



The Future of Worklife in ITSM:

Tech, trends and the
human factor

Table of Contents

- 01** Introduction
- 02** Executive Summary
- 03** Respondent Demographics
- 04** Technology and the Workplace
- 05** The IT Professional's Perspective
- 06** Skills Development
- 07** Worklife balance and wellbeing
- 08** Conclusion

01 Introduction

In the midst of rapid technology advances and the relentless march towards **Industry 4.0**, IT service management (ITSM) is experiencing an exciting journey into the future, or is it? The transition from the last industrial revolution to the next is being driven by the appetite for businesses to transform, supported by data science, machine learning, the advent of intelligent platforms, generative AI, and the **potential of artificial general intelligence**. But what does that mean for IT service management and the intersection between humans and machines?

Well, that intersection presents both challenges and opportunities for IT professionals. The future of worklife in ITSM is poised at a critical juncture, with the convergence of rapid advances in technology and an increasing focus on the human factor shaping the working landscape. If it does mean an exciting journey to the future, questions arise about the **role of technology** in transforming IT service management. How could technological advancements affect IT professionals? What are the key considerations as we embrace the future of work? What opportunities and challenges do we expect?

This research report aims to explore these questions and more, to provide insights into the intricate relationship between **technology, humans** and **the future of work**, by examining the potential implications, opportunities, and challenges presented to the people who work in IT. Through this research, we hope to offer valuable insight that helps IT professionals navigate their path towards the future.



02 Executive Summary

Between the 15th of March and April 24th 2023, Service Desk Institute, published an industry survey to research the future of worklife in IT service management.

The key findings in this report identify a number of data points related to roles and responsibilities, worklife balance, emotional wellbeing, employee experience, technological focus and skills; that combined, provide us with insight into what IT professionals consider to be important as IT service management evolves to meet the needs of the near future.

The full report provides additional analysis and findings as well as Cohort specific data. As a management summary, the key findings are:



42%
Work
remotely



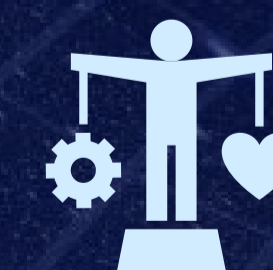
36%
Hybrid
workers



72%
Happy
with their
current role



42%
Considering
leaving their
current roles



73%
The same
worklife
balance

Of the 22% who said they work on location at an office, 14% said that it was their preferred location, and just 8% said they would prefer to work in a hybrid capacity if they were able to.

67% of respondents said that they are appropriately paid for their current role, and 72% said they were happy in their current role. However, 42% of respondents said that they are seriously considering leaving their current roles.

73% of respondents said that their worklife balance is the same as it was in 2022. 18% said that their worklife balance is better in 2023 than it was in 2022. The top 3 reasons for improved work like balance are remote work options, flexible schedules and a supportive line manager.

Only 17% of respondents said that they were worried about their job security. The top 3 reasons given as to why these respondents are worried about job security are business restructuring and mergers, economic instability and political instability.

43% of respondents said that their **worklife balance** is positively contributing to their emotional wellbeing.

The top 3 things organisations can do to improve **emotional wellbeing** are to improve salary or benefits, reduce workloads and provide more flexible work schedules.



The top 3 focus areas for organisations in the next 12 months are improving the **end-user experience**, improving the **employee experience** and digital transformation.



The top technology initiatives to support those focus areas are **self-service** technologies, artificial intelligence and machine learning and chatbots or **virtual agents**.



The overall qualitative feedback regarding the potential impact of technology, from both positive and negative viewpoints, is the impact **artificial intelligence** will have on organisations. This includes the potential impact of ChatGPT, and how this kind of artificial intelligence could have both a positive and negative impact on IT professionals.



The biggest impact on how organisations practice **continual improvement** now, and how they will practice continual improvement in 2028, will be the changes from human-driven to data-driven decision-making, siloed to collaborative teams, and cost reduction to **value creation**.

Our respondents predict that the biggest ITSM trends for 2024 will be **customer experience and XLAs**, chatbots and virtual agents and machine learning and artificial intelligence.

The challenges Service Desk professionals will face in 2024 centre on **adapting to continuous change**. This includes adapting to new technologies, keeping up with the skills requirements that new technologies bring, and the potential of job displacement as a result of adopting new technologies.

84% of respondents said that over the last 12 months, they have had to introduce **new skills, up-skill, or re-skill** their Service Desk staff.

The majority of those respondents focussed on improving technical skills due to changes in **technology** that require new skills and a recognition of technical skills deficit at first-line support. However, the need for focused **human skills** still prevails; the top 3 skills needed in the next two or three years are emotional intelligence, problem-solving and analytical thinking.

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Respondent Demographics

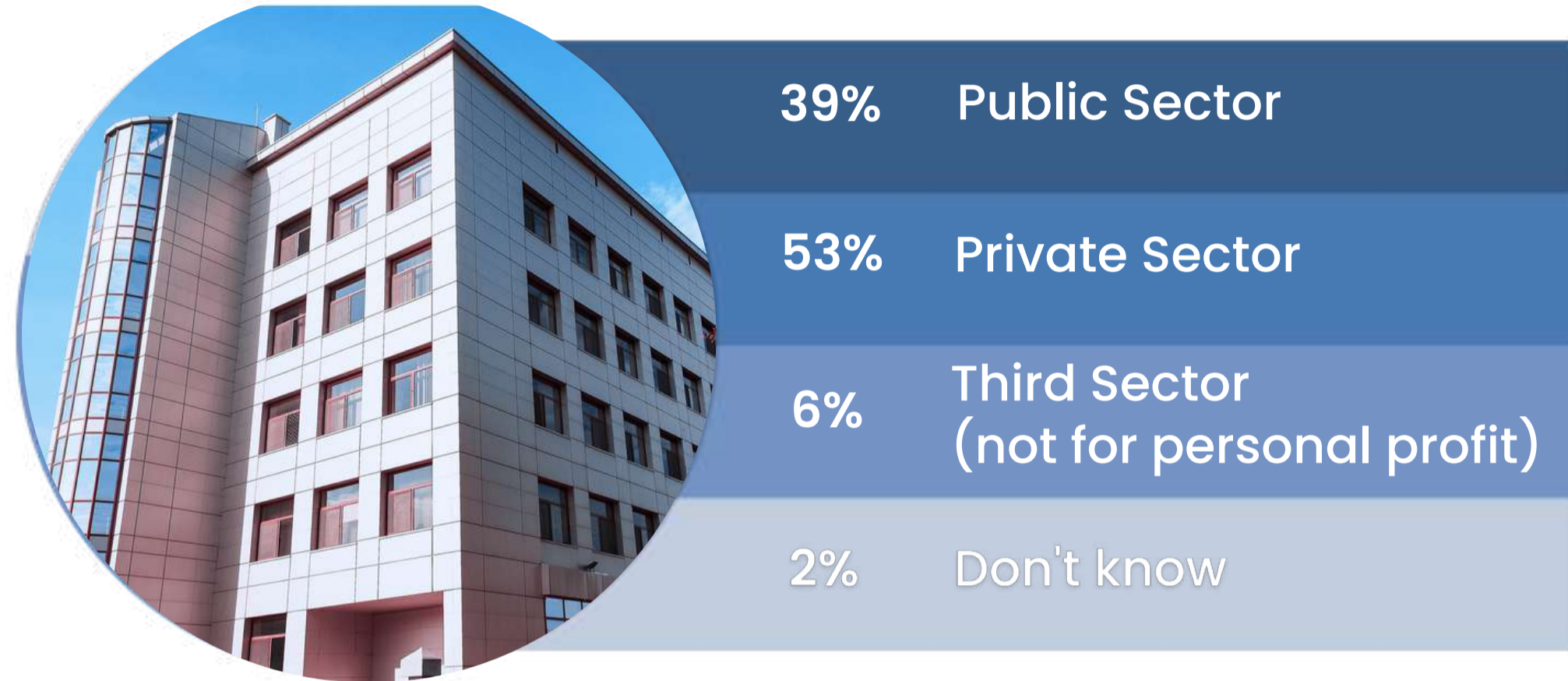
The key cohorts in this report include:

- 1 Respondents who categorise themselves as working at the **Service Desk** (including Service Desk Manager, Service Desk Team Leader and Service Desk Analyst)
- 2 Respondents who categorise themselves as **Managers** (including Service Desk Manager and IT Manager)
- 3 Respondents who categorise themselves as an **IT Manager**
- 4 Respondents who categorise themselves as **C-Level and IT Director**

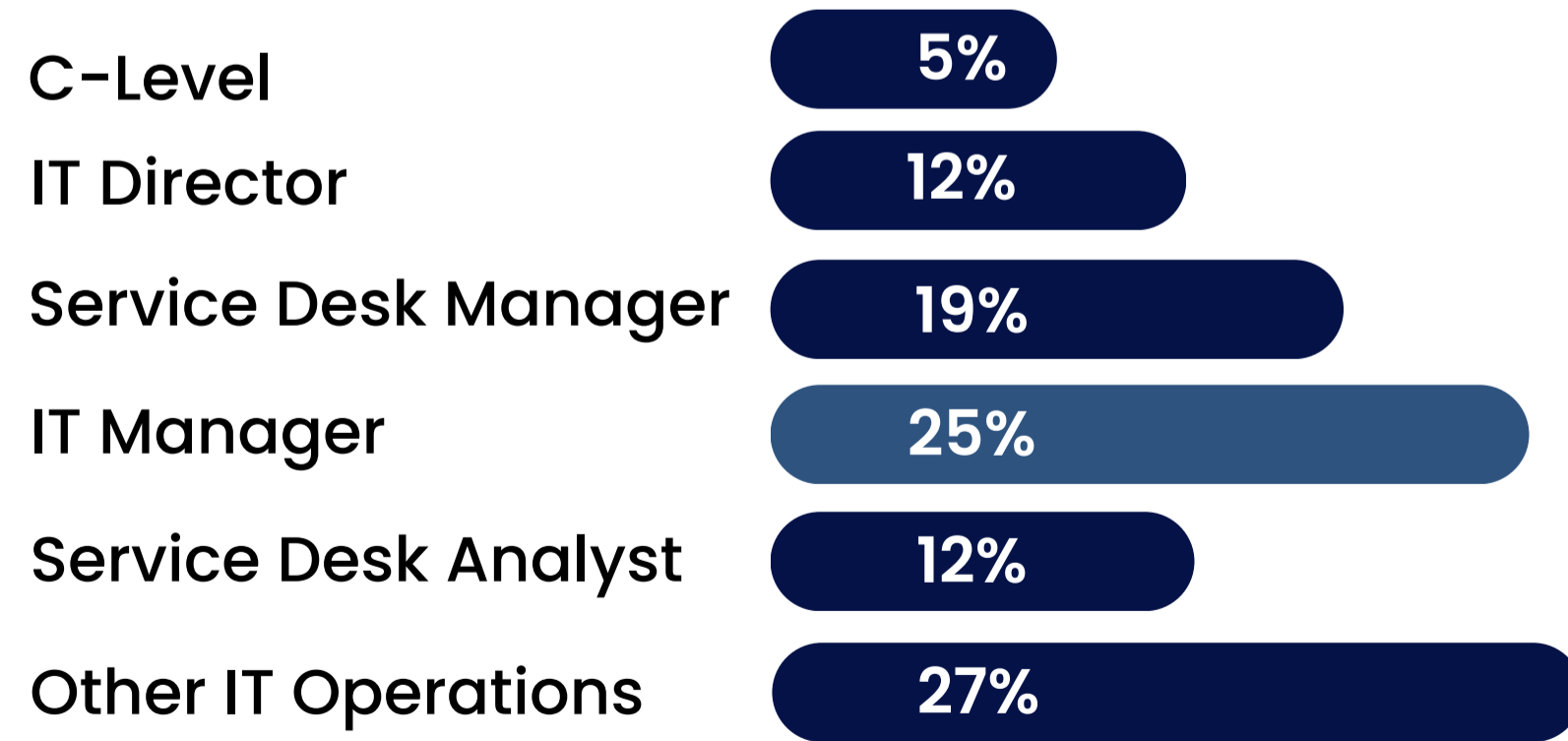


The survey respondents' demographic data, shows a lean toward participants from large private sector organisations who have been in post for between 1 and 3 years. The largest respondent demographic role wise, are IT Managers and Service Desk Managers, making up 44% of respondents.

Which of the following sectors classifies the organisation you work in?

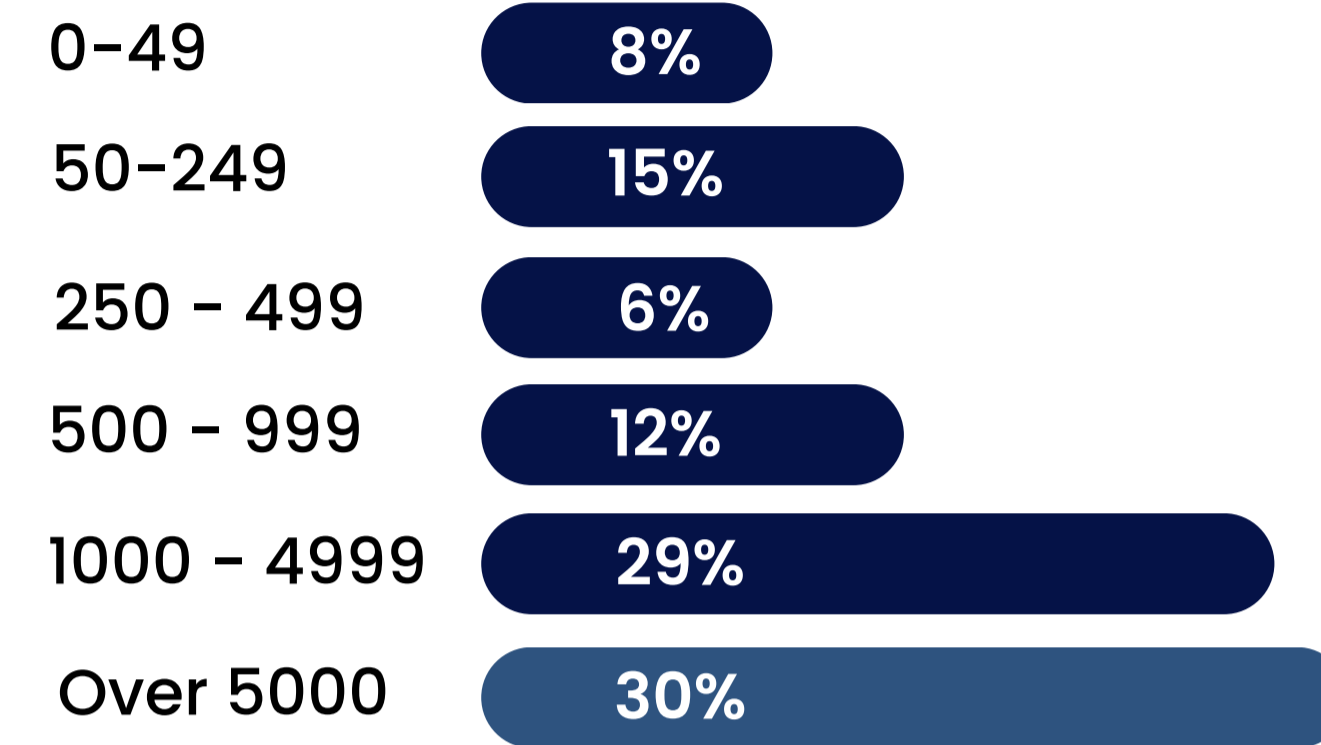


What best describes your Job Title?



Other IT Operations include roles such as Desktop Engineer, IT Consultant, Project Manager, Database Admin, System Admin, Service Architect, Customer Success, Quality and Continual Improvement

Which of the following best describes the number of full time employees, or equivalent full time employees, in your organisation?



