

COVID-19 and the female health and care workforce

Survey of health and care staff for the Health and Care
Women Leaders Network (August 2020)

Background

In June 2020 the Health and Care Women Leaders Network, delivered by NHS Confederation, commissioned a survey to understand the impact of COVID-19 on female staff, and how the impact varied for different staff. For example, depending on ethnicity, salary and gender.

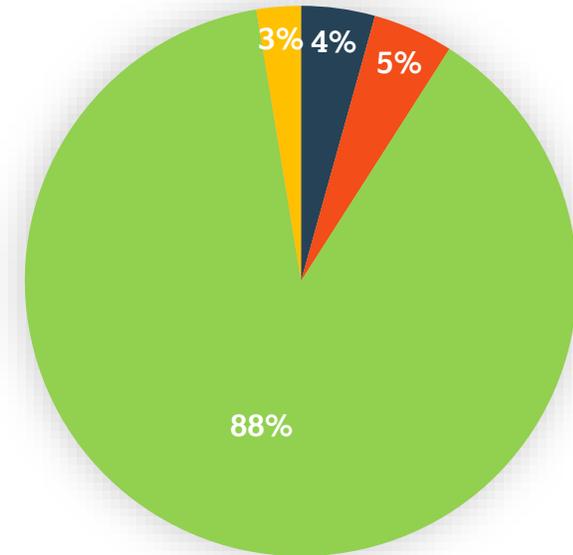
The survey considered the following areas:

- Managerial support, including ability to work flexibly/reduced hours to take account of caring responsibilities.
- Impact on staff physical health and emotional wellbeing.
- Time involved each week in non-work caring responsibilities.
- Additional unpaid hours since the pandemic started.
- Hours each week spent working remotely.
- Safety when working from home.
- PPE availability and training.

Demographic Profile of Women Respondents

Respondents	1308 women respondents
Mean age	45.58 years
Sexual orientation	74 Identify as LGBT
At least one child (<18 years)	665 548 At least one adult dependant
Contracted hours	65% full time, 35% part time

