



CANADIAN FEDERATION
OF NURSES UNIONS
LA FÉDÉRATION CANADIENNE
DES SYNDICATS D'INFIRMIÈRES
ET INFIRMIERS



CFNU National Nurses Survey

April 2026

Prepared by Viewpoints Research on behalf of the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions



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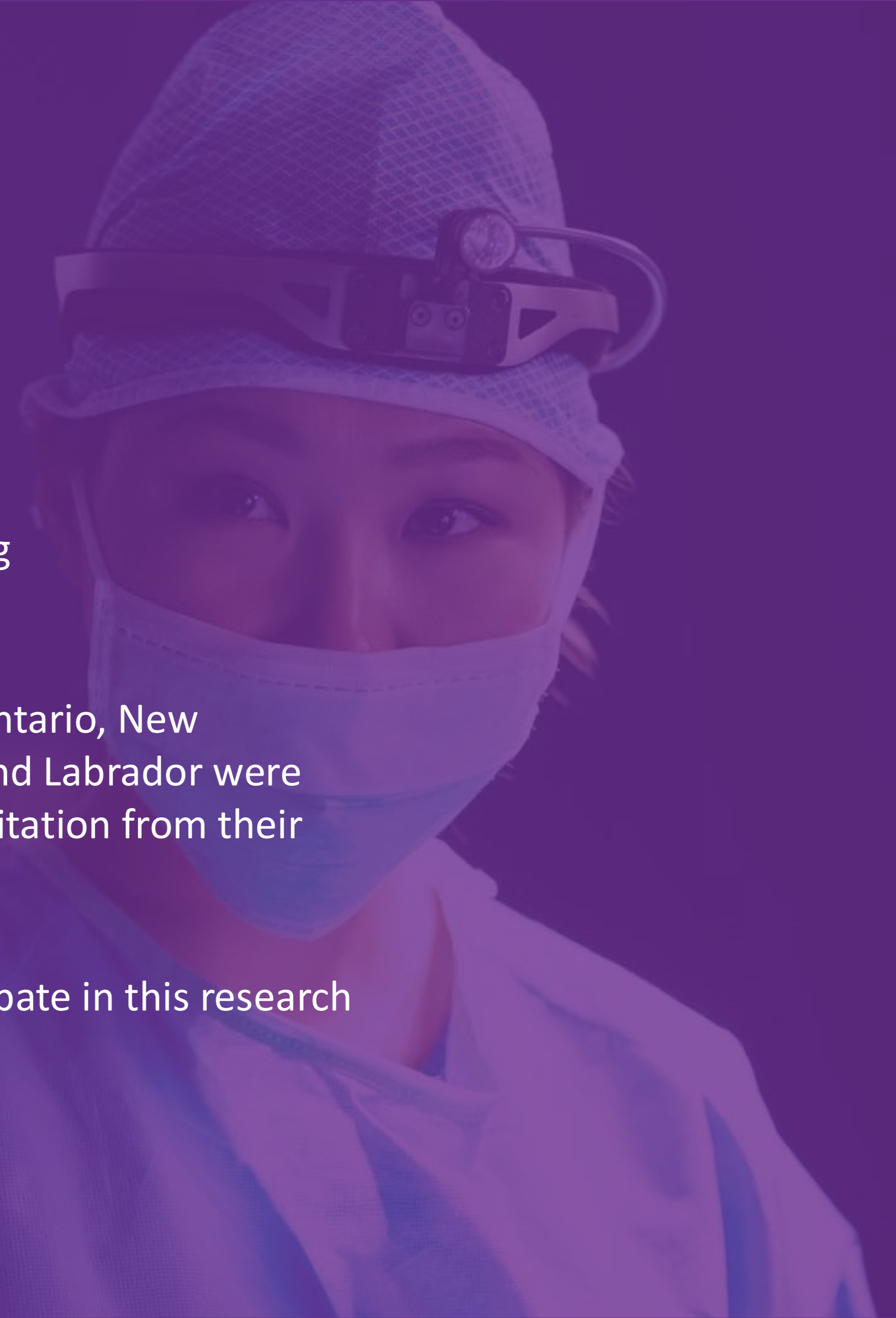
Methodology

On behalf of the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions (CFNU), Viewpoints Research conducted an online survey of 4,703 practicing unionized nurses in early 2026. The margin of error is +/- 1.4%.

Nurses from British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland and Labrador were randomly selected to participate in this research by direct email invitation from their respective nurses' union.

Nurses from Quebec and the territories were encouraged to participate in this research by their respective unions.

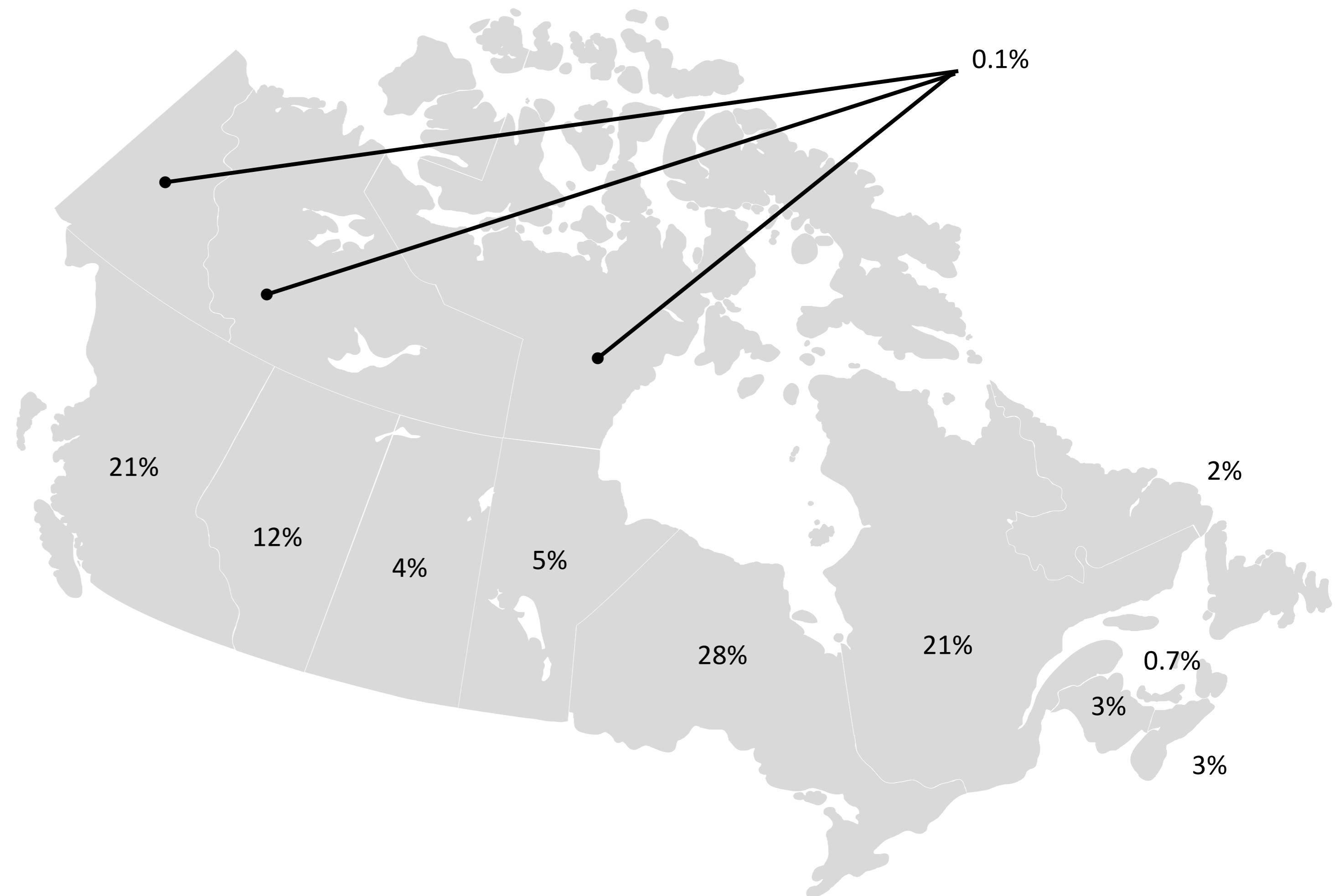
Bases for reported findings are 4,703 unless otherwise specified.



We received responses from nurses across Canada.

The survey received responses from over 4,700 nurses across the country.

This national survey represents nurses participating from all regions. With good representation from all regions, small weights have been applied so national data can be analyzed as representative.



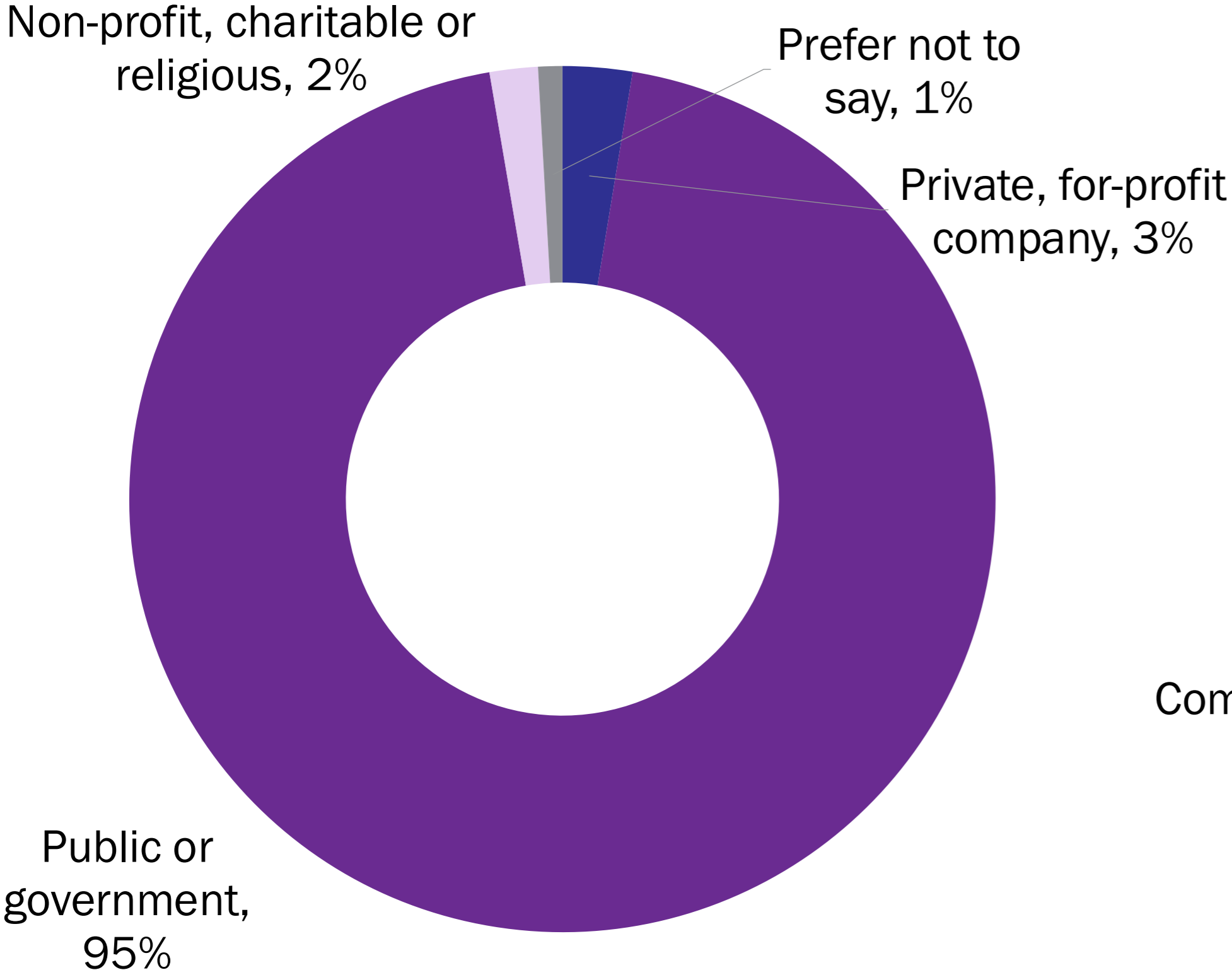
Findings

Work Experiences and Quality of Care



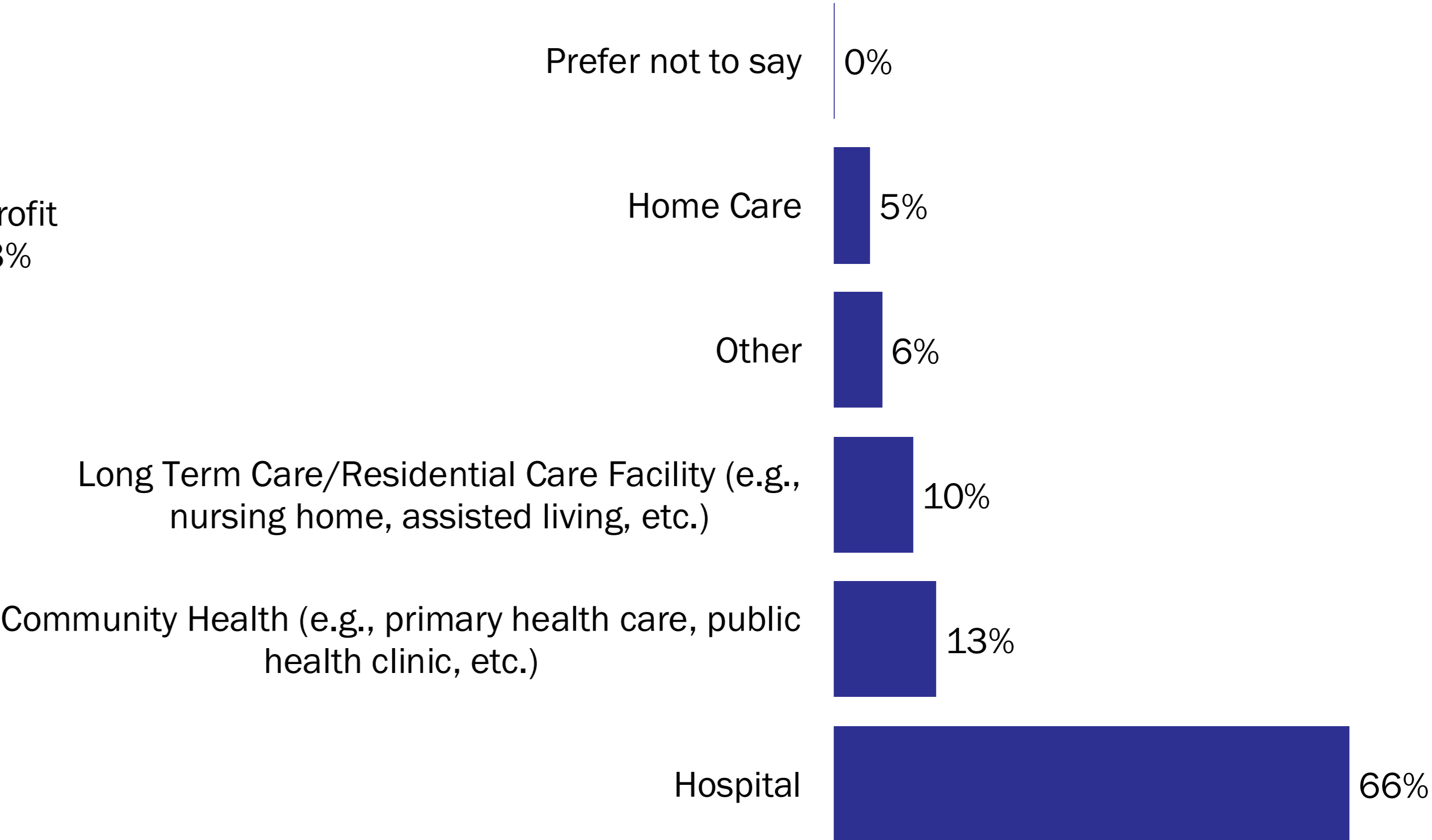
Most respondents work in public or government organizations and in hospital settings.

Which of the following best describes the type of organization you work for?



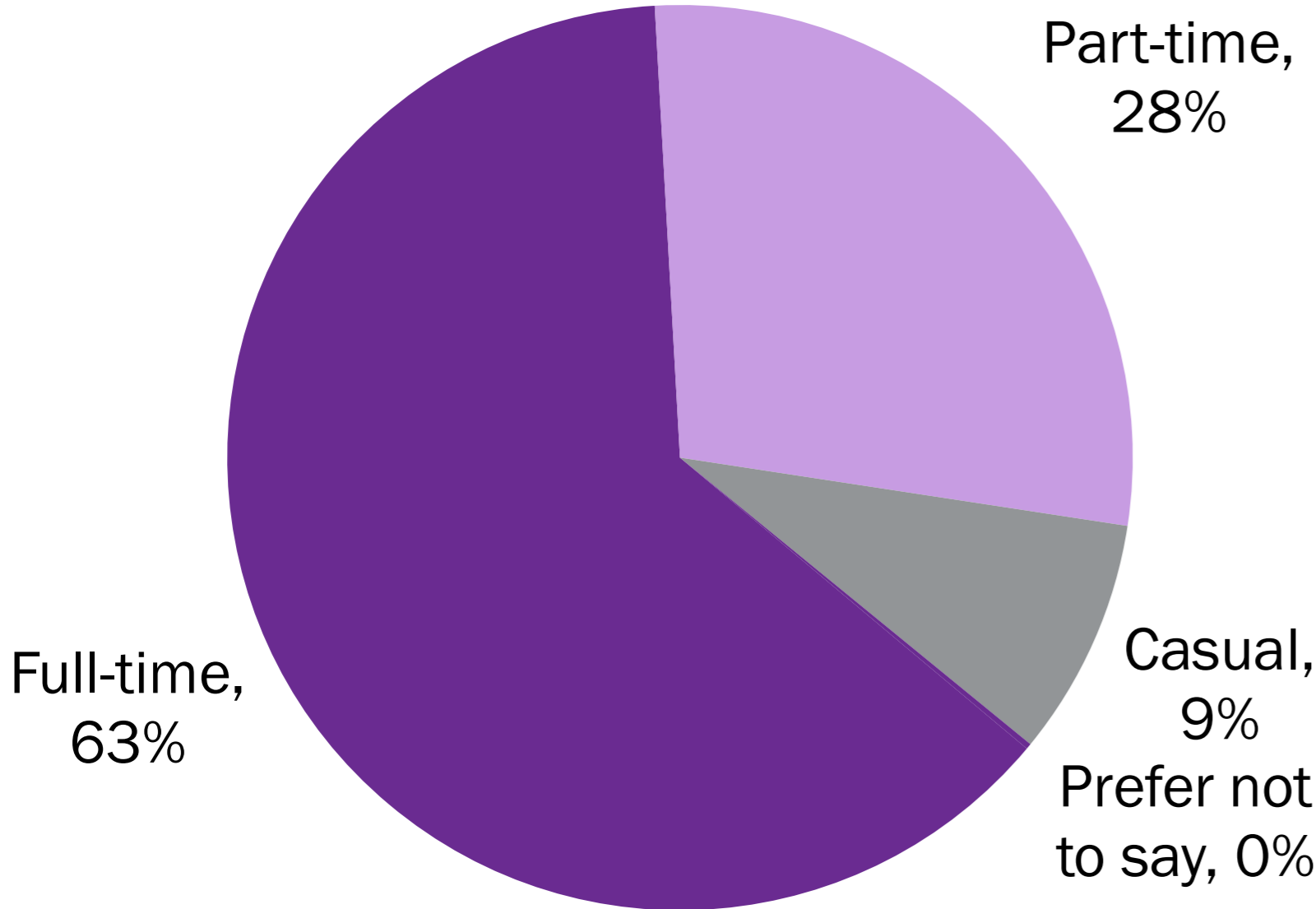
Thinking about your main job, in what sector are you currently employed?

If you have more than one job, please answer in terms of your main or primary job, where you regularly work the most hours.



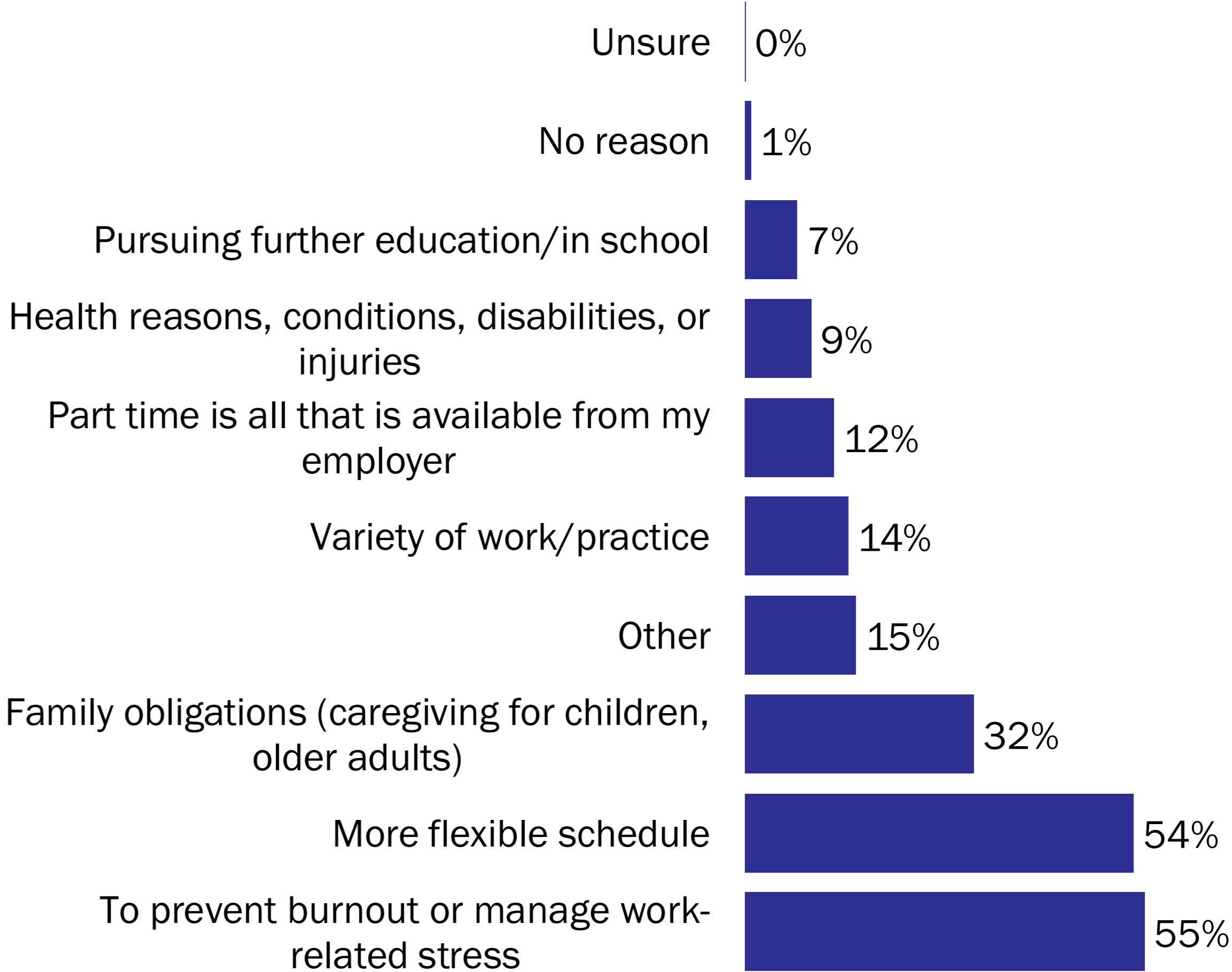
Most respondents have full-time jobs; those who don't say it's mostly to prevent burnout, for more flexible schedules and to manage family obligations.

Which one of the following best describes your current job status?



Overall, nurses work 1.4 jobs on average.

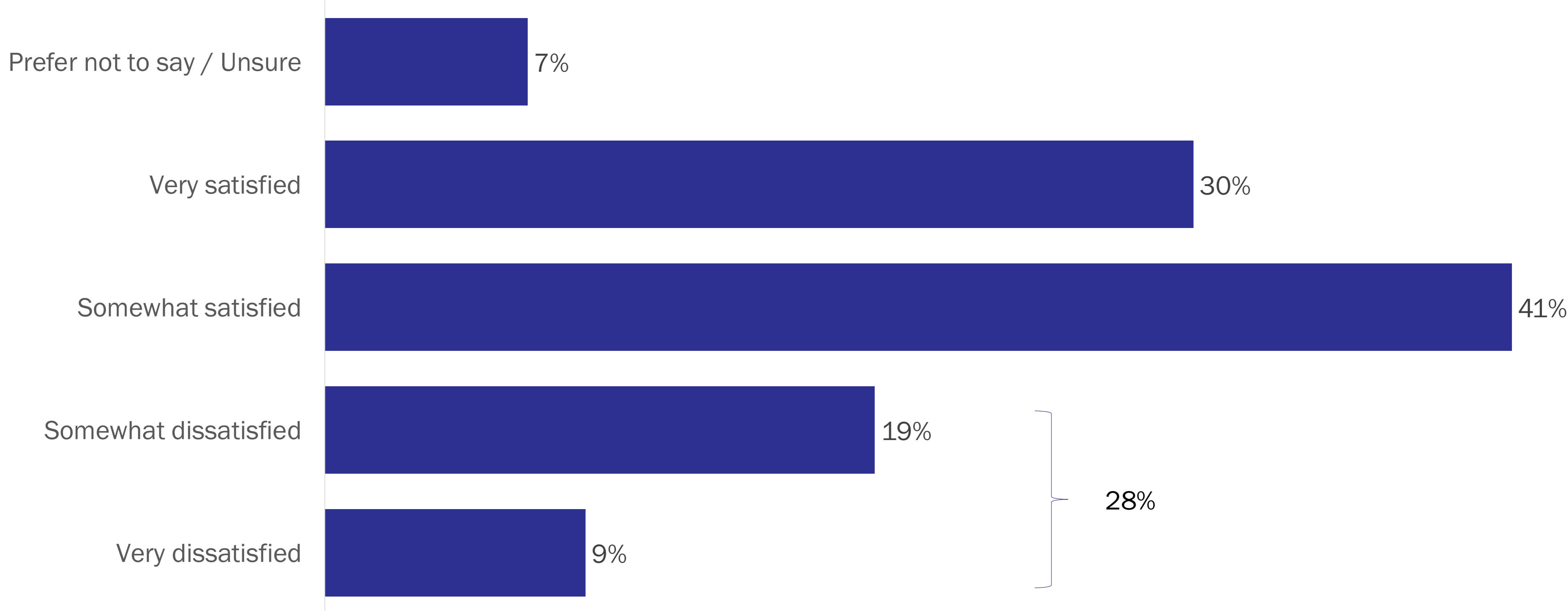
How many nursing jobs do you work?



Why do you work part time or casual hours?

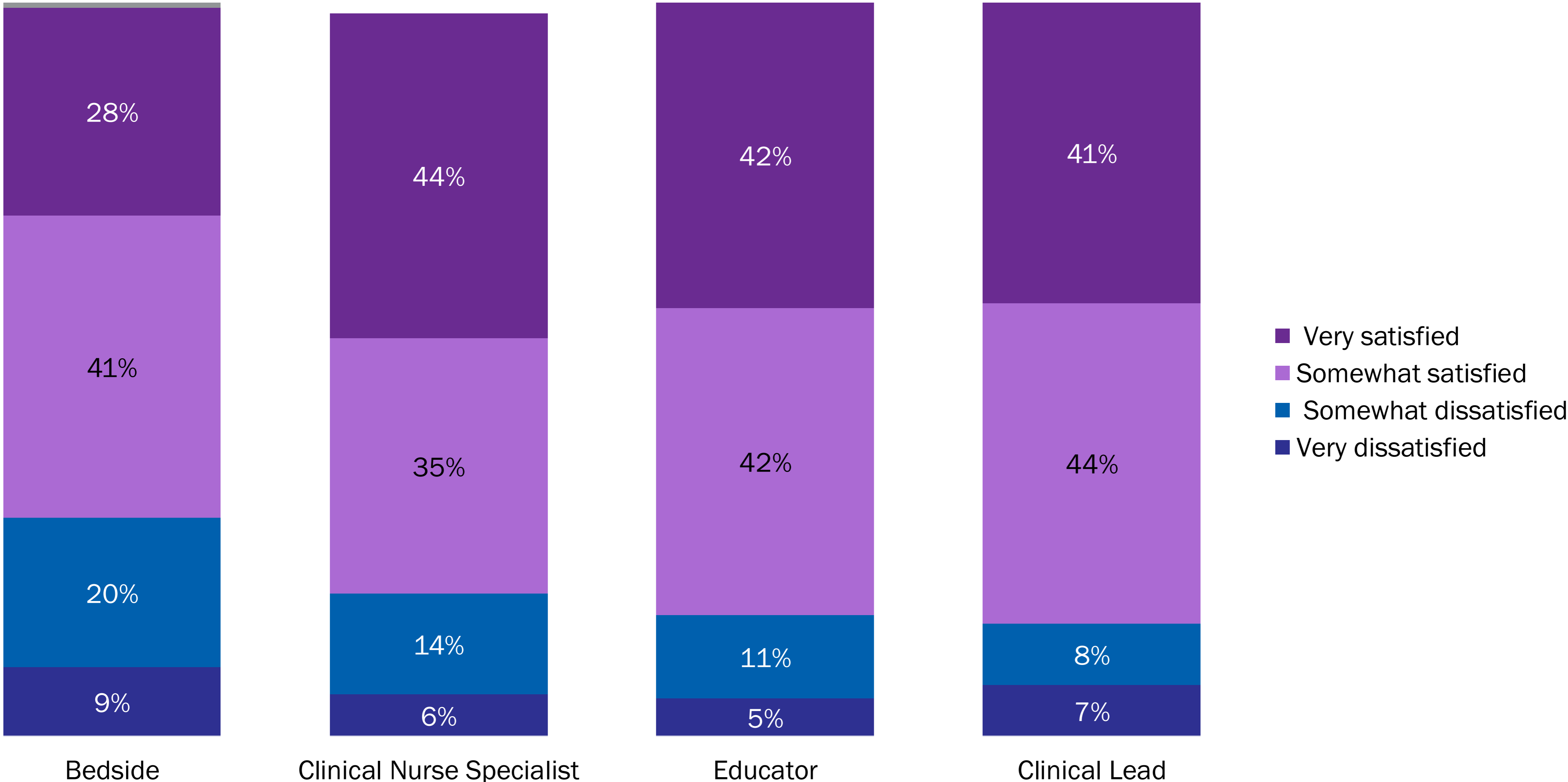
Base: 1,825

Over a quarter of respondents are somewhat or very dissatisfied with their choice of nursing as a career.



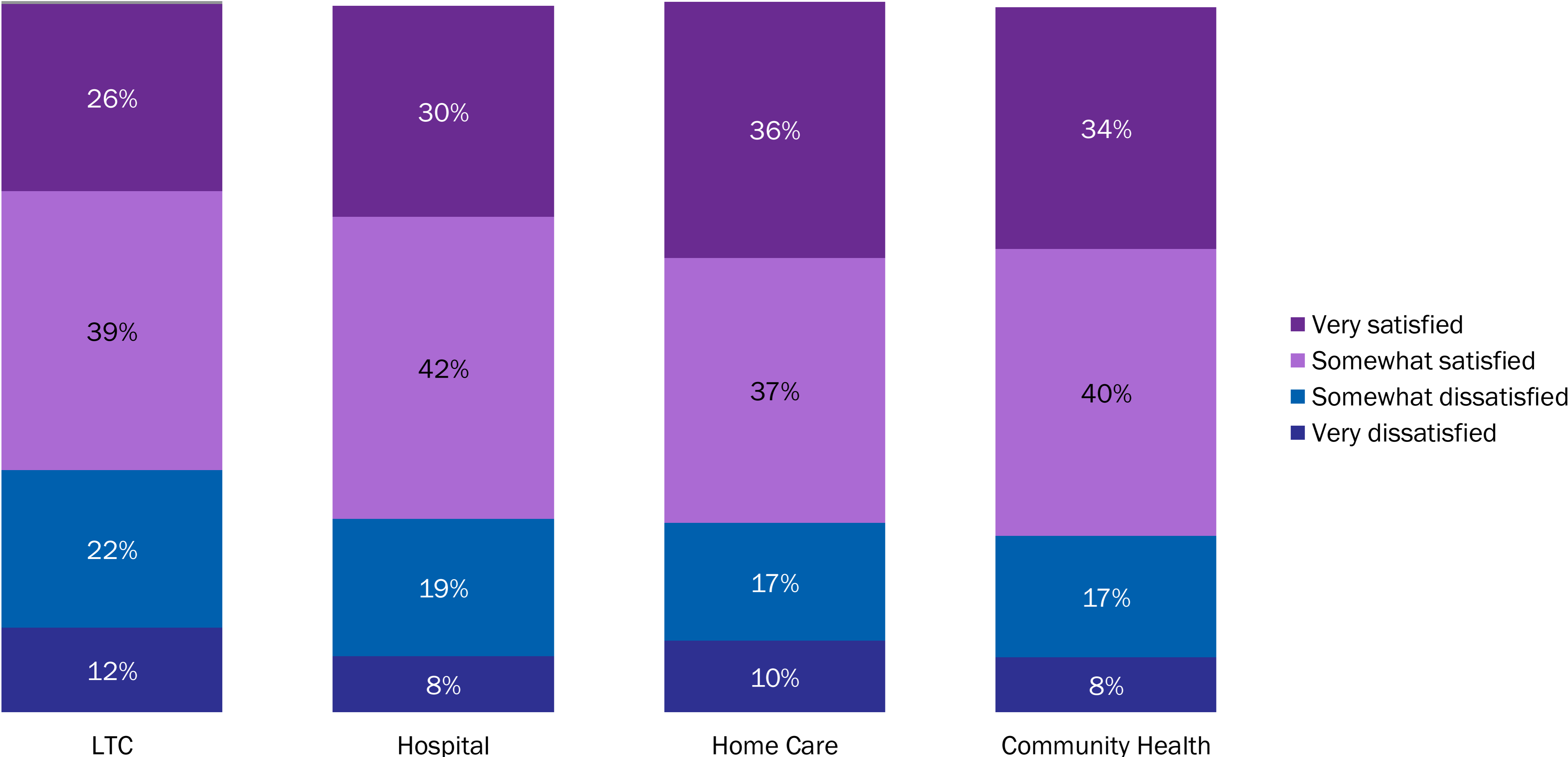
How satisfied are you with your choice of nursing as a career?

Bedside nurses are the least satisfied across roles.



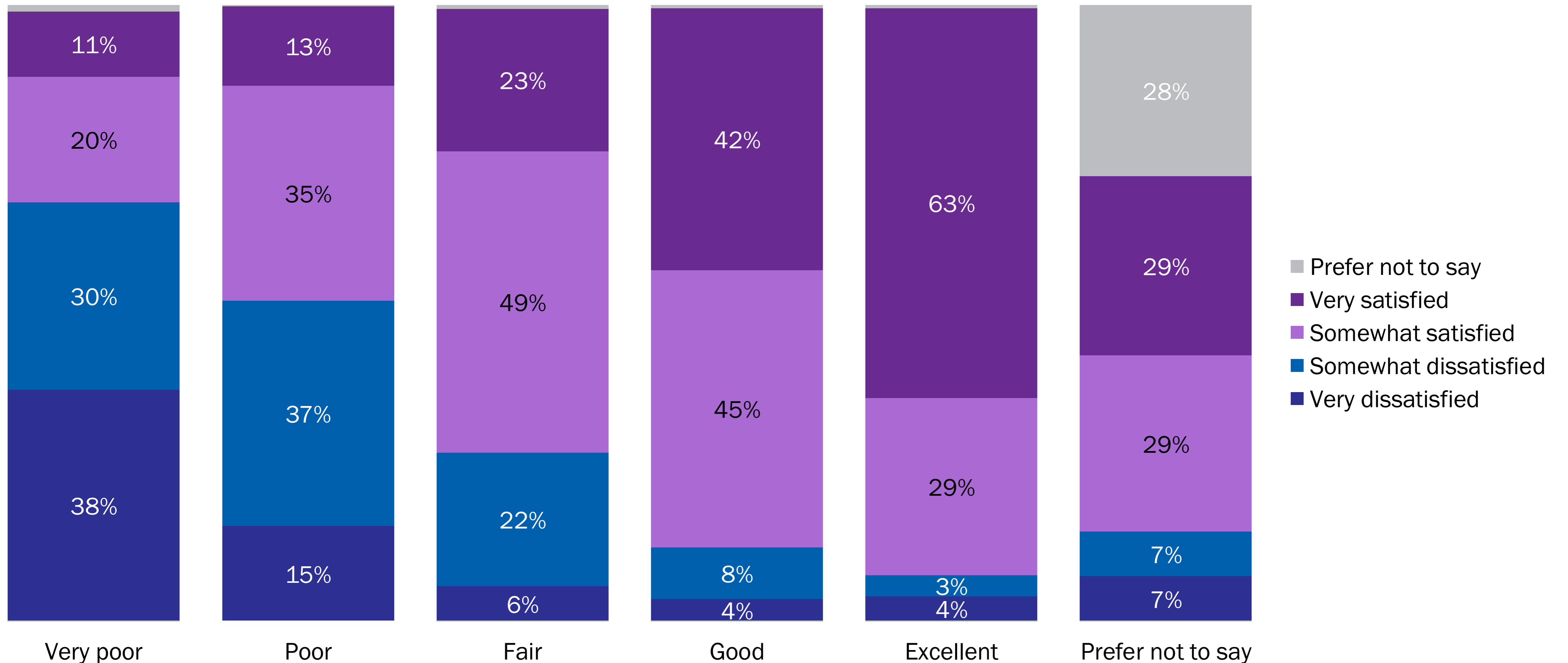
How satisfied are you with your choice of nursing as a career?

LTC nurses are the least satisfied across sectors.



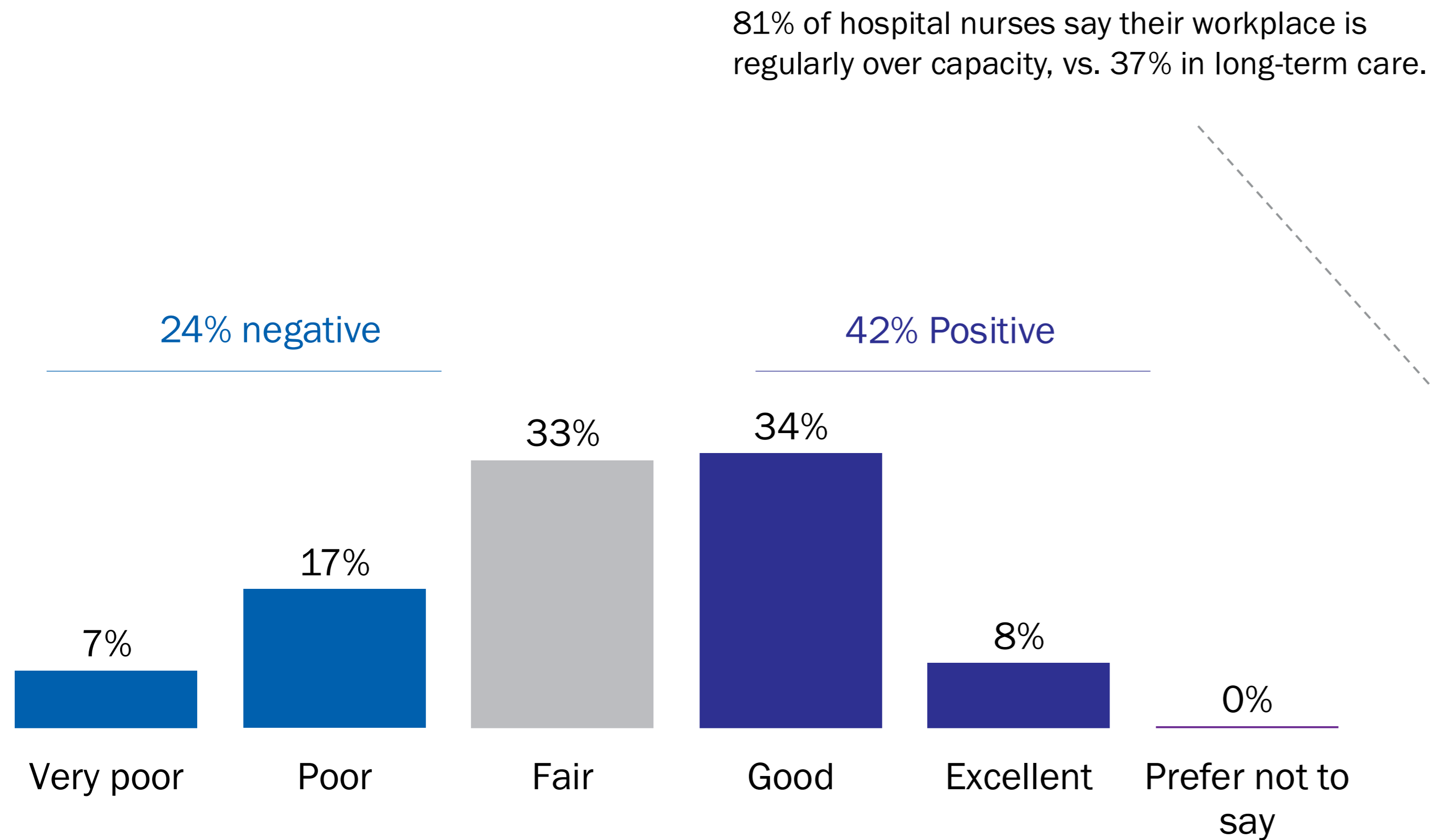
How satisfied are you with your choice of nursing as a career?

As ratings of work environment decrease, so do satisfaction ratings.

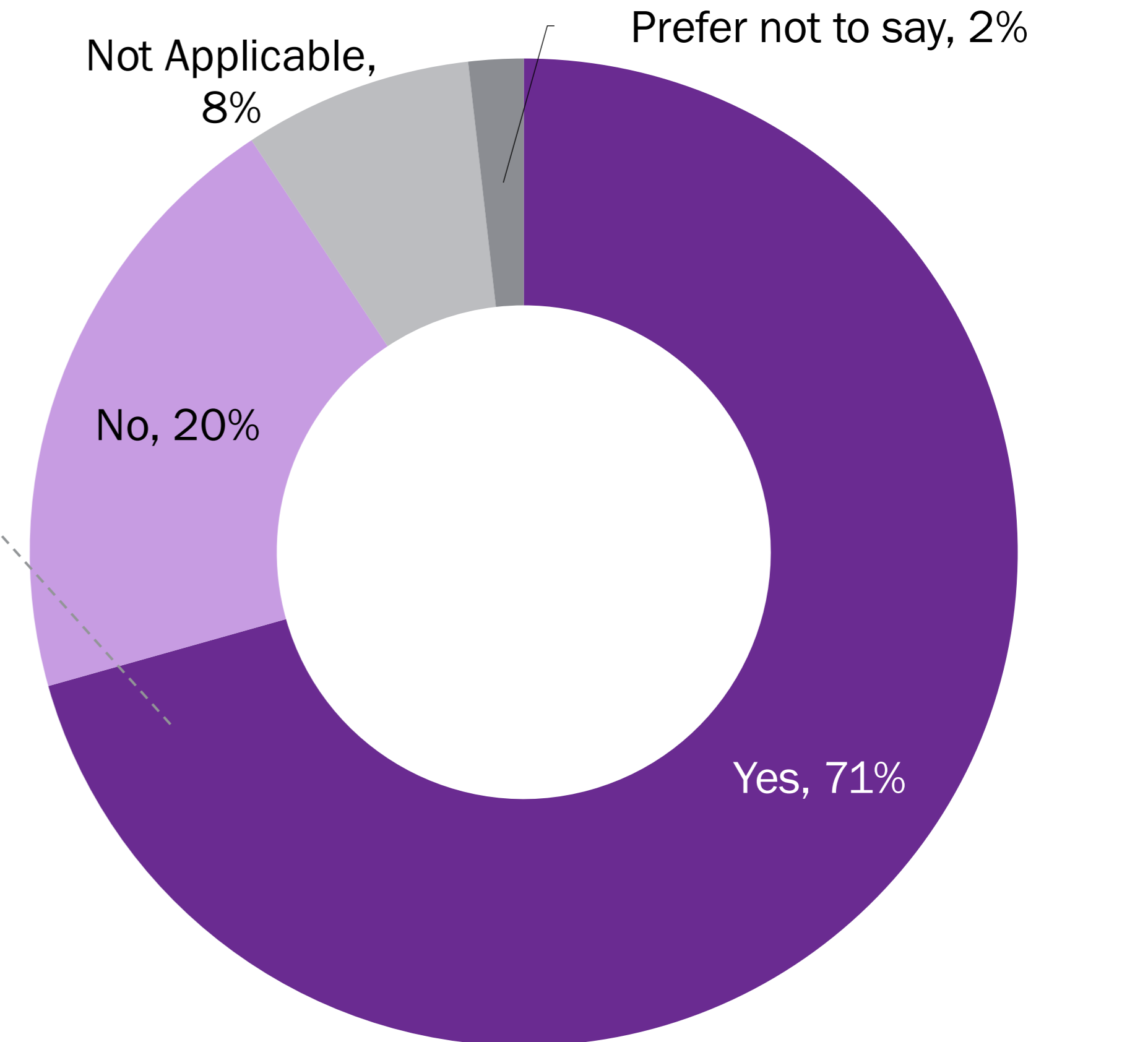


How satisfied are you with your choice of nursing as a career? How would you rate the work environment at your current job?

