



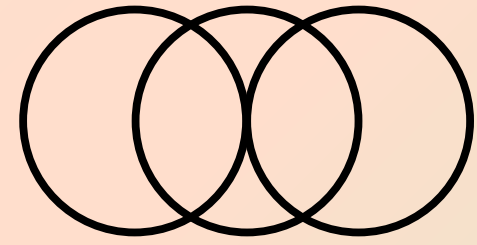
wellness at work

contents

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introduction



How do you feel about work right now? Productive? Stressed? Burnt out?

We'll take a guess and say that however you're feeling right now, current economic trends are an undertone of those feelings.

Slow economic growth, stubbornly high inflation, interest rates that just won't come down, and a fluctuating unemployment rate is making it harder for businesses to operate and grow. And of course there's talk of the possibility of a recession on the table – again...

With so many factors at play, it's clear we're all feeling an unnerving mix of uncertainty and concern, and these events are influencing your employees in a major way. They can significantly impact one's sense of wellbeing, which can seep into every part of life – including work.

You may be in perfect physical health, but do you really feel well if you're in financial distress? You may have a strong sense of occupational fulfilment, but if you don't feel that you can authentically communicate with others, you might feel excluded. The good news is, what employers do to support their employees' wellness can make a big difference. By being informed about how your team is feeling, employers can make employees feel more supported, fight risks to their wellbeing, and improve overall happiness in every aspect of their lives.

We spend, on average, one-third of our lives at work, which can be exhausting if our wellbeing isn't supported. That's why we surveyed over 1,000 workers from around Australia between 12 April to 1 May 2024.

We asked Australian workers about their mental health, how happy they are with their professional relationships, how comfortable they are talking to their manager about hairy topics, how they're managing the current cost of living crisis, plus so much more.

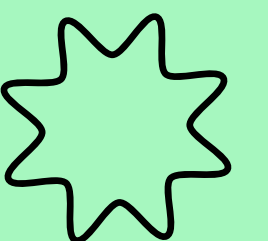
The results are essential reading for any business leader in 2024. While some results might surprise you, others are crystal clear. Our responses sit on a scale from worrying to insightful, with some pleasantly surprising results to round us out.

I want you to know that wellness can be fostered in the workplace and it doesn't have to break the bank. I hope these insights will help make employment easier and more valuable for yourself and your team this year.

Wishing you all the best,

Ben Thompson

CEO & Founder of Employment Hero



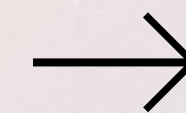


01.

The wellness progress report: *2022 vs. 2024*



In February 2022, we released the first edition of the Wellness at Work report. We surveyed over 1,000 Australian workers to explore their wellness status, with the hope to better understand how they're feeling about work. While the pandemic was still front of mind in our early 2022 findings, the results from 2024 are reflective of a very different time.



When we compare both year's results, some areas improved and others dipped. Our world is experiencing rapid change, geopolitical instability and economic whiplash, all off the back of a pandemic and climate disasters. It's clear that Aussies are required to be more resilient than ever before. But you likely already knew that.

Let's take a look.

Burnout is on the *rise*

In 2022, **53%** of Australian employees reported feeling burnt out. In 2024, that number has made a significant jump to **66%**.

While lower rates of burnout in 2022 could be a result of a slower world still recovering from the pandemic, the increase is alarming and one that employers should take notice of. Employers must also put measures in place to reduce the risk of burnout at work, otherwise teams could experience poor mental health and all of the knock-on effects that come with it.

In the past 3 months, would you say you have felt burnt out because of work?

	Agree	Disagree	Undecided
2022	53%	32%	16%
2024	66%	20%	14%

Work-life balance takes a *hit*

As many of us continue to work in a hybrid capacity, this finding might come as a surprise. More employees (**57%**) are rating their work-life balance as average or poor, compared to **52%** of people in 2022. In our opinion, this could be a sign that the current economic environment and rising cost of living is taking its toll on Aussies, with employees feeling the need to work longer hours or take on more responsibility.

In the last 3 months, your overall work / life balance has been...

	Good	Average	Poor
2022	48%	39%	13%
2024	43%	40%	17%

Teams are surging ahead with a *small spike* in productivity

Surprisingly, while our work-life balance has declined and we're more burnt out than we were two years ago, we're feeling slightly more productive. In 2022, **57%** of Australians rated their productivity as high, while two years on, **59%** rated it as high.

In the past 3 months, how would you rate your overall work productivity?

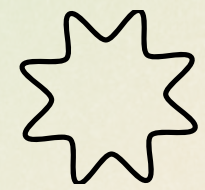
	High
2022	57%
2024	59%

Employers' commitment to wellness has *increased* – just

In 2024, we've seen a slight increase in employer perceptions. In 2022, **52%** of employees rated their employers' commitment to wellness as good. This year's findings report **53%**, meaning that although there's a slight (and very slow) improvement, there's a long way to go when it comes to prioritising wellness in the workplace.

How would you rate your employer's commitment to improving overall health and wellness for employees?

	Good	Average	Poor
2022	52%	34%	15%
2024	53%	32%	15%



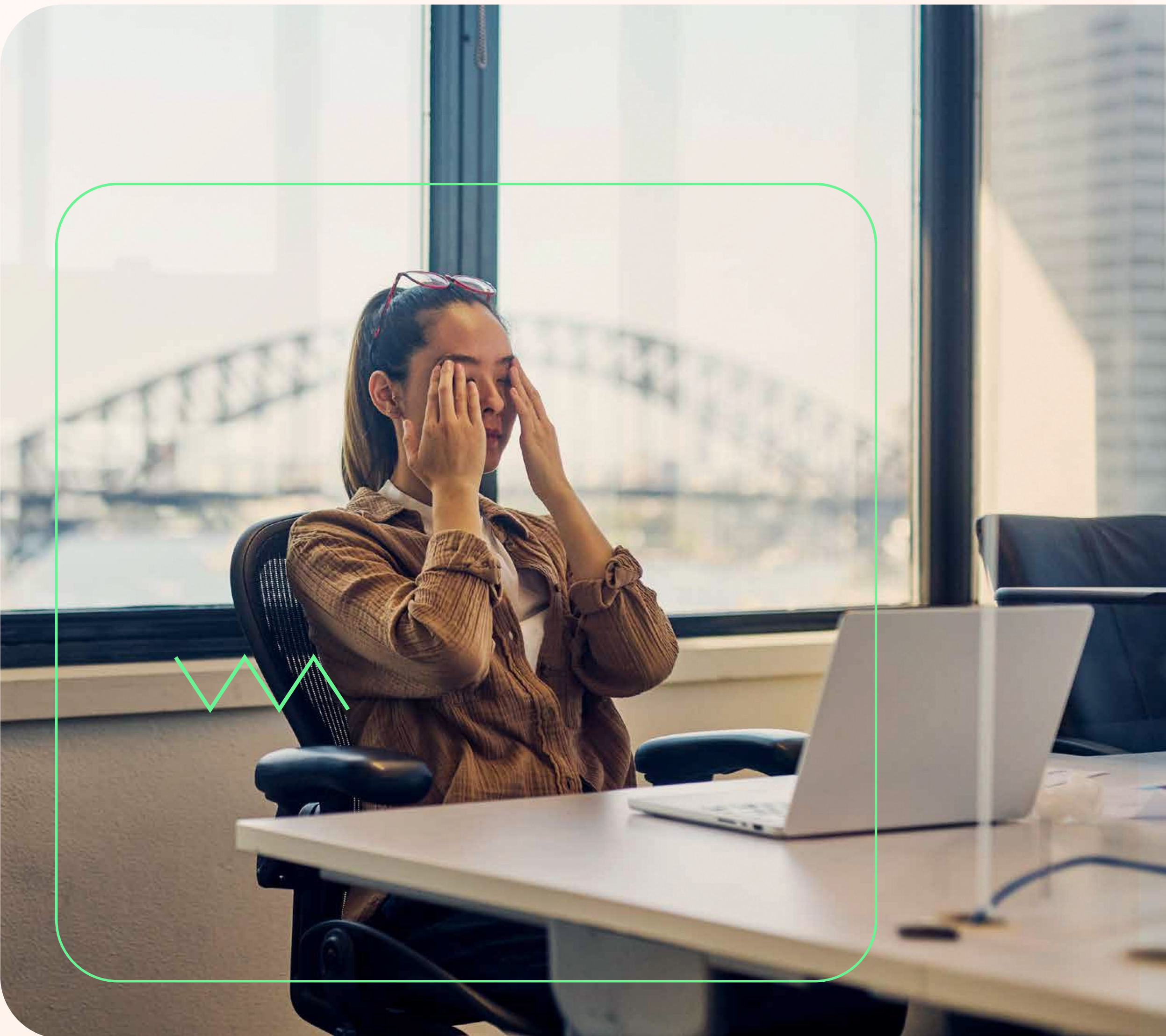
02.

The 2024 wellness *headlines*



Employees are in the red zone with *burnout*

When it comes to mental health, burnout is spreading quickly across the working population. Workers have felt a sense of fatigue recently, with **66%** signalling that burnout had affected them within the past three months. This comes as no surprise, especially as we grapple with the cost of living crisis and the current economic environment. Just **20%** agreed that they felt no sense of burnout from work.



We have a strong sense of *mateship* at work

Having positive working relationships with your colleagues in the workplace can be the difference between a great work environment and a not-so-great one. It also helps create a culture of belonging and community in teams.

Encouragingly, an overwhelming number of Australian employees (**81%**) stated they feel satisfied with the working relationships they have with their colleagues. Only **8%** stated they were dissatisfied.



Turns out, we happen to like our *managers* on the whole

Everyone remembers the best manager they've ever had. They support you in your work, whilst pushing you to your full potential. And the good news is, it seems like the overwhelming majority of employees in Australia have good managers.

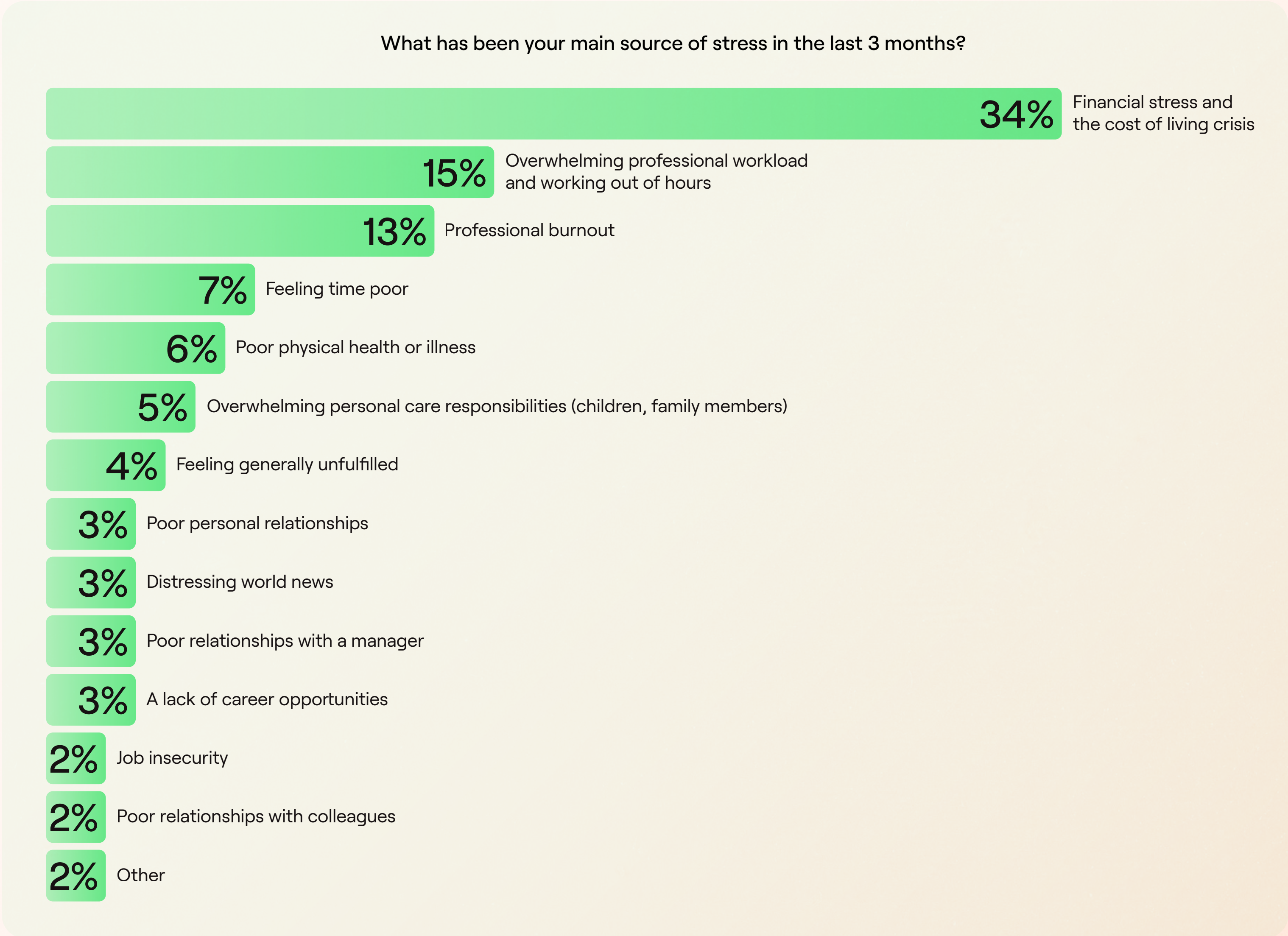
75% of Australians were satisfied with their working relationship with their manager, with only **13%** reporting feeling dissatisfied.



We're strapped for cash and stressed out

The majority of Australians (**34%**) indicated that financial stress and the cost of living was by far the main source of stress in the last 3 months. This comes as no surprise as we battle stubbornly high interest rates, a cost of living crisis and the full force of inflation. This is putting households under immense pressure, and it's not only seeping into our financial health, but also our mental health.

After being stressed about finances, the second highest stressor was an overwhelming professional workload and working out of hours (**15%**), followed by professional burnout (**13%**).



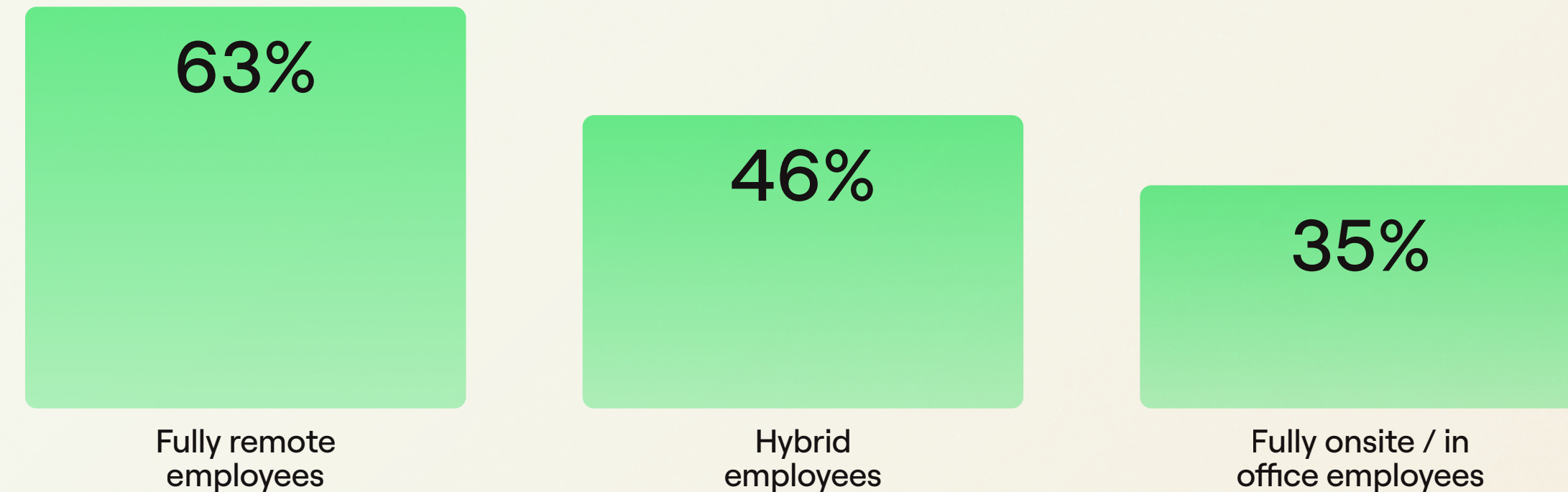
Remote work could be *the key* to good mental health and strong work-life balance

When it comes to those that have the best work life balance, **63%** of fully remote employees stated their overall work life balance was above average, in contrast to **46%** of hybrid employees and **35%** of fully in-office or on-site employees.

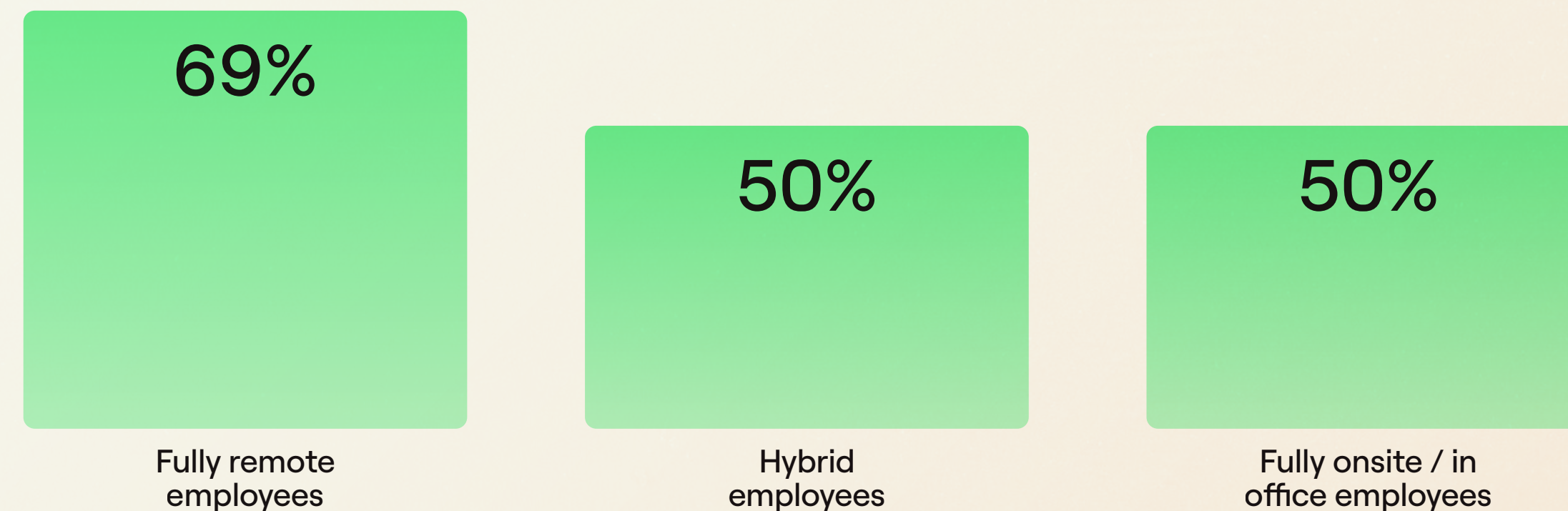
Additionally, **69%** of fully remote workers agreed that they were happy with their overall mental health, while only **50%** of both fully in-office/onsite employees and hybrid employees agreed.

We can assume that better mental health and a greater sense of work-life balance is a direct result of remote workers having time back in their day to focus on hobbies and commitments outside of work, and skipping the dreaded long commutes to the office.

Percentage of people who stated their overall work-life balance was above average



Percentage of people who stated they were happy with their overall mental health



03.

