



The Educational
Institute of Scotland

Paper A

Supply Teachers: Job Retention Payment

EIS MEMBER SURVEY REPORT 2021

January 2021

THE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTE OF SCOTLAND

Background

On the 19th December First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon announced that schools were no longer reopening after the Christmas break on the 5th of January, instead moving to online learning from the 11th January until the 18th January 2021. On the 30th December Ms Sturgeon made a further announcement stating that all schools will be closed to most pupils until the middle of February at the earliest.

Through our local associations and direct communications with members, the EIS is concerned that Supply Teachers are not being fully utilised to support remote learning, and in some cases there are reduced opportunities due to the national lockdown.

In order to investigate this issue, the EIS surveyed all members who had indicated that they were (or had been) on a temporary contract to find out about their experiences of getting work during the January 2021 school closure period. This survey also sought to understand how many members had benefitted from the Job Retention Payment that was available during the first period of lockdown (starting at the beginning of the epidemic in March 2020) and ascertain if this would be useful in the current circumstances.

Methodology

The Supply Teacher Survey was opened on Friday 22nd January and closed on Friday 29th January 2021. The survey has a total of 15 questions with opportunities to provide additional comments at the end of the survey.

In total 1,797 responses were gathered. The survey was emailed to all members who indicated that they were, or had been, on a temporary contract, which was just under 10,000¹ members.

The most recent information available from the Scottish Government, published in December 2020 suggests that around 12%, or 6,408² teachers are working on a temporary contract. As this total also includes centrally employed staff (1,009) the assumed number of teachers working on temporary contracts is 5,399. Using this as a measure of the total sample size, the EIS survey had a return rate of a third.

All figures within this report have been rounded to the nearest one decimal place, meaning that some questions may not have a total exacting 100%, with other questions within the survey allowing for multiple responses.

There was considerable opportunity for members to record more detailed answers to the questions posed, either by using comment boxes, or by ticking an “other” option where appropriate. Throughout this report member comments have been included under the corresponding questions. As some questions within the survey elicited thousands of additional comments or responses, the

¹ This does not indicate the current levels of supply teachers in Scotland.

² The Scottish Government, “Summary Statistics for Schools in Scotland 2020”
<https://www.gov.scot/publications/summary-statistics-schools-scotland-2020/>

quotes selected are only a snapshot of this wider data but have been chosen to reflect the majority of views captured.

Margin of Error

Margin of error (also called confidence interval) indicates the level of certainty with which you can expect your survey results to reflect the views from the overall population. Surveying is always a balancing act where you use a smaller group (your survey respondents) to represent a much larger one (the target market or total population).

Margin of error is often used as a way of measuring how effective a survey is. The smaller the margin of error, the more confidence you may have in your results. The bigger the margin of error, the farther they can stray from the views of the total population. One way in which to reduce the margin of error is to increase the sample size.

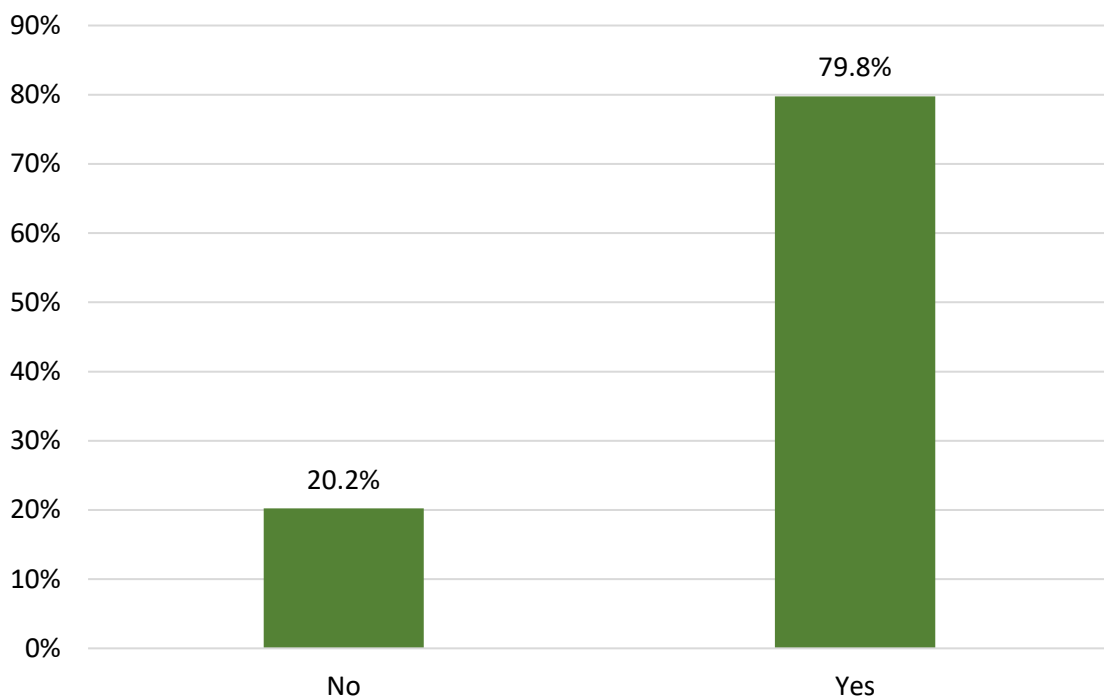
Using the Scottish Government statistics on the number of teachers on a temporary contract as our baseline figure, the margin of error with our sample of 1,797 is two percent³.

³ Survey Monkey, Margin of Error Calculator https://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/margin-of-error-calculator/?ut_source=mp&ut_source2=sample-size-calculator&ut_source3=inline&ut_ctatext=margin%2520of%2520error%2520calculator

Member Information

The first questions within the survey asked members to identify what sector, and local authority area they worked in. Table 1 shows how members responded when asked if they were currently registered with one or more local authorities for supply cover, with around 80% indicating that they were.

Table 1: “Are you currently registered with one or more local authorities for the provision of supply cover?” responses

