



**Karolinska  
Institutet**

# **Sickness certification as a work environment problem**

Therese Ljungquist  
Division of Insurance Medicine  
Karolinska Institutet

No conflicts of  
interest to declare

# Background

- Sickness certification is a common task among physicians
  - Many physicians find sickness certification tasks problematic
  - Do physicians also experience sickness certification as a work environment problem?
-

# Background

2008: 50% of physicians in Sweden:

Sickness certification tasks (SCT)  
is a work environment problem (WEP)  
to a large or to some extent

---

# Aim

- To study to what extent physicians in Sweden experience sickness certification tasks (SCT) as a work environment problem (WEP) in 2012
  - To explore possible associations with background and organizational factors
-

# Methods

- Cross-sectional study; N=33 144
  - Response rate: 58% (n=19 107)
  - Comprehensive questionnaire
  - 163 questions
-

# Sickness certification among physicians working in Sweden



**73%**  
**sickness certify**

**27% do not  
sickness certify**

# Study group

- 12 933 physicians who had sickness certification consultations
  - 49% women
  - Mean age 47 years
  - 70% certified specialists
-

# Frequency of experience of SCT as a WEP

- How often in your clinical work do you experience sickness certification consultations to be a work environment problem?
  - Response options: More than 10 times a week / 6-10 times a week / 1-5 times a week / About once a month / A few times a year / Never or almost never
-



# Frequency of experience of SCT as a WEP

- How often in your clinical work do you experience sickness certification consultations to be a work environment problem?
  - Response options: **More than 10 times a week / 6-10 times a week / 1-5 times a week** / About once a month/ A few times a year/ Never or almost never
-

# Frequency of experience of SCT as a WEP

- How often in your clinical work do you experience sickness certification consultations to be a work environment problem?
  - Response options: More than 10 times a week / 6-10 times a week / 1-5 times a week / **About once a month / A few times a year / Never or almost never**
-

# Severity of experience of SCT as a WEP

- To what extent do sickness certification tasks constitute a work environment problem for you?
  - Response options: Large / Fairly large / Little / No
-

# Severity of experience of SCT as a WEP

- To what extent do sickness certification tasks constitute a work environment problem for you?
  - Response options: **Large / Fairly large** / Little / No
-

# Severity of experience of SCT as a WEP

- To what extent do sickness certification tasks constitute a work environment problem for you?
  - Response options: Large / Fairly large / **Little** / **No**
-

# Background factors

- Gender
  - Age
  - Educational level
  - Years at current workplace
  - Clinical setting
  - Frequency of sickness certification cases
-

# Organizational factors

- Lack of time (daily / less often)
  - Workplace policy (well established /not well established / no / don't know)
  - Support from manager (substantial / some/ no)
-

