

Your Working Experience Survey Findings Pack

November 2020

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About this Pack

This pack outlines key insights from the most recent 'Your Working Experience' staff survey, distributed to ECC staff in October 2020.

It draws on other data sources where necessary to provide a detailed picture of staff experiences: this includes data from the previous staff survey distributed in May 2020, and details from the Digital Remote Working report.

Links to all key data sources are provided in the appendix for reference, and more detailed notes are in some of the slide notes.



About the data

Staff Survey, Oct, 2020

4,890 staff responded

58.3% response rate (details in slide notes)

Staff Survey, May, 2020

4,790 staff responded

62.7% response rate (details in slide notes)

Digital remote working report, June 2020

40 academic papers (reviewed)

10 staff diary studies (of remote- working experience)

12 in-depth staff interviews

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Section 1

Summary

Summary

1. New insights support what we knew about staff experience

- The most recent staff survey provides detailed insights from a large data-set, enabling us to have increased confidence in our initial research.
- We have confirmed staff views about the benefits and limitations of remote working, the impact of remote working on physical and mental wellbeing and ultimately, calls for more choice in when and where staff work going forward (to the extent possible within their roles).

2. Some difficulties experienced by staff have become more pronounced over time

- While more staff report having **access to the equipment they need now** than in May 2020, staff who have not (due to lack of space and other reasons) are now reporting an impact on their physical health (back pain etc).
- In previous research, a few staff had noted the **financial impact** of working from home. This was more pronounced in the October 2020 staff survey: many staff were concerned about heating and lighting costs as winter approaches.
- Staff are now asking for **communication about longer-term plans for remote-working** (summary point 6)
- A small downward trend for perspectives on **staff communication and relationships**.



Summary

3. Most staff are able to work remotely, but this varies greatly by function and by role

- 85% of surveyed staff said they could perform 'all' or 'most' of their role remotely; but 90% of staff in Organisation Development and People said they could perform 'all' of their remotely, compared to 35% in Children and Families.
- More than 1 in 5 (22%) of staff in Children and Families reported working predominately in an ECC office over the past three months, much higher than in other functions, which is causing anxiety and confusion for some of these staff.

Not all staff are working remotely; 7% reporting working predominately in ECC offices.

4. While staff attribute many benefits to remote working, there are also limitations

- The top benefits reported by staff were: lack of commute (73%), less safety risk - Covid (73%), flexibility (71%), saving money (65%) and an increased work-life balance (63%).
- The top limitations were: excessive screen time (60%), reduced social interaction (56%), limited relationships with colleagues (52%), limited access to printing (49%) and working more than set hours (39%).



Summary

5. Working remotely works best when its by choice and not everyday

- Staff who report being instructed to work all of their time in an ECC office or all of their time at home often report discontent.
- Many staff asked for more flexibility in where (and when) they work in the future: a hybrid model would address many of the limitations of remote working (such as social isolation, collaboration challenges) while maximising the benefits (improved work-life balance, reduced stress etc).

6. Staff are asking for further communication about what the future will hold

- Staff would like further communication on what future work models might look like. This will help them make decisions about the equipment they might need in the longer-term, and ensure their personal commitments are in order (i.e. childcare).
- Staff are sometimes unclear about what 'remote working' really means, erroneously thinking this means 'working from home': communicating these nuances to staff will reduce anxiety about being 'forced' to work from home in the future.



Section 2



Detailed findings

Most staff can perform their job remotely, but this varies by function and by role



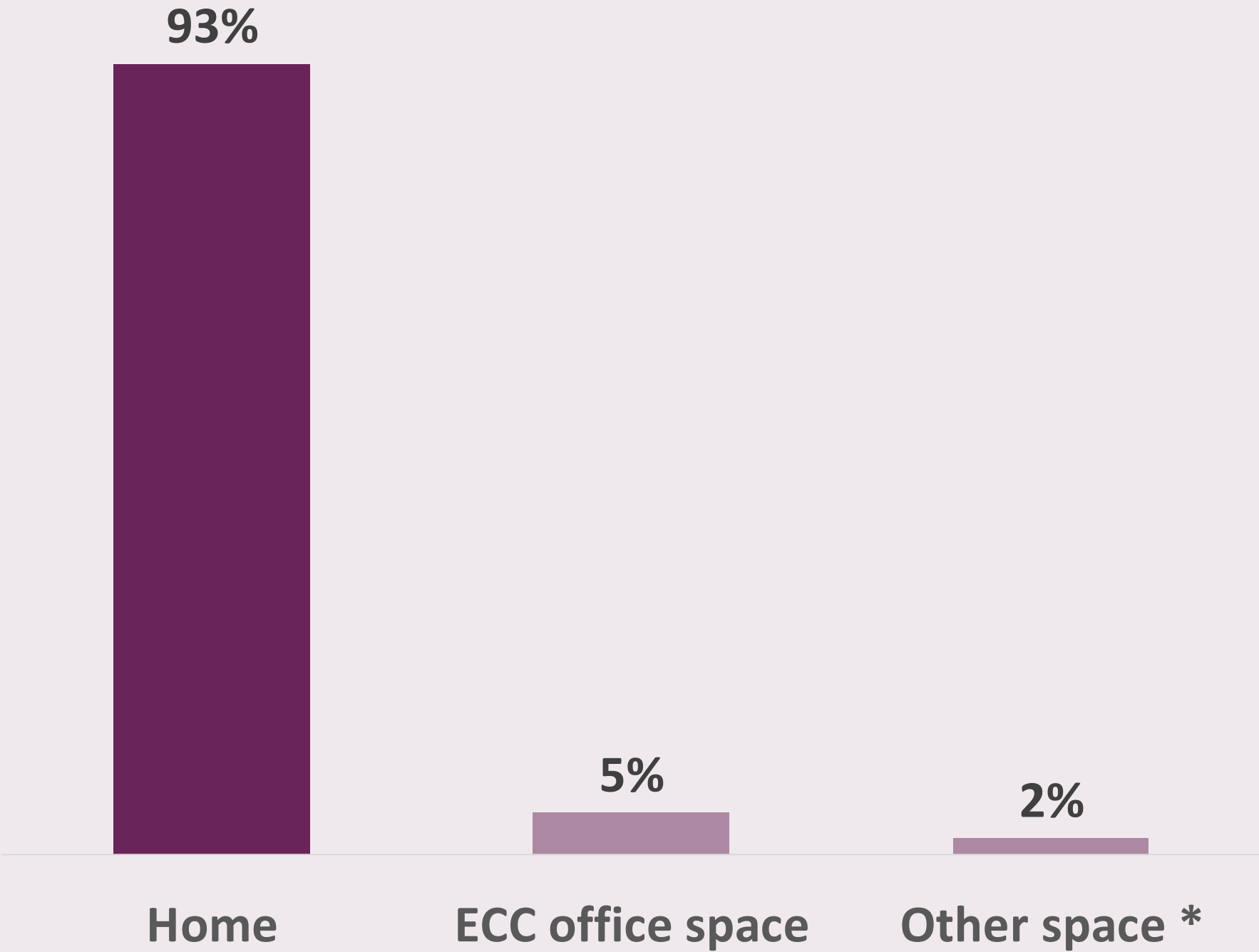
Changes to where staff work: August to October 2020

70%
of staff reported working in a new
location since March 2020

-  In most cases, this new location was **their home**.
-  Certain teams were more likely **NOT** to be working in a new location, largely staff working in child and family services, libraries and business services.

Source: October 2020 Staff survey. n =4,600. (Blank responses and those who had not worked for ECC prior to March 2020 were excluded from this analysis)

93% of staff who reported working in a new location post March 2020 reported having worked predominately from their home in the last three months

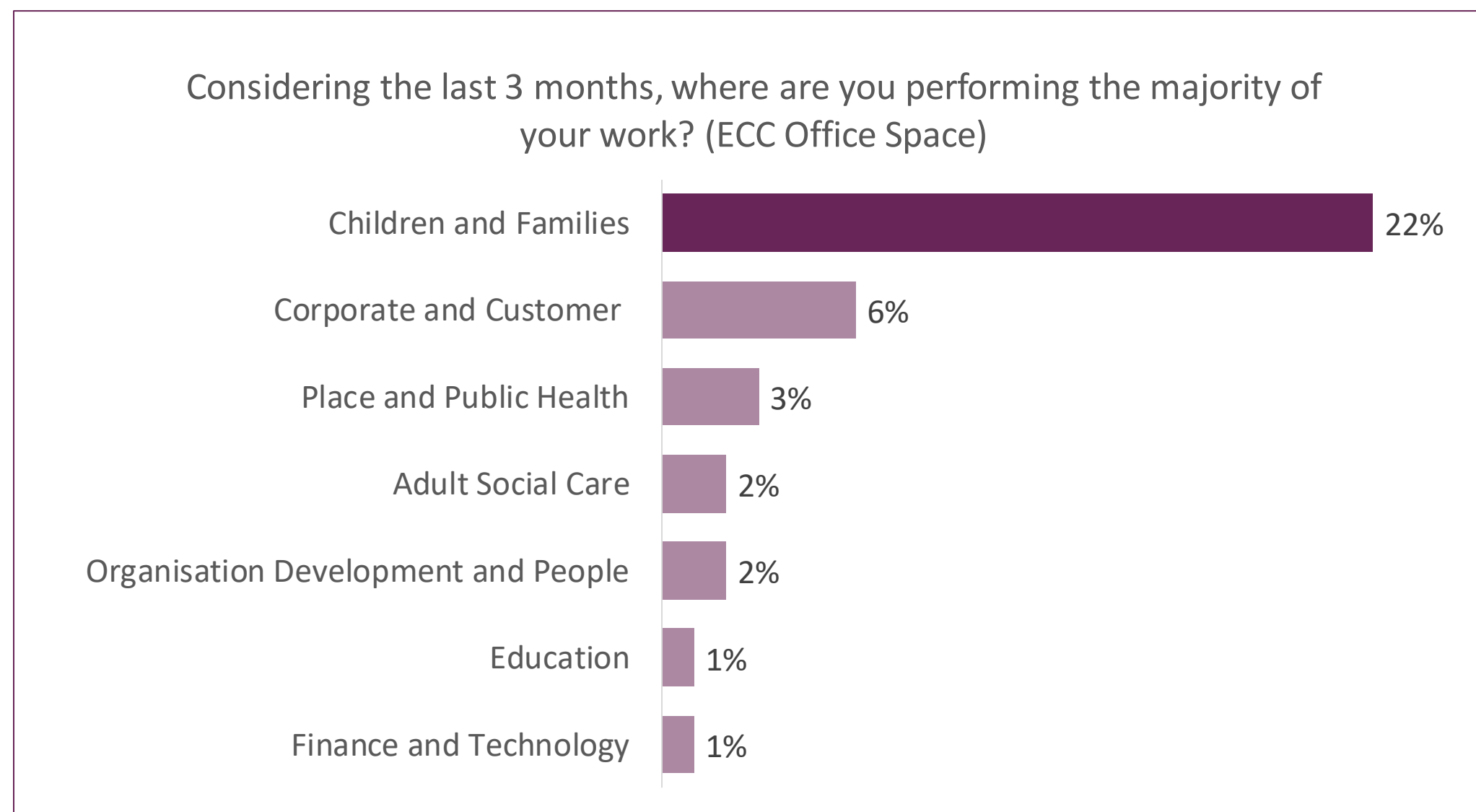


Source: October 2020 Staff survey. n=3,206. * See slide notes for 'other spaces specified.

Where staff work: Children and Families

August to October 2020

Staff from **Children and Families** were more likely to be working from an ECC office than staff from other functions (22% of staff).



