Mental health in the workplace:

A report on employee wellbeing and the impact of company initiatives

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Contents:

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There's never been a more important time to focus on employee mental health. The COVID-19 pandemic has really brought home to us at City Pantry not just how important focusing on mental health is, but also that we are all individual in terms of our view of the world and how we cope. Whilst some of us have loved working from home and seen the benefits of having lunch with our loved ones or packing in more time for personal fitnes; others have struggled to work from a single room in a shared house where the reality of the same four walls, day-in and day-out, is taking an understandable toll.

At City Pantry we are mindful that we need to deliver a personalised approach to mental health. Whilst unlimited holiday, an employee assistance programme, mental health coaching, regular yoga and pilates are all fantastic benefits, those informal check-ins in a world where we no longer just bump into someone around the office, are a bit trickier. There is no doubt however, that to really focus on the mental health of employees, businesses need to think about a number of aspects:

First, having a wide-ranging approach - what benefits one employee may not benefit another. And simply throwing in a few ad-hoc nods to mental health day isn't really going to cut it. We need a proper plan and approach. Business leaders should lead the charge and be really clear with their teams that everyone has mental health and it's not a constant. Encouraging individuals to track their mood over time, perhaps by using a suitable app, can really help them be mindful of their own mental health and also help them to talk about changes in how they are feeling or coping.

Listening to and supporting our employees is important, now more than ever: it's all too easy when we're rushing from one Zoom call to the next, to forget to check in on people as individuals and just ask them how they're doing. Everyone has a different context and just listening to someone by asking how they are feeling is a really good place to start. At City Pantry, a team of our own employees have completed their training as Mental Health First Aiders and they are now a further valuable resource to help and support our people, but there is always more to be done.

I would encourage everyone to think "how am I supporting my teams as employees, but most importantly as individual people?".

Jenny Crawford, Chief People Officer at City Pantry

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The Survey

What?

During summer 2020, we conducted a survey on the working lives of 1000 office-based employees across the UK. The participants are aged between 20 to 64 years old and work in a variety of sectors.

Respondents were asked to answer questions focused on:

• Job satisfaction and security
• Workload, stress, and mental wellbeing
• Company initiatives to combat stress at work

Why?

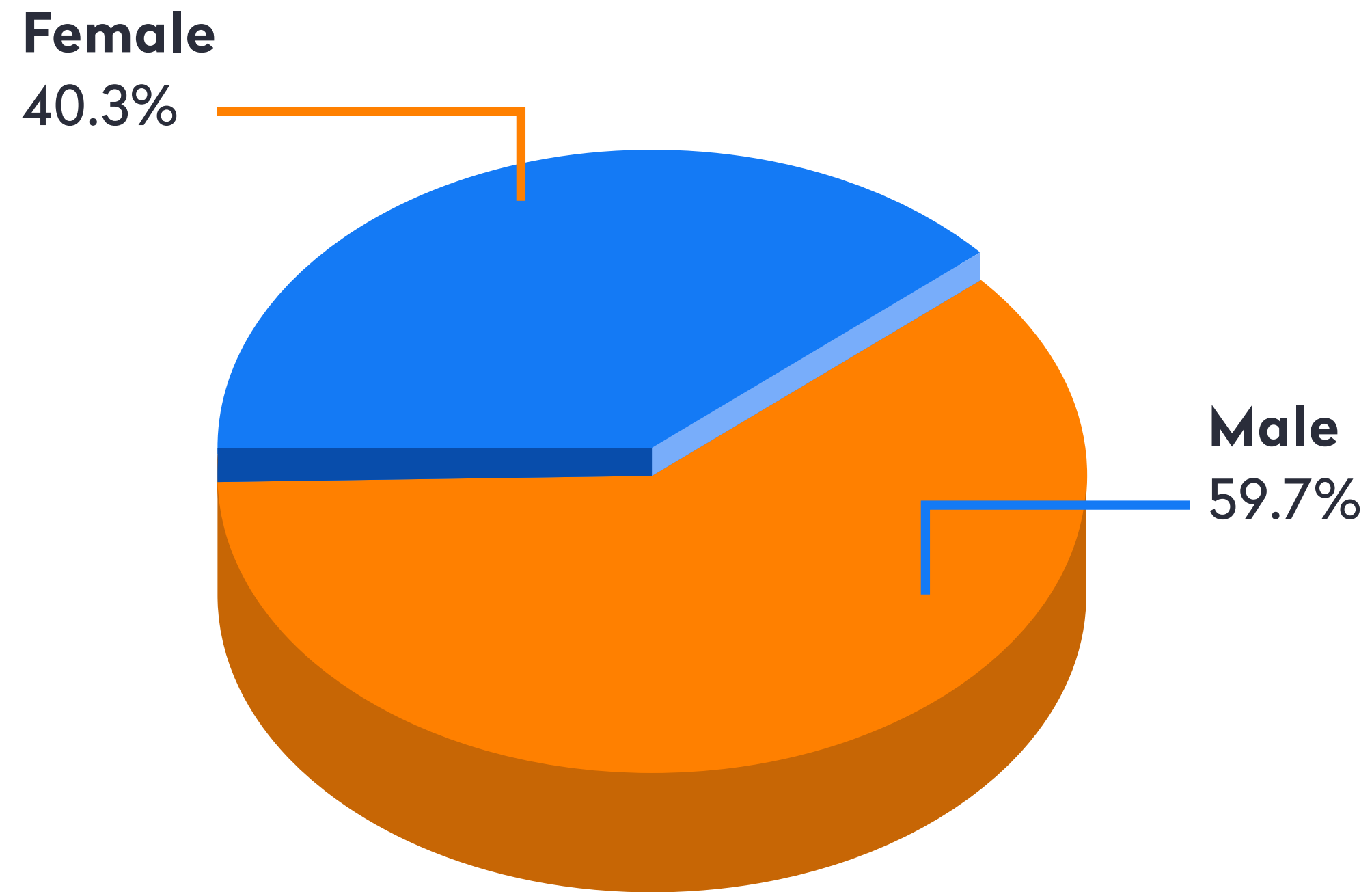Our mission is to "make people's working lives better" so employee wellbeing is at the heart of what we do and why we do it. We wanted to find out how employees feel about their roles and what businesses are doing to help support their teams.
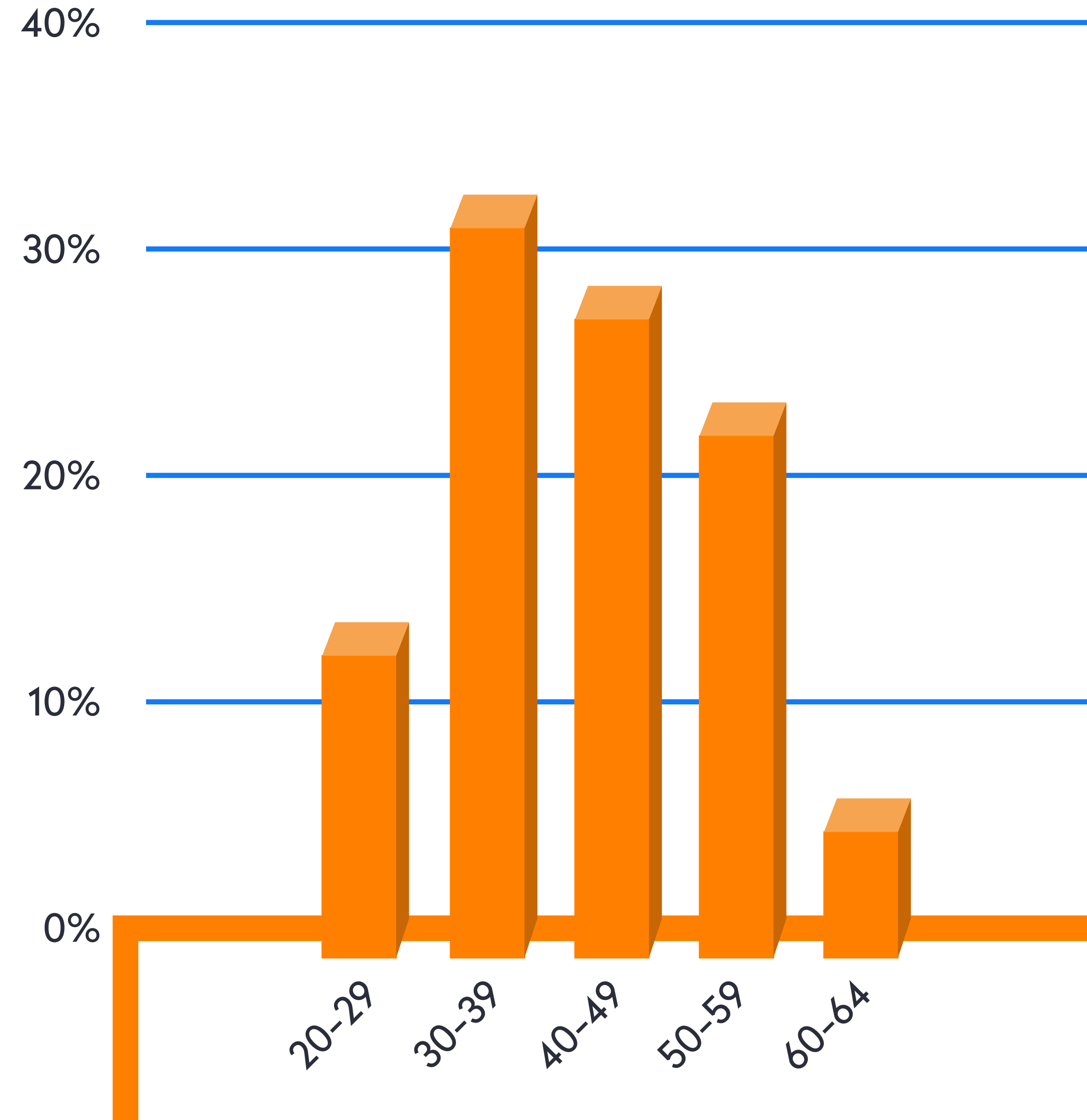
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Who did we survey?

Age

Gender

Female
40.3%

Male
59.7%

40%

30%

20%

10%

0%

20-29   30-39   40-49   50-59   60-64

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Job Title

Bar chart showing job title distribution (percentages):

- Manager (Mid-Level): ~19%
- Administrator: ~14.5%
- CEO/President/MD/C-suite: ~9%
- Manager (senior): ~8.7%
- Manager (entry-level): ~8.3%
- Accountant: ~6%
- Consultant: ~5.7%
- Operations Manager: ~4%
- Tech Support: ~3.5%
- Training & Development: ~3.2%
- System Analyst: ~2.9%
- Business Analyst: ~2.9%
- Software Developer: ~2.9%
- Computer Scientist: ~2.5%
- Broker/Dealer/Trader: ~2%
- Charity Administrator: ~1.6%
- Researcher: ~1.6%
- Actuary: ~1.1%
- Admissions Officer: ~1.1%
- Investment Banker: ~1.1%
- Purchasing Manager: ~1.1%
- Programmer: ~0.9%
- Ad Sales Rep: ~0.6%
- Buyer: ~0.6%
- Other Legal: ~0.6%
- PR Assistant/Exec: ~0.6%
- Content Marketer/ Writer: ~0.3%
- Copy Writer/Editor: ~0.3%
- Marketing Exec/Manager: ~0.3%
- Payroll Clerk: ~0.3%
- Social Media Analyst: ~0%

Place of work*

80%

60%

40%

20%

0%

I work from the company office

I work home/ remotely

I work from a shared space (e.g WeWork)

Other: mixture of home & office or meeting clients
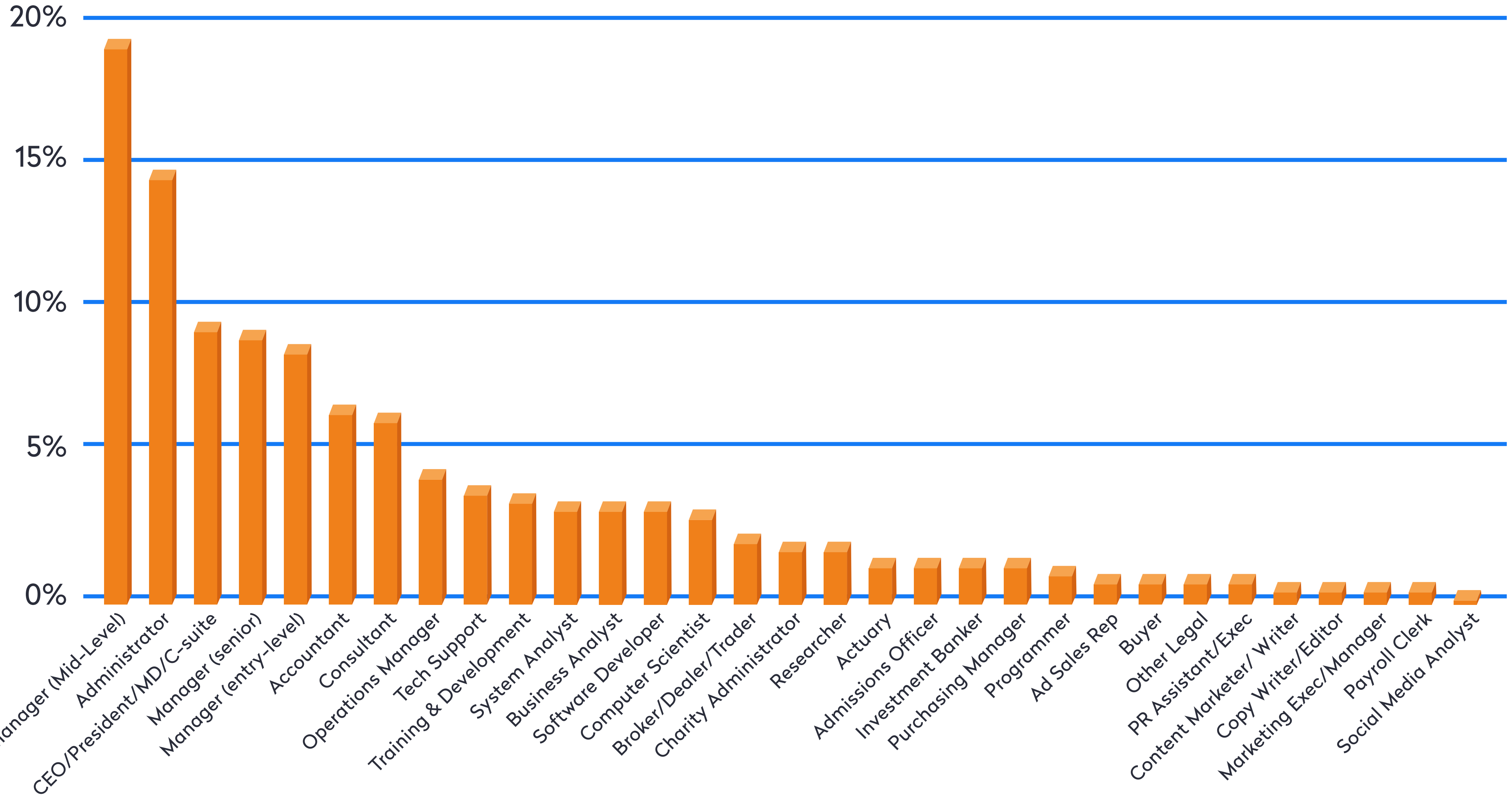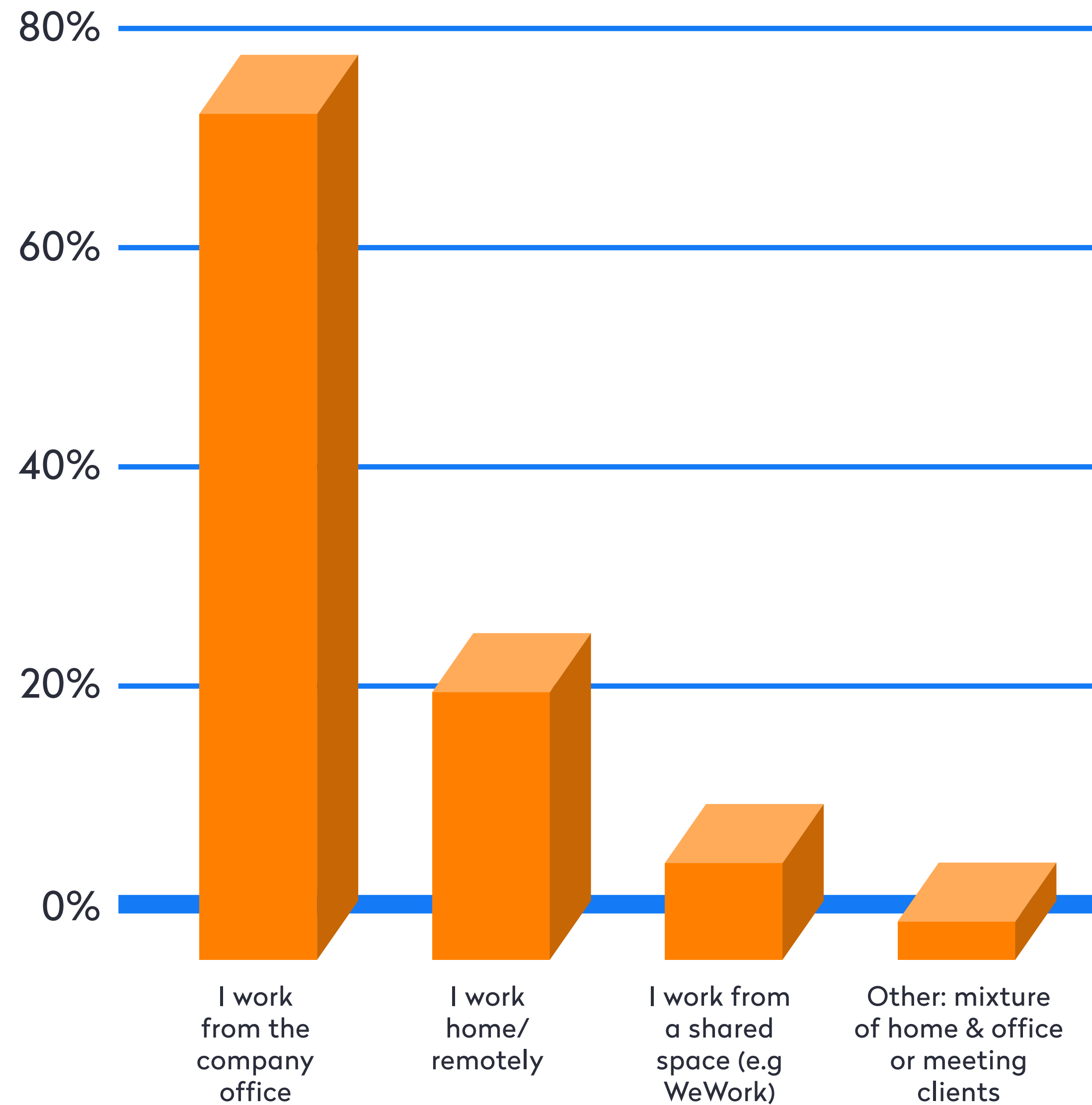
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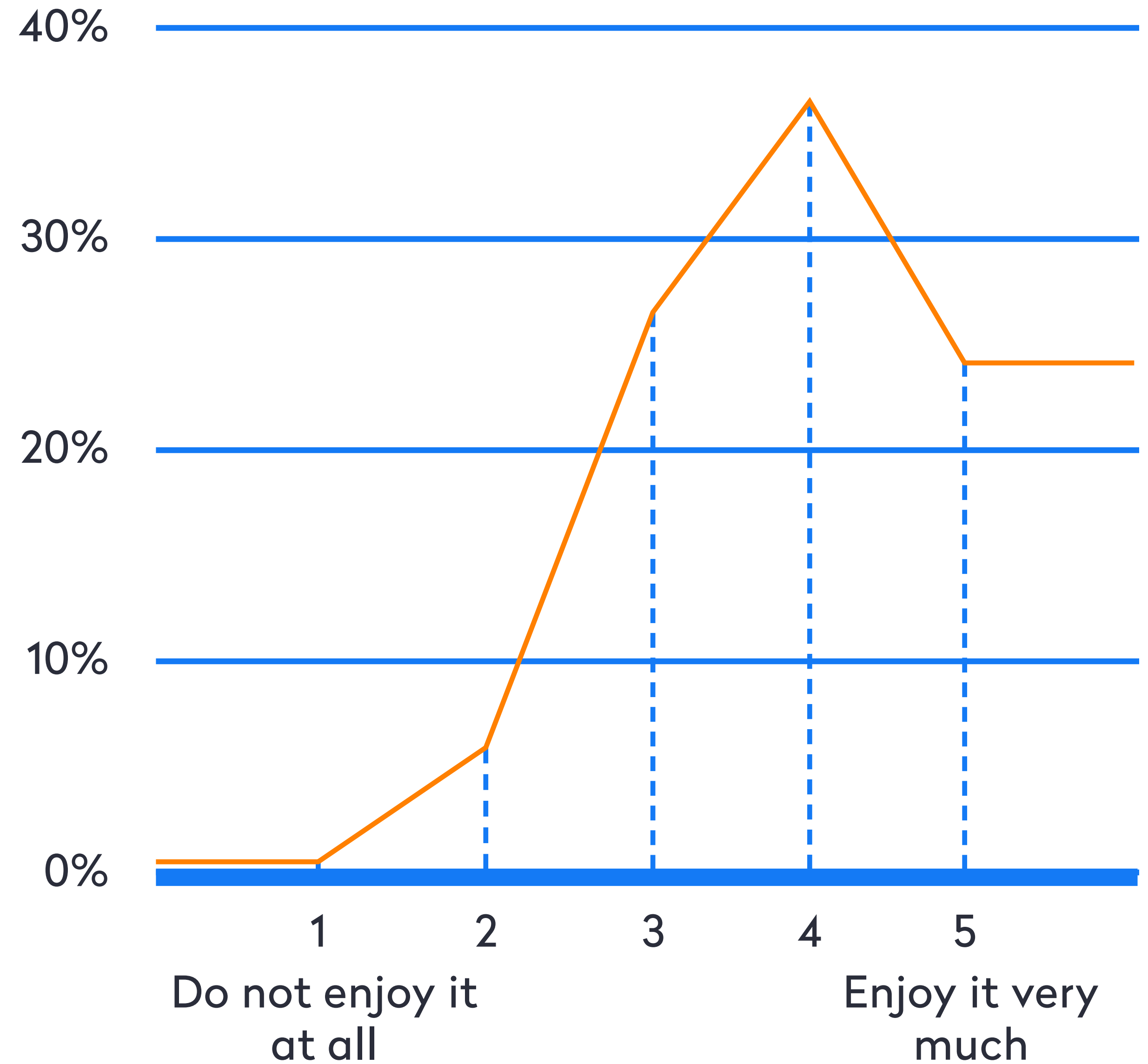*Usual place of work prior to lockdown