# Statistical methods

- Descriptive statistics
  - Logistic regressions
-

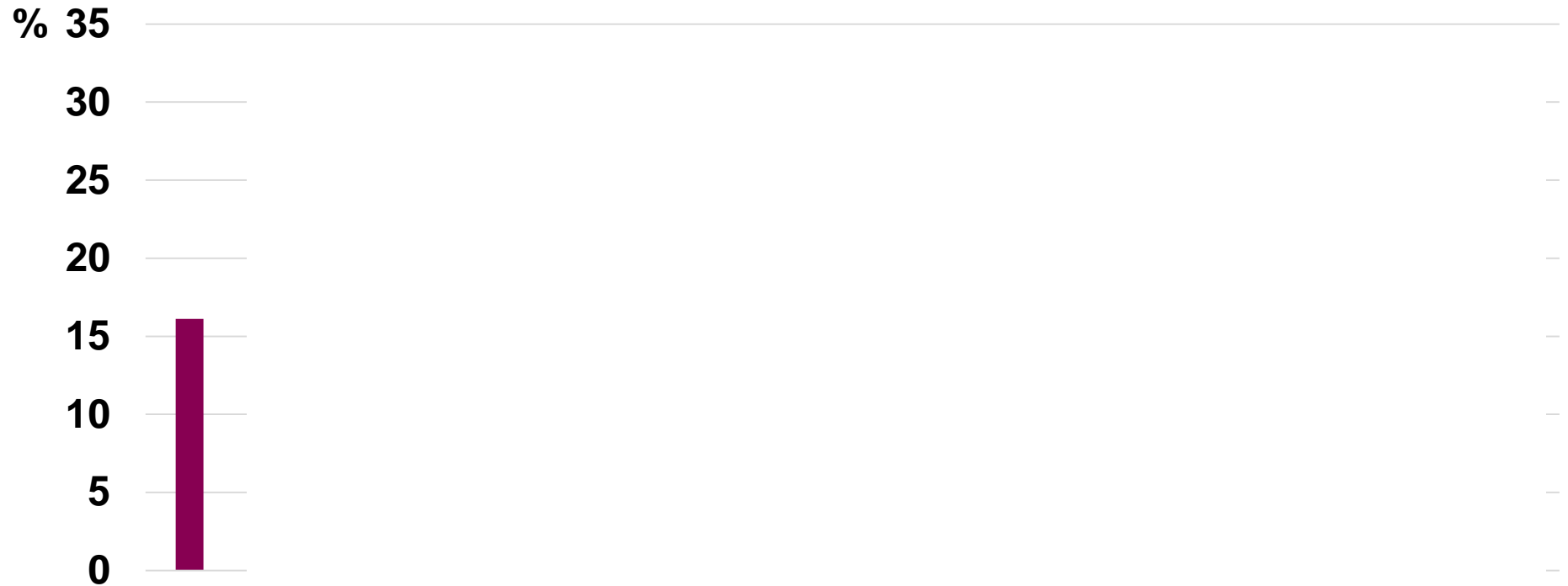


# Results

---

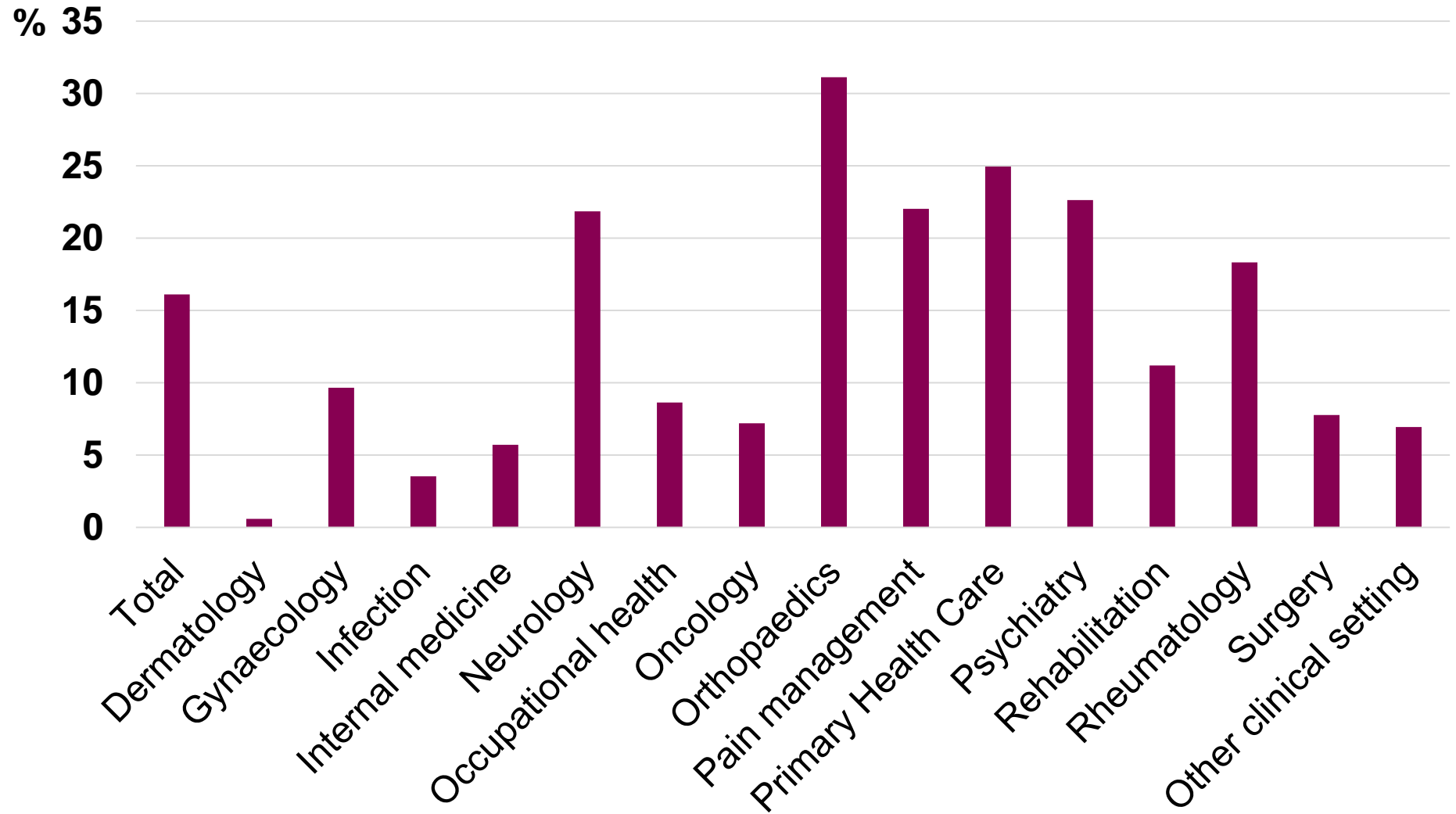
# Frequency of experience of SCT as a WEP

