



Essex County Council

Corporate Policy and Scrutiny

10:30	Tuesday, 02 March 2021	Online Meeting
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The meeting will be open to the public via telephone or online. Details about this are on the next page. Please do not attend County Hall as no one connected with this meeting will be present.

For information about the meeting please ask for:

Peter Randall, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Telephone: 033301 36131

Email: democratic.services@essex.gov.uk

Essex County Council and Committees Information

All Council and Committee Meetings are held in public unless the business is exempt in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government Act 1972.

In accordance with the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020, this meeting will be held via online video conferencing.

Members of the public will be able to view and listen to any items on the agenda unless the Committee has resolved to exclude the press and public from the meeting as a result of the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

How to take part in/watch the meeting:

Participants: (Officers and Members) will have received a personal email with their login details for the meeting. Contact the Democratic Services Officer if you have not received your login.

Members of the public:

Online:

You will need to visit the ECC Democracy YouTube Channel <https://tinyurl.com/yynr2tpd> where you will be able watch live or view the meeting at a later date. If you want to ask a question at the meeting, please email democratic.services@essex.gov.uk by noon on the day before the meeting. Please note that your question must relate to an item on the agenda for the meeting.

Accessing Documents

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The agenda is also available on the Essex County Council website, www.essex.gov.uk. From the Home Page, click on 'Running the council', then on 'How decisions are made', then 'council meetings calendar'. Finally, select the relevant committee from the calendar of meetings.

Please note that an audio recording may be made of the meeting – at the start of the meeting the Chairman will confirm if all or part of the meeting is being recorded.

	Pages
1 Membership, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest	4 - 4
2 Minutes	5 - 11
To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2021.	
3 Questions from the Public	
A period of up to 15 minutes will be allowed for members of the public to ask questions or make representations on any item on the agenda for this meeting. No statement or question shall be longer than three minutes and speakers will be timed. If you would like to ask a question at the meeting, please email democratic.services@essex.gov.uk before 12 Noon the day before the meeting (Monday 1 March).	
4 Remote Working and Staff Wellbeing	12 - 80
Members to receive report (CPSC/04/21) alongside a presentation from Cllr Susan Barker, Cabinet Member for Customer, Communities, Culture and Corporate and Pam Parkes, Director of Organisation Development and People.	

5 Essex Record Office - Update

81 - 102

Members to receive report (CPSC/05/21) alongside a presentation from Cllr Susan Barker, Cabinet Member for Customer, Communities, Culture and Corporate, Sam Kennedy, Director of Environment and Climate Action and Martin Astell, ERO Manager.

6 Date of Next Meeting

To note that the next Committee meeting will be held on Tuesday 30 March 2021. It is expected that the meeting will be held online, via Zoom.

7 Urgent Business

To consider any matter which in the opinion of the Chairman should be considered in public by reason of special circumstances (to be specified) as a matter of urgency.

Exempt Items

(During consideration of these items the meeting is not likely to be open to the press and public)

The following items of business have not been published on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information falling within Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. Members are asked to consider whether or not the press and public should be excluded during the consideration of these items. If so it will be necessary for the meeting to pass a formal resolution:

That the press and public are excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the remaining items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information falling within Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, the specific paragraph(s) of Schedule 12A engaged being set out in the report or appendix relating to that item of business.

8 Urgent Exempt Business

To consider in private any other matter which in the opinion of the Chairman should be considered by reason of special circumstances (to be specified) as a matter of urgency.

Committee: Corporate Policy and Scrutiny Committee

Membership, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest

Recommendations:

To note

1. Membership as shown below
2. Apologies and substitutions
3. Declarations of interest to be made by Members in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct

Membership

(Quorum 4)

Councillor M Mackrory (Chairman)
Councillor J Abbott
Councillor M Buckley
Councillor G Butland
Councillor M Garnett
Councillor S Lissimore
Councillor D Louis
Councillor M Maddocks
Councillor V Metcalfe (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor J Moran
Councillor M Platt
Councillor R Pratt
Councillor A Turrell
Councillor J Young (Vice-Chairman)

Minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Policy and Scrutiny Committee, held online, on Tuesday 26 January 2021

In attendance:

Councillor M Mackrory (Chairman)
Councillor A Turrell
Councillor M Buckley
Councillor G Butland
Councillor M Garnett
Councillor J Young

Councillor V Metcalfe
Councillor J Aldridge (substitute)
Councillor M Platt
Councillor S Lissimore
Councillor M Maddocks

1. Membership, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest

There were no changes to the membership of the committee since the last meeting.

Cllr Moran sent in his apologies for this meeting and was substituted by Cllr Aldridge.

Cllr J Abbott and D Louis were absent for this meeting.

2. Minutes

Members approved as a correct record Minutes of the meeting held on 24 November 2020

3. Questions from the Public

There were no requests to speak from members of the public.

4. Financial Overview as at the Third Quarter Stage

The panel for this item was:

- Cllr Chris Whitbread, Cabinet Member for Finance
- Nicole Wood, Executive Director of Finance and Technology
- Stephanie Mitchener, Director of Finance
- Adrian Osborne, Head of Strategic Finance and Insight
- Christine Golding, ECC Chief Accountant

The committee noted report CPSC/01/21 and received a presentation from the Cabinet Member and officers.

Key points raised during the presentation included:

Key messages

- Revenue over spend of **£607,000 (0.1%)** predominantly driven by COVID-19 pressures
- Continued uncertainty – impact of COVID-19 and new Tier restrictions on demand for services and future income means it continues to be challenging to provide a forecast for the year
- Previous £25m risk on Council Tax is now estimated at £8m for 2020/21 collection fund – Extension of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme means risks around increasing unemployment will now potentially impact the taxbase for 2022/23
- Emergency government funding of **£84.6m** has been received to date – recent funding announcements have been specific grants – largest of which is “Contain Outbreak Management Funding”. This is based on what Tier the county is in over each 28 day period. Up to the end of December ECC has been allocated **£16.1m**
- Capital under spend of **£17.6m (7.9%)** against the latest budget of £222m

Covid-19 impact

- Currently estimate spending pressures and income losses could be up to **£160m**. Some of the larger elements include:
 - **£19m** of adult social care pressures from hospital discharge
 - **£11m** for homecare related pressures, including increased demand, reduced income, increased staff overtime and PPE costs
 - **£31m** for the Adult Social Care Infection Control Fund
 - **£6m** Test and Trace
 - **£5m** for Waste pressures as a result of increased volumes
 - **£5m** for lost income in Country Parks and Essex Outdoors
- Total COVID grant funding is currently estimated at **£173m**, although new grants continue to be announced. This leaves us with an estimated **£13m** surplus from COVID funding at present, however given the level of uncertainty around ongoing restrictions and the unquantified risks we face, there will be further cost pressures and income losses that materialise in the remaining months of the year and we expect this funding to be fully committed
- Report recommended creation of new “COVID Equalisation Reserve” – will be used to set aside funding received from government and will aid consistency and transparency as it will all be in one place. Funding will be placed here until decisions are made on their utilisation. Report recommended **£16.4m** to be transferred in to this reserve from the remaining unallocated emergency grant funding
- Second claim made for Fees and Charges income loss compensation scheme – August – November claim totalled **£6.5m**, taking total claims to date to **£8.1m** – currently estimate full year claim could total **£15m**

- Proposals for Contain Outbreak Management Funding continue to be worked through and agreed. Up to end of December **£16.1m** allocated to ECC by government. Decisions taken to date include:
- **£2.3m** – Welfare
- **£2.2m** – Business Adaptation Grant scheme
- **£4m** – Additional financial support for residents asked to self-isolate and not eligible under Test & Trace support payments plus top up to districts who have exhausted funding allocations under Test & Trace support payments scheme
- **£1.1m** – District funding to extend compliance / COVID Marshalls initiative
- **£374,000** – Laptop scheme for schools

Following the presentation, members of the committee were invited to ask questions and provide scrutiny. Key points raised by members included:

- Frontloading of £13m surplus to Covid reserve – Members raised questions as to whether the overspend was due to future anticipated pandemic spending. ECC has to submit monthly forecasts of expected pandemic spending. Government are using these forecasts to allocate adequate funding. This will, in the long run, be audited.
- Director of Procurement role – Members raised questions around the role and remit of the director of procurement role. The Cabinet Member outlined a number of challenges facing ECC in the remit of procurement, not least of which relating to the changes resulting from Brexit. It was agreed by the Cabinet Member that more information would be provided to the committee outlining the purview and responsibility of the role. Members praised day to day procurement at ECC, but raised concerns around ‘big ticket’ procurement exercises and the unwillingness to take in outside support and consultancy.

ACTION: committee members to be provided with a full outline of the Director of Procurement role, along with a clearer picture on how success for this position might be measured.

5. ECC Budget and Organisational Plan 2021-22

The panel for this item was:

- Cllr Chris Whitbread, Cabinet Member for Finance
- Nicole Wood, Executive Director of Finance and Technology
- Stephanie Mitchener, Director of Finance
- Adrian Osborne, Head of Strategic Finance and Insight
- Christine Golding, ECC Chief Accountant

Members received paper CPSC/02/2021 and a presentation outlining a high level overview of the 2020-21 budget. The full details of the budget/organisational plan and papers can be found [here](#).

Following the presentation, Members of the committee were invited to ask questions and provide scrutiny.

The Chairman began the session by thanking The Cabinet Member and officers for attending scrutiny and congratulated them on behalf of the committee for putting together a comprehensive budget during such difficult and uncertain times.

Key points raised by members include:

- Frontloading of £13m surplus to Covid reserve – Members raised questions as to whether the overspend was due to future anticipated pandemic spending. ECC has to submit monthly forecasts of expected pandemic spending. Government are using these forecasts to allocate adequate funding. This will, in the long run, be audited.
- Insurance cost revenue - £7m gross, £3.8m net. The income is derived from maintained schools who purchase their insurance from ECC (£1.3m), £600,000 from internal recharge of motor premiums (covering Car Provision Scheme vehicles and ECC fleet vehicles). In 2021/22 there is an additional £1.2m of one-off income from Ringway Jacobs relating to Red Claims settlement that is being applied as a one-off saving.
- Self-insurance – members enquired as to what extent ECC self-insures, and the scope for further self-cover/how this might be balanced with risk – the Cabinet Member informed members that ECC does self-insure. ECCs deductible levels for its main policies are:
 - Officials Indemnity - £5m
 - Public Liability - £1.5m
 - Employers Liability - £1.2m
 - Property - £500,000
 - General Fleet Motor – £25,000

When ECC re-tenders a policy, officers look at internal claims experience and deductible levels and will occasionally request that the internal actuary completes a programme design review. Officers will then go out to the market and ask for quotes on alternative deductible options. This ensures that ECC gets the optimum balance between external insurance provision and self-insurance.

- The frequency with which external policies are retendered – Members were informed that ECC procures in accordance with the regulatory requirements applying at the time e.g. OJEU. All of the larger policies will have Long Term Agreements (LTA) of typically 3 or 5 years. Once the LTA expires, they are then re-tendered.
- Extent of coverage – members enquired as to whether ECC's policies cover only premises, or wider areas such as vehicles, public liability, employers liability etc. and how this cost is spread around service budgets. The Cabinet Member noted that ECC has separate policies for each class of business. ECC has a policy covering liability (including Employers Liability, Public Liability), a policy covering

Property (including buildings, contents, computers and business interruption) and two different motor policies for lease vehicles and general fleet vehicles. There are also a number of smaller more bespoke policies covering specific areas of the council. In terms of how this is paid for, the insurance budget is a Recharged Strategic Support Service (RSSS) and the net cost of the service is allocated across the organisation using a combination of claims data (so costs get allocated to those parts of the organisation that drive claims) and headcount information.

- The insurance reserve – Members enquired about the £7m insurance reserve - this is part of the overall £32.2m ECC holds on the balance sheet across provisions and reserves for the purposes of ECC's self-insurance scheme. The reserve (and provision) is set with reference to advice of the Council's retained insurance actuary to meet future insurance liabilities. ECC is obliged to set the insurance provision at the level set out by the actuary. However, the amount that the organisation reserve for is discretionary. The actuary typically presents three risk scenarios (low/medium/high) and as a matter of course ECC reserve based on the mid scenario. The current reserve holds £2.1m more than the mid scenario from the last actuarial valuation given emergent risks to the fund during 2020/21 including revaluation of existing claims. The 2020/21 revenue budget includes a one-off saving of £1.1m by reducing this reserve, which would see the closing balance for 2020/21 reduce to £6.3m.
- Key priorities – members noted that the key areas set out as priority in the budget are Family, Economy and environment and drew concerns around prior lack of investment in these areas. Members particularly raised the closure of children's centres as a high-profile example of poor investment. The Cabinet Member drew attention to budget growths in all of these areas in the 2021/22 budget and outlined positive benchmarking when compared to other authorities. The Cabinet Member also raised the Essex Climate Action Commission that had very recently completed it's interim report – and noted other practical actions that ECC had taken to promote positive environmental action.
- Future budget scrutiny – Members noted that, in future, it would be preferable for the budget to come to scrutiny earlier in the process rather than it coming in after it has been essentially agreed. The Cabinet Member reminded members that nothing was final until the budget had been adopted by Full Council in February, but confirmed that conversations had already taken place around incorporating scrutiny into the budget process at an earlier stage.
- Central govt. changes to local govt. investment policy – The Cabinet Member noted that changes in the near future were likely, and that future budgets and investment strategies would have to take this into account.
- Locality fund – members of the committee noted the success of the locality fund in delivering local division goals and supporting constituents. There was concern raised over the fact that it was not included in the budget as it stands. Members were informed that this

was a decision for the leader of the council, and that should the leader decide to move forward with it, provision could, and would, be made available.

- Pay ratio between highest and lowest paid employees – Members raised questions around the pay rate and ratios of ECC employees. Officers agreed to provide further information in writing.

ACTION: Officers to provide information on the pay ration of ECC employees.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member and officers for their attendance.

The Cabinet Member and Officers left the meeting

6. Essex Legal Services

The panel for this item was:

- Cllr Susan Barker, Cabinet Member for Customer, Communities, Culture and Corporate
- Paul Turner, Director of Legal and Assurance
- Katie Bray, Head of Legal

The Chairman welcomed the Cabinet Member and officers to the meeting. Members received report CPSC/03/21. Following a brief presentation highlighting the paper's key themes, members were invited to ask questions and provide scrutiny.

Key points raised by members included:

- Making use of effective external legal advice – Members were assured that ECC maintains significant legal expertise in a number of areas. ECC has one of the largest local authority legal departments in the country. Where this is not possible, however, external organisations and specialists are brought on board. This is particularly true when it comes to issues of commercial litigation.
- Court of protection fees – members raised questions around the cost to the resident of ECC services acting on their behalf. Members were particularly concerned about vulnerable or lower income residents and the impact this might have upon their estate and finances. Members were assured that ECC will always look to find a suitable friend or resident to act on behalf of the resident. ECC does not actively market the service as a commercial venture, it is used as a last resort if a suitable alternative is not able to be found. If the resident has an acting power of attorney then the service is also not applicable, unless there is a safeguarding concern, at which point ECC might be asked to provide an application to the court to seek an alternative model of support.
- Abandonment of previous trading model – Officers noted that the previous model created a number of complications and, on occasions

facilitated the potential for conflict of interest. The new model allows Essex Legal Services to focus on what is in the best interests of the authority as a whole, rather than what is in the best interests of the fee payer.