Job satisfaction:

Do employees enjoy and feel secure in their roles?

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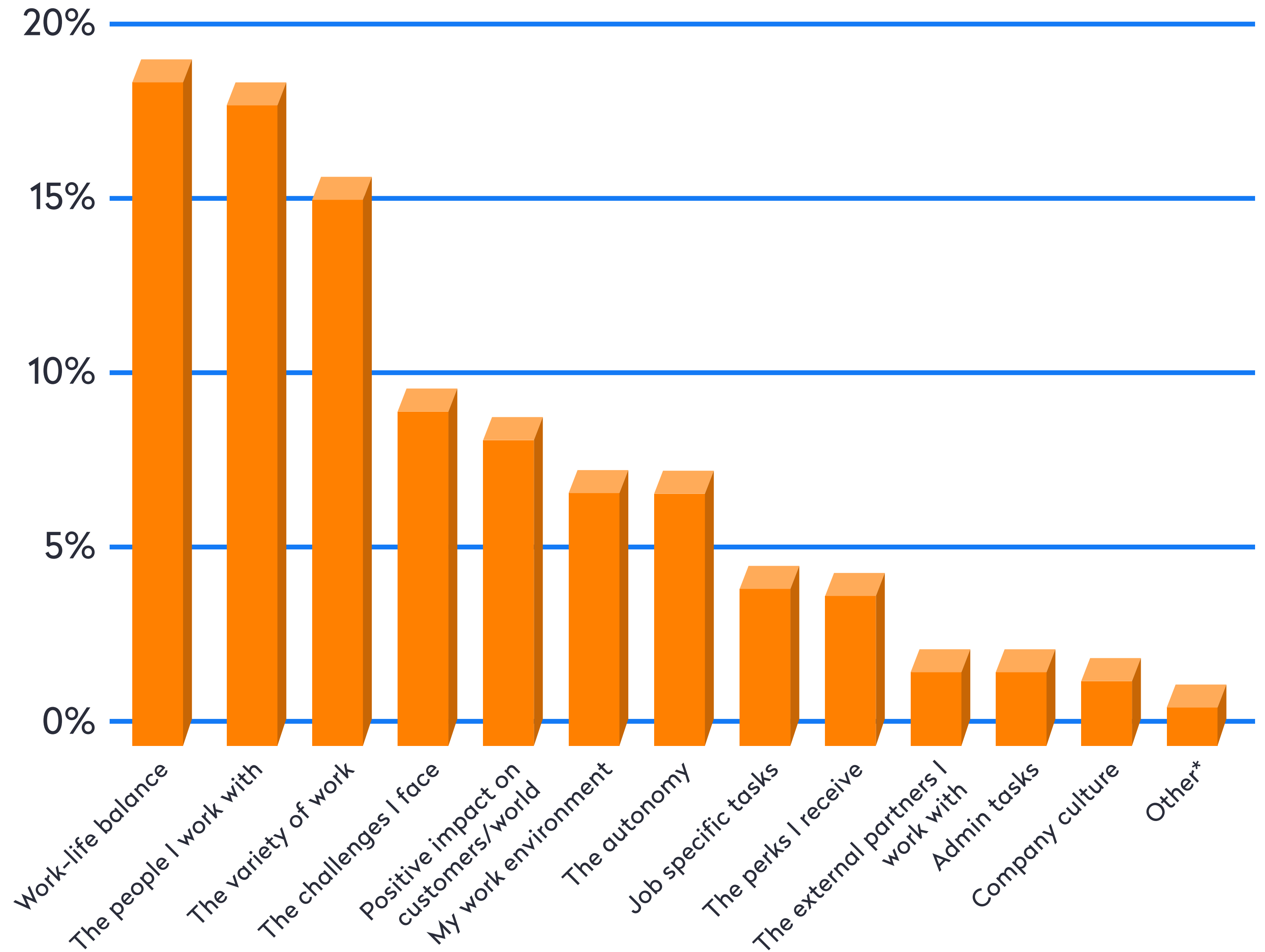# How much do you **enjoy** your job role?

64% of participants said they enjoy their current job

40%

30%

20%

10%

0%

1
Do not enjoy it at all

2

3

4

5
Enjoy it very much

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What part of your role do you **enjoy** the most?
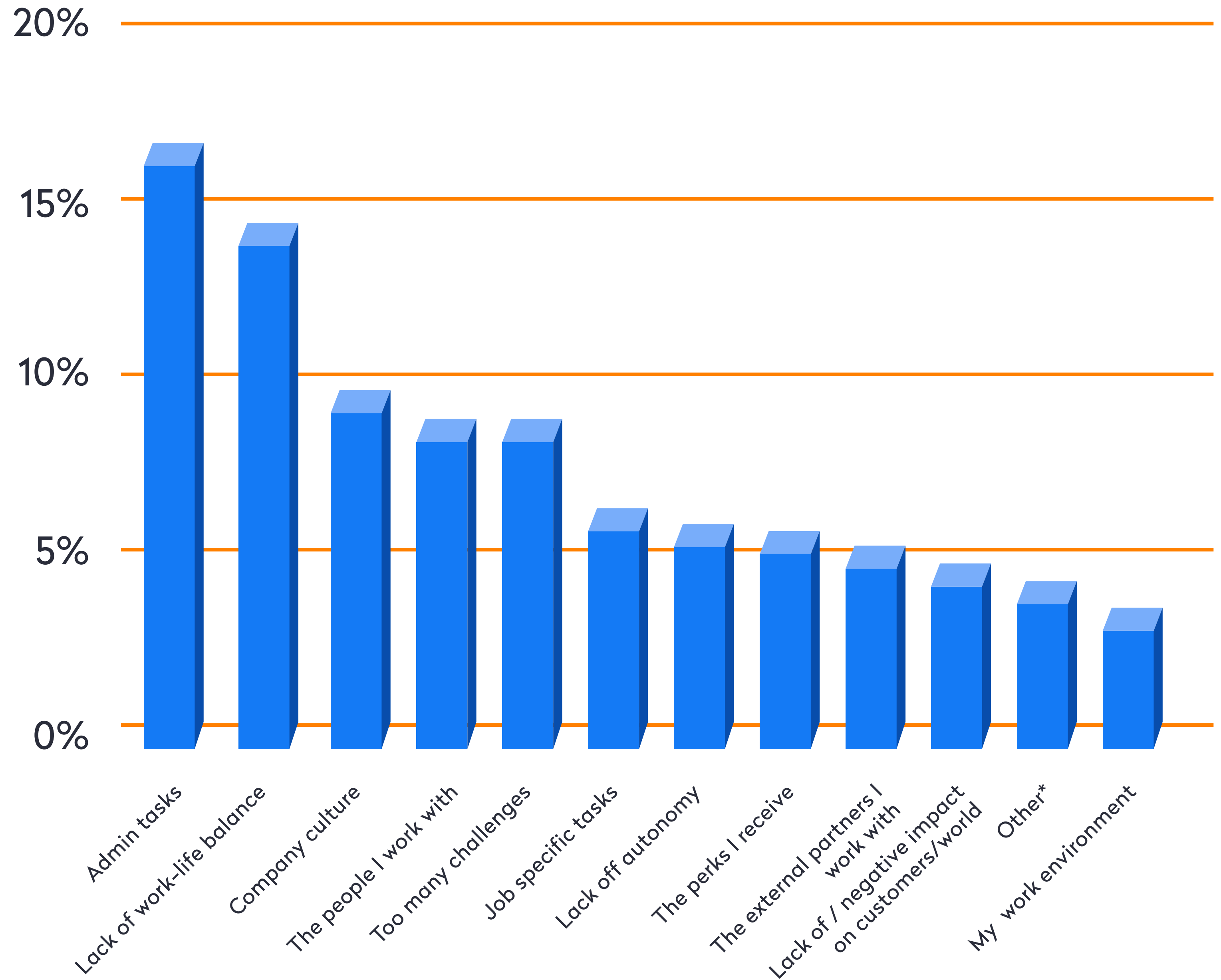
The most enjoyable aspects of the participants' jobs were work-life balance, variety of work, and good relationships with colleagues.

Category	Value
Work-life balance	~18%
The people I work with	~17.5%
The variety of work	~15%
The challenges I face	~8.5%
Positive impact on customers/world	~8%
My work environment	~6.5%
The autonomy	~6.5%
Job specific tasks	~3.5%
The perks I receive	~3.5%
The external partners I work with	~1.5%
Admin tasks	~1.5%
Company culture	~1.5%
Other*	~0.5%

*Salary

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What part of your role do you enjoy the least?

Performing admin tasks is the least enjoyable aspect of employees' jobs.

20%	
15%	
10%	
5%	
0%	

Admin tasks
Lack of work-life balance
Company culture
The people I work with
Too many challenges
Job specific tasks
Lack off autonomy
The perks I receive
The external partners I work with
Lack of / negative impact on customers/world
Other*
My work environment

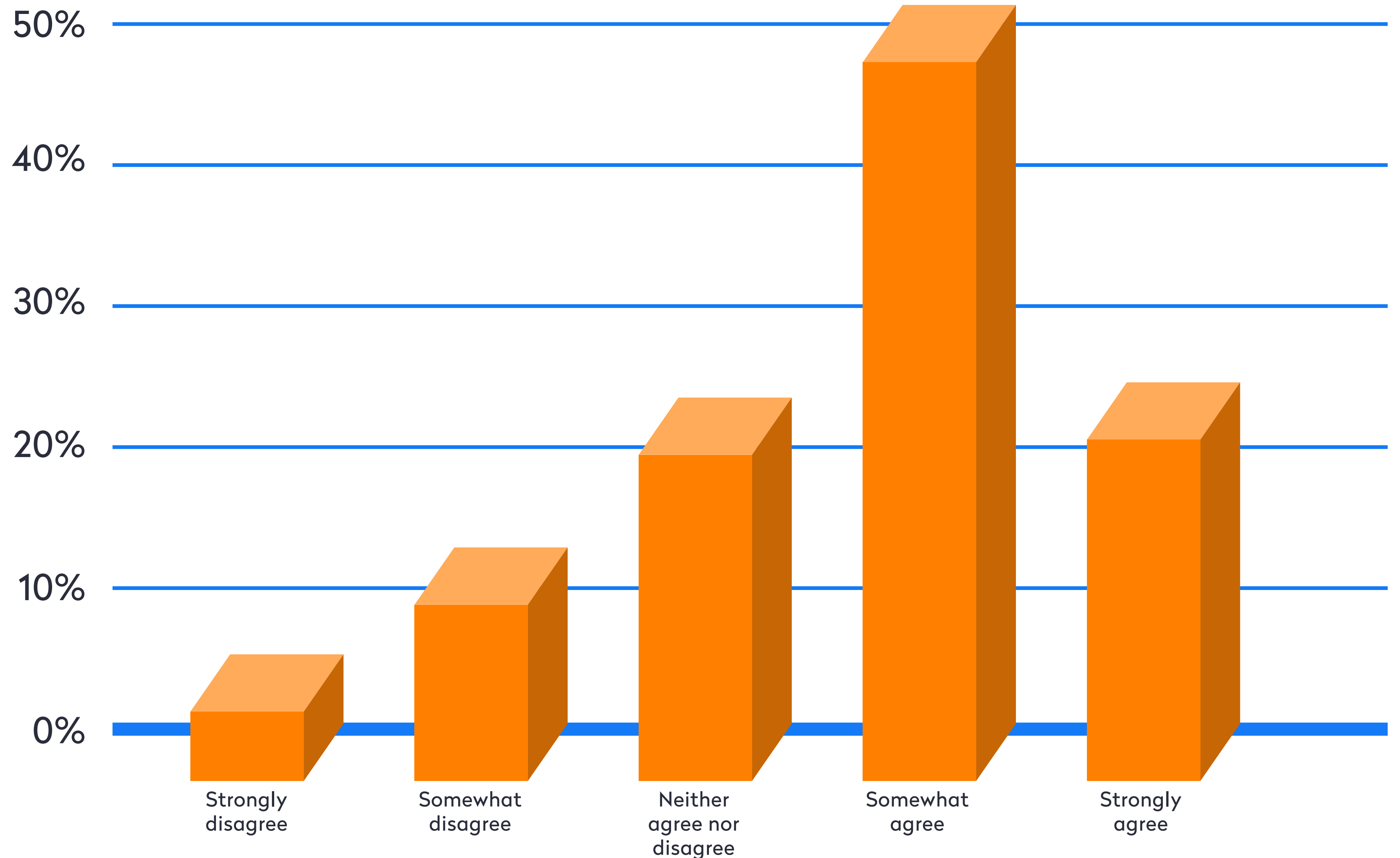*Other: Commute, salary not high enough

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Job satisfaction:

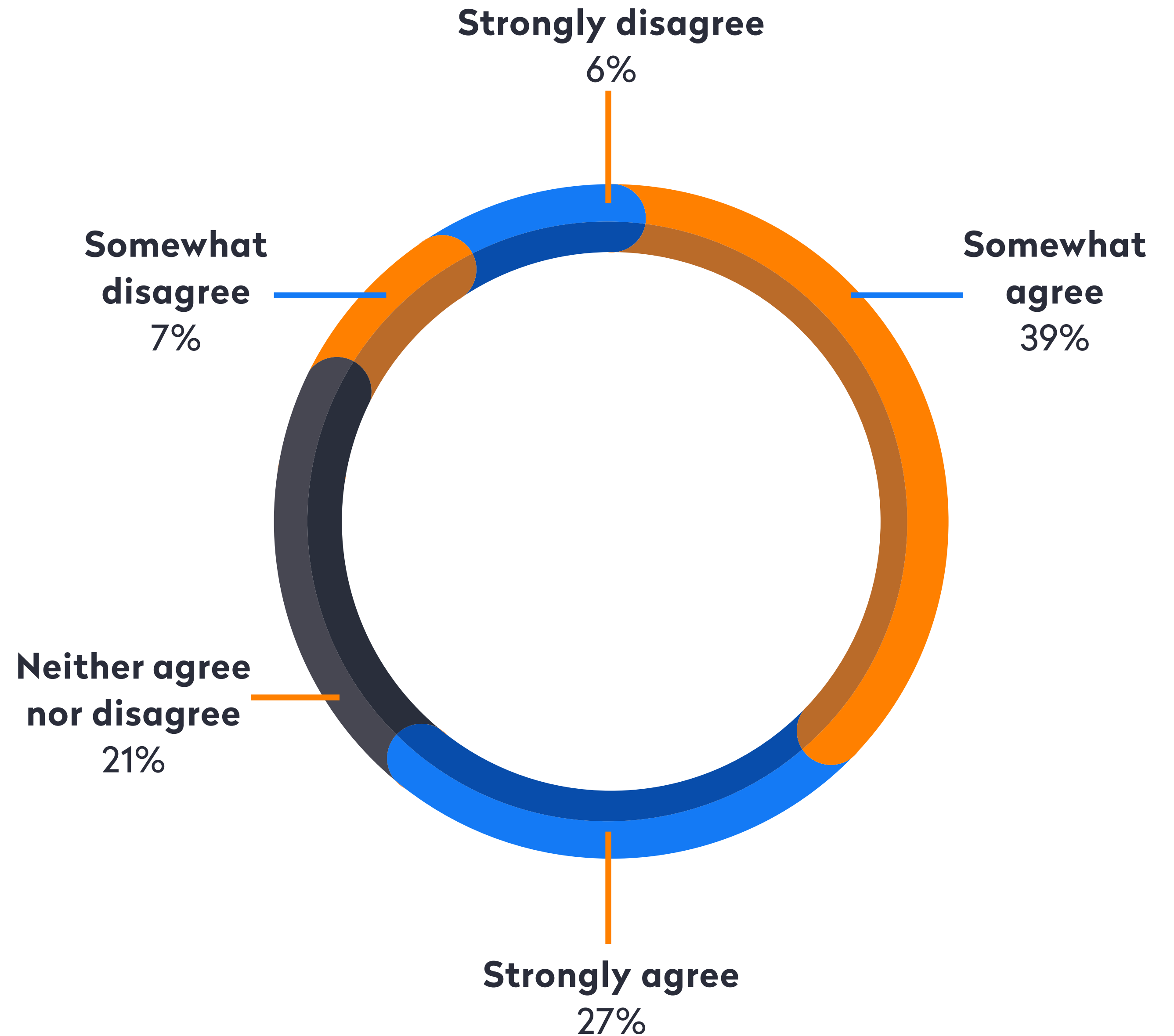We asked respondents how much they agreed with the following statements.