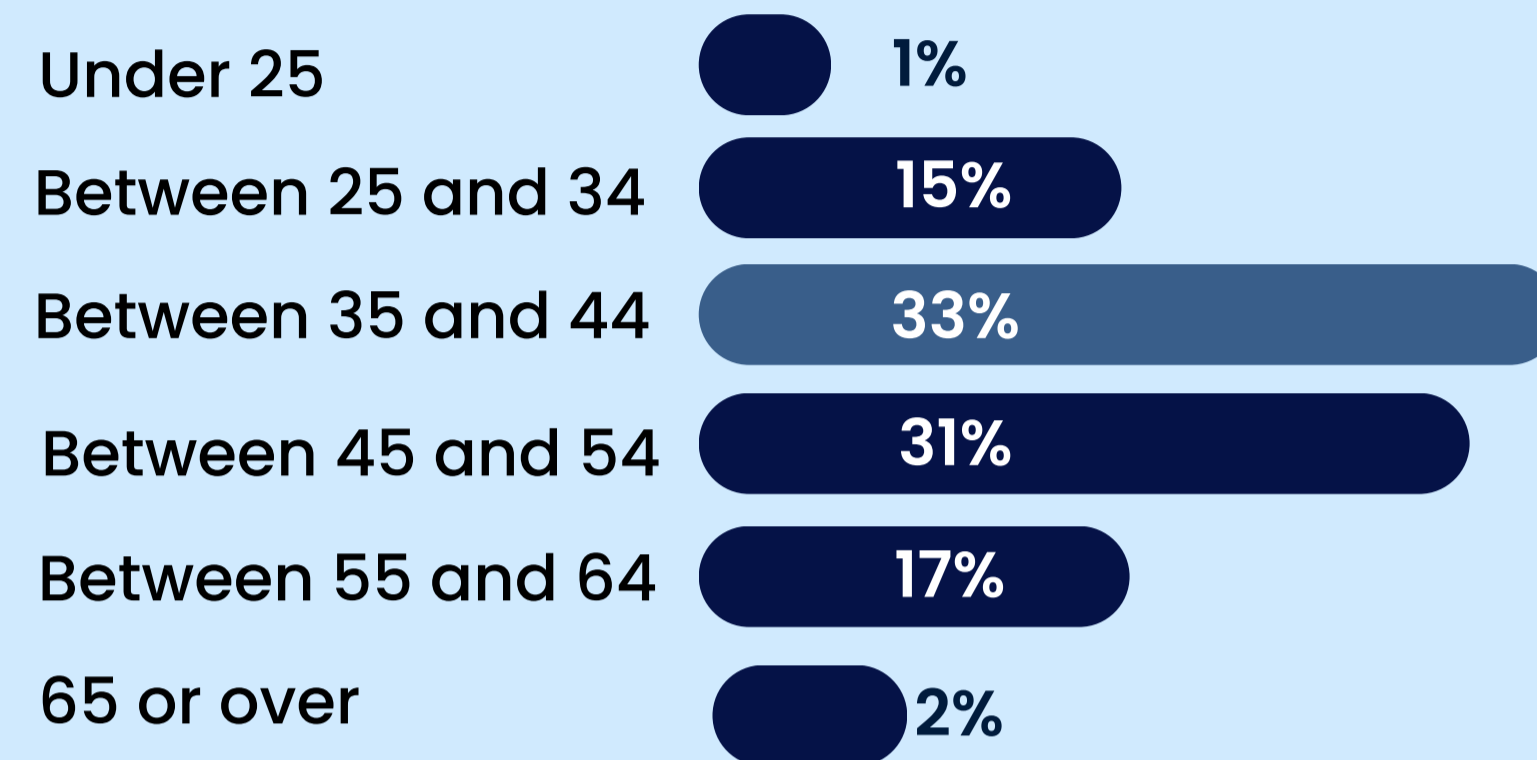
Small enterprise organisations, 0 to 49 FTE, make up 8% of respondents. Medium enterprise organisations, 50 to 249 FTE, make up 15% of respondents and large enterprise organisations, 250 and more FTE, makes up 77% of respondents.

How long have you been in your current role?

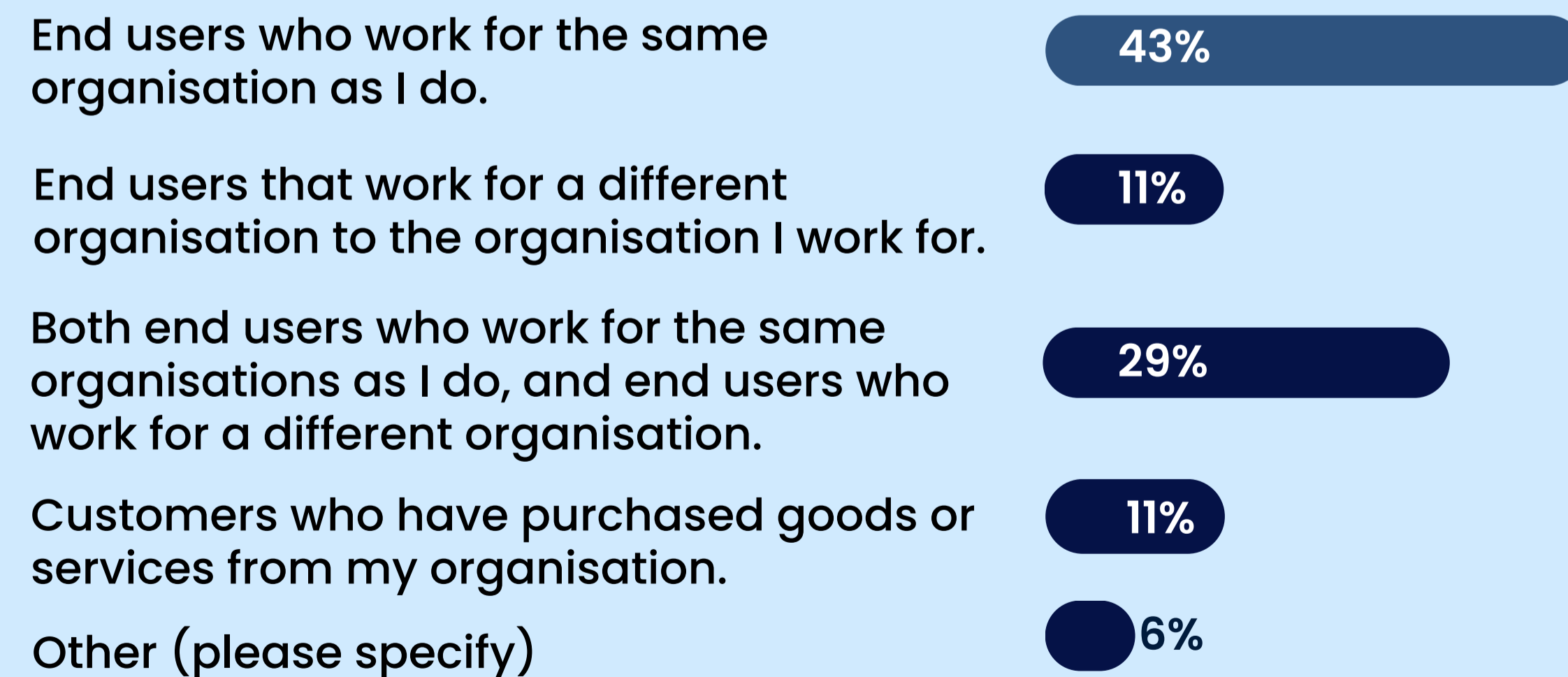


The largest demographic age range wise, are respondents between 35 and 44, and between 45 and 54, making up 64% of all respondents.

What is your age?

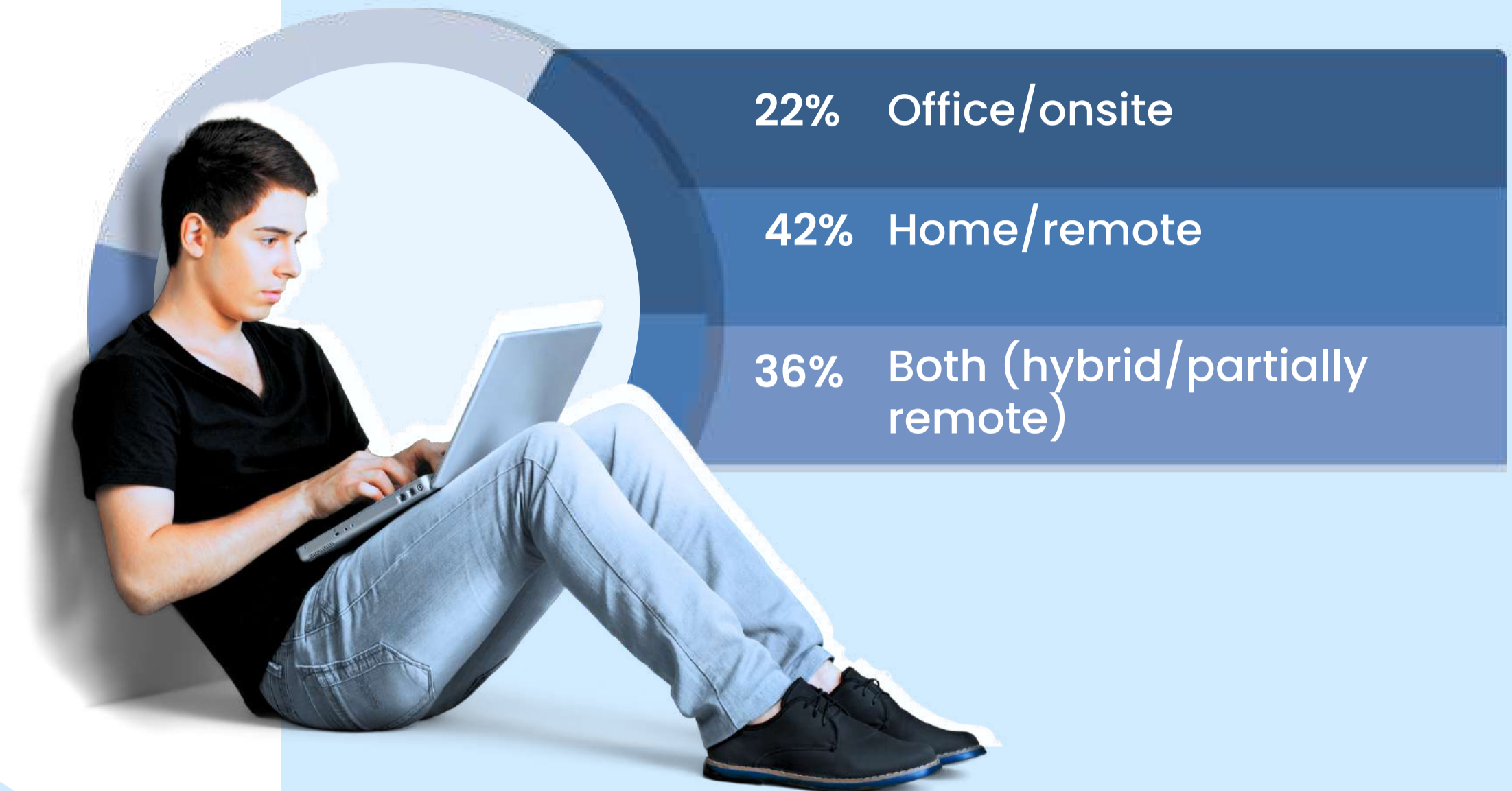


How would you describe the end-users whom your service desk supports?

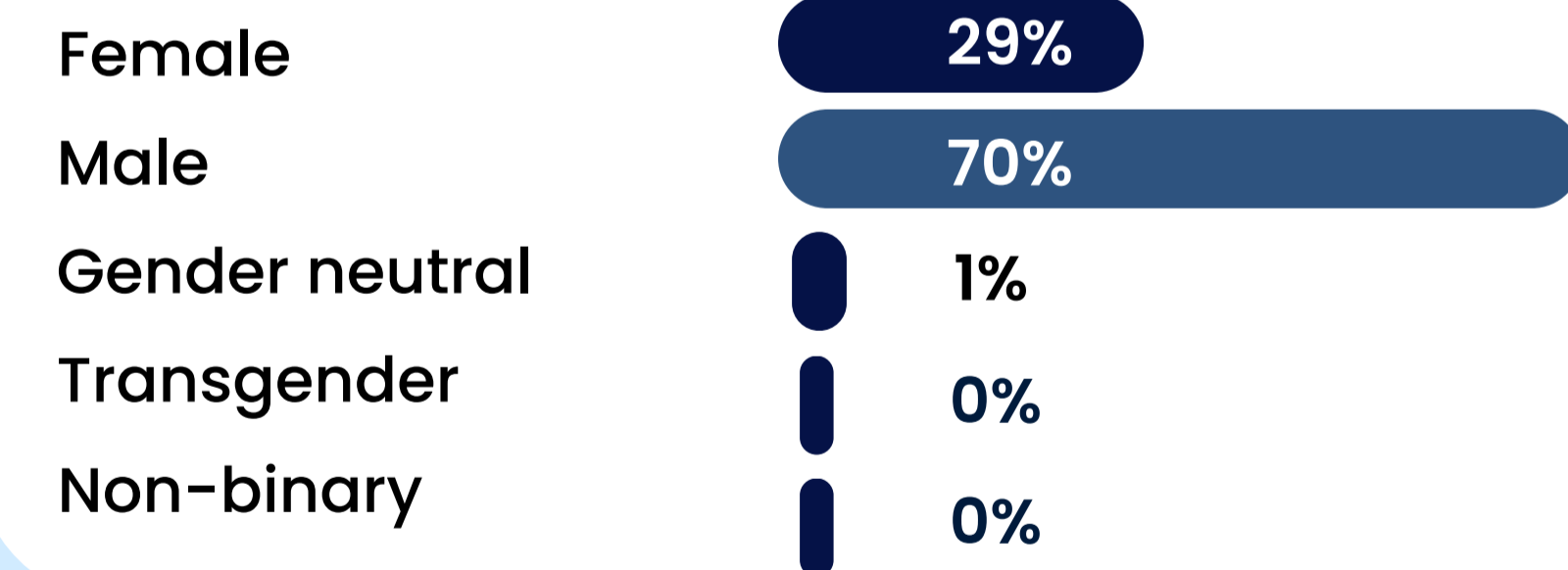


Remote work is here to stay.

What is your primary location for work?



How do you identify?



This is the first time SDI has included demographic data on how respondents identify, and primary work location. 70% of respondents identified as male, 29% identified as female and 1% as gender neutral. 42% of respondents said their primary work location is at home, 22% said their primary work location from an office and 36% said they are hybrid workers.

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Technology and the Workplace

In today's rapidly evolving business landscape, **the future of work** is intrinsically linked to the role of technology in the workplace.

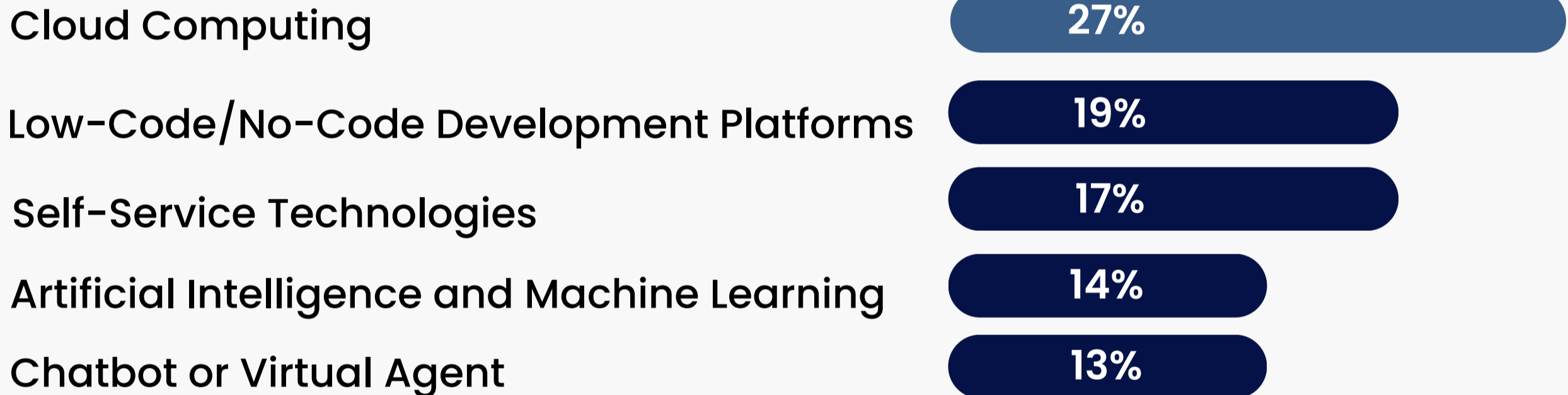
In this section of the research, we wanted to understand what organisations are focussing on now and in the near future and how technology is supporting those focus areas, along with the **IT professional's view** on technology and the workplace.



The impact of technology on worklife

Let's first look at the last 12 months, to understand the impact of technology advances on people's working lives.

Which of these technological advances has had the most positive improvement in your working life, during the last 12 months?



