

SAS Wellbeing in the Workplace Survey Report 2023

Introduction/Background

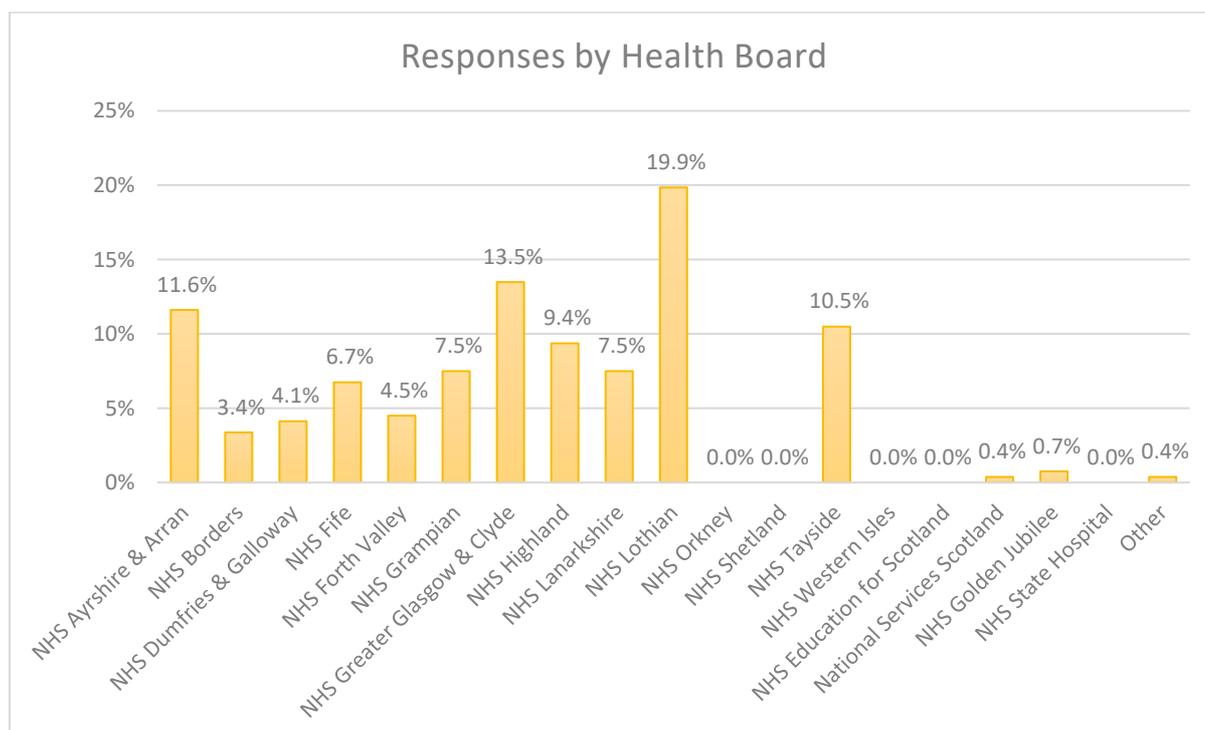
There are currently 1260 SAS doctors and dentists employed in NHS Scotland, who constitute approximately 10% of the senior medical workforce. The SAS Development Programme was established in 2012 as a result of Scottish Government funding to develop and support SAS doctors and dentists.

The SAS Development Programme at NHS Education for Scotland would like to ensure that they are doing all they can to support SAS with any issues of bullying, undermining, or harassment they might be experiencing/have experienced/have observed in the workplace. It is important to offer the right kind of support to everyone. As such, the 'SAS Wellbeing in the Workplace' survey was constructed to elicit doctors' and dentists' experiences, aiming to ascertain the extent of the problem for everyone across Scotland. Questions were also posed to seek views on how best the Development Programme could target support and resources to meet the challenges that occur in the workplace.

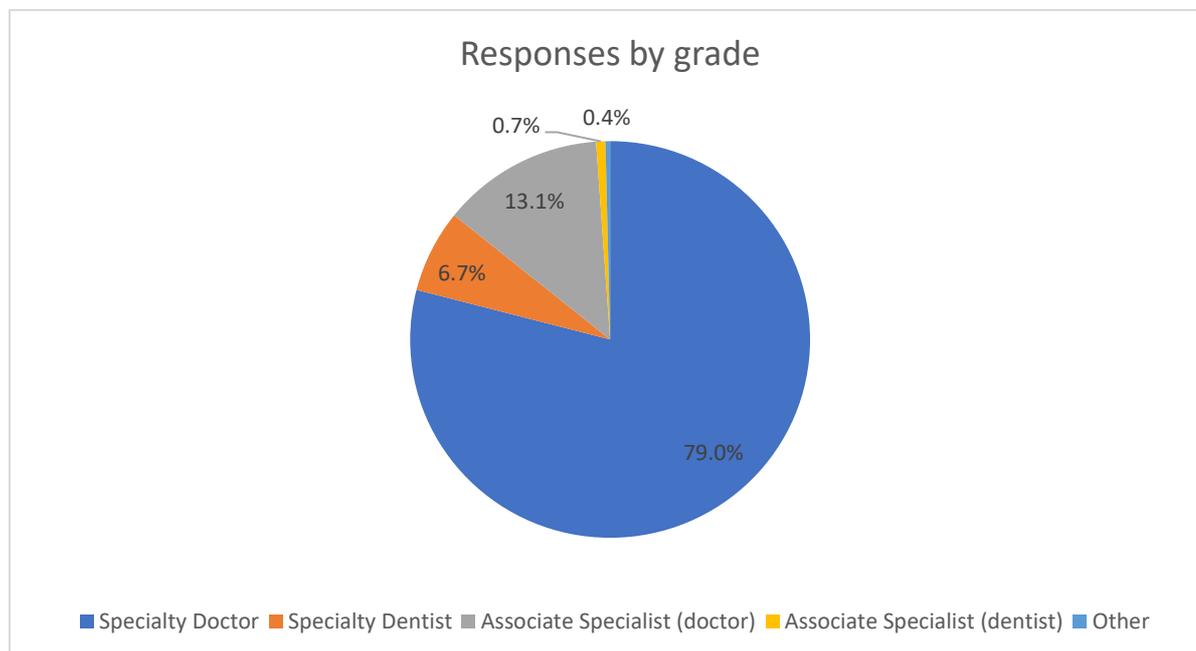
The survey comprised of 41 questions via Microsoft Forms, covering a mixture of preselected and free text options; it opened on 09.01.23 and closed on 17.02.23, accessible via a link provided by the SAS Development team and via the NHS Board SAS Education Advisers (EAs). The survey was completed anonymously; this report ensures that there is no individually identifiable data.