1 in 4 respondents rate their work environment negatively. Over 2 in 3 say their workplace is regularly over capacity.

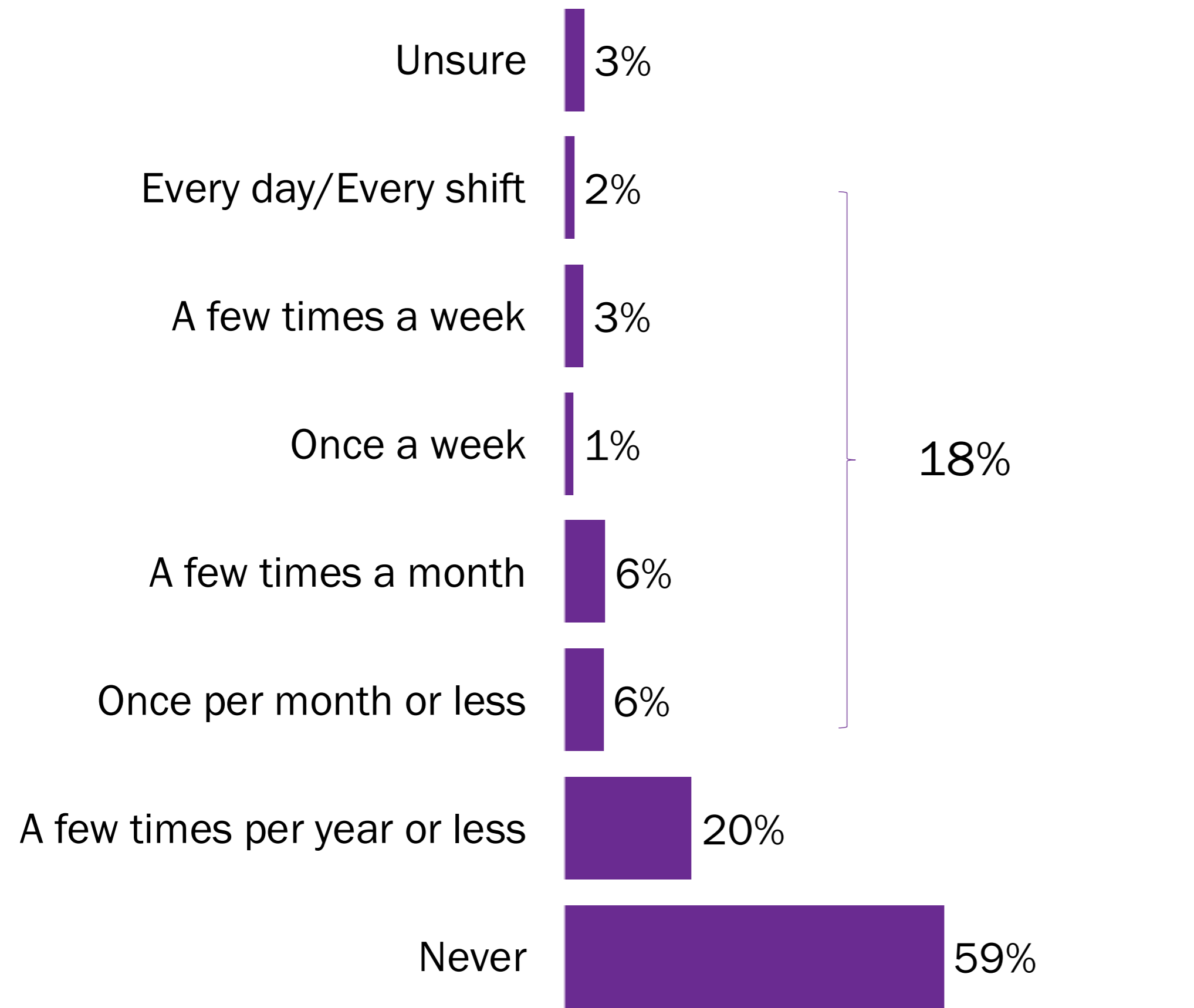


How would you rate the work environment at your current job in this workplace? Please consider adequacy of resources, relations with coworkers, and support from supervisors.

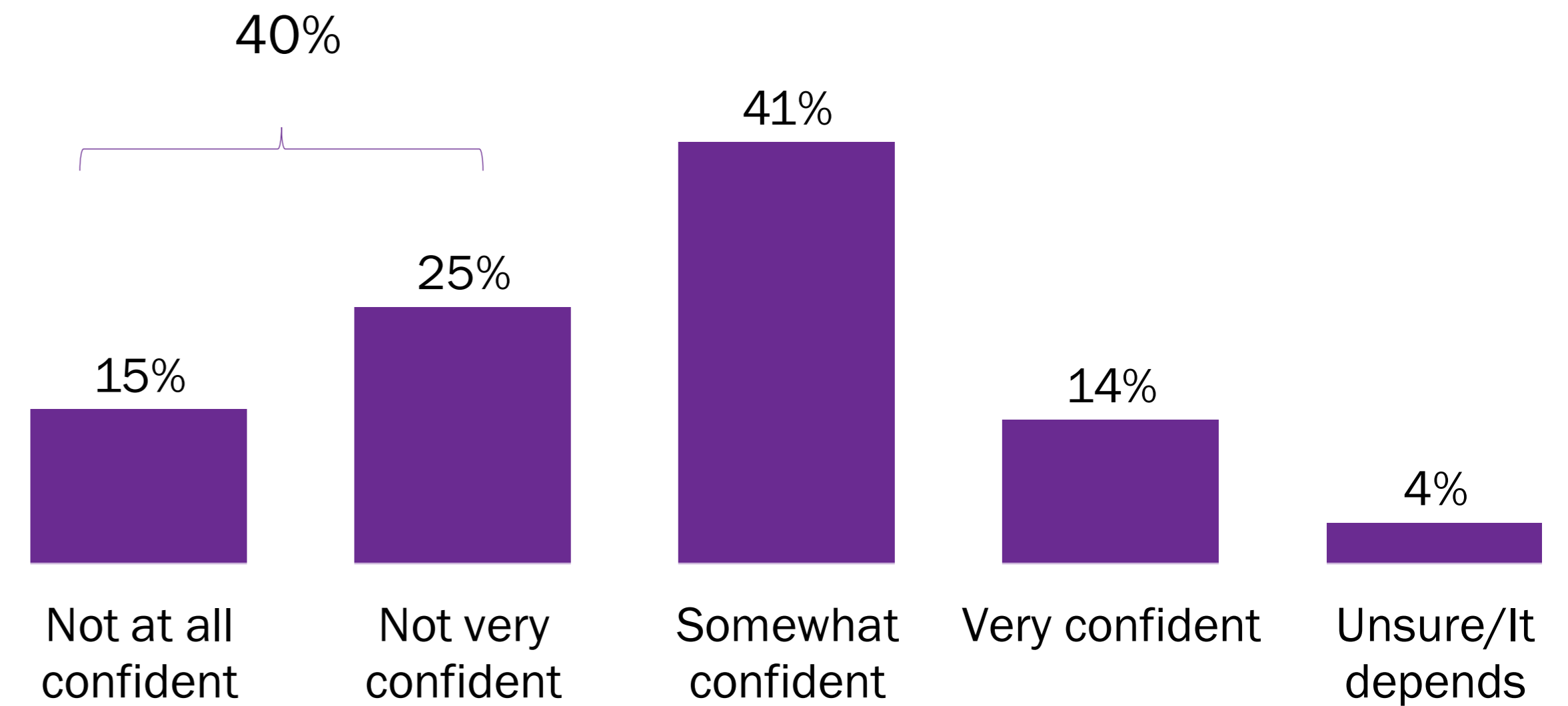


In your opinion, is your workplace regularly over capacity?

18% of nurses are redeployed at least once per month; 40% of those redeployed in the past year are not confident in their training and experience.

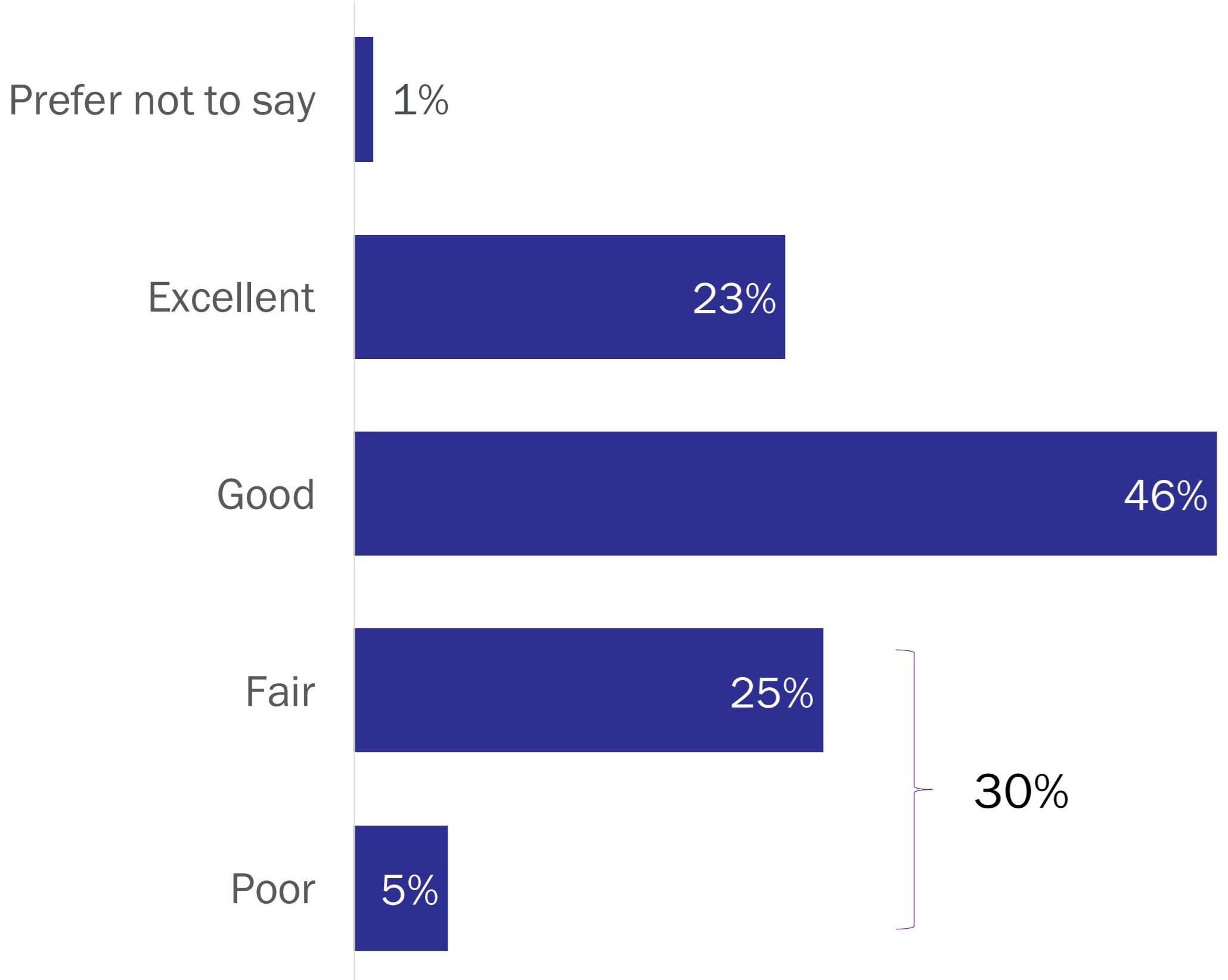


How often are you redeployed or reassigned to another unit?

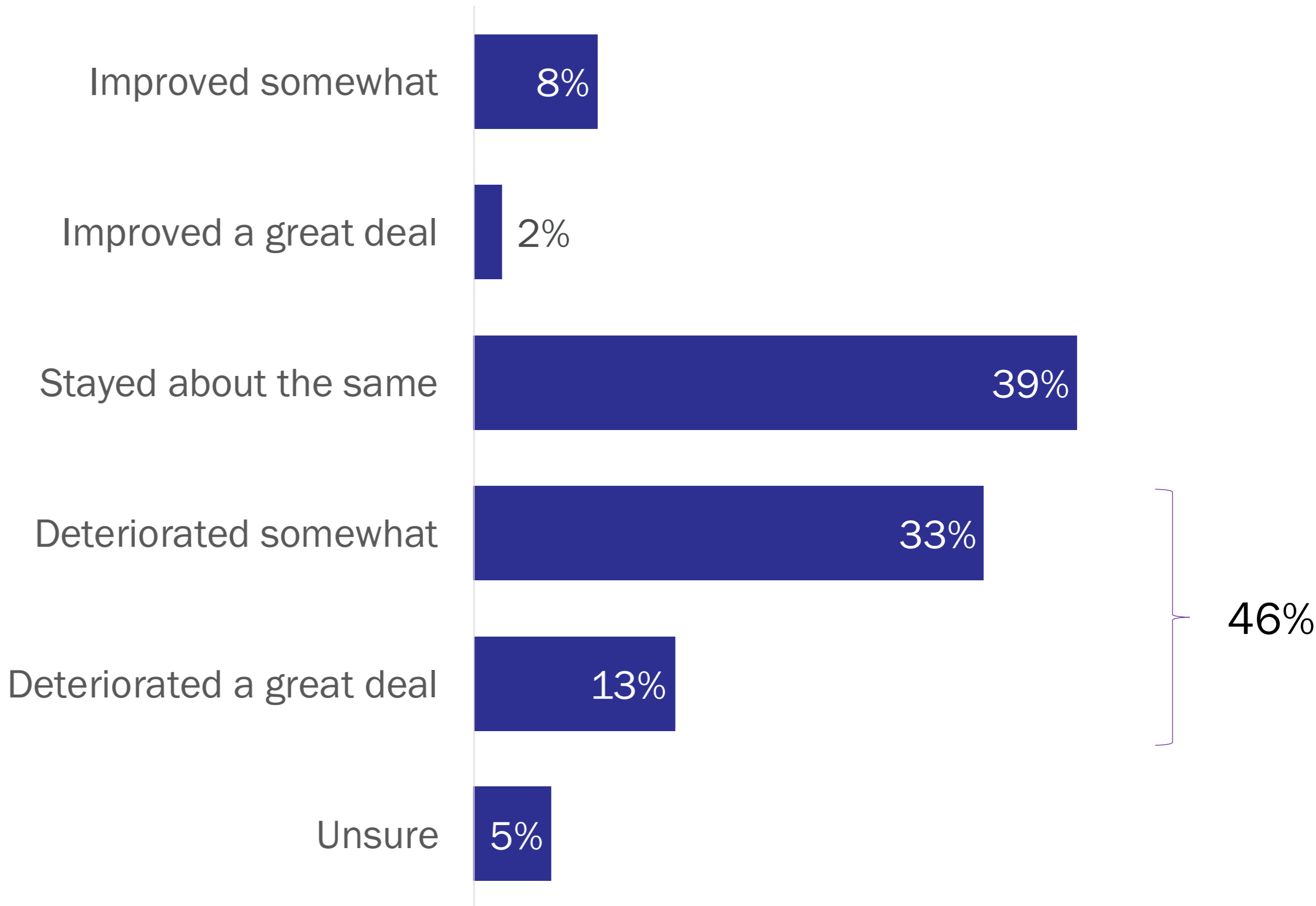


When being redeployed or reassigned to another unit, how confident are you in your training and experience? Base: 1,739

Nearly 1 in 3 respondents describe the quality of care as poor or fair. Nearly half feel it has deteriorated over the past year.



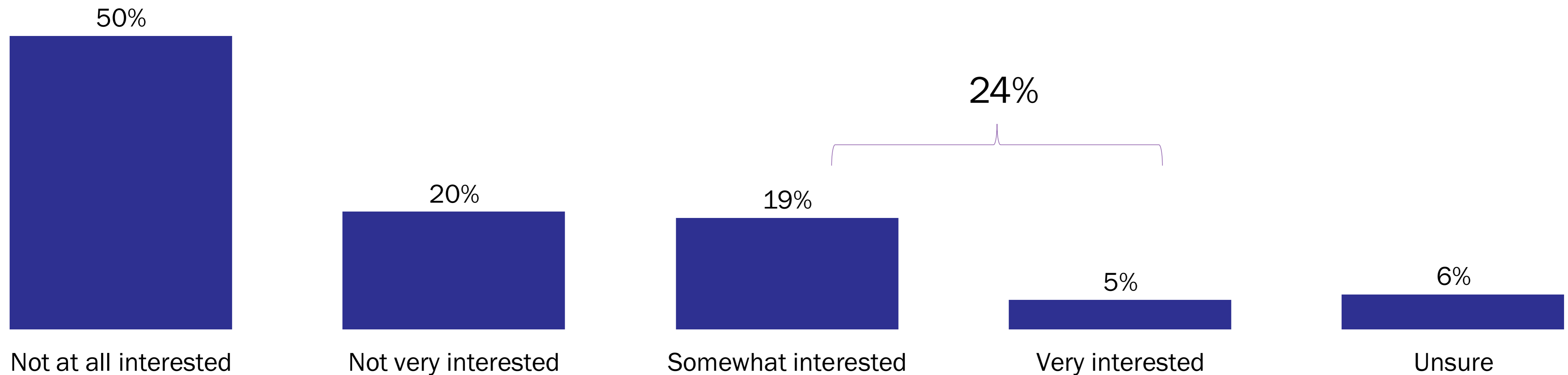
In general, how would you describe the quality of nursing care delivered to patients/residents/clients at your workplace?



Over the past year has the quality of care available in your workplace changed?

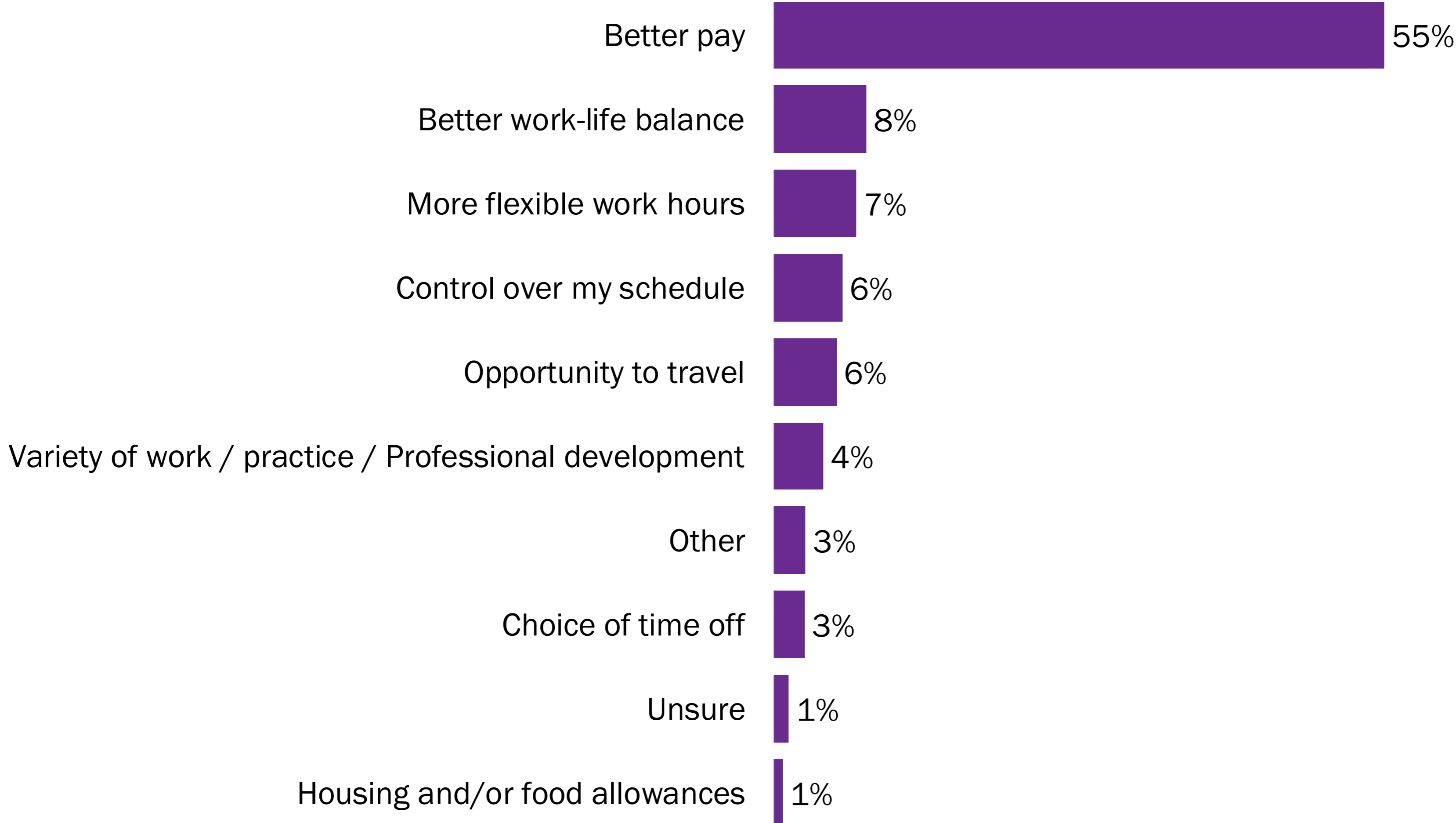
Nearly a quarter of respondents are interested in agency work.

How interested are you in beginning agency work or increasing the amount of agency work you already do?



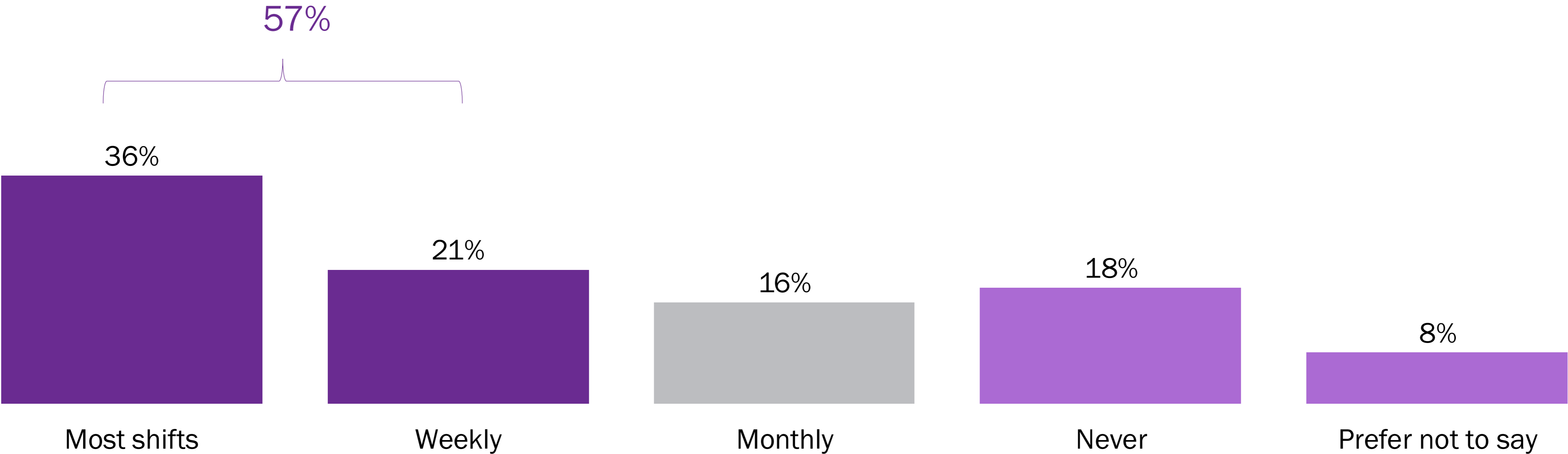
Note: Nursing agencies are external private staffing agencies that arrange contracts with a facility (hospital or other organization), typically spanning a few weeks to several months, to fill staffing needs.

The 24% of respondents that are interested in agency work are primarily interested in better pay.

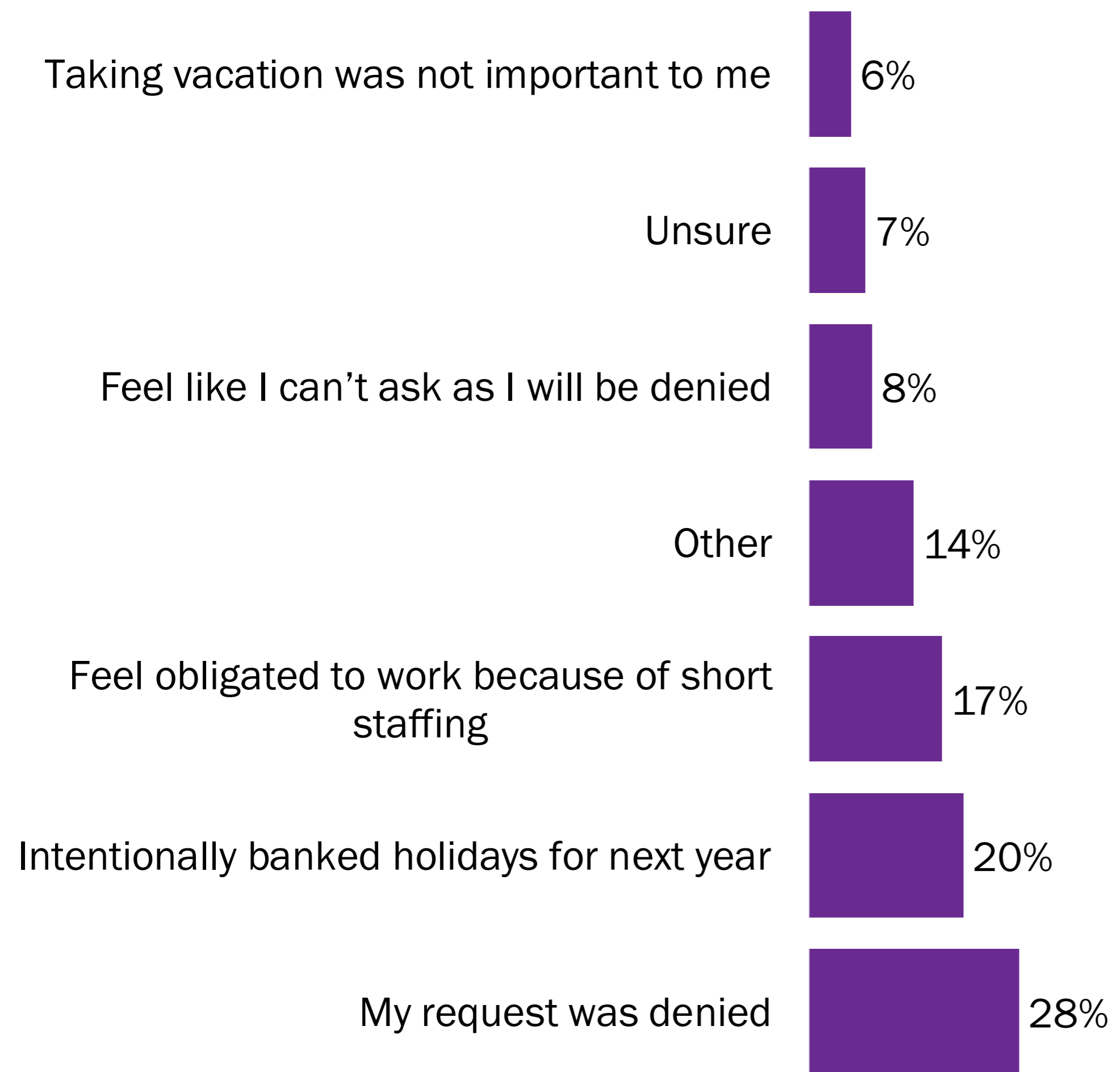


What is the main reason you are interested in work at a nursing agency or increasing the amount you work at a nursing agency? *Base: 1,132*

Over half of respondents (57%) are regularly responsible for more patients than they feel they can safely care for.



How often are you responsible for more patients than you feel you can safely care for?



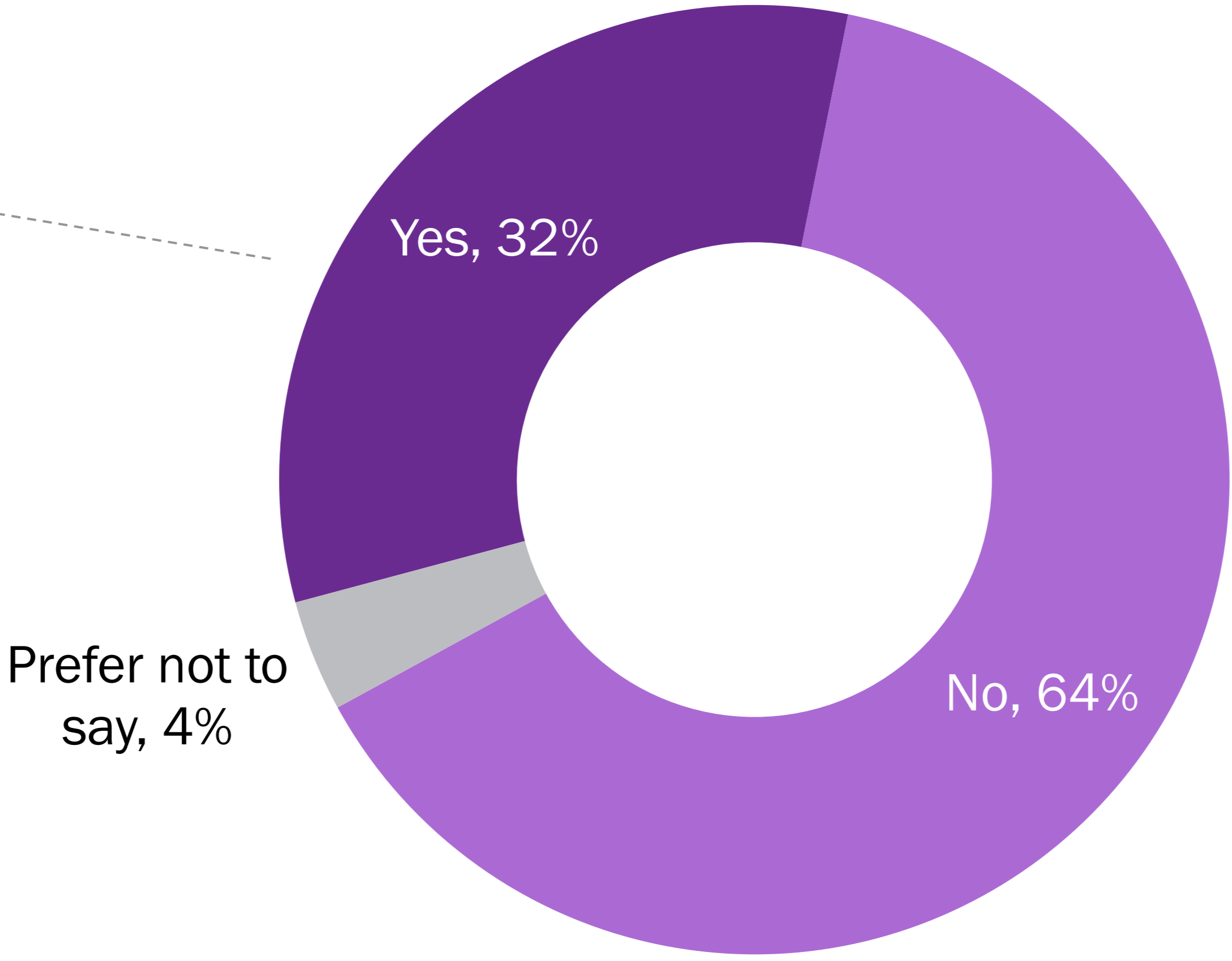
Respondents took an average of 70% of their vacation in 2025.

Over 1 in 4 who didn't take all their vacation had their request denied.

What is the main reason you have not taken all of your vacation?

Nearly a third of respondents have taken sick leave because they couldn't access vacation or other leaves.

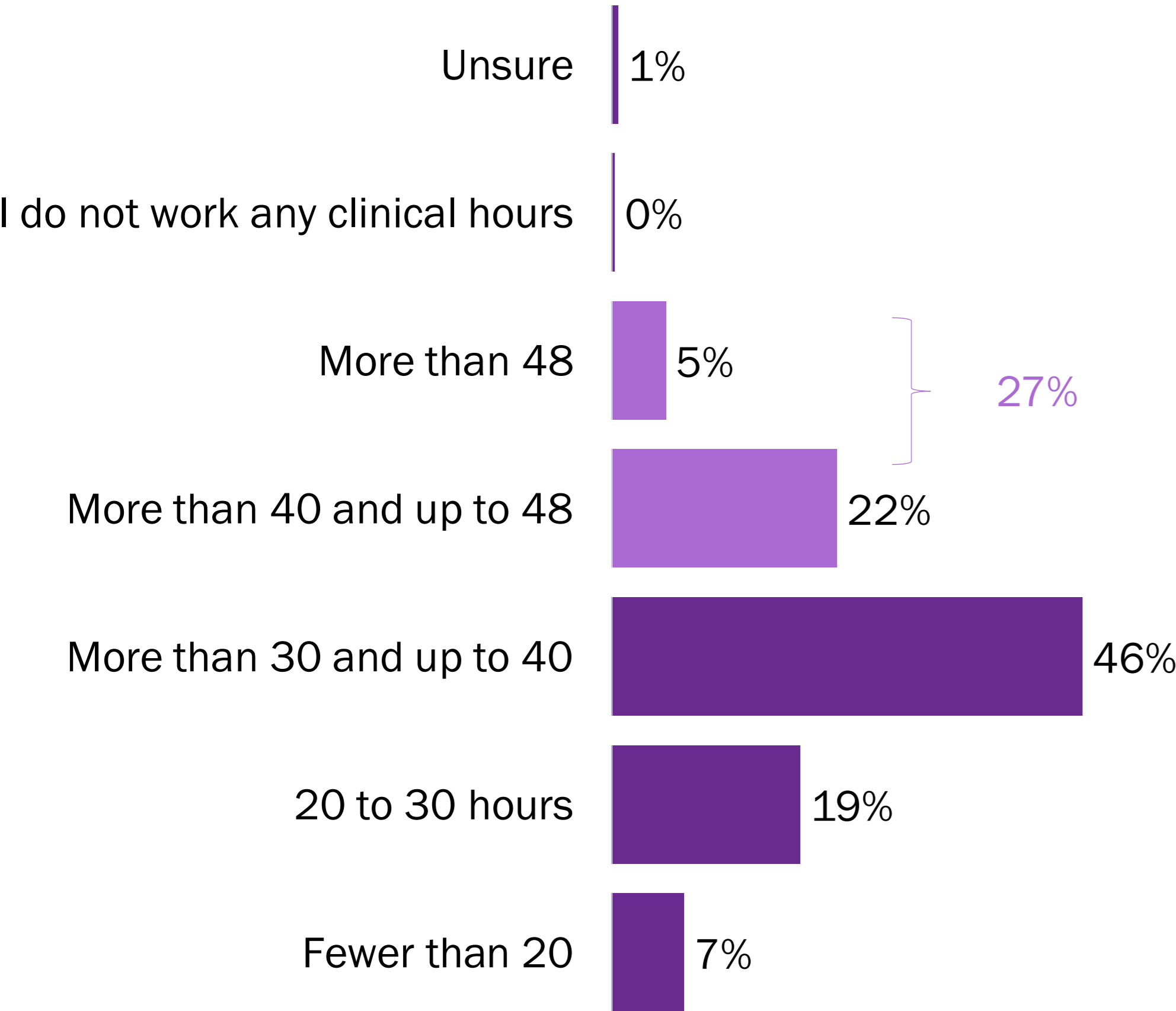
This has increased from 29% in 2025



Prefer not to say, 4%

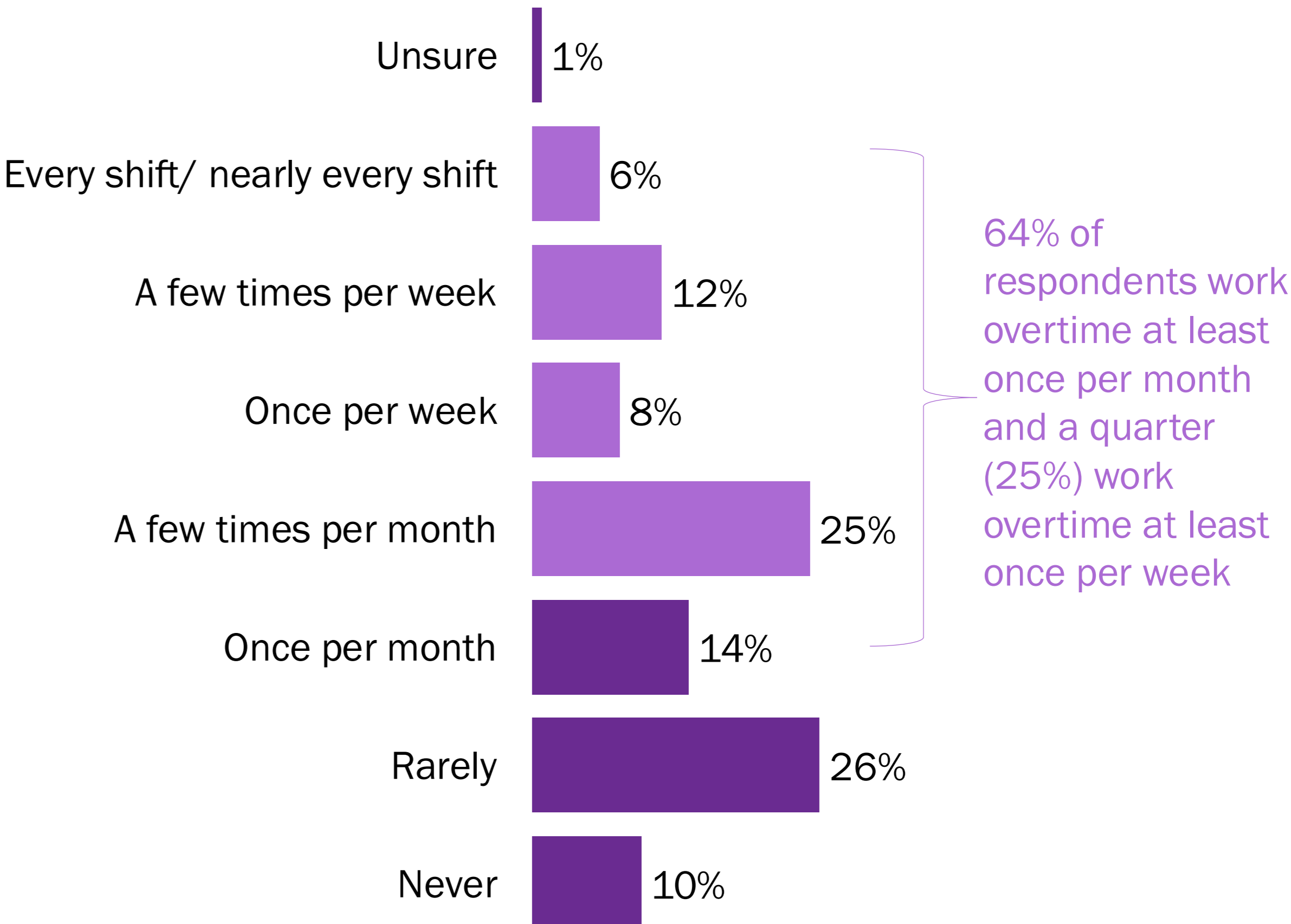
During the past year, have you taken sick leave because you were unable to access vacation or other leaves?

Over 1 in 4 respondents (27%) work more than 40 hours per week on average.



On average, how many hours do you usually work per week?

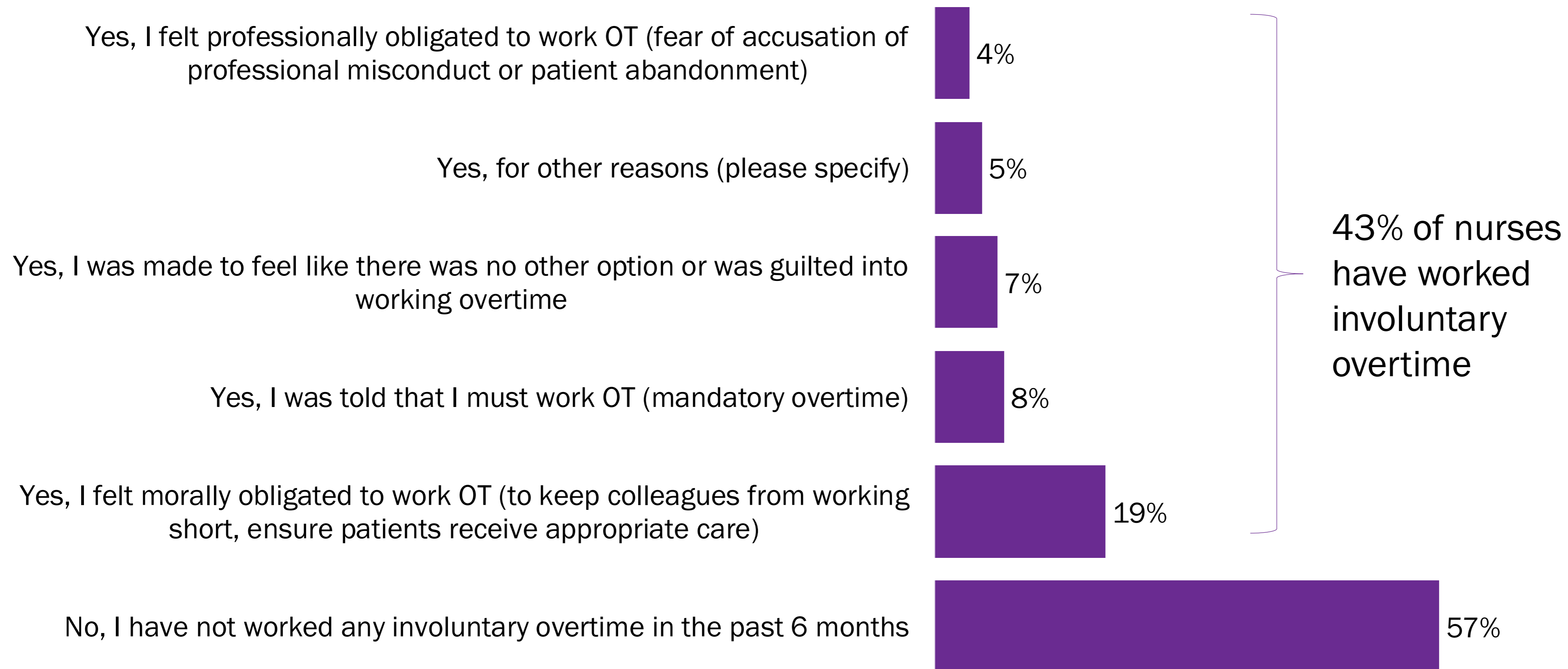
Nearly 2 in 3 (64%) respondents work overtime at least once per month.



