Association for Public Service Excellence

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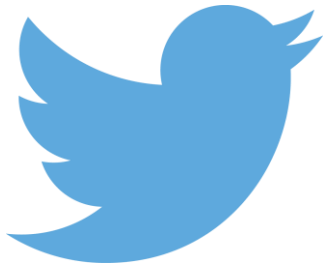

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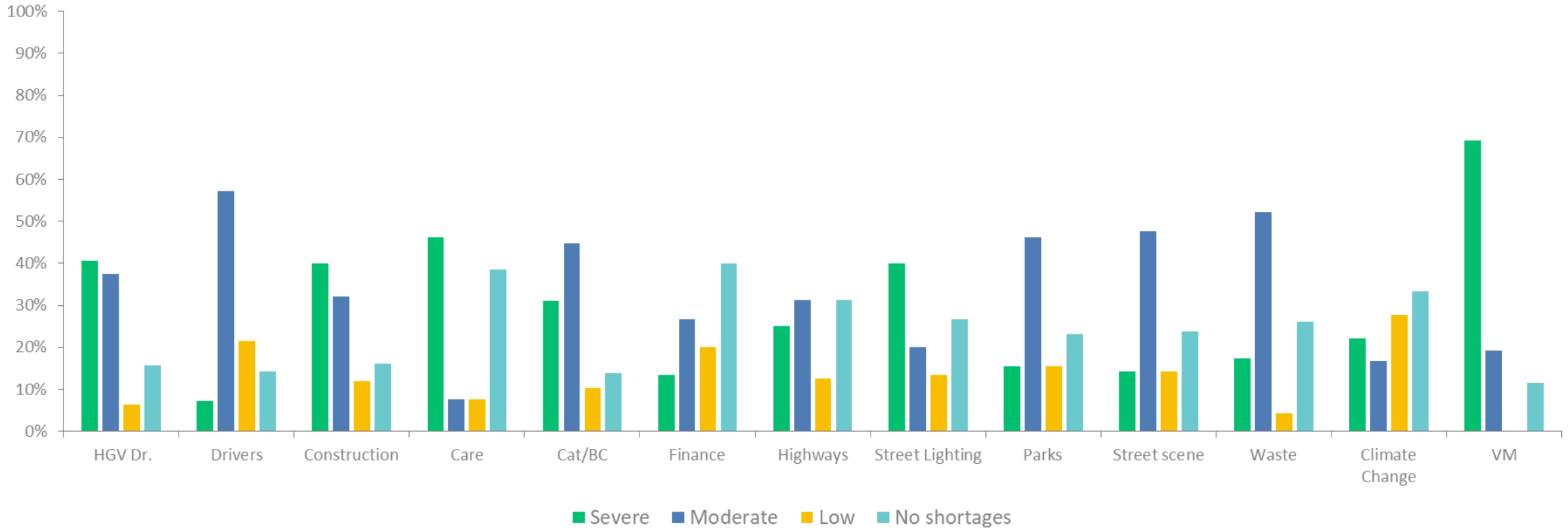
Empowering Local Government Frontline Services

A comprehensive overview of workforce matters

The small print

- Survey carried out over a shorter period – 4 weeks
- Samples across all services
- Relative samples from APSE's six administrative / regional areas (Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the England areas of Northern, Central and Southern)
- Comparators drawn where questions unchanged from previous surveys

Q1: Do you suffer from recruitment difficulties in any of the following areas of work?



Specific areas of concern 20+ comments

Planning

Leisure instructors / lifeguards

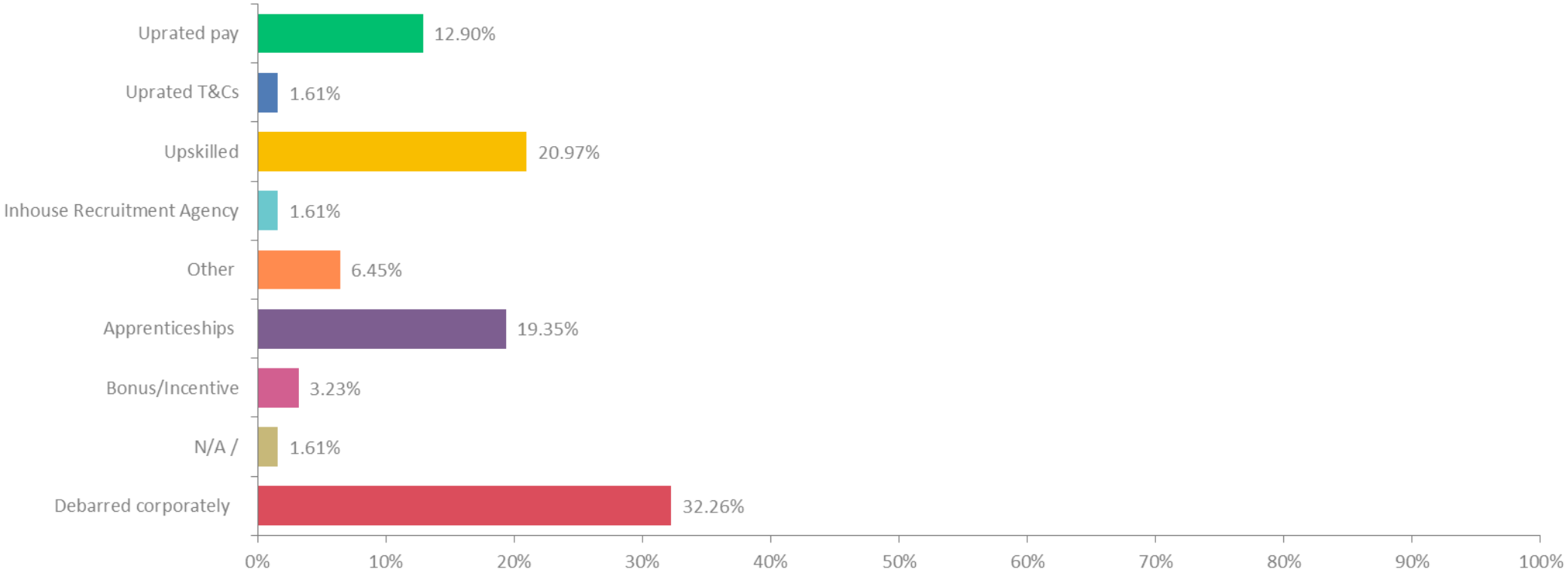
School cooks

Drivers – across all services

Environmental health and trading standards

Cost of training new staff

Q2: Have you introduced any schemes to improve recruitment?



