

Do Sexual Health Practitioners Experience Vicarious Trauma?

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Vicarious trauma.

‘Vicarious Trauma is a change in the psychological state of a person as a result of regularly witnessing or hearing about the traumatic experiences of others.’

- Feeling emotionally numb
- Increased irritability/anxiety
- Social withdrawal
- Suffering work-related nightmares
- Feelings of despair and hopelessness
- A more negative view of the world
- Increased illness and fatigue

Vicarious trauma.

- Known to affect aid workers, therapists, emergency services.
- Cumulative effect over time.
- Paucity of evidence for Sexual Health practitioners.

Aim

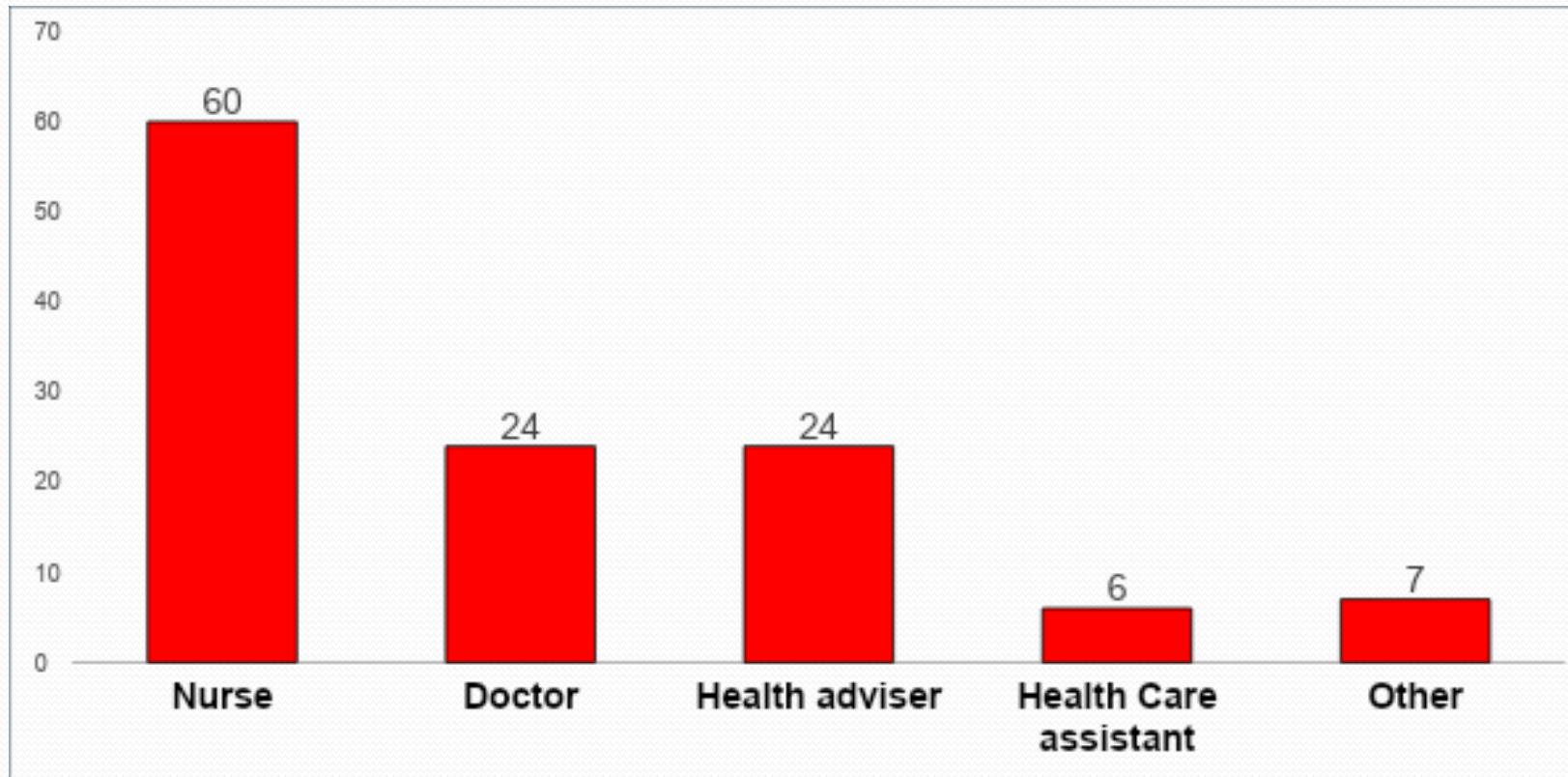
- Is VT something that affects sexual health practitioners?
 - What current coping strategies do practitioners employ?
-