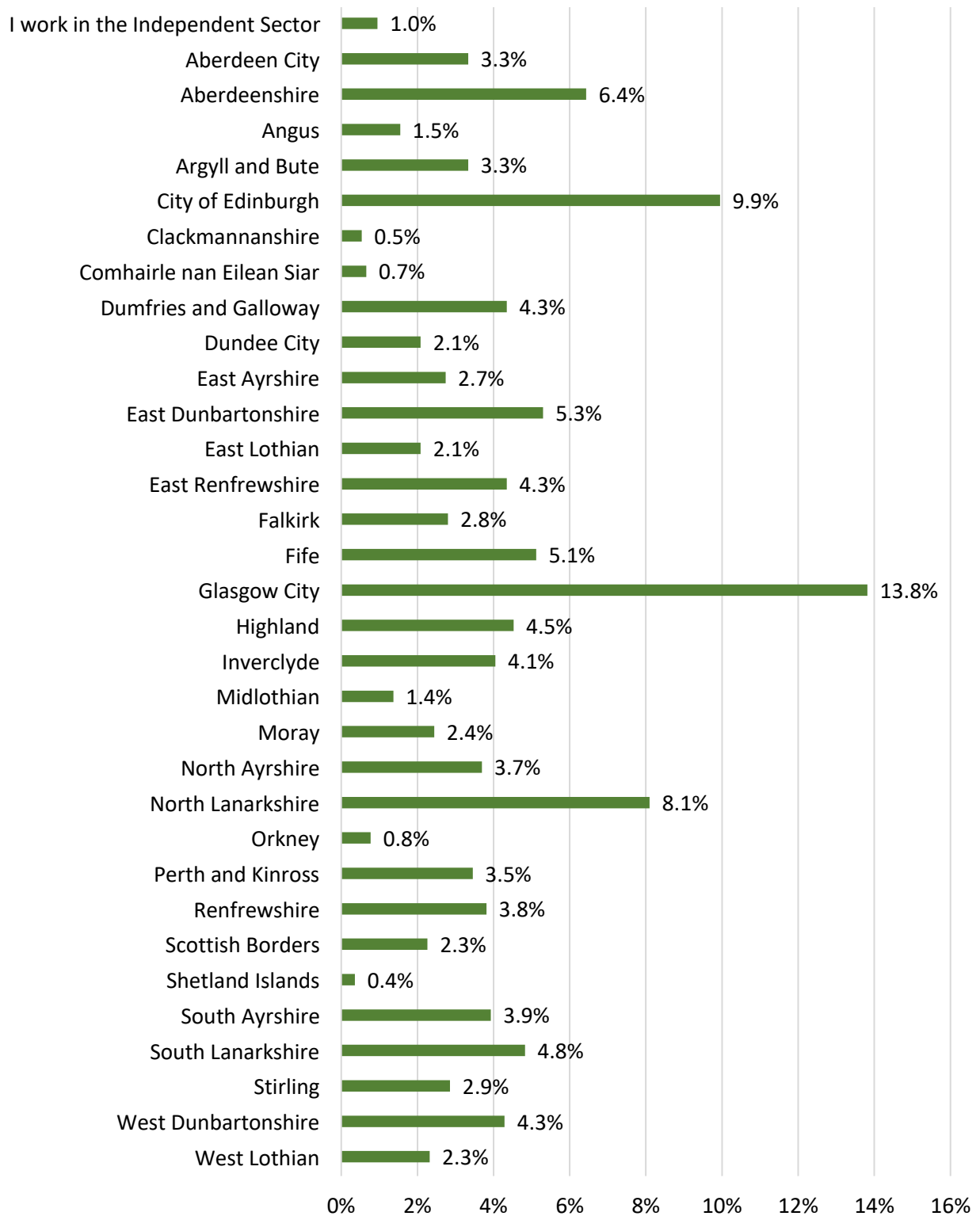


Total responses: 1,789

The next question asked members which local authority they were registered with. Members were able to indicate more than one as appropriate. The results in table 2 show the survey has gathered responses across all local authorities as well as including members who work in the independent sector.

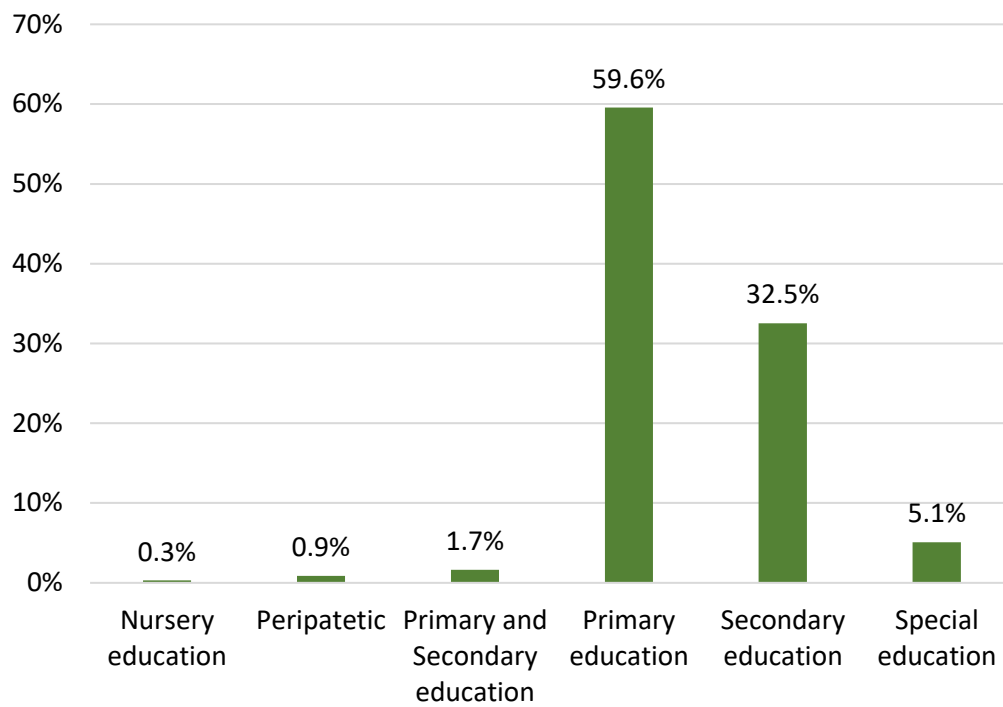
Table 3 shows the number of respondents on temporary contracts or seeking supply work in each sector.

Table 2: “Which local authority are you registered with? (tick more than one if applicable)” responses



Total responses: 1,679

Table 3: "Which sector do you work in?" responses



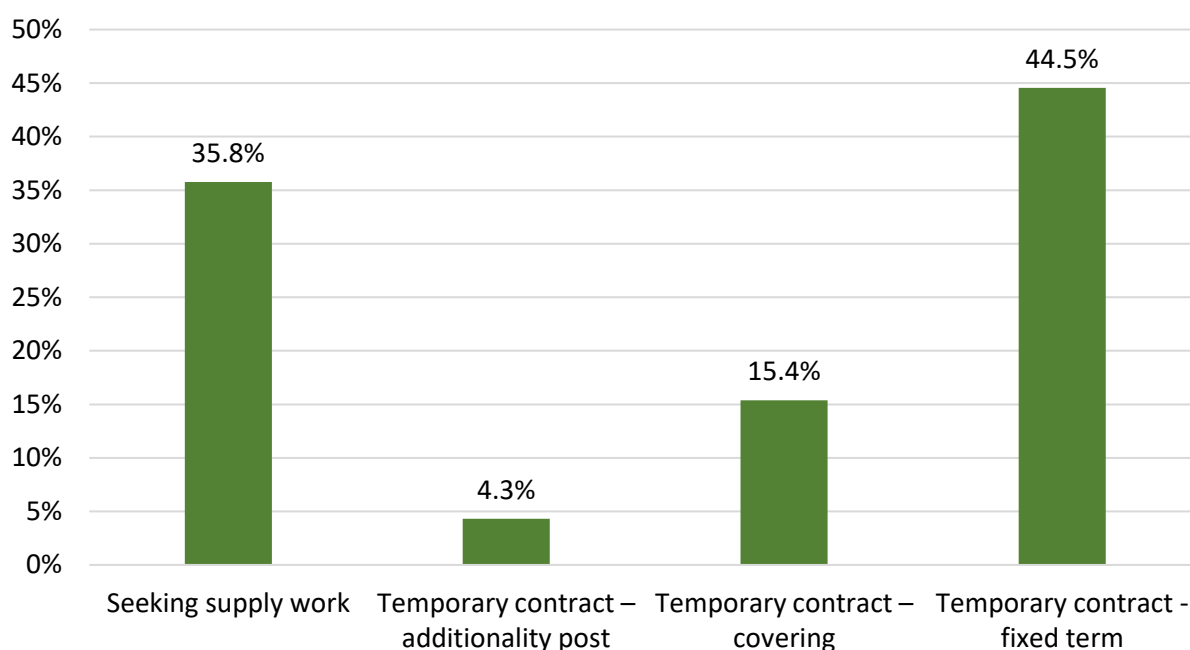
Total responses: 1,694

The information within these graphs shows that the responses gathered cover a representative sample of views geographically and across different education sectors.

