

Trainee survey on Sub-Speciality Selection in Anaesthesia

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Introduction

Anaesthetic training has several sub-speciality (SS) career paths which require experience in addition to the standard curriculum. Previously in the form of advanced training blocks, these are now included as speciality interest areas (SIA). The traditional SS options have been Intensive Care Medicine (ICM), Pain medicine, Obstetrics, Paediatrics, Cardiothoracic or Neuro-anaesthesia. In Scotland these posts have historically been assigned through a competitive application process, with many of those who successfully complete their advanced training seeking a consultant role within that SS. The number of applicants for these roles has varied over the years, so to determine what factors influence trainees to apply for a SS post we surveyed trainees in Scotland.

Aim

To determine factors that contribute to trainee selection of sub-speciality SIA placements in senior training years by surveying Anaesthesia trainees across Scotland.

Method

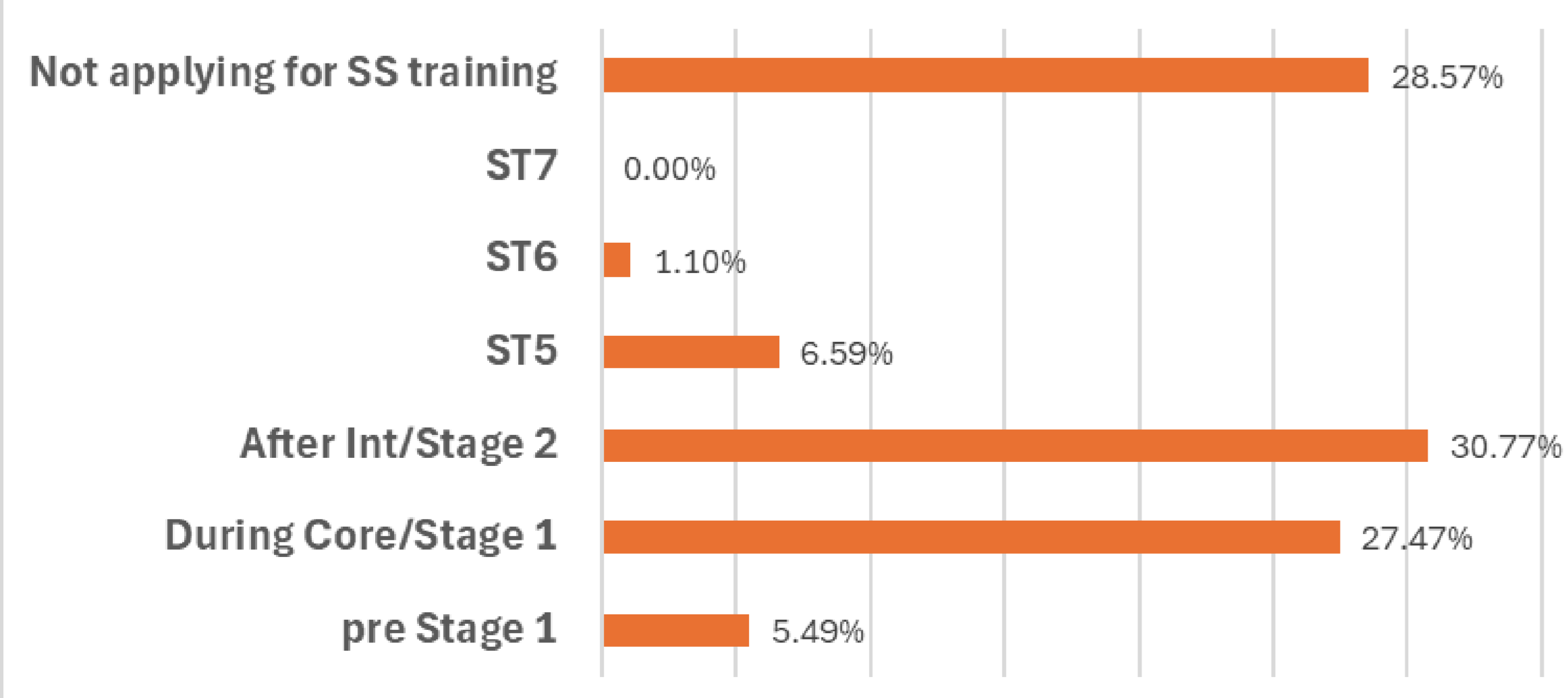
A multiple-choice survey was distributed to all anaesthetic trainees in Scotland via the NHS Education for Scotland mailing list. Trainees specified their grade and training region, then answered a series of questions on SS selection. The sub-specialities included were Obstetrics, Paediatrics, Cardiothoracic anaesthesia, Pain, ICU and Neuroanaesthesia.

