

Research study early findings

Registered Manager & Heads of Care **vacancy levels**

John Woodhouse

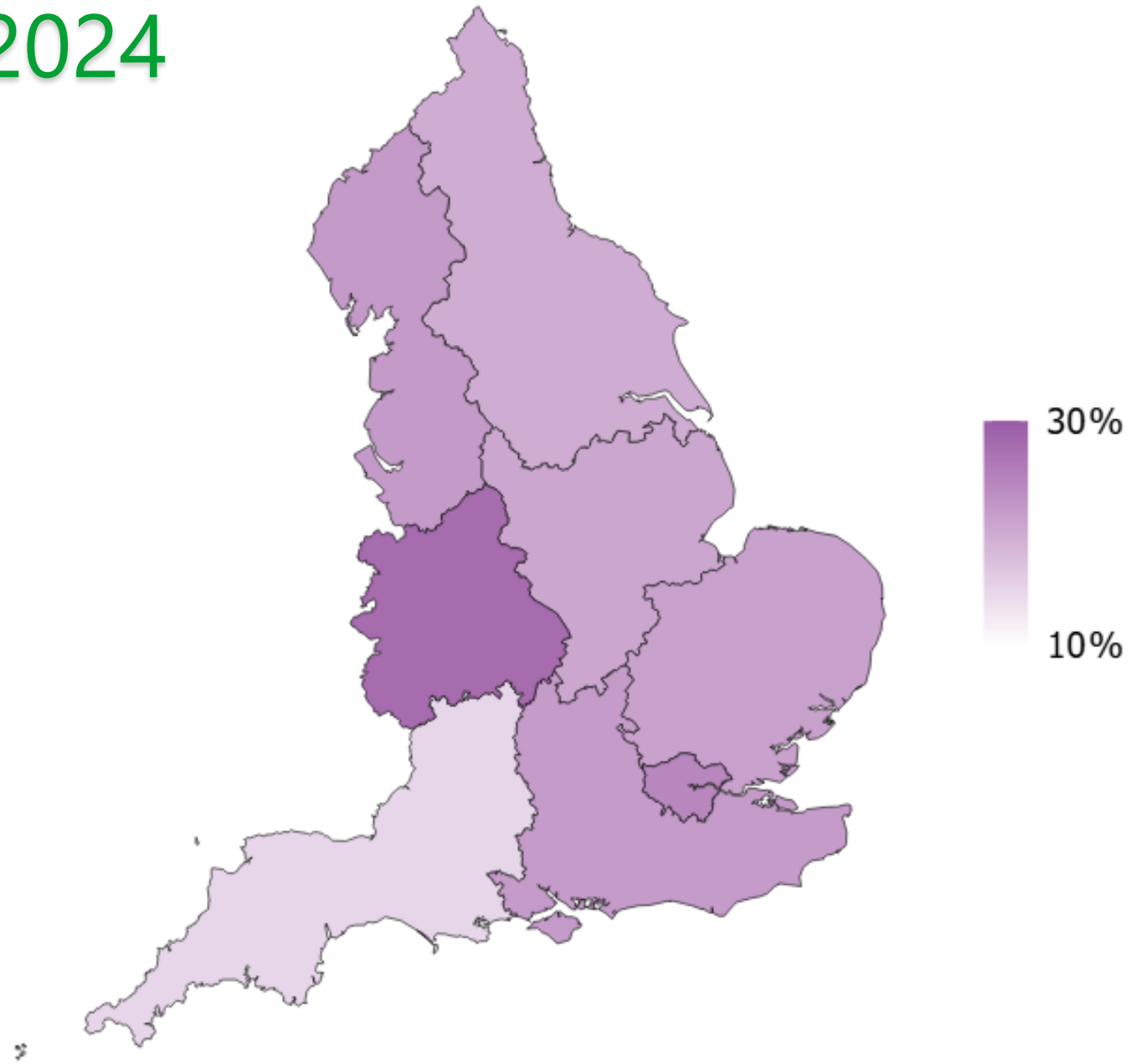


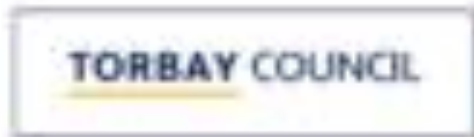
Background

- vacancy rate of 14% (vacancies or managers they have not registered) in [2021/2](#) rising to 18% in [2022/3](#)
- Number of children's homes rose by 9% in 2023, and by 12% 2024
- Residential Special School sector shrinking
- Local Authorities expect demand to rise
- Key limiter will be RM/HoC role



March 2024





Independent steering group

- The Department for Education
- Ofsted
- The South West Sufficiency Programme
- The National Association of Special Schools
- The Children's Homes Association
- Responsible Individual representatives from South West
- A local authority commissioner
- Academics & researcher ensuring validity of the work
- dialogue
-



Survey

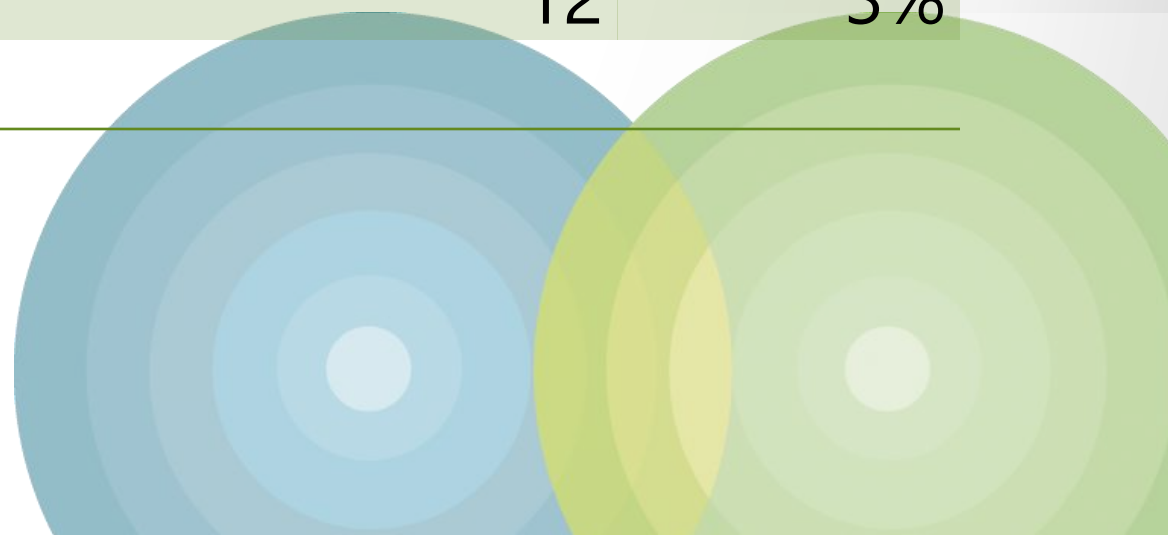
- 378 responses
- Over 95% of questions answered
- 351 children's homes (10% of children's homes)
- 23 Residential Special Schools (18% of RSS)
- 125,000 words
- Over 300 words per contributor



