

A close-up photograph of a woman with reddish-brown hair, wearing a white ribbed sweater and a black headset with two microphones. She is looking down with a focused expression, her lips slightly parted. Her hands are visible, holding the sides of the headset. She is wearing a gold ring with a large clear stone on her left ring finger. The background is plain white.

# Distance interpreting during the pandemic

A survey of official language interpreters  
employed by the federal Translation Bureau

January 18, 2021

# Background and Methodology

- The Canada Regional Bureau of the International Association of Conference Interpreters conducted an online survey of 51 active interpreters employed by the federal Translation Bureau from January 11 to January 15, 2021.
- A total of 37 respondents completed all questions in the survey for a response rate of 73%.
- The survey was conducted to measure the effects of distance interpreting over the ZOOM online platform on interpreters' health and safety.
- Full-time staff interpreters are assigned to work the majority of sittings of the House of Commons and Senate chambers and Parliamentary Committees and are essential to the functioning of Parliament.

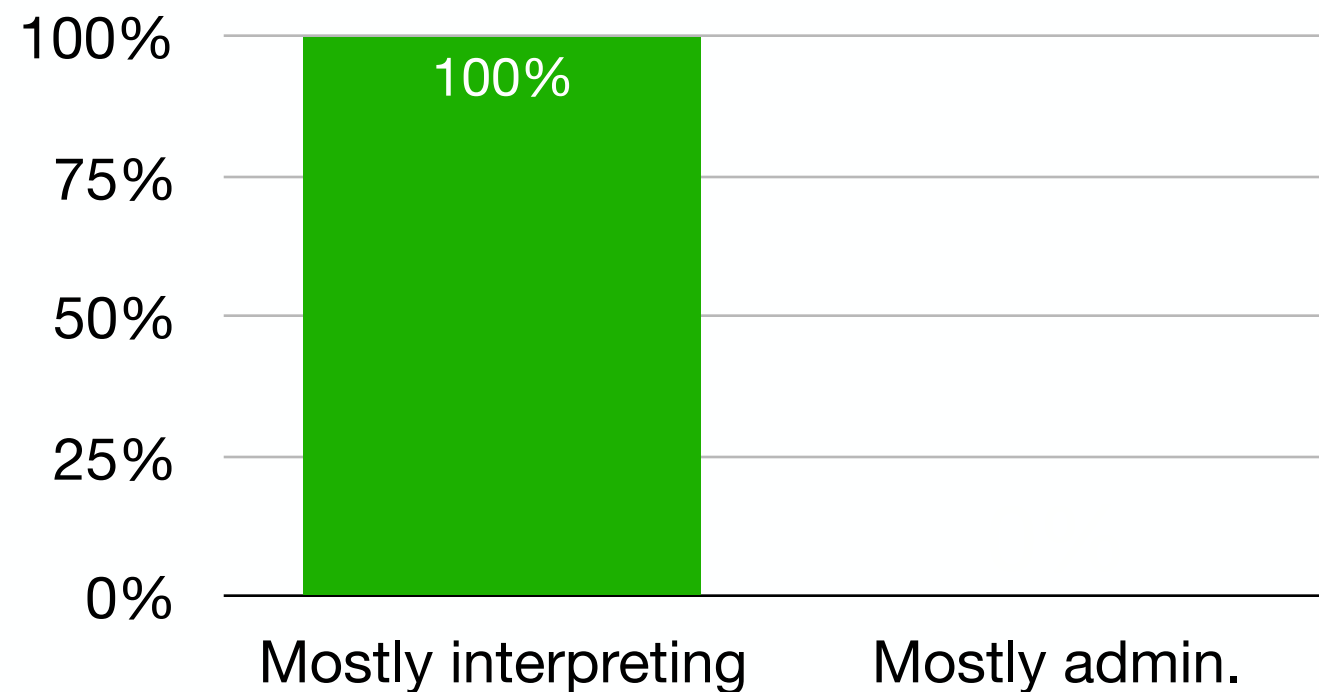
# Key Findings

The survey reveals that Parliament has become a hazardous workplace for official language interpreters since its proceedings migrated to the ZOOM platform nine months ago in April 2020. This has left the federal Translation Bureau's interpretation team, which is essential to the functioning of Parliament, riddled with auditory injuries and unable to deliver a quality product to Canadians.

- Seven-in-ten (70%) respondents have experienced auditory injuries serious enough to force most (88%) to take time off work to recover.
- Many (43%) report that the injuries they have suffered continue to linger, creating a large group of walking wounded among interpreters at the Translation Bureau.
- In spite of this, 78% report that they have not been assigned to other duties to rest their ears.
- Among respondents 102 incident reports have been filed to report injuries since April 2020, more than triple the number of injury reports filed during the previous 20 months.
- Quality of interpretation services in Parliament and for Canadians is suffering as a result with the vast majority (97%) of respondents reporting that they are never (16%), rarely (30%), or only sometimes (51%) able to do as good a job when doing Distance Interpreting as they would during an in-person meeting.

