



BDA Scotland Survey – Summary Report

August 2019

1. Executive Summary

BDA sought the views of dentists working in Scotland about a range of issues.¹

- Three quarters of respondents had concerns about the proposed introduction of an Oral Health Risk Assessment.
- Over 80 per cent had concerns about the possible introduction of a 24-month recall interval for dental checks.
- Over three quarters of respondents had concerns about the proposed reduction in scale and polish treatments.
- Almost three quarters thought that the Scottish Government should provide strong leadership for local areas that consider introducing water fluoridation.
- Over 90 per cent of respondents had concerns that the Scottish Government will use the NHS dentistry budget to fund aspects of the Oral Health Improvement Plan.
- Around 85% of respondents had concerns about the delay in recruiting a new permanent CDO²
- Over 40 per cent of respondents regarded the integration of practice management systems with Practitioner Services Division as ineffective, and a similar figure regarded their local patient referral system as inefficient.
- Over one third of respondents had reduced their workload and or made plans to take early retirement (or were considering these actions) to avoid breaching their pension allowance, and two thirds regarded the material provided by the Scottish Public Pensions Agency as unclear / unhelpful.
- Over half the respondents had no awareness of their local Director of Dentistry.

Respondents' comments on the various issues reflected these and other concerns. While these results may be seen as indicative (from 220 respondents), they signify some deep concerns among the profession on a range of topics. BDA Scotland will liaise with the Scottish Government and other stakeholders to ensure dentists' views are conveyed effectively.

¹ The survey was sent to dentists working in the GDS, HDS and PDS.

² The post was advertised in early August 2019, almost 8 months after the previous CDO retired.

2. Introduction

In March 2019, Scottish Council agreed to issue a survey to dentists in Scotland to gauge their views on a range of topics, including:

- Oral health / aspects of the Oral Health Improvement Plan (OHIP)
- Funding for NHS dentistry
- National leadership
- General issues – information management systems, pensions, local leadership.

The survey aimed to ensure the BDA is representing members effectively, and to present the findings to the Scottish Government as evidence of dentists' concerns. Some of the issues reflect concerns expressed by dentists [in a survey we carried out in spring 2018](#).

A total of 1,970 dentists in Scotland – including all BDA members and non-members whose email addresses we held – were invited to take part in the survey. Respondents were also given the opportunity to add comments in the survey.

Demographic Information

Information regarding respondents' demographics is shown below. Most respondents work in the General Dental Service.

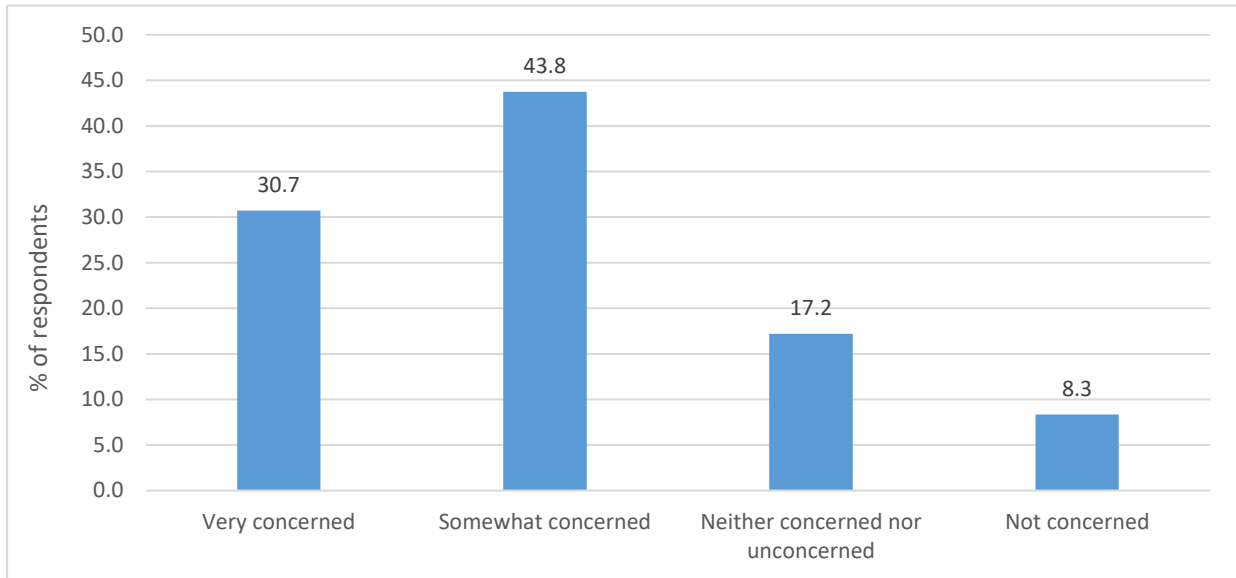
Main job role	% of total
GDP - Practice Owner	32.3
GDP - Associate / Assistant / Locum	35.9
PDS dentist	19.7
Hospital dentist	6.1
Academic	6.1

