



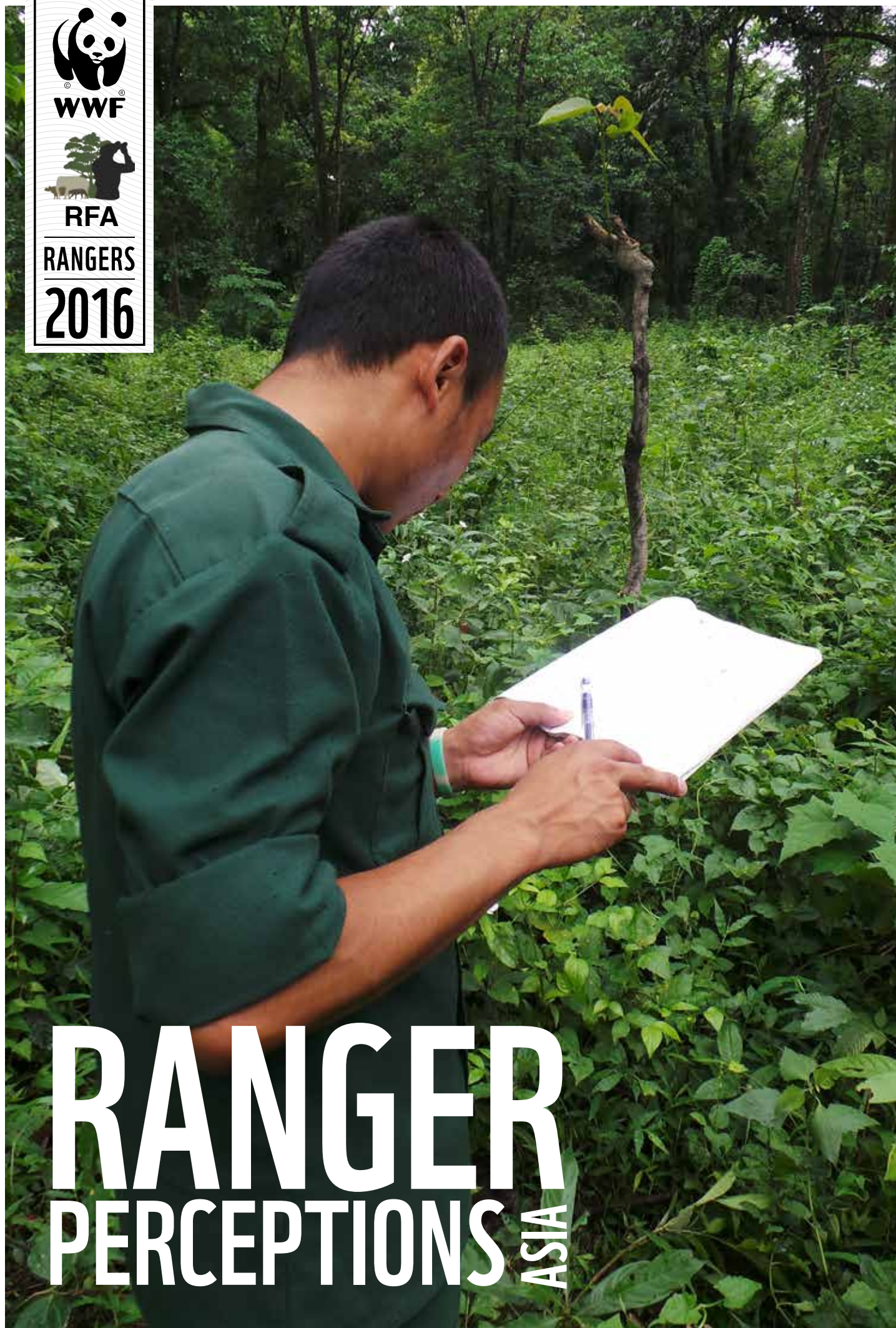
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RFA

RANGERS

2016



# RANGER PERCEPTIONS ASIA

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# SURVEY RATIONAL

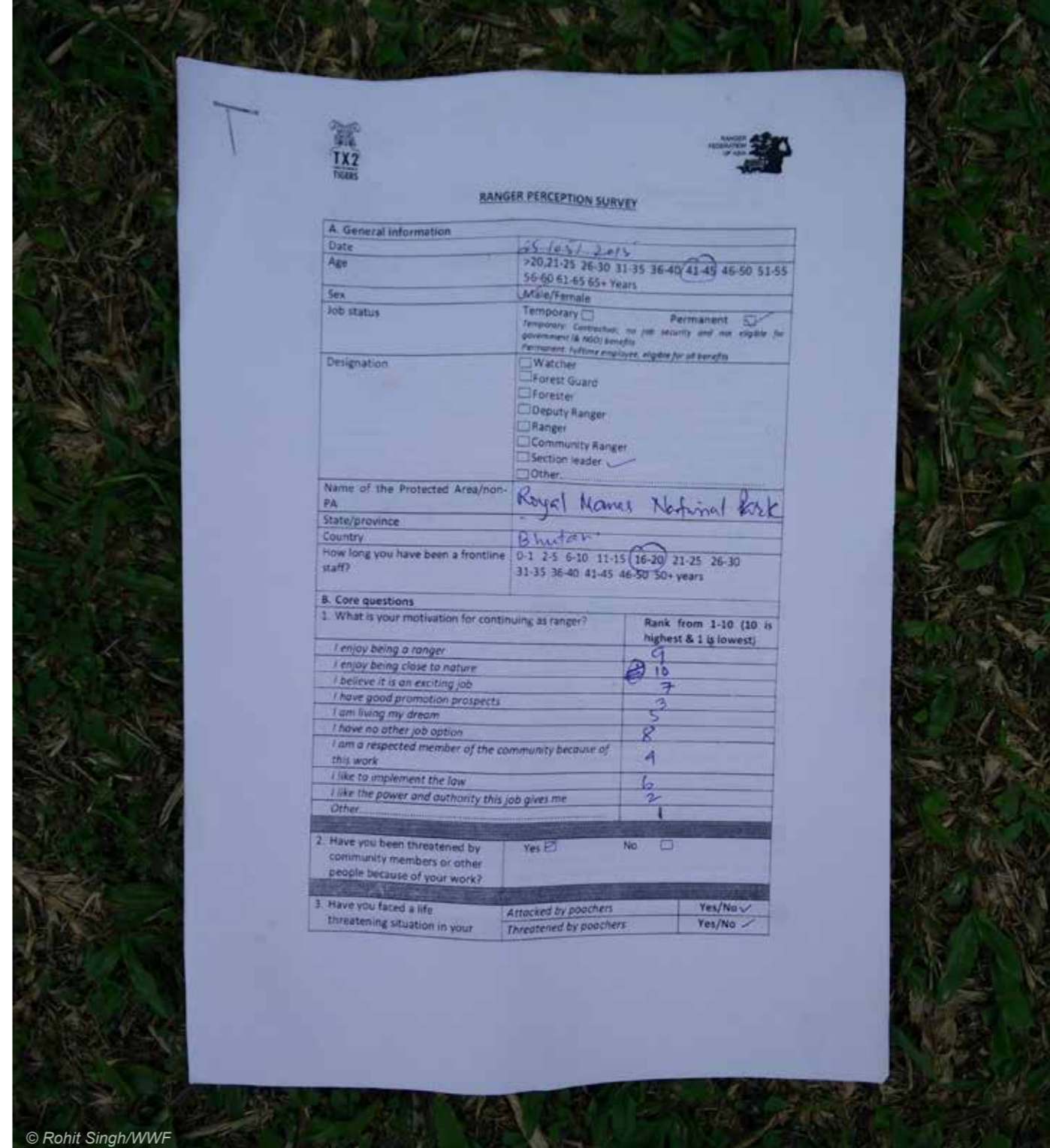
The poor and hazardous working conditions of wildlife rangers<sup>1</sup> are well known to anyone working in the field and are now appearing more frequently in the media.

