



Arts Pay NJ 2025

Full Survey Findings Report

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BAKERRICHARDS



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Cover image: Tiny Beautiful Things at Mile Square Theatre
Photo Credit: Daniel Seth Pagel

This study at a glance (Arts Pay NJ 2025)

Arts Pay NJ 2025 is the second statewide compensation and workforce study of New Jersey's nonprofit arts sector, building on the 2023 baseline.

The 2025 survey expands coverage (freelancers, teaching artists, volunteers, and university/government-affiliated workers) and adds deeper questions on workload, well-being, and internships.

Arts work often spans multiple jobs and mixed terms; the same job title can reflect very different pay, hours, benefits, and security.

See How to read this report for guidance on interpreting small subgroups.



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How to Read This Report

Using this report

Use the **Contents** to jump to sections; each section begins with a brief summary before the detailed slides.

What the results represent

This report summarizes responses from the 2025 Arts Pay NJ Individual Survey and describes patterns among respondents.

Note that results may not represent every arts worker in New Jersey; findings can be influenced by who chose to respond.

Comparing 2023 and 2025

Year-to-year differences may reflect both real change and differences in sample size, respondent mix, and the expanded scope of the 2025 survey (which added freelancers, teaching artists, volunteers, and university/government-affiliated workers). Where possible, comparisons are made within the same employment type. All 2023 comparisons throughout this report should be read with this caveat in mind.

How to interpret subgroup findings

Always check the subgroup sample size (n).

Smaller samples (n) mean less precise estimates.

Treat small differences between groups as directional unless sample sizes are strong.

Subgroup sample size guide

Subgroup n	Read as...	Approx. MOE (±)
< 30	Interpret as indicative only; do not draw firm conclusions	~18–20%
30–49	Interpret with caution; small differences may not be meaningful	~14–18%
50–99	Suitable for general comparisons; avoid over-interpreting small differences	~10–14%
≥ 100	More reliable for comparisons across groups	≤ ~10%

Introduction

About Arts Pay NJ (scope and method)

Arts Pay NJ is a statewide compensation and workforce study of New Jersey's nonprofit arts sector. The project was launched in 2023 (baseline) and returns in 2025 to track change and identify persistent gaps.

Working with research partner Baker Richards, we collected data from both organizations and individuals to provide a snapshot of pay, benefits, and workforce experiences across the sector.

Eligible organizations were New Jersey nonprofits whose primary mission/programming is the arts. For-profit arts and history organizations were not included; future expansion may be considered.

The study was composed of two phases:

1. **Organization survey** — payroll and role compensation data
2. **Individual worker survey** — employment patterns, demographics, benefits experience, and open-text perspectives

Limitations: The individual survey captures people working in the arts during the fieldwork period and does not include those who may have already left the sector. Results describe the respondent pool and may not represent the full New Jersey nonprofit arts workforce; findings can be influenced by who chose to respond. The 2025 survey expanded eligibility (adding freelancers, teaching artists, volunteers, and university/government-affiliated workers), which should be considered when comparing with 2023 results. Subgroup analyses involving small samples (see "How to Read This Report") should be treated as directional.

Key Stats

Individual Worker Survey

The individual worker survey was in field from July 24, 2025 to October 9, 2025

It was targeted specifically at people working in the arts during that period

It does not capture responses from those who might already have left the field

In total we received **534 responses**

Organization Survey

The organization survey was in field from July 28, 2025 to October 4, 2025

It was sent to the appropriate person within each organization who would have access to payroll information

In total we received submissions from 123 organizations, accounting for **6,521 personnel across the sector**

Project sponsors and partners (2025)

In addition to the financial commitment of New Jersey's arts service organizations (listed below), this project is made possible by generous funding from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, a partner agency of the National Endowment for the Arts



Made possible by funds from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, a partner agency of the National Endowment for the Arts.

New Jersey arts service organizations



Data Collection and Analysis by Baker Richards

[Baker Richards](#) is an independent research firm that has been contracted to collect, anonymize, and analyze the data from Arts Pay NJ.

Based in Cambridge, UK, but working around the world, the Baker Richards team of consultants, researchers, and developers share a passion for the arts and a strong focus on detail. They have worked with hundreds of organizations, including many of the world's leading theaters, opera houses, orchestras, and art museums.

Among other projects, Baker Richards is known for their multi-year partnership with Arts Professional in collecting and reporting on data in the [Arts Pay UK project](#).

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The Arts Pay NJ Compensation Dashboard

The result of the Organization Survey is an interactive Compensation Dashboard, which is free to use and can be accessed [here](#)

The screenshot displays the ARTSPAY NJ 2025 dashboard. At the top left is the logo "ARTSPAY NJ 2025". Below it are five main menu items: "Executive Summary" (with a clipboard icon), "Organization Stats" (with a bar chart icon), "Compensation Stats" (with a dollar sign icon), "Budget Stats" (with a calculator icon), and "Compare Years" (with a calendar icon). Below these is an "About" button with an information icon. At the bottom right, a smartphone mockup shows the dashboard interface. The footer contains logos for ArtRide New Jersey, ARTS ED NJ (Many Partners. One Voice.), DANCE NEW JERSEY (PROUD MEMBER OF), New Jersey Theatre Alliance (Supporting Theatre - Engaging Audiences), New Jersey Association of Museums, and SJCA SOUTH JERSEY CULTURAL ALLIANCE. A text block states: "ArtsPay 2025 is a project of New Jersey's Arts Service Organizations, listed above, and the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, a partner agency of the National Endowment for the Arts." A circular seal on the left of this text reads "NEW JERSEY STATE COUNCIL ON THE ARTS EST. 1966".

Overview of findings

Compensation and pay

Compensation is experienced as a bundle: wages interact with employment type, benefits, role level, and household reliance on arts income. Pay rises with role level and organizational resources, but progression does not reliably translate into perceived sustainability. About half of respondents report multiple jobs, shaping how pay and benefits are experienced and measured. Modest shifts since 2023 toward full-time and permanent roles have not consistently translated into improved stability.

Hours and workload

Full-time does not always mean stability: overtime eligibility is uncommon, and many respondents describe workload norms where contracted hours do not reflect actual time required. A majority report working beyond expected hours, with the pattern increasing alongside seniority and responsibility. Workload strain takes different forms: mid/senior full-time respondents often describe burnout linked to responsibility load and understaffing; freelance and self-employed respondents more often describe unpaid labor, boundaryless schedules, and inconsistent protections.

Benefits and transparency

Benefit access varies sharply: paid leave is relatively common, but parental leave, retirement contributions, reimbursements, and employer healthcare support remain uneven. Benefit gaps directly affect take-home value, particularly where healthcare costs erode wage gains. Uncertainty about benefit structures highlights transparency as a workforce issue. Expanded coverage in 2025 reveals persistent affordability and equity barriers in teaching artist work, project-based roles, and internships.

What respondents describe

Recurring themes across open-text responses

Hidden labor is described as normalized — after-hours contact, event weeks, and "always on" expectations are reported across role levels.

Benefits insecurity is experienced as pay erosion — healthcare cost increases and unclear employer contributions can cancel out raises.

Pay progression feels inconsistent — experience is not always reflected in offers, and pathways to advancement are often unclear.

Internships are described as necessary but raise concerns about fairness, with respondents noting a tension between professional development and exploitation.

Transparency is a differentiator — clear budgets, pay bands, and expectations are described as good practice where they exist.

Sustainability is not evenly distributed

Perceptions of underpayment differ by career stage: from affordability concerns at entry level to responsibility-reward mismatches at mid-career and stagnation pressures among senior respondents (see Section 4 for detail).

Sustainability is shaped by household context: reliance on arts income and living situation vary, suggesting some workers may be more supported than others in their ability to remain in the field.

Less standardized roles face greater risk: teaching artist and project-based work is described as less protected, with unpaid prep time, variable contracting, and limited benefits.

What changed between 2023 and 2025

Salaries have risen across role levels since the 2023 baseline, though gains are uneven: senior roles saw the largest real increase (+9%), while entry-level salaries barely outpaced inflation (+3%) and the hourly median was unchanged in nominal terms – a real-terms decline.

Despite these reported gains, respondents' perceptions of pay adequacy remain high relative to 2023. Insurance access has seen modest improvement, but the broader structural conditions that shape how pay is experienced – overtime eligibility, hours worked, workload norms, and non-insurance benefit gaps – have not shifted substantially. This suggests that growth, where it has occurred, may be offset by rising costs and persistent workload pressures.

Note that freelance and teaching artist roles are reported in detail for the first time in 2025 and do not have a 2023 baseline.

Full-time median salary	↑	\$64,000 → \$71,750 (+12% nominal; +6% after inflation)
Entry-level median	↑	\$44,000 → \$47,750 (+9% nominal; +3% after inflation)
Mid-level median	↑	\$57,950 → \$65,000 (+12% nominal; +6% after inflation)
Senior median	↑	\$76,355 → \$87,749 (+15% nominal; +9% after inflation)
Hourly median (individual)	—	Unchanged at \$25 (a real-terms decline)
Hours worked	—	Gap between contracted and actual hours persists; overrun patterns similar to 2023
Perceived pay adequacy	—	Perceptions of underpayment remain high relative to 2023 despite reported gains
Overtime eligibility	—	Unchanged: 82% of full-time respondents report no overtime eligibility
Insurance access	↑	Small net movement toward employer-provided coverage (+5–8pp across categories)
Non-insurance benefits	→	Some shifts, but gaps remain in retirement, reimbursements, professional development
Paid leave	—	Broadly consistent
Job seeking	↑	Remains elevated, particularly among younger respondents
Volunteering	↓	39% → 33% reporting regular volunteering

Section 1 – Respondent Profile

This section describes who responded and the employment realities shaping compensation and sustainability

Section 1 – Respondent Profile Summary

Respondents span the nonprofit arts workforce across career stages and work arrangements. In the primary job they reported on, most describe full-time employment, with meaningful representation of part-time, freelance/contract, and self-employed work. Role levels are concentrated in middle and senior positions, with lower representation of entry-level/early-career and teaching artist/freelancer roles.

Employment structure and “portfolio” patterns

Multi-job work is common in this respondent pool. Among those who answered the "how many jobs within the arts" question (n=290), 77.6% report two or more arts jobs, meaning many respondents' overall income and workload extend beyond their "primary job."

Income reliance and sustainability context

Among those providing a numeric estimate (n=410), 29.3% report arts work is <40% of household income and 70.7% report it is ≥40% - a key context for interpreting sustainability and retention risk.

Workload variability shows up early in the profile

Full-time respondents often describe seasonal peaks, while freelance/self-employed respondents describe hidden and unpaid time that “hours per week” questions may not fully capture.

Respondents describe workload variability that isn't fully captured by contracted hours

“Heavier workload during peak seasons (fall-spring, particularly close to openings/larger events)”

- Age 18 to 29, Transgender, Full time employee

“I used to play 150+ gigs/year. Recently I cut back drastically for personal reasons.”

- Age 40 to 49, Man, Freelance/Contract worker

“These questions really don't work for gigging musicians who do concerts and performances in various settings where the prep time is in the logistics: driving to the gig and setting up equipment”

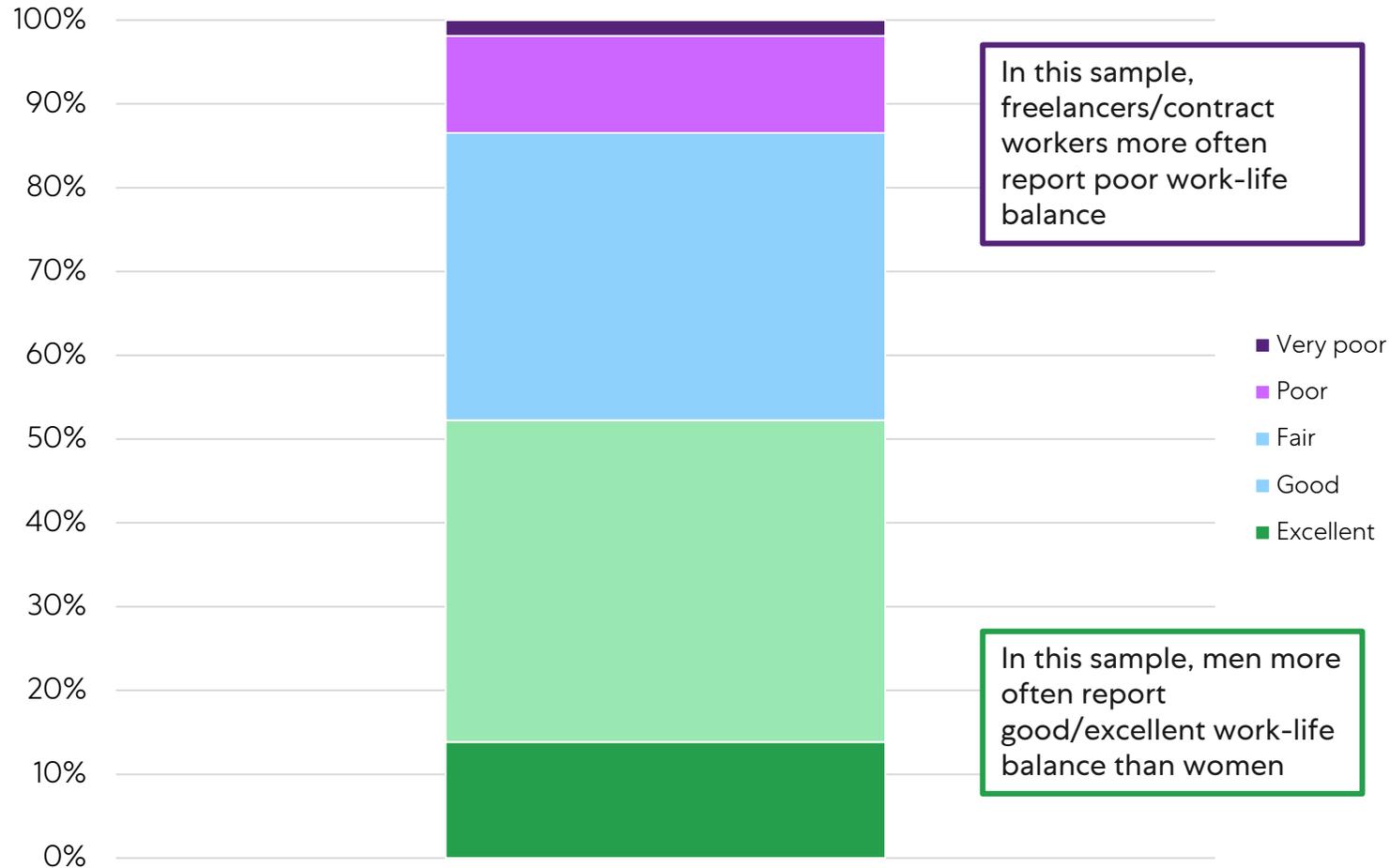
- Age 60+, Woman, Self-employed

“Although my contract says 40 hours I am often working more than that because we are understaffed and things are constantly being missed and require immediate solutions to fix. I love my job but I'm exhausted because of it.”

- Age 30 to 39, Woman, Full time employee

Work-life balance is mixed, with notable strain among freelancers and women

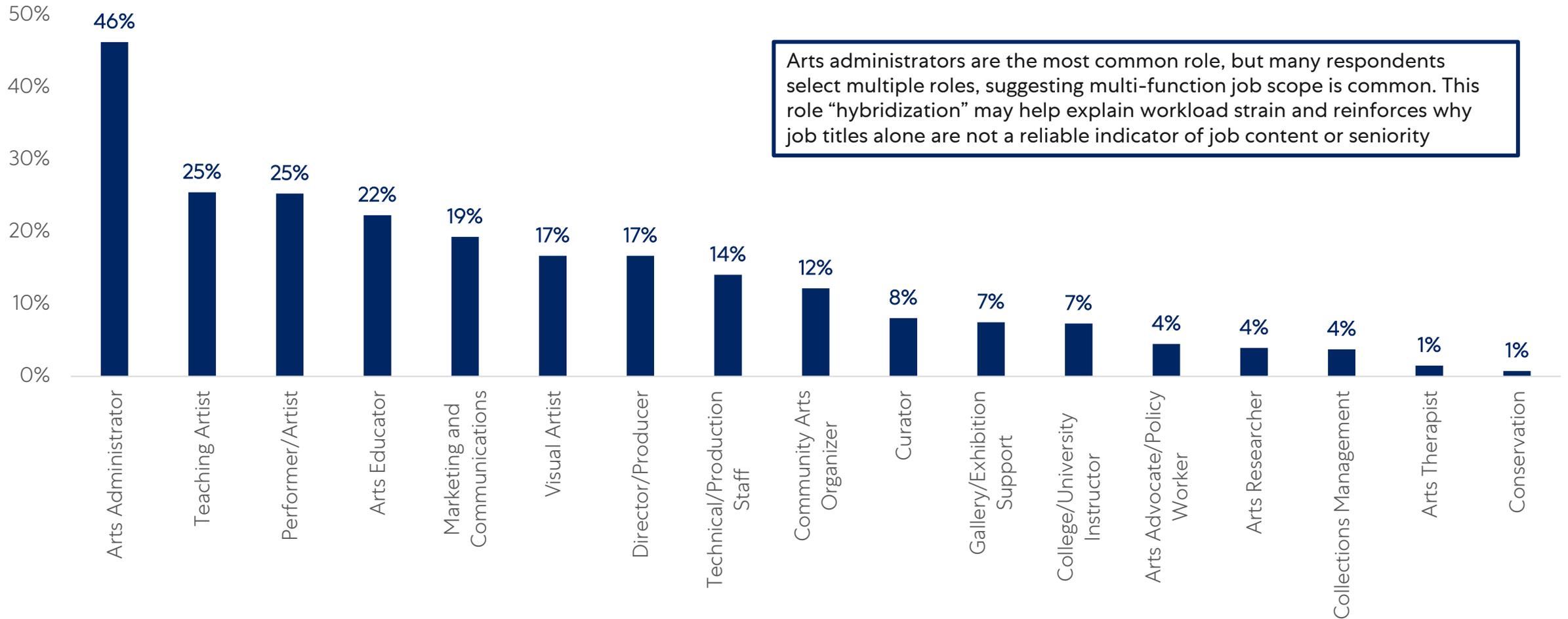
How would you rate your current work-life balance in your arts career?



“Sometimes when we have shows or events I could work over 50–70 hours... multiple weeks in a row... it really wipes me out.”
- Mid-level; full-time; one job in arts

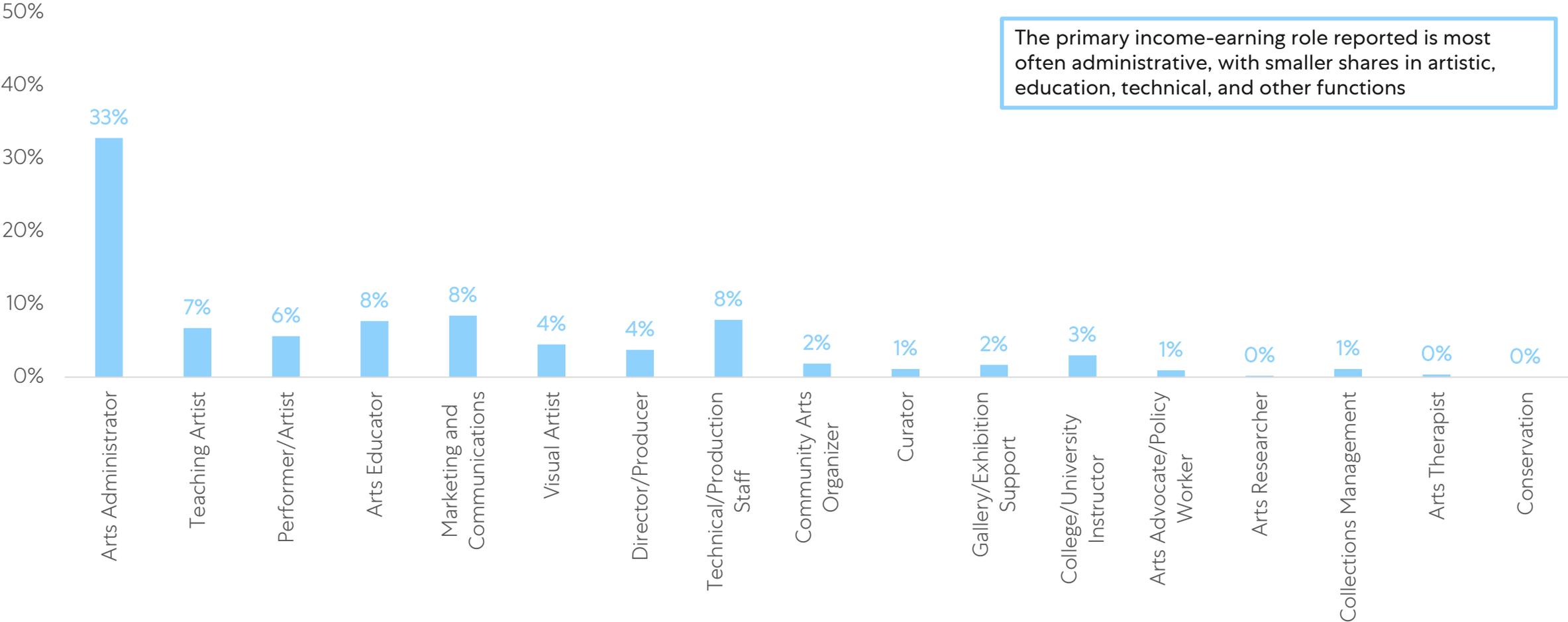
Many respondents wear multiple hats, suggesting hybrid work as a sector norm

Please select all the roles that represent your professional work in the arts sector.
(Select all that apply)



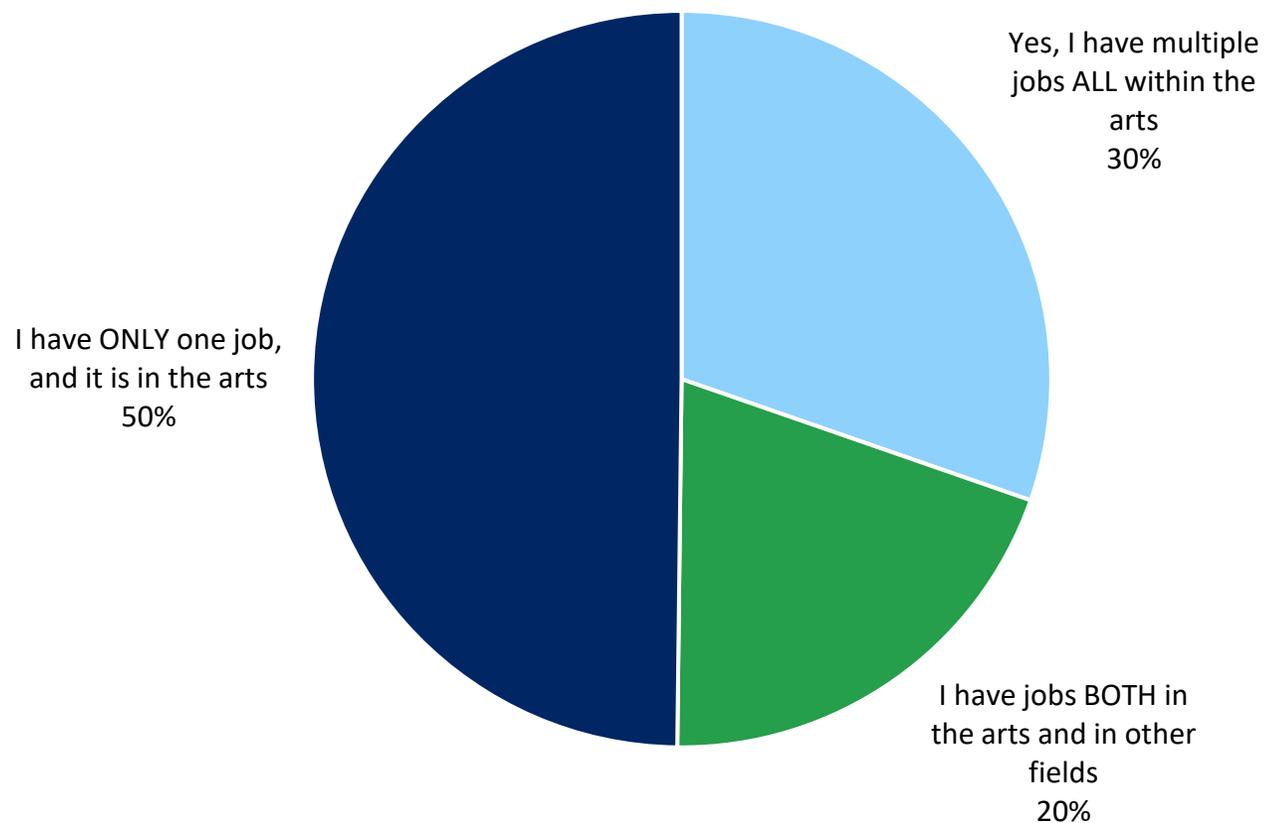
Primary income-earning roles skew administrative, with smaller shares in other functions

From the roles you selected above, which ONE is your primary income-earning role?

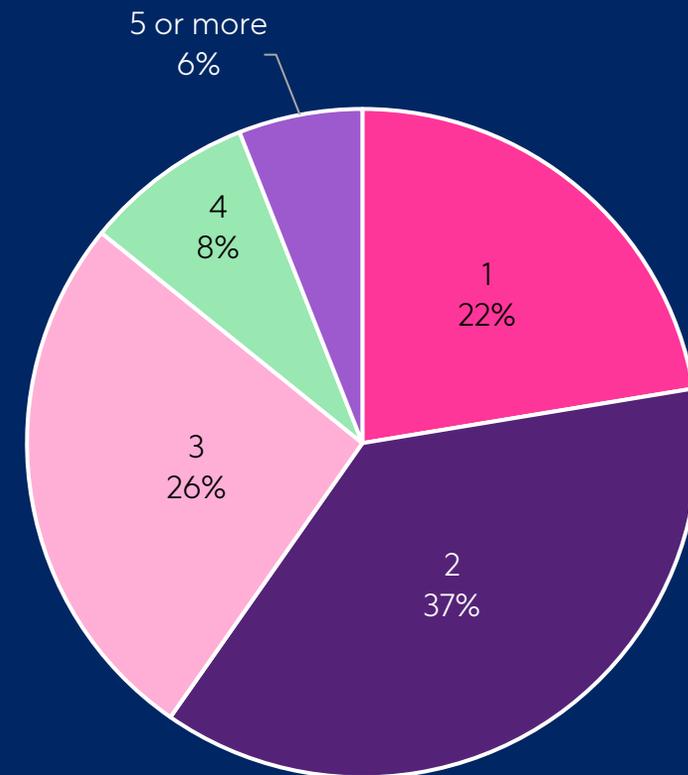


Half of respondents report holding more than one job (in the arts and/or other fields)

Do you currently work more than one job, either in the arts or in another field? (Select the option that best describes your situation.)

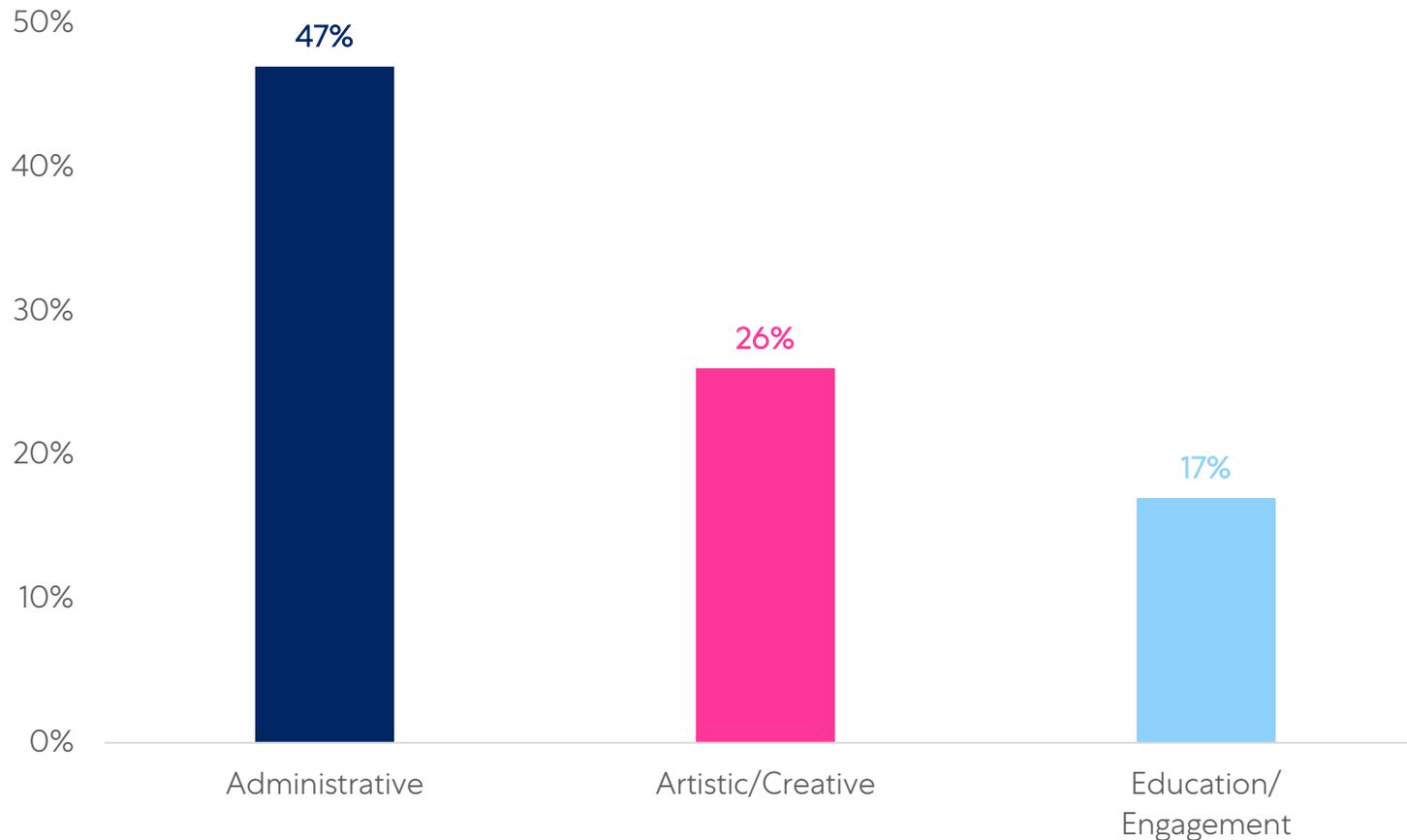


For those with multiple jobs: How many jobs within the arts do you have?



Job functions are concentrated in administrative roles

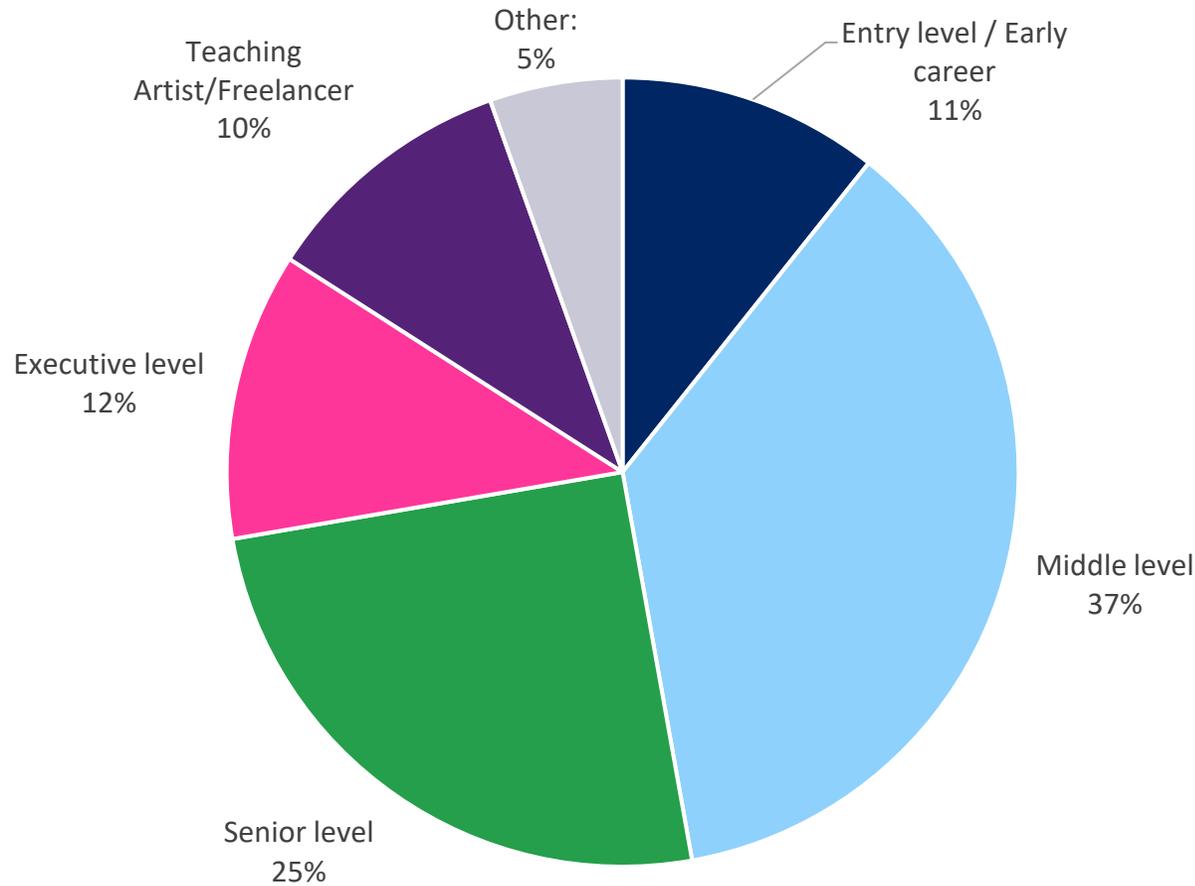
To help us categorize your role, please select the primary category that best describes your job function within the arts sector:



This concentration provides a useful lens for interpreting sector-wide pay narratives: medians later in the report are weighted toward administrative roles.

Respondents span career stages, with the largest share mid-level

Which of the following best describes the level of your role?



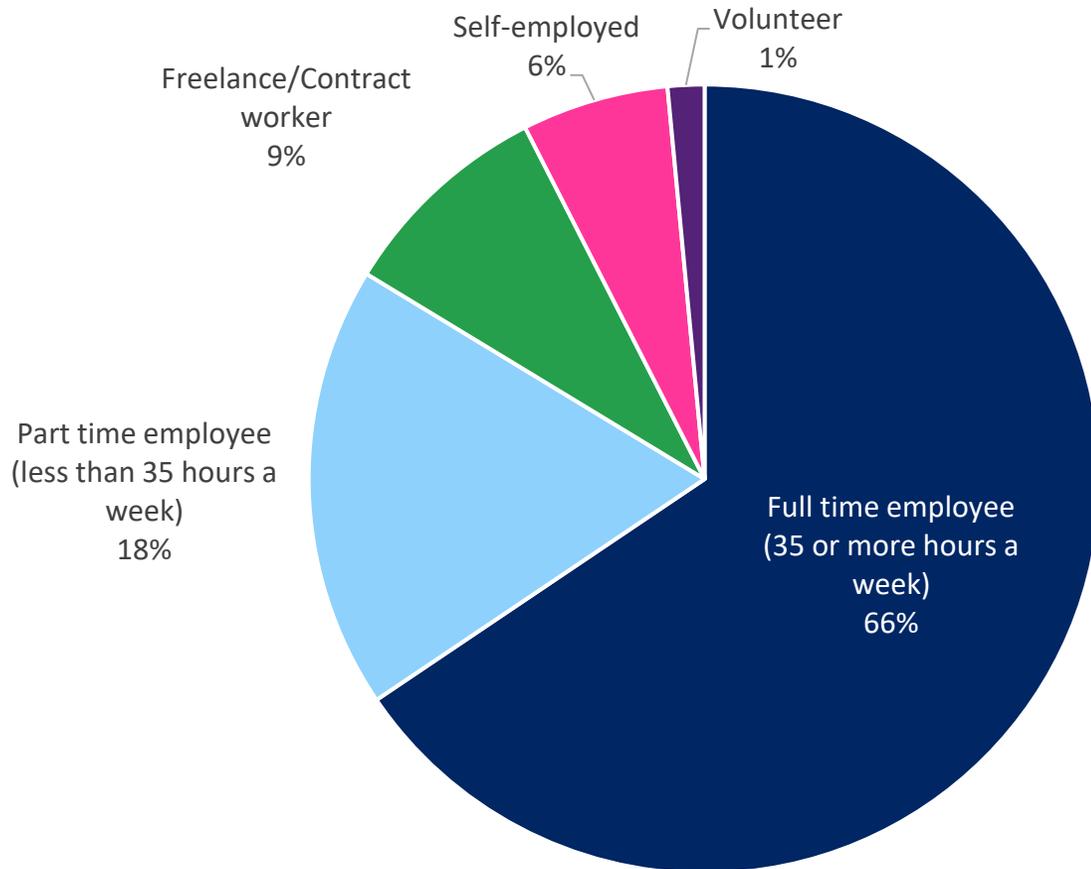
The respondent pool skews mid-level and senior, with fewer entry-level and executive respondents.

Previous survey:

- Entry – 13%
- Middle – 35%
- Senior – 23%
- Executive – 16%
- Teaching Artist / Freelance – N/A

Most respondents are full-time employees

Thinking about your primary arts job, which of the following best describes your terms of employment?



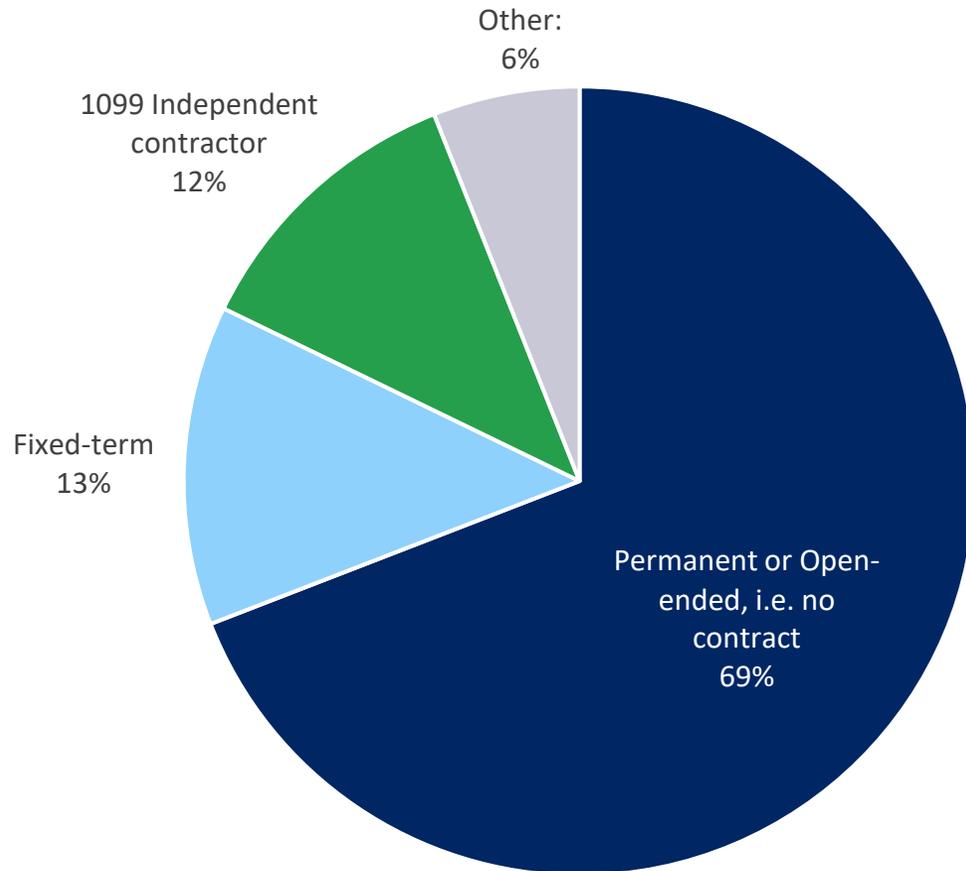
Most respondents describe their primary job as full-time. Compared with 2023, the full-time share is somewhat higher in this respondent pool, while part-time and contract/self-employed work remain meaningful segments

Previous Survey:

- Full-time – 59%
- Part-time – 16%
- Freelance/Contract worker – 13%
- Self-employed 9%
- Volunteer – N/A

Most respondents report permanent/open-ended employment

Which of the following best describes the basis on which you are employed?



Most respondents describe their primary job as permanent/open-ended, suggesting the respondent pool is anchored in ongoing organizational operations, even as some individuals also maintain project-based or freelance work alongside their main role.

Previous survey:

- Permanent or Open-ended – 67%
- Fixed term – 10%
- 1099 – 15%

Terms of employment against basis of employment

	Permanent or Open-ended	1099 Independent contractor	Fixed-term	Other	Total
Full-time employee	53%	2%	9%	2%	66%
Part-time employee	11%	2%	3%	1%	18%
Freelance / Contract worker	1%	5%	1%	1%	9%
Self-employed	2%	2%	0%	1%	6%
Volunteer	1%	0%	0%	1%	1%
Total	69%	12%	13%	6%	534

In respondents' **primary job**, the most common arrangement is full-time and permanent/open-ended (about half of respondents). Other combinations point to where stability and protections may be thinner (e.g., part-time permanent roles; fixed-term full-time roles; 1099 arrangements)

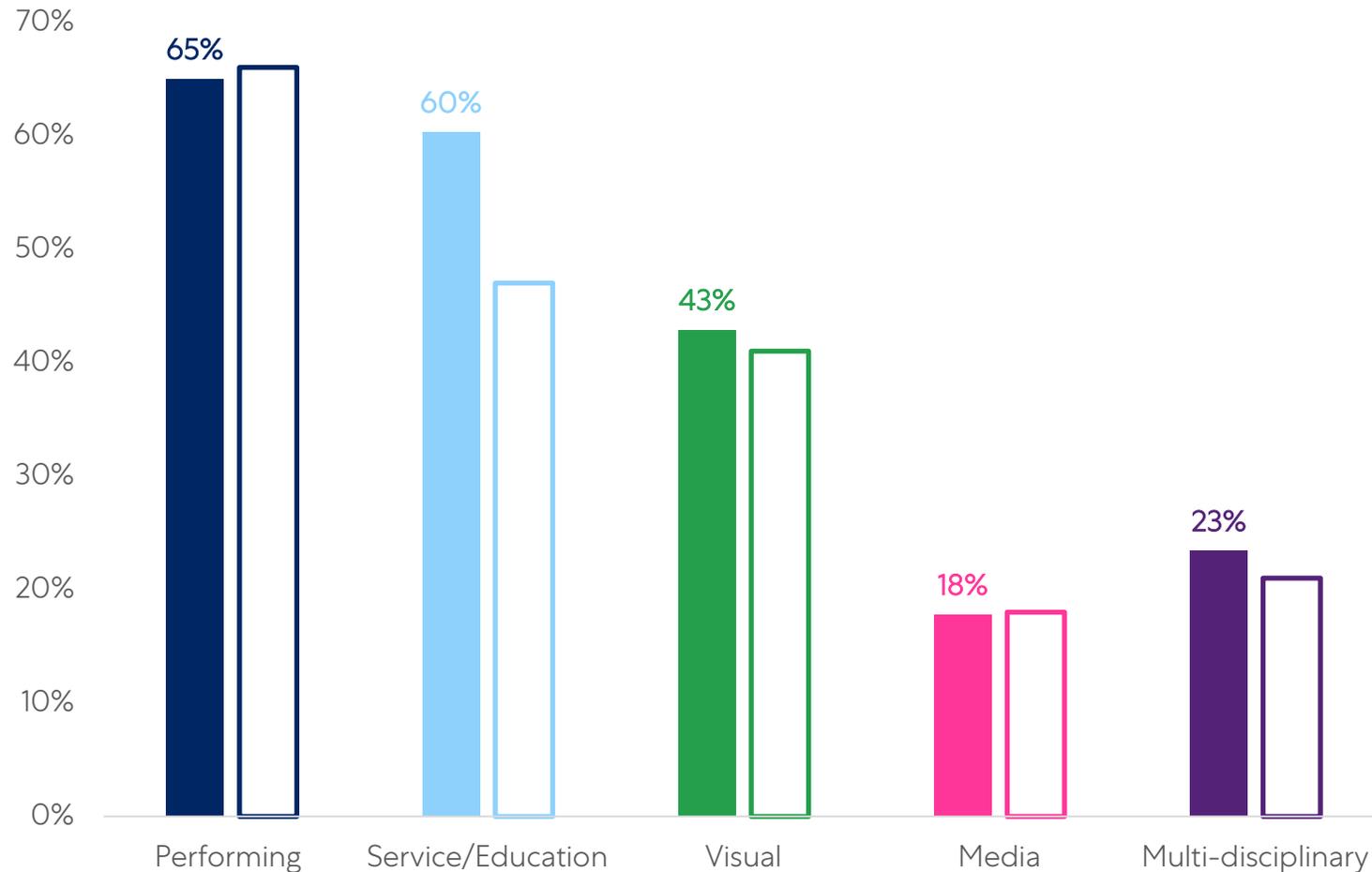
Compared with 2023, full-time and permanent categories are somewhat higher

	Permanent or Open-ended	1099 Independent contractor	Fixed-term	Other	Total
Full-time employee	+3%	+1%	+2%	0%	+7%
Part-time employee	0%	+1%	+1%	0%	+2%
Freelance / Contract worker	-1%	-2%	-1%	-1%	-4%
Self-employed	-3%	-4%	0%	0%	-6%
Volunteer	N/A				
Total	+2%	-3%	+3%	-1%	-276

Compared with 2023, this respondent pool shows a modest shift toward full-time and permanent/open-ended categories.

Performing, service/education, and visual arts remain prominent

How would you classify your primary arts job? (Select all that apply)



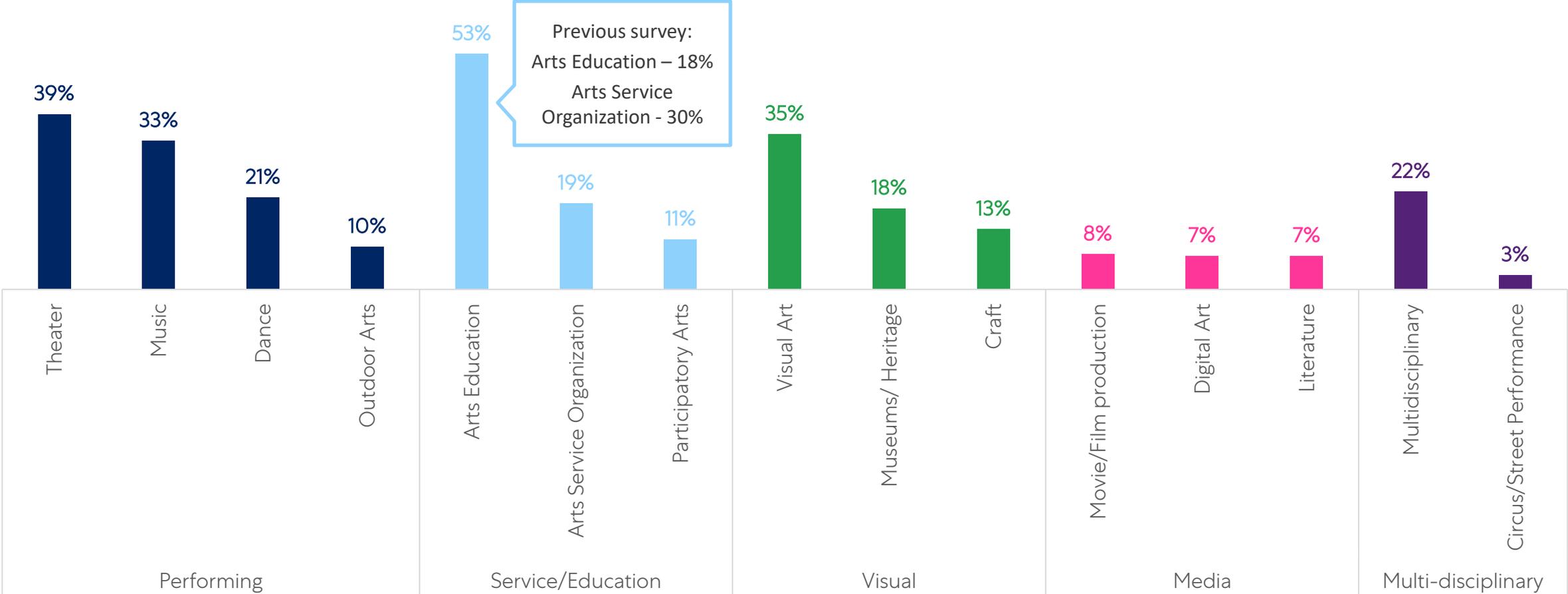
Respondents represent a mix of artforms and organizational types, providing context for later comparisons in pay, benefits, and workload norms across segments

Previous survey:

- Performing – 66%
- Service/Education – 47%
- Visual – 41%
- Media – 18%
- Multi-disciplinary – 21%

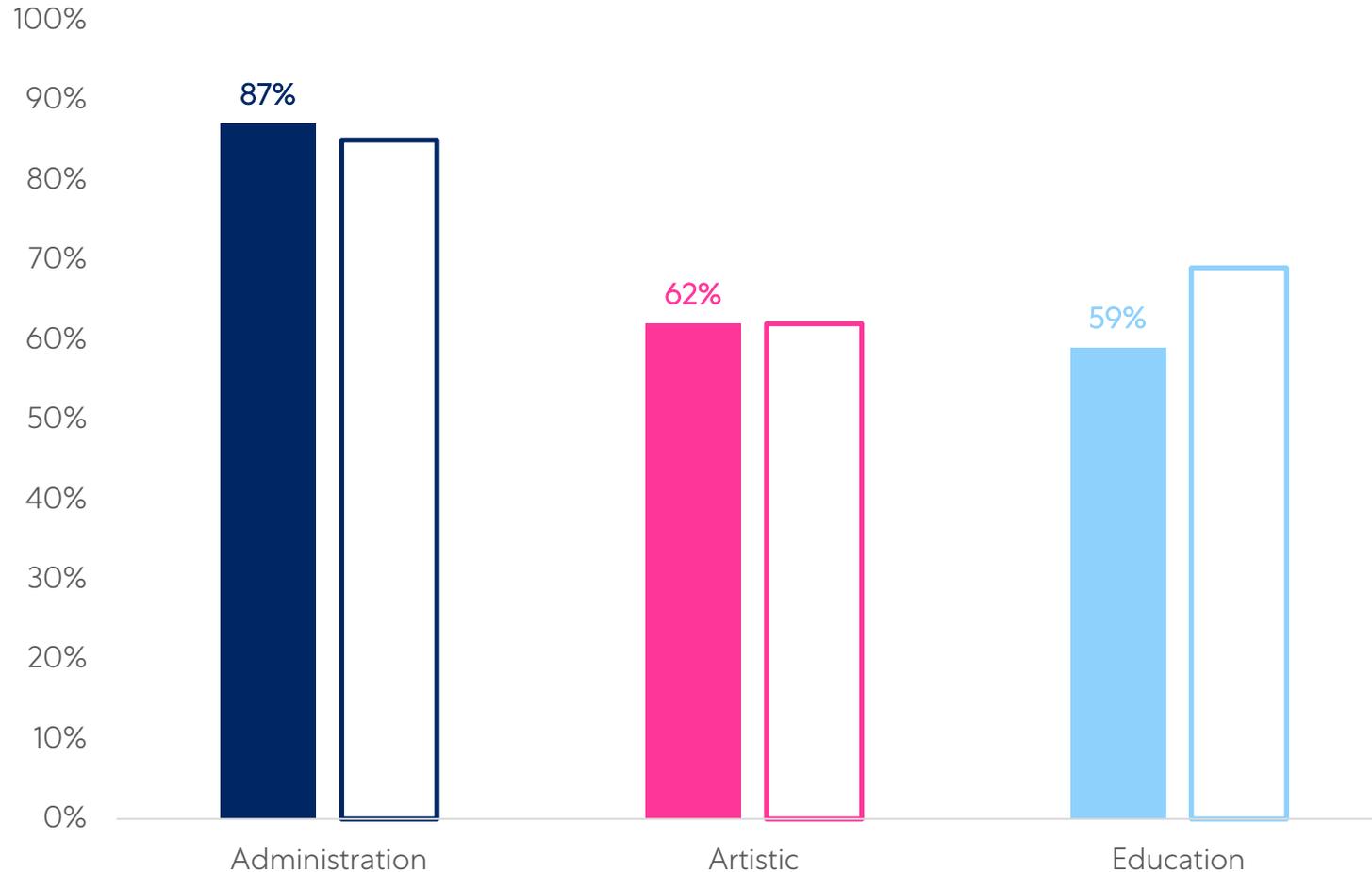
Arts education and theater appear prominently within the art-form mix

Which of the following art forms are you or your organization primarily involved in?
(Select all that apply)



Respondents report responsibilities spanning administration, artistic, and education

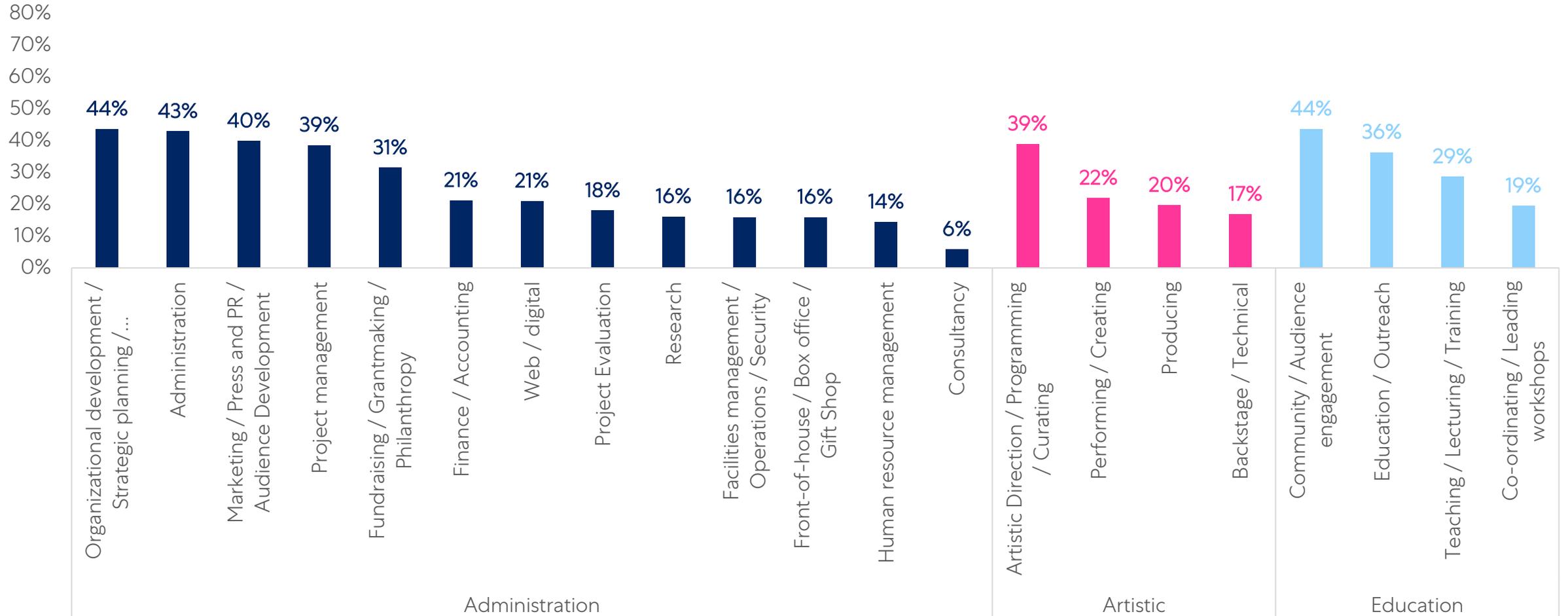
In your primary arts job, which of the following does your work cover? (Select all that apply)



Respondents commonly report responsibilities beyond their core job label. This reinforces the importance of analyzing workload and benefits alongside pay: the same can represent very different demands and expectations depending on role breadth

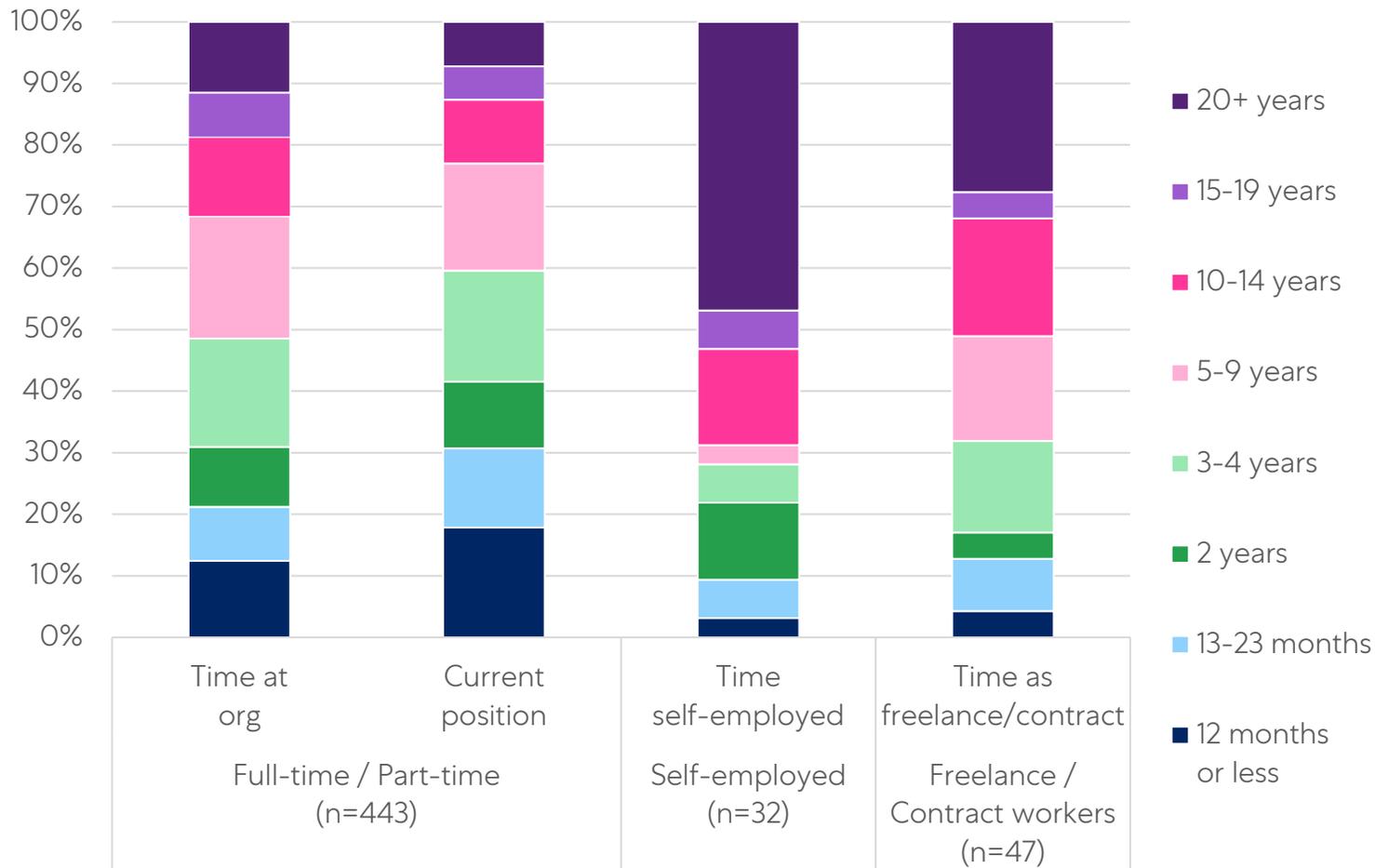
Work content spans strategic planning, engagement, and administration

In your primary arts job, which of the following does your work cover? (Select all that apply)



Tenure varies; the workforce includes both newcomers and long-tenured staff

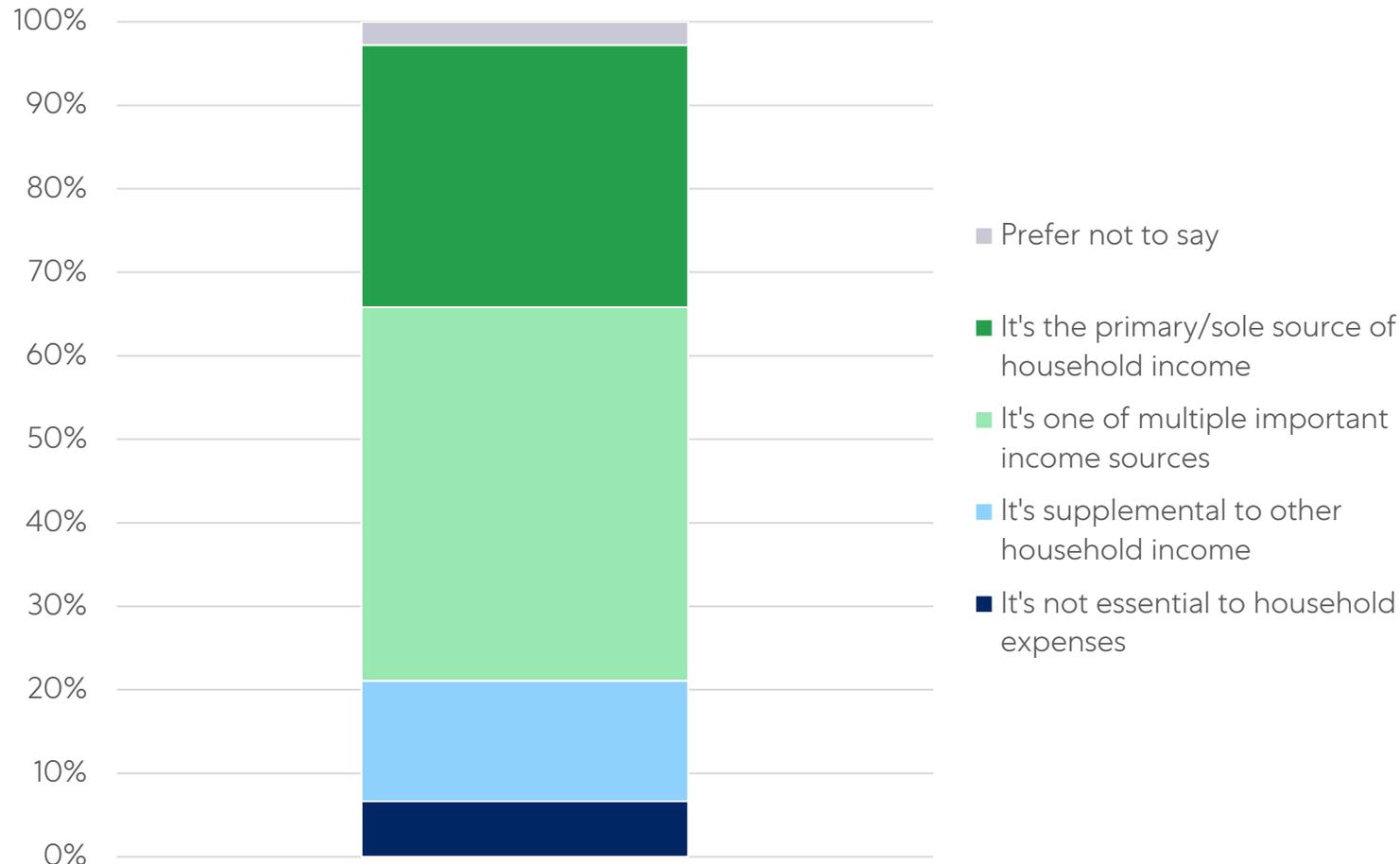
How long have you been employed at your primary organization?



Respondents include both recent entrants and long-tenured staff. This is important for interpreting pay progression, workload expectations, and retention. Seniority does not consistently translate into perceived sustainability

Less than a third of respondents report arts income as primary source of household income

How important is your arts income to your household's financial stability?

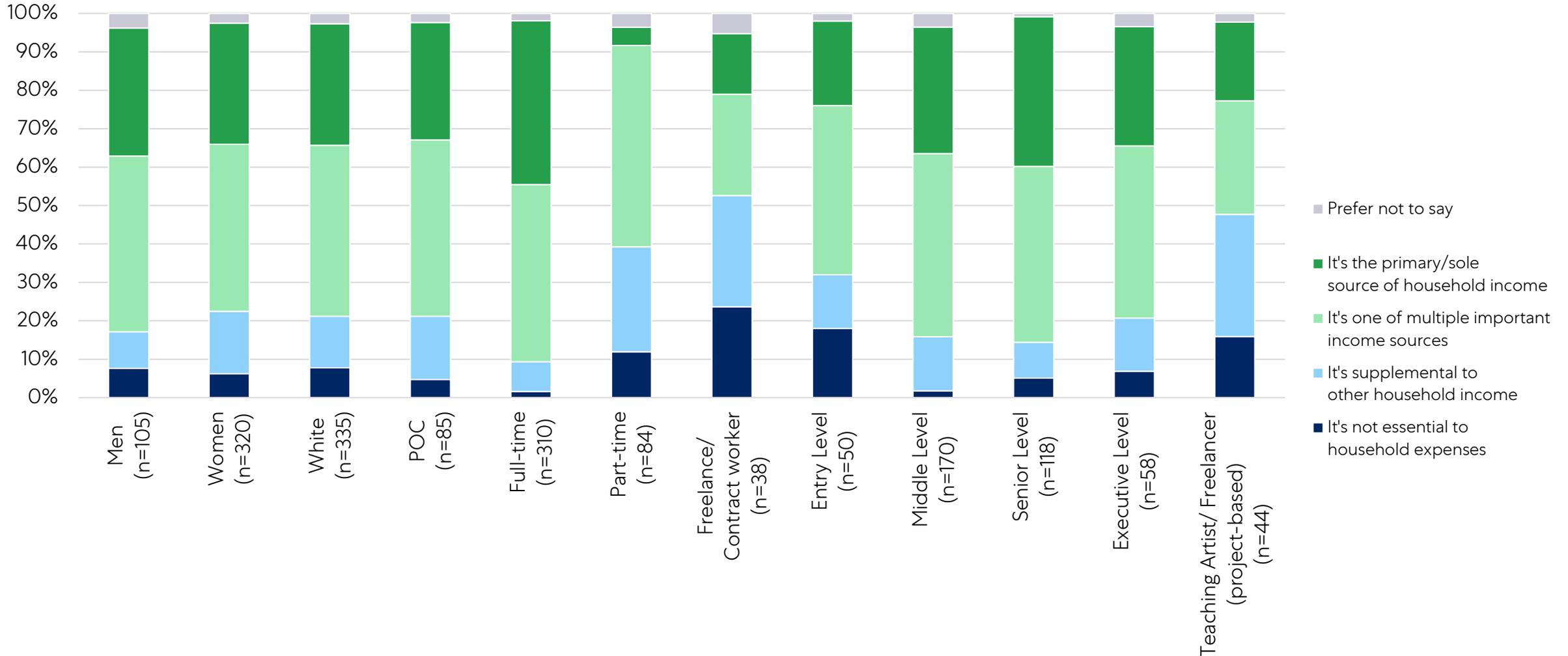


Household reliance is mixed in this respondent pool (n=237): fewer than one-third describe arts income as the primary or sole household source. Helpful for interpreting sustainability and retention patterns later in the report. Many respondents' ability to remain in arts work may depend on household income beyond their own arts earnings.

Household reliance on arts income varies across subgroups

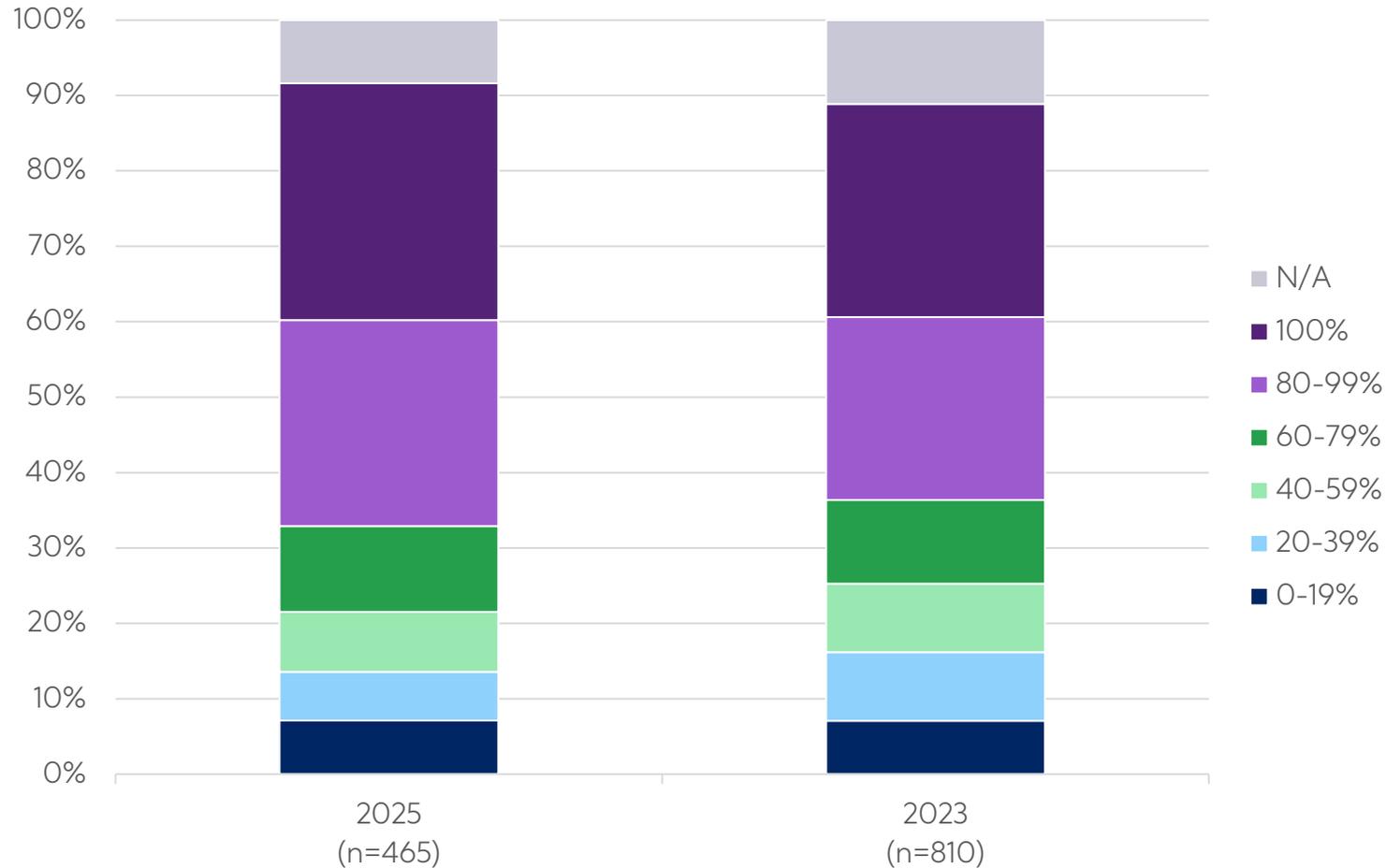
Arts work frequently functions as one of multiple household income sources, even for full-time and senior respondents

How important is your arts income to your household's financial stability?



Most respondents derive the majority of individual income from their primary arts job

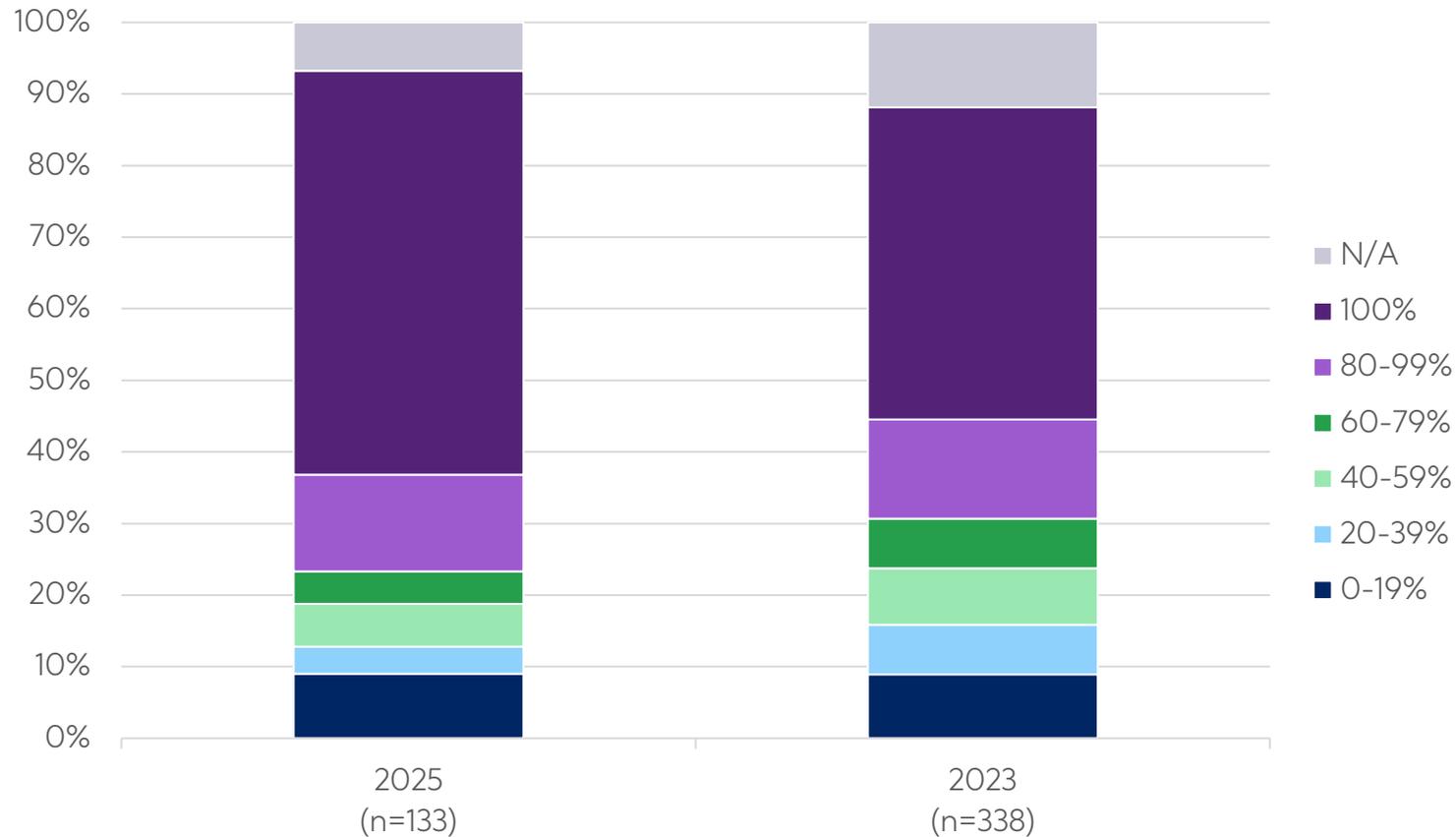
Approximately what percentage of your individual income comes from your primary arts job?



Most respondents report their primary arts job provides the majority of their individual income, broadly consistent with 2023

Extending to all jobs in the arts this increases, but a minority still generate more income from other sources

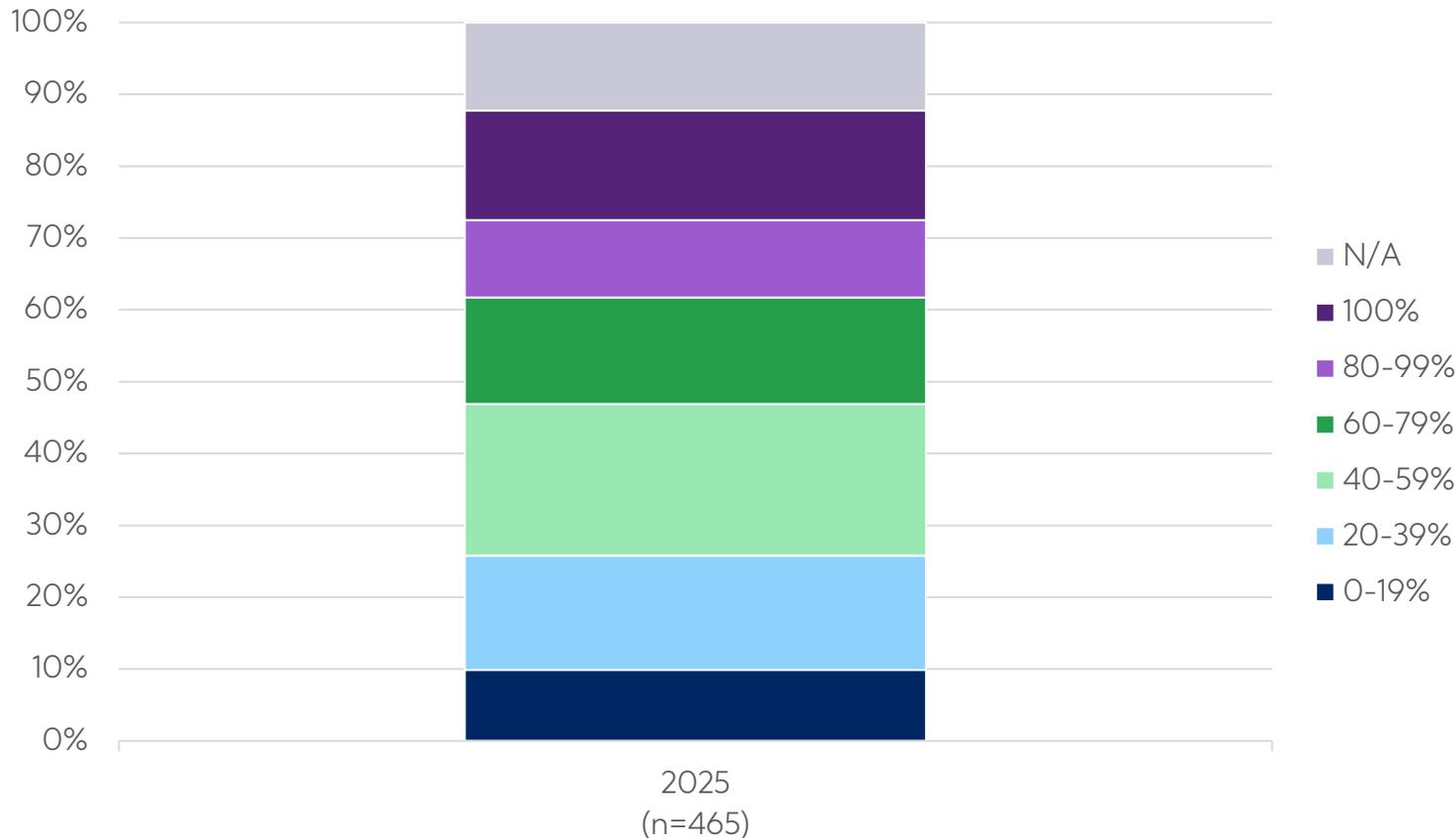
And approximately, what percentage of your individual income comes from ALL of your jobs in the arts?



When respondents include all arts jobs, more report earning most of their income from arts work, yet a minority still report most income comes from outside the arts.

Share of household income from all arts jobs

Approximately, what percentage of your HOUSEHOLD income comes from ALL of your jobs in the arts?

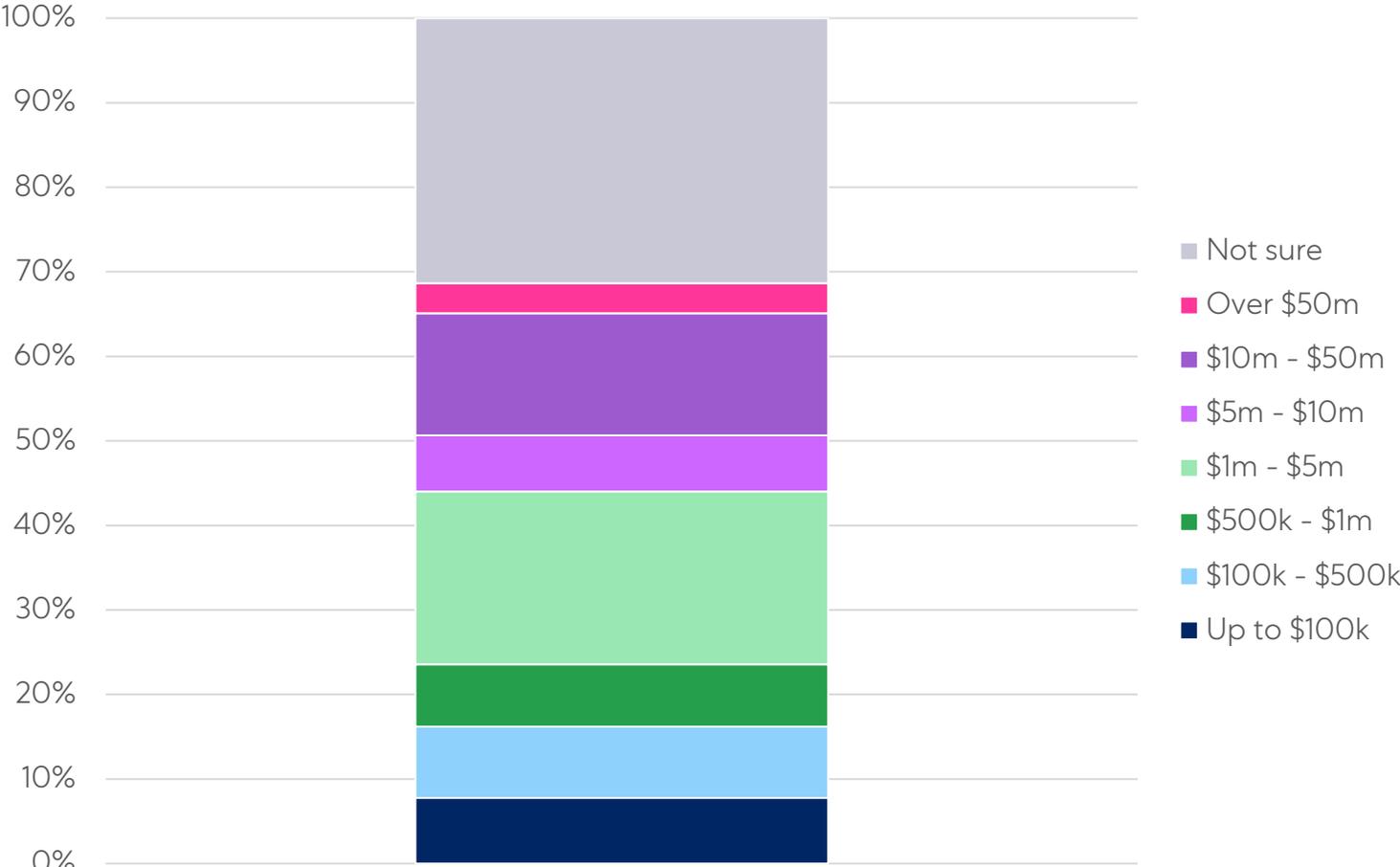


Household income remains more diversified: even when combining all arts jobs, many respondents report that arts work does not make up most of their household income.

This helps explain why wage changes alone may not resolve sustainability concerns for many households.

Annual Operating Budget of Employer

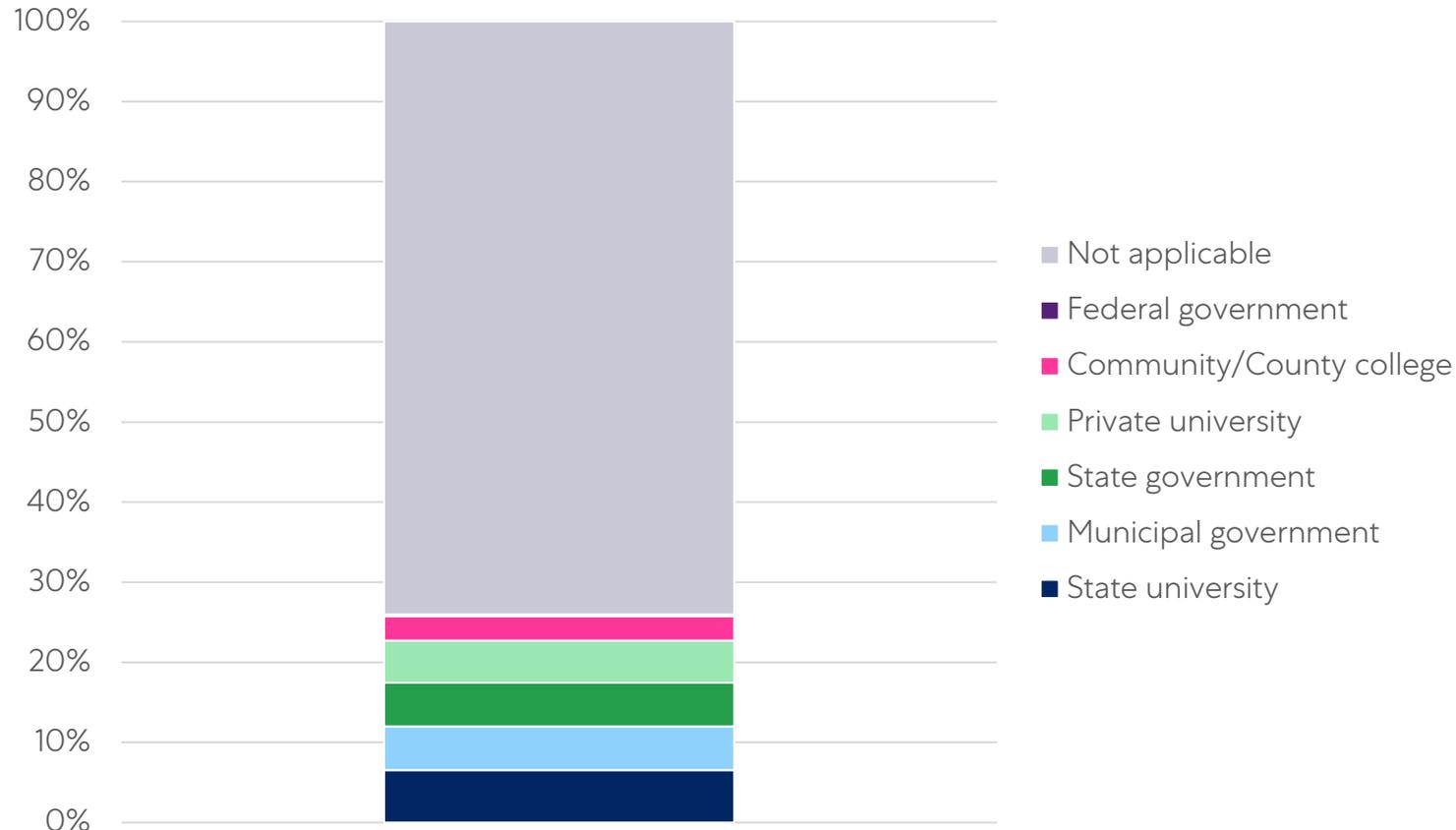
What is the annual operating budget of your primary organization/employer?



