

A STUDY BY
MUCK RACK

THE STATE OF
WORK-LIFE
BALANCE
IN JOURNALISM

A study on stress, burnout and support in 2025

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How do journalists balance a demanding job and a happy life?

To better understand how work-life balance impacts journalism professionals, we surveyed more than 400 journalists on topics like stress, burnout, vacation days, and working arrangements.

Executive Summary

- Stress levels for journalists remain high. **50%** have thought about leaving their job this year and **more than one-third** are unsure how long they'll stay in the industry.
- **38%** of journalists say their mental health has declined over the last year with many citing uncertainty and financial issues as the cause.
- Those with improving mental health cite solutions like counseling, a good support system and remote or hybrid work arrangements.
- **55%** of journalists think they'd receive support from their co-workers if they were struggling with mental health.
- **58%** of journalists report getting six hours or less of sleep each night. **85%** cite the inability to "switch off" as a contributing factor.

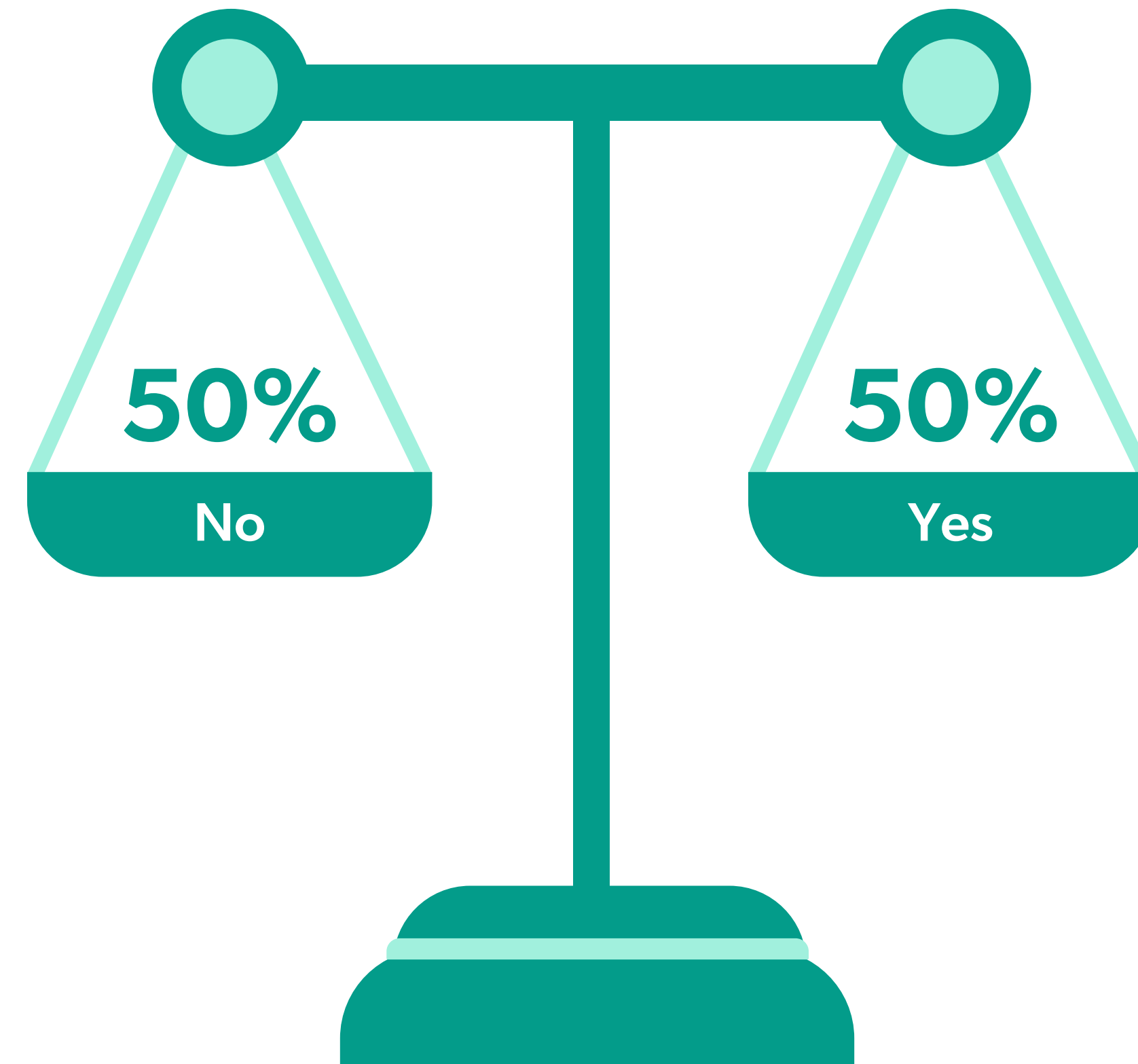
Stress & burnout

To find out the impact of stress on journalists, we asked about their current stress levels, burnout and whether stress has ever led them to leave a job.

Half of journalists considered quitting due to burnout this year

These figures are similar to what we saw
in the [2024 Work-Life Balance report](#).

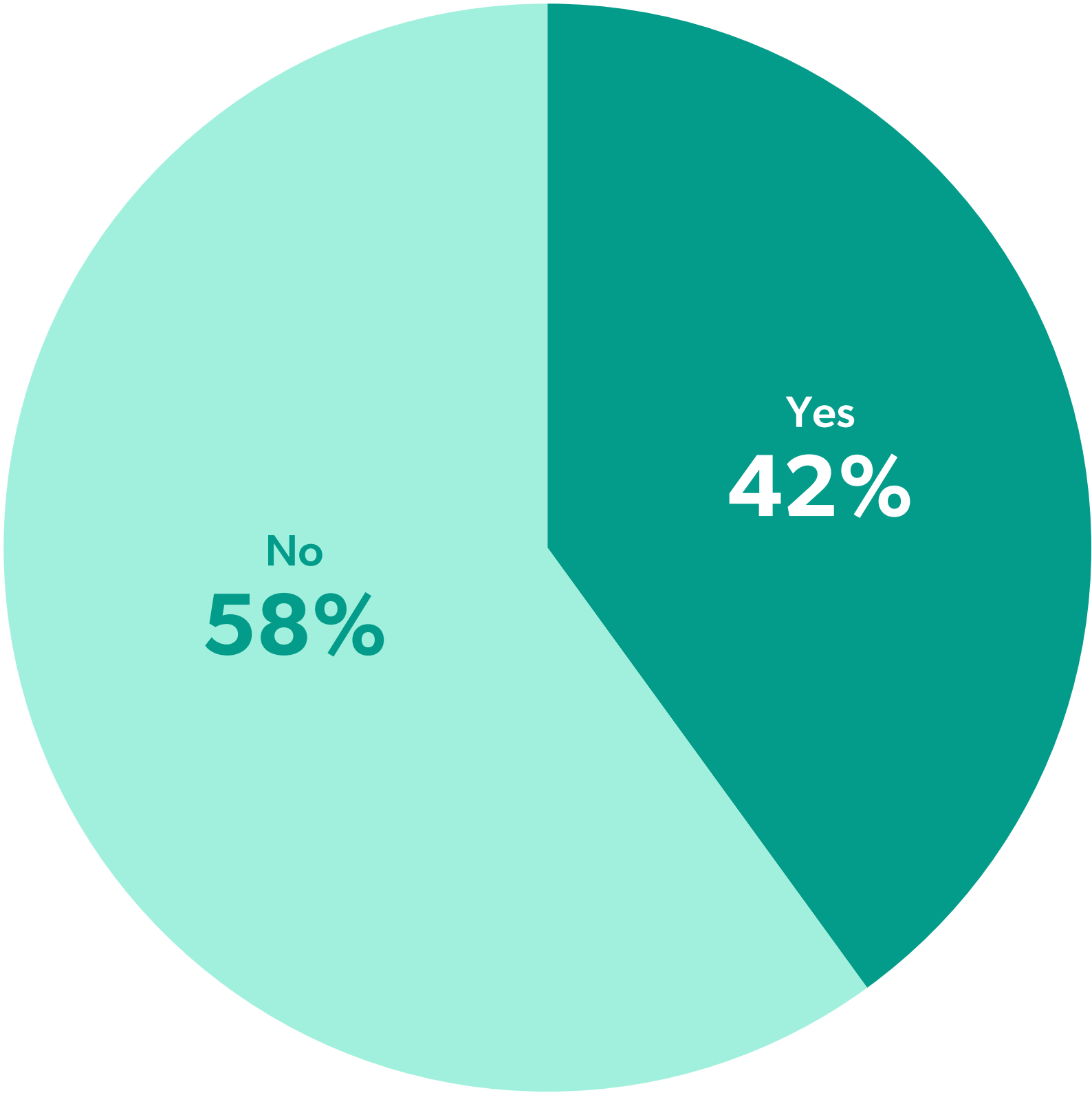
In the last year, have you thought about quitting
your job because of exhaustion or burnout?



Many journalists have previously quit a job because of burnout

42% of journalists have left a previous job due to burnout, showing that for many considering it now, this isn't the first time exhaustion has weighed heavily on them.

Have you previously left a job due to exhaustion or burnout?