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"I am satisfied with my current job

Only **13%** of employees said they weren't satisfied with their current job.

50%

40%

30%

20%

10%

0%

Strongly disagree

Somewhat disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

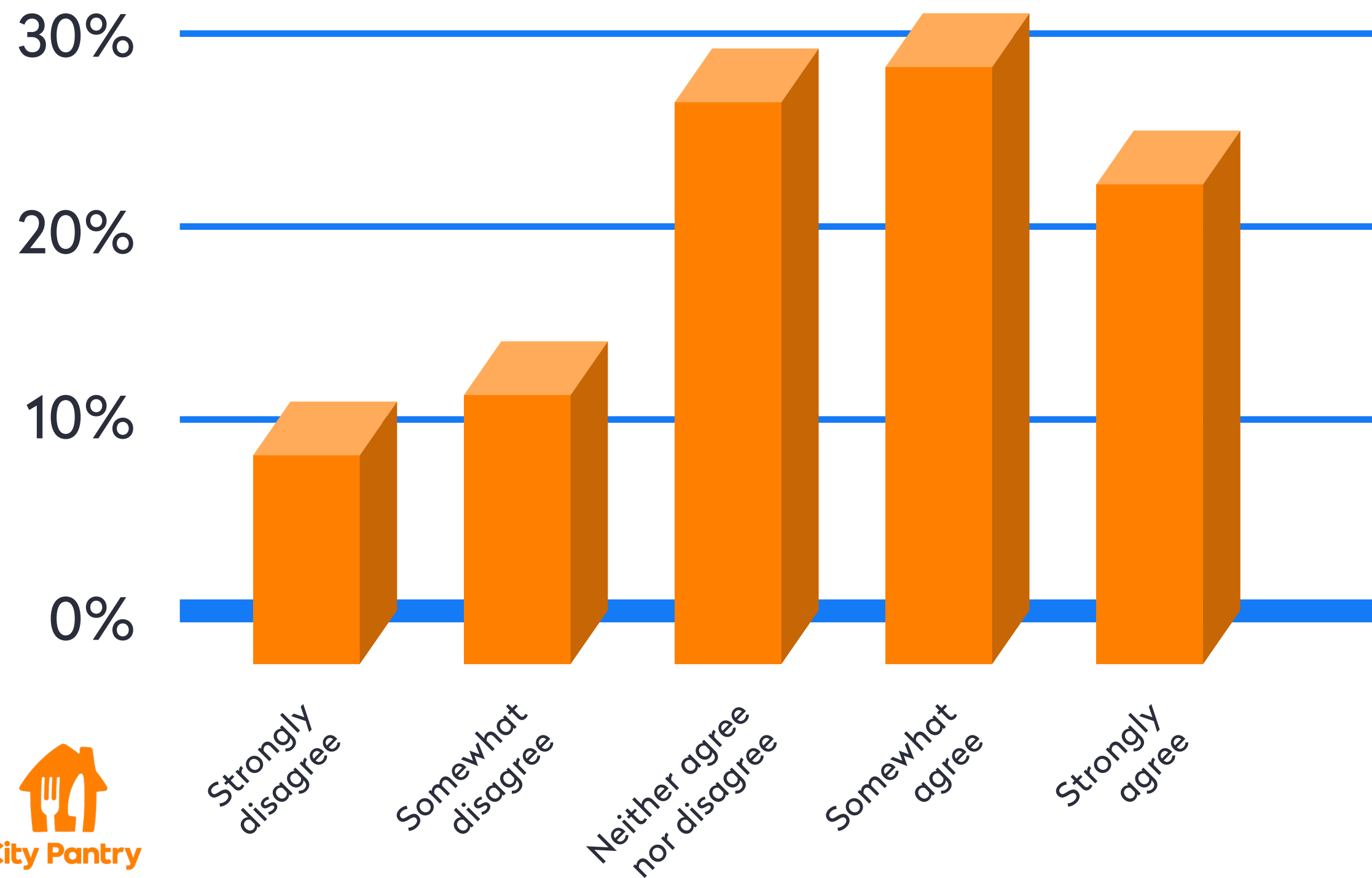Somewhat agree

Strongly agree

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"I wish to stay with my current company for the foreseeable future

66% of employees wish to stay at their current company for the foreseeable future
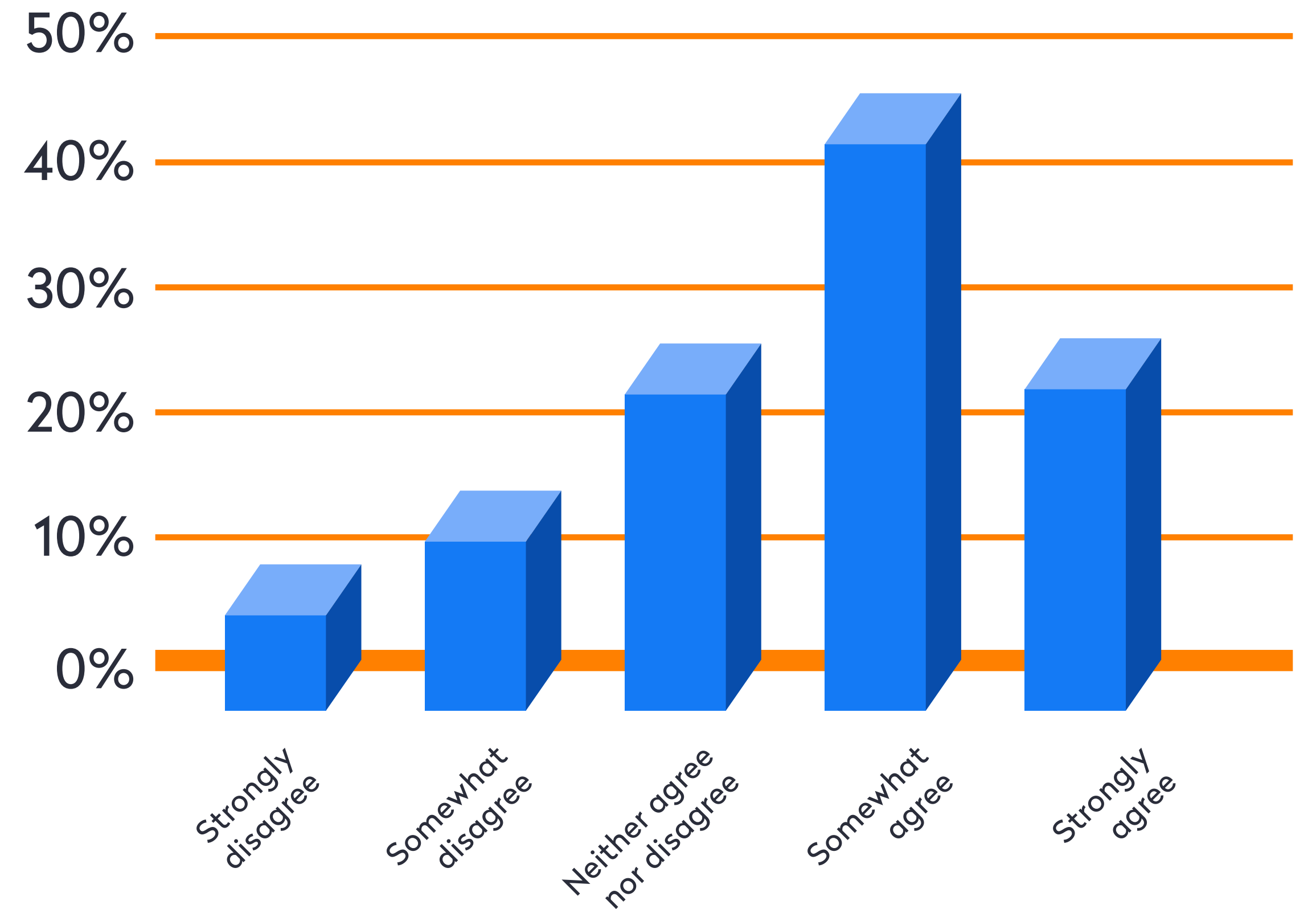
Strongly disagree
6%

Somewhat disagree
7%

Somewhat agree
39%

Neither agree nor disagree
21%

Strongly agree
27%

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"I hope to work with my current company until I retire

Just over half of employees hope to work for their current company until they retire

Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree

"I feel my employment with my current company is secure

63% agreed that their current employment is secure

Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree

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" What is the main reason for not feeling that your employment is secure?

Of those respondents who indicated they did not feel secure in their employment, we asked them to further explain the reason for feeling this way.

65%

The vast majority cited the COVID-19 pandemic and current economic environment as the main reason for feeling insecure about their employment, highlighting the negative and stressful effects individuals are feeling due to current macro events. Others cited feeling insecure due to lack of investment in their professional progression by employers, toxic workplace culture, feeling isolated at work as well as relying on contract work or being self-employed.

It's no surprise that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a huge economic impact across many industries over the course of 2020, and continues to bring with it a sense of general uncertainty.
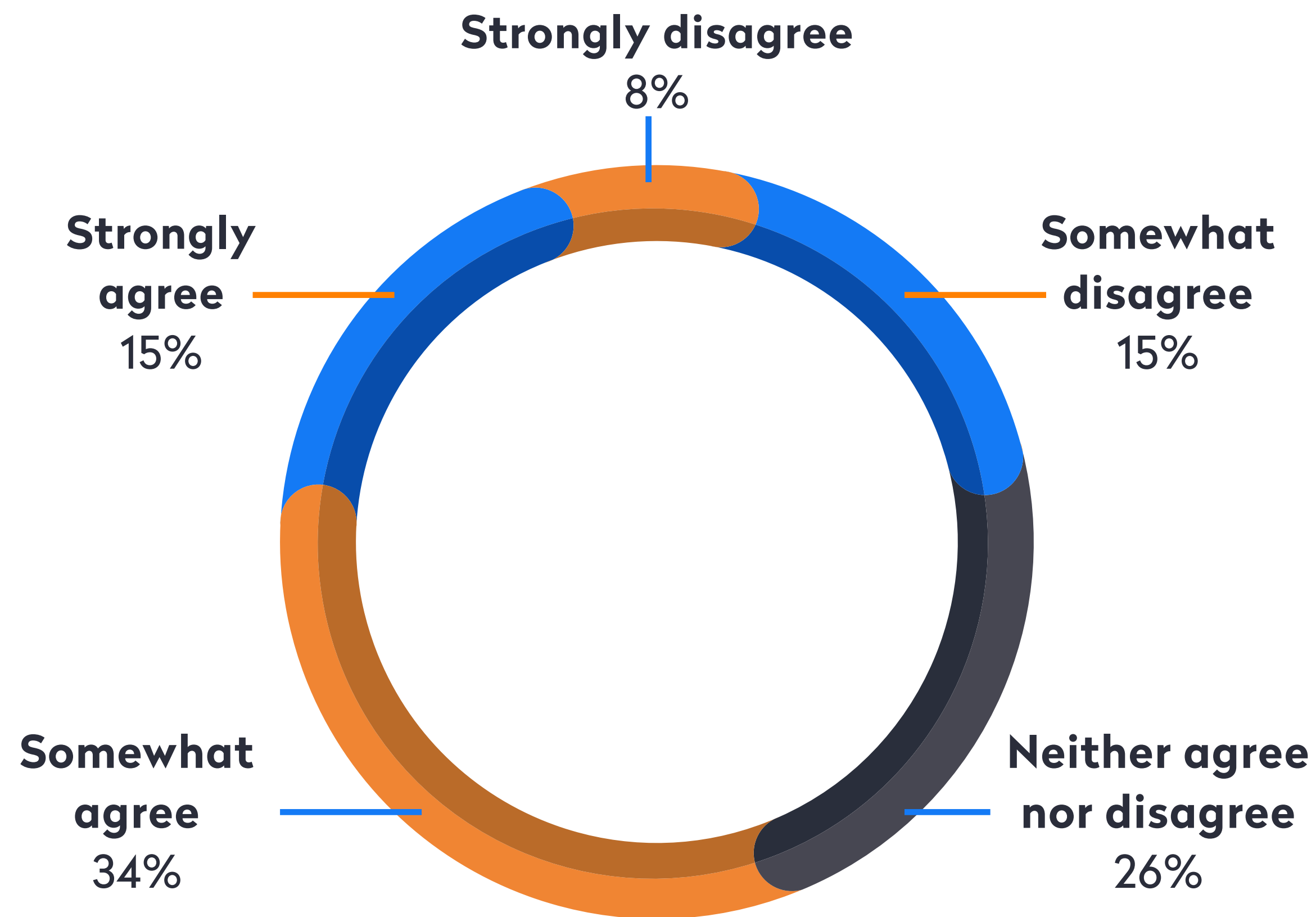
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"I share a great relationship with my colleagues
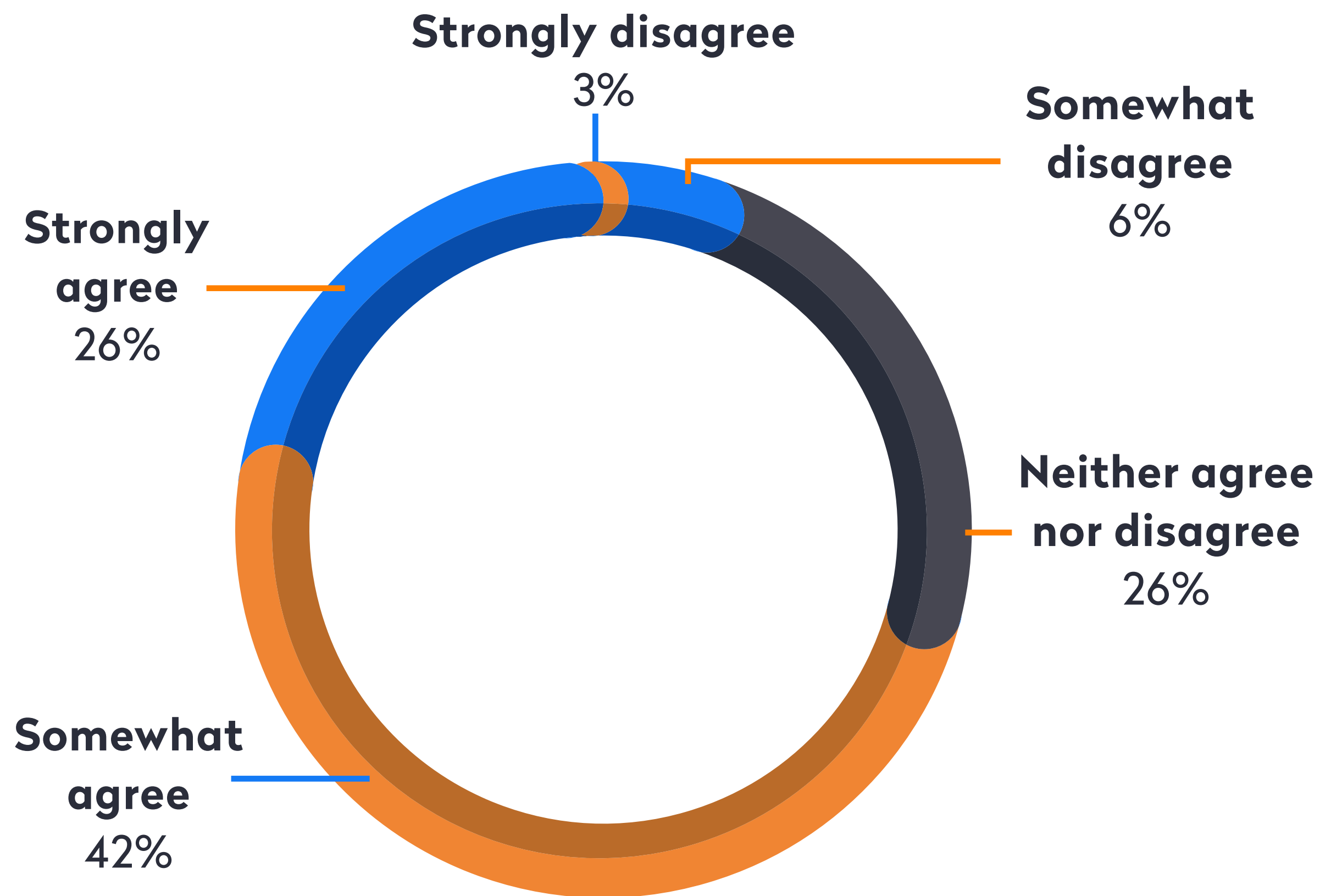
"I have close friends at work

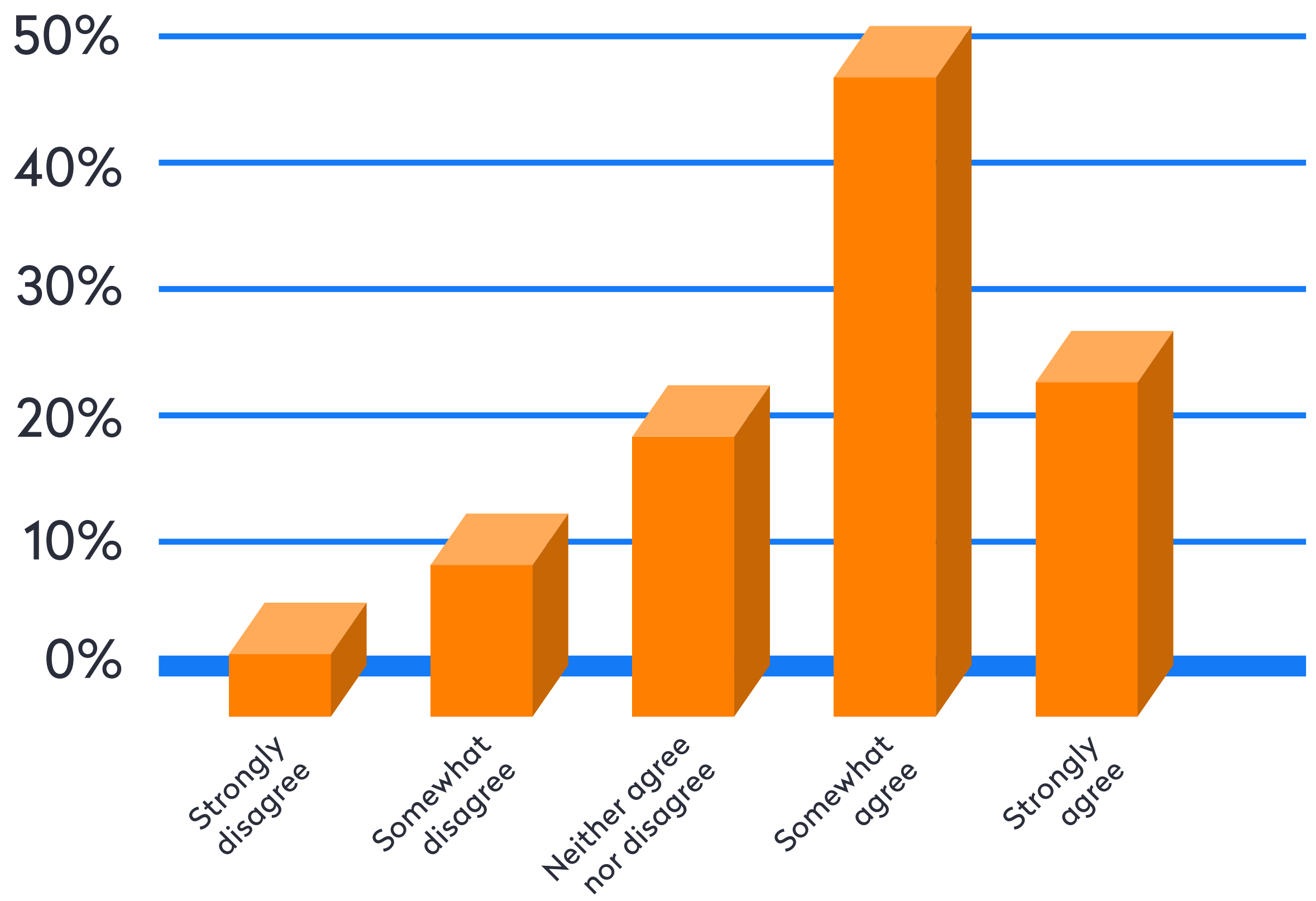**65%** of people said they get on well with their colleagues, and just over half consider some of their colleagues to be close friends.

