Meeting Fatigue

TO

From Zoom Fatigue

VIRTIRA'S 2023 WEBCAM STUDY

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CONTENTS

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INTRODUCTION

This study uncovers root causes of productivity gaps in organizations related to planning and running meetings.
Inside, we provide insights on why organizations should prioritize policies, workflow audits and employee training geared to reducing meeting frequency and increasing meeting quality.
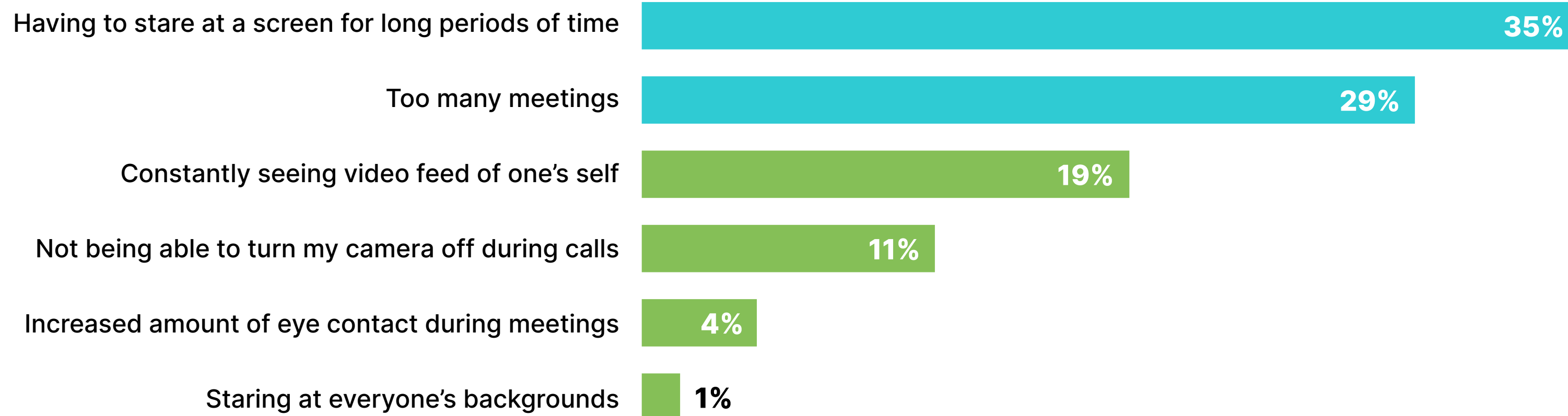
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Meeting Fatigue Ranked #1 by 64% Surveyed

Although our questions were geared to discover the extent and cause of *Zoom Fatigue*, the feedback is that *Zoom Fatigue* has taken a back seat to *Meeting Fatigue*. We all know what *Zoom Fatigue* is, but what's *Meeting Fatigue*, how is it different than *Zoom Fatigue*, how does it manifest itself and what's the broader impact? This study identifies key causes of *Meeting Fatigue*, what aspects of meetings are the most challenging for employees and how these undermine productivity and exhausts employees. Our study also details recommendations executives and managers can take to curb *Meeting Fatigue* and get their teams back on track, including auditing meeting frequency, improving meeting facilitation skills, making cameras optional and better use of status update tools.

Please rank these in what you think is the single biggest contributor to "Zoom Fatigue"?

RESPONSES RANKED AS #1

Having to stare at a screen for long periods of time	35%
Too many meetings	29%
Constantly seeing video feed of one's self	19%
Not being able to turn my camera off during calls	11%
Increased amount of eye contact during meetings	4%
Staring at everyone's backgrounds	1%

64% surveyed rank meeting-related issues #1 as the cause of "fatigue"

36% surveyed ranked camera related issues as #1

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"Zoom and meeting fatigue are starting to blend and too many meetings are just as bad as being on a camera for no reason."

MALE | 50S | CONSULTANT | NON-MANAGER | REMOTE | SOMEWHAT INTROVERTED

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How have businesses adapted post-COVID?

The onset of the pandemic in early 2020 sent office workers home and pushed nearly every call online, mainly via the digital meeting app Zoom. Within months, many of us had wearied of needing to always be presentable and enthusiastic on camera, a problem dubbed Zoom Fatigue.

Thus, it came as little surprise when our 2021 Webcam Study found that nearly half of all remote workers felt anxiety about appearing on camera for meetings.

Now, more than three years after the pandemic-driven shift to remote, we decided to see how businesses and employees have adapted to the new reality of virtual collaboration.

"I dislike all meetings. In person or on Zoom. At least with online meeting you don't have to leave the house."

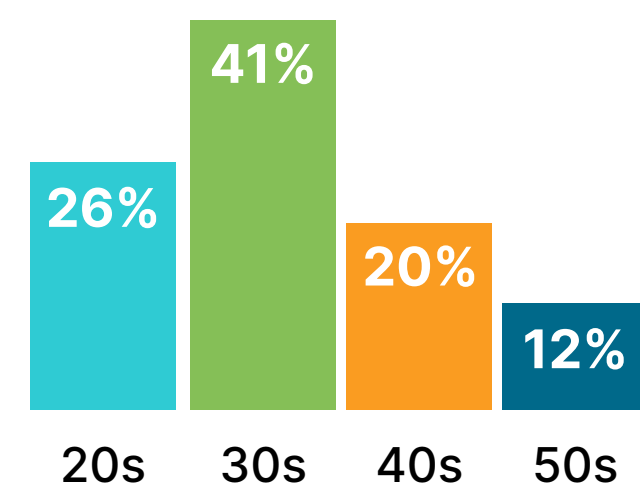**MALE | 30S | MIDDLE MANAGEMENT | HYBRID | AMBIVERT**

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"Don't think I really have 'Zoom' fatigue, more like 'Meeting' fatigue. A number of meetings we have are unnecessary, even though we had them before COVID."

FEMALE | 50S | MIDDLE MANAGEMENT | REMOTE | VERY INTROVERTED
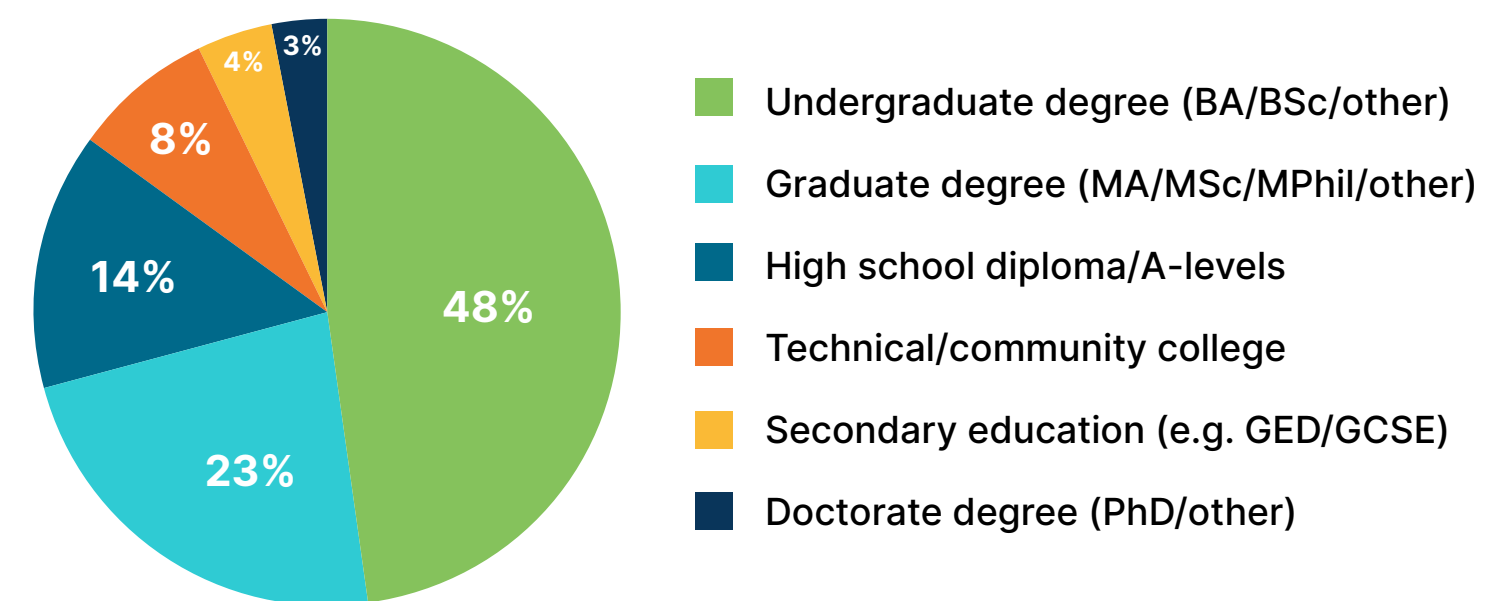
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Who We Surveyed

We asked 1,489 full time managers and employees with a good distribution of office-based, hybrid and fully remote work locations across a dozen countries what they thought. See the Methodology section at the end of this report.
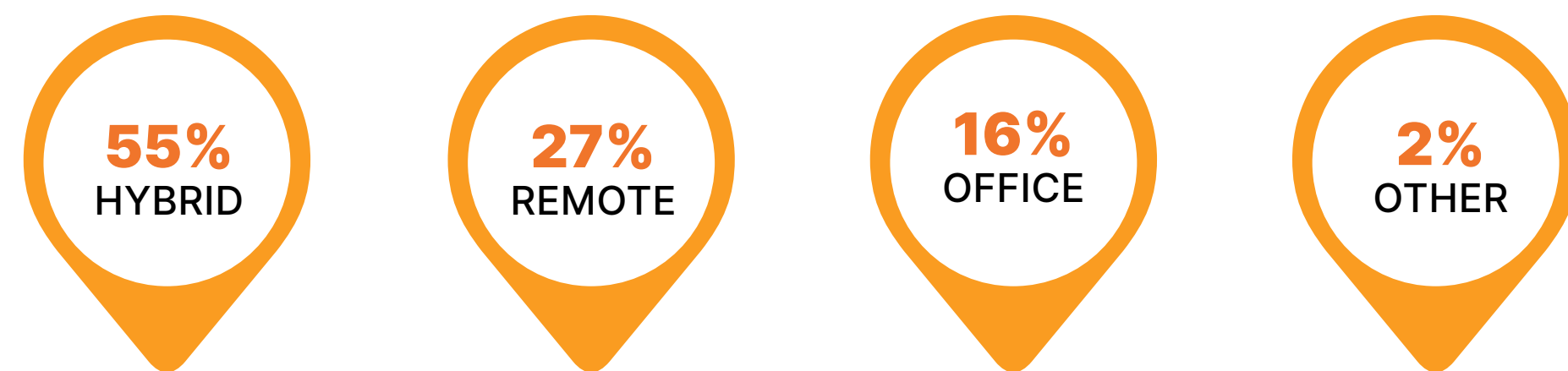
Age Groups
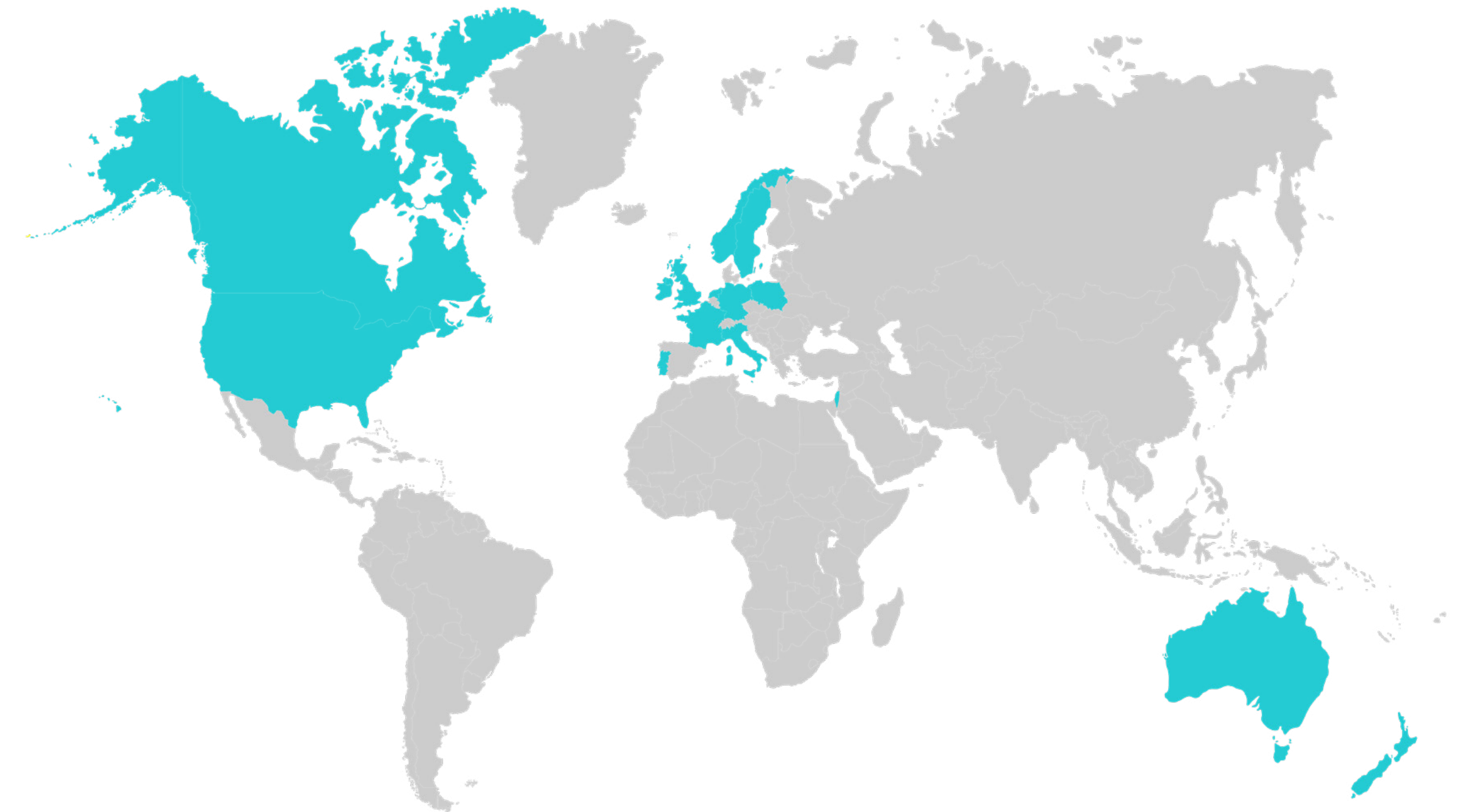
- 26% — 20s
- 41% — 30s
- 20% — 40s
- 12% — 50s

Educational Level

- 48% Undergraduate degree (BA/BSc/other)
- 23% Graduate degree (MA/MSc/MPhil/other)
- 14% High school diploma/A-levels
- 8% Technical/community college
- 4% Secondary education (e.g. GED/GCSE)
- 3% Doctorate degree (PhD/other)

Work Location

- 55% HYBRID
- 27% REMOTE
- 16% OFFICE
- 2% OTHER

Countries Represented

Australia	Ireland	New Zealand	Sweden
Canada	Israel	Norway	United Kingdom
France	Italy	Poland	United States
Germany	Netherlands	Portugal	

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Overview of the study recommendations.

