peopleware

WFM Benchmark Report 2025

Industry trends, challenges and insights

Contents

Introduction

Peopleware has specialized in Workforce Management (WFM) for over 30 years. We are genuinely passionate about the subject and we constantly strive to develop our products and services to support emerging trends. That's why we periodically carry out benchmarking surveys to understand the evolving goals and challenges of planning professionals. In this report, we share the insights that our latest survey generated.

As WFM evolves in 2025, three key themes are emerging: the persistent gap between manual and automated processes, the growing complexity of workforce planning driven by omnichannel customer service and hybrid workforces, and the increasing need to better engage employees. Operational complexity is rising, but so is the opportunity to handle it differently.

We surveyed WFM professionals through more than 100 in-depth questions to understand the evolving landscape. The results reveal what many in the industry already sense:

- WFM tools are widespread, but not everyone is satisfied
- Flexibility is still talked about more than it's practiced
- Empowerment starts with giving employees more control, and most organizations aren't there yet

The results also reveal some surprises:

- Schedule efficiency is the core purpose of WFM, but it is a key performance indicator (KPI) for only a minority of organizations
- Delivering schedules to employees by web portal or smartphone app has a dramatic impact on shrinkage
- We expected to see a fall in the prevalence of phone calls in customer service, but email is in steep decline as well

This report captures where the industry stands today - what's working, and what's holding organizations back. It identifies emerging trends and equips WFM professionals with data-driven insights that keep them at the top of their game.

Executive summary

1. WFM's strategic importance is undeniable

99% of professionals view WFM as critical to organizational success, with 81% noting its growing relevance. Top benefits include efficiency gains and reduced turnover.

2. Digital channels demand forecasting agility

Live chat and social media are the fastest-growing channels. However, 61% struggle with volatile volumes, and 52% frequently revise forecasts, signaling a need for AI-driven solutions.

3. Scheduling efficiency lags behind hybrid work trends

79% of organizations now manage hybrid teams, yet optimized scheduling practices are still underutlilized. Resistance to change and variable workloads are top scheduling roadblocks.

4. Employee engagement directly impacts retention

While 87% of respondents say employee engagement is important, nearly half of frontline employees feel only slightly empowered, or not at all, highlighting a gap between intent and action.

5. Technology gaps stifle progress

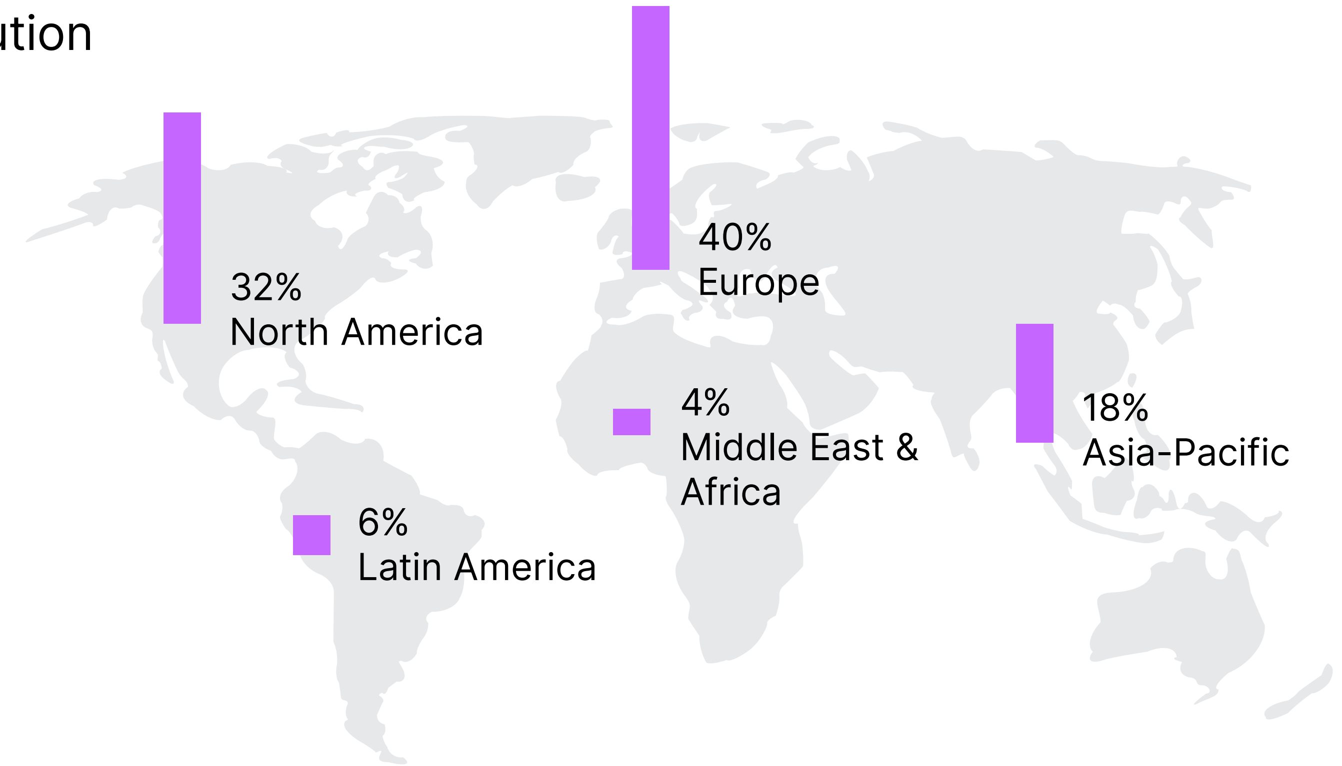
57% of respondents are not very satisfied with their current WFM tools, citing functionality gaps and poor integrations. Forecasting and scheduling are areas identified with the most potential for AI-driven innovation.

Demographics

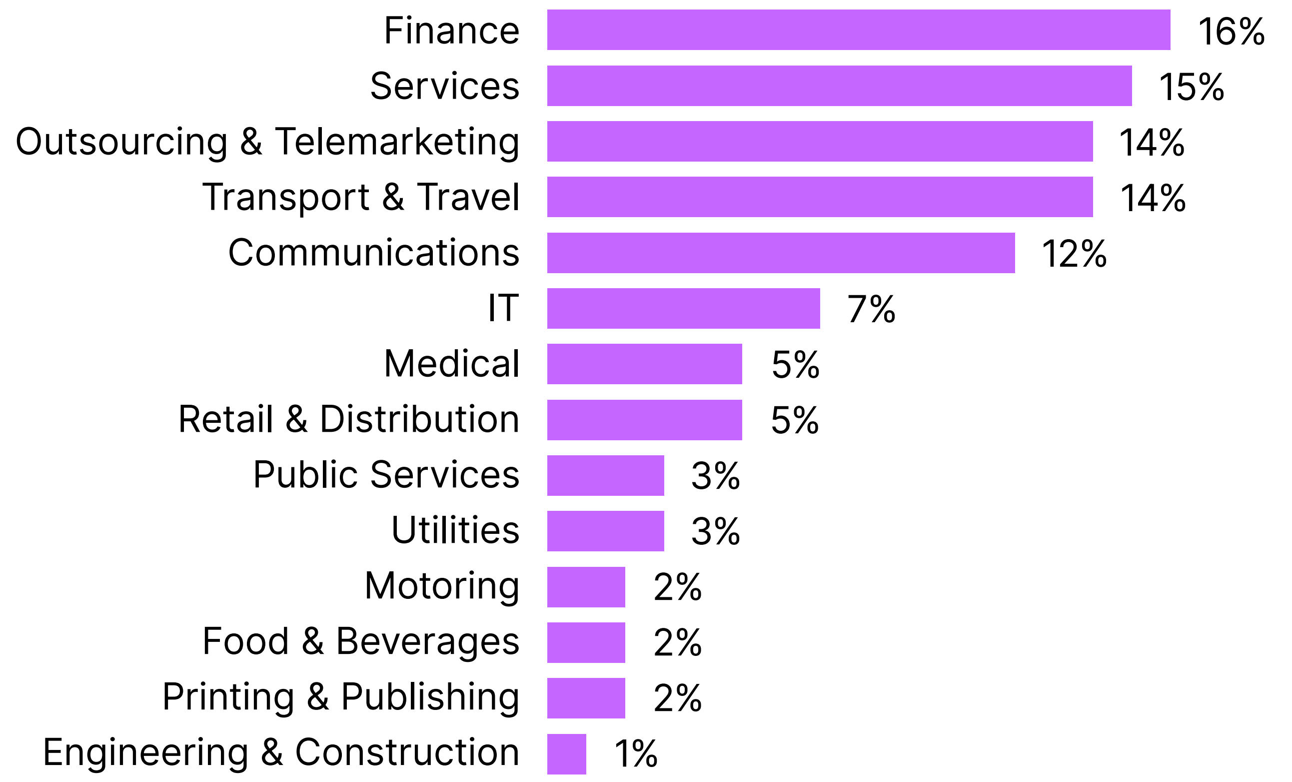
The **Peopleware WFM Benchmark Report 2025**, conducted between **December 2024 and March 2025**, gathered insights from **WFM professionals across 38 countries and 14 industries**. The respondents represented diverse roles, including WFM **managers, planners, analysts, and executives**, providing a well-rounded view of industry trends, challenges, and best practices.

We were delighted to find that over 80% of respondents are using WFM software as their primary tool for planning, representing an increase of nearly 7% compared to the findings of our 2020 report. As we expected, there has also been a marked shift from on-premise WFM to cloud WFM applications. That validates our decision to pioneer cloud WFM over 15 years ago.