# Detailed findings

Q1. Before the pandemic started, were you scheduled to do mostly interpreting work or mostly administrative work in 2020?

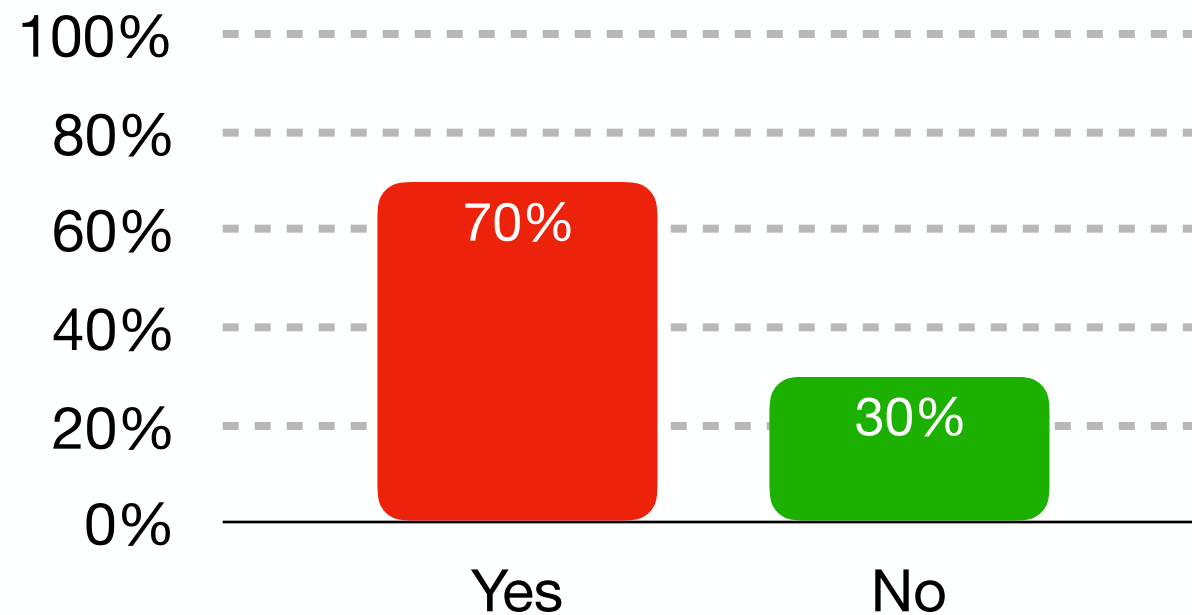


Number surveyed	51
Respondents	37
Mostly interpreting	37
Mostly admin	0

Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.



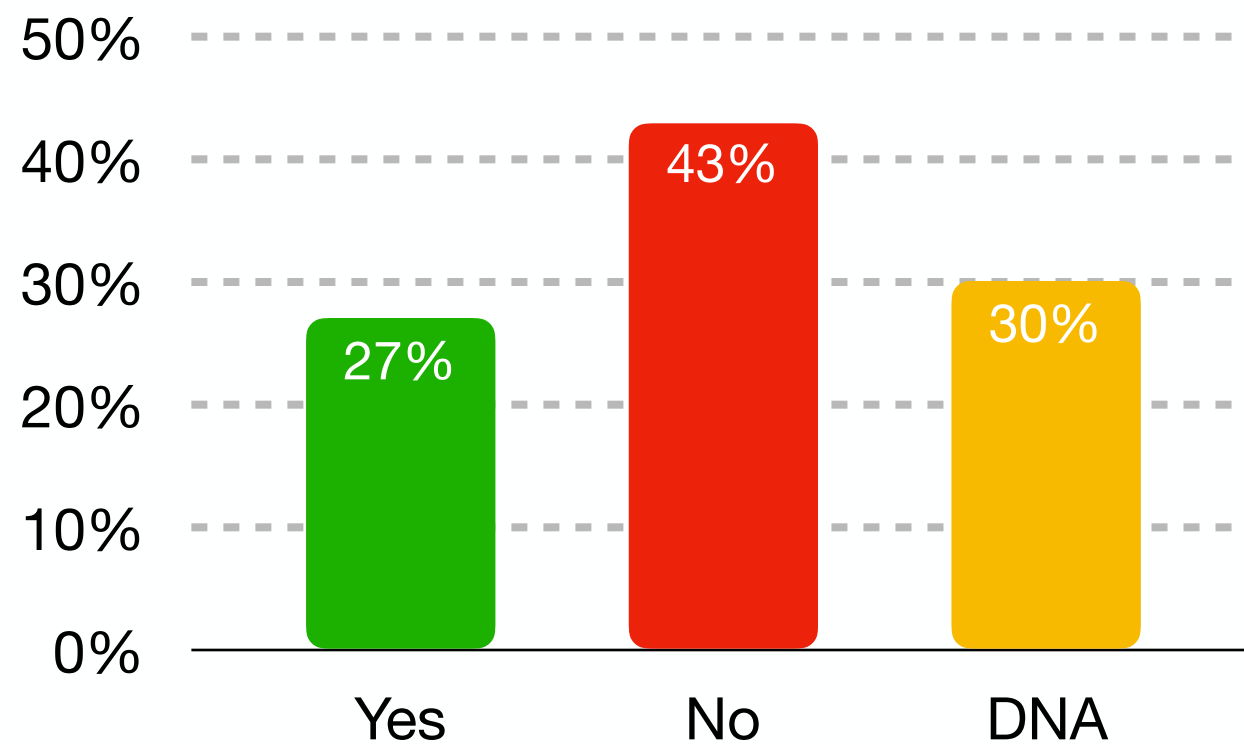
Q2. Since the pandemic started, have you been injured at work while doing Remote Simultaneous Interpreting (RSI)?