Age	% of total
Under 25	1.8
25-34	20.3
35-44	19.4
45-54	31.3
55-64	23.5
65 and over	3.2
Prefer not to say	0.5

3. Results

For each question, summary data are presented along with a summary of respondents' comments in the open text sections of the survey.

Q1. How concerned are you about the introduction of the proposed Oral Health Risk Assessment?

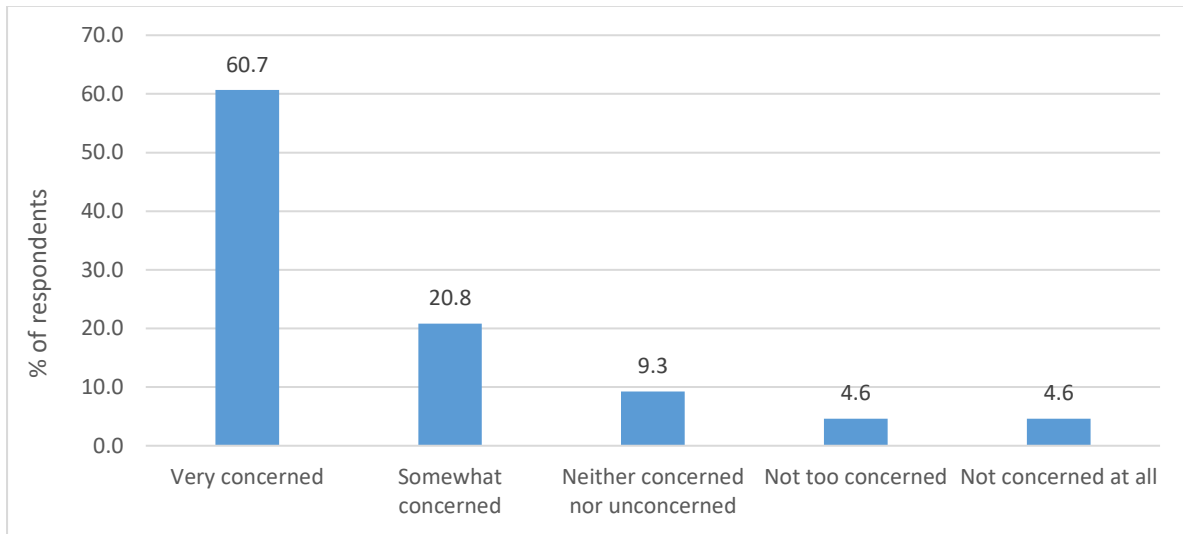


Note: Around 20% of respondents stated that they needed more information on the proposed OHRA.

Comments summary:

- There was some recognition of the benefits of an OHRA but major concerns about whether sufficient additional funding would be available that reflected the time taken to carry out an assessment
- Dentists also sought clarity on whether the new arrangements would be piloted, and if standardised guidance on how to carry out the assessments would be available
- A potential increase in litigation was raised as a potential risk if the OHRA did not identify issues which later became a problem.