30% of respondents are not sure of their organization's operating budget

University/government affiliation is a distinct employment context for some respondents

If your primary organization is part of or operated by a university, college, or government entity, please specify:



Respondents whose primary organization is operated by a university, college, or government entity may be working under different pay-setting mechanisms (e.g., pay scales), benefit structures, and classification norms than those in independent nonprofit organizations.

Freelance / Contract worker

This subsection summarizes responses from freelance/contract workers (n=48). Given the small sample, findings should be interpreted as directional rather than definitive.

Respondents describe inconsistent contracting norms and common unpaid or unreimbursed work elements (e.g., prep and travel), pointing to opportunities for clearer standards and practical resources.

Freelance / Contract worker Summary

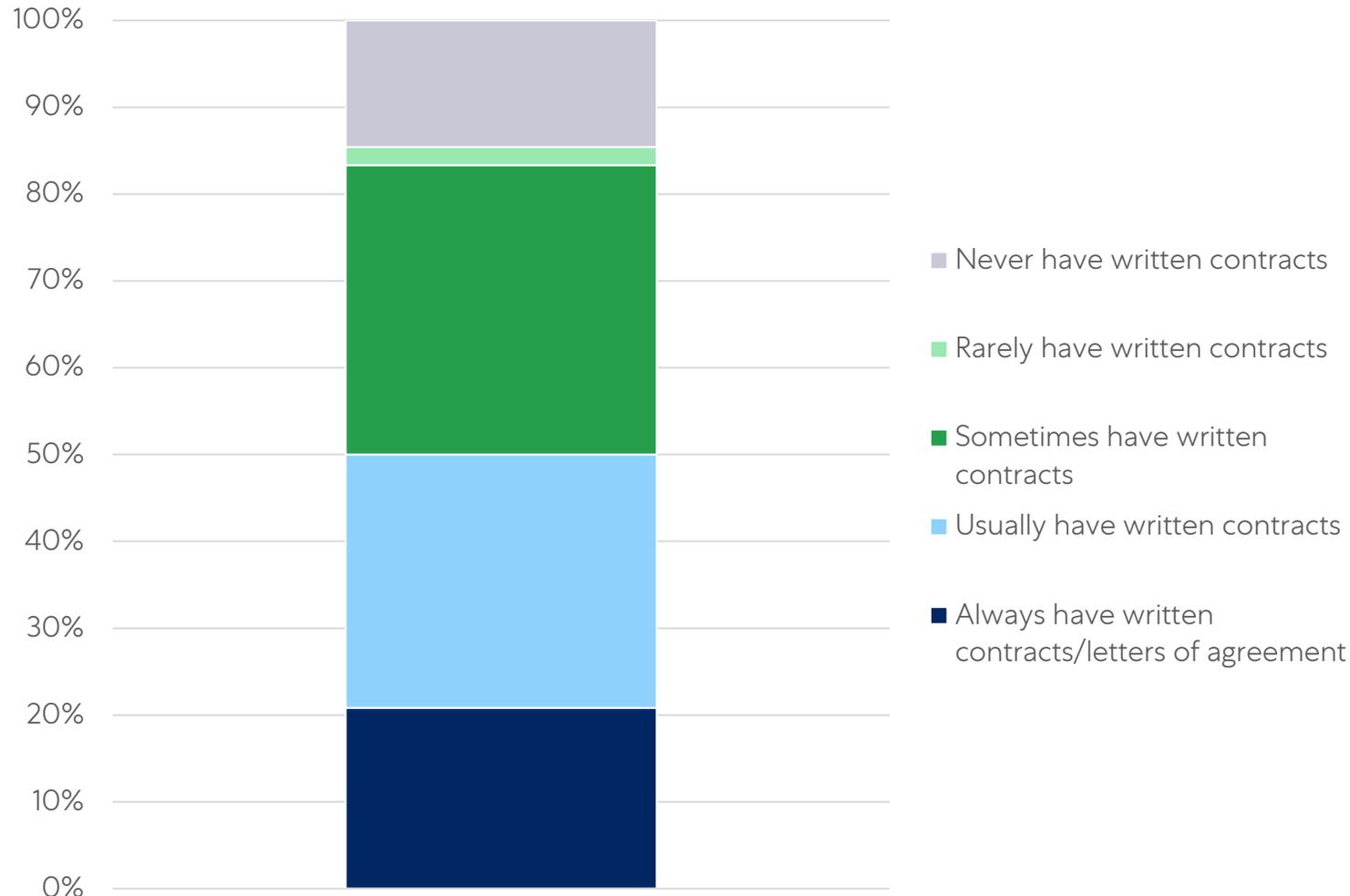
Freelance/contract respondents (n=48) describe a distinct compensation reality shaped less by a single “rate” and more by the terms that surround it: whether work is contracted in writing, how preparation and travel are treated, and whether payment timelines are predictable. Across items, respondents report bearing more risk and uncertainty, especially where contracting practices are inconsistent.

Contracts and scope are not standardized. Written contracts are not universal, and respondents describe situations where cancellations, scope creep, and unpaid expectations are harder to manage without clear terms. This is reinforced by the share who report wanting more guidance on what is reasonable to request, pointing to demand for shared standards and practical resources.

Unpaid time is a recurring driver of strain. Respondents frequently report uncompensated preparation and travel time, which reduces effective hourly earnings and makes “rate comparisons” incomplete without context. Where pay/budget transparency is only partial, negotiation is harder and the burden of guessing what is included in a fee increases.

Written contracts are not universal

How often are you formally contracted for your work?

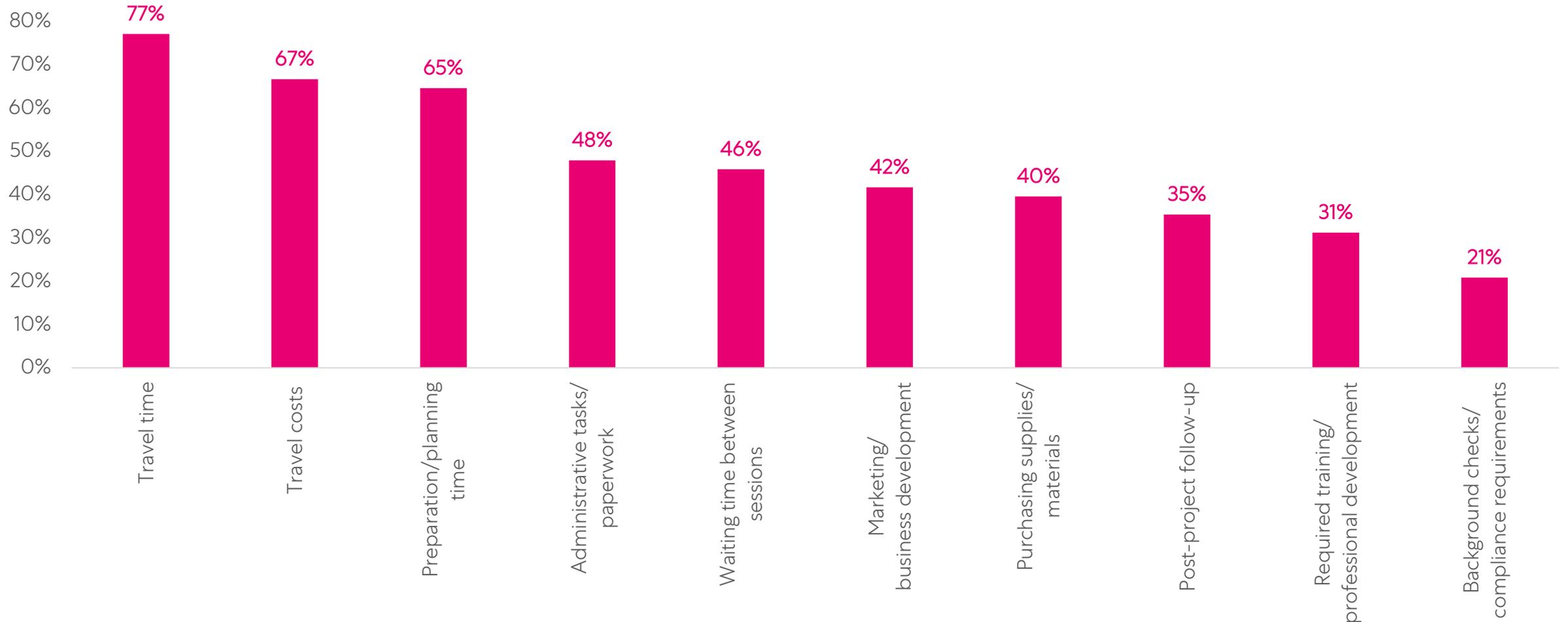


Only a minority report *always* working under written contracts; most report “usually” or “sometimes,” and a significant minority report never. This creates risk for both workers and commissioner, especially around scope, prep time, cancellations, and payment timelines

Unpaid or unreimbursed work is most commonly reported for travel and preparation time

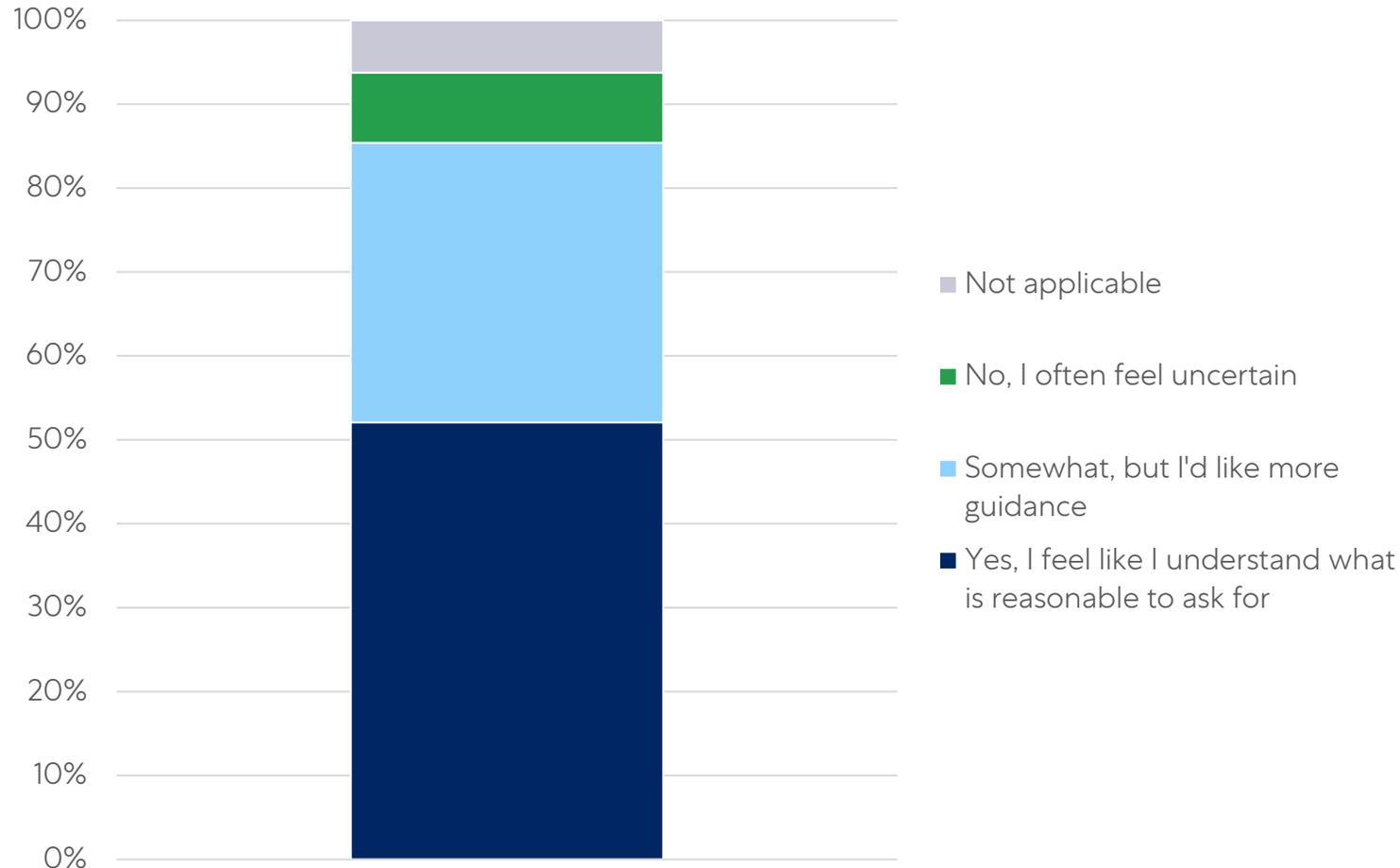
This reduces effective hourly earnings even when the stated rate appears adequate

Which of the following types of work are typically unpaid or not reimbursed within a contracted project? (Select all that apply)



Many freelancers want more guidance on what is reasonable to ask for

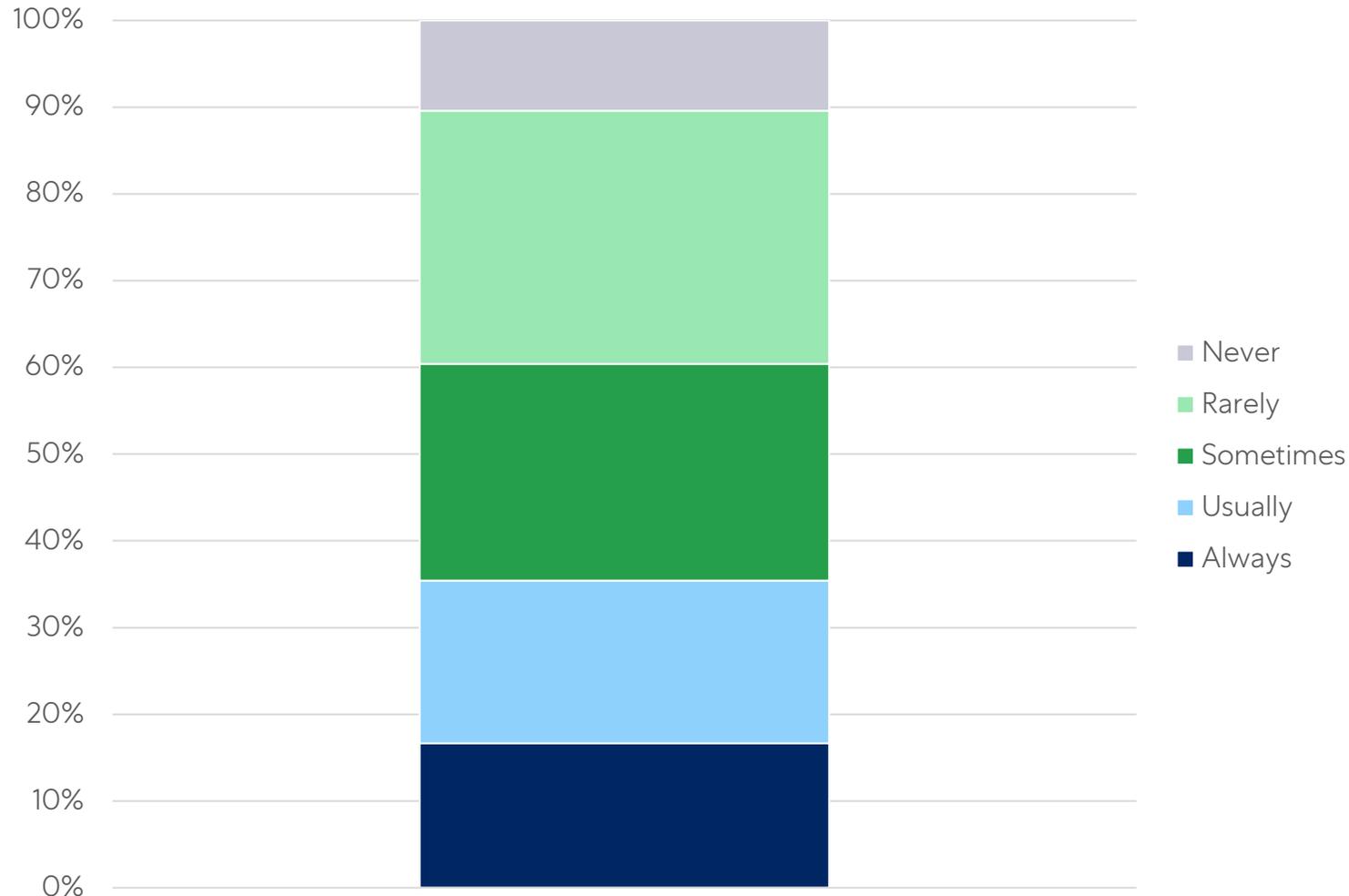
Do you feel you understand what is reasonable to ask for in a freelance contract?



A sizeable share report needing more guidance on reasonable contract terms. This points to a sector opportunity: shared standards and contracting-literacy resources can raise baseline practice without relying on individual negotiation power

Rate negotiation is inconsistent

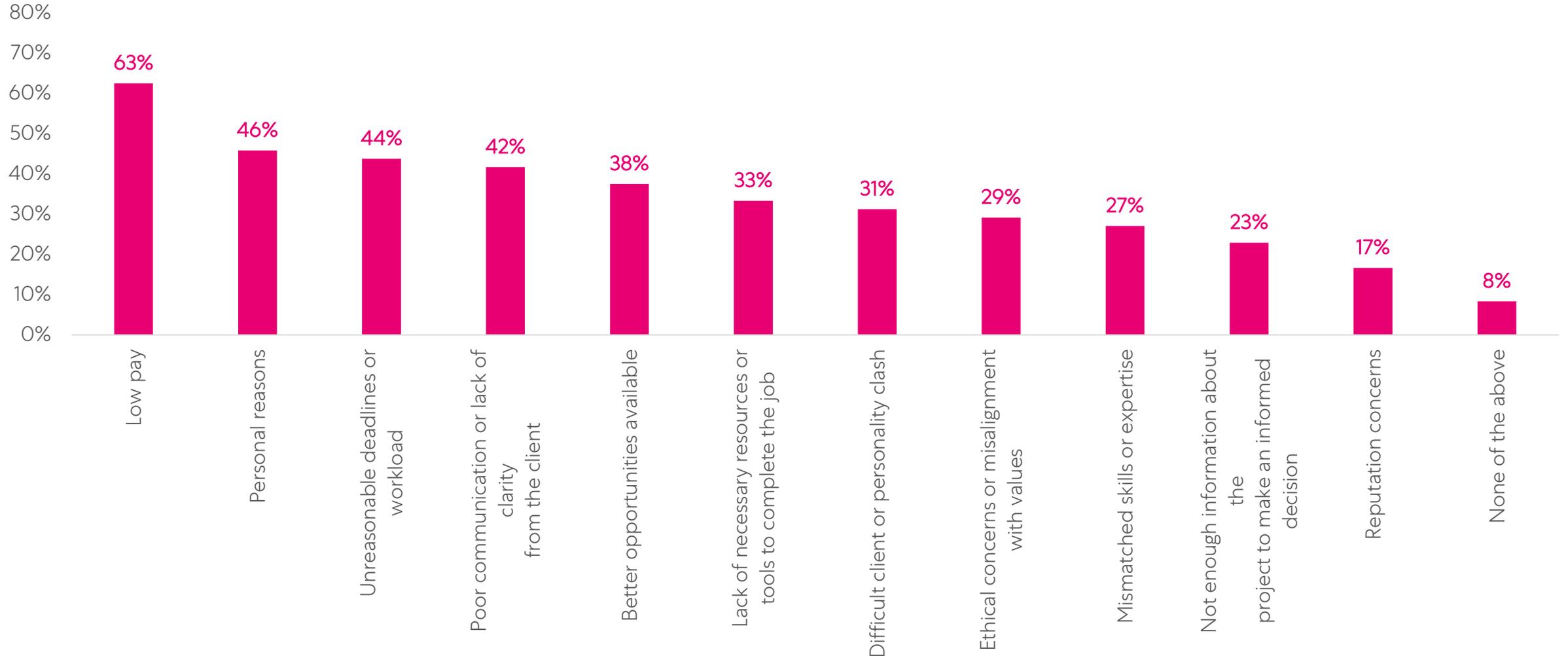
How often do you negotiate your rates?



Negotiation opportunity is uneven, suggesting leverage varies widely across freelance roles and clients/commissioners. Where negotiation is rare, low baseline rates and unpaid time are harder to correct through individual action alone

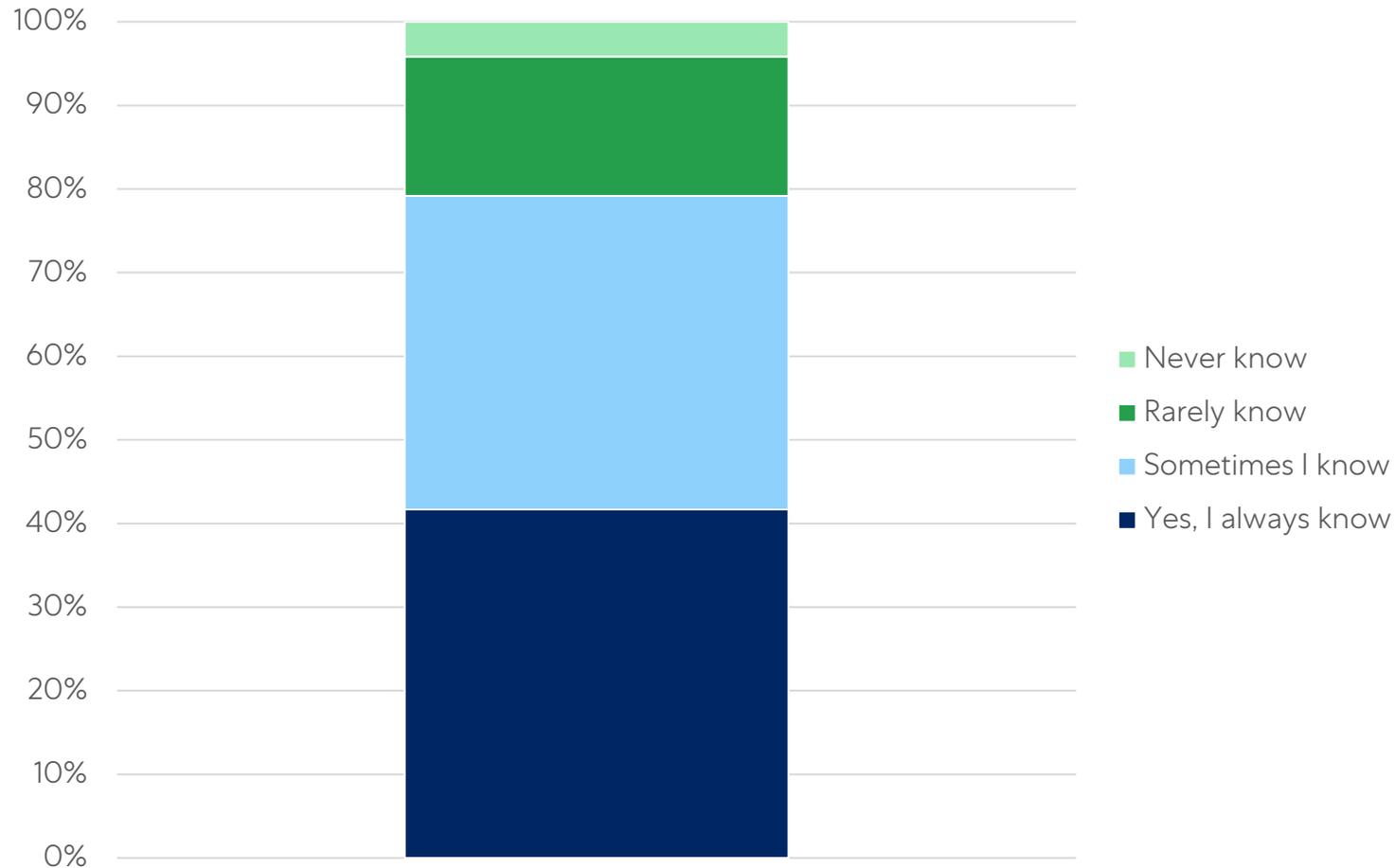
Low pay is the most commonly cited reason for declining work, alongside workload/deadlines and clarity/communication, suggesting that rate and terms operate together in whether work feels viable

Have you ever declined work due to: (select all that apply)



Funding transparency is partial

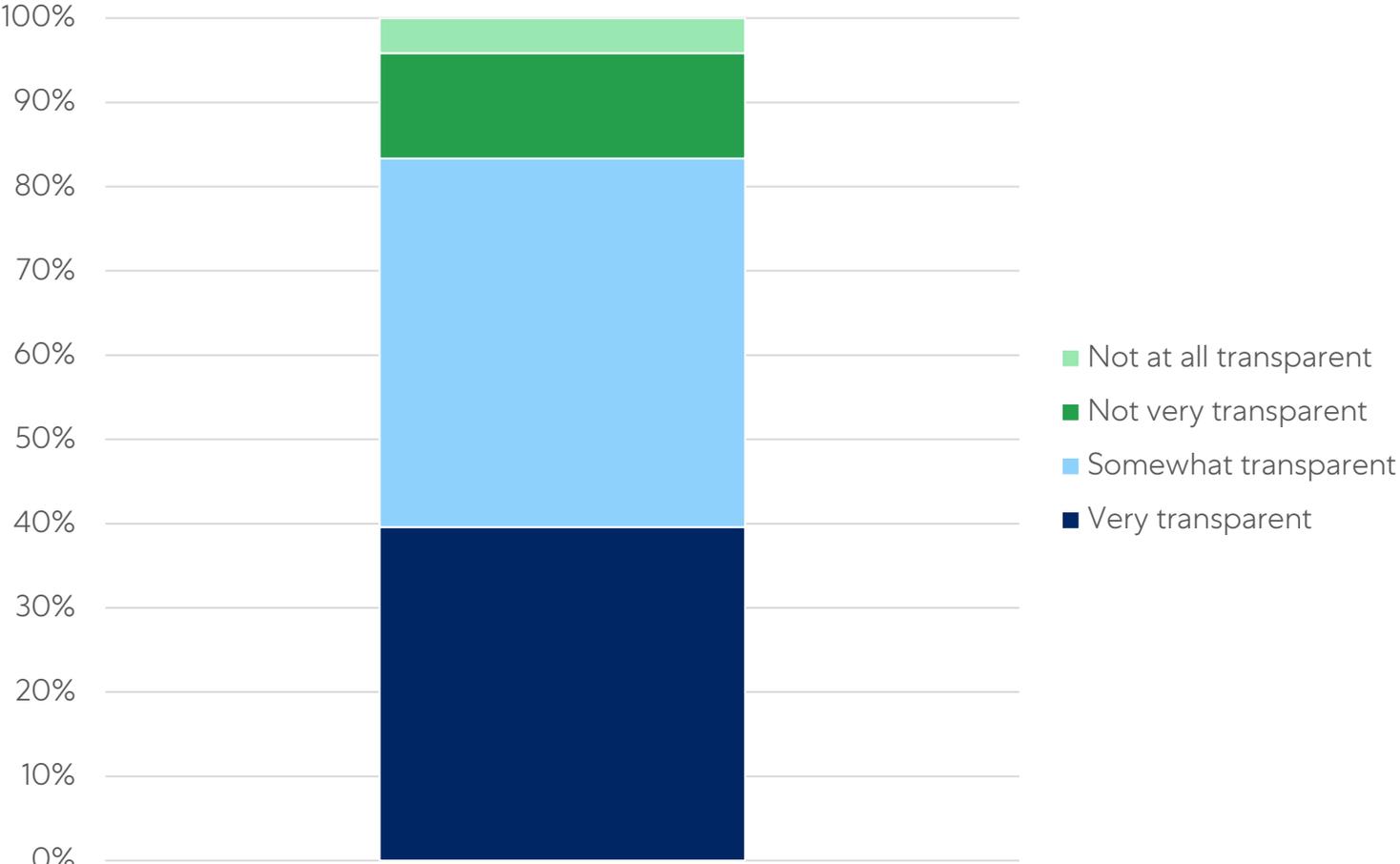
Do you know the source of funding for your work?



Only some freelance/contract respondents consistently know the funding source behind their work. Partial transparency can limit informed negotiation and makes it harder to understand constraints and accountability, or to assess whether fees align with available budgets

Pay/budget transparency is often “somewhat,” not fully transparent

How transparent are the organizations you work with about pay sources and budgets?



Respondents most commonly describe pay transparency as "somewhat" rather than fully transparent. Combined with the funding-source gaps described on the previous slide, this suggests freelance workers are often negotiating with incomplete information about budgets, fee inclusions, and expectations around unpaid time.

Section 2 – Compensation and Benefits

This section examines compensation as a package – how respondents are paid (salary/hourly/fees), how hours are treated, and what benefits accompany pay

Section 2 – Compensation and Benefits Introduction

Compensation in the nonprofit arts workforce is best understood as a 71,750 of:

1. base pay (annual salary, hourly wage, or fees)
2. treatment of additional hours (overtime eligibility and workload norms)
3. benefits as compensation (healthcare, paid leave, retirement contributions, and reimbursements)

These components vary sharply by role level and employment type. In practice, similar wage figures can translate into very different lived outcomes depending on benefit costs, paid leave, and the extent of unpaid time assumed by the job.

Accordingly, this section examines wages alongside overtime eligibility, hours, and benefit access because respondents repeatedly describe compensation as an interaction between all three.

Section 2 – Compensation and Benefits Summary

Pay progression exists, but perceived adequacy varies by career stage: from affordability at entry level to fairness concerns at mid-level and stagnation at senior level - a pattern explored further in Section 4. Overtime eligibility is low across this respondent pool, including among mid-level employees, reinforcing a pattern where "full-time" status does not necessarily imply protection against uncompensated additional hours.

Paid leave is comparatively common, but not universal; reported access varies by employment type. Healthcare coverage is a strong differentiator: many respondents are unsure what share of premiums their employer covers, even where they have access to an employee handbook, suggesting uneven transparency around benefits. PTO varies widely, with higher totals concentrated among longer-tenured respondents; newer workers are much less likely to have high leave availability.

"My earnings do not adequately meet the needs of my family's health insurance cost, my student loan cost, daycare cost, or my living expenses. My family and I live paycheck to paycheck and have had to use credit cards multiple times over the past two years to pay things like medical bills or pay for groceries if short on rent."

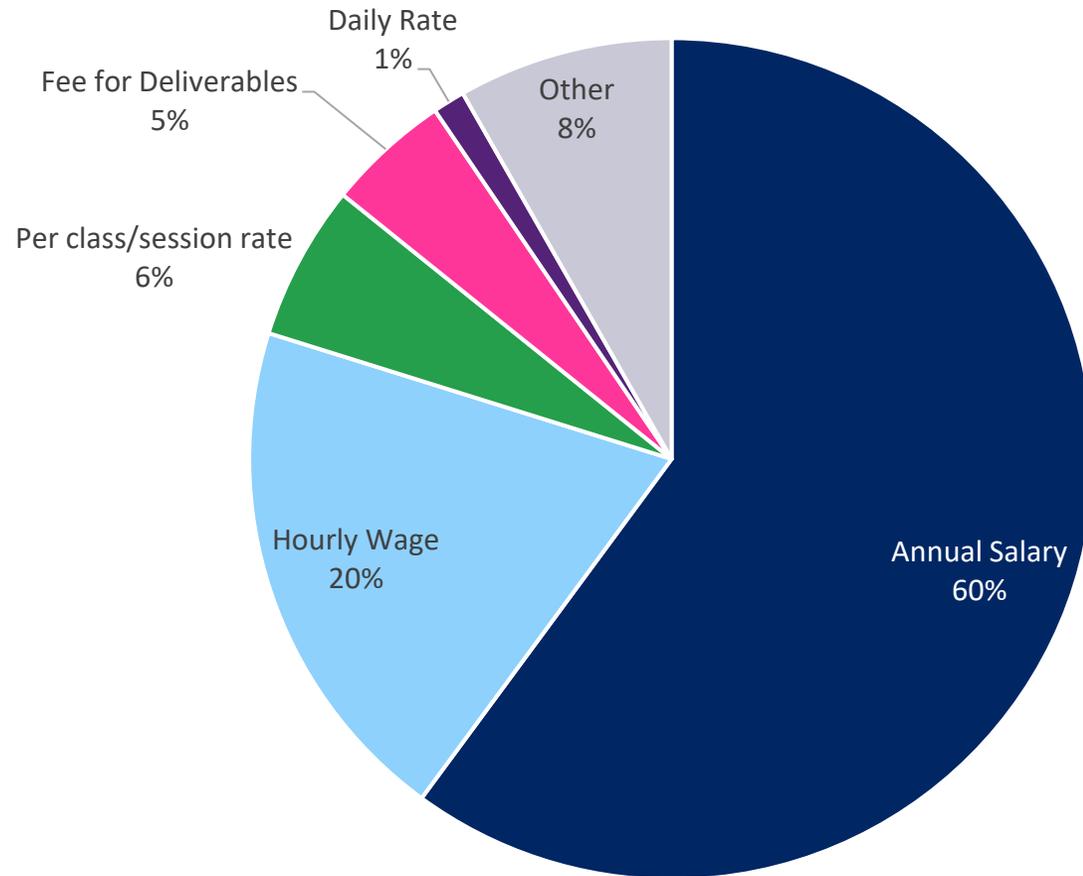
- Age 40 to 49, Woman, Full time employee (35 or more hours a week)

"We have a full time staff of five, with pay ranging from \$60,000 to \$150,000. Two members of our staff make more than \$100k salaries. We've been lucky to be able to pay people well, but have observed that most others in the arts in Jersey City are well under \$100k."

- Age 50 to 59, Woman, Full time employee (35 or more hours a week)

remains the dominant pay basis, but hourly and other bases are meaningful

On what basis are you paid in your primary arts job?



Most respondents are salaried in their primary job, but a substantial minority are hourly or paid on other bases (session, project, fee). This pay basis shapes benefit access and how overtime and hours are experienced

Pay basis aligns strongly with employment type

	Annual Salary	Hourly Wage	Daily Rate	Fee for Deliverables	Per class/session rate	Total
Full-time employee (35 or more hours a week)	61%	6%	1%	1%	1%	69%
Part-time employee (less than 35 hours a week)	5%	11%	0%	1%	1%	18%
Freelance/Contract worker	0%	4%	0%	1%	2%	8%
Self-employed	0%	1%	0%	2%	1%	5%
Total	65%	21%	2%	6%	6%	475

Salaried pay concentrates among full-time respondents; hourly and per-session pay are more common among part-time and freelance/contract roles

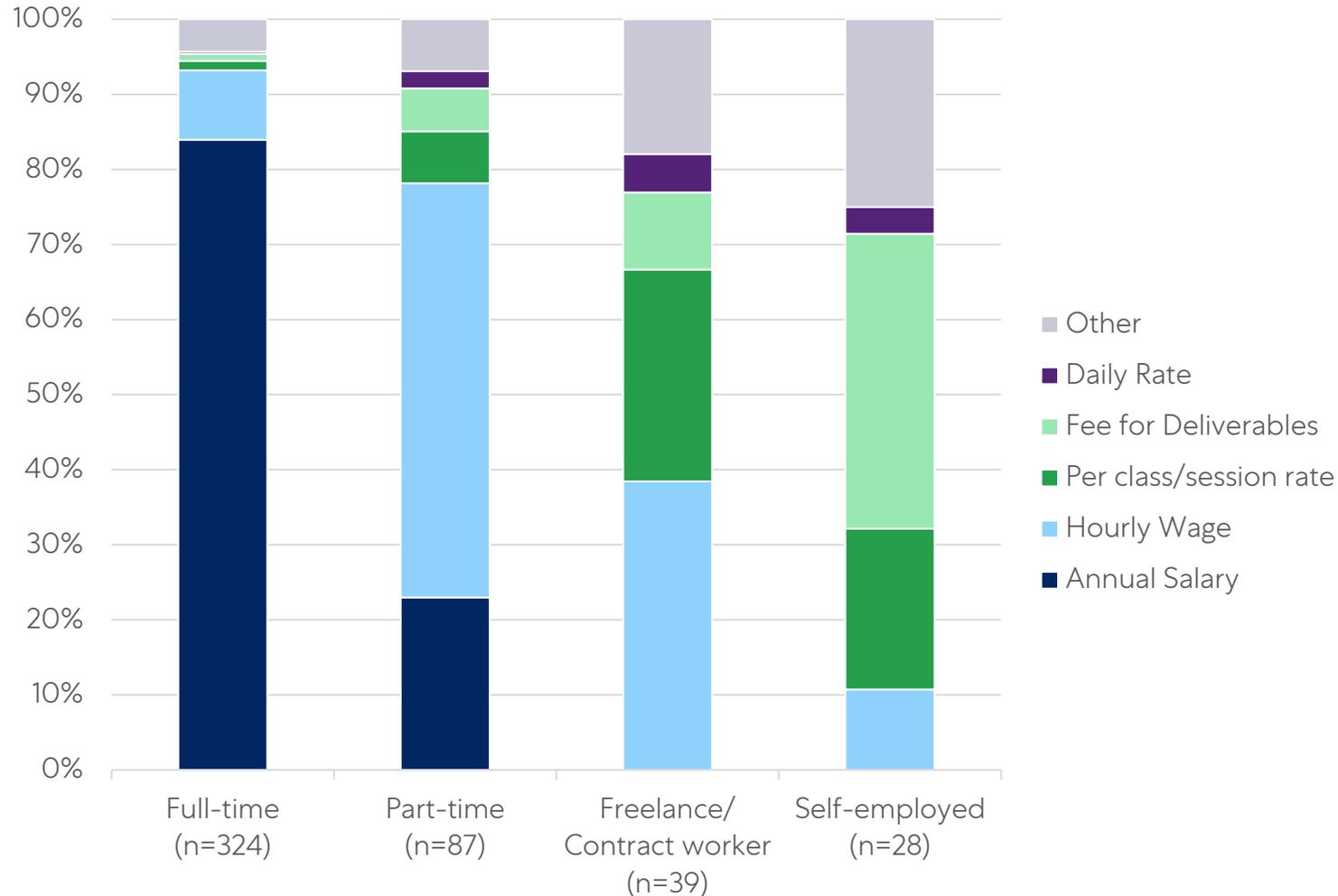
Compared with 2023, pay basis patterns show continuity with some shifts

	Annual Salary	Hourly Wage	Daily Rate	Fee for Deliverables	Per class/ session rate	Total
Full-time employee (35 or more hours a week)	+9%	+2%	+1%	0%	N/A	+10%
Part-time employee (less than 35 hours a week)	+1%	0%	-1%	+1%		+2%
Freelance/ Contract worker	-1%	0%	-2%	-4%		-5%
Self-employed	-2%	-1%	-1%	-5%		-7%
Total	6%	-1%	-2%	-8%		-335

Compared with 2023, the distribution of pay bases is broadly consistent, with modest shifts that may reflect real change and/or differences in who responded. The key analytic point is that hourly and per-session pay remain disproportionately outside full-time employment—so later comparisons of hourly medians should be read in that context.

Hourly wage and per-session rates are concentrated outside full-time

On what basis are you paid in your primary arts job?

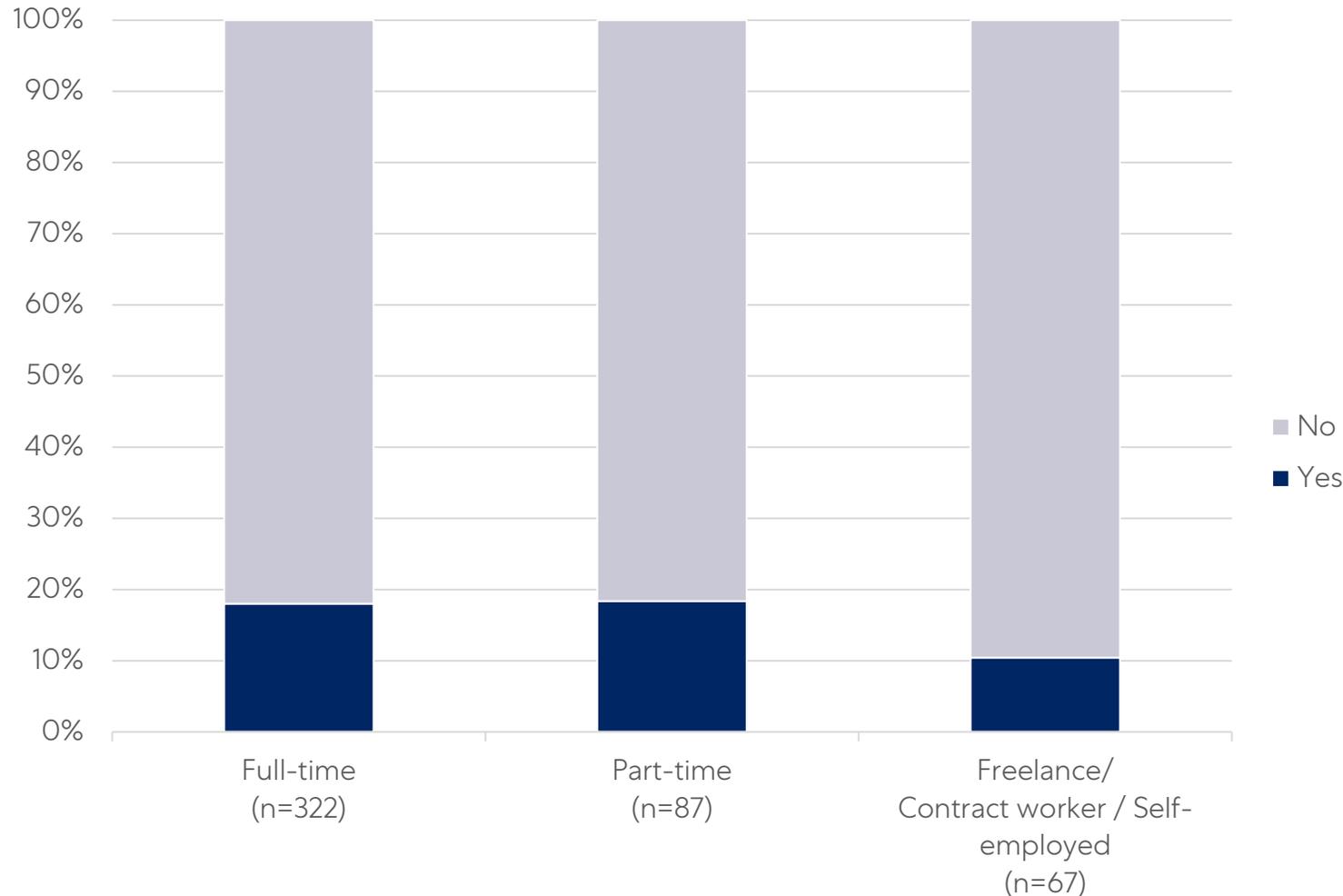


Part-time hourly **55%**
Freelance hourly **39%**
Per-session rates more common among freelance/self-employed

This concentration is consistent with why hourly/per-session respondents often describe greater income seasonality and weaker benefit access.

Most respondents are not eligible for overtime pay

Are you eligible for overtime pay?

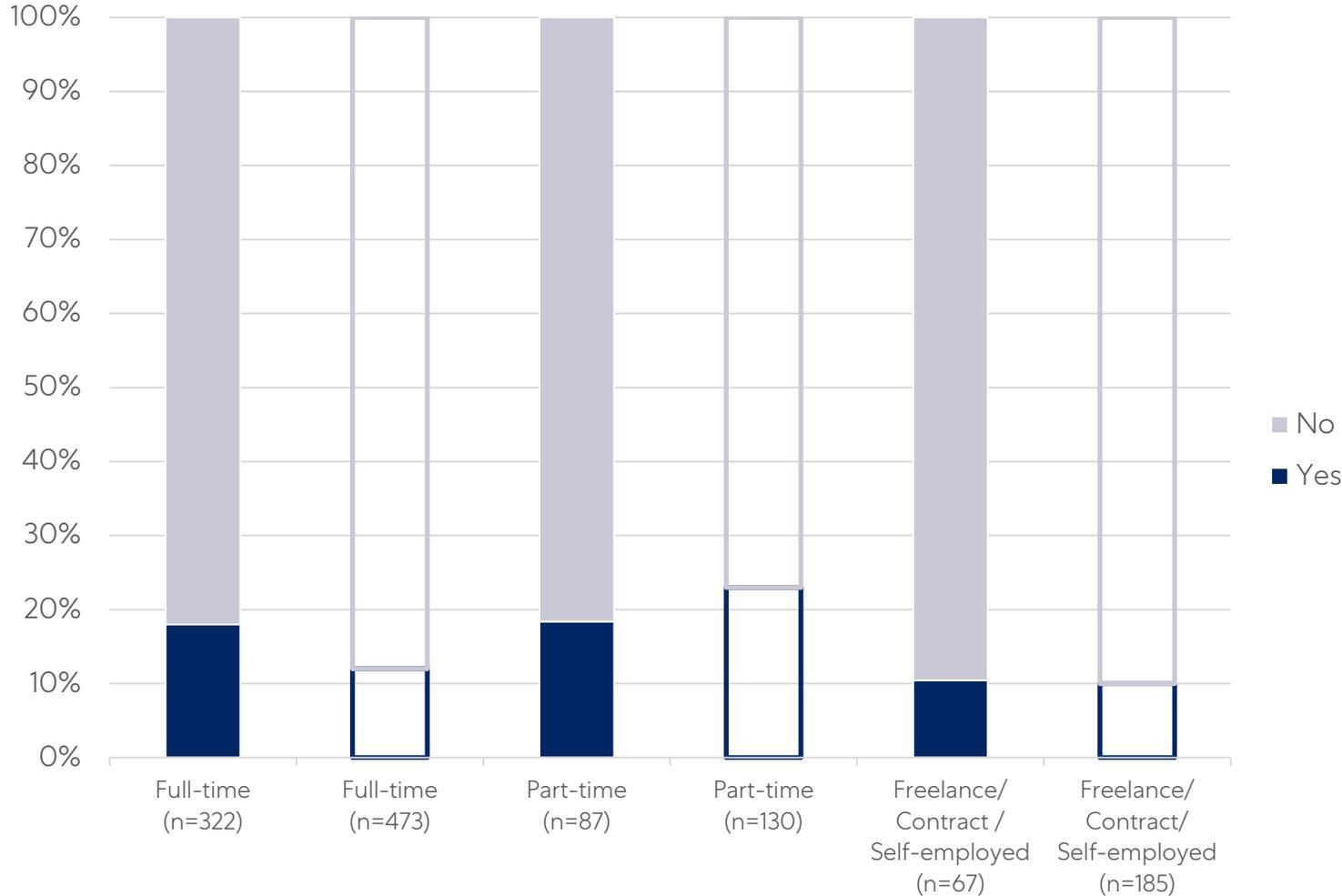


Full-time “No overtime” 82%
Freelance/self-employed
“No” 90%

Overtime ineligibility is common even among full-time employees (82% report “no”). This is important because later slides show many respondents work beyond contracted expectations, so uncompensated additional time becomes part of the effective pay picture

This continues patterns observed in 2023

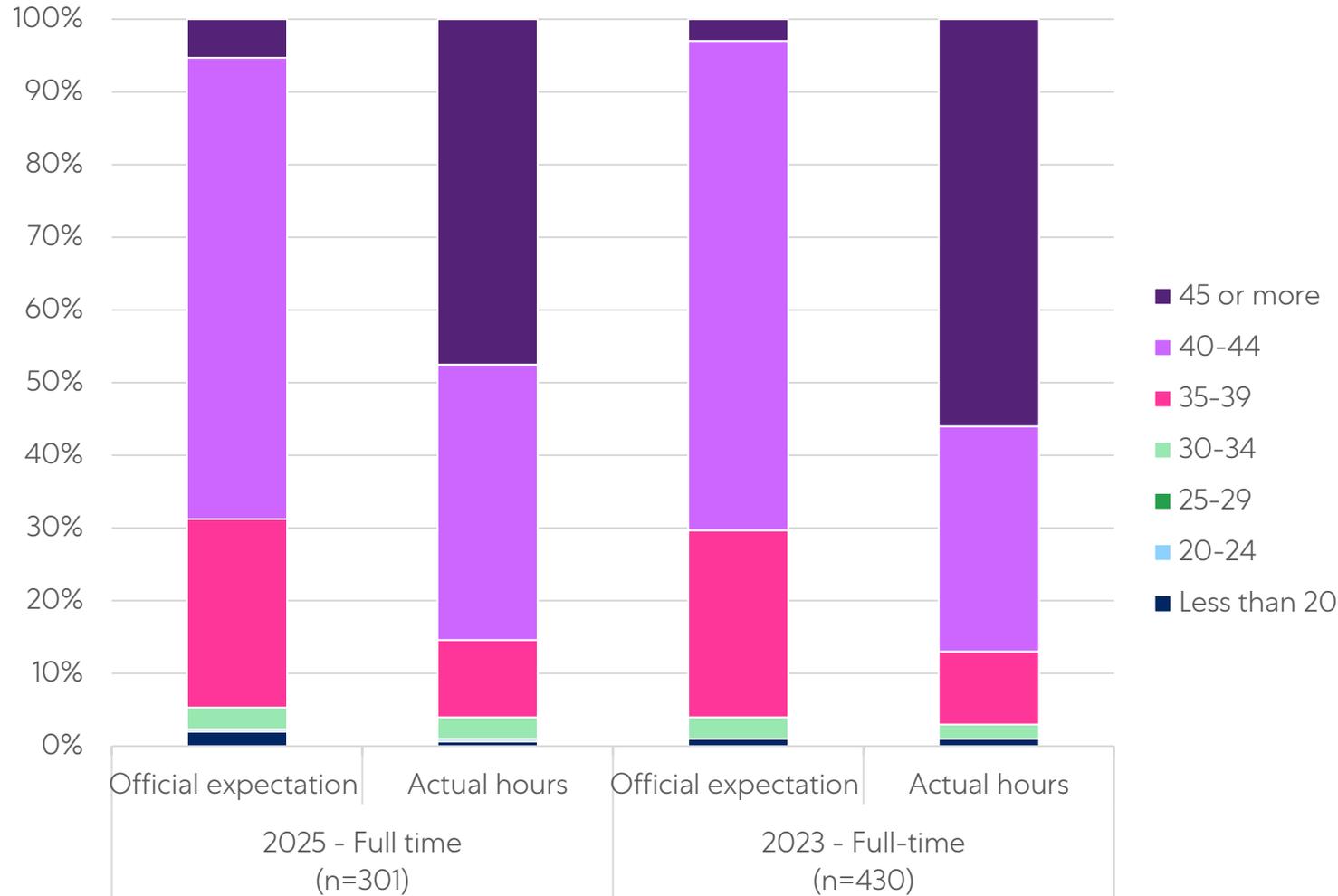
Are you eligible for overtime pay?



Overtime ineligibility remains the norm, consistent with 2023. This indicates that periods of higher workload are often managed without paid overtime in this sample, particularly in roles with broad responsibilities and event-driven peaks.

Hours worked: actual hours exceed official expectations for many

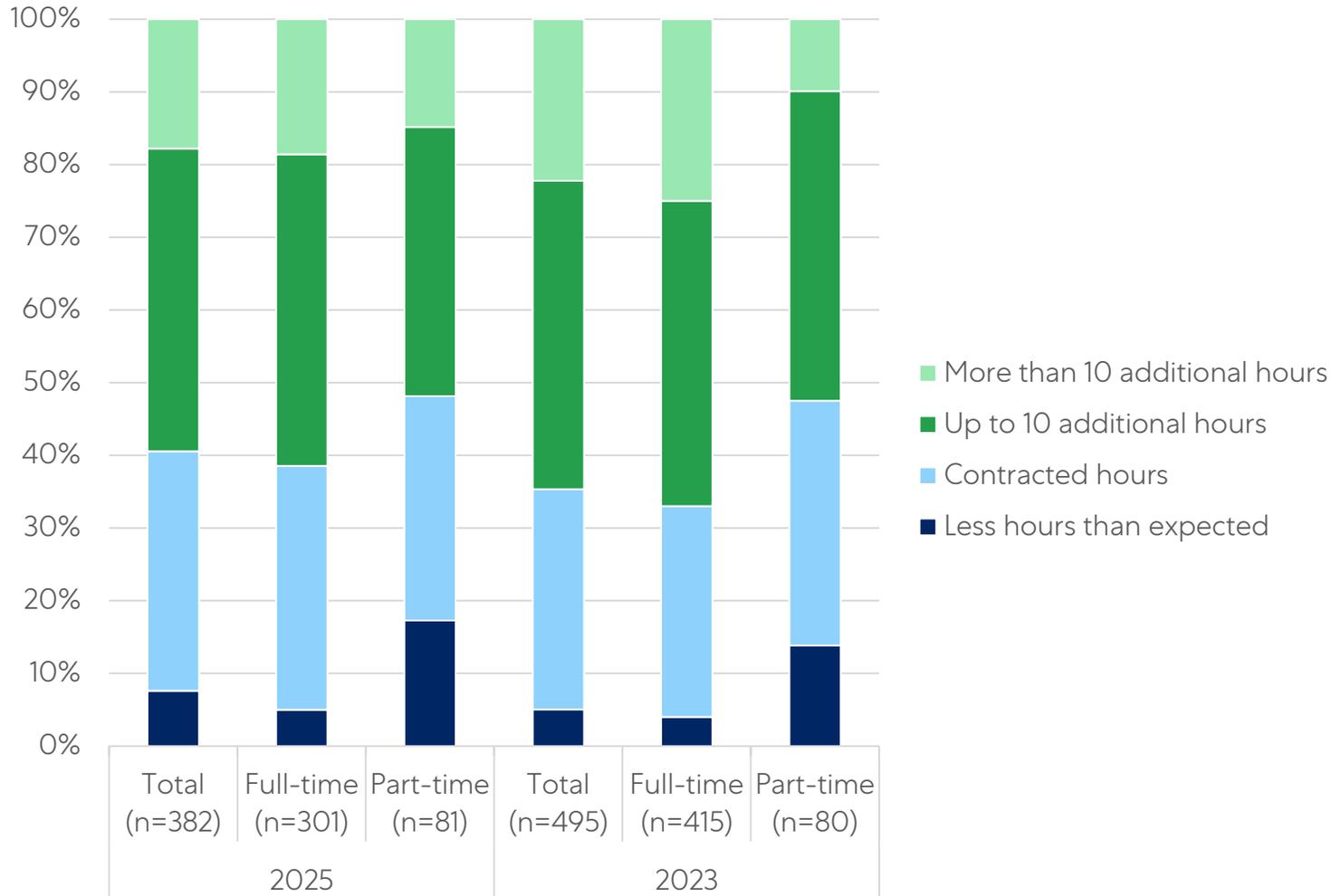
Hours worked



Many respondents report routinely working beyond contracted hours, particularly during peak periods or acute understaffing. This gap between contracted expectations and actual time required is frequently described as a driver of perceived underpayment, even where wages appear adequate on paper.

Hours worked: actual hours exceed official expectations for many

Additional hours worked

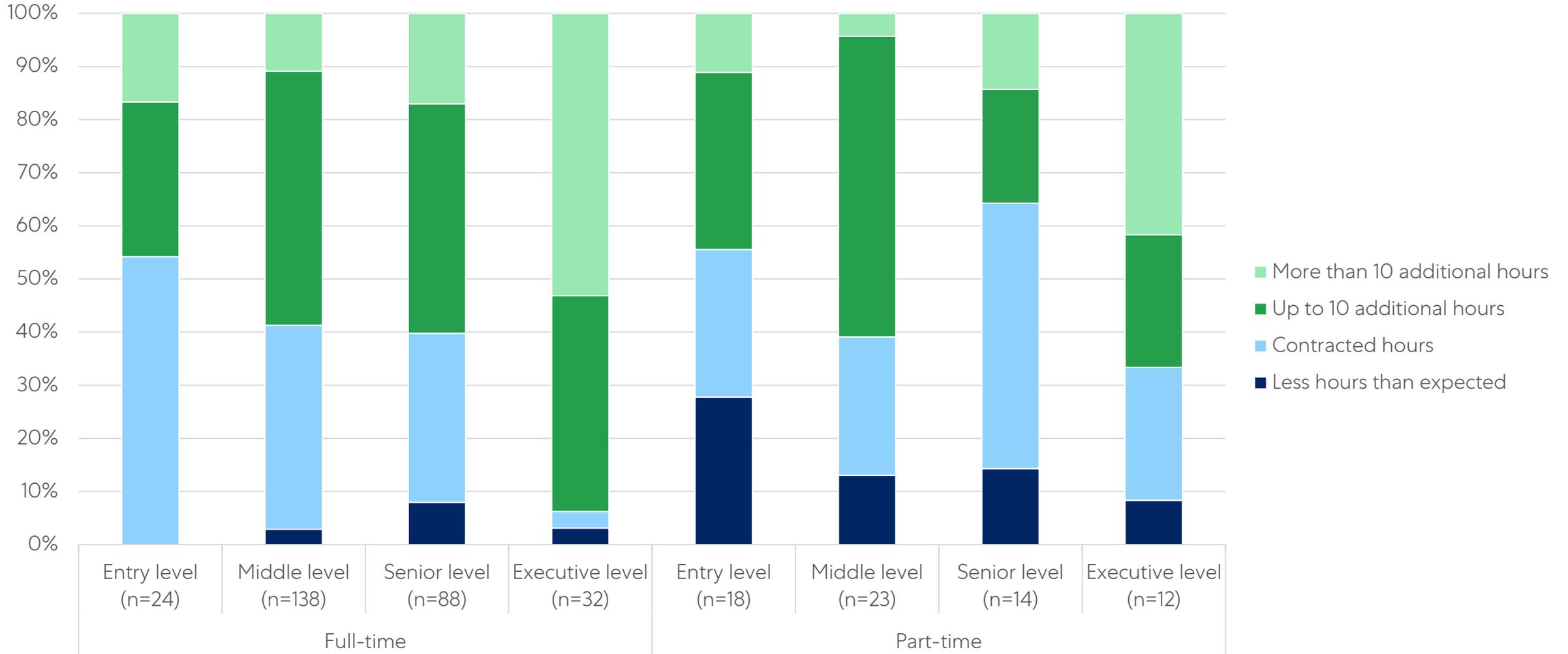


A substantial share report working beyond contracted expectations. This indicates that wage figures alone may not fully reflect workload where additional time is unpaid

Reported workload overrun rises with role level

This pattern may reflect higher responsibility loads and exempt-status norms, and could contribute to burnout and retention risk for mid- and senior-level roles

Additional hours worked



Respondents describe long-hours norms as common, but uneven, ranging from sustained overrun to more cyclical peaks with compensating flexibility

Is there anything else you would like to add about your working hours?

“Before this job, I have never worked for a company in the arts where 40 hours meant 40 hours. I am fairly certain that my lucky situation is the exception and not the rule. Before joining this organization, I was routinely working 50-60 hours or more for 40 hours worth of salary.”

- Age 40 to 49, Woman, Full time employee (35 or more hours a week)

“Since I'm self employed, I do not have any days off. My hours are sporadic and sometimes for no pay. Paying positions are hard to come by for individuals not associated with any organization. Grants for individuals are not options since I am not a nonprofit and music offers very limited grant opportunities, especially in NJ.”

- Age 40 to 49, Man, Self-employed

“Hours vary widely depending on week of the year. Busy periods can easily be 70-80hrs.”

- Age 40 to 49, Woman, Full time employee (35 or more hours a week)

“I love every single hour - even when they are long and tiring.”

- Age 50 to 59, Woman, Full time employee (35 or more hours a week)

“They are predictable and largely under my own scheduling control. In tech and other weeks I know that I will be working 60+ hours a week, but then in other times I have the freedom to reduce my hours as I choose”

- Age 40 to 49, Woman, Full time employee (35 or more hours a week)

Salary

This subsection summarizes self-reported annual salaries for respondents in salaried roles, with cuts by role level, organizational budget, and demographics

Summary

Salaries show clear progression by role level and, in general, by organizational budget. However, **many respondents describe** that alone does not determine whether work feels sustainable: open-text responses repeatedly connect “adequate pay” to workload expectations, overtime ineligibility, and benefit costs, especially healthcare, illustrating that is experienced as one part of a broader compensation picture.

by segment How respondents frame pay concerns shifts across career stages (see Section 4), but across levels, open-text responses connect perceived adequacy to workload, overtime, and benefit costs, not alone

Distribution matters as much as the median. Even where median salaries appear comparable to external benchmarks, the spread is wide and headline figures can obscure unequal outcomes when hours worked and benefit contributions vary across roles and organizations

Progression exists, but experience varies

Full-time / Annual Salary

Annual \$71,750
(n=268)
2023 Survey \$64,000

Annual median wage reported in the organization survey: \$61,950 (2023 \$57,000)

Annual median wage for Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occupations in All Industries in New Jersey was \$66,990 in 2024*

Annualized median wage for all industries in the U.S. was \$63,128

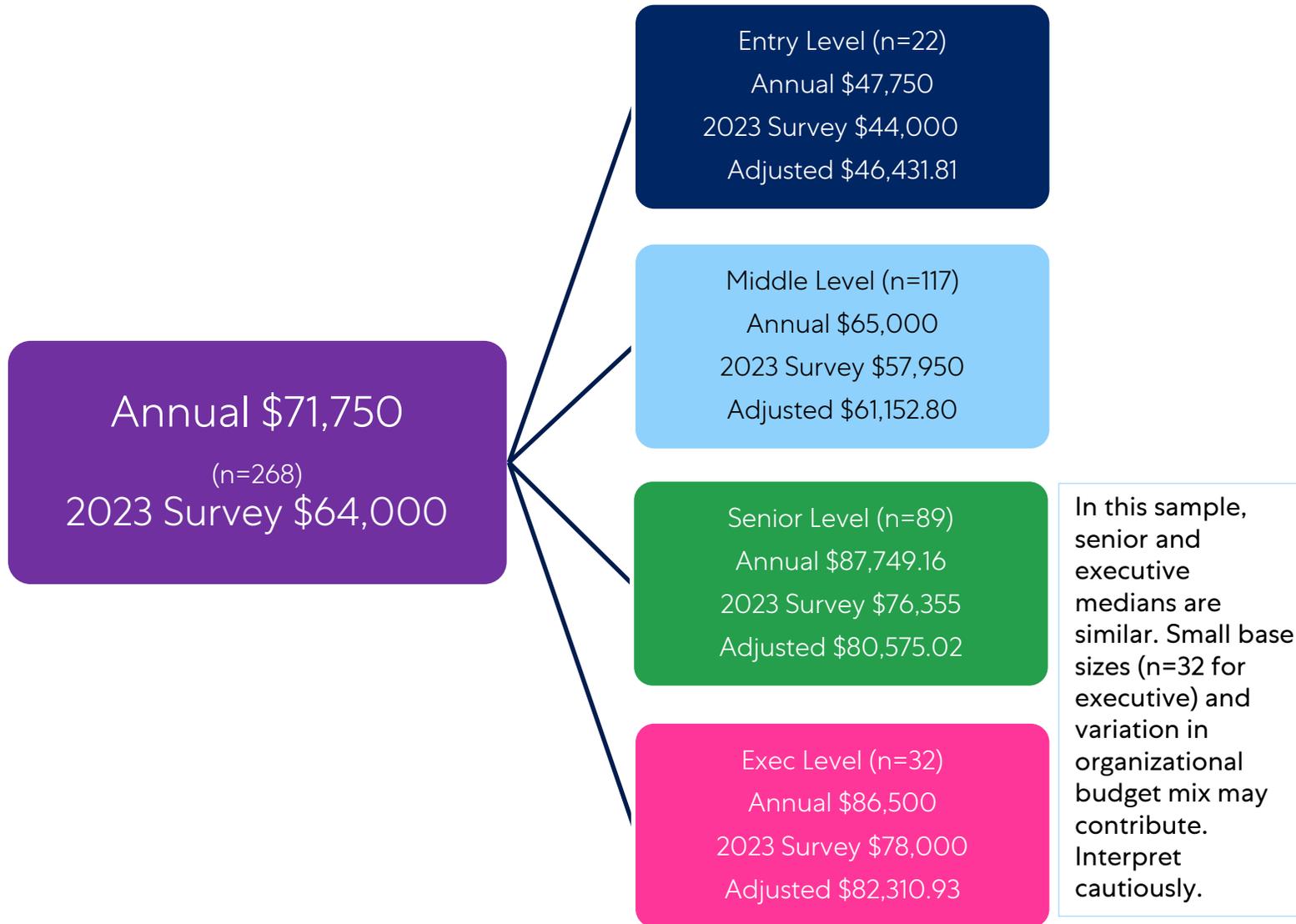
In this sample, the full-time median sits above selected external reference medians, but the distribution is wide. Respondent commentary suggests that perceived sustainability depends not only on level, but on workload overrun, overtime ineligibility, and benefit costs, especially healthcare, which can reduce effective take-home value

Adjusted for inflation:

- 2023: \$67,537.18

*[BLS Data Viewer](#) **Annualized Median wage for all industries is median weekly multiplied by 52 – [Data found here](#)

Full-time / Annual by Level



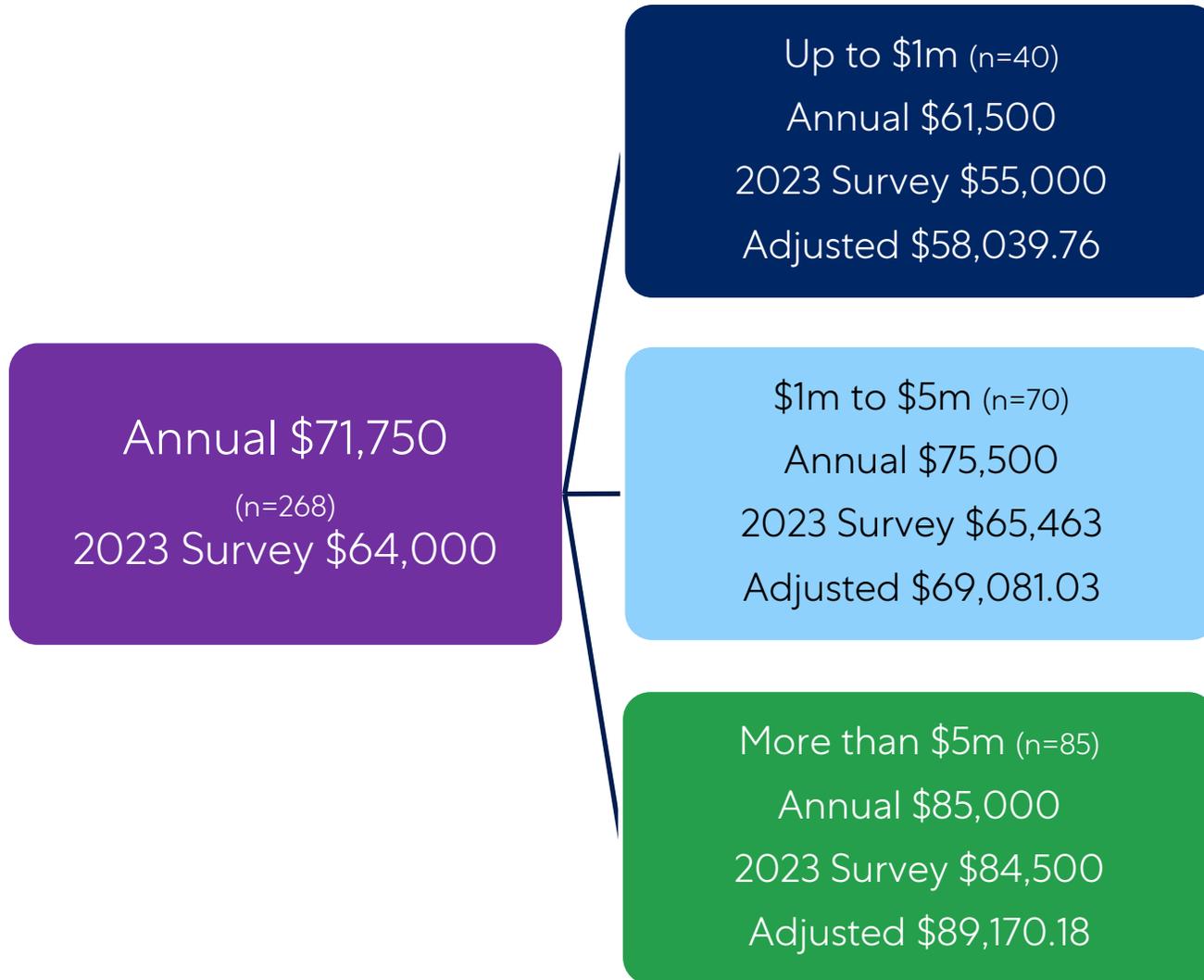
Median increases by role level, though progression is not linear and distributions overlap, so medians should be read alongside spread and base size

Entry level benchmark (Salary.com, 'Entry Level Position'): \$38,083

General & operations managers median (BLS): \$102,950 (May 2024)

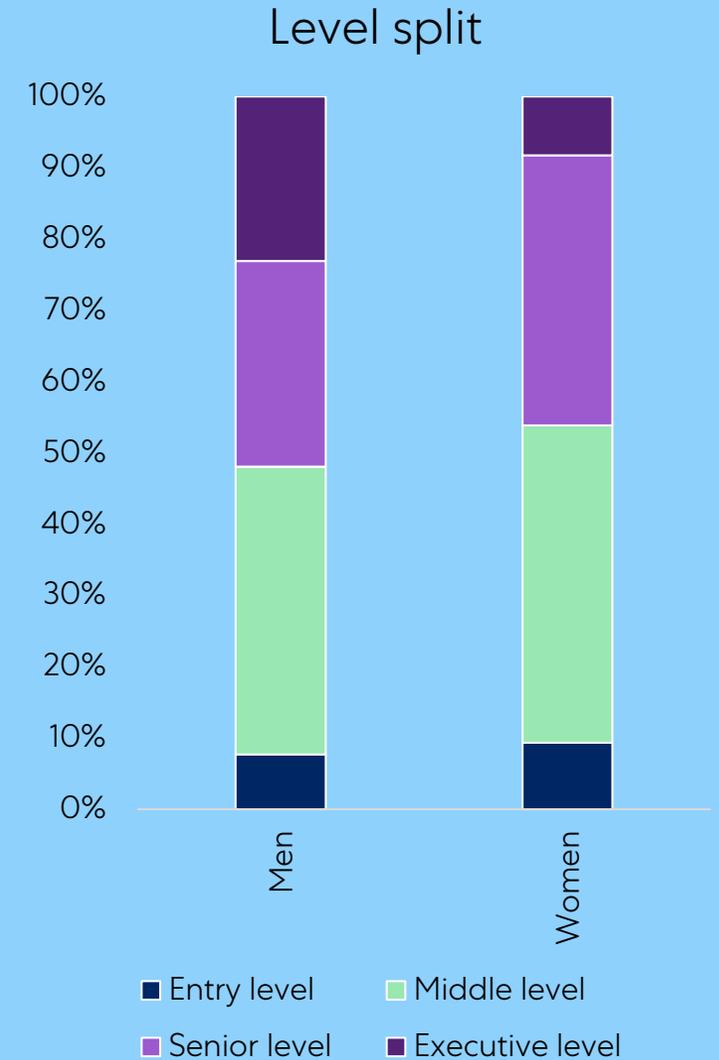
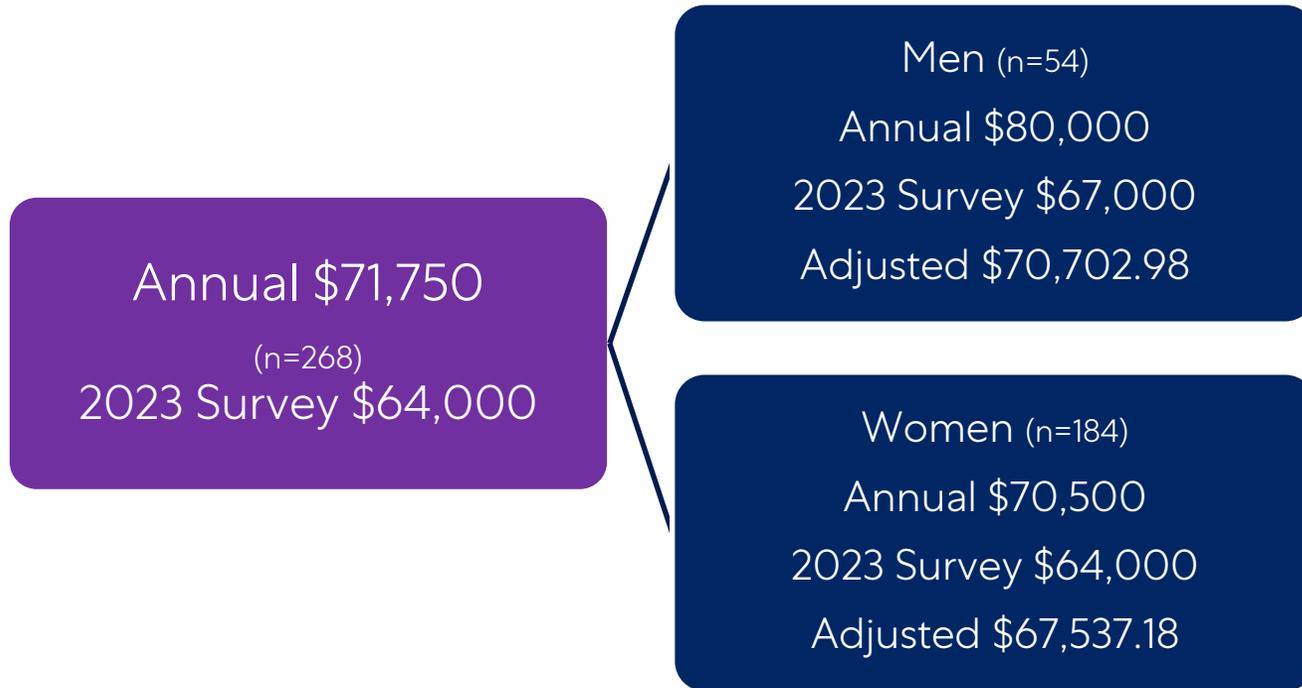
Senior executive benchmark (Salary.com, 'Senior Executive'): \$179,710

Full-time / Annual by Organizational budget

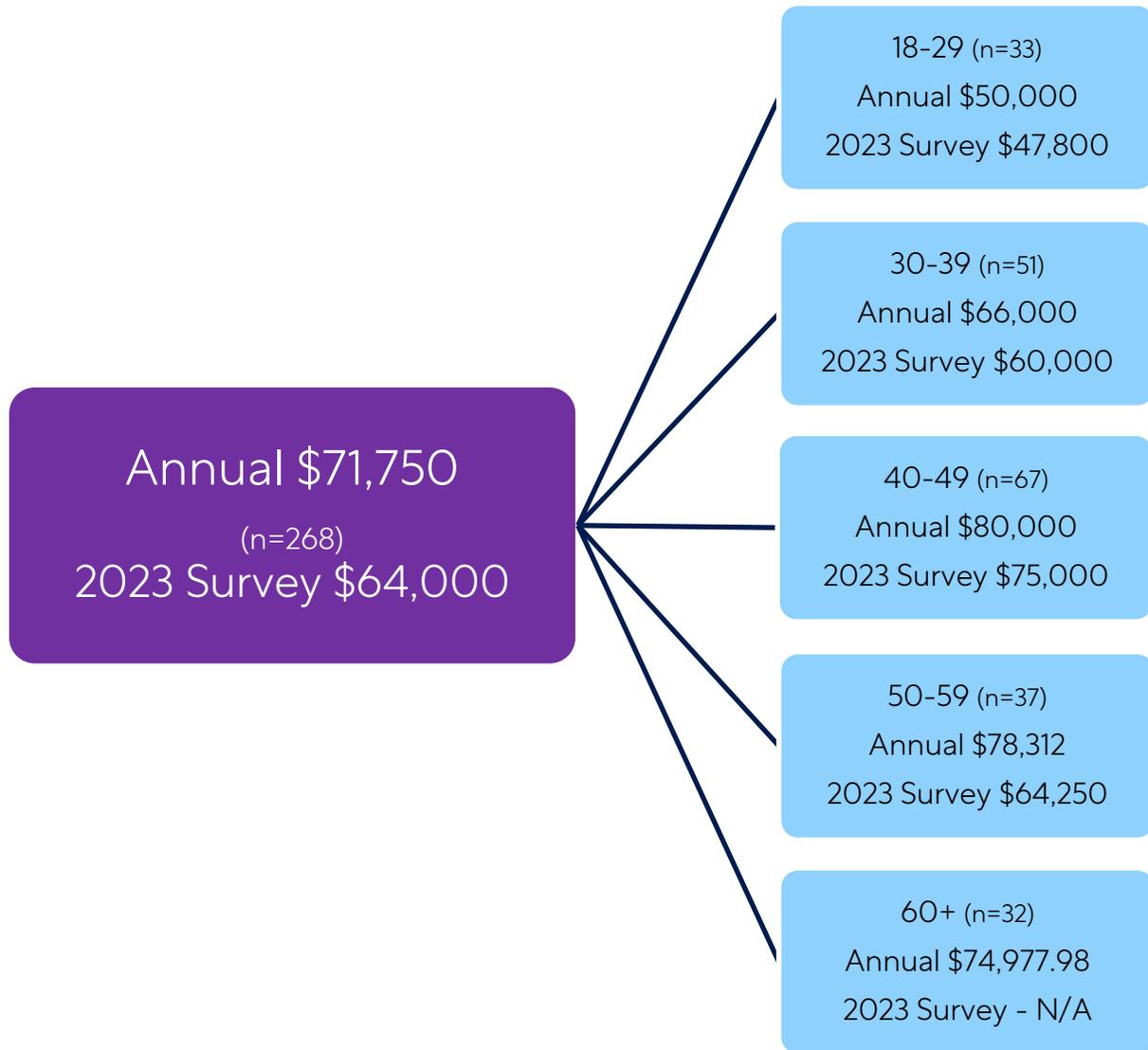


Higher organizational budgets correspond with higher median salaries, but budget size does not fully explain the overall distribution. This indicates that observed pay patterns are not attributable solely to the highest-budget organizations and likely also reflect role mix and broader sector norms

Full-time / Annual by Gender



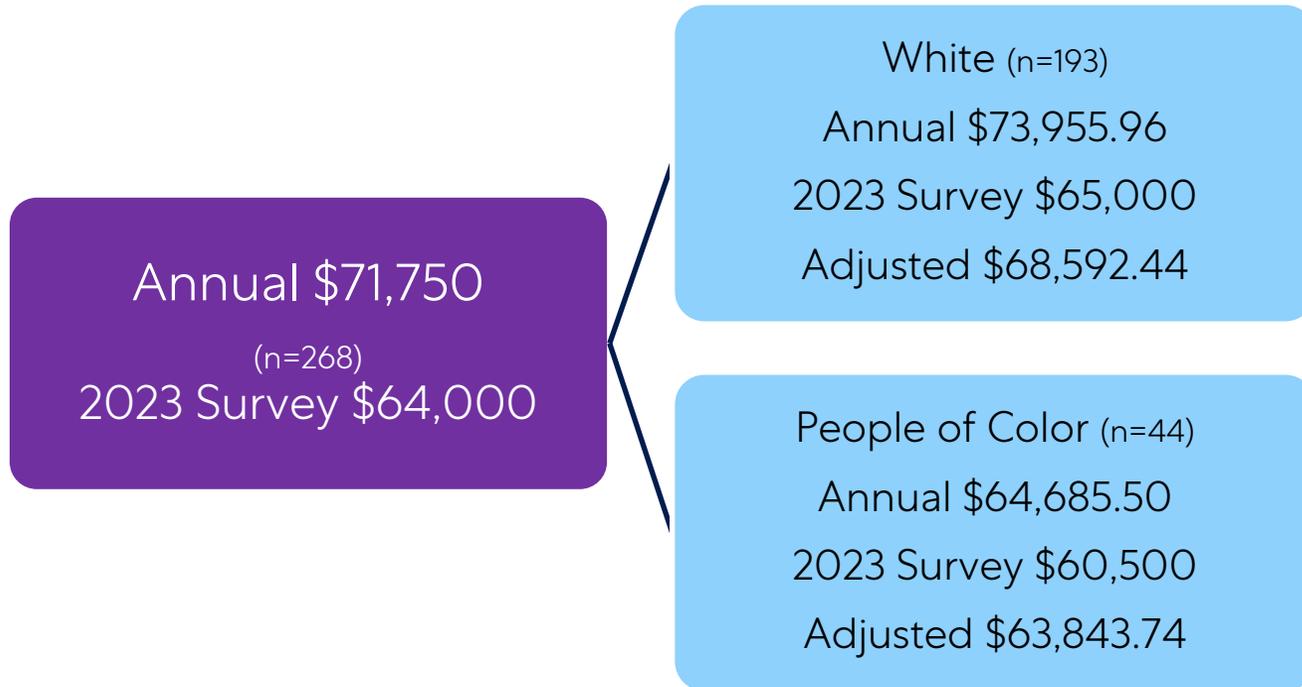
Full-time / Annual by Age



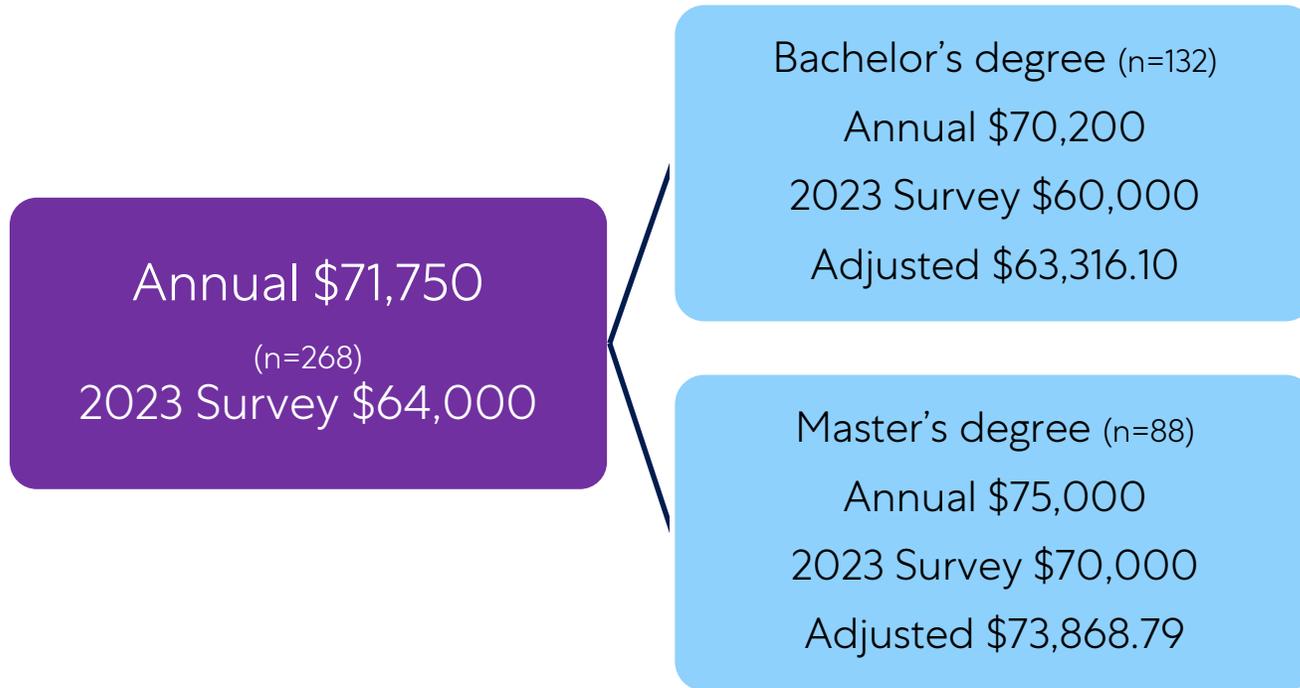
Median tends to rise across mid-career age bands, broadly consistent with progression by role level and tenure. Interpret differences as descriptive patterns rather than like-for-like comparisons.