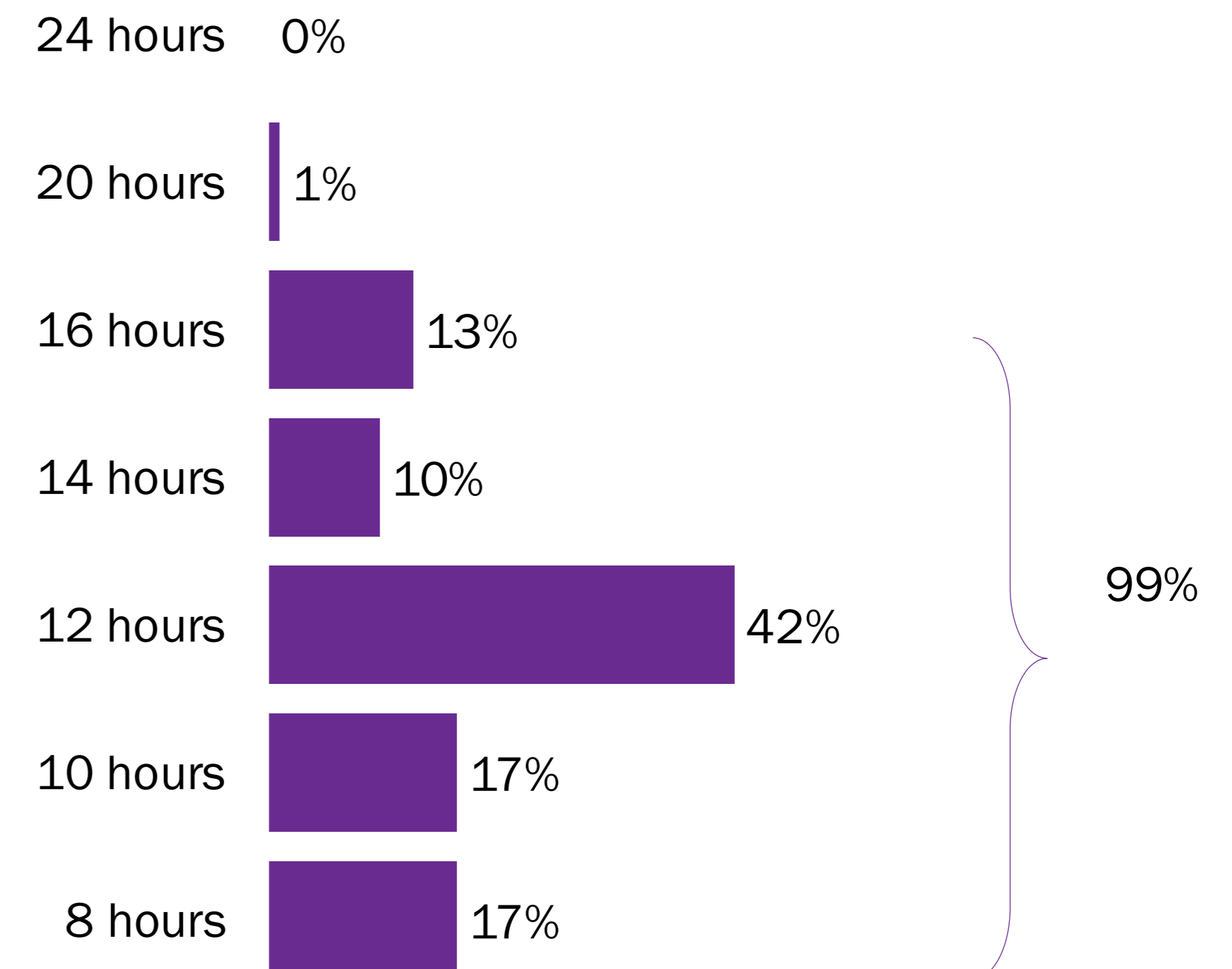
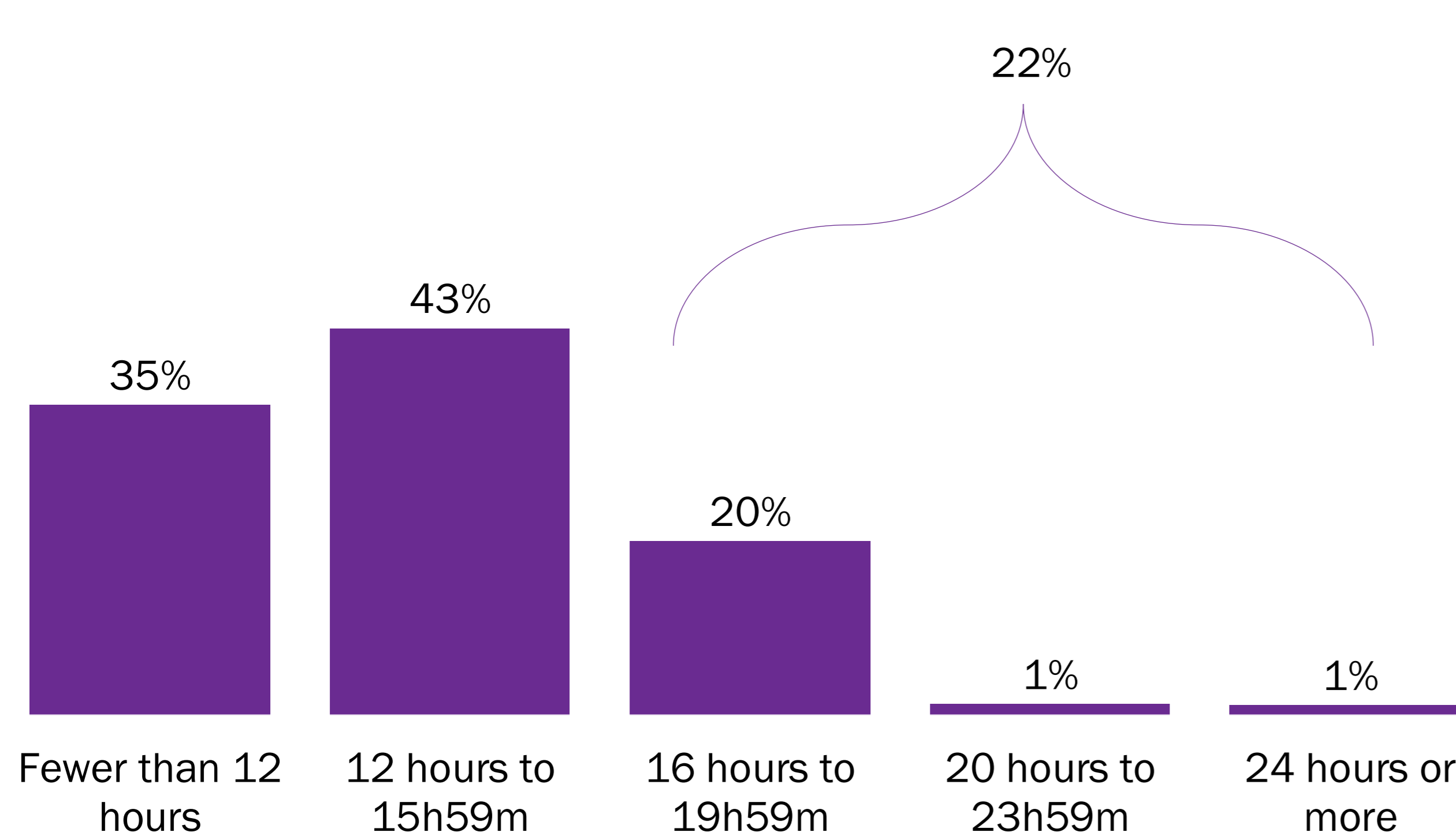
How often do you work overtime including paid and unpaid?

Of those who reported working overtime, over a third have worked involuntary overtime in the last six months.

Have you worked involuntary overtime in the last six months?



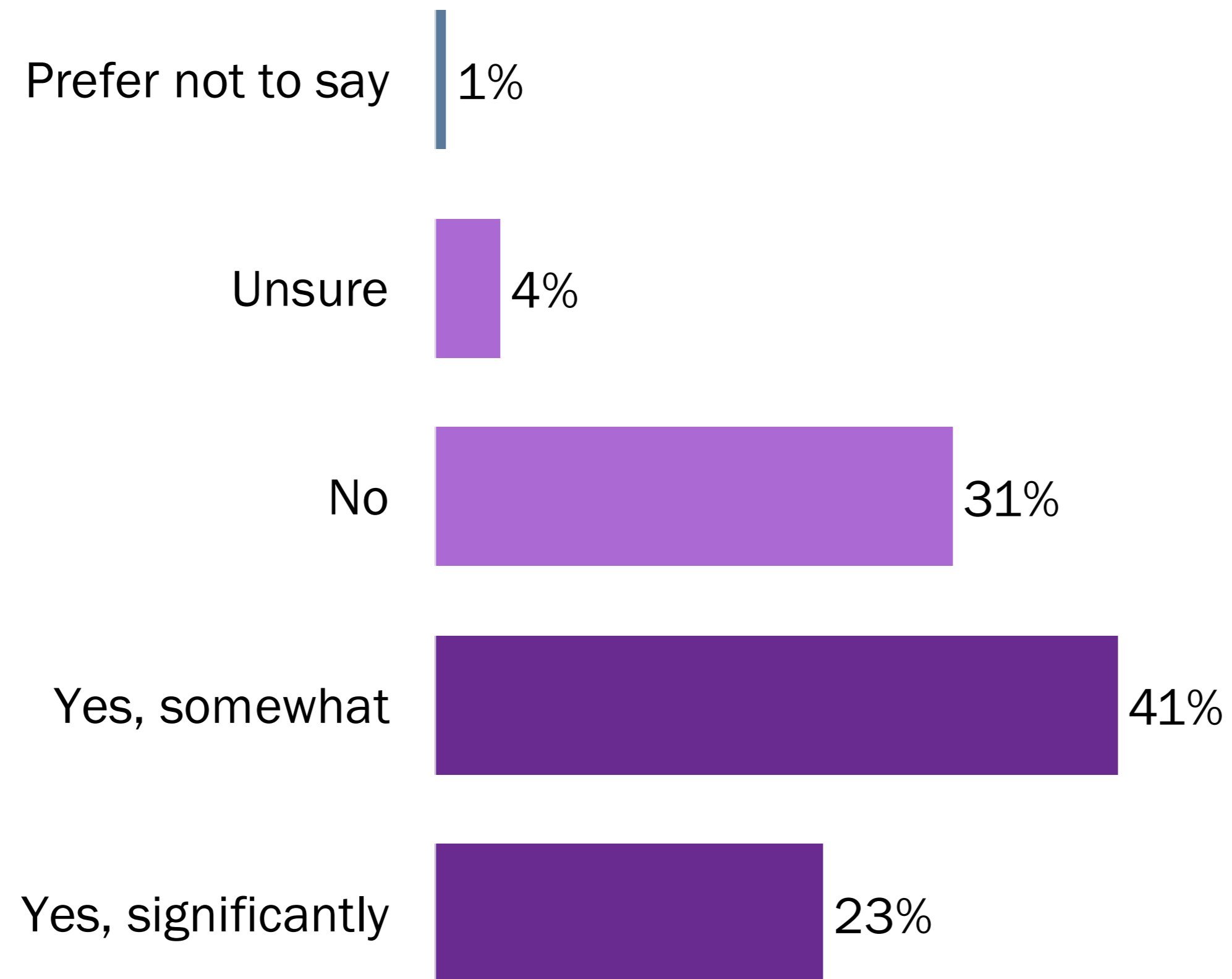
Nearly a quarter (22%) of nurses have worked shifts of 16 hours or more in the past 6 months. Nearly all nurses (99%) report feeling that patient and nurse safety is at risk due to fatigue-related errors after working 16 hours or more.



*In the past 6 months, what is the longest single shift you have worked?
All times below include breaks, mealtimes and report/handover.*

I begin to feel that my safety and/or my patient/client/resident's safety is at risk due to fatigue-related errors after working for longer than... All times include breaks and mealtimes.

Nearly two-thirds of respondents feel their relationships have been negatively impacted due to the hours they work.

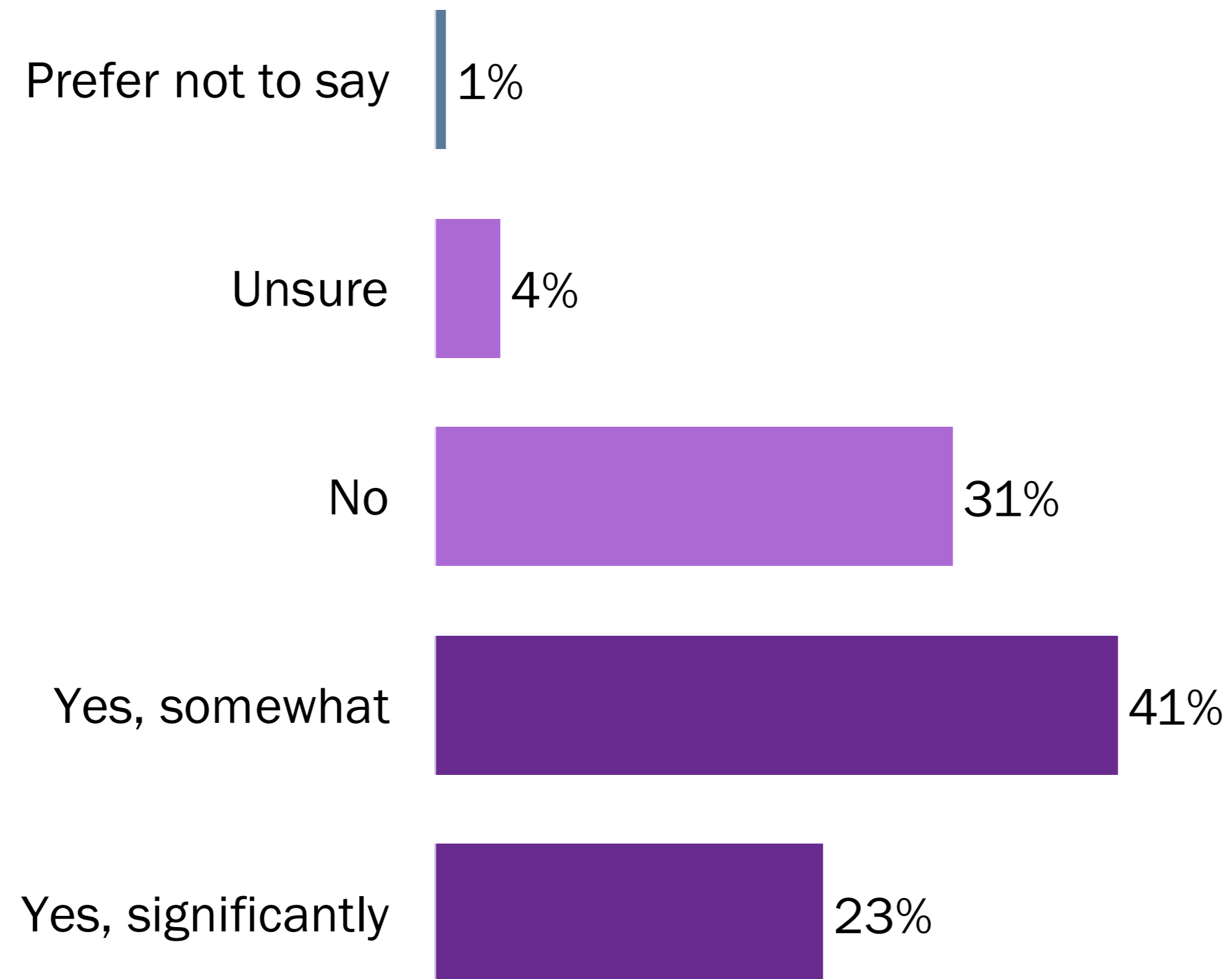


64% feel a negative impact on their relationships, up from 58% in 2025.

Nurses working in remote settings are nearly twice as likely to say their relationships have been significantly impacted (38% vs. 22% for those working in urban settings).

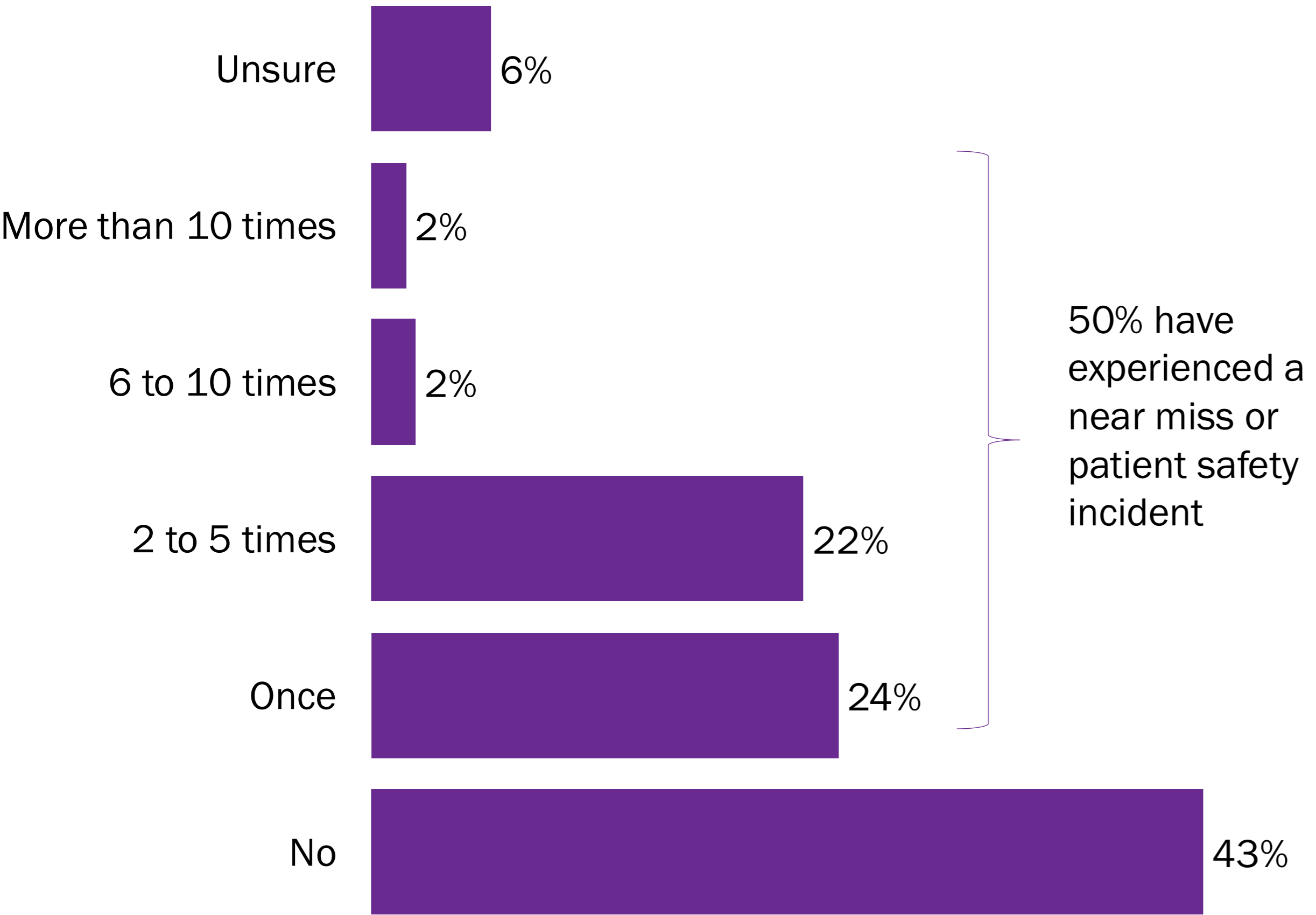
Based on the number of hours you work, do you feel that your relationships with family and/or friends have been negatively impacted?

The more hours nurses work, the more likely they are to report negative impacts on their personal relationships.

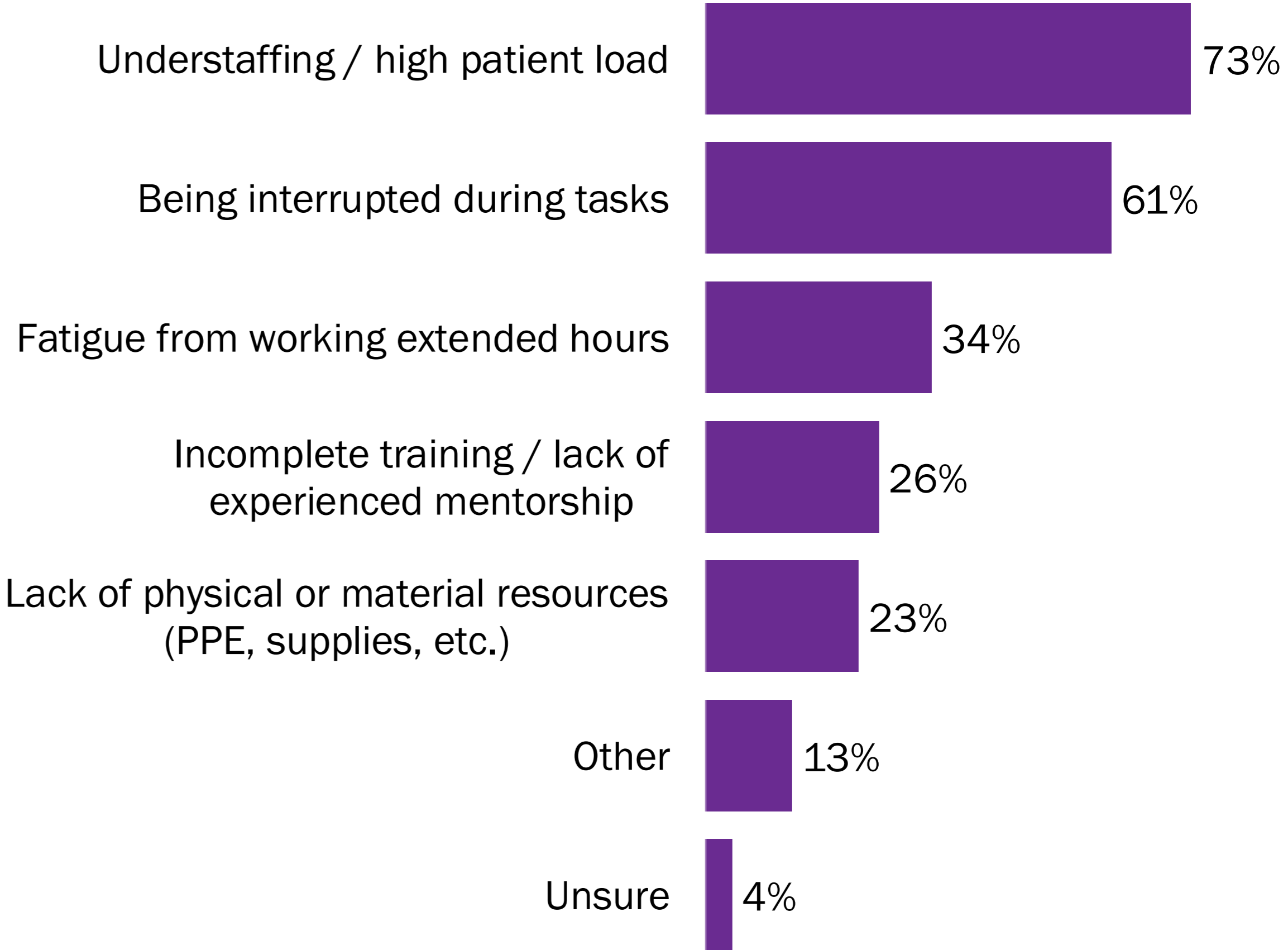


Based on the number of hours you work, do you feel that your relationships with family and/or friends have been negatively impacted?

Half of respondents have experienced a near miss or patient safety incident in the past six months. Nearly 3 in 4 of them say that understaffing or high patient load were contributing factors.



In the past six months, have you experienced a near miss or patient safety incident?



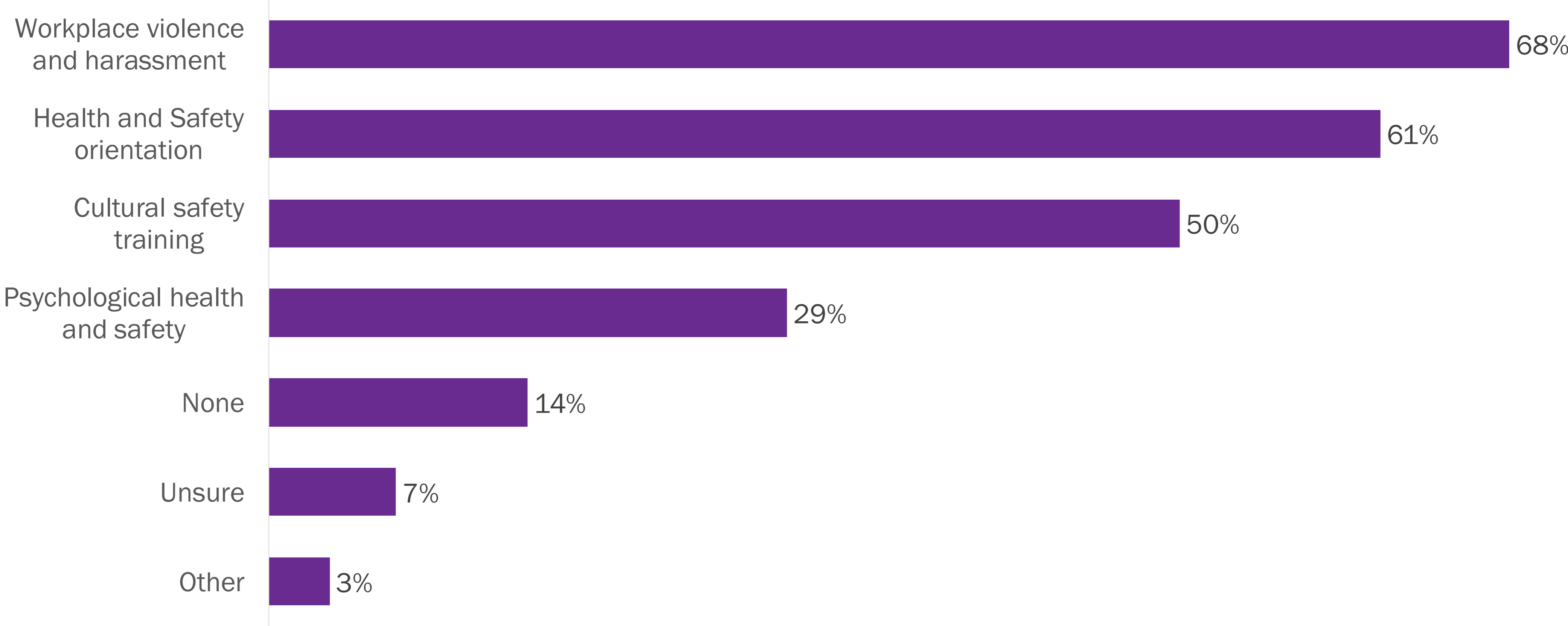
What factors contributed to the near miss(es) or patient safety incident(s)? Select all that apply.

Findings

Health, Safety & Discrimination

A healthcare worker in blue scrubs and a light blue surgical mask is holding a tablet. Another person's face, also wearing a mask, is partially visible in the background.

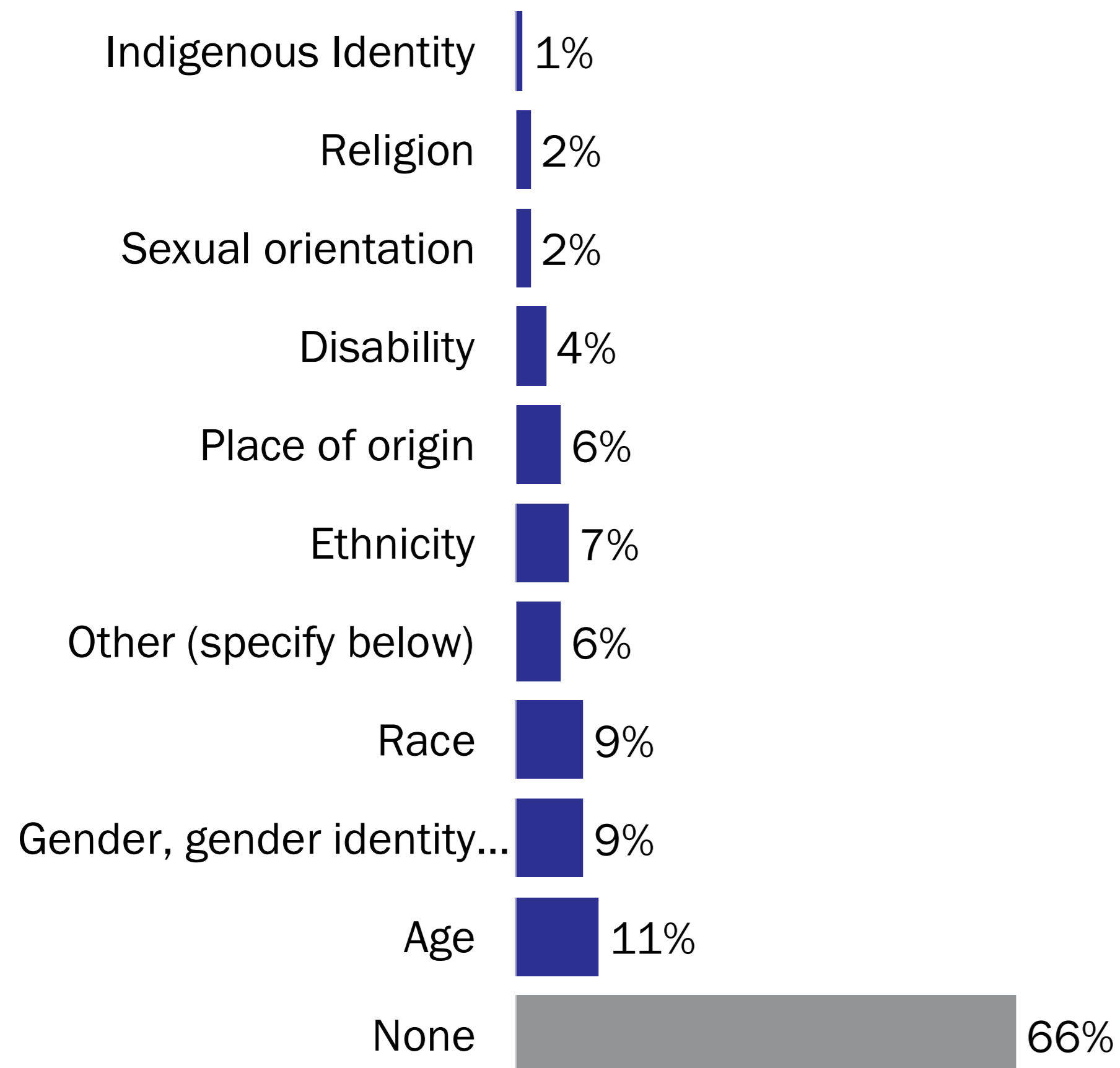
Nearly 1 in 3 respondents aren't receiving workplace violence and harassment training. Only a quarter are receiving psychological health and safety training.



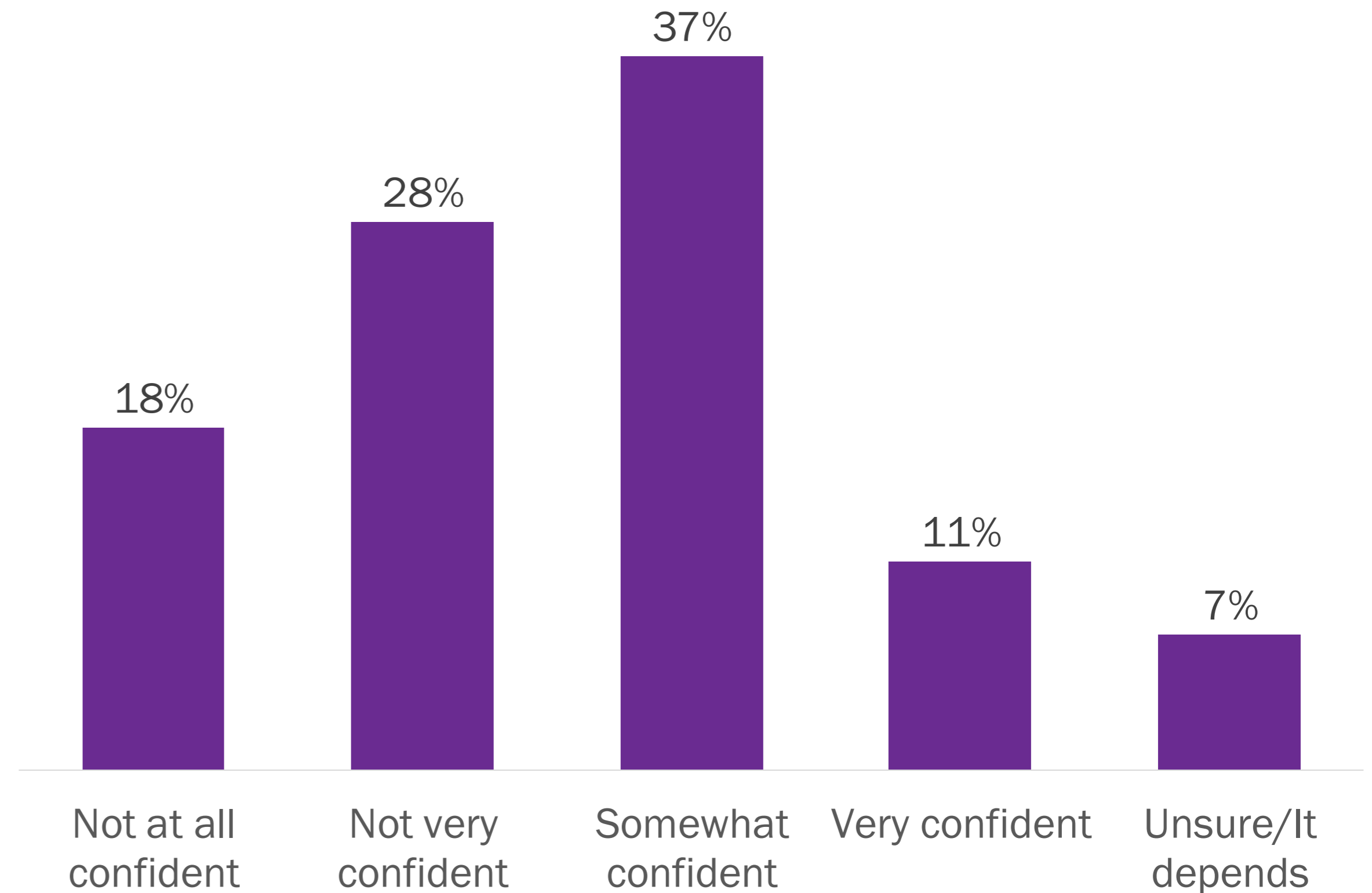
What kind of training on occupational health and safety do you receive from your employer?

A third report facing discrimination at work. Less than half have confidence in their employer's ability to resolve issues of workplace discrimination.

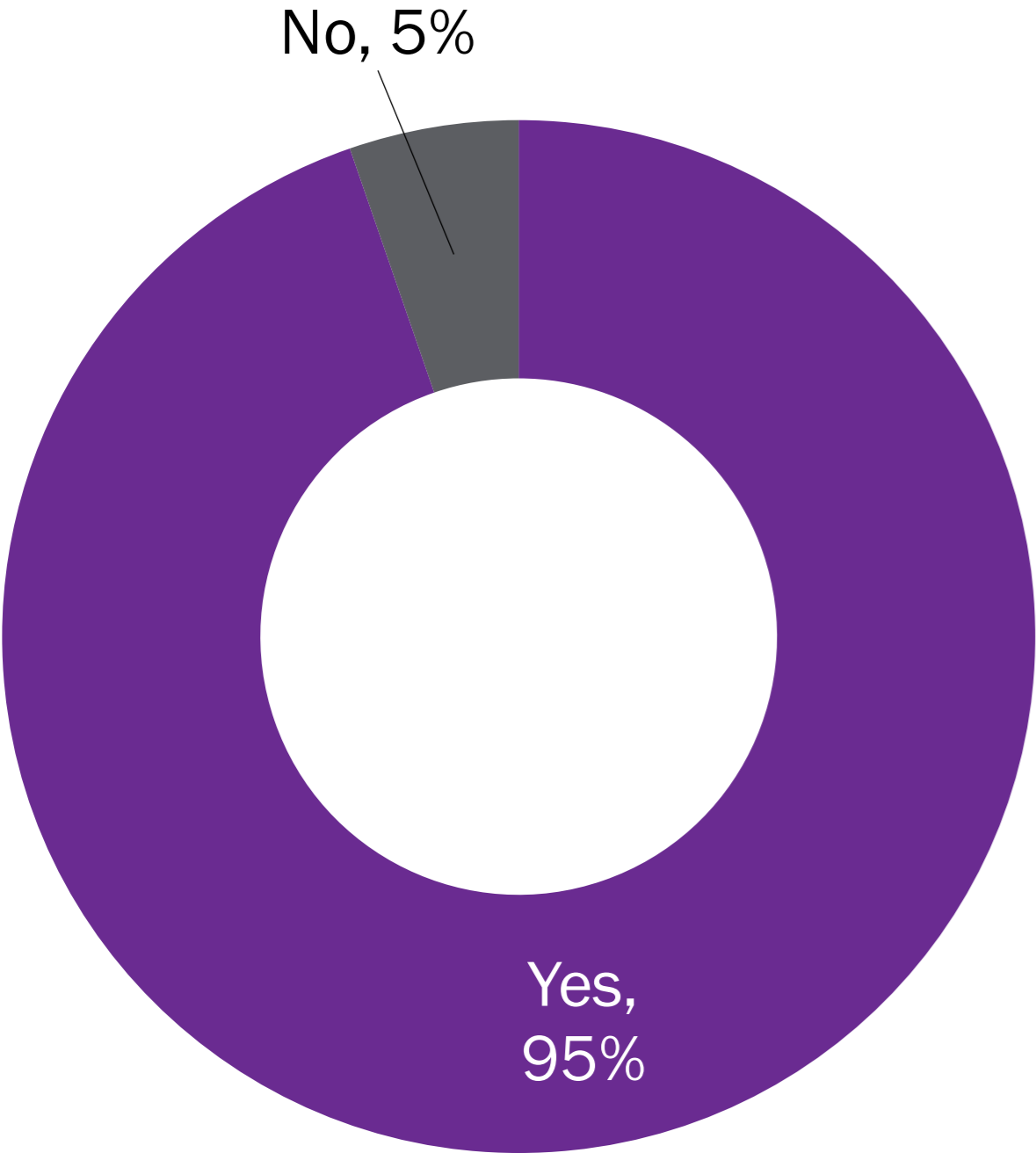
In the past year, have you experienced discrimination at work based on any of the following? Select all that apply.



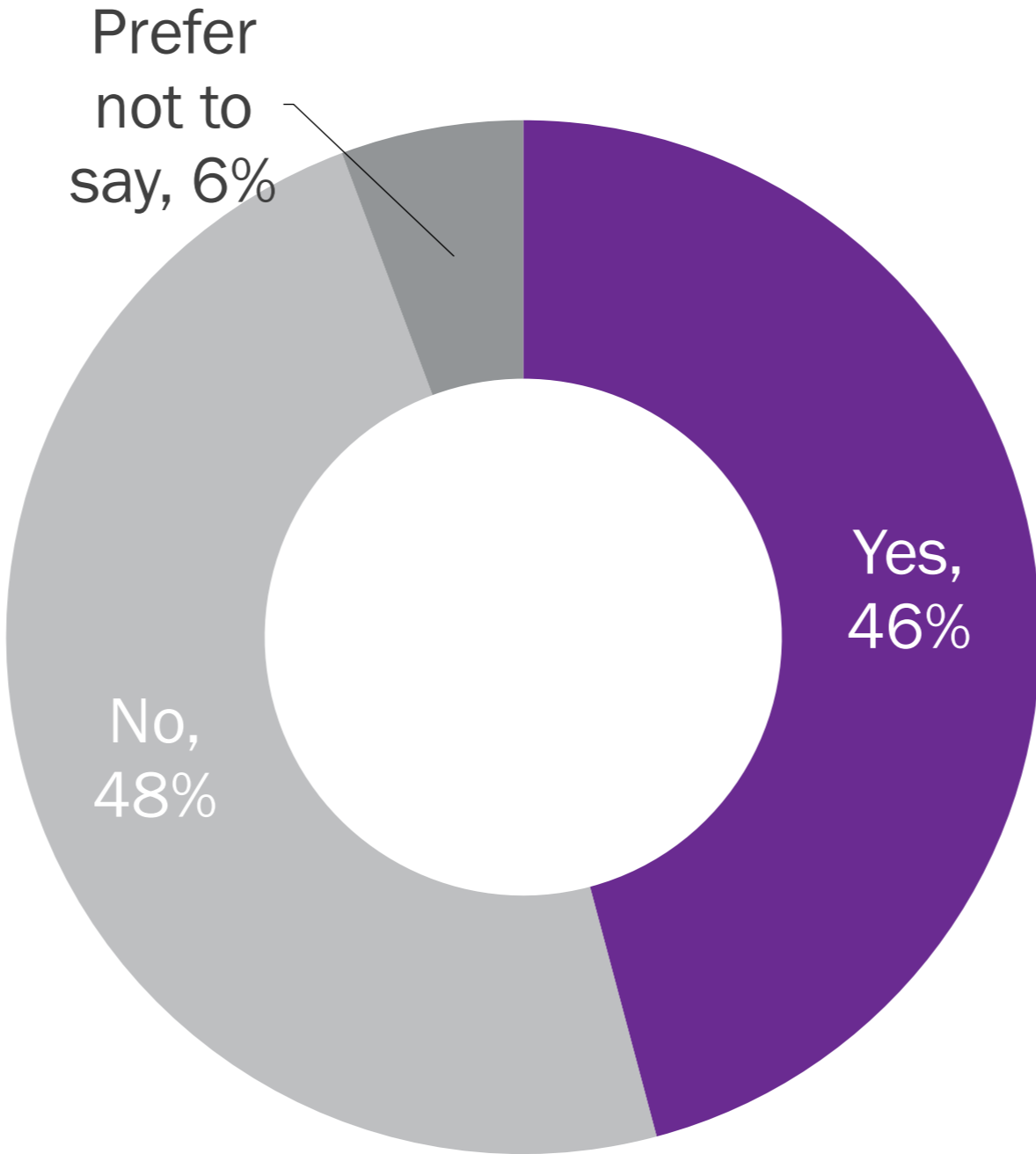
Do you feel confident in your employer's ability to resolve issues of workplace discrimination?



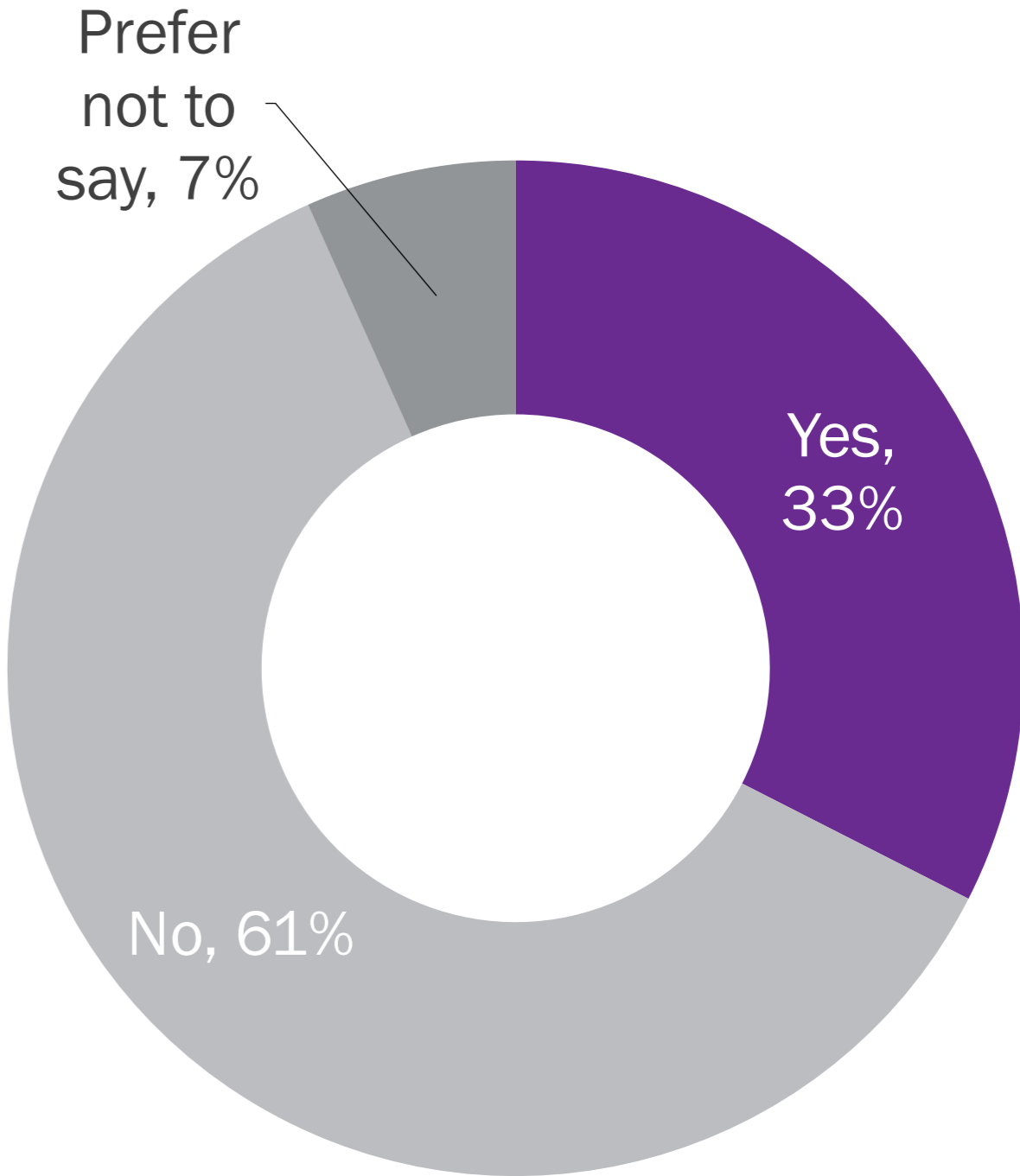
Nearly all nurses report experiencing violence or harassment in the past year. Despite this, only 46% say they reported these incidents. This may be in part due to the fact that 1 in 3 nurses fear repercussions for reporting work-related violence or harassment.



