

2025 Changemaker Wellbeing Index

The most comprehensive and representative research on the wellbeing of non-profit workers ever conducted in Canada.



**FUTURE
OF GOOD**

ENVIRONICS
RESEARCH

Foreword

The non-profit sector employs nearly 2.5 million people, and yet little is known about their conditions of work, their challenges and their potential.

The Changemaker Wellbeing Index provides a first-ever deep dive into this under-reported, yet invaluable sector. Non-profit workers provide essential services to Canadians across all age ranges and needs. As such, it is essential to regard them as a workforce that deserves our attention.

The Changemaker Wellbeing Index gives us the evidence needed to make advances—whether these be in hiring, retention or succession. Further, the evidence empowers board directors, management and staff to make improvements in policies and protocols.

Most importantly, it sheds light on the working reality of a significant and essential workforce in Canada and provides legislators with the opportunity to improve the health and wellbeing of this workforce and so recognize their role in the delivery of services to Canadians.

The Honourable Ratna Omidvar, C.M., O.Ont

Former Senator from Ontario

Deputy Chair of the Special Senate Committee on the Charitable Sector

Why It Matters

Canada's non-profit sector is at the precipice of 'a great rebalancing' between its push for purpose and its promise of wellbeing, and Future of Good is here to help you navigate this momentous shift.

The Changemaker Wellbeing Index, a first-of-its-kind report, will be updated annually over the next decade, providing changemakers with the high-quality data, research and analysis they need to address the wellbeing inequities non-profit workers and leaders have long grappled with.

By providing data sets that centre care and wellbeing within non-profit and charitable organizations, the inaugural Changemaker Wellbeing Index will radically change the information landscape.

Changemakers no longer need to rely on anecdotes; now, they can rely on evidence.

The index's comprehensive data sets furnish context and provide intersectional insights—insights that empower decision-making teams across the charitable and non-profit sector to not only advance wellbeing but also track their progress and tackle challenges unique to the sector.

This report illuminates critical findings around food insecurity, burnout, life satisfaction, talent retention, equity, and a whole lot more. It offers a nuanced look at findings and patterns and shines a light on all facets of wellbeing so you can better understand the key insights and implications for your team.

Ultimately, understanding and investing in the wellbeing of non-profit workers is not only essential for the individuals involved but also critical for maximizing the sector's impact and effectiveness in innovating and addressing societal challenges.

We hope you find these initial findings useful.

However, this report is where the adventure begins, not ends. Future of Good has crafted a unique learning journey for your team, including deep dives into our reports, breakdowns by topic, webinars and more, providing you with the tools you need to create meaningful change and advance wellbeing at work.

Anouk Bertner
Executive Director
Future of Good

Vinod Rajasekaran
CEO & Editor-in-Chief
Future of Good

Reflections by Funders of the 2025 Changemaker Wellbeing Index

"The Changemaker Wellbeing Index is a vital glimpse into the realities of changemakers on the front lines of supporting their communities through significant economic uncertainty and social upheaval. These insights will help United Way Centraide Canada identify opportunities for collaborative action to improve changemakers' wellbeing - so those powering our social purpose sector can continue to serve those experiencing vulnerability and to create an equitable future for all."

Anita Khanna

National Director, Public Policy and Government Relations, United Way Centraide Canada

"At GreenShield, we are deeply committed to ensuring equitable access to mental health care for all Canadians. As Canada's only national non-profit health and benefits company, we recognize the importance of this research in highlighting the mental health needs of those dedicated to social change. We are inspired by the values and commitment of those working in the social sector, and this research helps us address and support their wellbeing."

Sabrina Ladha

Vice President, Greenshield Cares

"Lasting social impact relies on the wellbeing of those driving change. This research highlights how to care for frontline changemakers—essential work for building a more resilient and effective social purpose sector."

Carlen Scheyk

Director, Collective Impact, ATB Financial

"As a non-profit social enterprise dedicated to advancing economic opportunity for all, WES recognizes the importance of empowering leaders, especially those with lived experience. Supporting the wellbeing of changemakers reminds us of the necessity to address mental health while fostering safe environments, which allow leaders to thrive."

Nomzana Augustin

Associate Director, Partnerships and Strategic Initiatives, WES Mariam Assefa Fund

"The Changemaker Wellbeing Index shines a light on the challenges that limit the impact of a human-centred sector. Data and insights on wellbeing can identify the opportunities to support the people—and, through them, the systems that can drive sustainable social benefits. By building a healthier, more resilient sector, we create the conditions for lasting, transformative impact."

Arti Freeman

President & CEO, Definity Foundation

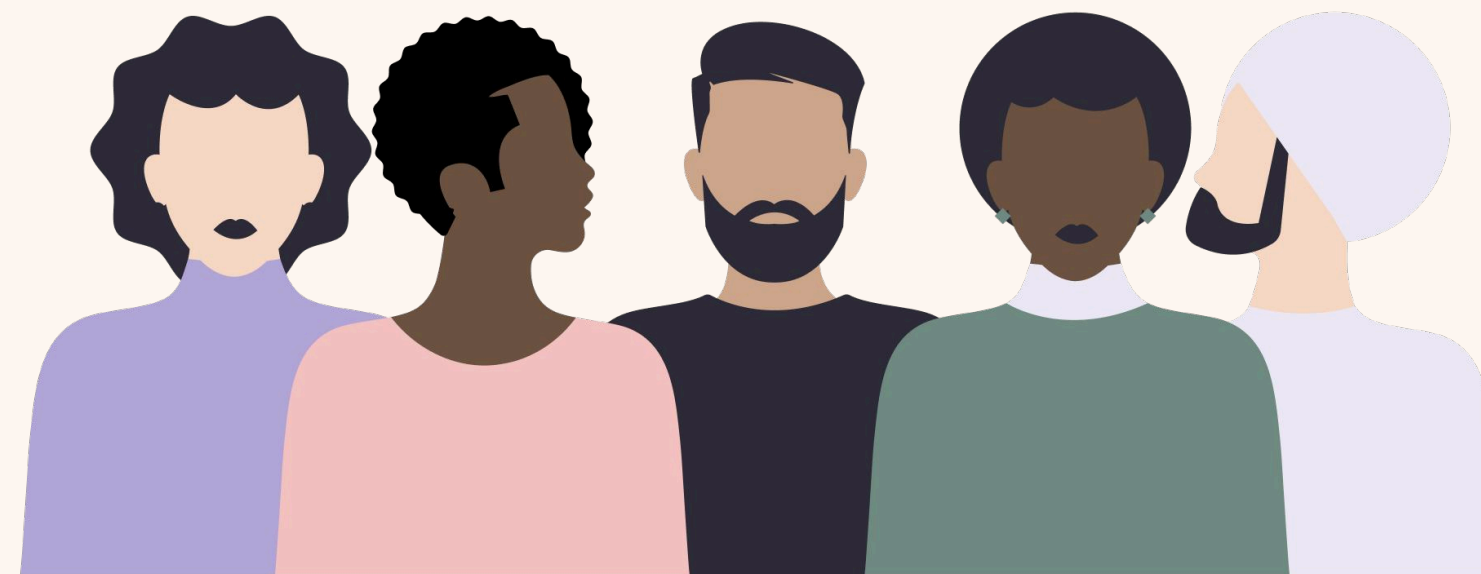
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01

Purpose & Context

The Changemaker Wellbeing Index survey captures the voices of more than 1,100 non-profit workers across Canada through the first-ever randomized panel survey of the sector. Unlike previous efforts that often rely on convenience samples, this study was designed to reflect the full breadth of the non-profit workforce—not just those who typically respond to sector surveys.

Non-profit workers are essential to community wellbeing, yet face chronic and well-documented challenges: job precarity, burnout, low wages, and a lack of recognition. Despite their vital roles, there's been a serious gap in rigorous, representative data on their lived experiences—until now.



02

Survey Design

The survey was developed in collaboration with sector partners and advisors. Questions were developed in partnership with Steven Ayer of Common Good Strategies, who also led the research and writing for this report. The median respondent took about 13.3 minutes to complete the survey.

The survey includes:

- Dozens of questions about workplace experience: from belonging, inclusion, and supervision to opportunities for growth, workload, and organizational culture.
- Eight core wellbeing measures, including life satisfaction, burnout, mental health, and work-life integration.
- More than two dozen demographic variables, covering identity, income, region, workplace role, and more.
- Questions on attitudes, opinions, and values related to sector work, future plans, and public service motivation.

The survey powered the creation of two tools:

- 1) The Changemaker Wellbeing Index, which captures how non-profit workers are really doing across eight domains (see subsequent slides.)
- 2) Workplace Wellbeing Framework, which maps key workplace dimensions and will guide future benchmarking and action. This will be the topic of future publications based on this survey.

03

Sampling Approach

The survey is among the first global attempts to build a representative sample of non-profit workers.

The online panel consisted was targeted to Canadians who were current employees. Respondents did not know the survey was about the non-profit sector. The survey was conducted by Environics Research between February 21 and March 14, 2025. While margin of error does not apply to panel data, a probability sample of this size would have a $\pm 2.8\%$ margin of error, 19 times out of 20 (95% confidence).

04

Sampling Composition

- 1,116 non-profit workers across Canada participated in the survey.
- Data was weighted to reflect the non-profit workforce using Statistics Canada's 2021 data, based on age (6), gender (2), region (6), immigrant status (2), and income (8). We also employed quotas during data collection (around age, gender, and region). Invites were targeted to employed Canadians. Because the survey collected income ranges for 2024 while Statistics Canada reported average income data from 2021, we estimated respondent income using the midpoint of each range and adjusted for inflation to align with the 2021 benchmarks. *Additional details available in the Appendix.*
- Limitations of the sample include an under-representation of Quebec-based and lower-income workers, and an over-representation of community-based non-profits.

Calculating the Changemaker Wellbeing Index

We looked at scores from eight common wellbeing metrics:

Mental Health

Burnout/Exhaustion

Anxiety at Work

Life Satisfaction

Job Satisfaction

Loneliness

Household Income
Sufficiency

Food Insecurity

We combined both positive and negative scores across all eight into one overall score.

First, we counted how many of the eight wellbeing indicators each person scored in the bottom range (e.g. poor mental health, low income sufficiency, high burnout). Next, we identified whether they scored high on at least one of three key “thriving” indicators: Mental health, Life satisfaction, Job satisfaction

Respondents were placed into one of four wellbeing categories based on their scores:

Thriving

Managing

Struggling

Severely Struggling

The State Of Non-Profit Worker Wellbeing



Select Key Findings For Non-Profit Workers

93%

think their work has a
meaningful impact on
their community at least
sometimes

78%

are satisfied with their
jobs



And yet:

33%

are thriving

36%

have poor wellbeing

30%

are food insecure

34%

feel burned out or
exhausted often or always

State Of Non-Profit Work In Canada

For years, non-profit workers have shared their concerns about mental health, burnout, and job-related strain. But until now, much of that conversation lacked sector-specific data. For the first time, we now have a clear picture—and it's sobering: the changemaker wellbeing index shows that 36% of non-profit workers are experiencing poor or very poor wellbeing. This is not a marginal issue. It is widespread, sector-defining, and impossible to ignore.

At first glance, non-profit employees don't appear to be faring worse than the general workforce. Their scores on key indicators like mental health and life satisfaction are broadly similar.

But this initial impression masks a deeper divide.

Crisis isn't universal—but it's unmistakable in large, and critical parts of the sector.

When we distinguish between government-linked non-profits (like hospitals, universities, and school boards) and community-based non-profits (including social services, arts, and environmental organizations), the picture shifts: 39% of workers in community non-profits report poor wellbeing, compared to 32% in governmental non-profits—a notable 7-point gap.

And as we zoom in further, the signals of strain become harder to dismiss.

In arts, culture, and recreation, 49% of workers have poor wellbeing. In social services, the rate is nearly as high at 45%.

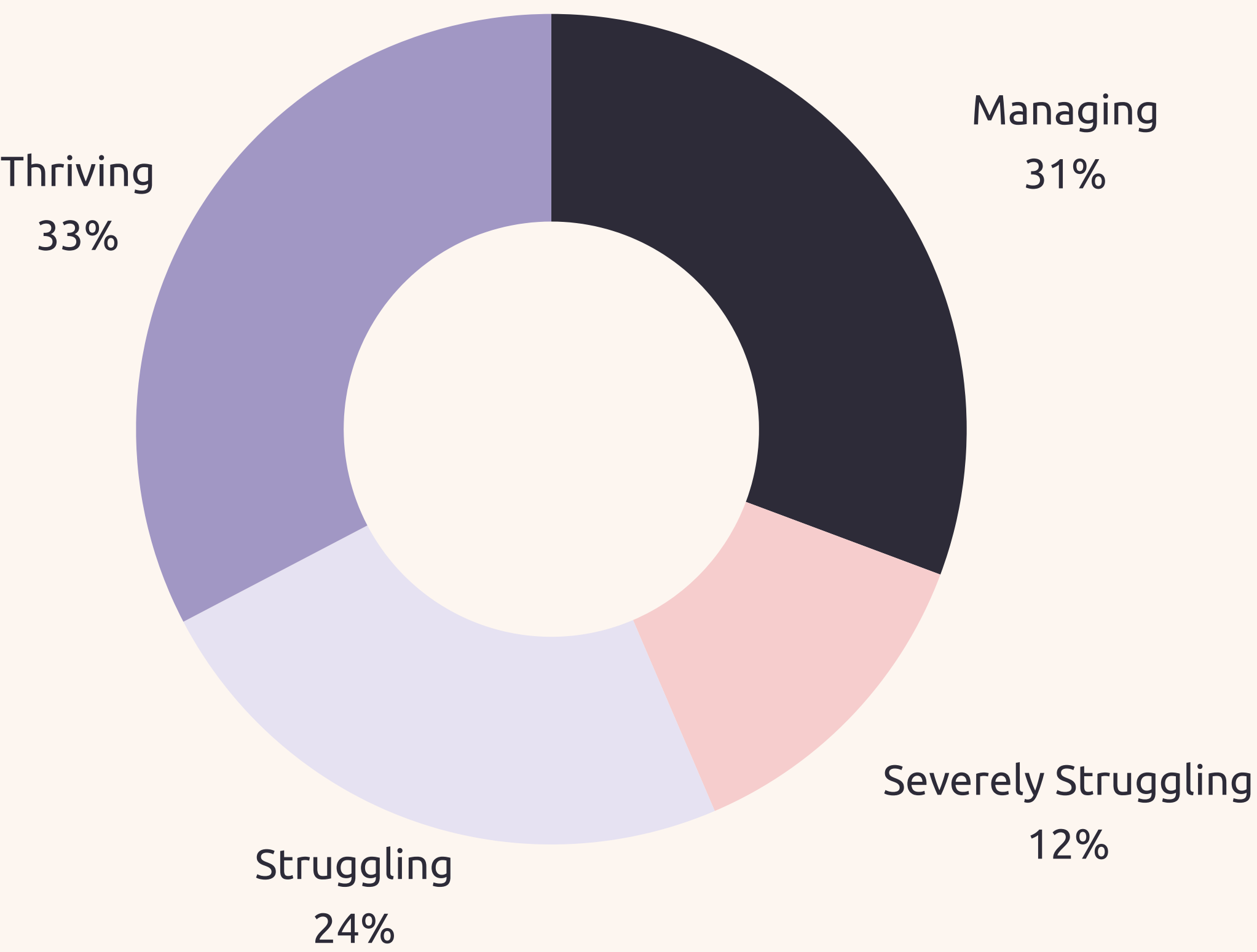


Changemakers Divided: A Third Are Thriving And A Third Are Struggling

Scores on the Changemaker Wellbeing Index

While one-third of non-profit workers are thriving, a worrying **36% face low wellbeing**—including 24% who are struggling and 13% who are severely struggling.

Those who are struggling are scoring poorly on at least 3 of 8 wellbeing measures while those are severely struggling are scoring poorly on 5 or more of the measures. See more details on how this was scored in the Appendix.



Note: Scores do not add up due to rounding.

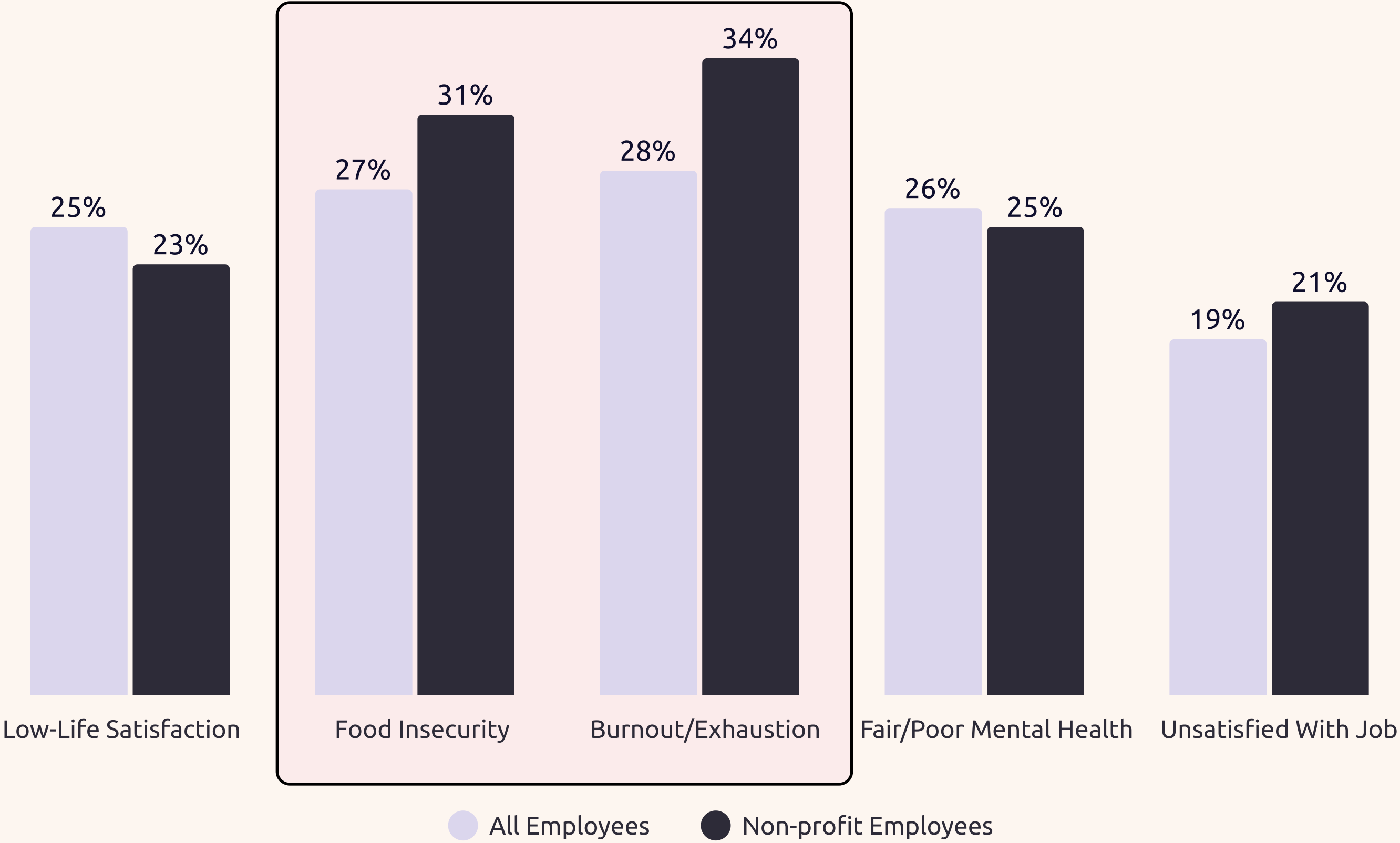
Non-Profit Workers Score Similarly To The General Workforce On Some Measures - But Burnout And Food Insecurity Are Higher

Scores on 5 Changemaker Wellbeing indicators, non-profit employees vs all employees

We compared our results to high-profile national surveys with identical indicators, as we did not survey the general workforce directly. **Differences should be interpreted with caution.**

Non-profit employees report significantly higher burnout (34% vs. 28%) and slightly greater food insecurity (31% vs. 27%) than the broader workforce.

Despite these pressures, low life satisfaction (23%) and poor mental health (25%) scores are nearly identical.