Full-time / Annual by Race

In this sample, People of Color respondents report a lower full-time median than White respondents. The level split suggests role composition may contribute to differences; interpret cautiously given subgroup base sizes

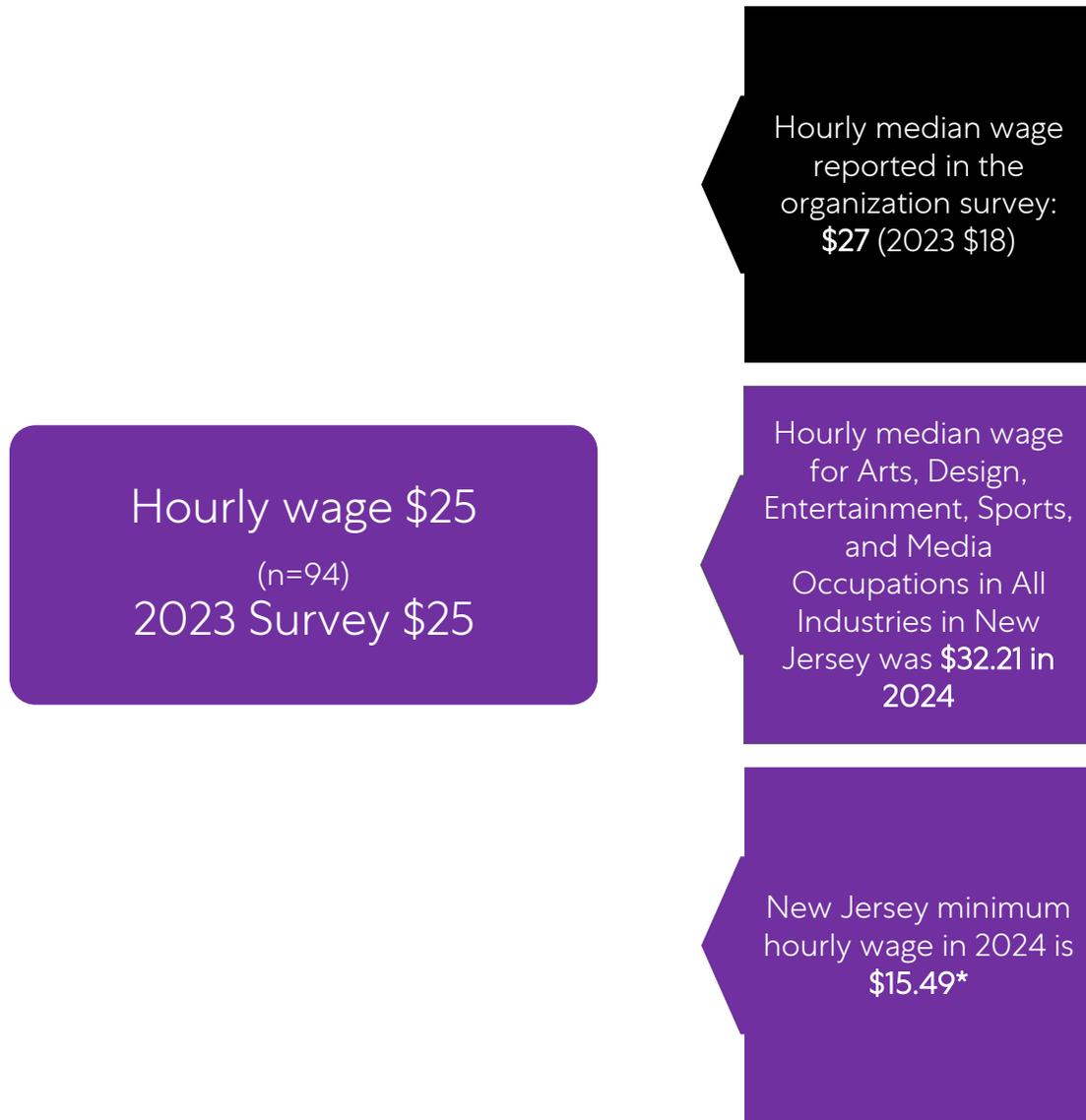


Full-time / Annual by Education (BA vs MA)



In this respondent pool, master's degree holders report a higher median than bachelor's degree holders. Compared with 2023, the difference appears smaller, though patterns may reflect role mix as well as education

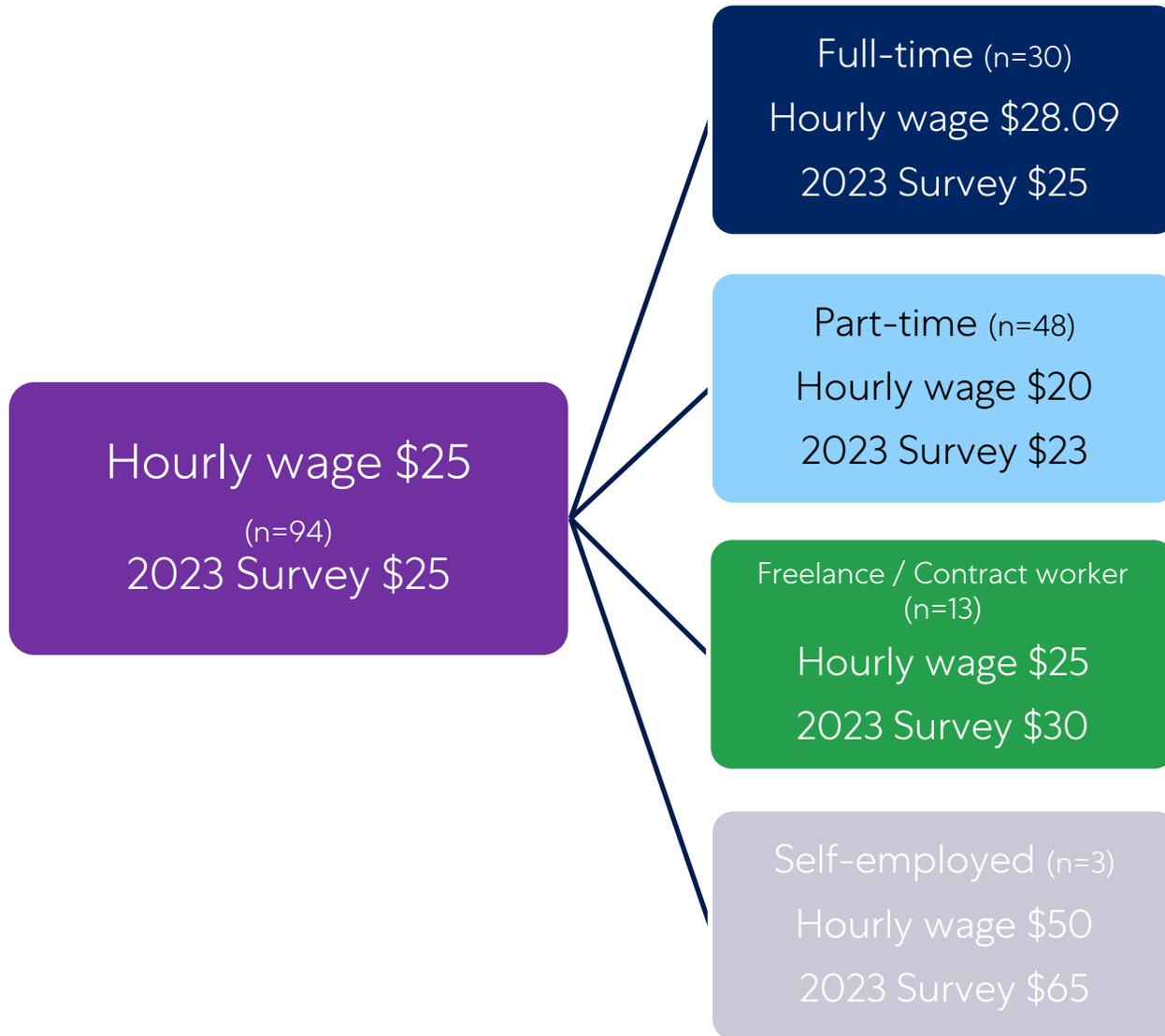
Hourly Wage



The individual survey hourly median (\$25) is unchanged from 2023. The organization survey reports a higher median (\$27, up from \$18 in 2023); these are different data sources and populations. The individual survey median sits below the referenced NJ occupational median (\$32.21). A contextual reference, not a like-for-like comparison

*Minimum wage increased in Jan 2026 to \$15.92:
<https://ogletree.com/insights-resources/blog-posts/new-jersey-minimum-wage-rate-to-increase-on-january-1-2026>

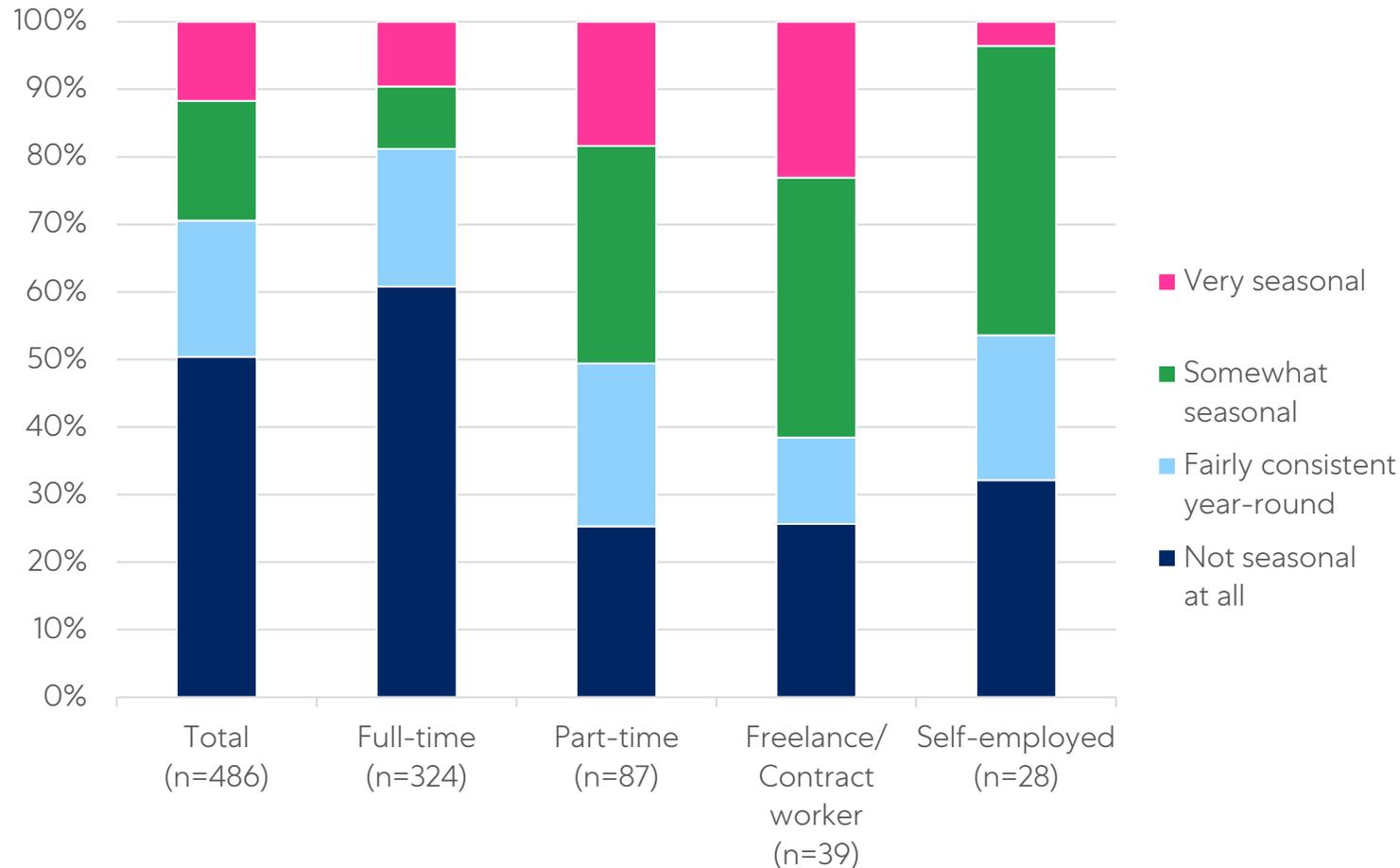
Hourly Wage by Employment Status



Hourly medians vary by employment status, with part-time respondents reporting lower medians than full-time or self-employed respondents.

Income seasonality is more pronounced outside full-time roles

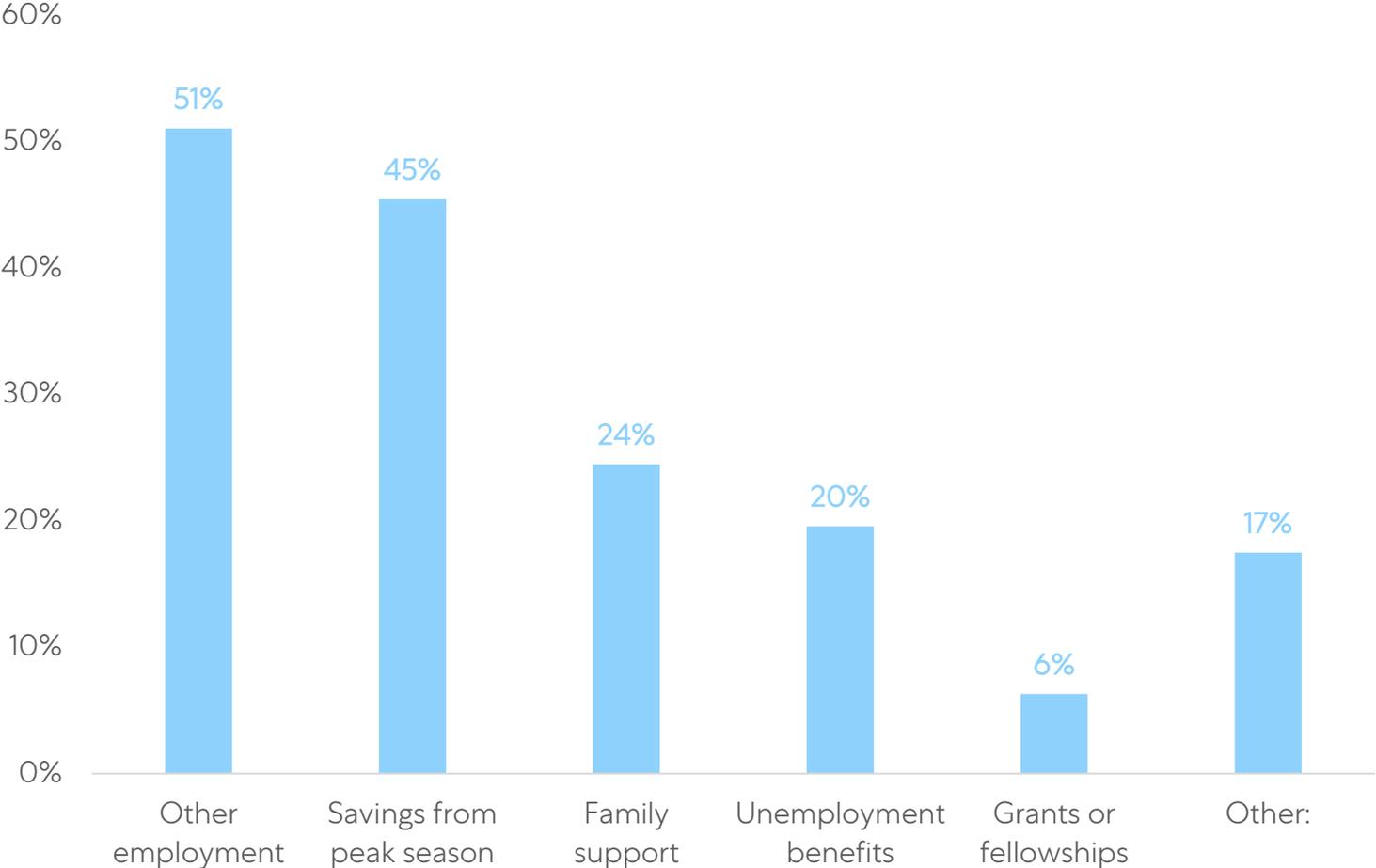
How seasonal is your income from your arts work?



Seasonality is reported more often outside full-time roles (hourly/session/contract-based). This increases financial planning pressure and helps explain why household buffering and secondary income are central to sustainability for many respondents.

Off-season income is commonly managed through other employment and savings

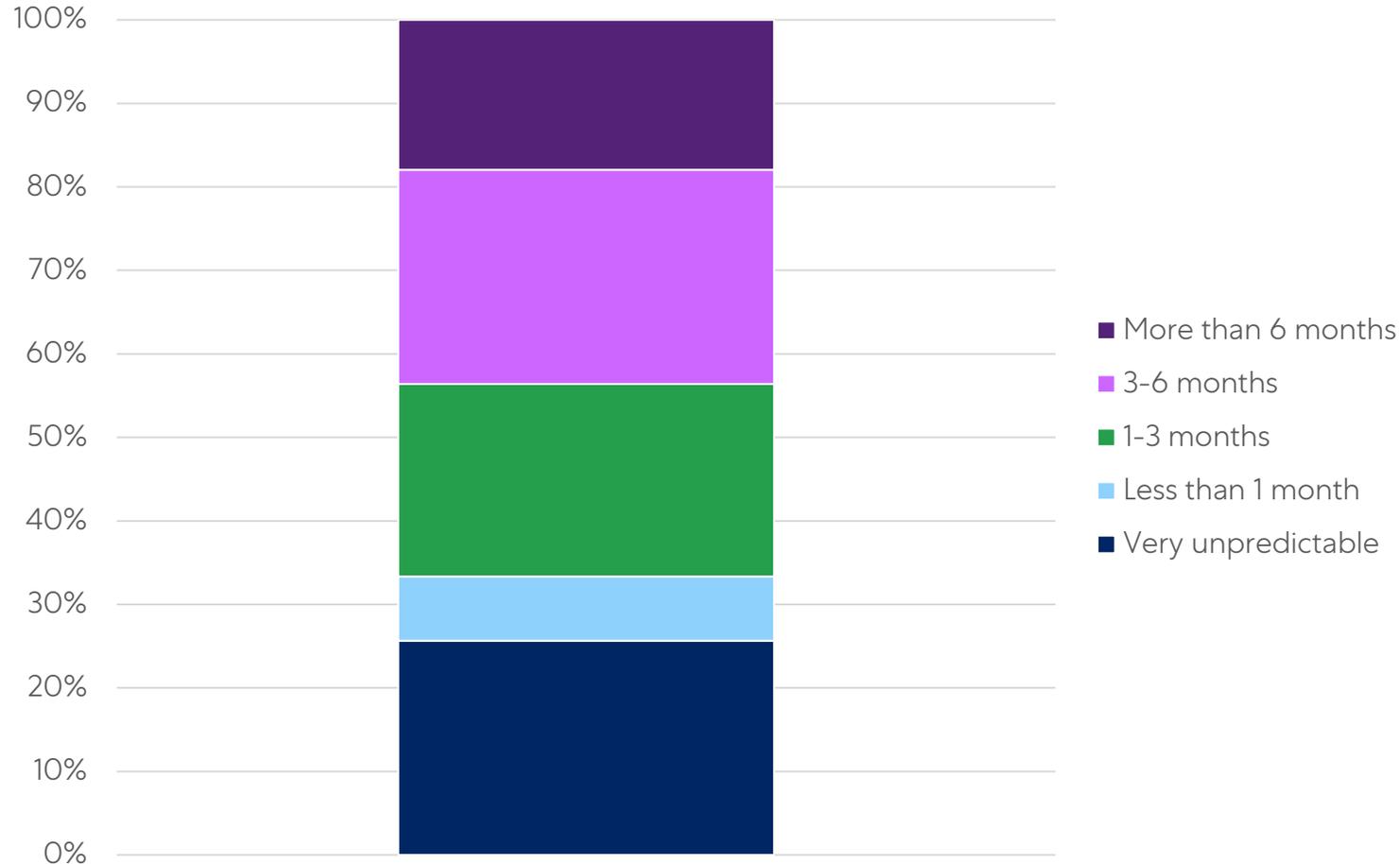
How do you manage income during off-seasons? (select all that apply)



Respondents describe managing off-season income through additional work, savings, and household support, suggesting portfolio careers as an economic strategy, not only a lifestyle preference.

Many respondents have limited lead time on upcoming work opportunities

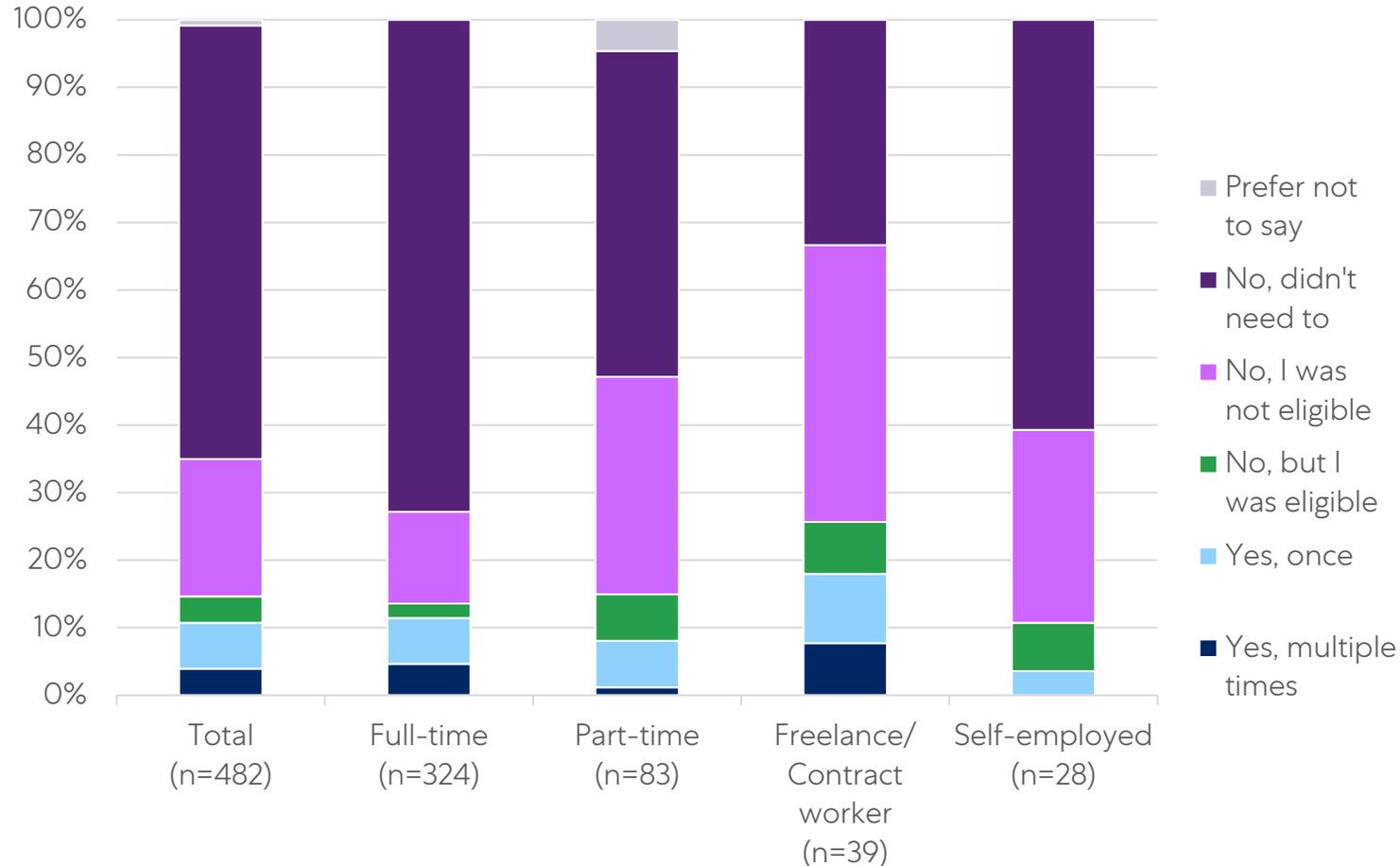
How far in advance do you typically know about upcoming work opportunities?



Short notice on future work increases insecurity and reduces the ability to plan childcare, secondary employment, and finances especially for seasonal and contract-based workers.

Unemployment use varies, and eligibility is a key barrier for some

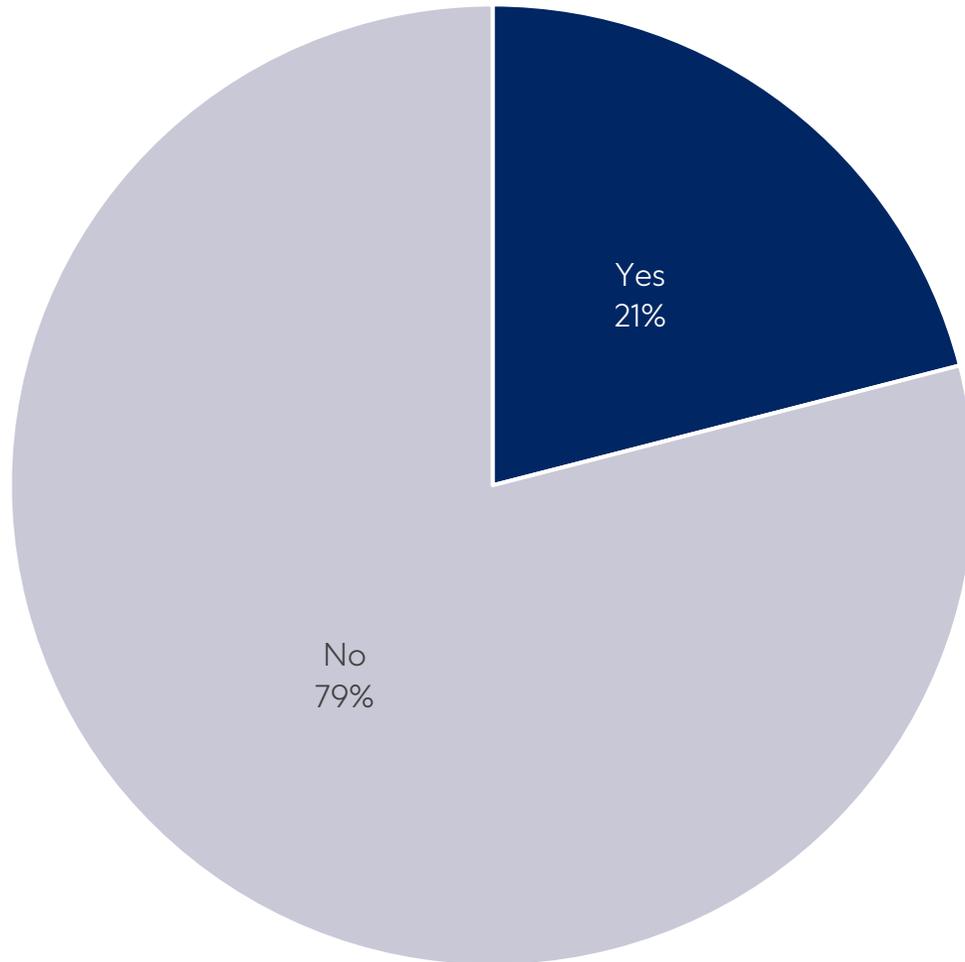
Have you used unemployment benefits in the past 12 months?



Unemployment usage appears relatively low given reported seasonality. Respondent comments point to eligibility constraints, limited awareness, and administrative burden as potential barriers, suggesting a clear opportunity for sector guidance and education

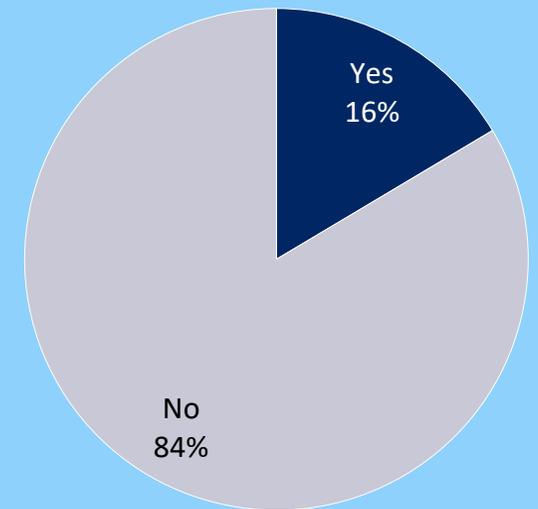
Union membership remains a minority status

Are you a member of a union?



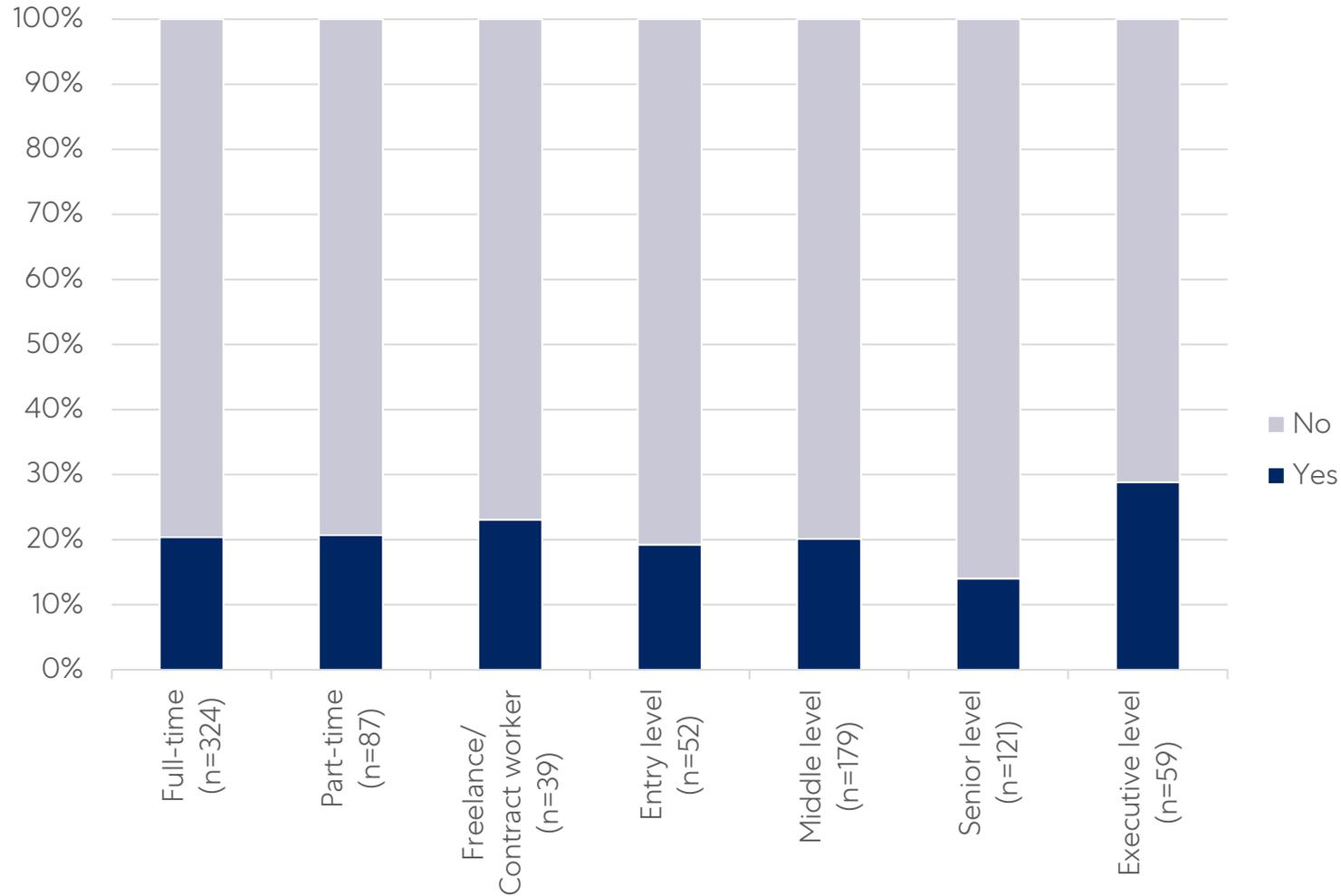
Union membership remains a minority status in this sample

2023:



Union membership is similarly proportioned by employment type and role level

Are you a member of a union?



Union membership remains a minority across groups, with broadly similar rates by employment type and role level (no single segment stands out as distinctly higher).

Benefits

This subsection summarizes reported benefit access and perceived benefit value, alongside patterns of uncertainty that may indicate transparency and onboarding gaps

Benefits Summary

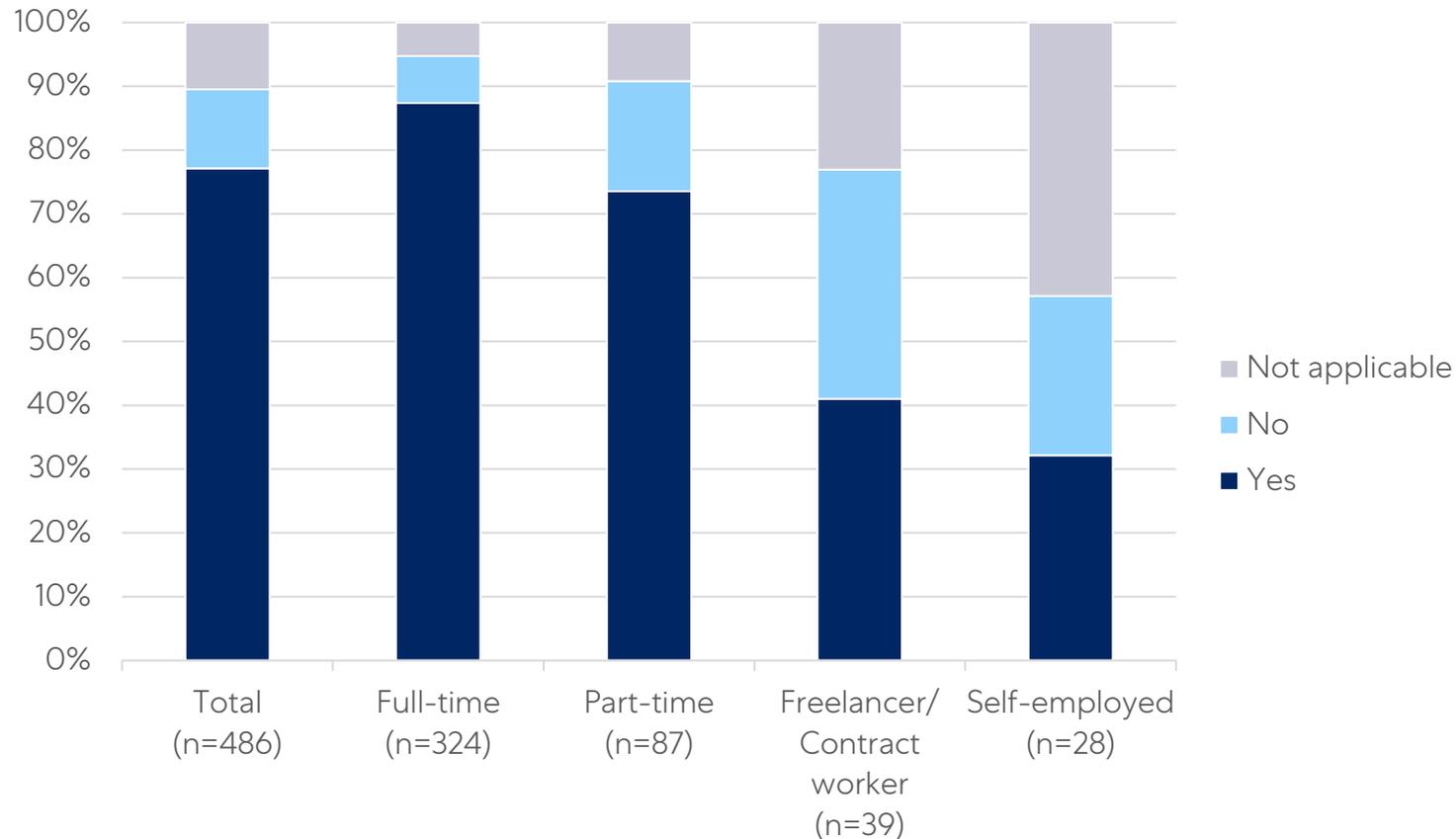
Among employee respondents, paid leave is relatively common, but access to healthcare support, retirement contributions, and reimbursements varies widely, creating meaningful differences in take-home value even where salaries appear similar.

Healthcare is the clearest differentiator. Employer contributions to premiums vary, and a notable share of respondents report uncertainty about what their employer covers. This uncertainty persists even among respondents who report receiving an employee handbook, suggesting uneven transparency and onboarding around benefits.

Non-insurance benefits remain patchy. Retirement contributions, professional development support, and reimbursements (travel/expenses) are often not offered. Where benefit access is limited, respondents describe the practical experience as “pay erosion,” especially when healthcare costs increase faster than wages.

The majority of full-time and part-time staff were provided with an Employee Handbook

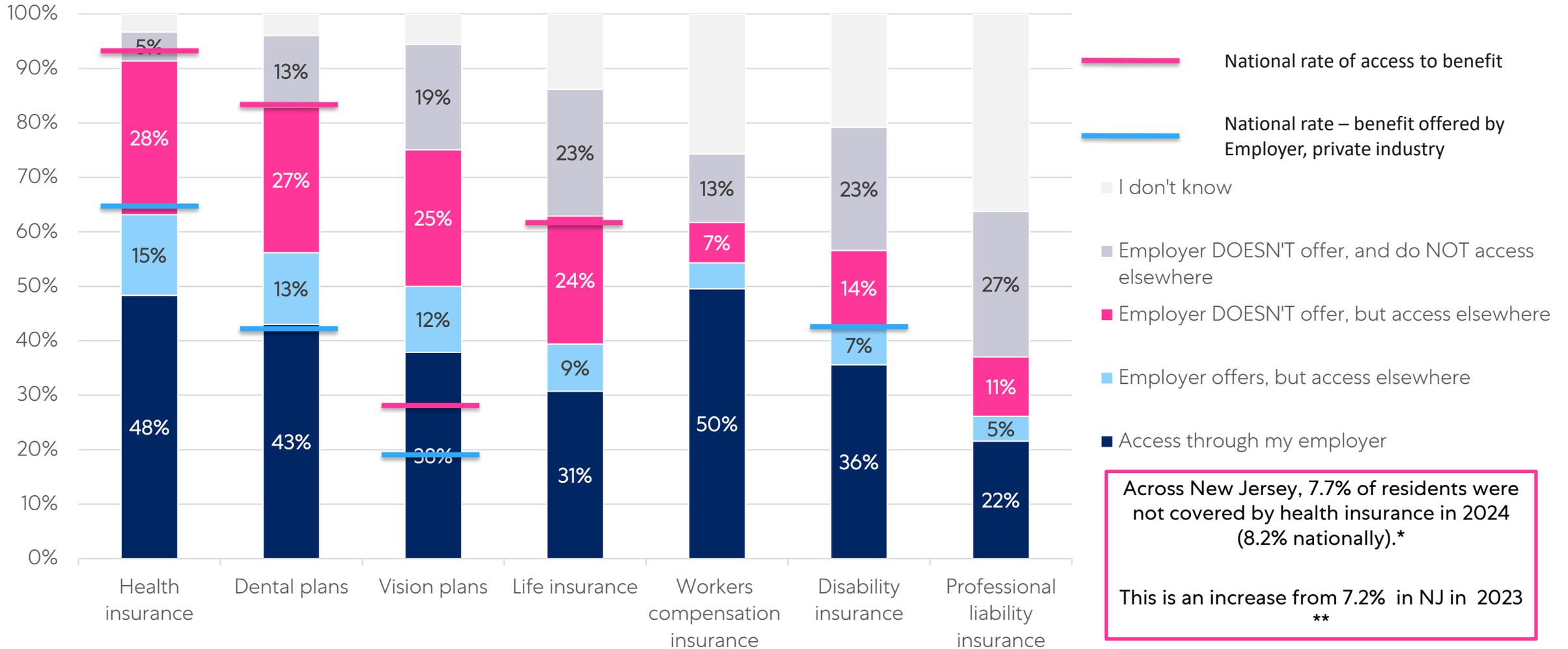
Were you provided with, or have access to, an Employee Handbook for the organization you primarily work for?



Most employee respondents report access to a handbook. “Not applicable” and lower access are more common among freelance/contract and self-employed respondents

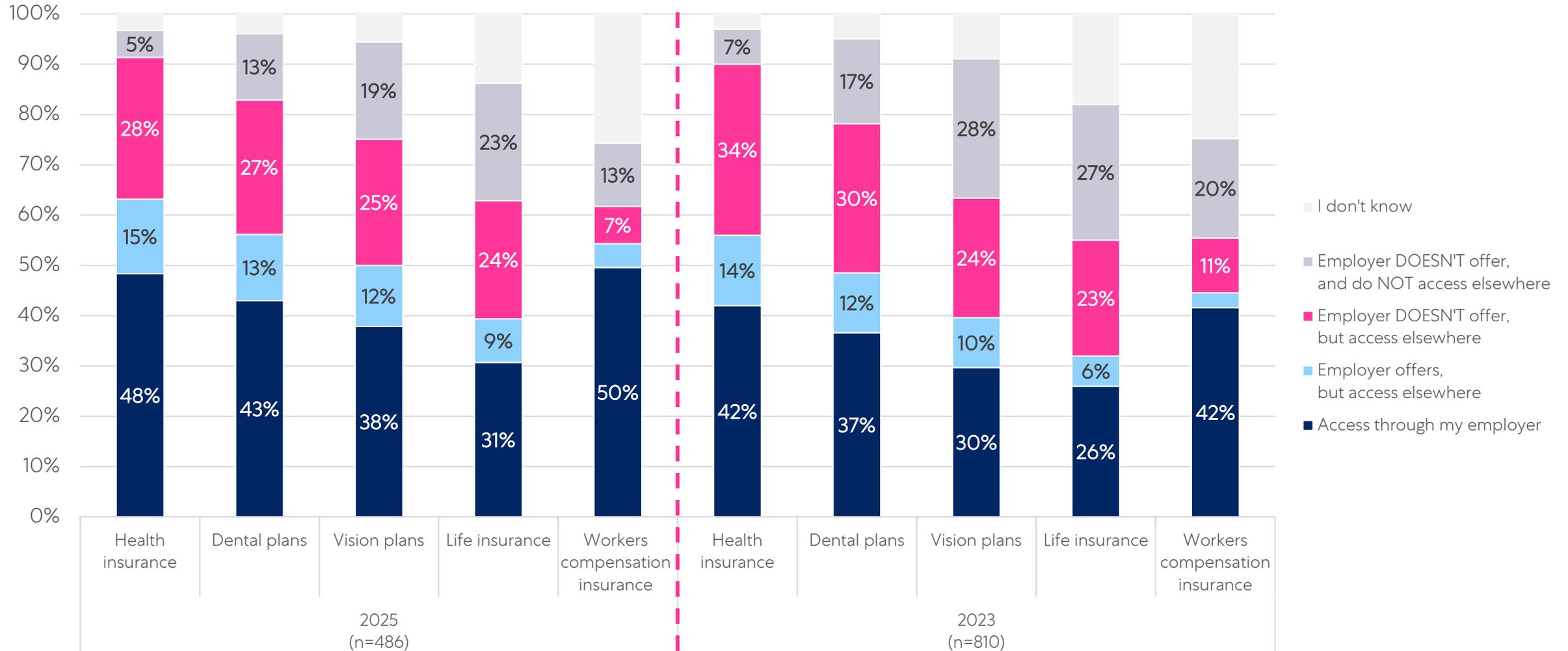
Access to employer-provided health-related benefits varies substantially across respondents, highlighting benefits as a key component of effective compensation

Insurance and Benefits – Please indicate your access to the following benefits:



Compared with 2023, insurance access patterns are broadly similar, with modest net movement toward employer access in several categories

Insurance and Benefits – Please indicate your access to the following benefits:



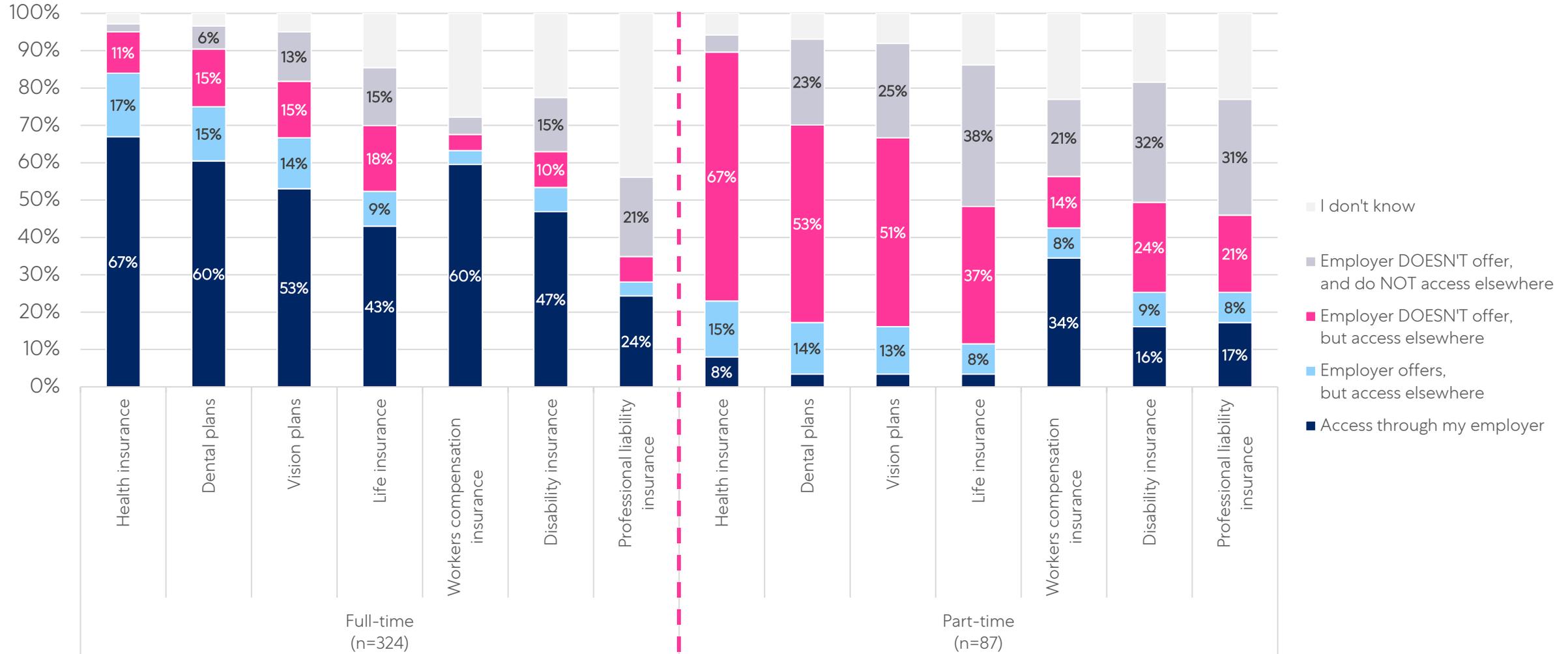
Net changes since 2023 show small shifts across access categories (employer access, access elsewhere, and “don’t know”)

Insurance and Benefits – Percentage difference



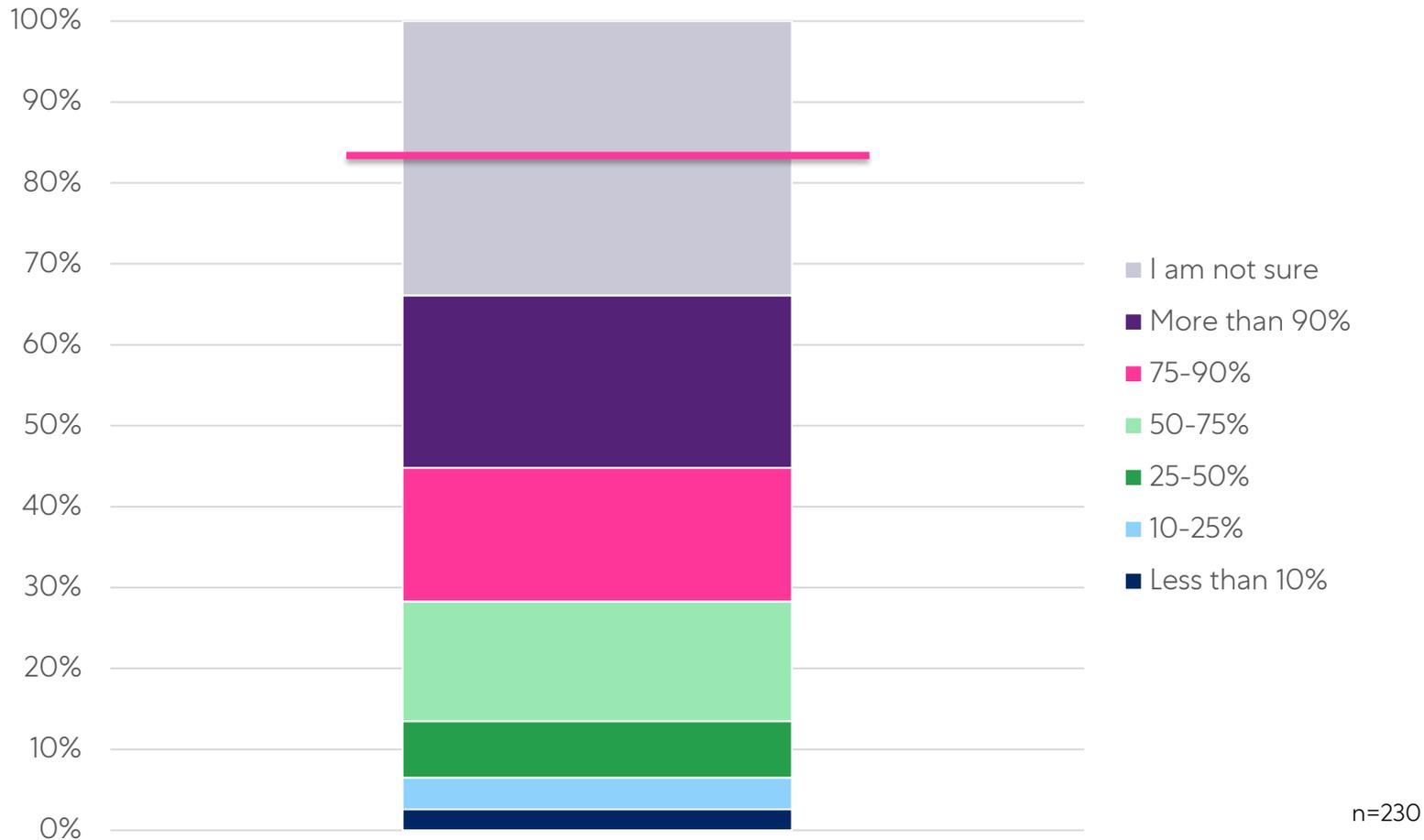
Benefit access differs sharply between full-time and part-time employee respondents, particularly for health insurance and related coverage

Insurance and Benefits – Please indicate your access to the following benefits:



Employer-paid healthcare premiums vary widely, affecting take-home value

Approximately, what percentage of your health care premiums are paid by your employer?



“Don’t know” responses appear even among respondents with handbook access, suggesting benefit clarity and day-to-day visibility are uneven in practice, not just in documentation.

“Raises have been minimal... barely covered increased costs of health insurance... take-home pay was virtually unchanged.”
 - *Senior; full-time; one job in arts*

National average employer share of health care premiums is 81%

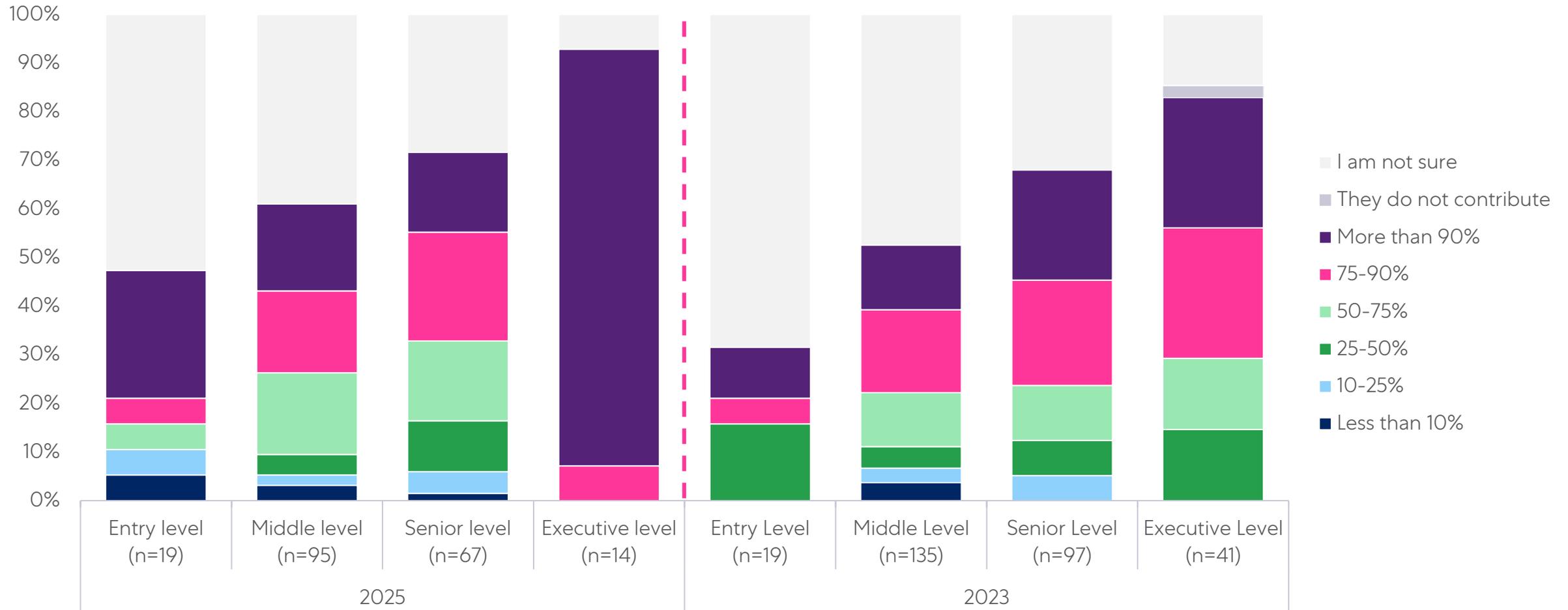
<https://www.bls.gov/news.release/ebs2.t03.htm>

[<https://mplayeradvisor.com/state-benefit-guides/employee-medical-benefits-summary-new-jersey>]

Awareness of employer premium contributions varies by role level

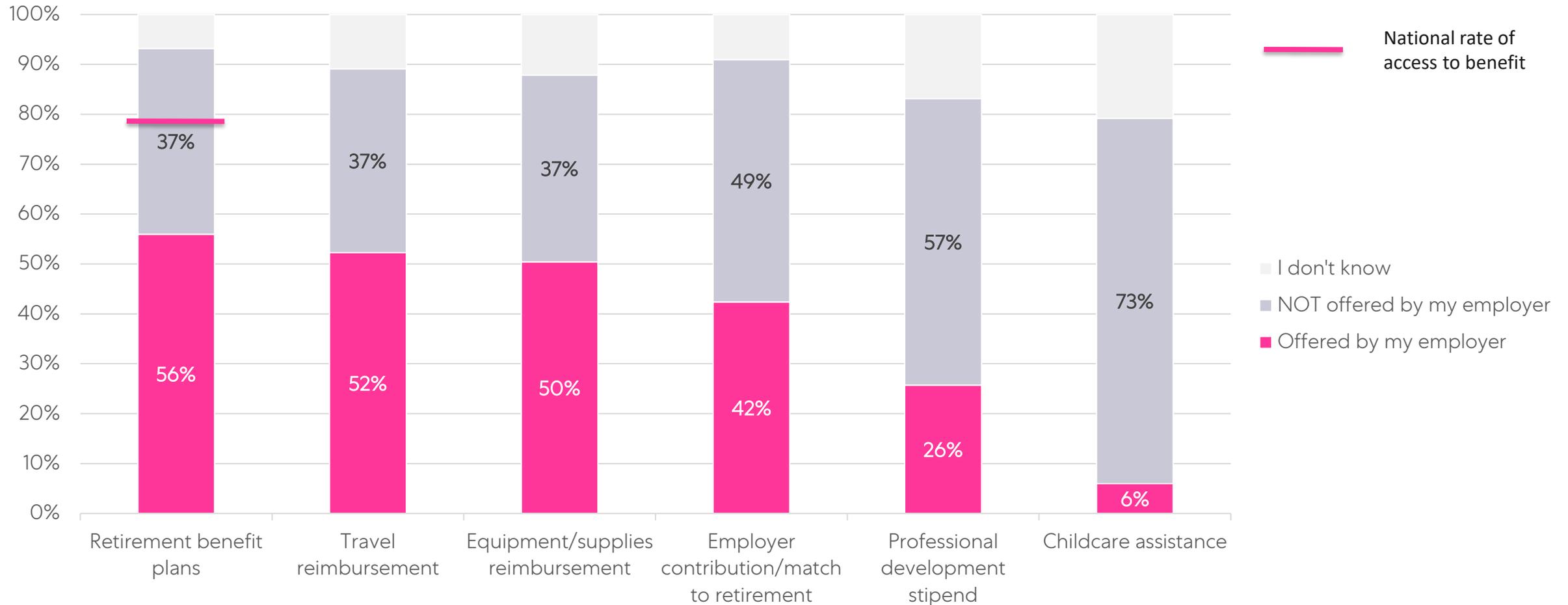
A substantial share of respondents (particularly at entry level) report not knowing their employer's premium contribution. This suggests that benefits transparency may be a distinct issue from benefits access, with implications for how workers evaluate their total compensation

Approximately, what percentage of your health care premiums are paid by your employer? Full-time/Annual salary



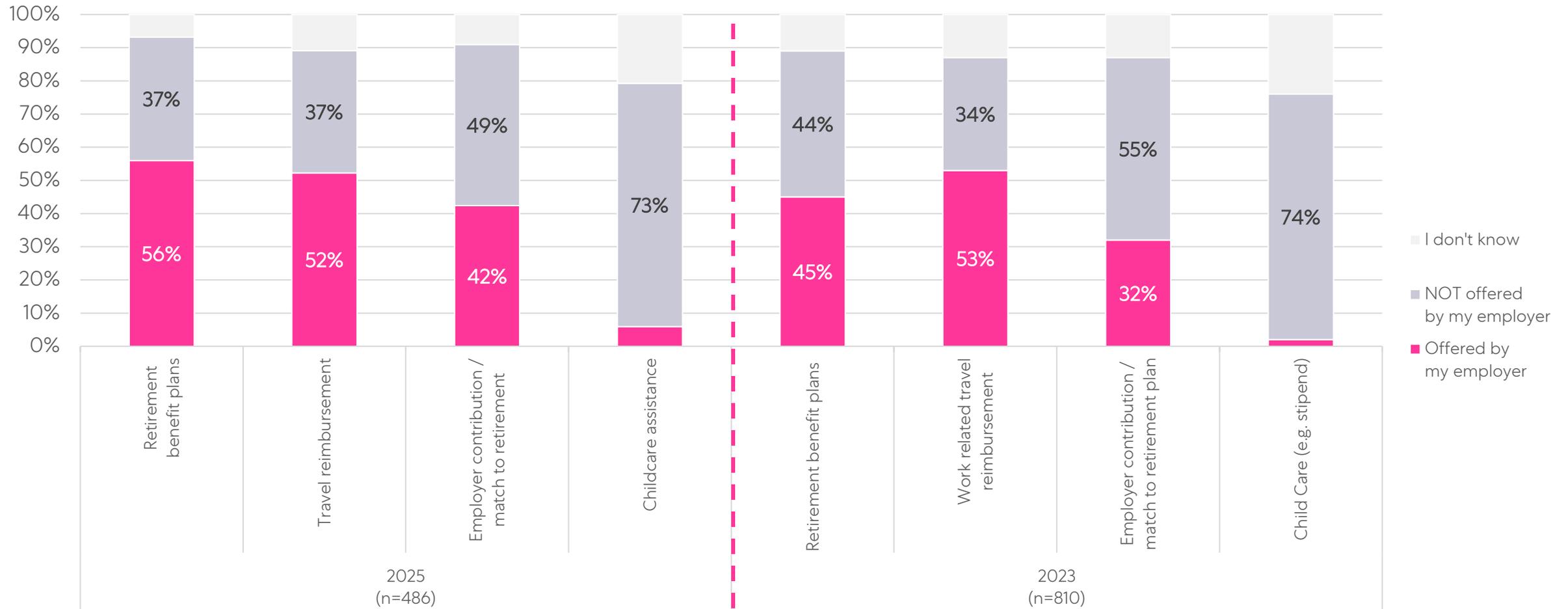
Non-insurance benefits (retirement contributions, reimbursements, professional development support) are often not offered, widening gaps in total compensation across roles and organizations

Other Compensation and Benefits – Which of these is offered by your employer?



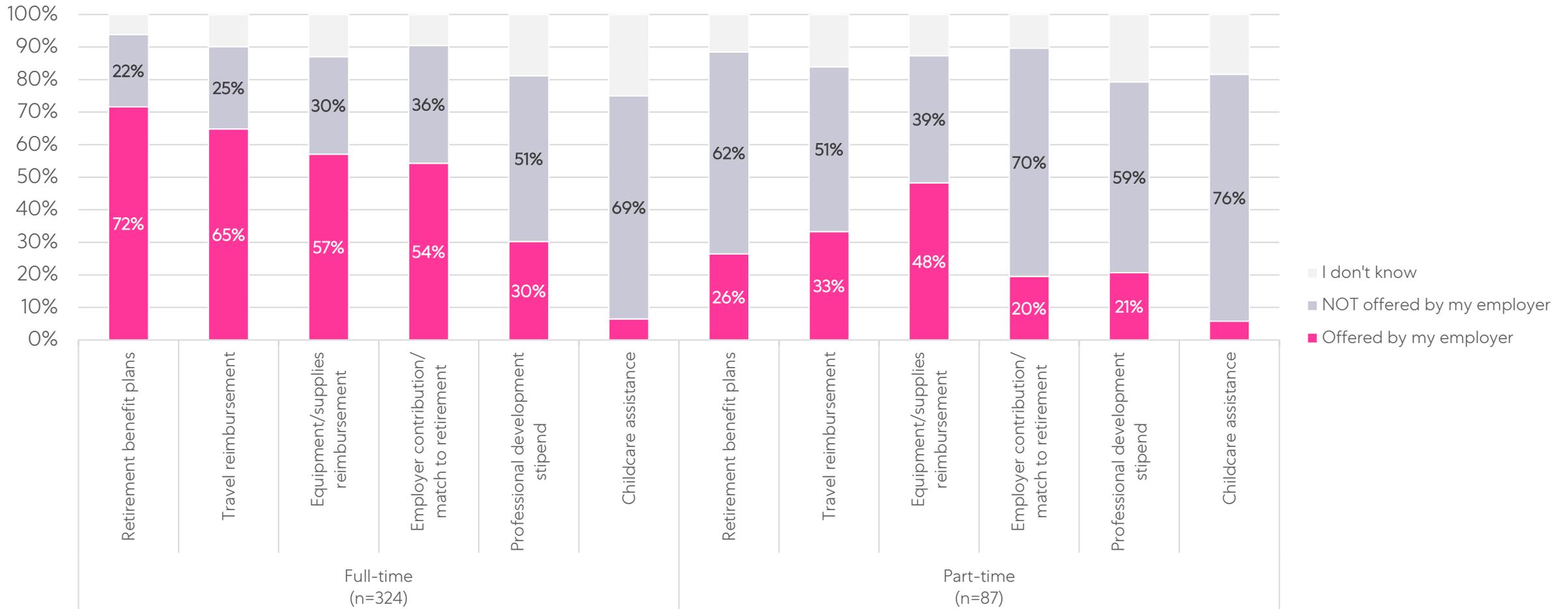
Compared with 2023, several non-insurance benefits show net shifts, but gaps remain

Other Compensation and Benefits – Which of these is offered by your employer?



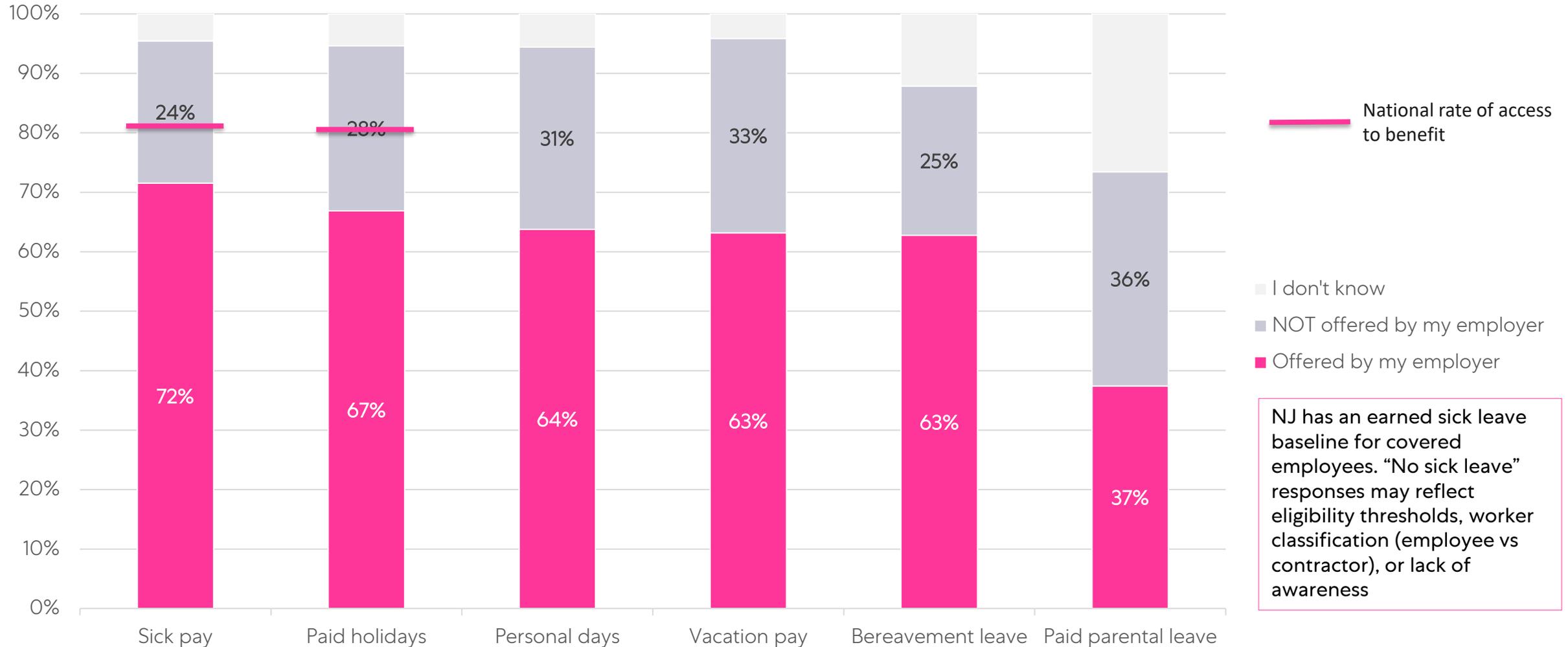
Full-time employee respondents report substantially higher access to most non-insurance benefits than part-time respondents

Other Compensation and Benefits – Which of these is offered by your employer?



Paid leave categories (sick, holidays, vacation) are more commonly offered than other benefits, while paid parental leave is notably less common among respondents

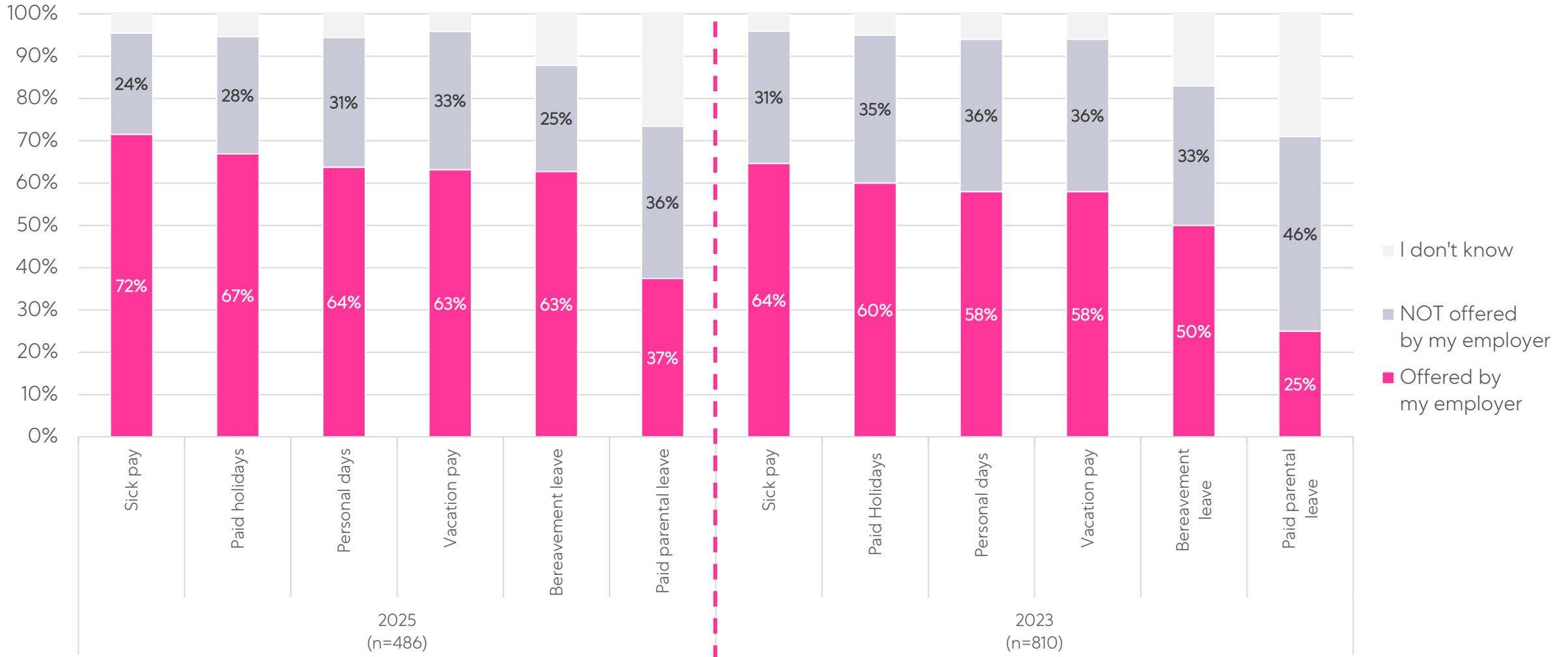
Paid Leave Benefits – Which of these is offered by your employer?



NJ has an earned sick leave baseline for covered employees. “No sick leave” responses may reflect eligibility thresholds, worker classification (employee vs contractor), or lack of awareness

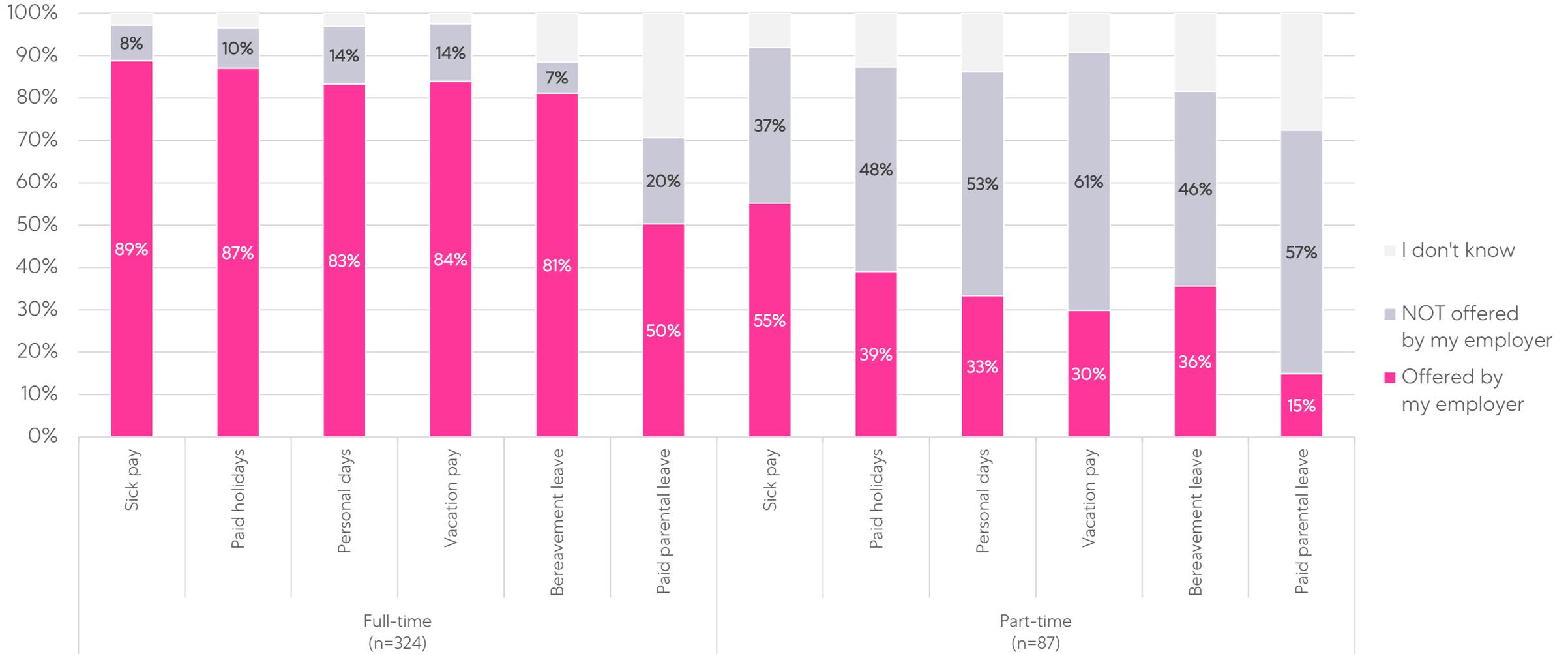
Paid leave offerings are broadly consistent with 2023, with only modest shifts across categories

Paid Leave Benefits – Which of these is offered by your employer?



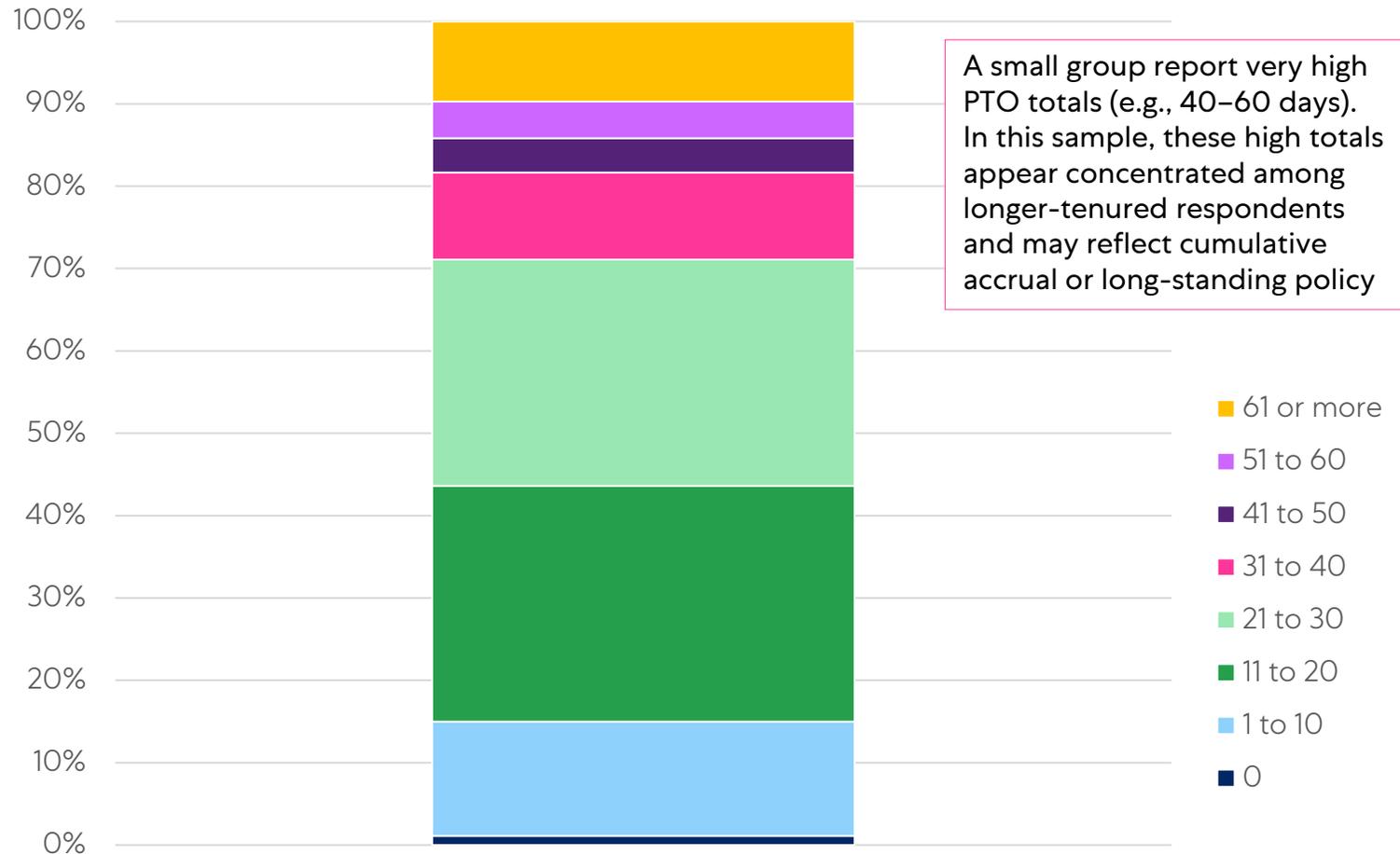
Paid leave access is substantially higher among full-time than part-time respondents, especially for parental leave, indicating employment type is closely associated with benefit protection

Paid Leave Benefits – Which of these is offered by your employer?



PTO totals vary widely across respondents

In total, how many days of PTO (including vacation, sick, and personal days) are you offered?



PTO totals vary widely. Higher totals are concentrated among longer-tenured respondents, meaning newer workers are substantially less likely to have high leave availability.

Section 3 – Teaching Artists and Volunteers

How teaching artist and volunteer participation shapes compensation, protections, and sustainability

Section 3 – Teaching Artists and Volunteers Summary 1/2

Teaching work is often supplemental rather than a single stable role

Teaching artist work is rarely described as a single full-time primary job. More often, respondents combine teaching with administrative work, performance, or unrelated employment, illustrating the sector's broader pattern of portfolio careers.

High-skill work, inconsistent standards

Teaching artists occupy a distinct position: central to education and community engagement delivery, yet often outside the benefit structures attached to full-time staff roles. Respondents describe variability in rates, inconsistent contracting practices, and uncompensated preparation and travel time

“With Freelance there is a lot of work that is done in preparation and post-production, but also in the marketing and communication of jobs. Let's say I am an adjunct for 3 classes at two universities in a semester that are 3 hours each. That is 9 hours. Yet I also have freelance work in between that can range from 24 hours (say 3 days) of the week that were for the prep of the shoot, the day of the shoot, and the post-production of the shoot, that is intermingled in between college class days. And then all other hours are for billing, promotion, equipment upkeep and maintenance, etc... Nevermind all of the Adjunct Professor hours of grading, HR training, meetings, faculty and student communication every day of the week that is not paid for even though Adjunct is not full-time or tenured or comes with benefits. These are vampire activities. As a freelancer, every waking hour feels devoted to some work that needs to be done for the work days to happen.”

(Age 50 to 59, Woman, Freelance/Contract worker)

“I think the funding for education needs to shift. Chrome books are hurting us more than helping us (at the elementary level especially), class sizes NEED to be smaller, and teachers need equal breaks in the day... arts teachers tend to have less prep time and more coverages.”

(Age 30 to 39, Woman, Employment type not provided)

Section 3 – Teaching Artists and Volunteers Summary 2/2

Income predictability and benefits gaps shape retention

In this sample, teaching artists are more likely than full-time employees to describe work as episodic and income as unpredictable. For these respondents, compensation challenges are less about annual progression and more about the absence of structural protections (paid leave, health insurance, retirement contributions, and reimbursement for required expenses).

Volunteer labor is supplemental, but not evenly distributed

Volunteer work remains a meaningful component of participation in the nonprofit arts sector. Respondents volunteer in roles ranging from event support and community outreach to board service and organizational assistance. While many volunteer contributions are relatively small in monthly hours, the prevalence of volunteering suggests that the sector continues to rely on

unpaid labor alongside paid staffing structures.

Volunteering is often framed as commitment-driven rather than career-driven, though it can also function as an informal entry or networking pathway, particularly for early-career individuals.

One respondent described how teaching can be structured as volunteer labor:

“I teach marching band, which can come with a stipend, but is officially an unpaid volunteer position.”

(Age 18 to 29, Non-Binary, Part time employee (less than 35 hours a week))

Segment variation: teaching and volunteering intersect with employment type

Variation by employment type is especially pronounced in this section:

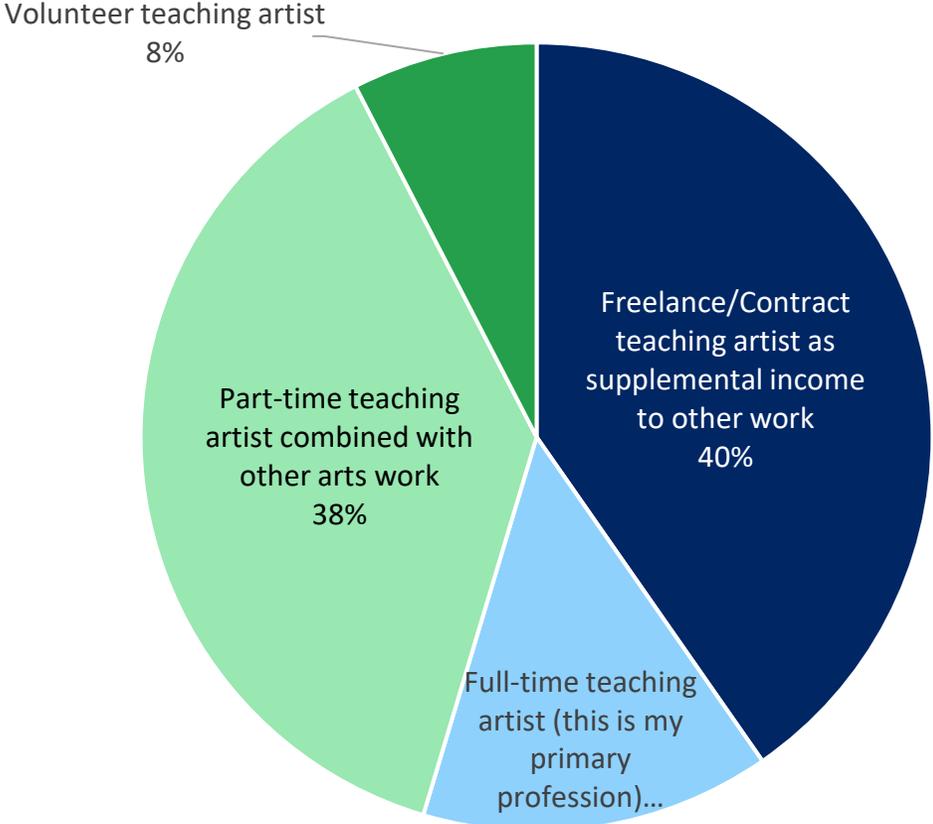
- Full-time employees may volunteer primarily in supplemental community or board roles.

- Freelance and self-employed respondents more often describe volunteer or unpaid labor as intertwined with professional survival, networking, or maintaining visibility.
- Part-time workers sometimes describe volunteering as bridging gaps in paid hours.

This reinforces a key structural theme: uncompensated labor is not experienced uniformly, and for workers outside full-time employment, the line between paid and unpaid contribution can become blurred.

Teaching artist work is often part-time or supplemental rather than full-time

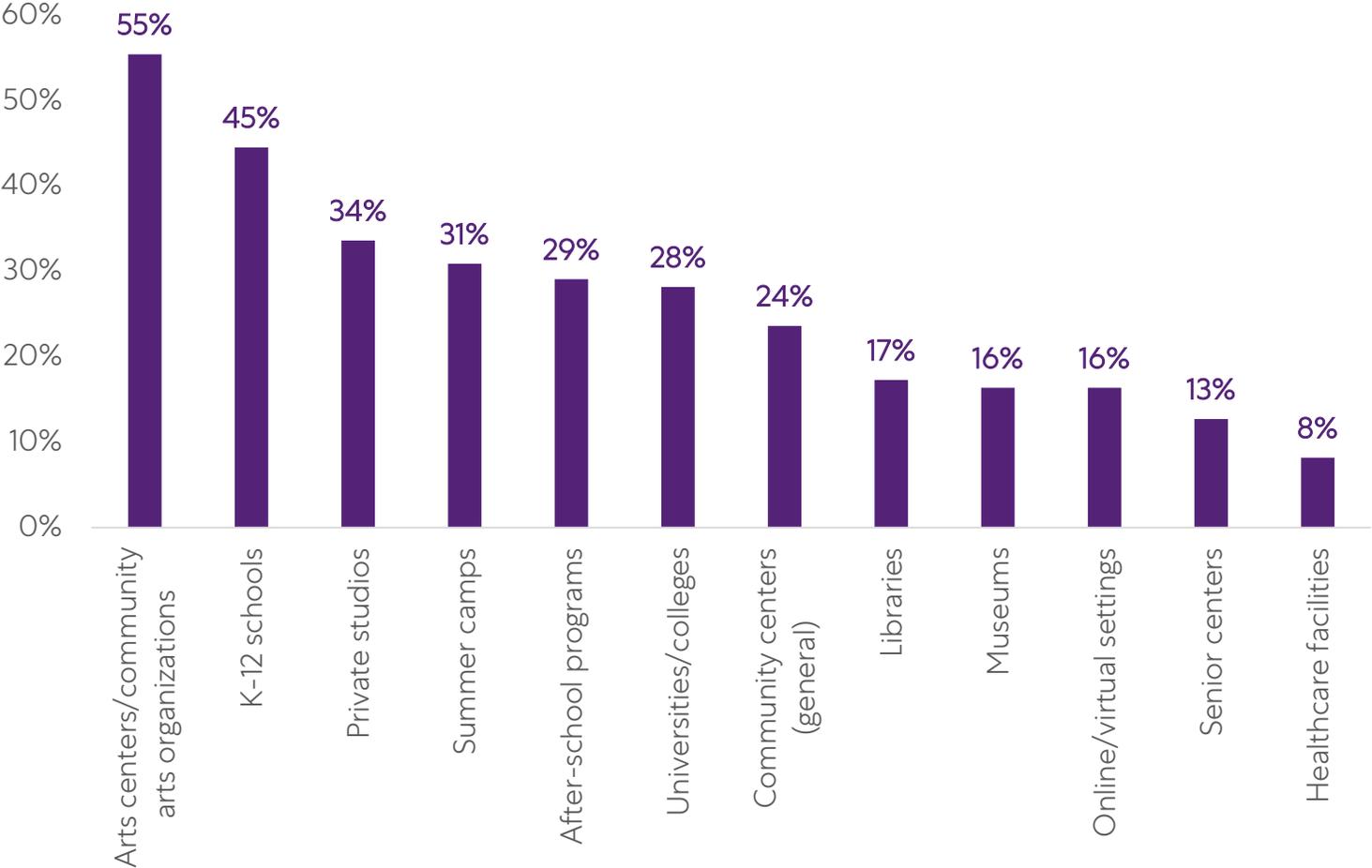
Which of the following best describes your teaching artist work?



