People Engagement in the Contact Centre



south west contact centre forum

CALL NORTH WEST

sensée

THE WORK-FROM-HOME SPECIALISTS

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Introduction

The 2021 Contact Centre People Engagement Survey paints a picture of the current state of people engagement in the new world of work.

- **How has a year of lockdown affected manager/ employee relationships?**
- **How engaged are employees?**
- **How has lockdown affected perceptions of peoples' roles - and career prospects?**
- **How are organisations ensuring that they support the Mental Health & Well Being of employees?**
- **How do management and employee perceptions differ?**

In our first questionnaire, we asked Contact Centre Directors/Managers to give their views on a range of topics relating to People Engagement, Mental Health & Well Being, and Work-from-Home.

In our second questionnaire, run simultaneously, we asked Contact Centre Agents/Advisers to give their views on the same topics.... helping build a comprehensive picture of People Engagement from all perspectives.

The survey was conducted by the South West Contact Centre Forum and Call North West in partnership with Sensée, the work-from-home specialists.

107 Contact Centre Directors/Managers and 215 Agents/Advisers completed our online survey questionnaires between January and March 2021.



Methodology

The “People Engagement in the Contact Centre?” survey was conducted online and promoted via advertisements, direct emails and in partnership with SWCCF and CNW members.

To encourage participation, individuals that completed the survey were entered into a free prize draw to win £500 of retail vouchers.

The Agent/Adviser survey involved approximately 28-30 questions and took an average of 7 minutes to complete. 97% of all questionnaires started were completed.

The Director/Manager survey involved approximately 25 questions and took an average of 6 minutes to complete. 96% of all questionnaires started were completed.

Individual responses were treated entirely confidentially, and aggregated for analysis purposes.



Exec Summary

Throughout lockdown, business leaders have debated how best to engage and support their people while working from home.

However, according to our survey, 81% of Contact Centre Agents/Advisers believe that People Engagement in their organisations is NOT currently a problem.

56% of Contact Centre Directors/Managers agree, with a further 40% more cautiously saying that, while it is a problem, it's not a major problem.

HIGHLIGHTS

70% of Agents/Advisers say that they mainly worked in bricks and mortar contact centres prior to lockdown and have now switched to mainly working from home..... and **the majority feel that the switch has gone well**.

Despite media headlines suggesting organisations have struggled to manage their colleagues in a work-from-home setting, **most Contact Centre Advisers say that their Managers have adapted well to the switch**: 57% say Very Well and 29% say Well.

And there's more good news when it comes to the current state of 'manager-employee' and 'team' engagement.

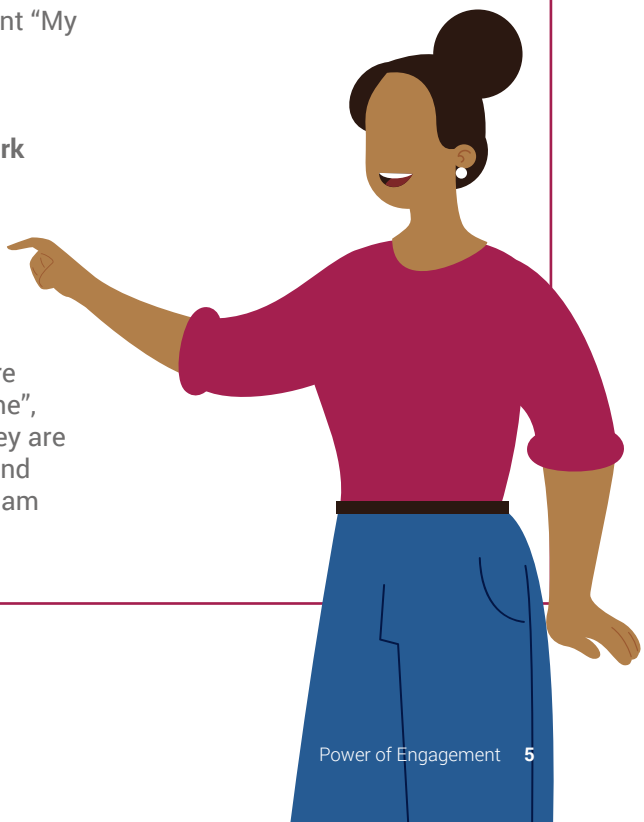
85% of Agents/Advisers Agree or Strongly Agree with the statement "Communication between senior leaders and employees in my organisation is good".... with 83% of Directors and Managers concurring. In a similar vein, 94% of Agents/Advisers, and 99% of Directors and Managers, Agree or Strongly Agree with the statement "My manager/contact centre team and I have a good working relationship". Virtually nobody disagreed.

79% of Agents/Advisers say that their employer allows them to work flexibly so they can enjoy a better work-life balance.

And when it comes to **career progression, training and compensation, the feedback from Agents/Advisers is also generally positive**.

While 65% of Agents/Advisers Agree or Strongly Agree that they are "pleased with the career advancement opportunities available to me", 15% disagree. Likewise, while 76% of Agents/Advisers say that they are "satisfied with the investment my organisation makes in training and education", 10% disagree. 12% also disagree with the statement "I am satisfied with my total compensation and benefits package".

Contact Centre Advisers say that their Managers have adapted well to the switch to WFH



Exec Summary (cont.)



Mental Health

Concerns over the impact of employee isolation on mental health while people are working-from-home (WFH) have frequently been aired over the last 12 months. **58% of Directors/Managers say that 'forced' WFH had a negative effect on people's mental health and wellbeing during lock-down**.

However our survey reveals that Agents/Advisers are generally happy with the efforts their employers are making at supporting their needs. When asked "Do you think your organisation adequately addresses the Mental Health & Well Being concerns of its employees?", 73% of Agents/Advisers say yes and only 8% say no.

The survey also revealed the breadth of measures employers were taking to address concerns. When Directors/Managers were asked "How do you monitor Health & Well Being within your teams?" 36% cite Formal Questionnaires, 29% Video Checks and 40% Occupational Health reports. But **the most common approach is simply to talk**. 89% of Directors/Managers cite Informal Conversations to discuss Health & Well Being concerns and 71% Formal Conversations.

69% of respondents say that their organisations have 'internal mental health first aiders', 68% that "(mental health and wellbeing) Issues are referred to a line manager" and 58% that their organisation 'works with 3rd party mental health professionals'.

Ethical Business

Finally, our survey reveals a growing recognition amongst employees of the role that their employer plays in broader society.

90% of Agents/Advisers Agree or Strongly Agree with the statement "My organisation has taken steps to ensure that it acts as a responsible member of society" as did almost all Directors/ Managers (i.e. 99%)

Likewise, **96% of Directors/Managers Agree or Strongly Agree with the statement "My organisation is dedicated to diversity and inclusiveness", together with 91% of Agents/Advisers.**

Our survey reveals that Agents/Advisers are generally happy with the efforts their employers are making at supporting their needs

Exec Summary (cont.)

And the future?

Perhaps not surprisingly, **work-from-home is expected to continue to play a significant role in the contact centre industry for the foreseeable future**.

Only 43% of Agents/Advisers believe they will be 100% returning to the office. 57% therefore believe they will be homeworking, with **the majority of those splitting their time between their home and the office**.

Intriguingly, when asked what percentage of their adviser population would be working from home in 2022, **60% of Directors/Managers say that they expect 50% or more to be working full or part time at home, with just 4% predicting a full return to the office**.

And when asked if they felt they had 'received sufficient training and advice to enable them to manage, train and support their work-from-home teams', 57% of Directors/Managers say 'No', although the majority of those recognise the efforts of their employer to achieve that goal.



"It's great to report that colleagues in the contact centre industry feel so overwhelmingly positive towards People Engagement issues - especially after the last 12 months"

"Our survey shows that progress is being made in key areas such as mental health support, building team cohesion and running ethical, inclusive and socially-responsible business. However, while organisations can take credit for these achievements, the job is far from complete."

Jane Thomas, Managing Director of the South West Contact Centre Forum and Call North West.



"The survey results are extremely interesting, particularly as they counter many of the negative perceptions about People Engagement in the age of 'forced' homeworking"

"Moving forward, the challenge will not be so much about making homeworking work - organisations have had a year to do that - it will be about defining long term strategies. Who will work from the office and who will work from home? How will we manage, communicate, schedule, train our 'hybrid' workforces? What new technology platforms will we need?

We maybe entering an era of extreme uncertainly but there's never been a better time to take a step back and make meaningful changes to modernise and transform UK business."

Mark Walton, CEO, Sensée

Results from Agent/Adviser and Director/Manager Responses

In this section we detail findings from questions that were asked in BOTH surveys. Findings are represented on a single chart, enabling readers to compare and contrast responses from the Agent/Adviser and Director/Manager surveys.

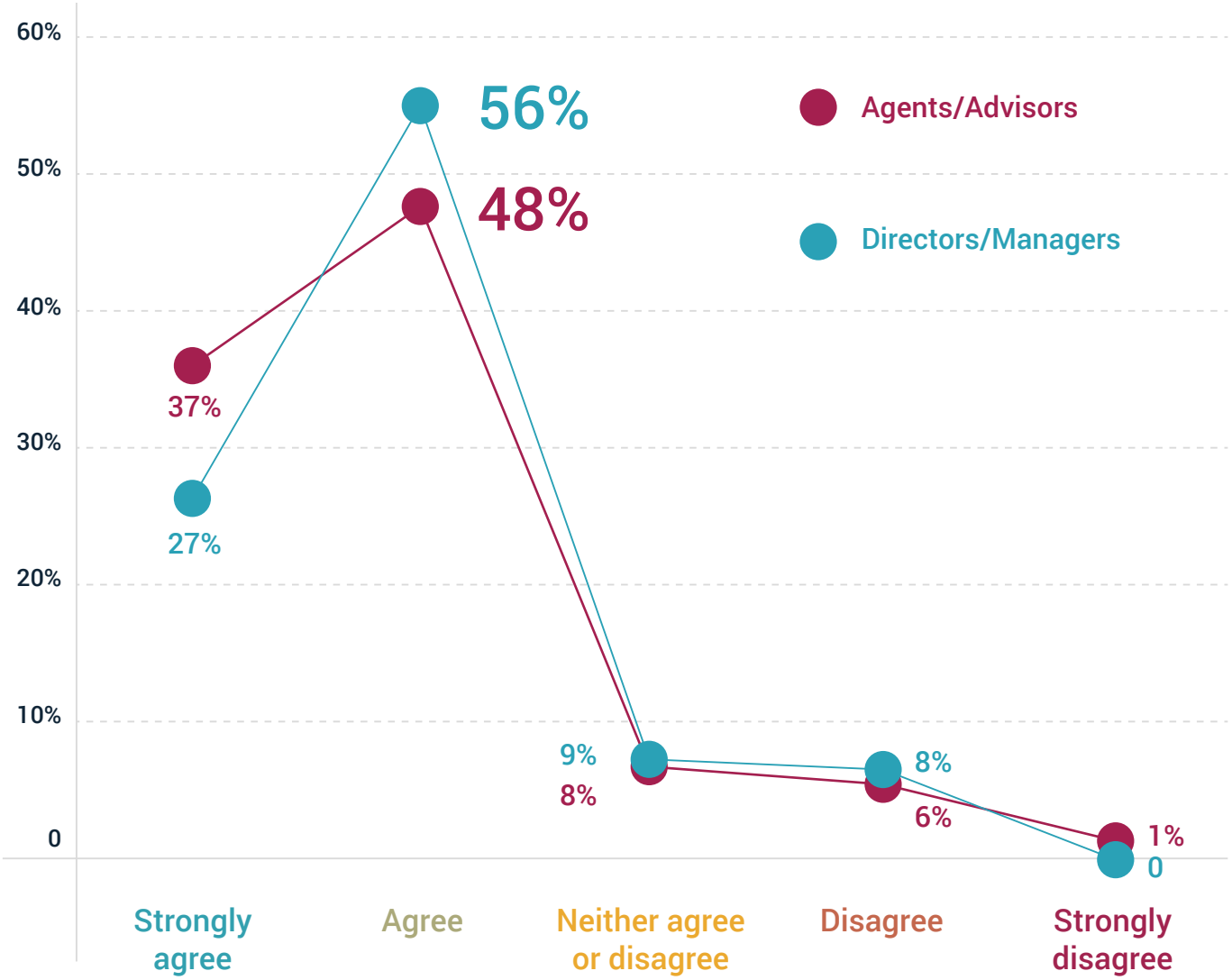
While there are some overlaps, respondents to the two surveys mainly come from different organisations.

Communication between senior leaders and employees is good in my organisation



85% of Agents/Advisers Agree or Strongly Agree with this statement, compared with 83% of Directors/Managers.

Just 7% of Agents/Advisers Disagree or Strongly Disagree with the statement, compared with 8% of Directors/Managers.

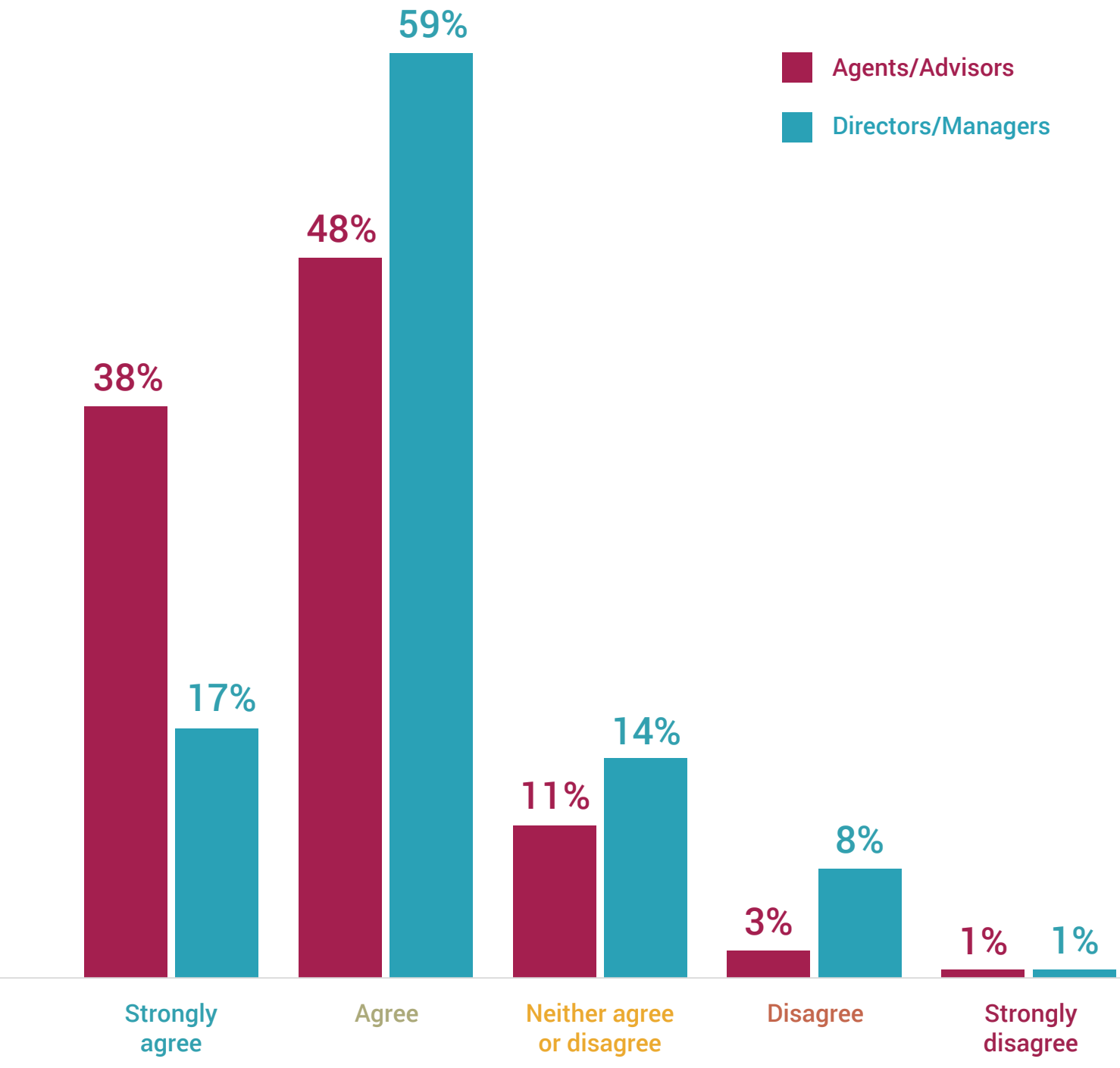




My organisation recognises strong job performance

86% of Agents/Advisers Agree or Strongly Agree with this statement, compared with 76% of Directors/Managers.