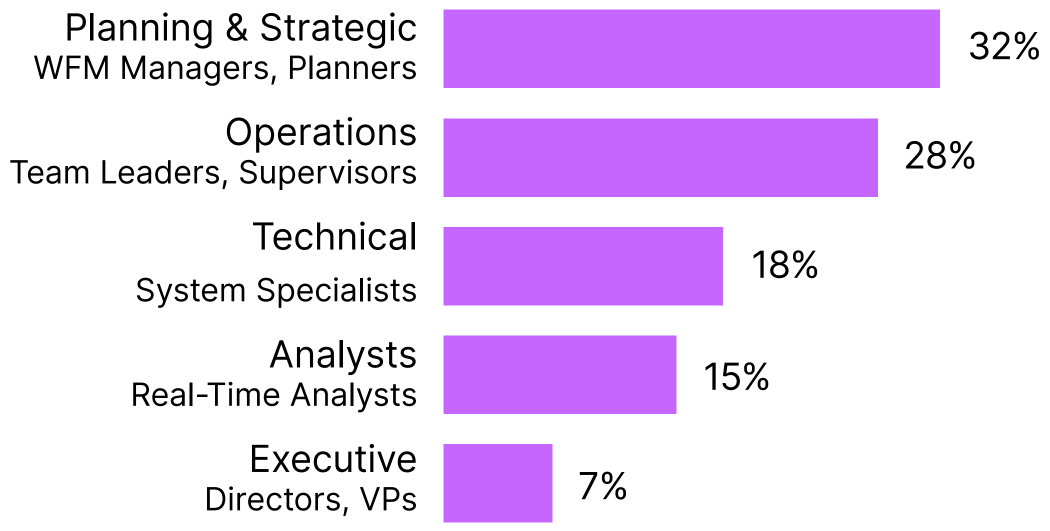
Geographic distribution



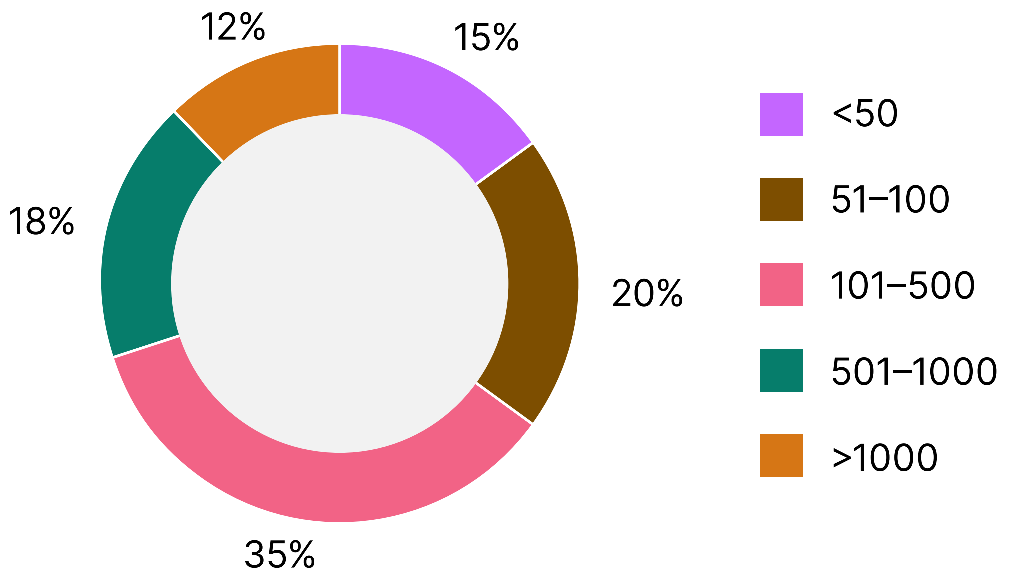
Industry



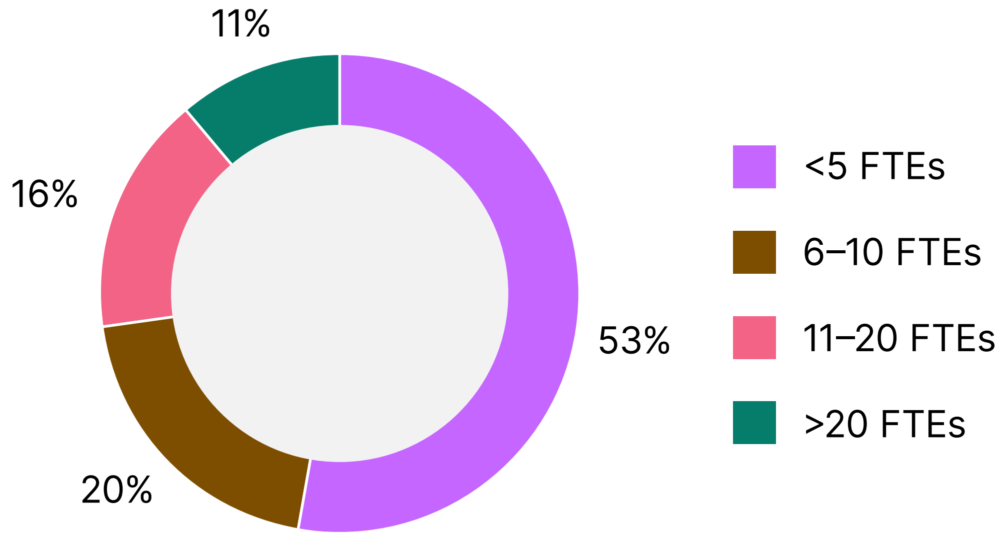
Roles



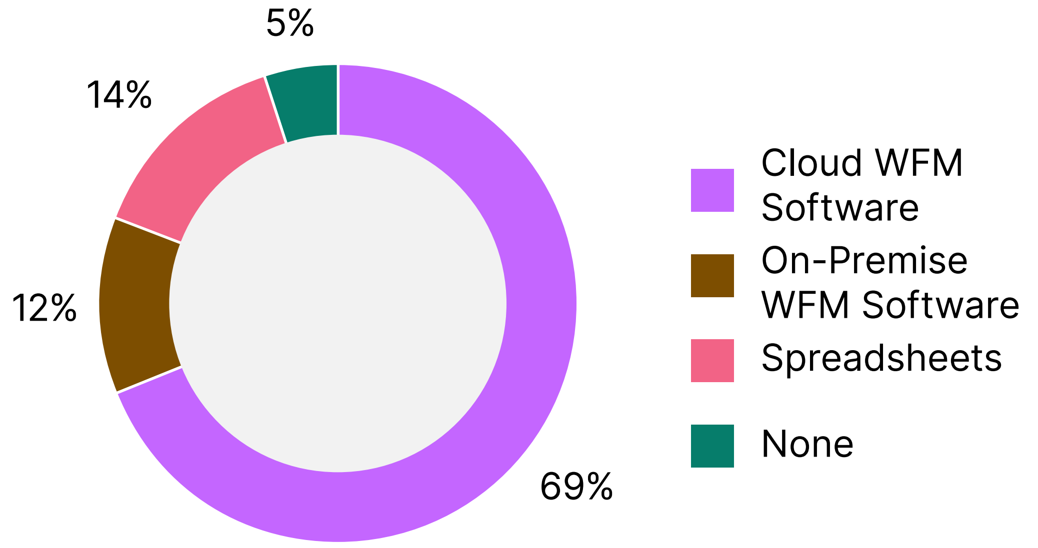
Size of operation
Number of employees



WFM team size
Planners and Managers



Current WFM technology

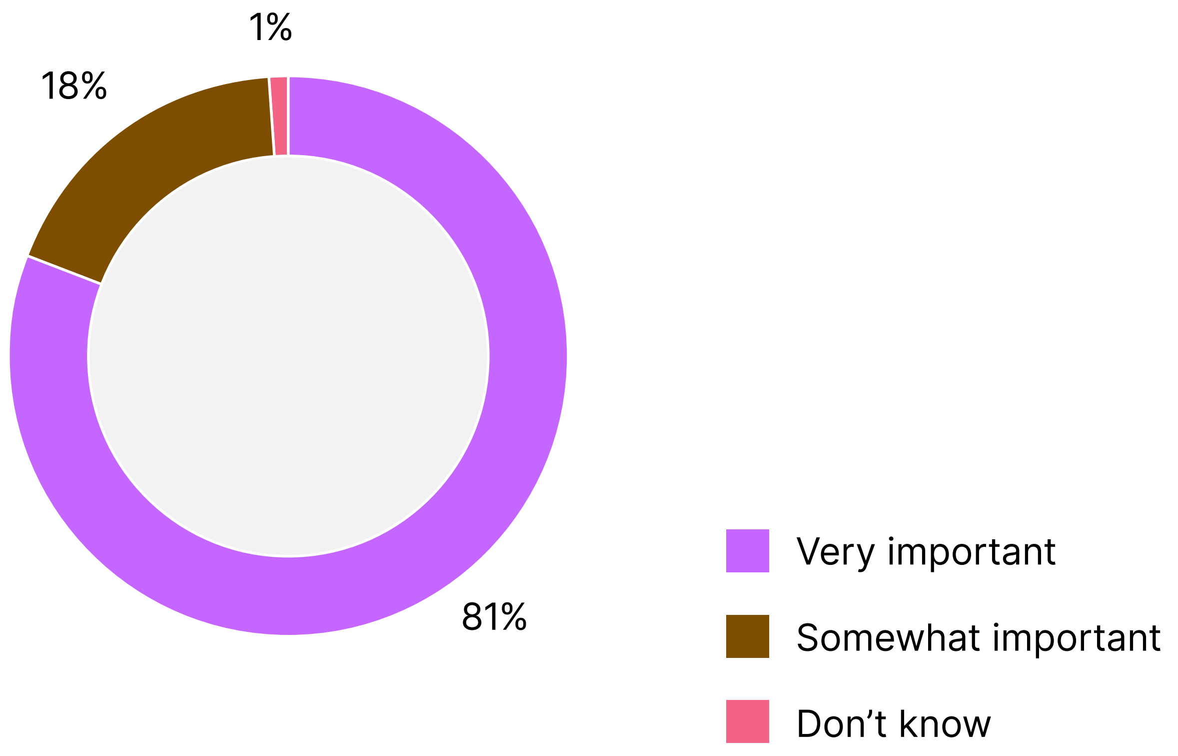


WFM's strategic importance

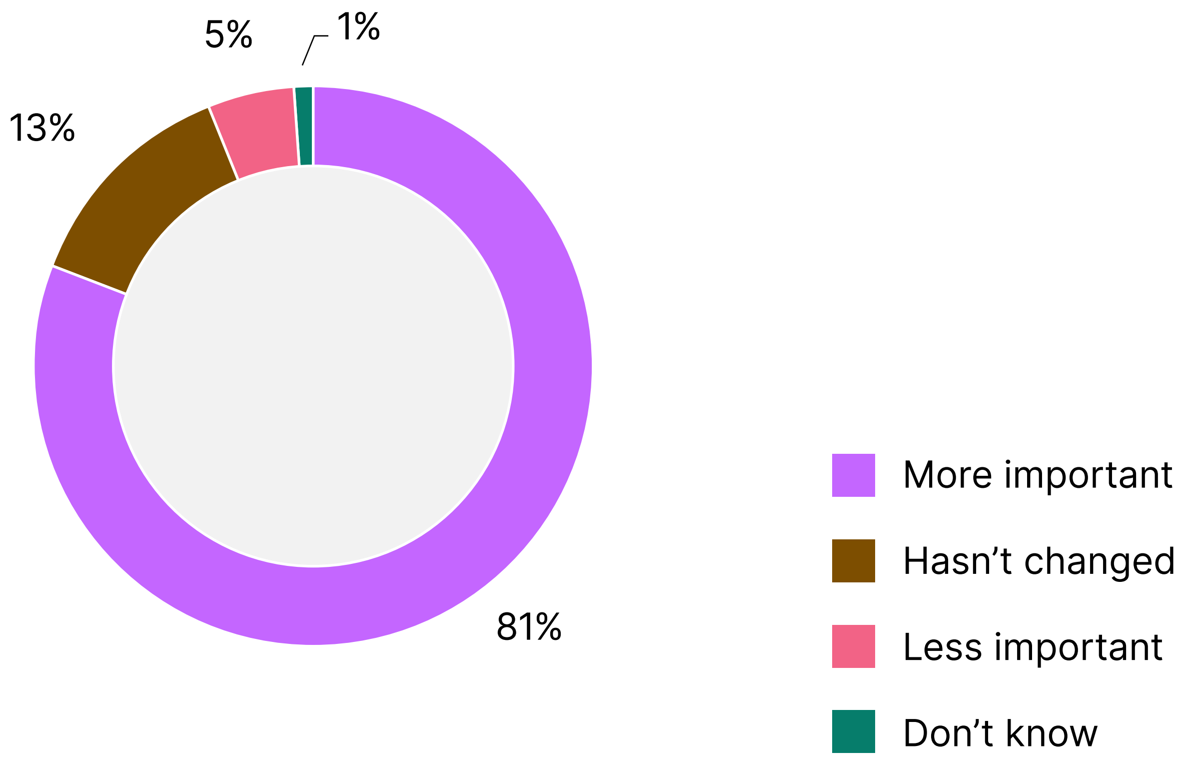
As customer demands evolve and operational efficiency becomes a priority, workforce management (WFM) has become a critical driver within organizations. An overwhelming **99% of respondents perceive WFM as important in achieving sustainable outcomes for their organizations, with 81% stating that it is becoming even more crucial over time**.

Organizations that effectively implement WFM solutions benefit from **increased efficiency (65%), reduced planning effort (51%)**, and **lower turnover and hiring costs**, all of which contribute to profitability gains. These advantages make a strong case for continued investment in WFM, yet many businesses still underestimate its impact on retention and overall financial performance. We were pleased to see **optimized employment costs** named the most important WFM benefit. Once the initial business case for WFM software has been proven and WFM has become 'part of the furniture', it's easy to forget its **primary purpose: to reduce costs and increase efficiency**.

How important is WFM in achieving sustainable outcomes for your organization?



Is WFM becoming more or less important?



How does your organization benefit from WFM?

65%
Increased efficiency/optimized employment costs

51%
Reduced planning effort

41%
Reduced staff turnover and hiring costs

36%
Increased profit (e.g., by reducing call abandonment)

Respondents could select multiple options.

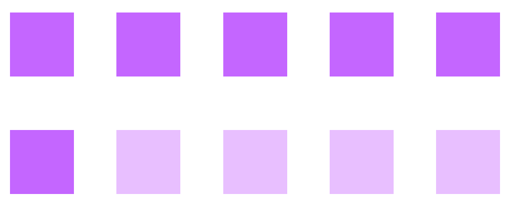
Learn more in our eBook on How to Make a Rock-Solid WFM Business Case.

WFM challenges

Realizing WFM's full potential is not without challenges. **Manual processes (58%)** remain a significant barrier, highlighting the need for automation and modernized WFM tools. Organizations also struggle with **forecast inaccuracy (52%), multi-skill/multi-channel planning (48%)**, and **volatile demand (46%)**, all of which hinder staffing and operational stability.

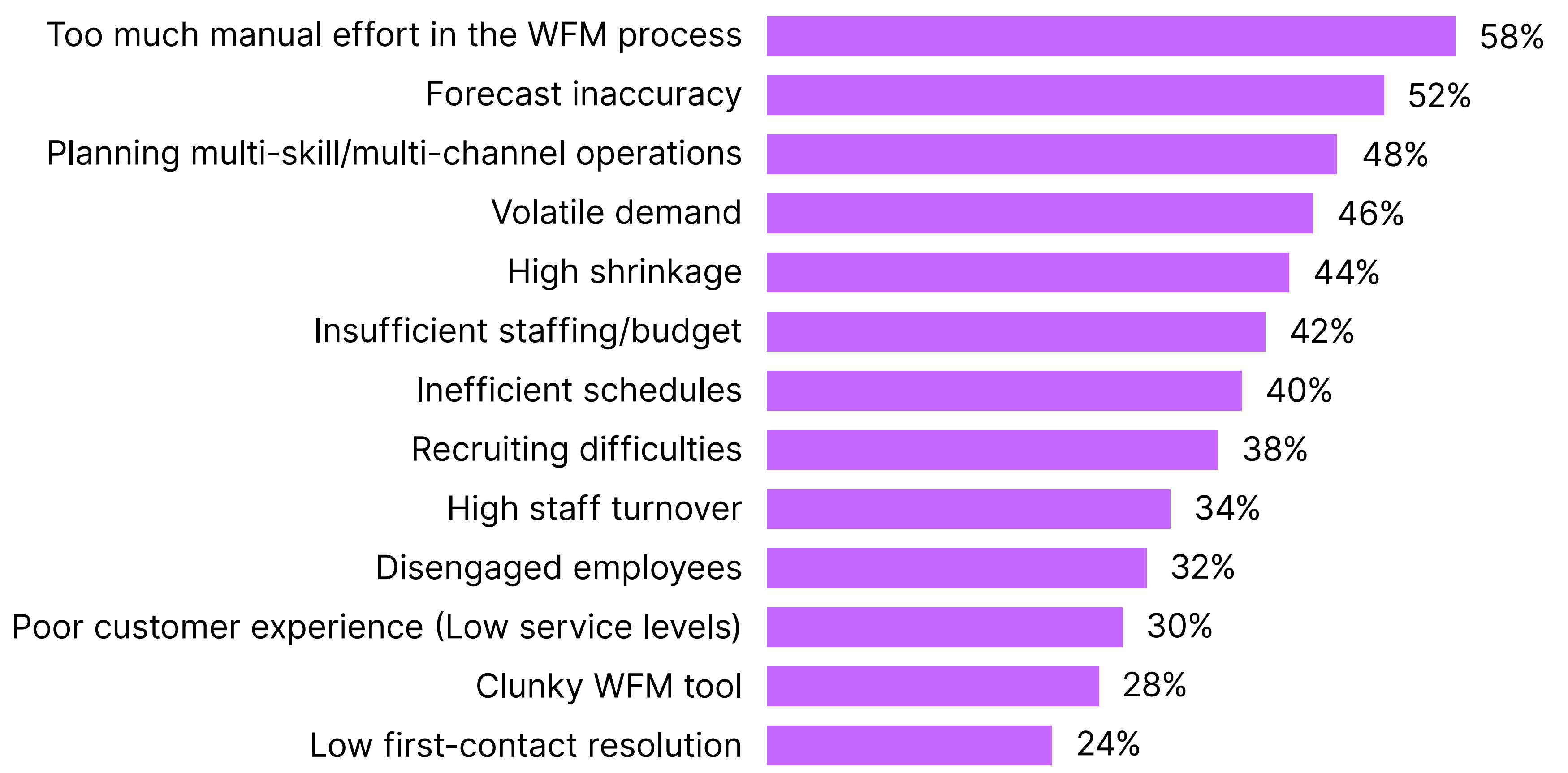
To keep up, organizations must take proactive steps to modernize their WFM strategies to build a more agile, efficient, and future-ready workforce.

Automating manual processes with AI tools can significantly reduce repetitive work, while improving forecasting accuracy through AI-driven predictions and external data integrations will help organizations navigate fluctuating demand more effectively.



6 in 10 WFM professionals cite manual effort as a major roadblock, while half struggle with **forecast accuracy**.

What are the biggest workforce management-related challenges that you and your organization have to deal with?



Respondents could select multiple options.

Download our guide on 12 Steps to Successfully Implement WFM.

Forecasting trends

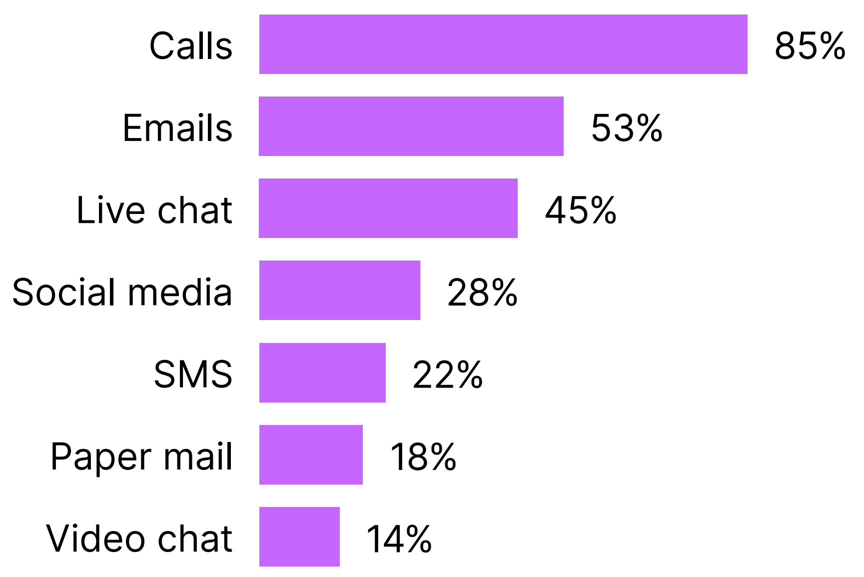
The shift toward digital

Forecasting remains the backbone of efficient workforce management, with **85% of organizations forecasting call volume**. However, **digital channels like email (53%), live chat (45%), and social media (28%) are becoming an increasing priority.**

The customer service landscape is undergoing a digital transformation. **Live chat (58%) and social media (48%) are the fastest-growing channels**, reflecting changing customer preferences and the need for real-time, omnichannel engagement.

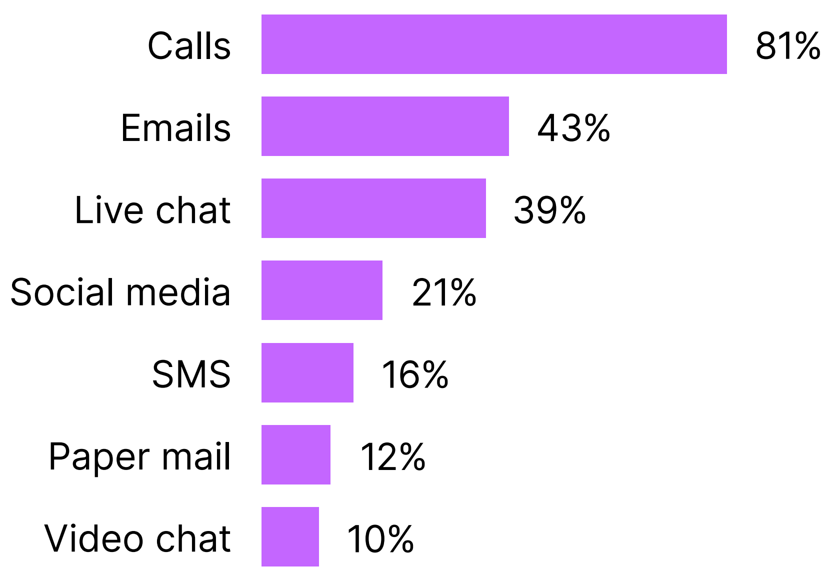
Notably, call volume trends vary by industry. **While 42% of organizations report growth in calls, 38% experience a decline**. Government (49%) and healthcare (36%) are seeing strong growth in calls. In contrast, a decline is seen in industries like utilities (22%) and travel (15%), where digital self-service is likely to dominate. These trends are aligned with our expectations and are confirmed by comparing this report with the benchmark report we published in 2020. Comparison shows a marked **fall in the prevalence of inbound calls and emails**. We were surprised to find that 18% of respondents still forecast for paper mail, although **56% of those report a decline in paper mail** volume. Based on what we have observed in our customers' operations, the 'paper' mail is typically application forms and usually scanned and processed electronically.