Throughout this report, you'll find ideas and suggestions and the data to support these findings. The [Recommendations section](#) at the end of this report goes into more detail on these key points:

Regularly audit meeting frequency (and how many are back-to-back).	Always ask: "Is this meeting/ attendee necessary?"	Make the camera optional whenever possible	Train everyone how to collaborate more and meet less.	Train everyone how to run a results-based meeting.	Empower employees to say no to last minute calls.
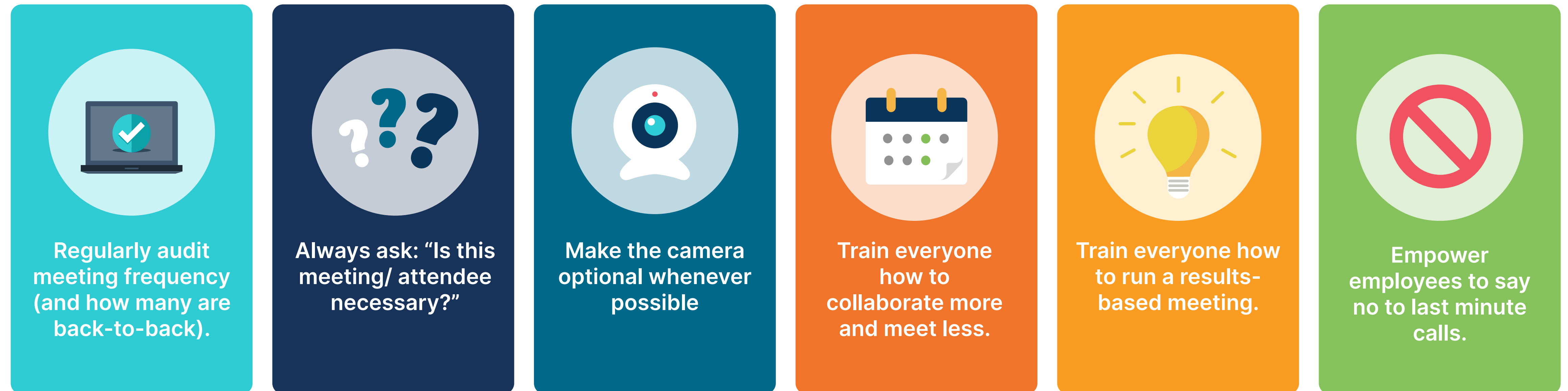
"[Meeting fatigue is] a necessary evil if we want to work from home."

MALE | 30S | MIDDLE MANAGEMENT | REMOTE | SOMEWHAT INTROVERTED

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STUDY INSIGHTS

The rankings showed us that the explosion in meetings during the pandemic has not eased as much as expected. We also found some interesting differences between the office, hybrid and remote employee experience.

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Overall, we're still having too many meetings.

One crucial question we asked in both our 2021 and 2023 surveys was, "Has the number of meetings you attend changed in the past year?" Given the return to the office over the past year, alongside the growing preference for hybrid over remote, we expected a general decline in meeting frequency. In 2021, more than 6 of 10 respondents said the number of meetings they attended had increased significantly. This time around, fewer participants experienced an increase in meetings.

But we may be seeing the start of a more worrying long-term shift. In 2023, three out of four workers overall said that the number of meetings they attend had either stayed the same (46%) or increased (30%), meaning that things have not relaxed back to pre-pandemic levels.

Has the number of meetings you attend changed from before the pandemic?

		63%
8%	25%	
Decreased	Stayed the same	Increased
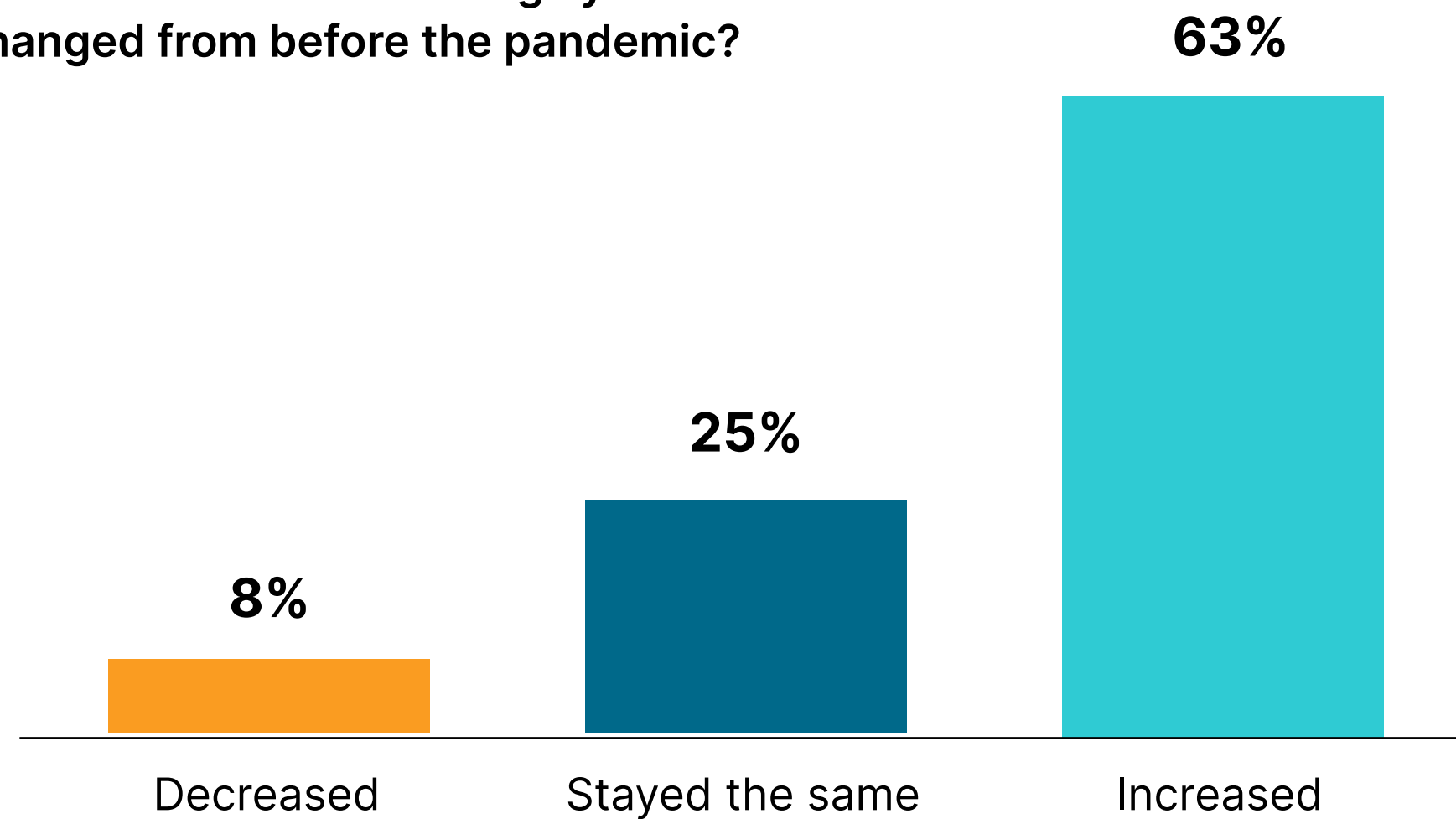
2021

In 2023, did the number of weekly online meetings you attend change vs. a year ago?

	46%	
24%		30%
Decreased	Stayed the same	Increased

2023

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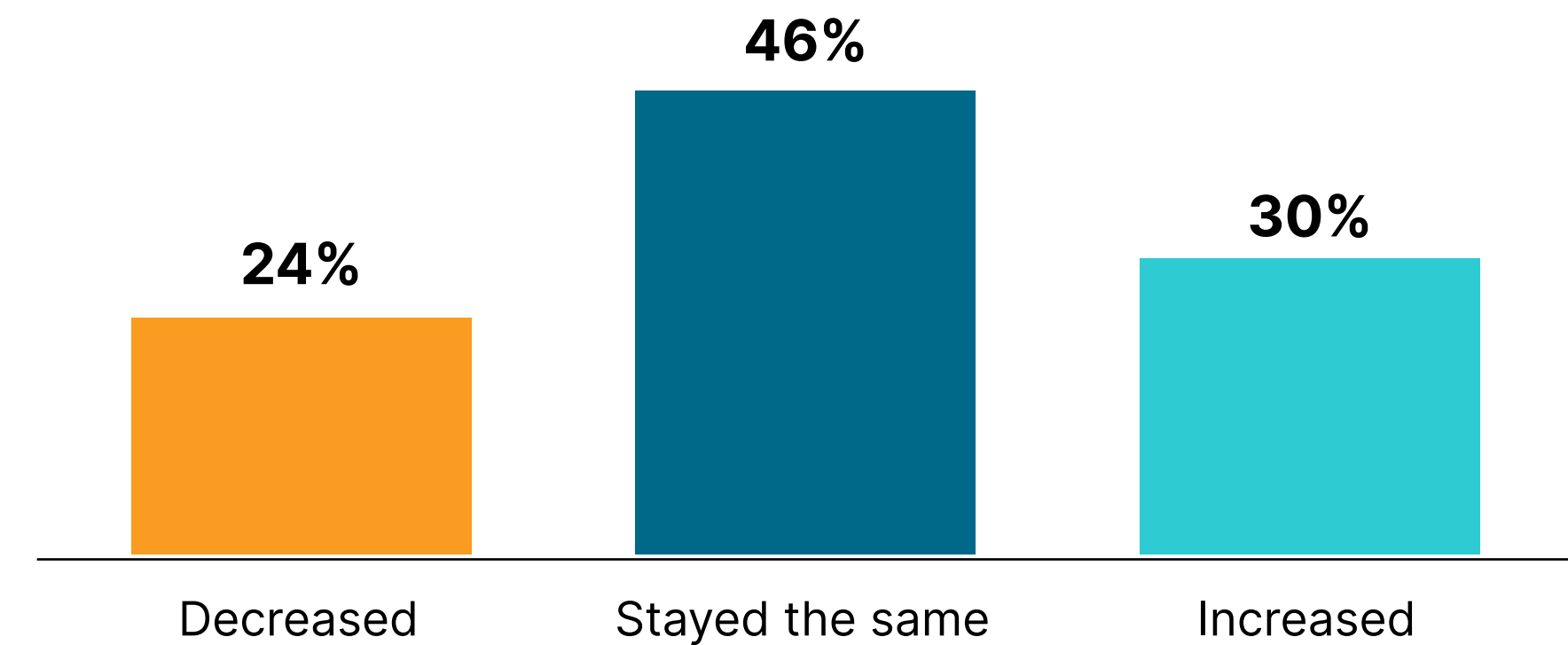
"I am a psychotherapist and work in a public health service. I have noticed that those colleagues who have had the worst outcomes using video are the biggest critics of online working... Yes, it can be tiring being on camera a lot but in my experience it has been a handy fig leaf to cover issues with competence and being able to work differently."
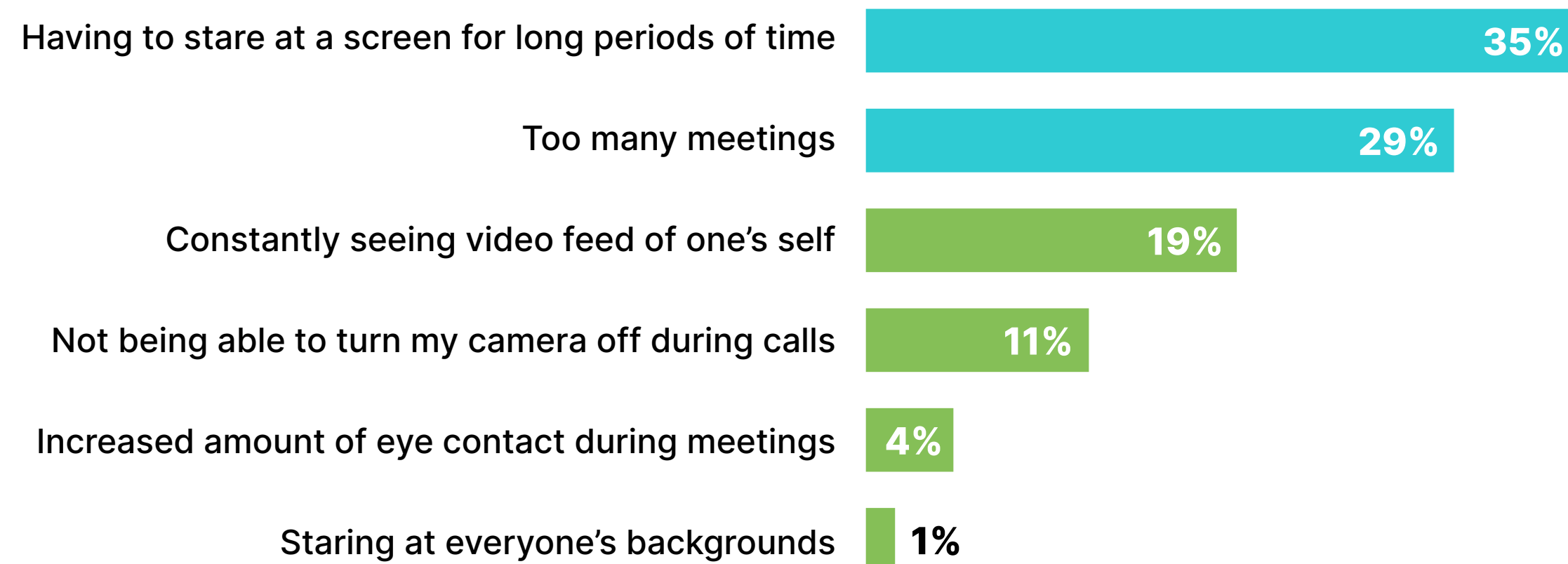
MALE | 40S | PROFESSIONAL | NON-MANAGER | HYBRID | SOMEWHAT INTROVERTED

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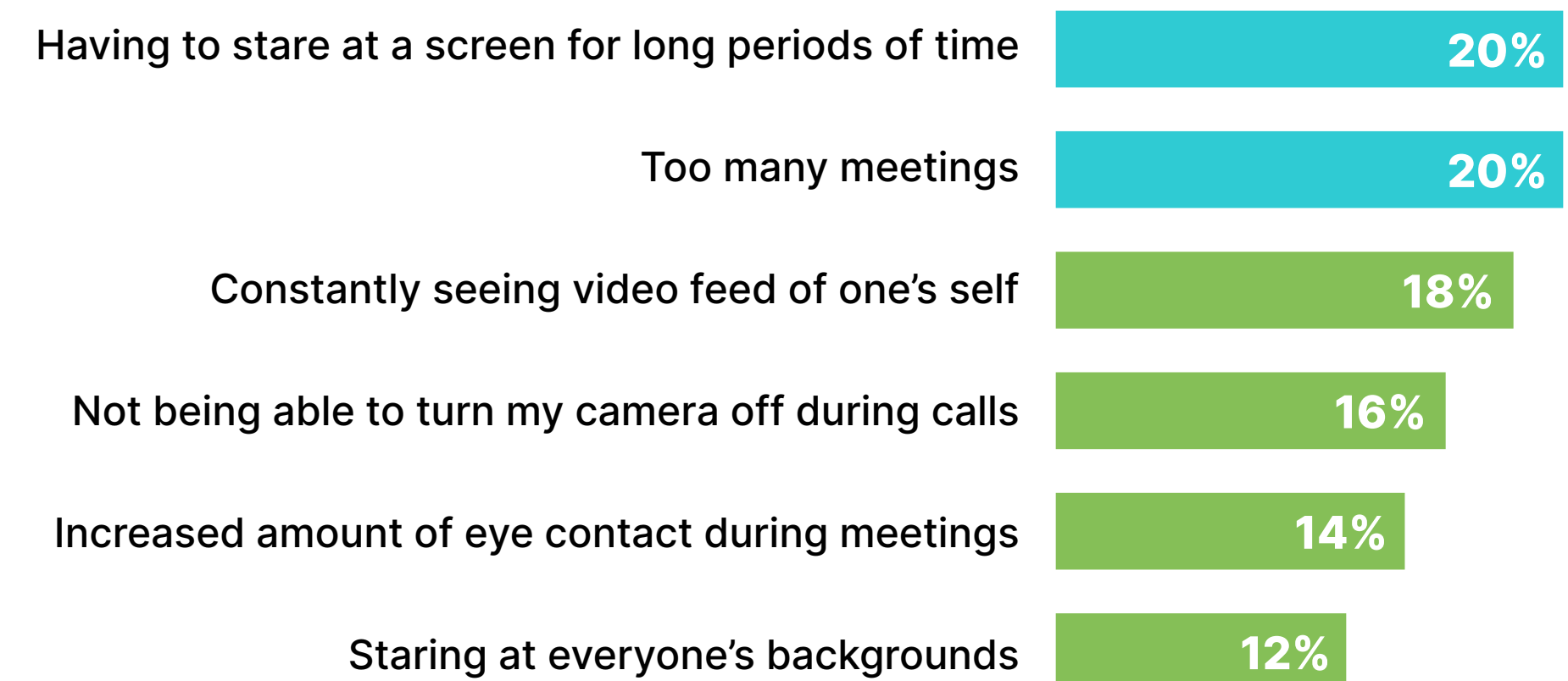# *Zoom Fatigue* has morphed into *Meeting Fatigue.*

Survey respondents overwhelmingly reported that Zoom Fatigue has morphed into acute Meeting Fatigue. Today's endless slog of meetings is ranked as the #1 cause of fatigue by 64% of employees. Many of the managers and employees surveyed still feel they are on camera too much, but the largest group (35%) viewed the time they stare at the screen during calls as their main source of fatigue, while an additional 29% viewed too many meetings as a key fatigue contributor.