At least once a week



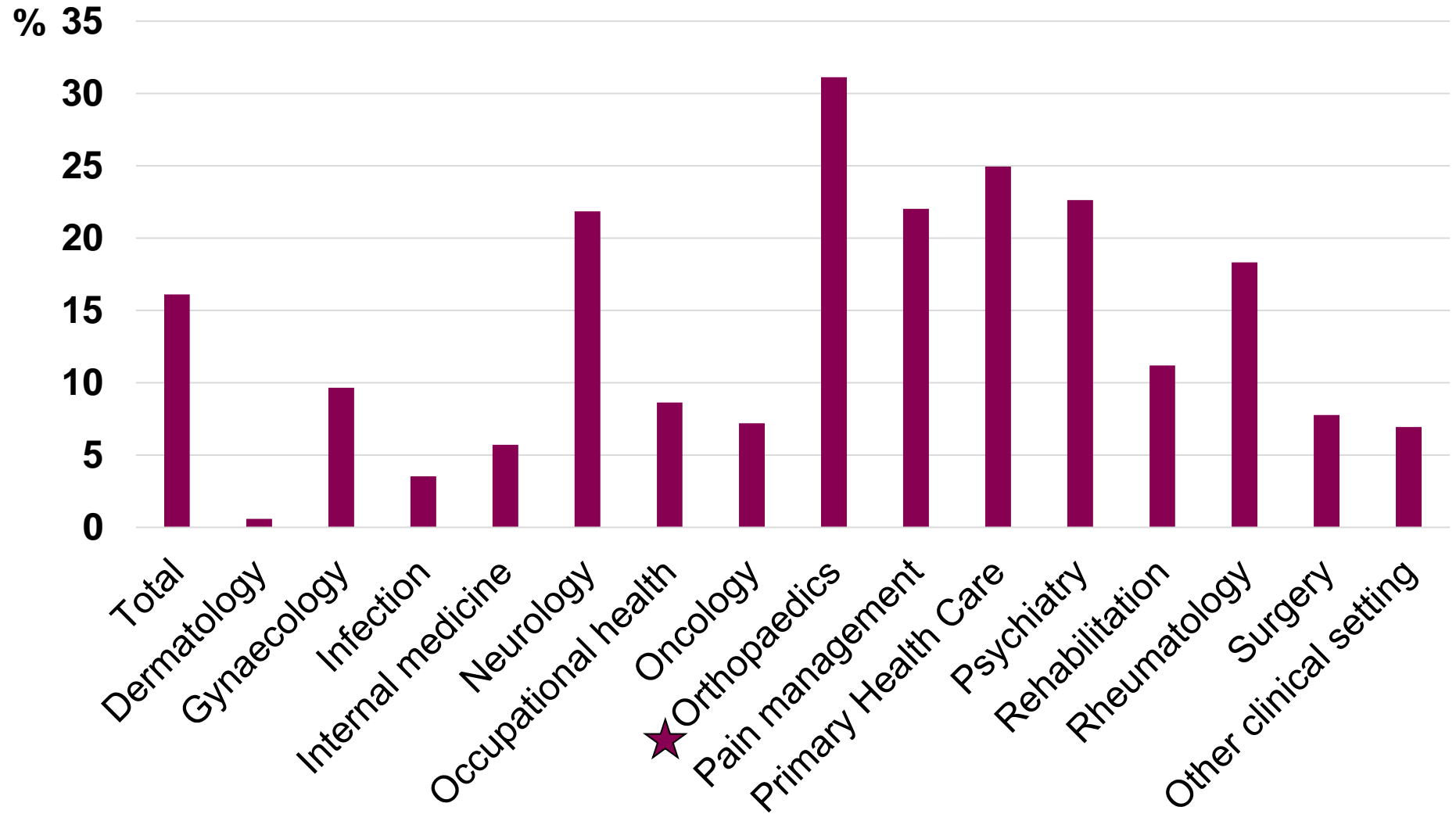
# Frequency of experience of SCT as a WEP

