



The Confederation of British Surgery

**Covid-19
Safety at Work Survey
July 2020**



Key Findings

Circa 650 seasoned surgeons were polled (more than 4/5, [84%] had more than 8 years' experience as consultants, and two out of five above 18 years' experience). A wide range of specialist disciplines were included in respondents, with the majority hailing from general surgery; trauma and orthopaedics; plastic surgery; and obstetrics and gynaecology – as well as many others.

When asked whether the pandemic would result in changes to the way they work:

- Two thirds (66%) said they would be reducing face-to-face contact with patients
- Nearly one in 5 (18%) stated they would altering their practice; eg avoid aerosol-generating procedures, which produce respiratory secretions (these include intubation, tracheotomy/tracheostomies, certain endoscopies and others)
- One in Twelve (8%) would switch specialty (1%) or leave surgery altogether (7%)

On PPE Provision:

A third (33%) of respondents asserted PPE provision was inadequate at their hospital, of those:

- Four out of five (80%) complained low supplies, rationing and shortages
- Nearly 70% (68%) cited ever-changing/inconsistent guidance
- Nearly half (48%) cited problems with the actual quality of PPE - ie, didn't fit, had to be re-used when not reusable etc
- Similar proportion (45%) said the guidelines in general were simply inadequate for the tasks at hand

Key Findings

When asked whether they had raised any concerns with their line managers:

- 2/5 (40%) had done so.

When asked if their concerns were dealt with satisfactorily:

- nearly a third (30%) said they were not addressed, or not effectively.
- Circa 5% stated there were no supplies available anyways to tackle the issue, or no action was taken.

Over one in ten (11%) were asked by their employers to stop discussing PPE.

When asked whether the actual *guidance* for PPE usage by public health authorities in the UK were adequate:

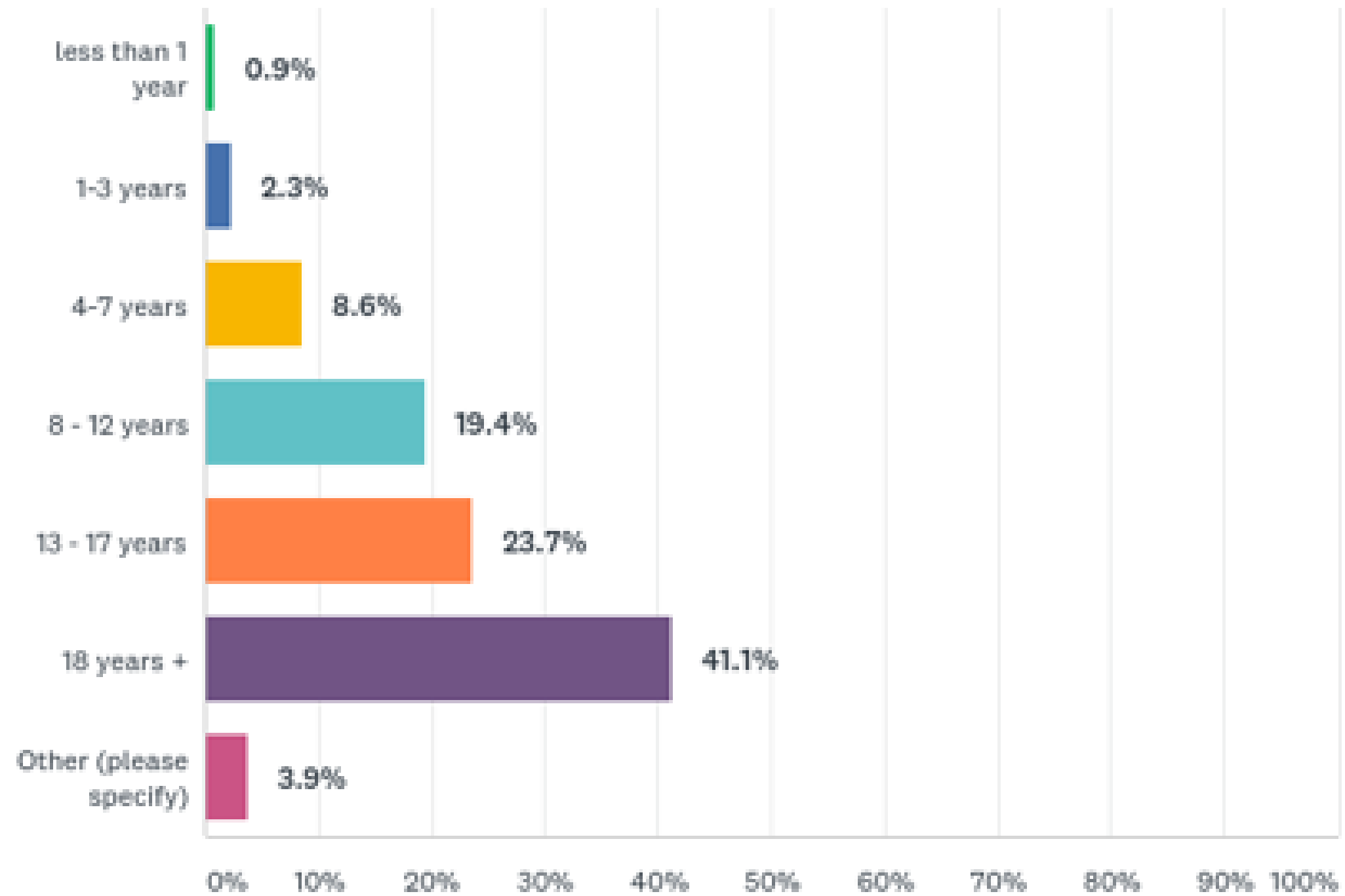
- a narrow majority (52%) said yes - but of those who disagreed, by far the biggest issue was inconsistency;
- nearly half (45%) of respondents cited this as the most pressing problem;
- with recommendations changing daily/weekly, from Trust to Trust and even hospital to hospital.
- A lack of solid scientific evidence was also mentioned often, with some even stating some measures were excessive, or inappropriate/inconvenient for the work being carried out (for example, wearing loupes as well as visors, which impeded their tasks).