Findings

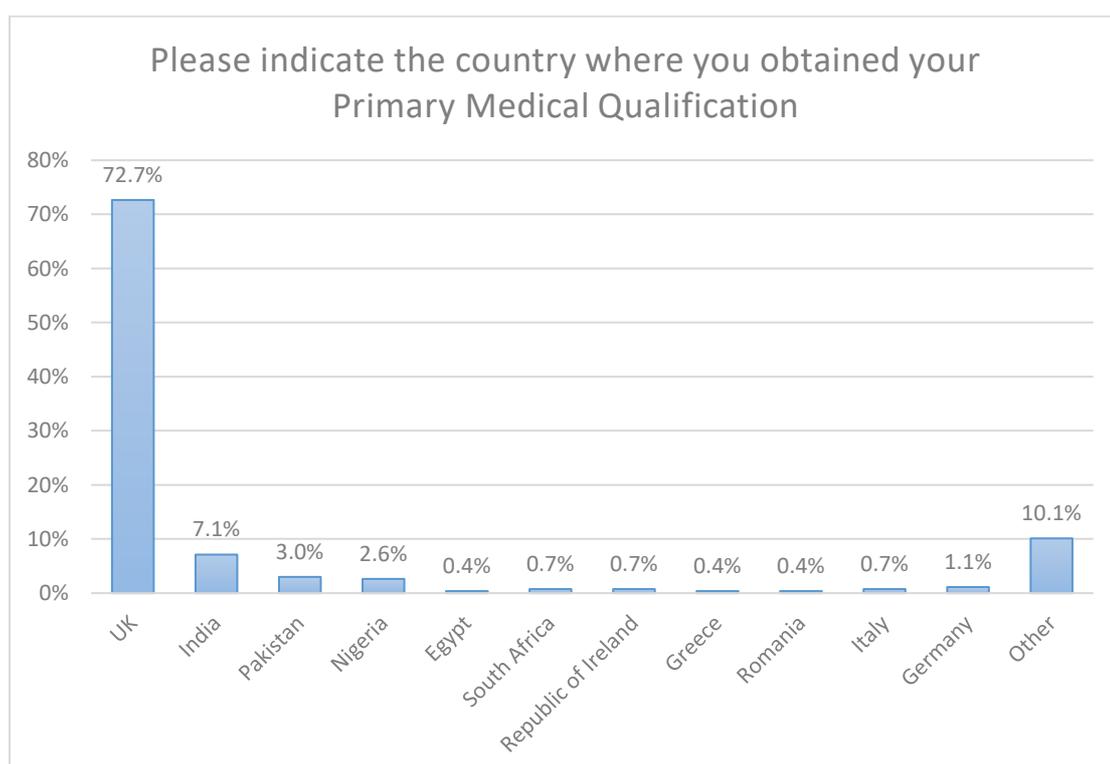
The survey received 267 responses which is a 21% return rate. Responses in general reflected the approximate SAS numbers in most of the Health Board areas.



The vast majority of respondents, 79%, were Specialty Doctors, 13% were Associate Specialist doctors, and 7.5% were Dentists (Specialty and Associate Specialists).

