

# Staff Survey


An informal survey was sent to year-round staffers in both chambers and both parties to better understand their workloads during session and the interim and to gain input on staffing levels and needs.

31 responses were received

Assuming 1 year-round staffer for 90 offices = 34% response rate

Conducted April 2025

Please consider modifications to the Legislative Assembly budget that will allow for appropriate staffing levels.



# Summary of Multiple-Choice Responses

See complete multiple choice and essay responses on pages 4-21

- 68% said that the workload during the interim is Manageable, but some tasks are ignored
- Top 5 work activities during the interim:
  1. Legislative Days
  2. Outreach
  3. Constituent Meetings
  4. Scheduling
  5. Organizing for Session
- Top 5 work activities that are not addressed adequately during the interim
  1. Policy Writing
  2. Outreach
  3. Reviewing Rules
  4. Field Research
  5. Workgroup Prep/Follow-up
- 84% of offices submitted >60 bills this session, 71% submitted >40 bills, → the workload is not just due to the significant bill submissions this session
- 87% of offices already rely on LPRO during the interim, → resources are already being utilized
- 55% of members work full- or part-time outside of the legislature during the interim

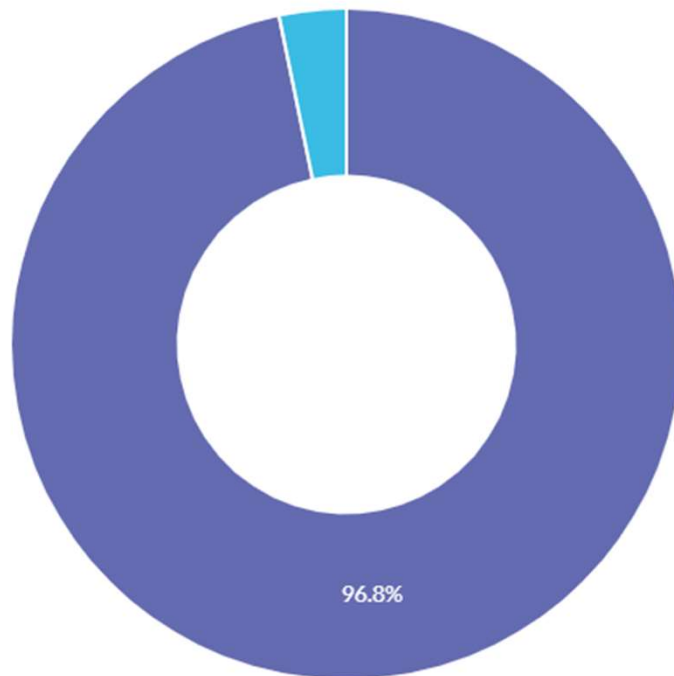
# Summary of Essay Responses

See complete multiple choice and essay responses on pages 4-21

## Themes:

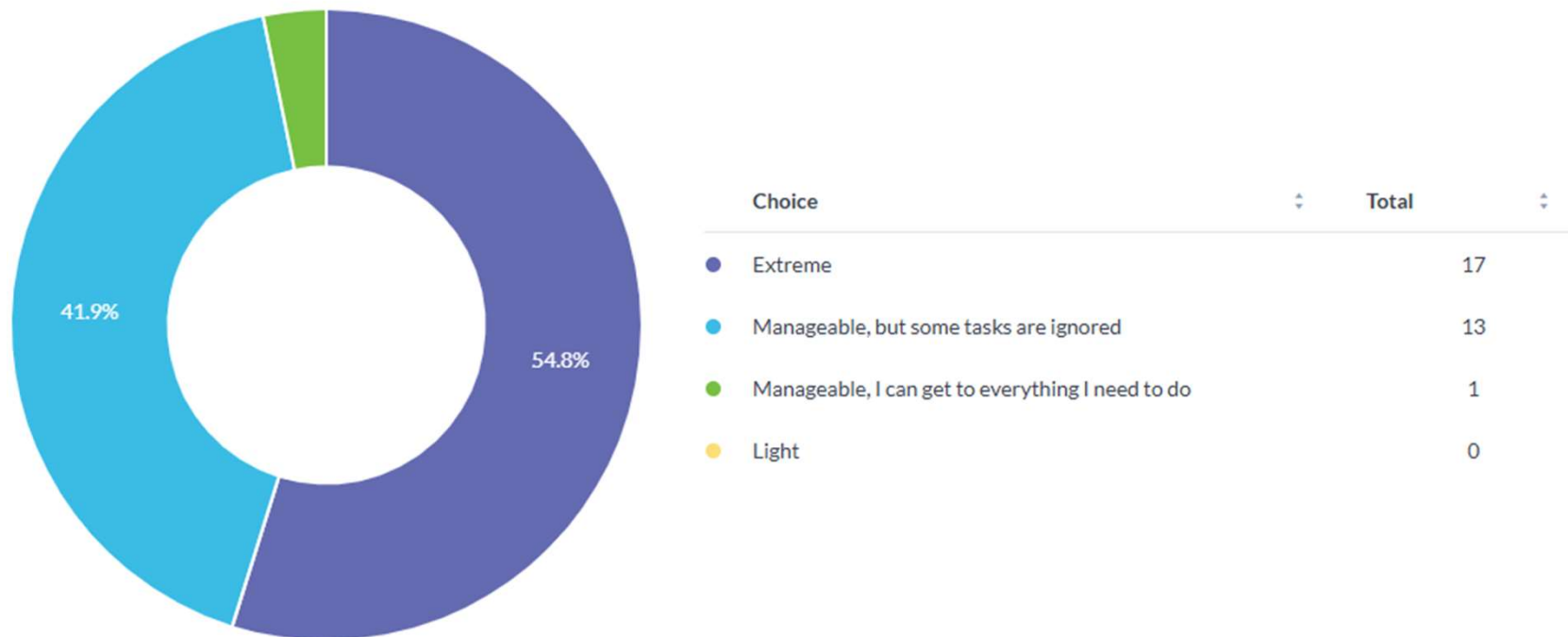
- Offices are stretched and don't feel like they are dedicating enough time to important work
  - Policy drafts lack depth before formally entering the legislative process in session
  - There is limited time for proper dive deeps into issue areas to better serve committee assignments
- Comms-related activities often take a back seat to other responsibilities
- LAs tackle the day-to-day functions while the Chief is tasked with longer term work such as policy development and committee work
- Lack of retention in the Legislative Assistant position leads to:
  - Setbacks that hinder overall progress and outcomes
  - Loss of institutional knowledge and workflow efficiency
- Offices run more smoothly and with less stress when staffed with experienced people