Strongly disagree
3%

Somewhat disagree
6%

Strongly agree
26%

Neither agree nor disagree
26%

Somewhat agree
42%

Strongly disagree
8%

Somewhat disagree
15%

Strongly agree
15%

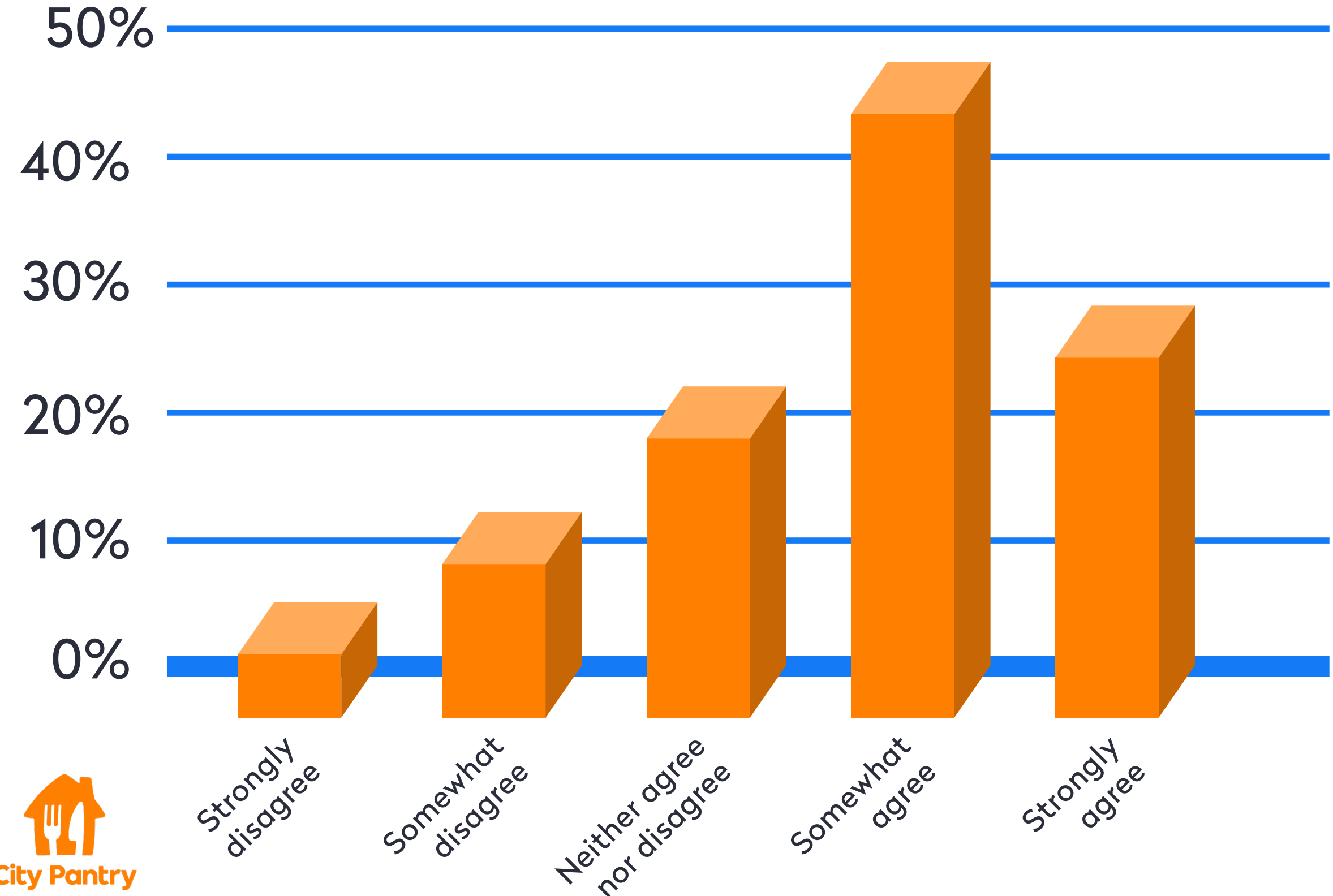**Neither agree nor disagree**
26%

Somewhat agree
34%

I am **satisfied** with my current work environment

Just under **70%** of employees were satisfied with their work environment at the time of the survey. This may indicate a preference for working at home, considering the survey was taken during the UK's national lockdown, when the majority of employees were working remotely.
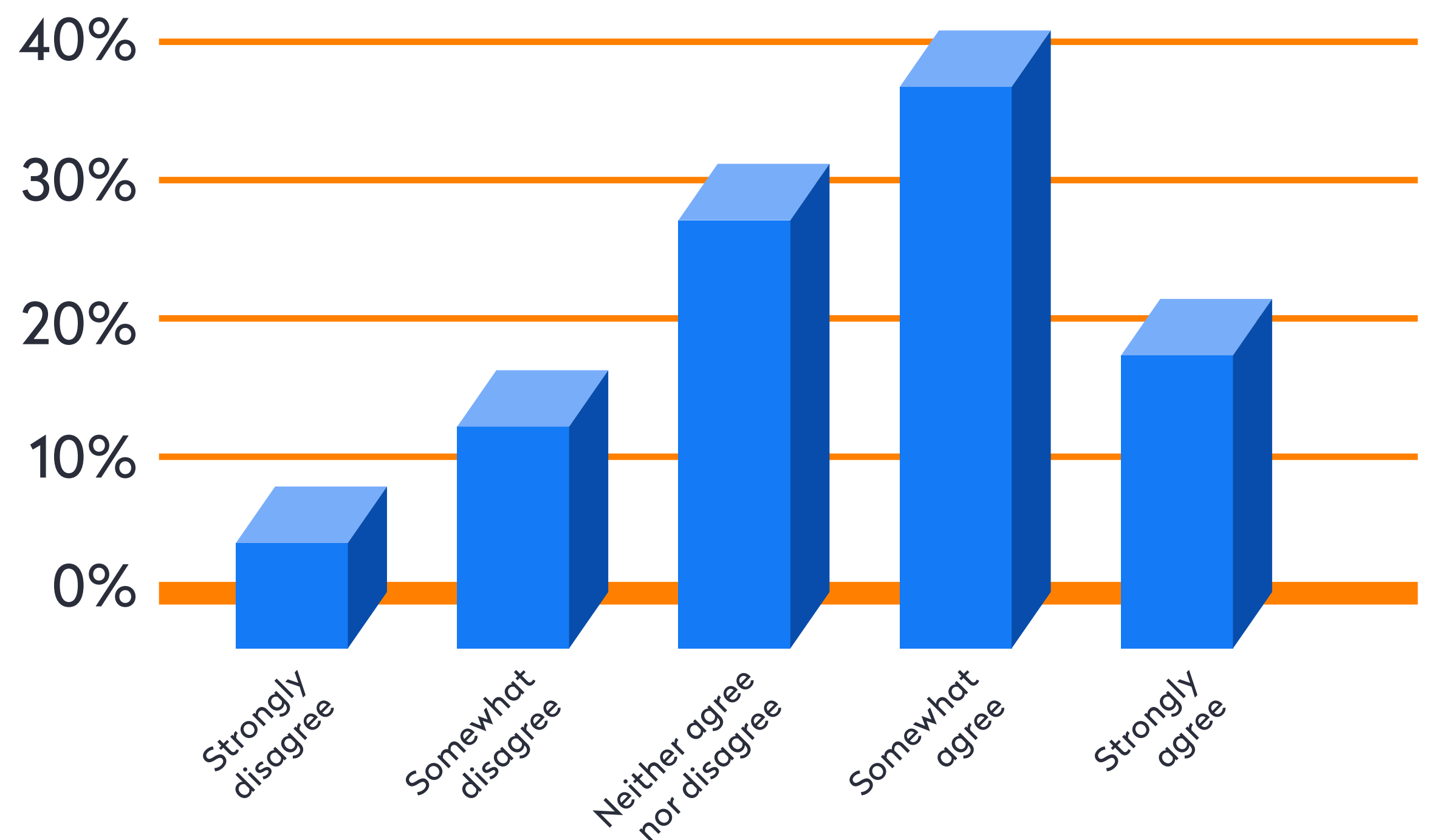

Category	Percentage
Strongly disagree	
Somewhat disagree	
Neither agree nor disagree	
Somewhat agree	
Strongly agree	

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"I enjoy a good work-life balance

The majority of UK desk-workers say that they benefit from a good work-life balance.

50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%

Strongly disagree | Somewhat disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Somewhat agree | Strongly agree

"I feel a strong sense of belonging with my employer

Over half of employees feel a strong sense of belonging with their employer.

40%
30%
20%
10%
0%

Strongly disagree | Somewhat disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Somewhat agree | Strongly agree

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Wellbeing at work:

Respondents describe how they feel at work

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Mental energy levels

56% of employees say their mental energy levels are high to very high.

5
1
2
3
4

1= Very low
5= Very high

Confidence

Most people feel confident at work – **65%** of them, in fact!

5
1
2
3
4

1= Very low
5= Very high

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Happiness

54% of people feel happy at work, while
8.2% feel quite or very low levels of happiness.

3%	11%	32%	41%	13%

1 2 3 4 5
Very low   Very high

Concentration

62% of employees have high
concentration levels while at work.

1%	7%	30%	47%	15%

1 2 3 4 5
Very low   Very high

Motivation

Over half of employees feel motivated at work.

3%	11%	30%	43%	13%

1 2 3 4 5
Very low   Very high

Satisfaction

Almost **60%** said they felt satisfied at work.

3%	10%	29%	42%	17%

1 2 3 4 5
Very low   Very high

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Enthusiasm towards work

56% of employees are enthusiastic about their work. It's encouraging to see high levels of employee enthusiasm, especially during the challenging times of 2020. This may be affected by shifting work patterns as a result of COVID, with employees able to enjoy more flexibility and a better work-life balance while working from home.

3%   1 = Very Low

11%   2

29%   3

42%   4

15%   5 = Very High

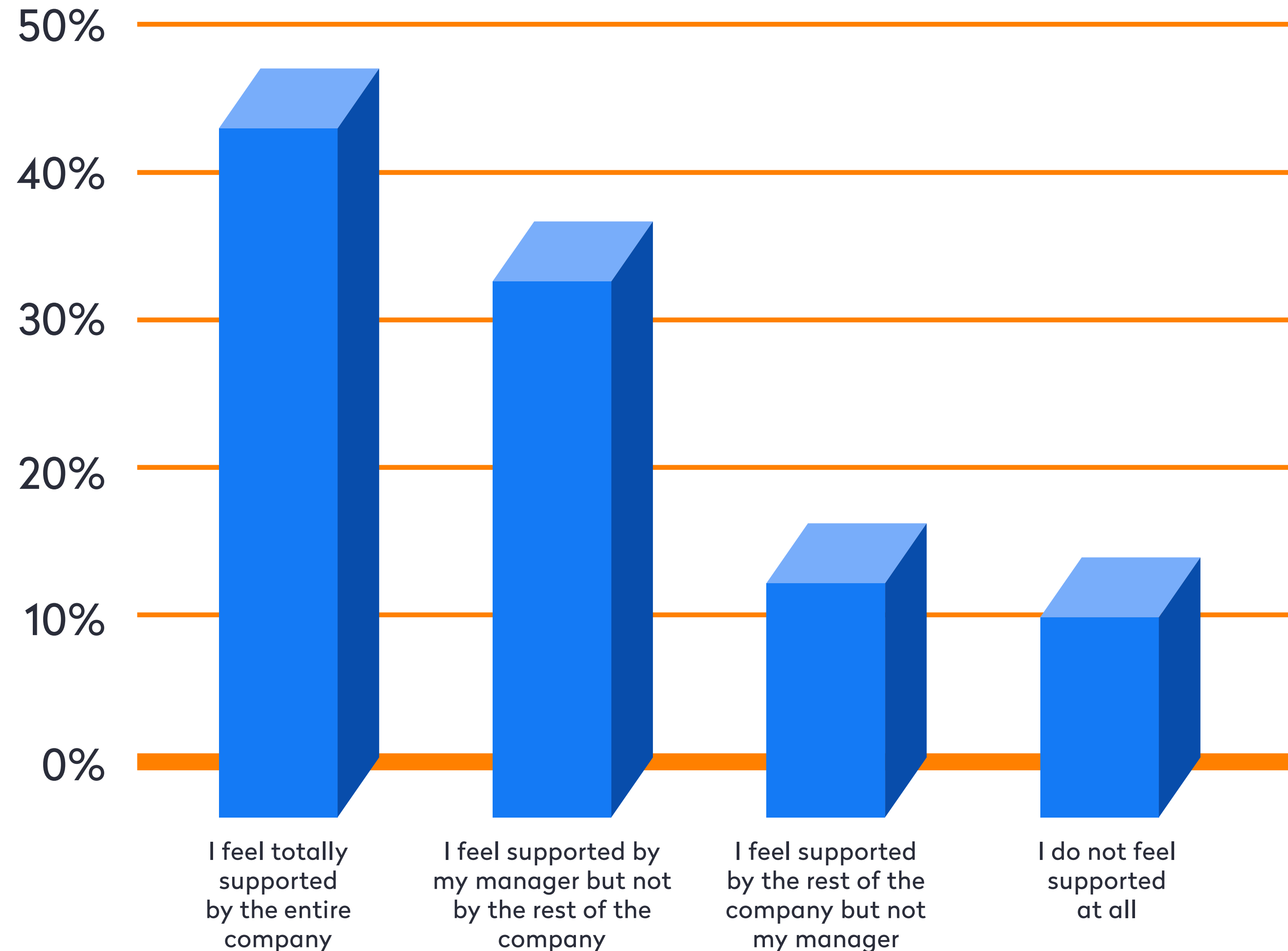City Pantry
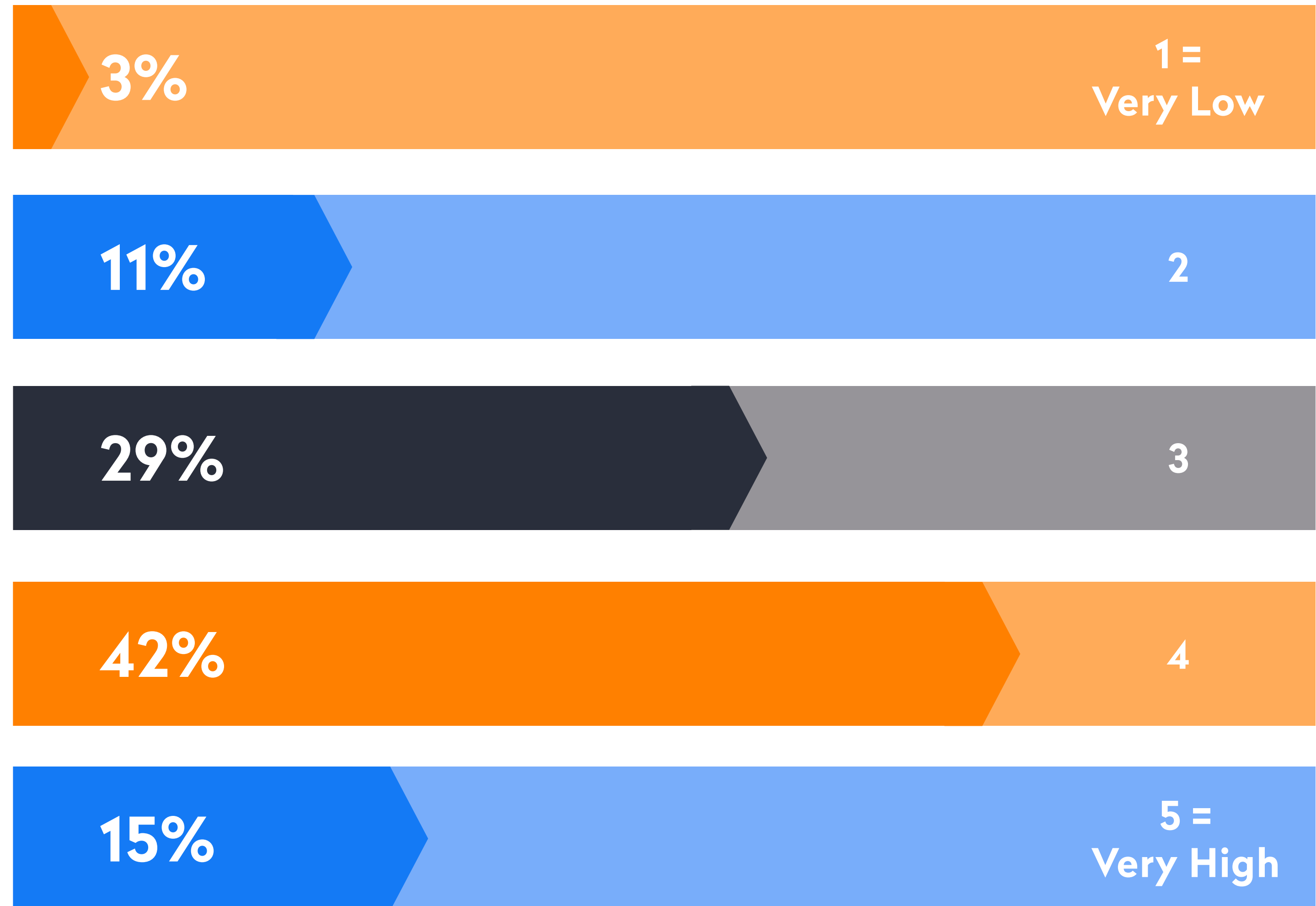
Wellbeing at work summary:

Overall, the results were positive, with over half of employees agreeing with each of our wellbeing statements.