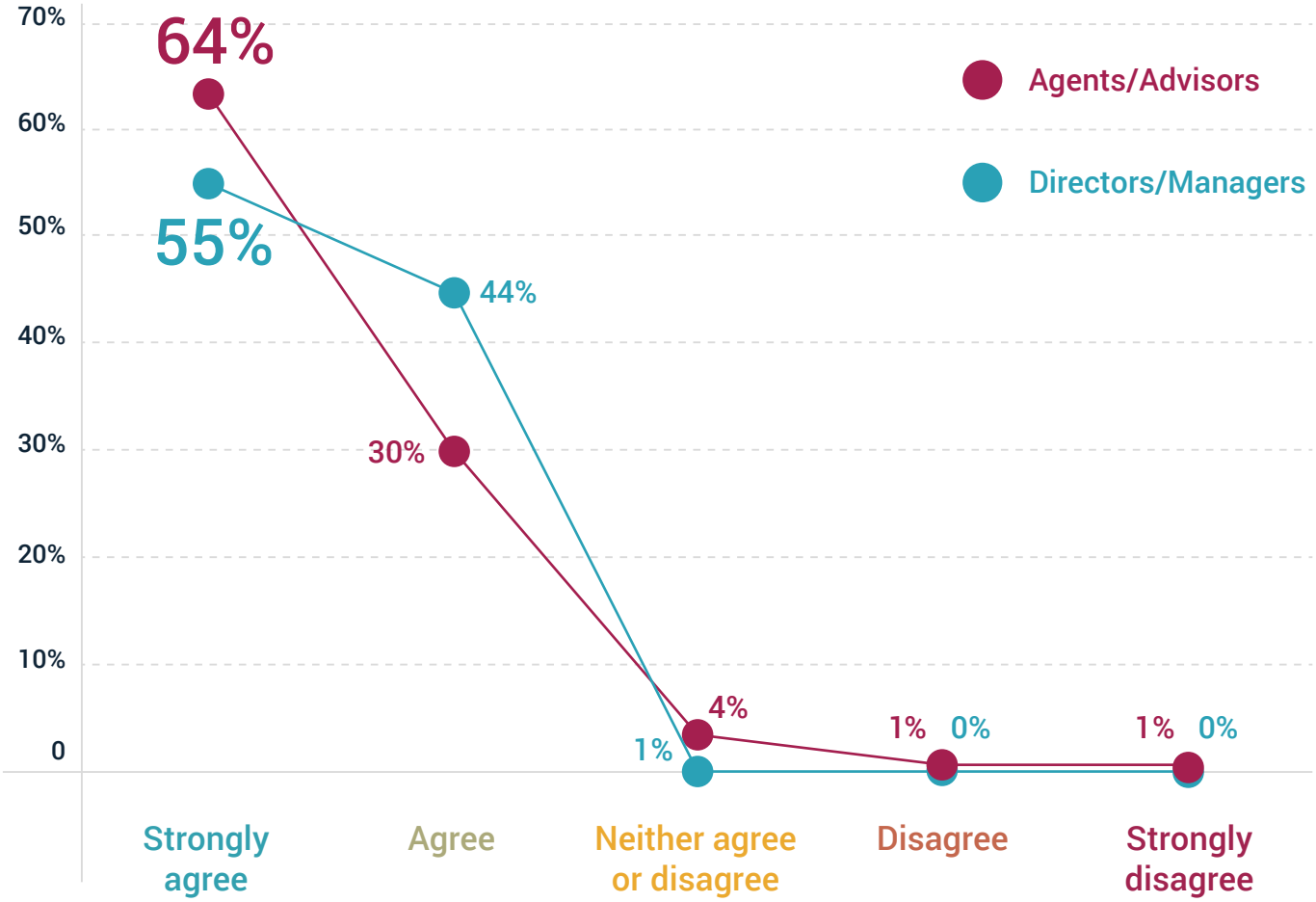
Just 4% of Agents/Advisers Disagree or Strongly Disagree with the statement, compared with 9% of Directors/Managers.



My manager/contact centre team and I have a good working relationship

94% of Agents/Advisers Agree or Strongly Agree with this statement, compared with 99% of Directors/Managers.

Just 2% of Agents/Advisers Disagree or Strongly Disagree with the statement. No Directors/Managers Disagree or Strongly Disagree.

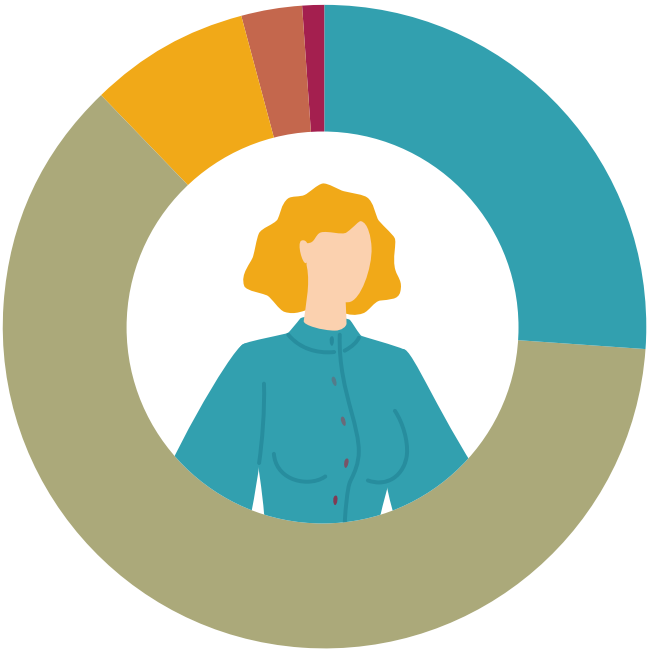




Management (in general) and employees trust each other

80% of Agents/Advisers Agree or Strongly Agree with this statement, compared with 87% of Directors/Managers.

Just 5% of Agents/Advisers Disagree or Strongly Disagree with the statement, compared with 5% of Directors/Managers.





DIRECTORS/MANAGERS	
Strongly Agree	26%
Agree	61%
Neither agree or disagree	8%
Disagree	3%
Strongly disagree	1%

AGENTS/ADVISERS	
Strongly Agree	32%
Agree	48%
Neither agree or disagree	14%
Disagree	4%
Strongly disagree	1%

My organisation is committed to making the work environment 'safe'

90% of Agents/Advisers Agree or Strongly Agree with this statement, compared with 98% of Directors/Managers.

Just 3% of Agents/Advisers Disagree or Strongly Disagree with the statement, compared with 1% of Directors/Managers.



Strongly agree

Directors/managers	Agents/Advisers
76%	54%

Agree

Directors/managers	Agents/Advisers
22%	36%

Neither agree or disagree

Directors/managers	Agents/Advisers
1%	7%

Disagree

Directors/managers	Agents/Advisers
1%	2%

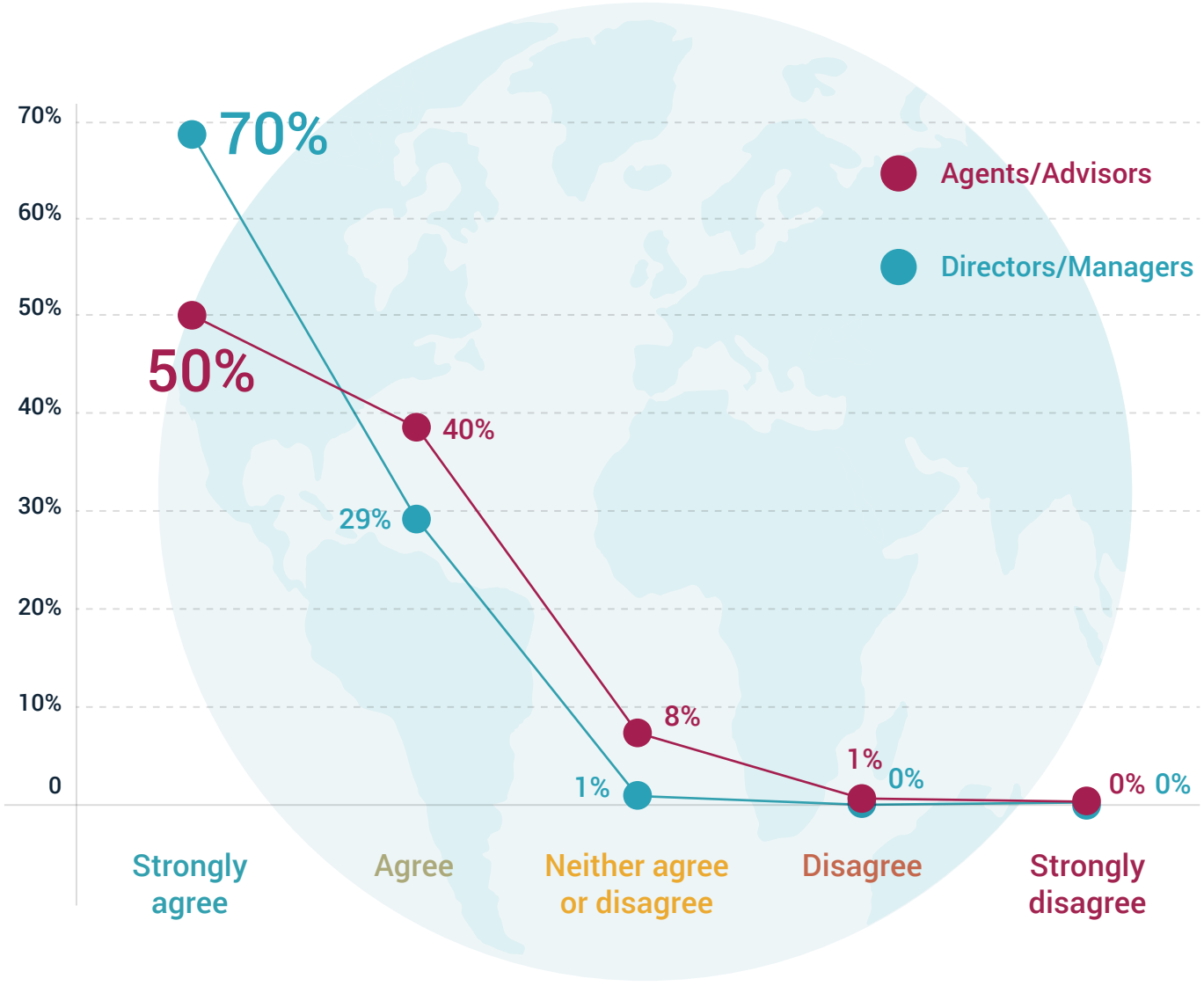
Strongly disagree

Directors/managers	Agents/Advisers
0%	1%

My organisation has taken steps to ensure that it acts as a responsible member of society

90% of Agents/Advisers Agree or Strongly Agree with this statement, compared with 99% of Directors/Managers.

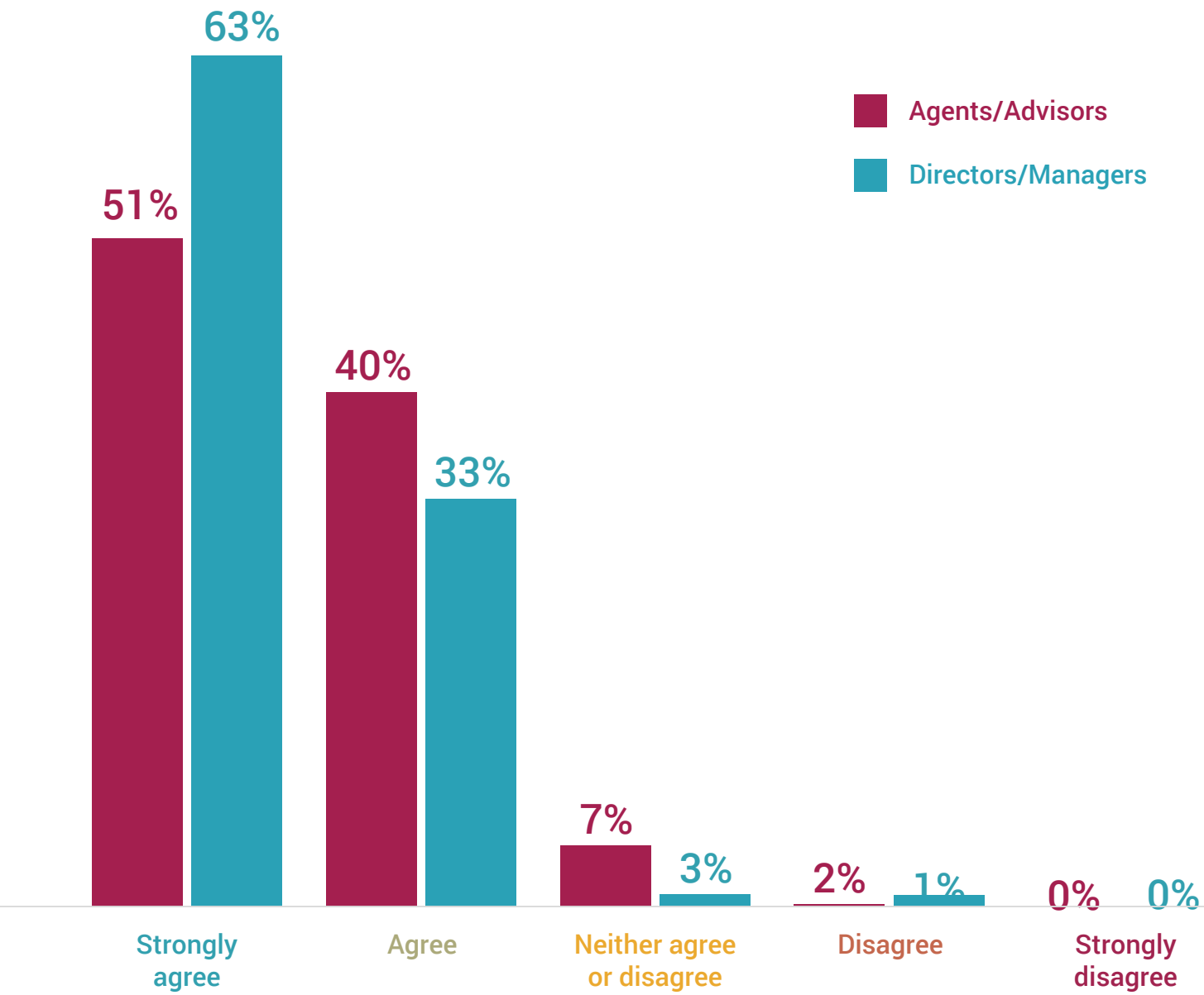
Just 1% of Agents/Advisers Disagree or Strongly Disagree with the statement. No Directors/Managers Disagree or Strongly Disagree.



My organisation is dedicated to diversity and inclusiveness

91% of Agents/Advisers Agree or Strongly Agree with this statement, compared with 96% of Directors/Managers.

Just 2% of Agents/Advisers Disagree or Strongly Disagree with the statement, compared with 1% of Directors/Managers.





My organisation gives its employees the opportunity to work flexibly so they can enjoy a better work-life balance

79% of Agents/Advisers Agree or Strongly Agree with this statement, compared with 87% of Directors/Managers.

7% of Agents/Advisers Disagree or Strongly Disagree with the statement, compared with 6% of Directors/Managers.

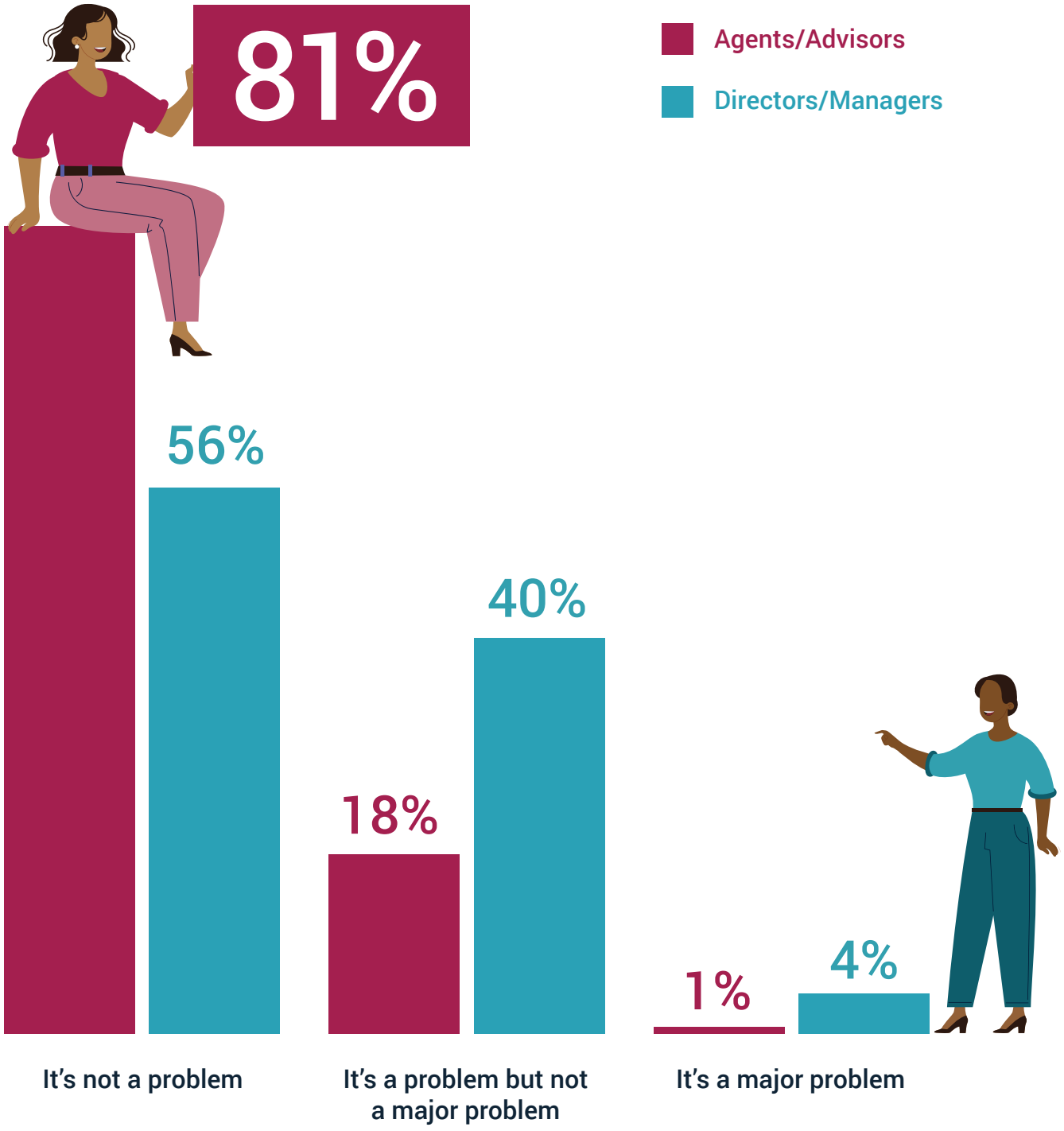


DIRECTORS/MANAGERS	
Strongly Agree	36%
Agree	51%
Neither agree or disagree	8%
Disagree	6%
Strongly disagree	0%

AGENTS/ADVISERS	
Strongly Agree	35%
Agree	44%
Neither agree or disagree	14%
Disagree	7%
Strongly disagree	0%

Is people engagement a problem in your organisation?