Number surveyed	51
Respondents	37
Yes	26
No	11

Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

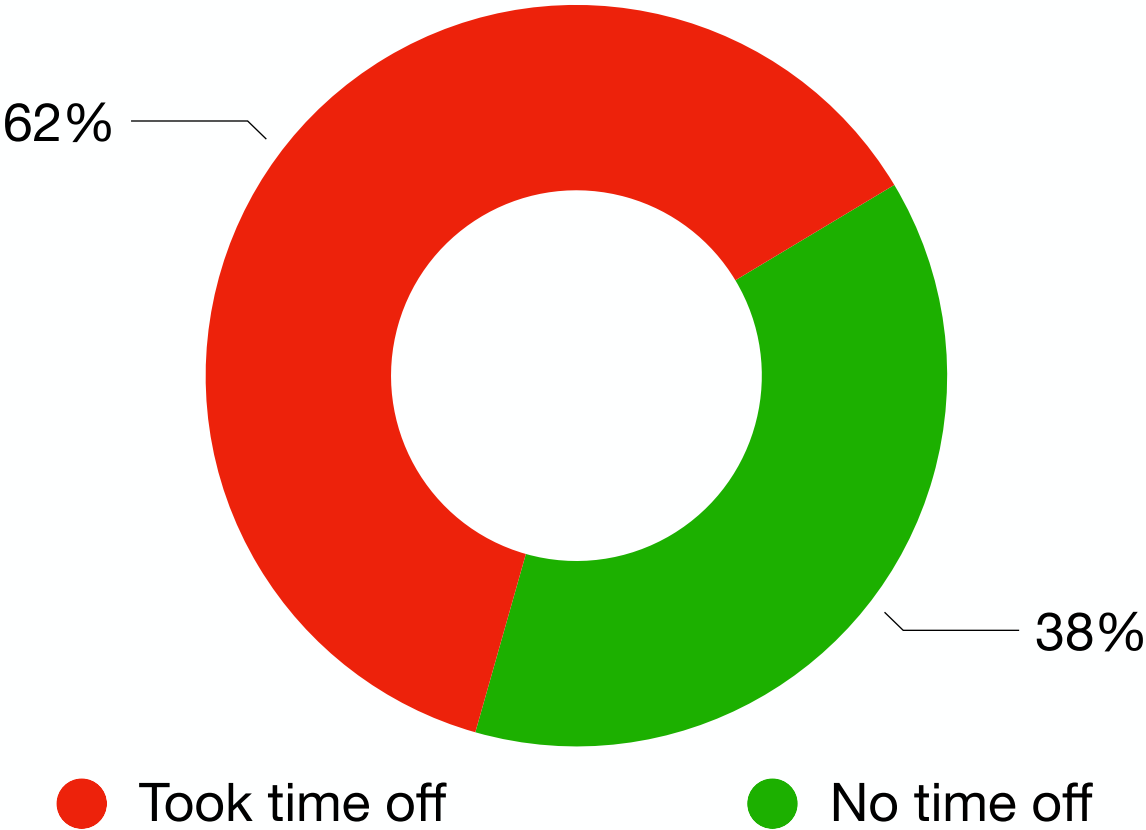
### Q3. Have you fully recovered from your injuries?