Key Findings

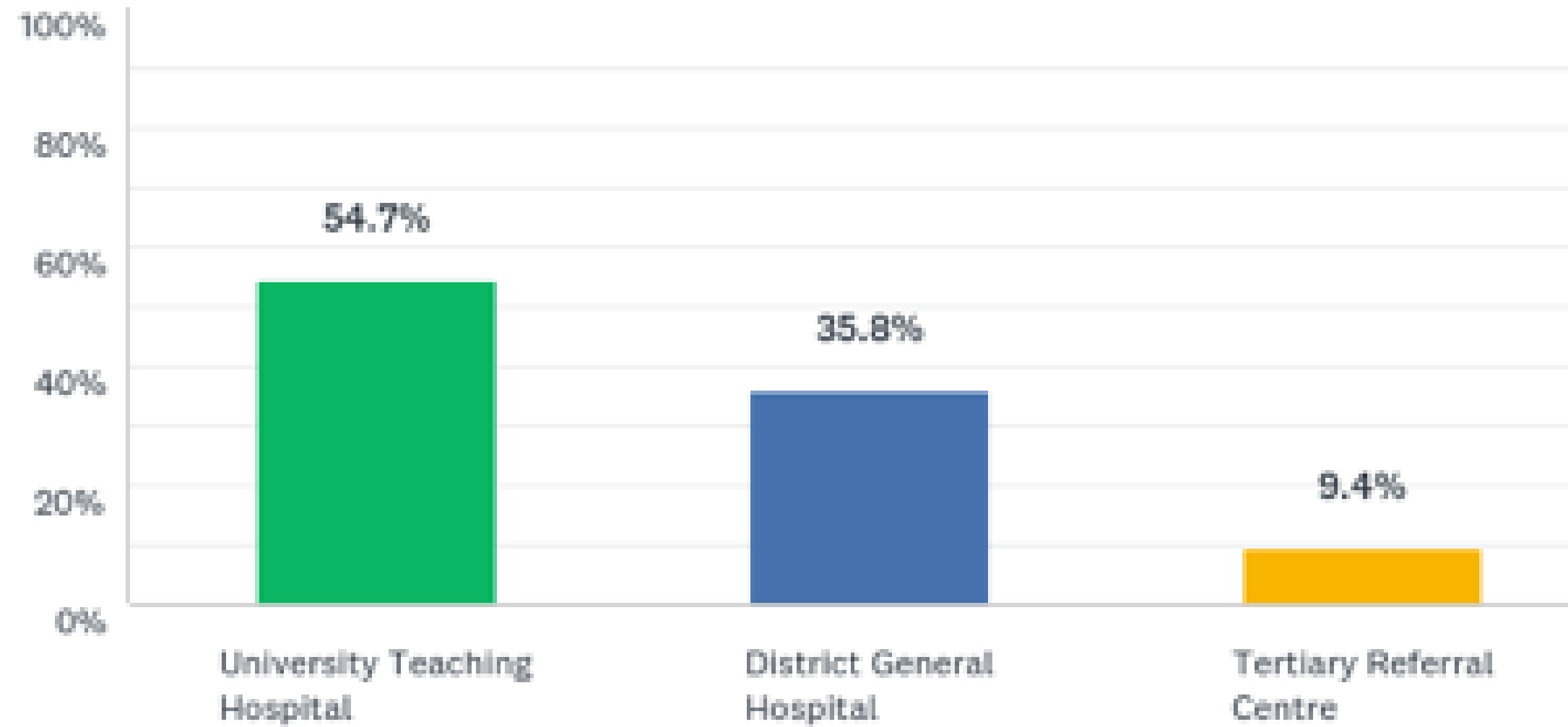
When asked (open-ended) about top 'lessons' learnt from the pandemic, the top ten commonest themes among all 649 respondents were (in descending order of popularity):

- Lack of preventative measures – urgent need for better preparation in the future
- The importance of embracing/accepting technology
- Strong criticism of the Government, and a (vociferous) call for clinical/scientific leadership, rather than political
- The need for successful short-term, emergency measures that have proven successful to be implemented long-term
- The crucial issue of PPE, including less reliance on imported equipment
- Critical need for wide investment – such as for example modernising IT and other chronically underfunded areas
- The urgency of reliable testing, track & tracing (seen as woefully inadequate)
- Significance of learning from other countries – rather than British 'exceptionalism'
- Clear and consistent communications based on evidence, which have been lacking
- A newly-found appreciation for the value of teamwork, across departments and specialisms

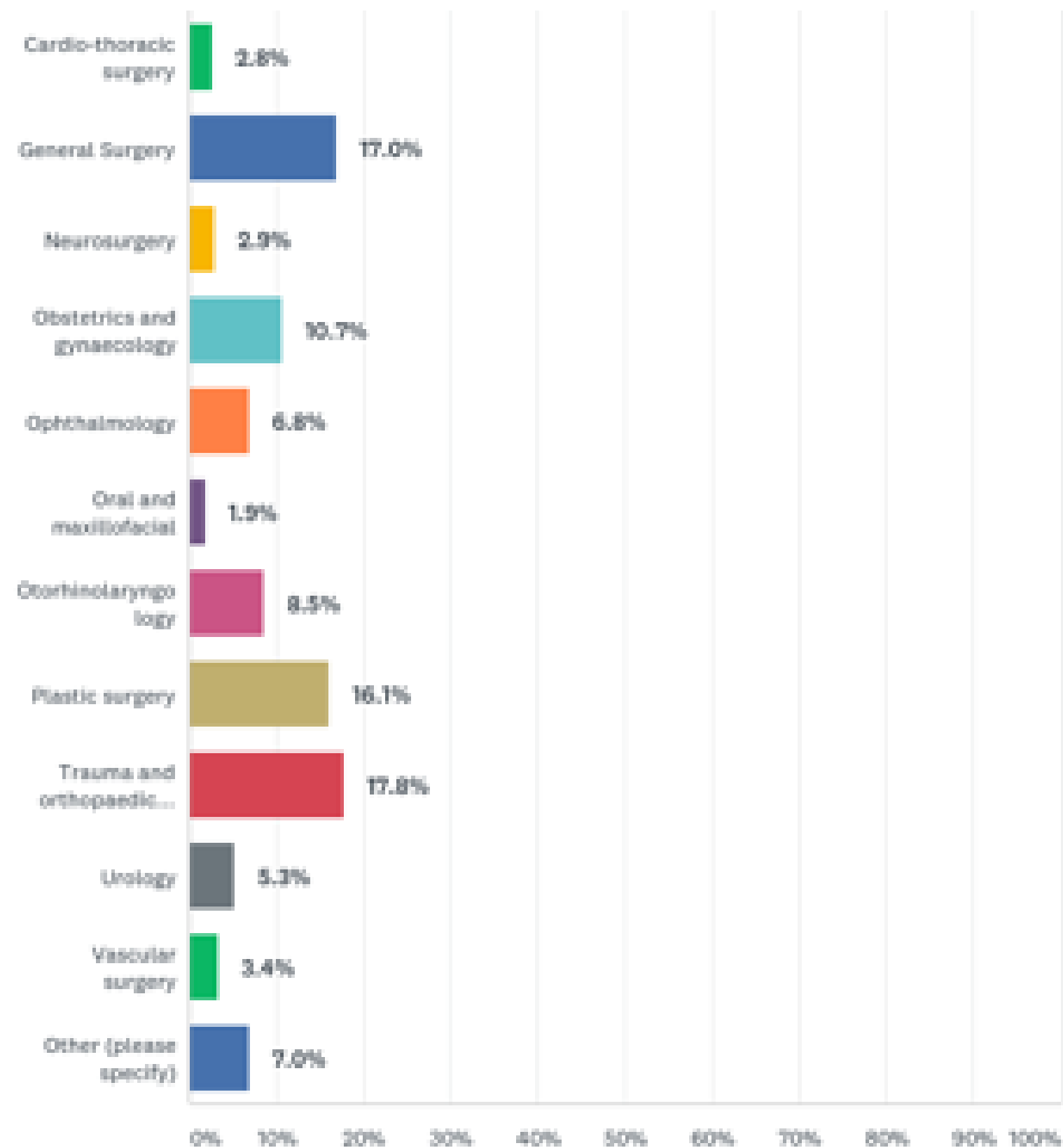
How long have you been a Consultant?



