

**wilson  
partners.**

**After lockdown:  
The shape of  
business in  
The Thames Valley**



**This latest piece of business research was conducted by Wilson Partners in July 2021 to help understand the state of business in the Thames Valley following the pandemic. We surveyed our own client base, consisting of approx. 500 ambitious owner managed businesses, largely SMEs, headquartered in the Thames Valley with 5 to 150 employees as well as a select few businesses of a similar DNA.**

Having run similar surveys in June and December 2020, we wanted to see how businesses have continued to adjust to the challenging landscape, whilst hopefully benefiting from the vaccine rollout and lifting of lockdown restrictions.

Helping our clients make informed decisions with clearly articulated information is at the heart of what we do and we continue to be here for those clients who need us. We hope that the data in our latest research is a useful addition to your planning for the future.



# Crisis! What Crisis?

The headline does not tell the full story as we're very aware of some businesses who continue to struggle with the knock on effects of COVID, some of whom will find business almost impossible once the furlough scheme is fully withdrawn. However, we can't ignore the overriding feeling of positivity this latest set of figures tells us and can hopefully provide some level of comfort for the 5% of respondents still severely disrupted.

## Remote working is here to stay

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The general consensus is that there's a happy medium to be found working both at home and in the office, a whopping 74% told us they will be working from home in some capacity, whilst 18% will go full time WFH with 50% finding remote working more productive.

## Cash is still king

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As ever cash is critical in not just staying afloat but also achieving your ambitions, so we're pleased to report that 50% of respondents told us that cashflow is better than 12 months ago, although 13% reported that it's worse.

# It's all about the three Rs

## Recovery

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Whilst almost 45% of respondents told us they had not been adversely affected by the pandemic, 50% are either in recovery mode or fully recovered with things looking good. 5% remain adversely affected.

## Recruitment

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With 55% of businesses looking to add to their workforce by the end of the year, it's good news for recruiters although with 30% reporting problems getting the right people, they're going to need to up their game. But with working from home here to stay, this presents a great opportunity to cast the net wider to get the best people – remember, not everyone in the country will be experiencing the Thames Valley 'bubble'.

## Rishi

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84% are expecting an increase in turnover and whilst it will take a lot to put a smile back on Rishi Sunak's face as he contemplates how to fund the biggest financial support since the war, he'll be pleased to learn that 64% are expecting to see a growth in profits and therefore the corporation tax take.

# Supply and inflation

**Another thing that might put a smile on Mr Sunak's face is the prospect of inflation to reduce the debt burden, but at what cost to business? Almost 50% of the Thames Valley businesses we surveyed are experiencing inflationary pressures, which could be exacerbated further for the 25% experiencing Brexit related issues.**

## **Fix the roof while the sun is shining**

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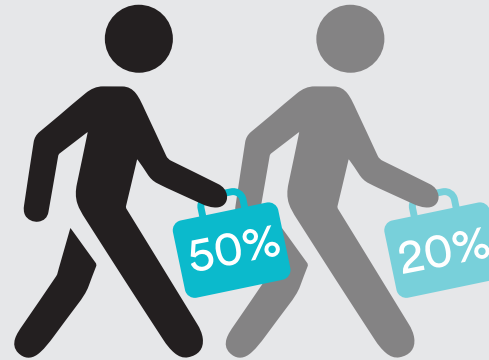
Well the sun is certainly shining for the majority at the moment and so you have to make hay. Supply chain issues, inflationary pressures, a lack of quality people and businesses still in recovery mode present a lot of variables that could turn on a sixpence at some point in the next few years. So in conclusion, the importance of keeping tight on your numbers, scenario planning,

staying on top of cashflow, and keeping a constant dialogue with your customers is as important now as it's ever been. And having had time to make improvements to your business through the pandemic, now is the opportunity to get it in the best shape, whether that be for growth, acquisition, exit or just to take more holiday.



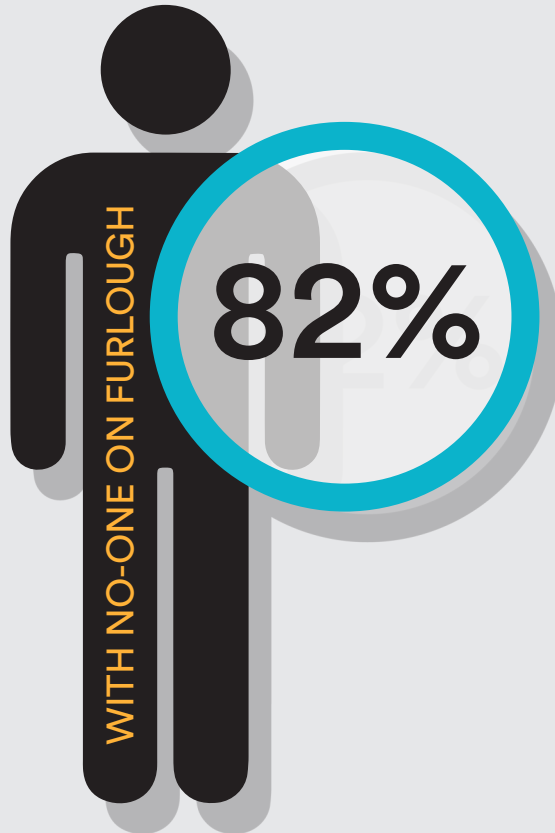
**74%**  
of businesses  
remote working  
1-5 days per week.

**18%**  
working from  
home full time.

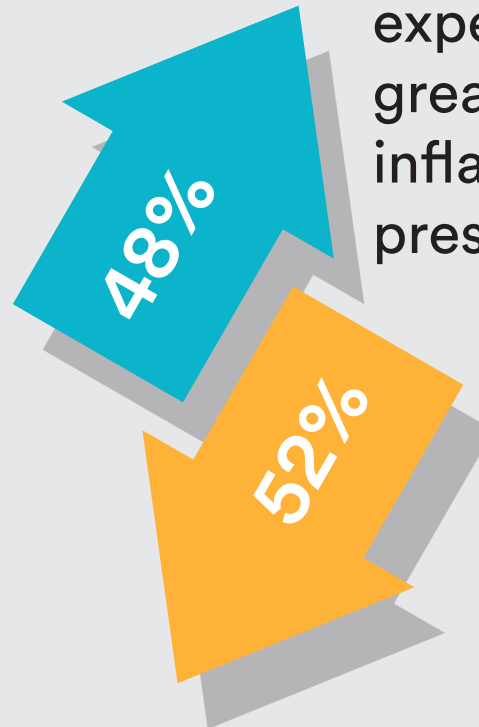


50% found remote working more productive,  
with 20% finding it less so

Not adversely affected by  
the pandemic



**48%**  
experiencing  
greater  
inflationary  
pressures



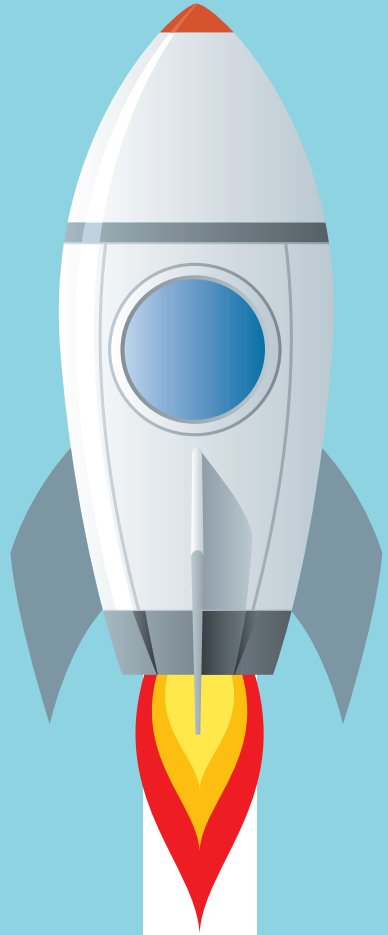
**55%**  
businesses increasing  
workforce by end of 2021



