



Microsoft Ireland **Work trend index 2023**

Insights into the experiences and expectations of workers in Ireland across all sectors



Foreword

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Our 2023 Work Trend Index, which surveys almost 700 workers across all sectors in Ireland, answers some key questions that leaders should be asking themselves right now - about employee expectations, productivity pressure points, effectiveness of hybrid working policies, and how leaders are showing up during a time of sustained change.

Engaging employees in this new world of work

We can be optimistic when we learn from this year's research that 77% of employees are happy at work. However, a startling statistic emerging in 2023 is the growing lack of confidence in leadership—the number one reason why workers changed roles. With the majority saying that culture is a top priority, there is now a pressing need for leadership to better understand what engages their employees, and find ways of connecting that bridge the gap between physical and virtual work environments.

A time of massive workplace change

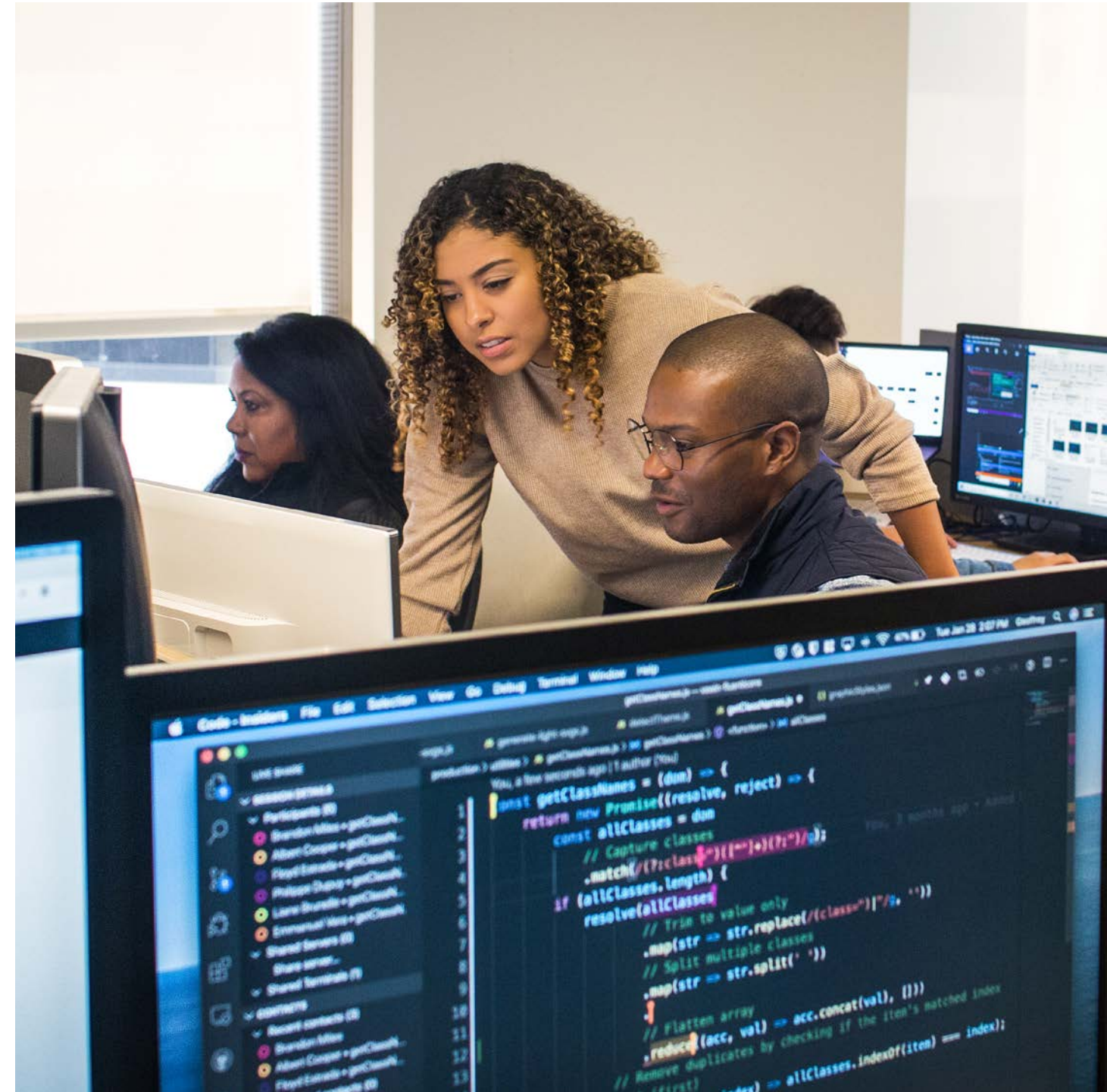
Many of us are still grappling with new ways of working - flexible, remote, and even hybrid, which are all still in their infancy. In addition, 42% of employees say they spend too much time searching for the right data. We are all aware that the pace and volume of work has increased exponentially, and it's no surprise that employees are struggling under the weight of work—putting innovation at risk. So, I am reassured to see that not only are workers increasingly using solutions, such as artificial intelligence (AI), they are more willing to embrace them in their role to improve productivity and performance.



Innovation changing the workplace

In fact, insights captured by [Microsoft's global study](#) shine a light on a new alliance between people and AI, where AI tools can address productivity pressure points. Naturally, 82% of leaders globally anticipate employees will need new skills in the AI era. Similarly in Ireland, skills availability has been identified as the most important obstacle to the adoption of AI, despite [LinkedIn data](#) showing that the share of AI talent in Ireland grew more than 500% between 2016 and 2022.

AI is a defining technology of our time. It has the potential to transform the way organisations operate and interact with their employees. In a world where creativity is the new productivity, digital debt (where employees are spending too much time responding to emails and attending meetings) is more than an inconvenience - it's impacting business. In Ireland, roughly half of employees say they don't have enough focus time and that they are feeling burned out. By providing next-generation copilots to work alongside people, AI can free us from digital debt and fuel innovation.



Engaging employees in a hybrid world

Our global study also found that organisations that doubled down on employee engagement in times of economic uncertainty performed twice as well financially as organisations that deprioritised it. As leaders, we must meet the needs of our workforce or risk losing talent to employers that do.

I hope you find these insights into the workforce in Ireland in 2023 valuable. While we may need to dig deep to tackle challenges during times of change and economic uncertainty, we must recognise that we now have the tools at hand to drive efficiencies, and better understand our employees and culture. This will allow us to move the dial on employee engagement and retain talent.

There is now a pressing need for leadership to better understand what engages their employees and find ways of connecting that bridge the gap between physical and virtual work environments.

Key insights

Top reasons workers changed roles

2023

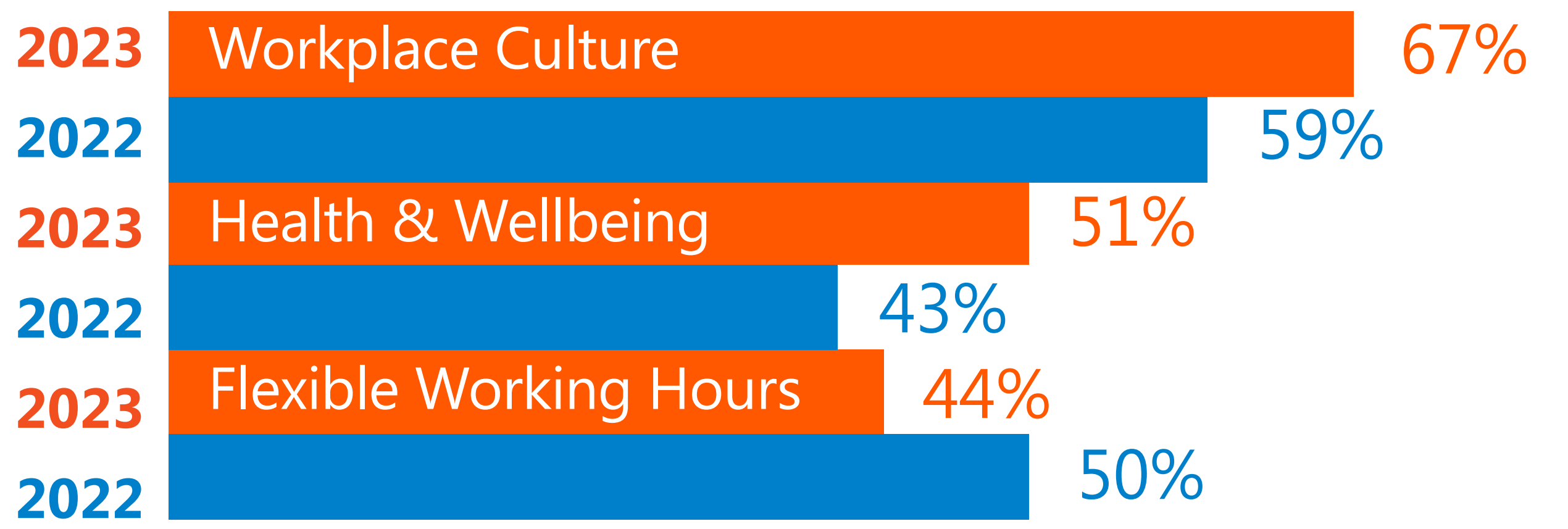
- Lack of confidence in leadership
- Well-being
- Not getting desired promotion
- Work-life balance