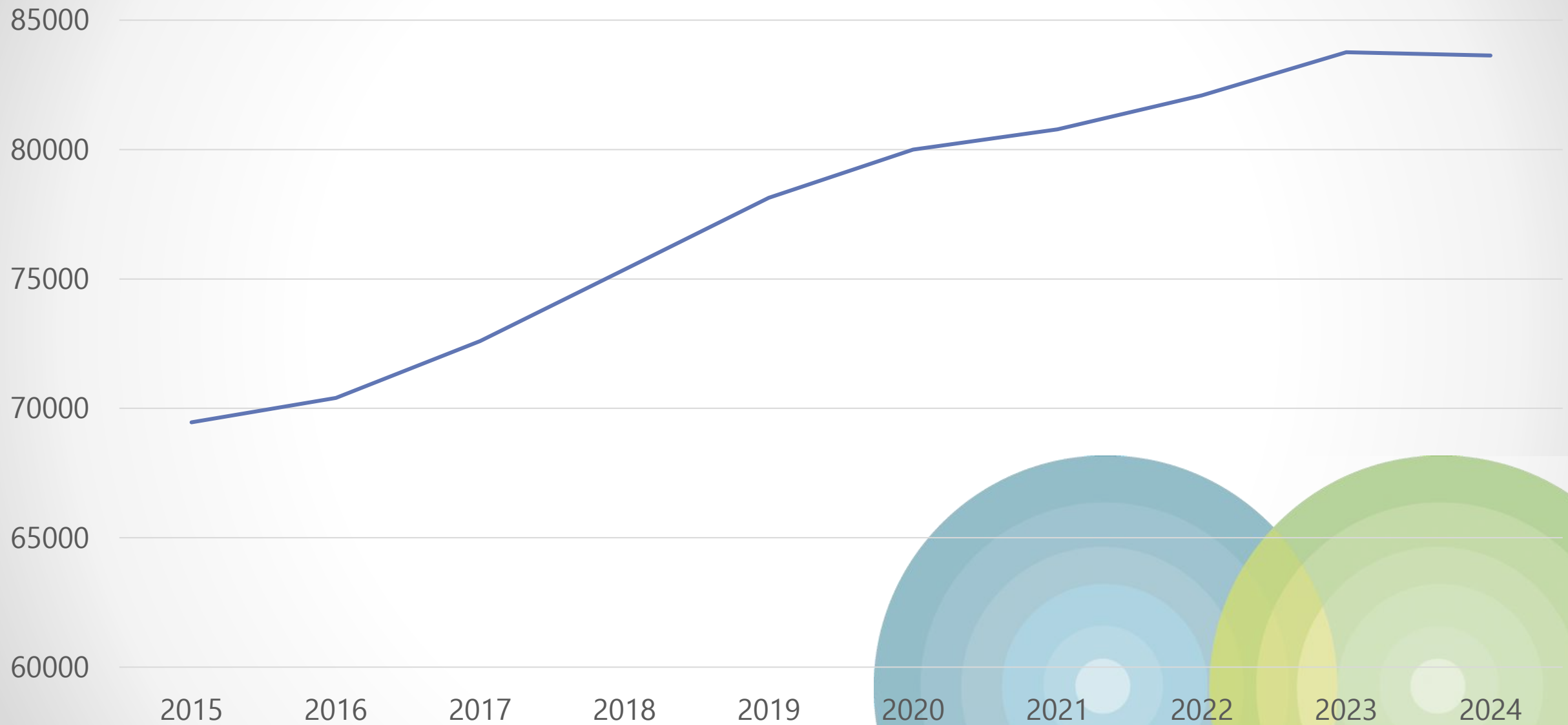
Who responded

TABLE 3 - What is your job role?

Head of Care	17	5%
Responsible individual	126	35%
Registered manager	156	43%
Other senior leadership role	30	8%
Principal	1	0%
Deputy Manager or similar	23	6%
Manager covering a Registered role	12	3%

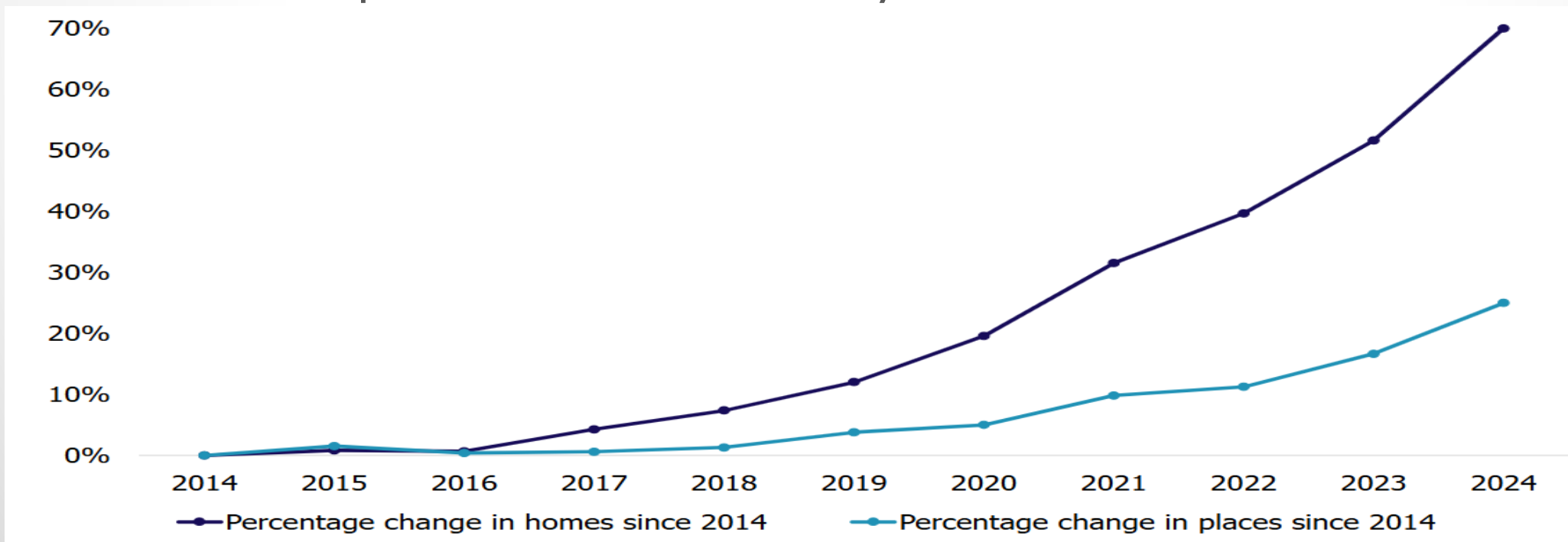


Numbers of children in care 2015-2024



Smaller homes could mean more managers...

- 1 in 4 registered beds empty
- Reduction in average new registration from 4 to 3
- 70% more children's homes in last 10 years
- 25% more places in last 10 years



“

...unfortunately people are not coming into our profession quick enough to backfill the roles

”