Comments on improving recruitment

Linked to Rugby Club for fitness staff

Apprentice programme

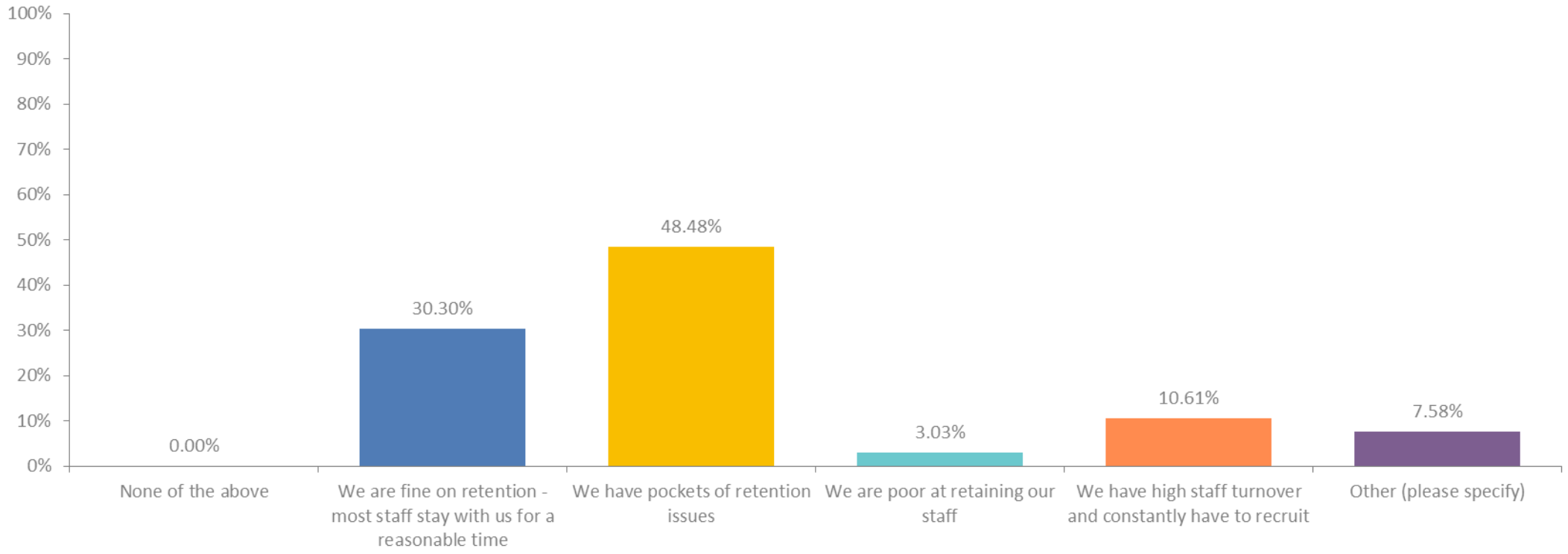
Amending requirements to replace with training / aptitude

Converting loaders to drivers with training schemes

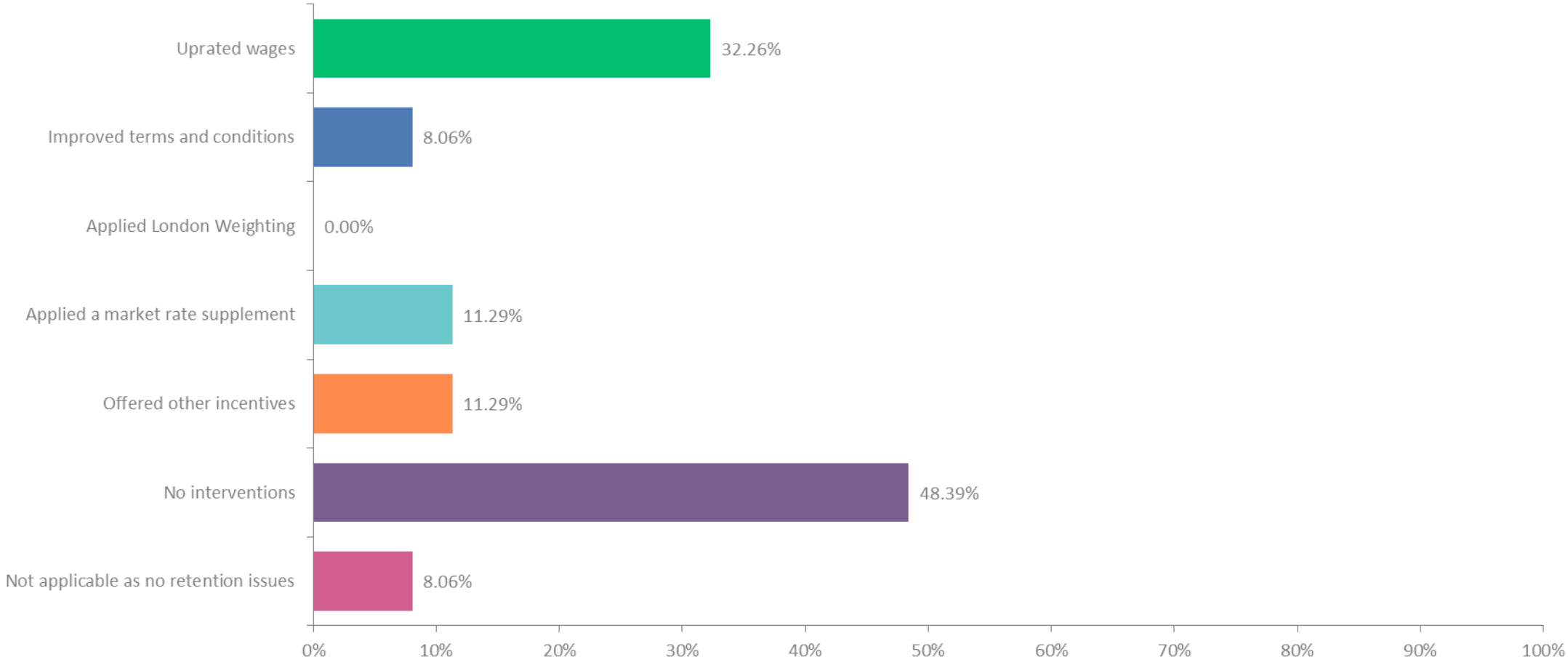
Agency / partnerships

Job evaluation – exploring if rates are still appropriate

Q3: Thinking about retention of staff how would you best describe your experiences?



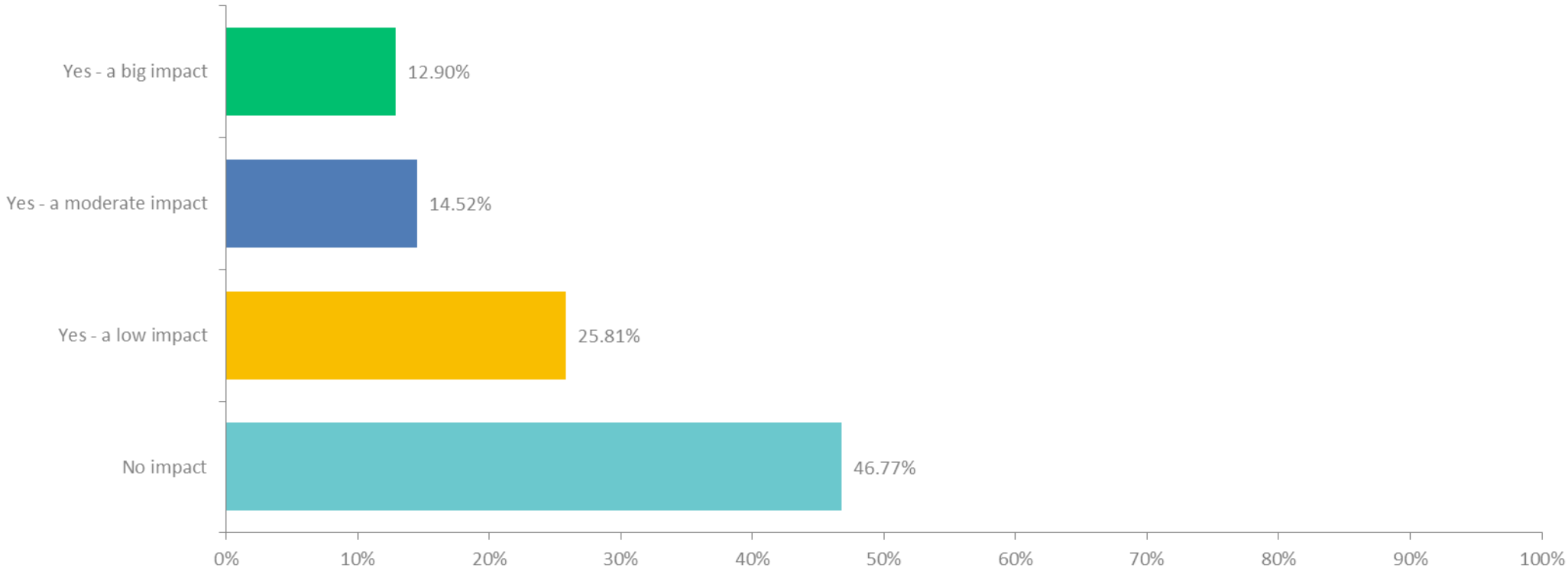
Q4: Have you made any interventions to support staff retention?