Expect profits to increase this year



**64%**



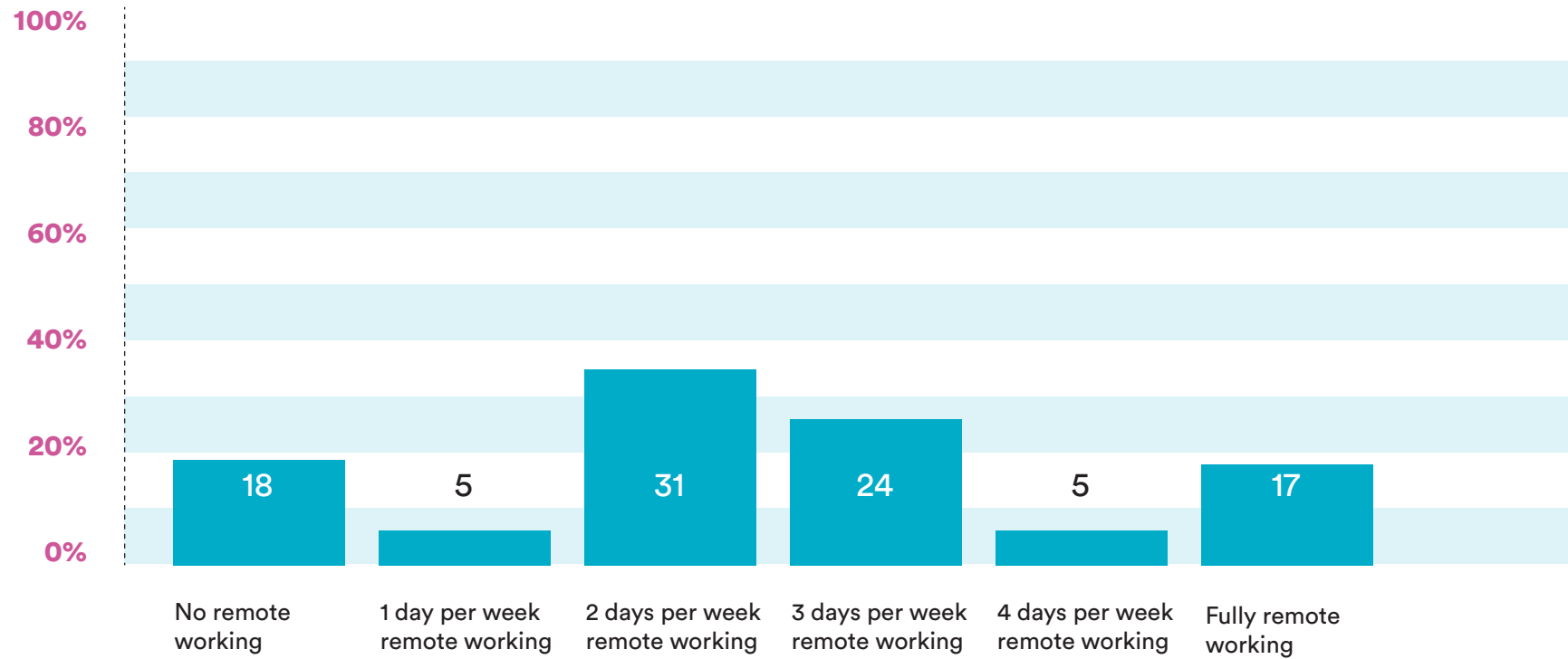
Now is your time!

# W. The results



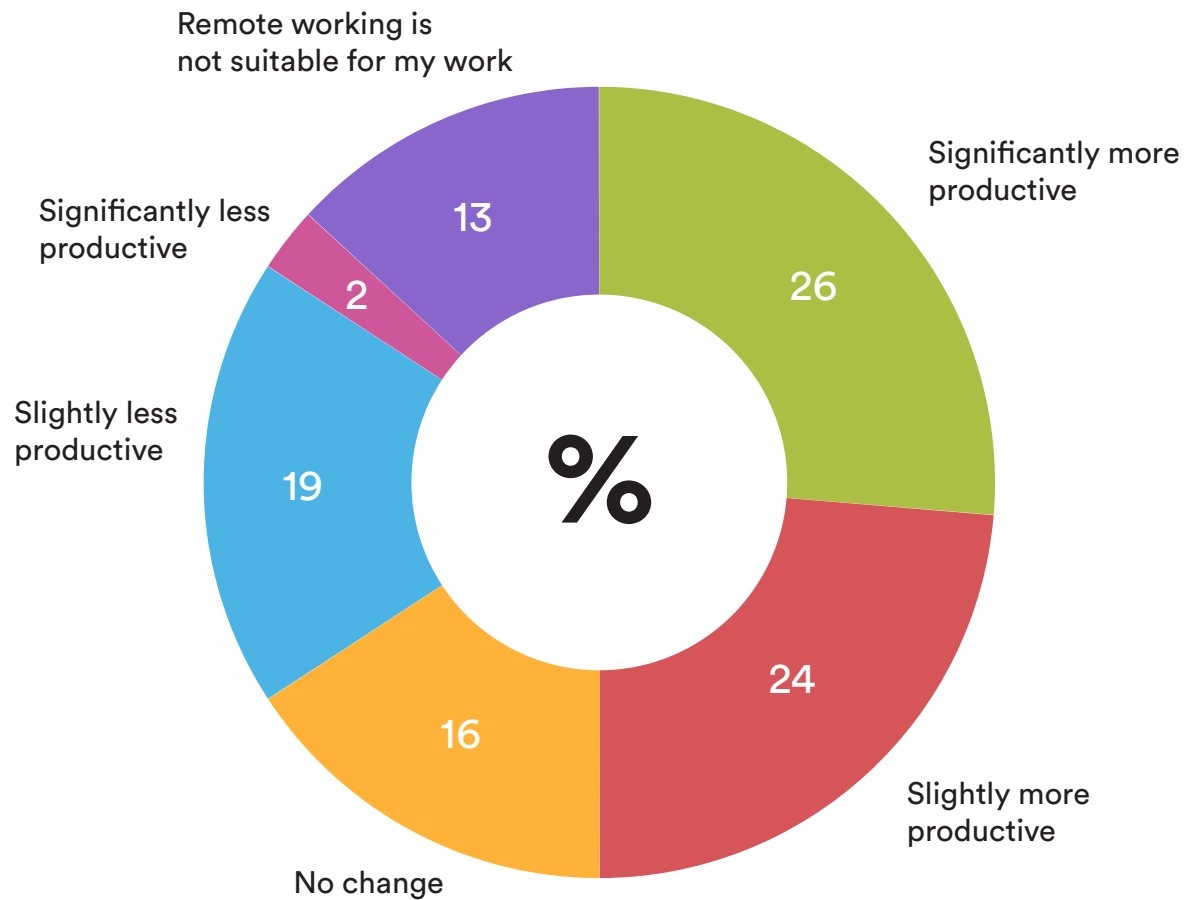
# Q1

Which of the following most closely describes your organisation's expected use of the 'workplace' in the long-term?



