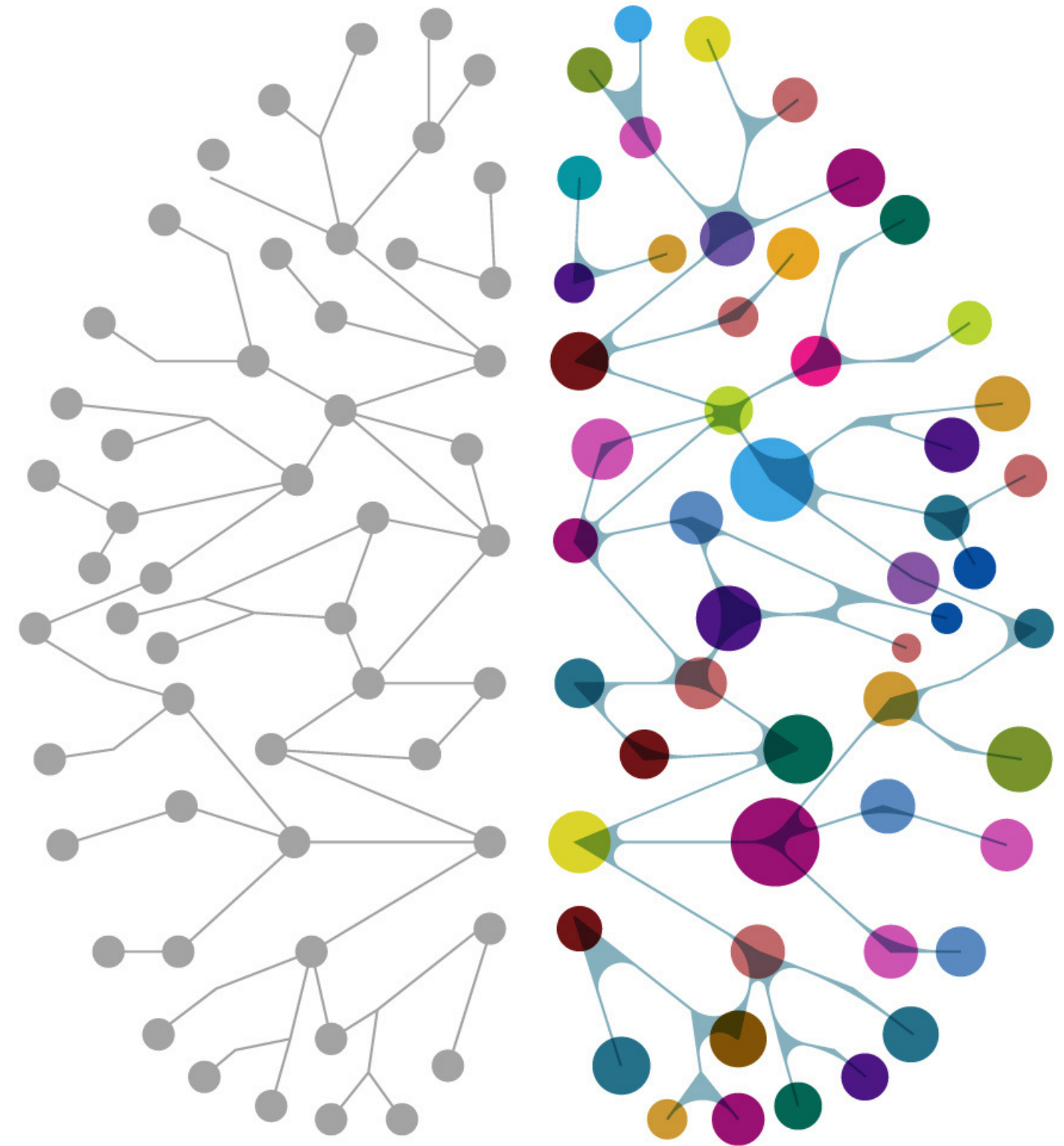


Survey Results

Neurodiversity as a competitive advantage

What can organisations learn from neuroscience and neurodivergent individuals when shaping the future of work?



The business case is clear, now it's time for action

Diverse organisations are often more profitable, innovative and less sensitive to market uncertainty. We therefore have good reasons to create more diverse organisations.

However, a diverse organisation, doesn't necessarily always guarantee healthy and thriving employees

Around 20% of the population is classified as neurodiverse, 20% are highly sensitive and nearly 50% are stressed/burned out. This equates to a large proportion of the population, many of whom are struggling.

A recent work performance study by Hewlett Packard Enterprise found that neurodiverse teams are 30% more productive than neurotypical ones. The same applies to diverse teams overall. Many "traits" of neurodivergent individuals (e.g. hyper focus, creativity, energy) are considered key competencies for the future, yet 30-40% are unemployed and many are struggling at work - trying to "fit in"

Numerous studies illustrate that our work environment and ways of working are impacting our brain health and cognitive performance negatively. Our brains are largely structured in the same way, what makes our brains healthy and perform well are pretty much the same things, irrespective of who we are and what type of job we have. Yet, what is and the extent to which something (e.g. noise) is impacting one person will be different to another.

Our brains are similar, yet we're all different genetically, physiologically, and neurologically.

Science is also illustrating that many of the factors within our work environment that support neurodivergent individuals, are similar to the factors that influence brain health, cognitive performance and productivity amongst the neurotypical population.



A survey focused on actionable features



To help further Neurodiversity up the corporate agenda in Sweden (and internationally), flow²thrive and AmbiCare conducted a survey targeting neurodivergent individuals.