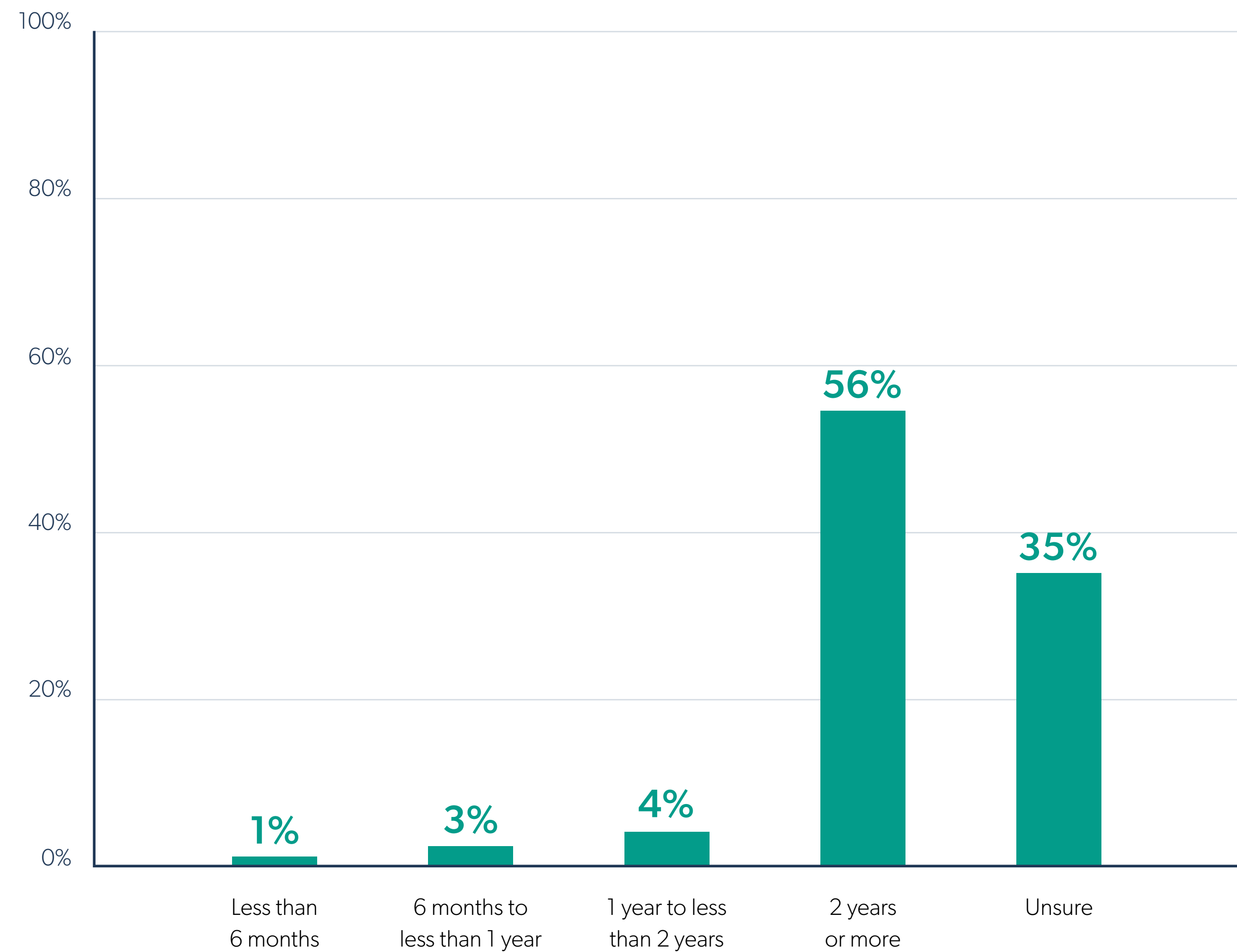


Despite burnout, most plan to stay in journalism

A new question from this year’s survey shows **56%** of journalists plan to stay in journalism for at least the next two years.

However, **more than one-third** say they are unsure of how long they’ll stay in the industry.

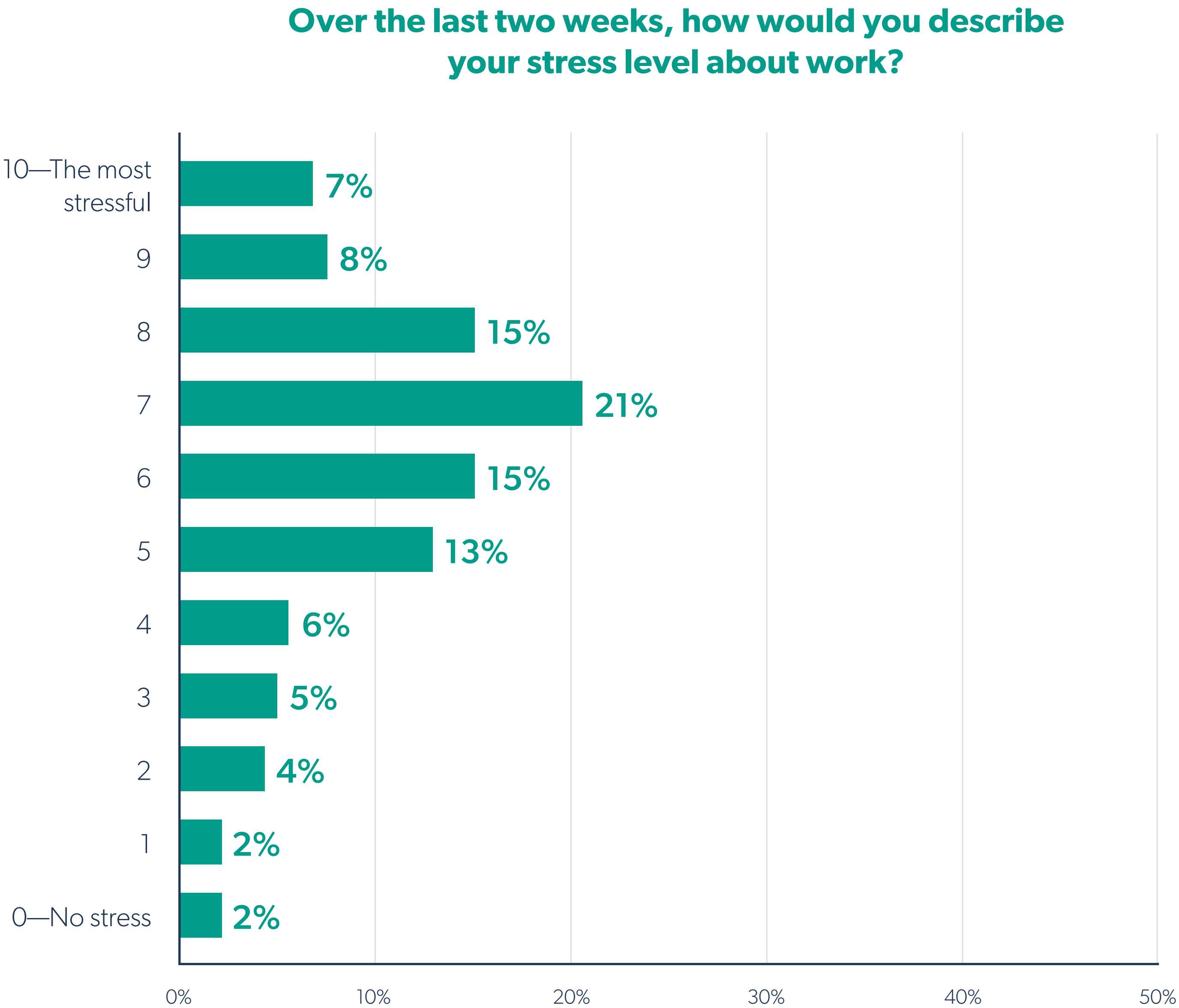
How long do you plan to remain in journalism?



After the election year, journalists' stress levels remain high

Journalists are most likely to rate their stress levels at 7 out of 10, with 10 being the most stressed.

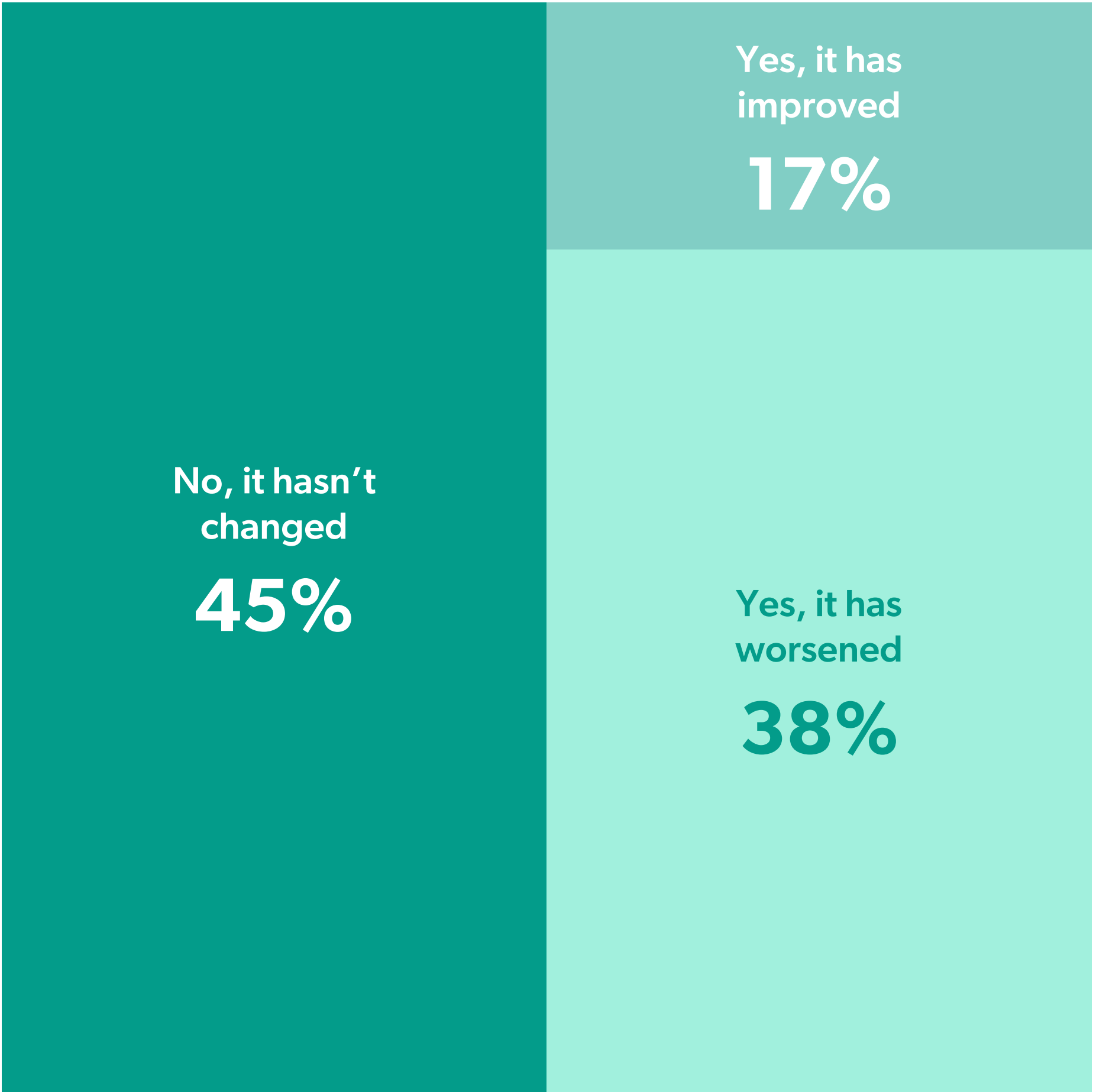
19% of journalists place their stress levels below the midpoint, while **66%** are above.