2022

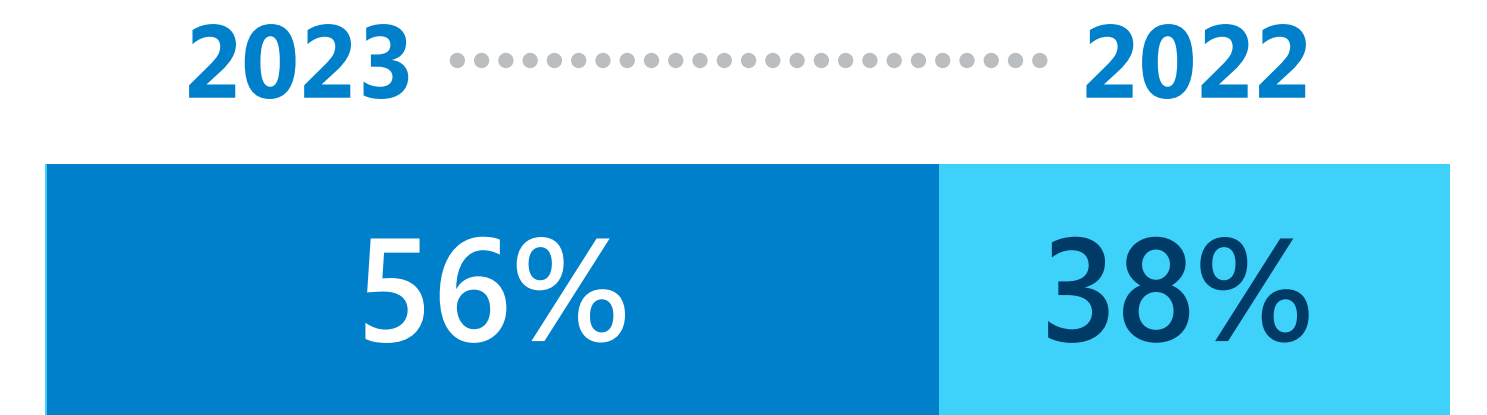
- Company culture
- Well-being
- New remote career opportunities
- Lack of flexible work options



The top three priorities for workers that employers in Ireland should provide year-on-year