Yet little has been done to systemically study and report on ranger working conditions; nor has there been an attempt to better understand how rangers feel about their work, their major concerns, challenges, rewards, as well as overall job satisfaction.

This Ranger Perceptions: Asia survey is the first in a series of reports that aim to shed light on these matters. The intent of this survey is to provide a snapshot of ranger working conditions, and gain insight into the factors that affect the motivation of rangers.

Two follow-up in-depth reports are planned; one on objective working condition indicators (pay, hours worked, access to equipment, etc.) and a second (more detailed) ranger perception survey incorporating in-depth interviews. It is hoped that this large data set will then serve to influence and improve government policy towards rangers and their working conditions.

<sup>1</sup> The word "ranger" or "rangers" is used throughout this report as a general term to collectively refer to all frontline staff. It is inclusive of wildlife wardens, forest guards, foresters, rangers, scouts, watchers and other frontline field staff.



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## METHODS

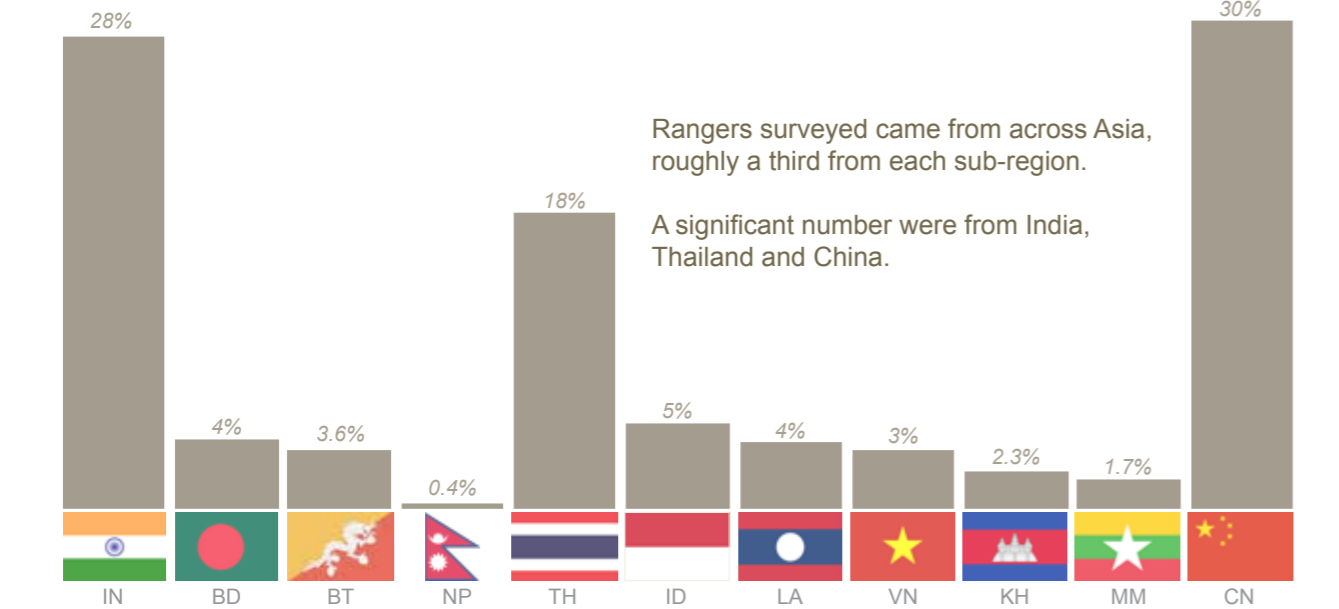
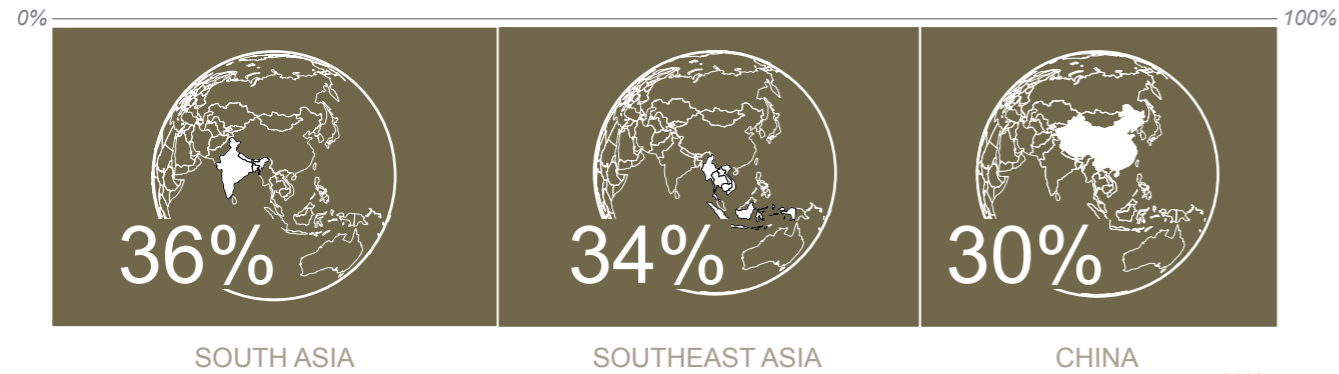
A ten question survey (see list of questions and complete results below) was undertaken to gain insight on issues that may influence ranger motivation. The survey incorporates elements of work rangers find most discouraging and ranks factors identified as important to a ranger's day-to-day work, such as facilities, equipment, training, infrastructure, hours worked, and pay. Other data collected looks at broader issues such as degree of authority, and perception by (or threats from) local communities.

A total of 530 rangers in 11 tiger range countries were surveyed; participants included individuals from Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar, Nepal, Thailand and Viet Nam. The majority of data inputs were gathered through personal interviews conducted by surveyors within each country, with 10% of data submitted through online survey forms. Each surveyor was briefed on the survey guidelines prior to conducting interviews to ensure that data was collected in a uniform and error-free manner.

The survey is a rapid assessment, and as such the findings should not be viewed as representative for any individual country, nor should they be extrapolated to the Asia region as a whole. The survey does not include armed forces posted on deputation in national parks and wildlife sanctuaries.

FIGURE 1: CONTEXT

530 TOTAL RESPONSES



Rangers surveyed came from across Asia, roughly a third from each sub-region. A significant number were from India, Thailand and China.