At least once a week



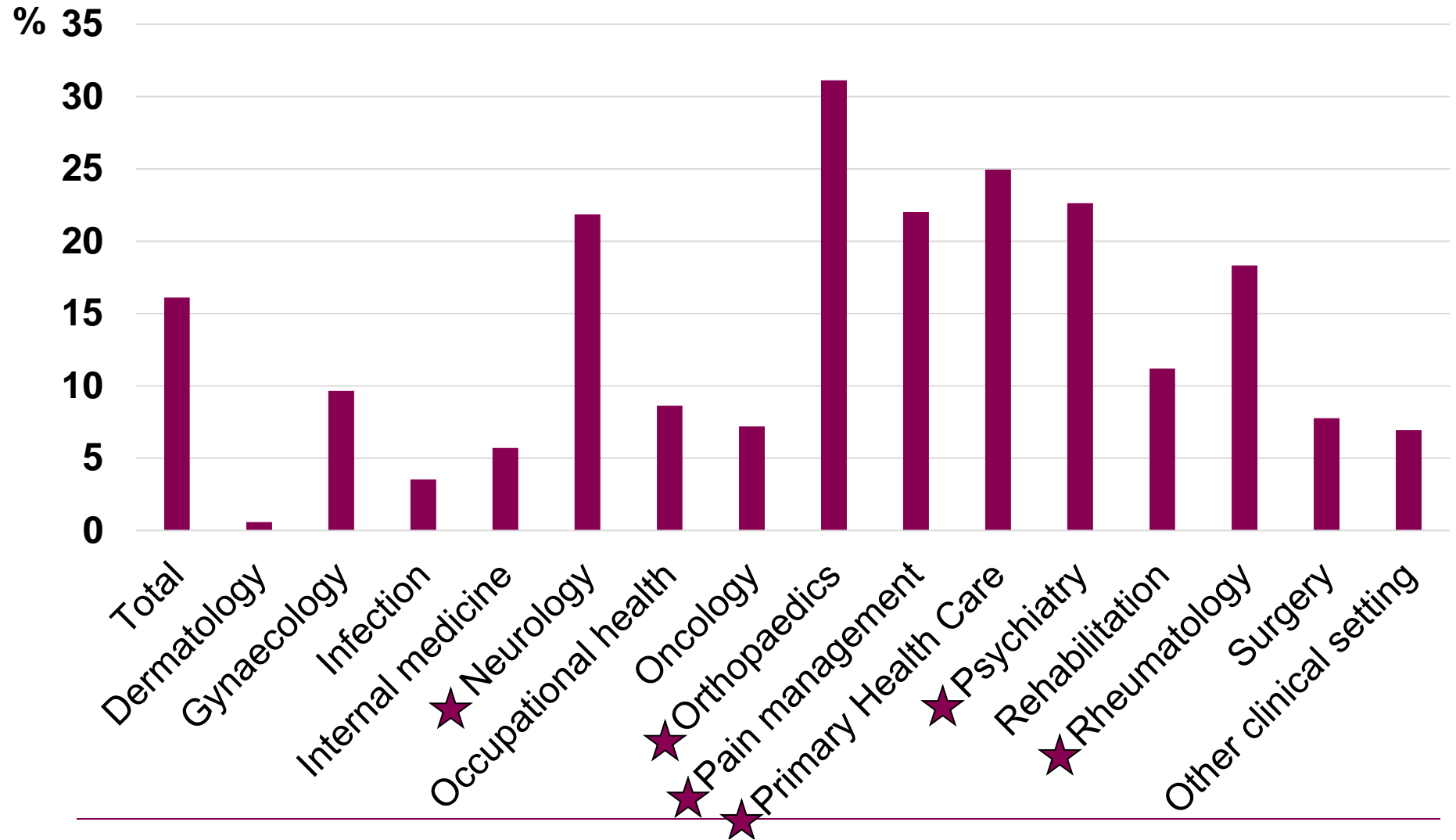
# Frequency of experience of SCT as a WEP