% of respondents who indicated experiencing at least one type of violence or harassment in the past year

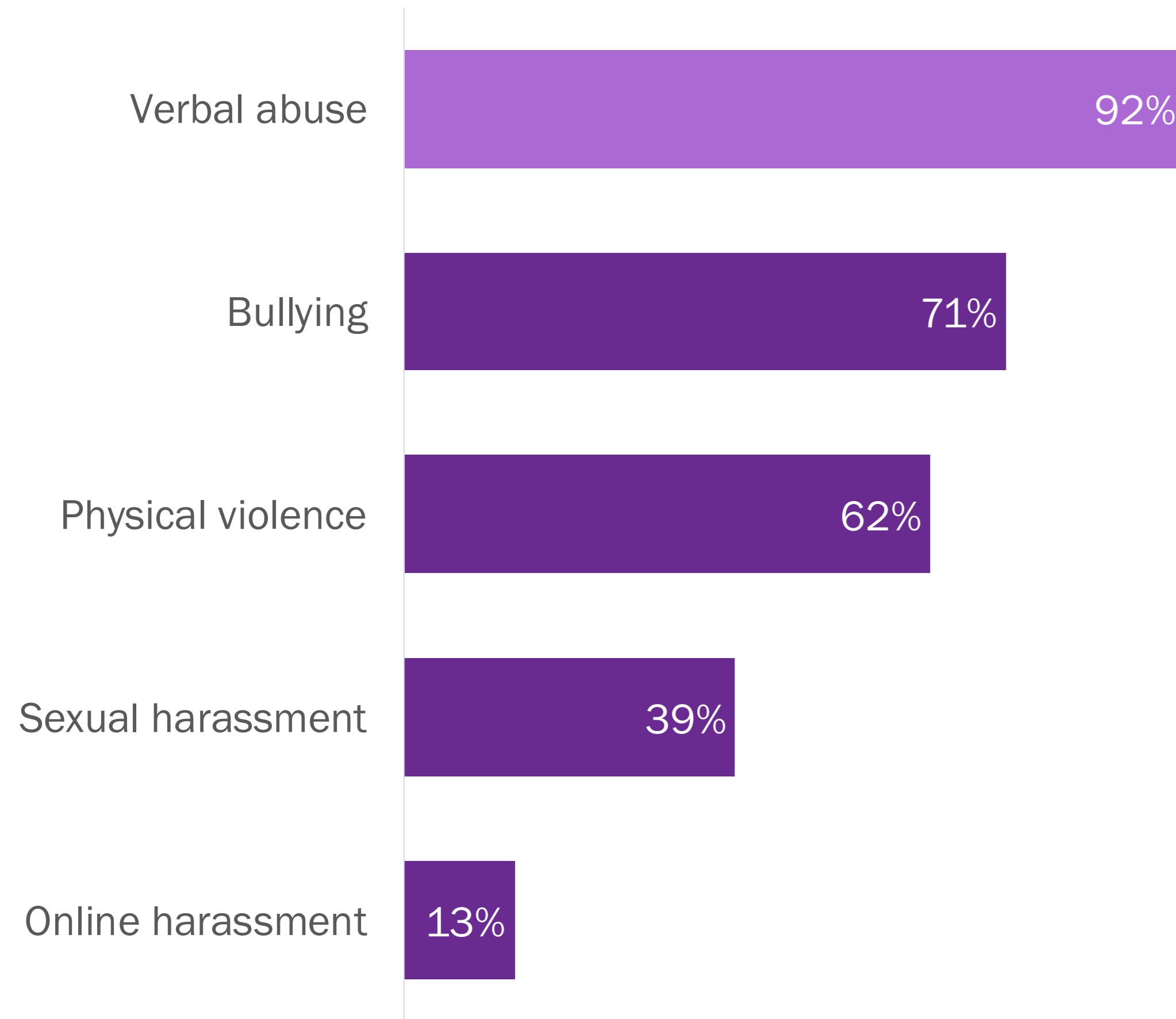


Did you report experiencing violence or harassment in the past year? (Base: 2,865, only those who indicated experiencing at least one form of violence)



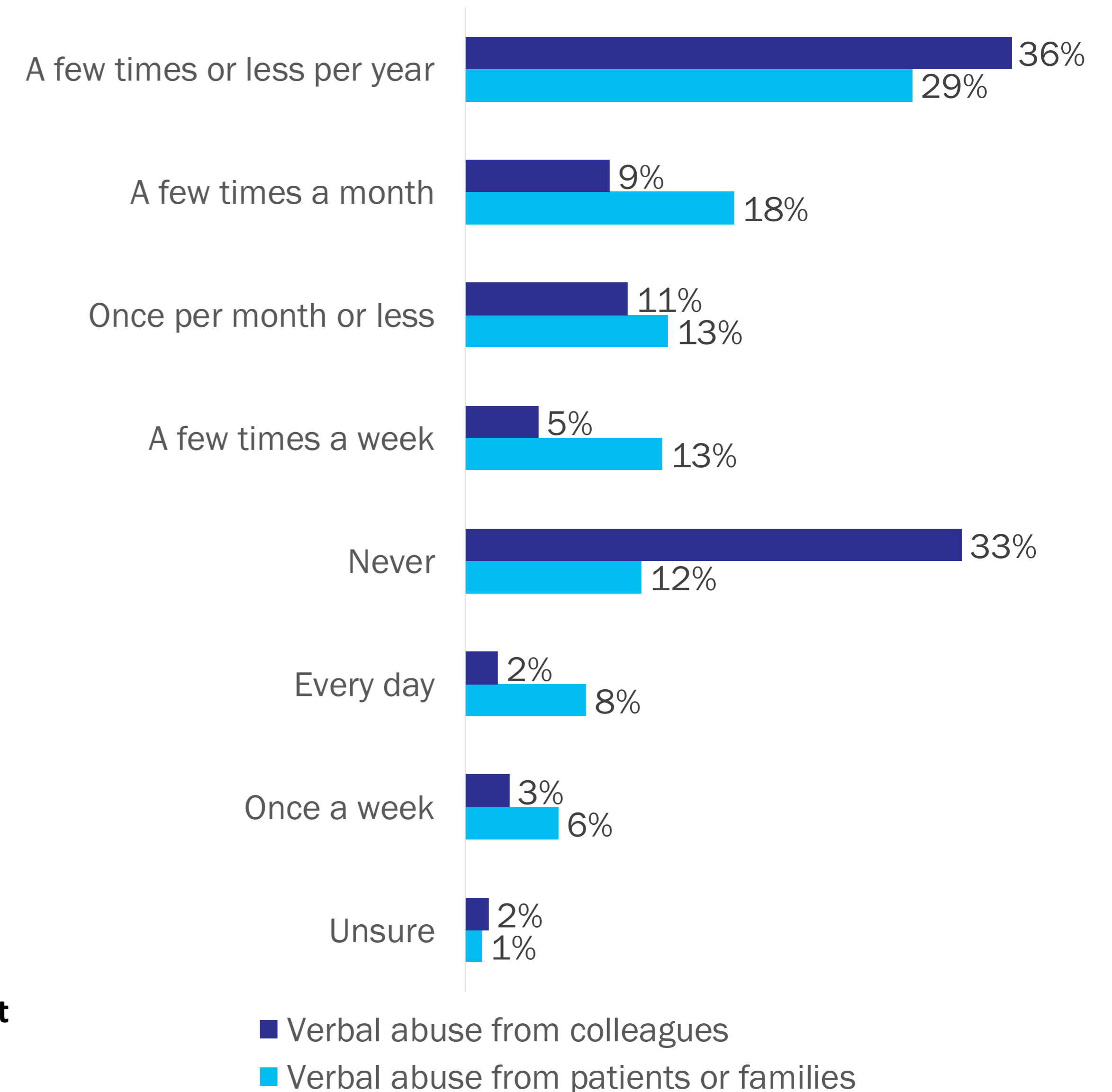
Do you fear repercussions if you report work-related violence or abuse?

Experiences of verbal abuse are near-universal among respondents.



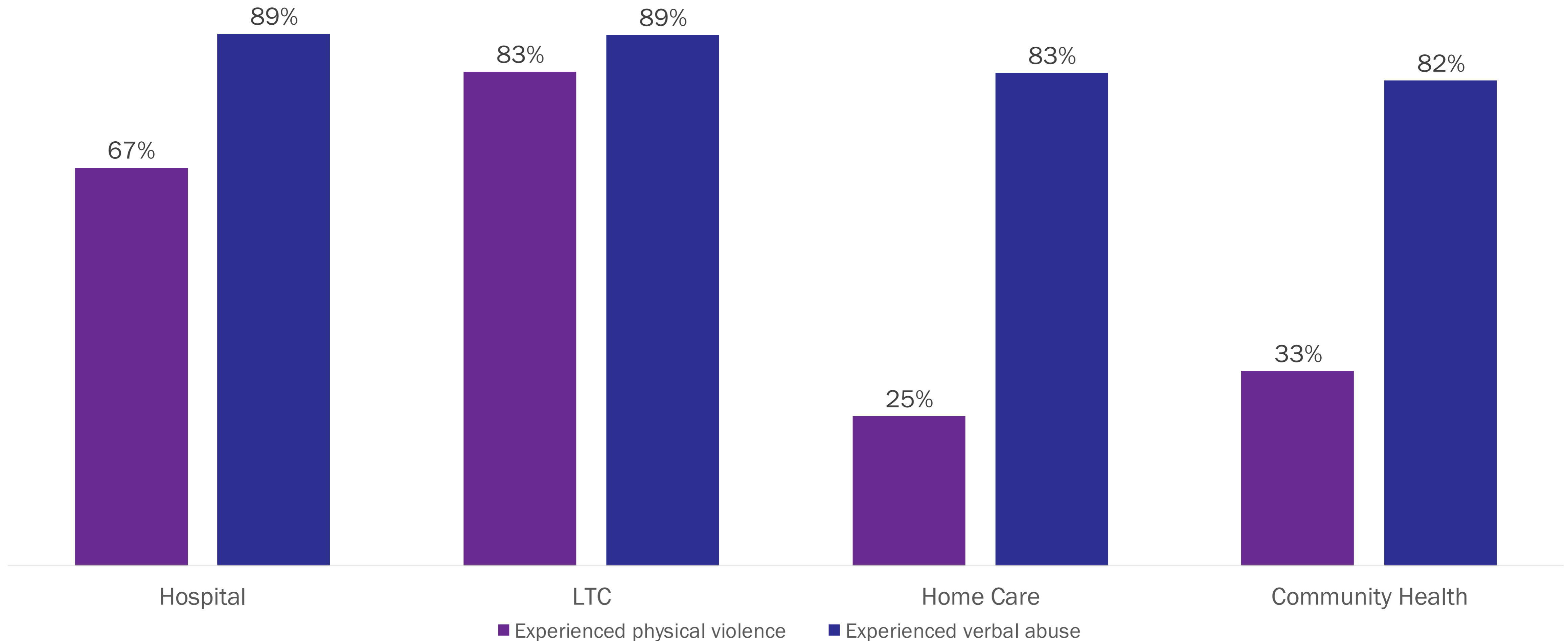
Thinking back over the past year, please indicate how often you have personally experienced any of the following acts of violence or harassment at work. (% who selected anything more than "never").

Verbal abuse from patients or families is especially common, with only 12% never experiencing this.

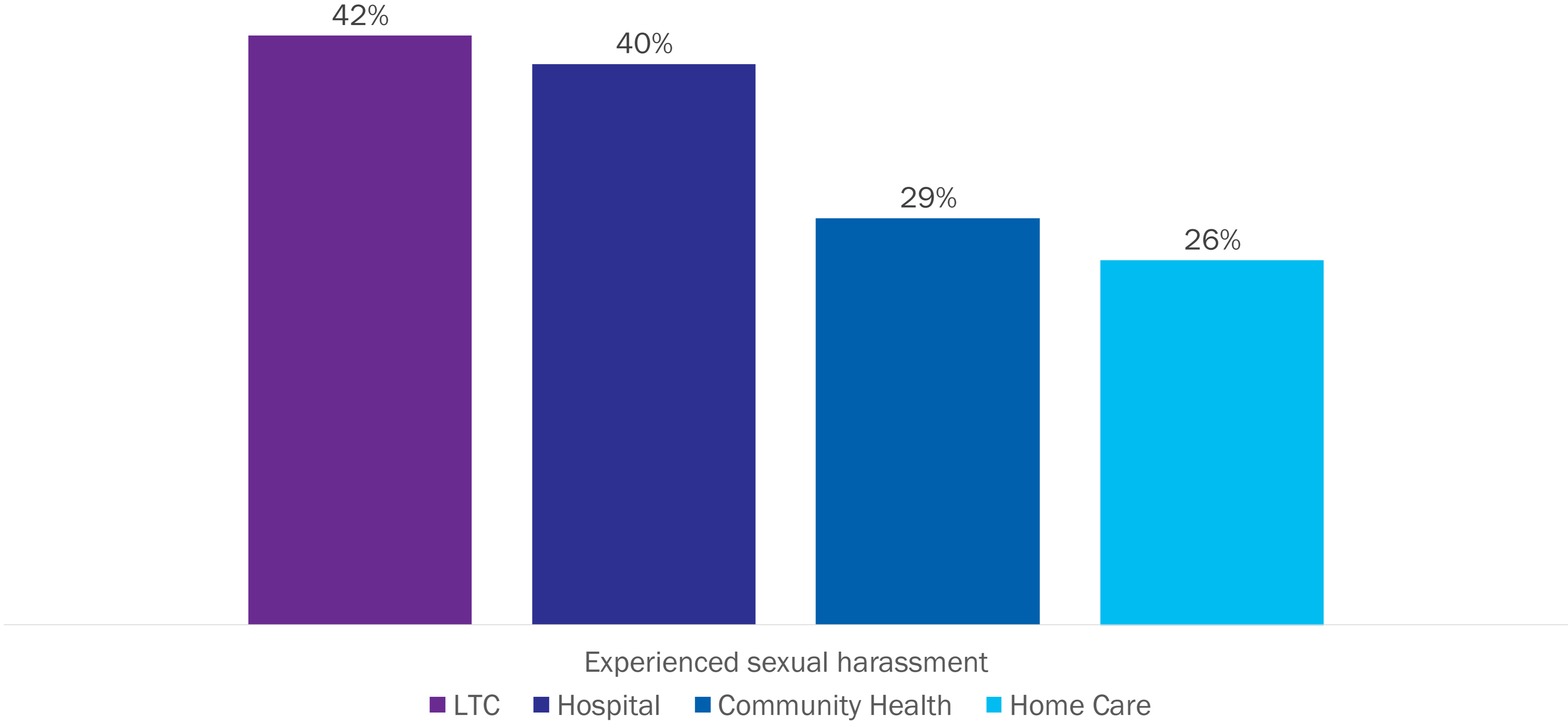


■ Verbal abuse from colleagues
■ Verbal abuse from patients or families

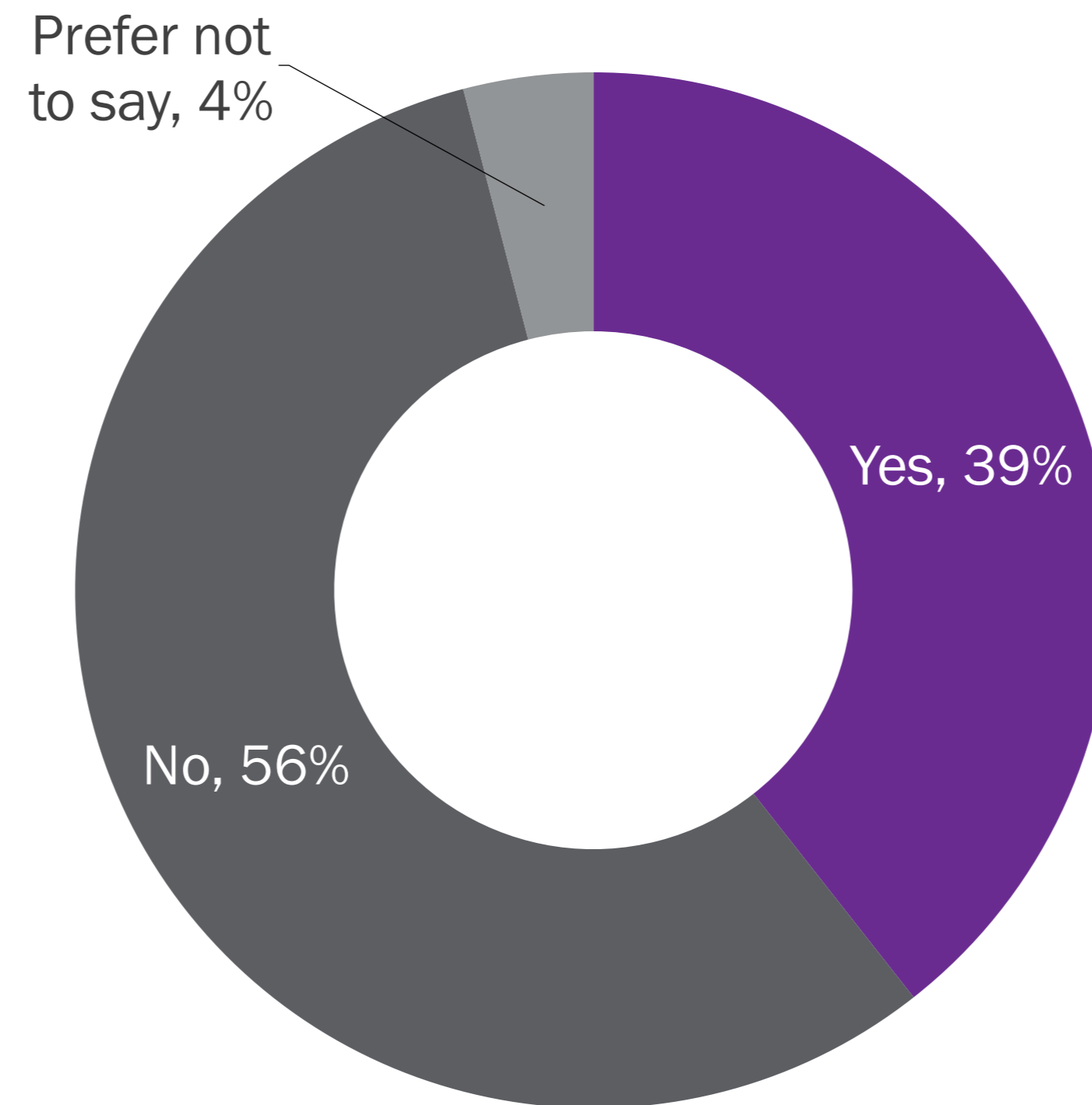
Experiences of physical violence vary enormously by setting. LTC nurses have by far the highest exposure at 83%. Verbal abuse is near-universal across sectors.



Experiences of sexual harassment shows meaningful sector variation, where hospitals (40%) and LTC (42%) are highest, while community health and home care are lower.

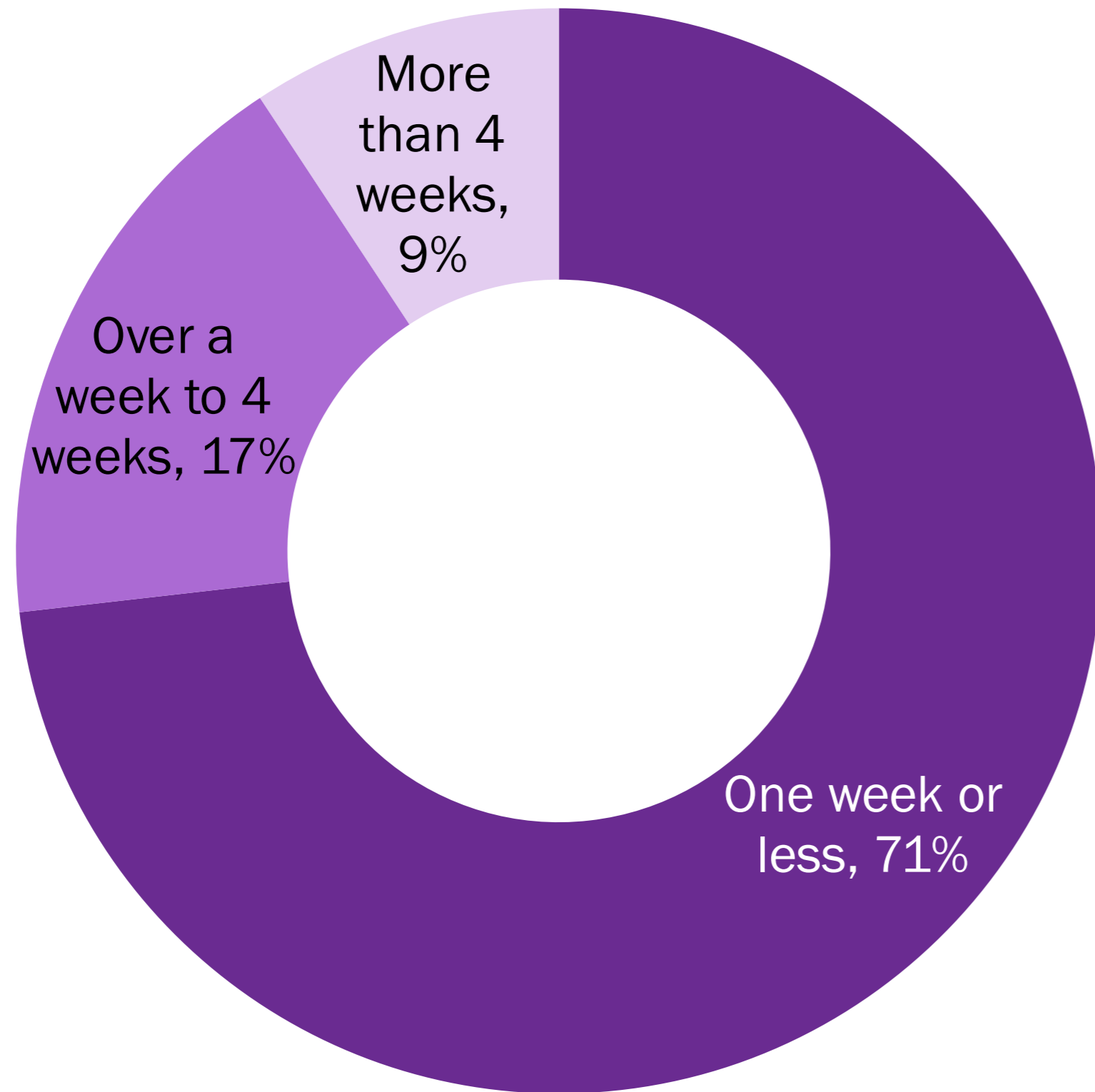


39% of respondents fear repercussions for reporting OH&S concerns.



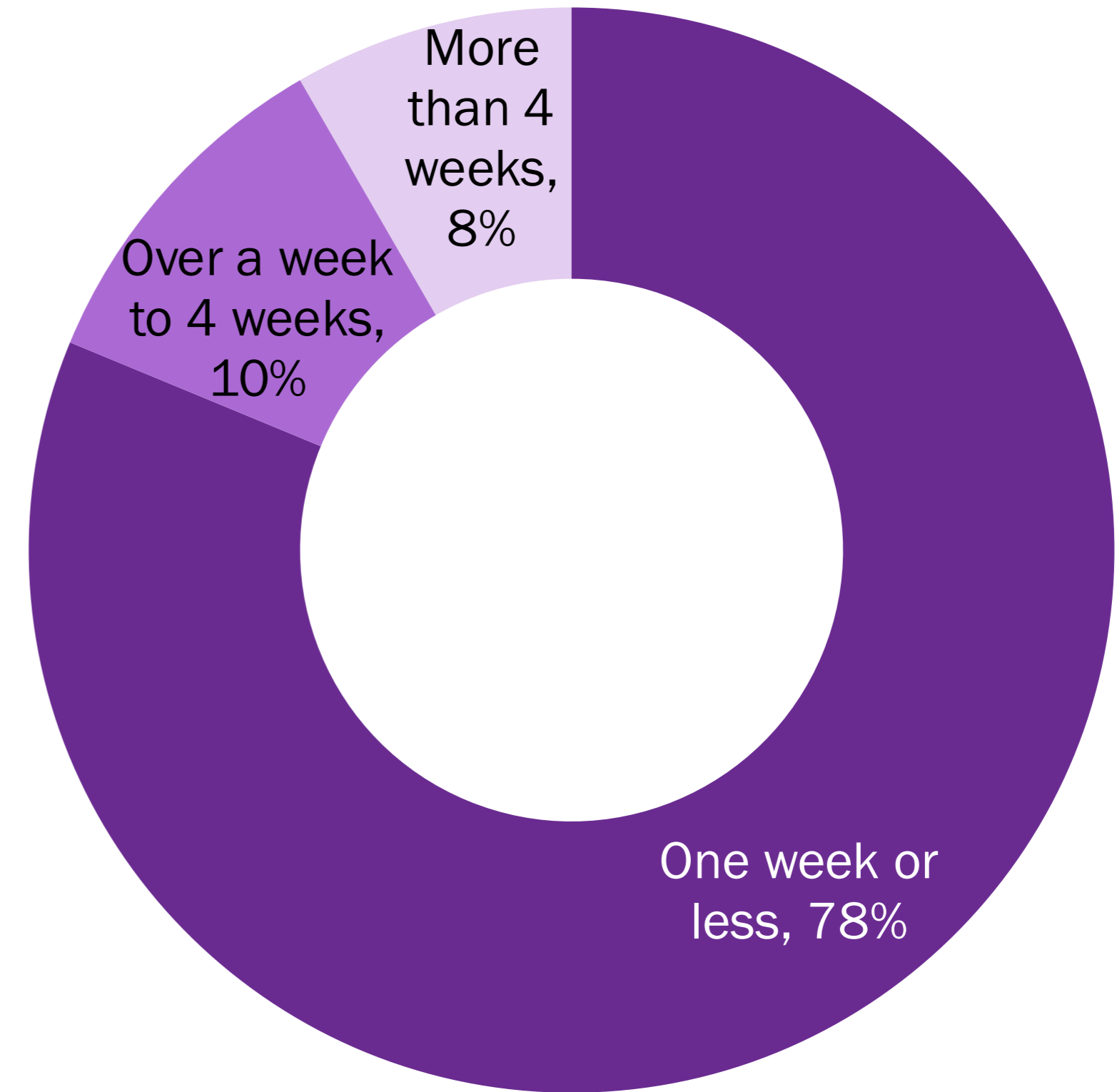
Do you fear repercussions if you report workplace occupational health and safety concerns (for example, unsafe work conditions, incidents, inadequate resources to maintain personal safety, etc.?)

26% of respondents were unable to work for more than one week in the past year due to physical health issues.



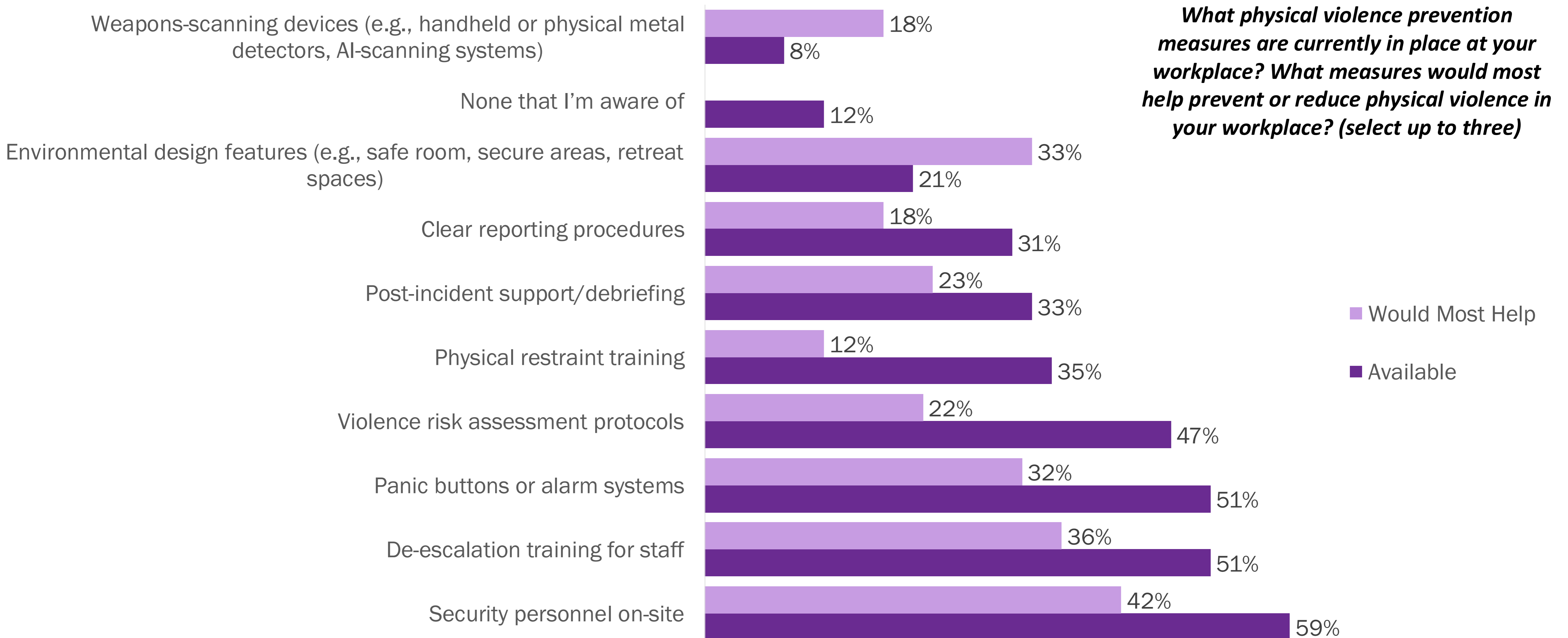
In the past year, approximately how often were you unable to work due to a physical health issue?

18% of respondents were unable to work for more than one week in the past year due to mental health issues.



In the past year, approximately how often were you unable to work due to a mental health issue?

Respondents express support for – and identify the availability in their workplace of – a wide variety of workplace violence prevention measures.

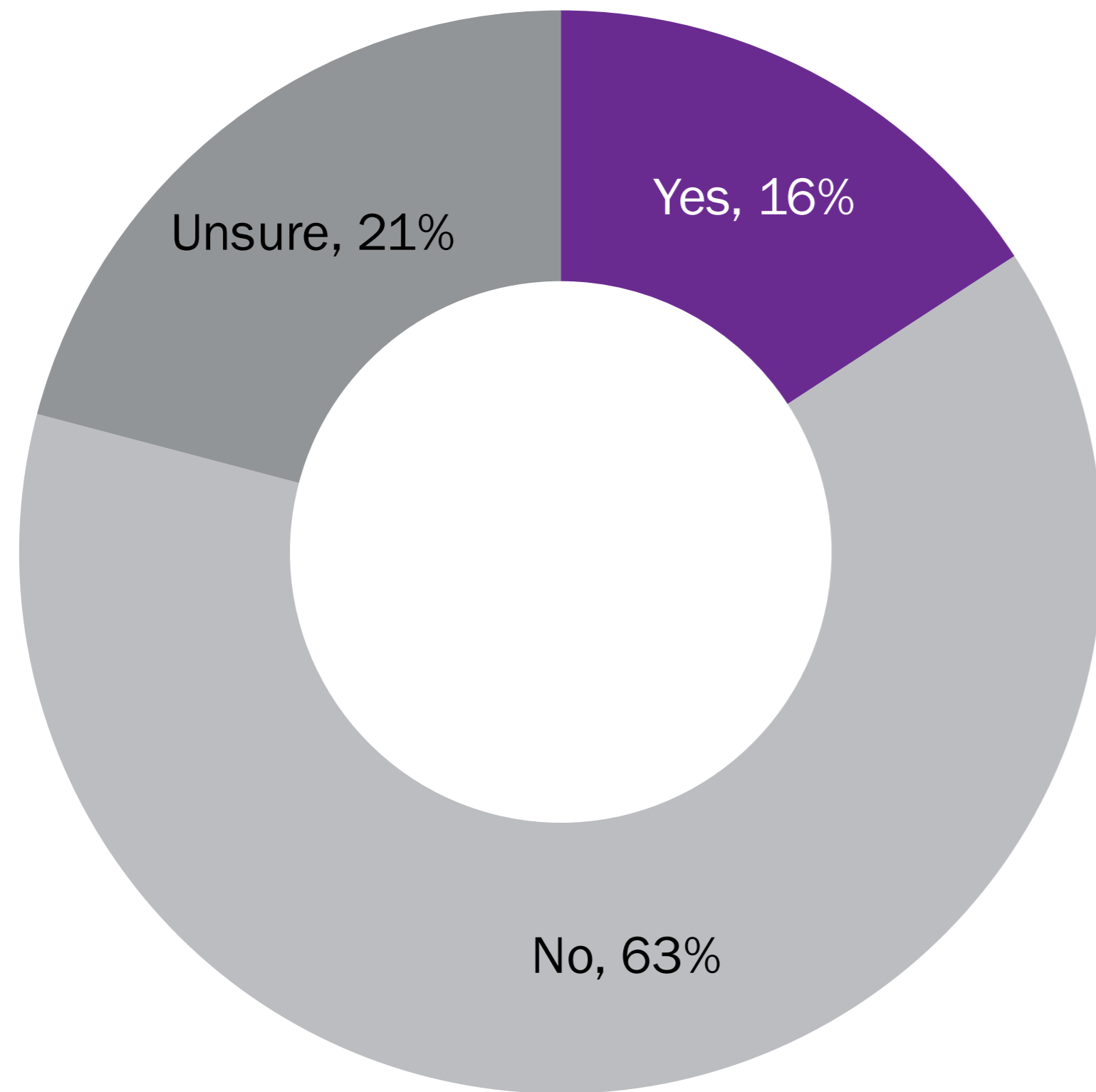


Findings

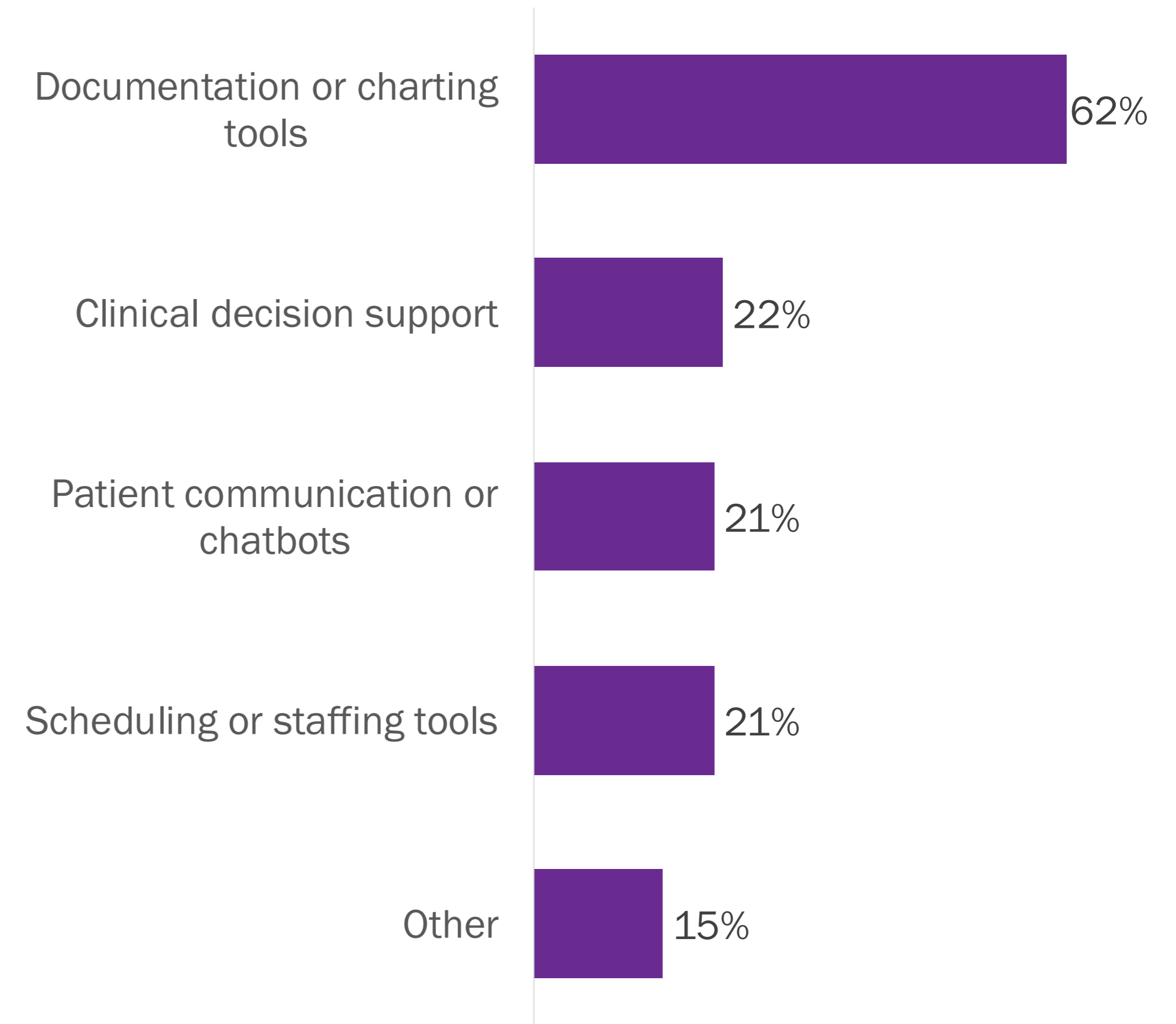
Artificial Intelligence in Practice



A small proportion of respondents report that AI tools and processes have been introduced into their nursing practice. For those who have, documentation or charting tools are the most commonly reported.

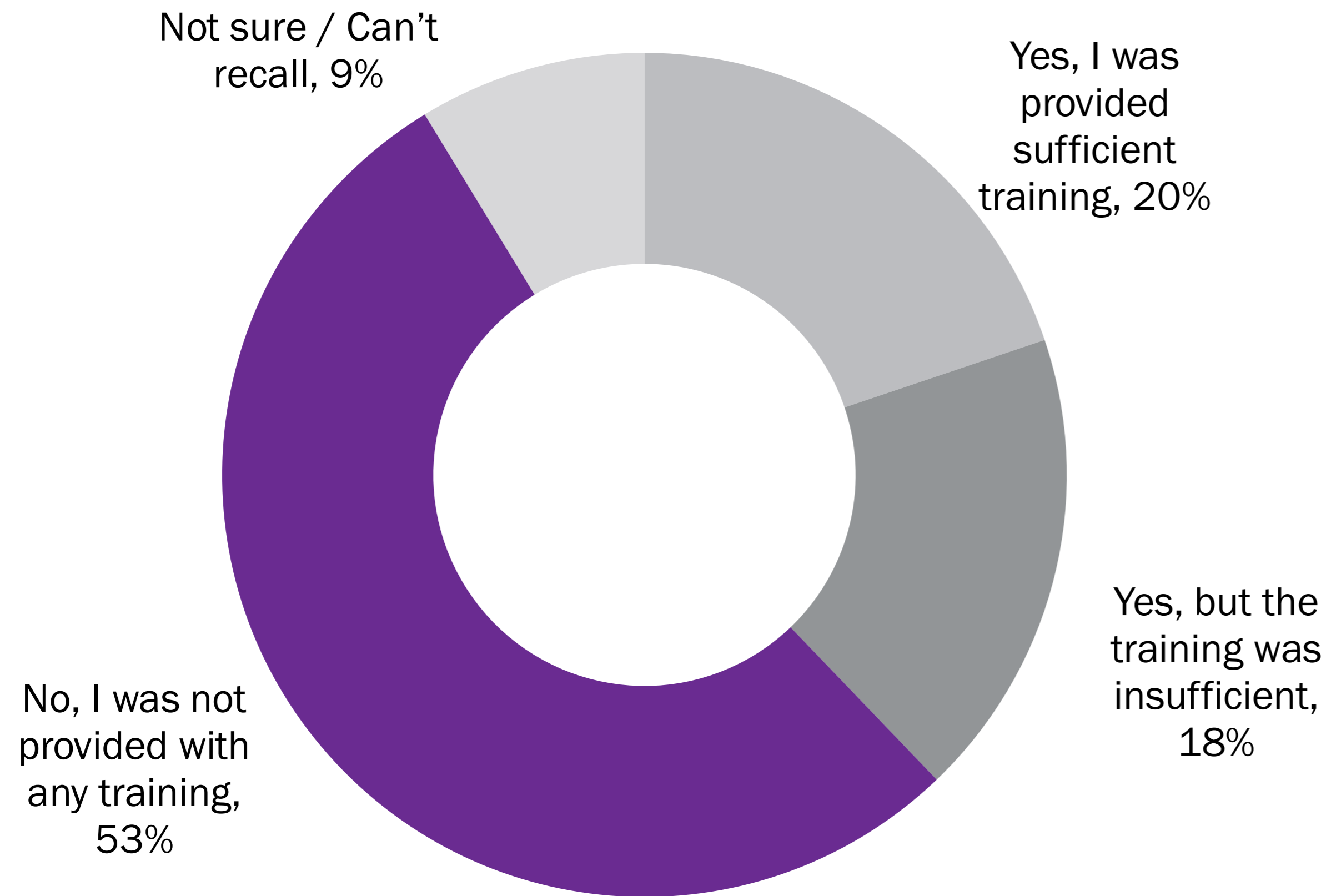


Has your employer introduced AI tools or processes into your nursing practice?

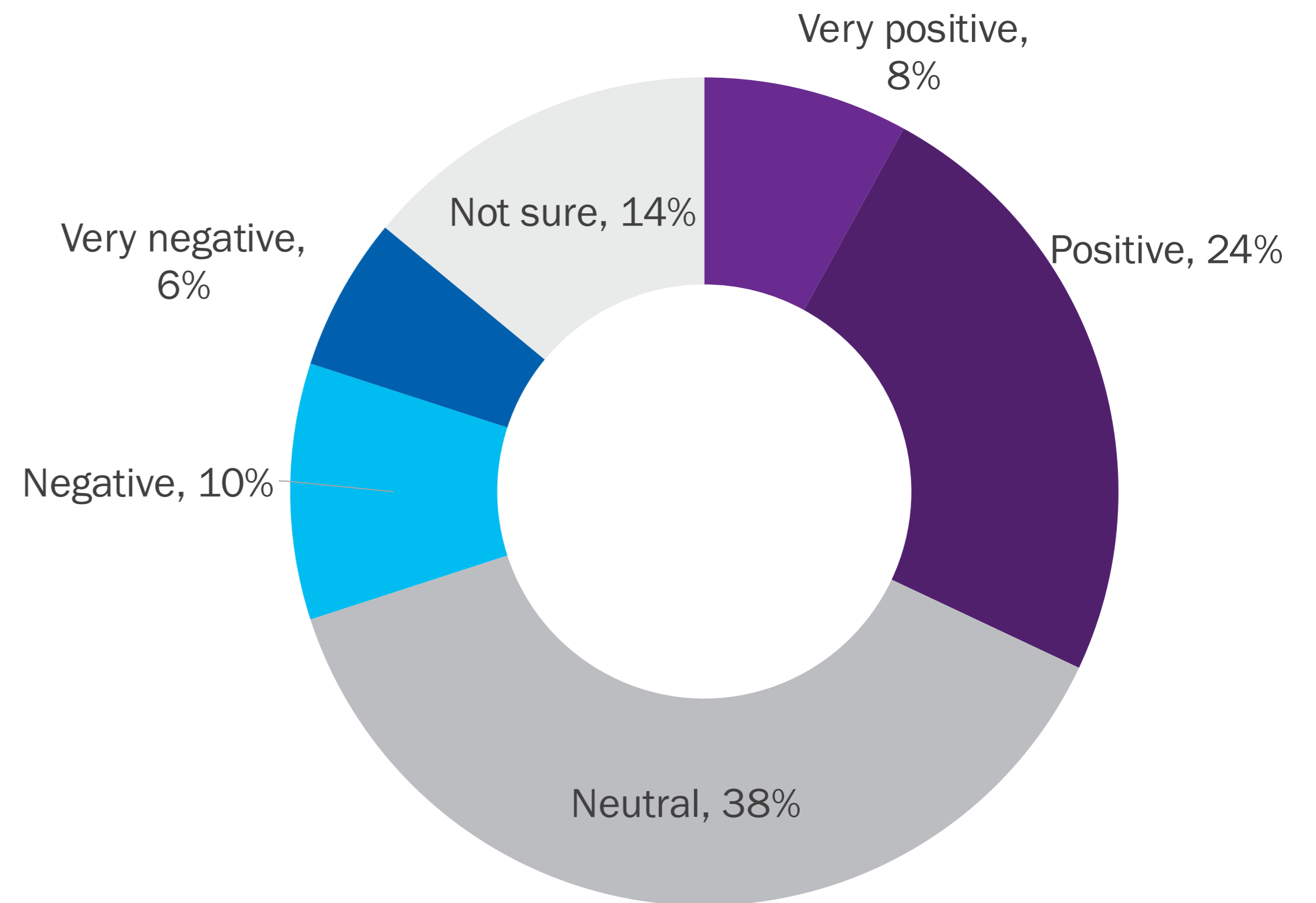


Which AI tools or processes have been introduced into your practice? (Base: 755)

More than half of nurses who report AI tools or processes in their workplace did not receive any training. Overall impressions of these technologies are mixed.

