

Investigating Label Use by Canadian Speech-Language Pathologists

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Introduction

- Children experiencing a delay in the development of oral language have variably been described as having a primary language impairment, specific language impairment, language learning impairment, and language disorder, among other labels
- Lack of consistent labels presents barriers to sharing information about children with similar profiles
- As a result of the "CATALISE studies" a consensus was reached for the label "developmental language disorder" (DLD) to describe children with a persistent language problem having a functional impact on communication or learning (Bishop et al., 2017)
- Despite significant advocacy efforts to raise awareness for DLD, there are indicators that label use may not be consistently adopted in clinical practice
- The CATALISE (Bishop et al., 2017) study included only 8 (of 57) experts from Canada
- Therefore, information regarding the use of diagnostic labels like DLD in the Canadian context is lacking
- The current study was aimed at investigating current label use, in practice, by Canadian speech-language pathologists as well as current awareness of the term DLD

Method

Participants

- 352 Canadian Speech-Language Pathologists
 - 49.5% practicing in school boards
 - 25.5% in private practices
 - 5.3% in hospitals
 - 3.5% in non-residential health care
 - 2.3% in residential health care
 - 13.9% in other settings (children's treatment centres, public health, telehealth, preschool speech and language initiative, etc.)

Practice Locations

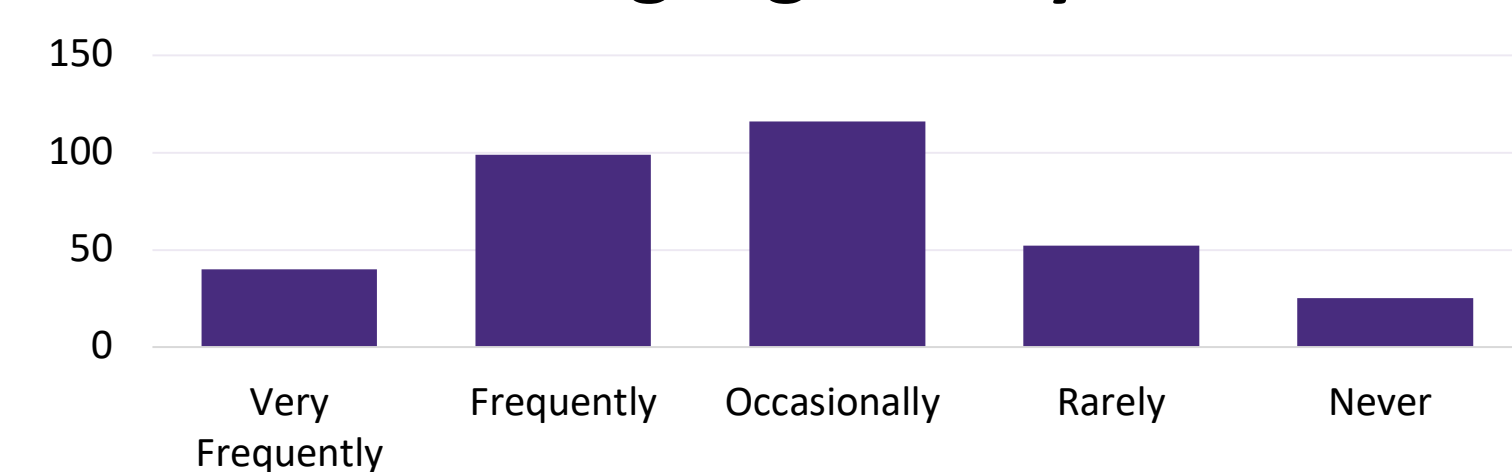
- Ontario: 235
- Alberta: 41
- New Brunswick : 28
- British Columbia 26
- Saskatchewan: 12
- Manitoba : 6
- Nova Scotia, Quebec, Newfoundland: 4

Procedure

- Recruited in person at SAC 2018 and online through social media invitation
- A 25 question online survey through Qualtrics
 - 3 on personal practice
 - 4 on use of specific labels to identify children with communication disorders
 - 1-3 on constraints on label use presented by professional licencing/legislature
 - 3 on purpose of assessment in practice
 - 11 on knowledge and use of the specific diagnostic label "developmental language disorder"

Results

Frequency of Specific Label Use to Describe the Profile of a Child with a Significant Language Delay