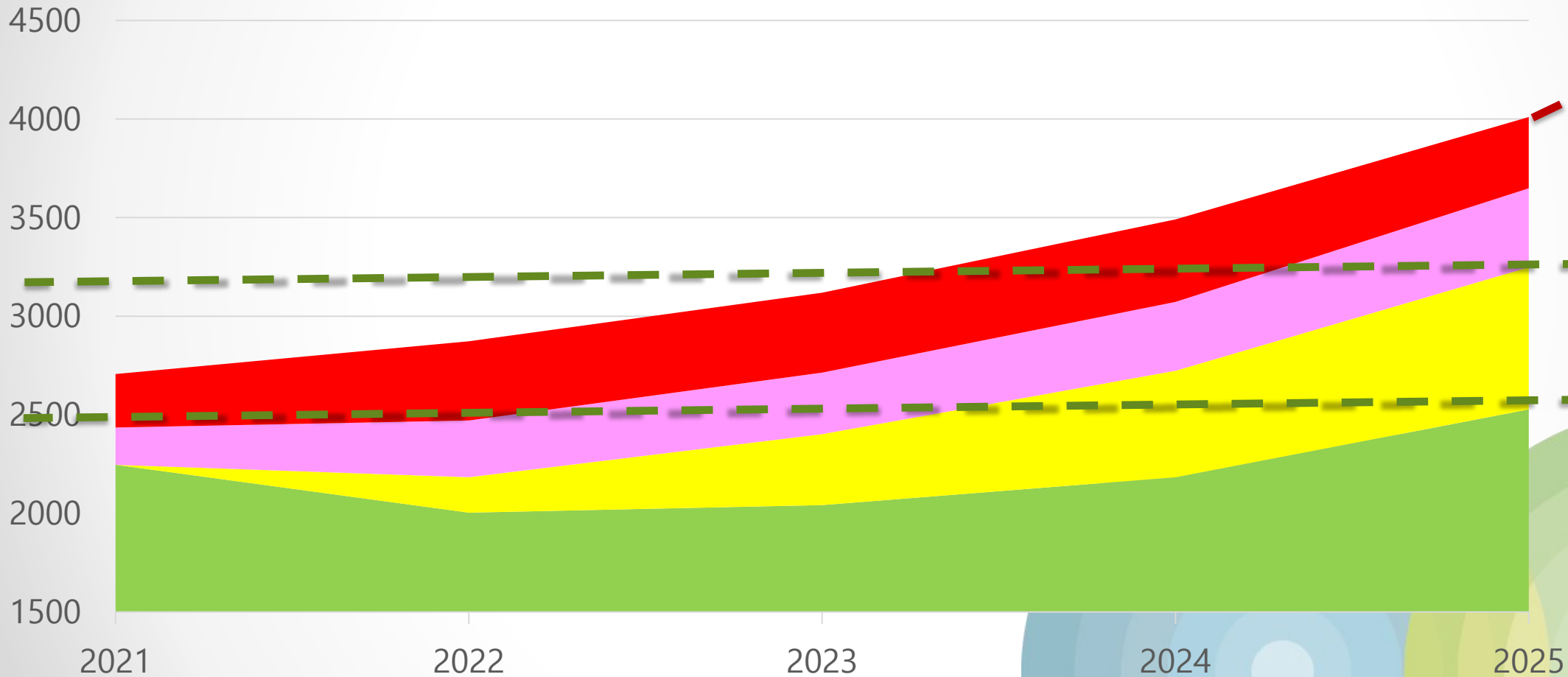
Sector is growing at a faster rate than RMs

Growth of children's homes with dual registration modelling

4,600?

2026

■ Homes with RM ■ Registered for 2 homes ■ Manager not Registered ■ Manager vacancy



“Dual registration has taken place for consistency in the vision and leadership of the homes and both homes are close enough by to ensure the Registered manager is a viable presence and they can respond quickly when needed. There is a capable structured team in place to manage the day to day operations of each home”

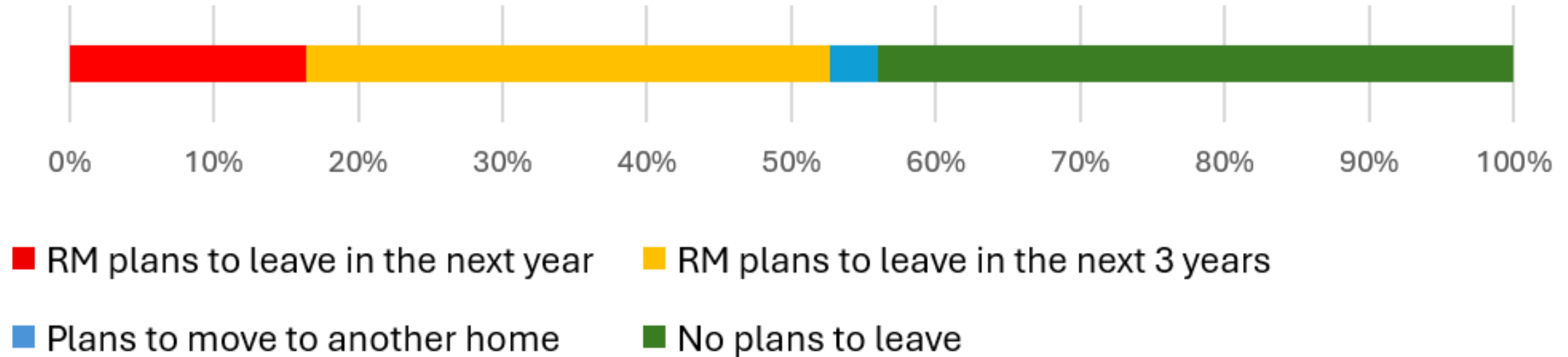


Regional variation in vacancy rates (no manager in post)

Region	31-Mar-22	31-Mar-23	31-Dec-23
England	14%	13%	13%
East Midlands	16%	14%	11%
East of England	13%	11%	12%
London	13%	17%	17%
North East, Yorkshire & Humber	11%	9%	11%
North West	15%	15%	14%
South East	12%	14%	11%
South West	19%	14%	9%
West Midlands	16%	10%	14%

Changes in RM role

RM views on whether planning to leave the role in the near future?



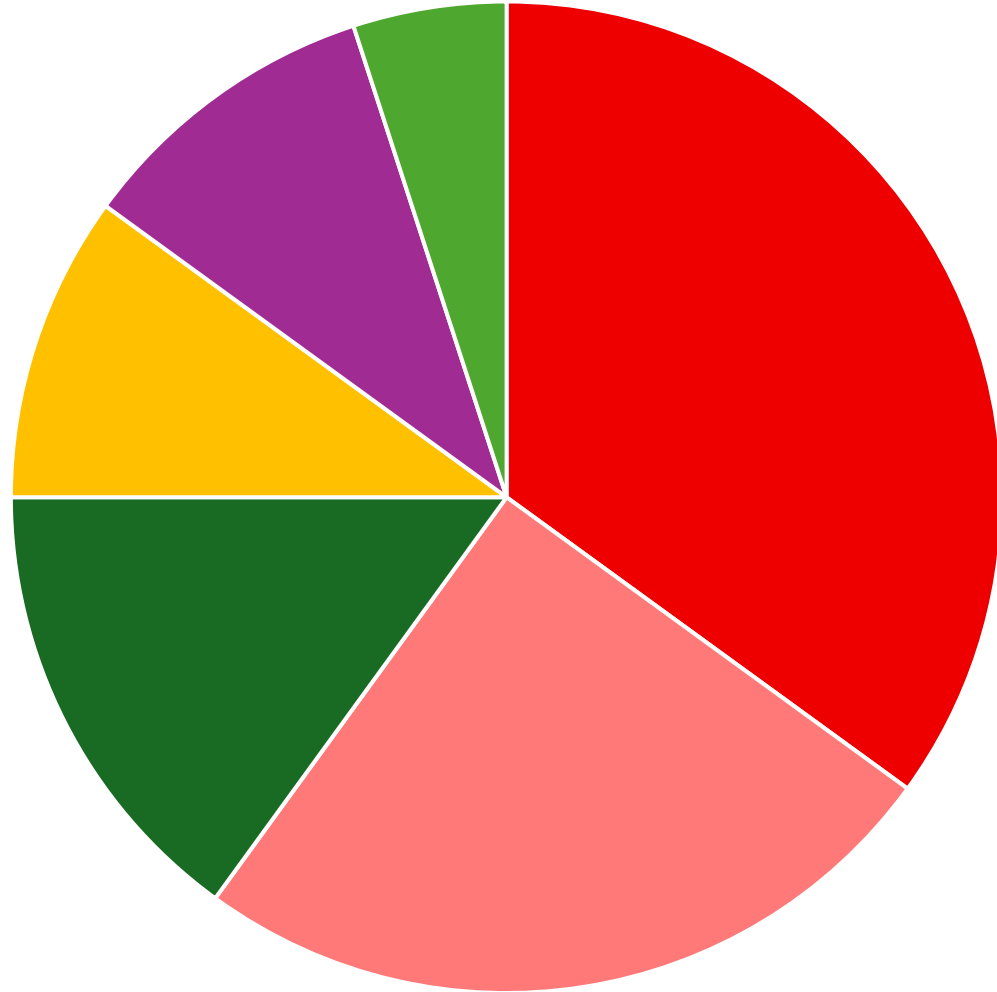
- 19% of managers were planning a change in the coming year against 29% change in children's homes staff
- 16% of Registered Managers plan to leave role in the coming year, and 54% in 3 years – average 5-6 year tenure
- Major concern managers not moving to another home
-



“It’s a thankless task. There is so much responsibility and expectation within the role, the nature of the work, the projection, transference and counter transference from the children, their vulnerability, the risks they take, the trauma, the staff. The regulatory standards, the safeguarding, the health and safety, risk management and it feels that it all hangs on the RM.”