The great generational *divide*



Gen Z

1997 – 2012



Millennials

1981 – 1996



Gen X

1965 – 1980



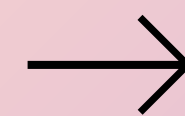
Baby Boomers

1946 – 1964



Please note:

We approximated age groups for this survey and have categorised the generations into the following:

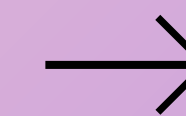


18 to 24 – Gen Z (2000 – 2006)

25 to 44 – Millennials (1980 – 1999)

45 to 54 – Gen X (1970 – 1979)

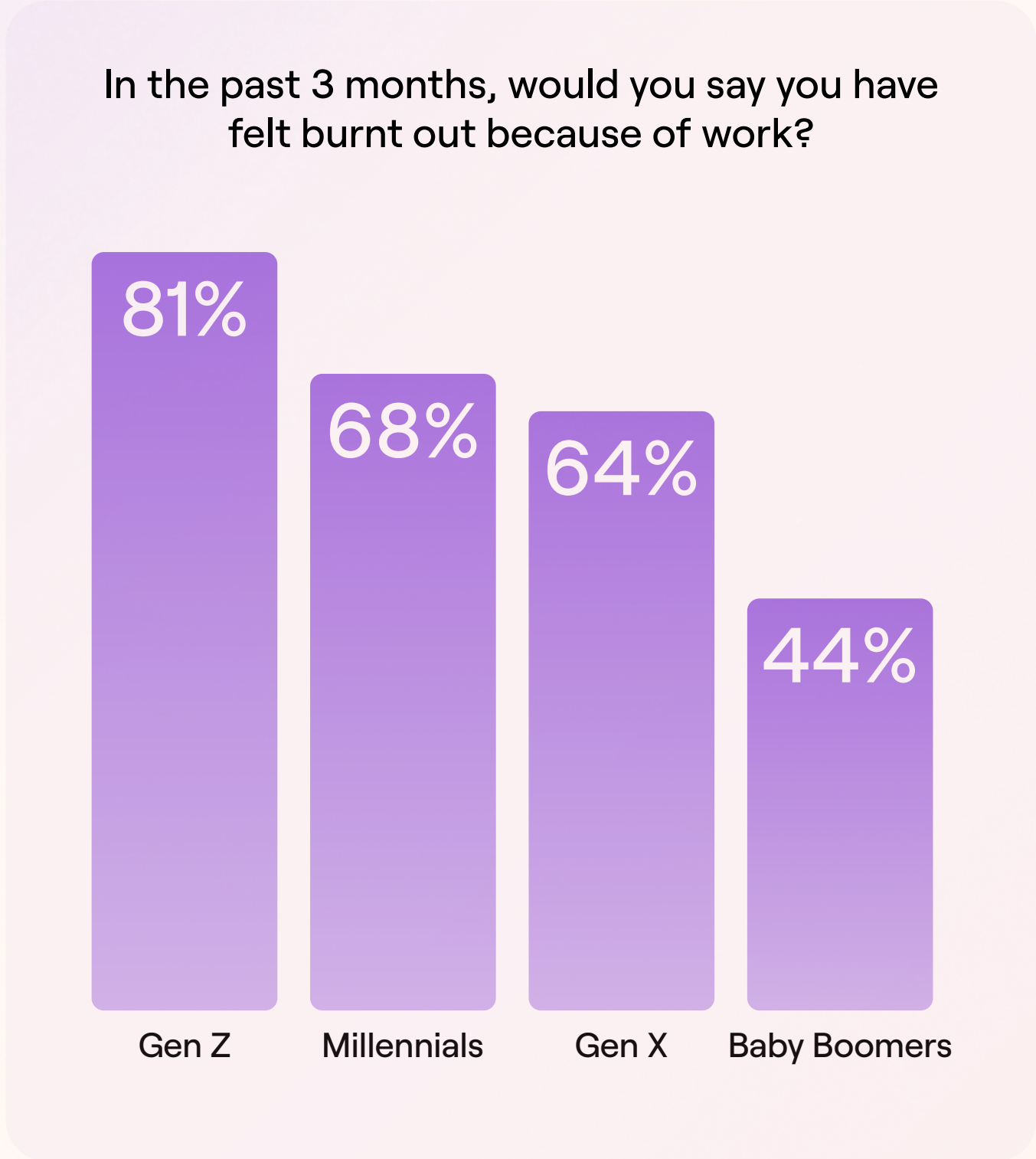
55+ – Baby Boomers (<1969)



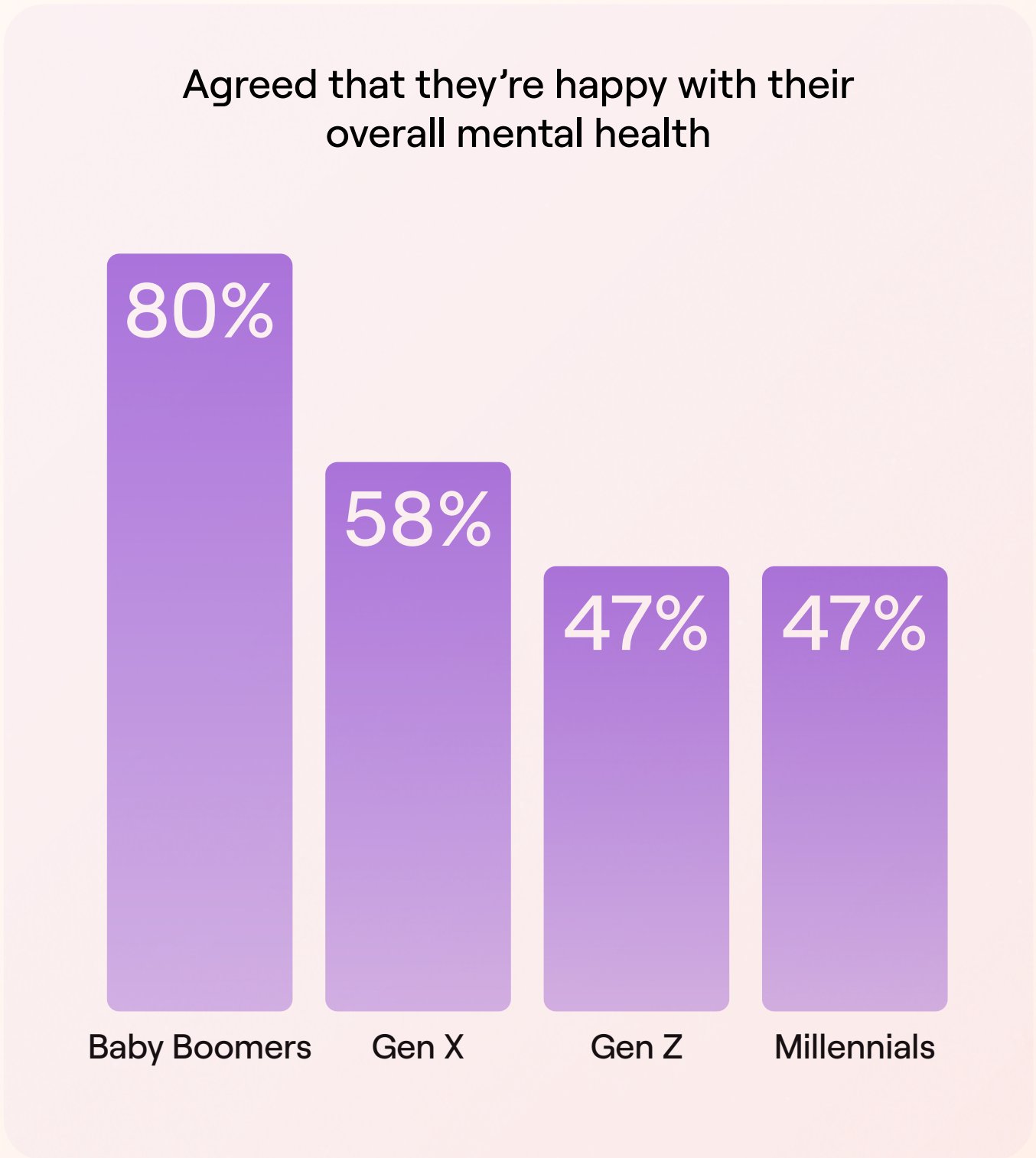
The general findings?

Baby Boomers are happiest at work and Gen Z are struggling across most areas. Let's take a closer look. →

Almost double the amount of Gen Z are *burnt out* compared to Baby Boomers

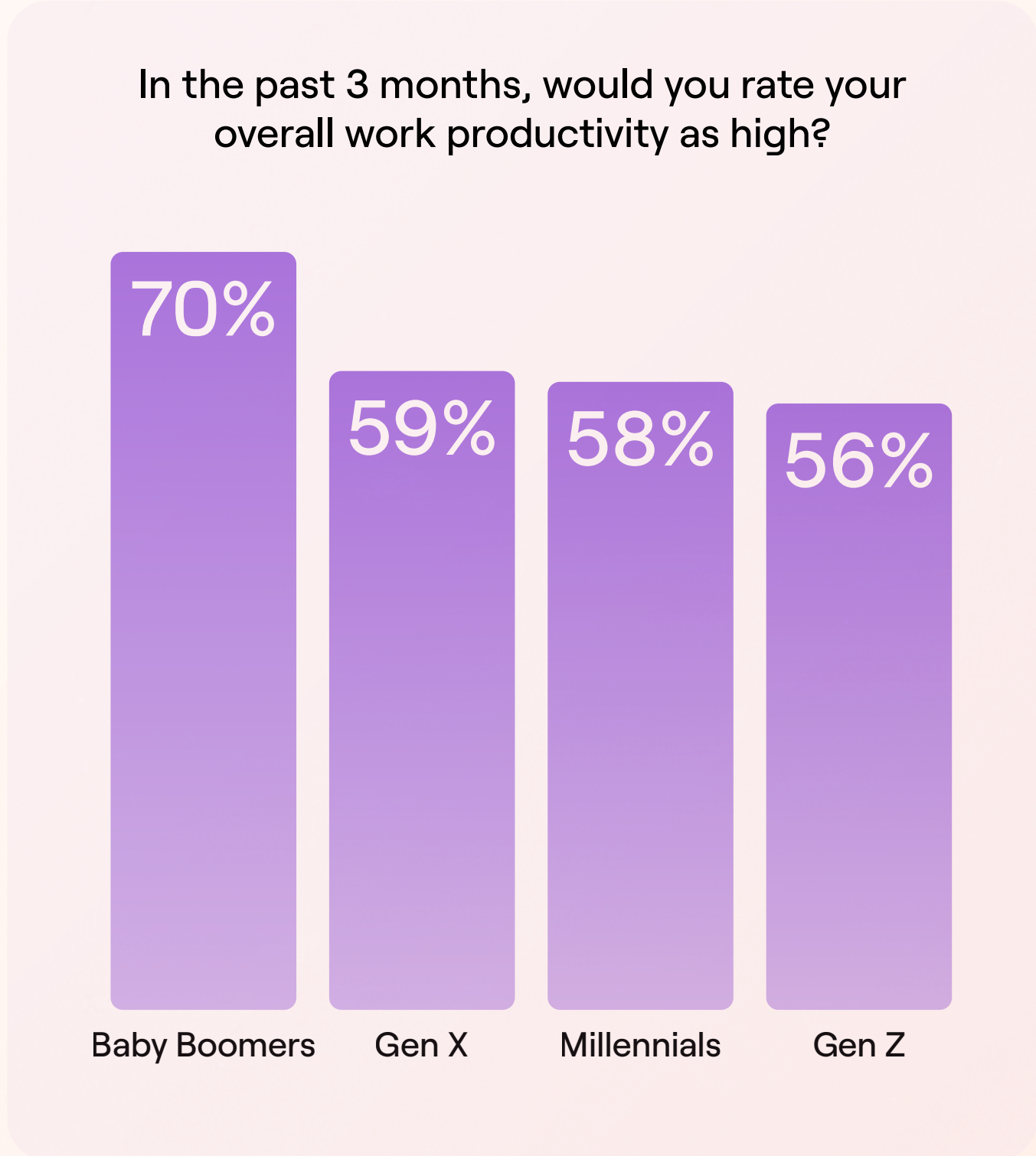


Four in five Baby Boomers are *happy* with their overall mental health, compared to less than half of Gen Z and Millennials

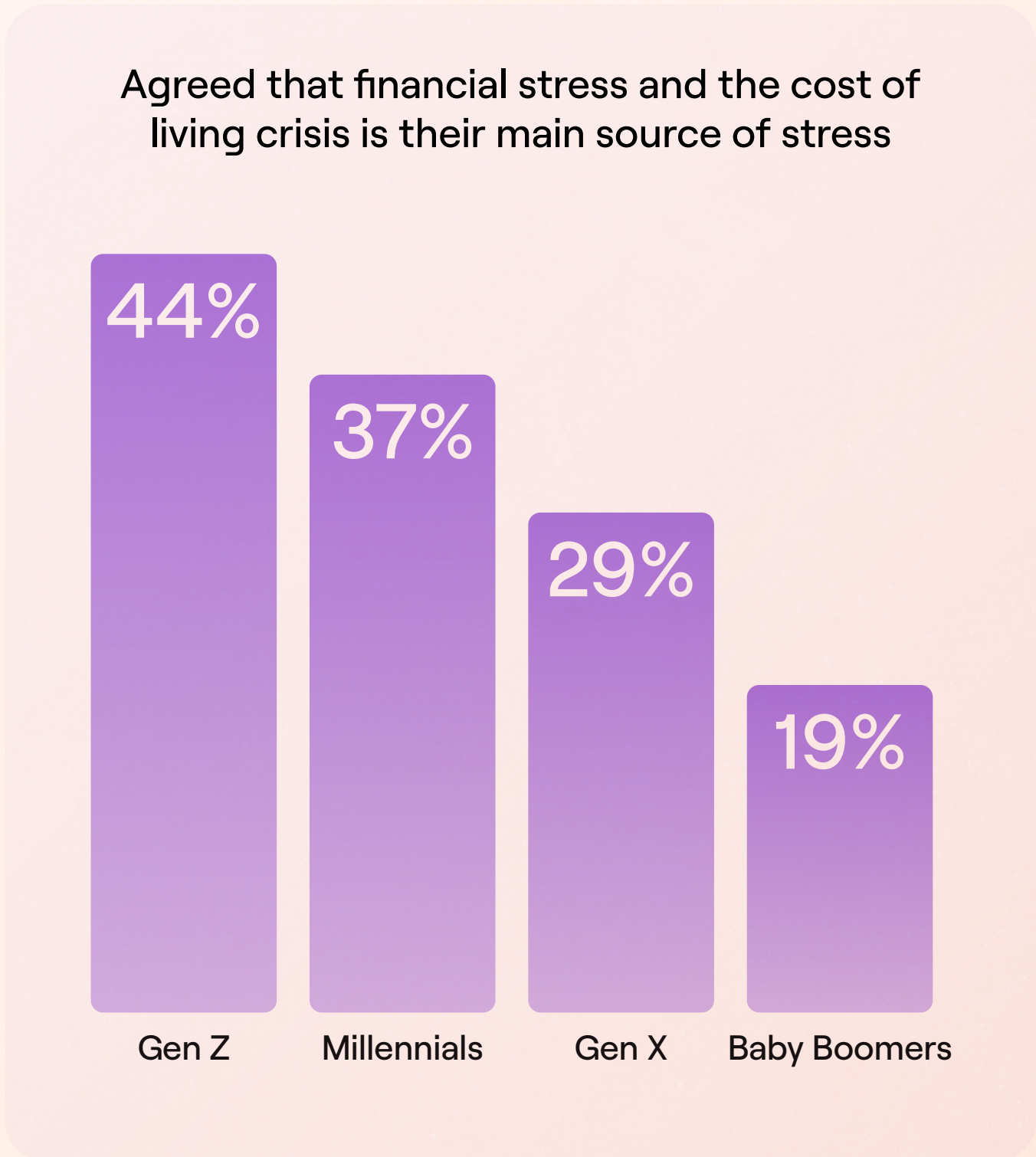




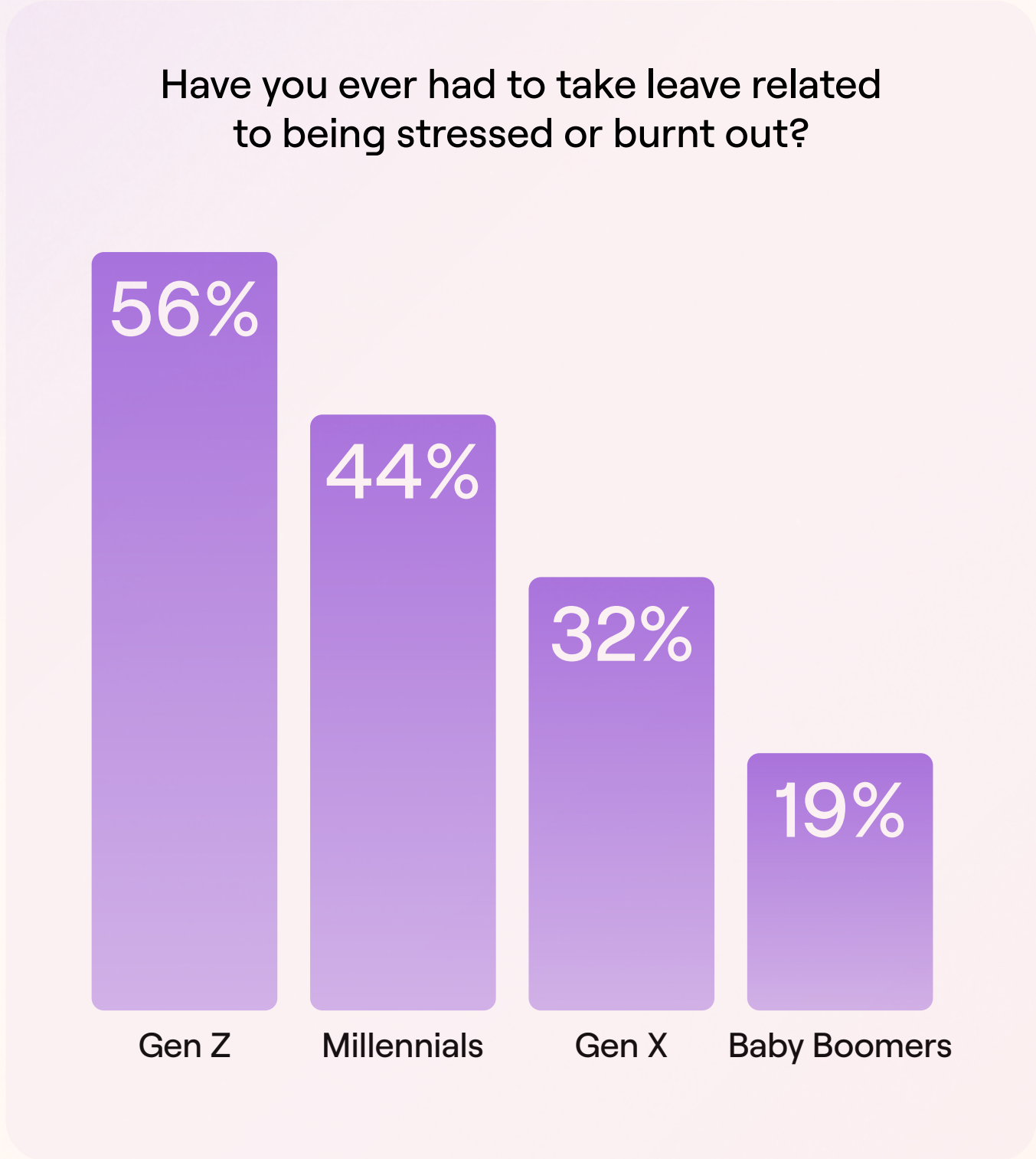
Baby Boomers feel more *productive* at work, compared to Gen Z and Millennials



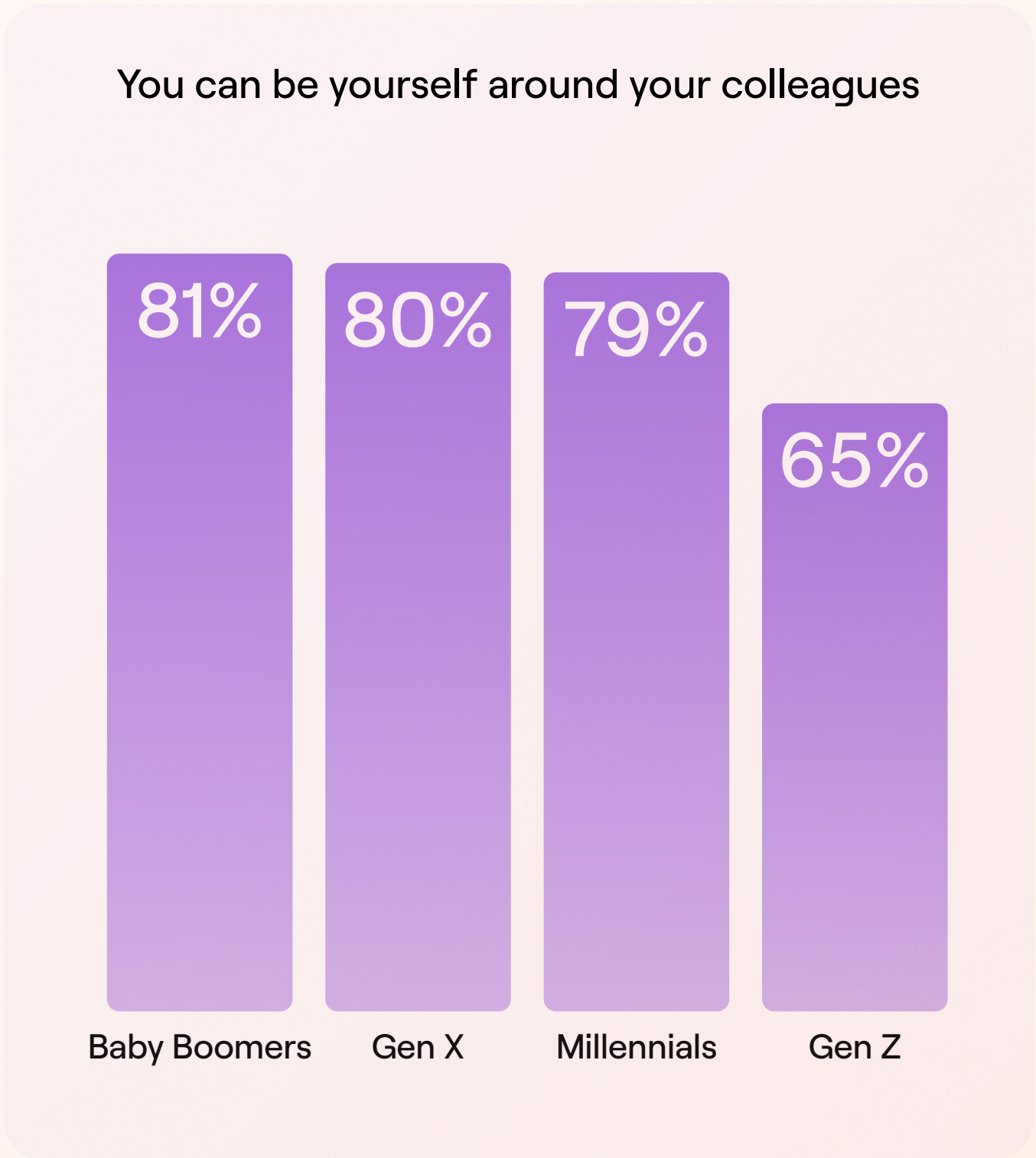
The main source of stress for Gen Z is *financial stress*, while it falls lower down the list for Baby Boomers



Over half of Gen Z are taking *stress leave* due to burnout, compared to one in five Baby Boomers



Baby Boomers feel more *comfortable* around their colleagues, compared to Gen Z



What is the *secret* to our senior colleagues' happiness?

