



Future Skills and the Post-pandemic Workforce

Carrington West & CIHT survey on the
changing nature of the workplace



Introduction

In 2021, CIHT worked with Carrington West to explore how the pandemic has changed the way organisations in the highways and infrastructure sector operate.

As we move forwards, many companies will be rethinking the way they operate and the future of their workforce, to ensure business continuity and the happiness and safety of their employees.

Through a series of three surveys sent to CIHT members and Carrington West contacts, between September and November 2021, we investigated:

- **Survey One: The future of the post pandemic workforce – what will be the new normal?**
- **Survey Two: Inclusivity, skills and training in the post Covid workplace**
- **Survey Three: “Future Skills” - what does the future look like for young engineers?**

Executive Summary

The way we work changed dramatically in March 2020 because of the need to reduce the spread of Covid-19. This adaptation has resulted in what looks to be part of a longer-term change in how we work, particularly with a move to increased use of hybrid working.

Before the pandemic, just under one in three people worked with mixture of home and office, in a hybrid way. After restrictions were fully lifted this increased to 3 out of 4 people adopting hybrid working. Our results show people value this, two out of three respondents said they would only consider jobs in the future if they could work remotely all or some of the time. Technology is key to making this work and technology skills are more important now than before the pandemic.

This change to our working patterns also means a change to our travel patterns, something that affects all CIHT members.

The support for people's wellbeing was high on the agenda for the employers of the people that responded to the survey. Something that was great to see and CIHT believe should continue as we move forward.

Finally, we saw some interesting results around equity, diversity & inclusion (ED&I) policy. Larger companies have put in place policies, but for smaller organisations further progress needs to be made with establishing policies.



The survey results confirm that the pandemic has opened the eyes of many to new ways of working and hybrid working has now become mainstream. However, the challenge is to maintain and increase productivity across the sector as almost 20% felt their productivity decreased while working from home.

Furthermore, the majority of respondents have felt the impact of the pandemic on the culture of the workplace, though the experience has not been consistent for all.

Finally, an interesting question is raised from the results; will the demographic profile of the office start to change as younger employers will be most likely to be the ones solely working in the office while more senior staff have access to hybrid working?

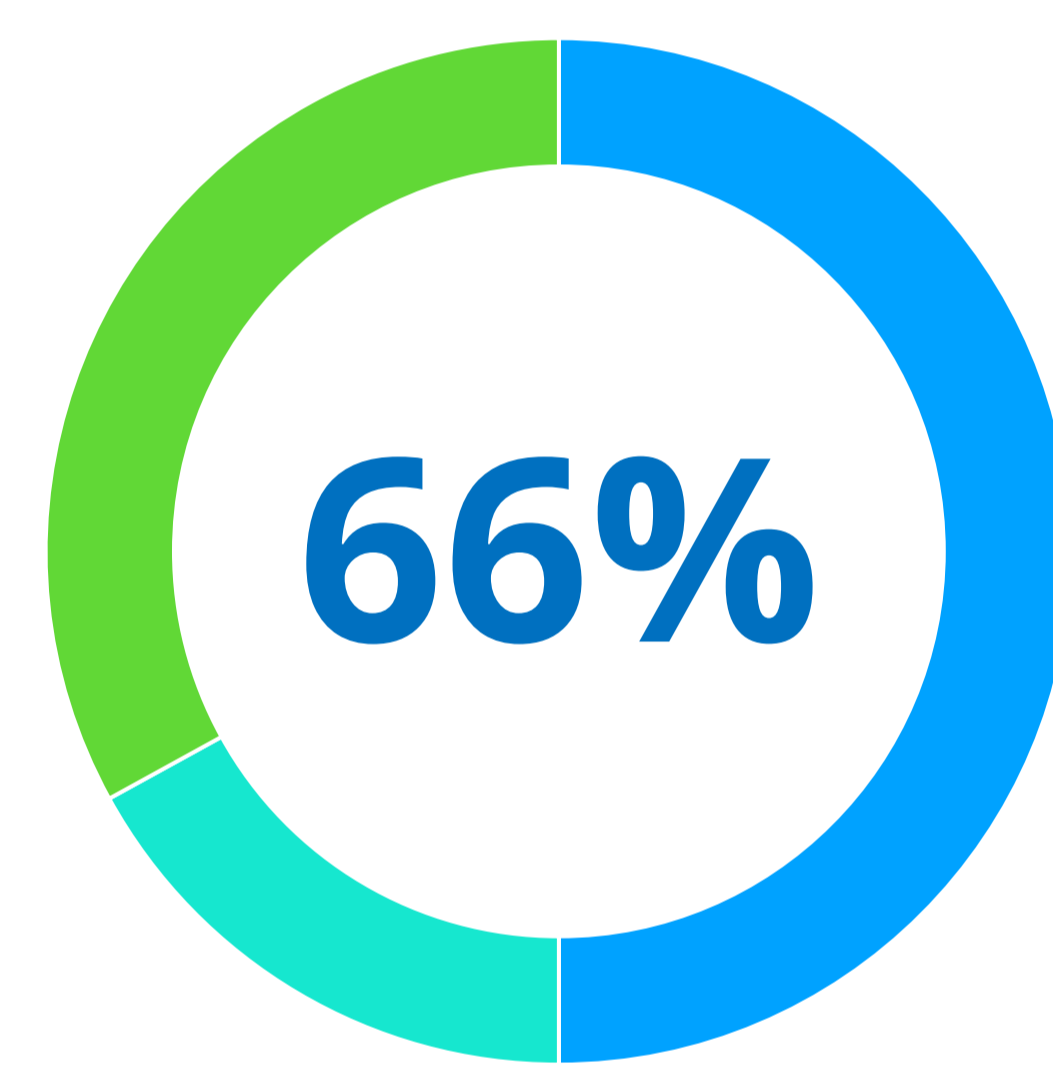
Has the pandemic changed the culture of your team and/or that of your wider organization?