For which of these channels do you forecast volume?



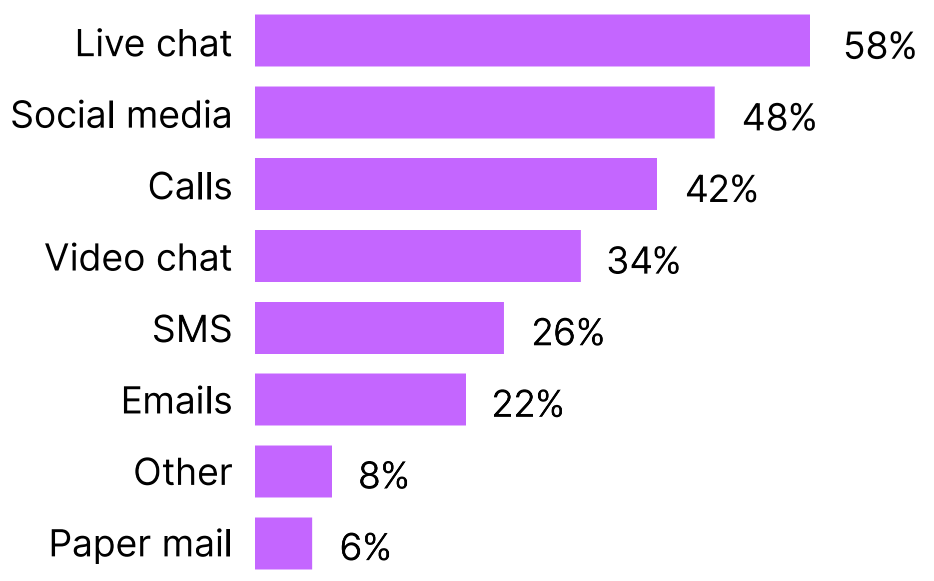
Respondents could select multiple options.

For which of these channels do you forecast average handling time (AHT)?



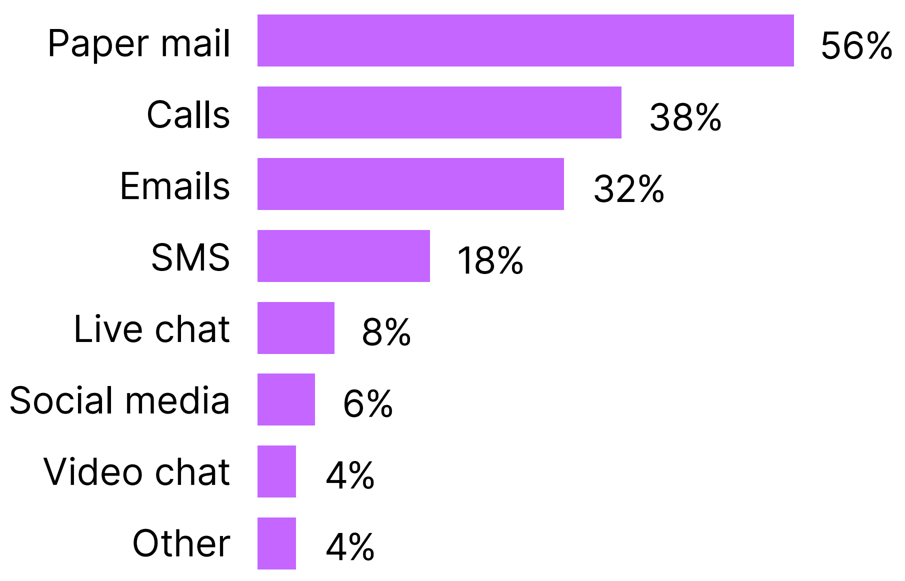
Respondents could select multiple options.

For which of these channels are you experiencing growth?



Respondents could select multiple options.

For which of these channels are you experiencing decline?



Respondents could select multiple options.

Forecasting challenges

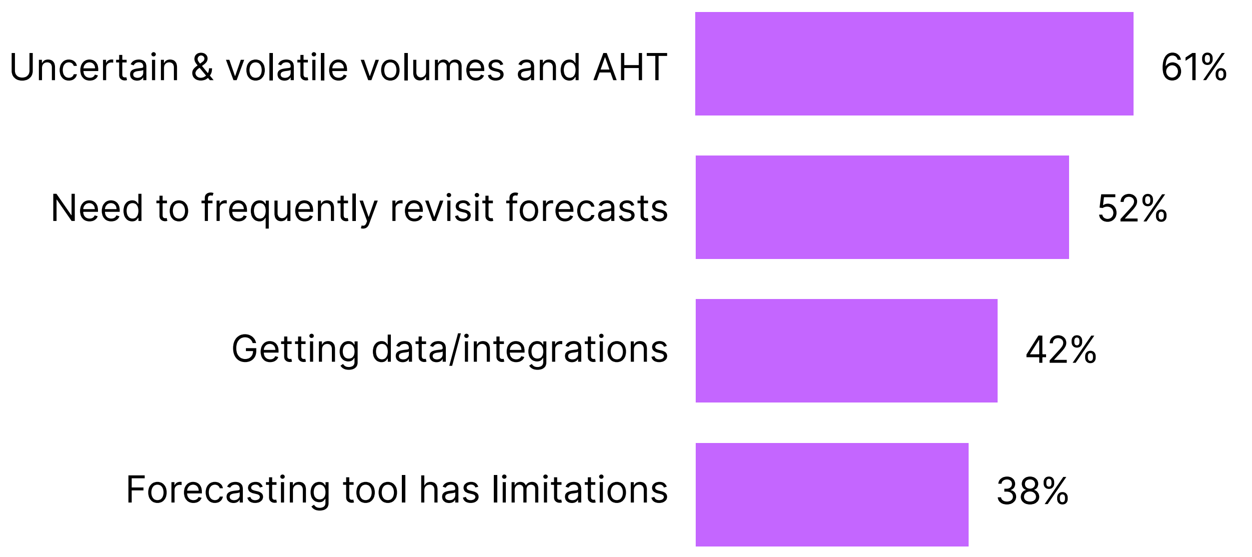
Navigating uncertainty

Forecasting remains a critical yet challenging aspect of WFM. **61% of organizations struggle with unpredictable volumes and average handling time (AHT)**, with the impact especially pronounced in transport (78%), outsourcing (72%), and retail (68%).

Frequent forecast revisions further complicate the process - **52% of organizations, particularly in finance and healthcare, report constantly adjusting their projections** in response to fluctuating demand or new insights.

We were **not surprised to find that volatile volume and AHT** are a problem for many organizations. Customer interactions are increasingly being handled via self-service, automation and 'bots', so the remaining contacts will naturally be more **complex and exhibit greater variability**. This points up the need for forecasting tools that use techniques like AI to **identify patterns in noisy data** and generate accurate forecasts despite the increased volatility.

What are the biggest challenges your organization faces in forecasting?



Respondents could select multiple options.

#1 Uncertain & volatile volumes and AHT
Industries most affected

1. Transport & travel
2. Outsourcing & telemarketing
3. Retail & distribution

#2 Need to frequently revisit the forecast
Industries most affected

1. Finance
2. Services
3. Medical

#3. Getting data and/or integrations
Industries most affected

1. IT
2. Public services
3. Utilities

#4 Forecasting tool limitations
Industries most affected

1. Communications
2. Motoring
3. Food & drink

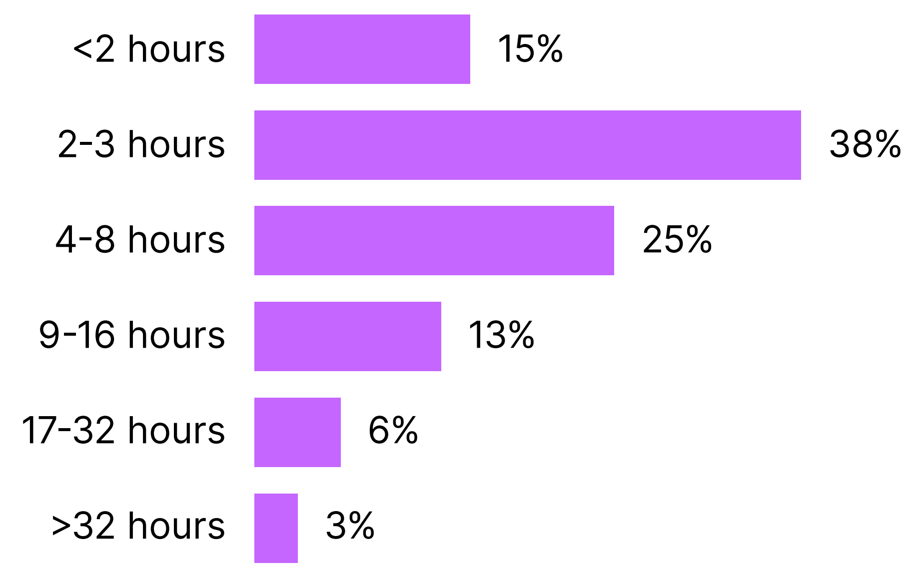
Forecasting realities

Opportunities for automation

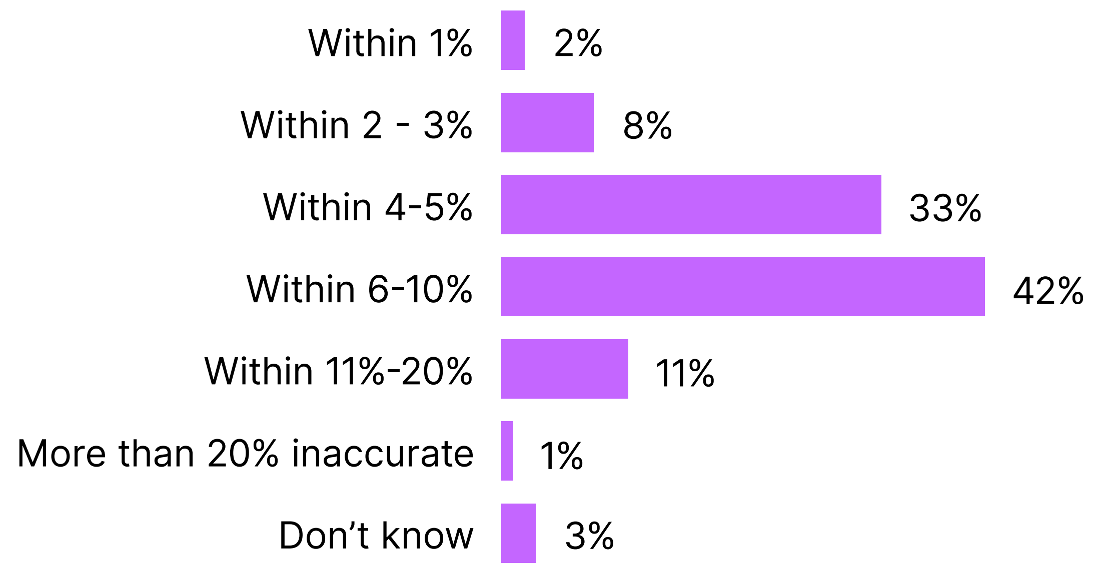
While **53% of respondents spend less than 3 hours per week on forecasting, 9% dedicate more than 17 hours**, suggesting plenty of opportunity for automation and AI-driven forecasting to improve efficiency. It's interesting to note that the percentage of respondents who spend **less than 2 hours per week on scheduling has tripled** since our 2020 survey. That's aligned with the experience of our customers. They are dramatically reducing the effort they spend on creating accurate forecasts by harnessing artificial intelligence (AI).

When it comes to forecast accuracy, results are mixed. While **75% of organizations report being within a 10% margin of error, only 10% achieve higher precision of 3% or better**. Long-range forecasting is widely adopted, with 96% of organizations engaging in it. However, just over half plan within a 12-month window, while only 16% of respondents forecast for a longer duration.

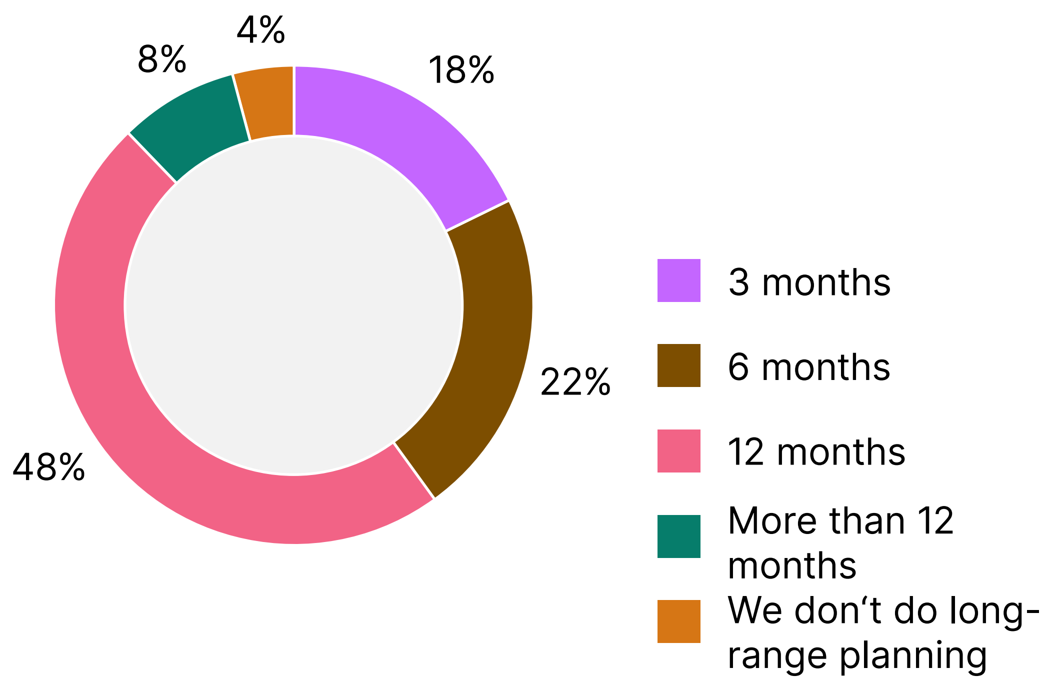
How much time do you and/or your team spend each week on forecasting?



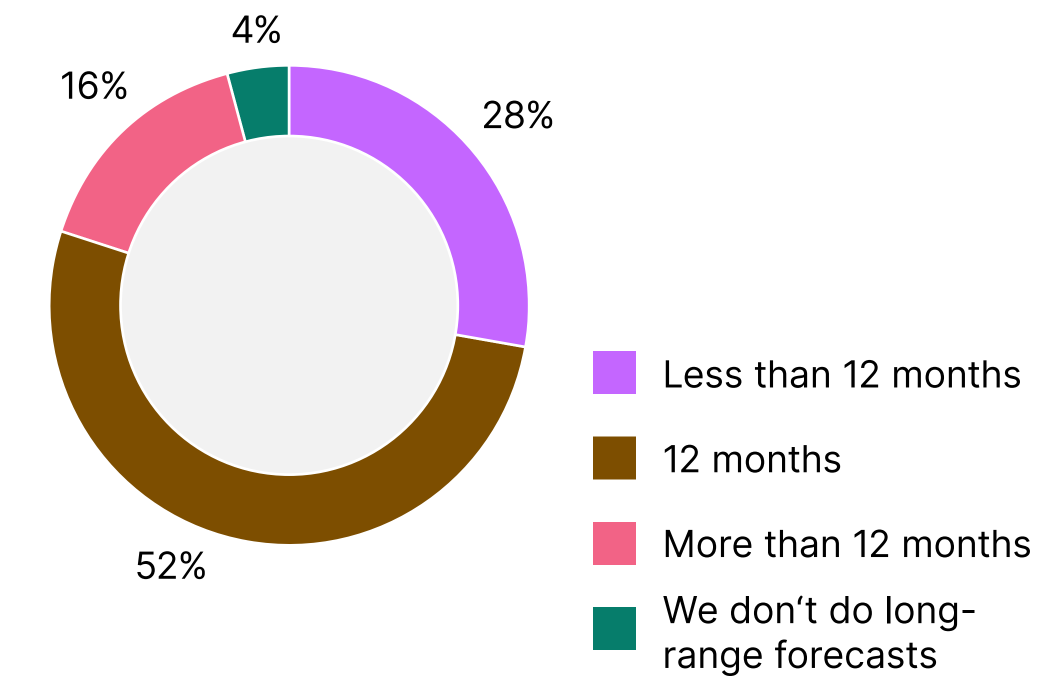
Typically, how accurate are your forecasts?