Conversely, more than one in ten employees indicated low to very low scores for almost all of these wellbeing states, which shows that employers need to be mindful to support those who are struggling the most.
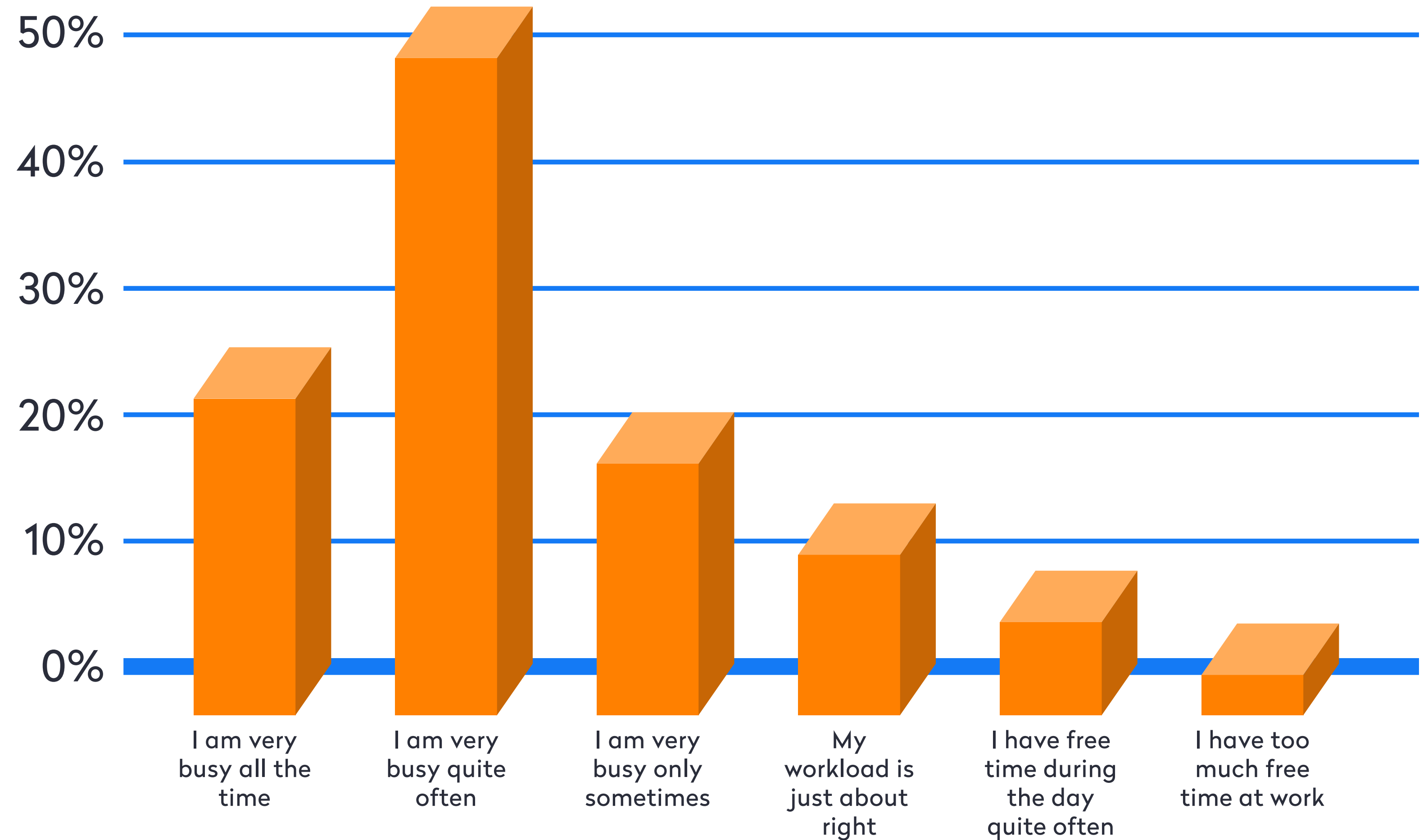
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How **supported** do you feel at your workplace to perform your **daily tasks** productively?

44% of employees feel totally supported by the entire company, but a third only feel supported by their manager and not the wider company. This highlights the important relationship between an employee and their line-manager – a relationship built on support and trust.

50%

40%

30%

20%

10%

0%

I feel totally supported by the entire company

I feel supported by my manager but not by the rest of the company

I feel supported by the rest of the company but not my manager

I do not feel supported at all

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How would you describe your **workload** on most days?

The vast majority of participants **(70%)** describe their workday as "very busy".

| 50% |
| 40% |
| 30% |
| 20% |
| 10% |
| 0% |

I am very busy all the time

I am very busy quite often

I am very busy only sometimes

My workload is just about right

I have free time during the day quite often

I have too much free time at work

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Workplace behaviour:

Are employees taking enough breaks?

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How often do you usually get away from your work computer for a **break** each day?

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) recommends that those looking at a screen should take a **5-10 break every hour.** Based on our survey, **almost half** of employees take approximately **1-3 breaks per day**, however 8% don't take any breaks at all.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and UK lockdown, the average working day schedule has changed for some, with "normal" working hours disrupted. These figures therefore could look very different during pre-COVID times, when the majority of employees worked from offices instead of their homes.

In an office environment, socialising with colleagues, "water cooler" chat, team lunches and tea or coffee
breaks can actually encourage people to take more regular breaks from their screens. However, when working from home, some respondents indicate spending longer periods of time between breaks, and some (8%) not taking any breaks at all throughout the day.

In a typical week, how often do you have your lunch while working?

26% of employees have a working lunch 2–3 times a week, however **23%** never take a break for lunch.

30%	
20%	
10%	
0%	

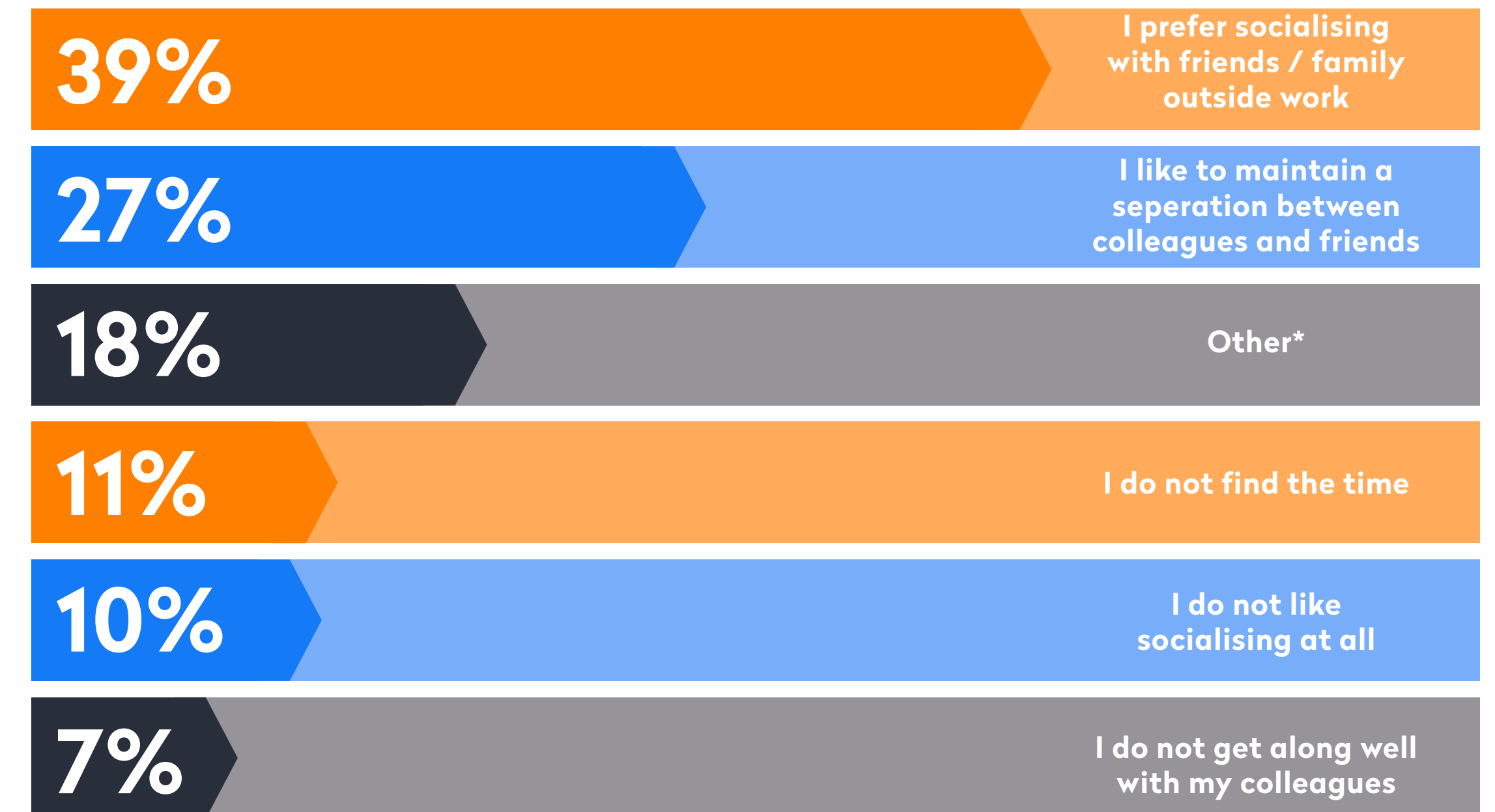Never | Once a week | 2–3 times a week | 3–4 times a week | Everyday

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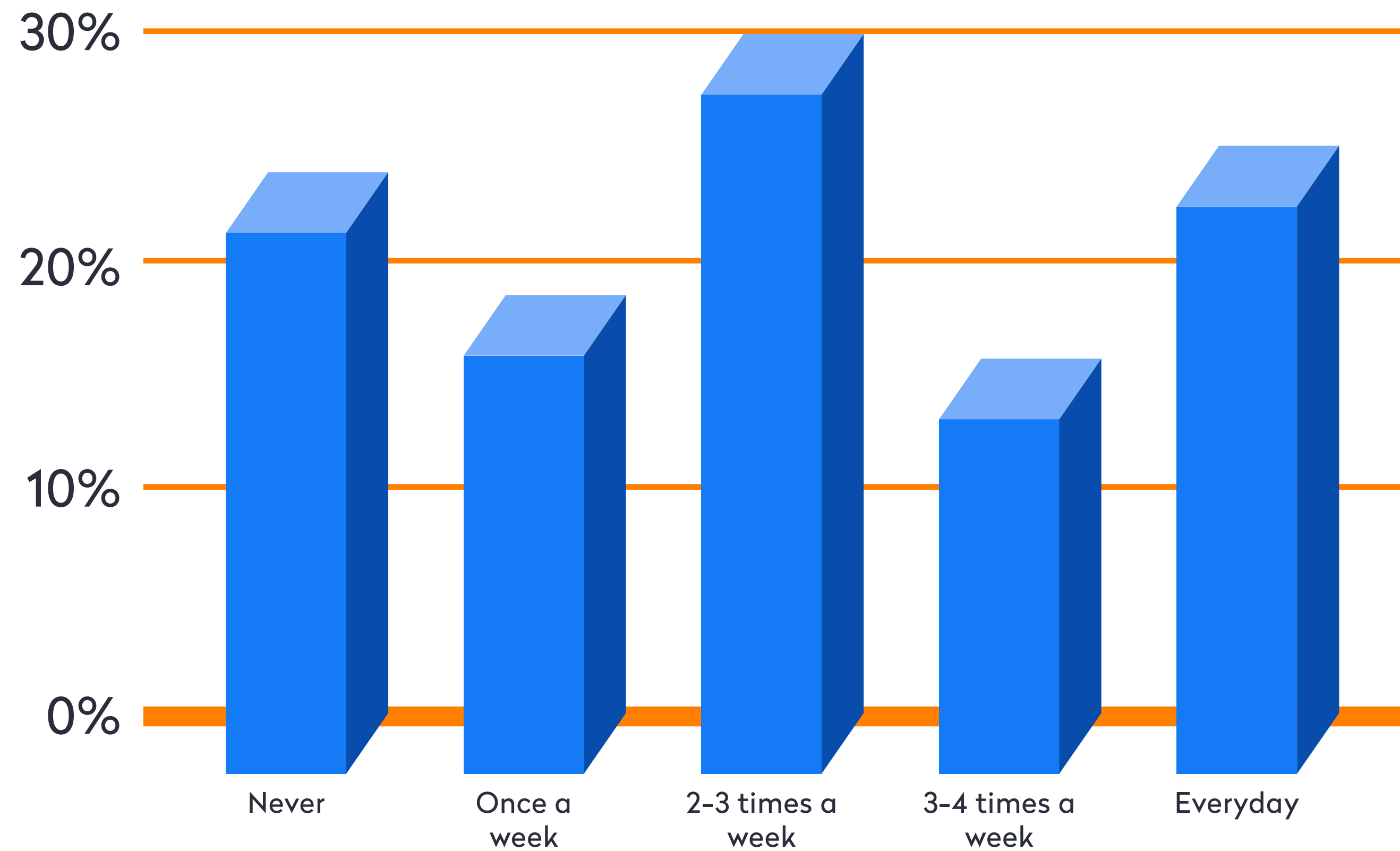
Before the lockdown, how often would you socialise with your work colleagues outside of work?

Just **over 50%** met up with colleagues at least once a month prior to lockdown.

6%	A few times a week
12%	Once a week
17%	A few times a month
15%	Once a month
24%	Once every few months
11%	Once a year
15%	Never

Why did you not socialise with your work colleagues outside of work before the lockdown?

Of the **15%** that said they never meet up with colleagues outside of work, **almost 40%** said they'd rather spend time with friends and family, and over a quarter want to keep their professional and private lives separate.

39%	I prefer socialising with friends / family outside work
27%	I like to maintain a seperation between colleagues and friends
18%	Other*
11%	I do not find the time
10%	I do not like socialising at all
7%	I do not get along well with my colleagues

*Other: work from home/remotely self-employed/work alone, lack of money

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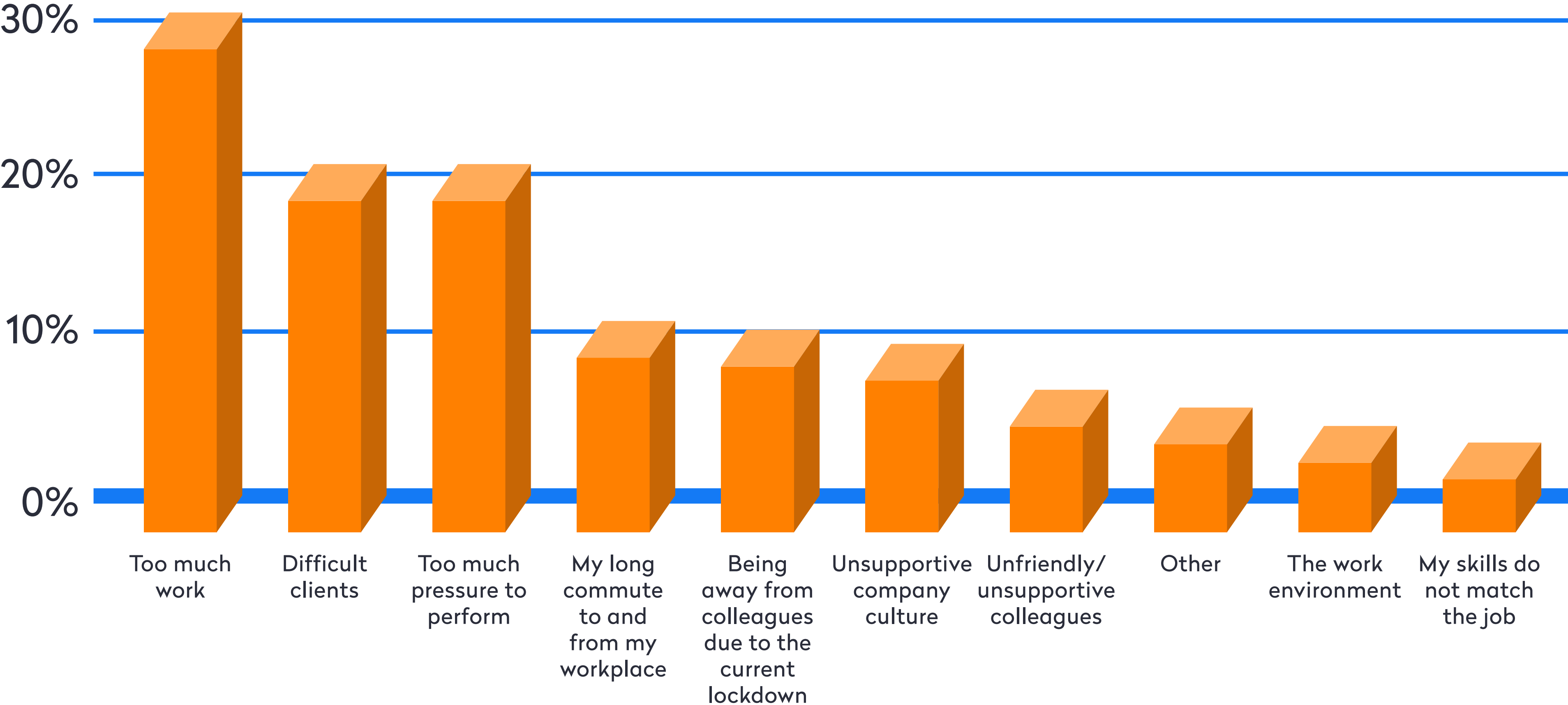# Stress at work:

How are companies dealing with stress at work?

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How **stressful** is your work?