Reasons RMs are leaving

- Stress and burnout – 35%
- Work-life balance issues – 25%
- Career progression – 15%
- Financial concerns – 10%
- Organizational challenges – 10%
- Retirement and long-term sustainability – 5%



“ I love the children, I am thankful for my RI, [my local authority] is a great place to work and my senior leaders are very visible. there is a lot of support available to me. The hours are long, and the job is very stressful, but it is the children that are the priority, and I stay in touch with many children who leave us, long into their adulthood.”



Confidence in recruiting (all sectors)

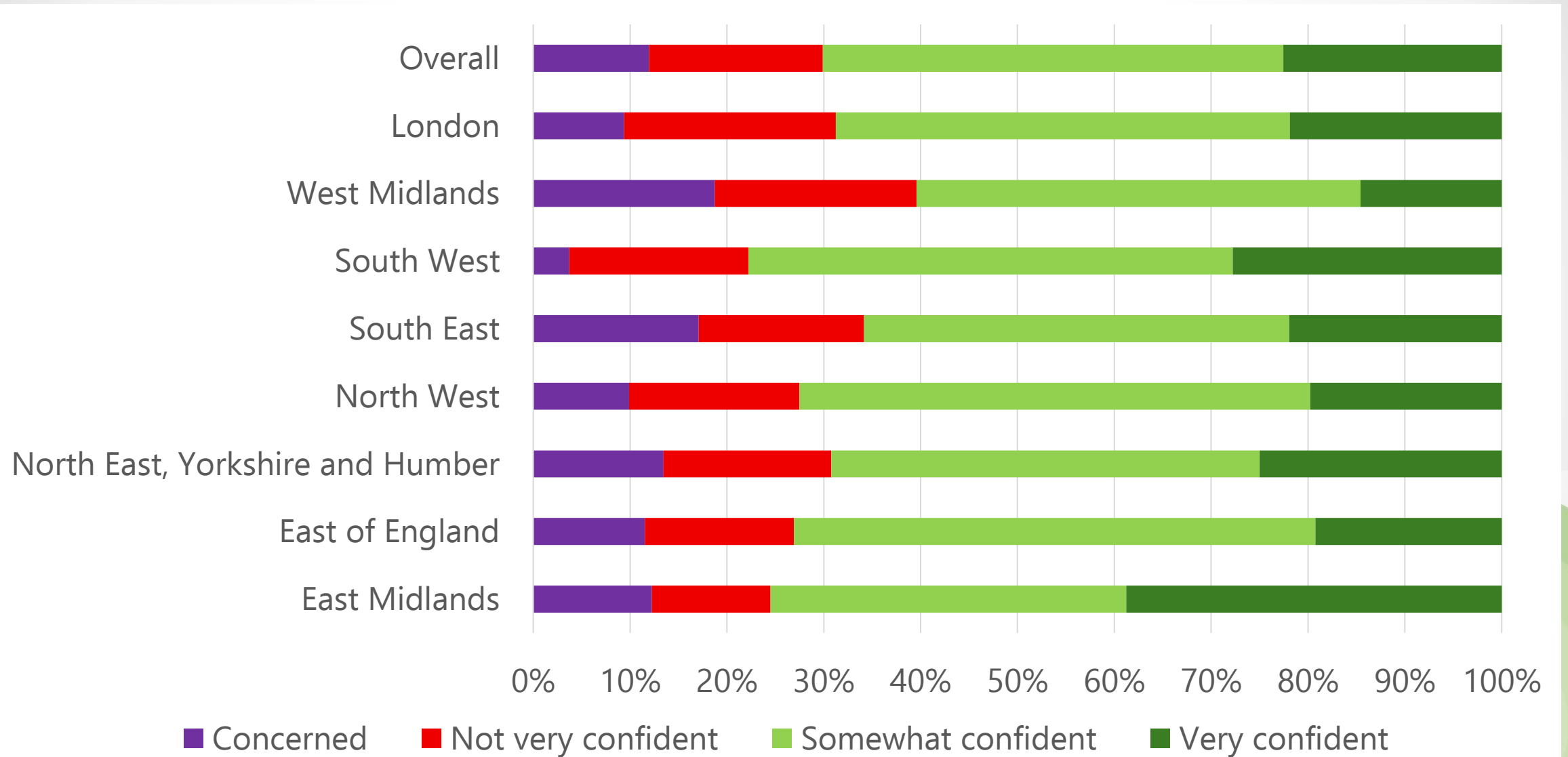
■ Concerned ■ Not very confident ■ Somewhat confident ■ Very confident



0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%

	All sectors	Local authority	Private only
Concerned	12%	10%	12%
Not very confident	18%	24%	17%
Somewhat confident	48%	48%	47%
Very confident	23%	18%	23%
	n=378	n=50	n=296

Confidence by region



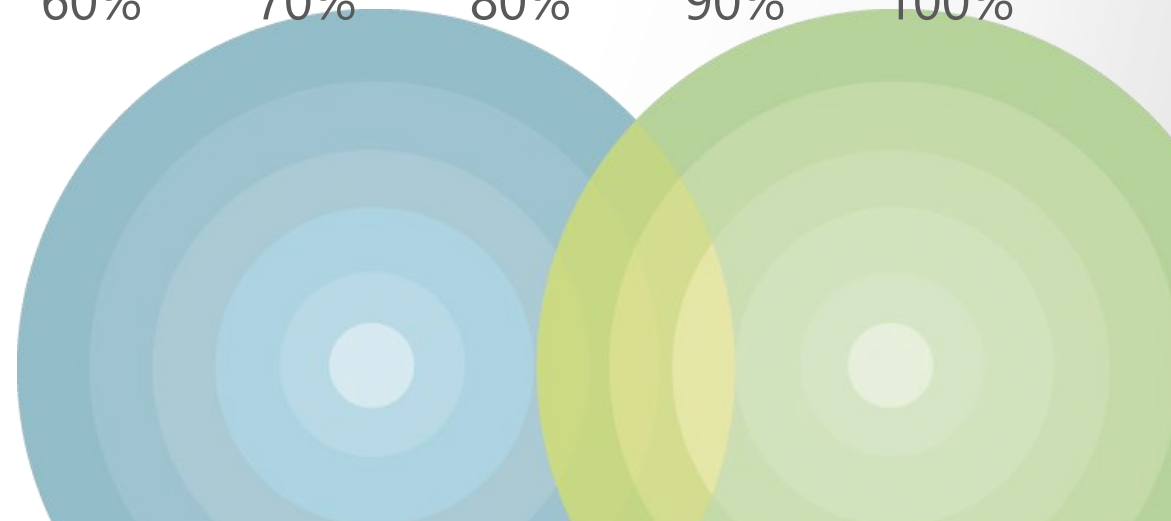
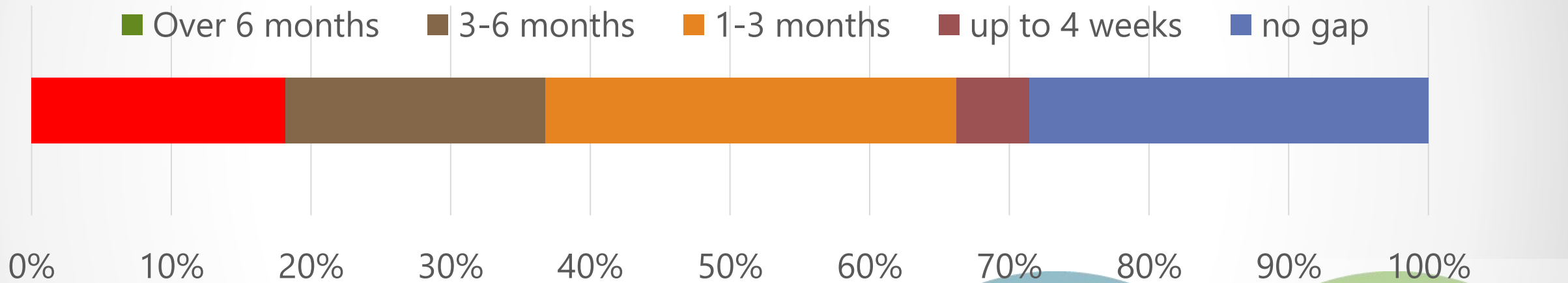
Advice for candidates