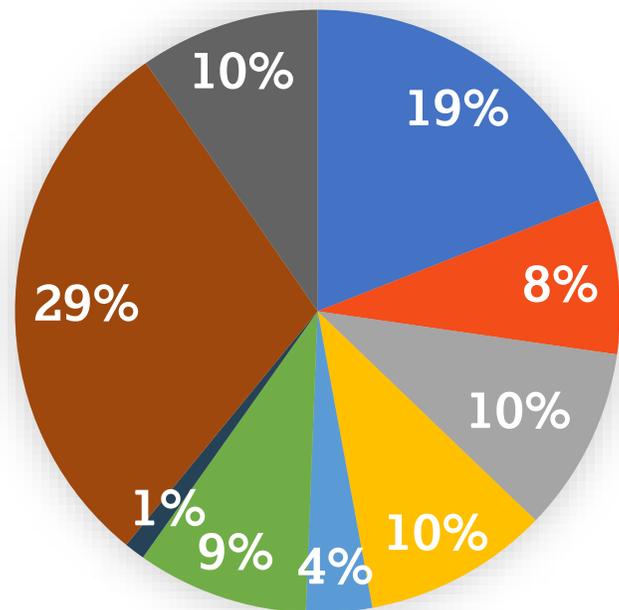
Ethnicity



■ Black ■ Asian ■ White ■ Mixed/multiple

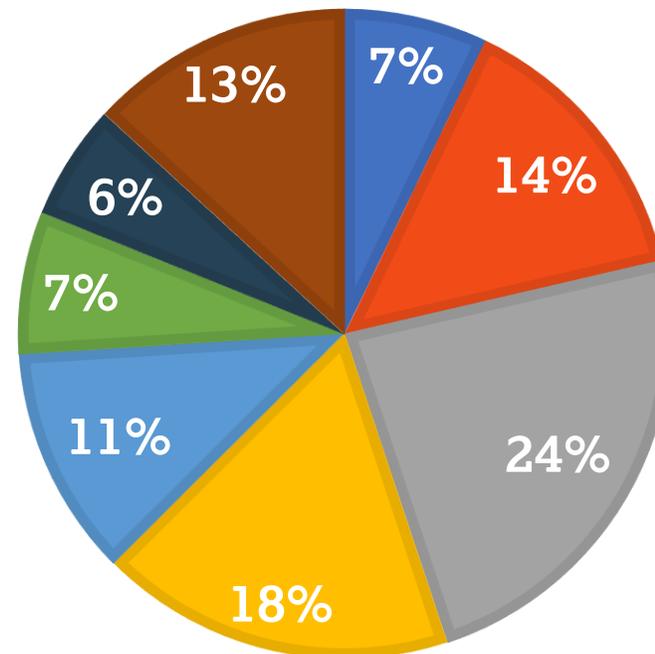


Job Role



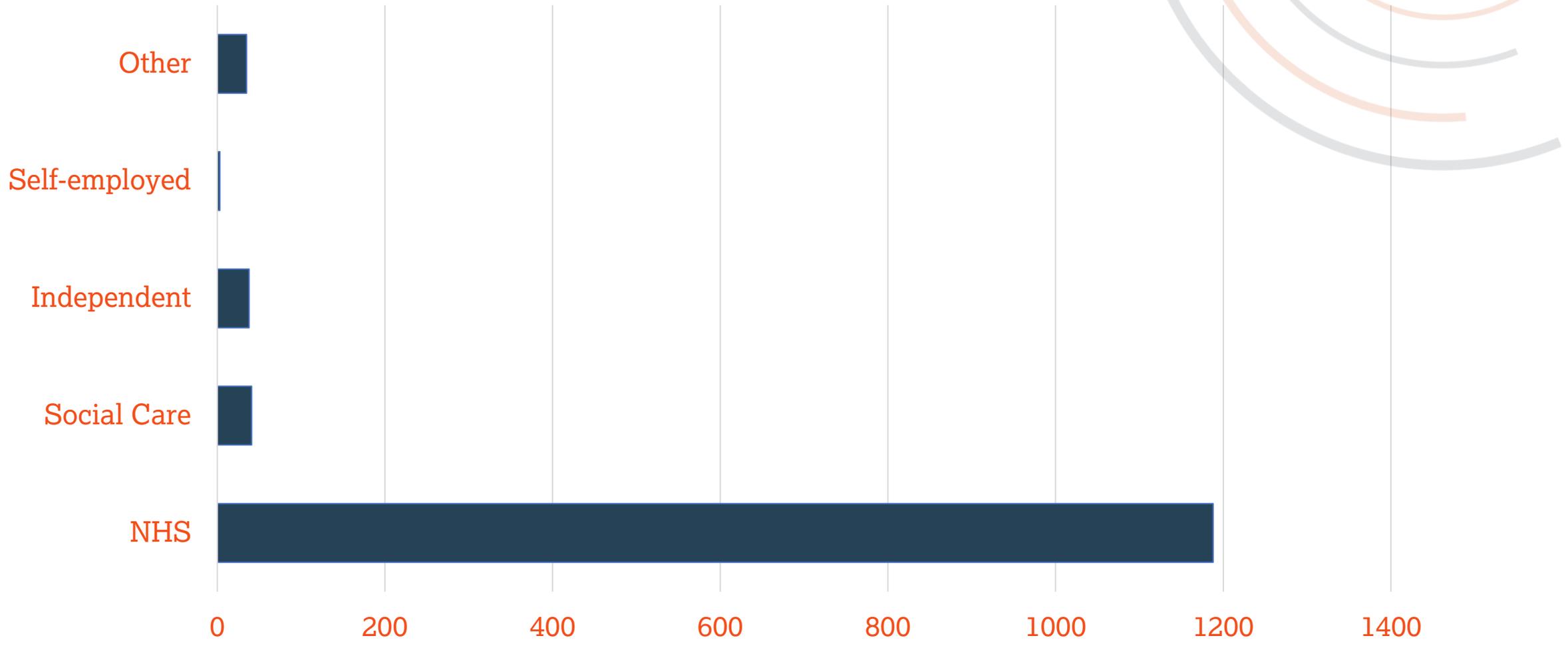
- Nurse
- Care assistant/support worker
- Psychologist/therapist
- Social Worker
- Other
- Doctor
- Support role
- Allied Health Professional
- Manager