We might not have the exact insight but perhaps they will. Employers looking to boost the happiness of their younger workers, consider establishing buddy or mentorship programs between older and younger team members. Although not an obvious pairing at first, you never know what the two might learn from one another.

Another suggestion is to build resilience and confidence in your younger workforce. Encouraging regular 1:1s between managers and their direct reports, a healthy culture of reward and recognition and continuous learning can all go a long way in fostering a happier workforce overall.

And if you'd like to take it a step further, never underestimate the benefit of a good survey. Our expert tip? Make sure the survey is anonymous and communicate how the company will respond to the survey responses to enact positive change. Find 1:1s, reward and recognition, learning modules, custom surveys and more in the Employment Hero platform and employment superapp, Swag.



Melissa Santos
Team Leader



Shoutout to [@James Hall](#) for the great work he's done over the week!

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 14

04.

Mental health and an *unstable* world



We're shining a spotlight on the state of employee mental health in 2024. How are Australian employees *truly* holding up?



When we think about mental health in the workplace, it's against the backdrop of a volatile planet. From living through a pandemic to dealing with the full swing of the economic pendulum, to say it's been an overwhelming time would be a gross understatement.

So how does this impact our work? At work, stress and frustration, mixed with other external pressures, often manifests in burnout, fatigue and a lack of work-life balance. We asked our survey respondents about each of these experiences, as well as if – and how – they believe their employer is supporting their mental health.

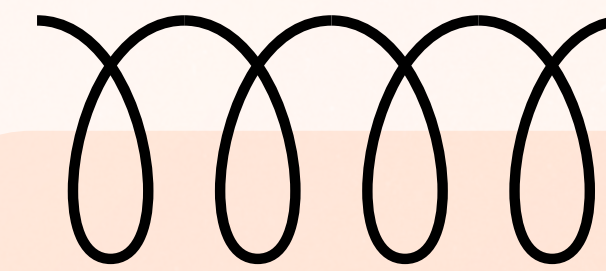
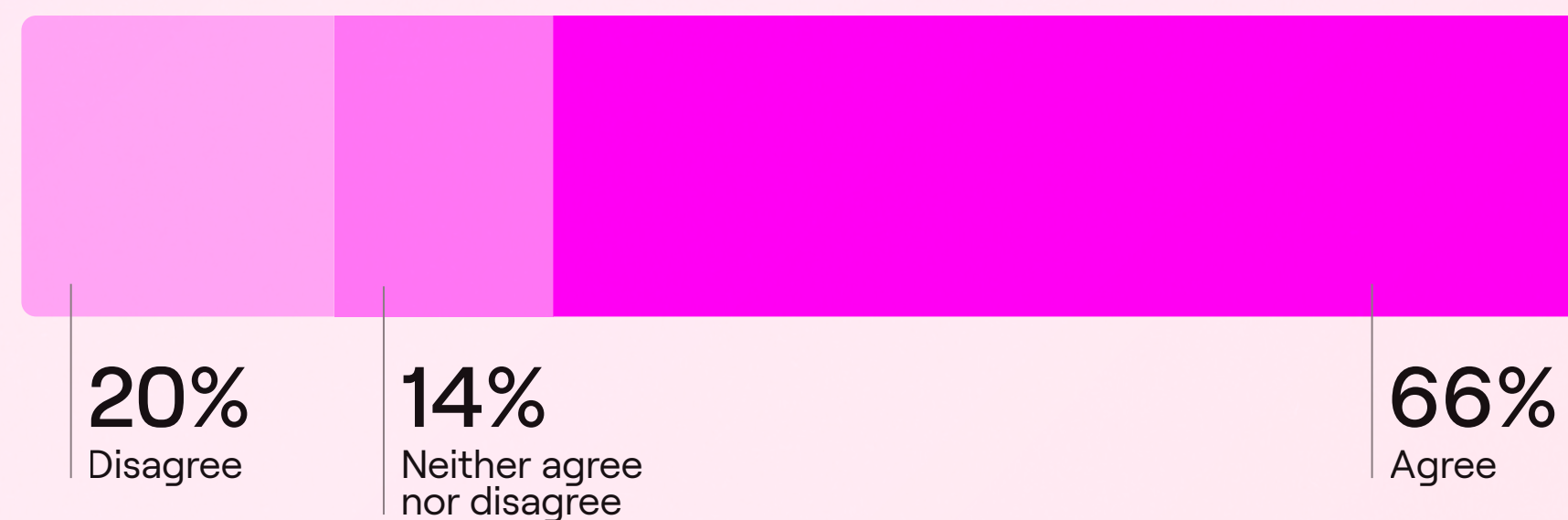
What is burnout?

If you're unsure what constitutes burnout, [Headspace](#) defines it as the feeling of being "constantly exhausted, emotionally drained, unproductive, and unmotivated at work".

Battling burnout: The epidemic sweeping across Aussie workplaces

The majority of Australians (**66%**) agree they have felt burnt out because of work in the past 3 months, with only a fifth of Australians (**20%**) not feeling burnt out because of work in the past 3 months.

In the past 3 months, would you say
you have felt burnt out because of work?



Women and Gen Z are *more* at risk of burnout because of work

When we take a closer look at certain groups in the community, it's clear that two groups have a higher risk of burnout.

The group with the highest rates of burnout is Gen Z. Out of all the groups, they're the most likely to agree that they have felt burnt out in the past 3 months because of work (**81%**), compared to all other age groups. Interestingly, only **45%** of Baby Boomers and **64%** of Gen X agree with this, while **68%** of Millennials agree that they've felt burnt out because of work in the past 3 months.

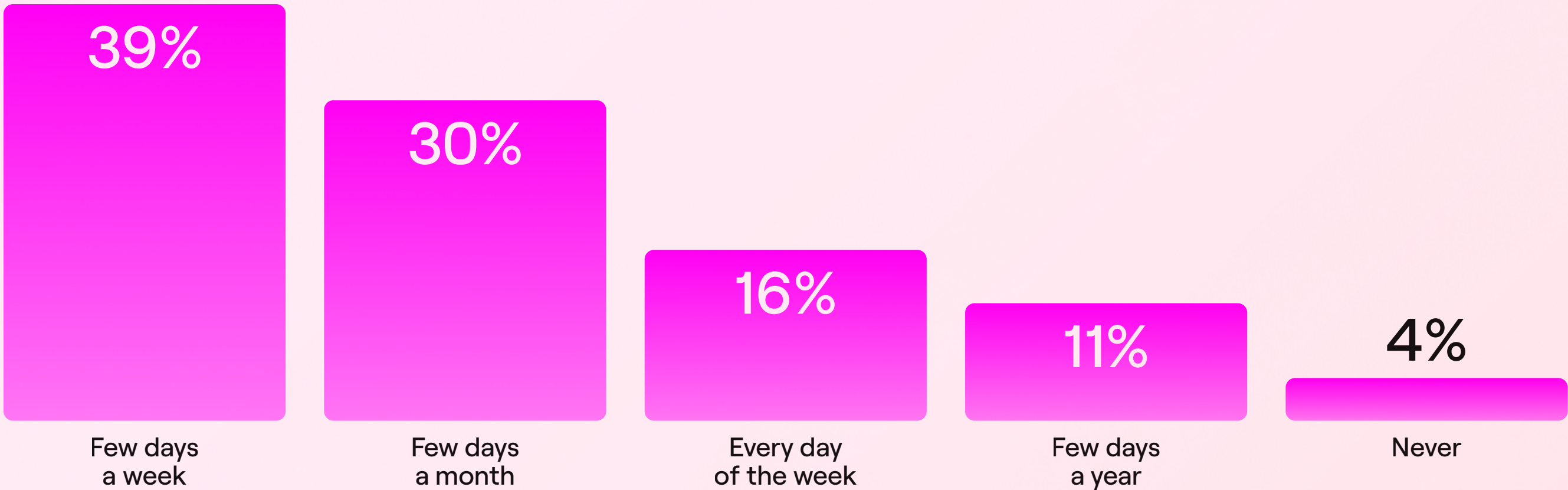
Women were the group with the second highest rates of burnout. **72%** of women indicated they have felt burnt out in the past 3 months due to work, compared to **60%** of men. We can assume that the wide gap between women and men is largely due to the gender inequalities that still exist in society. Unpaid labour in the household, emotional and family carer's responsibilities, as well as working hours to keep up with the cost of living crisis are all contributing to the heightened feelings of burnout.

Stress is rife in the workplace

Based on the rates of burnout in the workplace, it's no surprise that stress levels are high in the workplace right now. **85%** of Australians are experiencing stress at least a few times a month or more. Alarming, **39%** of Australians indicated that they feel stressed at work a few days a week in the last 3 months, followed by **30%** of Australians indicating they feel stressed a few days a month.

Following a similar pattern to burnout, female respondents had higher levels of stress, indicating that they feel stressed at work a few days a week (**46%**), compared to males (**30%**). Millennials were also the highest age group to indicate they feel stressed a few days a week (**42%**), compared to **32%** of Gen X. Interestingly, only **22%** of Gen Z who had reported having the highest levels of burnout stated that they feel stressed a few days a week at work.

In the last 3 months, how often have you been stressed at work?



While the old adage goes, a little bit of stress can be a good thing – chronic, persistent stress is definitely not. With stress being a notorious culprit of mental and physical health decline, employers would be wise to keep a watchful eye on stress levels at work.

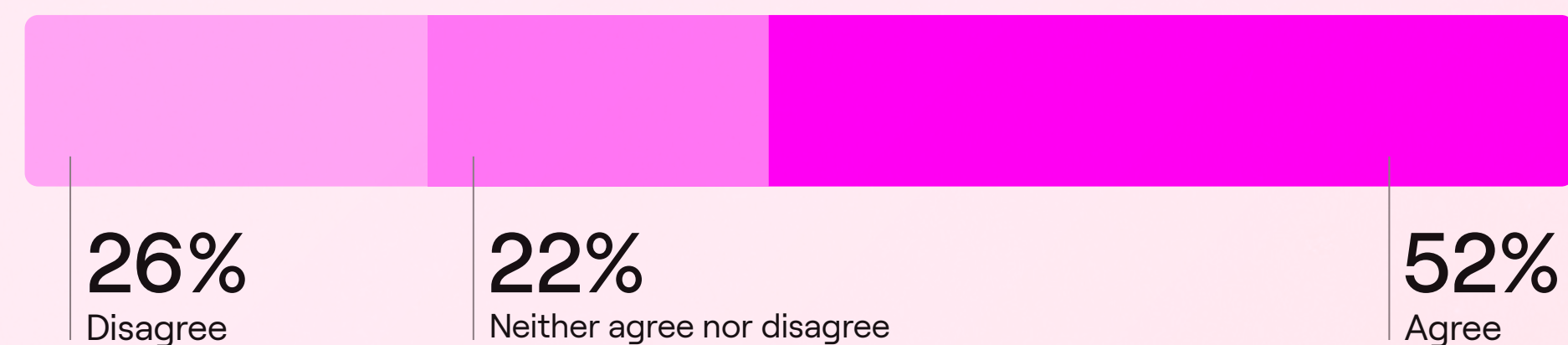


A jarring finding: We're stressed and burnt out, yet happy with our mental health...?

Although employees are feeling stressed and burnt out at work, the good news is that the majority (**52%**) are happy with their overall mental health. **26%** disagreed that they're happy with their mental health. This finding is alarming and possibly a sign that we've become accustomed to these feelings of heightened day-to-day stress.

If we take a closer look at working location, **69%** of fully remote workers agreed that they were happy with their overall mental health, while only **50%** of both fully in-office/onsite employees and hybrid employees agreed. We can assume that fully remote employees have extra time focusing on their hobbies and other priorities, drawing the conclusion that fully remote employees are overall more happy than their on-site and hybrid employee counterparts.

I am happy with my overall mental health...

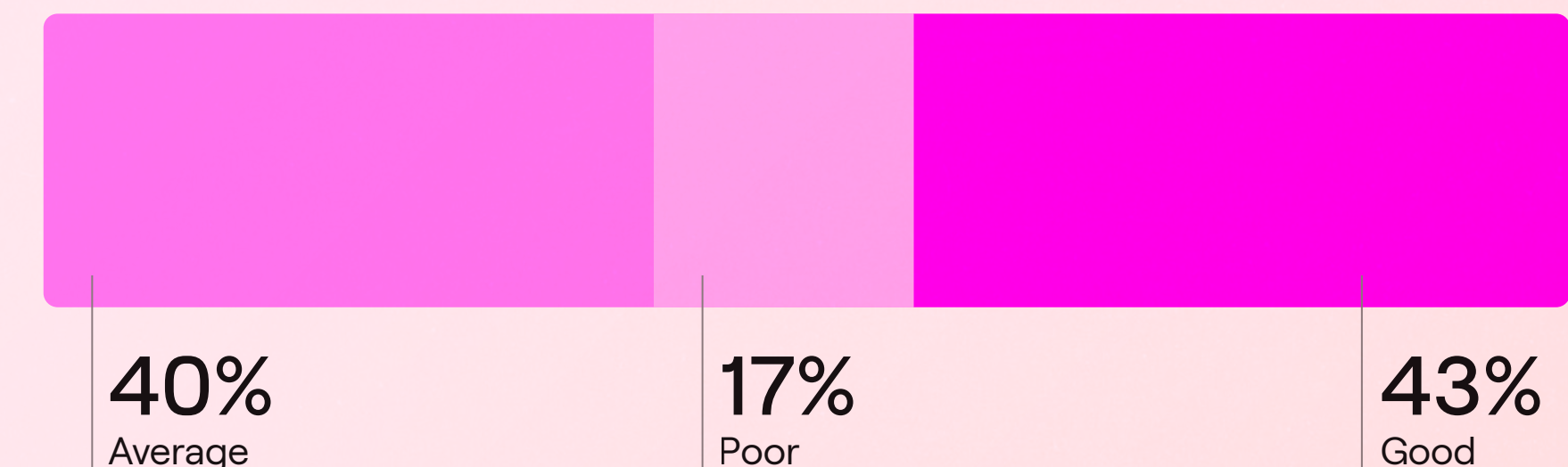


The ultimate juggling act: *Work-life balance*

An average sense of work-life balance could be a contributor to burnout, with **57%** of Australian workers rating their work-life balance as poor or average.

Unsurprisingly, **63%** of fully remote employees indicated that their overall work-life balance was above average, compared to **46%** hybrid employees and only **35%** of in-office/on site workers.

In the last 3 months, your overall work / life balance has been...



“As our data shows, remote work tends to lead to happier and more engaged employees. This is perhaps no surprise. For those that have the option to provide remote work, it can offer unparalleled flexibility, allowing employers to recruit the best talent and for employees to do their best work.

Employment Hero itself is a remote-first organisation. We believe that WFH or remote work benefits people in a myriad of different ways. For instance those with mobility issues, parents juggling work and family responsibilities, and more.

In addition, we've also seen first-hand what a massive pull factor remote work is for top talent. For many of those we interview, being forced back into the office is often bemoaned as a key reason why they're looking for a new role. Our remote-first nature is increasingly cited as a key reason for coming to work for us. ”



Ben Thompson,
CEO and Co-Founder at Employment Hero

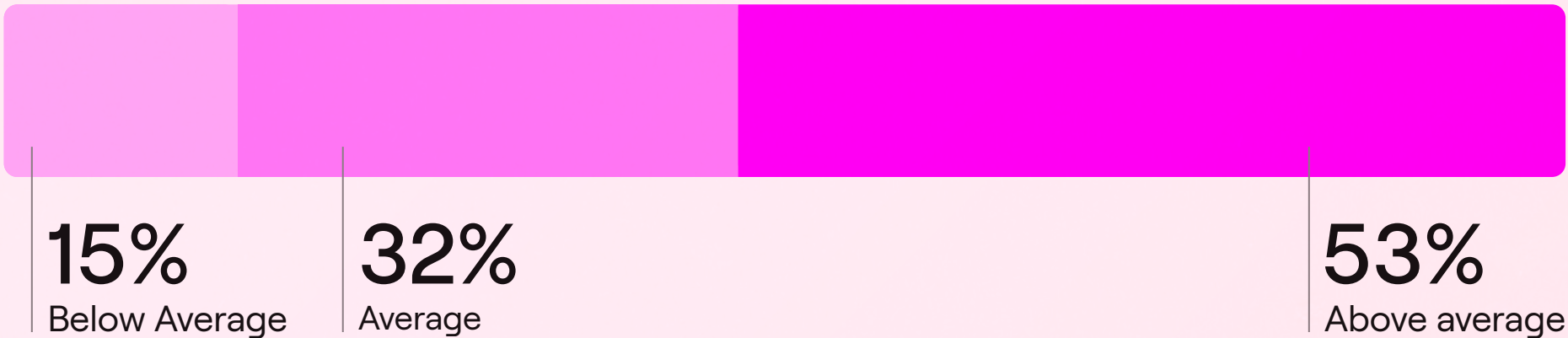


Are employers *fully* committed to improving health and wellness?