- Charging of portfolios for work carried out on their behalf – ELS receives a budget at the beginning of the year to provide a comprehensive internal service. This includes legal advice to cabinet members and senior leadership. ELS will only charge for capital projects.

7. Date of Next Meeting

The next full committee day was noted as the 2nd March. Here, members will be looking at results from the second internal ECC staff survey and an update from the Essex Records Office.

8. Urgent Business

None received

9. Urgent exempt Business

None received

Close of Meeting

The formal meeting was closed at 12.31

Report title: Remote Working and Staff Wellbeing	
Report to: Corporate Policy and Scrutiny Committee	
Report author: Pam Parkes, Director ODP & Service Transformation	
Date: 2 nd March 2021	For: Information
Enquiries to: Ben Unsworth, Head of Service Transformation or Alison Woods, Head of People Business Partners, Employment Practice & Equalities	
County Divisions affected: All ECC Employees	

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To update the Committee on remote working policies, the launch of the new staff wellbeing strategy, and the results of a recent internal staff survey.

2. Background

- 2.1 In October 2020, Members of the Corporate Policy and Scrutiny Committee, joined by members from the Health and People and Families Policy and Scrutiny Committees received an update on staff wellbeing and the success of remote working brought about by the pandemic. Members also received the results of an initial staff survey designed to gather insight into how well ECC employees were adjusting to remote working, and the support required to make this a success in the longer term.
- 2.2 Members noted that a second staff survey was in circulation at the time of the meeting in October. The results of this survey were circulated to members of all three of the above committees in December 2020 and are attached to this paper (Appendix A).
- 2.3 following receipt of the second survey results, members requested that an additional session be scheduled to discuss the findings.

3. Session Aims

- 3.1 Members are asked to discuss the results and findings with the Cabinet Member and officers, providing feedback and asking questions.

4. List of Appendices

- 4.1 Appendix A: Your Working Experience Survey: Summary
- 4.2 Appendix B: Your Working Experience Survey: Findings Pack

Your Working Experience Survey

March 2021



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

- Staff are more likely to disagree that **relationships with colleagues and managers** had improved since working remotely now than in the previous staff survey in May 2020.
- While more staff report having **access to the equipment they need** 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).



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 frustration 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 significant discontent.
- Many staff asked for more flexibility in where (and when) they work: 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.



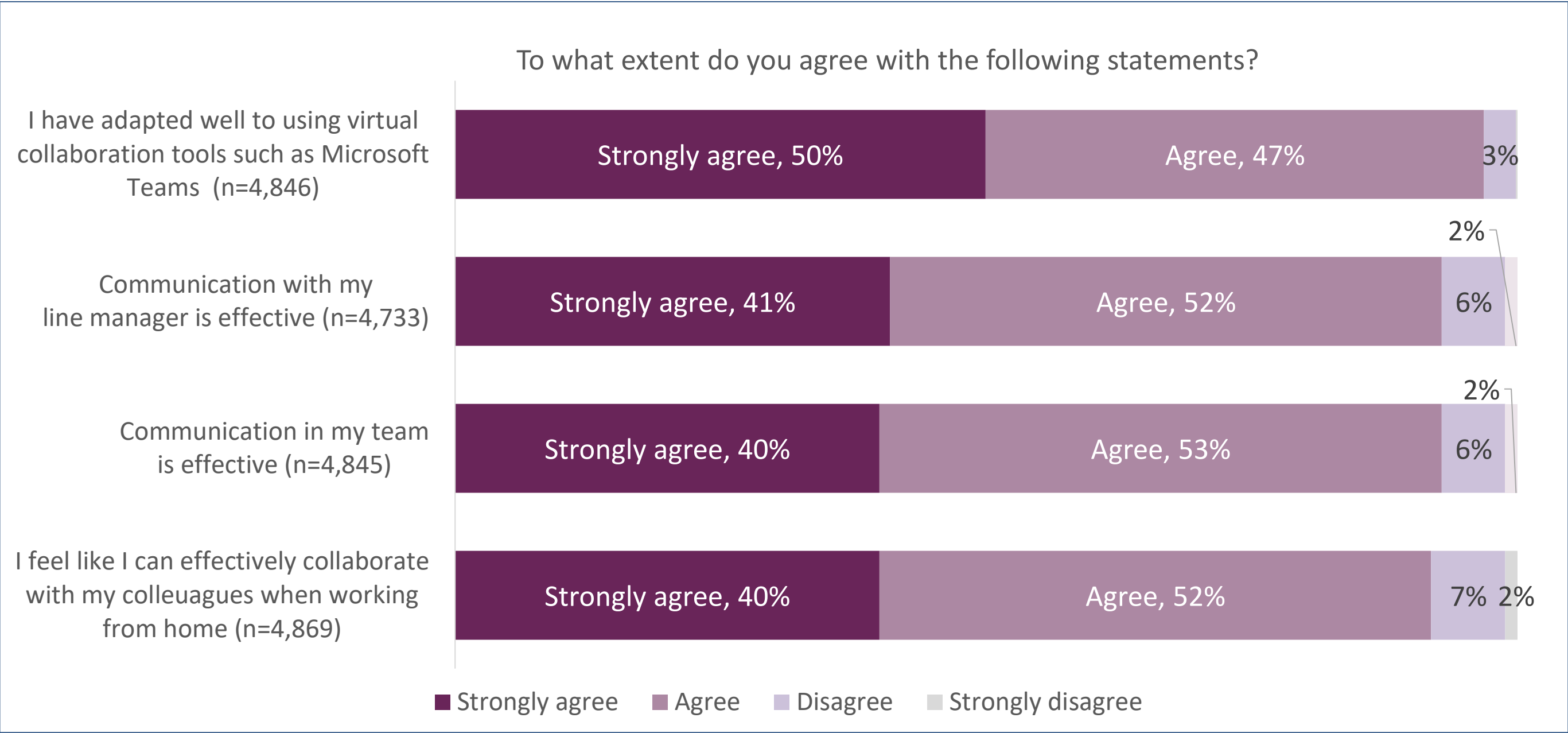
Most staff can perform their job remotely, but this varies by function and by role



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.

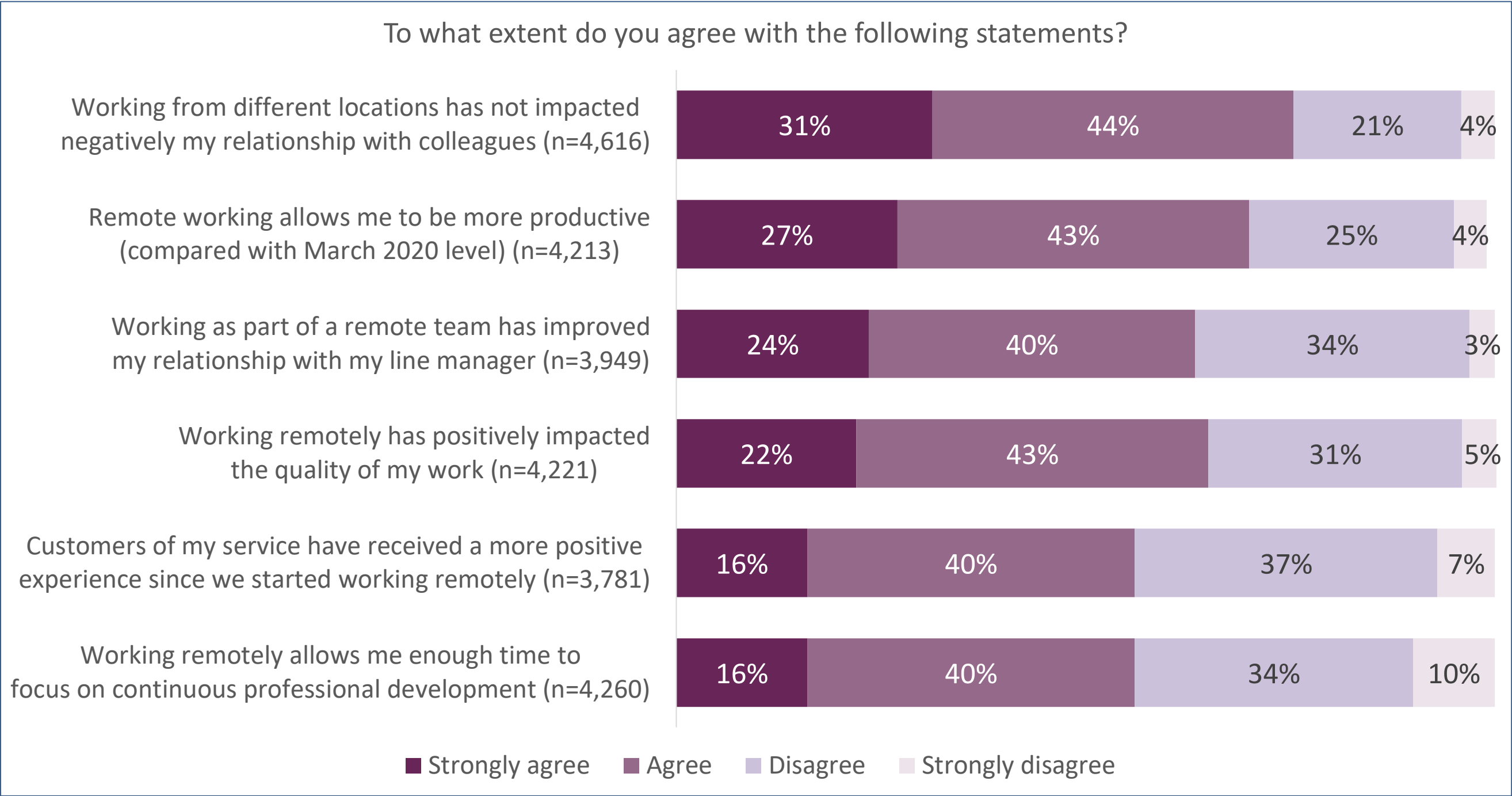


Source: Staff survey, Oct 2020. Percentages rounded to the nearest %. Blank and ‘Not applicable’ responses removed from analysis.

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).



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 (see slide notes)



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

Many staff report a home environment unsuitable for home working

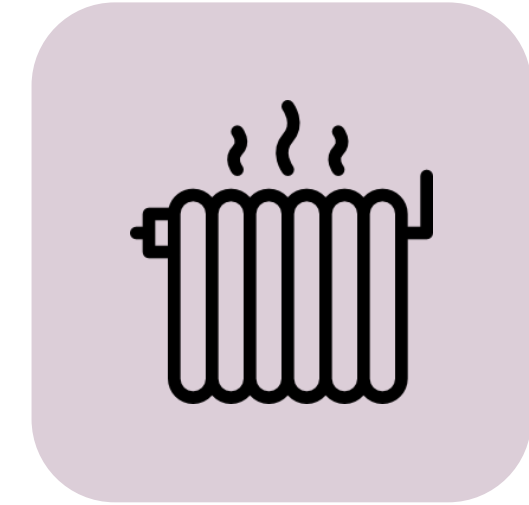
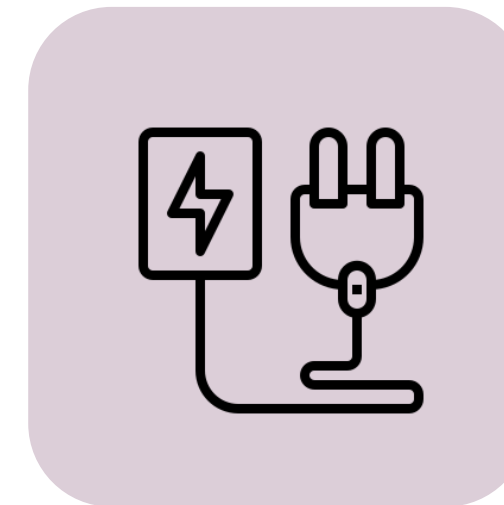
“2 of us work for ECC and live in a small flat. We have no space for a dedicated office or desk.”

“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

Financial considerations



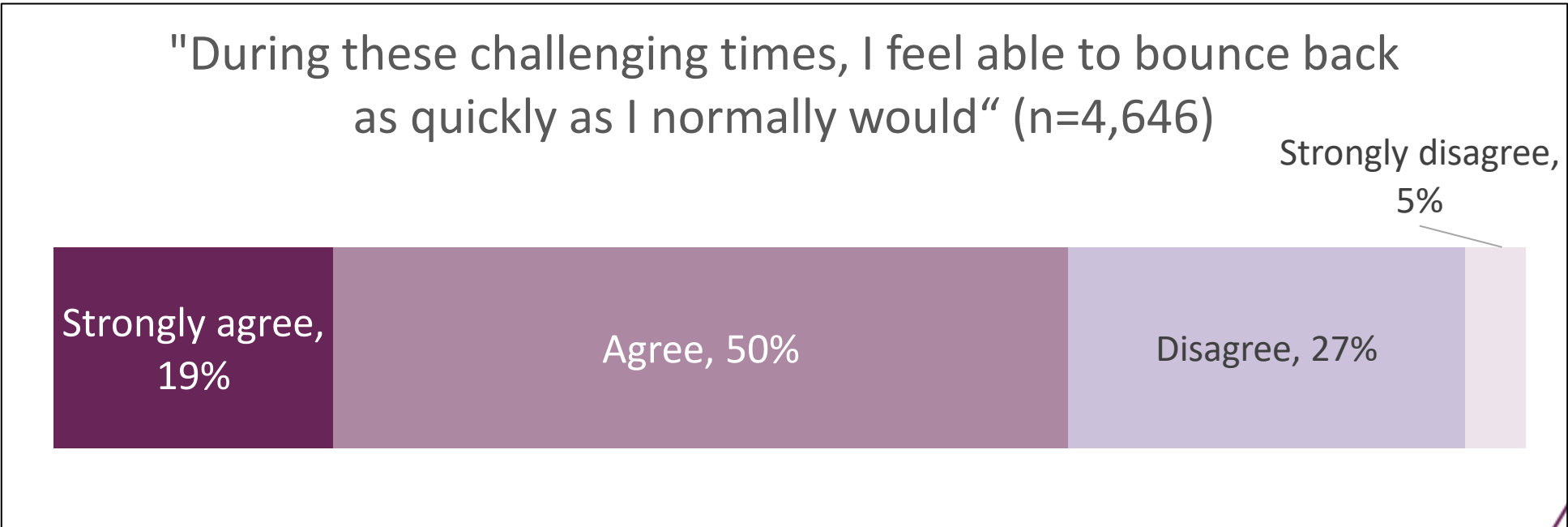
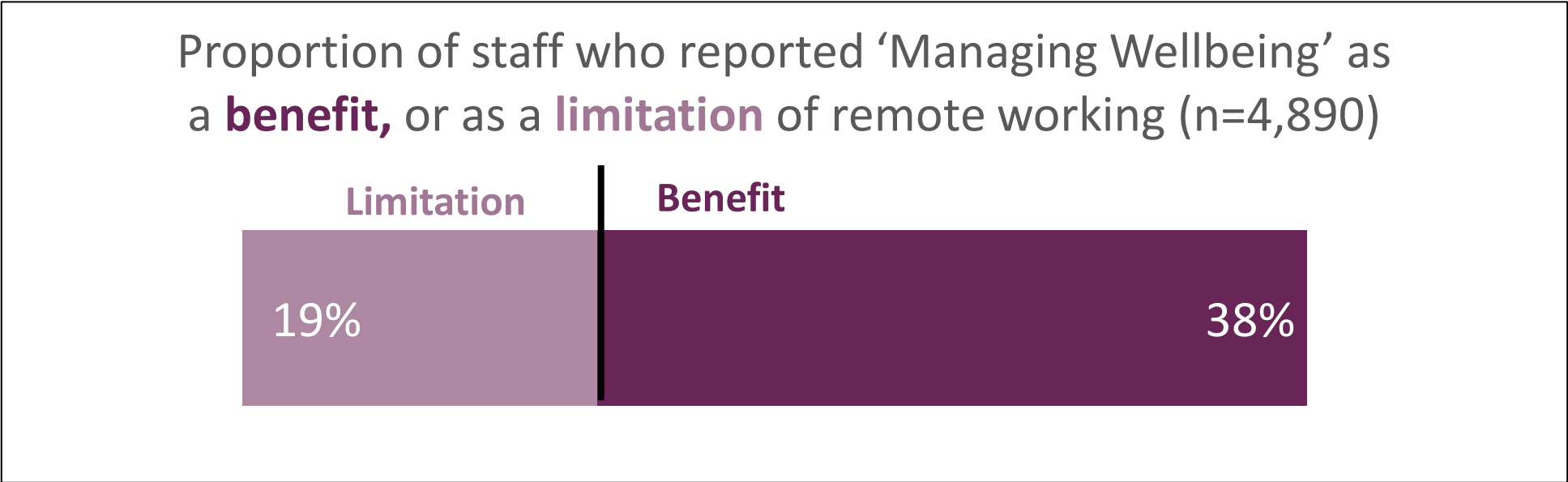
Staff wellbeing



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

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



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.