More than one-third of journalists report declining mental health over the last year

For **62%**, their mental health has either stayed the same or improved over the same period.

Have you noticed changes in your mental health over the last 12 months?



Access to therapy/counseling is the biggest contributor to improved mental health

Those who say their mental health improved over the last year cite things like receiving therapy, having access to remote or hybrid work and growing their support system as reasons for the change.

Factors in improving mental health



Therapy/counseling



Remote/hybrid work



Good support system

An uncertain future is the biggest reason for worsening mental health

Those with declining mental health commonly cite uncertainty about the future, general work stress, and financial issues including poor pay.

Factors in declining mental health



Uncertainty about the future



Work stress

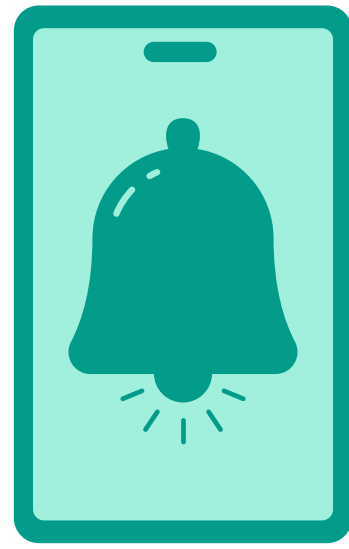


Financial issues

Sources of stress

We explored the main contributors to stress by asking journalists about their vacation habits, work hours, and overall workload.

Top stressors



Being “always on”



My workload

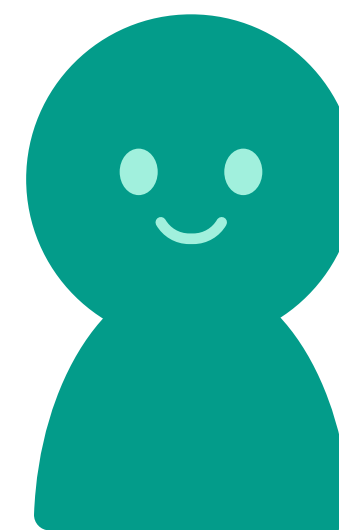


My salary

Least impactful stressors



My commute



My colleagues



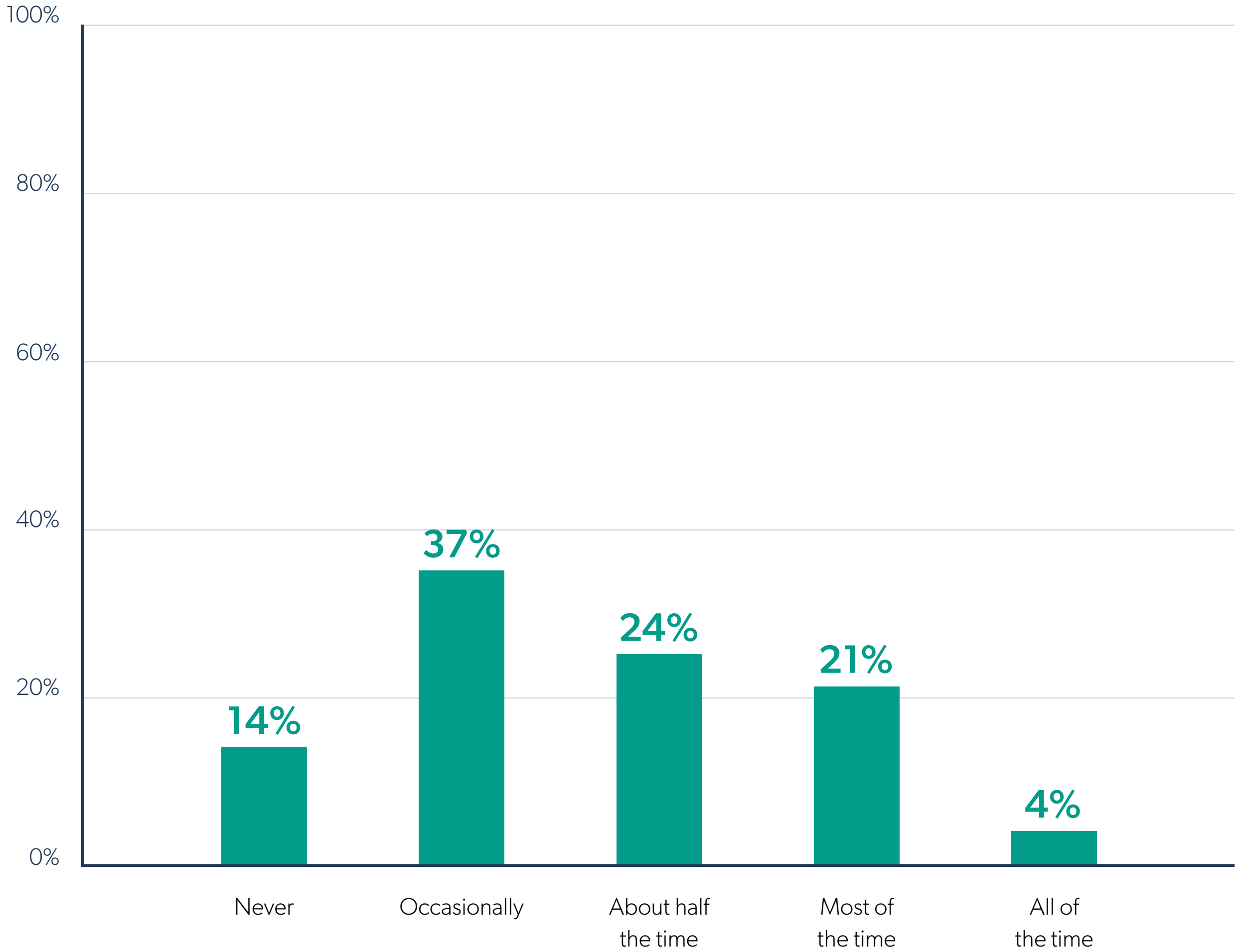
My sources

Most journalists have difficulty switching off after work

96% of journalists have trouble “switching off” after work. **More than one in three** experience this occasionally, **one in four** experience it half the time and **one in five** experience it most of the time.

Being “always on” is one of the top three contributing factors to journalists’ stress along with job security and salary.

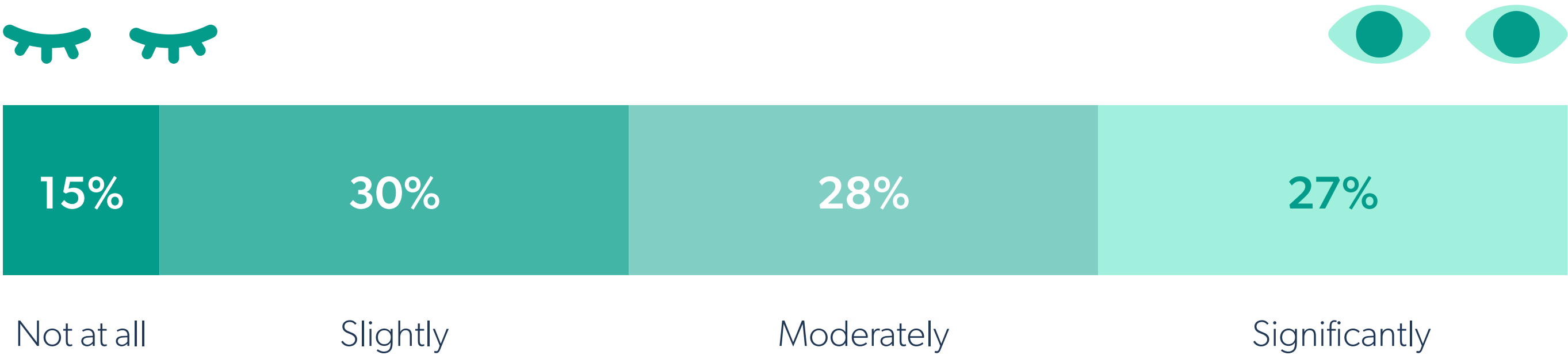
How often do you feel that you can “switch off” after work?



Inability to switch off significantly impacts sleep for more than a quarter of journalists

85% of journalists report that difficulty switching off affects their sleep at least slightly.