Number surveyed	51
Respondents	37
Yes	10
No	16
Does not apply	11

Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

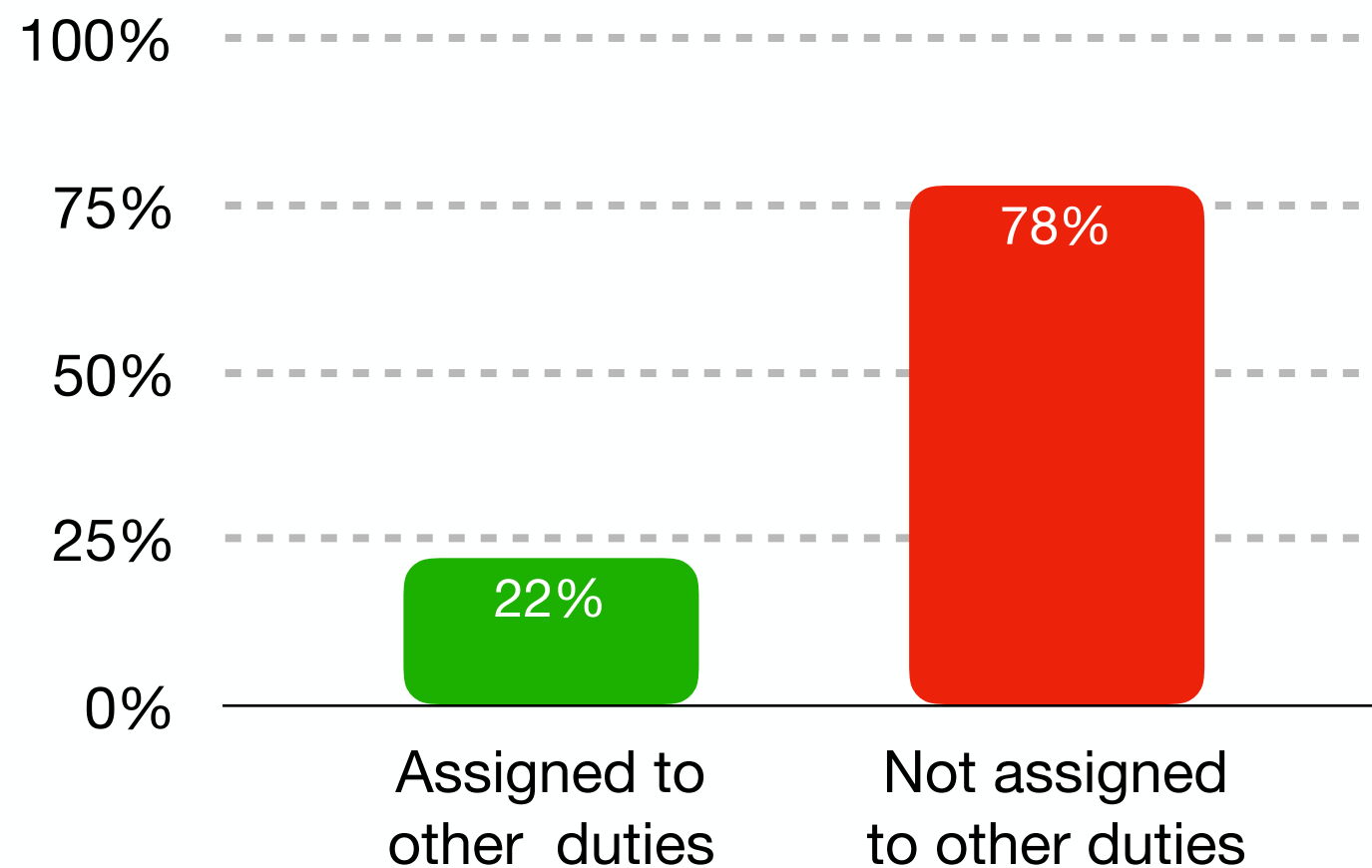
Q4. How many sick days/days off did you have to take roughly because of an injury while doing RSI? If none, please indicate so.



Number surveyed	51
Respondents	37
Took time off	23
No time off	14
Total days off	226

Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Q5. How many days have you been assigned to duties other than interpretation to rest your ears? If none, please indicate so.