Your Working Experience Survey Findings Pack

November 2020

Prepared by Narelle Ong, User Researcher, Service Transformation: narelle.ong2@essex.gov.uk

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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- 4 | [Appendices](#)



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



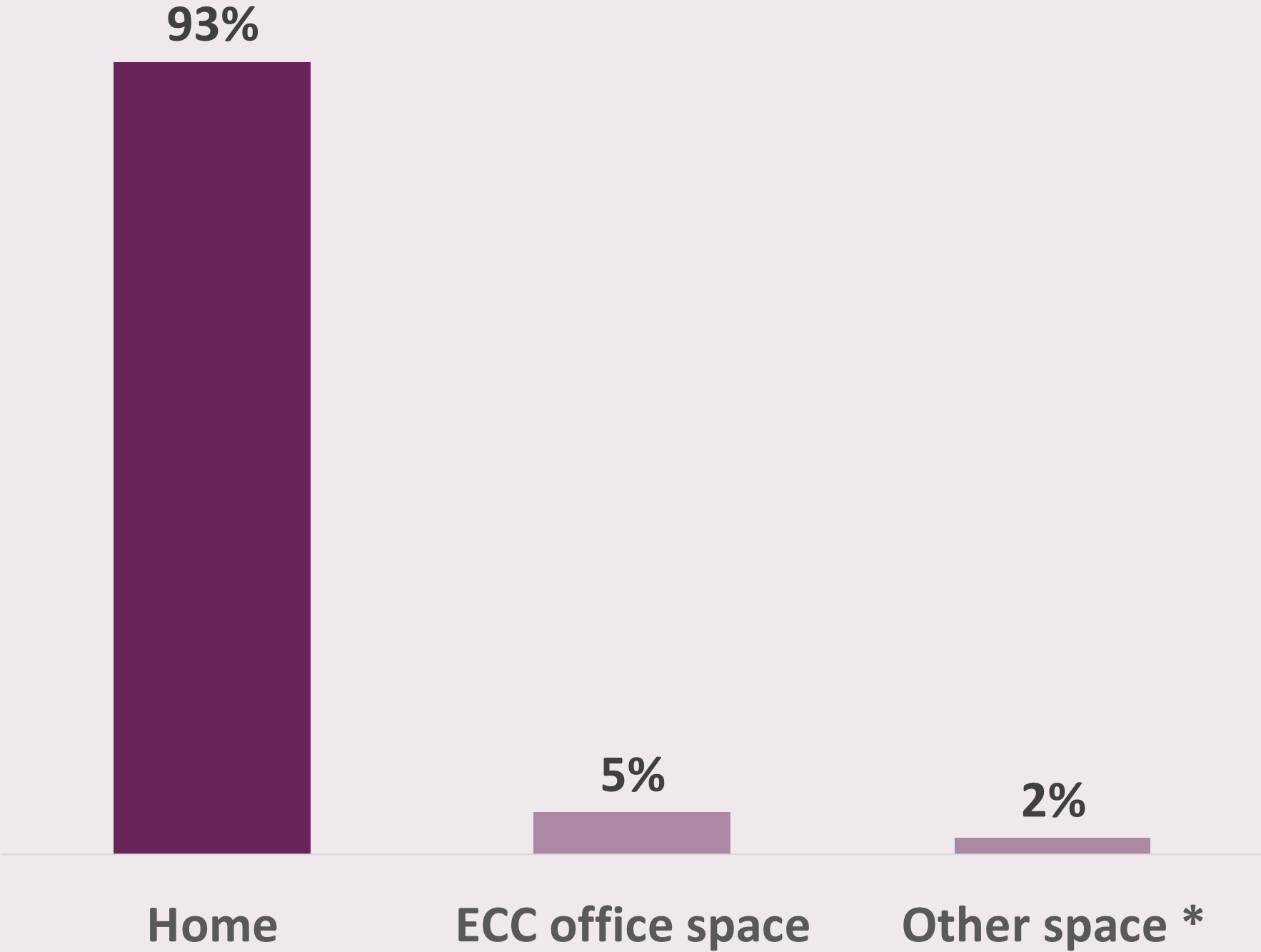
Changes to where staff work: August to October 2020

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

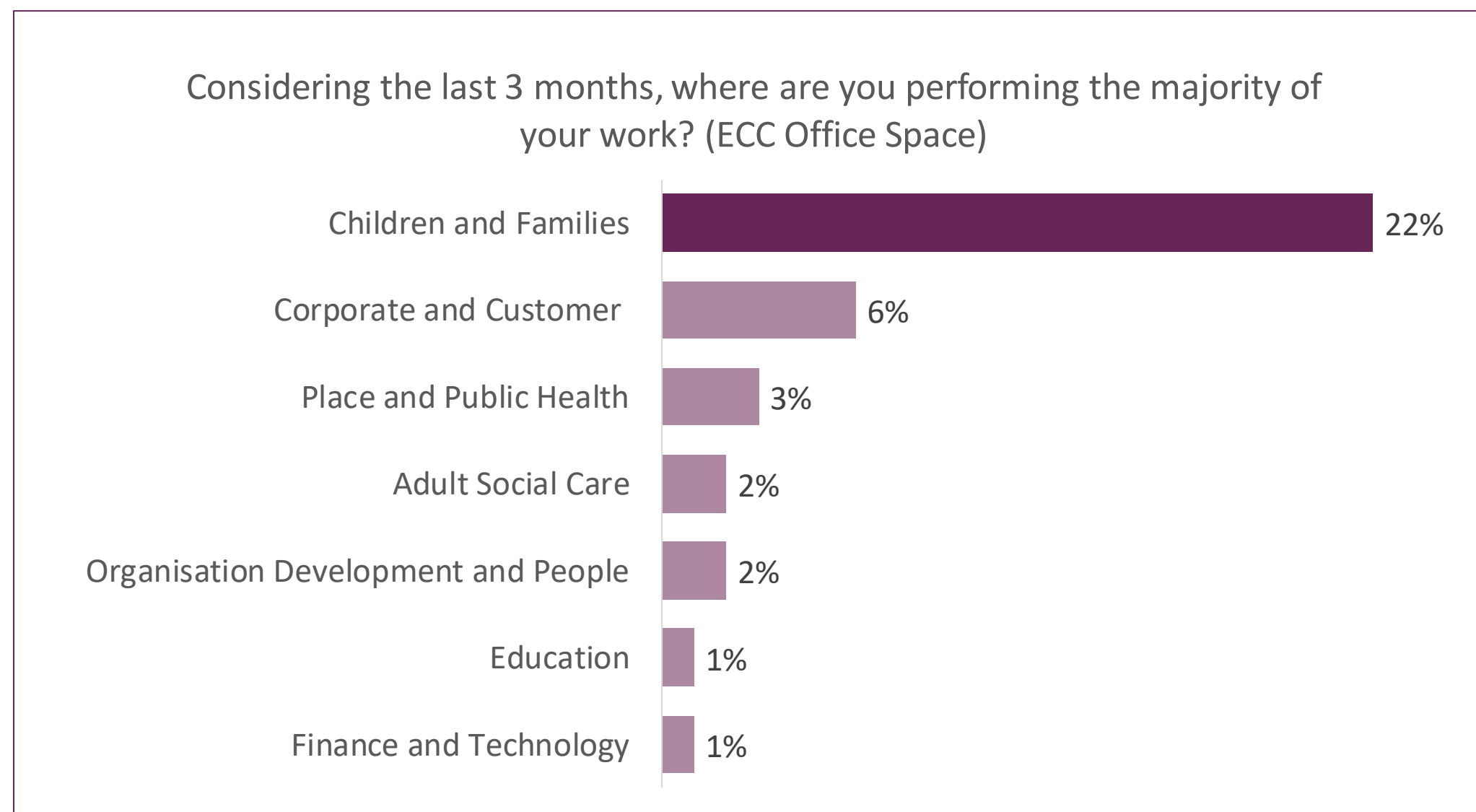


Source: October 2020 Staff survey. n=3,206. * See slide notes for 'other spaces specified.

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).



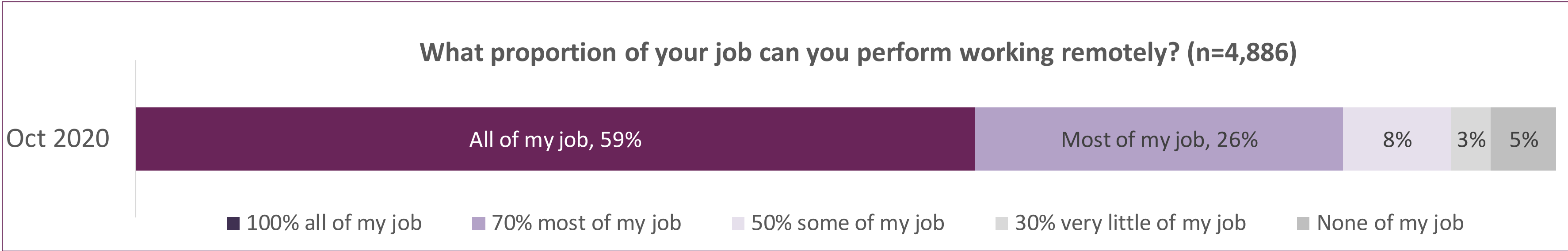
Source: Staff survey, Oct 2020

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:

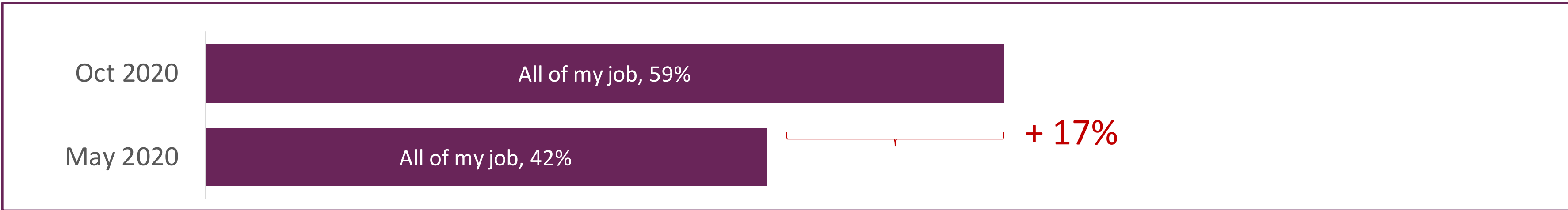
“Facilitate working from home to ensure employee safety during this time and allow work life balance”

“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.



