

Persistence Pays Off - Closing the loop a second time on improving epidural wait times to benefit patients and anaesthetists

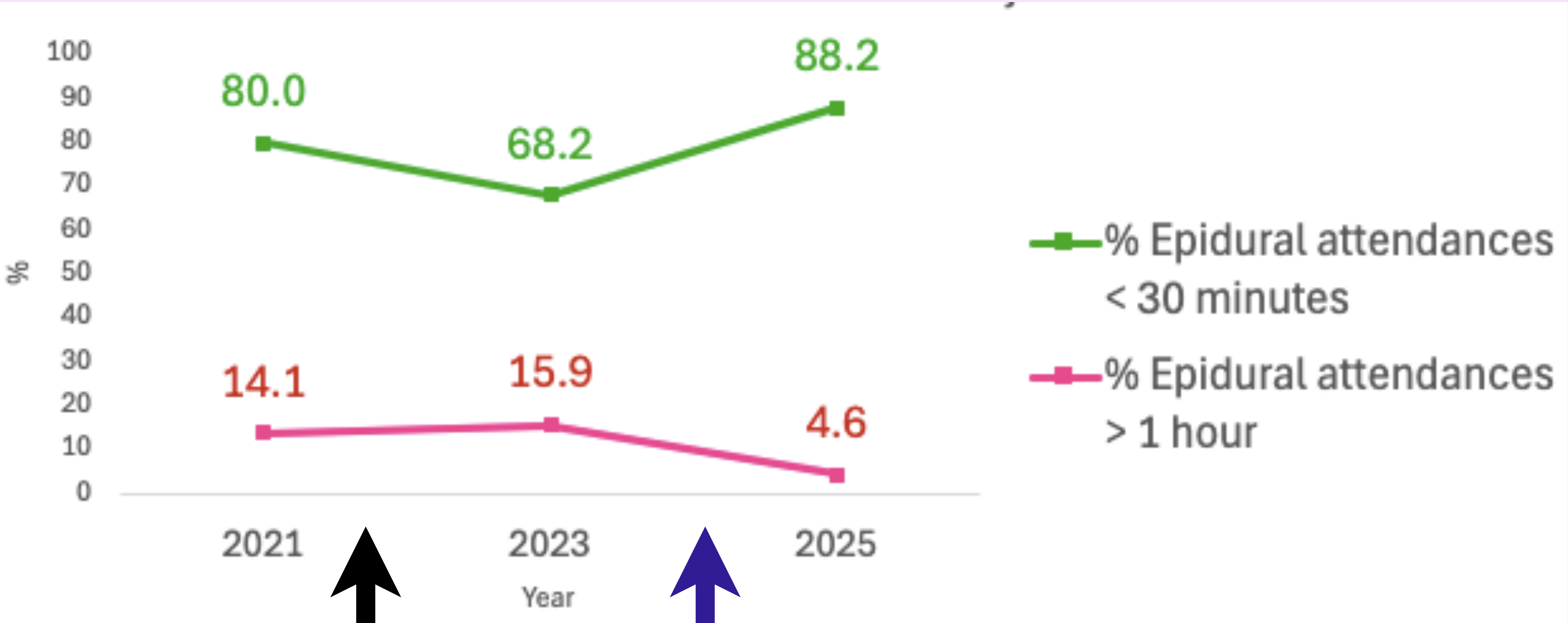
- Labour epidurals should be attended to within 30 minutes of request other than in exceptional circumstances, and always within one hour.¹
- Long waits for analgesia has negative effects on maternal mental health and contributes to birth trauma.²
- Our unit struggled to achieve this with one out of hours resident anaesthetist on multiple audits.
- Trainees reported feeling burnt out and unable to provide safe care.
- Since previous audit cycles, much work had been done with the trust and now there are always 2 resident anaesthetists out of hours, with locums sought if needed. In hours, staff are pulled from elsewhere if there are fewer than 4 anaesthetists present.
- This change has only been possible through the hard work of many people over several years.
- This has included performing regular audit cycles, multiple meetings with the trust, writing business proposals and ongoing work by the Consultant body to step down and fill gaps if necessary.
- Future work will look at improving efficiency over handover and triaging multiple simultaneous requests or those requests made at times of high clinical acuity. It was during these times that the few longer waits occurred.