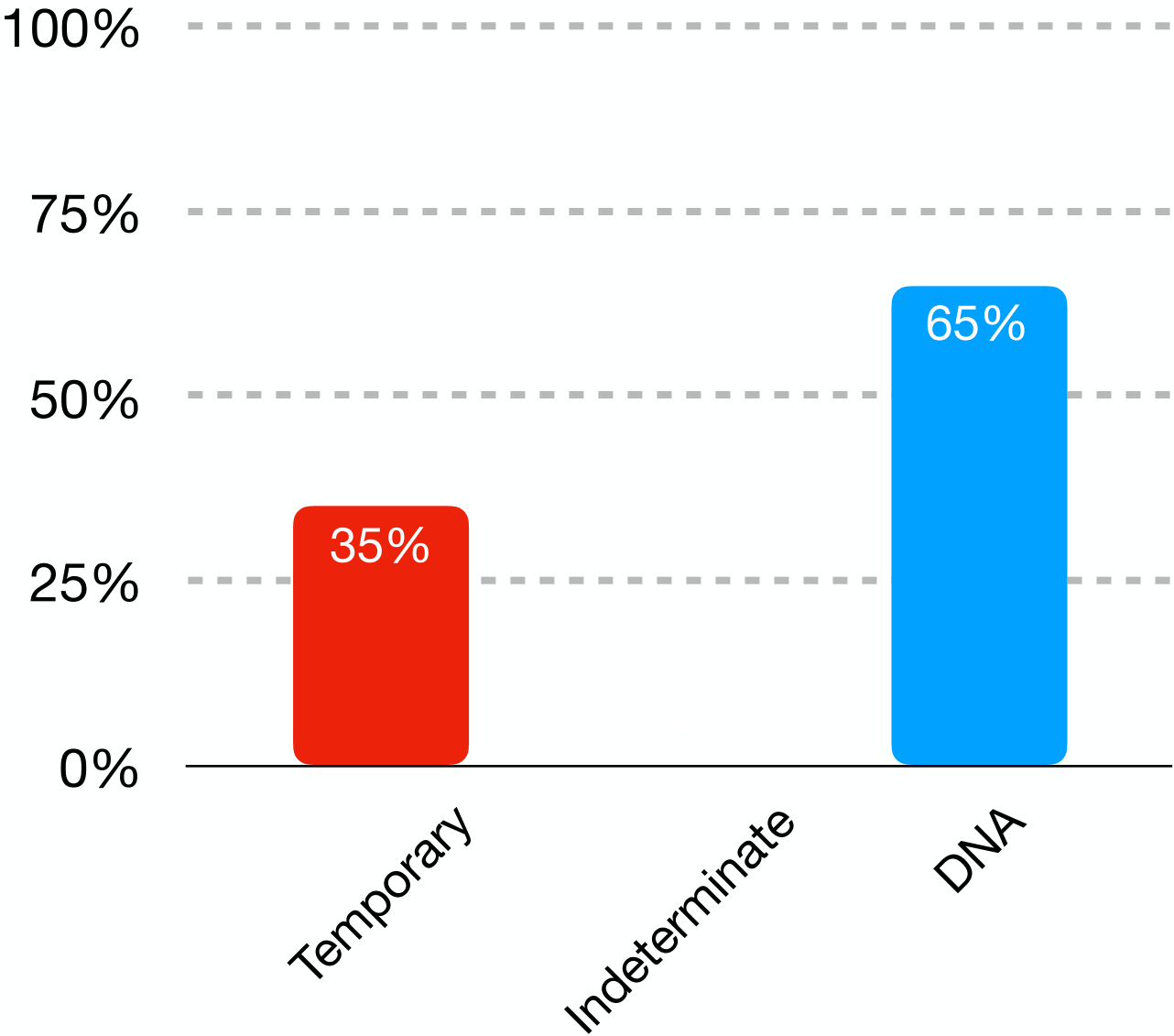


Number surveyed	51
Respondents	37
Assigned to other duties	8
Not assigned to other duties	29
Days assigned to other duties	118

Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.



