



European
Biosafety
Network

SHARPS INJURIES & COVID

Research by Ipsos MORI on behalf of the
European Biosafety Network

BACKGROUND & KEY OBJECTIVE

Background:

Healthcare workers are exposed to **sharps injuries** leading to a high risk of infection. The main risk from a sharps injury is the **potential exposure to infections** such as **blood-borne viruses (BBV), such as HIV, Hep B or C**. This can occur where the injury involves a sharp that is contaminated with blood or a body fluid.

The number of sharps injuries each year is high, estimated at 1.2m each year in Europe before the pandemic, although underreporting continues to be a major problem. A relatively small number are known to have led to serious illness. However, the effects of the injury and anxiety about its potential consequences, including the **adverse side effects of post-exposure prophylaxis, can have a significant personal impact on an injured employee.**

Workers in health and social care who directly handle sharps are the main group at risk, but other groups, such as refuse or transport workers, can be affected when sharps are not stored or disposed of correctly.

Key objective:

The European Biosafety Network (EBN) commissioned the survey to understand whether, why and how there has been a **change in the number, type and location of sharps injuries as a result of the COVID pandemic**. The survey conducted by Ipsos MORI in March/April 2021 included 80 of the largest hospitals in Europe, in Spain, France, Germany, Poland and Italy, covering more than 300,000 healthcare workers.

KEY RESULTS

The number of sharps injuries has increased as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic with an average reported increase of 23% over the last year, an estimated increase of 276,000 sharps injuries

- The increased **pressure of work and stress due to COVID** is the overwhelming reason cited by almost all respondents (**98%**), followed by the **lack of safety devices (47%) and PPE (45%)**.
- As a result of COVID, over 2 in 5 respondents said the **location in which sharps injuries occur** has shifted, being mainly in the **emergency department and intensive care**.
- In most countries, **nurses (82%) and doctors (54%)** are the workers who have experienced the highest increase in sharps injuries.
- **Covid vaccination** rollout more recently has also increased the number of sharps injuries by **almost half**.



AVERAGE INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF SHARPS INJURIES

The average growth in the number of sharps injuries was 23%, mainly due to the increased **pressure and stress due to COVID**.



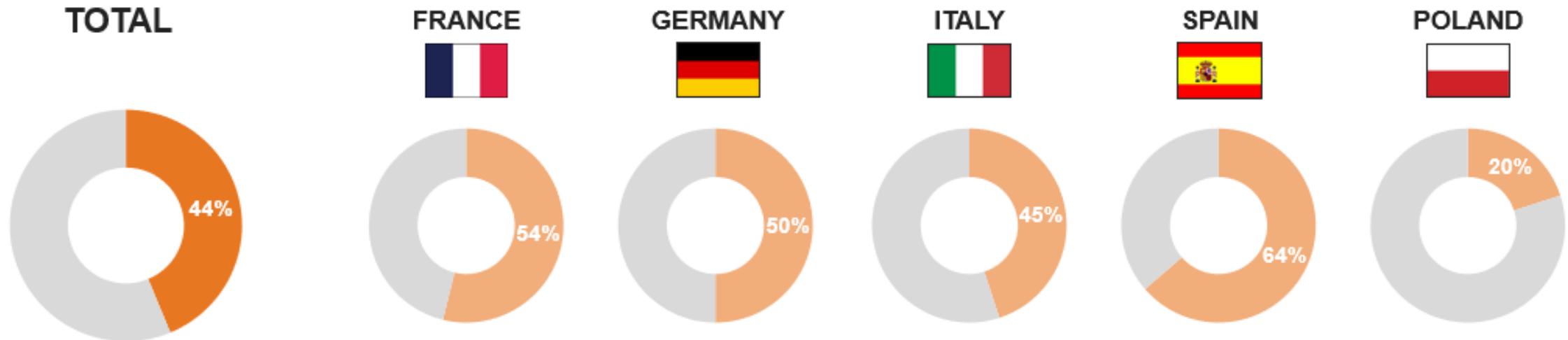
THIS INCREASED IS A RESULT OF...



Q2. By what percentage over the last year of the COVID pandemic? / Q3. This increased, is it a result of...
Base: Increase the number of sharps injuries (47), France (10), Germany (9), Italy (13), Spain (11), Poland (4)