The objective was to capture lived experience insights on what organisations need to consider when shaping work places, spaces and cultures that can help individuals identifying as neurodivergent to be their best self and thrive at work.

The survey covered questions related to factors that can positively impact health and performance in:

- Physical and digital work-environments
- Culture and ways of working
- Life outside of work

This report, covers the detailed findings from the survey. A summary report has also been developed, including also commentary and conclusions from a Roundtable meeting on the same topic, held 27 April 2023.

Definition of Neurodiversity

“Neurodiversity refers to the virtually infinite neuro-cognitive variability within Earth’s human population. It points to the fact that every human has a unique nervous system with a unique combination of abilities and needs.”

JUDY SINGER 2020

Authors



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Thorunn is one of the co-founders and the inventor of QuietFrames noise cancelling glasses. She has worked in global corporations with supply chain, finance and logistics. She has an extensive knowledge around stress management, ADHD/autism and neuroscience.



MIA SKOOG

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Mia is the second co-founder of QuietFrames noise cancelling glasses. She has 15 years of experience working with employee health initiatives and creating healthy and sustainable workplaces.



LINDA JARNHAMN

flow²thrive

Linda is the founder of flow²thrive, a neuroscience-based, data-driven, employee wellbeing consulting business. With a passion for brain health and cognitive performance optimisation, she strives to transform the world of work by applying neuroscience to the heart of people and culture practices.

High level demographics



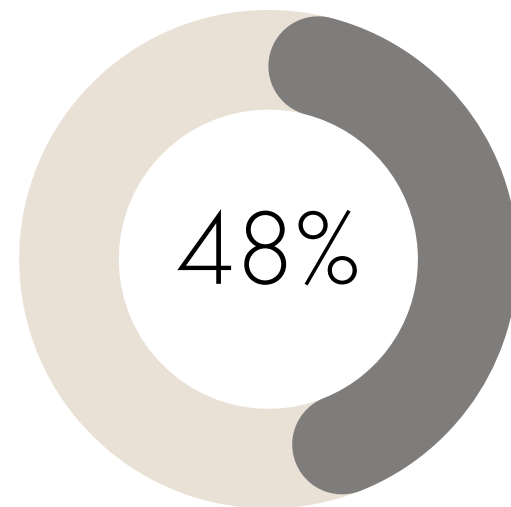
103 respondents started survey
Number of responses per questions vary
Predominately female (73%)
Majority from Sweden (76%)
Between 31 - 50 years old
ADHD/ADD (39%)
Autism (20%)
Many identifying/diagnosed with more than one



Executive summary

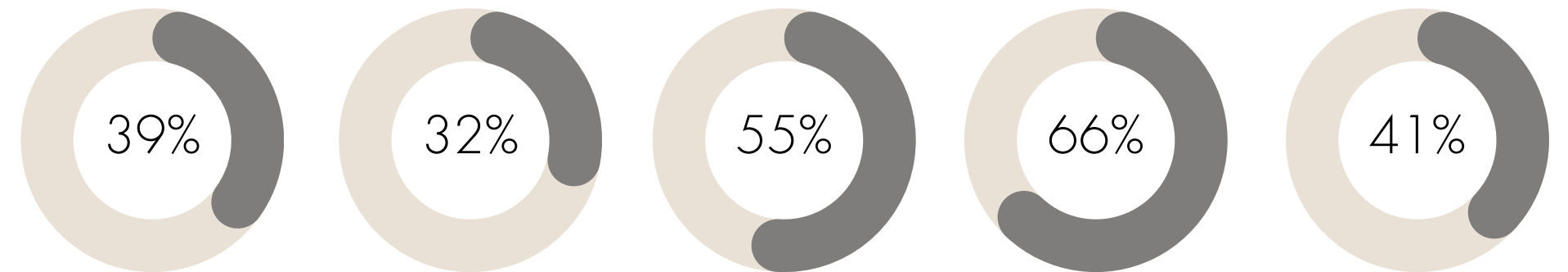
Survey participants were asked about the factors and support tools in their corporate office, home and virtual work environment, as well as the habits and behaviours at and outside of work that can make them feel and perform well. For each of the questions, they were also asked to provide a rating as to whether these factors/behaviours were available/possible to sustain. The findings are summarised below, and further detailed on subsequent pages.

Awareness of what makes a healthy and productive work environment is relatively high



Have well defined strategies & habits they know can make them feel and perform well at work

However, few neurodivergent individuals consider their work environment adequate or supportive



Culture & Ways of Working

Corporate office environment

Home office environment

Digital/virtual work environment

Habits outside of work

Executive summary

How we work and the environment we work in is key

There seems to be a strong level of consensus with regards to factors impacting ability to do your job well, be productive and thrive. However, how these various factors impact us differ between individuals. There are, as an example, significant differences in our needs for and how we balance social scenarios, stimulation and silence. How the brain perceive something as "interrupting" or not, and the severity of the same will also vary greatly between individuals diagnosed with ADHD, autism or dyslexia, or an individual who is suffering from e.g. burnout or depression, and so will the impact on the work performed.