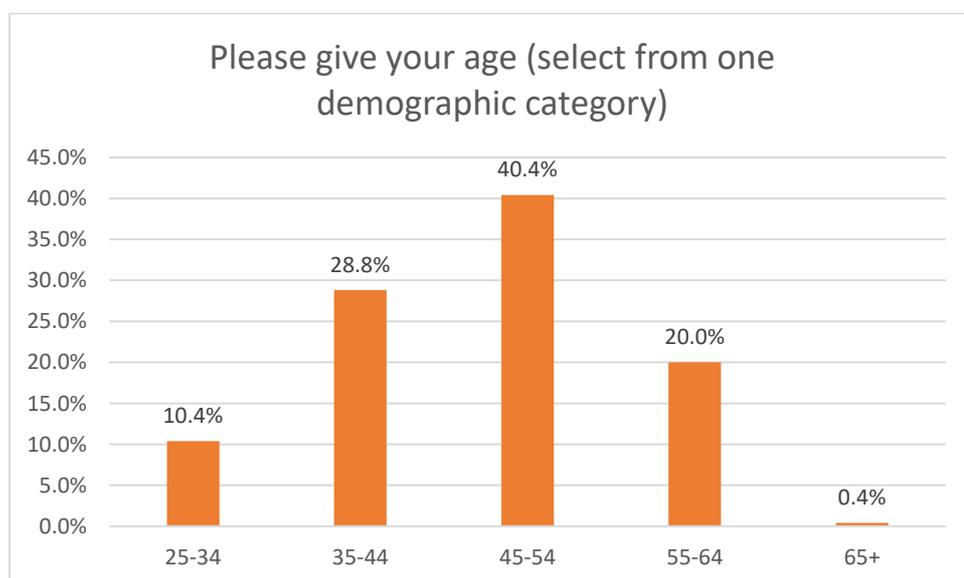
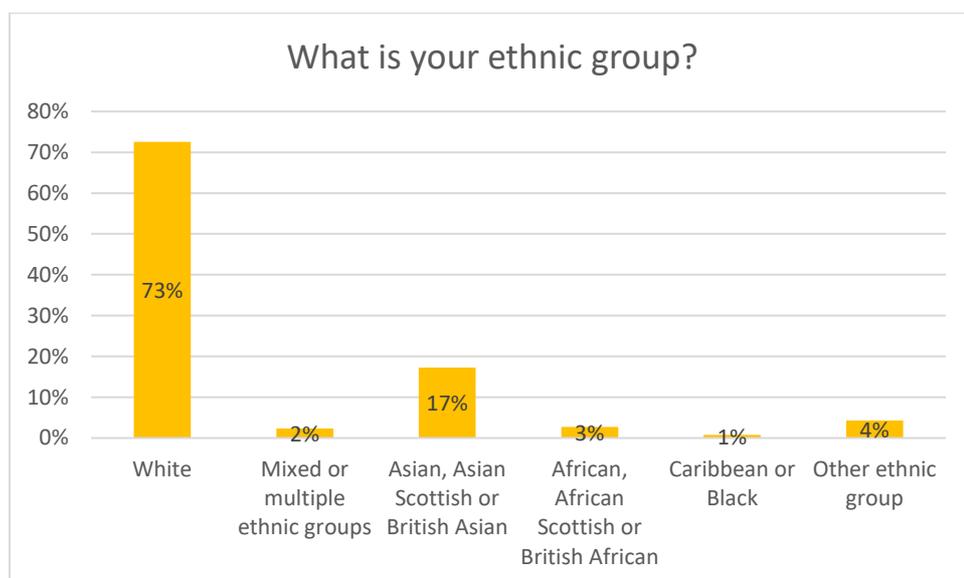


Of these professionals, 73% obtained their Primary Medical Qualification (PMQ) in the UK, with the remainder having qualified in Europe, Asia or Africa. This is consistent with data from the GMC's 2019 SAS-LED survey¹, where Scottish based respondents were 61% UK PMQ and 39% non-UK PMQ (which is significantly different from the UK average).