CHANGE OF LOCATION OF SHARPS INJURIES

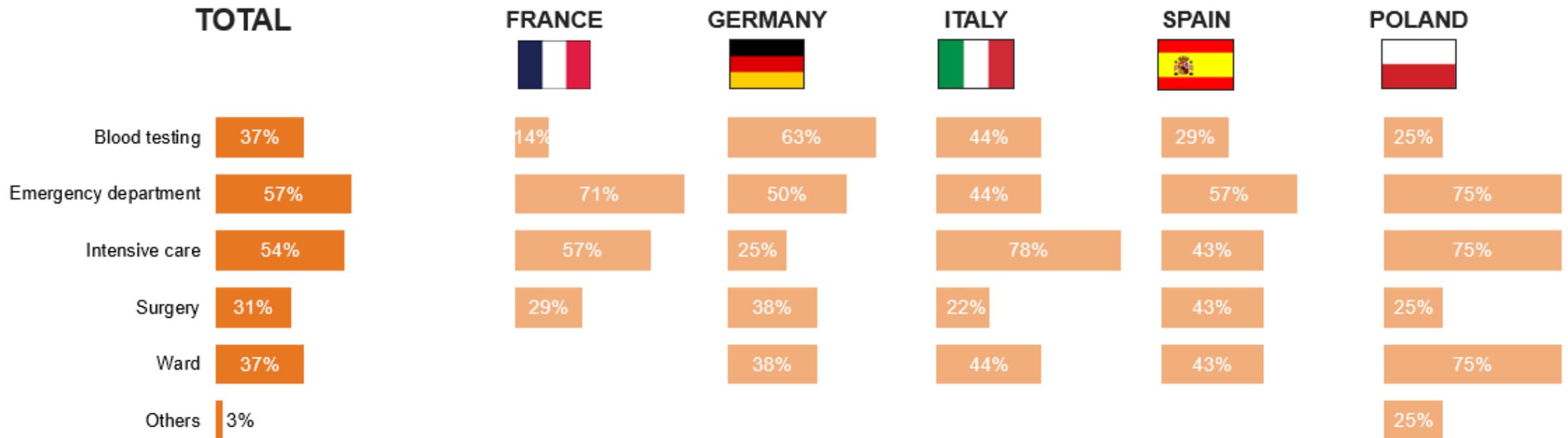
Over 2 in 5 OH respondents consider that the **location in which sharps injuries occur has changed**, with the highest proportion in Spain and lowest in Poland.



Q4. Has the location of sharps injuries changed, eg surgery, ward, blood testing, as a result of COVID?
Base: Total (80), France (13), Germany (16), Italy (20), Spain (11), Poland (20)

LOCATION OF SHARPS INJURIES

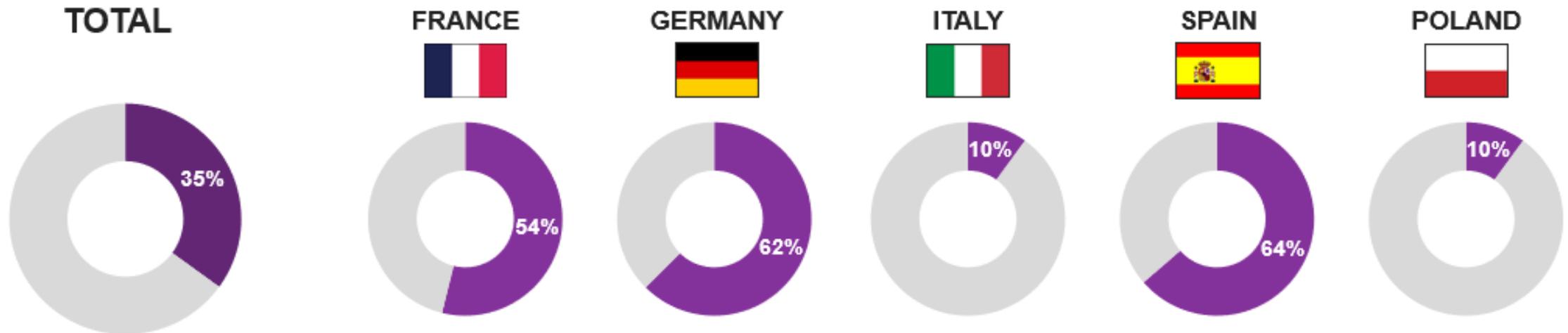
Overall, the **emergency department** and **intensive care** are where sharps injuries are most stated to have increased as a result of COVID.



Q5. Which locations of sharps injuries have increased as a result of COVID?
Base: Change of location of sharp injuries (35), France (7), Germany (8), Italy (9), Spain (7), Poland (4)