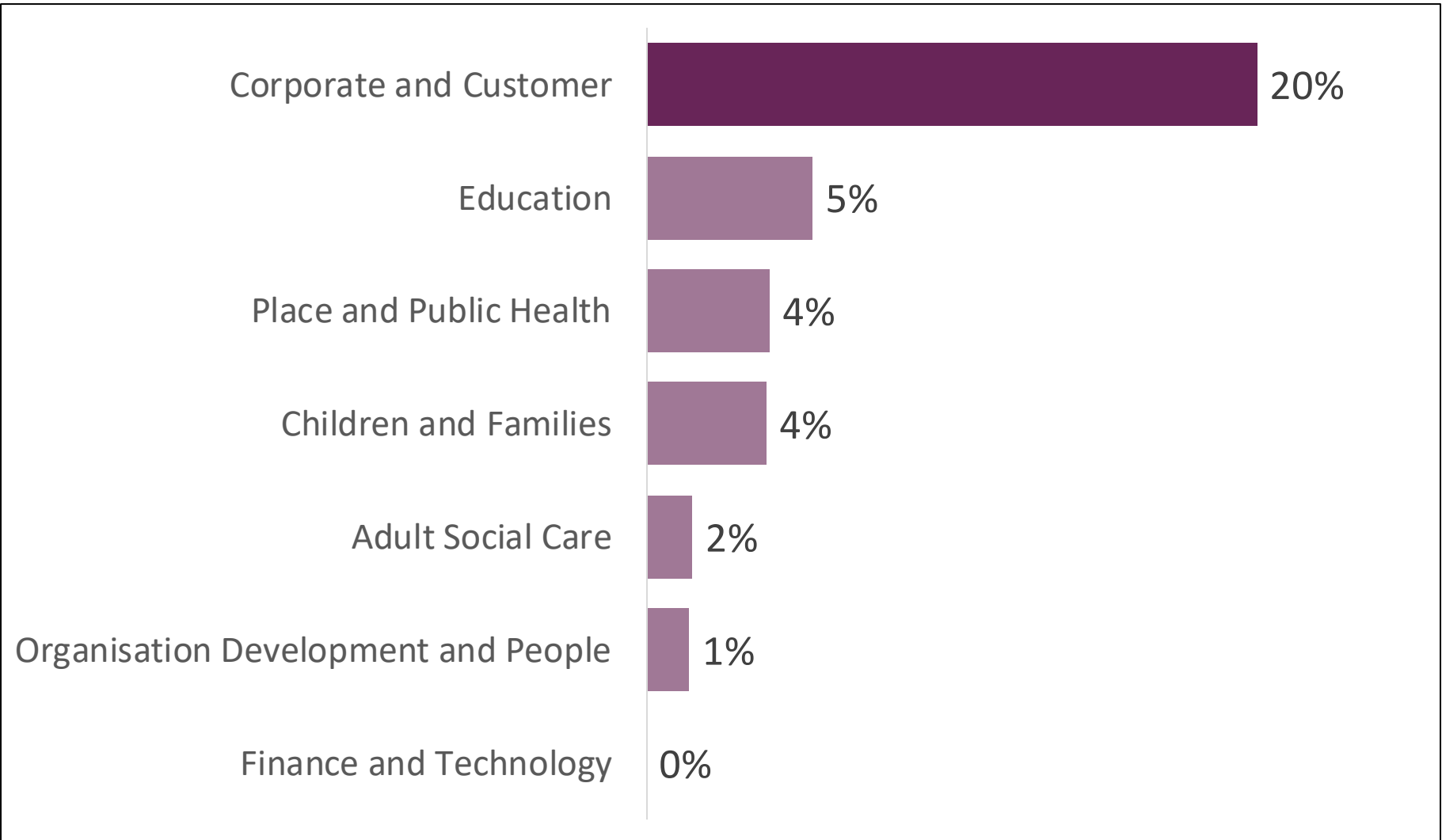
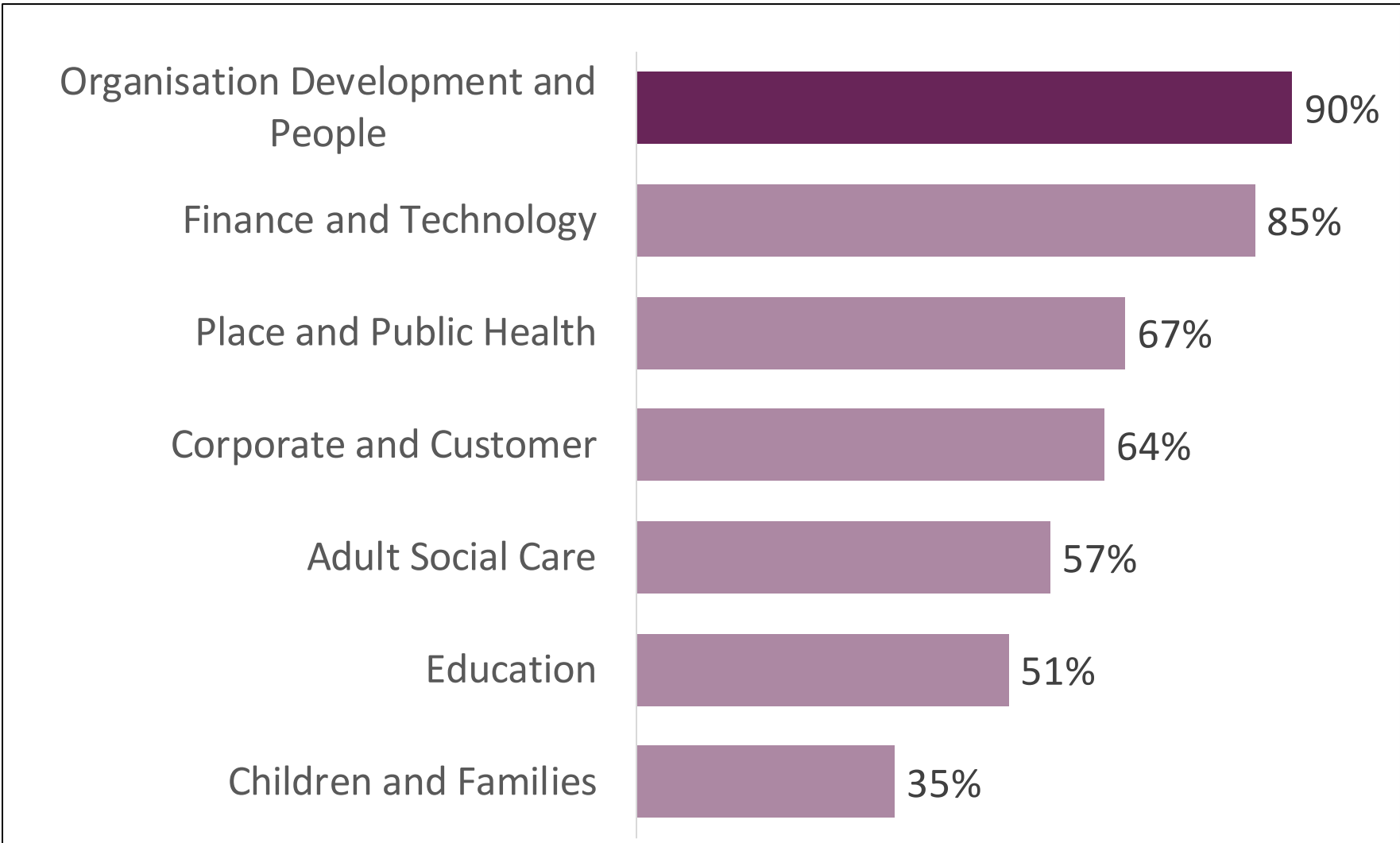
The percentage of staff able to perform ‘All’ of their job while working remotely has risen by **17%** since the survey was conducted in May.



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).



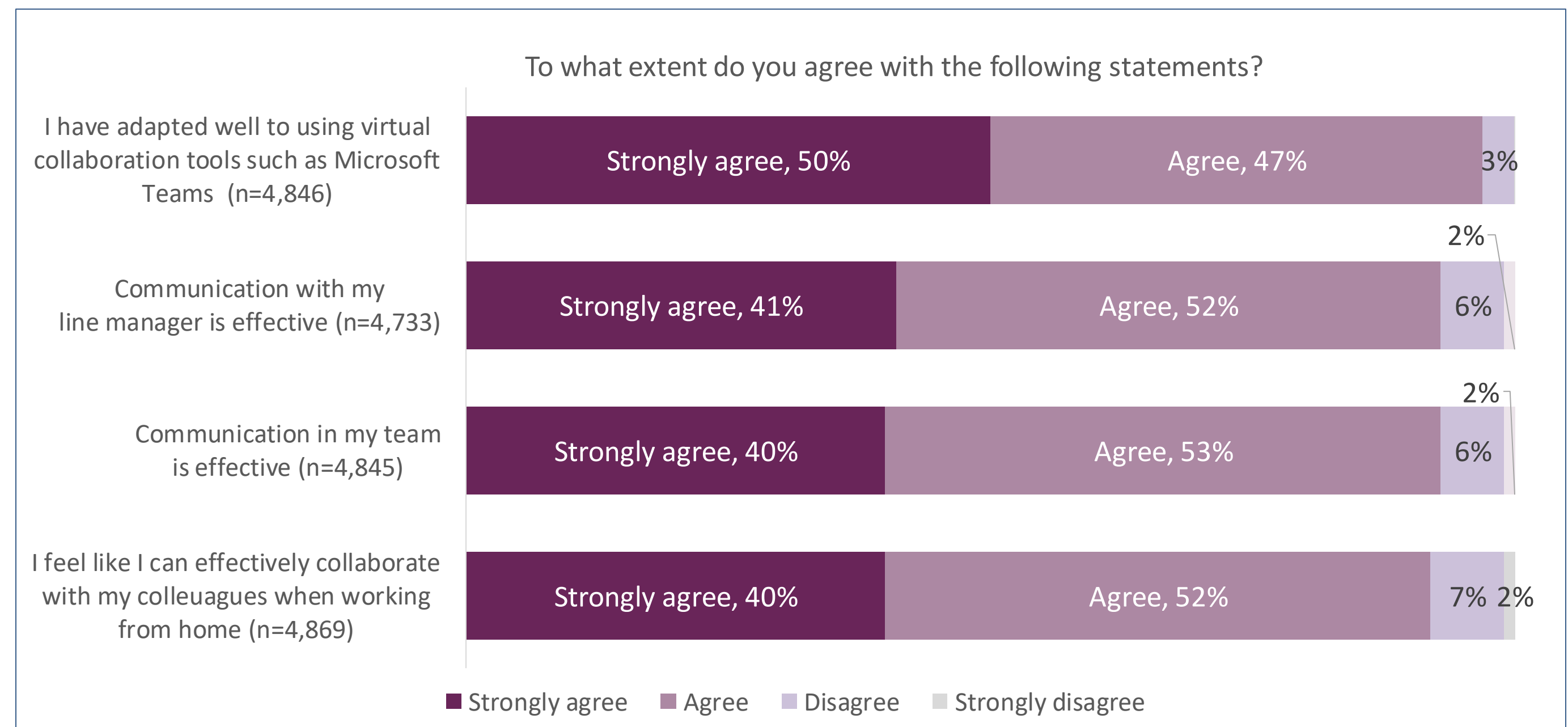
Source: Staff survey, Oct 2020.



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.

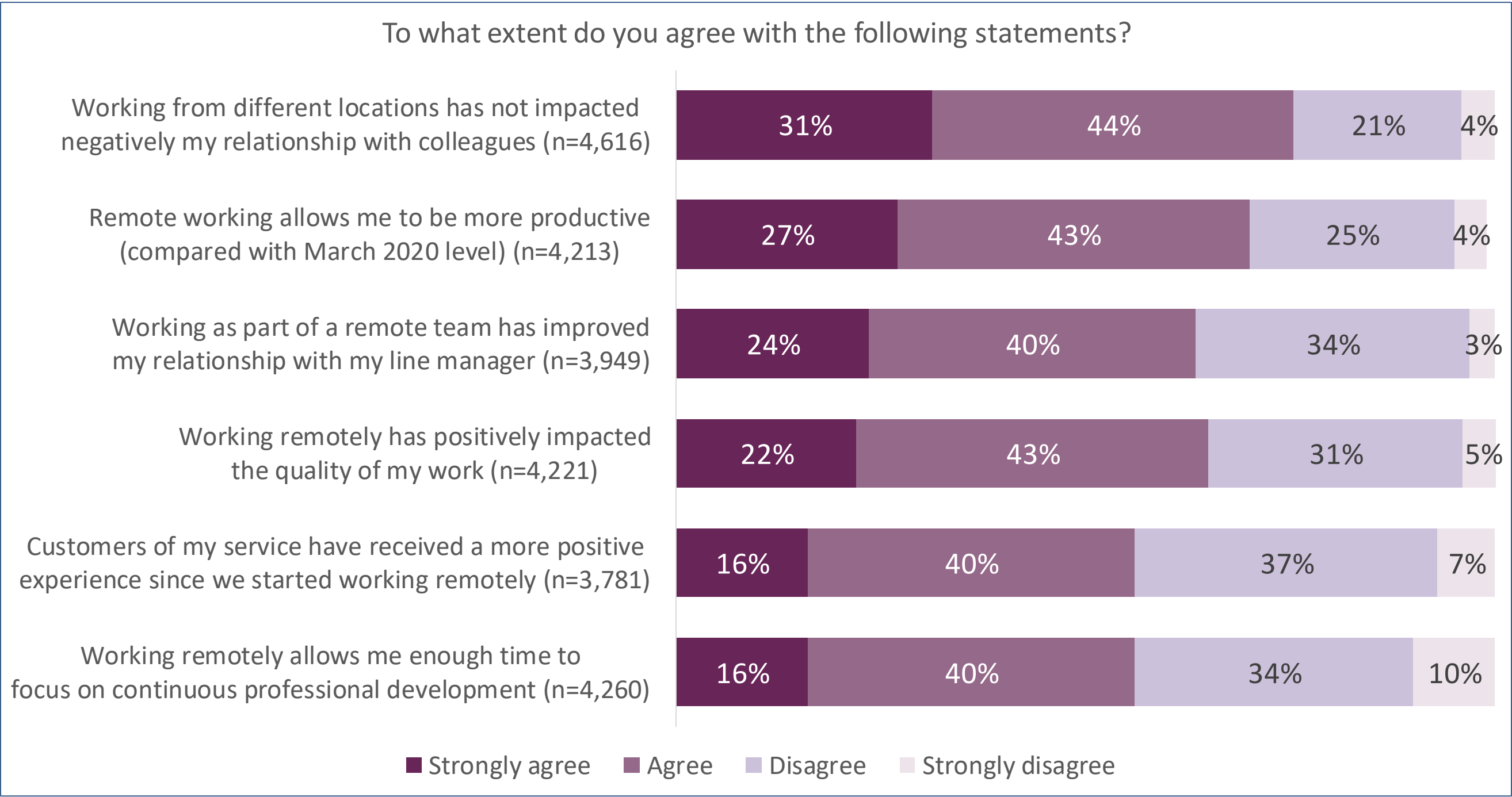


Source: Staff survey, Oct 2020. Percentages rounded to the nearest %. Blank and ‘Not applicable’ responses removed from analysis.

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).



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.

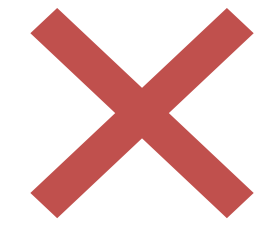


Top 5 benefits reported by staff



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

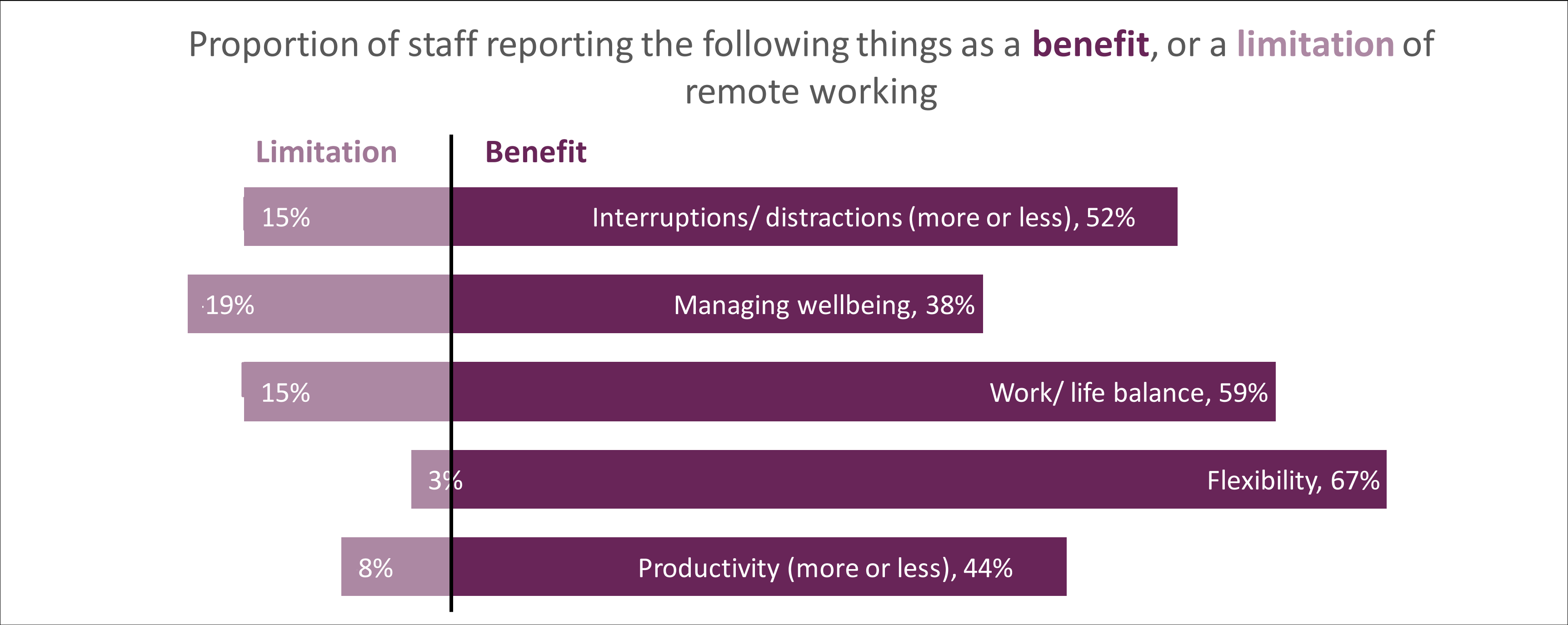


1. Excessive screen time - 60%
2. Reduced social interaction – 56%
3. Limited relationships with colleagues
(incl. social learning) – 52%
4. Limited access to printing – 49%
5. Working more than set hours – 39%

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).