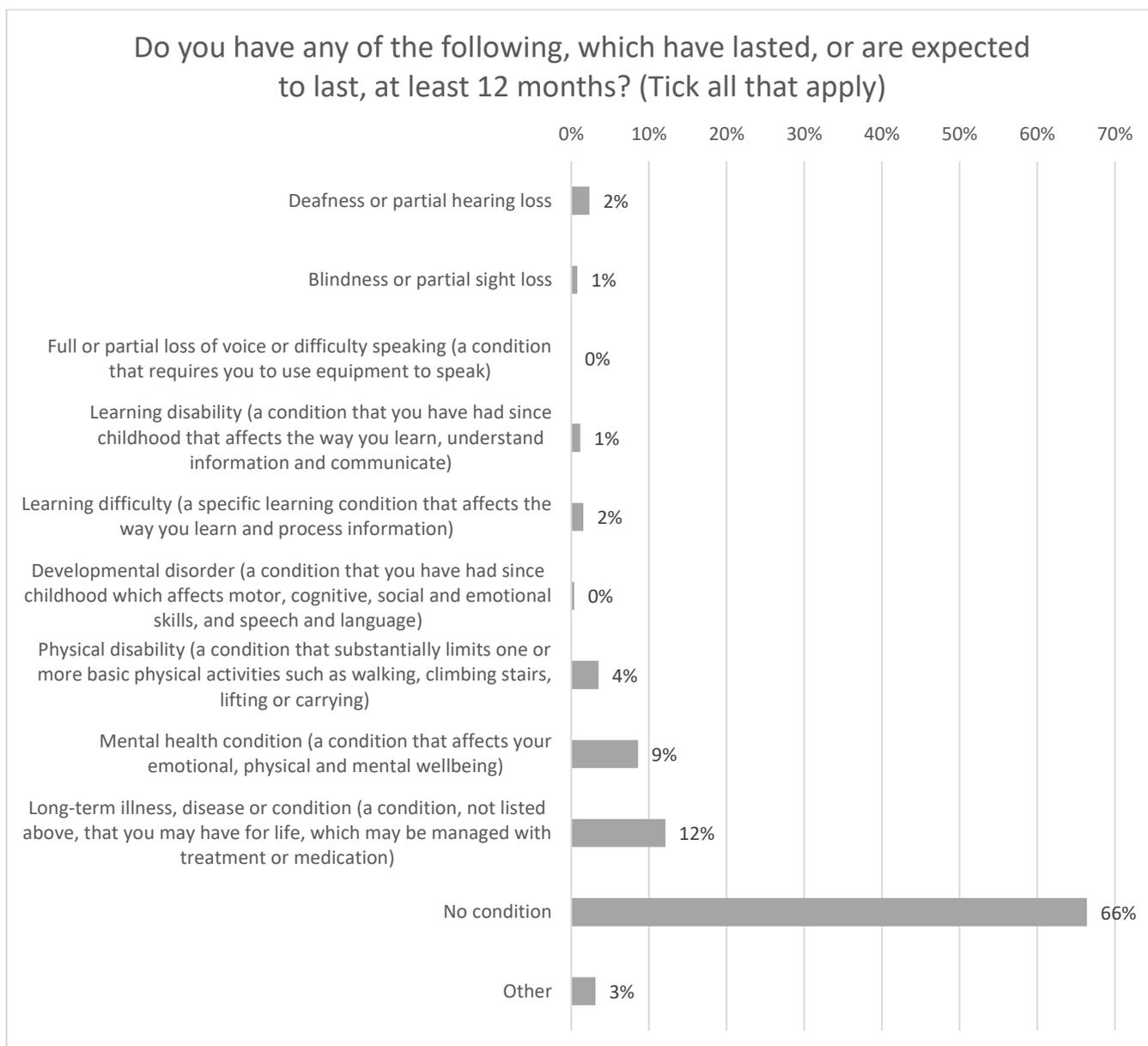


Two-thirds of respondents were female, 30% were male and 3% preferred not to say. 1.1% considered themselves as transgender. This is again consistent with the NHS workforce statistics from 2022² – 64% of Specialty Doctors were female and 30% male. Regarding sexual orientation, 90% stated they were best described as heterosexual, with the rest of the respondents replying that they were either homosexual, bisexual, or 'other'.

In terms of race, 69% respondents were White, 16% Asian, 2.6% African, and other groups included Caribbean/Black, and multiple ethnic /other ethnic groups.



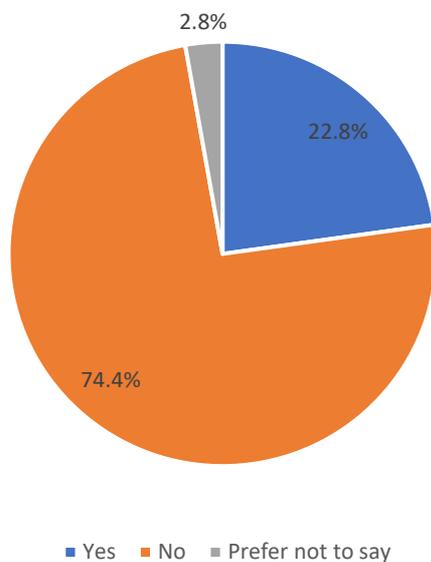
When asked about health, 64% of respondents had no ongoing conditions. 12% have a long term illness, and 8% have a mental health condition. Smaller proportions had a physical disability, developmental disorder, or learning disability or difficulty. There was a wide age range represented, from 25 years to over 65 years. Most respondents were in the 45-54 age bracket, followed by 35-44, and then 55-64 years.



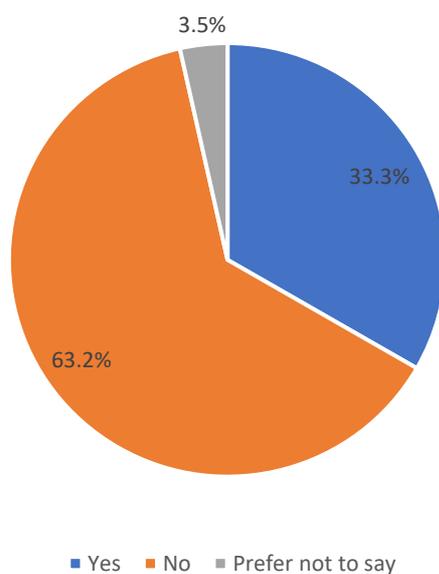
Bullying/Undermining/Harassment Statistics

In the last year, 57 respondents (21%) stated they had been bullied, undermined or harassed by a colleague in their workplace. 70% stated they had not experienced these behaviours and the remainder preferred not to say. Of SAS who had been bullied, undermined or harassed, significantly only a third had ever reported the incident(s).

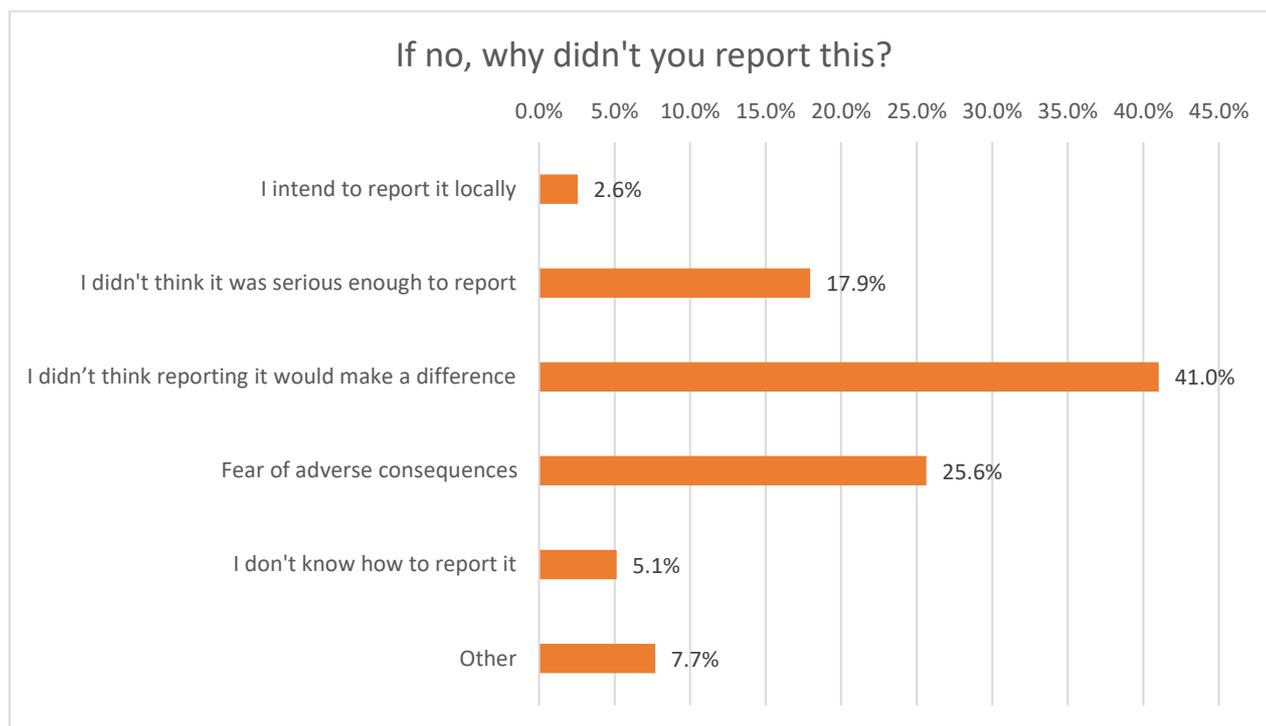
In the last year, have you been bullied, undermined or harassed by a colleague in your workplace?