At least once a week



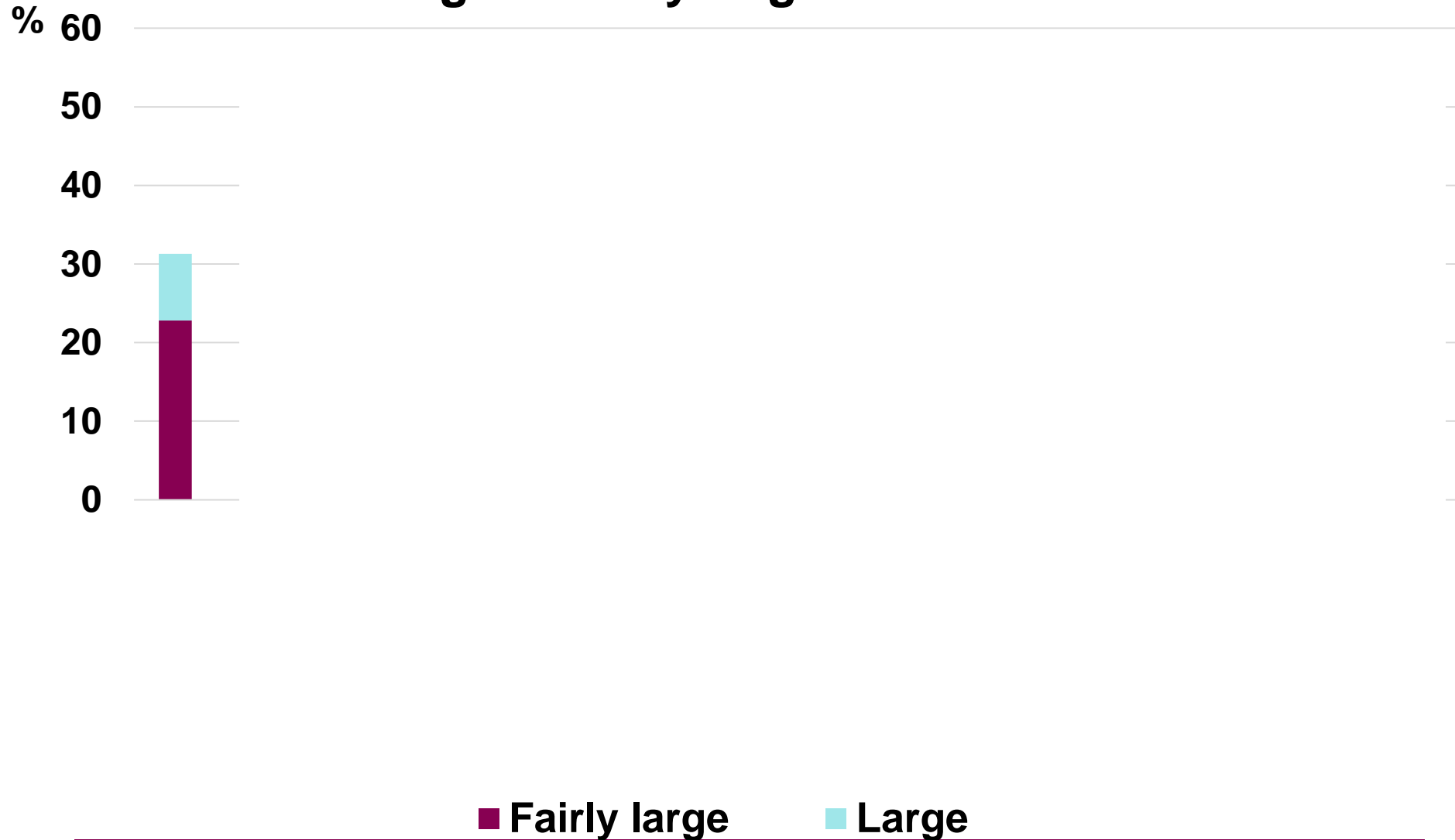
# Frequency of experience of SCT as a WEP