24% Yes – negatively

38% Yes – positively

27% No

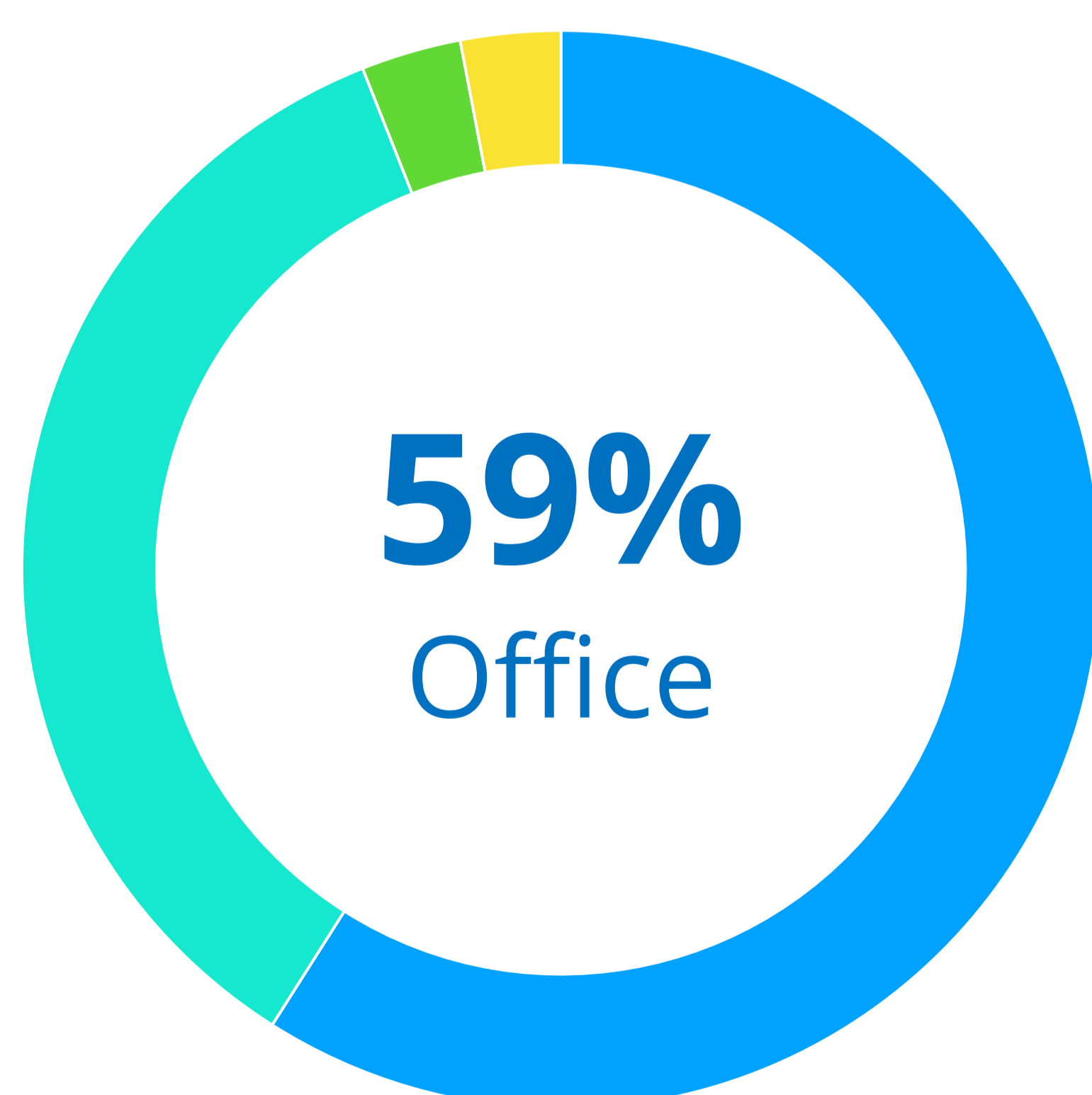
*Please note **41%** of those involved in the decision-making process for recruitment or manage a team or influence staff development within their organisation said **yes**.*



Agree that their productivity has not been affected by working from home.

■ Disagree ■ Don't know ■ Agree

Before the pandemic the majority were **office based**



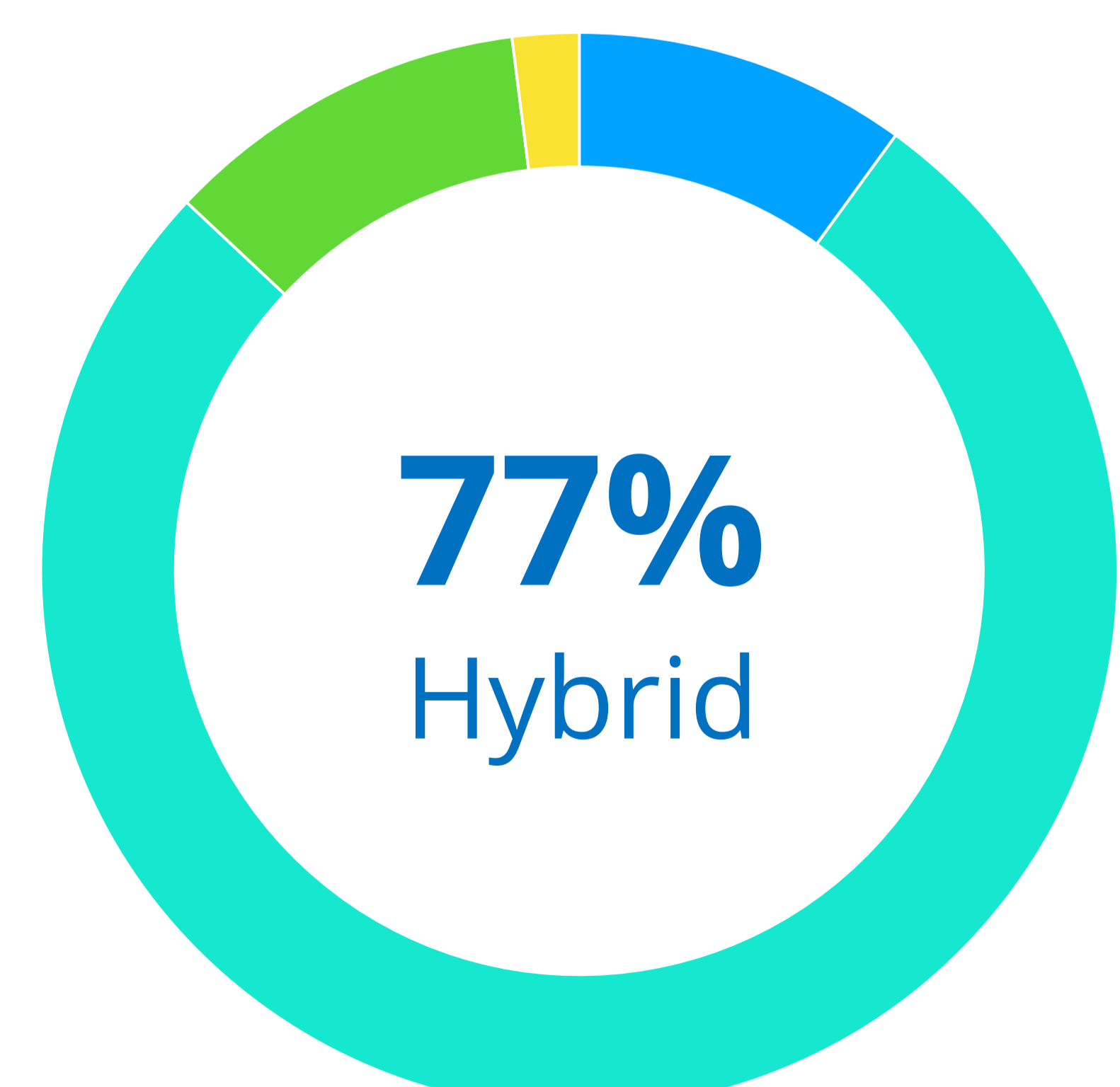
Home



On-site



By Q4 2021 the majority worked to a **hybrid model**



Office



Hybrid



The evidence suggests that hybrid working will persist due to the competitive pressure of attracting and retaining talent as almost two thirds of respondents would consider jobs in the future if they could work remotely all or some of the time.

While a minority believed that the skills needed in their organisation have changed as a result of the pandemic, it is clear that interpersonal skills maintain their importance even with remote working.

“I would only consider jobs in the future if I could work remotely, all or some of the time.”

68%

of people with **less** than 7 years of experience **agree**.

62%

of people with **more** than 7 years of experience **agree**.

“The skills we need in our organisation have changed as a result of the pandemic.”

32% agree



“Interpersonal skills are less important now that more people work remotely.”