50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Not stressful at all
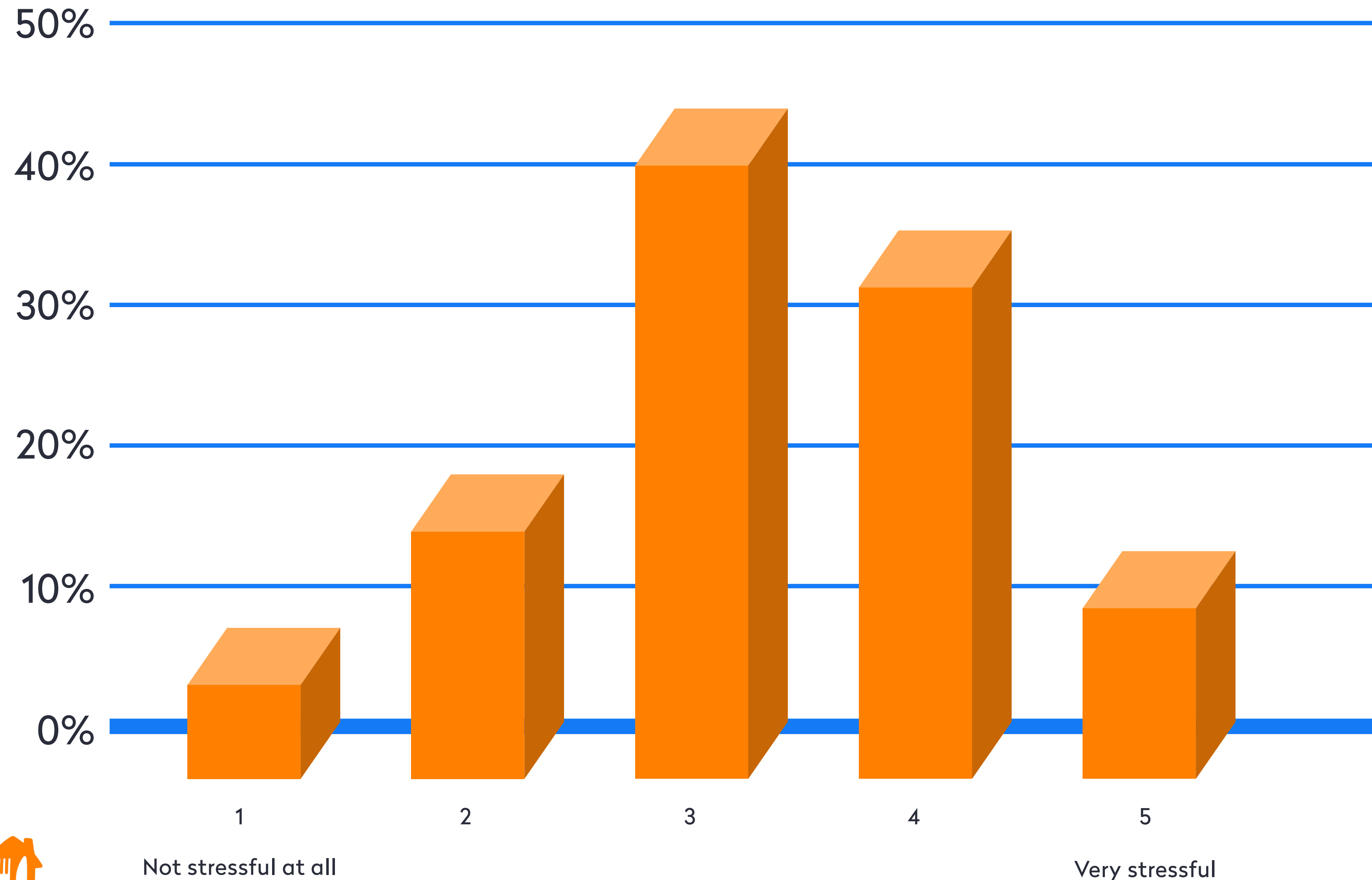
Very stressful

40% of employees consider their work quite or very stressful.
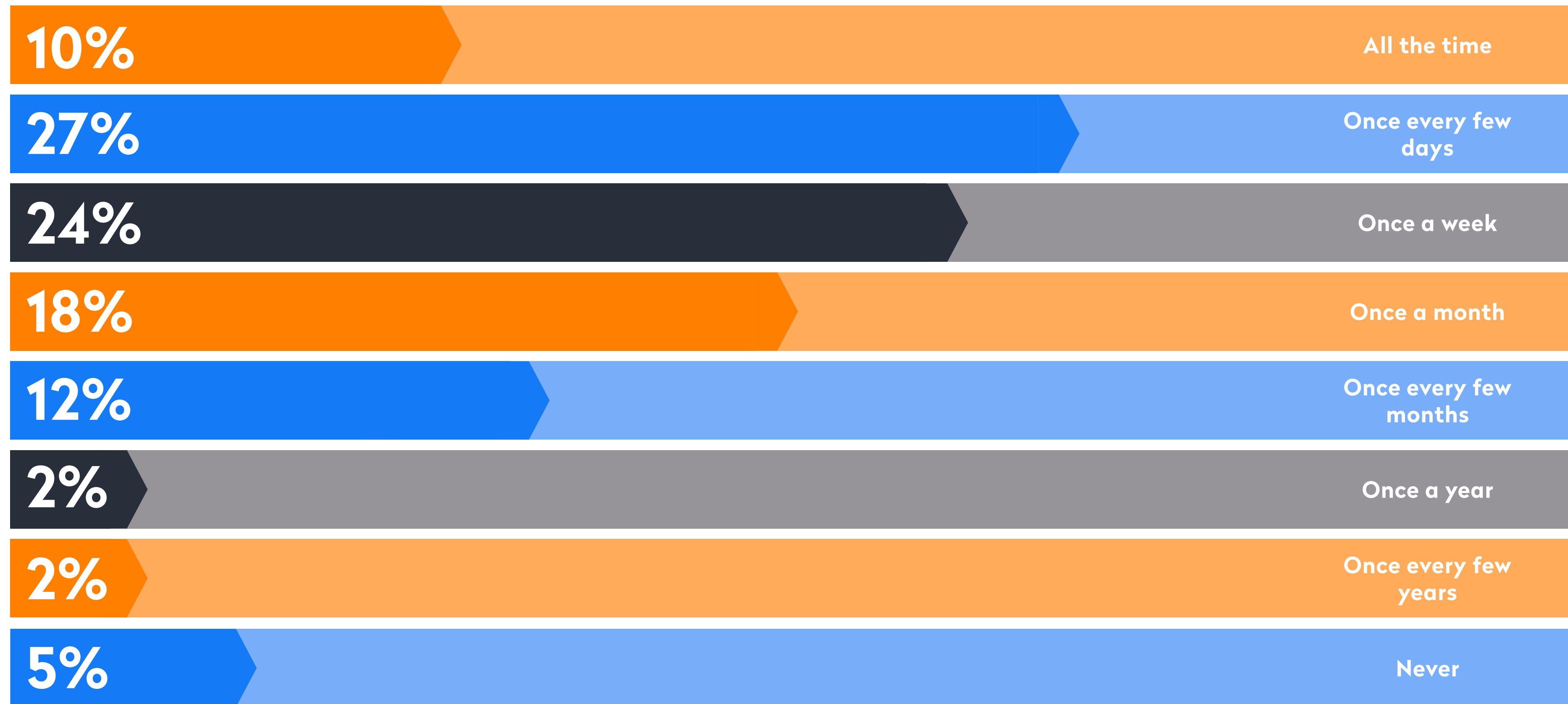
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What is the main reason for your stress?

Reasons for stress were varied but "a heavy workload" came out on top with almost 30% agreeing this is their main source of work-related stress.

30%	
20%	
10%	
0%	

Too much work | Difficult clients | Too much pressure to perform | My long commute to and from my workplace | Being away from colleagues due to the current lockdown | Unsupportive company culture | Unfriendly/ unsupportive colleagues | Other | The work environment | My skills do not match the job

*Other: manager, shortage of staff, customers, deadlines, financial pressure

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How often do you feel stressed at work?

The majority of employees feel stressed at work at least once a week.

| Percentage	Frequency
10%	All the time
27%	Once every few days
24%	Once a week
18%	Once a month
12%	Once every few months
2%	Once a year
2%	Once every few years
5%	Never

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How important is your team in helping you combat your work stress?

44% of those with a desk job consider their team extremely important in helping combat workplace stress.

50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%

1
2
3
4
5

Not important at all

Extremely important

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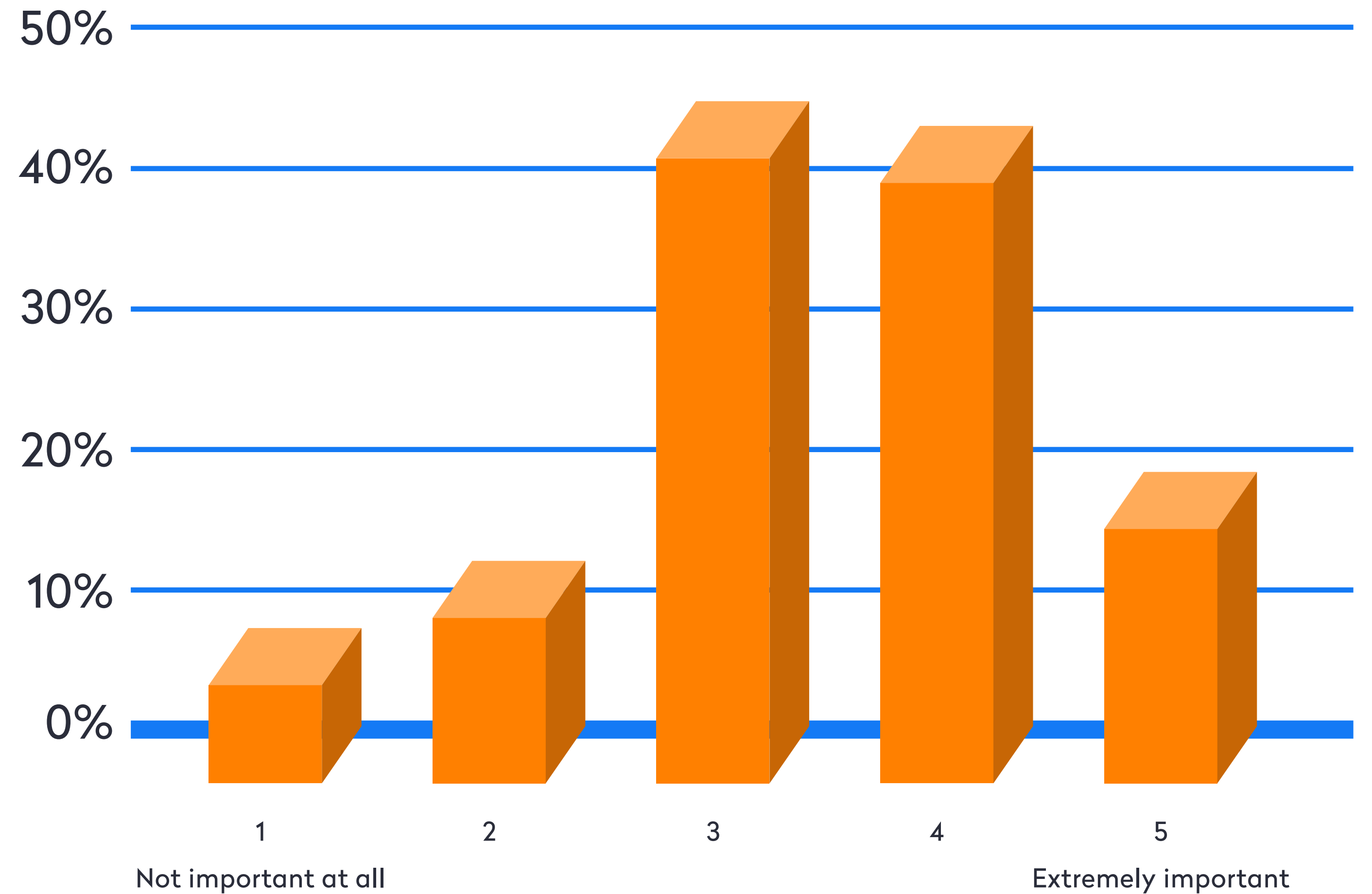
How much has stress affected your ability to work productively in the last year?

Almost 30% of employees say stress affected their ability to work productively in the last year, while 15% said it didn't at all.
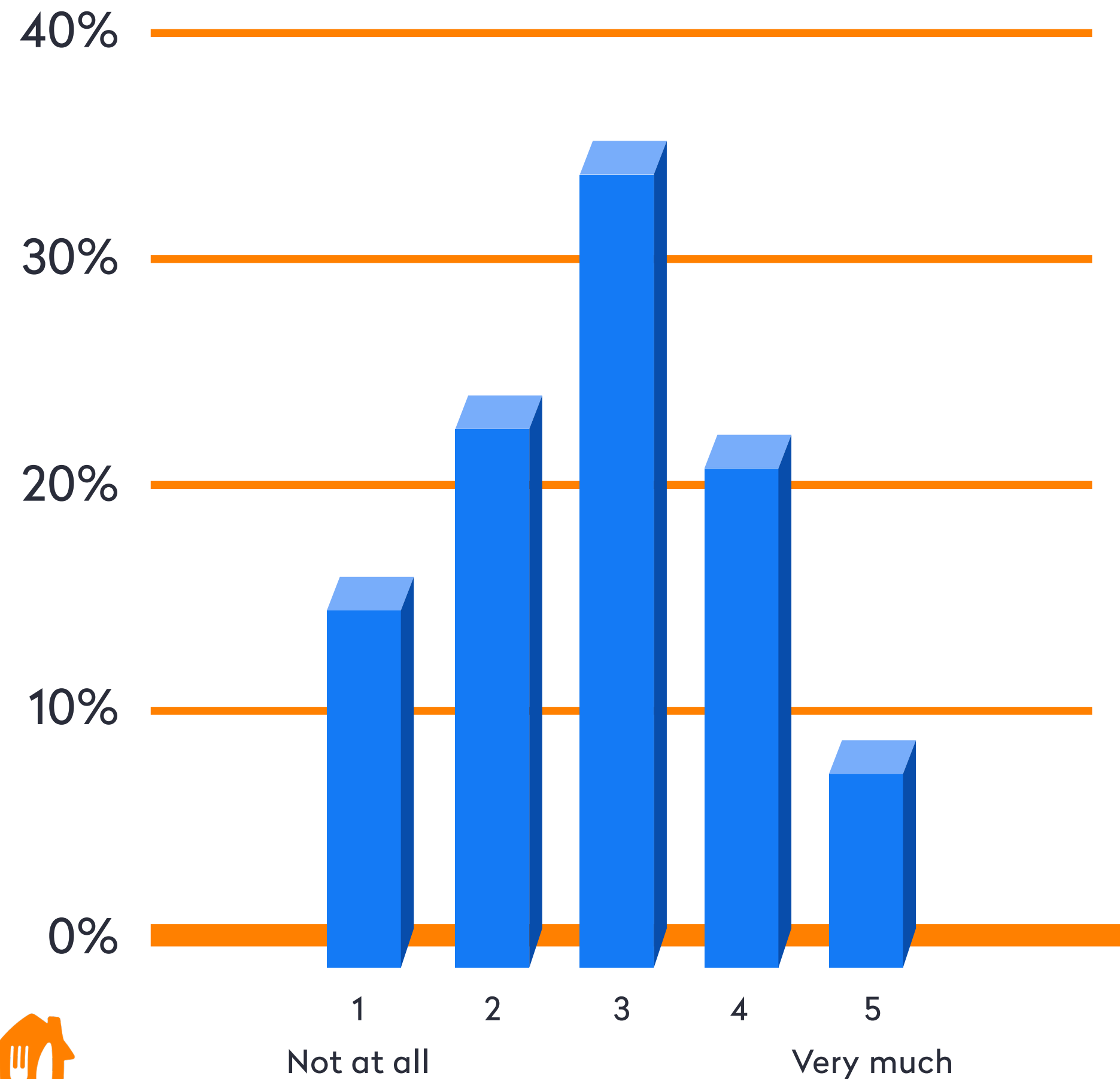
Do you think your company does enough to help deal with stress?

There is a big disparity between companies that are supporting colleagues and those that aren't.

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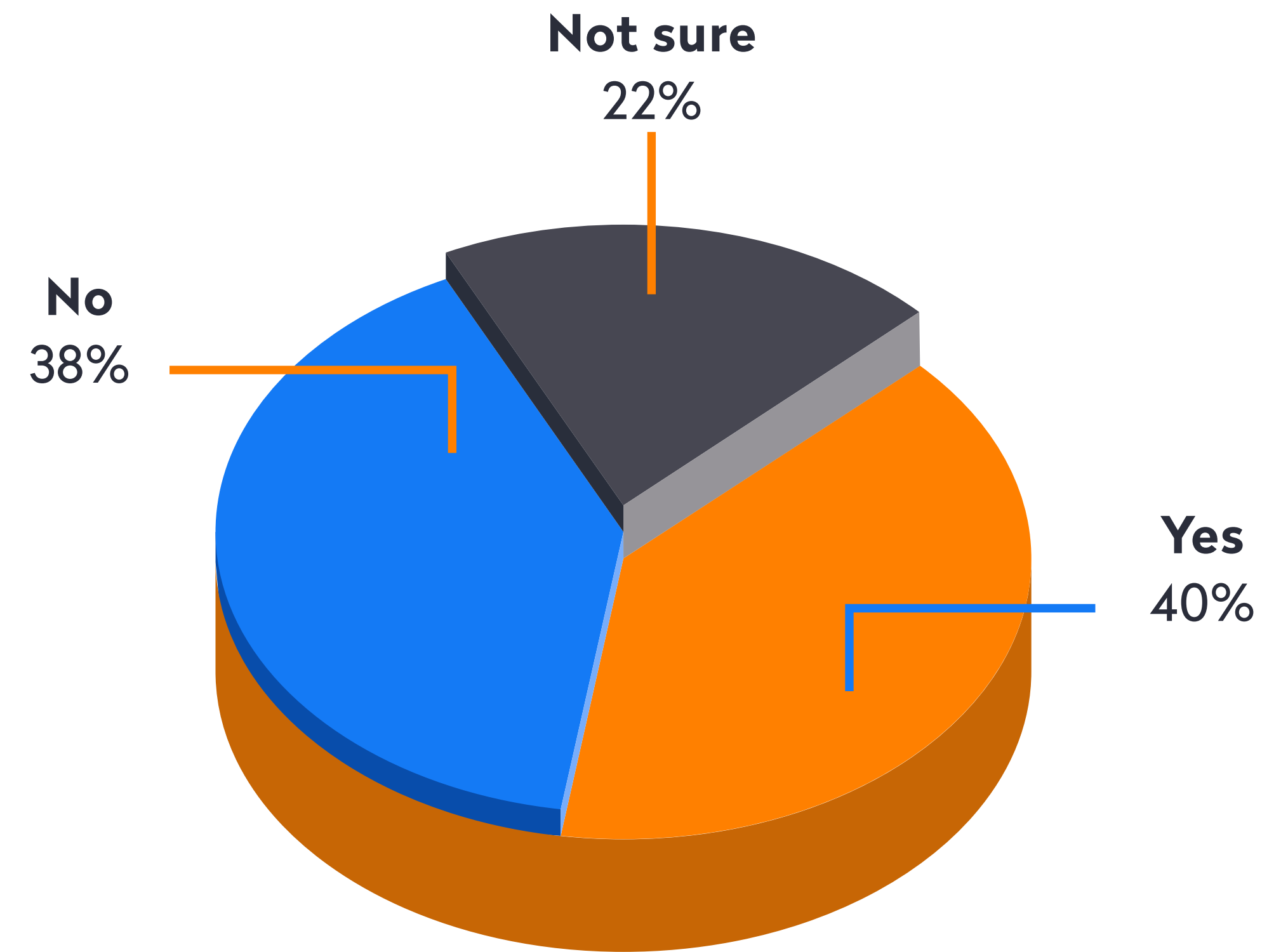
What initiatives does your company normally offer to help deal with stress?