How far in advance do you create long-term forecasts?



What is the duration of the long-range forecasts you produce?



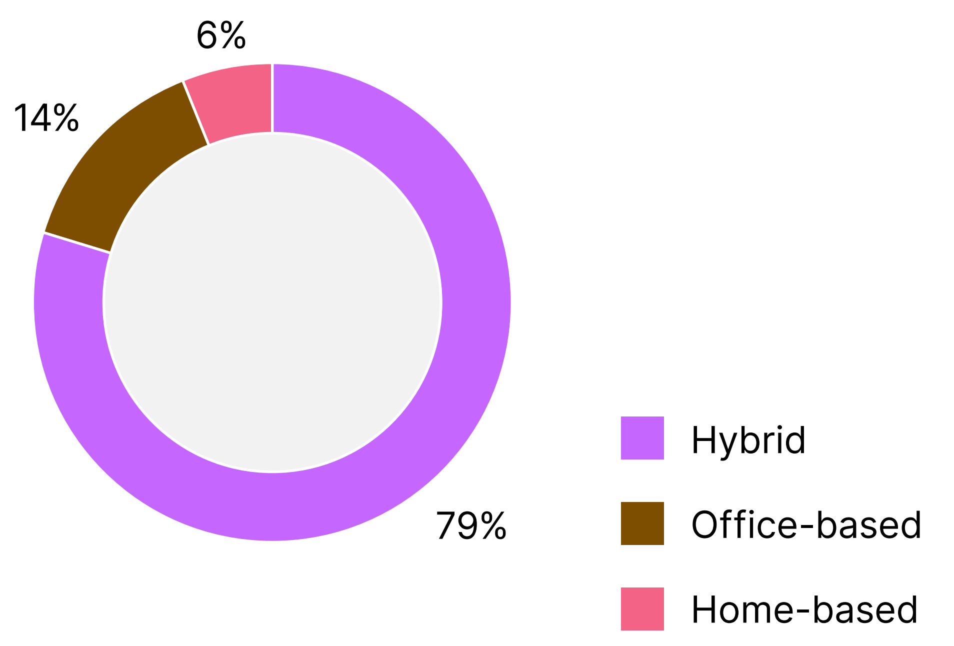
Scheduling trends

The push for flexibility and optimization

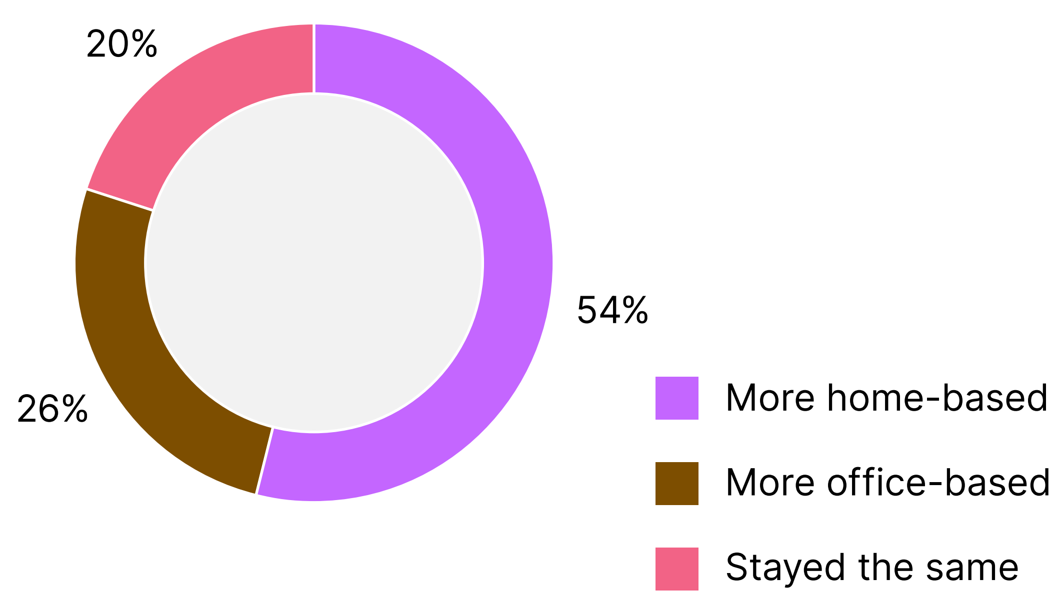
Scheduling is where most of the magic happens in WFM. It's where staffing levels are aligned with customer demand so that service goals are met while avoiding wasteful over-staffing and stressful under-staffing. Forecasting is important, but without scheduling, its value is limited. While organizations strive to align staffing with demand, many have yet to adopt scheduling strategies that leverage optimization and employee engagement. **Traditional fixed shifts continue to dominate, with 24% of organizations relying on fixed shifts for more than 75% of their workforce.**

In contrast, demand-driven optimized scheduling practices are still underutilized. Only about half the respondents use optimized scheduling for the majority of their employees. The data also shows limited employee influence over their own schedules, with **53% of organizations giving less than 25% of employees influence over their shifts**. The rise of hybrid work introduces another layer of complexity. Over **79% of organizations now manage a mix of office and remote employees, with 54% reporting an increase in home-based work after the Covid pandemic**. That's in stark contrast to our previous benchmarking study, in which 80% of respondents had less than 10% of employees working from home. This confirms that the Covid pandemic marked a step change in home working and **office-based working has not returned to pre-pandemic levels**. These shifts suggest that flexible scheduling will remain essential in the long term.

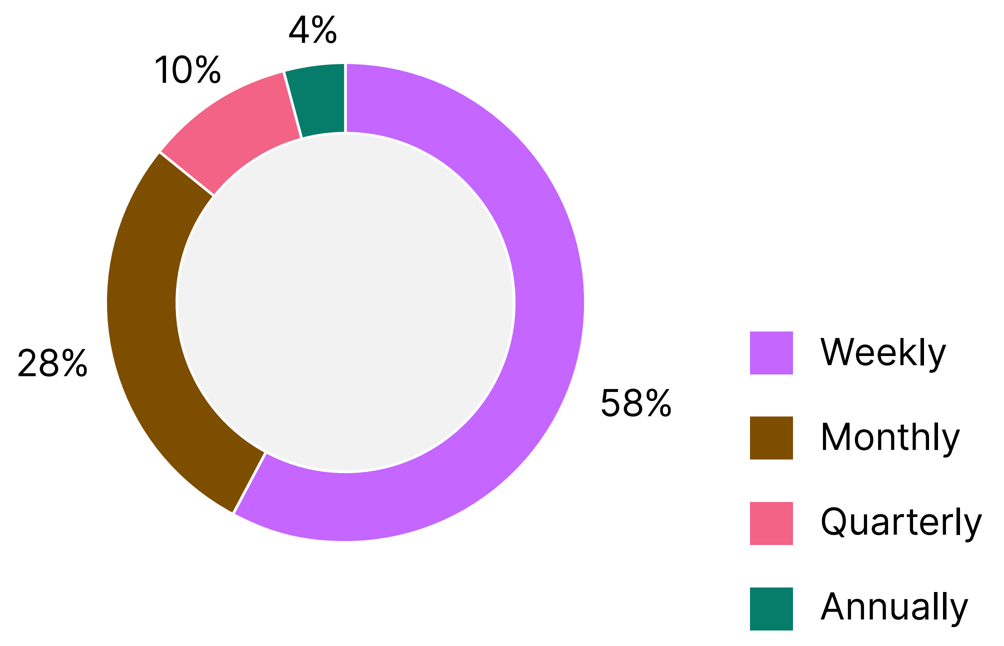
Approximately what is your mix of office-based, home-based and hybrid employees?



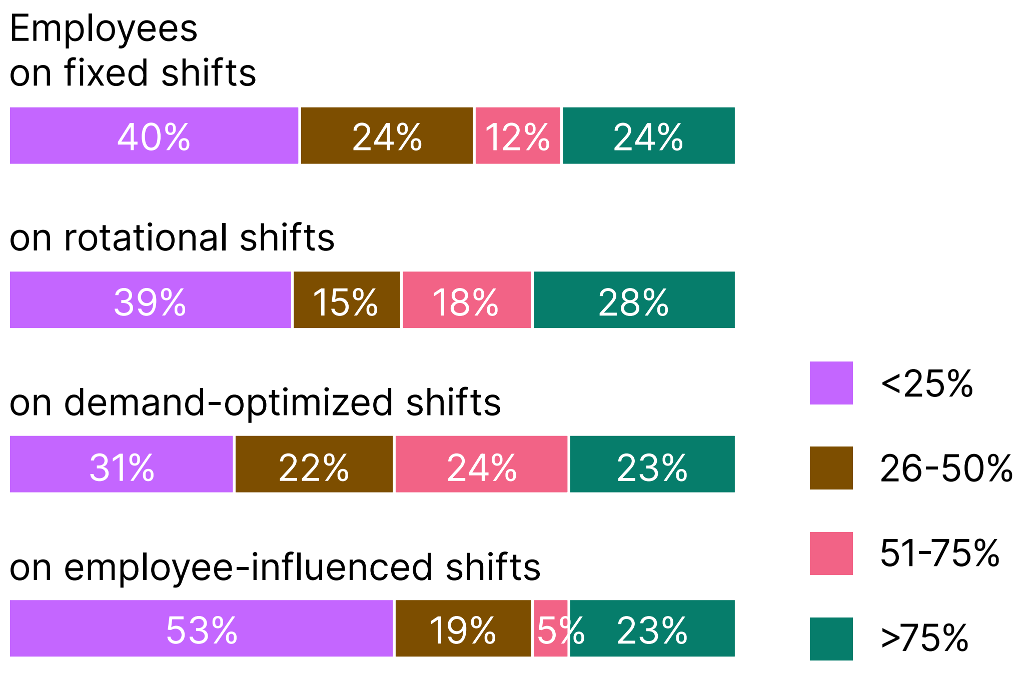
Has this changed post-Covid 19?



How frequently do you publish shifts to your employees?



What is the percentage of your employees on the various shifts?

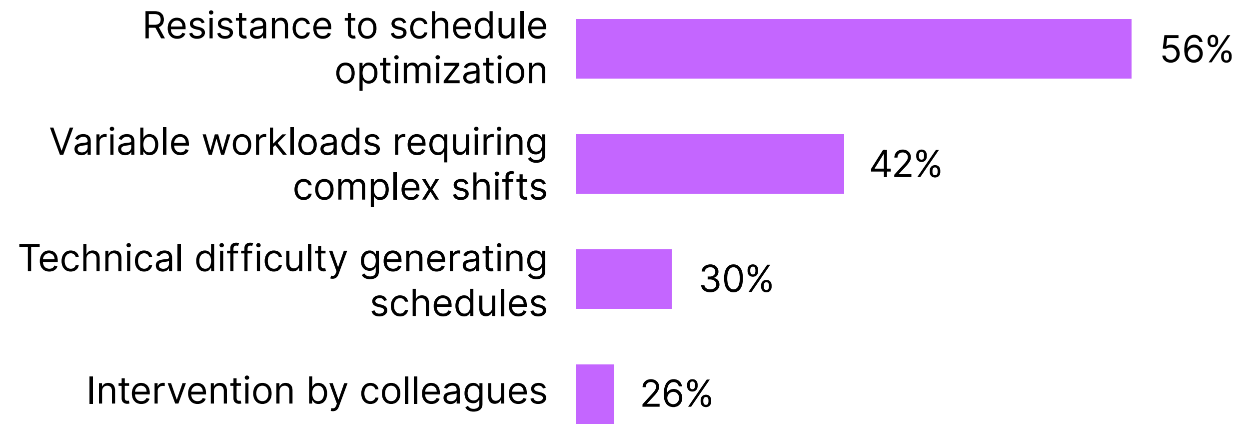


Scheduling challenges

Resistance and complexity

When it comes to scheduling, the biggest roadblock isn't technology, its resistance to change. **56% of organizations cite pushback** from employees, team leads, or management as their biggest challenge. **Other major challenges include variable workloads (42%), which demand more complex shift planning, and technical limitations (30%)** - especially in regulated or legacy-heavy sectors like public services and utilities. And while scheduling tools are widely available, **only 16% of organizations report rarely experiencing over- or understaffing**. For many, the process remains highly manual and time-consuming, with **over 35% of respondents dedicating more than 9 hours a week** to scheduling alone.

What are the biggest challenges your organization faces in scheduling?



Respondents could select multiple options.

#1 Resistance to schedule optimization
Industries most affected

1. Outsourcing & telemarketing
2. Transport & travel
3. Medical

#2 Variable workloads requiring complex shifts
Industries most affected

1. Retail & distribution
2. Services
3. Finance

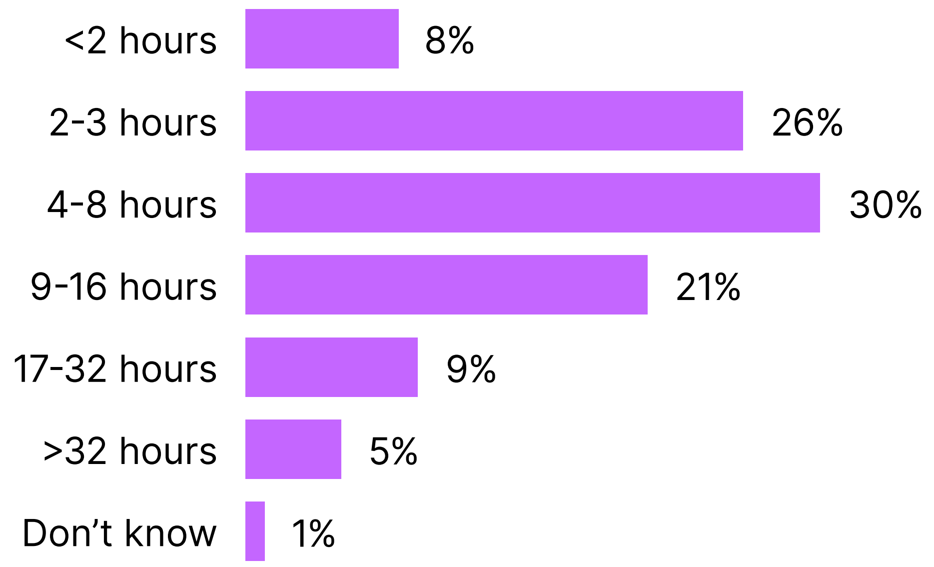
#3 Technical difficulties in generating efficient schedules
Industries most affected

1. Public Services
2. Utilities
3. IT

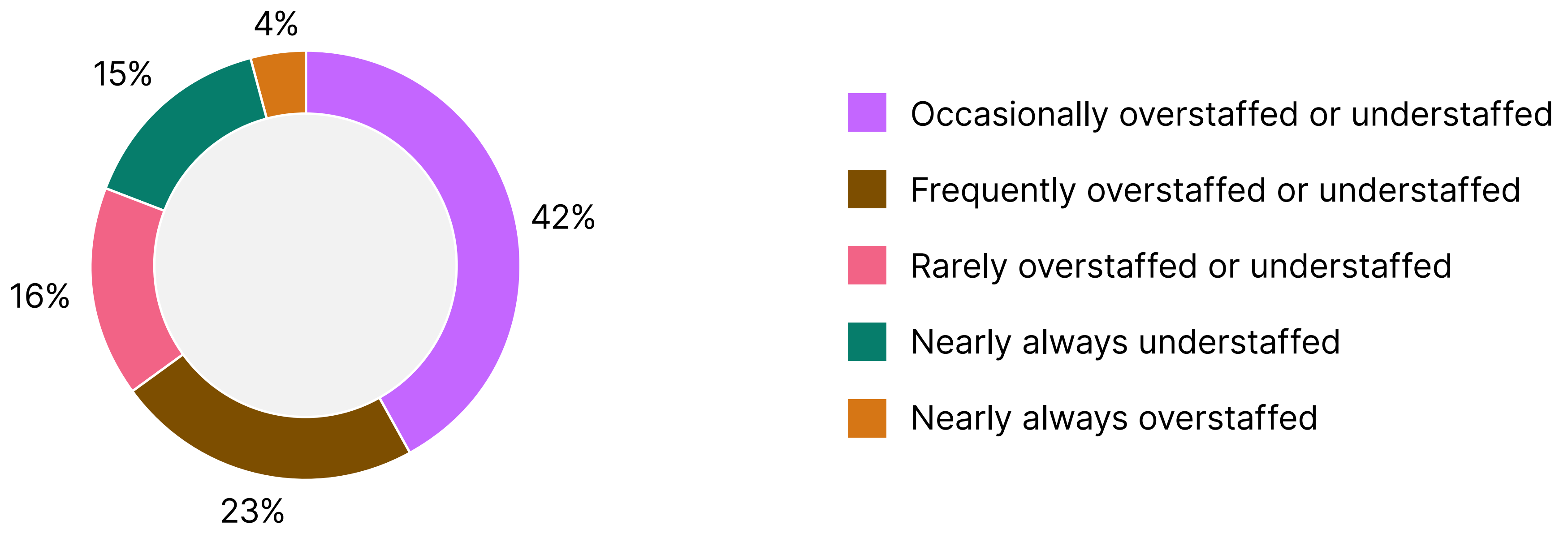
#4 Intervention by colleagues
Industries most affected

1. Motoring
2. Food & Beverages
3. Communications

How much time do you and/or your team spend each week on building schedules?