Teaching artist work is rarely described as a single stable full-time role. More often it appears as part-time employment or supplemental work alongside other paid jobs (including administrative roles)

Teaching work happens most often in community arts settings and K-12 schools

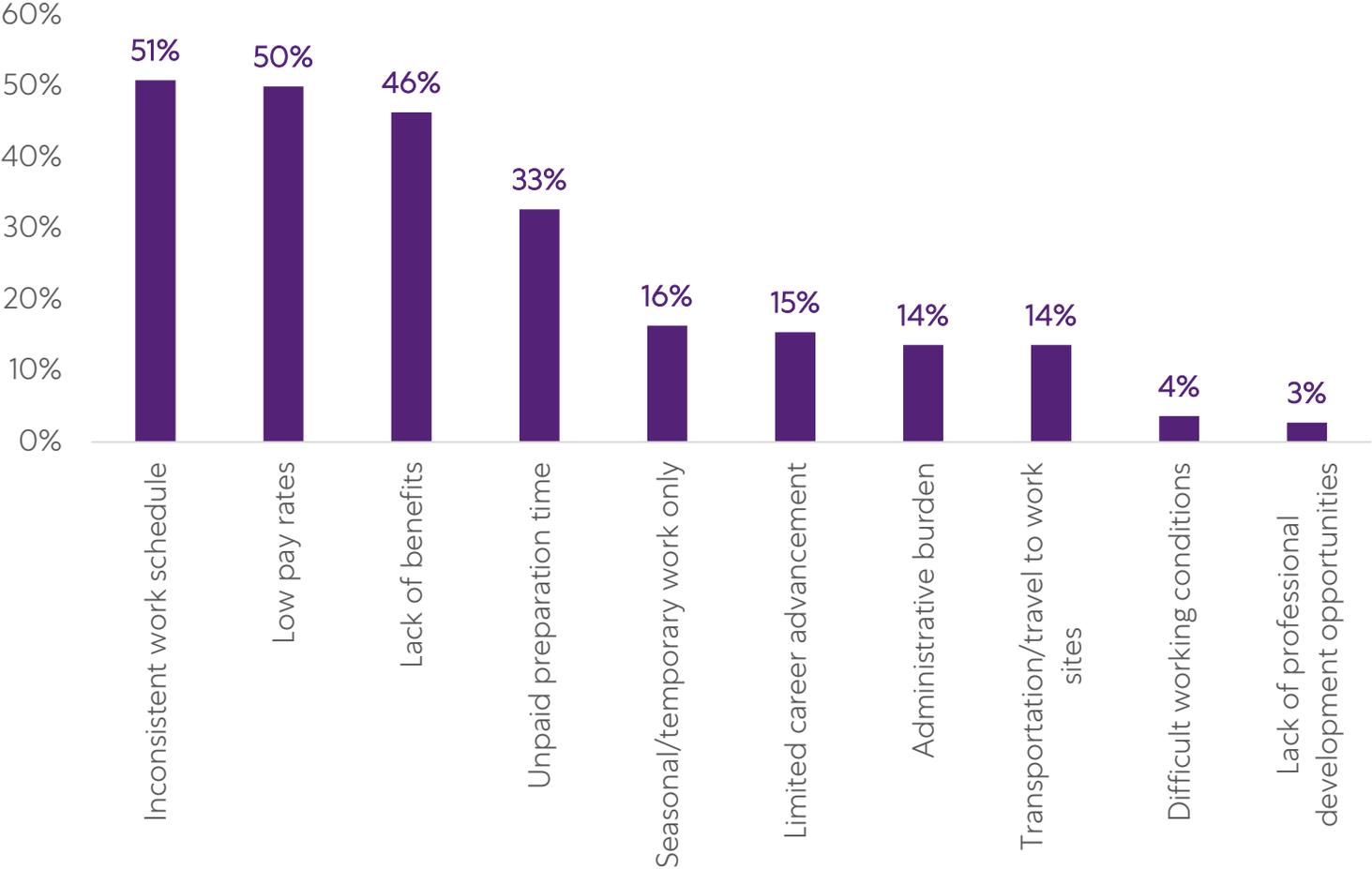
What settings do you primarily teach in? (Select all that apply)



Teaching work is concentrated in community settings and K-12 schools, highlighting teaching artists' role in delivering arts access and education

Teaching artists cite schedule instability, low pay, and lack of benefits as top challenges

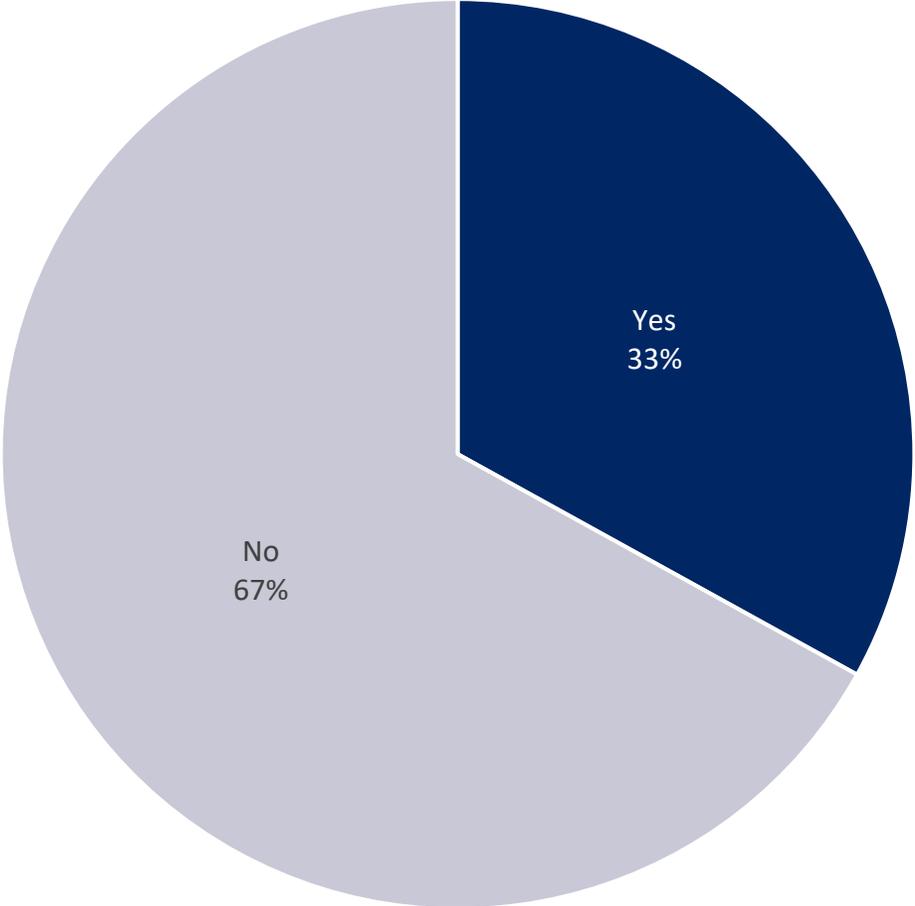
What are the most significant challenges you face in your teaching artist work? (Select up to 3)



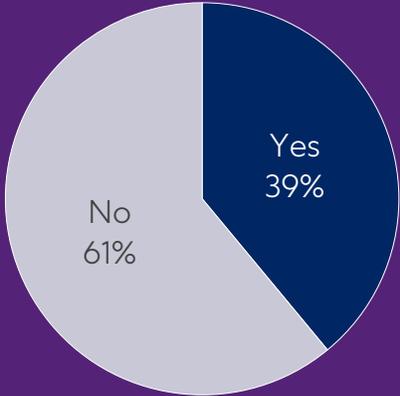
Respondents most often cite structural factors as challenges: unpredictable scheduling, low pay relative to prep and travel time, and limited access to benefits

A third of respondents volunteer regularly in addition to paid work

In addition to your paid work, do you regularly volunteer in the arts sector?

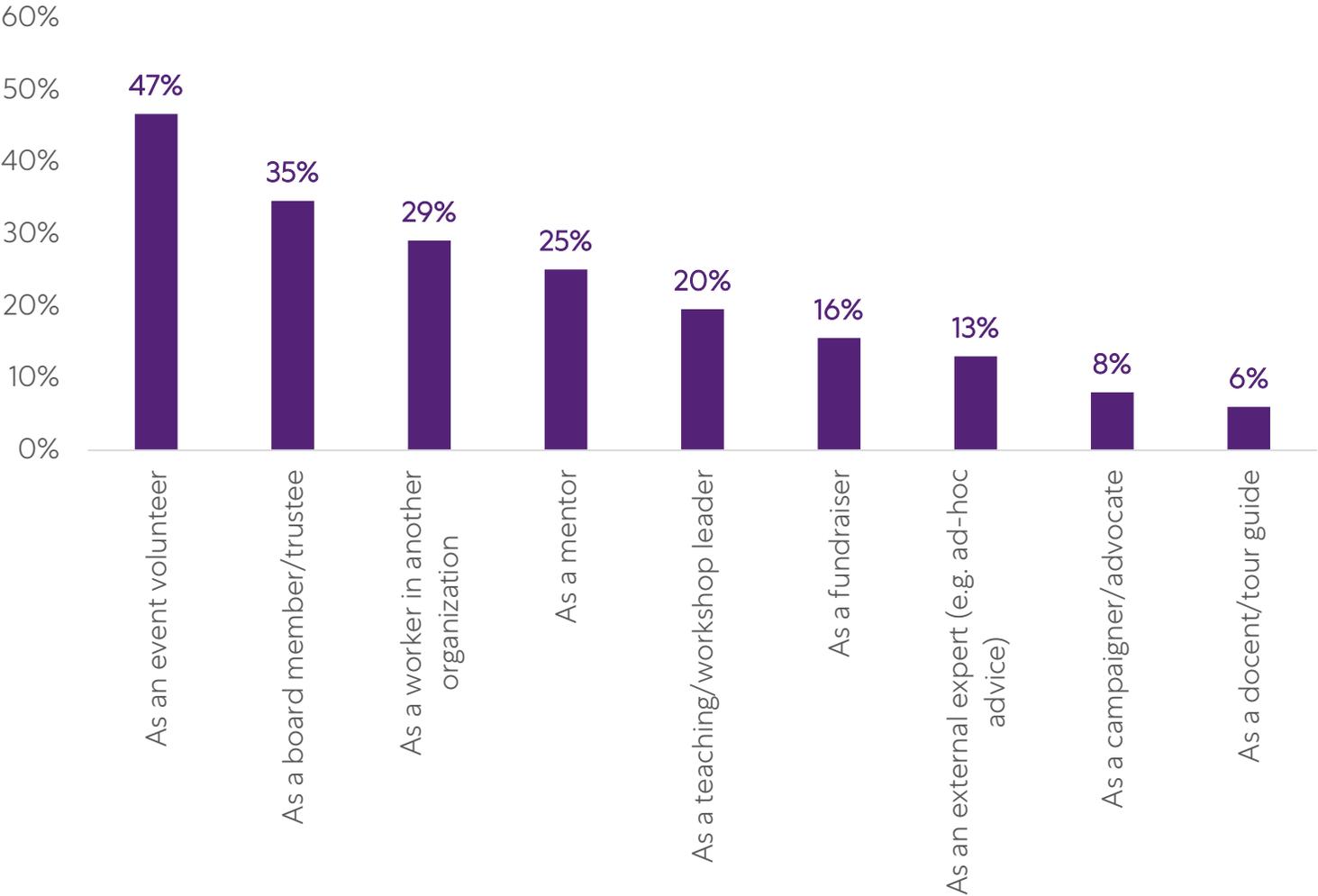


2023:



Volunteering most often takes the form of event support and board service

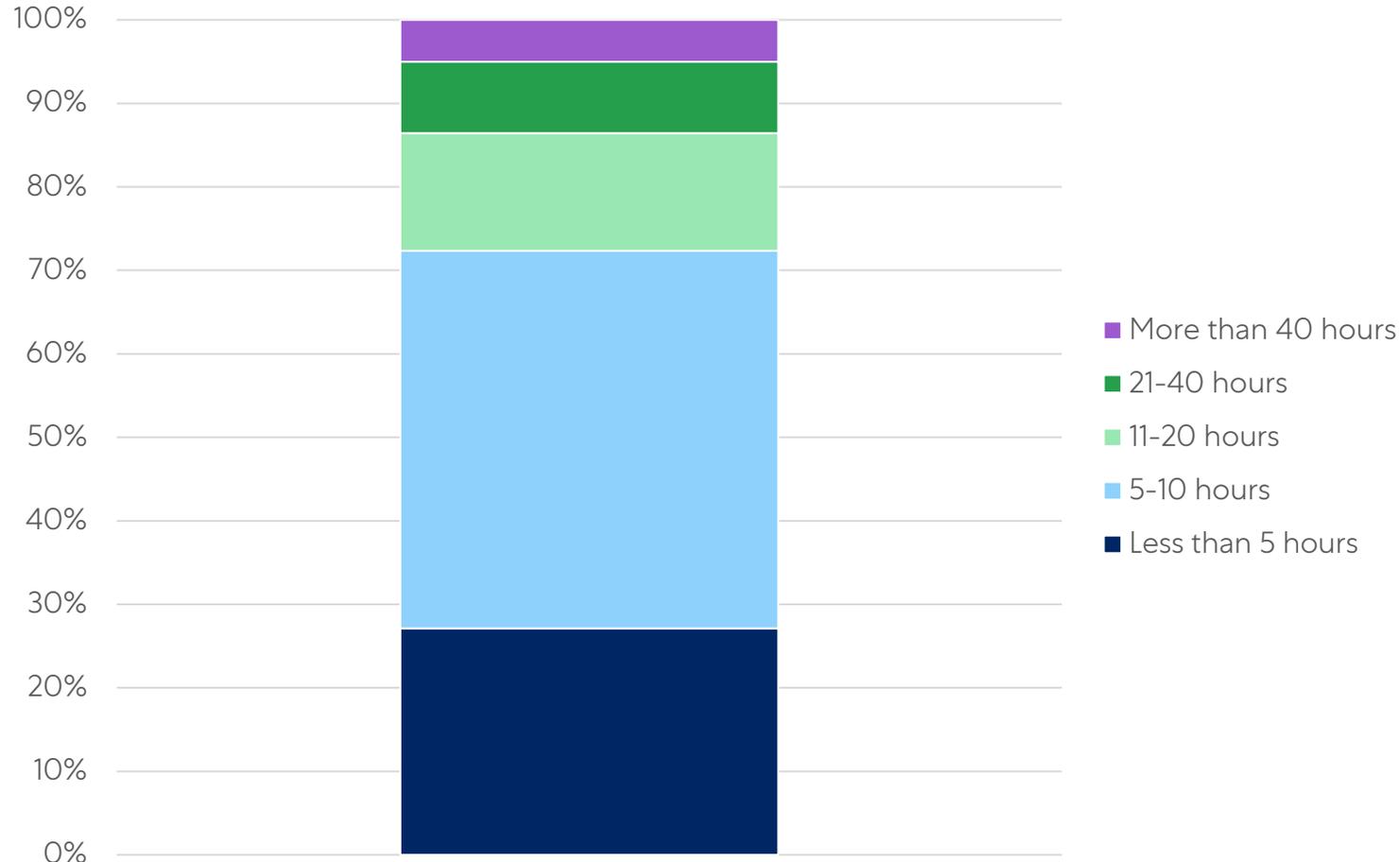
How do you volunteer? (Select all that apply)



Volunteer labor clusters around event support and governance/board service, suggesting volunteer contributions often underpin public-facing delivery and organizational continuity.

Most volunteers give under 10 hours per month, but a minority give much more

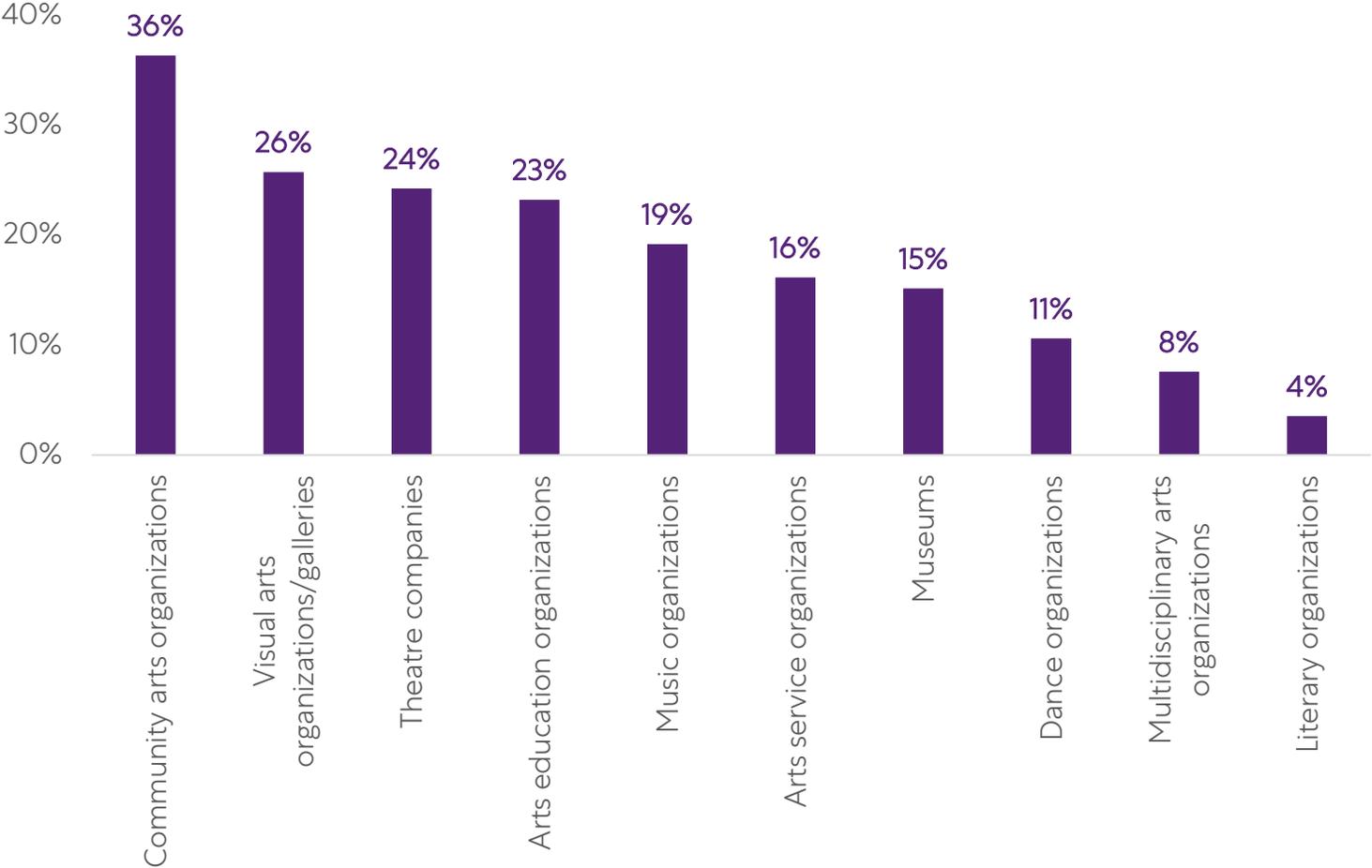
Approximately how many hours per month do you volunteer in the arts?



Most volunteer time is relatively limited month-to-month, but a minority contribute high hours, indicating that, in some contexts, volunteer hours may substitute for staff capacity

Volunteering most often supports community, visual arts, theater, and arts education organizations

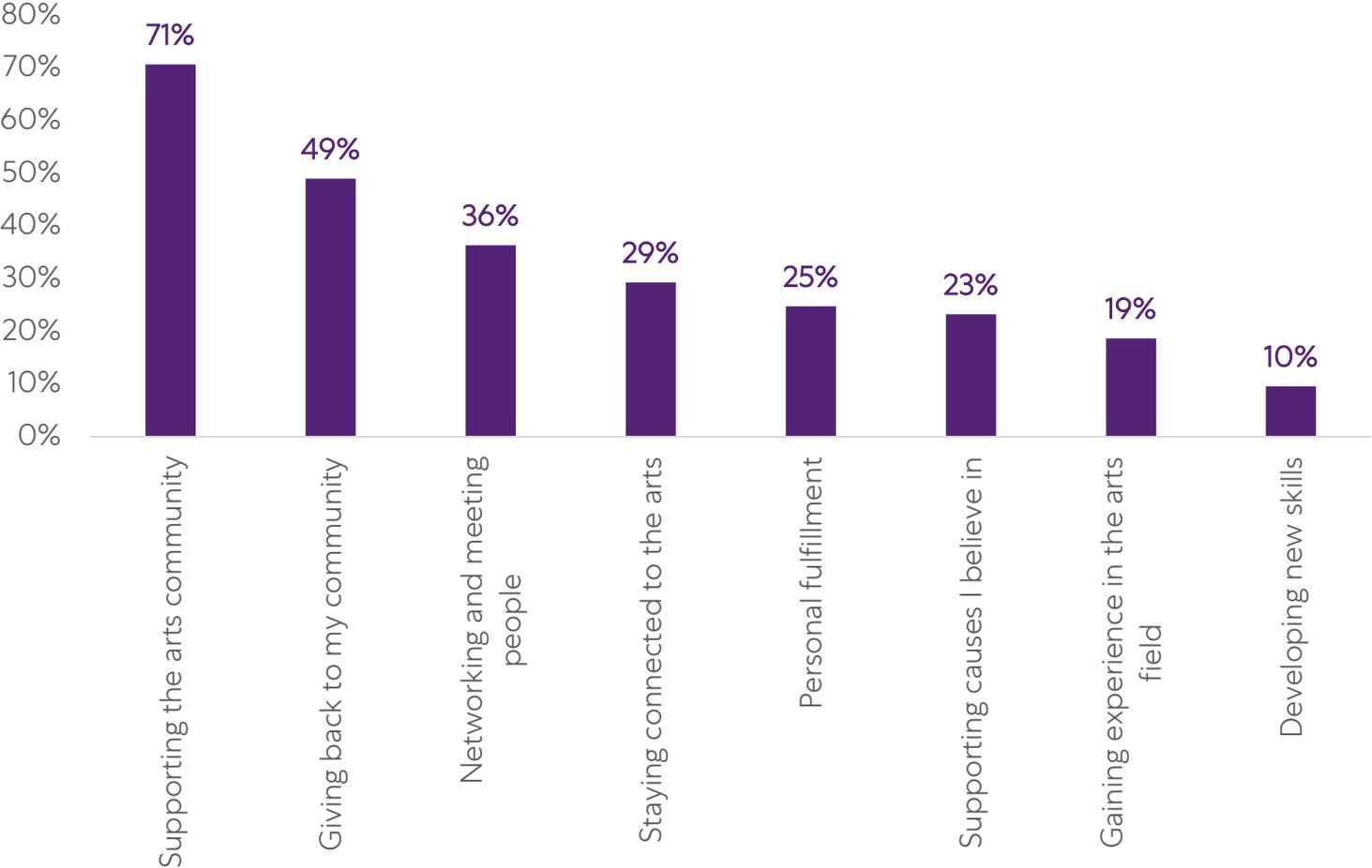
What types of arts organizations do you volunteer with? (Select all that apply)



Volunteer activity aligns with community-facing and education-focused organizational types, where programming volume and event cadence can be high and staffing models may rely more heavily on volunteer support.

Volunteering is motivated by community support and connection as much as career factors

What motivates you to volunteer in the arts? (Select up to 3)



Respondents most often describe volunteering as community support and connection, alongside (and sometimes more than) career factors

Volunteering is often framed as community impact and belonging

Those who DO volunteer - Please share any additional thoughts about volunteering in New Jersey's arts sector

“The arts are such an important part of the community and I try to ensure that we are involved and engaged with a broad range of arts programming from family workshops to professional arts programming.”

- Age 50 to 59, Woman, Full time employee (35 or more hours a week)

“The more we engage others in the arts, the more people understand how accessible it is and, hopefully, how important it is to support the arts. This is typically derived from the feeling of how it benefits their wellbeing - and, ultimately, the greater wellbeing of us all.”

- Age 60+, Woman, Part time employee (less than 35 hours a week)

“Volunteering in New Jersey's arts sector allows people to engage deeply with the local diverse culture, with opportunities to participate in artistic scenes from cities to small towns. Roles are varied, such as assisting with exhibitions and organizing workshops, with flexible time commitments, and they also help build industry skills. While small organizations, due to limited funding, may place a heavier burden on volunteers, one can directly witness the positive impact of art on communities—like helping artists gain exposure and enriching public experiences.”

- Age 50 to 59, Man, Part time employee (less than 35 hours a week)

Non-volunteering is often explained by time scarcity, burnout, and the feeling that low-paid work already functions as unpaid labor

Those who DO NOT volunteer - Please share any additional thoughts about volunteering in New Jersey's arts sector

“A lot of work is volunteer for lack of workforce budget. Some theatre companies take advantage of generous help and over do it however.”

- Age 30 to 39, Woman , Freelance/Contract worker

“For one, I don't have time for that. And secondly, sometimes my low compensation can already feel like volunteering. At the level of expertise I'm at, I no longer do work for free.”

- Age 30 to 39, Woman, Full time employee (35 or more hours a week)

“I would love to volunteer, but a lot of times I am already burnt out from donating my time as a professional dancer to companies that cannot pay me for my time, on top of my full time teaching schedule. It is a lot to balance, leaving me with no extra time to volunteer. Plus, any time I have contracted time off (holidays, school breaks, etc.), I am working so hard to find gigs to make up that lost income since nobody pays teachers on scheduled days off.”

- Age 18 to 29, Woman, Part time employee (less than 35 hours a week)

Section 4 – Value of work

How respondents evaluate compensation adequacy, workload strain, and sustainability

Section 4 – Value of work Summary 1/2

This section examines how respondents evaluate the value of their work in relation to compensation, benefits, workload, and long-term sustainability. Across quantitative measures and open-text responses, respondents describe strong commitment to arts and community impact alongside concerns about pay adequacy, normalized overwork, and uneven recognition of skill and responsibility.

Perceptions of “value” vary by role level and employment type. Underpayment is not experienced as a single uniform condition, but as distinct forms of strain and demoralization. A majority report that and benefits fall short of expectations; however, open-text responses suggest that the meaning of “low pay” differs by career stage.

Entry-level respondents most often frame value in terms of affordability and baseline living costs

Mid-level respondents emphasize a mismatch between responsibility and rewards

Senior respondents more often describe stagnation, understaffing pressure, and rising benefit costs that reduce the felt value of raises.

“Pay for entry-level exhibitions/museums/art gallery staff is typically abysmal. While my doesn't pay me enough to pay rent for a one-bedroom in nearly all of northern New Jersey, it is still higher than similar jobs in this sector.”

(Age 18 to 29, Woman, Full time employee (35 or more hours a week))

Section 4 – Value of work Summary 2/2

Burnout and workload intensity are prominent in value perceptions

Overwork is a recurring theme in how respondents evaluate job quality. Respondents describe “always on” expectations, staffing shortages, and sustained long hours—signals that appear strongest among mid-level and senior full-time employees, where exempt-status norms and high responsibility loads are common.

“Sometimes when we have shows or events I could work over 50 - 70 hours, 6 days a week, multiple weeks in a row. I like the overtime but not having 2 days off in a row really wipes me out!”

(Age 50 to 59, Woman, Full time employee (35 or more hours a week))

Mid-career narratives frequently include ethical and moral language

A notable qualitative pattern is the use of moral and ethical language to describe normalized under-compensation, framed as a mismatch between expectations, skill, and reward.

“The lack of pay & benefits and the way that has been normalized despite extremely high expectations on staff is demoralizing. It even feels unethical at times. The amount of work and skill required is not properly compensated”

(Age not provided, Woman, Part time employee (less than 35 hours a week))

Positive exceptions often cluster around predictability and protections

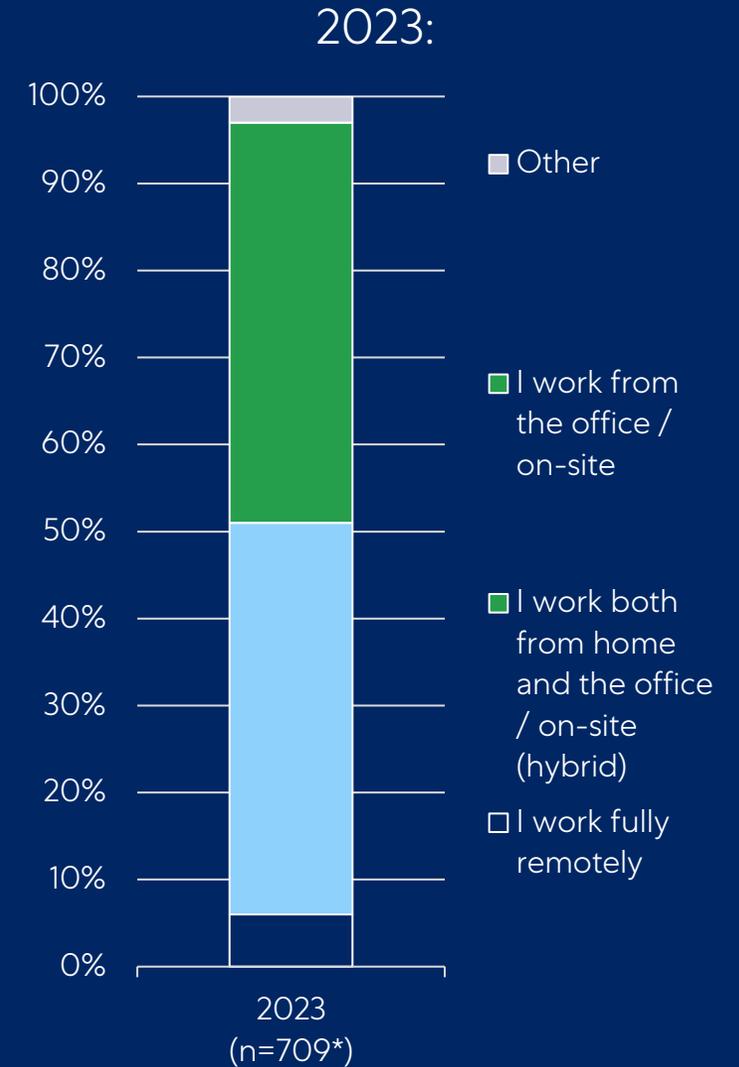
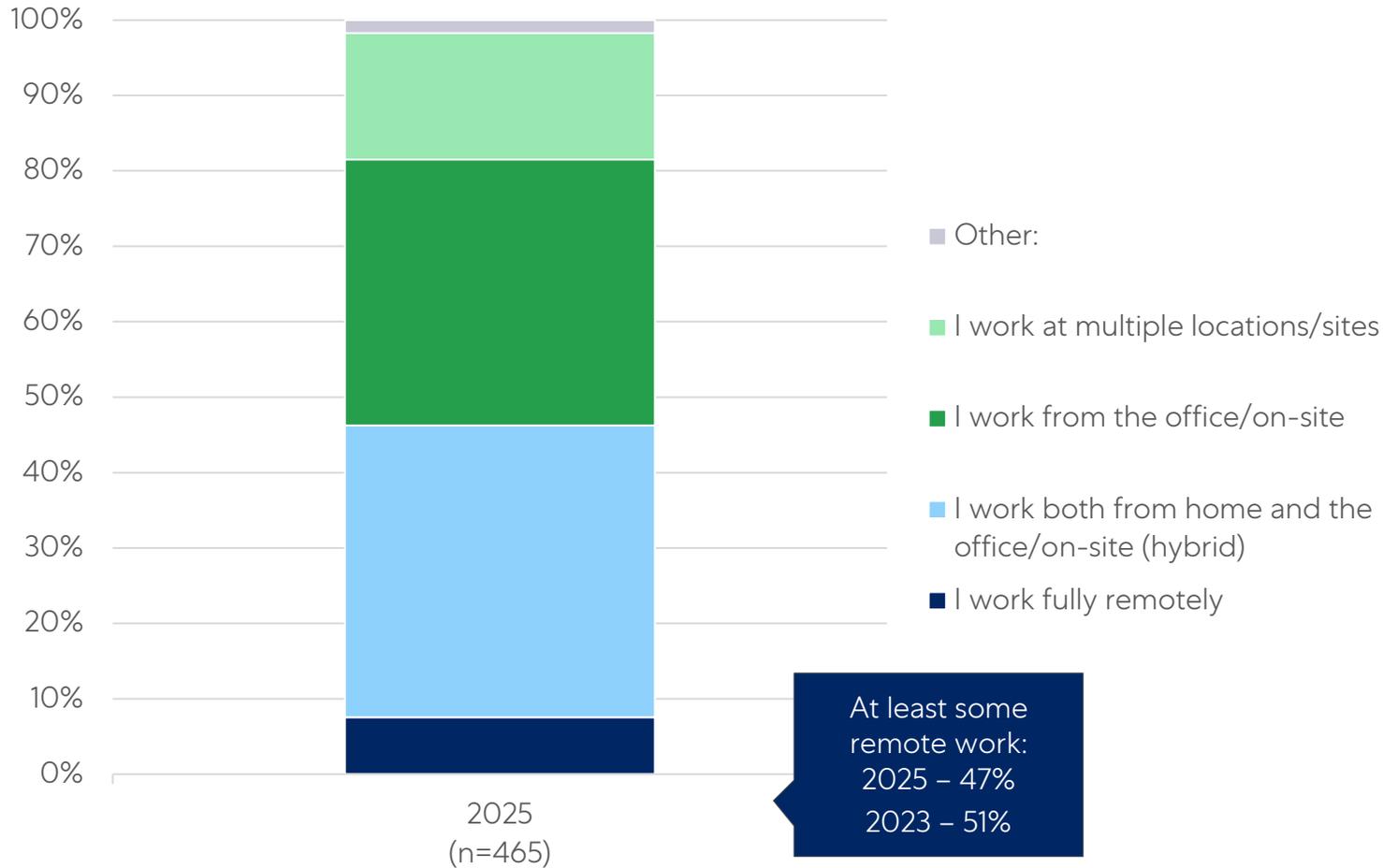
When respondents describe positive job quality, they tend to reference structures that improve security and manageability, flexibility (including remote work), clearer boundaries on hours, and more predictable terms.

“Remote work has changed my life for the better.”

(Age 30 to 39, Woman, Part time employee (less than 35 hours a week))

Most roles include on-site work; nearly half are hybrid

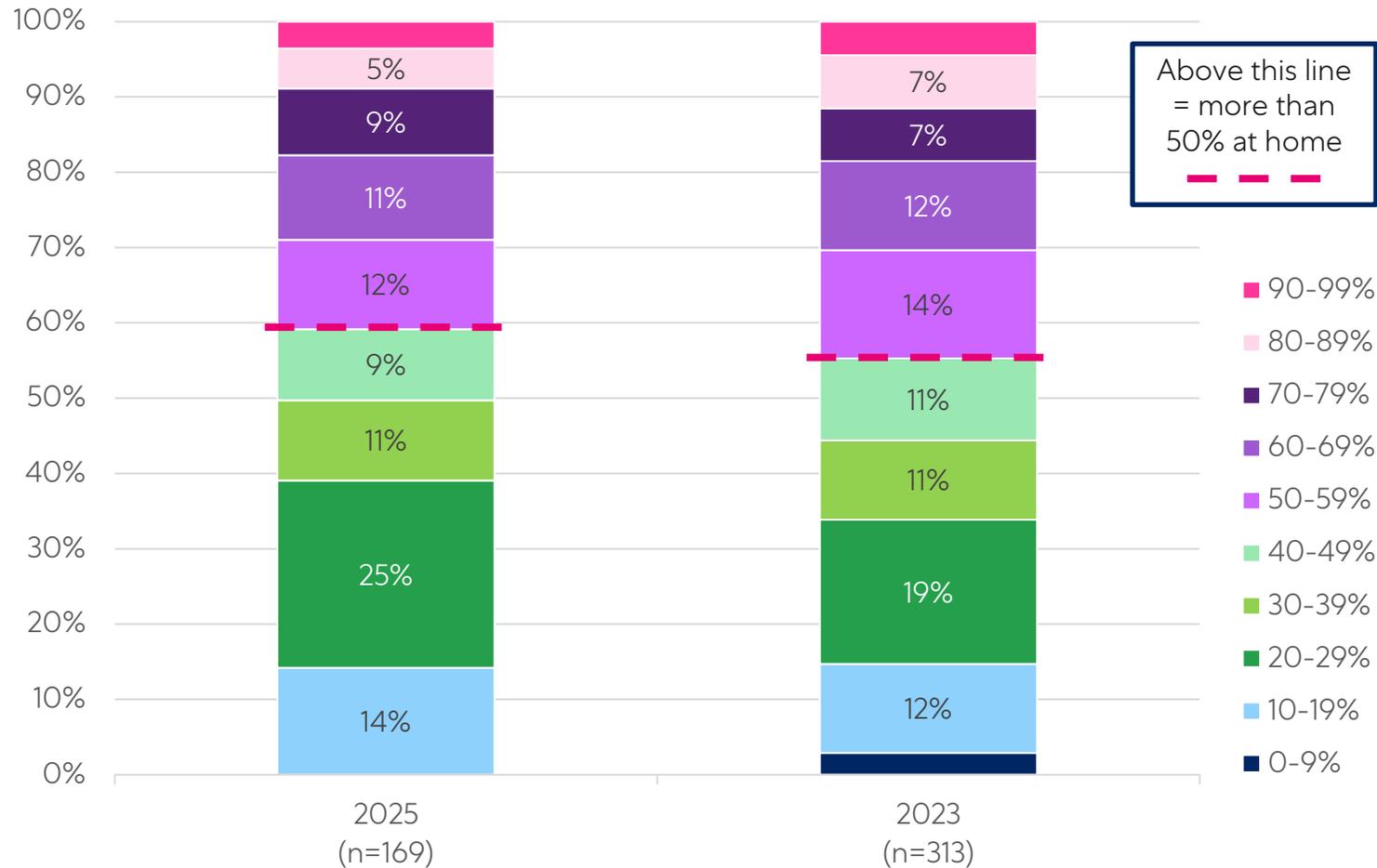
Which of the following best describes how you work in your primary arts job?



2025 n=465, 2023 n=709 *2023 figure does not include self-employed respondents; "I work at multiple locations/sites" was not a response option in 2023

Remote work hours vary widely among those with hybrid or remote arrangements

Approximately, what % of your working hours have you worked from home in the past 12 months?



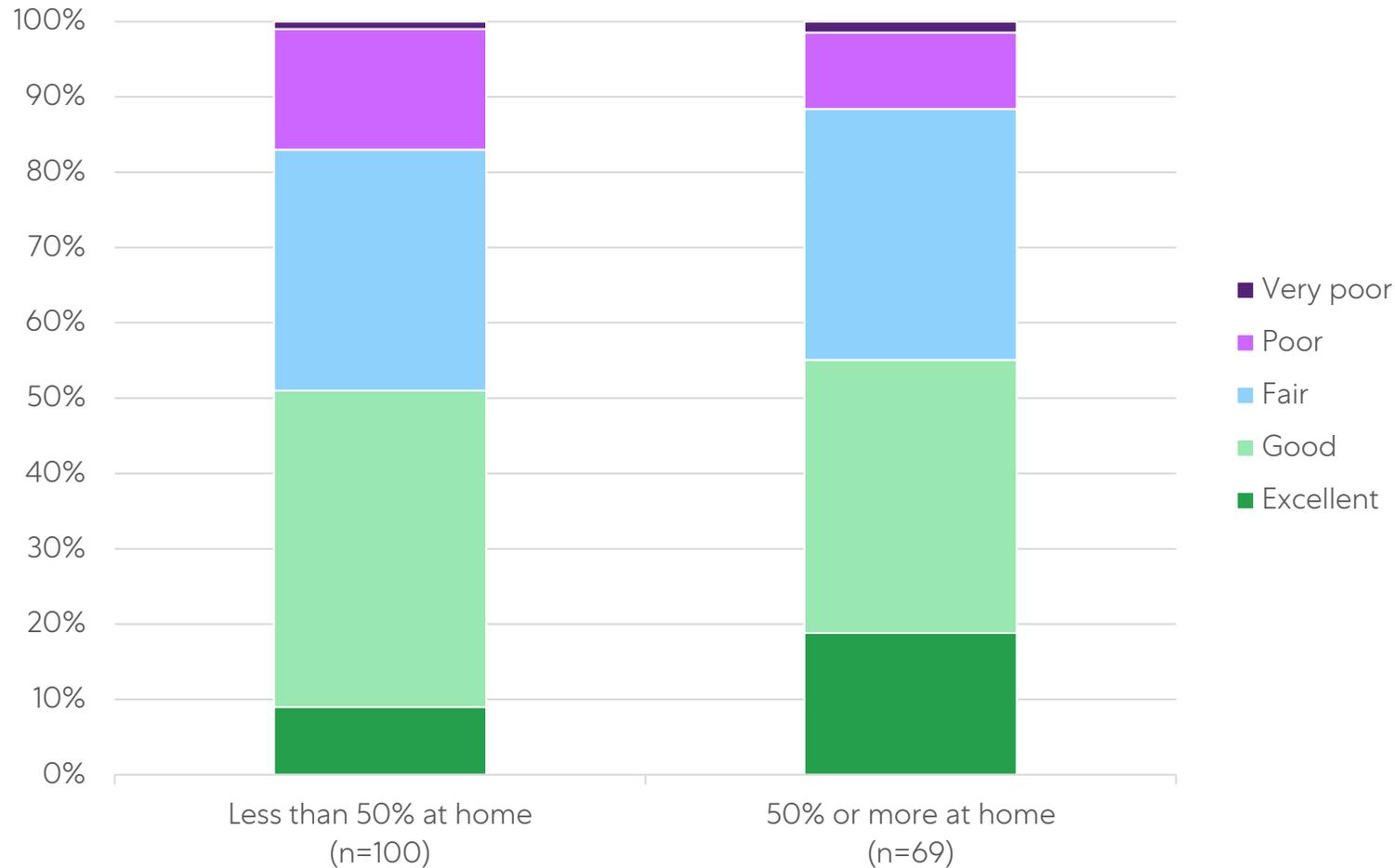
Above this line = more than 50% at home

- 90-99%
- 80-89%
- 70-79%
- 60-69%
- 50-59%
- 40-49%
- 30-39%
- 20-29%
- 10-19%
- 0-9%

Hybrid and remote work are not uniform arrangements: reported work-from-home hours vary widely. This variation likely influences how flexibility affects work-life balance and job quality across different roles and organizations

Work-life balance by share of working hours spent at home

How would you rate your current work-life balance in your arts career?

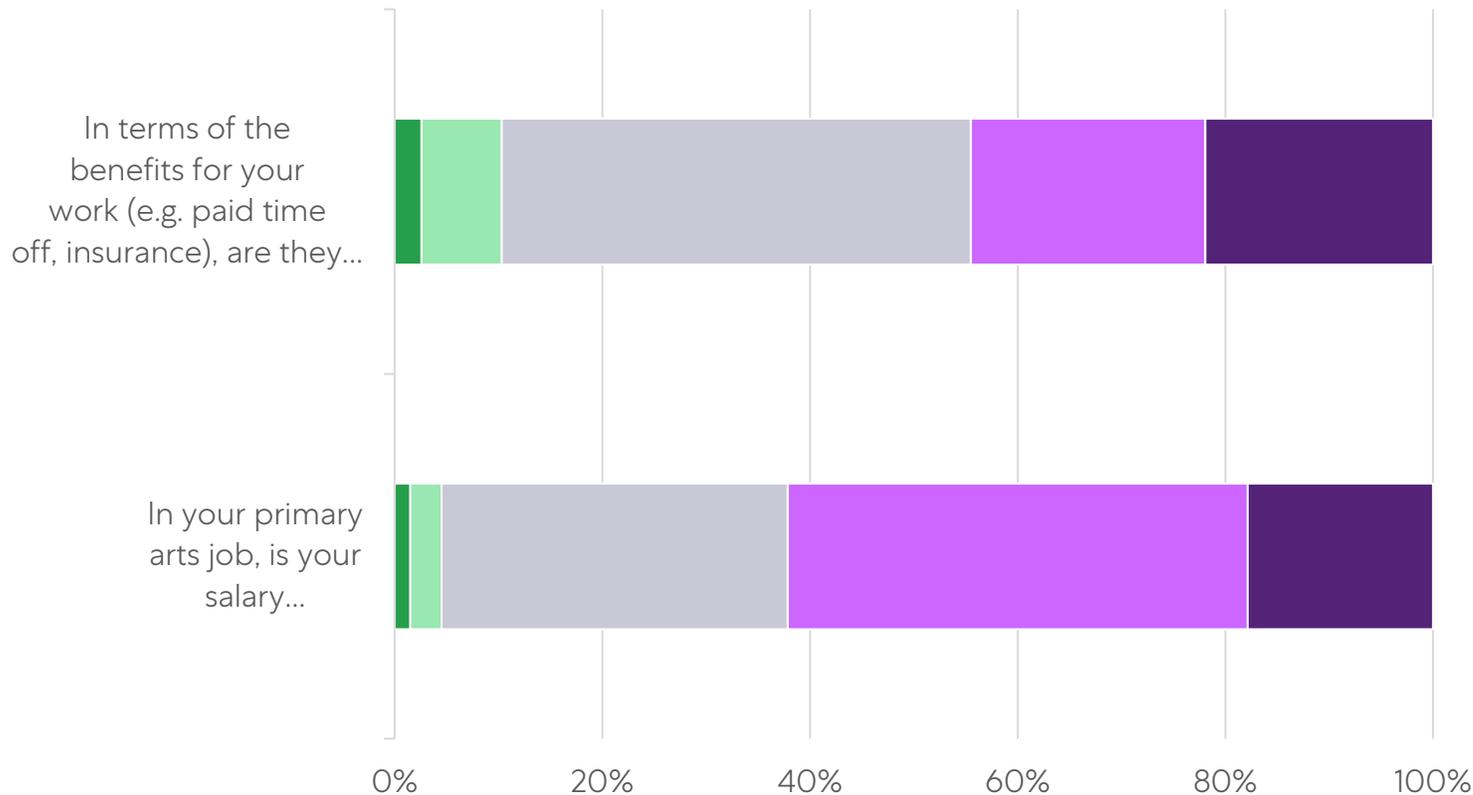


Respondents who work mostly from home are slightly more likely to report stronger work-life balance than those with less than 50% of hours at home (descriptive pattern, not a controlled comparison).

Most respondents feel and benefits fall short of expectations

Opinions on job value:

- A lot more than I would expect
- More than I would expect
- About right
- Less than I would expect
- A lot less than I would expect

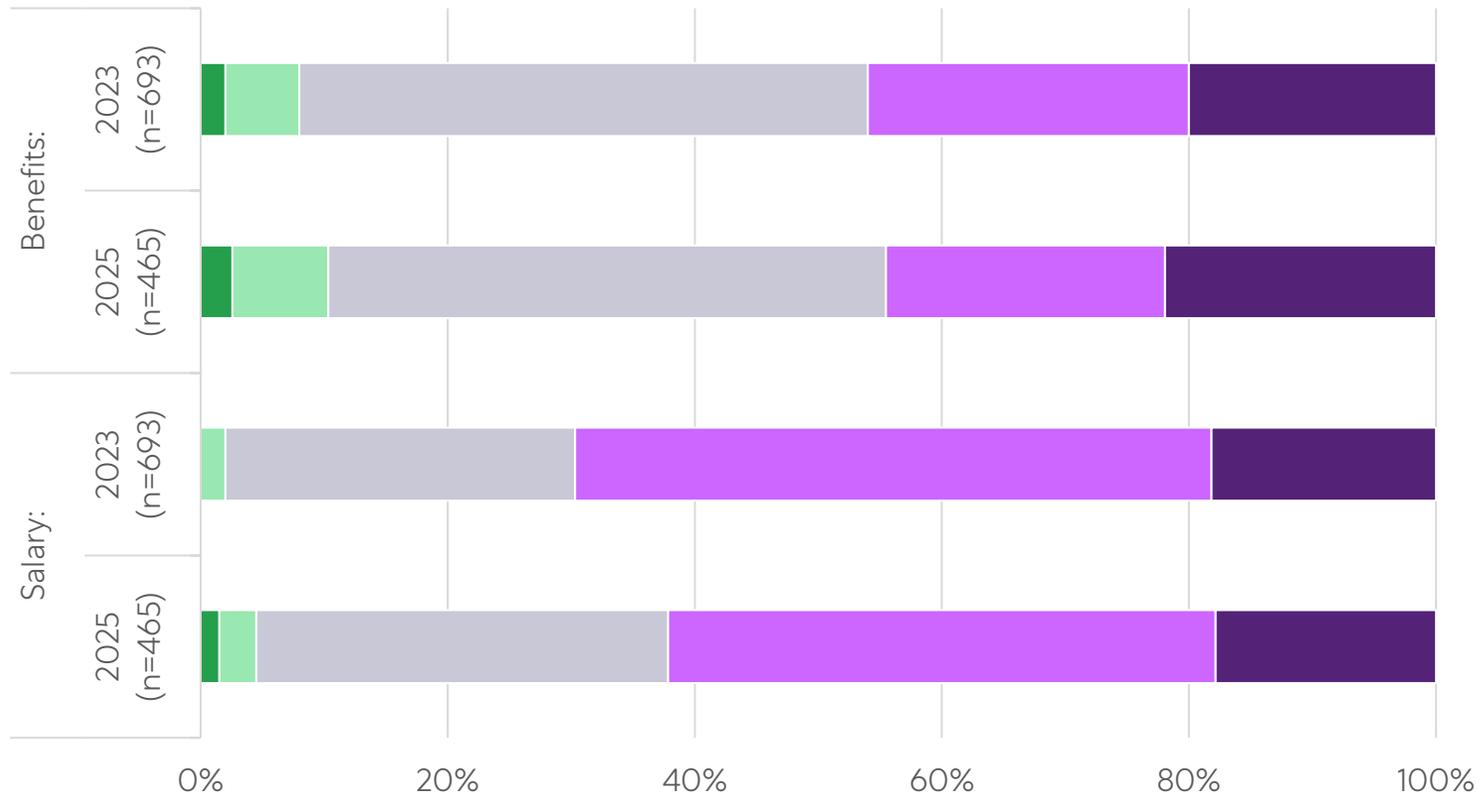


Perceived underpayment is not only about the wage figure. Respondents link compensation adequacy to workload expectations, overtime ineligibility, and benefit costs. Where benefits are costly or unclear, respondents describe wage increases as being eroded over time rather than producing a clear improvement in take-home value.

Perceptions of underpayment remain between 2023 and 2025

Opinions on job value:

- A lot more than I would expect
- More than I would expect
- About right
- Less than I would expect
- A lot less than I would expect

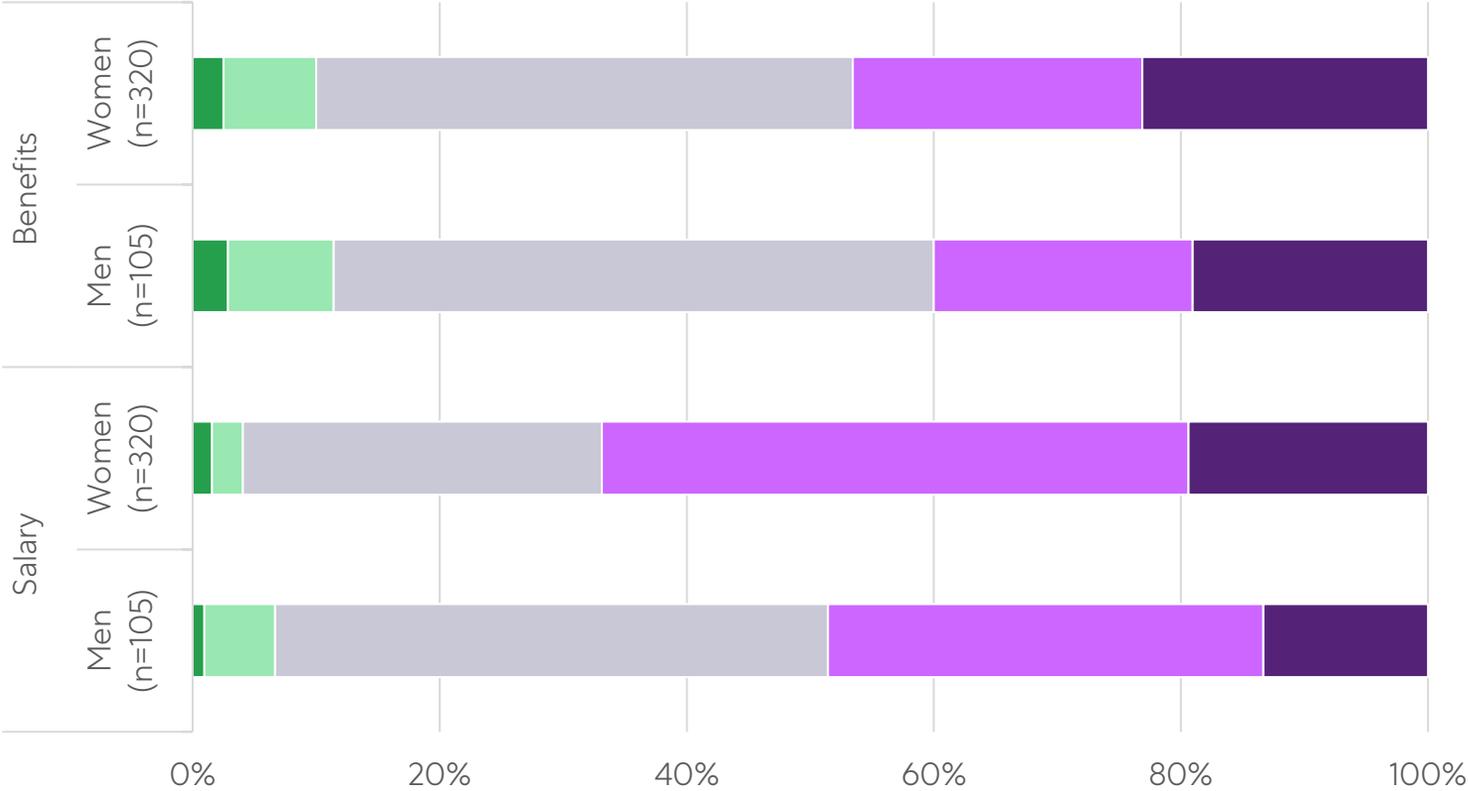


Perceptions of underpayment remain high relative to 2023. This suggests that any improvements in pay or employment conditions have not translated into a widely felt change in compensation adequacy among respondents

Job value perceptions by gender

Opinions on job value:

- A lot more than I would expect
- More than I would expect
- About right
- Less than I would expect
- A lot less than I would expect



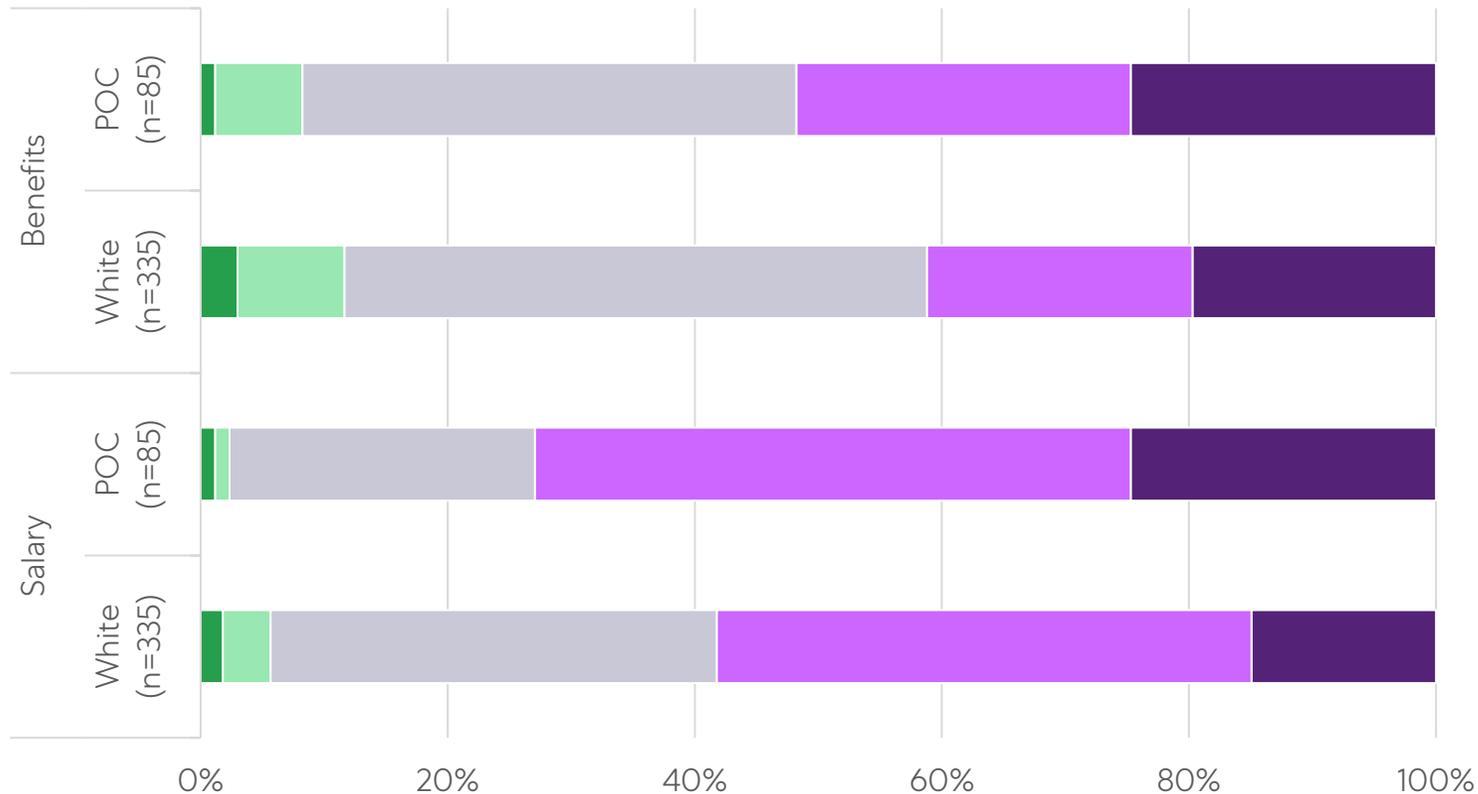
Women respondents are more likely than men to report that falls below expectations

(descriptive difference within this respondent pool)

Job value perceptions by race

Opinions on job value:

- A lot more than I would expect
- More than I would expect
- About right
- Less than I would expect
- A lot less than I would expect

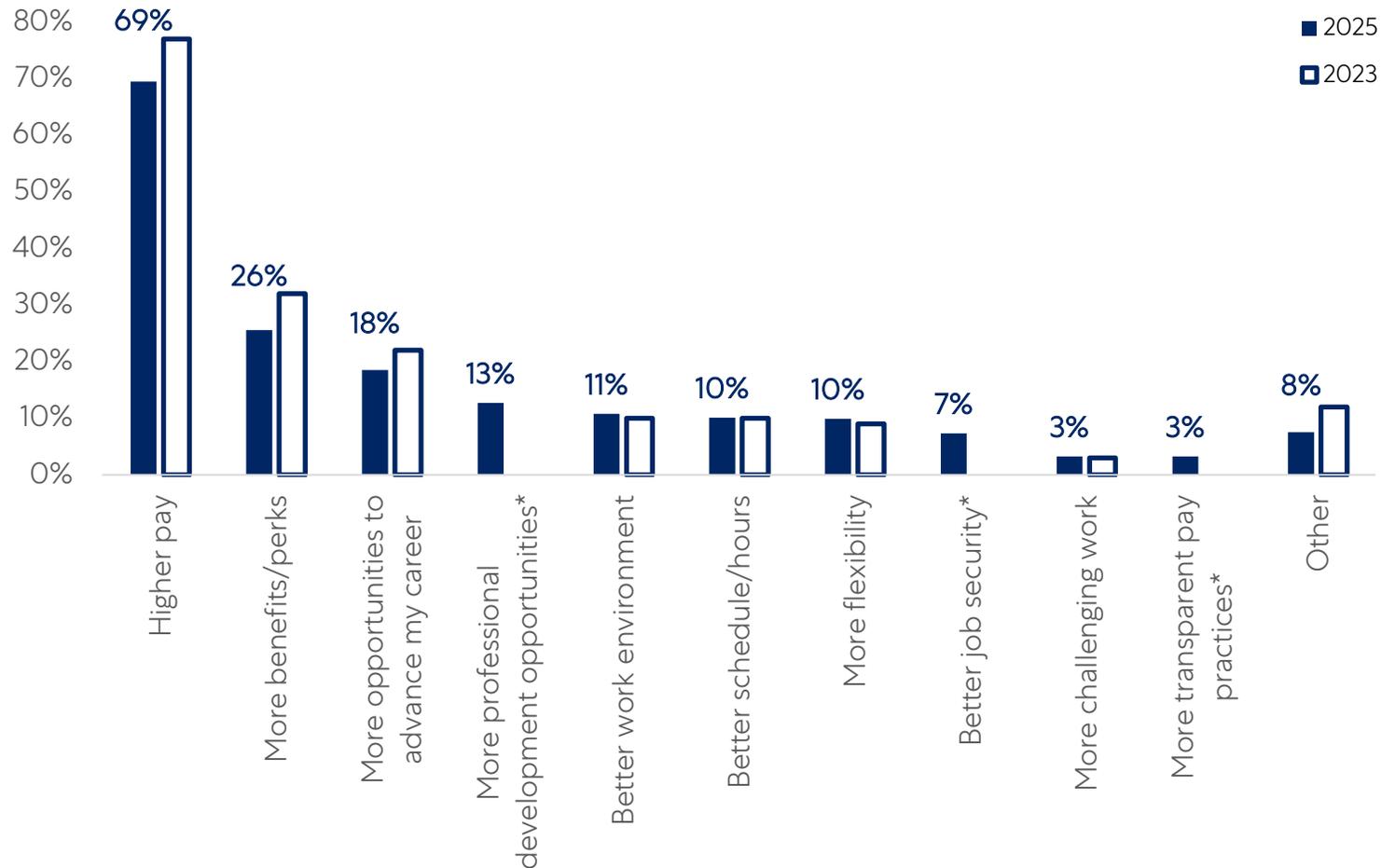


In this sample, People of Color respondents are more likely than White respondents to report that and benefits fall below expectations.

Interpret subgroup differences cautiously given smaller base sizes.

Higher pay is the top priority for making jobs more appealing

What would make your primary arts job more appealing? (Select up to 2 options)



Higher pay is the top priority for making jobs more appealing. Open responses suggest “more appealing” also means clearer protections: more predictable hours, stronger benefits (especially health and retirement), and greater transparency about expectations and compensation structure.

Respondents often link pay to workload, benefits, and security—describing job quality as a package rather than alone

Please elaborate on your choices above, or share any additional thoughts on what would make your primary arts job more appealing

“The lack of pay & benefits and the way that has been normalized despite extremely high expectations on staff is demoralizing. It even feels unethical at times. The amount of work and skill required is not properly compensated”

– Woman, Part time employee (less than 35 hours a week)

“Pay for entry-level exhibitions/museums/art gallery staff is typically abysmal. While my doesn't pay me enough to pay rent for a one-bedroom in nearly all of northern New Jersey, it is still higher than similar jobs in this sector.”

– Age 18-29, Woman, Full time employee (35 or more hours a week)

“I carry a very heavy workload and am in charge of a lot of programs. While I have a staff of two (1 full-time and 1 part-time) that assist me, I still consistently work more than 40 hours a week just to maintain the programs/projects. When you start to break down my based on the time that is spent, it is not great.”

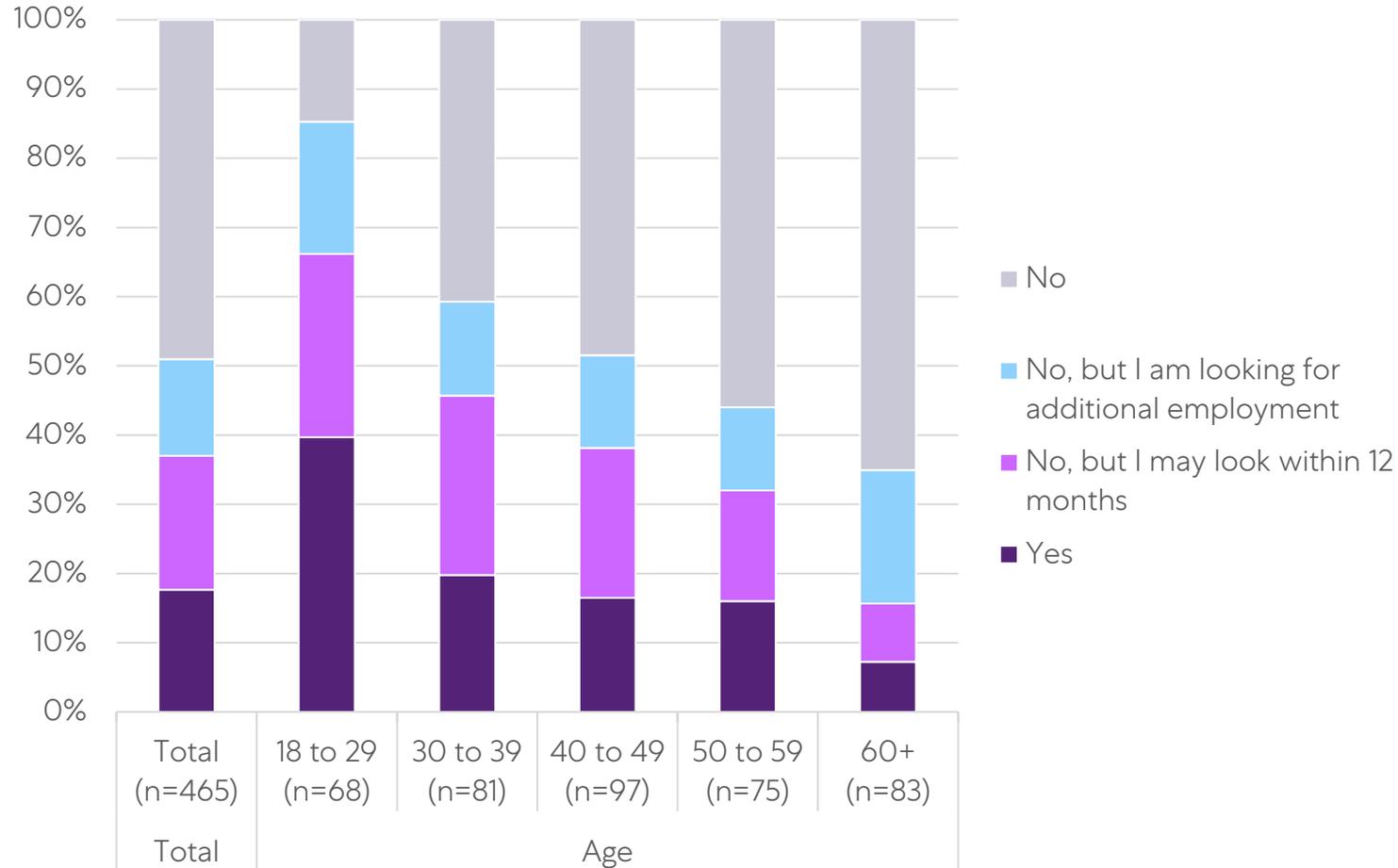
– Age 40-49, Woman, Full time employee (35 or more hours a week)

“I have to sign a Contract every year and don't know if I will be rehired from year to year. That is a stress. Sometimes I give more than my job requires and it feels taken for granted. I give everything I can so that I will get hired again... but sometimes feel the company gets more from me than what I am paid.”

– Age 60+, Woman, Full time employee (35 or more hours a week)

Many respondents are considering employment changes, especially younger workers

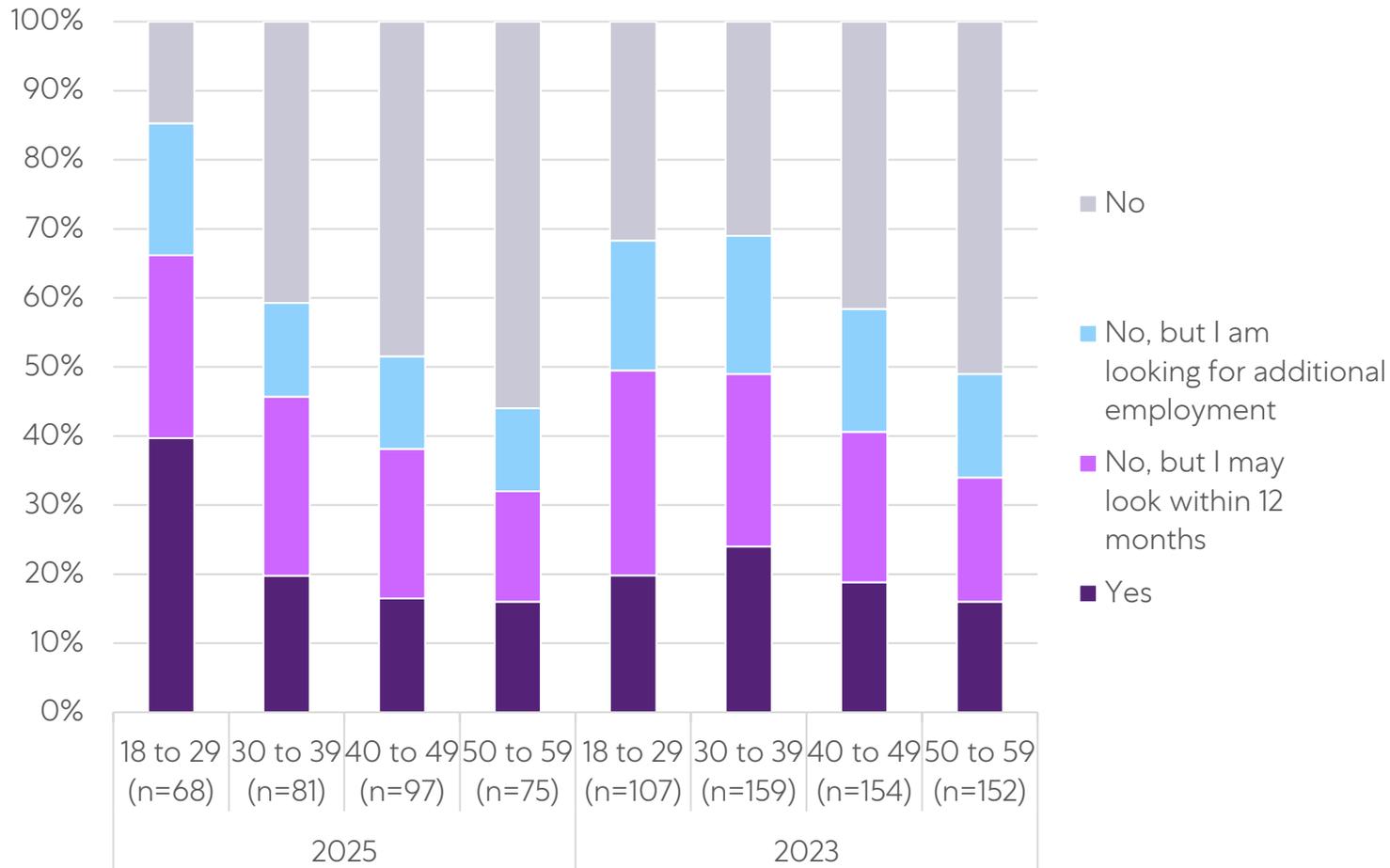
Are you currently looking for different employment?



Intent to change employment is a signal of retention risk, especially among younger respondents. In open responses, this is often framed less as dissatisfaction with arts work itself and more as an affordability and long-term sustainability constraint.

Job seeking remains elevated compared with 2023, especially among younger cohorts

Are you currently looking for different employment?

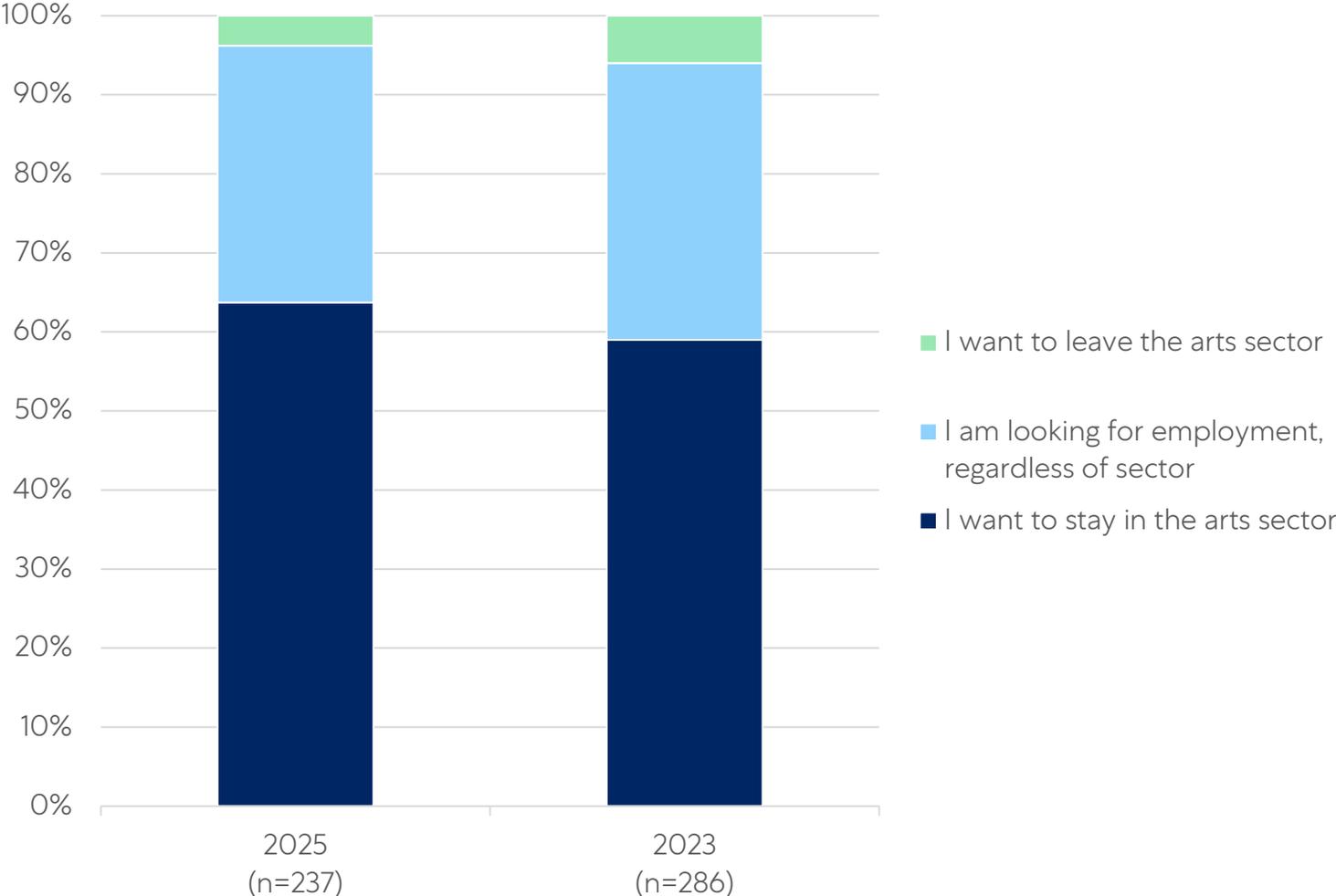


Compared with 2023, job seeking remains elevated—particularly among younger respondents.

The persistence of job seeking aligns with qualitative accounts of underpayment and workload strain

Most who are seeking employment want to stay in the arts sector

Where are you looking for employment?



Many respondents are not seeking to leave arts work entirely; they are seeking improved terms within it. This suggests retention could be influenced by changes in pay, benefits, workload norms, and transparency

Reasons for job seeking center on cost of living, income stability, and limited progression pathways

Please could you tell us why you're looking for different employment?

“Cost of living is continually getting worse so I will need to secure a new job with higher pay in order to be able to afford to my base-level housing and grocery bills.”

– Age 30 to 39, Woman, Full time employee (35 or more hours a week)

“Freelancing is exhausting. It's not getting easier or better. Trying to get blood from a stone. Regular income is very desired.”

– Age 50 to 59, Woman, Self-employed

“I don't have a stable and steady income and there is no opportunity for growth in the companies I've been working for.”

– Age 18 to 29, Non-Binary, Freelance/Contract worker

“The pay is not sustainable, and there is no clear progression path to other roles.”

– Age 40 to 49, Man, Full time employee (35 or more hours a week)

Respondents describe “trigger factors” for leaving: funding/job security uncertainty, stalled progression, and household financial shifts

Please could you tell us why you might look for different employment?

“Since the current funding climate for arts organizations has shifted dramatically in the last 6 months, I am aware that there may be a financial impact to the organization that would necessitate cuts in staffing.”

- Woman, Full time employee (35 or more hours a week)

“I am hoping to receive a raise and may decide to look for a new job if I do not feel my request is being taken seriously.”

- Age 18-29, Woman, Full time employee (35 or more hours a week)

“I am now single and shouldering all bills alone. My apartment is \$1800/month alone, and that is “below market rates”.”

- Age 30-39, Woman, Full time employee (35 or more hours a week)

“I hope to still be here in my same role, but if I feel my family needs to leave the country, I will look for different employment.”

- Age 40-49, Woman, Full time employee (35 or more hours a week)

“Job security in the arts is always tumultuous. I want to feel more comfortable knowing I'm in a field that will continue in the next 10 years.”

- Age 30-39, Woman, Full time employee (35 or more hours a week)

Several responses frame job seeking as risk management – against leadership volatility, income volatility, and rising living costs that require multiple jobs

Please could you tell us why you're looking for different employment?

“Too much volatility in upper management creates a confusing trickle down effect into the theatre space”

– Age 60+, Man, Full time employee (35 or more hours a week)

“Supplement total income is needed in this economy. I need multiple jobs to sustain basic life, necessities like housing, food, and expenses.”

– Age 30 to 39, Woman, Part time employee (less than 35 hours a week)

“As many employees in the not-for-profit arts sector, side hustles make it possible to live. I have a communications and marketing company on the side that also services the New Jersey, not-for-profit arts sector. I am always open to new client”

– Age 40 to 49, Man, Full time employee (35 or more hours a week)

Section 5 - Internships

Internships as an entry pathway: participation, compensation, and access barriers

Section 5 – Internships Summary

Internships remain a common pathway into arts employment, but respondents describe persistent concerns about compensation, access, and the sustainability of unpaid or low-paid internship models. Many respondents describe internships as necessary for gaining experience and connections, while respondents also describe affordability as a significant barrier that may shape who is able to enter, and remain in, the sector.

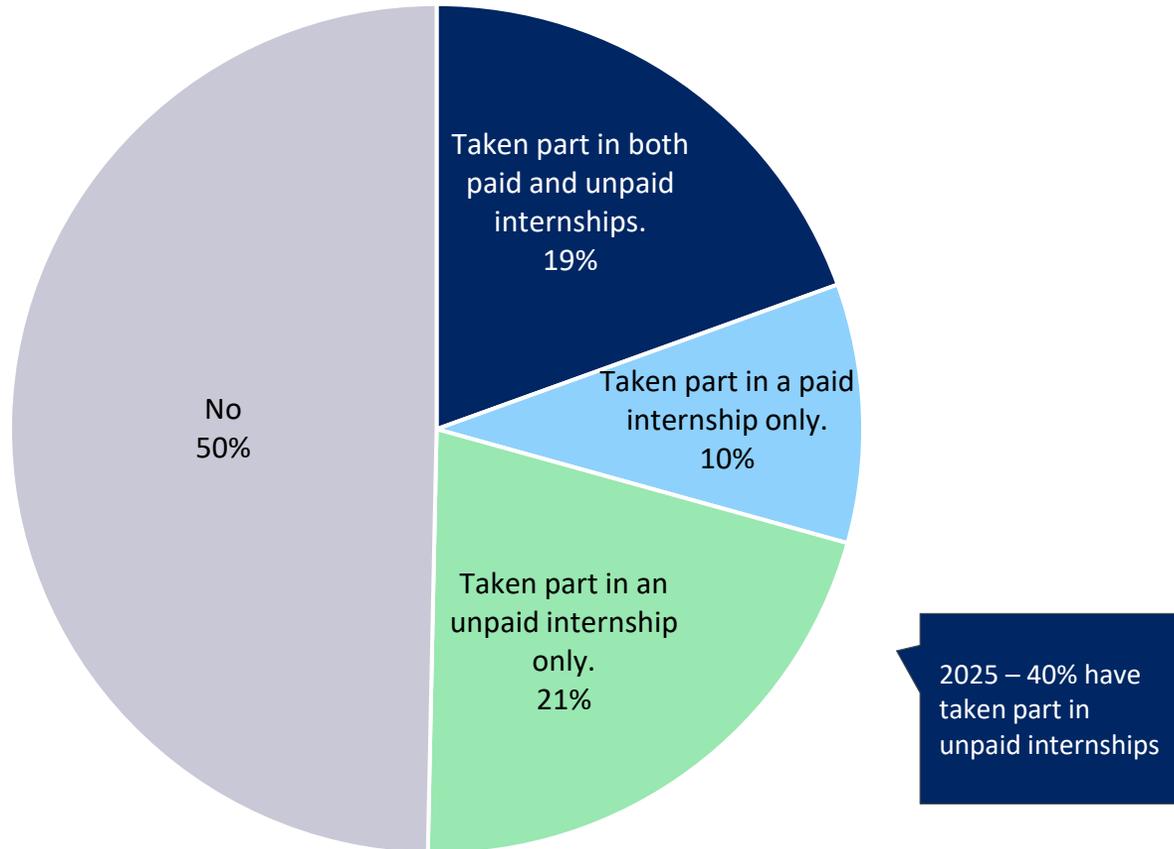
Unpaid and low-paid internships persist across museums, performing arts organizations, arts education programs, and service organizations. Respondents describe the financial burden of participation as a recurring theme, particularly for younger cohorts and those without household income buffering.

Affordability emerges as the leading barrier: internships can require substantial weekly hours, limiting the feasibility of combining them with paid work. Respondents also describe internships as valuable for skills and networks, but not consistently translating into job offers, sometimes extending the period of low- or unpaid labor prior to stable employment.

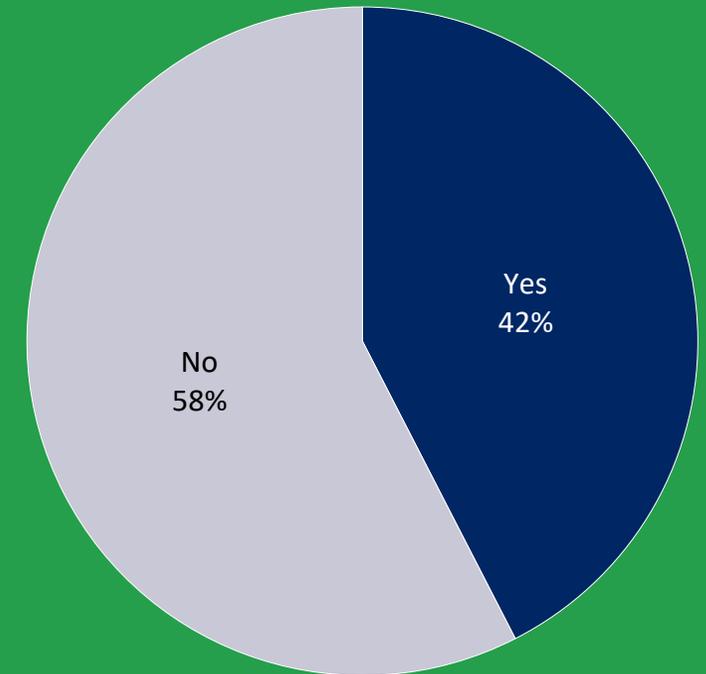
This produces a recurring tension in narratives: internships are “how you get in,” but the pathway is not equally accessible.

Internship participation is common; unpaid internships persist

Have you taken part in an internship in your career?
(Please select the option that best describes your experience)

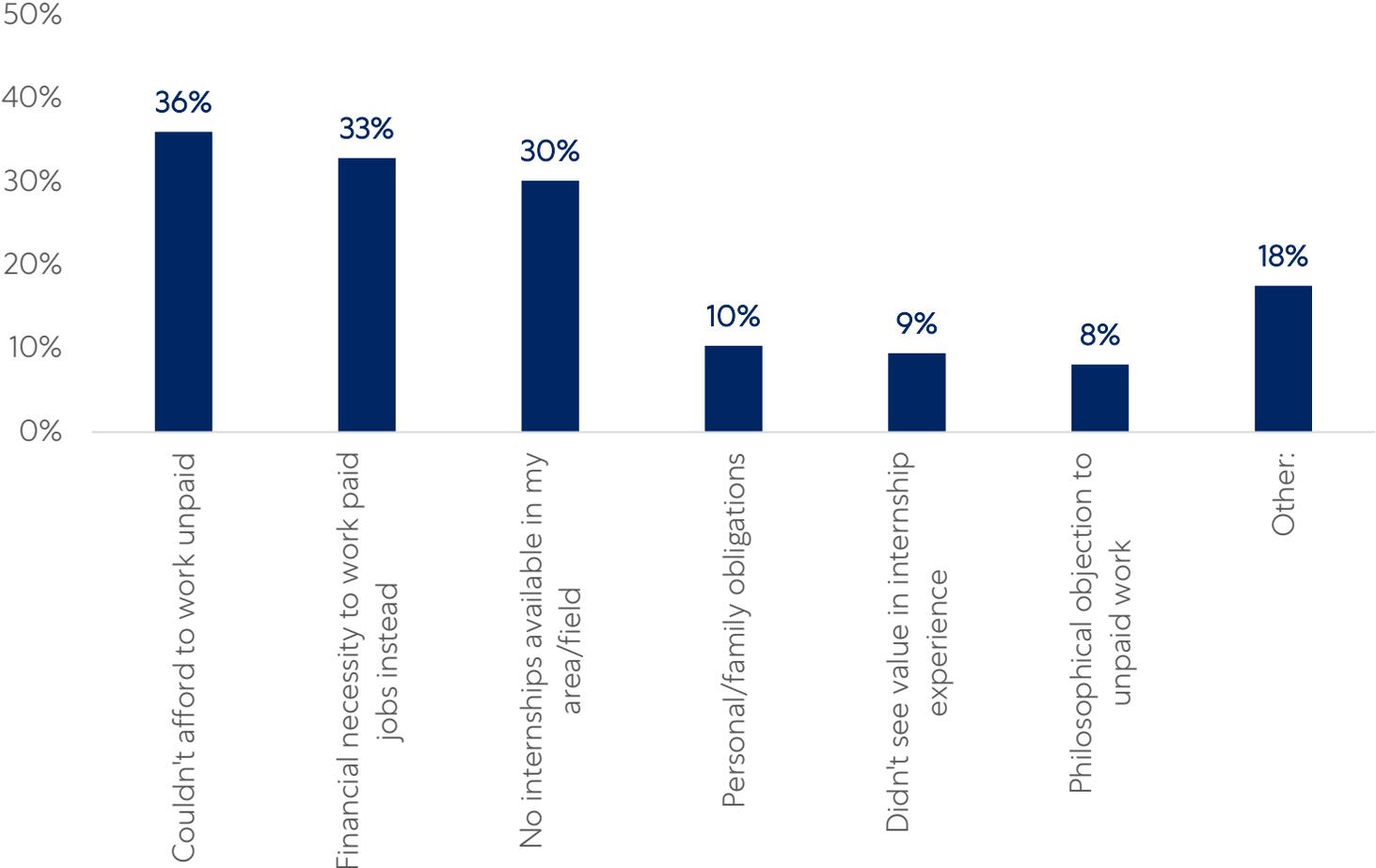


2023 - Have you taken part in an unpaid internship in your career?



