

To gown or not to gown... that is the question!

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Introduction

- **2025** draft guidance from the Association of Anaesthetists suggests the use of **sterile gowns for single-shot spinal** (SSS) anaesthesia should **not be considered mandatory**
- Already established guidance in the USA and Canada¹
- A full surgical scrub for a SSS injection is obligatory both in our organisation and in the majority of the UK
- If the new guidance is approved, we anticipate there may be significant **reluctance to abolish this practice**
- We wanted to establish the views of our anaesthetic department, obstetricians and theatre staff

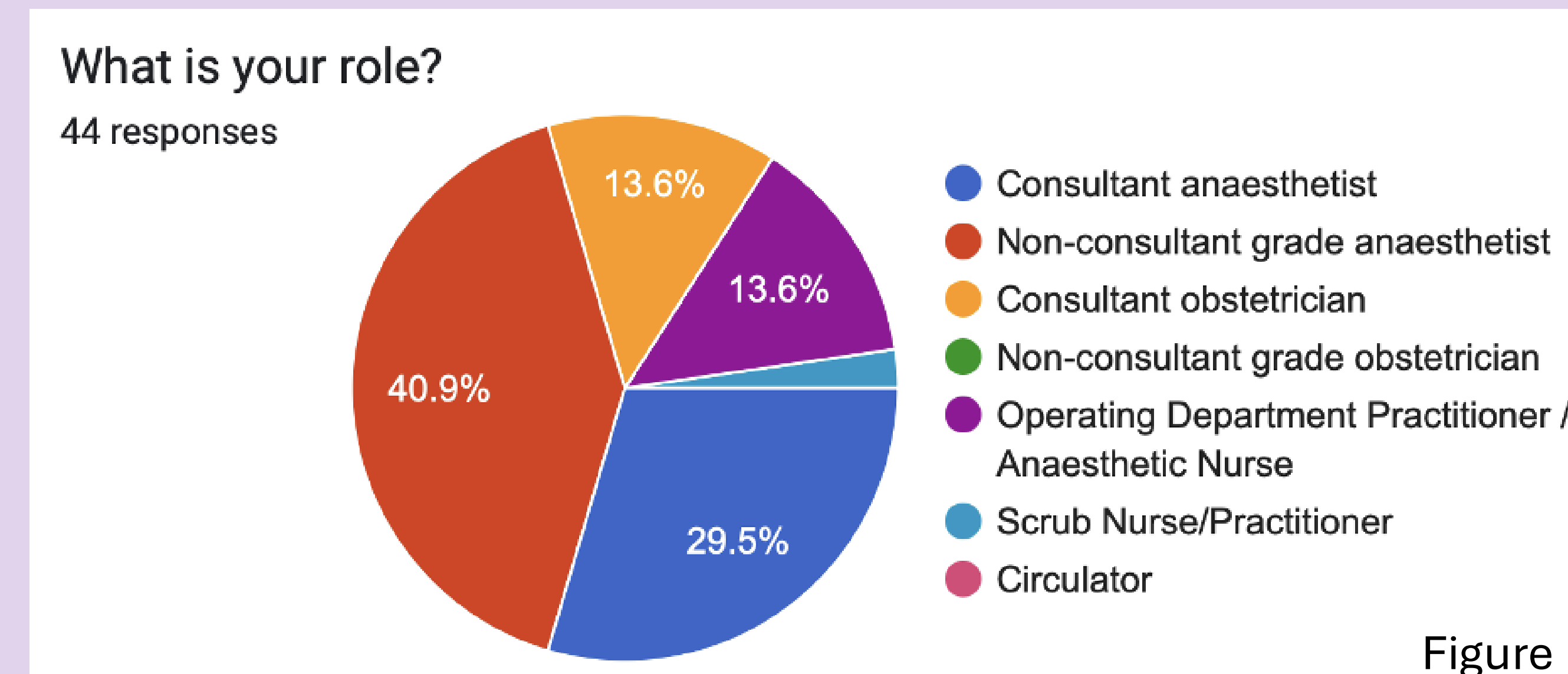
Methods

- Bespoke online **survey** collecting anonymous responses
- We asked respondents about:
 - Their **standard aseptic practice** for SSS
 - **Awareness** of the draft guidance
 - If individual practice would change if the guidance is published
 - For obstetricians and theatre staff; what their **comfort level** was of the proposed measures and if they would be happy for the anaesthetist to stop wearing a sterile gown for SSS anaesthesia

This was distributed among mailing lists was open to responses for **two weeks**.

Results

We received **44 responses**, with the majority coming from anaesthetists (70%) – see Figure 1.