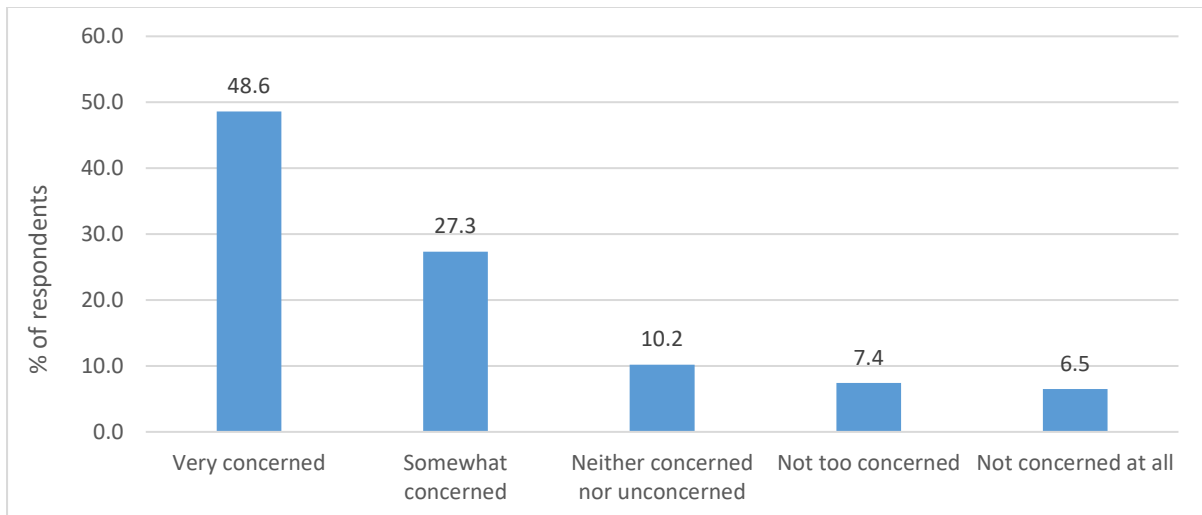
Q2. How concerned are you about the possible introduction of a 24-month recall interval?



Comments summary:

- While there was some support for dental checks every 24 months for low-risk patients, most respondents favoured a shorter recall interval.
- Dentists emphasised the risk of oral cancer, and that oral health can change rapidly, therefore more regular checks were essential.

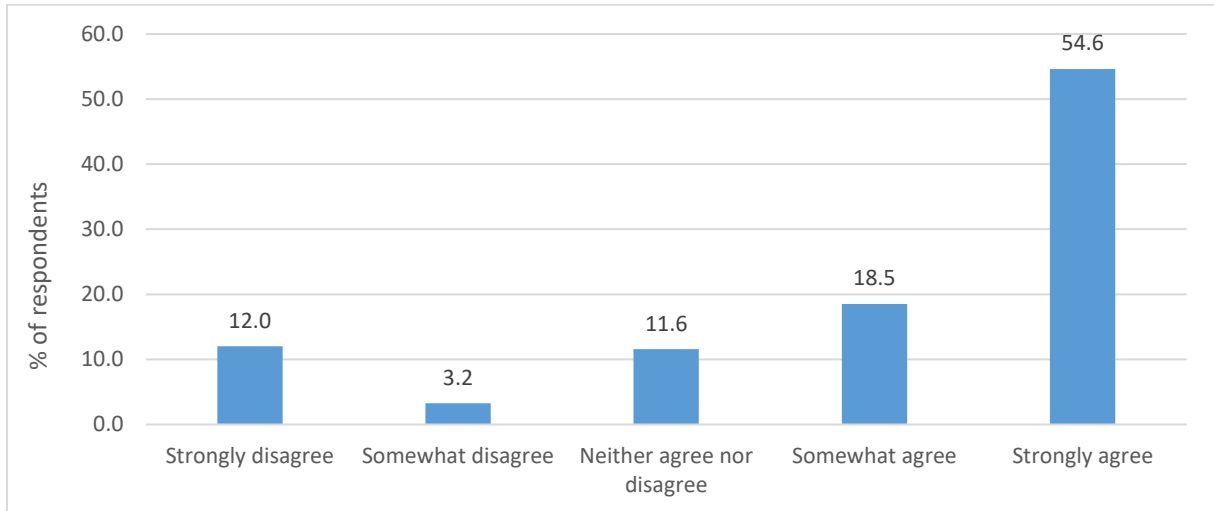
Q3. How concerned are you about the possible reduction in scale and polish treatments?



Comments summary:

- While there were mixed views about the evidence of the clinical effectiveness of scale and polish treatments, most dentists were in favour of providing regular treatments as it helps to encourage good oral hygiene
- There were some concerns about the effect of reducing scale and polish treatments on dental practices' finances.