Affordability is the leading barrier to internships

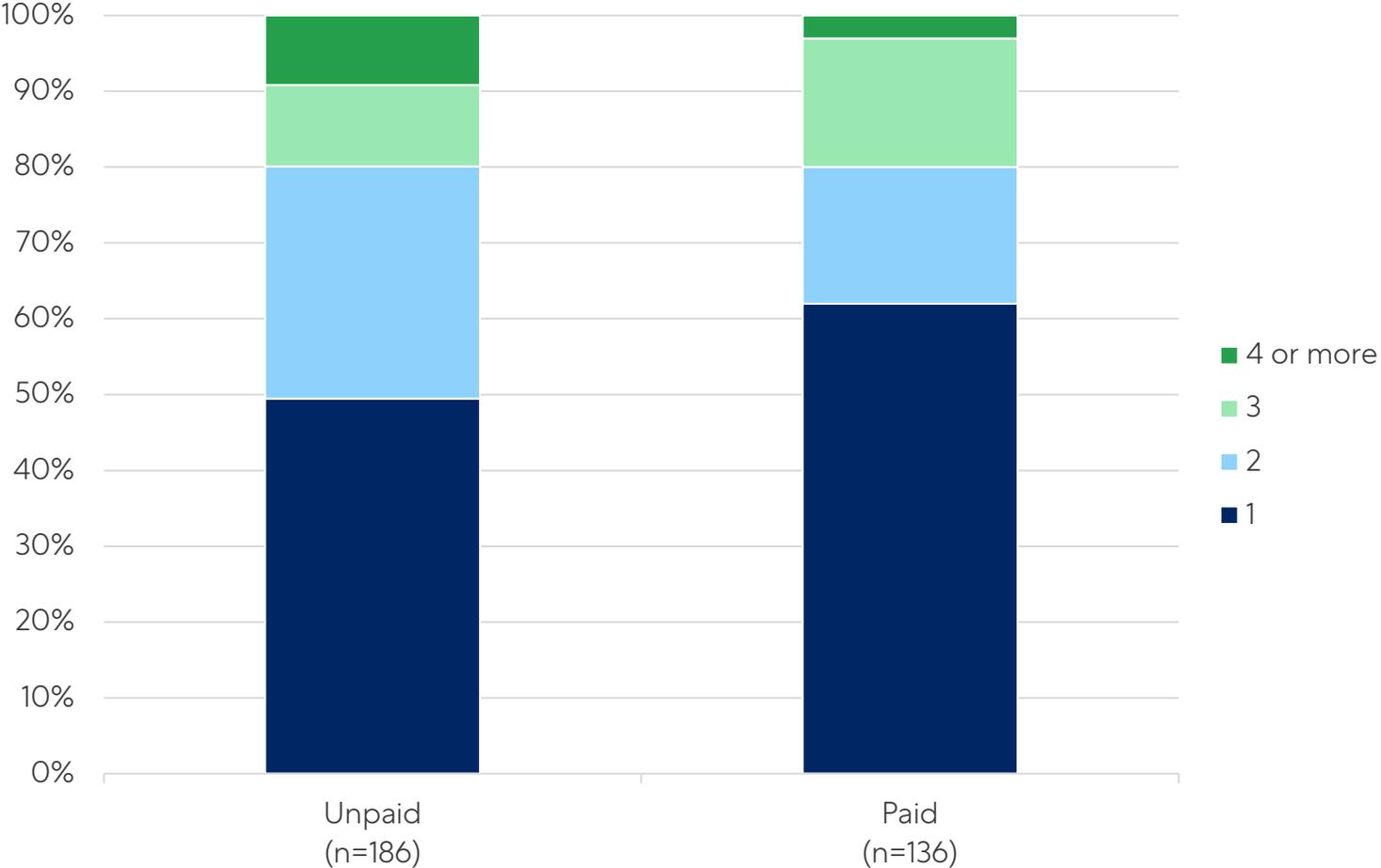
What were the main reasons you did not participate in internships? (Select all that apply)



Respondents most often cite affordability constraints as the reason they did not pursue internships. This positions internships as an access barrier when unpaid or low-paid roles require external support to be feasible.

Multiple internships are common, especially among those who did unpaid work

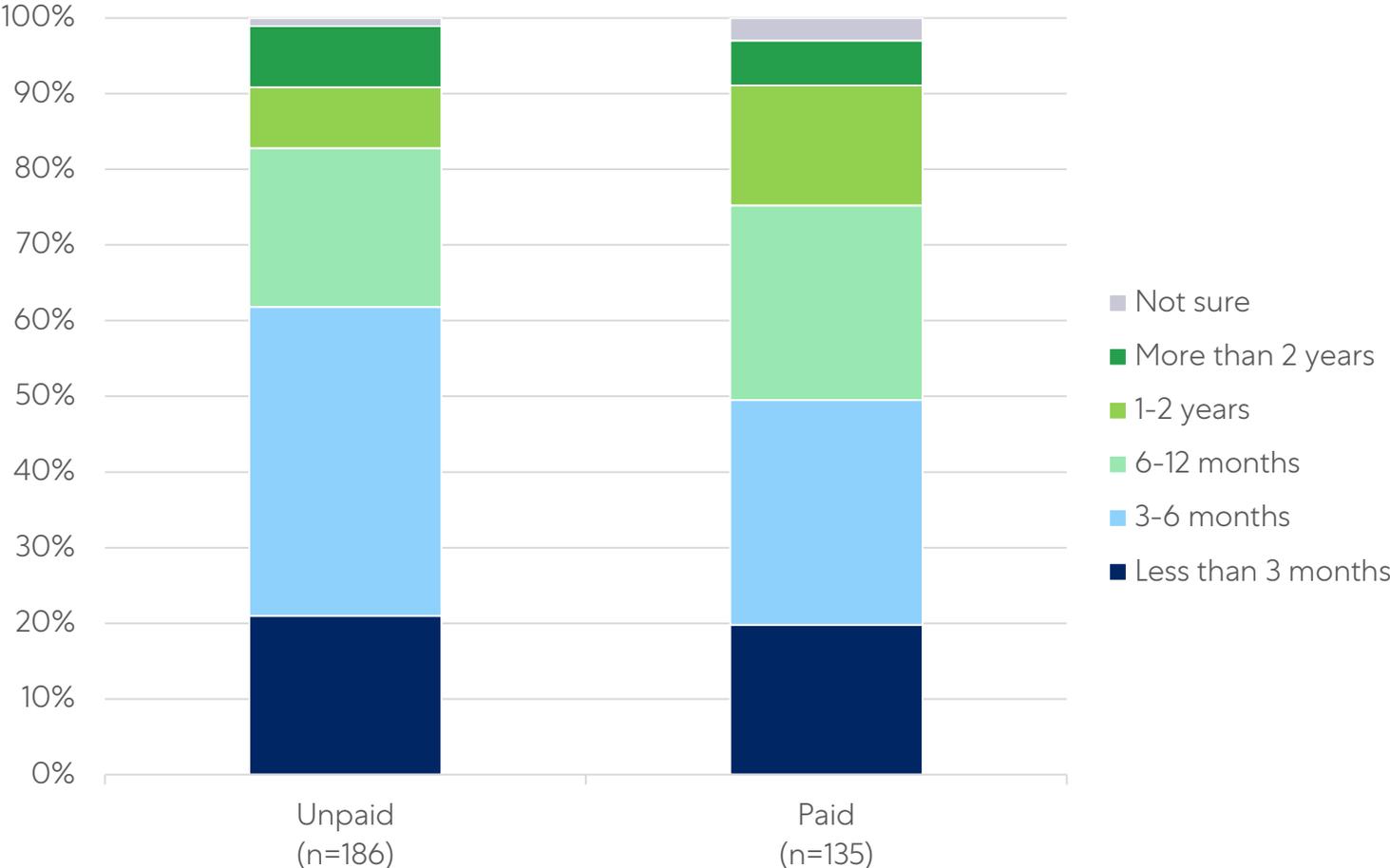
Approximately how many internships have you completed specifically in the arts?



Repeat internships are common, particularly among respondents who completed unpaid internship, suggesting that early-career experience-building can extend across multiple placements before stable paid employment.

Total duration of internships often last longer than three months

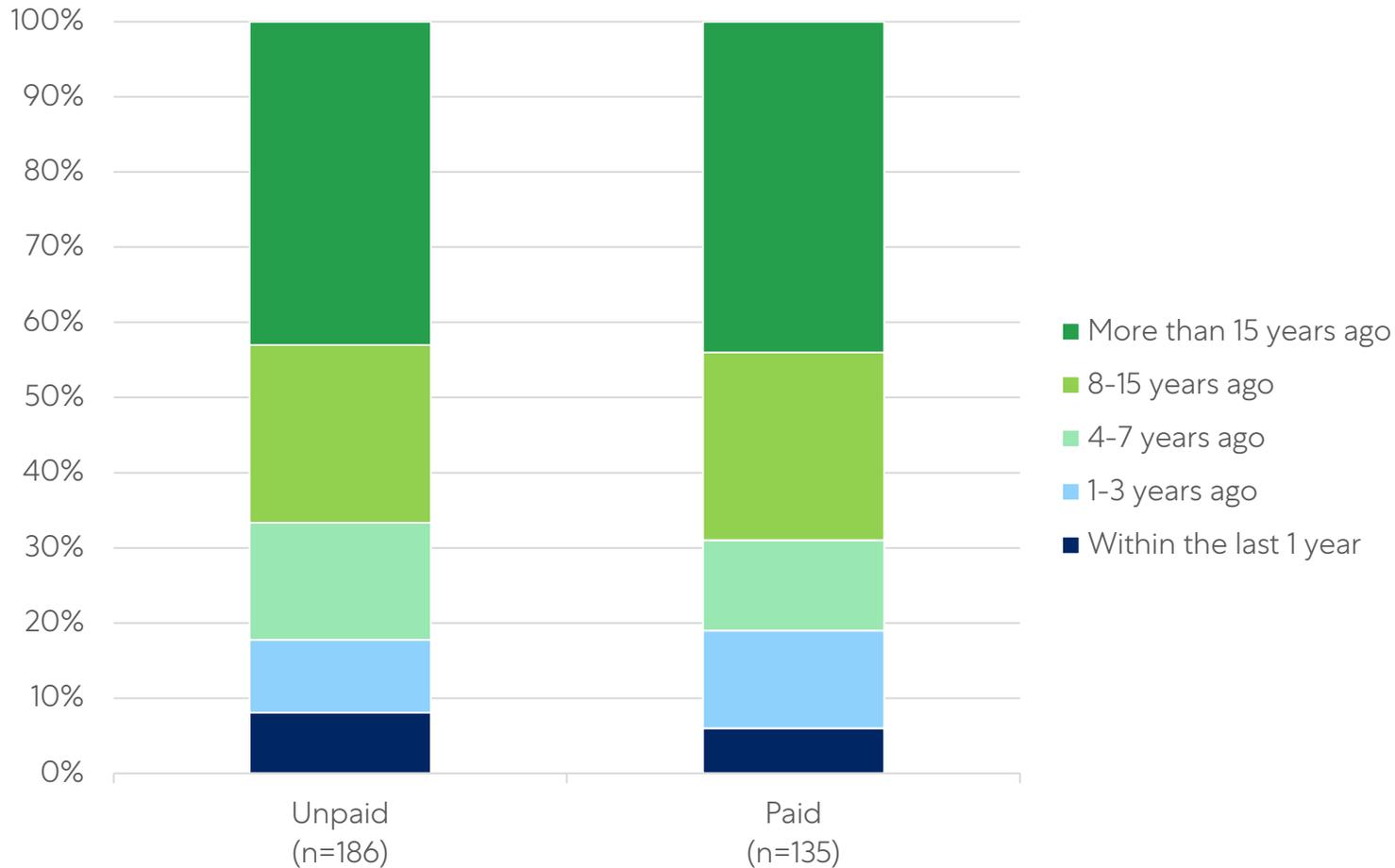
What was the total duration of all internships you've completed in the arts?



Internship pathways often extend beyond a single short placement. Many respondents report cumulative internship duration of three months or more, with a meaningful share reporting a year or longer.

Most significant internships took place several years ago for many respondents

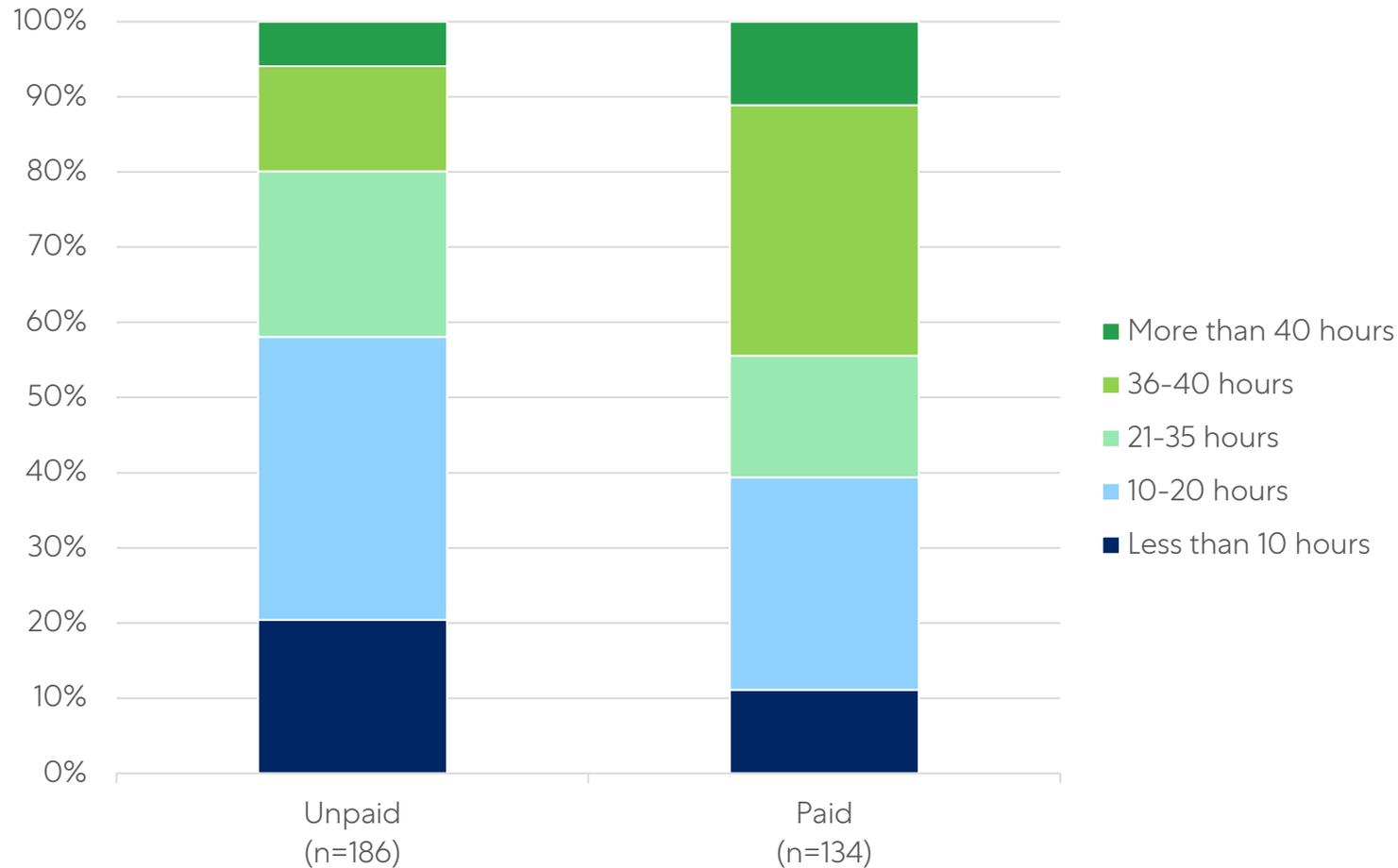
Approximately how long ago did your most significant internship in the arts take place?



For many respondents, the most significant internship occurred several years ago, consistent with internships being concentrated earlier in careers.

Unpaid internships often required substantial weekly hours

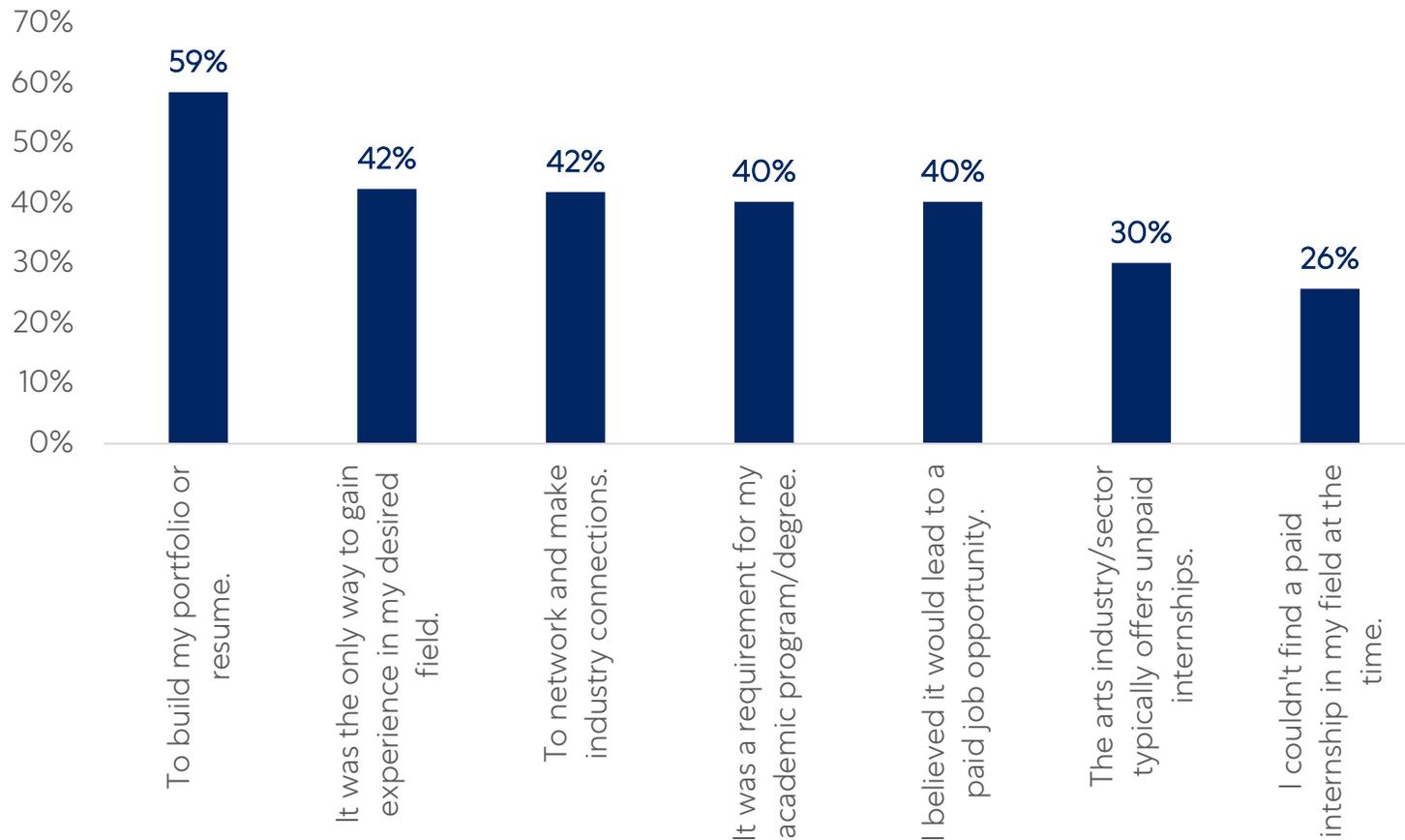
Approximately how many hours per week did your most significant internship require?



A substantial share report that their most significant unpaid internship required 21–35 hours per week or more, indicating that unpaid internships can carry high time demands that are difficult to combine with paid employment

Internships more often provide experience/connections than direct job offers

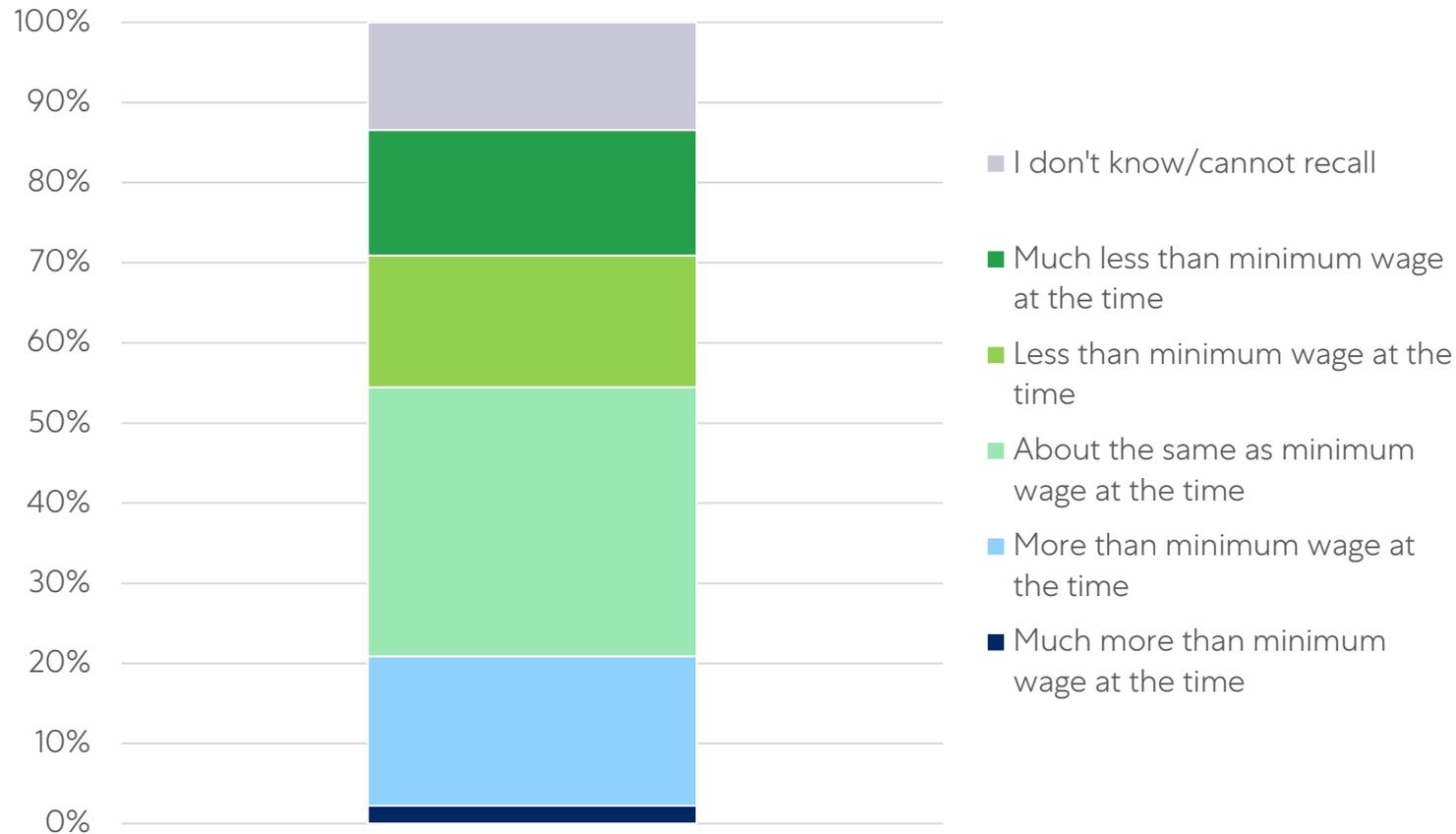
What was the primary reason you took part in your most significant unpaid internship in the arts? (Select all that apply)



Respondents cite portfolio-building, experience, and networking as primary motivations for unpaid internships. At the same time, responses reflect a tension: internships are framed as a common entry expectation, but the unpaid model is not equally feasible for everyone.

Paid internships often compensate at or near minimum wage

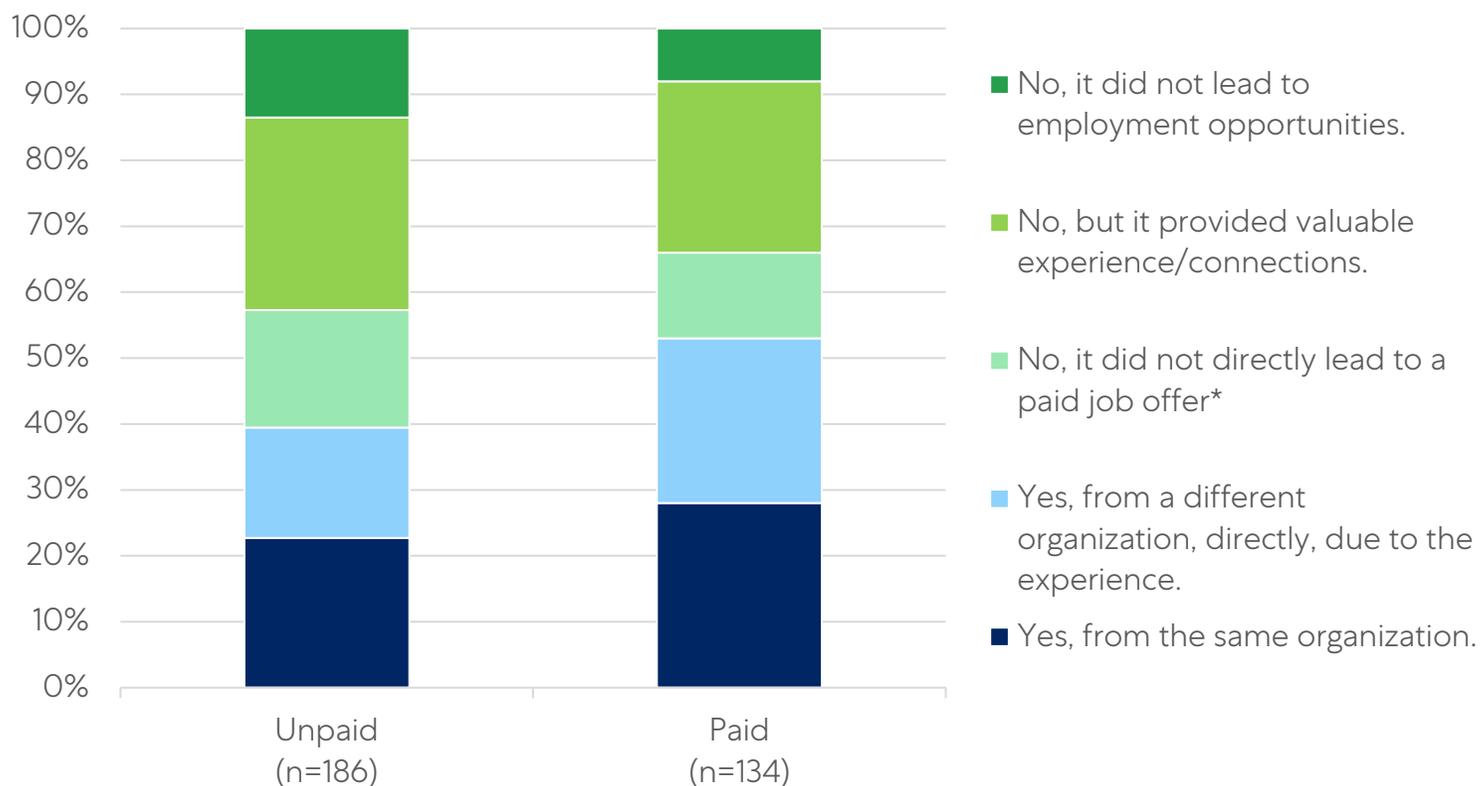
For your most significant paid internship ... how did your payment compare to the minimum wage at the time?



Even when internships are paid, compensation often sits at or near minimum wage, which can limit affordability for respondents without external support, especially when weekly hours are high

Most internships do not directly lead to paid job offers

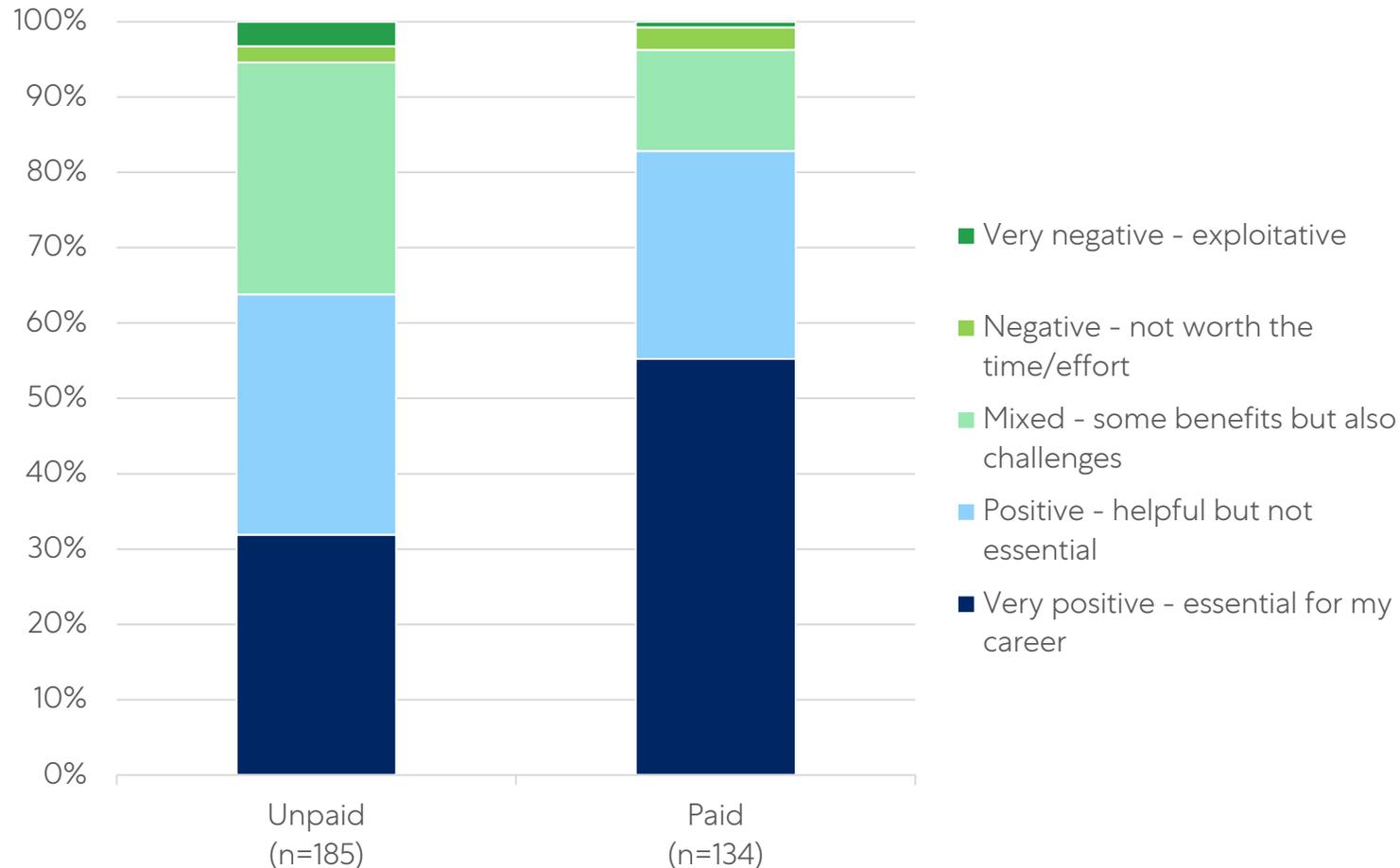
Did your most significant internship in the arts directly lead to a paid job offer (from the same organization or another due to the experience gained)?



Most respondents report that internships did not directly lead to a paid job offer. More commonly, respondents describe the value of internships as experience and connections rather than an immediate hiring outcome.

Paid internships are viewed more positively than unpaid internships

Looking back, how do you feel about your internship experience(s) in the arts?



Paid internships are more often rated positively, while unpaid internships draw more mixed or negative sentiment, demonstrating concerns about equity and sustainability in unpaid entry pathways.

Respondents often describe unpaid internships as valuable for learning and connections, while also emphasizing the financial strain and reliance on external support to make them possible.

Please tell us about your UNPAID internship experience(s) in the arts

“I did two unpaid internships in the arts/museums. For one of them, I was able to receive a grant/stipend through my college. These experiences were key to my ability to get a paid fellowship and entry-level job in the arts. They were both high-quality and taught me a lot about the museum world.”

– Age 18 to 29, Woman, Full time employee (35 or more hours a week)

“It was beneficial to learning about how a non-profit entity works”

– Part time employee (less than 35 hours a week)

“It was helpful to begin my career but difficult to give that much time without compensation.”

– Age 30-39, Woman, Full time employee (35 or more hours a week)

“It was the best - exposed me to great insights into what was to become my future career - introduced me to many influential people and I am still in contact with today – priceless”

– Woman, Full time employee (35 or more hours a week)

Paid experiences are often described as more sustainable and development-oriented, but respondents note that “paid” can still mean low compensation relative to hours and cost of living. Please tell us about your PAID internship experience(s) in the arts

“I had an amazing experience in terms of learning and connections, but "paid" is relative. The pay was a very small weekly stipend plus housing local to the company. I was extremely lucky to have parents who could and would pay for my phone, gas, car insurance, health insurance (this was pre-ACA) and emergencies that year. I also worked additional jobs like babysitting and bartending on top of my long internship hours to make it work. That internship experience definitely set the course of my career - in both good and problematic ways.”

- Age 40 to 49, Woman, Full time employee (35 or more hours a week)

“I had two paid internships. One at major arts organizations and one at small organization. They were both essential to my career development. One gave me insight to working at a large organization and how that structure works. The smaller organization provided me with tremendous hands on experience.”

- Age 50 to 59, Woman, Freelance/Contract worker

“It was during grad school. I had limited options because I absolutely needed to be paid for the internship, and most were unpaid.”

- Age 30 to 39, Woman, Full time employee (35 or more hours a week)

Additional comments highlight the “value vs exploitation” tension, including ethical concerns from both interns and supervisors, and concerns about unpaid skilled labor tied to reference-seeking dynamics.

Do you have any additional comments about INTERNSHIPS in the arts sector or your experiences?

“As a Director of Education, we offer unpaid internships, and I do feel ethically conflicted about them.”

– Age 18 to 29, Woman, Full time employee (35 or more hours a week)

“I feel I was taken advantage of, I only wanted to volunteer one day week, but they kept asking me to come in (unpaid) additional hours and I wanted to get a good reference from them, so I did work additional hours doing highly skilled work”

– Age 60+, Woman, Full time employee (35 or more hours a week)

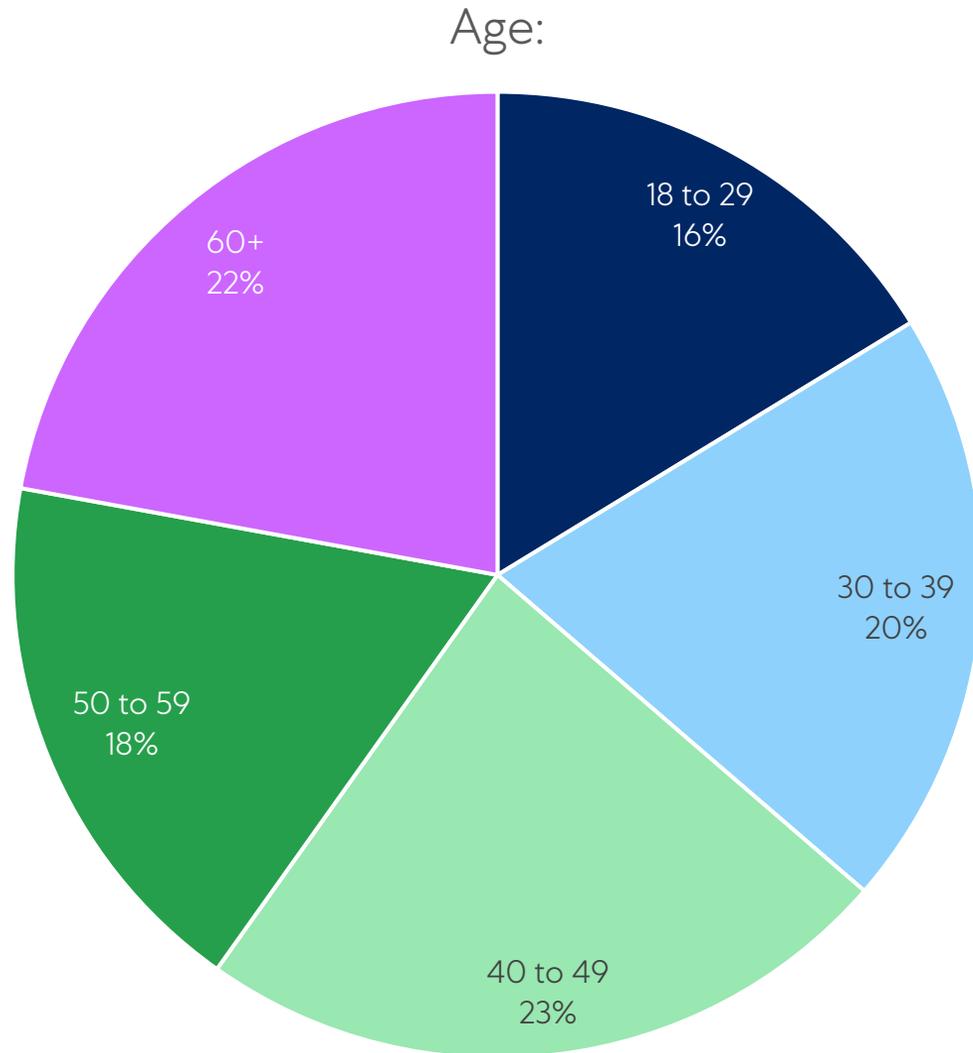
“I think more arts organizations are paying interns nowadays, but when I was in college interning, it was very hard to find a paid internship in the arts. I feel I needed them for my resume, but my first job offer out of college was not linked to either of my internships, or direct skills gained there. However, had I not had any internship experience, I think I would have been less competitive.”

– Age 30 to 39, Woman, Full time employee (35 or more hours a week)

Section 6 – Demographics & Access

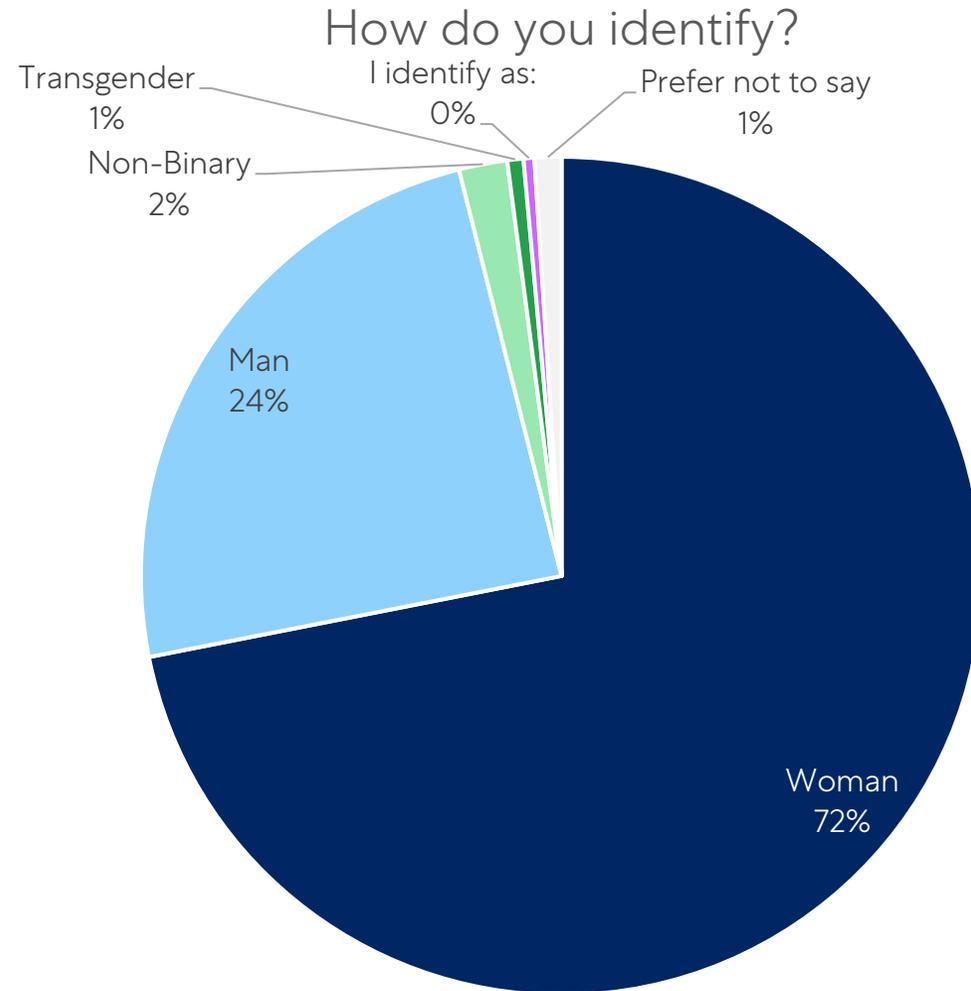
Understanding who responded and how identity and access factors intersect with working conditions

Respondents span all adult age groups



Respondents span all adult age groups, with a concentration in working-age bands. Age is a useful interpretive lens throughout the report because it correlates with role level/tenure, household structure (including dependents), student loan burden, and access to benefits (especially health insurance and retirement).

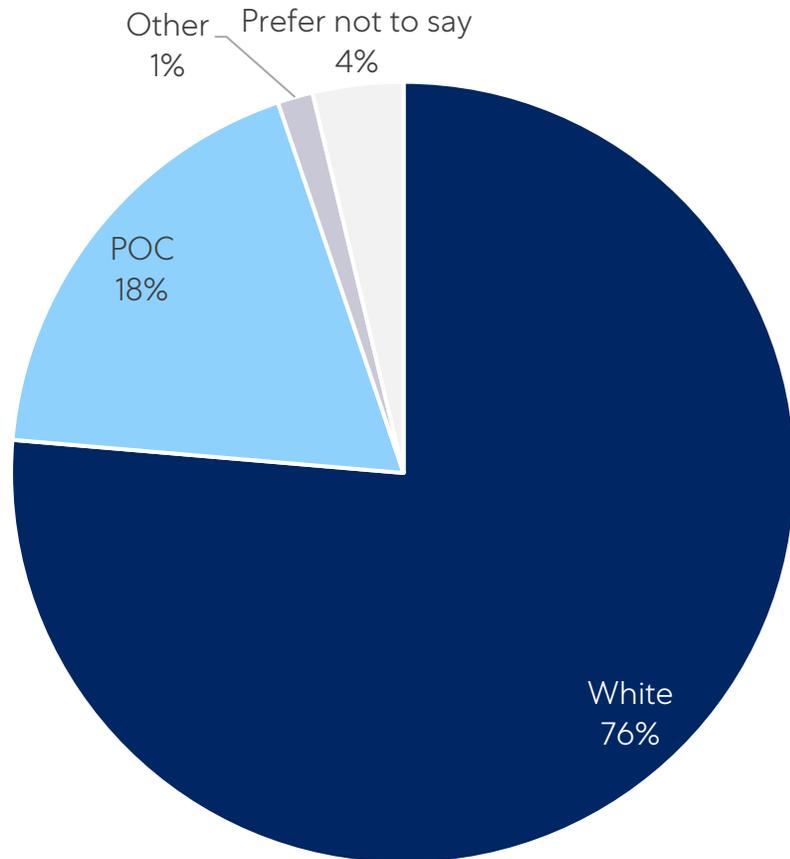
Most respondents identify as women



The respondent pool is predominantly women, consistent with patterns in nonprofit and cultural work. Gender is therefore a key lens for interpreting pay, workload, benefits access, and reported sustainability

Most respondents identify as White

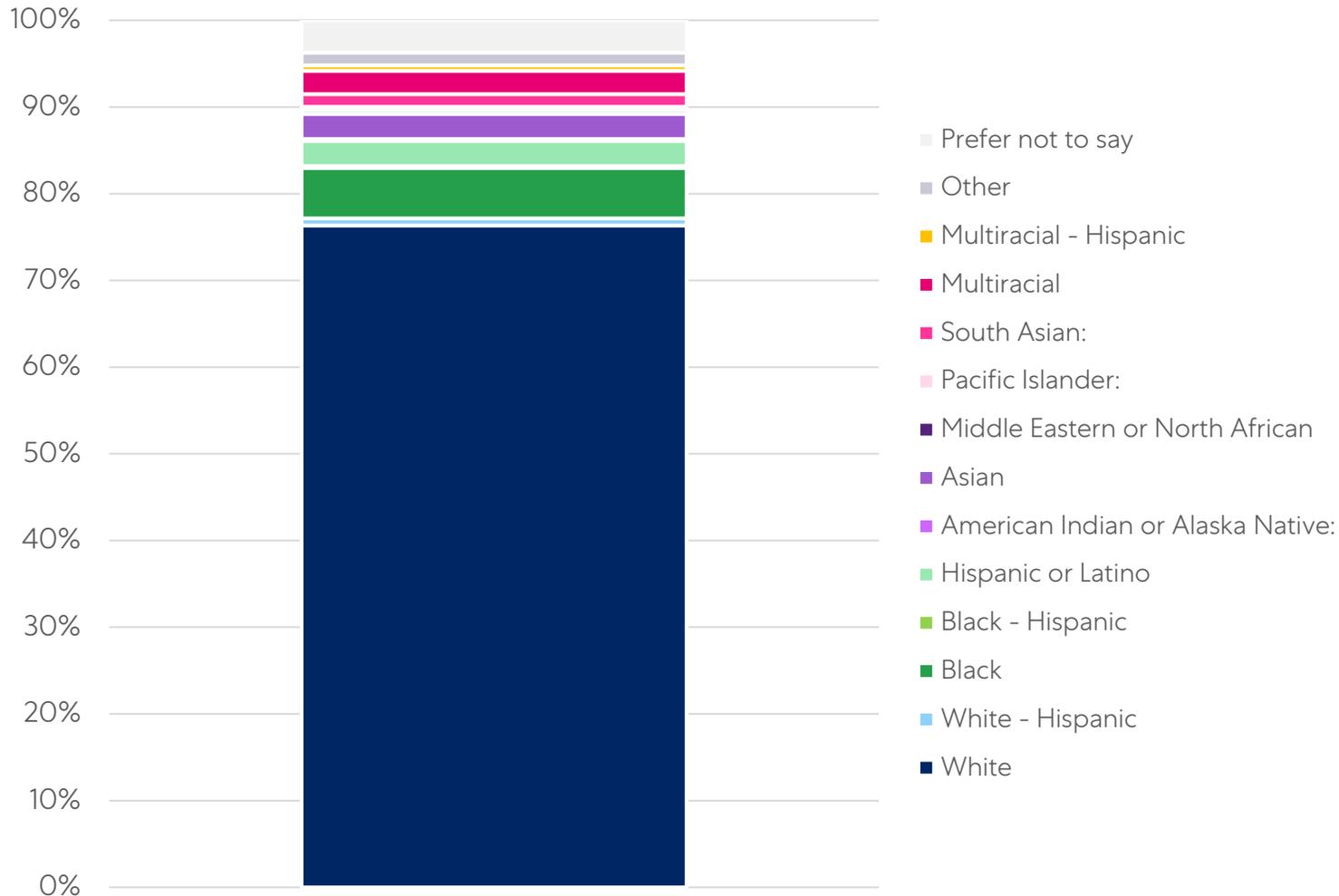
What is your race? (Select all that apply and use the text box if you would like to be more specific)



The respondent pool is majority White, with smaller representation of other racial identities. This provides context for subgroup analysis: where bases are small, demographic cuts should be interpreted cautiously, but persistent differences can still be meaningful, especially when the same direction appears across multiple measures (pay, benefits, workload, and perceived value)

Race/ethnicity detail

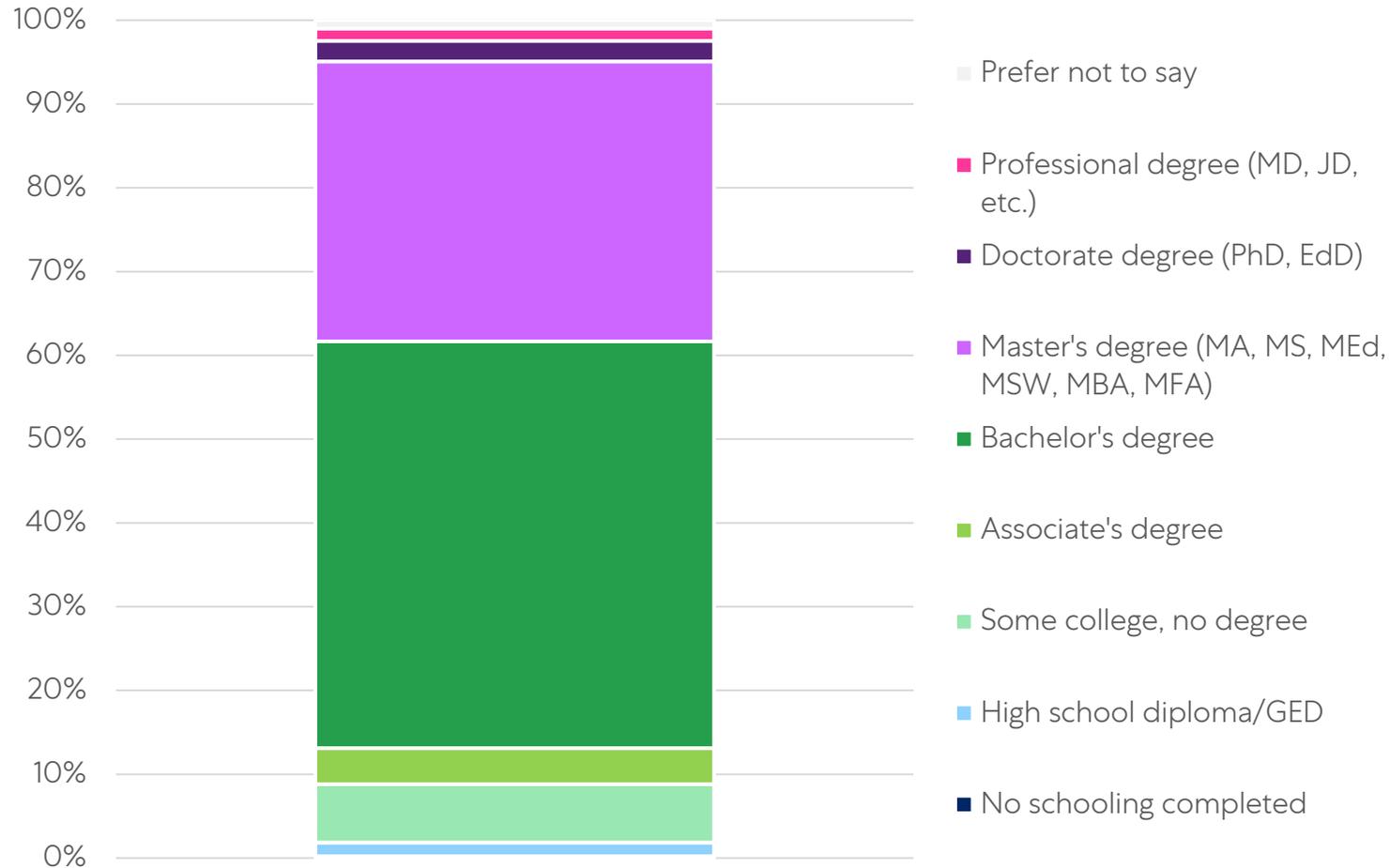
What is your race?



	What is your race?
Prefer not to say	4%
Other	1%
Multiracial - Hispanic	1%
Multiracial	3%
South Asian	1%
Pacific Islander	0%
Middle Eastern or North African	0%
Asian	3%
American Indian or Alaska Native	0%
Hispanic or Latino	3%
Black - Hispanic	0%
Black	6%
White - Hispanic	1%
White	76%

Most respondents hold bachelor's or master's degrees

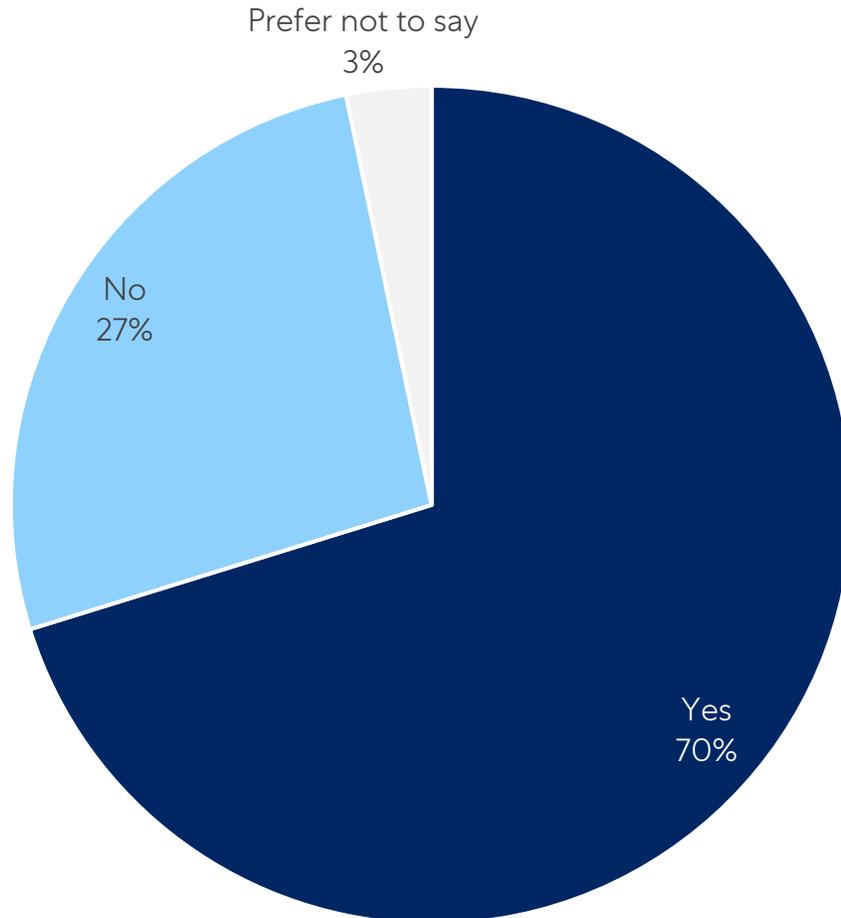
What is the highest degree or level of school you have COMPLETED?



Most respondents hold a bachelor's or master's degree, providing useful context for interpreting pay adequacy and perceived underpayment: respondents often describe a mismatch between credential expectations and compensation outcome, especially in mid-level roles

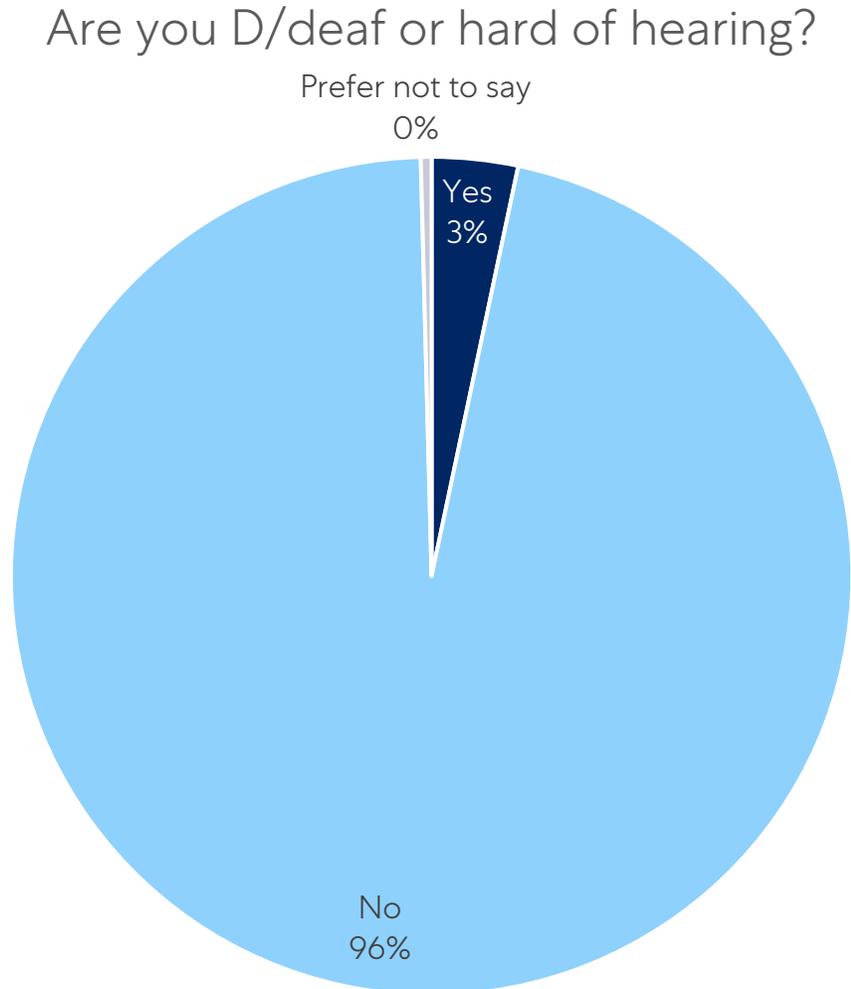
Most degrees are in arts-related fields

Is your highest degree in an arts-related field?



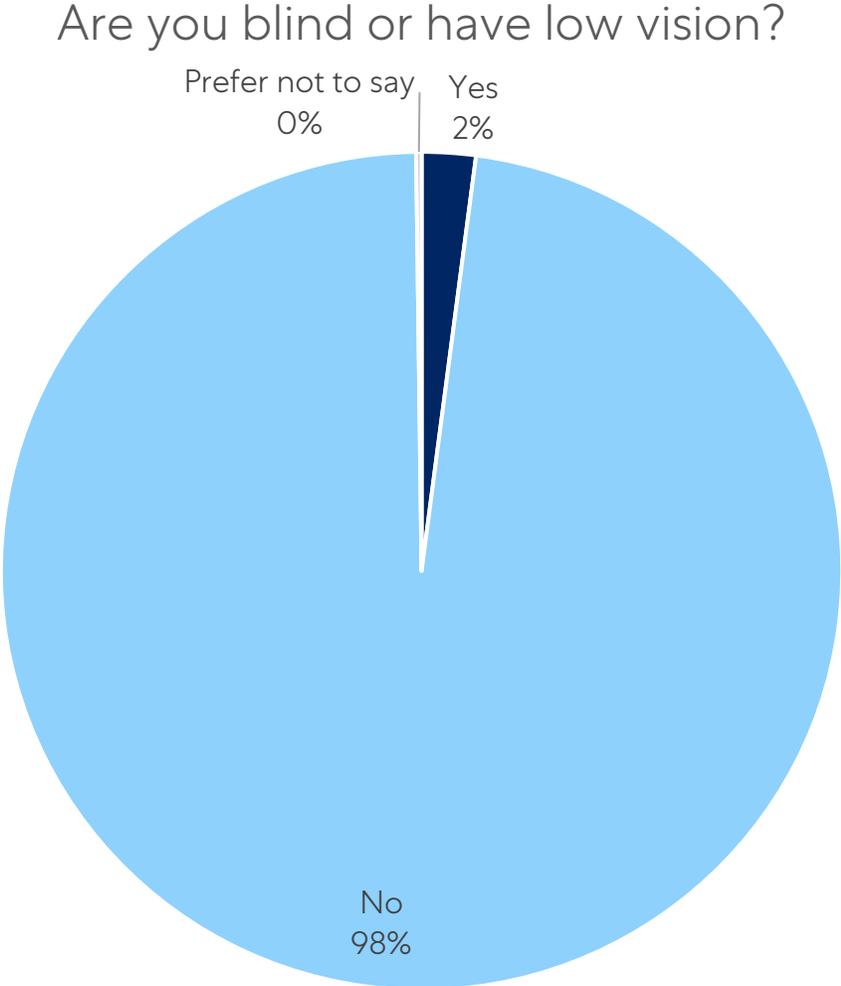
Most respondents report their highest degree is in an arts-related field. This reinforces that many respondents have invested in training aligned to the work, while some describe a tension between professional identity and compensation structures that require household support or external income

Few respondents report being D/deaf or hard of hearing



Reported D/deaf or hard of hearing status is low in this respondent pool. As with other disability-related measures, low reported prevalence may reflect barriers to entry, retention, or survey participation, and should not be treated as evidence that accessibility needs are minimal.

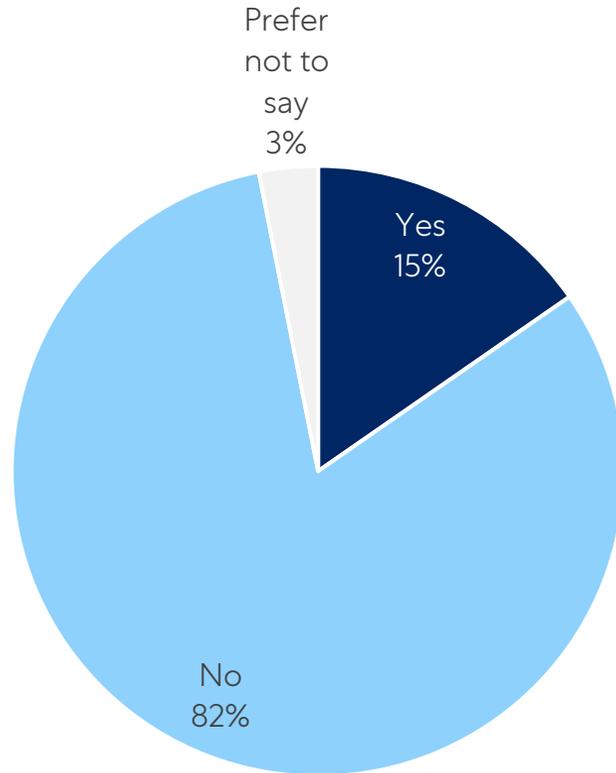
Few respondents report being blind or having low vision



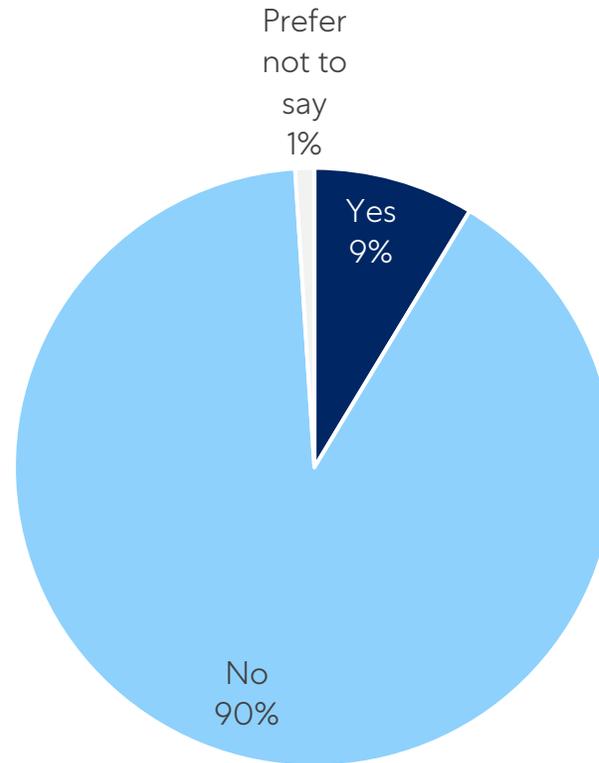
Reported prevalence is low in this respondent pool. This should not be interpreted as evidence of minimal need; low response rates for disability-related questions may reflect access barriers at the point of entry, retention, or survey participation itself.

15% of respondents identify as neurodiverse or neurodivergent and 9% of respondents report having a physical disability

Do you identify as neurodiverse, neurodivergent, or as having an intellectual disability?



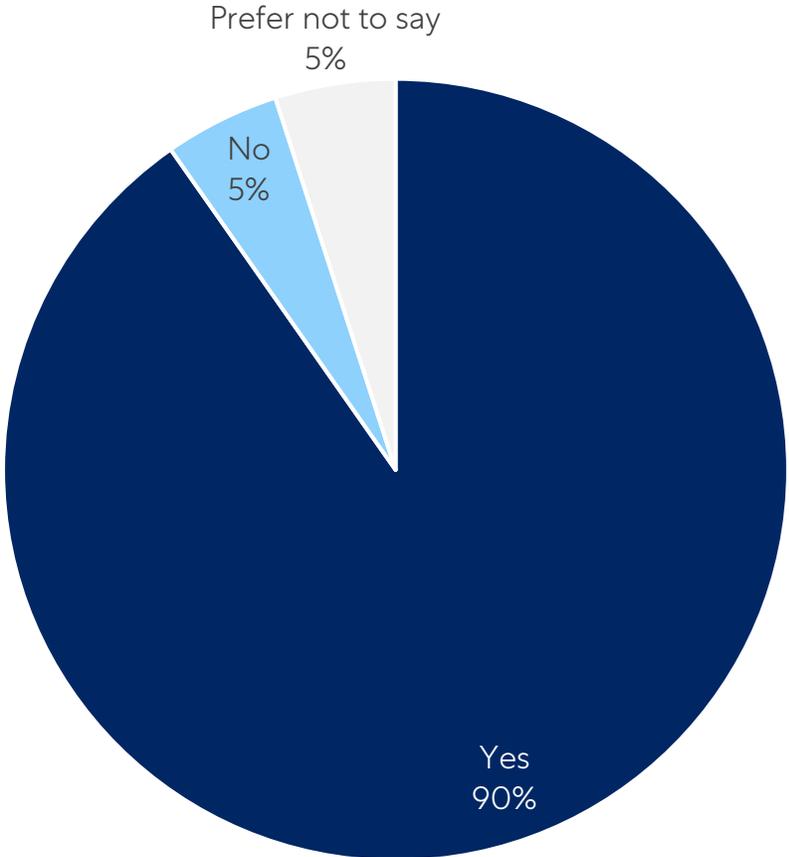
Do you have a physical disability?



A meaningful share of respondents report a physical disability and identify as neurodiverse /neurodivergent. This provides additional context for findings on workload strain, burnout, flexibility, and job seeking, particularly where respondents describe predictability, clear expectations, and remote/hybrid options as central to sustainability.

A small but meaningful share (5%) report their work environment does not meet their needs

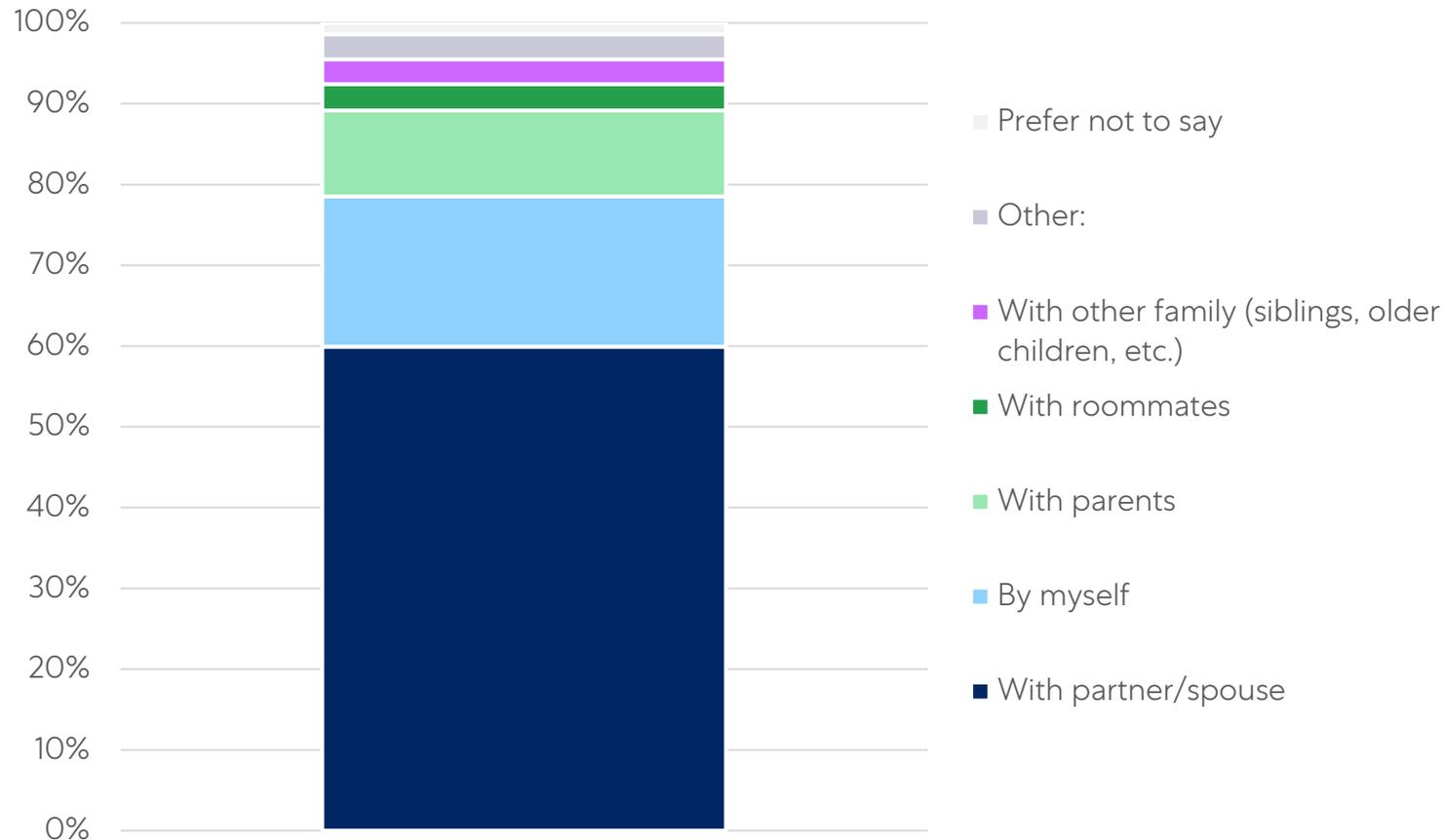
Is your work environment accessible to meet your needs to carry out your job responsibilities?



Most respondents report their work environment is accessible to meet their needs, but a meaningful minority report it is not, indicating potential gaps in workplace inclusion and support.

60% of respondents report living with a partner/spouse

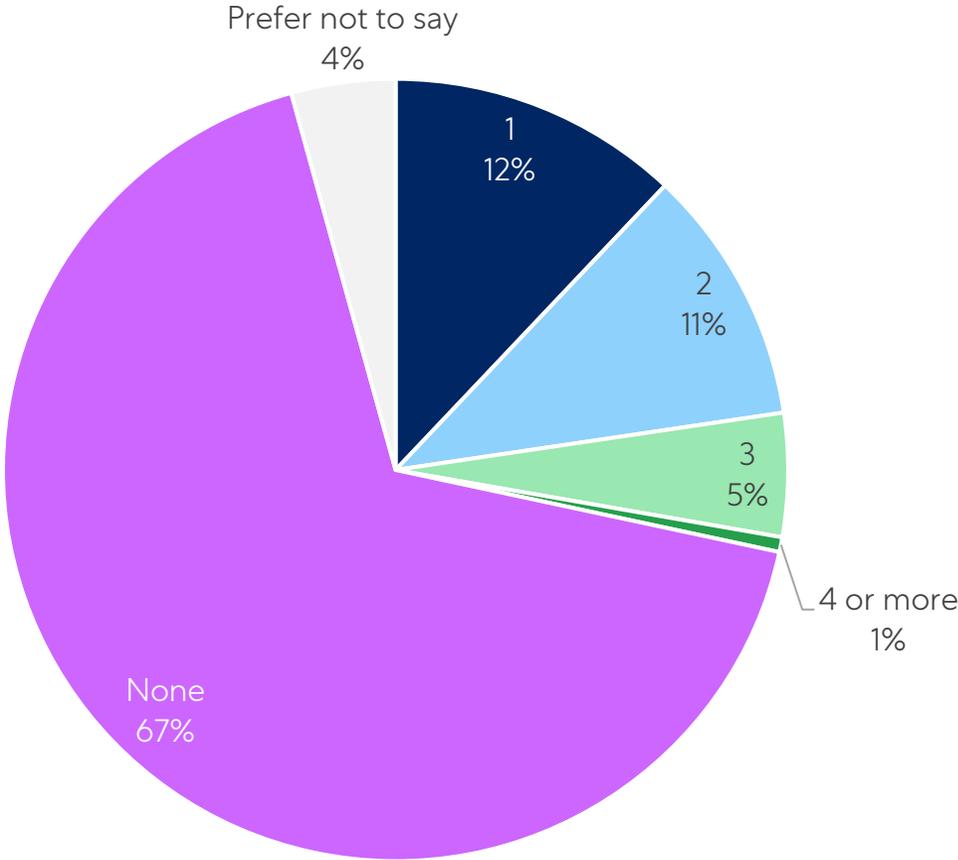
Which of the following best describes your living arrangements? Ignoring any children you might live with.



Living arrangements vary. The most common arrangement is living with a partner/spouse, with sizable shares also living alone, with parents, or with roommates. Context for interpreting household buffering and cost-of-living pressure

33% of respondents have dependents under 18

How many children under 18, or other dependents, do you live with?



About one-third report dependents under 18, adding context for workload demands, scheduling needs, and benefit priorities (especially healthcare and paid leave)

Respondents describe long-standing constraints on pay growth

Are there any comments or observations that you would like to make about earnings or levels of pay in the arts sector?

“As a musician/performer, I have not seen a substantial difference in what arts orgs pay me in 40 years. There is a ceiling on what small groups can afford and if you're not playing enormous venues (which most of us aren't) you'll only make more by working a lot more.”

– Age 60+, Woman, Self-employed

“My colleagues and friends in the tech theater industry that don't work under the umbrella of an Ivy League university are all underpaid and overworked. While I feel I'm paid a decent for my arts job, I still feel the need to work a second job for extra income due to the cost of living in our area.”

– Age 40 to 49, Man, Full time employee (35 or more hours a week)

“As CEO it is impossible to pay as well as I'd like to. We do our best and are transparent but cannot keep up with cost of living in our region. It is frustrating, and I think long term harmful for the field. And there is often commentary that comes from outside observers that we should "just pay more," and that we are at fault or lack integrity because we aren't paying more. When we can't fundraise more for GOS, and funding for the arts is shrinking in NJ, it isn't possible to "just pay more.”

– Age 50 to 59, Woman, Full time employee (35 or more hours a week)

Several respondents emphasize that when wages cannot rise quickly, predictability and “soft benefits” (flexibility, leave, hybrid options, transparent progression) meaningfully affect job sustainability.

What changes would you most like to see in how arts organizations approach compensation and working conditions?

“4 day workweek”

– Age 40 to 49, Man, Full time employee (35 or more hours a week)

“Any entity that cannot provide fair wages would need to provide reasonably more soft benefits (no overtime, hybrid schedule, vacation, personal, sick leave etc)”

– Part time employee (less than 35 hours a week)

“I hope in the future compensation is built into an employee's overall growth plan with an organization. Often times, it falls on the employee to ask for more after they have been with an organization longer and/or have taken on more work.”

– Age 18 to 29, Woman, Full time employee (35 or more hours a week)

“Higher pay, more flexibility in work-from-home, more office privacy (so many offices are multi-person offices), more flexible working hours, guaranteed annual increases to match cost of living, and more financial support for commuting. My previous job (working at a university in Boston) included an unlimited monthly subway pass as a benefit for all employees.”

– Age 30 to 39, Man, Full time employee (35 or more hours a week)

“It would be great to have a widely-available application process for arts support, as many grants don't cover this and parent institutions either can't afford or won't pay for additional staffing.”

– Age 30 to 39, Woman, Full time employee (35 or more hours a week)

Pay, time, flexibility, and benefits operate together in how job quality is experienced

“As a whole it is a cooperative environment with out of the box problem solvers - mentorship, peer learning, collaboration are prevalent”

- Age 50 to 59, Woman, Part time employee (less than 35 hours a week)

“My current org gives cost of living increases annually, which I believe is unusual. It's been essential for living in a HCOL area as an arts professional. This should be standard.”

- Age 40 to 49, Woman, Full time employee (35 or more hours a week)

“I find that the teaching artist community specifically is very helpful and kind, though slightly disjointed. I have considered starting an online community somewhere for teaching artists to connect and share opportunities. Some of my greatest workshops happened because someone else recommended me or mentioned my name if they weren't able to do the work. This sense of community is helpful for everyone and I would love to see the community flourish in this way.”

- Age 18 to 29, Woman, Freelance/Contract worker

Final comments underscore the central tension of the report: deep commitment to the work alongside uneven protections, affordability constraints, and sustained workload strain.

“Despite the well-known challenges in arts sector pay and working conditions, I have had several positive experiences that give me hope for the future. I've worked with organizations that are transparent about their budgets and make a genuine effort to compensate artists and arts workers fairly within their means. I've also seen a growing commitment to offering flexible work arrangements, wellness support, and professional development opportunities, which contribute to better working conditions overall. Looking ahead, I'm hopeful that the sector will continue to prioritize pay equity, transparency, and sustainable workloads. I believe that by advocating for clearer pay standards, more funding for arts organizations, and stronger support for early- and mid-career professionals, we can build a healthier, more equitable arts ecosystem for everyone involved.”

– Age 30 to 39, Woman, Full time employee (35 or more hours a week)

“As always, the people make it.”

– Age 30 to 39, Woman, Full time employee (35 or more hours a week)

Conclusion

Arts Pay NJ 2025 depicts a workforce sustained by strong commitment and community value, but shaped by uneven protections and compensation structures that differ sharply by role level and employment type. Pay progression is evident, yet many respondents describe it as insufficient to produce stability once workload norms, overtime ineligibility, and benefit costs are taken into account.

Uncompensated time remains widespread across the respondent pool: many report working beyond expected hours, particularly during peak periods and in understaffed contexts. For freelancers and teaching artists, unpaid preparation and travel time further reduces effective earnings and can amplify income volatility. Benefits materially shape whether pay translates into stability: where benefits are strong and predictable, respondents more often describe work as livable; where benefits are limited, costly, or unclear, respondents describe wage gains as being eroded over time.

Practical takeaways most commonly cited by respondents

- **Clarify workload boundaries** (after-hours norms, peak-period expectations, comp time) so “official” hours match reality.
- **Increase transparency** (pay bands/progression criteria, benefit summaries, employer share of healthcare premiums).
- **Strengthen the benefits floor** where possible (healthcare support, retirement contributions, parental leave, reimbursements).
- **Standardize contracting for freelance/teaching work** (written terms, cancellation/payment timelines, paid or reimbursed prep/travel).
- **Reduce entry-path affordability barriers** (move internships toward paid models, or provide stipends/support where unpaid persists).

For many respondents, the ability to remain in arts work appears to depend in part on household income beyond their own arts earnings – a structural dynamic that organizational-level changes alone may not fully resolve.

Appendix A: Comparison Data Tables

Key Stats: Gender

Metric	Men (n=105)	Women (n=321)	Total (n=534)
Median Annual Salary (FT)	\$80,000	\$70,500	\$71,750
Median Hourly Rate	\$26.78	\$25.00	\$25.00
Feel underpaid	49%	67%	62%
Master's degree+	33%	42%	39%
Student loans	23%	30%	29%
Rely on outside income	68%	71%	70%
Actively job seeking	16%	20%	18%
PTO days (median)	25	22	22
Avg benefits offered	8.8	8.8	7.9
Work-life balance: Excellent/Good	67%	49%	52%
Work-life balance: Fair	26%	36%	34%
Work-life balance: Poor/Very poor	8%	15%	13%
Hours: Expected (mean)	37.7	34.3	35.0
Hours: Actual (mean)	43.0	39.3	40.0
Single arts job	42%	57%	50%
Multiple jobs	58%	43%	50%

Key Stats: Race

Metric	People of Color (n=85)	White (n=336)	Total (n=534)
Median Annual Salary (FT)	\$64,686	\$73,956	\$71,750
Median Hourly Rate	\$23.00	\$25.38	\$25.00
Feel underpaid	73%	58%	62%
Master's degree+	36%	39%	39%
Student loans	45%	26%	29%
Rely on outside income	67%	71%	70%
Actively job seeking	26%	16%	18%
PTO days (median)	20	25	22
Avg benefits offered	8.2	9.0	7.9
Work-life balance: Excellent/Good	48%	55%	52%
Work-life balance: Fair	36%	34%	34%
Work-life balance: Poor/Very poor	15%	11%	13%
Hours: Expected (mean)	36.3	34.6	35.0
Hours: Actual (mean)	38.8	39.8	40.0
Single arts job	40%	57%	50%
Multiple jobs	60%	43%	50%

Key Stats: Role Level

Metric	Entry (n=57)	Middle (n=195)	Senior (n=134)	Executive (n=63)	Total (n=534)
Median Annual Salary (FT)	\$47,750	\$65,000	\$87,749	\$80,000	\$71,750
Median Hourly Rate	\$20.00	\$25.00	\$40.00		\$25.00
Feel underpaid	58%	63%	55%	71%	62%
Master's degree+	22%	36%	43%	40%	39%
Student loans	38%	36%	21%	11%	29%
Rely on outside income	68%	69%	65%	84%	70%
Actively job seeking	30%	17%	17%	8%	18%
PTO days (median)	20	22	25	30	22
Avg benefits offered	7.0	9.2	9.4	7.0	7.9
Work-life balance: Excellent/Good	54%	52%	57%	52%	52%
Work-life balance: Fair	35%	36%	33%	25%	34%
Work-life balance: Poor/Very poor	11%	12%	10%	22%	13%
Hours: Expected (mean)	32.1	35.5	36.5	35.2	35.0
Hours: Actual (mean)	32.7	40.2	42.4	45.4	40.0
Single arts job	47%	61%	56%	41%	50%
Multiple jobs	53%	39%	44%	59%	50%

Key Stats: Age

Metric	18 to 29 (n=68)	30 to 39 (n=81)	40 to 49 (n=97)	50 to 59 (n=76)	60+ (n=83)	Total (n=534)
Median Annual Salary (FT)	\$49,950	\$65,500	\$80,000	\$82,656	\$73,956	\$71,750
Median Hourly Rate	\$20.00	\$25.00	\$35.00	\$35.00	\$27.88	\$25.00
Feel underpaid	69%	63%	63%	62%	63%	62%
Master's degree+	15%	42%	51%	39%	41%	39%
Student loans	51%	53%	29%	12%	7%	29%
Rely on outside income	69%	60%	70%	74%	72%	70%
Actively job seeking	40%	20%	16%	16%	7%	18%
PTO days (median)	20	22	25	22	30	22
Avg benefits offered	7.7	9.4	10.0	9.1	7.4	7.9
Work-life balance: Excellent/Good	51%	43%	45%	53%	65%	52%
Work-life balance: Fair	38%	42%	39%	30%	28%	34%
Work-life balance: Poor/Very poor	10%	15%	15%	17%	7%	13%
Hours: Expected (mean)	32.1	36.7	39.2	35.4	29.3	35.0
Hours: Actual (mean)	34.8	38.7	44.4	41.1	37.0	40.0
Single arts job	43%	52%	48%	61%	46%	50%
Multiple jobs	57%	48%	52%	39%	54%	50%

Key Stats: Job Function

Metric	Administrative (n=250)	Artistic/Creative (n=141)	Education /Engagement (n=91)	Total (n=534)
Median Annual Salary (FT)	\$71,000	\$82,500	\$72,000	\$71,750
Median Hourly Rate	\$22.75	\$25.00	\$26.50	\$25.00
Feel underpaid	62%	61%	64%	62%
Master's degree+	35%	34%	58%	39%
Student loans	30%	22%	40%	29%
Rely on outside income	67%	77%	68%	70%
Actively job seeking	16%	16%	22%	18%
PTO days (median)	24	24	20	22
Avg benefits offered	9.8	4.4	7.4	7.9
Work-life balance: Excellent/Good	54%	55%	42%	52%
Work-life balance: Fair	32%	33%	44%	34%
Work-life balance: Poor/Very poor	14%	12%	14%	13%
Hours: Expected (mean)	36.7	32.6	32.1	35.0
Hours: Actual (mean)	41.7	37.0	38.8	40.0
Single arts job	64%	35%	37%	50%
Multiple jobs	36%	65%	63%	50%

Key Stats: Discipline

Metric	Performing (n=347)	Service /Education (n=322)	Visual (n=229)	Media (n=95)	Multi-disciplinary (n=125)	Total (n=534)
Median Annual Salary (FT)	\$73,507	\$68,000	\$70,000	\$82,721	\$80,000	\$71,750
Median Hourly Rate	\$27.90	\$22.88	\$22.00	\$25.00	\$22.75	\$25.00
Feel underpaid	58%	68%	69%	70%	61%	62%
Master's degree+	37%	38%	36%	41%	40%	39%
Student loans	27%	32%	26%	30%	27%	29%
Rely on outside income	69%	69%	80%	67%	79%	70%
Actively job seeking	15%	18%	22%	23%	16%	18%
PTO days (median)	22	25	25	33	25	22
Avg benefits offered	8.4	8.0	7.5	7.1	7.8	7.9
Work-life balance: Excellent/Good	53%	53%	53%	55%	45%	52%
Work-life balance: Fair	36%	31%	31%	36%	41%	34%
Work-life balance: Poor/Very poor	12%	16%	15%	9%	14%	13%
Hours: Expected (mean)	35.4	36.1	34.0	32.2	35.3	35.0
Hours: Actual (mean)	40.6	40.3	39.6	39.3	41.9	40.0
Single arts job	49%	48%	52%	36%	52%	50%
Multiple jobs	51%	52%	48%	64%	48%	50%

Appendix B: Organization Survey Results

The organization survey captures how funding, governance, staffing models, and HR practices shape what organizations can do on pay and benefits. Results should be read as structural context alongside the individual worker survey, particularly where autonomy is limited (e.g., institution-affiliated entities) and where workforce mix is heavily contract- or volunteer-supported

Organization survey: summary of findings

- Organizations report modest budget and growth expectations, but compensation decisions are still strongly constrained by funding reliability and available budget.
- Institution-affiliated respondents often operate within university pay bands and benefit systems, limiting autonomy.
- Unions are uncommon overall.
- Many organizations rely on contractors and volunteers, with inconsistent practices on compensating prep/travel/admin time.
- Benefits provision varies widely – health insurance remains a major gap for many non-institution-affiliated organizations

How to read this appendix

Purple slides were asked to all (not including those who are entirely volunteer led after first two slides)

Pink slides were those who were University-affiliated arts organization, Community/county college-affiliated arts organization (includes county arts agencies affiliated with educational institutions)

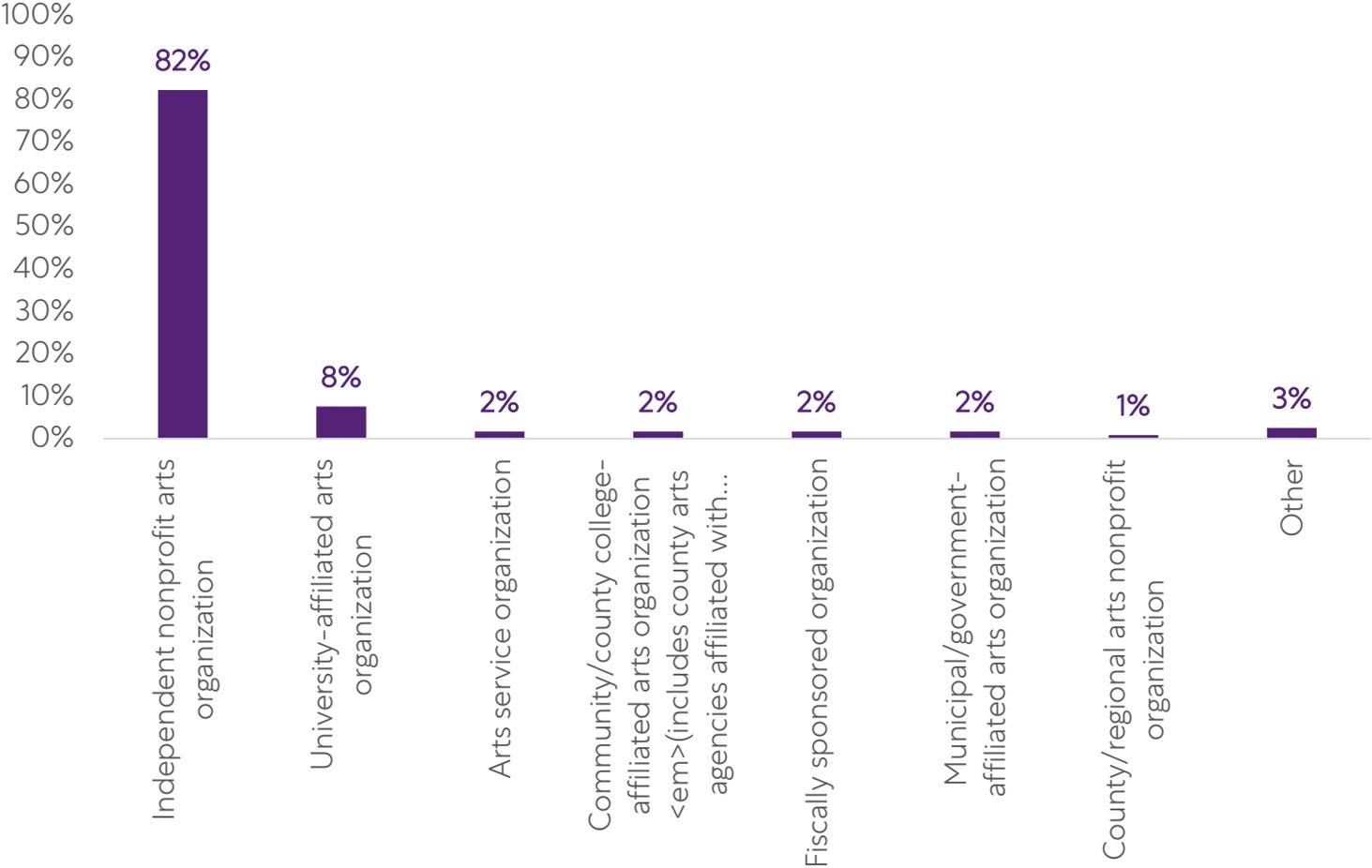
Green slides are those who were NOT University-affiliated arts organization, Community/county college-affiliated arts organization (includes county arts agencies affiliated with educational institutions)

Blue slides are those who are entirely or primarily volunteer led

Appendix B1 – Organization Profile

Type of Organization

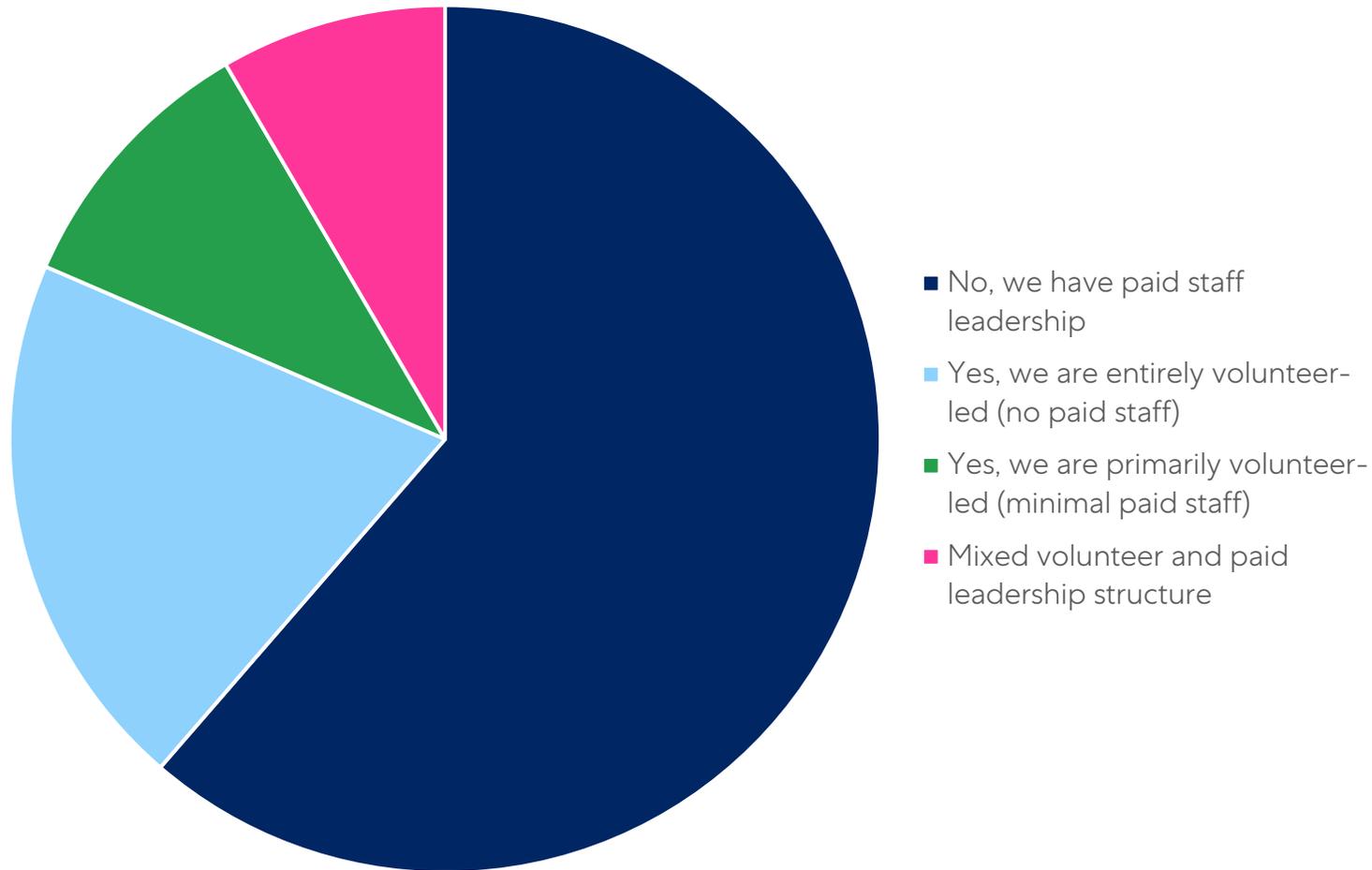
What type of organization best describes your arts organization?