How efficient are your schedules?



Intraday management challenges

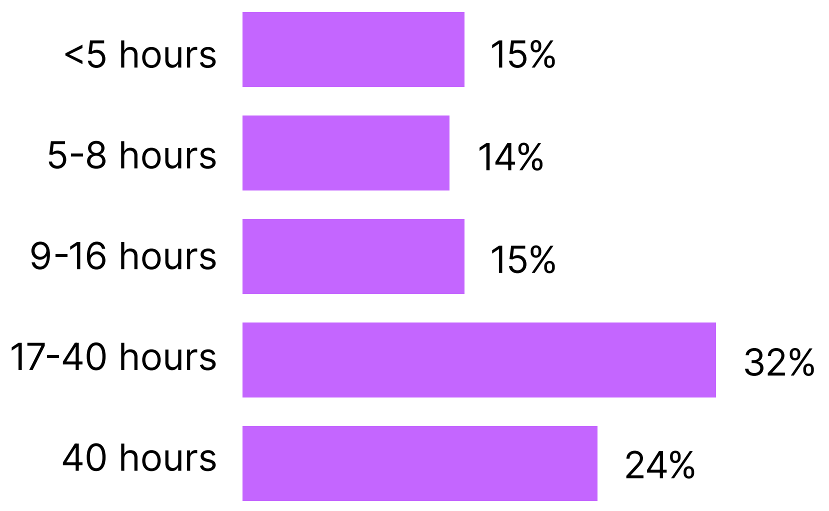
Unplanned absences and poor adherence

No two days are the same. Even the best-laid plans can change, making intraday management essential. **While 62% of organizations report having a structured real-time management process, a substantial 38% still operate reactivel**y, risking both service levels and employee workload balance.

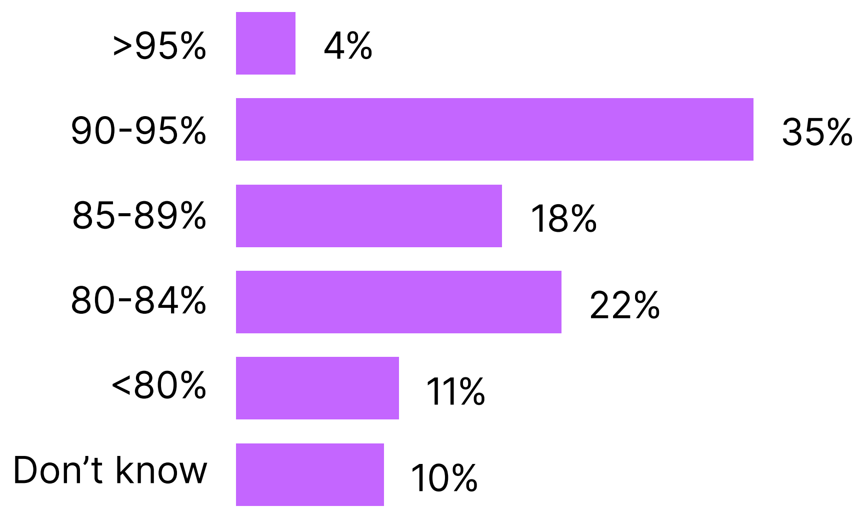
The ability to quickly adjust schedules, redeploy employees, and respond to live demand fluctuations separates high-performing WFM teams from the rest. This ability requires dedicated resources, with **56% of organizations spending more than 17 hours per week on intraday management**.

Unplanned absences (68%) are the top challenge organizations face in intraday management, with the issue particularly acute in the medical (82%) and retail sectors (78%). The second most common challenge is poor schedule adherence, affecting 55% of organizations that struggle to ensure that shifts are followed as planned. One piece of good news is that the percentage of respondents reporting **shrinkage in excess of 30% has declined** markedly since our 2020 survey. Another positive sign is that the percentage of respondents achieving **90% adherence or better has almost doubled** since our 2020 survey. Both of those effects are correlated with the greater uptake of WFM applications.

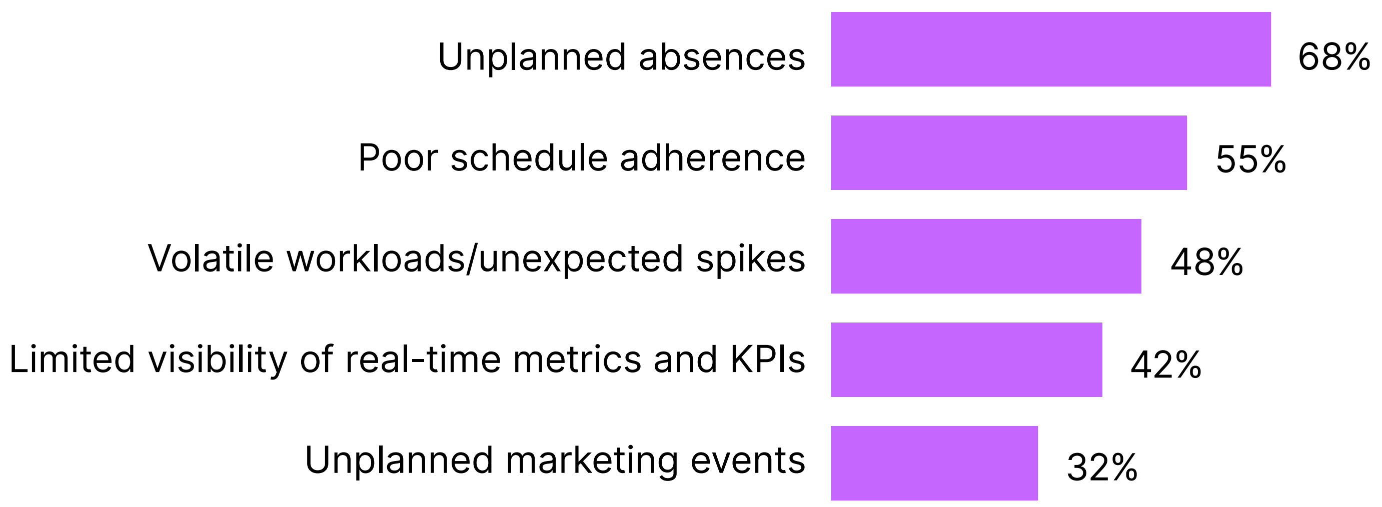
How much time do you and/or your colleagues spend in total each week on real-time management?



What's the average schedule adherence percentage for your employees?



What are the biggest challenges your organization faces in intraday management?



Respondents could select multiple options.

#1 Unplanned absences
Industries most affected

1. Medical
2. Retail & Distribution
3. Transport & Travel

#2 Poor schedule adherence
Industries most affected

1. Outsourcing & Telemarketing
2. Public Services
3. Services

#3 Volatile workloads
Industries most affected

1. Finance
2. IT
3. Utilities

#4 Limited visibility of real-time metrics and KPIs
Industries most affected

1. Transport & Travel
2. Communications
3. Motoring

#5 Unplanned marketing events
Industries most affected

1. Retail & Distribution
2. Food & Drink
3. Communications

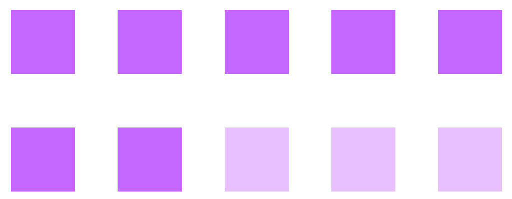
Analysis and reporting

Metrics that matter in WFM

When it comes to metrics, traditional KPIs still dominate. **Service level (90%), abandonment rate (82%), and average speed of answer (80%) are the most commonly tracked**, and remain the North Star for many operations. However, **people-focused metrics like staff turnover, absenteeism, and employee experience scores are tracked far less frequently**. The main goal of WFM is to optimize the deployment of employees, as such, we were surprised to find that schedule efficiency is a KPI for just 27% of respondents. Based on the practices of our customers and the results of our 2020 report, we were expecting 50% or more respondents to constantly measure the efficiency of their schedules.

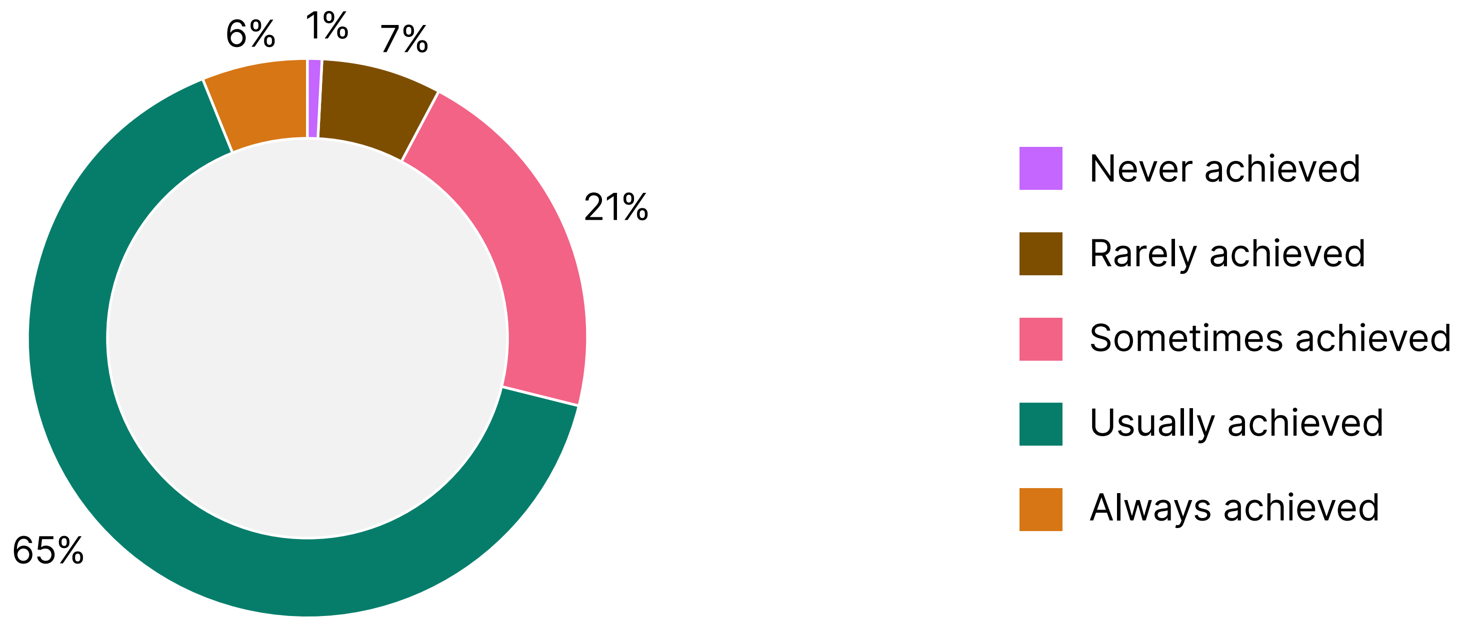
Service level emerged as the single most important KPI for 36% of organizations, far ahead of metrics like customer satisfaction (13%), indicating a continued emphasis on operational efficiency. However, despite the focus on performance metrics, **1 in 3 organizations reveal to only sometimes or rarely achieve their KPI target**s, suggesting persistent challenges in aligning goals with day-to-day operational realities. Nevertheless, the percentage of respondents who rarely or never hit their KPI goals has decreased from 18% to 8% since our 2020 report. That trend correlates with increased use of WFM applications and is aligned with our expectations.

Learn about the 35 Most Important Call Center KPIs.

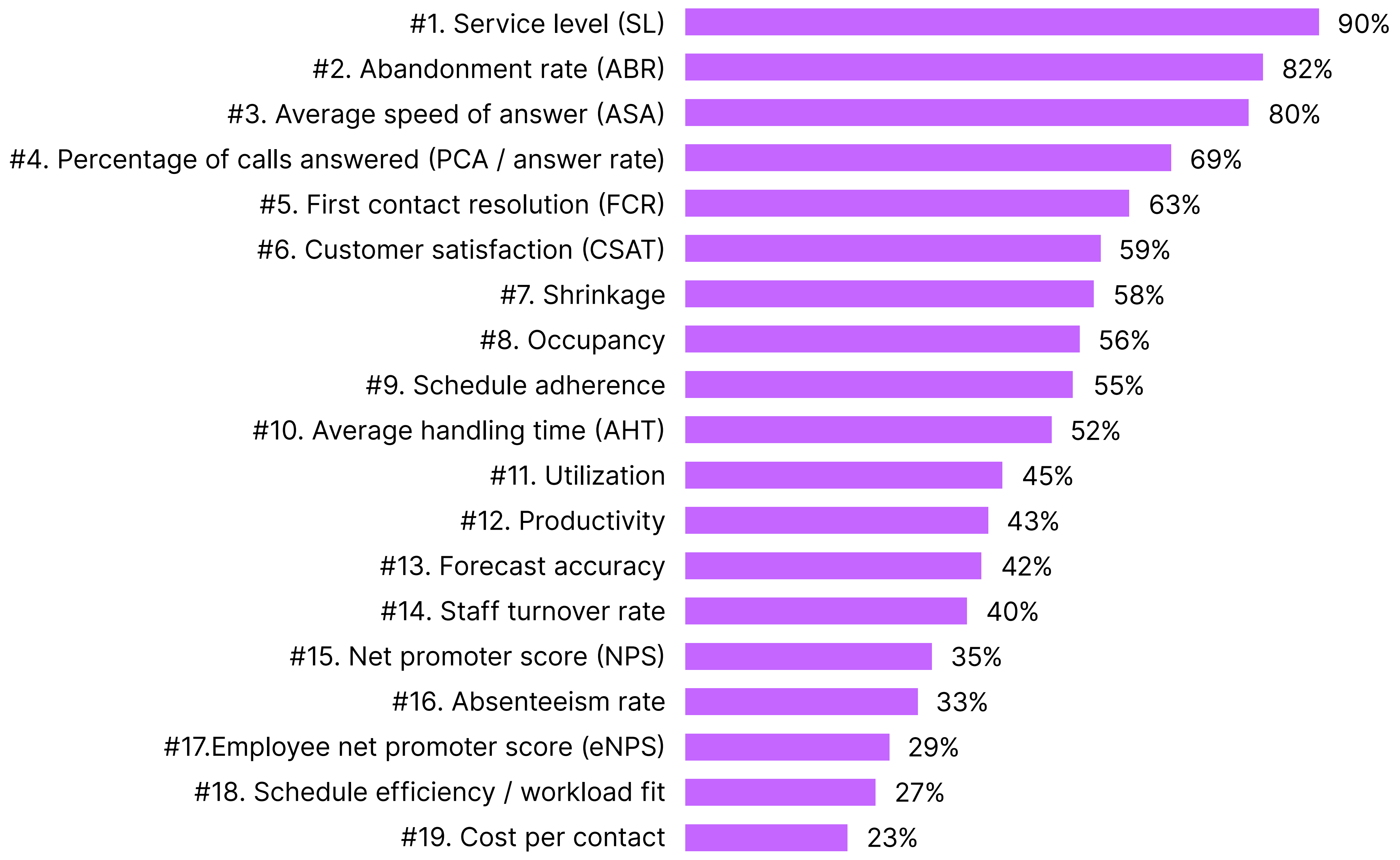


7 in 10 WFM professionals are involved in analysis
with 40% dedicating more than 9 hours per week.

