



*THE ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT OFFICIALS*



TAO EU SURVEY  
**TELEWORK  
AND RISK OF BURNOUT**

*BRUSSELS – January 2021*

## TAO-AFI EU STAFF SURVEY –TELEWORK & RISK OF BURNOUT

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In November 2020, TAO-AFI, *the Association of Independents*, launched an EU-Survey to evaluate how Commission staff were coping with remote working through these exceptional and demanding times. TAO-AFI identified very early into this difficult period solid evidence of issues that are greatly affecting the strength, mood and motivation of the personnel. These include:

- increasingly demanding working conditions
- difficulty reconciling work and private life
- expectation or even the obligation to work long hours with unrealistic workloads
- poor support from management or unreasonable supervision of staff work resulting in even more stress and demotivation
- Reduction in team cohesion and personal relationships within teams

Accordingly, TAO was amongst the first to alert our administration to the risk of psychological burnout of a significant part of the workforce who were struggling with the new teleworking reality. In parallel, TAO proposed specific measures that the administration could adopt with immediate effect to mitigate the threat (please see TAO's communication: "[Fighting teleworking burnout](#)")

In order to obtain a fuller picture of the situation, TAO kindly invited staff across the institution to give their views on the issue in an **anonymous questionnaire**. It was essential to grasp the nature and scale of the issue so that measures can be taken to mitigate against risks. The health, dignity and well-being of the staff must always be the priority of any good employer – in compliance with its duty of care.

Staff had until **Friday 11 December** to reply to the survey via the application EU-Survey.

- The survey received 1797 contributions throughout all DGs
- Below a summary of the replies

# TAO-AFI EU STAFF SURVEY –TELEWORK & RISK OF BURNOUT

## 1. STATUS & SERVICE

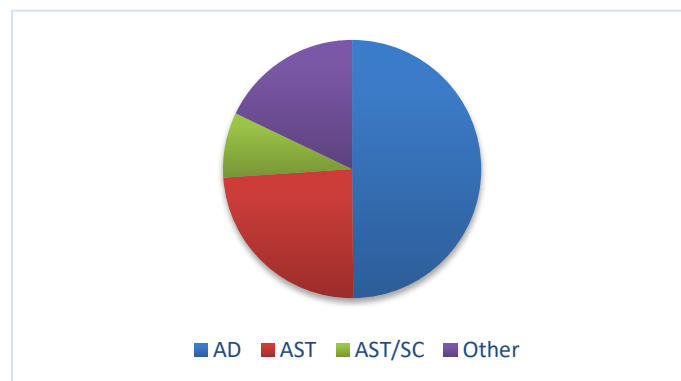
### a) Status

<b>Civil servant</b>	<b>69%</b>
Temporary agent	7,68%
Contract agent	22,48%
Other	0,89%



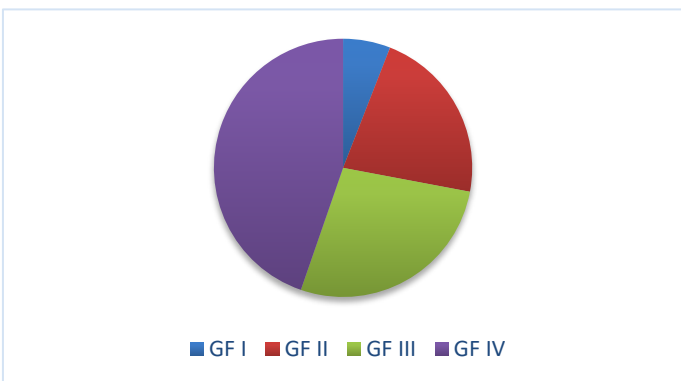
### b) Function Group

<b>AD</b>	<b>49,92%</b>
AST	24,1%
AST/SC	8,18%
Other	17,92%



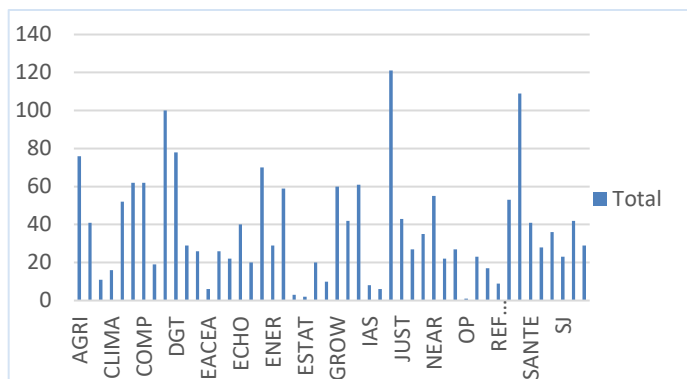
### c) AC Function group

GF I	5,93%
GF II	22,03%
GF III	27,33%
<b>GF IV</b>	<b>44,70%</b>



### d) DG

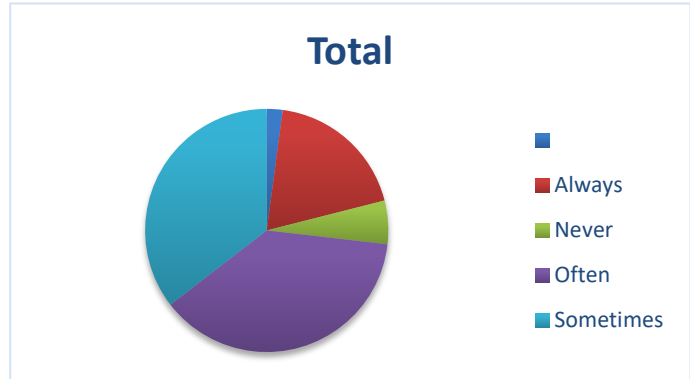
AGRI	76	EACEA	6	GROW	60	OP	1
BUDG	41	EASME	26	HOME	42	PMO	23
CAB	11	ECFIN	22	HR	61	REA	17
CLIMA	16	ECHO	40	IAS	8	REFORM	9
CNECT	52	EEAS	20	INEA	6	REGIO	53
COMM	62	EMPL	70	JRC	121	RTD	109
COMP	62	ENER	29	JUST	43	SANTE	41
DEFIS	19	ENV	59	MARE	27	SCIC	28
DEVCO	100	EPSO	3	MOVE	35	SG	36
DGT	78	ESTAT	2	NEAR	55	SJ	23
DIGIT	29	FISMA	20	OIB	22	TAXUD	42
EAC	26	FPI	10	OLAF	27	TRADE	29
<b>Grand Total = 1797</b>							



2. INTENSITY AND COMPLEXITY AT WORK

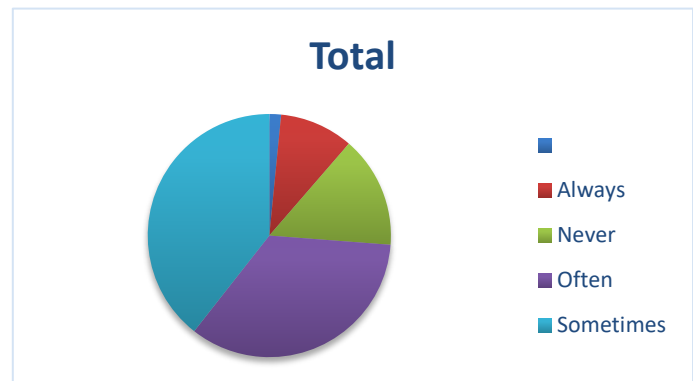
a) Are you subject to high pace constraints?