The majority of organizations in our sample are independent nonprofit arts organizations

Leadership model: paid vs volunteer-led

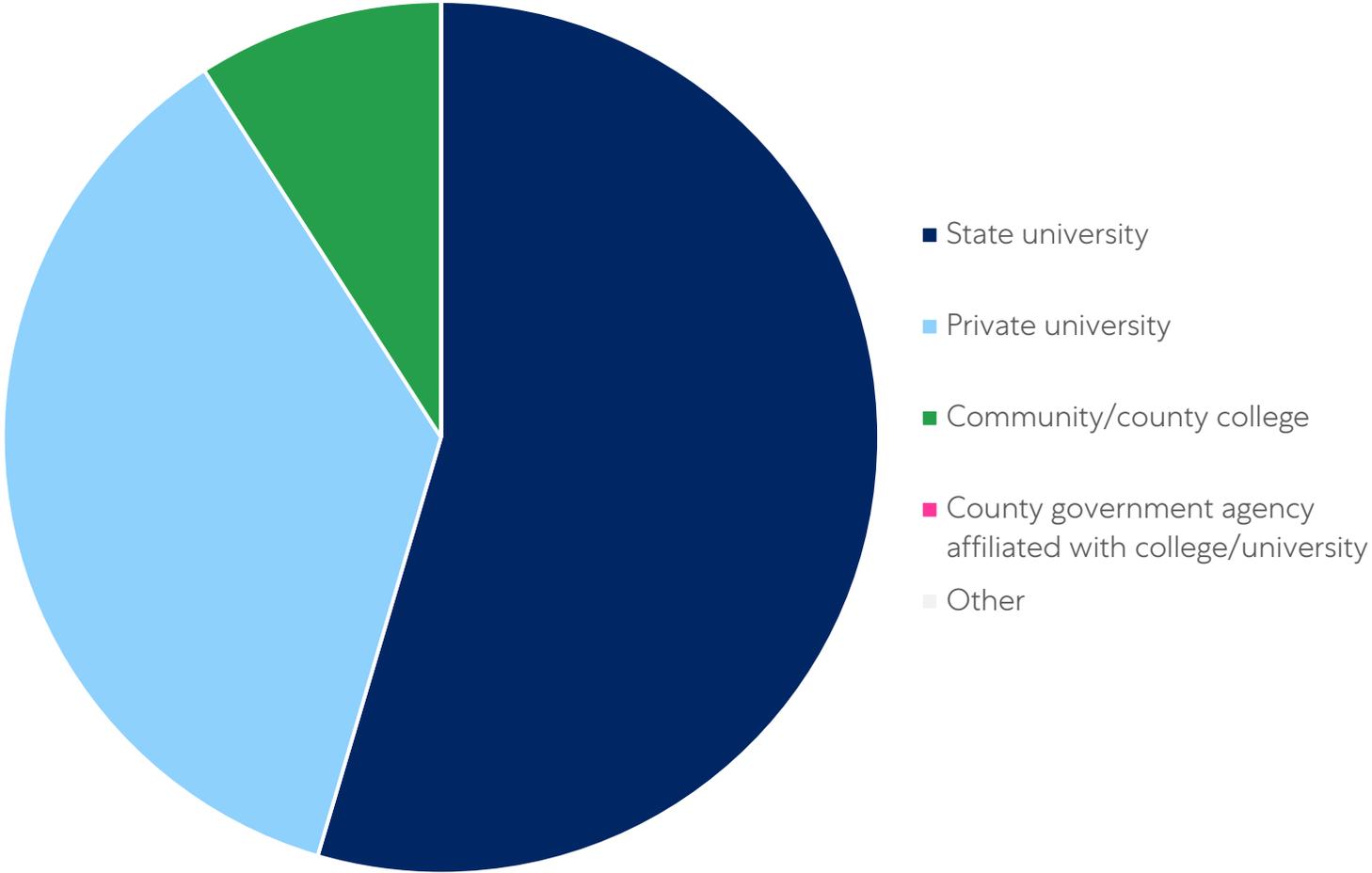
What is your relationship to the parent institution?



Most organizations report paid staff leadership, but a meaningful minority identify as entirely or primarily volunteer-led, or as mixed volunteer/paid leadership structures.

University/college affiliation type (institution category)

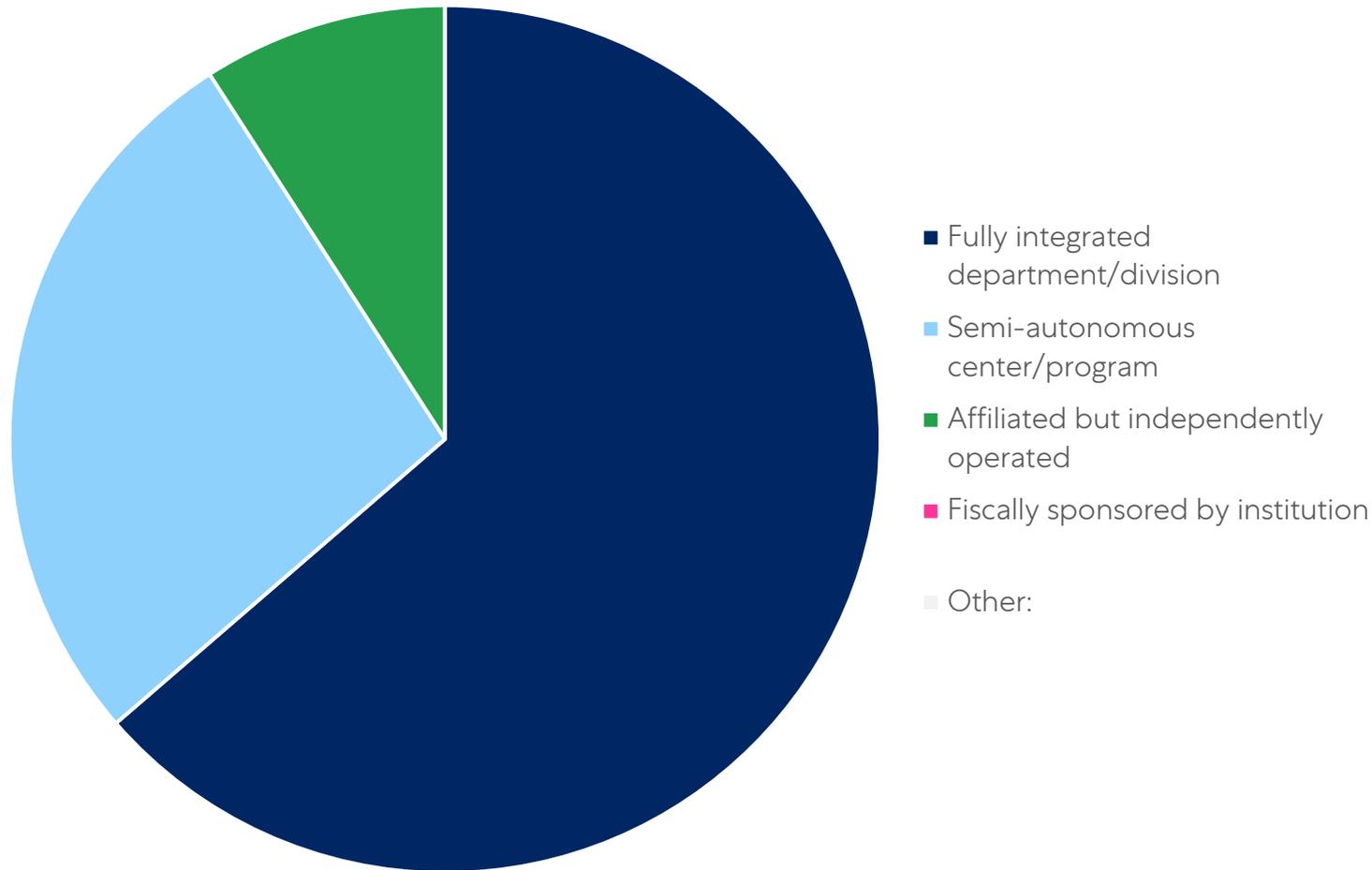
Please specify your institutional affiliation:



Among university-/college-affiliated respondents, the institutional category (state university, private university, community/county college, county agency affiliated with a college/university, etc.) provides context for the governance and funding constraints described later, including autonomy over budgets and compensation.

Organizational relationship to parent institution

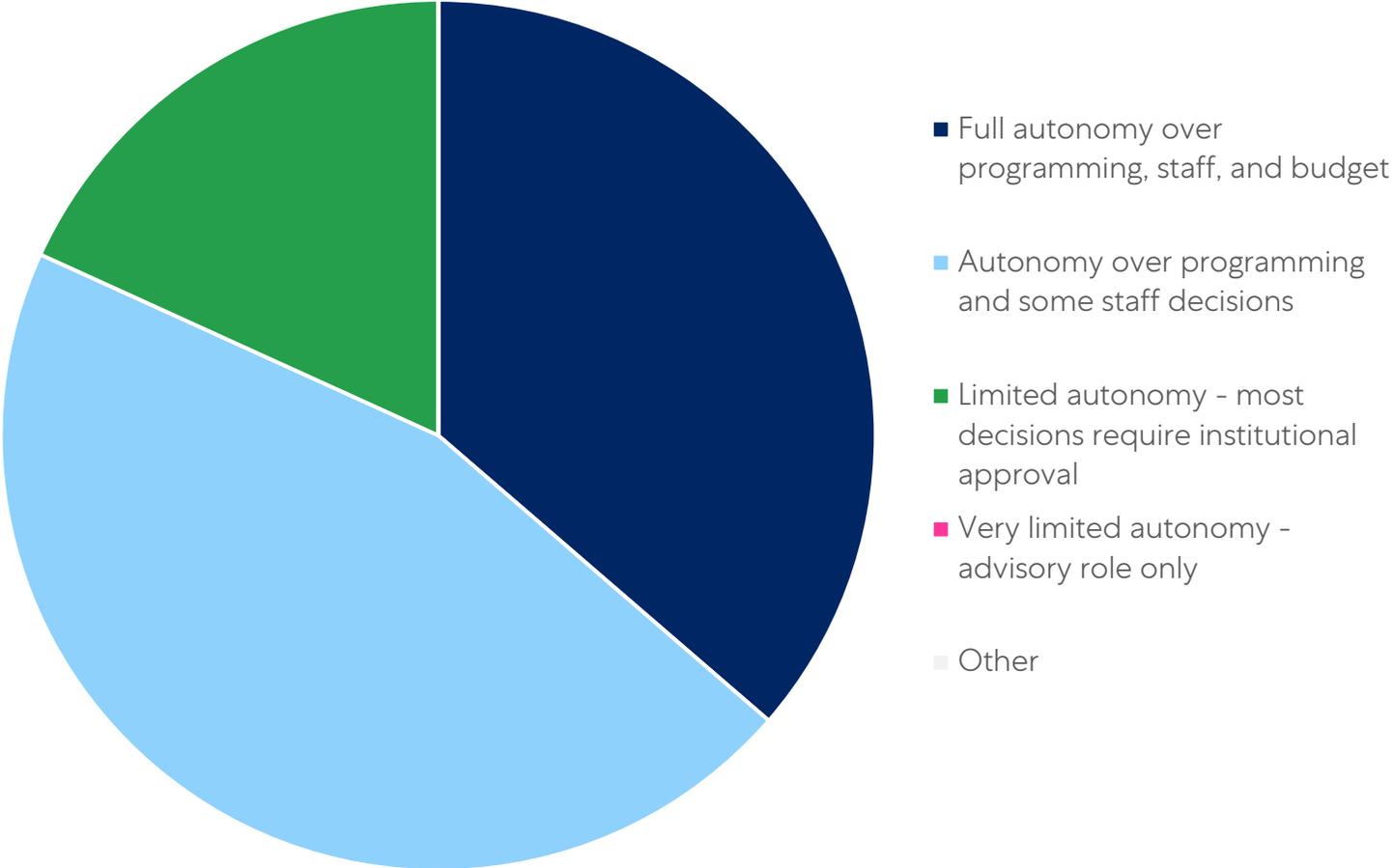
What is your relationship to the parent institution?



University/college-affiliated arts entities vary from fully integrated departments to semi-autonomous centers/programs and affiliated-but-independent operations. This variation is likely to shape pay-setting autonomy, staff classification, benefit structures, and the capacity to implement sector-specific compensation improvements.

Autonomy over programming, staffing, and budget

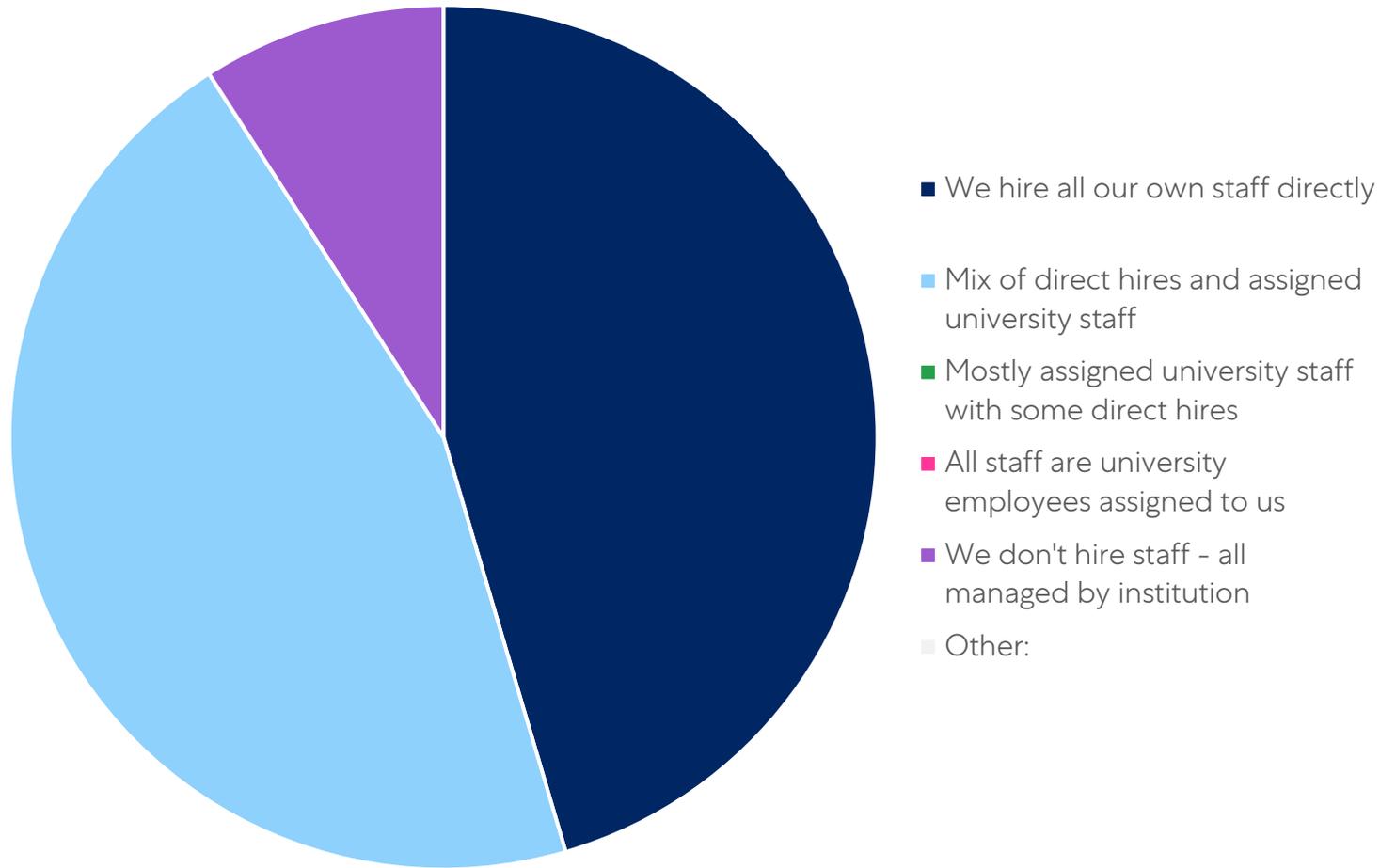
What decision-making authority does your arts organization have?



Autonomy varies widely in institution-affiliated settings. Lower autonomy implies that compensation improvements may depend more on institutional HR, budget cycles, and governance priorities than on arts leadership intent alone

Staffing model in institution-affiliated organizations

How do you hire and manage staff?

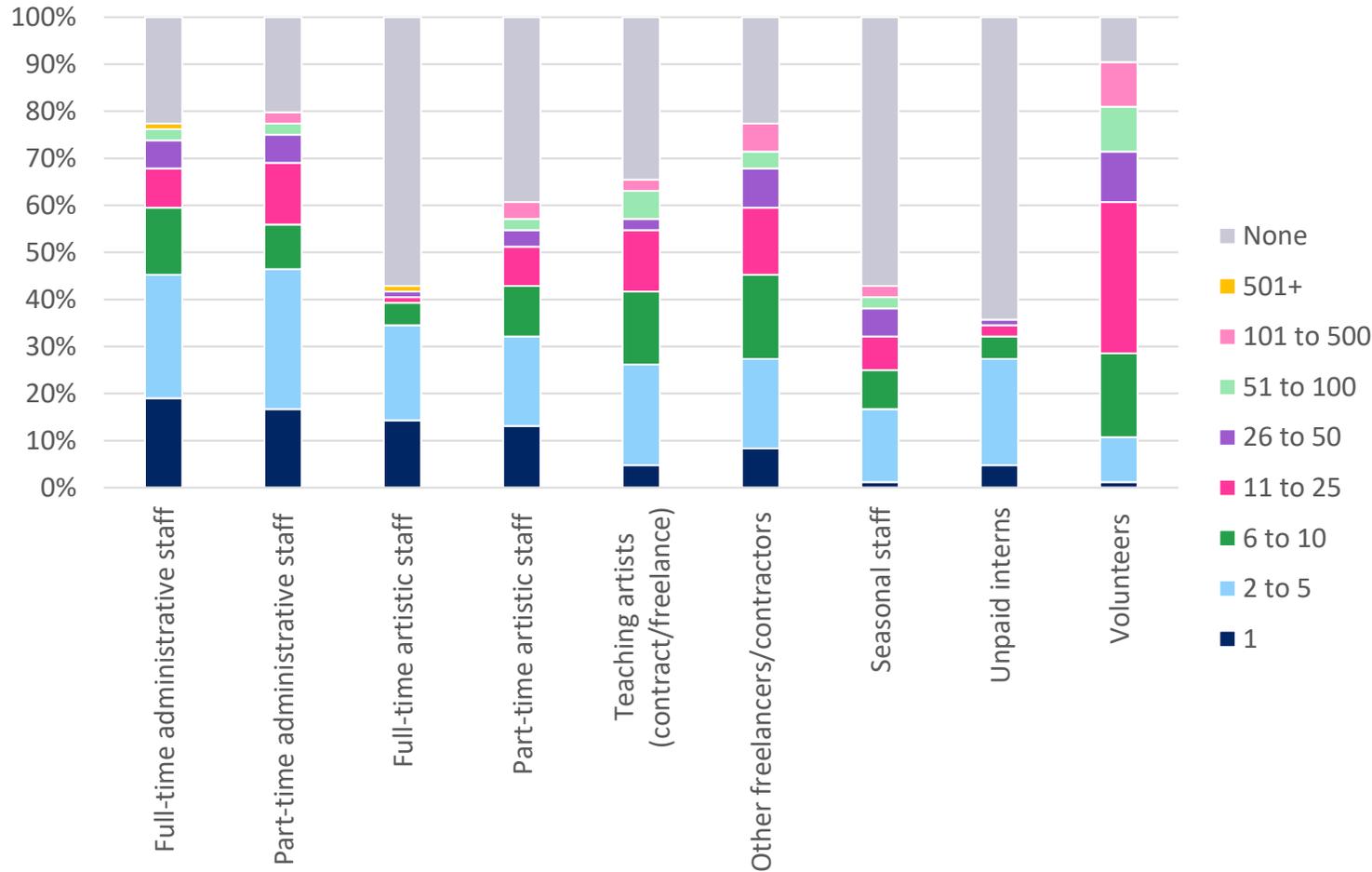


Institution-affiliated organizations report a mix of direct hires and assigned/shared university staff. This distinction is analytically important: staff may be institution employees governed by university policies rather than arts-unit policies, affecting benefits, classifications, overtime treatment, and compensation review cycles.

Appendix B2 – Staffing Structure

Workforce composition (staffing categories across organizations)

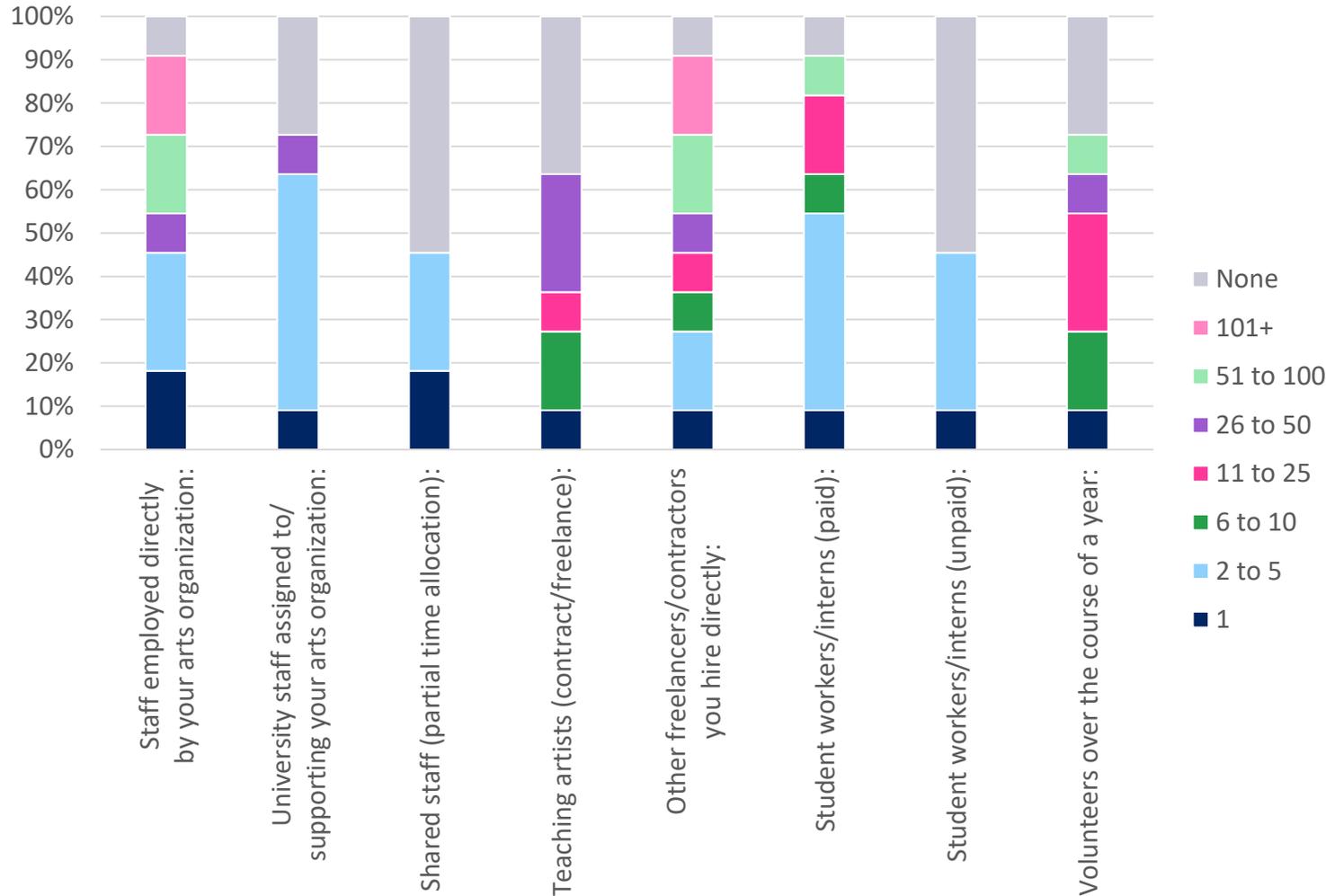
How many of the following work for / are employed by your organization?



Across non-university organizations, staffing spans full-time and part-time administrative and artistic staff, contractors (including teaching artists), seasonal staff, unpaid interns, and volunteers. This mix reinforces why worker experiences vary: job quality is shaped as much by classification and benefits access as by wage rates

Workforce composition in institution-affiliated organizations

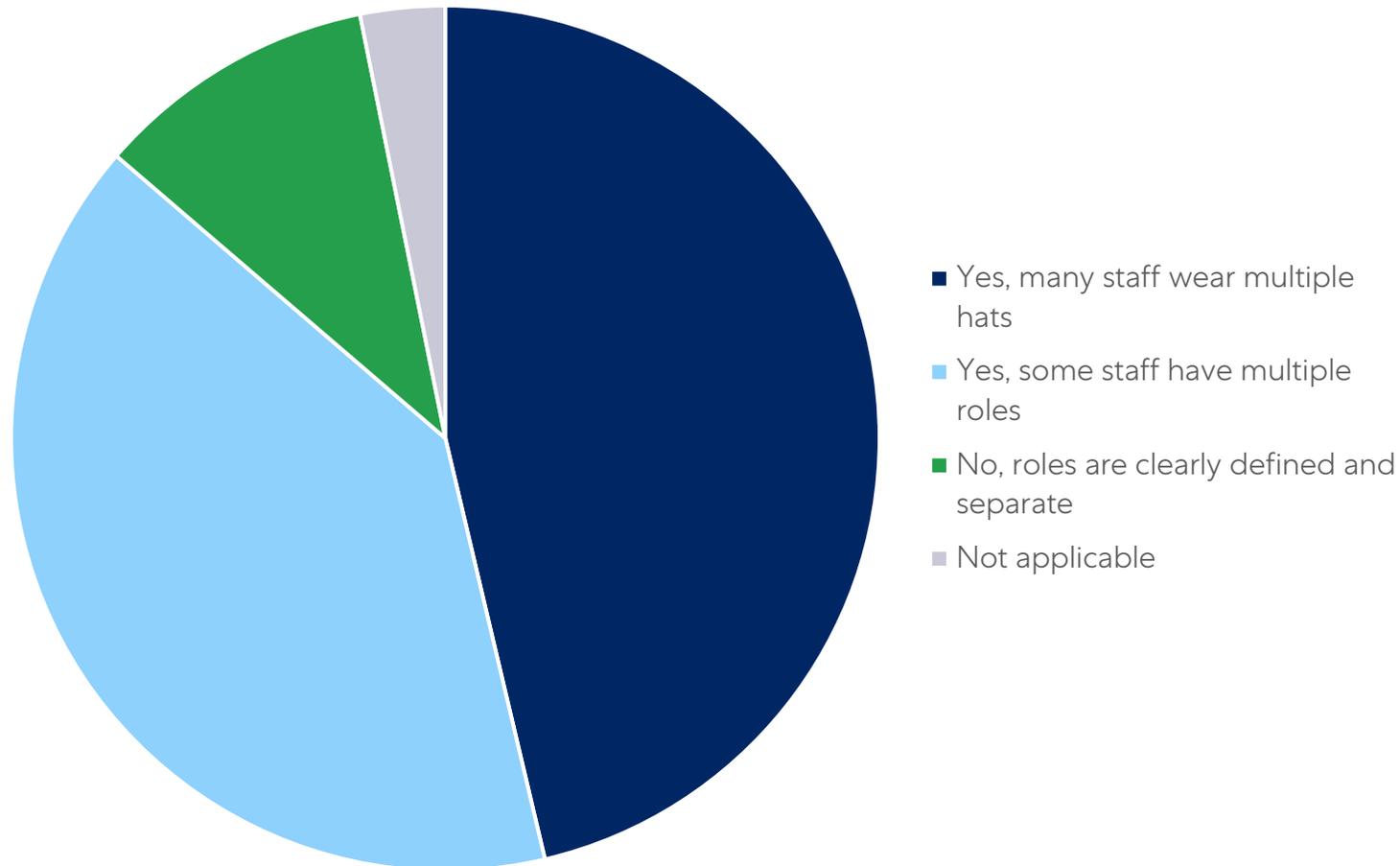
How many people support your arts organization's work?



This chart provides a headcount distribution across direct arts-organization staff, assigned/shared university staff, teaching artists, other contractors, paid/unpaid student workers/interns, and volunteers. It highlights how the workforce can be structurally split across employment categories in ways that shape protections and access to benefits

Many staff within organizations have multiple roles

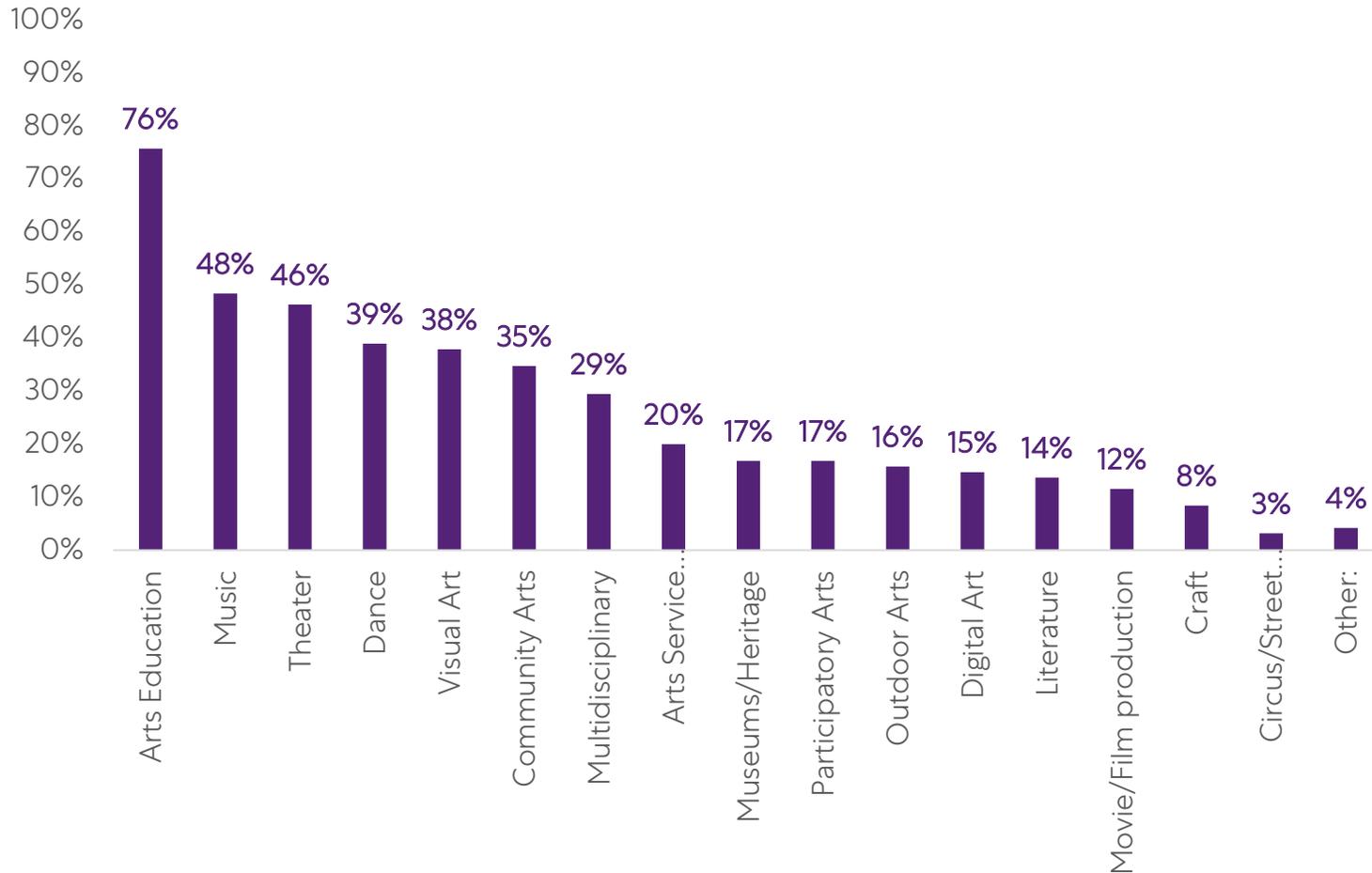
Do you have staff who hold multiple roles within your organization?



Only 11% of organizations sampled stated that staff roles are clearly defined and separate. The majority report that staff are likely to have multiple roles.

Artform/programming areas represented in organization sample

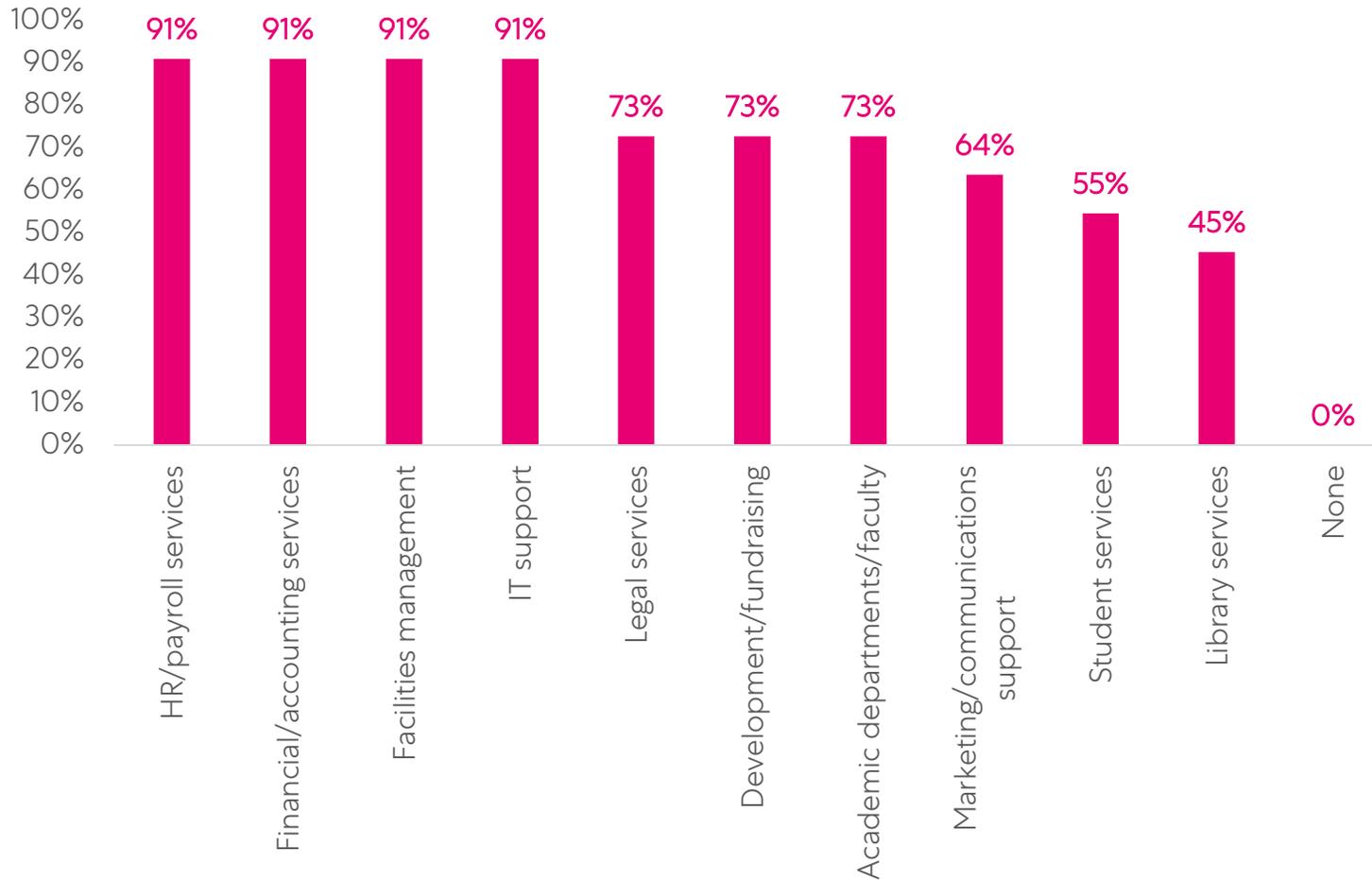
With which of the following art forms is your organization involved? (Select all that apply)



The organization sample spans arts education, music, theater, dance, visual art, community arts, and other areas.

Services provided by parent institution (university-affiliated)

What institutional resources do you share or access?
(Select all that apply)

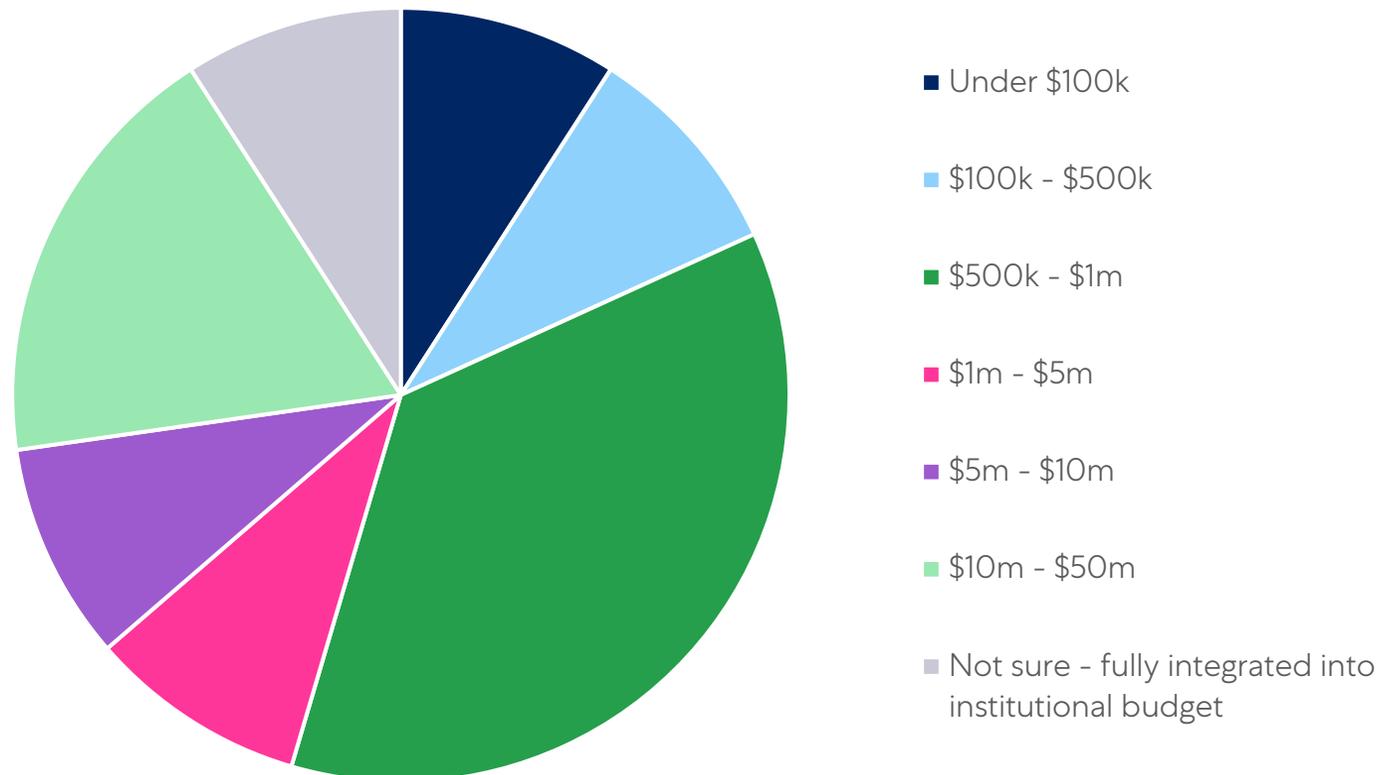


Institutional support functions (HR/payroll, finance, facilities, IT, legal, fundraising, marketing, etc.) vary across university-affiliated organizations. Where these supports are absent or inconsistent, arts units may experience operational strain and limited capacity for compensation reform

Appendix AB3 – Financial Details & Budget Mix

Budget size (university-affiliated respondents)

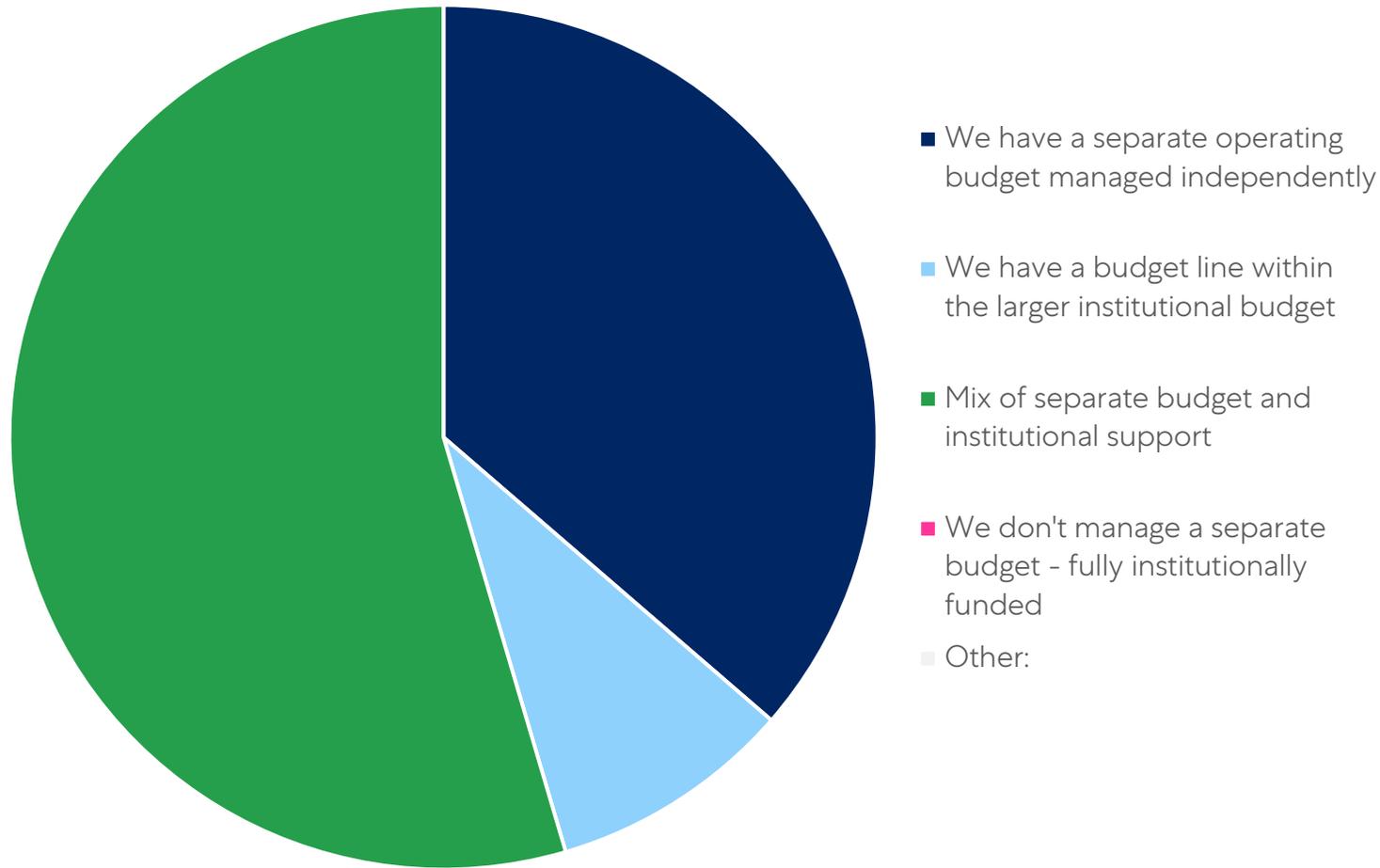
What is your arts organization's total annual budget including estimated in-kind contribution by the university (facility maintenance, marketing support, etc.)?



Budget bands contextualize autonomy and compensation constraints in institution-affiliated settings. The “fully integrated into institutional budget / not sure” category is especially important: where the arts unit is not a distinct budget entity, transparency and pay-setting flexibility may be lower.

Budget governance in institution-affiliated organizations

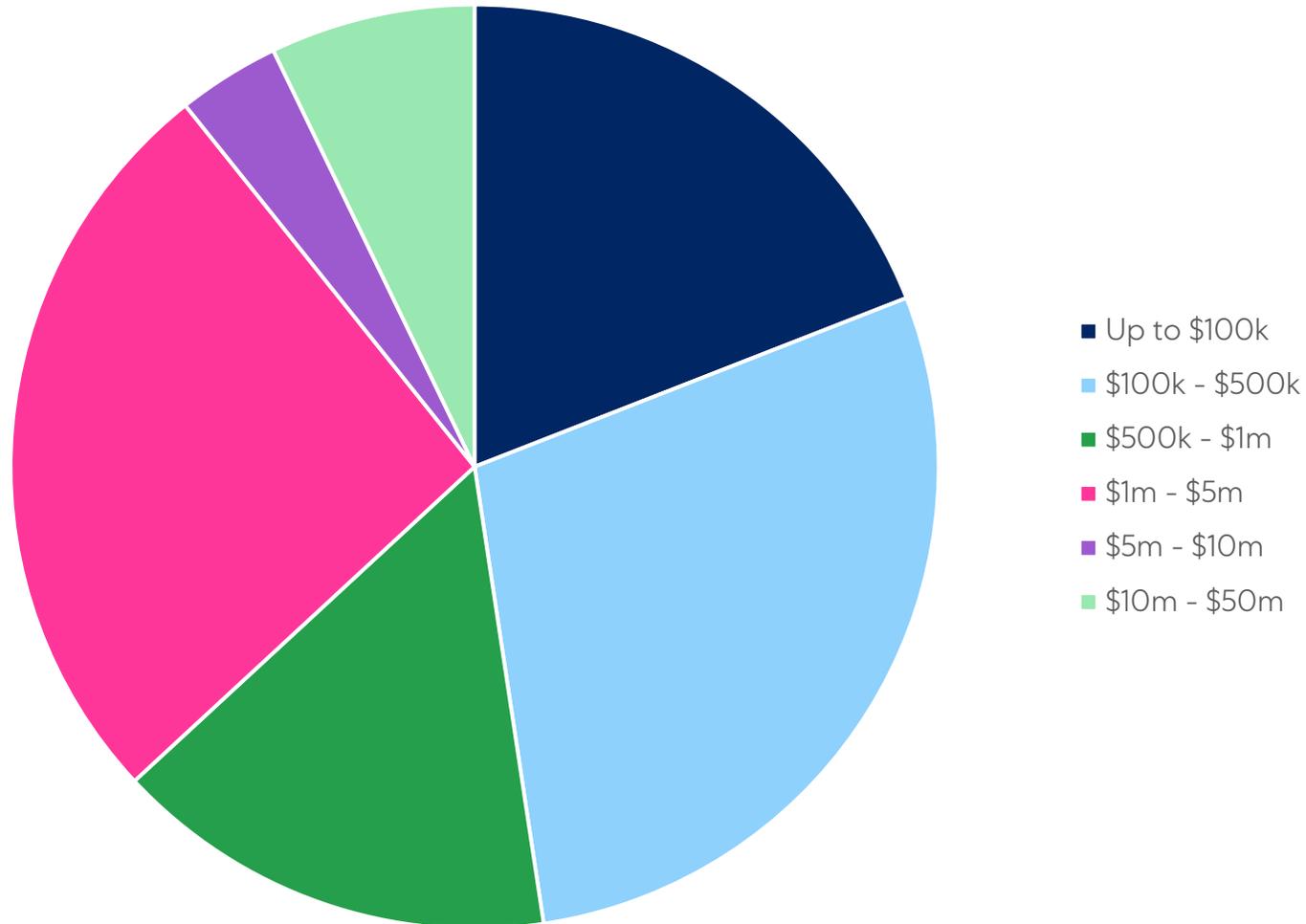
How is your budget structured?



This chart clarifies whether the arts organization manages a separate operating budget, sits as a line within institutional budget, or is fully institutionally funded. This is a key determinant of autonomy over staffing decisions and the feasibility of salary/benefit improvements

Operating budget size (non-institution-affiliated)

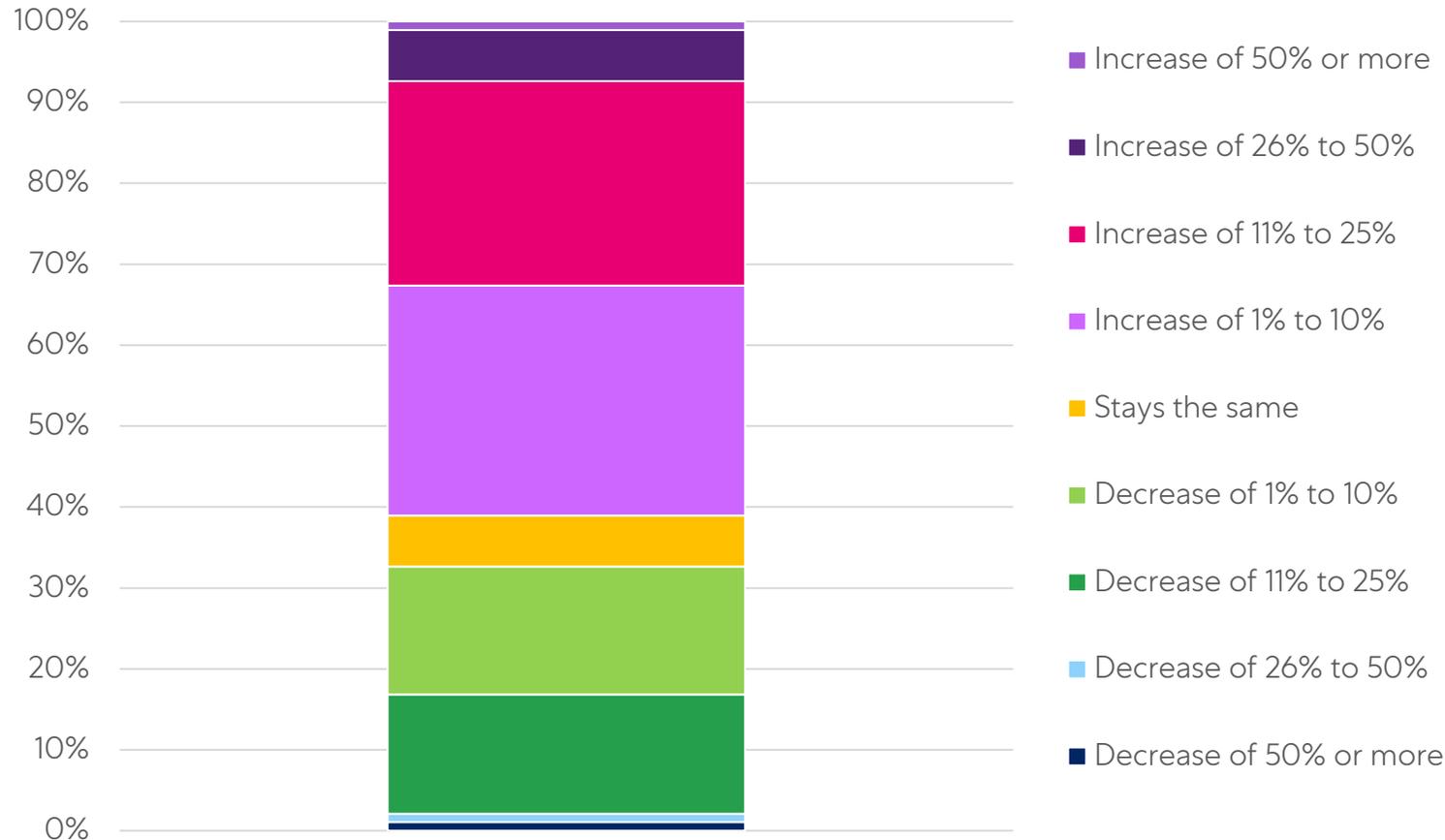
What is your current annual operating budget?



Budgets cluster in the small-to-mid range, with the largest share in the \$100k–\$500k band and a substantial portion in the \$1m–\$5m band

Operating budget change (most recent fiscal year)

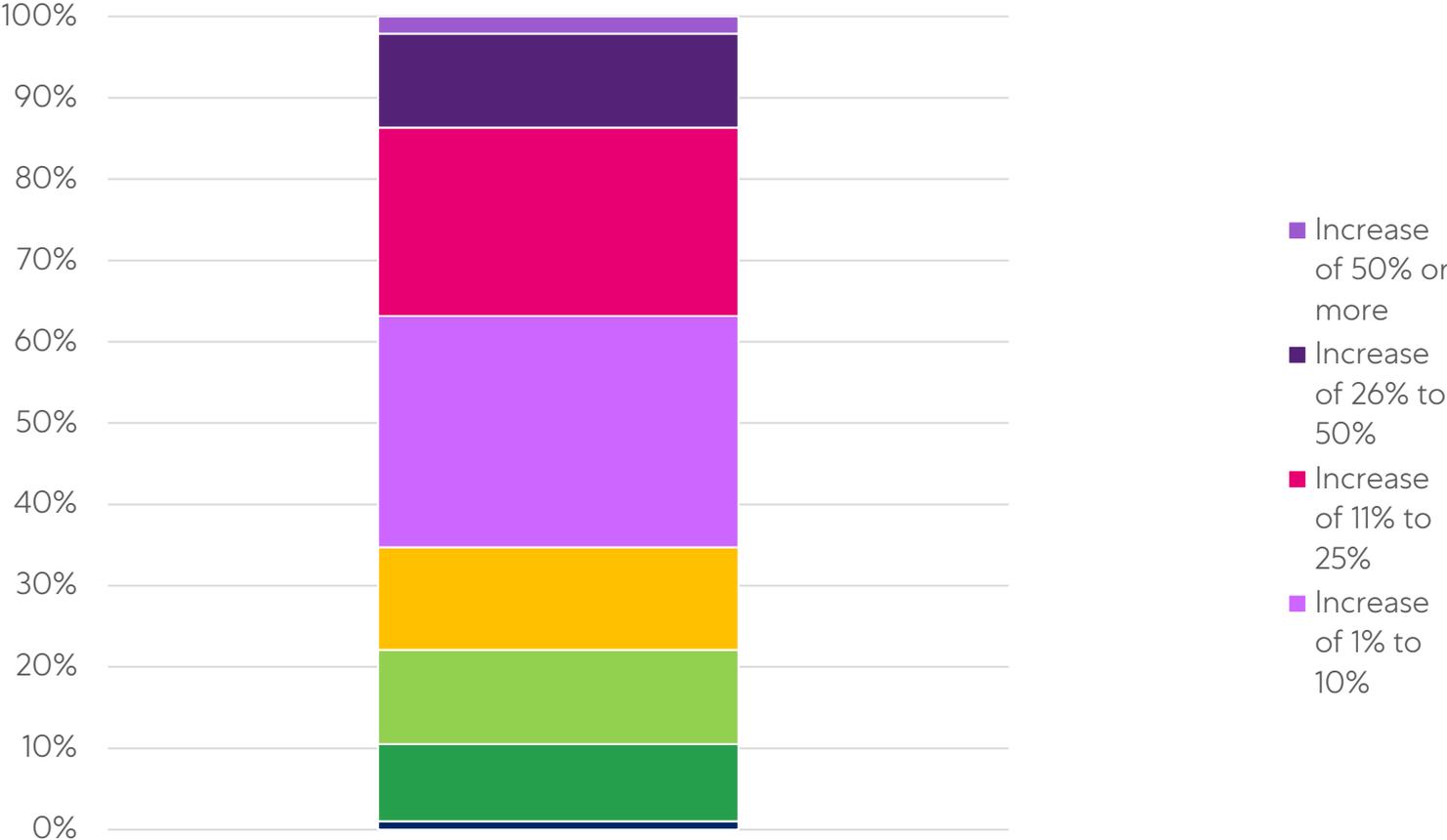
Compared to the previous fiscal year, approximately how did your operating budget change in your most recently completed fiscal year?



Most organizations report modest growth rather than large swings – more small increases (1–25%) than decreases – suggesting incremental capacity changes rather than step-change expansion

Expected operating budget change (next fiscal year)

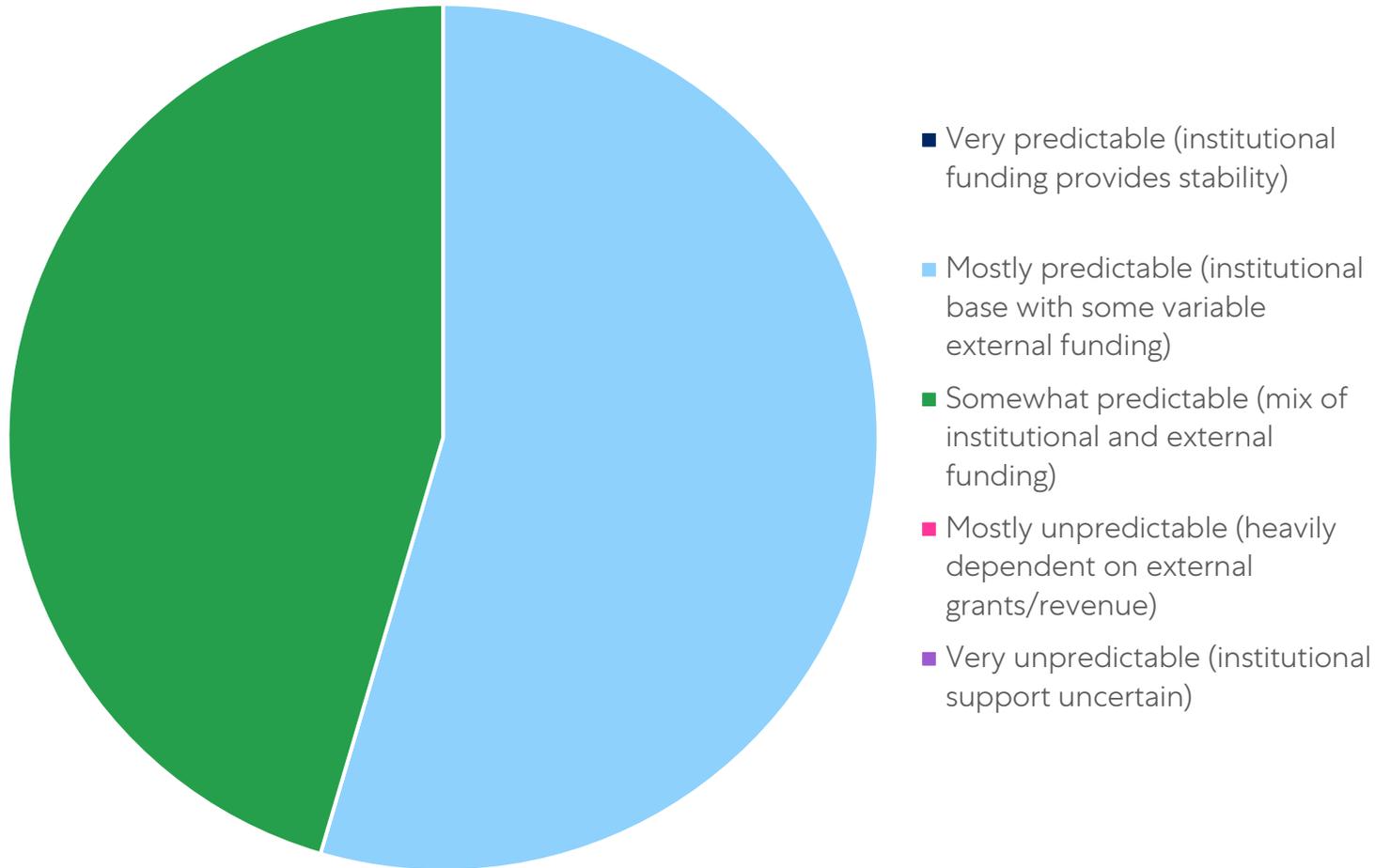
How is this expected to change in the next fiscal year?



Expectations remain cautiously positive: modest increases are most common, with fewer organizations expecting flat budgets or contraction. Important for understanding feasibility of near-term pay improvements.

Funding predictability (institution-affiliated)

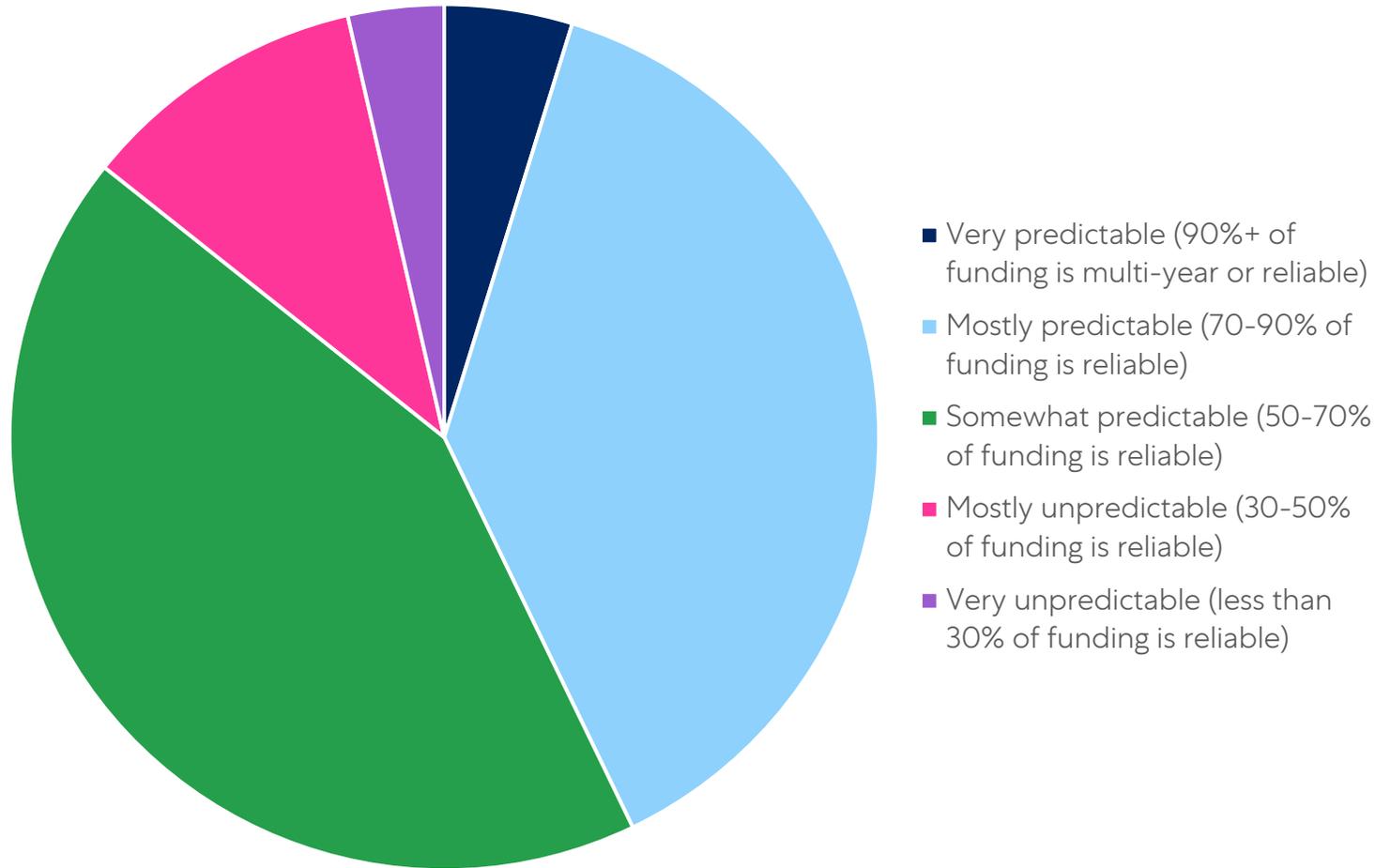
How predictable is your annual funding?



Institution-affiliated respondents largely sit in the “mostly/somewhat predictable” range, indicating stability relative to fully independent funding models, but not necessarily autonomy over allocation

Funding predictability (non-institution-affiliated)

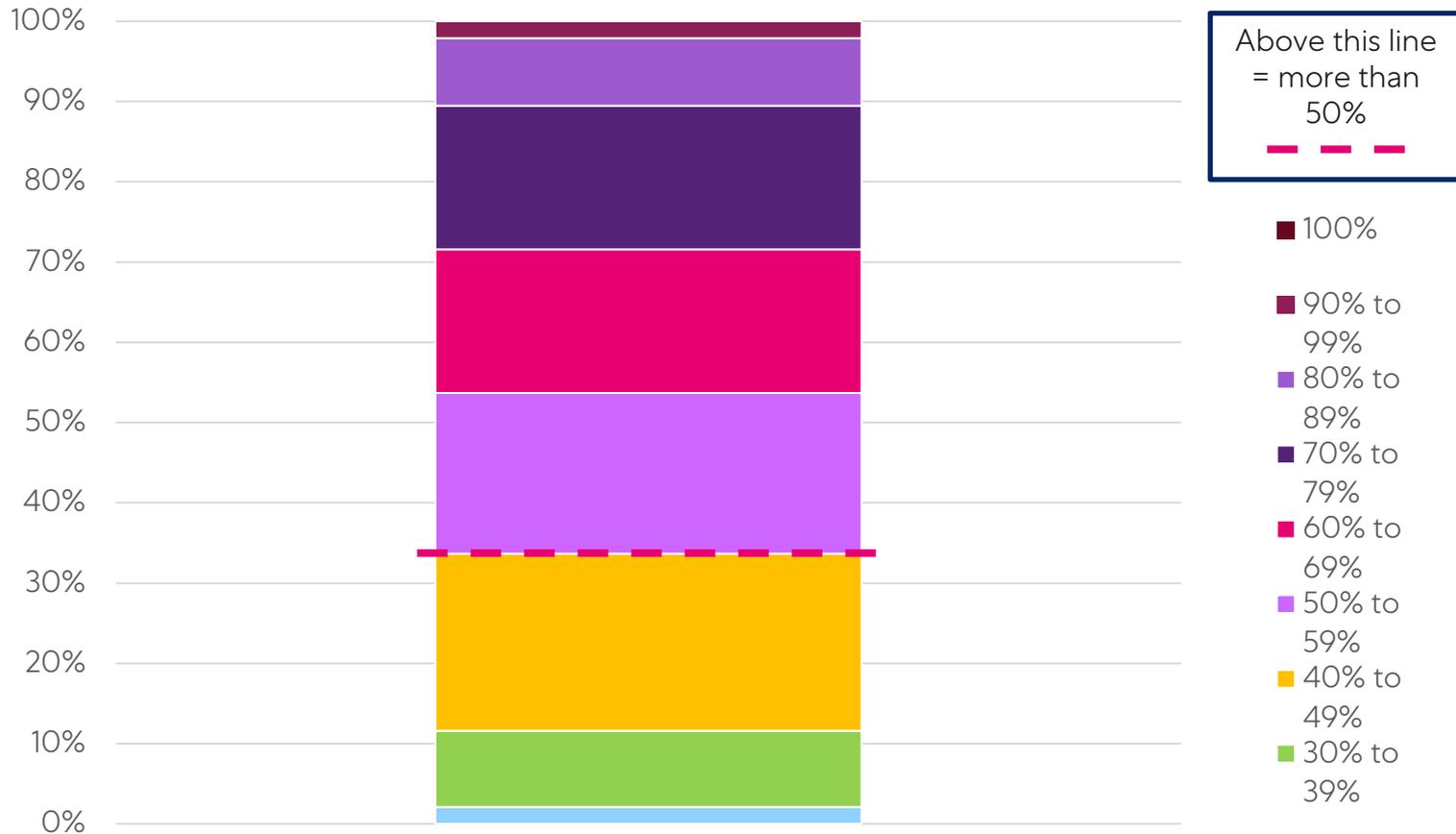
How predictable is your annual funding?



Independent organizations skew toward “somewhat/mostly predictable,” with a meaningful minority reporting unpredictability, illustrating how volatility limits multi-year compensation planning

Share of budget from a key source (threshold view)

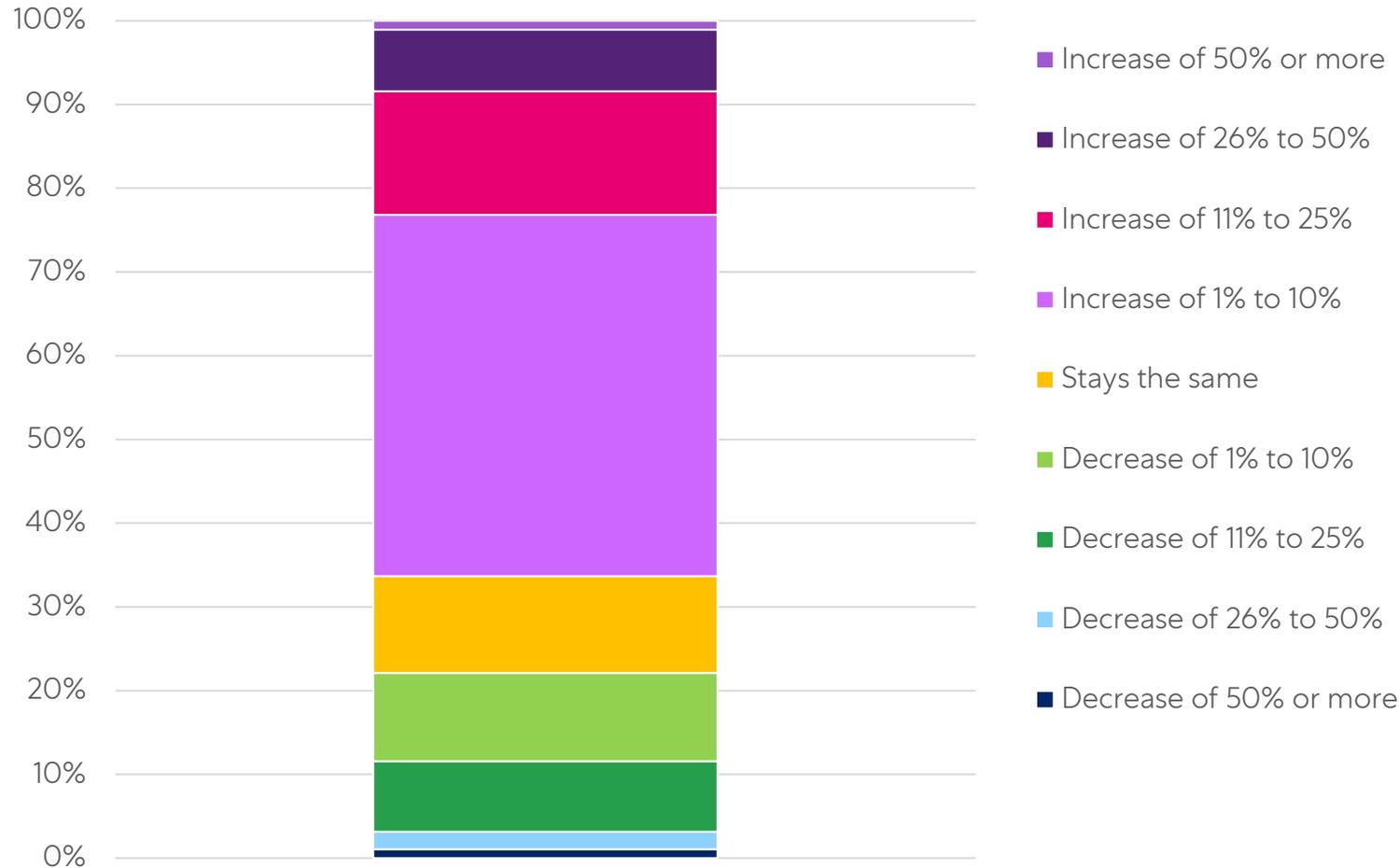
Approximately, what percentage of your annual operating budget is used for all compensation for all personnel support, including staff and artists?



Compensation commonly represents a large portion of operating budgets (often ~40–70%), underscoring why pay equity efforts are tightly coupled to funding growth and flexibility

budget change (most recent fiscal year)

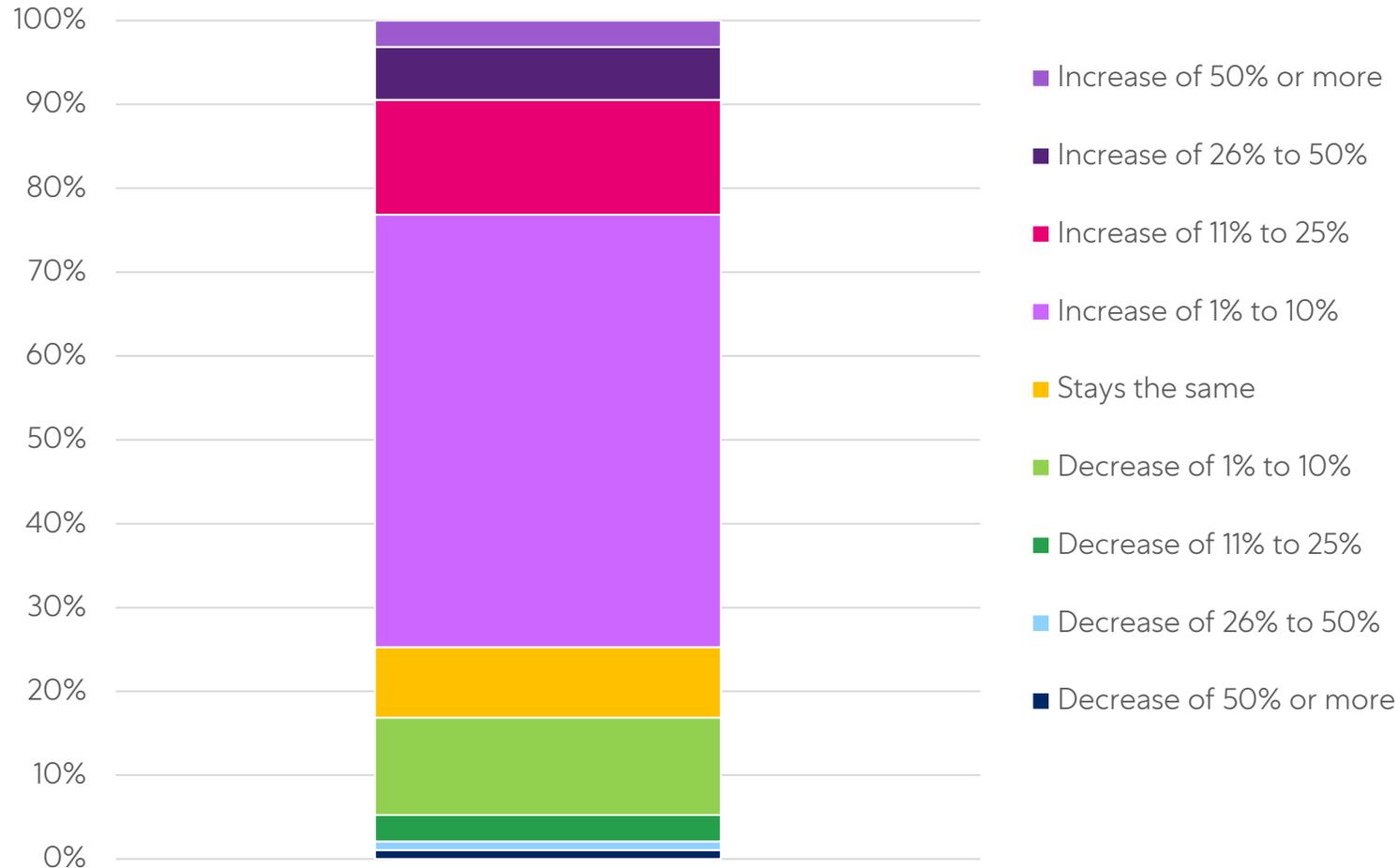
Approximately, how has your budget changed compared to the previous fiscal year?



Reported budgets most often increased modestly (especially 1–10%), suggesting gradual upward pressure on payroll rather than widespread freezes

Expected budget change (next 12 months)

How is this expected to change in the next 12 months?



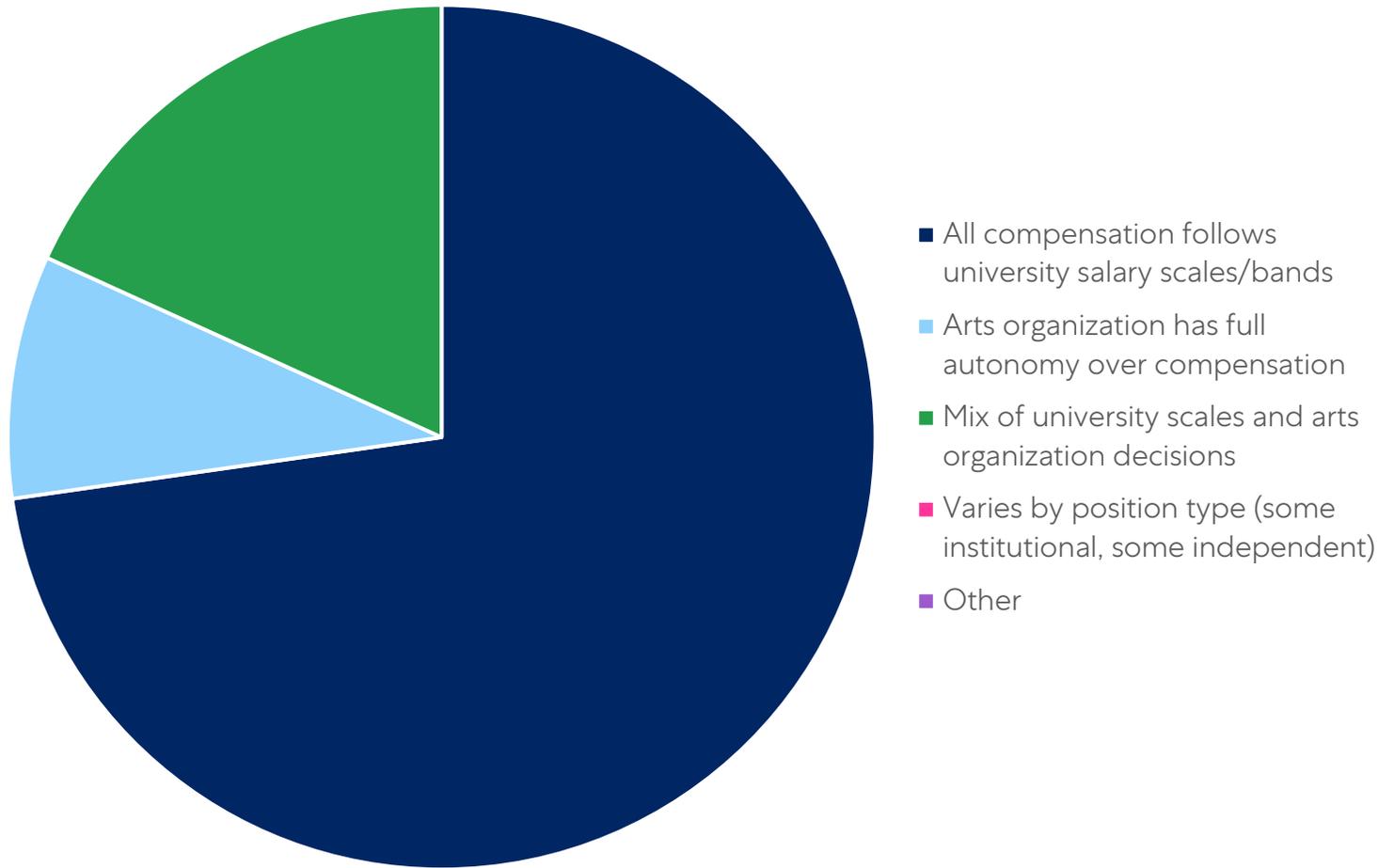
Expectations are more optimistic than retrospective reports. Many anticipate small increases, though this does not guarantee improvements are evenly distributed across roles or worker types

Appendix AB4 – Compensation & Setting

How pay is set, reviewed, and governed (including institutional constraints)

Compensation governance (institution-affiliated)

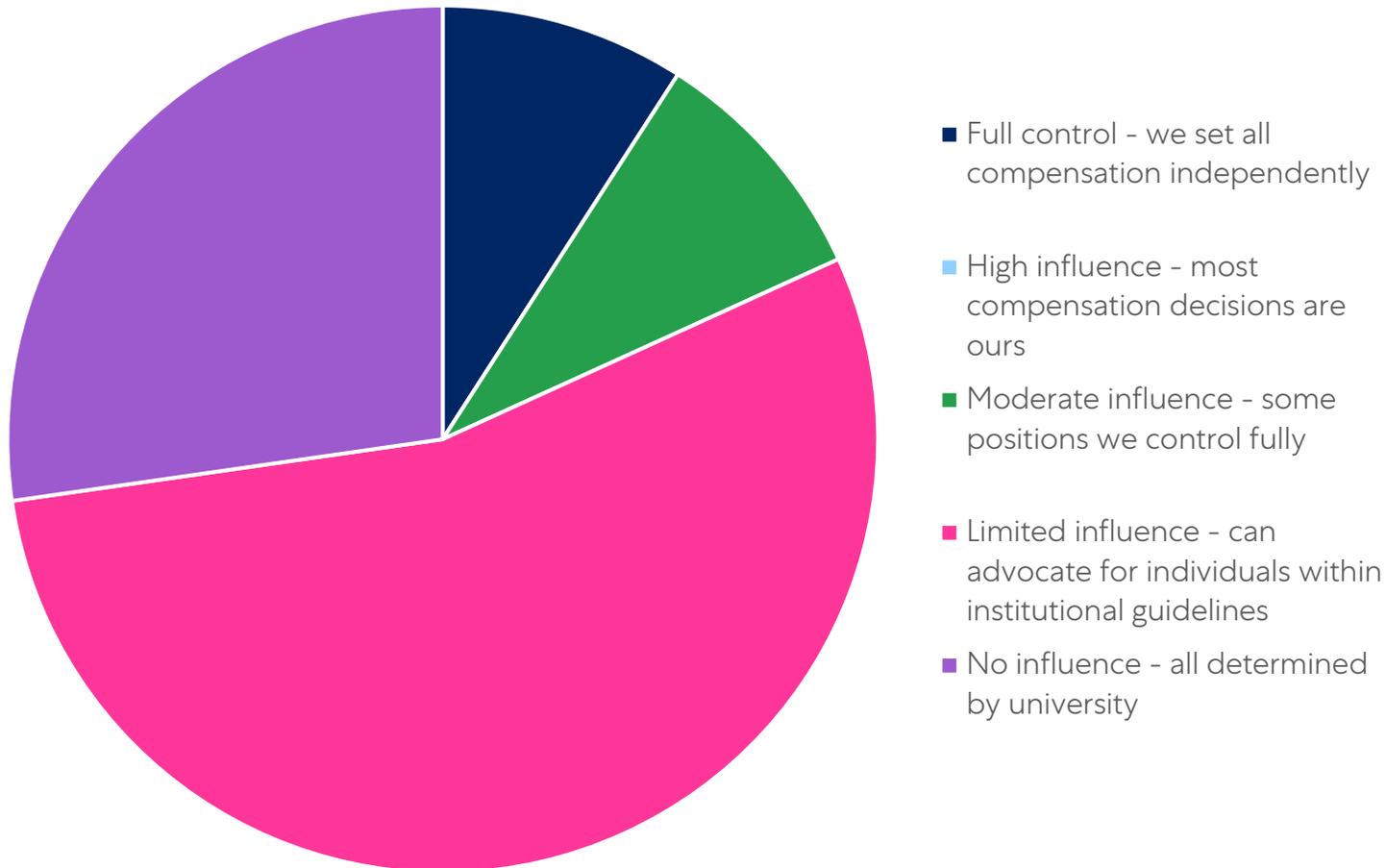
For staff compensation in your organization:



Most institution-affiliated respondents report that compensation follows university scales/bands, with only a minority indicating full autonomy

Influence over staff compensation (institution-affiliated)

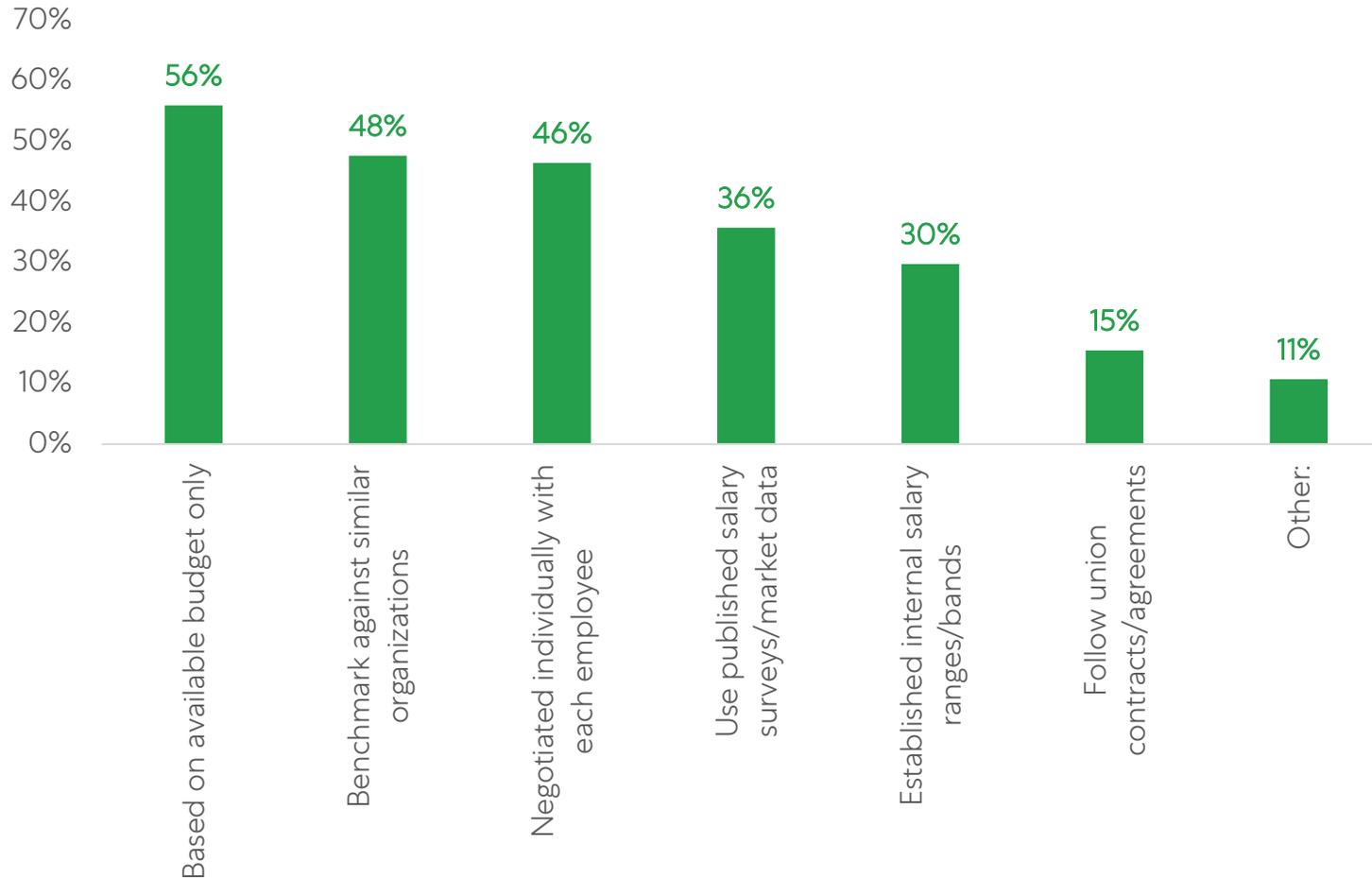
How much influence does your arts organization have over staff compensation?