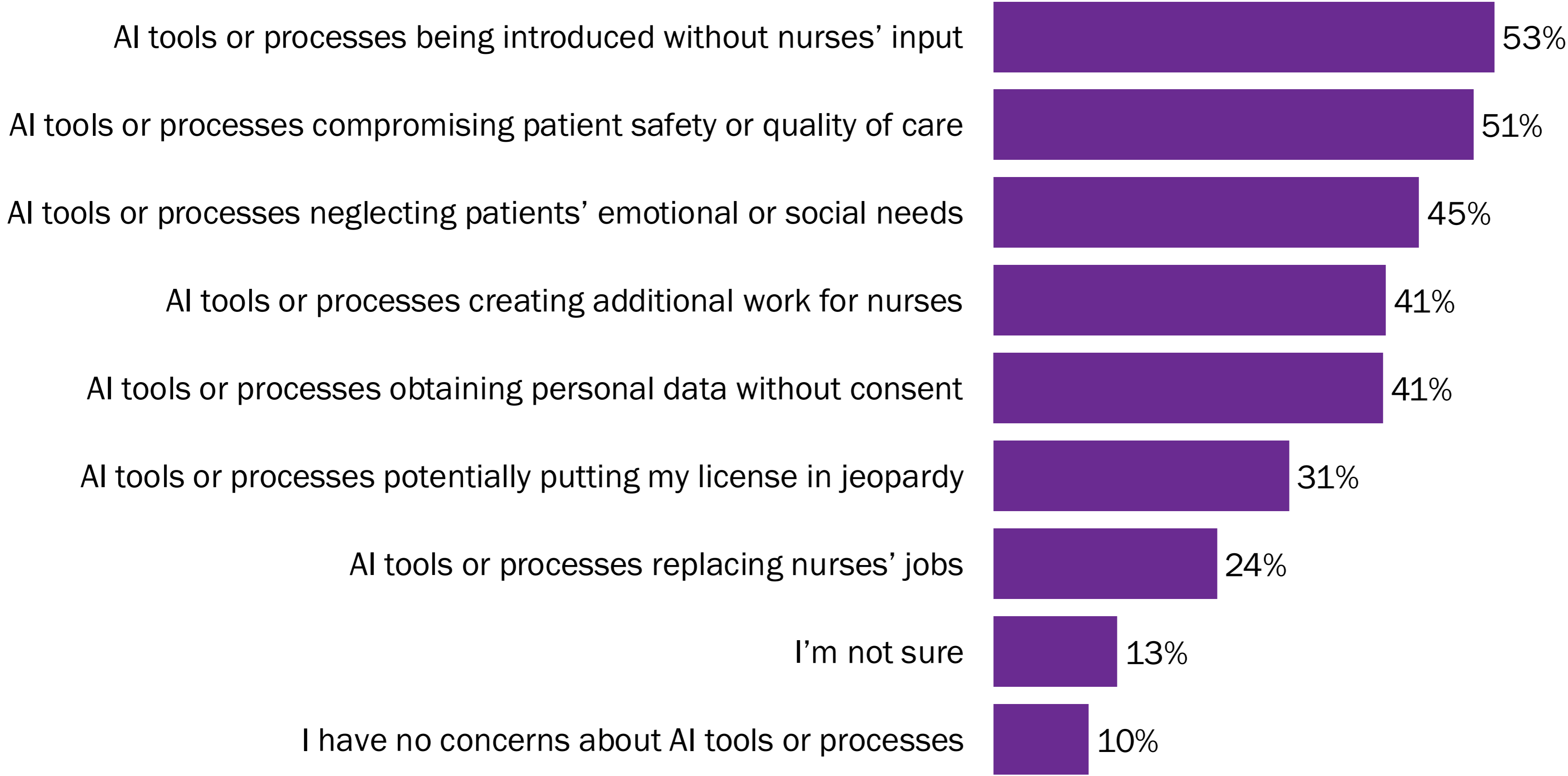


Were you trained in how to use the AI tool(s) or processes that have become part of your practice? (Base: 755)



What is your overall impression of the AI tool(s) or processes? (Base: 643)

Nurses' top AI concerns are being left out of implementation decisions (53%), followed by patient safety risks (51%).



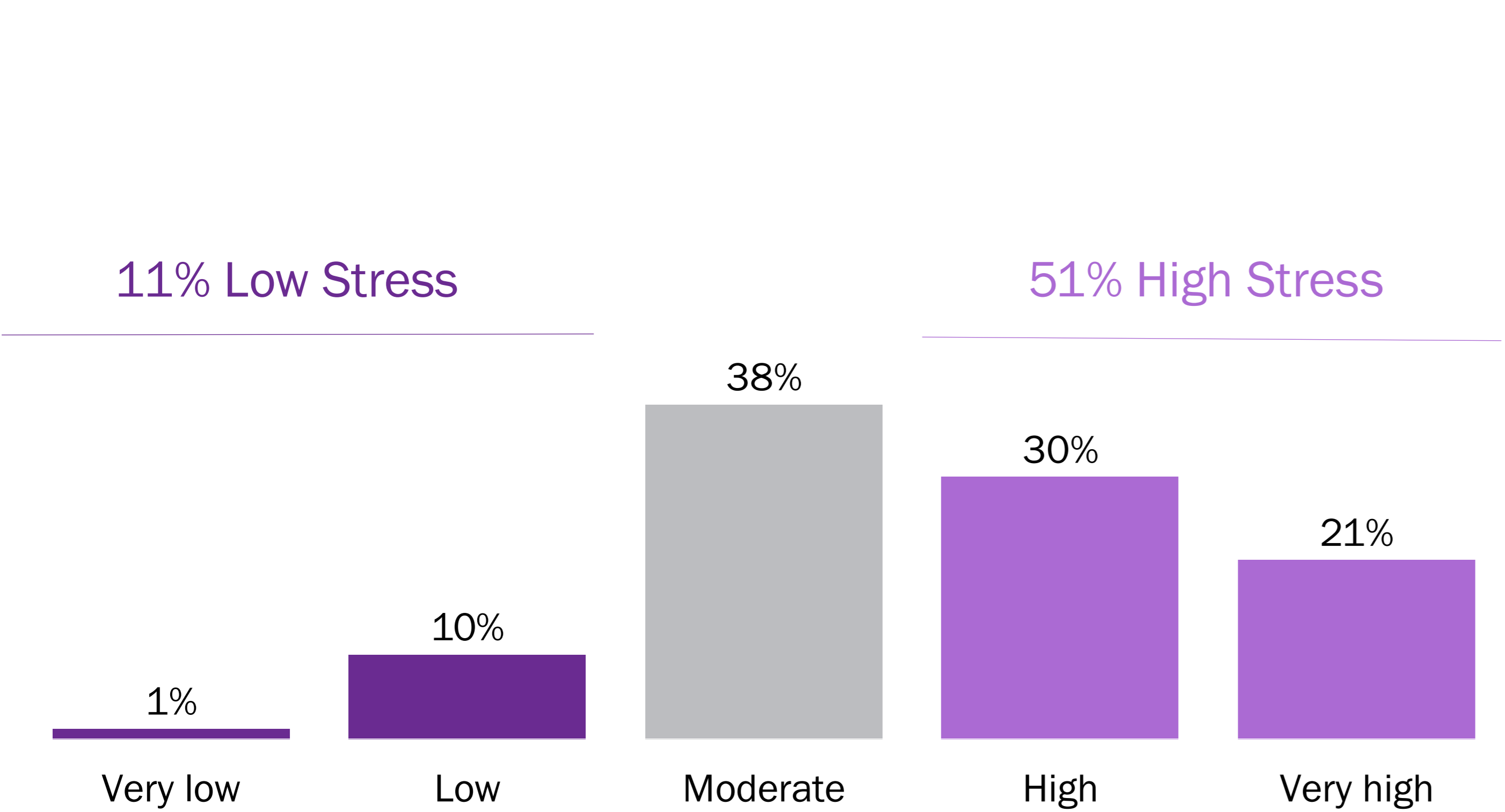
What concerns do you have about AI tools or processes in nursing practice?

Findings

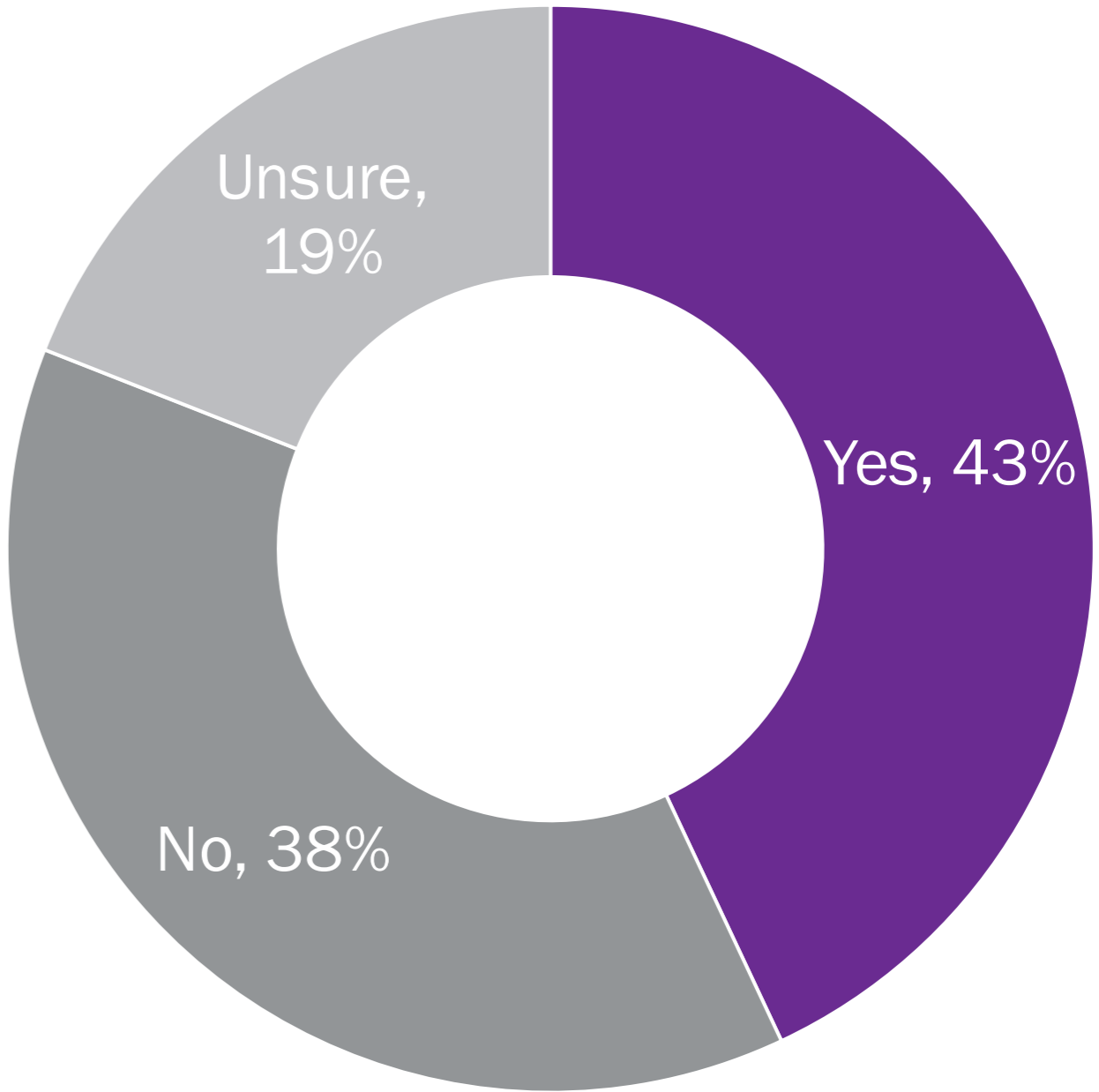
Well-being



Over half of respondents rate the stress in their job as high or very high. Less than half think they have access to sufficient mental health supports.

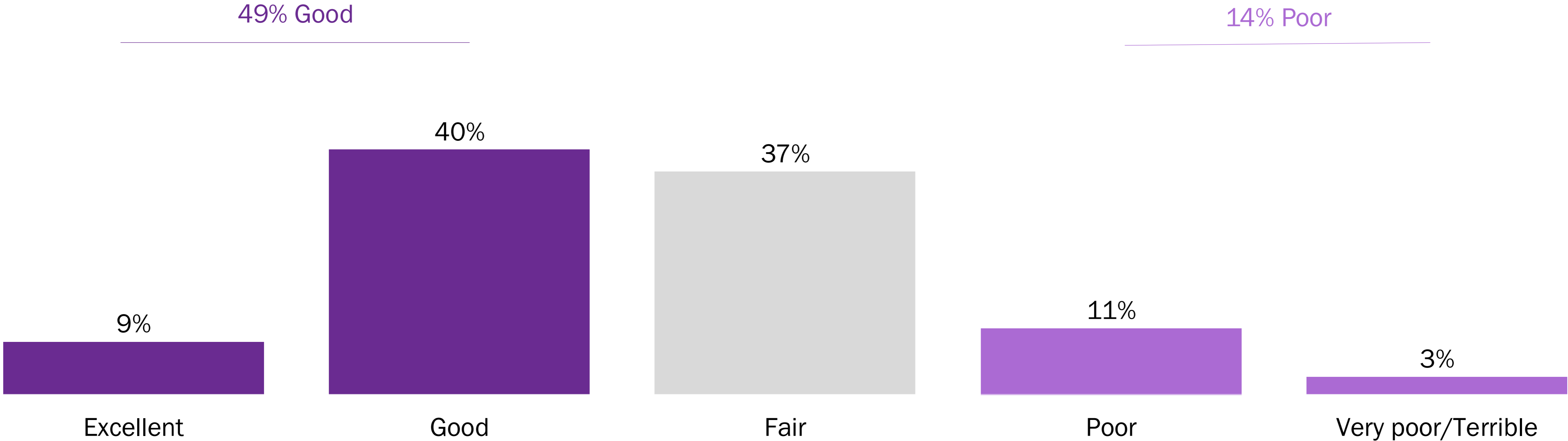


Generally, how would you rate the stress you experience in your job?



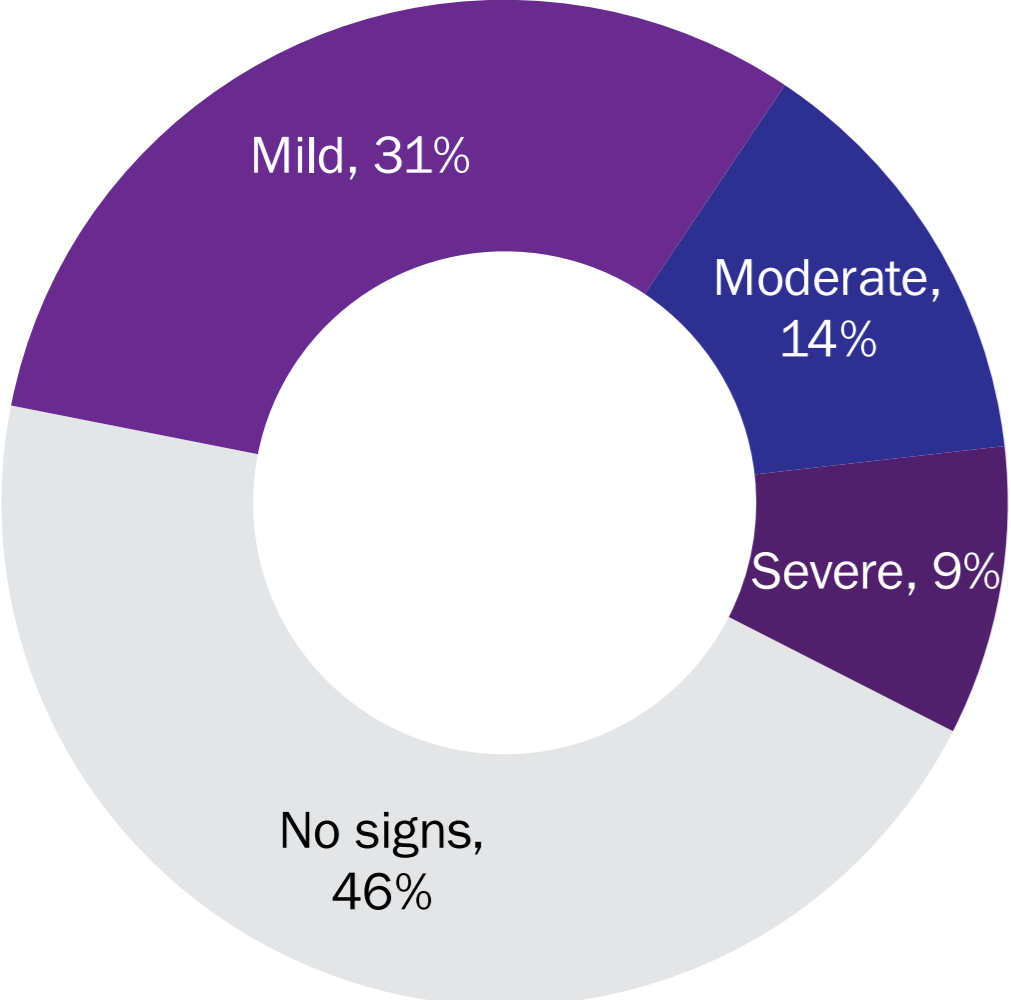
In general, do you feel you have access to sufficient mental health supports?

Most respondents rate their mental health as good or fair.

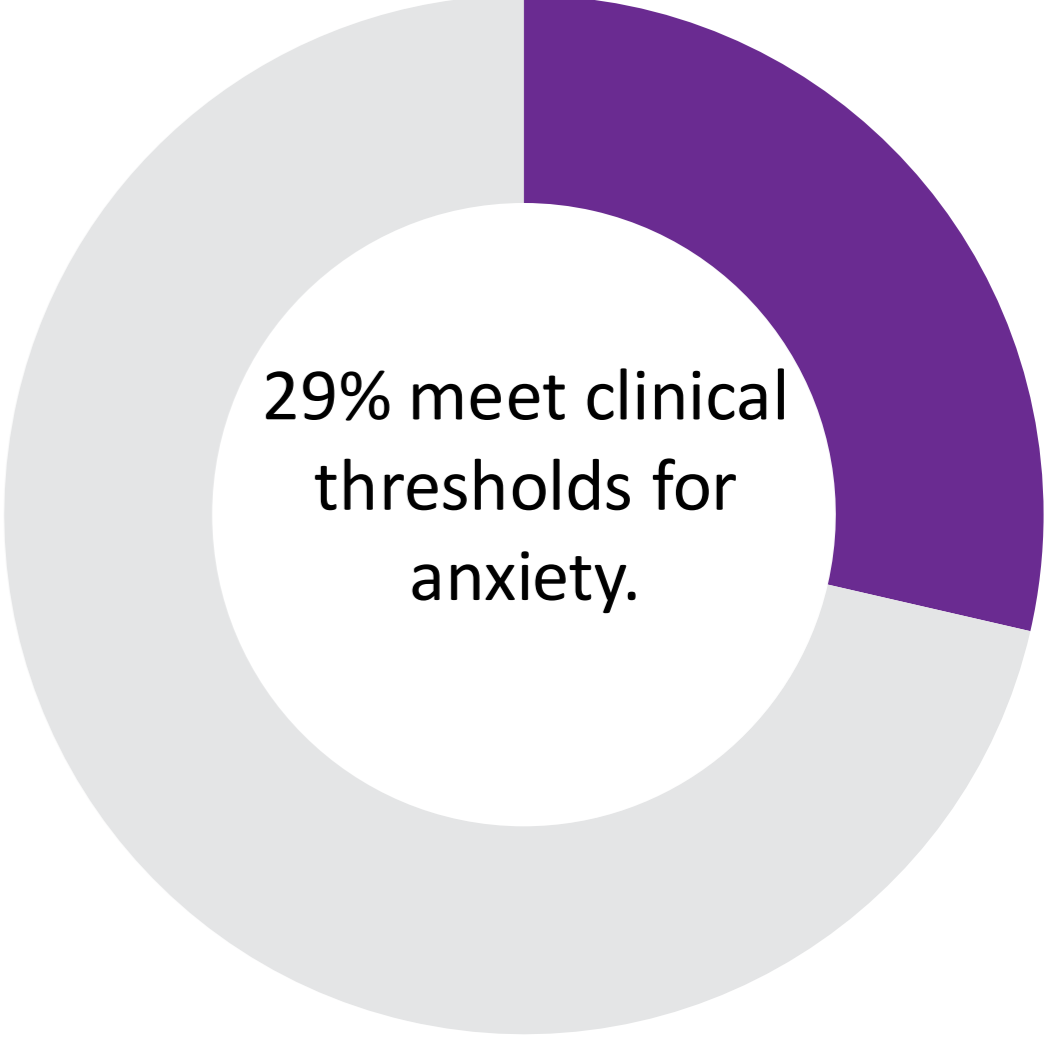
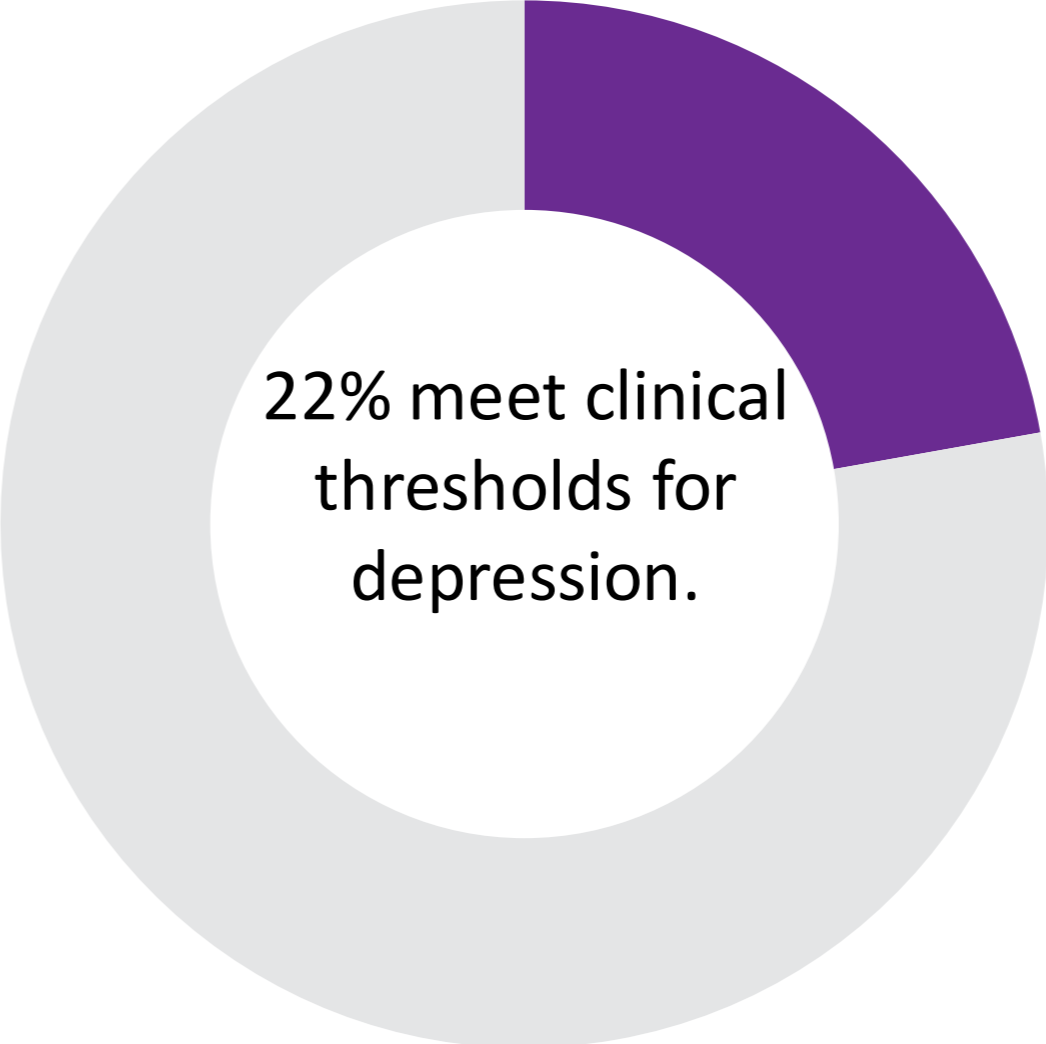
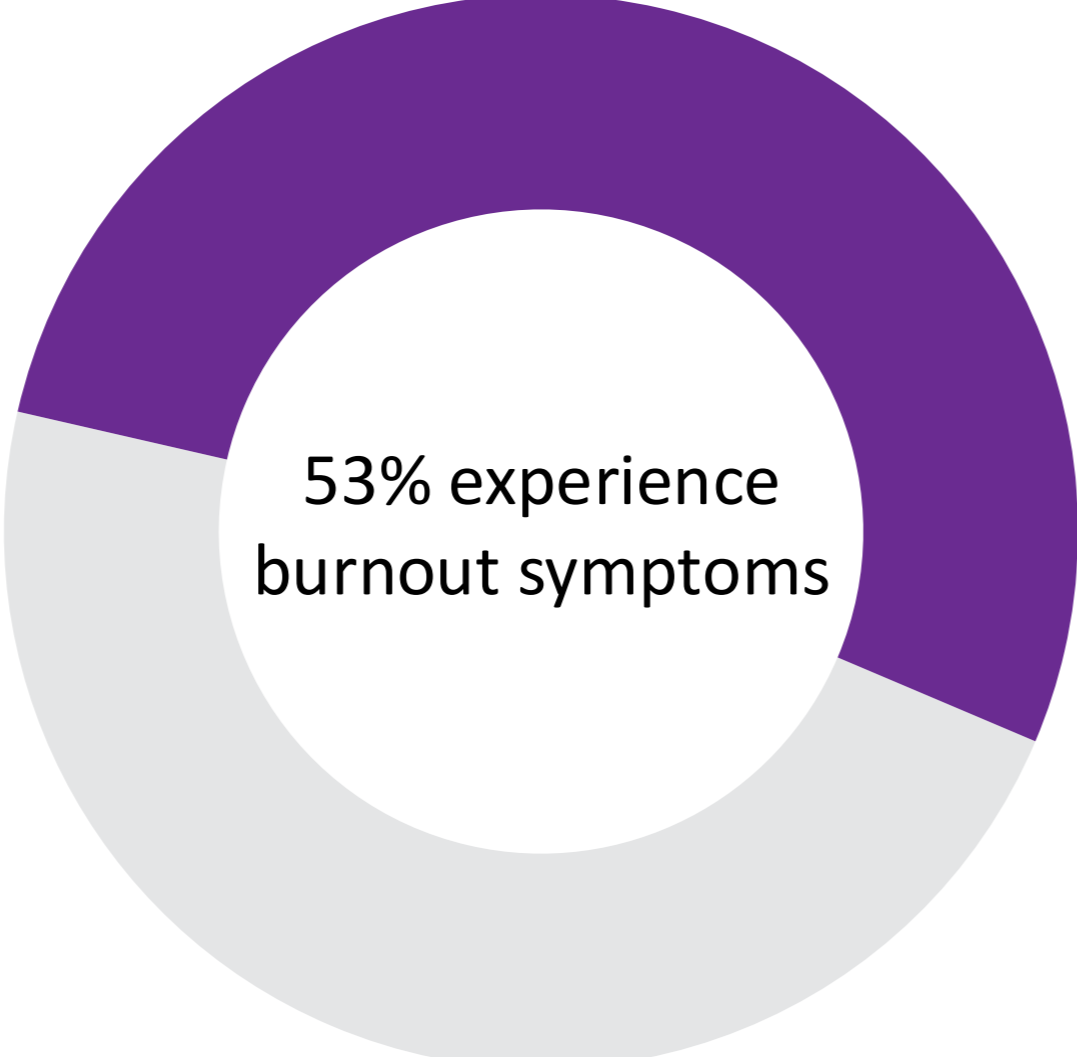


In general, would you say your mental health is...

Despite most rating their mental health as good or fair, over half of respondents experience burnout and some level of psychological distress.



Psychological distress



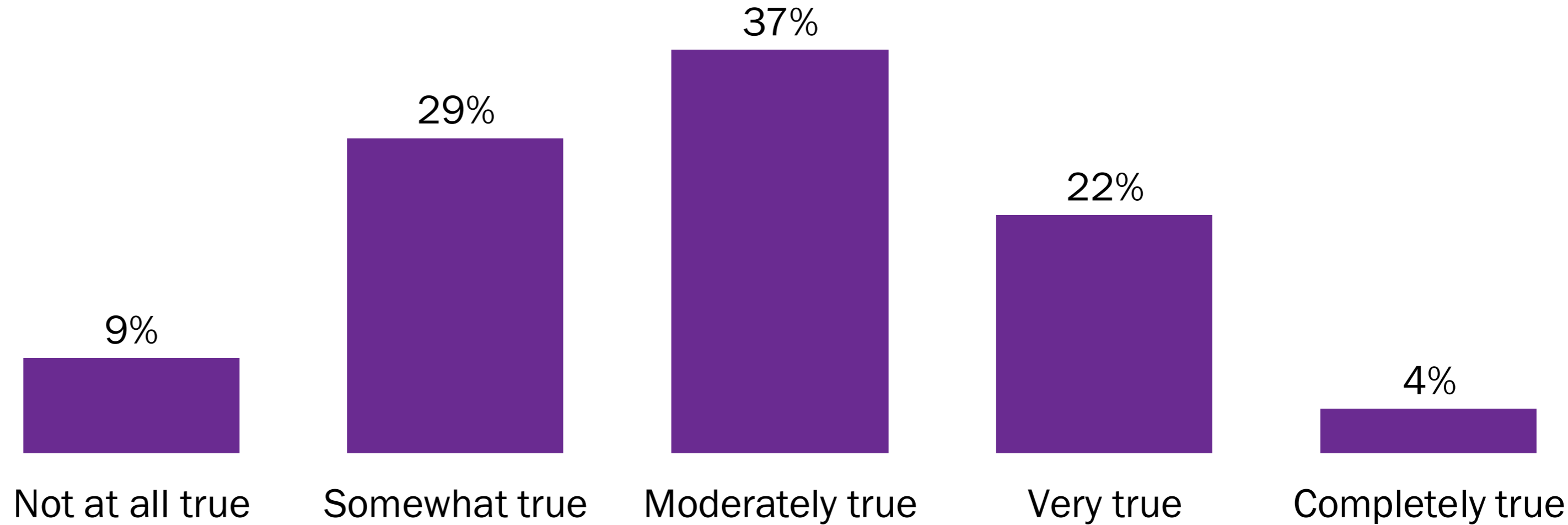
Results on psychological distress, depression, and anxiety are based on the Patient Health Questionnaire-4., a self-report validated questionnaire designed to screen for anxiety, depression, and psychological distress. Results on burnout are based on the work exhaustion subscale of the Professional Fulfillment Index.

38% of respondents report that professional fulfillment indicators are “not at all true” or only “somewhat true” for them.

This index measures how respondents experience their work across six dimensions. The average score across all respondents is 4.6 out of 10. A score of 7.5 or greater suggests professional fulfillment.

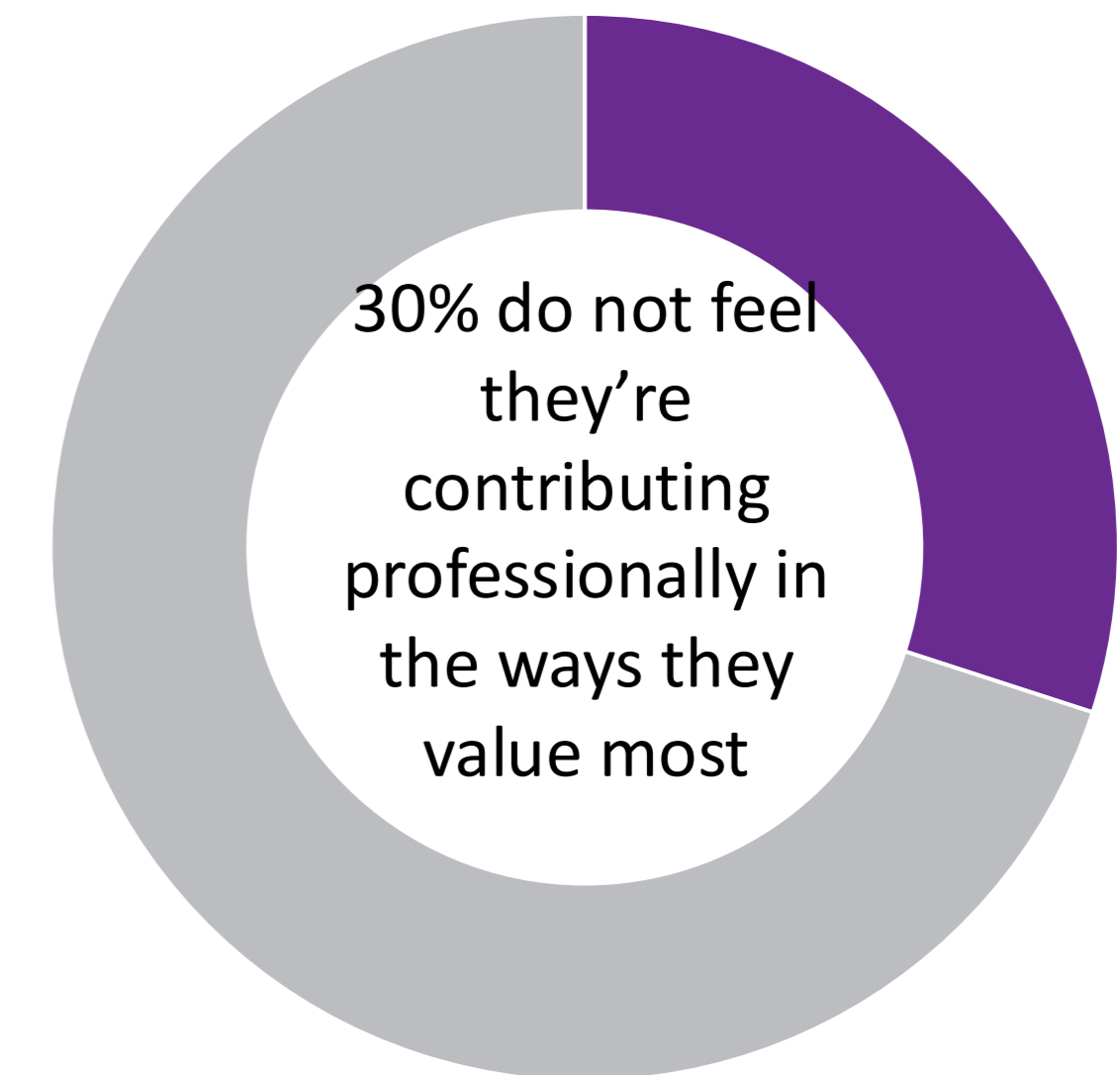
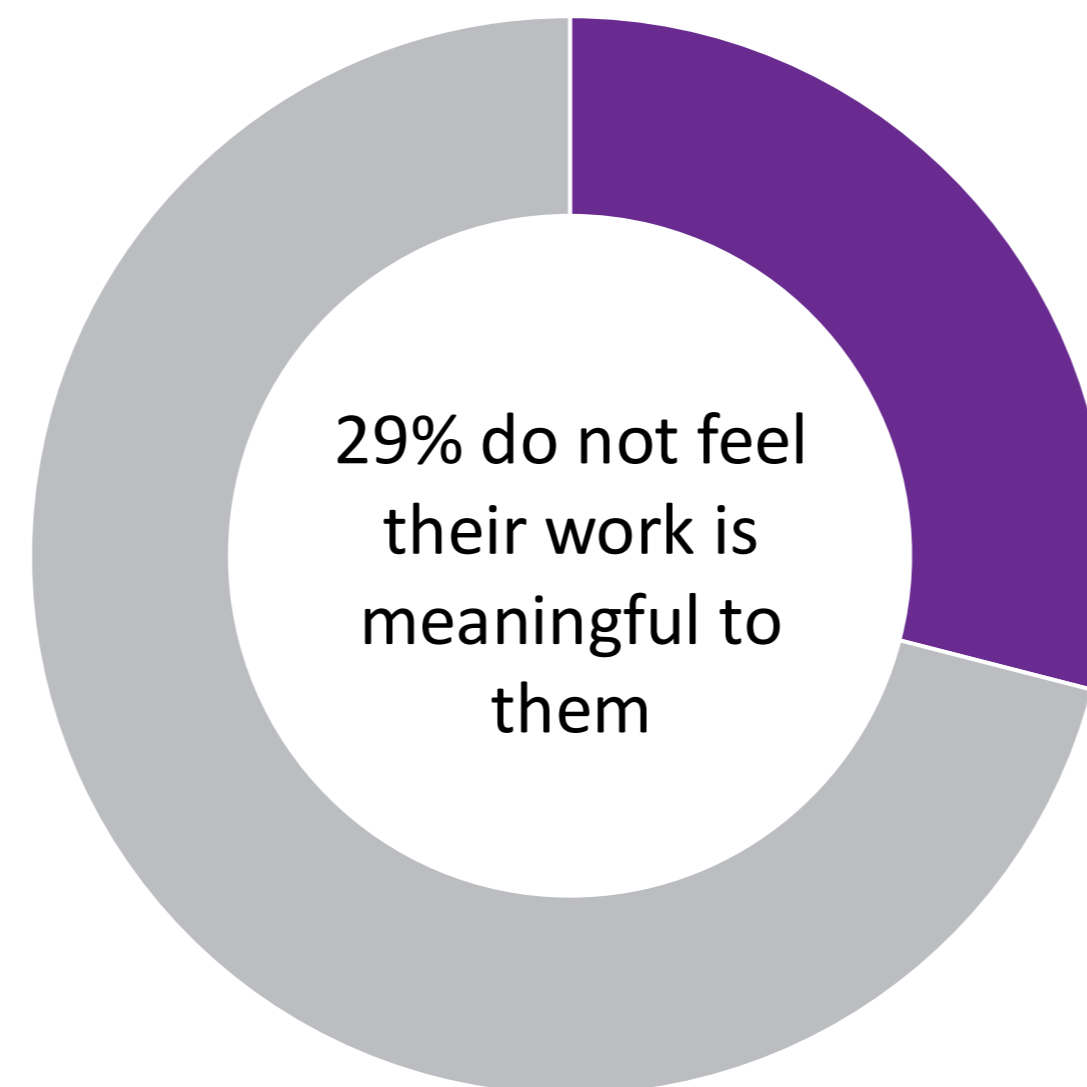
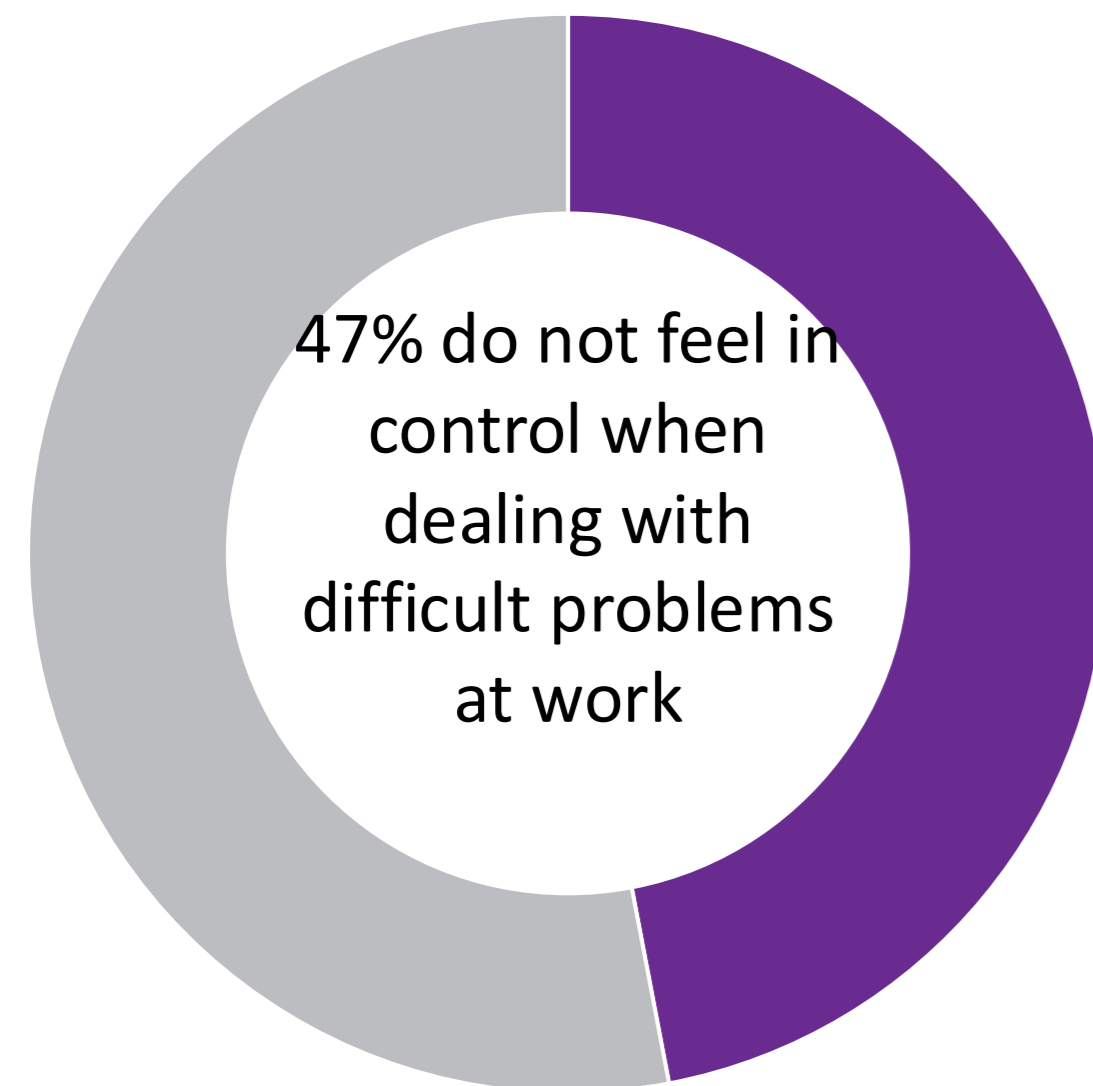
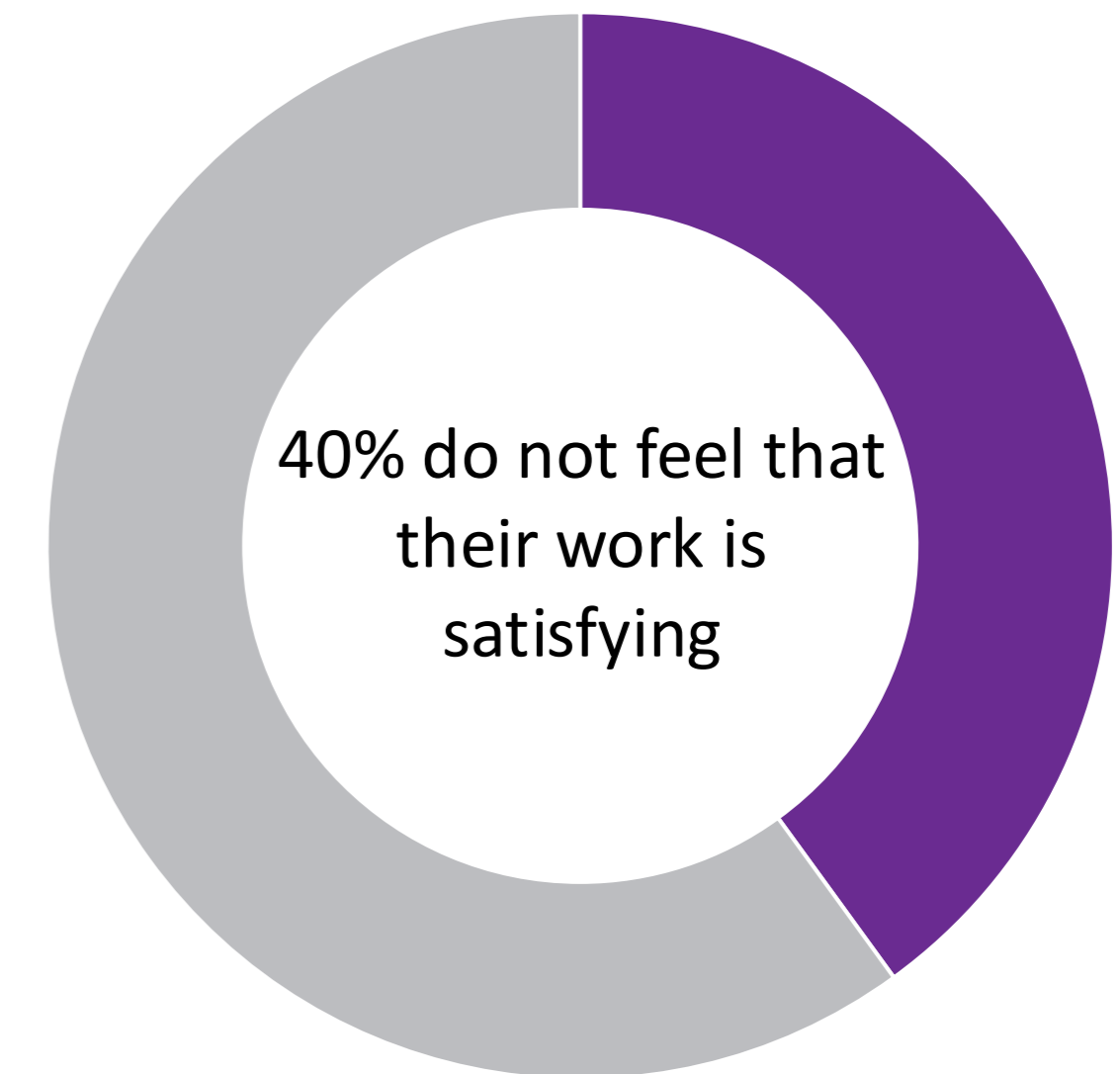
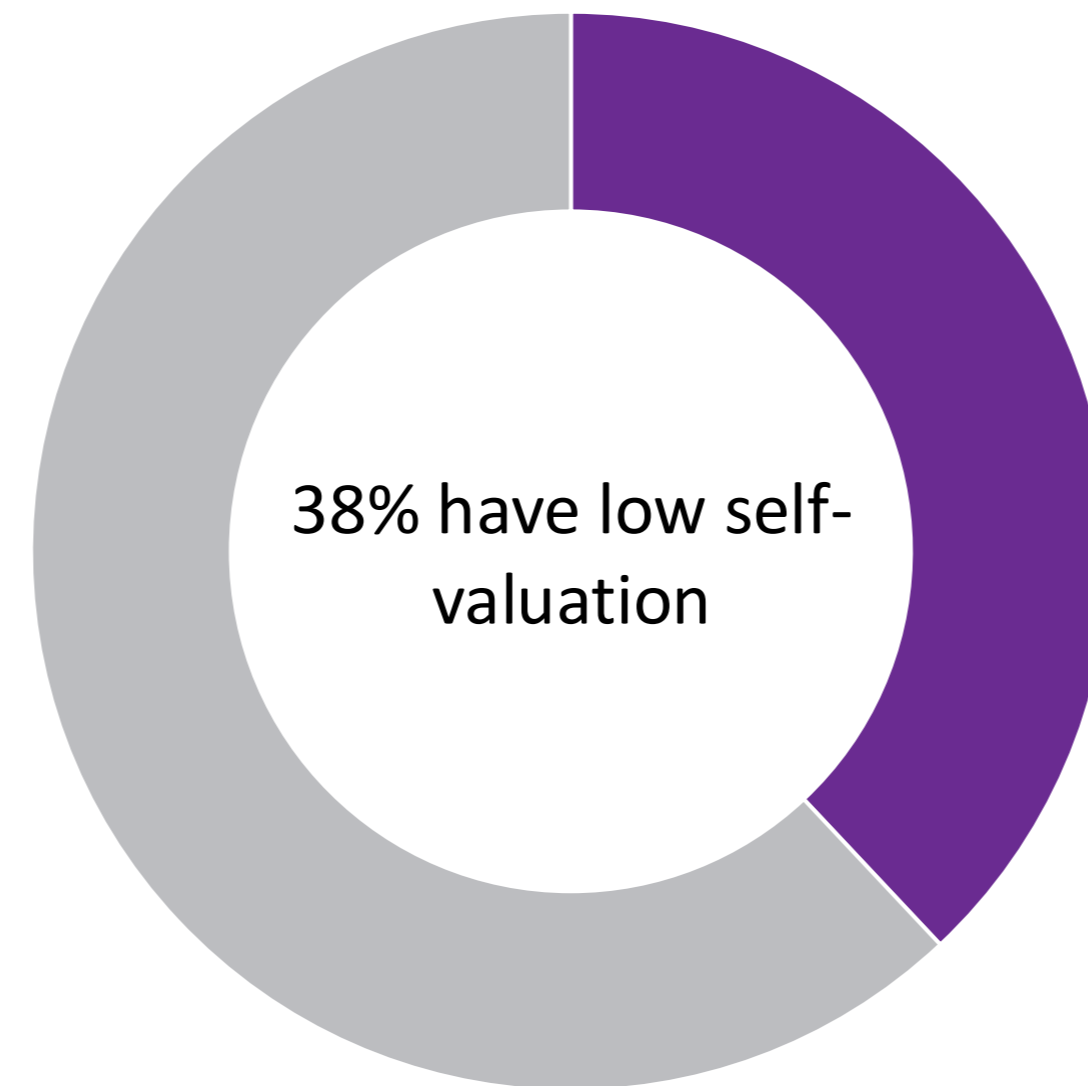
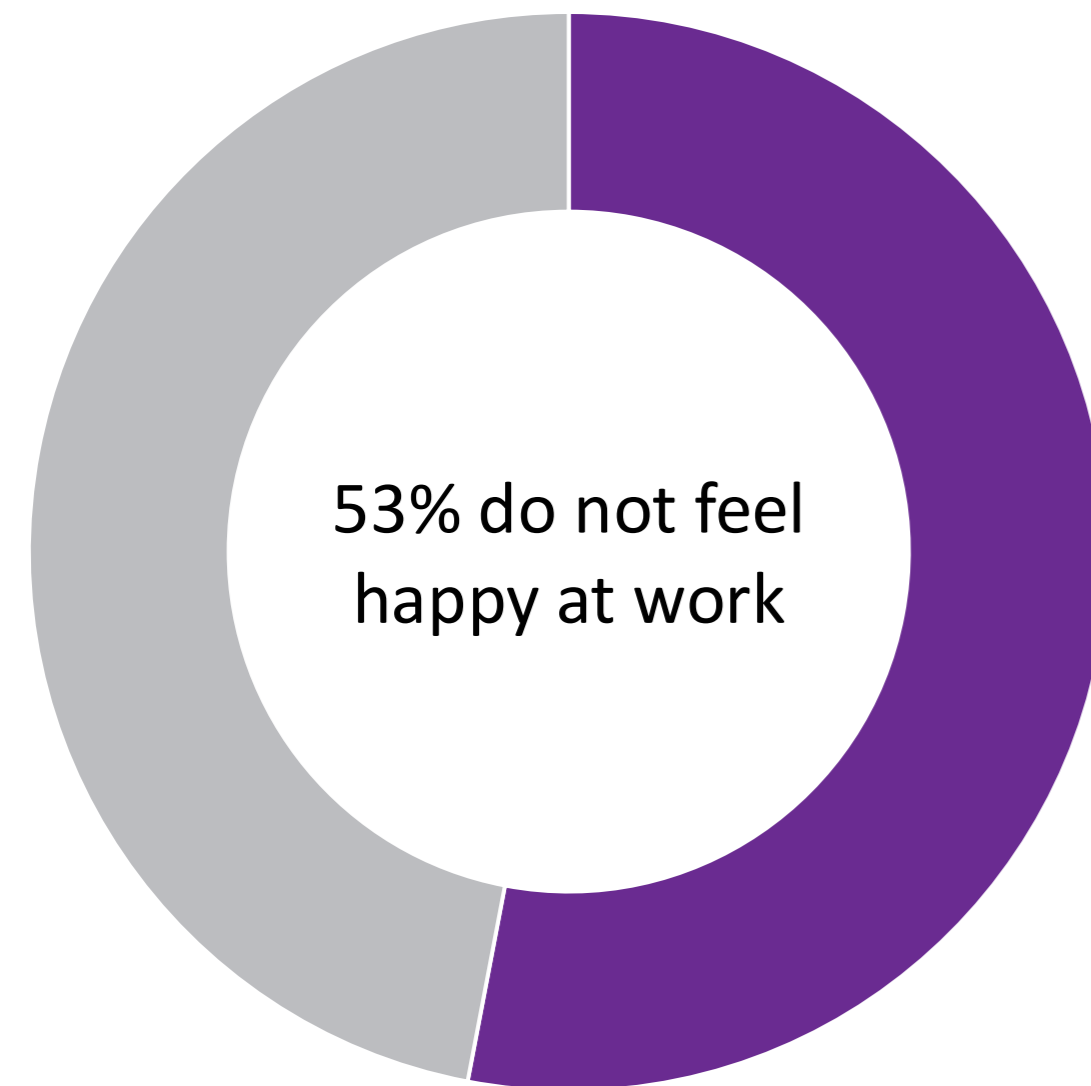
Indicators include:

- Feeling happy at work
- Feeling worthwhile at work
- Work being satisfying
- Feeling in control when dealing with difficult problems
- Work being meaningful
- Contributing professionally in the ways they value most



Professional fulfillment index, all indicators combined

Professional fulfillment indicators are under strain.