How often does your organization achieve its KPI goals?

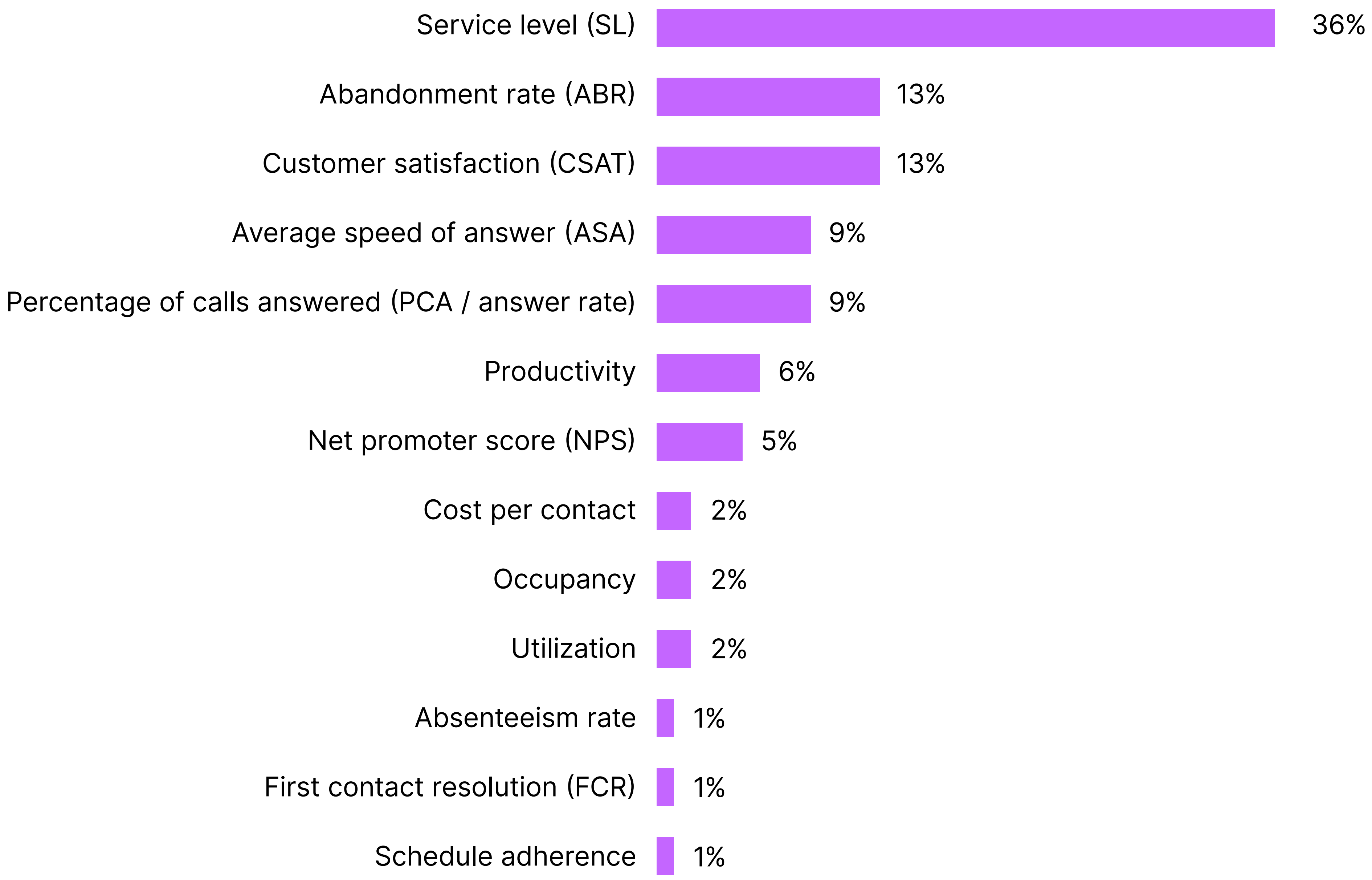


Which of these KPIs and metrics do you track?



Respondents could select multiple options.

What is your single most important KPI?

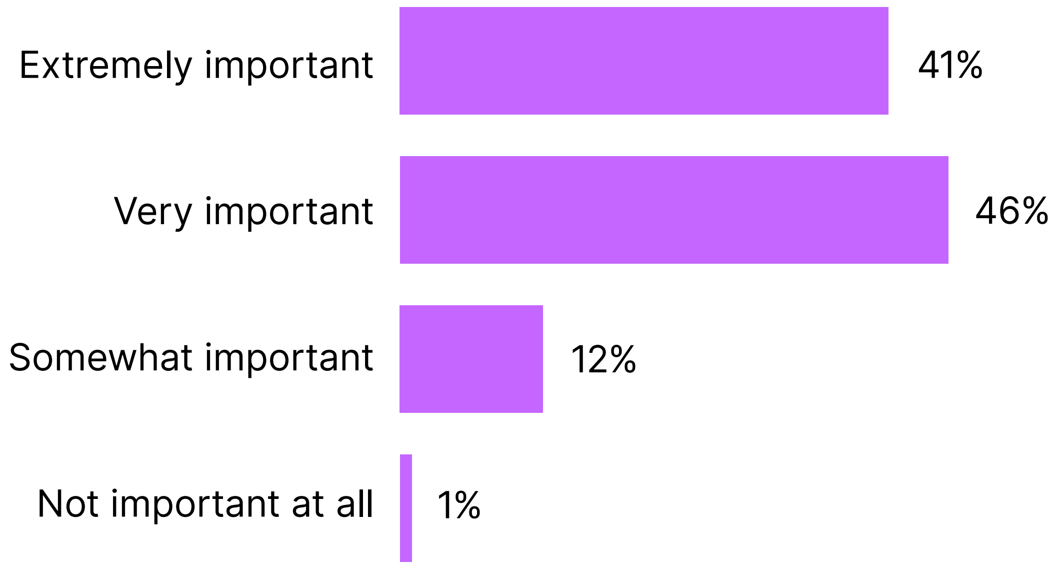


Employee engagement

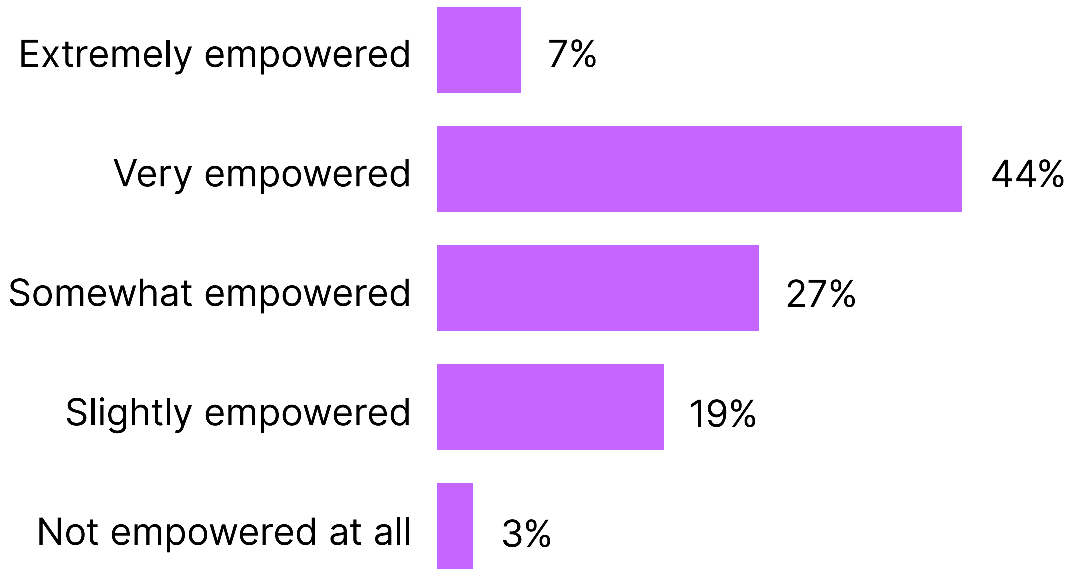
The gap between intent and impact

A workforce isn't just numbers on a screen, it's made up of people. **While 87% of respondents say employee engagement is very or extremely important, nearly half of frontline employees feel only slightly empowered or not empowered at all**. This highlights a disconnect that most leaders recognize engagement as critical for their organizations but often struggle to turn intent into action. The data reinforces that effort makes a difference. **Notably, organizations that dedicate more than 9 hours per week on engagement initiatives are 3.8x more likely to report highly engaged employees** than those investing fewer than 4 hours.

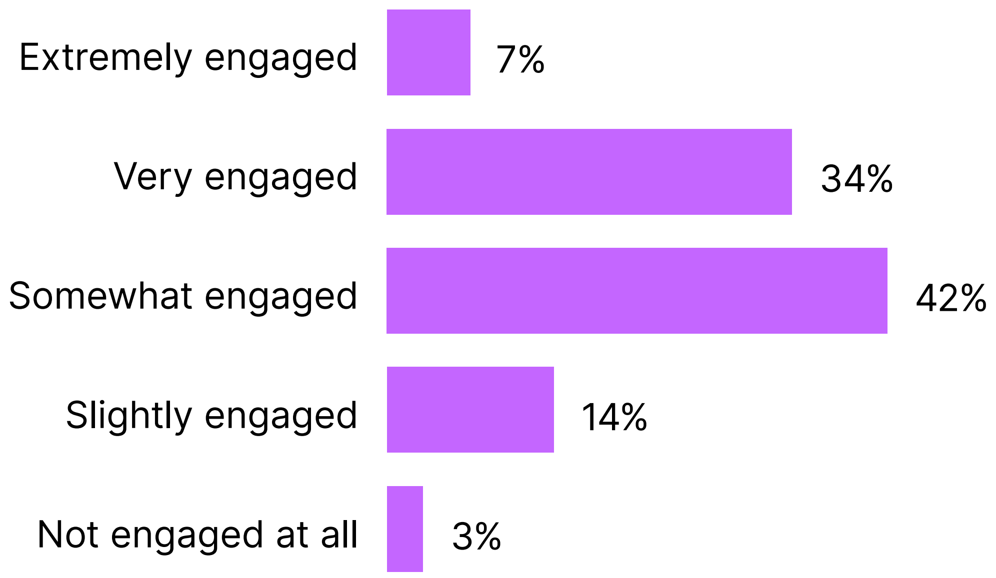
How important are employee engagement and empowerment in your organization?



How empowered are your employees?



How engaged are your employees?



Weekly time on engagement vs Engagement levels

Time spent	% of respondents	"Extremely/very" engaged employees
<5 hours	37%	9%
5-8 hours	32%	18%
9-20 hours	19%	34%
21-40 hours	12%	29%

Discover strategies in The Complete Call Center Employee Engagement Guide.

Employee engagement

The Goldilocks zone for occupancy

Our data reveals a clear “sweep spot” for occupancy levels that balances productivity with employee retention. **Organizations maintaining 81-85% occupancy achieve the optimal balance**, demonstrating:

- **37% lower turnover** than underutilized teams
- **51% better retention** than overburdened teams
- **Optimal scalability** (28% of organizations operate successfully in this range)

The analysis also uncovers a dramatic spike in turnover when occupancy exceeds 90%, suggesting a “burnout threshold” where retention systems may begin to fail.

Meanwhile, there’s a strong correlation between **scheduling interaction methods** and **shrinkage**. Organizations using smartphone apps and web portals report best-in-class results, with **this group reporting 32% lower shrinkage than spreadsheet users**.

The results for staff turnover were more concerning than anticipated, with 14% of respondents reporting turnover of 40% or more, compared to just 9% in our 2020 survey. As predicted, users of WFM applications experience lower turnover than those relying on spreadsheets or no WFM tool.

Download our guide to Occupancy, Utilization & Productivity.

Employee occupancy levels vs Average annual turnover

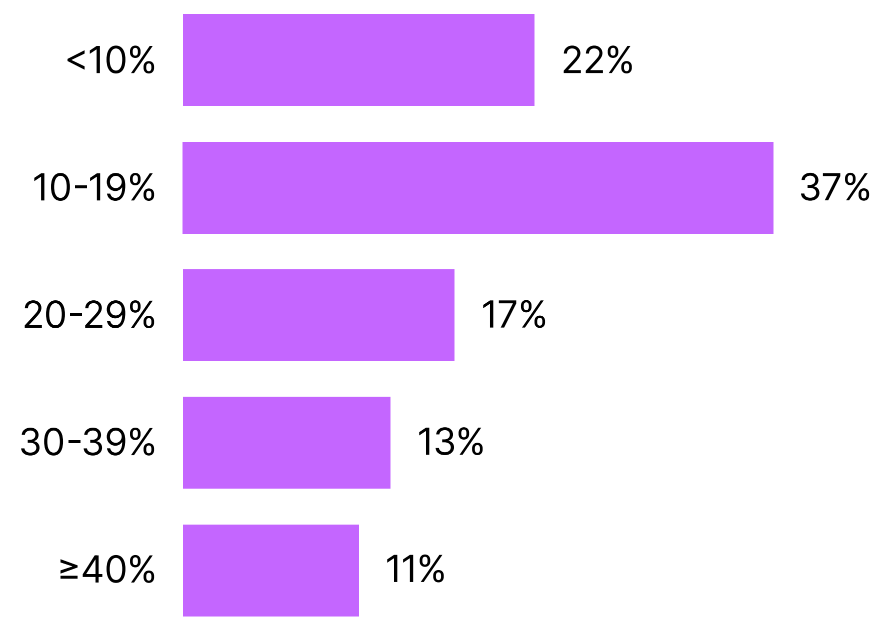
Occupancy range	% of respondents	Average annual turnover
<76%	11%	27%
76-80%	26%	23%
81-85%	28%	17%
86-90%	20%	14%
>90%	15%	35%

Schedule interaction methods vs Average shrinkage

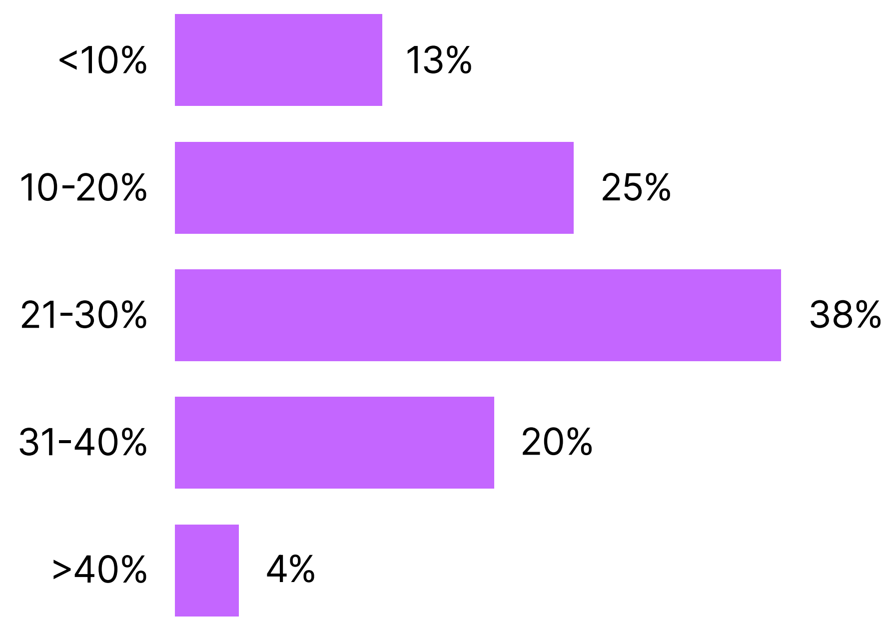
Method	% of respondents	Average shrinkage
Web portal	63%	21%
Smartphone app	28%	17%
Email	19%	25%
Spreadsheet	12%	29%
PDF	8%	23%

Respondents could select multiple options.