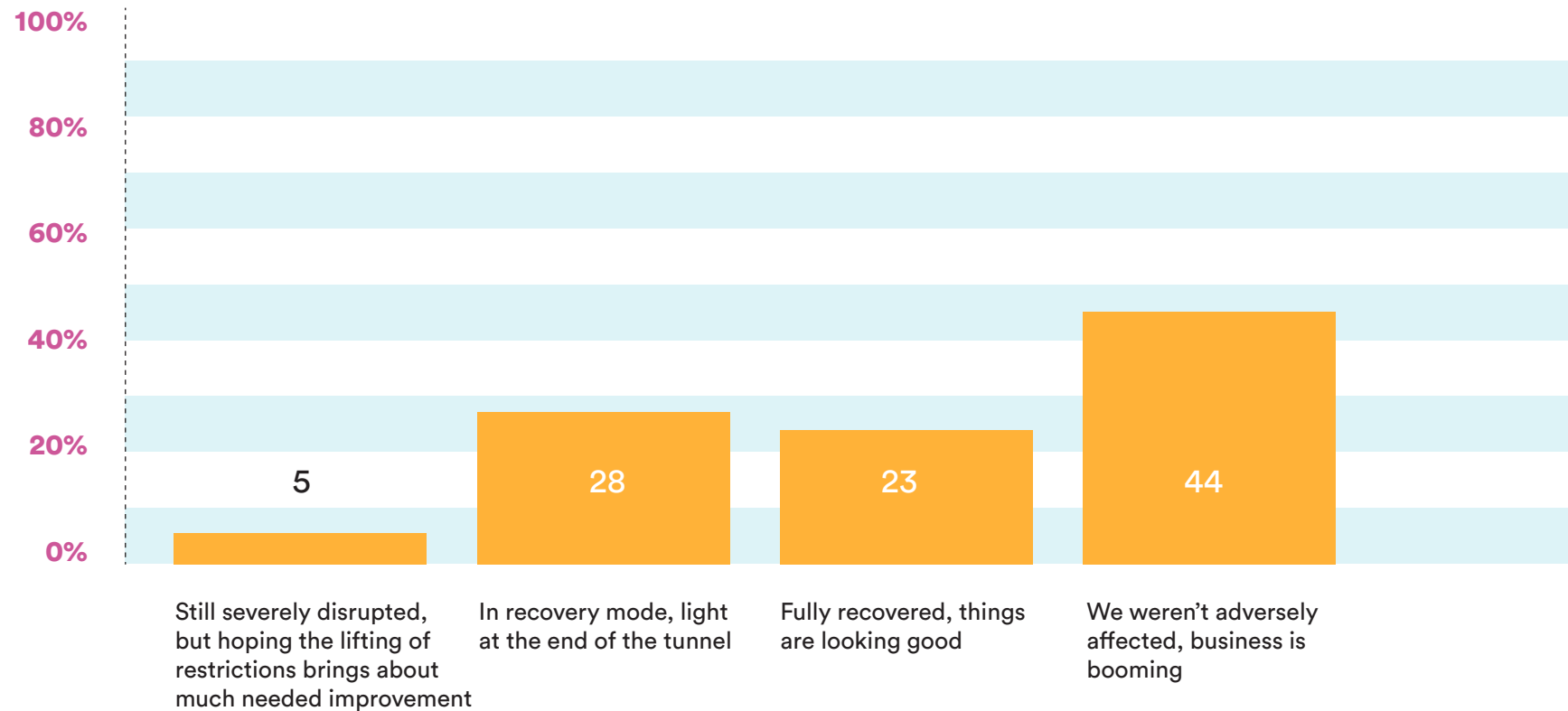
# Q2

On balance, do you find remote working more or less productive for your own work?



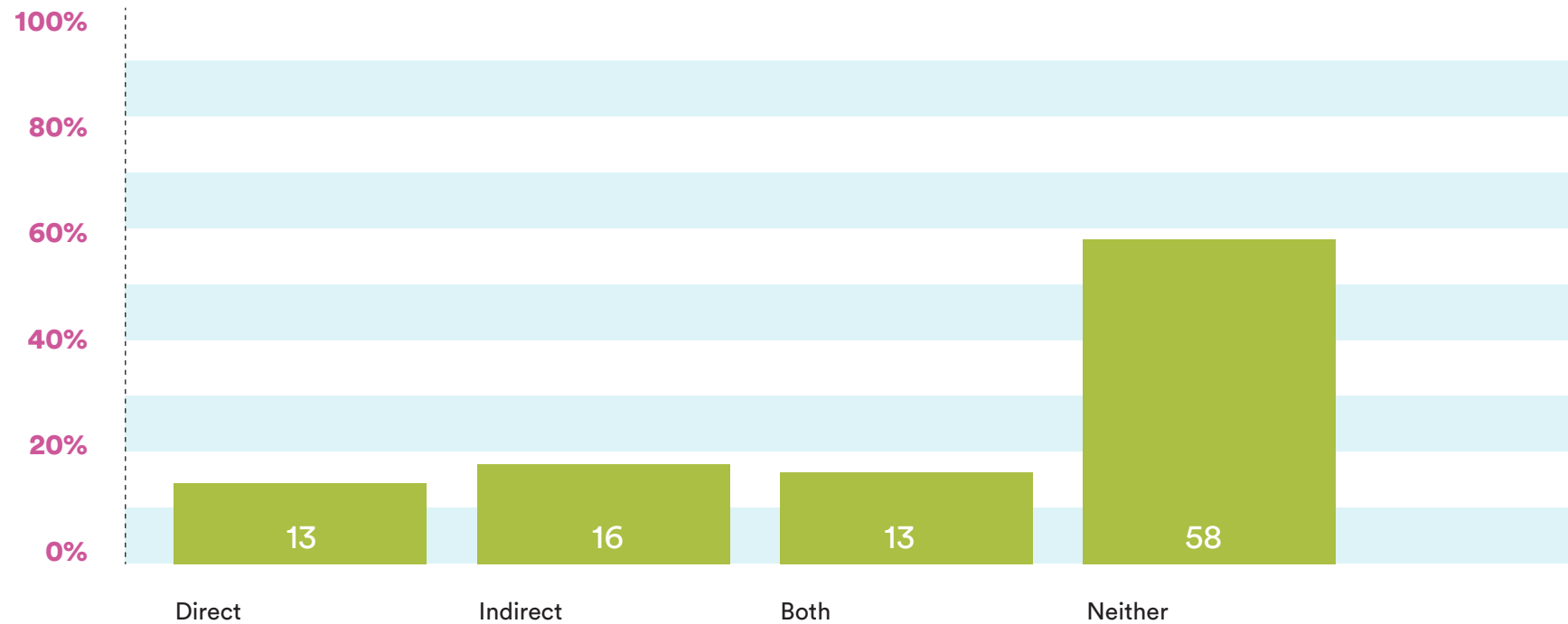
# Q3

Following on from the pandemic, which statement best describes your business?