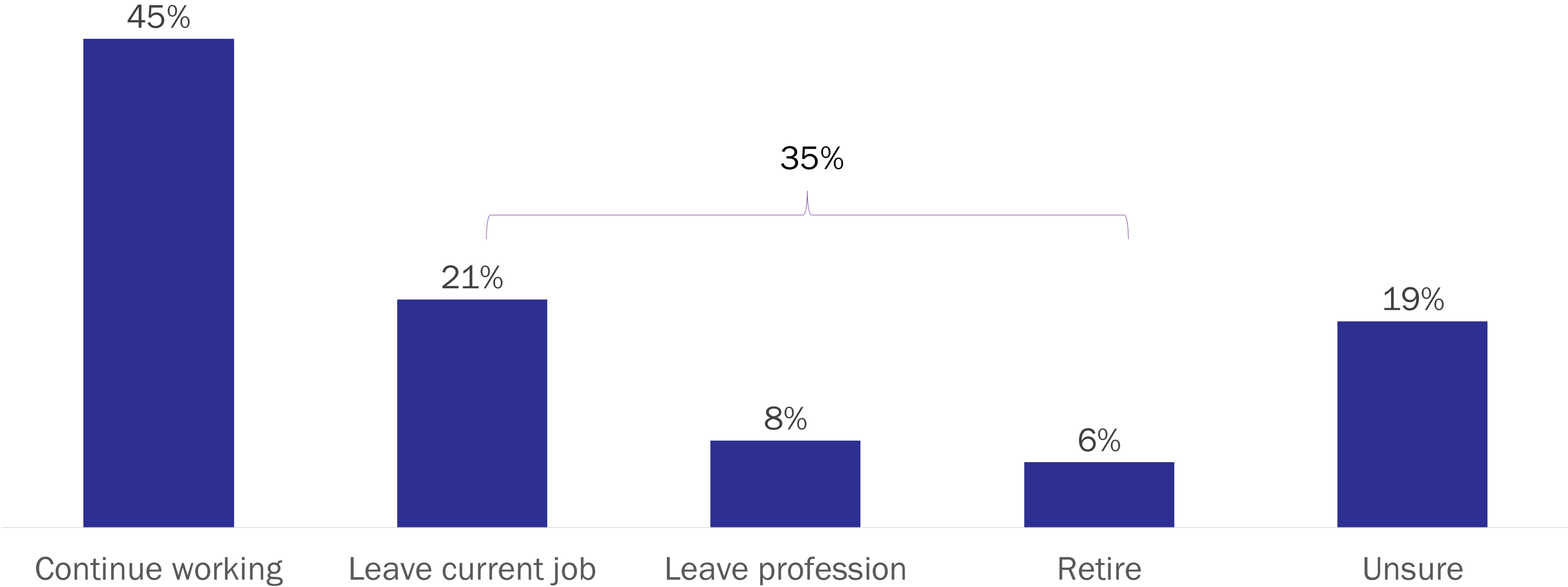
Results are based on responses to questions from the Professional Fulfillment Index, a self-report validated questionnaire.

Findings

Intention to Leave



Over a third of respondents are considering leaving their current job or the nursing workforce within the next year.

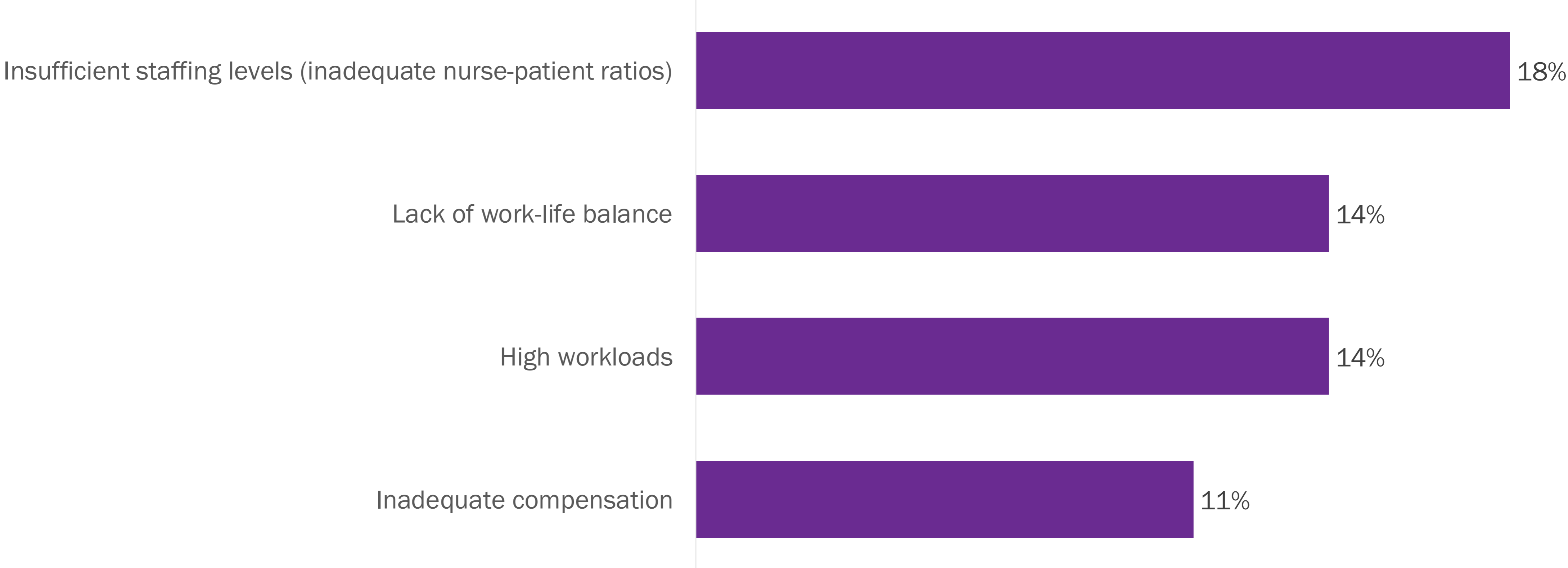


Are you considering leaving your current workplace within the next year?

Insufficient staffing levels such as inadequate nurse-patient ratios was ranked as the top factor that respondents considered when leaving a job.

Below is a list of factors others have said are important for them to consider when leaving a job. Please rank the top three factors that are most important for you to consider when leaving your current job.

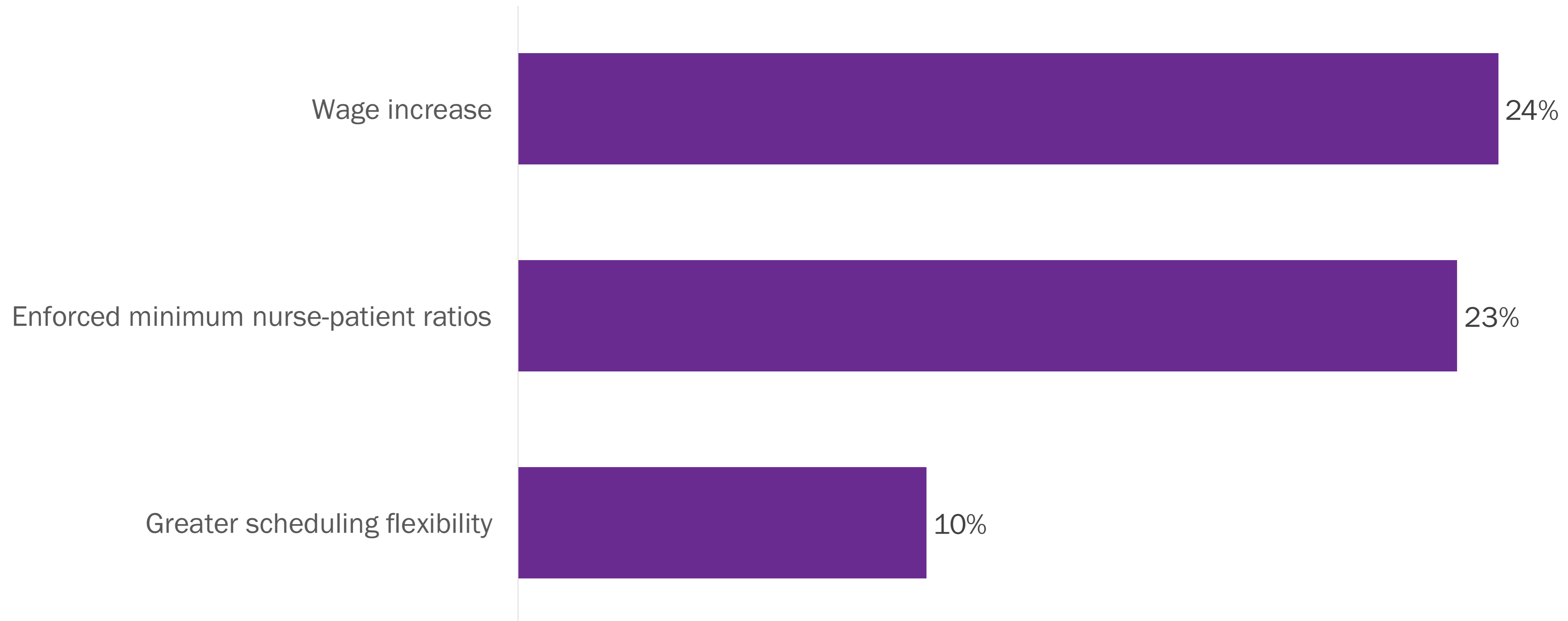
% of respondents who ranked each as their most important reason to leave (top four options)



Wage increases and enforced minimum nurse-patient ratios are the highest ranked factors that would influence decisions to stay in their job or the nursing profession.

How influential would each of the following be in keeping your job or staying in the nursing profession? Please rank in order of most influential to least influential.

% of respondents who ranked each option as most influential (top three options)

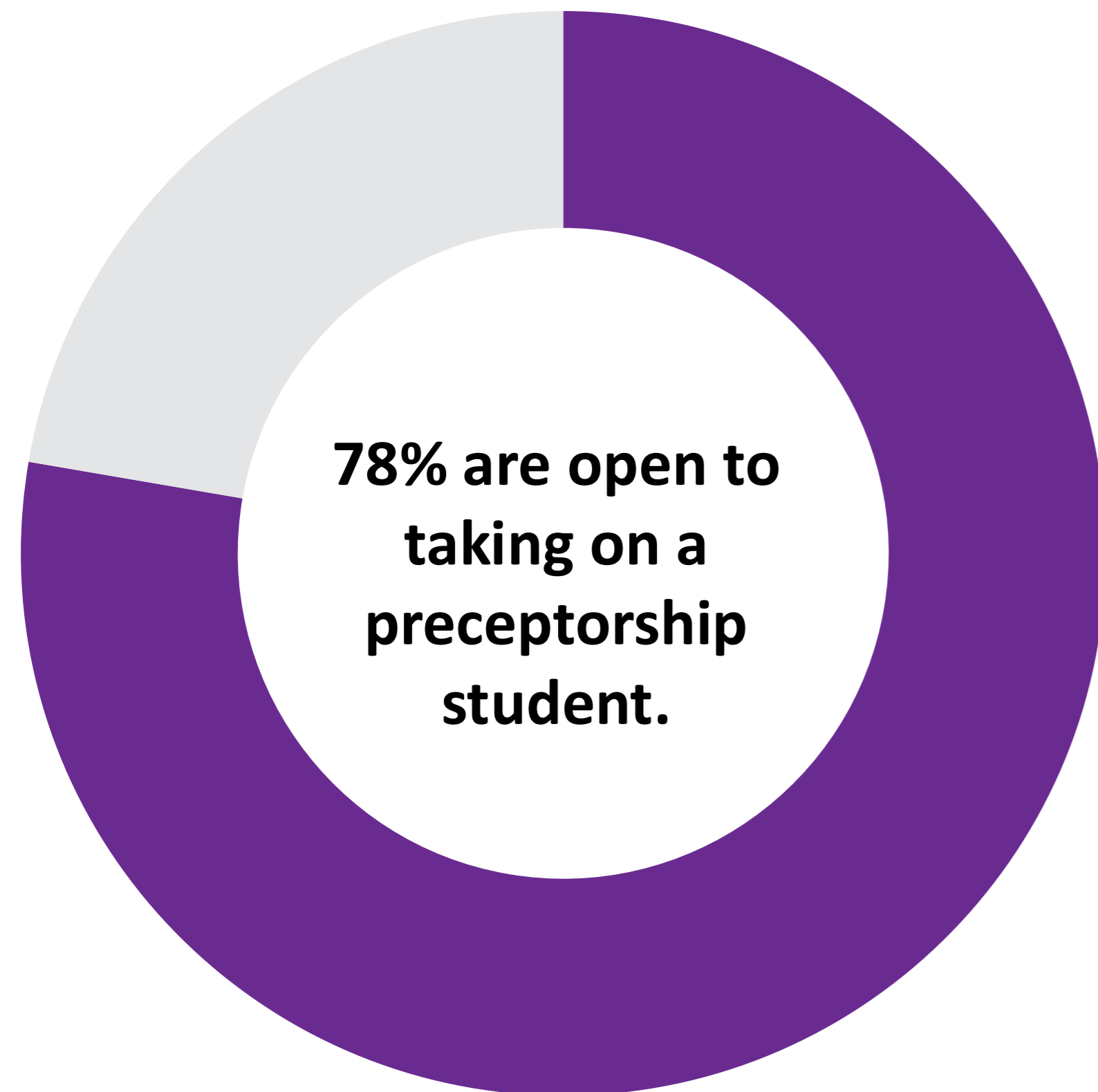


Findings

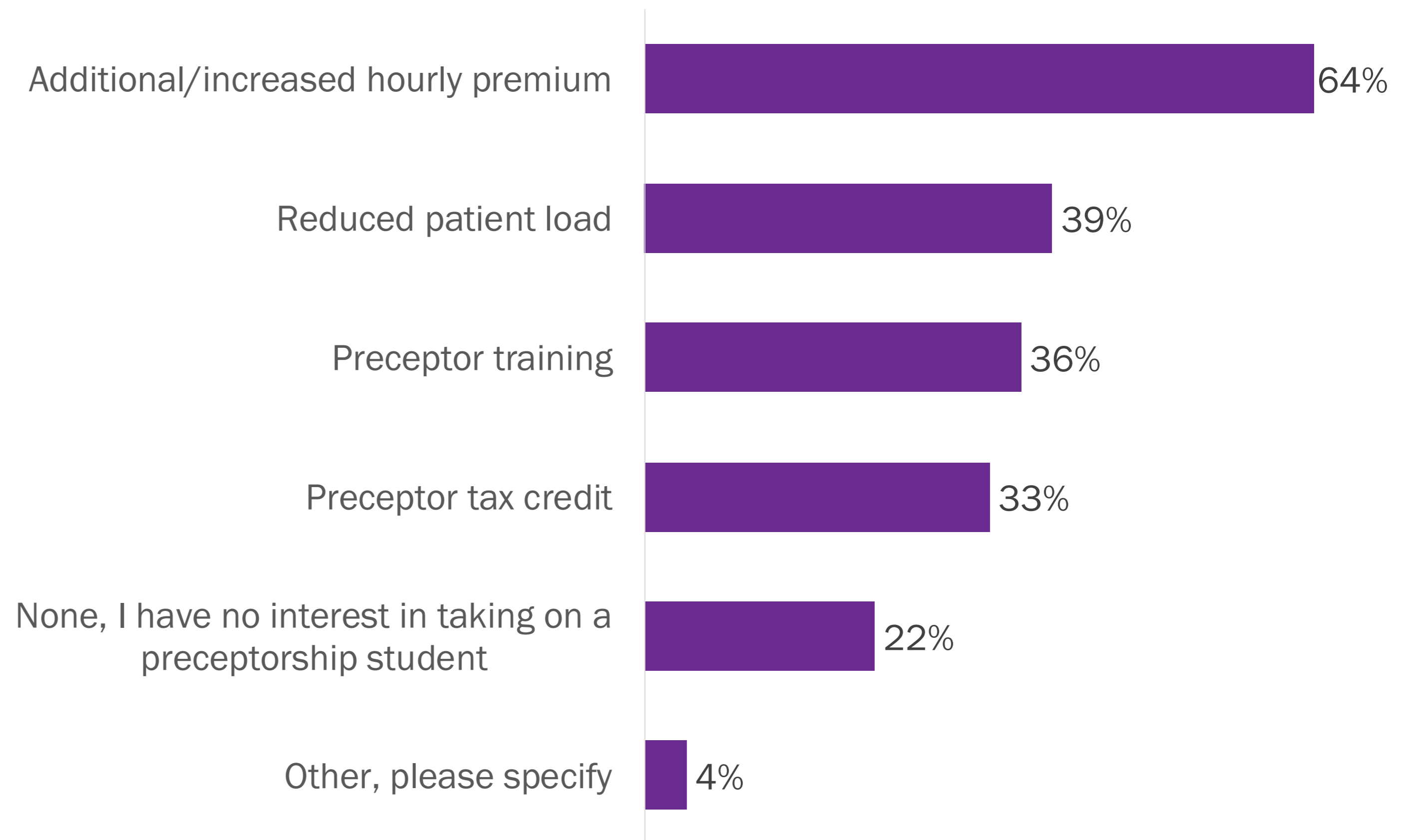
Preceptorships

A healthcare professional, likely a nurse, is shown in profile, wearing blue scrubs, a light blue surgical mask, and light blue gloves. She is adjusting a clear plastic IV drip chamber on a metal stand. The background is a blurred hospital room with other IV stands and medical equipment.

Most respondents would be positively influenced to become a preceptor with the right incentives. Financial compensation is the top motivator.



Which of the following (if any) would positively influence your decision to become a preceptor?



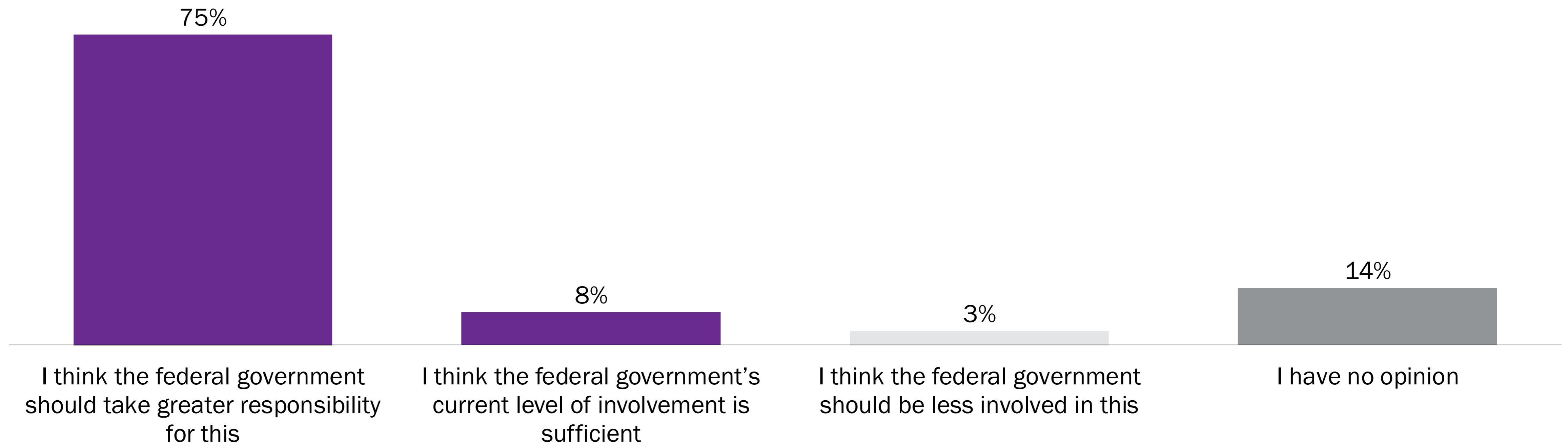
Findings

Federal Government Role



3 in 4 respondents believe the federal government should take greater responsibility for health care access and equity.

The federal government's role in health care at the provincial and territorial levels is largely relegated to providing funding and convening governments and stakeholders. In the current context of chronic staffing shortages, what responsibility do you think the federal government should take for addressing health care access and inequities across the country?

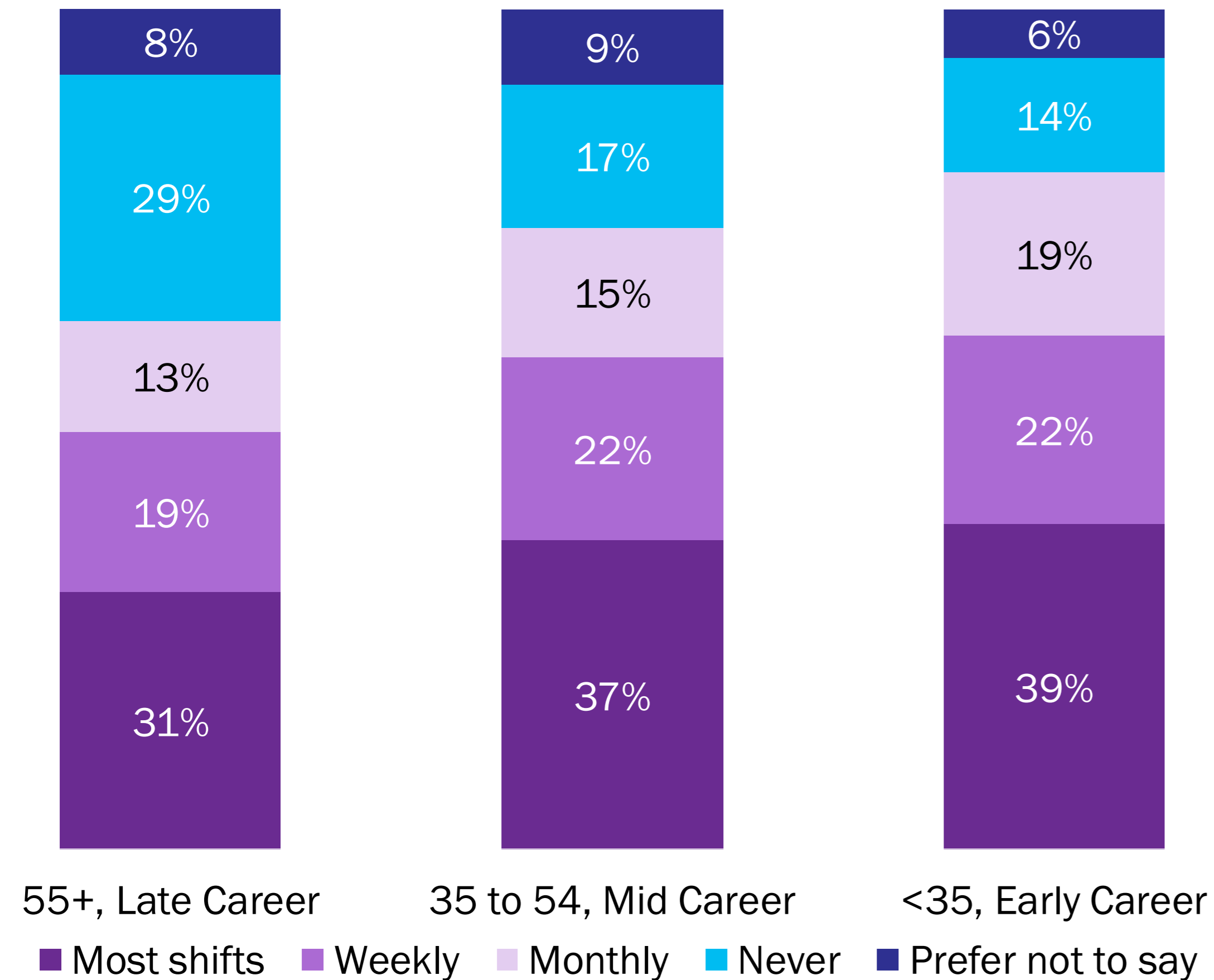


Findings

Experiences of Early Career Nurses

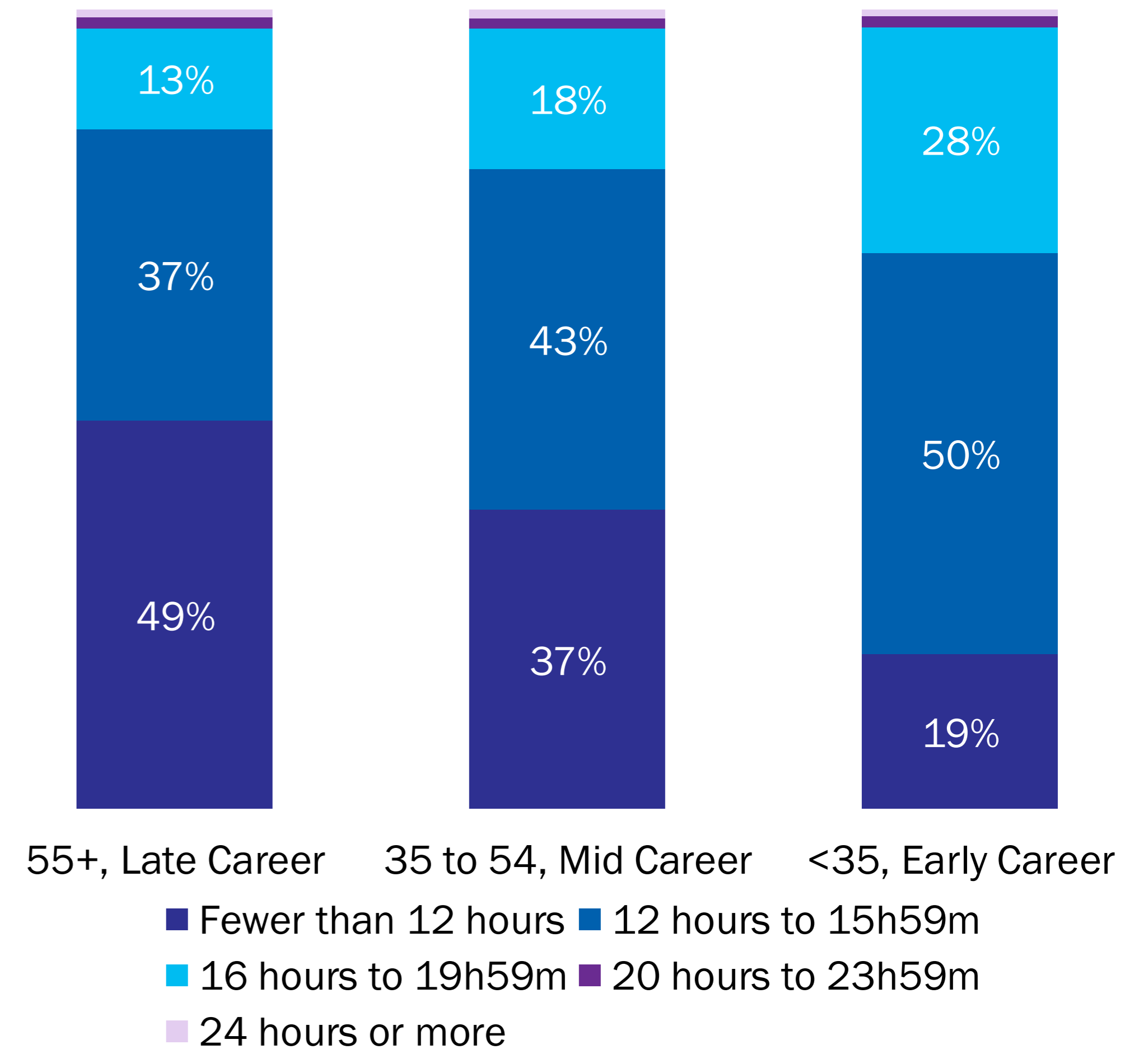


Early career nurses are more likely to regularly work with unsafe patient loads.



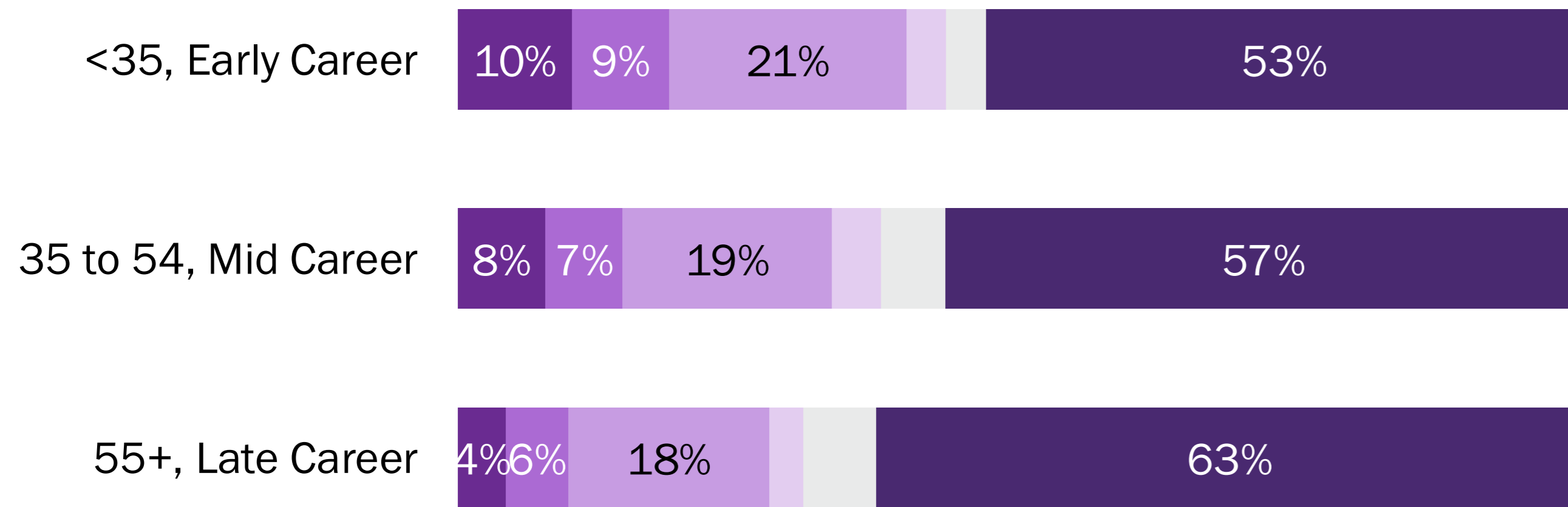
How often are you responsible for more patients than you feel you can safely care for?

Early career nurses are more likely to work longer shifts.



In the past 6 months, what is the longest single shift you have worked?

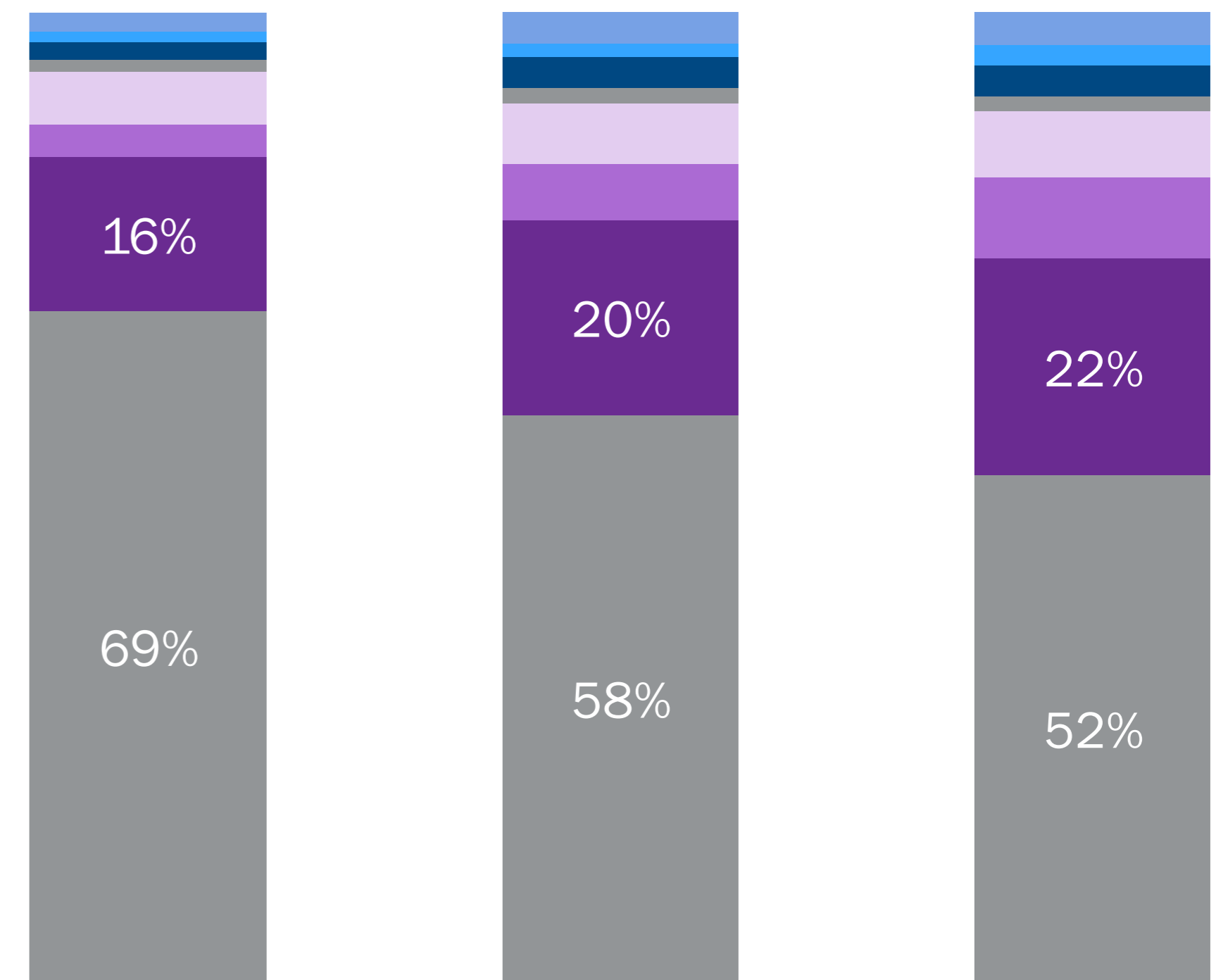
Early career nurses are more likely to work involuntary overtime.



- Yes, I was told that I must work OT (mandatory overtime)
- Yes, I was made to feel like there was no other option or was guilted into working overtime
- Yes, I felt morally obligated to work OT (to keep colleagues from working short, ensure patients receive appropriate care)
- Yes, I felt professionally obligated to work OT (fear of accusation of professional misconduct or patient abandonment)
- Yes, for other reasons (please specify)
- No, I have not worked any involuntary overtime in the past 6 months

Have you worked involuntary overtime (OT) in the past 6 months?

Early career nurses are more likely to be redeployed to other units.

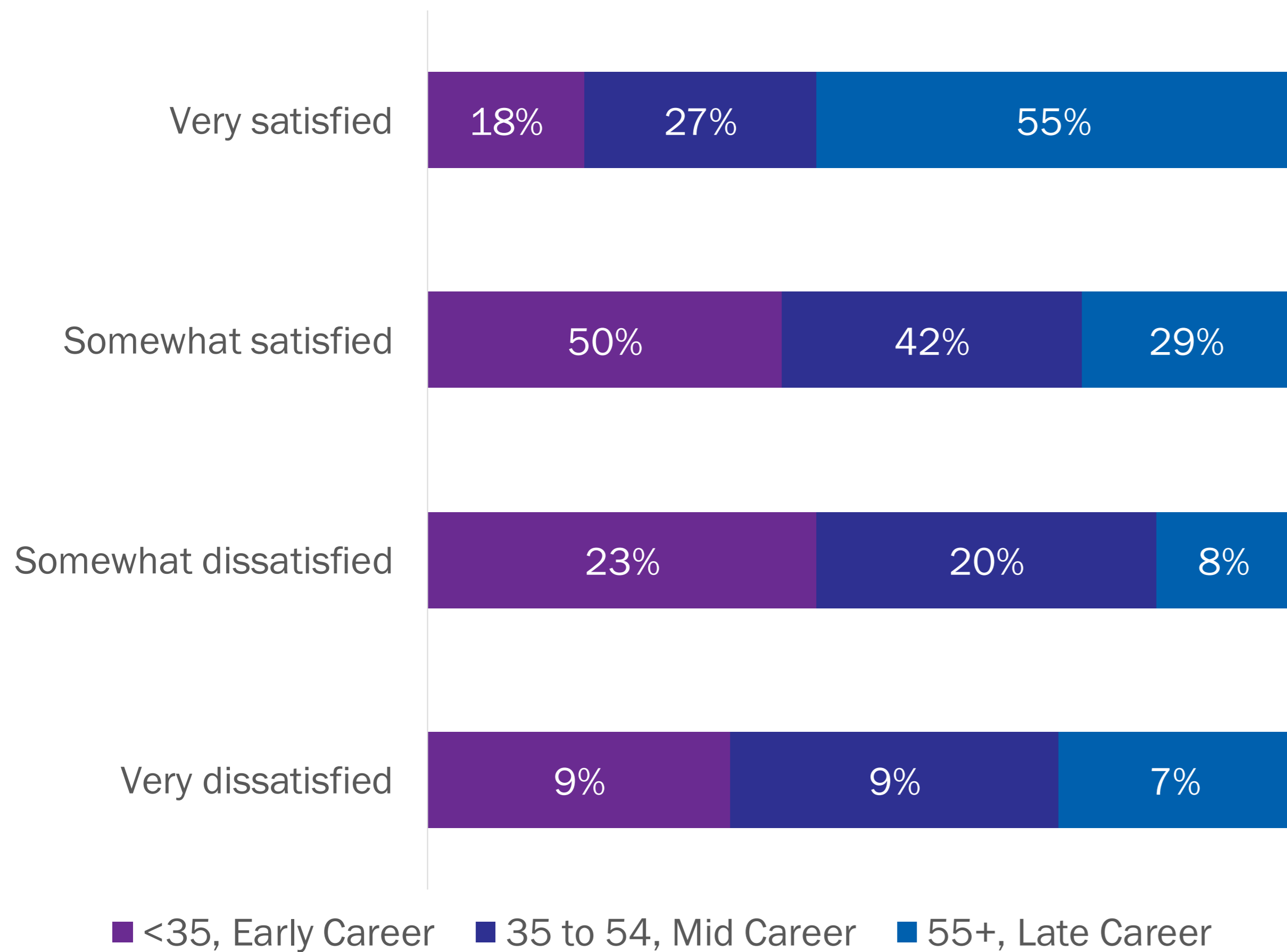


55+, Late Career 35 to 54, Mid Career <35, Early Career

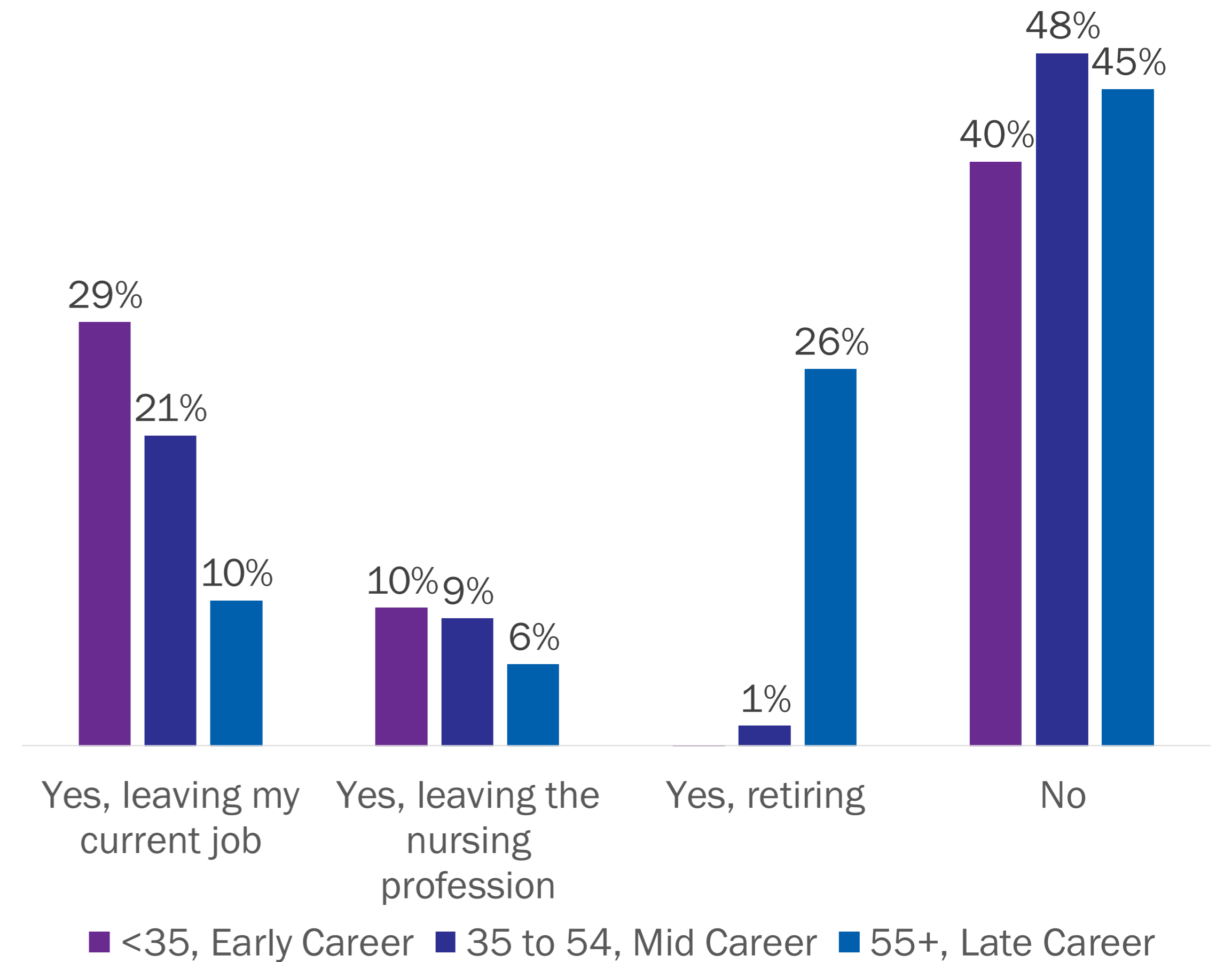
- Never
- A few times per year or less
- Once per month or less
- A few times a month
- Once a week
- A few times a week
- Every day/Every shift
- Unsure

How often are you redeployed or reassigned to another unit?