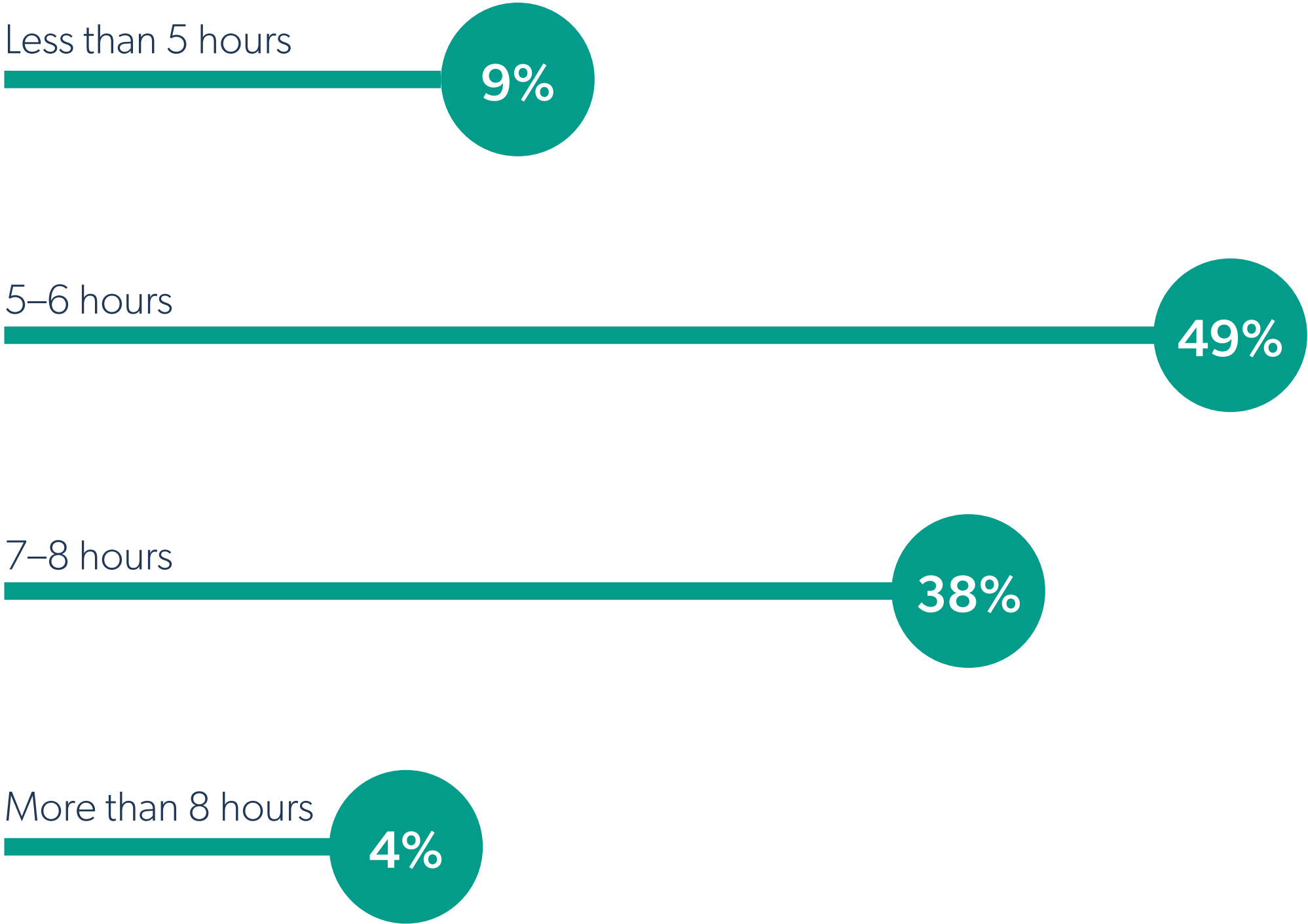
Does your difficulty “switching off” after work affect your sleep?



Journalists don't get enough sleep

4% of journalists report getting more than 8 hours of sleep at night. Nearly half, **49%**, get 5–6 hours.

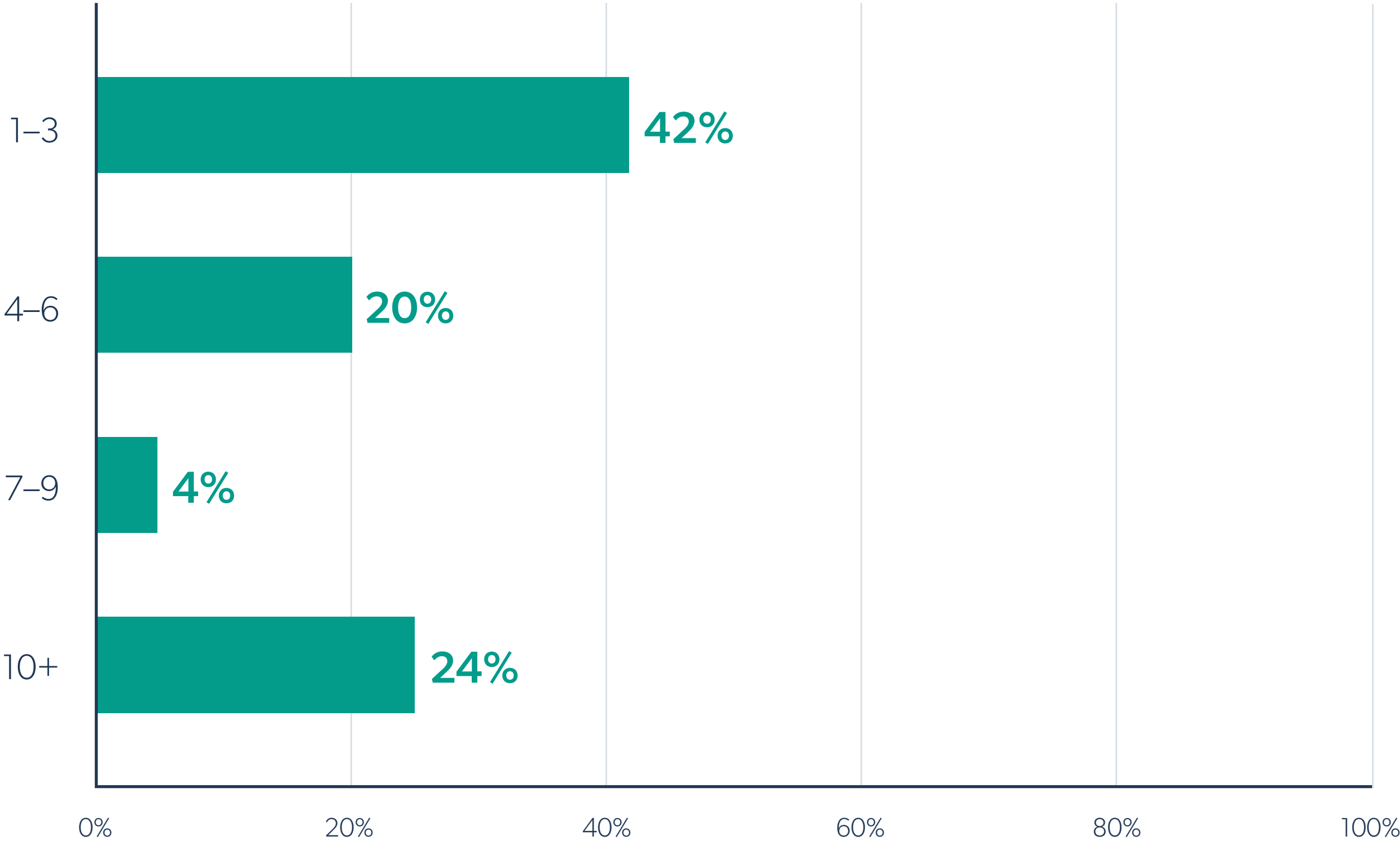
On average, how many hours of sleep do you get per night?



48% of journalists write four or more stories per week

About **one in four** journalists work on 10 or more stories in a normal week.

How many stories do you work on in a normal week?

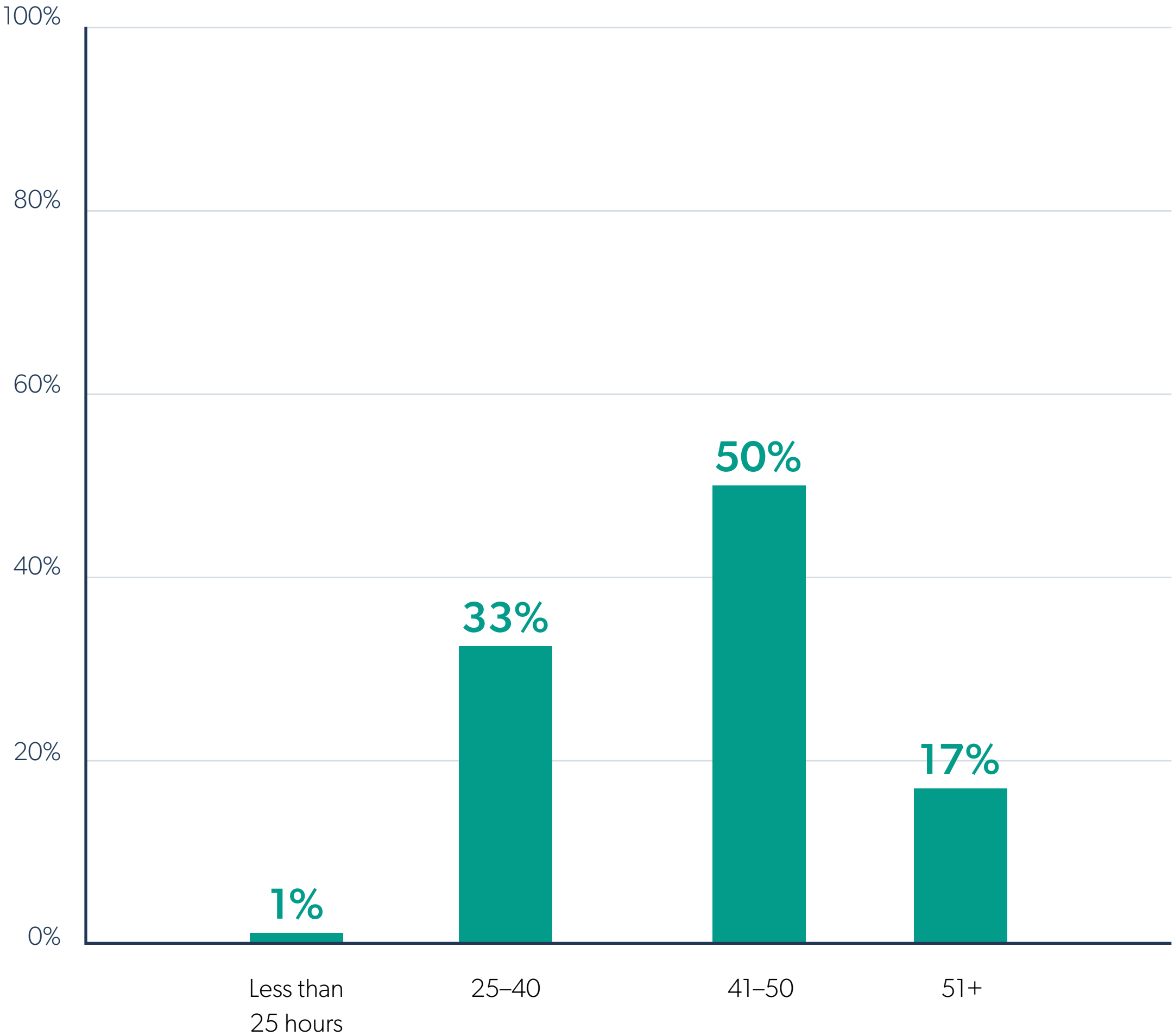


Most full-time journalists work more than 40 hours a week

67% of full-time journalists say they work more than 40 hours a week.
17% work more than 51.