Equivalent full-time salary



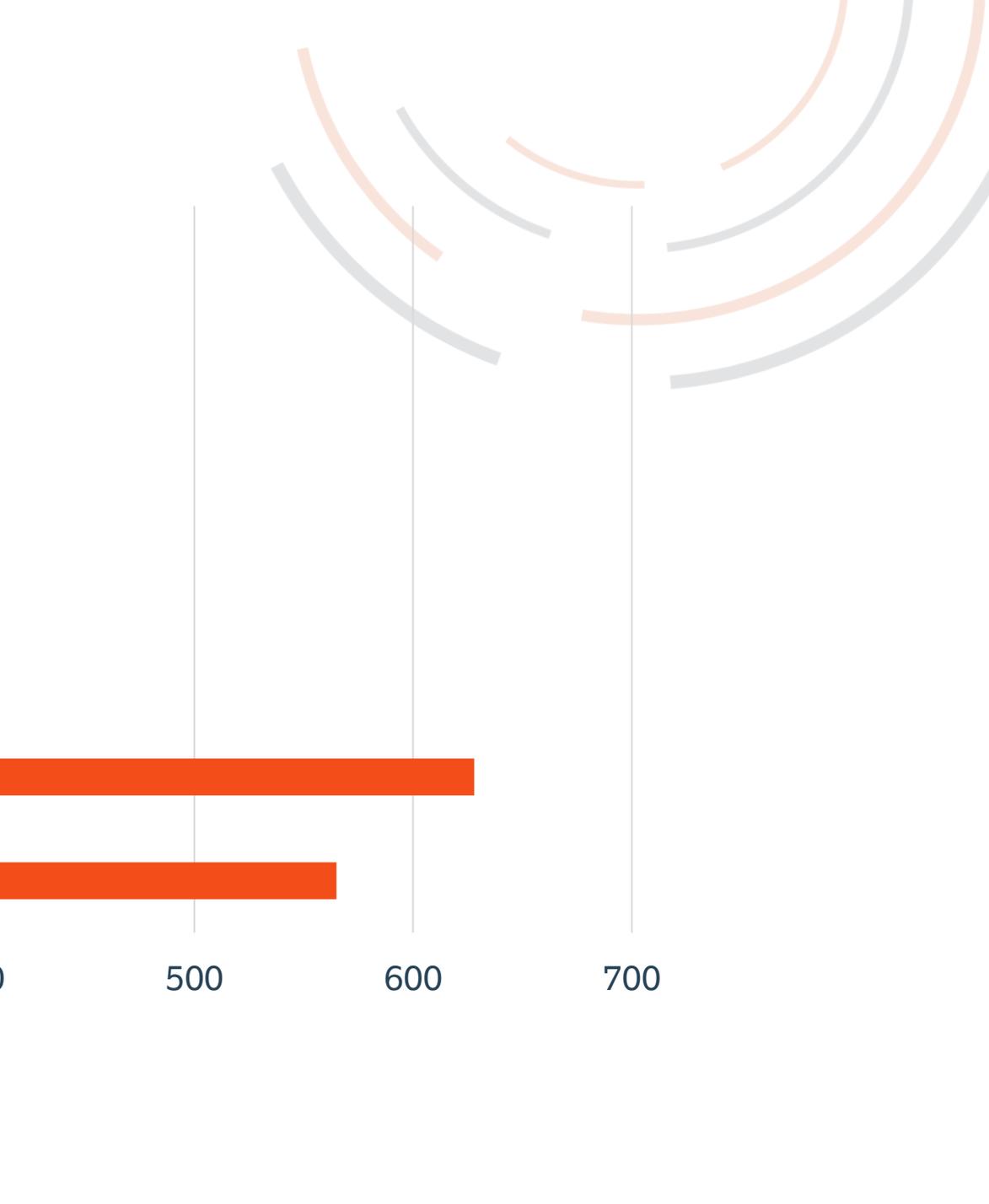
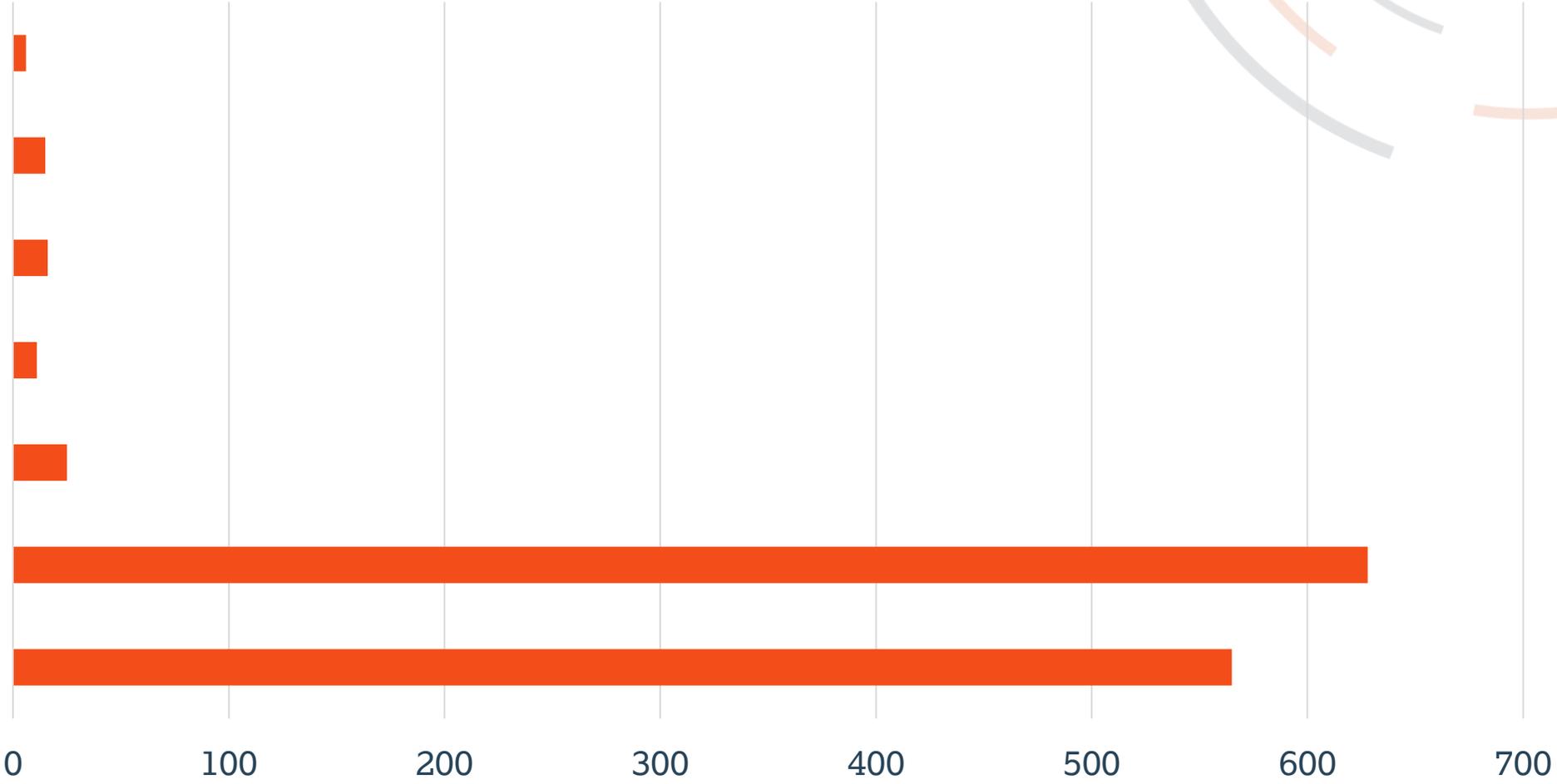
- 10-20k
- 20-30k
- 30-40k
- 40-50k
- 50-60k
- 60-70k
- 70-80k
- 80k+