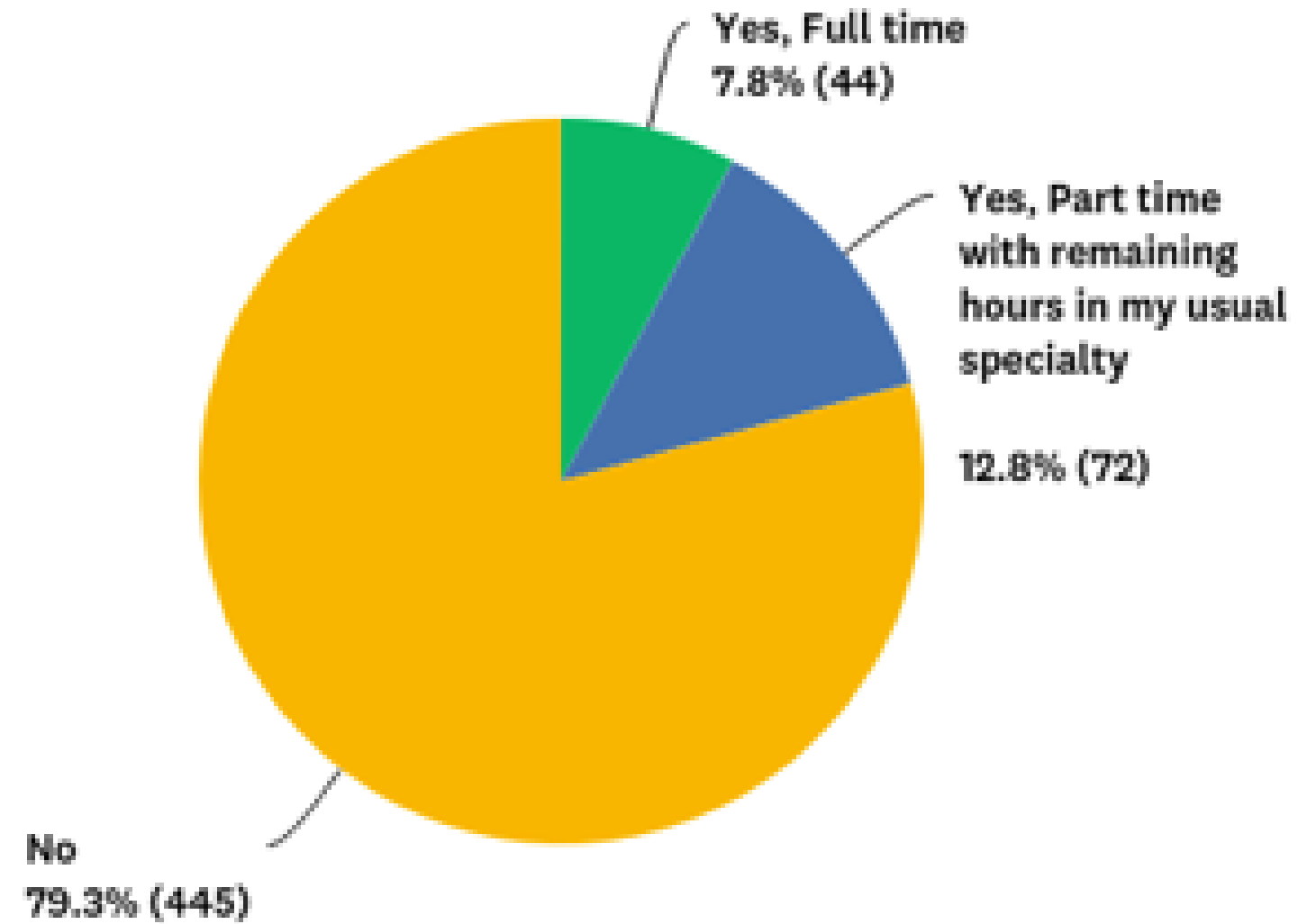
What type of hospital are you working in?



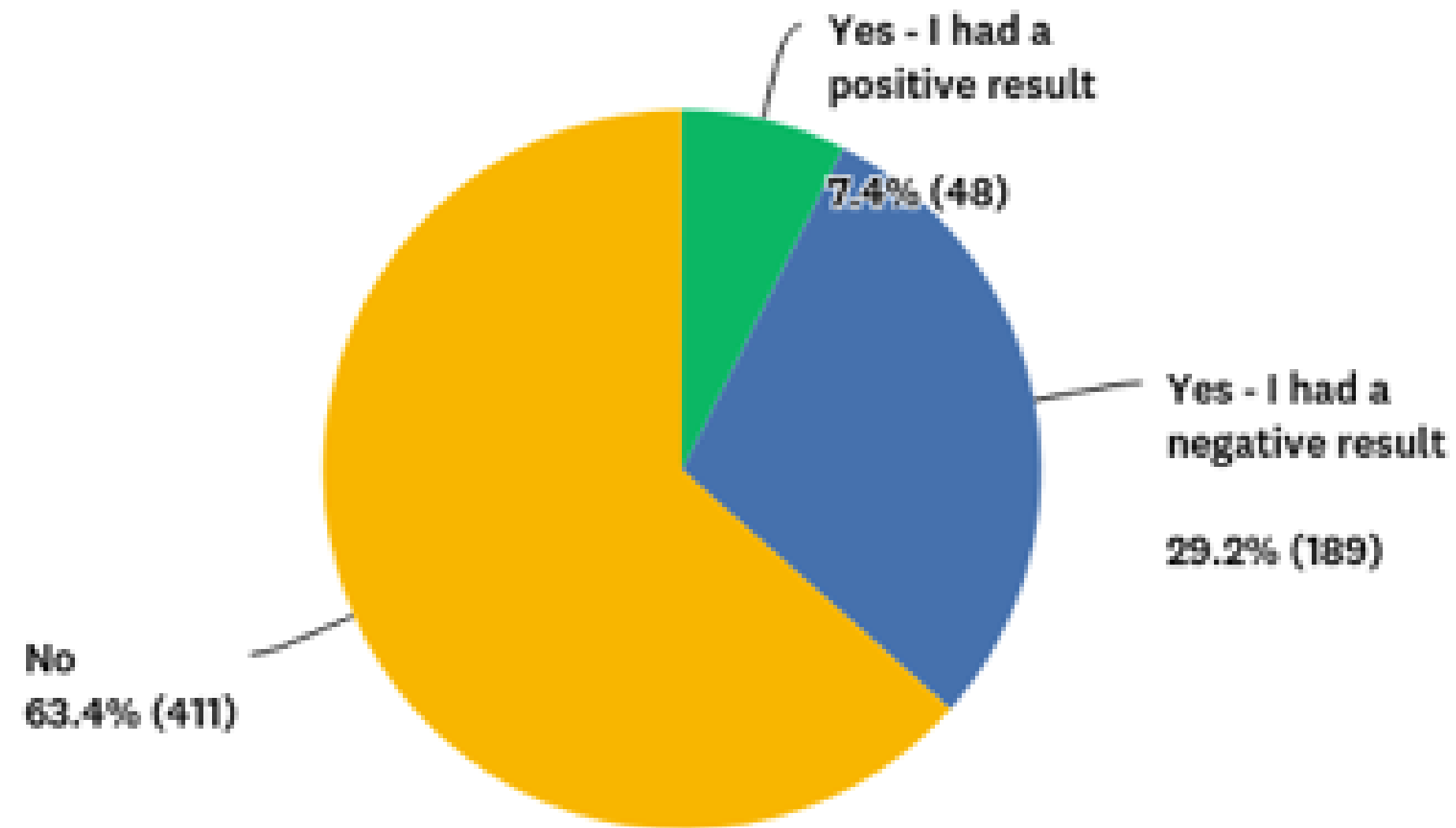
What is your specialty?