The number of employees considering changing jobs has increased year-on-year



Employee sentiment

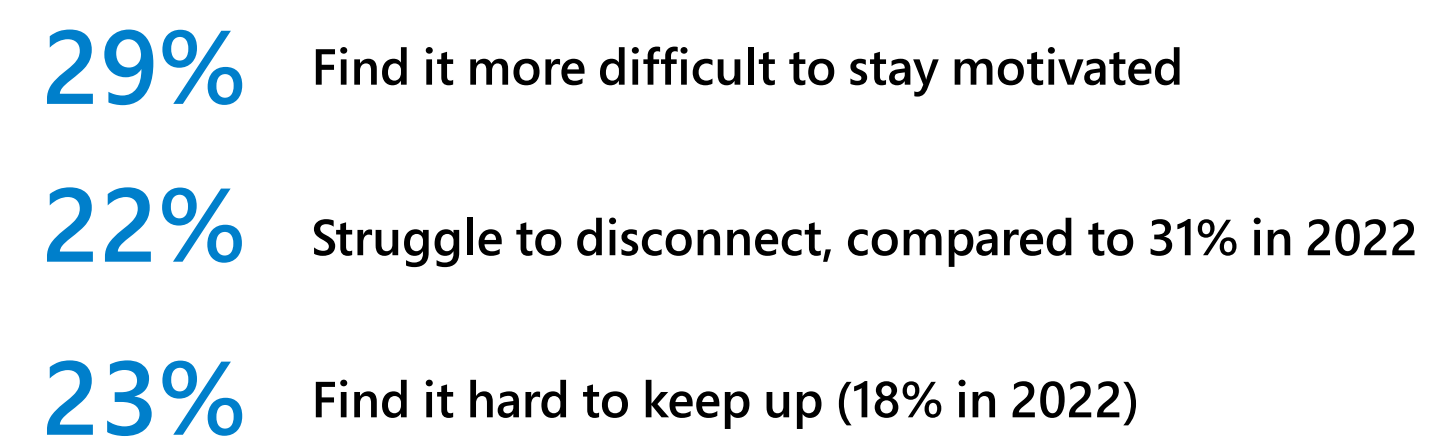


Productivity & pressure points

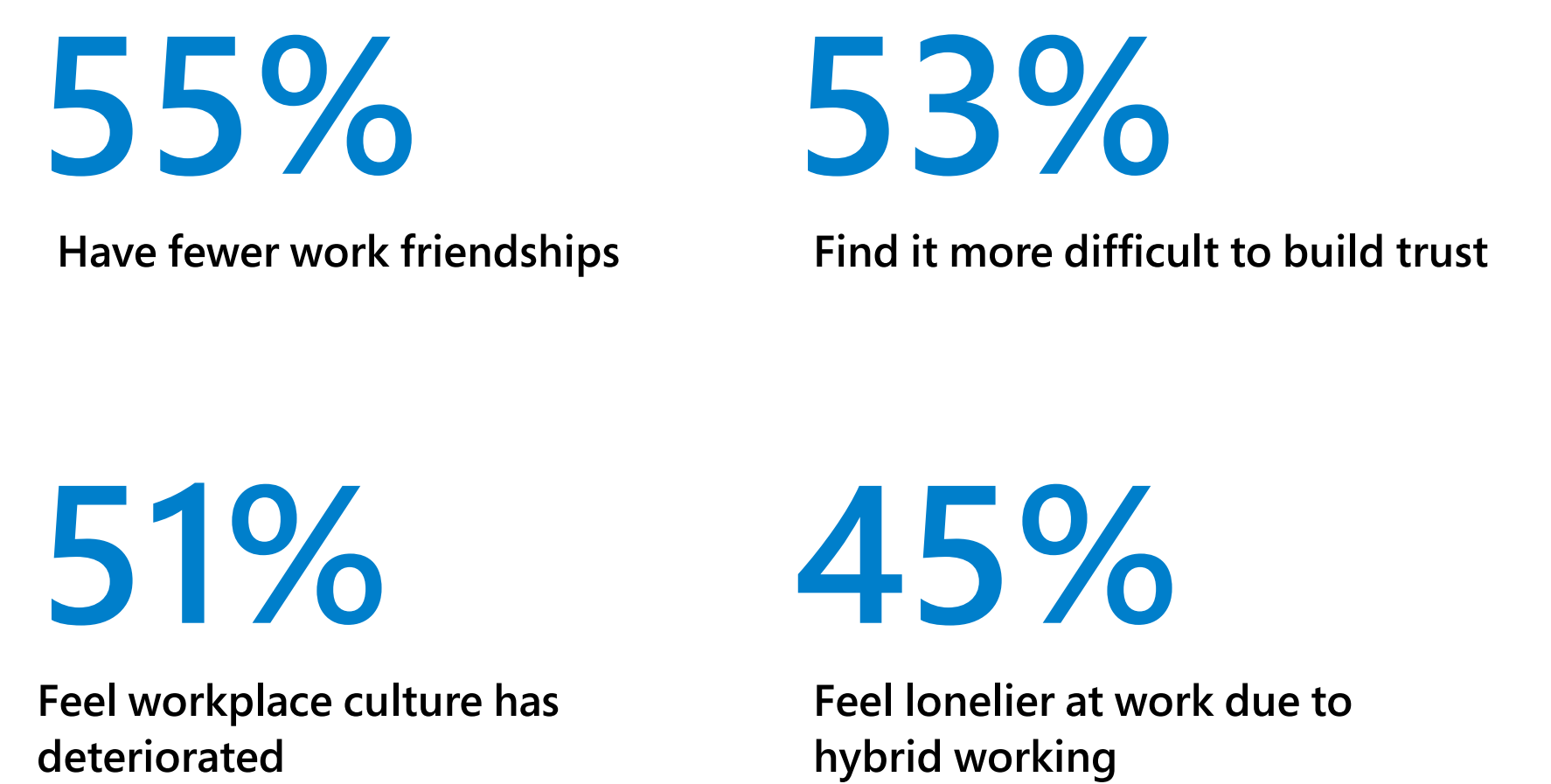


Hybrid working challenges

Twelve months on, hybrid workers are still struggling with motivation and find it challenging to disconnect from work



Workplace culture



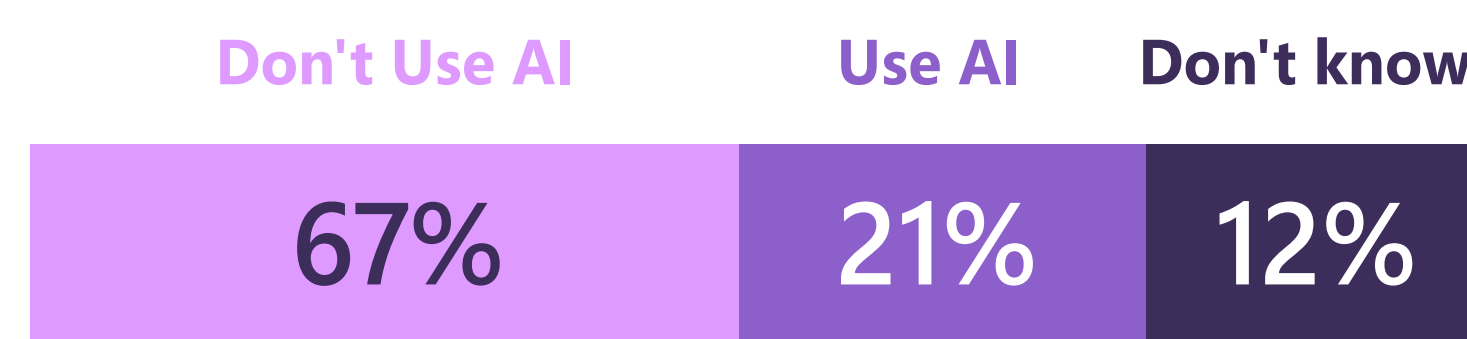
Virtual meetings

Workers show mixed sentiment towards virtual meetings



AI technologies

Innovation driven through Artificial Intelligence to support the workplace of the future



- 18-34 year-olds and Dublin residents are more likely to report using AI tools
- Men are also more likely to use AI tools in their job than women (25% vs. 17%)



Executive summary

During a period of massive economic change, when the pace of work is outpacing our ability to keep up, and as employees seek a better work-life balance, our 2023 Work Trend Index study, of almost 700 workers across all sectors in Ireland, has identified invaluable year-on-year trends for leaders to better understand employee expectations.

Leadership and culture

More than two thirds of Irish workers indicate they have the right work-life balance.

There are plenty of positives to take from the research in relation to leadership and culture. Those struggling to disconnect from work reduced year-on-year from 31% in 2022, to 22% in 2023. More than three-quarters of those surveyed say they are currently happy within their workplace. The majority feel there are opportunities to grow with their current employer which is a positive signal for future retention.

In contrast, however, more than half of workers highlighted that leadership teams need to be more in touch with what employees want. For the second year in a row, workplace culture has been the single most important priority for workers. However, more than half of employees believe workplace culture has deteriorated in the hybrid-working environment. Poor company culture suggests there is a mismatch between workers' personal values and organisational behaviours which need to be better aligned.



More than two thirds of Irish workers indicate they have the right work-life balance.

Productivity and burnout:

Almost half of Irish workers say they are feeling burned out at work.

In Ireland, while workers seem to have achieved a better work-life balance, in terms of the time they spend at work, they are under increasing amounts of pressure to compete with an ever-increasing task list. When considering their experience at work over the past year, workers have struggled most with not having enough time to complete their work (55%), or enough focus time (49%).

Many also struggled with being assessed on the number of tasks completed during the workday, as opposed to being measured by their impact (43%).

Over one third of workers (35%) feel they have too many meetings, and 42% say they spend too much time searching for the right data.

These findings allow us to get at the heart of what is impacting productivity and potentially creating a sense of burnout amongst workers. The good news is that all of the above can be addressed. There is a clear desire from workers to stop thinking in terms of tasks and 'to-dos'

and give greater weight to outcomes and impact. Trimming time in meetings and using next-generation technology to find more efficient ways to source and manage information would help to drive productivity, reduce the risk of burnout and, improve the employee experience.

Half of workers highlighted that leadership teams need to be more in touch with what employees want.

Technology and workplace solutions

In relation to technology, interestingly, one fifth of workers in Ireland (21%) say they are now using Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools in their job.

Of those workers in Ireland who do not currently use AI (67%), one quarter cite an interest in doing so.

When it comes to virtual meetings, the results highlight mixed sentiment among workers with 63% feeling that they are given equal opportunities to contribute, 56% feeling their presence is generally necessary, and 44% feeling that they are a good use of their time.

As adoption grows and workplace tools become more sophisticated and widely used, digital solutions can play a key role in supporting greater efficiencies and focus time, as well as opportunities for greater connection between leaders and workers—all of which have been highlighted as areas for improvement in this report.

Conclusion

We now have an opportunity to design effective culture strategies that connect with workers and serve to generate improved retention and attraction. As we navigate the months ahead, we must understand worker's challenges, how they balance their work and life priorities, and focus on wellbeing and collaboration to help motivate our colleagues.