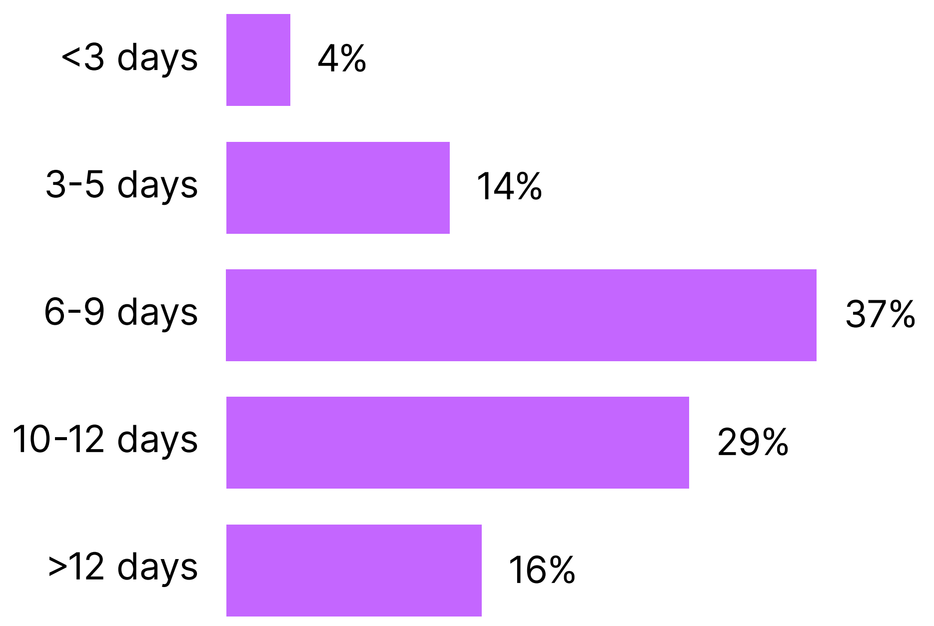
What's the annual staff turnover percentage in your organization?



What is your typical level of shrinkage?



What's the average number of employee sick days per year in your organization?



WFM innovation & technology adoption

Breaking barriers to better tools

Technology is the backbone of modern workforce management. From AI-driven forecasting to self-service tools, innovation continues to transform how organizations optimize operations. But while expectations are high, satisfaction and adoption often lag behind.

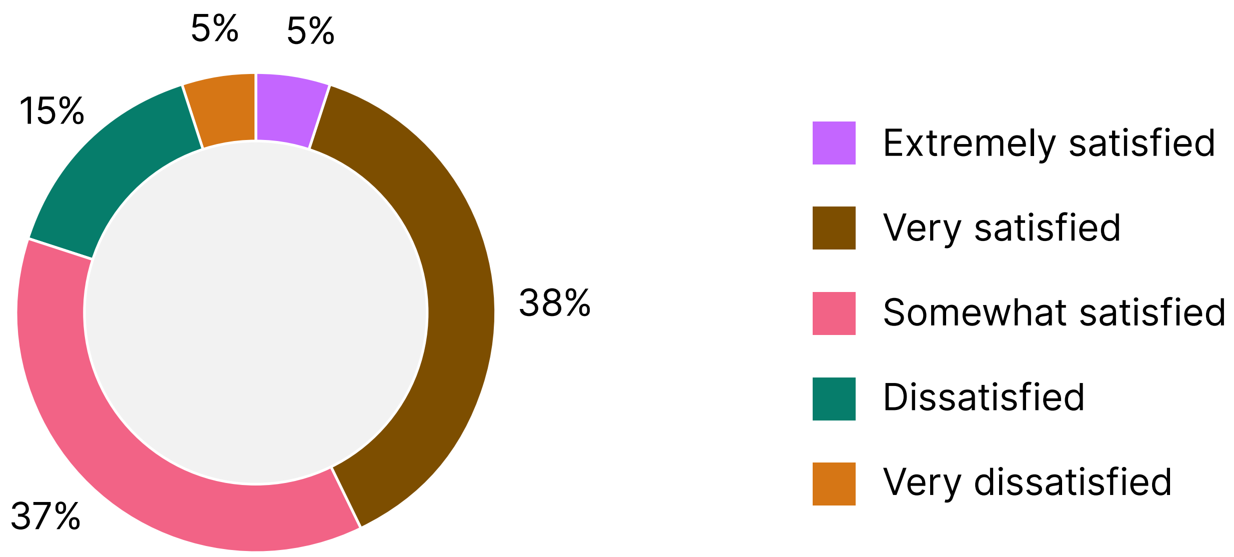
71% of organizations have integrated WFM tools with core systems like ACD and CCaaS, **yet deeper integration with HR (38%) and payroll (32%) tools remains limited**, highlighting an opportunity for better cross-functional alignment.

More than half of respondents report being less than "very satisfied" with their current WFM solution, citing functionality gaps (61%) and integration challenges (56%) as their top frustrations. These pain points signal a strong demand for more robust, seamless platforms. However, when considering new tools, budget constraints (64%), integration concerns (48%) continue to be major blockers.

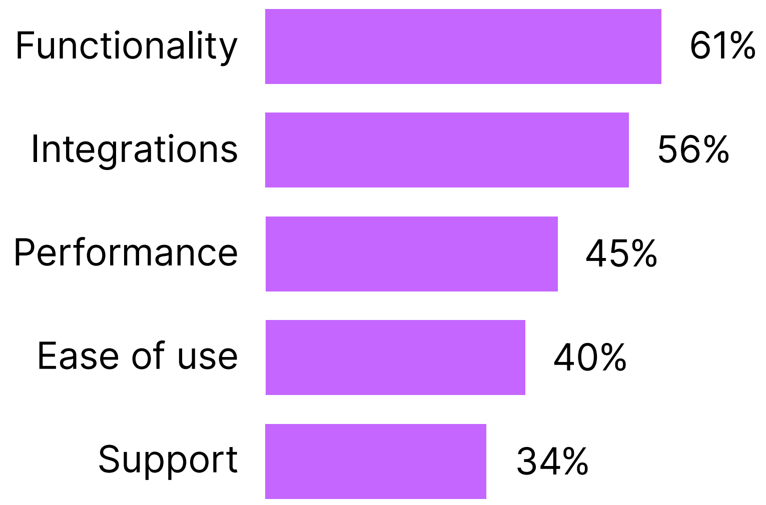
When asked where innovation is most needed, respondents point to forecasting (36%) and scheduling (23%), two areas that are well suited to AI solutions. Yet, only 55% consider AI "very relevant", revealing an ongoing education gap that vendors and leaders must work to close.

Explore deeper insights in Empowering Workforce Management with AI Technology.

How satisfied are you with the tool your organization uses for WFM?

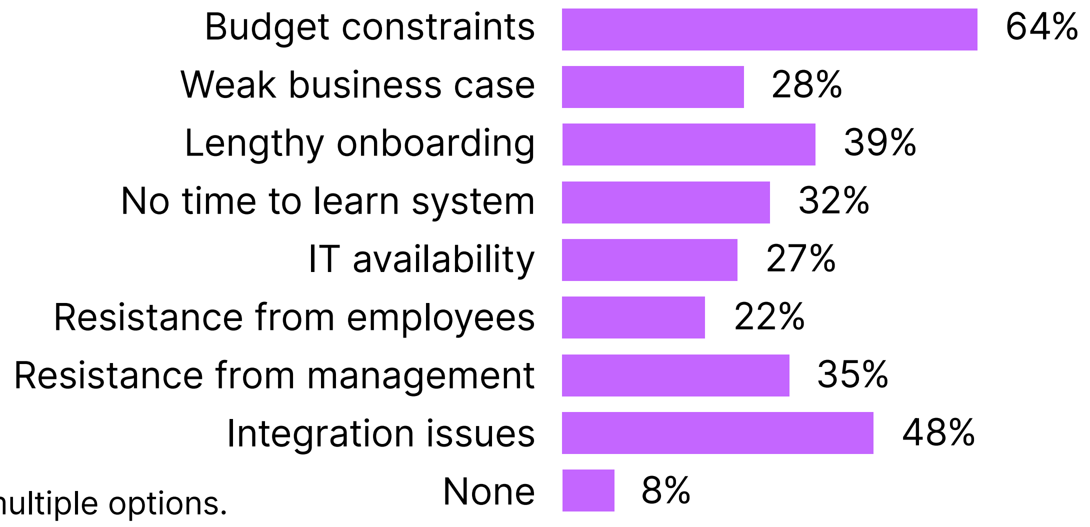


If you are dissatisfied, what are the reasons for that?



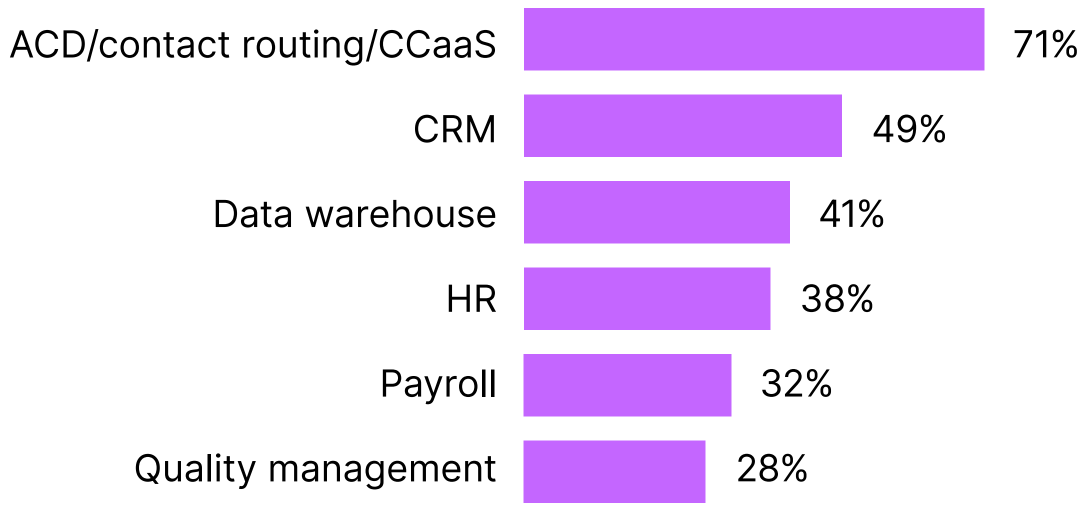
Respondents could select multiple options.

What barriers did you experience (or would you expect to experience) when proposing to replace your WFM tool?



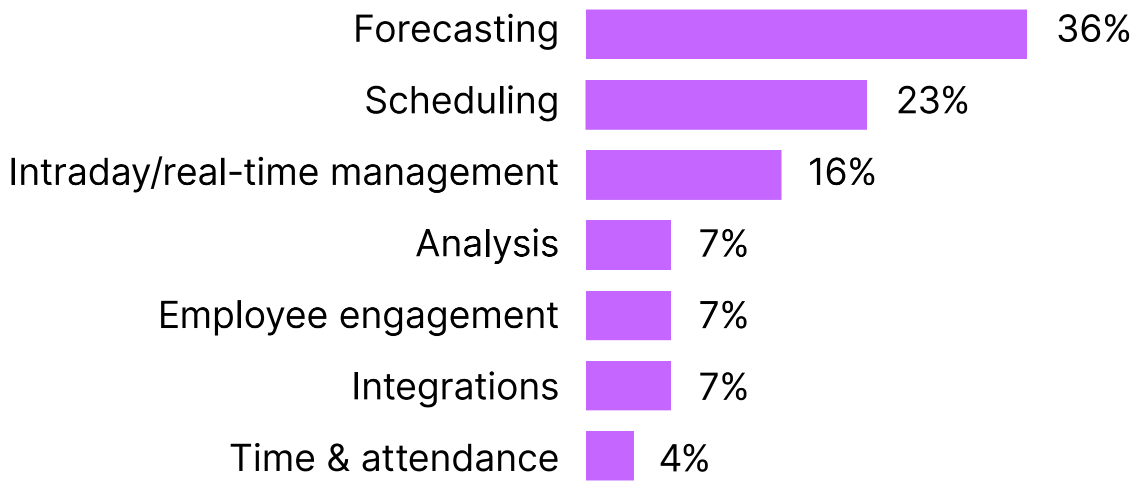
Respondents could select multiple options.

With what systems do you integrate your WFM tool?

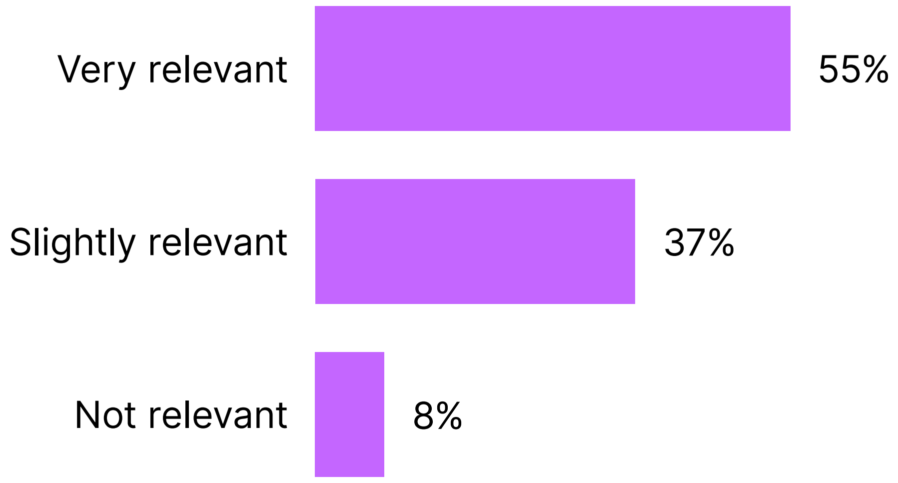


Respondents could select multiple options.

Where do you see the most scope for innovation in WFM tools?



What is the relevance of AI (artificial intelligence) to workforce management?



The WFM profession in 2025 and beyond

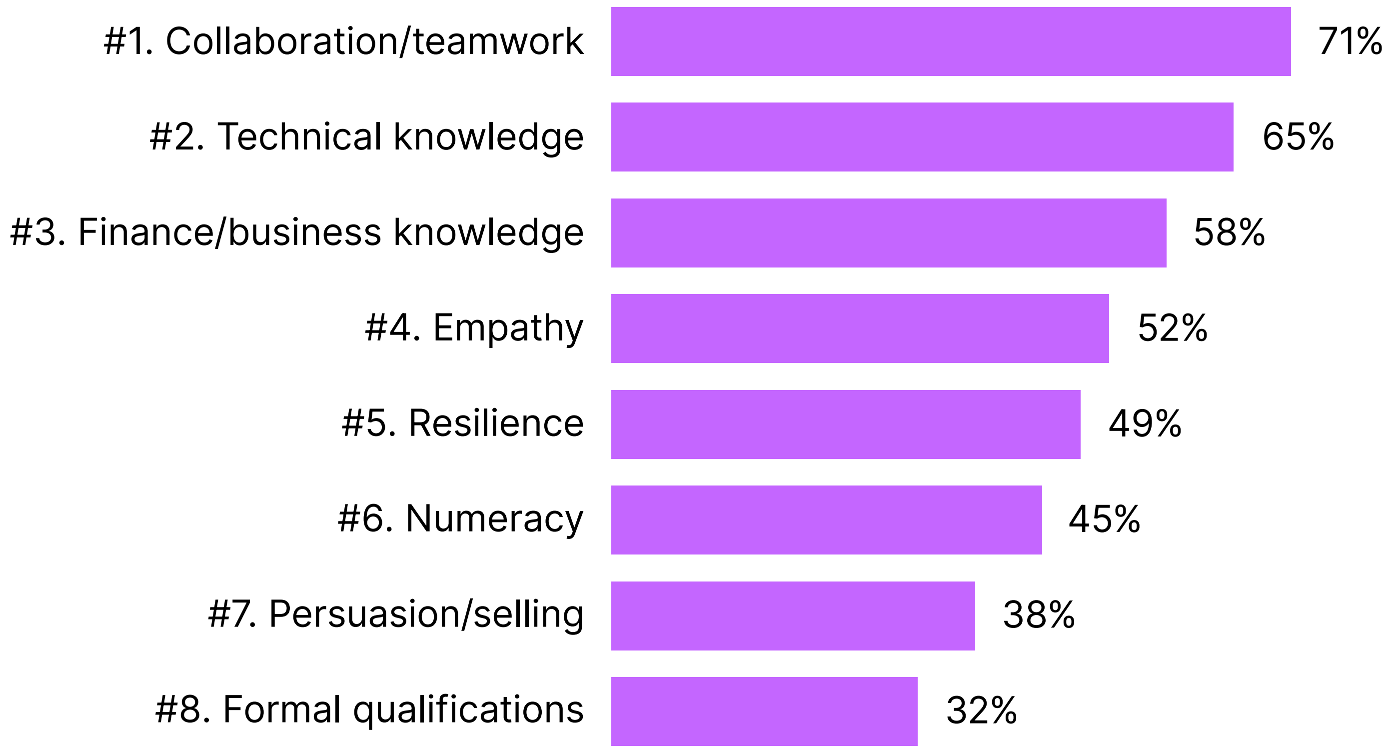
As automation and AI reshape the industry, there's a growing need to blend technical expertise with human-centered capabilities. This final section explores how professionals view their evolving skill sets, job satisfaction, and career outlook.