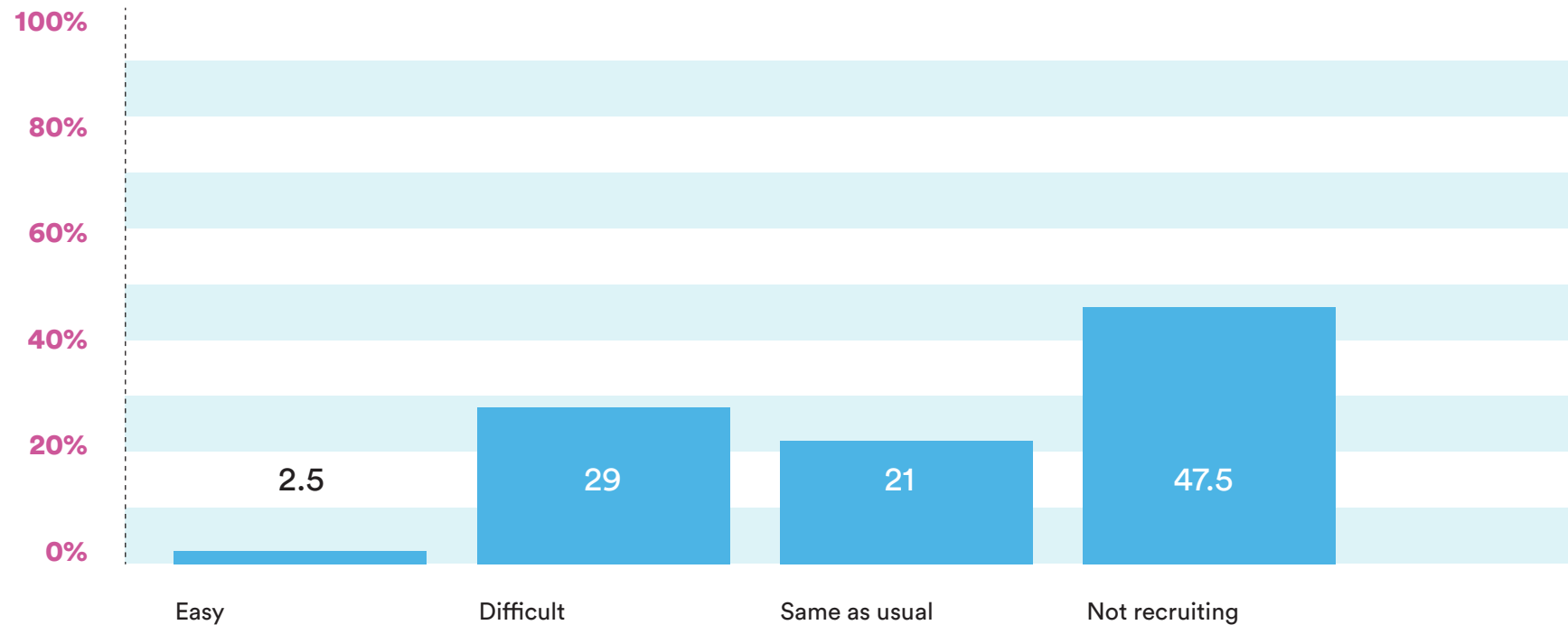
# Q4

Are supply chain issues having a direct or indirect impact on your business?



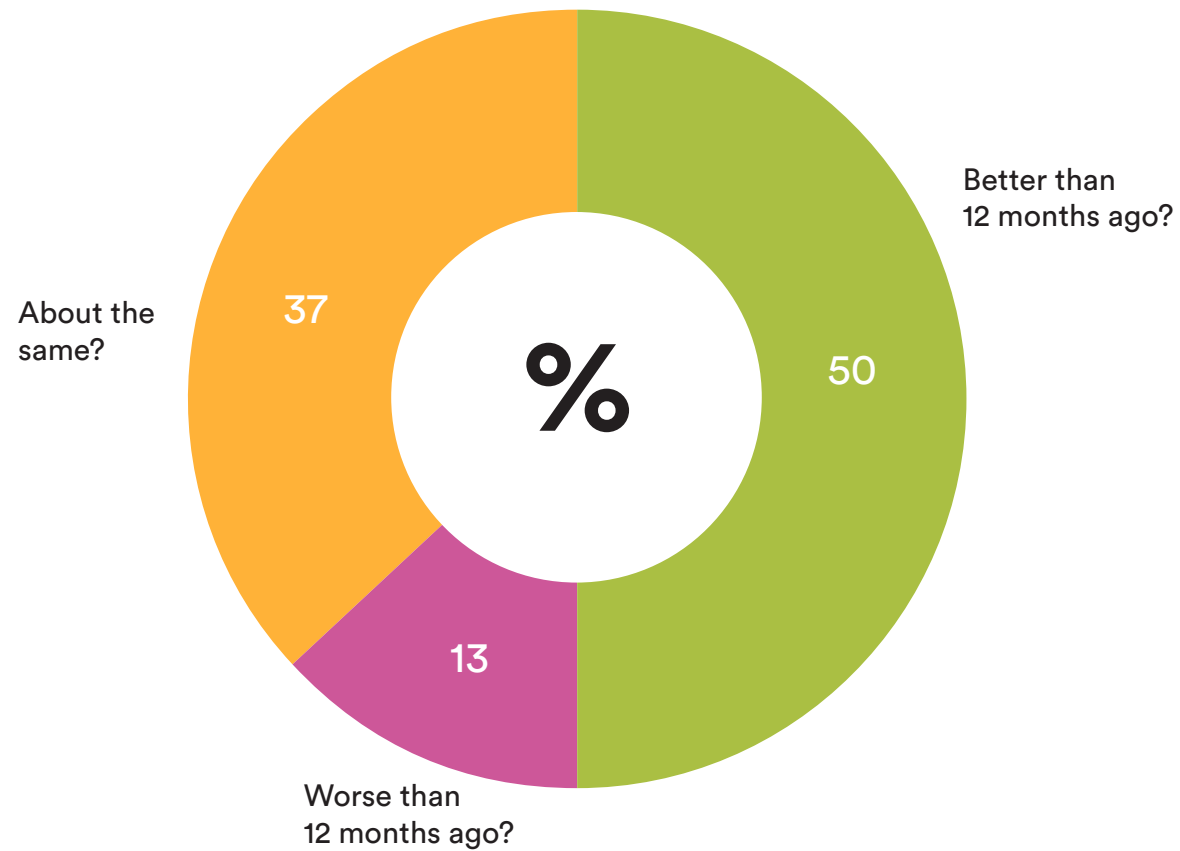
# Q5

If you're recruiting, how easy is it to get hold of quality people?