No answer	38
Always	340
Never	104
<b>Often</b>	<b>678</b>
Sometimes	637
Grand total	1797



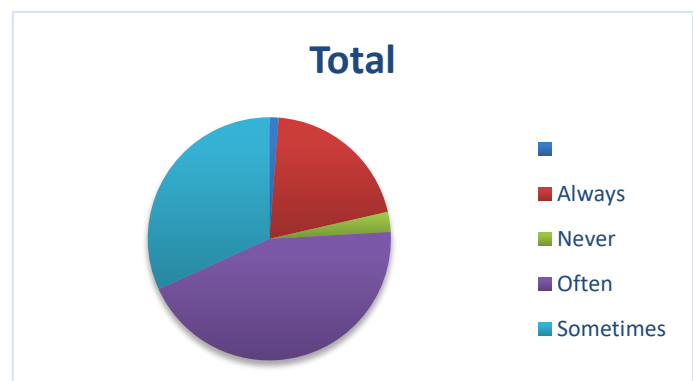
b) Are your objectives clearly defined?

No answer	32
Always	355
Never	94
<b>Often</b>	<b>740</b>
Sometimes	576
Grand total	1797



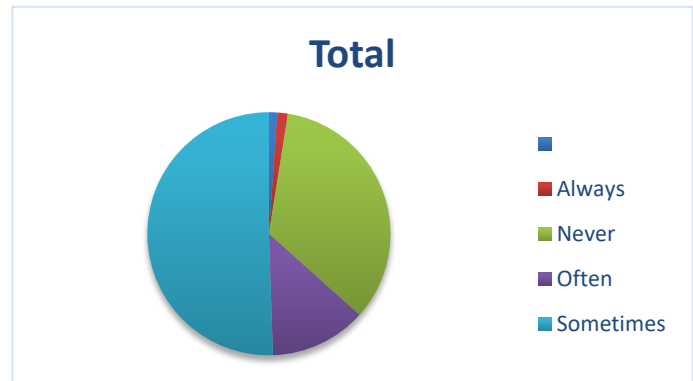
c) Are the objectives set consistent with the means and responsibilities you are given to achieve them?

No answer	22
Always	363
Never	48
<b>Often</b>	<b>793</b>
Sometimes	571
Grand total	1797



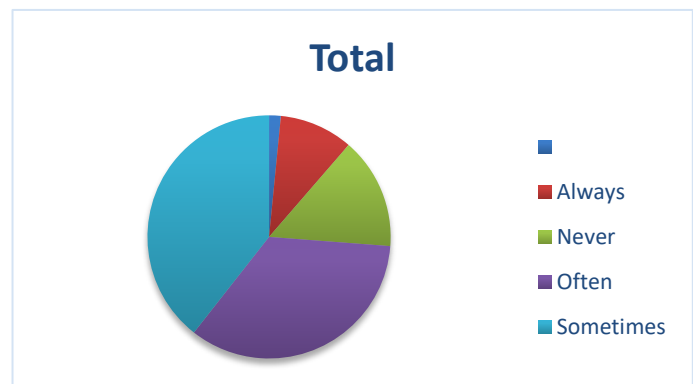
d) Do you receive instructions, orders or requests that may be contradictory to each other?

No answer	20
Always	25
Never	613
Often	231
<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>908</b>
Grand total	1797



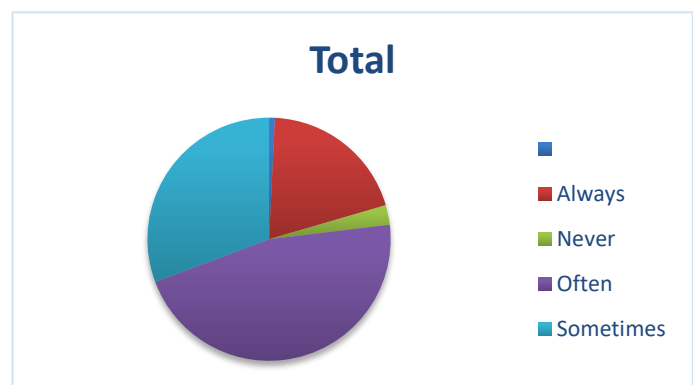
e) Do you have to change tasks, positions or functions unexpectedly to meet the constraints of the moment?

No answer	28
Always	176
Never	267
Often	618
<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>708</b>
Grand total	1797



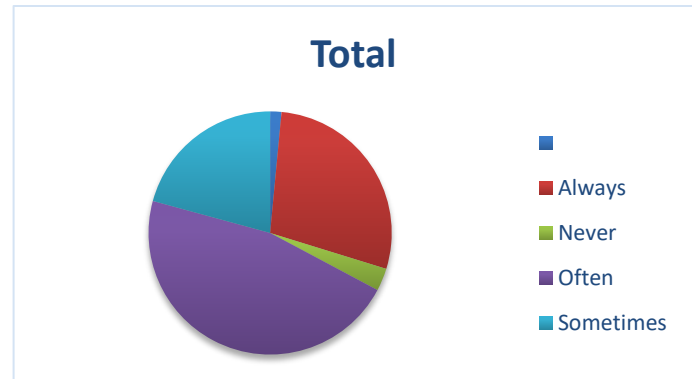
f) Are you frequently interrupted by unplanned tasks?

No answer	14
Always	354
Never	47
<b>Often</b>	<b>830</b>
Sometimes	552
Grand total	1797



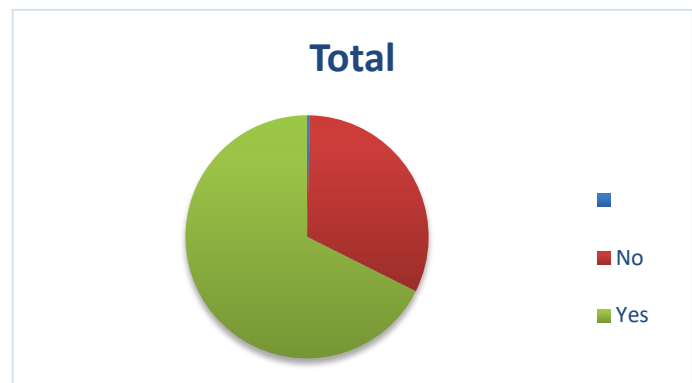
g) Do you engage in activities that require sustained attention or constant vigilance?

No answer	27
Always	508
Never	54
<b>Often</b>	<b>835</b>
Sometimes	373
Grand total	1797



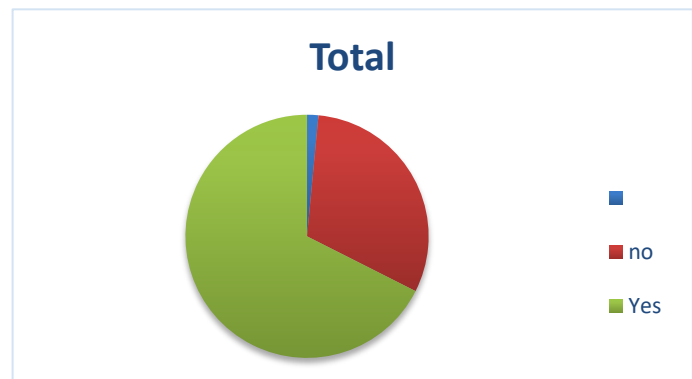
h) In the context of teleworking, do IT requirements at home add stress to your work (bad connections, continued focus on the screen and audios...)?