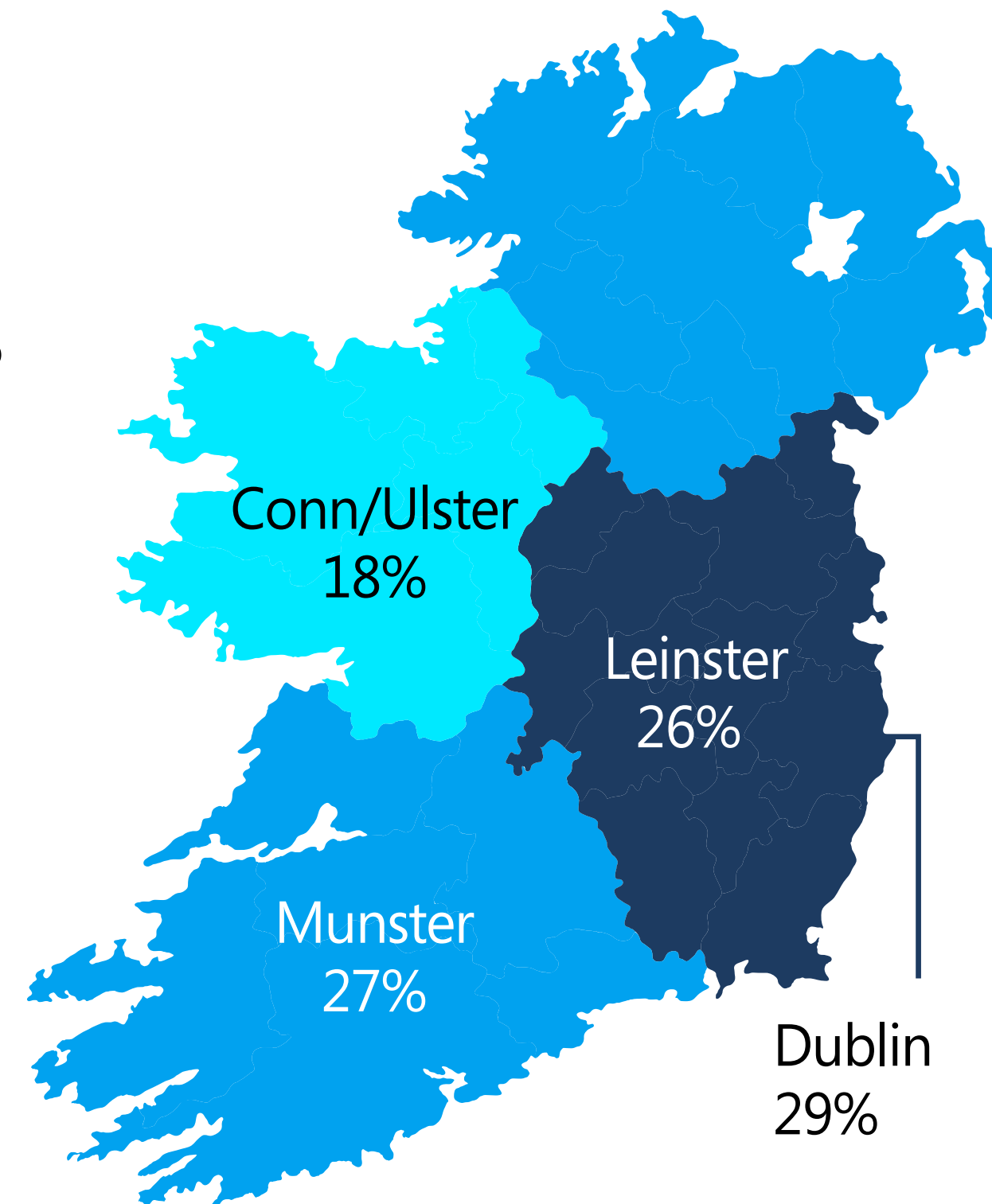
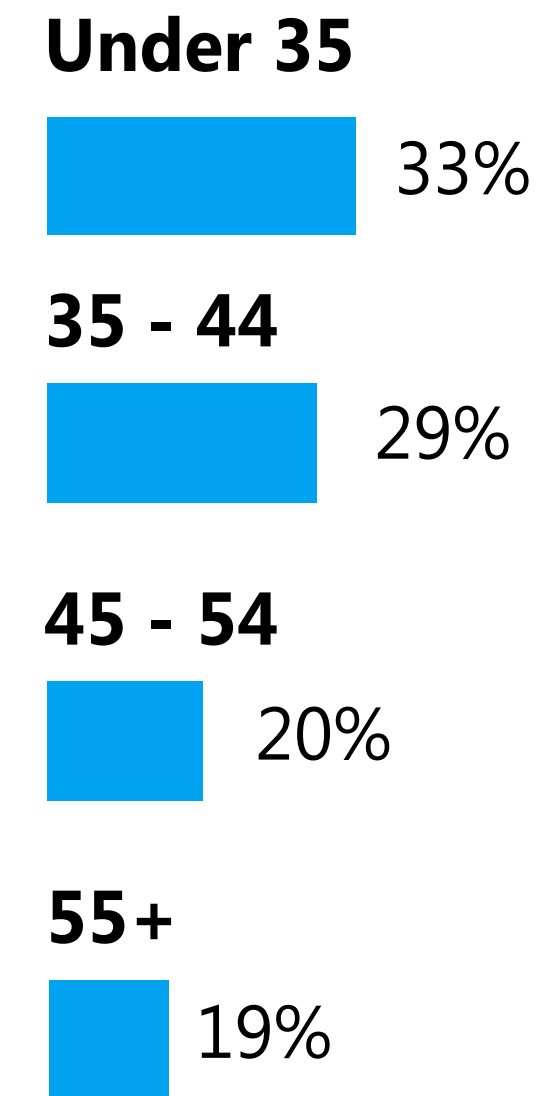
This transition will benefit from technologies designed for a hybrid world, specifically those that bridge the gap between the digital and physical work environment.

Methodology

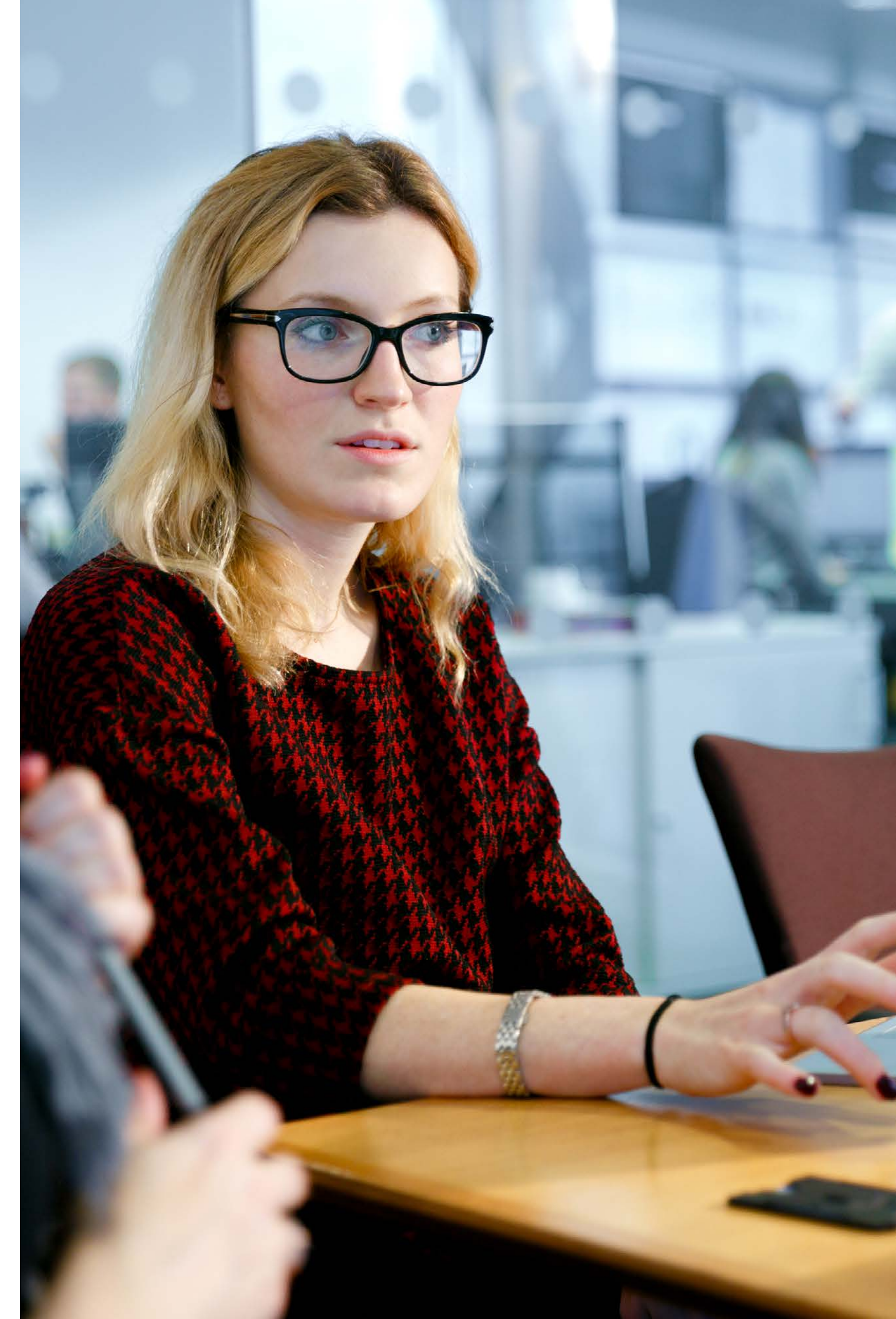
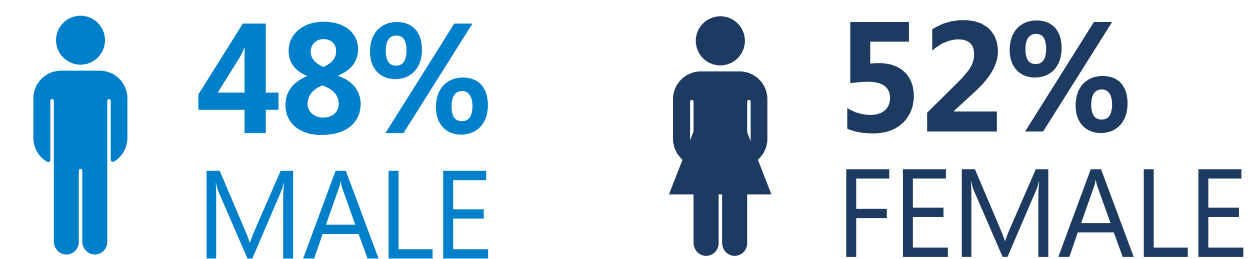
Research was conducted among workers in Ireland across all sectors by Amárach Research. There were 691 respondents, out of a total sample of 1,200 people, with quotas set on gender, age, and region, to achieve a sample aligned with the national population. The questions were answered by all those working either full-time or part-time, across all sectors and levels.