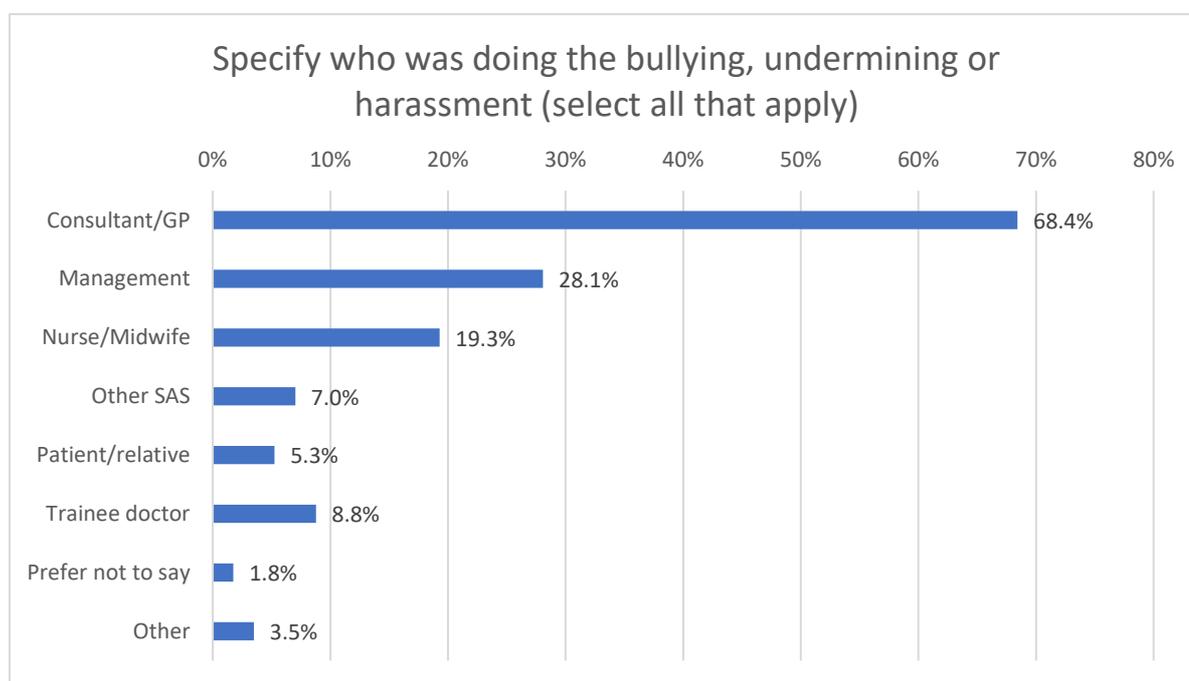
If yes, did you ever report this?