IN = India; BD = Bangladesh; BT = Bhutan; NP = Nepal; TH = Thailand; ID = Indonesia; LA = Laos; VN = Vietnam; KH = Cambodia; MM = Myanmar; CN = China

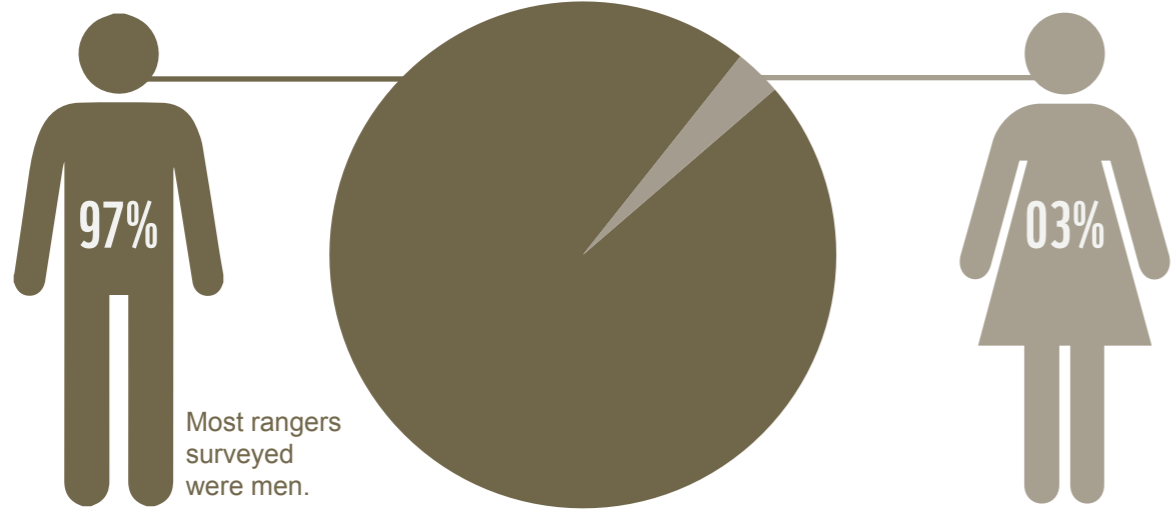
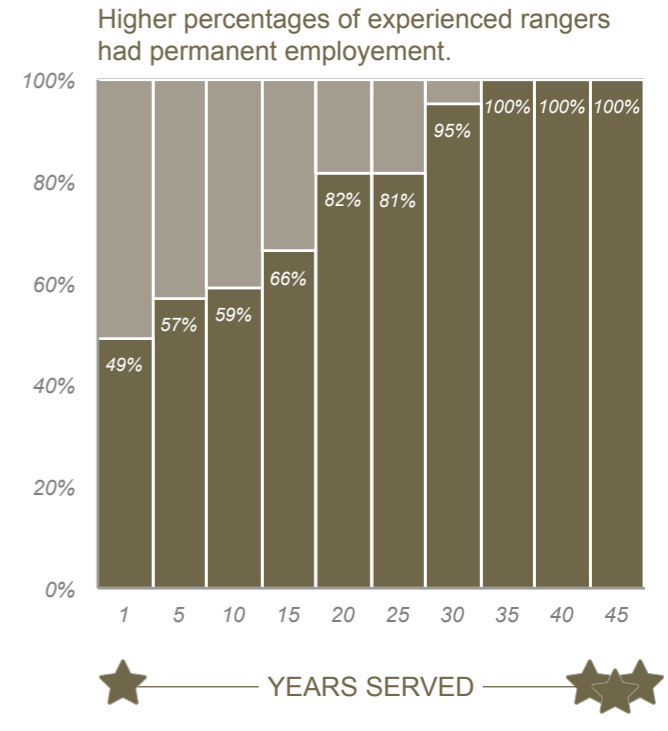