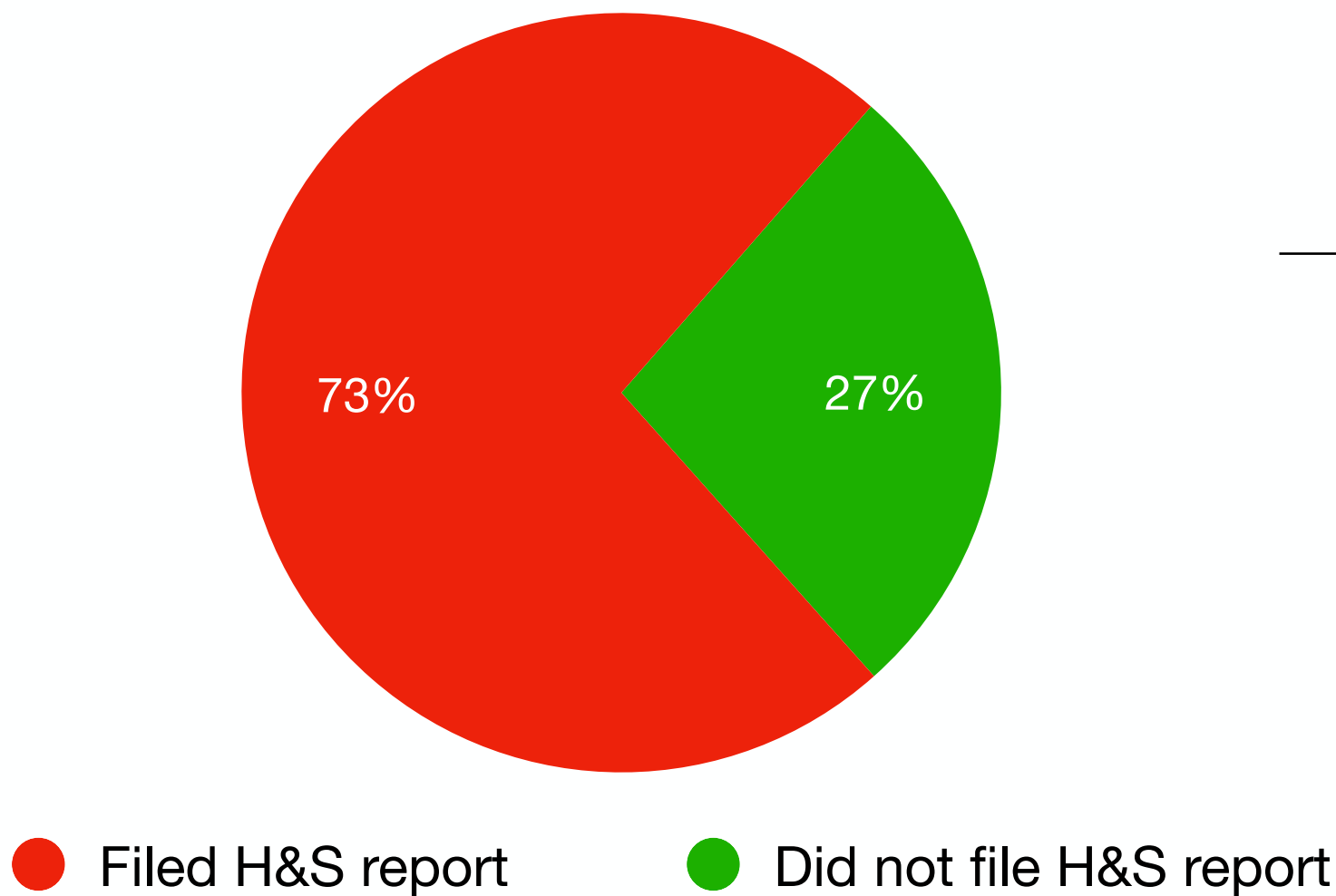
Q6. Was it temporary or have you been assigned to other duties for an indeterminate period of time?



Number surveyed	51
Respondents	37
Temporary	13
Indeterminate	0
DNA	24

Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

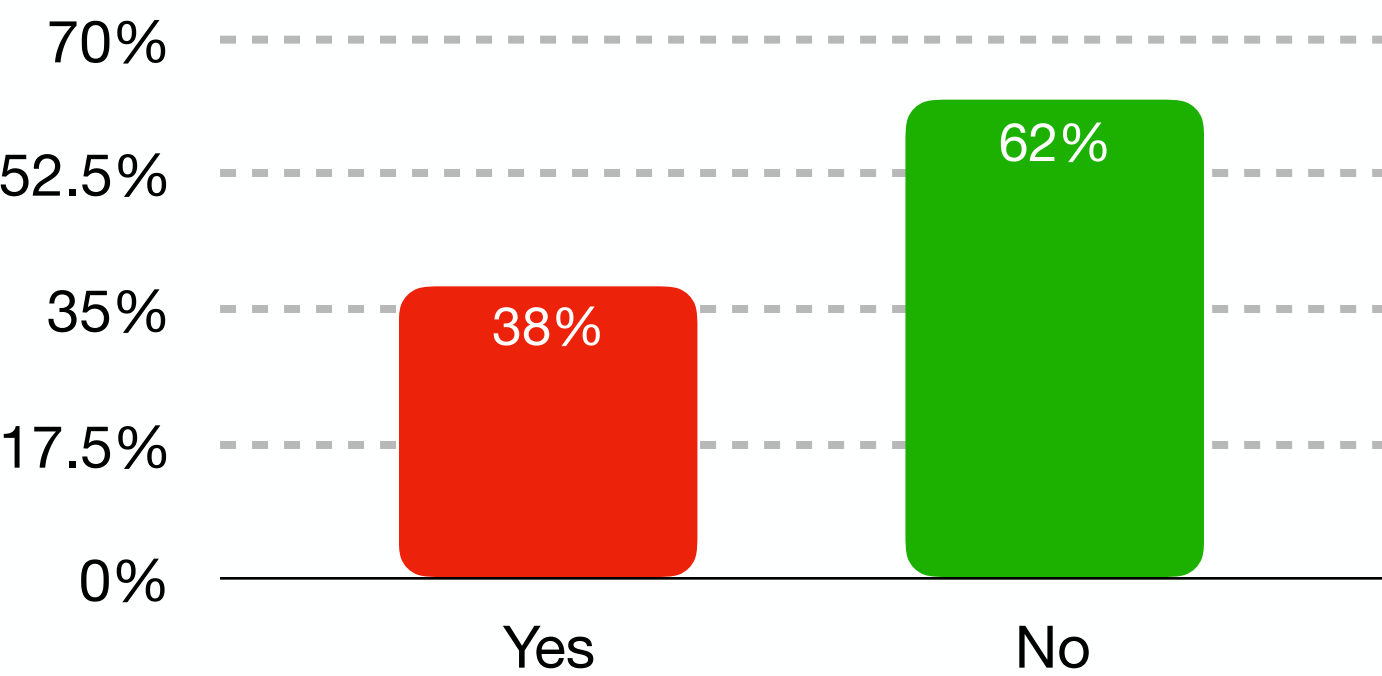
Q7. Since the beginning of the pandemic, how many health and safety incidence reports (form 874) related to RSI have you filed roughly? If none, please indicate so.