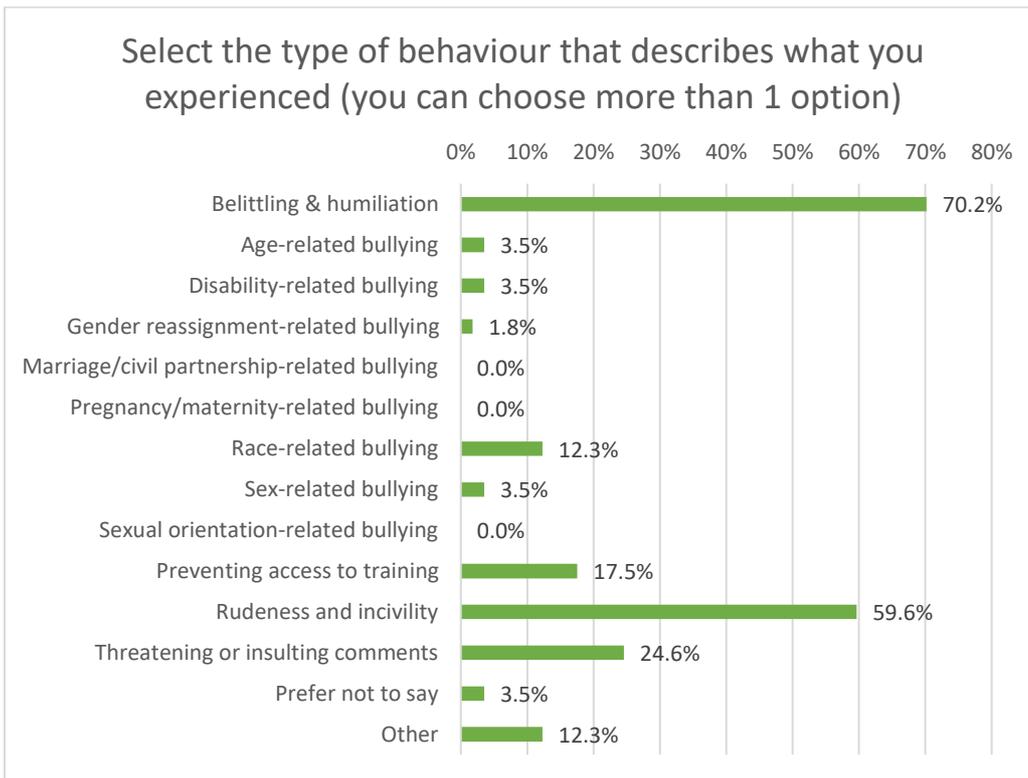
Of the 63% that experienced bullying but did not report it, the main reason given (44%) was that they didn't think reporting it would make a difference, with 28% citing a fear of adverse consequences, and 19% felt that it was not serious enough to report. A further 5% did not know how to report it, with 2% still intending to report the issue.



Of those SAS doctors and dentists who have experienced bullying, the main group (70%) reported to be doing the bullying, undermining or harassing was consultants, with 28% management, and 20% nursing staff. This highlights a culture of fear in the NHS which has been increasingly recognised.



Belittling and humiliation (70%) and rudeness and incivility (60%) were the most reported behaviours, followed by threatening and insulting comments (25%), preventing access to training (18%) and race related bullying (12%). A smaller number reported sex, age and disability related bullying.



66% of those reporting bullying, undermining or discrimination felt that this behaviour was related to their role as an SAS doctor or dentist.

Taking Action

The majority (66%) of those responding to the survey knew how to report bullying, undermining and incivility but disappointingly only 27% had confidence in local processes dealing with these types of behaviour with the remainder stating they had no confidence (24%) and a larger number stating that they did not know (41%).

Some examples of positive action were shared, including:

'They spoke to the concerned person and told them to stop'

'Increasing inclusion of Speciality Doctors as a group within the Consultant group. We used to be an add on and after thought and excluded from certain things. Increasingly we are included in most things'

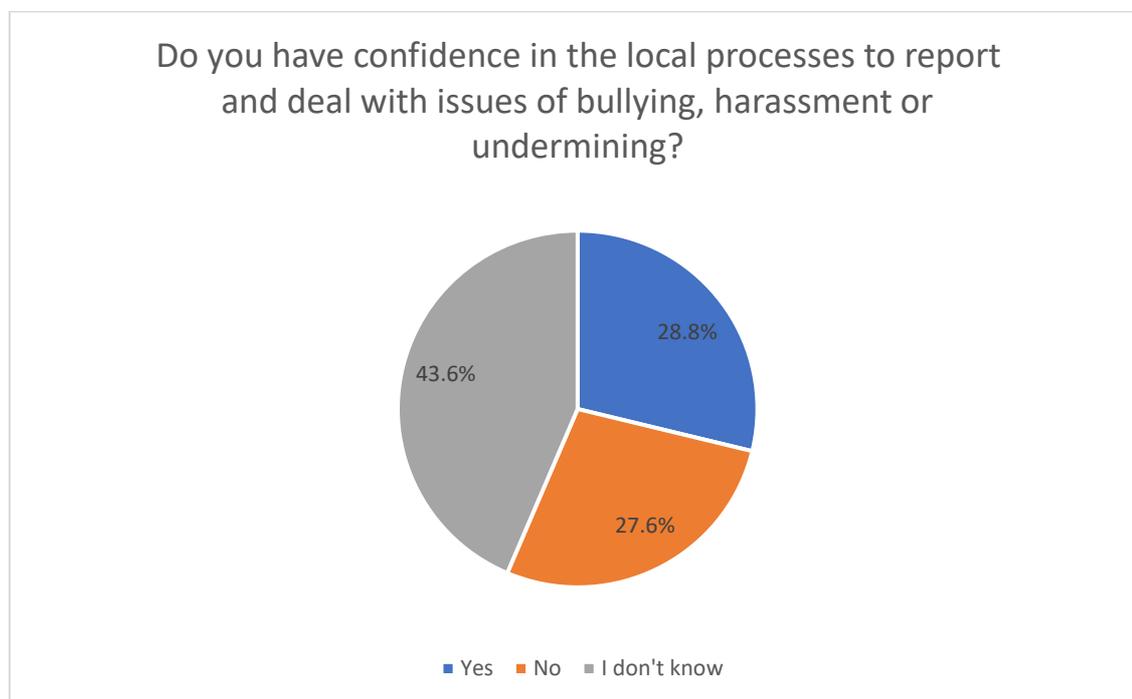
'I felt supported and encouraged to report issues raised within the workplace. We have had debriefs and been allowed to air issues of concern at peer group meetings'

'[Our team] have a weekly staff meeting where issues experienced by staff (both nurse medical staff support workers etc) can be raised and discussed and put forward to management'

'I was allowed not to work directly with the offender in [their] clinic. I still work with [them] while fulfilling my duties on the on-call rota.'