Please rank these in what you think is the single biggest contributor to "Zoom Fatigue"?

RESPONSES RANKED AS #1

Having to stare at a screen for long periods of time	35%
Too many meetings	29%
Constantly seeing video feed of one's self	19%
Not being able to turn my camera off during calls	11%
Increased amount of eye contact during meetings	4%
Staring at everyone's backgrounds	1%

WEIGHTED AVERAGE OF OVERALL RESPONSES

Having to stare at a screen for long periods of time	20%
Too many meetings	20%
Constantly seeing video feed of one's self	18%
Not being able to turn my camera off during calls	16%
Increased amount of eye contact during meetings	14%
Staring at everyone's backgrounds	12%

64% rank meeting-related issues as the prime cause of "fatigue" is from meetings, 36% from cameras
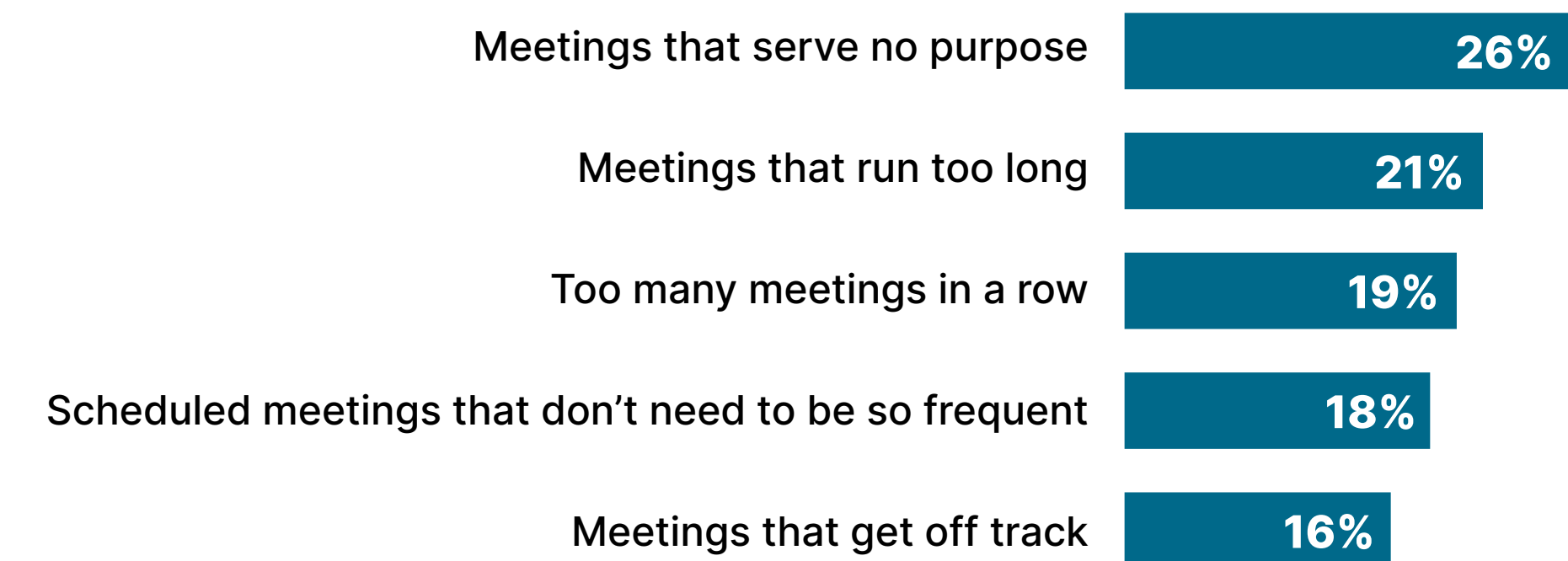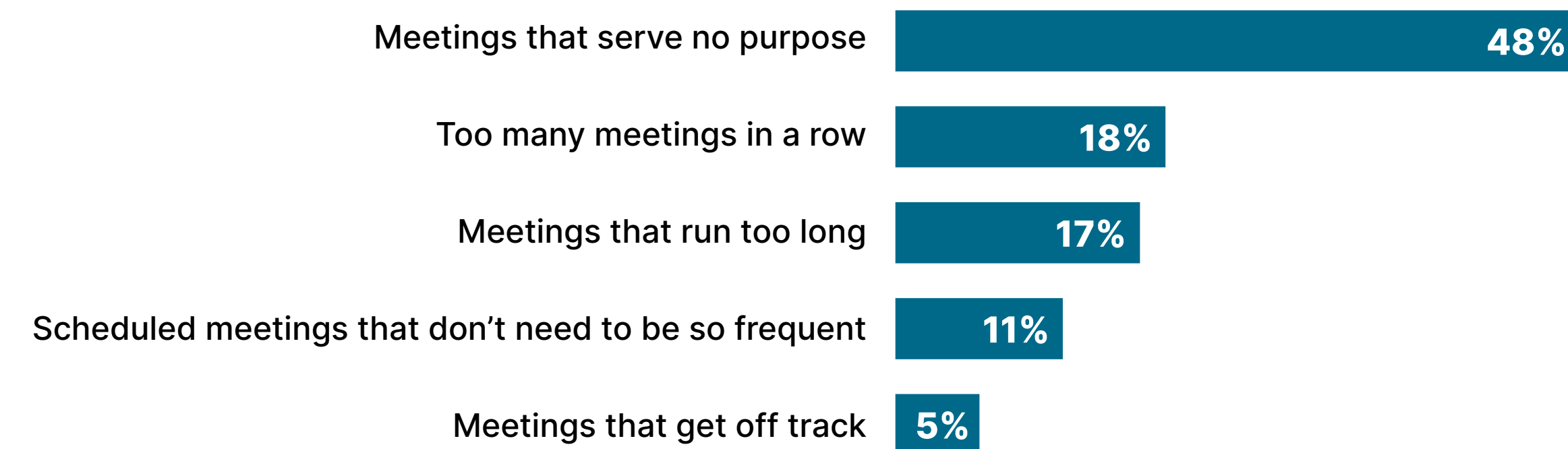
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Why are so many meetings without purpose?

With the results on the previous page, we wanted to dig more into why meetings are such a challenge in 2023. 48% ranked "meetings without a purpose" as the #1 cause of meeting fatigue (more on this in the anecdotal responses later), followed by issues around scheduling and lack of meeting facilitation skills.

Please rank in order of what you think is the single biggest contributor to "Meeting Fatigue"?

RESPONSES RANKED AS #1

Meetings that serve no purpose	48%
Too many meetings in a row	18%
Meetings that run too long	17%
Scheduled meetings that don't need to be so frequent	11%
Meetings that get off track	5%

WEIGHTED AVERAGE OF OVERALL RESPONSES

Meetings that serve no purpose	26%
Meetings that run too long	21%
Too many meetings in a row	19%
Scheduled meetings that don't need to be so frequent	18%
Meetings that get off track	16%

48% rank meetings without a purpose as prime cause of "Meeting Fatigue".

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I have no issue with 'Zoom fatigue' and honestly, I think it's just people putting a trendy new spin on the usual problem of too many meetings - the meeting that could have been an email, the meeting about the meeting, etc... Online meetings ROCK!

FEMALE | 40S | ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF I NON-MANAGER | HYBRID | AMBIVERT

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Even with the move back to the office, knowledge workers are increasingly connecting virtually.

By the end of 2023, nearly half of all knowledge workers are expected to be working remotely on a full time (9%) or part time (39%) basis. Thus, if business leaders fail to address this issue, our pandemic-driven explosion in meetings (and poorly run meetings) — and the resulting dip in productivity — could become the new normal.

"...People are now too reachable - it's becoming difficult to have a break between meetings, it can be too easy to check diaries and availability - people think that working remotely means one is available 24/7."

FEMALE | 50S | MIDDLE MANAGEMENT | REMOTE | SOMEWHAT EXTROVERTED
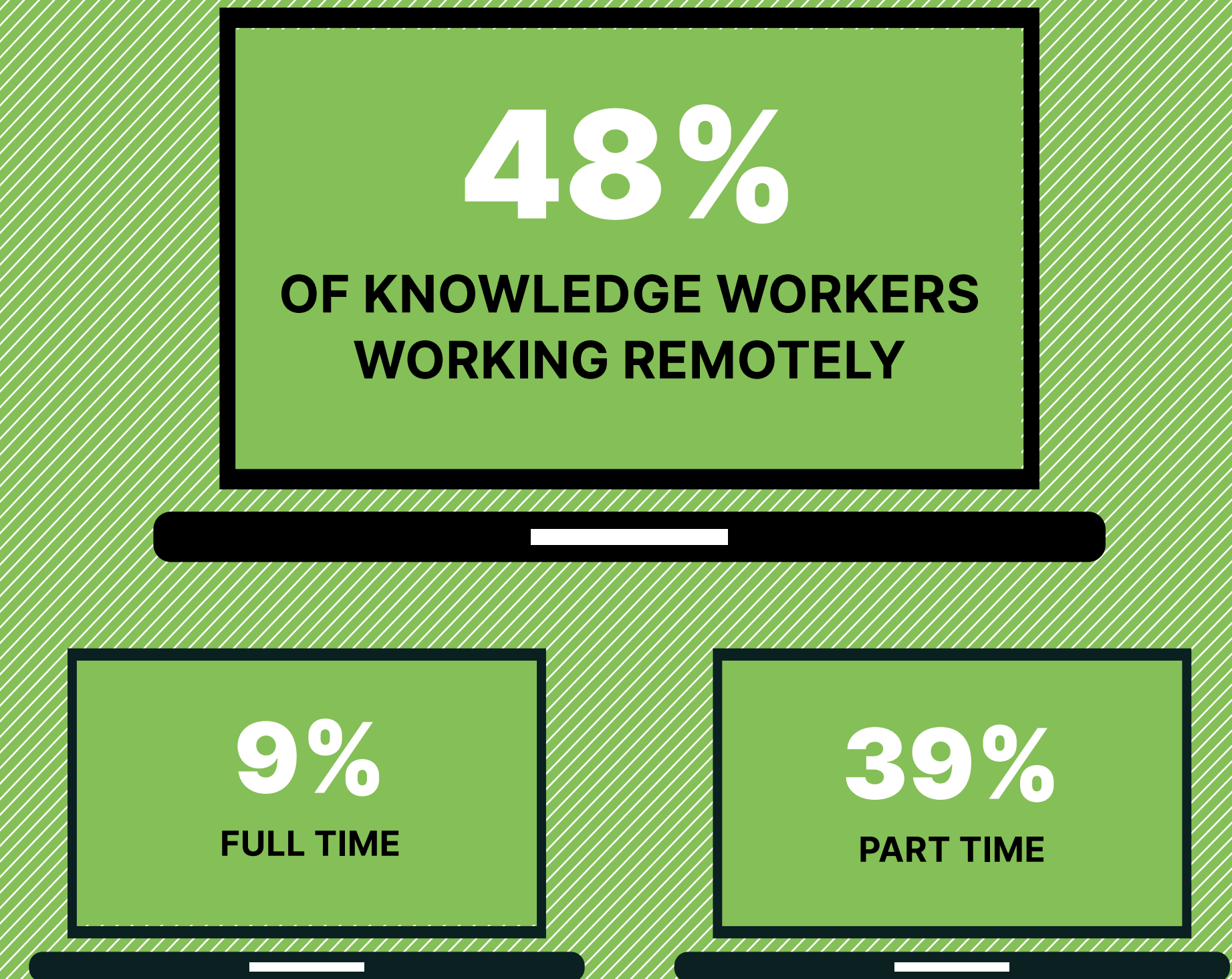
48%
OF KNOWLEDGE WORKERS WORKING REMOTELY

9%
FULL TIME

39%
PART TIME

By the end of 2023, nearly half of all knowledge workers are expected to be working remotely on a full time (9%) or part time (39%) basis

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"Since COVID, I have noticed an increase in update meetings I am involved with, primarily due to some people working from home and some in the office. These update meetings however have not really improved productivity, and sometimes feel more like a burden than anything / a distraction from actually doing work."
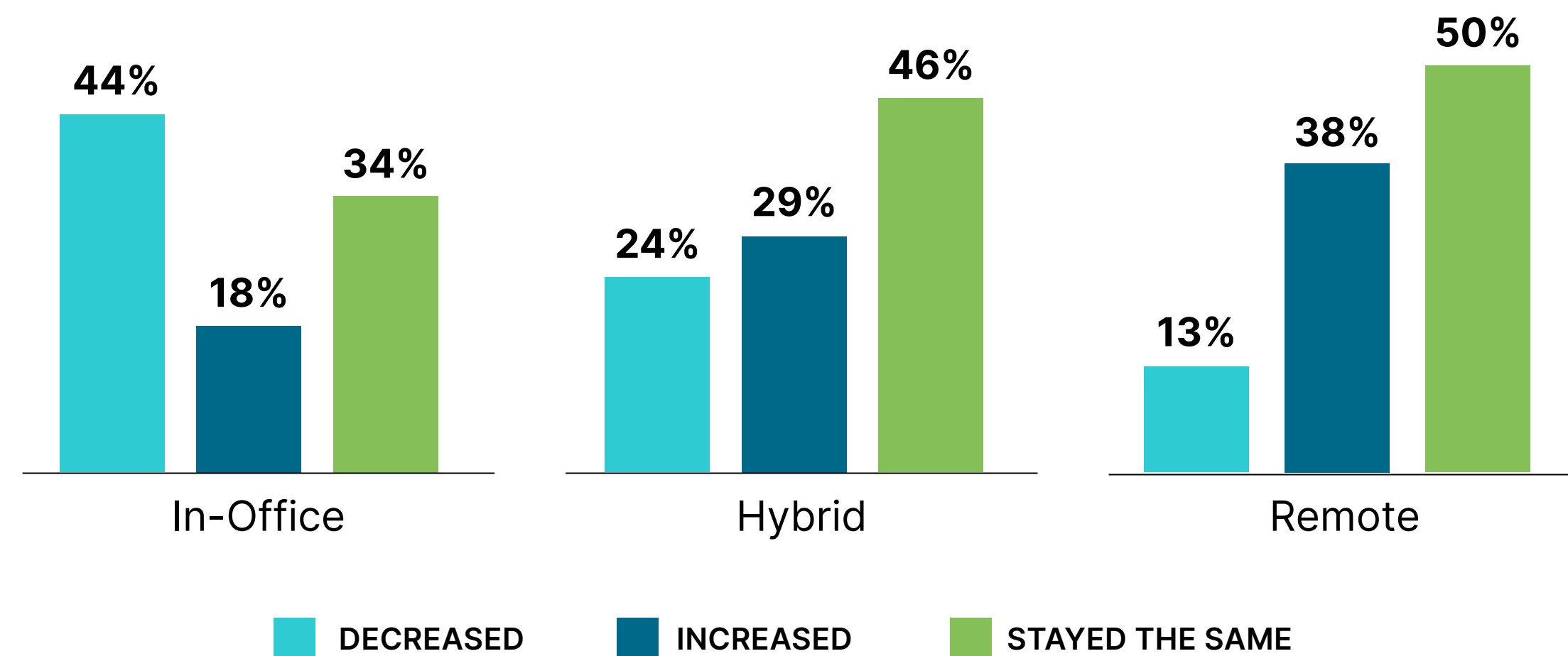
MALE | 20S | PROFESSIONAL I MANAGER | OFFICE | AMBIVERT

If you're in the office, it has gotten better. For remote and hybrid, *not so much*.