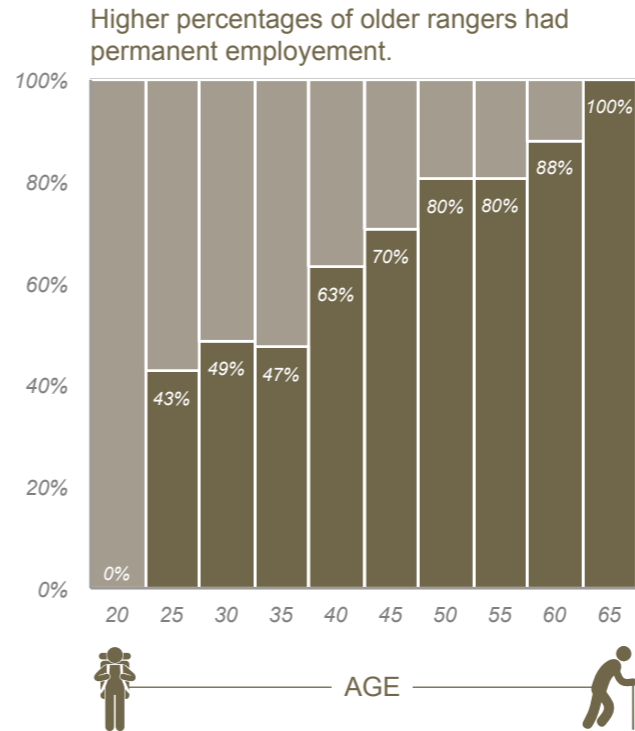
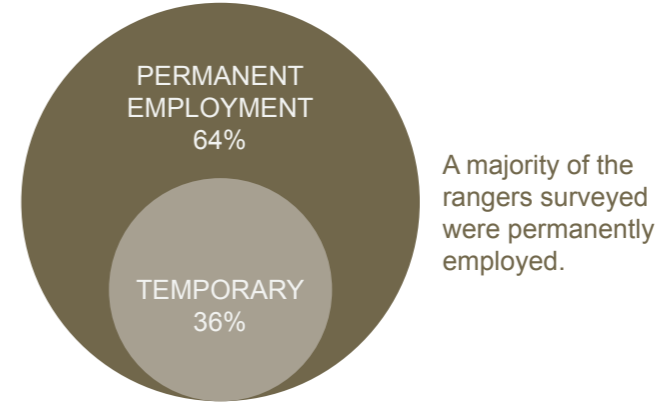
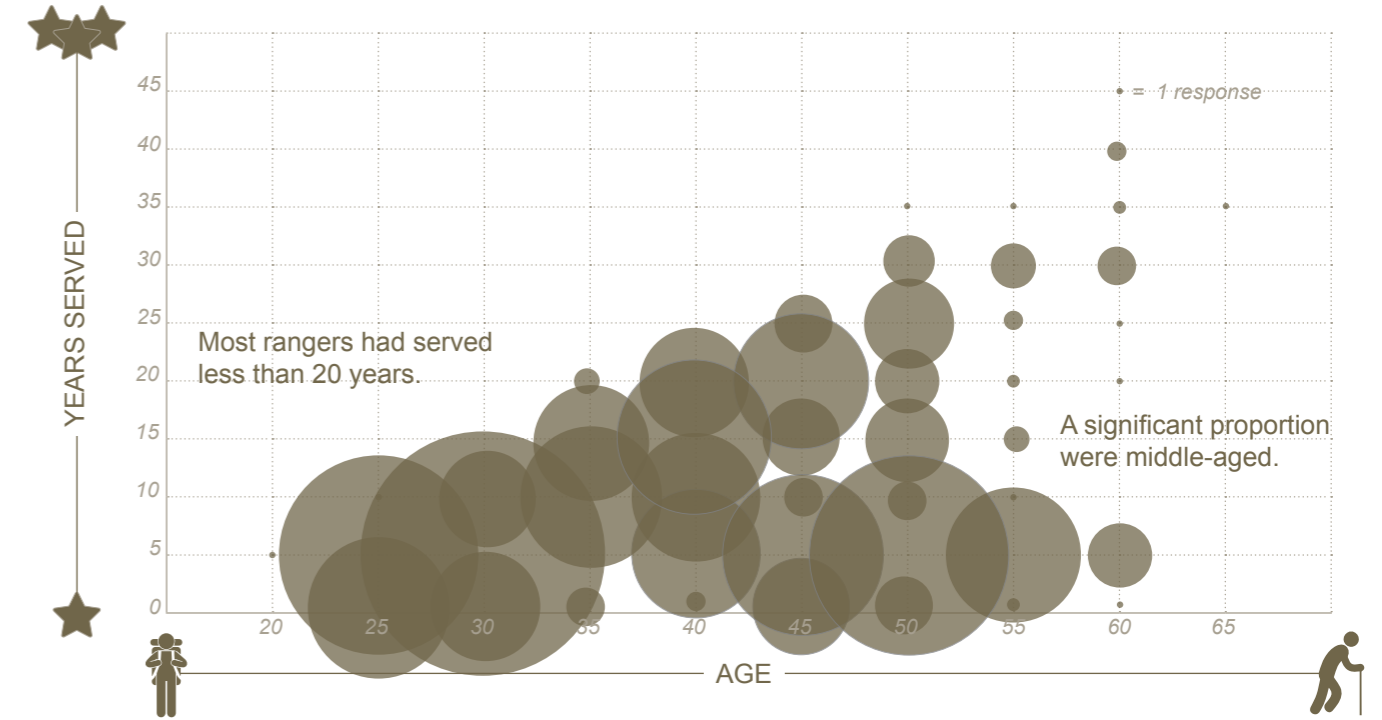
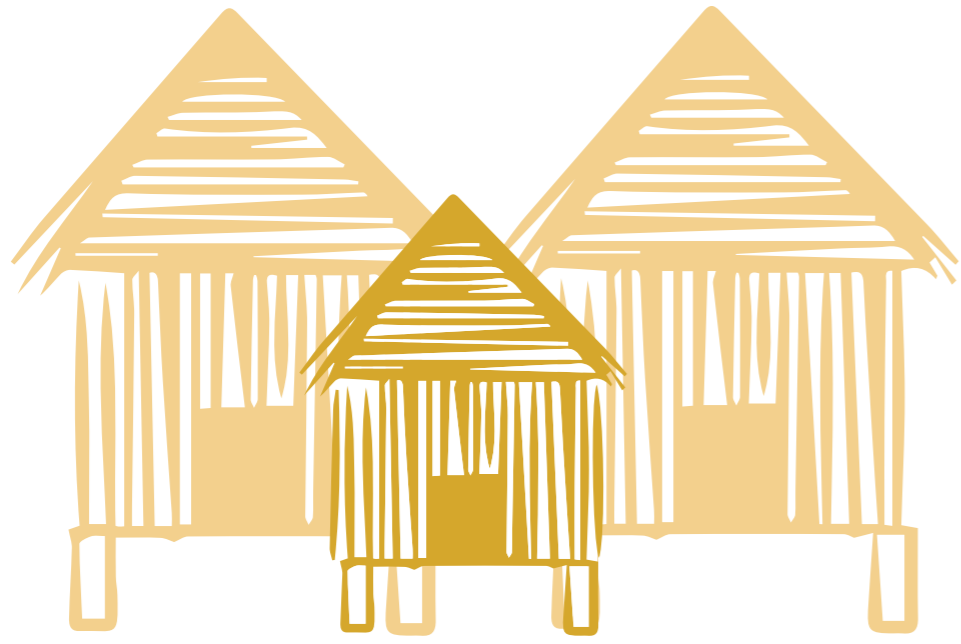
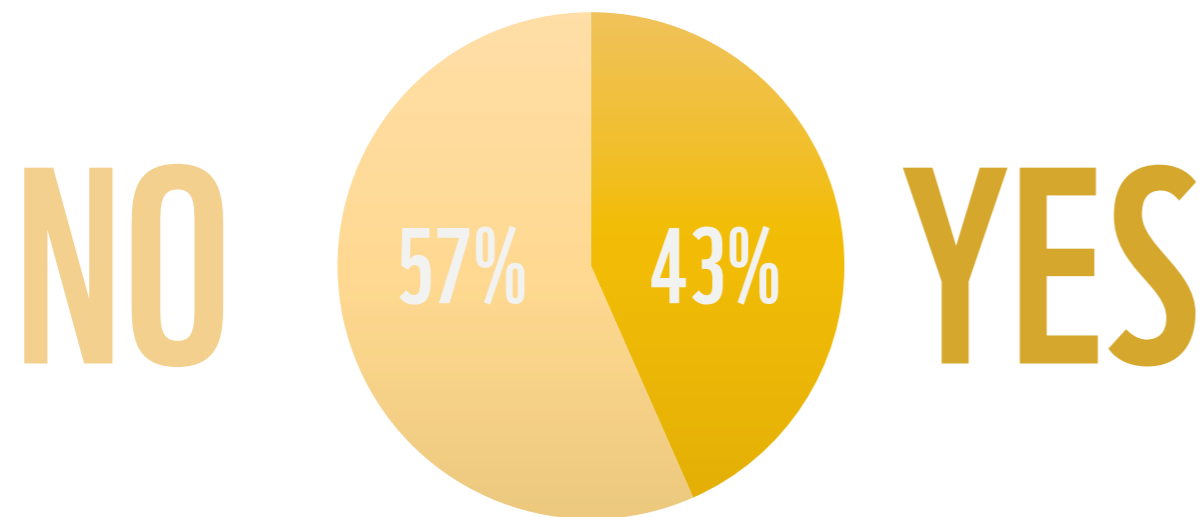