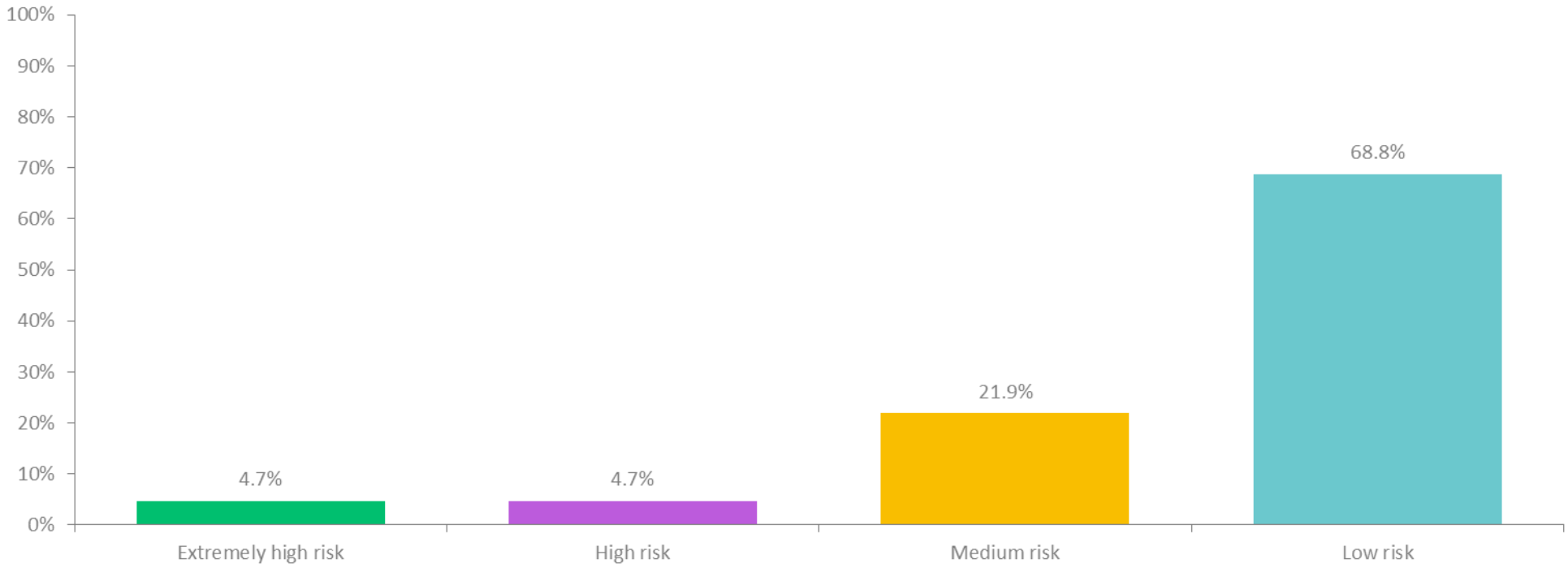
Comments on interventions to support staff retention?

- ❑ Cost of living payments
- ❑ Staff wellbeing
- ❑ Promoting the wider benefits – pay, pensions, ill-health protections
- ❑ Call for internal promotions rather than external recruitment to motivate staff with opportunities

Q5: Has Brexit impacted on recruitment and retention issues?



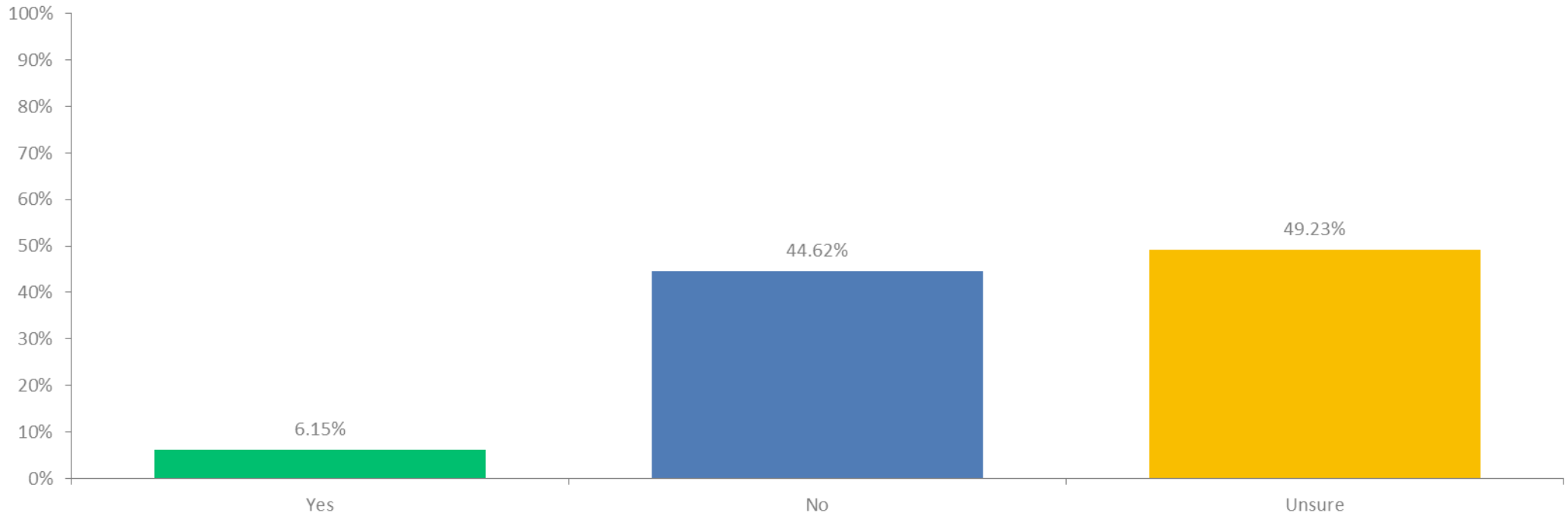
Q6: Equal Pay is making a return to the headlines once again. What do you consider your equal pay risk to be?



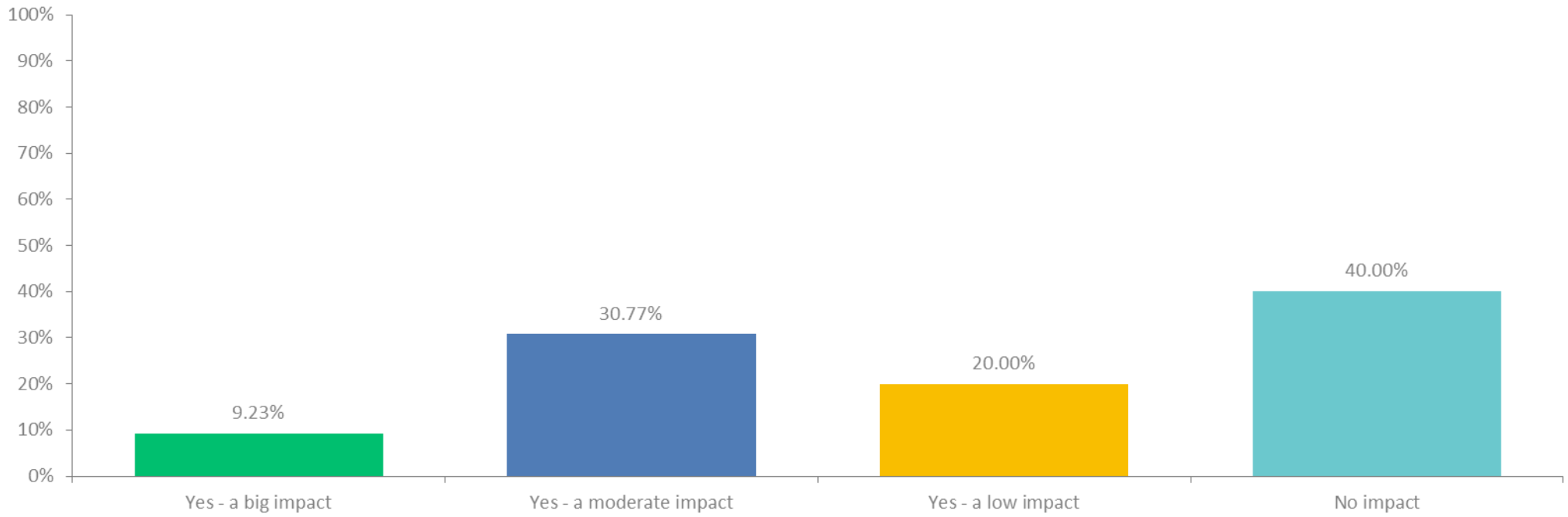
Equal Pay comments…..