Q1. As a staffer, do you find the annual workload is unbalanced?

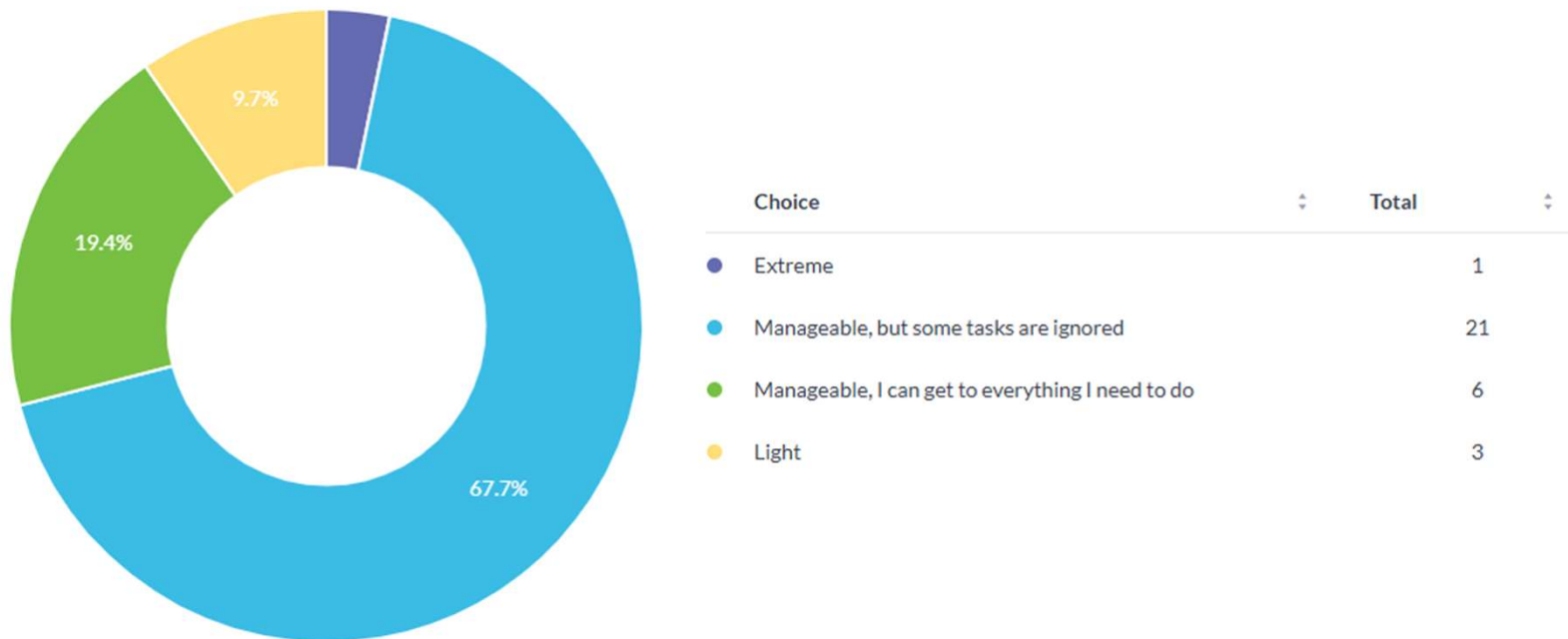


Choice	Total
Yes	30
No	1

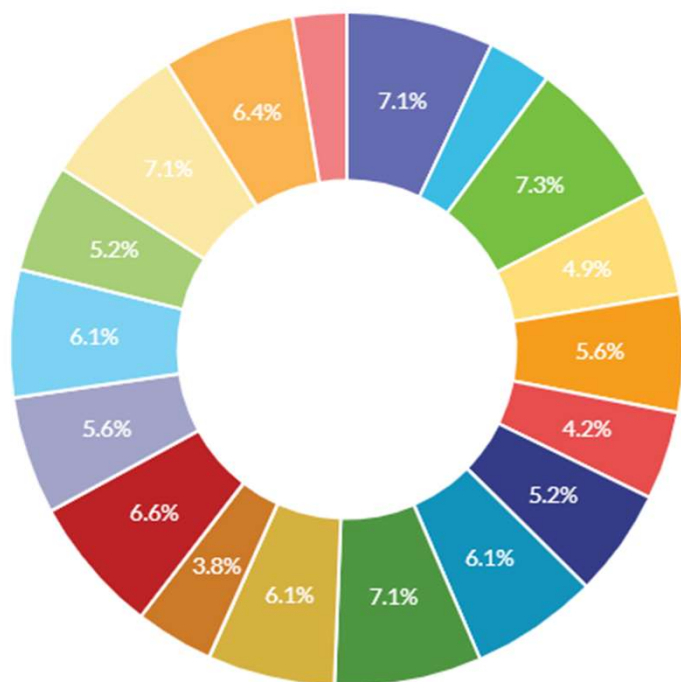
Q2. How is the workload during the session?