- see the role as a vocation, rather than a job. Value Based Interviewing and other approaches that explore motivation are better suited to identifying candidates with the internal motivation to succeed.
- set firm work-life boundaries to resist some of the pressures of the role, examine the capacity to delegate to a capable team and learn from experienced professionals in the field.
- need a high level of resilience to cope with the stress of long hours with high levels of responsibility and significant emotional investment.
- Employers were reminded they must think about how they support their workforce. Respondents encouraged applicants to consider the right organisational fit and leadership, looking for supportive leaders rather than organisations driven by financial benefit.
- Respondents recommended prioritising professional development and training (including qualifications, as well as shadowing experienced professionals and seeking out peer support opportunities with other managers).

•



Gap in appointment of Registered Manager



“

I have a suitability qualified deputy who is reluctant to apply for registration because of the perceived negative experience of fit persons interview

”



“ I have no prior experience of this interview but the feedback from my colleagues has increased my anxiety about it. I am happy to go through it but nervous all the same.”



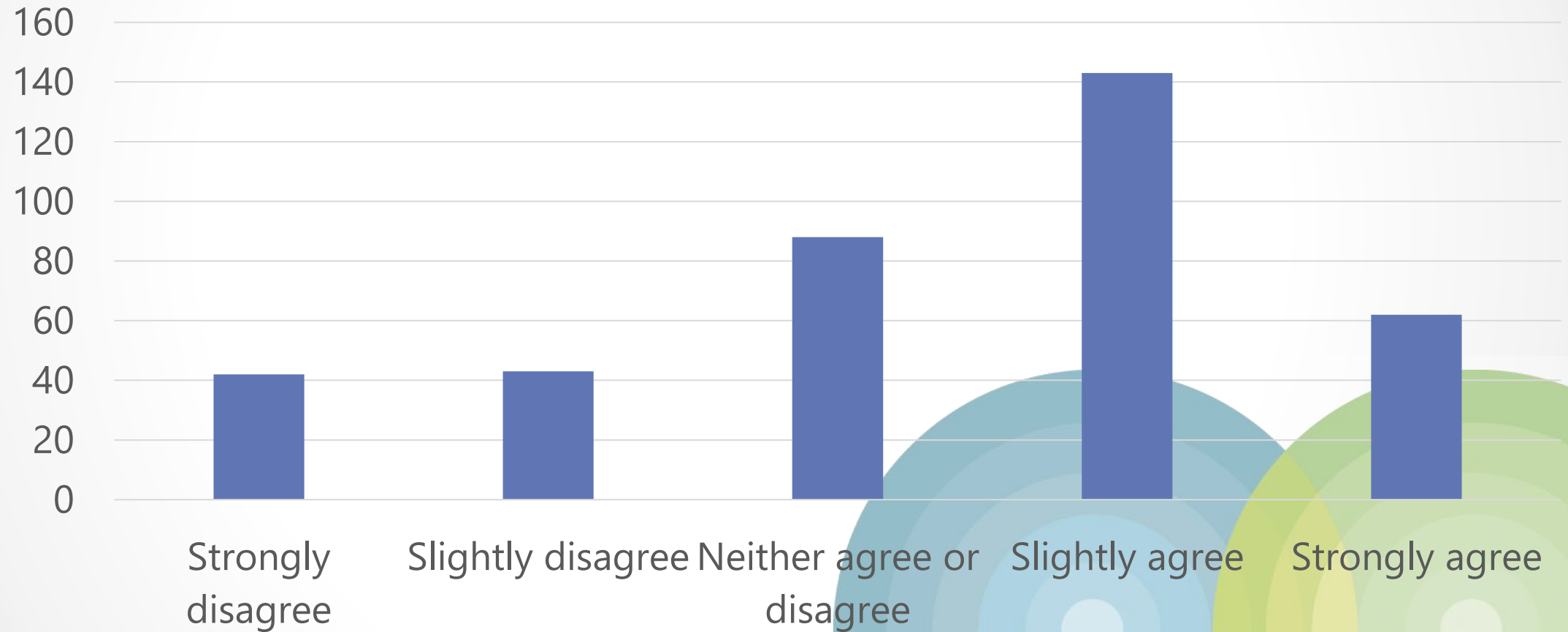
“

I think it's fair and realistic and required

”



The fit person interview puts people off becoming a
Registered Manager / Head of Care (n=378)



“ Be prepared to put in what you want to get out of this role. At times your own life needs to come second and the care of the young people first. Don't always expect to change the world, the smallest changes are golden and to be treasured.”



Manager in post, but not registered	80	48%
Unexpected departure of RM	82	50%
Difficulty in recruiting new RM	73	44%
Failed induction / probation of new RM	20	12%
Unsuccessful at Fit Person's Interview	5	3%
More than one option selected	62	38%



“ We have had a succession of young ambitious Heads of Care who we develop and then they move on and are looking for more sociable hours. The role does not easily fit with young families.”

- Principal, RSS



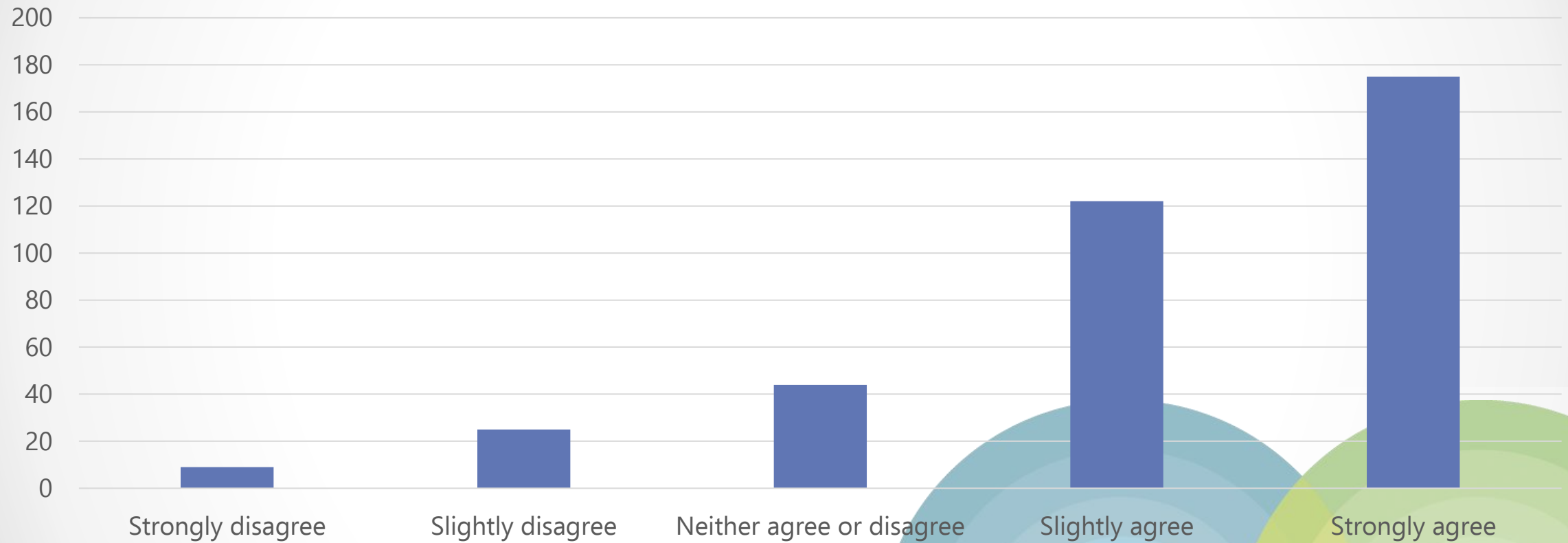
“

There is a new 'disruptor' to market in [my area] aggressively expanding homes and paying wages vastly in excess of market norms ie 65k for manager , £40k for a residential carer . These have taken managers from my services and staff