Method

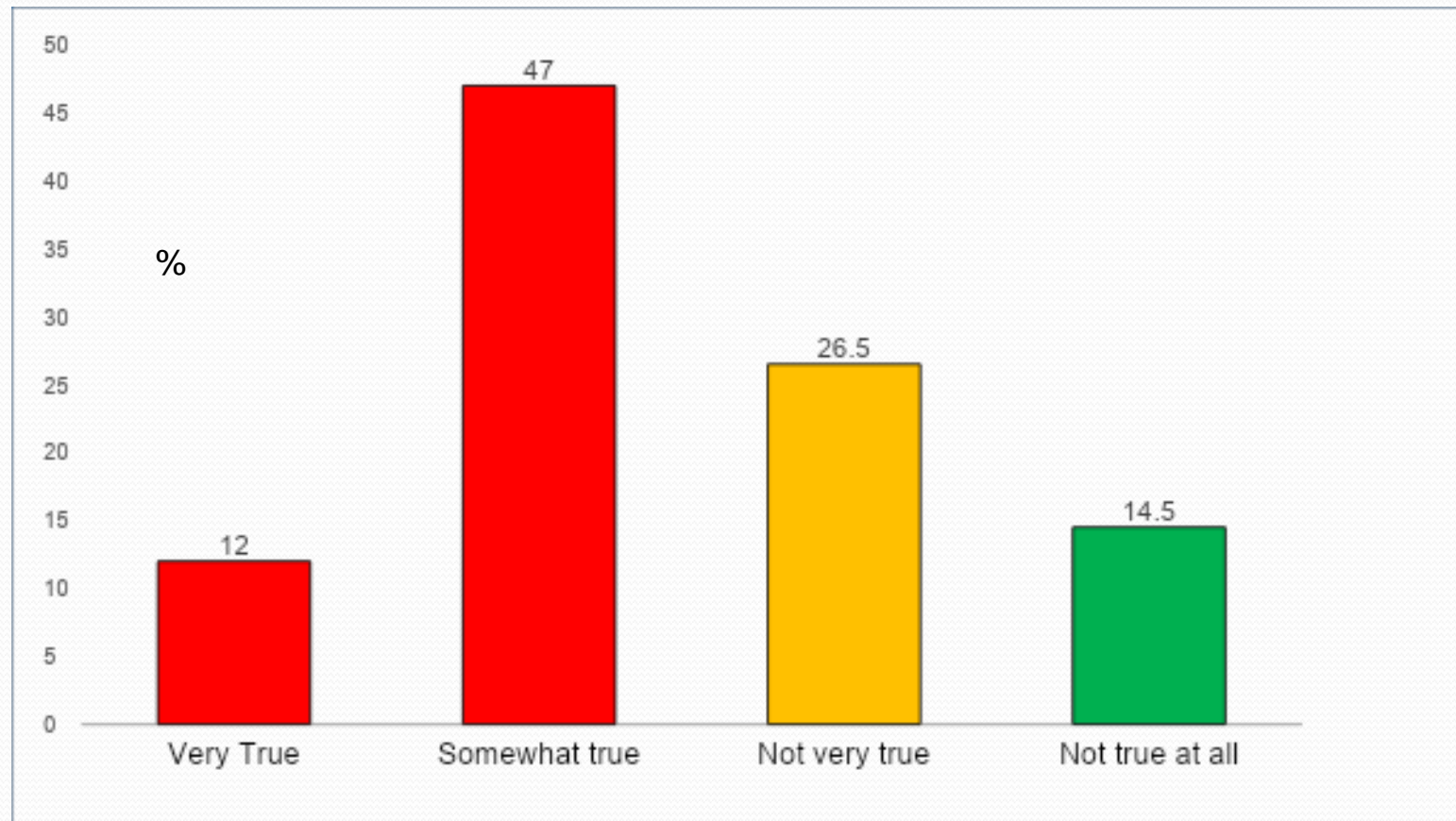
- Survey distributed via BASHH and SSHA newsletters.
- 10 Questions.
- VT definition given.