Due to the high proliferation of the internet among the Irish population, the Amárach Research is completed fully online.

Age



Gender



Research themes

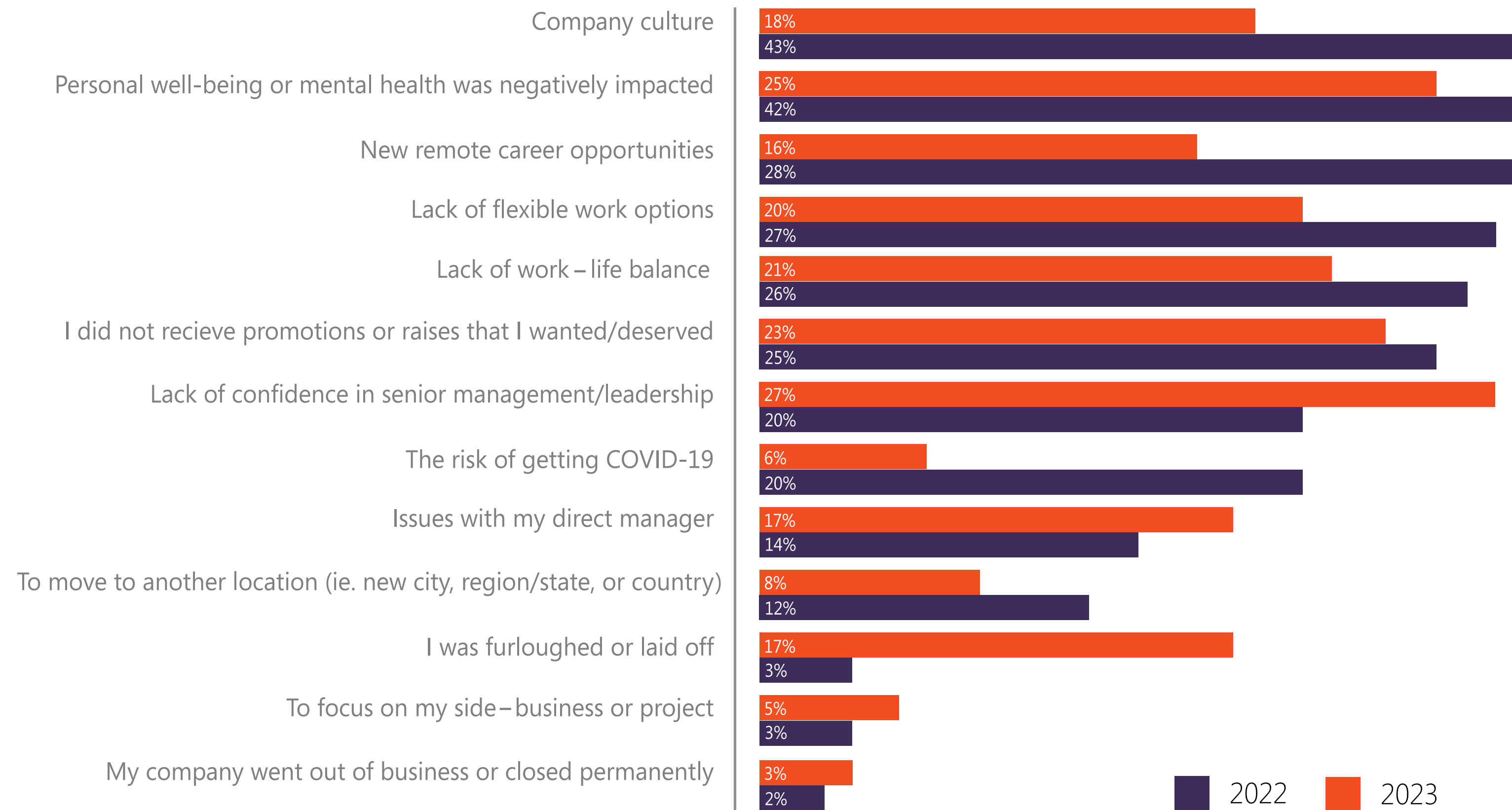
- 1 Employee trends, attrition rates & workplace expectations
- 2 Hybrid working & social capital—the challenges
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1 Employee trends

Lack of confidence in leadership is the biggest driver behind workers leaving roles in last 12 months—there is a need to equip leaders in Ireland to better connect, engage, and inspire employees.

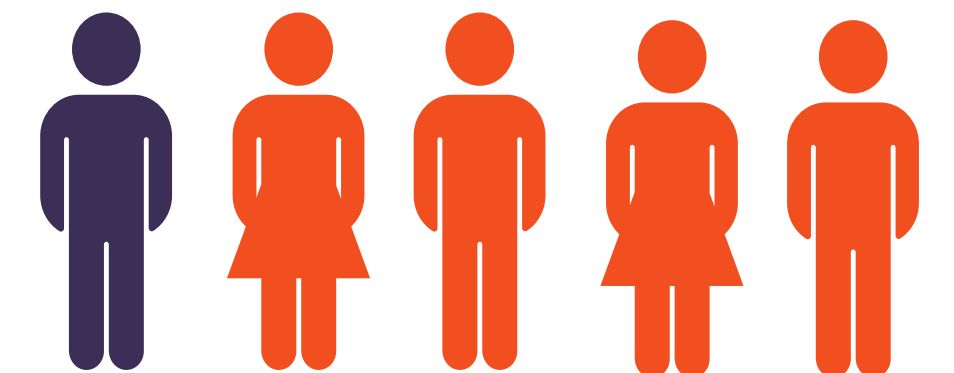
Reasons for leaving roles in last 12 months*



*Respondents could choose more than one option

1/5

Around 1 in 5 (19%) of adults in Ireland who are currently employed have changed employers at least once in the past year, compared to 14% in 2022



A lack of confidence in company leadership (27%), negative impacts to mental well-being (25%), and a lack of professional recognition (23%), were highlighted as the top three reasons why workers have been changing roles in Ireland over the last year

1 56% of workers in Ireland would consider changing roles this year. This compares to 38% in 2022, suggesting that attrition rates could rise in the next 12 months.