But others reported a less positive culture:

'My experience is that the senior management and clinical lead are often a very close-knit group and so raising any issues becomes difficult. There is often bias with no objectivity. I believe that a clinical lead should be a representative for the group however in my experience it often feels like a dictatorship'



Courses and Events

The SAS Development Programme has arranged several workshops with themes such as managing undermining and bullying behaviours, leadership and wellbeing and dealing with difficult situations in the workplace, with further events planned.

Of those responding, a total of 37 (14%) had attended one of these events prior to the survey with 83% finding these beneficial, and 56% using the follow up/signposting resources helpful. Encouragingly a small number of attendees (13%) have since used their training to tackle bullying and harassment in their workplace with over half of these stating that this had resolved the problem.

Active Bystander Training

Active Bystander training is an award-winning³ training course which gives attendees the skills to challenge unacceptable behaviours, including those which may have become normalised over time. This was offered to all SAS in the boards in 2021/22 and was attended by 26% of respondents. Of those who have not undertaken this training 61% would be interested in doing so.

60% of respondents would like to see more information, training and/or workshops offered on bullying and harassment in the workplace

Looking Forwards

In terms of future training, 160 respondents (60%) felt that they would like to see more information, training and workshops offered on bullying and harassment in the workplace.

The respondents were asked for suggestions to help Health Boards reduce bullying, undermining and harassment and these included:

'It would be helpful for examples of SAS leadership to be shared across boards especially to areas/departments where they are not given these roles'

'BAME: wider recognition of this group and other groups dealing with minority or side-lined persons'

'Greater government and trust level acknowledgment of workplace pressures and stress'

'I think one of the issues about having training/workshops on bullying and harassment in the workplace is perhaps that the people who most need to go on them do not have awareness that they need to go on one'

'Managers should also be educated and trained with doctors through interdisciplinary education'

'The offender should be informed of their behaviour so that they can apologize and change'

'Developing the staff wellbeing service / 3rd sector support group'

'Maybe an information leaflet sent to all of us via email that lets us know the procedure for reporting bullying and what resources are at our disposal.'

Summary

This survey of SAS doctors and dentists in Scotland shows that an unacceptably high number have been subject to bullying and harassment in the workplace and reflects similar themes to the GMC survey of 2019¹. The impact of poor behaviour in the form of bullying and harassment has long been shown to have a significant impact in both the performance and mental health and wellbeing of NHS staff. A recent survey carried out by Royal College of Surgeons of England⁴ demonstrated bullying, belittling and humiliation with SAS and Locally Employed Doctors reporting feeling excluded from opportunities to develop with no voice, influence or control over their work schedules, that they fear blame and perceive injustice, and that there was a lack of supportive colleagues and a sense of belonging.

The SAS Development Programme was established for the support and development of SAS doctors and dentists in Scotland and as such are well placed to facilitate training and information on bullying and wellbeing.

This is the first survey we have undertaken and it has provided an overview of SAS doctors' and dentists' experiences in the workplace. In future years, we will seek to analyse the findings further by protected characteristics to understand if experiences differ by, for example, ethnicity, sex, or disability. This will support our work to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty and address issues of inequality in the workplace.

It is important to recognise the wider workplace culture in which SAS doctors and dentists work. While we will continue to support the SAS workforce through our development programme, improving the experiences will require actions from across the wider health and social care system to create and sustain an inclusive working environment. Developments this year from NES include:

- An updated 'Once for Scotland' essential learning module on equality, diversity and inclusion, available on Turas Learn by the end of 2023.

- A resource on ‘cultural humility’ which will explore values, behaviours and skills for a culturally aware culture, based on lived experiences of staff. This will be available by November 2023 on Turas Learn.
- The ‘Leading to Change’ Programme offers a range of leadership development opportunities for health, social work and social care and includes this year the development on an Allyship programme and Leadership programme for under-represented groups.

¹ [‘Specialty, associate specialist and locally employed doctors workplace experiences survey: initial findings report’](#), GMC, 2019.

² [NHS Scotland Workforce, Quarter end Sep 2022](#), Public Health Scotland, 2022.

³ [Winner in the Organisational Development and Culture Change category](#), Universities HR Awards, 2018.

⁴ [‘The Royal College – Our Professional Home: An independent review on diversity and inclusion for the Royal College of Surgeons of England’](#), Baroness Helena Kennedy QC, 2021.

Annex 1: Questions

(* denotes a mandatory question; ‘conditional’ indicates a question only asked to those who selected the relevant response to a prior question)

Please select your Health Board: *

- NHS Ayrshire & Arran
- NHS Borders
- NHS Dumfries & Galloway
- NHS Fife
- NHS Forth Valley
- NHS Grampian
- NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde
- NHS Highland
- NHS Lanarkshire
- NHS Lothian
- NHS Orkney
- NHS Shetland
- NHS Tayside
- NHS Western Isles
- NHS Education for Scotland
- National Services Scotland
- Golden Jubilee National Hospital
- State Hospital (Carstairs)
- Other [free text]

Please select your job role: *

- Specialty Doctor
- Specialty Dentist
- Associate Specialist (doctor)
- Associate Specialist (dentist)
- Other [free text]

Please indicate the country where you obtained your Primary Medical Qualification: *

- United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
- India
- Pakistan
- Nigeria
- Egypt
- South Africa