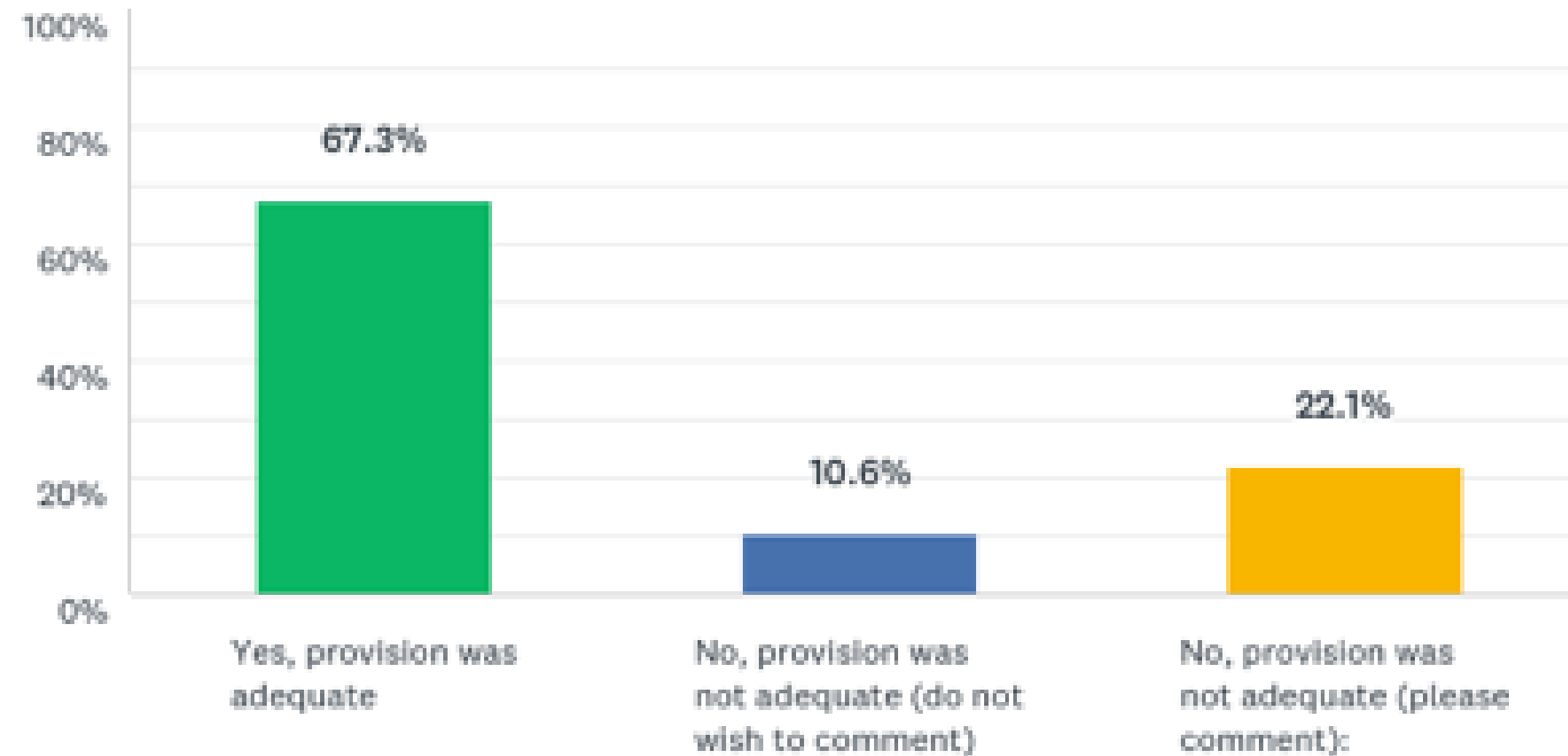
Have you been/were you re-deployed?



Have you been tested for Covid-19?



In your opinion, was the provision of PPE adequate in your hospital?



Reasons why the provision of PPE was not adequate in your hospital



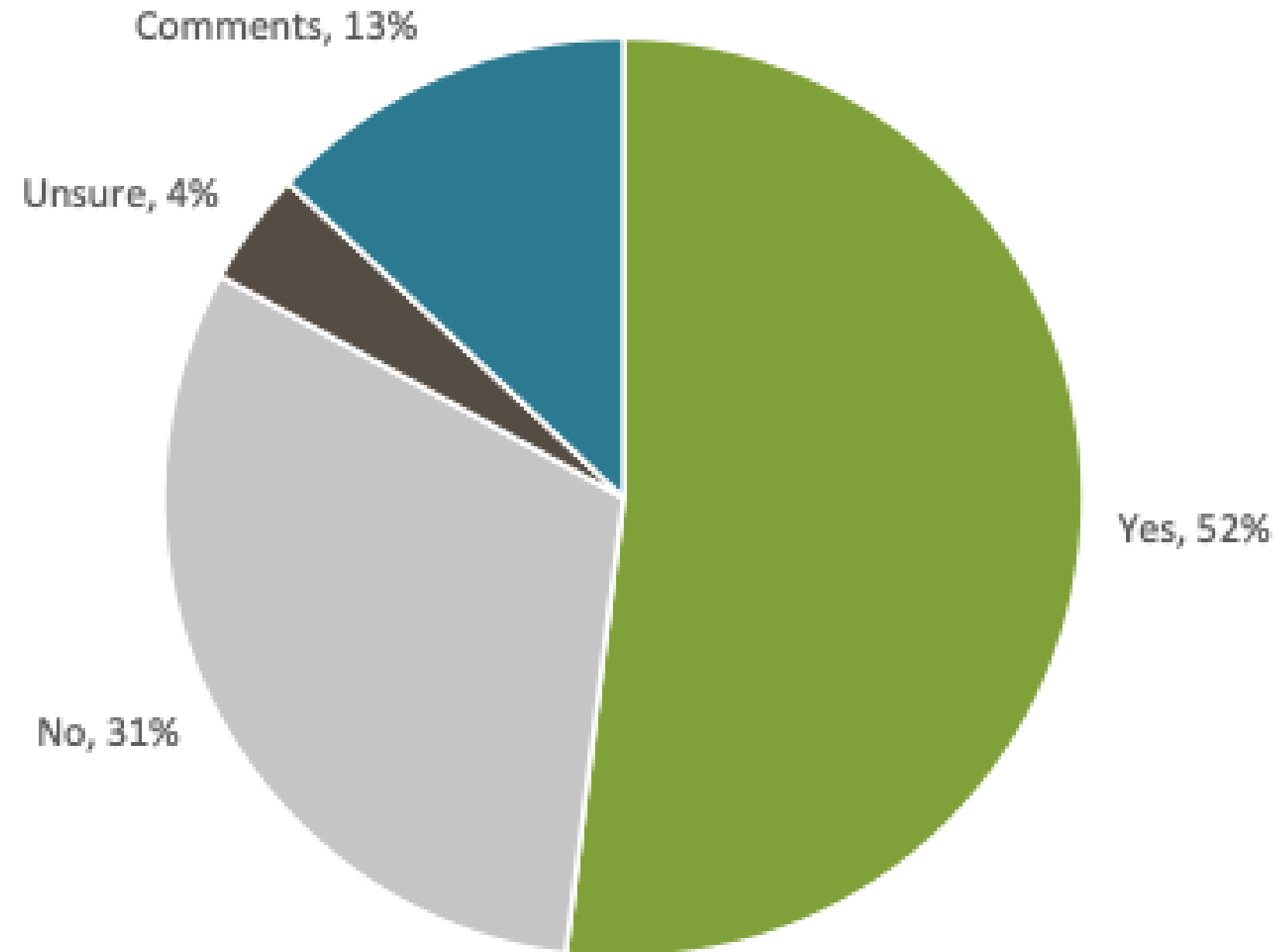
144 respondents commented about provision of PPE not being adequate in their setting. These comments addressed multiple issues and have been assessed as follows:

- Four out of five respondents (80%) complained of low supplies, rationing and shortages
- Nearly 70% cited ever-changing/inconsistent guidance
- Nearly half (48%) cited problems with the actual quality of PPE - ie, didn't fit, had to be re-used when not reusable etc
- Similar proportions (45%) said the guidelines in general were simply inadequate for the tasks at hand.