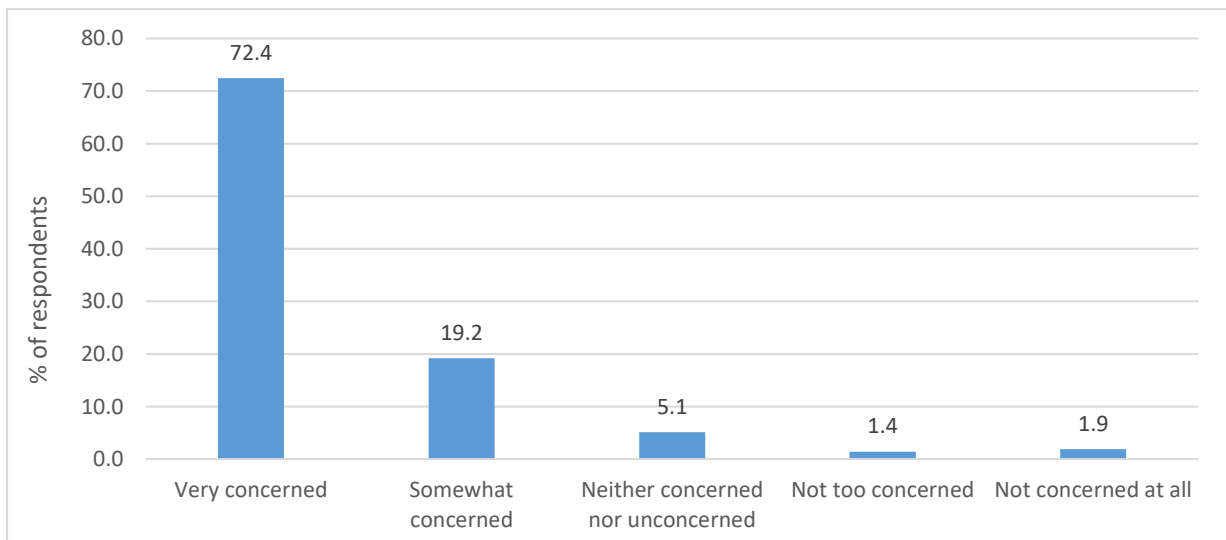
Q4. To what extent do you agree that the Scottish Government should be providing strong leadership and support to local areas that are considering introducing water fluoridation?



Comments summary:

- A minority of respondents were opposed to water fluoridation as they regarded it as “mass medication”, and favoured other ways of applying fluoride.
- However, most were in favour as they regard it as the most effective and cost-effective way of reducing dental decay and tackling health inequalities.
- Political difficulties were acknowledged, and the need for public education on the issue.

Q5. How concerned are you that the Scottish Government will use the NHS dentistry budget to fund aspects of the OHIP?

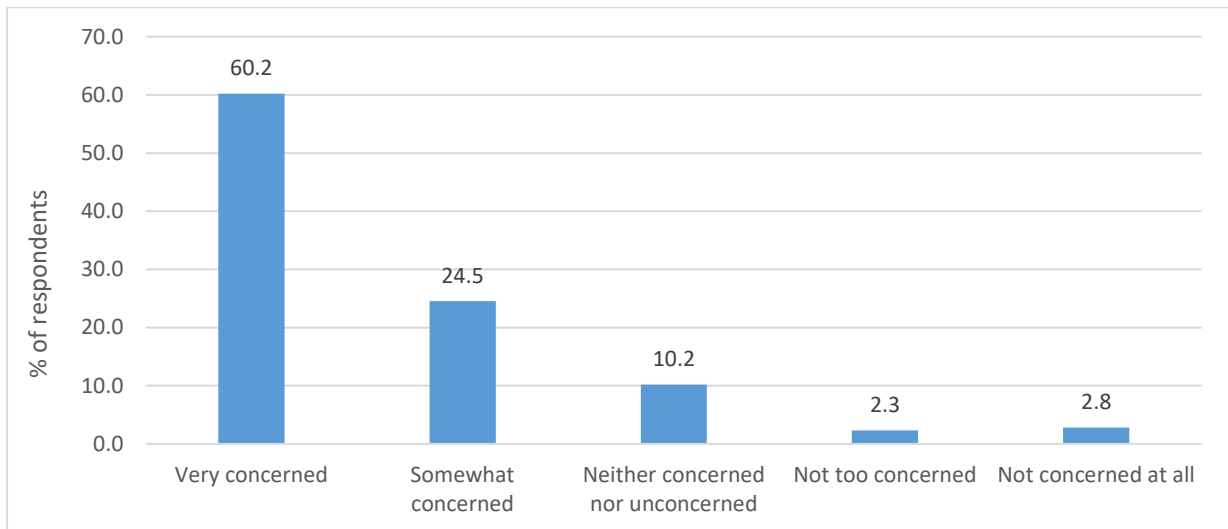


Comments summary:

- There were major concerns among dentists about whether new funding will be available to implement the OHIP.