Number surveyed	51
Respondents	37
Filed H&S report	27
Did not file H&S report	10
Total H&S reports filed	102

Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

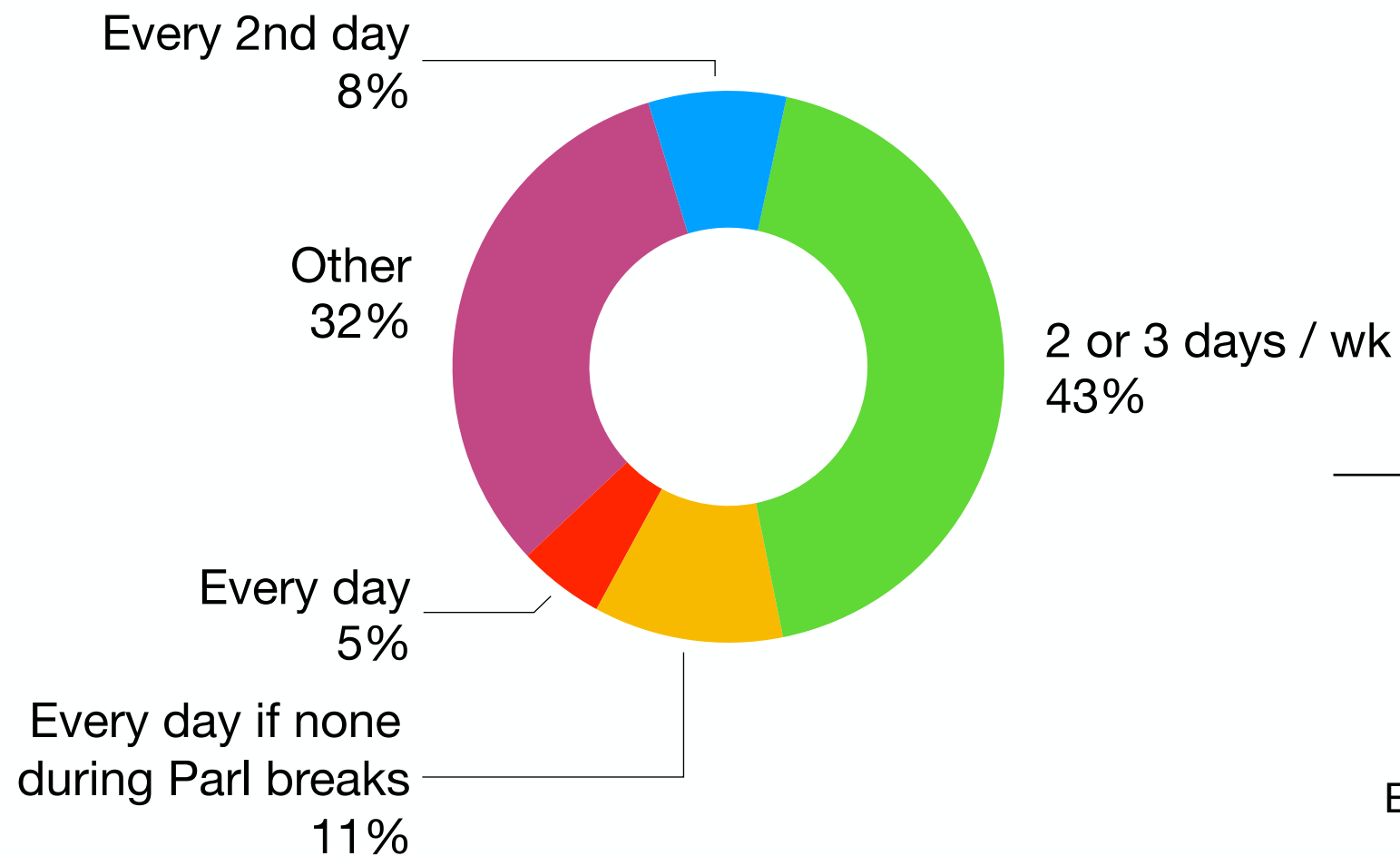
Q8. Have you opened a file with the Workplace Safety & Insurance Board (WSIB) following an injury while doing RSI?