Sector



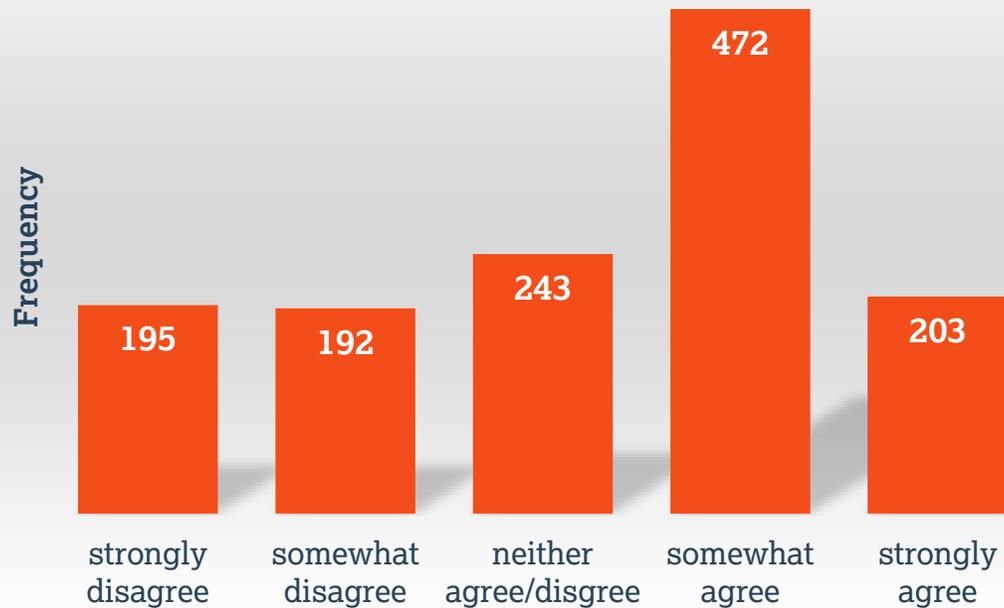
Religion

Sikh
Jewish
Hindu
Buddhist
Muslim
Christian
None



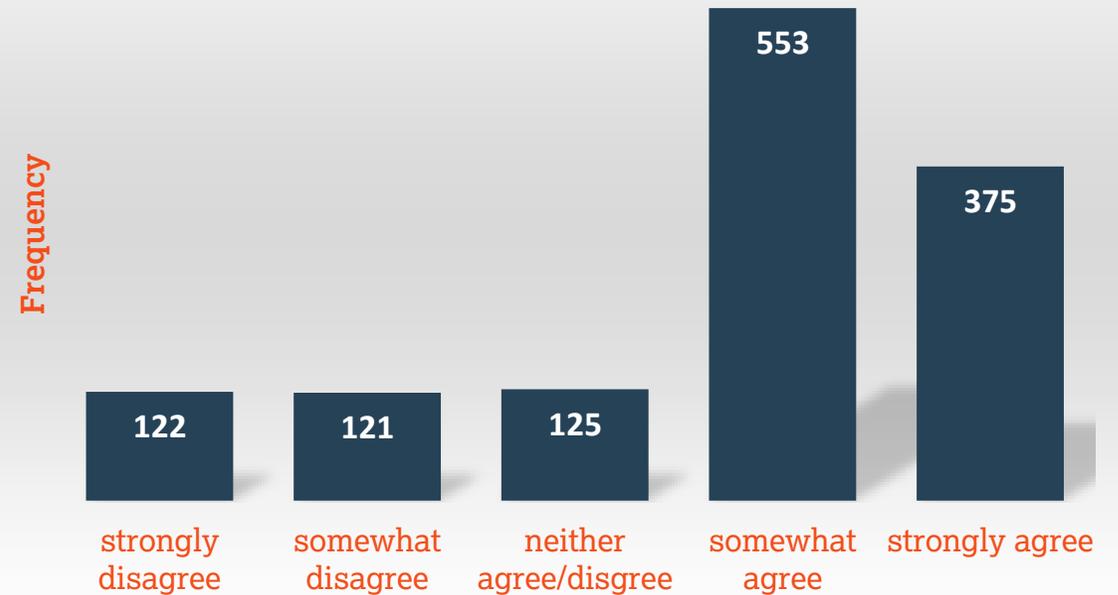
Impact on physical health and wellbeing

My job has had a greater negative impact than usual on my physical health since the COVID-19 pandemic



52% somewhat/strongly agree

My job has had a greater negative impact than usual on my emotional wellbeing since the COVID-19 pandemic



72% somewhat/strongly agree

Working and non-working hours

Average working and non-working hours since lockdown started



Over 11 more hours than usual each week involved in caring responsibilities

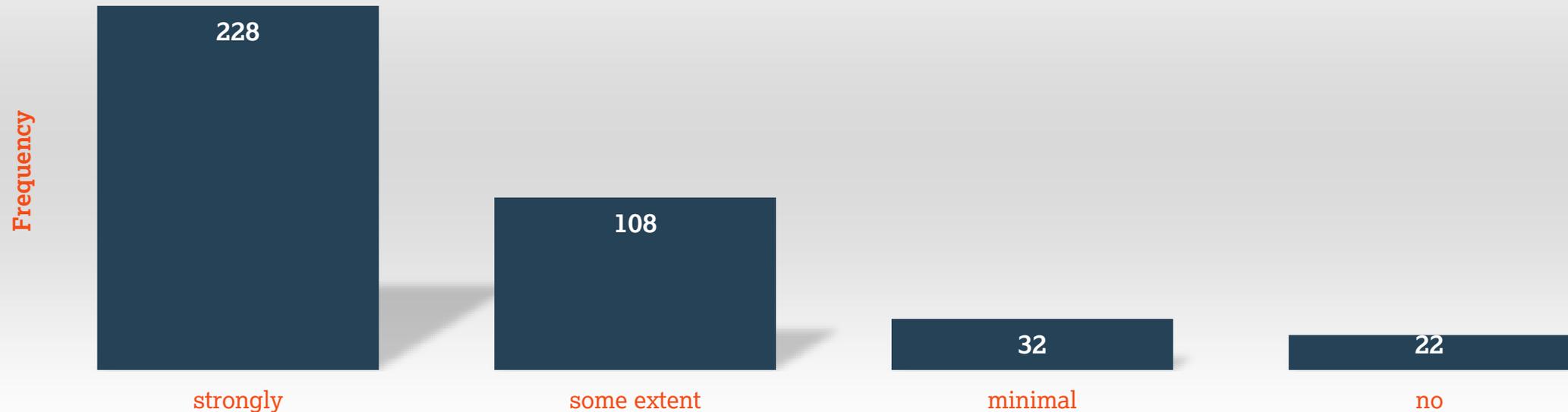
Over 7 more hours than usual each week in unpaid overtime

