trinet
People Matter

STATE OF THE WORKPLACE

Full Data Report with Charts 2025

Maine, Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont, Rhode Island, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Missouri and Ohio—

Great Lakes and New England

TABLE OF CONTENTS

01. INTRODUCTION

TriNet is proud to introduce the 2025 State of Work: Maine, Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont, Rhode Island, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Missouri and Ohio—Great Lakes and New England Report. In a year marked by rapid technological advancement, shifting employee expectations and continued evolution in how and where work gets done, Great Lakes and New England organizations remain at the forefront of change.

Across industries, employers are navigating increasing complexity. From balancing flexibility and performance to integrating artificial intelligence and investing in workforce development, leaders are making strategic decisions that will shape the future of work. At the same time, employees are redefining engagement, growth, and what meaningful work looks like in 2025.

SURVEY APPROACH

The 2025 State of Work: Maine, Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont, Rhode Island, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Missouri and Ohio—Great Lakes and New England Report is based on survey responses collected in 2025 from full-time employers and employees working at Great Lakes and New England-based small and medium-size businesses. Two complementary surveys were conducted: one targeting employers and HR decision-makers, and one targeting employees across a range of roles and seniority levels.

This report includes data from the following states: Maine, Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont, Rhode Island, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Missouri and Ohio.

Industries represented include: Financial Services, Life Sciences, Main Street Industries, Nonprofit, Professional Services and Technology.

Generations represented include: Baby Boomers (1946–1964), Generation X (1965–1980), Millennials (1981–1996) and Generation Z (1997–2012).

Results are reported as percentage distributions. Select-all-that-apply questions may total more than 100%. All findings reflect 2025 data only.

01. KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Employees are feeling more overworked than employers recognize.

Employees are feeling more overworked than employers recognize. Employers underestimate the amount of hours employees work and the degree to which they feel overworked. Employers are more optimistic about the measures the company takes to enhance work/life balance. Notably, only 1.3% of employers said work/life balance is not a focus of the company, compared to 17.4% of employees. Overall, employers appear to view their work/life balance initiatives as significantly more robust and visible than employees experience them.

2. Employers tend to believe that less than 10% of employees are planning to leave their jobs, while 34% of employees are actively looking.

Employers may underestimate employees' mobility therefore it is important to keep employees engaged and connected to their work. There are high levels of overall engagement at work. Part of engagement is knowing there is room to grow in a company. Employers tend to be more optimistic that employees have a clear growth path in the company than employees were. Managers somewhat overestimate how empowered employees feel, hinting that more awareness is needed about how to keep employees connected, empowered, and optimistic about growth.

3. Employees and employers in this region agree that employees need more managerial and leadership skills to be successful at their company in the near term.

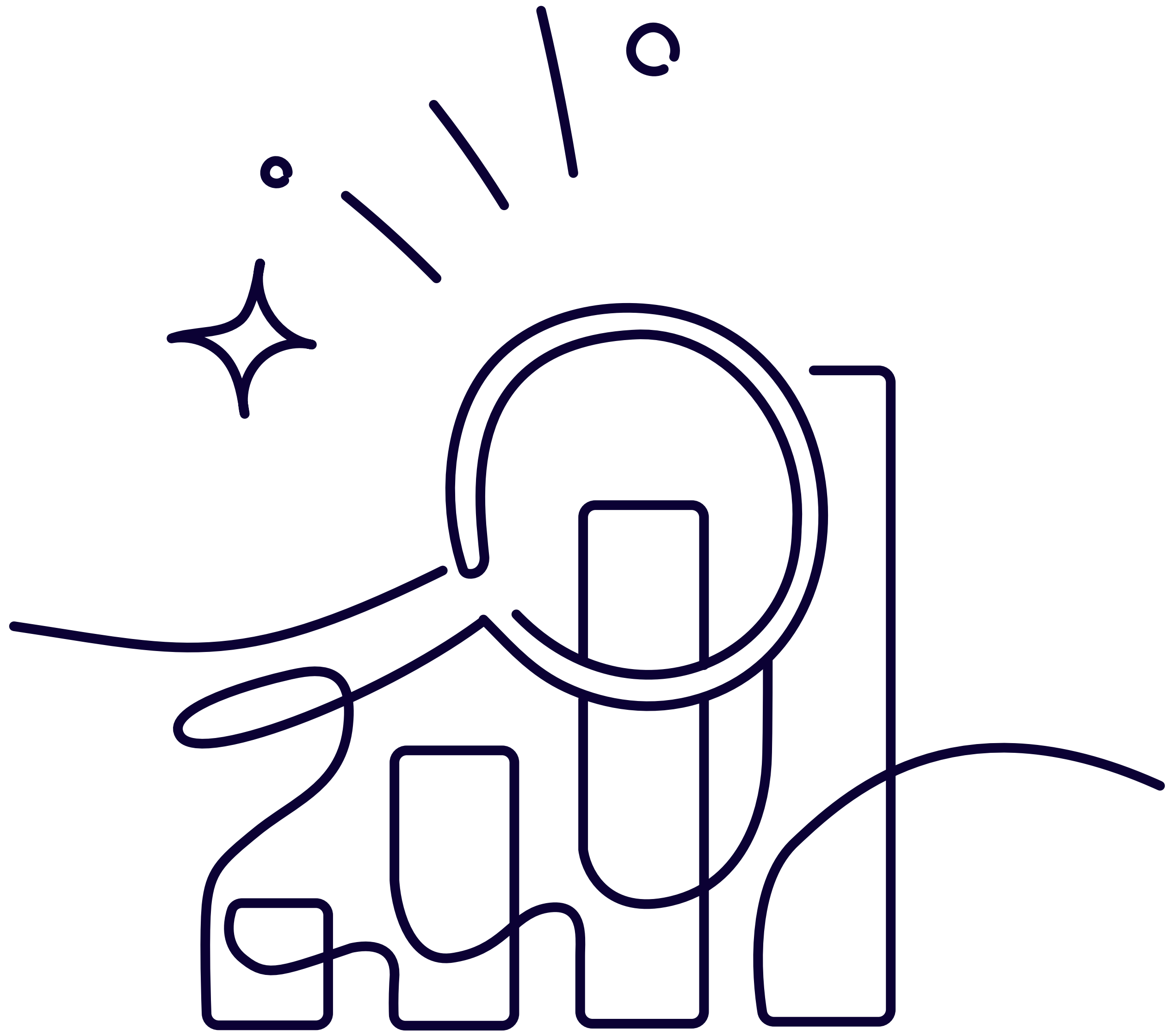
(53.3% employers versus 49.6% employees). Managers also emphasized the importance of developing creative skills, but employees were not as concerned about this skill (52.0% versus 31.3%). Managers also are more aware of the need for employees to learn new and advanced skills to succeed (upskilling) (50.0% versus 27.8%). Managers are more attuned to a potential need for specific skills than employees are aware of.

4. Consistent with national data, managers are much more comfortable with the use of AI.

They are also more comfortable with employees using AI for HR functions compared to employees' overall use. While managers are comfortable with delegating AI for procedural functions such as onboarding, they are less comfortable with using it for interpersonal or cultural activities. Younger employees are more interested in 24/7 HR service availability suggesting they expect AI, or for other reasons, HR services to be available any time they need them.

02. METHODOLOGY

The 2025 State of Work: Maine, Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont, Rhode Island, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Missouri and Ohio—Great Lakes and New England Report is based on survey data collected June 30–July 2, 2025 from full-time employers and employees working in Great Lakes or New England states at organizations with five to 500 employees. Two separate but related surveys were administered: an employer survey completed by senior leaders and HR decision-makers, and an employee survey completed by full-time professionals across a range of industries and seniority levels.



Employer respondents → **N = 150**

Employee respondents → **N = 115**

Results are presented as percentage distributions. Select-all-that-apply questions may total more than 100%. Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding. All findings reflect 2025 data only.

The data and percentages cited are based on a sample population and may not represent the specific geographic regions, industries or generations. While every effort has been made to ensure accuracy, TriNet makes no guarantees regarding the completeness or applicability of the information to your specific organization or situation.

03. WORK/LIFE BALANCE & EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Employees report working more hours than employers recognize. They also have lower work/life satisfaction than employers. Young managers and employees appear to have higher work/life satisfaction. While employees tend to spend more time working at the office location, they also are more in favor of doing so compared to managers. But a higher percent than managers also prefer 100% remote work, reflecting wide variations in employee work location preferences. While managers overestimate employees' feelings of connection to leadership, the company mission, and their direct managers, they underestimate employees' connection to the work.

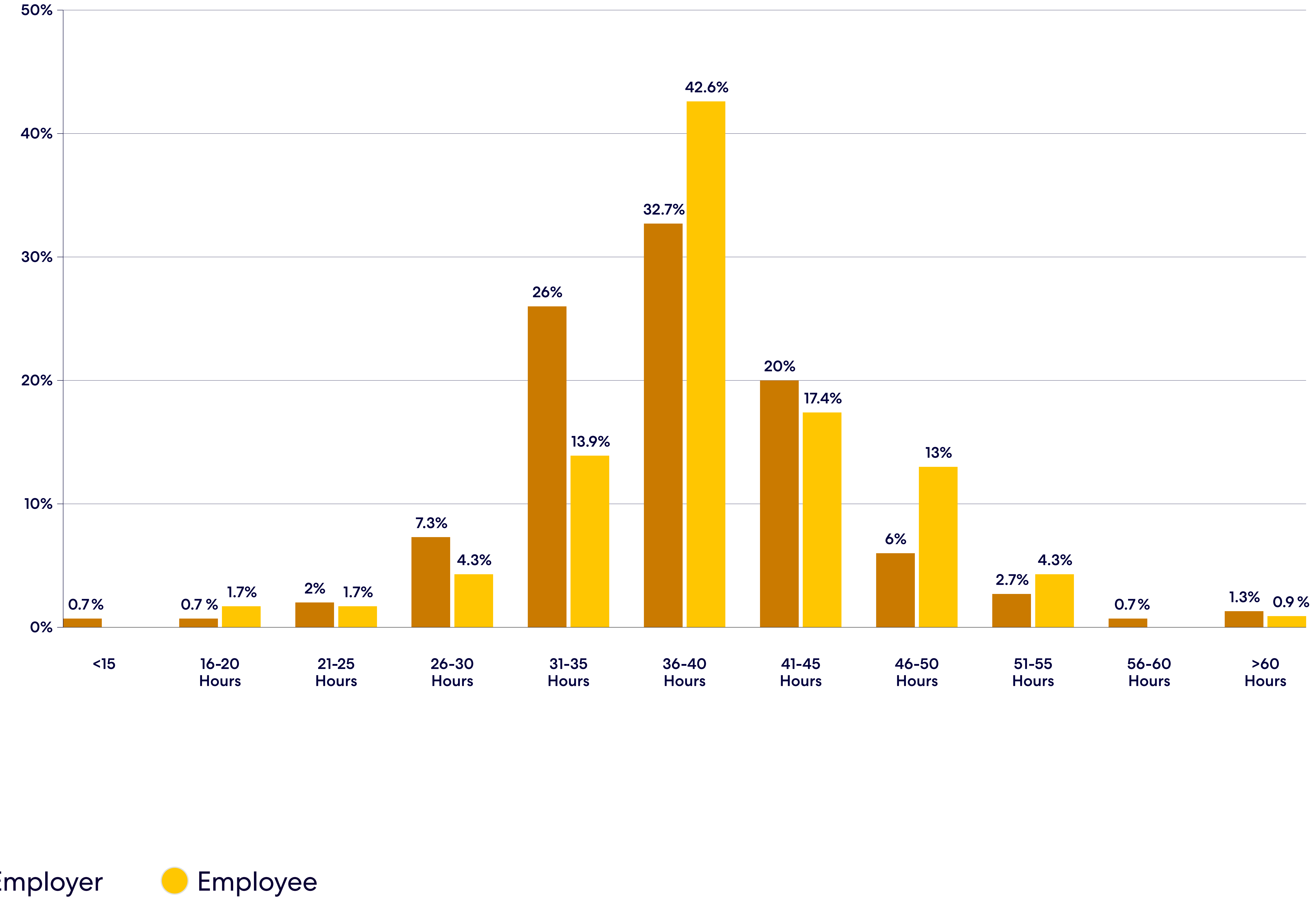
03. WORK/LIFE BALANCE & EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Employers most commonly estimate that employees work between 36–40 hours per week (32.7%) and 31–35 hours (26.0%), with a smaller proportion (20.0%) estimating 41–45 hours. In contrast, employees themselves most frequently report working 36–40 hours (42.6%), but a notably larger share report working longer schedules—13.0% report 46–50 hours and 4.3% report 51–55 hours, compared to just 6.0% and 2.7% respectively among employer estimates. Employees in this region reported working more hours compared to all employees.

Hours Worked Per Week

QUESTION (Employer):
How many hours per week do you think employees work?

QUESTION (Employee):
How many hours per week do you work?



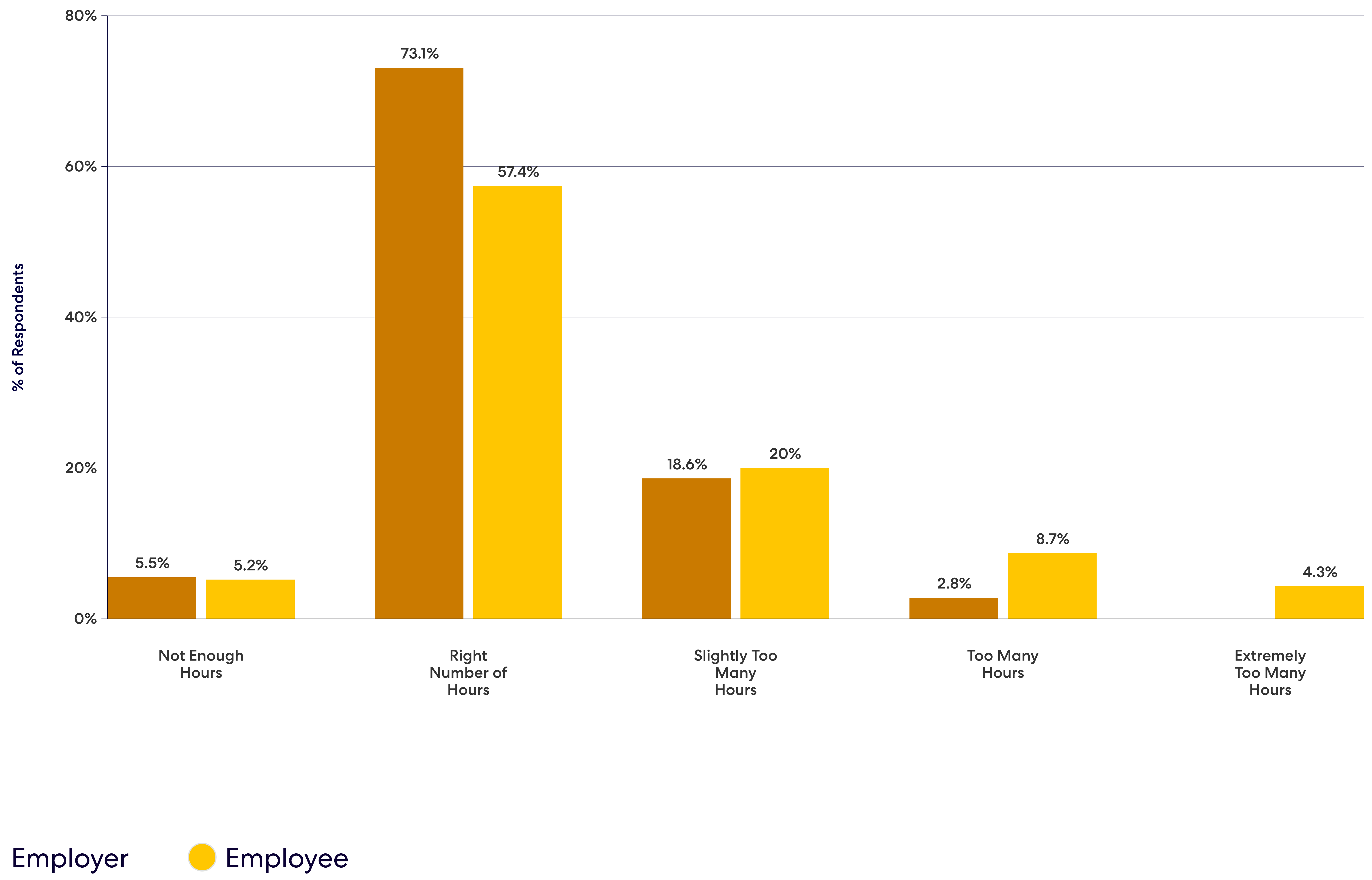
03. WORK/LIFE BALANCE & EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Employers overwhelmingly believe employees feel they are working the right number of hours (73.1%), whereas only 57.4% of employees say this themselves—a gap of nearly 16 percentage points. Employees are also much more likely to report feeling overworked overall. While employers estimate that 21.4% of employees feel they work slightly too many or too many hours combined, employee self-reports show 28.7% feel this way—and an additional 4.3% report working extremely too many hours, a category not reflected in employer perceptions. These results are consistent with national data.

How Employees Feel About Hours Worked

QUESTION (Employer):
How do you think your employees feel about the amount of hours they work each week?

QUESTION (Employee):
How do you feel about the amount of hours per week you work?



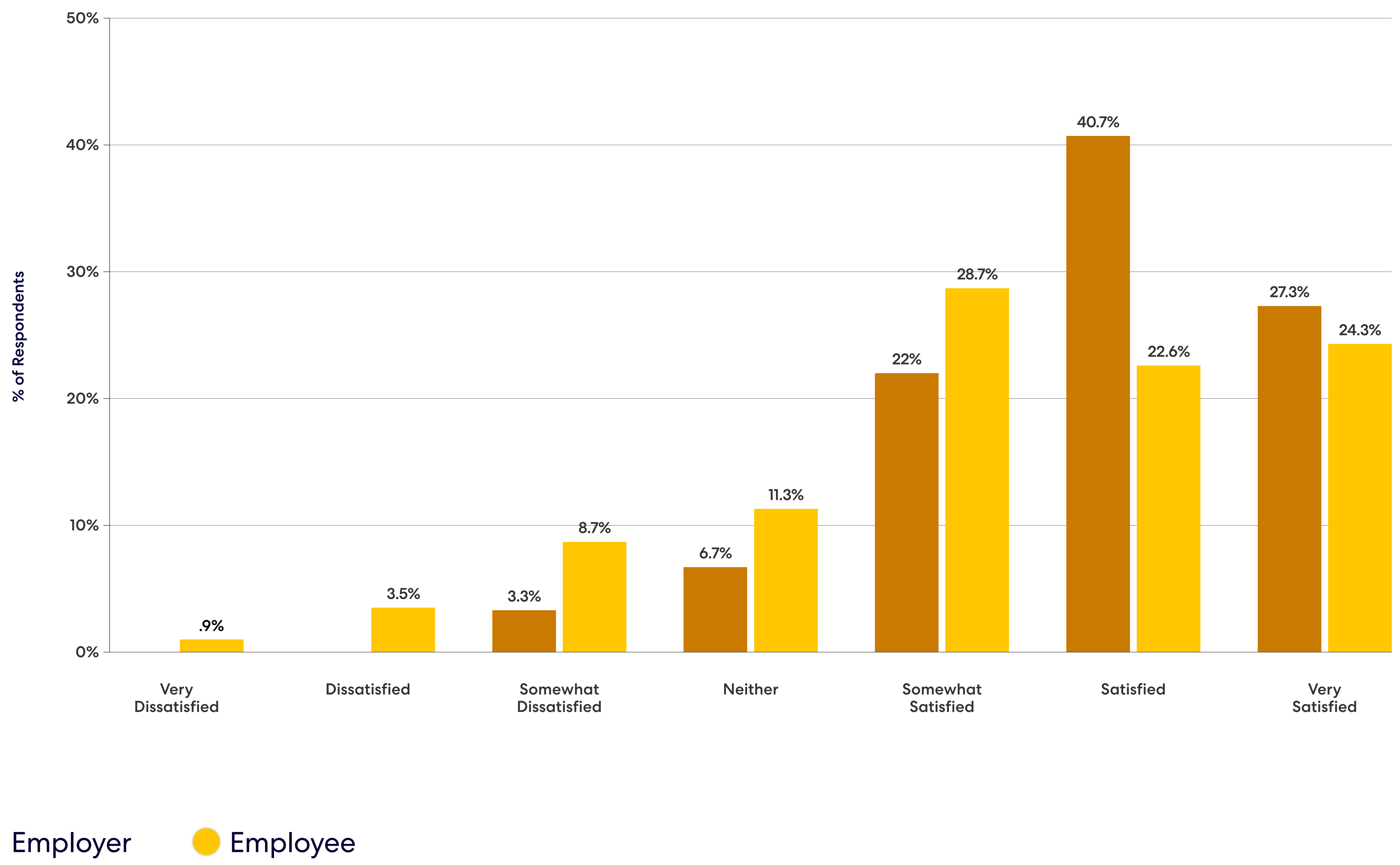
03. WORK/LIFE BALANCE & EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

90% of employers are somewhat satisfied, satisfied or very satisfied with their work/life balance. In contrast, employee self-reports show a lower combined positive rate of 75.6%. Employees are also more likely to report dissatisfaction. While only 3.3% of employers are somewhat dissatisfied and none are very dissatisfied, employee responses show 13.1% reporting some level of dissatisfaction (including 0.9% very dissatisfied and 3.5% dissatisfied). Millennials show the strongest satisfaction among employees; Gen Z shows the highest dissatisfaction (37.5% combined dissatisfied). Employees in this region are slightly less satisfied compared to all nationwide responses.

Work/Life Balance Satisfaction

QUESTION (Employer):
How satisfied are you with your overall work/life balance? (Manager self-report)

QUESTION (Employee):
How satisfied are you with your overall work/life balance?



03. WORK/LIFE BALANCE & EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Across nearly every category, employers report much higher levels of prioritization than employees perceive. For example, 59.3% of employers say they encourage teamwork, compared to just 23.5% of employees. Similarly, 52.7% of employers report offering flexible hours, while only 19.1% of employees identify flexible hours as a work/life balance priority at their company. Managing workflow (48.0% employer versus 26.1% employee) and WFH/hybrid options (34.7% versus 20.9%) show similar disparities.

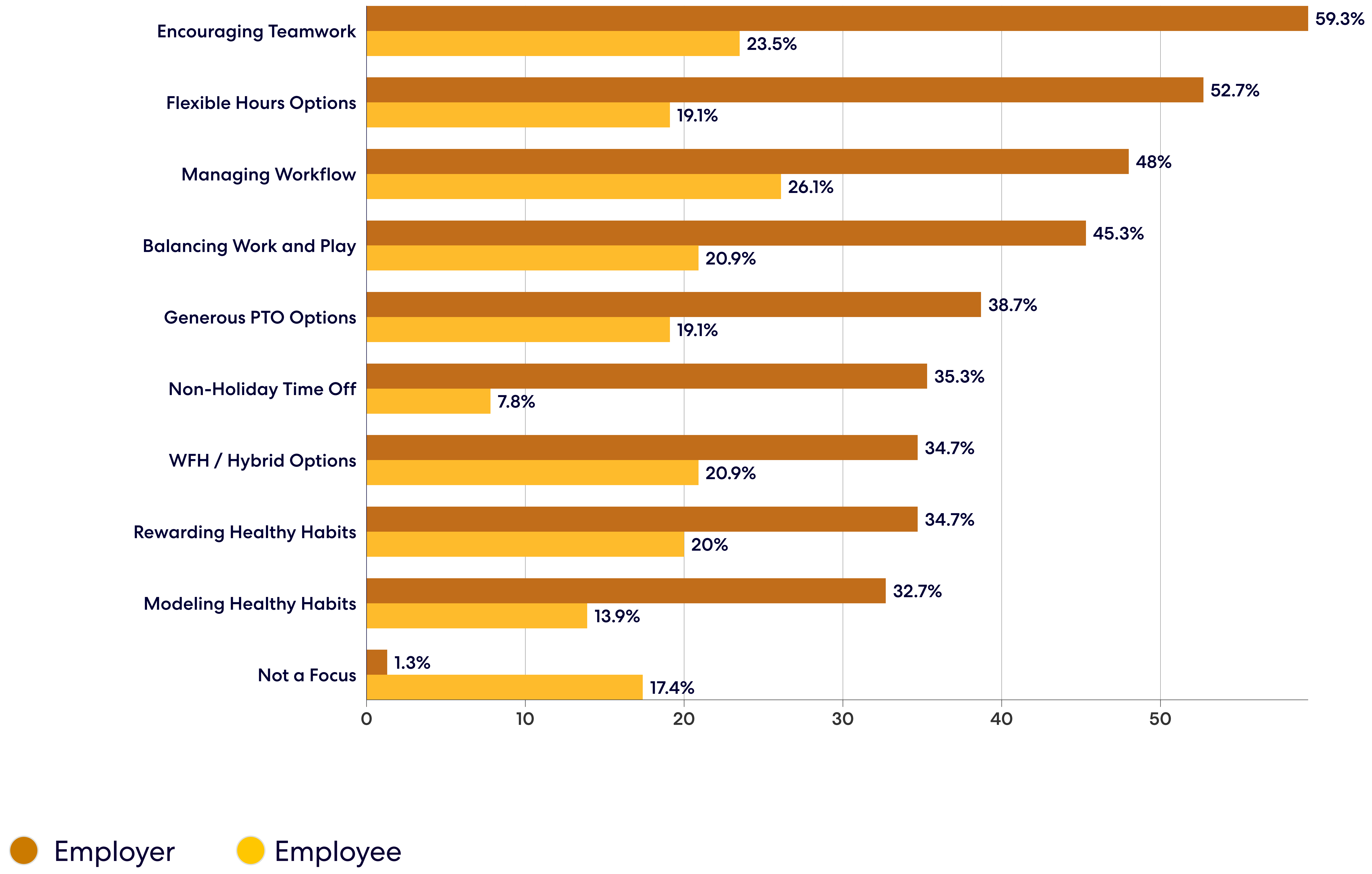
Benefits-related supports show even sharper differences. While 35.3% of employers report offering company-wide non-holiday time off (e.g., Summer Fridays), only 7.8% of employees recognize this. Generous PTO (38.7% versus 19.1%) and modeling healthy habits (32.7% versus 13.9%) also reveal sizable perception gaps. Managers in this region more often recognized Generous PTO compared to nationally (38.7% versus 31%).

Most notably, only 1.3% of employers say work/life balance is not a focus of the company, yet 17.4% of employees report that it is not a focus—a striking difference. Overall, employers appear to view their work/life balance initiatives as significantly more robust and visible than employees experience them.

How the Company Prioritizes Work/Life Balance

QUESTION (Employer):
How does your company prioritize work/life balance?

QUESTION (Employee):
How does your company prioritize work/life balance?



03. WORK/LIFE BALANCE & EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

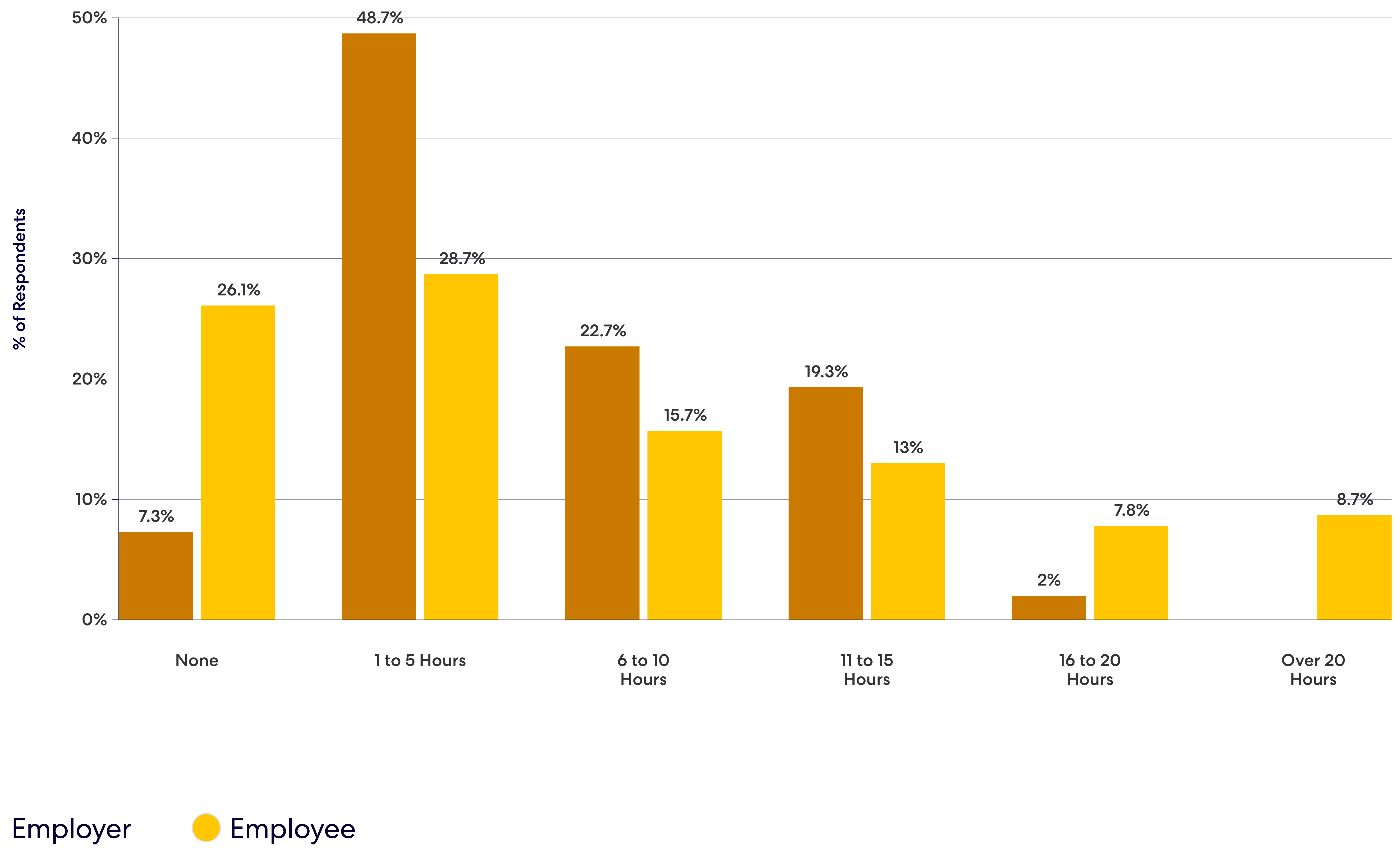
Employers most commonly believe employees spend 1–5 hours (48.7%) on personal matters, whereas employees are more evenly distributed between None (26.1%) and 1–5 hours (28.7%). Notably, employees are far more likely to report spending no time at all on personal matters (26.1% versus 7.3%), suggesting employers may underestimate how many employees fully separate personal and work time.

Employers in this region estimated employees spend less time compared to all employers. A higher percentage of employees in this region said they spend no time on personal matters compared to nationally (26% versus 17%).

Personal Matters During Work Hours

QUESTION (Employer):
How many hours per week do you think employees spend on personal matters during work hours?

QUESTION (Employee):
How many hours per week on average do you spend on personal matters during work hours?