56%

Of employees are considering changing jobs to work in the same or a different industry



28%

Of employees are planning to earn additional income via a side project

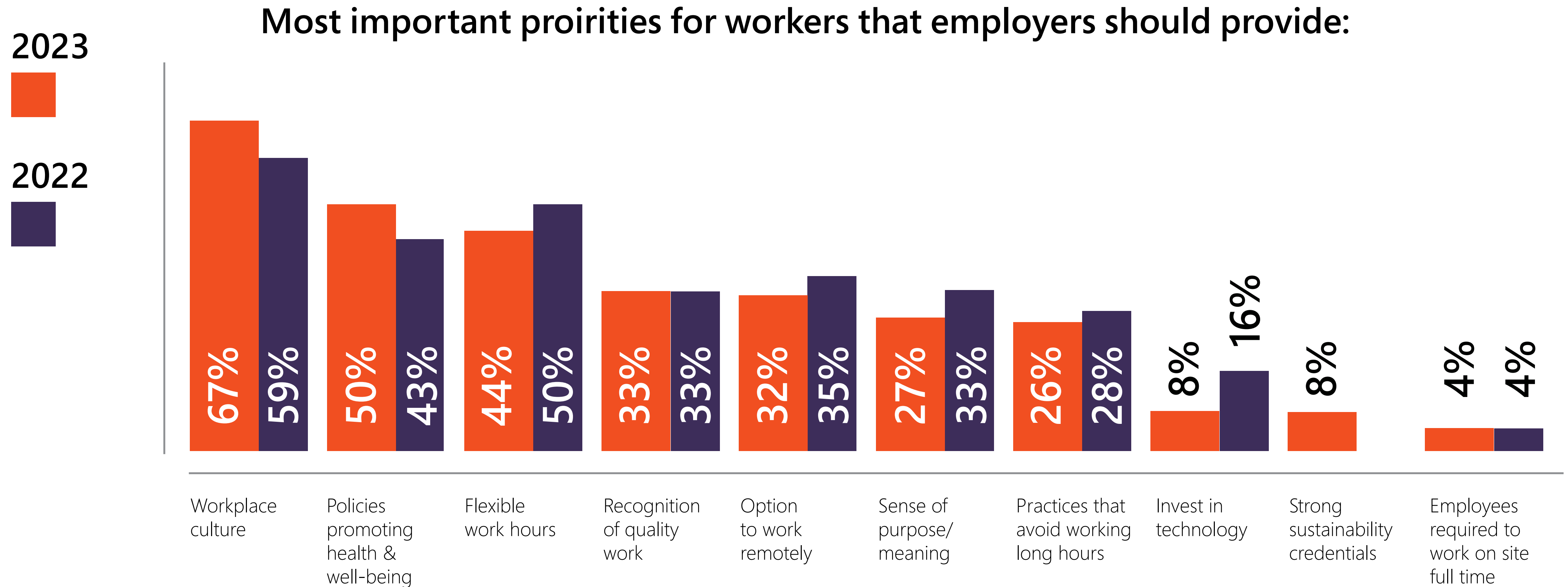


16%

Of employees are considering asking for a more flexible work schedule or location

1

More than two-thirds of workers (67%) prioritise a positive workplace culture over anything else. This has increased year-on-year and highlights the crucial need for leadership teams to focus on company culture.



1 Despite positive sentiment towards their organisation, once again, workers have highlighted that leadership needs to be more in touch with what employees want. A takeaway from this year's research is the need to bridge the divide between leadership and workers.



Interestingly, more than three quarters (77%) of those surveyed said they were happy in their workplace, while more than two-thirds (66%) indicated they had the right work-life balance, and 59% felt there were opportunities to grow with their current employer. That said, more than half of workers highlighted that they felt leadership was out of touch (54%), and 45% say they are feeling burned out at work.

	Agree	Disagree	Don't know
I am happy working at my current company	77%	20%	3%
I am achieving the right work-life balance	66%	31%	3%
I have the resources I need to deliver business impact	59%	21%	20%
There are opportunities for me to grow within my role	59%	34%	7%
Leadership at my company is out of touch with what employees want	54%	36%	10%
I am burned out in my job	45%	49%	7%

1 Productivity pressure points



Not enough time to complete their work (55%), or enough focus time (49%)



Many struggled with being assessed on the number of tasks completed during the workday, as opposed to being measured by their impact (43%)



Over one-third of workers (35%) feel they have too many meetings.

42% say they spend too much time searching for the right data



Having a supportive manager (32%), and flexibility with work (28%), are the top factors impacting employees' productivity

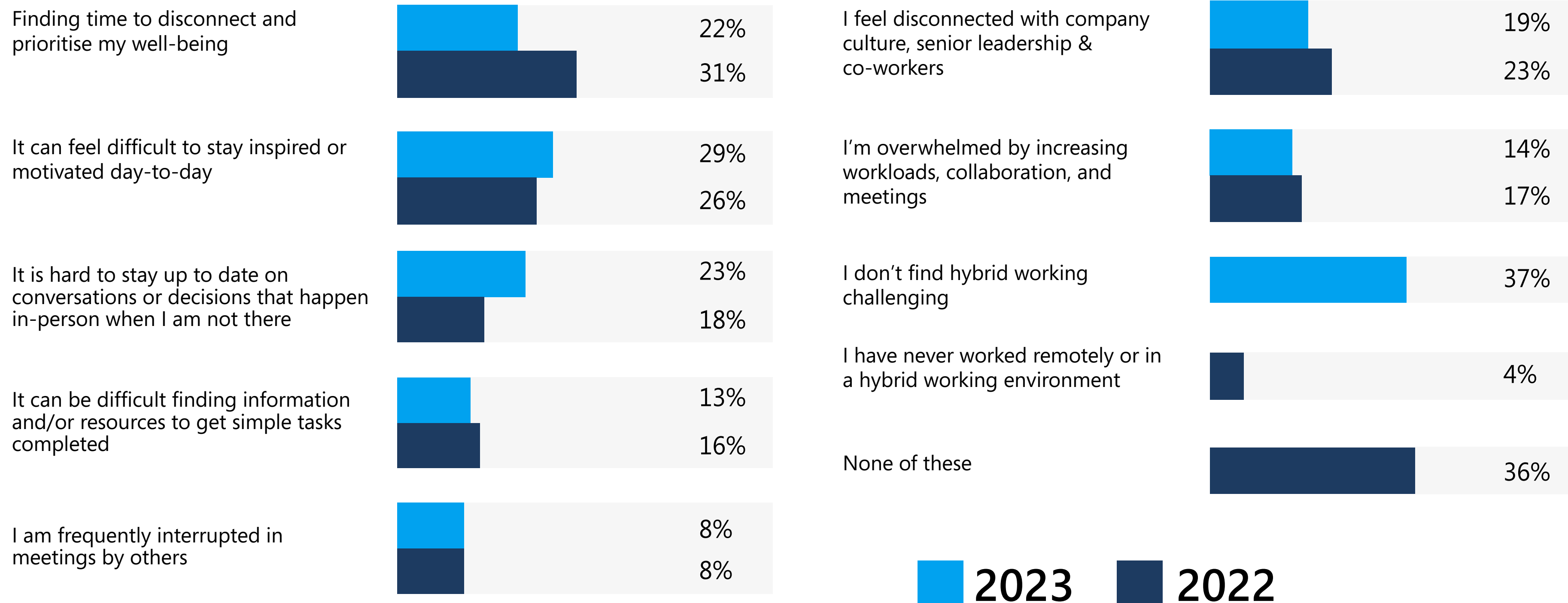
Research themes

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- 2 Hybrid working & social capital—the challenges
- 3 Digital solutions for the workplace



2 Hybrid working

Twelve months on, hybrid workers are still struggling with motivation and find it challenging to disconnect from work. Additionally, they are finding it harder than ever to stay up-to-date with business activity and decisions when not in person.



The number of participants who felt they were struggling to disconnect from work reduced year-on-year from 31% in 2022 to 22% in 2023



Workers also feel it is harder to keep up with what's happening in the business when working remotely (23% in 2023, compared to 18% in 2022)

29% of workers are finding it more difficult to stay motivated, compared to 26% in 2022

2 Hybrid working

Despite workplace culture being the biggest priority, more than half (51%) of hybrid workers felt their workplace culture has deteriorated since they began working remotely.