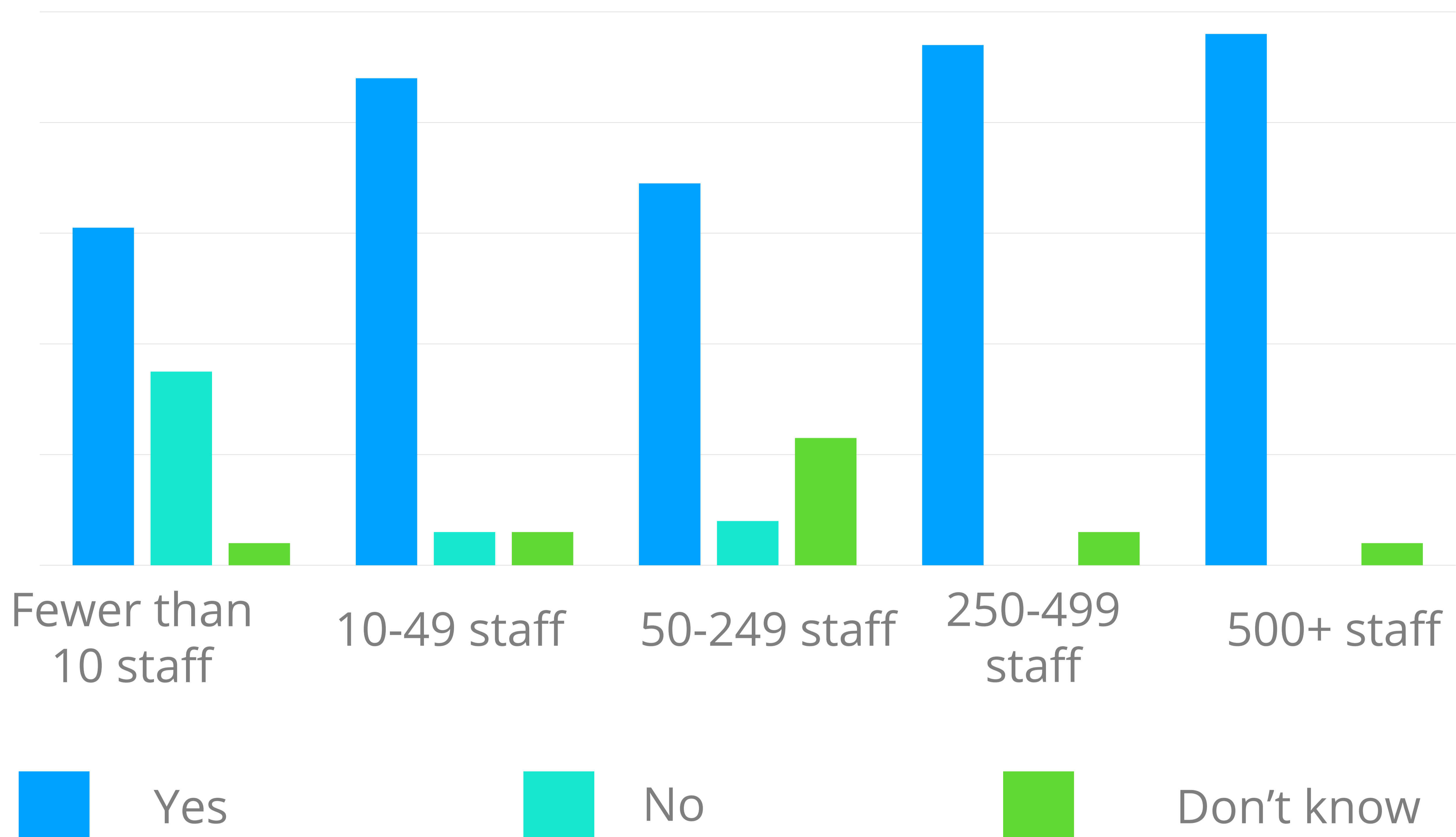
92% disagree



ED&I policy, training and guidelines appears to be better established within larger organisations, however, the challenge to solve remote or hybrid working to better meet ED&I objectives when hiring is a problem across the sector and a matter of urgency if ED&I is not to take a backwards step.

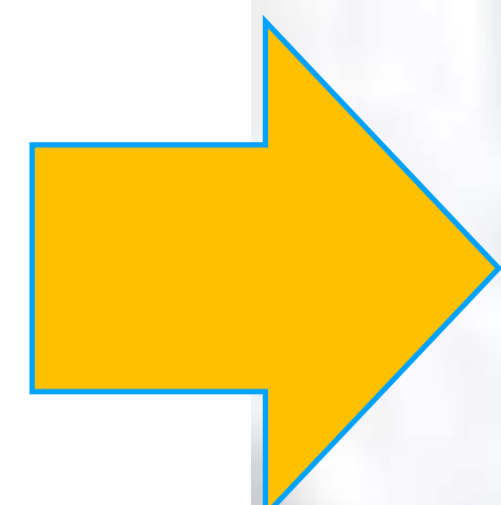
Furthermore, to compound the issue, it is of great concern that a number of respondents who are involved in decision-making process for recruitment or manage a team or influence staff development within their organization, are not aware of an ED&I policy within their organisation. Training to help staff understand how to contribute positively to inclusion and diversity in the workplace is inconsistent at all levels of organisations. Nearly 50% of respondents (65% of respondents in organisations with less than 499 staff) receiving no training.

Does your organisation have an Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (ED&I) policy?



Results from those involved in the decision-making process for recruitment or manage a team or influence staff development within their organisation.

Has remote or hybrid (remote/office mix) working enabled your organisation better meet ED&I objectives when hiring?



8% said yes

Please note that respondents from organisations with less than 50 staff, 0% said yes.

Have you ever received ED&I training?



65% said yes
of hiring managers/team leaders

Please note that respondents from organisations with less than 250 staff less than 47% said yes.

Have you ever received ED&I training to help you understand how to contribute positively to inclusion and diversity in the workplace?



56% said yes
of employees with no hiring or management responsibility

Please note that respondents from organisations with less than 499 staff 35% said yes.



The results presented here clearly show that training and development is something that is very much still expected in the workplace post-pandemic. The question of how best to deliver programmes in the future is something that organisations will need to review. This is something that many organisations have, with 69% of decision makers saying that training programmes have been adapted to accommodate remote workers, conversely, only 43% of agree that their organisation has done this.



Top technical skills employers think young professionals are lacking:



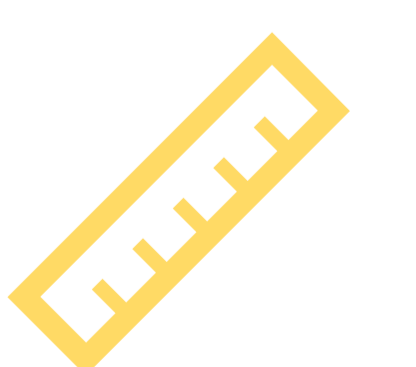
Report & technical writing



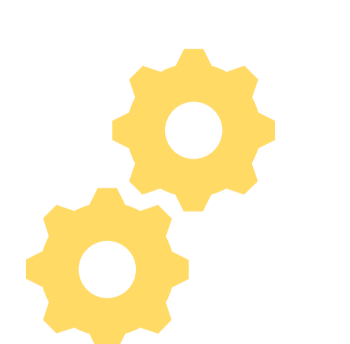
Technical software



Data analysis



Design



Problem solving



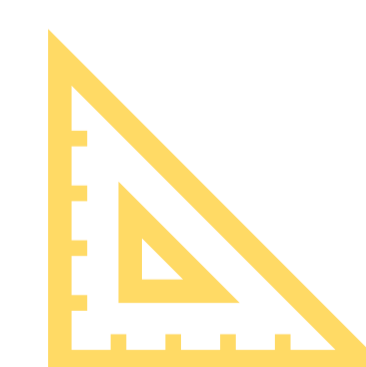
Critical thinking



Application of theory into practical world



Technical knowledge



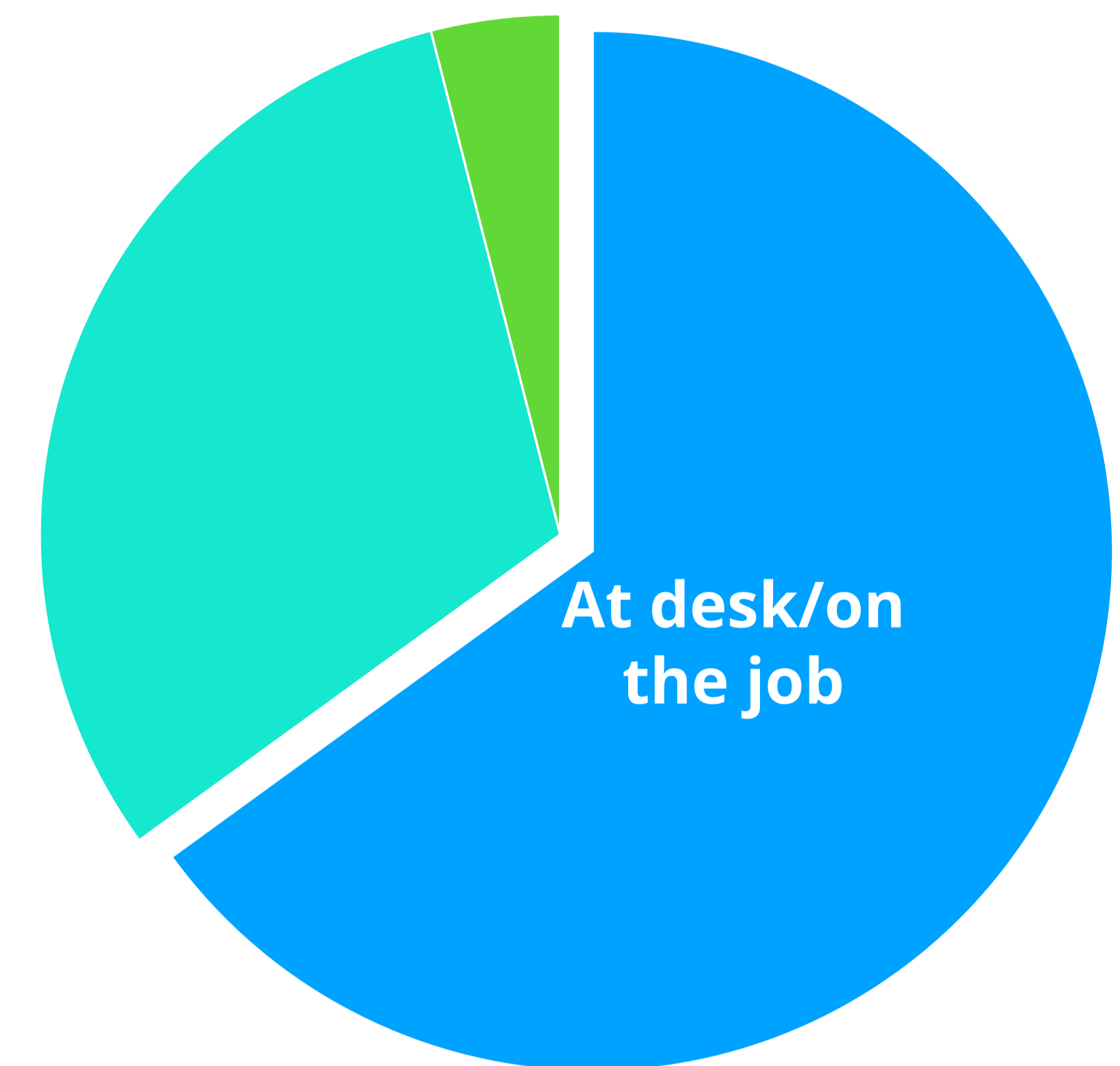
Site experience



Standards

Young professionals appear to be the ones that have had their learning and development opportunities impacted the most. The majority of respondents (66%) indicated that learning and development for young professionals is harder than pre-pandemic and that 41% said that young professionals do not get the same level of support they had previously. The lack of training and development opportunities for young professionals was going to be a likely consequence of the pandemic in the industry, especially informal opportunities that are found in a face-to-face environment. Something that is a clear indicator of this is the fact that a fifth (20%) of respondents said that the pandemic had affected their career progression.

The majority of training for entry level professionals is at desk or on the job.



At desk/"on the job" training by peers and managers: **65%**

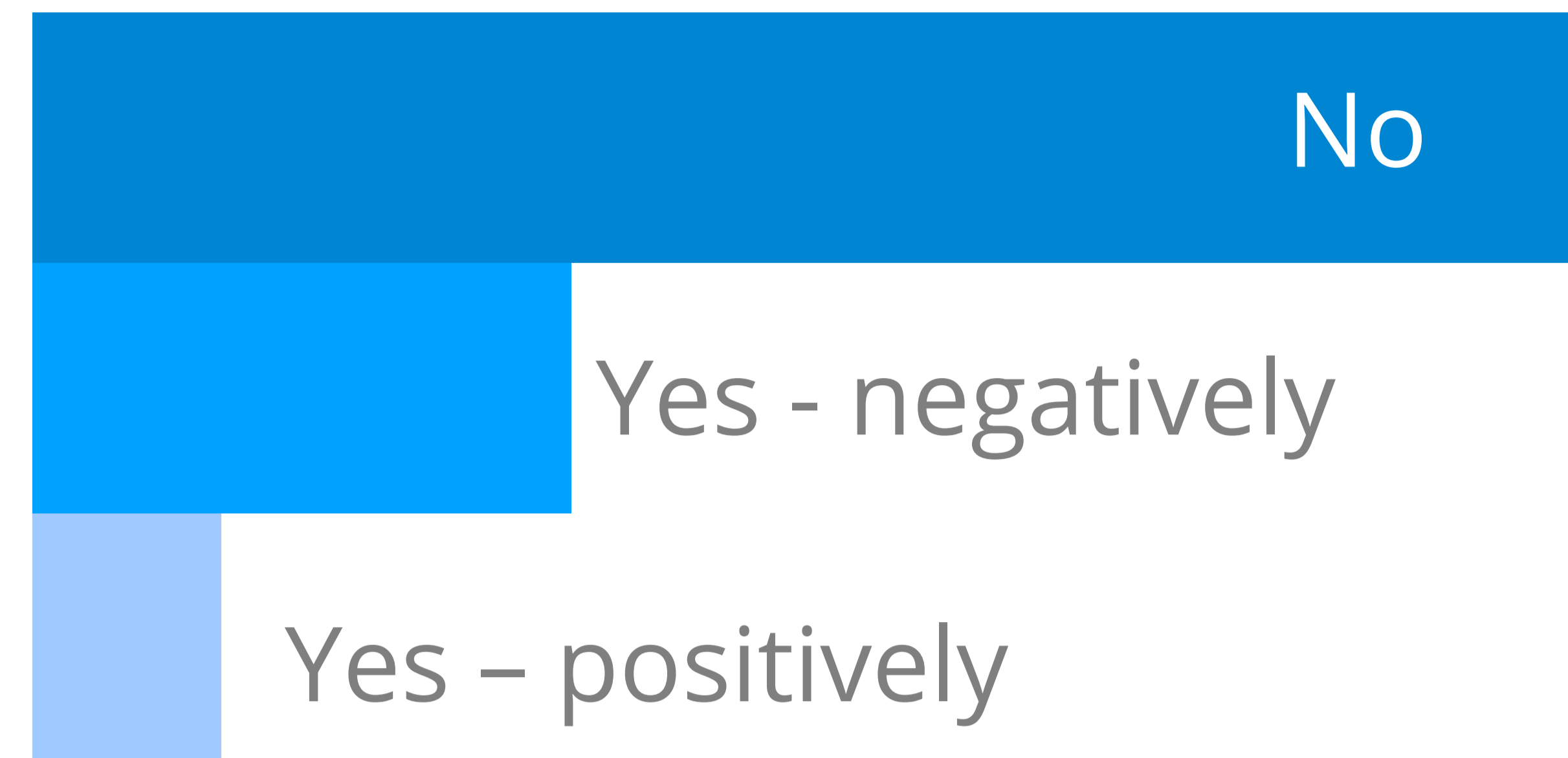
A formal, structured programme that has set achievement targets and clear expectations: **31%**

External providers including professional organisations such as the CIHT: **4%**

69% of leaders say they adapted training to accommodate remote workers **but only 43%** of young professionals agree



“The pandemic has affected career development and progression within my organisation.”