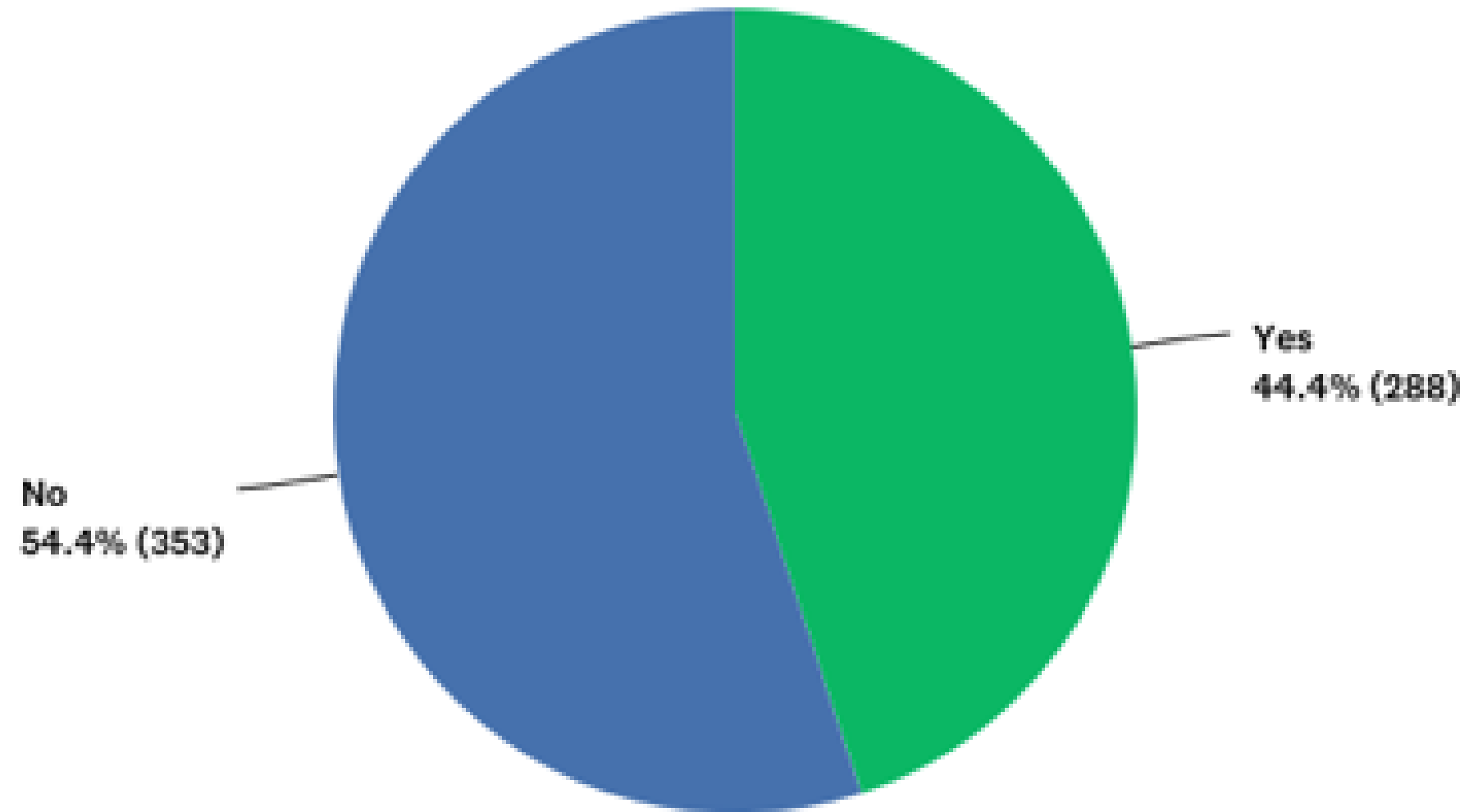
Do you think the current *guidelines* for PPE amongst the healthcare team are adequate?



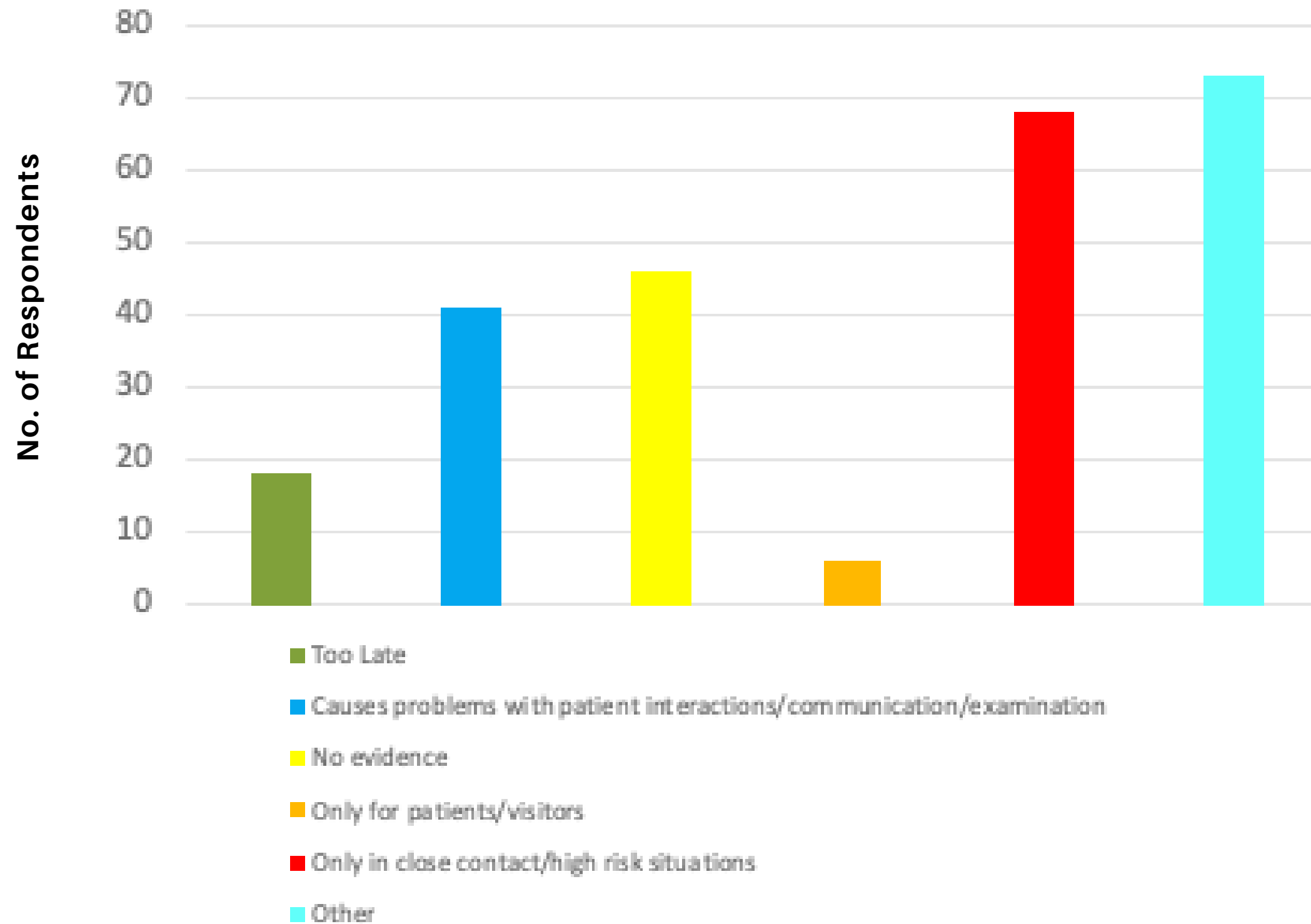
The comments (13%) stated were largely negative and state that the guidelines are changing too often/are confusing/vague/excessive/have been appropriate but are now inappropriate (over the top) in some areas of surgery