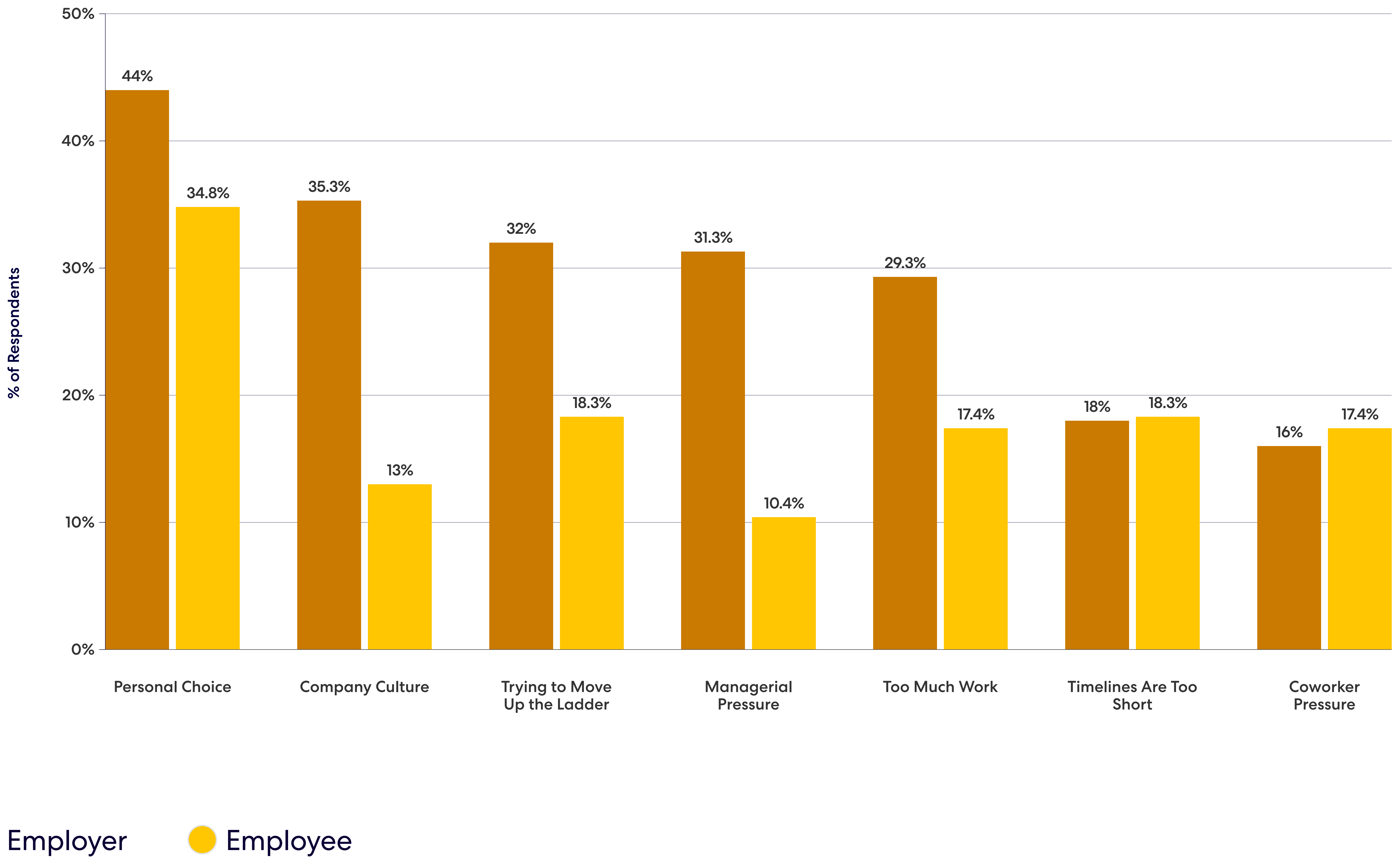
03. WORK/LIFE BALANCE & EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Employers attribute after-hours work to personal choice at 44.0%, while 34.8% of employees selected this option. Employers attribute overtime to company culture at almost three times the rate of employees (35.3% versus 13.0%). The top reasons for employees to work outside company hours after personal choice were moving up the ladder, short timelines, too much work, and coworker pressure. Employers are less likely to blame short timelines compared to all employers (18% versus 26%), while employees in this region are less likely to say it is a personal choice (34.8% versus 46%) or that they are trying to move up the ladder (18.3% versus 27%).

Reasons for Working Outside Company Hours

QUESTION (Employer):
What are the reasons you believe your employees work outside typical hours?

QUESTION (Employee):
What are the reasons you work outside typical hours?



03. WORK/LIFE BALANCE & EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

44.3% of employees are in the office all week—higher than employers (32.9%). However, 9.6% of employees are fully remote, while no employers are. Employee preferences are polarized: 42.6% prefer all week, while 22.7% prefer one day or less. Employers and employees in this region spend a bit less time in the office compared to national results. Managers in this region are more favorable to 3–4 day hybrid schedules while employees are more interested in being in the office all week, compared to national results.

Return to Office—Actual versus Optimal Days

QUESTION (Employer):

How many days per week do you work from the office?

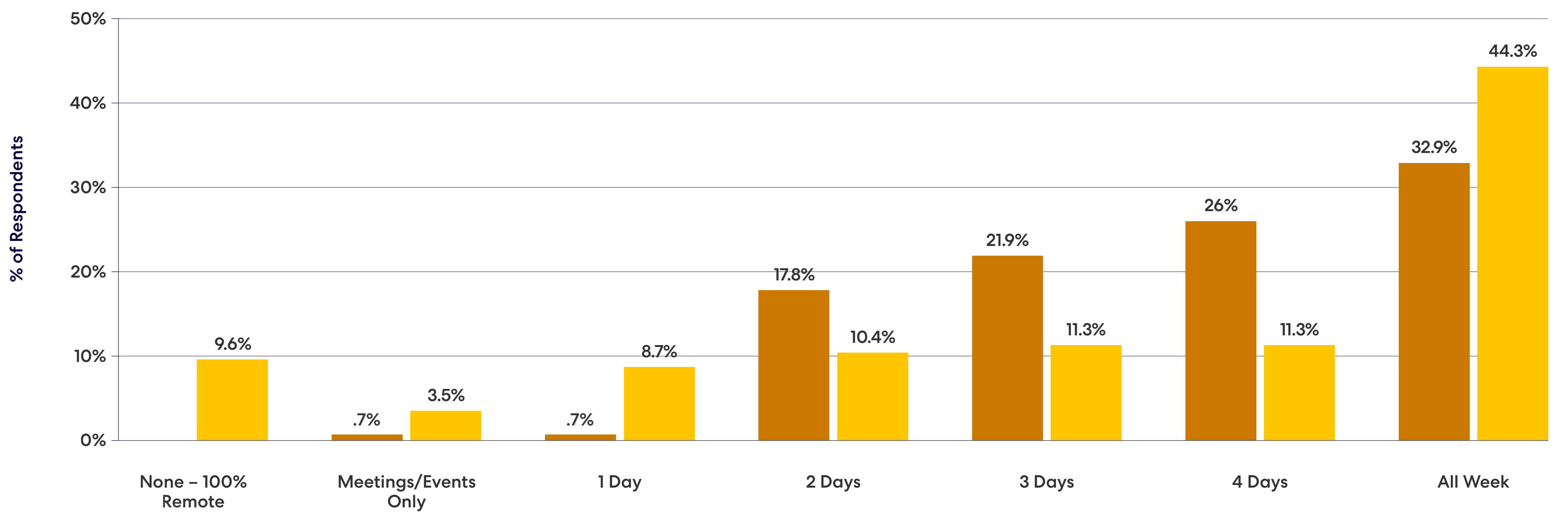
How many days per week is optimal for you to work from the office?

QUESTION (Employee):

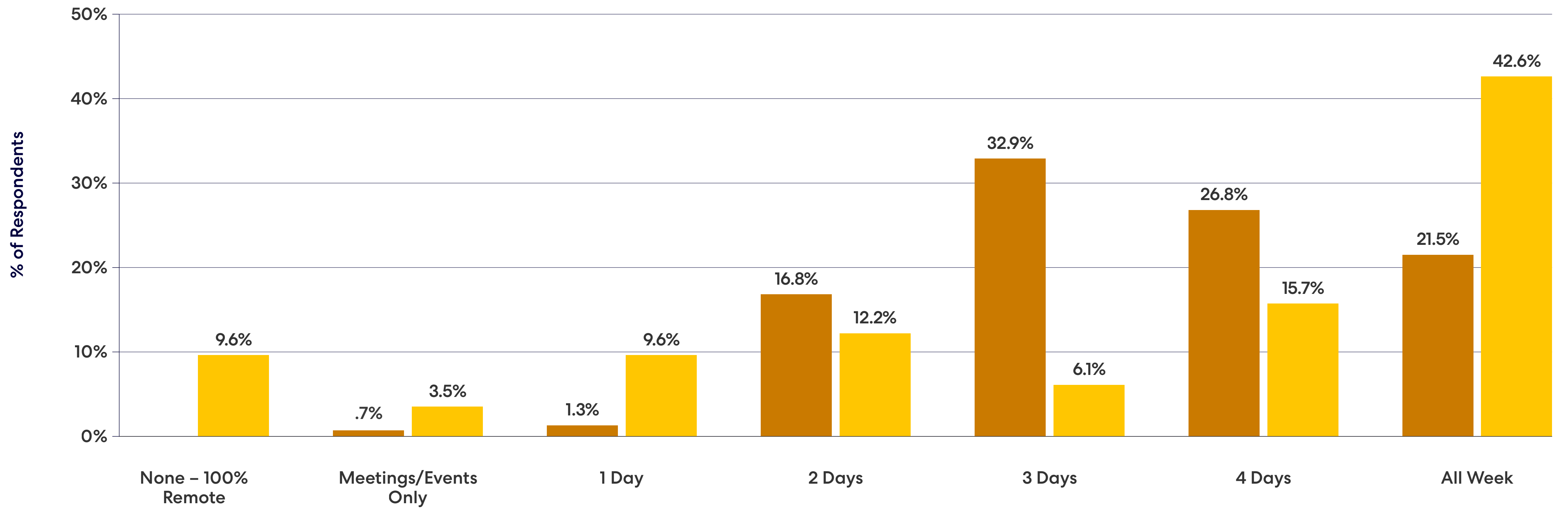
How many days per week do you work from the office?

How many days per week is optimal for you to work from the office?

Days per Week in the Office (Actual)



Optimal Days Per Week in the Office (Preference)



Employer Employee

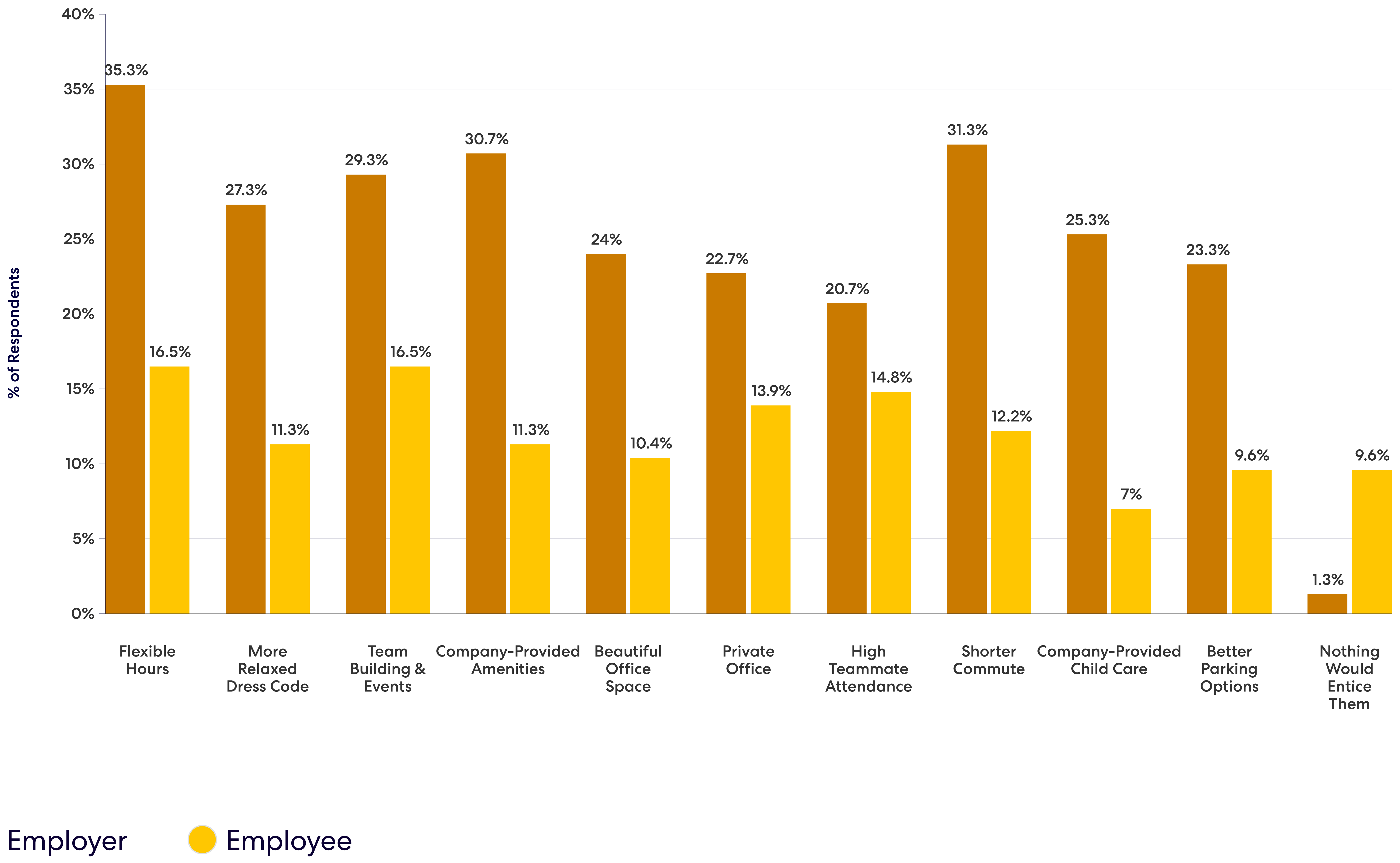
03. WORK/LIFE BALANCE & EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Employers overestimate nearly every incentive. Flexible hours leads employer picks (35.3%) but scores lower with employees. Team building: 29.3% employers versus 16.5% employees. 9.6% of employees say nothing would entice them—only 1.3% of employers believe that. Managers in this region are less enthusiastic about dress code and flexible hours compared to all managers.

Return to Office Incentives

QUESTION (Employer):
What would entice employees to return to the office?

QUESTION (Employee):
What would entice you to return to the office?



03. WORK/LIFE BALANCE & EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Connection to company mission is relatively aligned at the top end, but employers cluster responses in the "moderately connected" category (42.7%), while employees are more split between "moderately" (25.2%) and "extremely connected" (38.3%). Employers also underestimate the share of employees who feel disconnected: 6.0% of employers think employees are slightly or not at all connected, compared to 13.9% of employees reporting those lower levels.

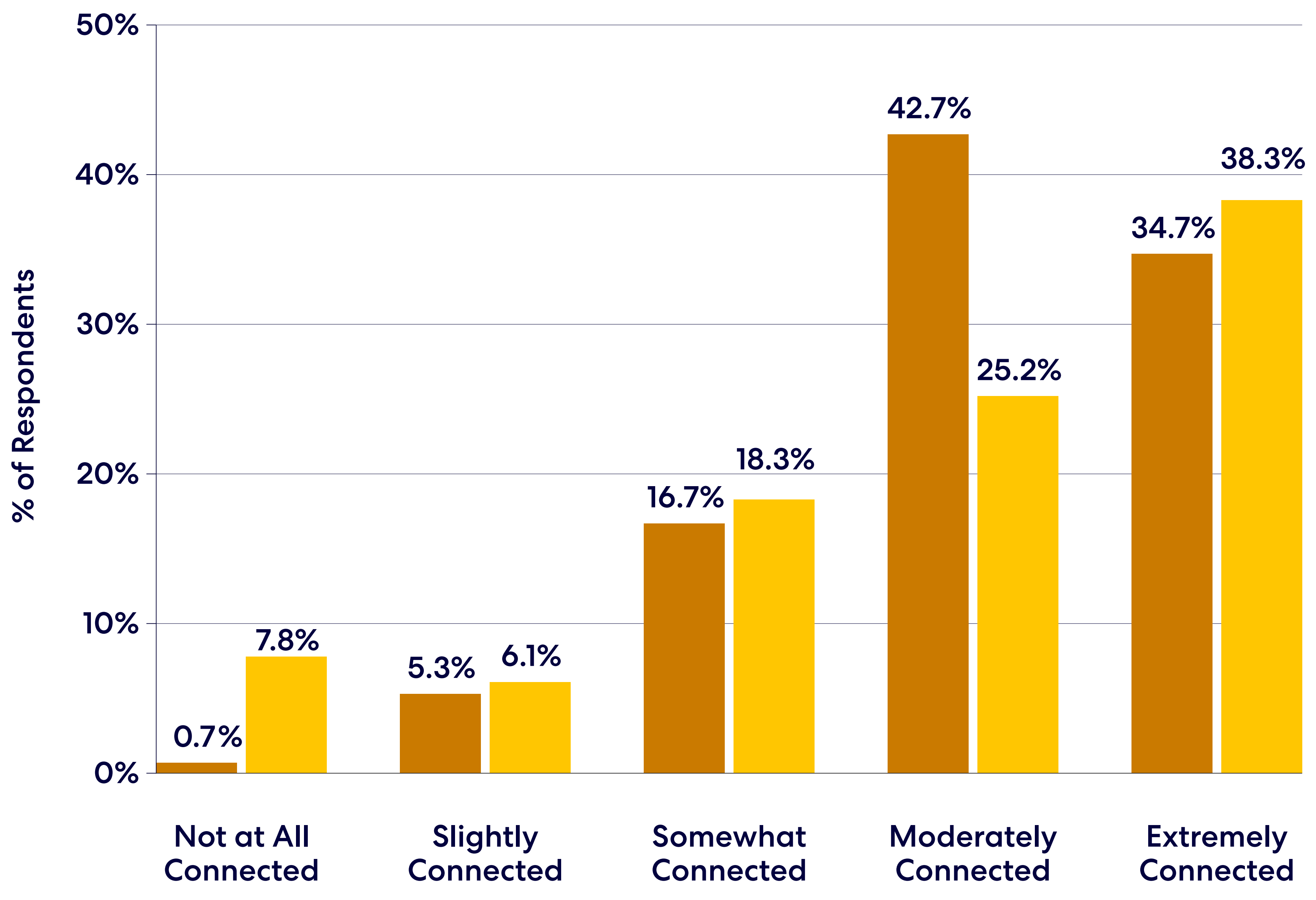
The largest gap appears in connection to leadership. Nearly half of employers (47.3%) believe employees are extremely connected to leadership, whereas only 34.8% of employees report feeling that way. Employers also report fewer employees as disconnected from leadership (10.7% slightly/not at all) compared to employees' own reports (13.0%).

Connection Scores

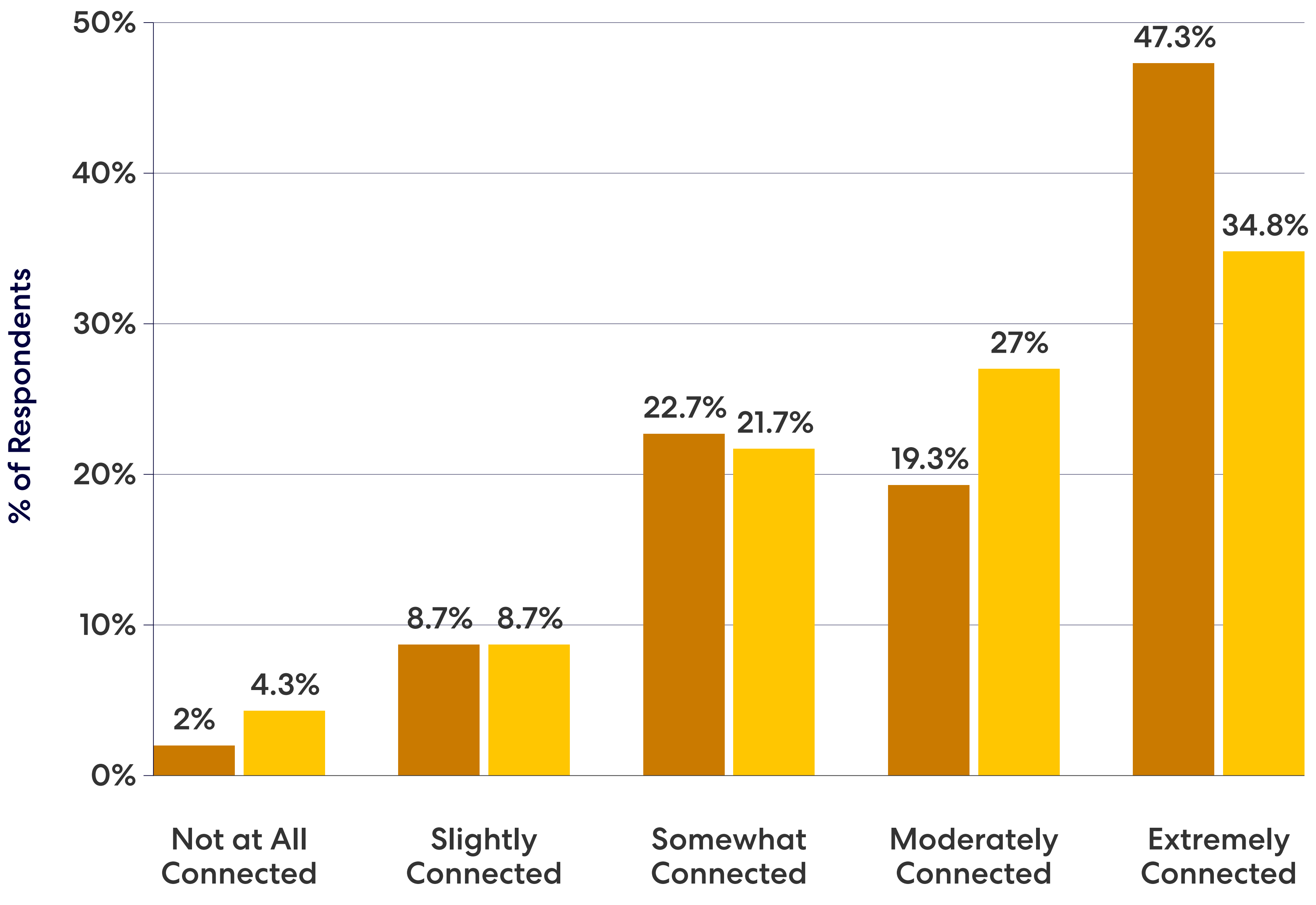
QUESTION (Employer):
How connected do employees feel to the company/mission/leadership/manager/work?

QUESTION (Employee):
How connected do you feel to the company/mission/leadership/manager/work?

Connection to Company Mission



Connection to Leadership



Employer
Employee

03. WORK/LIFE BALANCE & EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

For connection to direct manager, employers again overestimate intensity at the top level: 44.6% believe employees are extremely connected, compared to 33.0% of employees. Employees are more evenly distributed between moderately and extremely connected (33.0% each), suggesting employers may slightly overstate the strength of those relationships.

The most interesting reversal appears with connection to work itself. Employees report higher extreme connection to their work (48.7%) than employers estimate (40.5%). This suggests that while employers may overestimate connection to leadership and management, they slightly underestimate how strongly employees feel connected to their actual work.

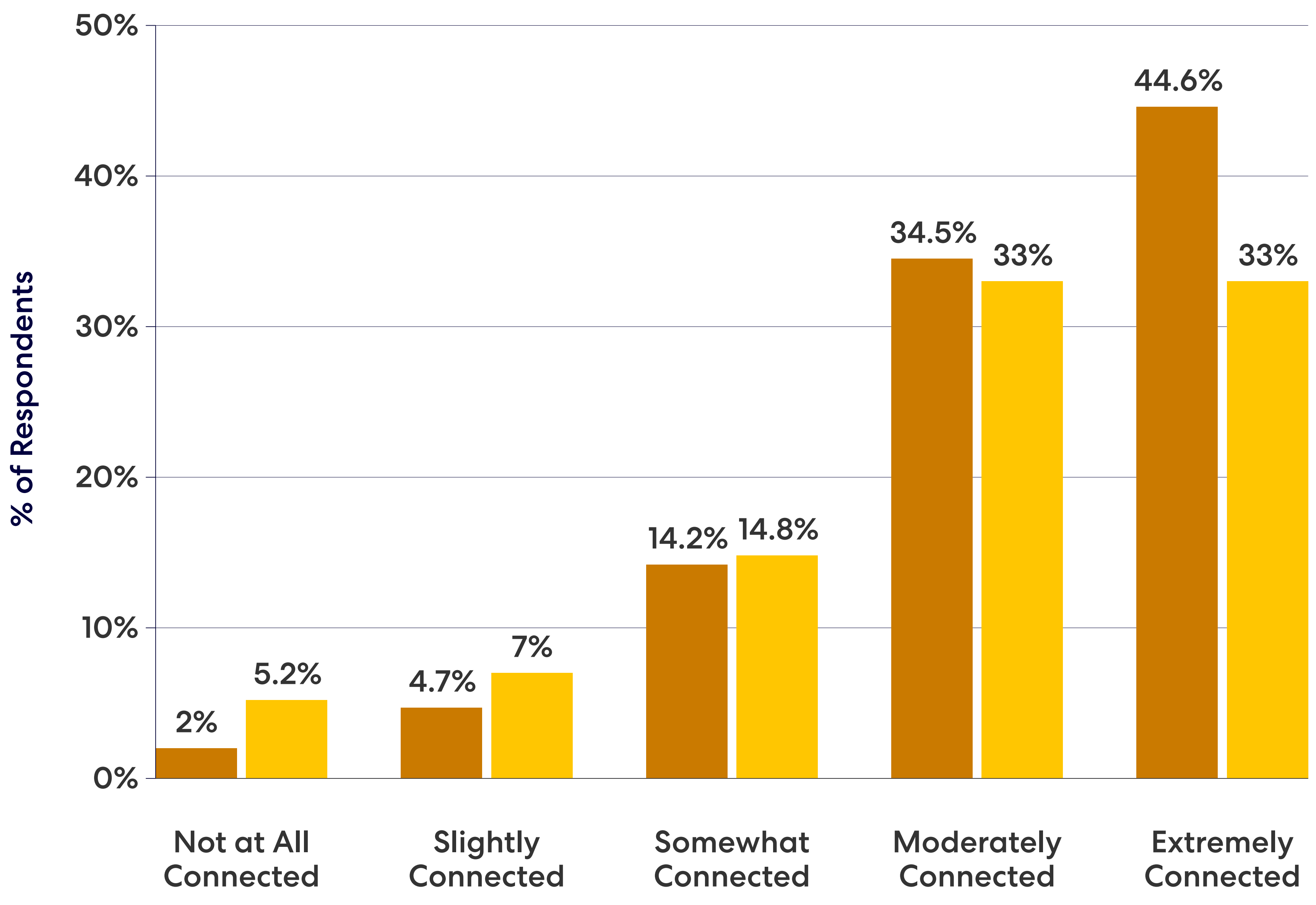
All of these results are consistent with national numbers.

Connection Scores

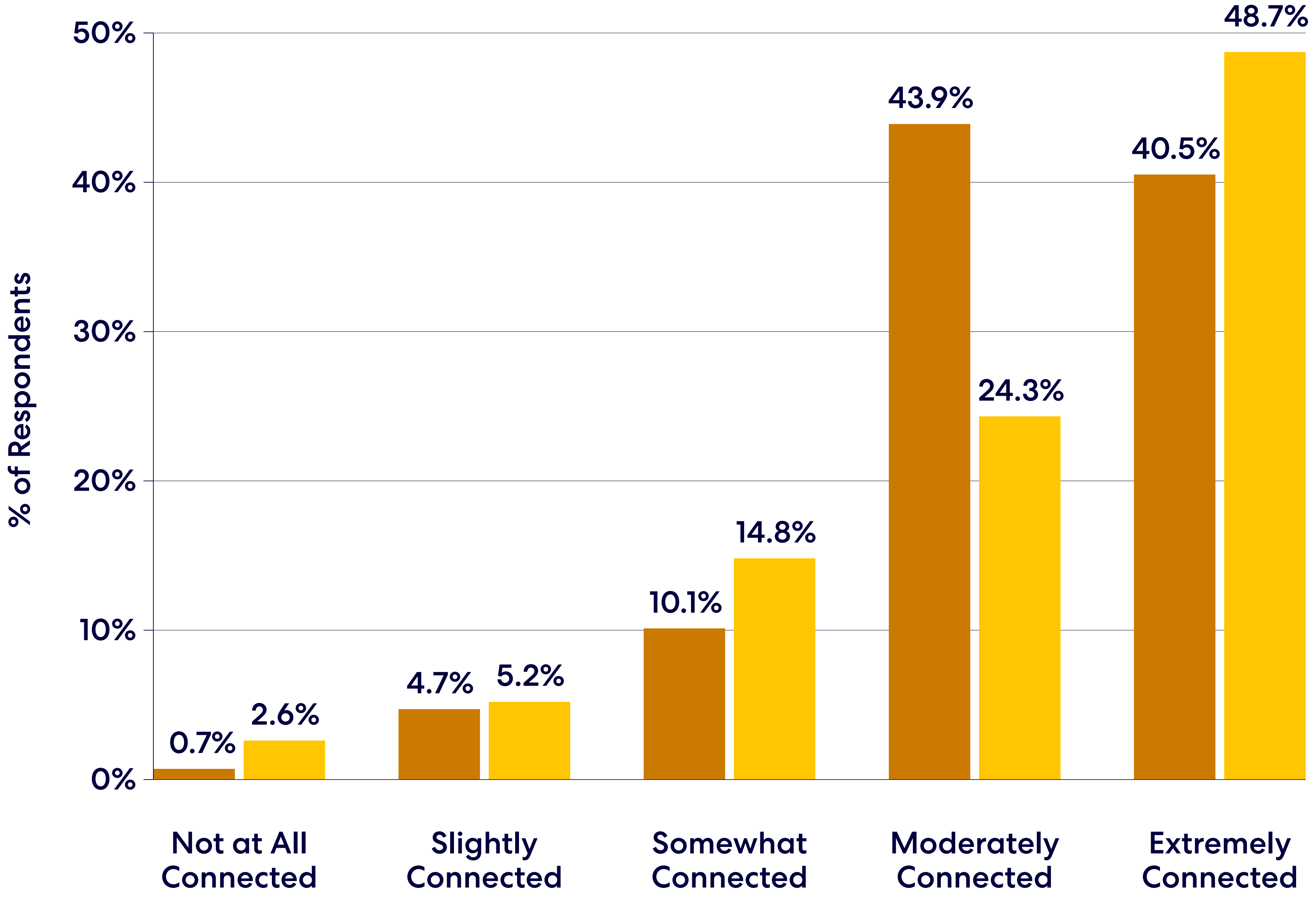
QUESTION (Employer):
How connected do employees feel to the company/mission/leadership/manager/work?

QUESTION
How connected do you feel to the company/mission/leadership/manager/work?

Connection to Direct Manager



Connection to Work



Employer Employee

04. BUILDING AN EMPOWERED WORKFORCE—READINESS, SKILLS & GROWTH

Employers are more optimistic that employees have the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in their jobs. Baby boomer employees overall are most confident in their ability to succeed in their roles. Both employees and employers agree that employees need to develop their leadership and managerial skills to succeed in their roles in the near term.

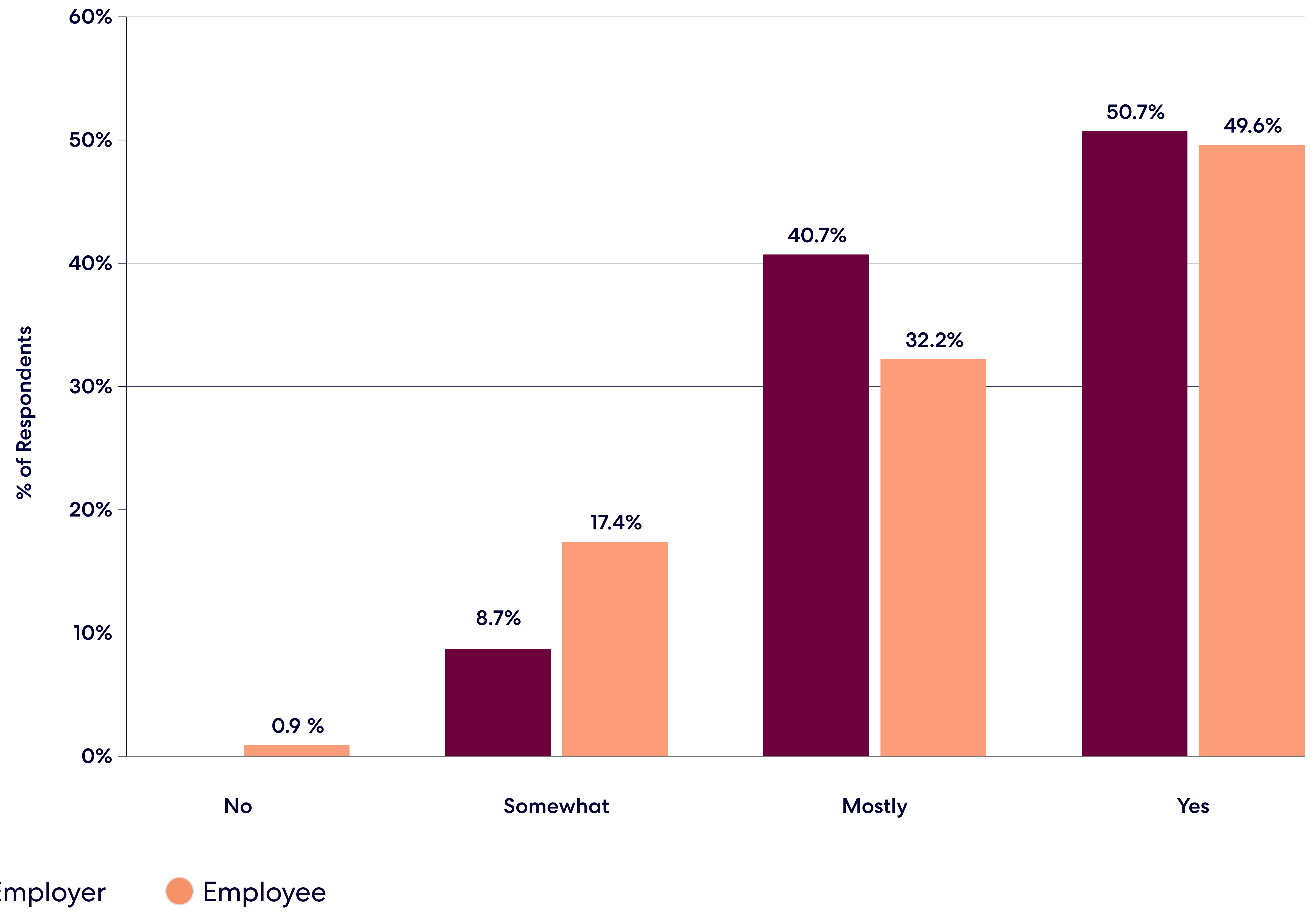
04. BUILDING AN EMPOWERED WORKFORCE—READINESS, SKILLS & GROWTH

There is alignment between managers and employees that most employees are equipped to succeed, with roughly half in both groups selecting "Yes" (50.7% employers versus 49.6% employees). Employees are more likely than employers to select "Somewhat," suggesting greater recognition of skill gaps. Employers in this region are slightly more confident in employees' knowledge and skills compared to national results.