Support to work flexible hours

NB responses given only by staff who asked to work flexible hours



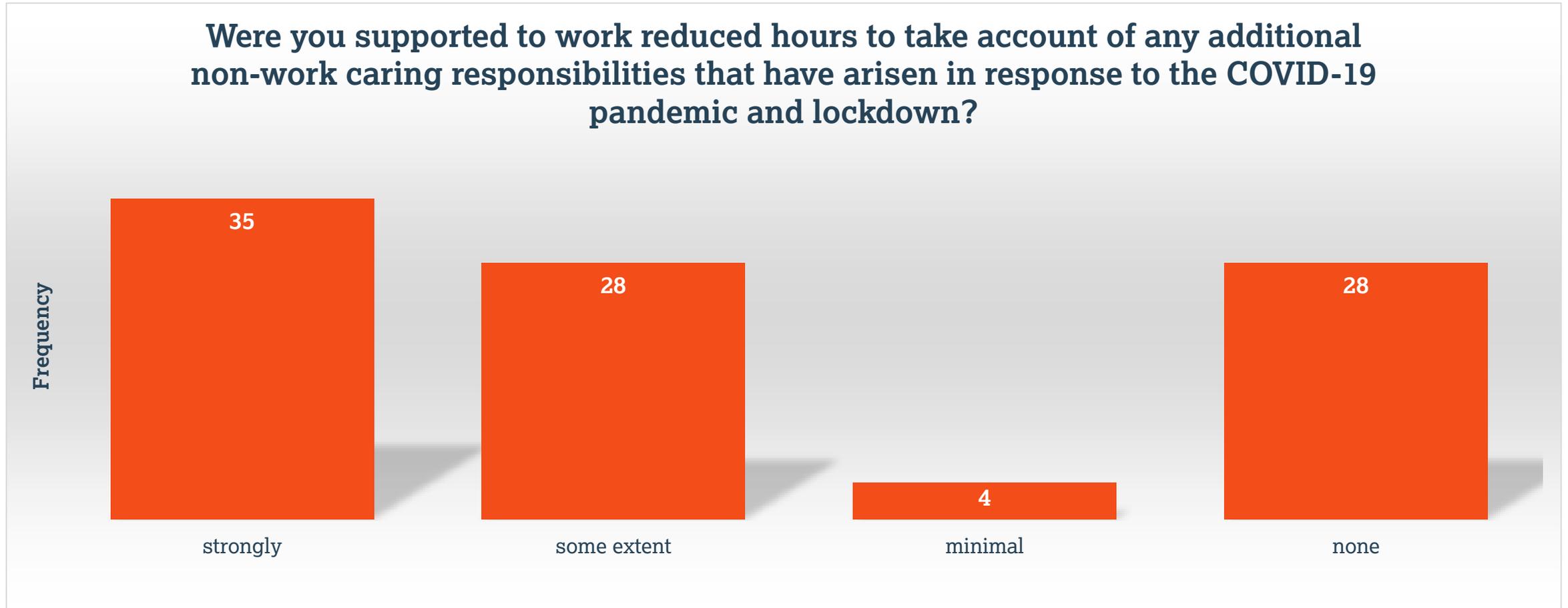
Were you supported to work flexible hours to take account of any additional non-work caring responsibilities that have arisen in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown?



86% were supported to work flexible hours to at least some extent

Support to reduce hours

NB responses given only by staff who asked to reduce their hours



66% were supported to reduce their hours to at least some extent

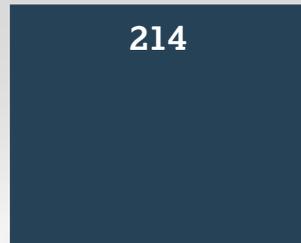
Safety sharing personal concerns

I have felt safe sharing my personal concerns or needs with my manager in relation to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic

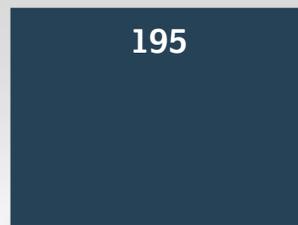
Frequency



strongly disagree



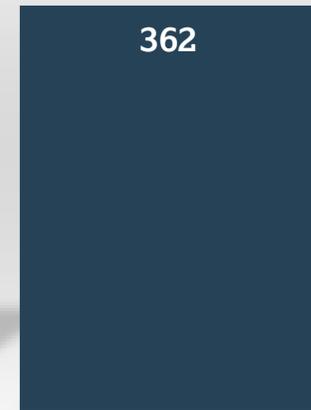
somewhat disagree



neither agree/disagree



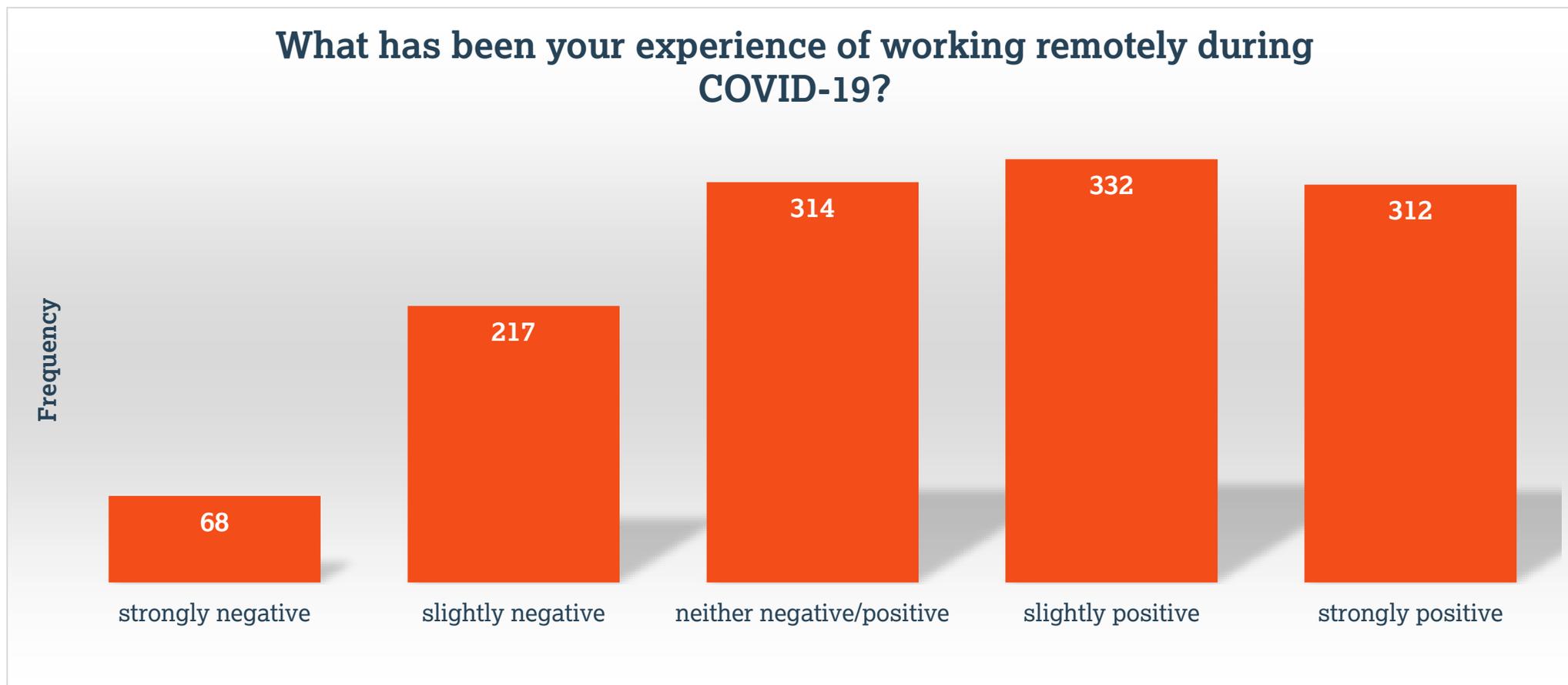
somewhat agree



strongly agree

26% somewhat/strongly disagreed that they felt safe sharing their personal concerns with their manager

Experience of remote working

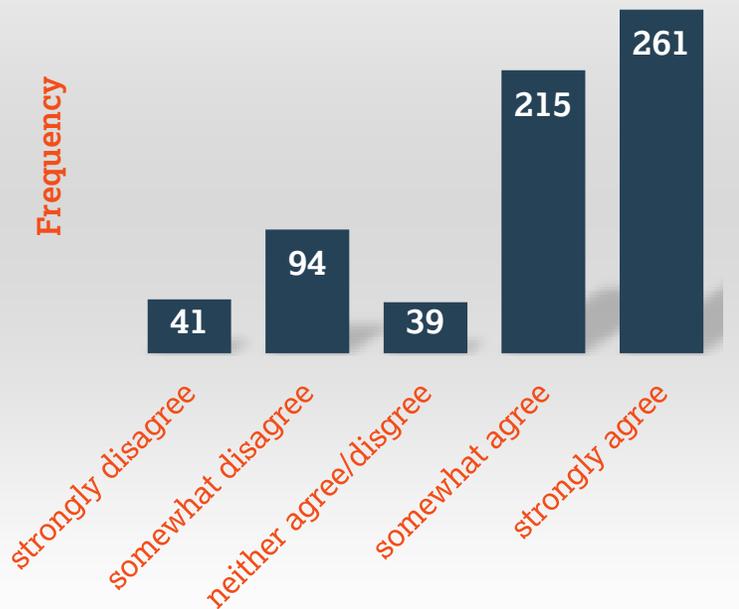


23% have had a slight or strong negative experience of remote working

Personal protective equipment (PPE)