No answer	7
<b>Yes</b>	<b>1215</b>
No	575
Grand total	1797



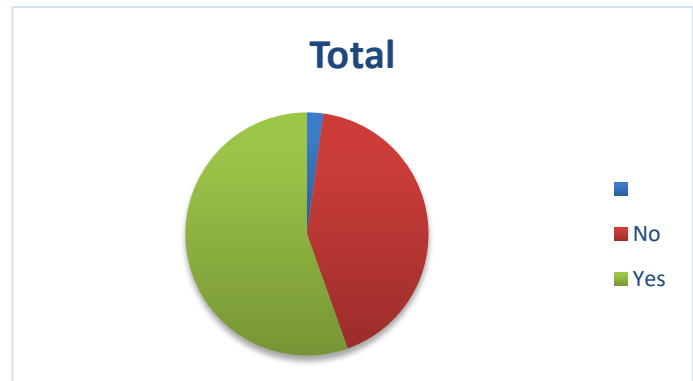
i) In the context of teleworking, do you think your line managers are competent to deal with the management of staff under its responsibility?

No answer	27
<b>Yes</b>	<b>1214</b>
No	556
Grand total	1797



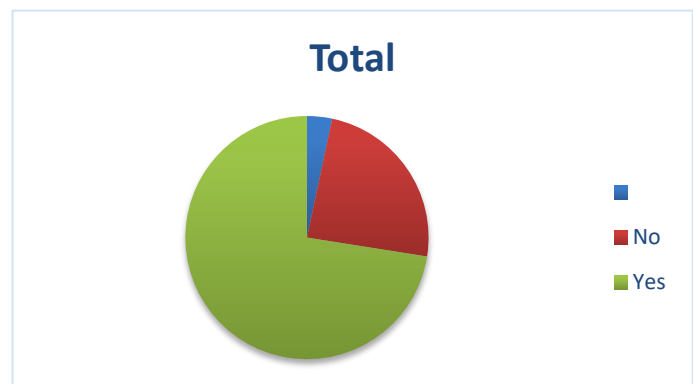
j) In the context of teleworking, do you think your line managers need further training to manage staff under its responsibility?

No answer	39
<b>Yes</b>	<b>996</b>
No	762
Grand total	1797



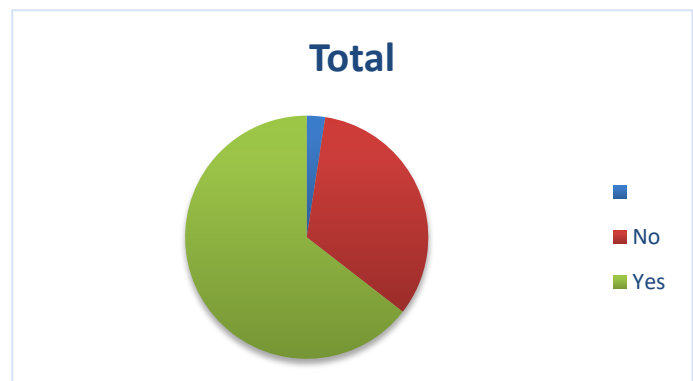
k) In the context of teleworking, do you think your line managers should receive more direct feedback from staff in the course of your annual evaluation reports about the managers' teleworking-related skills (360° evaluation)?

No answer	60
<b>Yes</b>	<b>1303</b>
No	434
Grand total	1797



l) In the context of teleworking, do you think your line managers should be specifically evaluated by their supervisors on their competence to manage staff remotely?

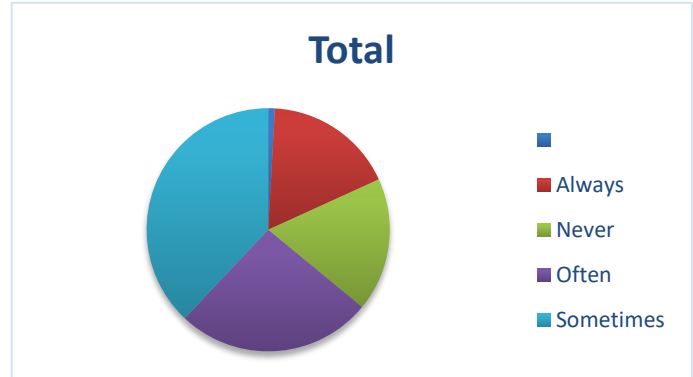
No answer	44
<b>Yes</b>	<b>1159</b>
No	594
Grand total	1797



### 3. WORKING HOURS

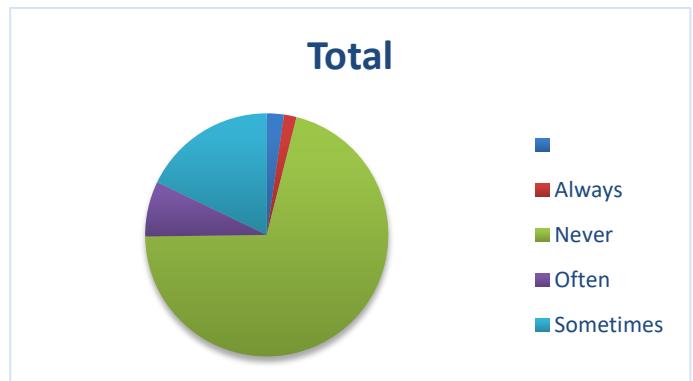
a) Do you ever work more than 45 hours a week?

No answer	16
Always	311
Never	319
Often	469
<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>682</b>
Grand total	1797



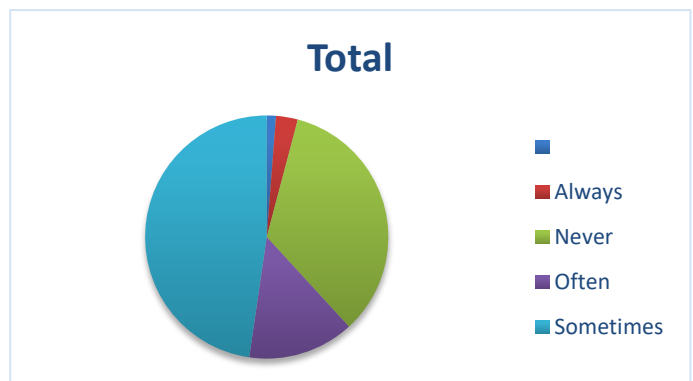
b) Are you subject to night shift or staggered schedules?

No answer	41
Always	30
<b>Never</b>	<b>1273</b>
Often	132
Sometimes	321
Grand total	1797



c) Are you contacted outside working hours for professional reasons?

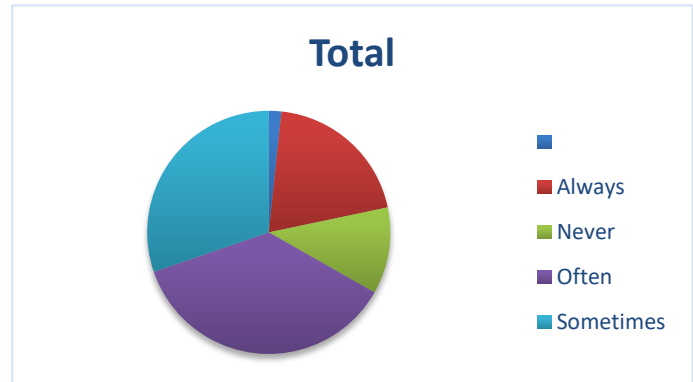
No answer	22
Always	52
Never	612
Often	254
<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>857</b>
Grand total	1797





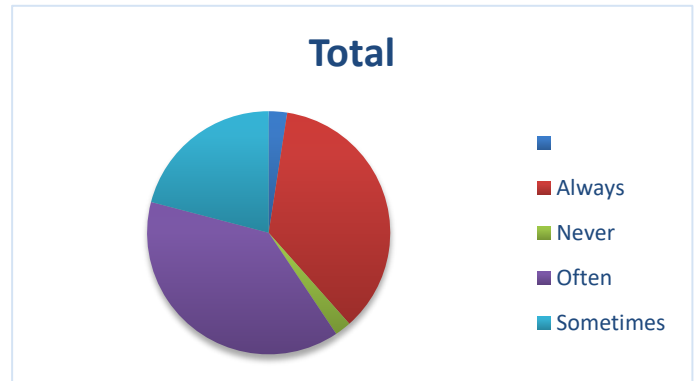
d) Do you know well in advance your working hours or any changes in your work schedule?