At least once a week



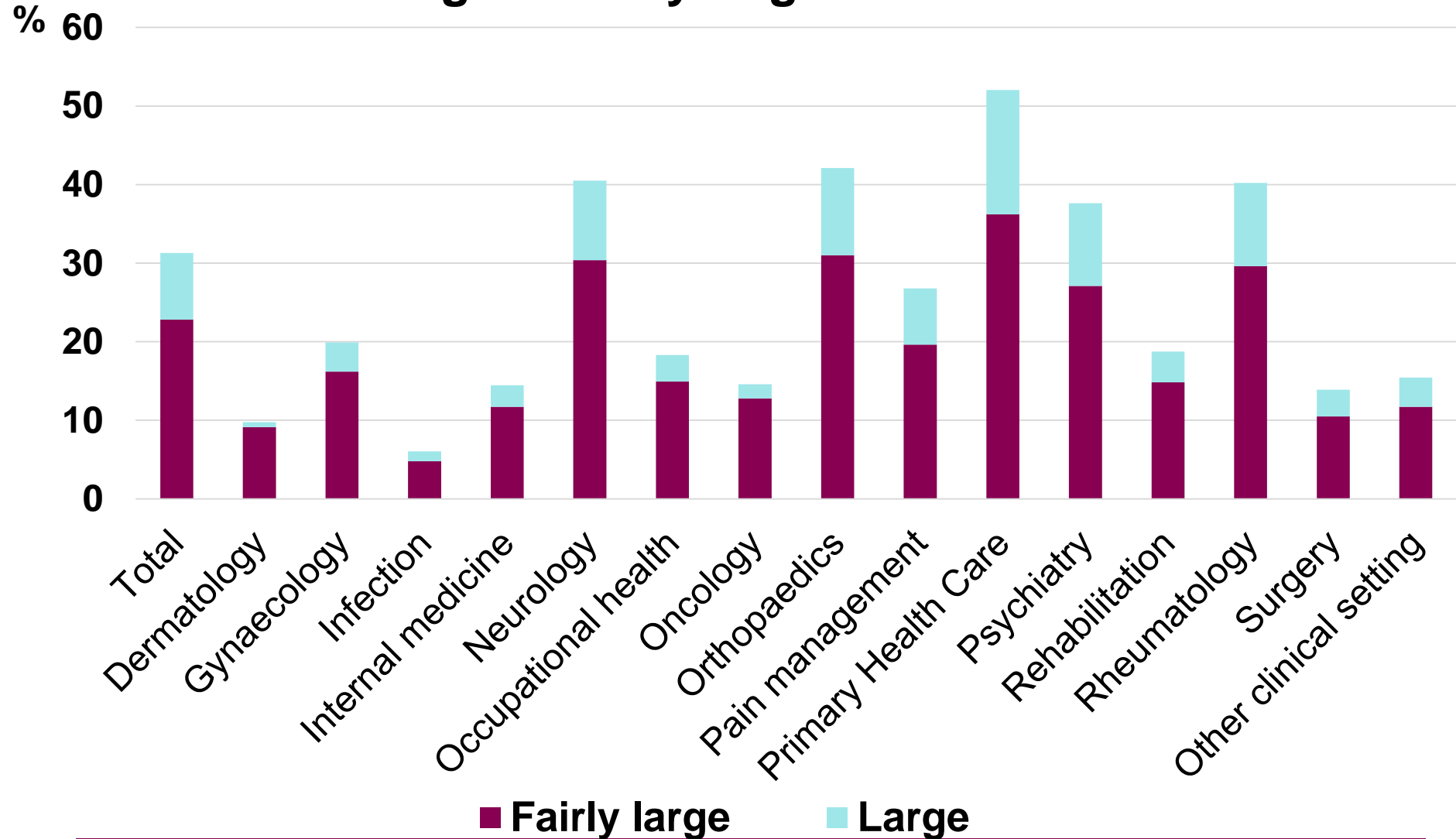
# Severity of experience of SCT as a WEP