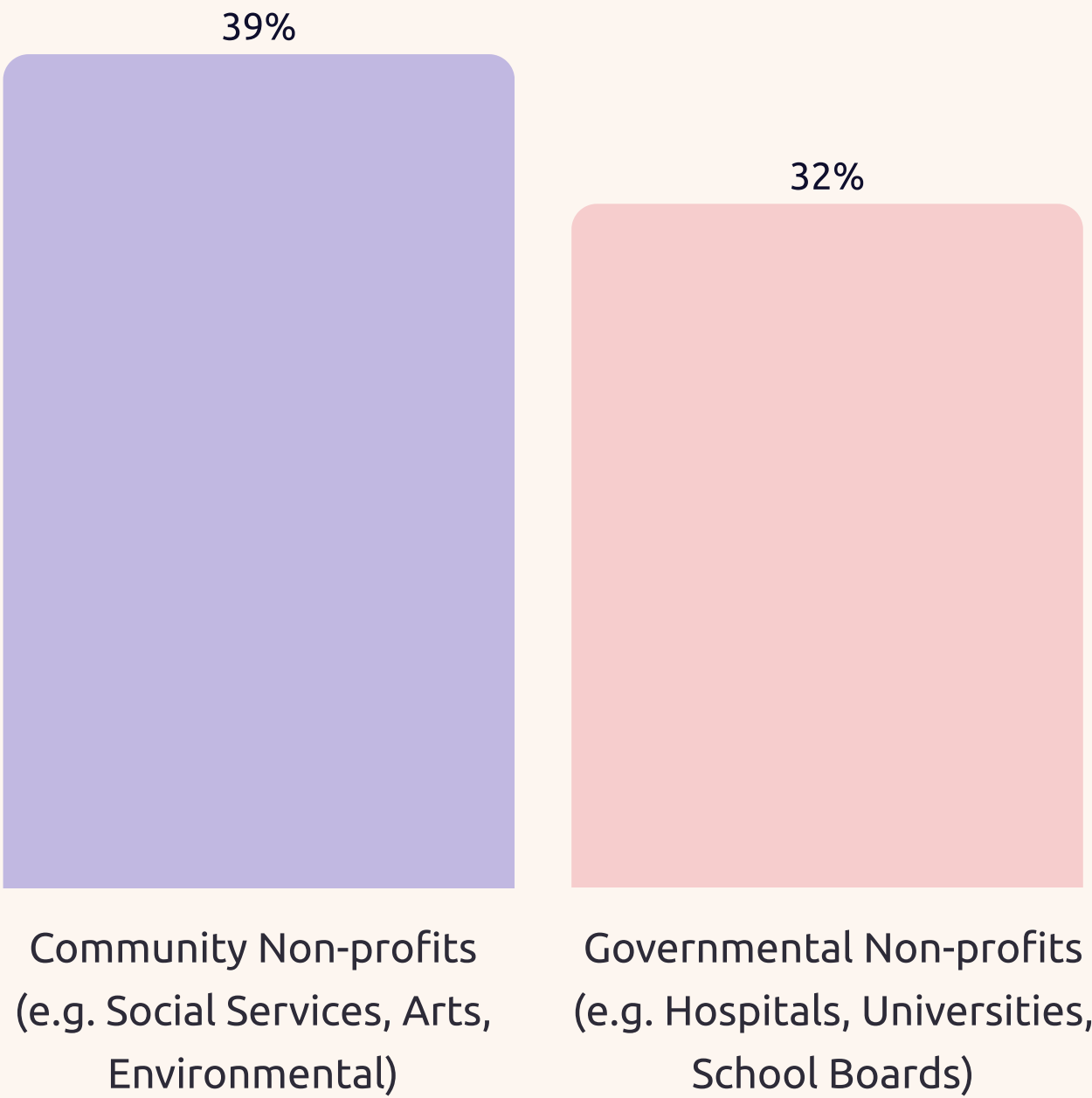
Source: Data on non-profit employees is from the Changemaker Wellbeing Index. Life satisfaction is sourced from Statistics Canada. Burnout and exhaustion figures are from Mental Health Research Canada. Food insecurity data comes from two surveys conducted by the Environics Institute. Mental health and job satisfaction data are drawn from the Survey on Employment and Skills, conducted by the Environics Institute in partnership with the Future Skills Centre and the Diversity Institute. All analysis was conducted by the author and does not necessarily reflect the views of the data providers. For full details, please see the Appendix.

Note: Burnout/exhaustion includes those who are always/often burned out for CWI and always/most of the time for MHRC. Burnout was calculated for employed Canadians [MHRC’s Poll 23](#) (February 2025). All analysis was conducted by the author and does not necessarily reflect the view of MHRC. See Appendix for additional details.

Employees Of Community Non-Profits Have Lower Wellbeing Compared To Those Working In Governmental Non-Profits Like Hospitals, Universities, And School Boards

Percentage with low wellbeing

Community non-profit workers are significantly more likely to report low wellbeing (39%) than those in governmental non-profits like hospitals, universities, and school boards (32%).

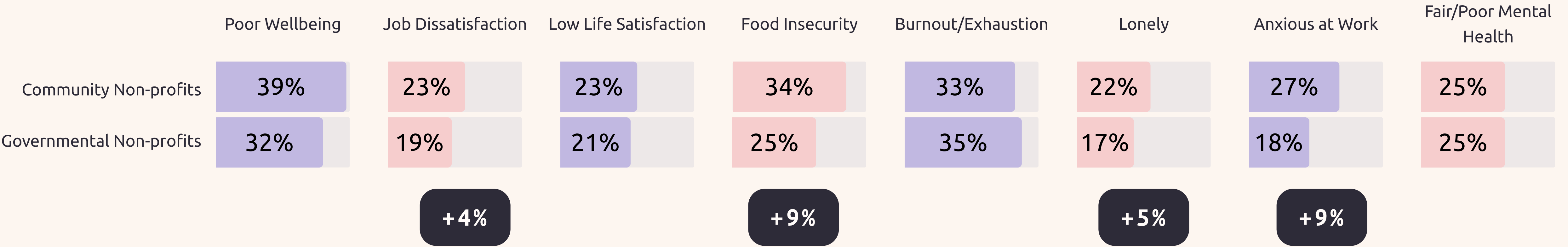


Note: In this report, community non-profits refers to all organizations outside of the hospital, university, college, and school board sectors, who are all classified as governmental non-profits. Statistics Canada estimates that 67% of the non-profit sector work for governmental non-profits, whereas in our sample they represented only 38% of our respondents. See Appendix for details.

Food Insecurity And Anxiety Drive Poor Wellbeing In Community Non-Profits, With Smaller Concerns For Job Dissatisfaction And Loneliness

Percentage with low wellbeing

Poor wellbeing is more common among community non-profit workers (39% vs. 32%), driven by higher rates of food insecurity (+9 percentage points) and anxiety at work (+9 percentage points), with smaller but notable gaps in loneliness and job dissatisfaction.

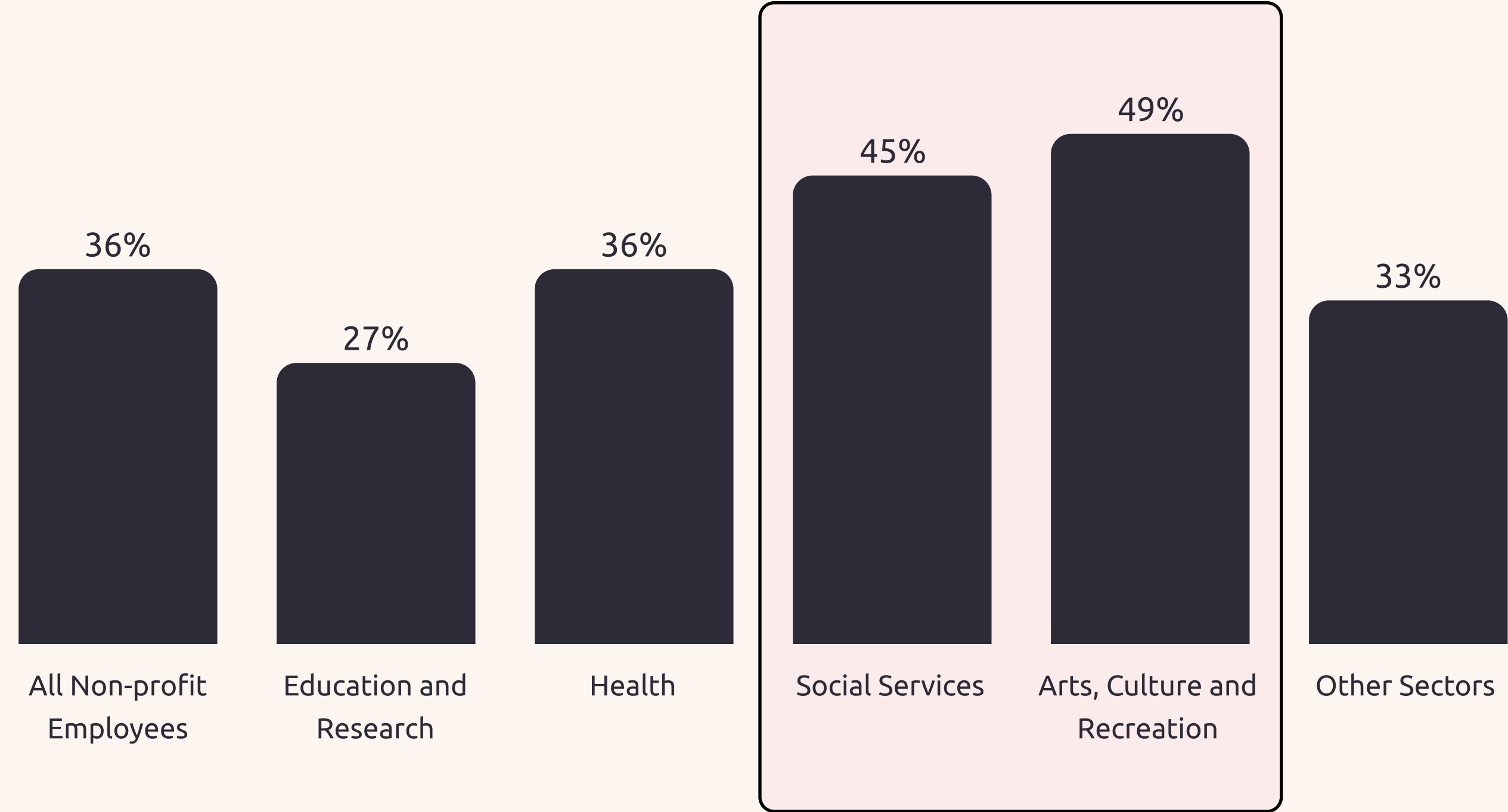


Note: Poor wellbeing refers to the scores on the Changemaker Wellbeing Index (struggling/severely struggling). Low life satisfaction refers to 5 or lower on a 11 point scale, loneliness, anxiety at work, and burnout/exhaustion refers to someone always or often feeling these symptoms. Job dissatisfaction refers to those who are somewhat or very unsatisfied with their job.

Poor Wellbeing Isn't Sector-Wide—But It's Deep In Fields Like Social Services And Arts, Culture And Recreation

Struggling on wellbeing

Social services (45%) and arts, culture, and recreation (49%) stand out with the highest rates of poor wellbeing—around 10 percentage points or more above the non-profit average (36%).



Note: The Education & Research and Health categories include both governmental and non-governmental non-profit organizations. The Other Sectors category includes environmental groups, religious organizations, grantmakers and sector support, international, housing non-profits, and professional associations.

Wellbeing Challenges: Burnout In Social Services, Frustration And Disconnection In Arts, Culture And Recreation

Social services workers face mental health–driven strain, with burnout (39%) and poor mental health (37%) well above the non-profit average (34% and 25%).

While arts, culture, and recreation workers show signs of frustration and disconnection, with the highest loneliness (35%) and job dissatisfaction (33%).



	Poor Wellbeing	Job Dissatisfaction	Low Life Satisfaction	Food Insecurity	Burnout/Exhaustion	Lonely	Anxious at Work	Fair/Poor Mental Health
All non-profit employees	36%	21%	22%	30%	34%	20%	23%	25%
Education and Research	27%	14%	19%	18%	34%	12%	16%	23%
Other Sectors	33%	15%	16%	35%	30%	17%	26%	16%
Health	36%	22%	22%	33%	34%	20%	23%	25%
Social Services	45%	26%	28%	38%	39%	24%	29%	34%
Arts, Culture and Recreation	49%	33%	25%	36%	30%	35%	22%	27%

Who's Struggling Most?



Who's Struggling Most?

Key Findings

- Income is one of the strongest predictors of wellbeing: Half of workers earning under \$25K report poor wellbeing, compared to just 16% of those earning \$150K or more.
- Younger workers are also at significantly higher risk: 45% of those under 30 report poor wellbeing, more than triple the rate among those 65 and older (14%). Similarly, nearly half of entry-level workers had poor wellbeing
- Women face a notable wellbeing gap: 39% report poor wellbeing, 10 points higher than men (29%). Given that women make up 70% of the sector's employment, this represents a huge number of workers in the sector.
- Racialized identity and immigration status showed only modest differences

Key Insight

Younger and lower-income workers are more likely to struggle—not for lack of commitment, but because they have less support, less stability, and fewer buffers against exhaustion. These quiet forms of inequality, rooted in age and income, deserve a more central place in how we think about equity in the sector. And they raise a deeper question:

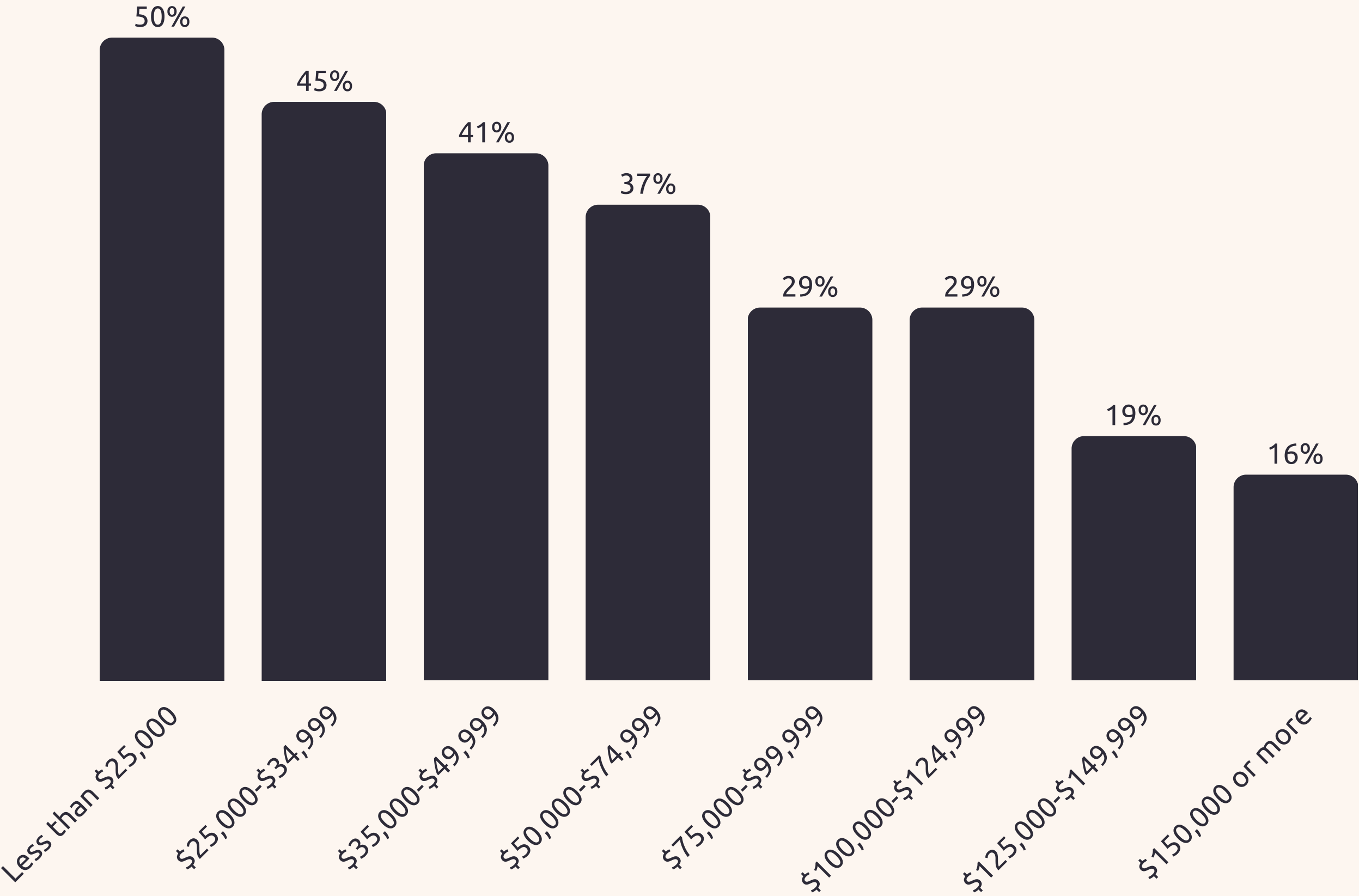
How can a sector built on the prospect of change hope to thrive if it falters in supporting those just beginning their path?



Wellbeing Strongly Correlates With Income

Percent struggling with wellbeing, by personal employment income

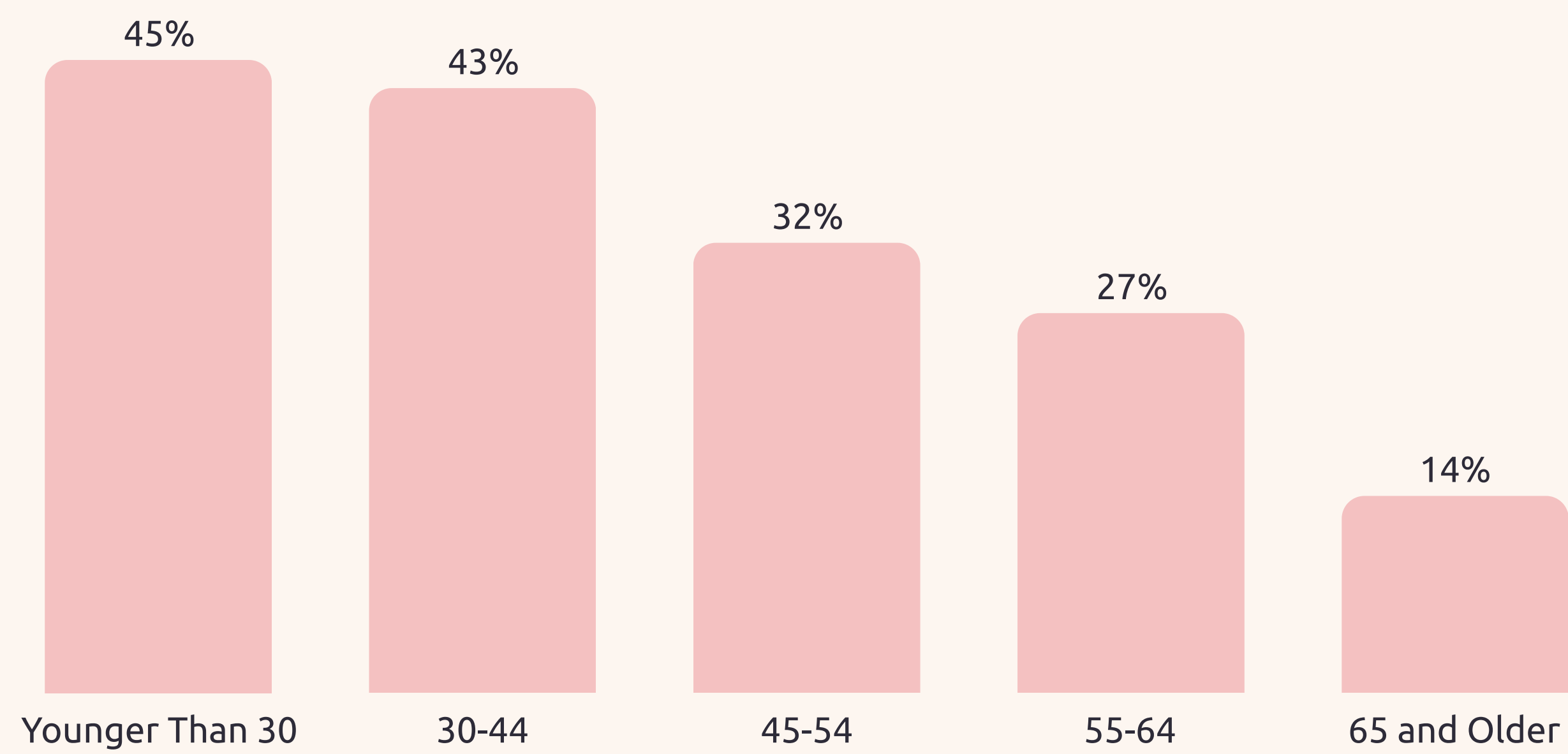
Poor wellbeing rates drop steadily as income rises, from 50% among those earning under \$25K to just 16% among those earning \$150K or more—making income one of the clearest predictors in the Changemaker Wellbeing Index.



Note: As calculated by the Changemaker Wellbeing Index.

Younger Non-Profit Workers Report Much Lower Wellbeing

Percent struggling with wellbeing, by age



Age is one of the strongest predictors of wellbeing: 45% of workers under 30 fall into the lowest wellbeing category, compared to just 14% of those aged 65 and older.



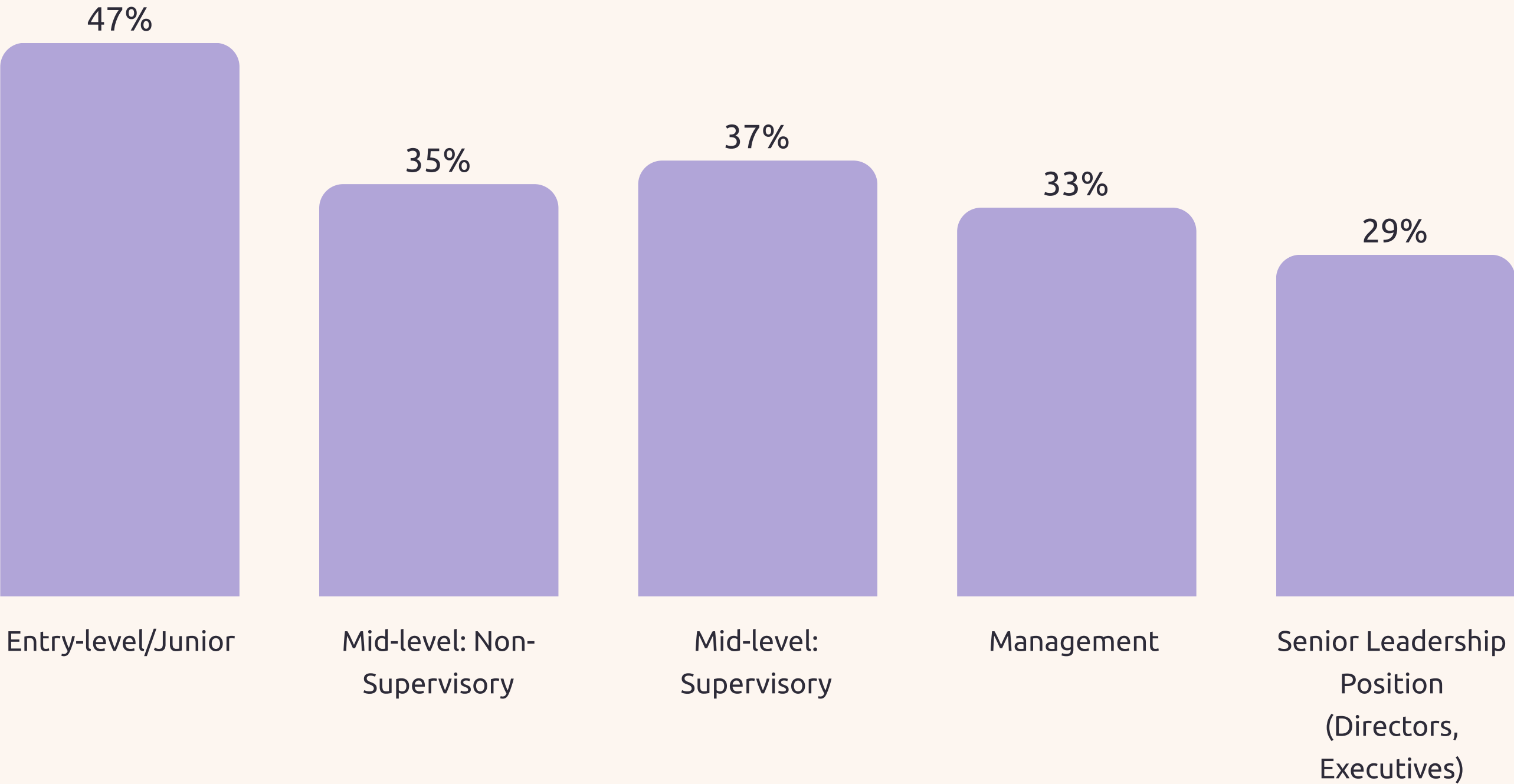
Note: As calculated by the Changemaker Wellbeing Index.