Results

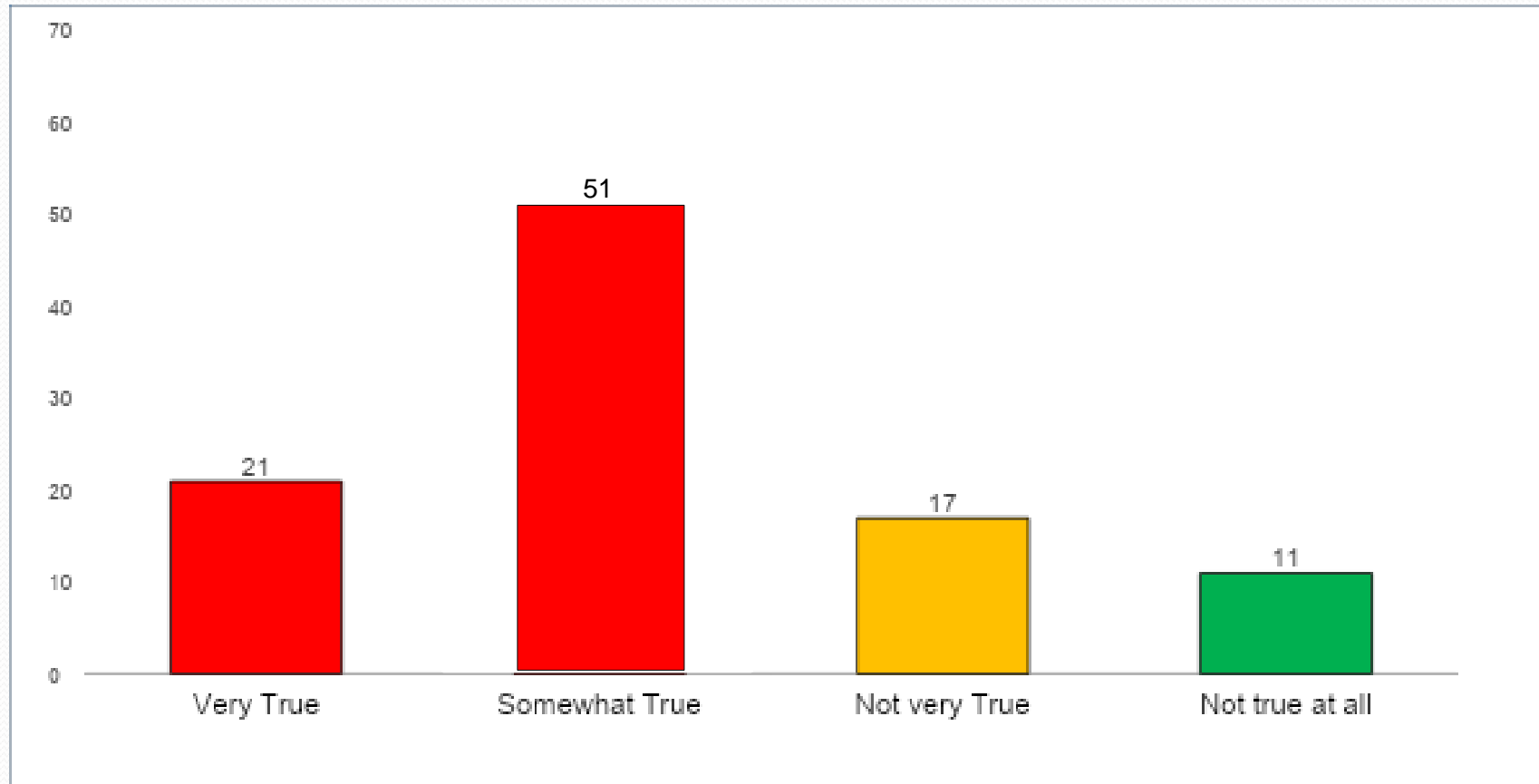
➤ 121 responses.