Almost a third of employees say that their company doesn't offer any initiatives to help employees deal with stress. Of the companies that do offer initiatives, the most cited are training for managers, remote counselling, and mindfulness workshops.
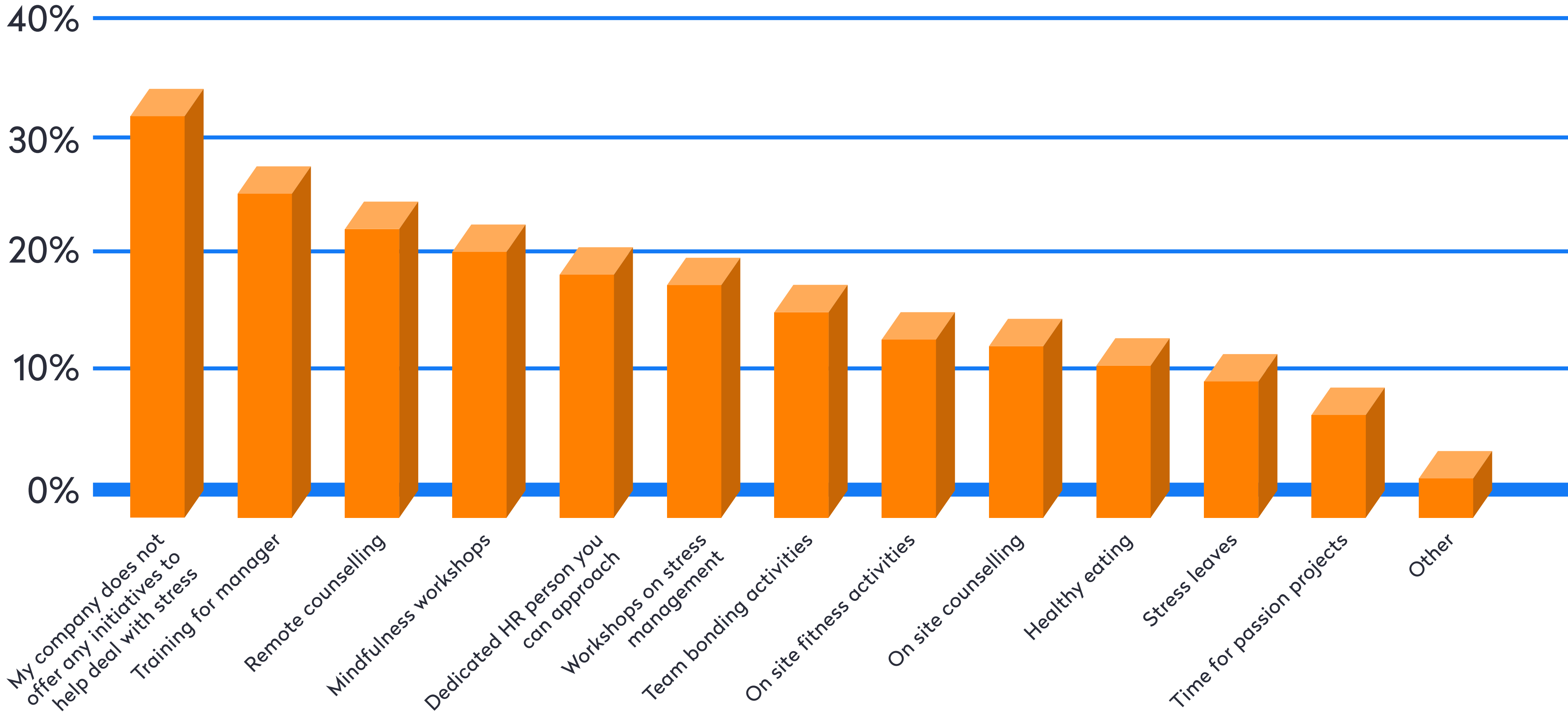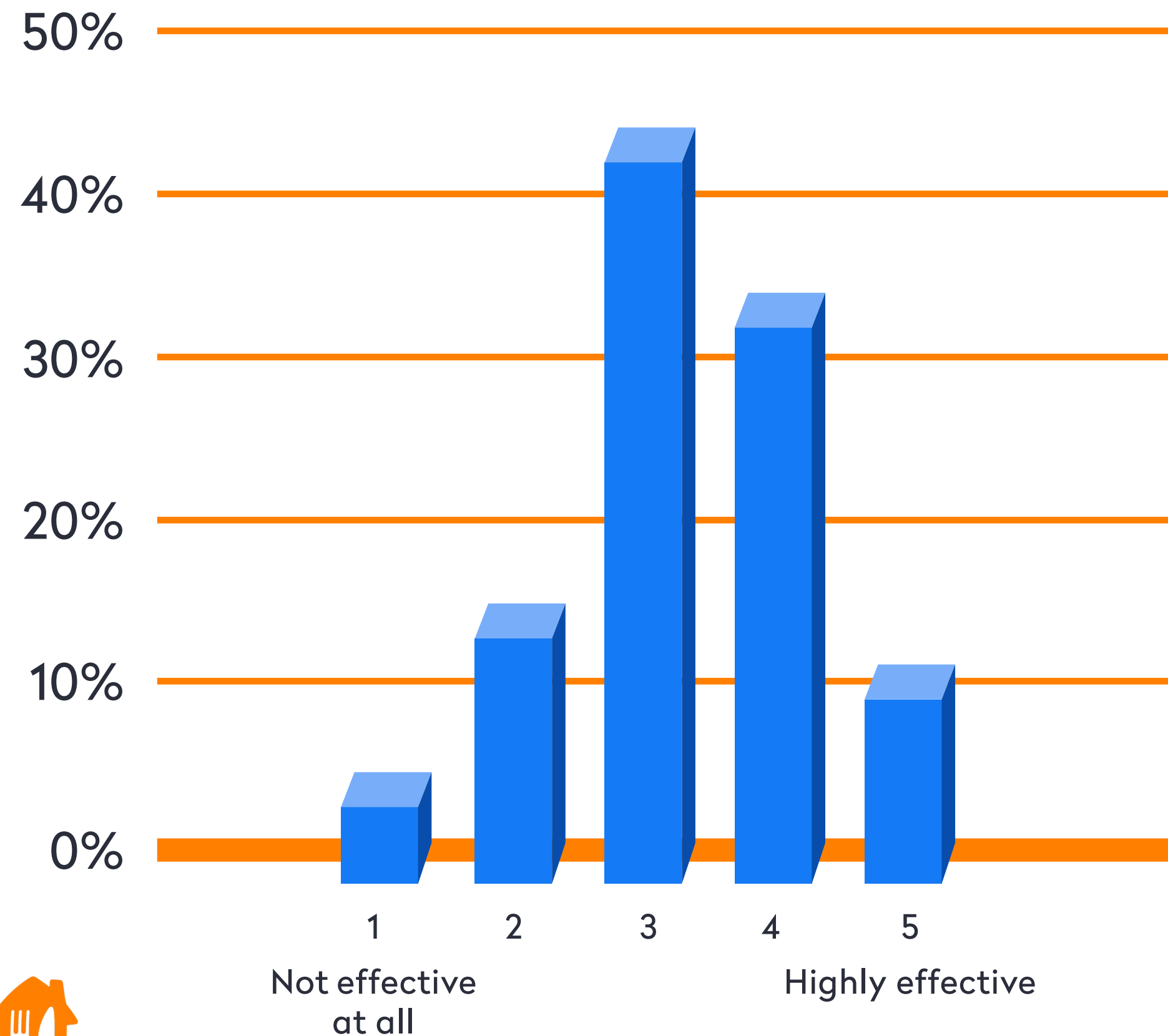

*Other: pays a good salary, flexible hours

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# How effective do you find these initiatives at combating stress at work?

Employees that have access to initiatives to combat stress feel that they work moderately well, which shows there is still room for improvement.

Y-axis: 50%, 40%, 30%, 20%, 10%, 0%

X-axis: 1 (Not effective at all), 2, 3, 4, 5 (Highly effective)

Have you ever spoken to anyone at work regarding work-related stress?
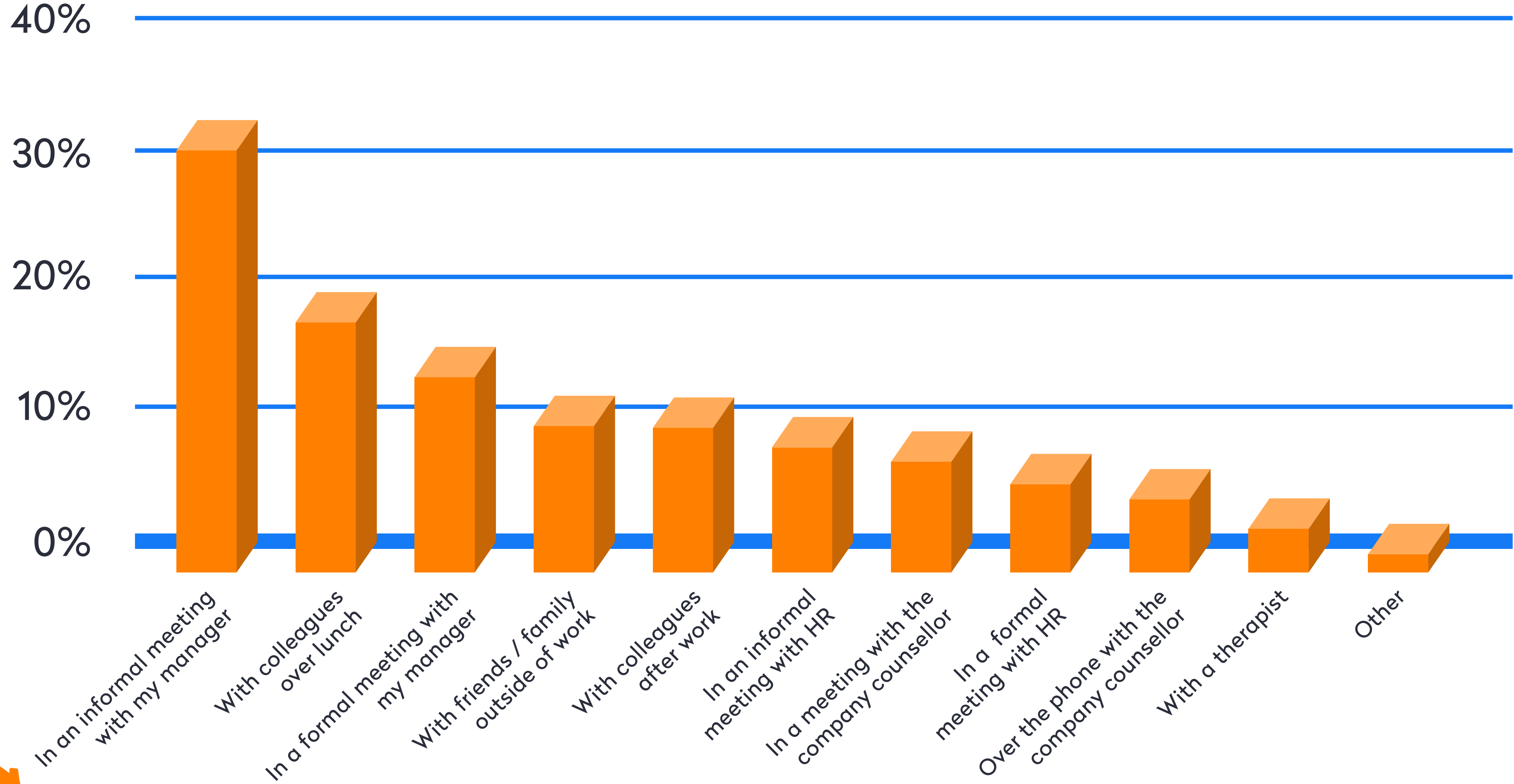
The vast majority of people surveyed have never spoken about work-related stress at work, which may indicate that companies simply aren't aware of the need to combat it.

Companies that foster more open work environments are able to provide their employees with a space where they feel more comfortable sharing their experiences.

No
72%

Yes
28%

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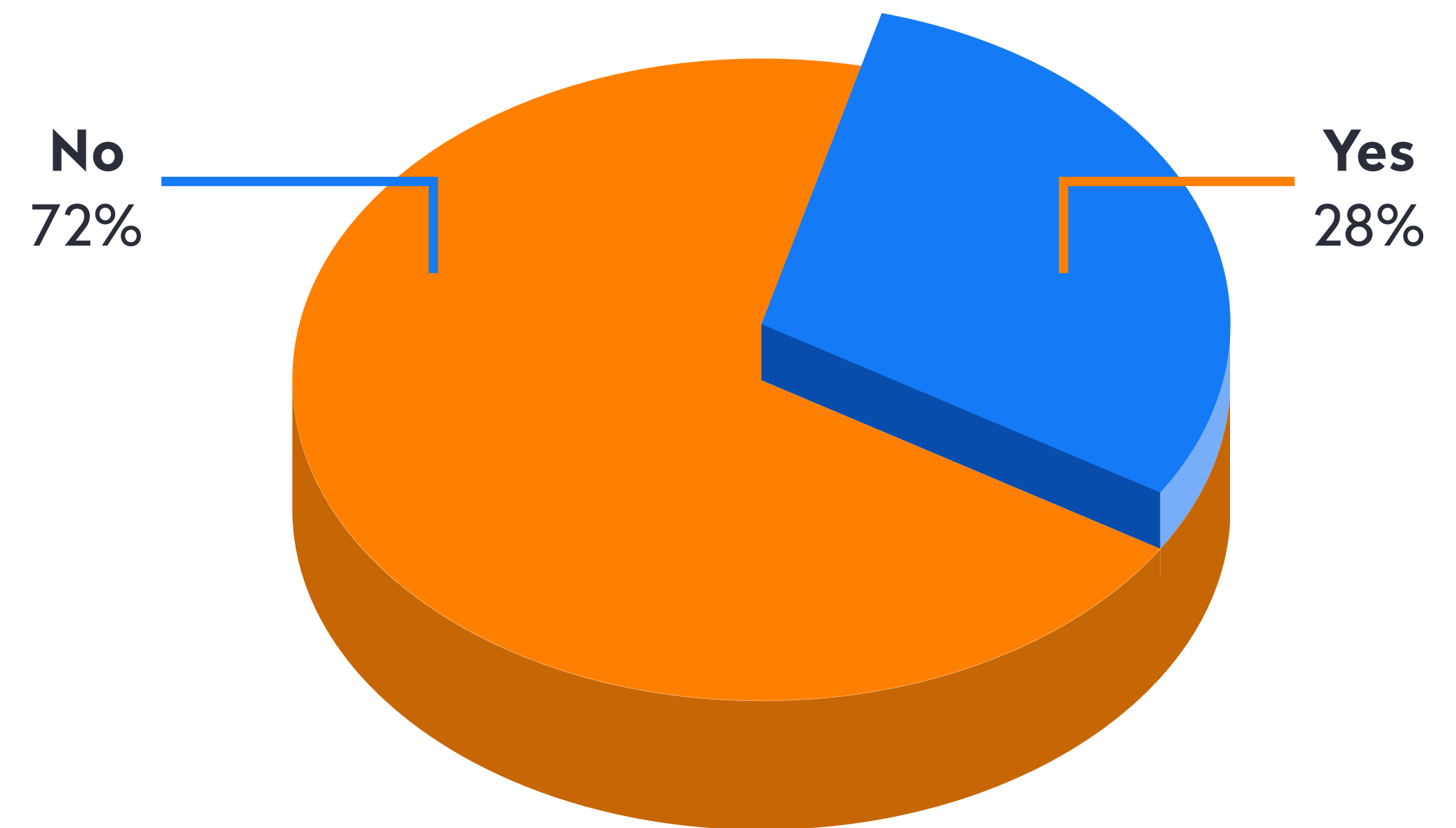
Where did you feel most comfortable **speaking about your stress** at work?

Those that have spoken about stress at work prefer to talk about it in informal settings, such as casual meetings with their manager or with colleagues **over lunch.** Again, highlighting the importance of the employee-line manager relationship.

Chart categories (left to right):
- In an informal meeting with my manager — ~30%
- With colleagues over lunch — ~16%
- In a formal meeting with my manager — ~12%
- With friends / family outside of work — ~8%
- With colleagues after work — ~8%
- In an informal meeting with HR — ~7%
- In a meeting with the company counsellor — ~6%
- In a formal meeting with HR — ~4%
- Over the phone with the company counsellor — ~3%
- With a therapist — ~2%
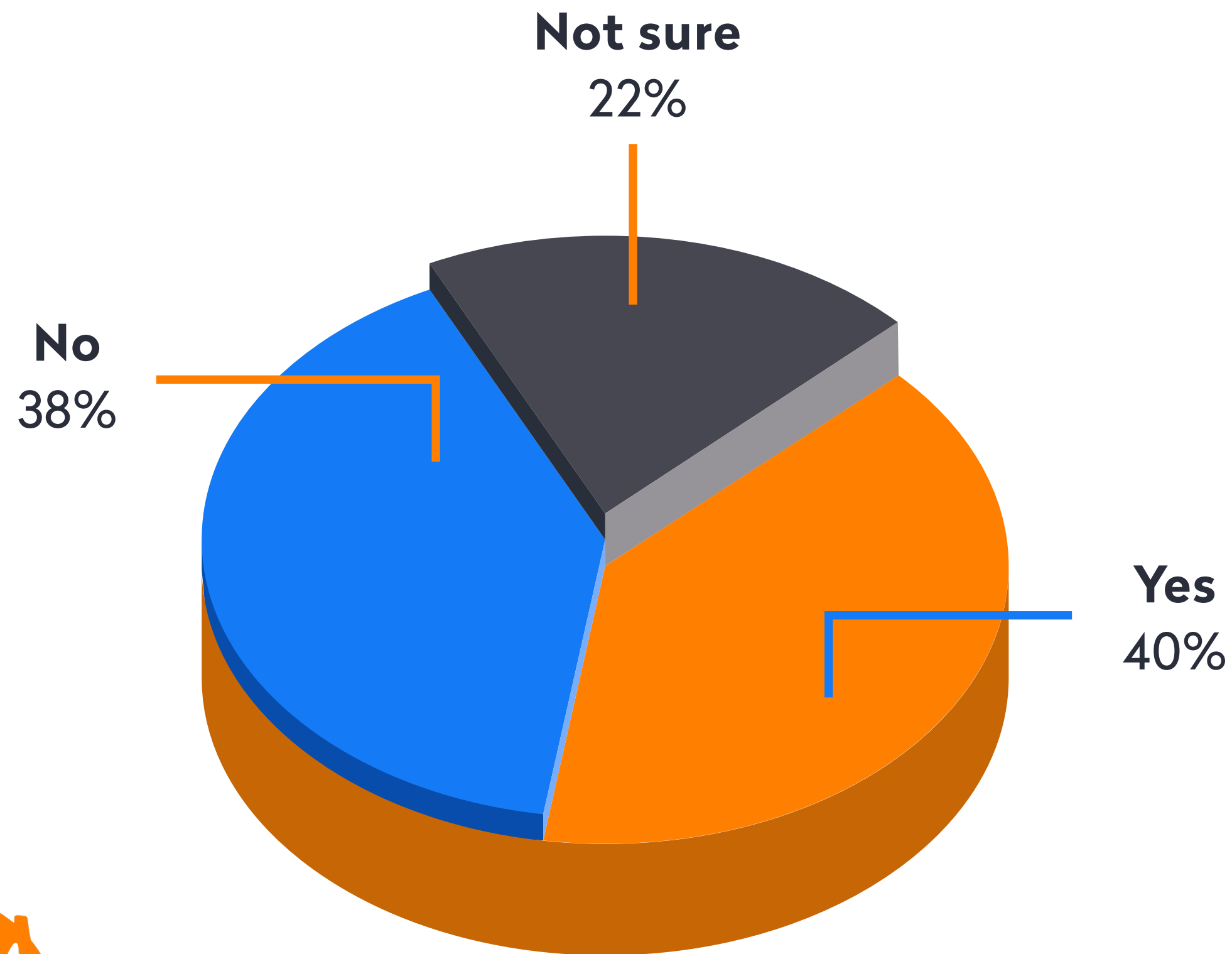- Other — ~1%

Y-axis: 0%, 10%, 20%, 30%, 40%

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Mental health at work:

Do employees feel comfortable talking about their mental health?