Accountability & flexibility



92%

"Freedom under responsibility, rules of the game, balance between work and free time"

Clarity of expectations, plans, priorities



89%

"Clear plans and expectations, not canceling meetings at short notice, help prioritising work"

Openness, trust, supportive attitude



89%

"Open-mindedness, ok to show vulnerability, ask for help, ability to be yourself"

Distraction free: auditory silence



89%

"Silent work space, visually closed spaces, ability to be on my own and not talk during parts of the day"

Executive summary

How we sit, move, rest, recover and the visual environment is also important

Movement, at and outside of work

55%



"Regular exercise. Keto diet. Meeting up with friends"

Rest & restorative time

48%



"Possibility to take breaks when I need to and to be able to set my own schedule"

Seating & desk arrangements

42%



"Good equipment (large screen, keyboard, mouse) and also a good chair here too"

Right light & visual silence

36%

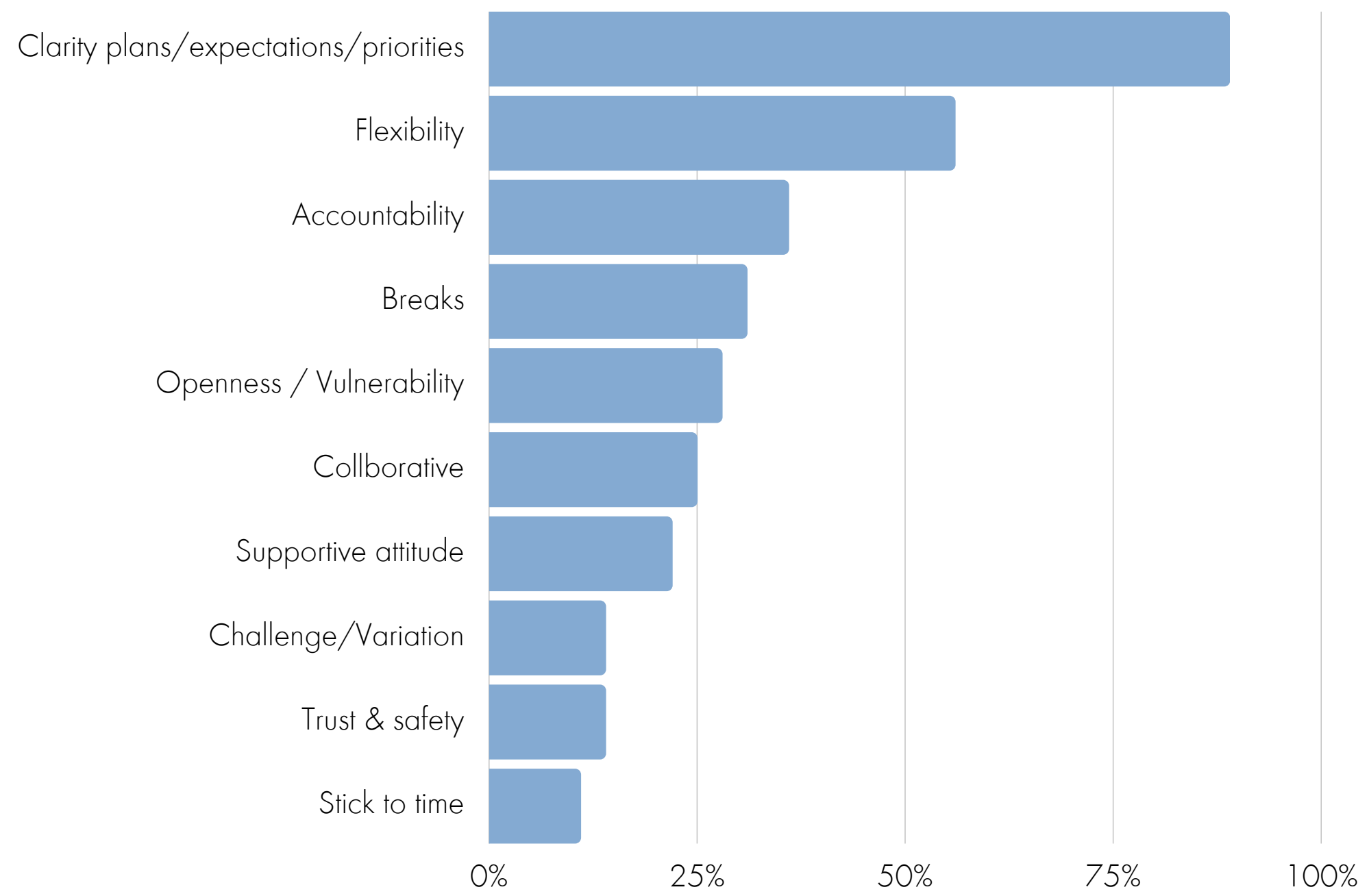
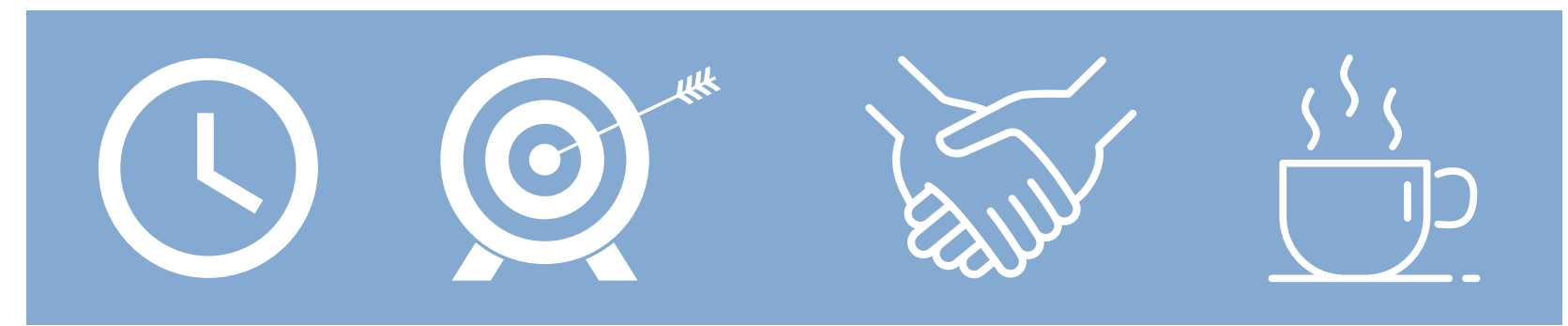