No answer	30
Always	360
Never	207
<b>Often</b>	<b>656</b>
Sometimes	544
Grand total	1797



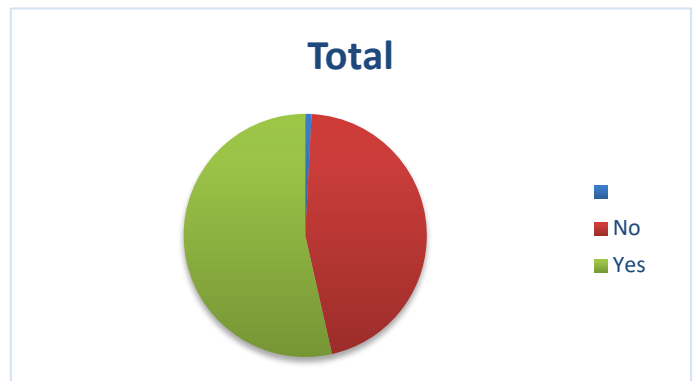
e) Do your line managers allow you to conciliate work and personal life?

No answer	30
Always	360
Never	207
<b>Often</b>	<b>656</b>
Sometimes	544
Grand total	1797



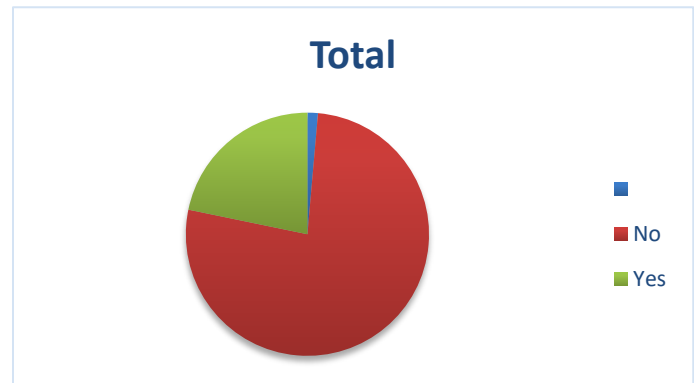
f) In the context of teleworking, do you have to follow work-related videoconferences outside working core hours including during lunch breaks or after 6pm?

No answer	15
<b>Yes</b>	<b>962</b>
No	820
Grand total	1797



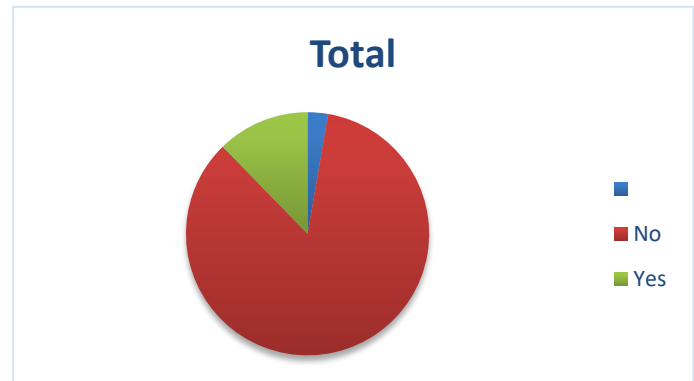
g) In the context of teleworking, are you invited to over 20 hours per week of video-conferencing?

No answer	25
Yes	391
<b>No</b>	<b>1381</b>
Grand total	1797



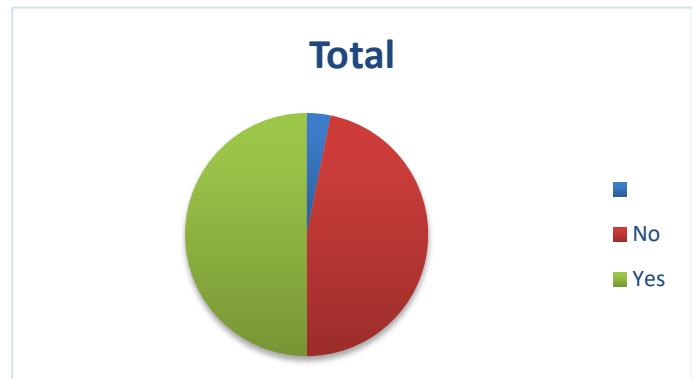
h) In the context of teleworking, does your manager plan one day per week of digital rest where no videoconferencing is organized?

No answer	49
Yes	221
<b>No</b>	<b>1527</b>
Grand total	1797



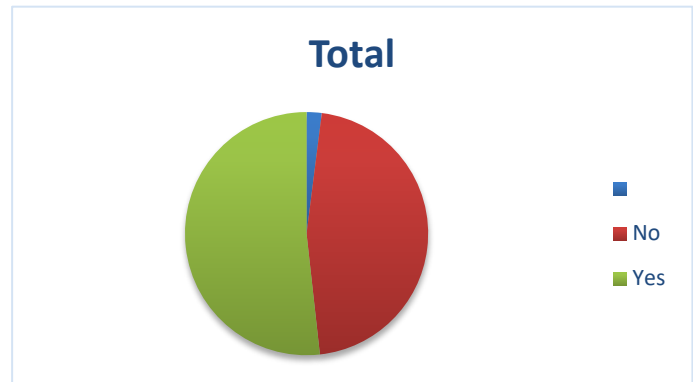
i) In the context of teleworking, do you think working hours should be regulated in detail by DG HR at central level for good practices to apply uniformly across DGs?

No answer	57
<b>Yes</b>	<b>899</b>
No	841
Grand total	1797



j) Did you perceive a significant increase in the amount of work you are accountable for following the departure of colleagues who are not replaced in the last ten months?

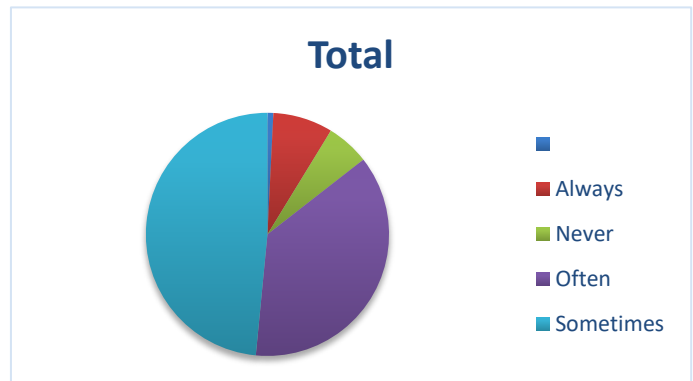
No answer	36
<b>Yes</b>	<b>930</b>
No	831
Grand total	1797



#### 4. EMOTIONAL DEMANDS

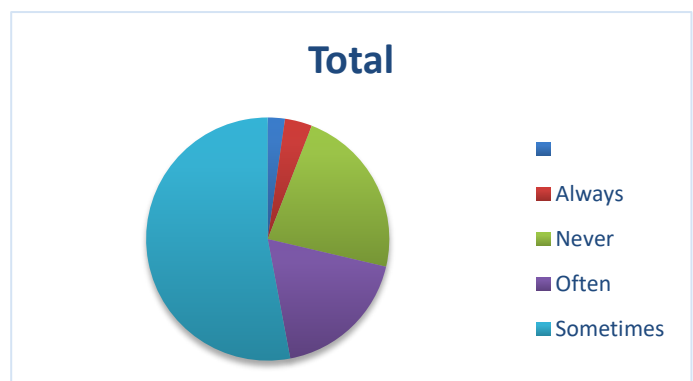
a) Do you face situations of tension?