- Overarching perception that ‘corporate’ level is masking service level issues
- Task and finish is creeping up the agenda as a potential risk
- Growth in the NMW and Living Wage creating tensions
- More professional roles filled by women means greater parity in those areas
- Perceptions that some operational level staff are underpaid compared to market rates external to the council.

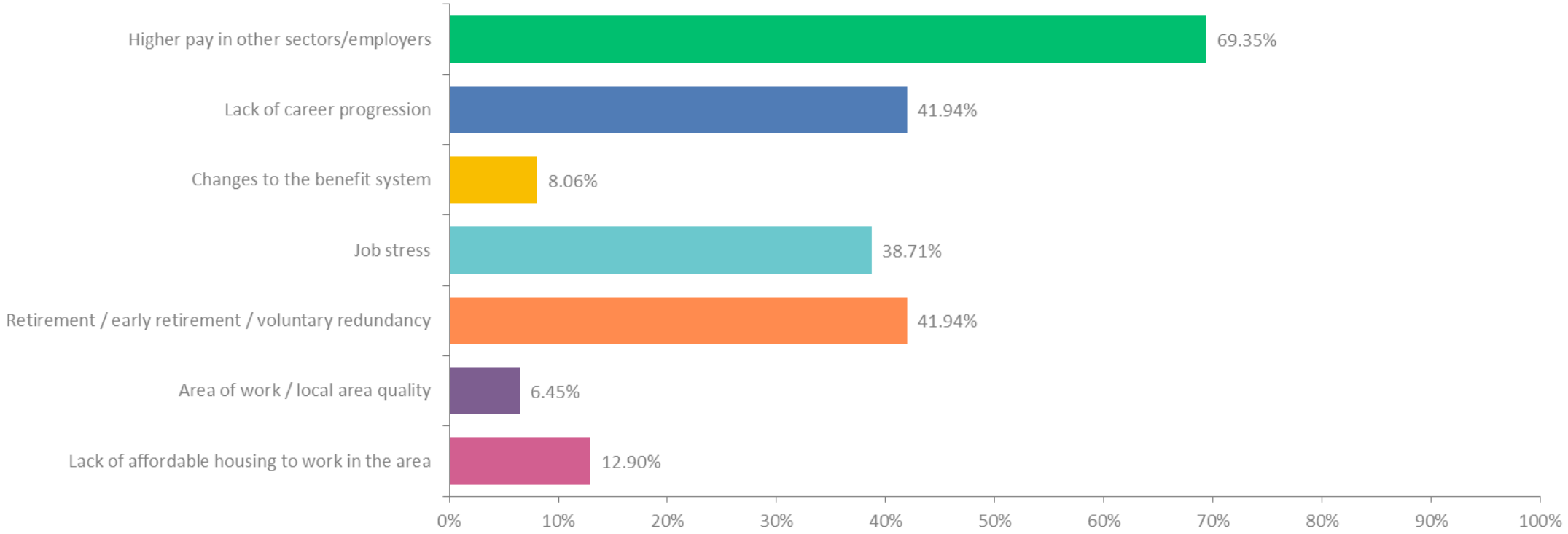
Q7: Do you currently have any live equal pay claims against your authority / service?



Q8: Has the COVID pandemic had an impact on staff recruitment and or retention? For example, have more staff opted for early retirement?



Q9: What do you believe to be the main reason for people leaving your council / service? *Note this year we have introduced a new option that relates to changes in in-work benefits and restrictions on working hours for example Universal Credit payments.*

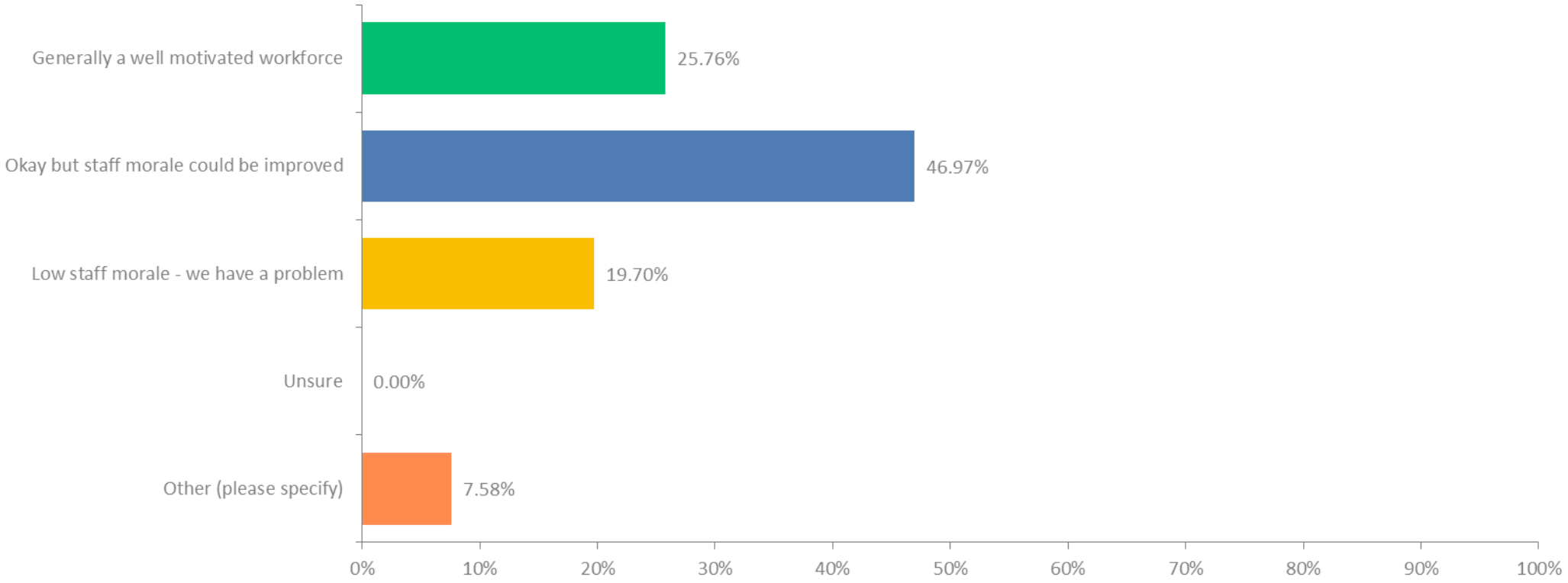


Comments on the main reasons for people leaving your council / service?