Entry-Level Non-Profit Workers Struggle With Wellbeing

Percent struggling with wellbeing, by position level

Nearly half (47%) of entry-level non-profit workers have poor wellbeing.

This is compared to just 29% of those in senior leadership—highlighting a steep challenge for those entering non-profit work.

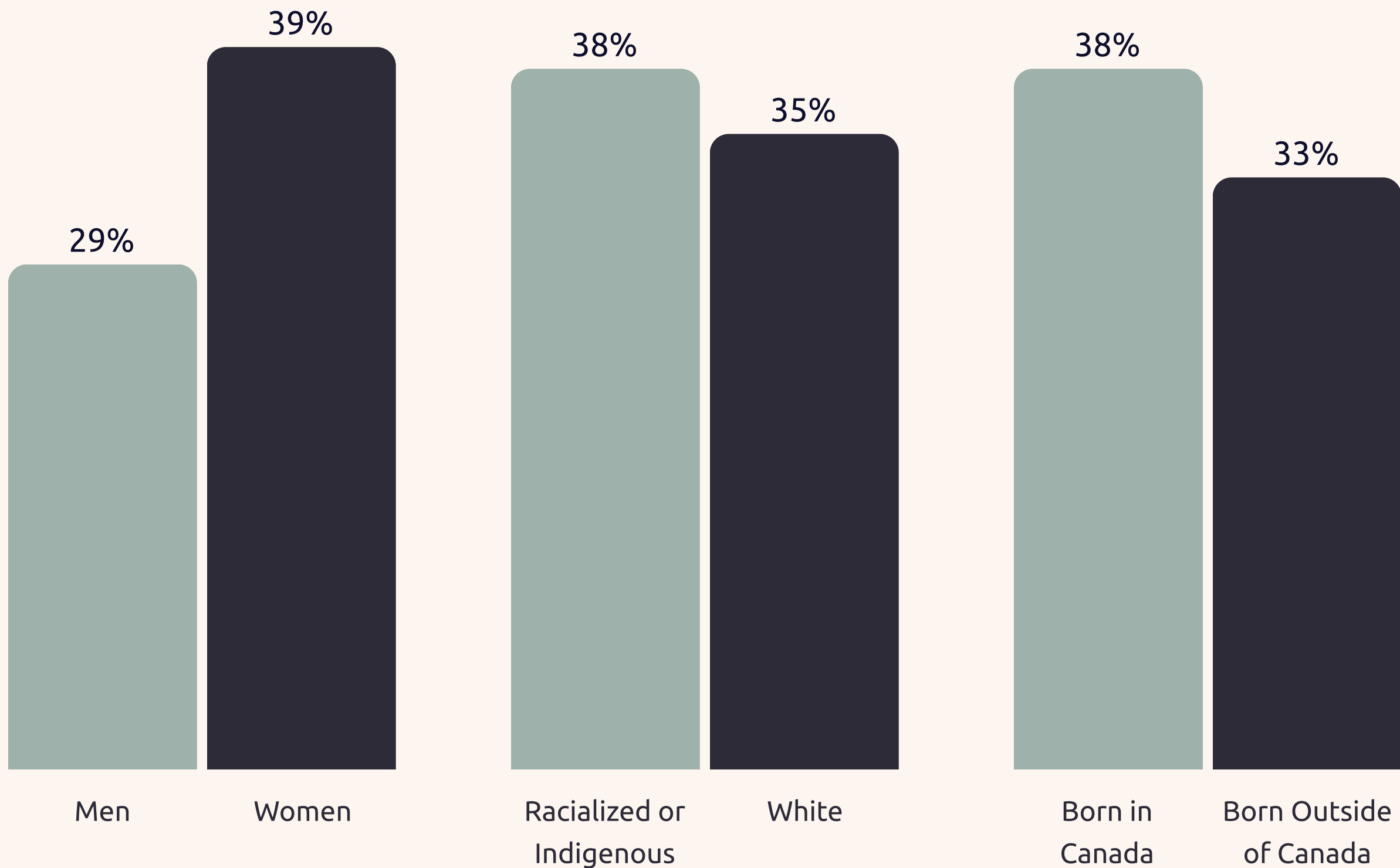
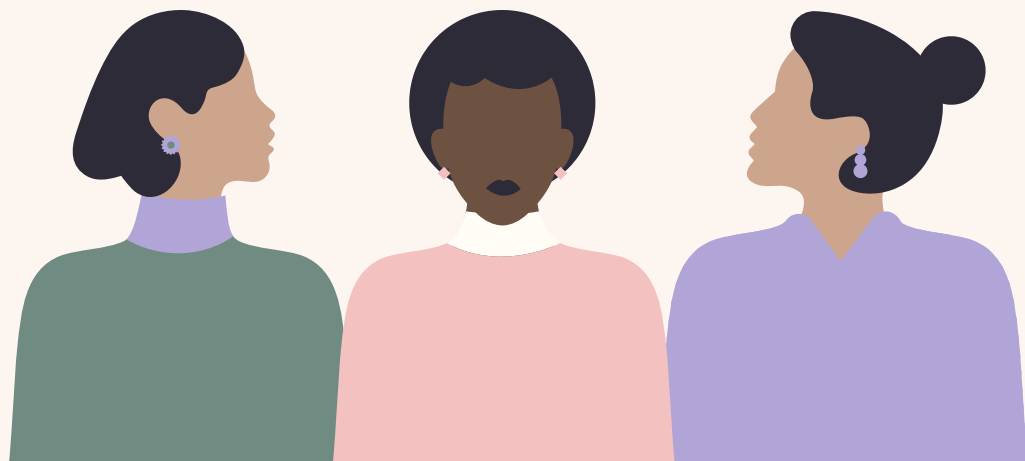


Wellbeing Challenges Are Especially Pronounced For Women

Percent struggling with wellbeing, by various categories

39% of women report poor wellbeing, 10 points higher than men—highlighting a significant gender gap in non-profit workforce wellbeing.

Differences by racialized status and immigration background are less pronounced, with only modest gaps between groups.



The Non-Profit Sector's Recruitment And Retention Problem



The Non-Profit Sector's Recruitment And Retention Problem

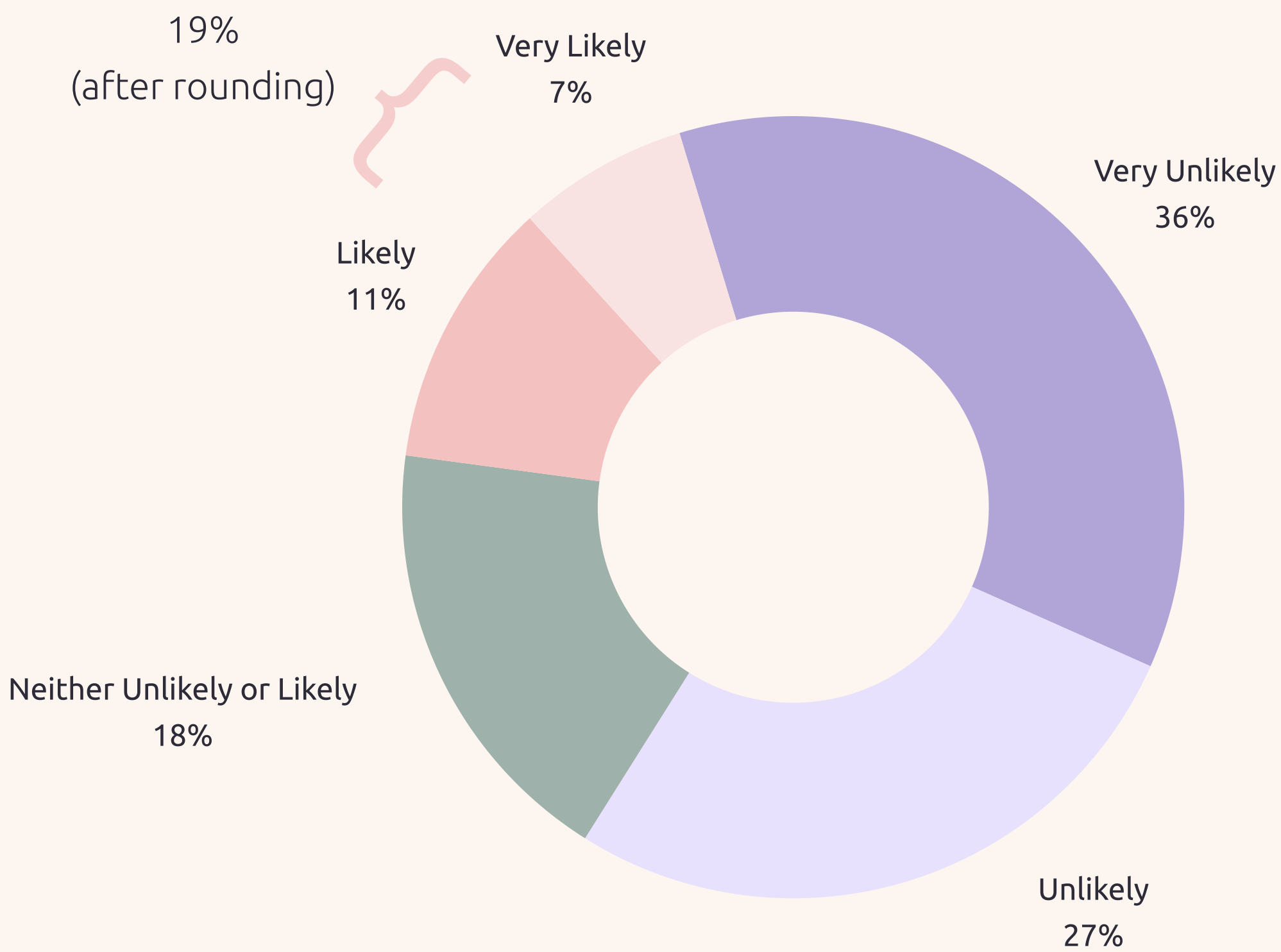
Key Findings

- **Intention to leave is relatively high:** 20% of community non-profit workers say they are likely to quit in the next six months – compared to 15% in government non-profits and 15% in a 2022 national study of workers. An additional 22% say it's possible, meaning nearly half are at some degree of risk of leaving
- **But critically, turnover risk is concentrated in arts, culture, recreation and social services non-profits:** where half of workers are considering leaving, underscoring the urgent need for stabilization and retention strategies.
- **Poor job satisfaction is driving quitting intentions:** Just 11% of very satisfied workers say they're likely to quit, compared to 62% of those very unsatisfied
- **Workers who quit non-profits leave the sector entirely:** When non-profit workers quit, they are more likely than other sectors to leave their industry altogether according to a global study. More than 70% left the sector entirely.
- **Employees do not endorse their workplaces:** The overall employee net promoter (eNPS) for non-profit workers is -11, indicating significantly more people who would not recommend their workplace (detractors) than would (promoters). Anything below zero is considered a poor score.
- **Basic HR practices can help:** Organizations with all five foundational HR practices see far higher endorsement (+14 eNPS) than those with fewer than two (-34).

The sector's ability to attract and retain the next generation of changemakers is in jeopardy unless workplace conditions improve. HR investments, supportive culture, and stronger systems aren't just “nice to have” – they are urgent survival strategies. Given the high costs of replacing employees, non-profits need to do better at retaining staff.

One In Five Non-Profit Workers Say They Will Likely Leave Their Job In The Next Six Months

Likelihood of voluntarily leaving job in next six months



Intention to leave jobs appears to be slightly higher in the non-profit sector, but evidence is weak.

Comparable data on quitting intentions among Canadian workers is limited.

We found that 19% of non-profit employees were likely to leave their jobs—about four points higher than the 15% reported in a 2022 McKinsey study of Canadian workers.

Note: Our survey found that 19% of non-profit workers reported being likely to leave their job in the next 6 months—higher than the 15% reported in a 2022 McKinsey study of Canadian workers (n=1,935). Differences should be interpreted with caution due to variation in question wording and timing: McKinsey asked about leaving in 3–6 months during the while our survey asked about voluntary departure within six months. Response scales were similar but not identical. Source: Job quitters are switching sectors, McKinsey says. But why?, World Economic Forum, 2022.

A Warning Sign: Nearly Half Of Community Non-Profit Workers May Leave, With Social Services Leading The Way

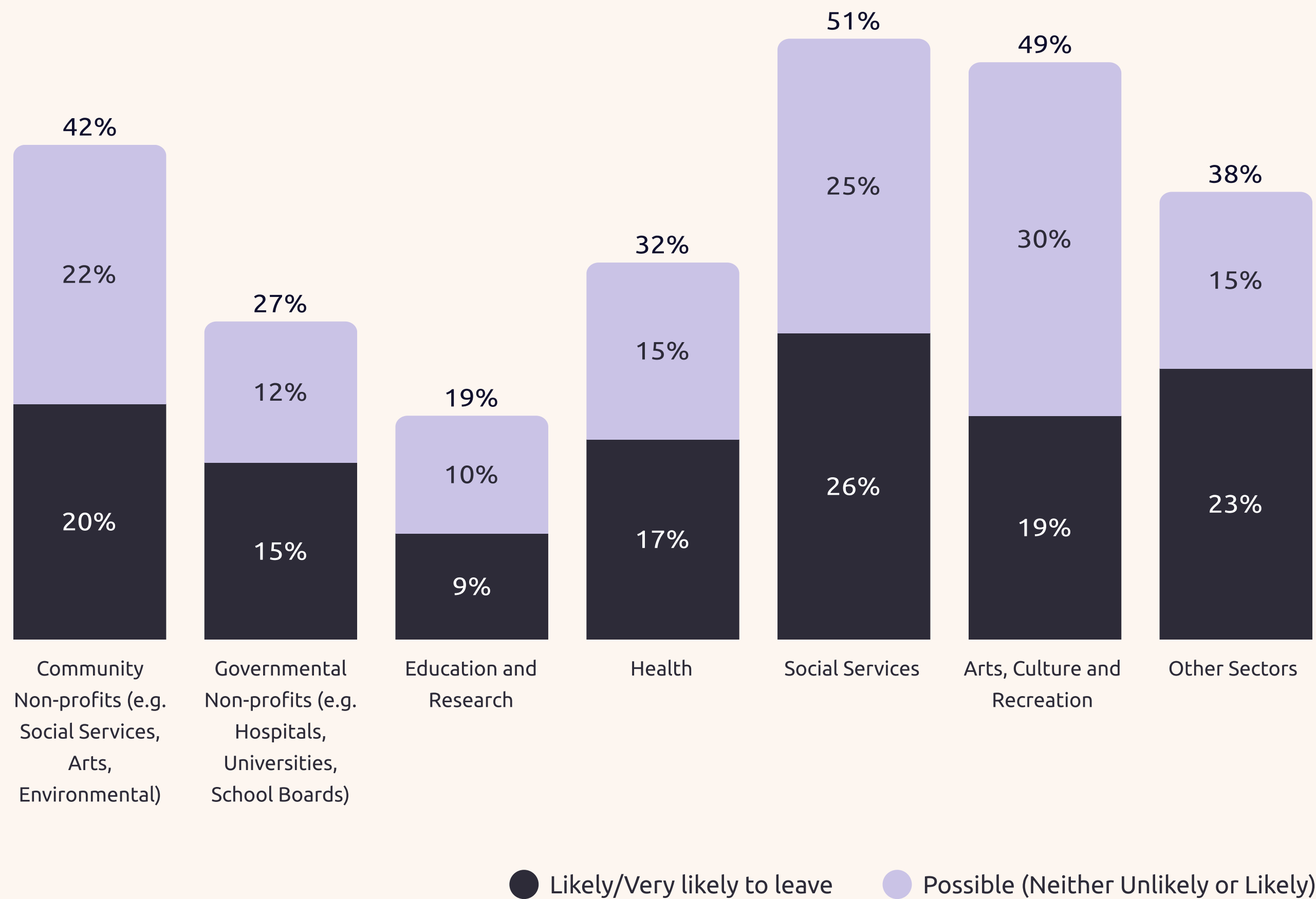
Likelihood of voluntarily leave job in next six months, by sector

Workers in community non-profits are more likely to consider leaving their jobs:

20% say it's likely, compared to 15% in governmental non-profit roles.

An additional 22% say it's possible, meaning 42% of community non-profit workers are at some degree of departure risk—versus just 27% in governmental non-profits.

Arts and culture and social services are driving this trend: over half of workers in these sectors say they are open to leaving or actively planning to quit. Social services has the highest rate of folks saying they are likely to quit.



Low Job Satisfaction Drives Turnover Risk—With High Costs For The Sector

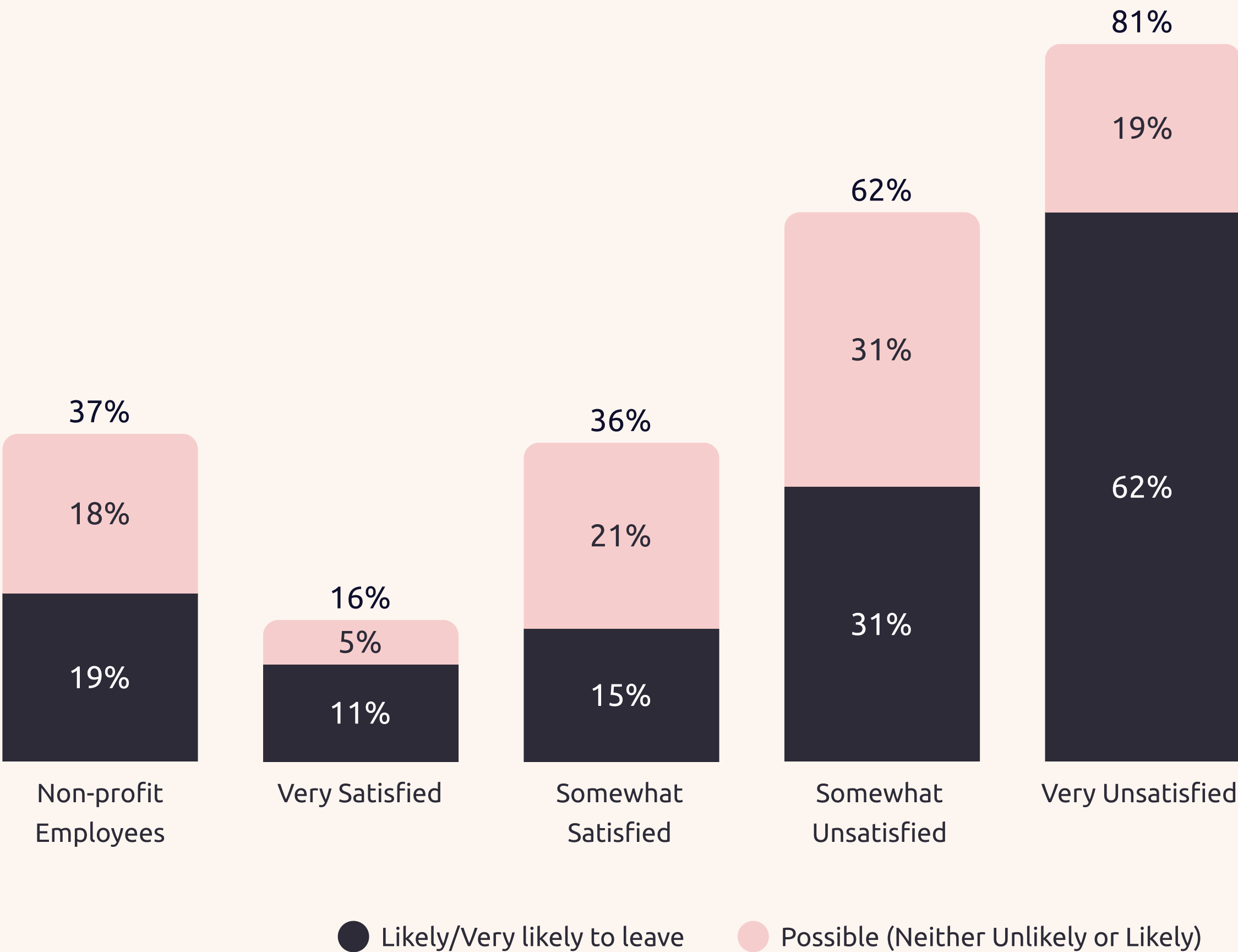
Likelihood of voluntarily leave job in next six months, by job satisfaction

Dissatisfaction matters a lot for quitting:

Just 11% of very satisfied workers are likely to quit, compared to 62% of those very unsatisfied

The cost of turnover is significant: The cost to replace an employee can range between \$10,000 to \$52,000 or more, depending on their role, sector and seniority.^{1,2}