Does your company provide staff with a mentor/coach?

64% of respondents who are involved in the decision-making process for recruitment or manage a team or influence staff development within their organisation **said yes.**

78% of those worked in companies with **250-499** staff said **yes.**

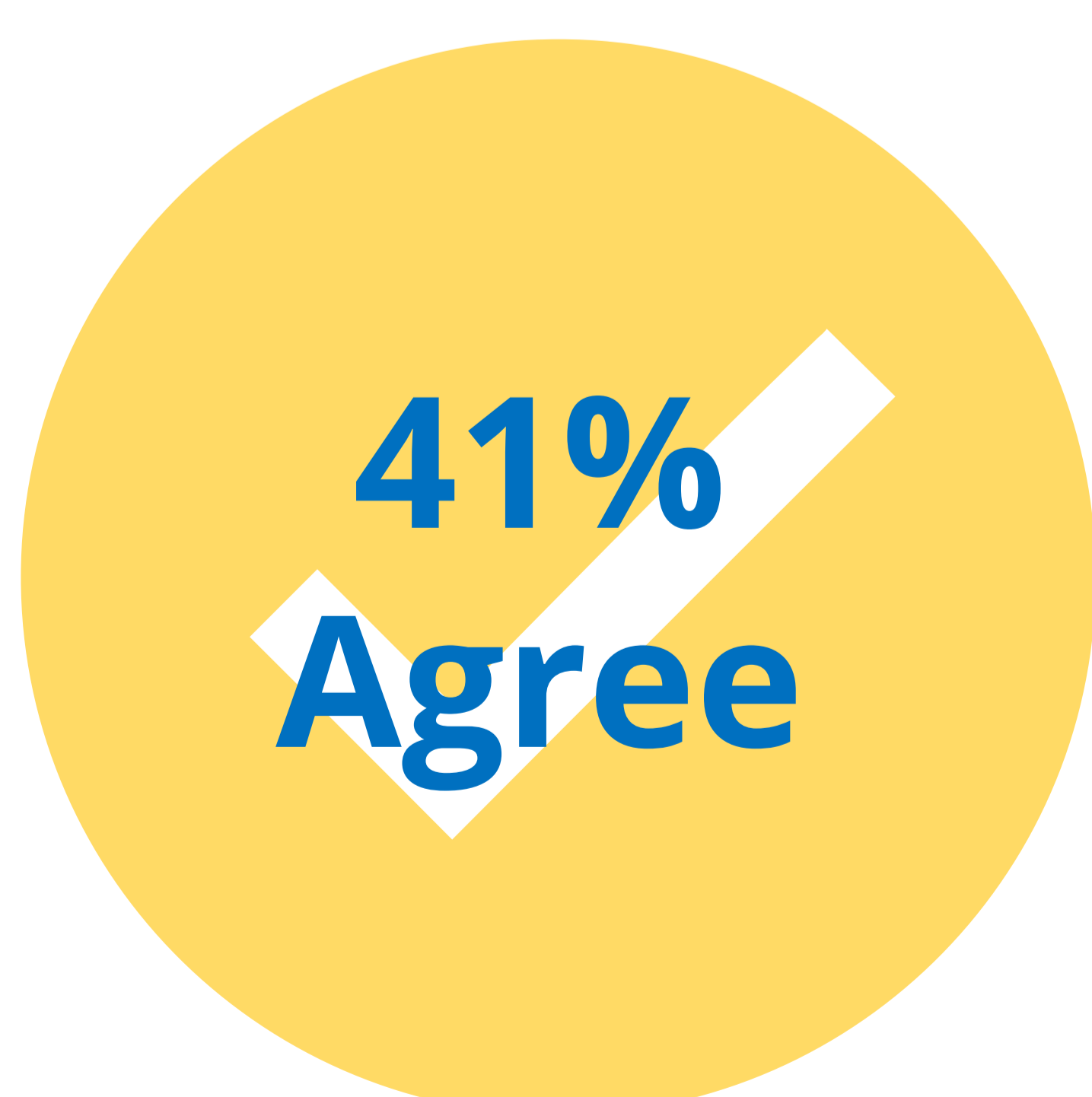
39% of those worked in companies with **fewer than 10** staff said **yes.**

Does your company provide you with a mentor/coach?

68% of respondents who are **NOT** involved in the decision-making process for recruitment or manage a team or influence staff development within their organisation **said no.**

42% of those worked in companies with **250-499** staff said **yes.**

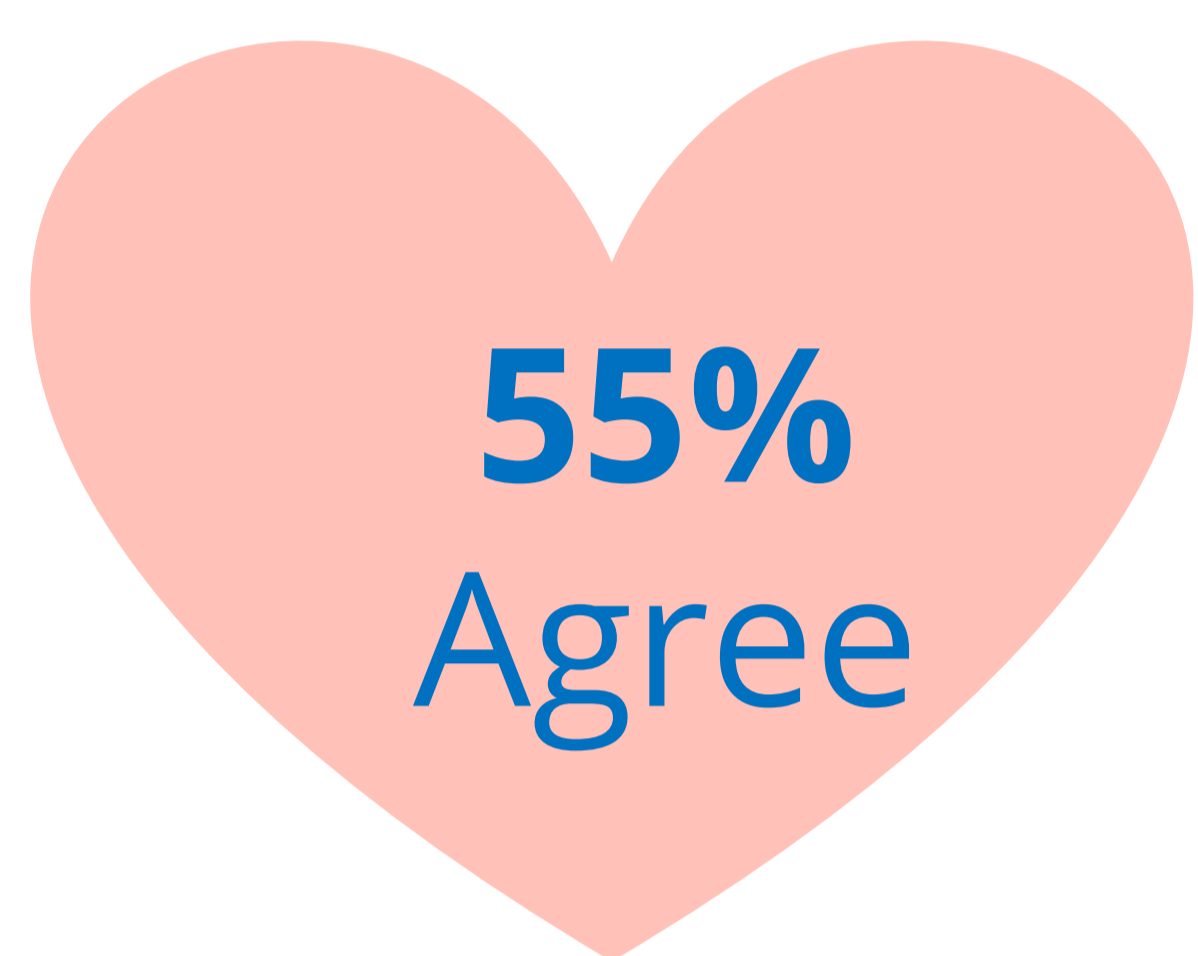
0% of those worked in companies with **fewer than 10** staff said **yes.**