Source: literature view



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

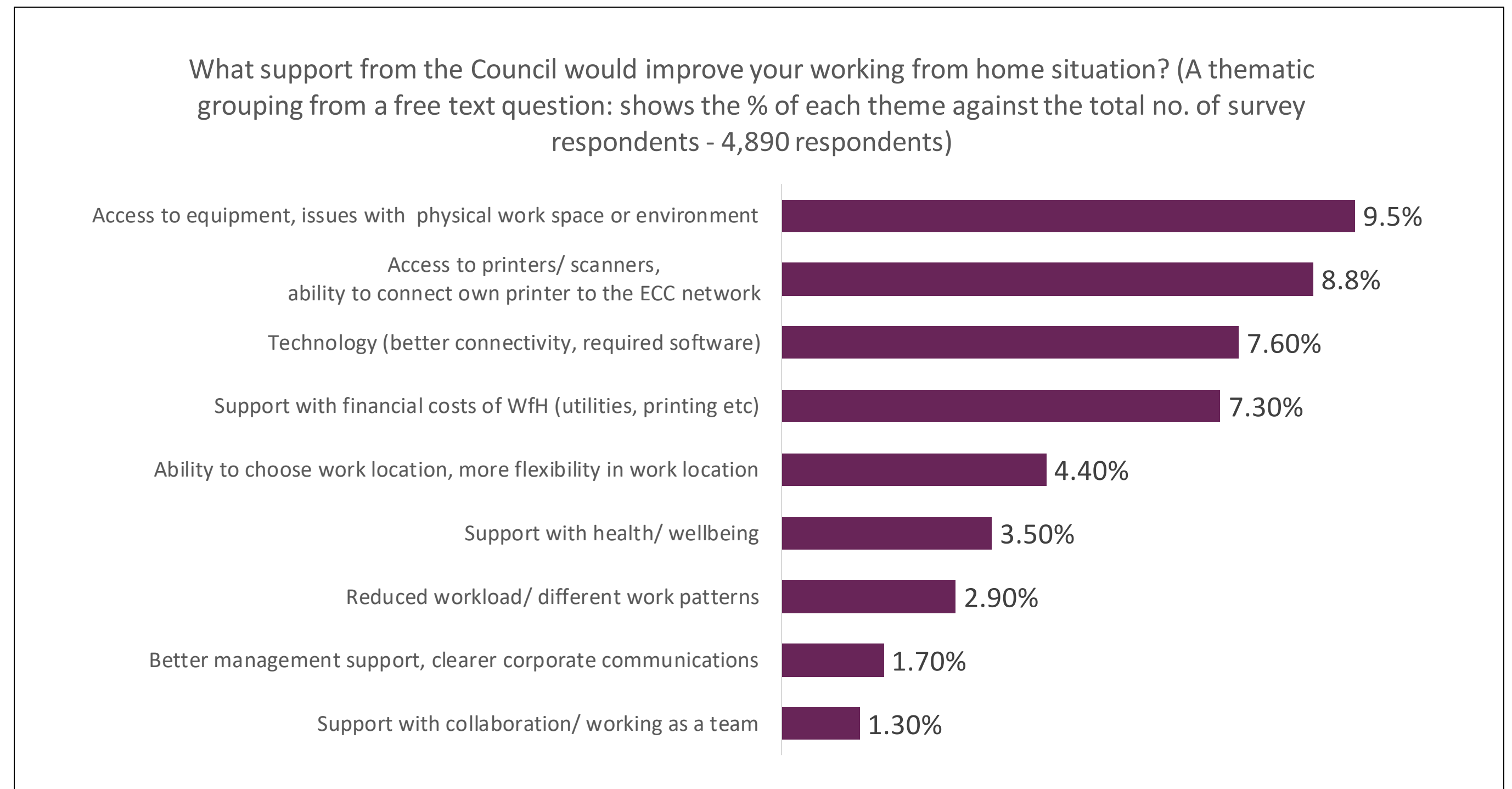


Some staff need further support to continue to work from home in the longer-term, and/or to improve their working from home situation

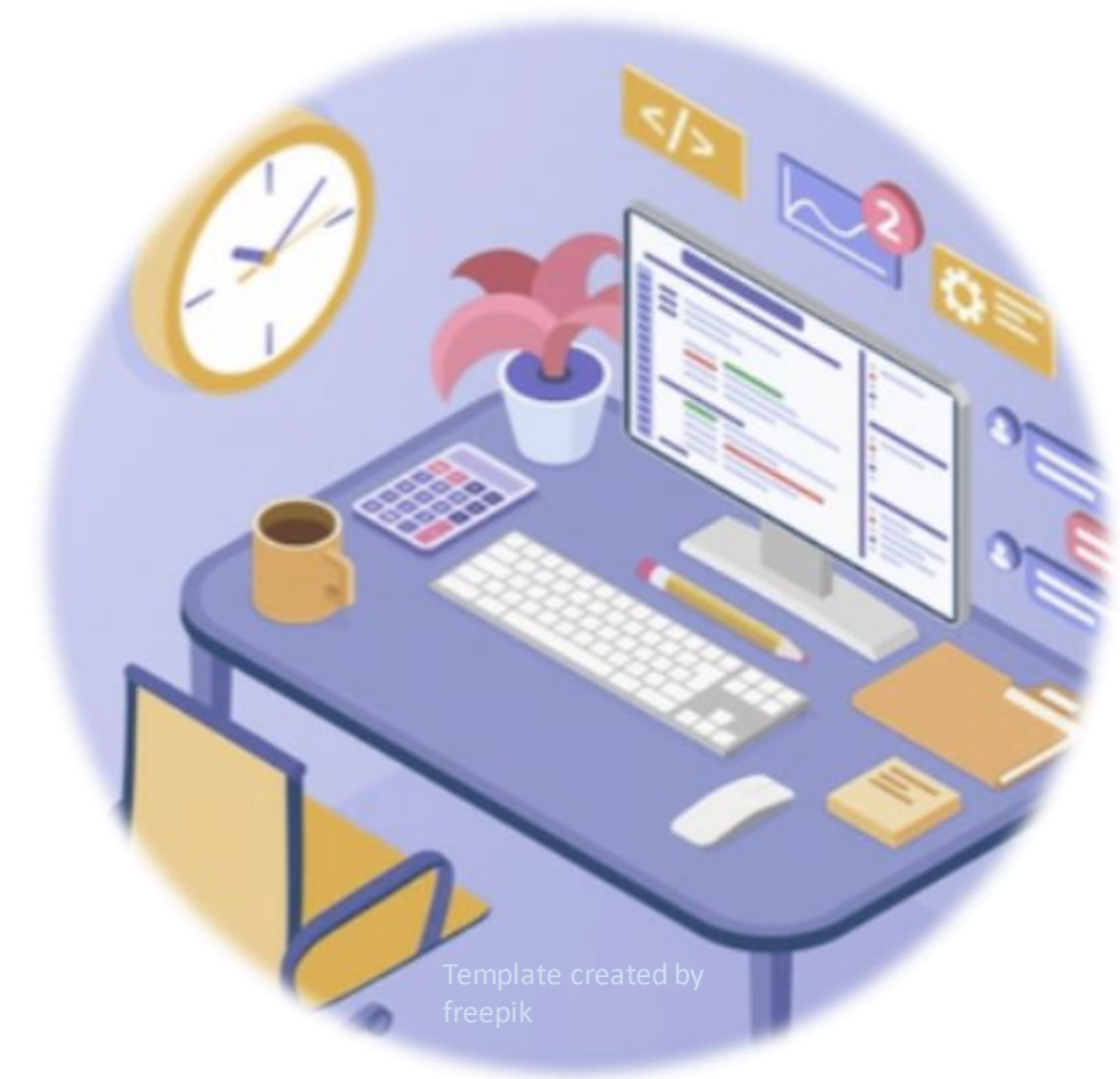
15% of surveyed staff did not think that had the right support from the Council to continue working from home in the longer term.

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

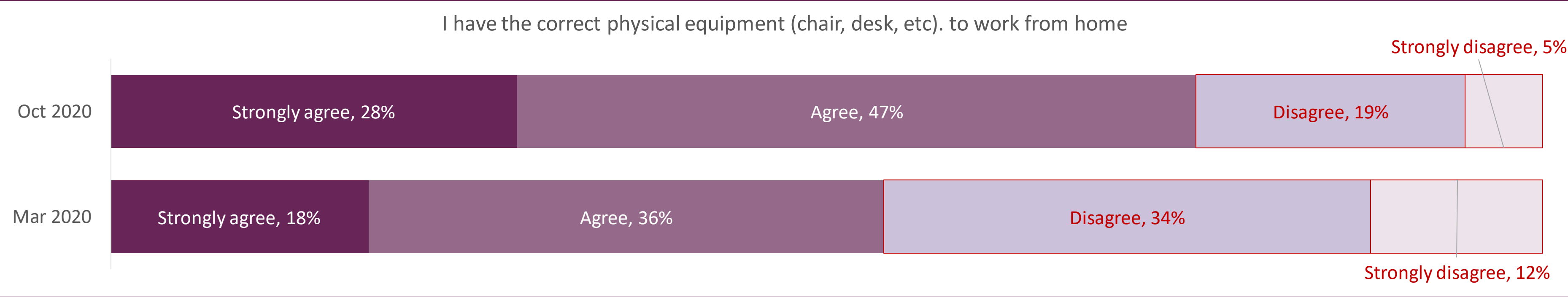
Further details of why these supports are needed are in the following slides.



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.”

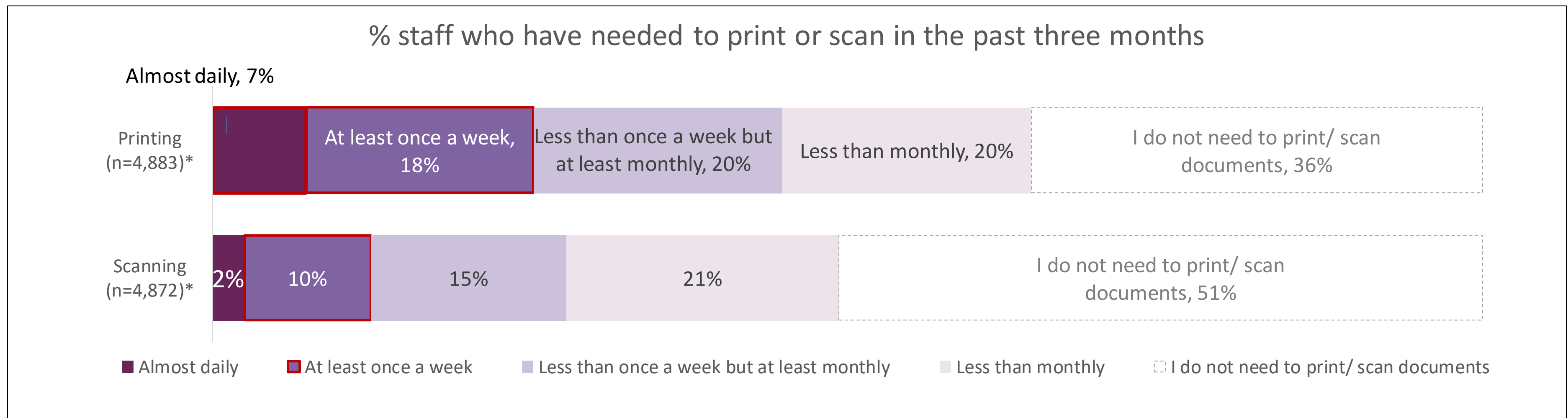
“There are major issues over delivery [of the equipment] as apparently they won't set it up ...it will be over to me to haul upstairs and get set up with no help.”

Source: Staff survey, Oct 2020



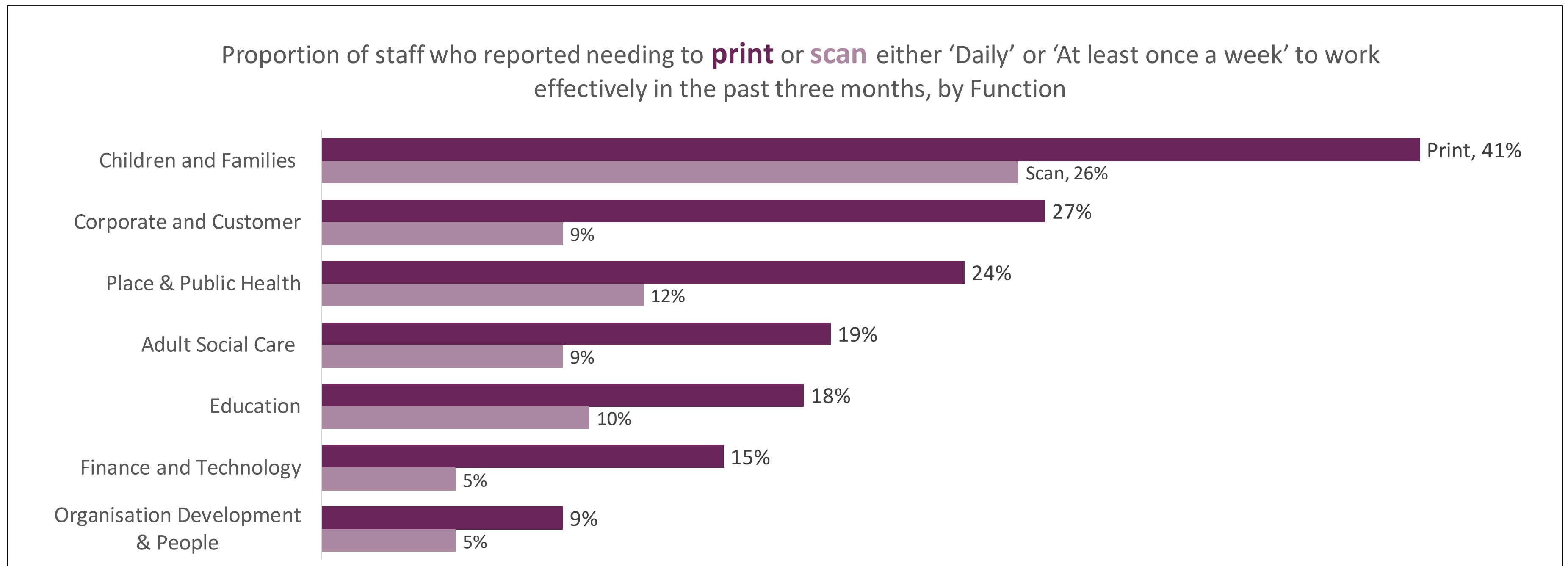
Some staff have needed regular access to printers and scanners in the last three months

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.