Q3. How is the workload during the interim?

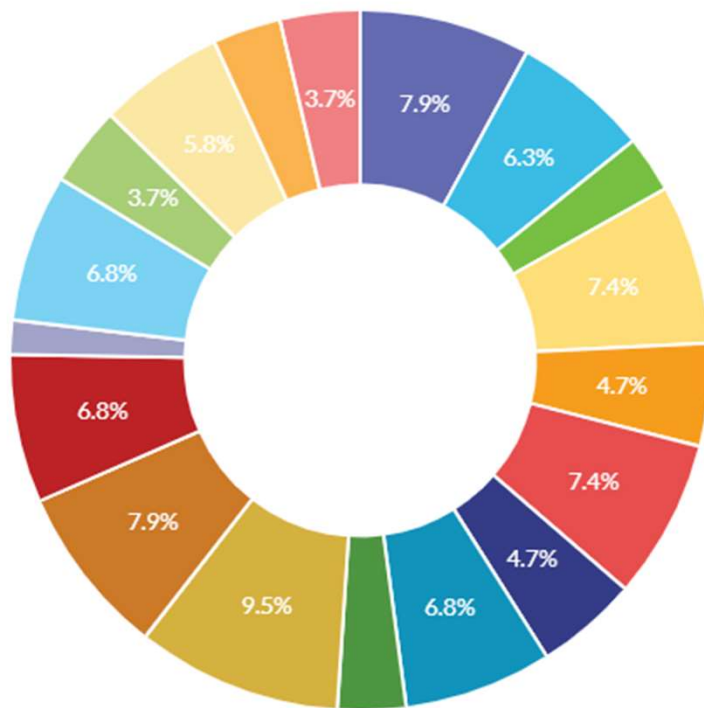


## Q4. What legislative activities do you or other staff engage in during the interim?



Choice	Total
Outreach	30
Committee prep/management	13
Legislative days	31
Workgroup prep/follow-up	21
Workgroup attendance	24
Field research	18
Informational trips	22
Comms	26
Scheduling	30
Policy writing	26
Reviewing rules	16
Organizing for session	28
Hiring activities	24
Stakeholder meetings	26
District leader meetings	22
Constituent meetings	30
Town halls	27
Other	11

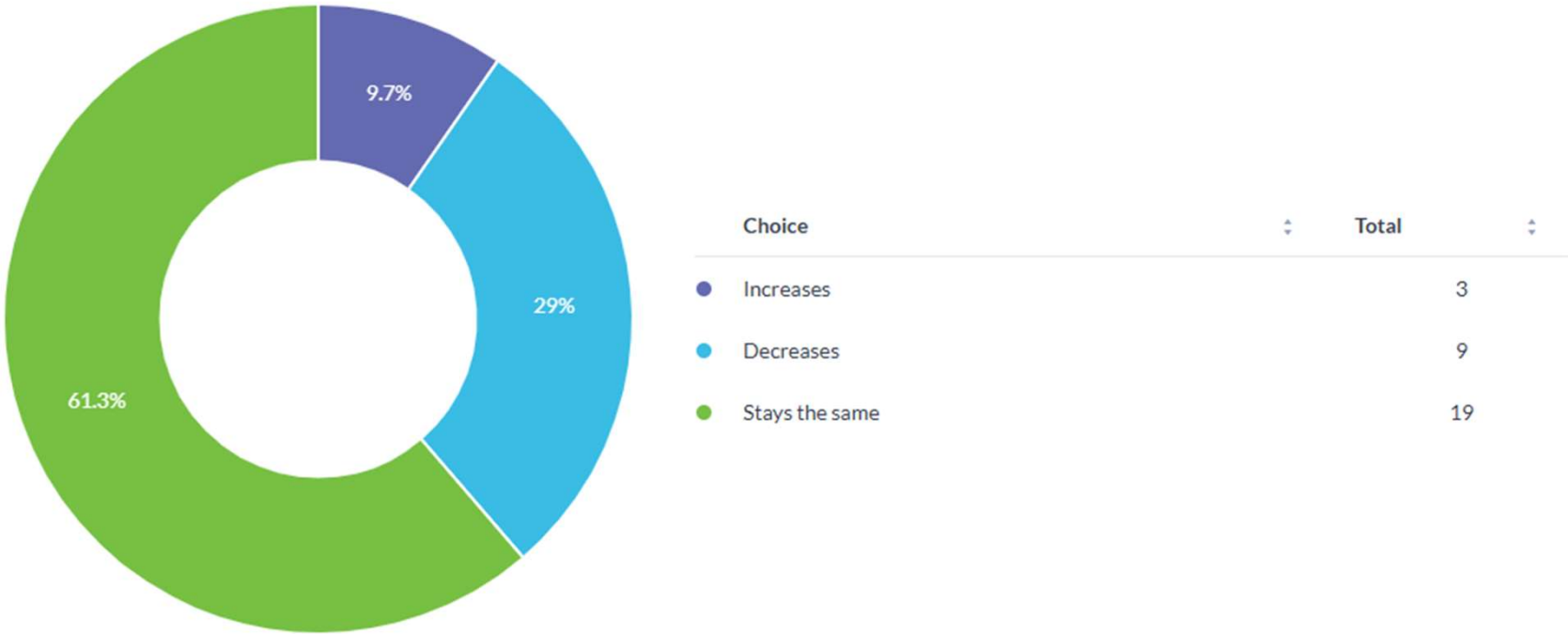
Q5. What legislative activities do you feel do not get enough attention or you are unable to conduct during the interim?