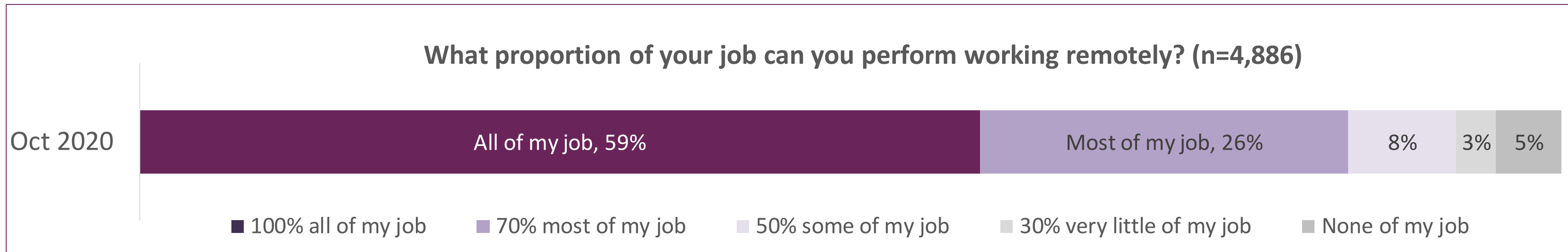
Source: Staff survey, Oct 2020

52% of staff in Children and Families who were working from an ECC office felt they could perform 'all' or 'most' of the role remotely. This was leading to some frustration and confusion:

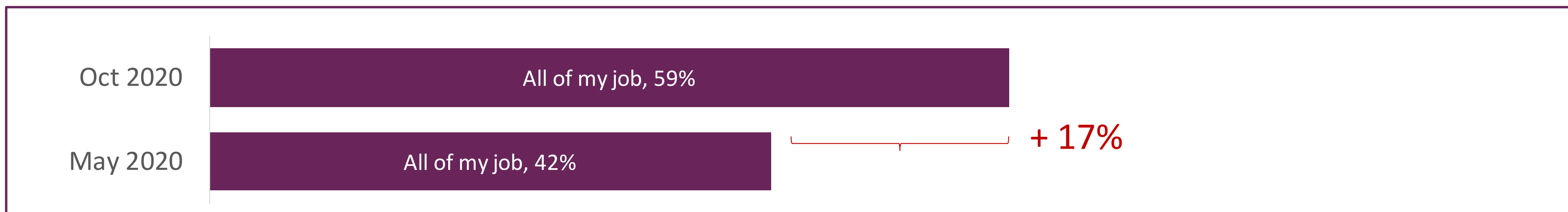
“Facilitate working from home to ensure employee safety during this time and allow work life balance”

“The messages that are given can be mixed i.e. work from home although there is an expectation that staff come to the office.”

85% of staff reported being able to perform **‘All’** or **‘Most’** of their job remotely in October 2020.



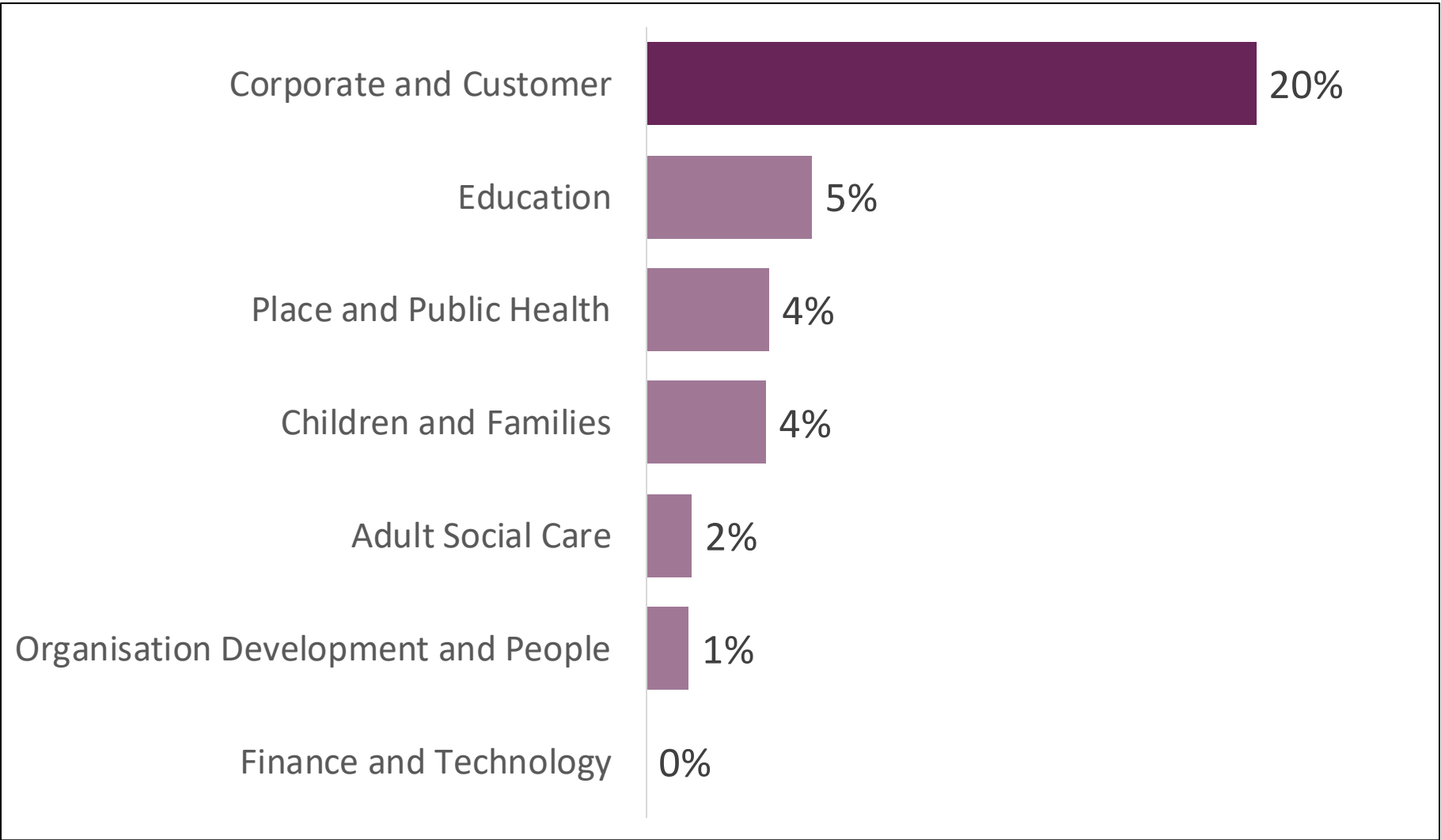
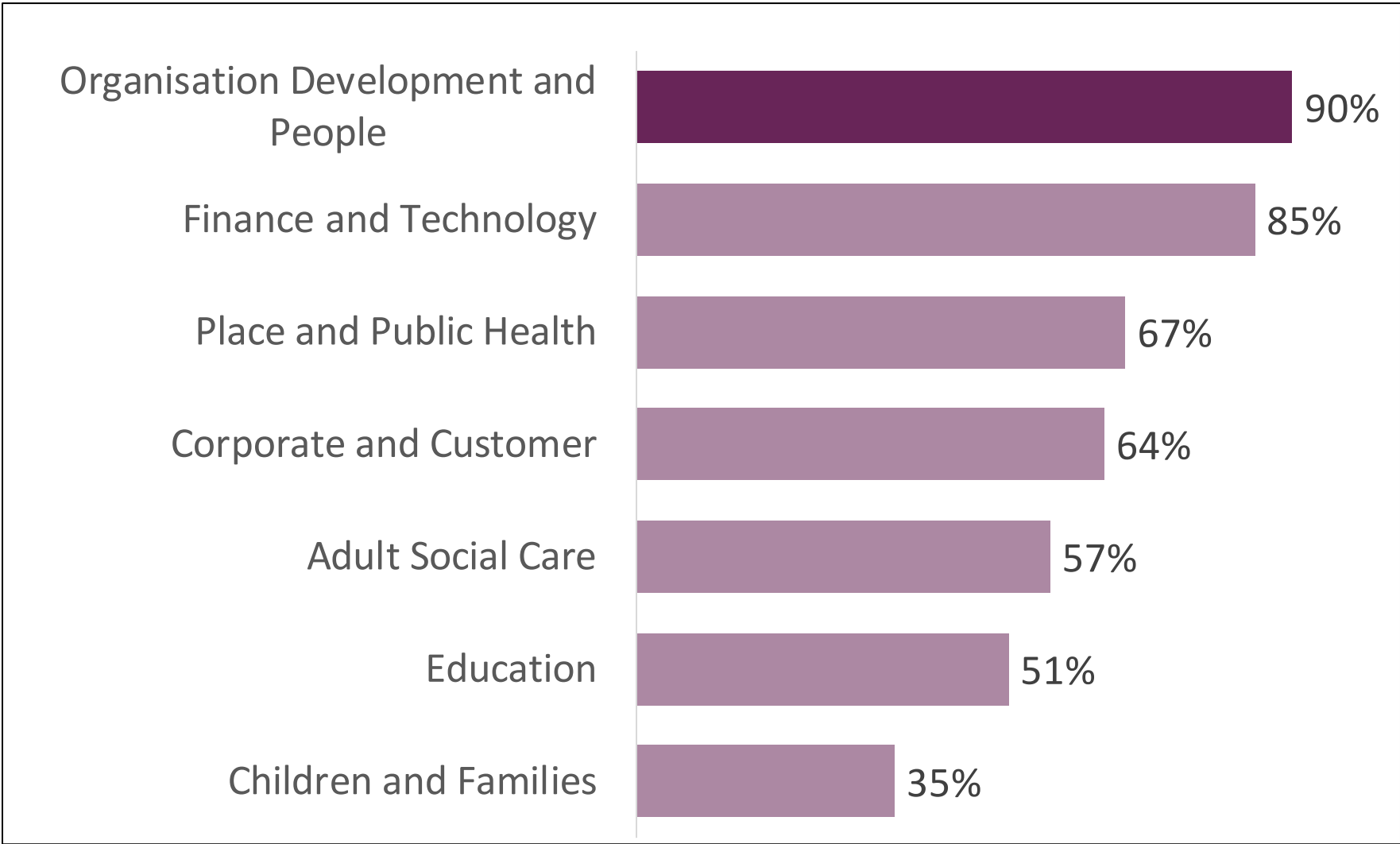
The percentage of staff able to perform ‘All’ of their job while working remotely has risen by **17%** since the survey was conducted in May.



Source: Staff surveys, May and Oct 2020

90% of staff in **Organisation Development and People** reported being able to perform ‘all’ of their role remotely.

20% of staff in **Corporate and Customer** reported being able to perform ‘very little’ or ‘none’ of their role remotely. These staff predominately represented library service staff (79%, see slide notes for further details).