For office workers, meeting frequency has improved considerably, with 44% reporting that the number of meetings they attend has decreased.

Fully remote workers, on the other hand, have seen a 38% increase - and 50% report seeing no improvement in meeting frequency.

In 2023, did the number of weekly online meetings you attend change vs. a year ago?

In-Office: 44% 18% 34%
Hybrid: 24% 29% 46%
Remote: 13% 38% 50%

■ DECREASED　■ INCREASED　■ STAYED THE SAME

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"It has now become the norm where everything is online and people feel like they can contact you constantly."
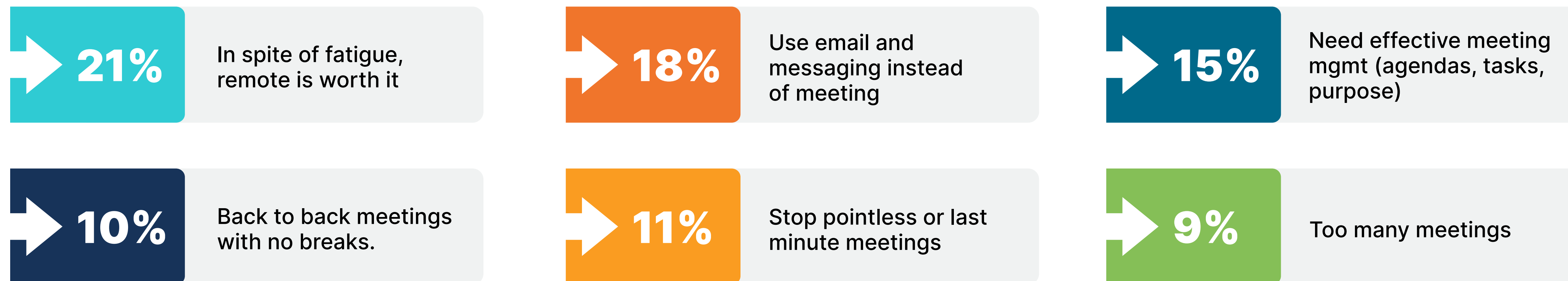
FEMALE | 30S | JUNIOR MANAGEMENT | HYBRID | SOMEWHAT INTROVERTED

VIRTIRA

Hey, got a sec?

We wondered remote workers are bearing most of the brunt of "too many meetings", so decided to dive into the anecdotal data and take a closer look. Overall, besides telling us that working remotely is worth the fatigue, people reported that meetings are just too easy to set up. Whereas in the office, a manager might just tap a staffer on the shoulder and request a quick chat, today's managers are messaging employees to request a call, rather than simply sharing the relevant info or asking their queries via email or online message.

Most of our participants felt that their managers and their colleagues could improve their meeting management skills, in terms of keeping the team on track, setting an agenda with specific tasks, and aligning everybody with the organization's purpose.

Meeting Fatigue - Key Themes from Study Comments

21% In spite of fatigue, remote is worth it	**18%** Use email and messaging instead of meeting	**15%** Need effective meeting mgmt (agendas, tasks, purpose)
10% Back to back meetings with no breaks.	**11%** Stop pointless or last minute meetings	**9%** Too many meetings

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"I find 20% of my meetings are [not needed]... just a call where someone reads out to us a email update they sent 2 hours ago, a complete waste of time."

MALE | 40S | MIDDLE MANAGER | REMOTE | SOMEWHAT INTROVERTED

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Why are there too many meetings? Because they are so easy to set up.

Because meeting online is now seen as a normal part of the workday, the widespread embrace of remote and hybrid work appears to have made managers and other team mates more liberal in terms of scheduling calls and meetings.

What had previously been in-office chats and impromptu gatherings morphed into formal online meetings according to many of the anecdotal comments.

"I'd rather zoom fatigue than unnecessary commuting to the office."

FEMALE | 30S | MIDDLE MANAGEMENT | HYBRID | AMBIVERT

What had previously been in-office chats and impromptu gatherings morphed into formal online meetings according to many of the anecdotal comments.

"I definitely have meeting fatigue - multiple back to back virtual meetings every day."

FEMALE | 30S | CONSULTANT | NON-MANAGER | REMOTE | AMBIVERT

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Leaders need to invest in meeting and collaboration training.

For Virtira, a project consultancy that assists organizations on increasing productivity, our 2023 study shows that many companies are failing to adequately train their staff on the collaborative tools that can largely replicate the convenience of in-office checkins and chats.

That the vast majority of workers are still attending as many meetings or more meetings than they did in the pandemic's early days means managers are struggling to adapt to out of office employees.

Most have yet to fully embrace the tools, systems, and policies that can simplify and streamline the hybrid workplace. Unsurprisingly, the number of meetings is directly related to the share of remote workers within an organization. But bringing everybody back into the office full-time is basically a non-starter, so leaders need to find alternative solutions

"I still think it's preferable to face to face. The problem isn't zoom, it's poor meeting management."

FEMALE | 50S | JUNIOR MANAGEMENT | OFFICE | SOMEWHAT INTROVERTED

VIRTIRA

"...When I worked in the office people would come to my desk and ask a question now I'm scheduling in 30 mins meetings. Just feels a waste of time sometimes."

MALE | 30S | JUNIOR MANAGEMENT | OFFICE | SOMEWHAT INTROVERTED

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SMILE, YOU'RE ON CAMERA!

It appears most people have gotten used to camera as a necesary price for remote work, even though 51% prefer them off. Corporate mandates have eased - but perceived peer pressure to turn them on - hasn't.

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People have gotten used to cameras.

Lets' return to the focus of our 2021 study and examine video camera use and its impact.

Attitudes towards cameras have largely stayed the same for most participants, with 51% reporting that being on camera makes them anxious, up from 49% who reported this in 2021.

Being on camera during a business meeting makes me feel anxious:

TRUE 51%	FALSE 46%	NA 3%

"I hate camera calls so much."

FEMALE | 20S | PROFESSIONAL | NON-MANAGER | OFFICE | VERY INTROVERTED

VIRTIRA

"I'm seeing more colleagues turn their cameras off. I think there is a link to poor mental health for those people. I find it embarrassing to have colleagues see my house so I blur the background."

FEMALE | 40S | PROFESSIONAL | MANAGER | HYBRID | AMBIVERT
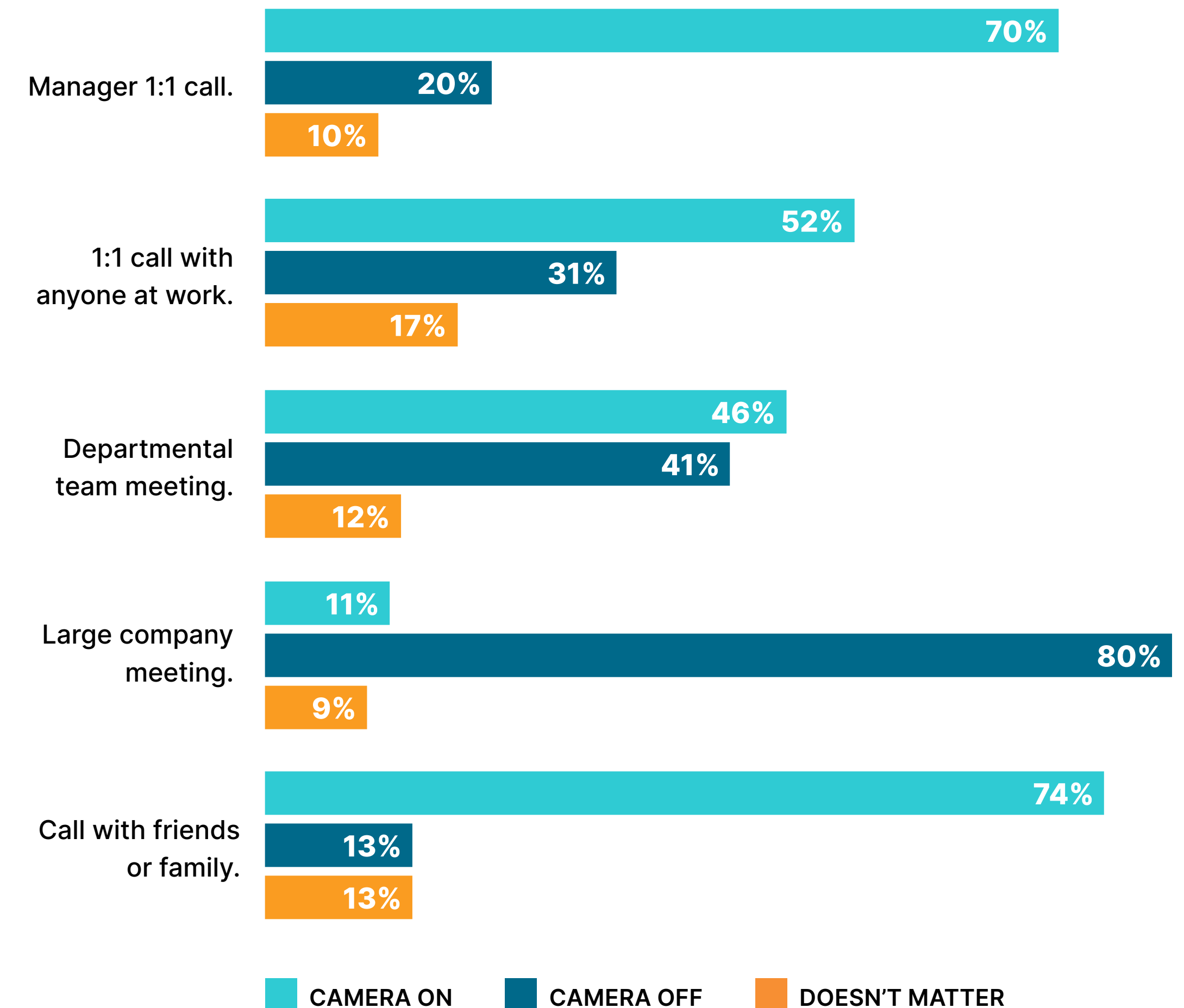
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The smaller the meeting, the higher the acceptance for it to be on camera.

Across all ages and employment levels, the general consensus is that cameras are best used for smaller meetings, which ranked closely to online meetings with family and friends for preference.

"Even with cameras on, there still isn't the same level of engagement as you'd get in real life. Questions get asked by the host but even the most vocal stay silent as a host cannot read a full room or interact in the same way and it all becomes a bit awkward. Every. Single. Time."

MALE | 40S | CONSULTANT | NON-MANAGER | HYBRID | AMBIVERT

What is your preference for being on camera during these scenarios?

Manager 1:1 call.
- CAMERA ON: 70%
- CAMERA OFF: 20%
- DOESN'T MATTER: 10%

1:1 call with anyone at work.
- CAMERA ON: 52%
- CAMERA OFF: 31%
- DOESN'T MATTER: 17%

Departmental team meeting.
- CAMERA ON: 46%
- CAMERA OFF: 41%
- DOESN'T MATTER: 12%

Large company meeting.
- CAMERA ON: 11%
- CAMERA OFF: 80%
- DOESN'T MATTER: 9%

Call with friends or family.
- CAMERA ON: 74%
- CAMERA OFF: 13%
- DOESN'T MATTER: 13%

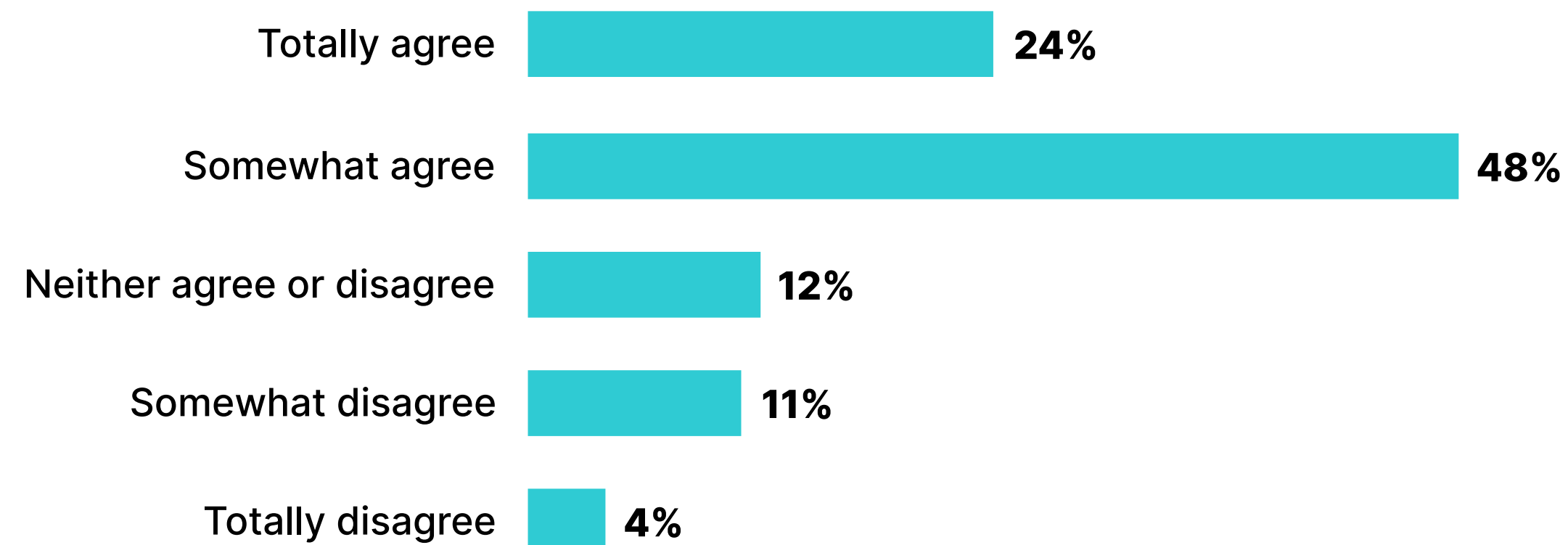CAMERA ON   CAMERA OFF   DOESN'T MATTER

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Cameras are seen as great for reading emotions and reactions.

Many respondents reported being able to better appreciate the advantages of being on camera.

Seven out of 10 agreed that being on camera enabled people to more easily read emotions and understand reactions. This underscores why video tends to work well for one-on-one calls and smaller meetings.

Many consultants encourage meeting on camera in order to read each person's emotions and reactions. What do you think of this?

Totally agree	**24%**
Somewhat agree	**48%**
Neither agree or disagree	**12%**
Somewhat disagree	**11%**
Totally disagree	**4%**

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Who's afraid of multi-tasking?

The main reason people want their camera off is no longer anxiety, as it was in 2021, but to free them up to work during "pointless meetings". A surprising 82% of respondents said being on video made them less able to multi-task.

Once the bane of productivity advice (including our own), multi-tasking serves an important purpose – if – the meeting is a check the box or poorly run or as many people have noted, "pointless".

Many of those surveyed said that they frequently attend meetings in which they are either not expected to participate or only expected to participate for a few minutes. In such cases, multi- tasking simply lets them get work done.

"Large meetings where irrelevant personal nonsense comes up, how was your weekend etc... look attentive, seem interested, keep nodding, etc. I place my camera at a funny angle so I can still do work 'chores', e-mails, wages, etc."