When asked which technology has had the biggest effect on **improving how people work** over the last 12 months, the top 3 responses in a multichoice set of 29 options are **cloud computing**, **low-code/no-code** development platforms and **self-service** technologies.

27% of respondents said that cloud computing has improved their working lives, and 19% of respondents said that low-code/no-code development platforms has improved their working lives.

We didn't ascertain the reasons why these technologies have had the biggest effect. However, cloud computing and low-code/no-code technologies can improve working lives by offering increased accessibility, flexibility and collaboration options to support remote work options. They can also help to empower non-technical end users and reduce the support dependency on IT teams, along with fostering innovation and self-sufficiency within an organisation.

Other technologies mentioned here include **Artificial Intelligence** and machine learning, and chatbots or **virtual agents**, a theme that we see throughout the research data.

It's interesting to note that 25% of respondents said that technological advances have not improved their working life in the last 12 months.

Again, we don't have data to understand why this is the case. However, there could be several reasons, including the likes of limited or no technology advances, technology adoption challenges, a mismatch between technology and people needs, increased workloads or responsibilities as a result of new technology, or inadequate support, knowledge and resources.

When it comes to an understanding of what organisations are planning for the next 12 months, the top 3 responses in a multichoice set of 19 options are improving the **end-user experience** and the **employee experience**, with 75% and 50% of respondents respectively, selecting end-user experience and employee experience as focus areas.

What areas will your organisation's IT department be focusing on in the next 12 months?



Improving the experience proves to be a clear focus for IT. The experience management movement in IT has seen continued growth over the last 12 months; based on our data, we expect this movement to continue to grow.

Many may argue that IT service management is augmenting into IT experience management, with the importance of the hybrid digital workplace experience core to driving digital businesses. Alongside the focus on experience, digital transformation, upskilling or reskilling, improved security and enabling the self-sufficient end user are also key focus areas.



What areas will your organisation's IT department be focusing on in the next 12 months? Let's look at the cohort data to analyse how each group responded.

Respondents who categorised themselves as working at the **Service Desk**:

- Improving the end-user experience
- Enabling the self-sufficient end user
- Improving the employee experience
- Our digital transformation strategy



Respondents who categorised themselves as **Service Desk Manager** or **IT Manager**:

- Improving the end-user experience
- Enabling the self-sufficient end user
- Improving the employee experience
- Our digital transformation strategy

Respondents who categorised themselves as an **IT Manager**:

- Improving the end-user experience
- Our digital transformation strategy
- Enabling the self-sufficient end user
- Improving the employee experience



Respondents who categorised themselves as **C-Level** and **IT Director**:

- Improving the end-user experience
- Improved data and cyber security
- Cost efficiency/optimisation
- Improving the digital workplace

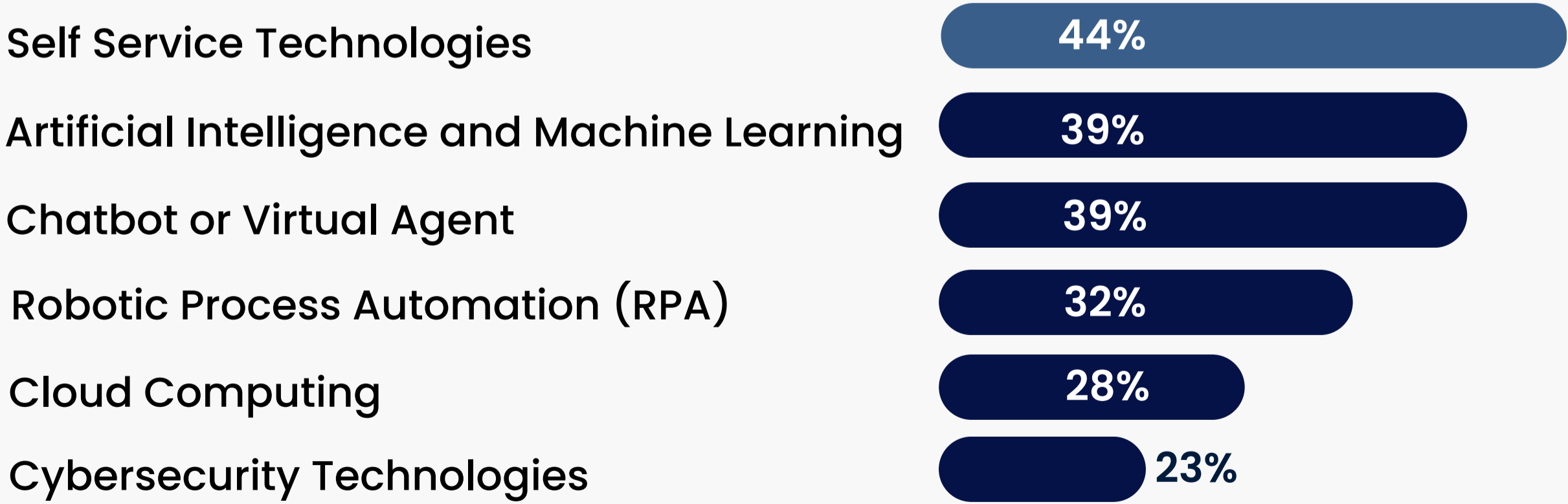
Each cohort prioritises end-user experience.

Improving the **end-user experience** is a **top focus** for each cohort for the next 12 months, with 3 of the 4 cohorts almost mirroring each other by including enabling the self-sufficient end user, improving the employee experience and digital transformation.

In a clear shift from the other cohorts, the C-Level and IT Director cohort has included improved data and cyber security, cost efficiency/optimisation and Improving the digital workplace as a focus for the next 12 months.

From the perspective of enabling those focus areas, we also wanted to understand what **technological advances** organisations will be implementing in the next 12 to 24 months.

What technological advances do you think your organisation will be implementing in the next 12 to 24 months?



The top 4 choices selected by our respondents from 28 technology options are **self-service technologies, artificial intelligence and machine learning, chatbot or virtual agent and robotic process automation.**

Those technologies combined potentially mean we'll see accelerated progress towards the development of intelligent platforms and AI-driven assisted service propositions over the next 2 years.

The recent developments in large language models (LLM) – most notably OpenAI's GPT-4 – the rise of generative AI and sparks of artificial general intelligence could mean that we are at a tipping point in IT service management.

The potential of viable AI-driven support propositions, or AI co-pilots, have the potential to revolutionise support services and influence what service management becomes. From the perspective of the IT professional, that could mean both positive and negative consequences. The upside of increased efficiency, improved decision-making, enhanced end-user support, continuous learning, and upskilling opportunities are tempered by the potential downsides of job displacement, increased reliance on technology, privacy and security concerns and ethical considerations.

What have we learned?

01 Enhancing the end-user experience

Improving the end-user experience is core strategy.

02 Development of intelligent platforms

We expect to see accelerated progress towards the development of intelligent platforms and AI-driven assisted service propositions over the next 2 years.

03 Technology advancements

Technology advances have made a limited positive improvement on some people's working lives in the last 12 months.

[**Conversational AI in Employee Experience**](#)

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05

The IT Professional's Perspective

To better understand the **IT professional perspective** when it comes to the near future, we asked our respondents what technologies most excited them, what technologies they were most concerned about, and what they forecast for IT service management and the near future.

From the resulting qualitative feedback, artificial intelligence features more than in previous SDI research reports. Many may say this was to be expected in the current climate. **OpenAI released ChatGPT** to an unsuspecting world in November 2022, and the internet has gone into overdrive since its release.

Within a week, ChatGPT had 1 million users, and since then, we've seen it develop through a number of releases. In March 2023, to much pomp, the latest version of the LLM that ChatGPT is currently powered by, GTP-4, was released.

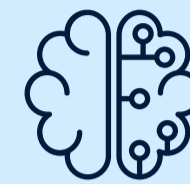
When asked what technologies most excited IT professionals when considering their potential impact of technology in the next 5 years, the overriding feedback was **artificial intelligence** and **ChatGPT**.

81% of the feedback we received cited artificial intelligence as the most exciting technology potential in the near future. We've included some of that feedback in the following quotes from IT professionals.

'Like everyone I'm sure, ChatGPT. It seems as game changing as when the internet became accessible to mainstream consumers'.

In their own words...

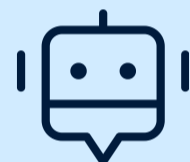
What technologies most excite you when considering their potential impact of technology in the next 5 years?



'Real-time AI co-pilot technology for service desk assistance and support'.



'AI use for call handling in a call centre or a helpdesk, where currently, service desk agents focus on implementing improvement initiatives; we are looking at intelligent systems that can assist end-users and even analyse and propose recommendations'.



"Machine learning and AI to allow our customers to get the best use out of our data. Combined with microservices delivered with low code/no code shared across our global organisation and strong digital and self-service capabilities, we can really start to differentiate ourselves, increasing our customer volumes without needing to increase headcount'.



'ChatGPT, natural language understanding, automation, virtual assistants for end users and service desk agents'.



'Tools that will remove duplication in the day job, tools such as Microsoft Co-pilot'.



'Humans working together to empower one another to harness technology appropriately'.

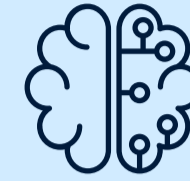
Similarly, when asked what technologies IT professionals are most concerned about when considering their potential impact in the next 5 year's, 83% of respondent feedback also cited AI as most concerning technology, with ChatGPT again being cited. We've included some of the feedback we received in the following quotes from IT professionals.

'For me its AI and chatbots, it is not the technology I'm concerned about, it is the potential of poor decisions being made based on cost over quality of service. We need to ensure customers still have an easy route into a human when required.'



In their own words...

What technologies are you most concerned about when considering their potential impact in the next 5 years?



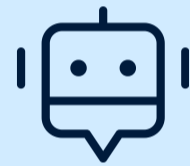
'AI and its misuse if humans don't get together'.

'AI, we are blindly running into all the good, knowingly ignoring the bad... hoping for the best'



'AI and how it will be regulated'.

'ChatGPT is a powerful tool with limited constraints built around it. It has the potential to be misused, mishandled and misunderstood'



'Everything being pushed to the cloud, locking third-party support out of the back-end of systems'.



'I'm more concerned with the organisation's ability to keep pace with technology advances particularly around funding models'.

'I am concerned about technological advances and the impact on the human race'.



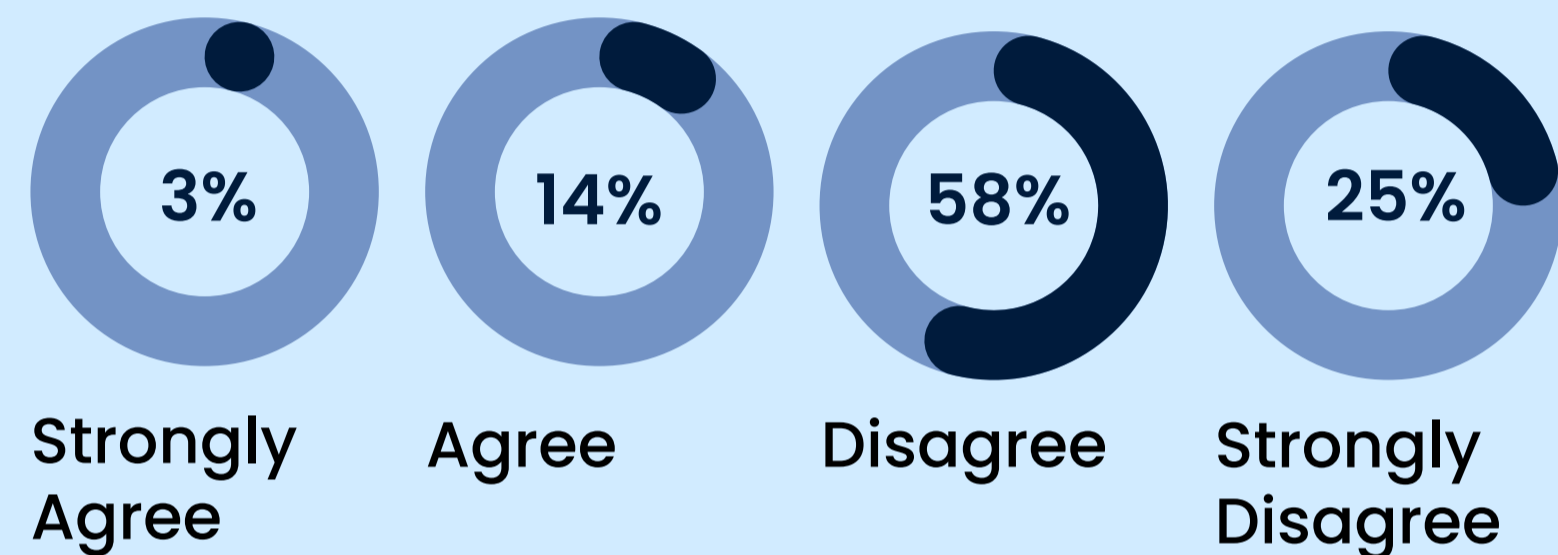
'Chat GPT, it's a powerful tool with limited constraints built around it. It has the potential to be misused, mishandled and misunderstood'.



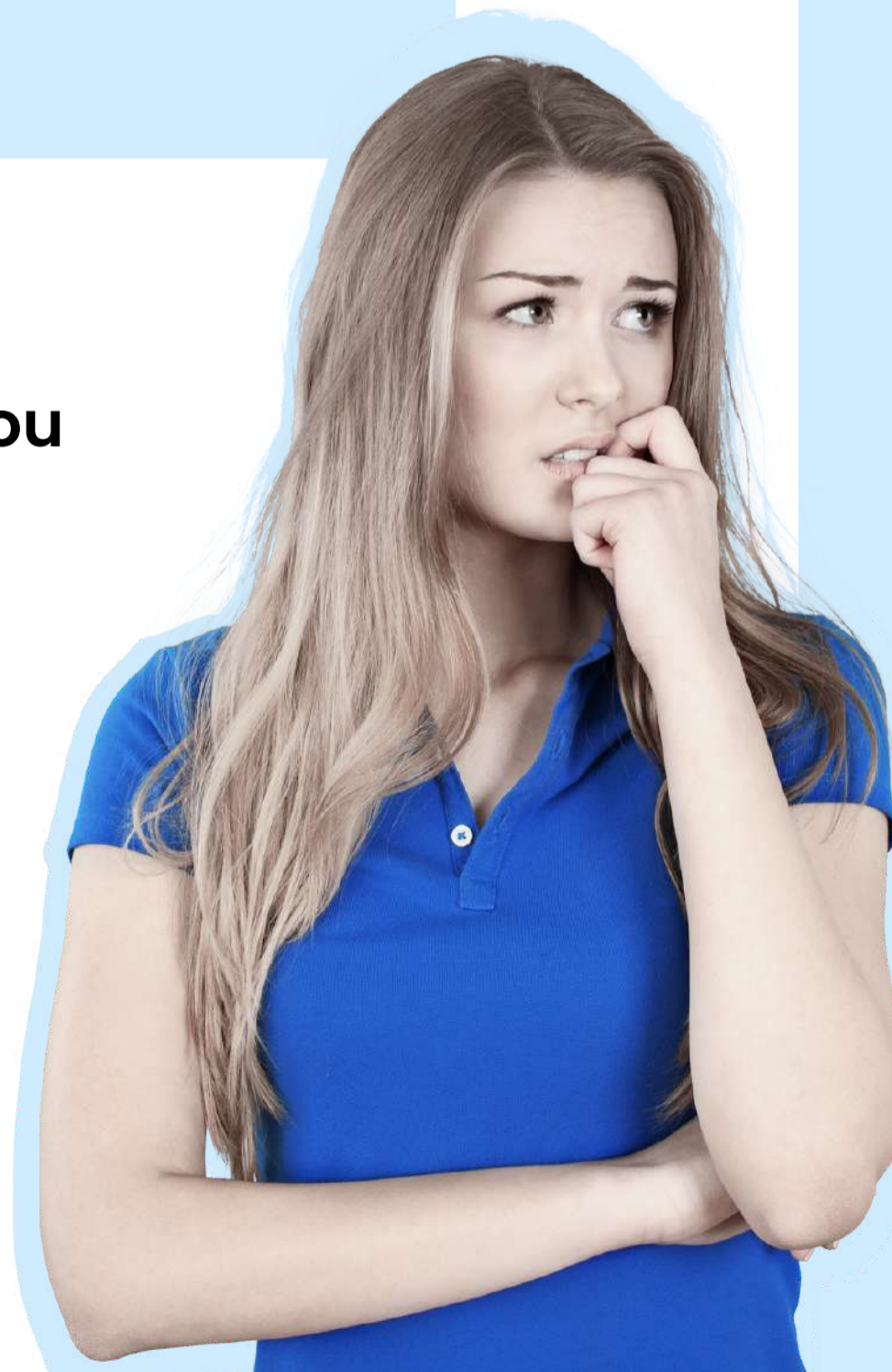
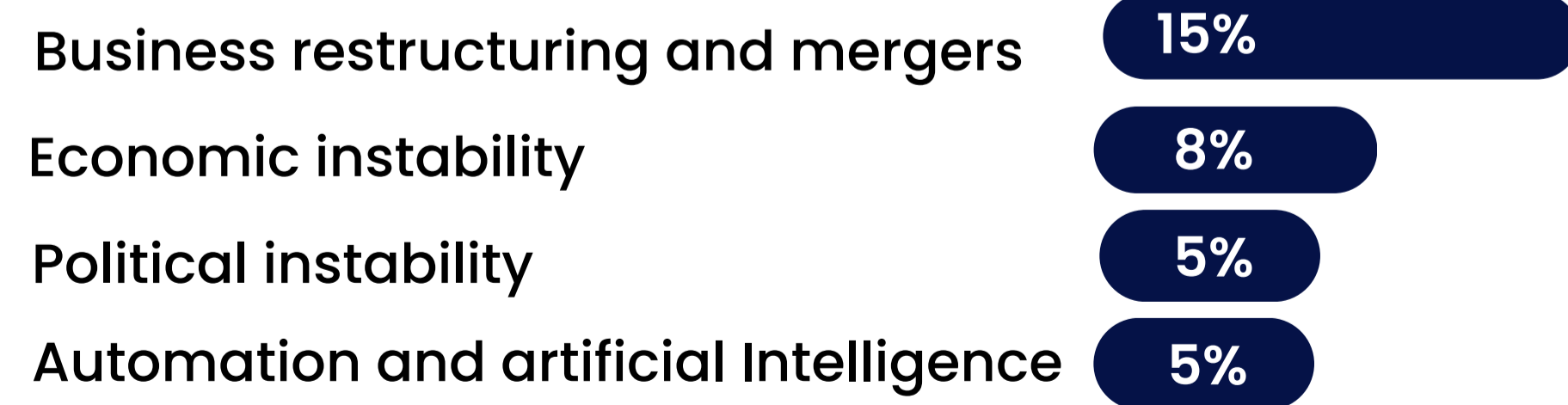
'I'm concerned about more innovative methods of hacking and how we stay ahead or keep up with that'.