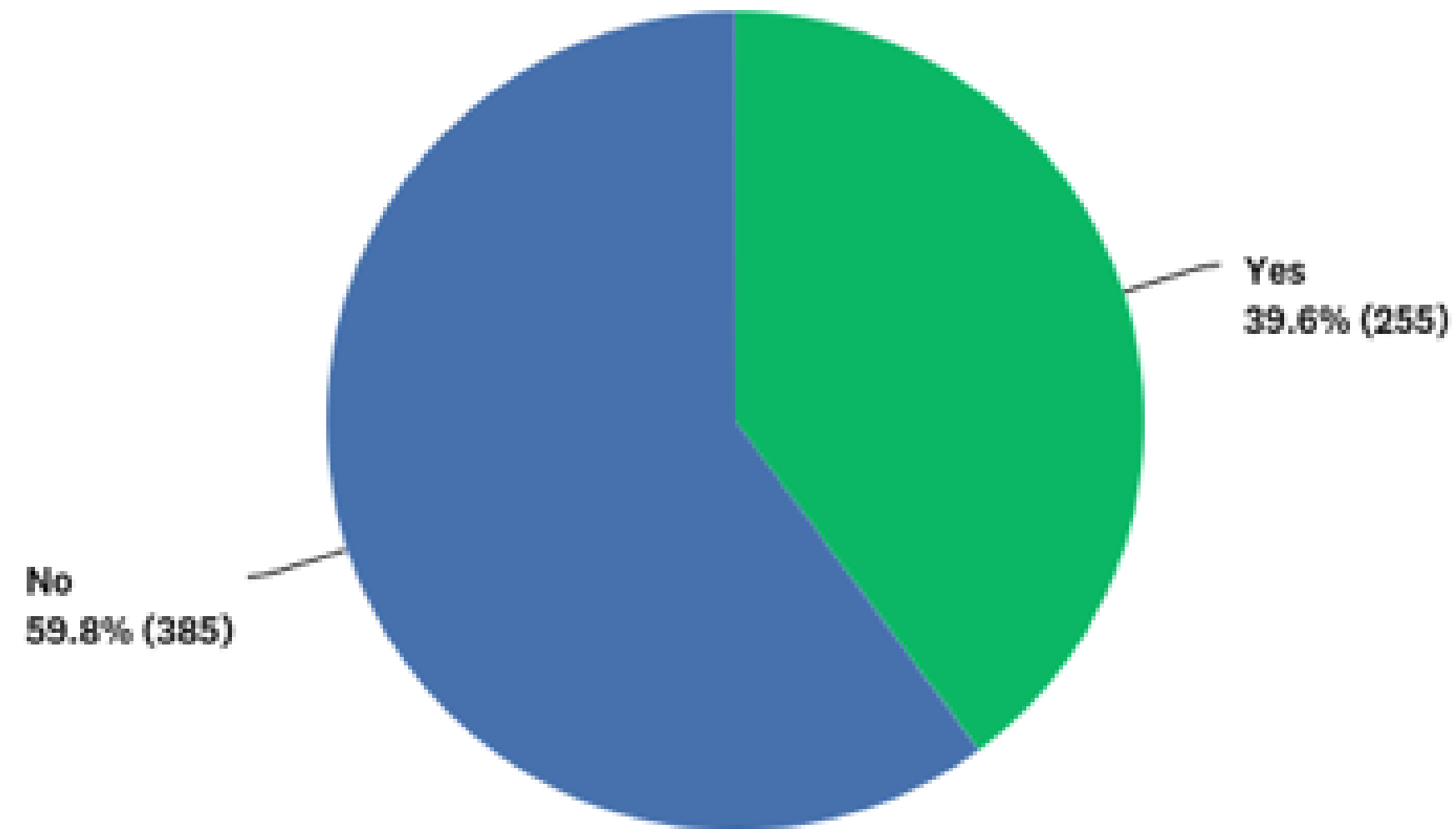
Do you agree with the Government and BMA that in future all patients and hospital staff should wear face masks at all times?



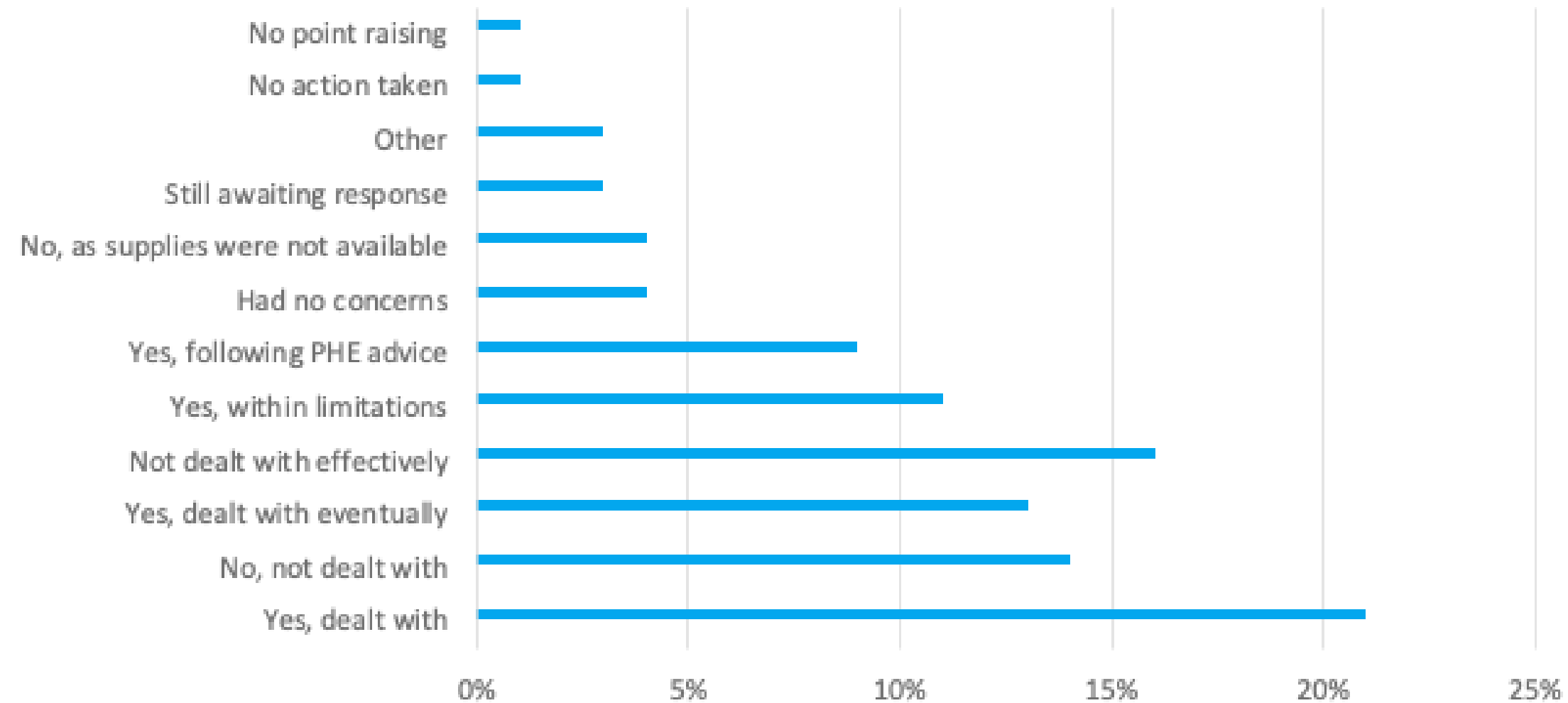
Reasons stated for not agreeing with the Government and BMA that in future all patients and hospital staff should wear face masks at all times:



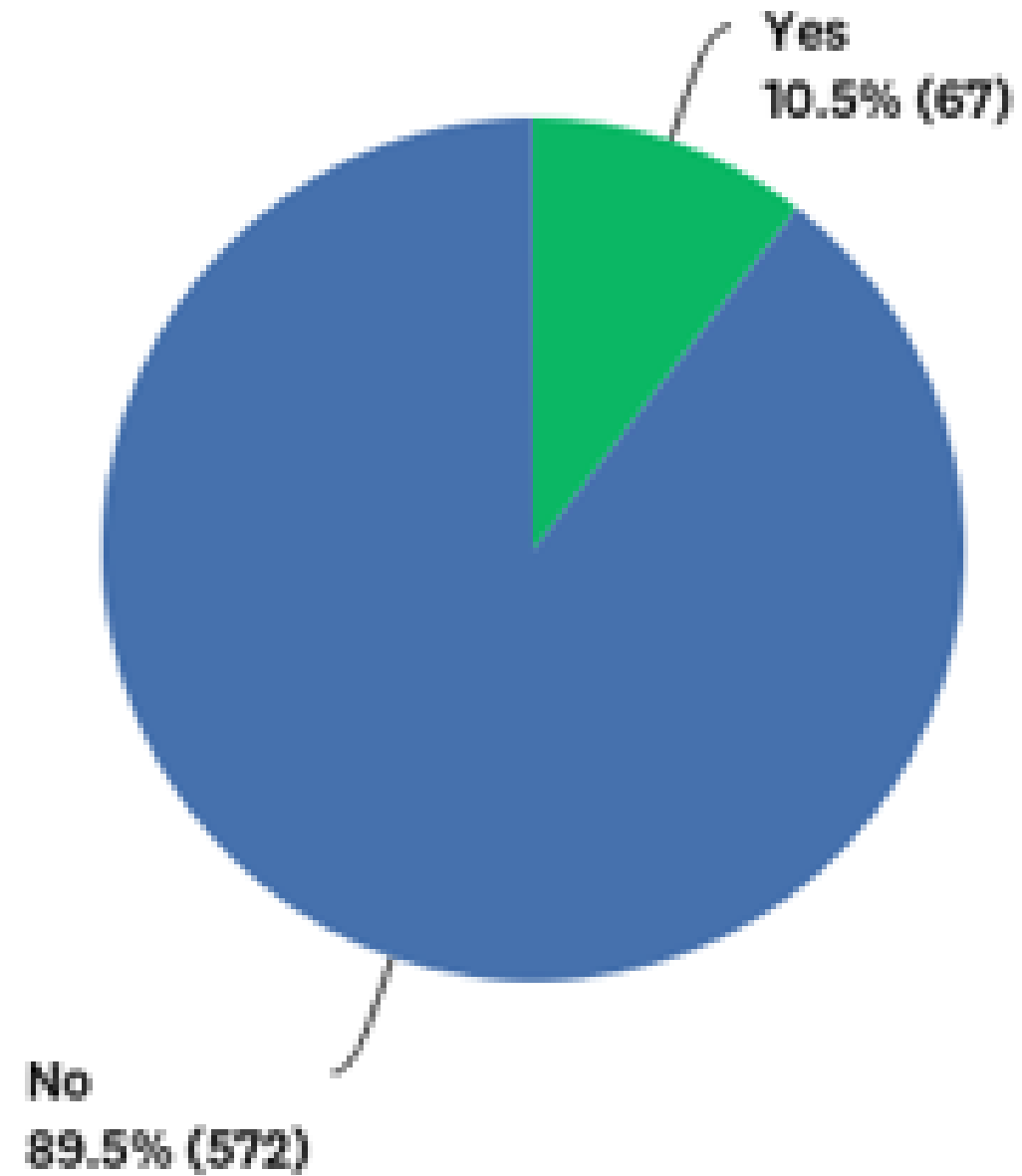
Did you raise any concerns about PPE to your appropriate line manager?



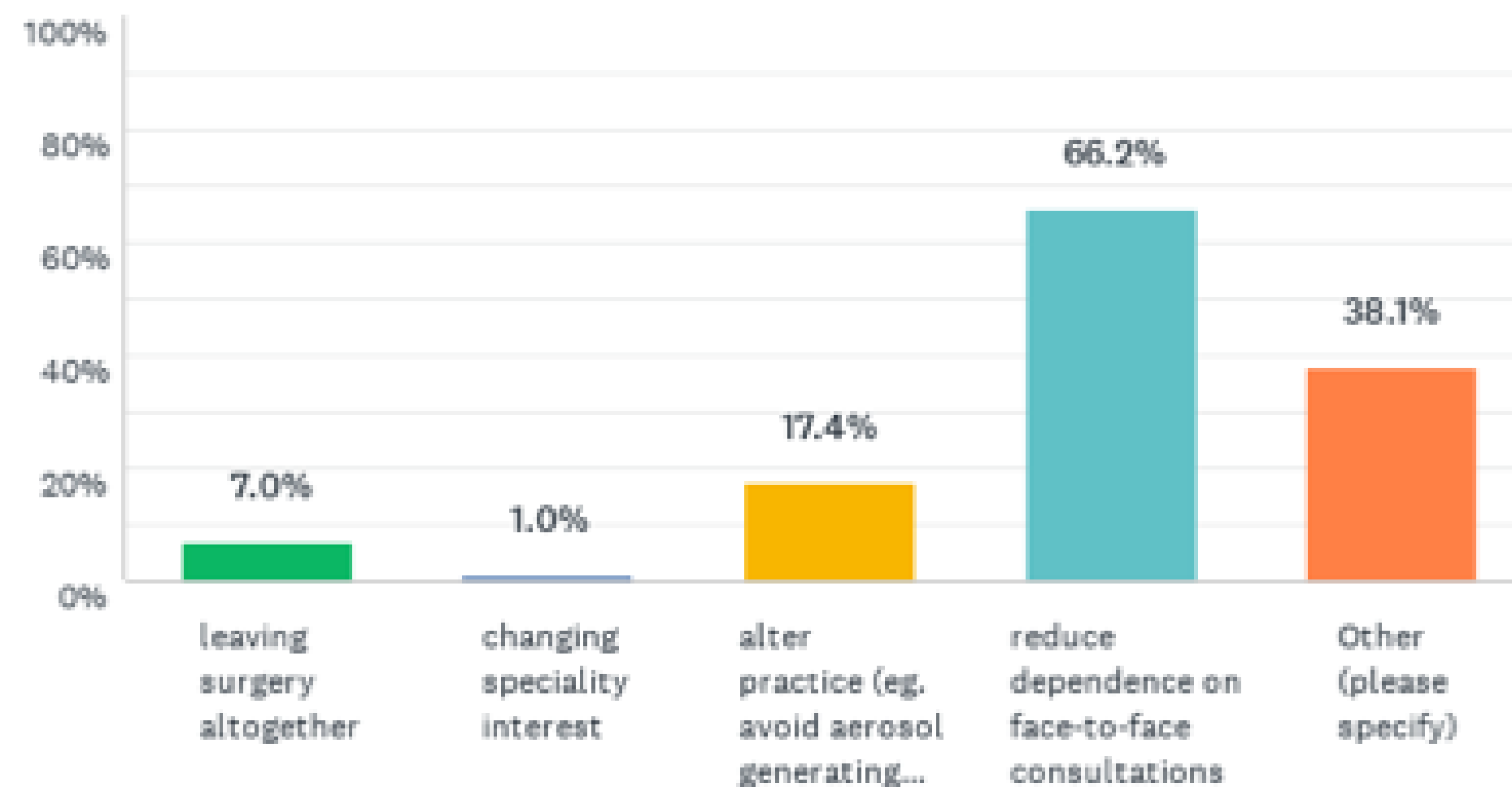
Were your concerns dealt with appropriately?



