

RESULTS & ANALYSIS

Employer Survey 2026

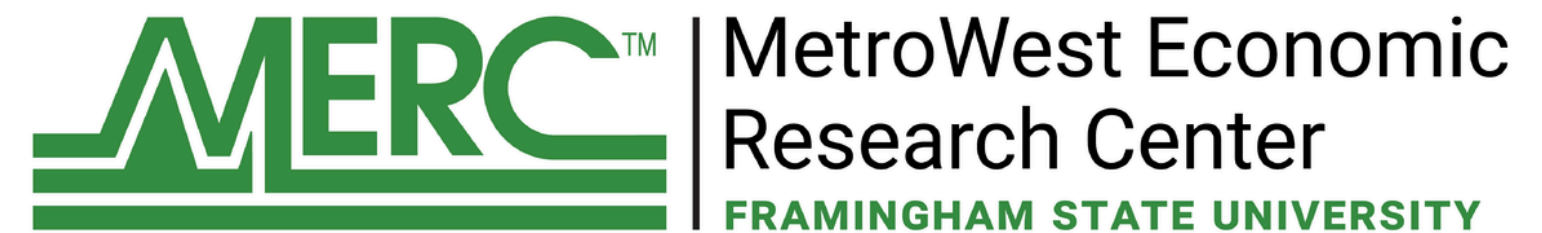
Presented by the 495/MetroWest Partnership
495Partnership.org



ABOUT THE SURVEY

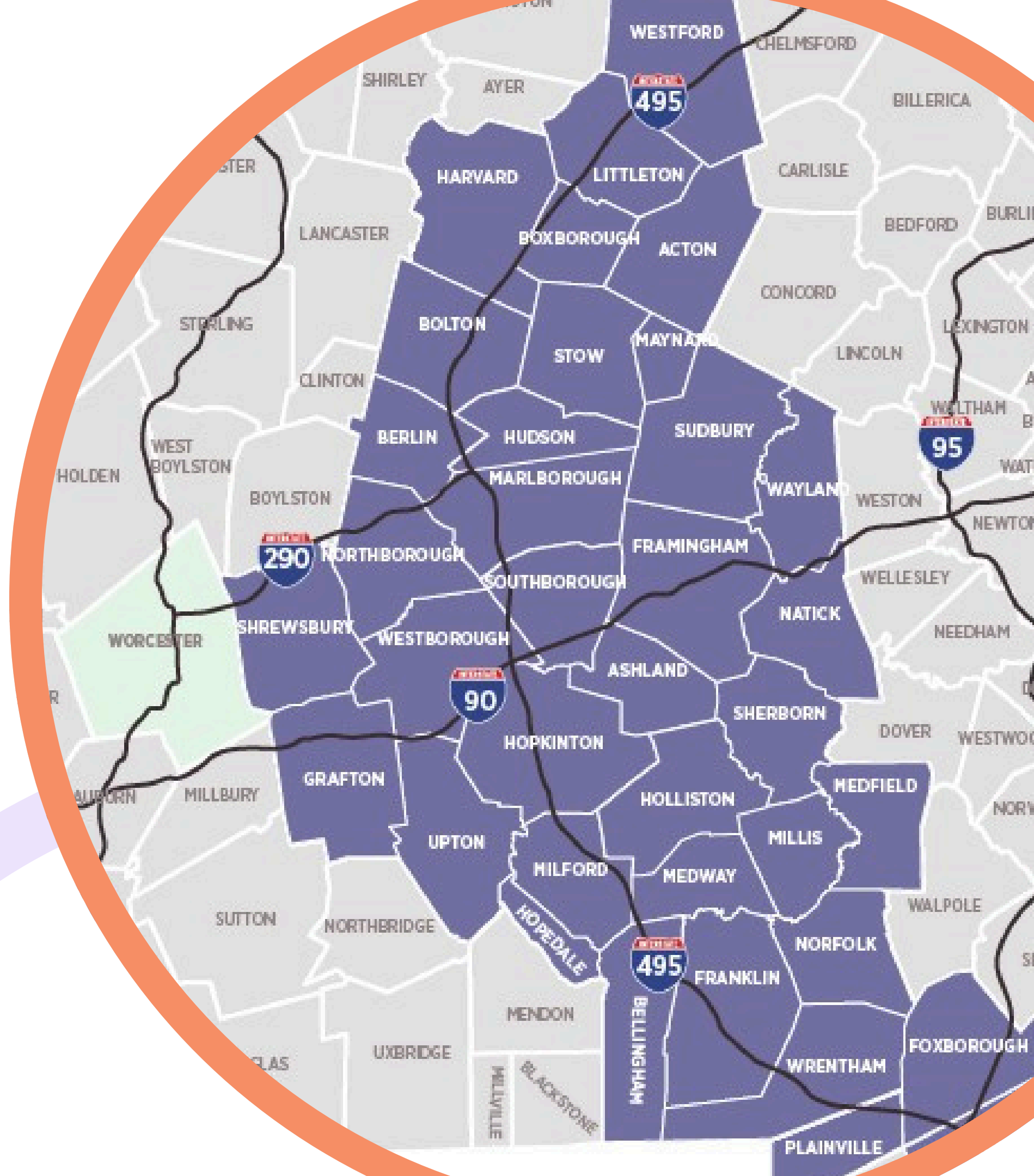
The survey represents a collaborative effort between the 495/MetroWest Partnership and Framingham State University's MetroWest Economic Research Center (MERC).