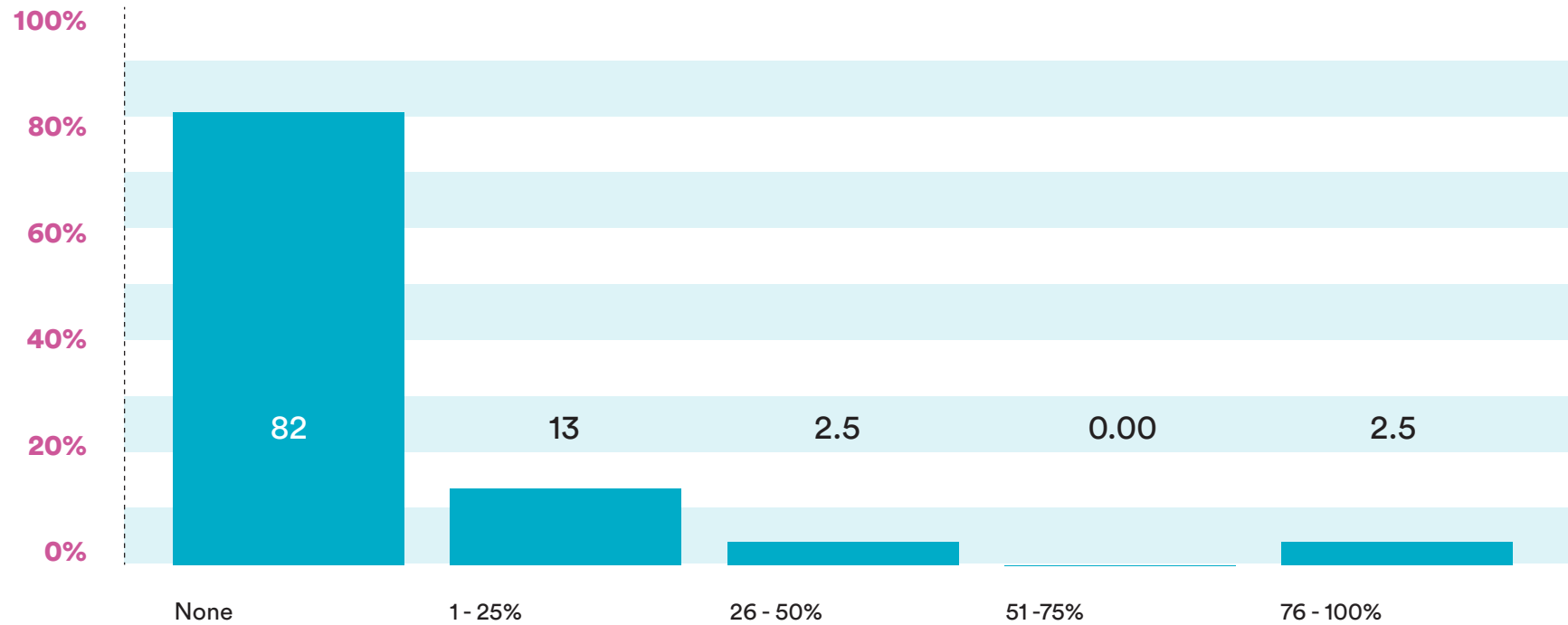
# Q6

Is cash flow...



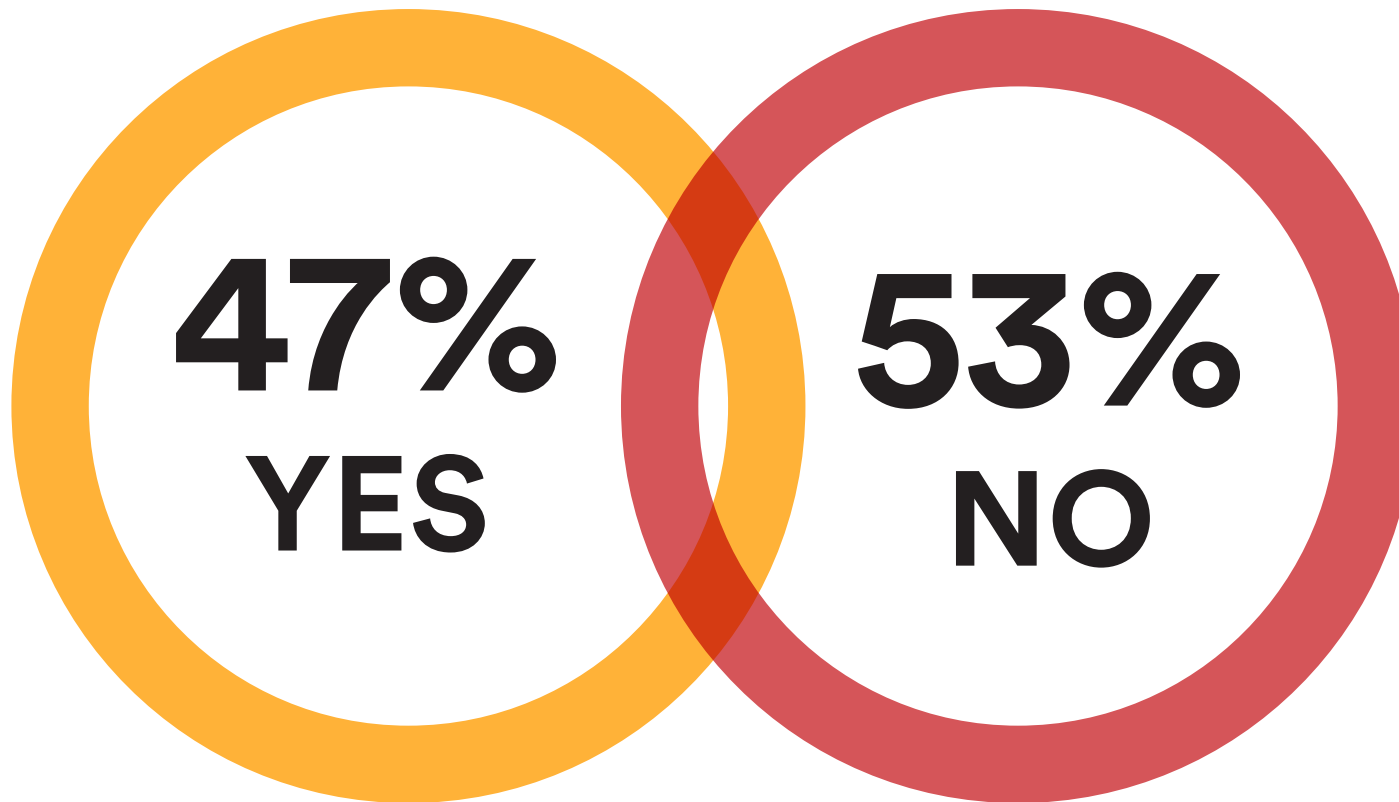
# Q7

## What percentage of your team is on furlough?



# Q8

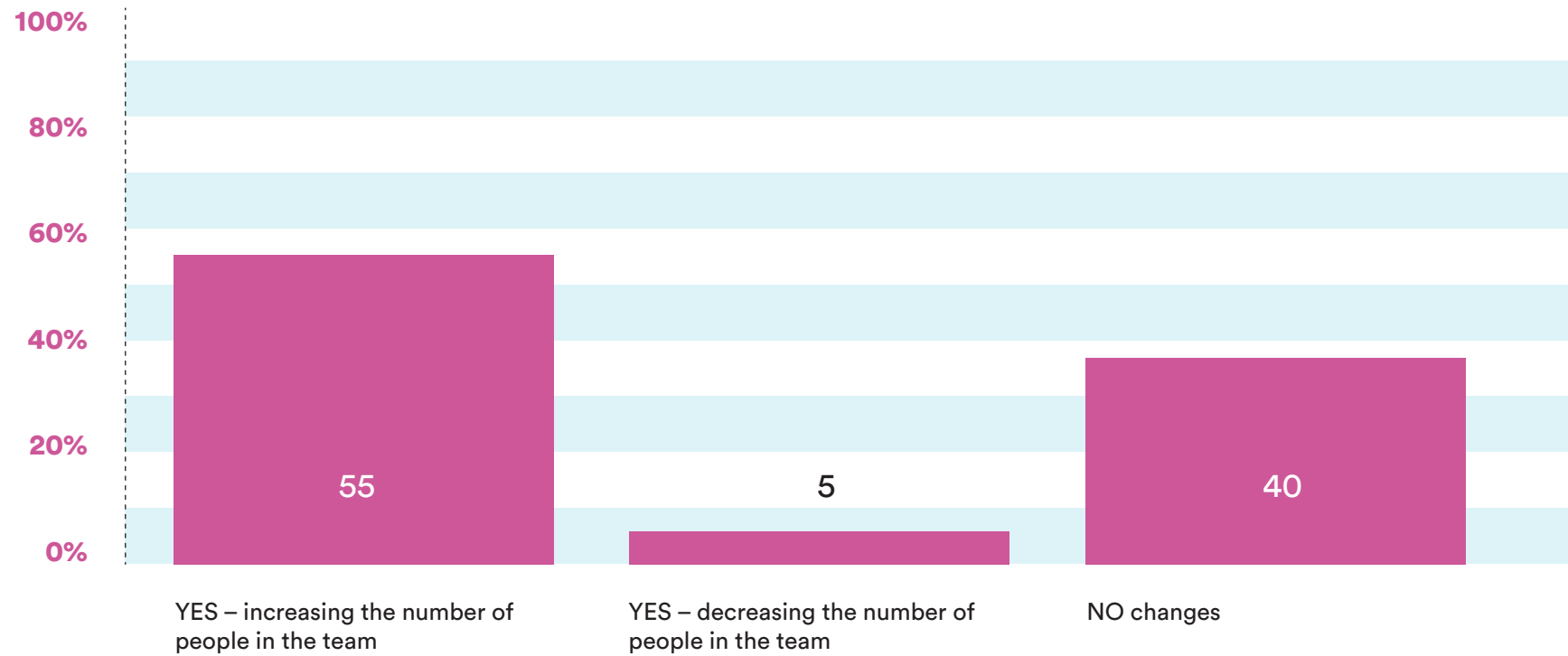
Are you experiencing higher inflationary pressures in your sector compared to 6 months ago?