FEMALE | 40S | MIDDLE MANAGEMENT | OFFICE | AMBIVERT

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82%
of respondents said being on video made them less able to multi-task

Cameras are more optional than during the pandemic.

Before Covid, many attendees of online calls were able to take advantage of downtime in the meeting to catch up on pending tasks.

But then, with mandated video use during lockdowns, many organizations invertedly reduced productivity from attendees only minimally involved in the call being forced to appear fully engaged at all times.

Fortunately, we are seeing a positive trend on this count, as the chart on the following page shows.

"I just don't like having the camera on because I cannot get other work done while I'm on a meeting sometimes these meetings are so boring and I have to log on just for the sake of it."
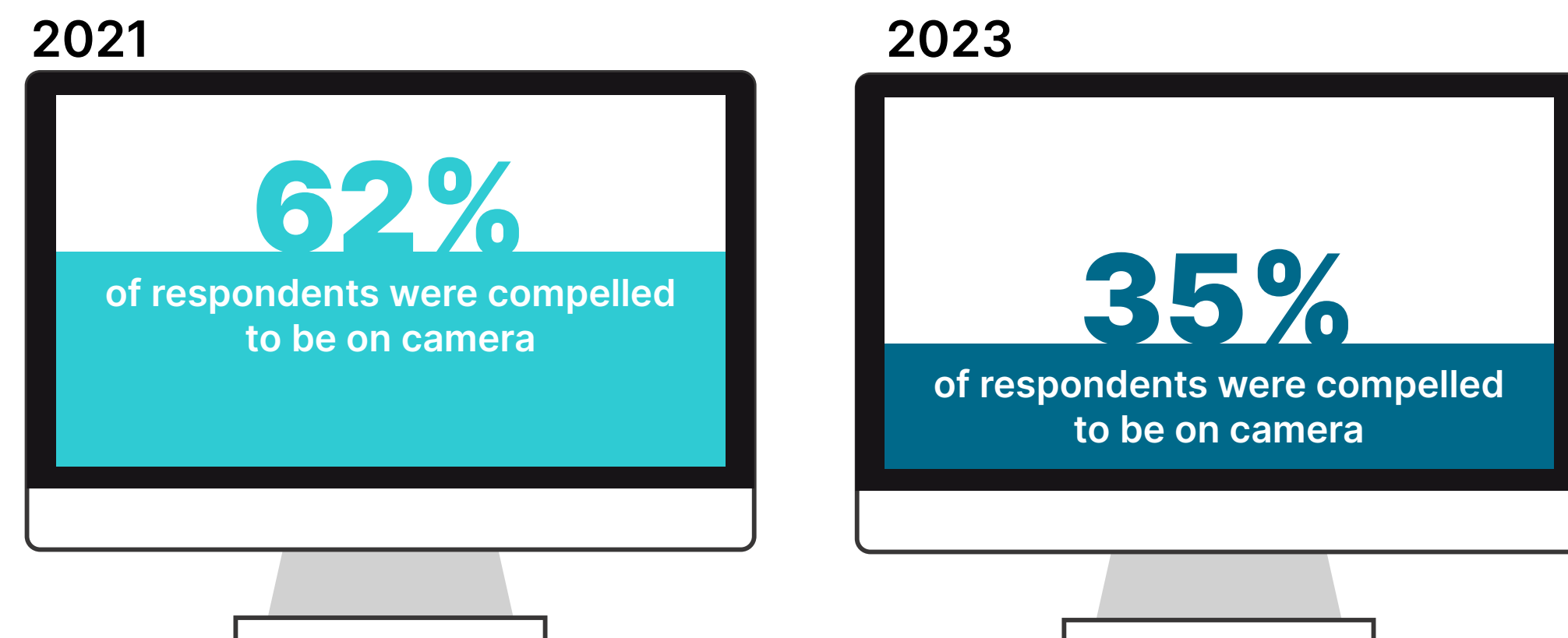
FEMALE | 40S | ADMIN STAFF | NON-MANAGER | HYBRID | AMBIVERT
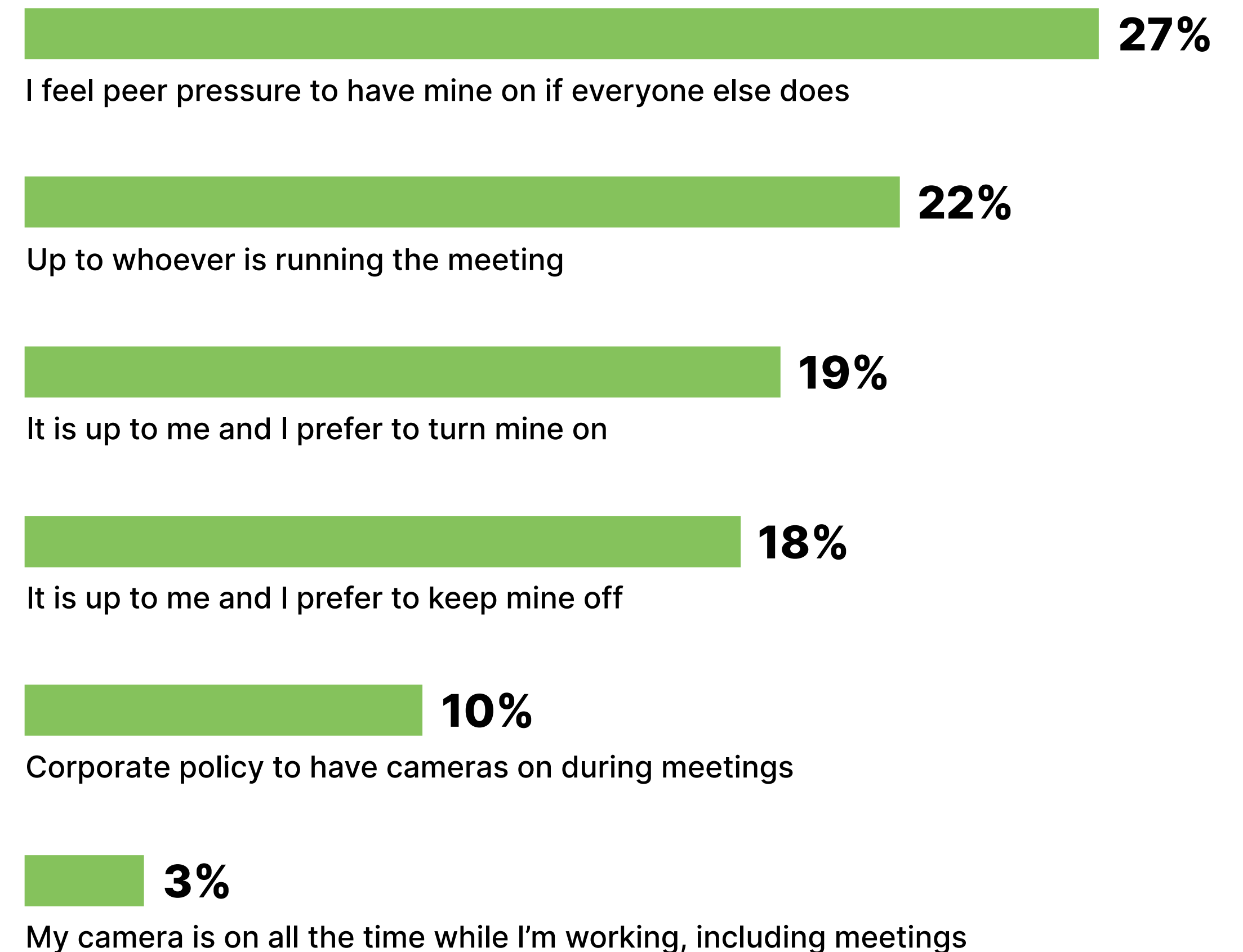
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Corporate camera mandates are down by over 50%

In 2021, 62% of respondents were compelled to be on camera during meetings. 23% said it was corporate policy, while 10% cited departmental policy and a further 26% said it was up to whoever led the meeting.

This year, the overall number is down to 35%, with corporate policy down more than half, dropping from 23% down to 10% That's a significant decline that suggests leaders have grasped the issue.

2021

62%
of respondents were compelled to be on camera

2023

35%
of respondents were compelled to be on camera

What mostly determines if you use a camera during an online work meeting?

27%
I feel peer pressure to have mine on if everyone else does

22%
Up to whoever is running the meeting

19%
It is up to me and I prefer to turn mine on

18%
It is up to me and I prefer to keep mine off

10%
Corporate policy to have cameras on during meetings

3%
My camera is on all the time while I'm working, including meetings

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Peer pressure continues to be an issue.

However, there is one troubling development. Our 2023 data showed a slight increase in the number of respondents feeling peer pressure to turn on video up slightly from 26% in 2021.

Research has shown that peer pressure plays a pivotal role in camera usage, particularly among younger workers. And this holds true regardless of the presence of a corporate or departmental policy .

This means that meeting leaders need to reinforce and emphasize that "cameras are optional" to help those who feel less comfortable on camera – turn it off.
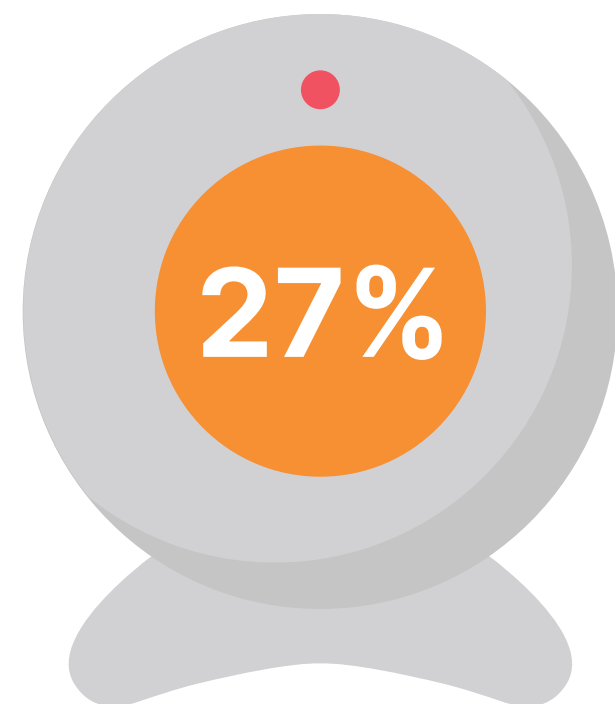
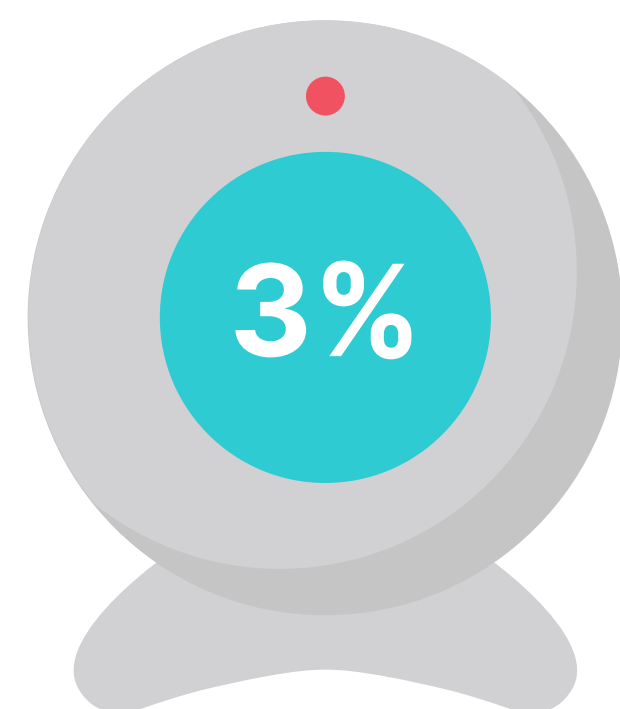**27%** **of respondents reported turning on their cameras due to peer pressure.**

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"Honestly I don't think meeting / zoom fatigue is really an issue. It's a much better option than having to be in the office in my opinion. No contest. Remote is better in everyway. I leave my camera [on] as a matter of courtesy."

MALE | 40s | JUNIOR MANAGEMENT | REMOTE | AMBIVERT

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Cameras on All. The. Time.

We also find it troubling that 3% of respondents reported that their camera was on all the time, down slightly from the 4% that was reported in 2021.

3%

of respondents reported that their camera was on all the time

"I have worked with a team that hung out in a video call all day which I thought was a pretty weird thing to do. Personally, I generally keep my camera off even when talking to close colleagues, though occasionally if trying to explain something I will turn it on to help communication. "

MALE | 40S | UPPER MANAGEMENT | REMOTE | SOMEWHAT INTROVERTED

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Managers need to reinforce "camera optional".

The peer pressure issue shows that managers need to "walk the talk" and reinforce at all meetings that being off camera is individual choice. Our own company policy is that video should never be mandatory.

If your employee would rather not turn on their camera, they should not have to. Setting aside multi-tasking, for many people being on video increases anxiety, so the best option is to allow the individual to decide.

"It's just exhausting having to stare at a camera constantly as this not is not normal behaviour. I also think it can be very invasive."

MALE | 40S | PROFESSIONAL | NON-MANAGER | HYBRID | SOMEWHAT INTROVERTED

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1:1 MEETINGS - HOW OFTEN?

If managers are looking to cut down on meetings, could the weekly 1:1 be a candidate? After 70% of respondents responded they preferred 1:1's less often, we dove into 1:1 meetings and asked our respondents for additional feedback.

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Does the weekly 1:1 meeting need a re-think?

With the increase in remote and hybrid work, the tradition of the one-on-one meeting between manager and team member has become all the more important. However, this seems to be changing in terms of how often such meetings should be held.

Most traditional management enthusiasts prefer weekly one-on-ones. But only 30% of our 2023 respondents believe they should be weekly, which we suspect is due to the increase in other meetings, creating less time for these than in a traditional office environment.

In our survey, nearly one in four reported that 1:1s should take place every other week (24%), monthly (23%) or as needed (23%).

If you participate in regular manager-employee one-on-one meetings, how often should these occur?

30% WEEKLY

24% EVERY OTHER WEEK

23% AS NEEDED

23% MONTHLY

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Why are 1:1 meeting frequencies declining?

We decided to delve further into this topic with 900 of our survey respondents, to understand why the traditional 1:1 weekly meeting cadence appears to be declining.

We added an additional question to understand if managers had been trained in 1:1 meetings to see if the reason 1:1s were less frequent was because they were just poorly run. Of the people who responded, 51% reported that they had been trained in how to conduct 1:1 meetings.

I have been trained to do 1:1s

TRUE 51%	FALSE 49%

"...Meetings have become too frequent, and one-to-ones are only necessary on a bi-weekly or monthly basis."