Based on the feedback, you would probably expect our respondents to be concerned about their jobs and the risk AI may have on **job displacement**. To understand that, we asked our respondents if they agreed with this statement, 'I am worried about my job security'. 58% of respondents disagreed with the statement, including 25% that strongly disagreed. Only 17% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed.

Do you agree with this statement 'I am worried about my job security'.



From a job security perspective, which of these are you most worried about?



What's on people's minds regarding job security...

We also asked what people are most worried about when it comes to job security to qualify that. Although AI and automation were selection options, they didn't feature prominently as a respondent selection.

The main reasons for job security concerns are **business restructuring** and **mergers, economic instability** and **political instability**. All currently very real concerns for many people irrespective of whether they work in IT or in the wider organisation.

If we consider the wider organisation, recent predictions on global job displacement as a result of AI and technology like ChatGPT, include warnings that 300 million full-time jobs around the world could be automated and that 800 million jobs (**30% of the global workforce**) could be displaced by 2030.

However, according to the World Economic Forum, AI will provide **133 million new jobs** by 2025. Predictions aside, the next 5 years will be critical when we consider the potential impact of AI on people's livelihoods and the need for lifelong learning to help navigate the future of work.

A look into the future... Service Desk landscape

When we consider the next 12 months and the kinds of challenges the **service desk could encounter**, gaining the perspective of a wide range of IT professionals gives us the opportunity to broadly understand the current landscape and how that could relate to what to expect.

Our respondent feedback includes key challenges around adapting and keeping up with change, continuing to meet business and end-user expectations, resourcing, and job displacement. 21% of respondent feedback focussed on the challenges of adapting to the likes of **technology change, working location change**, and adapting to the **customer's changing needs**. We've included some of the feedback we received in the following quotes from IT professionals

"AI is coming. How can service desk professionals effectively adapt to use AI to improve their jobs and quality when executive management will be pushing AI prematurely into the business."

In their own words...

What challenges do you think service desk professionals will face during 2024?



'Adapting our traditional service model to support an ever more flexible customer base'.

'Adapting to hybrid working after working remotely'.

'Business change is based on changing economic conditions and pressures'.



'The reluctance of some customer demographics to move towards a self-service or self-help culture when they have been used to a hand-holding culture.'



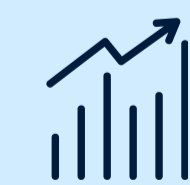
'Automation, keeping up with rapid technology changes and challenges'.

'Remaining competitive and versatile to adapt to new technologies'.

'Driving end users to be more self-sufficient'.



'Dealing with Increasing workloads due to the adoption of new technology without an increase in SD staff to support'.



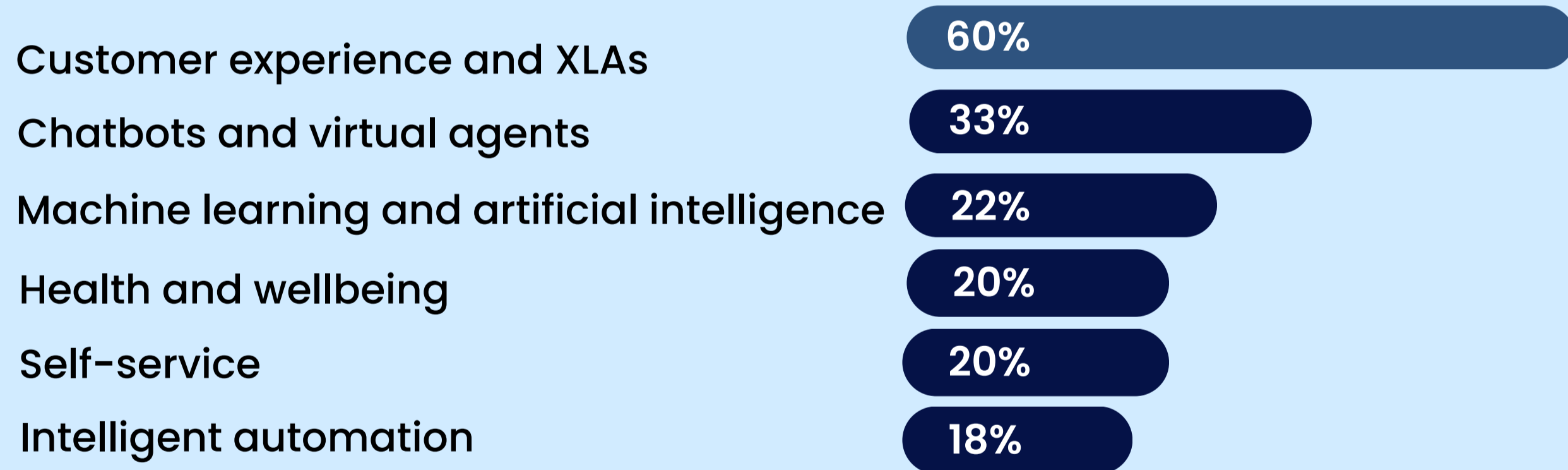
'Increased demand and expectations on performance without additional staffing or reduction in tasks. An assumption is that technology should be able to keep up with growth and subsidize the need for additional personnel despite growth'.

'Business leaders thinking service desk staff can be completely replaced by chatbots and AI'.

We also wanted to understand **what IT professionals expect to see** as the top trends for IT service management in 2024 by selecting their **top 3 trends** from 31 options.

60% of respondents said they think that **customer experience** and **XLAs** will continue to be a big trend in 2024, followed by chatbots and virtual agents, and machine learning and artificial intelligence. Although health and wellbeing does also feature here, it comes in as joint 5th, which some may consider to be relatively low considering its importance.

What do you expect to be a big trend for IT service management in 2024? (Pick your top 3)



Finally in this section of the research, we wanted to gain our respondents thoughts and predictions on IT service management, and what they think will be the norm by 2028. Here's some of the thoughts and predictions submitted by our respondents. They make great reading with some astute observations, and ask some serious questions that in some cases the industry will need to address soon.

In their own words...

What thoughts or predictions do you have regarding the future of IT Service Management? What do you think the norm will be in 2028?



'It will be more difficult to get your foot in the door into IT if you have no experience and that experience will become more valuable as it will only be needed to maintain complex systems rather than simpler albeit necessary IT Support tasks'.



'The voice support channel will become almost obsolete, and voice in a supportive environment will be viewed like fax machines are now'.



'We'll see better automation and deeper collaboration with more transparency. Hopefully a shift away from pure metrics to valuing human experiences'.



'Many tasks will be automated reducing the need for clerical operations, but systems will still fail and have greater business impact. Service management will be more important than ever'.



'The service desk will shift to a 3rd line and application development skillset as front-line break/fix will no longer be required'.

'AI will be part of our everyday life. Generation Z will come to the workforce, and services will need to adapt to their way of living and be respectful of their values'.

'ITSM will play a more supportive role in the delivery life cycle. Product and agile are the latest buzzwords. ITSM and ITIL may change to a supporting framework rather than a leading one'.

What have we learned?

01 AI is seen as a promising technology

The potential of artificial intelligence in IT service support is seen as the most exciting and the most concerning technology.

02 Unlocking the potential of ChatGPT

Technologies like ChatGPT are expected to become an absolute game changer.

03 Importance of job security

Very few IT professionals are concerned about job security.

04 Customer experience matters

Customer experience and XLAs will continue to be the key industry trend in 2024.

[*The Importance of Intelligent Automation*](#)

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Skills Development

The need for **new skills** and **reskilling** to support the future of IT services continue to be a highly discussed topic, especially taking into account the previous data and feedback about potential changes in the technology landscape.

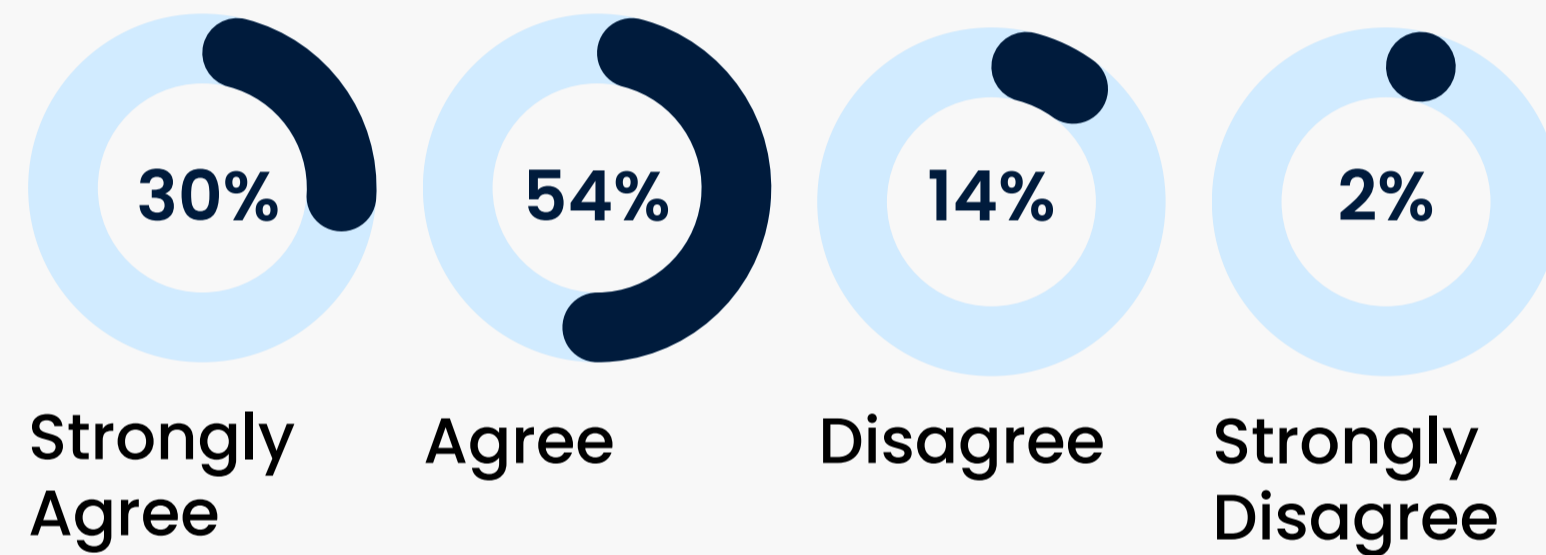
This could mean that the focus on **experience management** and adapting to new technology are key drivers for the need for new or revised skills.



There's a need for upskilling and reskilling.

Over the last 12 months, 84% of respondents said that they have introduced new skills, up-skilled or re-skilled their service desk.

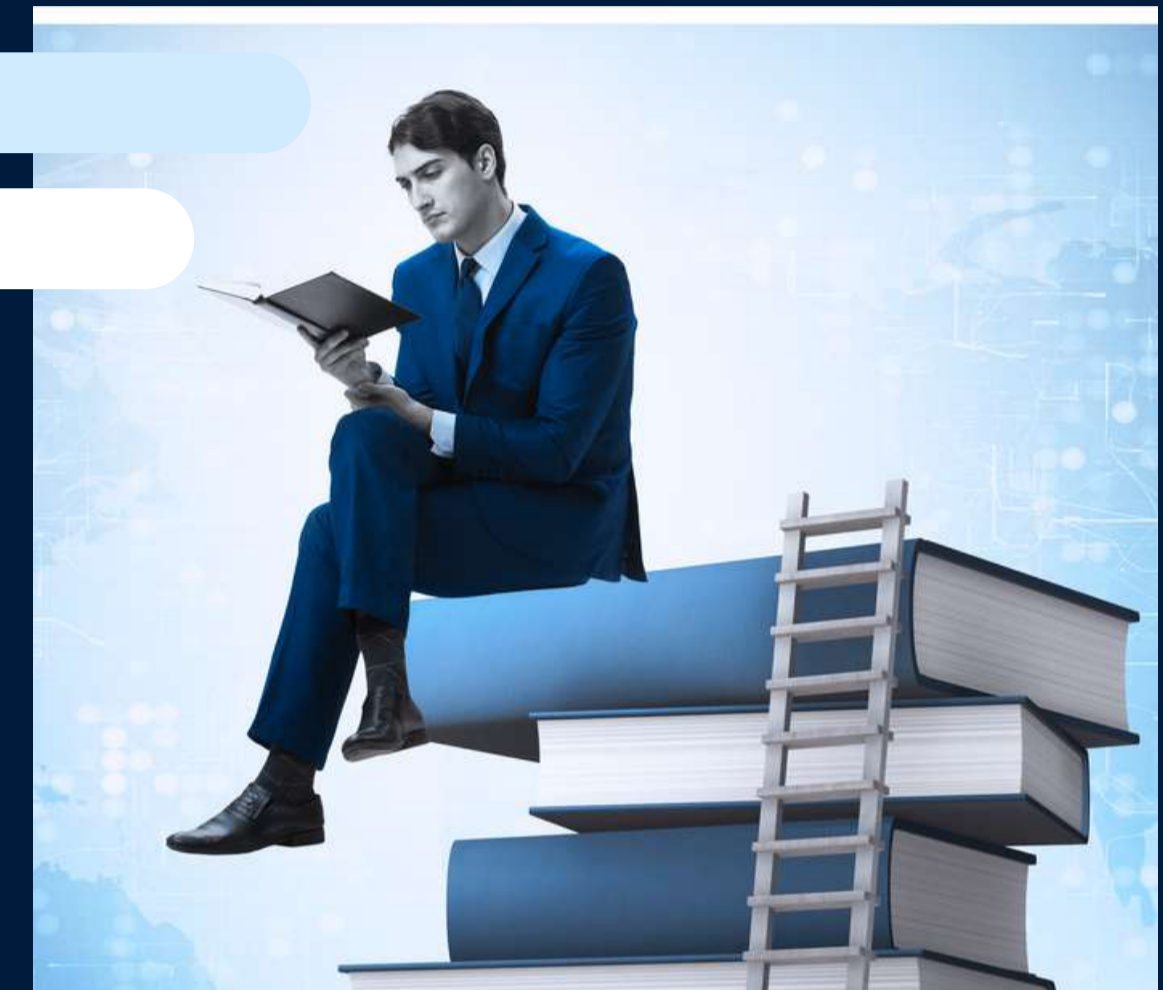
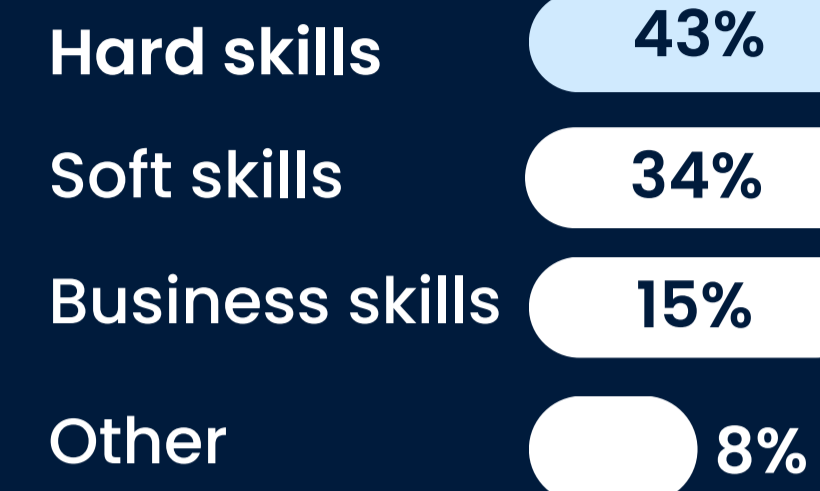
Do you agree with this statement 'Over the last 12 months we've had to introduce new skills, up-skill or re-skill our service desk staff'.