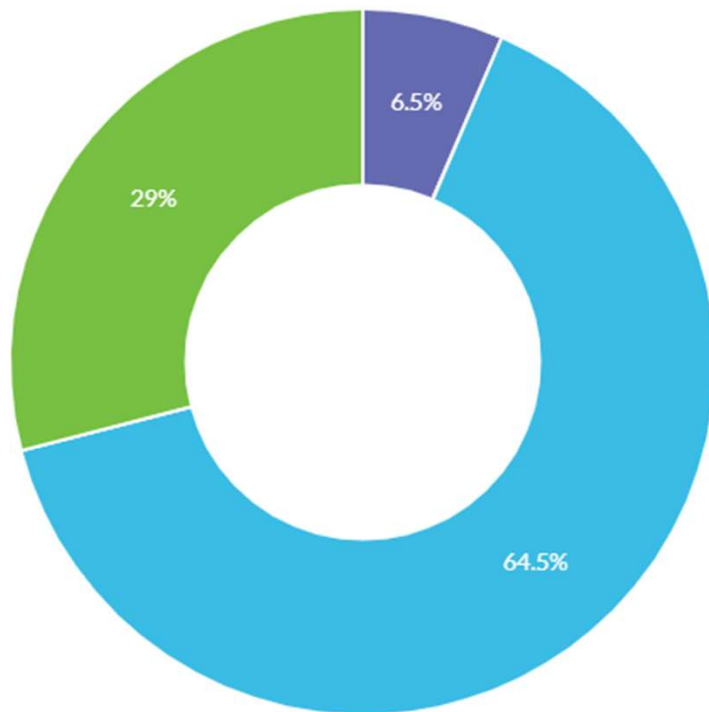
Outreach	15
Committee prep/management	12
Legislative days	5
Workgroup prep/follow-up	14
Workgroup attendance	9
Field research	14
Informational trips	9
Comms	13
Scheduling	6
Policy writing	18
Reviewing rules	15
Organizing for session	13
Hiring activities	3
Stakeholder meetings	13
District leader meetings	7
Constituent meetings	11
Town halls	6
Other	7



