

# RETURNING TO EMPLOYMENT FOLLOWING A DIAGNOSIS OF CANCER: AN IRISH SURVEY

## DATE

16<sup>th</sup> February 2021

## AUTHOR

Sheelah Connolly, Helen  
Russell, Edward Henry



# Background

- Previous research suggests that not all people of working age diagnosed with cancer can and do return to work
- While for some this is a personal decision, for others, personal or work-related factors can act as a barrier to returning to work

# Aim of research

To explore the experience of returning to employment following a diagnosis of cancer in Ireland

# Methods

- ESRI/ICS developed “Returning to Work” questionnaire
- Open to those
  - In formal employment at diagnosis
  - Diagnosed 2010-2020
  - Aged <65 at time of diagnosis

# Questionnaire

Questionnaire included questions on

- Working status
- Impact of diagnosis on career prospects
- Support from employer
- Reasons for returning to employment
- Barriers and facilitators to returning to employment
- Health status
- Demographic and socio-economic status

# Questionnaire respondents

- 377 unique responses to the online questionnaire
- Data were weighted to address the low response rate from some group
- Not all respondents were asked all questions
- Not all respondents answered all questions

# Profile of respondents – sex and age-group

Characteristic		Percentage
<b>Sex</b>		
	Male	35%
	Female	65%
<b>Age-group</b>		
	<35	4%
	35-44	28%
	45-54	26%
	55-64	36%
	65+	6%

# Profile of respondents – site, stage of cancer

Characteristic	Percentage
<b>Site of cancer</b>	
Breast	17%
Colorectal	7%
Cervix	24%
Prostate	9%
Lymphoma	3%
Skin	6%
Lung	5%
Ovary	1%
Other	28%
<b>Stage of cancer</b>	
0	2%
1	30%
2	20%
3	20%
4	10%
Don't know	18%



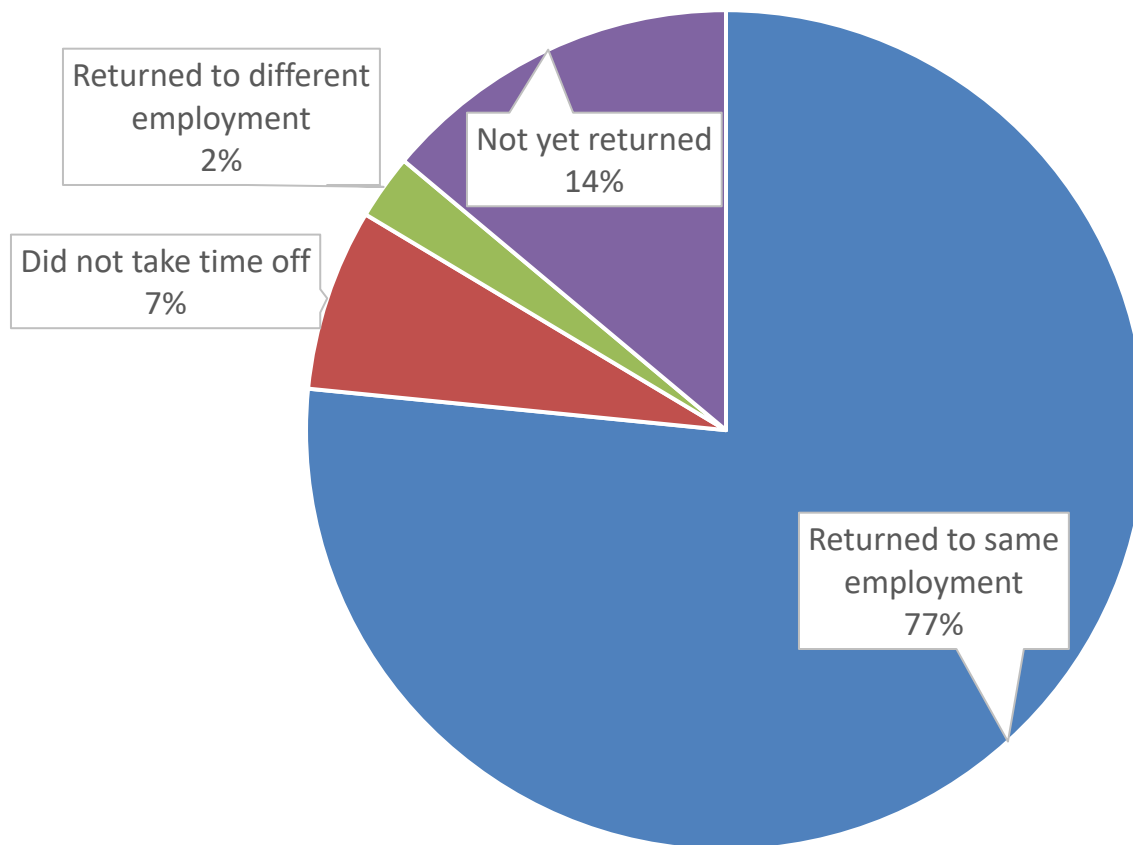
# Profile of respondents – current health issues