55%
Hybrid workers reported having fewer work friendships (55%)

I feel more included in meetings during remote and hybrid work because I have more ways to contribute

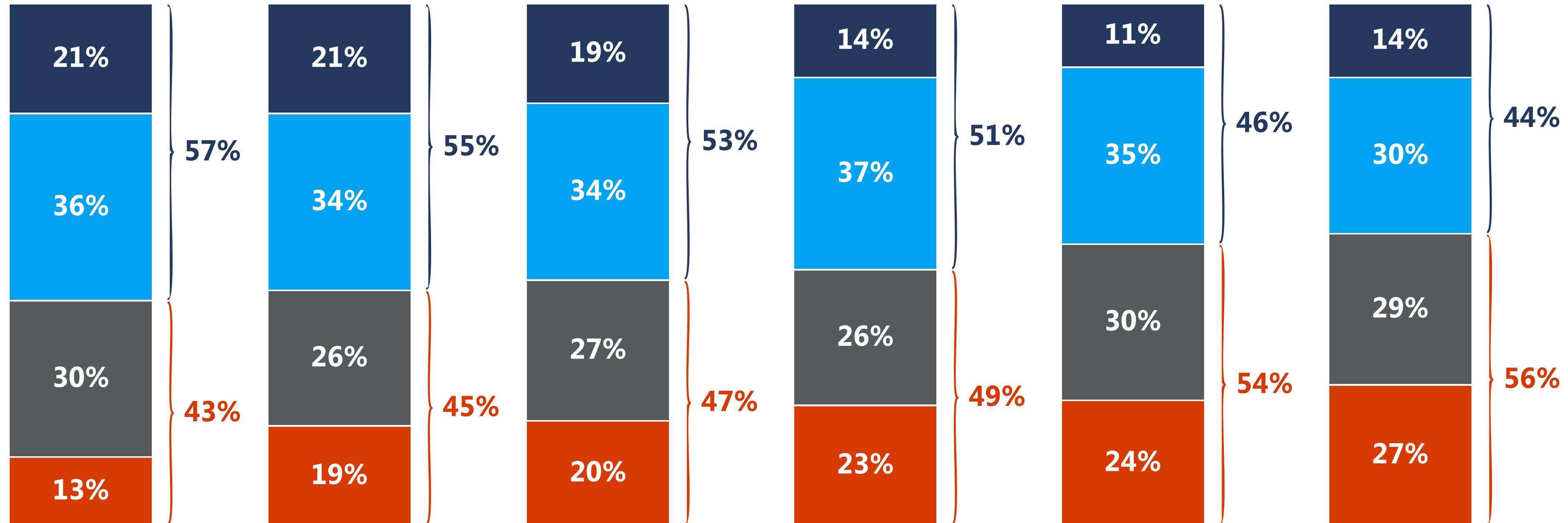
I have fewer work friendships since remote and hybrid working

It's been harder to build trust with co-workers during remote or hybrid working

My workplace or team culture has deteriorated since remote and hybrid work

Innovation, new ideas, or fresh thinking has been negatively impacted by remote and hybrid work

I feel more alone or lonely at work than I did before remote and hybrid work



53%
Of hybrid workers are finding it more difficult to build trust

44%
Of hybrid workers are feeling lonelier at work

Strongly agree

Somewhat agree

Somewhat disagree

Strongly disagree

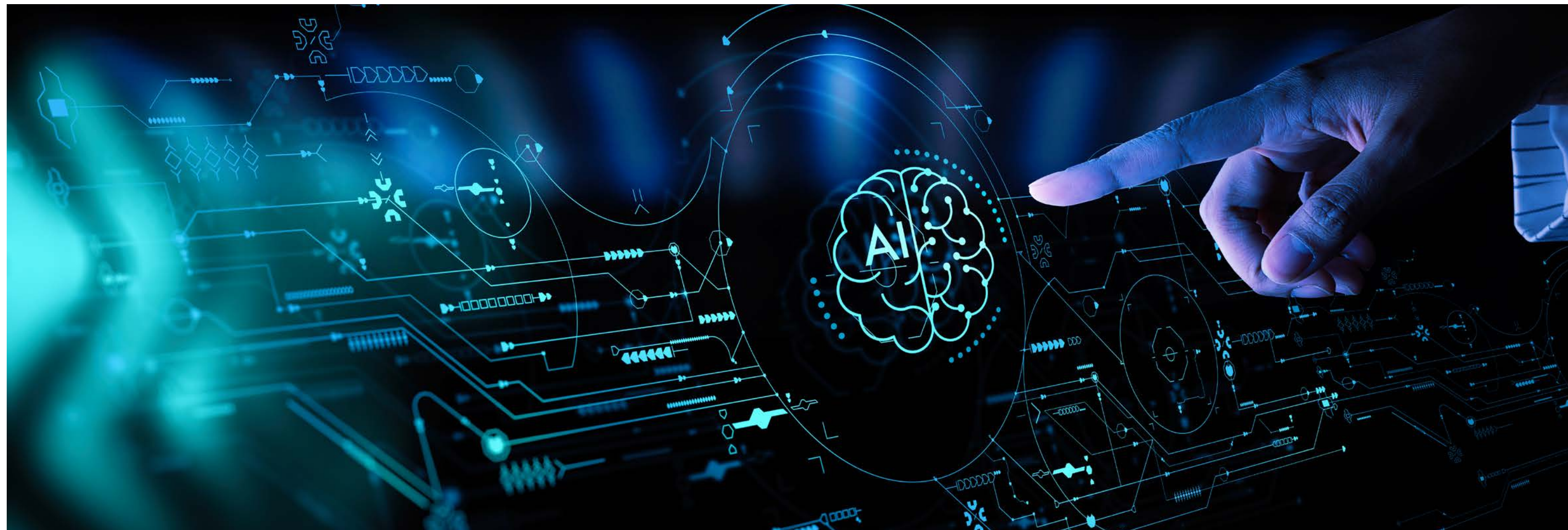
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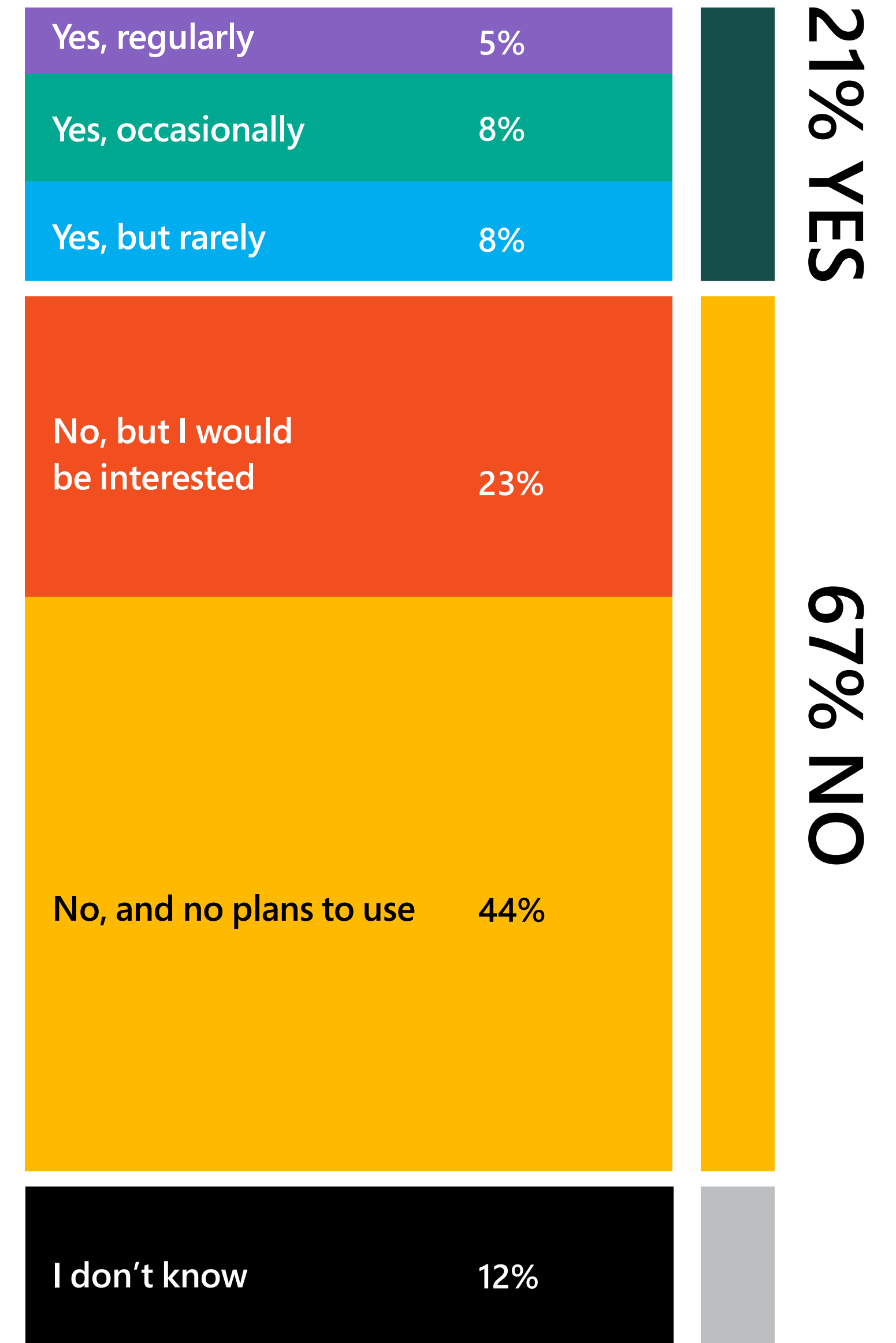


3 Digital solutions: AI

Digital solutions can play a key role in supporting greater efficiencies and focus time, as well as opportunities for greater connection between leaders and workers—all of which have been highlighted as areas for improvement in this report.