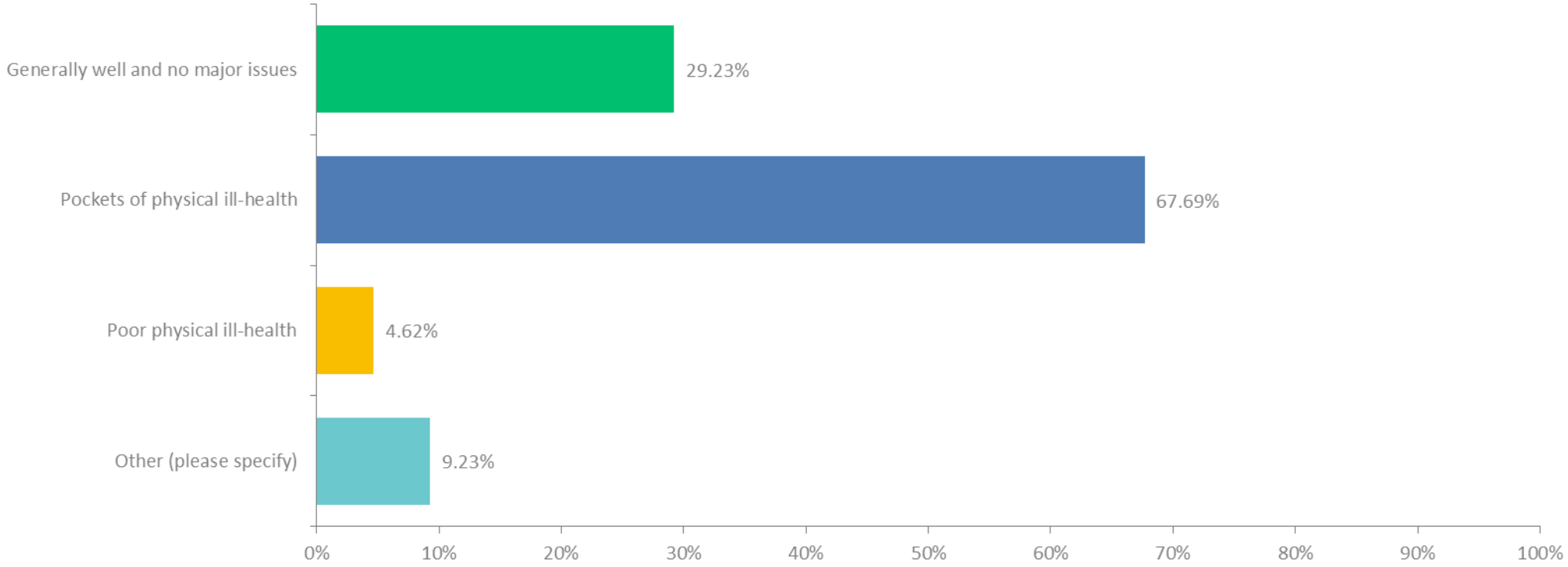
"Pay is main barrier to recruitment and potentially to retention (dependant on whether main earner or not). Parity across local / region / authorities would improve things but only if comparable to private sector. Package, even pension benefits are not perceived to be particularly advantageous."

"We have lost a number of people to Env Health consultancy work and to national regulatory bodies, from both EH and TS. Those who have joined [redacted] indicate they are enjoying the experience away from the pressures of local government (financial, political and public expectation,) but a few have returned, mainly in agency roles where they can be well paid but without the pressures associated."

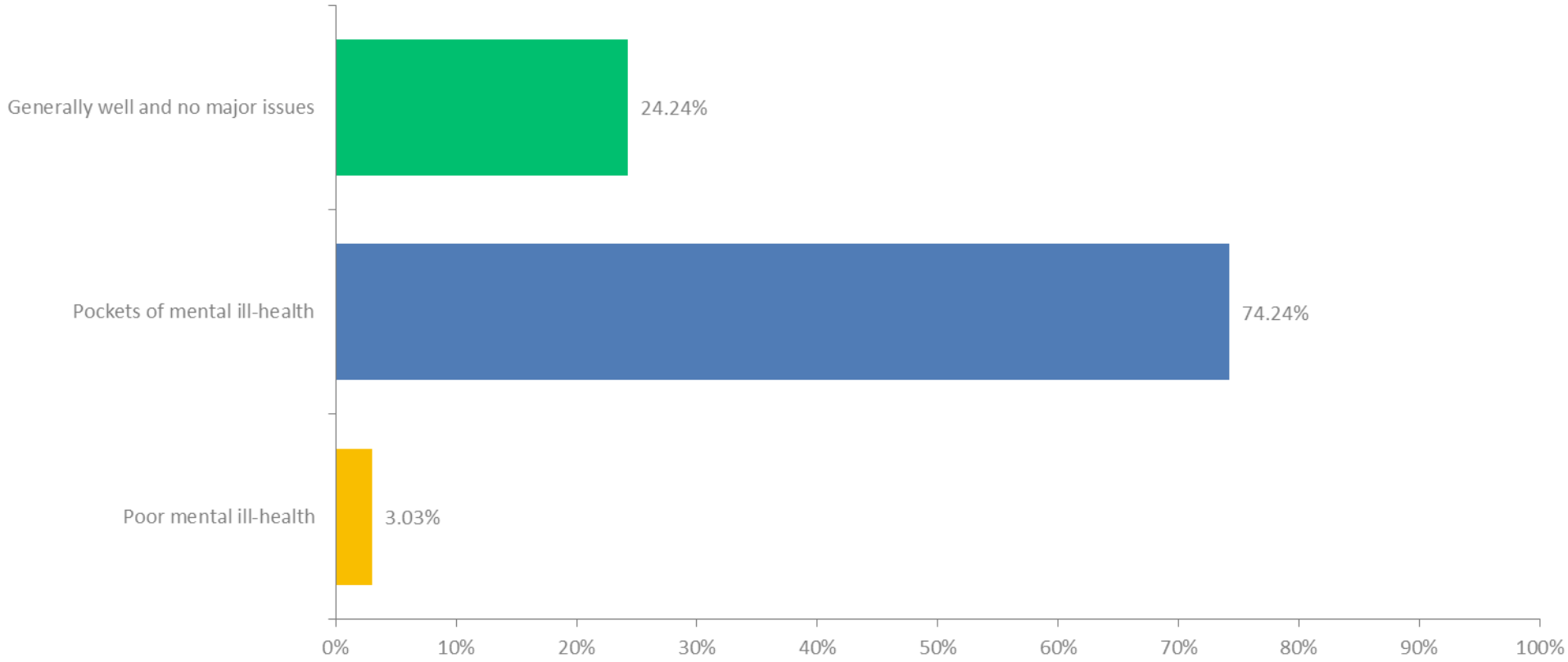
Q10: Thinking about staff morale what best describes your current workforce?



Q11: Thinking about staff physical wellbeing how would you describe your workforce?



Q12: Thinking about mental wellbeing how would you describe your workforce?



Comments on physical and mental wellbeing issues…

"There is clearly an epidemic of mental health issues, job satisfaction, social media, family work life balance, expectations……"

"Delays in the NHS is impacting on people returning to work – few mental health services for example"

Ageing workforce, therefore more likely to suffer ill-health issues, slower to recover..