## Large or fairly large extent



# Severity of experience of SCT as a WEP

## Large or fairly large extent



## Factors associated with experience of SCT as a WEP

### Final multivariate model

	OR (99% C.I.)
Internal medicine	1
<b>Neurology</b>	<b>2.53 (1.27- 5.07)</b>
<b>Orthopaedics</b>	<b>3.68 (2.37-5.72)</b>
<b>Primary Health Care</b>	<b>4.06 (3.16-5.21)</b>
<b>Psychiatry</b>	<b>1.65 (1.19-2.29)</b>
<b>Rheumatology</b>	<b>3.48 (1.58-7.69)</b>
Lack of time with patients once a week or less often	1
<b>Daily lack of time with patients</b>	<b>2.18 (1.34-3.55)</b>
Lack of time with patient-related aspects once a week or less often	1
<b>Daily lack of time with patient-related aspects</b>	<b>3.11 (2.10-4.61)</b>
Substantial support from immediate manager	1
<b>Some support from immediate manager</b>	<b>1.86 (1.49-2.31)</b>



## Factors associated with experience of SCT as a WEP

### Final multivariate model

	OR (99% C.I.)
Internal medicine	1
<b>Neurology</b>	<b>2.53 (1.27- 5.07)</b>
<b>Orthopaedics</b>	<b>3.68 (2.37-5.72)</b>
<b>Primary Health Care</b>	<b>4.06 (3.16-5.21)</b>
<b>Psychiatry</b>	<b>1.65 (1.19-2.29)</b>
<b>Rheumatology</b>	<b>3.48 (1.58-7.69)</b>
Lack of time with patients once a week or less often	1
<b>Daily lack of time with patients</b>	<b>2.18 (1.34-3.55)</b>
Lack of time with patient-related aspects once a week or less often	1
<b>Daily lack of time with patient-related aspects</b>	<b>3.11 (2.10-4.61)</b>
Substantial support from immediate manager	1
<b>Some support from immediate manager</b>	<b>1.86 (1.49-2.31)</b>
No support from immediate manager	1.12(0.96-1.3)

# Conclusions

- 31% of physicians in Sweden experienced sickness certification tasks as a work environment problem
  - 9% did so to a large extent
  - Higher proportion in primary health care, orthopaedics, rheumatology, neurology, psychiatry
  - Higher proportion among those with daily time pressure
-



**Thank you for your attention!**

---

- Ljungquist T; Hinas E; Arrelöv B; Lindholm C; Wilteus AL.  
Nilsson GH; Alexanderson K.  
Sickness certification of patients - a work environment problem  
among physicians?  
Occ Med 2013;63:23-29
  - Ljungquist T, Arrelöv B, Lindholm C, Löfgren Wilteus A,  
Nilsson GH, Alexanderson K.  
Physicians who experience sickness certification as a work  
environment problem: where do they work and what specific  
problems do they have? A nationwide survey in Sweden.  
BMJ Open 2012;2: e000704
-