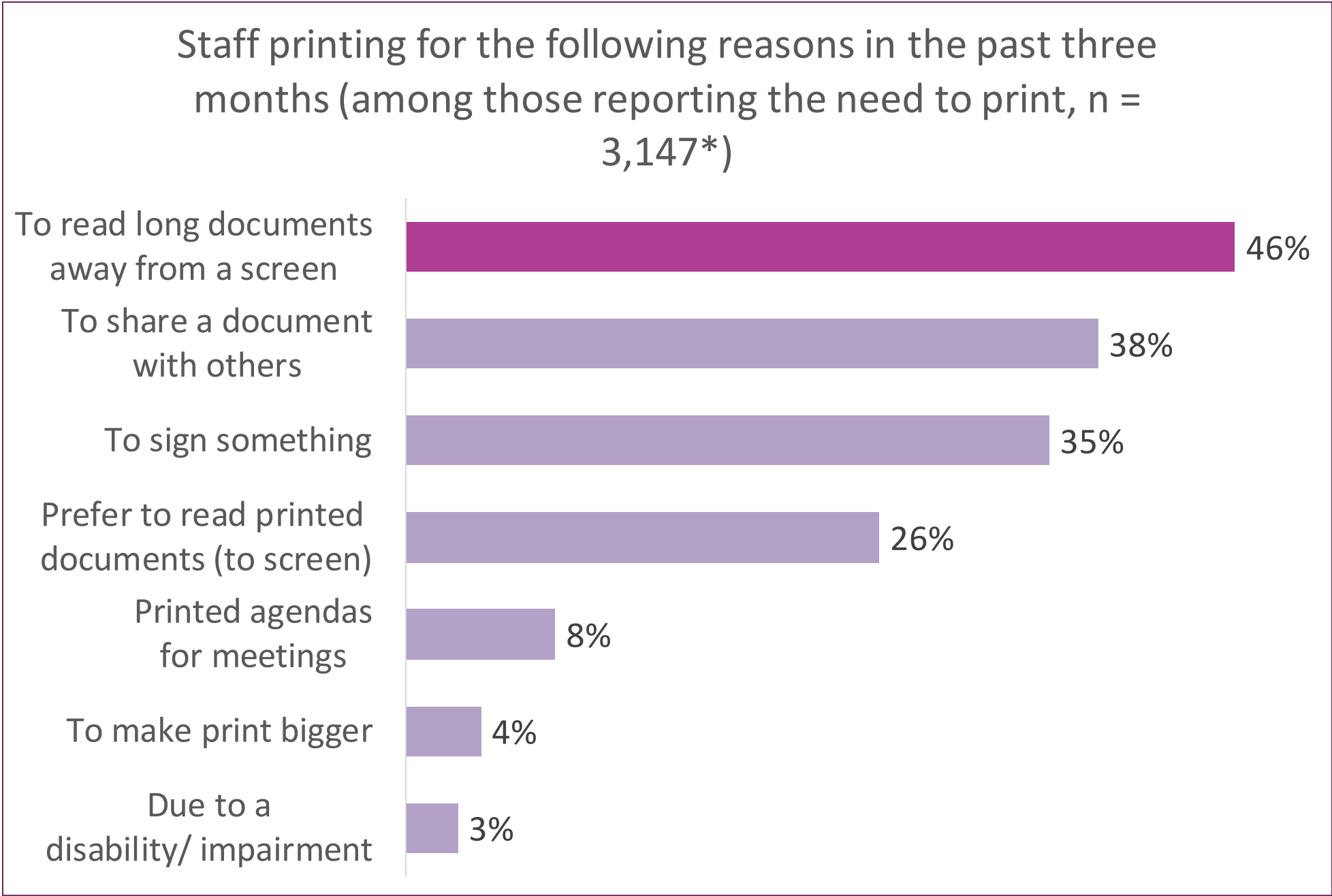
Source: staff survey, Oct 2020. * Blank responses not included in analysis/ reported ‘n’.

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

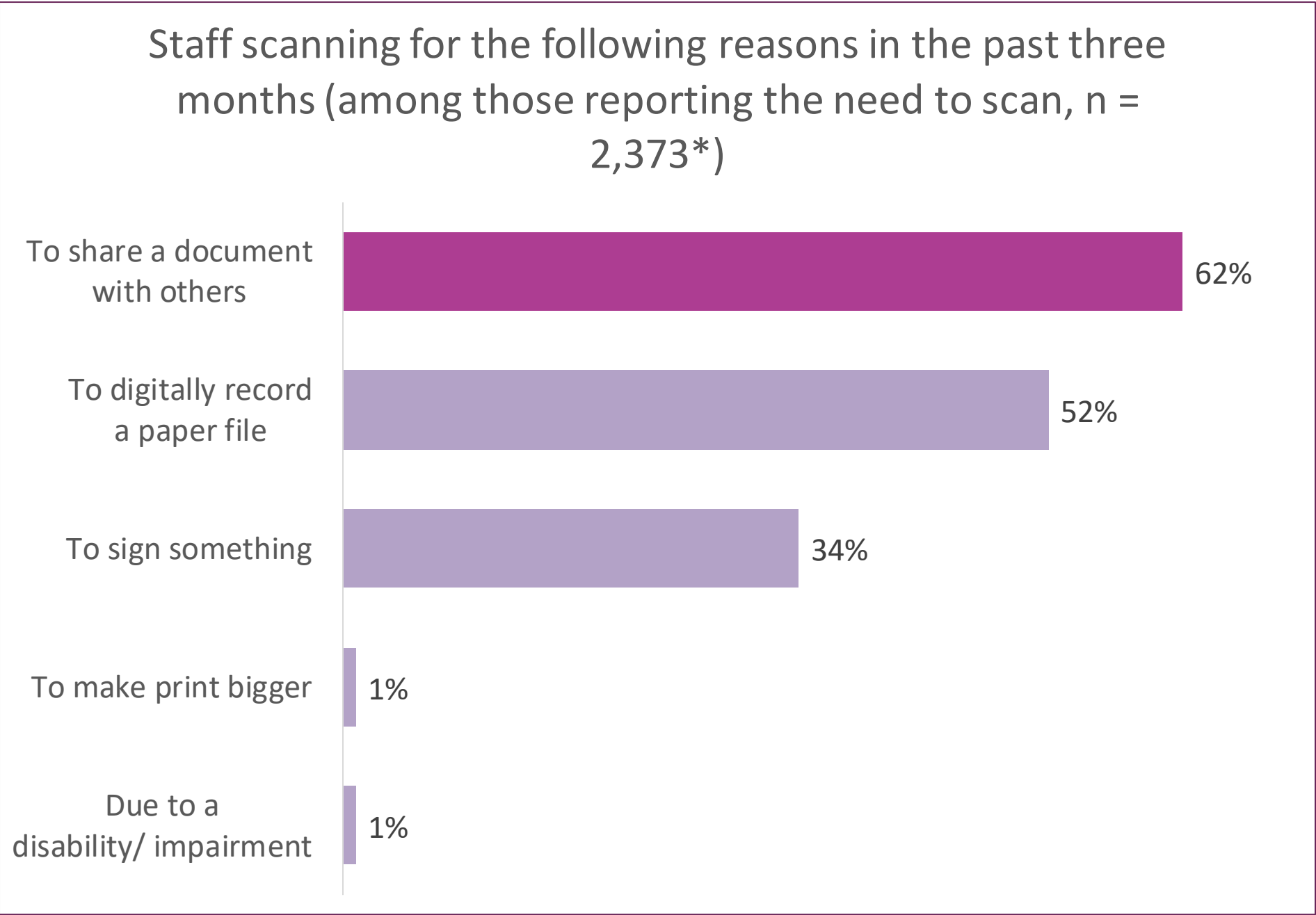


Source: staff survey, Oct 2020. Blank responses not included in analysis or the reported 'n' Does not include staff who did not provide details of the function in which they worked.

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.”

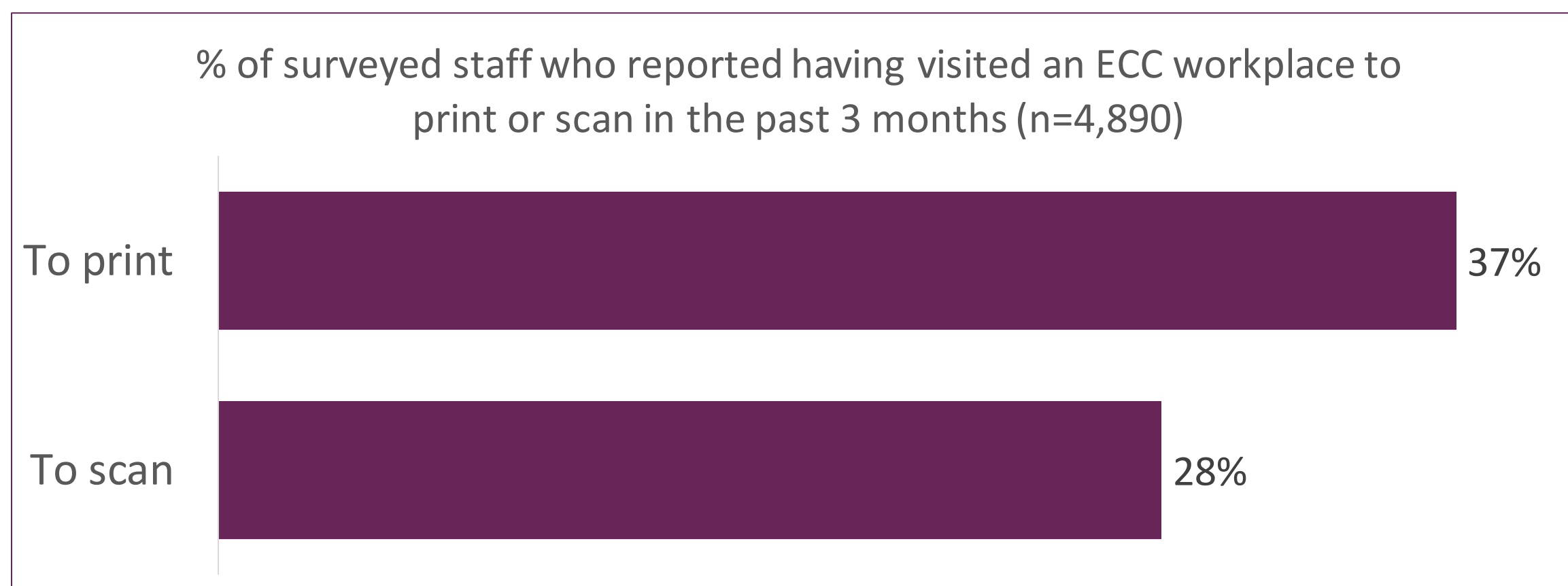
“ECC computers won't allow such access [to printers] ... when off the shelf computers and printers are geared up for this. More interconnectivity of electronic options to be used through ECC laptops.”

“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

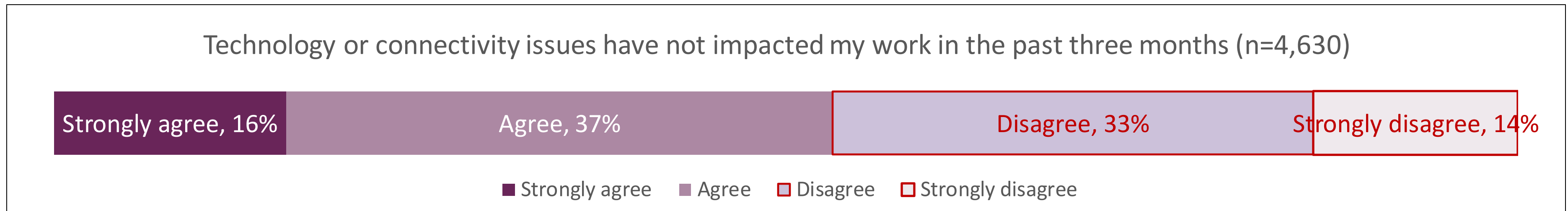
“2 of us work for ECC and live in a small flat. We have no space for a dedicated office or desk.”

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

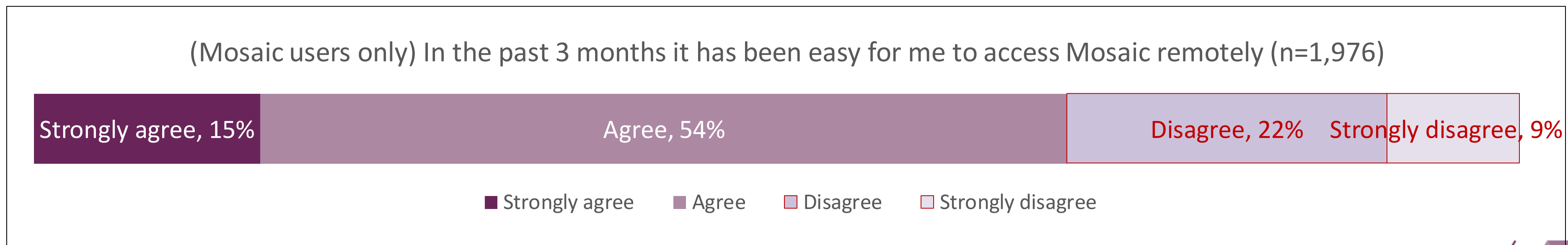
“I live in a one bedroom flat... Working in social care there are concerns regarding confidentiality.”

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

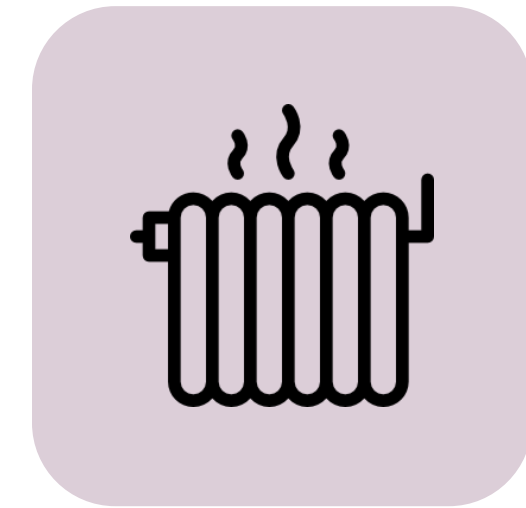
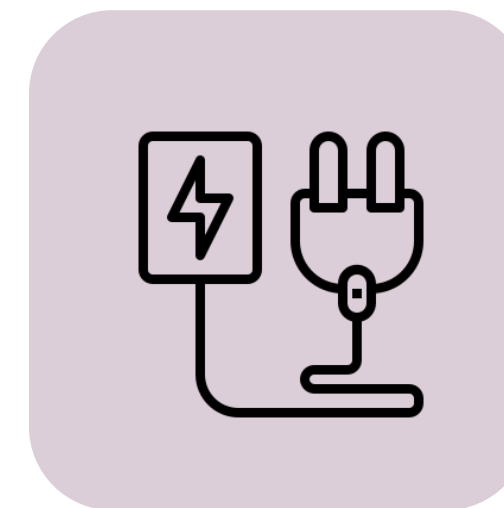