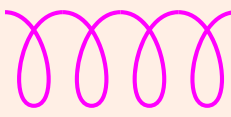
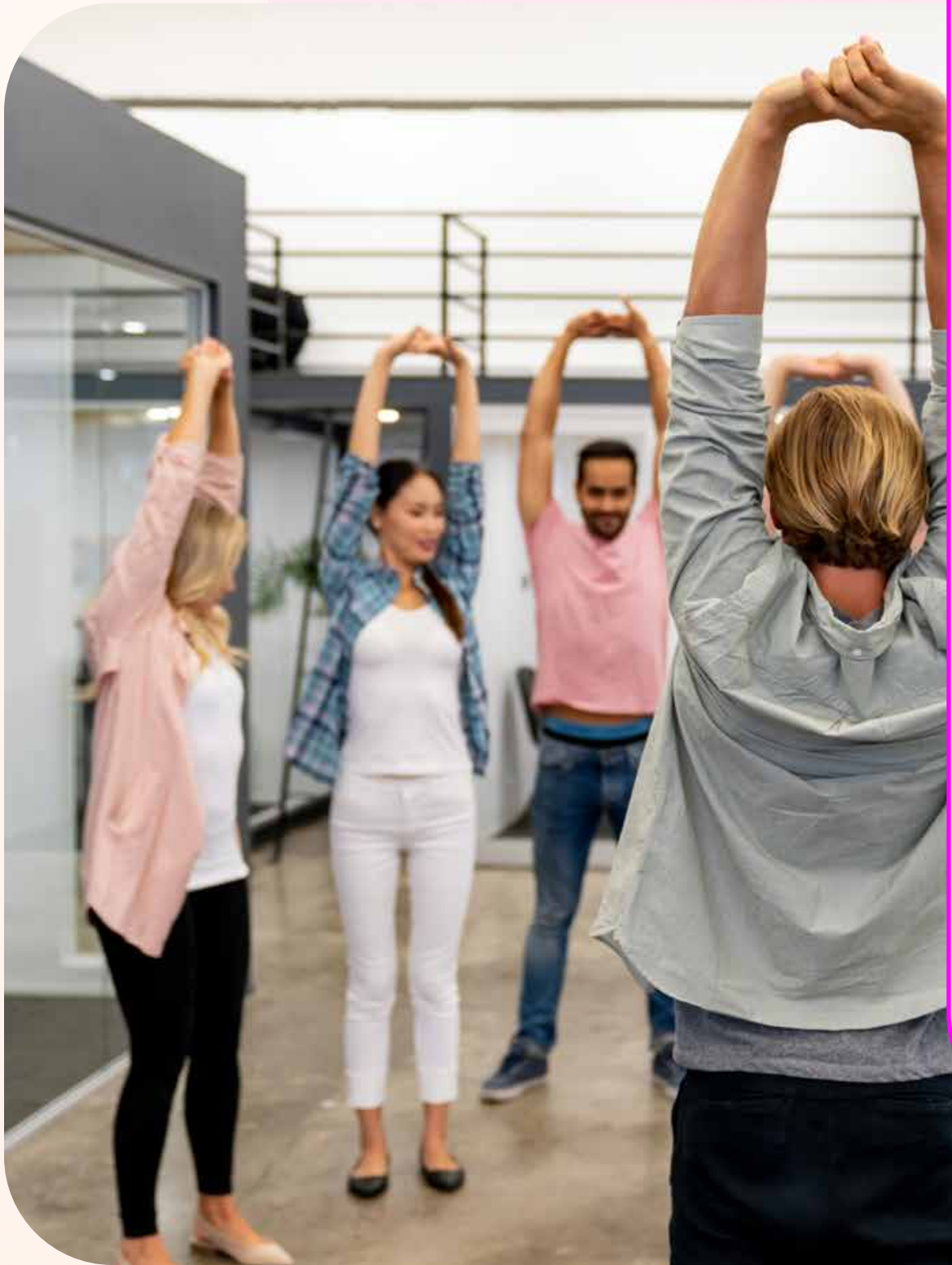
What’s encouraging is that **53%** of employees rated their employer’s commitment to improving overall health and wellbeing as good, while only **15%** rated it as poor. This shows that while progress may be slow compared to previous years (**52%**), the majority of Australians believe that their workplace is committed to improving their health and wellbeing.

Remember, employees who feel supported in their wellbeing are more likely to be [positive and productive](#) in the workplace – something that all employers should be aiming to consistently achieve.

How would you rate your employer’s commitment to improving overall health and wellness for employees?



But are employers really committed to improving wellness for their team? Recently, the term ‘[carewashing](#)’ has come to light – and it’s proving detrimental to workplace culture.



What is carewashing?

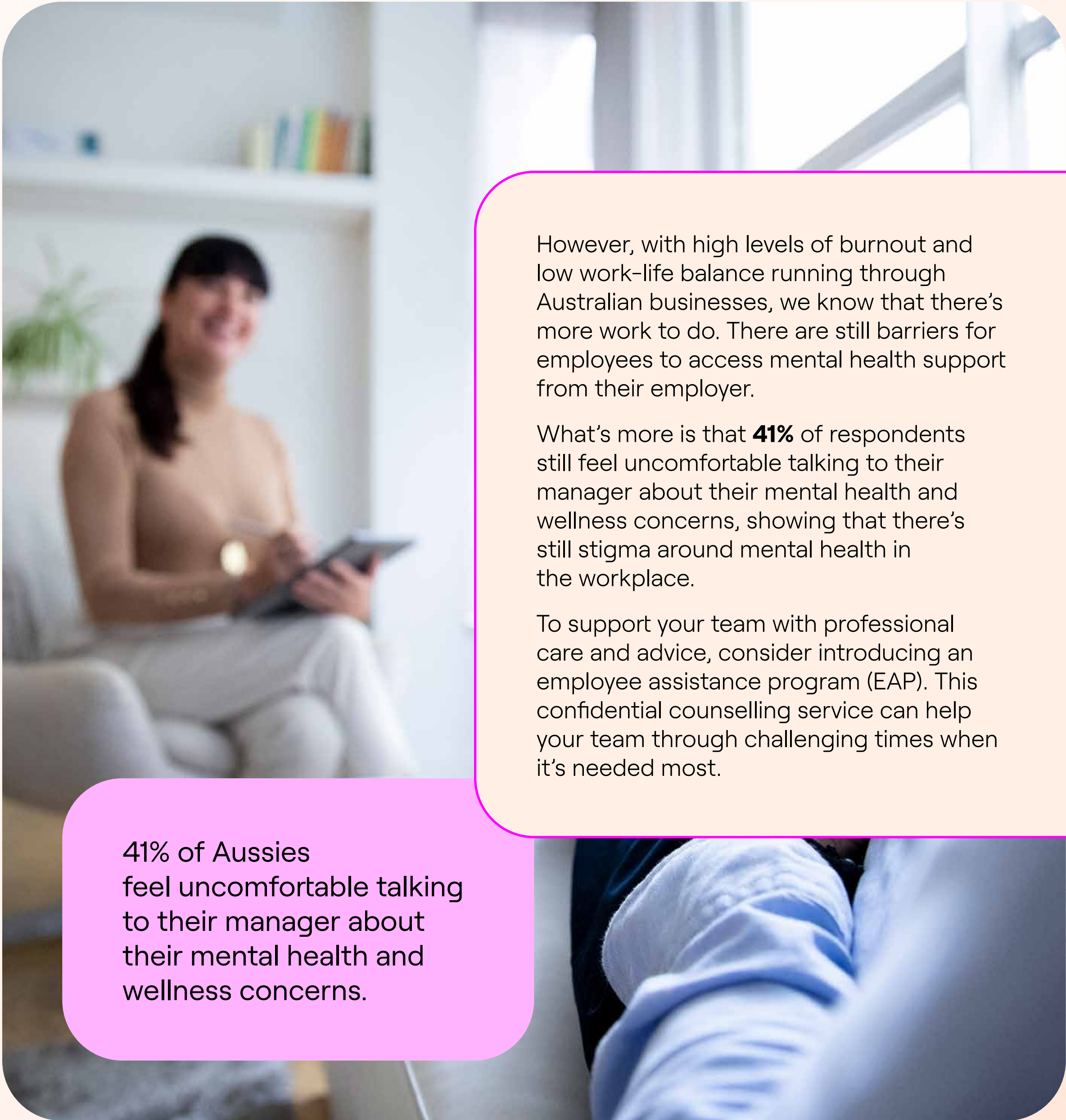
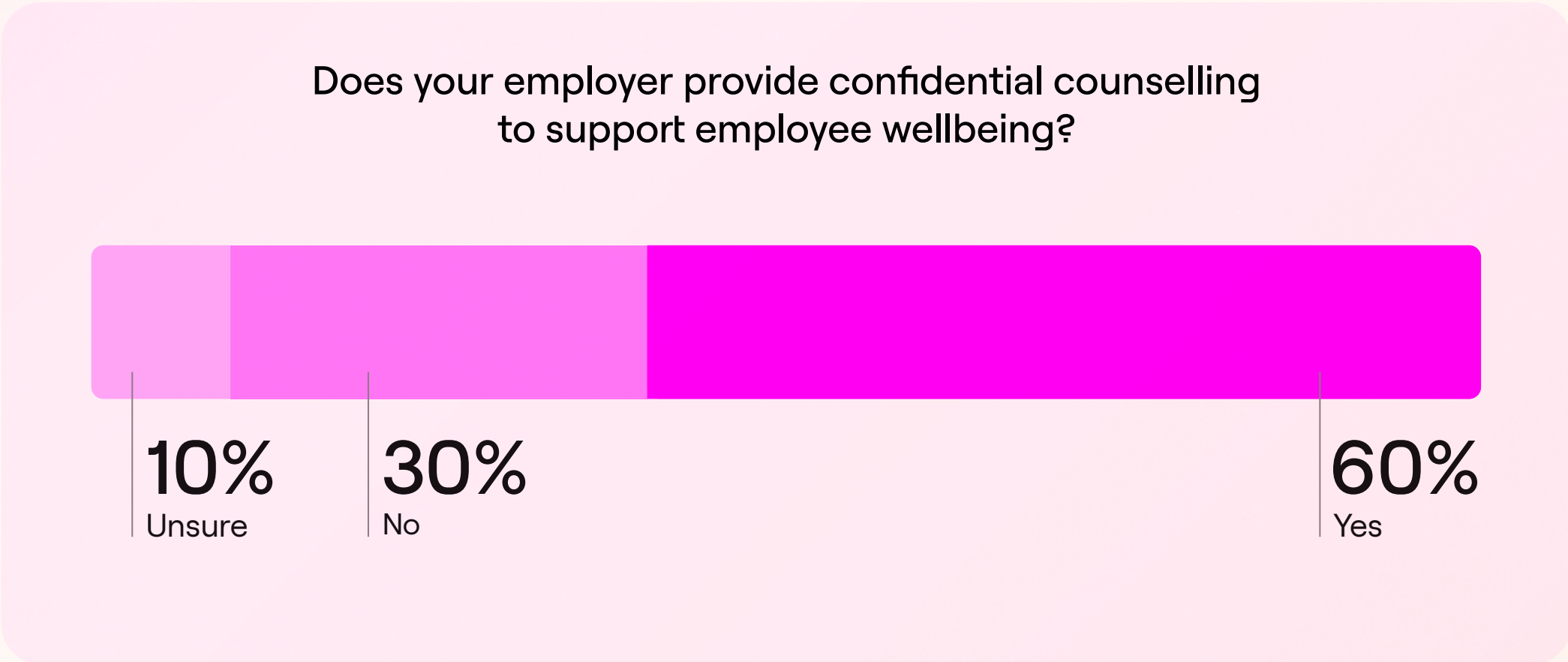
Carewashing is covering up or putting a misleading spin on a failure to meet some commitment, stated claim, or standard.

In the workplace, this might look like a wellness check box that’s been ticked off by simply offering yoga classes to your employees. But, in reality, there’s no support or commitment to wellness beyond the occasional yoga class, resulting in burnt out and unhappy employees.

The majority of employees have access to behind-the-scenes support with *confidential counselling*

It's extremely encouraging that, while a generation ago there was little to no dialogue around mental health in the workplace, it's now on the majority of employers' radars. **60%** of employees stated that their employer provides access to confidential counselling, proving that we're heading towards more supportive workplaces and a greater duty of care at work.

This is a sign that employers are more committed to employee wellbeing; progress that's worth acknowledging and celebrating.



However, with high levels of burnout and low work-life balance running through Australian businesses, we know that there's more work to do. There are still barriers for employees to access mental health support from their employer.

What's more is that **41%** of respondents still feel uncomfortable talking to their manager about their mental health and wellness concerns, showing that there's still stigma around mental health in the workplace.

To support your team with professional care and advice, consider introducing an employee assistance program (EAP). This confidential counselling service can help your team through challenging times when it's needed most.

41% of Aussies feel uncomfortable talking to their manager about their mental health and wellness concerns.

How can *employers* stay across psychosocial hazards in the workplace?



Employers can stay ahead of psychosocial hazards by fostering open communication. Regular check-ins and anonymous surveys with employees help identify industry-specific stressors. Developing a risk management plan, similar to those for physical hazards, allows for the assessment and control of these mental and emotional stressors. Implementing clear policies, alongside support resources like training and mental health programs, demonstrates a commitment to employee wellbeing.

By actively managing psychosocial hazards, employers can cultivate a happier, more productive workforce with reduced conflict and a stronger sense of belonging.




Sanam Ahmadzadeh Salmani,
Legal Counsel at Employment Hero



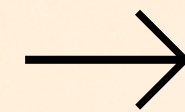
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When every cent counts:
How are Aussies
holding up in a cost
of living crisis?





Are you feeling the pinch from the rising *cost of living*?



Groceries, fuel, interest rates, rent and utilities are all steeply trending upwards – and have done so since the end of the pandemic. And although the CPI only rose 3.6% over the 12 months to the March 2024 quarter, Aussies are still struggling off the back of the huge increases that came when inflation peaked at 7.8% in December 2022.

What's even more concerning is that we're still seeing unsustainable pricing increases to housing, up 4.9% in the last year alone, not to mention the increases to all the other essentials in our lives. This means that it's costing more and more each year just to put a roof over our heads – and it's impacting households right across the nation.

Sadly, there looks to be no relief in sight.

As cost of living soars, many workers are finding themselves having to rework budgets, consider additional sources of income or even start working [second jobs](#) just to keep up – and once financial pressure hits, it can seep into every part of our lives.

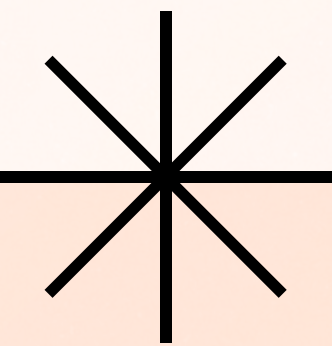
When we asked our respondents about their biggest cause of stress in the last three months, **the leading answer by far was financial stress and the rising cost of living (34%).**

We know that employees are doing it tough, but what are Aussie employers doing to support employee financial wellbeing during these difficult times? We're sharing worker perceptions and what organisations can offer beyond salary to lighten financial stress within the current economic environment.

Financial stress levels *continue* to soar

When we think about stress during the workday, we generally attribute it to workloads, priorities and deadlines. But it's clear that financial stress is a forgotten source of discomfort. The rising cost of living and the financial stress that's sweeping through the Australian population is now the leading cause of stress for Aussie employees (**34%**) by a long shot.

Other sources of stress behind this was an overwhelming professional workload and working out of hours (**15%**), professional burnout (**13%**) and feeling time poor (**7%**).



Aussies are off course and off track with their financial *goals*

With the current cost of living crisis and financial stress being the main source of stress for employees, it's not surprising to hear that only **41%** of employees are on target with their financial goals.

What's more concerning is that [recent research from Swag](#) revealed the huge knock-on effect financial stress can have on every other dimension of wellbeing. **72%** of Australians reported negative emotions or behaviours – like a lack of motivation, losing sleep, and binge habits – as a result of their financial situation.

What's more is that a staggering **90%** of Aussies report having outstanding short-term debt and that almost 1 in 2 (**46%**) of Australians struggle to pay for regular expenses like rent and food before payday. **18%** say this happens often, and **28%** say that they are sometimes unable to pay for expenses like rent, food and transport before their regular paycheck. Which leads into the question – what are employers doing to support their teams' financial wellbeing?

Workplace support falls short as cost of living pressures leaves employees *struggling*

To answer the question above, Australian employees say not much. The cost of living is tough right now and it's unlikely that there will be relief in sight anytime soon. Between the financial pressures of sky-high inflation, rising interest rates, and the uncertainty of when relief will come, there's no denying it's a stressful time for many.

So do employees think that their workplace is doing enough to support the rising cost of living? **59%** of respondents said no, a true indicator that there's significant work to be done. After all, can someone truly work to their full potential and feel mentally well if they're in financial distress?

Just **28%** of employees stated that their workplace was doing enough to support them with the rising cost of living and **13%** were unsure.



Unsurprisingly, remote workers were more likely to say that their workplace was doing enough to support them with the rising cost of living (**48%** agreed), compared to only **26%** of in-office workers who agreed. We can assume this is the case due to the financial benefits that remote workers experience just being able to work at home. Often, we forget that even just heading into the office comes with significant costs – petrol to drive to work, the train fare, a morning coffee, lunch and entertainment after work... it all adds up when it comes to breaking down your weekly spend.



Did you know Employment Hero can help your team fight cost of living pressures with our employment superapp, *Swag*?

swag

Swag has a bunch of features that help your employees' money go further by tapping into the huge purchasing power we have on everyday essentials. Swag Benefits, through Employment Hero's vast network of 300,000+ SME customers and 2M+ global employees, negotiates significant discounts from popular retailers like Big W, Booking.com, The Iconic, Uber Eats, Caltex, and many more. We also have offers on discounted energy, phone, internet and insurance plans.

You can even give your team the ability to access their pay as soon as they've worked with Earned Wage Access, at no cost to you – a game-changer for those unexpected bills.

[Learn more here.](#)

\$96,355.79



New pay run



Clocked In
7:45 AM

50%

Contract

x 

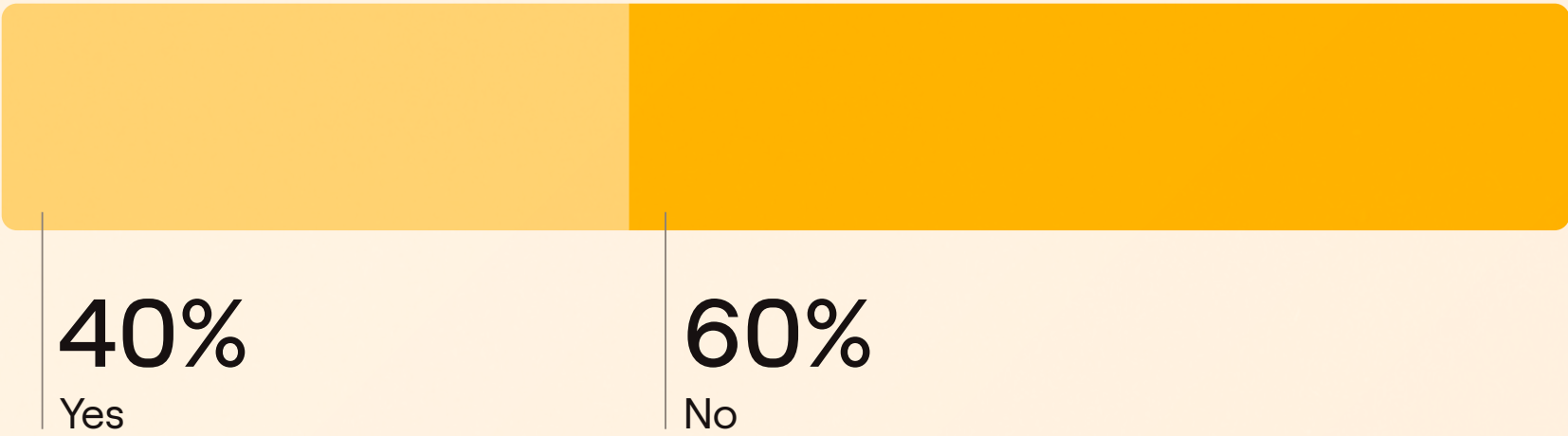
Sign and send

Employees *keep quiet* at work about financial concerns

Money remains a taboo topic of discussion, especially in the workplace. Over half of workers (**60%**) are uncomfortable when it comes to discussing their financial concerns with their employer.

This reluctance to bring up the money conversation at work could be a reflection of the individual workplace and their feelings surrounding talks about money; something that we hope to see destigmatised.

Would you be comfortable talking to your manager about your personal financial concerns?