"A desk near a wall, where nobody can walk behind me and I can view to the whole place"

Way of of Working

Behaviours, habits or factors in my employer's culture/ways of working that can make me feel and perform well are...

Behaviours, habits or factors currently present in the culture/ways of working



- 92% Accountability & flexibility
- 89% Clarity plans, expectations, priorities
- 89% Openness/trust/supportive attitude
- 31% Ability to take breaks
- 14% Challenge & variation

Way of Working

Comments



Freedom under responsibility, rules of the game, remote work, togetherness, balance between work and free time, tune in, give feedback and feedback but trust-based leadership. Calm environment, green colors, less demand on availability at all times. Be able to screen the workplace.

Clear frameworks about where I have the freedom to choose & test & dare new things, I am curious & enjoy investigating & tinkering with tasks that mean I can make mistakes—then I would like to know clearly where the boundaries are . I don't need handholding, but feel free to demarcate a bit of the surface of the ocean before you throw me in there.

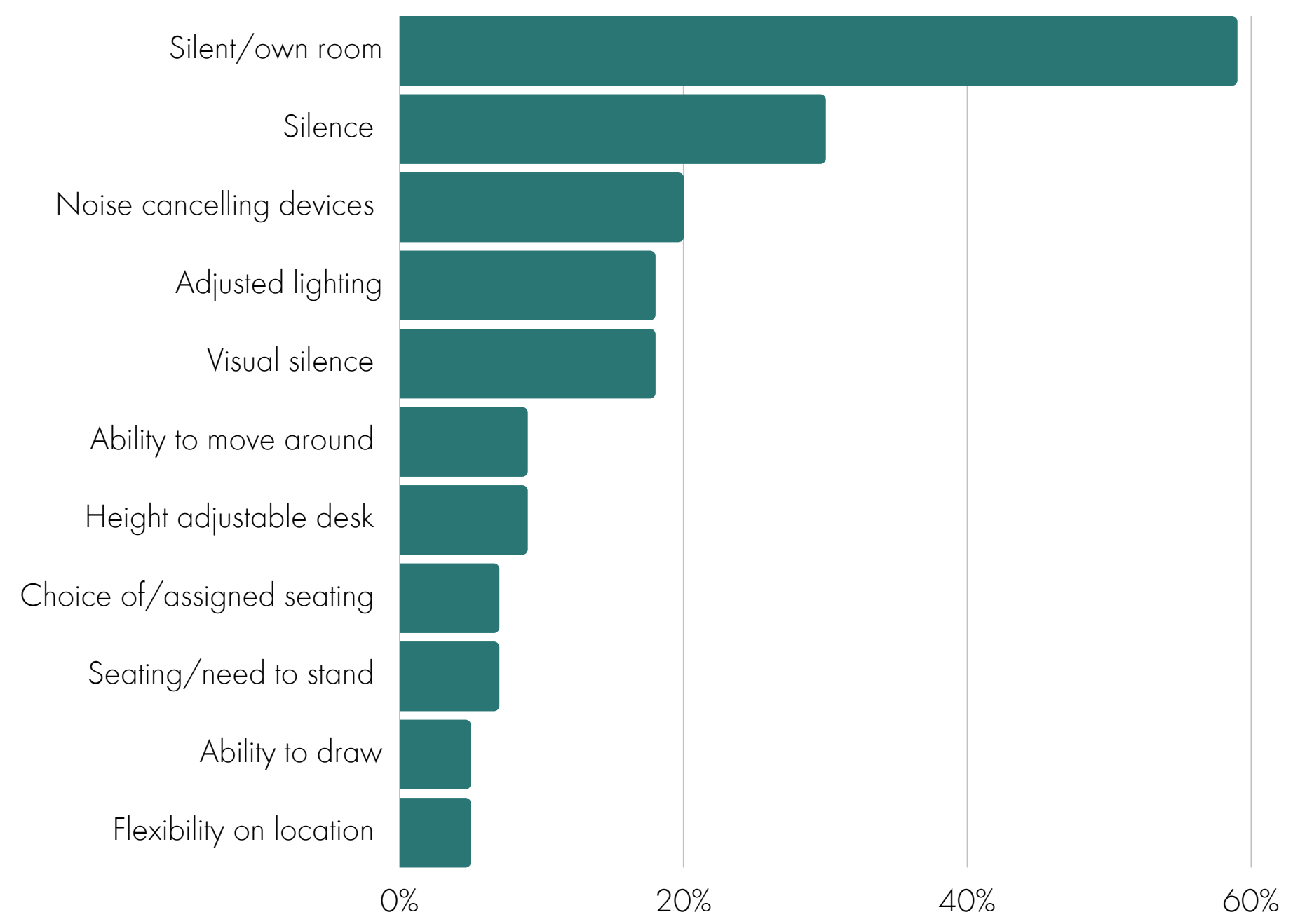
Freedom from stress and freedom from planning needs. If I can do what hits me, I usually get a lot more done than if I have to fit into a template

Clear plans, clear expectations, not canceling meetings at short notice (I prepare a lot mentally), help to prioritize.