No answer	14
Always	143
Never	103
Often	666
<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>871</b>
Grand total	1797



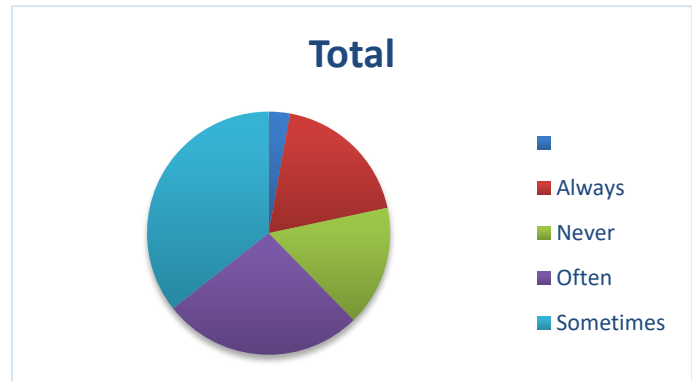
b) In the course of your professional activities, do you have to deal with people that are suffering (physically, psychologically or socially)?

No answer	41
Always	65
Never	409
Often	330
<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>952</b>
Grand total	1797



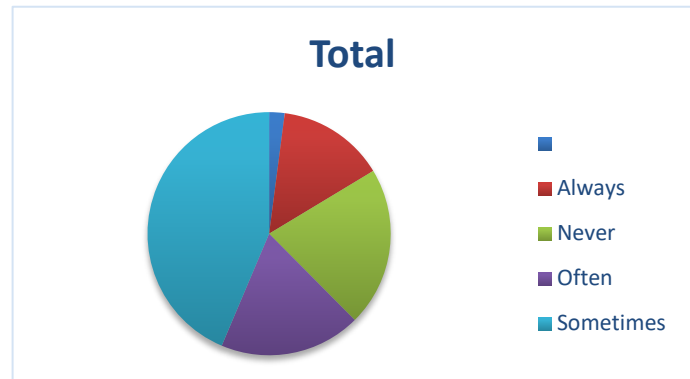
c) In your work, do you have to “look good” in all circumstances?

No answer	51
Always	338
Never	288
Often	480
<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>640</b>
Grand total	1797



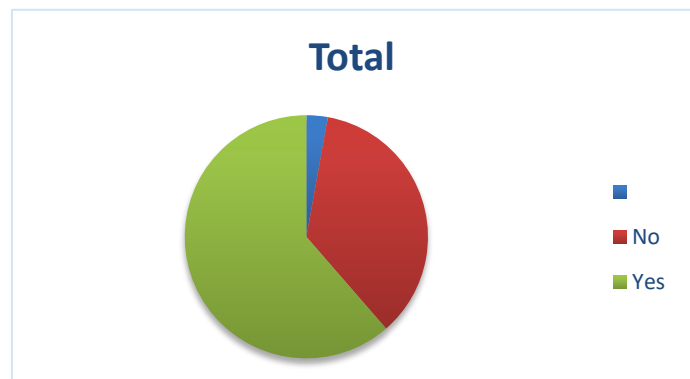
d) In the context of teleworking, would you feel free to exercise your right to disconnect or withdraw from too long continued videoconference periods cfr. over three hours, should you feel your health is at stake in terms of fatigue or stress?

No answer	37
Always	257
Never	381
Often	338
<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>784</b>
Grand total	1797



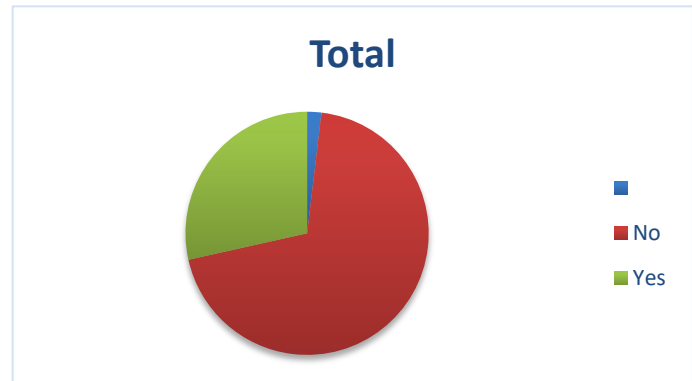
e) In the context of teleworking, should you feel the need to disconnect from abusive video-conferencing periods would you feel free to notify it to your line managers?

No answer	51
<b>Yes</b>	<b>1103</b>
No	643
Grand total	1797



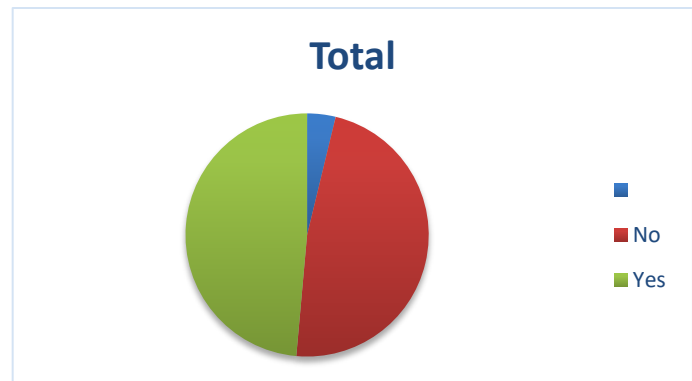
f) Do the additional costs of teleworking at home payed by you constitute a source of stress?

No answer	34
Yes	512
<b>No</b>	<b>1251</b>
Grand total	1797



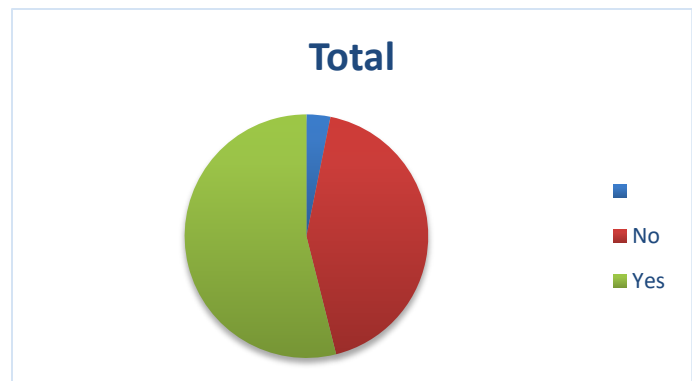
g) Would it significantly alleviate the risk of telework burnout if you were given the option to telework from your place of origin?