“Young professionals in my organisation don’t get the same training and support as they did before the pandemic.”

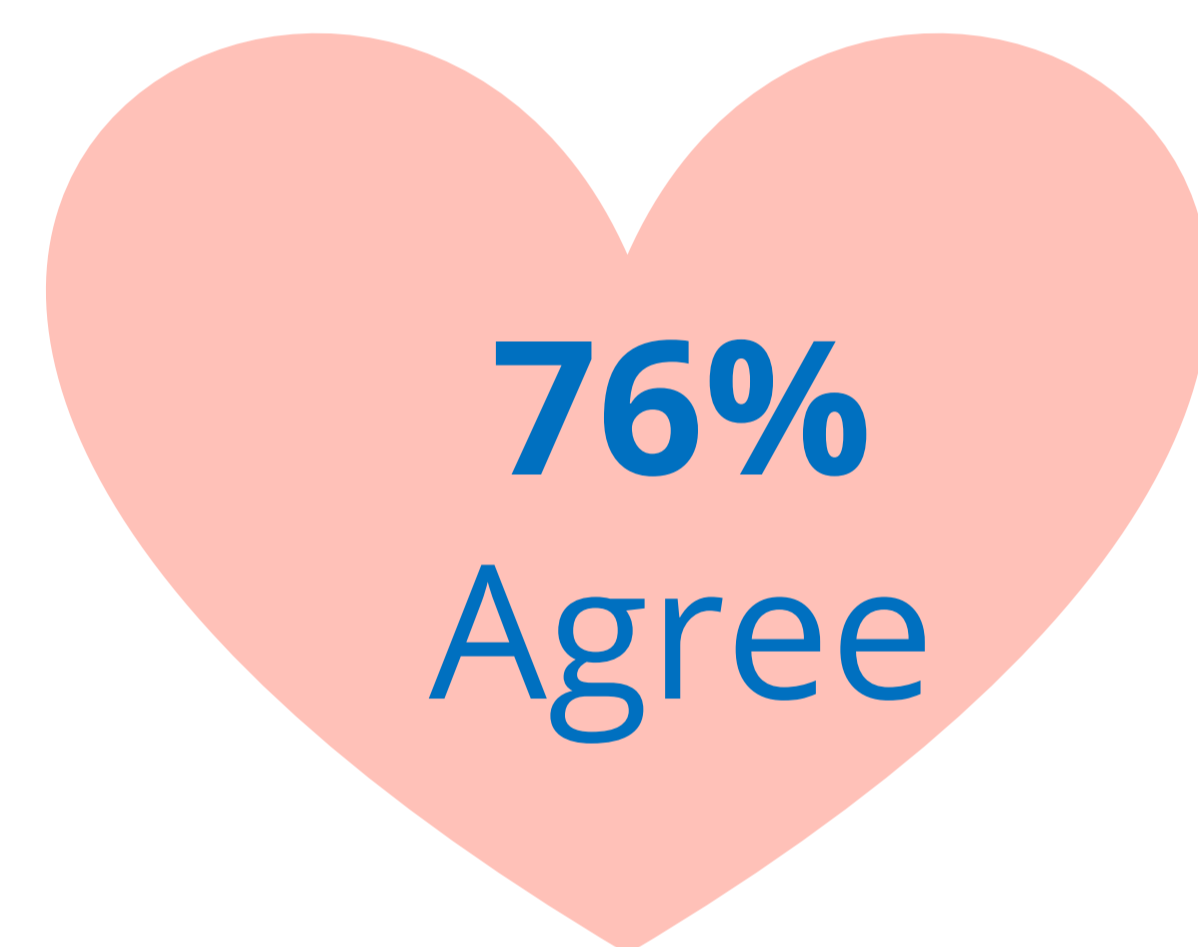
It is welcoming to see that 76% agreed that their organisation had taken measures to engage with all their employees during the pandemic, and 68% agreeing that their organisation took active steps to look after their health and wellbeing during the pandemic. A better work/life balance is something that was also seen as a positive outcome of remote working, but it is important to note that not all in the industry can work from home so easily.

What is interesting to see though despite the support for a hybrid work environment was that many felt detached from their workplace (38%) and that it was harder to build relationships working remotely, with 56% agreeing.