19% of Agents/Advisers say that People Engagement is a problem in their operation, but just 1% believe that it is a major problem. That compares with 44% and 4% respectively for Directors/Managers.



What is the most common result of engaged employees?

65% of Agents/Advisers believe that 'higher productivity' is one of the 3 main benefits of Engaged Employees. 59% identify a 'willingness to do more than expected' and 56% 'more satisfied customers'.

When asked the same question, 62% of Directors/Managers cited 'more satisfied customers', 52% 'better working relationships' and 47% 'higher productivity' amongst the top 3 benefits.

Higher productivity

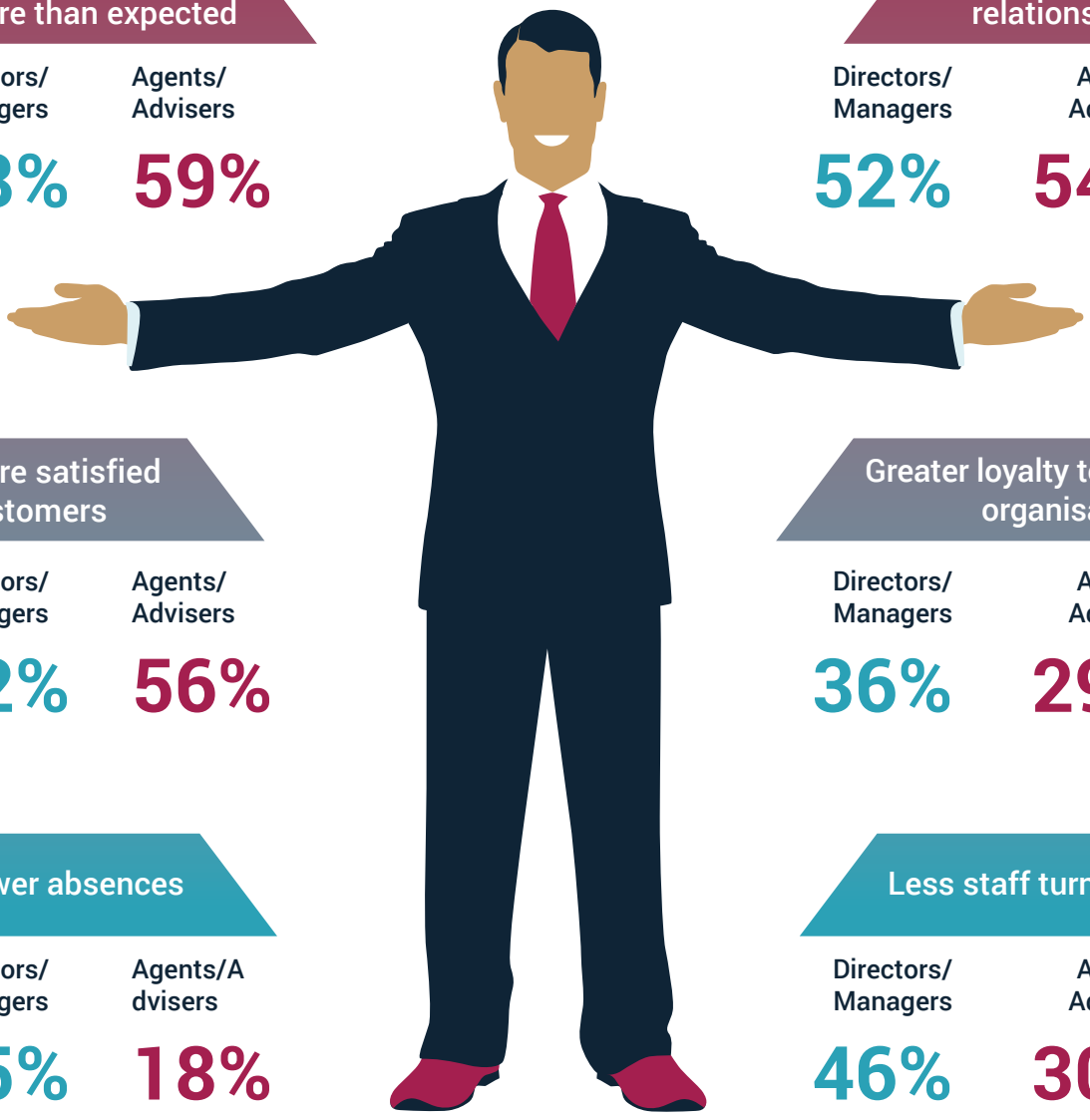
Directors/managers	Agents/Advisers
47%	65%

Willingness to do more than expected

Directors/ Managers	Agents/ Advisers
38%	59%

Better working relationships

Directors/ Managers	Agents/ Advisers
52%	54%



More satisfied customers

Directors/ Managers	Agents/ Advisers
62%	56%

Greater loyalty to the organisation

Directors/ Managers	Agents/ Advisers
36%	29%

Fewer absences

Directors/ Managers	Agents/A dvisers
25%	18%

Less staff turnover

Directors/ Managers	Agents/ Advisers
46%	30%

What is the most common result of disengaged employees?

58% of Agents/Advisers believe that 'lower productivity' is one of the 3 main results of Disengaged Employees. 47% identify 'more absences' and 46% an 'unwillingness to go beyond their job description'.

When asked the same question, 64% of Directors/Managers cited 'lower productivity', 52% 'higher staff turnover' and 52% 'more absences' amongst the top 3 results.

Lower productivity

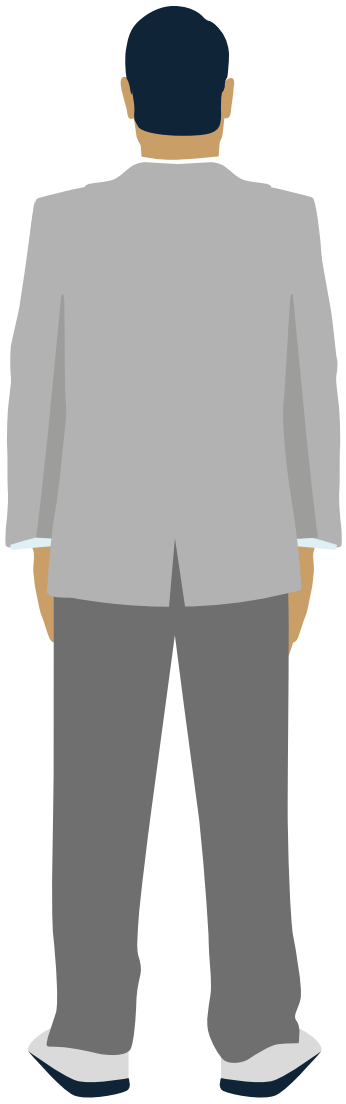
Directors/managers	Agents/Advisers
64%	58%

Unwillingness to go beyond job description

Directors/ Managers	Agents/ Advisers
34%	46%

Dysfunctional work relationships

Directors/ Managers	Agents/ Advisers
34%	36%



Frustrated customers

Directors/ Managers	Agents/ Advisers
38%	33%

Disloyalty

Directors/ Managers	Agents/ Advisers
9%	15%

More absences

Directors/ Managers	Agents/A dvisers
52%	47%

Higher staff turnover

Directors/ Managers	Agents/ Advisers
52%	43%

What could my organisation do more of to improve employee engagement?

75% of Agents/Advisers believe that 'listening to employees' opinions' is one of the 3 main things leaders could do to improve employee engagement. 69% identify 'giving recognition and praise' and 54% 'providing learning and development opportunities'.

When asked the same question, 55% of Directors/Managers cite 'listening to employees' opinions', 52% 'providing learning and development opportunities' and 50% 'communicate clear expectations'.

Listen to employees' opinions

Directors/ Managers	Agents/ Advisers
55%	75%

Give recognition and praise

Directors/ Managers	Agents/ Advisers
48%	69%

Help find solutions to problems

Directors/ Managers	Agents/ Advisers
37%	46%



Defend direct reports

Directors/ Managers	Agents/ Advisers
3%	8%

Communicate clear expectations

Directors/ Managers	Agents/ Advisers
50%	38%

Provide learning and development opportunities

Directors/ Managers	Agents/ Advisers
52%	53%

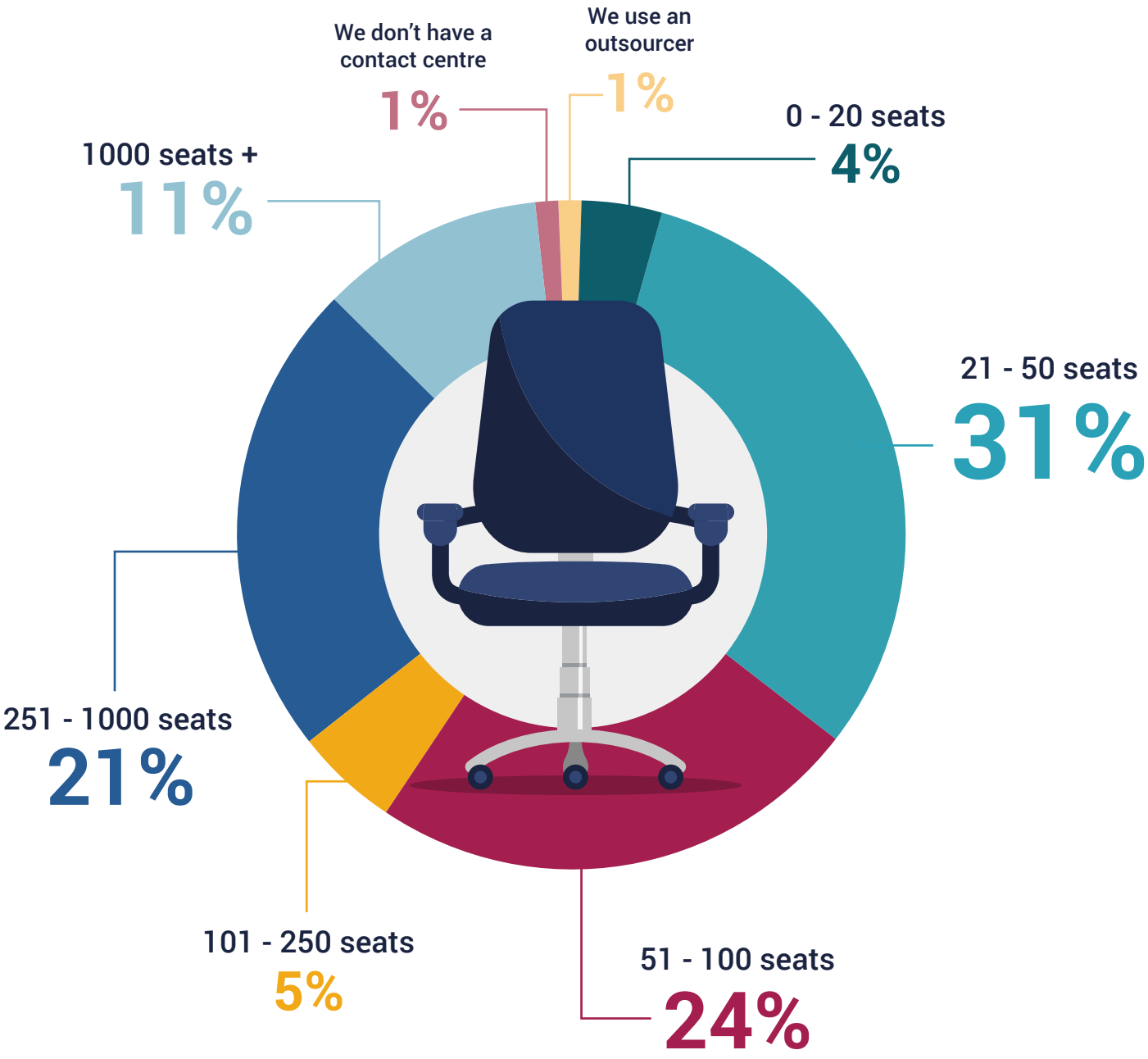
Results from Agent/Adviser Responses

In this section we detail the findings from questions that were just asked in the Agent/Adviser survey.

Size of your contact centre

Participants for the Agent/Adviser questionnaire come from a representative sample of small and large contact centres.

35% work in contact centres that have 50 or less seats, 29% from contact centres with 51-250 seats, and 32% with over 250 seats. The remainder either don't have a contact centre or use an outsourcer.



Industry sector

Survey participants also come from a broad range of industries. 30% of respondents are from Financial Services firms, 12% from the Public Sector and 11% from Utilities firms.



Utilities
11%



Retail
3%



Financial Services
30%



Public Sector
12%



IT & Telecoms
1%



Healthcare
1.5%



Media
0.5%



Manufacturing
1.5%



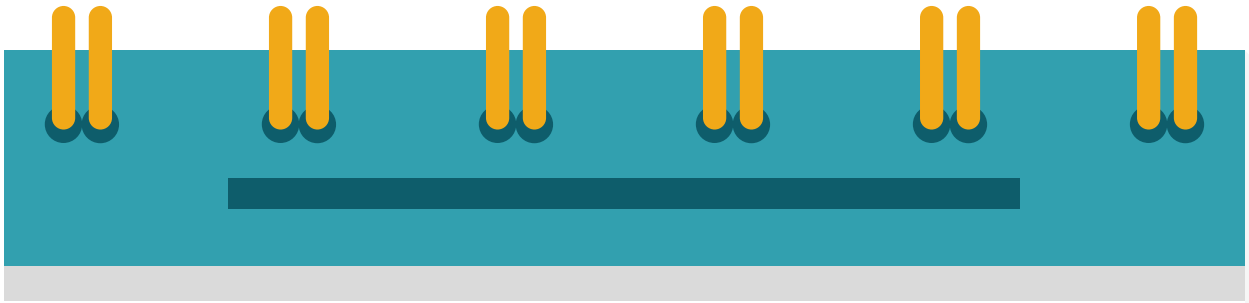
Outsourcing / BPO
2%

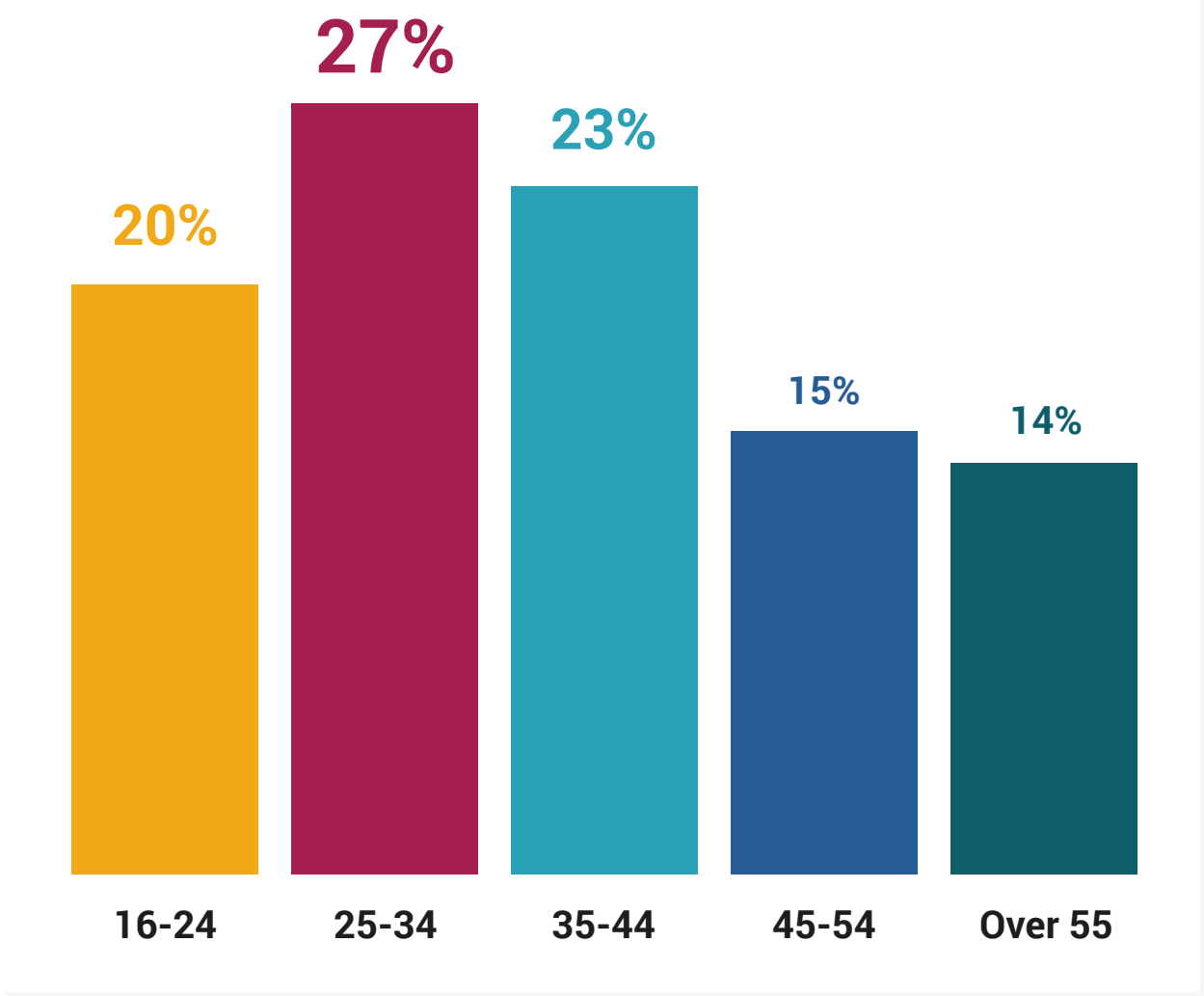


Other
37%

Age

47% of respondents are under 35 years of age and 38% between 35 and 55.