Current Employment Status

When asked about their current employment status, just over a third of respondents said that they were currently seeking supply work.

Table 4: “What is your current employment status?” responses



Total responses: 1,320

In addition to the 1,320 responses gathered within table 4, a further 308 members left additional comments. Within these comments members highlighted that they had temporarily left teaching as they believed there was no work, they were reluctant to source work because they were in a vulnerable group, or they were working in supply but not on a contract.

Some members also emailed the EIS after filling in the survey to highlight their difficulties finding or accepting work. Many talked about the lack of available opportunities due to school closures. Some also shared their apprehension of accepting a contract if the schools were to reopen in the very near future, as they did not feel safe working within a classroom at present.

Below are some of the comments that members left when asked about their current employment status.

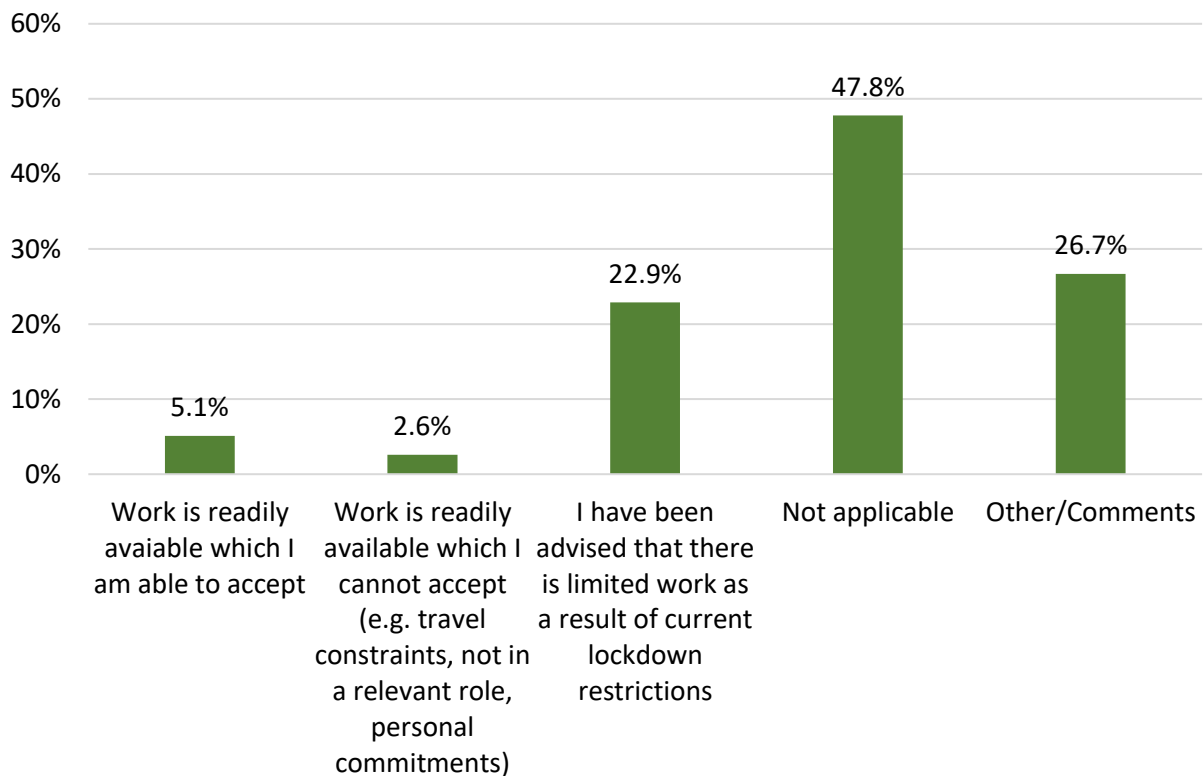
- “Not seeking until safe to do so given age and health”
- “Temporarily left teaching as there’s no work”
- “I've been covering a class 4 days a week since the term 1; however, I haven't got any contract.”

- “0.3 temp contract and was on supply for other days but not needed during closure”
- “I am working two days in a school which was organised for this term before Christmas. I have been lucky that this has been upheld and I am in running the hub on those days, but two days a week is not enough for me to live off. Also I am a flexi route probationer so it is even harder getting days which go towards my total.”
- “I usually work 2-3 days a week in [school name redacted] but there is no work for me when there are no students in the building.”
- “Had some supply days booked for January and February and cancelled due to schools closing”
- “Taken a temporary post outside of teaching due to lack of work.”

These comments show the difficulties that many supply teachers are facing as they try to source work during the school closure period.

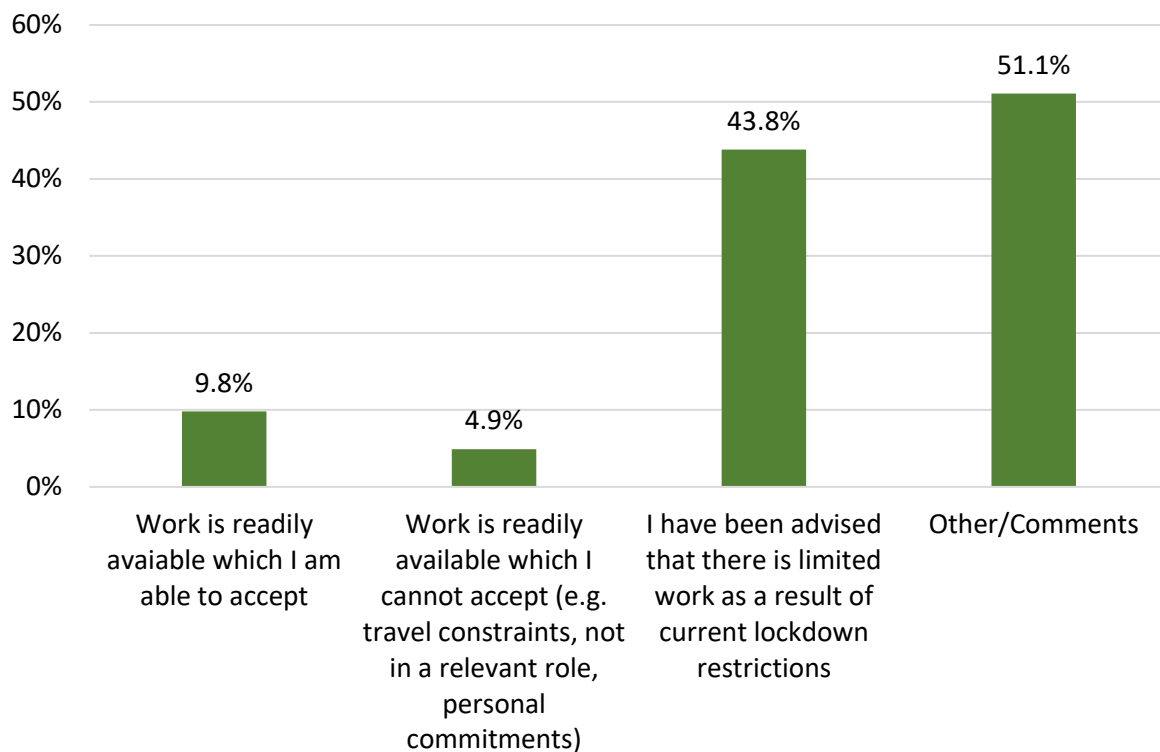
Members were then asked to describe their experiences of seeking work. Table 5 shows the full results to this question, showing that around half of respondents are not seeking work. When these answer choices are removed, as shown in Table 6 we can see that almost half of all respondents who are seeking work have been advised that there are limited opportunities as a result of the current lockdown.