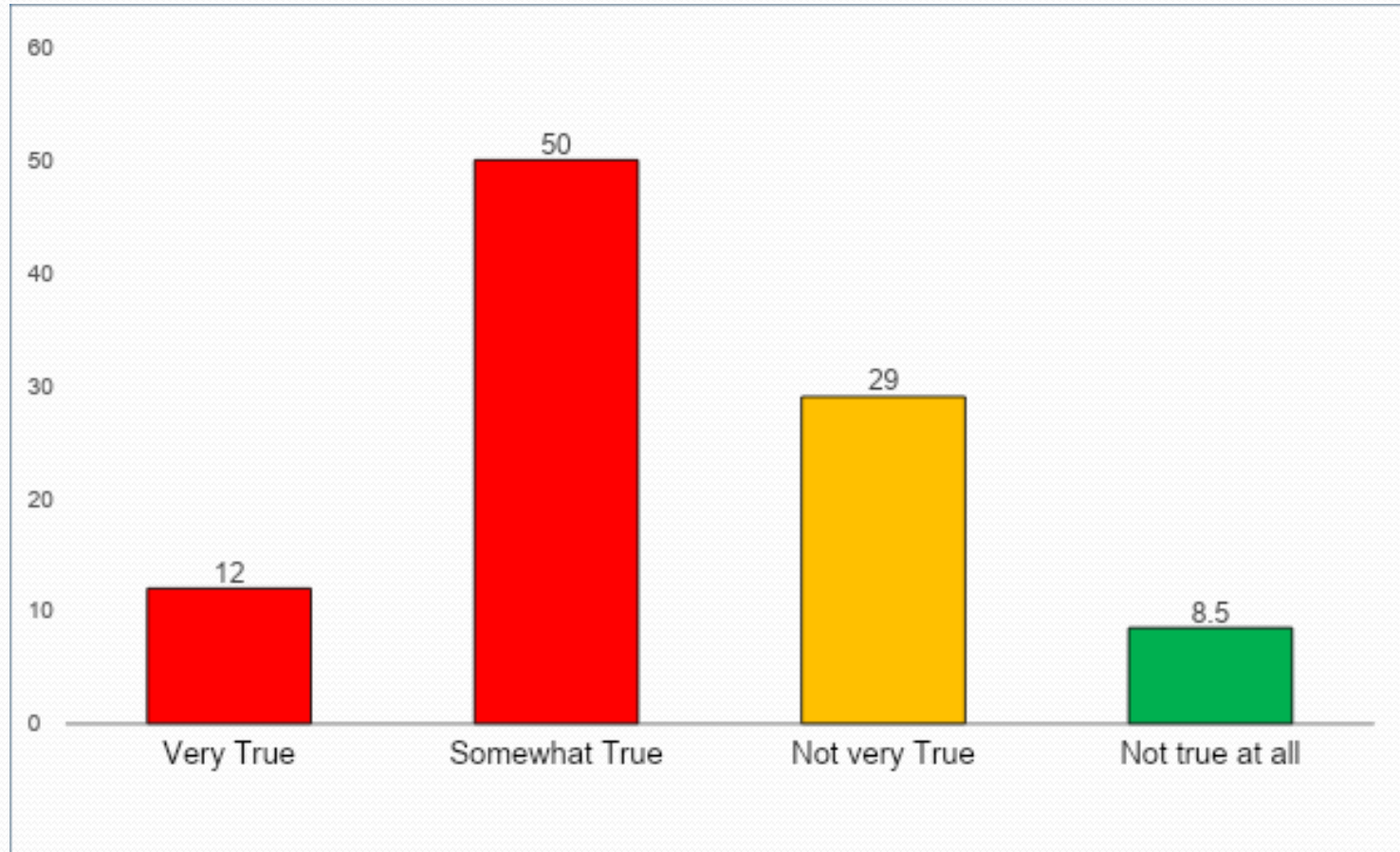
I feel that some or all of the symptoms of Vicarious Trauma apply to me:



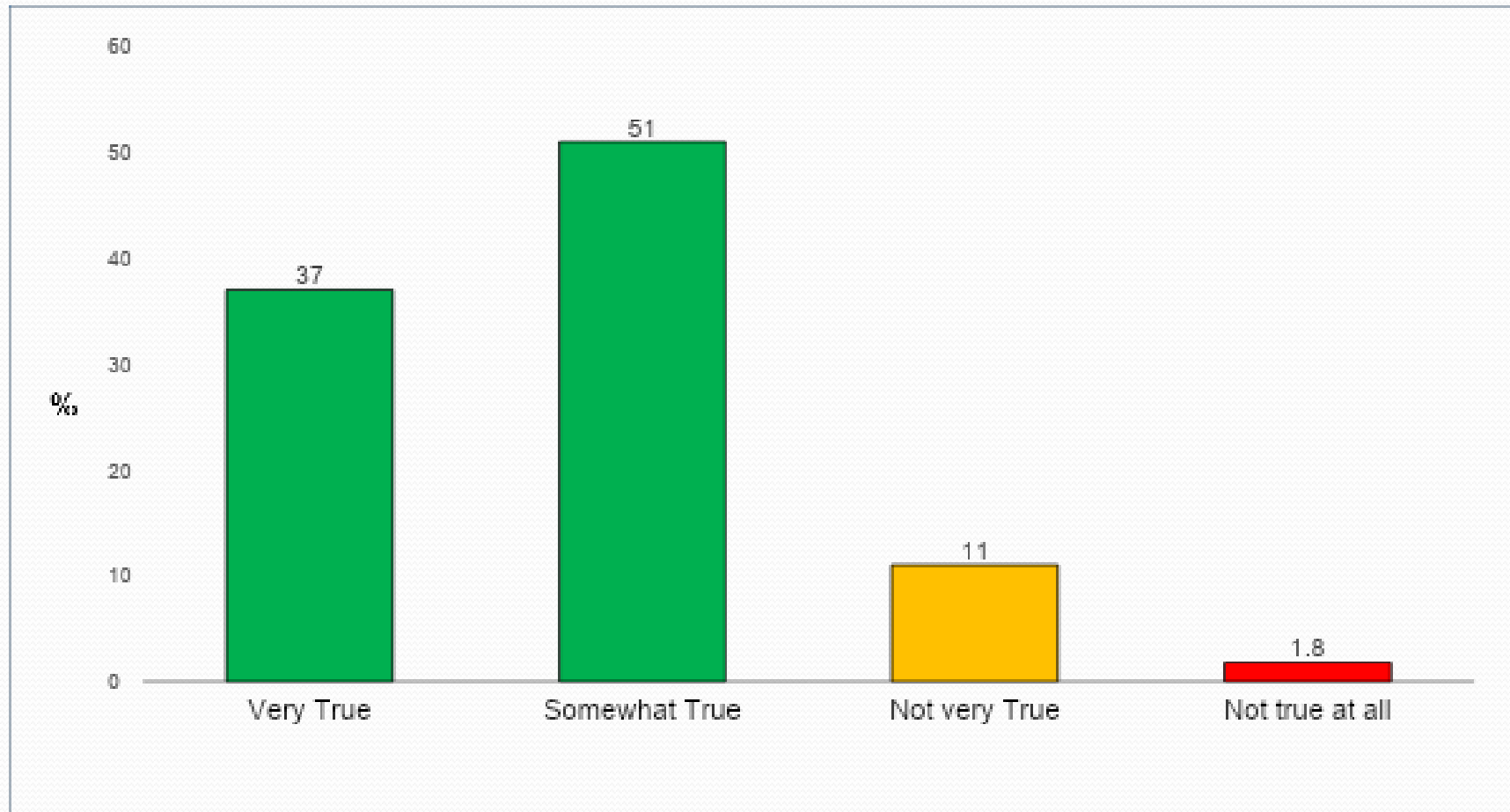
In the last 12 months I have come into work feeling physically or mentally unwell:



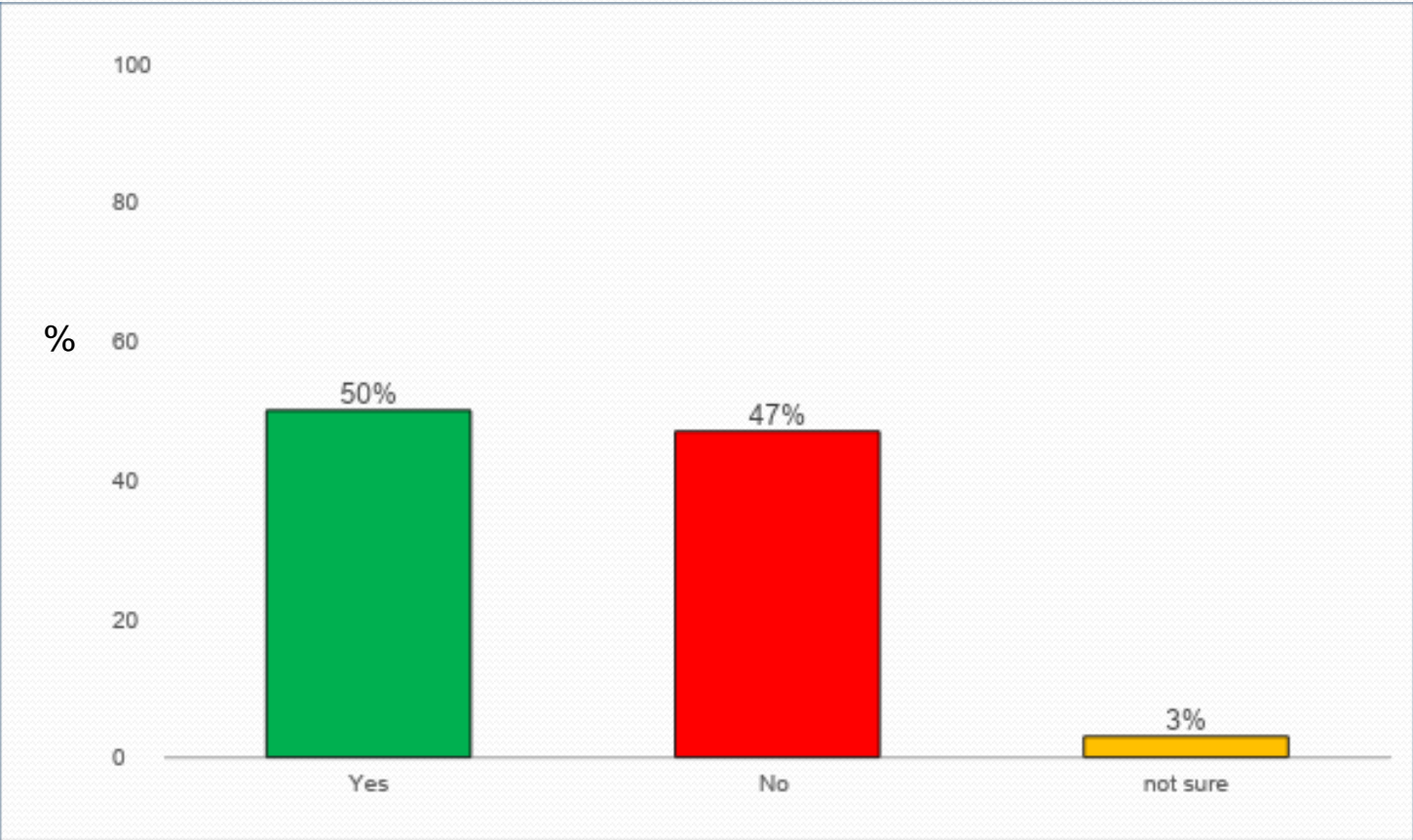
I sometimes struggle with the emotional impact of my work:



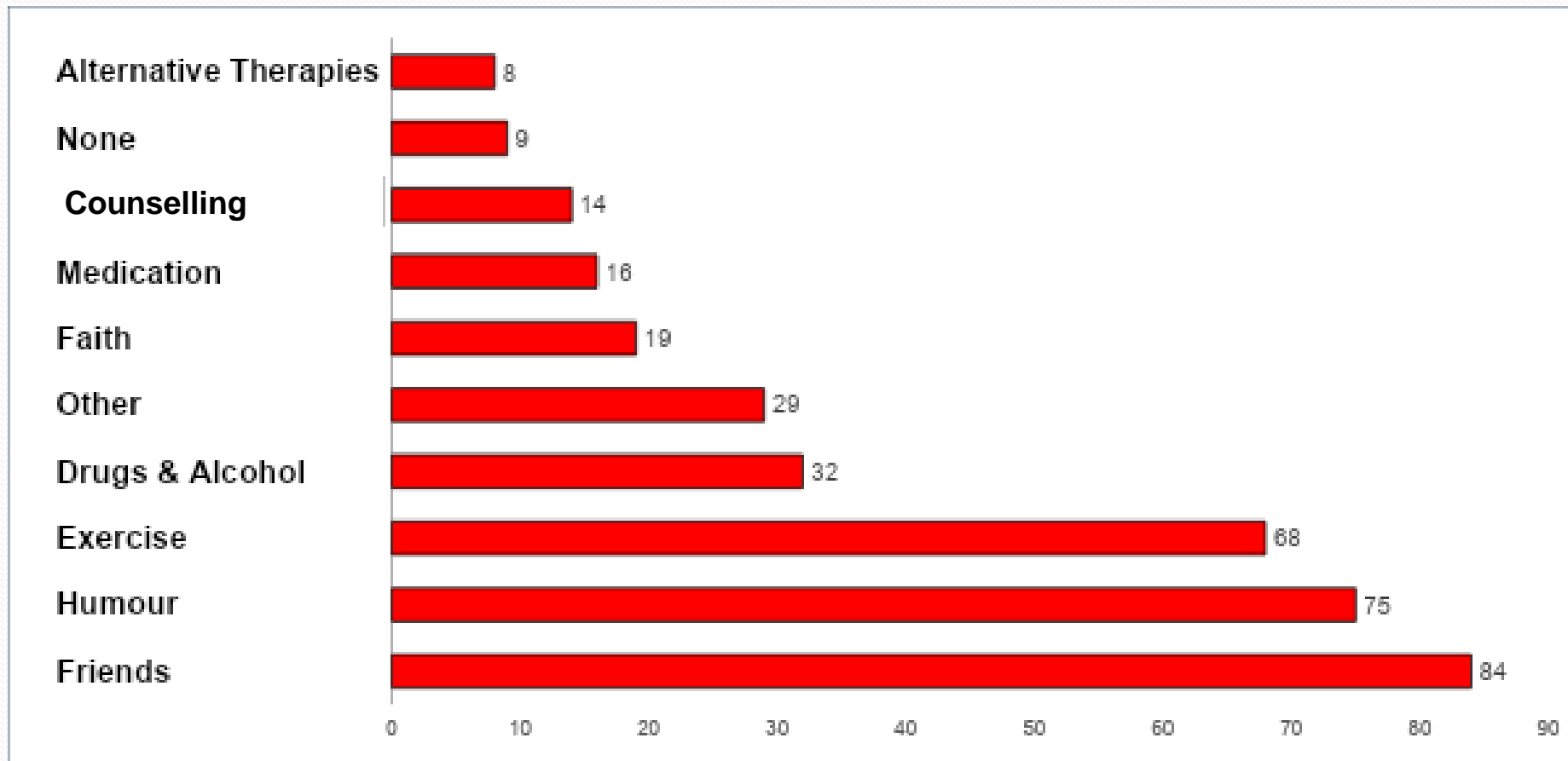
I enjoy coming to work and feel it is a supportive environment



As part of your role, do you receive regular clinical supervision?



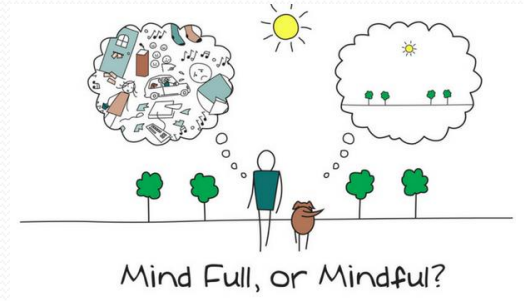
Coping Strategies



Other coping strategies



➤ Support from colleagues



➤ Mindfulness



➤ Yoga



➤ Support from family



➤ Nature/Countryside

➤ 'I try to keep busy all the time so I don't have to think about it'

Learning points

- Vicarious Trauma may affect sexual health practitioners.
- More research needed using validated tools, possible comparisons.
- Develop formal supportive networks within Sexual Health
- Develop systems for recognising and supporting those most at risk.
- Encourage a culture of help-seeking.

With thanks to:

Everyone who completed the survey!

BASHH



SSHA

Society of Sexual Health Advisers