Remote access to Mosaic has been an issue for 32% of its users



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

Financial considerations

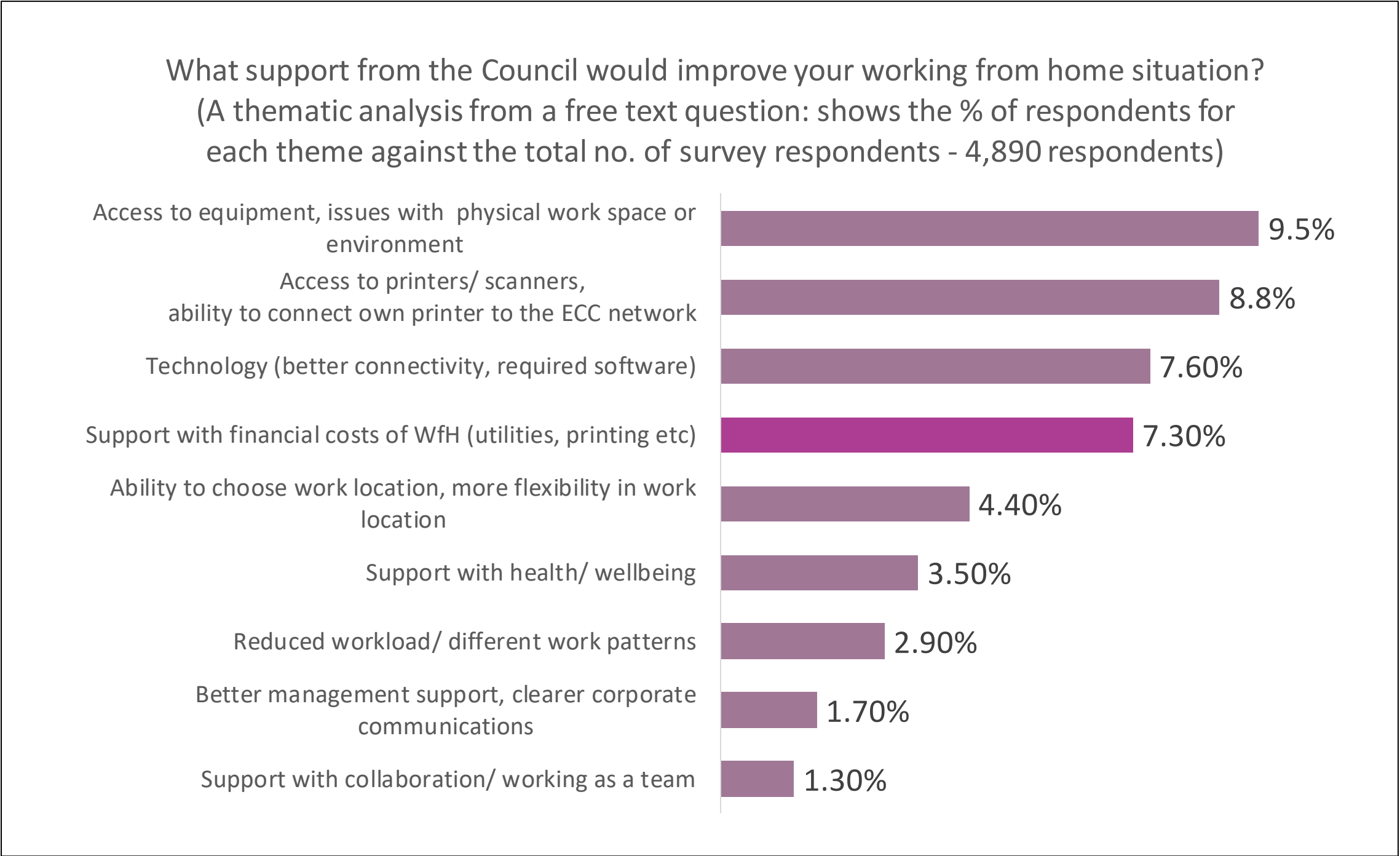


Some staff would like compensation for expenses related to working from home

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).



Source: Staff survey, Oct 2020

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

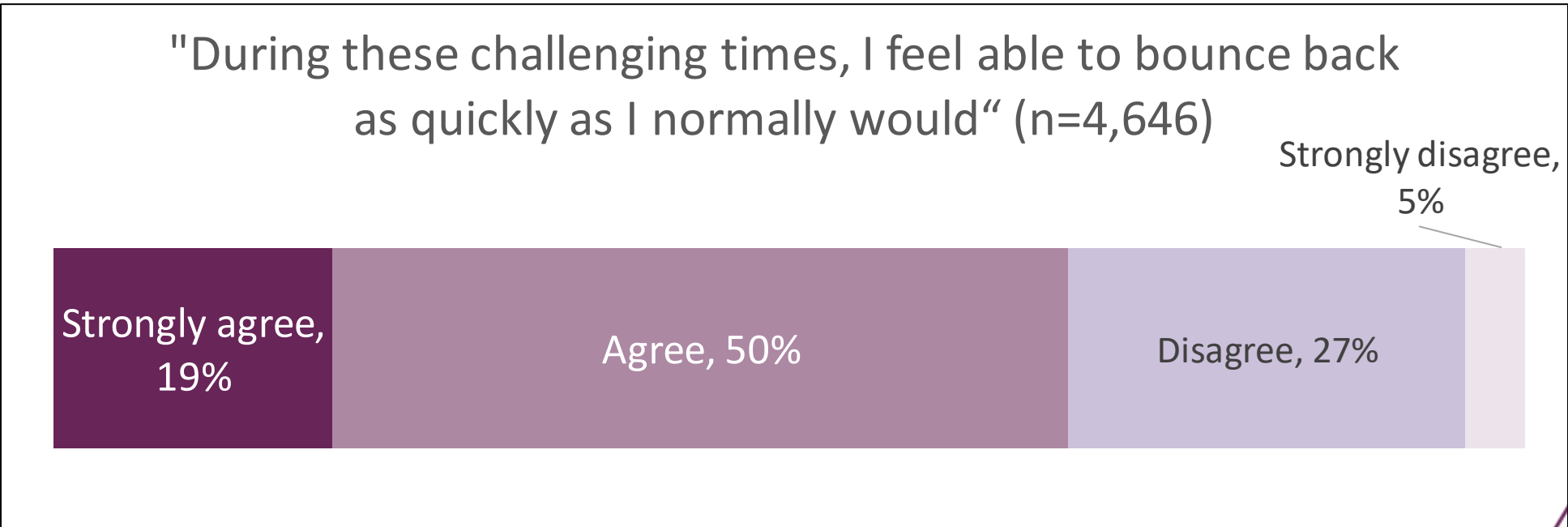
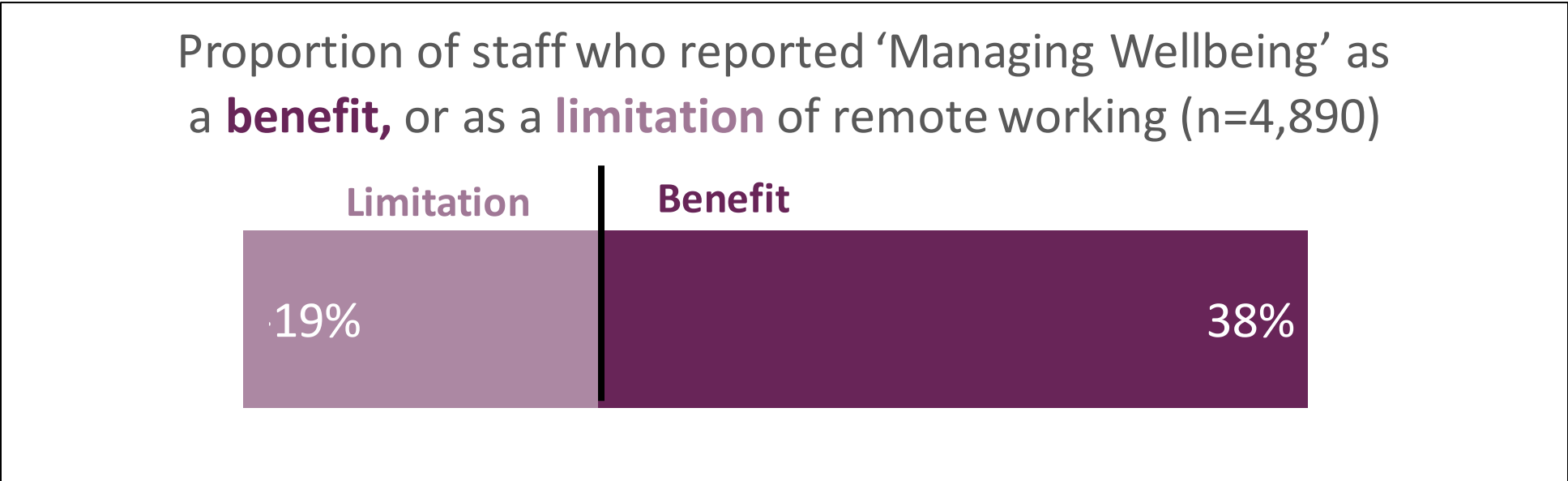
Staff wellbeing



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

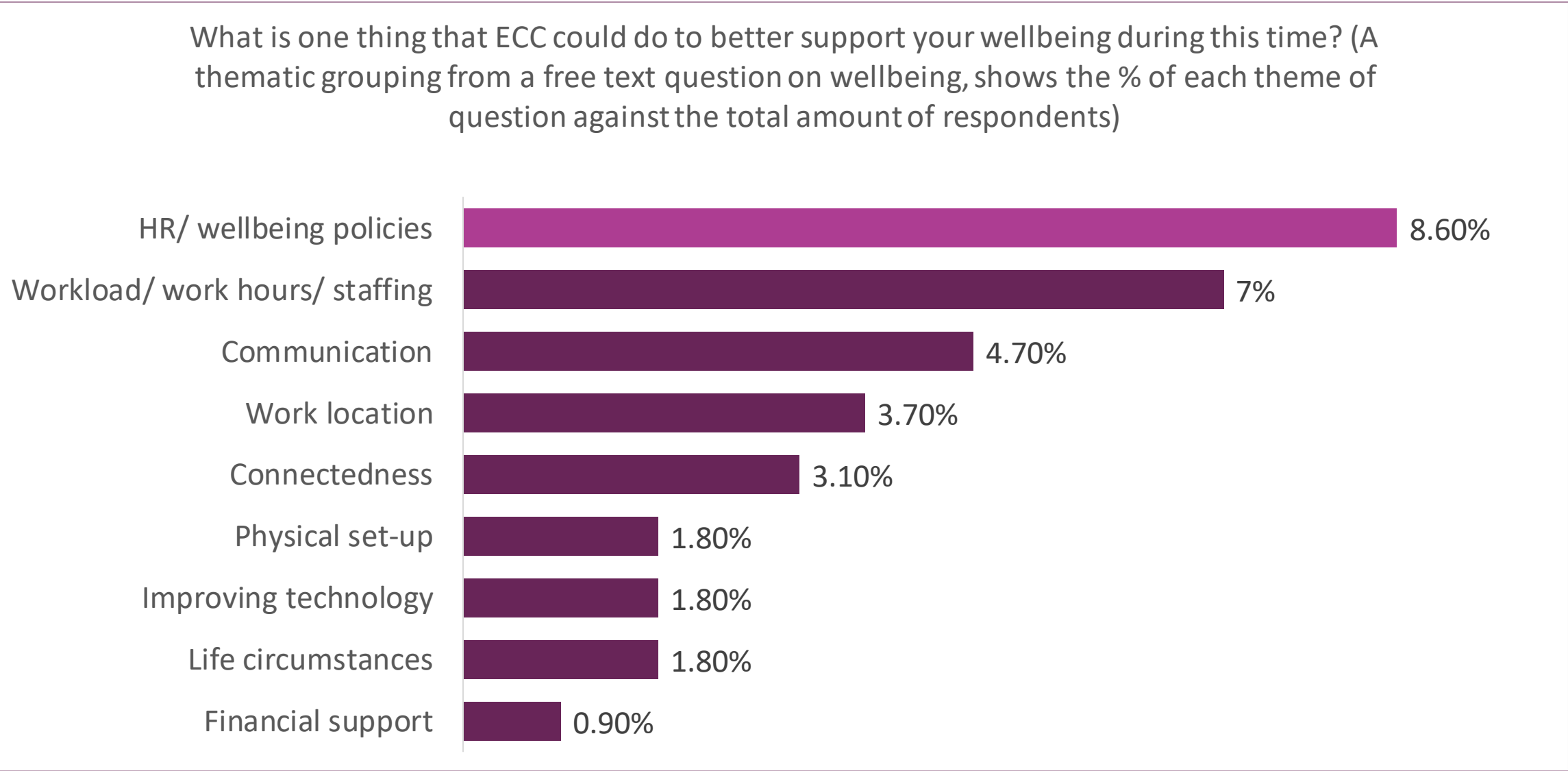
Amending HR/ wellbeing policies was most commonly suggested to improve staff wellbeing during this time

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.

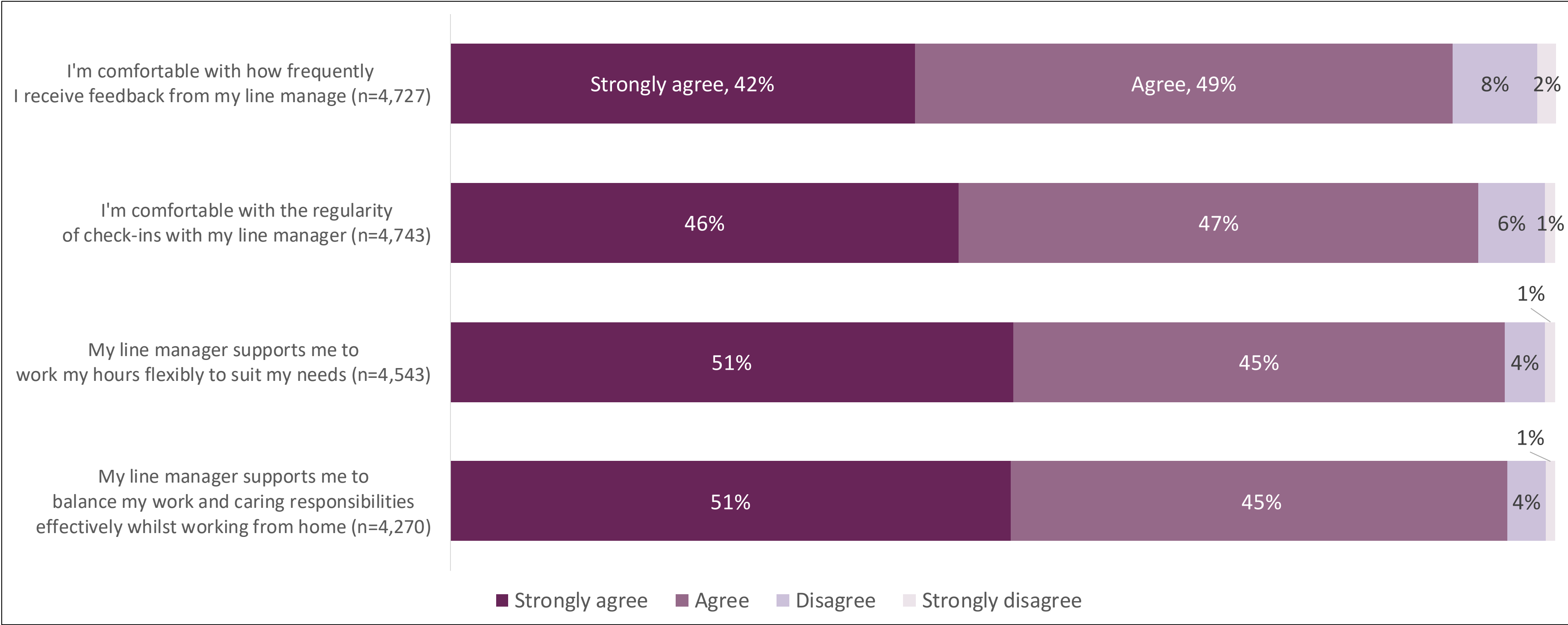
See slide notes for further details on these and other areas of support suggested by staff.



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.