Questions were worded appropriately to capture responses relevant to both the 2010 and 2021 Anaesthetic training curriculums. Respondents were allowed to select more than one option when selecting factors influencing their decisions.

Results

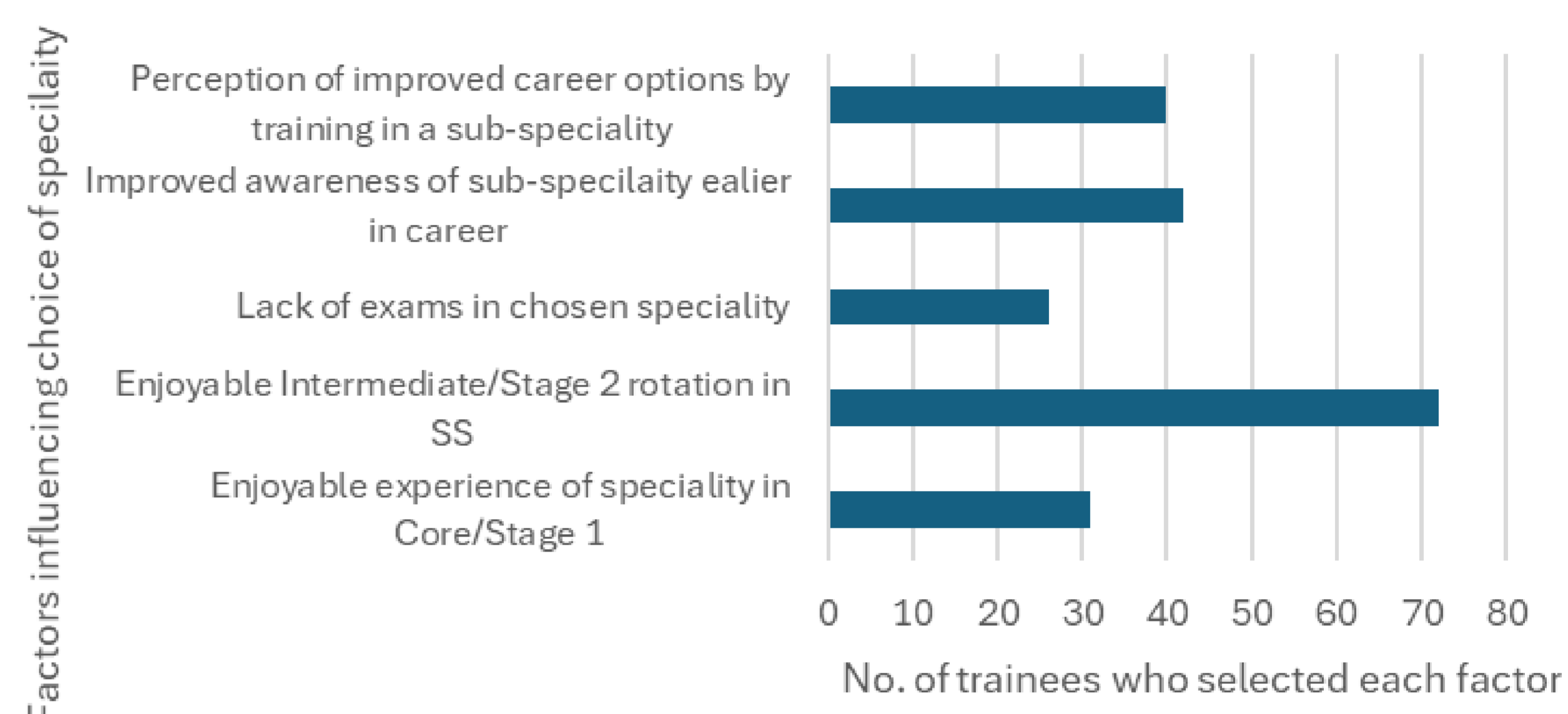
112 Anaesthetic trainees completed the survey, all of whom were at a minimum of ST3 year of training. Of these, 25 did not intend to apply for SS training in the defined specialities and 25 were unsure. Of the 66 trainees who said they will pursue SS training, 25 decided during core training and 29 said their intermediate/stage 2 placement was when they decided. Of those that said they would not choose a SS the most common reason was a desire to focus on other areas of anaesthetic practice during senior training years, with a significant proportion stating an unenjoyable intermediate block or that further exams were a deterrent. Lack of exposure or awareness of SS pathways in early training years was also a common factor.