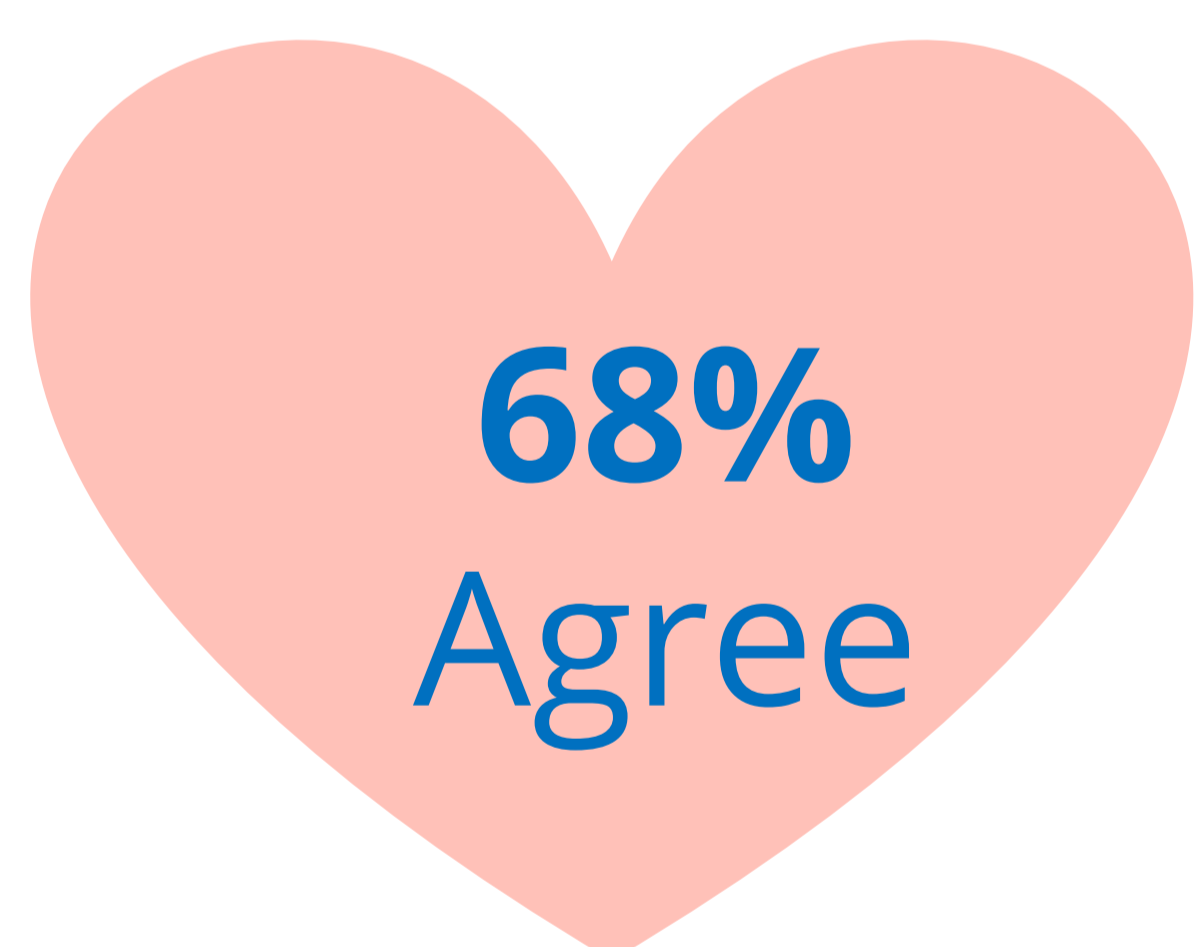


“I have a better work/life balance when I work from home, all or some of the time.”

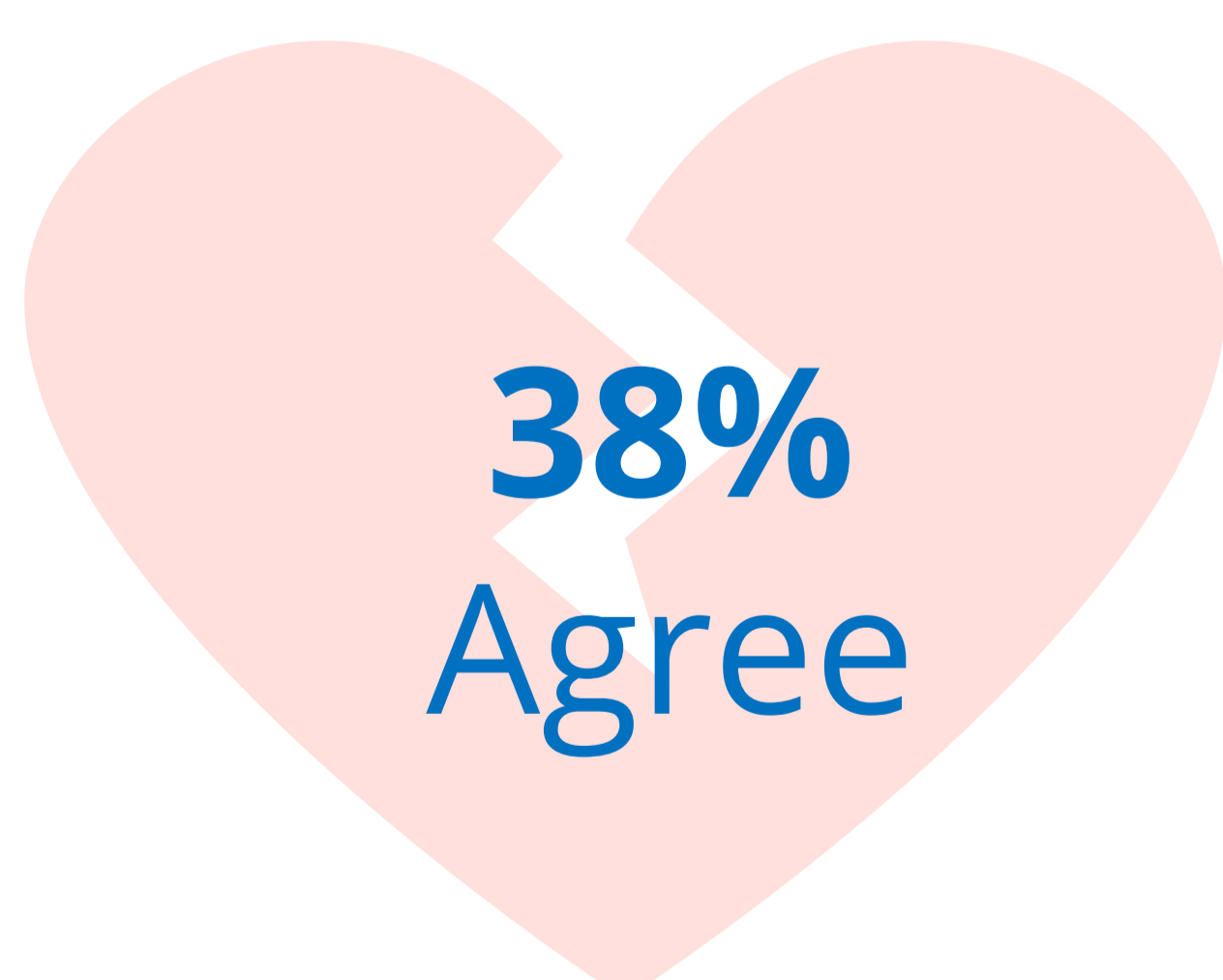
Only 47% of those with more than 7 years work experience agree.