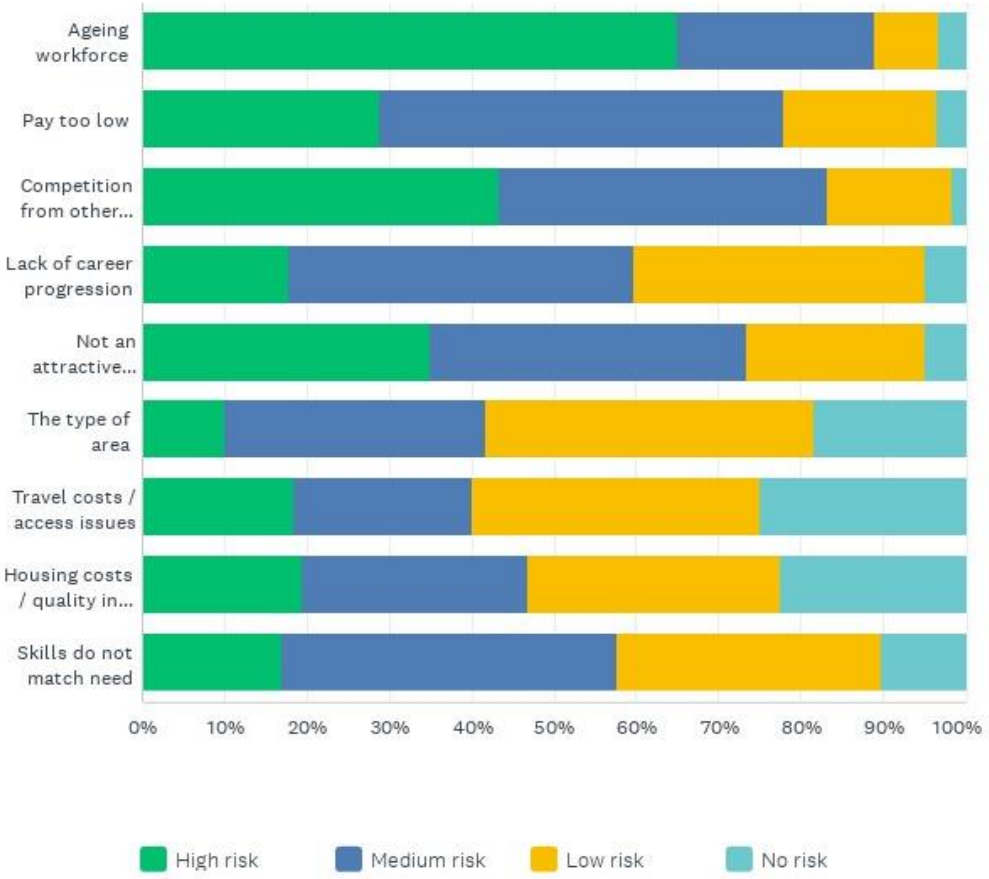
Q13: Which of the following presents the biggest risks to recruiting and retaining your workforce

Near to 90% (high/medium risk) due to ageing workforce

78% Pay issues (high/medium)

83% Competition from other sectors (high/medium)

73% Not an attractive career choice (medium/high)

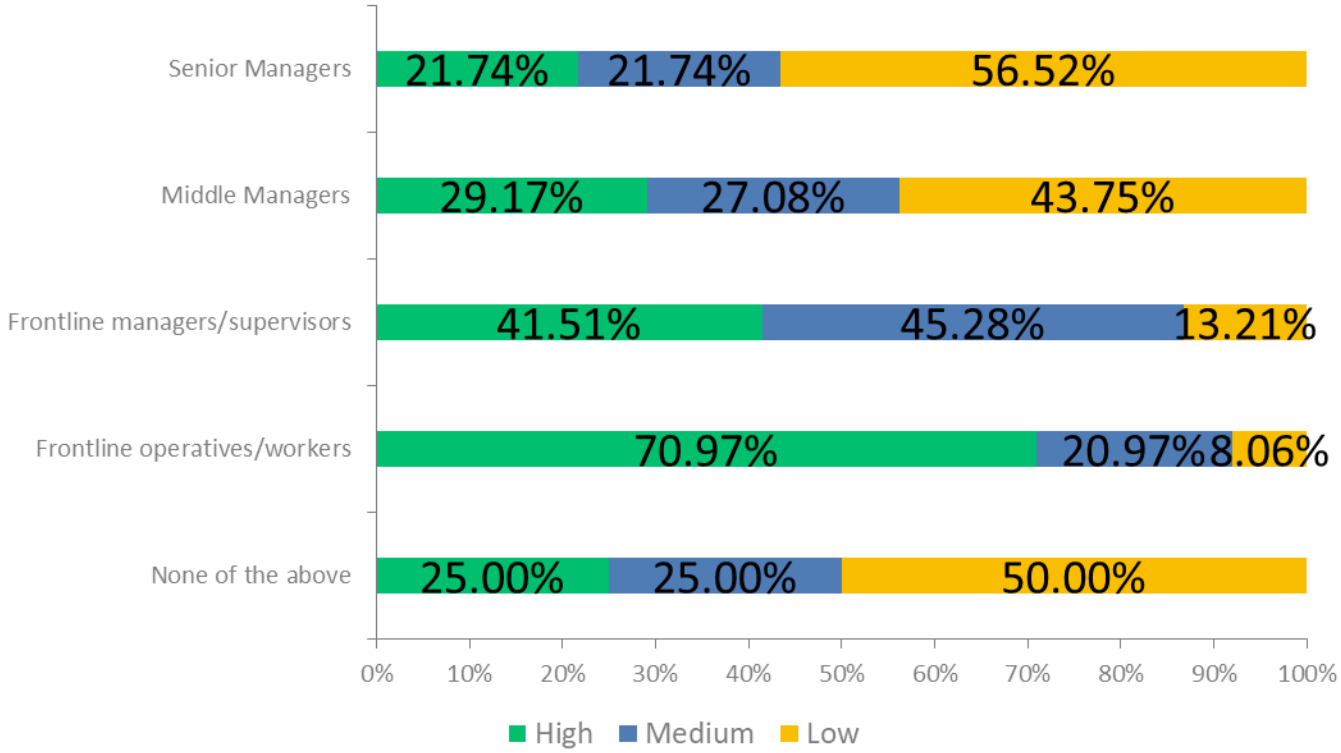


Q14: Which roles are experiencing the most challenges in terms of recruitment and retention? Please rank highest with the greatest challenges to low with the least challenges.

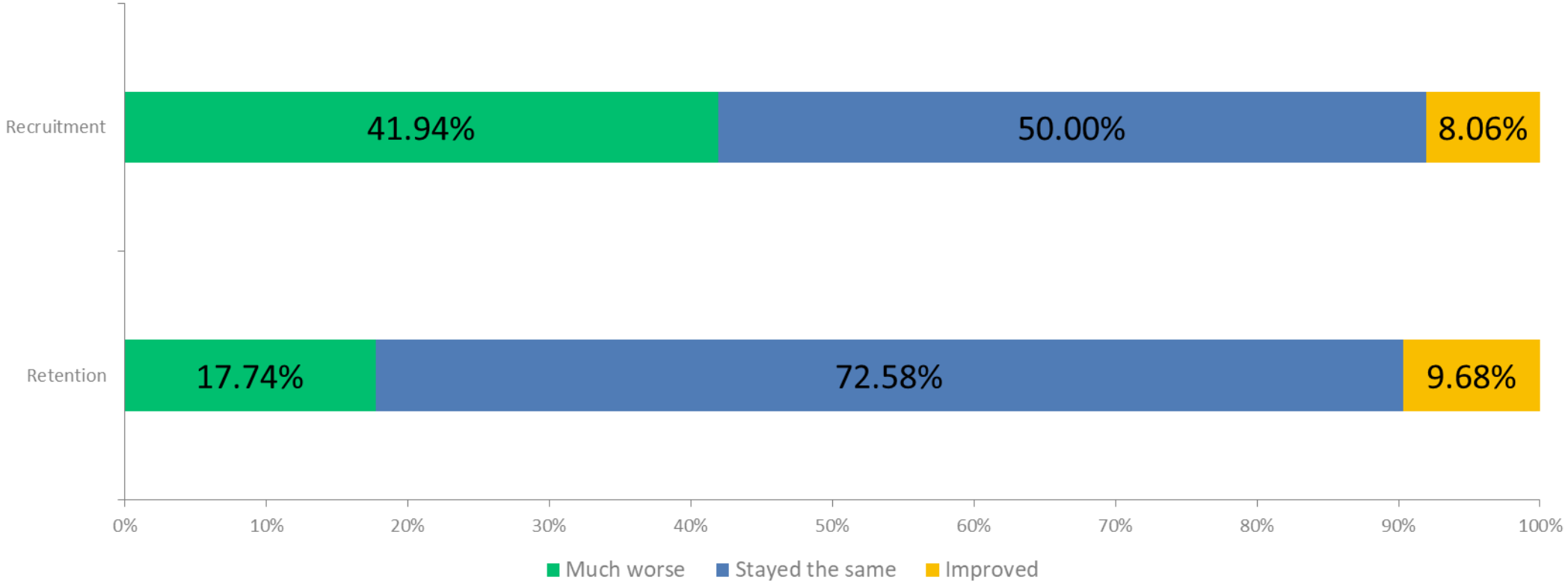
Just under **44%** high/medium for **senior managers** compared to **96%** on **frontline supervisors / managers**

Near to **71%** high risk in **frontline** services –just over 8% report low risk here.