Sources of stress

Over the last week, about how many hours did you work?

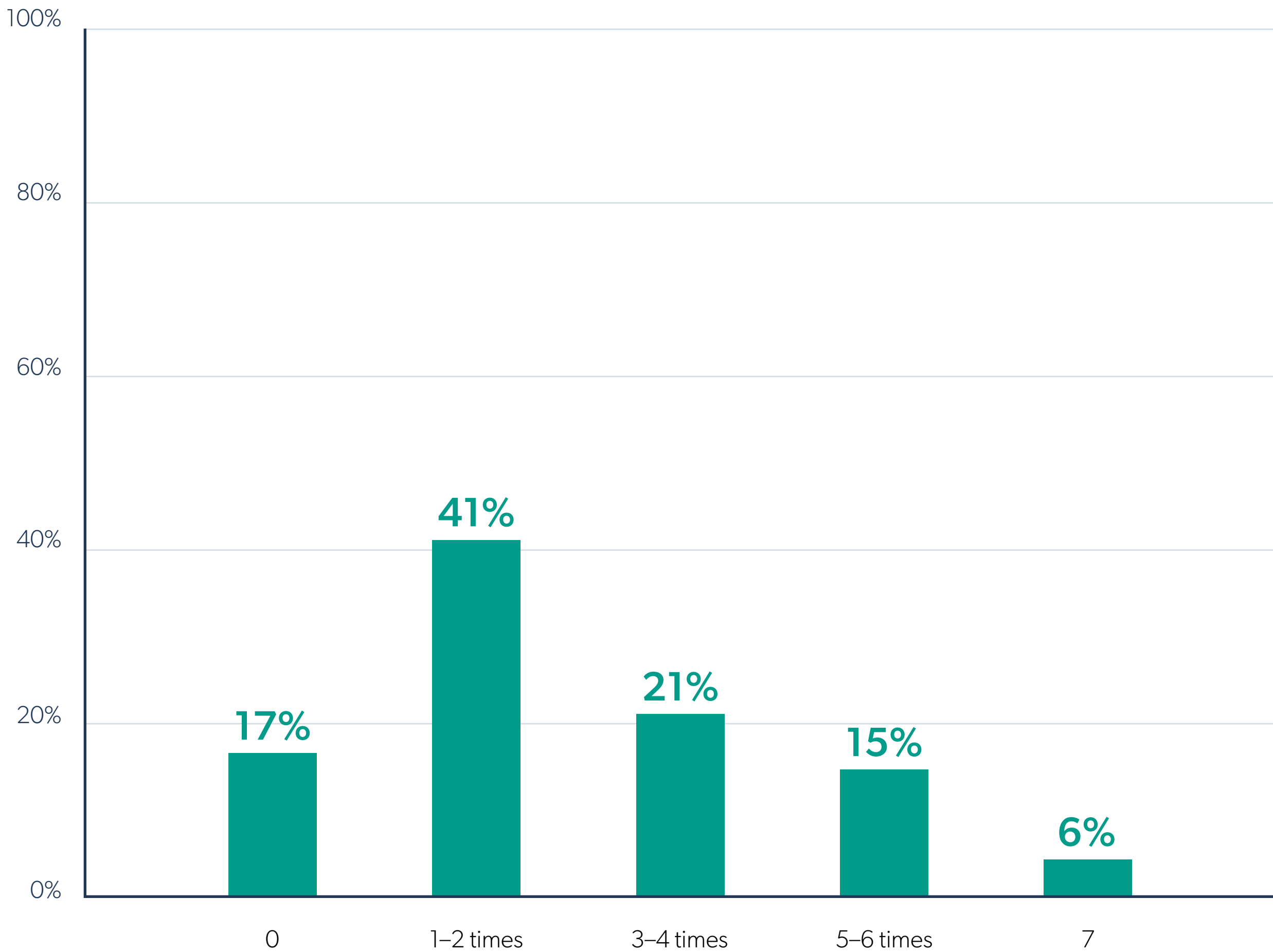


Most journalists don't work normal business hours

83% of journalists are working outside of normal business hours at least once a week and **21%** are doing it more than 5 days a week.

Sources of stress

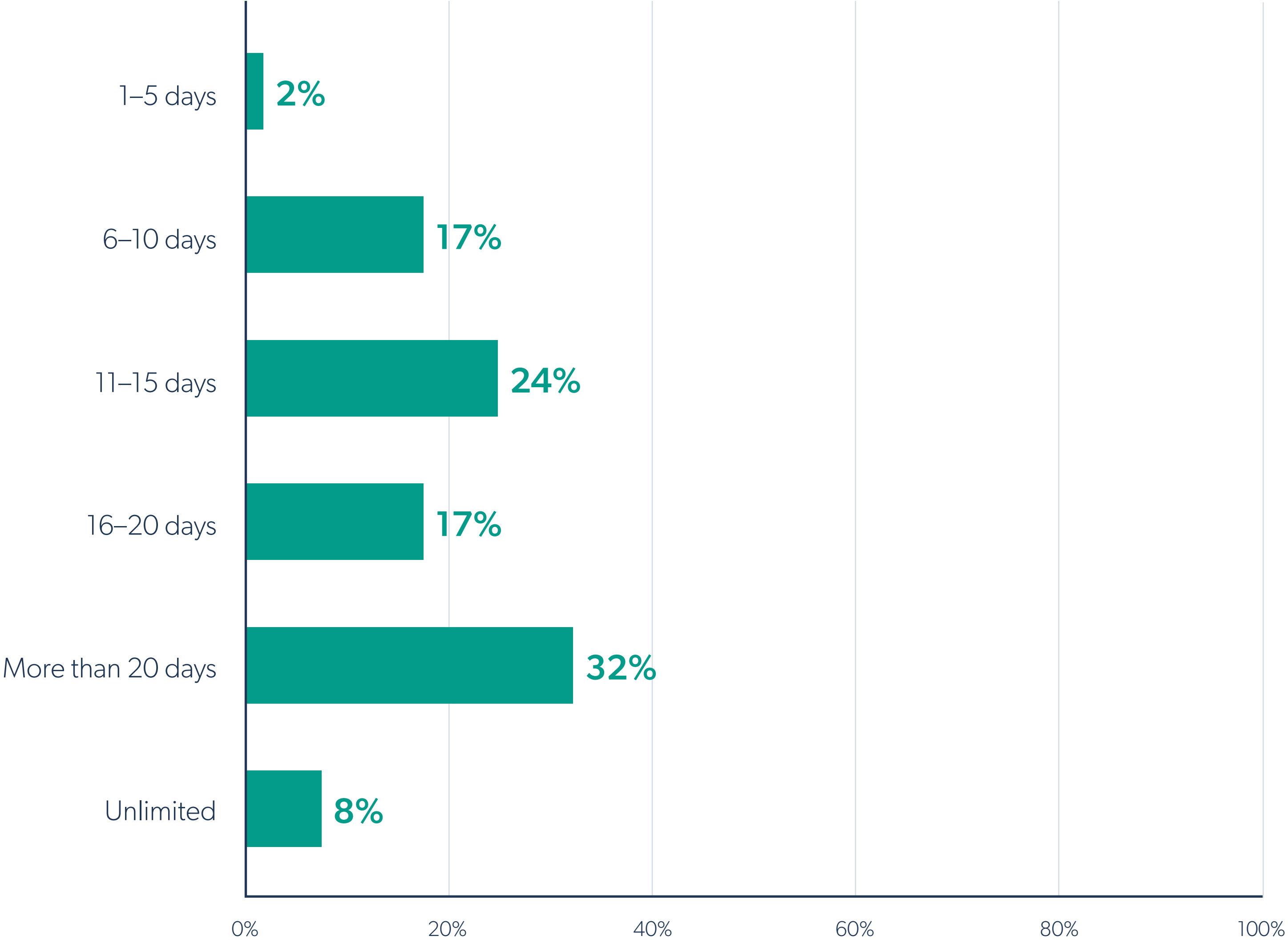
Over the last week, how many times have you had to work after hours, like late nights, early mornings or on weekends?



More than one-third of journalists are given more than 20 vacation days

Unlimited vacation is quite rare among full-time staffers, but about **half of them** have more than 15 days of vacation per year.

How many vacation days are you given each year?