FIGURE 2: THREAT



Have you been threatened by community members or other people because of this work?



# Have you faced a life threatening situation?

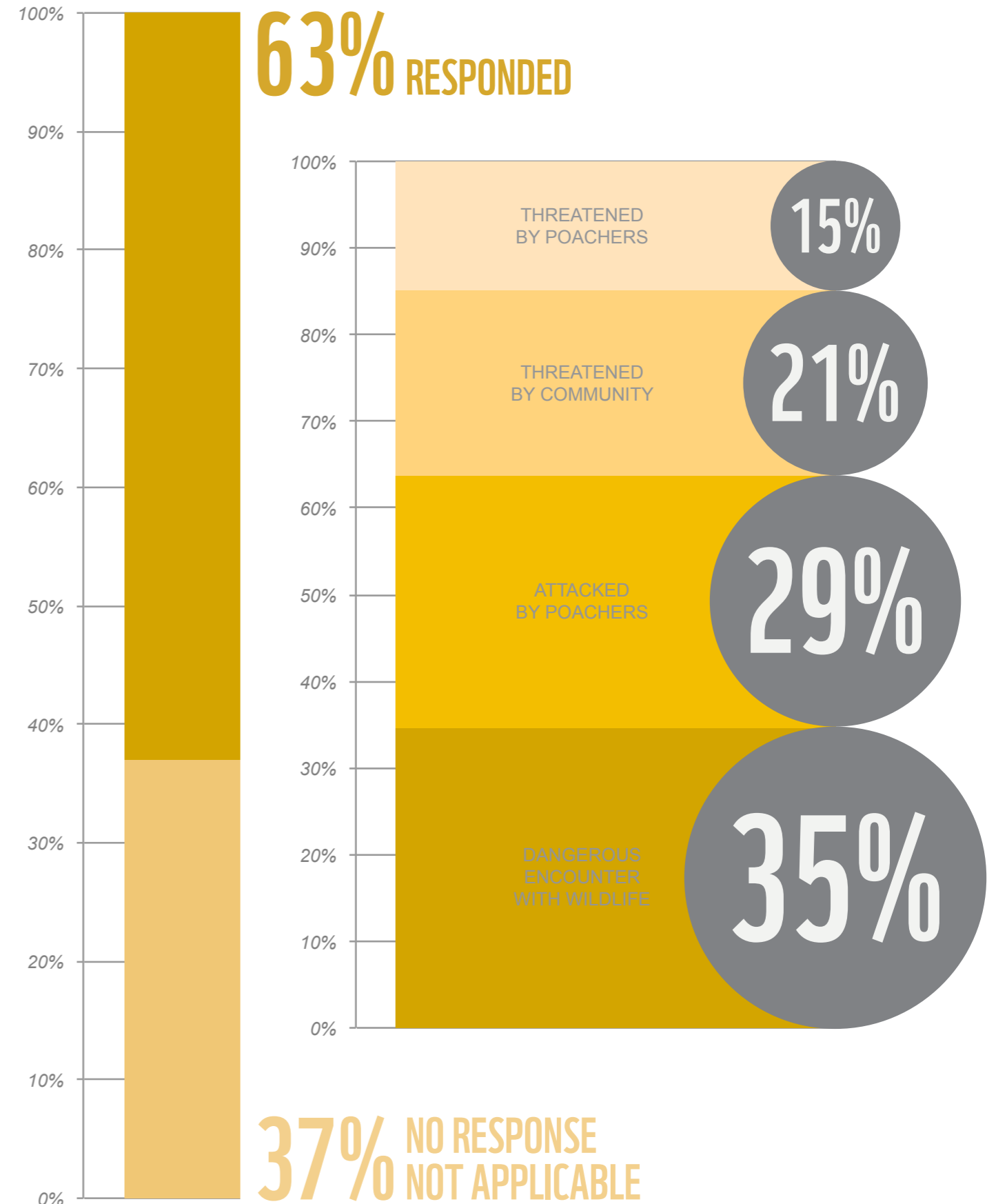


FIGURE 3: FAMILY

# How many days a month do you get to see your family?

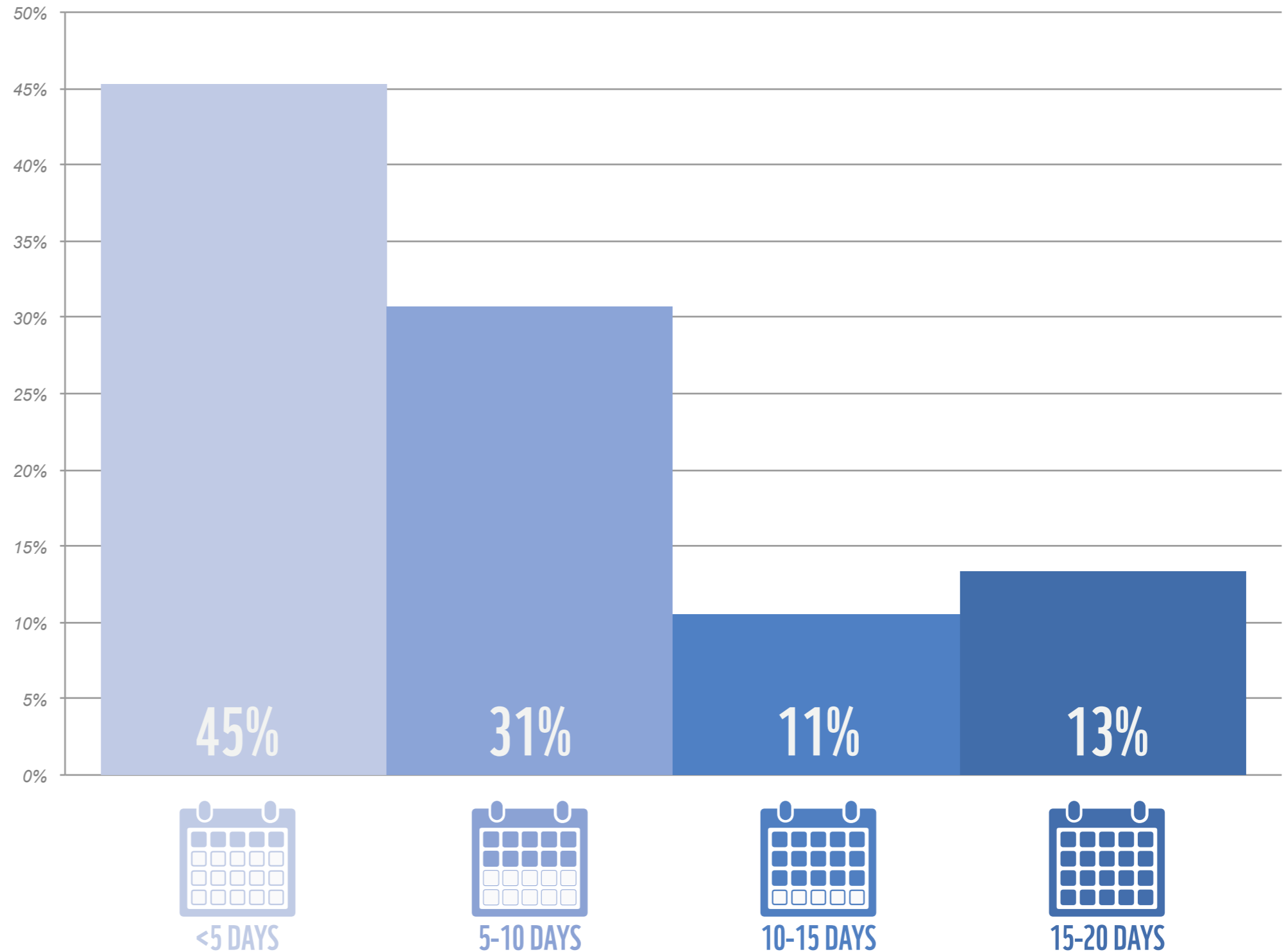
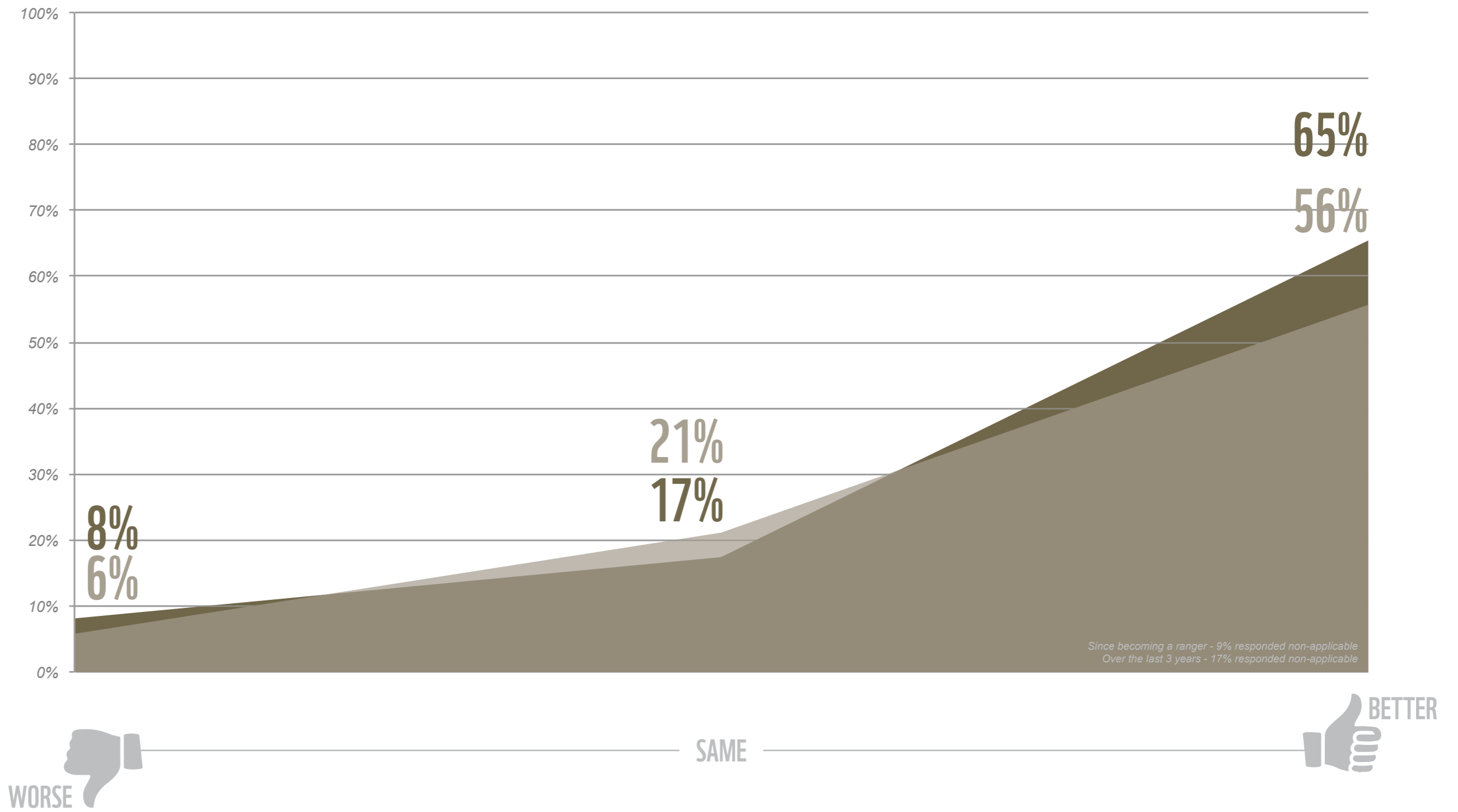