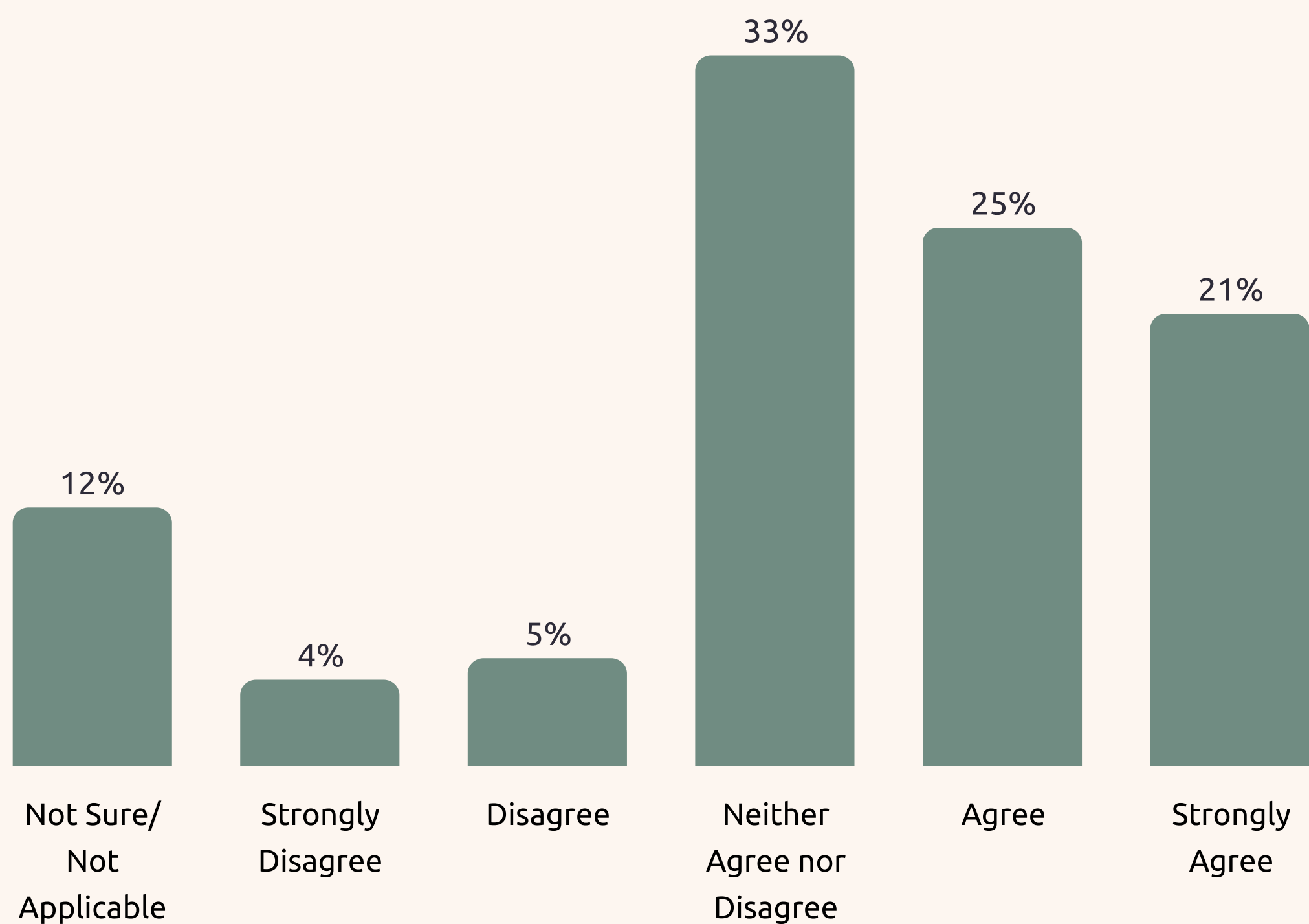
Takeaway: In a resource-constrained sector, improving job satisfaction is not just a wellbeing issue—it’s a retention strategy with material financial implications.



Note: 1. Freeman, Tyler, Mugayar-Baldocchi, Marino, Perez, Fernando, and Salguero, Julian. (May 6, 2024). From hire to inspire: Getting—and keeping—Gen Z in manufacturing. McKinsey & Company. 2. De Smet. Aaron, Mugayar-Baldocchi, Marino, Reich, Angelika, and Schaninger, Bill. (September 11, 2023). Some employees are destroying value. Others are building it. Do you know the difference?. McKinsey & Company.

Most Workers Don't Express Preference For Non-Profit Sector. The Exception? Those Most Satisfied By Their Work

Happier working in nonprofit sector than public/private sectors³



Tepid Enthusiasm For Working In The Non-Profit Sector

Just under half (46%) of non-profit workers say they are happier working in the non-profit sector, including only 21% who strongly agree.¹

Satisfied Non-Profit Employees Want To Stay In The Sector

Employees who are very satisfied with their jobs are twice as likely to say they are happier working in the non-profit sector than elsewhere (56%) compared to those who are unsatisfied (29%). In other words, the people most likely to leave their jobs are also most likely to want to leave the sector.

Non-Profit Workers Less Likely To Stay In The Sector After Leaving A Job

A global study found that nonprofit sector employees were the second most likely—out of eight sectors studied—to leave their field entirely after leaving a job.²

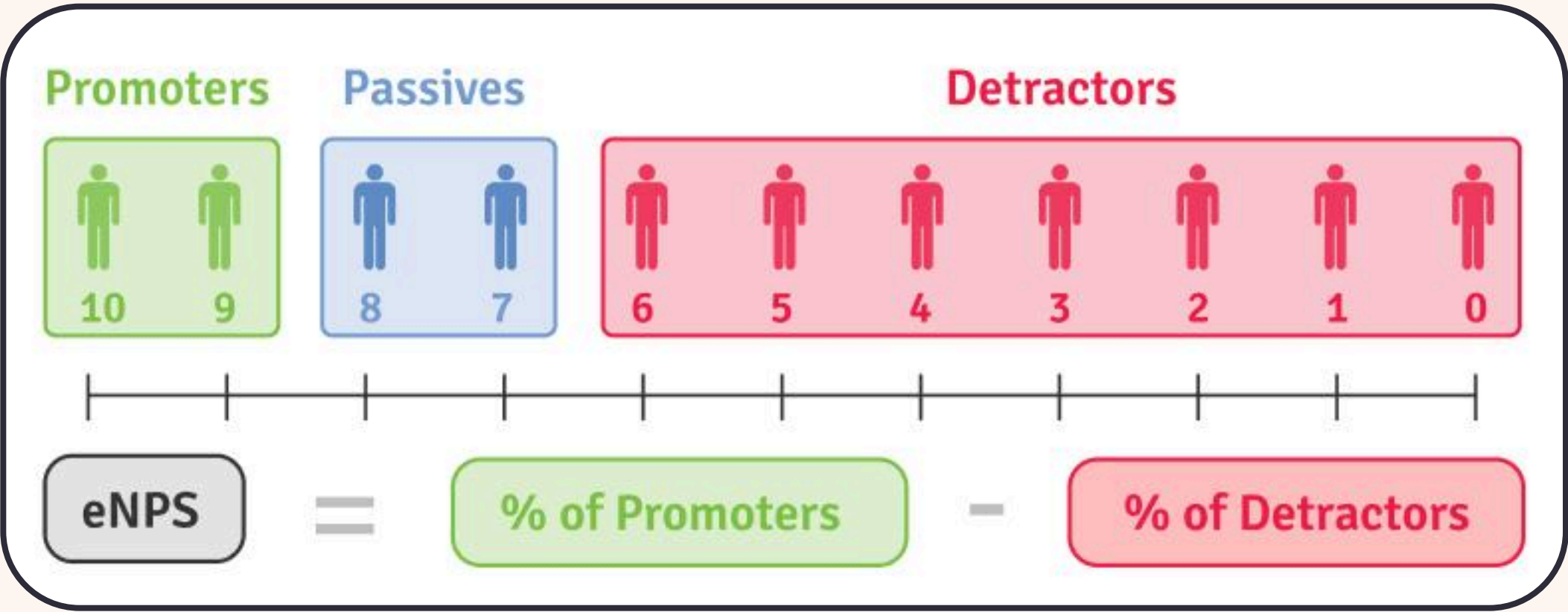
Note: 1. In most questions, the percentage who picked cannot say was extremely low and we excluded them from the analysis. Since the rate is high here, we have included them. 2. Masterson, Victoria. (2022). The Great... Reshuffle, Re-invention, Reassessment? 3 reasons workers are quitting and heading to different sectors. World Economic Forum. 3."Question: "I am happier working in the nonprofit/charitable sector than I would be working in the private or public sectors"

Would You Tell a Friend to Work Here? The Question That May Decide The Sector’s Future

One of the most widely used benchmarks in workplace culture is the Employee Net Promoter Score (eNPS), which asks: How likely are you to recommend your organization to a friend or colleague as a place to work?

The eNPS measures the number of people who are promoters of a workplace minus the number of people who are actively detractors from the workplace.

If today’s changemakers wouldn’t tell a friend to join, how will we inspire and sustain the next generation?



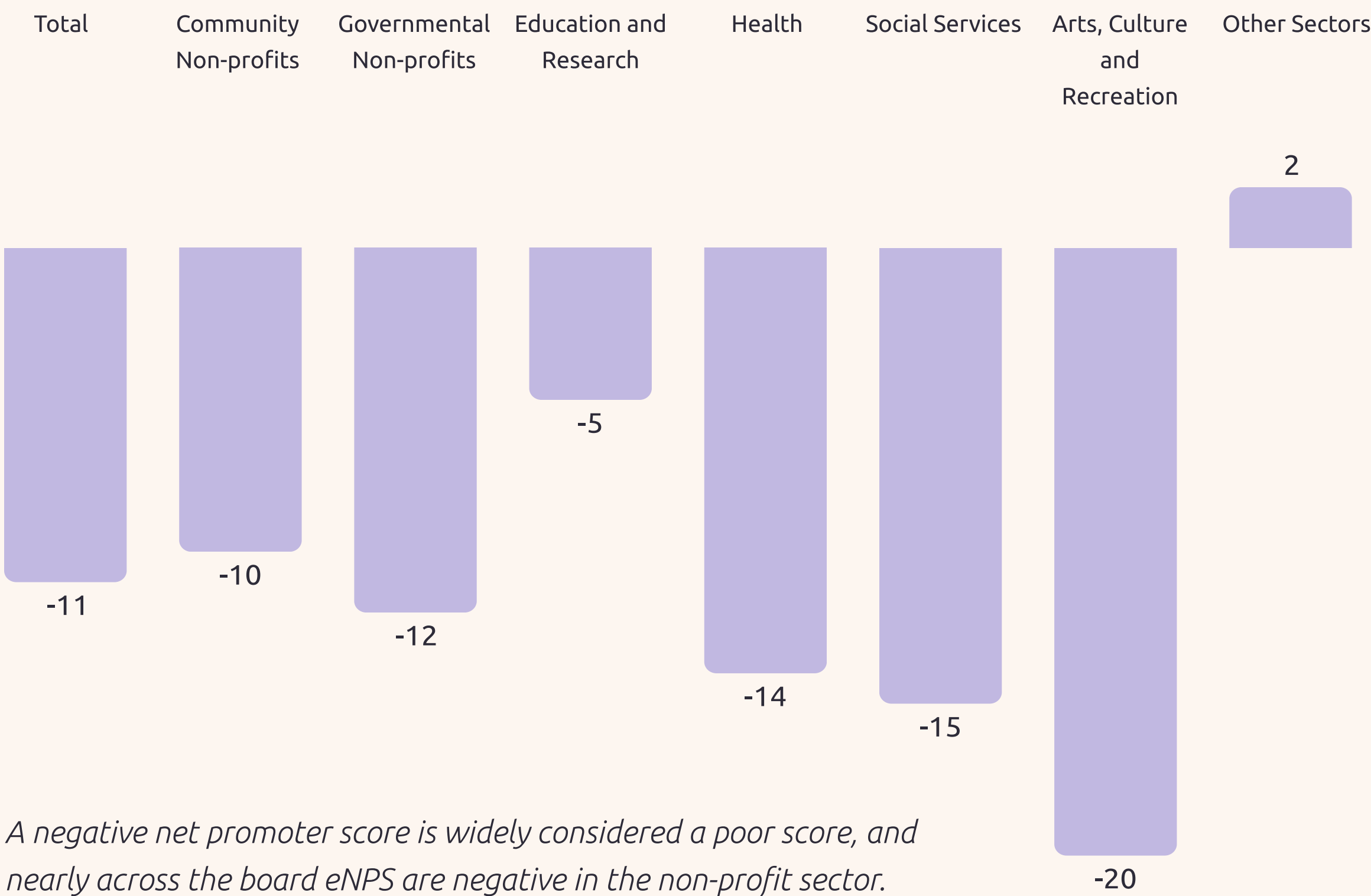
Non-Profits Score Very Poorly On Employee Recommendation Scores

Employee Net Promoter Scores, by sector (eNPS)

Non-profit workers report an eNPS of -11, signaling broad reluctance to recommend their workplace. 25% are promoters, and a striking 35% are detractors of their workplace.

By contrast, a large international vendor-based benchmark of millions of employees found an average score of 21 in 2023, though their sample is very different from ours.¹ Notably, their sample of health care and social assistance workers scored 13, though it was lowest of any industry tracked.

The gap reflects more than morale—it suggests sector-wide risks around recruitment, retention, and long-term sustainability unless worker experience is addressed.



Source: 1 Foley, Kira. (2024). Employee Net Promoter Score (eNPS): What You Need to Know. Perceptyx. However, our non-profit survey reflects a representative cross-section of sector employees. In contrast, many vendor-based eNPS benchmarks (e.g. from Perceptyx or others) are based on select workplaces—often those already engaged in employee experience tracking—which may skew results more positively. On the other hand, our survey was more than 13 minutes long, which could have biasing impacts on our scores.

The Case For HR Investment: Unlocking Employee Endorsement In The Non-Profit Sector

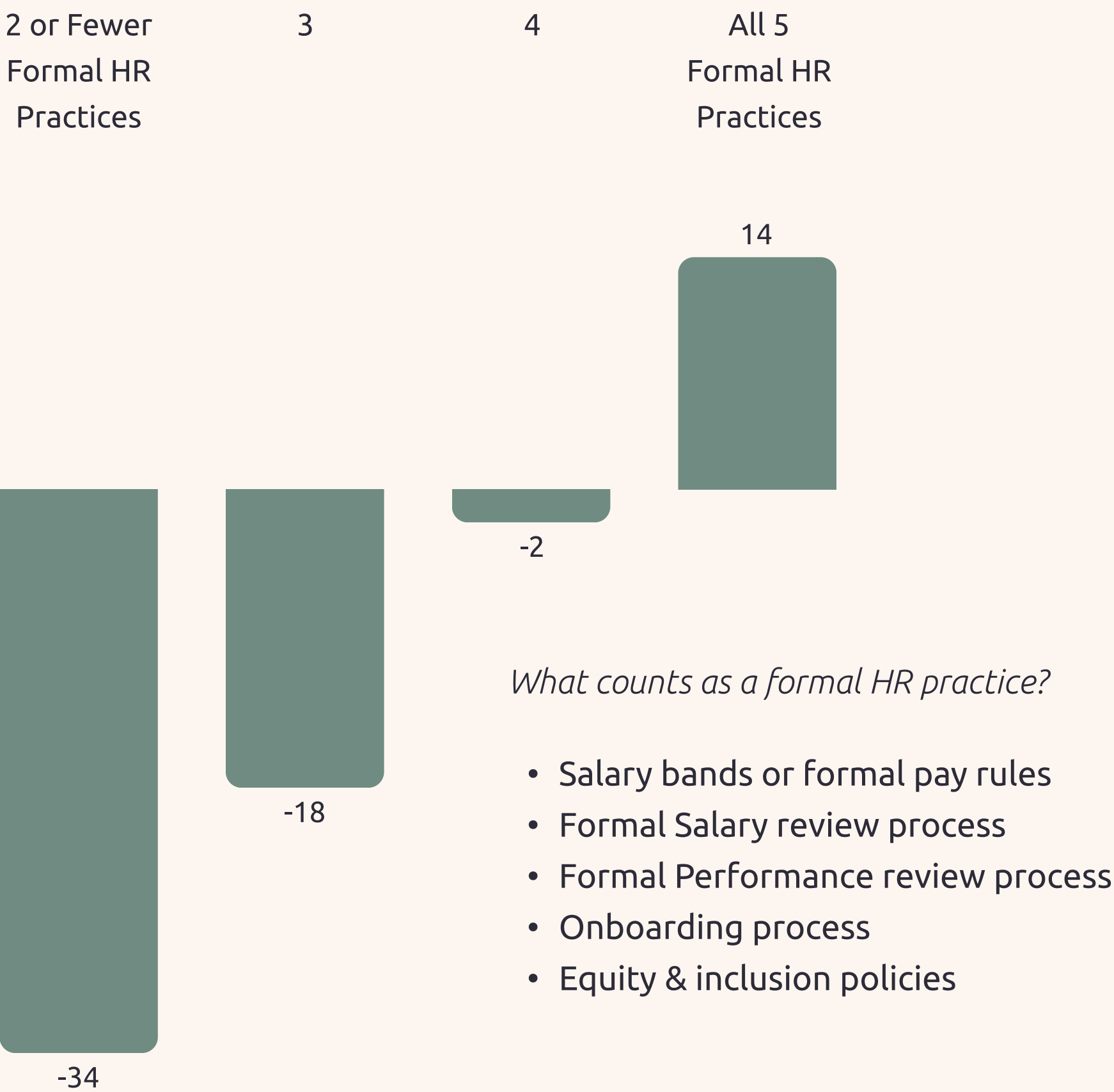
eNPS by number of formal HR practices in place

Stronger HR Foundations Are Linked to Higher Employee Net Promoter Scores (eNPS)

Organizations with all 5 formal HR practices report an eNPS of 14, compared to -34 among those with fewer than two.

It’s difficult to say what comes first, but potentially, employees are less likely to recommend joining an organization that feels chaotic or disorganized.

Implications: Even modest investments in basic HR structure could significantly boost employee advocacy across the non-profit sector.



Note: Respondents were asked whether they or their organization had certain formal HR practices in place. Some of the observed effect may reflect the experiences of individuals who are not well integrated into their organization - these employees may be less aware of existing practices and more critical in their assessment, especially if they are already having a negative experience.

The High Costs Of Poor Pay



Key Insights On Compensation

Key Findings

- Non-profit workers earn significantly less than other Canadians—community non-profit staff make 32% less than the national average, with the average employee making \$43,000 in 2021.
- But over one-third of workers earning under \$50,000 – the average for the sector - say their income is not enough to make ends meet.
- 4 in 10 of all nonprofit workers report they rarely or never have enough left over to save from their salary.
- Because of these challenges, food insecurity is widespread, with 33% of community non-profit workers reporting being food insecure in the past year.

Key Insight

Financial strain and food insecurity are widespread across the non-profit sector—and the data shows that pay raises matter, especially as living costs rise. Without regular increases, even modest price hikes can push workers into hardship.

Our data shows to improve outcomes across the sector, we need to do the basics well: build intentional HR practices around pay, reduce our dependence on temporary contracts, and ensure predictable funding that keeps pace with the cost of living.

These aren't radical ideas—they're the quiet, structural commitments that let people do meaningful work without living on the edge.

Financial Security Remains Out Of Reach For Many Non-Profit Workers

Answers to financial measures on the Changemaker Wellbeing Index

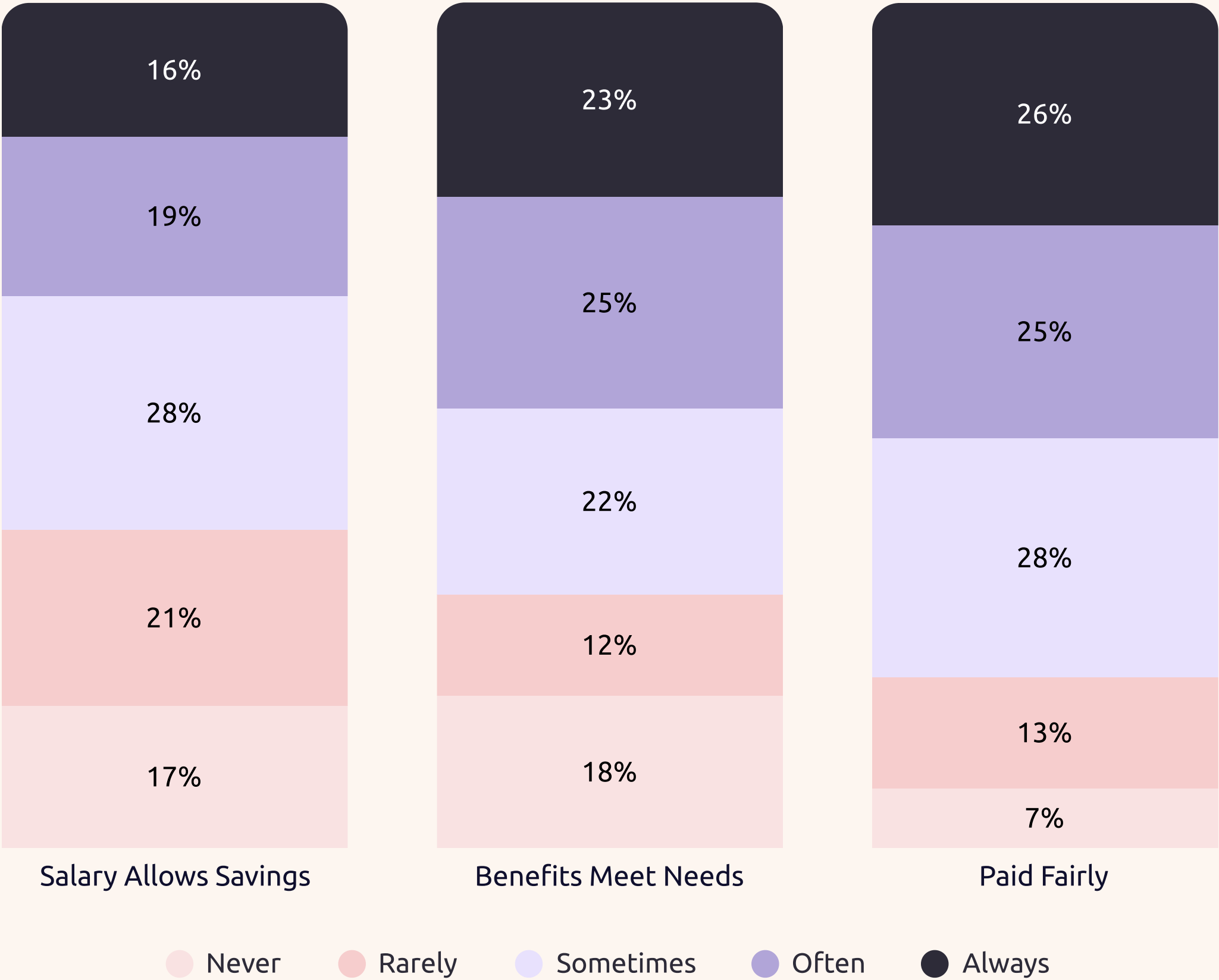
Widespread Financial Difficulties

Only 34% of workers say their salary allows them to save money “always” or “often.” A further 38% say this happens “rarely” or “never.”