No answer	68
<b>Yes</b>	<b>873</b>
No	856
Grand total	1797



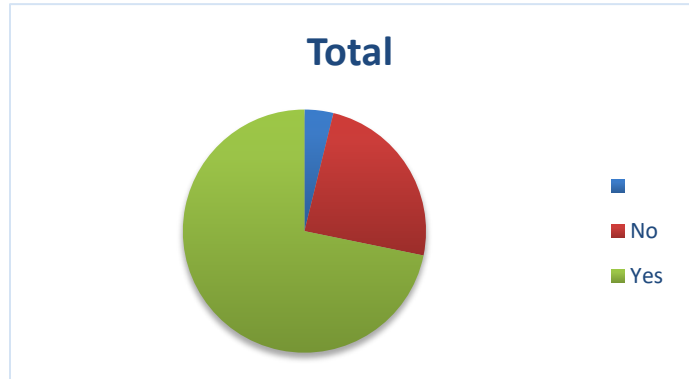
h) Do you think the option of teleworking from the place of origin should be negotiated individually by staff with its line managers to find personal tailored solutions?

No answer	57
<b>Yes</b>	<b>969</b>
No	771
Grand total	1797



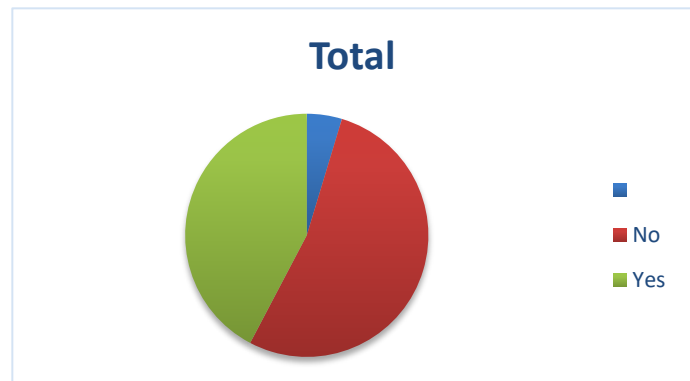
i) Do you think the option of teleworking from the place of origin should be negotiated centrally by the staff representatives with the administration to set uniform rules for all?

No answer	69
<b>Yes</b>	<b>1290</b>
No	438
Grand total	1797



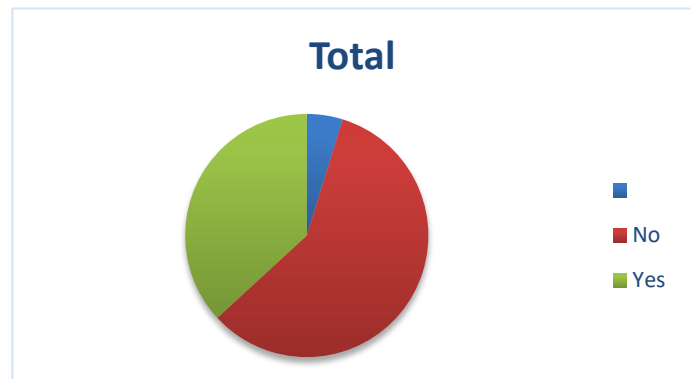
j) Do you think the option of permanent teleworking from the place of origin should be offered in return of waiving fully the right for the expatriation allowance?

No answer	84
Yes	760
<b>No</b>	<b>953</b>
Grand total	1797



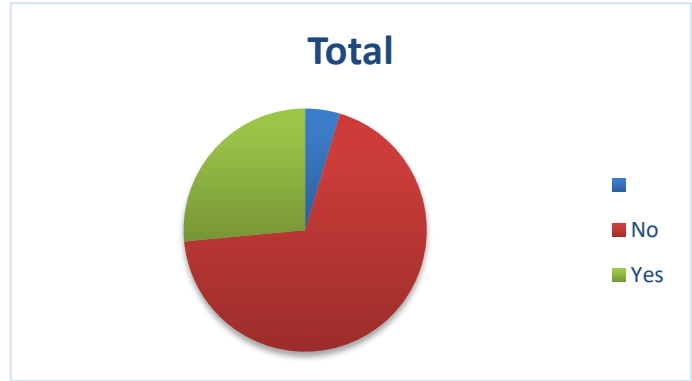
k) Do you think the option of permanent teleworking from the place of origin should be offered in return of waiving partially the right for the expatriation allowance?

No answer	86
Yes	662
<b>No</b>	<b>1049</b>
Grand total	1797



1) Do you think the option of permanent teleworking from the place of origin should be offered without any financial implication in the staff monthly compensation?

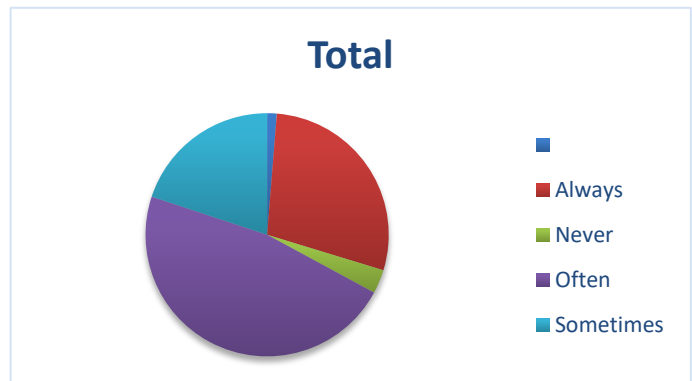
No answer	83
Yes	476
<b>No</b>	<b>1238</b>
Grand total	1797



## 5. AUTONOMY AT WORK

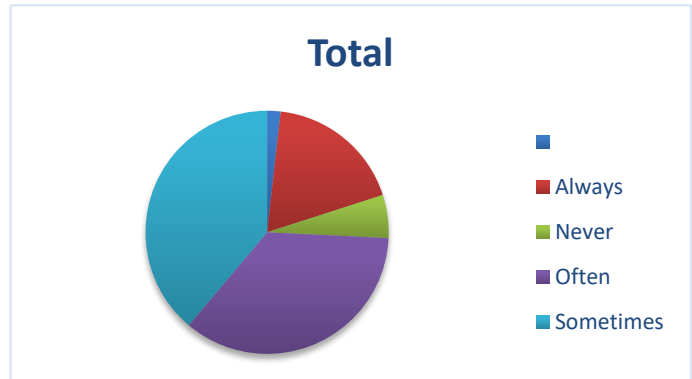
a) Do you have a certain freedom in your work as long as the objectives are achieved?

No answer	23
Always	511
Never	57
<b>Often</b>	<b>848</b>
Sometimes	358
Grand total	1797



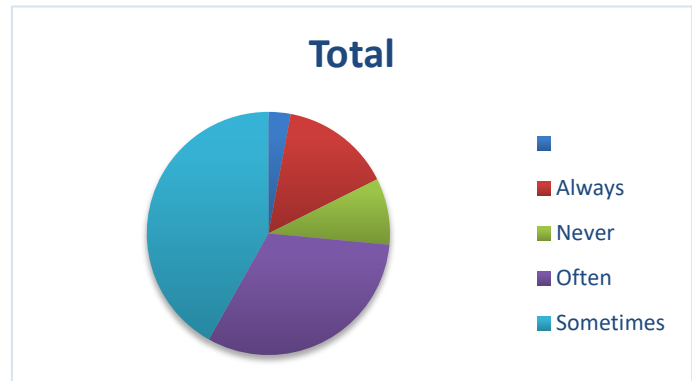
b) Can you take a break in your work when you feel the need?