- Dentistry is seen as a “Cinderella” activity and not a priority for the Scottish Government.

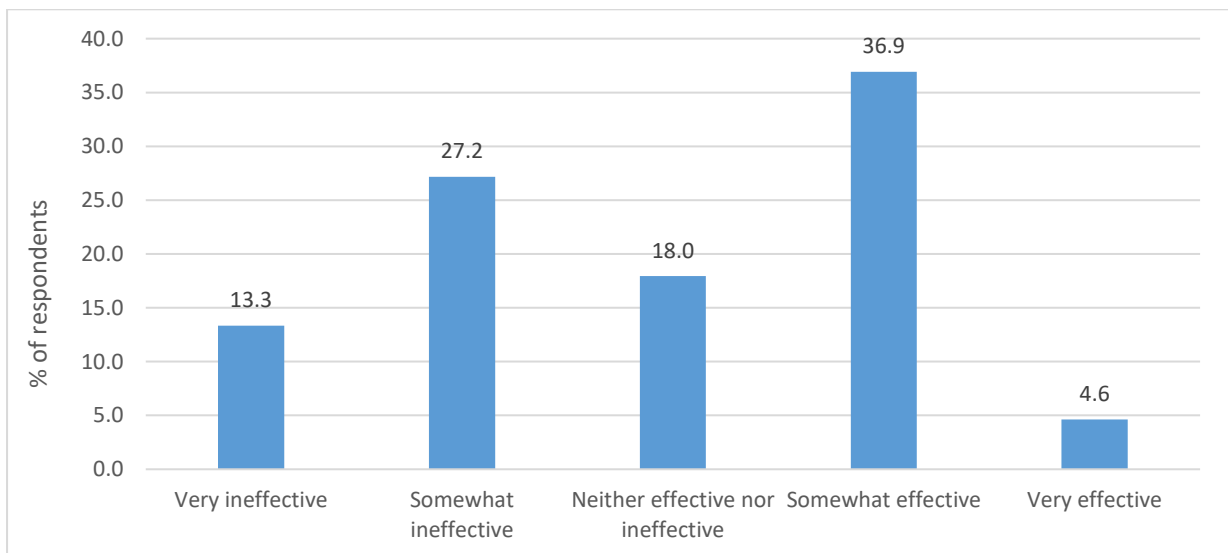
Q6. How concerned are you about the delay in recruiting a new permanent CDO?



Comments summary:

- Dentists were concerned about the lack of leadership, and how the Scottish Government views the importance of dentistry.

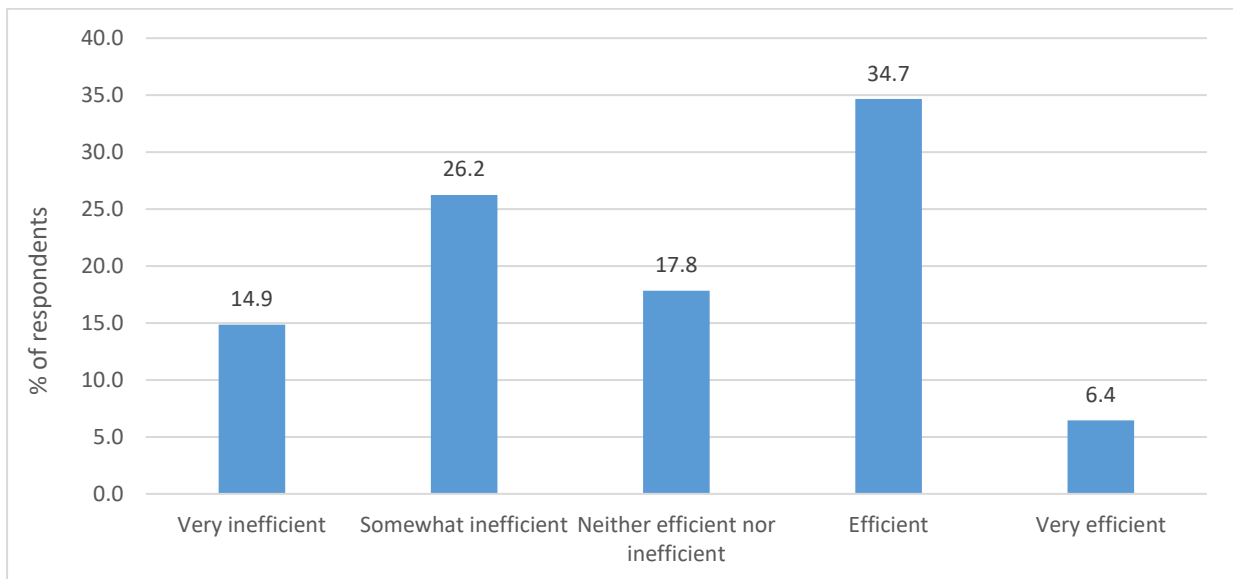
Q7. How effectively integrated is your practice management system with Practitioner Services Division?