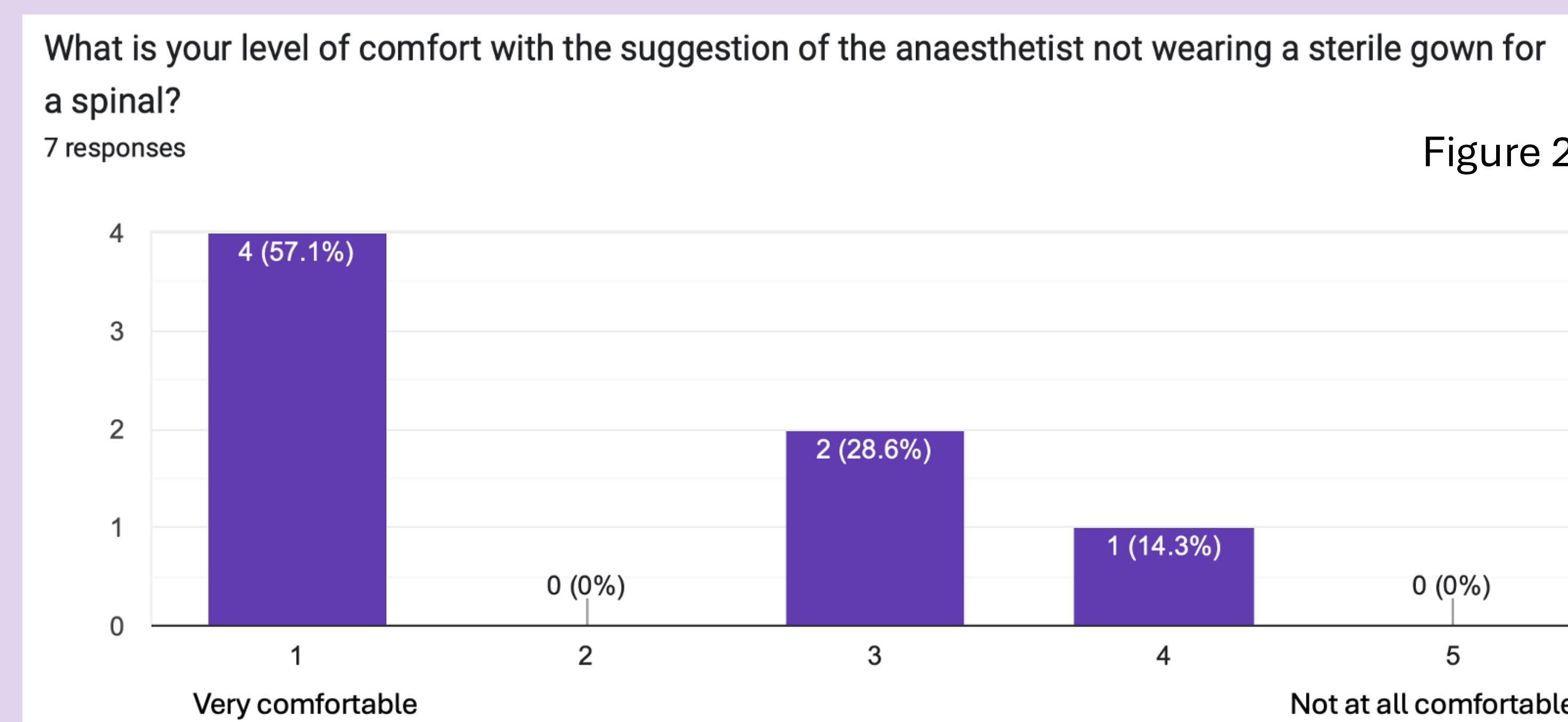


ANAESTHETISTS

- **All** always use skin prep, sterile drapes, a hat, mask, gown and gloves, only altering this practice in a category 1 caesarean (cat 1 c/s) section
- **35%** were **aware** of the draft guidance
- **55%** would **observe** it when it comes into practice
- **16%** would observe this practice for **select patients only**, namely time critical cat 1 c/s