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Do you think your company does enough to help with mental health?

Again, there is a massive disparity between companies doing enough to help with mental health and those that aren't.

Not sure
22%

No
38%

Yes
40%

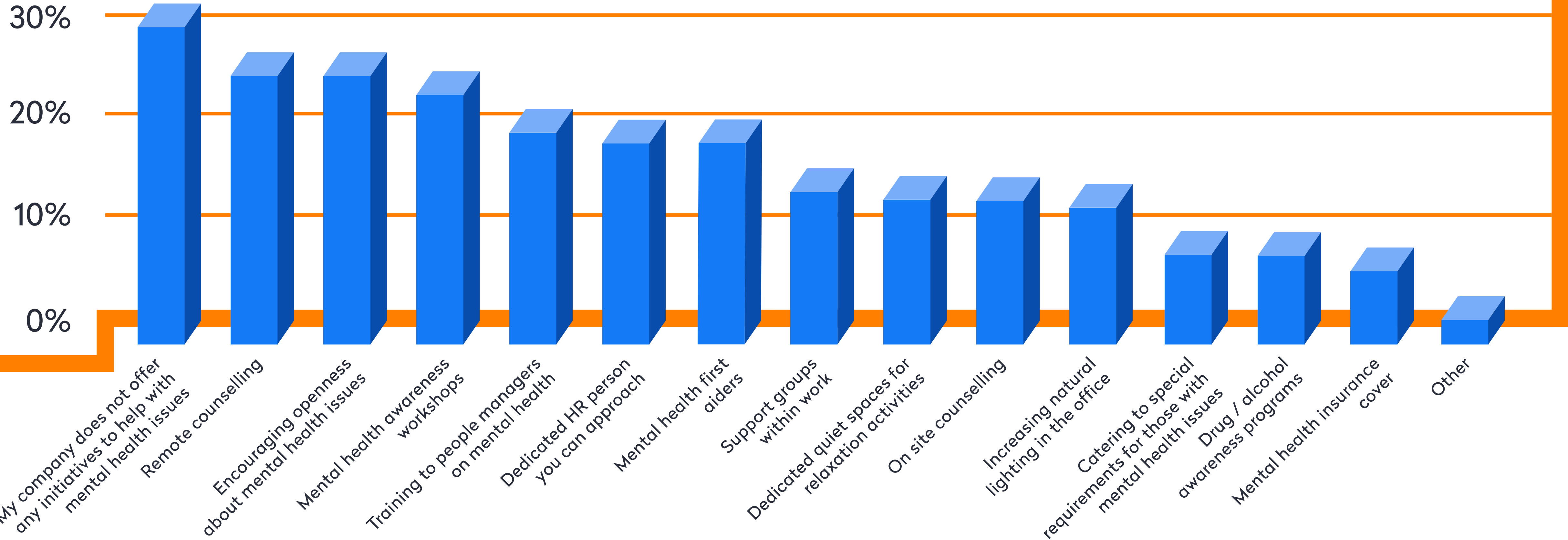# Have you ever spoken to anyone at work regarding mental health-related issues?

Even fewer people (under 20%) have spoken about mental health-related issues at work than they have about workplace stress. This may indicate that there is still a perceived stigma associated with mental health issues and illnesses in the workplace.

Prefer not to say
3%

No
79%

Yes
18%

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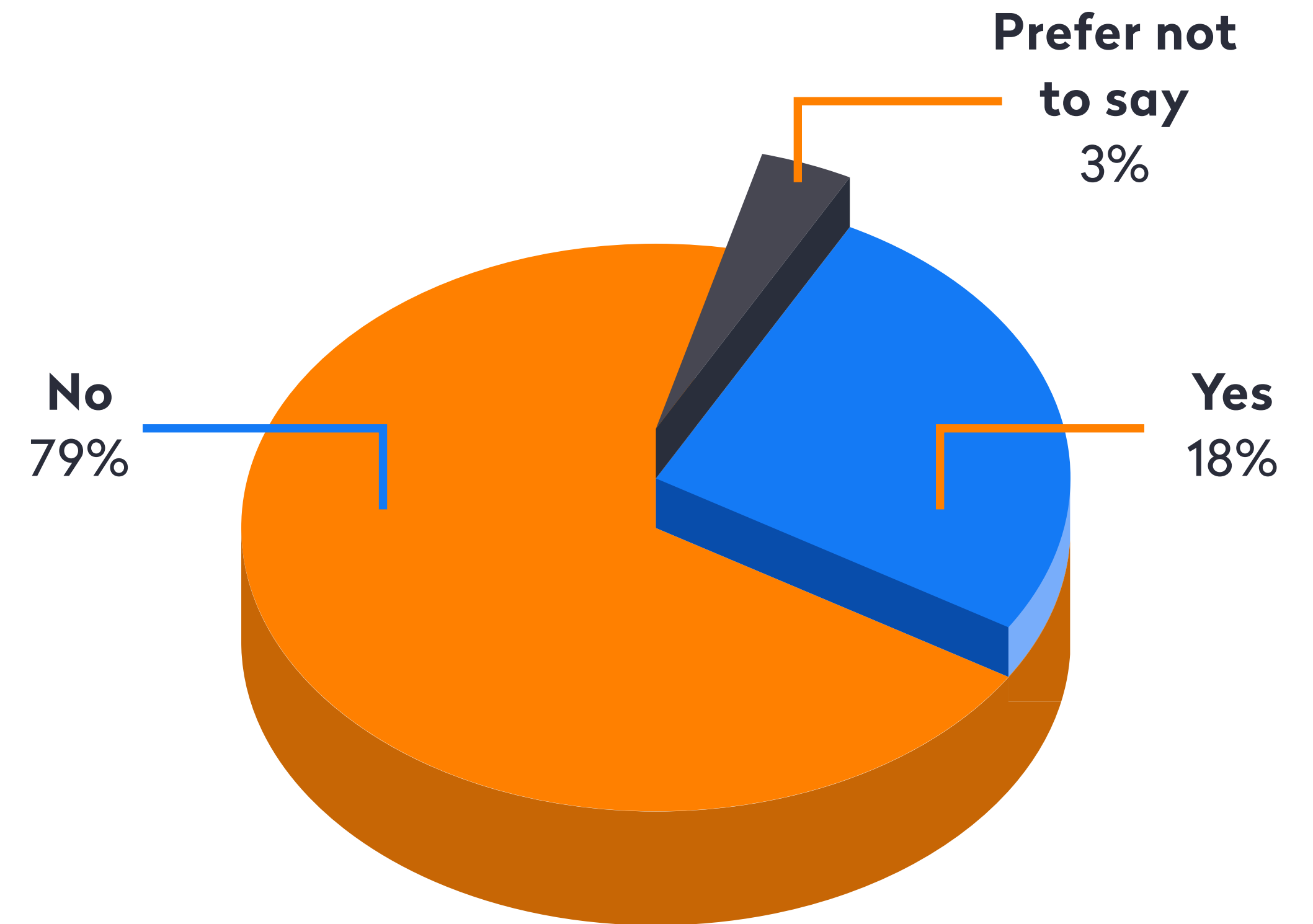
What initiatives does your company normally offer to help with mental health issues?

Almost a third indicate their company doesn't offer any initiatives to help employees with their mental health.

But of those companies that do, remote counselling, encouraging openness in the workplace, and mental health awareness training and workshops are the most common initiatives.


Chart categories (left to right):
- My company does not offer any initiatives to help with mental health issues — ~28%
- Remote counselling — ~23%
- Encouraging openness about mental health issues — ~23%
- Mental health awareness workshops — ~21%
- Training to people managers on mental health — ~18%
- Dedicated HR person you can approach — ~17%
- Mental health first aiders — ~17%
- Support groups within work — ~12%
- Dedicated quiet spaces for relaxation activities — ~11%
- On site counselling — ~11%
- Increasing natural lighting in the office — ~10%
- Catering to special requirements for those with mental health issues — ~6%
- Drug / alcohol awareness programs — ~6%
- Mental health insurance cover — ~4%
- Other — ~1%

*Other: flexibility at work, 'don't know', unlimited holiday
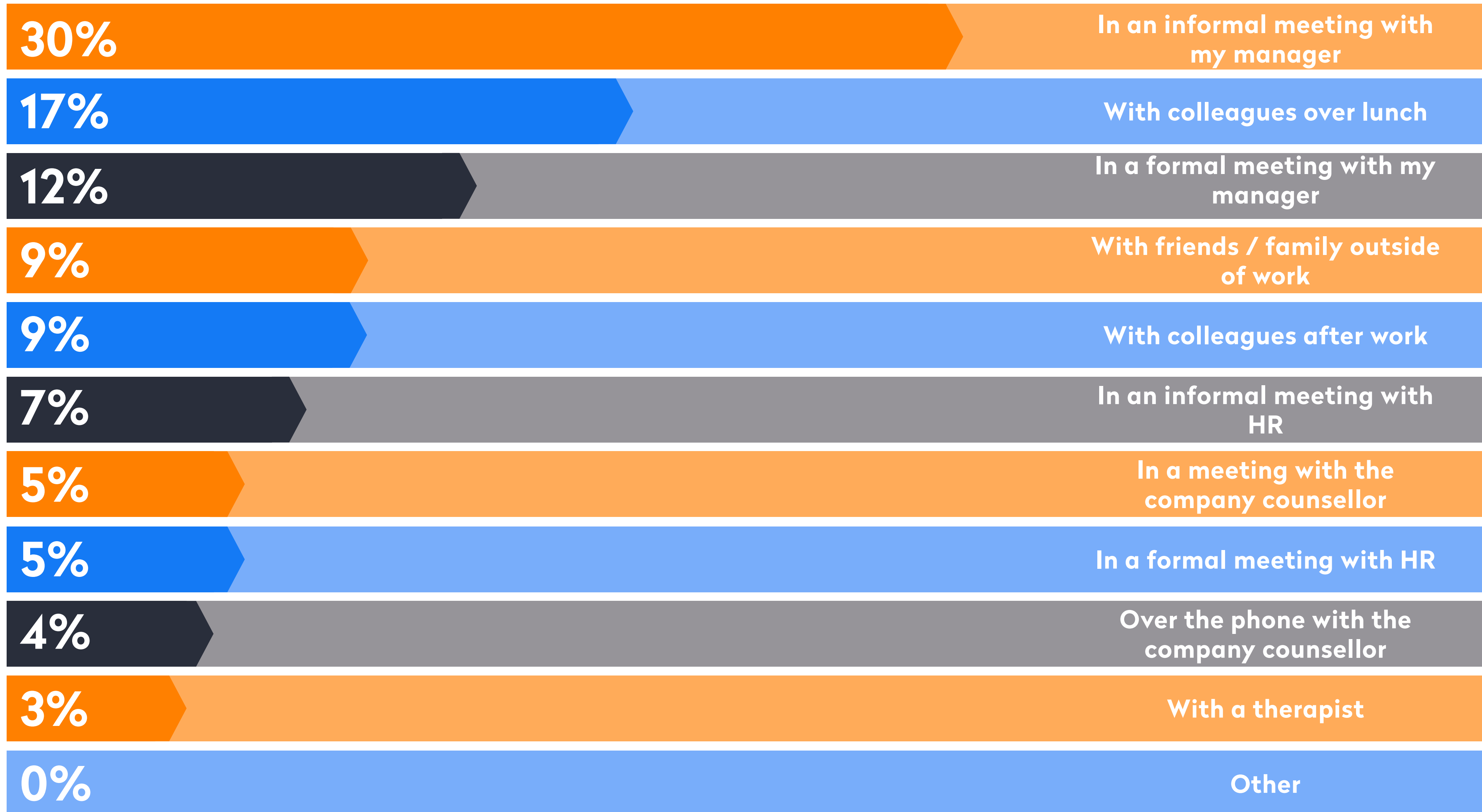
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How **effective** do you find the initiatives offered by your company to help with mental health issues?

Of those that have access to workplace initiatives that help with mental health, employees generally consider them to be **moderately effective.**

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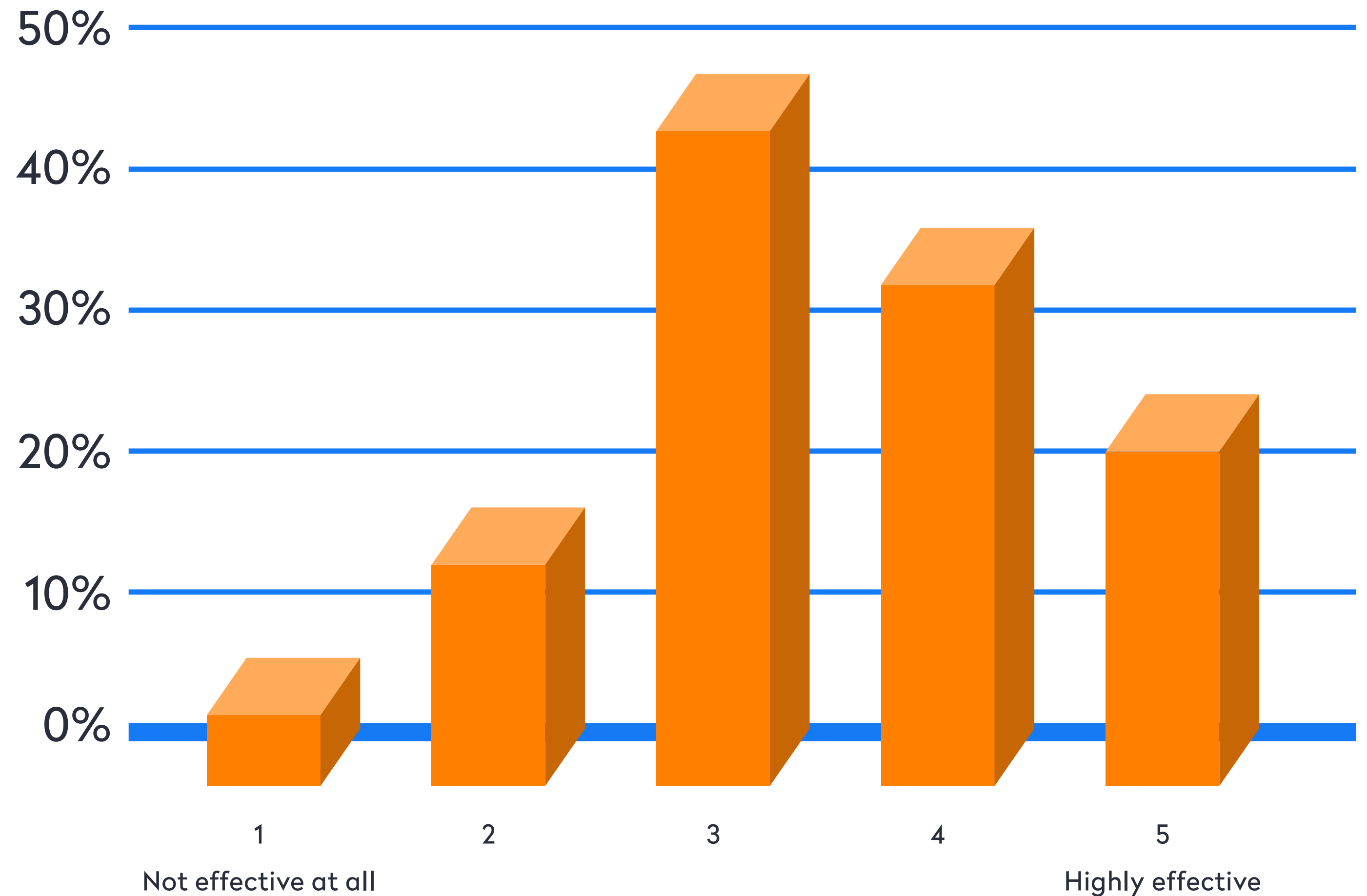
Where did you feel **most comfortable speaking** about your mental health issues?

Like stress, people generally prefer talking about mental health-related issues in informal settings.

%	Setting
30%	In an informal meeting with my manager
17%	With colleagues over lunch
12%	In a formal meeting with my manager
9%	With friends / family outside of work
9%	With colleagues after work
7%	In an informal meeting with HR
5%	In a meeting with the company counsellor
5%	In a formal meeting with HR
4%	Over the phone with the company counsellor
3%	With a therapist
0%	Other

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Conclusion:

Key takeaways

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People working in desk jobs aren't taking enough breaks

Over 50% of employees take between 0–3 breaks away from their computer per day, much fewer than the HSE's recommended 5–10 minute break per hour in front of a screen.

Those in desk jobs also indicate that they sometimes don't even take a break for lunch, with a quarter participating in working lunches 2–3 times a week, and over 20% never taking a proper lunch break.

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Companies aren't very effective at combating stress in the workplace

61% of employees feel stressed at work at least once a week, but only 40% think their company does enough to help them deal with that stress.

Over a third of employees stated that their companies don't offer any initiatives to help them combat stress at work, but of those that do have access to initiatives, less than half found them to work moderately well.

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Employees are reluctant to talk about mental health at work

While the majority of employees in desk jobs enjoy their roles and generally benefit from high confidence, happiness, and motivation levels, only 18% of desk job workers have ever spoken about mental health-related issues at work.

This could show that the perceived stigma around mental health still exists in the workplace and that companies generally aren't doing enough to foster openness.

It's clear that companies need to do more to help boost employee wellbeing and create an open work culture that encourages people to speak out about the mental health-related issues they are facing.

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Work friendships contribute to workplace wellbeing

Prior to the COVID19 lockdown, office-based workers would spend a significant amount of time with colleagues, sometimes upwards of 35 hours a week, which may be more than some would spend with friends or family. These relationships regularly develop into friendships both inside and outside the office, with over 50% of our respondents citing they have close friends at work, and socialised with their colleagues outside the office at least once a month.

Indeed, "colleagues" are highlighted as the second-most important aspect of what individuals enjoy about their job.

During these uncertain times, these relationships prove to be just as important to a remote-working team, with 44% of employees considering their teams crucial in helping them combat work stress. Additionally, over half of those surveyed would choose to speak about stress or mental health in an informal setting with their manager or colleagues, further highlighting the importance for businesses to maintain a company culture that cultivates strong working relationships.

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About us:
Who is City Pantry?

City Pantry is the UK's leading office-food delivery platform, and more recently one of the leading providers of direct-to-consumer food box home delivery services.

We connect corporate customers to the best restaurants and caterers around to provide their employees with delicious food, drinks, and snacks - wherever they may be.

Whether their teams are working from home or in the office, we have solutions to suit every company.

With safe, contact-free delivery available nationwide, City Pantry helps companies keep their staff well-fed and connected.

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