Number surveyed	51
Respondents	37
Opened WSIB file	14
Did not open WSIB file	23

Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

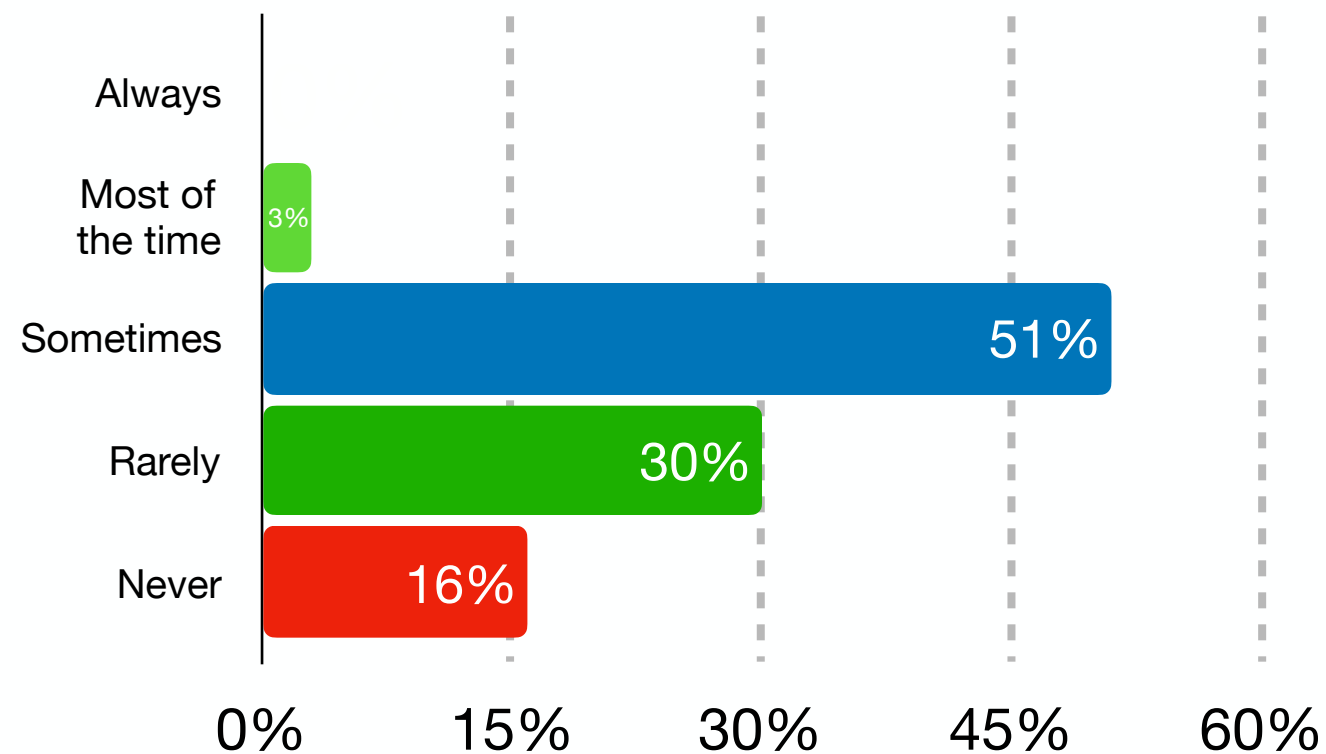
Q9. How much RSI work could you do without getting injured or suffering from undue fatigue, while still offering quality interpretation services?



Number surveyed	51
Respondents	37
Every 2nd day	3
2 or 3 days/wk	16
Every day if none during Parl breaks	4
Every day	2
Other	12

Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Q10. Are you able to do as good a job doing RSI as you would for an in-person meeting?



Number surveyed	51
Respondents	37
Always	0
Most of the time	1
Sometimes	19
Rarely	11
Never	6

Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.