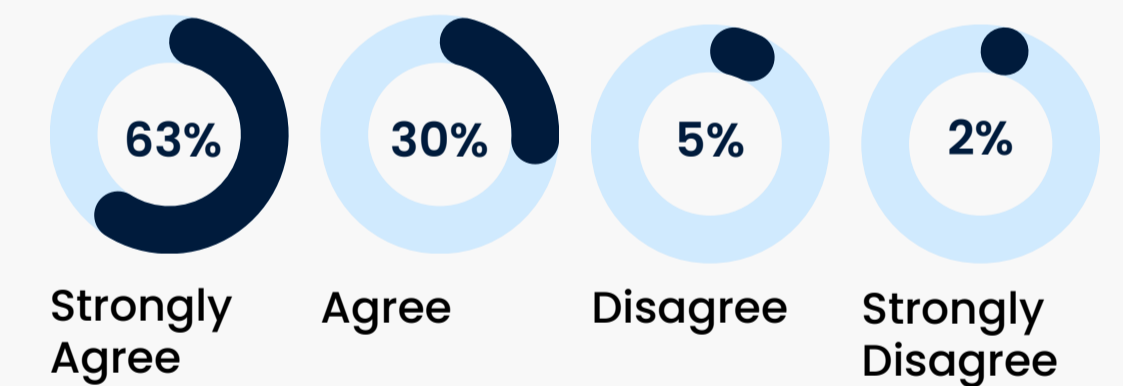
We can interrogate the qualitative data further to understand why the skills emphasis has shifted to technical skills in the last 12 months. Much of that data suggested that **skills development planning** has taken into account the current and future climate of technology advancements. For a number of our respondents, that has meant the **need to think strategically** about the near future, and new technical skills that service desk staff will need.

Alongside that, there is a recognition of a **technical skills deficit** at the service desk in some respondent organisations, and organisations are looking for higher levels of technical expertise in lower-level roles. The majority of respondents, 43%, said that the new skills put in place were technical skills, so hard skills rather than soft skills.

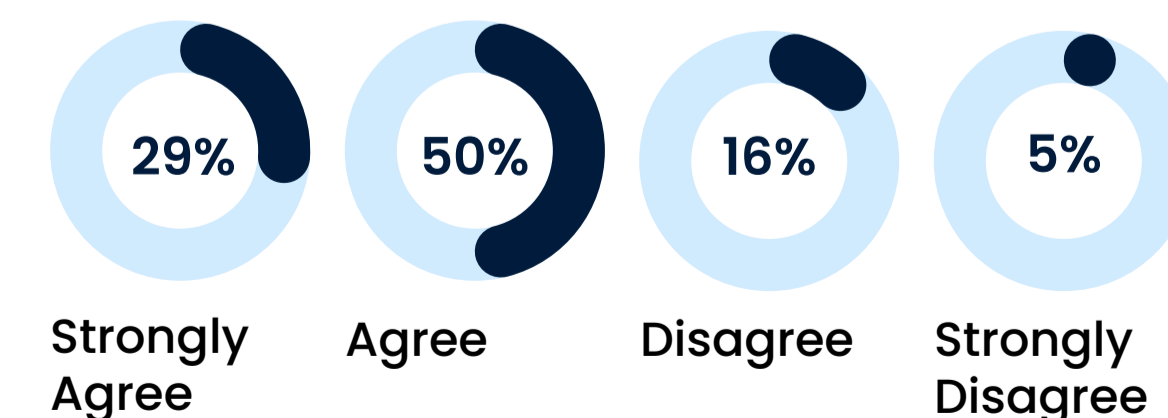
What types of new skills, up-skilling or re-skilling have been put in place over the last 12 months?



Do you agree with this statement, 'I would be willing to learn new skills or move to other areas of my organisation to develop new skills'.



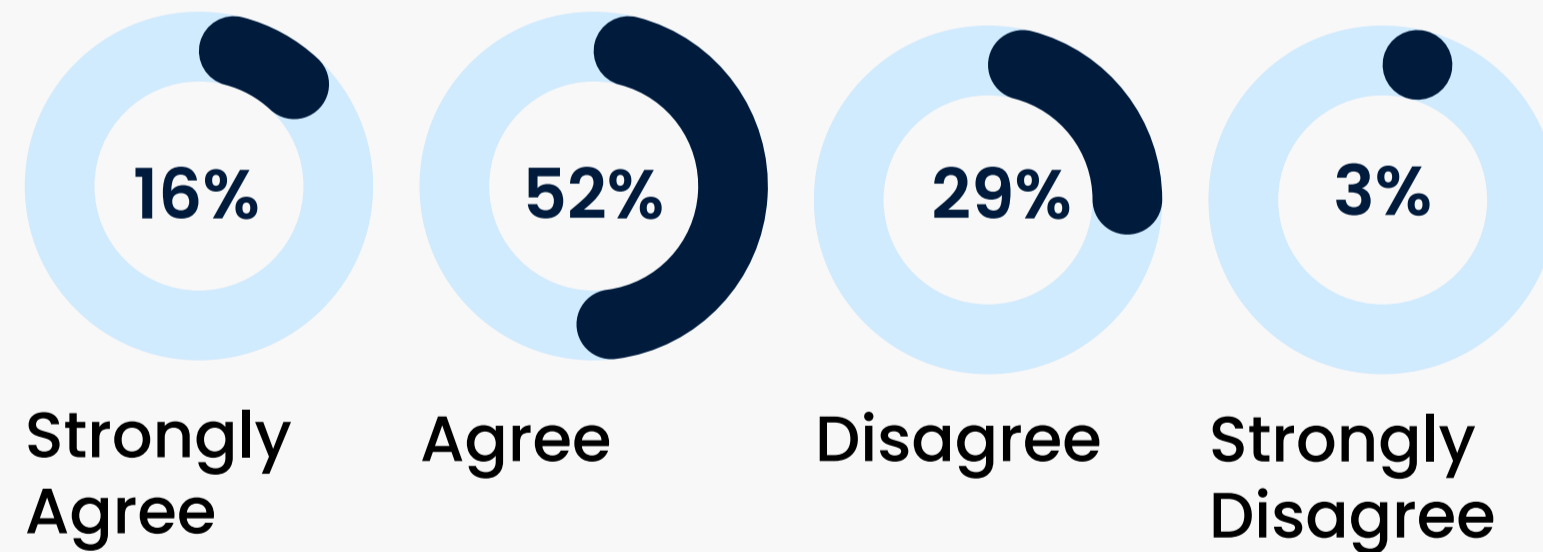
Do you agree with this statement, 'My organisation supports my skills development'.



However, 34% of respondents who have introduced new skills, up-skilled or re-skilled their service desk in the last 12 months and said they had invested in softer, **human skilling needs** (for example emotional intelligence, effective communication, teamwork, responsibility, creativity, problem-solving, critical thinking and adaptability).

And that theme looks likely to continue when we consider the evolving skills needs of Service Desk professionals. 68% of respondents said that during the last 12 months, they had **changed their view** on the skills service desk professionals will need in the next 2 to 3 years.

Do you agree with this statement 'During the last 12 months, I've changed my view on what skills I think service desk professionals will need in the next 2 to 3 years'.



We asked our respondents to tell us why their views have changed, and this is what they said...

In their own words...

Why have your views about the skills service desk professionals will need in the next 2 or 3 years changed?



'I have implemented a firm development plan for my service desk staff to take into account the current and **future climate** of technological advancement'.



'ChatGPT and AI are introducing **new skills factors** into support, IT professionals will likely need to learn how to use AI'.



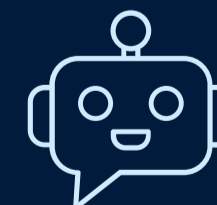
'Digital transformation requires our Service Desk to have **different skill sets** to support the transformation'.



'We need broader technical skills for supporting users remotely and through other channels such as chatbots and live chat. Doing mere user support is no longer sufficient, we need to have skills in **emerging technologies** to stay current. AI is also threatening to disrupt the way we work so we must be prepared to live with it'.



'Hard technical skills for our service desk staff are lacking. Our staff need to work more on getting their **hard skills improved** and specialise in particular IT areas'.

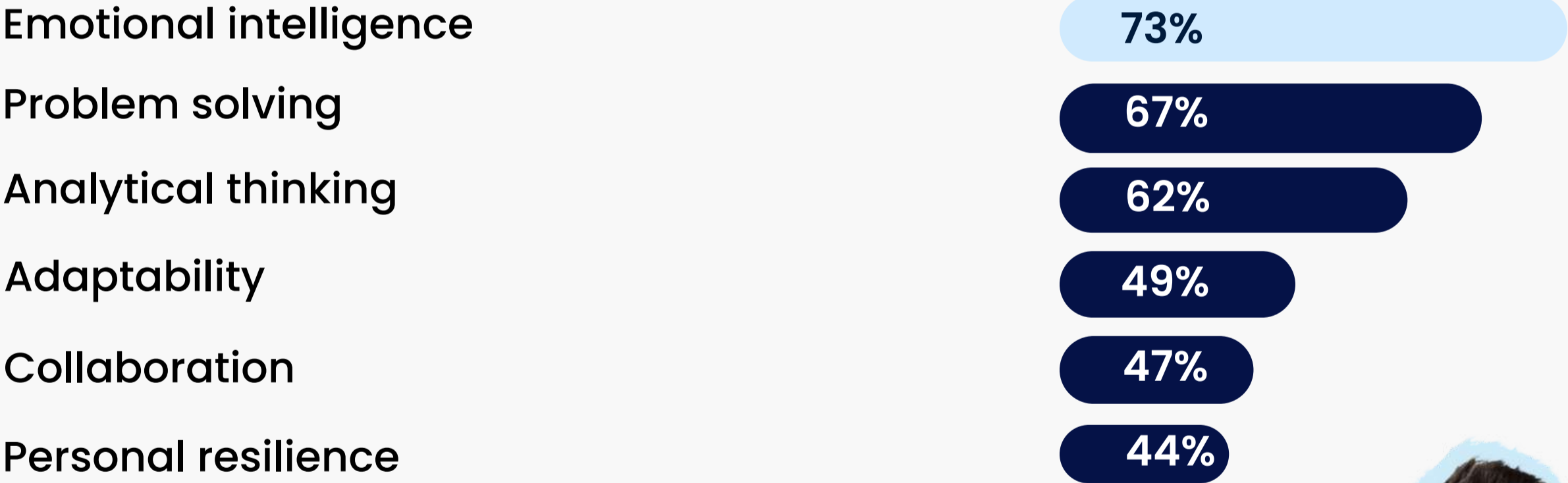


'AI and chatbot channels will replace traditional service desk channels, and the role of our Service Desk will be **predominantly technical**'.

The hottest skills for the near future!

The hottest skills for the near future, based on our respondents' feedback, are emotional intelligence, problem-solving, analytical thinking, adaptability skills collaboration and personal resilience.

Which of these skills do you think service desk professionals will need most in the next 2 to 3 years?



It's also interesting to look at the least number of responses here as well. The lowest responses to the question about skills and the near future are leadership, technology design, programming and management skills.



In their own words...

Why have your views about the skills service desk professionals will need in the next 2 or 3 years changed?



'As we entered into a new 5-year business strategy in 2022, it became clear what is required to **meet our organisational objectives** and the role the service desk will play. Therefore skills need to be enhanced to allow the service desk to provide not only the functional skills but also the softer skill sets that will enable us to unlock and achieve our NPS objectives'.



'Service desk professionals need to offer more than a 'log and flog' service. They need to have skills that can **assist the user**, and we need to shift left work to the Service Desk to help provide a better customer experience'.



'**AI and chatbot** channels will replace traditional Service Desk channels, and the role of our Service Desk will be predominantly technical'.



'I am focussing on 2025 and am looking at what skills our employees need at that time and they will be the same and different from now'.



'**Asking, listening, observing** and **empathising** should be placed higher than pure technical skills'.



'Strong service has always relied on the same fundamentals. If the customer isn't first and foremost, a service desk will never deliver all it can. A service desk with **helpful, capable, coachable staff** isn't a new requirement, but it's vitally important'.

Let's look at the cohort data to analyse how each group responded. Emotional intelligence, problem-solving and analytical thinking are clearly seen as key skills for the near future by all cohorts. It's also clear, at a cohort level, that our respondents think the need for programming, management and leadership skills for service desk will diminish in the near future.

Respondents who categorised themselves as working at the **Service Desk**:

Top selections

- Emotional intelligence
- Problem-solving
- Analytical thinking
- Critical thinking

Bottom selections

- Leadership
- Technology installation and maintenance
- Ideation
- Management



Respondents who categorised themselves as **Service Desk Manager** or **IT Manager**:

Top selections

- Emotional intelligence
- Problem-solving
- Analytical thinking
- Collaboration

Bottom selections

- Programming
- Leadership
- Design Thinking
- Management

Respondents who categorised themselves as an **IT Manager**:

Top selections

- Problem-solving
- Emotional intelligence
- Analytical thinking
- Personal resilience

Bottom selections

- System analysis
- Programming
- Management
- Design Thinking



Respondents who categorised themselves as **C-Level** and **IT Director**:

Top selections

- Emotional intelligence
- Collaboration
- Analytical thinking
- Problem-solving

Bottom selections

- Technology design
- Programming
- System analysis
- Management

Embracing change is the key to surviving in the tech industry.

When considering the impact of machine learning, artificial intelligence, intelligent automation and service orchestration on the way organisations work in the near future; there is the potential that this technology's design and use will also incorporate assisted workload and performance management.

As a result, **management skills** and the role of **middle management** in their current forms are predicted to **change or diminish**. It's interesting to see those forecasts reflected in this data.

We also wanted to contextualise these results in a slightly different way by considering how organisations will practice continual improvement in the near future.

We did this by providing a list of potentially impacting relationships and asked our respondents to select which relationships will have the biggest impact on how organisations practice **continual improvement** in 2028.

The outcome here is to understand the skills required to adapt to the impacting relationships and align them with the near future service desk skills needs.