FIGURE 4: WORKING CONDITIONS

# Have working conditions become better or worse?

SINCE BECOMING A RANGER

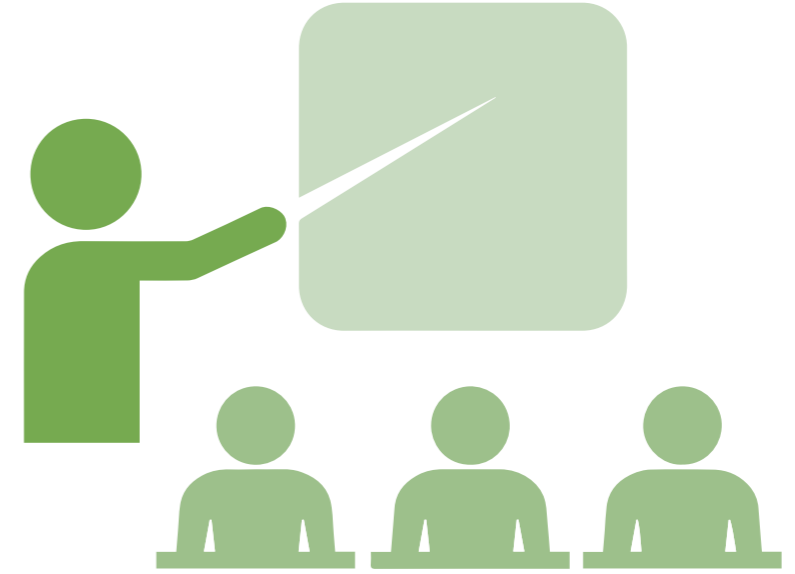
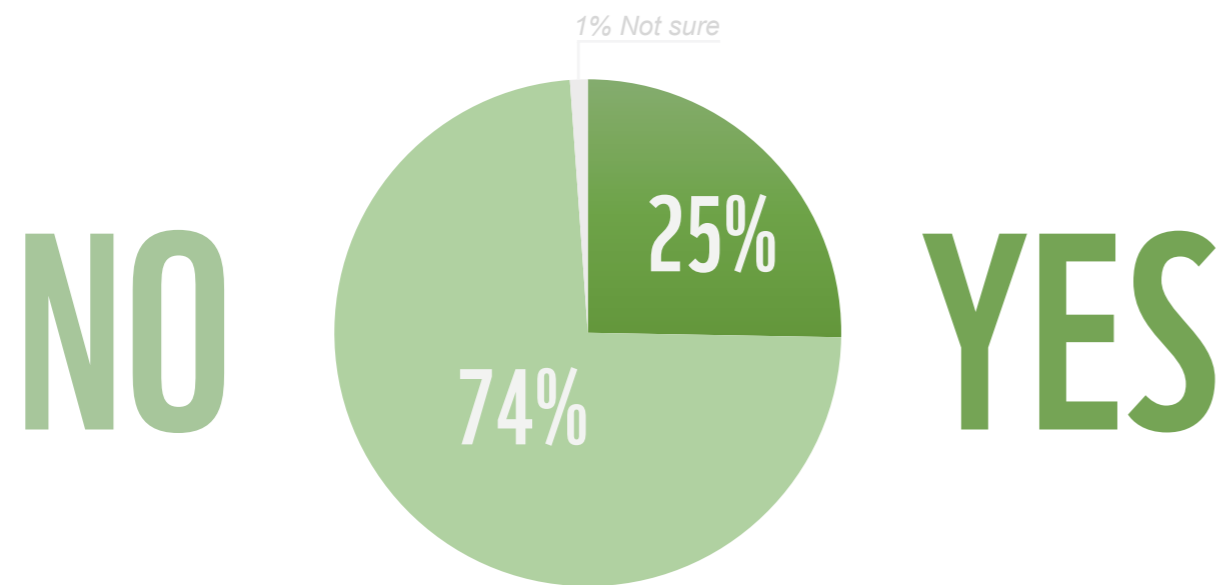
OVER THE LAST 3 YEARS