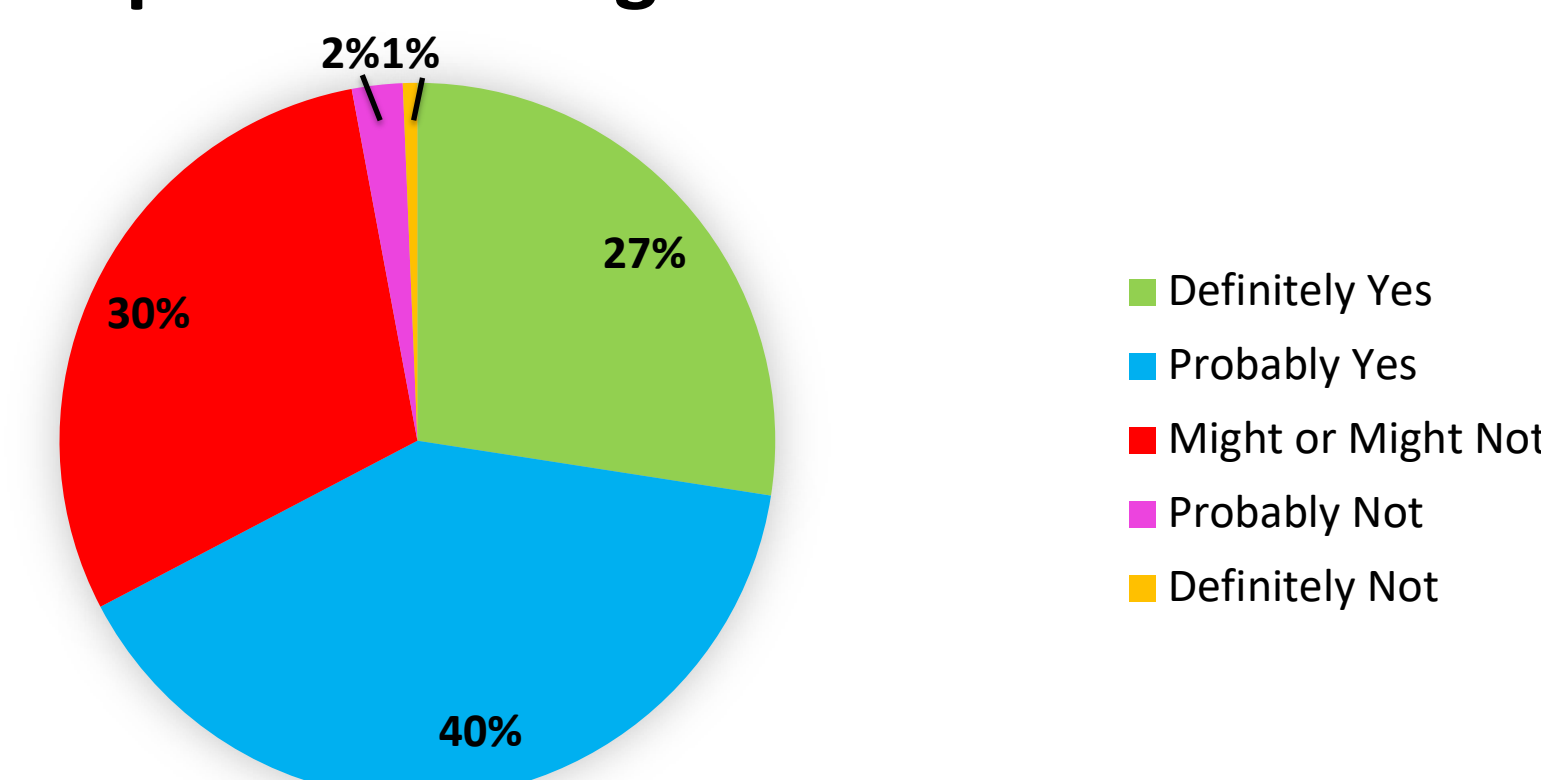


Importance of Assessment Objectives

Establishing goals for intervention	4.7
Determining if eligibility criteria for services are met	3.7
Providing parents with a diagnostic label	3.1
Assessing the level of functional impact	4.5
Identifying strengths and weaknesses	4.8

Scale: 1 (very unimportant) to 5 (very important)