Q6. The volume of constituent casework/response during the interim

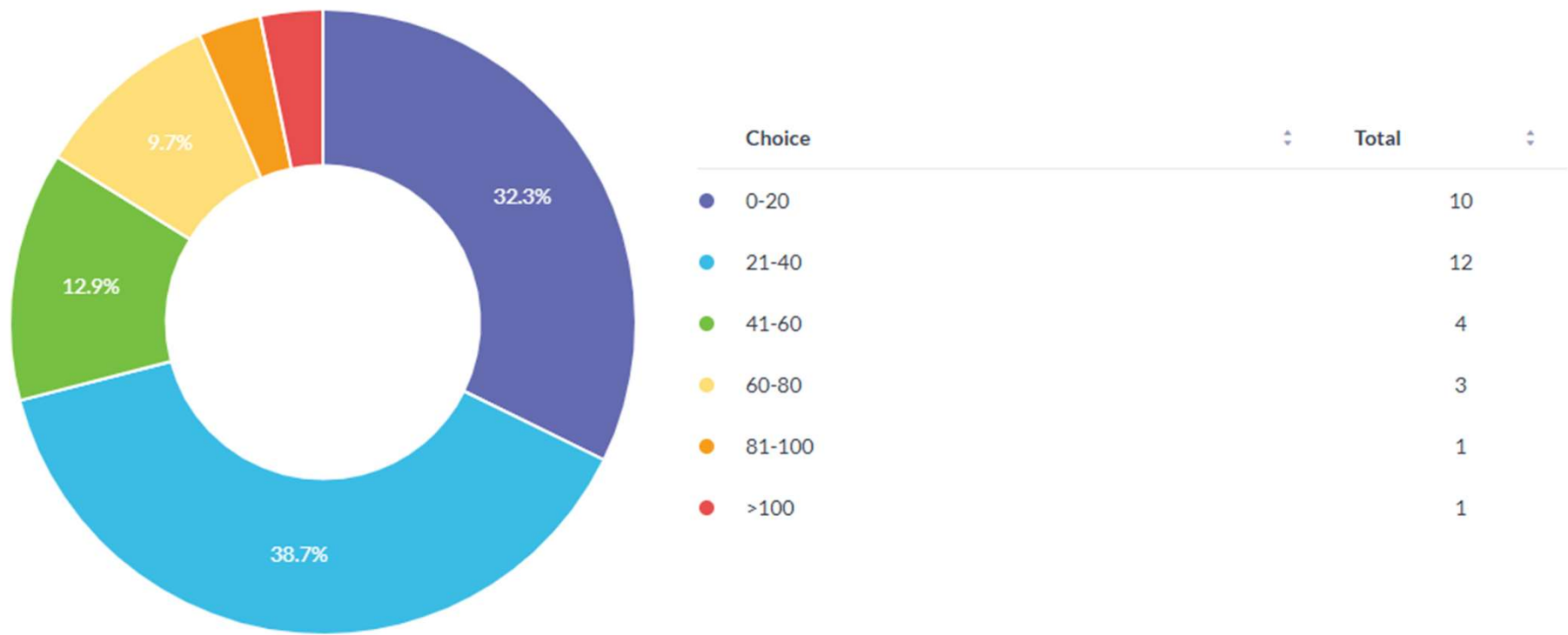


Q7. The volume of scheduling requests during the interim

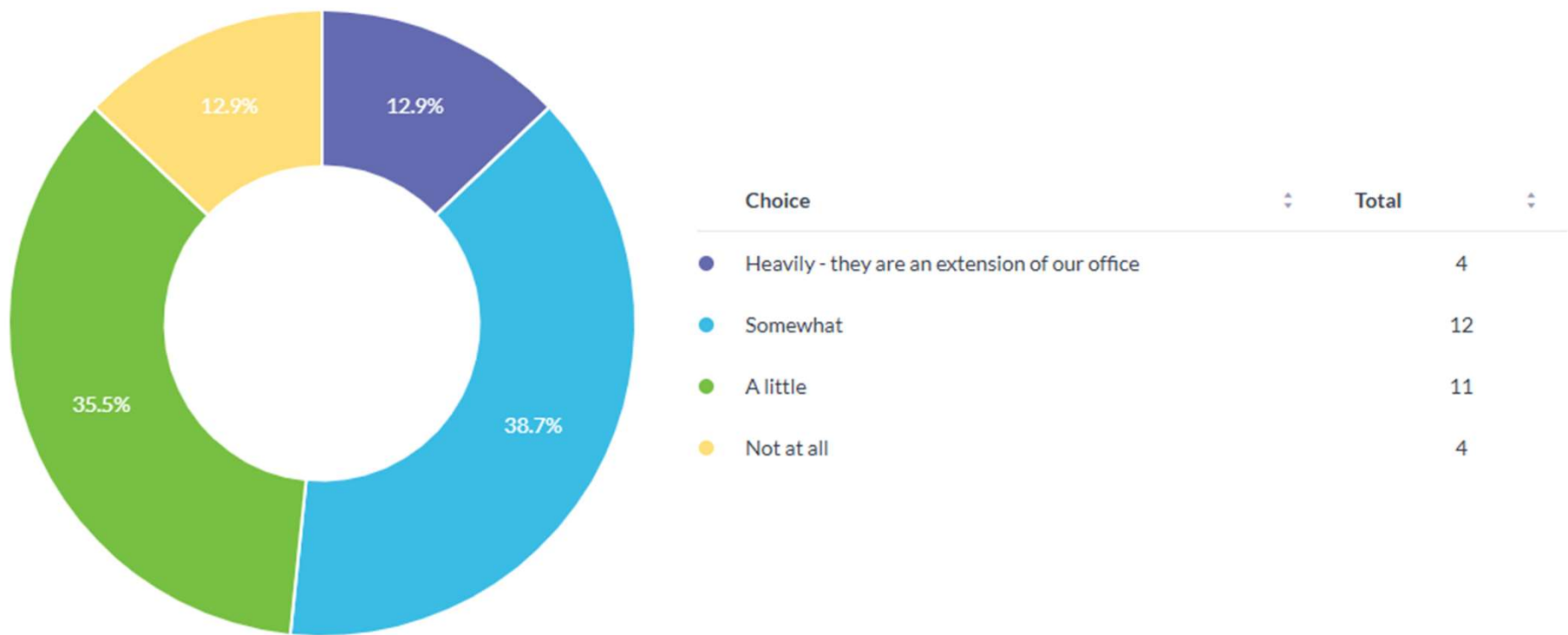


Choice	Total
Increases	2
Decreases	20
Stays the same	9

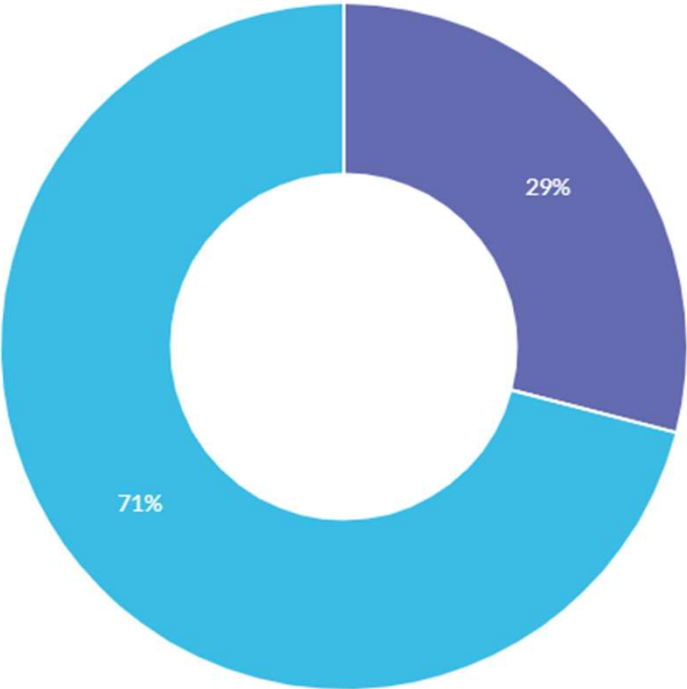
Q8. How many bill concepts did your office develop during the interim?



Q9. How heavily do you rely on LPRO to help during the interim?



Q10. Are you able to take breaks and time off whenever you need to?



Choice	Total
Yes	9
No	22

## Q11. How would having a year-round LA improve your office's legislative agenda, improve function, or contribute to improved outcomes?