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Republic of Ireland • Greece • Romania • Italy • Germany • Other [free text]
What is your sex? * <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Male • Female • Prefer not to say
Do you consider yourself to be trans or have a trans history? (Trans is a term used to describe people whose gender is not the same as the sex they were registered at birth) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No
If yes, please describe your trans status e.g. non-binary, trans man, trans woman: [free text]
Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation? (please select one only) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Straight / heterosexual • Gay or lesbian • Bisexual • Other sexual orientation
If you answered 'other sexual orientation' please describe here: * [free text]
What is your ethnic group? * <ol style="list-style-type: none"> White Mixed or multiple ethnic groups Asian, Asian Scottish or British Asian African, African Scottish or British African Caribbean or Black Other ethnic group
A) White - select that which best describes your ethnic group or background * <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scottish • Other British • Irish • Polish • Gypsy/Traveller • Roma • Showman/Showwoman • Other [free text]
B) Mixed or multiple ethnic groups - please describe * [free text]
C) Asian, Scottish Asian or British Asian (select that which best describes your ethnic group or background) * <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pakistani, Scottish Pakistani or British Pakistani • Indian, Scottish Indian or British Indian • Bangladeshi, Scottish Bangladeshi or British Bangladeshi • Chinese, Scottish Chinese or British Chinese • Other [free text]
D) African, Scottish African or British African - Please write in (e.g. Nigerian, Somali) * [free text]
E) Caribbean or Black - Please write in (e.g. Scottish Caribbean, Black Scottish) * [free text]
F) Other ethnic group - please describe e.g. Jewish, Sikh * <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arab, Scottish Arab or British Arab • Other [free text]
Do you have any of the following, which have lasted, or are expected to last, at least 12 months? (Tick all that apply)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deaf or partial hearing loss • Blindness or partial sight loss • Full or partial loss of voice or difficulty speaking (a condition that requires you to use equipment to speak) • Learning disability (a condition that you have had since childhood that affects the way you learn, understand information and communicate) • Learning difficulty (a specific learning condition that affects the way you learn and process information) • Developmental disorder (a condition that you have had since childhood which affects motor, cognitive, social and emotional skills, and speech and language) • Physical disability (a condition that substantially limits one or more basic physical activities such as walking, climbing stairs, lifting or carrying) • Mental health condition (a condition that affects your emotional, physical and mental wellbeing) • Long-term illness, disease or condition (a condition, not listed above, that you may have for life, which may be managed with treatment or medication) • No condition • Other [free text]
<p>Please give your age (select from one demographic category)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under 25 • 25-34 • 35-44 • 45-54 • 55-64 • 65+
<p>In the last year, have you been bullied, undermined or harassed by a colleague in your workplace? *</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No • Prefer not to say
<p>[conditional] Did you report this? *</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No • Prefer not to say
<p>[conditional] If no, which of the following describes why you didn't report it? *</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I intend to report it locally • I didn't think it was serious enough to report • I didn't think reporting it would make a difference • Fear of adverse consequences • I don't know how to report it • Other [free text]
<p>[conditional] Specify who was doing the bullying, undermining or harassment *</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultant/GP • Management • Nurse/Midwife • Other SAS • Patient/relative • Trainee doctor • Prefer not to say • Other [free text]
<p>[conditional] Select the type of behaviour that describes what you experienced (you can choose more than 1 option) *</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Belittling & humiliation • Age-related bullying • Disability-related bullying • Gender reassignment-related bullying • Marriage/civil partnership-related bullying • Pregnancy/maternity-related bullying • Race-related bullying

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sex-related bullying • Sexual orientation-related bullying • Preventing access to training • Rudeness and incivility • Threatening or insulting comments • Prefer not to say • Other [free text]
<p>Do you feel you are bullied / undermined or discriminated against because of your role as a SAS doctor/ dentist? *</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No • Prefer not to say
<p>Do you know how to raise a concern about bullying, undermining or harassment where you work? *</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No • I don't know
<p>Do you have confidence in the local processes to report and deal with issues of bullying, harassment or undermining? *</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No • I don't know
<p>Have you attended any SAS Programme courses/learning sessions in the last year on how to deal with bullying, harassment or undermining? *</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No
<p>[conditional] If yes, did you find this beneficial? *</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No • Other [free text]
<p>[conditional] If yes, did you find the follow-up support/signposting document provided by the SAS Development Team useful? *</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No • Other [free text]
<p>[conditional] If you were experiencing any bullying or harassment in the workplace, have you taken action since attending the course? *</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No • Prefer not to say
<p>[conditional] If yes, what? e.g. reported it formally, reported to a senior colleague, dealt with it informally, asked other person to help, etc *</p> <p>[free text]</p>
<p>[conditional] If yes - has this stopped the problem? *</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No • Other [free text]
<p>[conditional] If the problem has not stopped, why not? *</p> <p>[free text]</p>
<p>Have you attended Active Bystander Training? *</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No
<p>[conditional] If not, would you be interested in attending a virtual Active Bystander Training session? (This involves developing the skills to challenge unacceptable behaviours in the workplace) *</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No
<p>Please give examples of positive action that has been taken in your workplace as a result of the issue that you raised (if any - please leave blank if you have not raised an issue)</p>

[free text]
Please give examples of positive action that has been taken in your workplace to prevent further issues arising (if any - please leave blank if you have not raised an issue) [free text]
Do you think there are any national initiatives that may help to avoid future issues of bullying, undermining or harassment? [free text]
Would you like to see more information/training/workshops offered on bullying and harassment in the workplace? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Yes• No
Please describe any other supports/resources you would like to see the SAS Development Programme provide in this area [free text]
We are keen to work with Health Boards to reduce bullying, harassment and undermining. What other suggestions do you think would be helpful? [free text]