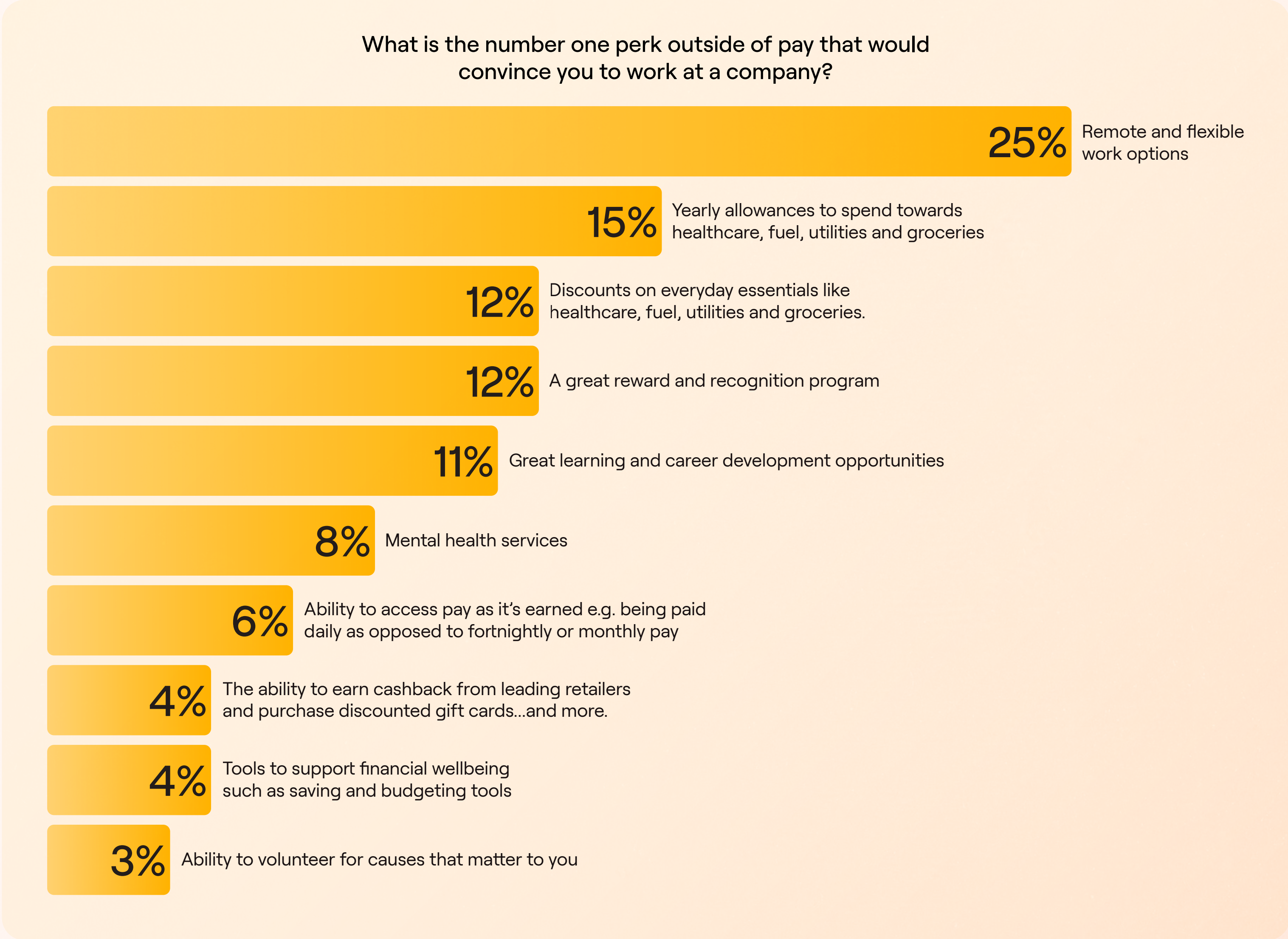
We're banking on meaningful *perks*

Do you offer a range of perks at your workplace? It might be time to do a pulse-check on what you're currently offering, especially if it has the power to attract and retain top talent.

A [recent survey](#) of over 300 Australian hiring managers found that almost two-thirds have had a candidate accept a job opportunity as a result of the company's employee benefits and perks package, compared to the salary on offer alone. This presents a huge opportunity for companies looking to bolster their retention strategy, while supporting their team.

We asked what was the number one perk outside of pay that could convince an employee to stay at a company, and unsurprisingly, they're all related to reducing spending and saving money.

The most popular perk was remote and flexible work options (**25%**), followed by yearly allowances to spend towards healthcare, fuel, utilities and groceries (**15%**). The third most popular perk was discounts on everyday essentials like healthcare, fuel, utilities and groceries, selected by **12%** of Australians.



What perks and benefits would you *most* like your employer to introduce?

In their own words...

“More **flexible working arrangements**. I believe this actually boosts staff morale and encourages productivity.”

“Higher discounts and **rewards programs** for staff and remote working conditions.”

“**Food and fuel allowance** for all staff who travel longer than 45 minutes to get to work.”

“**More annual leave, increased pay**, discount or refund of fuel, groceries, food allowance etc.”

“Rebates on spending on **health and wellness** (eg gym membership, exercise equipment, yoga classes, etc)”

“I would appreciate it if my employer introduced perks and benefits that focus on **holistic employee wellbeing**. This could include initiatives like **flexible work hours** or remote work options to accommodate different lifestyles and promote a healthy work-life balance. Additionally, offerings such as **comprehensive healthcare coverage, including mental health services**, and access to wellness programs like gym memberships or mindfulness classes would greatly benefit employees’ physical and mental health. Also introducing professional development opportunities such as **tuition reimbursement** or skill-building workshops demonstrates a commitment to employee growth and career advancement.”

“Costs of living pressures continue to grow for everyone, both here and abroad. At Employment Hero, we increasingly hear that employees are under financial stress and feeling unsupported by their employers. Employers are clearly concerned about their employees’ wellbeing and are struggling to balance supporting their teams with the financial pressures on their businesses. In the current environment, employers are looking to offer meaningful benefits beyond salary to increase impact, value, and engagement. Perks like Earned Wage Access, exclusive discounts on essentials, and financial wellness programs can significantly enhance employees’ financial security and overall wellbeing.”



Rob Dunn,
Managing Director (Swag) at Employment Hero



Support that makes a difference: *Providing perks that work*

[Macadamia Farm Management \(MFM\)](#) is an industry leader in providing specialist farm management services to the macadamia industry. During an exciting period of growth, they turned to Employment Hero to help them create a package of unbeatable perks and benefits for their team. These perks meant that they could attract and retain stand out talent in a competitive market, all while providing their team with perks and benefits that actually make a difference to their financial wellness.

Tanya McCombe, HR Manager at Macadamia Farm Management shared the transformational impact that Employment Hero has made to their business and their benefits offering.



We're coming up to our wage review time and the rising cost of living is a concern for everyone. If we can't pay that dollar value, how else can we give back to the employee? We want to give the tools to people to make their pay go further through extra perks, so they don't feel like they need to look for another job.

We wanted to create a point of difference that was tangible. If a candidate goes, 'well if you're not able to pay me \$35 per hour, but I can access discounted gift cards, or my pay early, that's a compelling offer.'

Our employees can access gift cards at a discounted rate, and with the cost of living the way it is, every dollar saved helps.



Tanya McCombe,
HR Manager

**MACADAMIA FARM
MANAGEMENT PTY. LTD.**





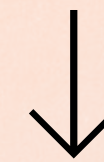
06.

Better together:
The prevailing sense
of *mateship* at work



Humans are social creatures and with [loneliness on the rise](#), *workplaces can offer connection at a time when it's most needed.*

While we rely on social interaction from our friends and family, our research confirms that this is also true at work.



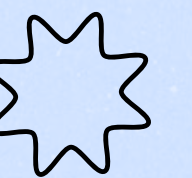
According to the [World Health Organisation](#), a healthy workplace is “one where employers and employees collaborate to continually protect and promote people’s health, safety, and wellbeing and workplace sustainability”. Digging into the detail, we can see the underlying theme of this definition directly relates to the respect, communication and appreciation employees feel within the workplace.

For many, the relationships we form at work can contribute to our overall wellbeing – whether that’s positive or negative. With approximately one-third of our lives spent at work, the relationships we have with co-workers

has the power to directly affect our overall health and motivation.

[Research](#) also shows that when you have employees who are happy and have positive relationships at work, it’s predictive of workplace success. Strong relationships between colleagues is more likely to lead to more engaged and higher performing employees.

So, are we having positive relationships with our colleagues and managers, and are we comfortable leaning on them when we’re faced with problems? Let’s take a closer look at how Australians feel about their professional relationships.



Australians are *happy* with the workmates they have

We all want to feel happy and satisfied at work, and Aussie workplaces are leading the way. **82%** of employees agreed that they were satisfied with the level of respect they received from their colleagues, followed by **81%** agreeing that they have a good working relationship with their colleagues. **78%** agreed that they can be themselves in the workplace around their colleagues.

These findings are all great for the business’ bottom line, with a [recent study](#) finding that a feeling of workplace belonging leads to a **56%** increase in job performance, a **50%** reduction in turnover risk, and a whopping **75%** decrease in employee sick days.

Interestingly, the findings present a generational divide at play. Baby Boomers and Gen X were more likely to have a higher level of satisfaction with their sense of community in the workplace, while Gen Z and Millennials had lower levels of satisfaction. This could be due to older generations relying more heavily on the social interaction gained through the workplace and the relationships they’ve built at work.

The greatest divide in the workplace was the ability to be yourself around your colleagues. **81%** of Baby Boomers, **80%** of Gen X respondents and **79%** of Millennials were satisfied, versus only **65%** of Gen Z respondents. This finding could mean that younger generations are still adjusting to working life and feeling comfortable enough to bring their whole selves to work.

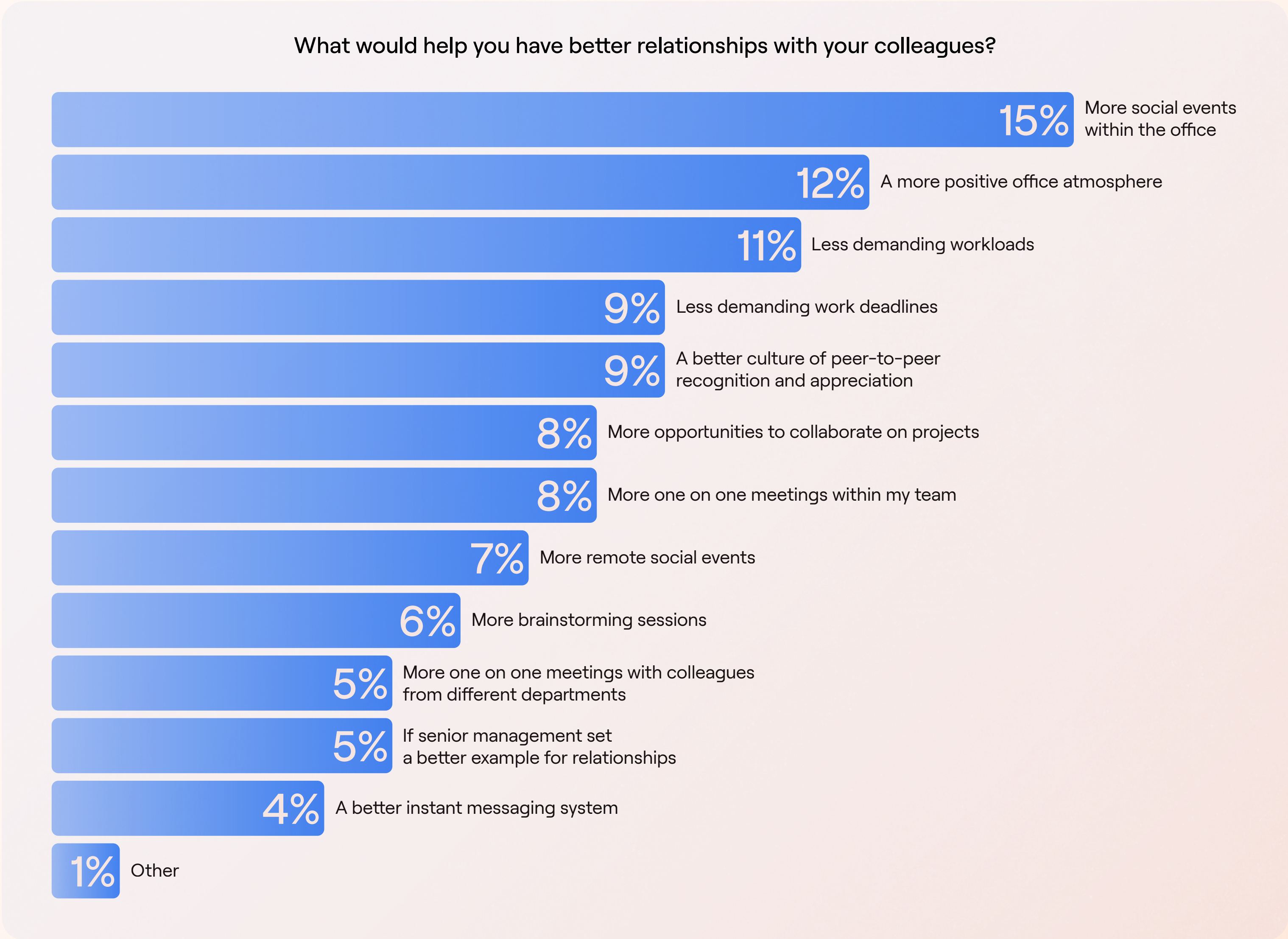
How satisfied are you with the following aspects of your workplace?



Can employers do more to support *mateship* in the workplace?

Finding the perfect harmony between social interaction and work is a balancing act. Not enough social time with your team can amount to feelings of burnout and isolation, while too much social time can feel forced and unnatural. What exactly do Australians think would help improve the relationships they have with their colleagues?

At the top of the list were more social events within the office (**15%**), followed by a more positive office atmosphere (**12%**) and less demanding workloads (**11%**). We wonder if the desire for more social events and a positive office atmosphere could be the ricochet effect of the pandemic, with many people missing the office buzz and in-person social connection.

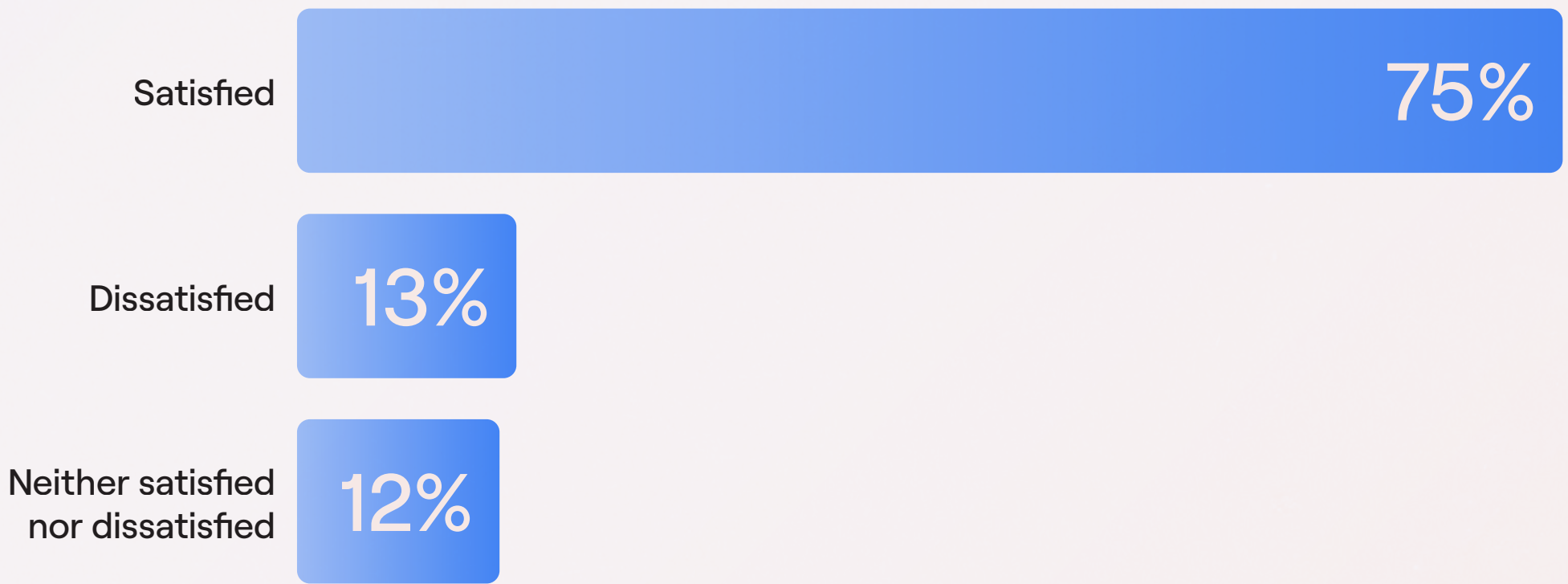


Do Aussie employees *actually* like their manager?

We all know the saying “people leave their boss, not their company”, and more often than not this comes down to the working relationship you have with your manager. So much so that a [Gallup survey](#) found that half of people searching for a new job left a role because of a bad manager.

The manager you have at work can have a huge impact on the overall employee experience and how you feel towards work. The good news is that on the whole, the majority (**75%**) of Aussies are happy with the working relationship they have with their manager, making it much easier to work together and develop a strong sense of trust, communication and feedback.

How satisfied are you with the working relationship you have with your manager?



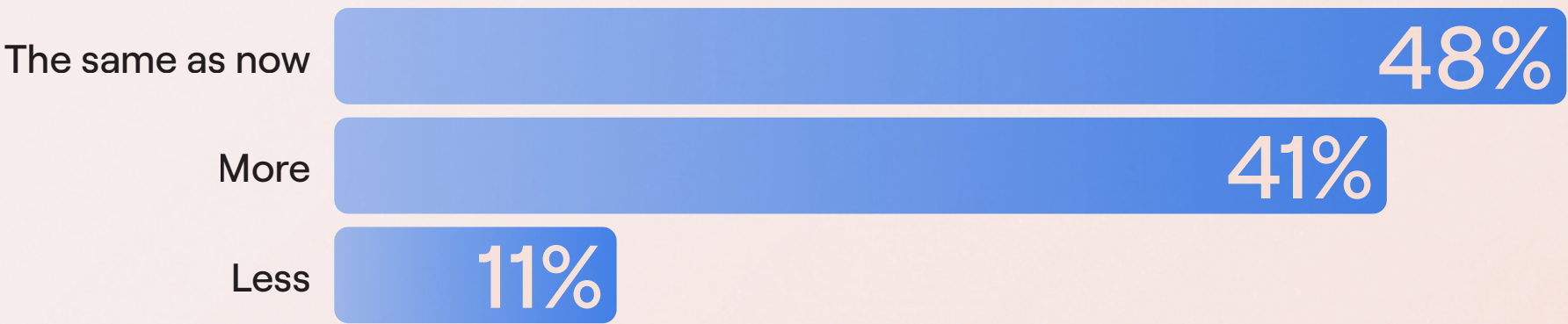
The secret to strong professional relationships is *one-on-one time*

Having one-on-one time with a manager has endless benefits. It’s dedicated time to discuss performance, remove any roadblocks and focus on professional development – not to mention the way it can help build trust and improve the working relationship. With so many positives that can come out of one-on-one meetings, it’s no wonder that **41%** of employees are looking for more time with their manager.

Interestingly, **48%** of employees stated that they were happy with the amount of time they spent with their manager. This could be due to the fact that many companies are prioritising regular meetings with their employees and carving out time regularly for catch-ups. Only **11%** of employees said they wanted less time.

If we take a look at where employees work from, **59%** of fully remote workers wished for more one-to-one time, versus only **41%** of hybrid workers and **38%** of fully in-office workers. We can assume this gap is due to fully in-office workers being able to access their manager more easily in the office.