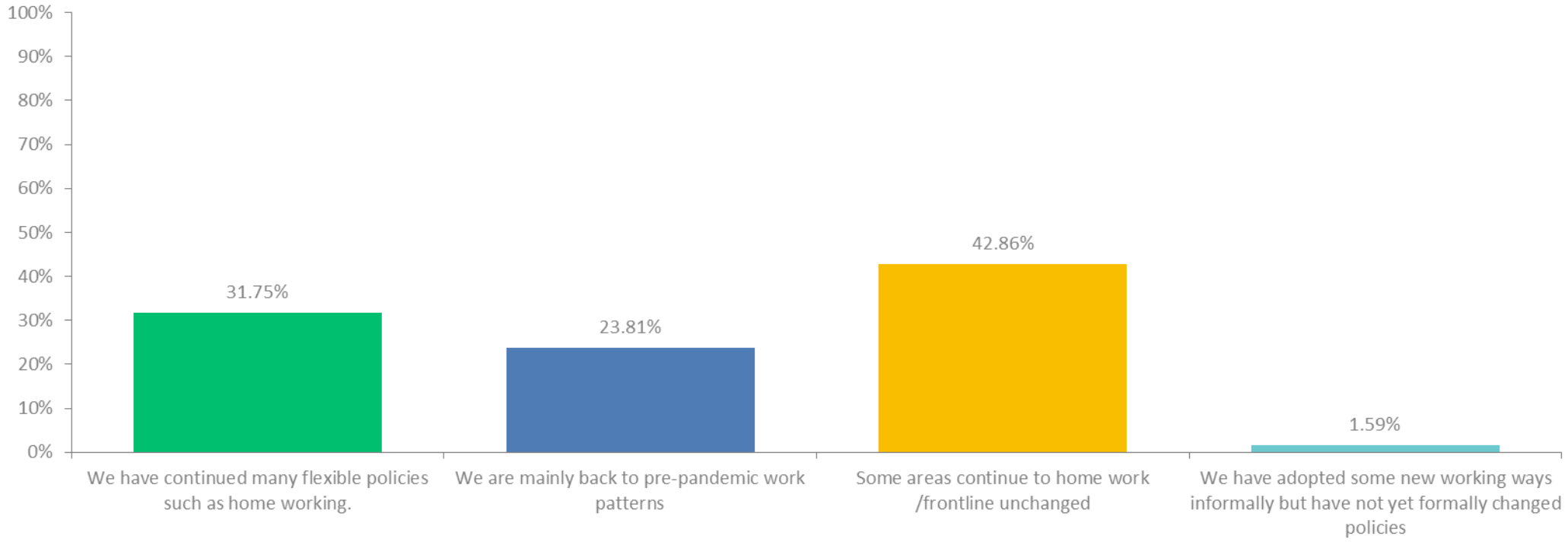
Over **56%** risk with **middle managers**



Q15: Thinking about the last year how do you view recruitment and retention issues in your authority



Q16: Thinking about the pandemic ways of working what best describes your post-pandemic working practices?



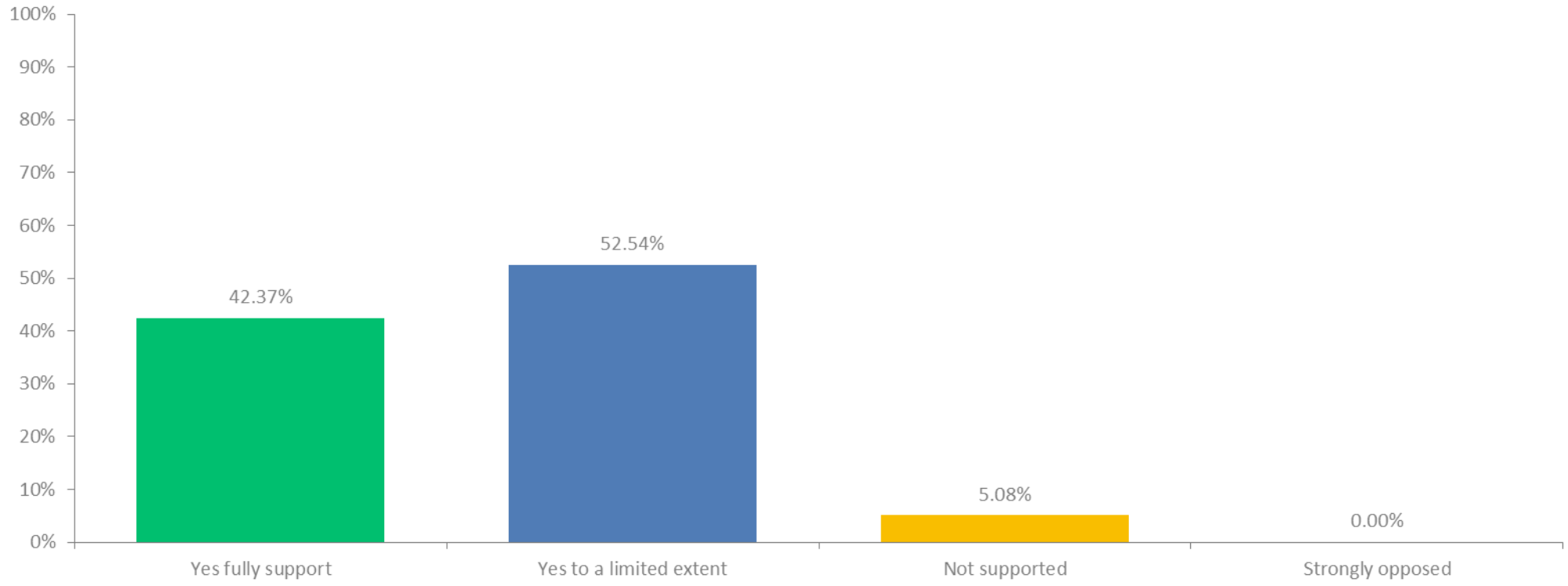
Post-pandemic working practices…remains a polarising issue….

“Home working on the 'staff' side has led to resentment by the frontline staff who do not have the option. Due to the reduction of productivity and availability of those working from home, the frontline staff are picking up the slack leading to increased workload.”

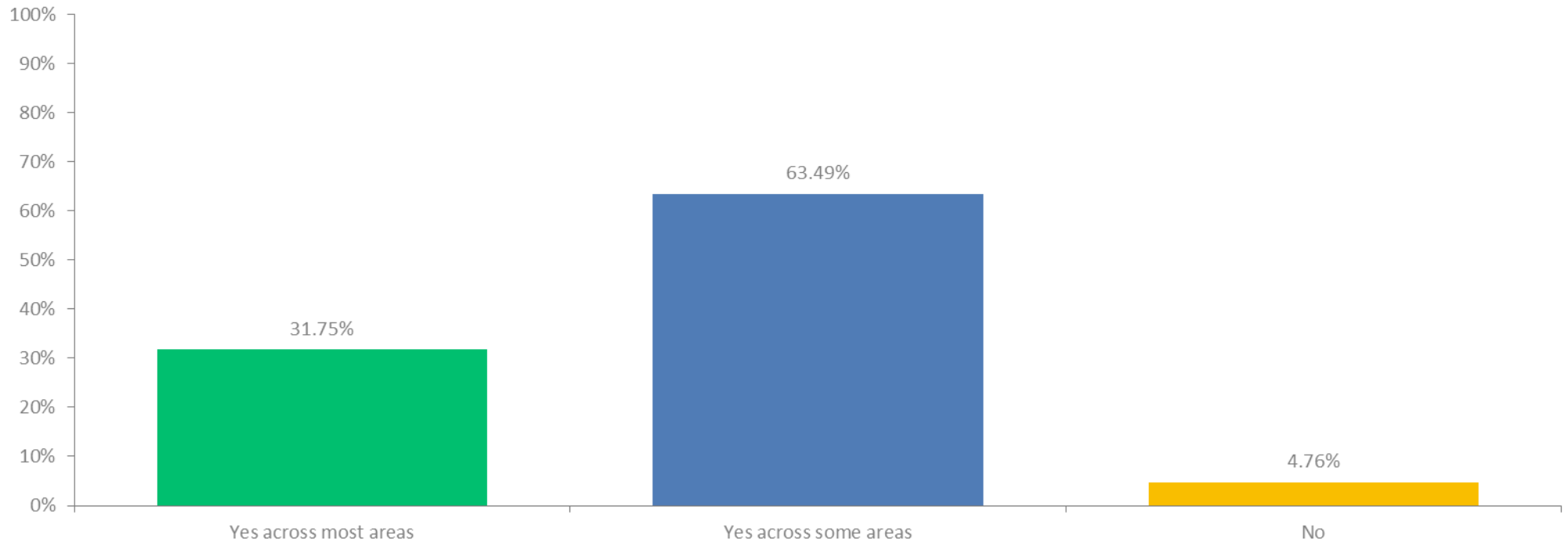
“Bereavement services can’t work from home!”