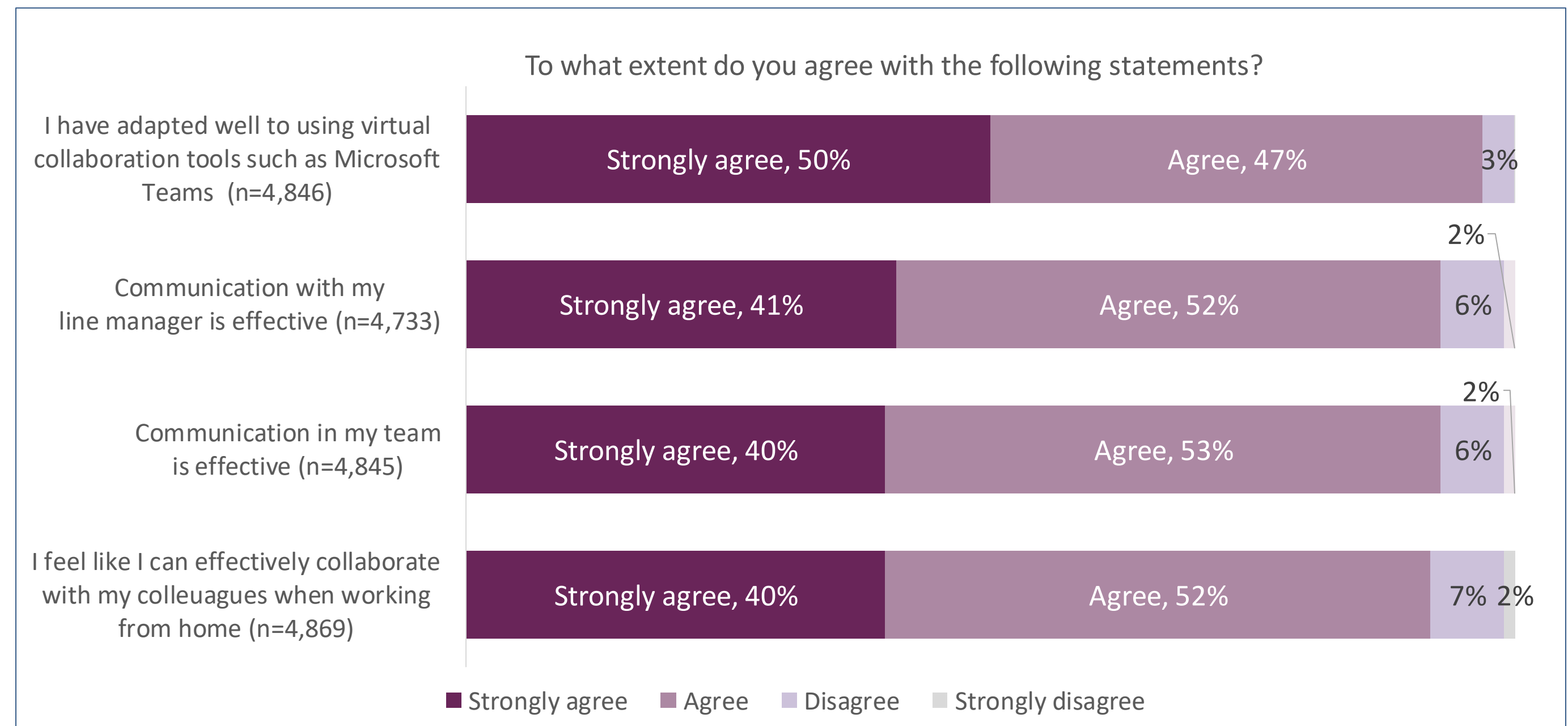
Source: Staff survey, Oct 2020.



Most staff have adapted well to new work styles and tools, and to remote collaboration

More than **9 in 10 staff** agreed that they could collaborate effectively with their colleagues when working from home (91%), that communication in their team was effective (92%) and that they had adapted well to virtual collaboration tools (97%).

The staff who did not agree suggested the following supports: additional training in using virtual collaboration tools; guidance on how to communicate optimally in a virtual team; opportunities to meet with their team safely 'in real life' for collaborative activities.

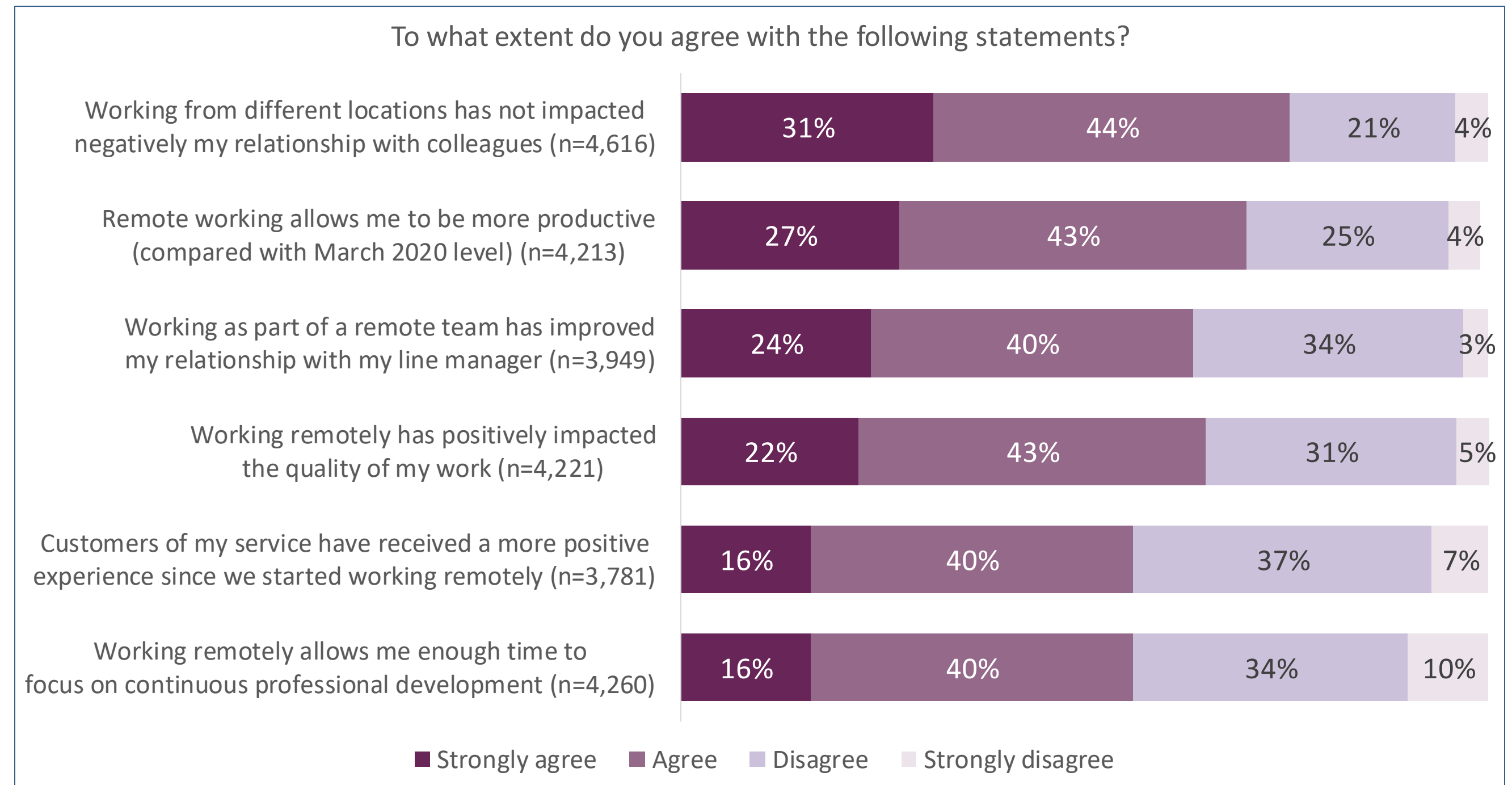


Source: Staff survey, Oct 2020. Percentages rounded to the nearest %. Blank and 'Not applicable' responses removed from analysis.

It is not clear whether staff feel that their work quality, productivity, or working relationships have improved as a result of remote working

More than **4 in 10 staff** (44%) disagreed that customer experience had improved since we started working remotely. Similarly, staff did not always feel that remote working had allowed improvements to productivity, work quality, working relationships or time in professional development either.

However, it is not clear from these questions whether staff feel that these things were *worse* than before March 2020, or *had stayed the same* (although some further insights into staff views on productivity are on slide 25).



Source: Staff survey, Oct 2020. Percentages rounded to the nearest %. Blank and 'Not applicable' responses removed from analysis.

Staff are experiencing both benefits and limitations when working remotely; a hybrid model that maintains the benefits and helps overcome the limitations is preferred by most.

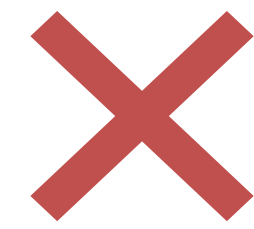


Top 5 benefits reported by staff



1. Lack of commute - 73%
2. Less safety risk (COVID) – 73%
3. Flexibility – 71%
4. Saving £ - 65%
5. Work-life balance - 63%

Top 5 limitations reported by staff

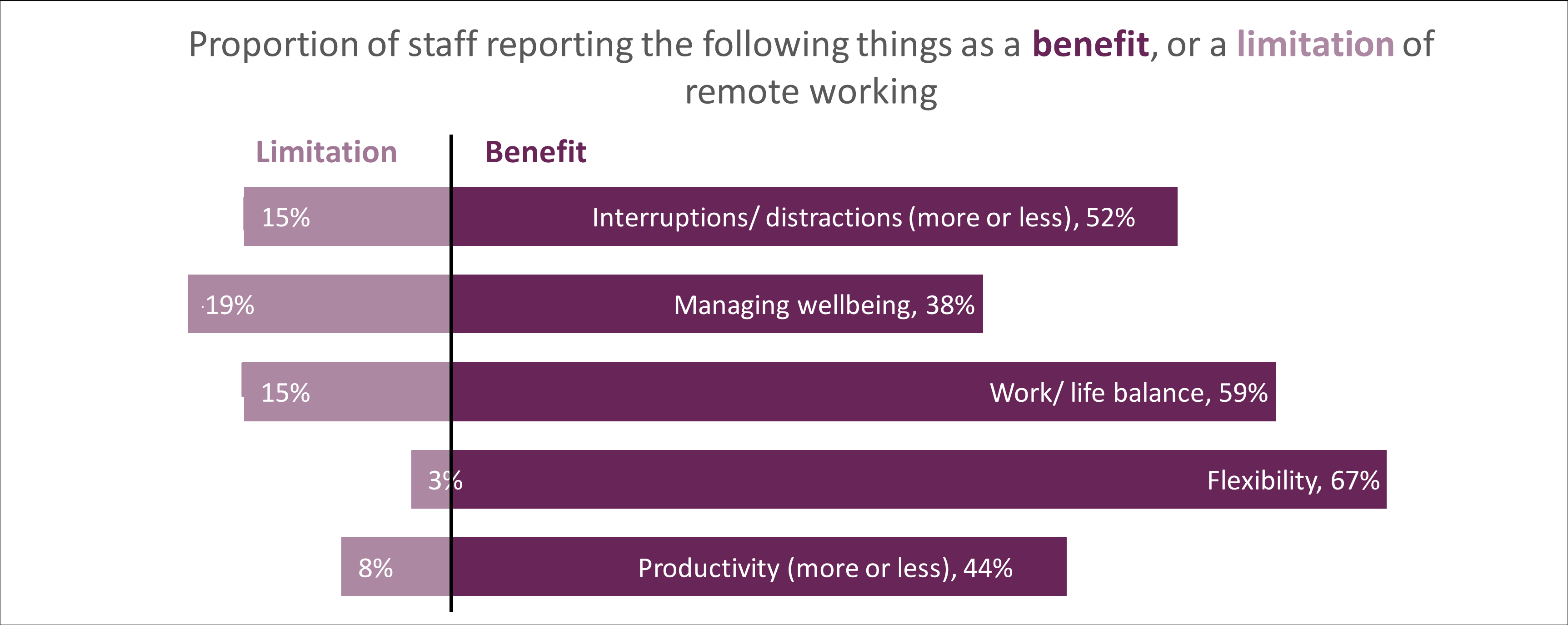


1. Excessive screen time - 60%
2. Reduced social interaction – 56%
3. Limited relationships with colleagues
(incl. social learning) – 52%
4. Limited access to printing – 49%
5. Working more than set hours – 39%

These correlate with recent academic findings on experiences of remote working post Covid-19 and past internal research (see slide notes)



One person's benefit is another's limitation...