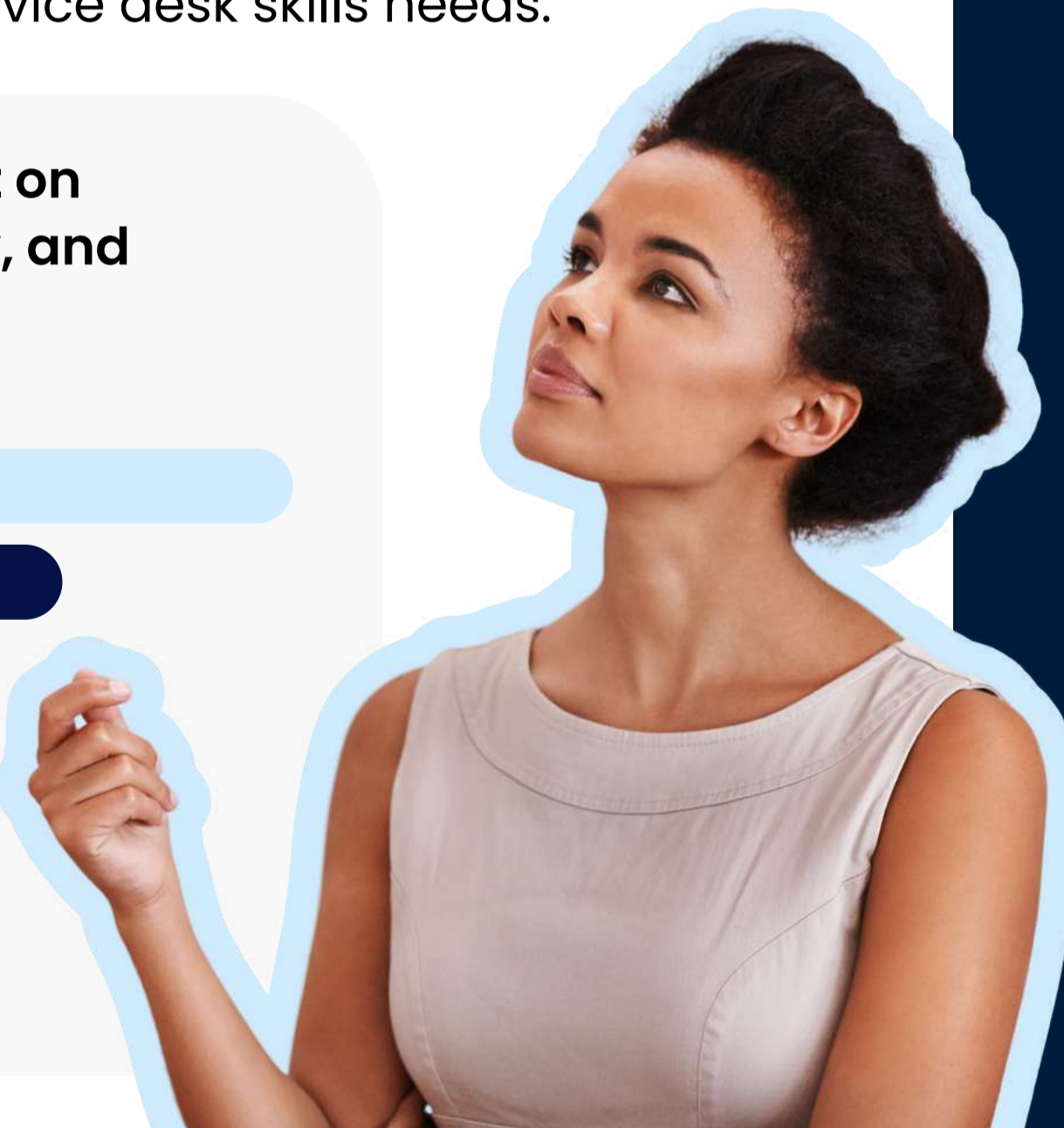
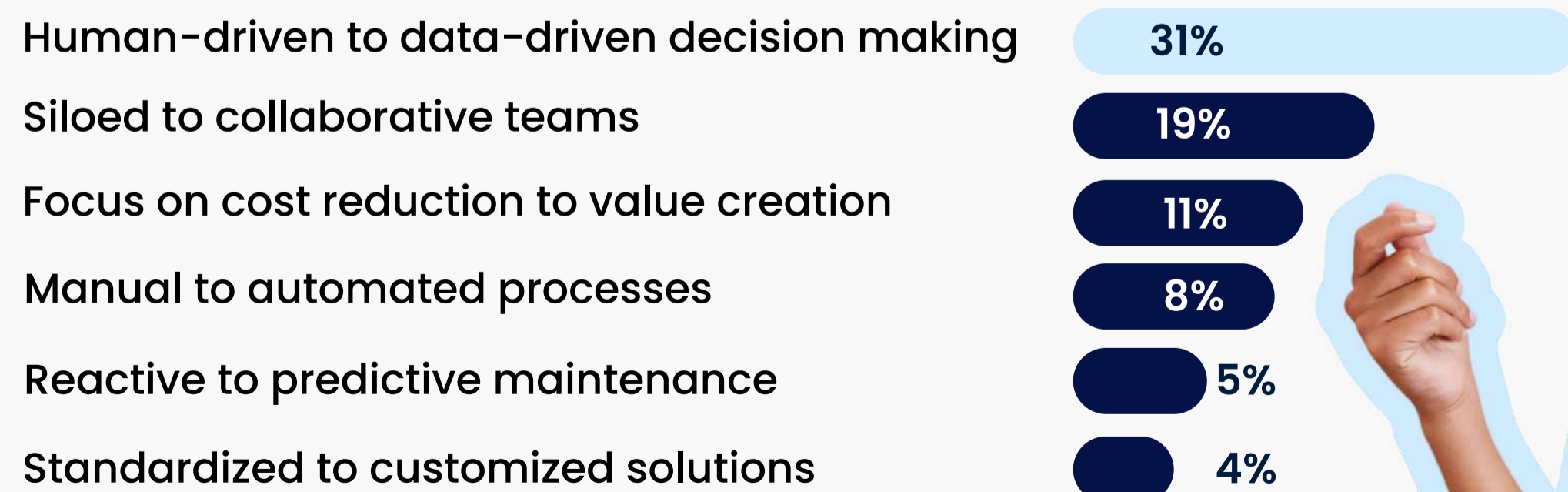
The top 3 impacting relationship selections are **human-driven to data-driven decision making**, **siloed to collaborative teams**, and **the focus on cost reduction to value creation**.

If we map these results to the skills Service Desk will need over the next 2 or 3 years, we can see that they align relatively well. Problem-solving and analytical thinking skills support the shift to data-driven decision-making, and emotional intelligence and collaboration skills support the shift to collaborative teams.

We've already seen the references to the need to adapt to the ever-changing technology landscape, so adaptability skills again support these relationships. It's also very positive to see the focus on cost reduction to value creation as a top 3 selection. The principles of value creation in ITSM have gained momentum over recent years and continue to gain prominence.

The future of ITSM will involve a shift from reactive to proactive management, greater emphasis on collaboration and integration, continuous improvement and innovation, and the upskilling and reskilling of IT professionals. Embracing value creation is crucial for organisations to remain competitive and drive innovation in a rapidly changing technology landscape.

Which of these do you think will have the biggest impact on how organisations practice continual improvement now, and how they will practice continual improvement in 2028?



What have we learned?

01 A need for the technical skills

Recent investment in Service Desk skills development has been slightly more focussed on improving or developing **new technical skills** due to technology advancements and the potential deficit in technical skills.

02 IT worker's view on service desk skills

The majority of IT workers **think differently** about the skills requirements to work at the service desk in the near future.

03

Learning new skills

People **want to learn new skills** and are prepared to move to learn.

04

IT's hottest skill is emotional intelligence

Emotional intelligence is becoming the most sought-after skill in IT.

05

The key driver for new skills needs

The move from human decision-making to data-driven decision-making is seen as the **key driver for new skills** needs.

[*SDI Training & Development Brochure.*](#)



07

Worklife balance and wellbeing

As many of us will attest to, where and how we work has changed significantly over the last few years.

The factors that influence the location-based digital workplace vary and may be influenced by a complex mix of **personal, organisational, and environmental factors**. We initially wanted to understand our respondents primary location for work and their preferred primary location of work.



Remote work is here to stay

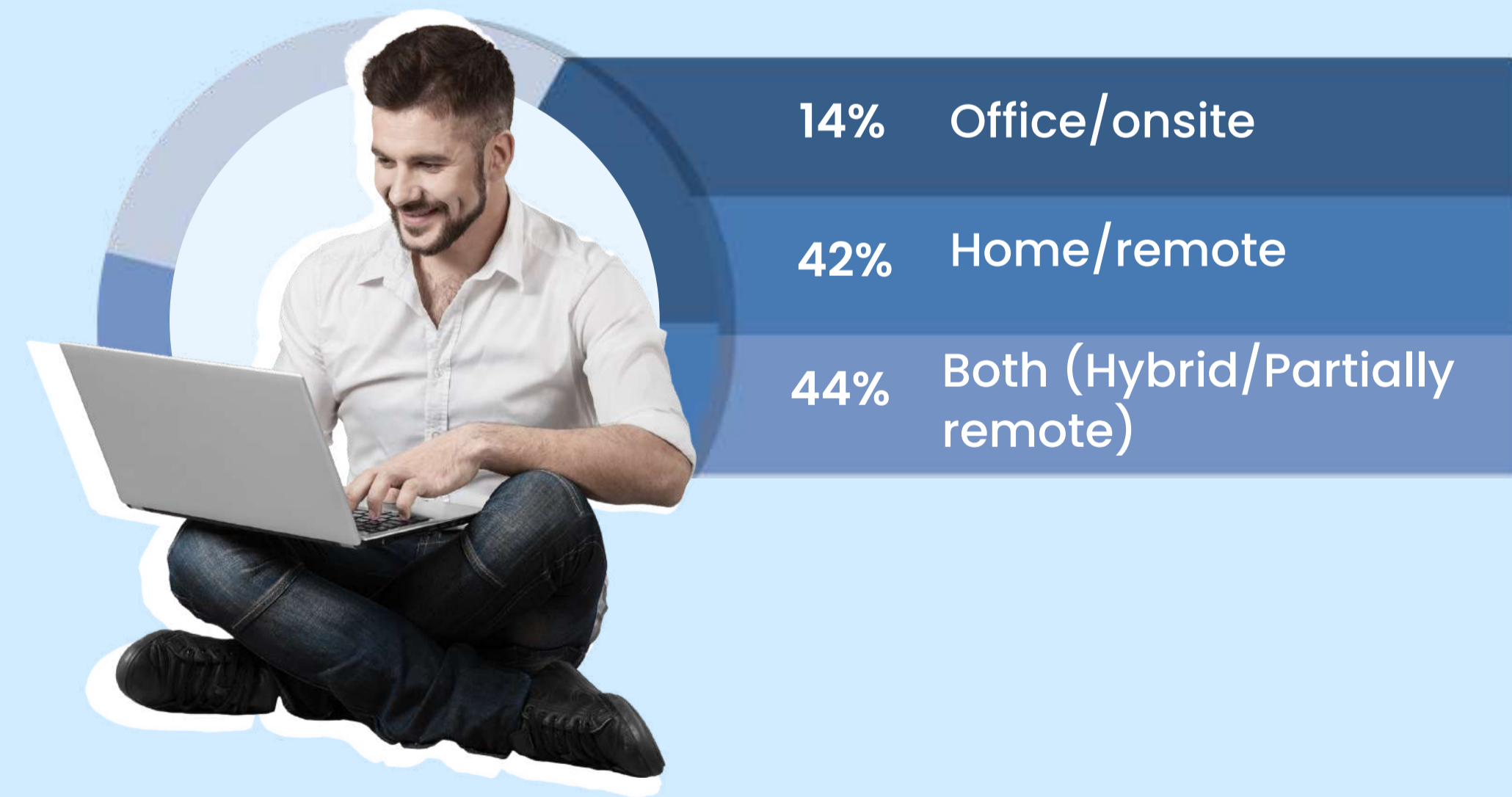
42% of our respondents said their primary location for work is currently **home or remote**, and 36% said they are currently hybrid workers. Of the 22% who said they work on location at an office, 14% said that it was their preferred location, and just 8% said they would prefer to work in a hybrid capacity if they were able to.

From that data, it's evident that remote working has gained significant traction and is the norm for almost half of our respondents. We can again analyse this data further by looking at the cohort data, where we see that **C-Level** and **IT Director respondents** and those who work in other areas of IT Operations are the main cohorts that work from home. We see the remainder of the cohorts as mainly hybrid workers.

What is your primary location for work?



What is your preferred location for work?



Let's look at the cohort data to analyse how each group responded.

Respondents who categorised themselves as working at the **Service Desk**:



Respondents who categorised themselves as **Service Desk Manager** or **IT Manager**:



Respondents who categorised themselves as an **IT Manager**:



Respondents who categorised themselves as **C-Level** and **IT Director**:



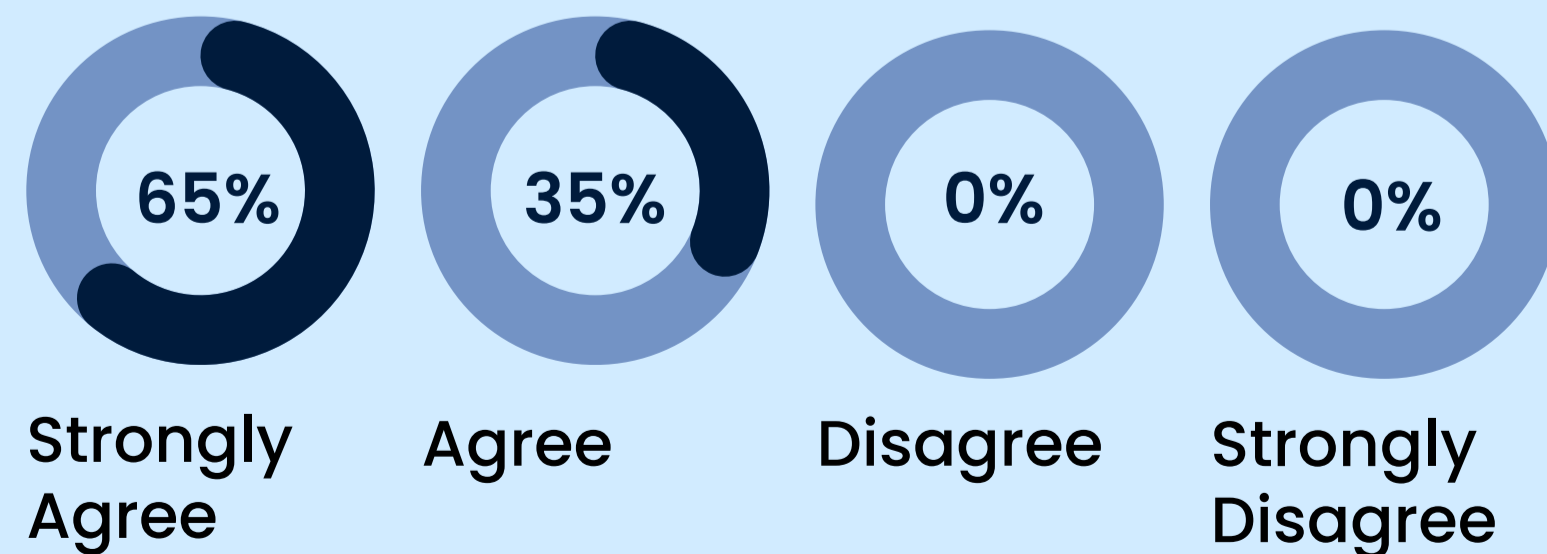
Worklife balance in today's workplace

There are undoubtedly benefits relating to the location-based work flexibility that organisations provide workers.

Realising and maintaining **a healthy relationship with work** has always been a defining factor when we consider the physical and emotional impact on happy, fulfilled people and teams. Striking a balance between professional and personal life remains as relevant today as it always has been. However, there is increasing emphasis on the importance of that balance in the modern-day workplace due to factors such as changing workforce demographics, remote and flexible work, increased mental health awareness and its impact on productivity and job satisfaction, along with talent attraction and retention, and employee happiness.

So let's look further at the relationship between worklife balance and wellbeing and how worklife balance has impacted on **wellbeing in the last 12 months**. Let's start with understanding how important worklife balance is; when asked if worklife balance is very important, 100% of respondents said it was, with 65% of those strongly agreeing that worklife balance is important to them. Many may consider these results are to be expected. However, confirming that gives us a better understating of the importance of the remaining data.

Do you agree with the statement, 'worklife balance is very important to me'



18% of all respondents said that their **worklife balance is better** in 2023 than it was in 2022, which is a relatively positive response. However, 8%, said their worklife balance is worse in 2023 than it was in 2022.

How is your worklife balance in 2023 in comparison to 2022?