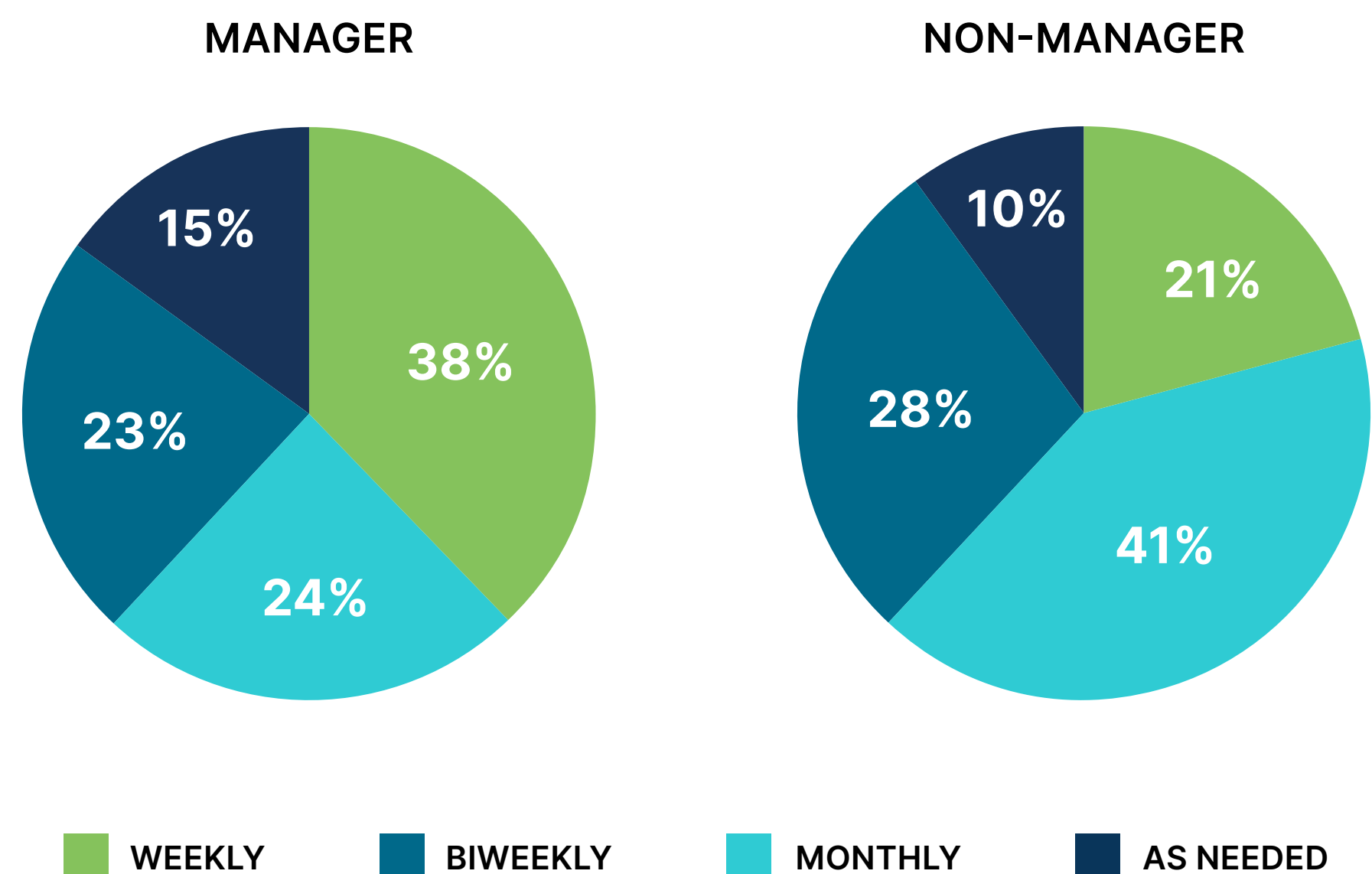**MALE | 30S | UPPER MANAGEMENT | HYBRID | TRAINED IN 1:1S – PREFER BI-WEEKLY AMBIVERT**

VIRTIRA

"Because it's important to check in with your team and be able to guide them. Not all people will come forth to a manager and ask for help or guidance..."

FEMALE | 30S | PROFESSIONAL | NON-MANAGER | HYBRID
NOT TRAINED IN 1:1S - PREFER BI-WEEKLY | AMBIVERT

VIRTIRA

Managers still prefer 1:1s more frequently.

Between managers and non-managers, as in other similar studies, managers have a higher preference for conducting 1:1 meetings more frequently.

38% of managers reported preferring weekly 1:1s while only 21% of non-managers reported wanting them that often, and instead preferred them (41%) bi-weekly.

MANAGER

15%
23%
38%
24%

NON-MANAGER

10%
21%
28%
41%

- ■ WEEKLY
- ■ BIWEEKLY
- ■ MONTHLY
- ■ AS NEEDED

"My preference is weekly but I get that this shouldn't be the standard for all staff and managers should understand what works best for them. I think anything beyond monthly is not suitable"

MALE | 30S | MIDDLE MANAGEMENT | HYBRID TRAINED IN 1:1S – PREFER WEEKLY | VERY INTROVERTED

VIRTIRA

From the comments: when should 1:1 meetings be more frequent?

Overall, having more frequent 1:1 meetings is tied to improving performance – either where there are gaps - or when the employee requests more help or the manager sees the employee needs help. Similarly, when there is something new - new employees or team members and there's a need to help bring them up to speed, when there is a lot of organizational change, or there is a recent promotion.

27%
Performance or work quality issues or PIP

19%
Flex when employee requests and manager agrees

18%
New employees or team members or promotion

15%
Manager sees employee struggling

9%
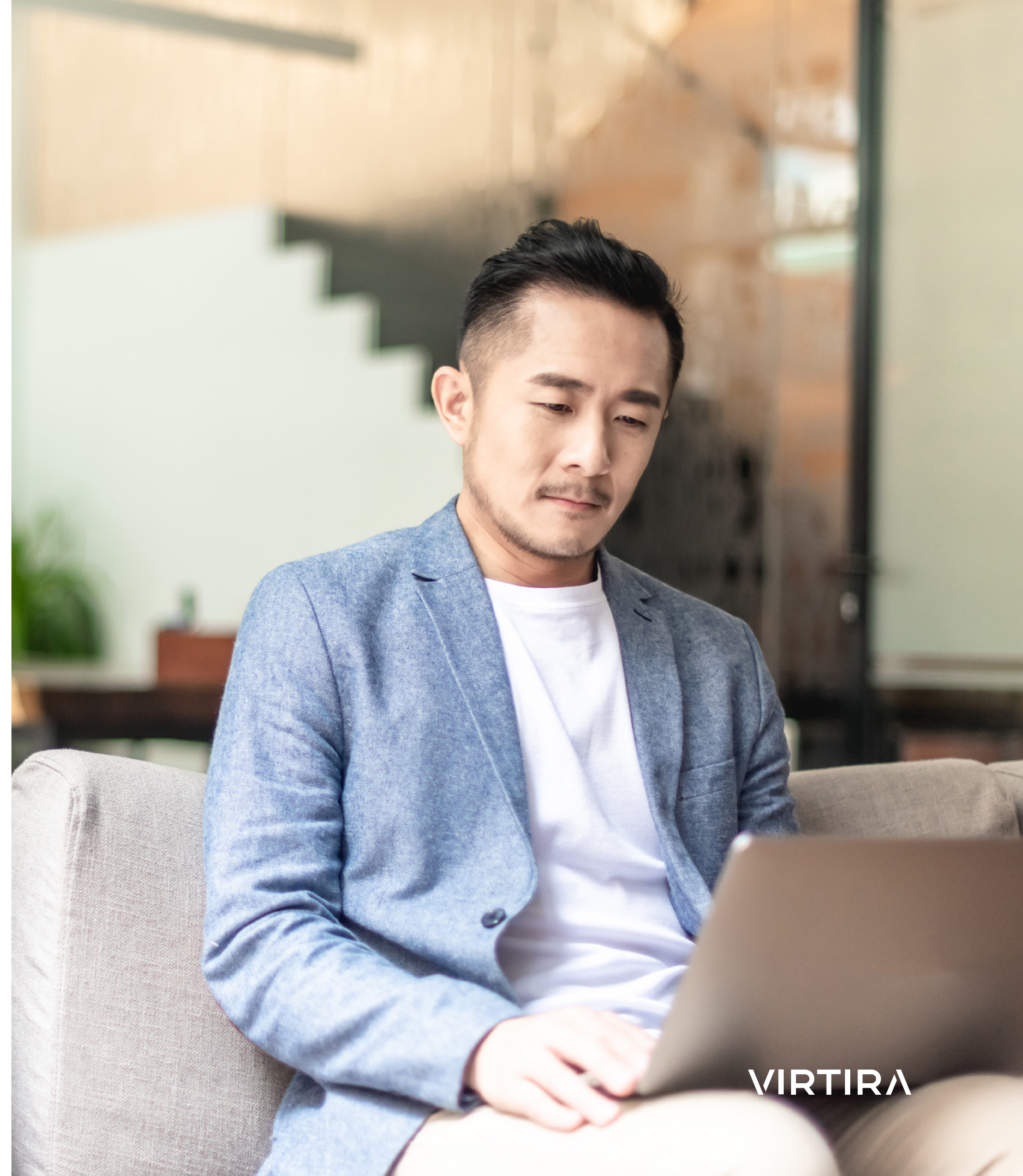Heavy workloads or deadlines

7%
Changing workplace or new project

VIRTIRA

"It depends on the work schedules of both parties. Some periods can be very intense and require more regular 1:1's, others are quieter and require less contact."

FEMALE | 50S | MANAGER | HYBRID | TRAINED IN 1:1S - PREFER BI-WEEKLY | AMBIVERT

VIRTIRA

From the comments: when should 1:1s be less frequent?

Many organizations use on-line dashboard and status tools to reduce meeting frequency. There's also consensus that as long as staff are experienced, with set goals they are working towards and no issues to discuss, that 1:1s can be less frequent, although not less than monthly. In addition, the overall trend appears to be to give employees the opportunity to set the schedule, assuming there are no performance issues and the manager works with each one to establish a cadence that works.

16%

Have regular contact and collaboration. Use status tools.

15%

Flex when manager and employee agree

15%

No issues, stable, nothing to discuss

13%

Experienced autonomous staff

12%

Performance good with set goals

11%

Never less than monthly

VIRTIRA

"... I don't want a manager that is breathing down my neck all the time - I need space to do my job."

MALE | 30s | ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF | NON-MANAGER | HYBRID
NOT TRAINED IN 1:1S - PREFER BI-WEEKLY | SOMEWHAT INTROVERTED

VIRTIRA

Could fewer 1:1s spike productivity?

Let's assume your one-on-ones generally last half an hour each. You have one boss, and 10 managers, each manager in your firm has 5 direct reports. Shifting 1:1 meetings from weekly to bi-weekly meetings would free up 1,062.5 working hours per year in that organization, based on 50 weeks a year.
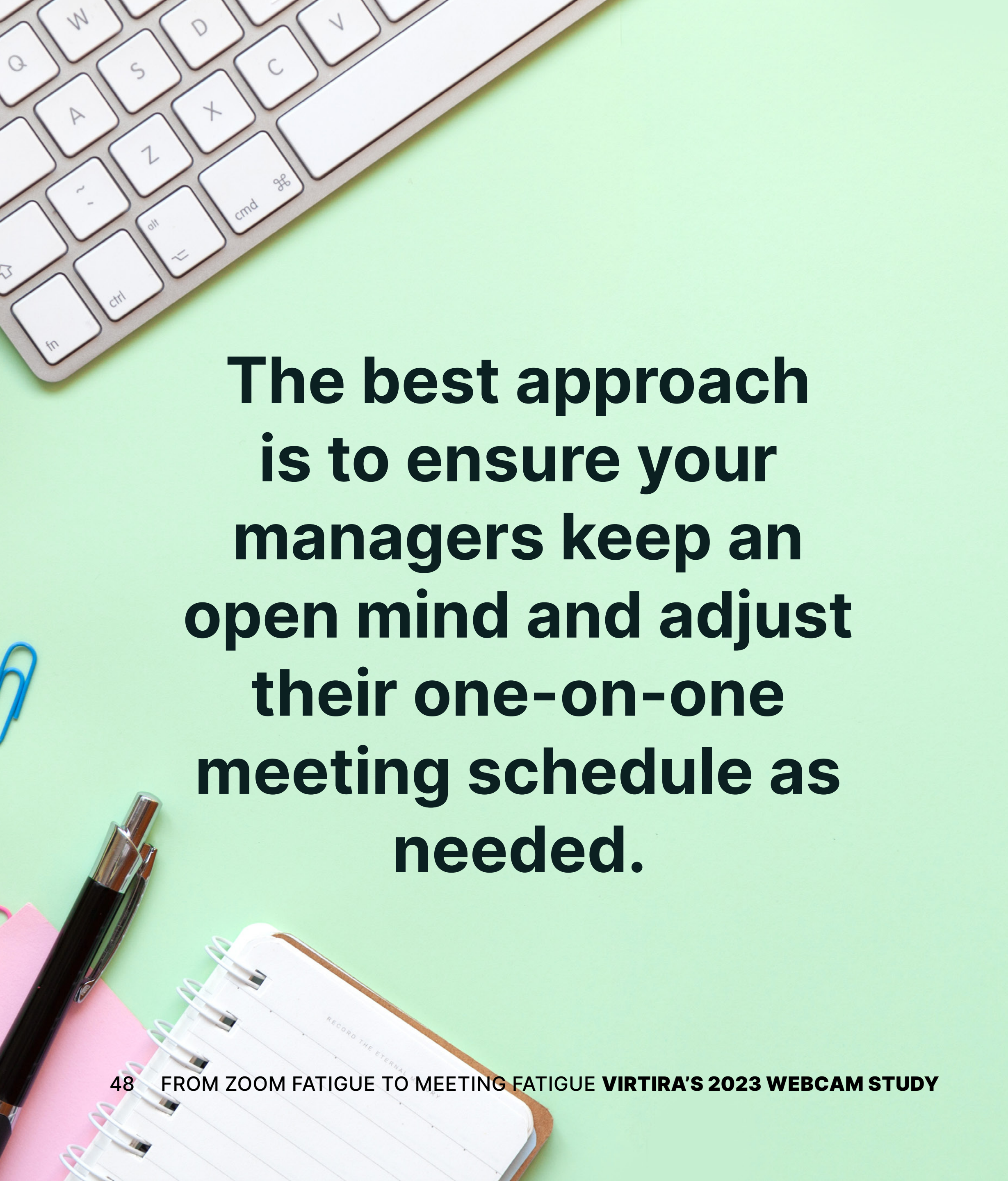
= 5 Hours per Week

= 7.5 Hours per Week
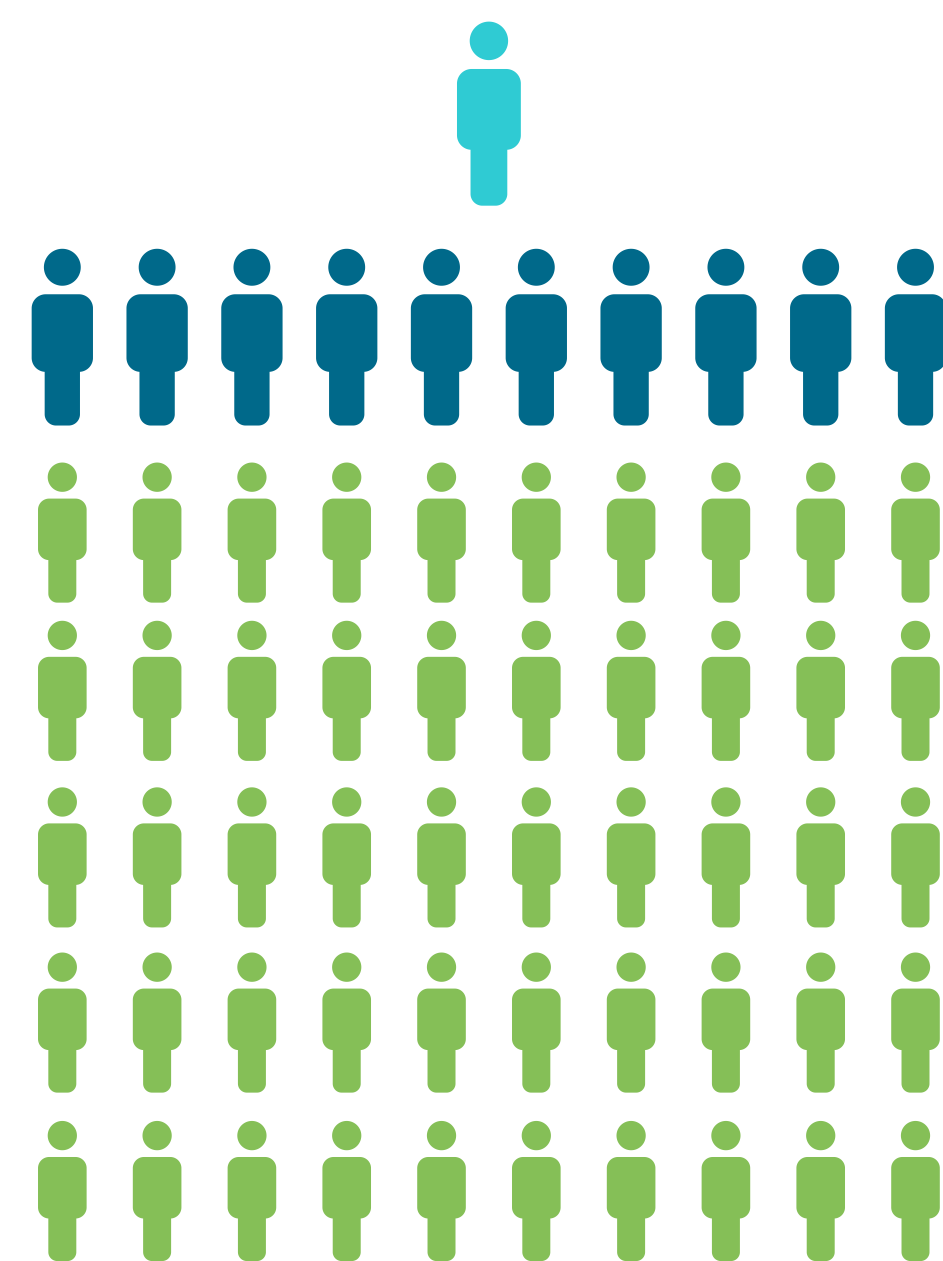
= 30 Hours per Week

How much time do weekly 1:1s take?