Experiences of remote working are mixed

Not all staff are enjoying remote working, which appears to be a result of personal factors such as:

- Access to the space, equipment and technology they need to work remotely
- The needs of their role (i.e. the need for supervision or emotional support in their role)
- Individual working styles and preferences

“I think if I was forced to (work remotely) permanently then I would look for work elsewhere.”

“I have loved [working from home]: it’s been one of the positives that's come out of the pandemic.”



Staff want choice over work hours and locations (to the extent possible within their role)

Many staff asked for choice in where and when they work going forward, to facilitate the following benefits:

- To achieve a better work/life balance, reduce stress levels and improve morale.
- To enable more time and space to focus, and the right spaces to innovate and collaborate as needed, to increase their productivity and effectiveness.
- To combat limitations of home working, such as: loneliness, screen fatigue, feeling disconnected from colleagues and customers, poor home workspaces, and challenges in onboarding new staff.

Staff were realistic about the level of choice that could be afforded within their job role: those that would struggle to undertake their role across different locations or over flexible hours did not ask for this.

“I would like a better balance, to work from home most days but work in the office 1 day a week to a maximum of 2 days. This will balance out the isolation I feel at home.”

Source: Staff survey, Oct 2020



Staff preferences over work location correlates with what we know from the literature, and supports a move towards a hybrid working model wherever possible

From the literature

- For those jobs which are highly complex but do not require significant collaboration or social support individuals can perform better when telecommuting than when working in an organisation's offices, due to having the time and space to focus on tasks (Golden & Gajendran, 2019).
- Remote working forces companies to measure performance by results and outcomes: this allows staff to be judged by their work and not their physical appearance or office mannerisms.
- Remote working has been found to increase morale and organisational loyalty (Baard & Thomas, 2010).
- Companies that allow remote work, experience 25% less employee turnover. It also helps attract and retain talent which reduces hiring costs (State of Remote Working Report, Owl Labs 2017).



Continued and additional support would help staff work remotely in the longer-term

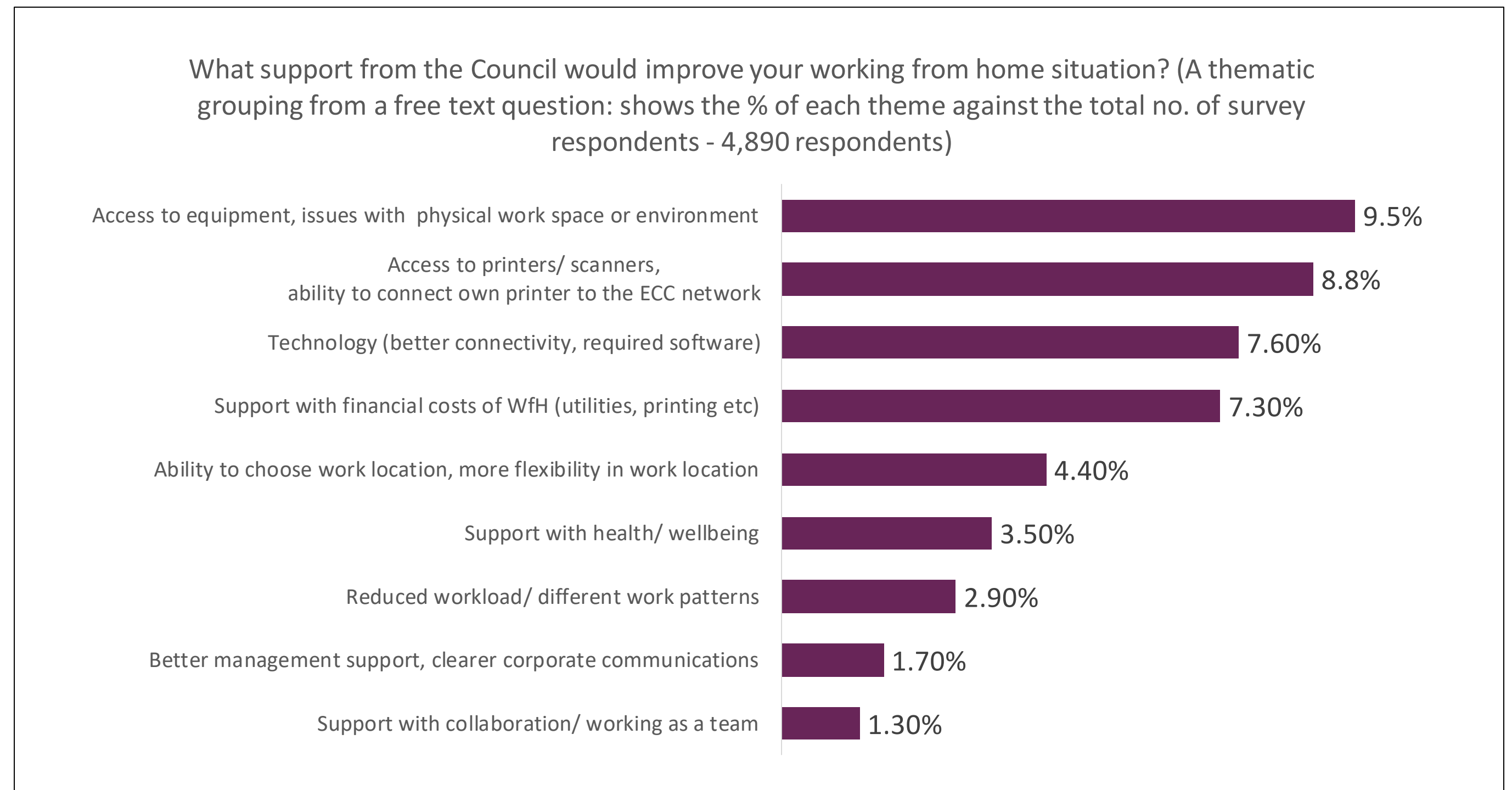


Some staff need further support to continue to work from home in the longer-term, and/or to improve their working from home situation

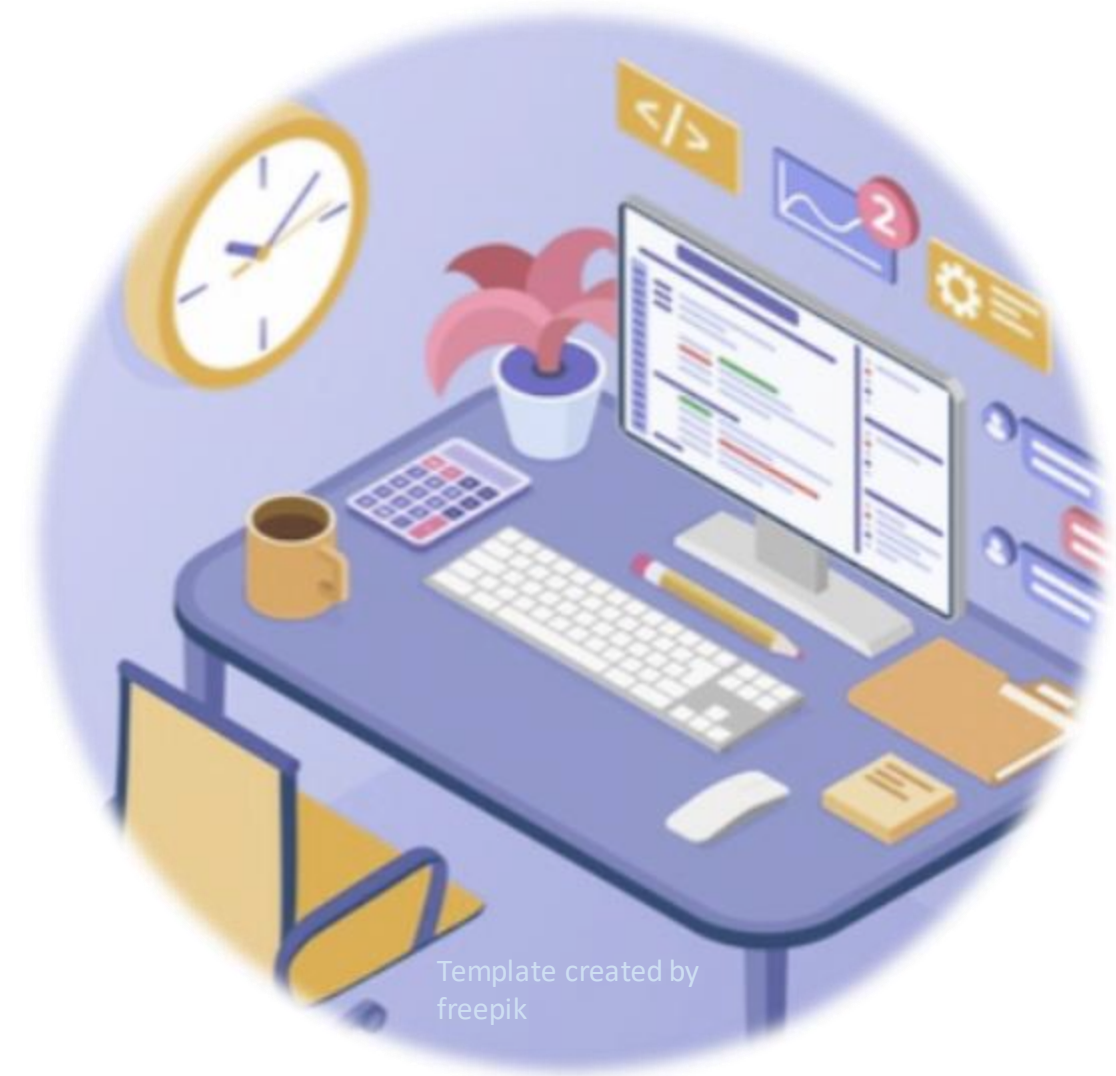
15% of surveyed staff did not think that had the right support from the Council to continue working from home in the longer term.

Staff most commonly referenced the need for support with equipment , technology, and the costs associated with working from home.

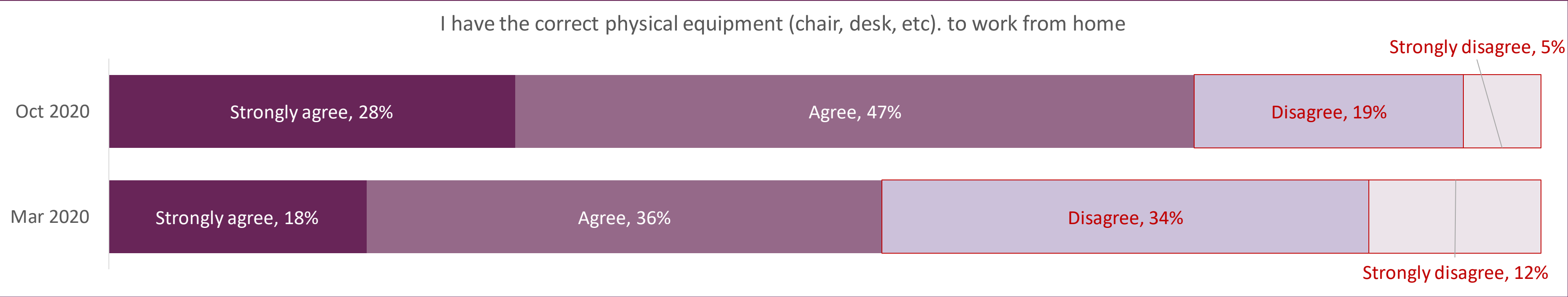
Further details of why these supports are needed are in the following slides.



Access to equipment, spaces and technology continue to affect staff's ability to work remotely



Almost 1 in 4 staff (24%) **disagreed** that they have the correct equipment (desk, chair etc) to work from home; fewer disagreed than in May 2020 (46%), indicating some improvement



Source: staff survey, Oct 2020. Note: blank and ‘not applicable’ responses removed for analysis.