Soft skills take the lead, with collaboration and teamwork (71%) emerging as the most essential skills for the future, followed by technical knowledge (65%) and finance/business acumen (58%). Interpersonal traits like empathy (52%) and resilience (49%) are nearly as valued as hard skills, underscoring the shift toward more people-focused strengths.

Despite ongoing changes in the industry, WFM professionals report high levels of satisfaction: **98% find their roles rewarding, and 87% feel secure in their jobs**. When it comes to staying up to date, professionals favor **industry publications and blogs (29%) as their top learning resource**, followed by social media (16%) online communities, and webinars.

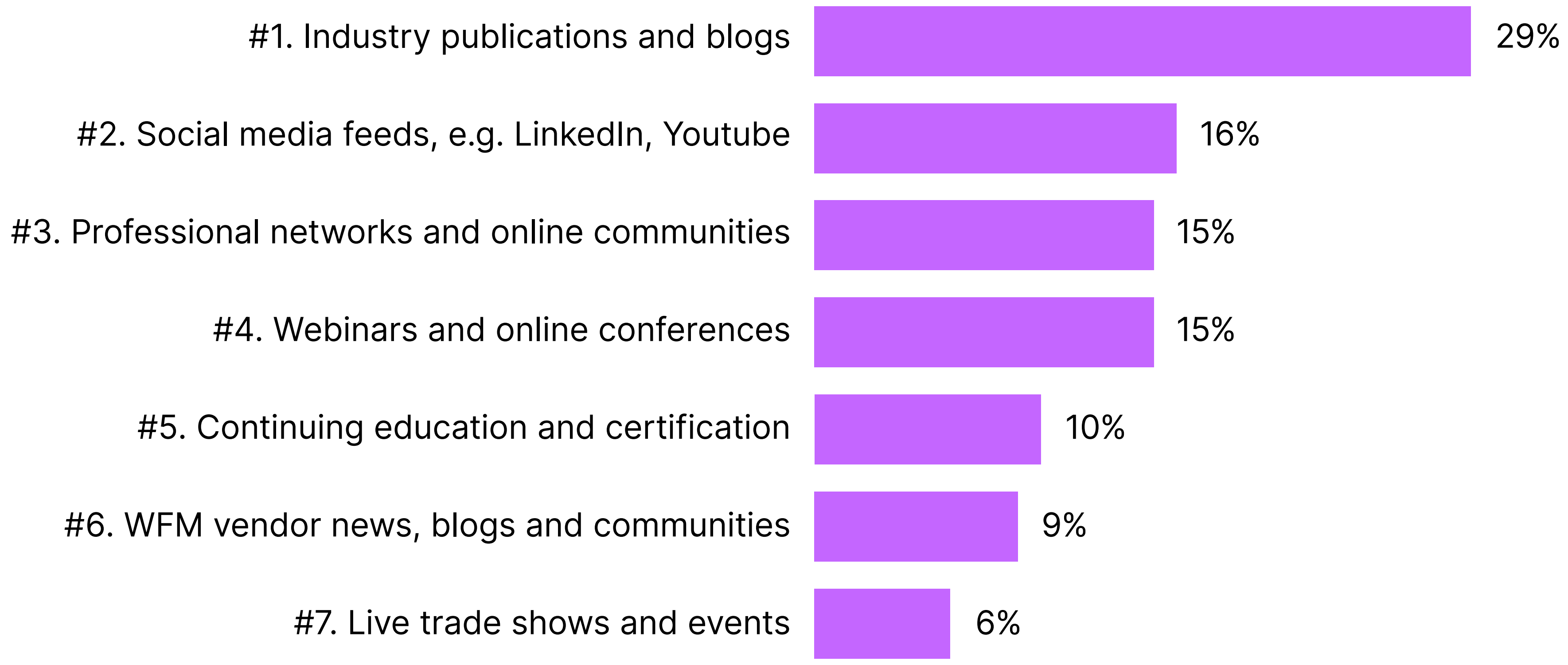
As the function becomes increasingly complex, so too does the opportunity for career growth - especially for those who invest in developing both their human and technical skills.

What skills or traits do you think WFM professionals will need to develop in future?

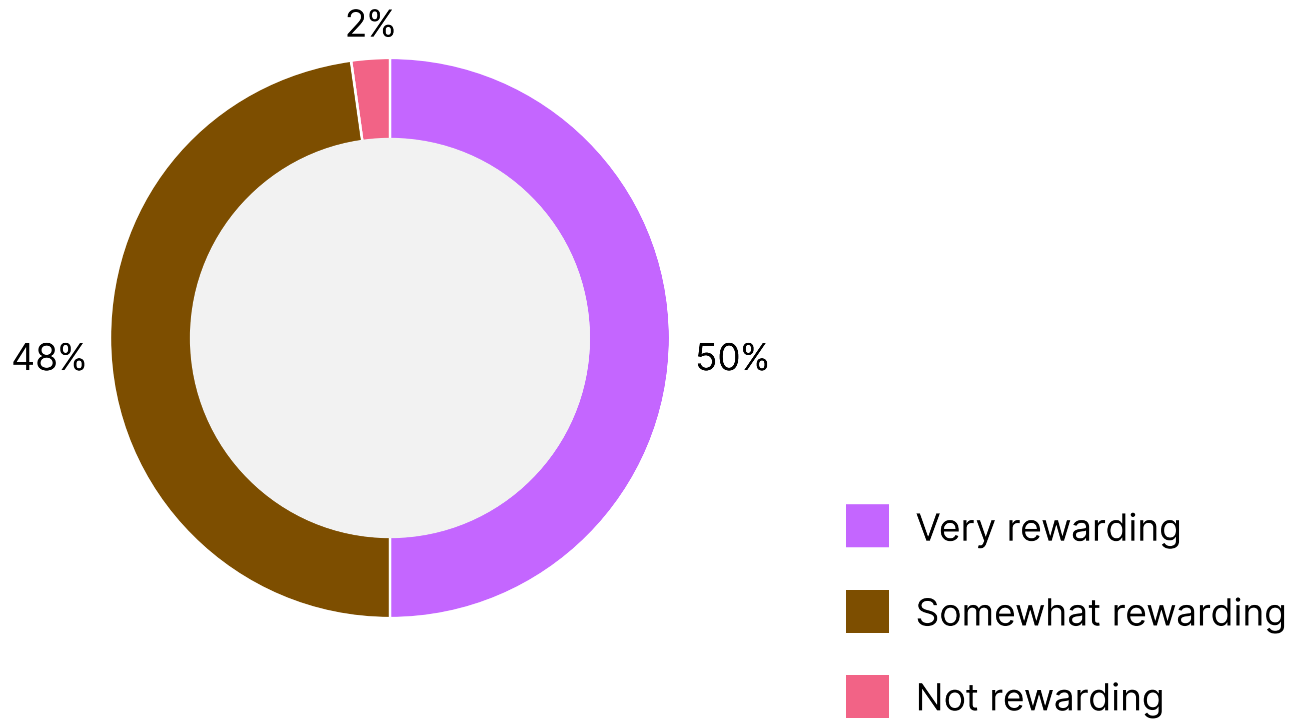


Respondents could select multiple options.

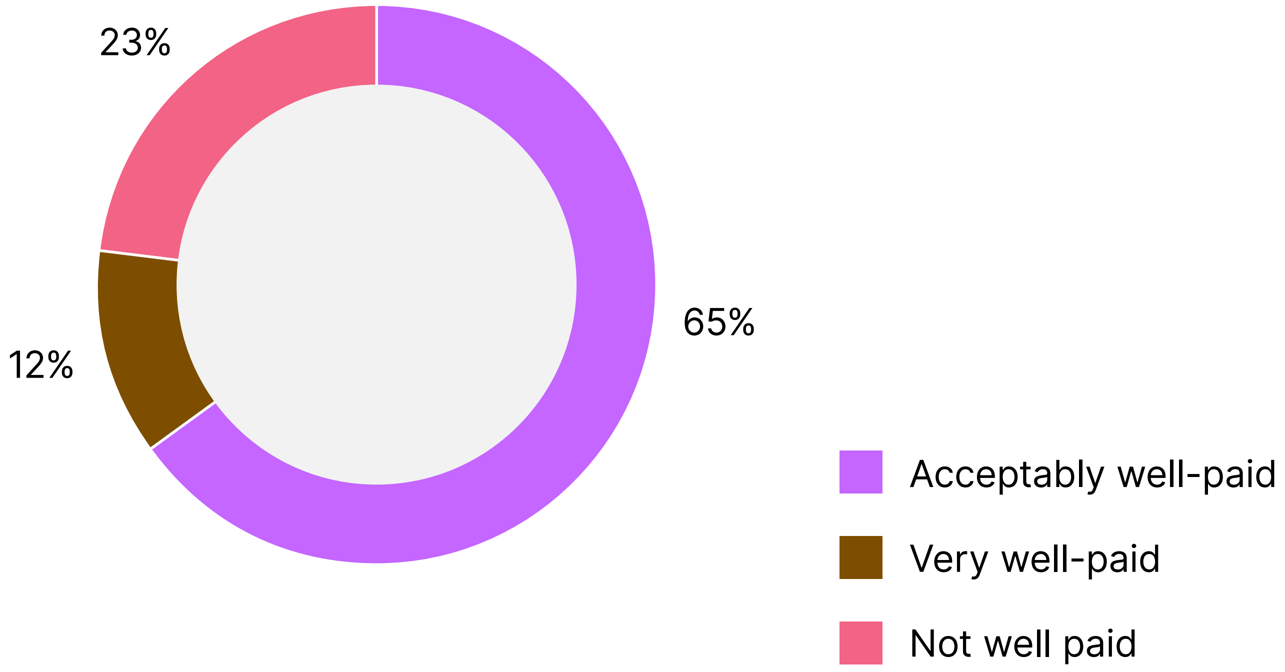
If you had to choose one, which would you name as the best source of information?



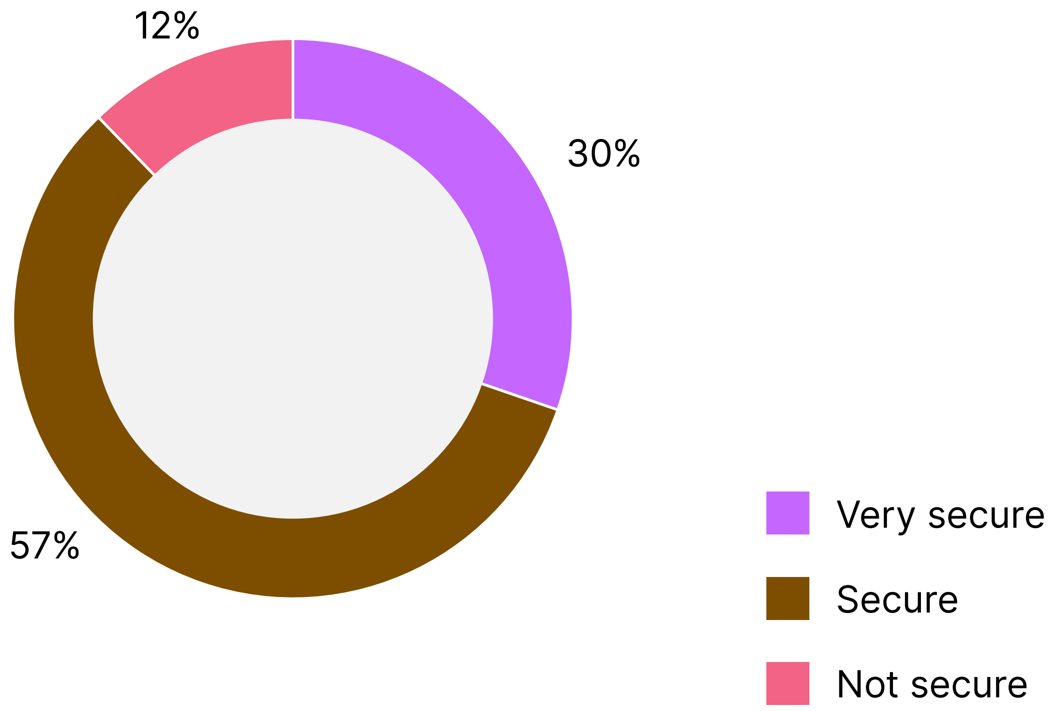
Do you find your job rewarding and fulfilling?



Do you consider your job to be well-paid?



Do you feel secure in your job?



Key takeaways

Reinforce WFM's strategic role

Align WFM with business outcomes: Quantify ROI in terms of efficiency, turnover reduction, and profit gains to secure executive buy-in for modernization.

Modernize forecasting with AI

Prioritize digital channels: Invest in tools that integrate live chat and social media data, and adopt agile 3-6 month forecasting cycles to manage volatility.

Level up scheduling

Reduce the use of fixed shifts: Pilot demand-driven, optimised schedules to increase efficiency. Engage with employees via smartphone apps and web portals to improve shrinkage, adherence, and staff turnover.

Bridge the intraday visibility gap

Proactively manage absences: Implement real-time dashboards and cross-training to address unplanned absences and poor adherence.

Balance metrics with employee experience

Track people-centric KPIs: Pair service-level targets with turnover and engagement scores to sustain performance and retention. Planning is about optimizing costs, so make schedule efficiency one of your KPIs.

Upgrade technology with integrations in mind

Target HR and payroll gaps: Only 38% integrate WFM with HR tools. Prioritize platforms that unify data across ACD, CRM, and employee systems.

Invest in the WFM professionals of tomorrow

Cultivate hybrid skills: Foster collaboration, technical knowledge, and empathy, to prepare teams for AI-augmented workflows.

peopleware

Peopleware is a leading workforce management (WFM) solution, trusted by over 500,000 users in 30+ countries. With smart forecasting, automated scheduling and real-time management, organizations can optimize workforce efficiency and keep work aligned with demand. From precise time tracking to flexible planning, Peopleware helps organizations boost operational efficiency and foster a more engaged, productive workforce.

We have a team of highly experienced experts who are passionate about WFM and the transformation that it can bring about. Many members of our team are former planners. They have walked in your shoes and they speak your language. When it comes to implementing the Peopleware WFM software, we measure ourselves by your success and we never recommend Peopleware WFM unless it will really help you achieve your goals and overcome your challenges. If you've read enough about WFM to know that it's worth investigating, why not arrange a no-obligation call with us?

Contact us
peopleware.com/contact

Share the report and join us in growing a more connected, informed, and empowered WFM community.

With special appreciation to Doug Casterton and weWFM for supporting the survey behind this report.

Want to see how Peopleware makes the workforce management process a breeze?

Book a demo

Catch the key takeaways of this report in just a few minutes.

Watch the highlights