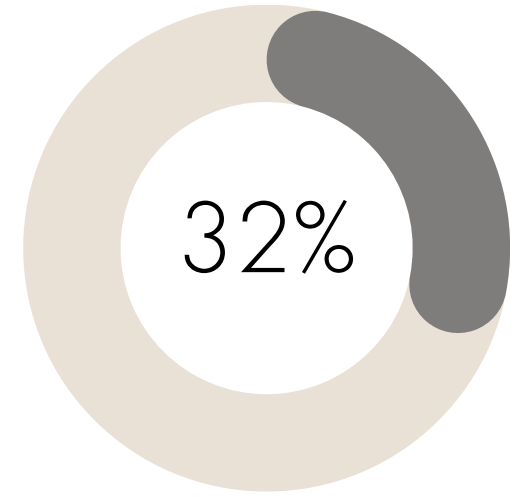
Possibility to take breaks when I need to. To be able to set my own schedule, as well as a bit of flex time.

Place of Work: Corporate Office

The things and support tools in my CORPORATE office environment that can make me feel and perform well are...



Factors needed currently present in CORPORATE office environment



89% Auditory silence
 41% Seating & ability to move around
 36% Lighting & visual silence

Place of Work: Corporate Office

Comments

Silent work space, visually closed spaces, ability to be on my own and not talk during parts of the day

Social interaction is key to my day

Screened off areas, own room/own place (NOT activity based offices!). Comfortable lighting.

Quiet place, a desk near a wall, nobody could walk or pass behind me. View to the whole place where I stand/sit

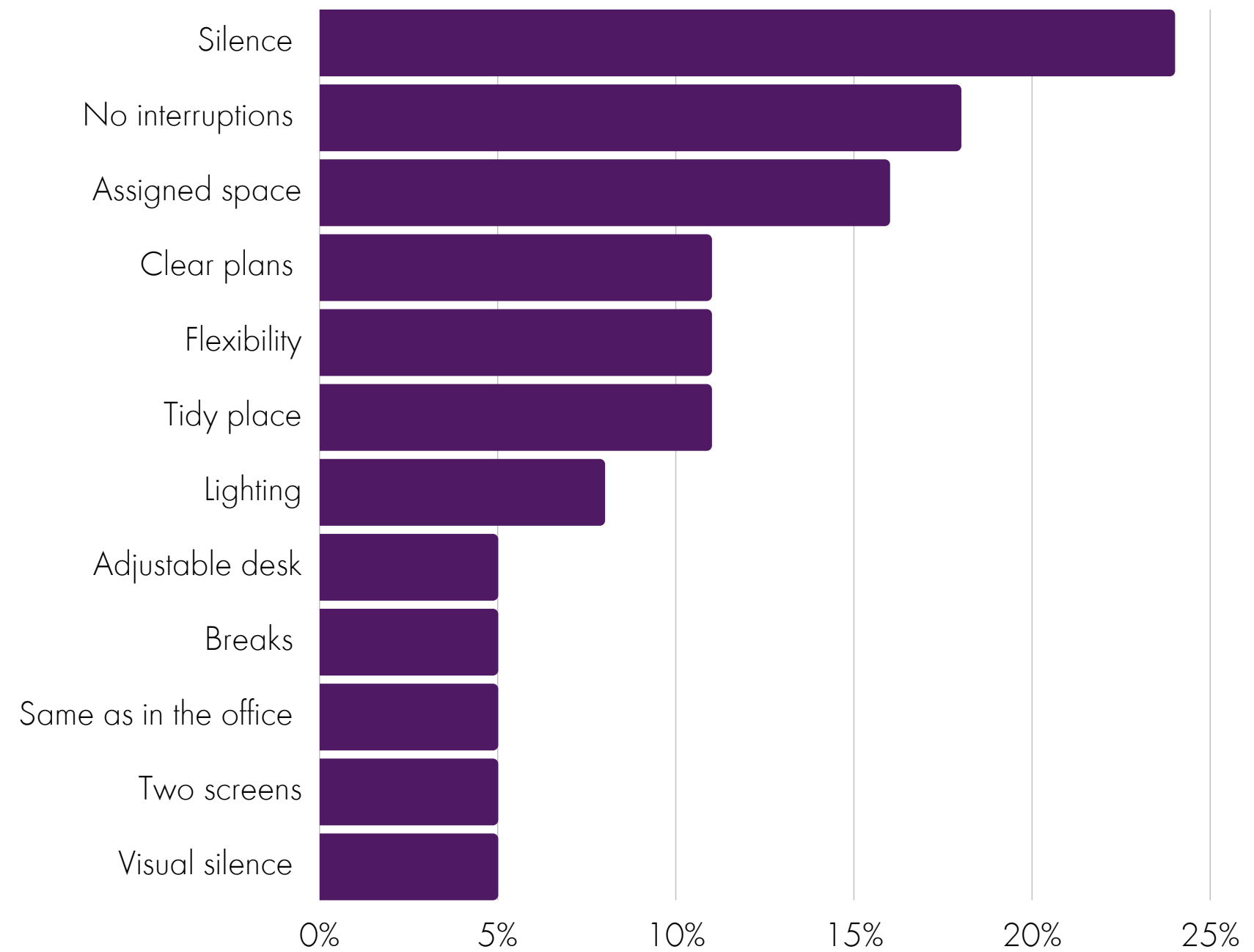
I want to be able to close the door on me, to have silence around me, to be able to switch between sitting and standing

That I can move, get up from my desk. Adjustable table..... Silence, or head phones. That there are people nearby, for socializing (I'm very extroverted). Preferably someone to work alongside. Challenge, difficult tasks, otherwise I get tired.