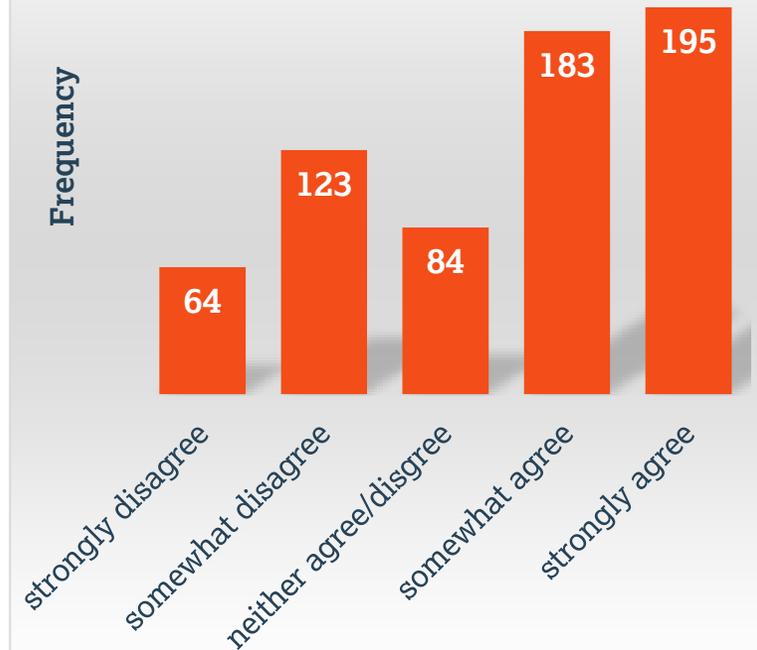


Adequate PPE has been available in my workplace in line with Public Health England guidance



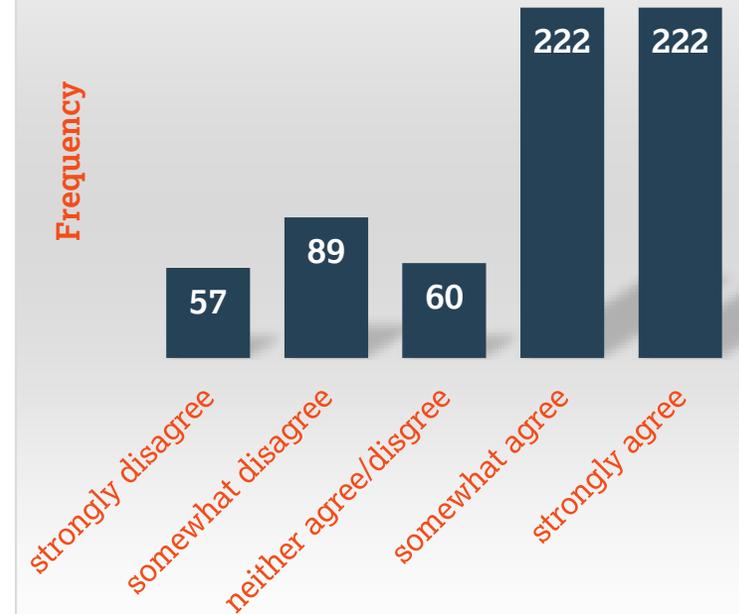
21% somewhat/strongly disagree

PPE has been available in all the sizes needed



29% somewhat/strongly disagree

Appropriate staff training has been given to all staff who need it on the correct use of PPE



22% somewhat/strongly disagree

Safety working from home

- A small but distinct percentage of respondents (2.6 per cent) said there were factors in their home that made working from home problematic for their personal safety.
- Of the black staff who responded, three out of 54 reported feeling unsafe at home.
- Of the Asian staff who responded, four out of 59 reported feeling unsafe at home.
- Of the white staff who responded, 26 out of 1,088 reported feeling unsafe at home.

Key differences between sub-groups

There were statistically significant and conceptually meaningful differences as follows:

- Respondents earning higher salaries worked more unpaid hours than respondents earning lower salaries.
- BME respondents felt less safe sharing their personal concerns with managers than white respondents.
- Respondents with adult dependants felt less safe sharing their personal concerns with manager than respondents without adult dependants.
- Respondents with children reported that work has had a greater negative impact on their physical health and emotional wellbeing since the lockdown started, than respondents without children.
- Respondents with children reported working more hours in non-work caring responsibilities than respondents without children.
- Respondents with children reported working more unpaid hours than respondents without children.
- No meaningful or significant differences were found on survey responses according to sexual orientation, religion, sector or role type.

Male respondents

- 121 men responded to the survey.
- The pattern of findings from these 121 men was similar to findings from women.
- However, the small sample size of male respondents does not allow meaningful comparison to the findings from women.

Recommendations

1. Requests to work flexible/reduced hours should always be accommodated unless there are exceptional reasons why this is not possible.
2. Managers should pay particular attention to the physical and emotional health needs of female staff with children during the pandemic.
3. Staff should be discouraged from working unpaid overtime and to maintain good work-life boundaries, particularly when working from home and for staff with children.
4. Organisations should prioritise the appointment of a wellbeing champion, and the national wellbeing offers should be extended to all across health and care and continue beyond this immediate crisis.
5. NHSEI should ensure the continuation of all wellbeing support and psychological support that will be needed by those on the front line.
6. Staff safety is a priority – PPE must always be available in all sizes and appropriate training in using PPE must be given. If PPE is not available, workers need to know how to speak up and be encouraged to do so.
7. Managers should support workers to speak up about personal concerns in relation to the pandemic, being mindful that BME staff and staff with adult dependants may find it particularly difficult to share their concerns, and signposting to alternative speaking-up channels.
8. Managers should create a culture where workers feel able to speak up about their personal safety at home and, where concerns are shared, staff should be proactively helped to seek support.
9. Organisations should review their home working policies, and ensure staff have access to the appropriate equipment and safety assessments are undertaken.
10. Domestic violence information and support services should be made available to all staff working across health and care.

1. Requests to work flexible/reduced hours should always be accommodated unless there are exceptional reasons why this is not possible.