“I would love to have a proper desk and chair along with a printer/scanner to assist with my work load”

“A 2nd larger screen. At the office I have my laptop and two larger screens”.

“I just need to find out how to get a desk, chair & monitor”

Not all staff are using the available equipment purchasing scheme

Staff reported not using the scheme for a variety of reasons:

- not having the space in their home for purchased equipment
- thinking that they will soon be returning to the office
- the budget for equipment not being sufficient for their needs, especially when specialist equipment is required (such as an ergonomic chair)
- not having the ability to finance the purchase of larger equipment upfront
- not wanting to enter shops due to shielding
- concerns about the impact of the cost of equipment on service budgets.

From the literature

Lack of support (employer guidance) with the setting up of home offices can increase the incidence of injuries due to lack of ergonomically designed computer workstations, regulated rest breaks, engineered lighting, and inspections by safety officers (Ellison, 2012).

“I had considered applying to purchase a chair and desk, however it then seemed as though the situation was easing so I didn’t.”

Source: Staff survey, Oct 2020



Access to specialist equipment and technology has been a challenge for some, resulting in a poor staff experience

“I have an Access to Work chair, my line manager requested Mitie to relocate it to my home....I've heard nothing from them and am now in agony from the chair that I'm sitting on.”

“Dragon voice software has not worked properly since moving to O365 , it wastes time, freezes in word/outlook. it doesn't work with online surveys like this at all.”

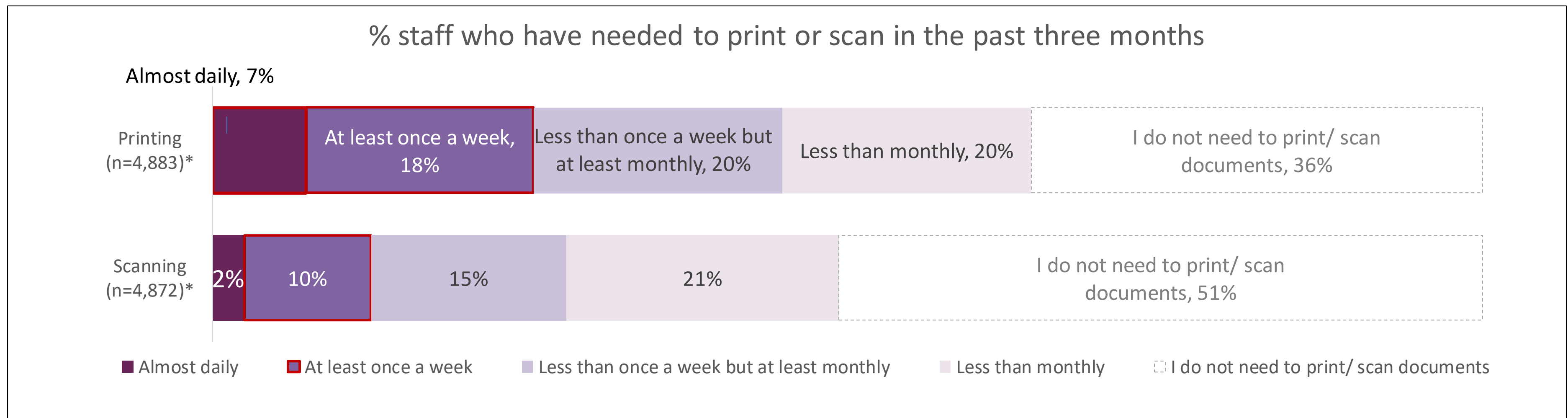
“There are major issues over delivery [of the equipment] as apparently they won't set it up ...it will be over to me to haul upstairs and get set up with no help.”

Source: Staff survey, Oct 2020



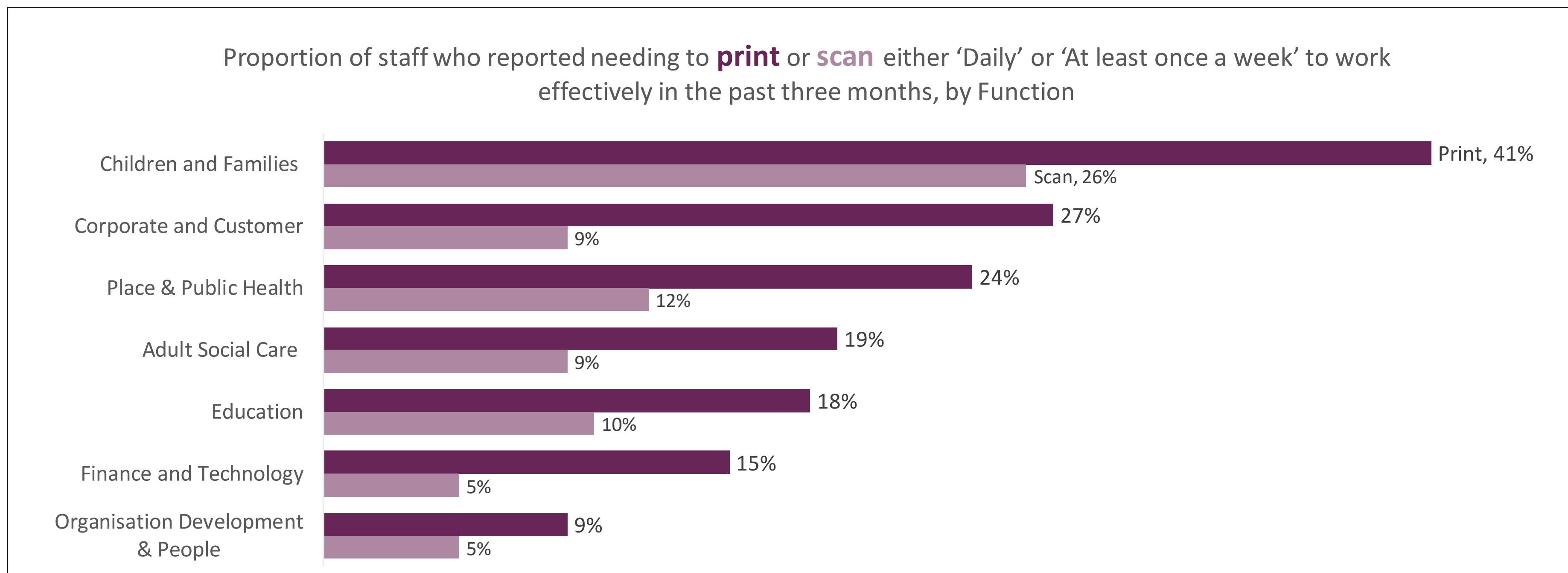
Some staff have needed regular access to printers and scanners in the last three months

1 in 4 staff (25%) reported needing to print ‘almost daily’ or ‘at least once a week’ to work effectively in the past three months. This was just over **1 in 10** staff (12%) for scanning.



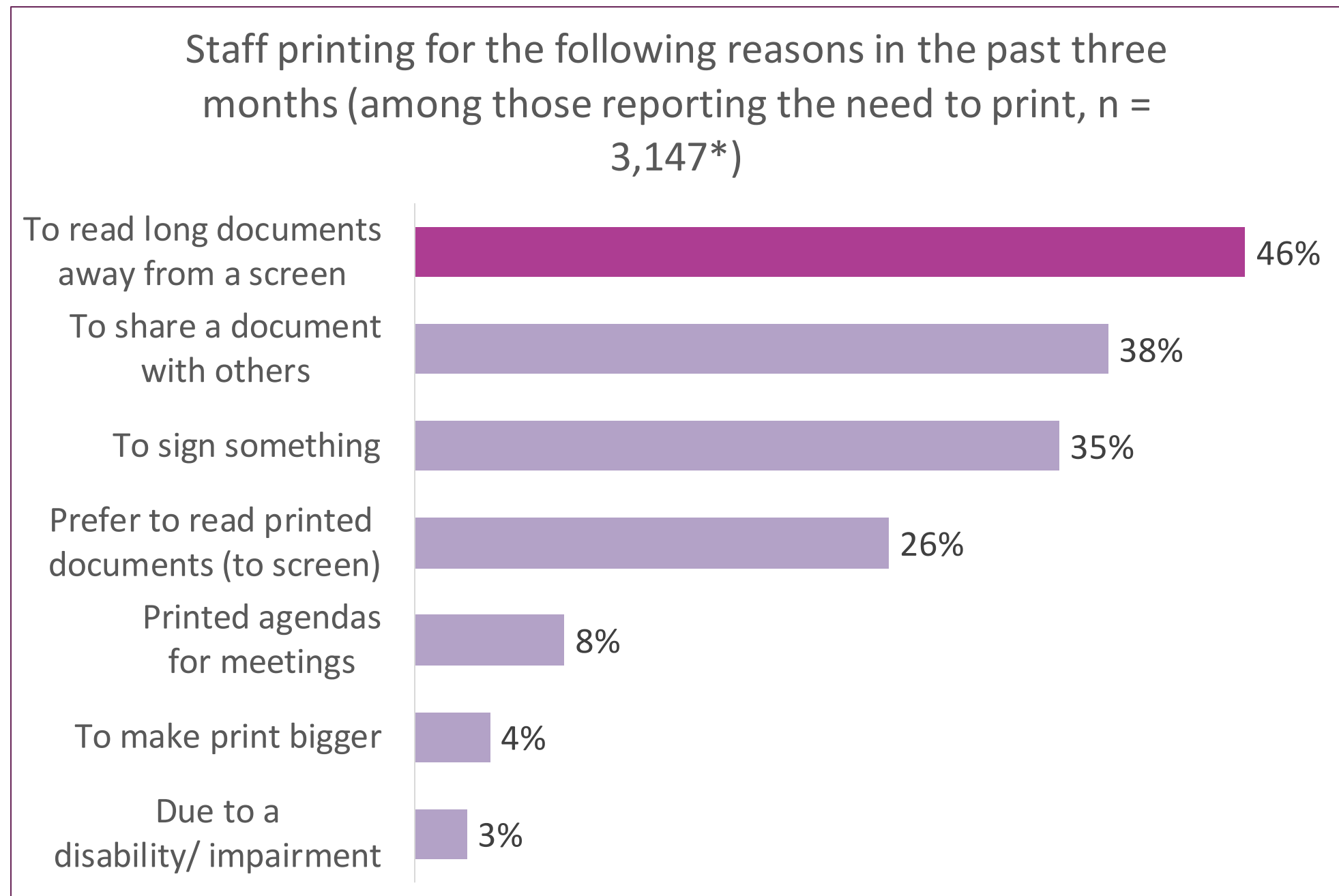
Source: staff survey, Oct 2020. * Blank responses not included in analysis/ reported 'n'.