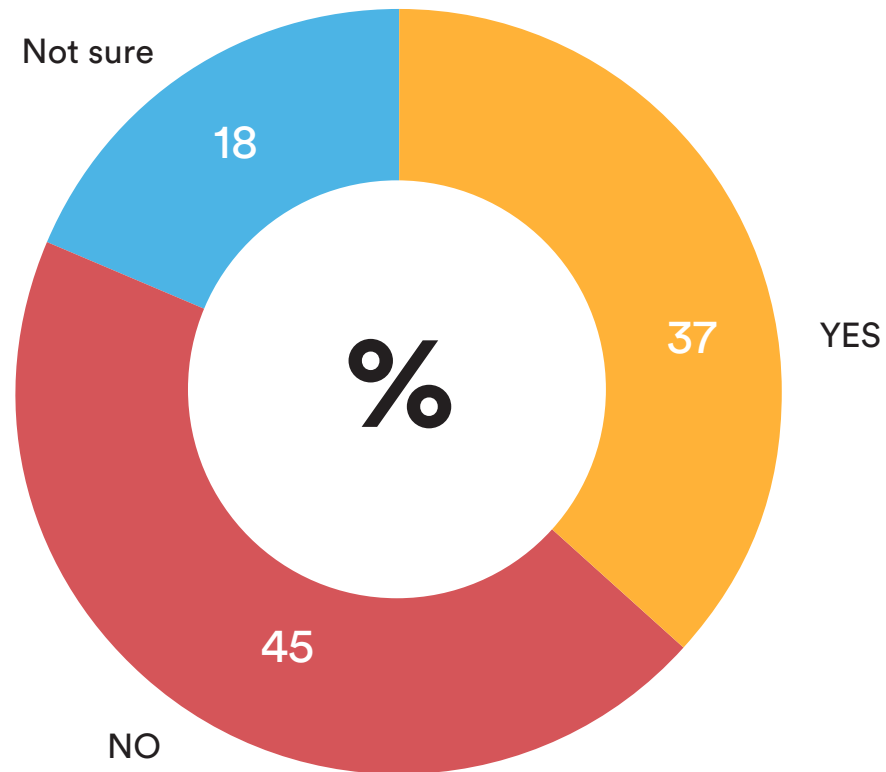
# Q9

Do you plan on making changes to your workforce by the end of 2021?



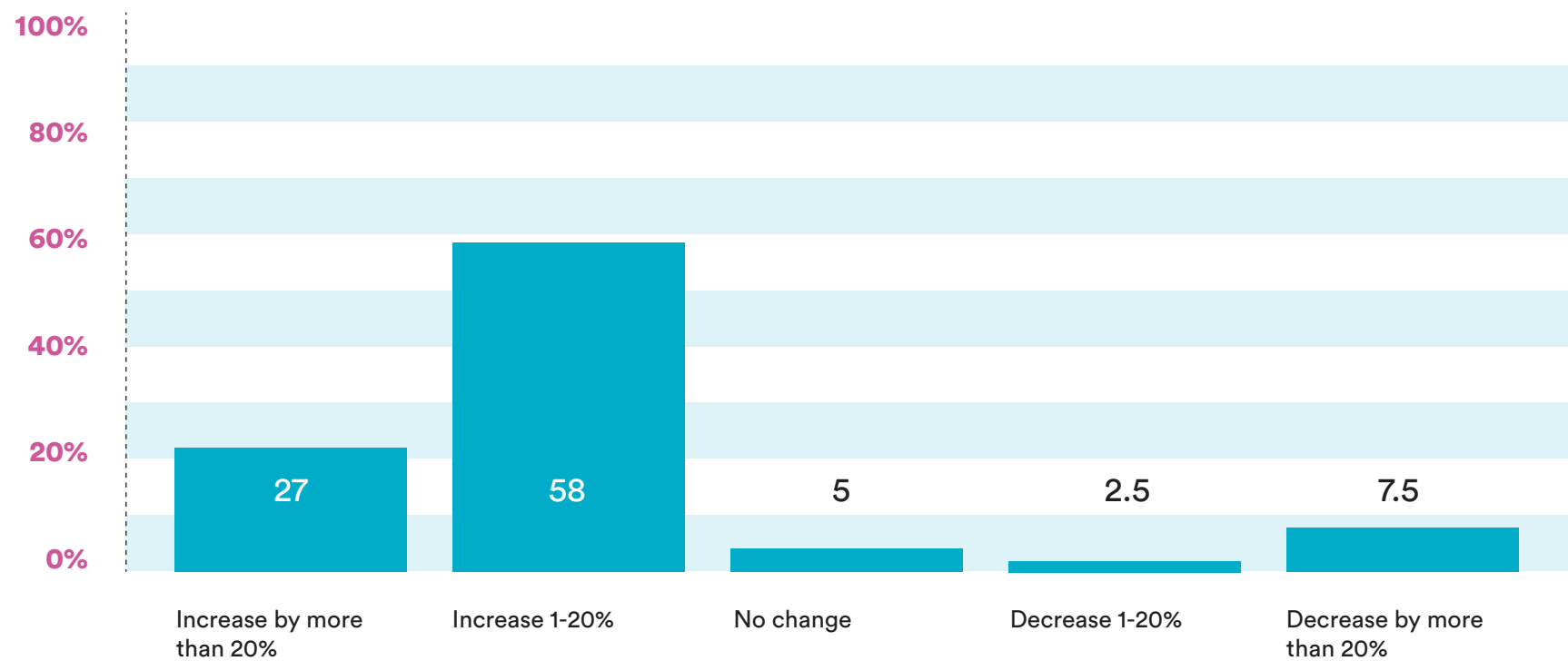
# Q10

Do you plan on increasing capital investment into your business by the end of 2021?