Knowledge & Skills to Succeed

QUESTION (Employer):
Do employees have the knowledge and skills to be successful in their roles?

QUESTION (Employee):
Do you have the knowledge and skills to be successful in your role?



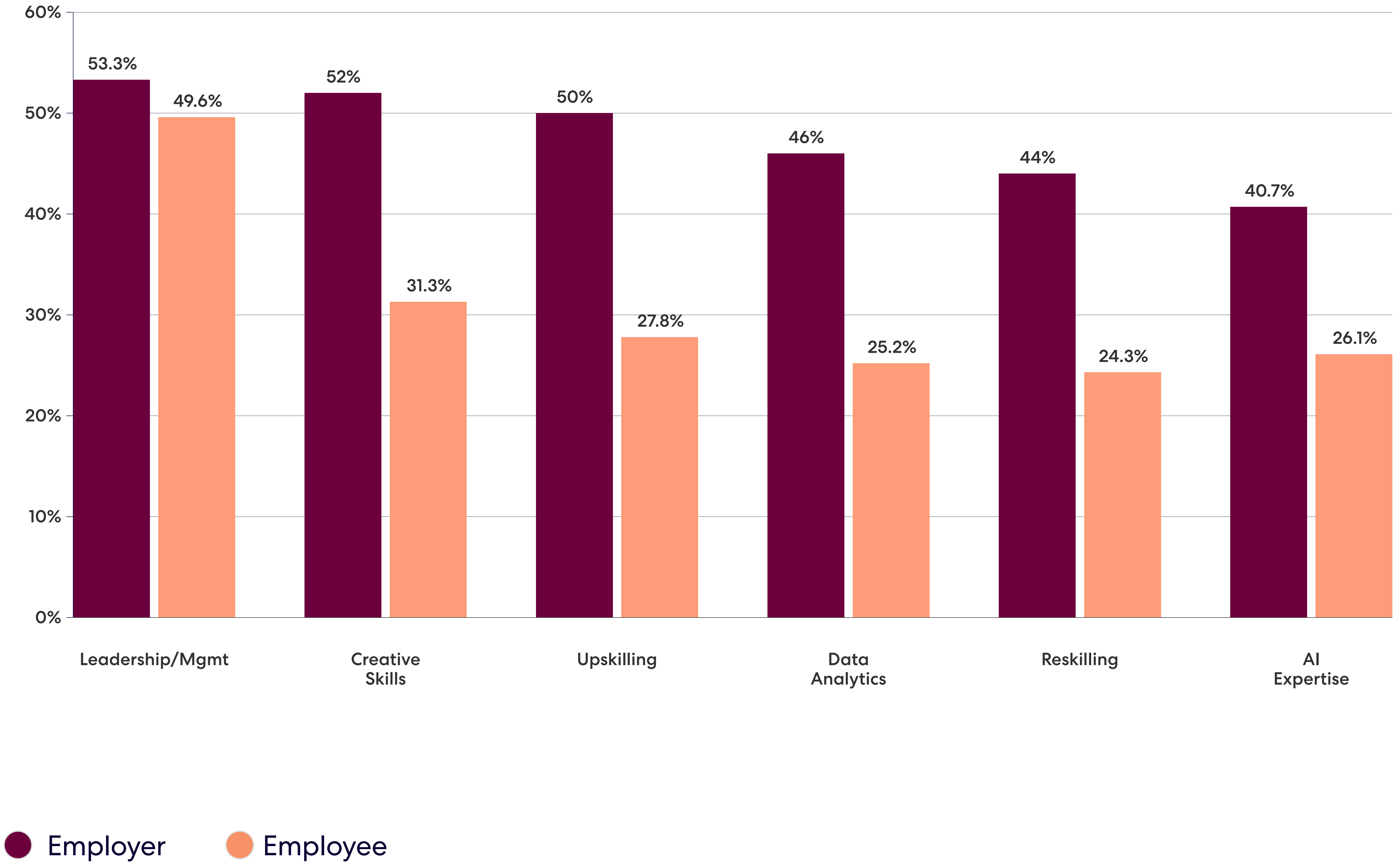
04. BUILDING AN EMPOWERED WORKFORCE—READINESS, SKILLS & GROWTH

Both groups agree leadership and managerial skills are the top need (53.3% versus 49.6%). However, employers consistently rate every other skill category much higher than employees do, particularly creative skills (52.0% versus 31.3%), upskilling (50.0% versus 27.8%), and data analytics (46.0% versus 25.2%). This suggests employers perceive a broader and more urgent skills gap than employees themselves report, especially around analytical, creative, and market-adaptive capabilities. Employees are less concerned about creative skills, data analytics, and AI in this region, compared to nationally, while employers are in sync with national results.

Skills Employees Need to Develop

QUESTION (Employer):
What skills do employees need to develop in the next 3+ years?

QUESTION (Employee):
What skills do you need to develop in the next 3+ years?

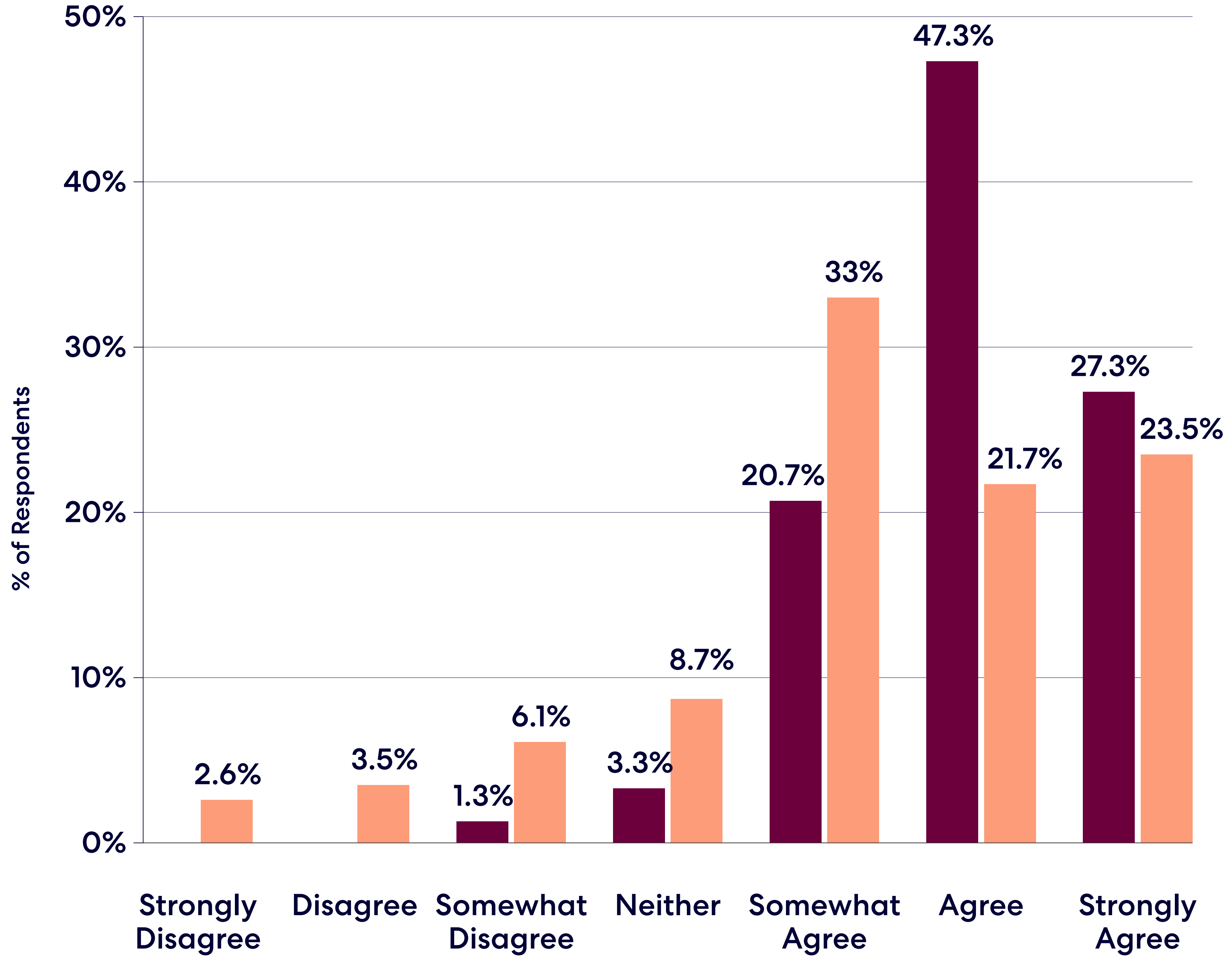


04. BUILDING AN EMPOWERED WORKFORCE—READINESS, SKILLS & GROWTH

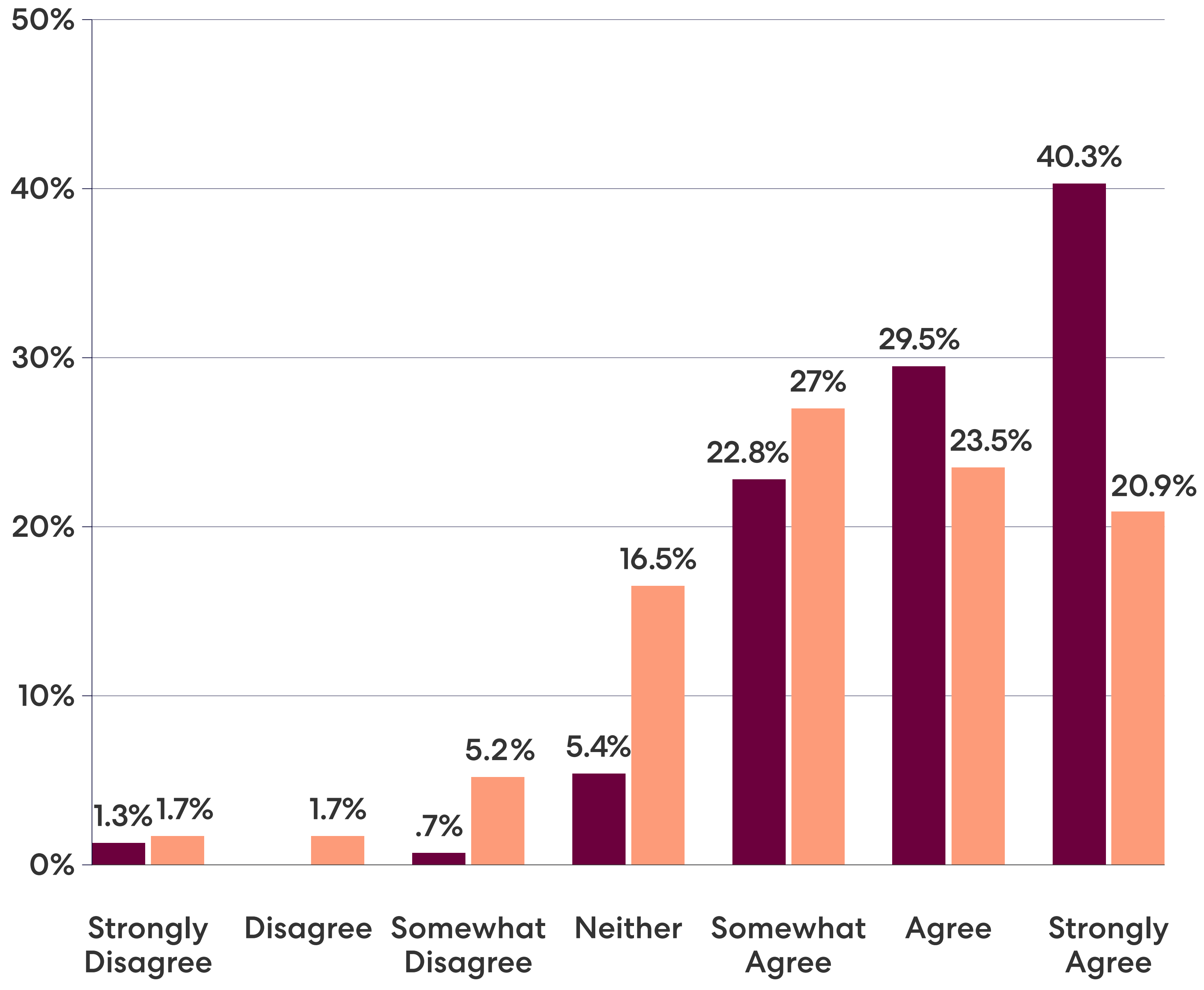
There is a sizable optimism gap on both measures. While 95.3% of employers believe employees have room to grow, only 78.2% of employees agree. The gap is even larger around clarity of growth path: 92.6% of employers believe employees have clarity, compared to 71.4% of employees. This suggests that leaders perceive significantly more structure and opportunity than employees experience, particularly around career path clarity. Employees in this region are a bit clearer that they have room to grow, and about their specific growth path, compared to nationally. Employers in this region differ little from national opinions.

Growth Path Clarity

QUESTION (Employer):
Do employees have room to grow and clarity on their growth path?



QUESTION (Employee):
Do you have room to grow and clarity on your growth path?



Employer Employee

04. BUILDING AN EMPOWERED WORKFORCE—READINESS, SKILLS & GROWTH

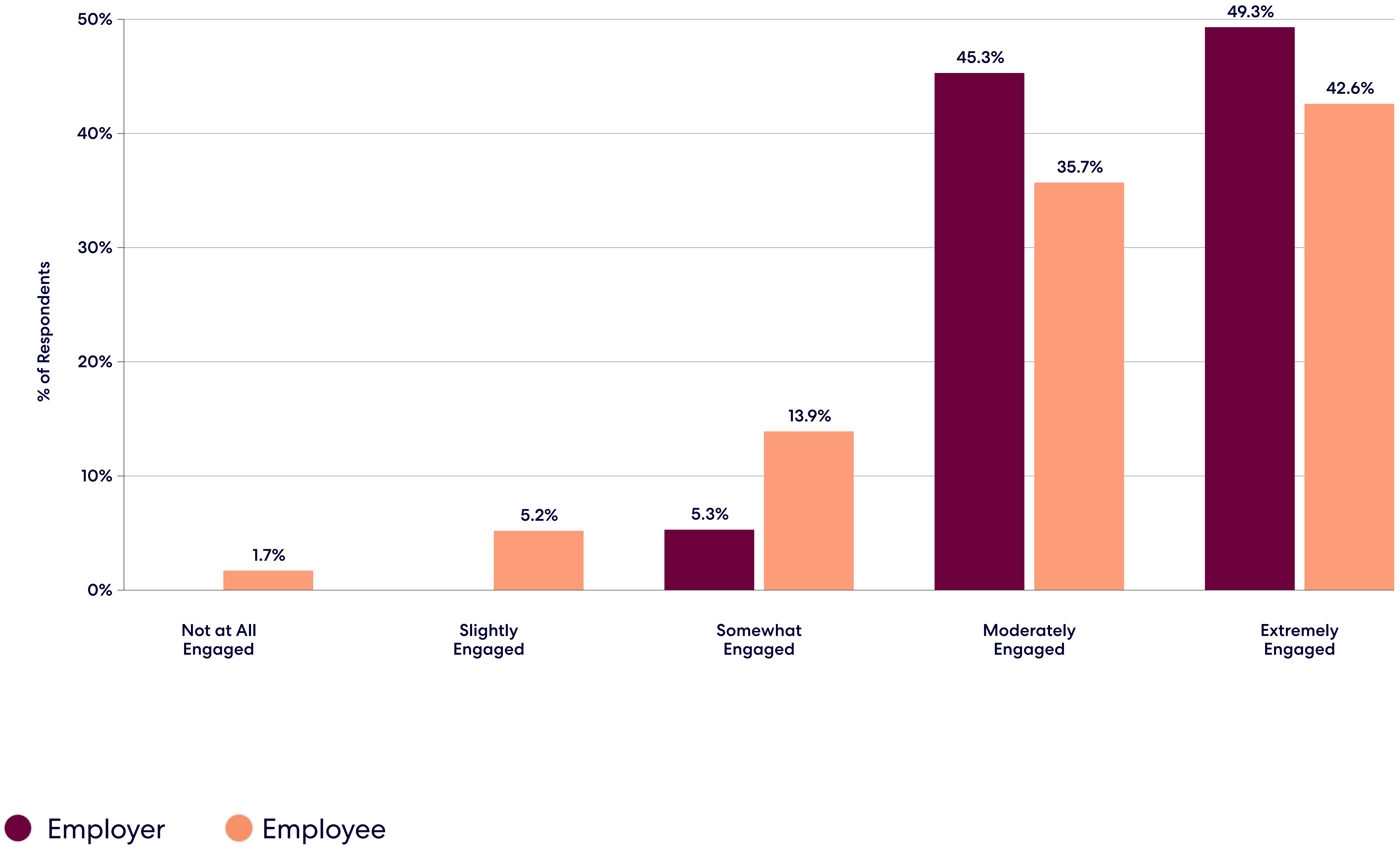
There is a noticeable optimism gap in engagement. Employers believe that 94.6% of employees are either moderately or extremely engaged (45.3% moderately, 49.3% extremely), whereas employees report a lower combined figure of 78.3% (35.7% moderately, 42.6% extremely). Employers also report very little low engagement (5.3% somewhat engaged and no lower categories), while employees indicate 20.8% fall below moderate engagement (including 1.7% not at all engaged and 5.2% slightly engaged). This suggests employers may underestimate the proportion of employees who feel only marginally engaged or disengaged.

Employees in this region are slightly less engaged compared to all employees (extremely engaged, 42.6% versus 49%).

Engagement Levels

QUESTION (Employer):
How engaged do you think employees at your company are?

QUESTION (Employee):
How engaged do you feel at work?



04. BUILDING AN EMPOWERED WORKFORCE—READINESS, SKILLS & GROWTH

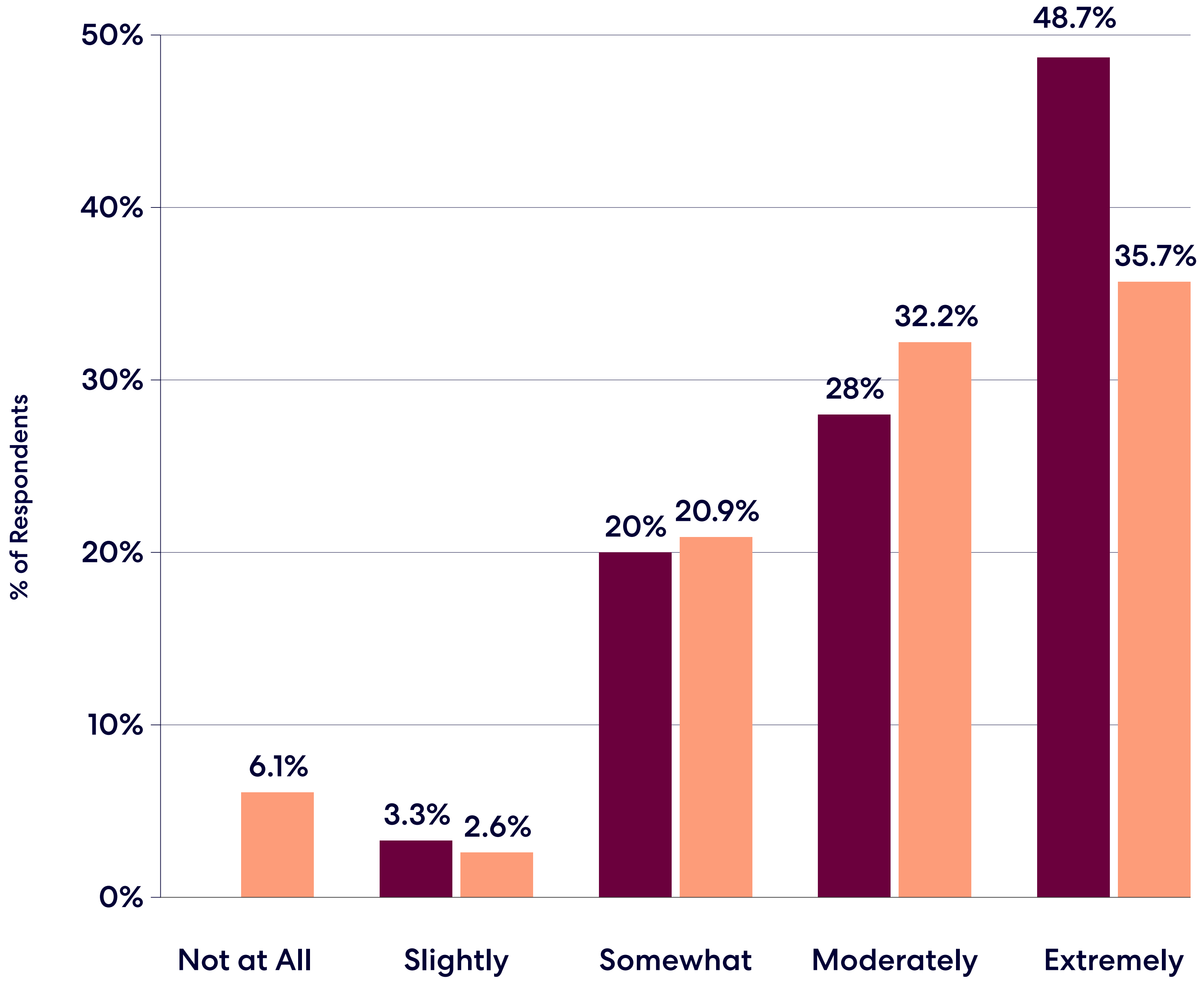
Employers rate compensation as extremely influential at 48.7%—employees at 35.7%. For belief in mission: 39.6% employers versus 28.7% employees at the 'extremely influential' level. Employees spread responses more broadly, suggesting engagement is multi-factorial. Responses are consistent with national data.

Influences on Engagement

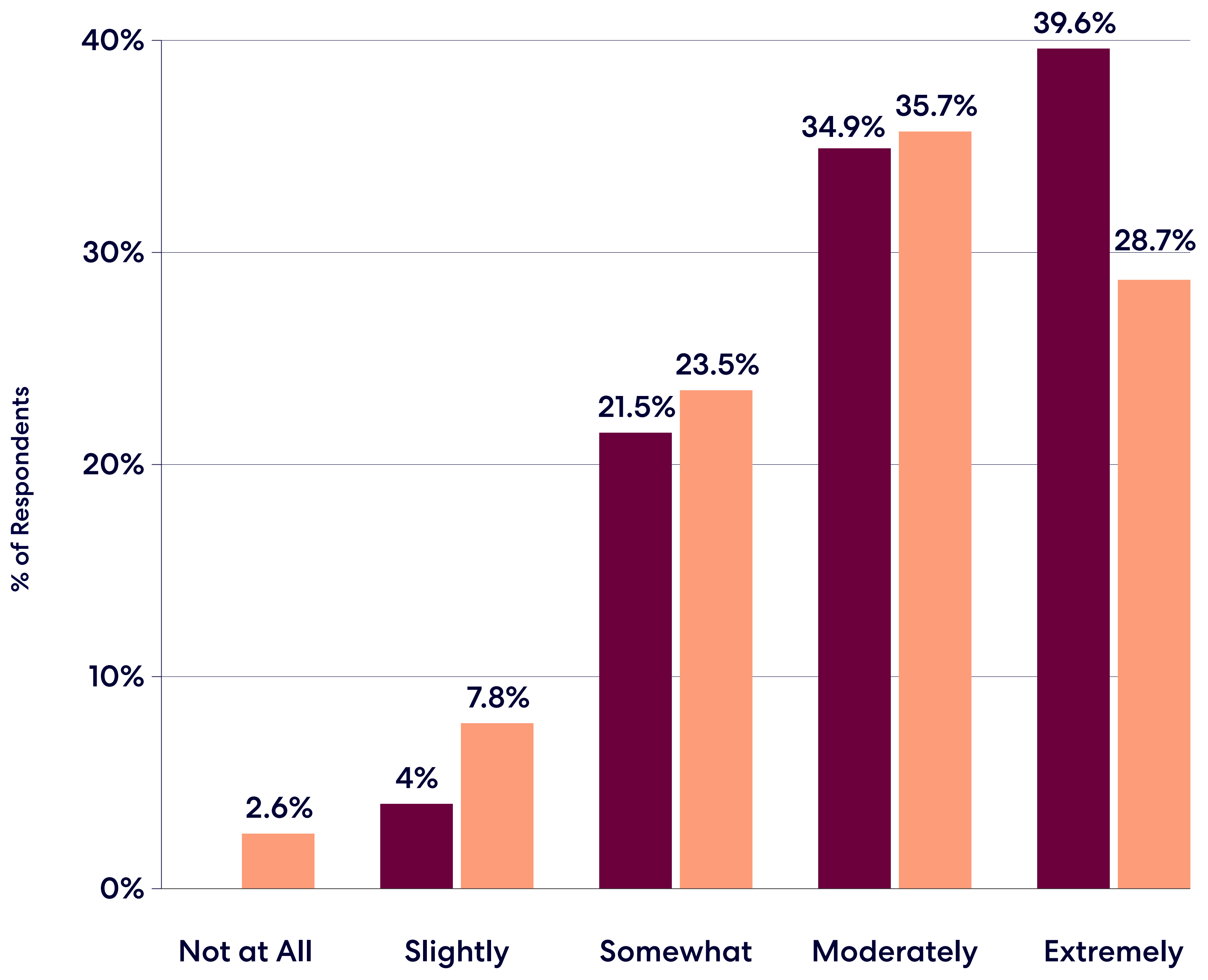
QUESTION (Employer):
What level of influence do compensation and belief in company mission have on engagement?

QUESTION (Employee):
What level of influence do compensation and belief in company mission have on your engagement?

Influence on Engagement—
Compensation & Incentives



Influence on Engagement—
Belief in Company Mission



Employer Employee

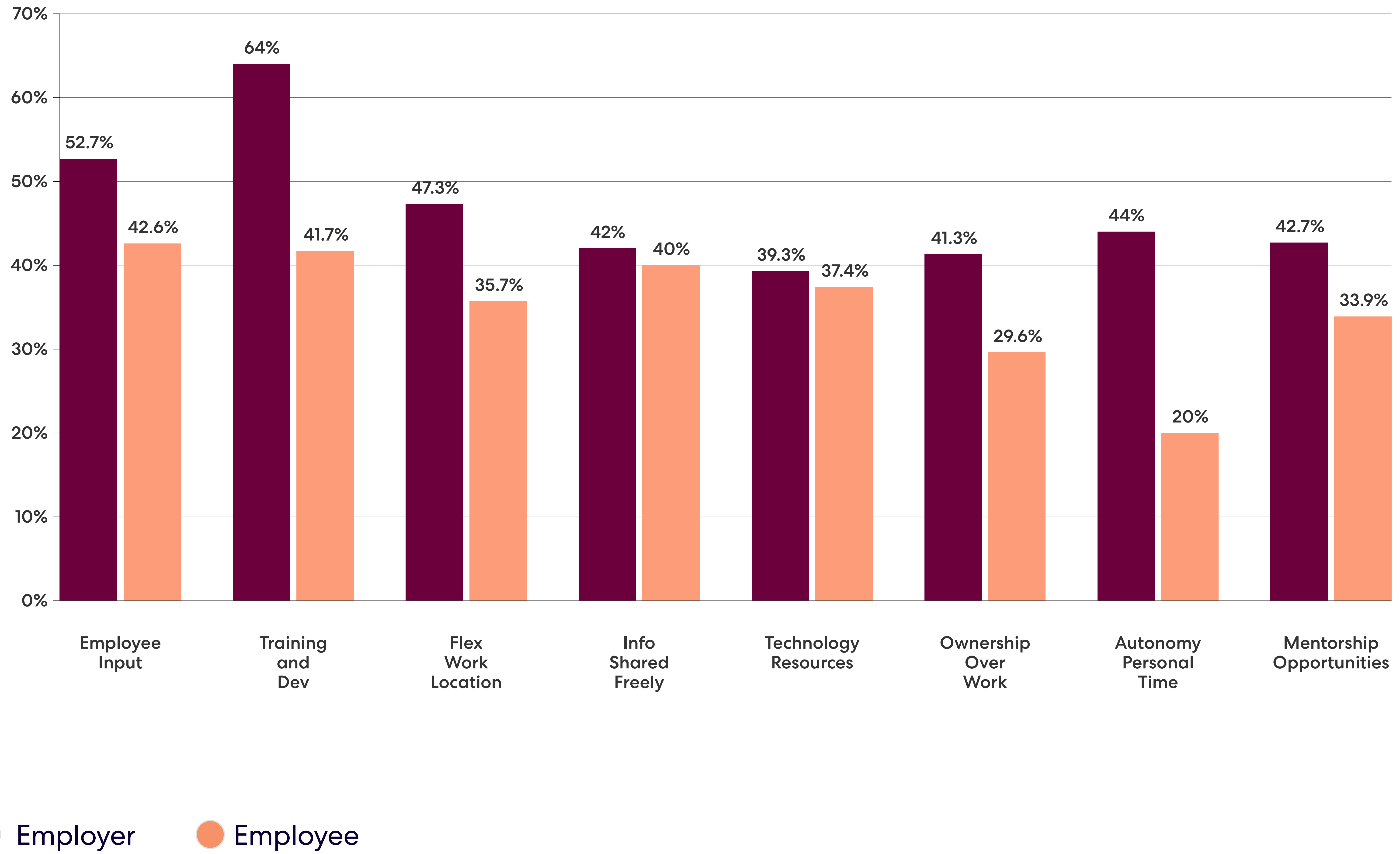
04. BUILDING AN EMPOWERED WORKFORCE—READINESS, SKILLS & GROWTH

Employers define empowerment more expansively. The largest gaps: training & development (64.0% employers versus 41.7% employees) and autonomy over time (44.0% versus 20.0%). Strongest alignment: employee voice—52.7% employers versus 42.6% employees. Technology resources and information shared freely are less of a factor in empowerment for employers in this region, compared to managers across the country. Training and development and autonomy over time are less important to employees in this region, while mentoring is more important, compared to national data.

What an Empowered Experience Looks Like

QUESTION (Employer):
What do you believe an empowered experience looks like for employees?

QUESTION (Employee):
What does an empowered experience look like to you?



04. BUILDING AN EMPOWERED WORKFORCE—READINESS, SKILLS & GROWTH

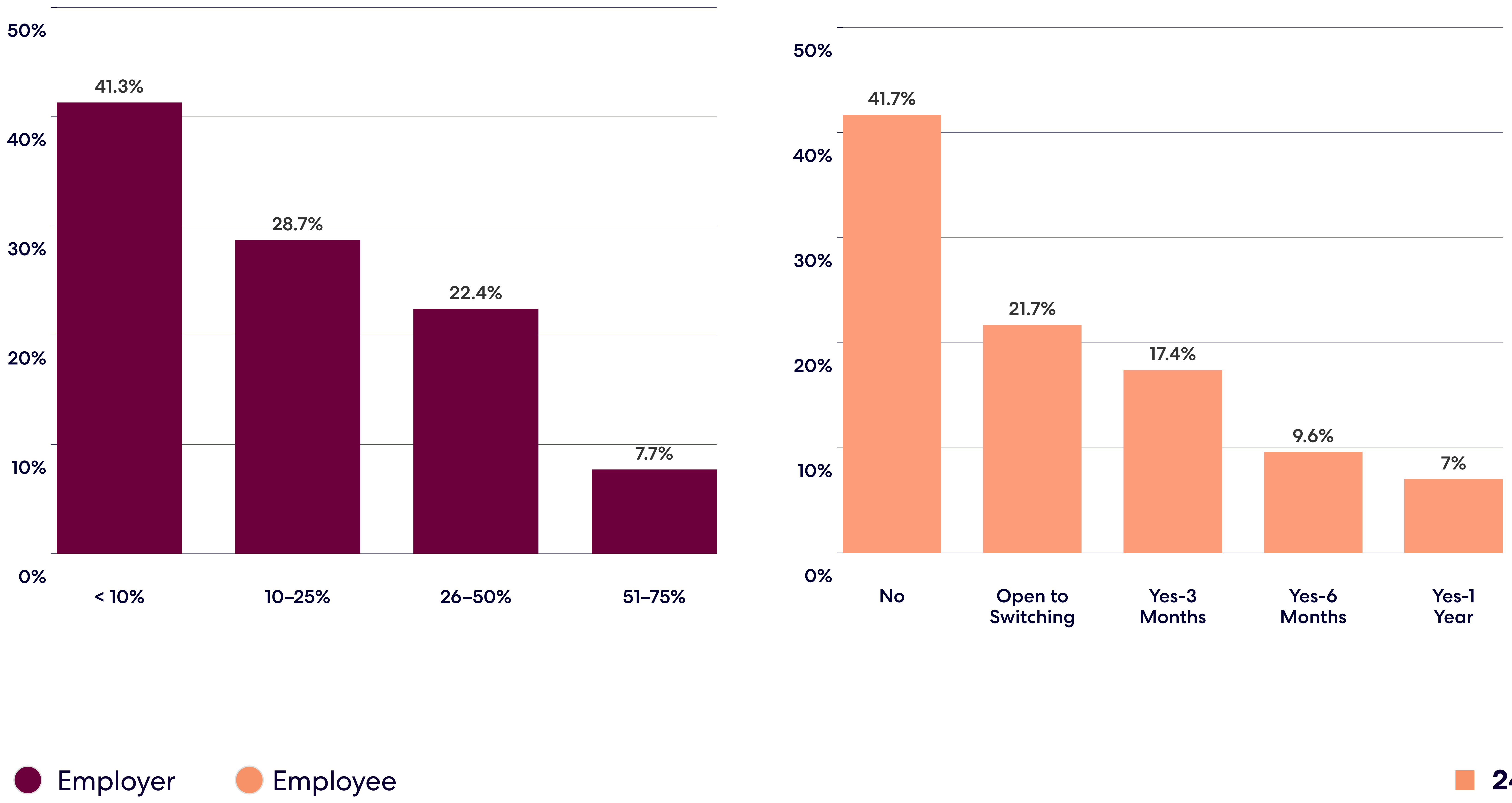
There is a notable perception gap between employer estimates of job seeking and employee self-reports. 41.3% of employers believe that less than 10% of their workforce is looking for a new job and only 7.7% believe that more than half of employees are looking. In contrast, 34.0% of employees report that they are actively planning to switch jobs within the next year (17.4% within 3 months, 9.6% within 6 months, and 7.0% within a year), and an additional 21.7% say they are not actively looking but are open to switching. This suggests that employers may underestimate the degree of mobility or openness to change within their workforce, particularly when including those who are passively open to new opportunities.