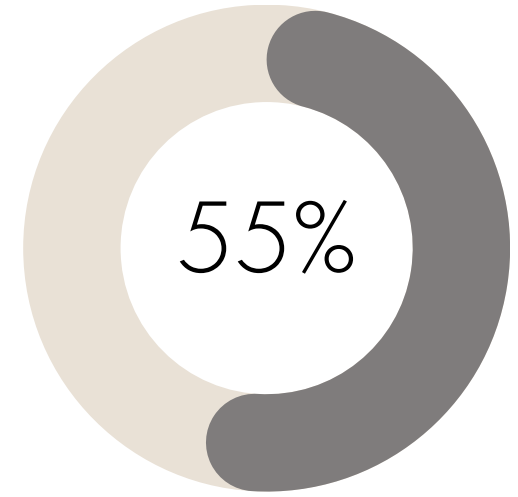


Place of Work: Home

Things and support tools in my HOME work environment that can make me feel and perform well are...



Factors needed currently present in your HOME office environment



42% Auditory silence/no interruptions
 26% Assigned, tidy space
 21% Clarity & flexibility

Place of Work: Home

Comments



Flexibility and the ability to adapt the environment to the priorities for the day. Privacy, noise level

A tidy space. A special place to work. An agenda with slots for breaks, coffee break. That no one else is home

Same as in the office really. I avoid working from home as much as I can. Distracting.

Good equipment (large screen, keyboard, mouse) even at home (as I mostly work from home now) and also a good chair here too. Clear goals and structure.

Sit at the desk in your bedroom, have good lighting, sit on a comfortable chair and put a note on the door that you don't want to be disturbed right now.

Daylight. Use breaks to deal with things as they come up (eg, keep on top of laundry or dishes)... Have more social engagement outside of work, Manage immediate work environment (light, sound, temp) to minimize its wear and tear on me. Have pets around