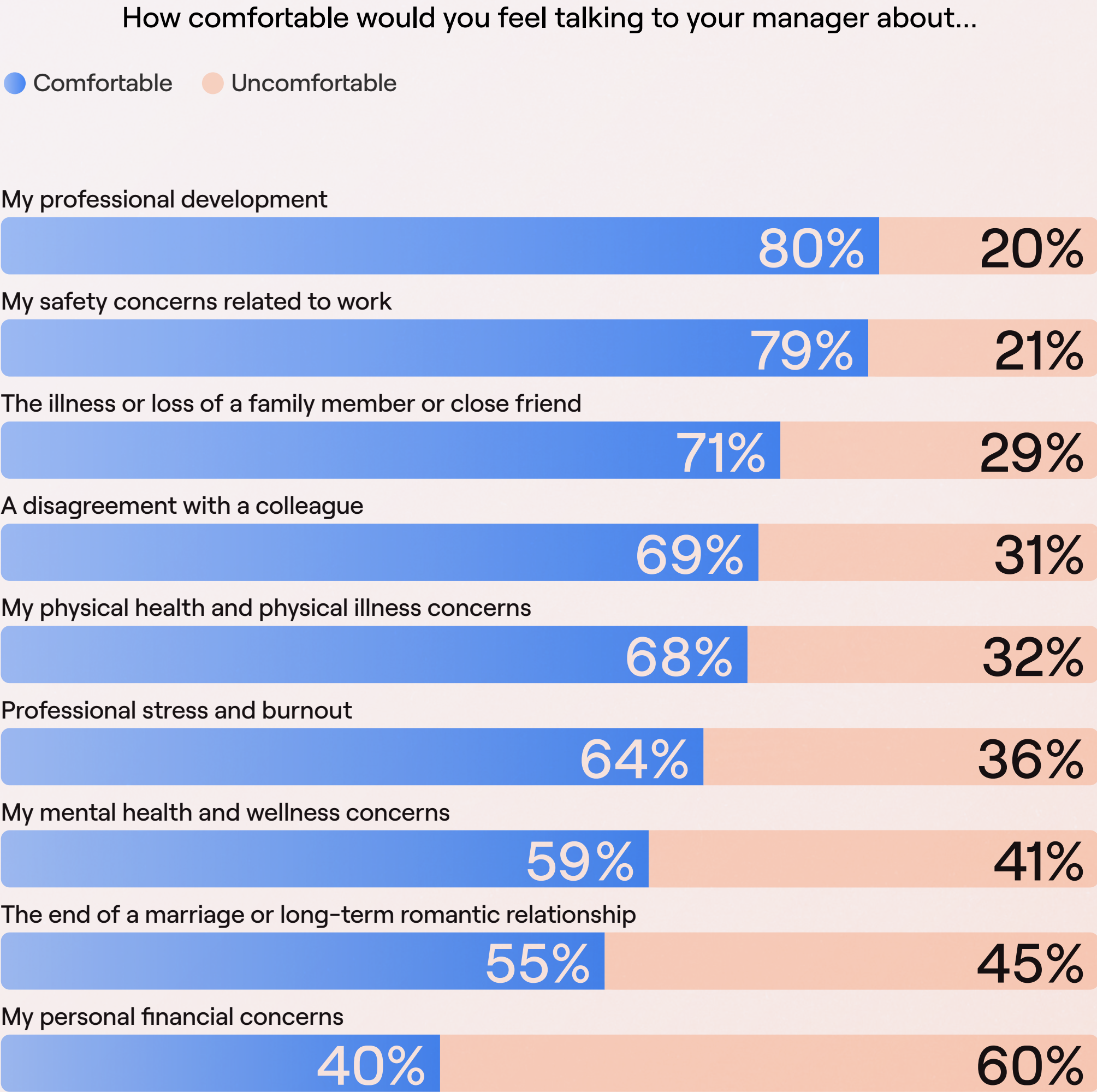
Do you wish you had more or less one-to-one time with your manager?



How do we feel about navigating *tricky topics* of conversation with our manager?

The good news is that the majority of employees feel comfortable talking to their manager about personal issues, as well as concerns in the workplace. **80%** of respondents feel comfortable talking to their manager about their professional development, and **79%** feel comfortable raising their concerns about safety at work.

The most uncomfortable conversation that employees feel about having with their manager? **Personal finances**, with only **40%** of employees feeling comfortable raising this with their manager. This is no surprise considering the current economic climate.



Tell me what you want, what you really, *really* want. What are employees asking for?

While employers are tracking in the right direction in 2024, there's still improvements to be made. We asked employees how their employers can improve their overall health and wellness. Here's what they said.

"More mental health days and allow **flexibility to work from home more.**"

"Better understanding of the nature of the work and the link to burnout. I'd also like **more incentives and benefits that are health-related** for employees."

"Better working hours, appreciation for the work done and deadlines met, along with **appropriate pay for specific roles.**"

"A **realistic workload** to allow an even work/life balance."

"Financial planning sessions to assist with the cost of living crisis."

"Flexible work arrangements: This could include remote work options, compressed workweeks, or flexible start and end times."

"Implementing flexible work schedules or remote work options, **providing wellness programs** such as gym memberships and mental health counselling, **promoting a culture of work-life balance**, and fostering a supportive and inclusive work environment **where employees feel comfortable discussing health concerns.**"

"Encourage employees to openly discuss their physical and mental health without judgement and to provide better support by **offering stress leave** to help employees get back on track."

“

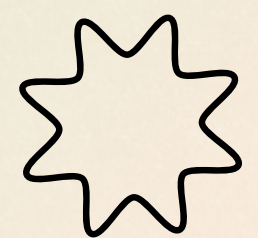
If we want a high-performing organisation in the long term, we can't overlook people's wellness at work. Being well and performing well go hand in hand. We can't have one, without the other. One trend we see in healthy and high-performing organisations is that they've created a psychologically safe environment where employees can speak up. Employees feel safe asking for help, acknowledging when they are struggling, and openly discussing their well-being.

It's no surprise that these same organisations have made 1:1 employee meetings a priority. They recognise that employee engagement and well-being are intrinsically linked to their relationship with their manager. So, they've made regular 1:1 check-ins a non-negotiable, knowing that these check-ins are one of the best ways to build healthy, psychologically safe relationships at work. As the report suggests, 41% of employees are looking for more time with their manager, so if you want to improve wellbeing and engagement in your workplace, my advice would be to start there.”



Shelley Johnson,
Founder of Leadership and HR agency, Boldside

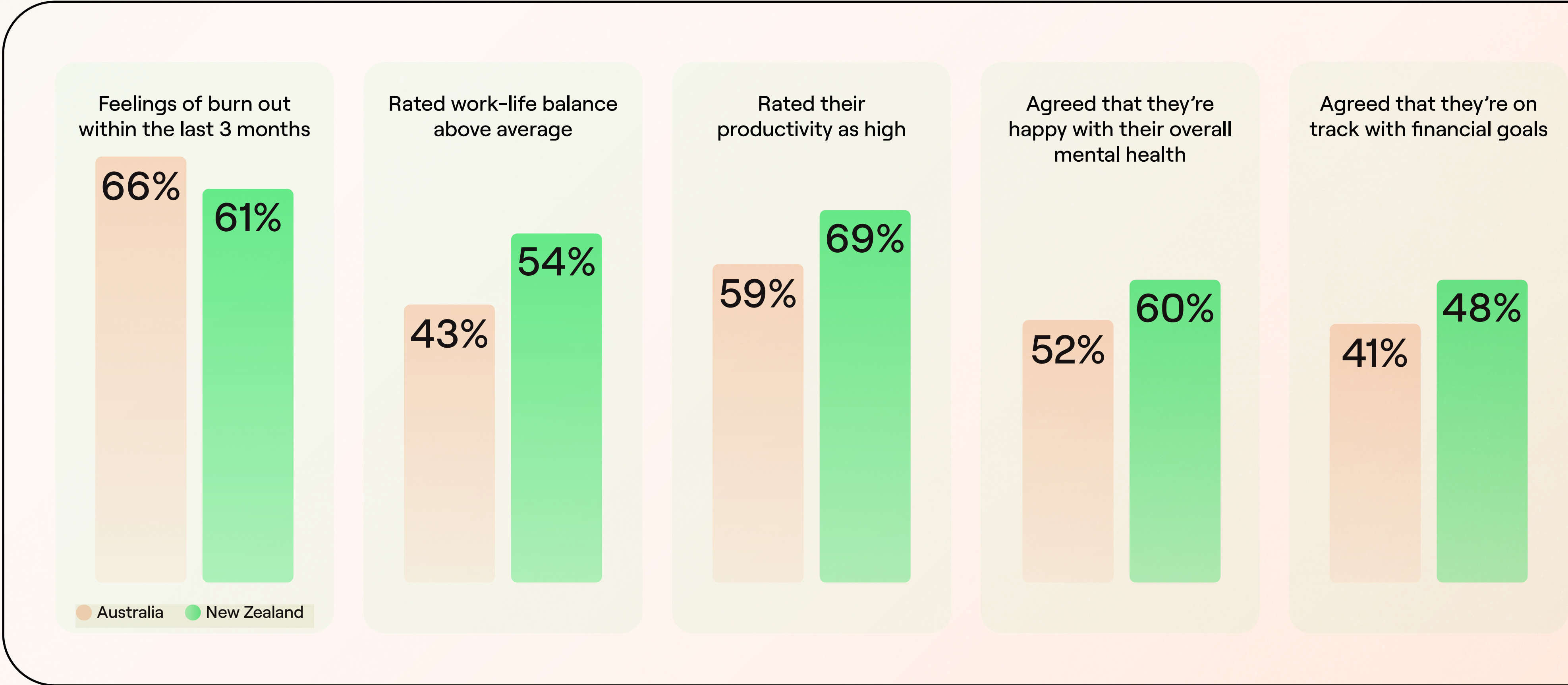




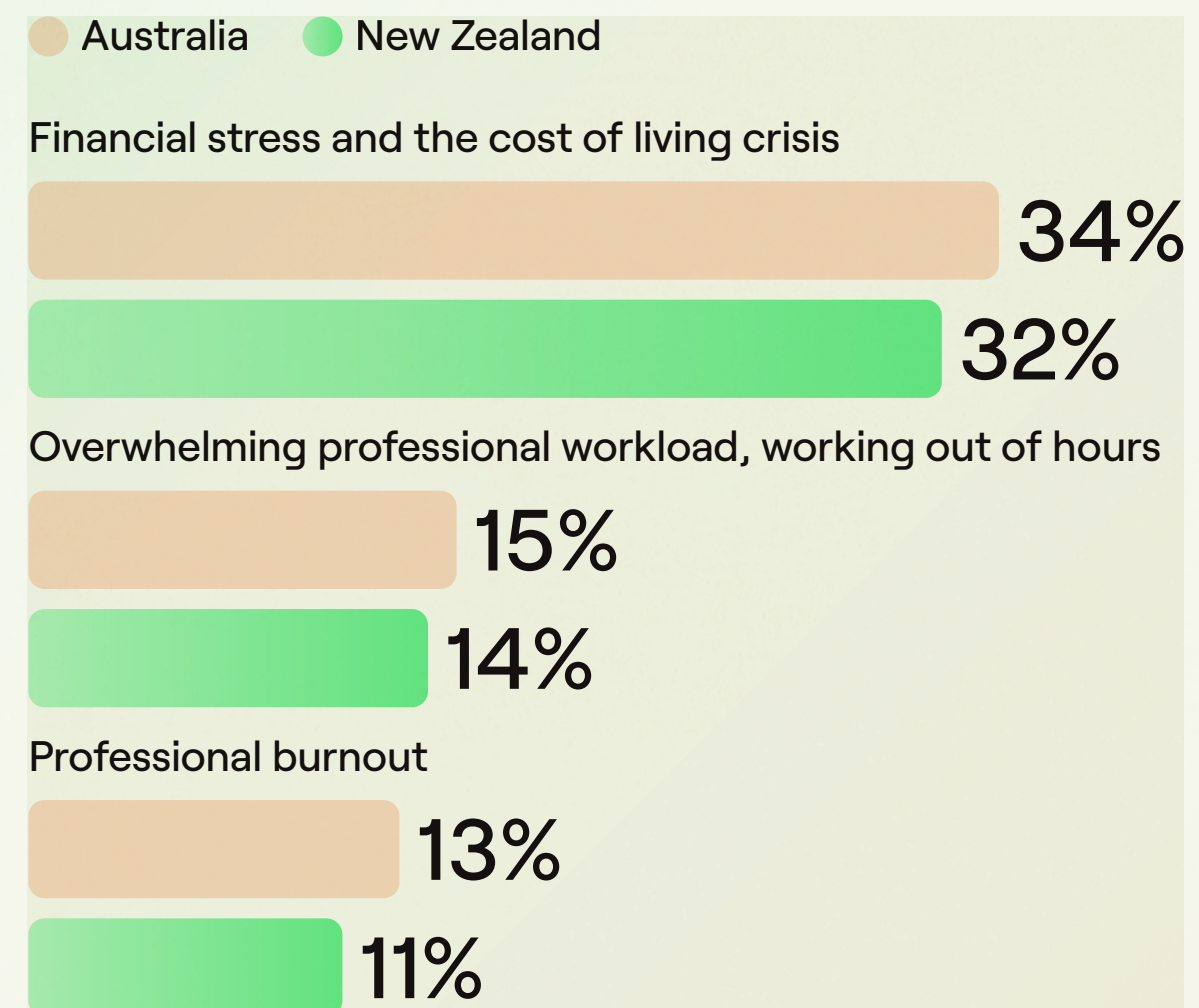
A look across the Tasman – are Aussies and Kiwis really *different*?



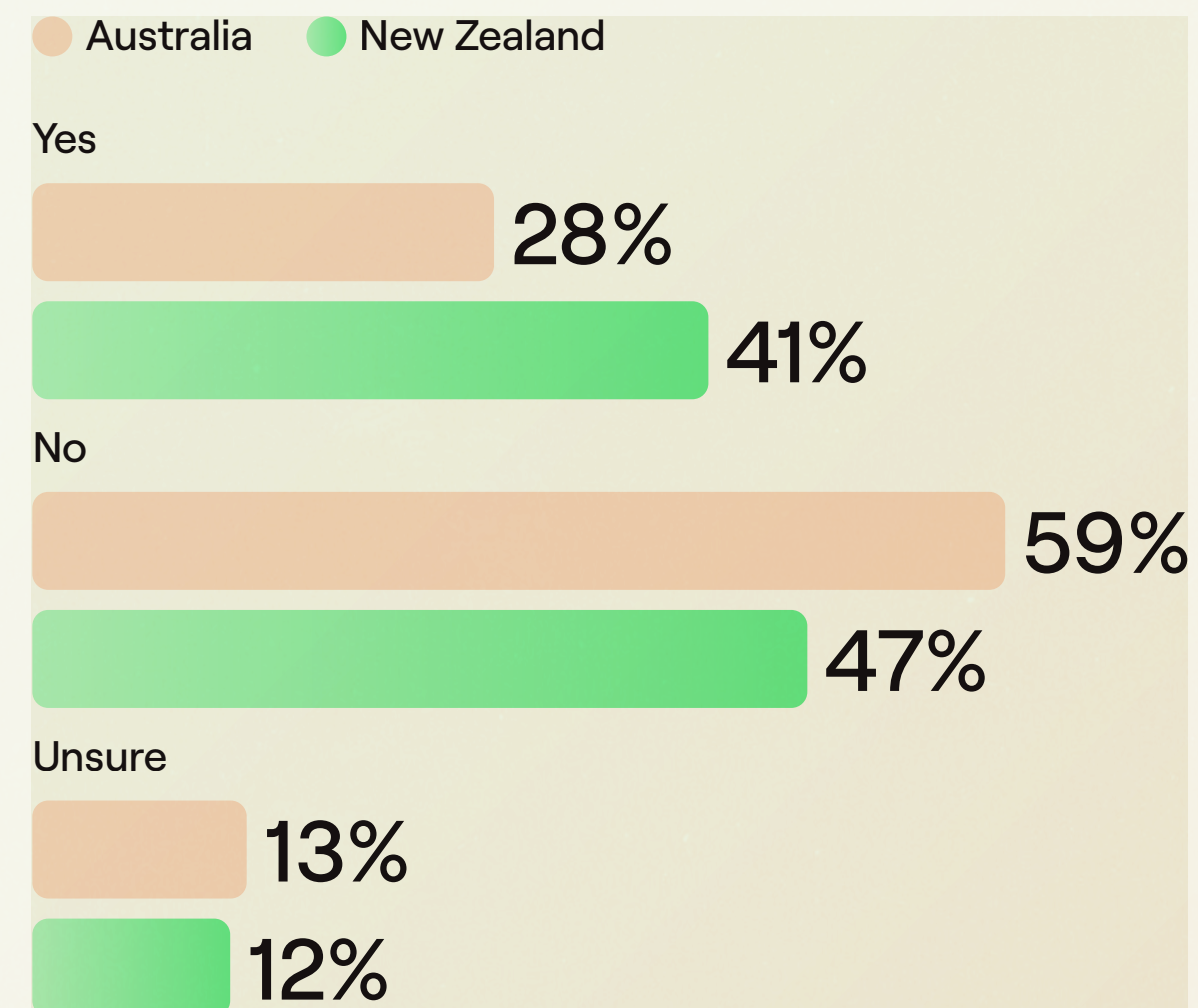
We also conducted our wellness at work research across the ditch with our friends in New Zealand. Are we really the same when it comes to wellness trends?



Main source of stress in the past 3 months



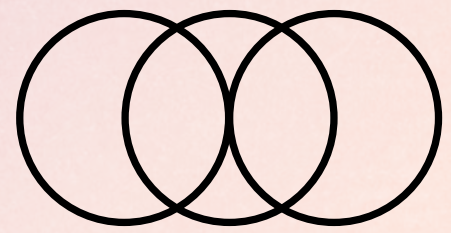
Do you think your workplace is doing enough to support you with rising living costs?



Does the similarity stereotype ring true for Australia and New Zealand workplaces? While some areas are similar, it's clear others have a widening gap. Looking at the data, we can see that Kiwis on the whole are holding up better than their Aussie counterparts.

For almost every category, wellness was rated lower in Australia, compared to New Zealand. Aussies are experiencing higher rates of burnout, have poorer work-life balance, are less productive and aren't as happy with their overall mental health. Additionally, they're more likely to be off track with their financial goals and report that employers are not doing enough to support them with rising cost of living.

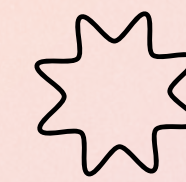
For Aussies, this might be a surprising find, and another timely reminder that employers still have work to do to improve wellness at work.



Employee wellness
considered, what *could*
Australian workplaces
look like when it's
fostered on the clock?

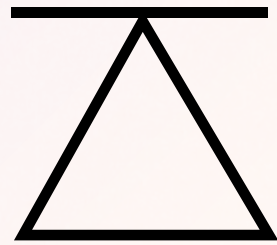


Throughout this report, we've explored the state of employee wellbeing in 2024. By taking a closer look at employee health, *we hope business leaders work towards better supporting their team*, all whilst fulfilling their duty of care responsibilities as an employer.



When we zoom out to a general view of workplace wellness, it's clear that Australian businesses are heading in the right direction, even if there still is progress to be made. →

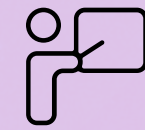
How can workplaces *improve* employee wellness at work?



Future-thinking employers know that for a peak performing team, employee wellbeing has to be above average. High-growth and resilient businesses are created by healthy and inspired employees, who are given the environment to do their best work. When employee wellness is considered as part of the workplace strategy, that's where growth is supercharged.

When an employee feels that their employer actively invests in their development and overall wellbeing at work, it's likely they'll feel valued for their contribution and can be their authentic self in the workplace.

Some ways employers can do this include;



Create a flexible development and coaching strategy.

You can do this by using tools like Learning Management Systems, one-on-one meetings, mentorship programs, career pathways and external learning opportunities. [Download our Guide to Coaching.](#)



Provide meaningful benefits.

Give your team access to the benefits they want and need. Help cut cost of living pressures by offering exclusive benefits on everyday essentials and earned wage access, all while becoming an employer of choice. [Learn how with Swag.](#)



Never underestimate the importance of feedback.

The secret sauce to building a strong wellness program is asking your team what they want. Getting an overall perspective of how people feel in your business will allow you to understand how you're doing in supporting them and most importantly, if you can do more. Asking for feedback or setting up a recurring [Happiness Survey](#) is an effective way to keep your finger on the pulse.



Support mental wellbeing with an Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

Giving your team mental health support can be one of the most meaningful things you can do as an employer. An [EAP can support mental wellbeing](#) by providing your team with professional counselling and support services when they need it most.





Reward and recognise your team for great work.

Teams need to feel appreciated for the work they do, and the best way to make sure this happens is to create structured programs for both top-down and peer-to-peer recognition. [Download our Ultimate Guide to Recognition.](#)



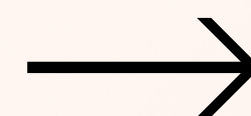
Set clear and achievable goals.