Employers in this region are slightly less concerned that employees are looking to leave the company compared to national data. Employees' job intentions are consistent with national numbers.

Job Search & Turnover Intent

QUESTION (Employer):
What % of your employees do you believe are looking for a new job?

QUESTION (Employee):
Are you currently looking for a new job?



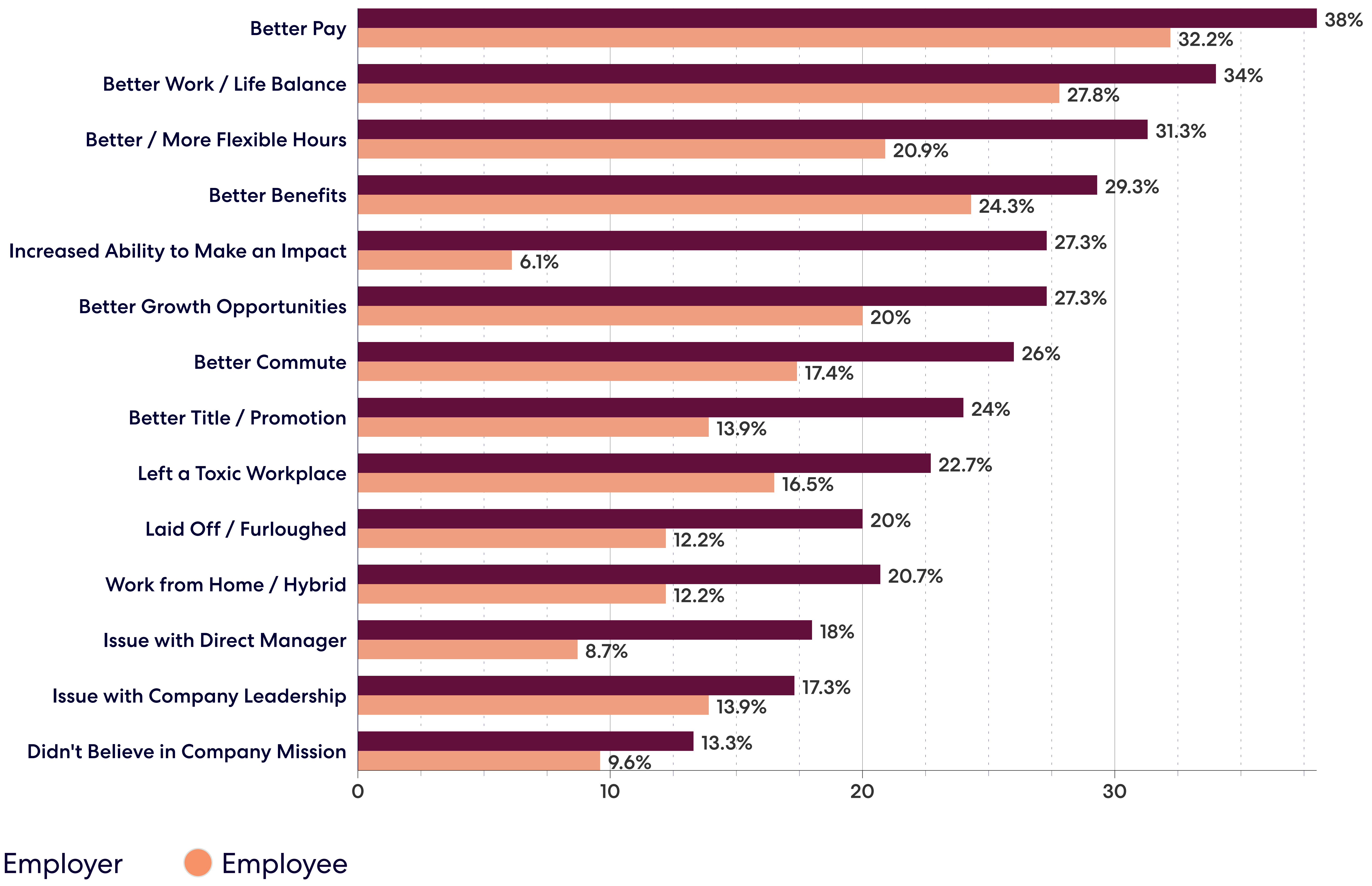
04. BUILDING AN EMPOWERED WORKFORCE— READINESS, SKILLS & GROWTH

Employers perceive that employees most often leave their jobs at the company due to needed higher pay, better work life balance, and more flexible hours. Employees most commonly say they left their last job due to better pay, work life balance, and better benefits. Employers overestimate the importance of flexible hours. There was a large gap between employers believing employees leave to make an impact and employees saying this is the reason they left (27.3% versus 6.1%). Employees in this region are less likely to choose 'make an impact' compared to all employees (6.1% versus 14%), while employers are more likely (27.3% versus 19%).

Reasons for Leaving a Job

QUESTION (Employer):
Why do you believe employees leave your company?

QUESTION (Employee):
Why did you leave your last job?



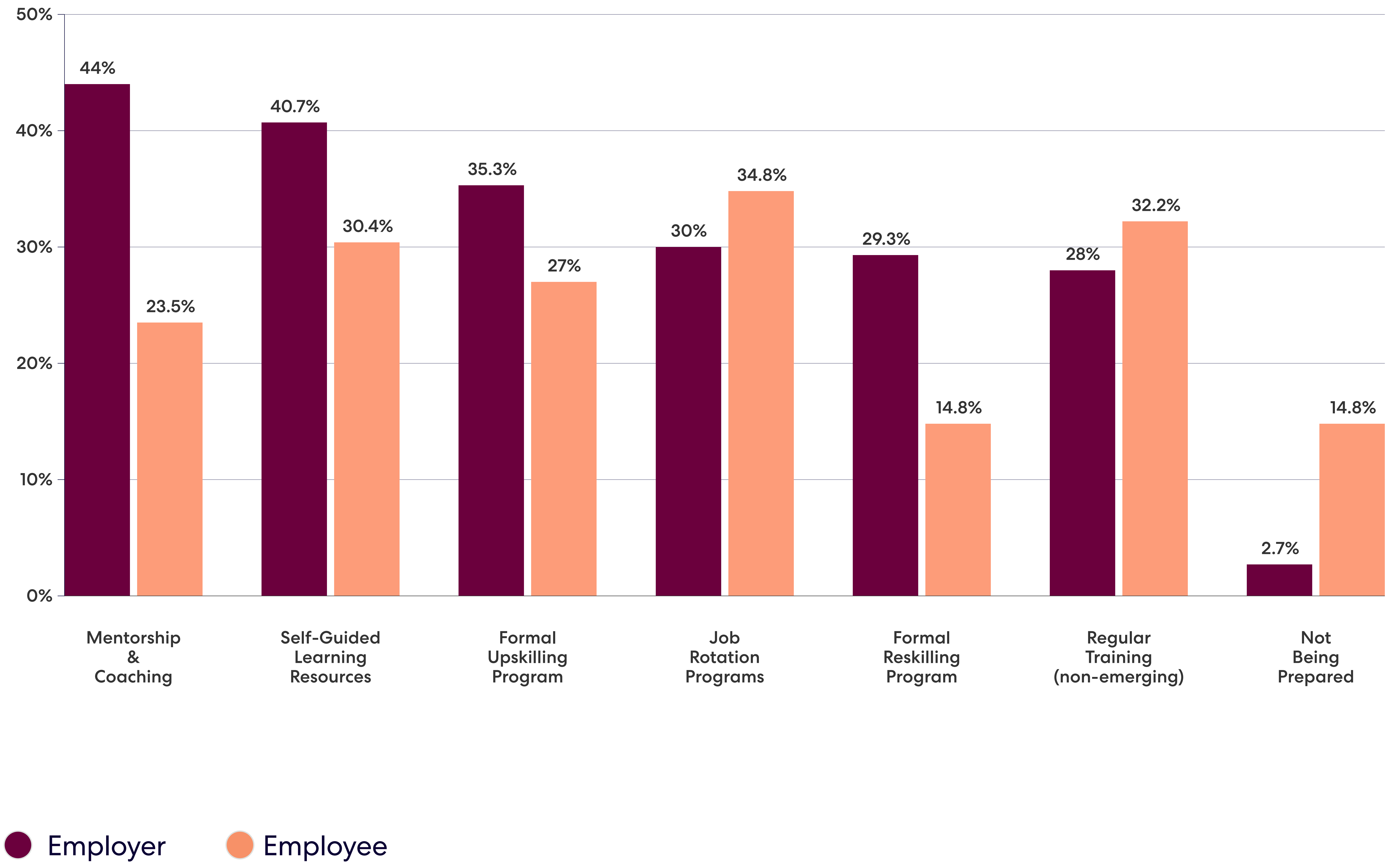
04. BUILDING AN EMPOWERED WORKFORCE—READINESS, SKILLS & GROWTH

Only 2.7% of employers believe employees are not being prepared—14.8% of employees say they aren't. Employers report mentorship at 44.0%; employees experience it at 23.5%. Formal reskilling: 29.3% employers versus 14.8% employees. Employers are less likely to choose formal upskilling and reskilling, as well as job rotation, compared to national responses, while employees are less likely to choose mentoring/coaching and reskilling.

Job Preparation for the Future

QUESTION (Employer):
How are employees being prepared for jobs of the future?

QUESTION (Employee):
How are you being prepared for jobs of the future?



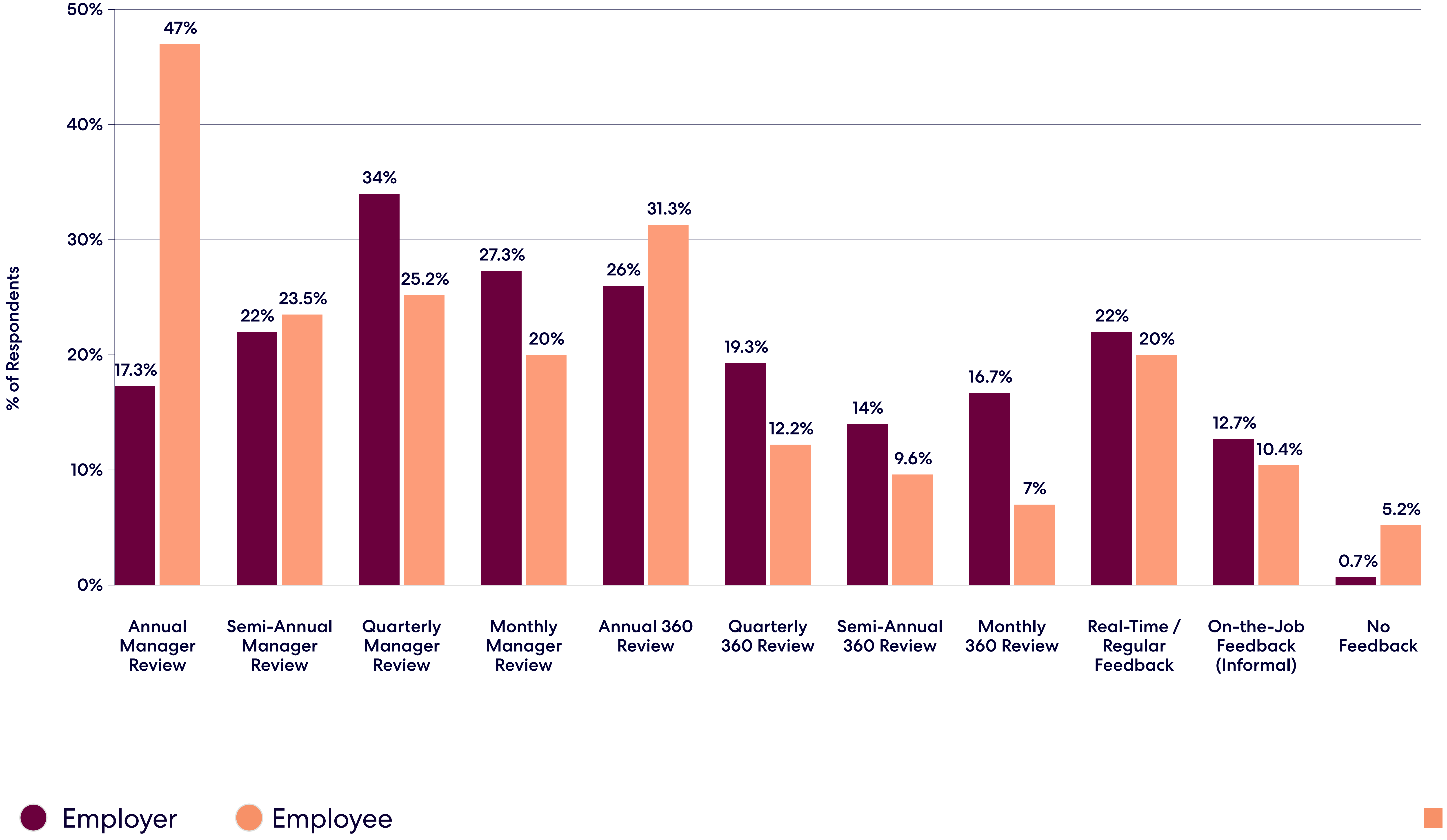
04. BUILDING AN EMPOWERED WORKFORCE—READINESS, SKILLS & GROWTH

Employers lead with quarterly manager reviews (34.0%). Employees most commonly receive annual manager reviews (47.0%). 5.2% of employees report receiving no feedback at all—compared to under 1% of employers who believe that. Employers reported the use of annual manager reviews at a lower rate than national responses (17.3% versus 33%) and viewed these reviews as less optimal (3.3% versus 16%). Employees in this region favored the quarterly manager review at a similar rate as all employees.

Feedback Formats

QUESTION (Employer):
How does your company provide feedback? What formats are most effective?

QUESTION (Employee):
How do you currently receive feedback? What formats do you prefer?

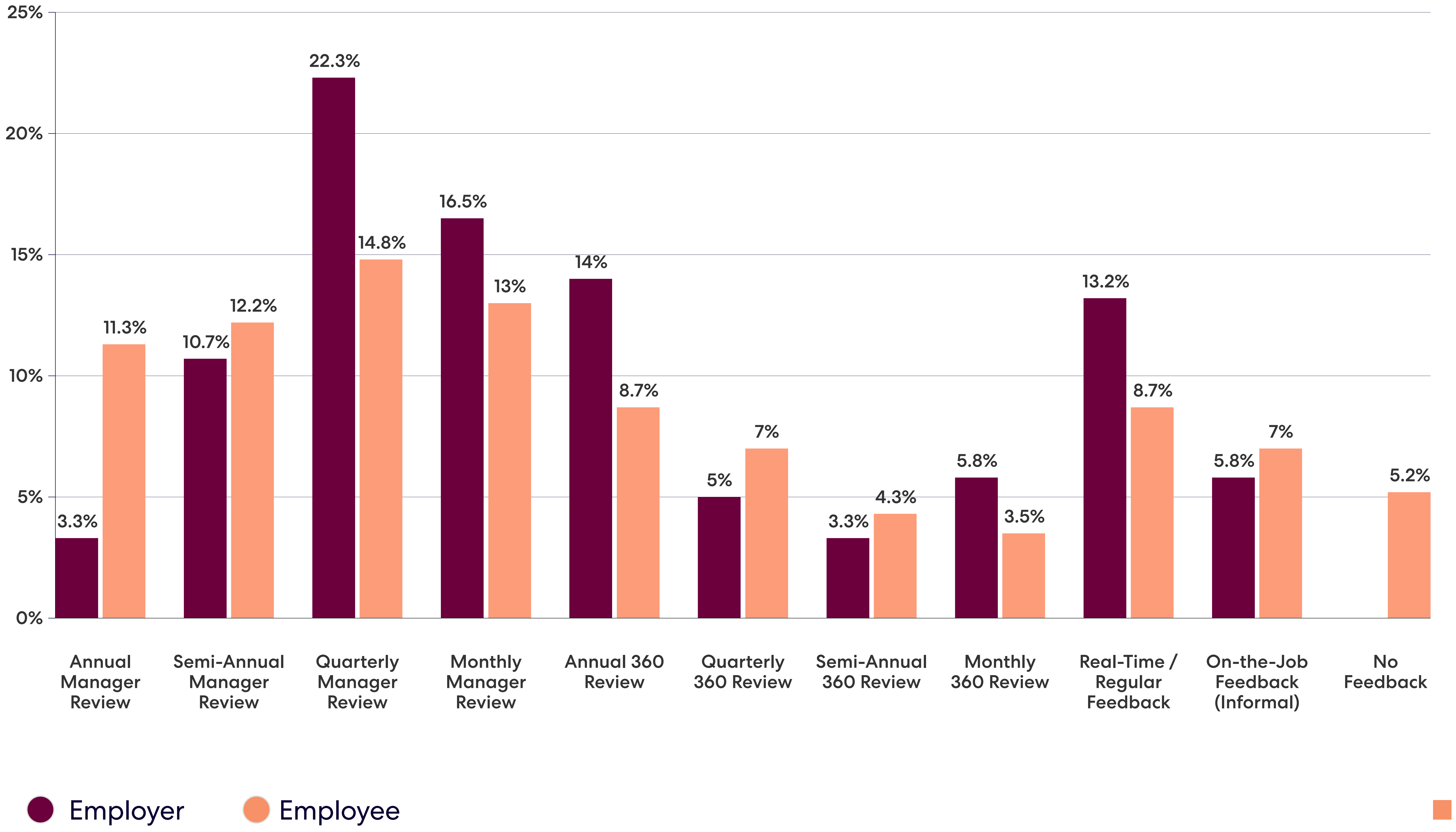


04. BUILDING AN EMPOWERED WORKFORCE—READINESS, SKILLS & GROWTH

Most Effective/Preferred Format for Feedback

QUESTION (Employer):
How does your company provide feedback and reviews to employees?

QUESTION (Employee):
How do you receive feedback at your company?



05. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BENEFITS

Core benefits—medical insurance, paid vacation, mental health insurance, and parental leave—show near-perfect alignment between employers and employees in this region.

Medical insurance (61.3% employers versus 56.5% employees), paid vacation (54.7% versus 54.8%), mental health insurance (48.0% versus 46.9%), and parental leave (46.0% versus 45.2%) show the strongest alignment as extremely important for employees. Lifestyle perks—pet insurance, wellness discounts, and fitness perks—show mutual agreement that these are less important. Parental leave is more important to both employees and employers in this region, compared to nationally.

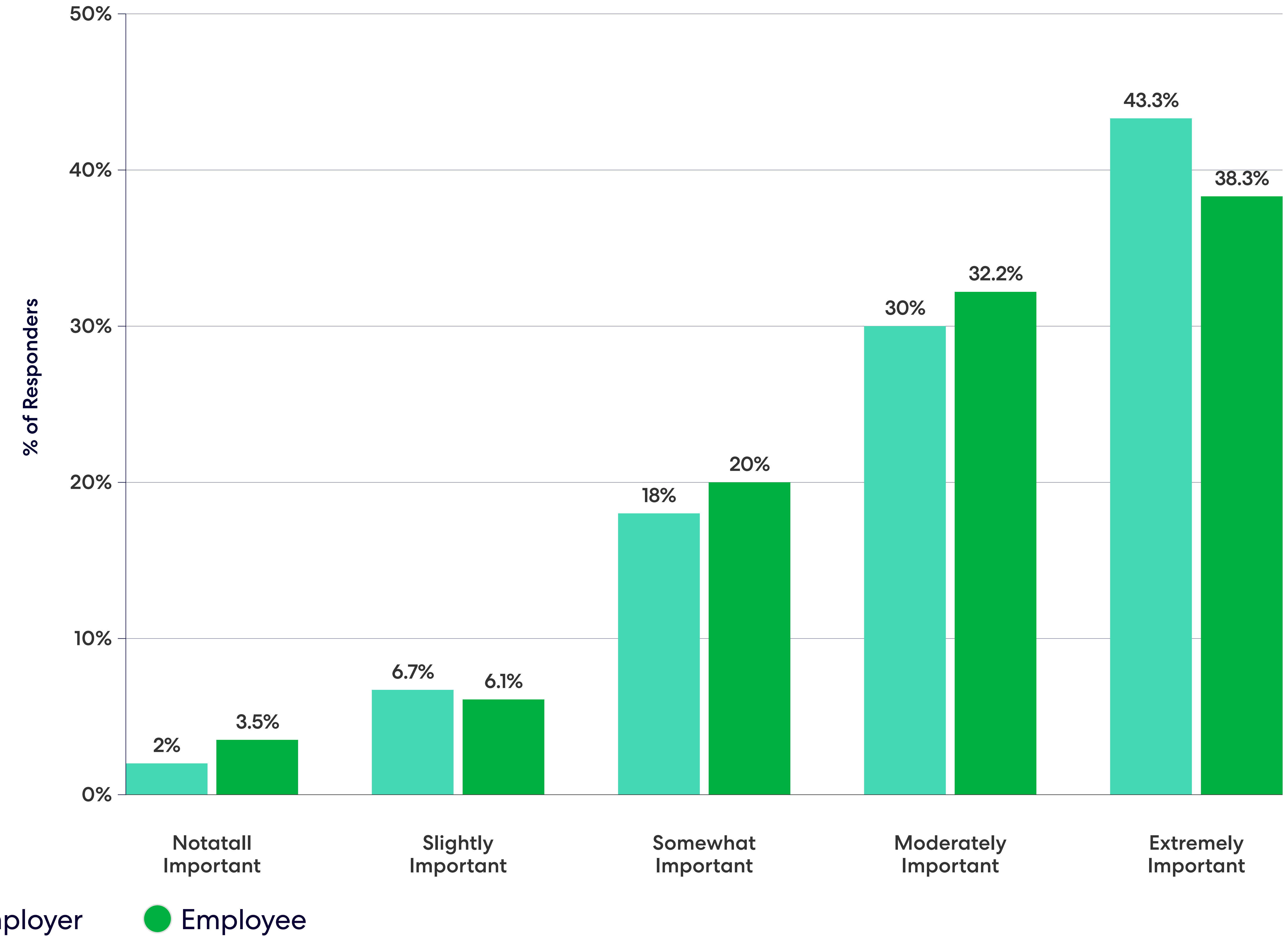
05.
THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BENEFITS

Employers rate retirement benefits as highly important to employees, but employees tend to rate them slightly lower at the highest importance levels. This suggests employers may slightly overestimate how central long-term retirement planning is in immediate job decisions compared to employees' broader benefit priorities.

Pension & Retirement Plans

QUESTION (Employer):
What level of importance do employees consider each benefit when looking for a job?

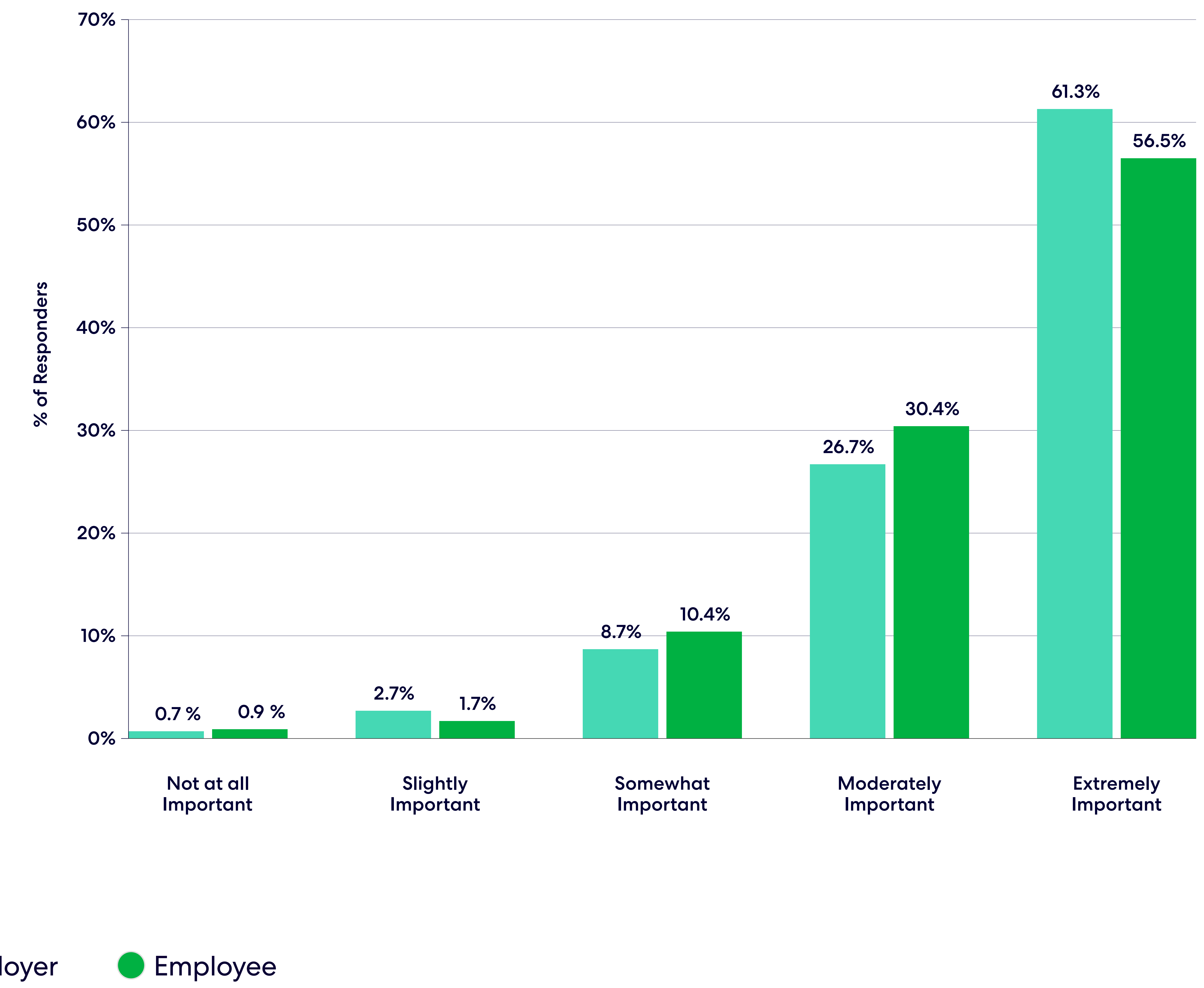
QUESTION (Employee):
What level of importance would you assign each benefit when looking for a job?



05.
THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BENEFITS

Both groups rate medical insurance as highly important, with strong alignment at the top end of importance. However, employers tend to cluster more responses in the “extremely important” category, indicating they may view it as a more decisive factor than employees distribute it in practice.

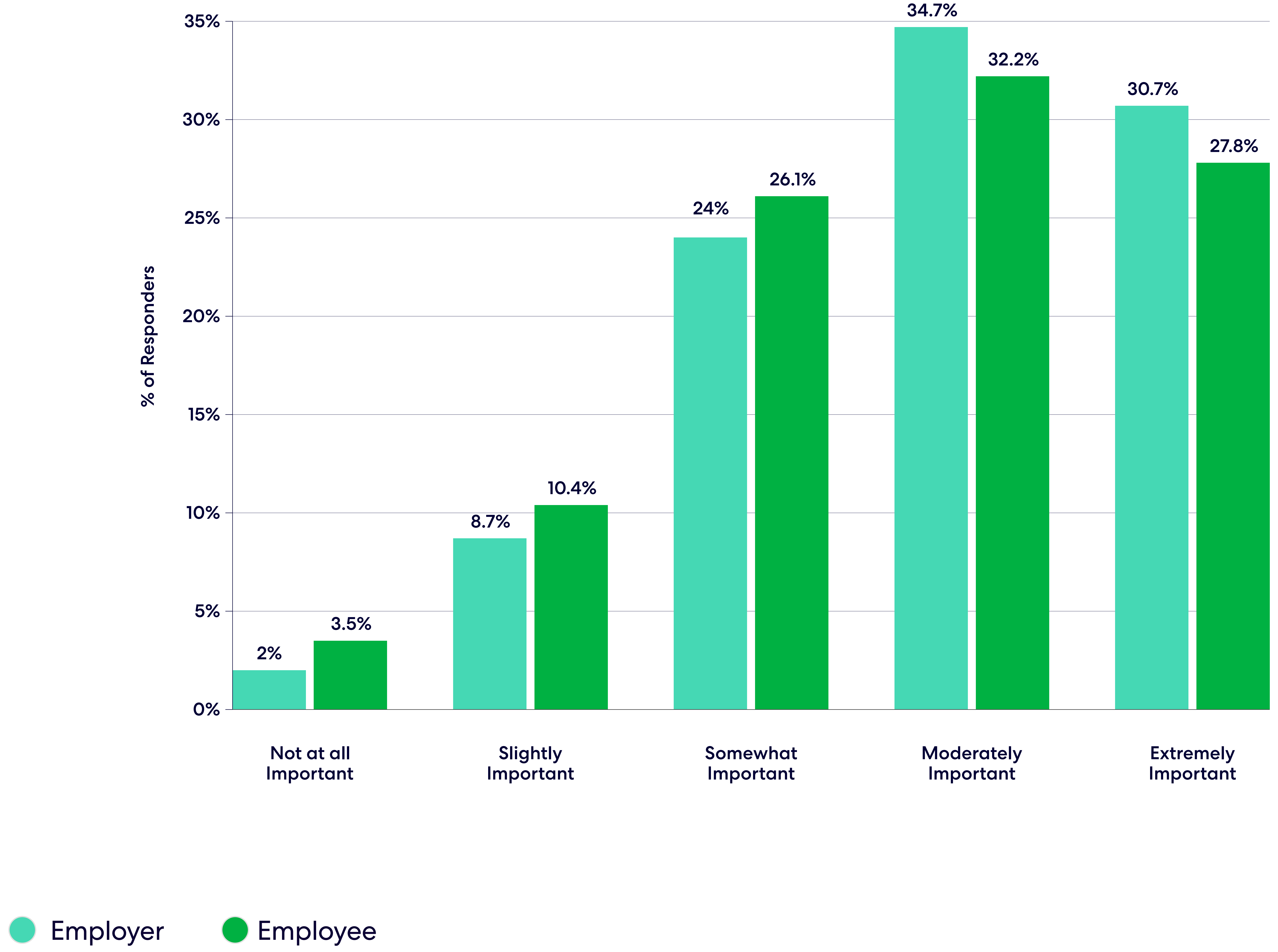
Medical Insurance



05. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BENEFITS

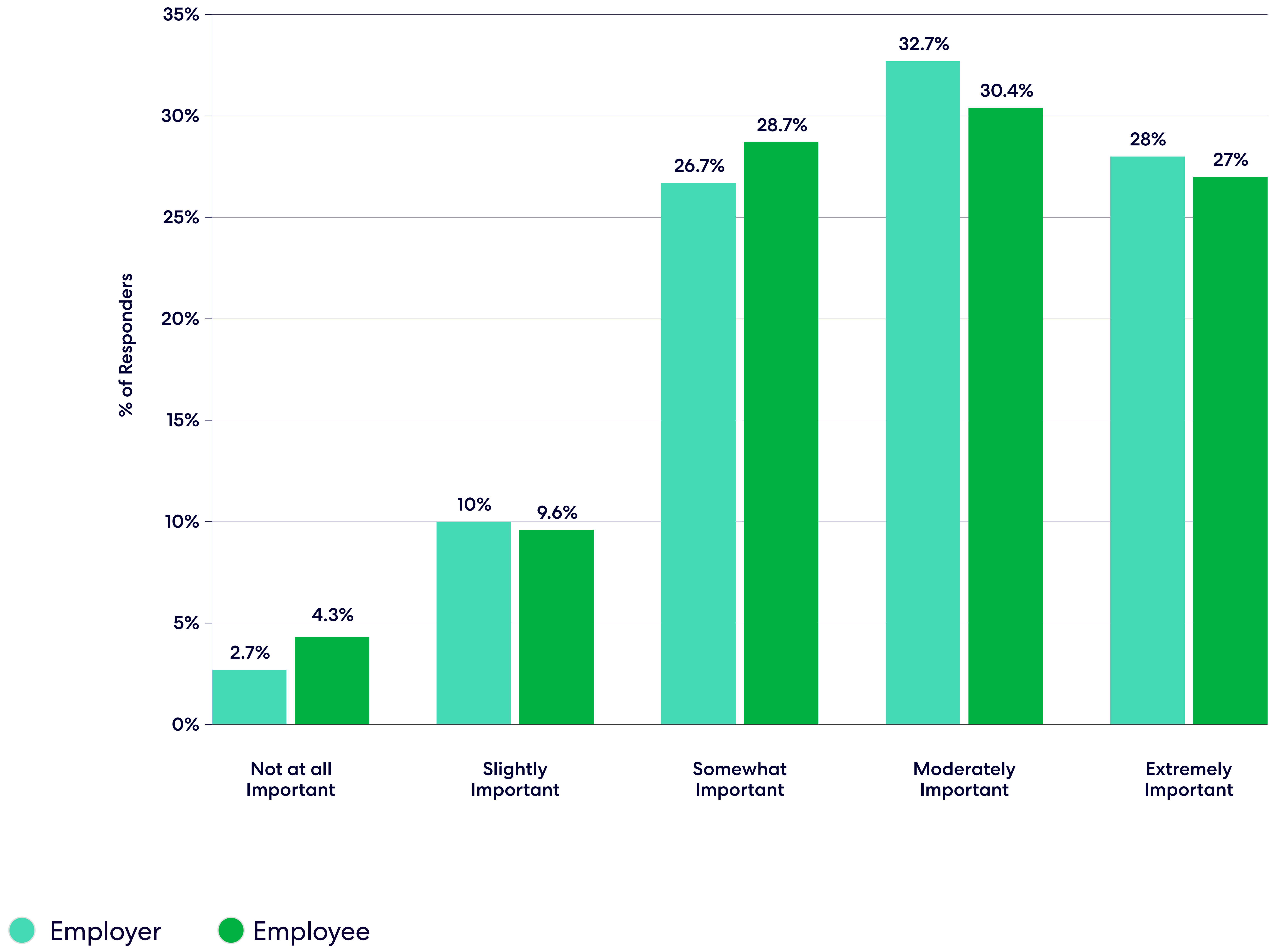
Employers generally rate dental and vision coverage as moderately important, whereas employees spread responses more across moderate and somewhat important categories. This suggests these benefits matter, but they may not be primary decision drivers for employees to the same degree employers assume.