42.5 hrs / week

2,125 hrs / year

Switching to bi-weekly would save over 1,000 hours per year.

VIRTIRA

The best approach is to ensure your managers keep an open mind and adjust their one-on-one meeting schedule as needed.

Flex 1:1 meetings to your workflow and staff requirements.

The simple fact is that some staffers will indeed need some weekly hand-holding, while more experienced hands might only need a monthly check-in. Thus, the best approach is to ensure your managers keep an open mind and adjust their one-on-one meeting schedule as needed.

"[Weekly] is the longest you should leave someone to their own devices and also weekly is a good opportunity to check in on their well-being too."

FEMALE | 30S | MIDDLE MANAGEMENT | HYBRID

TRAINED IN 1:1S – PREFER WEEKLY | SOMEWHAT INTROVERTED

VIRTIRA

STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS

Here's our suggestions for steps that organizations can take to significantly reduce "*Zoom and Meeting Fatigue*".

VIRTIRA

Regularly audit meeting frequency.

Our study shows that many firms are scheduling too many meetings, because it's easy to do so, because they believe they are needed with staffers in different locations, and because they have yet to grasp the possibilities of today's online tools.

Thus, the first step is to regularly review the number of meetings held by each department. Is the total increasing, and if so why? We recommend doing this quarterly to ensure your managers aren't overloading their staffers with calls. Even so, some people may not speak up if you do this during a meeting, so augment any audit with employee surveys, or include it in your performance review cadence.

And ask everyone to build in breaks between calls.

"I definitely have meeting fatigue – multiple back to back virtual meetings every day."

FEMALE | 30S | CONSULTANT | NON-MANAGER | REMOTE | AMBIVERT

VIRTIRA

Always ask: "Is this meeting/ attendee necessary?"

Some meetings are absolutely necessary, like a monthly project review, a regular one-on-one call, or an all-hands company gathering. But many meetings have barely the flimsiest reason for being scheduled, and many meetings have far too long of an invite list.

Such oversights waste employee time, which is why it's wise for managers to constantly ask if an upcoming meeting is necessary, and if each invite on the list is expected to participate. Populating calls with unnecessary participants erodes productivity, while paring the invite list ensures more efficient use of resources and time.

"Lots of unnecessary meetings that could easily be a quick email or a phone call rather than a full blown meeting including meetings I am involved in which do not impact my department."

MALE | 30S | MIDDLE MANAGEMENT | HYBRID | VERY INTROVERTED

VIRTIRA

Empower employees to say no to last minute calls.

One of our core values at Virtira is "Say No to Firedrills", last minute requests that divert attention from priority tasks. "Say No to Last Minute Calls" might be on our list for our next core values review because it is fundamental to productivity. We recommend reinforcing that last-minute (hey have you got a sec) meetings are counterproductive and coaching all staff to ask "why" this can't be done via collaboration tools.

When attendees are unable to prepare or decline, you're setting yourself up for a waste of time. One of the best ways to ensure a meeting is necessary is to put together a thorough agenda in advance. If, upon reviewing the agenda, the manager finds most tasks can be achieved via email, maybe it's best to just cancel.

"There is an issue with others being able to see whereabouts and schedule meetings last minute. If it were in person that wouldn't be accepted."

MALE | 30S | PROFESSIONAL | NON-MANAGER | HYBRID | SOMEWHAT EXTROVERTED

VIRTIRA

Train all staff how to collaborate more, meet less.

Meetings cannot wholly replace the benefits of informal office run-ins or casual chats in the break room. But businesses can begin to bridge this gap with an informed and wise of use of the good old email and collaboration tools, which everyone had to employ during the pandemic.

Executives and managers should budget for company-wide "how to collaborate" training to enable uninterrupted access to key bits of information, immediate and direct communications, and improved cooperation 24/7.

This will help employees ease into asynchronous work. Your staffers likely live and work in different time zones and might keep their own schedules, yet they can still collaborate efficiently, and should be able to do so.

"While it does help with connectivity, I feel there has been an increase in the number of meetings overall, for a lot more minor things that really could have been resolved without meeting."

FEMALE | 20S | MIDDLE MANAGEMENT | HYBRID | SOMEWHAT INTROVERTED

VIRTIRA

Train all staff how to plan and run a meeting.

If your managers and employees have little idea how to plan and run an effective meeting, your meetings are likely to waste a good deal of time. To ensure successful meetings, it's crucial to train everyone on:

- The value of a strong, clear agenda and purpose for each meeting

- Limiting tangential discussions and jotting down issues to be moved up the chain

- Paring the attendee list and inviting only those relevant to meeting objectives

- Make it easy for everyone to be on camera or off, as they choose

- Writing and communicating the agreed commitments, deadlines, and assigned tasks

This last step may also involve choosing a designated note-taker or investing in a reliable meeting notes tool. It's also a good idea to record the meeting just in case a review is later needed for clarification.

Either way, by assigning responsibilities and clarifying deadlines, managers incentivize staffers and can then track progress and ensure subsequent meetings build upon achieved milestones.

VIRTIRA

Make the camera optional whenever possible.

Why are so many employees still mandated to to do meetings on camera? Because someone has confused the concept of building relationships with actually getting something done.

Most who work in offices are used to physically seeing other people, so, since the technology is available, why not do video interaction so there's still some face time involved? The truth is that aspect of webcams is important for team bonding, but here's a way to balance the social with the practical: everyone keep their webcams on for maybe three minutes or so to start a videoconference, then step back and let the person running the meeting (or someone presenting content) take up the whole screen.

As an exercise, why not do an anonymous poll and just see how many see the benefit of a bunch of talking heads? Frankly, unless it's a team-building exercise, there is no reason for everyone's head to be visible the whole time. All that does is make people feel obligated to stare at their webcams during the entire meeting, so they look like they're listening. Now, imagine a large in-person meeting where everybody stared at everyone else in the same way. In a conference room setting, people are generally looking down at their notepads or printed material. Create the same environment online.

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METHODOLOGY: WHO WE SURVEYED

We surveyed 1,489 full-time employees, managers, and executives across a range of commuting styles and worker types. We also analyzed over 1,500 comments to glean additional insights beyond the quantitative data.
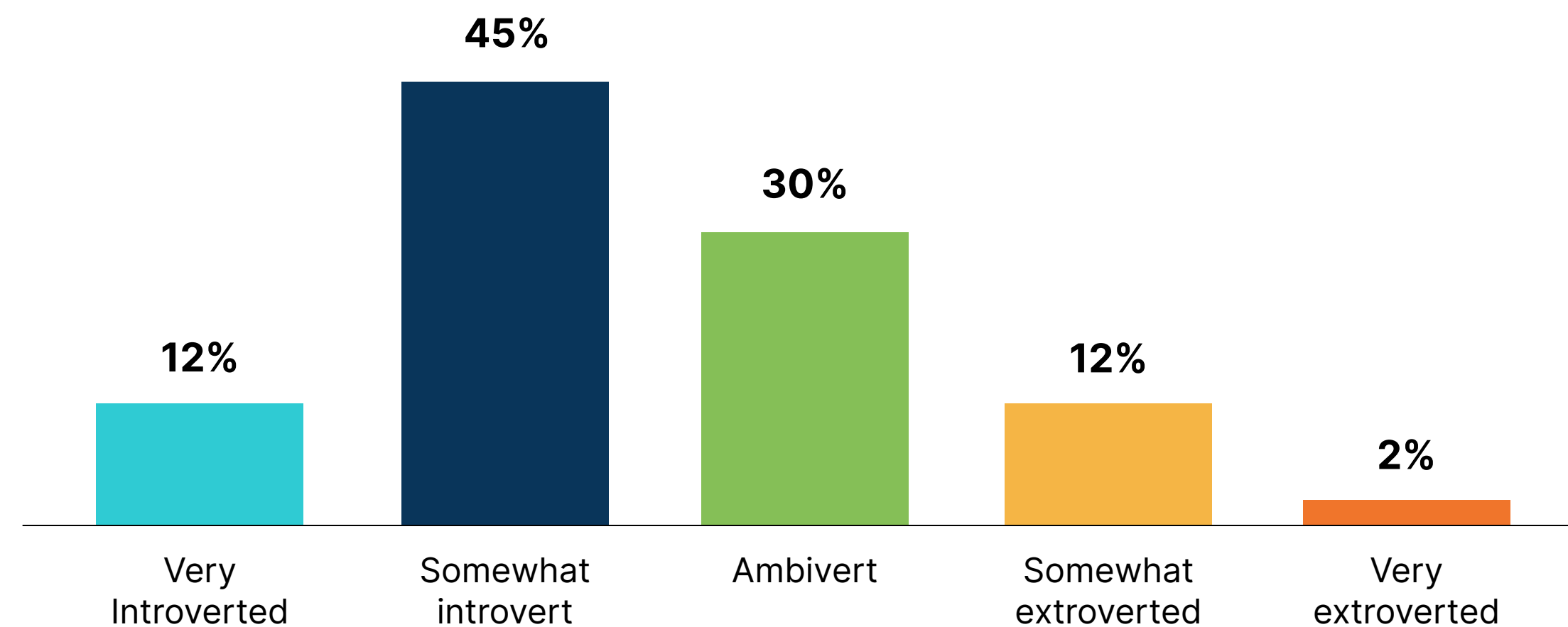
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Our survey methodology.

Survey data was collected during the period between June 10th and June 30th, 2023, using Prolific and Survey Monkey platforms. We ensured that a range of remote, hybrid and office workers were represented.

Our sample had responses from a sample comprising 1,489 full-time employees, managers, and executives.

We surveyed a range of commuting styles and worker types. In addition to the usual demographics questions, we surveyed how participants viewed themselves regarding introversion or extroversion, their training in 1:1 meetings, what industry they represented, company size and managerial levels.
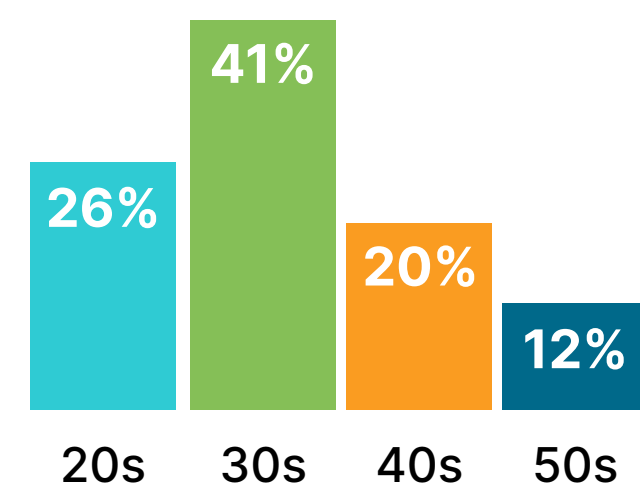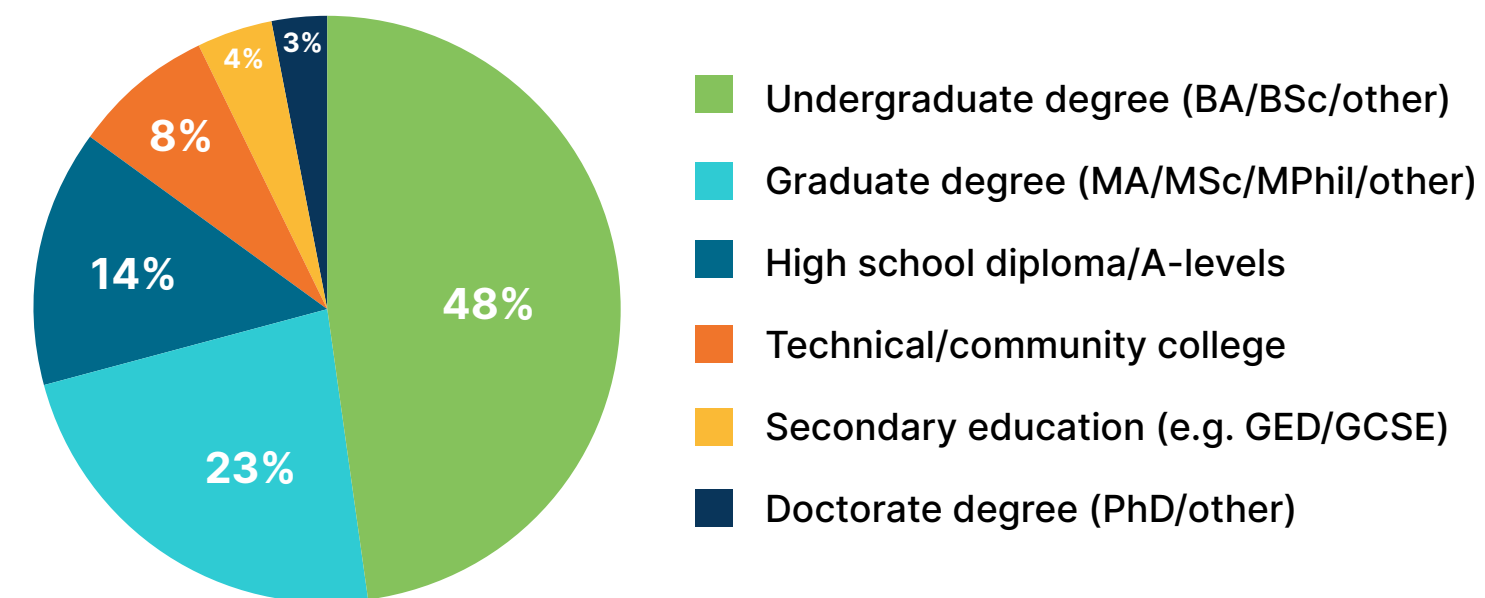
Personality Type

12%	45%	30%	12%	2%
Very Introverted	Somewhat introvert	Ambivert	Somewhat extroverted	Very extroverted

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Qualitative and quantitative analysis

Furthermore, we examined over 1,500 comments to gain additional insights.