It's so much easier to stay motivated when you're moving towards a clear objective. Goals should be ambitious, but clear and achievable. [Explore the leading goal-setting framework Objectives and Key Results \(OKRs\).](#)



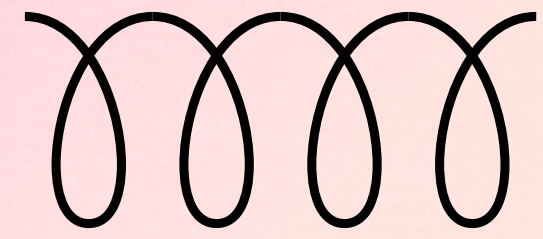
Strongly articulate your company's mission and values.

Without a mission, employees won't know what they're ultimately working towards, making it harder to find meaning in the everyday. Values set a tone for the company's culture and give guidance when making decisions. [Learn more about company values.](#)



While the findings range from worrying to reassuring, one thing is clear... Workplaces need to take the good with the bad and find ways to foster wellness at work.

Employment Hero supports a healthy and happy workplace for all, and we hope this report can get you thinking about new or better ways to enact wellbeing programs in your own workforce.

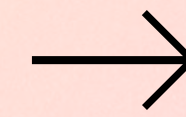


Survey *Demographics* and methodology



The findings in this report have been determined from a survey organised by *Employment Hero*.

The 10 minute online quantitative survey was deployed using the *QuestionPro platform*, and survey responses were collected from AU-based respondents which fit the survey respondent criteria.

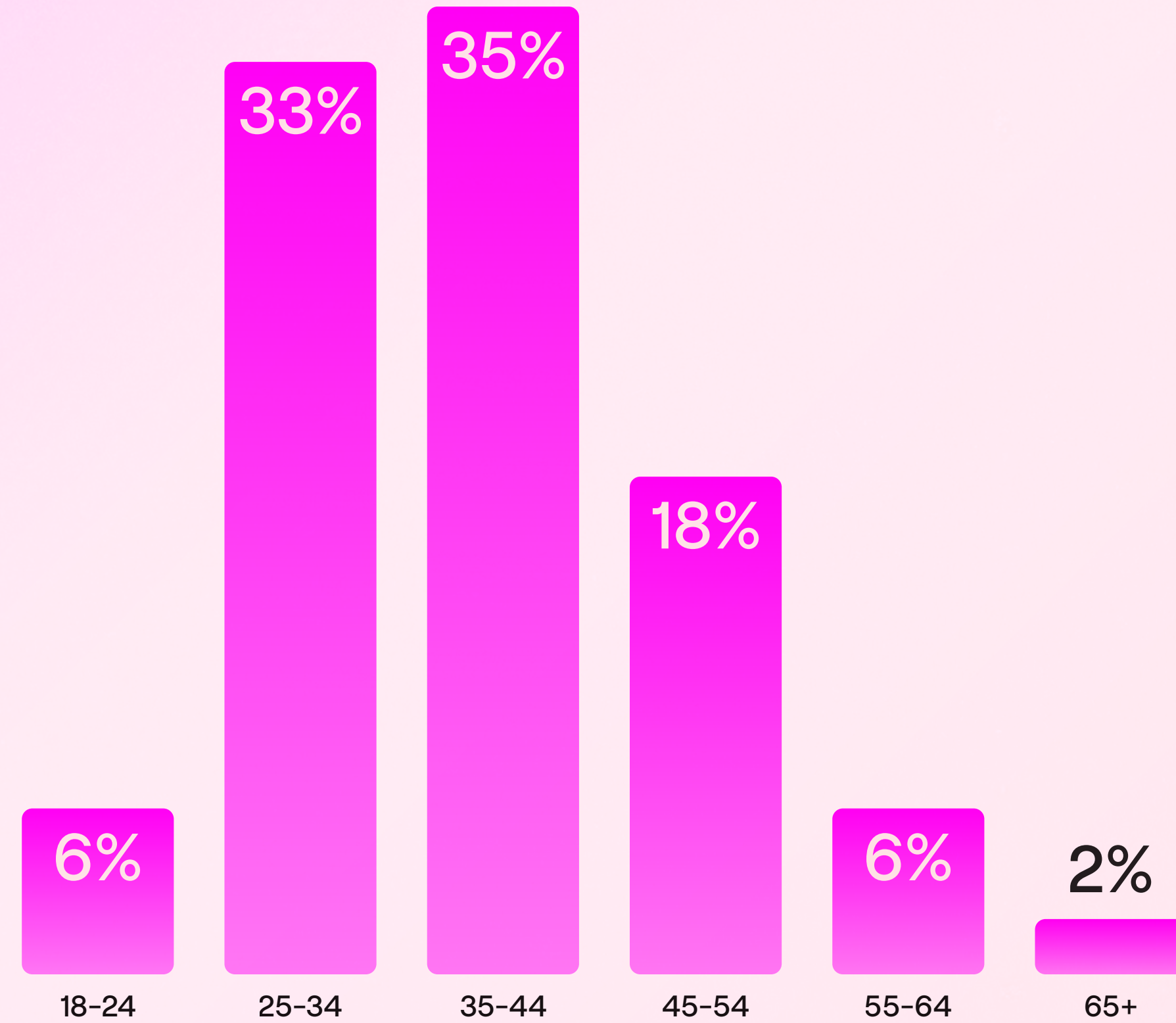


To complete the survey, respondents had to be employed in any capacity (full time, part time, casual, fixed term) and not own the business they worked in. Readers should be mindful that this places a skew on the sample distribution with fewer respondents in the 18-24 and 65+ age groups, as they are more likely to either not be employed or be retired.

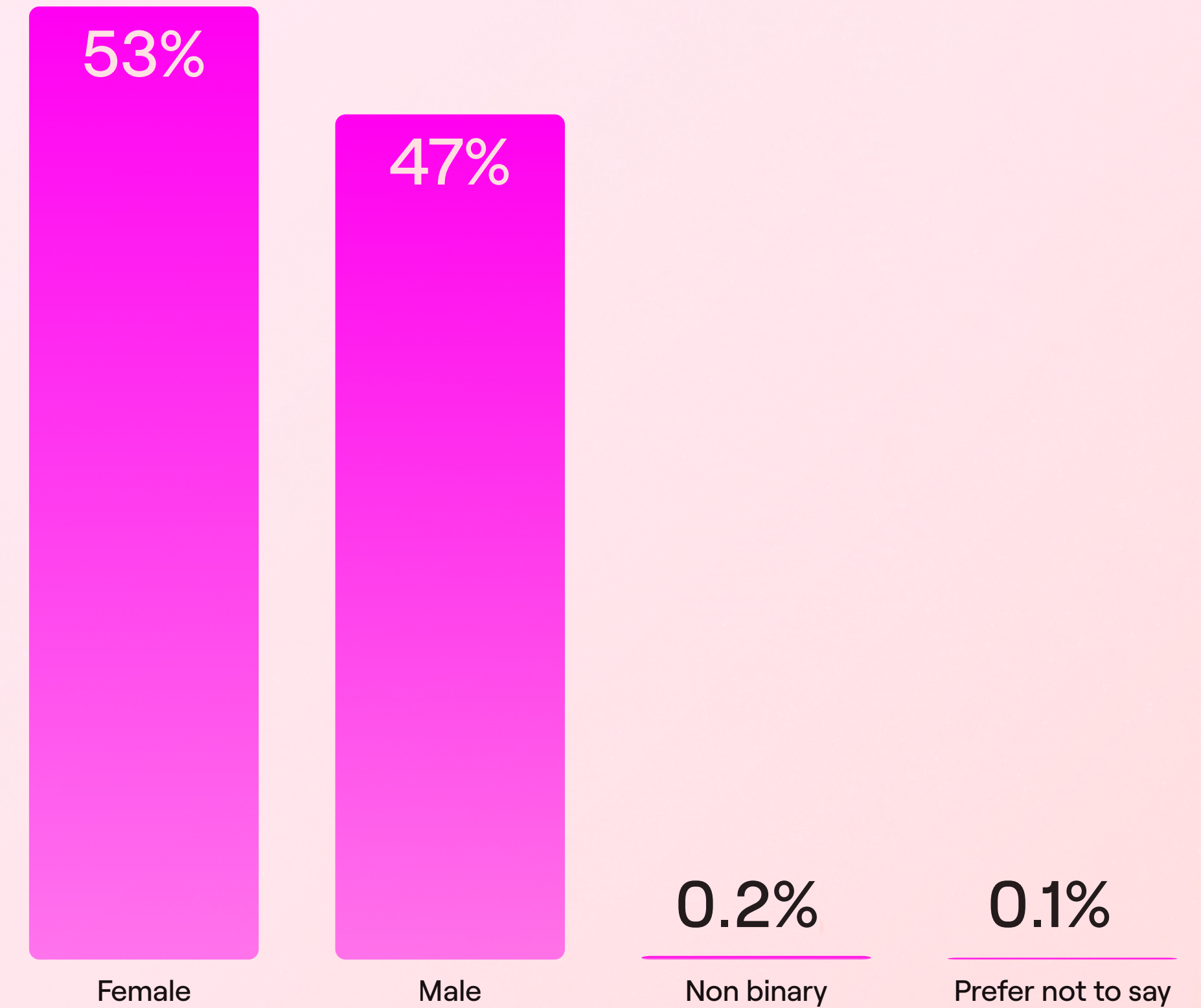
In total there were 1020 survey participants. There were 506 working parents surveyed, making up 50% of the overall sample.

The survey collected responses between 12 April to 1 May 2024. For the open text questions, responses were cleaned and pre-processed programmatically using Python to remove stop words, punctuation and other non-informative elements. Thereafter, Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) topic modelling was employed to uncover underlying themes and patterns in the open-ended responses provided by participants, and these identified topics were then used to perform a thematic analysis of the survey responses.