References

1. RCOA, *Guidelines for the Provision of Anaesthetic Services, Chapter 9*
2. *All-Party Parliamentary Group on Birth Trauma Listen to Mums: Ending the Postcode Lottery on Perinatal Care (2024)* <https://www.theo-clarke.org.uk/birth-trauma-report>

Improved staffing is better for patients and trainees (but is a battle to achieve)

Results of Successive Audit Cycles



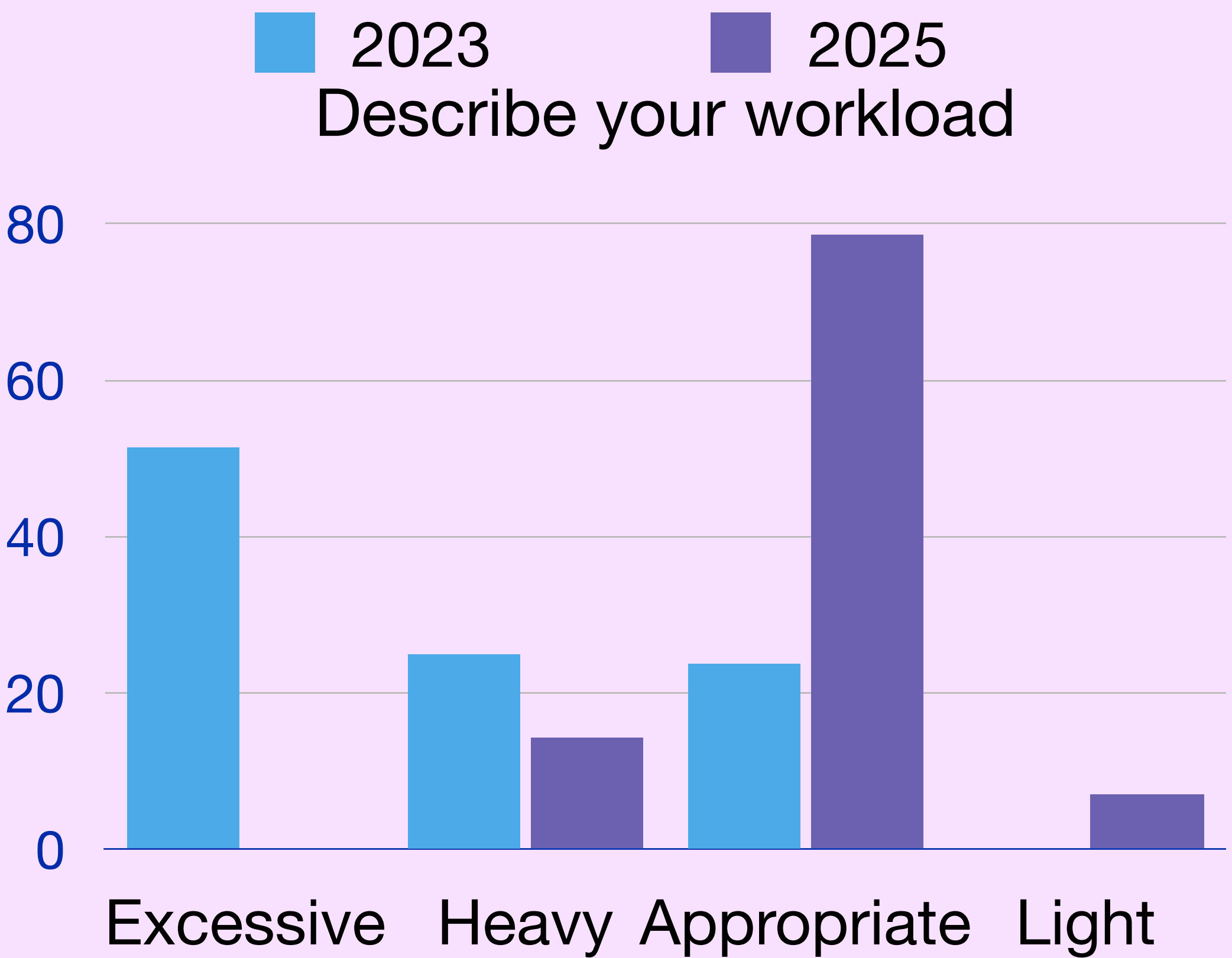
Ongoing discussions re: increasing staffing. Occasionally 2 resident anaesthetists out of hours but inconsistent. If daytime staffing below minimum of 4, no extra cover sought