Comments summary:

- There were largely negative views on the effectiveness of the integration of practice management systems with PSD, and the prior approval system in particular.
- Note: BDA Scotland will be carrying out a follow-up survey of the quality and performance of PSD services later this year.

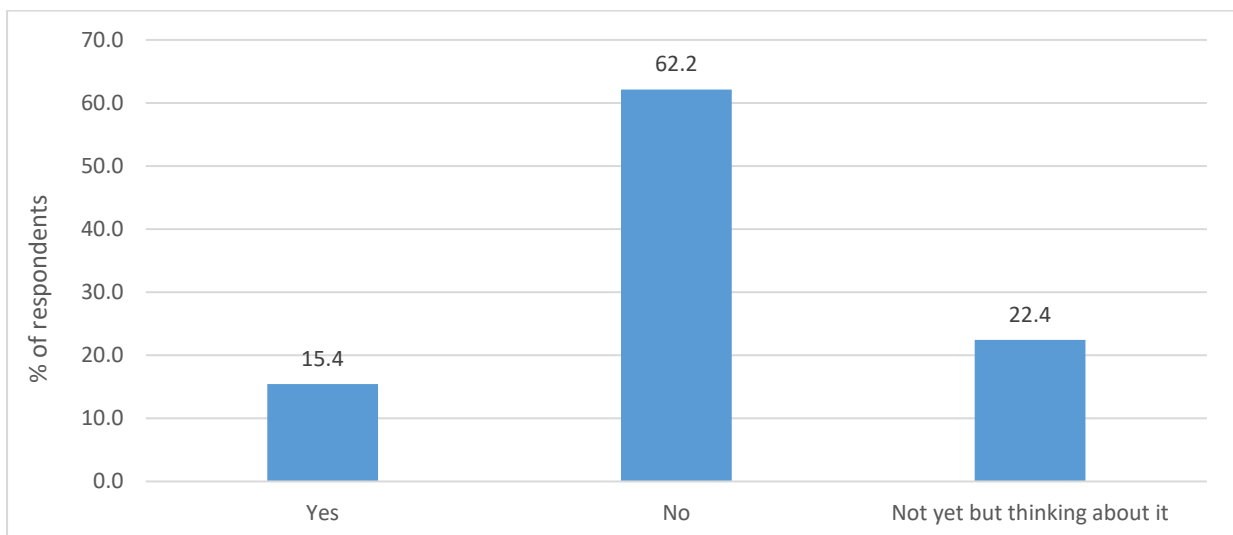
Q8. How efficient is the patient referral system in your Health Board area?