CHANGE OF JOB CATEGORY OF WORKERS INJURED BY SHARPS

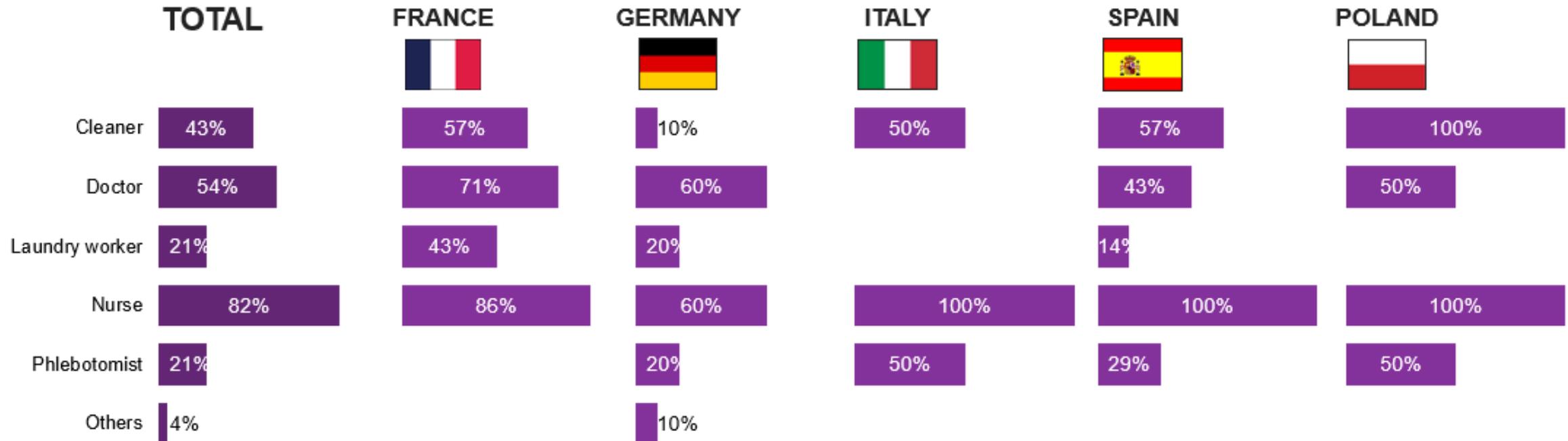
As a result of COVID, over half of respondents in France, Germany and Spain said that the **job category of workers injured by sharps has changed**.



Q8. Has the job category of workers injured by sharps, eg doctor, nurse, phlebotomist, cleaner or laundry worker, changed as a result of COVID?
Base: Total (80), France (13), Germany (16), Italy (20), Spain (11), Poland (20)

JOB CATEGORIES OF WORKERS INJURED BY SHARPS

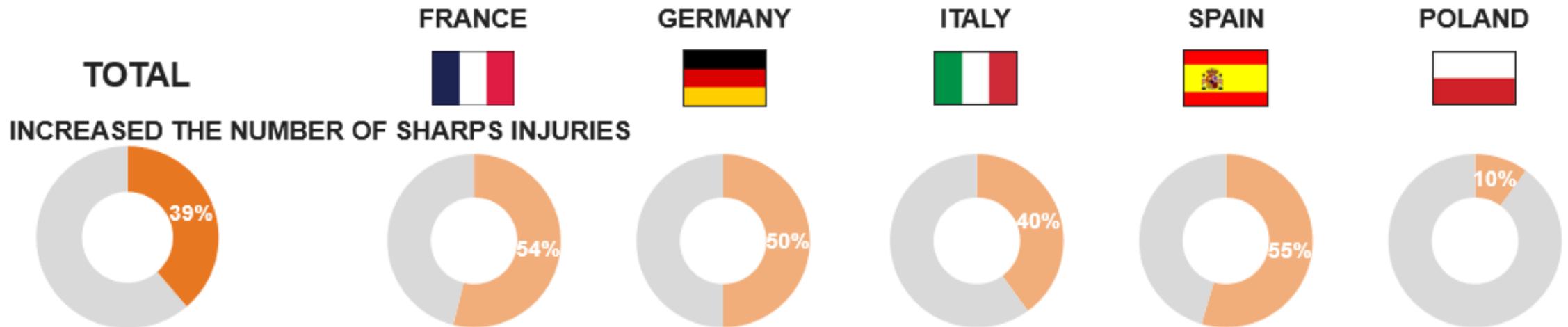
In general, **nurses** are the workers who experienced the **highest increase** in the number of sharps injuries.



Q9. Which job categories of workers injured by sharps have increased as a result of COVID?
Base: Job categories changed (28), France (7), Germany (10), Italy (2), Spain (7), Poland (2)

COVID VACCINATION

Approximately half of respondents said there had been an increase in the number of sharps injuries resulting from the **COVID vaccination programme in early 2021**.



Q13. Has there been an increase in the number of sharps injuries due to COVID vaccination during the last few months of the COVID pandemic? / Q14. Was a safety device used to administer the COVID vaccination?
Base: Total (80), France (13), Germany (16), Italy (20), Spain (11), Poland (20)



METHOD

What have we done?

TARGET

Occupational Health Specialists in healthcare settings:

- Practice settings in **Public or University/ Teaching Hospitals**
- All hospitals with **> 500 beds**

Free-found recruitment based on the agreed screening criteria above.

SAMPLE

Total 80 interviews with the following distribution:

France	13
Germany	16
Italy	20
Spain	11
Poland	20

FIELDWORK

From **March 24th** to **April 19th 2021**