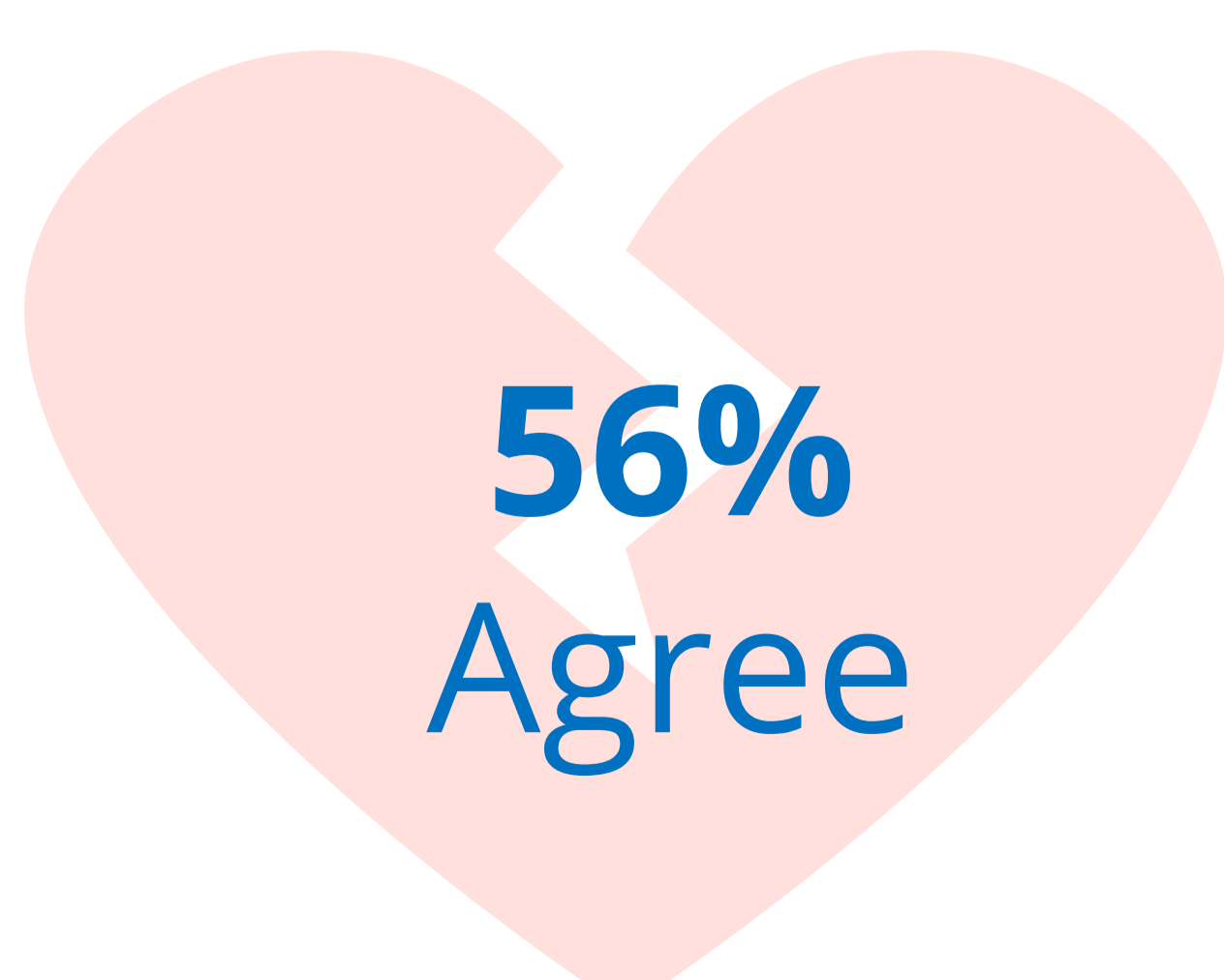
“My organisation has taken active measures to engage all employees during the pandemic.”



My organisation has taken steps to actively look after my health and wellbeing during the pandemic.”



“I feel detached from the wider organisation when I work remotely.”



“It is harder to build relationships when working remotely.”

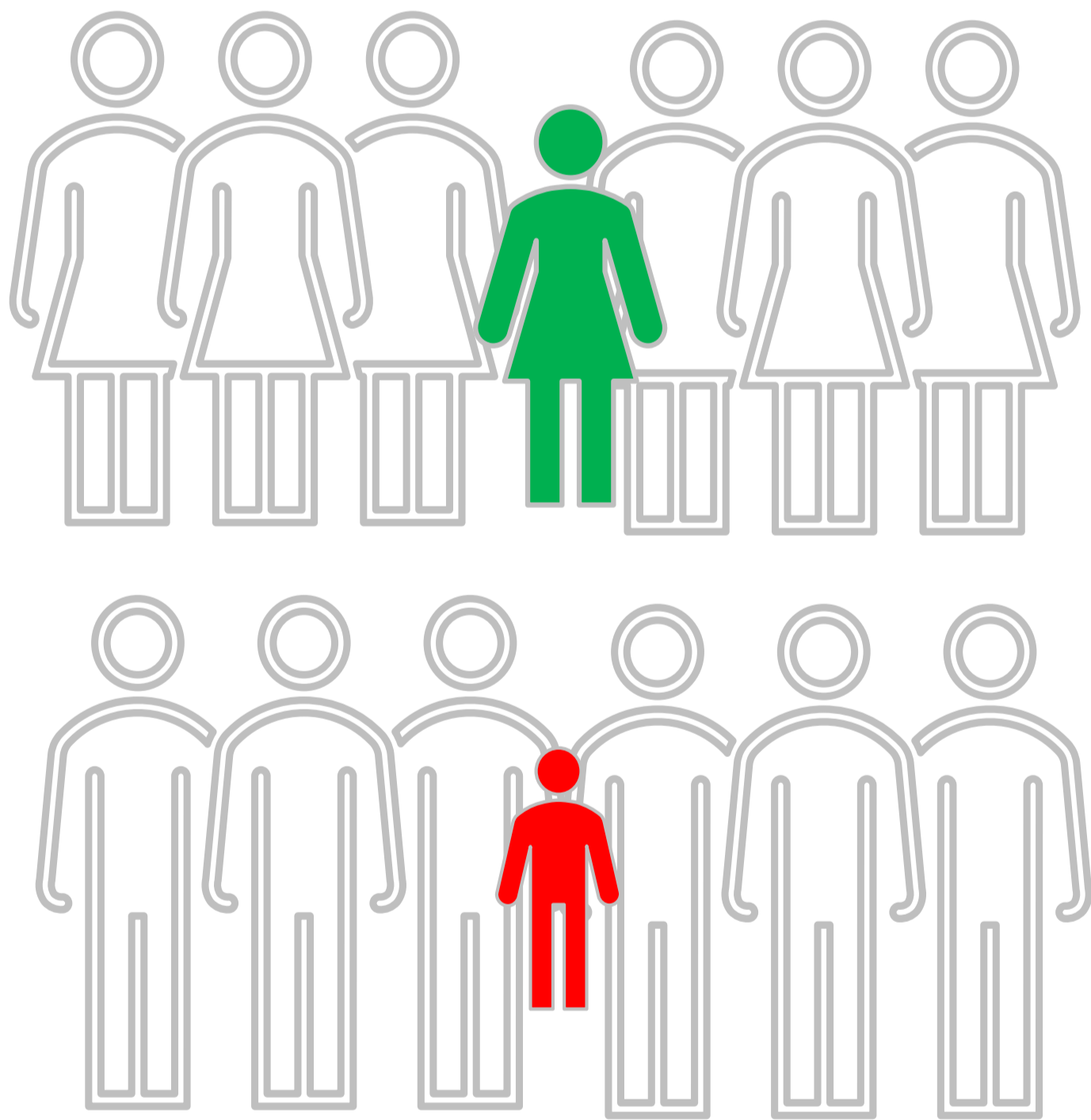
The pandemic has not resulted in hiring freezes as some had anticipated, however, those with less than 7 years of experience and female had the greater likelihood of being furloughed.



2.5% of total respondents furloughed.
The figure was 13% amongst those with less than 7 years experience and 0.9% of respondents with greater than 7 years experience.



55% agree location is less important now when hiring someone new.



8% of female respondents indicated that they were **furloughed** compared with **1.4% of male** respondents.



Between March 2020 and November 2021
62% actively hired
25% only hired if absolutely necessary
5% had a hiring freeze

In March 2020, the UK went into lockdown. Organisations that were technologically enabled were those that were resilient to manage the shift to digital ways of working. While some organisations were equipped to deal with the change, 49% of respondents said that their organisation has had to make a significant investment in technology over the past 18 months to facilitate remote working.

A potential result of this is that the vast majority (66%) of those that were surveyed believe that technology skills are more important now than pre-pandemic. Work still needs to be done, however, as 40% believe that their employers do not adequately invest in their IT/digital skills training.

What do you think is the root cause of a lack of IT/digital skills in the sector?

- 40%** Employers do not adequately invest
- 34%** Not taught at undergraduate level
- 26%** Technology changes too quickly

Types of technology that helped professionals do their job during the pandemic

- 58%** Online learning & development platforms.
- 88%** Remote access to internal systems
- 83%** Video software for meetings
- 83%** Chat/message platform for internal communications or collaboration e.g. Slack/ MS Teams/Whatsapp groups

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