Dental Insurance



05.
THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BENEFITS

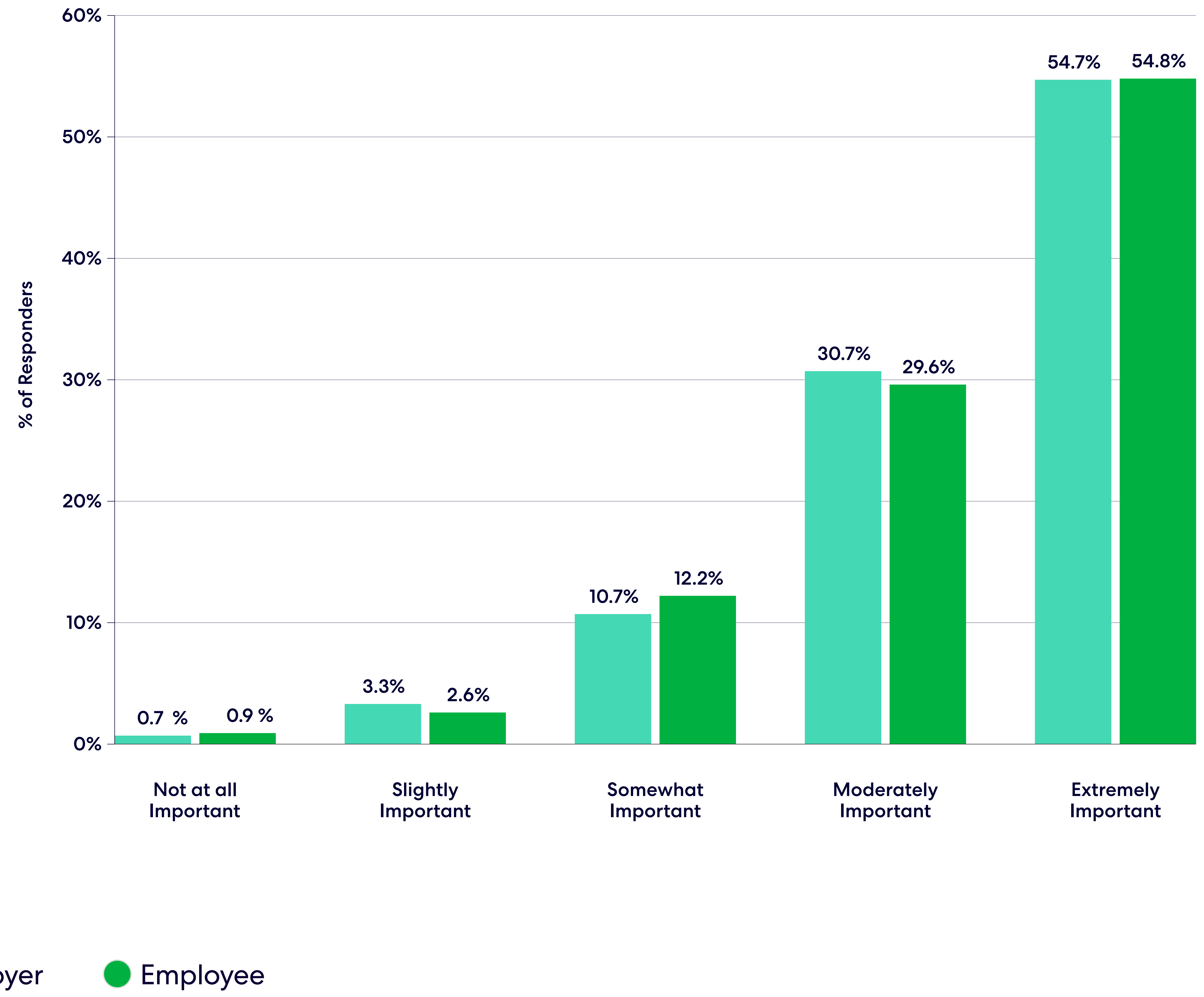
Vision Insurance



05. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BENEFITS

There is strong alignment that paid time off is highly important. Employees often rate this benefit as extremely important at similar or higher levels than employers estimate, indicating this is one area where employers do not underestimate employee priorities.

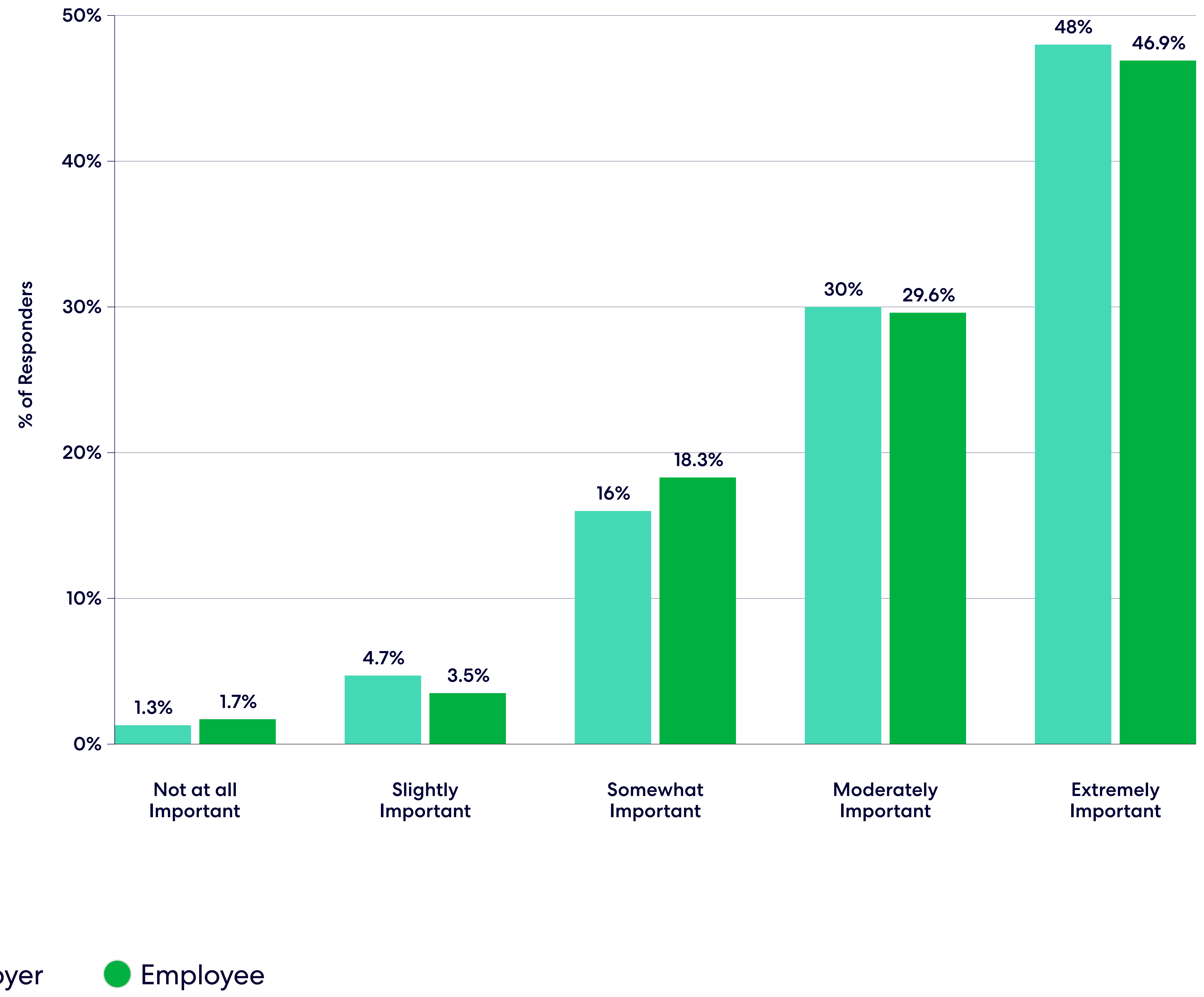
Paid Vacation & Sick Time



05. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BENEFITS

Employees tend to rate mental health coverage as more important than employers estimate, particularly at higher importance levels. This gap suggests employers may undervalue the growing role of mental health benefits in job selection decisions.

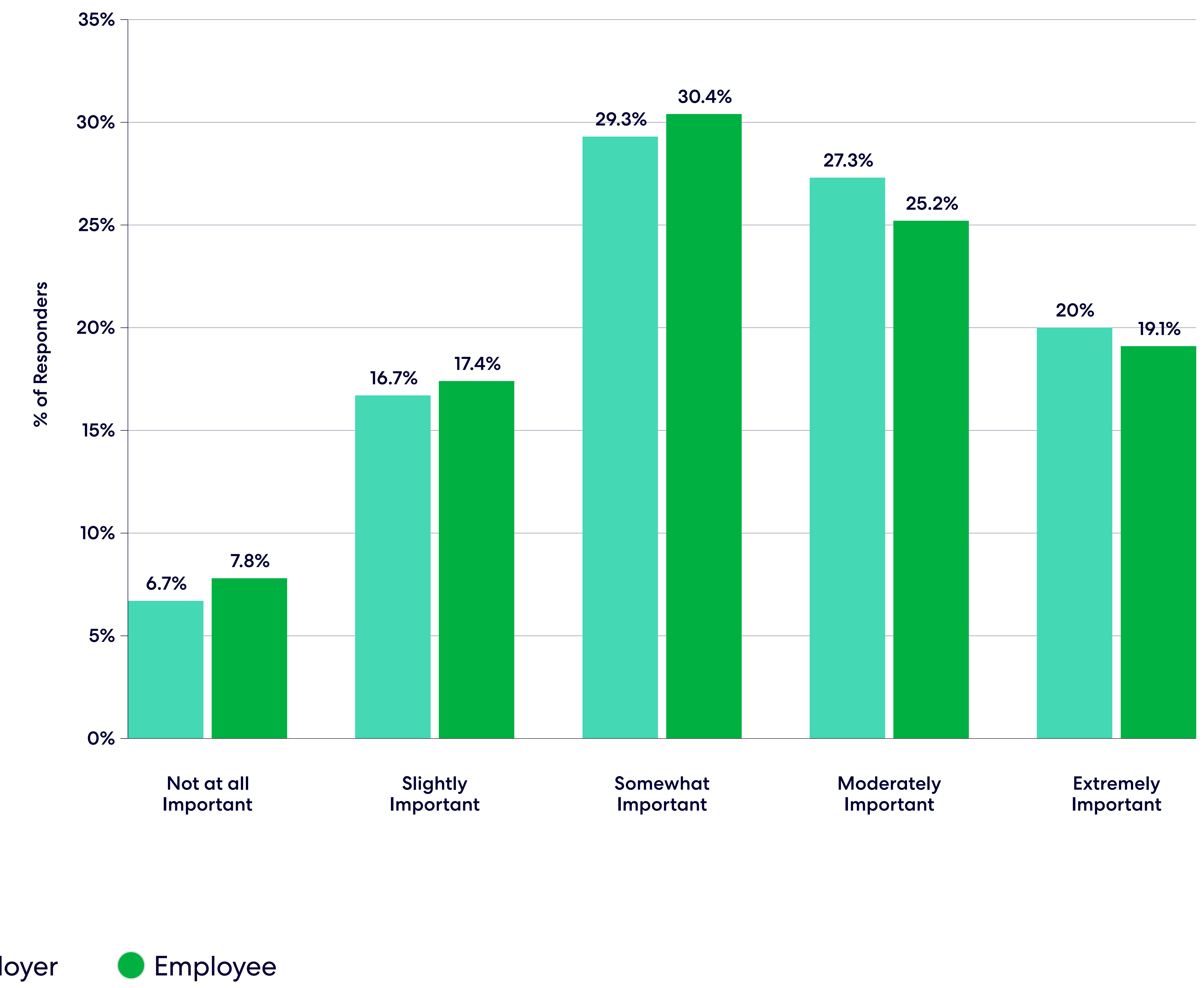
Mental Health Insurance Coverage



05. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BENEFITS

Employers may assume structured wellness offerings carry moderate importance, but employees tend to distribute responses more evenly, often placing them below core benefits like PTO and medical insurance. This indicates these offerings may be viewed as supplementary rather than central.

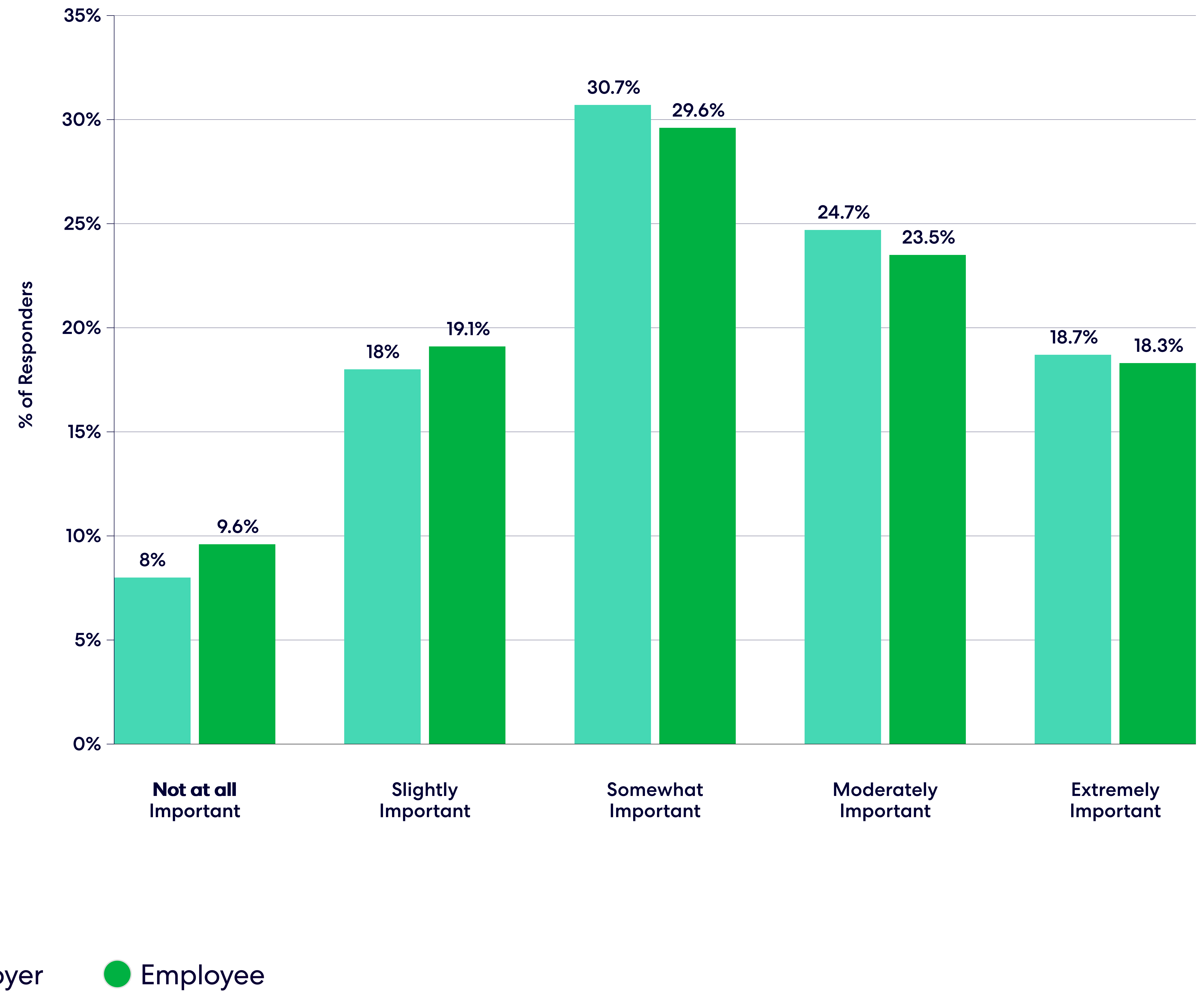
Mental Health Workshops/Apps



05.
THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BENEFITS

Both groups recognize some importance, but employers tend to assign greater weight than employees do. Employees appear to prioritize foundational benefits over lifestyle-oriented wellness perks.

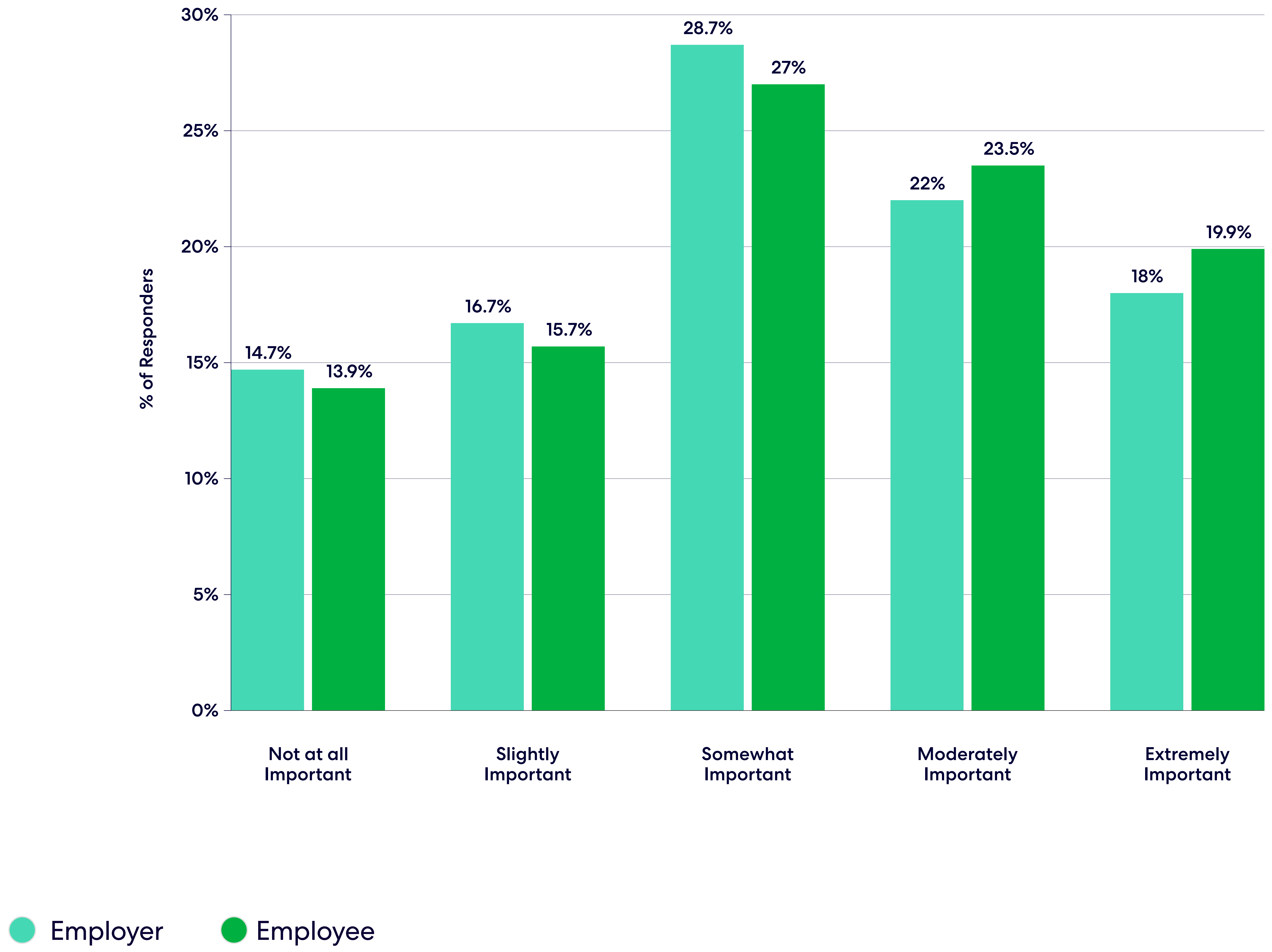
Wellness Classes / App Subscriptions



05. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BENEFITS

Employers often rate fertility coverage as moderately important, but employees' responses are more polarized, with a meaningful share rating extremely important and others rating it lower. This suggests the benefit is highly consequential for specific subgroups rather than universally important.

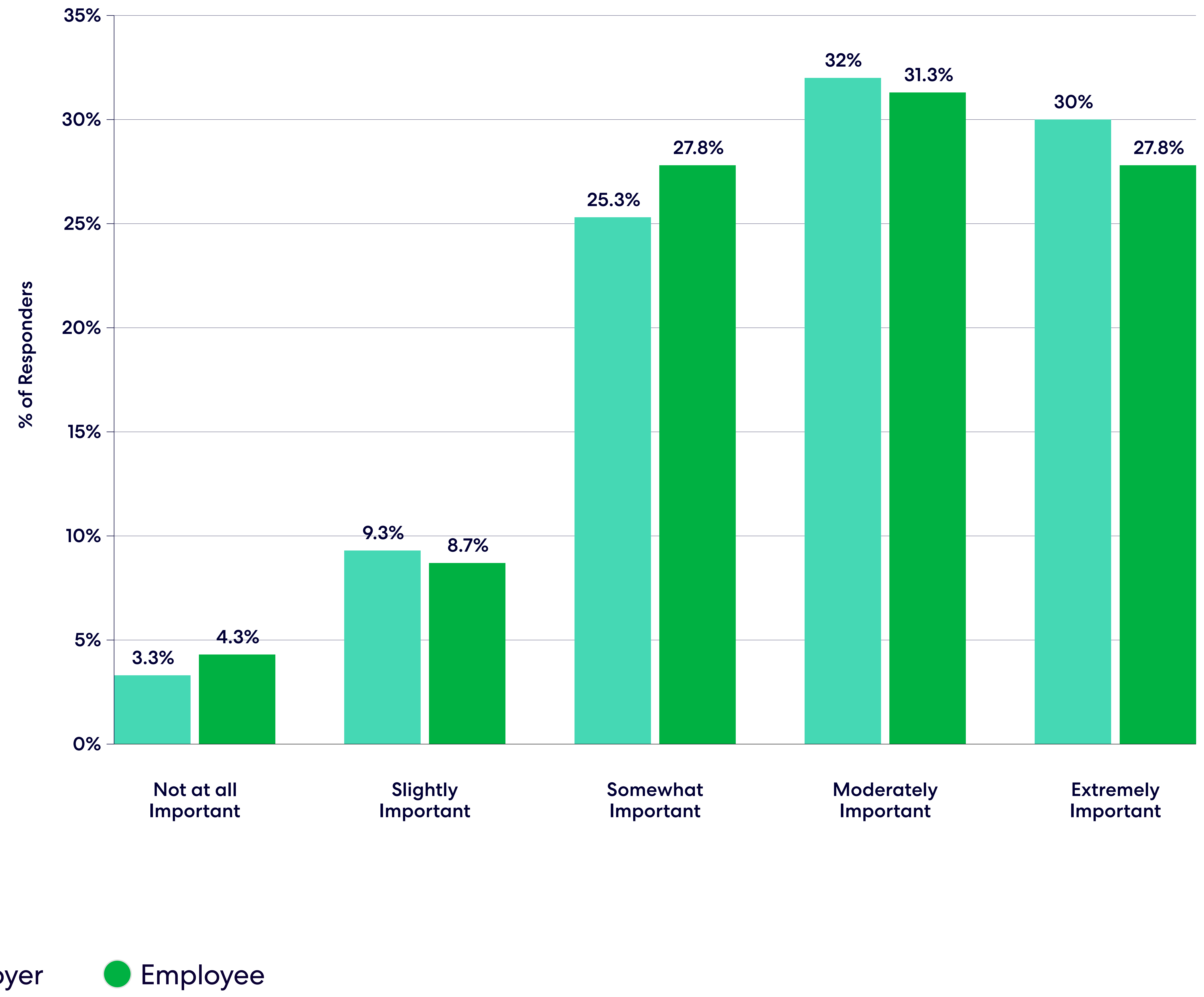
Fertility Coverage



05. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BENEFITS

Employers and employees are generally aligned in viewing life insurance as important but not typically at the very highest level compared to medical insurance or PTO. Differences, where present, tend to reflect employers rating it slightly more uniformly important than employees.

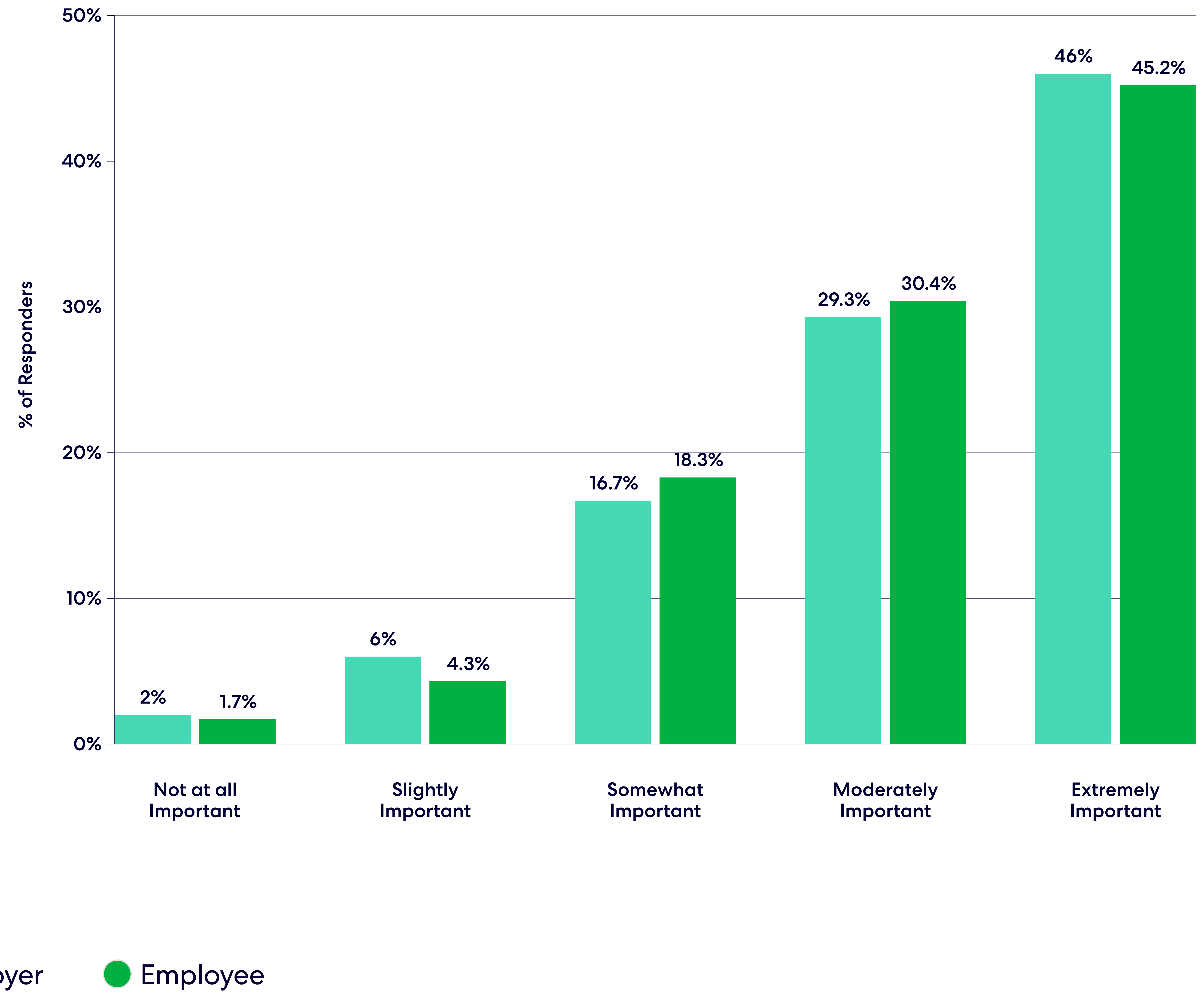
Life Insurance



05.
THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BENEFITS

Employees frequently rate parental leave as highly important, often at higher levels than employers estimate. This indicates that family-related benefits may carry stronger influence in job decisions than leaders assume.

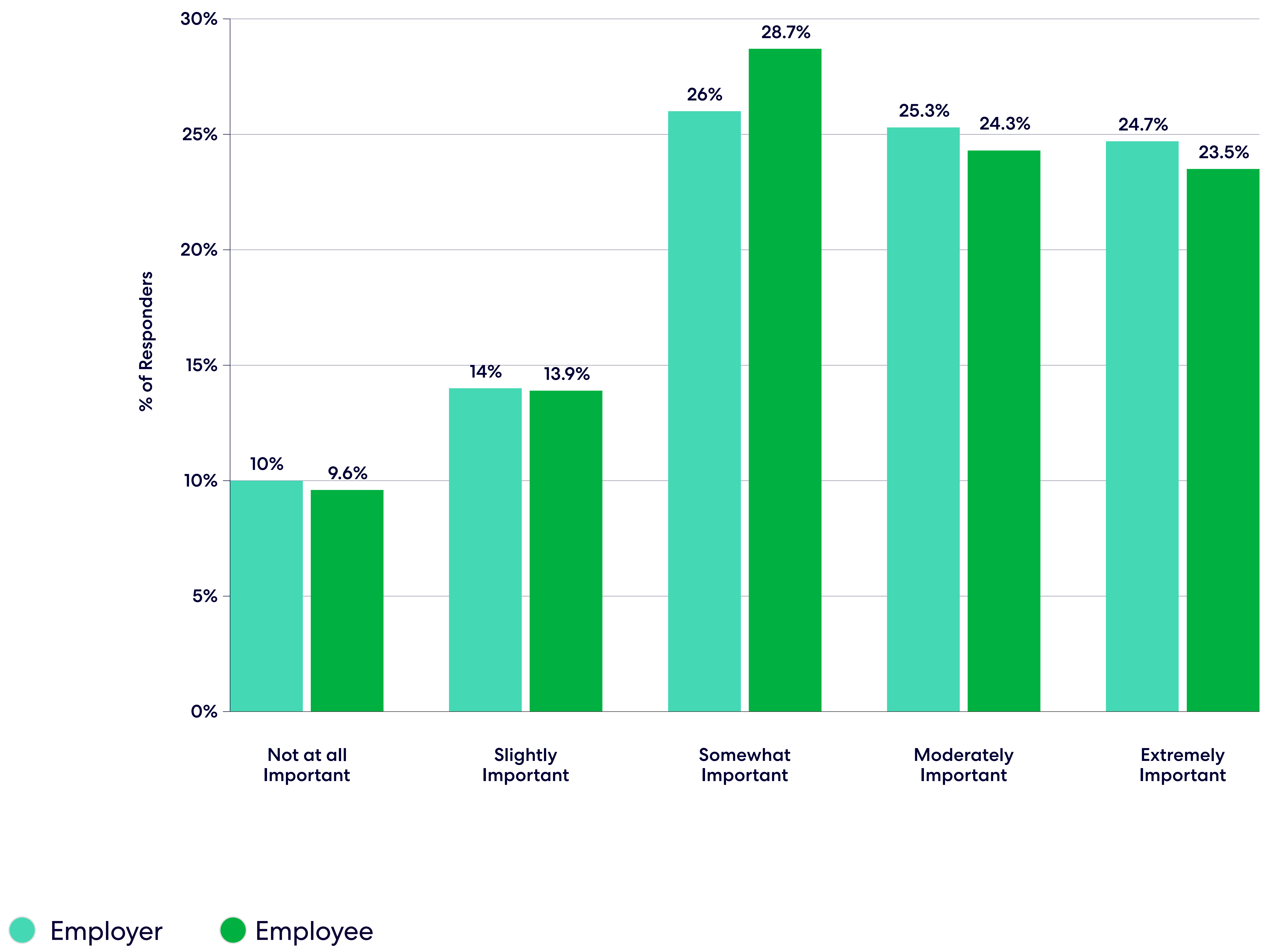
Parental Leave



05. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BENEFITS

Employers tend to rate childcare assistance as moderately important overall, while employees' responses are more segmented, with high importance among some and low importance among others. This reflects life-stage variability that may not be fully captured in employer averages.