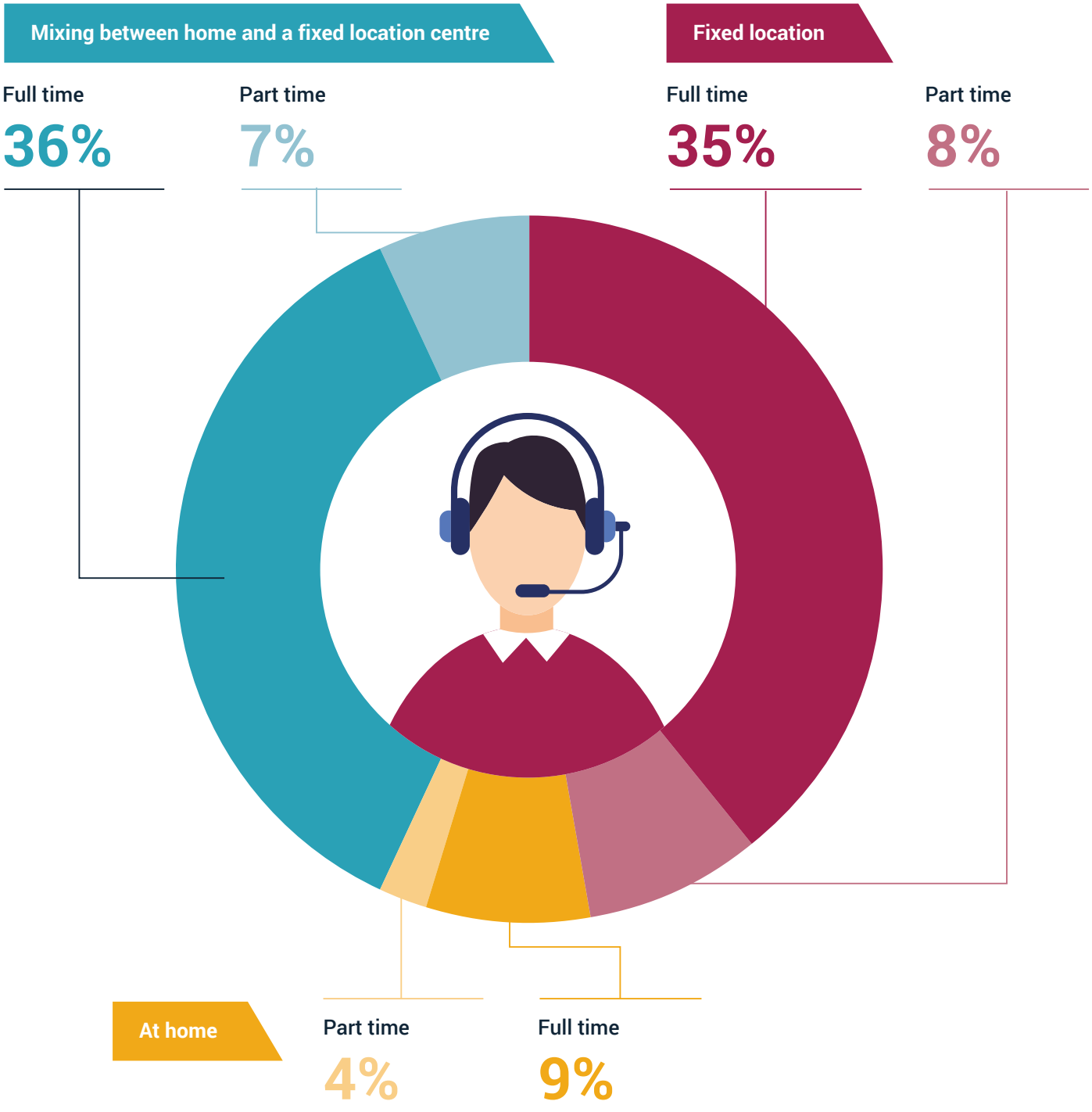
Area of employment

The vast majority of respondents work in Customer Services (79%). 6% work in Sales.



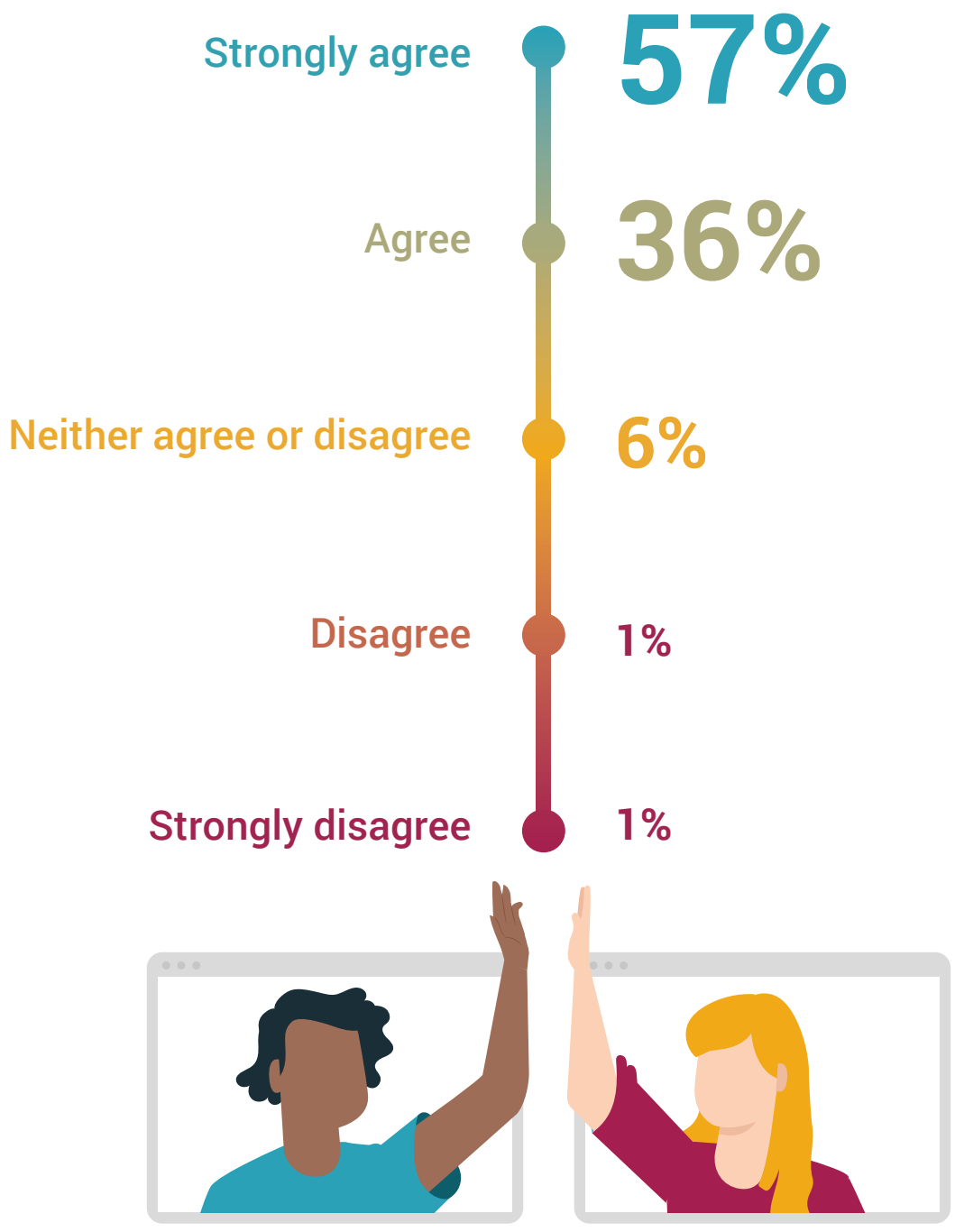
By 2022, do you expect to be working:

By 2022, 43% of people expect to be working full or part time in a fixed location contact centre while 13% expect to be working full or part time at home. The remainder will be hybrid (office/home) working.



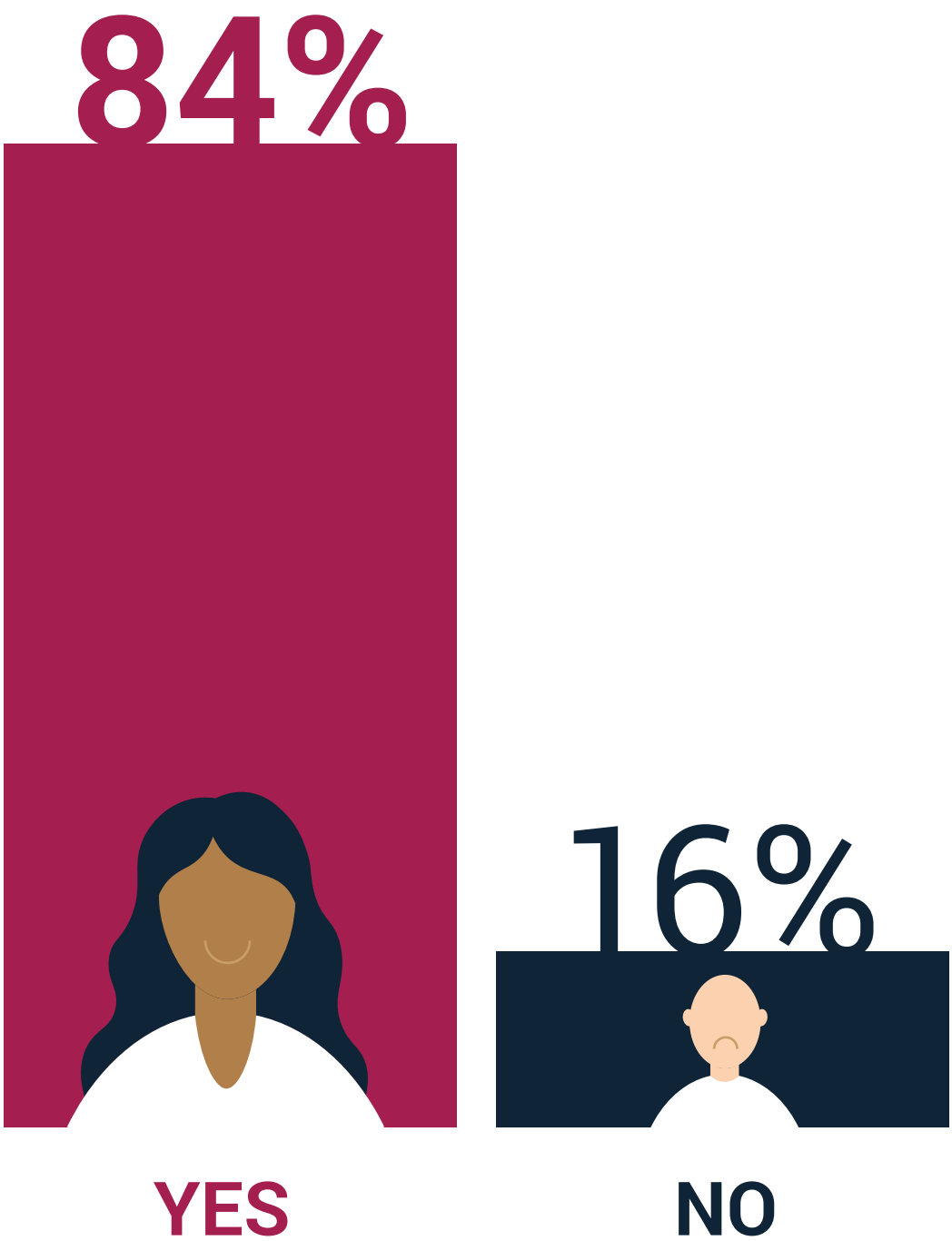
My co-workers and I have a good working relationship

93% of Agents/Advisers Agree or Strongly Agree with this statement.
Just 2% Disagree or Strongly Disagree.



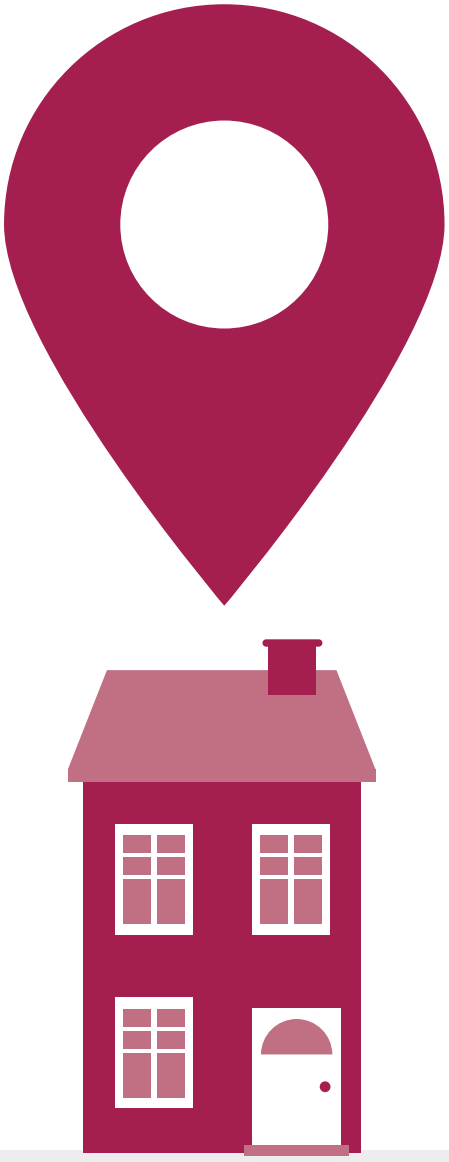
Does your organisation measure employee engagement?

84% of respondents say that Employee Engagement is measured in their organisation.



Did you previously (mainly) work in a fixed location contact centre and currently (maily) work from home?

At the time of responding, 70% of Agents/Advisers said that they were previously (mainly) work in a fixed location contact centre and are now (mainly) working from home.