Just more than half (51%) feel they are paid fairly most of the time.

While 49% say their benefits meet their needs regularly, 30% say this “rarely” or “never” happens (note this includes those without benefits).

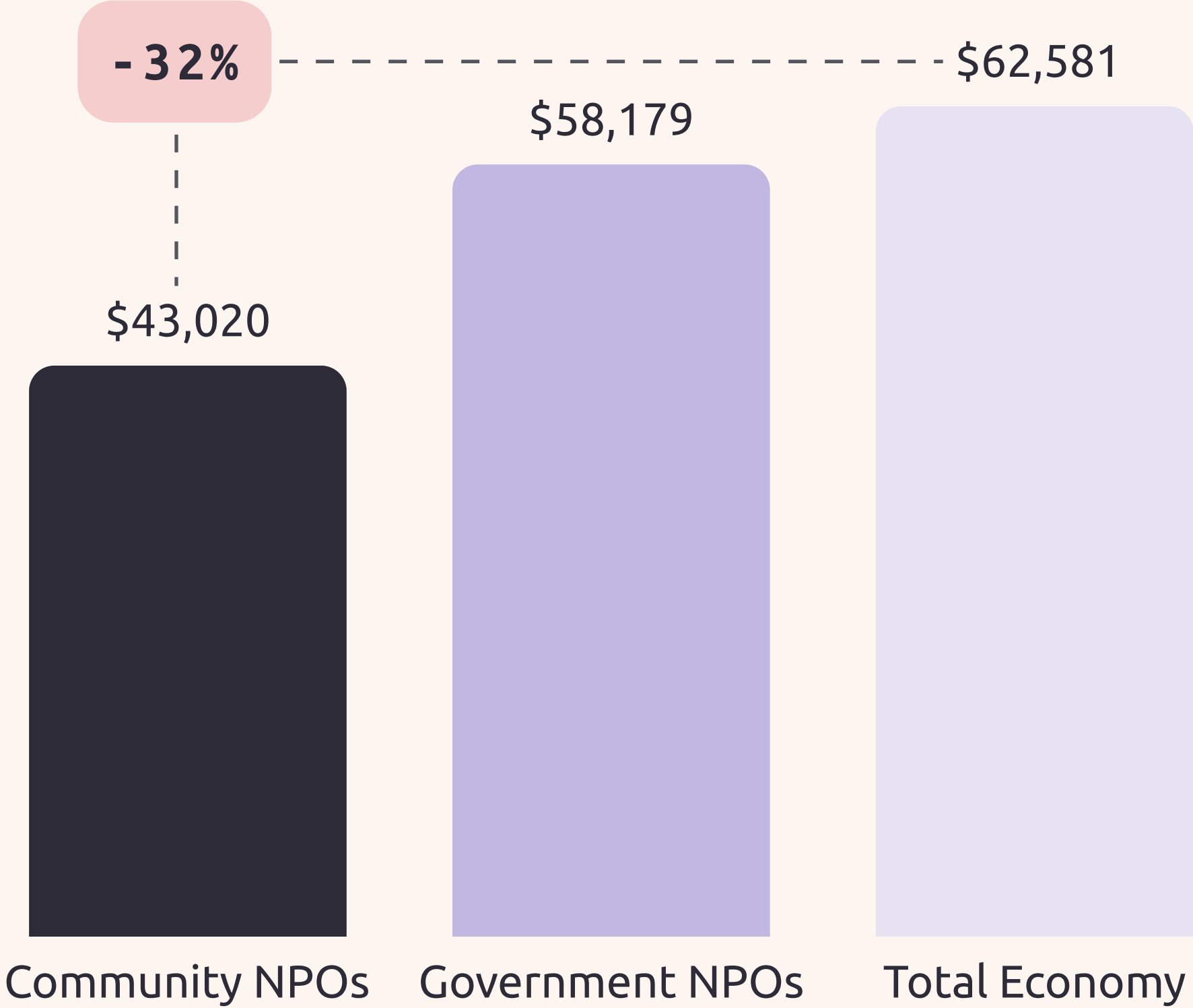
These three indicators form our Adequate and Fair Compensation facet of workplace wellbeing, one of 10 areas we will dive into in future work. Non-profit workers scored their employers worst on these measures than any other facet of workplace wellbeing.



Note: Respondents were asked how often each of the following statements was true for them: “My current salary allows me to save for future financial goals,” “Extended health and wellness benefits provided by my employer (e.g., health, dental, vision, mental health support) meet my personal and family needs,” and “I am paid fairly for the work I do.” Numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Non-Profit Workers, On Average, Are Paid Much Less Than Other Canadians. Wages At Community Non-Profits Drag That Average Down

Average annual salary, by sub-sector, 2021

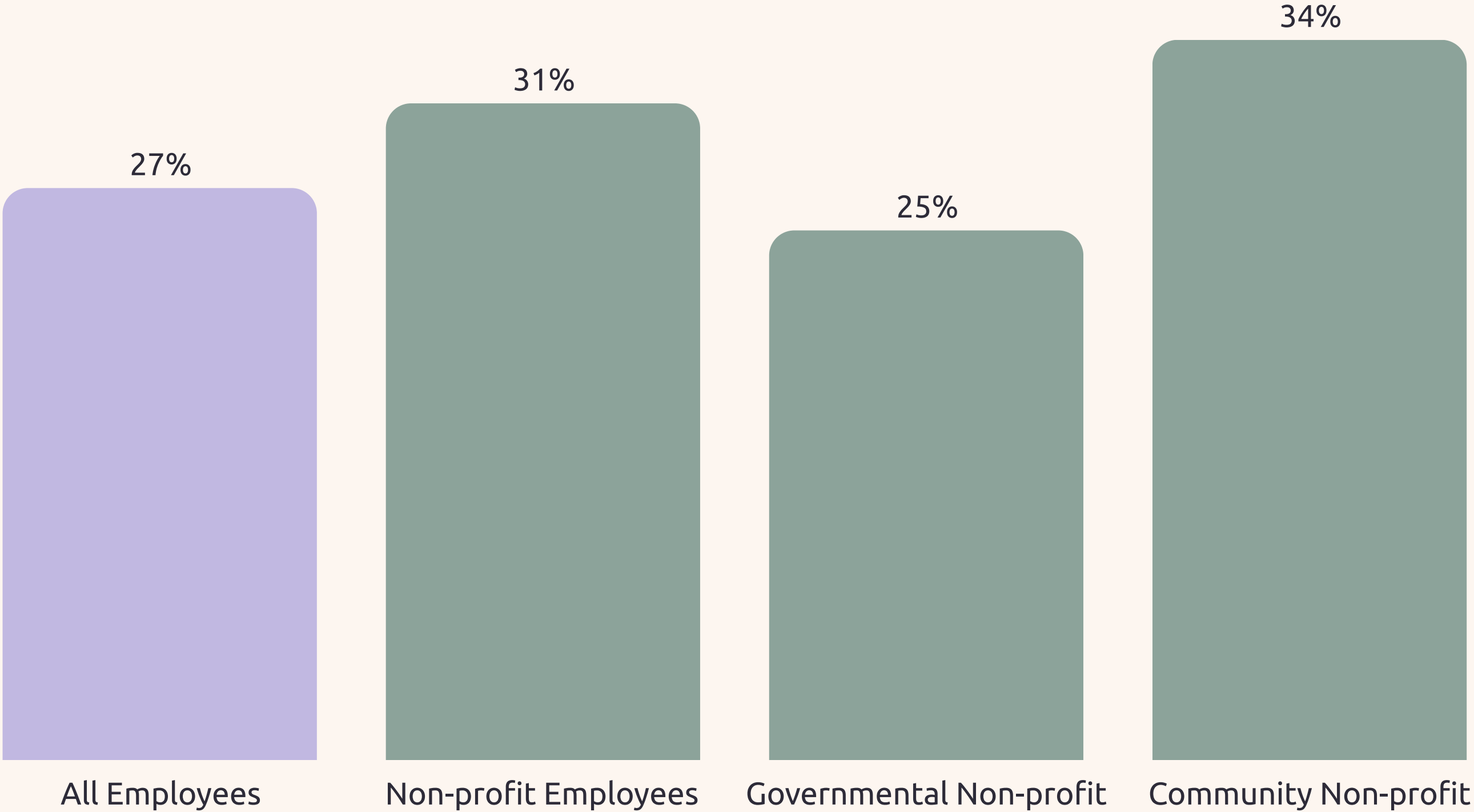


Source: Statistics Canada via *People First: A Portrait of Canada's Non-profit Workforce* — Data and Trends Report by David Lasby at Imagine Canada. Note: Imagine Canada's report also has data for business non-profits, which include things like business associations, chambers of commerce, trade groups, and professional associations. In this report, we include business non-profits within the broader category of community non-profits. They report a higher average annual salary than community non-profits at (\$54,841), but somewhat lower than government non-profit organizations.

Stemming From Pay Challenges, Non-Profit Workers, And Particularly Community Non-Profit Workers, Have High Rates Of Food Insecurity

Report food insecurity in last 12 months (%)

A third (34%) of community non-profit employees are food insecure.



Note: All respondents were asked the same question: “In the last 12 months, did you ever eat less than you felt you should because there wasn’t enough money to buy food?”

Source: Special thanks to Andrew Parkin at the Environics Institute for providing data from two 2024 surveys they conducted which comprises the all employees data in the chart. This combined dataset includes responses from over 4,100 employees, drawn from surveys commissioned by YMCA Canada and Food Banks Canada. While the results suggest that non-profit employees may experience higher levels of food insecurity, some of the difference could reflect variations in survey timing or methodology rather than actual disparities in lived experience.

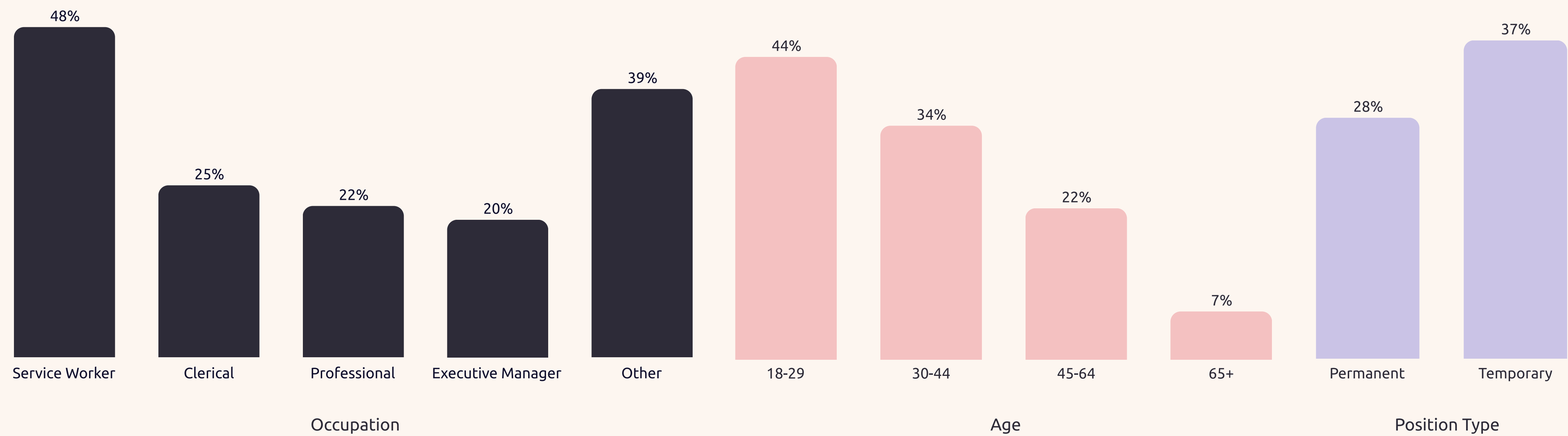
Widespread Food Insecurity Among Young And Frontline Non-Profit Workers

Food insecurity rate, by select characteristics

Nearly half (48%) of workers in **services roles**—often those delivering critical, frontline supports—report experiencing food insecurity.

The rate is similarly staggering among **younger employees aged 18–29**, at 44%, highlighting a troubling trend for the next generation of non-profit workers.

Temporary workers (37%) are significantly more vulnerable than their **permanent counterparts (28%)**, underscoring how precarity and lower pay intersect with access to basic needs.



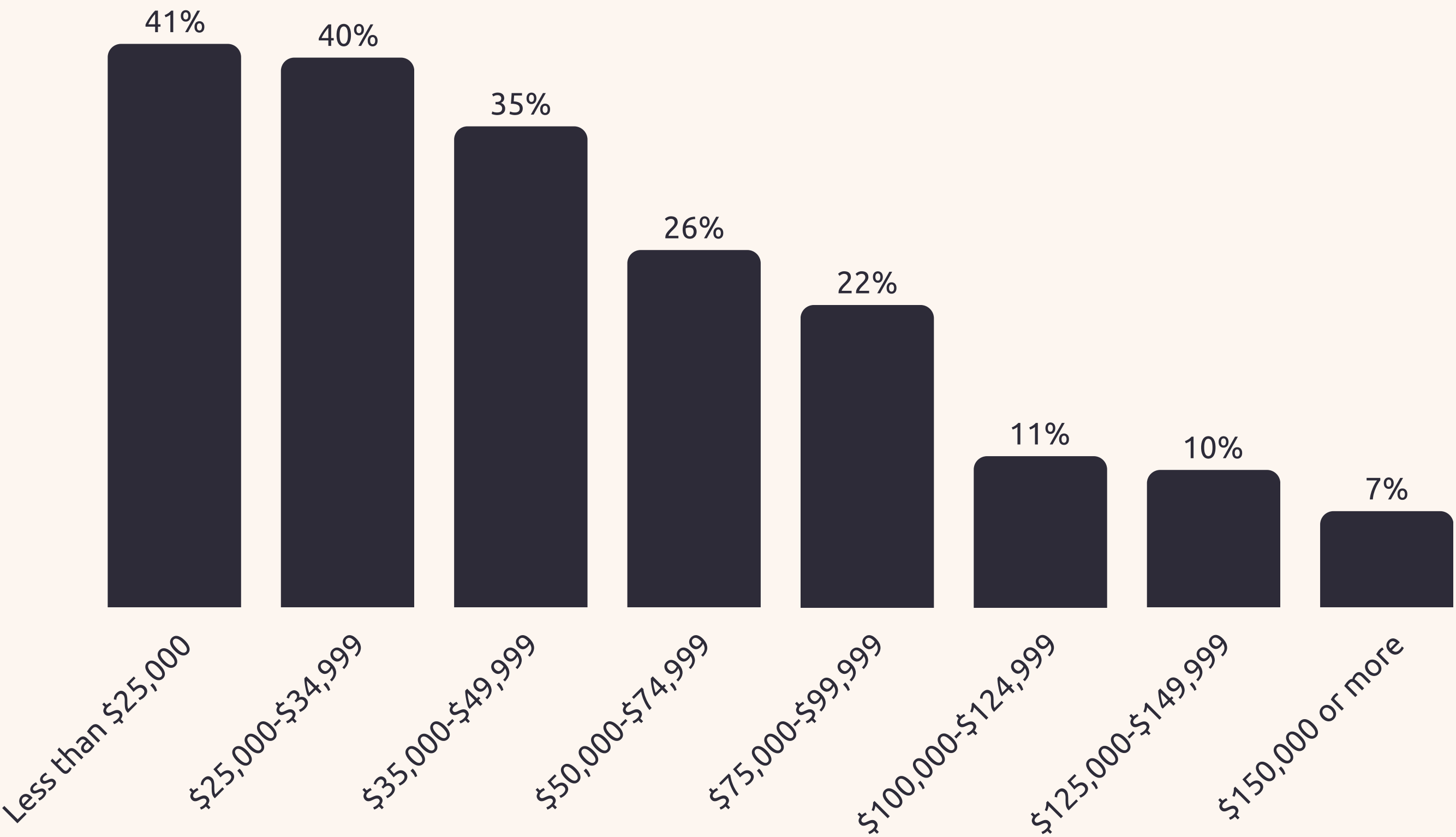
Many Non-Profit Workers Can't Make Ends Meet—Even At Moderate Income Levels

Household income isn't enough, by personal employment income

Financial Stresses Common

More than one-third of employees earning less than \$50,000 annually report struggling to make ends meet. Overall, 28% say their household income is not enough for them.

Financial stress doesn't diminish significantly until the \$100K+ range – highlighting rising cost pressures even on middle-income workers.

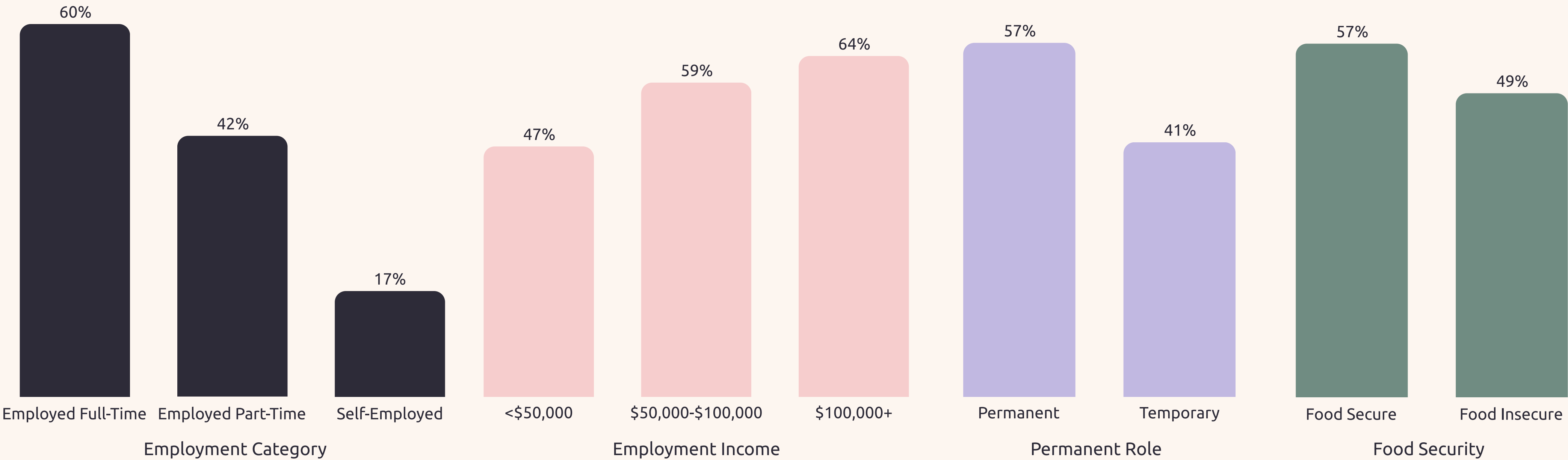


Note: This question asked respondents to assess whether their total household income is enough for them at the present time. The chart shows everyone who says their income was not enough. Importantly the report uses personal employment income ranges for analysis but asks about household income. Household income includes all sources and contributors, while personal income refers only to the respondent's employment earnings.

Half Of Non-Profit Workers Received A Raise In The Last Year—But Those Who Need It Most Were Left Out

Pay raise in the last year, by employment characteristics

Most (54%) employees have received a raise, however, the most vulnerable are bearing the brunt of wage stagnation.



Pay Raises Matter. The Sector Needs The Tools To Deliver Them.