Staffing increased to minimum 2 anaesthetists out of hours, 4 in hours. If falls below this, staff pulled from elsewhere or locum sought

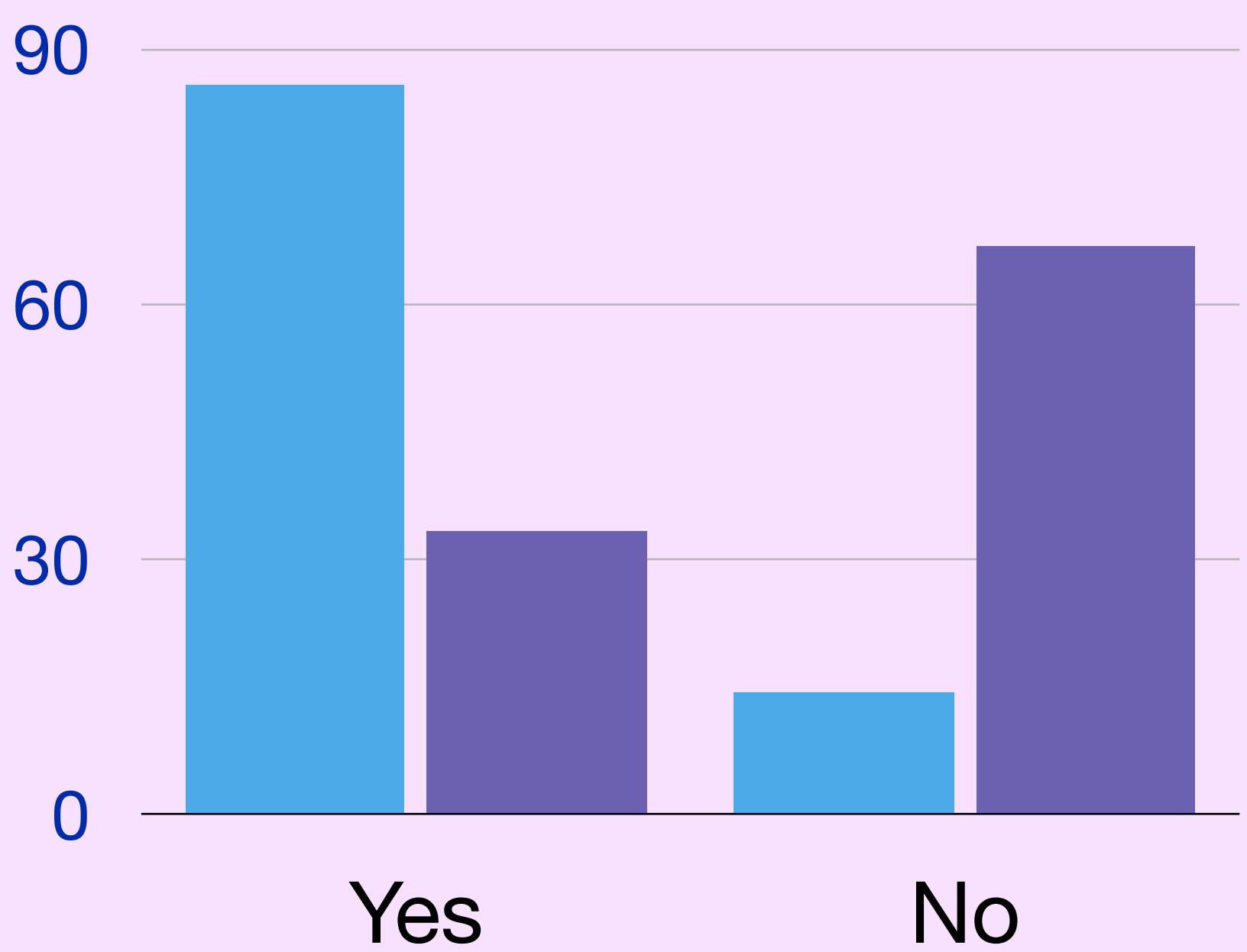
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Results of Trainee Satisfaction Surveys



Have you been unable to take breaks?



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Authors : Rachel Spiro, Ffion Hughes, Fleur Roberts, Nishanth Niranjana, Reena Pal