Place of Work: Home

Comments

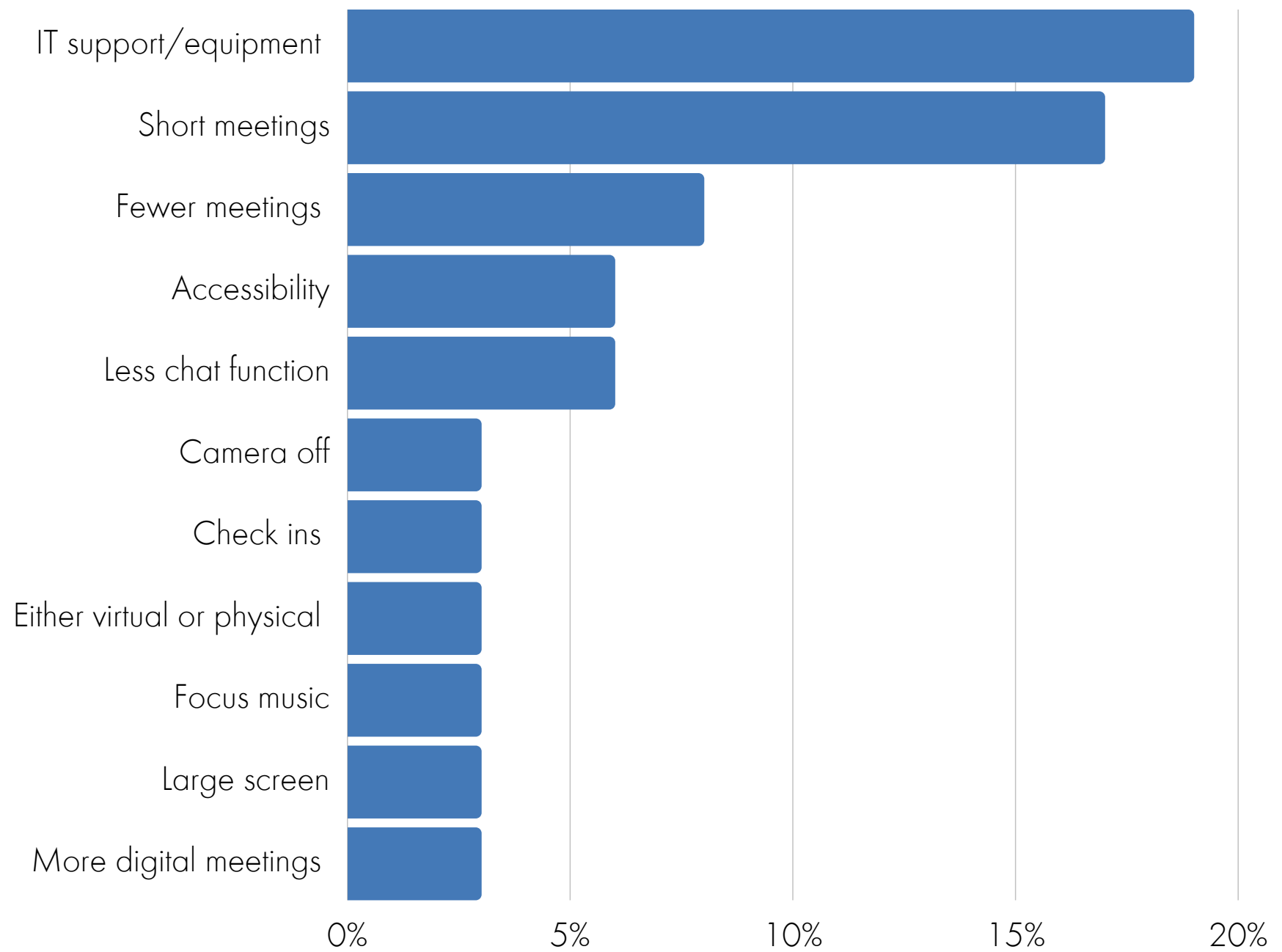


Some had answered the question from the perspective of benefits of working from home:

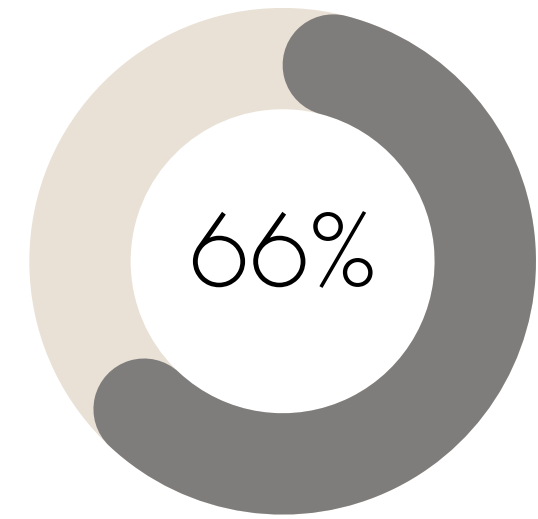
- Better focus/less stress
- Close to people you love
- No commute
- Familiarity
- Flexibility
- Less noise
- Less socialising
- No need to get dressed
- 'Uncomfortable' habits less visible

Place of Work: Virtual

What, if changed, in your virtual work environment would have the most positive impact on how you feel and perform?



Factors needed currently present in VIRTUAL office environment



25% Fewer & shorter meetings
 19% Good tech / IT support
 17% Virtual call conduct

Place of Work: Virtual Comments



Camera off more often. Using chat function less. Having space between meetings to reflect

Smaller meeting groups could perhaps be good. Then there won't be many people looking at one at the same time and it will be less of a hassle.

Computers and programs such as speech synthesis, the ability to dictate, calendars with notices and time aids help maintain structure and routines, provide accessibility and a clear sense of greater predictability

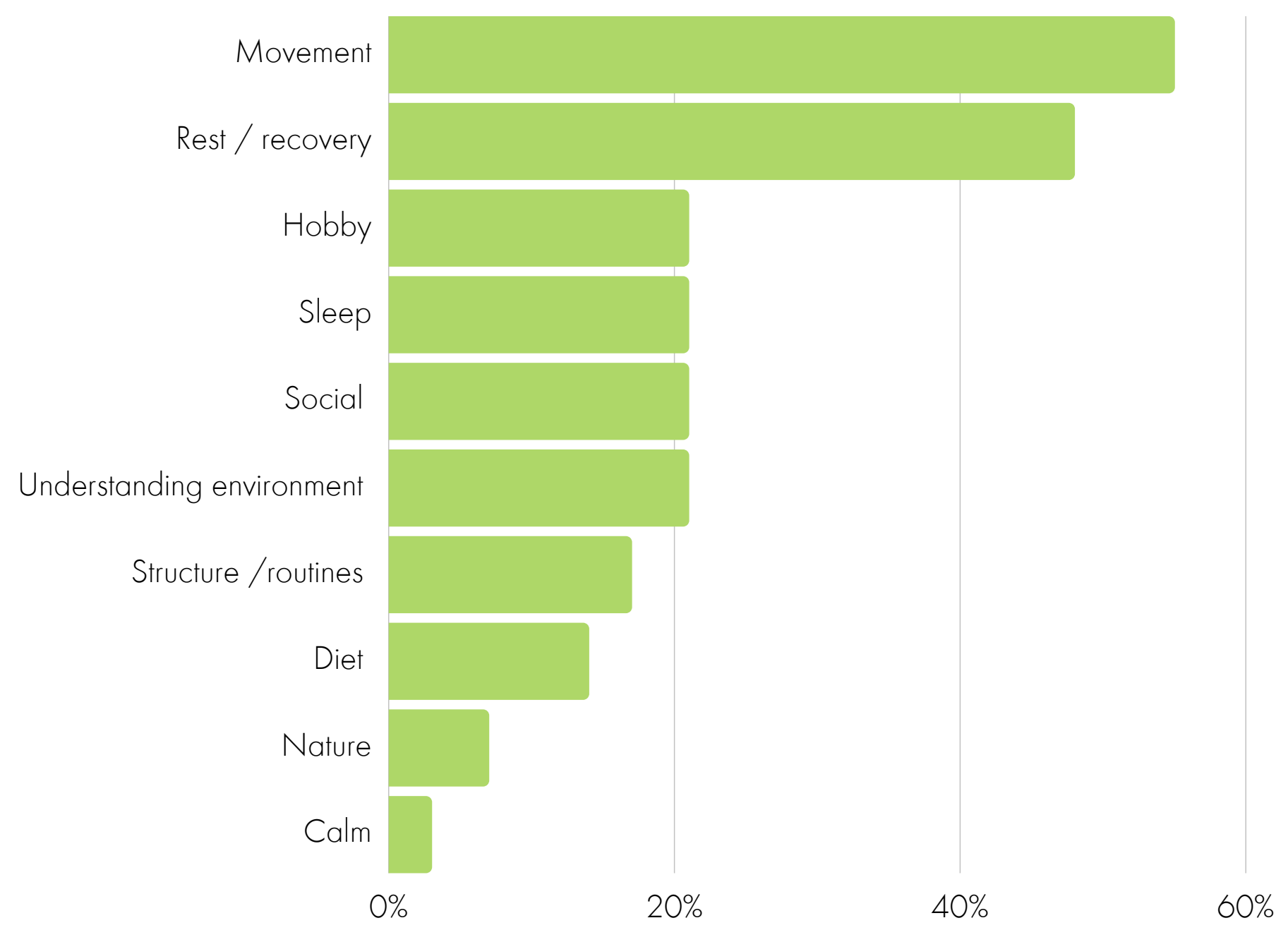
For example, being able to turn off chat and mailbox notifications for parts of the day. Creating policy against managers sending messages after work hours.