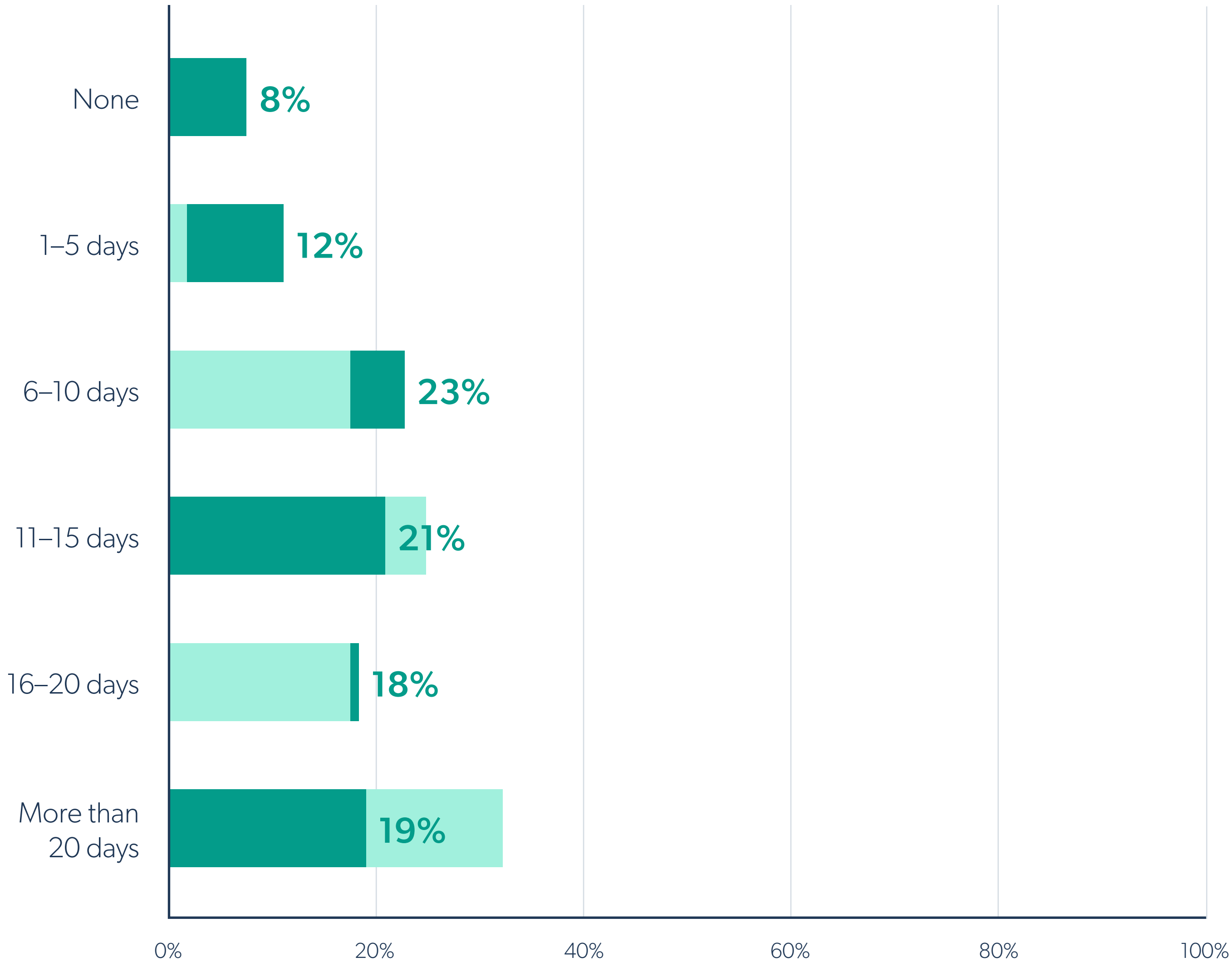
But most aren't using all their PTO

When it comes to actually using those vacation days, journalists aren't taking full advantage. Despite **40%** having more than 20 days of vacation, only **19%** actually take that much time off.

- PTO given
- PTO taken

Sources of stress

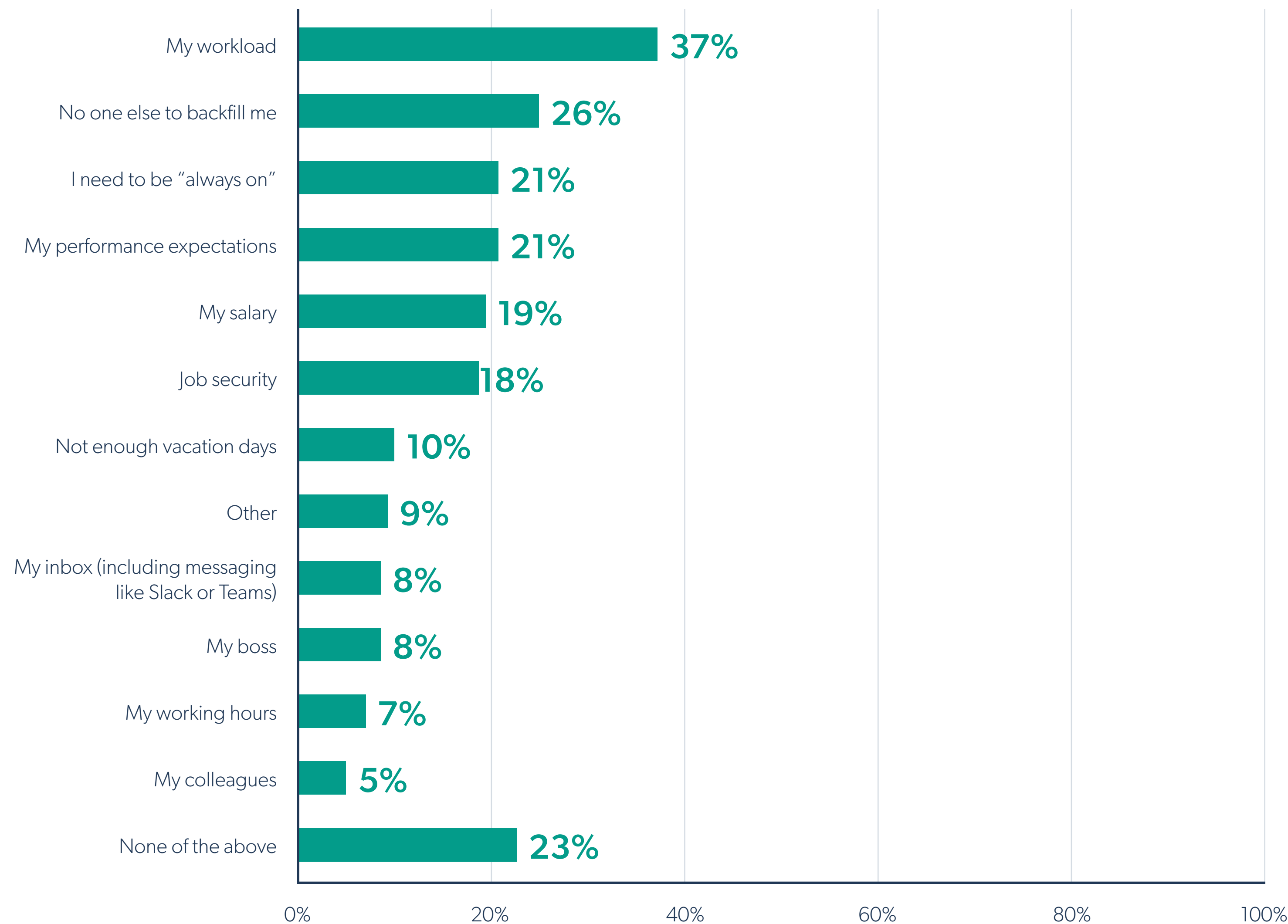
How many vacation days did you use last year?



Heavy workloads keep journalists from vacation

37% report workload is the biggest barrier to using vacation days. Other top reasons include **26%** who say there is no one to back them up and **21%** who say they always need to be “on.”

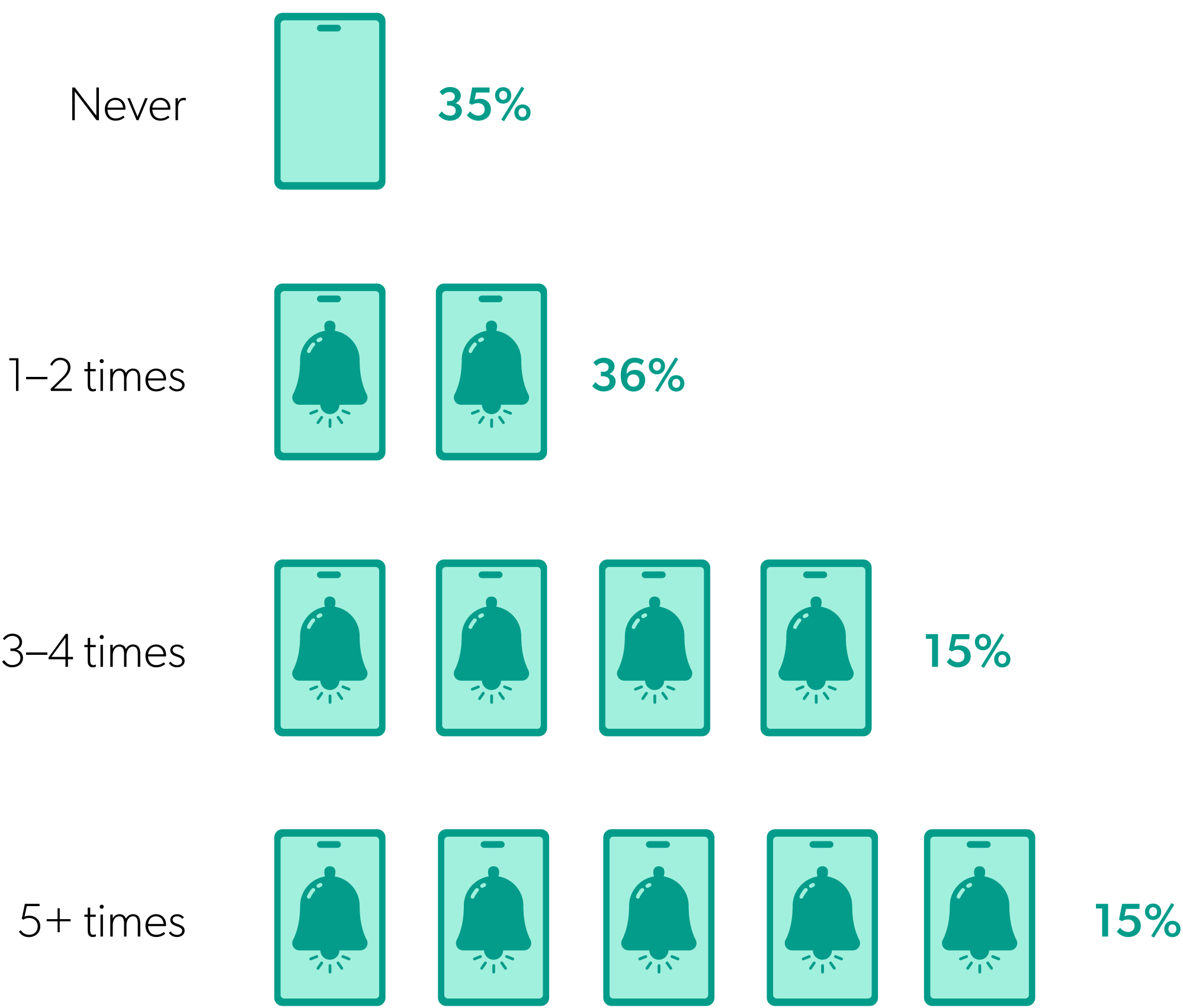
What are the main barriers to you using your vacation days? Select all that apply



When they do vacation, most get interrupted with work

Around **one-third** of journalists say their vacation is never interrupted by work, **another roughly one-third** say it happens one or two times, and the **last third** say it happens more than three times.