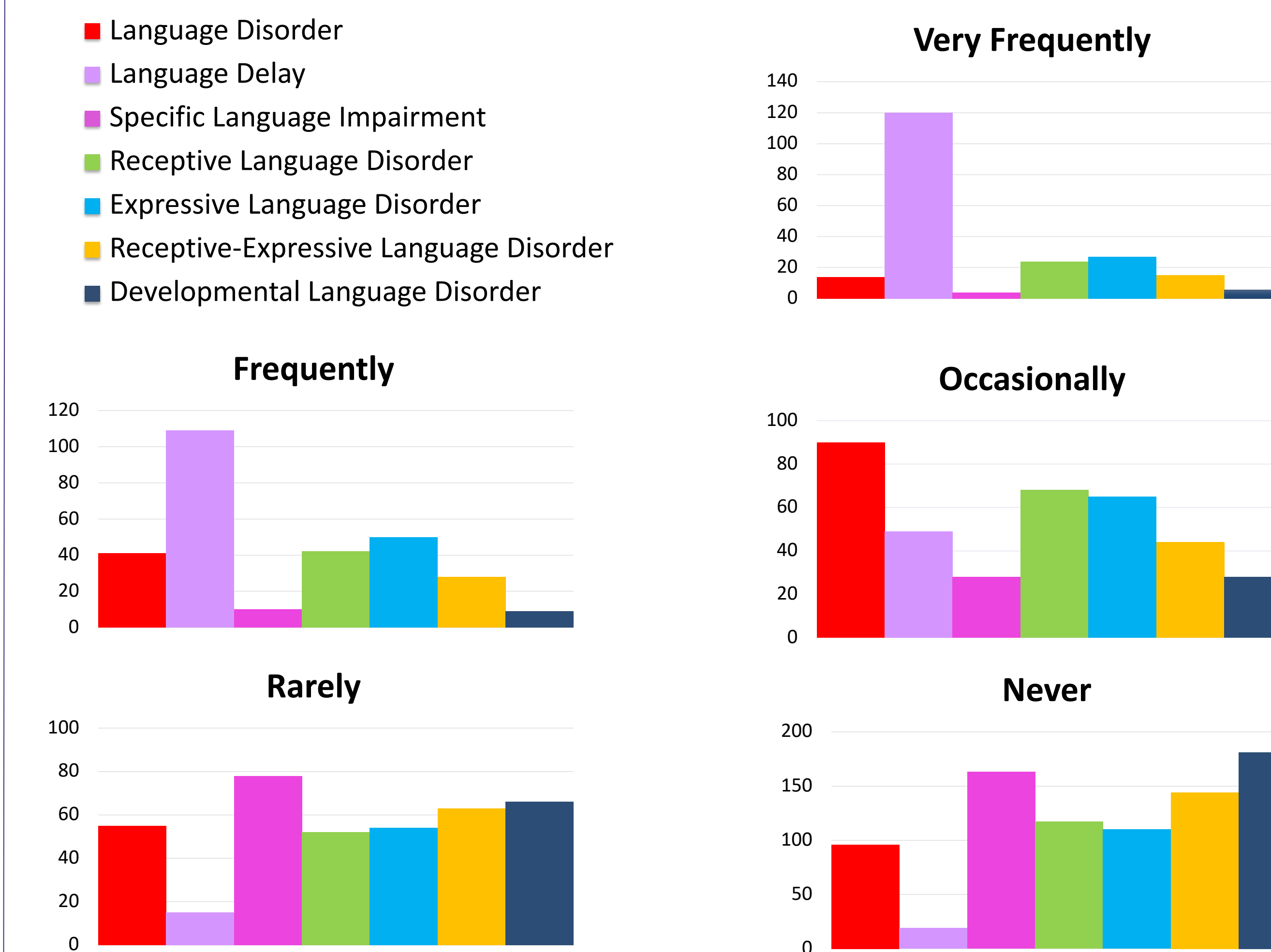
Do you feel the outcome of your assessments puts you in a position to provide a diagnostic label?



Professional Limitations

- 72.4% reported limits by professional bodies in providing diagnostic labels
- If limitations changed, how likely would participants be to use diagnostic labels?
- 29.8% Extremely Likely, 39.0% Likely, 26.6% Neutral, 4.1% Unlikely, 0.5% Extremely Unlikely

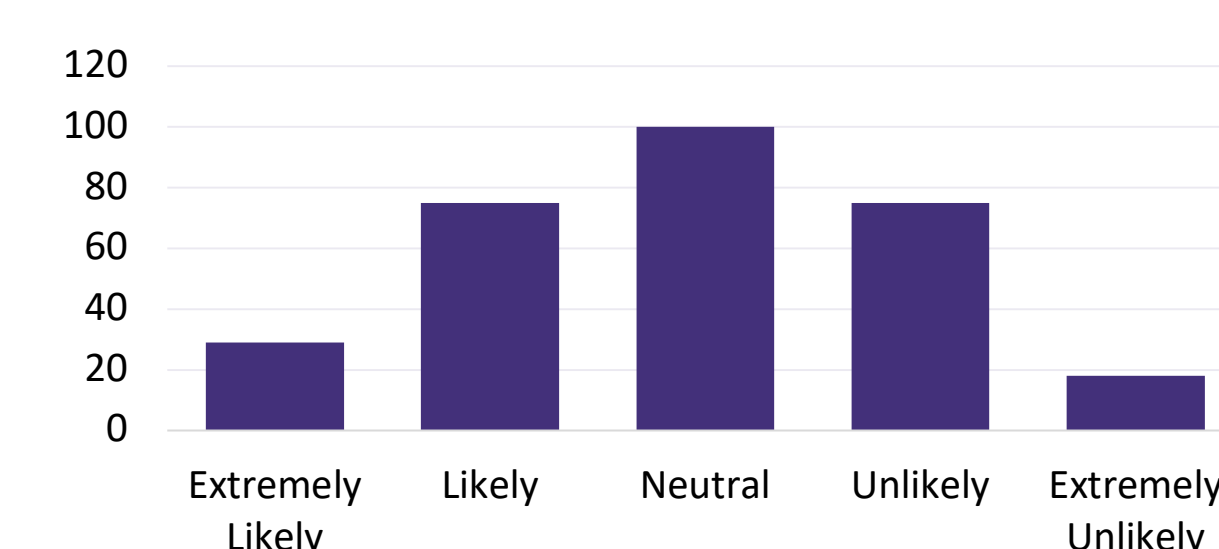
For a child presenting with a language delay, how often would you use the following terms:



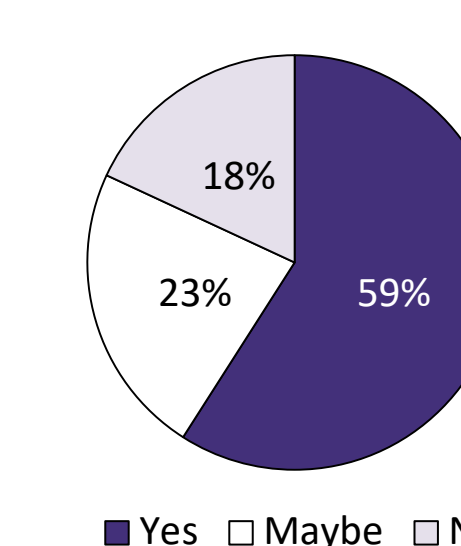
Developmental Language Disorder

- 46.6% correctly identified DLD definition
- 55% felt DLD was an effective label
- 88.2% (strongly) agreed that having a consistent diagnostic label would provide better advocacy
- 77% (strongly) agreed that children would be better off if professionals were consistently using the agreed upon label DLD

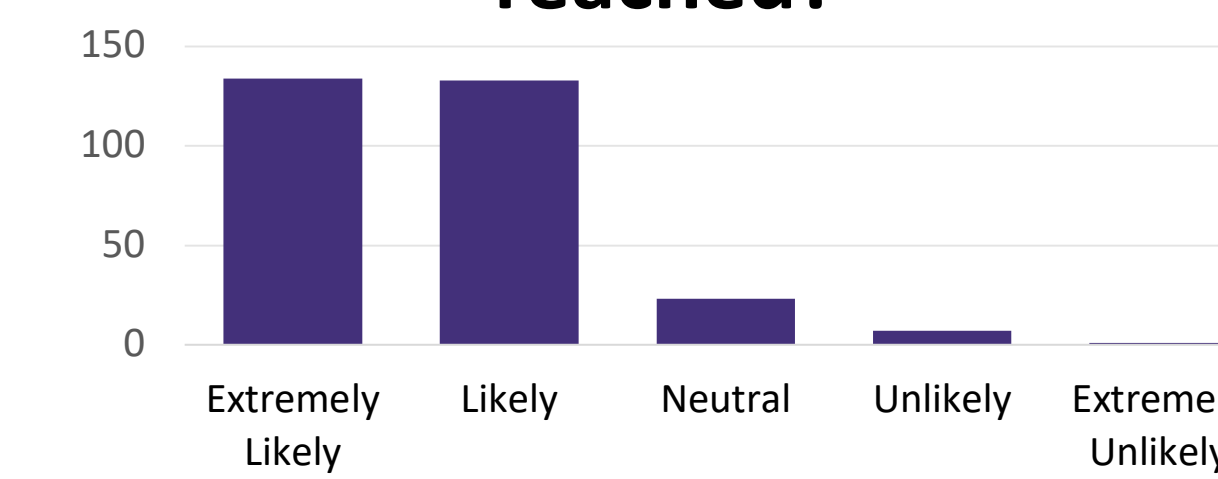
How likely are you to use the label DLD?



Are you aware of the label "Developmental Language Disorder"?



If there were an international consensus reached?



Conclusions

- Majority of Canadian SLPs are not consistently providing labels to children experiencing significant language delays
- Practice highly inconsistent
- Label "language delay" used most frequently
- Providing parents with a diagnostic label rated as the least important assessment objective (mirroring McGregor et al., 2017)
- Majority of Canadian SLPs feel that the outcome of their assessments puts them in a position to provide a diagnostic label
- Limitations in use of diagnostic labels imposed by their professional licencing body commonly reported
- About half of respondents were aware of the label DLD & could choose correct definition
- Awareness of international consensus may influence practice

References

Bishop, D. V. M., Snowling, M. J., Thompson, P. A., Greenhalgh, T. and THE CATALISE CONSORTIUM (2016). CATALISE: a multinational and multidisciplinary Delphi consensus study. Identifying language impairments in children. *PLoS One*, 11. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0168066>.

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