Timing of Sub-Speciality Selection



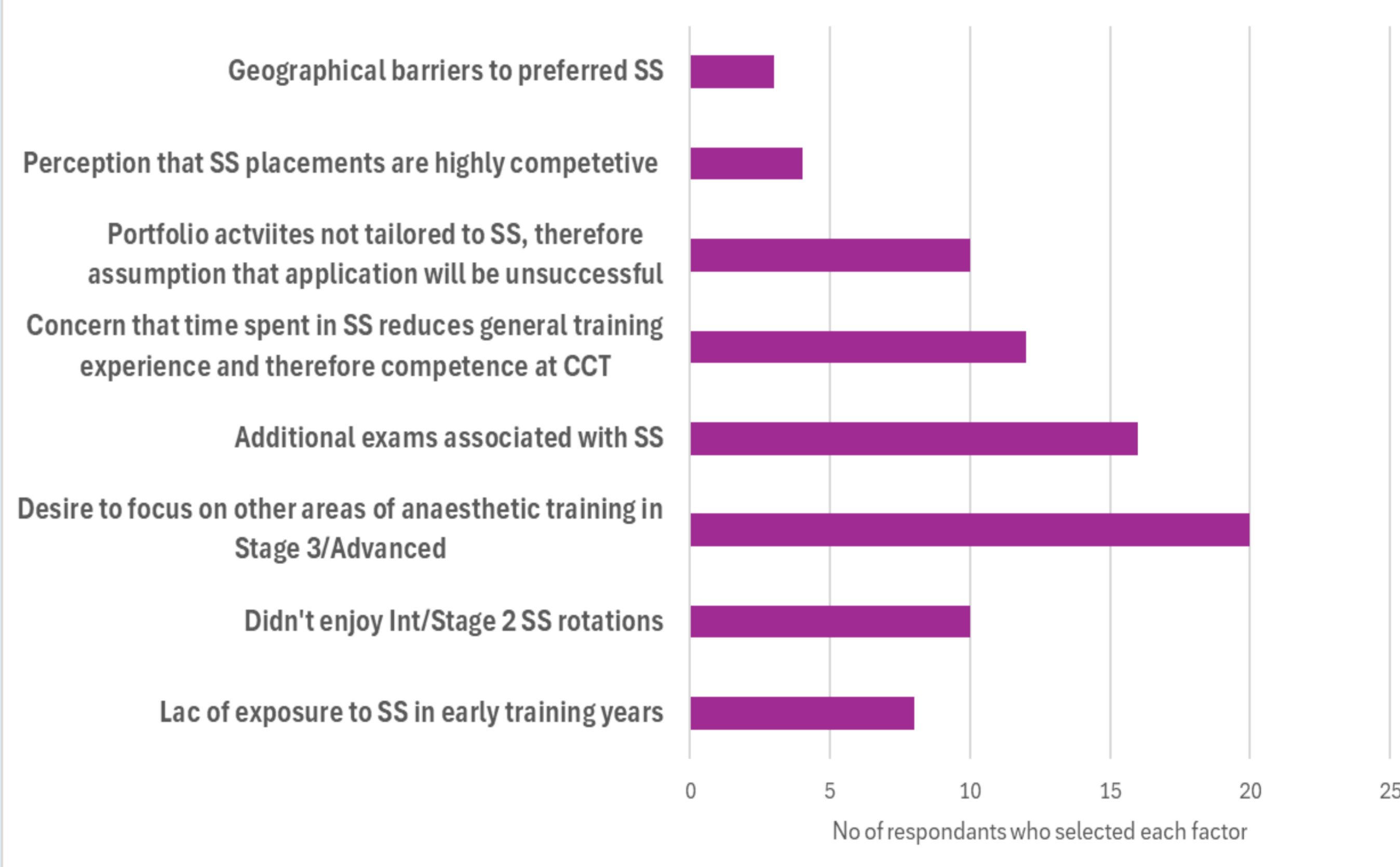
Results

Factors that increase likelihood of Sub-Speciality Selection



96 people answered the question on what factors would make them more likely to chose a SS. The factor most commonly selected was an enjoyable experience in Intermediate/Stage 2 training.

Factors that Discourage Selection of Sub-Specialities



38 respondents answered the question focussing on factors that discourage SS selection. A desire to focus on other areas of anaesthetic training in senior years was the most commonly selected reason. With additional exams and an unenjoyable Stage 2/intermediate rotation also being a strong influencing factor.

Conclusion

The results of this survey highlight the importance of informing anaesthetic trainees of SS options and gaining clinical exposure early in training. This allows trainees to tailor their portfolio activities accordingly and be successful in competitive application processes. The perception that focussing on a SS in senior training may reduce general competence at CCT is somewhat concerning, and the Covid-19 pandemic may have compounded this view due to redeployment or reduced elective operating. Local training committees may want to highlight SS options at the point of induction and take steps to optimise Stage 2 rotations. Ultimately these specialities require specific expertise, so to ensure service provision is sustained it is imperative that trainees continue to seek SS training.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to all the anaesthetic trainees across Scotland who took the time to complete our survey.