Influence is most often “limited” (advocacy within guidelines) rather than full control, implying that pay equity improvements may require partnership with institutional HR and budget leadership

How organizations set staff pay (non-institution-affiliated)

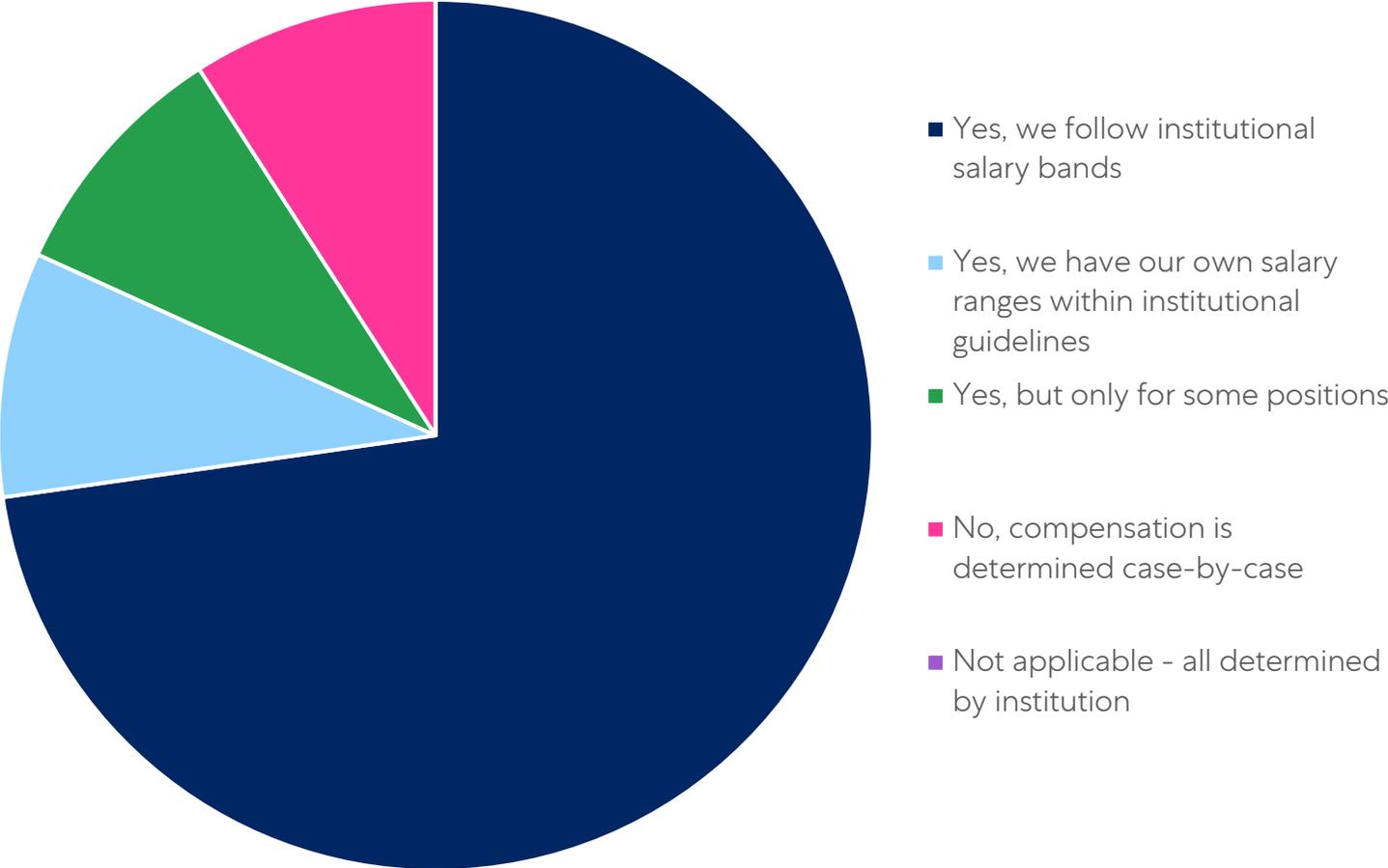
How do you determine compensation levels for your staff? (Select all that apply)



Pay-setting is driven primarily by available budget, benchmarking, and individual negotiation; fewer organizations cite formal internal bands, consistent with variable transparency and role-to-role inconsistency

Access to bands (institution-affiliated)

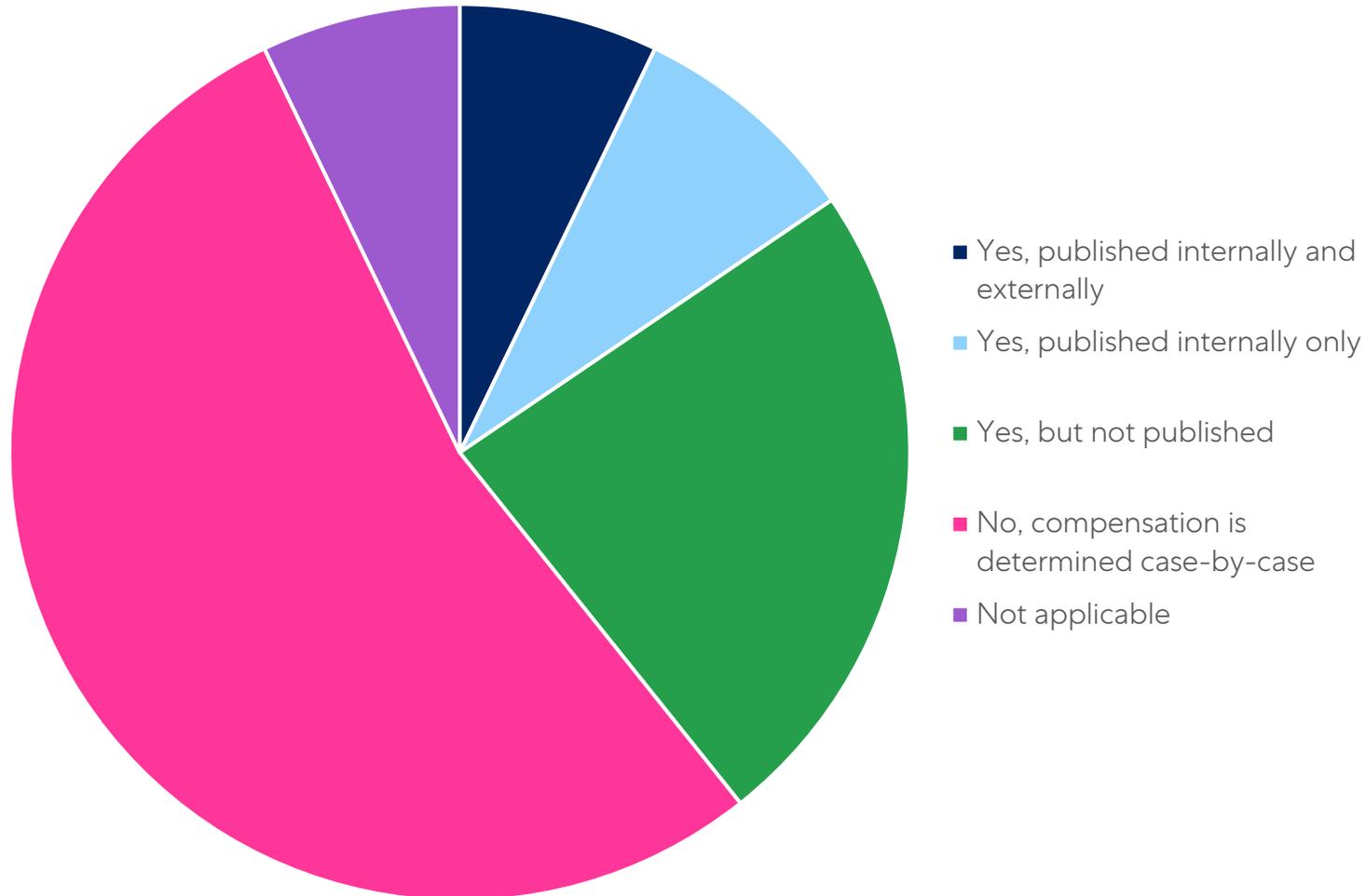
Do you have access to formal ranges/bands for positions?



Most institution-affiliated respondents report access to formal institutional bands, suggesting that pay transparency may exist upstream, even if arts units can't fully control outcomes

ranges/bands (non-institution-affiliated)

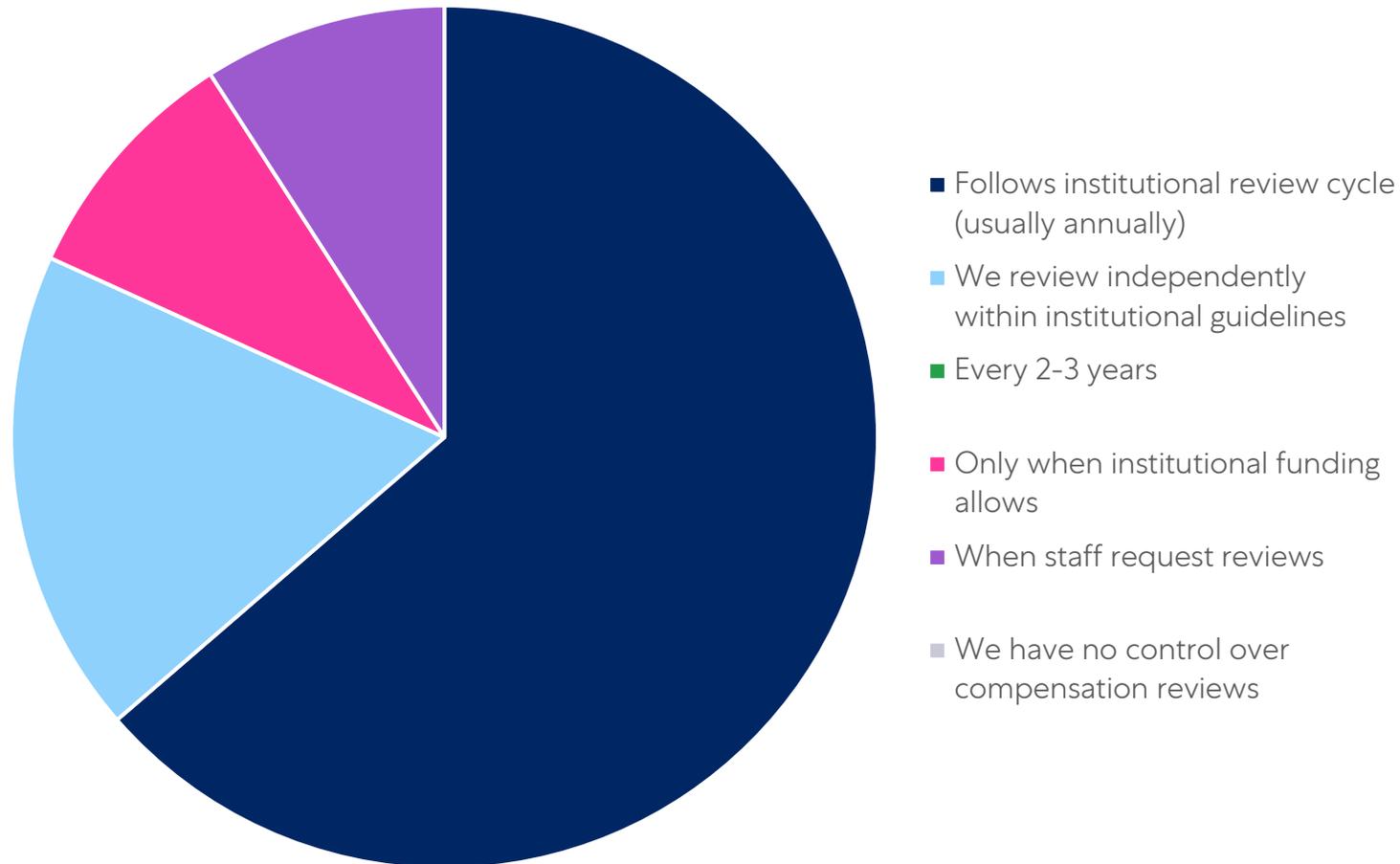
Do you have formal ranges/bands for positions?



A majority report case-by-case compensation rather than formal ranges, with relatively few publishing ranges, suggesting a key opportunity area for transparency and internal equity

Pay review cycles (institution-affiliated)

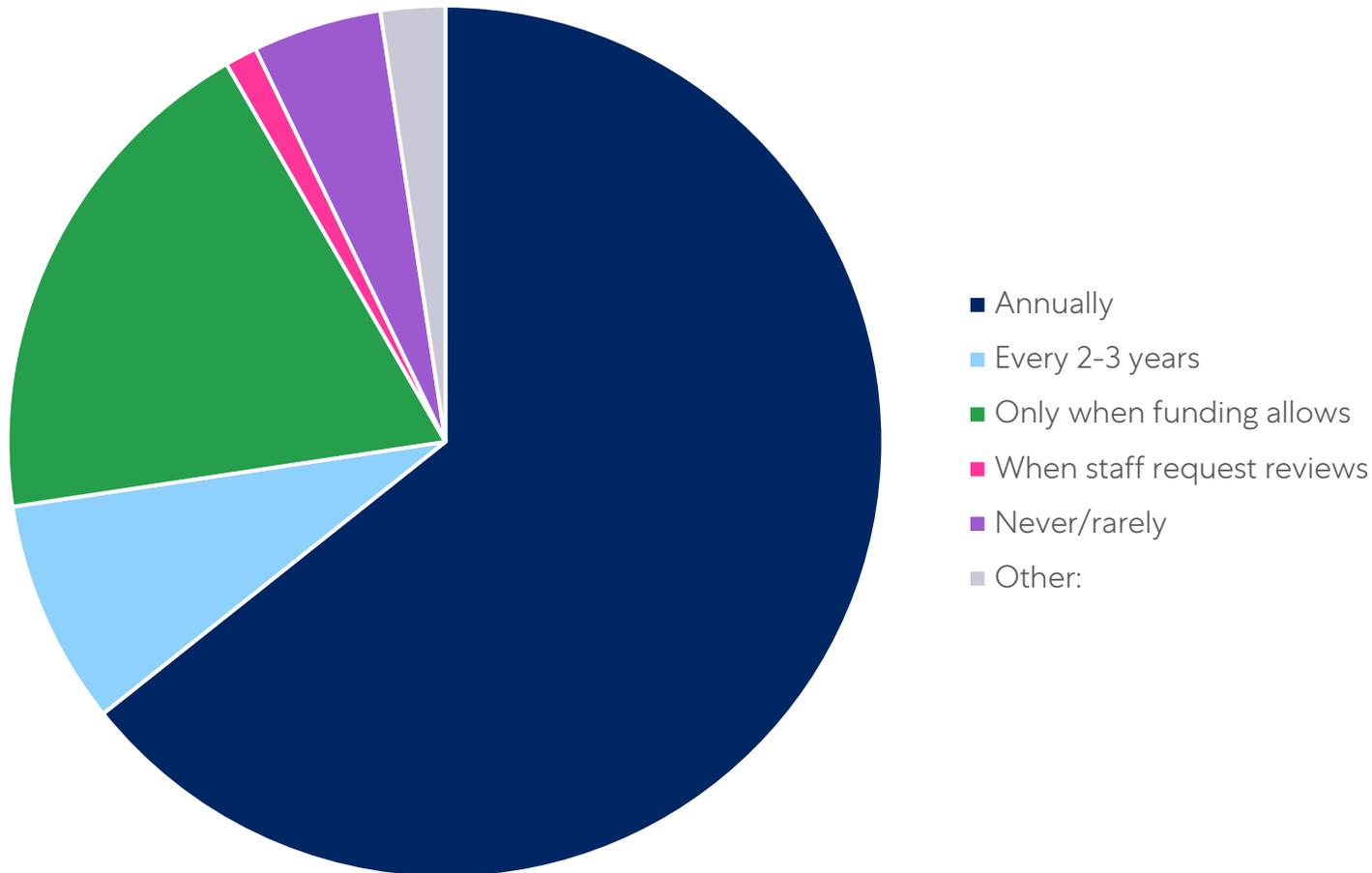
How often do you review and adjust staff compensation?



Reviews tend to follow institutional cycles and constraints; where adjustments depend on institutional funding, improvements may be slower even when arts leadership intends change

Pay review cycles (non-institution-affiliated)

How often do you review and adjust staff compensation?



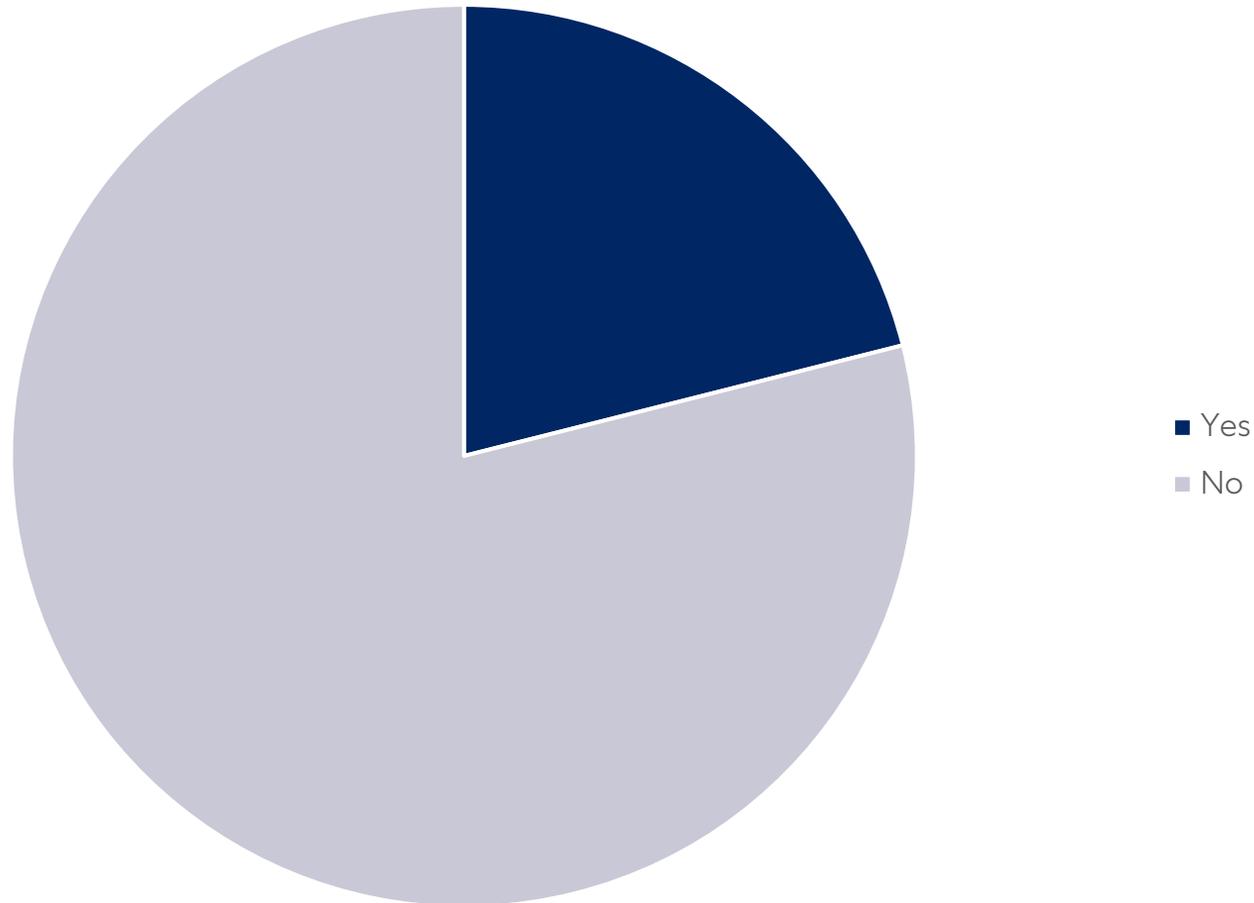
Annual reviews are most common, but “only when funding allows” remains significant, highlighting the centrality of unrestricted funding to consistent wage progression

Appendix AB5 – Unions & Agreements

Prevalence of union agreements and how institutional union coverage applies to arts staff

Union agreements (overall prevalence)

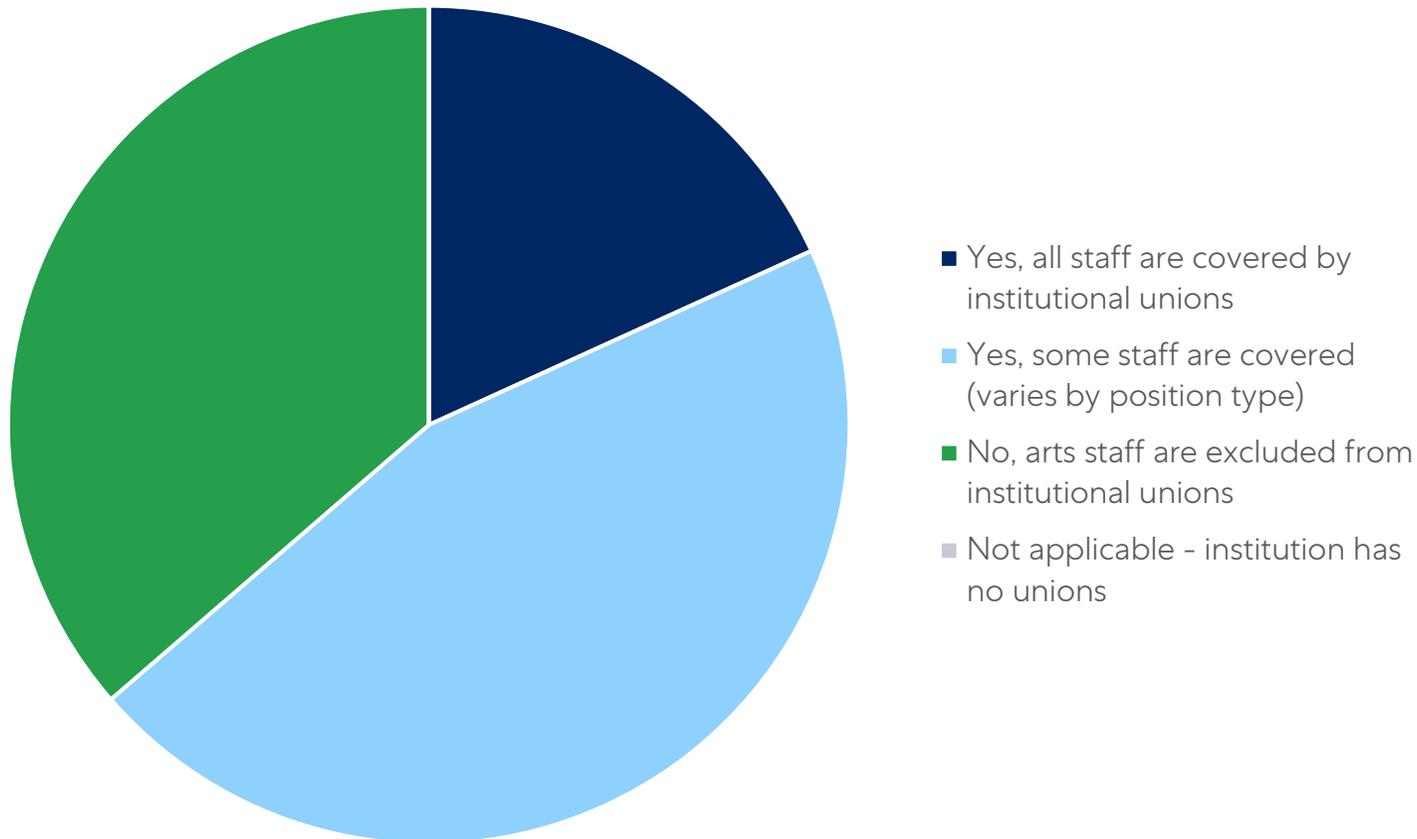
Does your organization have any formal agreements with any Unions?



Most organizations report no formal union agreements; where unions are present, they can materially shape wage floors, benefits access, and contract practices

Institutional union coverage for arts staff (institution-affiliated)

If you are university or institutionally affiliated, are your arts staff covered by broader institutional union agreements?



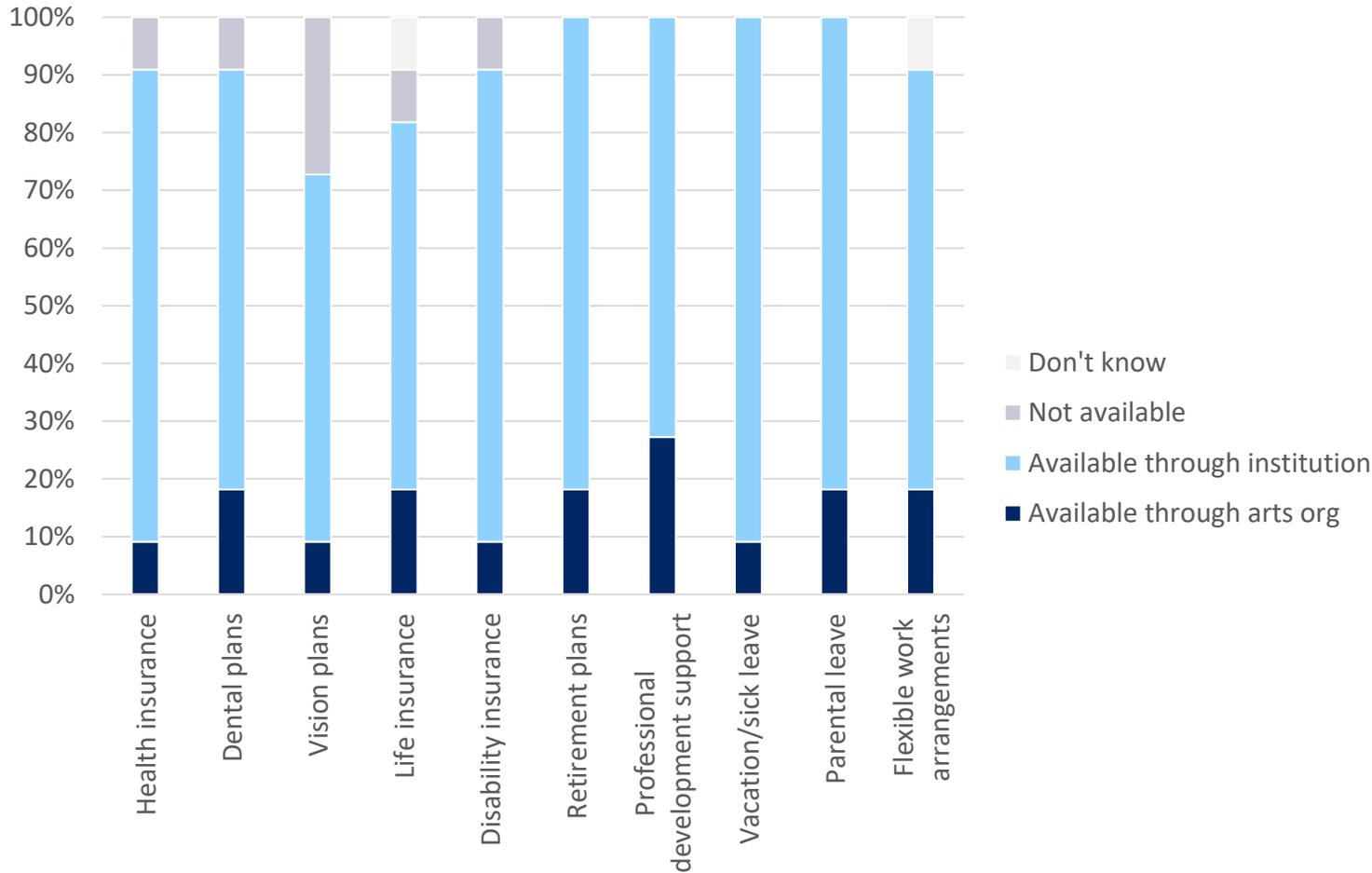
Coverage varies: many report partial coverage by broader institutional agreements, while a substantial share report exclusion

Appendix AB6 – Benefits

Availability, governance, and differentiation of benefits across staff types

Benefits availability (institution vs arts unit)

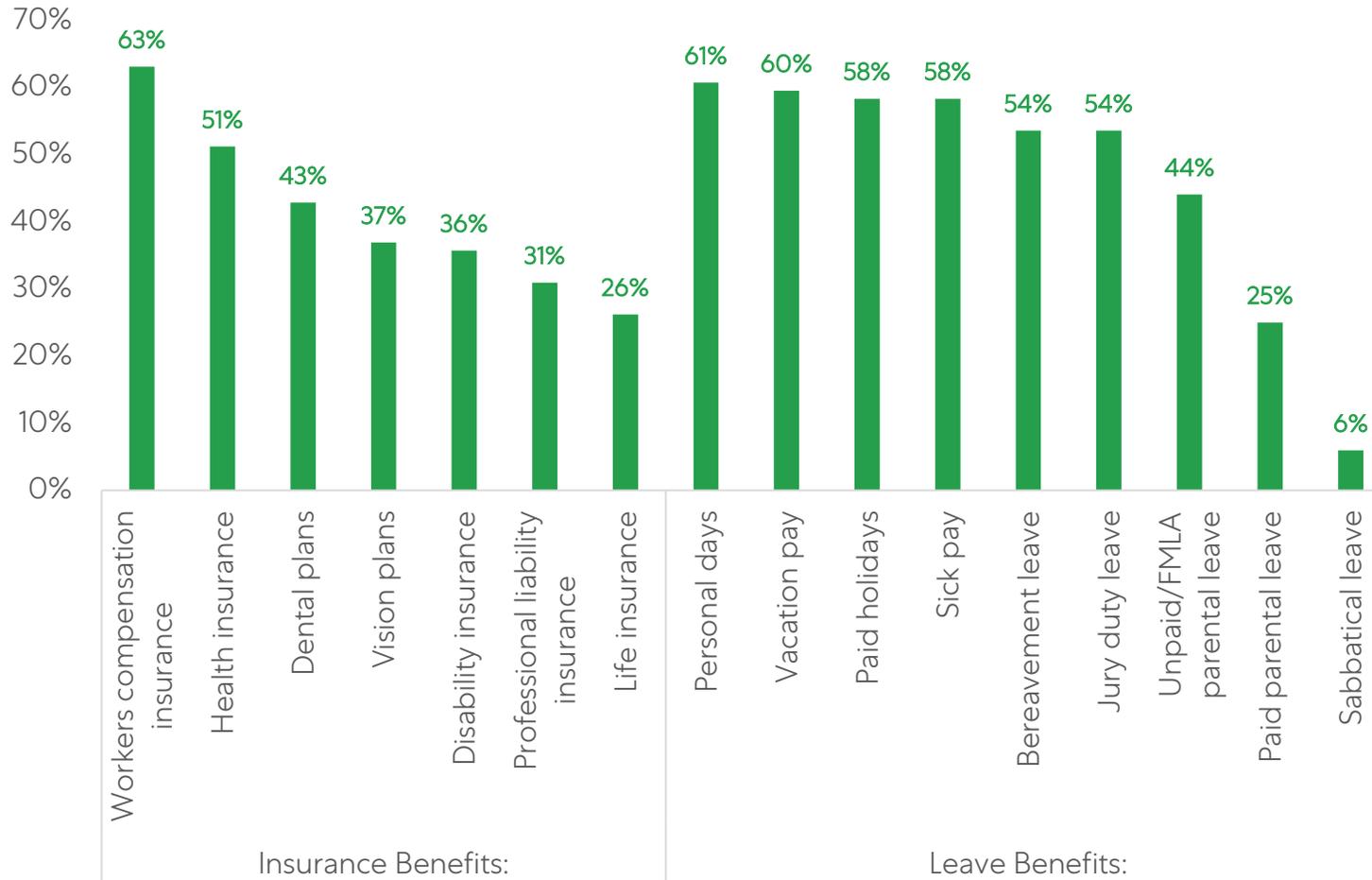
Which of the following benefits are available to your arts organization staff?



In institution-affiliated settings, benefits are predominantly provided through the parent institution; arts-unit provision plays a smaller, supplementary role, limiting local flexibility to address gaps.

Core insurance and leave benefits offered (non-institution-affiliated)

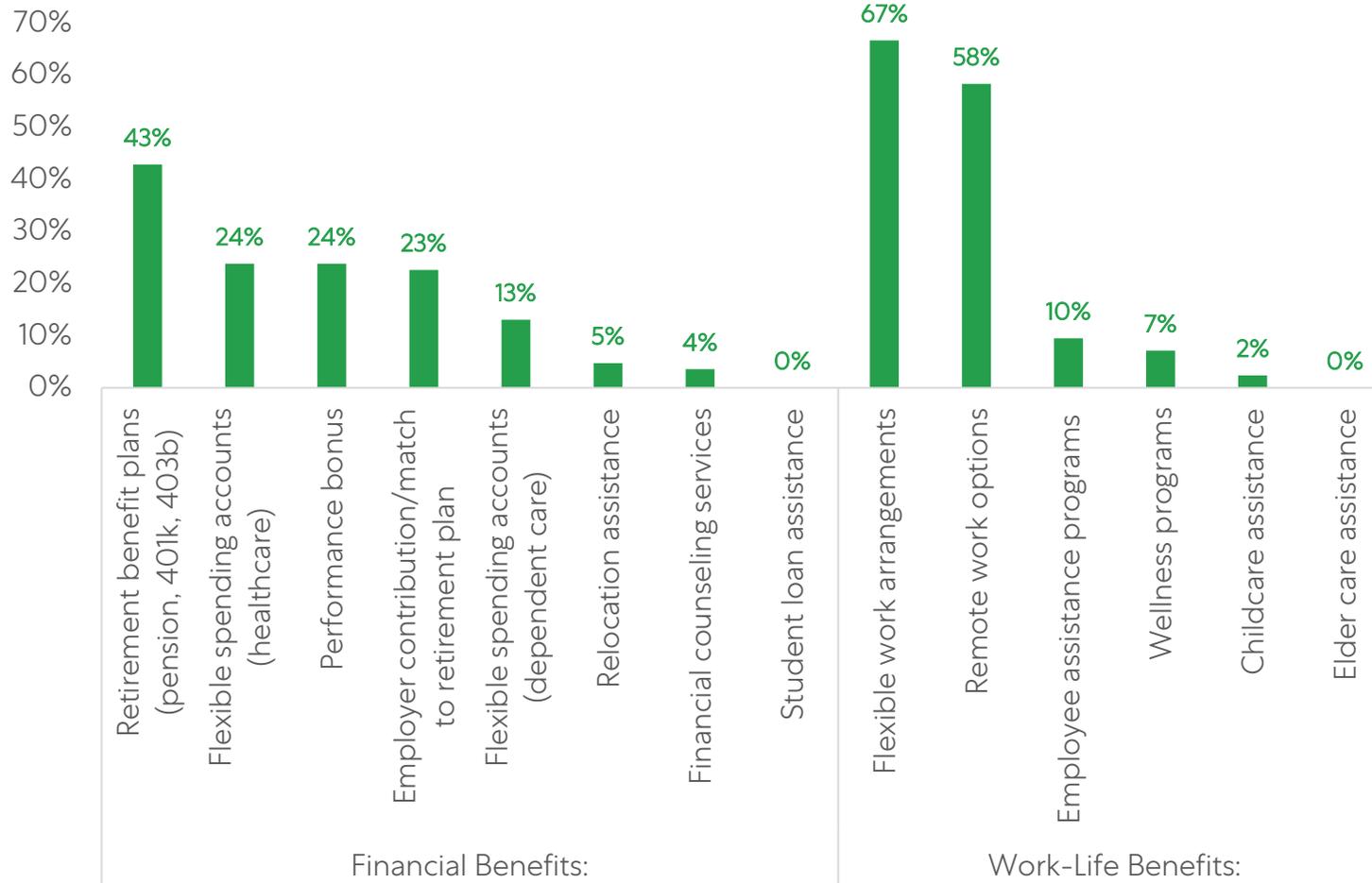
Does your organization offer any of the following compensation



Statutory/standard benefits (workers' comp, paid time off categories) are most common; insurance benefits appear less universal, indicating uneven job quality across organizations and roles

Work-life and financial benefits offered (non-institution-affiliated)

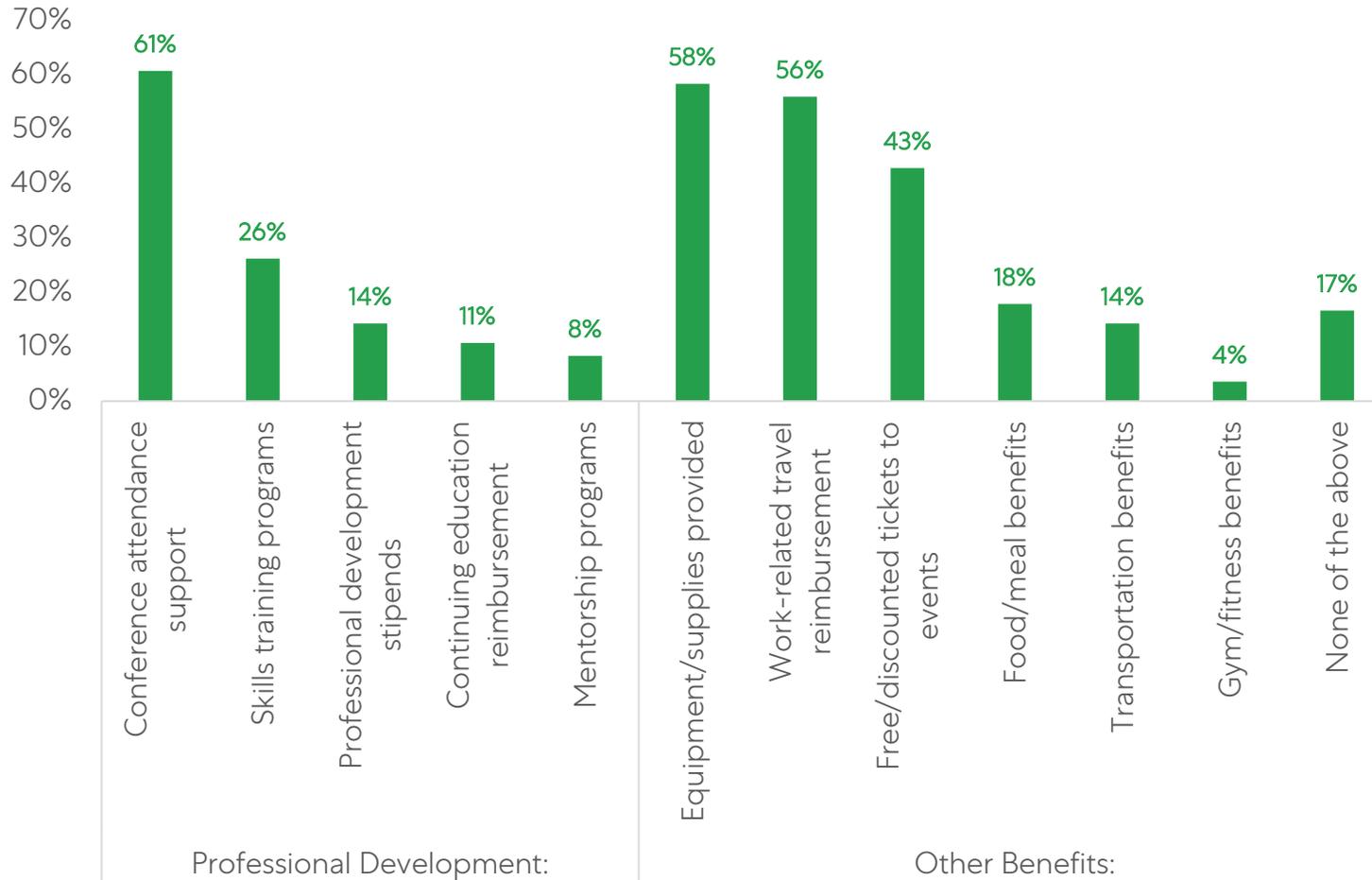
Does your organization offer any of the following compensation



Flexible work and remote options are relatively common, while retirement-related and other financial benefits are less consistently offered, suggesting flexibility sometimes substitutes for higher-cost benefits

Professional development and other benefits (non-institution-affiliated)

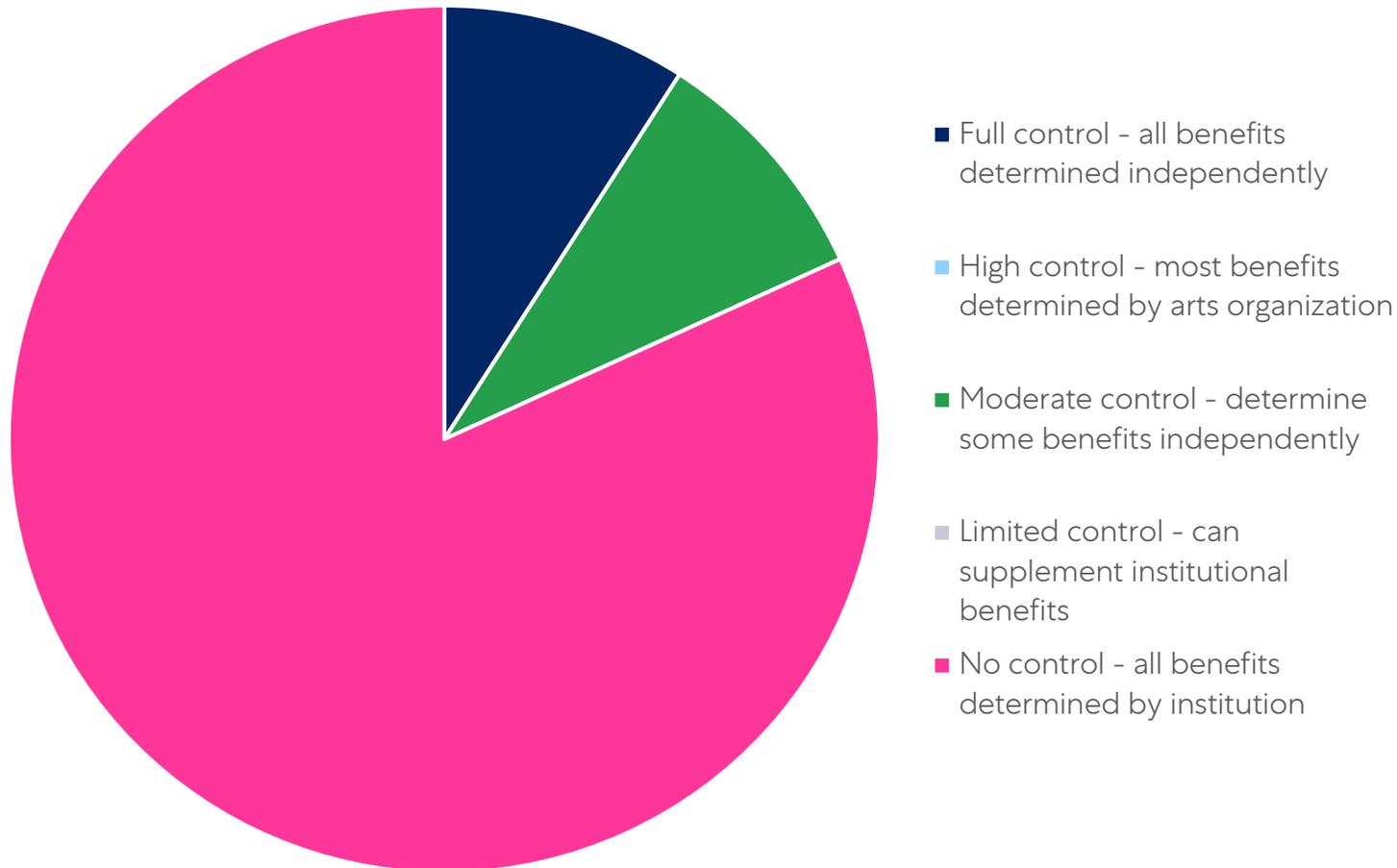
Does your organization offer any of the following compensation



Conference support and reimbursements are relatively common, but structured development programs are less, indicating a potential lever for retention that may be lower-cost than increases

Control over benefits (institution-affiliated)

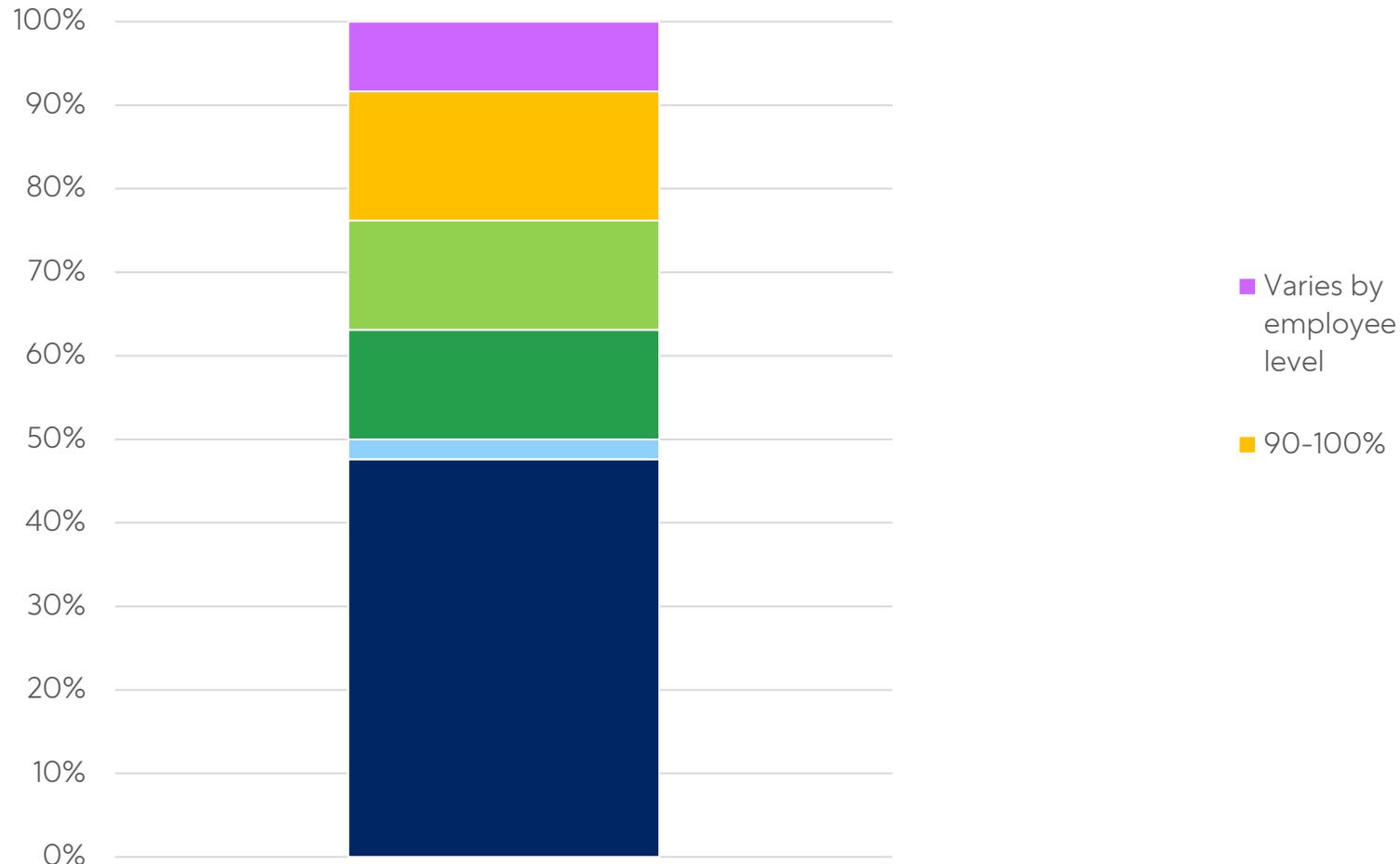
What control does your arts organization have over benefits?



Most institution-affiliated respondents report no control over benefits, meaning benefits improvements often require institutional policy change rather than arts-unit action alone

Health insurance premium coverage (non-institution-affiliated)

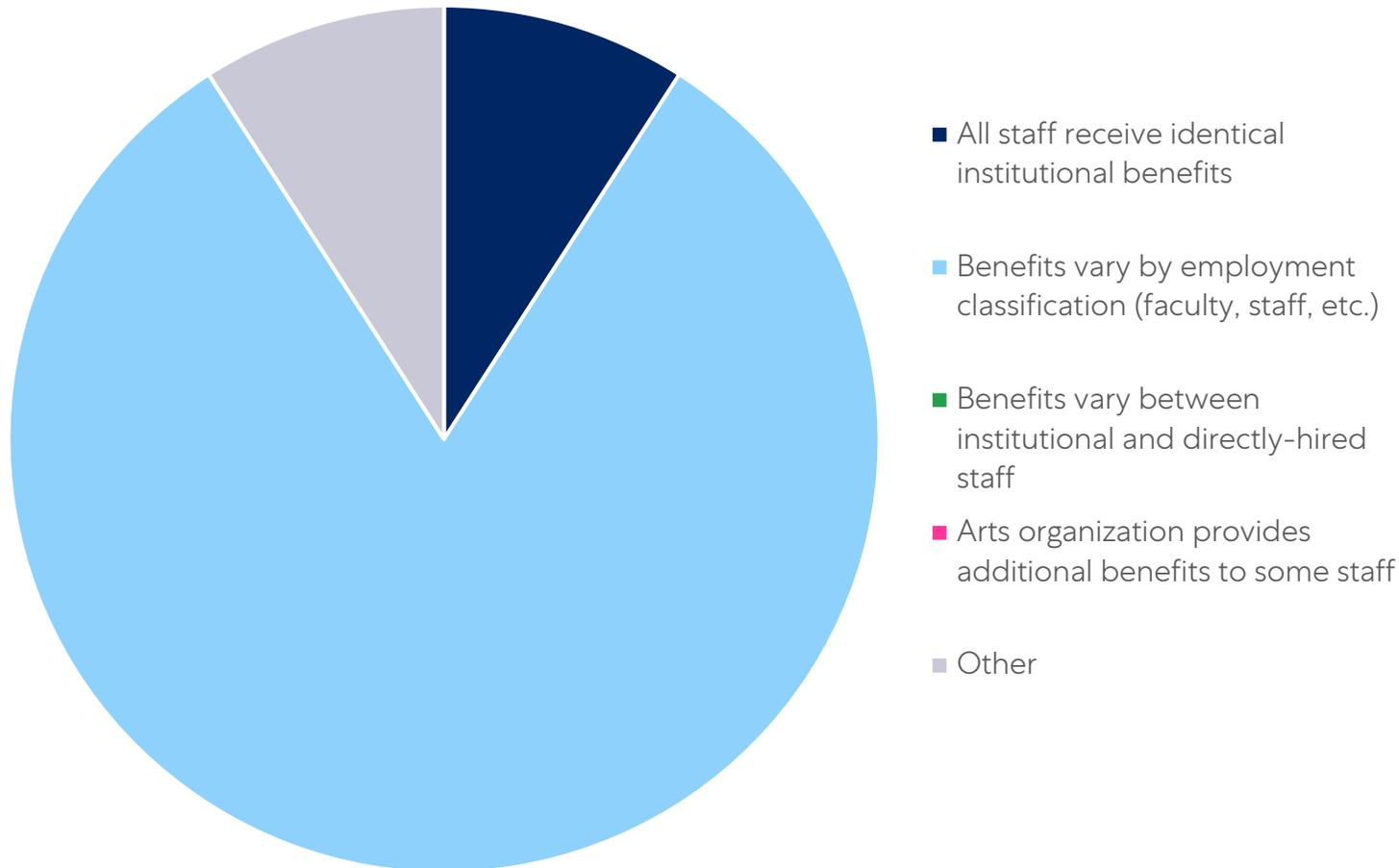
For health insurance, what percentage of premiums does your organization typically pay?



Nearly half report not offering health insurance; among those who do, employer contribution levels vary, showing substantial differences in employer health insurance offerings and contribution levels across organizations and worker types.

Do staff receive different benefit packages? (institution-affiliated)

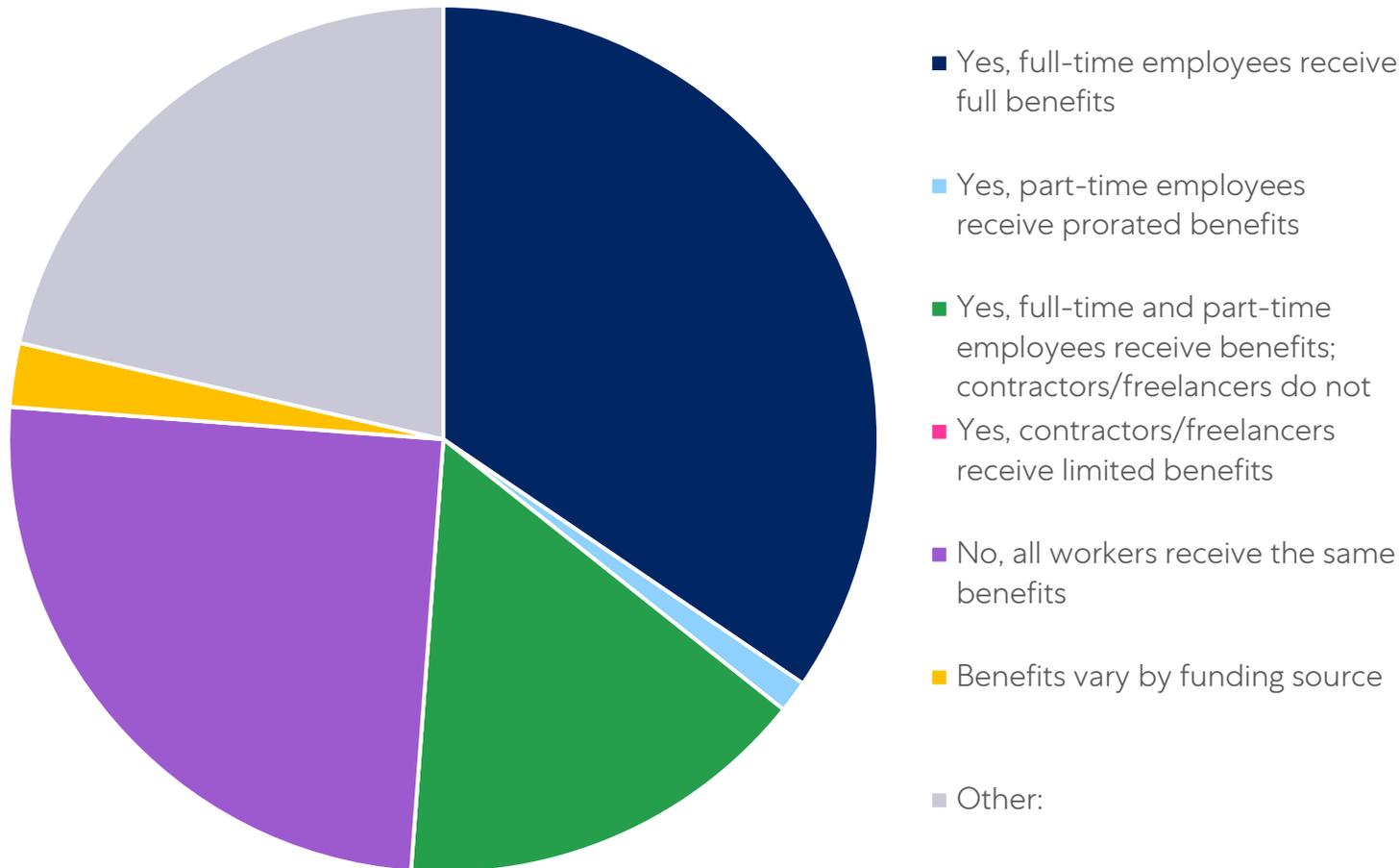
Do different types of staff receive different benefit packages?



Benefits most often vary by institutional classification (faculty/staff/etc.), which can create inequities inside arts units when workers fall into different employment categories

Benefit differentiation by employment status (non-institution-affiliated)

Do you offer different benefit packages based on employment status?



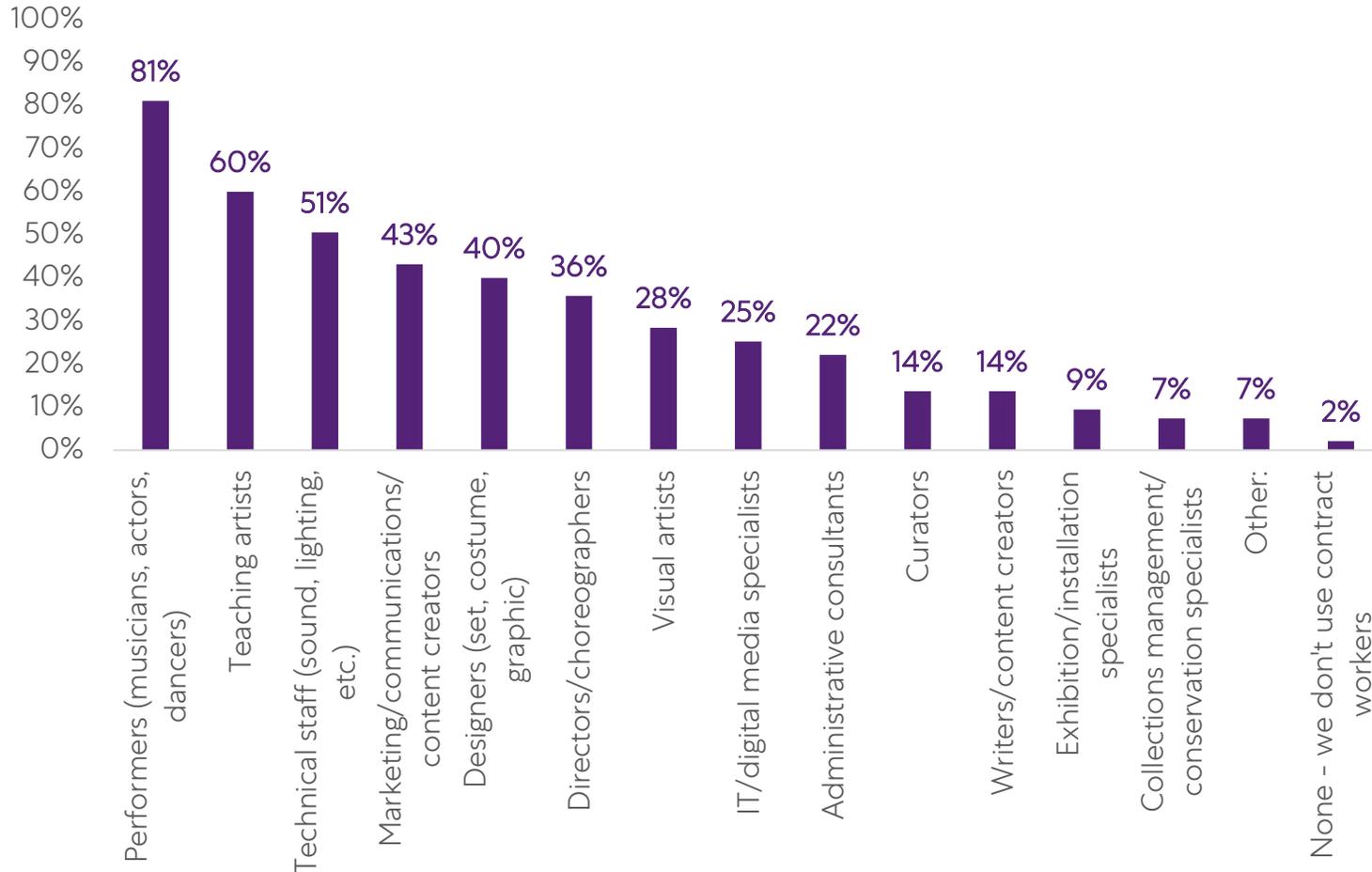
Many organizations differentiate benefits by full-time vs part-time status (and often exclude contractors), though a meaningful share report uniform packages, evidence of highly varied employment models

Appendix AB7 – Freelancer/Contract Worker Practices

Who is contracted, how rates are set, and whether contracts and non-performance time are compensated

Types of contract workers engaged

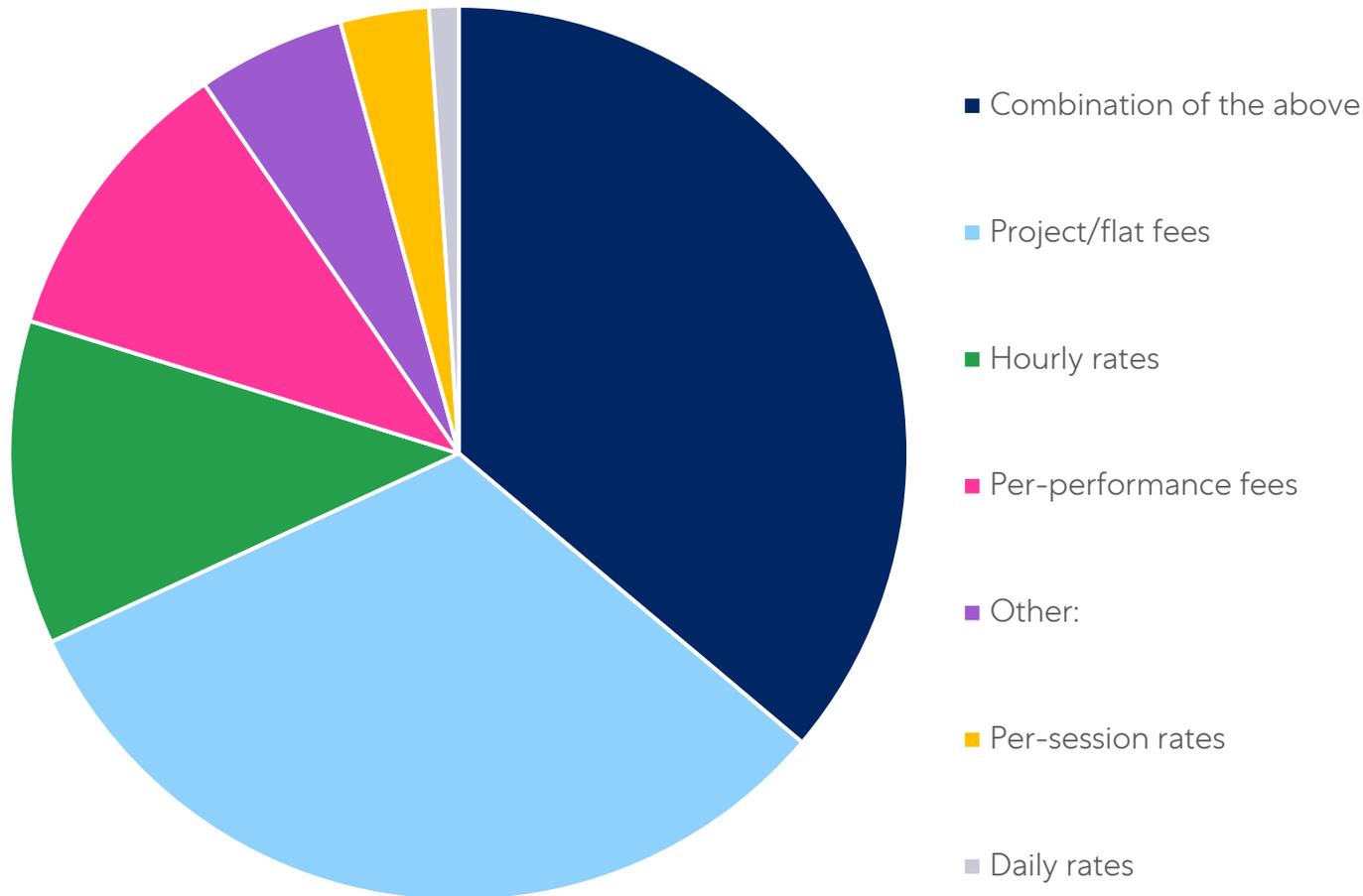
What types of contract workers do you regularly employ? (Select all that apply)



Contracting is widespread across artistic and production functions (performers, teaching artists, technical roles, marketing/design), highlighting that compensation practices for non-staff work are an important part of the overall picture

How freelancers/contractors are paid

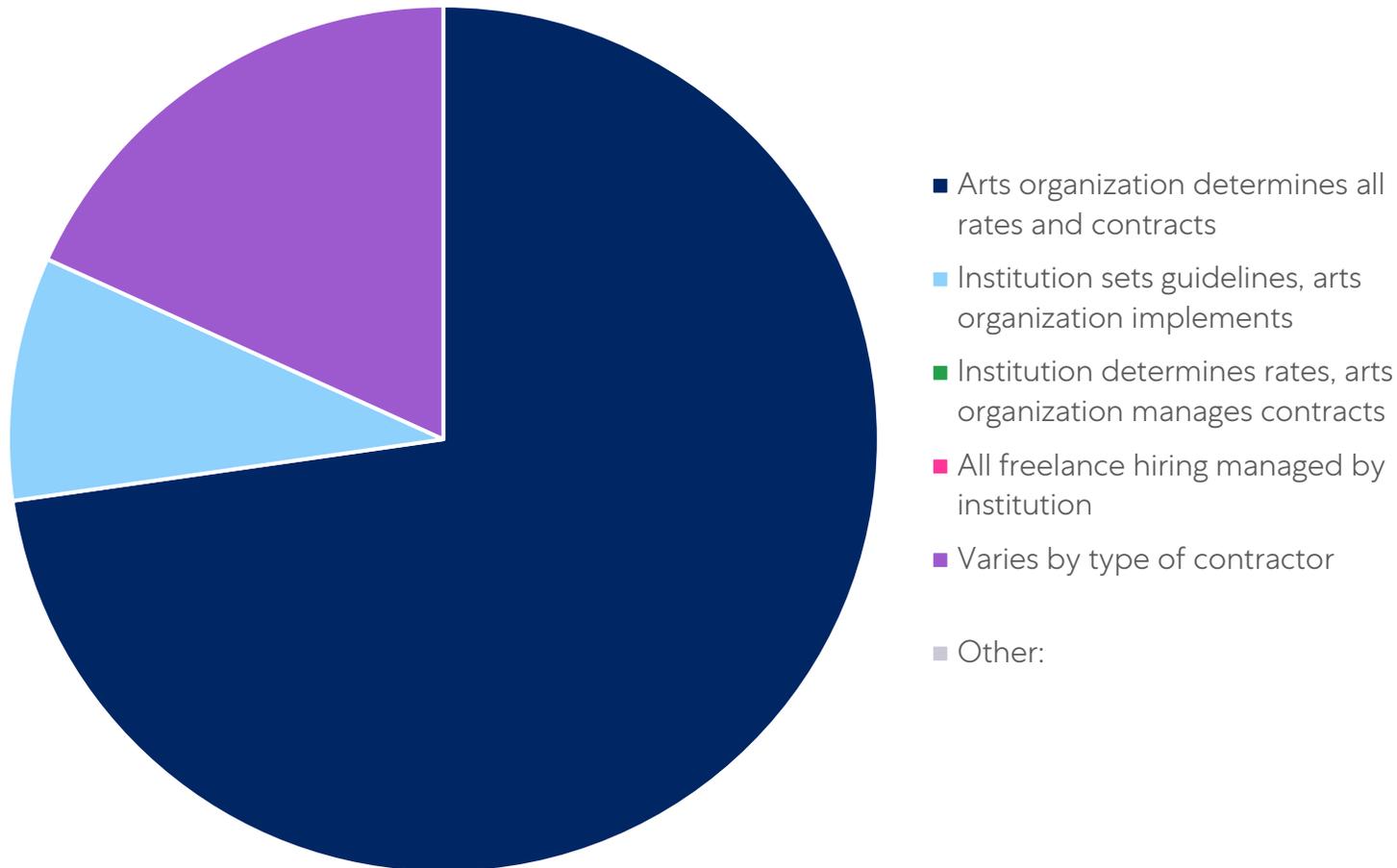
How do you typically compensate freelancers/contract workers?



Payment models are mixed (combinations of hourly, flat, project, and per-performance fees), which complicates benchmarking and can obscure unpaid prep/admin time

Who sets contractor rates and terms? (institution-affiliated)

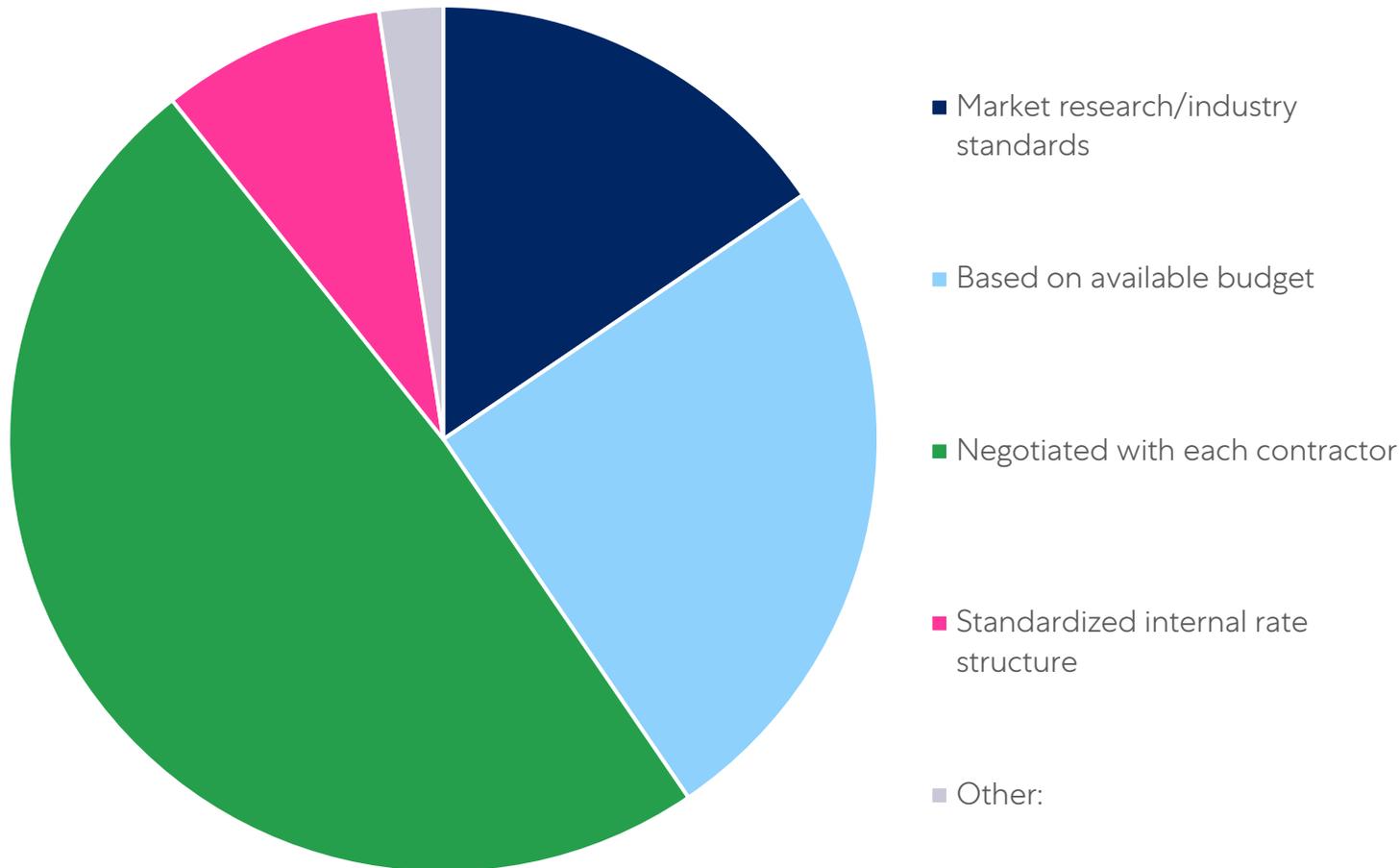
Who determines rates and contracts for freelance/contract work?



Most institution-affiliated respondents indicate the arts unit determines rates/contracts, but some variability remains, suggesting different institutional constraint patterns across campuses

How contractor rates are determined (non-institution-affiliated)

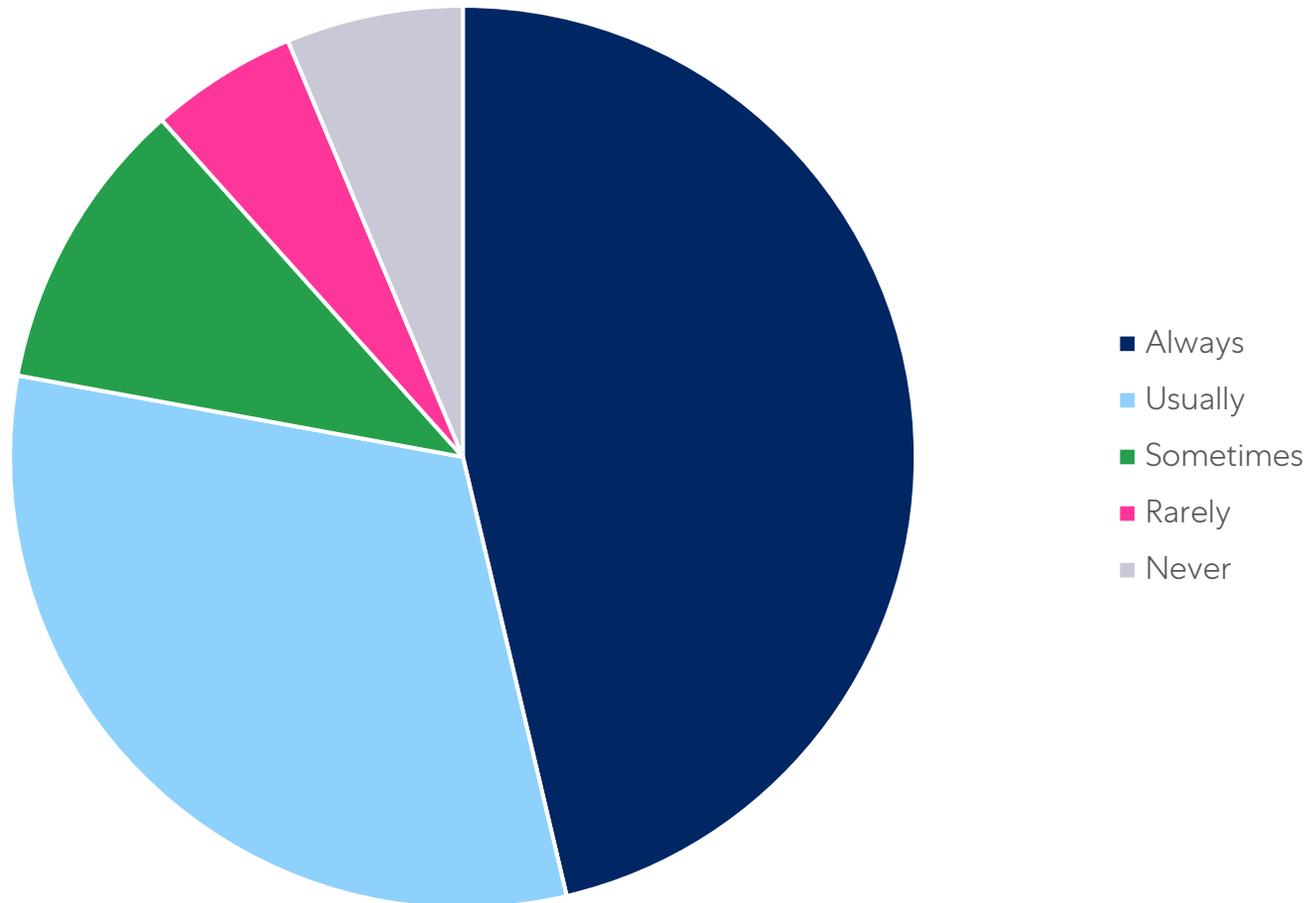
How do you determine rates for freelance/contract work?



Rates are most often negotiated individually or based on available budget, with fewer organizations using standardized internal rates, which may lead to inconsistent rates for similar work

Written contracts for freelance/contract work

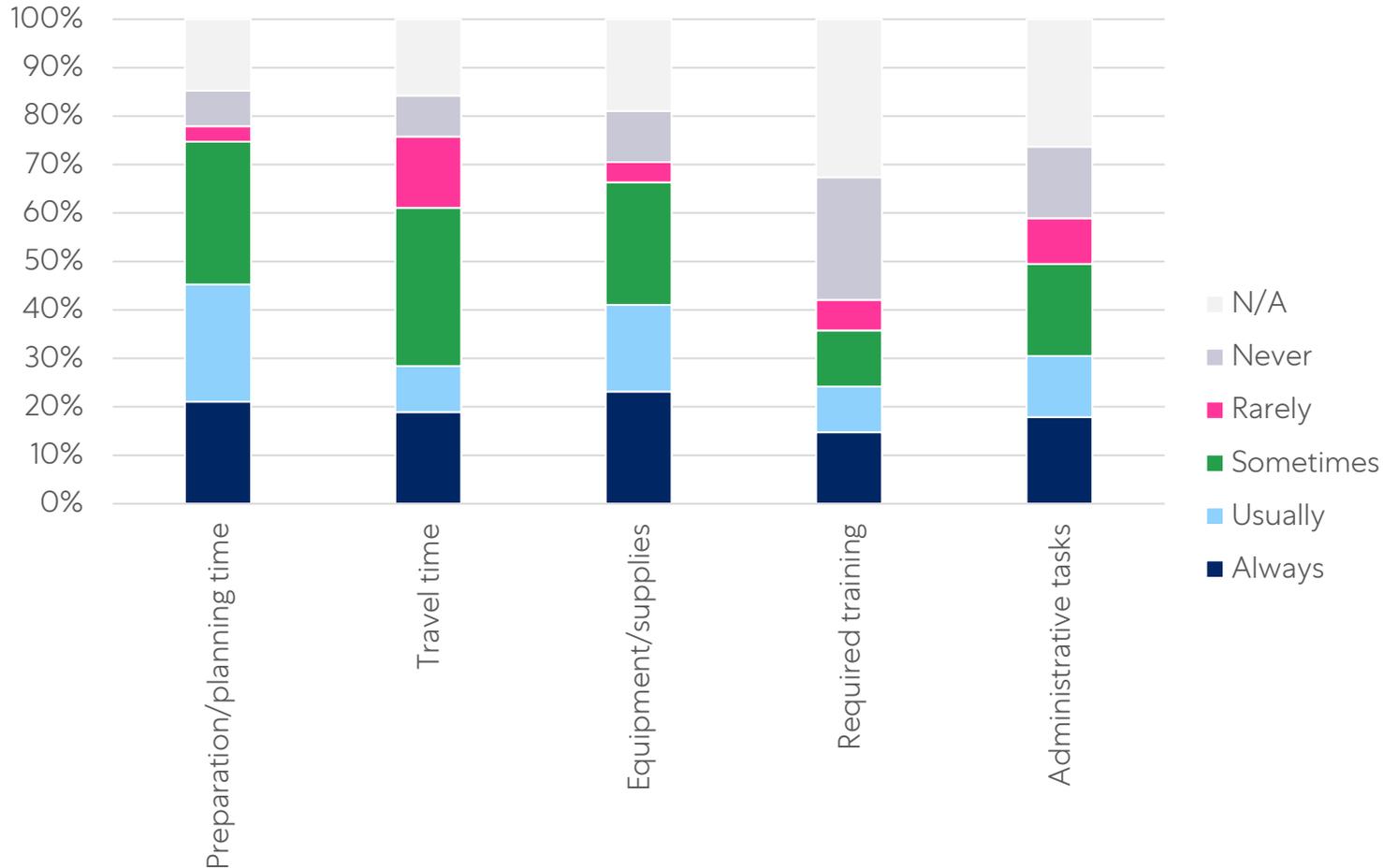
Do you provide written contracts for freelance/contract work?



Most organizations report “always/usually” providing written contracts, but a non-trivial minority do so inconsistently – a potential gap in standard practice that may affect worker protections

Paying for prep, travel, supplies, training, admin time (contractors)

How many of the following work for / are employed by your organization?