Early-career nurses are more likely to be dissatisfied with their careers and to be uncertain about staying in their current jobs.

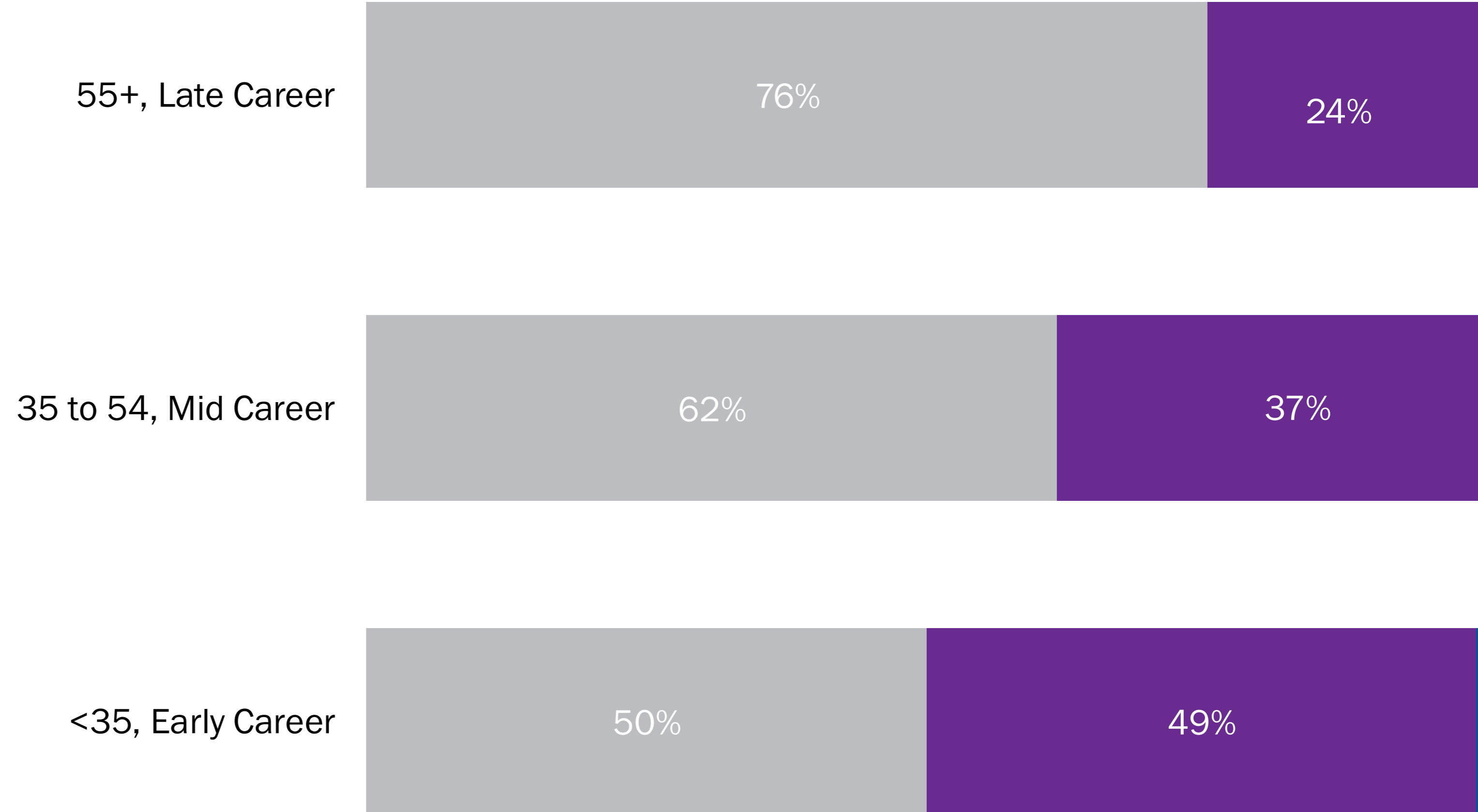
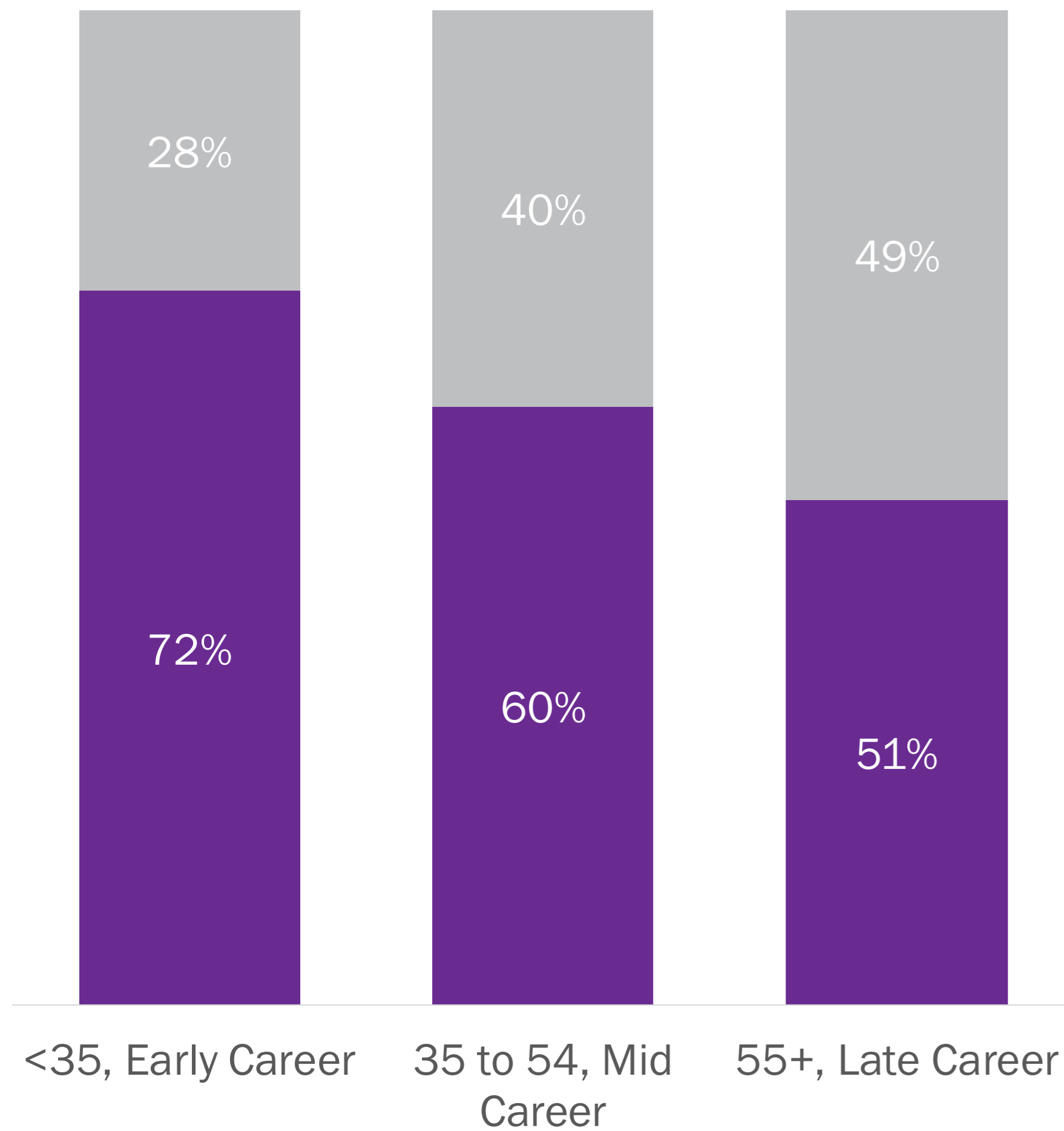


How satisfied are you with your choice of nursing as a career?



Are you considering leaving your current workplace within the next year?

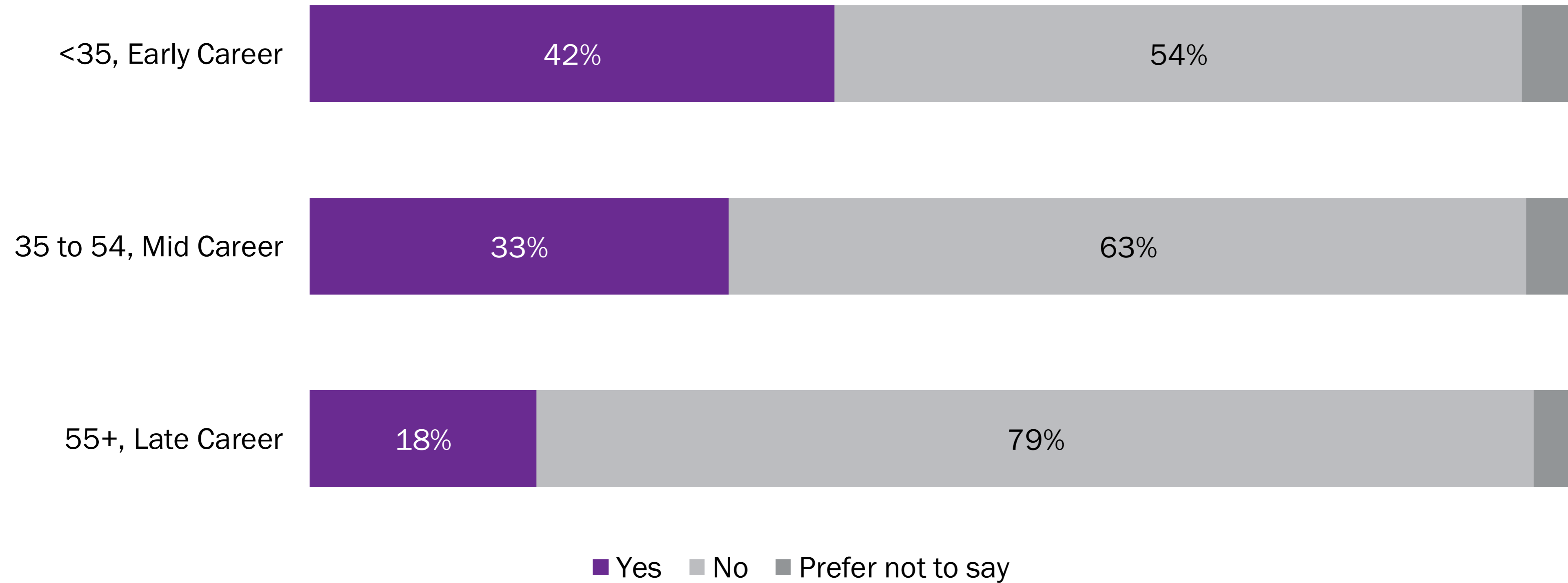
Early career nurses experience physical violence and sexual harassment at higher rates.



■ Did not experience physical violence
■ Experienced physical violence

■ Did not experience sexual harassment ■ Experienced sexual harassment

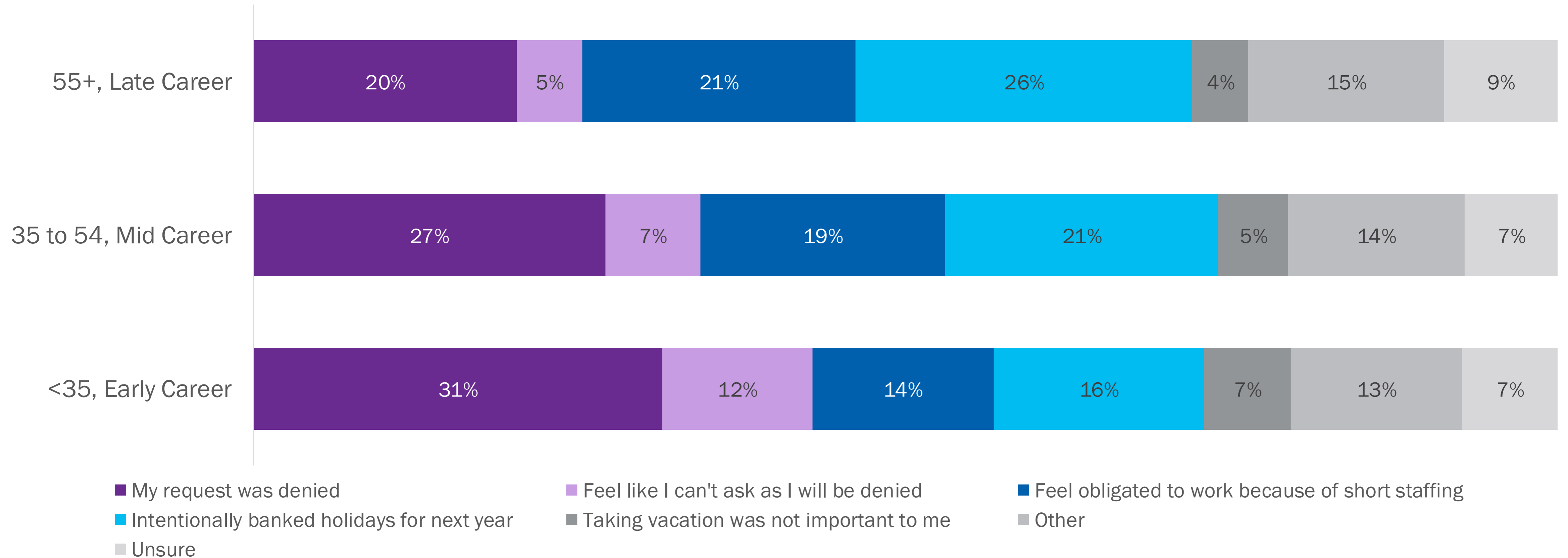
Early career nurses are more likely to take sick days due to inaccessibility of other leaves.



During the past year, have you taken sick leave because you were unable to access vacation or other leaves?

Early career nurses are more likely to have vacation denied.

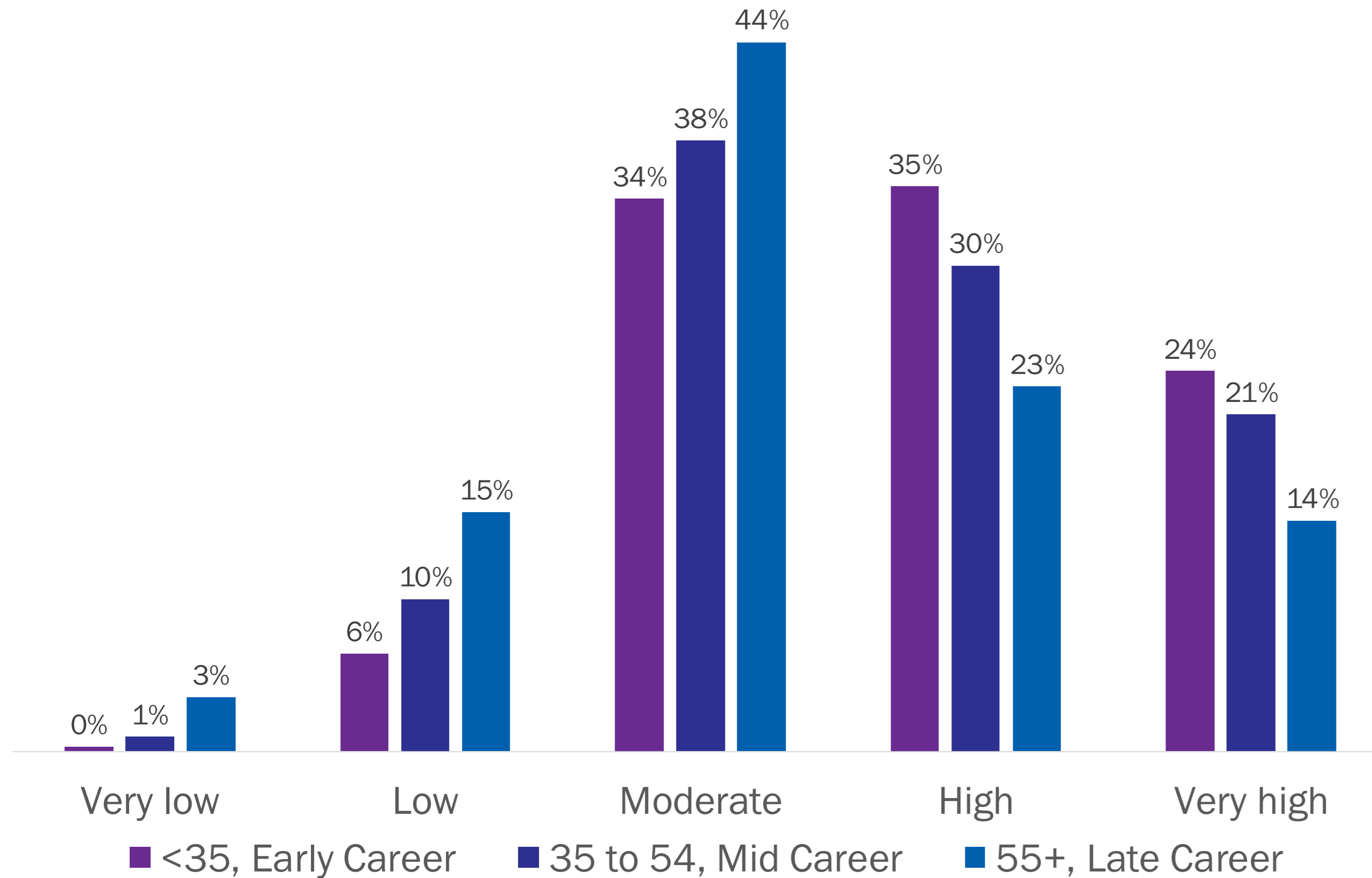
31% of early-career nurses report that the main reason why they have not taken all their vacation is because their request was denied, compared to 27% of mid-career and 20% of late career nurses.



What is the main reason why you have not taken all of your vacation?

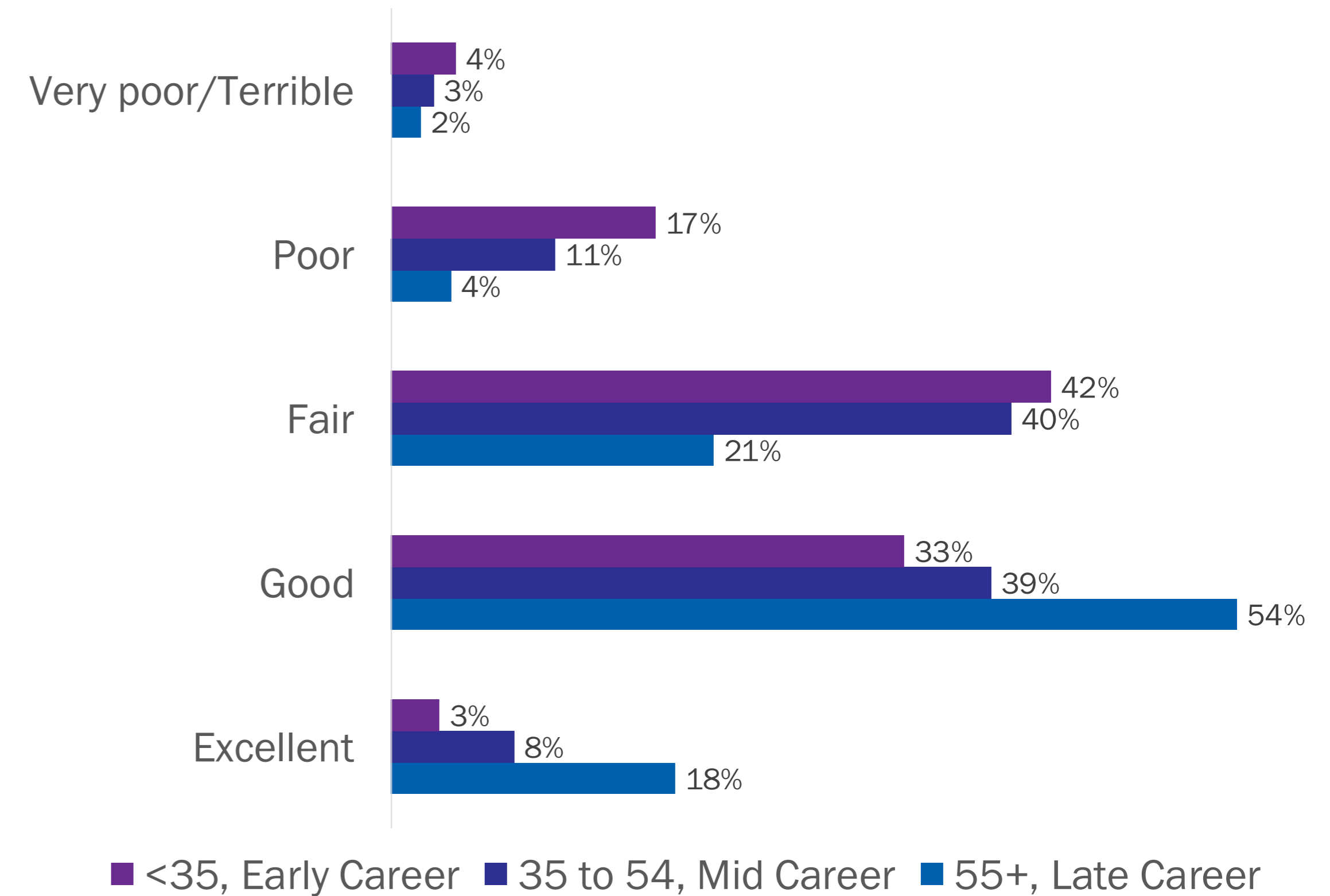
Early career nurses are more distressed and report worse mental health than their older counterparts.

Early career nurses are more likely to rate their job stress as “very high”



Generally, how would you rate the level of stress you experience on the job?

Early career nurses are more likely to rate their mental health as poor, fair and very poor or terrible.



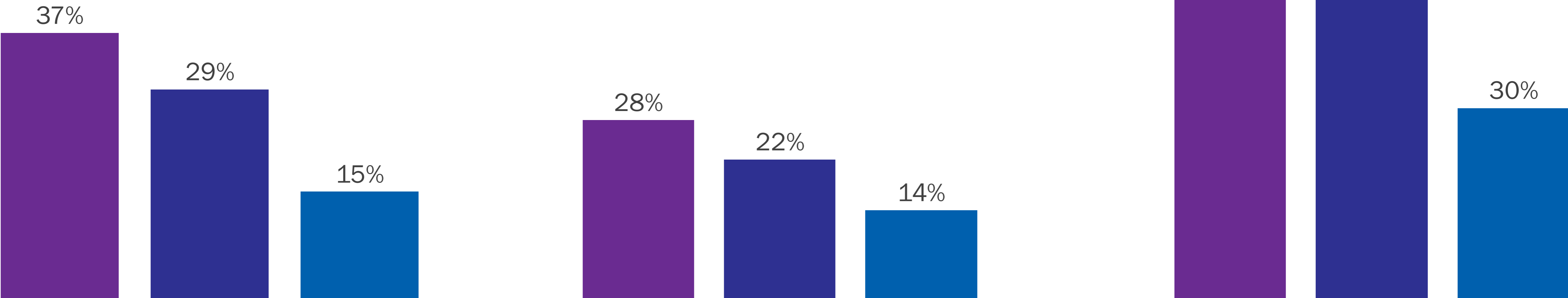
In general, would you say your mental health is...

Early career nurses are more likely to screen positive for anxiety, depression, and burnout than their later-career counterparts.

Early career nurses are more likely to screen positive for anxiety

Early career nurses are slightly more likely to screen positive for depression

Early career nurses are more likely to screen positive for burnout



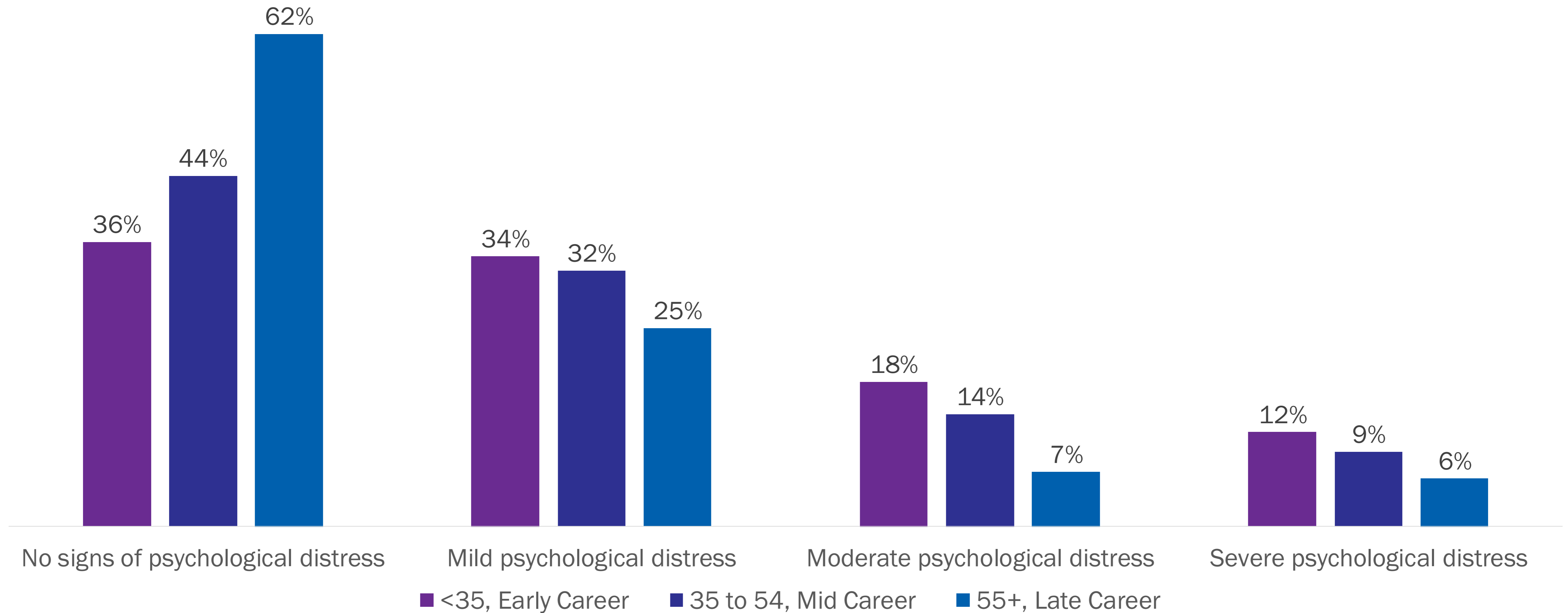
Screened positive for anxiety

Screened positive for depression

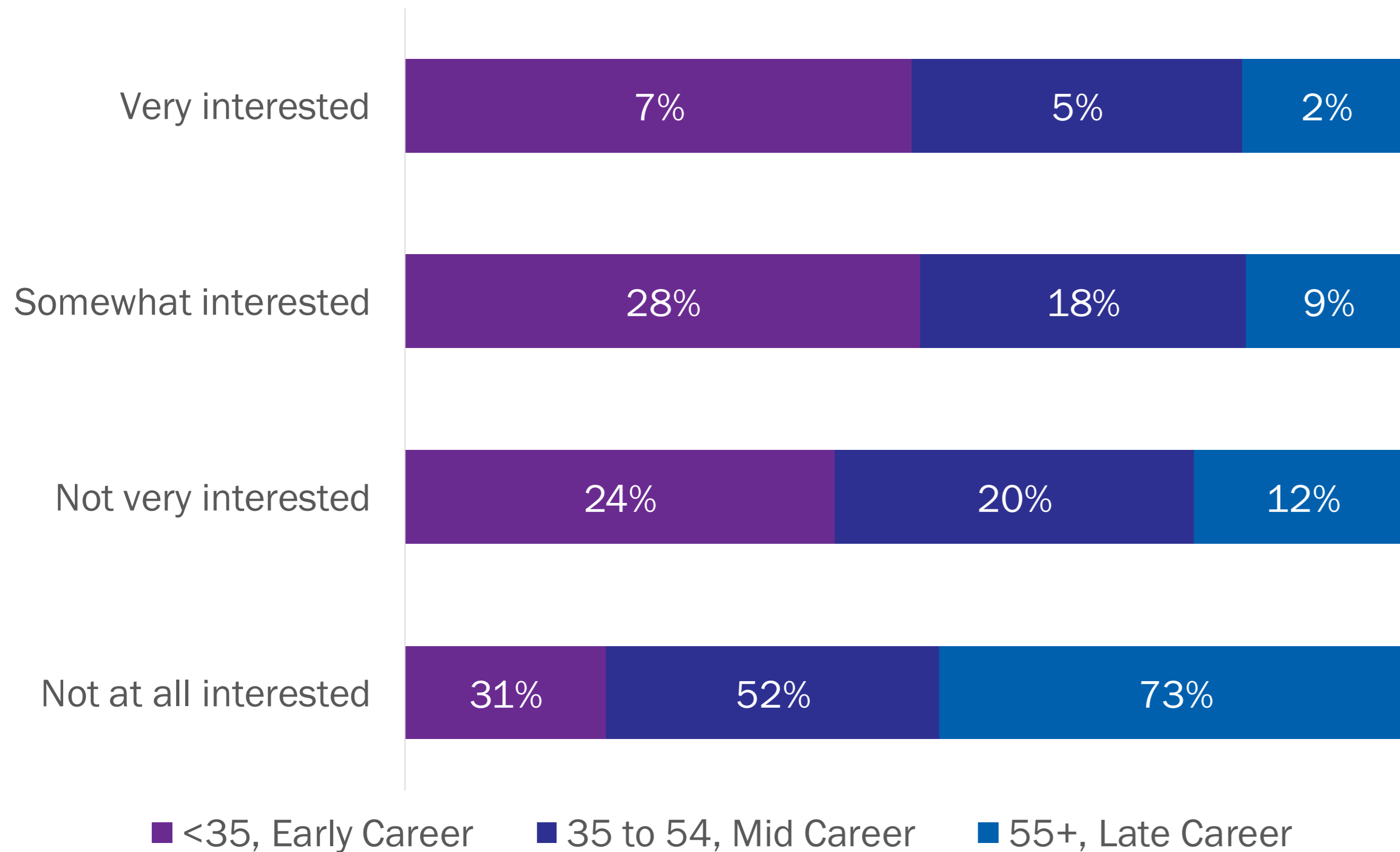
Screened positive for burnout

■ <35, Early Career ■ 35 to 54, Mid Career ■ 55+, Late Career

Early career nurses are more likely to show signs of psychological distress than their later-career counterparts.

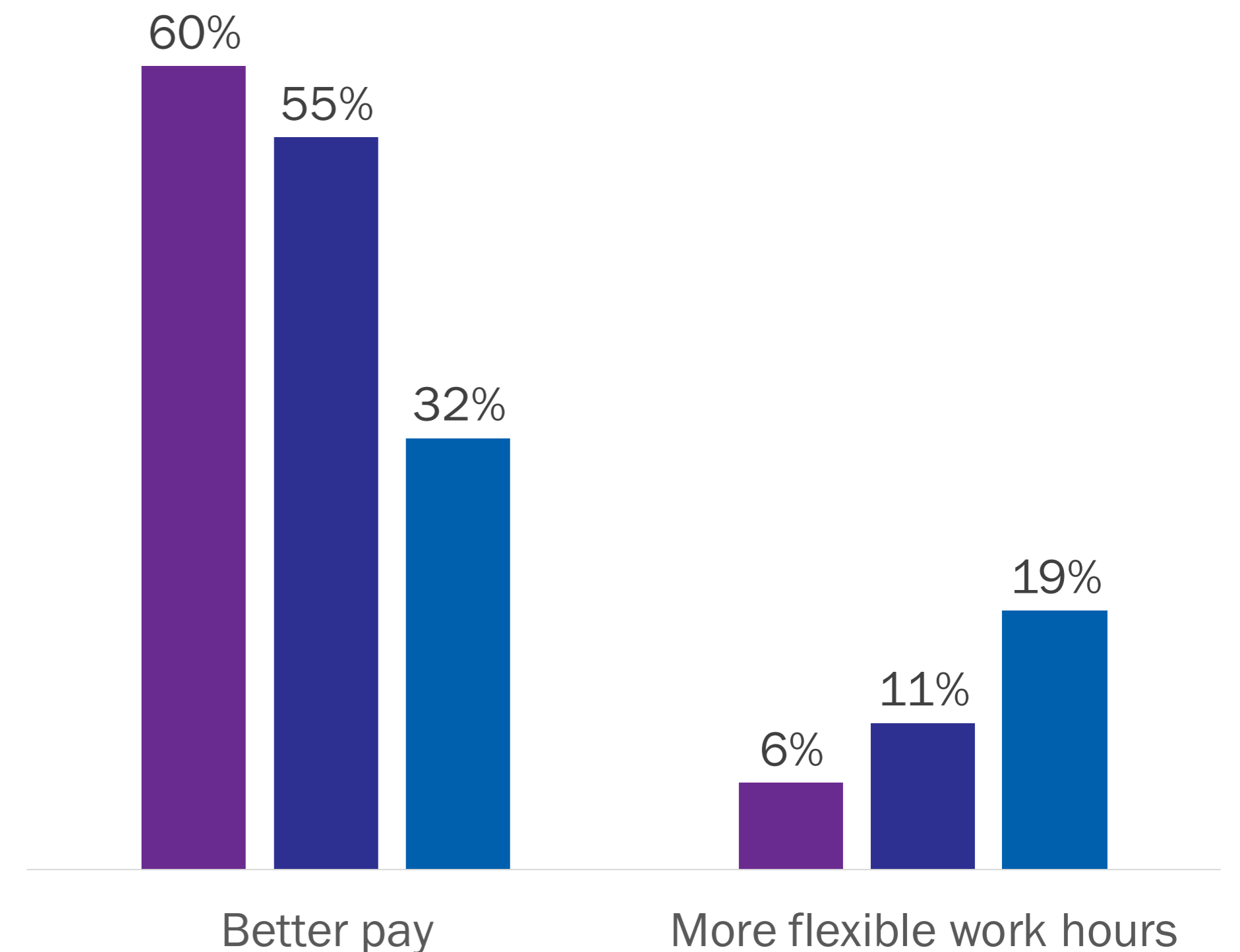


Early career nurses are significantly more drawn to agency work.



How interested are you in beginning agency work or increasing the amount of agency work you already do?

Early career nurses are more likely to cite better pay as the primary reason for their interest.



What is the main reason you are interested in work at a nursing agency or increasing the amount you work at a nursing agency?

Findings

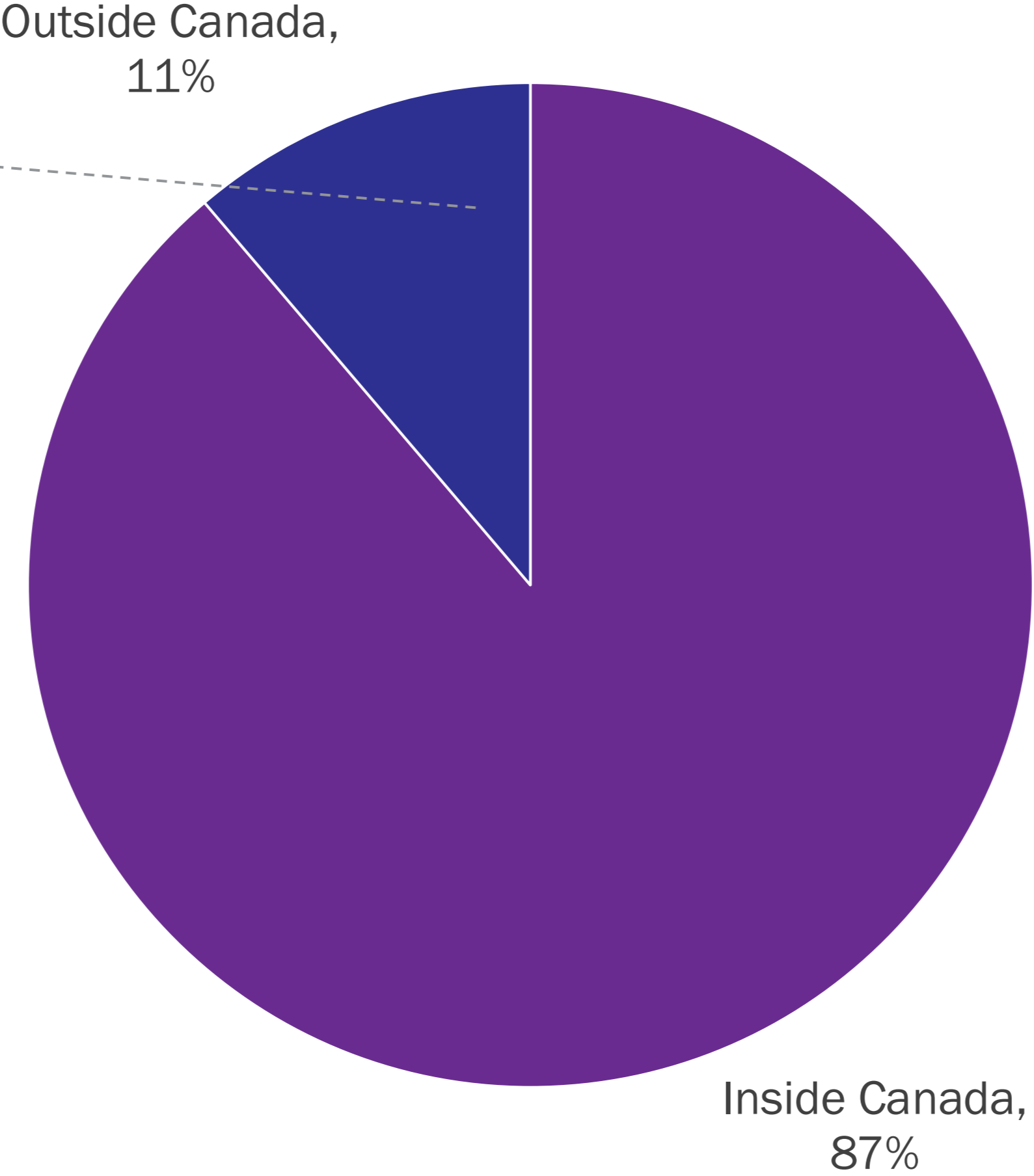
Experiences of Internationally Educated Nurses (IENs)



IENs make up 11% of the sample and are concentrated in clinical, frontline roles.