Staff within Children and Families report needing to print and scan more often than staff in other functions

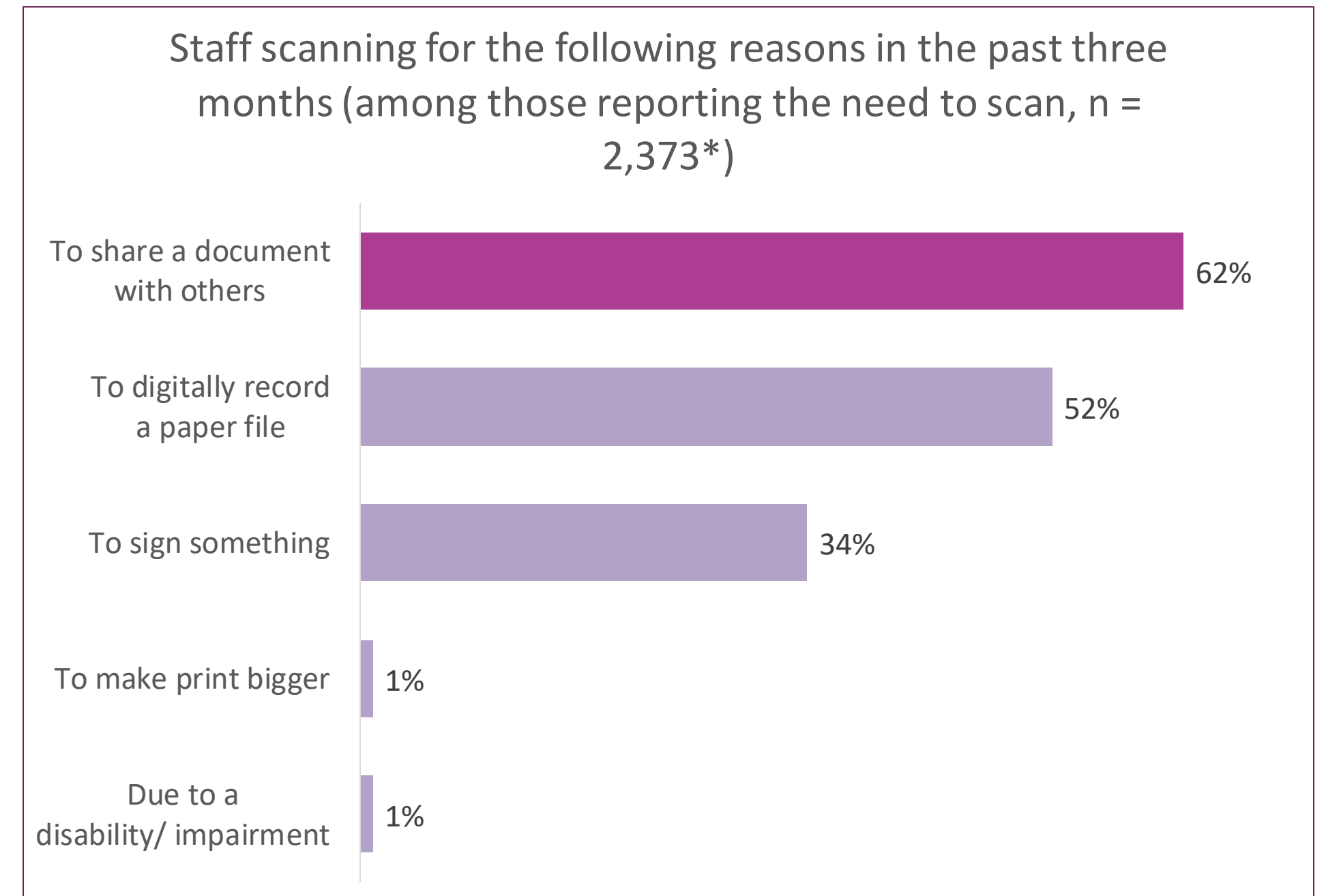


Source: staff survey, Oct 2020. Blank responses not included in analysis or the reported 'n' Does not include staff who did not provide details of the function in which they worked.

The main reason for printing is **to read long documents away from the screen**



The main reason for scanning is to **share a document with others**



Source: staff survey, Oct 2020. The total 'n' removes those who had not printed or scanned in the last 3 months



Some staff are struggling to adjust to limited access to printers and scanners

“I would like to be able to print from home directly from my laptop to my home printer as I have a learning disability.”

“ECC computers won't allow such access [to printers] ... when off the shelf computers and printers are geared up for this. More interconnectivity of electronic options to be used through ECC laptops.”

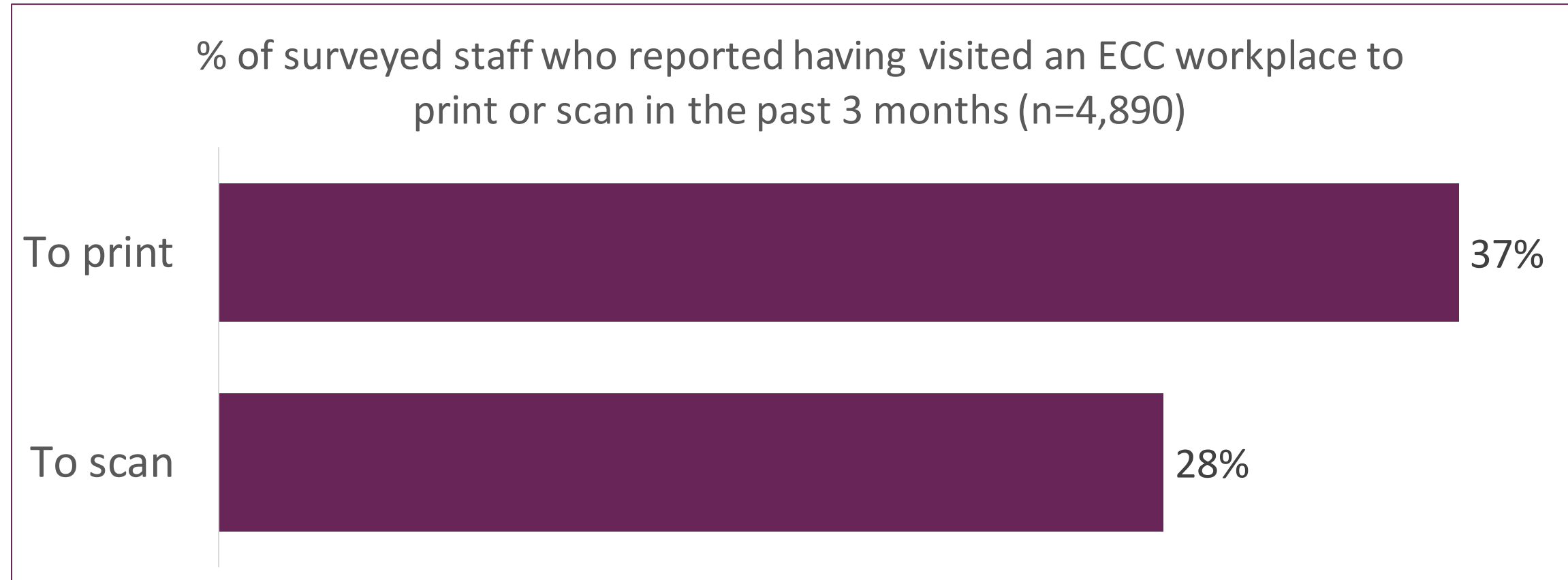
“A small printer with a scanner would be the only thing that I would require to make home working more effective”

Source: staff survey, Oct 2020



Some staff continue to visit an ECC workplace to print or scan

ECC staff have visited ECC workplaces to print (37% of staff) or scan (28%) over the last three months, in many cases due to not having printer or scanner facilities in their remote place of work. This leads to safety risks to staff, inequalities in staff ability to work remotely, and unnecessary staff travel time. Almost half of staff surveyed (49%) reported limited access to printing as a limitation of remote working.



Source: staff survey, Oct 2020. All responses included in analysis.

“I drive 20 miles into the office to print and once I get to County Hall half the printers are not even working”.

Many staff report a home environment unsuitable for home working

“2 of us work for ECC and live in a small flat. We have no space for a dedicated office or desk.”

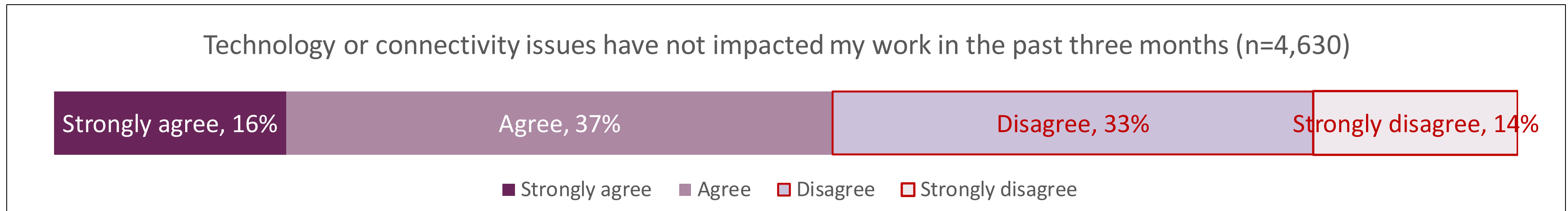
“I live with other people and so at times this can be very difficult - noise, distractions limited space.”

“I live in a one bedroom flat... Working in social care there are concerns regarding confidentiality.”

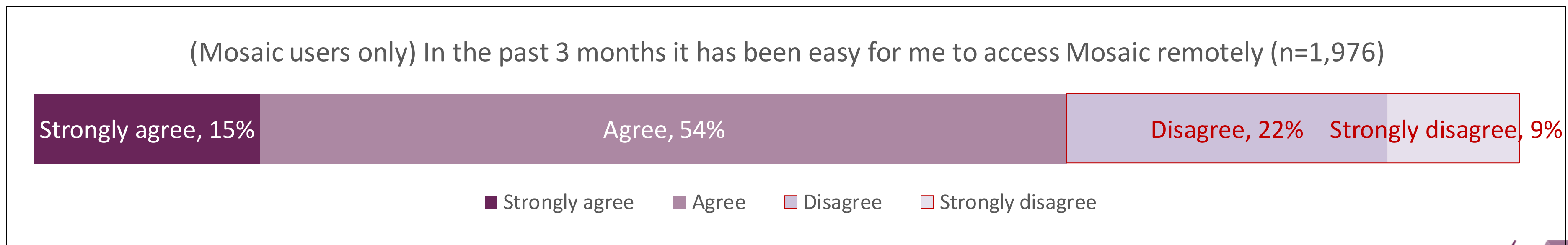
Source: staff survey, Oct 2020



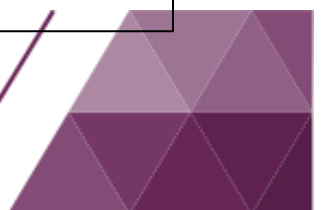
Almost half of staff (47%) report that technology or connectivity issues have impacted their work in the past three months



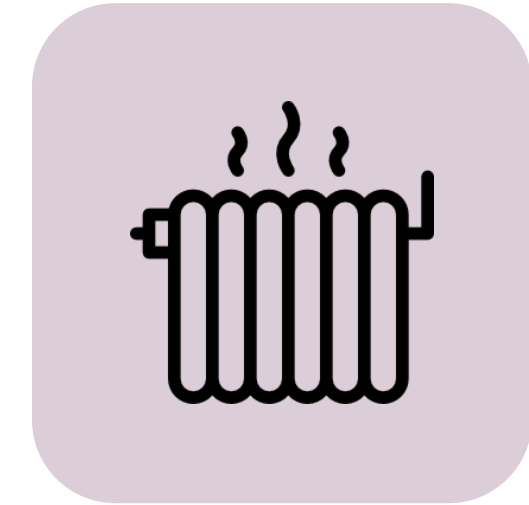
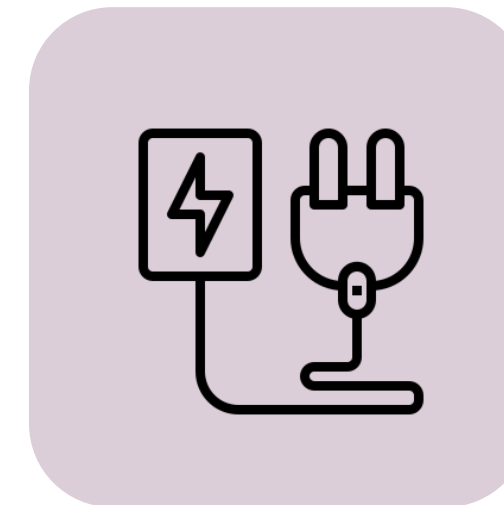
Remote access to Mosaic has been an issue for 32% of its users



Source: staff survey, Oct 2020. Note: blank and 'not applicable' responses removed for this analysis