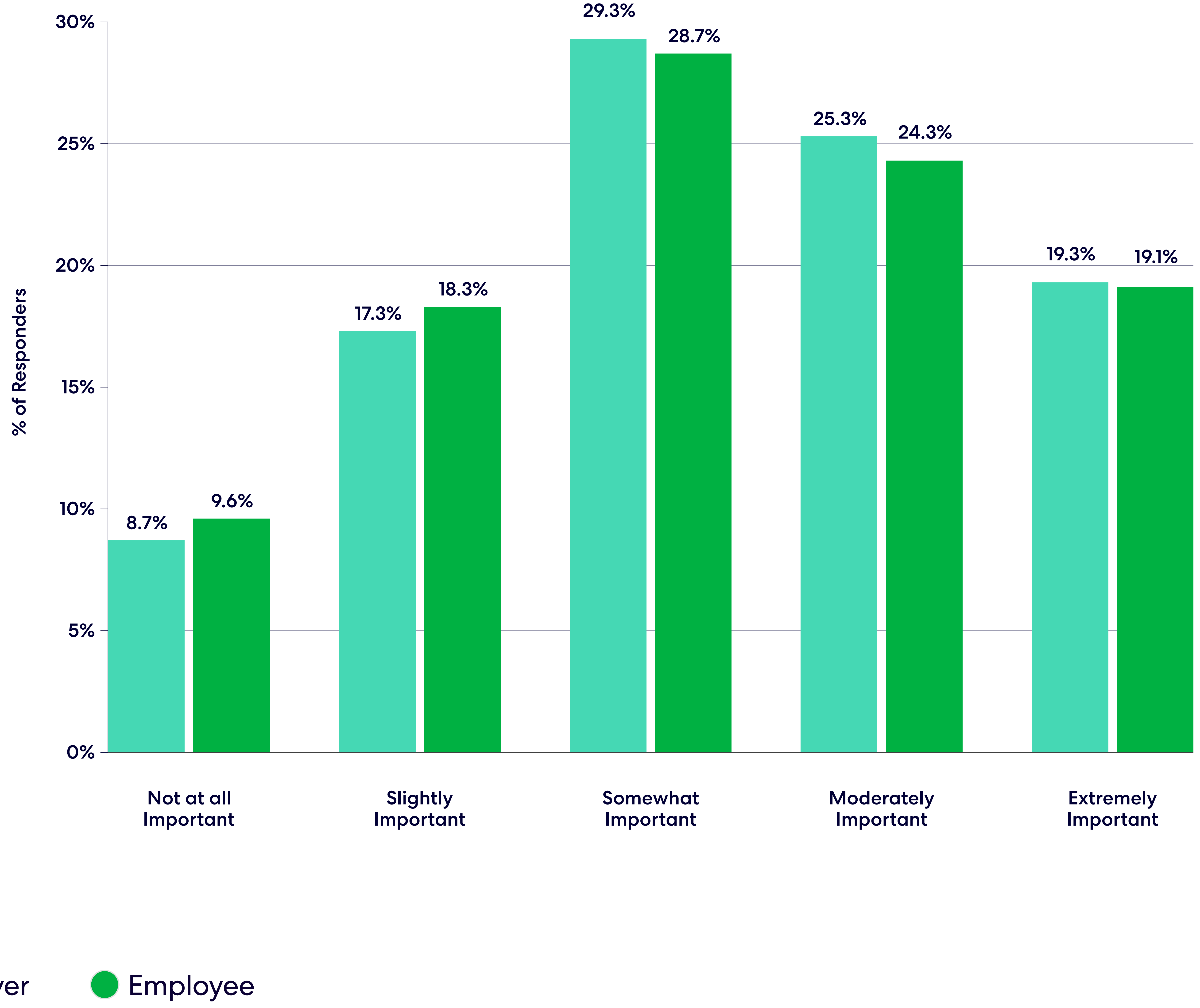
Childcare Assistance



05. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BENEFITS

Employers typically assign moderate importance to fitness-related perks, while employees often rank them lower than core financial and health benefits. This suggests such perks are appreciated but rarely decisive in job choice.

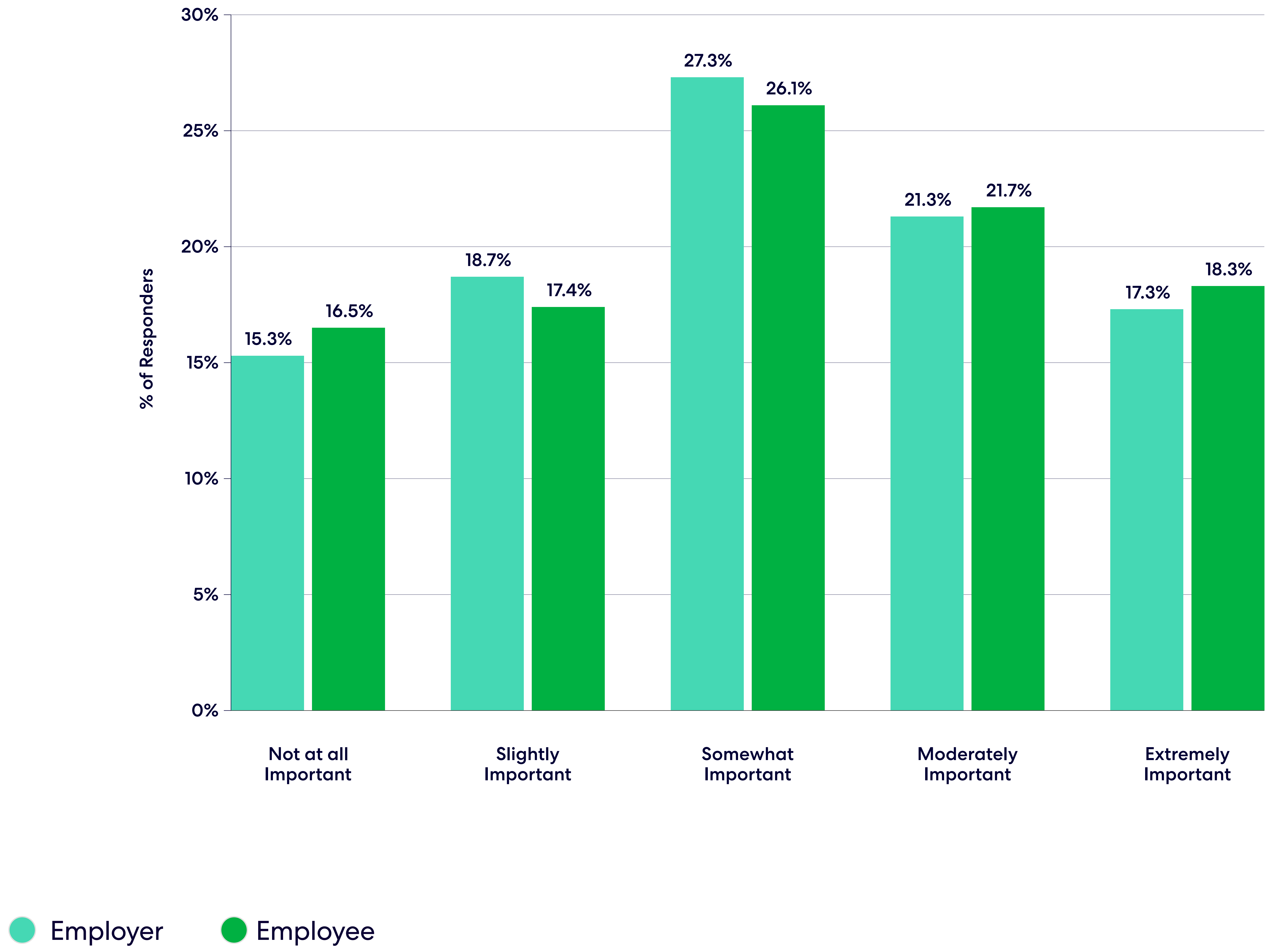
Fitness Perks



05. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BENEFITS

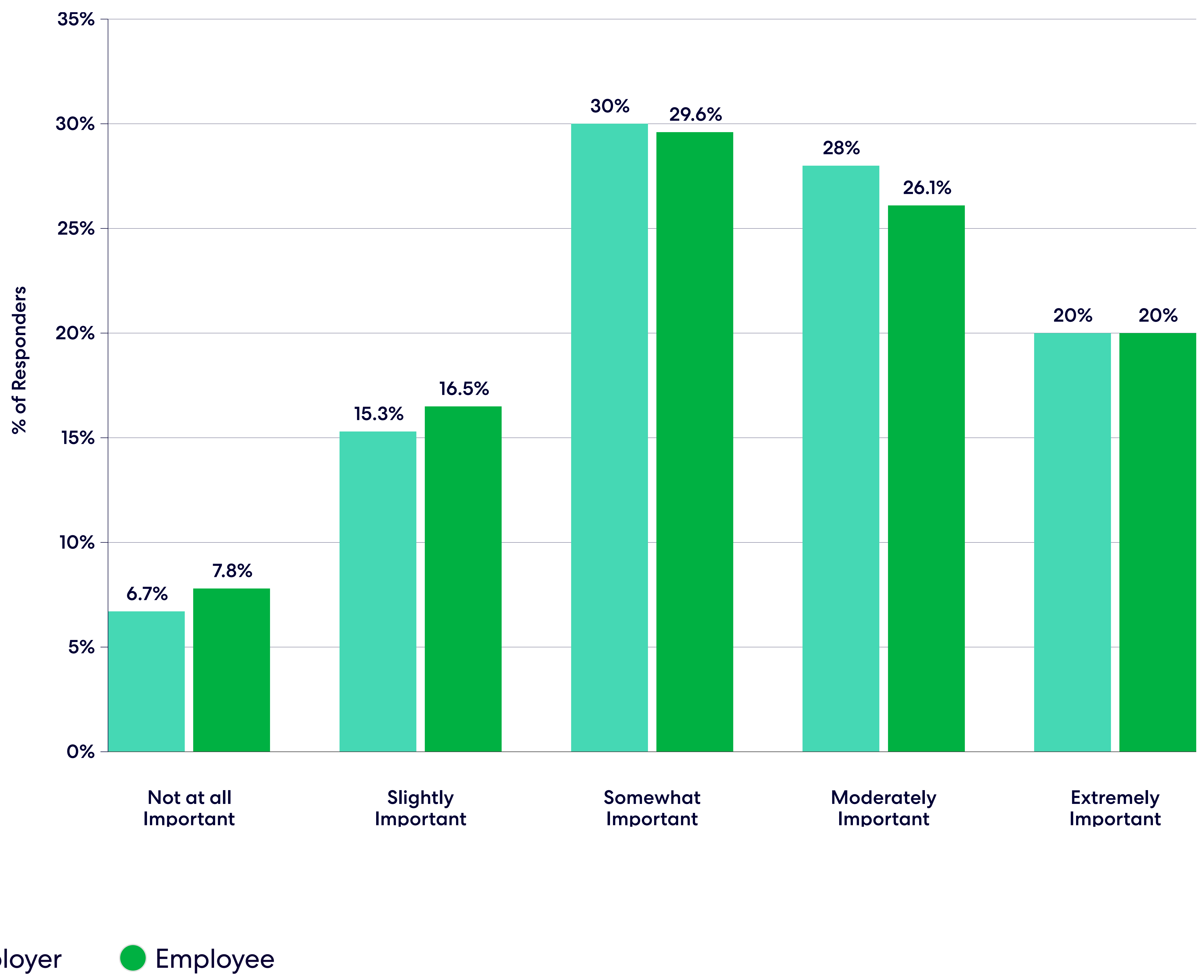
Both groups tend to rate pet insurance as lower in importance relative to core benefits. Employers may slightly overestimate its relevance, but overall it appears to be a secondary consideration.

Pet Insurance



05.
THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BENEFITS

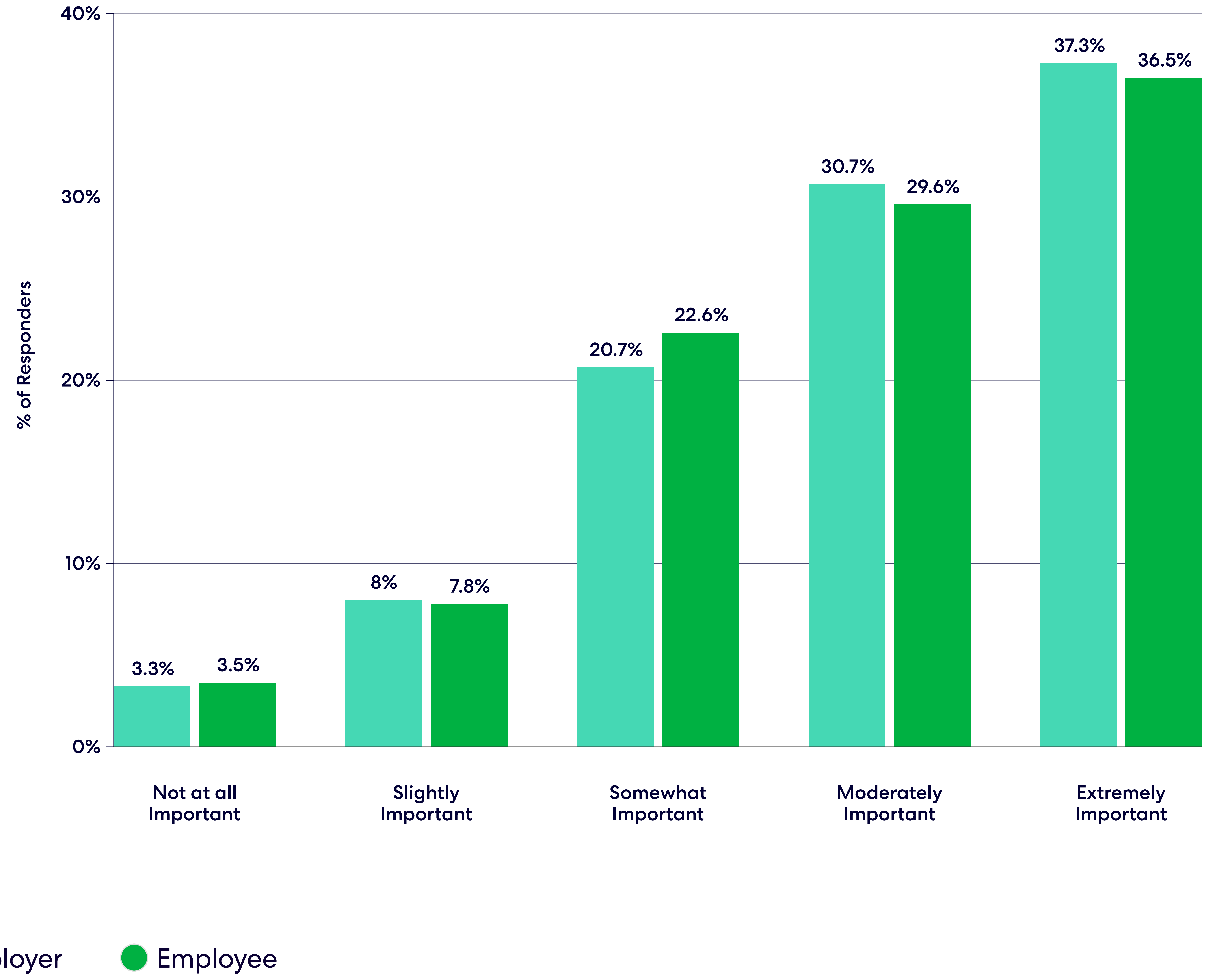
Employee Discounts



05.
THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BENEFITS

There is generally strong agreement that education reimbursement is important, though employers may rate it as more universally important than employees do. Employees' ratings suggest it is highly relevant for career-focused individuals but not equally prioritized by all.

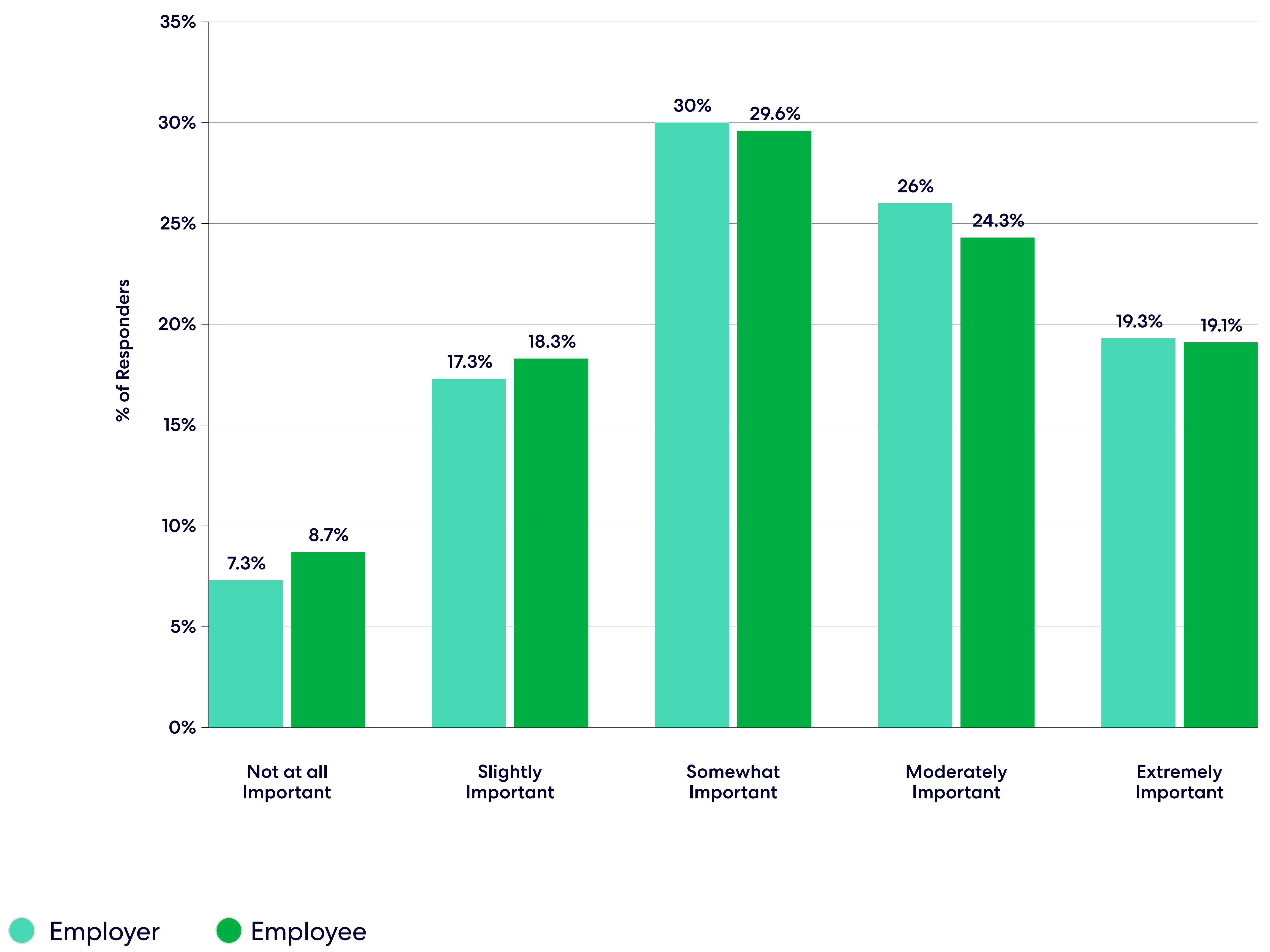
Education Reimbursement



05. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BENEFITS

Similar to other lifestyle benefits, employers tend to rate these as moderately important, whereas employees more often rank them below structural benefits. The difference suggests that while wellness is valued, it does not outweigh compensation, growth, or healthcare considerations.

Wellness Activity Discounts



06. DEMAND FOR 24/7 HR

Both groups endorse 24/7 HR availability, but employers do so far more strongly—84.4% combined agreement versus 63.5% among employees, a 21-point gap. Employer support is also more emphatic, concentrated in firm Agree (39.1%) and Strongly Agree (25.8%) responses, whereas employees spread more thinly across the agreement tiers and peak at the softer Somewhat Agree (23.5%). The pattern suggests the expectation of always-on HR is driven more by employers than demanded by employees—worth flagging, since it implies leaders may prioritize round-the-clock availability beyond what the workforce itself is asking for.

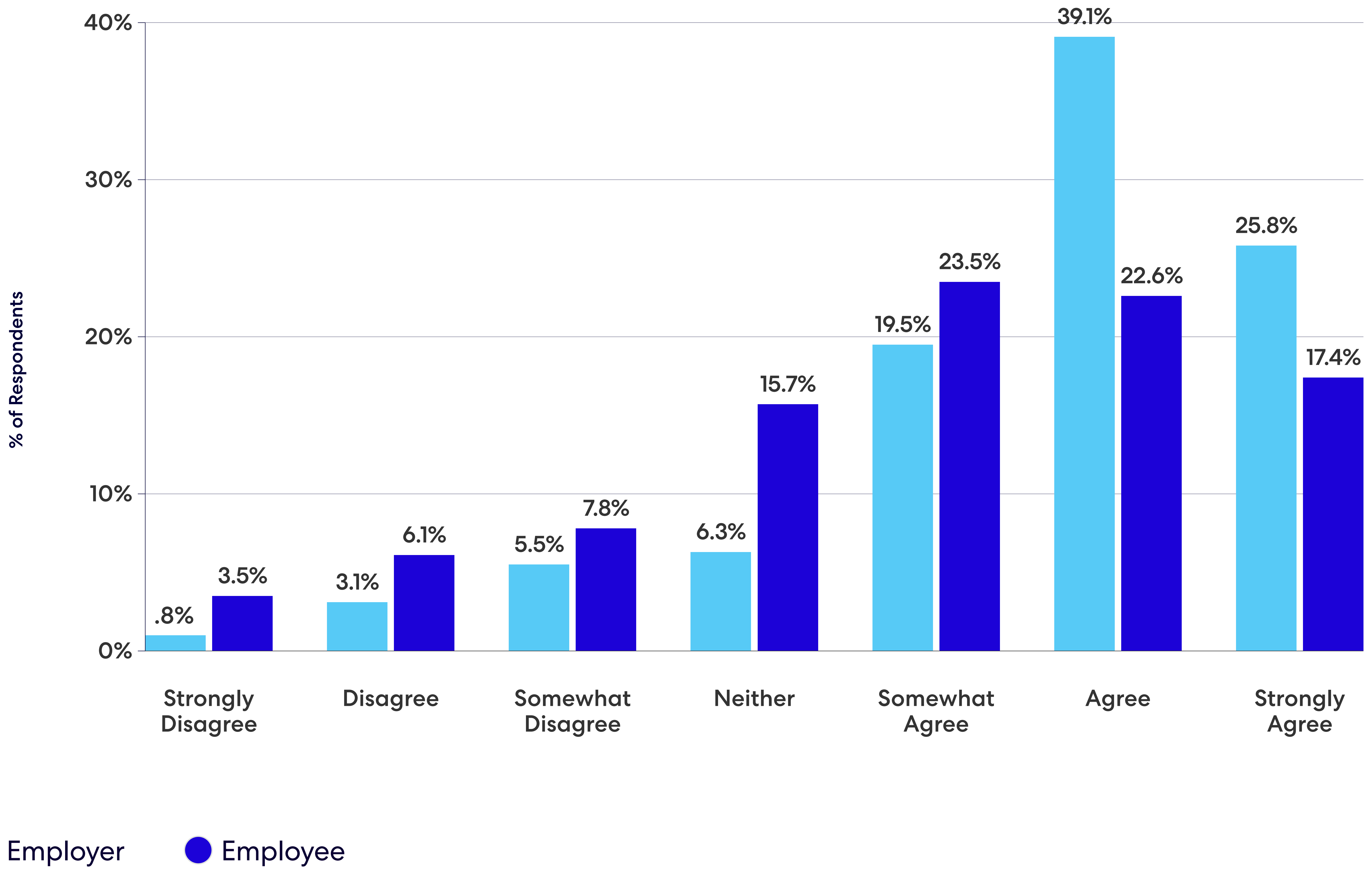
06. THE DEMAND FOR 24/7 HR

Employers show substantially stronger agreement that HR should function as a 24/7 service (84.4%) compared to employees (63.5%). Employees are more evenly distributed across the scale and are more likely to express neutrality or disagreement (33.1% versus 15.7%), suggesting leaders may place higher importance on constant availability than employees themselves expect or demand.

The Demand for 24/7 HR

QUESTION (Employer):
Do you agree that HR should be available 24/7?

QUESTION (Employee):
Do you agree that HR should be available 24/7?



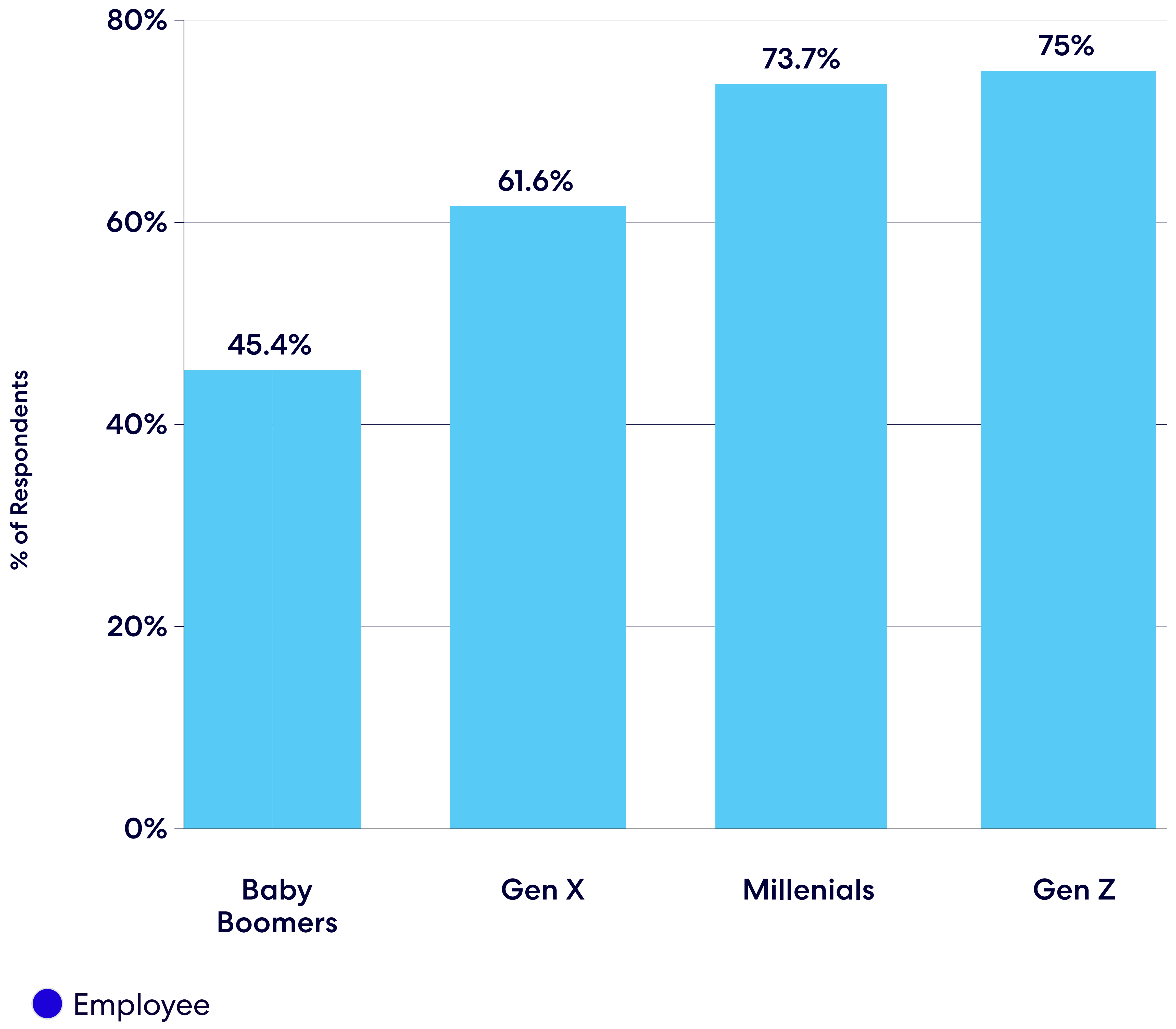
06. THE DEMAND FOR 24/7 HR

Gen Z (75.0%) and Millennials (73.7%) show the strongest support for 24/7 HR. Baby Boomers (45.4%) are the most skeptical. Gen X sits in between at 61.6%, suggesting this is fundamentally a generational divide in workplace expectations.

24/7 HR Agreement by Generation

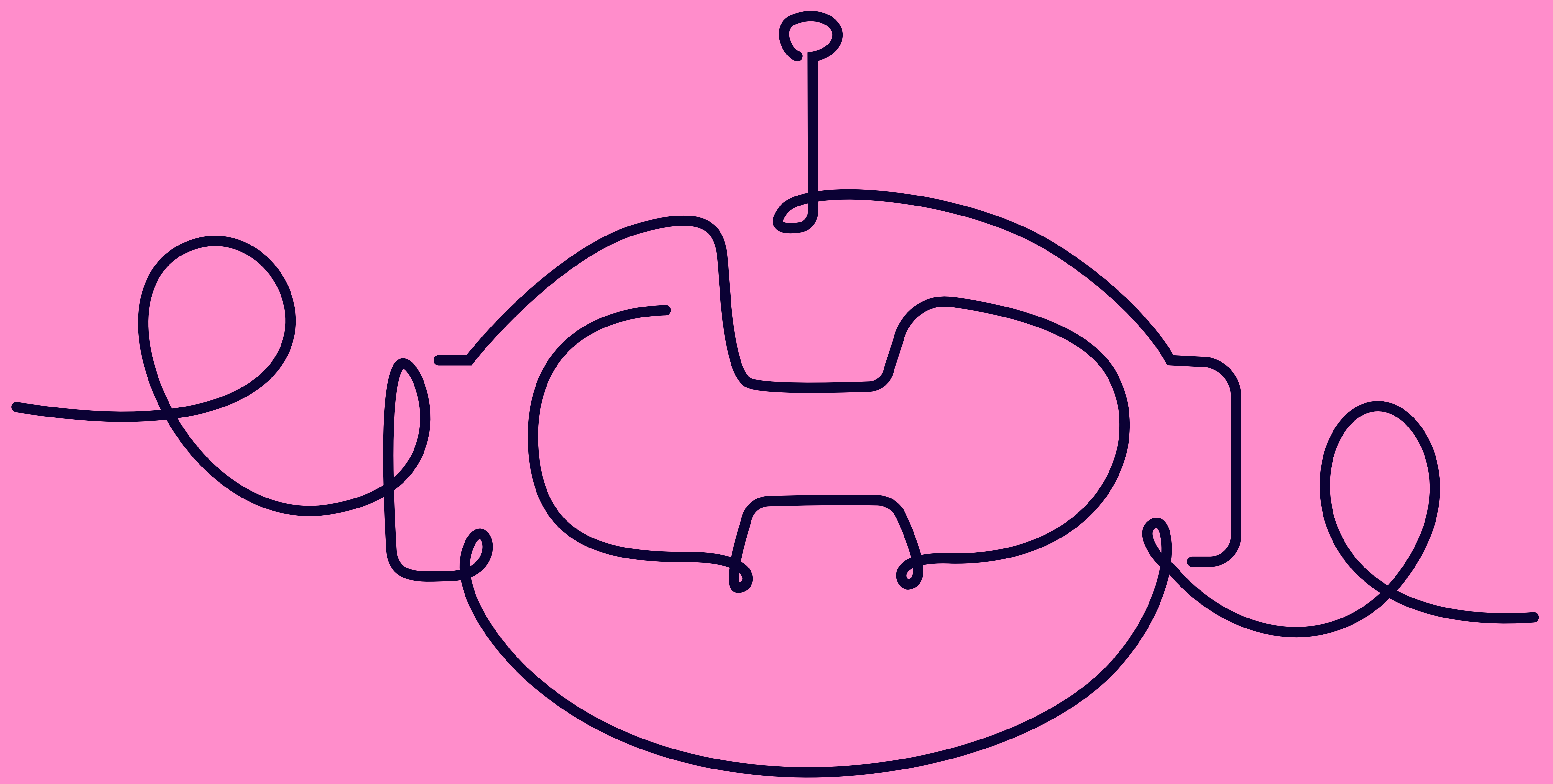
QUESTION (Employer):
Do you agree that HR should be available 24/7?