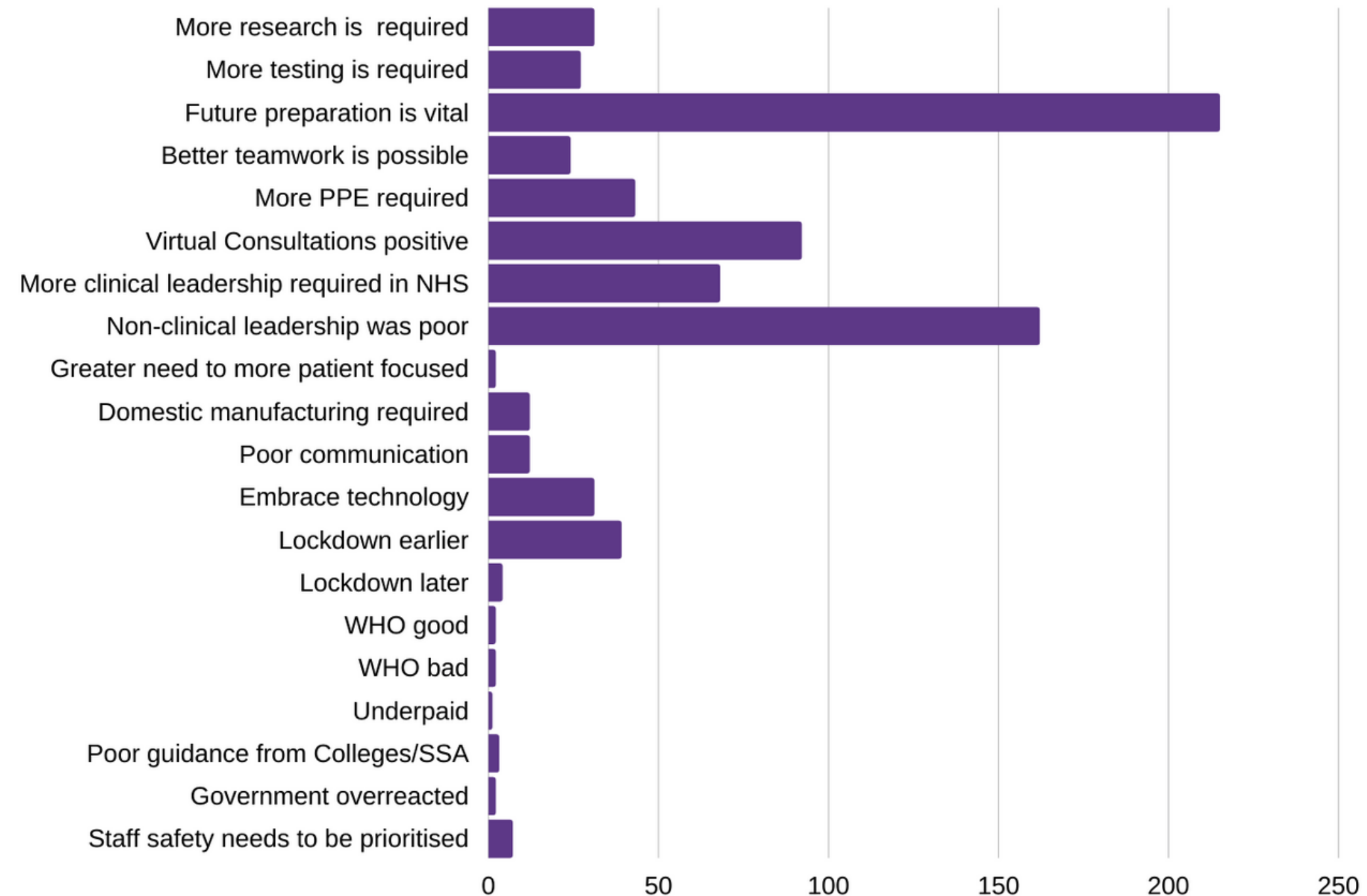
Did your Trust or Employer ask you to stop discussing a lack of PPE?



As a result of your experiences during COVID-19, are you considering any of the following?



What lessons can we learn from this pandemic?



Open ended question. These results were extracted from 540 responses, where respondents gave detailed and lengthy responses.



Working for all the Surgical Team

For the professional and employment interests of surgeons and their teams irrespective of the Surgical Royal College or Surgical Speciality Association affiliation.

**Professor John Macfie,
CBS President and retired
consultant colorectal surgeon
states that:**

“As representatives of the surgical community, it was imperative that we ‘take its temperature’ and identify its most widespread views on the pandemic. Whilst many might not find some of their experiences and opinions on the subjects of – for example – personal protective equipment (PPE) guidance and provision to be shocking, it has still been jarring to find that a third found their concerns ignored when they were raised, and more than a tenth were directed outright to drop the subject.

“The level of dissatisfaction with the lack of preparation for the crisis, and perceived disregard for healthcare workers’ safety was such, that one in twelve of all respondents are considering changing their discipline or leaving the field of surgery altogether. That, in fact, is a figure that should be horrifying to all.”



**CBS has been created
*by surgeons for surgeons.***

As an organization it is wholly committed to looking after the welfare of surgeons, the extended surgical team and their families.

**According to Mark Henley,
consultant plastic surgeon
and Founding member of the
Confederation of British
Surgery;**

“The surgical community appears to be embracing the importance of technology, and our findings highlight the urgency for investment in this and other, chronically underfunded areas - particularly in education and training.

Sadly, it is impossible to ignore the scathing criticism of the Government’s pandemic response; it was the third most cited issue when asked about lessons for the future, alongside a crucial need for leadership to be scientific and clinical, rather than political.”



CBS is the first and only trade union to be recognised under UK law to protect and represent all surgeons, and negotiates on their behalf the terms and conditions of service, contracts of employment, litigation and insurance.

Consultant plastic surgeon and Founding Member of the Confederation Nigel Mercer warns that;

“There is significant concern that the multiple changes made to Guidance about Covid testing, combined with the reluctance to regularly test NHS staff, significantly impact on maintaining ‘Covid lite’ pathways, which are essential to ensuring maximum safety for patients and staff.

Combined with ongoing concerns about PPE and a potential second wave of Covid in the Autumn, it is clear that both patients and staff remain very concerned about post surgery Covid security. Maximising new technology and especially testing and track and trace are essential for safety in perioperative care.”



**For more
information**

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