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The inspection process is too stressful (n=375)



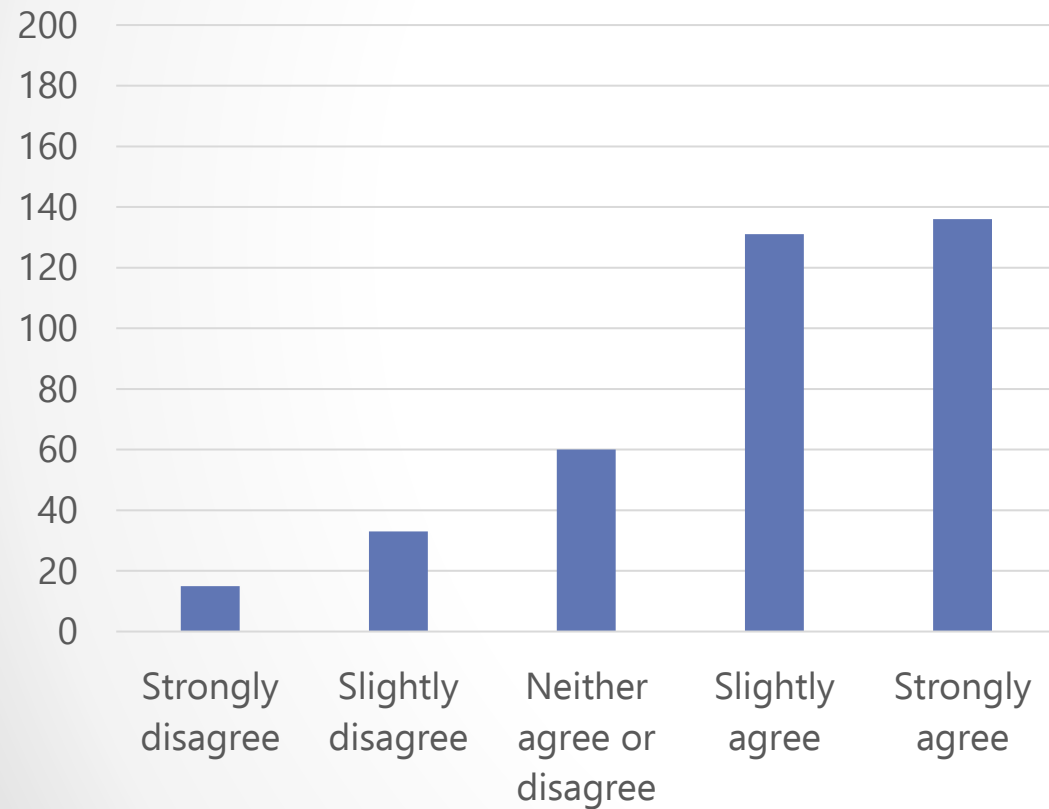
“

Some inspectors make you feel at ease, where others make you feel like you have failed before you have started. As states previously, it should be collaborative and supportive as we are all in this for the children above anything else.

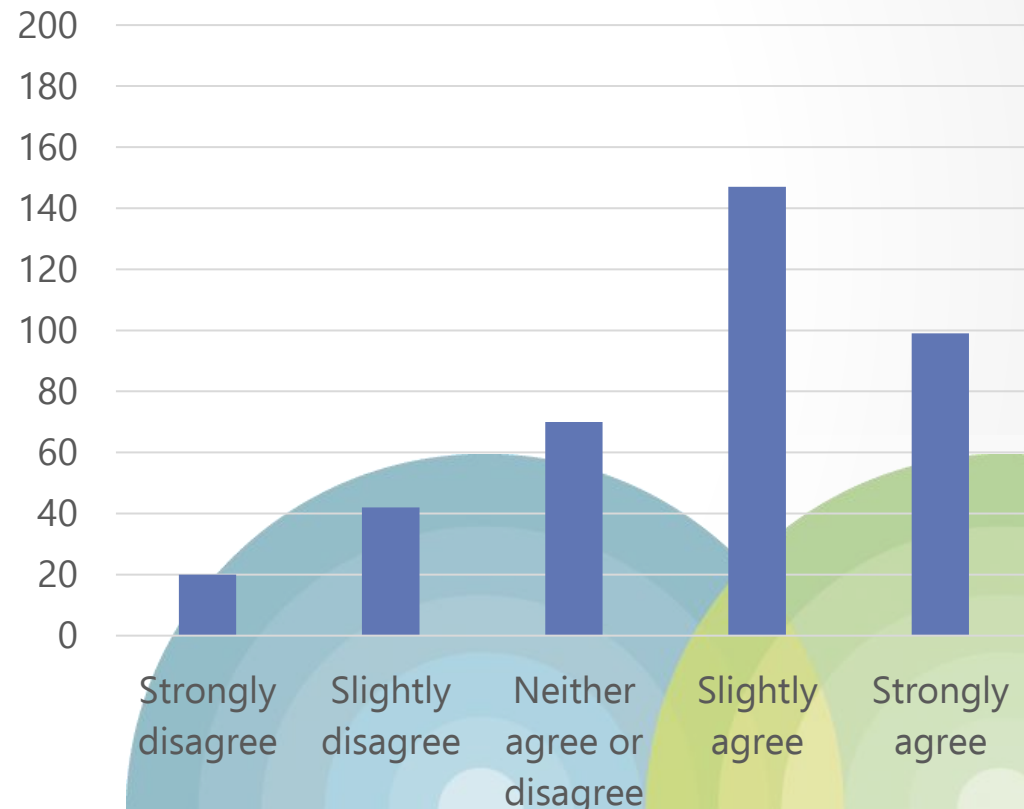
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The Registered Manager / Head of Care
role carries too much responsibility
(n=375)