1 in 5 (21%) reported using Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools in their job, while of those who do not use AI (67%), almost 1 in 4 say they would be interested in doing so.



3 Virtual meetings

Workers show mixed sentiment towards virtual meetings

	Agree	Disagree	Don't know
I am given an equal opportunity to contribute	63%	14%	23%
My presence is necessary	56%	20%	24%
The virtual meetings I join are a good use of my time	44%	25%	31%
It's difficult to brainstorm in a virtual meeting	39%	31%	30%
Takeaways or next steps are unclear	34%	34%	32%
It's hard for my team to come to a consensus by the end of a virtual meeting	27%	39%	34%

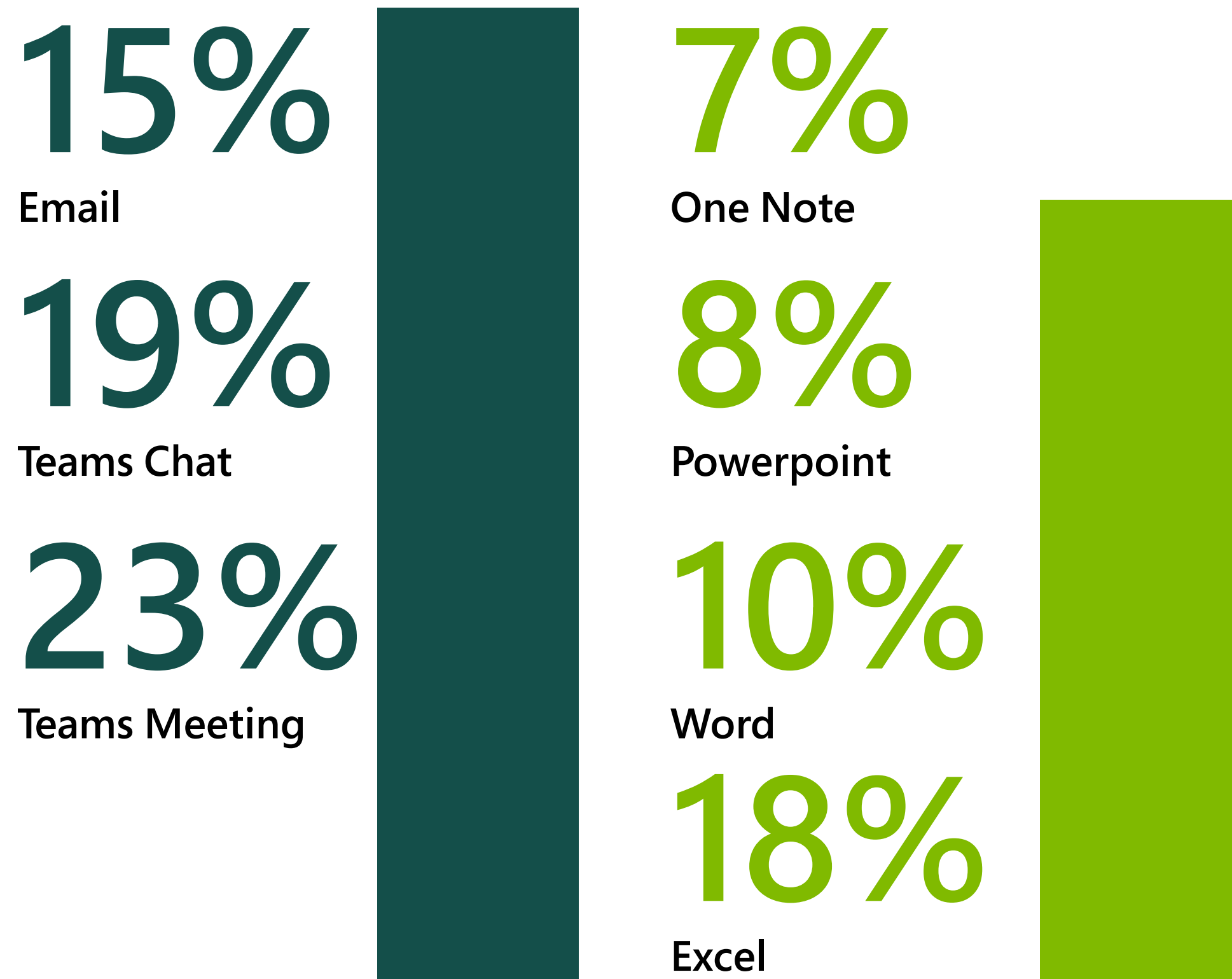
63%

of workers feel that they are given equal opportunities to contribute in virtual meetings, 56% feel their presence is generally necessary, and 44% feel that virtual meetings are a good use of their time.



3 Balance of employee time

Analysis of aggregated productivity signals in Microsoft 365 from Microsoft's global Work Trend Index 2023



Productivity patterns in Microsoft 365 are a window into how many of us spend our time. Globally, the average person spends almost 60% of their time communicating - attending meetings, writing emails and chat. This is compared to creative time such as in Word, Excel and PowerPoint.

% of share time spent in Microsoft 365

The path forward

Our latest research shows definitively what many leaders know intuitively: a workforce that is energised and empowered is more likely to be productive and high performing.

Hybrid working resources

While hybrid working models can present opportunities, when not managed well, it can cause significant challenges. Employers must recognise that whether hybrid, remote, or in the office, flexible work is the new way of work. For some practical guides to help with in-person and virtual collaboration, resetting work-life balance, and getting hybrid meetings right, [click here](#).

How to approach AI as copilot

AI is poised to lift the weight of work—freeing people from digital debt and fueling innovation to usher in a new wave of productivity growth. And both overwhelmed employees and leaders looking to bolster productivity are ready for that promise to pay off. But AI won't simply "fix" work—it will create a whole new way of working. Leaders will need to help employees learn to work safely and responsibly alongside AI to reap

the rewards of the employee-AI alliance: more value creation for businesses and a brighter, more fulfilling future of work for everyone.

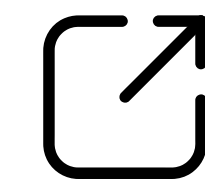
Take action:

- Bring leaders together across the organisation to help people experiment safely and responsibly with AI.
- Be intentional and programmatic. Like any platform shift, adopting AI at scale requires change management. Pick specific disciplines, processes, and workflows to test and learn, and identify advocates to lead the charge.
- As you begin to adopt AI, deploy it where people need the most relief based on your organisation's pain points and challenges.
- Help people embrace a new way of working,

starting with building AI aptitude—from practicing 'prompt engineering' (question-based rather than explicit directions) to fact-checking and verifying AI-generated content.

- Leverage [learning resources](#) and crowdsource best practices from employees as they adapt to AI as copilot.
- Consider how roles and functions can evolve alongside AI, creating opportunities for reinvention.

Read about Microsoft 365 Copilot [here](#), and visit the global 2023 Annual Work Trend Index microsite to learn more about how AI promises to transform work for everyone.



Visit the global 2023 Annual Work Trend Index microsite



Work trend index 2023: Irish research study