Current health issues	Percentage
Tiredness	86%
Insomnia/disturbed sleep	71%
Anxiety	66%
Difficulty remembering things	62%
Pain	56%
Bowel problems	44%
Shortness of breath	35%
Nausea	22%
Lack of appetite	20%
Behavioural problems	20%
Problem passing urine	19%

# Profile of respondents – employment characteristics

Characteristic	Percentage
<b>Employment status</b>	
Employee	86%
Self-employed	13%
On state training/employment scheme	1%
<b>Employment sector</b>	
Public sector	37%
Semi-state sector	2%
The not-for-profit sector	4%
Private sector	57%

# Profile of respondents – current employment situation (n=373)



# Impact of cancer diagnosis on career prospects

- Impact of cancer diagnosis on career prospects (n=375)
  - No impact - 51%
  - Negative impact - 47%
  - Positive impact - 3%

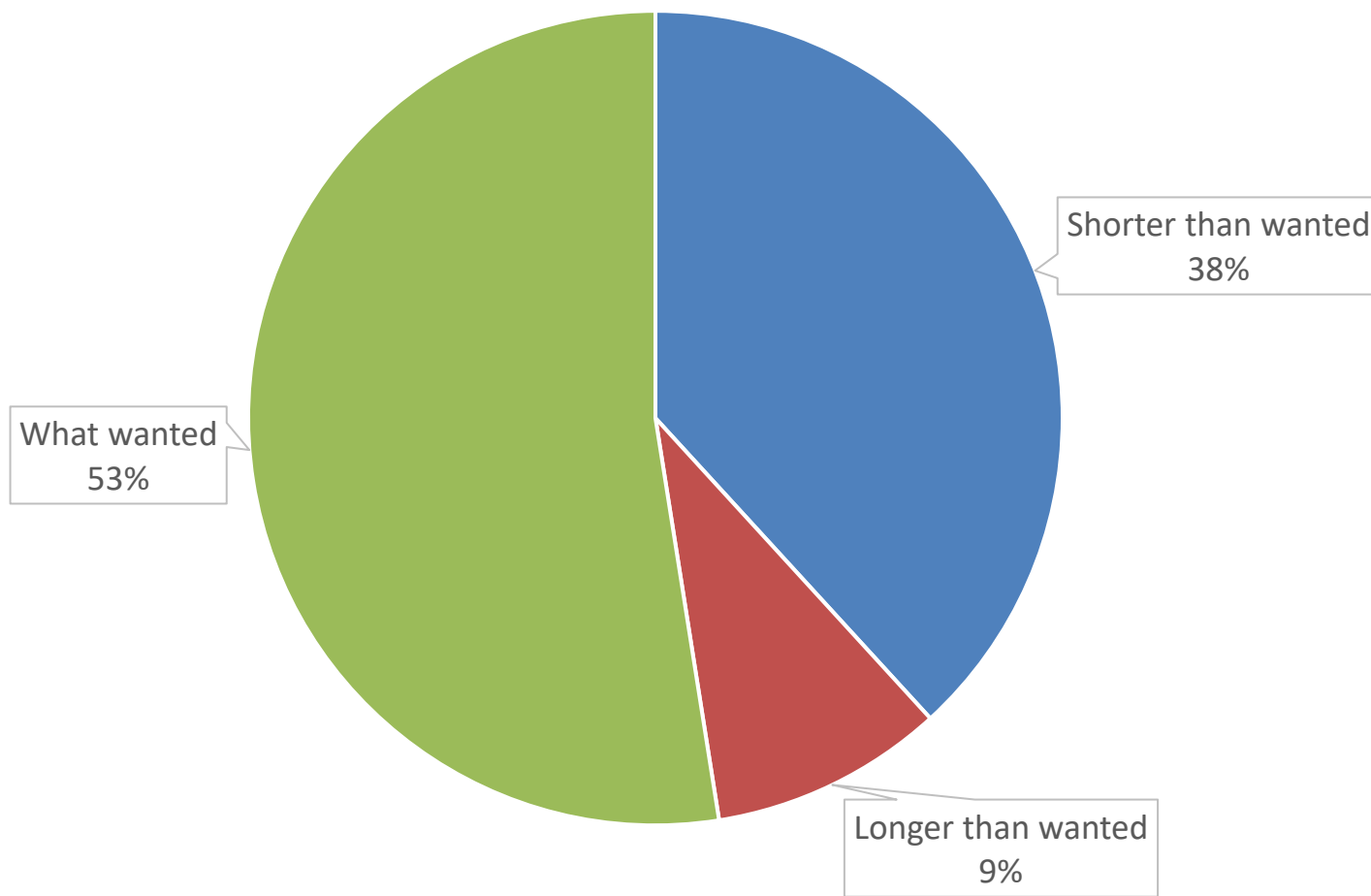
# Impact of cancer diagnosis on career prospects

- Differences observed across groups in % reporting negative impact
  - **Sex:** Female (53%); males (35%)
  - **Age group:** <35 (69%); 55-64 (33%)
  - **Employment status:** Employee (44%); self-employed (61%)
  - **Sector:** Public (59%); Private (39%)
- **Length of leave also important:** For those reporting a negative impact – average length of leave was 51 weeks relative to 32 weeks for those that did not report a negative impact