Percentage with a pay raise in last 12 months, by HR practice in place

Good Pay Practices Require Intentional Structures

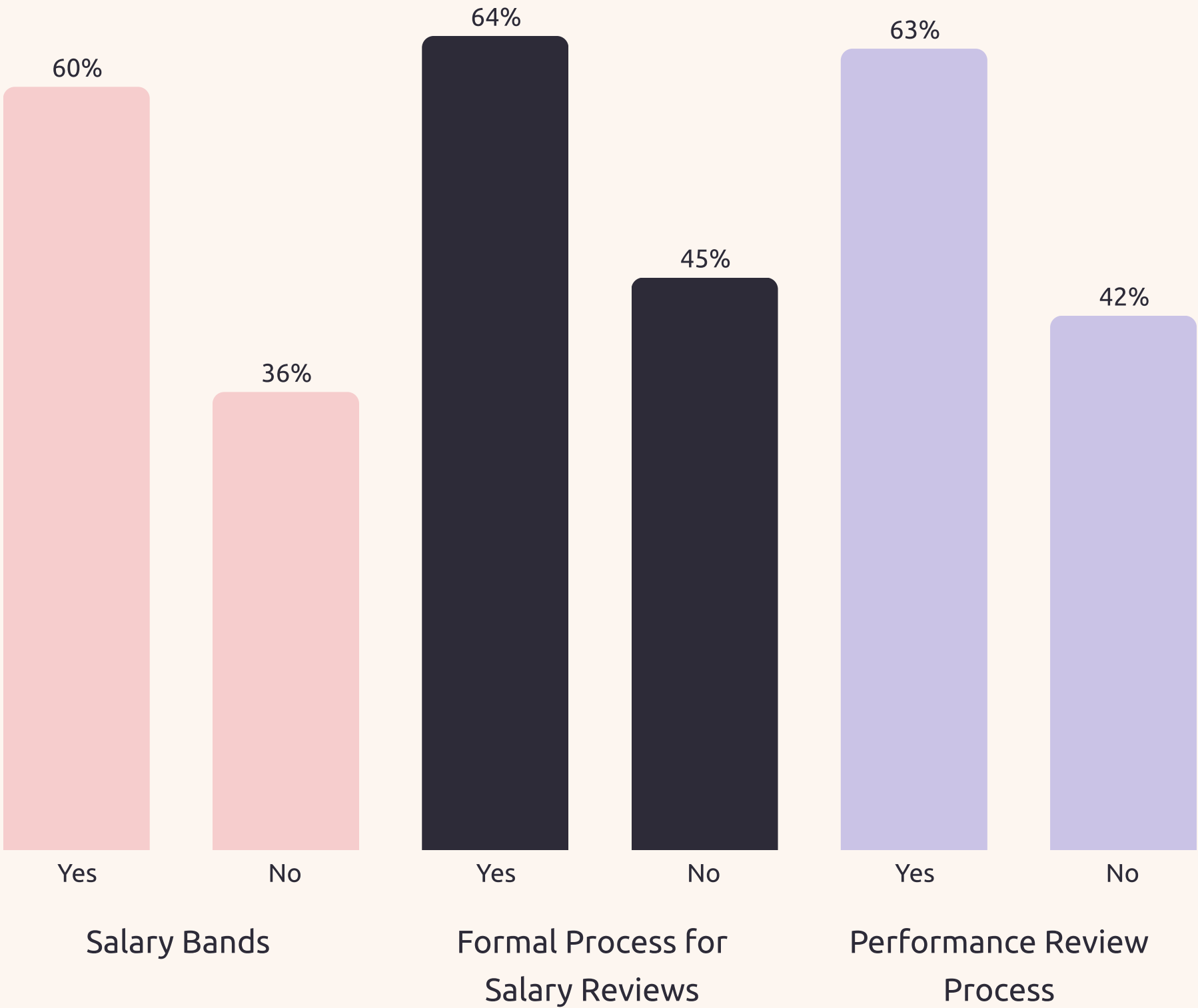
Having any sort of formal HR practice was associated with a 20 percentage point higher likelihood of receiving a pay raise.

Pay Raises Matter

In a series of regression analyses, receiving a pay raises in the last year predicted job satisfaction and retention beyond every other income question on our survey, controlling for numerous other demographic variables.

A Role For Funders

Those who perceived their organization as in the best financial shape were 21% percentage points more likely to receive a raise than those in the worst.



Note: We conducted a variety of regression analyses to confirm that this relationship persisted even after controlling for several relevant job characteristics. While the detailed results are beyond the scope of this report, the findings remained directionally consistent. Respondents who answered "Don't know" for formal processes were excluded; however, their inclusion would not have substantially changed the results.

A (Tepid?) Consensus On DEI



A (Tepid?) Consensus On DEI



Key Findings

- **Broad but moderate support:** 68% of non-profit workers support DEI policies, but only 33% strongly support them.
- **Consensus across the board:** All demographic groups show majority support for DEI, and very few strongly in any demographic oppose these efforts.
- **Associated with higher perceptions of fairness among equity seeking groups:** Racialized and Indigenous workers are three times more likely to say everyone is treated fairly when DEI policies are in place than at organizations without, though interpret with caution.
- **Strongest support comes from stability:** Workers earning over \$100K and those very satisfied with their jobs are most likely to strongly support DEI practices, with the inverse true of those less satisfied and with less income.

Key Insight

There is broad consensus on the value of DEI in the non-profit sector. These policies are not just symbolic—they're associated with tangible benefits, including significantly higher perceptions of fairness among racialized and Indigenous workers when such policies are in place, though we cannot attribute causation.

But there's room for growth. The least enthusiastic support comes from those who are struggling most – workers with lower incomes and poor job satisfaction – while the strongest support comes from those in more secure positions. This presents an opportunity:

DEI efforts can grow deeper roots by demonstrating their ability to make an impact on the workers who are struggling.

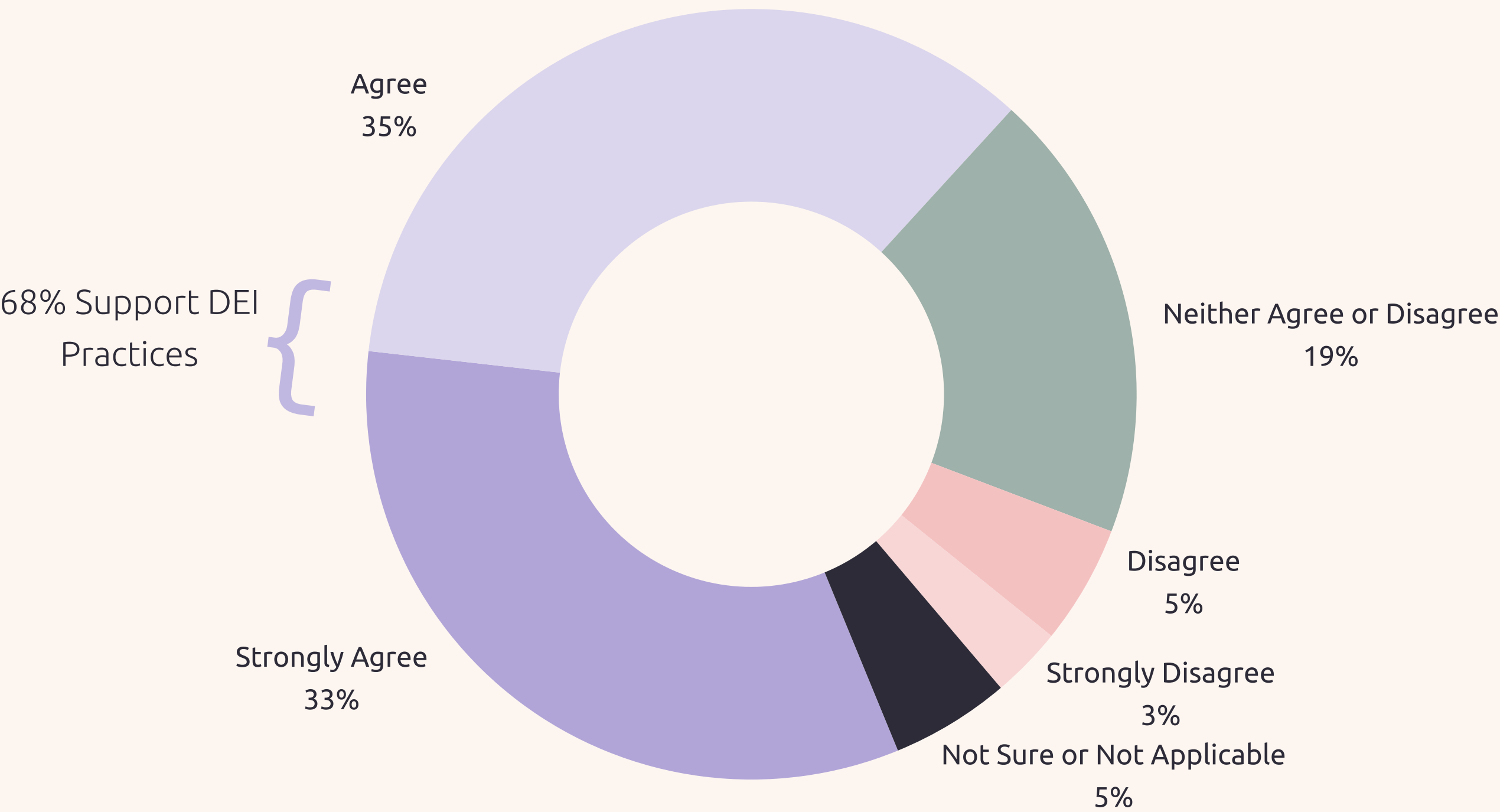
Two Thirds Of Non-Profit Workers Support Implementing DEI Practices At Their Workplace, But Support Is Slightly Tepid With Only A Third Strongly In Favour

Question: I support implementing practices around diversity, equity, and inclusion in my workplace

Every single demographic group had at least 55% support for implementing DEI practices.

Only 8% disagreed with DEI practices (5% disagreed, 3% strongly disagreed).

Among the more progressive leaning readers of Future of Good, 93% supported DEI practices.¹



Note: 1. We also conducted a separate survey with Future of Good readers. After analysis, we determined that the results could not be meaningfully combined with the main dataset. While not included in this report's analysis, we intend to explore them further in future work.

All Demographic Groups Have Majority Support For DEI Policies.

Highest Support for DEI

- NDP voters (78%)
- Service workers (78%)
- Very satisfied with their job (75%)
- Over 100k in employment income (74%)
- Born outside of Canada (73%)
- Women (72%)

Lower Support for DEI

- Less than 100k employment income (66%)
- Conservative Party voters (62%)
- People thinking of leaving their jobs (61%)
- Men (59%)
- Staff at small organizations (58%)
- Quebec residents (56%)
- Unsatisfied with their job (56%)

Racialized and Indigenous workers have almost same support for DEI practices (69%) as white workers (67%).

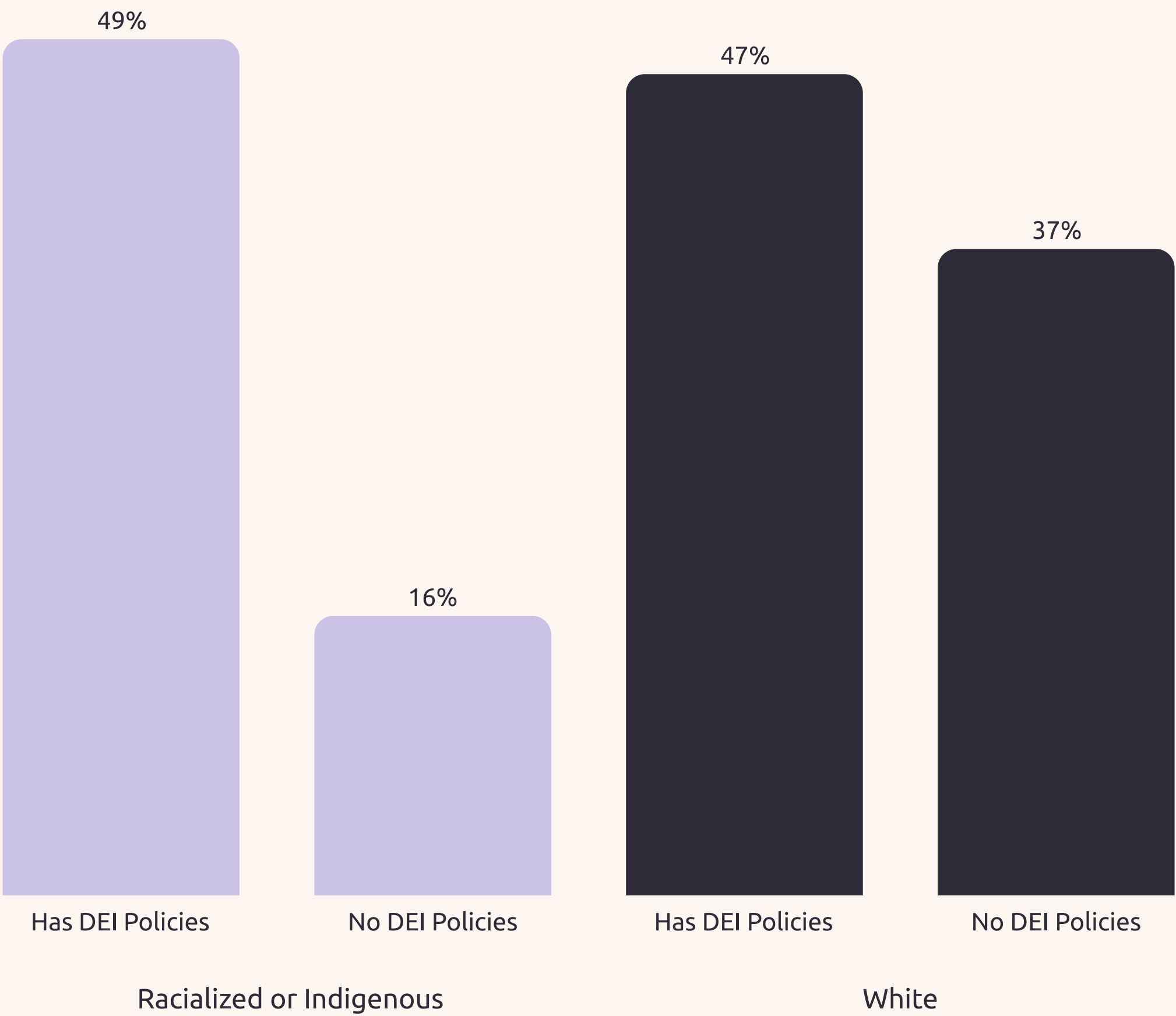


DEI Policies May Support Fairness—Especially For Racialized And Indigenous Workers

Percent that strongly agree people from all backgrounds are treated fairly, by racialized status and presence of DEI policies

68% say their organization has DEI policies (and 18% aren't sure).

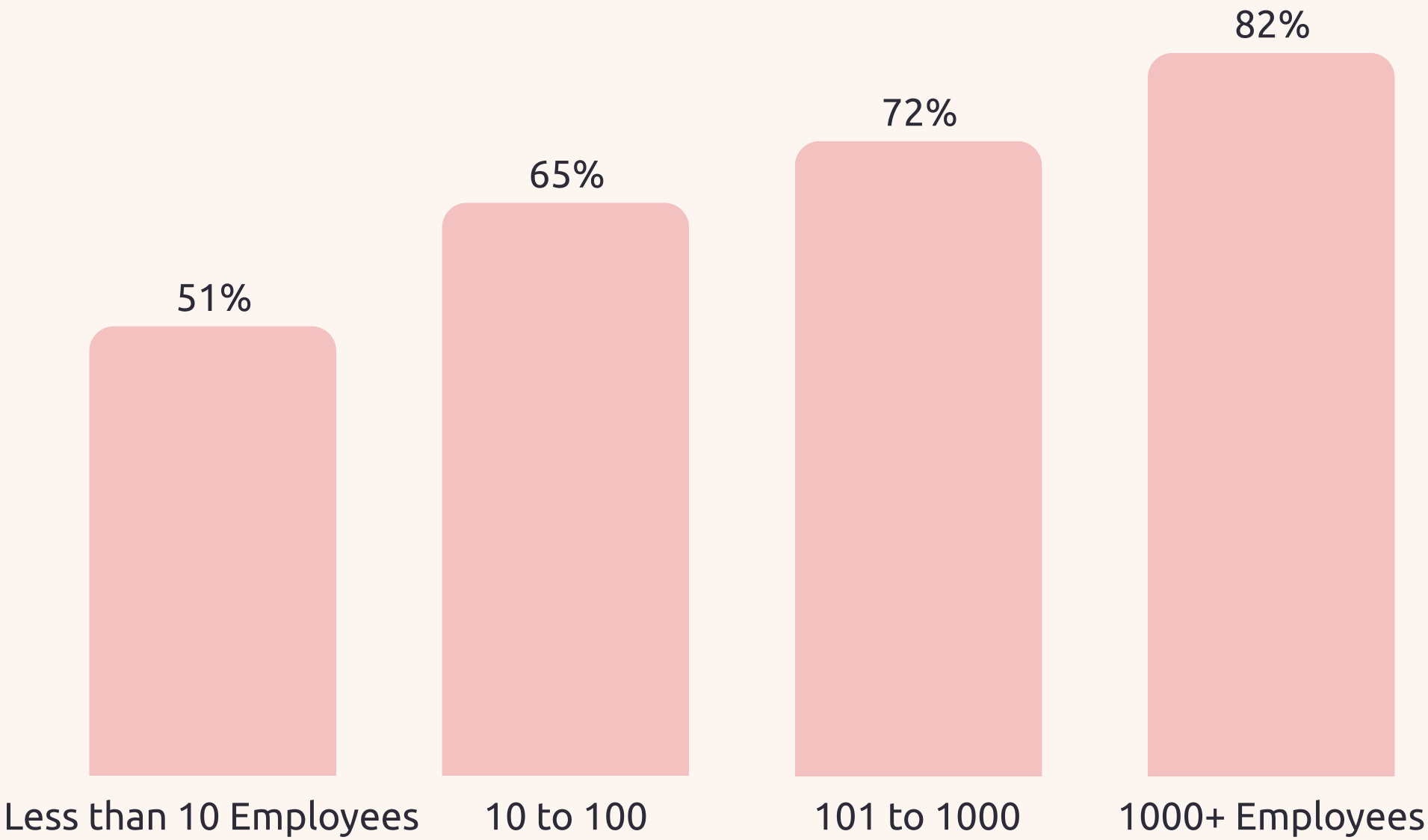
Racialized and Indigenous workers were three times more likely to say everyone is always treated fairly when the organization has DEI policies.



Note: This chart shows correlations, not causation. There is overlap in who works at small vs. large organizations, and sample sizes are modest in some groups. That said, the differences observed are both statistically significant and striking.

Small Organizations Often Lack DEI Policies, But Larger Organizations Tend To Have Them

Has diversity, equity and inclusion policies by employee estimated organization size

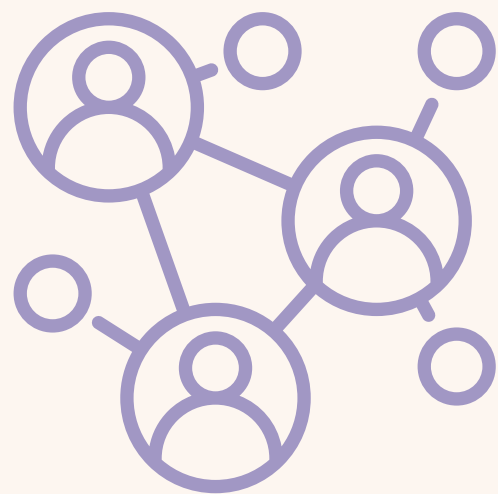


This appears to be part of a broader problem that small non-profits lack HR policies in general.

DEI policies were among the most common policies for small non-profits to have, but the average small non-profit only had implemented two of the five policies.

What counts as a formal HR practice?

- Salary bands or formal pay rules
- Formal Salary review process
- Formal Performance review process
- Onboarding process
- Equity & inclusion policies



Note: 18% were not sure, though it was roughly evenly distributed across organization sizes.

Building Broader Enthusiasm For DEI Means Making Its Relevance Clear To Those Struggling In The Workplace

Percent that strongly support DEI practices

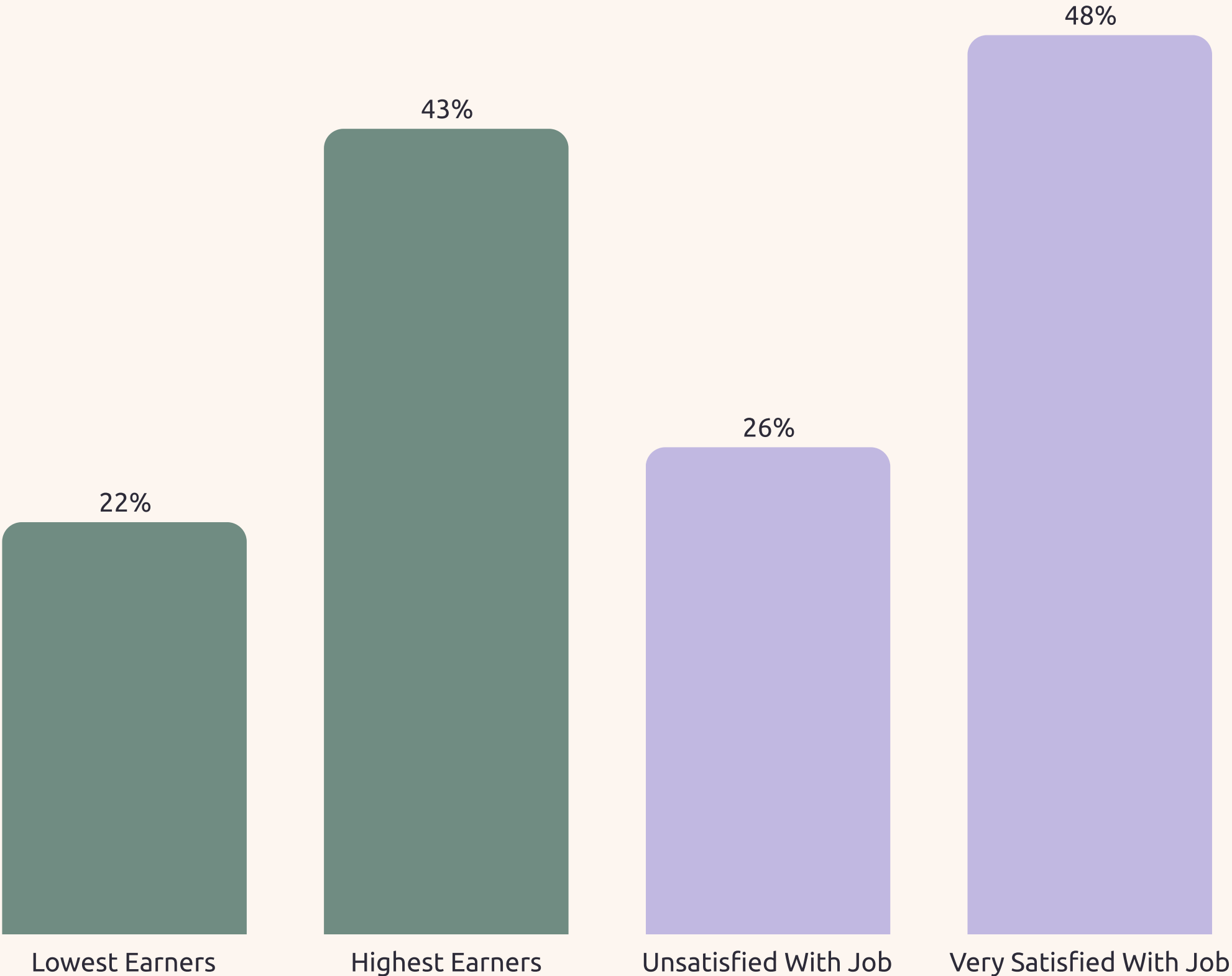
There is less enthusiastic support for DEI policies among workers who are struggling.