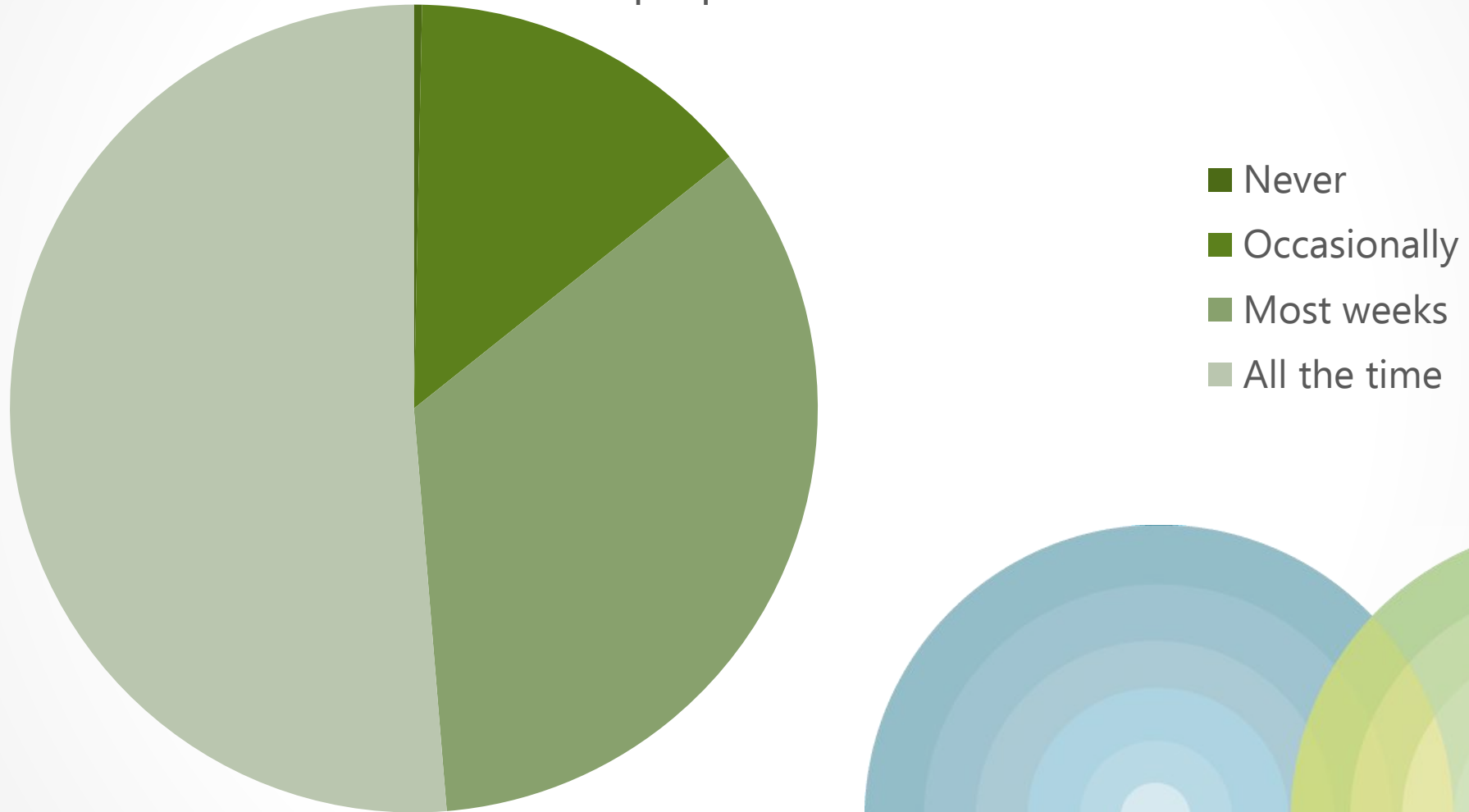


The Registered Manager / Head of Care
role feels unachievable – there is too
much work (n=378)

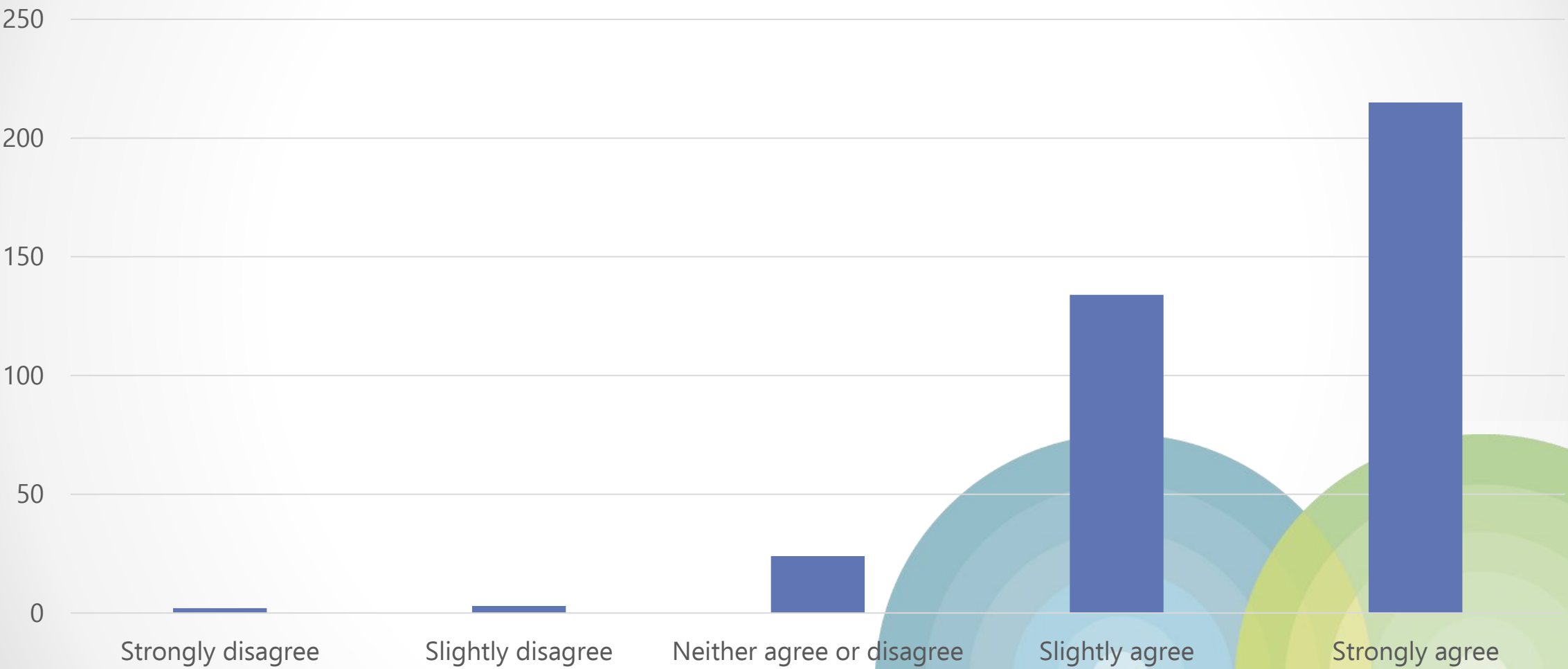


Average hours...?

How often would you say RMs & Heads of Care (RSS) work over and above contracted hours to keep up with their workload?