Table 5: “If you are currently seeking supply work, which of the following best describes your experience:” responses



Total responses: 1,526

Table 6: “If you are currently seeking supply work, which of the following best describes your experience:” responses discounting “not applicable” answers



Total responses: 796

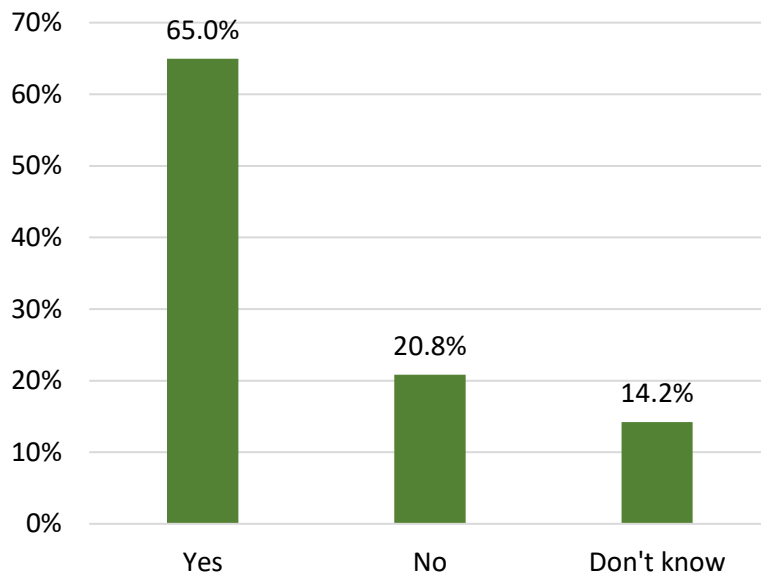
Just over half of respondents indicated “other” when asked to describe their experiences of finding supply work. 407 comments in total were gathered under this question, demonstrating the complexity of issues facing supply teachers at present.

- “Have not actively sought supply work this term because of my age and new variant of COVID. However not been approached for supply by any of the schools I had been working in on a regular basis up until Christmas 2020.”
- “Although I am not currently looking for work, I had to start my maternity leave two months earlier than planned because there was no work available and I had no income.”
- “At present, apart from my half day per week, there would seem to be no other supply available. I have previously travelled over 80 miles per day for supply, so my willingness to work is not in question: the availability of work is the issue.”
- “Have only had one offer of work in October despite usually having constant offers if science/maths work throughout the year.”
- “I am worried that what limited work is available may be because teacher has gone off with Covid. I should receive the vaccine in March and then I will feel more confident going into unknown teaching situations.”
- “I have had no communication from Fife Council. I am on a 3-day short term contract until 29 January. It started in the last week before the Christmas break. I have had no other offers of employment from Fife since the start of term and expect that there won’t be. I covered classes almost every day October to December 2020 but now Supply teachers have been forgotten about.”

- “I have received no emails from the authority about available supply work and have had no direct contact from any school.”
- “I live in a different council area so have not deemed it sensible to cross boundaries since the travel restrictions. I am also retired and feel that there was much less supply available particularly before Christmas and I also did not apply so that those trying to earn a living got first shot.”
- “I was successful at interview for permanent role within North Lanarkshire council, however had the offer removed and replaced with fixed term contract.”
- “I recently managed to secure a COVID support job, but I have not removed myself from the supply list and my phone has not once rung fir supply cover. I can also state that the school I am working in has taken in no supply teachers at all this term.”
- “It took nearly four months from date of application to finalising my supply contract. I have been available for work since the beginning of January and only now have I been offered just two days Childcare cover.”

When asked if they would accept a suitable permanent contract, either part-time or full-time almost two thirds of respondents said they would. This shows that there is a high level of demand for more secure work amongst staff on temporary contracts.

Table 7: “Would you accept a suitable permanent contract (either part-time or full-time) if it was offered to you?” responses



Total responses: 1,547

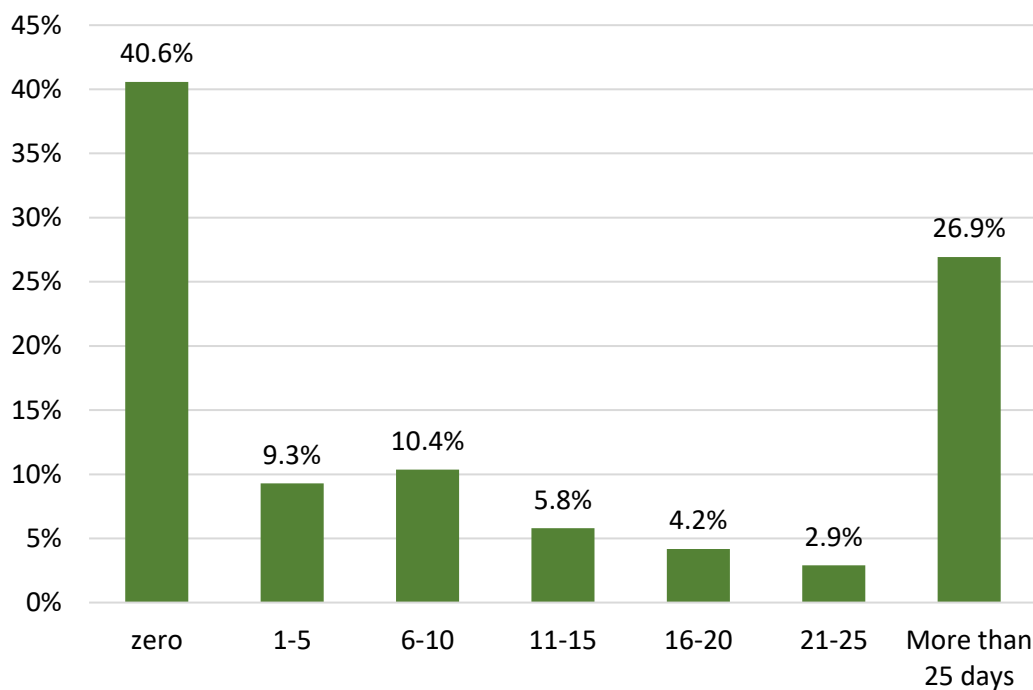
Contracted Hours in January 2021

To better understand how the reduced opportunities for supply work has impacted on members working week, we asked them to indicate how many hours they had been contracted to work in January 2021, and compare this to the hours they worked across the same time frame in 2020.