Key Insights

- Low-income, dissatisfied, and disengaged workers show the weakest support for DEI initiatives, while the highest earners show the strongest support.
- This may signal that current DEI efforts are perceived as aligned with the priorities of more affluent or stable employees.

Key Opportunity

DEI strategies must connect more directly to the lived experiences of struggling workers to build broader support.



Note: “Lowest income” refers to those earning under \$25K—though this is broadly consistent with most lower-income workers in the sample. Some overlap with older workers may partially explain these results. “Highest earners” are those making \$150K or more. “Unsatisfied with job” includes both somewhat and very dissatisfied respondents. These were calculated with “Don’t know” and “Not applicable” excluded.

Different Roles, Different Realities: Pressure Points And Opportunities In The Sector



A Deeper Dive On Select Key Outcomes

Job Dissatisfaction Linked to Entry-Level, Low-Income Roles:

- Entry-level staff are twice as likely to be dissatisfied (28%) as those in management (14%).
- Dissatisfaction rises steadily as income falls, peaking at 24% among workers earning under \$35K.
- Sectors like arts, culture, and social services show the highest dissatisfaction rates (33% and 27%, respectively).

Burnout and Job Satisfaction Are Deeply Connected:

- Burnout affects 70% of very unsatisfied workers, compared to just 20% of those who are very satisfied.
- Burnout is also elevated among those experiencing food insecurity (51%) and those considering quitting (46%).

Burnout Is Not Evenly Distributed:

- Women (37%) and younger workers (39% of those aged 18–29) are especially affected.
- Service roles show the highest burnout (42%); executive roles show the lowest (33%).
- Workers aged 65+ report the lowest burnout (14%).

Mental Health Challenges Follow Similar Lines:

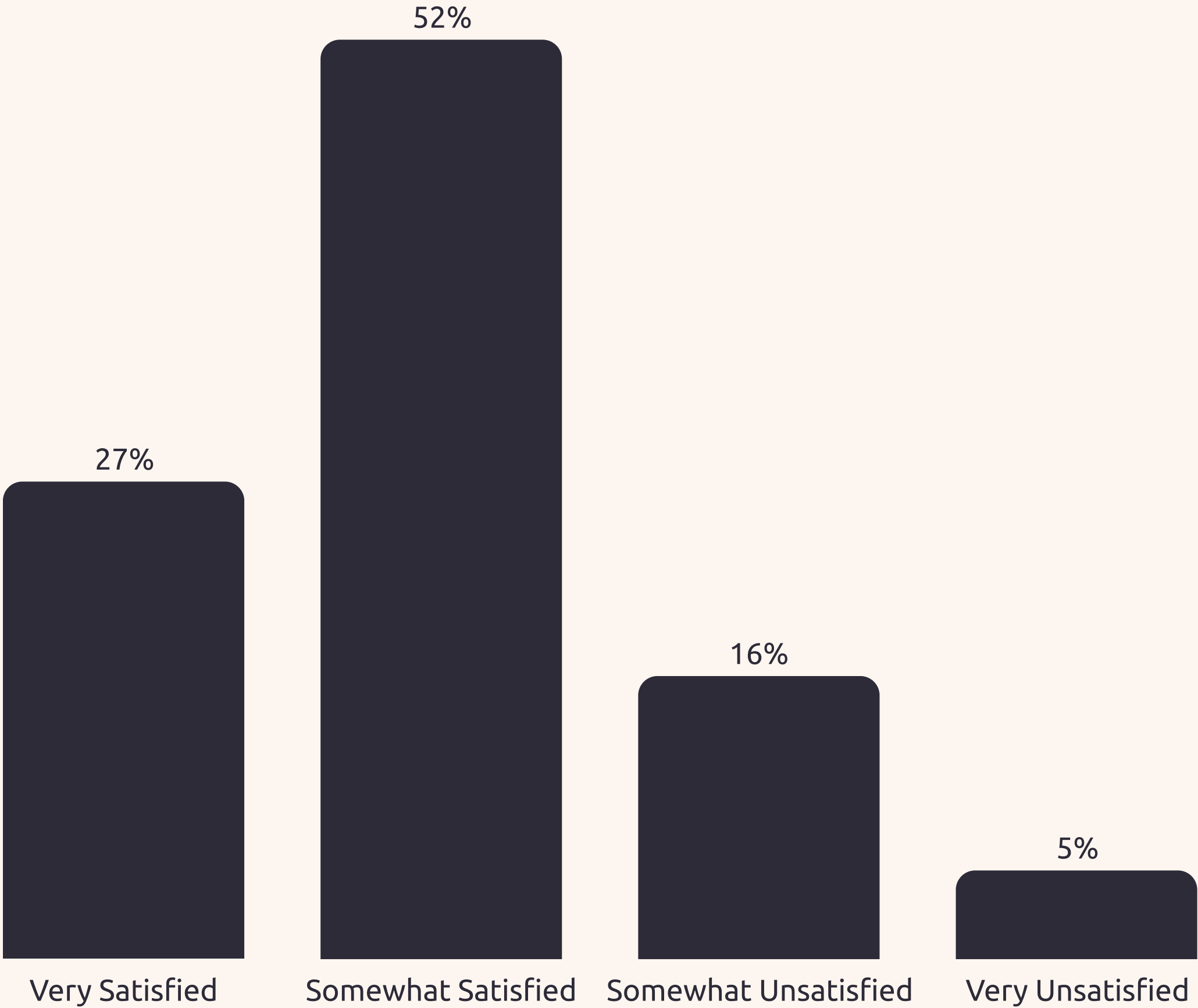
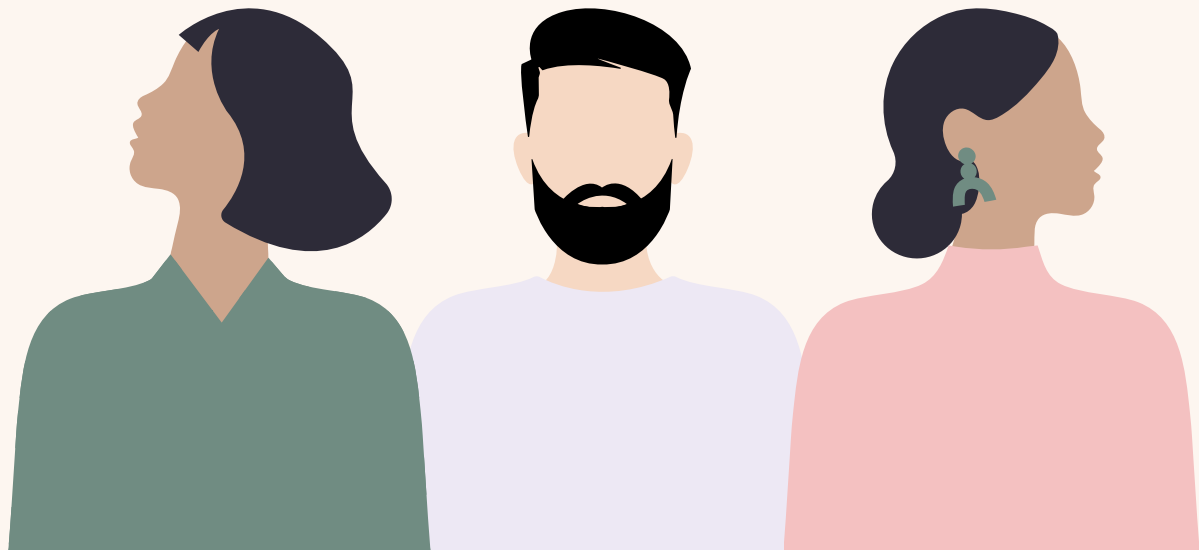
- 31% of 18–29 year olds report fair or poor mental health, compared to just 11% of those 65+.
- Rates of fair/poor mental health are worse for women (30%) than men (14%), and also lower for those earning under \$35K (29%).

Despite the challenges, non-profit workers report similar levels of life satisfaction to other Canadians, with 43% in both groups rating their life satisfaction 8 out of 10 or higher.

Only A Quarter Of Non-Profit Workers Are Very Satisfied

Satisfaction with job

With only 27% of nonprofit workers reporting they are “very satisfied,” the sector risks losing talent not to lack of commitment, but to unmet workplace needs.



Dissatisfaction Is Associated With A Combination Of Factors: Low Income, Entry-Level Status, And Work In Arts, Culture, Recreation, Or Social Services.

Dissatisfied with job

Seniority

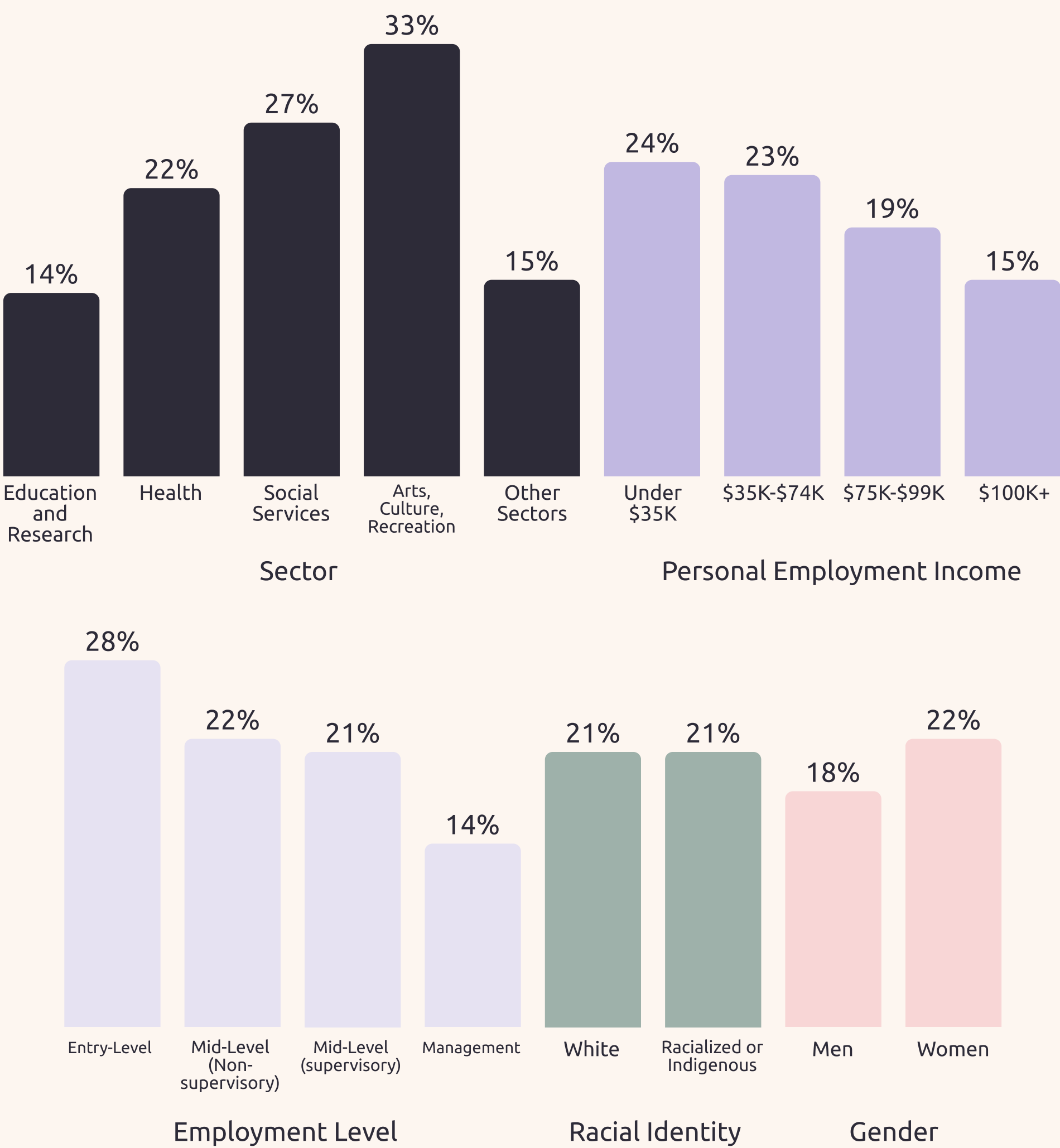
Entry-level employees are twice as likely to report job dissatisfaction as those in management roles, 28% and 14% respectively.

Dissatisfaction Rises As Income Falls

24% of workers earning under \$35K report dissatisfaction, compared to just 15% among those earning over \$100K.

Sectoral Differences Are Stark

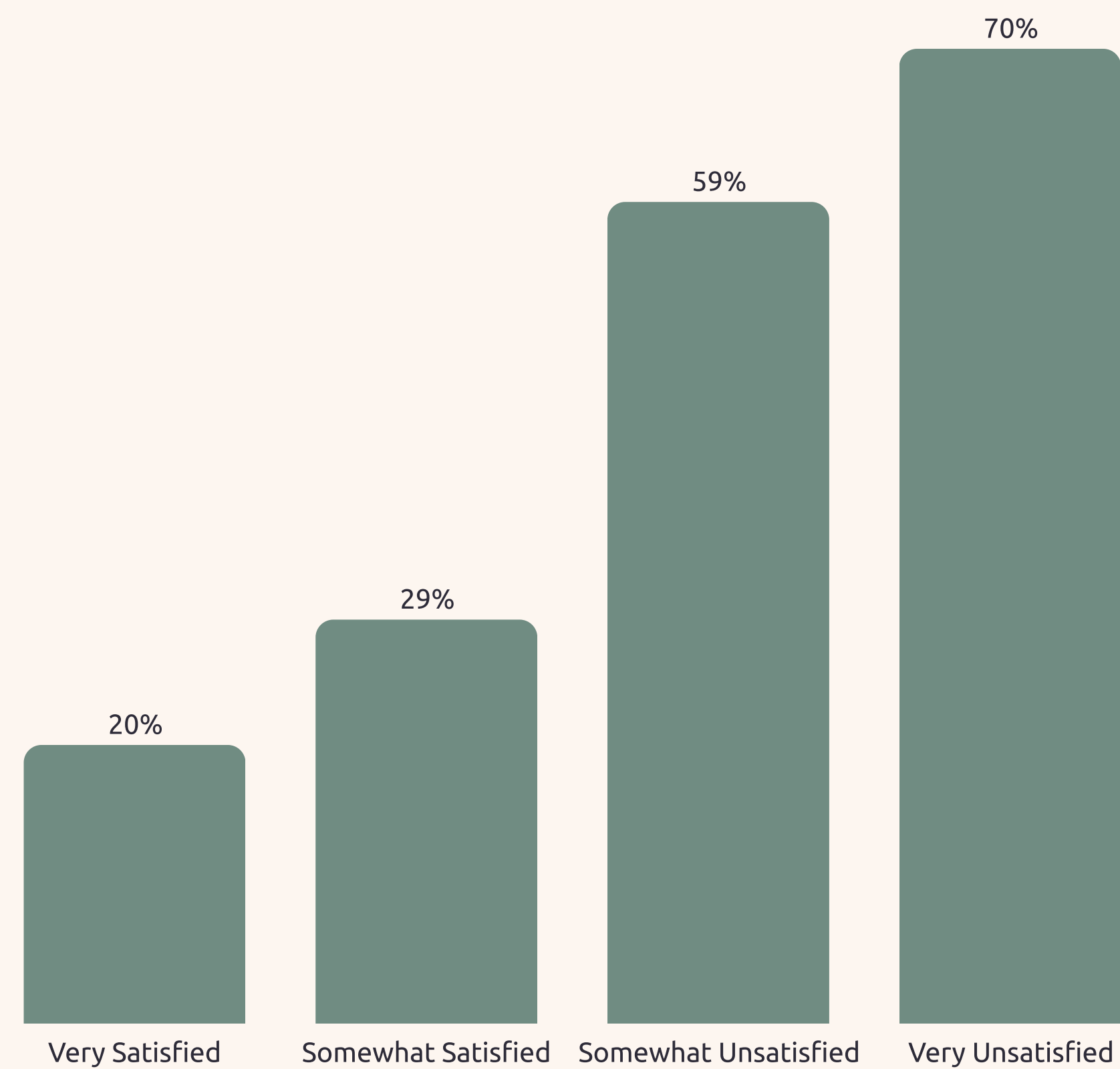
Dissatisfaction reaches 33% in arts, culture, and sports, and 27% in social services, versus just 14% in education and research.



Note: This analysis was done with missing values included so some numbers could be off by 1% versus other sections.

Poor Job Satisfaction Is Also Associated With Burnout, Which Has Significant Issues For Quality Of Work And Safety

Always or often burned out and exhausted



Lower Job Satisfaction Is Associated With Much Higher Burnout

This is bad for wellbeing – and job performance.

A review of 45 studies found that burnout is consistently associated with diminished job performance. This includes both in-role tasks and extra-role behaviours, such as helping colleagues or going beyond formal job duties. There is particular risk for tasks involving sustained attention and emotional labour.¹

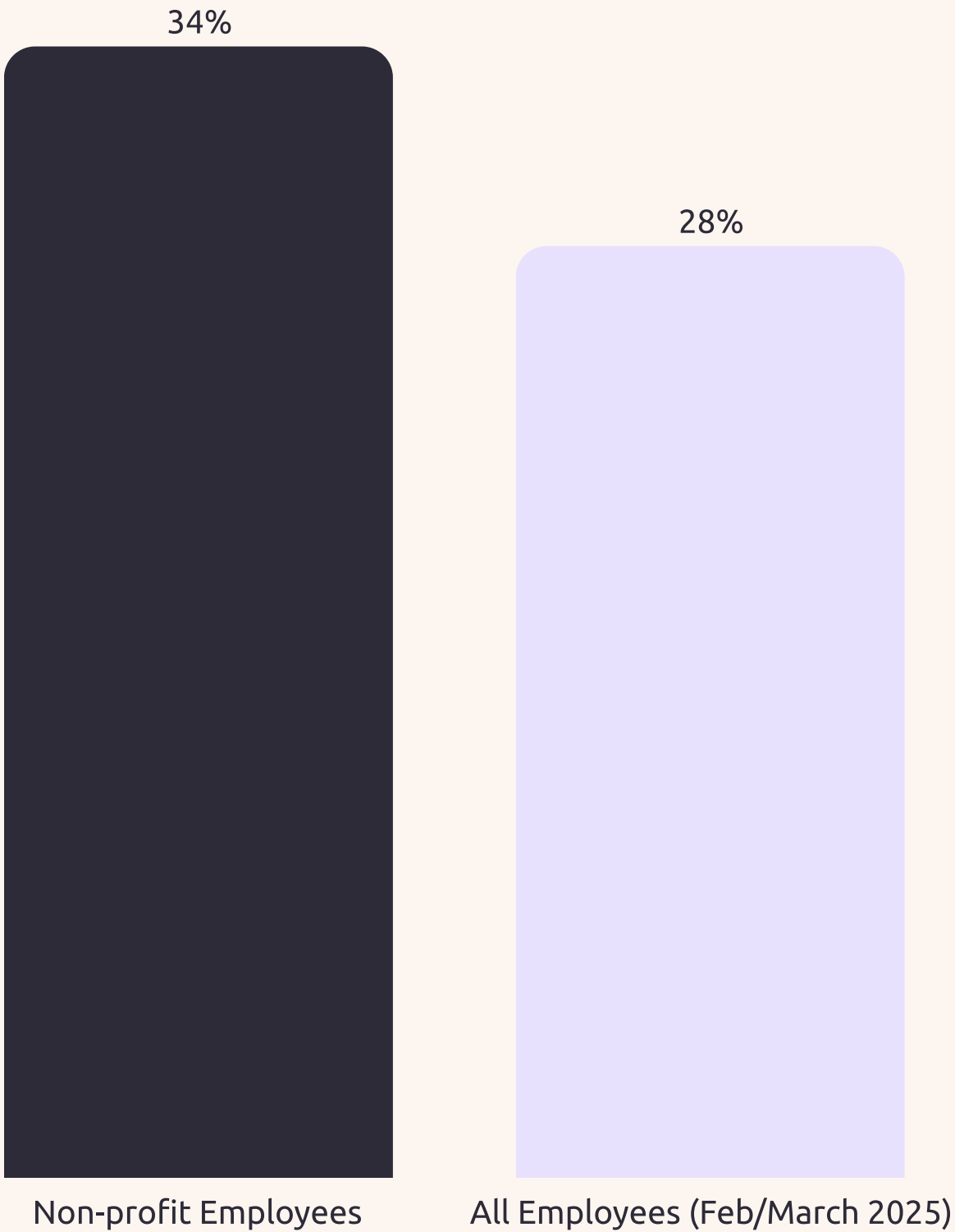
Source: 1 Corbeanu, A., Iliescu, D., Ion, A., & Spînu, R. (2023). The link between burnout and job performance: a meta-analysis. European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology, 32(4), 599–616. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1359432X.2023.2209320>

A Third Of Non-Profit Employees Feel Burned Out And Exhausted Most Of The Time – Higher Than The General Workforce.

Percentage reporting burnout and exhaustion (often/always)

70% Feel burned out and exhausted at least some of the time (including the 34% feeling burned out always/often)

Complementary results from abroad: A 2024 US LinkedIn study found that three of the five most burned-out job functions were in healthcare, community and social services, and education.