How many times over the last year has a vacation day been interrupted by work?

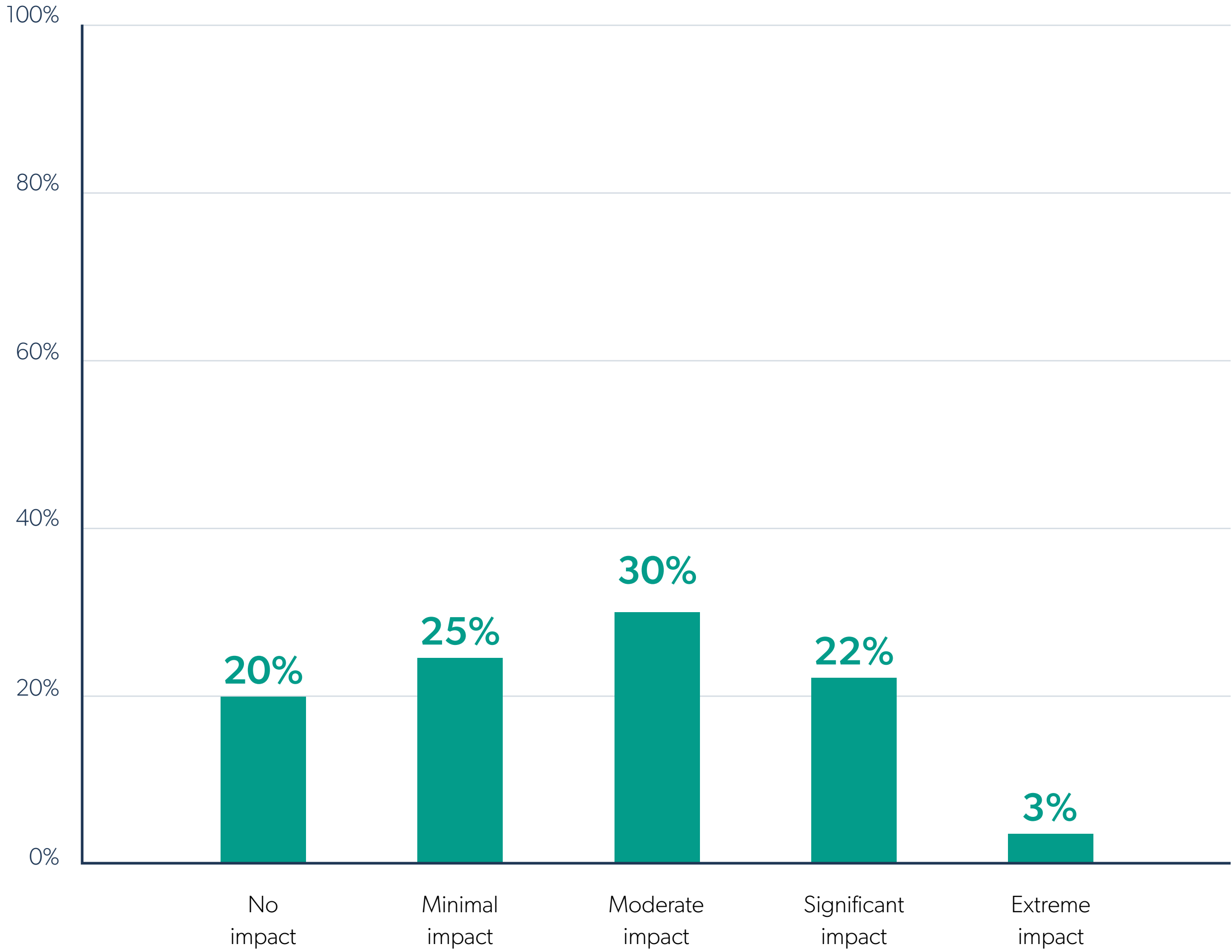


Most journalists feel pressure from social media demands

Eight out of ten journalists feel that social media demands affect their work-life boundaries to some degree. About **25%** say it's a minimal impact, but a similar amount say it's a significant or extreme impact.

Sources of stress

How do social media demands or expectations affect your work-life boundaries?



Work environment and support

To understand how work environments shape journalists' experiences, we examine their working arrangements, the support available, and access to mental health services.

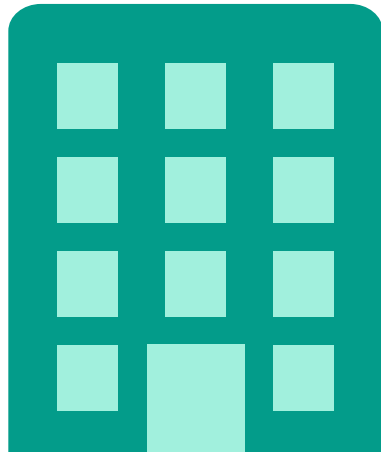
Despite return-to-office headlines, most journalists are still remote

There is a mismatch between wants and demands in the working environment of journalists. Those who are currently in the office have the biggest mismatch. About **60%** of them would prefer a hybrid arrangement compared to **32%** who would stay in office.

While **76%** of those who have hybrid arrangements would prefer to keep things the same, about **18%** would prefer fully remote.

And **68%** of those fully remote journalists like their arrangement, but **30%** would prefer hybrid and only **2%** in-office.

What’s your current work arrangement?



In office
12%

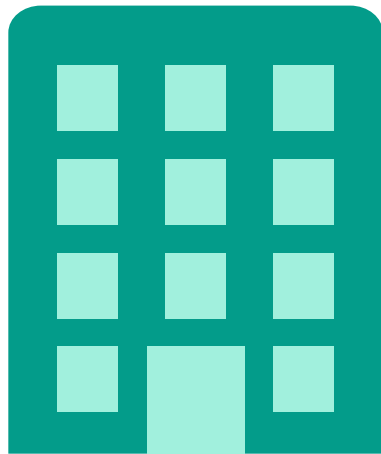


Hybrid
28%



Fully remote
60%

What’s your ideal work arrangement?



In office
7%



Hybrid
47%

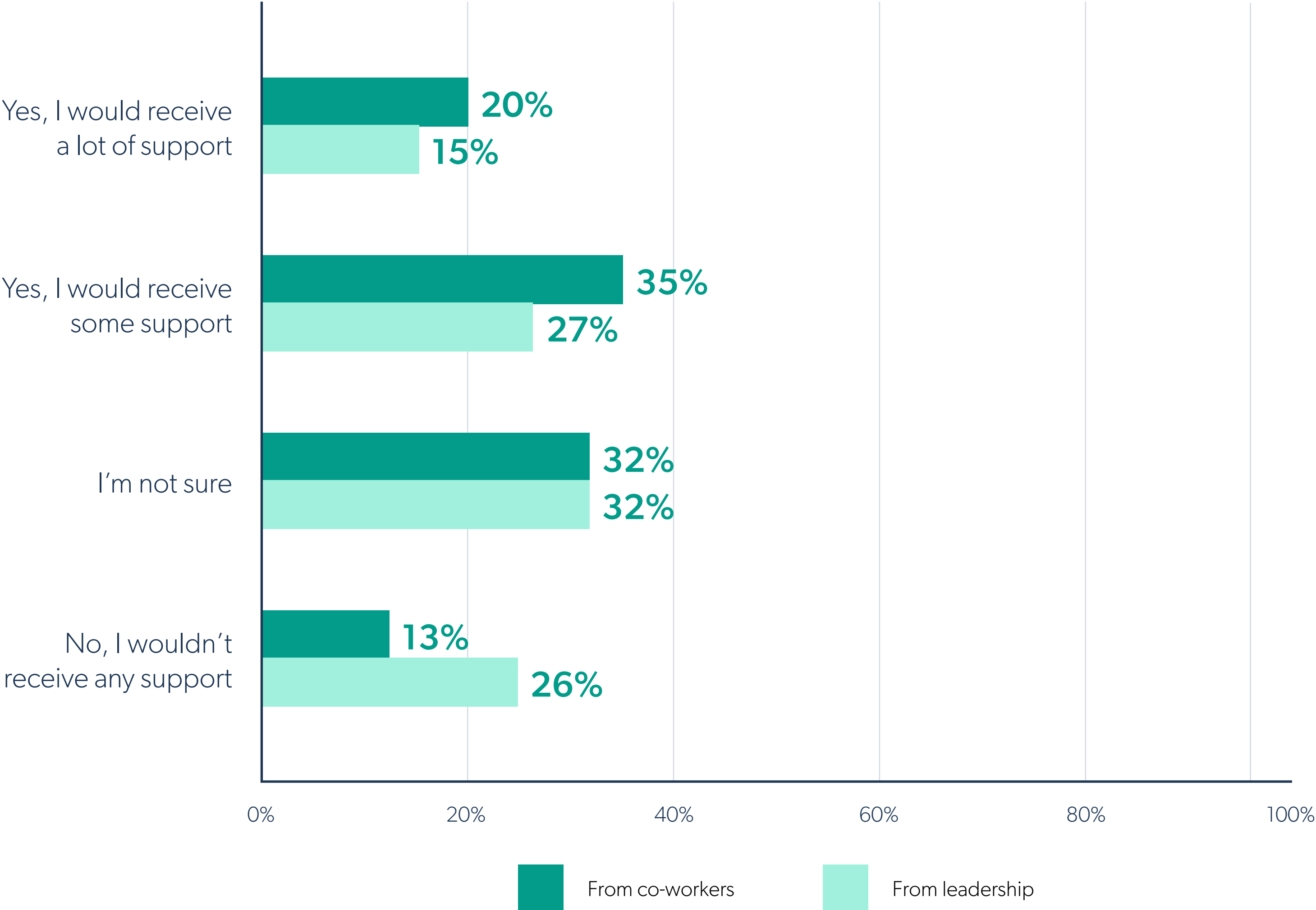


Fully remote
47%

Journalists trust co-workers more than leadership for mental health support

55% of journalists expect at least some support from their co-workers if struggling with their mental health, while only 42% feel the same about leadership. Notably, **more than a quarter** believe leadership wouldn't support them at all.

Do you feel your co-workers/your company's leadership would support you if you were struggling with your mental health?