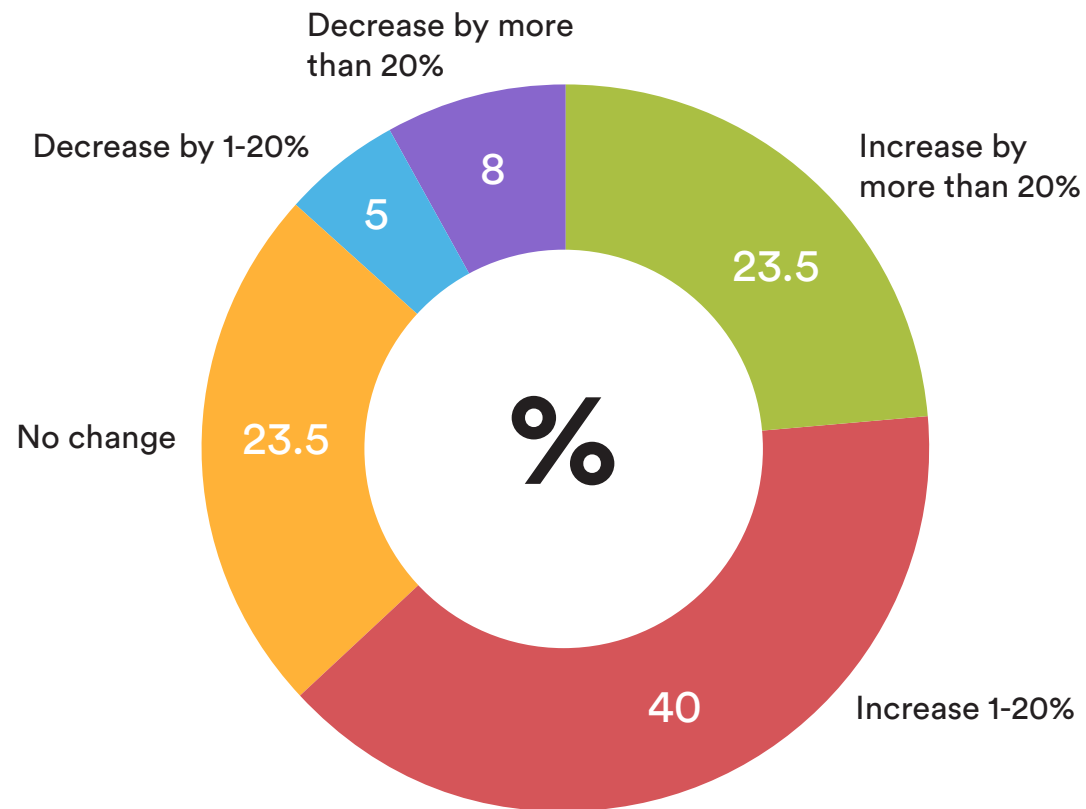
# Q11

How do you think turnover in 2021 will compare to 2020?



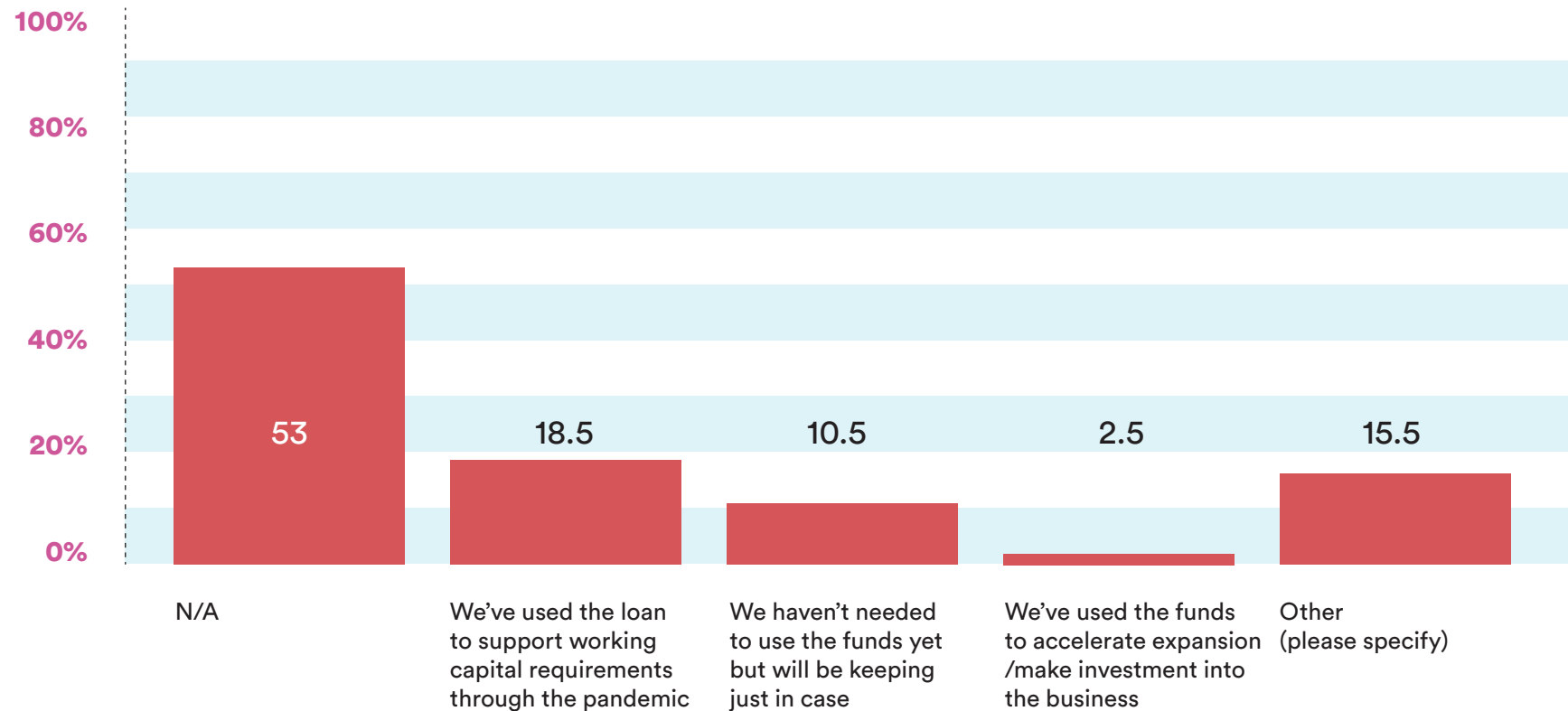
# Q12

How do you think profit in 2021 will compare to 2020?