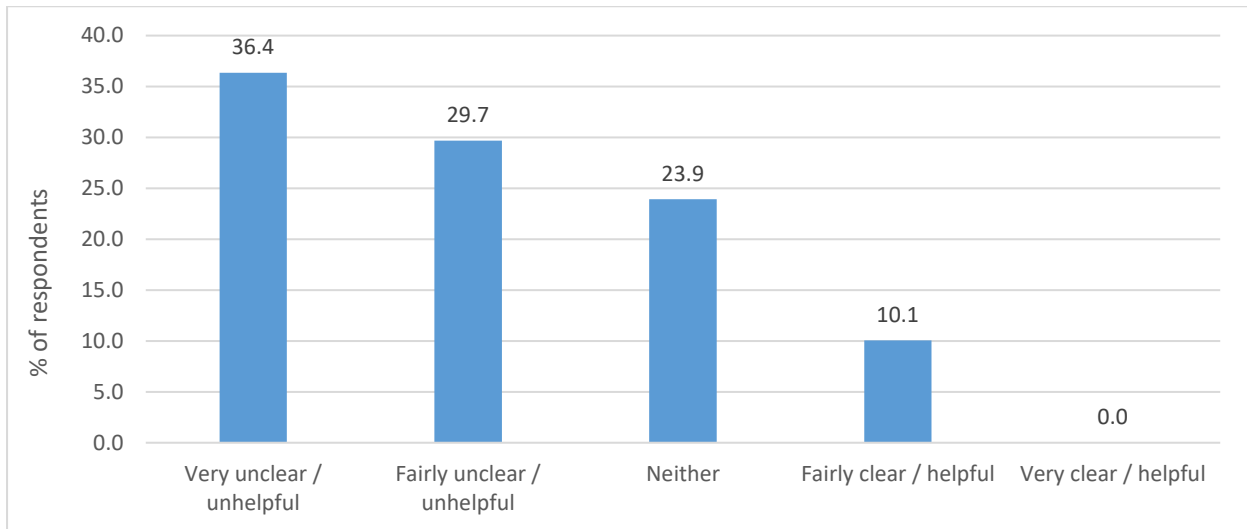
Comments summary:

- There were varying views on the effectiveness of SCI Gateway – it works well in some areas but there are major problems in others.
- Note: The e-Dental Programme Board recently issued a survey of GDS and PDS to assess the effectiveness of referral pathways.

Q9. Have you reduced your workload and or made plans to take early retirement to avoid breaching your pension allowance?



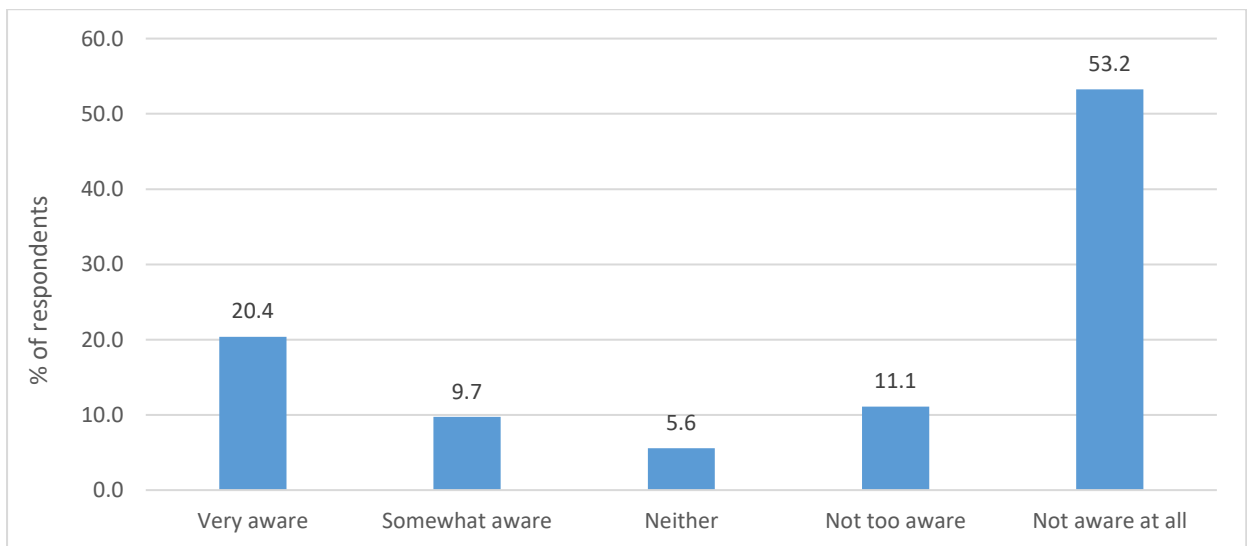
Q10. How clear and helpful is the material provided by the Scottish Public Pensions Agency in allowing you to make informed choices about your pension arrangements?



Comments summary:

- Dentists were largely critical of the frequency, timeliness and clarity of pensions information provided by SPPA
- Note: BDA representatives are due to meet with SPPA in September.

Q11. How aware are you of the Director (or Chief) of Dentistry in your NHS Board area?



Comments summary:

- Dentists who had formal contact with their Director of Dentistry through formal channels (for example, committee membership) had some awareness but others were unaware of who it is
- There were concerns about the transparency of the appointments process and whether the interim Directors were representing all branches of the profession effectively.