Financial considerations

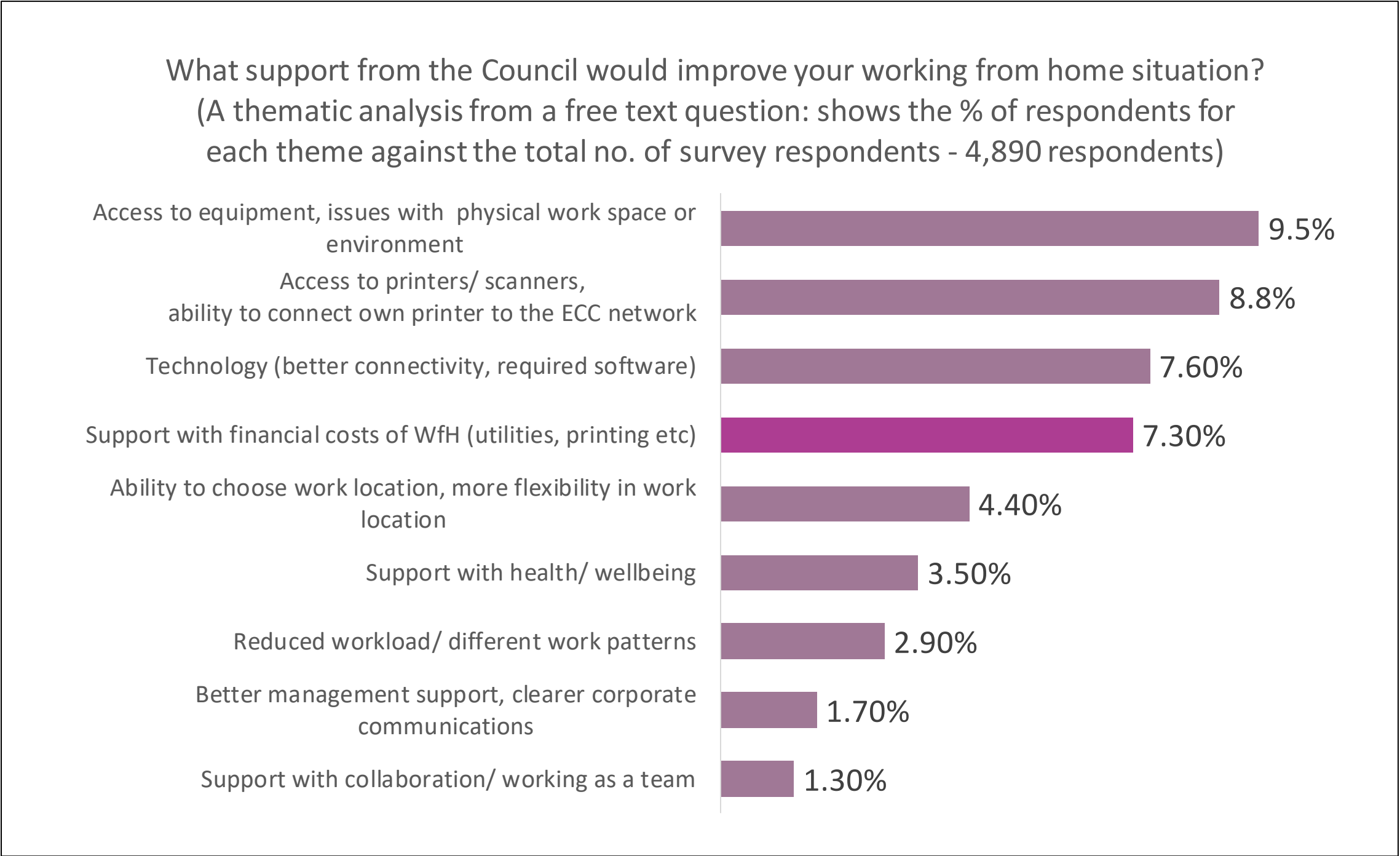


Some staff would like compensation for expenses related to working from home

356 of staff surveyed (7.3%) asked for support with the **financial costs of working remotely** (the 4th most common theme identified in responses).

Staff spoke specifically about support for the following costs:

- Heating and lighting, particularly as the winter months draw in (most commonly mentioned)
- Faster/ better Broadband
- Printing-related costs (for a printer and/ or printing equipment).



Some staff would like compensation for the expenses related to working from home

“The Council could give me an allowance towards my utility bills. It is costing me money to work from home ... ECC have not communicated what they are going to do to allow us to claim money for this.”

“It would be good if the Council could support colleagues with a contribution towards their electricity bills (working at home allowance). Laptops need charging and come winter lighting will need to go on earlier, some colleagues might find this a worry.”

“I expect my heating bills to go up significantly in winter. I don't know if it's possible to claim expenses for that from either the council, or from HMRC. Some information from the council about this would be appreciated.”

Source: Staff survey, Oct 2020



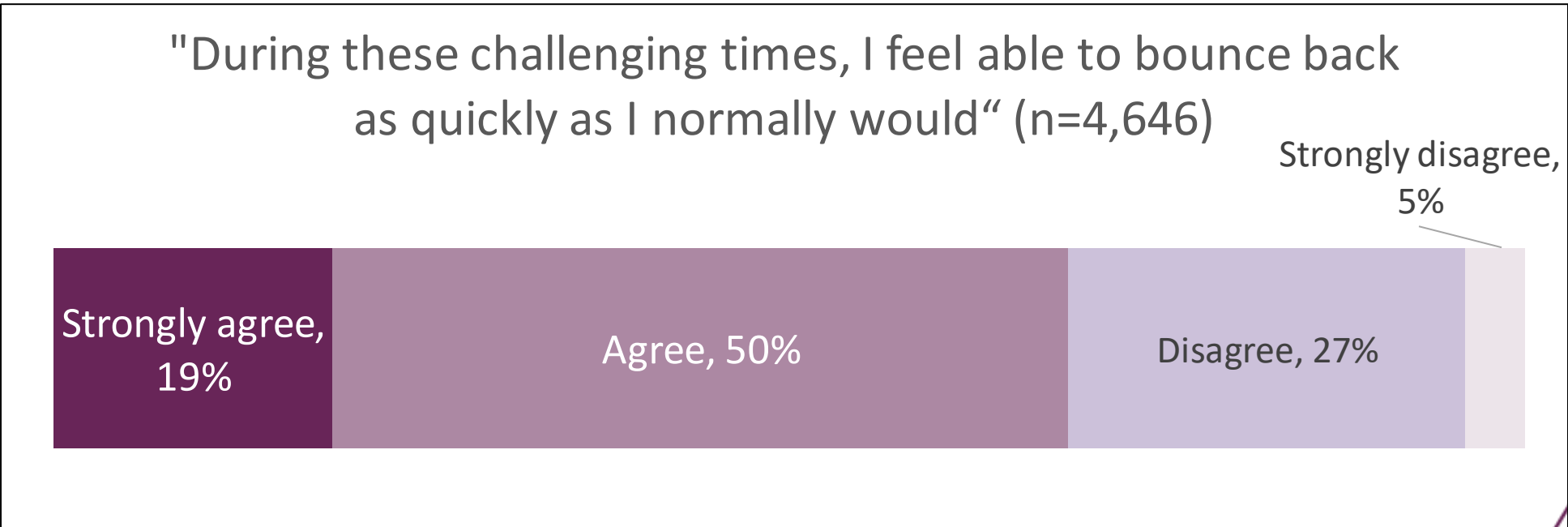
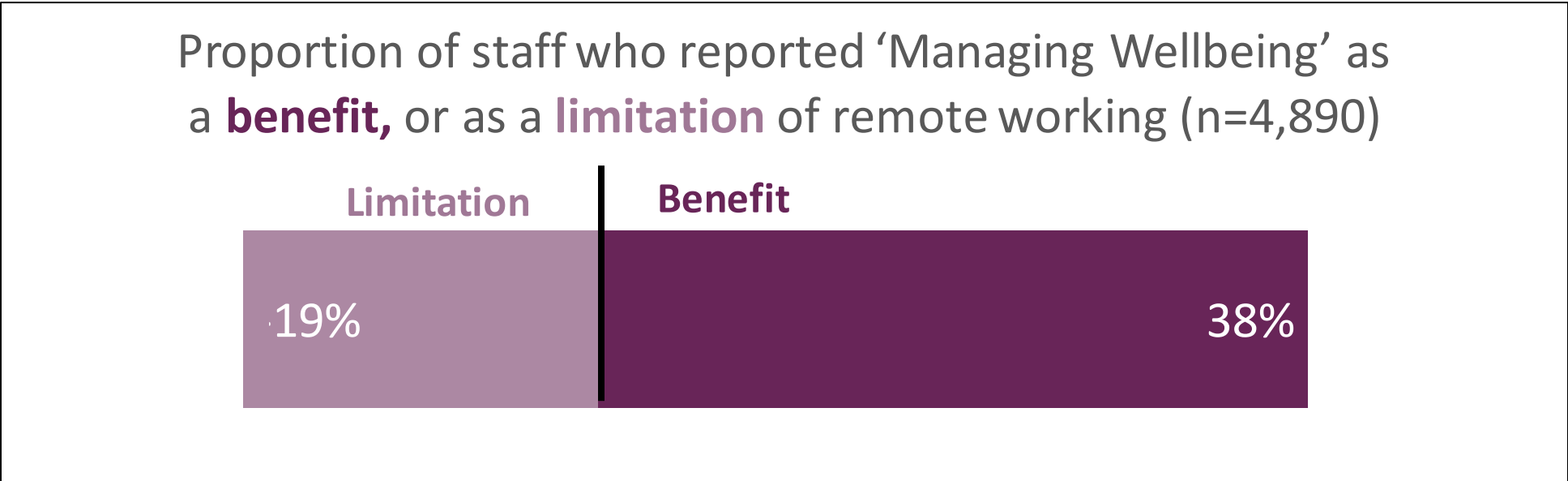
Staff wellbeing



The impact of remote working on staff’s ability to manage their wellbeing is mixed

While around 4 in 10 (38%) staff reported managing wellbeing as one of the benefits of remote working, around 2 in 10 (19%) reported it as a limitation.

Almost one third of staff (32%) reported finding it more difficult to ‘bounce back’ during this challenging times than they normally would.



Loneliness, poor work-life balance, and suboptimal work environments are affecting staff mental and physical wellbeing

“My work/life balance no longer exists, we roll out of bed and onto the laptop and essentially turn the laptop off and go back to bed!”

“I have inflammatory arthritis and am working at my kitchen table, sitting on a metal chair. ”

“I fear for my long term mental health, and that of many of my colleagues who report isolation.”