“Hybrid / home working means I get more done”

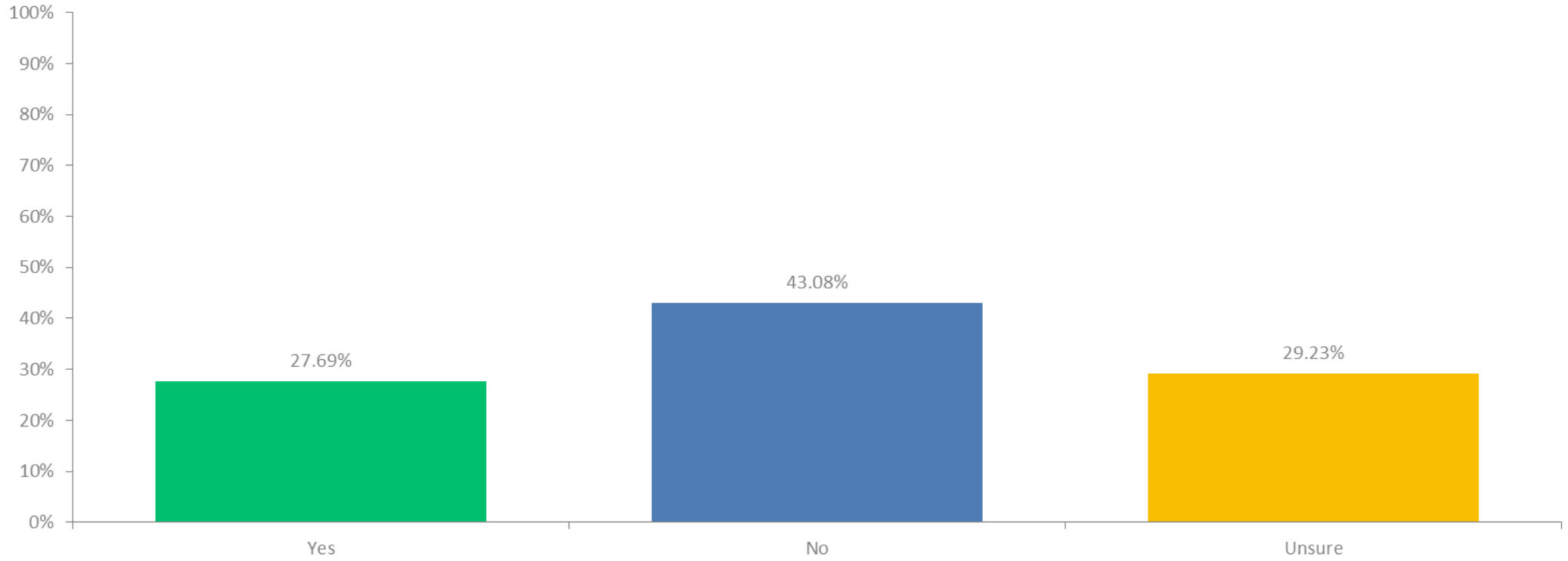
Q17: Do your post-pandemic working arrangements enjoy political support from local councillors?



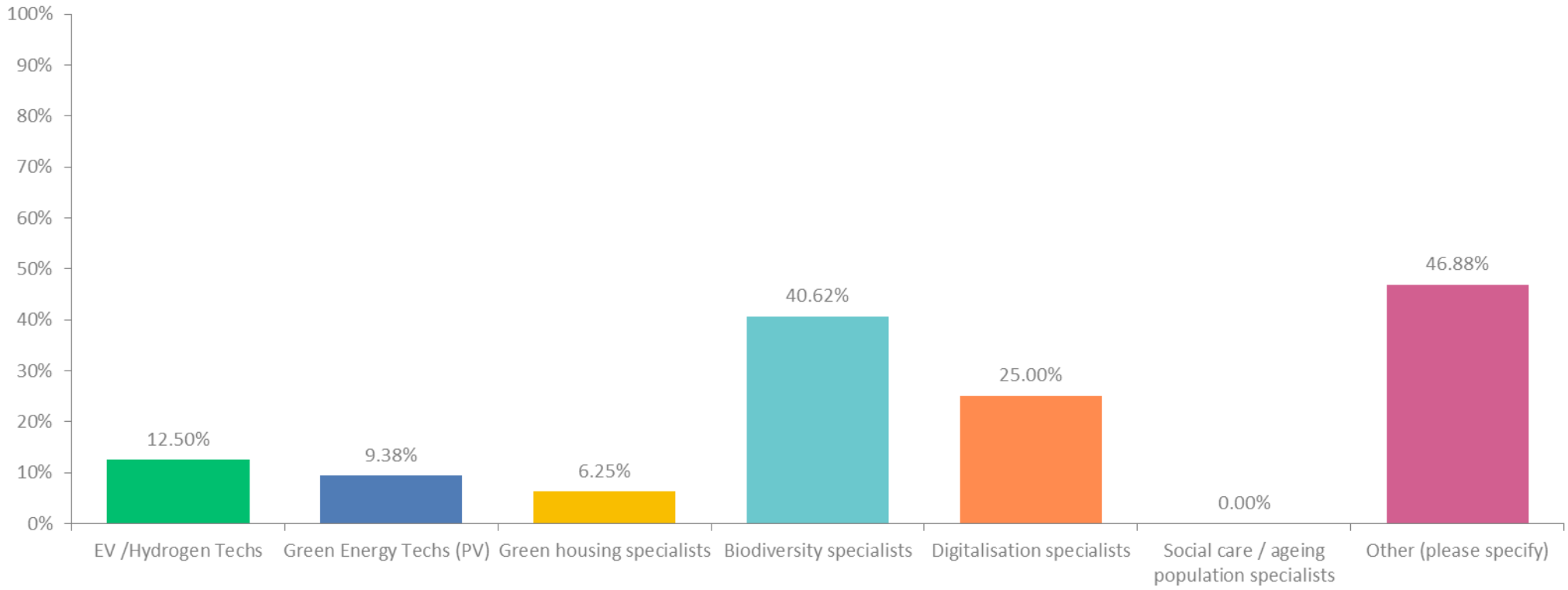
Q18: Do you have skills shortages?



Q19: Thinking about climate change and green skills do you believe you have skills to meet future service needs?



Q20: Have you recruited any of the following?



Skills and green skills .....comments

- Need councillors to resource more / fund more
- Considering engaging sociologists / behaviour change / engagement specialists
- Biodiversity shortages in people with the right skills
- Graduates with sustainability degrees
- May not yet know what is needed.

Final thoughts …….

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