Age Groups
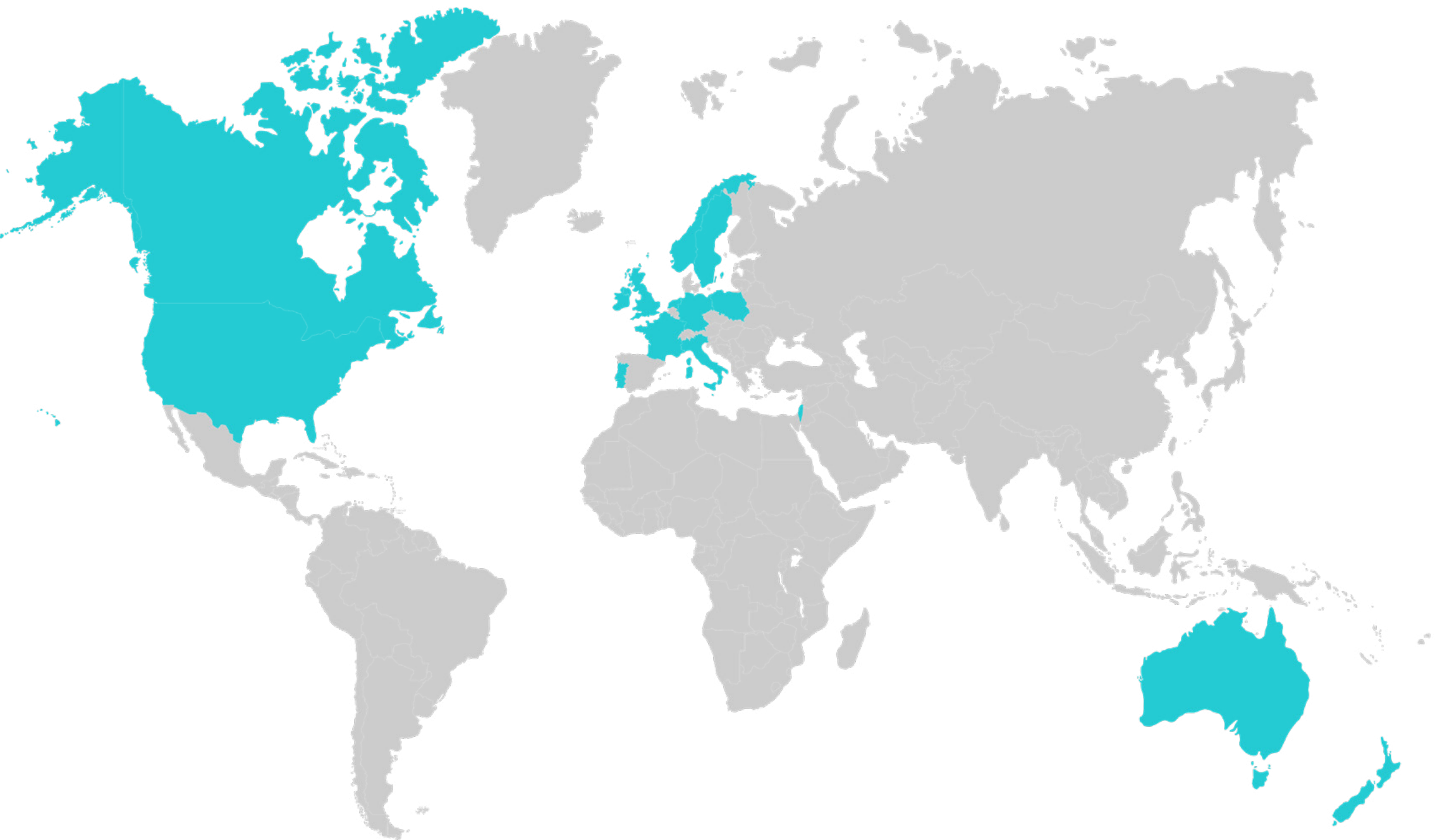
- 26% 20s
- 41% 30s
- 20% 40s
- 12% 50s

Educational Level

- 48% Undergraduate degree (BA/BSc/other)
- 23% Graduate degree (MA/MSc/MPhil/other)
- 14% High school diploma/A-levels
- 8% Technical/community college
- 4% Secondary education (e.g. GED/GCSE)
- 3% Doctorate degree (PhD/other)

Work Location

- 55% HYBRID
- 27% REMOTE
- 16% OFFICE
- 2% OTHER

Countries Represented

Australia	Ireland	New Zealand	Sweden
Canada	Israel	Norway	United Kingdom
France	Italy	Poland	United States
Germany	Netherlands	Portugal	

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Management, organizational size and industries

Our respondents had some management responsibilities at varying levels across a range of industries and company sizes.

Company Size

- 1000+ — 54%
- 50-249 — 18%
- 250-999 — 17%
- 10-49 — 11%

Management Status

MANAGER 54%

NON-MANAGER 46%

Job Role

Role	Percent
Trained Professional	29%
Middle Management	26%
Administrative Staff	15%
Junior Management	11%
Upper Management	7%
Consultant	5%
Support Staff	4%
Researcher	2%
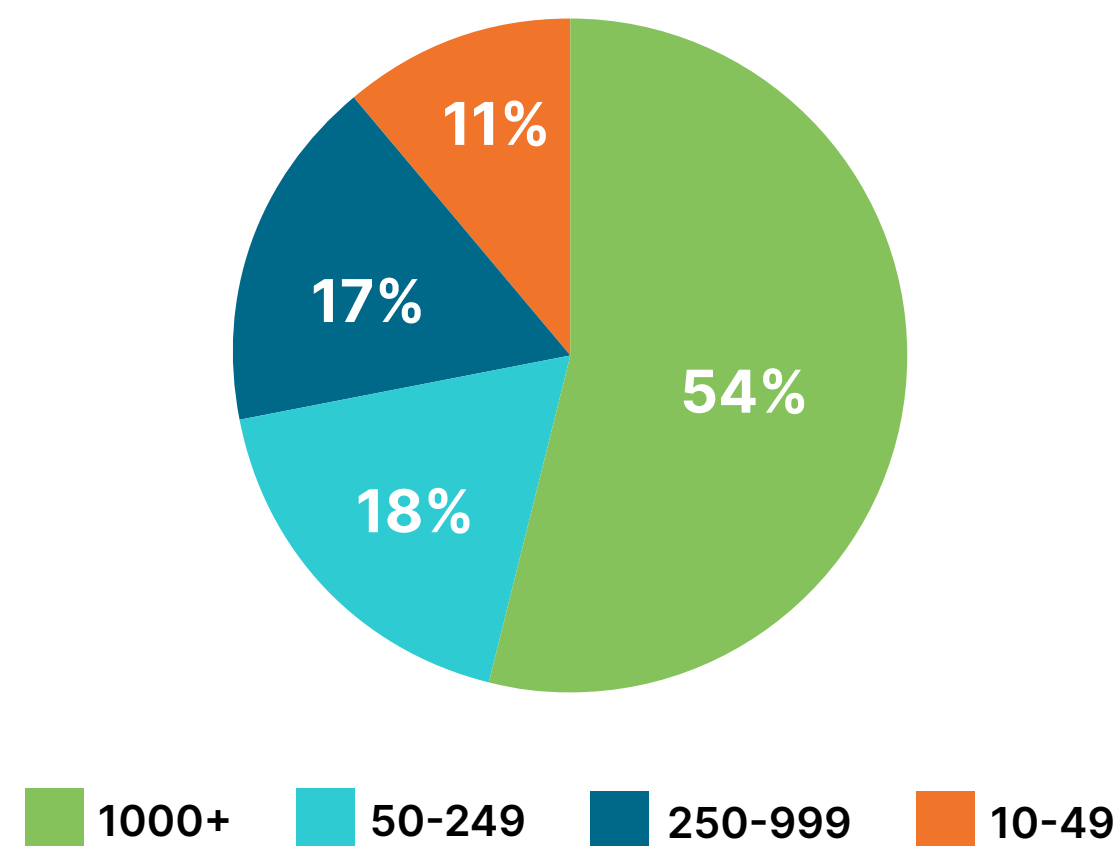
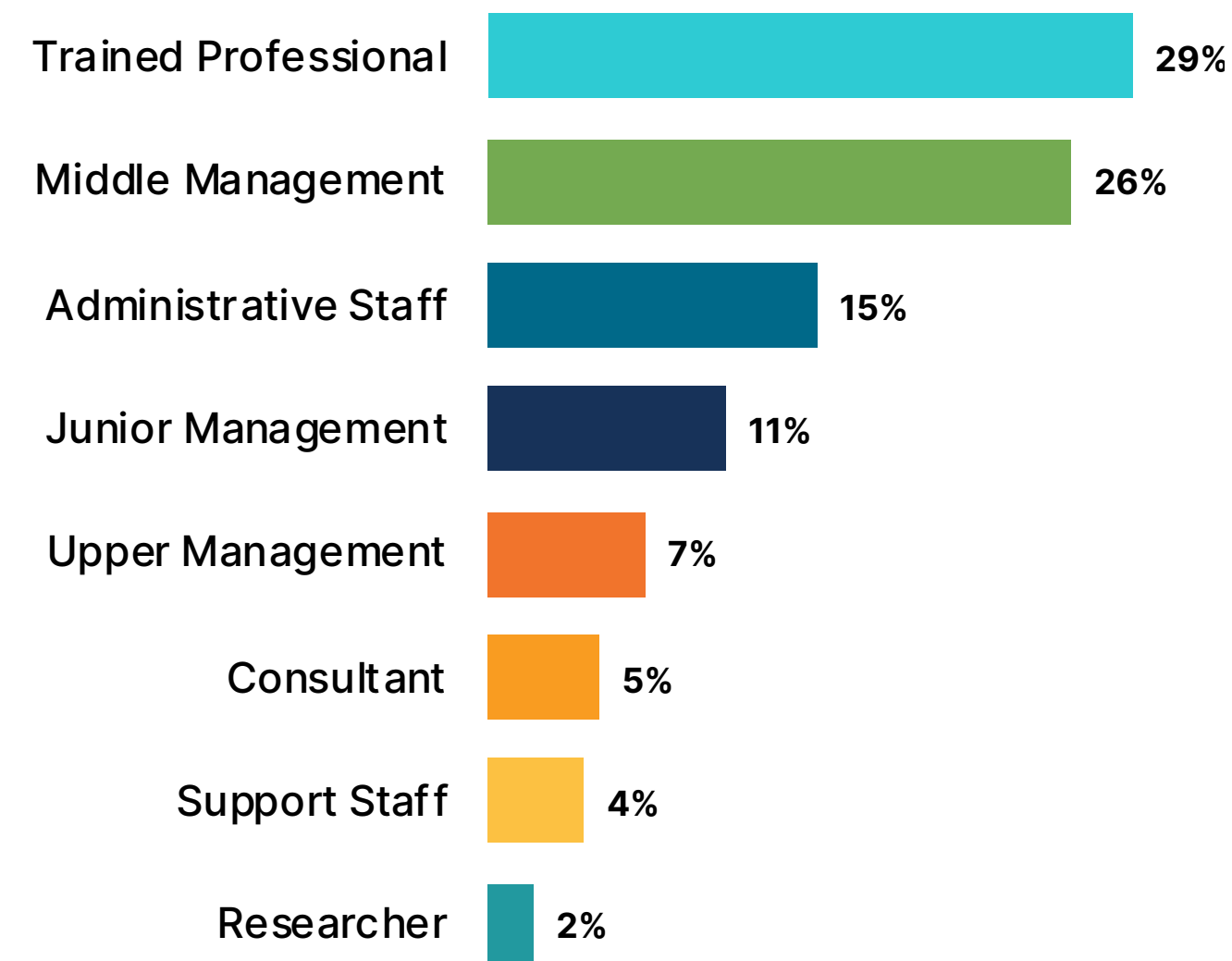## Top Industries Represented

Industry	Percent
Education & Training	16%
Government & Public Administration	15%
Information Technology	14%
Finance	14%
Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics	8%
Medicine	7%
Retail	6%
Business Management & Administration	5%
Marketing & Sales	4%
Manufacturing	4%
Transportation, Distribution & Logistics	4%
Legal	3%

In questions dealing with sex and gender, we relied on the Prolific survey platforms self reporting community guidelines. We did not filter or exclude any groups other than has been reported in this section here.

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We hope this gives you some ideas into how to create more productive organizations.

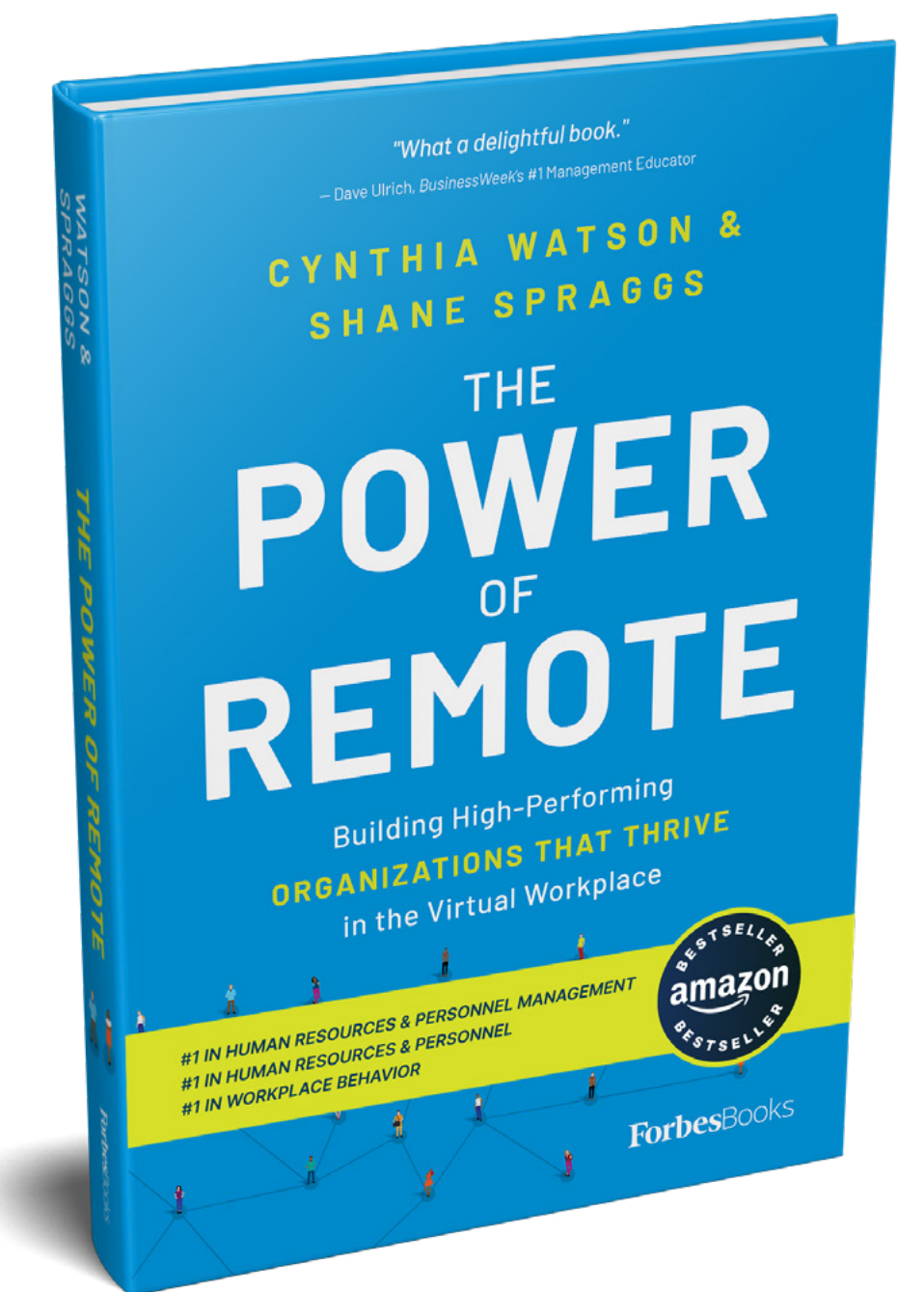For more insights, visit our website, where we have downloadable guides, courses and links to our best selling book on how to be productive in any work environment.

Wishing you a more productive (and happier) workforce.

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TOOLS & RESOURCES
Remote Work Agreement Sample Clauses

POWER OF REMOTE

AS FEATURED IN
Forbes | Books

Netiquette
The Perfect Online Meeting

TOOLS & RESOURCES

Meeting Agenda Template

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"What a delightful book."
— Dave Ulrich, BusinessWeek's #1 Management Educator

CYNTHIA WATSON &
SHANE SPRAGGS

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