IEN's are:

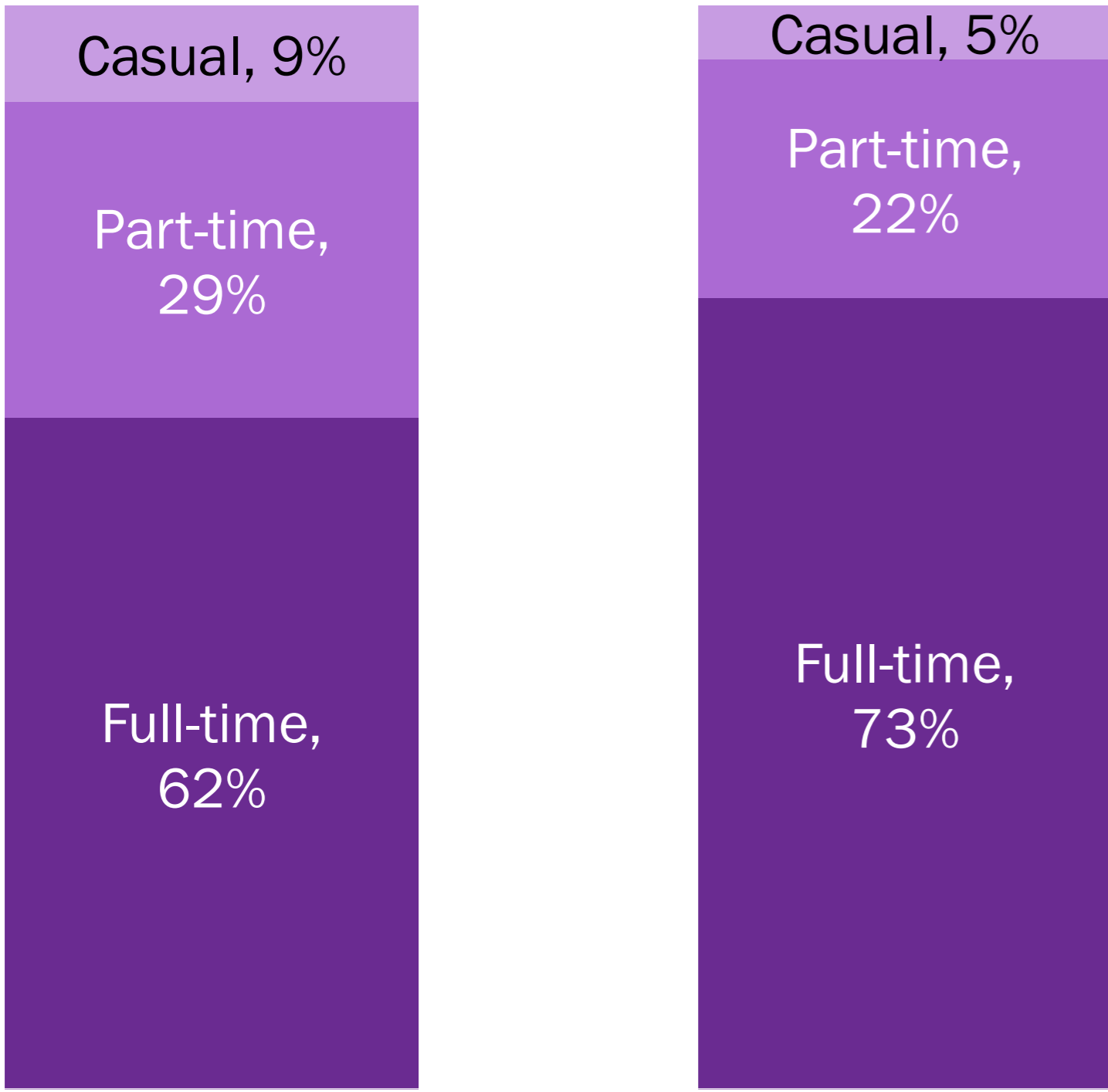
- Bedside clinicians (85%)
- Concentrated in LTC (18% compared to 9%)
- Predominantly racialized (34% Southeast Asian, 15% South Asian, 9% Black)
- Newer to their workplaces (55% 5 years or less compared to 36%)



Canadian-educated: 4,187
Internationally-educated: 516

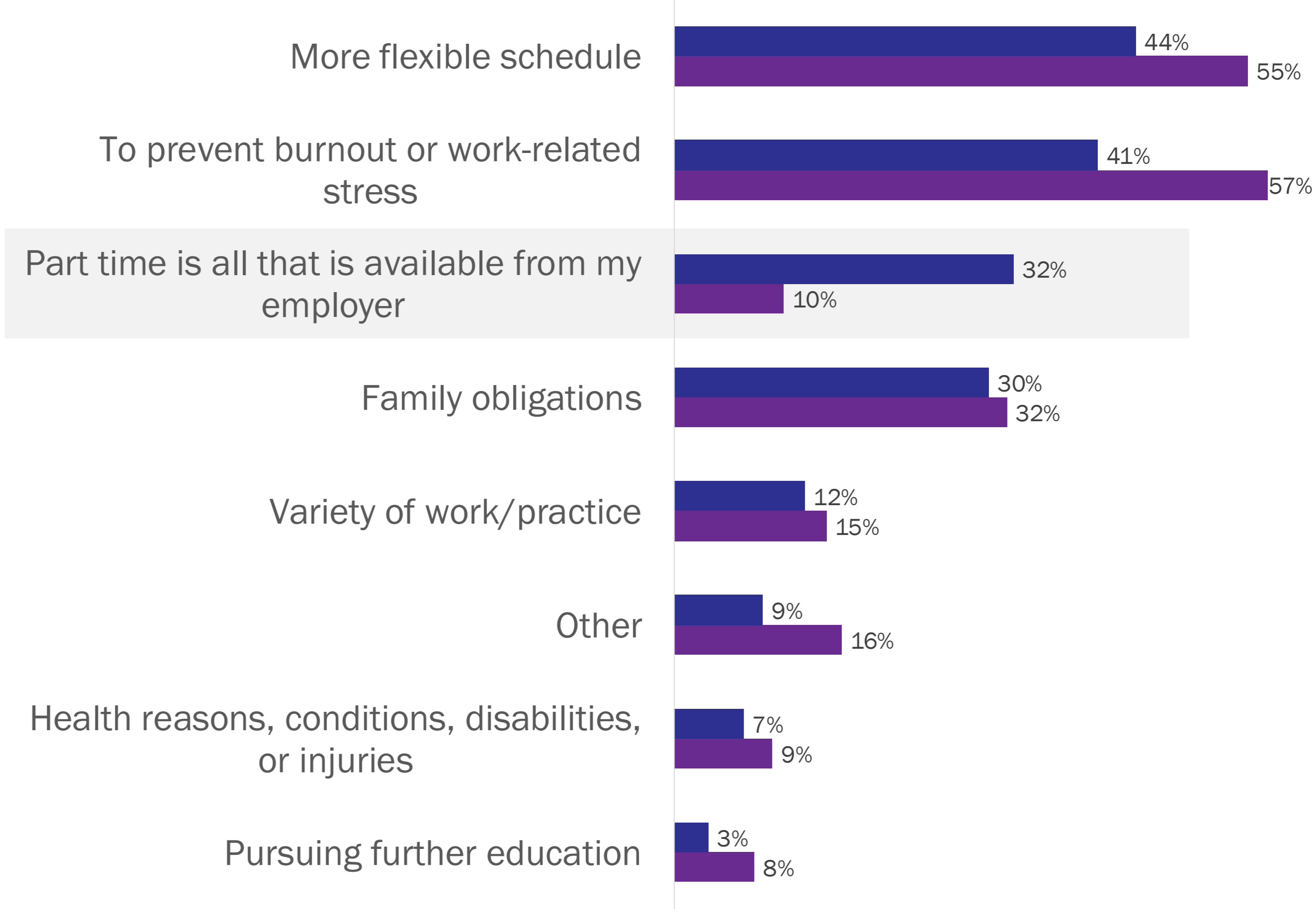
Did you receive your initial nursing education in Canada?

IENs are more likely to work full time.



Which one of the following best describes your current job status?

IENs who work part time are more likely to have this as their only option.

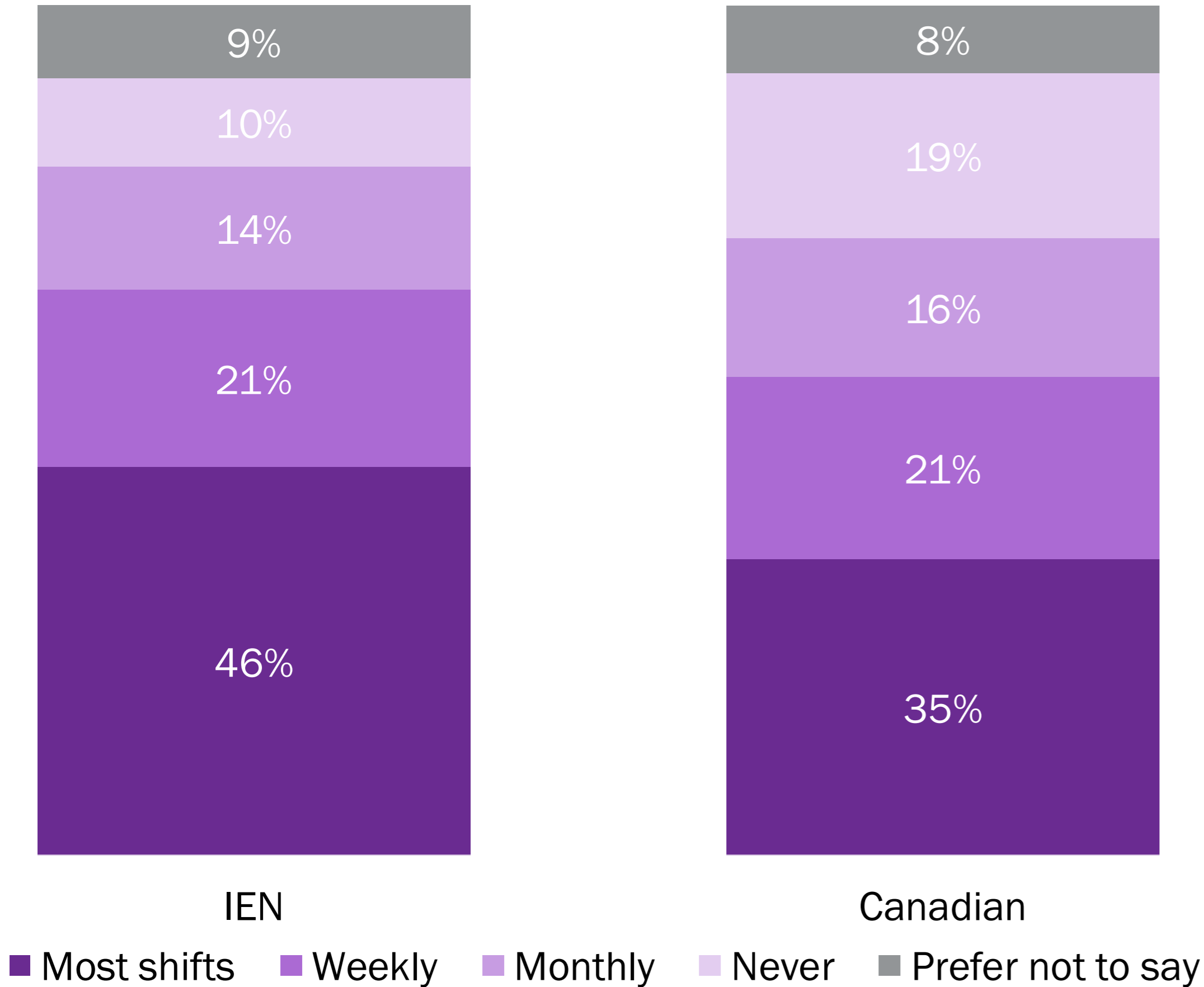


Why do you work part-time or casual hours?

■ IEN ■ Canadian-educated

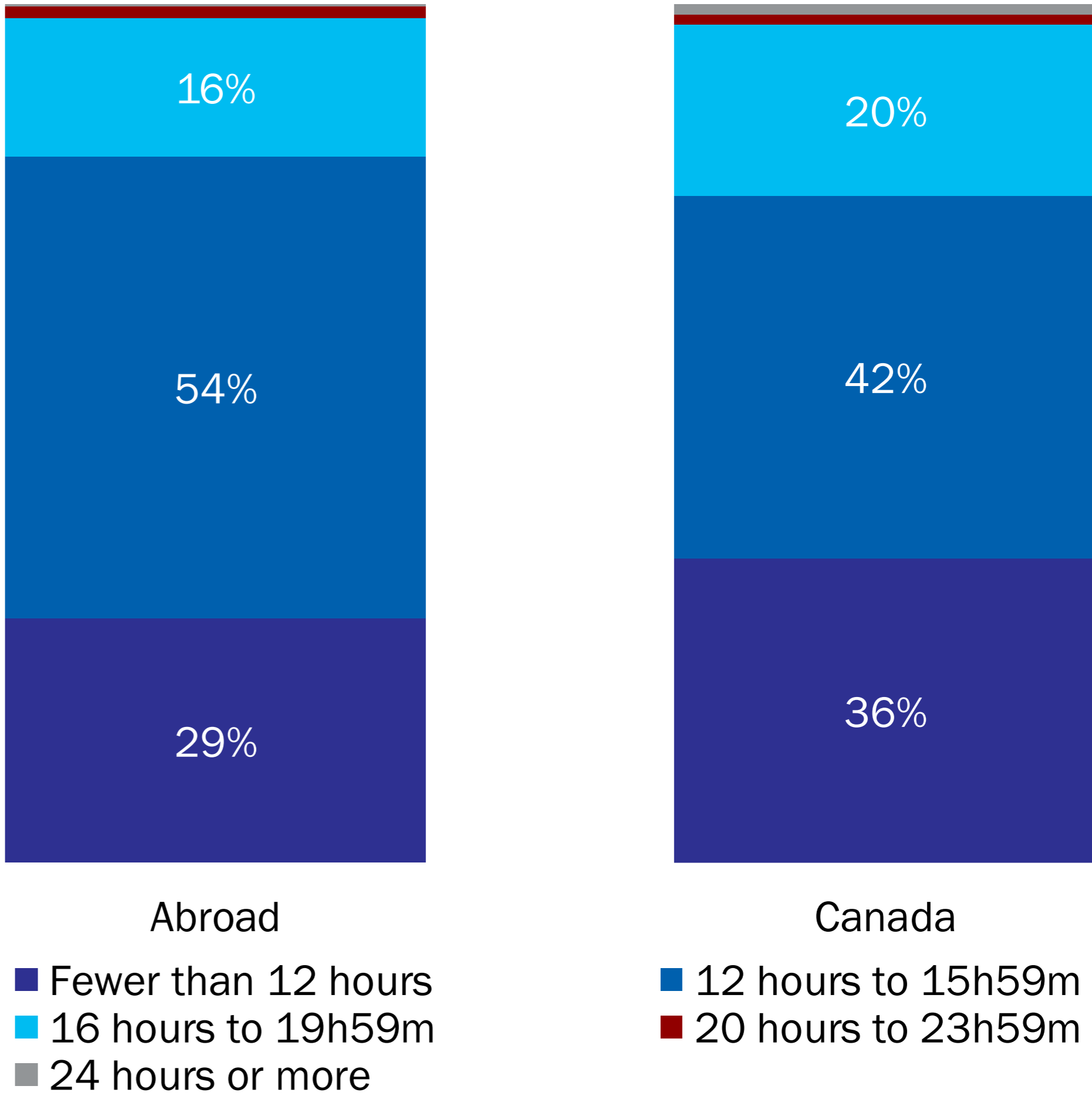
IENs report heavier patient loads and working longer shifts.

IENs more often feel responsible for more patients than they feel they can safely care for.



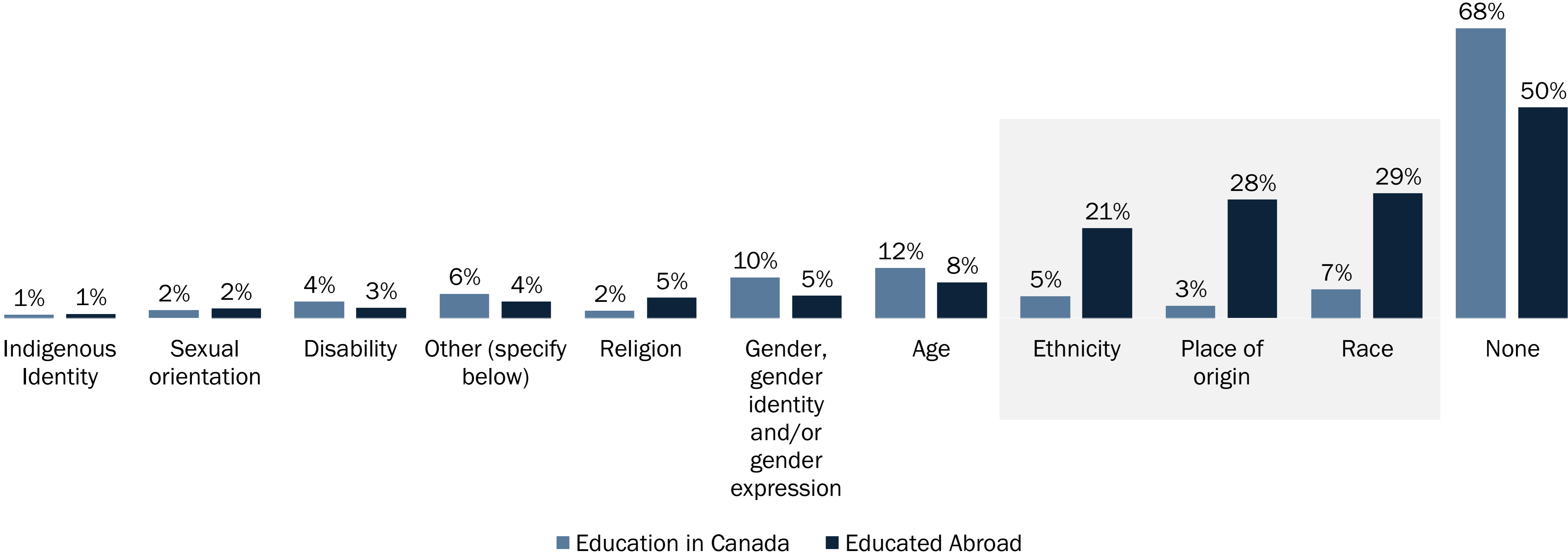
How often are you responsible for more patients than you feel you can safely care for?

More than half of IENs have worked a 12–16-hour shift in the past 6 months.



In the past 6 months, what is the longest single shift you have worked? All times include breaks, mealtimes, and report/handover.

Half of IENs experienced workplace discrimination in the past year – driven overwhelmingly by race, place of origin, and ethnicity.



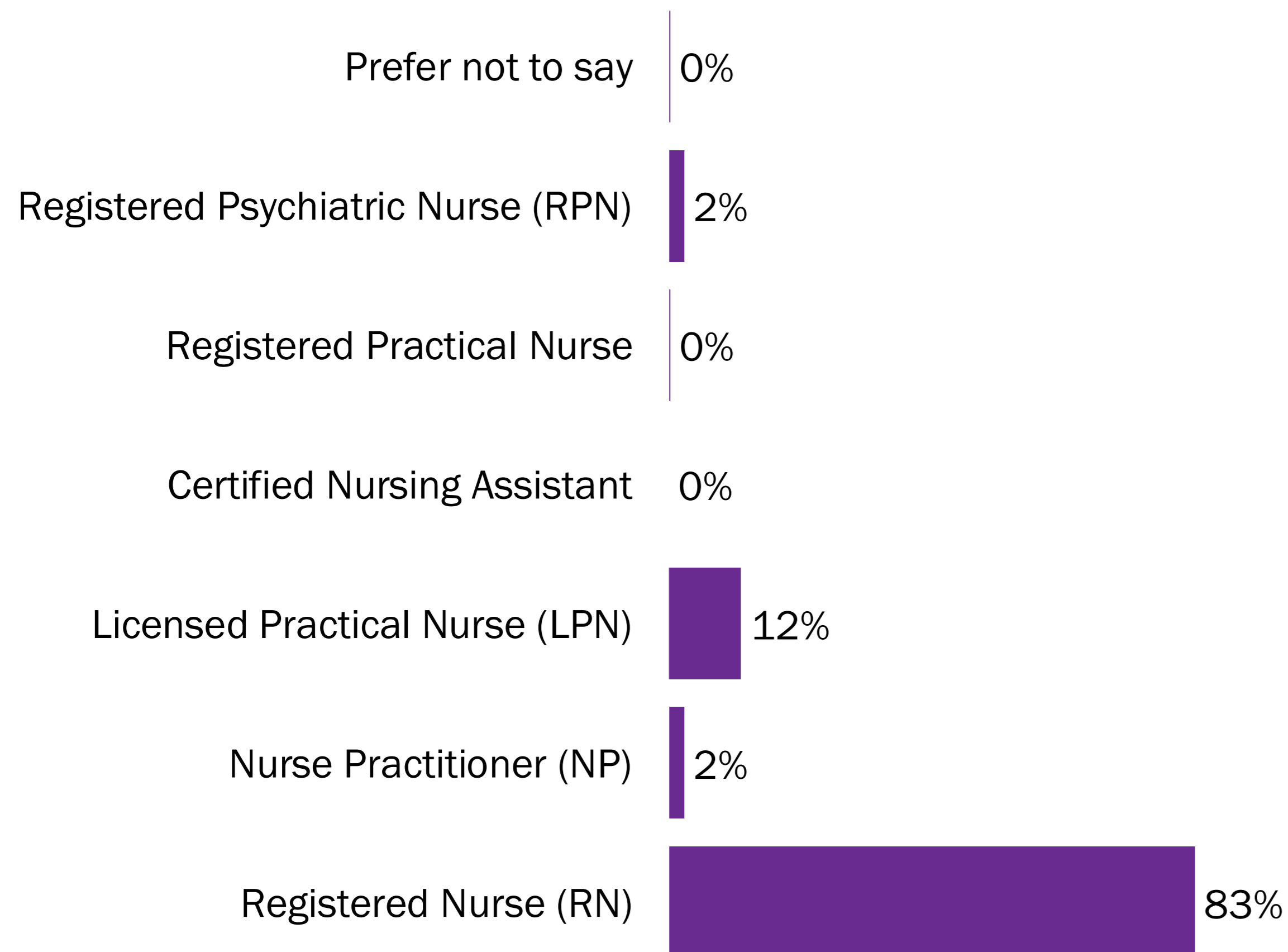
Findings

Sample Characteristics

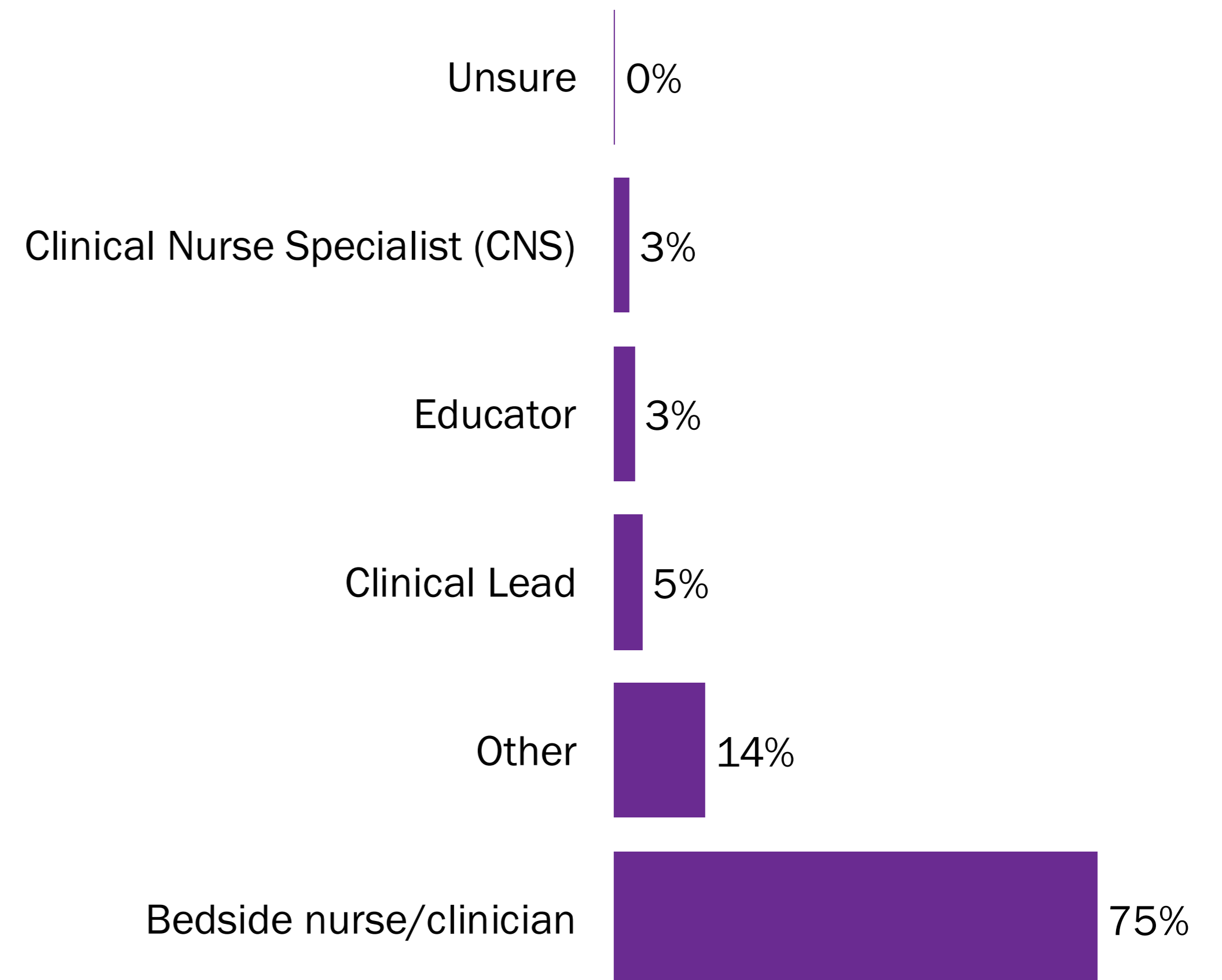


Most respondents practice under the RN designation and work in bedside nurse / clinician roles.

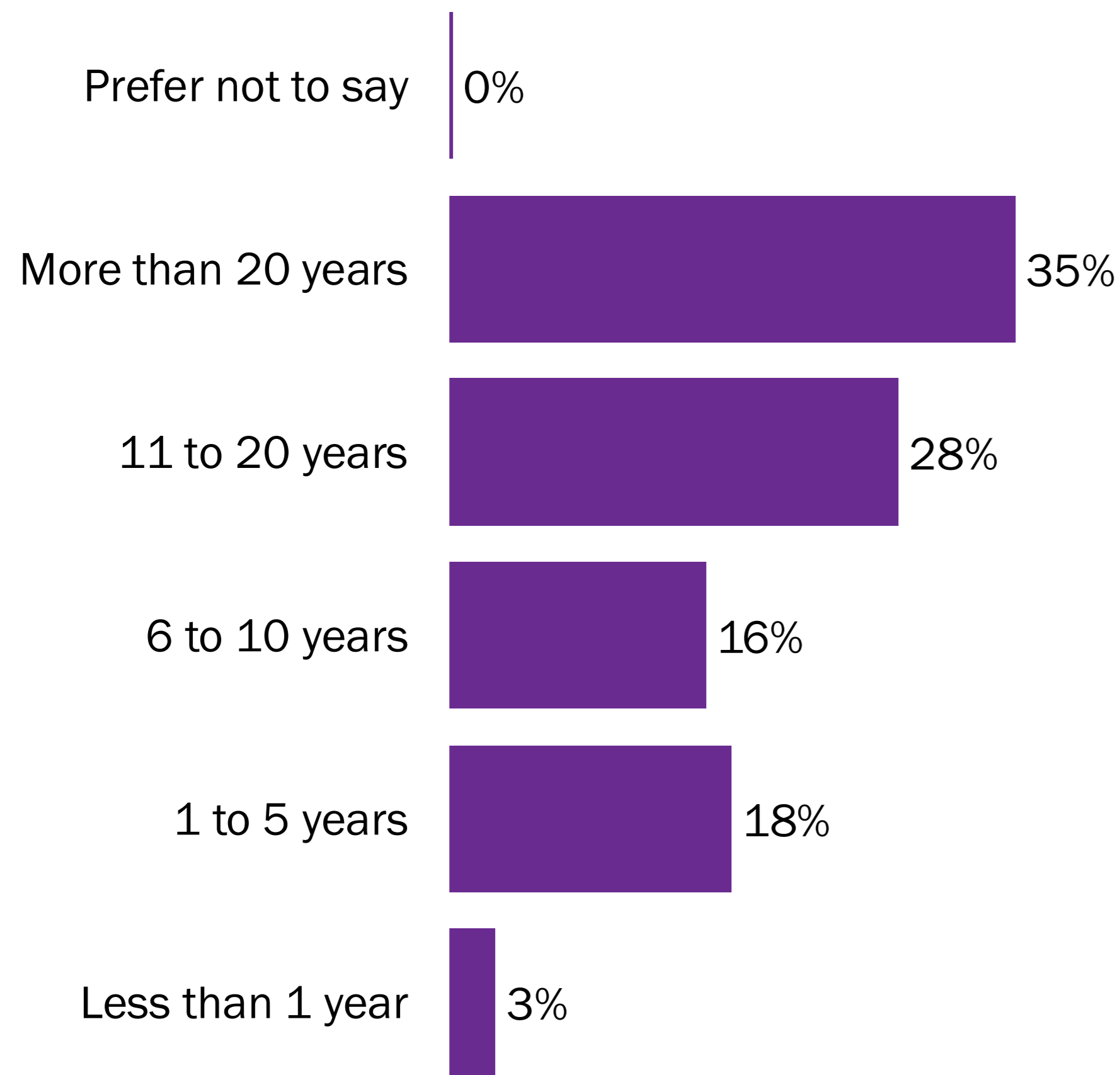
Please indicate the current nurse designation you are practicing under.



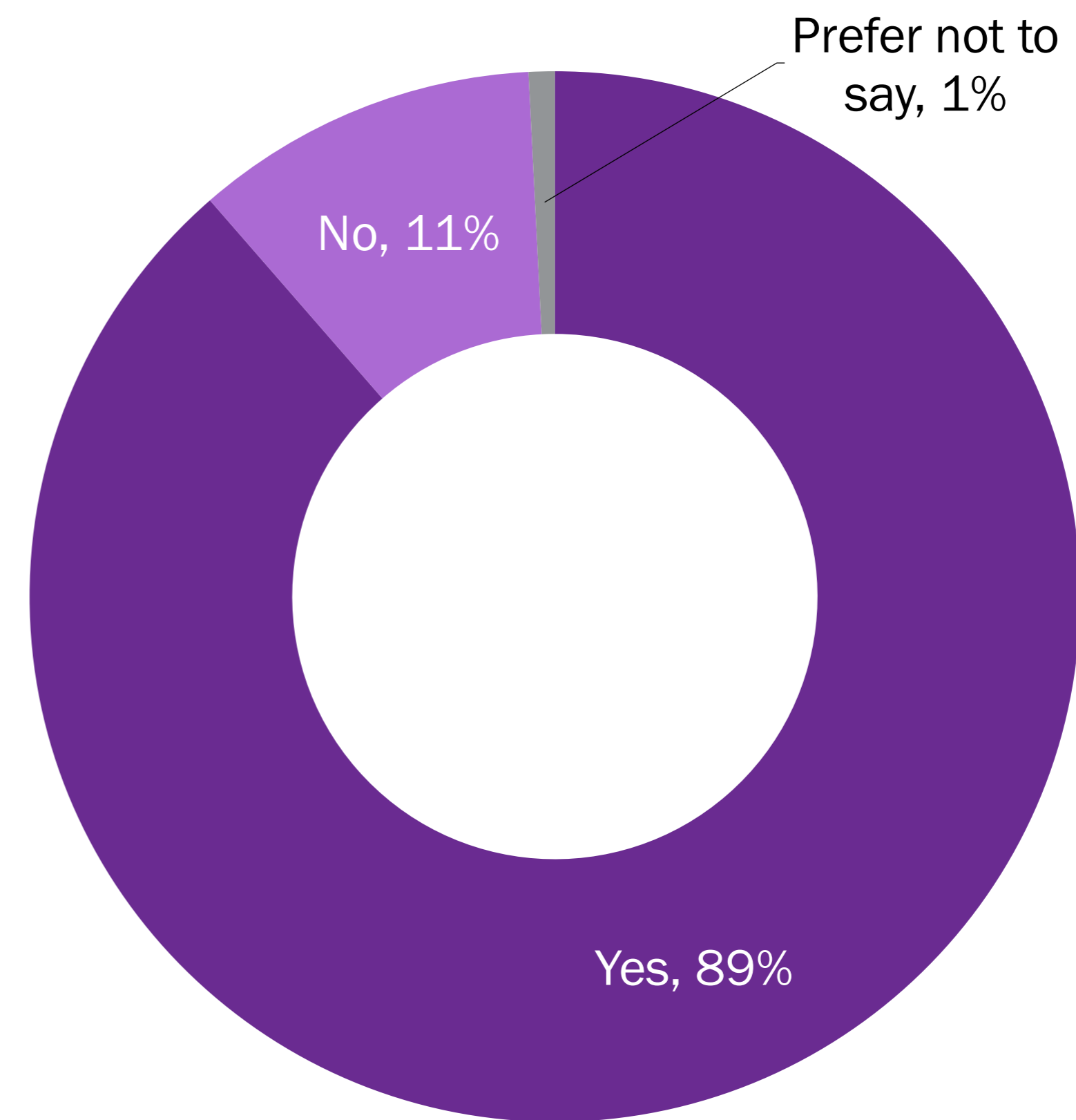
In your main job, which of the following would you use to describe your role?



Most respondents have been working as a nurse for more than 11 years. Most received their initial nursing education in Canada.

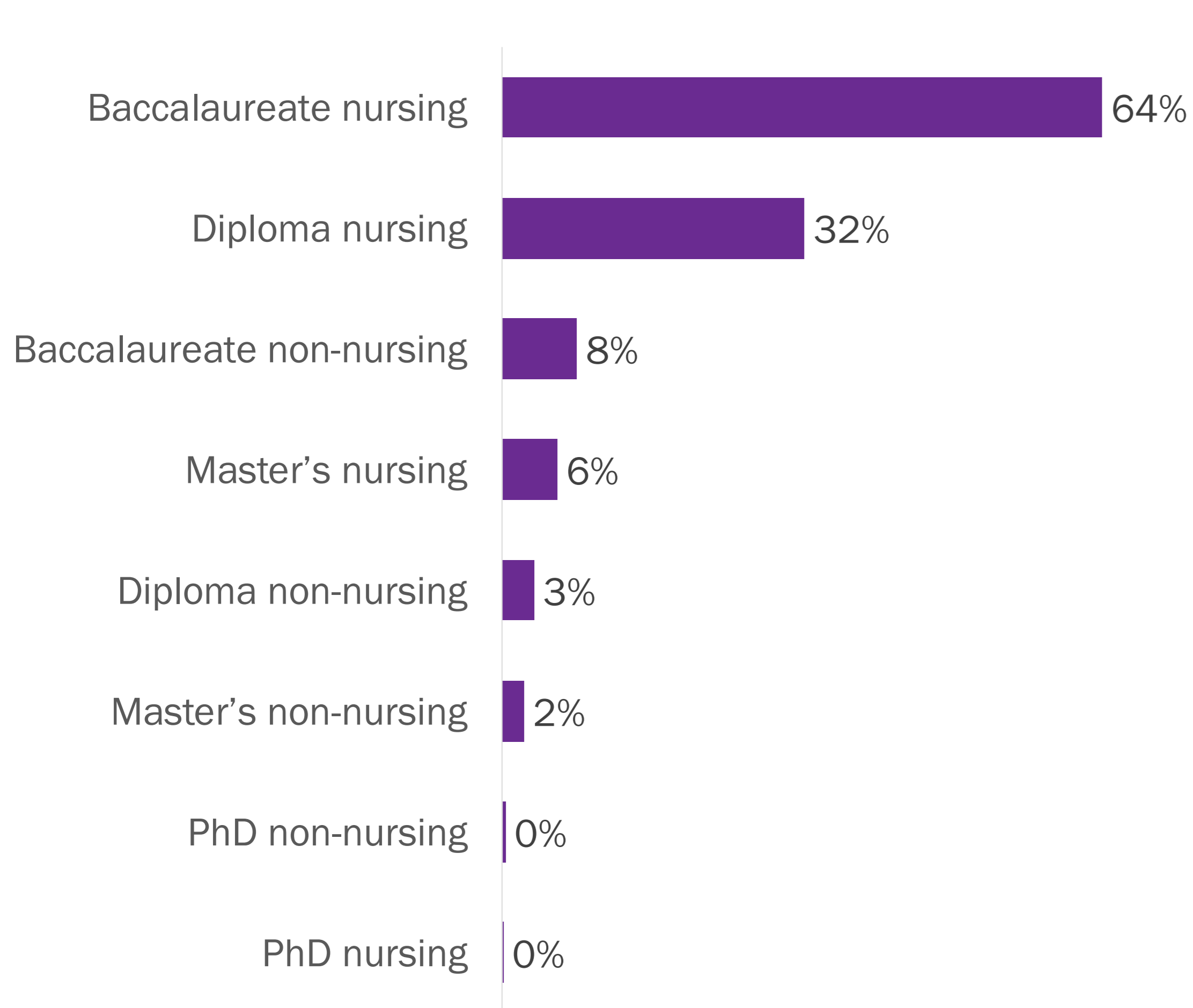


How long have you been working as a nurse?

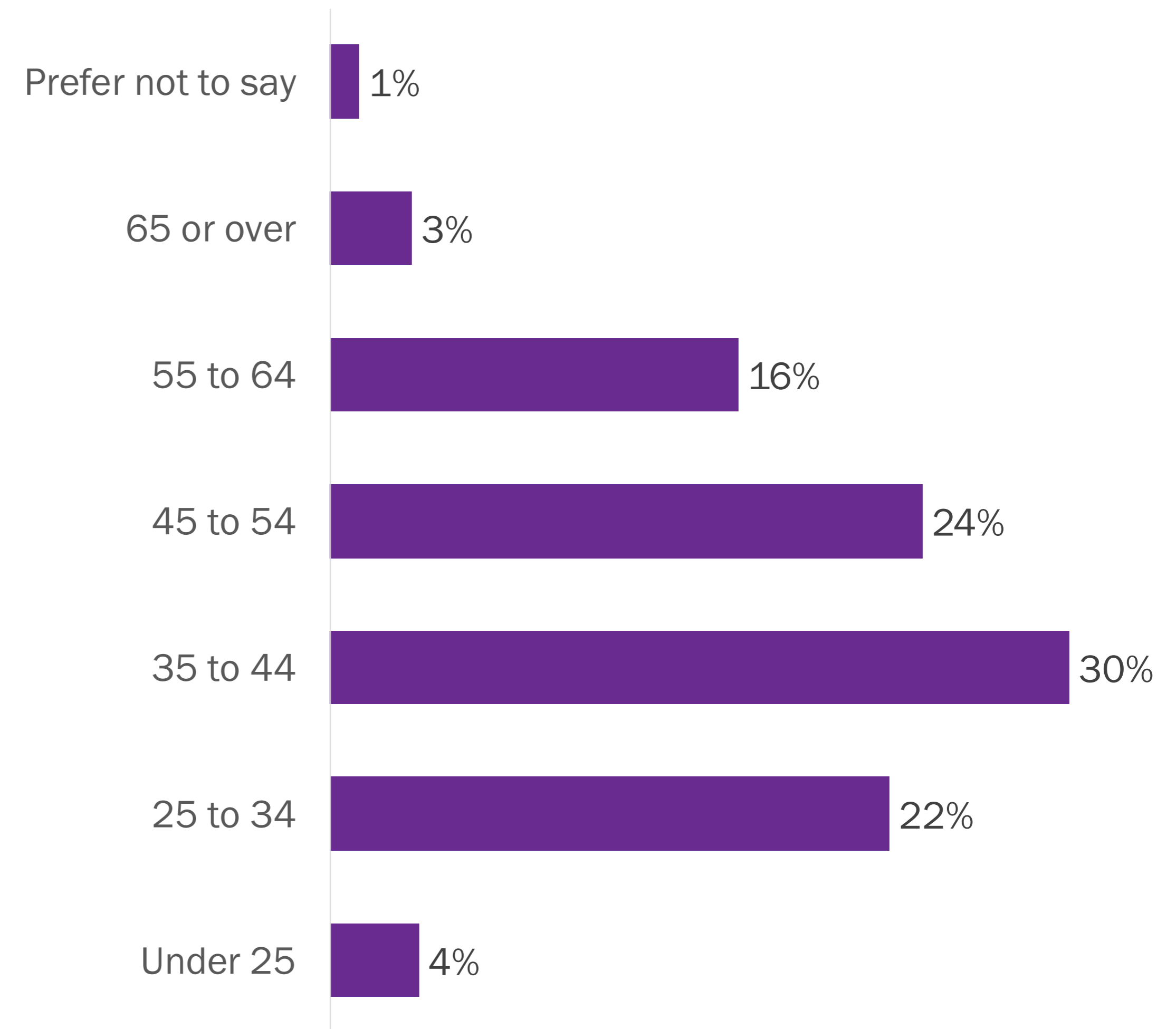


Did you receive your initial nursing education in Canada?

Most respondents have completed a baccalaureate in nursing. Respondents are distributed across age groups.

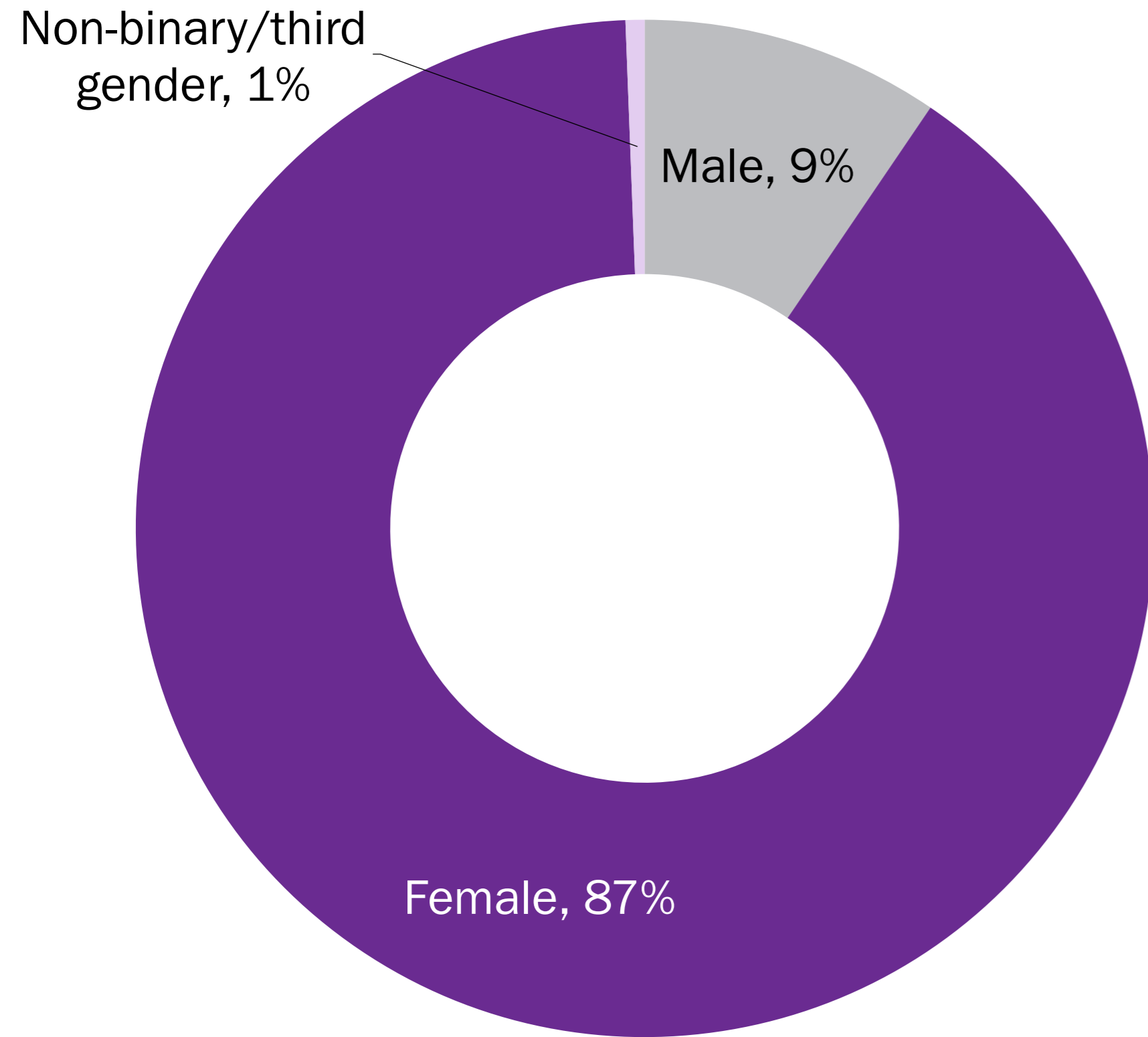


What level(s) of education have you completed?

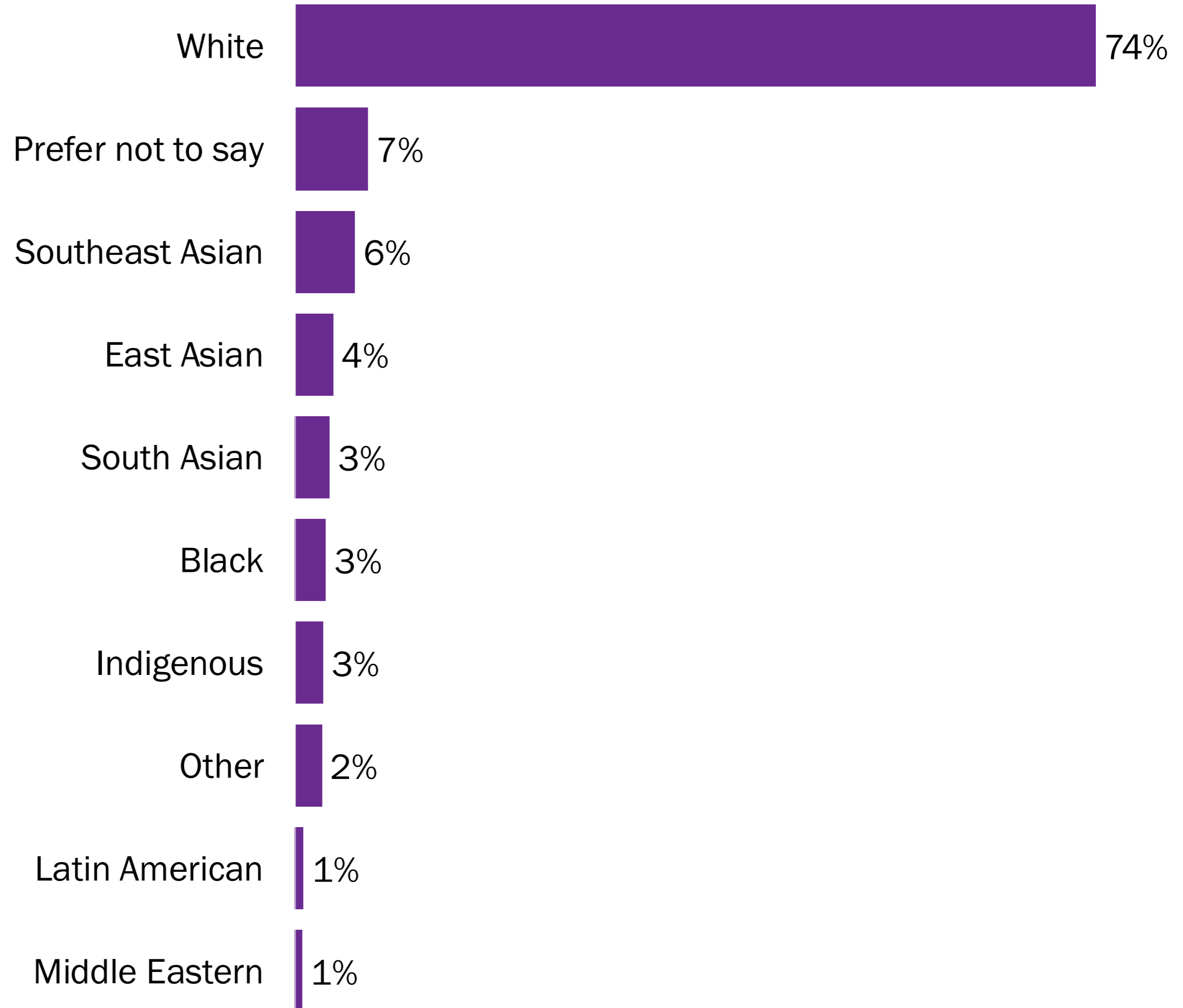


What age category are you in?

Most respondents identify as female and as white.



How do you identify?



In our society, people are often described by their race or racial background and our race may influence the way we are treated by individuals and institutions. Which category(ies) best describes you?