My worklife balance is better than it was in 2022 **18%**

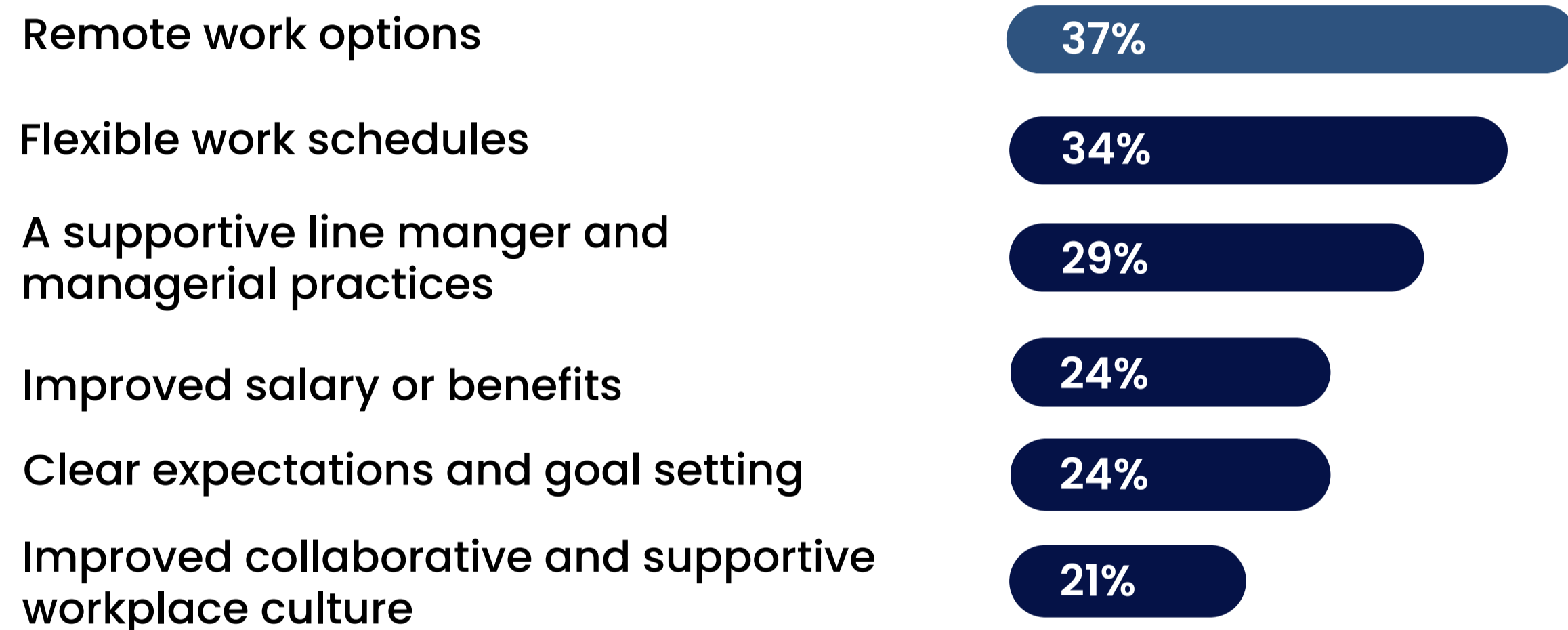
My worklife balance is worse than it was in 2022 **8%**

My worklife balance is the same as it was in 2022 **74%**



So let's look at the drivers for these results. We offered participants the opportunity to select a multiple ranges of **35 options** to understand what has contributed most to their worklife balance and the main reasons why their **worklife balance** is either better or worse in 2023 than it was in 2022.

Why do you consider your worklife balance to be better in 2023 than it was in 2022?



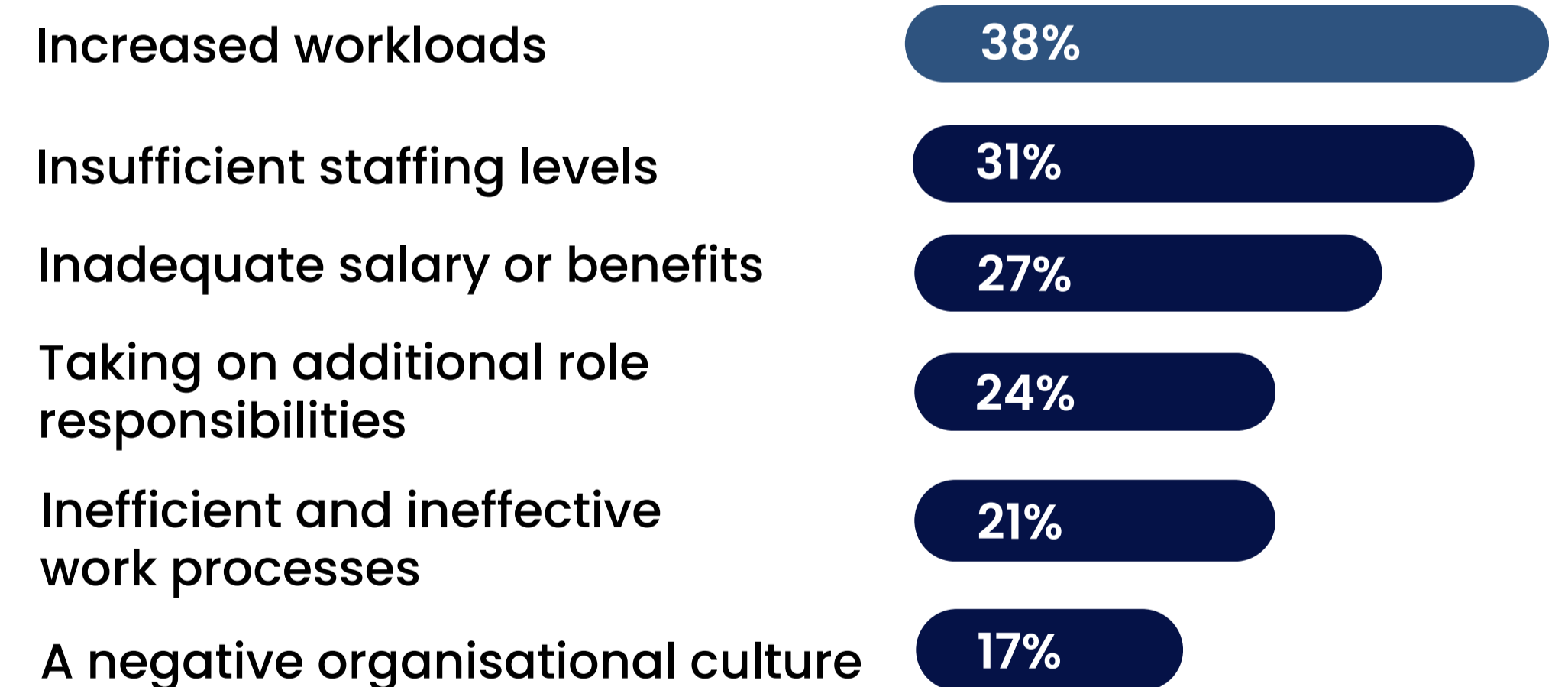
The main reasons for the improvement in people's worklife balance in 2023 are remote work options, **flexible work schedules**, and **supportive line management** and **managerial practices**. 37% of respondents selected remote work options is the biggest contributor to their improved worklife balance.

We also see improved salary or benefits features as another contributor, along with clear expectations and goal settings. It's clear that the ability to work remotely with flexibility continues to have a positive impact on worklife balance.

Conversely, when we look at the main reasons why the relatively small, but important 8% of respondents have experienced a worsened worklife balance in 2023 (again selected from a multi-choice of 35 options), we see the primary contributors as **increased workloads**, **insufficient staffing** and **inadequate salary** or benefits.

It's interesting to note that a large proportion of the job roles that make up 8% mentioned here are **C Level** and **IT Director respondents**.

Why do you consider your worklife balance to be worse in 2023 than it was in 2022?



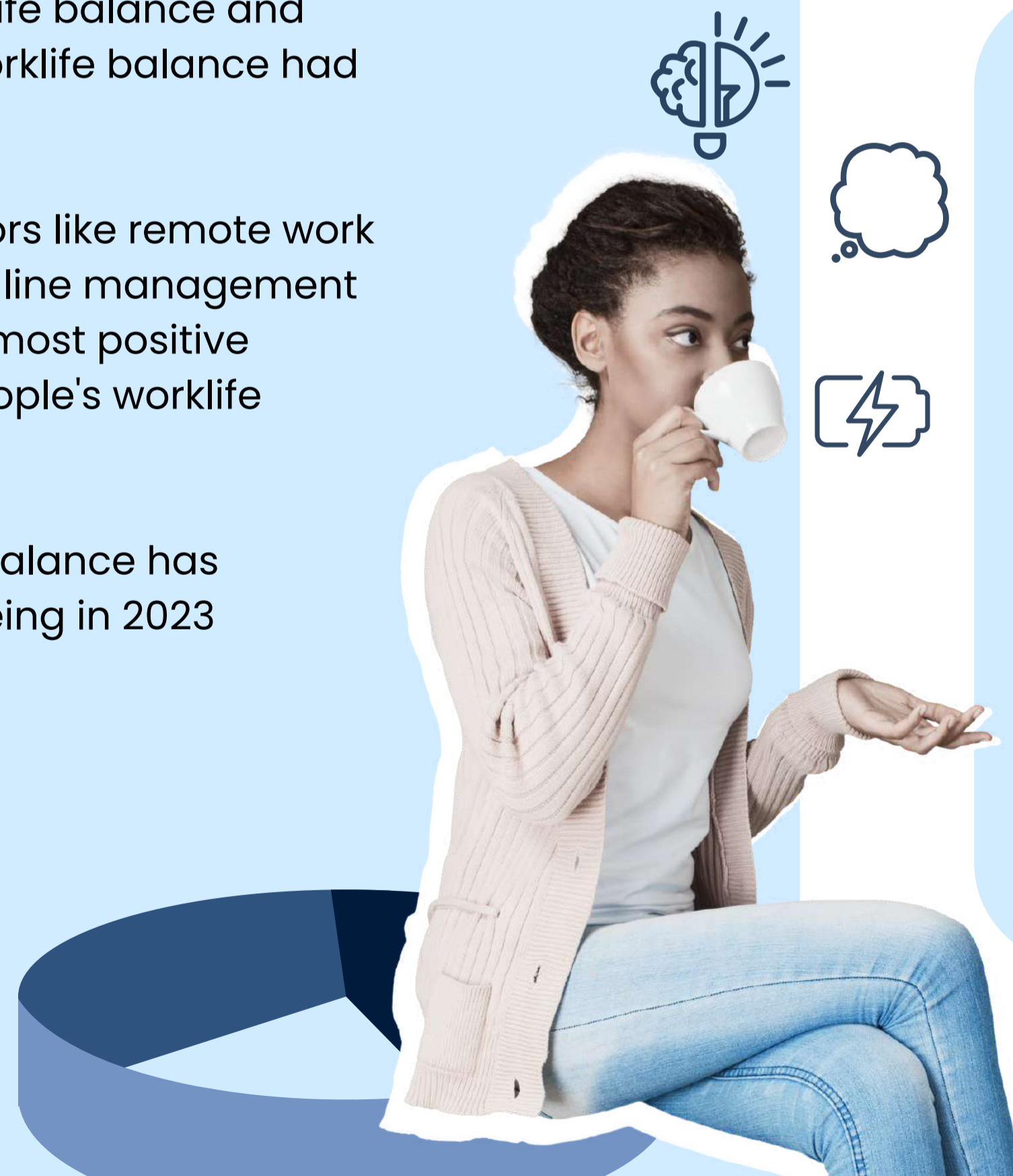
Effect of worklife balance on wellbeing

Next, let's look at wellbeing and the **effect of worklife balance** on wellbeing over the past 12 months. A quarter of respondents said their **emotional wellbeing** is better in 2023 than it was in 2022, which again is a positive response. However, 14% said that their wellbeing is worse now than it was in 2022.

When we look at the relationship between worklife balance and wellbeing, 43% of respondents said that their worklife balance had positively contributed to their wellbeing in 2023.

So when we consider highly prized worklife factors like remote work options, flexible work schedules, and supportive line management and managerial practices, these have had the most positive contribution to people's wellbeing as well as people's worklife balance.

23% of our respondents said that their worklife balance has negatively contributed to their emotional wellbeing in 2023 which is a significant amount.



How is your emotional wellbeing in 2023, in comparison to 2022?

My emotional wellbeing is **better** than it was in 2022 **25%**

My emotional wellbeing is **worse** than it was in 2022 **14%**

My emotional wellbeing is **the same** as it was in 2022 **61%**

How has your worklife balance in 2023 contributed to your emotional wellbeing?

My worklife balance in 2023 has **positively contributed** to my emotional wellbeing. **43%**

My worklife balance in 2023 has **negatively contributed** to my emotional wellbeing. **23%**

My worklife balance in 2023 has **not contributed** in any capacity to my emotional wellbeing. **34%**

It's also clear to see that for the majority of respondents, worklife balance and **emotional wellbeing** is the same in 2023 as it was in 2022.

This data does not confirm how good, or indeed bad, worklife balance or wellbeing is for these respondents. Just because their worklife balance or wellbeing is the same as the previous year, doesn't necessarily mean that some of these respondents didn't experience poor worklife balance or wellbeing in 2022.

However, we can analyse the data further to identify how these respondents fared. **74% of respondents** said that their worklife balance is the same as in 2023 as it was in 2022.

When we look further at this group, we find that 17% of those said that their worklife balance in 2023 has **positively contributed** to their emotional wellbeing. 14% of this group also said that their worklife balance in 2023 has **negatively contributed** to their emotional wellbeing. 69% said that their worklife balance in 2023 had not contributed in any capacity to their emotional wellbeing.

This gives us a better picture of the relationship between worklife balance and wellbeing for this **group between 2022 and 2023**.



Cohort the 74% who said that their worklife balance is the same as it was in 2022.

How has your worklife balance in 2023 contributed to your emotional wellbeing?

My worklife balance in 2023 has **positively contributed** to my emotional wellbeing. 17%

My worklife balance in 2023 has **negatively contributed** to my emotional wellbeing. 14%

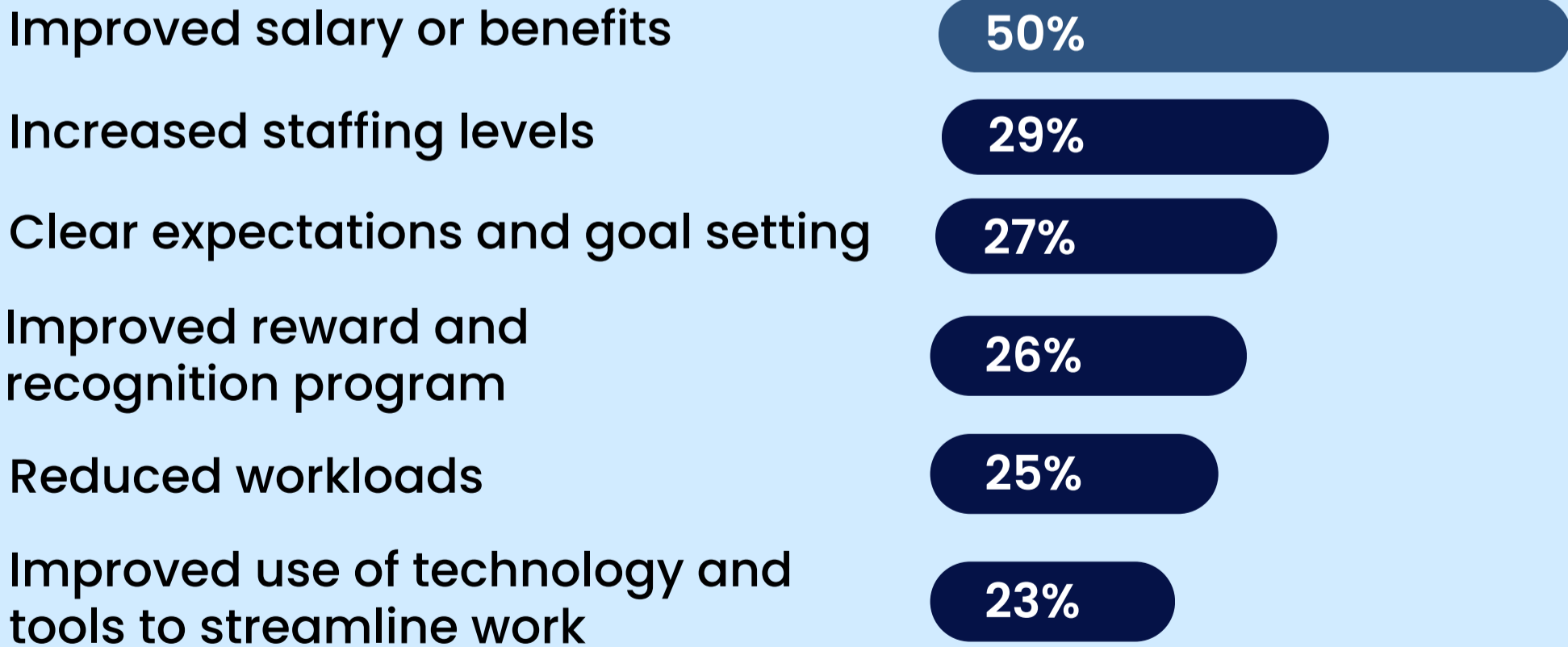
My worklife balance in 2023 has **not contributed** in any capacity to my emotional wellbeing. 69%

2024 Vision: Empowering employees for better wellbeing at work!

We also wanted to understand what our respondents thought would make their **worklife balance better** and what their organisation could do to improve their emotional wellbeing in 2024.