**FIGURE 5: ENABLING CONDITIONS**



**Do you feel you are provided with proper equipment and amenities to ensure safety?**



**Do you feel you are adequately trained to do your job?**

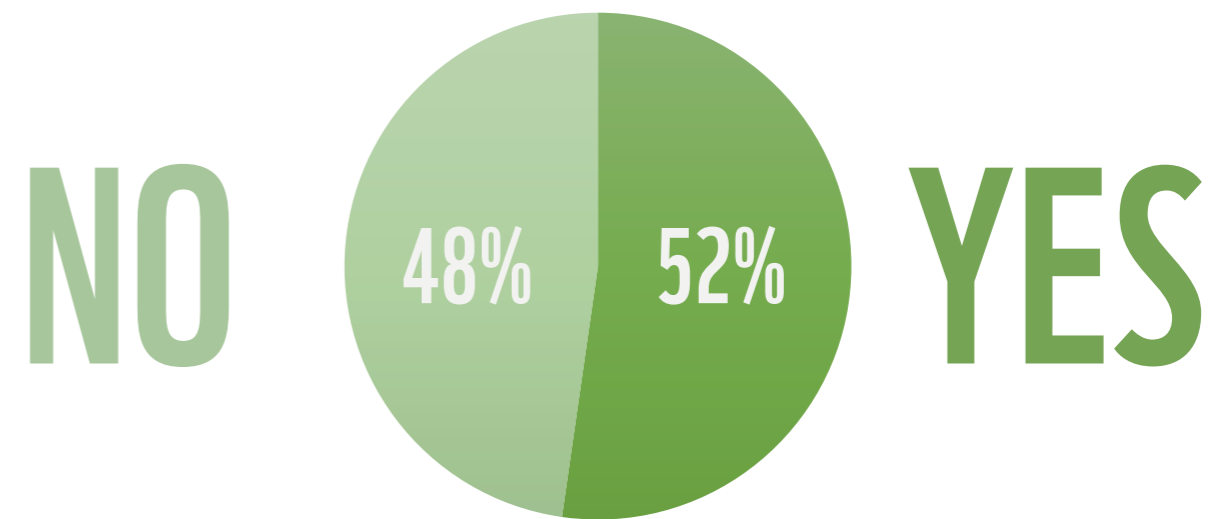




FIGURE 6: MENTALITY

# What is your motivation for continuing as a ranger?

# What is the worst aspect of being a ranger?

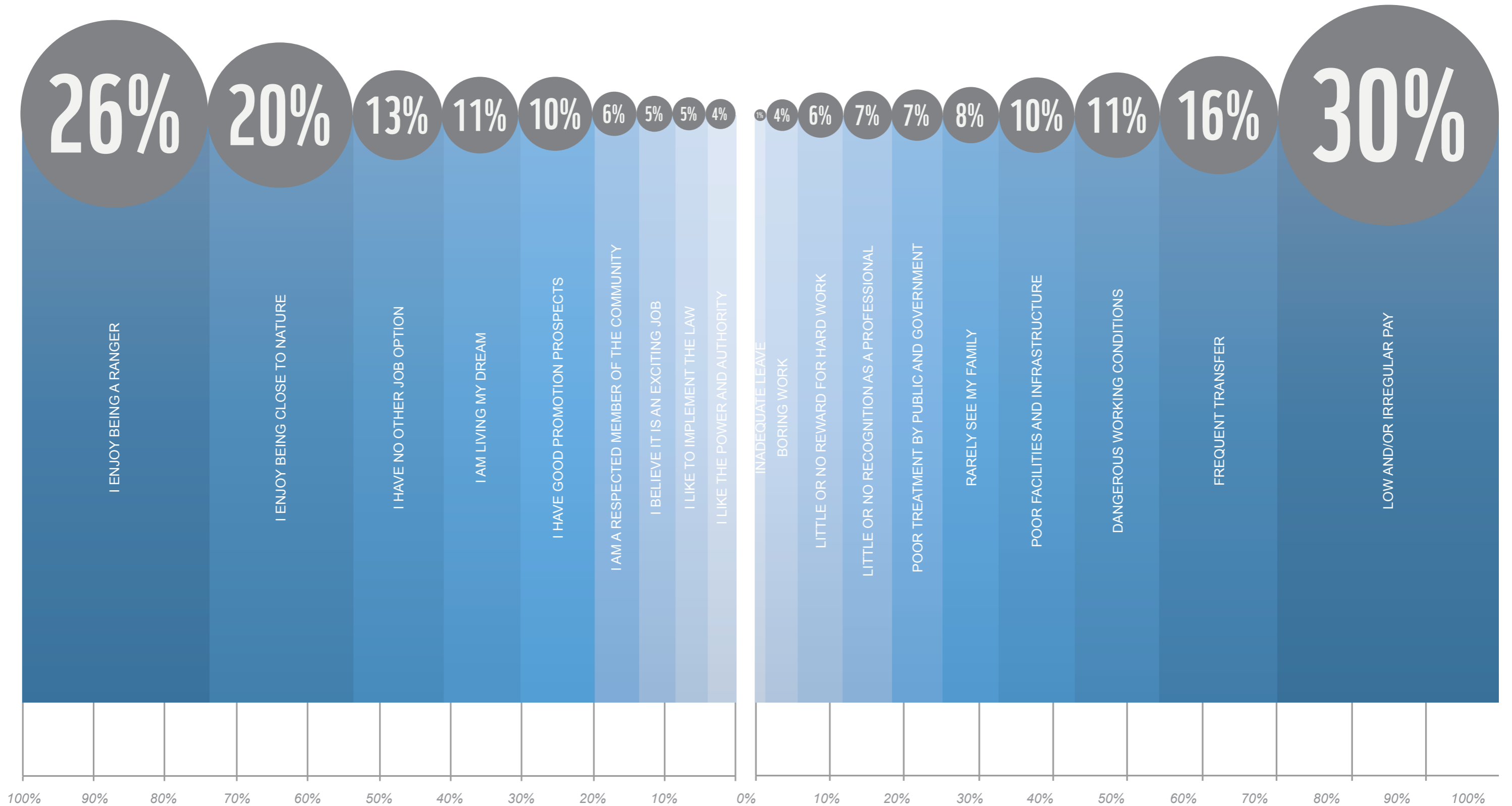
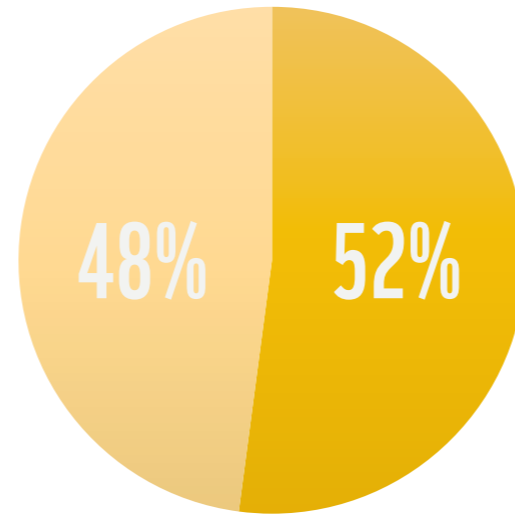