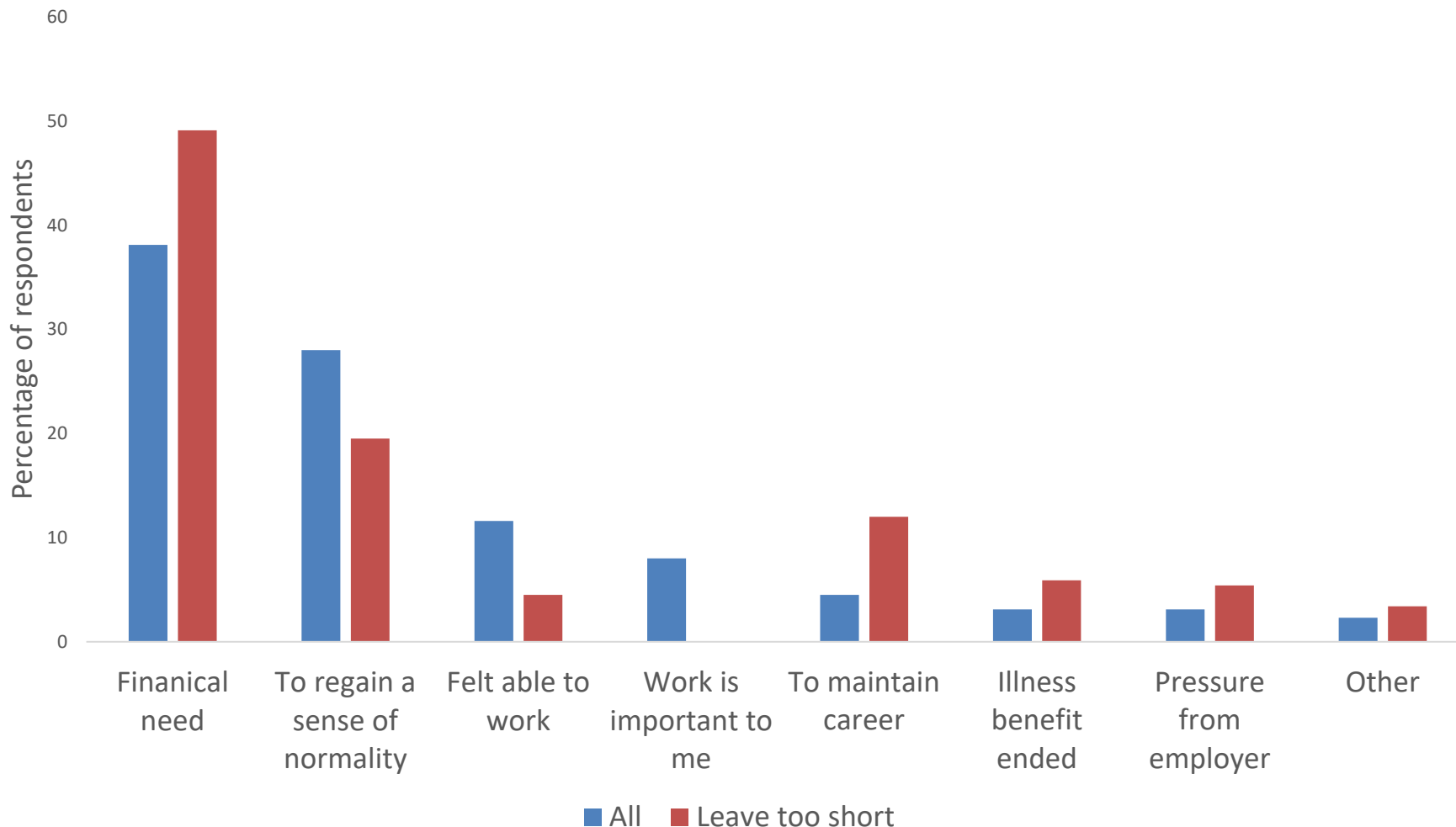
## Impact of cancer diagnosis on career prospects

- The observed difference between males and females were largely explained by the fact that a larger proportion of women work in the public sector and have longer length of leave relative to males