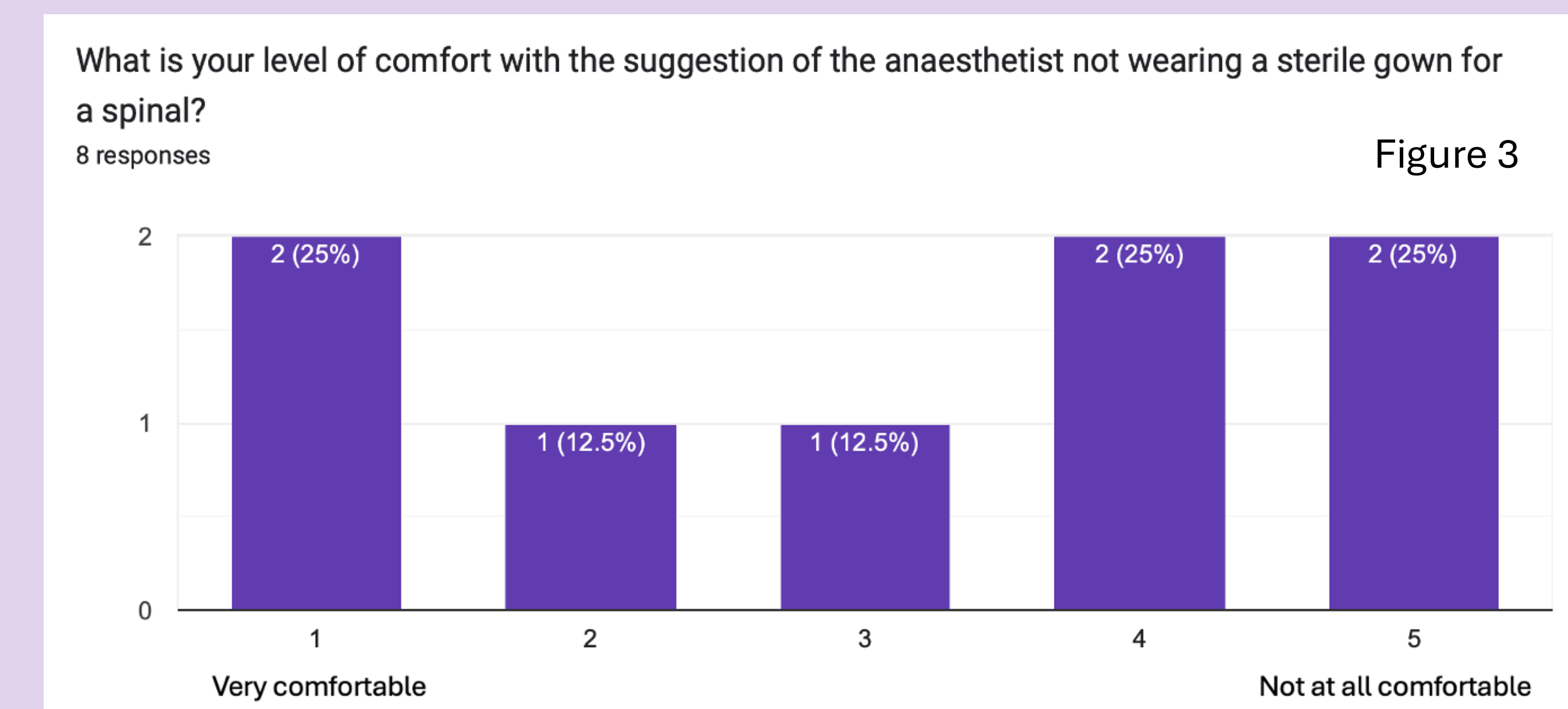
OBSTETRICIANS

- **None** were **aware** of the draft guidance
- Varying levels of comfort were displayed with the concept (Figure 2)
- **71%** said they would be **happy** for the anaesthetist to stop gowning if the guidance was accepted



THEATRE STAFF

- **63%** were **unaware** of the draft guidance
- Again, varying levels of comfort were displayed with the suggestion of not wearing a sterile gown for SSS anaesthesia (Figure 3.)
- Only **25%** said they would be **happy** for the anaesthetist to stop gowning for SSS if this was recommended, with 38% saying they would be happy for certain patients only, such as a cat 1 c/s



Discussion

Since our initial survey, the guidance has been formally published.² As anticipated, there is **significant hesitation** amongst the anaesthetic cohort to adopt proposed new measures, with just under **30% maintaining current practice** of full sterile scrub for SSS **even if guidance suggested this is unnecessary**.

What is surprising is the **wide acceptance of the obstetricians** versus the reluctance of the theatre staff to the abandonment of the sterile gown for the anaesthetist performing SSS injection. Despite the potential **environmental, economic and time-saving benefits** the guidance could bring, our results **question whether this will be adopted** widely enough to allow these benefits to be seen.

References

1. BH Tuohy, CL Shelton, S Dieleman et al. Time to re-evaluate the routine use of sterile gowns in neuraxial anaesthesia. *Anaesth Intensive Care* 2024; **52**: 197–199. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0310057x231210314>
2. Phillips, C., Bahra, M., Metodiev, Y. et al. Use of sterile gowns for single-shot spinal anaesthesia: consensus guidelines from the Association of Anaesthetists, Royal College of Anaesthetists, Obstetric Anaesthetists' Association, Regional Anaesthesia UK, College of Anaesthesiologists of Ireland and Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists. *Anaesthesia*. 2026. <https://doi.org/10.1111/anae.70212>