No answer	32
Always	328
Never	103
Often	636
<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>698</b>
Grand total	1797



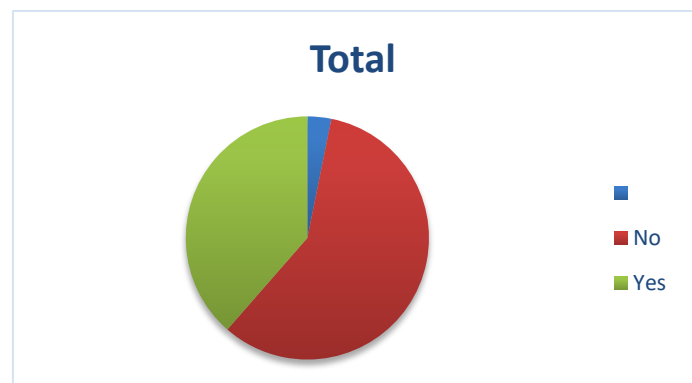
c) Can you use your professional skills and develop new ones?

No answer	53
Always	264
Never	159
Often	569
<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>752</b>
Grand total	1797



d) In the context of teleworking, are you concerned about forms of geo-localization i.e. the administration might locate you close to your laptop or other working tools at all time through digital tracing instruments?

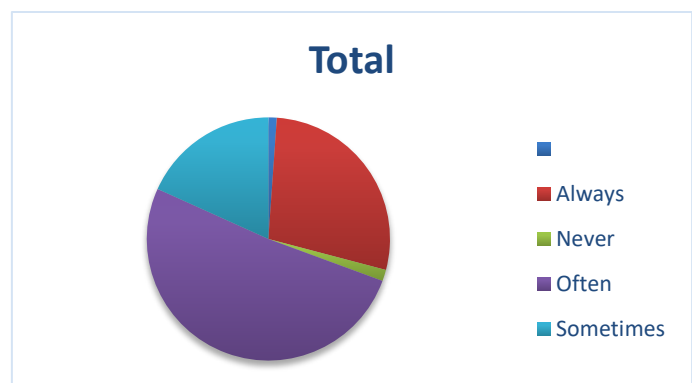
No answer	57
Yes	693
<b>No</b>	<b>1047</b>
Grand total	1797



## 6. SOCIAL RELATIONS AT WORK

a) Are the relations between colleagues good (trust, mutual help, and friendliness within the team)?

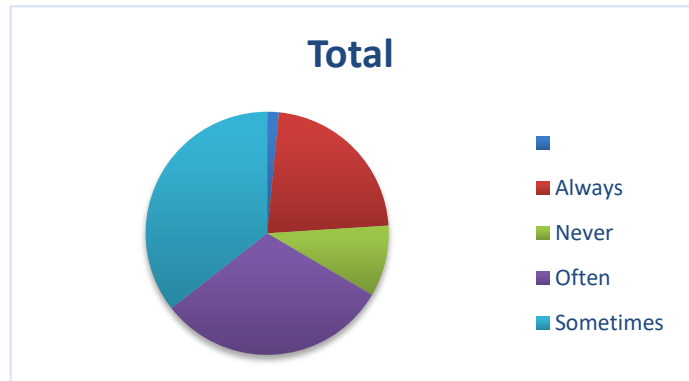
No answer	20
Always	503
Never	27
<b>Often</b>	<b>919</b>
Sometimes	328
Grand total	1797





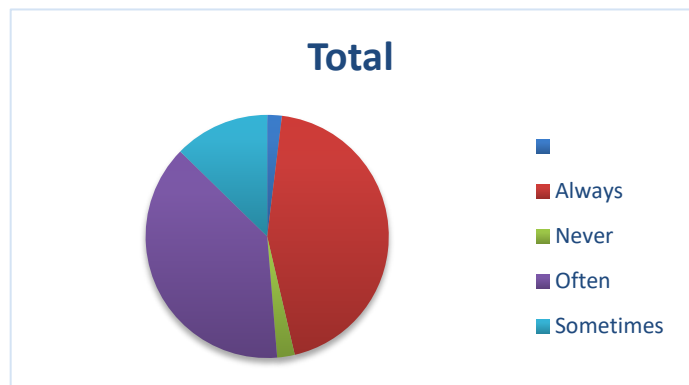
b) Do you receive support from your hierarchy?

No answer	28
Always	403
Never	170
Often	557
<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>639</b>
Grand total	1797



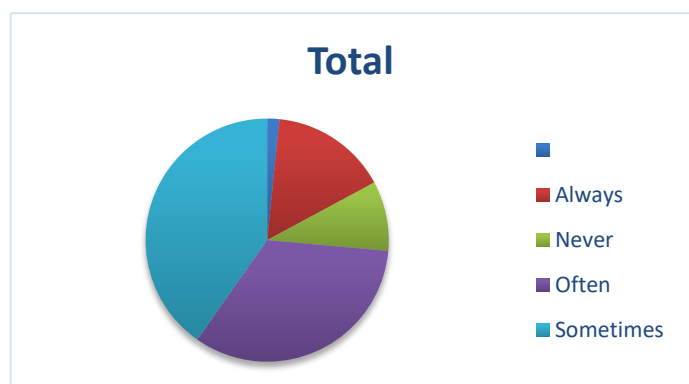
c) Is there, within your unit, a climate of courtesy and mutual respect between the colleagues (absence of offensive or discriminatory remarks or attitudes, etc.)?

No answer	35
<b>Always</b>	<b>798</b>
Never	42
Often	694
Sometimes	228
Grand total	1797



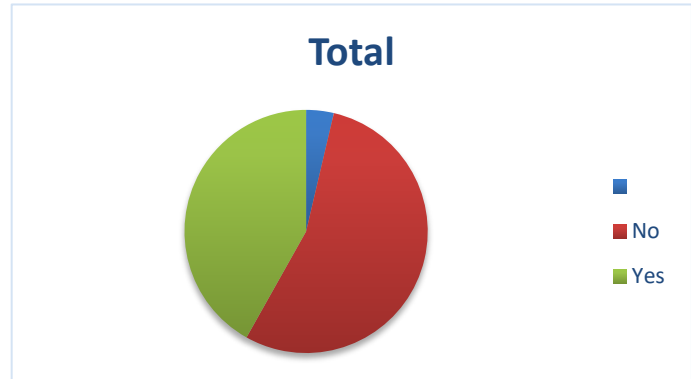
d) Do you receive any signs of recognition of your work from your superiors?

No answer	29
Always	279
Never	167
Often	599
<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>723</b>
Grand total	1797



e) Do you think that permanent teleworking from the place of origin should not be offered because it will irreversibly harm the social relations at work and team working?

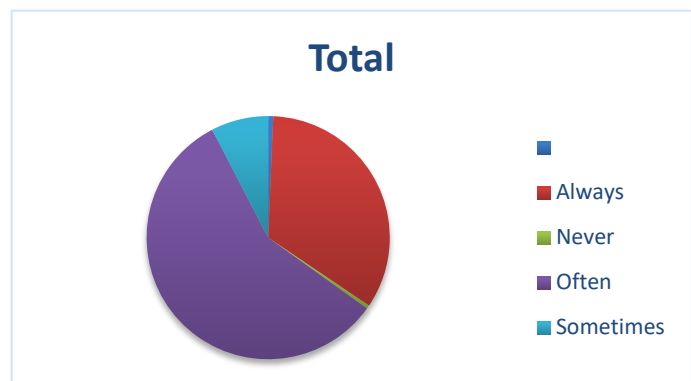
No answer	66
Yes	752
<b>No</b>	<b>979</b>
Grand total	1797



## 7. VALUES

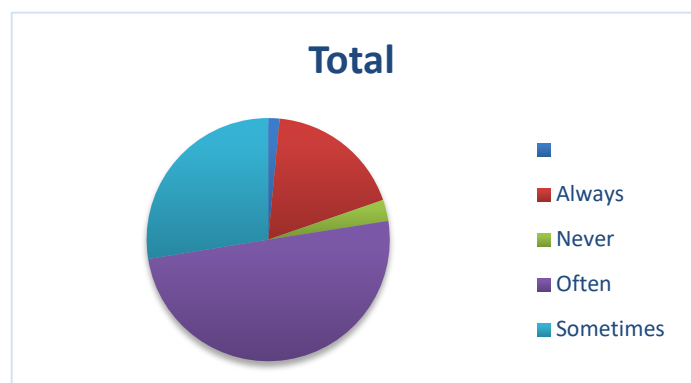
a) Do you consider your work as being of good quality?