Supporting resources

- This [flexible working guide](#) from NHS Employers is designed to help embed flexible working for nurses in your organisation.
- The NHS Employers [flexible working hub](#) has a host of [advice and resources](#) to support flexible working.
- [FlexNHS](#) is a free network that promotes and enables flexible working in the NHS.

The resources referenced in the following slides are not a definitive list and may be used to support action against more than one of the recommendations.

2. Managers should pay particular attention to the physical and emotional health needs of female staff with children during the pandemic.

Supporting resources

- This [resource from NHS Employers](#) helps employers gain buy-in from senior leaders to support your health and wellbeing agenda.
- These [NHS Employers resources](#) help support the physical and mental wellbeing of staff with children.
- The [How Are You Feeling Today, NHS? toolkit](#) from NHS Employers helps employers start a conversation with staff about mental health.
- Guidance on [how managers can support workplace mental wellbeing](#).
- The [Every Mind Matters toolkit](#) helps to check in with staff and recognise their mental health.
- For further information, see the NHS Employers [health, safety and wellbeing COVID-19 guidance](#).



3. Staff should be discouraged from working unpaid overtime and to maintain good work-life boundaries, particularly when working from home and for staff with children.

Supporting resources:

- The NHS Employers COVID-19 guidance on [staff health safety and wellbeing](#) and resources help to support the physical and mental wellbeing of [staff with children](#).
- Staff can check if they are eligible for free childcare with this government guidance on [childcare choices](#).
- The NHS Staff Council [overtime guidance](#) helps support conversations on temporary changes to overtime payments made to staff during the COVID-19.
- Make health and wellbeing a vital conversation with this useful [toolkit from NHS Employers](#).

4. Organisations should prioritise the appointment of a wellbeing champion, and the national wellbeing offers should be extended to all across health and care and continue beyond this immediate crisis.

Supporting resources:

- This resource from [Mind](#) supports organisations to implement a workplace mental health champion.
- The [NHS Health and Wellbeing Framework](#) supports the appointment of health and wellbeing champions.



5. NHSEI should ensure the continuation of all wellbeing support and psychological support that will be needed by those on the front line.

Supporting resources:

- [We are the NHS: People Plan 2020/21 – action for us all](#), sets out practical actions for employers and systems as well as the actions that NHSEI and Health Education England will take over the remainder of 2020/21. It includes specific commitments around looking after our people with quality health and wellbeing support for everyone.

6. Staff safety is a priority – PPE must always be available in all sizes and appropriate training in using PPE must be given. If PPE is not available, workers need to know how to speak up and be encouraged to do so.

Supporting resources:

- Find the latest updates on PPE from [NHS England](#).
 - Find information on the use of PPE and infection control and prevention procedures in this [guidance](#) from NHS Employers.
 - Access resources from the [Health Safety Executive](#) about how to properly fit PPE.
 - Touch Design created bespoke resources for the NHS to help with staff communications during the COVID-19 response. Some of these are shareable, contact [Touch Design](#) for more information.
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7. Managers should support workers to speak up about personal concerns in relation to the pandemic, being mindful that BME staff and staff with adult dependants may find it particularly difficult to share their concerns, and signposting to alternative speaking up channels.

Supporting resources:

- NHS Employers' COVID-19 guidance for NHS workforce leaders helps employers protect the [health, safety and wellbeing](#) of staff as we move through the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The [National Guardian's Office website](#) has information and resources to support workers to speak up, including the Freedom to Speak Up Guardian Directory, and resources to help organisations foster a positive speaking-up culture.
- The [raising concerns section](#) of the NHS Employers website has resources, guidance and information to help NHS organisations effectively respond to concerns.
- Find out why black and minority ethnic staff may feel more reluctant to share their concerns with these [lived experience stories](#) from The King's Fund.
- Shared learning from [Neil Thwaite, chief executive of Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust](#), on the steps his organisation has taken to protect the wellbeing of the workforce.
- This wellness action plan from Mind helps on [to support your mental health when working from home](#).

8. Managers should create a culture where workers feel able to speak up about their personal safety at home and, where concerns are shared, staff should be proactively helped to seek support.

Supporting resources:

- NHS Employers' COVID-19 guidance for NHS workforce leaders helps employers preserve and protect the [health, safety and wellbeing](#) of staff as we move through the COVID-19 pandemic.
- NHS Employers' guidance helps organisations with [enabling and supporting staff to work safely from home](#).
- Shared learning from [Neil Thwaite, chief executive of Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust](#), on the steps his organisation has taken to protect the wellbeing of the workforce.
- The [National Guardian's Office website](#) has information and resources to support workers to speak up, including the Freedom to Speak Up Guardian Directory, and resources to help organisations foster a positive speaking-up culture.
- The [Every Mind Matters toolkit](#) helps to recognise mental health and check in with staff.

9. Organisations should review their home working policies, and ensure staff have access to the appropriate equipment and safety assessments are undertaken.

Supporting resources:

- NHS Employers' COVID-19 guidance for NHS workforce leaders helps employers [enable and support staff to work from home](#).
 - This guidance from [Acas](#) includes the steps employers need to take to ensure working from home is suitable for staff.
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10. Domestic violence information and support services should be made available to all working across health and care.

Supporting resources:

- This resources from the NHS Staff Council Health and Safety Partnership Group has guidance on [domestic violence and abuse](#).
- This guide from the NHS Staff Council Health and Safety Partnership Group provides guidance on dealing with [domestic violence](#) and the steps employers should take to support staff.
- This blog from [Belfast Health and Social Care Trust](#) talks about the importance of supporting employees who are experiencing domestic abuse.