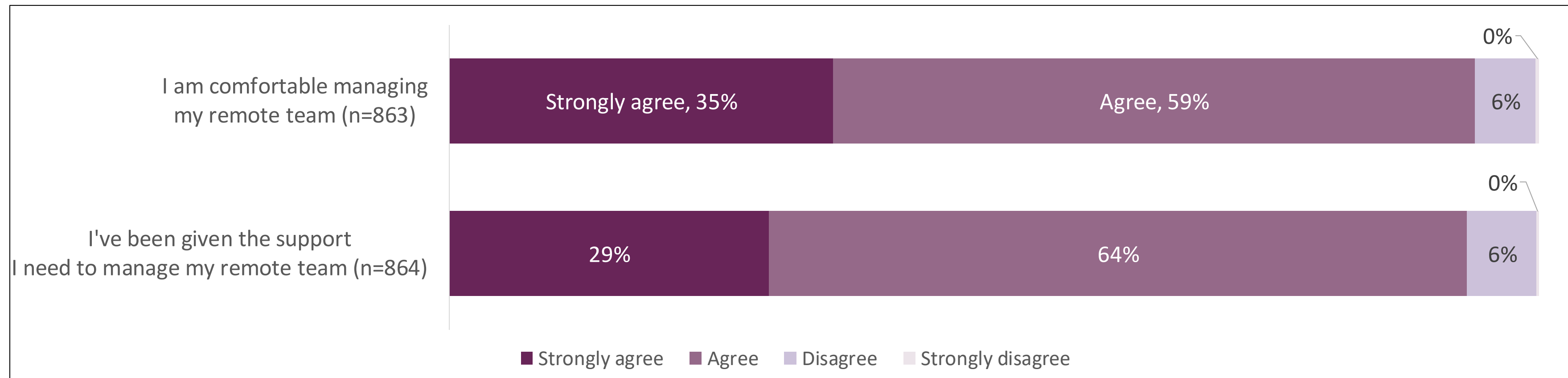
Source: Staff Survey, Oct 2020

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

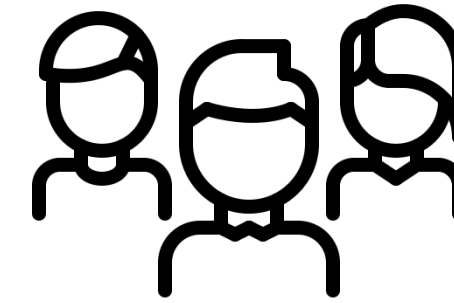
Our challenge is to adopt a hybrid approach as soon as possible. We can then design models with services that strike a balance between the needs of staff, residents and ECC as an organisation.

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

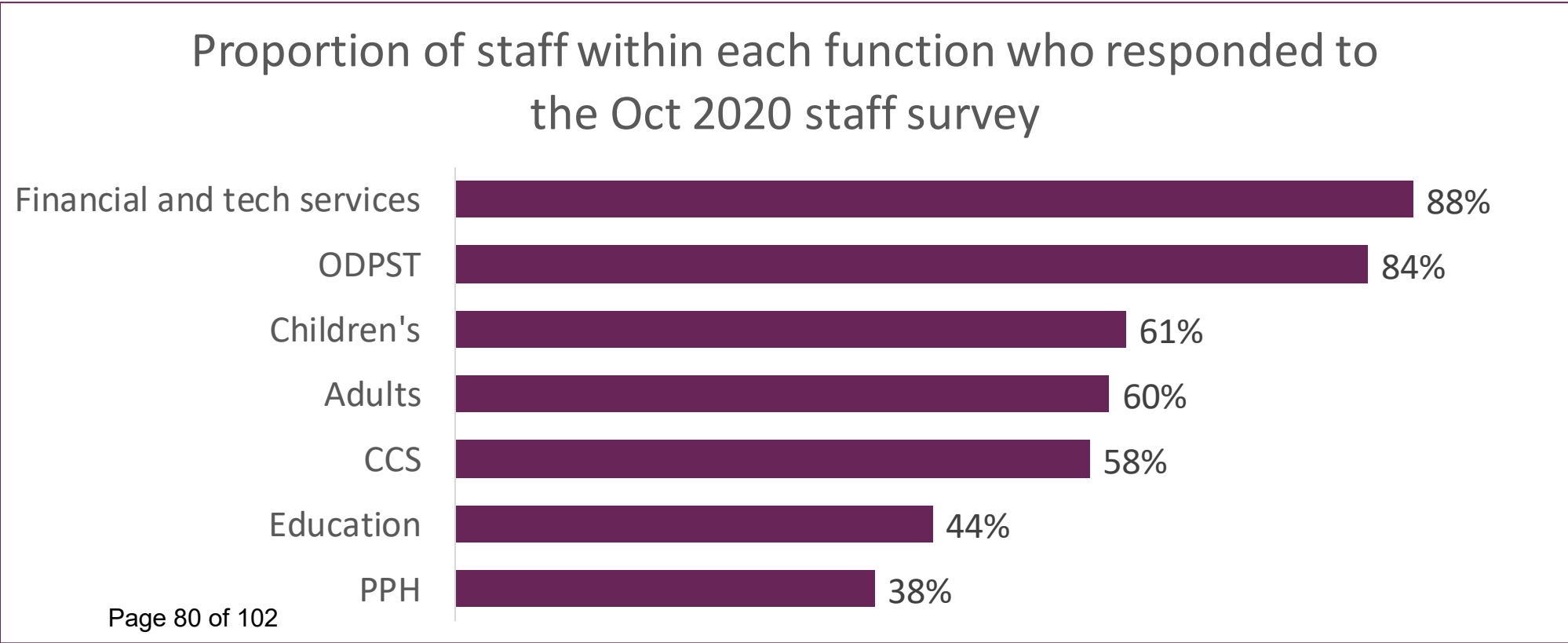
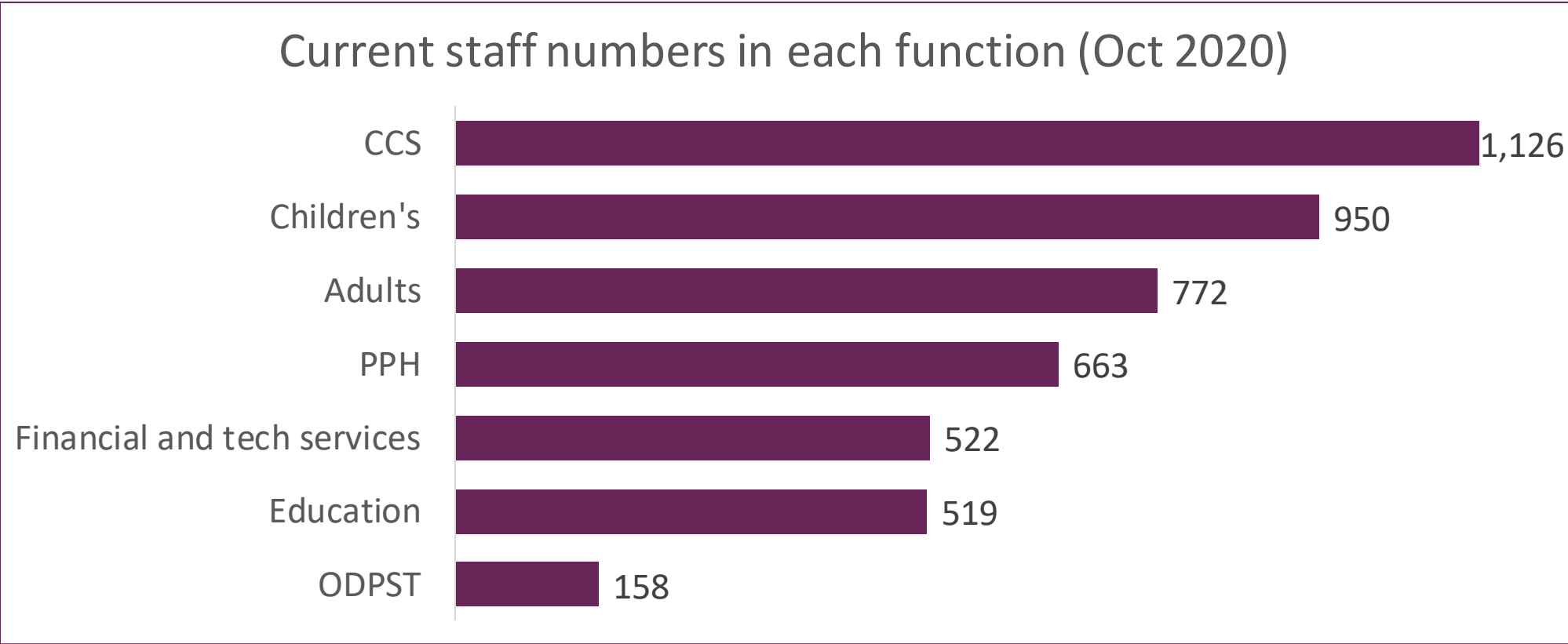
Many staff who completed the staff survey were happy to be contacted for further discussion about their experiences. This provides us with the opportunity to reach out to these colleagues for further research and testing: e.g. staff who currently have a high need for printing could be targeted to test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



Report title: Essex Records Office - Update	
Report to: Corporate Policy and Scrutiny Committee	
Report author: Sam Kennedy, Director for Environment and Climate Action	
Date: 2 nd March 2021	For: Information
Enquiries to: sam.kennedy@essex.gov.uk	
County Divisions affected: All ECC	

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To update the committee on the work of the Essex Records Office (ERO) and the impact of the pandemic on office operations.

2. Background

- 2.1 Members have been approached to receive an update on the work of the Essex Records Office.
- 2.2 The update will include information on:
- Income generation and the impact of Covid-19.
 - Statutory/legal basis for the ERO
 - Document preservations
 - ERO facilities
 - Current projects
 - Challenges and opportunities

3. Session Aims

- 3.1 Members are asked to discuss the update with the Cabinet Member and officers, providing feedback and asking questions.

4. List of Appendices

- 4.1 Appendix A: ERO update presentation.

Essex Record Office Update



March 2021

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Why archives are important

TRUST

Democracy and society are strengthened by scrutiny of the archival record, holding institutions and individuals to account

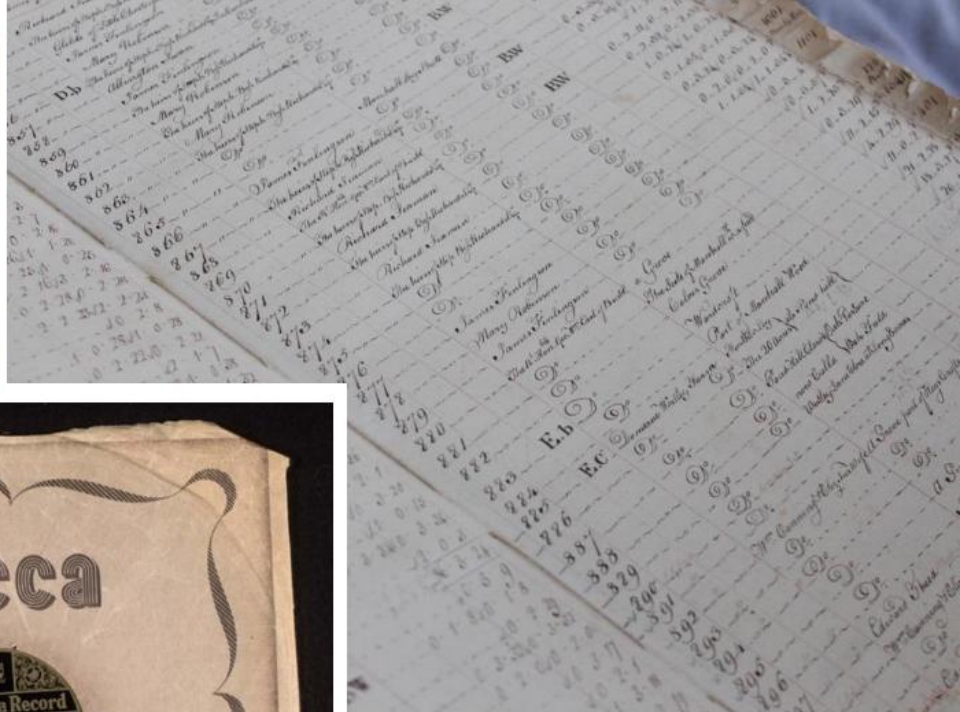
ENRICHMENT

Archives enhance and enrich our society intellectually, culturally and economically

OPENNESS

Archives cultivate an open approach to knowledge and are accessible to all

The archive and certificates services provided by Essex Record Office are statutory



Essex Record Office: some numbers

- Through our conferences, operations and grants in 19/20 we generated an income of **£626,615** mitigating our expenses **£1,217,291**, and reducing our net cost to **£590,676**.
- This year, covid has seen our online research and search services increase dramatically many of our core services, events and conferences have been badly affected by Covid closures.

Essex Record Office: some figures

- 11 repositories
- 8 miles of shelving
- c. 16,000,000 documents
- 35,000 sound and video recordings
- 3/4 million digital images
- 8,500 books in the Library

“Handling these documents is a real privilege, and a **unique connection** to the past.”



What the ERO preserves

- Public Records
- Local government records
- C of E and nonconformist church records
- Manorial records
- Deposited records
- Pictorial collections
- Sound and video recordings
- Local studies library materials
- ECC art collection



Public Searchroom

Digitisation



Sound and Video



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Conservation





TRC
CONFERENCE CENTRE





The Model New Town: Harlow Development Corporation records



THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

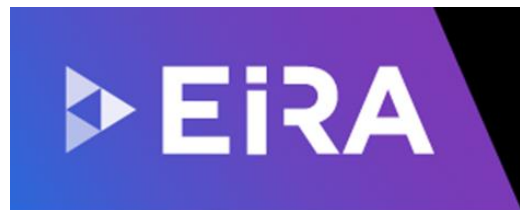
Online



Communicating Connections

Sharing the heritage of the
Marconi Company's wireless world



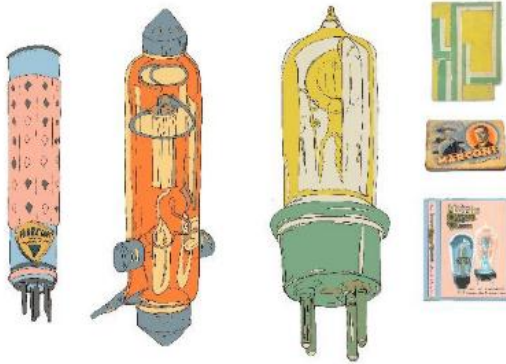


University of Essex



**Science, Technology and Innovation
at the Essex Archives:** a strategy for
enhancing individual, community
and commercial engagement through
digital technology and creative
practice





Part of:
ESSEX
2020

Artist-in-Residence: Elaine Tribley

Physical **space**
to take in
records for the
next 25-50
years

Fully capable
of ensuring the
preservation of
**digital
records**

Representative
of **diverse
communities**
in Essex

Outreach to all
parts of the
county to have
real impact on
people and
communities

“We had a mind-blowing time at the ERO, our brains were stretched. It was an experience of a life time and **an adventure beyond words.”**

Essex Record Office

Appendix: Legal Designation



March 2021

Legal designation

- **1958, Public Records Act** – Essex Record Office is an appointed place of deposit, accepting public records on behalf of the Lord Chancellor
- **1962, The Local Government (Records) Act** – whereby the County was constituted an ‘archive authority’ and is able to keep and promote archives
- **1972, Local Government Act, s.224** – Essex Record Office fulfils for Council its responsibility for making “proper arrangements” for documents belonging to or in its custody

Legal designation

- **1978 (amended 1992), Parochial Registers and Records Measure** – Diocesan Record Office, receiving records of the Diocese of Chelmsford.
- **1959, Manorial Document Rules and Tithe (Copies of Apportionment) Rules, 1960** – ERO accepts custody of manorial and tithe documents on behalf of the Master of the Rolls
- **2018, The Registration of Births, Deaths, Marriages and Civil Partnerships (Fees) (Amendment) and Multilingual Standard Forms Regulations** – copies of civil registration certificates