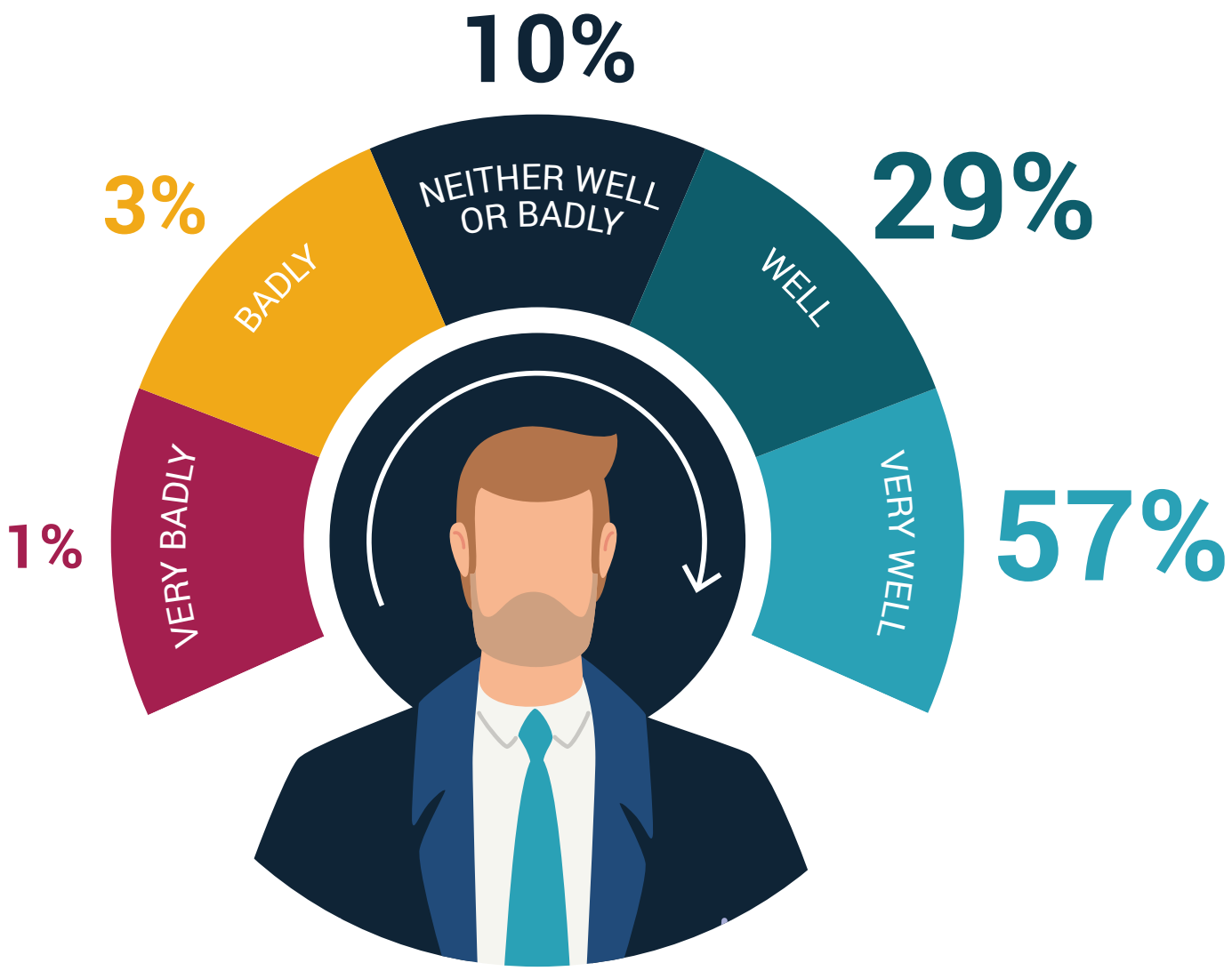


YES
70%

NO
30%

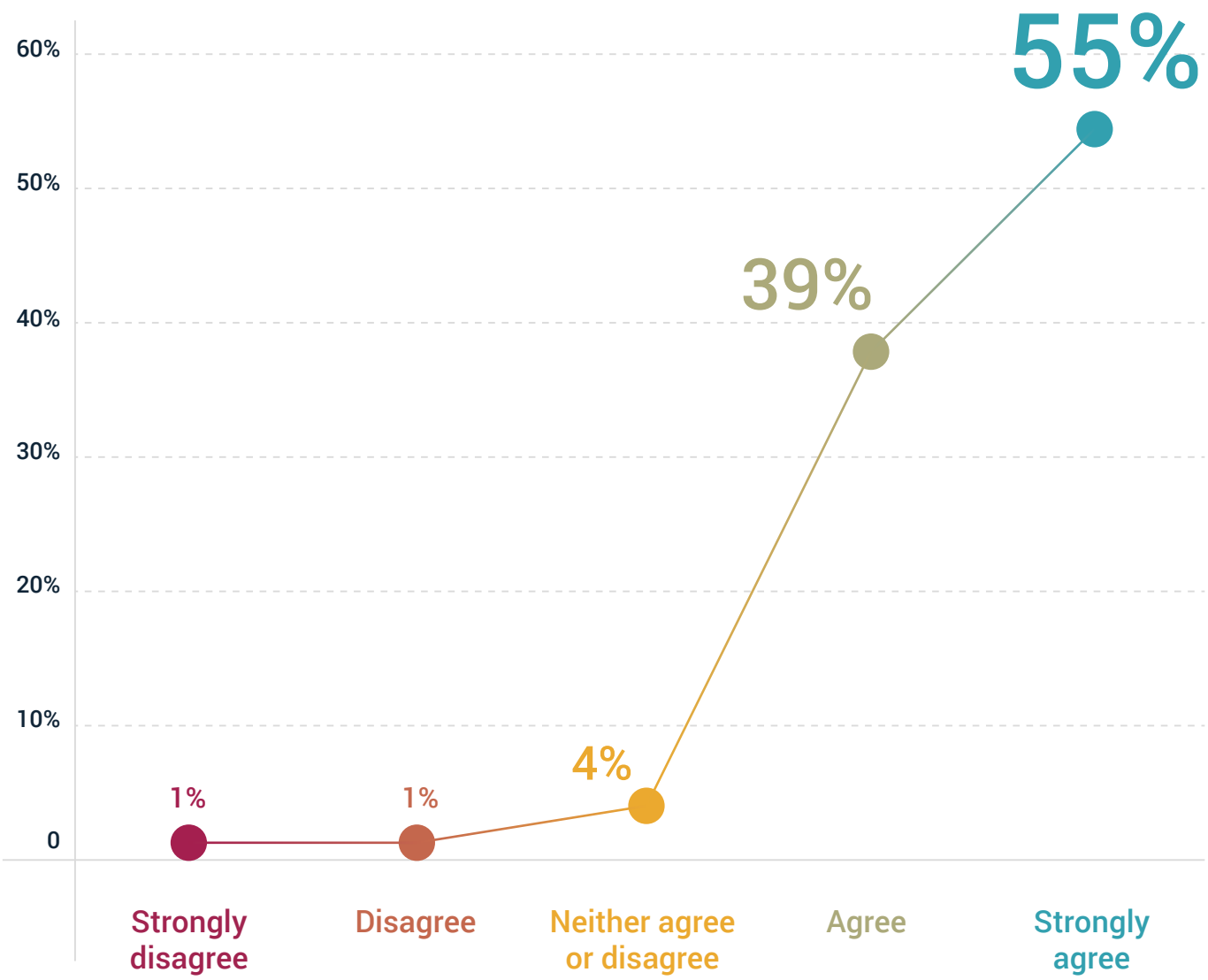
How well do you feel your employer has adapted to the switch from managing in-office teams to managing work-from-home teams?

57% of Agents/Advisers say that their employer has adapted Very Well to the switch to work-from home, with a further 29% saying that they have adapted well.



I understand how my work impacts the organisation's business goals

94% of Agents/Advisers Agree or Strongly Agree with this statement, just 2% Disagree or Strongly Disagree.



In these current difficult times, do you think your organisation adequately addresses the Mental Health & Well being concerns of its employees?

73% of respondents say that, in difficult times, their organisation adequately addresses the Mental Health & Well being concerns of its employees.

While the remainder do not believe those concerns are adequately met, the majority of those recognise the efforts of their employer to do so.

Yes
73%

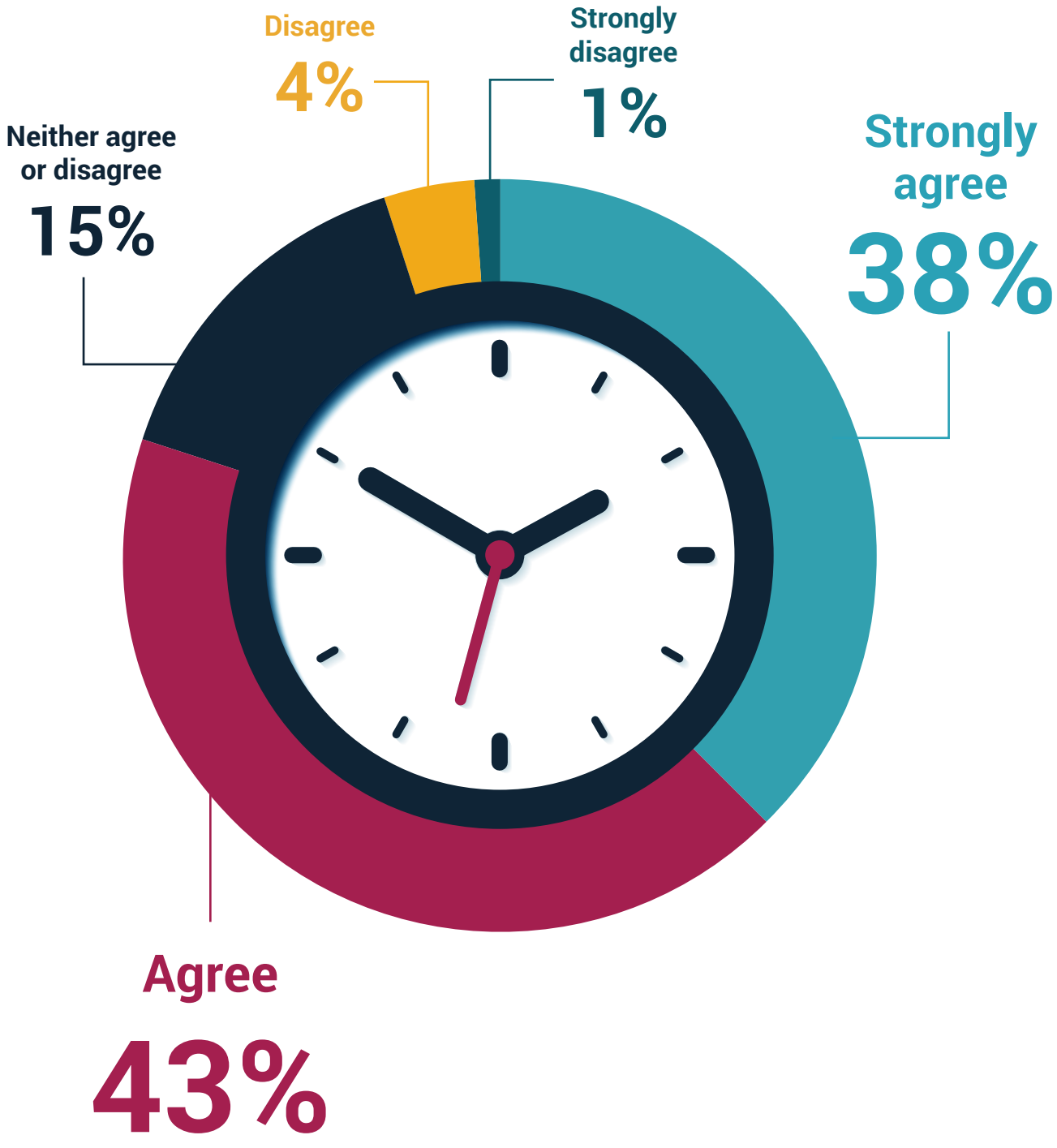
No
8%

No, but it's trying hard to
18%



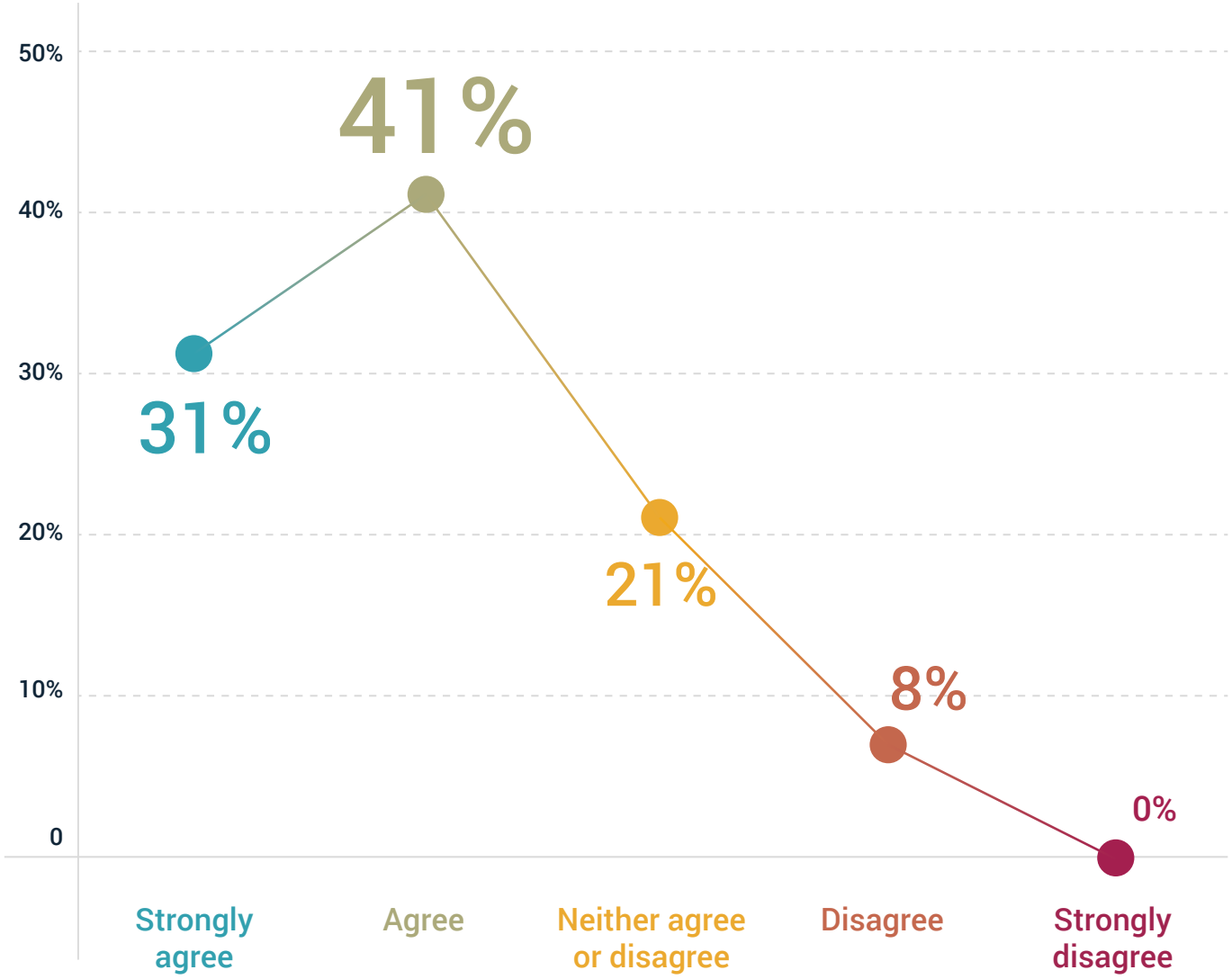
I am often so involved in my work that the day goes by very quickly.

81% of Agents/Advisers Agree or Strongly Agree with this statement.
Just 5% Disagree or Strongly Disagree.



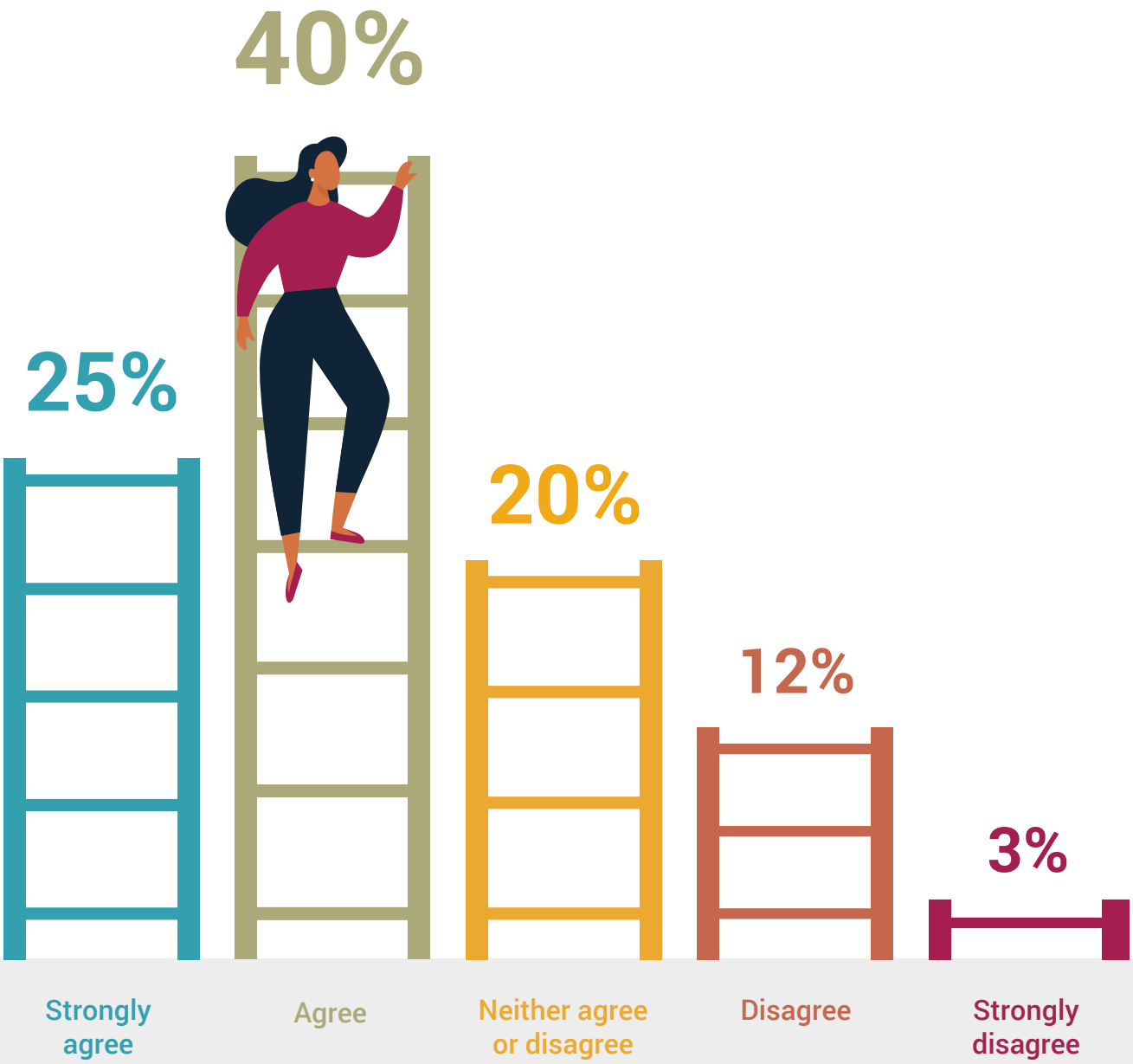
I am encouraged to proactively identify future challenges and opportunities to improve the organisation

72% of Agents/Advisers Agree or Strongly Agree with this statement.
Just 9% Disagree or Strongly Disagree.