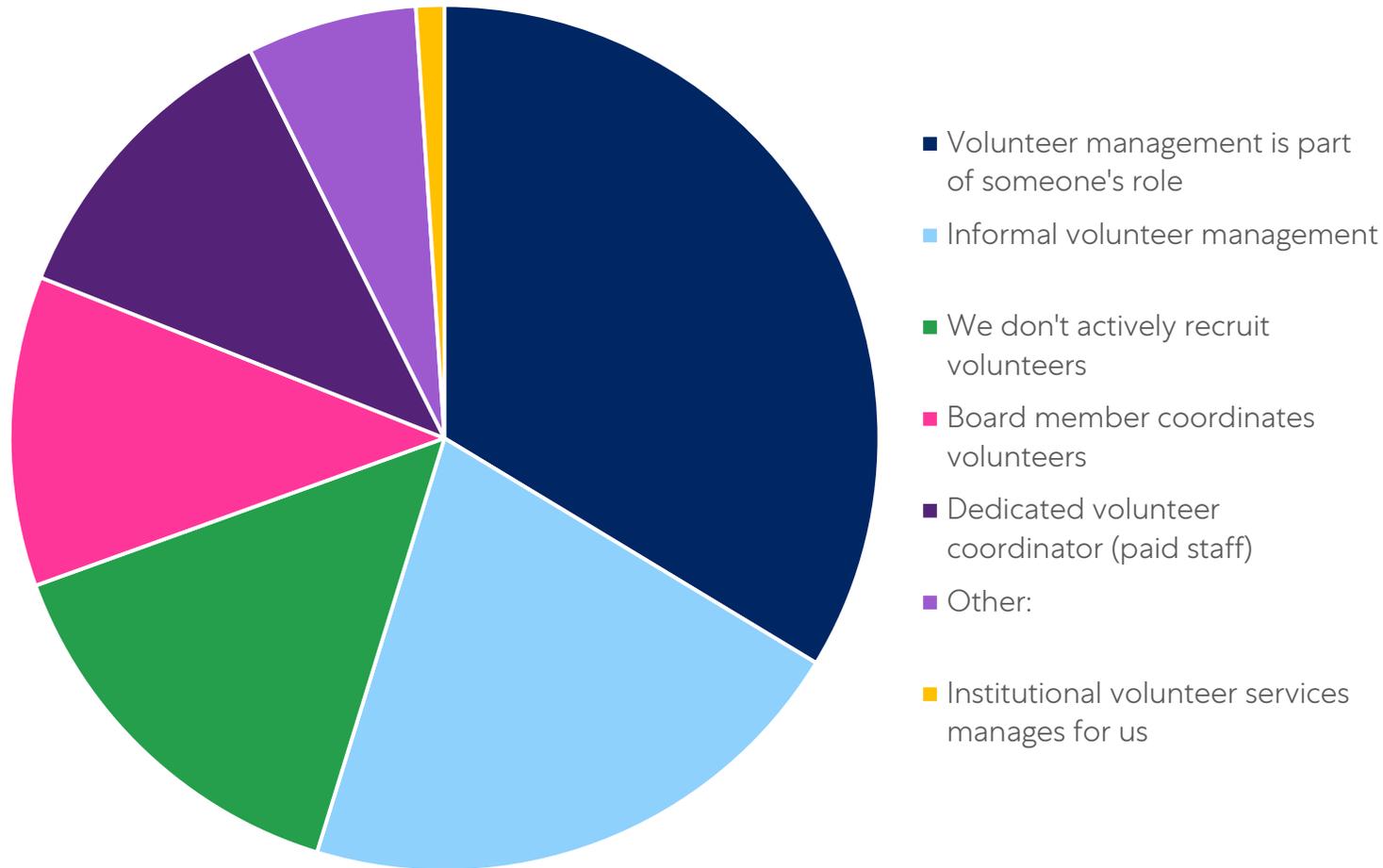
Prep/planning and equipment/supplies are most likely to be paid (always/usually), while required training is least consistently compensated, showing that some types of non-performance time are less consistently compensated

Appendix AB8 – Volunteer Management & Coordination

How volunteers are managed, compensated (if at all), and the scale/value of volunteer contributions

How volunteers are recruited and managed

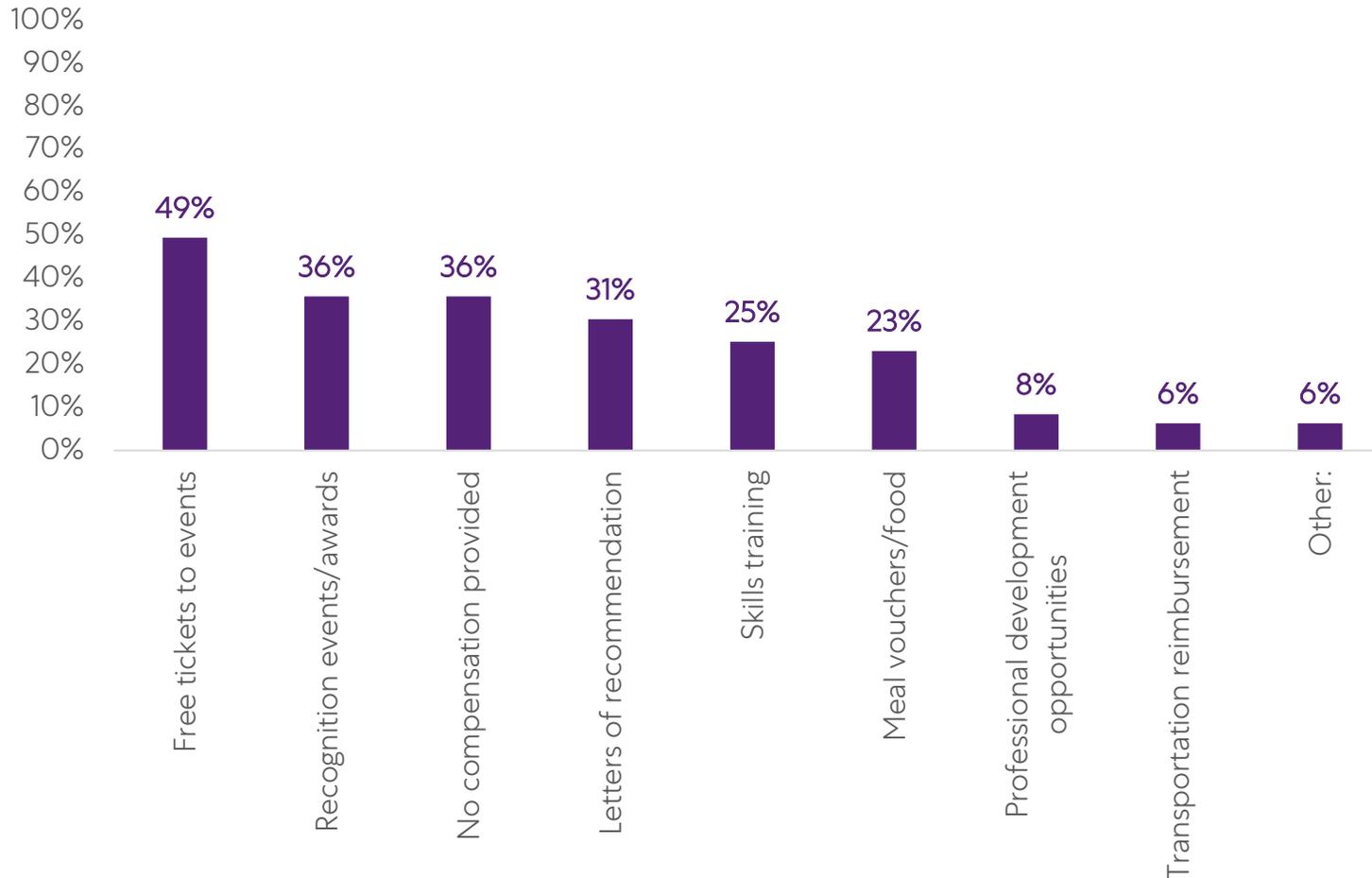
How do you recruit and manage volunteers?



Volunteer management most often sits within someone's role or is informal, rather than resourced via a dedicated coordination, suggesting capacity limits and potential burnout risk

What volunteers receive (benefits/recognition)

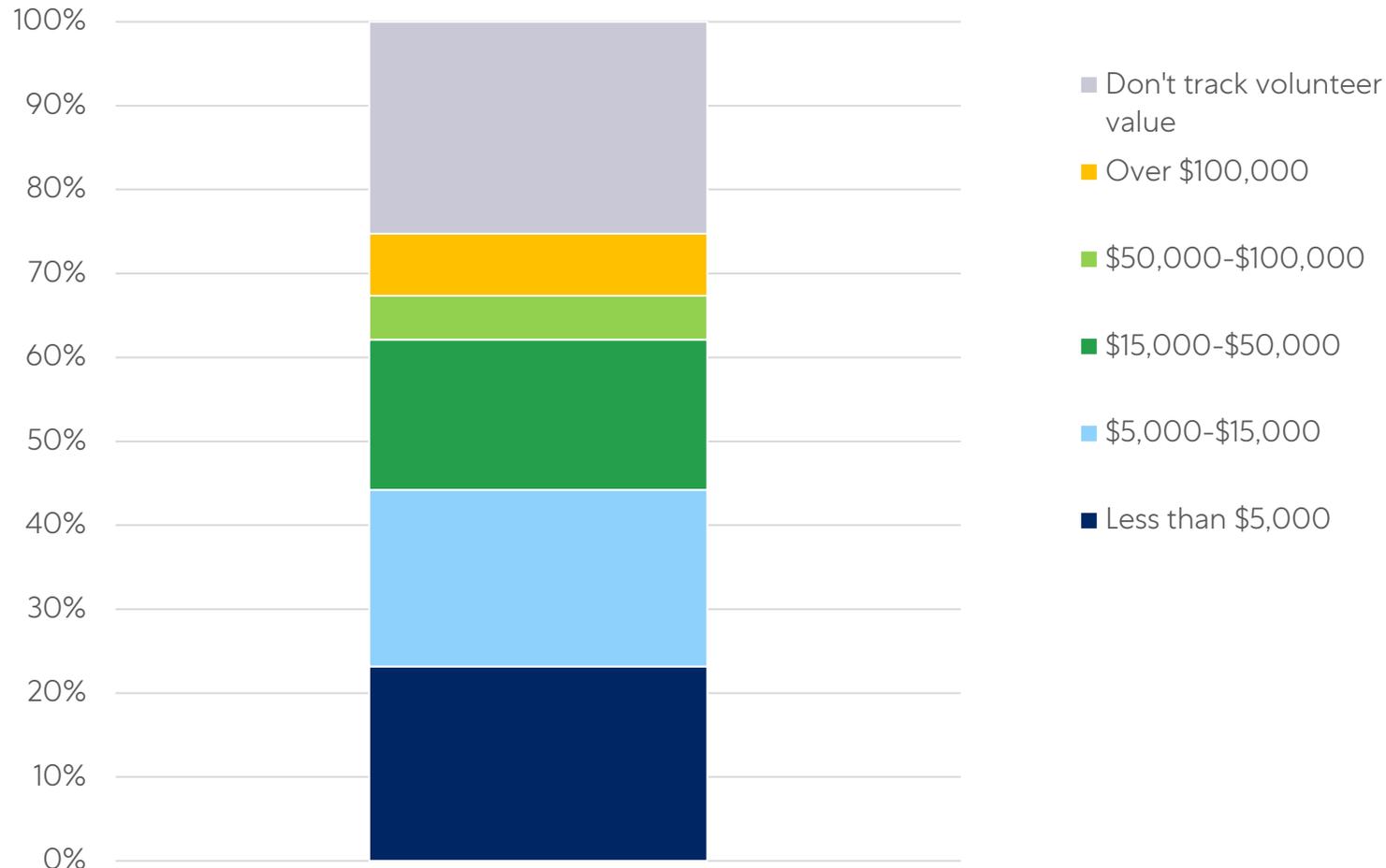
Do you provide any compensation or benefits to volunteers? (Select all that apply)



Non-cash recognition (tickets, awards) is common, but many organizations report providing no compensation

Estimated annual value of volunteer contributions

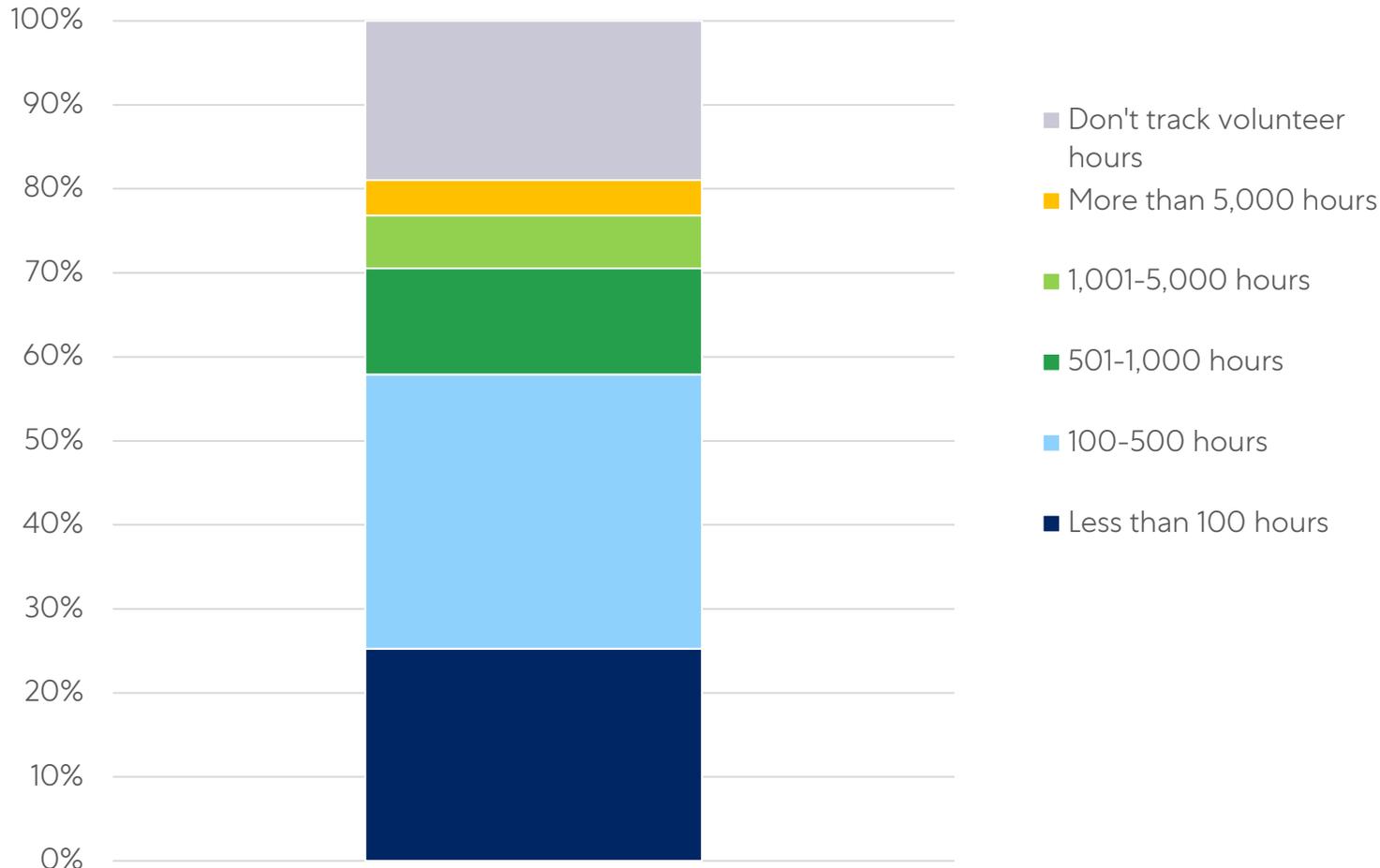
What is the estimated annual value of volunteer contributions to your organization?



Volunteer contribution value varies widely, and a sizable share do not track it, suggesting true operating capacity may be undercounted in budget-only analyses

Estimated annual volunteer hours

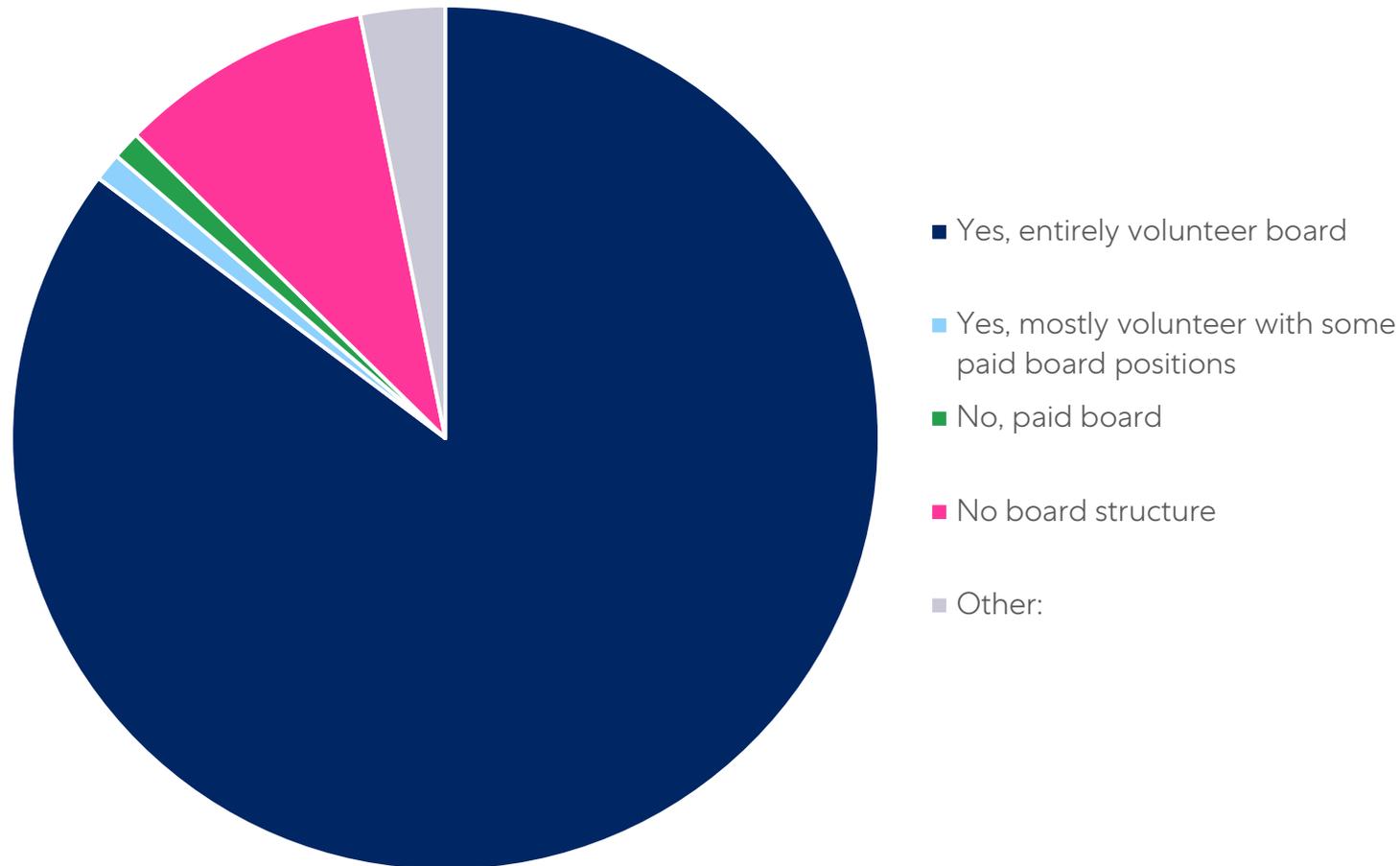
Approximately, how many total volunteer hours does your organization benefit from annually?



Many organizations report relatively low-to-moderate volunteer hours, with a meaningful portion not tracking, again indicating measurement and visibility gaps for unpaid labor

Board structure (volunteer vs paid)

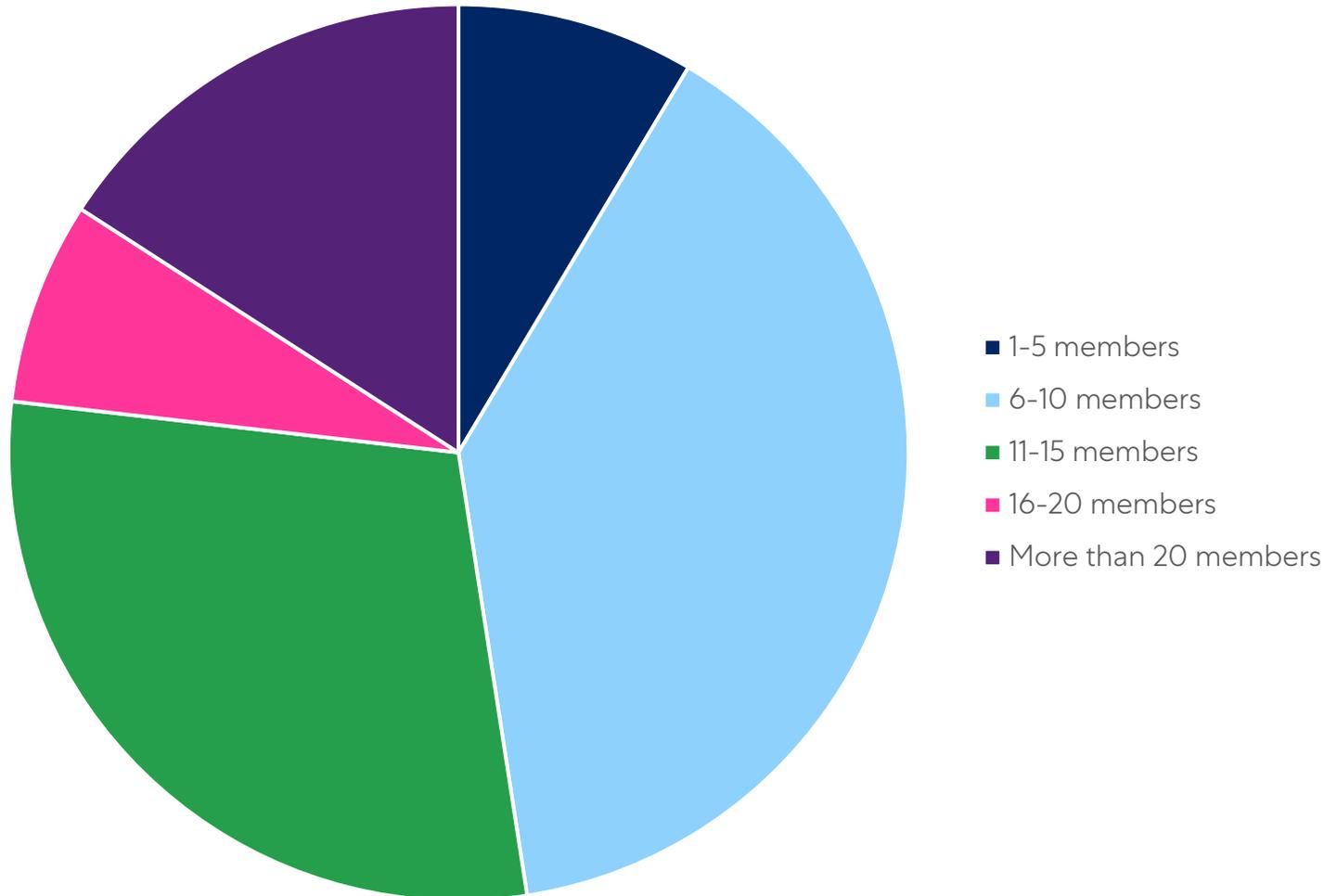
Does your organization have a volunteer board of directors?



Boards are primarily volunteer, consistent with nonprofit governance norms

Board size (volunteer board members)

How many volunteer board members do you have?



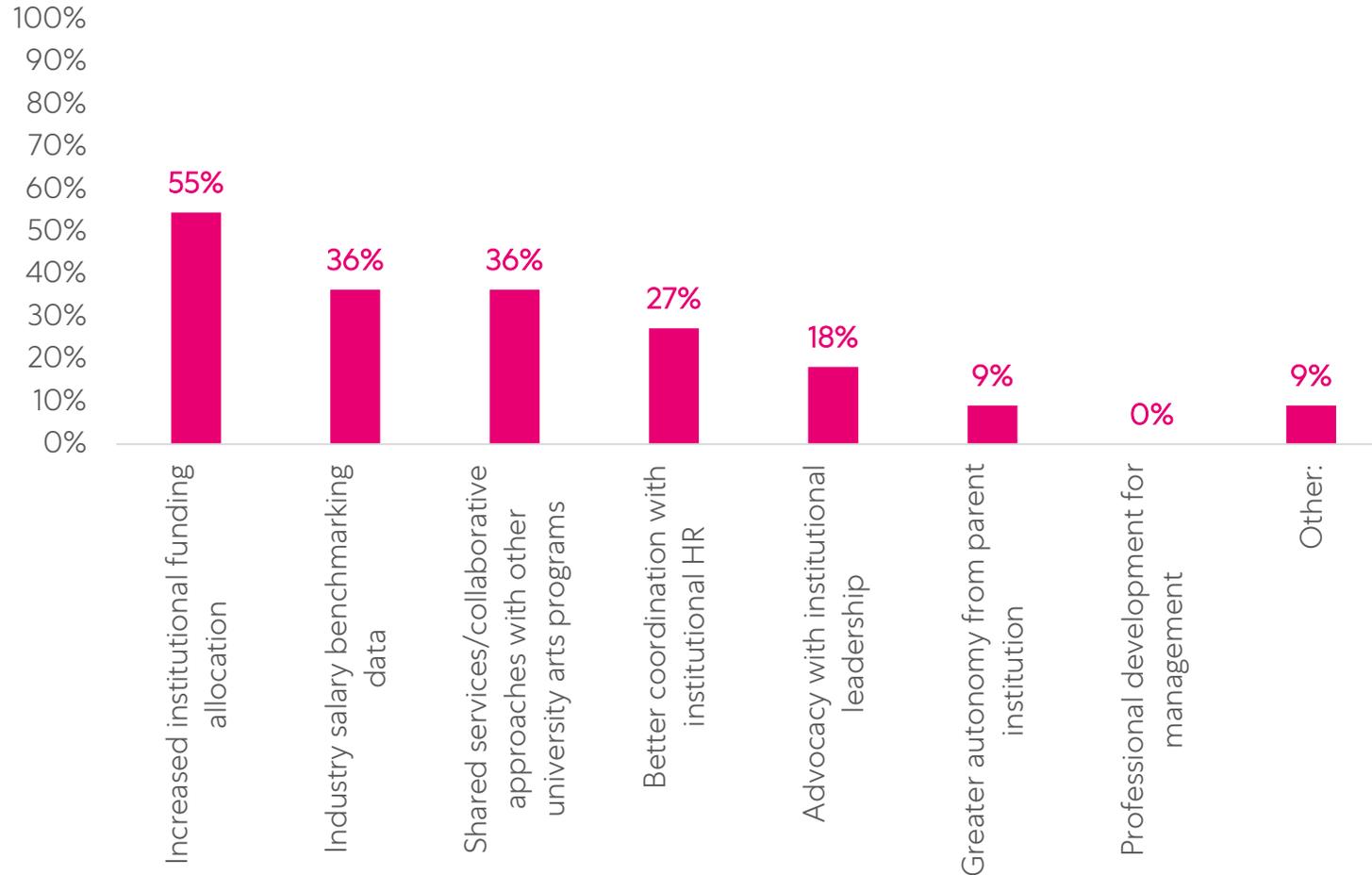
Board size clusters around mid-sized boards (often 6–15), which may affect fundraising capacity, governance workload distribution, and ability to sponsor compensation reforms

Appendix AB9 – Future Planning & Sustainability

What would help most, priorities for the next three years, optimism, and external drivers of compensation decisions

What would help most (institution-affiliated)

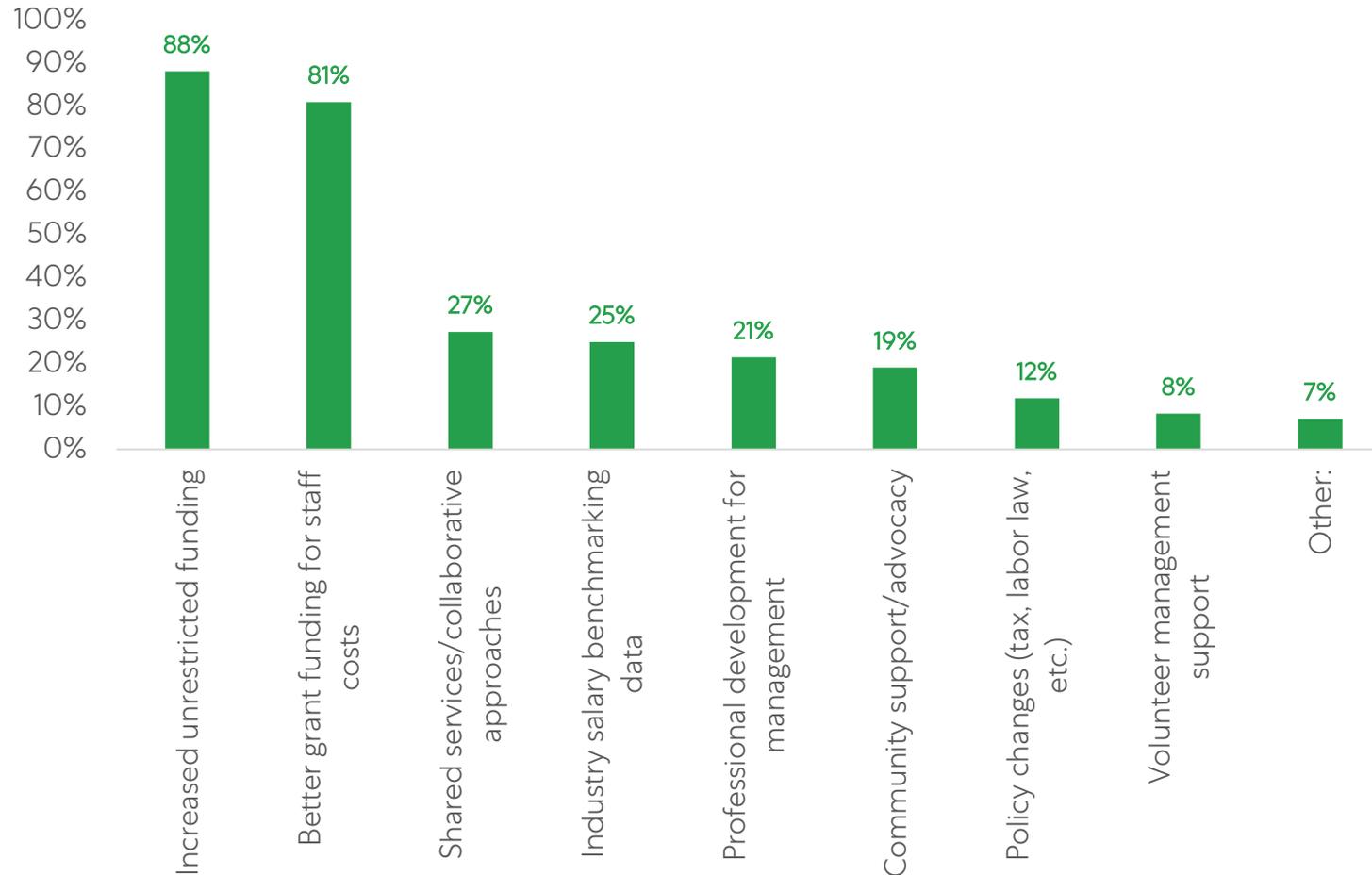
What would most help your organization improve compensation practices? (Select up to 3)



The dominant needs relate to institutional funding allocation and autonomy/coordination, indicating that improving pay may hinge on parent-institution policy and resourcing more than local intent

What would help most (non-institution-affiliated)

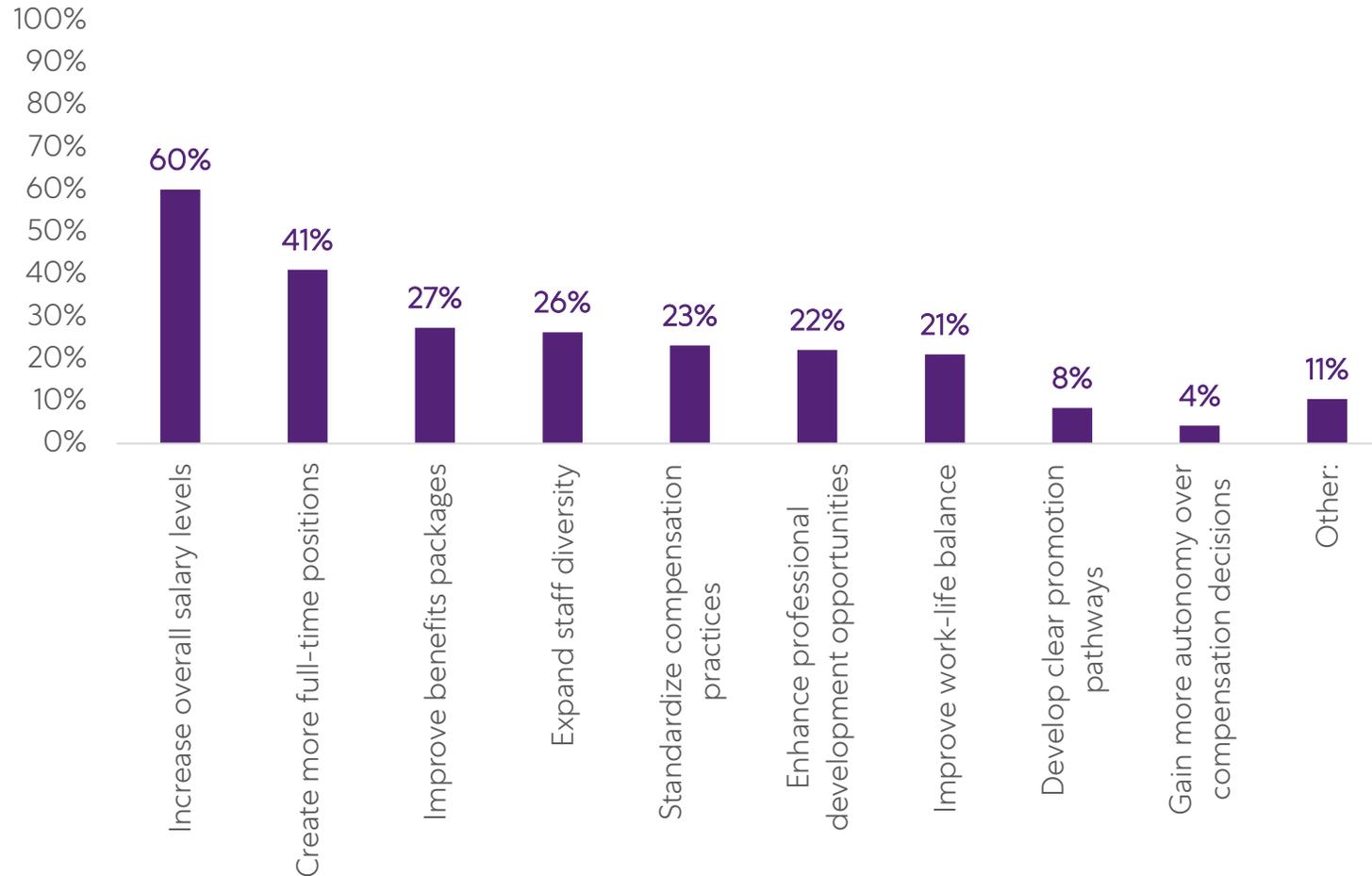
What would most help your organization improve compensation practices? (Select up to 3)



Unrestricted funding and grant coverage for staff costs emerge as top needs, suggesting that compensation improvements are structurally constrained by funder rules and revenue flexibility

Compensation priorities (next 3 years)

What are your organization's compensation priorities for the next 3 years? (Select up to 3)

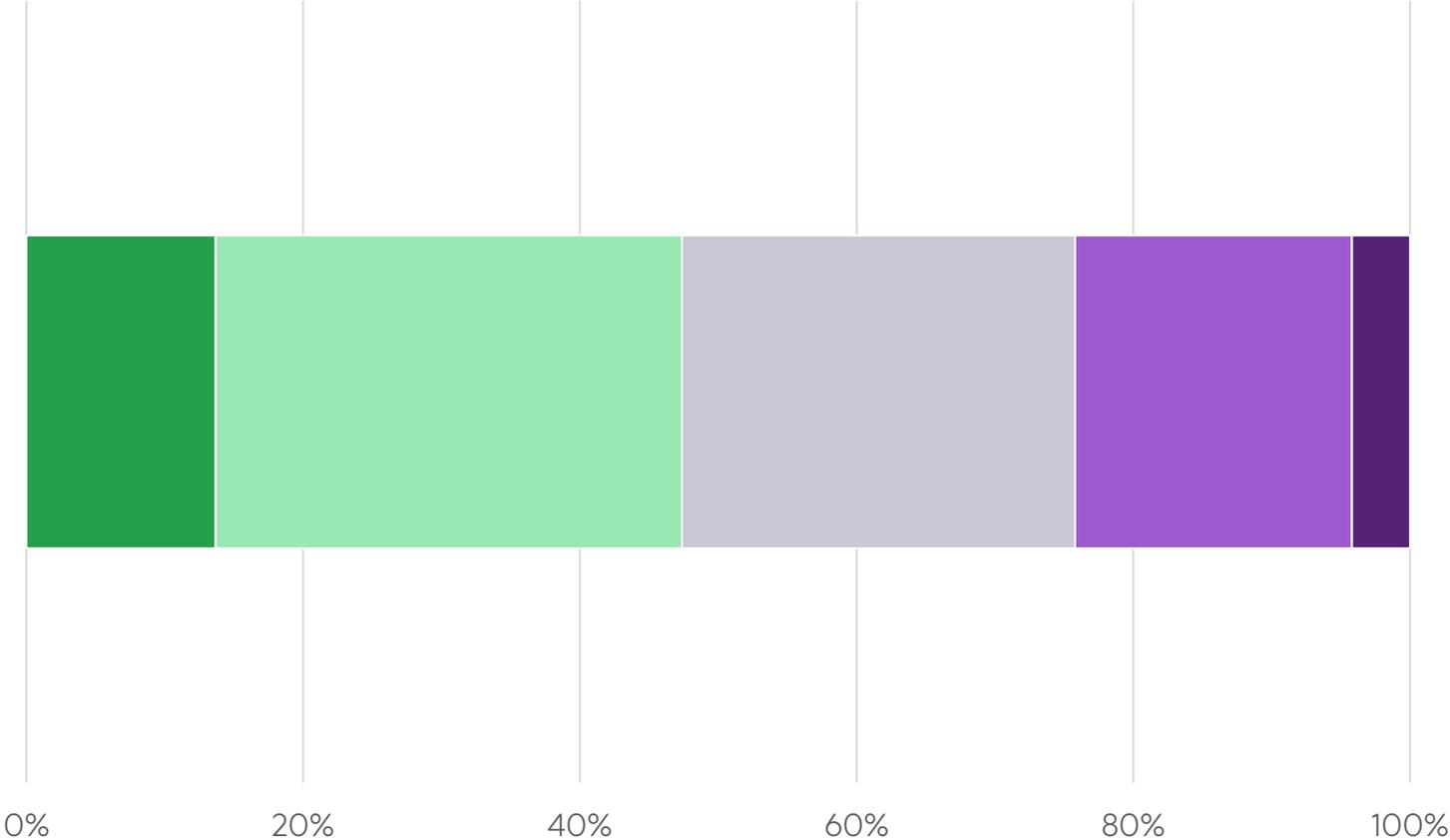


Increasing levels and creating more full-time roles lead priorities, with benefits and standardization also prominent – consistent with a desire to improve job quality, not only wages

Optimism about improving compensation (next 3 years)

How optimistic are you about your organization's ability to improve compensation over the next 3 years?

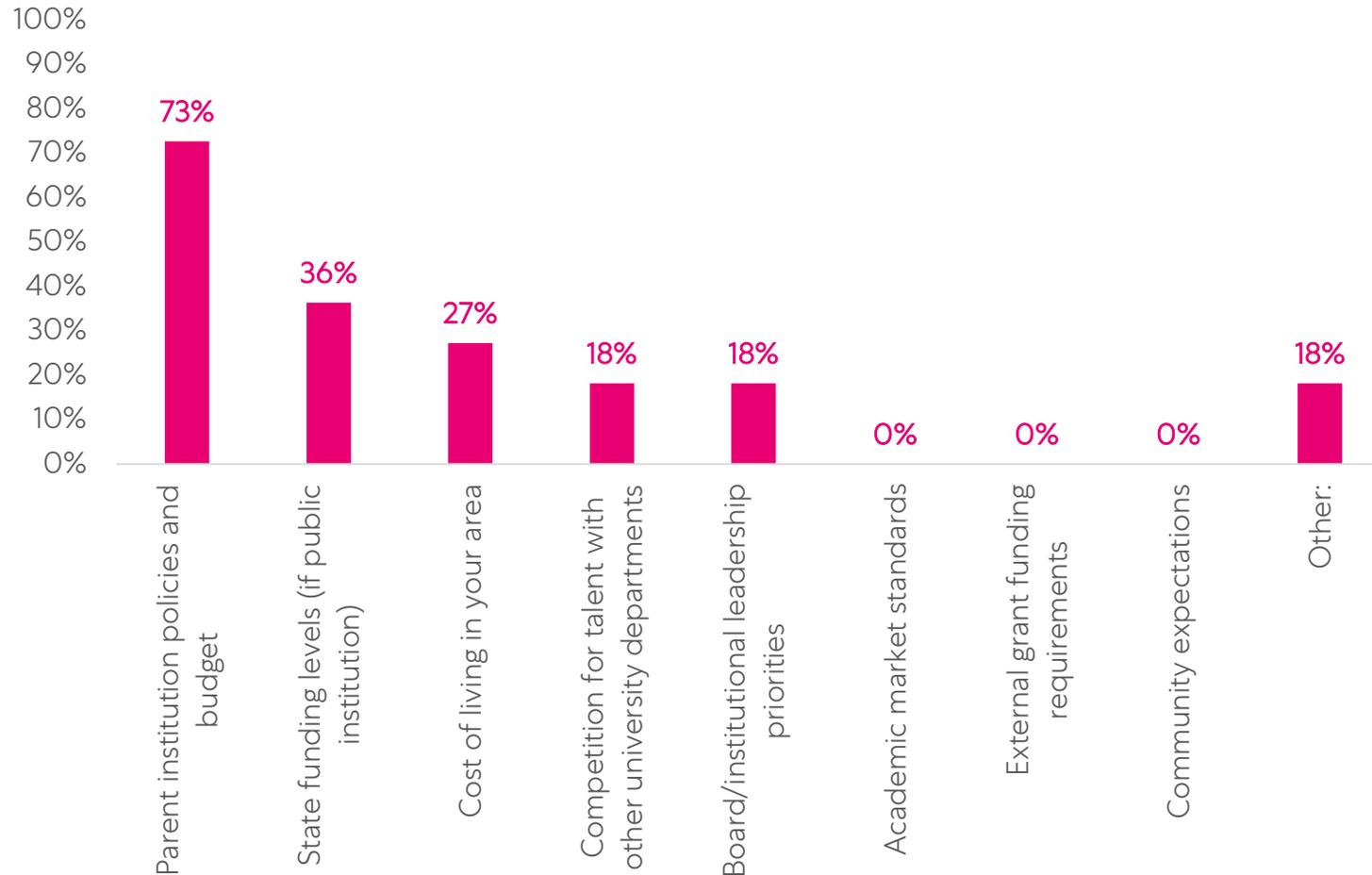
Very optimistic Somewhat optimistic Neutral Somewhat pessimistic Very pessimistic



Sentiment is mixed: more optimistic than pessimistic overall, but a large neutral share suggests uncertainty about resources and feasibility

External factors shaping pay decisions (institution-affiliated)

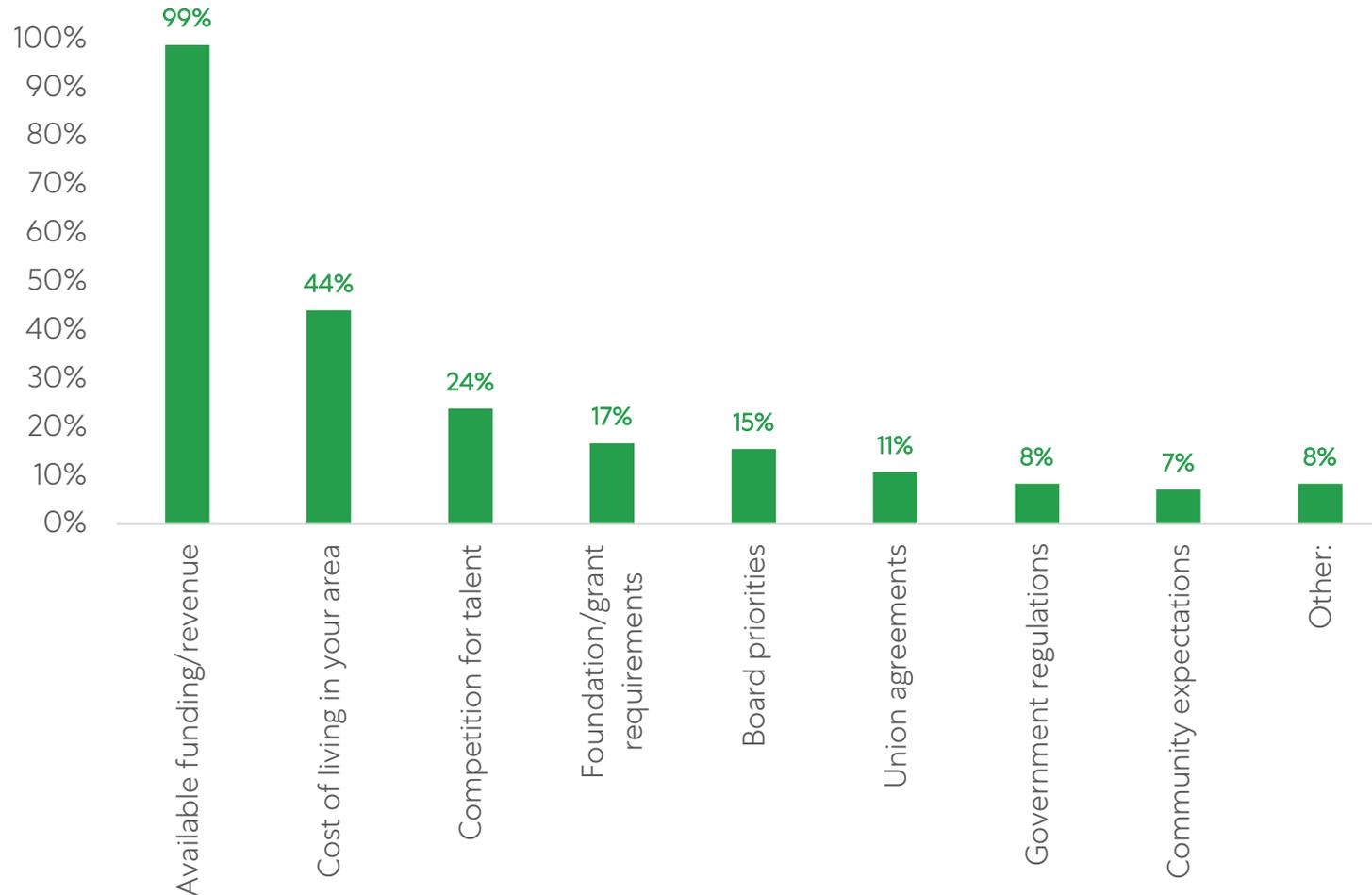
What external factors most influence your compensation decisions? (Select up to 3)



Parent institution policies/budgets are the most common response, with state funding and cost of living also influential, suggesting that pay-setting is structurally upstream of arts-unit control

External factors shaping pay decisions (non-institution-affiliated)

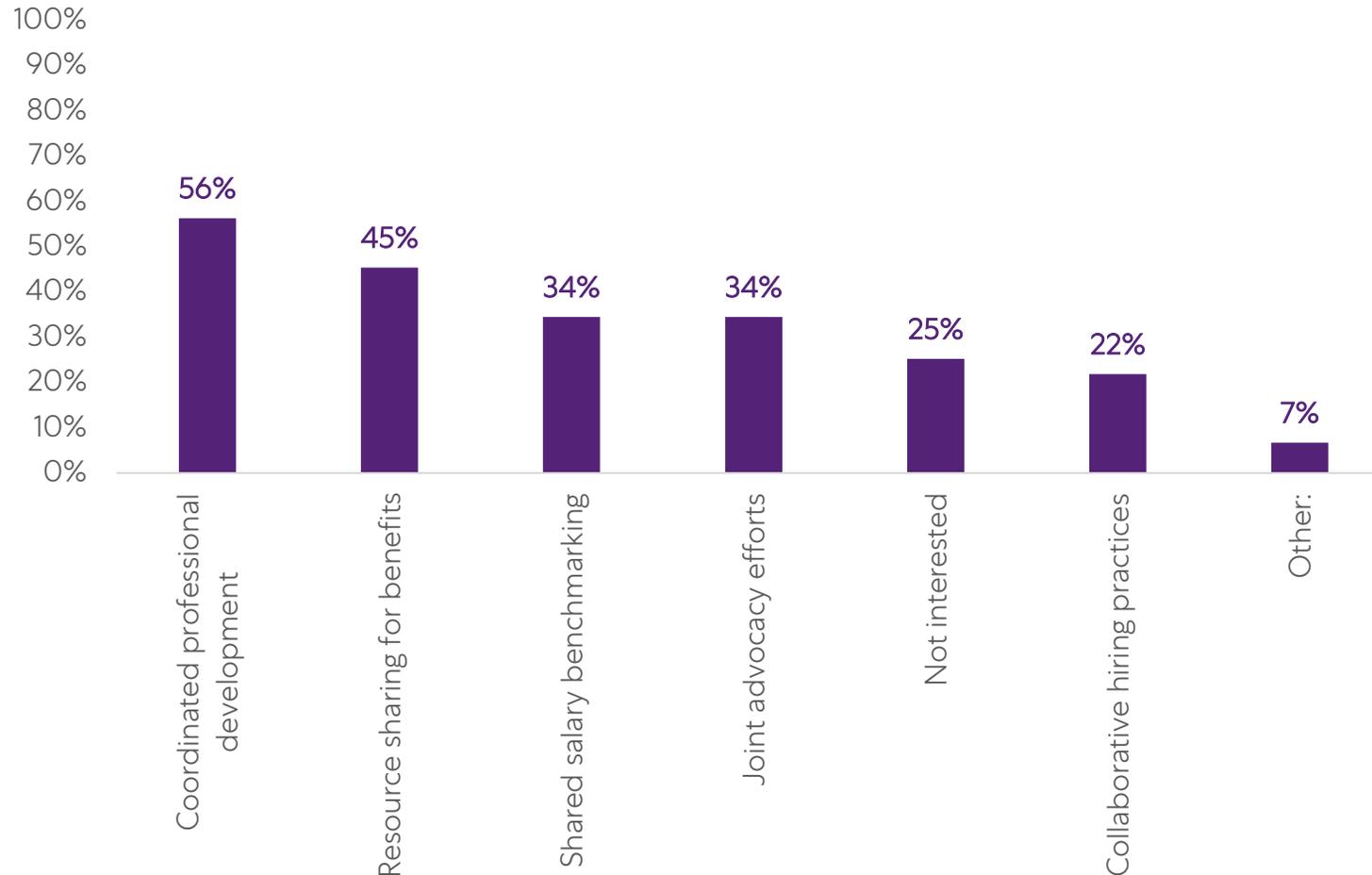
What would most help your organization improve compensation practices? (Select up to 3)



Available funding/revenue is the most commonly selected factor shaping compensation decisions, with cost of living and competition for talent secondary, pointing to a funding-first constraint environment

Interest in collaborative compensation initiatives

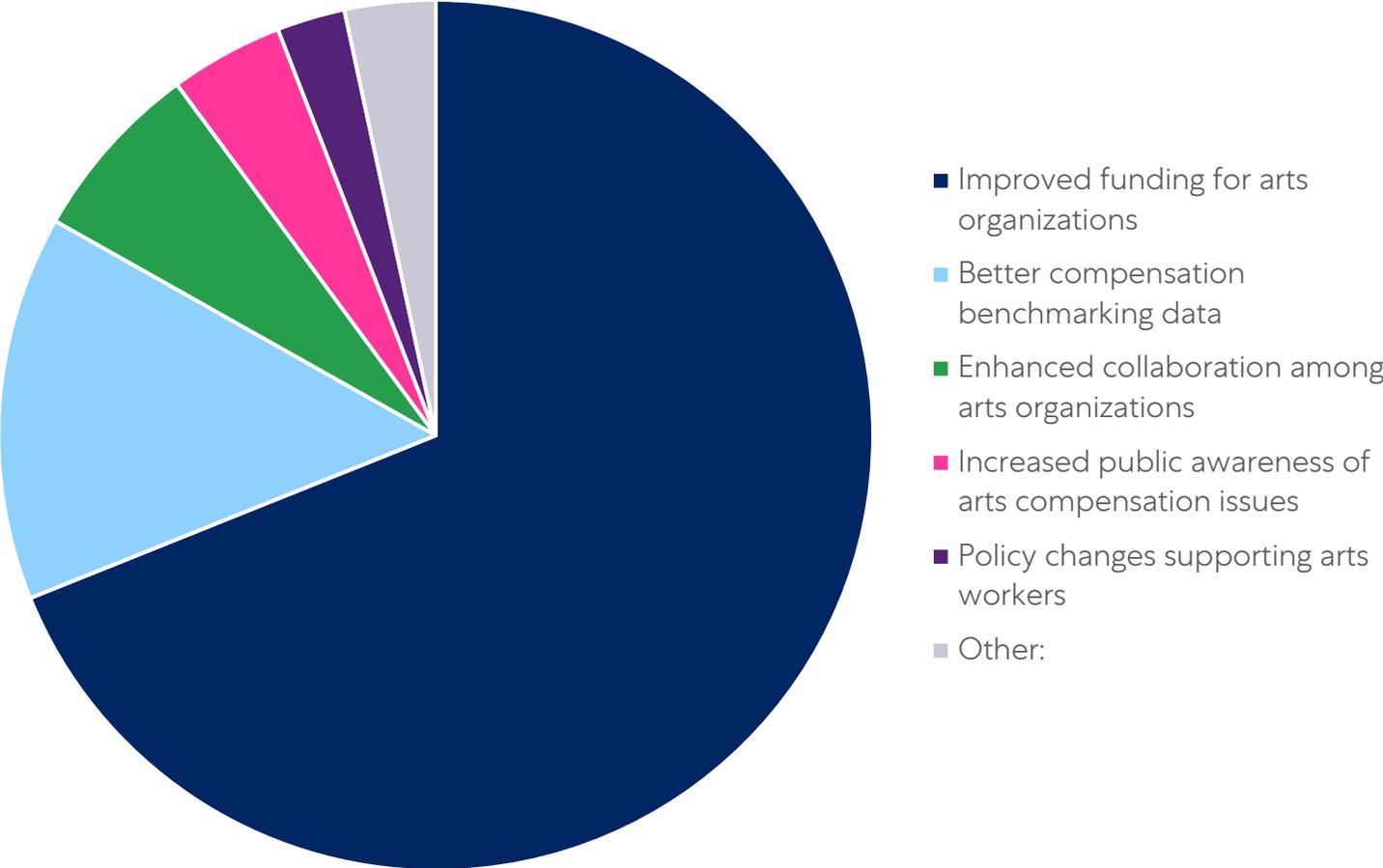
What are your organization's compensation priorities for the next 3 years? (Select up to 3)



Many organizations express interest in coordinated professional development, shared benefits strategies, and shared benchmarking, indicating an appetite for collective solutions where individual capacity is limited

Most important outcome organizations want from Arts Pay NJ

What is the most important outcome you hope to see from Arts Pay NJ?



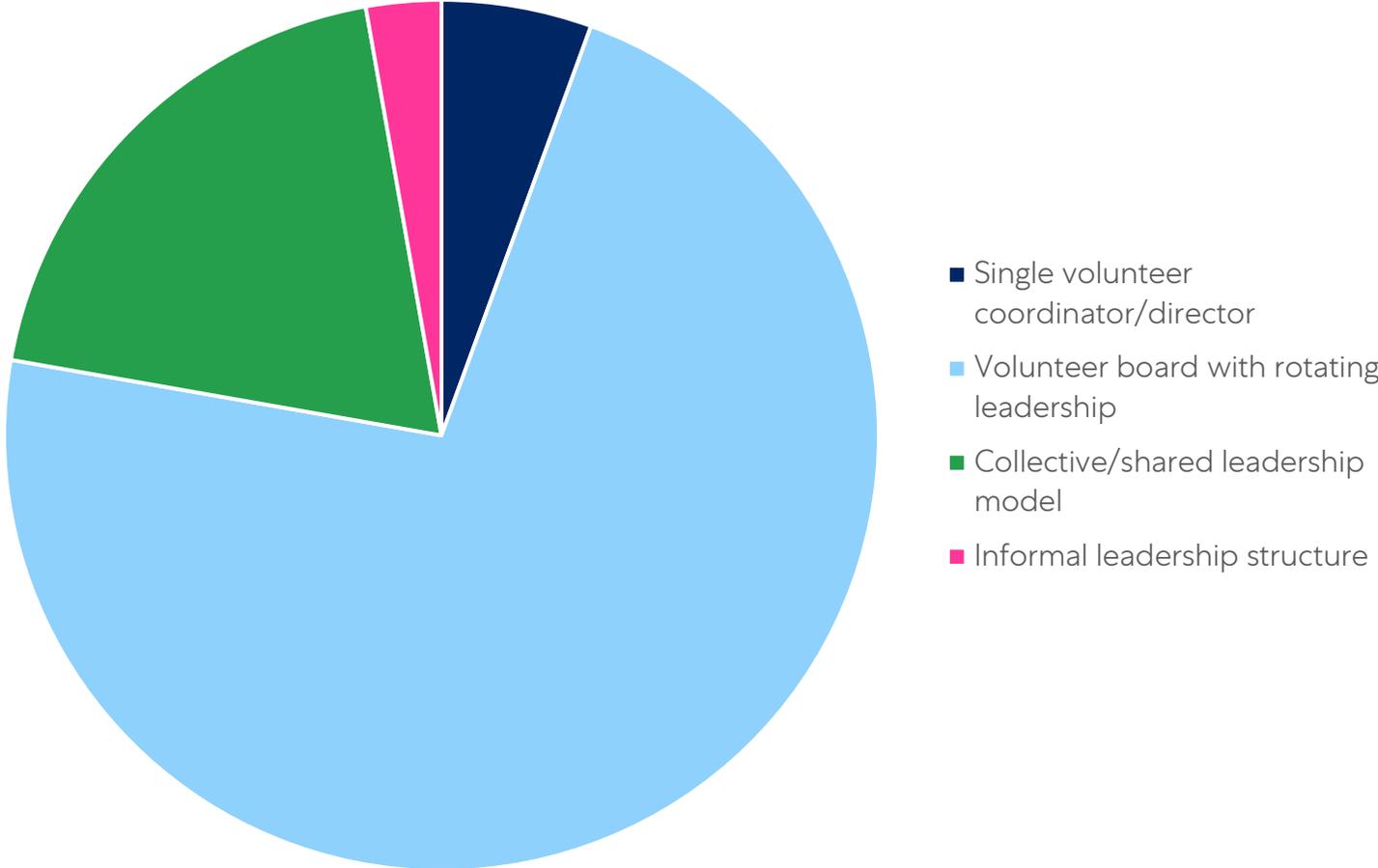
Improved funding for arts organizations is the most commonly selected desired outcome, with benchmarking data a clear secondary priority

Appendix AB10 – Volunteer-led organizations

Leadership structures, scale, finances, and the specific supports volunteer-led organizations say they need

Volunteer leadership model (volunteer-led organizations)

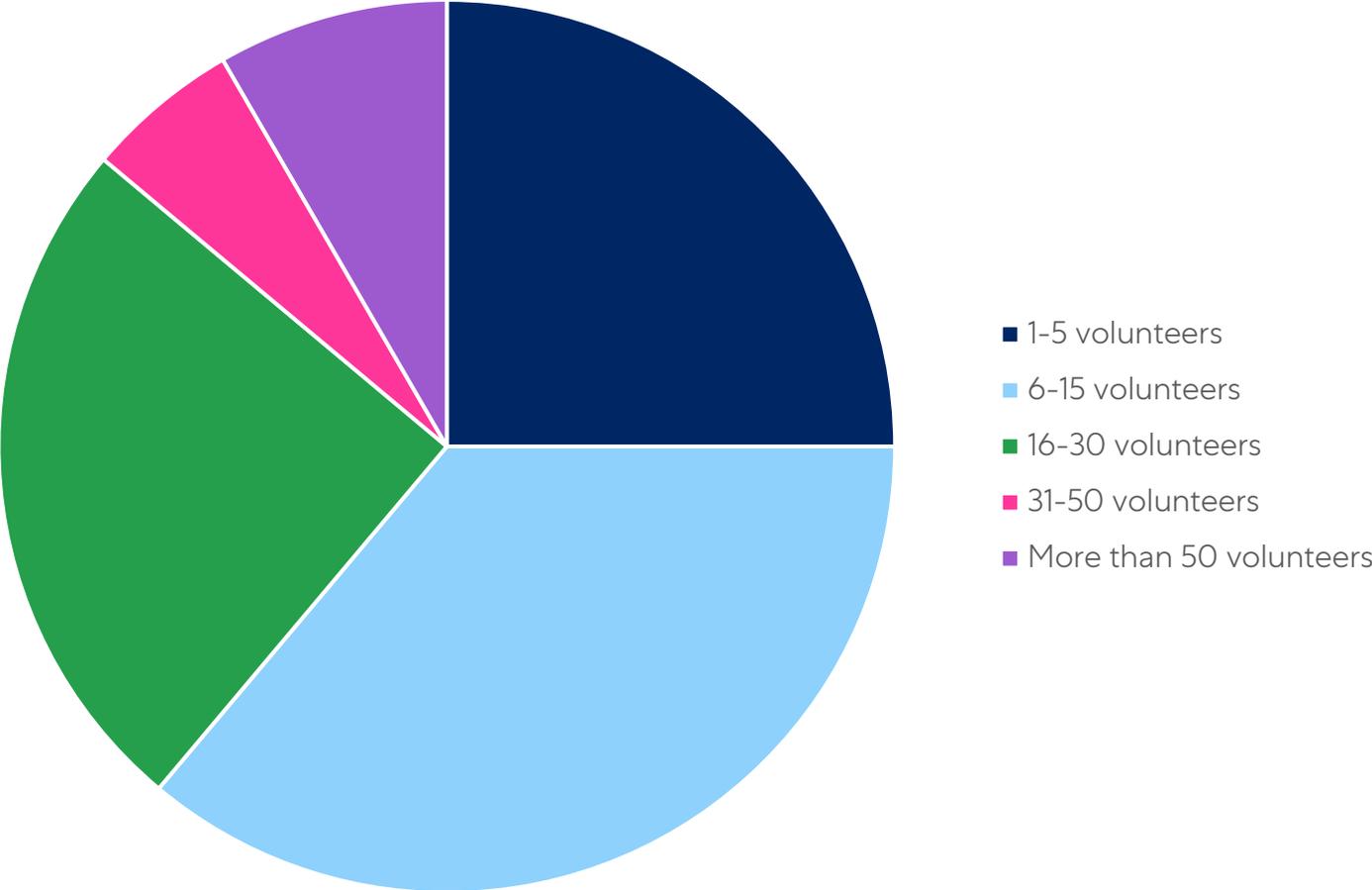
What type of volunteer leadership structure do you have?



Most volunteer-led organizations use a volunteer board with rotating leadership; smaller shares report collective/shared leadership

Active volunteer count (volunteer-led organizations)

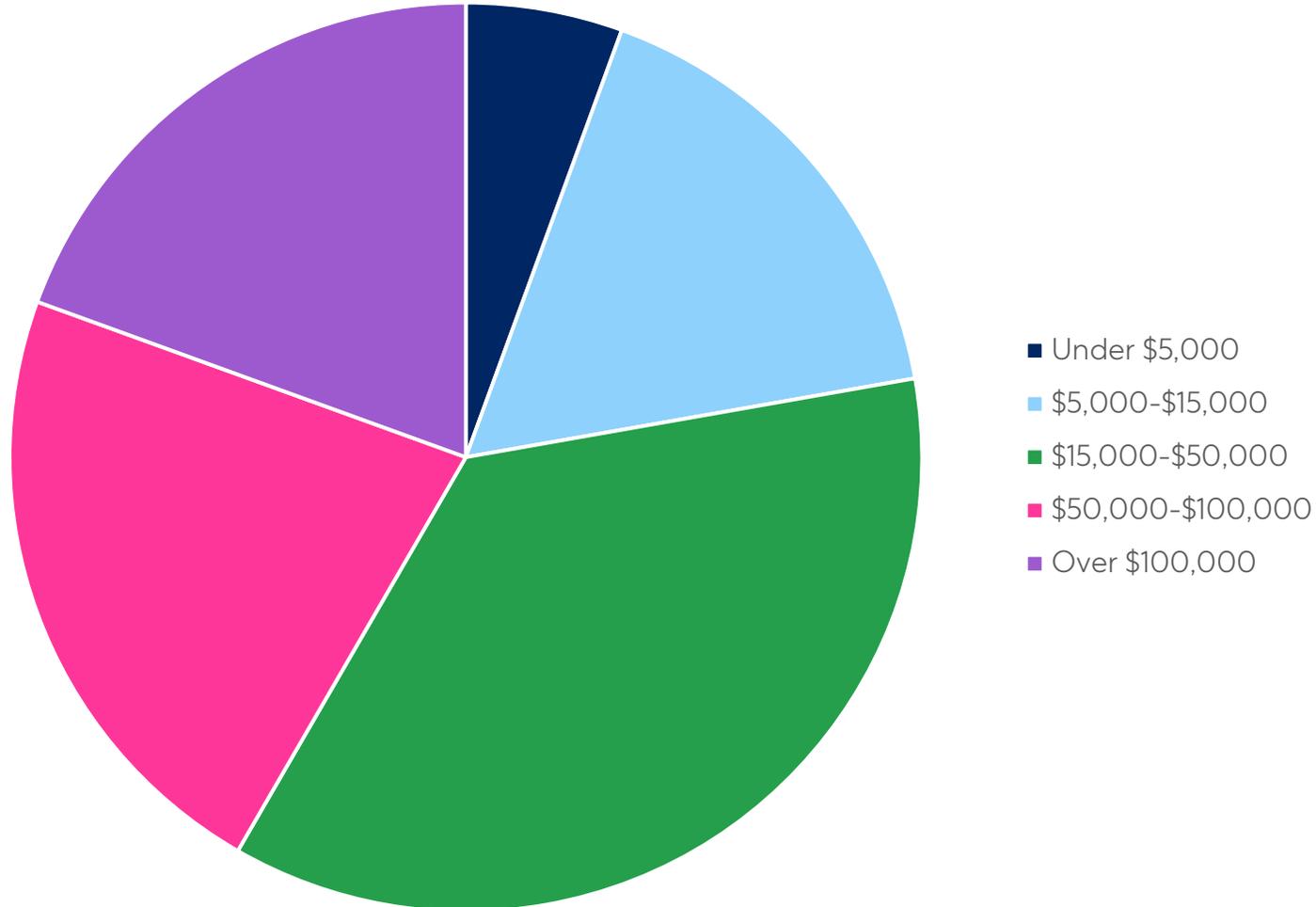
How many active volunteers regularly contribute to your organization?



Volunteer-led groups are typically small-to-mid sized (often 1–30 active volunteers), which shapes operational bandwidth and fundraising potential

Operating budget size (volunteer-led organizations)

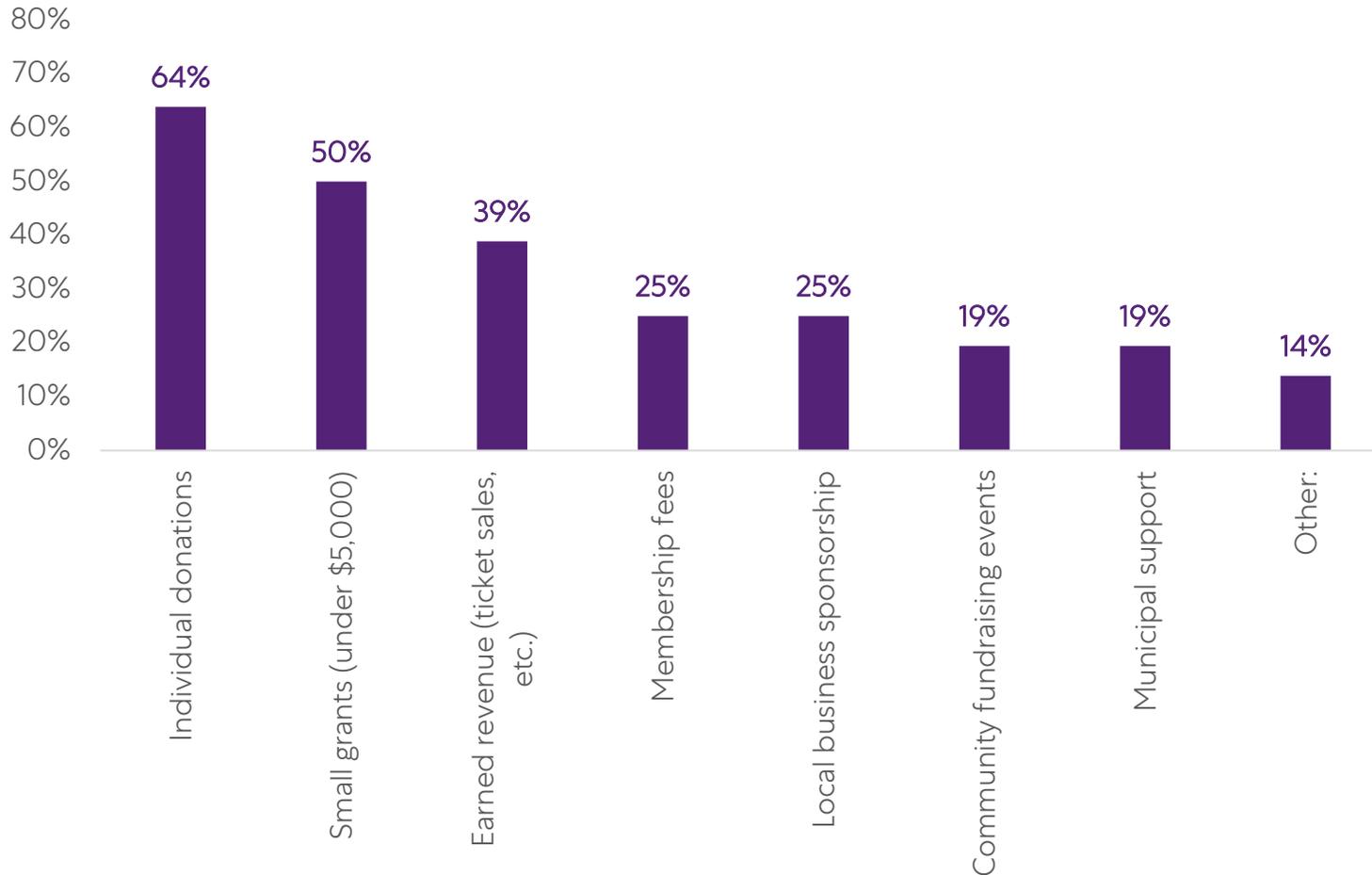
What is your approximate annual operating budget?



Budgets cluster in the \$15k–\$100k range, with fewer above \$100k

Primary funding sources (volunteer-led organizations)

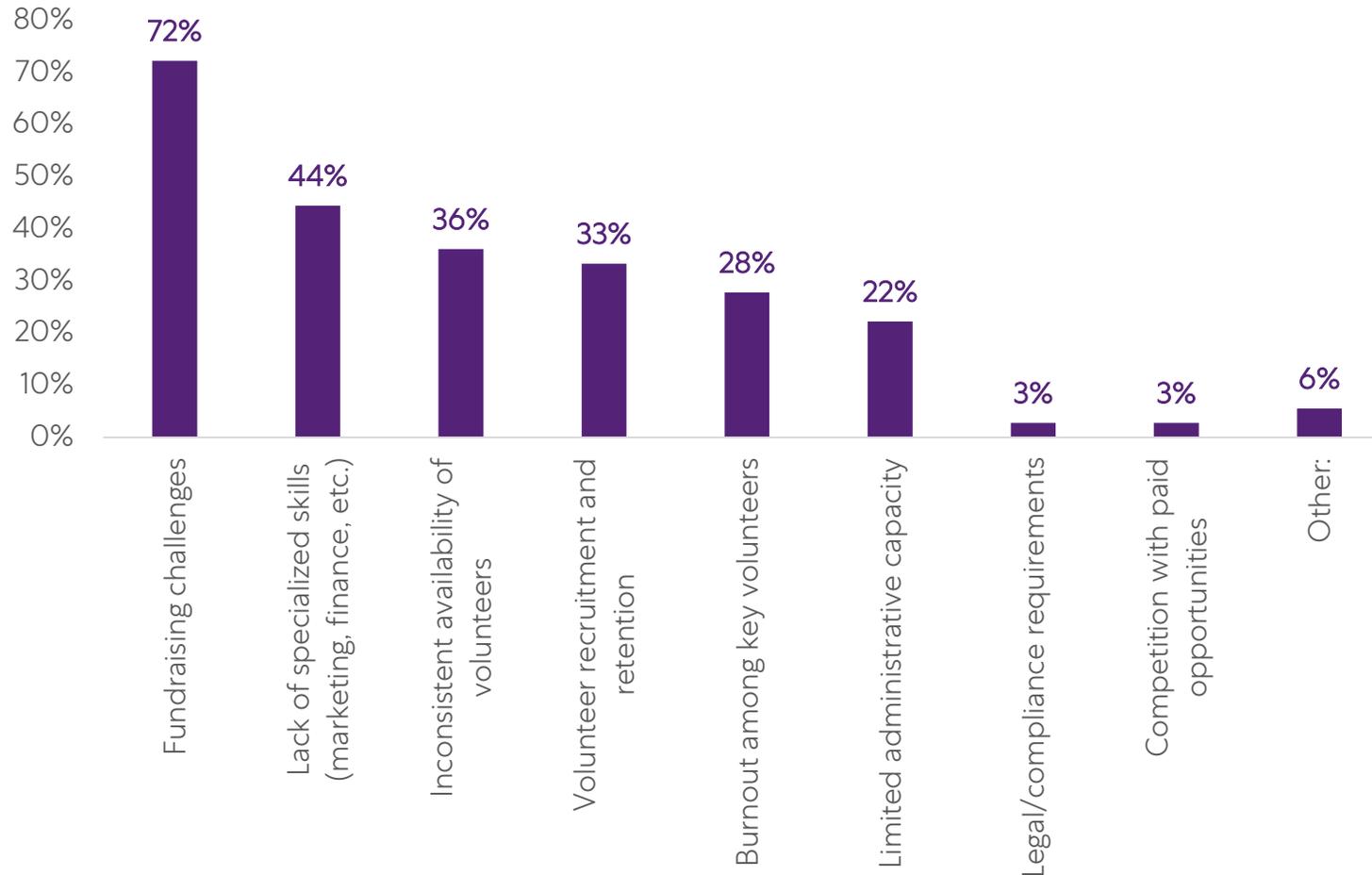
What are your primary funding sources? (Select all that apply)



Individual donations and small grants are most common, with earned revenue also important - a high reliance on community-scale funding streams

Biggest challenges (volunteer-led organizations)

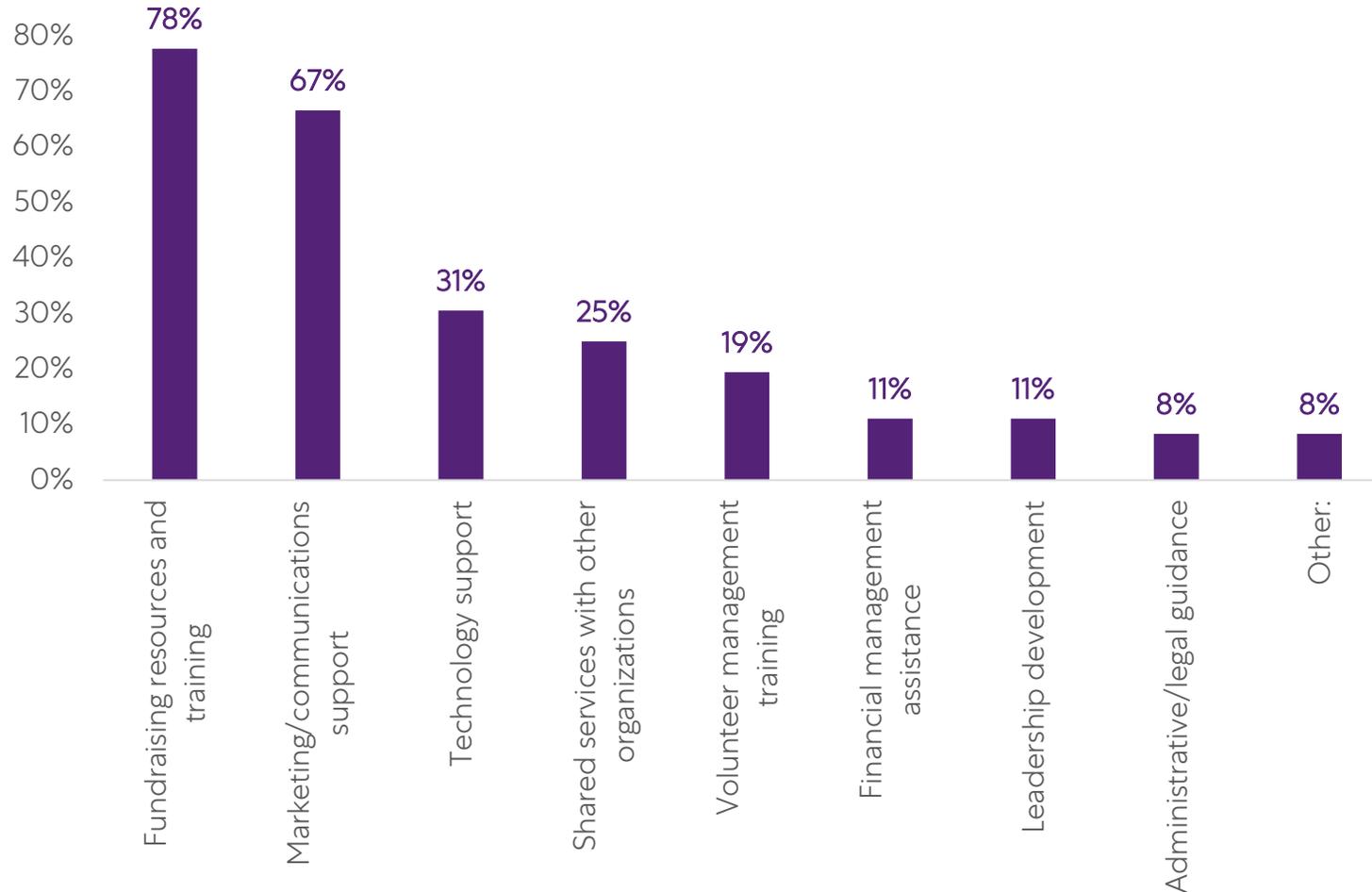
What are the biggest challenges your volunteer-led organization faces? (Select up to 3)



Fundraising is the leading challenge, followed by gaps in specialized skills and volunteer availability

Most helpful supports (volunteer-led organizations)

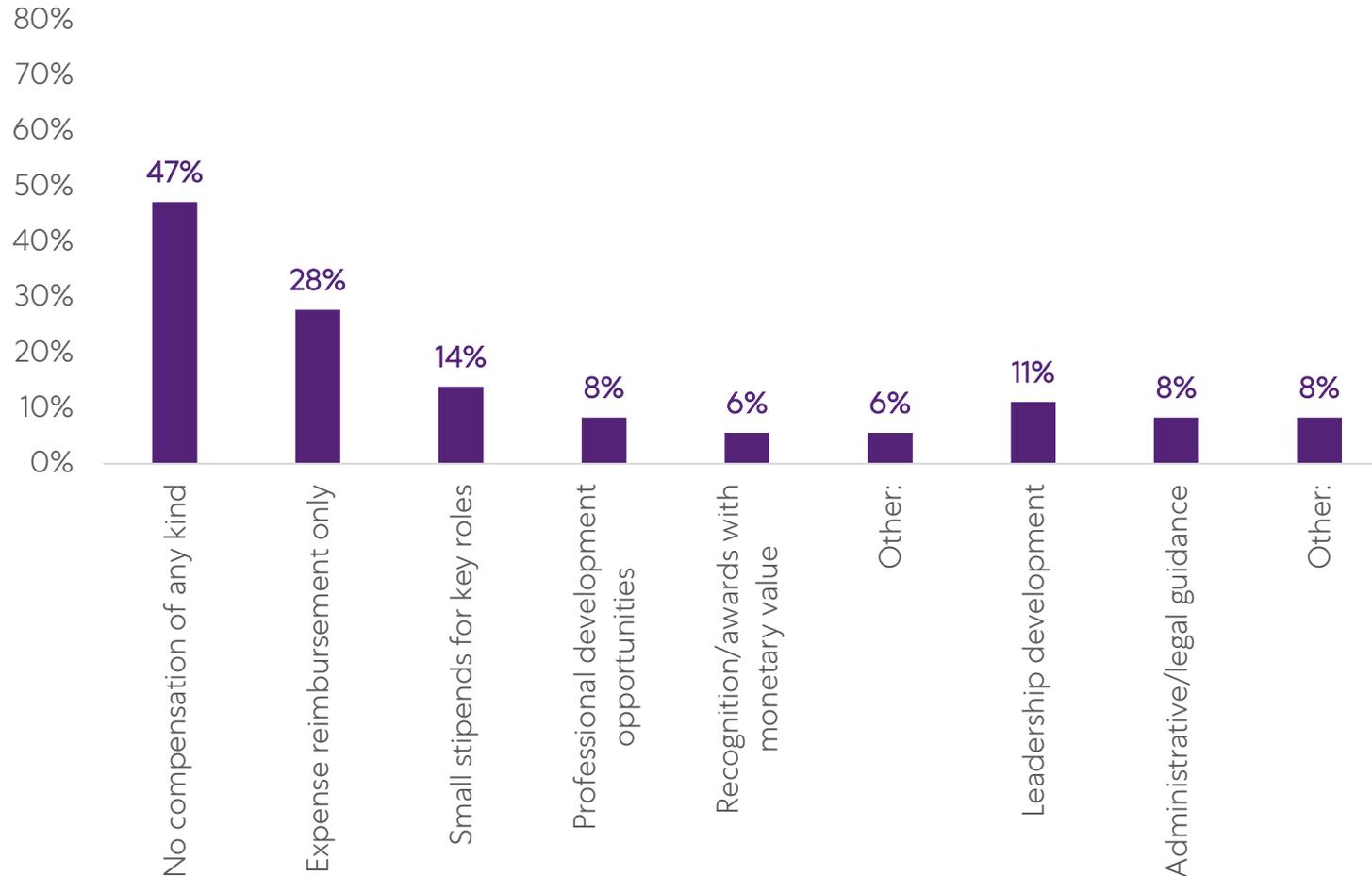
What support would be most helpful for your volunteer-led organization? (Select up to 3)



Fundraising resources/training and marketing/communications support lead, with technology support also present

Do volunteers receive compensation? (volunteer-led organizations)

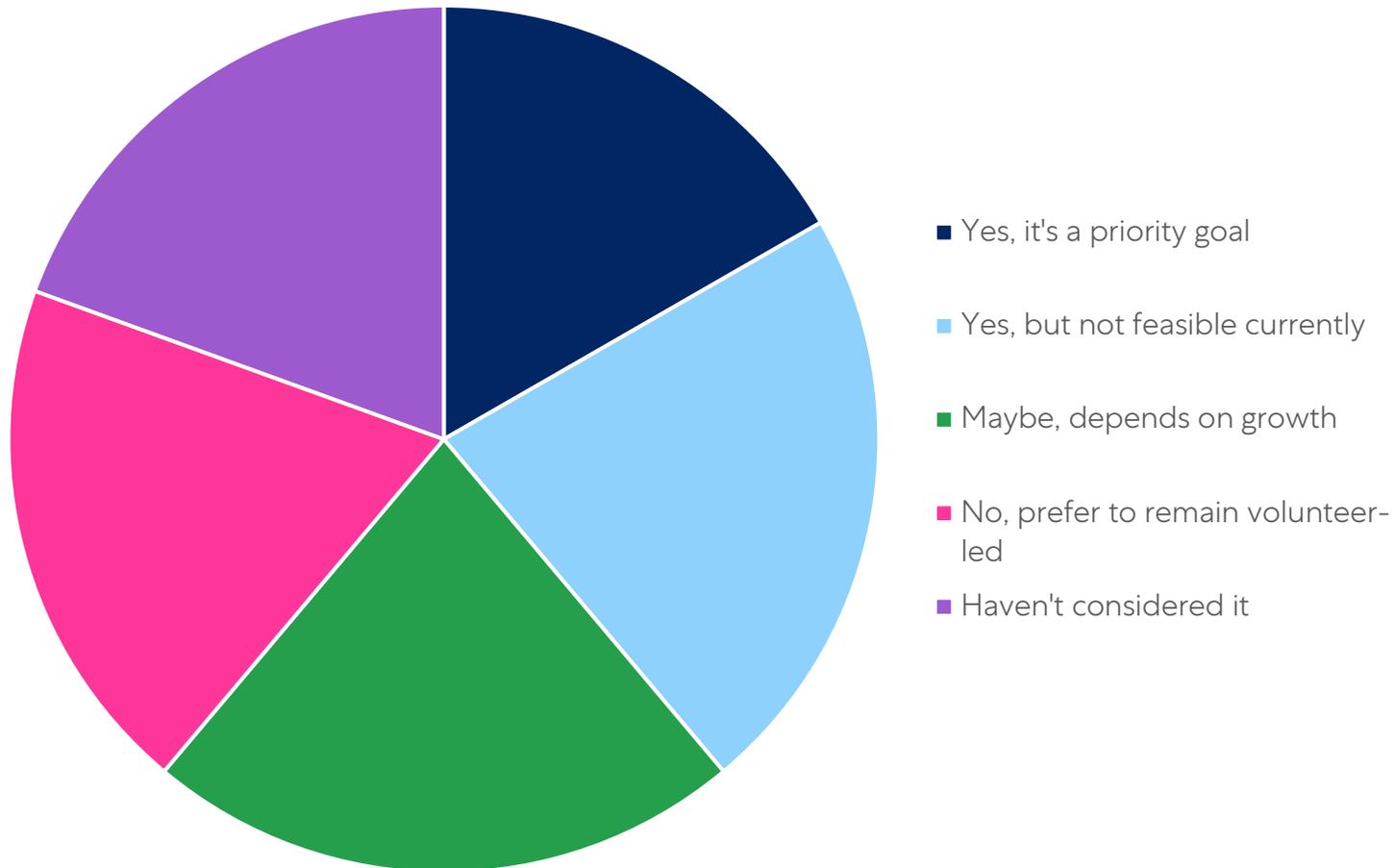
Do any of your volunteers receive any form of compensation?



Most report no compensation or reimbursement-only models; stipends appear for a minority

Interest in transitioning to paid staff (volunteer-led organizations)

Are you interested in transitioning to having paid staff in the future?



Responses are dispersed across “priority,” “not feasible,” and “depends on growth,” indicating aspiration toward paid capacity but significant resource barriers

Job functions by employment type (1 of 2)

	Full-time (n=350)	Part-time (n=97)	Freelance/Contract worker (n=47)
Arts Administrator	53%	40%	23%
Marketing and Communications	21%	18%	13%
Arts Educator	20%	27%	26%
Performer/Artist	17%	32%	53%
Technical/Production Staff	16%	9%	17%
Other:	16%	20%	17%
Director/Producer	15%	16%	26%
Teaching Artist	15%	41%	45%
Visual Artist	12%	16%	30%

Job functions by employment type (2 of 2)

	Full-time (n=350)	Part-time (n=97)	Freelance/Contract worker (n=47)
Community Arts Organizer	11%	8%	23%
Curator	8%	5%	17%
Gallery/Exhibition Support	7%	10%	9%
College/University Instructor	5%	12%	11%
Arts Advocate/Policy Worker	5%	2%	6%
Collections Management	3%	5%	4%
Arts Researcher	3%	6%	4%
Arts Therapist	1%	2%	2%
Conservation	1%	1%	0%