## Reported appropriateness of length of leave (n=319)

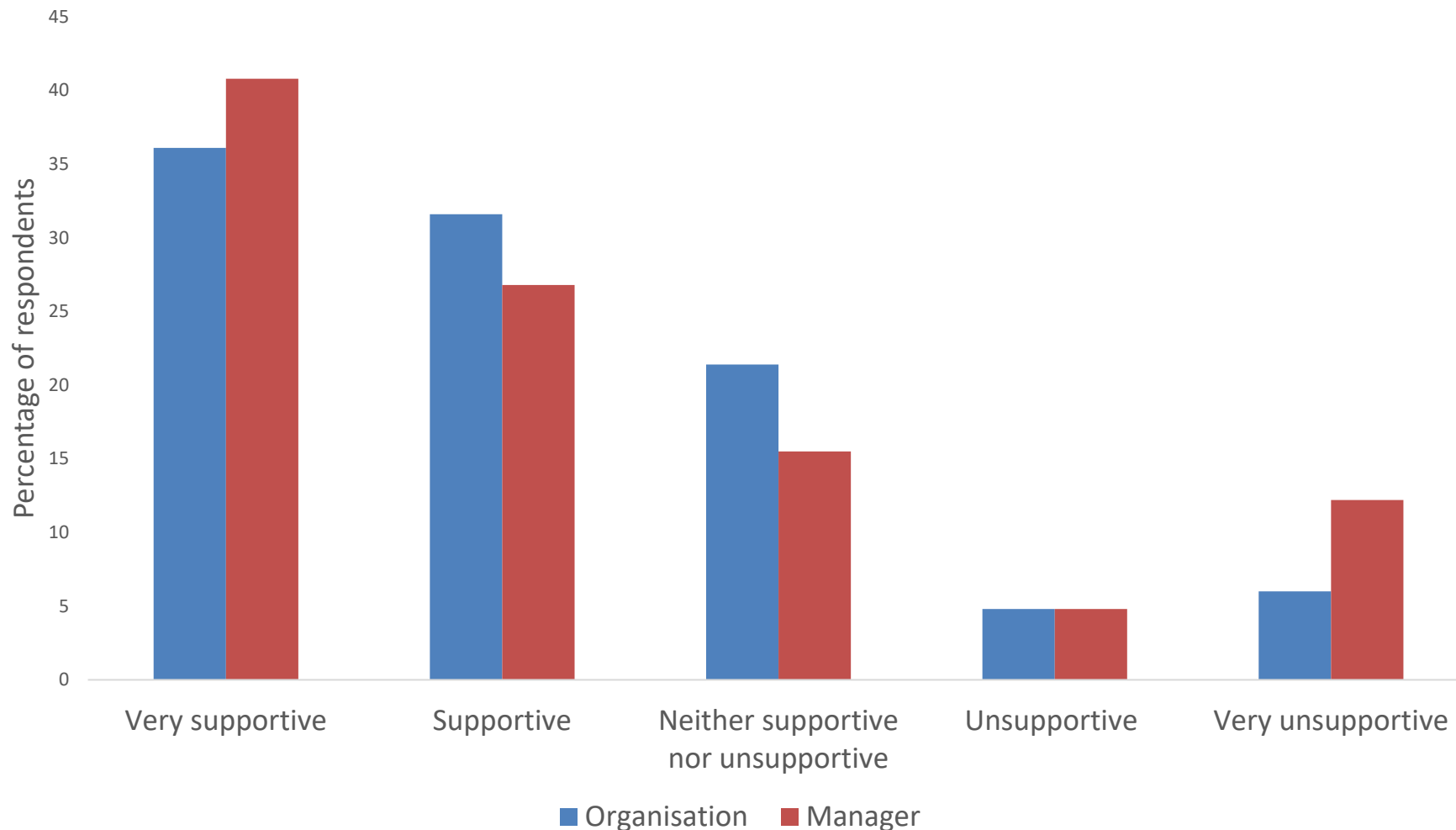


# Main reason for returning to employment (n=319 