Source: Staff survey, Oct 2020



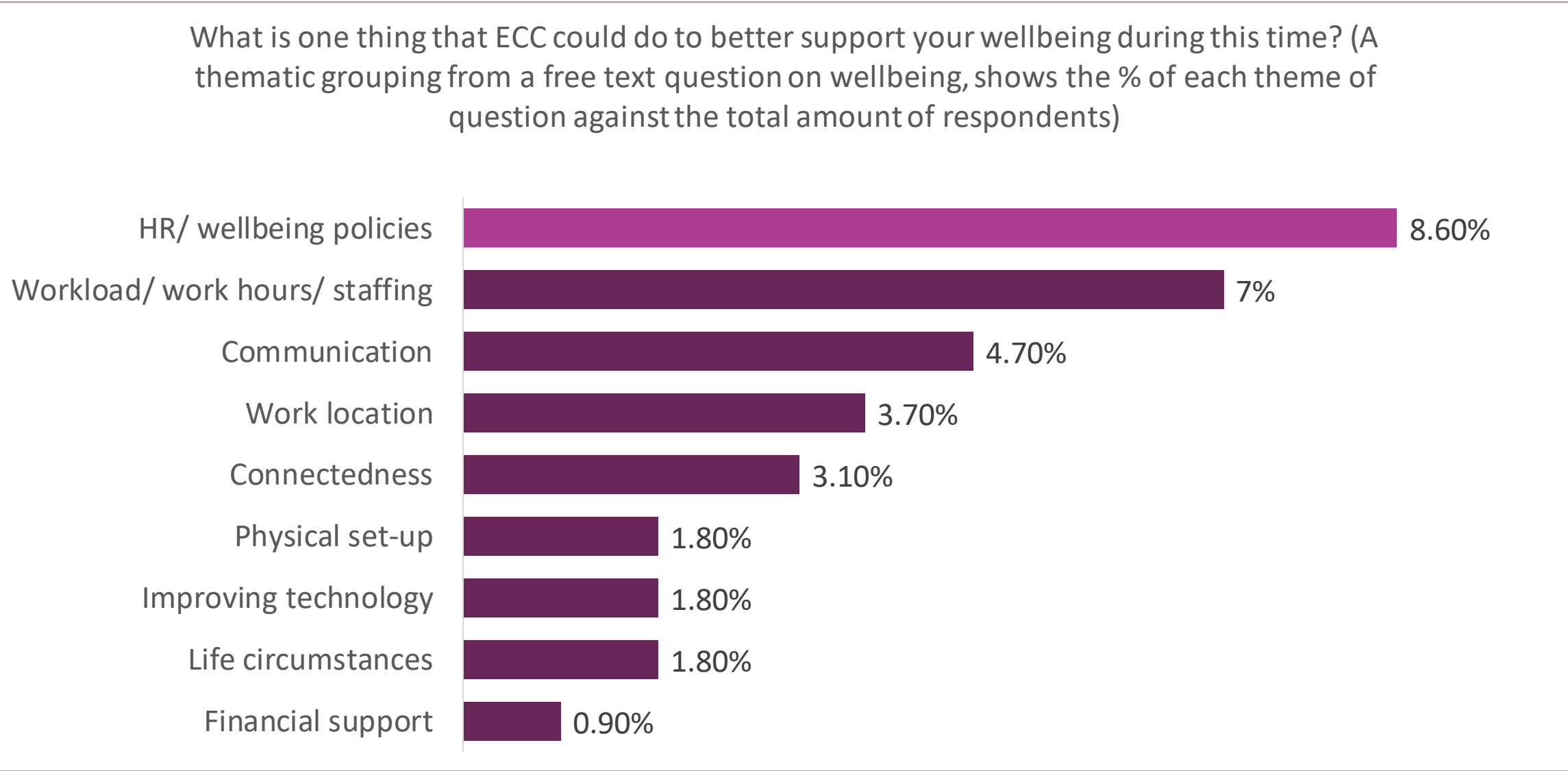
Amending HR/ wellbeing policies was most commonly suggested to improve staff wellbeing during this time

More than 8% of surveyed staff suggested amendments to HR/ wellbeing policies to improve staff wellbeing.

This commonly included:

- Policies to encouraging taking leave/ regular breaks
- Wellbeing supports, such as ‘protective mental health days, wellbeing ‘vouchers’, stay active ‘vouchers’, wellbeing/ resilience training packages etc.

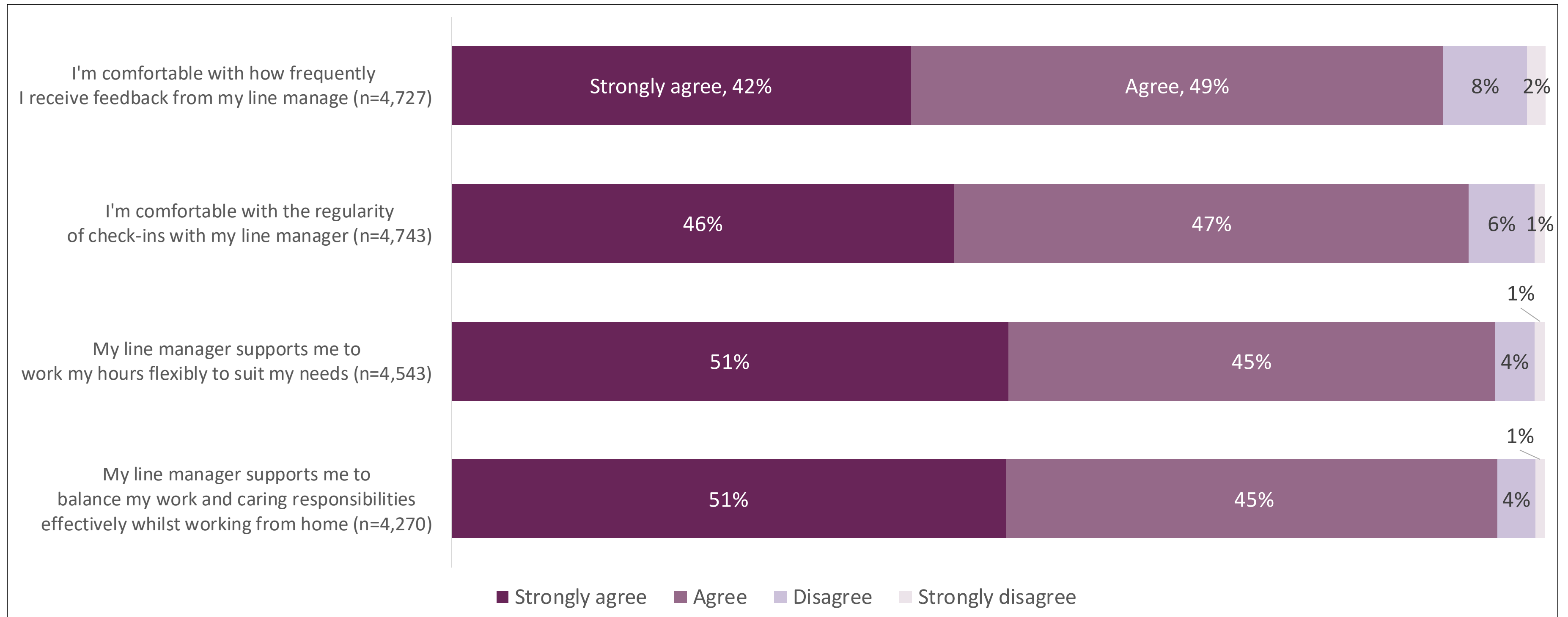
See slide notes for further details on these and other areas of support suggested by staff.



Leaders and managers play an essential role in creating a supportive homeworking environment, and communicating about the future of remote working



Most staff feel adequately supported by their managers while working remotely



Source: staff survey, Oct 2020. Note: blank and 'not applicable' responses removed for this analysis.

Some staff reported being asked to return to the office when they felt it was not required for their role

- Some staff have been directed by managers to return to the office when they feel they could undertake their role at home.
- They felt this was due to a lack of trust to perform their role unsupervised, and in one case, management concerns about losing office space if staff were not there.
- Staff felt that managers and leaders could do more to model positive remote working behaviours, such as taking regular breaks and adopting flexible work patterns.

Source: Staff Survey, Oct 2020

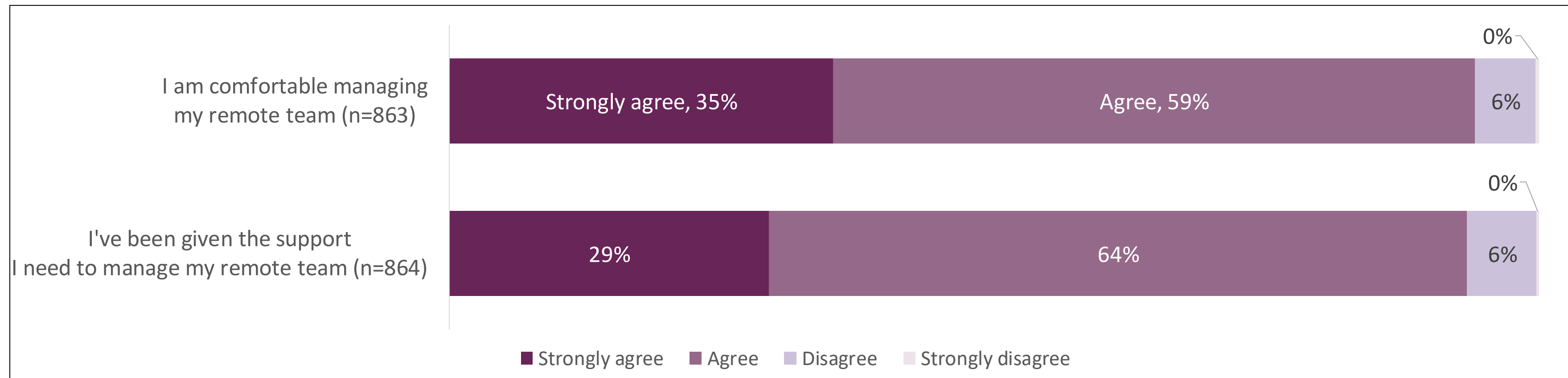
From the literature

- One of the most significant barriers to adoption of remote working is senior management resistance: a change is needed to manage by outcomes and not by hours worked.
- Managers play an essential role in creating a successful homeworking environment and leading by example.
- Remote working requires considerable management time and effort to make it work successfully.

Source: DRW Discovery Report, June 2020



Most managers feel able to manage their team remotely, despite reporting additional challenges



Source: staff survey, Oct 2020. Note: blank and 'not applicable' responses removed for this analysis

Managers noted additional challenges they experience in managing a remote team, for which they would like additional support: supporting staff wellbeing; effective onboarding of new staff, managing poor performance, enabling team collaboration, and monitoring staff wellbeing and workloads. It was harder for managers to manage these things remotely, and takes more time.

There is a need to improve communication about the future of remote working, so that staff can plan for this

“At the moment I do not have space for a dedicated work area, however I am moving shortly and will have the space. It would be good to have clarity on whether I will still be eligible for financial support with buying a desk etc.”

“I would appreciate a long term commitment to being able to work from home such that I could amend childcare arrangements.... (so can amend childminder contract/be here for them to come home to).”

“My team would like to know that there is a permanent change so they can adapt on a longer term basis rather than worrying whether they will be called into the office in a few months.”

“Confirmation that this will be long term instead of the constant unknown.”

Source: Staff survey, Oct 2020

Staff also asked for findings of the most recent staff survey to be shared with them as soon as possible.

Section 3

Using the findings from this pack

Our challenge is to adopt a hybrid approach as soon as possible. We can then design models with services that strike a balance between the needs of staff, residents and ECC as an organisation.

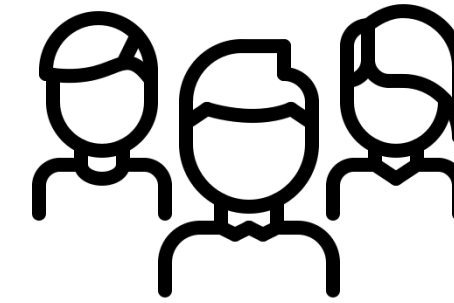


Future data exploration/ research is planned



Segmentation analysis of the staff survey

Data and analytics colleagues are using the most recent staff survey to undertake 'segmentation analysis': this analysis will help understand differences in remote working practices at a more granular level (i.e., what characteristics lead to better remote working experiences, and why). This analysis will be completed by late November 2020.



Further discussion about staff experience

Many staff who completed the staff survey were happy to be contacted for further discussion about their experiences. This provides us with the opportunity to reach out to these colleagues for further research and testing: e.g. staff who currently have a high need for printing could be targeted to test the appropriateness of potential solutions.



Section 4

Appendices

A note on the data

Review of the October staff survey data should bear in mind the different sizes of each function, and the differences in response rates to the survey by function. This means we can be more confident in our findings for some functions than for others (due to increased statistical power).