Table 8 shows that 40% of members have had no contracted hours since the start of the new year.

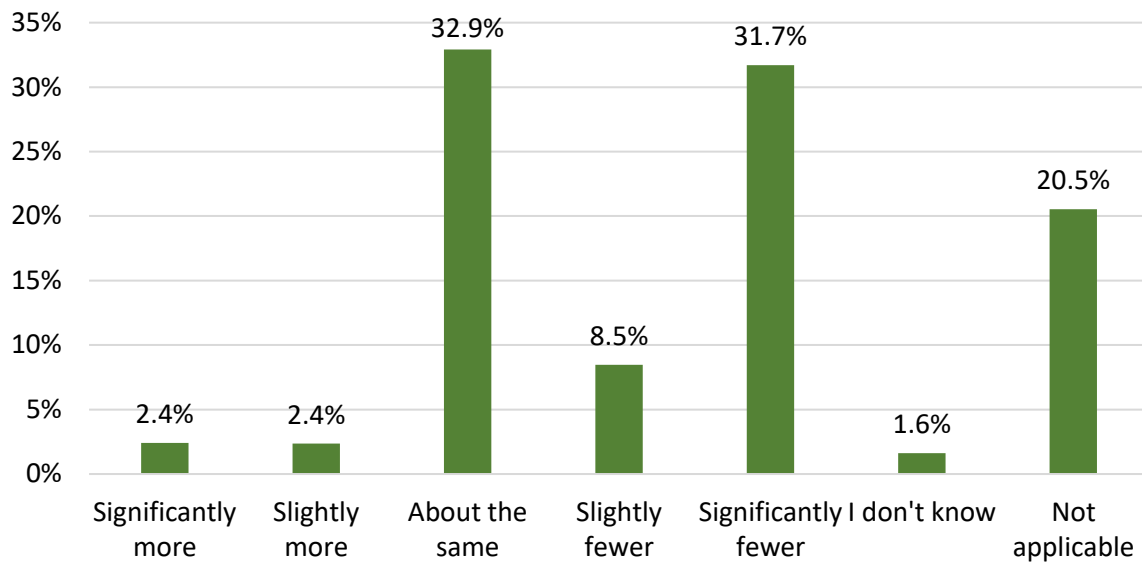
Table 10 shows that only 6% of members have said that they have been contracted to work more hours in January 2021, than January 2020, with over half of respondents working slightly or significantly fewer hours in January 2021.

Table 8: “How many days have you been contracted to work since the beginning of term? (This is the total number of days contracted in January 2021)” responses



Total responses: 1,486

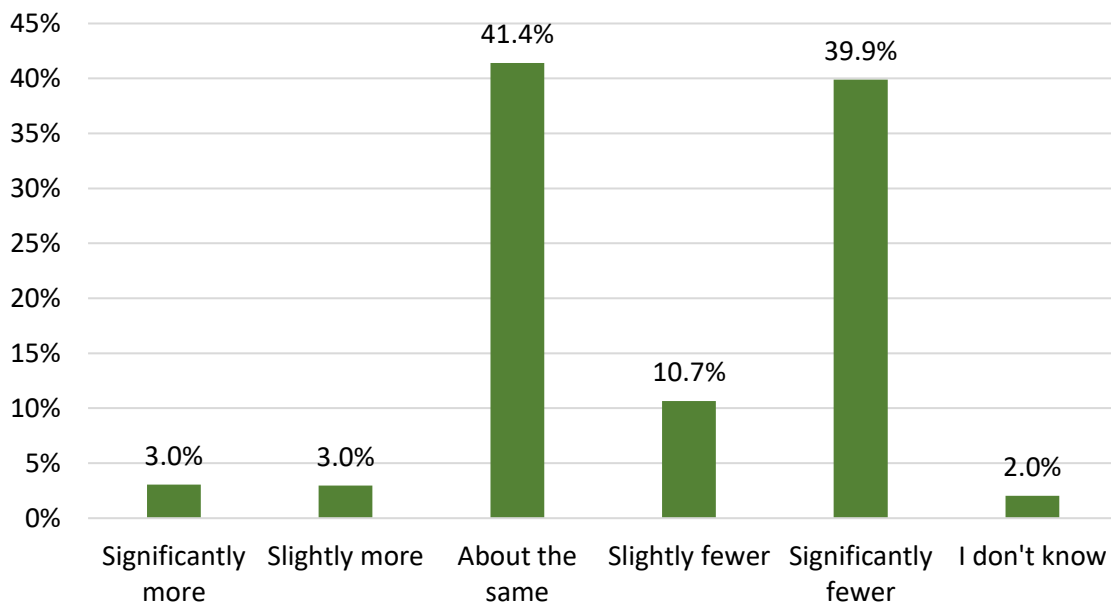
Table 9: “Is this more, fewer than, or about the same number of days that you worked: Over the same time period in January 2020?” responses



Total responses: 1,486

With a fifth of respondents saying this question wasn't applicable to them, table 10 shows this data with the "not applicable" responses omitted. From this table, we can see that around half of respondents indicated they had a reduction in hours, and just over 40% had seen their hours stay the same. Only 6% saw an increase in their contracted hours in January 2021.

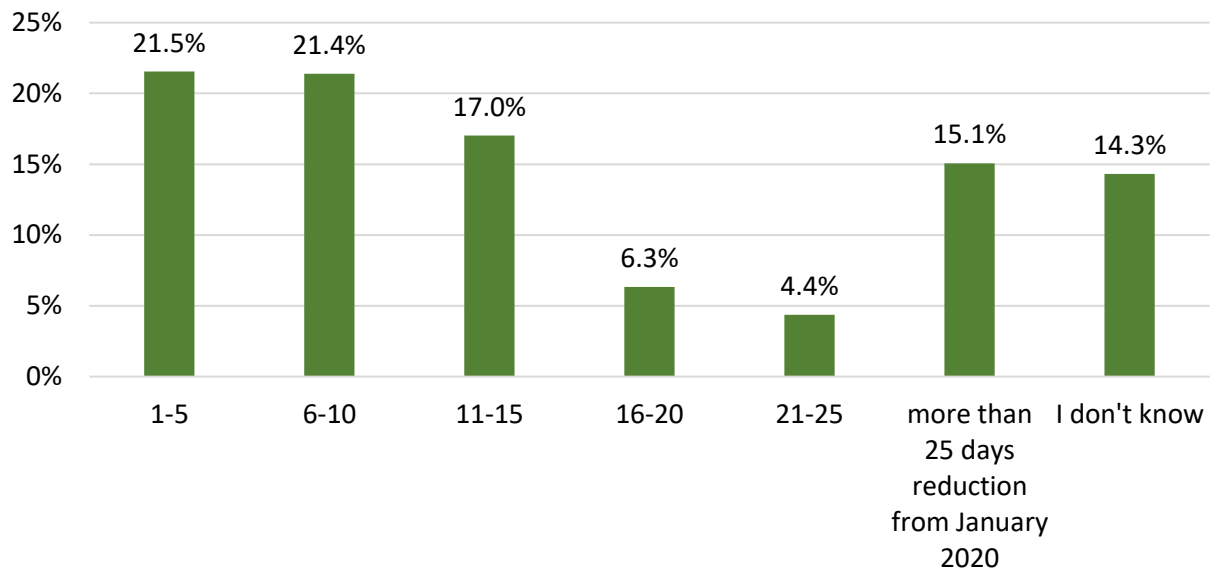
Table 10: “Is this more, fewer than, or about the same number of days that you worked: Over the same time period in January 2020?” responses discounting “not applicable” answers