for all; n=103 for “Leave too short”)





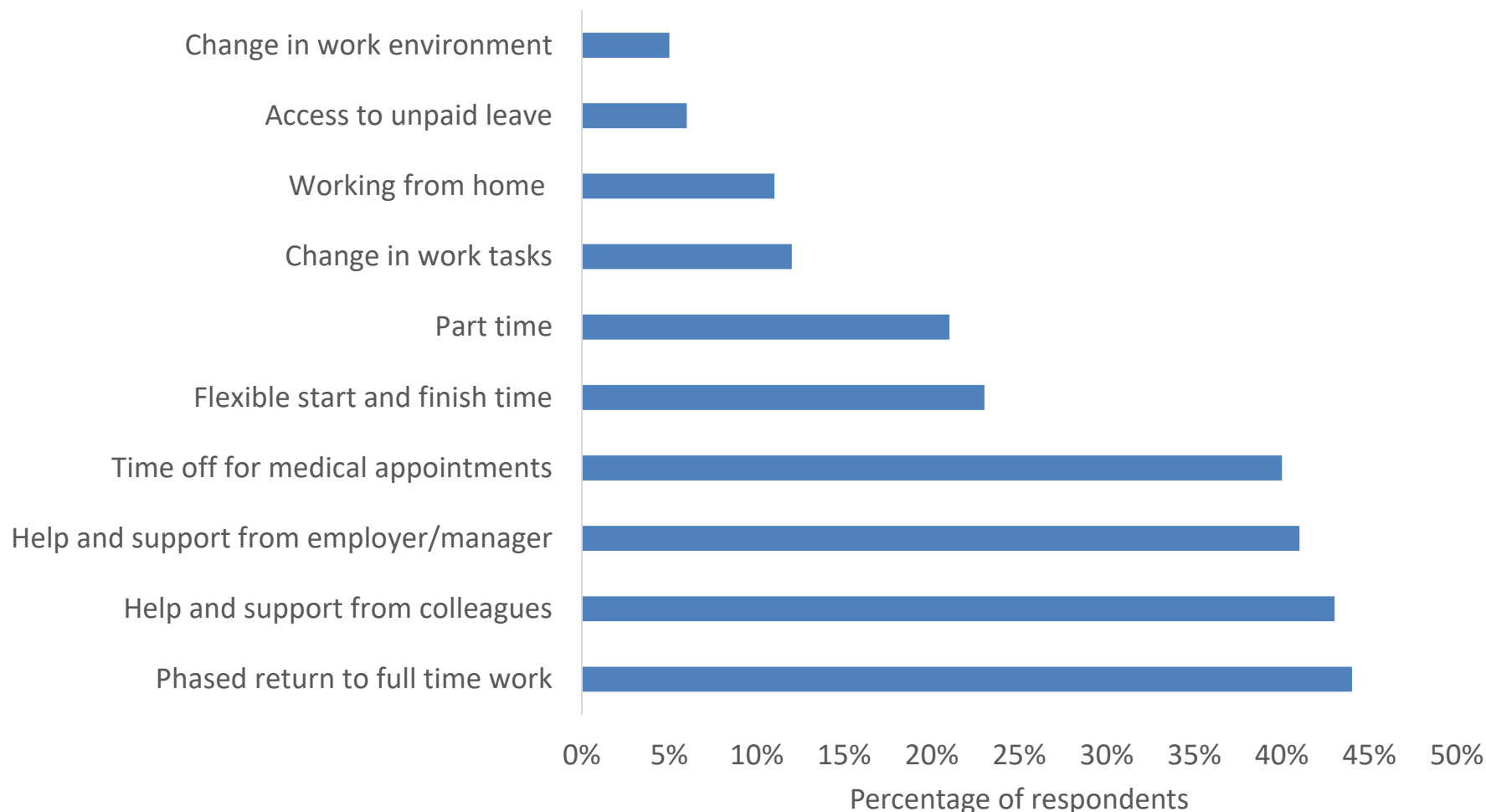
## Level of support offered by organisation/manager (n=299/290)