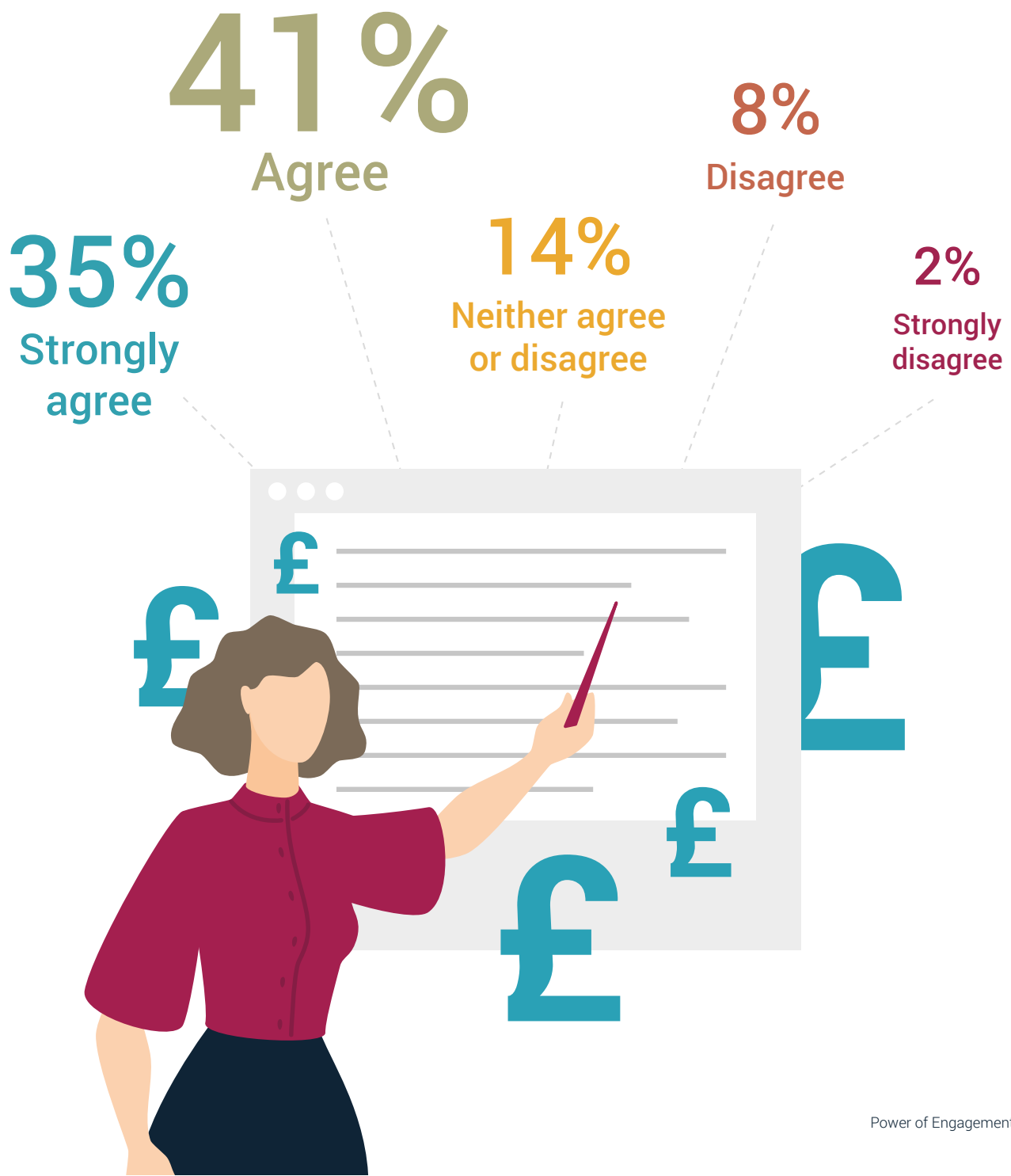
I am pleased with the career advancement opportunities available to me

65% of Agents/Advisers Agree or Strongly Agree with this statement.
Just 15% Disagree or Strongly Disagree.



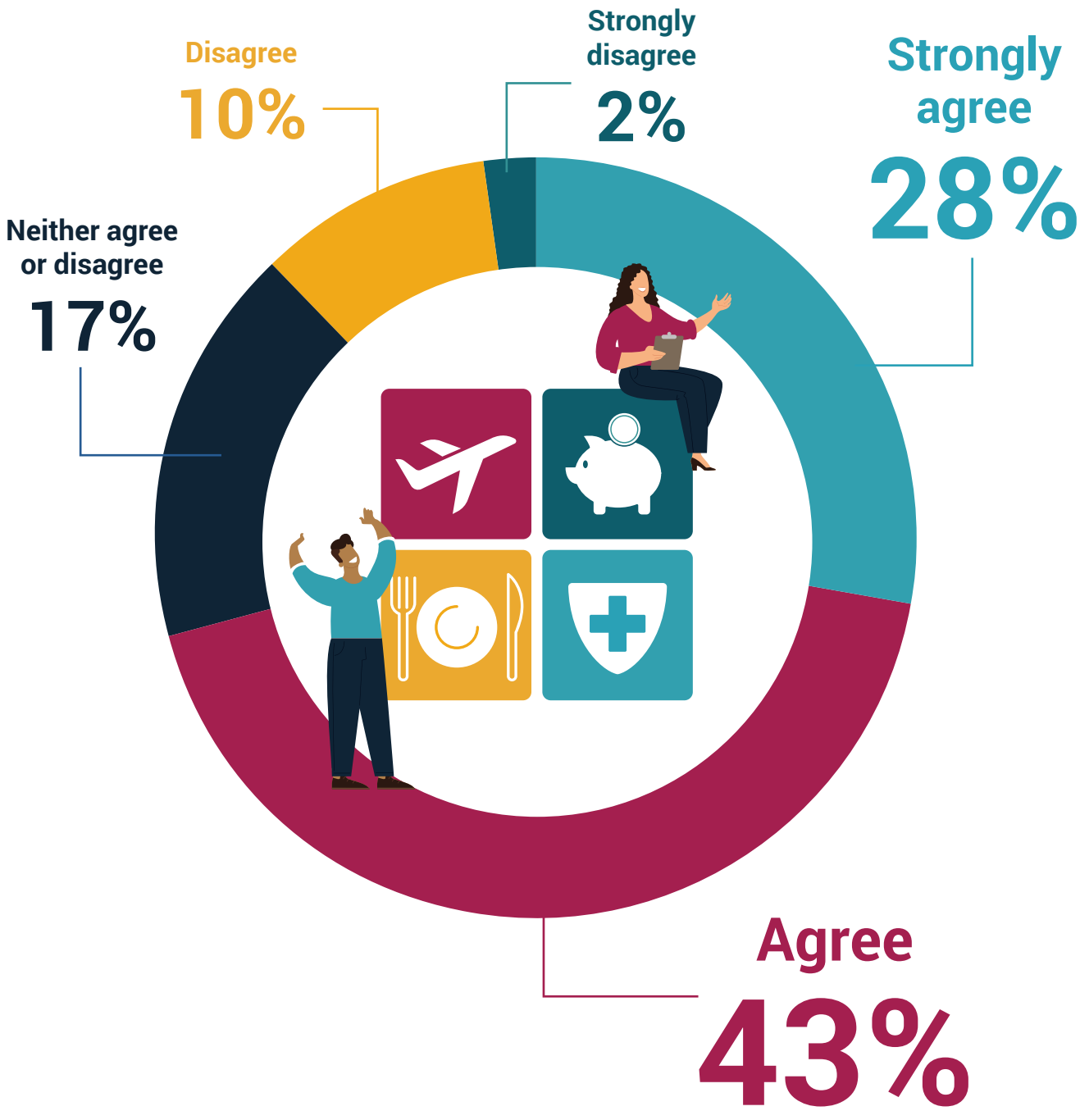
I am satisfied with the investment my organisation makes in training and education

76% of Agents/Advisers Agree or Strongly Agree with this statement,
10% of Agents/Advisers Disagree or Strongly Disagree.



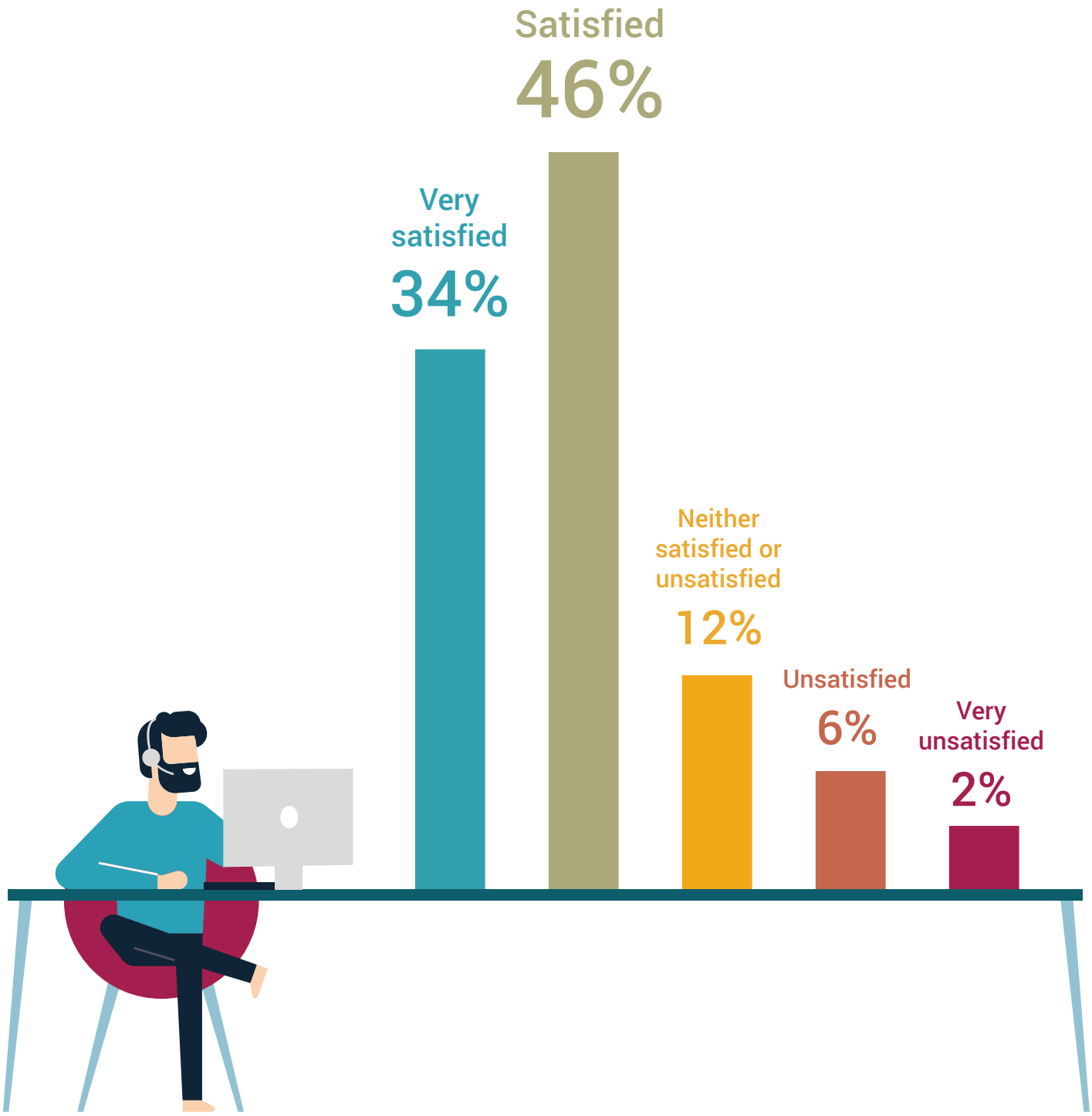
I am satisfied with my total compensation and benefits package

61% of Agents/Advisers Agree or Strongly Agree with this statement, 12% Disagree or Strongly Disagree.



How satisfied are you with your current role?

80% of Agents/Advisers Agree or Strongly Agree with this statement.
8% of Agents/Advisers Disagree or Strongly Disagree.



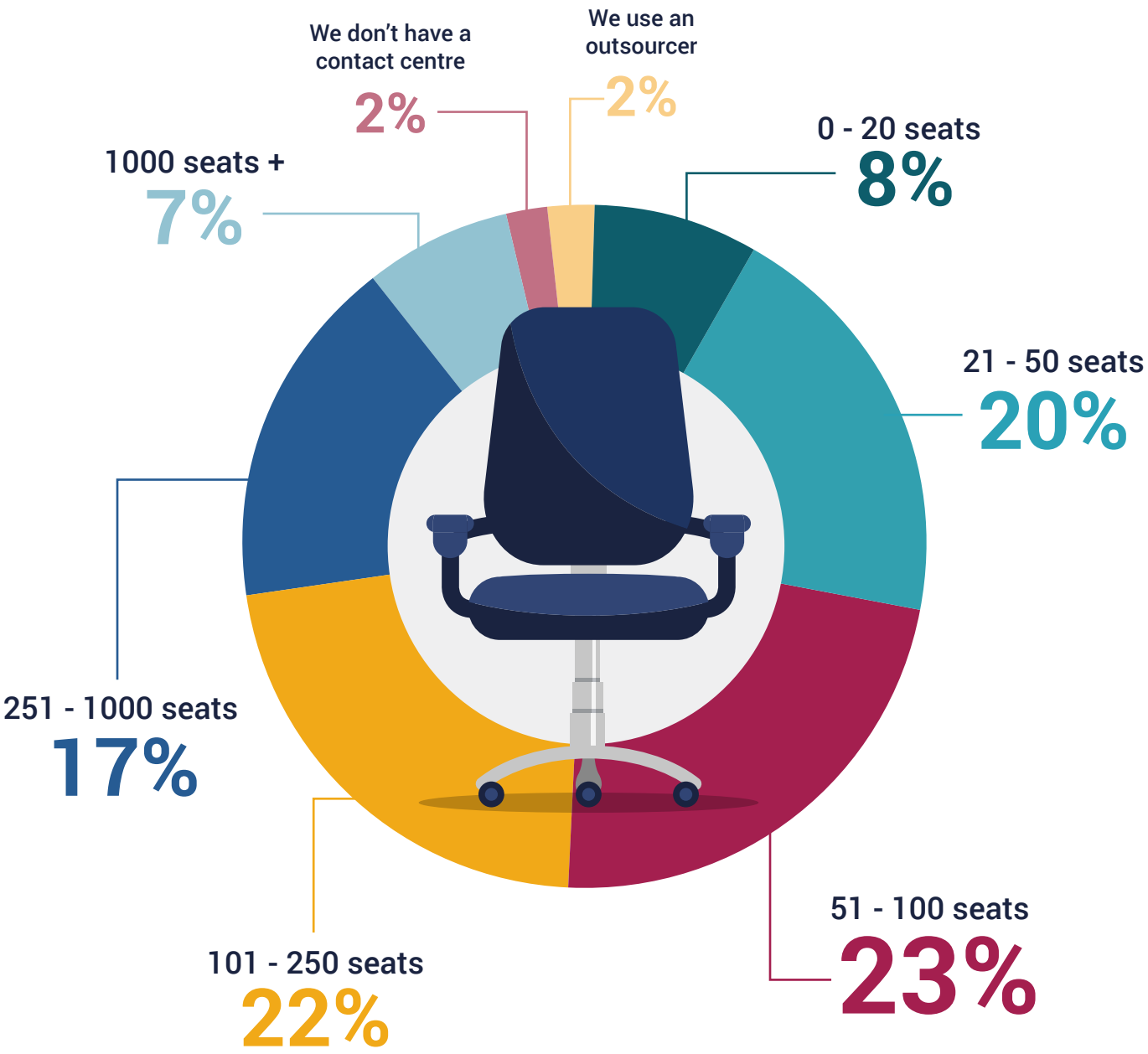
Results from Director/ Manager Responses

In this section we detail the findings from questions that were just asked in the Director/Manager survey.

Size of your contact centre

Participants for the Director/Managerr questionnaire come from a representative sample of small and large contact centres.

28% work in contact centres that have 50 or less seats, 45% from contact centres with 51-250 seats, and 24% with over 250 seats. The remainder either don't have a contact centre or use an outsourcer.



Industry sector

Survey participants come from a broad range of industries. 27% of respondents are from Financial Services firms, 15% from the Public Sector and 8% from Utilities firms.