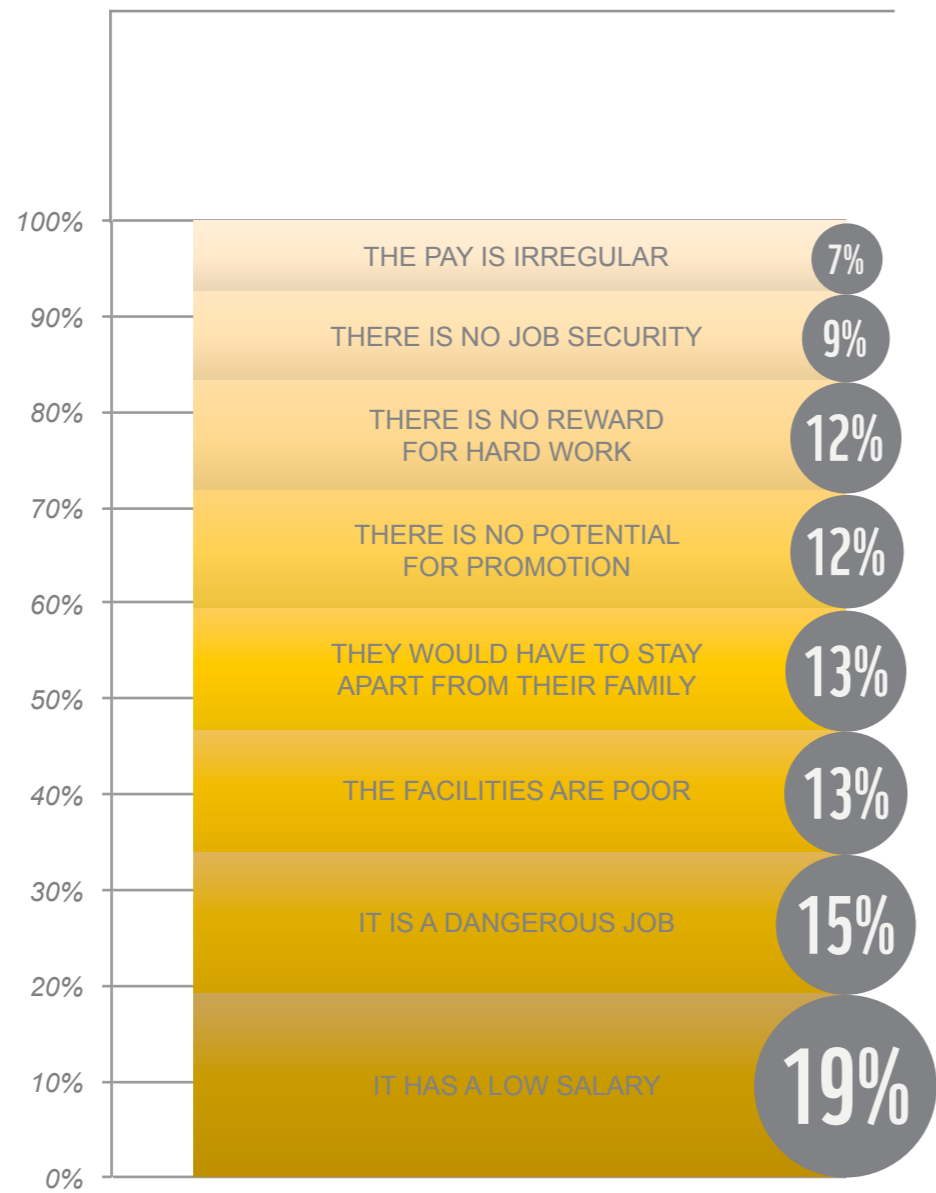
FIGURE 7: FUTURE

# Do you want your children to become rangers?

NO



YES



# RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of the survey, the following priority recommendations are forwarded to those responsible for staffing, planning and delivering ranger work. In the vast majority of cases this will fall to one or more government agency or department; most frequently this will be Environment, Forestry, Natural Resources, or Finance.

## **Recommendation 1: Make targeted interventions to improve basic employment conditions for rangers**

With low salary and irregular pay frequently topping the list of worst aspects of ranger work, one of the greatest challenges is to improve basic labour indicators throughout this sector. Additionally lack of contractual security, job relocation, and limited time spend with loved ones also speak to the need to ensure predictability and work-life balance are introduced into this sector.

By acknowledging wildlife poaching as a serious priority, in that it, i) degrades or irrevocably destroys valuable biological resources and ecosystems, ii) renders ineffective the millions of dollars governments invest annually in conservation spending, iii) weakens the local perception of rule of law, and iv) allows foreign criminal syndicates to violate the territorial integrity of the state, it is suggested that rangers need to be treated similar to other valued civil servants who risk their physical wellbeing to protect the interests of the state. This would include police, border officials, fire fighters, military, emergency response specialists, and other similarly situated public employees. Rangers should be professionalized to the same extent as others performing comparable functions.

## **Recommendation 2: Ensure equipment levels, and training are adequate to improve ranger effectiveness**

With roughly one half of rangers indicating that they do not feel adequately trained to do their job, and roughly three-fourths believing they do not have the proper material support to stay safe in the field, there is clearly a pressing need to rectify these shortcomings. With many rangers having lost their lives in Asia while on duty over the past several years this problem needs to be approached with the gravity and humanitarian concern it deserves.

As such this recommendation contains three sub-components;

i) Institutionalize capacity building programs for rangers: Based on the survey results there is a clear need to implement systemic changes that improve the quality and frequency of ranger training. The most efficient way to achieve this is through the establishment of specialized colleges and institutions that carry the mandate to develop and deliver best practice curriculum, as well as adapt to emerging threats. A few colleges exist in Africa, and it is suggested that Asian states implement a similar system as a means of better training field rangers prior to starting the job, and then at regular intervals thereafter.



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ii) Improve ranger access to critical equipment: Although many non-governmental organizations have been trying to fill this gap, there still remains a considerable shortfall in the provision of health supplies, transport vehicles, weapons, boots, shelter and potable water required to keep rangers safe and ensure their effectiveness. Countries themselves will need to allocate greater budgets for such items in the vast majority of landscapes where rangers work.

iii) Increase ranger numbers: Although not addressed directly by the survey, it is also important here to call upon decision makers to increase the overall number of rangers in the field, especially where they currently fall below the 3 rangers/100 km<sup>2</sup> benchmark. Such action vastly reduces the mortal danger faced by rangers on patrol, who are more easily overwhelmed by superior numbers and weaponry of poachers when operating in low densities.

It is worth noting here that in the past two years the poaching issue has received an elevated status on the international stage, be it through high-level meetings in the UK and Botswana (and shortly Viet Nam), national-level executive orders, or powerful statements from countries delivered through intergovernmental forums such as the United Nations General Assembly and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Unfortunately, a huge gulf still exists between the discourse at this level and the actual material support being provided to the only agents who can combat poaching groups. If this inconsistent approach persists, the ideals and elements of a ramped-up anti-poaching collaboration currently being discussed at the international level will be largely squandered.

## **Recommendation 3: Conduct further studies to improve ranger welfare, job satisfaction and motivation, and help facilitate attempts by other organizations to do the same**

Additional surveys that go into greater detail will have the potential to provide a more complete picture of the challenges and conditions that impact rangers and their effectiveness. In particular, there is urgent need to conduct a detailed survey on the objective indicators of employment conditions of those rangers working in Asia. In addition to more comprehensive analysis, there is also a need to incorporate larger numbers of rangers. As governments often have the final authority to approve such studies, they should do so, and without hesitation; viewing them as an opportunity to harvest more actionable information they themselves can benefit from. Additionally, governments should do what they can in order to enhance education and awareness of wildlife conservation issues and ranger welfare generally, given that these matters often do not garner the attention of the wider civil society.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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We are also highly indebted to the hundreds of frontline staff from Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar, Nepal, Thailand and Vietnam who kindly contributed to this survey.

# Ranger Federation of Asia in Numbers

100%  
RECYCLED



2013

Date the Ranger Federation of Asia was established

1700+

The number of RFA members across Asia



## RANGER FEDERATION OF ASIA

14

Number of countries where the RFA is working to improve ranger conditions

08

Number of other organizations the RFA works with on ranger issues



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