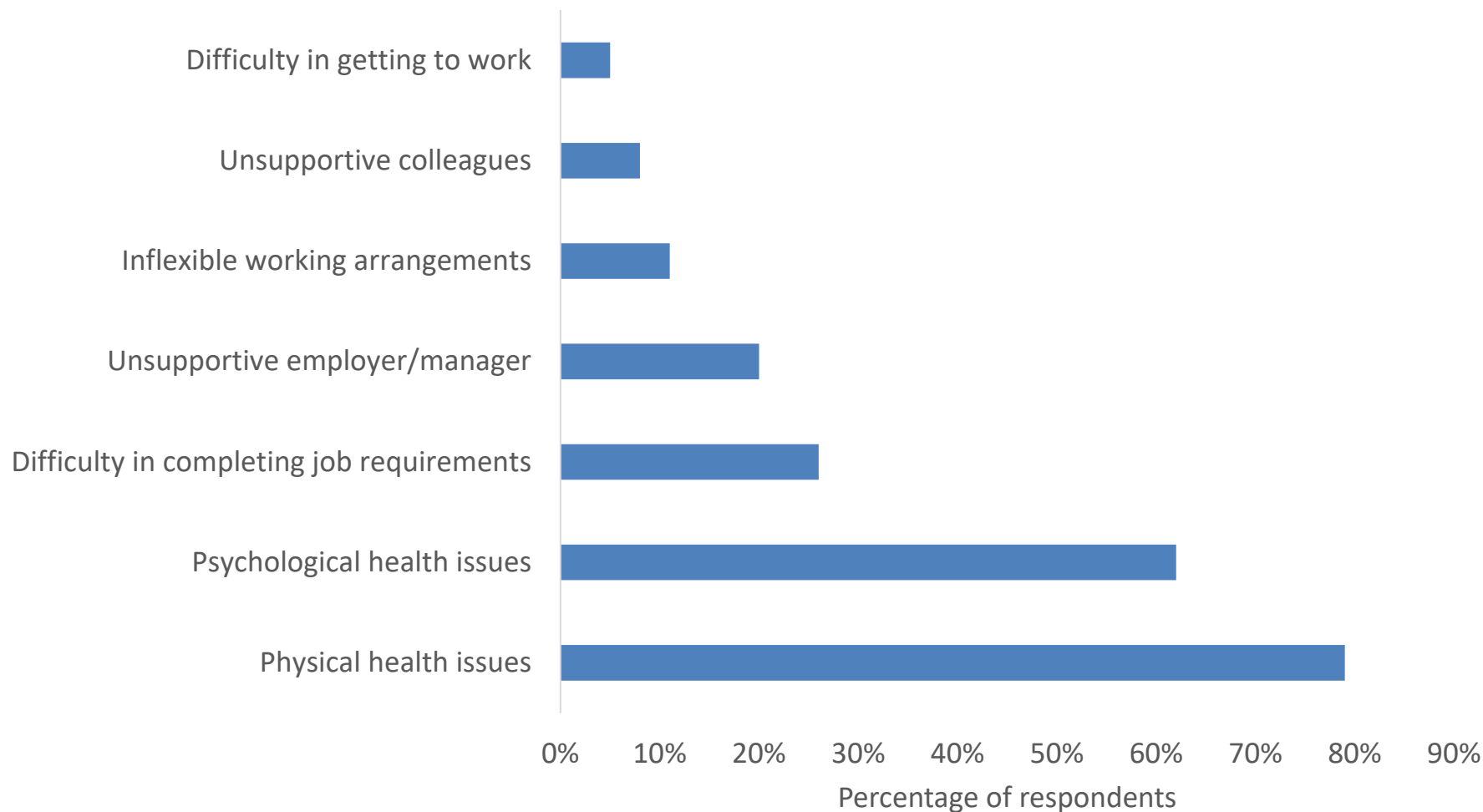
## Level of support offered by organisation/manager

- Differences observed across groups
  - **Organisation support** – higher proportion reporting unsupportive/very unsupportive organisation among public sector respondents and those in small organisations
  - **Managerial support** - higher proportion reporting unsupportive/very unsupportive manager among males, public sector respondents