Utilities
8%



Retail
7%



Financial Services
27%



Public Sector
15%



IT & Telecoms
3%



Healthcare
3%



Media
0%



Manufacturing
1%



Other
37%

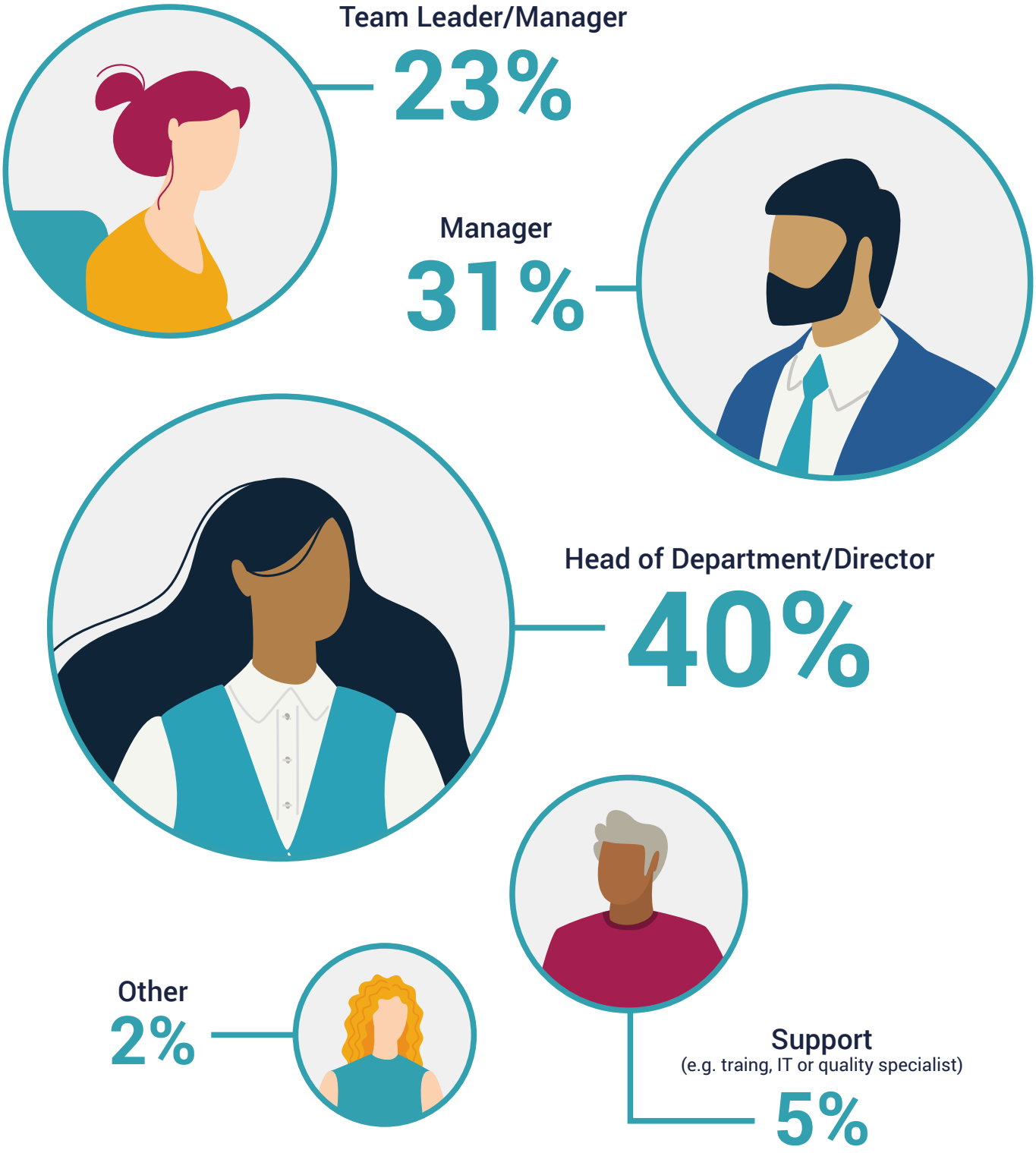
Area of employment

The vast majority of respondents work in Customer Services (76%).
4% work in Retentions.



Job role

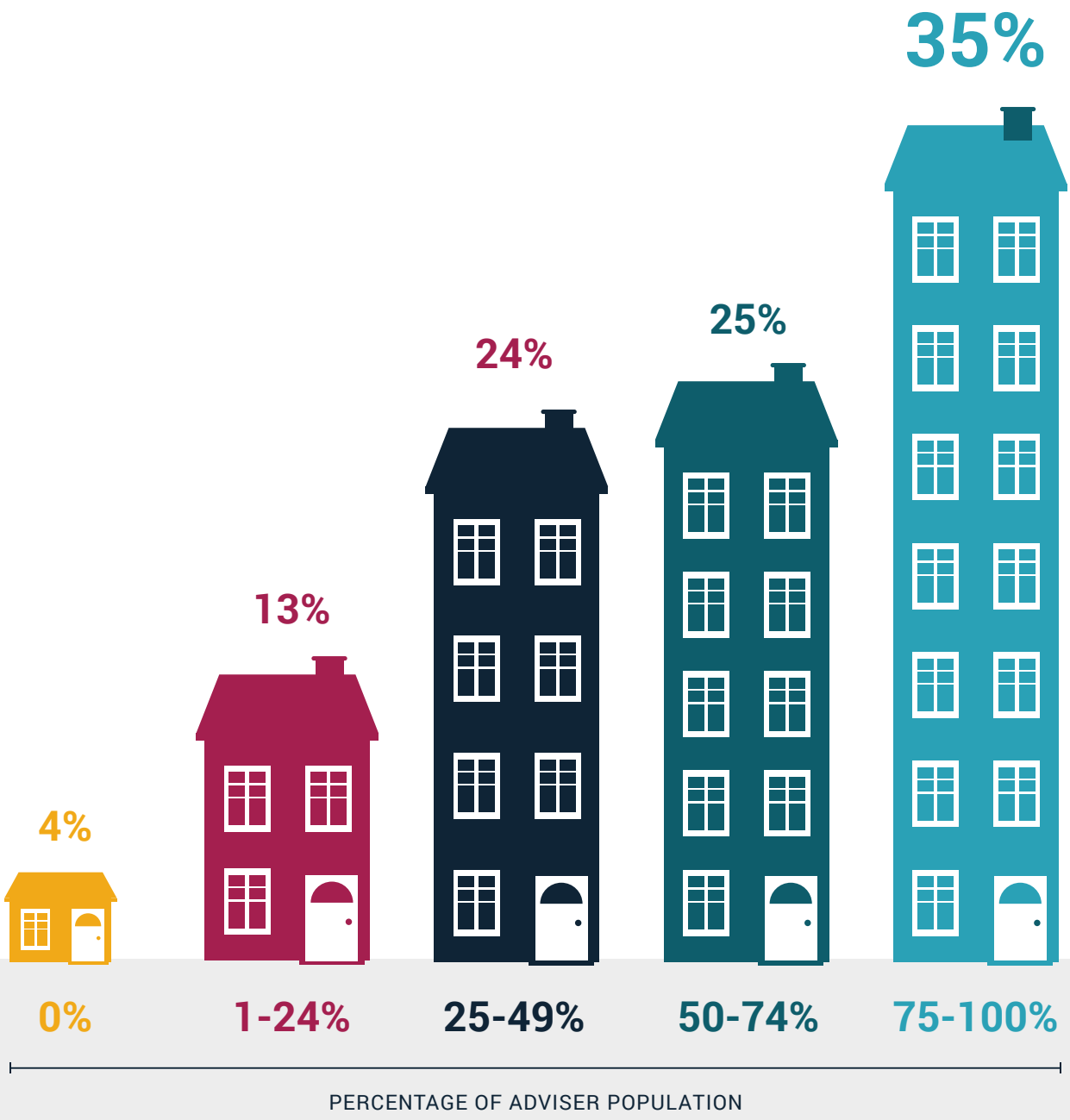
40% of people responding to the Director/Manager questionnaire are Department Heads and Directors, 31% are Managers and 23% Team Leaders and Team Managers.



What percentage of your adviser population do you think will be working full or part time from home in 2022?

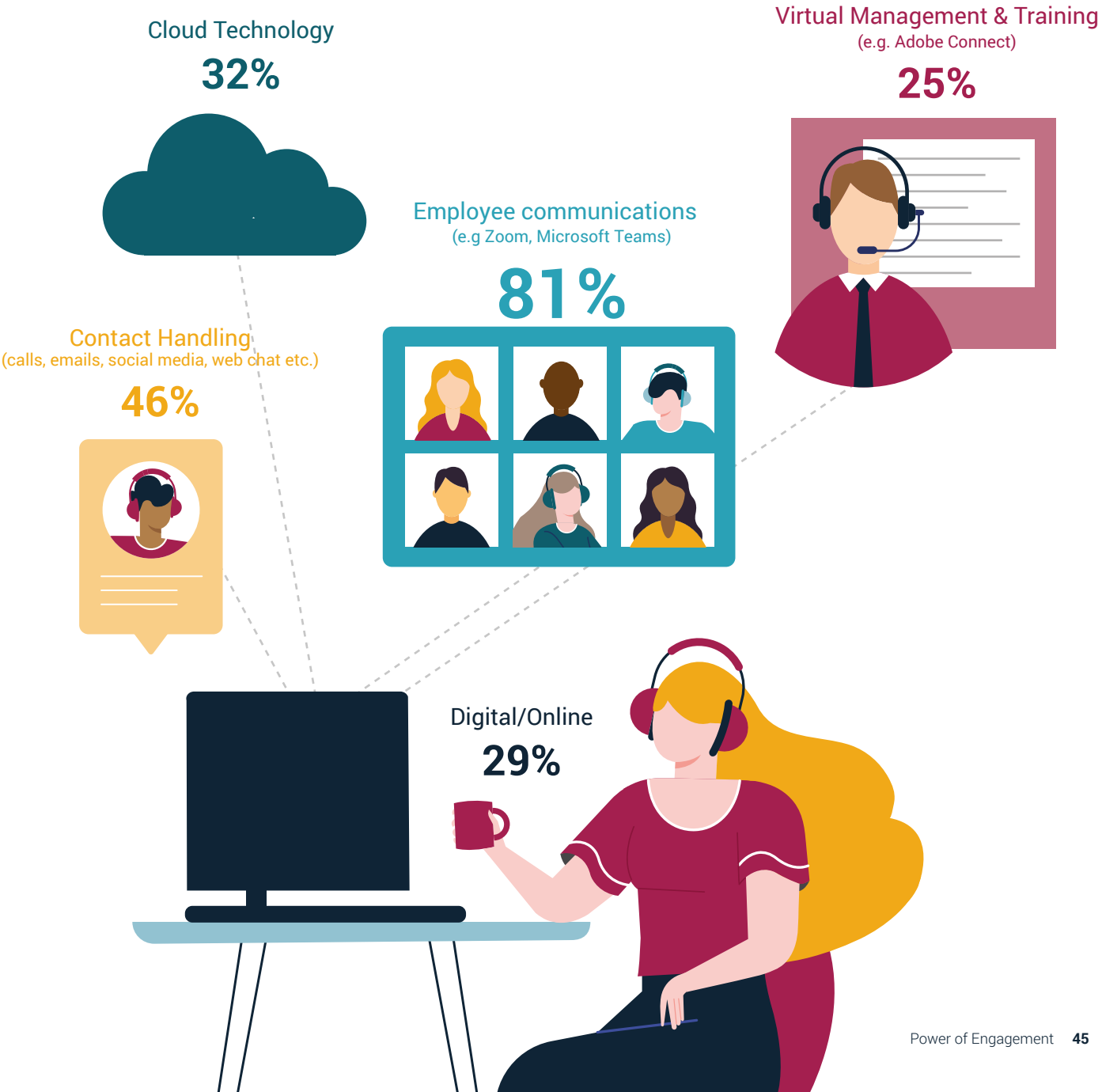
By 2022, 60% of Directors/Managers people expect over half 50% or more of their people to be working full or part time at home.

Just 4% predict a full return to the office.



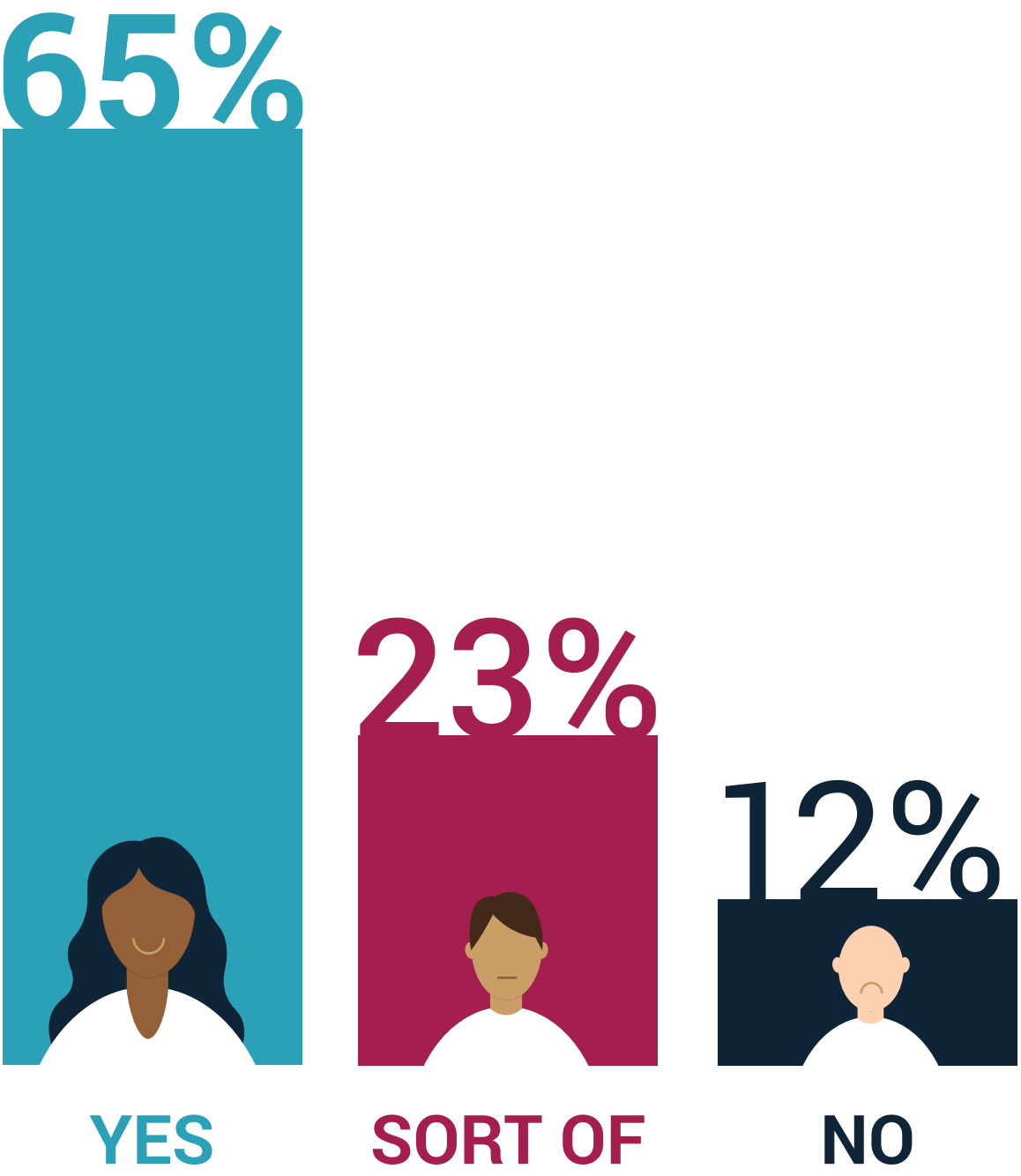
During the last few months, did your organisation invest in the following technology solutions to see you through the current crisis and beyond?

81% of Directors/Managers say that their organisation invested in Employee Communications technology during the last few months, 46% in Contact Handling technology and 29% in Digital/Online solutions.



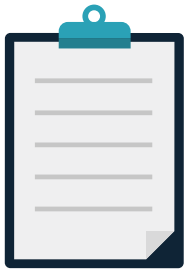
Does your organisation measure employee engagement?

65% of Directors/Managers say that Employee Engagement is measured in their organisation, 23% say that it is 'Sort of' measured.



How do you monitor Mental Health & Wellbeing within your teams?

When asked “How do you measure Mental Health within your teams?’ 89% said that they had ‘informal discussions’, 71% that they had ‘formal one-on-one conversations’ and 40% ‘occupational health reports’.