Journalists want flexible work arrangements, more staff and mental health support

When asked what one policy would improve work-life balance at your organization, the **most common** response was hybrid/remote work. Another common response was increasing headcount.

One unique response was, “giving everyone a single week out of the year to go deep into one story of their choosing with some relevance to their work.”

Work environment and support

Most requested policy changes for work-life balance



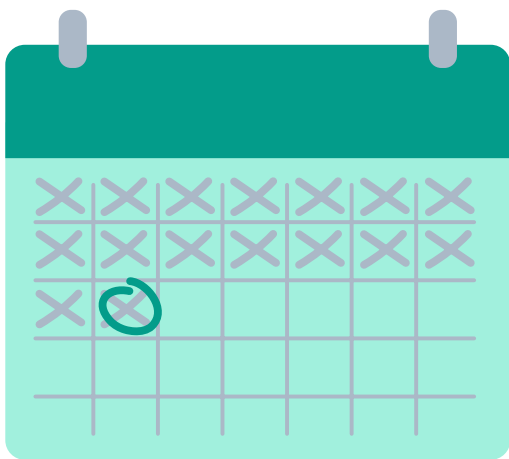
Hybrid/remote work



Additional staff



Mental health support



More time off

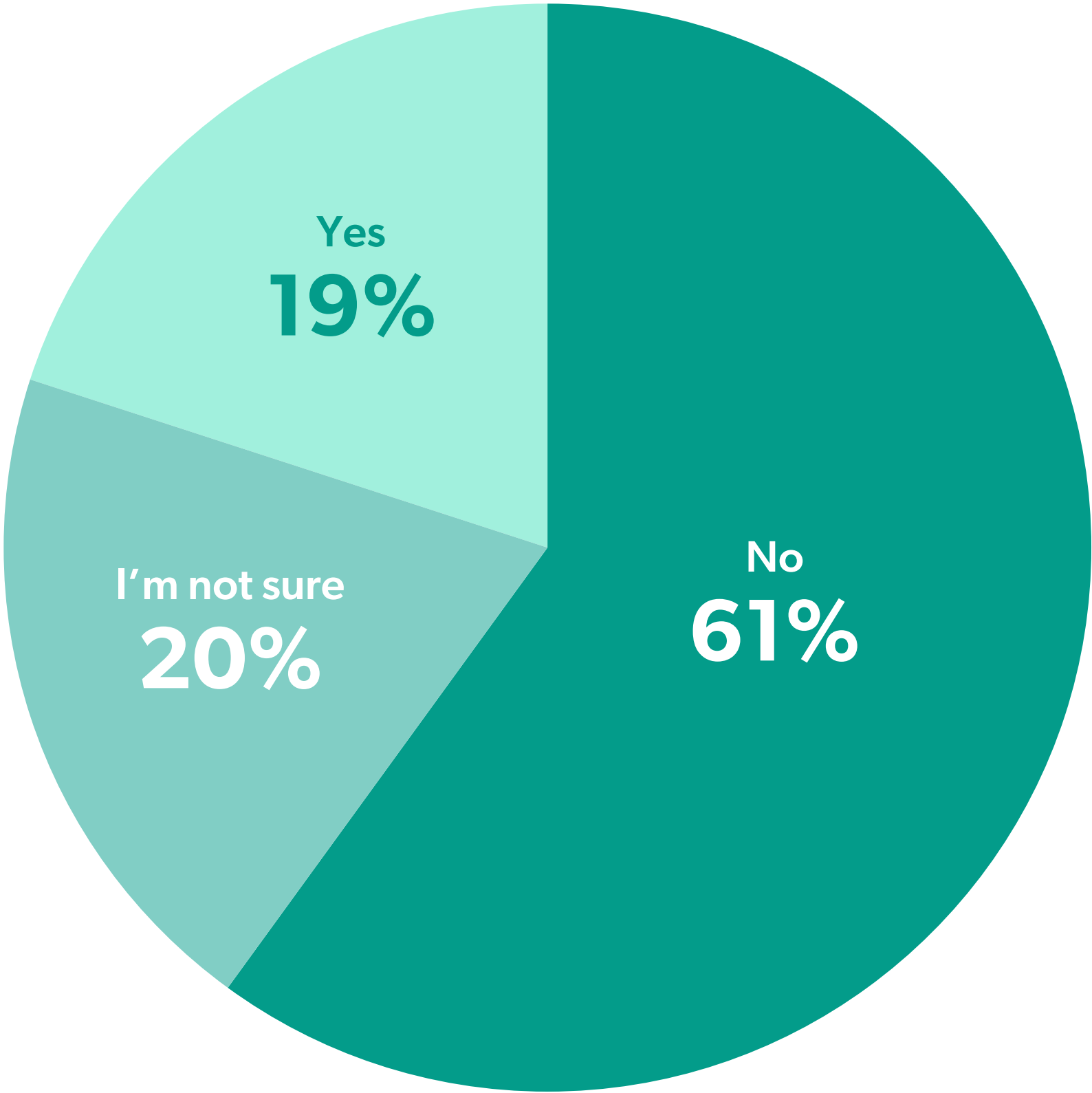


Better compensation

Most workplaces lack mental health support services

Despite **more than one-third** reporting declining mental health, **the majority** of journalists are not offered mental health service through their company.

Does your workplace offer mental health services?



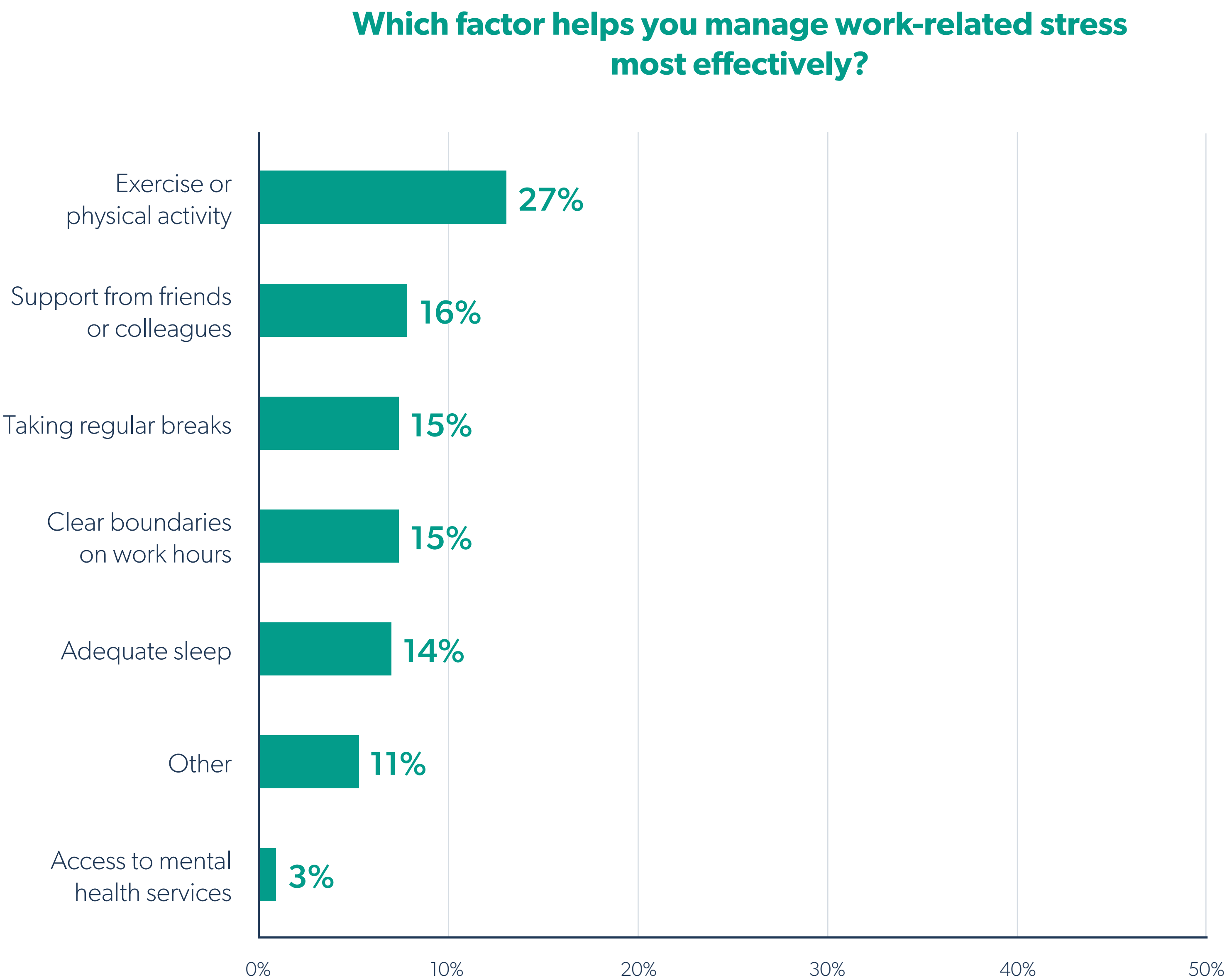
Physical activity tops the list for managing work-related stress

27% of journalists surveyed said exercise was the best way to manage their work-related stress.

The responses in the “other” category include spending time with family, faith and prayer, and watching tv.

One cheeky response was “the infallible knowledge that the great asteroid is coming.”

Work environment and support



Takeaways

Finding the right balance between work and life is different for everyone. Many journalists have discovered strategies that improved their mental health over the last year. We asked journalists for personal insights about what has worked for them in the past.

Here are a few strategies that have helped journalists find better mental health over the last year.

- “Taking breaks and communicating to my editor when I cannot meet certain deadlines.”
- “I meditate and take time to be in nature.”
- “Adapting extracurriculars to new in-office days even if these were not my first preference in my new job.”
- “Physical exercise, good sleeping hours, less social media & news.”
- “The practice of mindfulness.”
- “Seeing a psychiatrist.”

Methodology

For this report, we surveyed 432 journalists from January 2 to February 17, 2025. Survey responses were sought primarily through email and most respondents came from outreach to Muck Rack's database and email contacts. Respondents were primarily from the US. UK, India and Canada are also represented in smaller numbers.

Data was cleaned to remove spam responses, major outliers, identifiable mistakes, and low-effort responses. This left a total of 408 responses. The conservative margin of error is +/- 5%

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