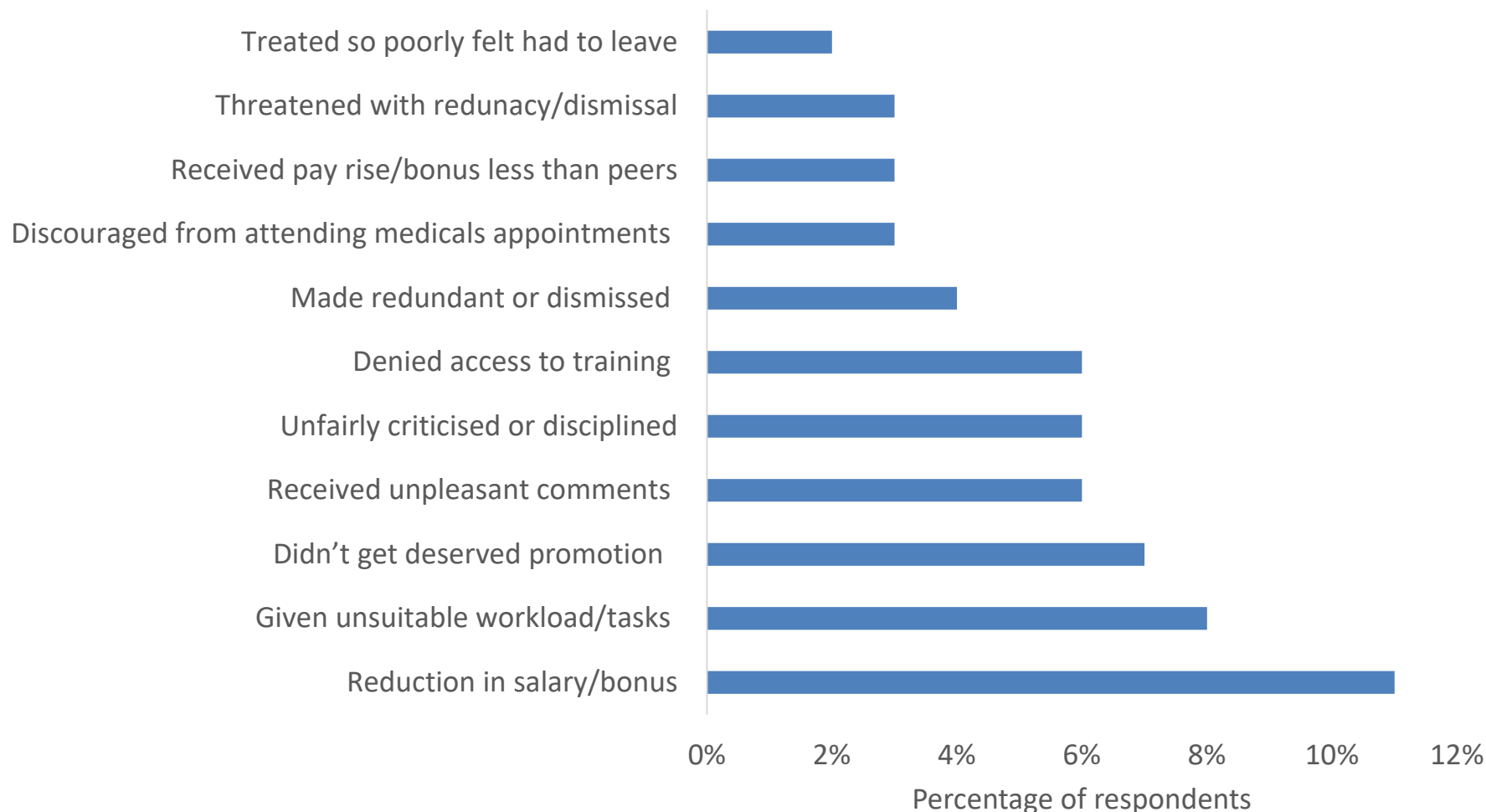
# Factors which facilitated return (n=312)



## Factors which acted as a barrier to return (n=139)



# Experienced negative work-related issue (n=321)



# Policy and practice implications

- **For employer**
  - Facilitating flexible return
  - Avoiding discrimination
  - Financial supports
- **For Government**
  - Entitlement to paid leave for appointments
  - Development of statutory sick leave pay
  - Providing information – employees and employers

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