Source: 2025 Changemaker Wellbeing Index (CWI) and 2025 Mental Health Research Canada (MHRC) Poll 23. **Interpretation note:** Includes those who are always/often burned out for CWI and always/most of the time for MHRC. Burnout was calculated for employed Canadians MHRC’s Poll 23 (February 2025). All analysis was conducted by the author and does not necessarily reflect the view of MHRC. The question text in both surveys was “I feel exhausted and burnt-out”, but in MHRC’s survey the response options were never, rarely, sometimes, most of the time, and always, while in the Changemaker Wellbeing Index, most of the time was replaced with often, which could contribute to the differences observed. LinkedIn Study: Cromidas, Rachel. (2024). Four in ten workers in the U.S. report feeling stuck and burned out on the job. LinkedIn News. https://www.linkedin.com/posts/linkedin-news_four-in-ten-workers-in-the-us-report-feeling-activity-7224769543951257600-tANu

Burnout Isn't Evenly Shared: Job Satisfaction, Insecurity, Age, And Gender Drive Exhaustion

Always/exhausted and burned out

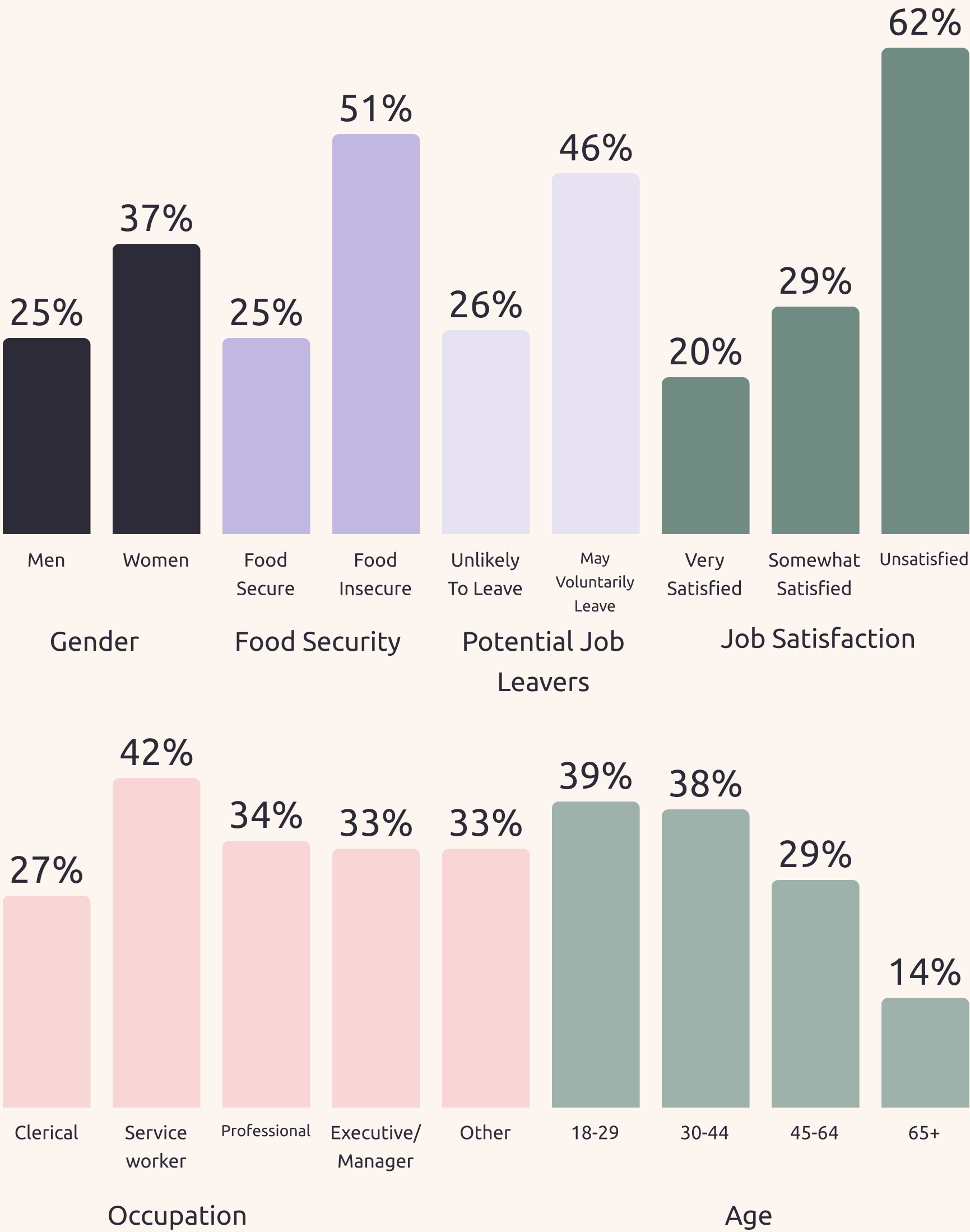
More than 60% of those dissatisfied with their jobs report always or often feeling burned out, triple the rate of very satisfied workers (20%).

Women, food-insecure workers, and those considering quitting are all substantially more likely to report frequent burnout.

Burnout is highest among service roles (42%) and lowest in executive/manager roles (33%) and those age 65+ (14%).

Burnout is strongly tied to stress signals like food insecurity (51%) and job exit intentions (46%), reinforcing its role as a red flag for instability.

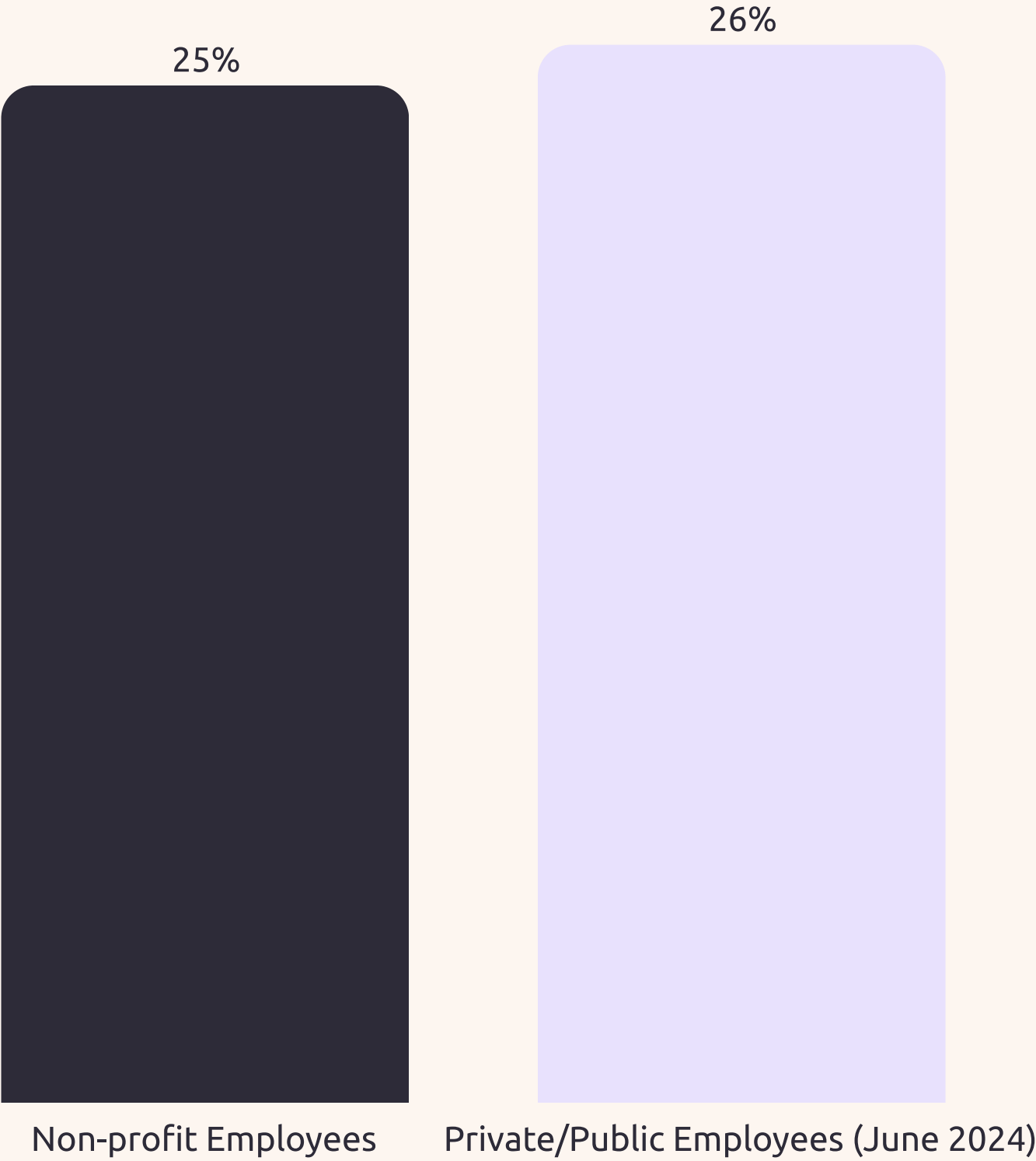
Burnout is high across sectors, as we discuss in our opening section on wellbeing.



A Quarter (25%) Of Non-Profit Employees Reported Fair Or Poor Mental Health; The Same As The Broader Workforce.

With fair/poor mental health

- 17% of non-profit employees described their mental health as fair.
- 8% describe their mental health as poor, which is statistically similar to the broader workforce.
- 17% of non-profit workers rated their mental health as excellent.
- 26% reported their mental health as being very good.
- 33% described their mental health as good, which is also consistent with broader workforce trends.



Sources: Changemaker Wellbeing Index (left); Survey on Employment and Skills – Wave 7, conducted by the Environics Institute in partnership with the Diversity Institute and the Future Skills Centre (right).

Note: Wave 7 of the Survey on Employment and Skills was conducted primarily in May and June 2024, and includes only private and public sector employees (excluding non-profit workers). Data from both sources were analyzed by the author.

Mental Health Challenges Are Most Acute Among Low-Income, Young, And Dissatisfied Employees

Mental health fair/poor

Mental Health Outcomes Strongly Correlate With Income

30% of workers earning under \$35K report fair/poor mental health, compared to just 18% of those earning over \$100K.

Younger Workers Are Significantly More At Risk

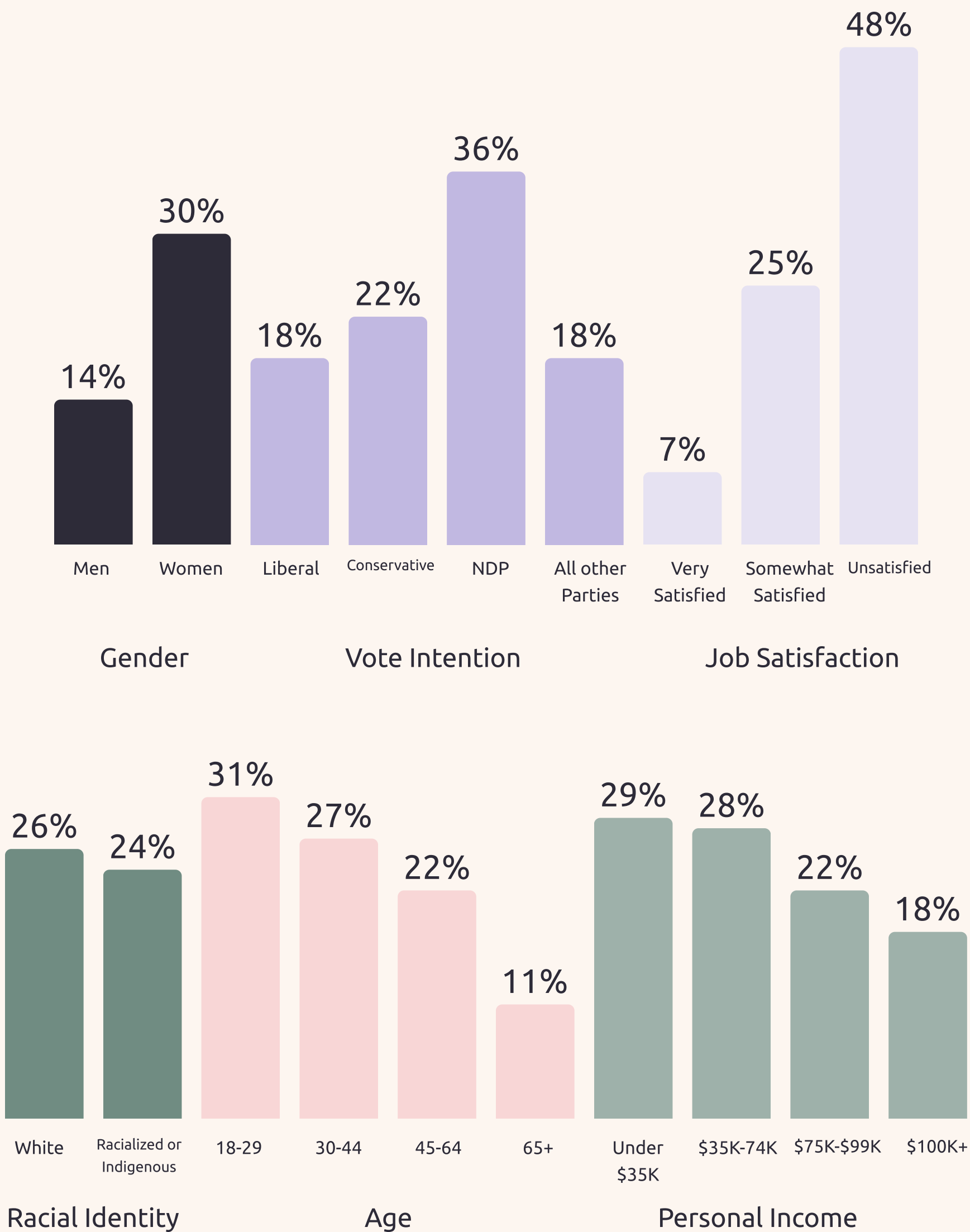
31% of those aged 18–29 report fair/poor mental health, more than triple the rate for older adults 65+ (10%).

Gender Identity Matters

Women are twice as likely to report fair/poor mental health than men (30% vs. 15%).

Political Orientation

NDP supporters have worse mental health than supporters of other parties, potentially intertwined with gender, age, income, and political anxiety.

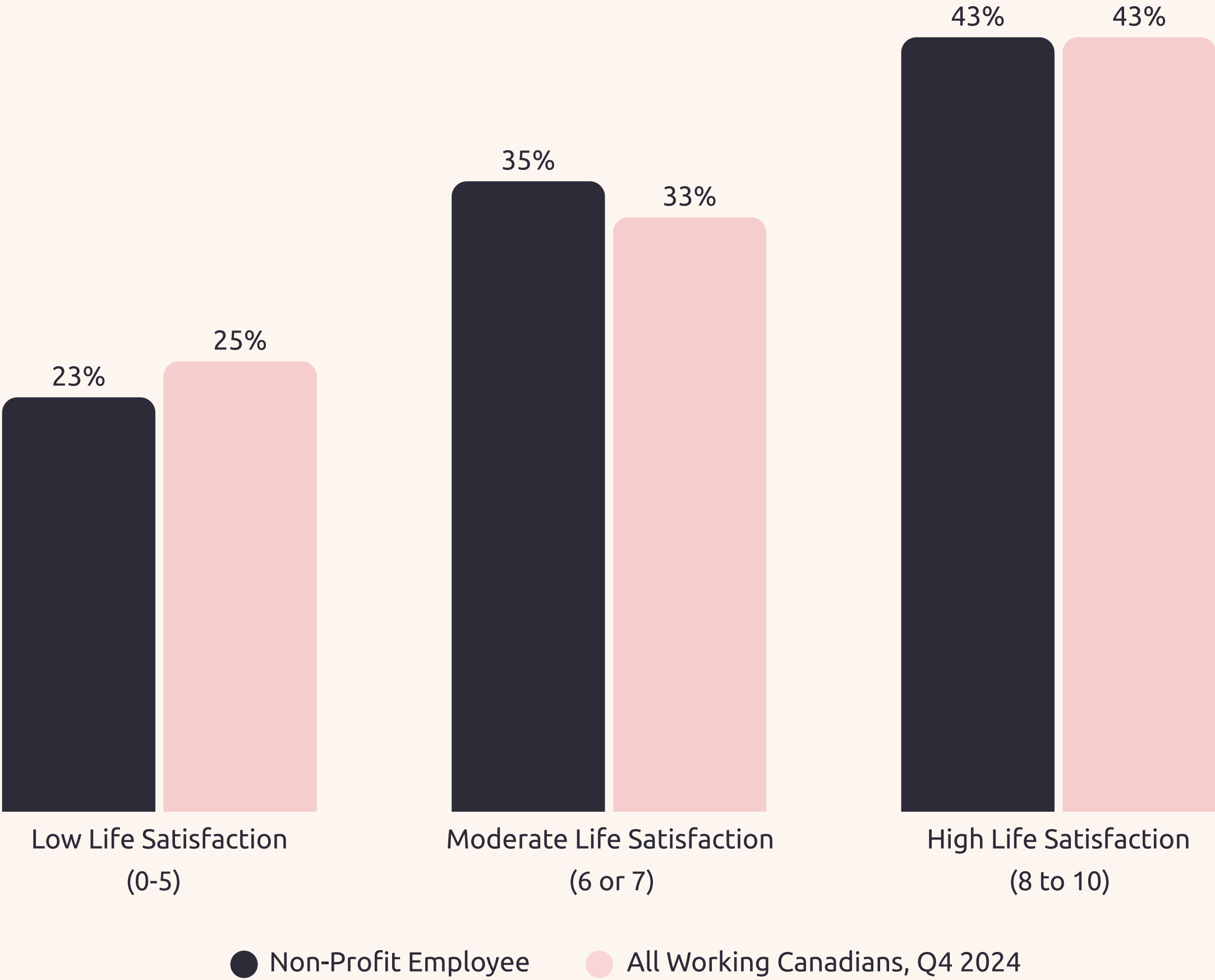


Note: This analysis was done with missing values included so some numbers could be off by 1% versus other sections.

Against The Odds? Non-Profit Workers And The General Workforce Report Equal Life Satisfaction

Life satisfaction

The non-profit sector is poorly paid, burned-out, and food insecure, but those factors don't translate to lower levels of life satisfaction when compared to other Canadians.



Source: Statistics Canada. Table 13-10-0844-01 Life satisfaction by gender and other selected sociodemographic characteristics. <https://doi.org/10.25318/1310084401-eng>

Note: Life satisfaction is measured on a scale from 0 to 10. Respondents were asked, “Using a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means ‘Very dissatisfied’ and 10 means ‘Very satisfied,’ how do you feel about your life as a whole right now?” Respondents who did not answer this question were excluded from the calculations in this table.

Appendix



Appendix: Sector Type – Governmental Vs Non-Governmental

Sector Group	Examples	% of Sample	Weighted N	Unweighted N
Community Non-Profits	Community orgs, multiservice agencies, child care, arts & culture orgs, faith-based orgs, foundations, housing & advocacy groups	61.9%	671	666
Governmental Non-Profits	Universities, public colleges, hospitals, school boards	38.1%	413	422
Total	-	100.0%	1084	1088

Interpretation Notes:

This variable was not used in weighting, as we aimed to preserve the robust response from community-based non-profits.

However, the proportion of non-governmental non-profit respondents is significantly higher than the sector-wide share estimated by Statistics Canada. Statistics Canada shows that about 67% of non-profit employees work in government non-profits while here they represent only 38% of the sample. This should be kept in mind when interpreting findings.

Our definition of community non-profits includes organizations Statistics Canada may classify as “business non-profits” (e.g., industry associations, chambers, unions, professional bodies).

Note: Our classification was somewhat hampered based on the fact people inconsistently labeled their organization in different areas in different questions. For example, employees who indicated they work for a hospital or university would say they worked for the government in another question.

Appendix: Sector Classification

Respondents were asked:
“Which of the following sectors best describes the type of organization you work for?” (QA3) These were grouped into five sector categories for analysis.

Grouped Sector Type	Included Subcategories	% of Sample	Weighted N	Unweighted N
Education and Research	Includes schools, colleges, universities, and research organizations (gov’t and non-gov’t)	24.0%	225	254
Health	Includes hospitals, health centres, and other health non-profits (gov’t and non-gov’t)	25.5%	239	227
Social Services	Includes child care, settlement services, multiservice agencies, and community services	19.8%	186	181
Arts, Culture, and Recreation	Includes performing arts, heritage, museums, sports, and social clubs	10.0%	93	95
Causes, Faith, and Systems Change	Universities, public colleges, hospitals, school boards	20.8%	195	190
Total	-	100.0%	938	947

Some responses marked “Other” were reclassified based on known institution type (e.g., colleges → Education).
Due to limited respondent knowledge of legal status, some organizations could not be definitively classified.

Appendix: Measure Definitions And Benchmarking Of Nonprofit Employees Methodology

Measure Definition			Comparison Details (all nonprofit employee data is from the Changemaker Wellbeing Index)		
Measure	Question text	Responses included	Source	Sample	Time period
Low life-satisfaction	Using a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means "Very dissatisfied" and 10 means "Very satisfied", how do you feel about your life as a whole right now?	Those who score 0 to 5	Statistics Canada	Employed Canadians	Q4 2024
Food insecurity	In the last 12 months, did you ever eat less than you felt you should because there wasn't enough money to buy food?	"Yes"	YMCA Canada and Food Banks Canada	Employed Canadians	Combining two 2024 surveys
Burnout/exhaustion	I feel exhausted and burnt-out	Those who answer "often" or "always" for CWI and "most of the time" and "always for MHRC	Mental Health Research Canada	Employed Canadians	February 2025: Poll 23
Fair/poor mental health	In general, would you say your mental health is excellent, very good, good, fair, or poor?	Fair or Poor	Survey on Employment and Skills	Employed Canadians in Public/Private Sector	May / June 2024: Wave 7
Low job satisfaction	Are you very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat unsatisfied, or very unsatisfied with your current job?	Somewhat unsatisfied and very unsatisfied	Survey on Employment and Skills	Employed Canadians in Public/Private Sector	May / June 2024: Wave 7

Acknowledgment: Sincere thanks to Mental Health Research Canada for generously providing data from Poll 23 and to the Environics Institute for sharing raw data from the Survey on Employment and Skills and two other polls conducted on behalf of YMCA Canada and Food Banks Canada. The Survey on Employment and Skills was conducted in partnership with the Future Skills Centre and the Diversity Institute. Their data contributions made this analysis possible. All analysis was conducted by the author. **Note:** Differences between non-profit workers and the general workforce shown in this report may reflect variations in survey timing, methodology, and sampling.

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