It is incredibly easy for me to zoom out and lose focus when I have to sit in a meeting that way. Shorter and more efficient meetings could perhaps be something.

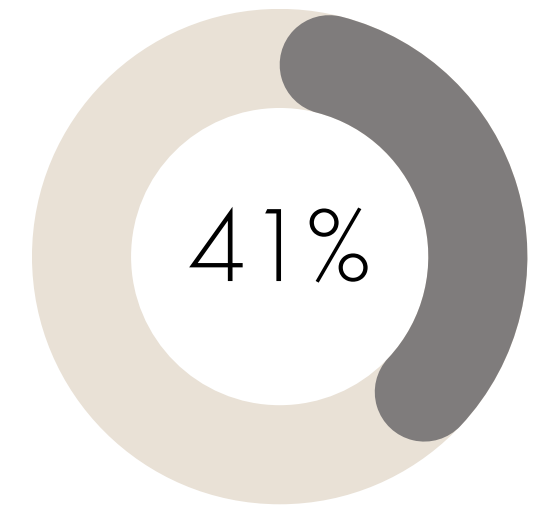
If people were clear about what kind of communication they prefer (call, in person, chat, etc.) & for what. I don't want to jump between a bunch of different ones. Personally, I prefer chat because then I can use strategies for when to read & when to answer, and I have it in writing so I don't forget as easily (I forget verbal stuff as quickly as it is said)

Way of Living

The habits and/or support tools in my life outside of work that can make me feel and perform well are...



Ability to maintain or use habits and/or support tools in your life outside of work?



- 55% Movement
- 48% Breaks
- 21% Challenge/hobby
- 21% Sleep
- 21% Social

Way of Living Comments

Regular exercise. Keto diet. Meeting up with friends



Hobbies and interests where I am just connecting with one or two people

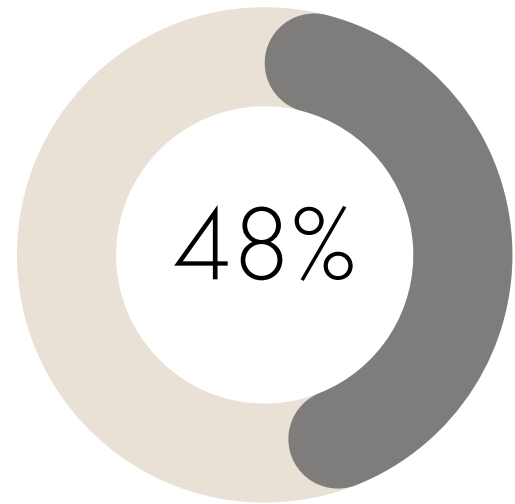
Exercise. Meditation. Mindfulness. Nature. Closeness to my family. Being able to be spontaneous. To be creative

Sleeping directly after work so i don't have to worry about how much sleep i get, physical training, mentally stimulating hobbies

Exercise. Meditation. Mindfulness. Nature. Closeness to my family. Being able to be spontaneous. To be creative

Understanding from my family, opportunity for rest and recovery, spending time outdoors

Strategies, habits & support tools



Almost half of the respondents have well defined strategies and habits that they know can make them feel and perform well at work

Plans, structure & boundaries

- Schedules
- Calendar
- Reminders
- Colour coding
- Routines
- Planning & preparation
- Prioritisation
- Separation of activities
- Time limits & boundaries

Movement & recovery

- Exercise, exercise, exercise
- Exercise in the morning
- Rest & recovery
- Balance activity - rest
- Walks
- Daytime naps
- Selective social engagement
- Morning meditation

Sleep

- Sleep after work
- Get sufficient sleep
- Sleep is core
- Consistent wake up time
- Strict evening routine
- No phone before bed

Contact us

AmbiCare

ABOUT AMBICARE

AmbiCare helps workplaces to increase well-being and to reduce stress in open spaces. QuietFrames noise cancelling glasses increases people's ability to focus and gives the user more energy for important things in life.

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ABOUT FLOW2THRIVE

We put the human brain at the center of our work. By using our proprietary neuroscience-based methodology and tools, we work with our clients to help them challenge and change their own thinking and practices; to take a truly human centric approach to work.

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