Formal questionnaires

36%



Video checks

29%



Occupational health reports

40%



Formal one-on-one conversations

71%



Informal conversations

89%

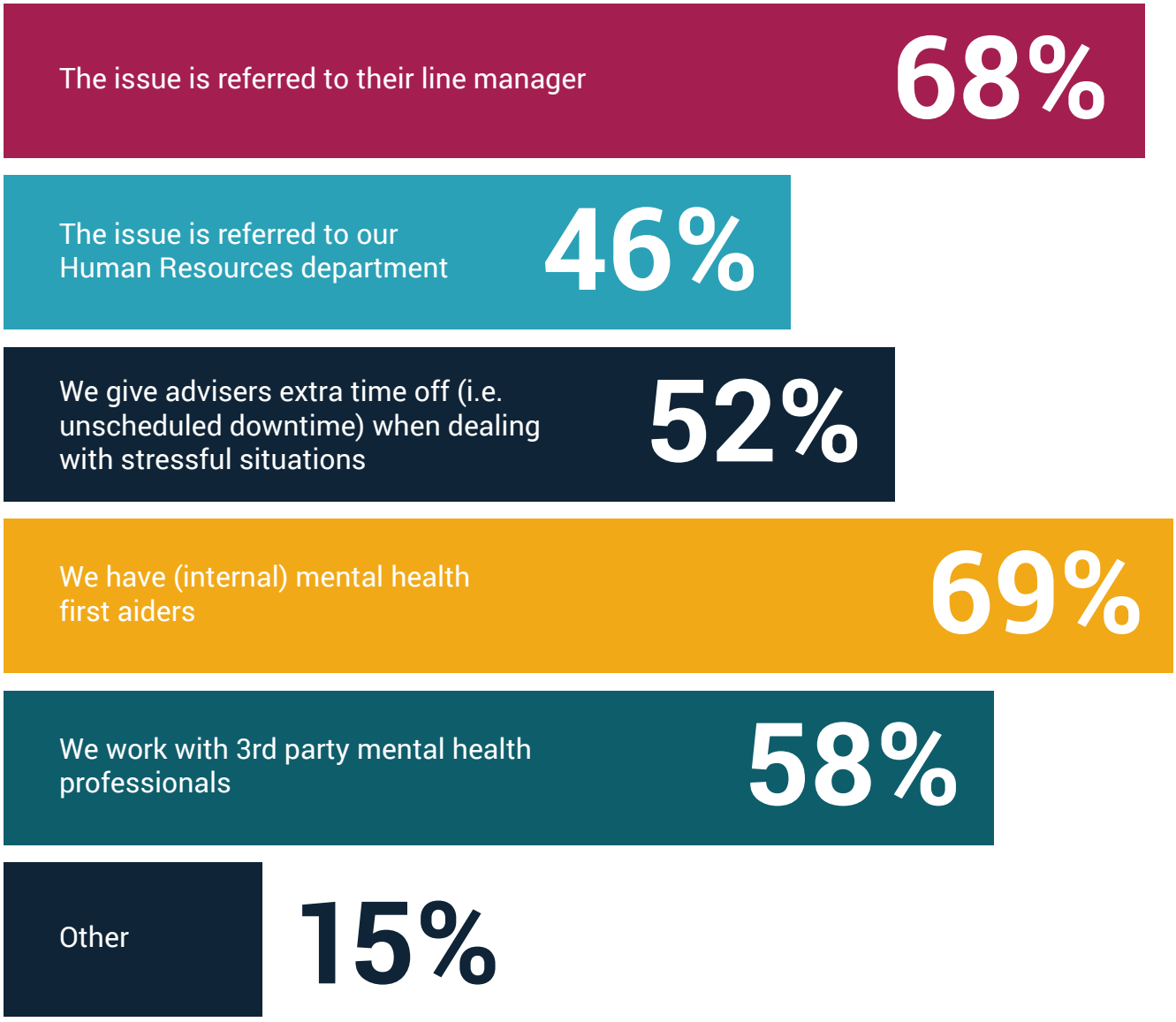


Other

15%

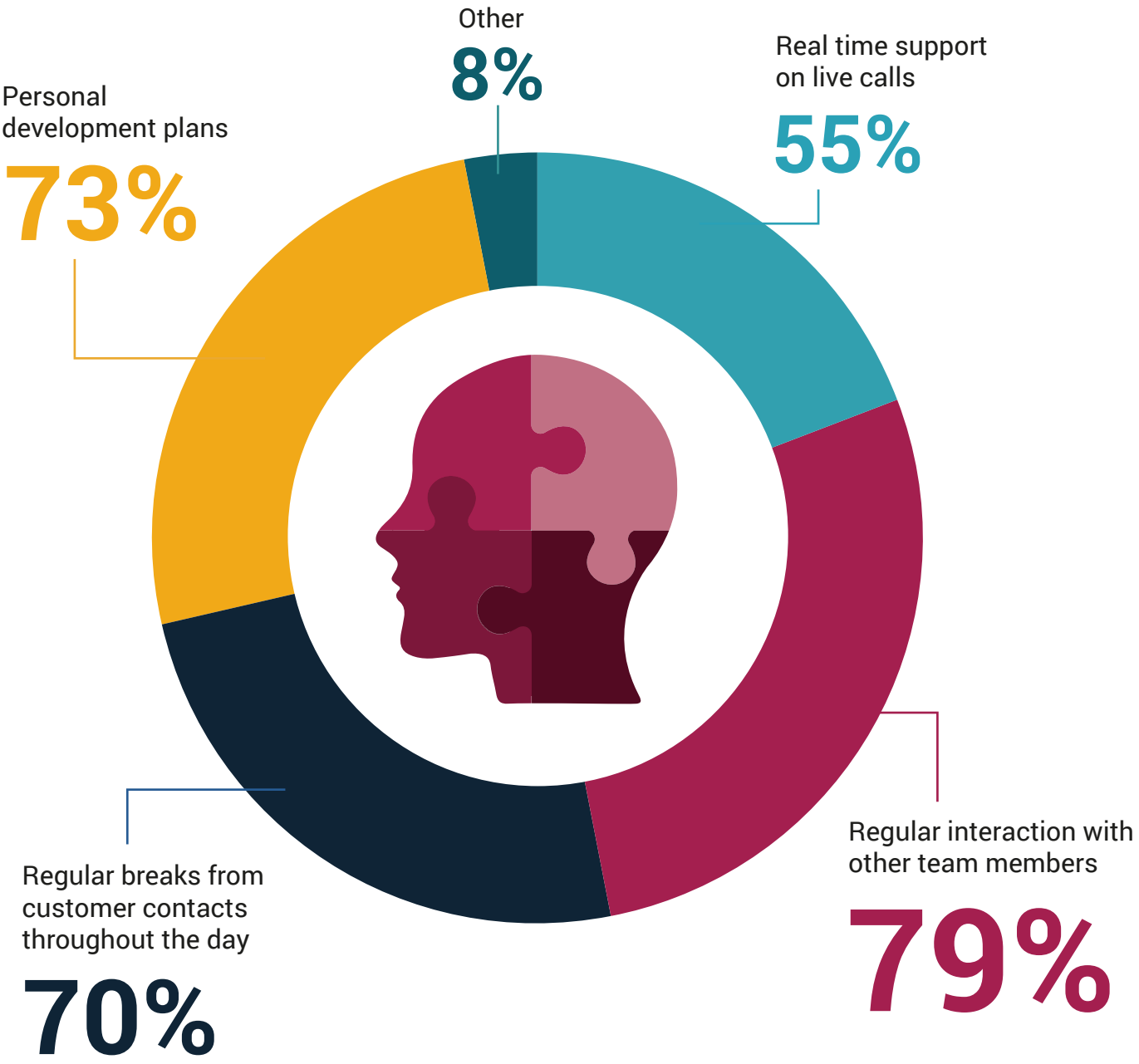
What do you do if you spot a potential Mental Health & Wellbeing issue?

When asked "What do you do if you spot a potential Mental Health & Wellbeing issue?" 69% of respondents said their organisations have 'internal mental health first aiders', 68% that "Issues are referred to a line manager" and 58% that their organisation 'works with 3rd party mental health professionals'.



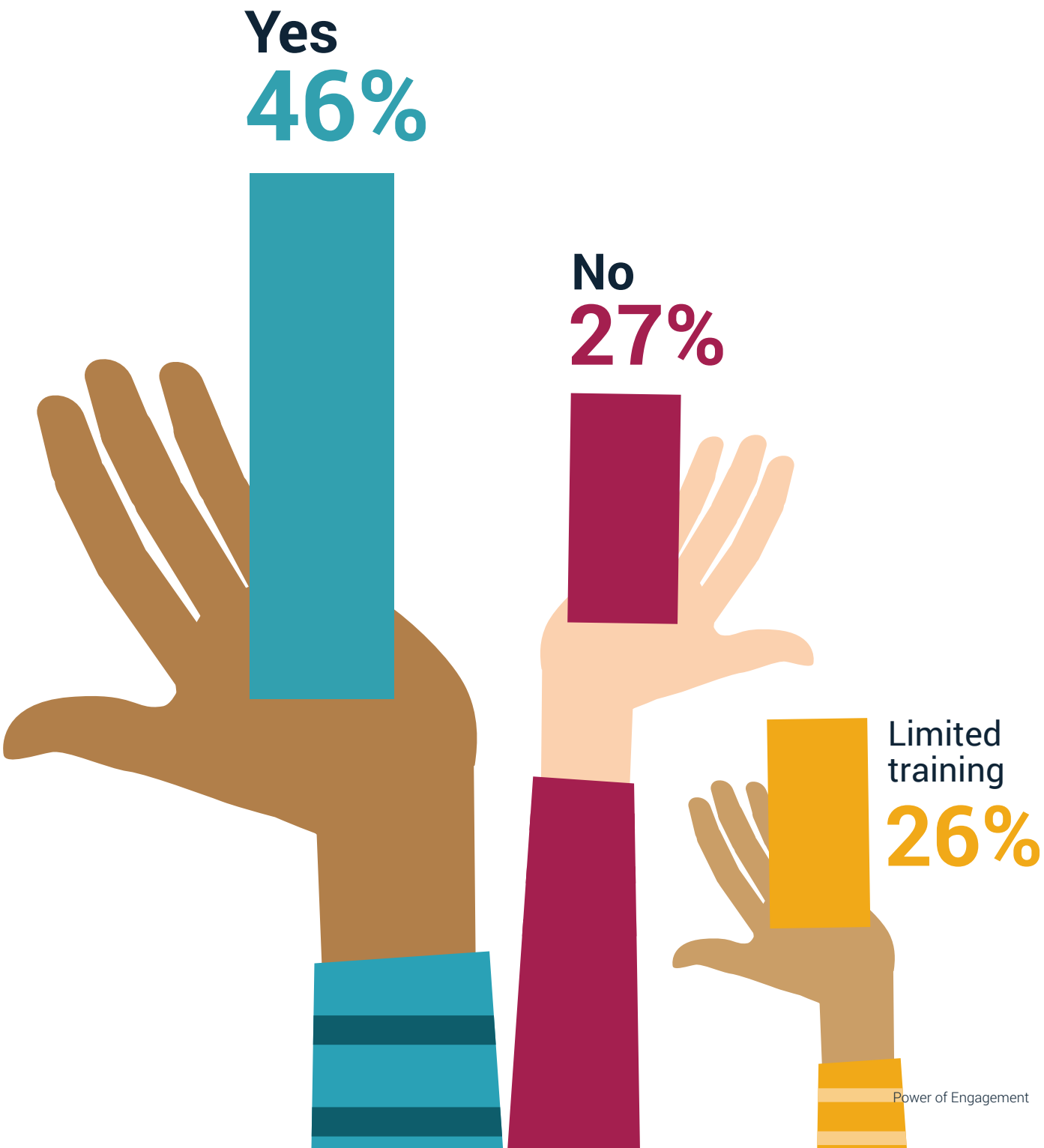
In recognition of peoples' Mental Health & Wellbeing needs, does your organisation currently offer its employees support in the form of:

When asked how their organisations offer employees support in recognition of peoples' Mental Health & Wellbeing needs, 79% of respondents cited 'regular interaction with other team members', 73% 'personal development plans' and 70% 'regular breaks from customer contacts throughout the day'.



Have your Managers received formal Mental Health & Wellbeing training?

46% of Managers have had formal Mental Health and Well Being Training and 26% 'Limited Training'.



As a Director/ Manager, do you feel your organisation has provided sufficient training and advice to enable you to manage, train and support your work-from-home teams

When asked whether they felt they had 'received sufficient training and advice to enable them to manage, train and support their work-from-home teams', 57% of Directors/Managers said 'No', although the majority of those recognise the efforts of their employer to achieve that goal.

No, but my organisation trying hard to

39%

Yes

43%

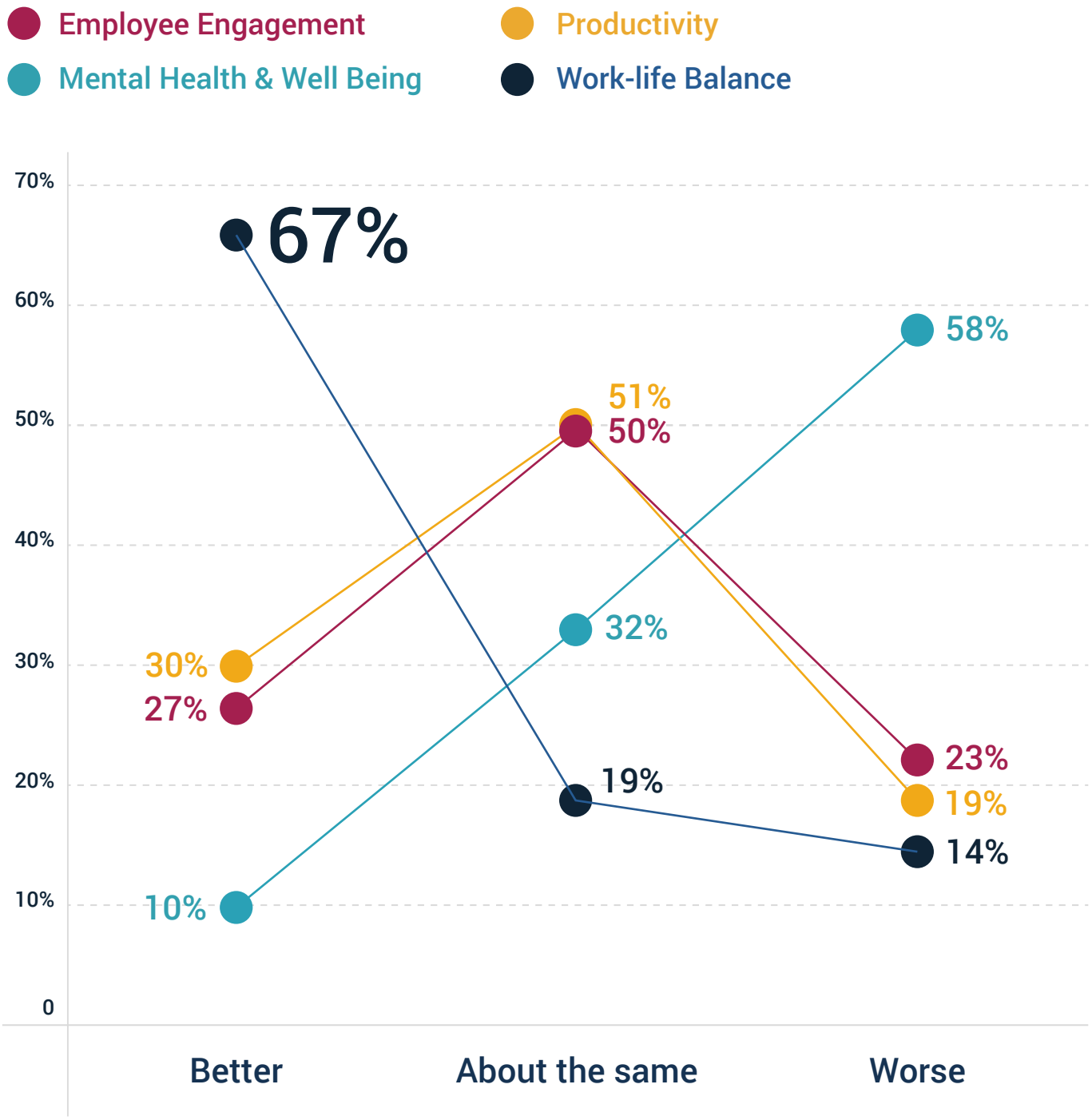
No

18%



How has work-from-home impacted your team(s) over the lockdown period

When asked 'how has work-from-home impacted your team(s) over the lockdown period?' 67% of Directors/Managers cited a 'better work-life-balance', 30% 'higher productivity' and 27% 'better employee engagement'. 58% however cited a negative impact on 'mental health and well being'.



COMPANY PROFILE

South West Contact Centre Forum

Established in 2008, the SWCCF covers one of the largest regions in the UK, which includes Bristol, Bath, Swindon, Cheltenham and Plymouth. The Forum delivers extensive support to the region's 250 employers who collectively employ circa 52,000 people in both the Public and Private sector. It repre-sents clients in the highly professional and regulated areas of financial and legal services, ICT, retail, utilities and creative sectors, and boasts some of the biggest companies in the UK.

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Training Enquiries
training@swcontactcentreforum.com

www.swccf.co.uk

south west contact centre forum

COMPANY PROFILE

Call North West

Where it all started…

October 2003, Call North West was launched with backing from the North West Regional Development Agency and the University of Central Lancashire. The aim of the project, to support the call and contact centre industry which spans across many sectors in the North West.

18 years later…

Call North West supports the 700 plus contact centres in the region through a diverse 12-month calendar of specialist events including the Annual Employee and Team Engagement Challenge, Quarterly Forums, Specialist Training, Contact Centre Conventions, Bi-monthly User Groups, culminating in the Annual Call North West Awards Ceremony, the showcase event of the year!

Call North West offers a huge support network for all contact centre professionals in the North West.

Our successes and achievements are centred around offering the contact centre industry key initiatives and events, all with the objective of sharing best practice, giving members insight and expertise to enable them enhance their businesses and position in the industry. Call North West develops close partnerships with member and supporting a vibrant membership community in the region.

Call North West is an excellent networking organisation, whatever the size of your contact centre business there is opportunity to be a part of a success contact centre forum, where businesses build a dynamic network and receive support for all areas of their contact centre business.

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Training Enquiries

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www.callnorthwest.org.uk

CALL NORTH WEST

COMPANY PROFILE

Sensée

Sensée is the UK's only specialist provider of flexible homeworking services using fully-employed advisers and managers.

Our services include:

- HomeAgent-based contact centre outsourcing: We help well-known organisations (including Allianz Partners, ageas, BUPA and several Government departments) improve business performance, cut costs and provide brilliant customer service. Our award-winning team of 1300 service advisors and support/management delivers service, sales, retention, disaster recovery & tech support services by phone, email, webchat, text & social media. Sensée is ISO27001 accredited and has achieved PCI-DSS and GDPR compliance.
- Consulting and Best Practice: Sensée's experienced consultants deliver a broad portfolio of Benchmarking, Consulting, Discovery and Workshop services.
- CloudWorks™ Ecosystem: Our tech platforms support your homeworkers' entire Employee Lifecycle - from recruitment and on-boarding to scheduling, training, communication and management - whilst ensuring the most rigorous Infosec compliance.

Sensée's UK-wide recruitment reach and remote employee-centric ecosystem creates accessible careers for people anywhere and sustainability for our planet and communities.

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sensée

THE WORK-FROM-HOME SPECIALISTS