No answer	12
Always	607
Never	8
<b>Often</b>	<b>1033</b>
Sometimes	137
Grand total	1797



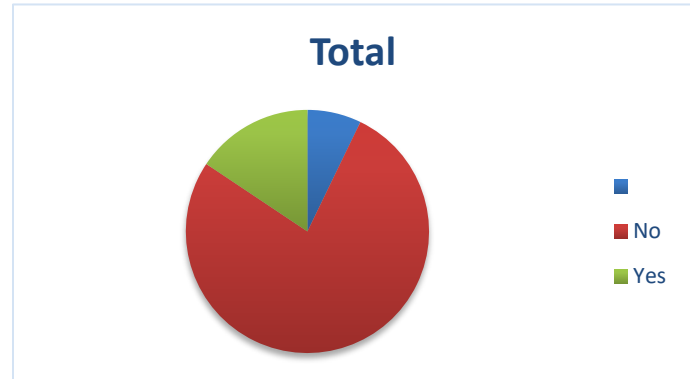
b) Do you think in general that your work is recognized as useful?

No answer	27
Always	327
Never	51
<b>Often</b>	<b>897</b>
Sometimes	495
Grand total	1797



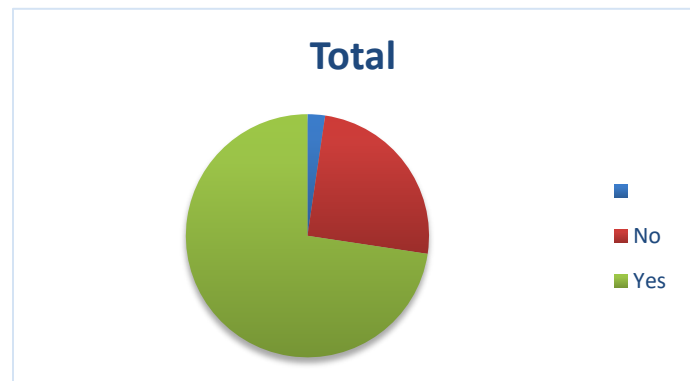
c) Do you think that the existence of careers which, are blocked for more than five years or permanently at certain functions and grades is a normal and acceptable practice by the administration?

No answer	129
Yes	281
<b>No</b>	<b>1387</b>
Grand total	1797



d) Do you think that the administration should pay a significant part of the cost of teleworking at home ?

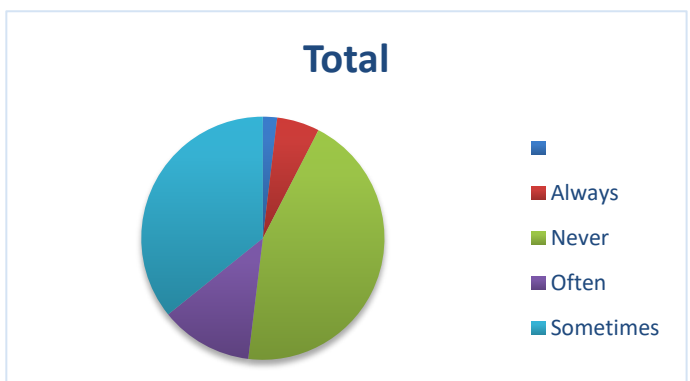
No answer	42
<b>Yes</b>	<b>1305</b>
No	450
Grand total	1797



## 8. SECURITY OF EMPLOYMENT AND WORK

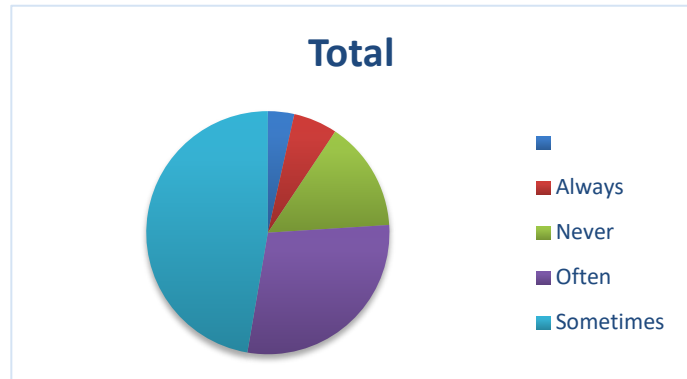
a) Are you facing uncertainties about maintaining your activities in the coming months?

No answer	34
Always	102
<b>Never</b>	<b>797</b>
Often	221
Sometimes	643
Grand total	1797



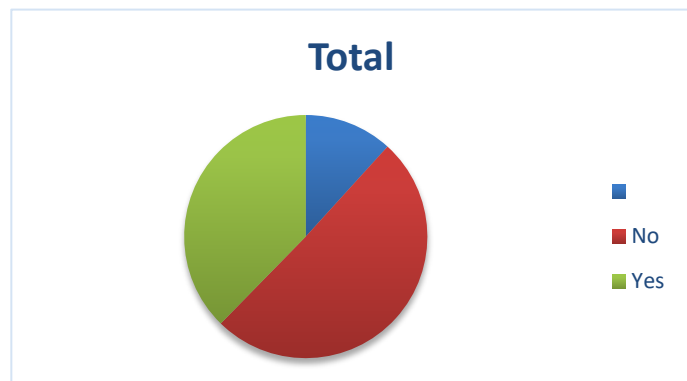
b) Are changes sufficiently anticipated, accompanied and clearly explained to the staff?

No answer	63
Always	105
Never	263
Often	516
<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>850</b>
Grand total	1797



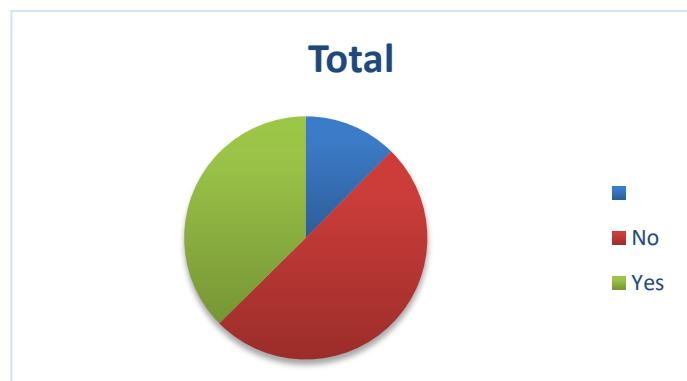
c) Do you see the ongoing frequent transfers of staff to executive agencies as a source of new opportunities e.g. permanent contracts or the opening of new management positions?

No answer	211
Yes	677
<b>No</b>	<b>909</b>
Grand total	1797



d) Do you see the ongoing transfers of staff to executive agencies as a source of legal uncertainty and stress?

No answer	223
Yes	672
<b>No</b>	<b>902</b>
Grand total	1797



# TAO-AFI EU STAFF SURVEY –TELEWORK & RISK OF BURNOUT

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## ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

TAO-AFI thanks all participants for their input.



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