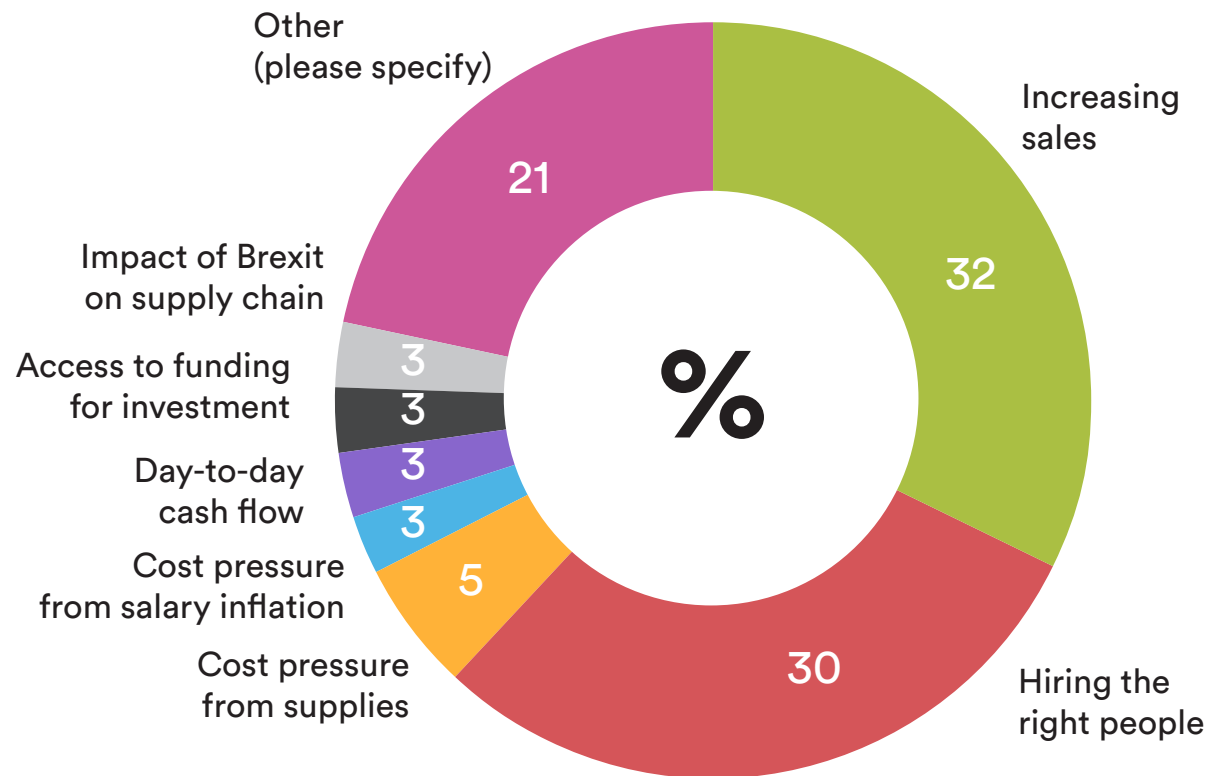
# Q13

If you took either a Bounce Back Loan or CBILS, which of the following best applies?



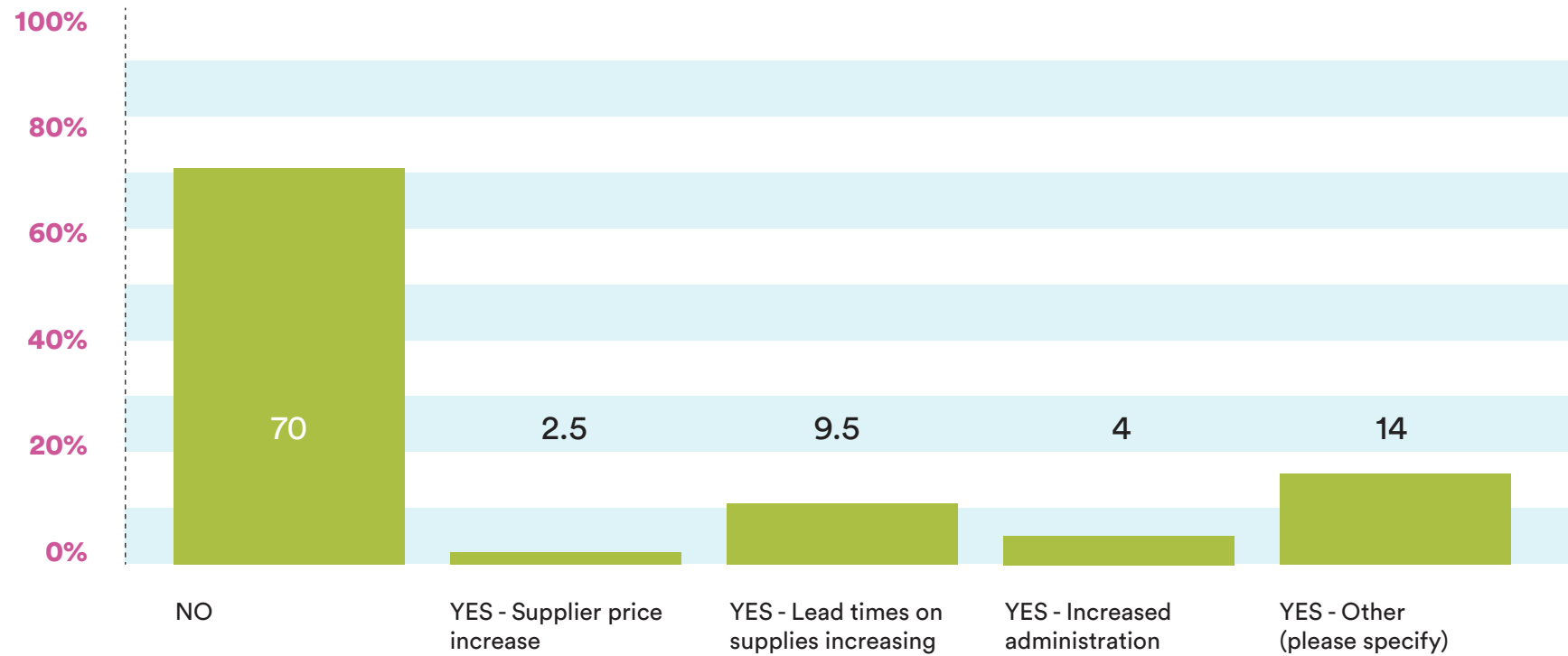
# Q14

What is the biggest challenge you're facing right now?



# Q15

Has your business been adversely affected by Brexit?



# Q16

## What keeps you awake at night?

There are too many answers to print, but aside of bed partners, children, neighbours keeping you awake, there is certainly concern around recruitment, whether it's getting everyone back from Furlough or finding and maintaining the right people. Future lockdowns are another regular keeping some of you from your slumber, exit planning occupying the minds of 10% and of course cash flow.

As ever if your business is keeping you awake at night, remember that you're not alone in your worries and that Wilson Partners are here to help share the burden and help you manage problems and realise your ambitions.

### Hiring good people

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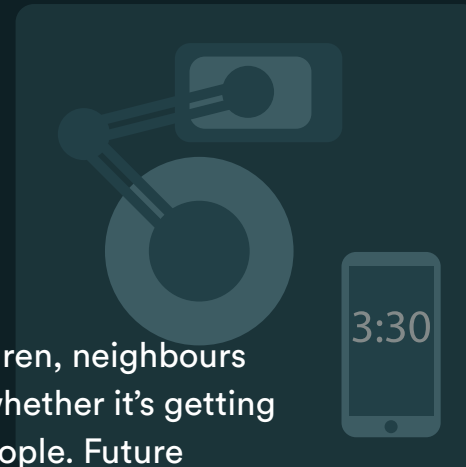
Have we got the right people in the right roles and maintaining levels of business and energy levels

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### When is the right time to maximise a sale!

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The potential burnout of existing staff, the mental health effects on the population as a whole resulting from the lockdown (particularly those who have lost their jobs), and the increasing climate uncertainty





# Who we are

**We are Wilson Partners. We combine the financial expertise, experience and accessibility of our talented team with a deep understanding of our clients to help achieve their goals.**

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We provide a suite of integrated, innovative and value-added accounting, tax and corporate finance solutions that empower businesses, investors and private clients to make better decisions.

We don't do grey suits, operate in silo's or spend all day counting beans.

On the contrary, we operate out of a vibrant open plan office in the centre of Maidenhead, all our directors are fully engaged in the business and we're passionate about client success, because after all, if you thrive, we thrive.

Life is short, so we don't just want to make up the numbers.

We are a business that makes a real difference to the relationships we build and helps to make life count for our people and our clients.

Each one of us is dedicated to challenging, inspiring and supporting our clients to live the lives they want and enjoy the success that will benefit those they care about and the wider community



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The information contained in this document was obtained from a cross-section of business leaders in the Thames Valley Region between 24th and 31st July 2021.