QUESTION (Employee):
Do you agree that HR should be available 24/7?



07. AI IN HR

Overall, managers appear far more supportive of AI in HR contexts than employees are inclined to use it, suggesting that adoption lags behind leadership endorsement, particularly in more personal or high-stakes areas. Employers are more interested in delegating procedural functions to AI and less interested in interpersonal tasks such as recruitment.



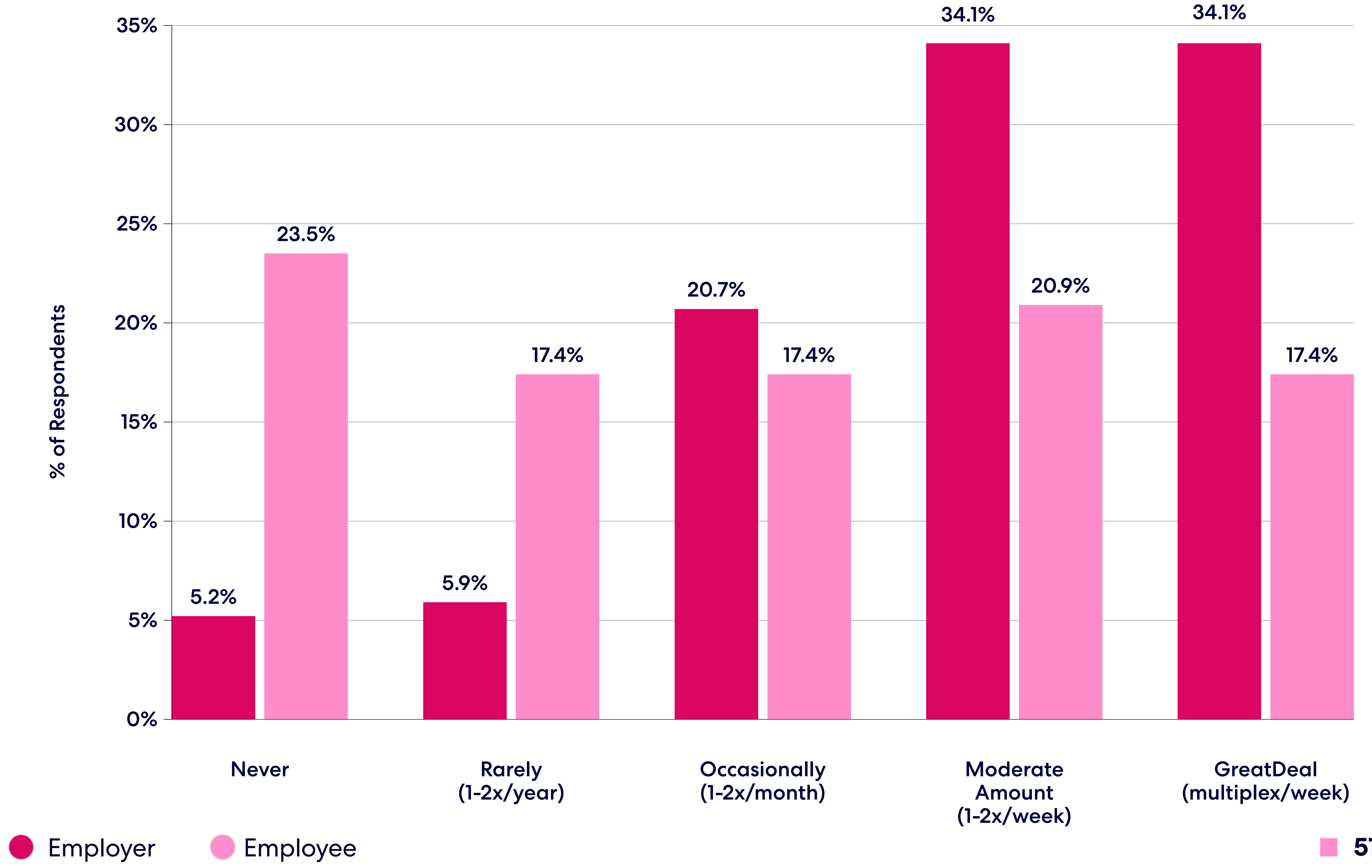
07.
AI IN HR

Employers are much more likely to use AI at work at least weekly (68.2%) compared to employees (38.3%). This signals perhaps less training or awareness of AI for employees. Employees in this region use AI less than at the national level.

AI Frequency of Use

QUESTION (Employer):
How frequently do you use AI at work?

QUESTION (Employee):
How frequently are you using AI at work?



07.
AI IN HR

Employer acceptability stays high for transactional functions (70–74%) but falls sharply for sensitive ones, bottoming at 39.8% for Interpersonal Issues—the lowest employer approval across all regions. Employee usage is the defining story: frequent use never exceeds 28.7%, and "Never" is the single largest employee response in every function, peaking at 52.2% for interpersonal issues. This is the widest acceptance-to-usage gap of any region—employers are ready, but employee adoption lags well behind.

AI by HR Function

QUESTION (Employer):
How acceptable is it for employees to use AI for each HR function?

QUESTION (Employee):
How often do you use AI for each HR function?

07.
AI IN HR

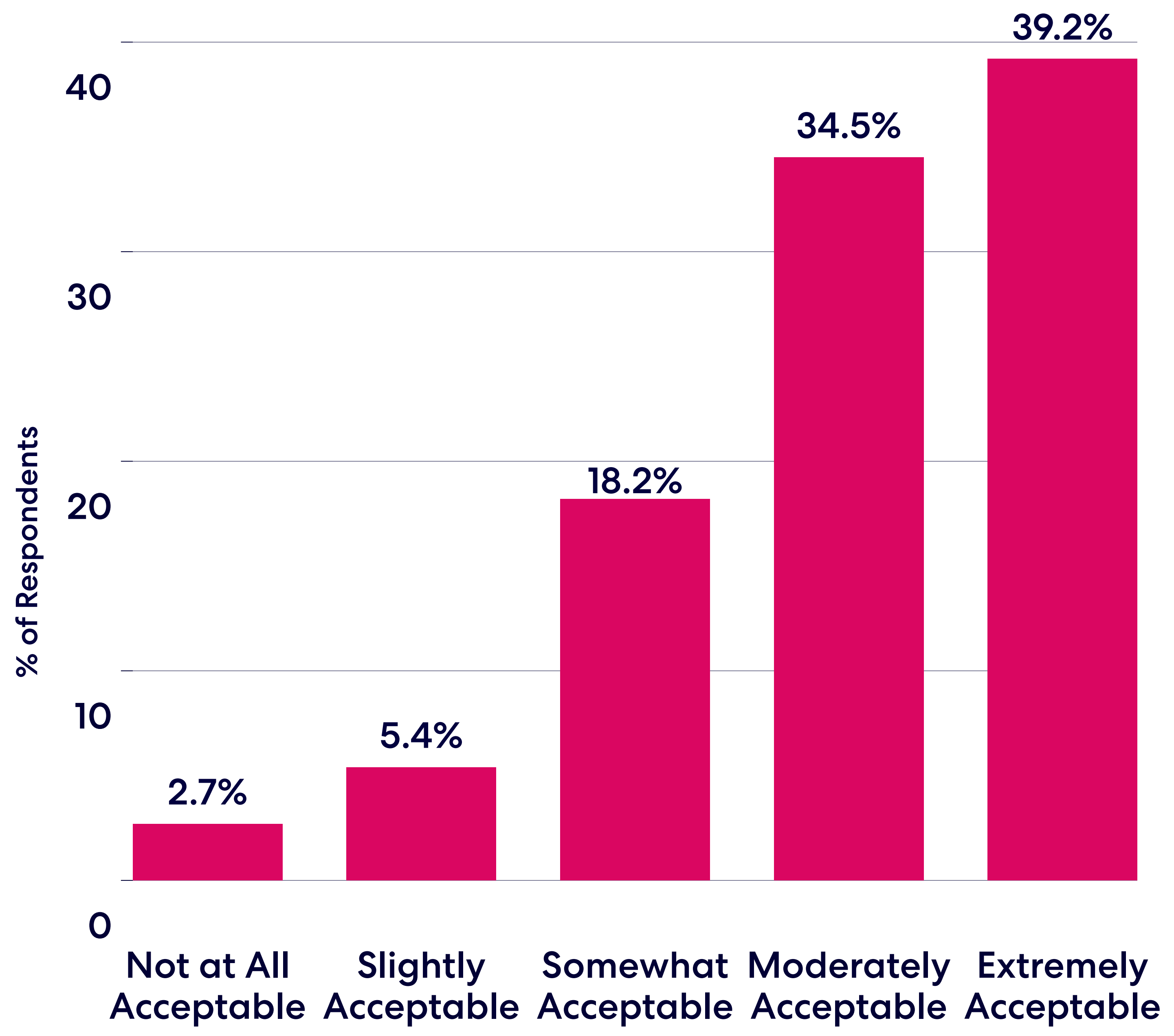
Payroll questions draw strong employer endorsement at 73.7% Moderately or Extremely acceptable, but employee usage is low-to-moderate at 26.1% frequent use. Most striking, 42.6% of employees report never using AI for payroll—the second-highest “Never” rate in the region—underscoring a substantial readiness-to-adoption gap even for routine transactional tasks.

Asking Payroll Questions

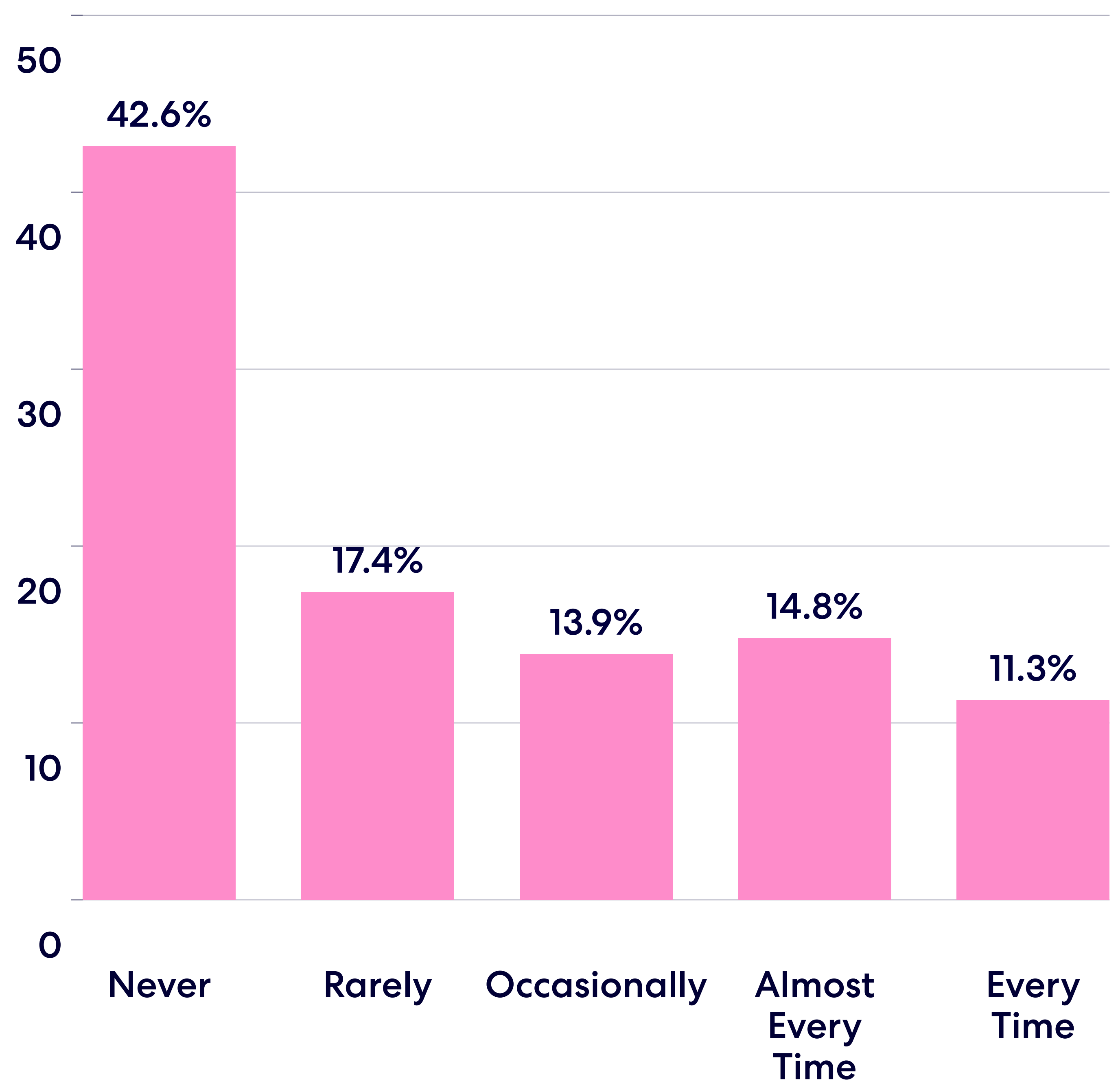
QUESTION (Employer):
Please indicate how acceptable it is for employees to use an AI assistant in your HR platform to complete the following tasks vs. reaching out to an HR admin.

QUESTION (Employee):
How frequently are you using AI for the following HR-related tasks?

Combined (Moderately + Extremely Acceptable: 73.7%



Combined (Moderate + Great Deal): 26.1%



Employer Employee

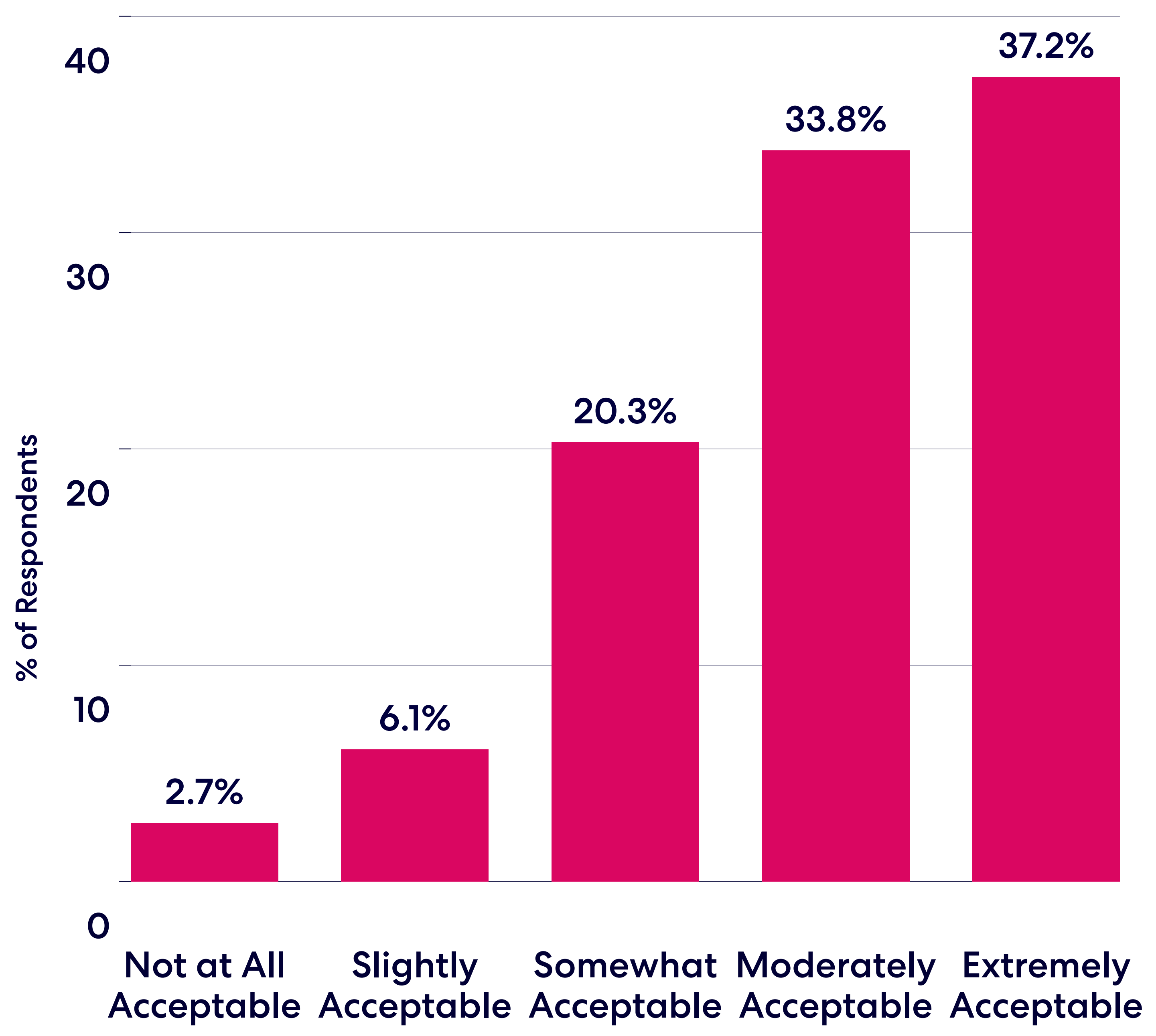
Benefits questions mirror the regional pattern: high employer acceptance (71.0% Moderately or Extremely acceptable) against limited employee use (24.3% frequent). With 39.1% of employees reporting they never use AI for benefits, even one of the most AI-friendly functions elsewhere sees subdued adoption in this region.

Asking Benefits Questions

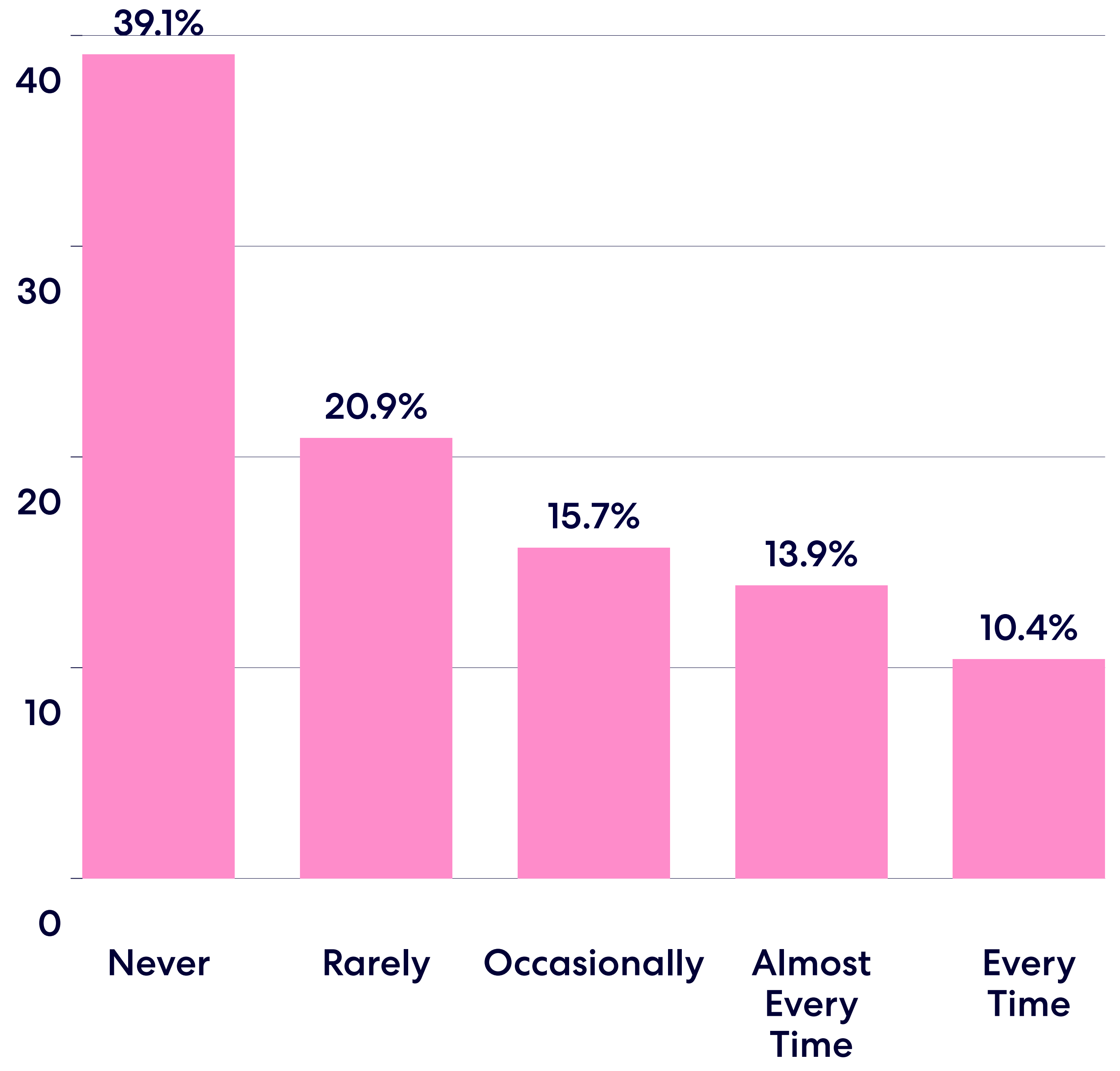
QUESTION (Employer):
Please indicate how acceptable it is for employees to use an AI assistant in your HR platform to complete the following tasks vs. reaching out to an HR admin.

QUESTION (Employee):
How frequently are you using AI for the following HR-related tasks?

Combined (Moderately + Extremely Acceptable: 71.0%



Combined (Moderate + Great Deal): 24.3%



Employer Employee

07.
AI IN HR

Personal HR questions show employers growing more cautious—acceptance drops to 60.8%—while employee usage falls further to 21.7% frequent use. Nearly half of employees (47.0%) never use AI here, reflecting heightened sensitivity around personal matters on both sides of the relationship.

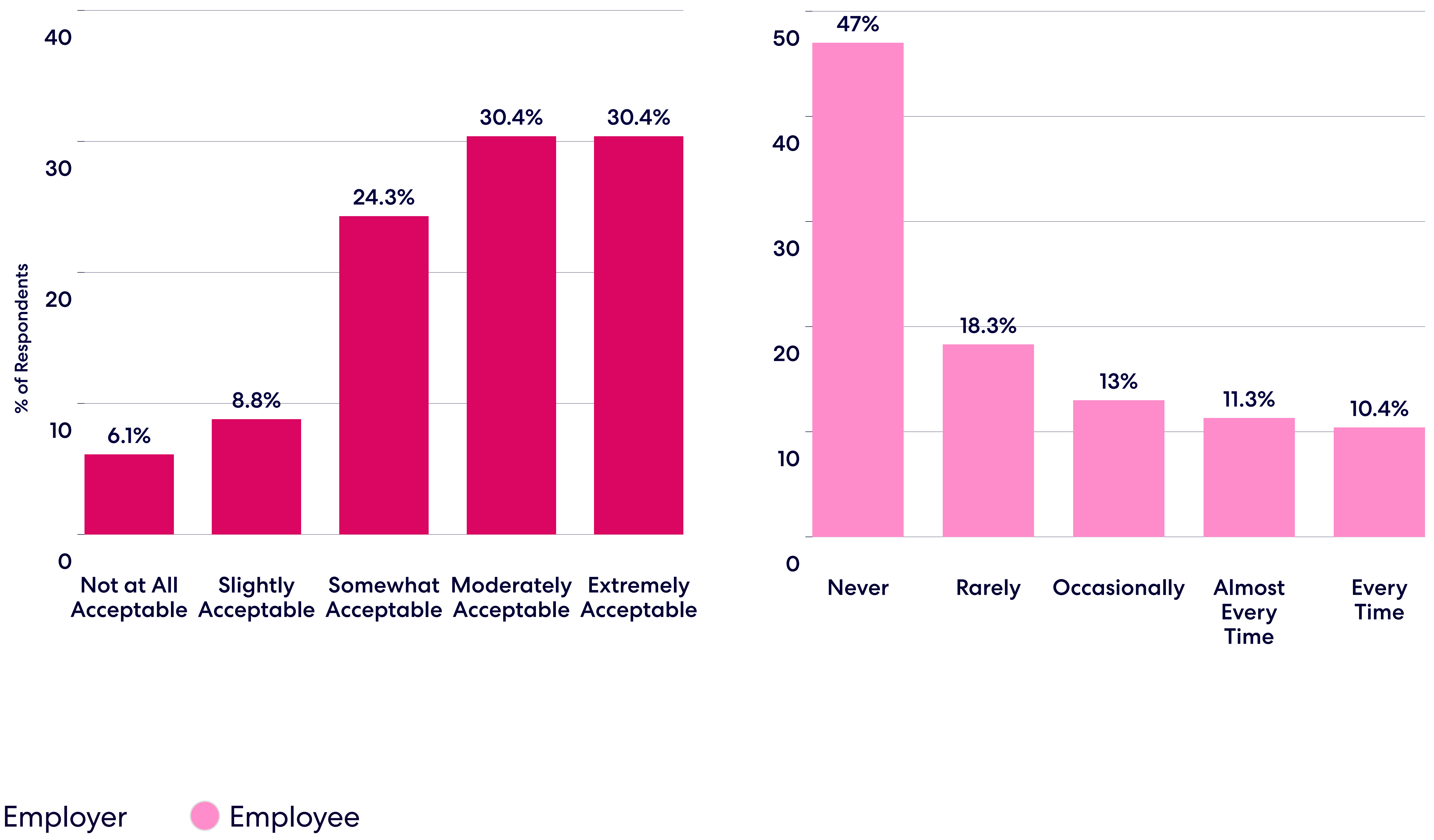
Asking Personal HR Questions / Asking Interpersonal Questions

QUESTION (Employer):
Please indicate how acceptable it is for employees to use an AI assistant in your HR platform to complete the following tasks vs. reaching out to an HR admin.

QUESTION (Employee):
How frequently are you using AI for the following HR-related tasks?

Combined (Moderately + Extremely Acceptable: 60.8%

Combined (Moderate + Great Deal): 21.7%



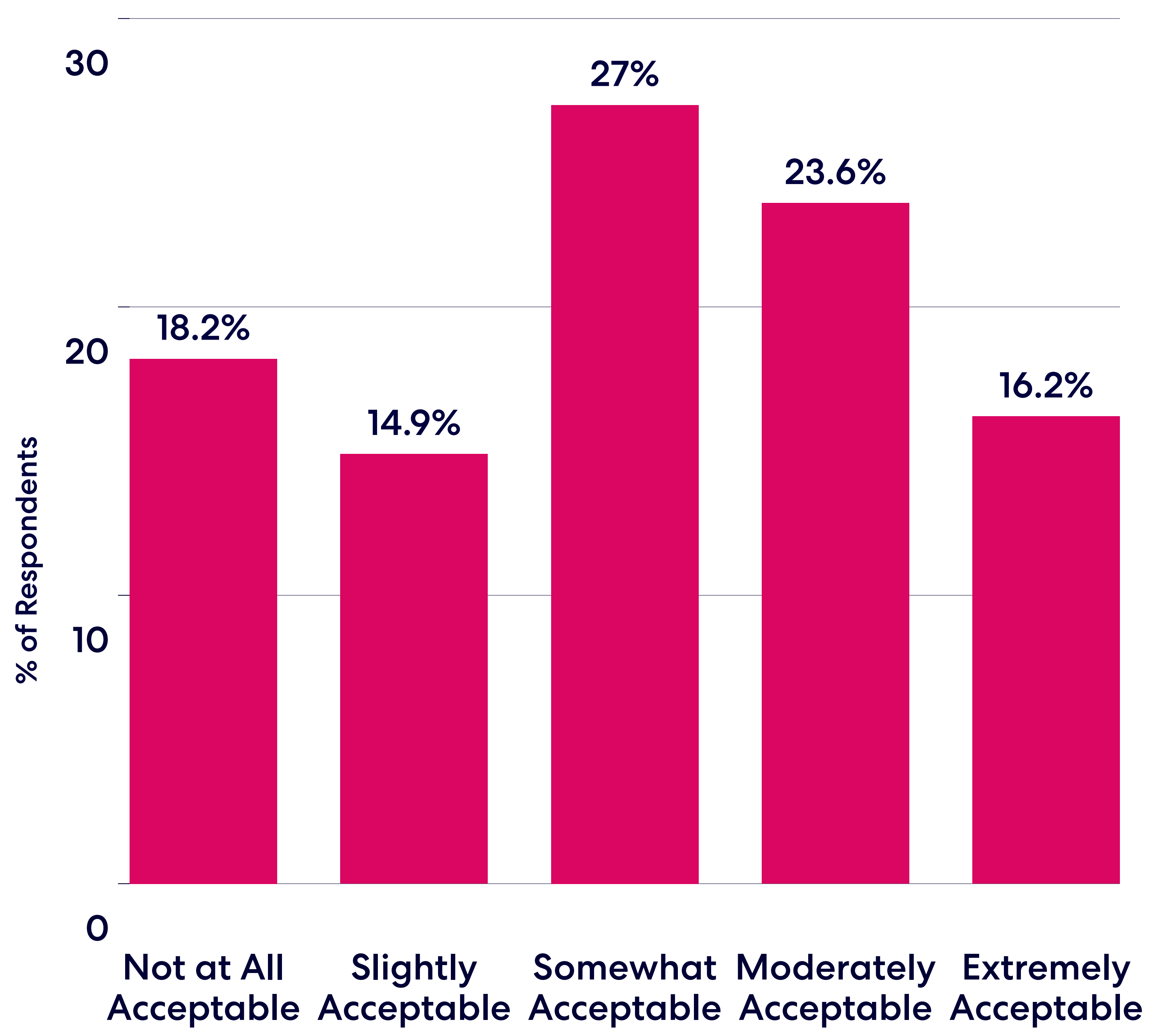
07.
AI IN HR

Interpersonal issues are the most sensitive category in the region by a wide margin. Employer acceptance falls to 39.8%—the only function below a majority, and the lowest of any function across all regions—while a third of employers (33.1%) rate it Slightly or Not at all acceptable. Employee usage is correspondingly lowest at 19.2% frequent use, with a majority (52.2%) never using AI for these concerns. Here, employer caution and employee reluctance reinforce each other.