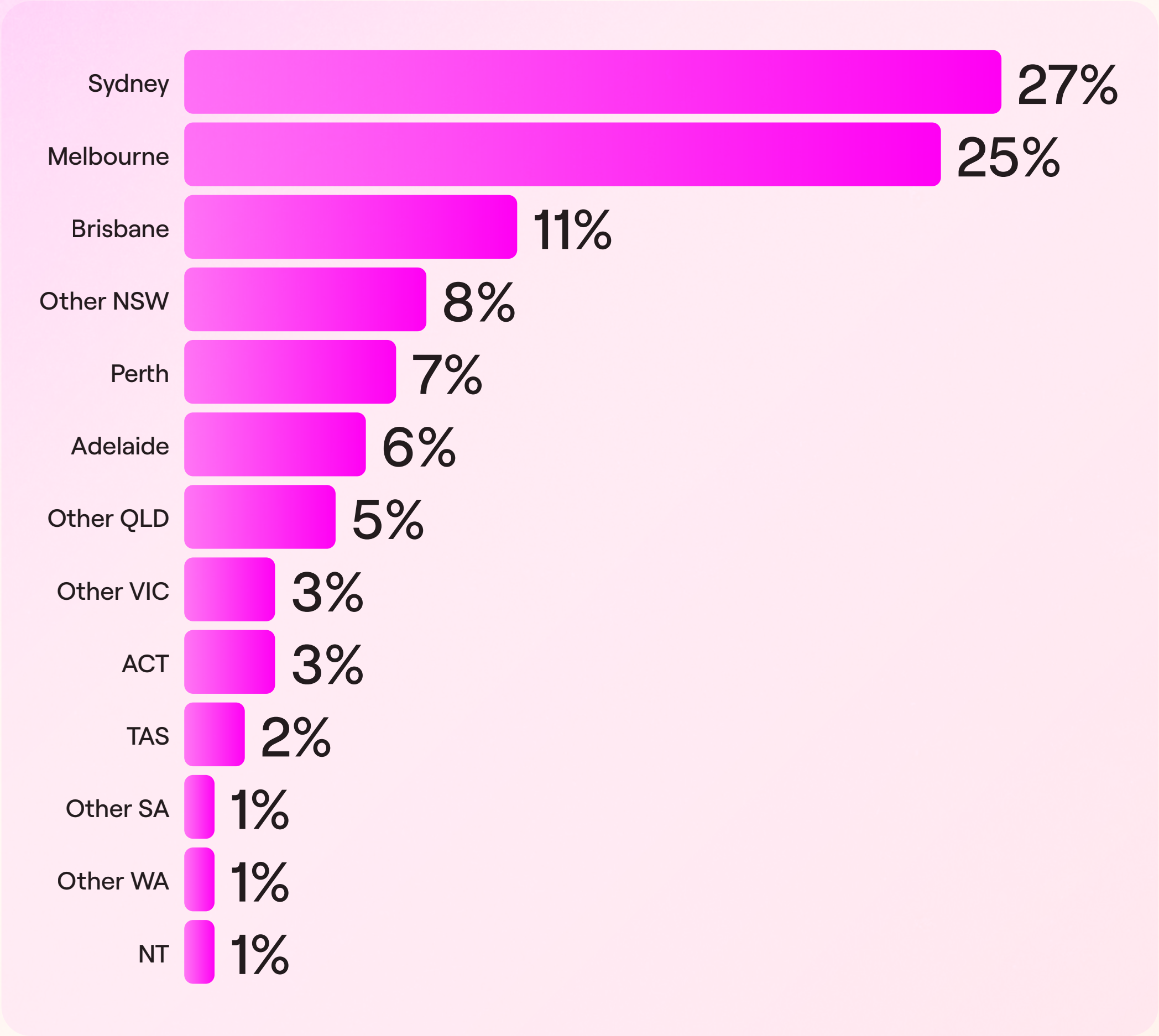
Age of respondents



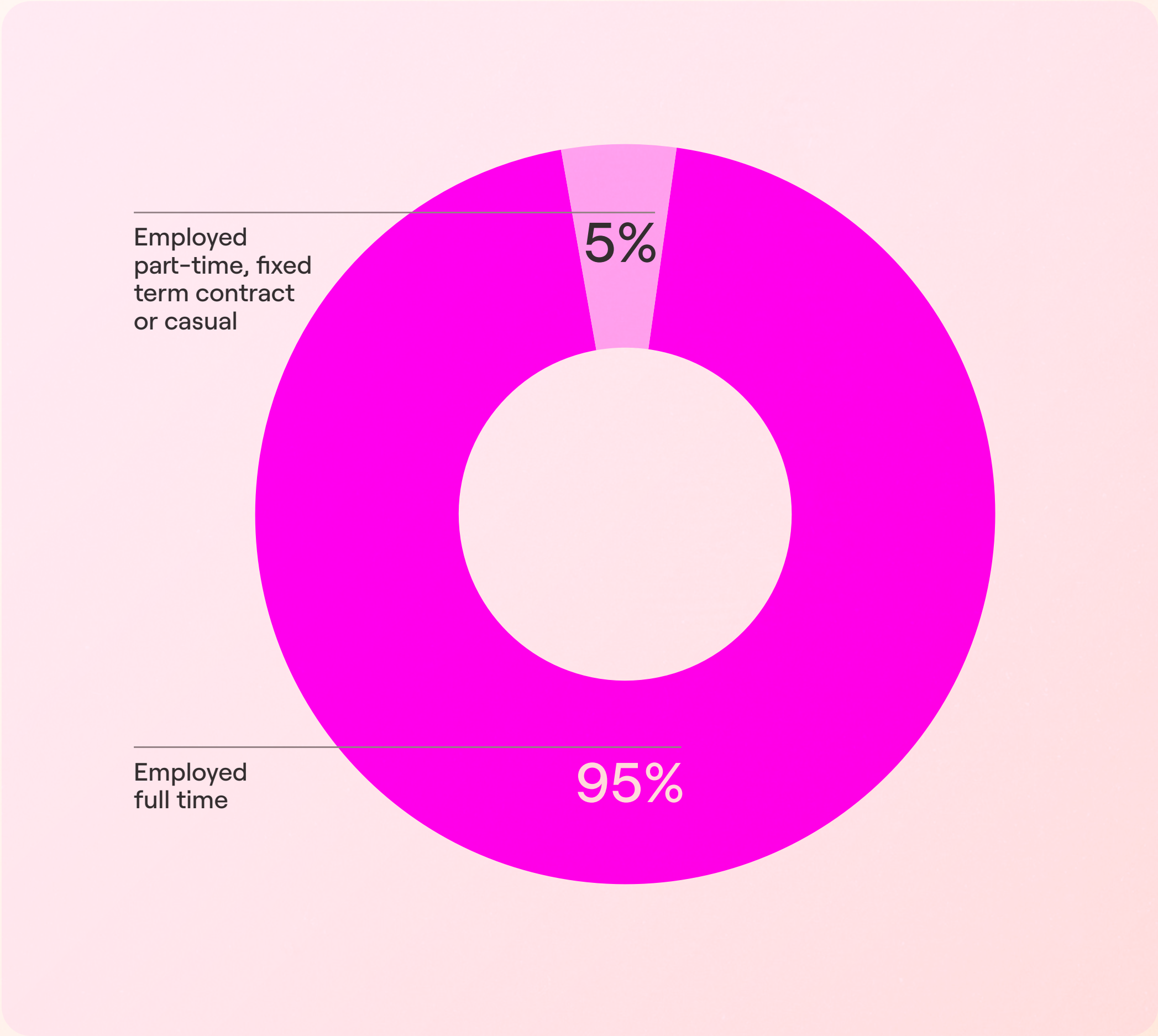
Gender of respondents



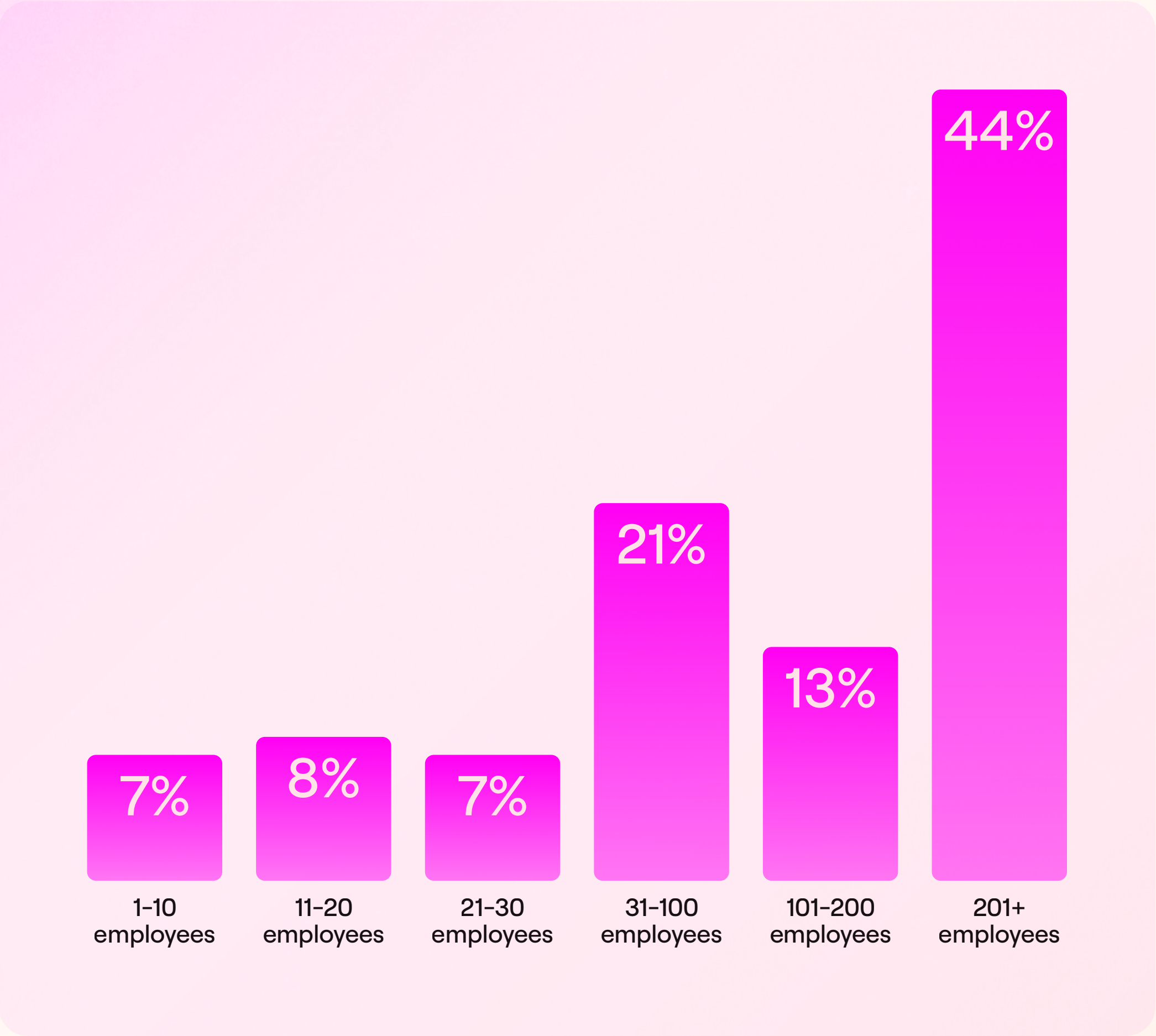
Location of respondents



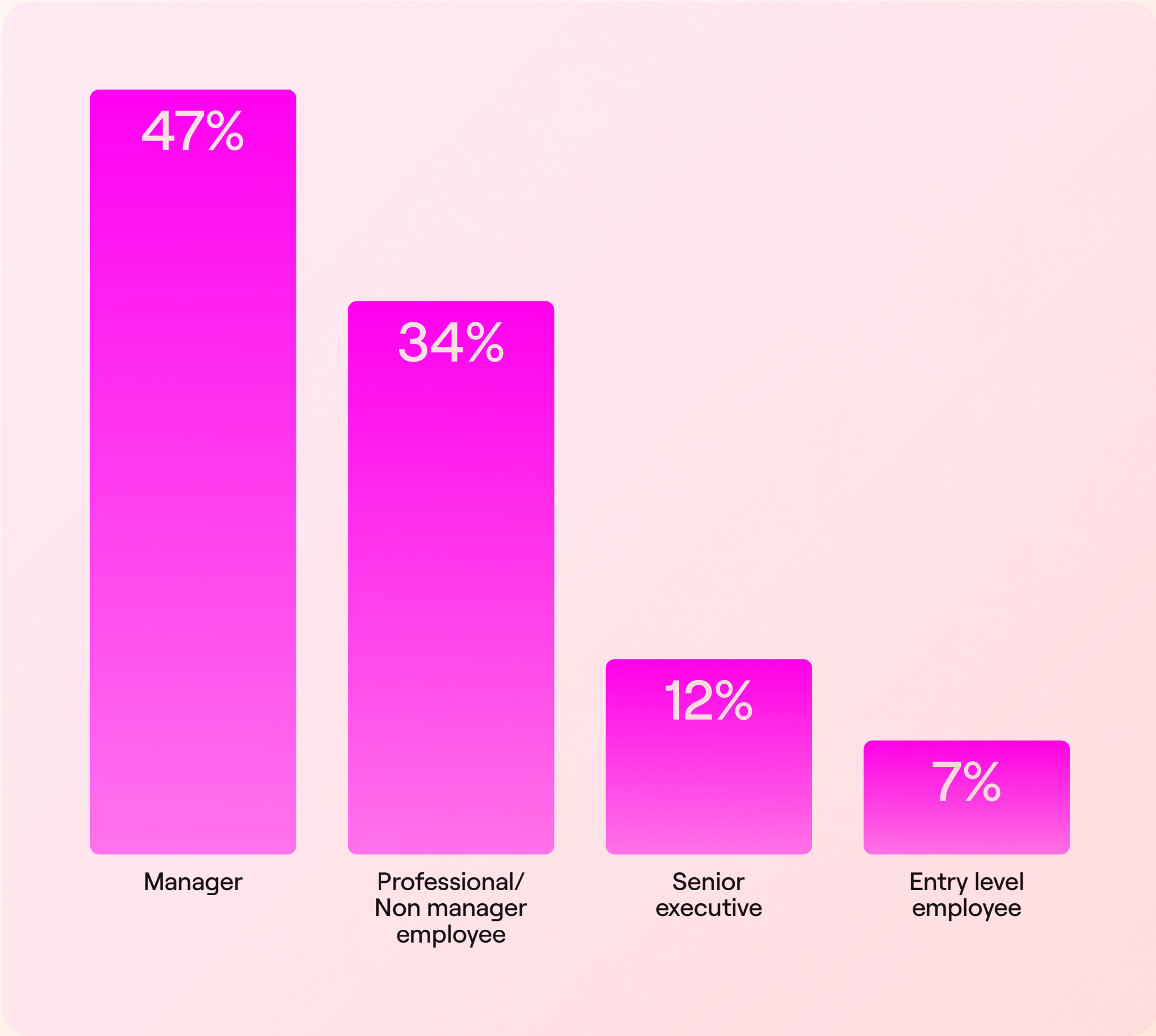
Work status of respondents



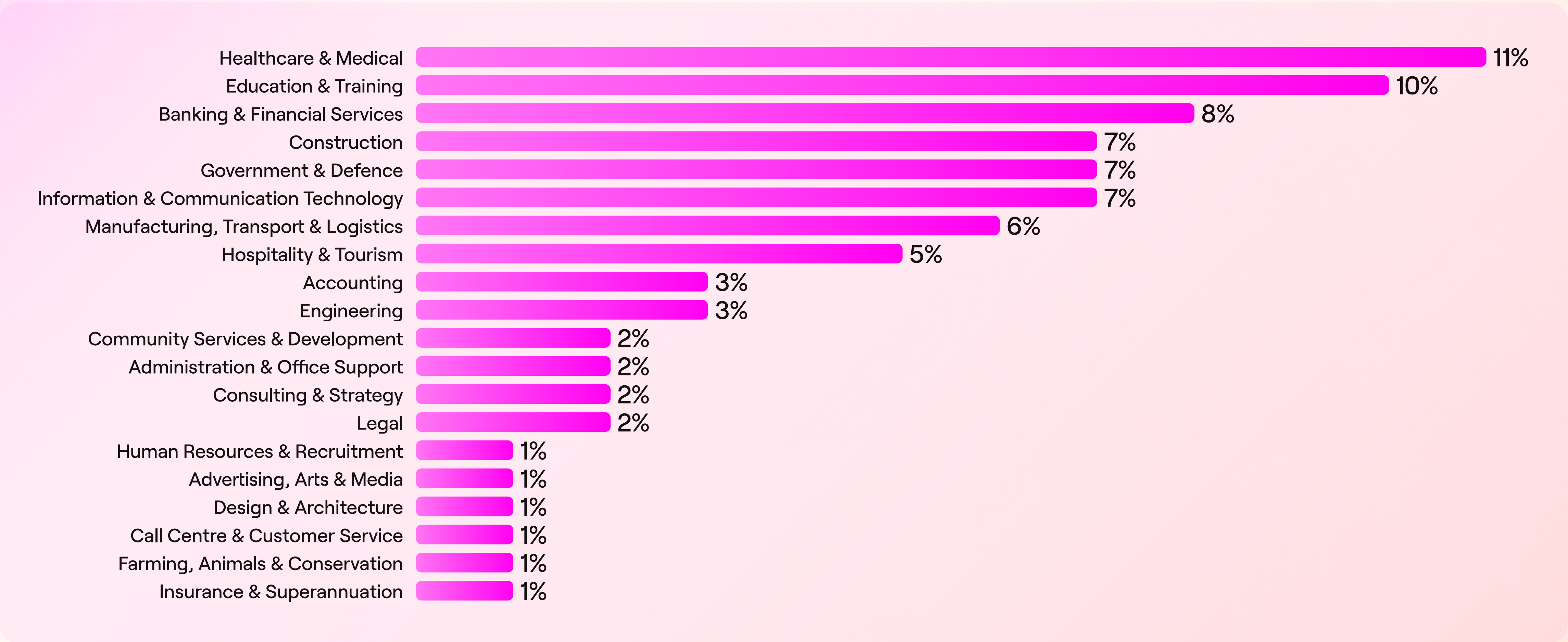
Organisation size
that respondents are employed by



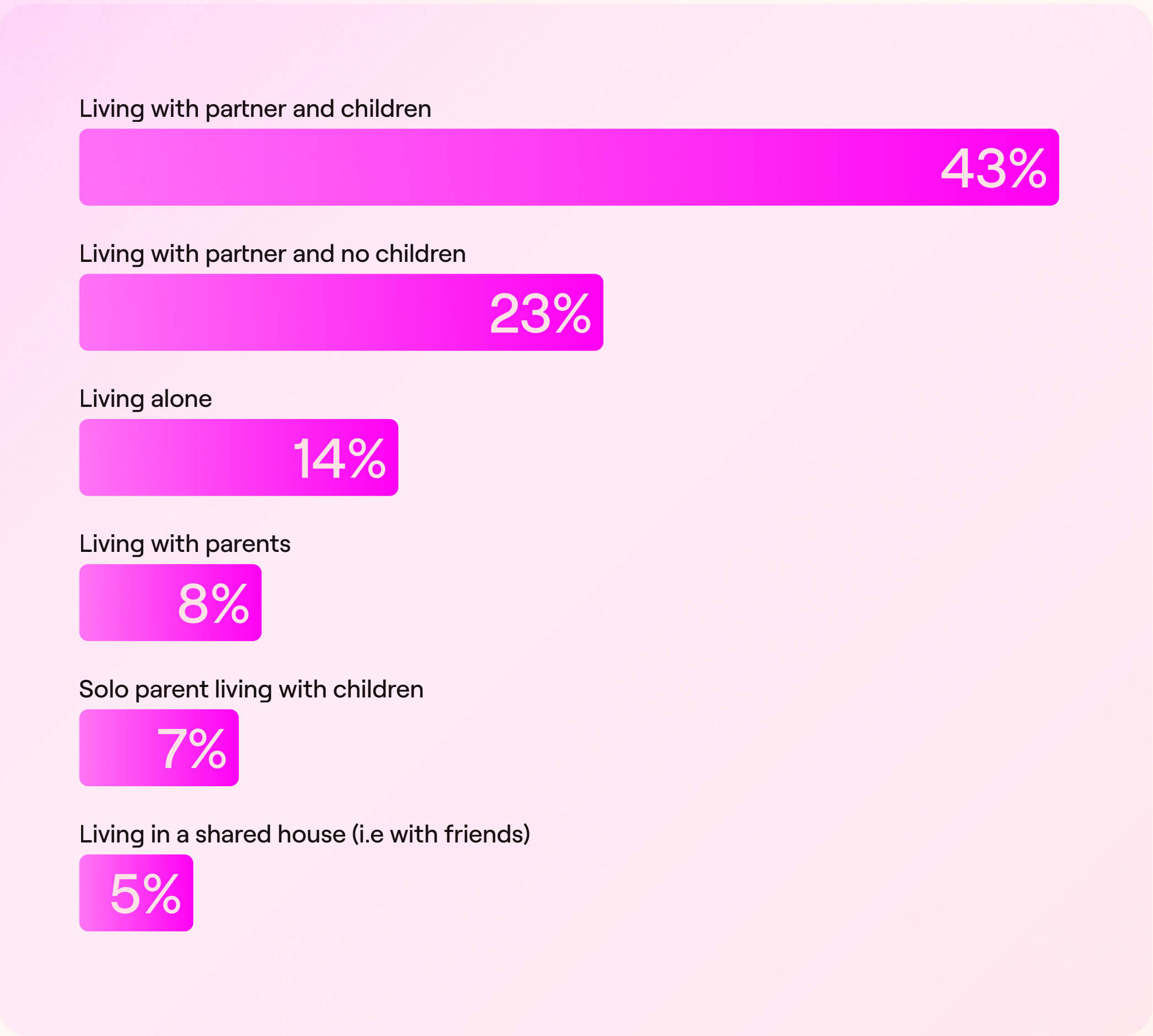
Professional seniority
of respondents



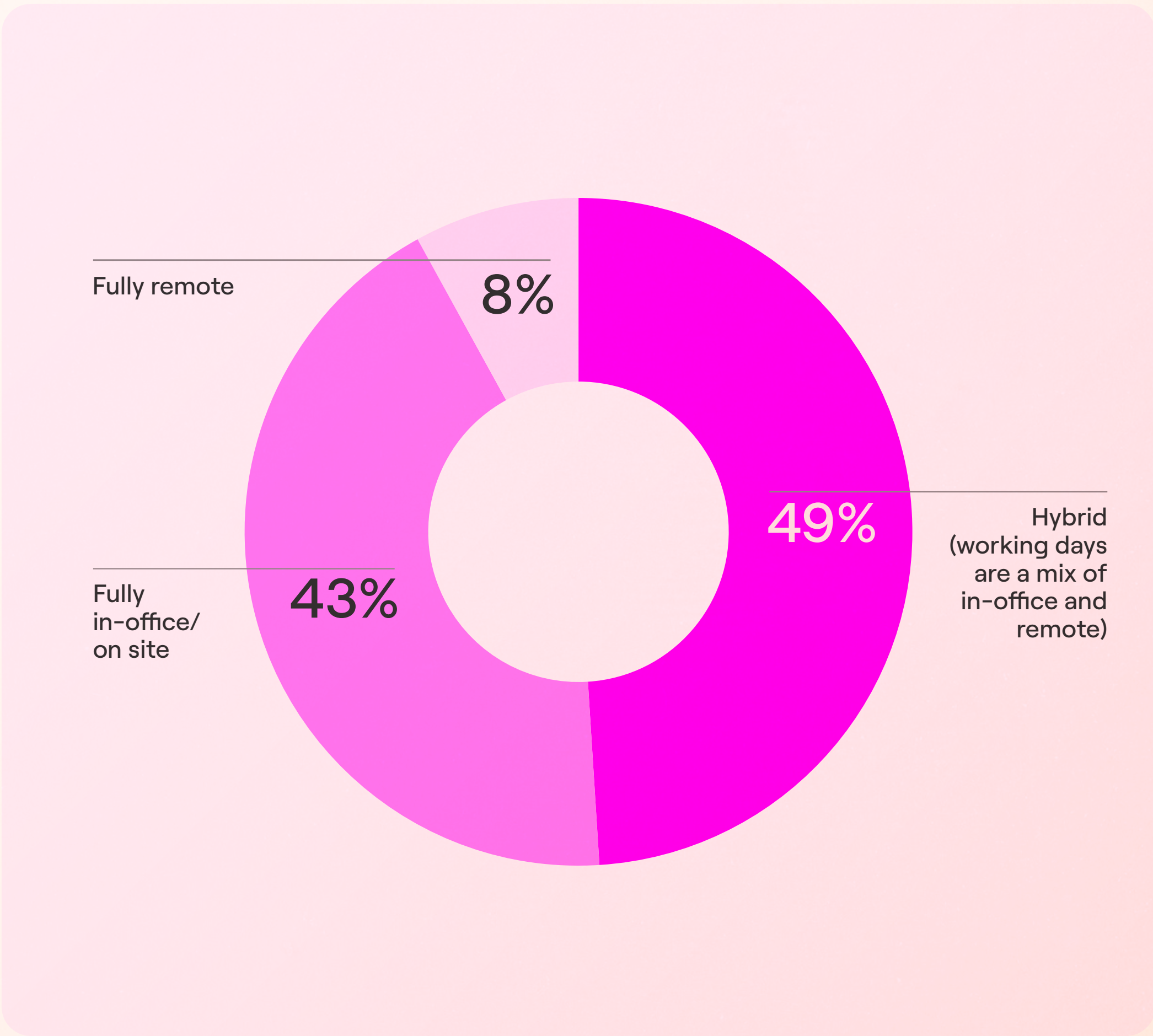
Industry of respondents



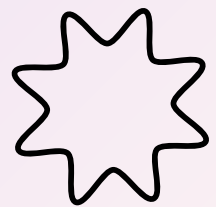
Current living situation of respondents



Personal work arrangement of respondents



About Employment Hero



Employment Hero is the world's leading HR, payroll and employee engagement platform. Its powerful employment platform and groundbreaking employment superapp, Swag, are changing work for the better. The award-winning employment software helps launch businesses on the path to success by powering more productivity every day. Employment Hero services over 300,000 businesses and its core platform reduces admin time by up to 80 per cent.

Employment Hero is launching employers toward their goals, powering more productive teams and taking employment to rewarding new heights.

Applicant tracking system

AI recruitment tool, SmartMatch

Recognition

Shout Outs (Peer to peer recognition)

Policy templates

Performance reviews

Feedback

Employee happiness scores

1:1s

OKRs (Objectives and Key Results)

Easy payroll

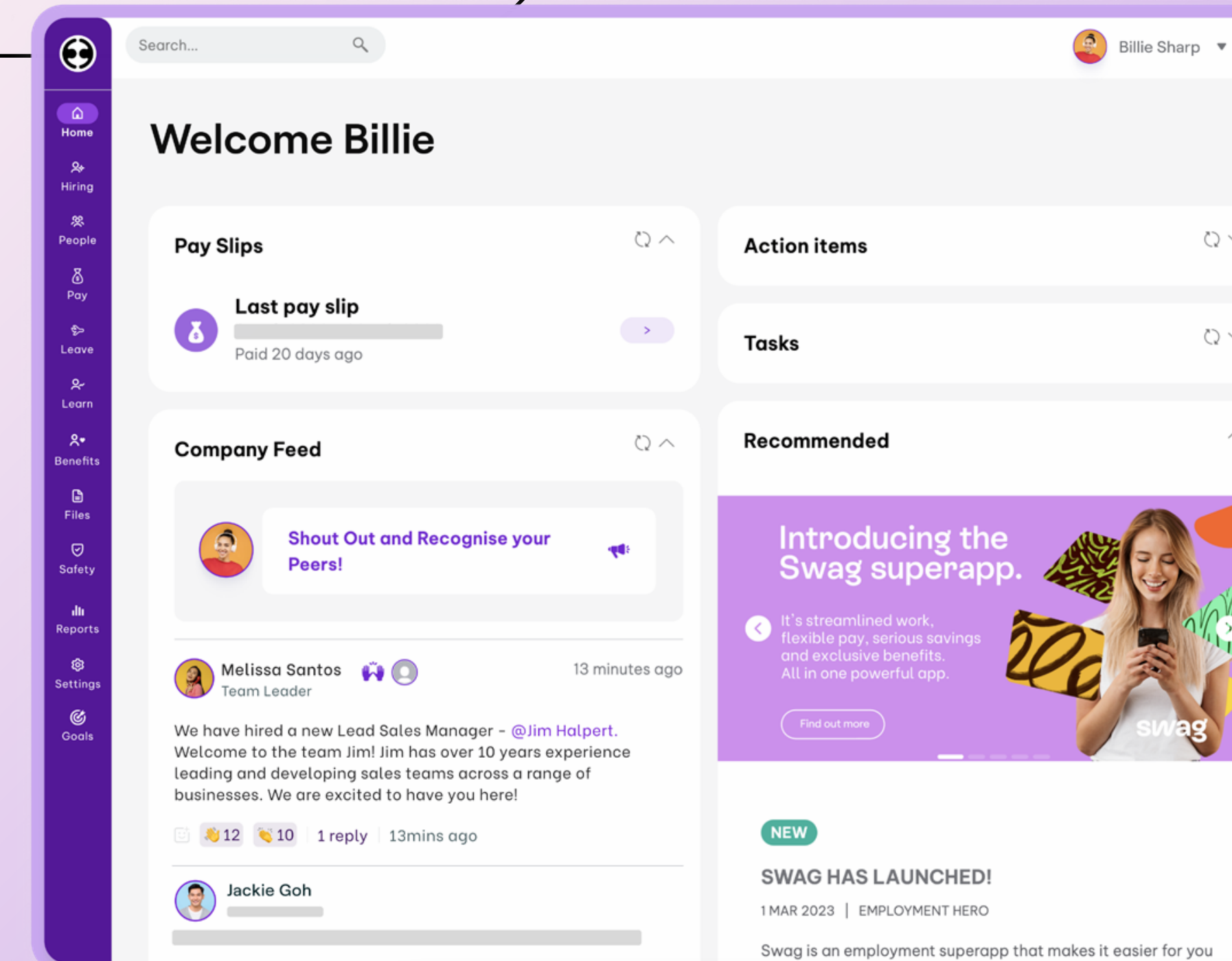
Learning management system (LMS)

Access to our employment superapp, Swag

A range of employee benefits

Custom surveys

And so much more...



For more information on how we can help transform your business, book a demo today.

[BOOK A DEMO](#)

wellness at work



2024 Report



This report was designed with love from the design studio and marketing teams at Employment Hero.