Total responses: 1,181

Members who indicated that they had worked fewer hours in January 2021, than in January 2020 were then asked to highlight what the difference was in these working days. Around 15% of members said they had their work reduced by more than 25 days, with just over 40% saying they had lost 1-10 days work in comparison to the same timeframe in 2020 as show in table 11.

Table 11: If you have worked fewer days in January 2021, than you did in the same time period of January 2020, can you indicate the difference in these days? responses⁴

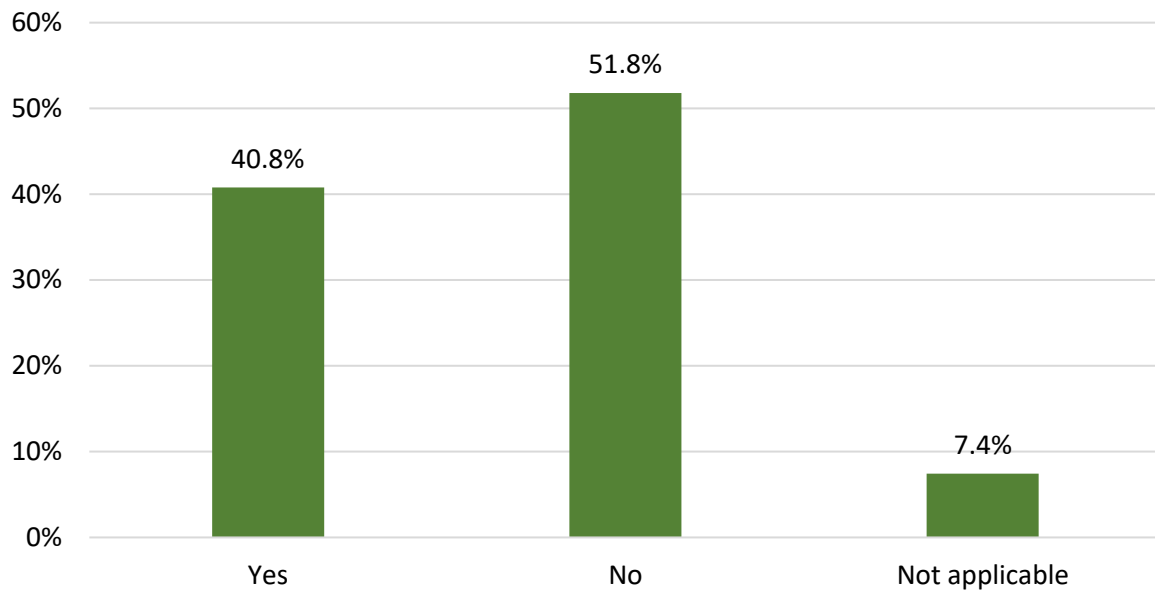


Total responses: 664

Around 40% of members suggested that they have, or did have prior to lockdown, an existing long term temporary contact as demonstrated in table 12. Table 13 shows that the majority of respondents (where applicable) have had these contracts honoured.

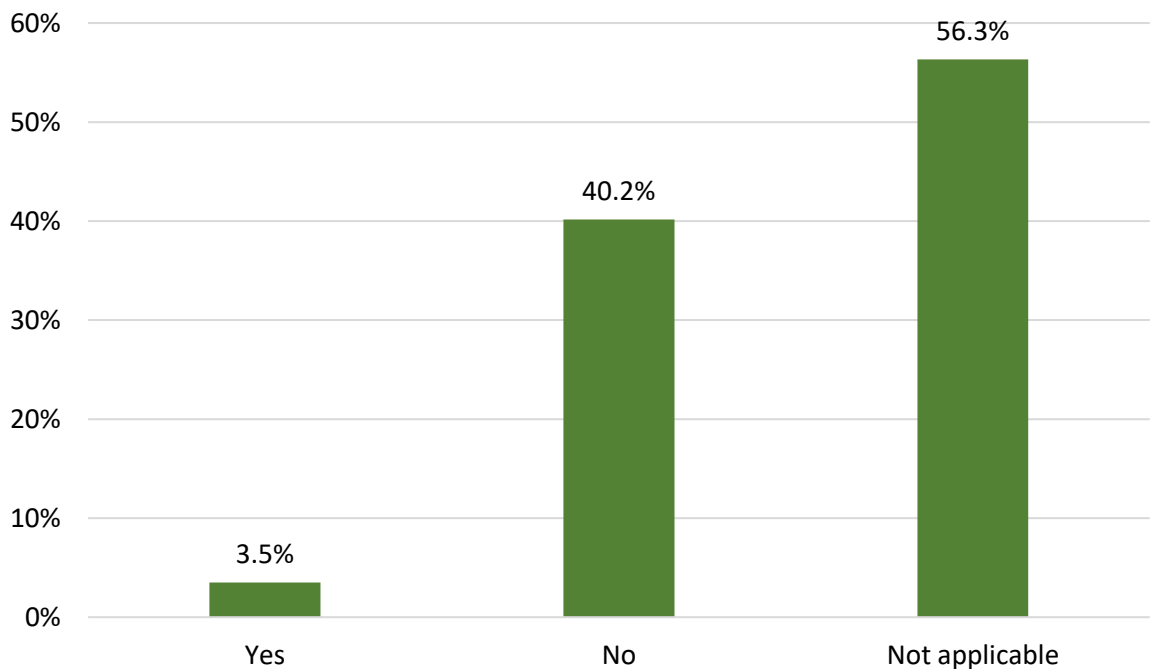
⁴ This question was designed to only be answered by respondents who had worked fewer days in January 2021 than January 2020. There was a not applicable option included in this response, with 823 respondents indicating this question was not relevant to their circumstances. This graph does not include these not applicable responses.