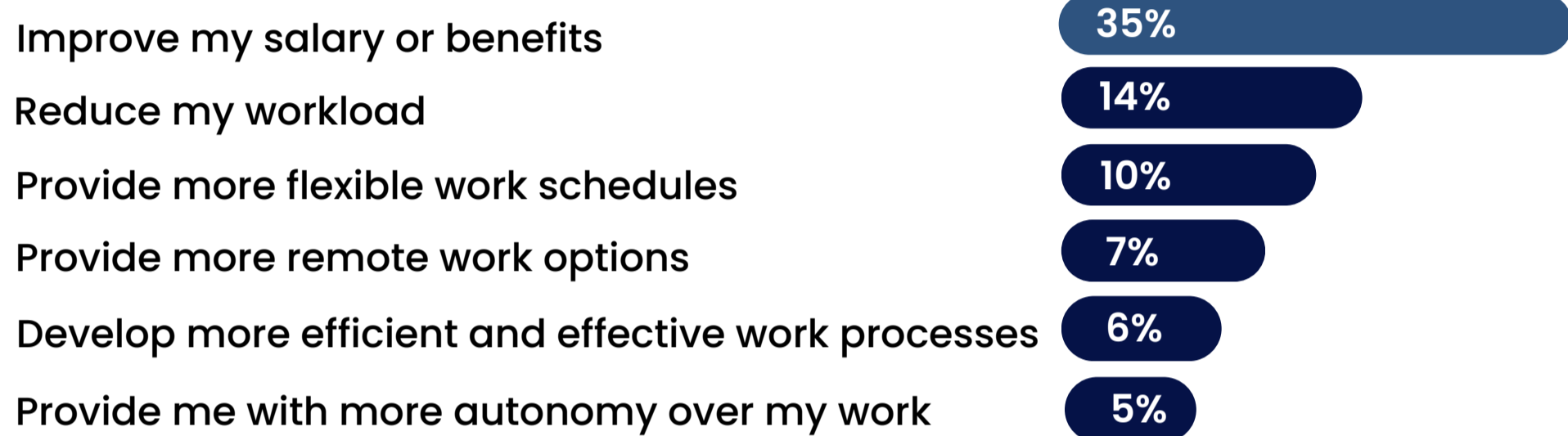
We would expect to see very similar points raised here to back up the combined results seen in this section of the report. The data responses are very clear indeed. The top response to both questions is the same, improved salary or benefits. Alongside that, increasing staffing levels and clear expectations and goal setting top the activities that would improve worklife balance.

What would make your worklife balance better in 2024?



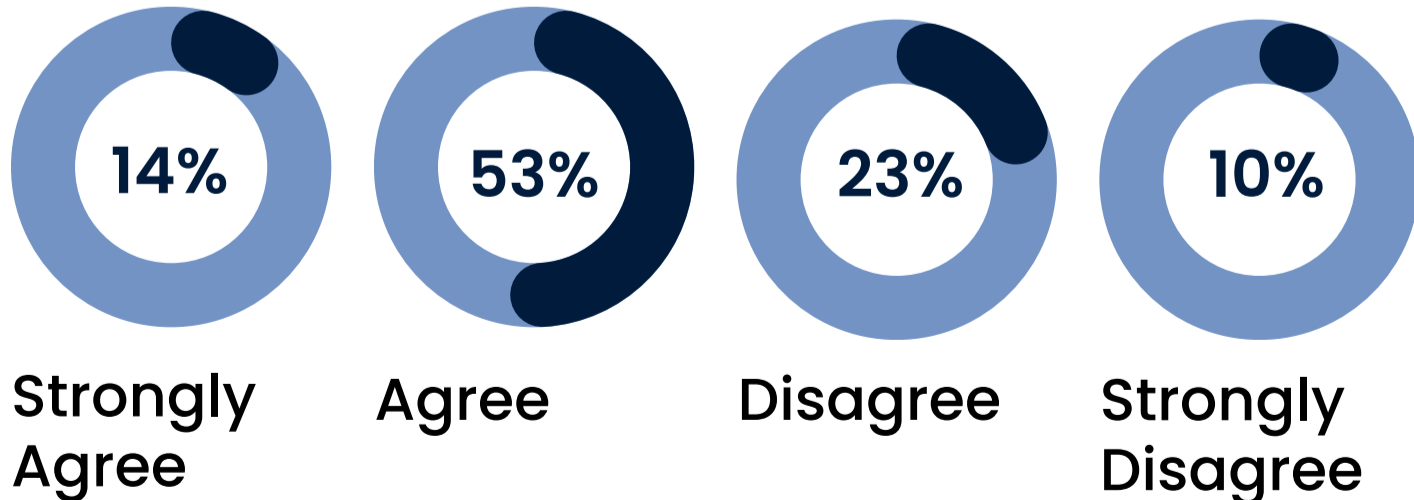
From an improving wellbeing perspective, along with improved salary or benefits, other factors include reduced workloads, more flexible work schedules and more remote work options. All of which align with the improved worklife balance respondent data.

Which of these could your organisation do better to help improve your emotional wellbeing in 2024?



We also asked our respondents if they thought they were appropriately paid for their current job role. 67% of respondents said they are appropriately paid for their current job role, and 33% said they are not appropriately paid.

Do you agree with this statement 'I am paid appropriately for my current job role'?



The responses here are undeniable; for many of our respondents, the old adage of overworked and underpaid is still very much a reality in 2023. However, we've also witnessed political and economic instability and its impact on the cost of living over the last 12 months, which also potentially plays its part in these results.

We also asked for more qualitative feedback regarding what our respondents would you like their **organisation to do differently**, or do more of, to help improve their emotional wellbeing. We've included some of the feedback we received in the following quotes from IT professionals.

'From my perspective, I would like to focus on the work we do and how we do it and improve this for the teams, this would have a greater positive impact on emotional wellbeing compared to offering lots of support and employee relations groups'.

In their own words...

What would you like your organisation to do differently, or do more of, to help improve your emotional wellbeing?

- 'Autonomy, and foster a feeling of trust and better training programs'.
- 'Be clear in their communication of strategic goals and objectives'.
- 'Upper management taking a more active role/interest in meeting with teams under them to identify trends and stay up to date on processes and improvement activities. More accountability from upper management, unless the trust is explicitly given to teams under them'.
- 'Create a culture that encourages breaks when working from home'.
- 'Have meaningful conversations rather than just asking, 'Are you ok?' and then moving on to a list of actions'.
- 'Formalise remote working options so that these are no longer considered "a privilege'.
- 'Consider workloads and if these are achievable and fair for salary and benefits'.
- 'Have compassionate leadership rather than bullying'.
- 'Give me the job title and remuneration for the role I'm actually delivering'.
- 'Recognise I am an introvert and need to recharge after group events'.
- 'Set clearly defined goals for my area of the business'.
- 'I would like management in the department to call out poor practices within the management team and ensure a consistent approach is taken with all members of staff'.

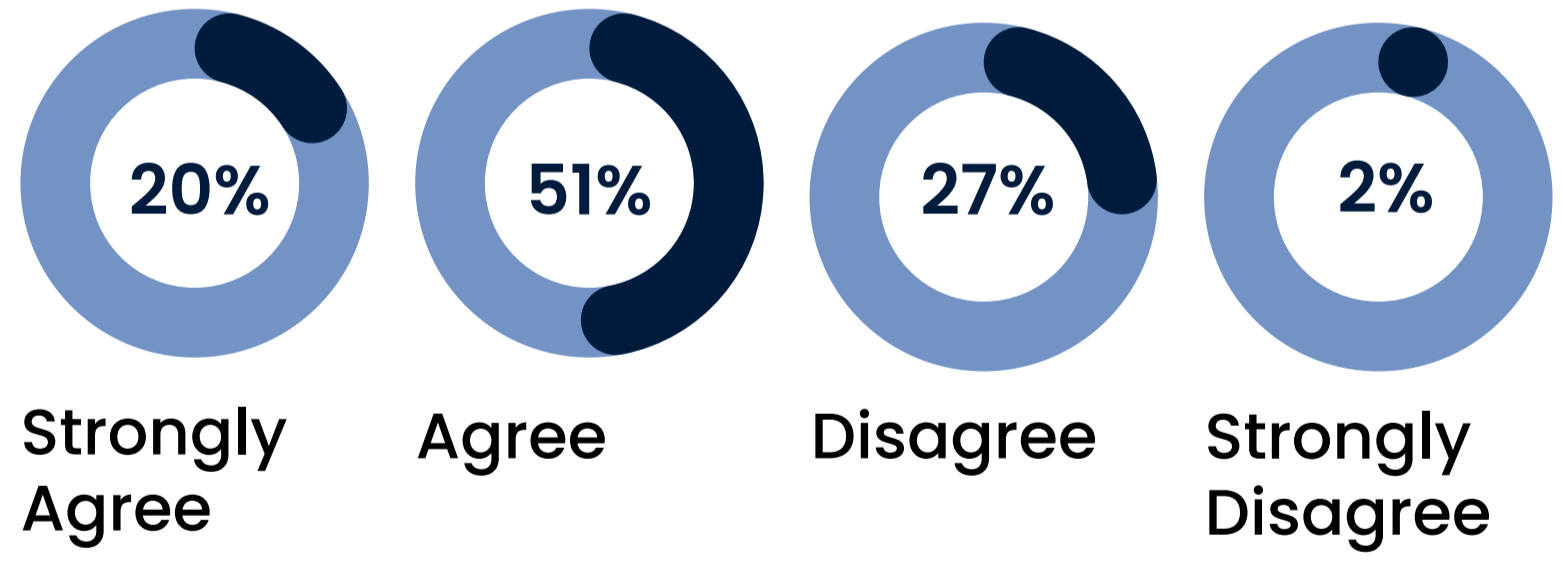
Good news for employers: 71% of workers are happy in their current roles!

Finally, we wanted to know how many of our respondents are happy in their current roles and the likelihood of them leaving their current roles. 71% of respondents said that they are happy in their current role, which is a very positive result.

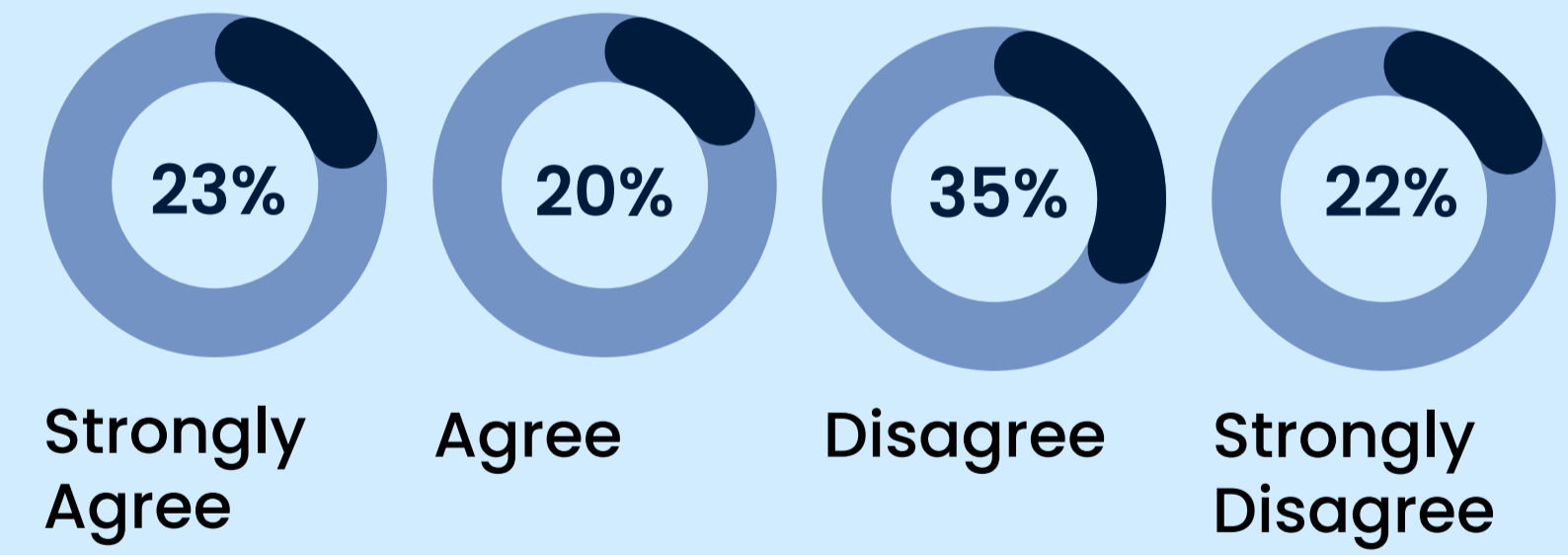
That doesn't mean, however, that our respondents aren't looking for new opportunities, 43% of our respondents said that they are seriously considering leaving their current job role.



Do you agree with the statement, 'I am happy in my current job role'



Do you agree with this statement 'I am seriously considering leaving my current job role'



What have we learned?

01 Flexible schedules enhance worklife harmony

Remote work options and flexible work schedules have helped to make worklife balance better and positively contributed to emotional wellbeing.

02 Clear expectations can improve emotional wellbeing

Improving salary or benefits, increased staffing levels, reducing workloads and clear expectations and goal setting are all key drivers for improving worklife balance and emotional wellbeing.

03 Happy employees don't always stay

Generally, people think they are paid appropriately and are happy in their current roles, however, that won't necessarily stop leaving their current role.

08 Conclusion

What does all this mean for IT service management and the intersection between humans and machines? As we've seen, that intersection presents both **challenges** and **opportunities for IT professionals**. As ITSM embraces the future of work, it becomes increasingly crucial for organisations to strike a balance between technology and the human.

This paradigm shift necessitates a focus on nurturing human skills such as emotional intelligence, problem-solving, analytical thinking and collaboration, and a commitment to health and wellbeing. From an **IT professional's perspective**, this evolving landscape calls for continuous skills development to remain relevant and competitive. That means organisational investment in training and upskilling initiatives that empower employees to adapt and excel in the age of digital transformation. And by doing so, fostering a culture of continuous learning that encourages worklife balance and wellbeing.

Technology and the workplace are intertwined more than ever before, not only shaping the way IT professionals approach their work, but also how they interact with business stakeholders, their colleagues and the people they support. The implementation of **advanced technologies** will continue to help organisations to streamline and automate routine tasks, allowing IT professionals to focus on higher value, strategic endeavours and promoting an environment conducive to innovation and creative problem-solving. Additionally, the integration of machine learning and AI in ITSM tools will enable predictive and proactive service delivery.

As a result, organisations will **leverage data-driven insights** to optimise resource allocation, reduce downtime, and enhance customer satisfaction. The future of worklife will be a delicate interplay between cutting-edge technology and the indispensable human factor. Organisations that foster the **right workplace culture** that values skills development, worklife balance, and wellbeing, will be able to harness the potential of emerging technologies while maximizing the unique capabilities of their human workforce.

The key to success in the ever-evolving IT industry lies in striking the perfect balance between these two dimensions, ensuring a symbiotic relationship that drives happiness, growth, innovation, and long-term sustainability.

SDI wishes to thank all the participants who took part in this industry research. We'll hopefully have the opportunity to revisit this same research process again in 2024 to understand how the research findings and observations actually play out in 2024.



Author

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About SDI

The SDI company vision statement is "Connecting people globally to make their today and tomorrow better."

The SDI company mission statement is "Inspire Service Desk & Support Teams to be brilliant."

For more information about SDI please visit

 servicedeskintstitute.com



To achieve SDI's vision and mission, our goals are to help organisations to:

01 Embrace:
Embrace best practice and raise the quality of service.

02 Pioneer:
Pioneer, push boundaries, stimulate novel thinking and innovate.

03 Explore:
Explore, discover, learn, and take action to be better.

04 Create:
Create inspiring human and digital experiences.

05 Shine:
Shine, deliver and demonstrate exceptional business value.

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