1. Better relationship building, improved policy development
2. For our office, an additional year round staffer during an interim would be mostly superfluous, but the extra budget would absolutely increase district outreach.
3. It would allow our office to run more efficiently and productively.
4. Would relive a lot of the stress of having to find and replace a new LA 2 every session
5. I think multiple offices need more support. La2 year rounds does this.
6. The work of an LA is crucial to a smoothly running office. Having a CoS do the jobs of two people- things are bound to fall through the cracks
7. Improve amount of time dedicated to policy work. Someone solely focused on constituent work. Increase the ability to diversify the type of work the office does. More events will be possible.
8. Having a year-round LA not only creates more bandwidth to accomplish office and policy tasks, it also provides a level of professional development for me as a manager, and a sense of collegiality in what can otherwise be an isolating position given that Members are otherwise employed/engaged outside of session.
9. As Chief of Staff I would focus more on policy, committee prep, and district engagement - and not have to worry about recurring administrative tasks to keep the office afloat. It would allow me to take vacations more regularly.
10. As the work of the Legislature has become increasingly full time and year round, given the important work to develop policy that occurs in the interim, a year-round LA would allow constituents to be better served in the interim and help communicate the Legislator's work as well as enhancing all the work of the office.
11. I think there are higher priorities than this, but I understand that having capable LAs in the session requires a year round staff. Most of the staffing issues I have had in the past have been from inexperienced staff making greenhorn blunders.
12. Year-round LA2s would do the following: -Grow capacity for constituent follow-up. When offices get too busy to quickly serve constituents, they miss opportunities to serve the public. Slow constituent service can frustrate constituents until they give up on responding, which stops casework -Help members/chiefs keep up with tasks -More proactively solicit ideas from the community -Grow staff's experience in legislative procedure, which helps offices work together & make better policy faster
13. Would allow more capacity for policy development and stakeholder outreach on bill concepts, setting us up for better success in session. Would also help us decrease response times and ability to follow up on constituent services cases.

## Q11. How would having a year-round LA improve your office's legislative agenda, improve function, or contribute to improved outcomes? (cont.)

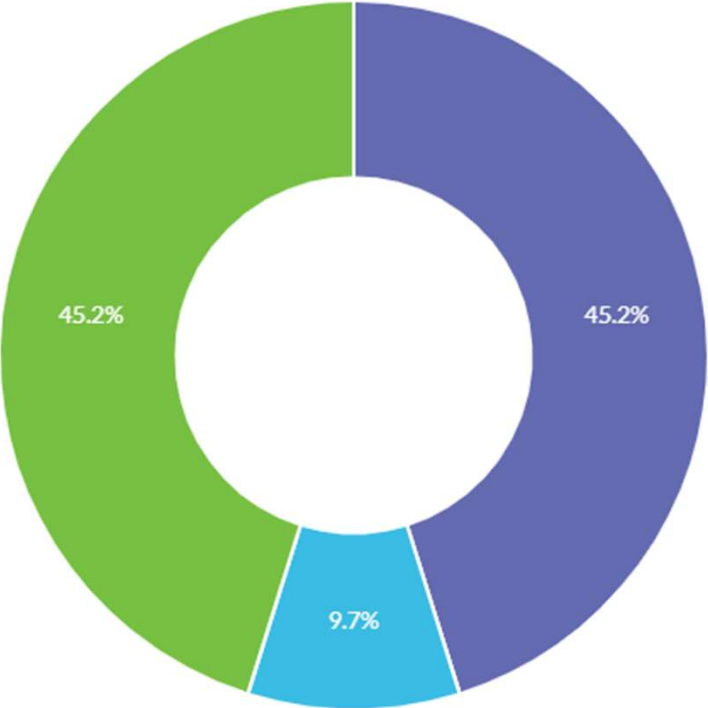
14. Having full-time staff would allow me to allocate policy research and development as well as improve our office's presence in town halls, tours, visits, and other in-district related events. It would allow our office that each and every constituent can receive the attention and timely information that they deserve.
15. Our constituent response times are not anywhere close to where they need to be. For particularly difficult messages it can take a full month or more before someone will hear back from us, especially during the interim when staffing is even more profoundly insufficient. The issues people are facing nowadays have also escalated in severity and urgency.
16. An LA's role in the office is invaluable. An LA allows for the day to day functions to keep going while the Chief is tasked with long term goal implementation and directly assisting member in drafting policy, staffing meetings, and tracking all things committee. While some tasks overlap, often an LA cannot work up, but a Chief can work down. Without an LA, it is impossible for a member and their chief to make progress and craft good policy in the interim because there are too many tasks to juggle.
17. Our office has 1 staff in the interim. That person is responsible for answering office calls, following up with constituent inquiries, communications, scheduling, policy development, workgroup facilitation, and any administrative tasks. While this balance is fine immediately after session, it becomes more challenging in the fall/winter when we have to buckle down on policy development and begin the hiring process. Eventually, it just becomes too many balls to juggle and work quality isn't great.
18. Our Member's office is consistently in high demand due to their leadership roles, committee assignments, and strong relationships with industry leaders, stakeholders, constituents, lobbyists, and others — particularly given their expertise in a specific industry. This level of demand creates the need for one staff member to focus exclusively on policy work. Consistency in this role is critical to the Member's success; fragmented staffing in policy leads to setbacks and hinders overall progress.
19. The lack of LA2 staff in the interim results in a complete restructuring of the COS job description. Because I will need to spend many hours on scheduling, inbox maintenance and constituent responses, I am not able to engage in the higher-level tasks I am paid to do related to policy development and legislation. It results in a frustrating knowledge gap in my ability to support my Member and communicate with stakeholders, lobbyists, etc.
20. It would allow more flexibility for staff to complete tasks both in session and in interim. Hopefully this would also bring some stability to legislative offices which would greatly benefit constituents, not constantly having new staff who are learning the job, they instead potentially have someone that they have interacted with before and have established a working relationship with.
21. Working to assist constituents would greatly improve. It is always incredible how much help people need with navigating the agency requirements for getting the assistance they need. It helps us to come up with more ideas about how to de-regulate and repeal old restrictive laws on the books that are causing so much trouble with housing, land-use, and small business start-ups.
22. Improve sharing of workload

## Q11. How would having a year-round LA improve your office's legislative agenda, improve function, or contribute to improved outcomes? (cont.)