Raising Interpersonal HR Issues

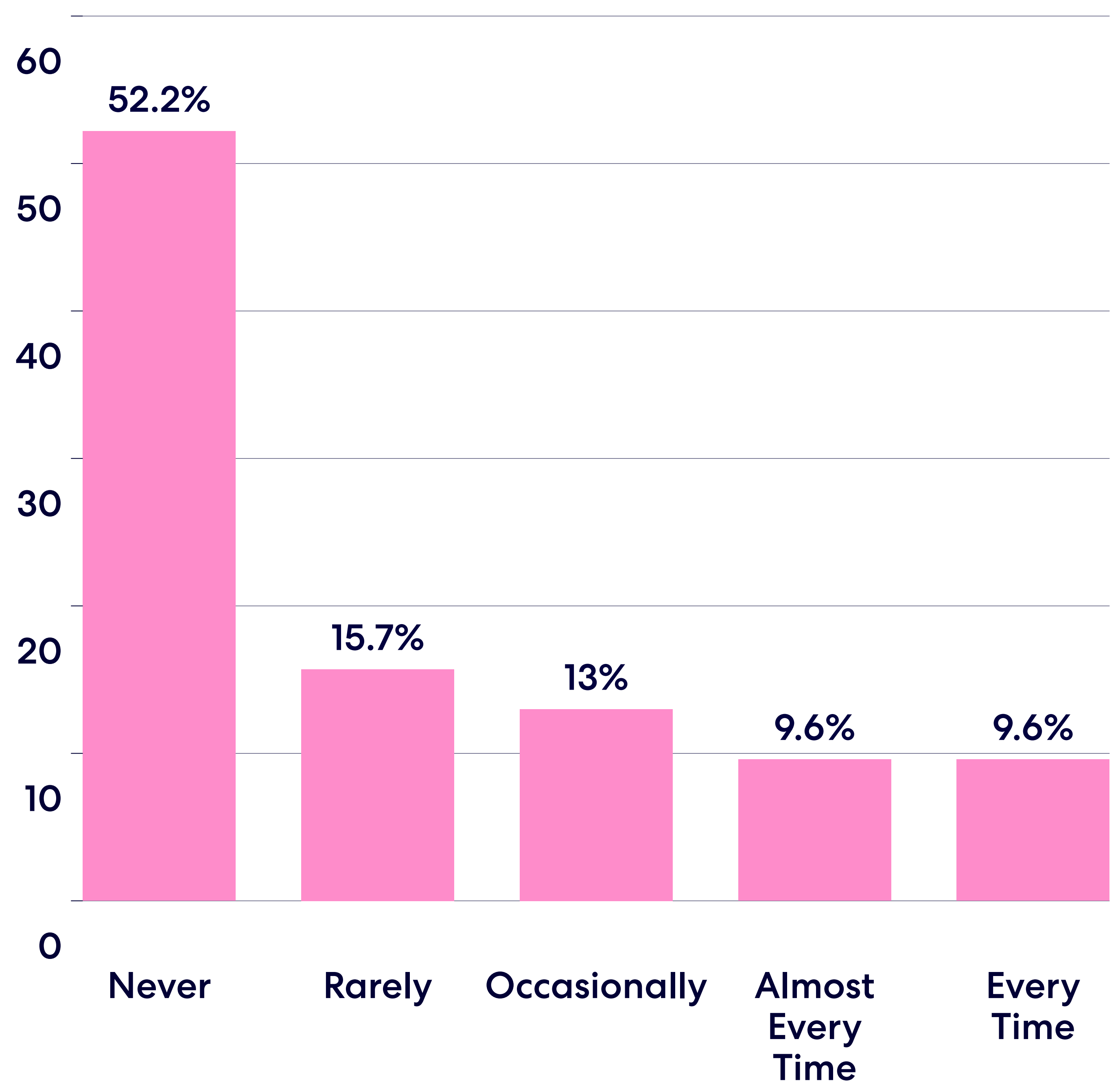
QUESTION (Employer):
Please indicate how acceptable it is for employees to use an AI assistant in your HR platform to complete the following tasks vs. reaching out to an HR admin.

Combined (Moderately + Extremely Acceptable: 39.8%



QUESTION (Employee):
How frequently are you using AI for the following HR-related tasks?

Combined (Moderate + Great Deal): 19.2%



Employer
Employee

07.
AI IN HR

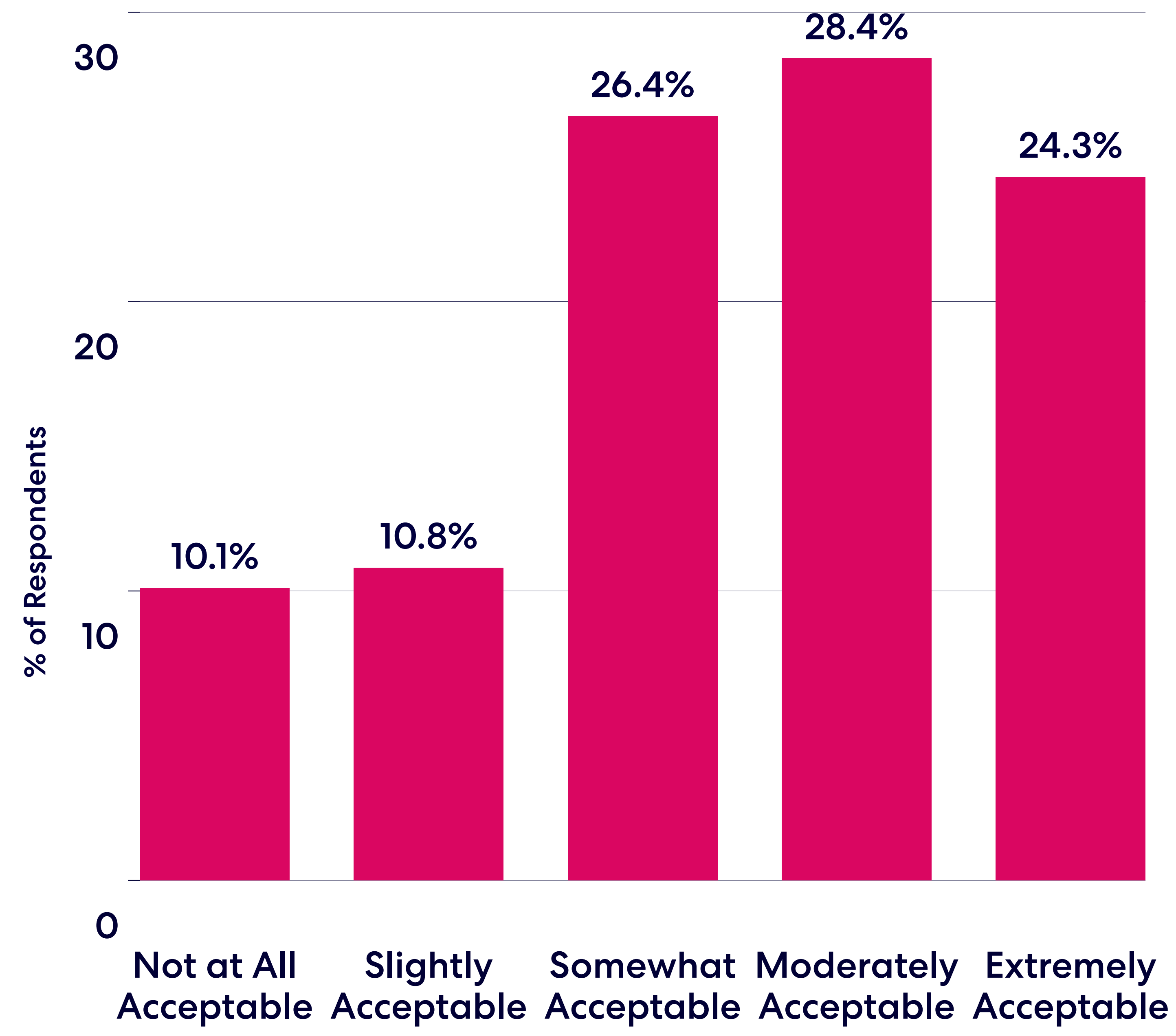
Performance reviews split employers nearly down the middle, with only 52.7% rating AI Moderately or Extremely acceptable and over a fifth (20.9%) rating it Slightly or Not at all acceptable. Employee usage stays limited at 23.5% frequent use, with 44.3% never using AI for reviews. Evaluative contexts draw notably more hesitation here than routine transactional tasks.

Performance Reviews

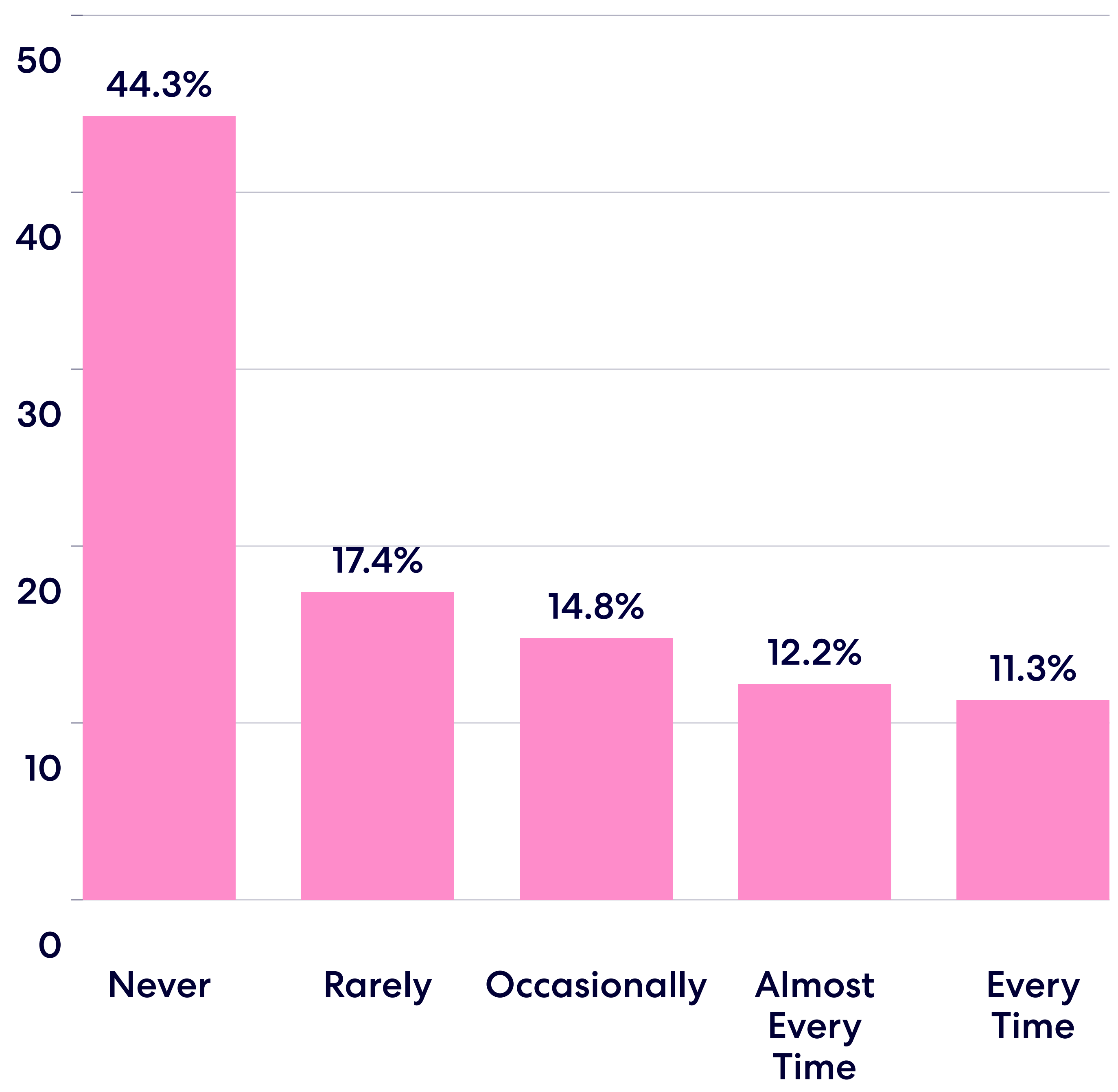
QUESTION (Employer):
Please indicate how acceptable it is for employees to use an AI assistant in your HR platform to complete the following tasks vs. reaching out to an HR admin.

QUESTION (Employee):
How frequently are you using AI for the following HR-related tasks?

Combined (Moderately + Extremely Acceptable: 52.7%



Combined (Moderate + Great Deal): 23.5%



Employer

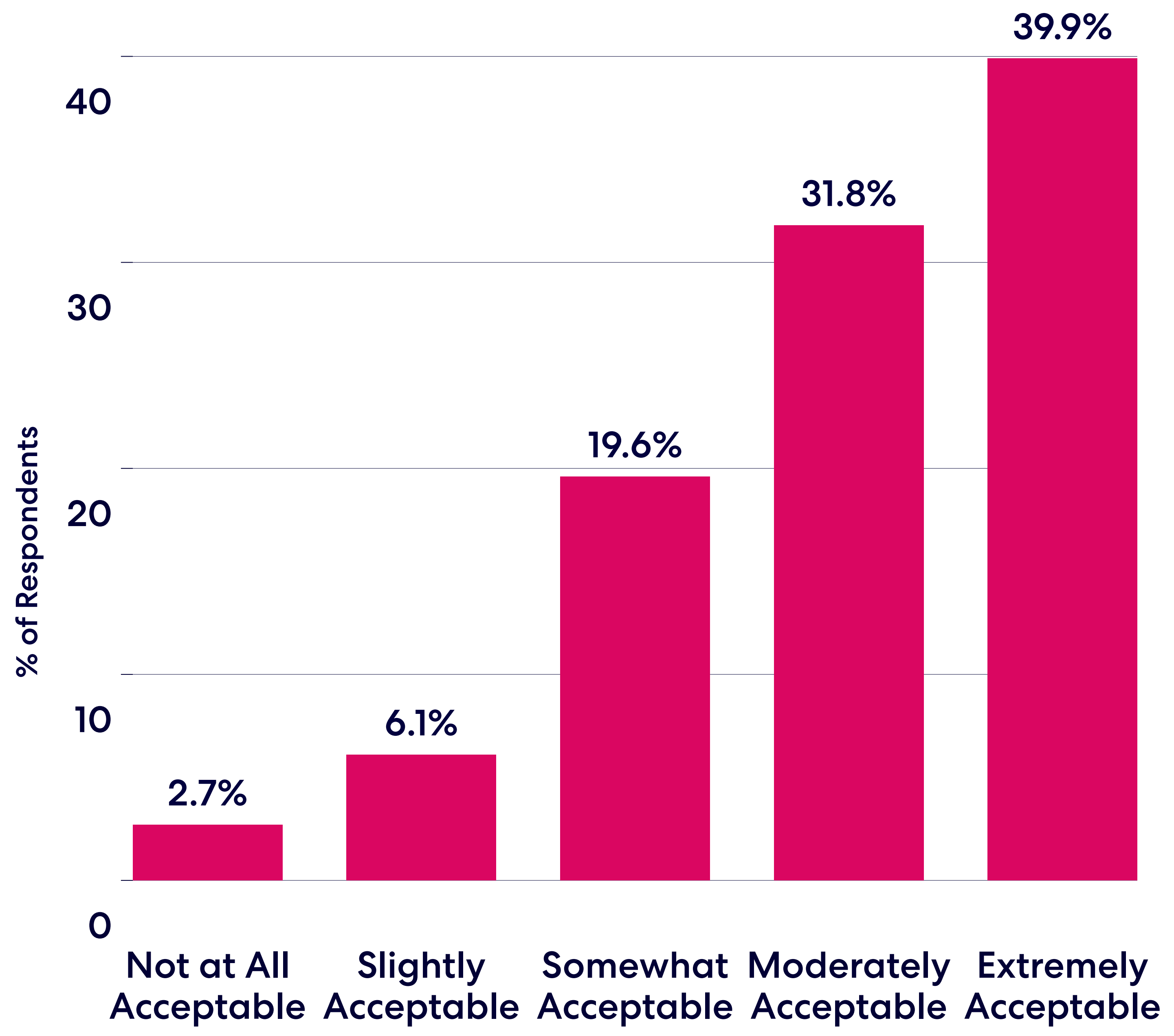
Training and development is the region's strongest alignment area. Employer acceptance reaches 71.7% Moderately or Extremely acceptable—and employee frequent use, at 28.7%, is the highest of any function in the region. While still modest in absolute terms, this is where Great Lakes & New England employees are most willing to engage AI, marking it as the most natural entry point for adoption.

Training & Development

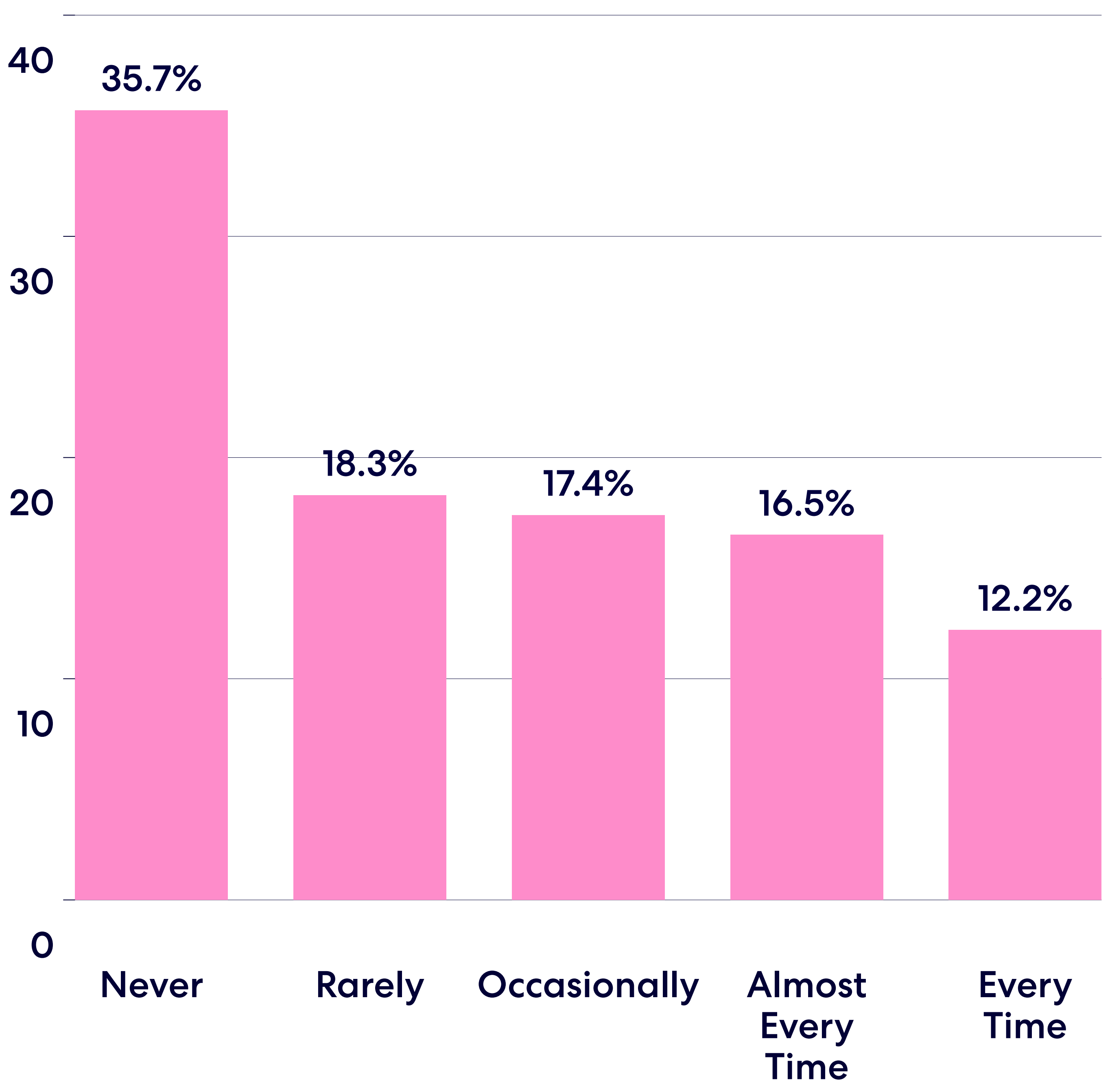
QUESTION (Employer):
Please indicate how acceptable it is for employees to use an AI assistant in your HR platform to complete the following tasks vs. reaching out to an HR admin.

QUESTION (Employee):
How frequently are you using AI for the following HR-related tasks?

Combined (Moderately + Extremely Acceptable: 71.7%



Combined (Moderate + Great Deal): 28.7%



Employer Employee

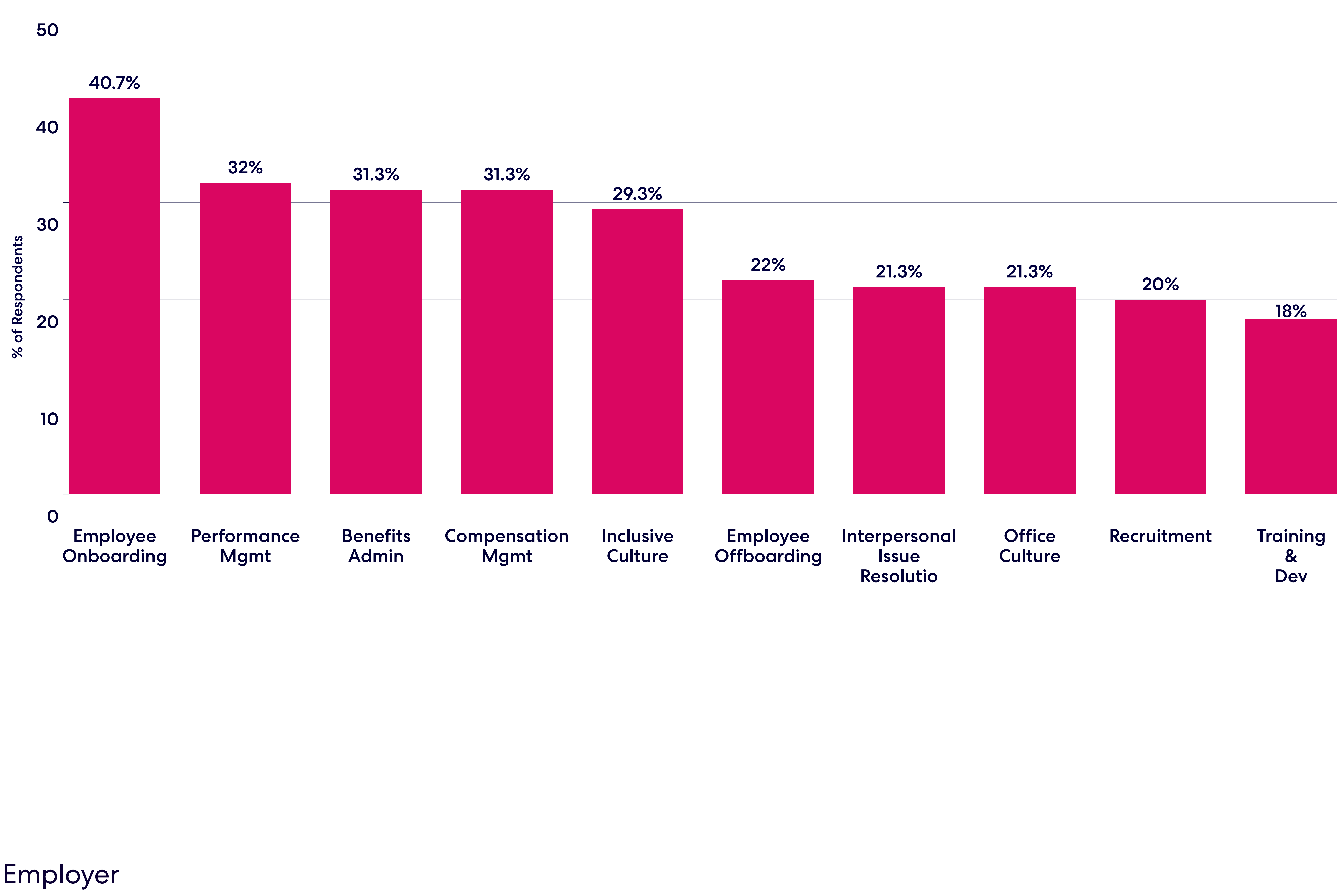
07.
AI IN HR

The strongest delegation interest is in Employee Onboarding (40.7%), followed by Performance Management (32.0%), Benefits Administration (31.3%) and Compensation Management (31.3%). Employers appear most comfortable delegating structured, process-driven, or administrative functions to AI, while more relational or culture-based areas such as interpersonal issues, office culture, and training show lower delegation interest.

Employers in this region are less enthusiastic about delegating offboarding to AI compared to nationally (22% versus 32%).

The pattern is clear: employers are comfortable letting AI handle structured, process-driven functions where outcomes are measurable and mistakes are recoverable. They are consistently reluctant to delegate anything involving human relationships, judgment calls or organizational culture.

Tasks Employers Would Delegate to AI



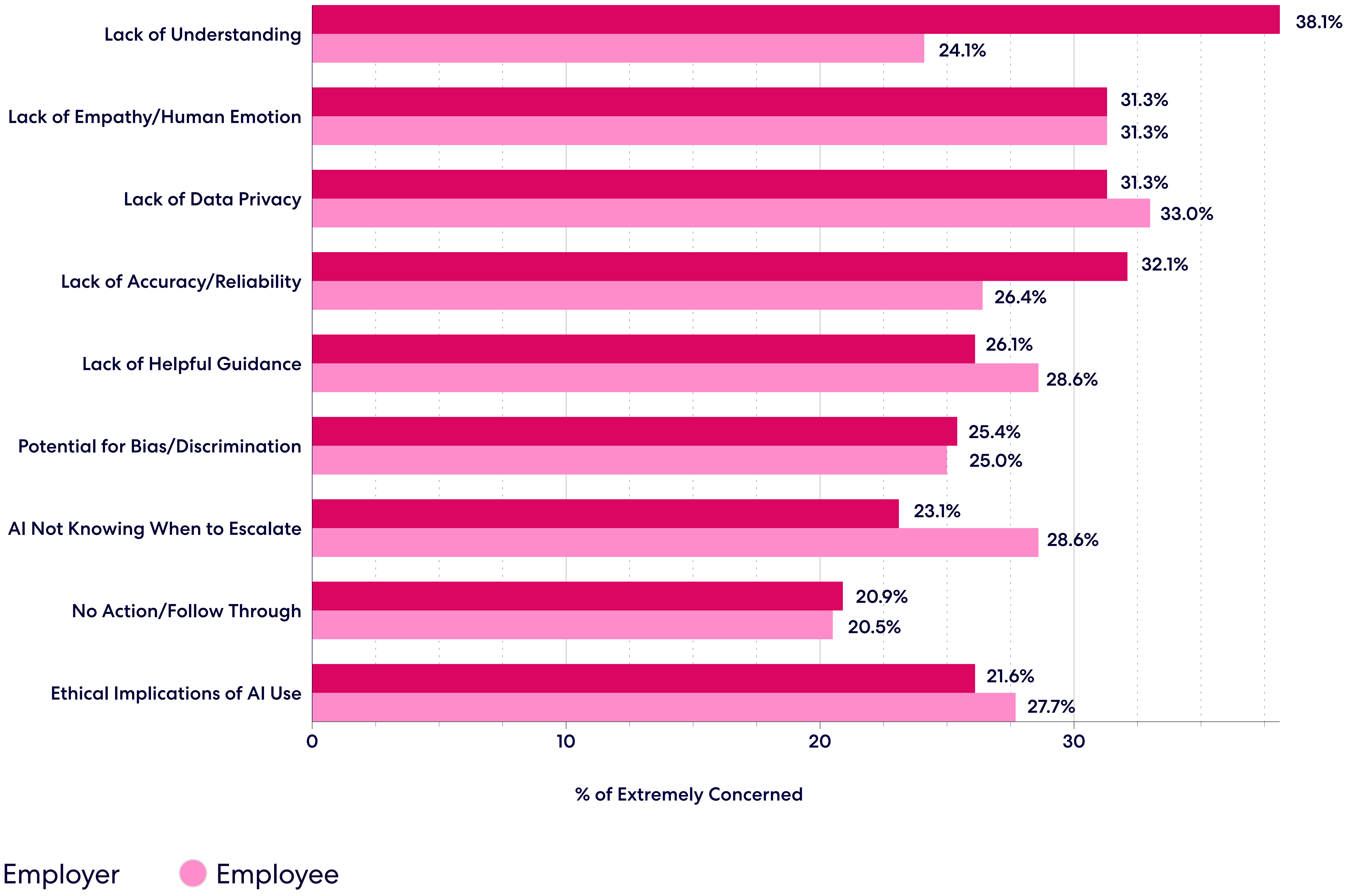
07.
AI IN HR

Compared to employees, employers show high concern levels as well, particularly around capability (understanding, accuracy), though employee concern intensity was even higher for ethical implications and escalation concerns.

Top Concerns About AI in HR

QUESTION (Employer):
What are your top concerns when using AI for HR tasks?

QUESTION (Employee):
What are your top concerns when using AI for HR tasks?



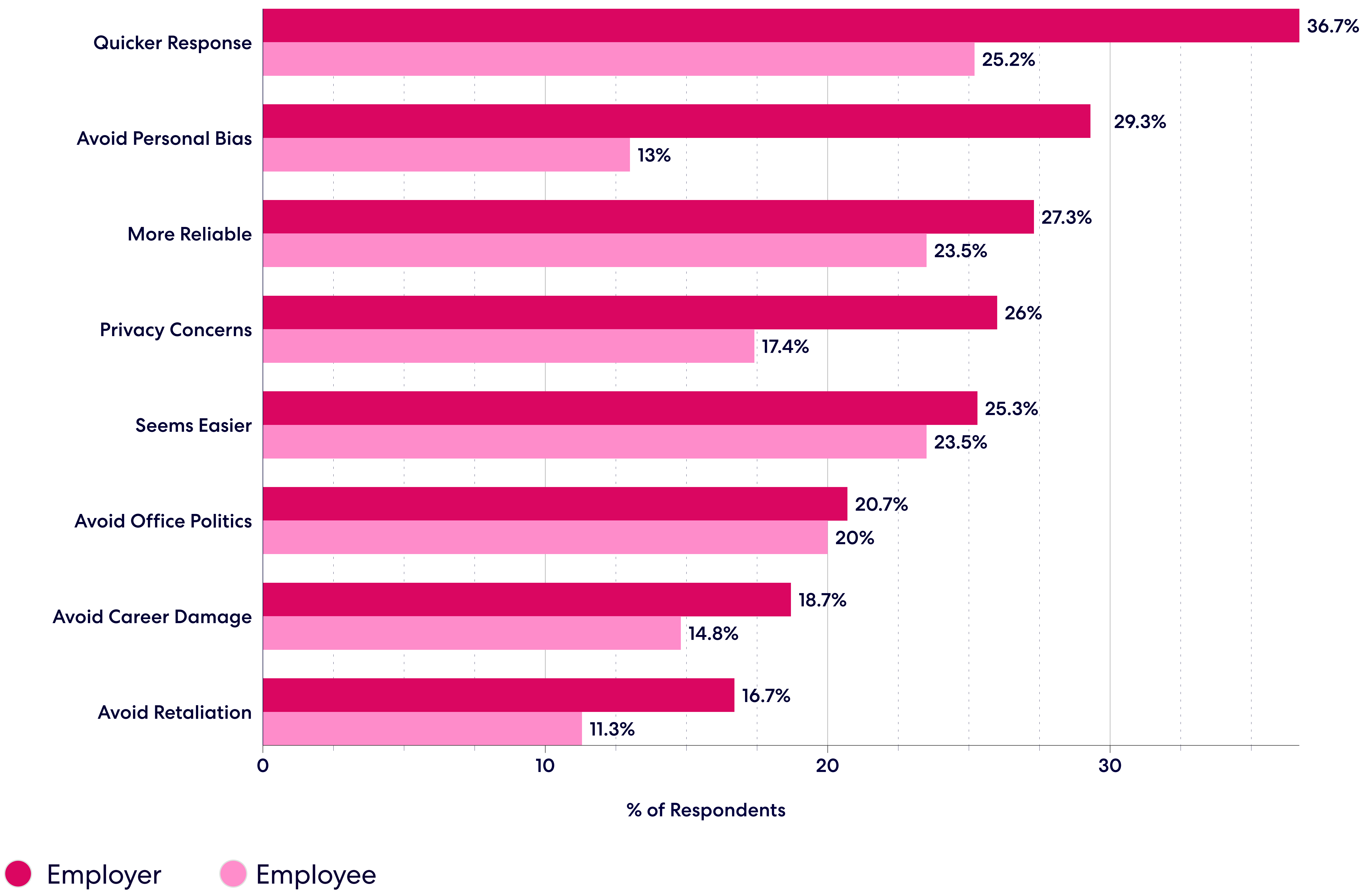
07.
AI IN HR

Both groups show very similar prioritization patterns. Efficiency-based reasons (“Seems Easier,” “Quicker Response,” and “More Reliable”) rank highest for both employers and employees, suggesting AI is primarily valued for convenience and speed. Risk-avoidance factors (retaliation, career damage, bias, privacy, office politics) rank lower overall but remain meaningful, with employers slightly more likely than employees to attribute AI use to risk-mitigation concerns.

Why AI Was Selected Over an HR Administrator

QUESTION (Employer):
Why did you select AI over reaching out to an HR administrator?

QUESTION (Employee):
Why did you select AI over reaching out to an HR administrator?



08. CONCLUSION

Across the Great Lakes and New England region survey findings, several broad patterns emerge.

First, there is a consistent perception gap between managers and employees. Managers tend to view work conditions more positively—believing employees are working appropriate hours, are highly satisfied with work/life balance, are clear on growth paths, and are strongly engaged—while employee self-reports are generally positive but more tempered, with higher neutrality and dissatisfaction rates.

Second, generational differences are meaningful. Younger employees (Millennials and Gen Z) report higher job-search intentions, greater expectations for 24/7 HR responsiveness, and somewhat lower clarity around growth paths (particularly Gen Z), suggesting stronger expectations for immediacy, mobility, and career transparency. Mid-career groups (Gen X and Millennials) often show the strongest agreement on growth clarity and HR accessibility, while Baby Boomers tend to be more moderate or divided on “always-on” expectations.

Third, across AI use in HR, leadership endorsement significantly exceeds actual employee usage, particularly in sensitive areas such as interpersonal or personal HR matters—indicating that cultural comfort and trust, not just policy approval, shape adoption. Overall, the data suggest an organization with generally high engagement and confidence, but also clear generational shifts in expectations around mobility, responsiveness, and technology use—alongside perceptual gaps between leadership and employees that may influence retention and communication strategies.

About TriNet

TriNet is a leading provider of comprehensive human resources solutions for small and medium-size businesses (SMBs). TriNet offers human capital expertise, access to benefits, risk mitigation and compliance support, payroll, and real-time technology.

Go to TriNet.com to get started or speak with a TriNet representative at 888.874.6388