Table 12: “Do you have, or did you have prior to lockdown, an existing long term temporary contract?” responses



Total responses: 1,496

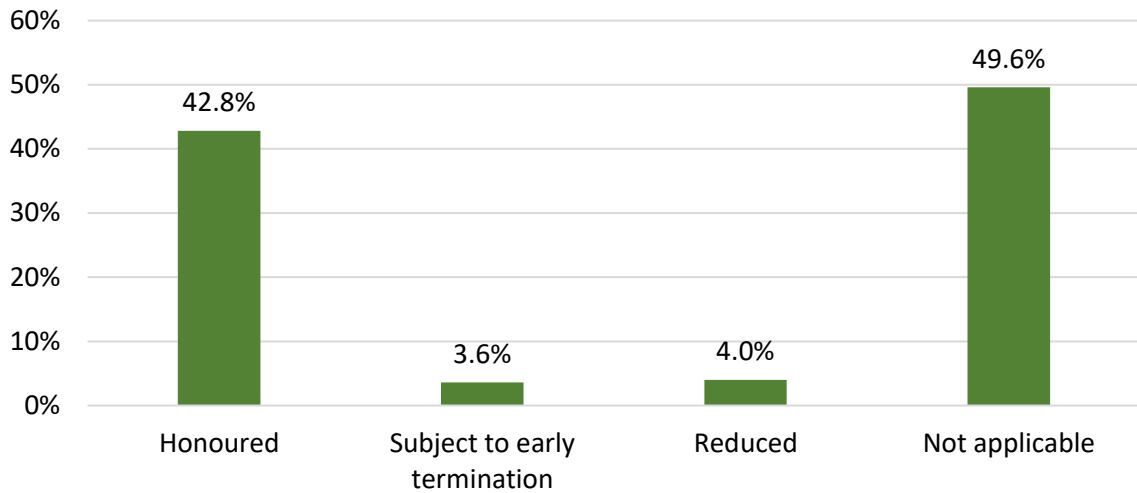
Table 13: “If yes, has this existing long term temporary contract been brought to an early end? (e.g., by the issuing of a four-week notice period)” responses



Total responses: 1,481

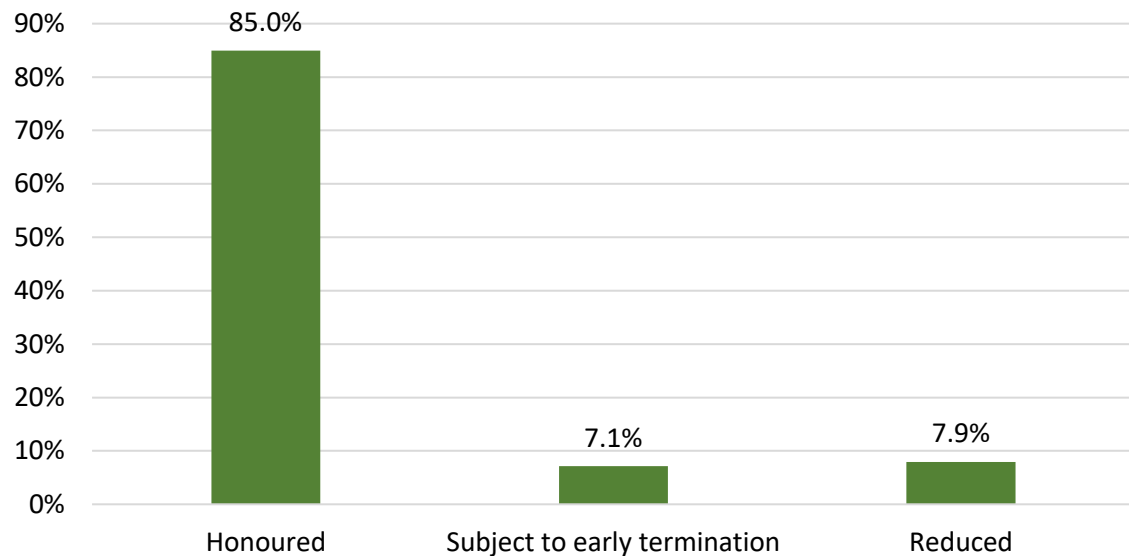
When asked if their current arrangements had been honoured, around half of members indicated that this question was not applicable to them (detailed in table 14). Once these “not applicable” answers were omitted we can see that the vast majority (85%) of members have had their current arrangements honoured, yet 15% have seen a reduction in hours or an early termination to their contract as demonstrated in table 15.

Table 14: “Have your current arrangements been honoured or have they been subject to notification of termination / reduction?”



Total responses: 1,450

Table 15: “Have your current arrangements been honoured or have they been subject to notification of termination / reduction?” responses discounting “not applicable” answers



Total responses: 731

In addition to the responses highlighted in tables 14, and 15, over 120 comments were recorded in relation to members current arrangements. These comments highlighted that even where current contracts were being honoured, there was ongoing discussions about potential reductions or terminations.

Some members also suggested that they have not been offered contracts that they would normally expect to receive.

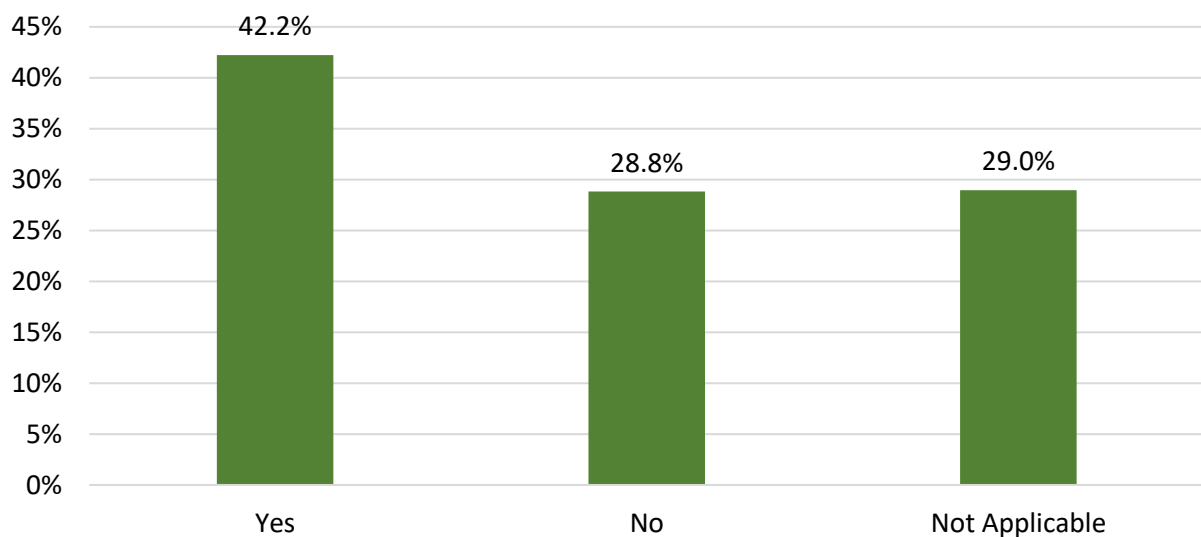
Below are some of the comments that members left in relation to this issue:

- “I had been in a school for 3 weeks before Xmas and asked if I could come back in week 2 of the following term. This offer no longer applied on school closure.”
- “Honoured in one school, told no longer required in second school, although verbal contract with them was to continue until February.”
- “I am working on a weekly basis but currently shielding. I am consulting with the school online. I don’t have a contract and will end around the end of January”
- “Advised just before Christmas that the supply post I covered from August until December was filled and supply no longer needed. Nothing else made available after Christmas.”
- “Contacted supply to see if I should return to school attended before Christmas-still waiting for a reply! Headteacher very supportive and needs staff so she asked me to return. Don’t know how long for!”
- “I’m at the end of contract but due to Covid I didn’t go into schools this session but I see children are desperate for help and I am available to help online.”
- “Honoured- but I have been "warned" my contract may be terminated early”
- “I was offered (verbal) a 3 day temporary Covid recovery post a few weeks before Xmas but it was withdrawn. It was a verbal offer so I had no insurance. The situation is AWFUL for supply in D&G. I wish I hadn’t left my previous profession to retrain as a teacher”
- “Was told by Stirling Council over the summer that I would have a position for the full year after John Swinney said that last year's probationer's should be guaranteed work. Stirling Council advised me that this could be in several different schools throughout the year and I indicated that I was ok with this. At the October Holiday Stirling Council advised me that I would no longer have a position for the full year and would be placed on the regular supply list. Thankfully I was able to find work until Christmas, but haven't been able to find work since.”
- “I worked at [school name redacted] from September 2019 to March school closing. I was meant to work until of school term. My contract was reviewed every 3 months. It was early terminated due to the lockdown in March 2020. I have not gone on to work there since. I have worked 13 days since the start of August 2020 until today. I was available full-time to accept any work.”
- “One of my posts has been honoured. The other not. Although I had been doing both jobs since Aug no contract had been issued.”
- “In December I had been given supply work for the whole of January. This was then cancelled when lockdown announced”
- “We REALLY need our Union's help on the LIBERTIES the authorities are taking in this respect! Thanks for reading my response”

Job Retention Payment

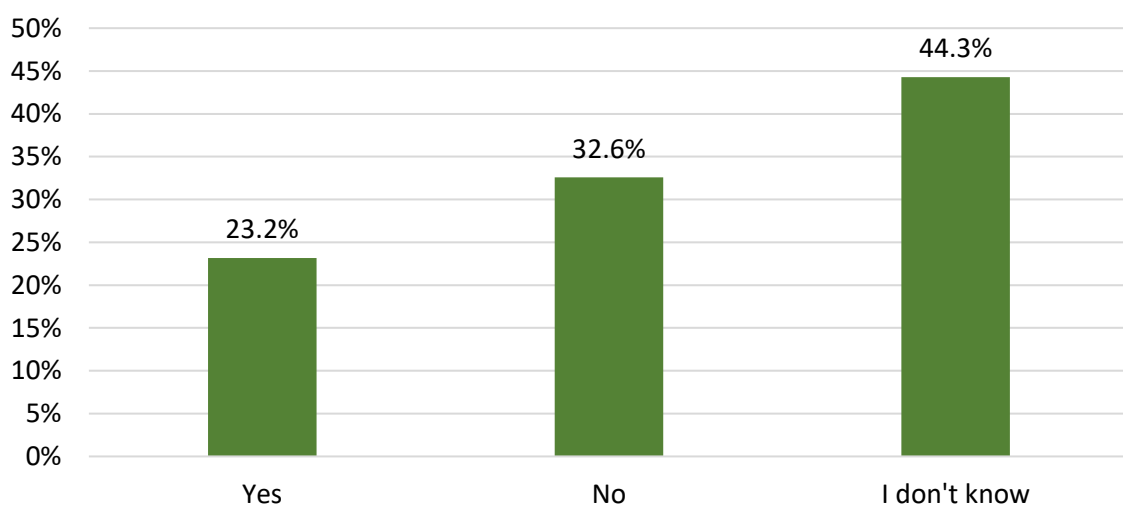
Finally, members were asked if they received payment through the Job Retention Payment during the first period of lockdown. 42% of members said they had received this payment, with a further 23% saying that this would be applicable to their situation now.

Table 16: “Did you get payment through the Job Retention Payment arrangements during the first period of lockdown? (Starting in March 2020)”



Total responses: 1,485

Table 17: “Would a similar arrangement be applicable to your situation now?” responses



Total responses: 1,477

Final Comments and Conclusions

At the end of the survey, members were offered the opportunity to share any further concerns or issues that they would like the EIS to raise on their behalf.

Within these comments, members highlighted their frustrations around securing work, as well as their anxieties around school safety in light of the current pandemic. Many members shared their financial concerns as they do not have contracts despite working regular days in a familiar school. There was also concern raised by some members as they felt disadvantaged when applying for posts if they had considerable experience.

Over 600 comments were recorded. Below are some of the issues that members highlighted:

- “I am in a different position. I am retired just doing a couple of days per week in the school I was in. Last time there was retention pay I had been contracted to work full time and it only covered what I was to work. I do believe that that the retention pay is needed esp. for those supply teachers who aren't getting supply. I don't have as many BOB emails as I would have had if not for lockdown. There is definitely less supply work.”
- “I would like to be vaccinated with permanent teachers so I would be available to do supply work.”
- “I am working 3 days, but was planning on working 5 in the new year, but since lockdown supply work came to a stop.”
- “Last lockdown my contract which was meant to last till end of term in June was terminated at Easter.”
- “I relocated from Glasgow to Argyll and Bute due to the lack of supply work available. I find that there seems to be an unspoken bias towards employing newly qualified teachers over more experienced (and costly) teachers. After four months of no success seeking employment in teaching from August to November, I was pleased to be offered a fixed term contract and no longer have to claim universal credit. Hopefully, this opportunity will lead to more next year with Argyll and Bute council.”
- “If a retention payment was offered and calculated from either August to October or October to December, I'd not be due anything as I've had no work: none available from Aug to Oct, then broken ankle until mid December. No way to earn anything. And no texts since 9th December. One school did phone me for a few weeks work but wasn't interested when I stated I'd applied for (unsuccessfully now) the Covid recovery posts. They said it would cost too much to take on one supply teacher then have to change to another. They also asked when I qualified (I don't consider it relevant) & I'm sure this was because they knew they'd get a RQT cheaper.”
- “Lack of permanent post is a worry. Job security is crucial for stable income, in 2nd year teaching and not having permanent post is a concern particularly as at the time I joined the profession there was supposed to be a lack of teachers and surplus jobs available. Now considering if a change of profession was the right decision!”
- “I would like to inform you that I tried to offer my services for online teaching and I was rejected.”
- “Moving from probationary year 2019-2020 to temporary 1 year contract this year 2020-2021 I have real concerns over recruitment again this year and the scarcity of decent permanent contracts due to high numbers of new probationers and existing staff on supply

an temporary contracts seeking work. The COSLA story does not appear to match the general situation we are experiencing on the ground. Recruitment is a huge stress and massive burden on teacher wellbeing as it is so uncertain at present and something needs to be done.

- “I am struggling to make ends meet due to lack of work there needs to be a retention scheme to help support those who want to work but can’t find the work due to the lockdown and the domino effect it causes I am now relying on a crisis grant just to get by! skipping meals to support my daughter through no fault of my own no person should ever be put in this position something needs to be done. Thanks.”
- “I worked in [school name redacted] as required, averaging 3 days a week during November and December 2020. Since school closure, the school has no supply work for me at all.”
- “Neither authority has asked about the possibility of working from home to support learners as a mentor/ tutor etc. The need to use public transport or working in different schools would be a further concern; being allocated to one would be a solution”

Further Information

For more information on any of the themes within this report please contact:

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