23. I would have better stakeholder engagement. This includes working with agencies to make sure all of the bills can be implemented. I could meet with more organizations and community to get better feedback on the policy but also get endorsements for the policy. I would be able to coordinate advocates further in advance to be queued up earlier in session. Our policy would be better developed before session starts which would lead to less placeholders and multiple amendments.
24. Salary stability Wont need to find other jobs to supplement income
25. -Timely constituent responses/casework -Better district outreach -Better public access to elected office -Robust public communications/newsletters -Thorough bill preparation/research -Stronger coalition building -Sharing work of pre-session bill requests/filings -Less stress -More efficient, stable office -Not retraining new staff each year -More productive if can delegate more, instead of overworked Chief handling while new staff continue learning until the job ends and new training restarts
26. Interim is the time to get them trained. I cannot get well-functioning staff to help in the session if I can't train them prior. Also, too hard to find a qualified person that will accept only 2 or 6 months of work that isn't going to need replaced next time anyway because they found real employment somewhere else.
27. It would allow me to focus more on policy making and building out our district presence.
28. Allow for the depth of policy creation that is significantly more conducive to being ready to enter the legislative process formally in session. Similarly, it would allow for properly dive deep into issue areas the Rep has identified as areas where they'd like to have a deeper understanding to better serve their committee assignments. The continuity of not having to start over and learn these policy areas on the job every session would be a game changer in the effectiveness of the office.
29. A year-round LA could assist with the lesser tasks allowing the LA4 to provide more focus on proper development of policy, research and workgroups
30. No improvement. There would not be enough work for a year round LA so it would be a wasteful use of taxpayer funds.



Q12. During the interim, does the member work another job?



Choice	Total
No	14
Yes, part time	3
Yes, full time	14

### Q13. Please add any additional comments here. For example: What changes to workload or process have you seen over the years? How is work quality/effectiveness compromised, because of limited staff?

1. We are not as effective with limited staff.
2. Its definitely fluctuate, only been here two years don't have the best data.
3. W/ limited staff during interim, the first thing that drops off is admin. We're always out of stationary, printer ink, etc. Then the voicemails stop being checked. Then I give up hope on ever getting the inbox down to zero. Then form letters from constituents get ignored. Then, constituent casework response times grow so dramatically that by the time I follow up they've given up and stop responding. Then it's the socials. Weeks go by w/ out me having time to post anything. The newsletter gets put off and put off till it's actually time for the following month's newsletter. I try to zoom into workgroups and take notes for my boss, but I'm also trying to catch up on emails, so I miss 1/2 the info. Then the scheduling lags. Then we find out about events my boss should have attended but I missed the invite email. I barely have the time & bandwidth to meet w/ bill partners to ensure they get their policy nailed down and our bills into shape. I ask them to support me on outreach to stakeholders. They generally miss at least one really critical group that later gets angry that we didn't include them. But w/ everything else on my plate, I can't quality control like I need to. And this is all before we layer in the committee chair prep work. My boss's committee has at least 4 corresponding agencies that require relationship building/ maintance, check-ins, bill crafting, and budget deep dives. My to-do list grows and grows but never shrinks. My boss says to do time blocking and get done what I can. That I have to be ok w/ imperfection. But all of us (most of us?) gravitated to this work because we are overachieving nerds who want to help people. Letting the quality of my work slip is almost as painful as the stress headaches I get because of this job. So I ignore chores, put off doctor apointments, put off various life mantance activities, and forgo vacation. Yes, I need a better work/life balance. But the work doesn't stop just because I voew to make time for yoga. Our constituents' problems don't go away because we are short staffed. Agencies are slashing their customer service departments. So it falls on us to help Oregonians navigate the same life tasks that we put off doing for ourselves. Whew! I could go on...
4. Some offices have more work than others during interim - based on a lot of factors. For our office, things don't slow down by much
5. Our constituent caseload has doubled.
6. Over the last several years, I have noticed an increased level of public engagement with the Legislature, and particularly, increased casework for navigating public benefits and programs through agencies. As I spend more time with those needs during interims, I am less able to pursue the challenges of policy work that position me for professional growth. Serving Oregonians is an honor and a privilege, but I do worry I'm narrowing my own opportunities if my position is largely focused on customer service.
7. A large issue in the building is the loss of institutional knowledge, and the loss of any efficiency gains in workflow every time a person turns over. We essentially have to teach a new person how the building and our office works, then immediately lose them again after a few months. We would all operate more effectively if staff was able to be retained for longer.
8. As my member has become more senior in the legislature, our office experiences more meeting requests, more emails from constituents, and more requests to join workgroups. This leaves less capacity for detailed bill development and constituent outreach.

**Q13. Please add any additional comments here. For example: What changes to workload or process have you seen over the years? How is work quality/effectiveness compromised, because of limited staff? (cont.)**

9. Over the years, the workload as increased significantly especially as many community and statewide leaders pursue ambitious goals to deliver for Oregonians. However, to truly deliver, we need to make sure every office has adequate support staff to do all of the necessary work, even if they seem less important than workgroup discussions and policy development. Our office strongly believes in holding monthly in-district events, supporting social media, and outreach to make sure that we continue to be an accessible office for constituents.
10. I work for a member who puts in the work and needs staff to be able to keep up. Even for a more relaxed member, I don't think our staffing situation is adequate and it certainly hamstrings ours.
11. The volume of constituent casework and emails has certainly increased in my few years in the legislature. The pace of session has also seemed to increase and become more challenging, which means pre-session work on bills has become way more critical.
12. As I have observed over several years with my Member, and previously noted, consistency within a Member's office is critical to their success. Fragmentation among Legislative Assistant (LA) positions leads to setbacks and hinders overall progress and outcomes.
13. During the interim, many COS are compensated for work that we do not have time to do so that we can maintain basic office administration; this is an irresponsible use of public funds. Without an LA2, when COS take time off of work during the interim for vacation or medical leave, etc., it leaves the member without staff. Constituent work, administrative tasks and policy work are neglected, or reassigned to the Member. Under the current S&S structure, if a staff person needs to take paid family leave, those benefits must be paid out of the office budget, which can be crippling since we cannot afford additional staff. The current S&S budgets structure penalizes experience, higher education and bilingualism, and discourages retention. As staff tenure and skill sets increases, offices can afford less. Each legislative office should not be saddled with controlling a budget when there is no ability to grow that budget to accommodate the pay increases that staff earn.
14. I don't have enough experience to say what has changed over the years.
15. Somehow we need to seriously consider how to reduce the number of bills, and increase the quality of the bills being introduced -- during the long session especially. It is essentially impossible to read and investigate all of the bills, their expected and unexpected outcomes and arrange for quality public testimony for support and opposition to get the best outcomes from the LA. As the system is now there is a huge amount of wasted time and resources creating legislation in LC that goes nowhere and is bad legislation in the first place.
16. Workload continues to grow. Work quality is compromised when you get overwhelmed.