Registered Managers / Heads of Care feel stressed by the job

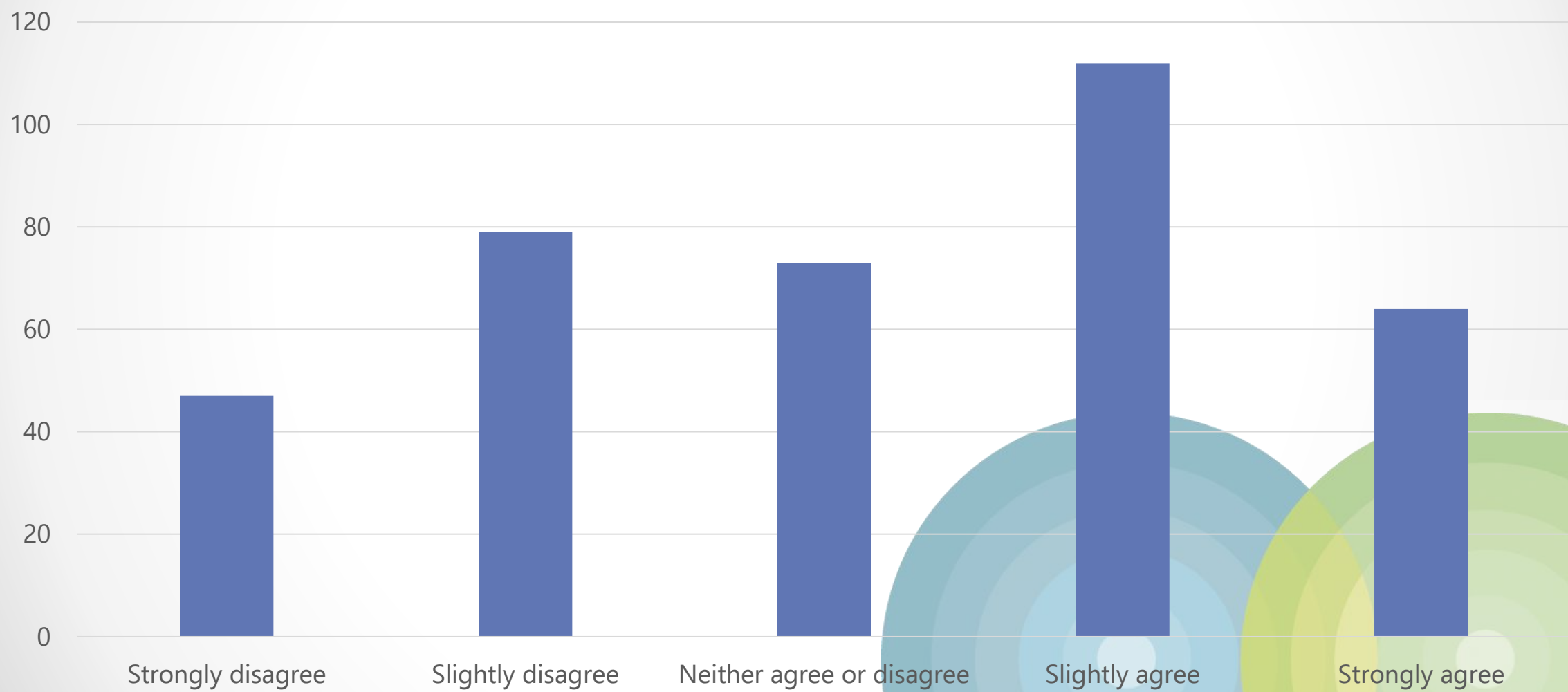




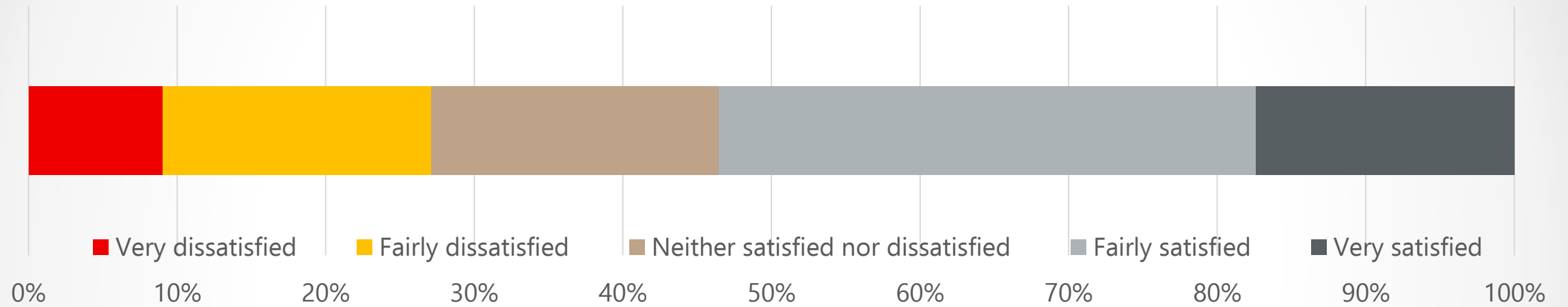
I get stressed at times because I care, too much at times. I am available to my team 24/7 365. If they need support or advice I am available... I promote a work life balance to the team and encourage stress management activities outside of work, debrief and welfare check ins are also regular in addition to supervision to prevent the team taking their stresses home.



People's organisations are considerate of their life outside work

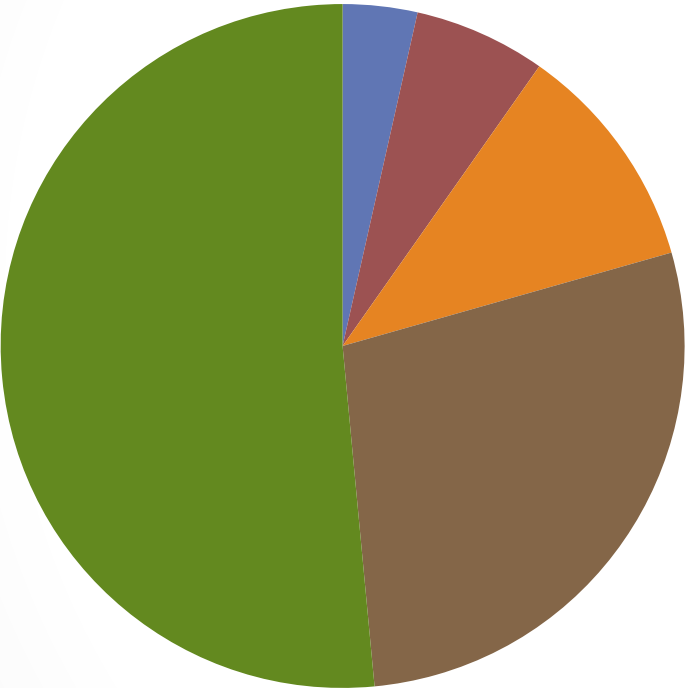


RM satisfaction with salary level



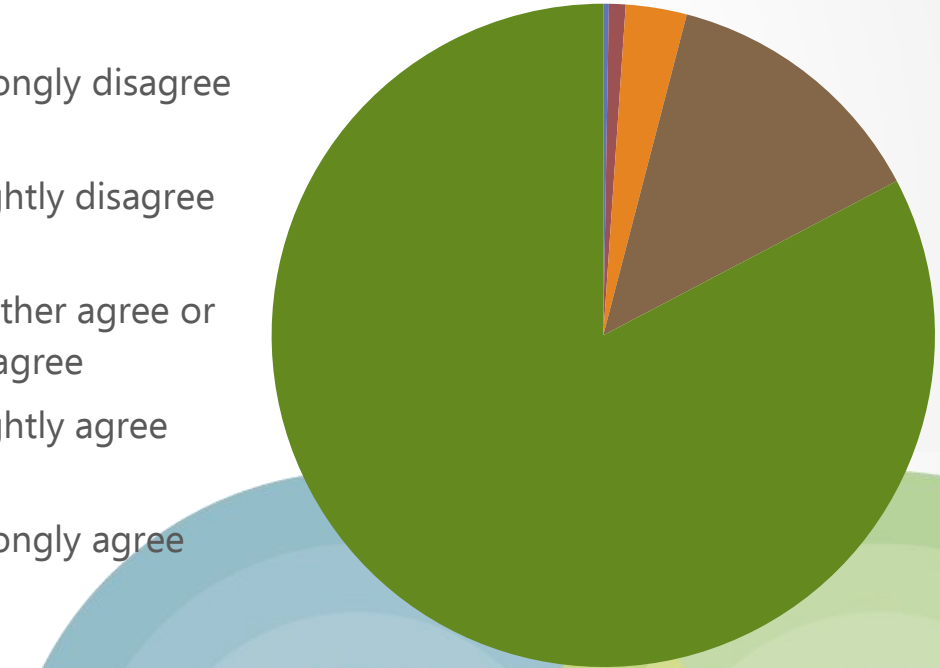
I feel valued by my employer

- Strongly disagree
- Slightly disagree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Slightly agree
- Strongly agree



Pride in residential child care

- Strongly disagree
- Slightly disagree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Slightly agree
- Strongly agree



“Working in the residential sector is amazing. Ofsted are very helpful and supportive. Working for a local authority which is under section 114 is a nightmare when everything just becomes about saving money and being given an unsurmountable work load outside of your role within residential”