### Q13. Please add any additional comments here. For example: What changes to workload or process have you seen over the years? How is work quality/effectiveness compromised, because of limited staff? (cont.)

17. Since COVID, there has been a significant increase in constituent casework during the interim. Constituents also reach out more than before to meet with the rep or to share thoughts. Our engagement through social media, newsletters and mailers has also increased because constituents expect regular communication. Scheduling for a member that has to work full time in the interim has become increasingly more difficult. There is a slight decrease in scheduling requests from session but there is always a constant stream of requests that are not fulfilled. I could take more meetings for my member but that takes away from the meetings I need to take for policy that my member needs. Additionally, I have so much vacation leave because it is hard to find time that works for the office. When I do take vacation, I always end up doing some work because I have to monitor the email. Lastly, there is a lot of outreach to community leaders and district leaders that should be happening but there is just not enough time.
18. Every office needs min 2 full time staffers All year Salaried Full benefits. Anything above 2 can be paid for by individual campaign funds
19. For committees chairs, legislative staff take on a great deal of extra work on bills and processes of other legislators and stakeholders that interact with the committee. Capacity was added through LPRO to fill certain research needs, but that nonpartisan role is not allowed/applicable to assist with most of the work of legislative offices. Proactive work to move proposals in a particular political direction or to facilitate political agreement among legislators remains the responsibility of partisan staff. Leadership expects chairs' offices to be knowledgeable about the many bills in their committees, but does not provide additional resources for that work as compared to a legislative office that does not have any expectations regarding committee work. With the substantial increase in bills introduced in recent years, we are simply doing more work with the same hours/resources. Leadership has also increased expectations in recent years about production of committee work plans as well as how much stakeholder workgroup/consensus building is necessary for policy to move forward. That work is time consuming and the impact on staff, especially for committee chairs, has not been accounted. There is a process to request support from LPRO for workgroups, but that capacity is at the discretion of leadership and not always approved. The interim was historically viewed as slower paced time that in part made up for frantic work during session. However, expectations have grown for robust interim work, if hoping to move significant bills forward in session. That work is useful, but there has not been an assessment of impact on staff. In addition, there is an antiquated framework of budgeting for staff support during session. Leadership budgets enough funds for offices to hire support staff during the formal session, but does not account for the fact that much of the work for session begins prior to that formal window. Support staff is necessary at least in September when legislative days ramp up and the majority of bills are actually being prepared and filed. Instead, the Chief must do the heavy work of preparing for session on their own. By the time they can hire support, things are moving very quickly, and there is little time to spend getting someone up to speed on work already in motion. This is also undesirable for support staff, as they don't get the chance to engage with policy development to the degree they could if included in bill preparation. There are numerous different roles and expectations associated with a legislative office that, in other business contexts, would be treated as separate jobs (e.g., communications, community outreach, customer service, policy, legislation, budgets, secretarial, etc.). Offices are forced to triage and leave behind some duties that are valuable to constituents of the district. For example, while vital to the democratic process, interfacing with the public is often one of the first services to decline. In the big picture, the system of staffing up only during session made more sense over a decade ago when even-year sessions were less robust or did not exist, and when legislative staff were more typically administrative support. Those times have changed, but there remains a structure with baseline assumption that support staff should be laid off after session.
20. No change, always a problem.

**Q13. Please add any additional comments here. For example: What changes to workload or process have you seen over the years? How is work quality/effectiveness compromised, because of limited staff? (cont.)**

21. Understanding policy areas is a “use it or lose it” sort of knowledge base. Every 6 months or two years learning a new policy area can be exciting, but when you have to learn on the job while juggling all of the other tasks during session, it can be hard to feel like you’re bringing your best on day one, or even month one or two. Having experienced working in the Capitol pre and post COVID, not only have we seen more constituent engagement with offices—which is fundamentally a good thing, we are public servants—but a significant amount of agency rule making to track and reports being received to the legislature from a variety of sources. These reports contain valuable information that can and should shape policy making, but if staff don’t have time to review them adequately we do redundant work or miss opportunities to create the most effective policy the first time. This also leads into so much of the legislative authority being delegated to agencies through the rule making process instead of the legislature fully crafting the policy within the bill. The out of control number of placeholder bills could also be addressed by this. All of this takes time and knowledge.
22. During the session due to the inability in the budget to have the proper amount of staff needed to provide focus on specific tasks things are overlooked or ignored. This could be everything from scheduling to providing consistent constituent outreach, the ability to fully read and vet policy while maintaining a level of well being for staff and members alike. Everyone is effected when needs aren't met. I have appreciated the additional training received this year for staff from LPRO and other supporting staff within the Capitol community, however more is still needed and more opportunities in the interim would be appreciated to allow more focus on learning when it can have time to sink in and not rushed just before session. Having two full time staff could allow both staff to partake instead of being thrown into the session just days or weeks before due to budget issues and hirings last minute.