Conducted for the 13th year running in 2026, this survey has proven an important tool in gauging business confidence in the 495/MetroWest region.



ABOUT THE SURVEY

The survey focuses on employers with physical plants located in the 495/MetroWest region, defined as the 37 cities and towns served by the 495/MetroWest Partnership.



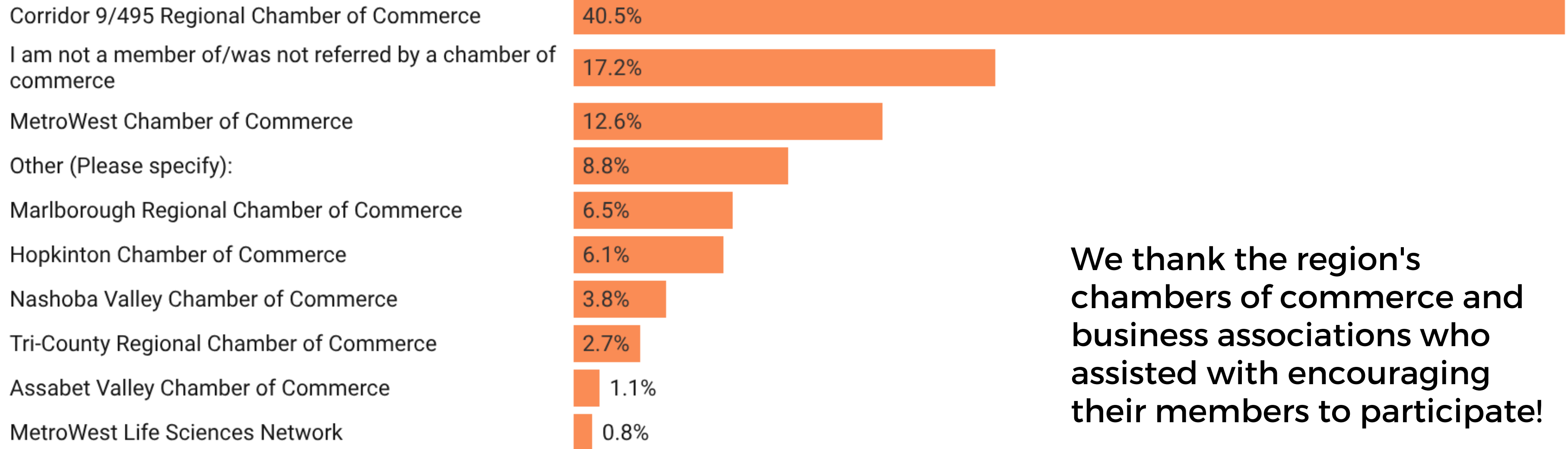
ABOUT THE RESPONSES

Owners, leaders, or individuals with regional hiring authority for private, public, or nongovernmental organizations that have a presence in the 495/MetroWest region were invited to take part.

The survey was conducted online during April 2026.

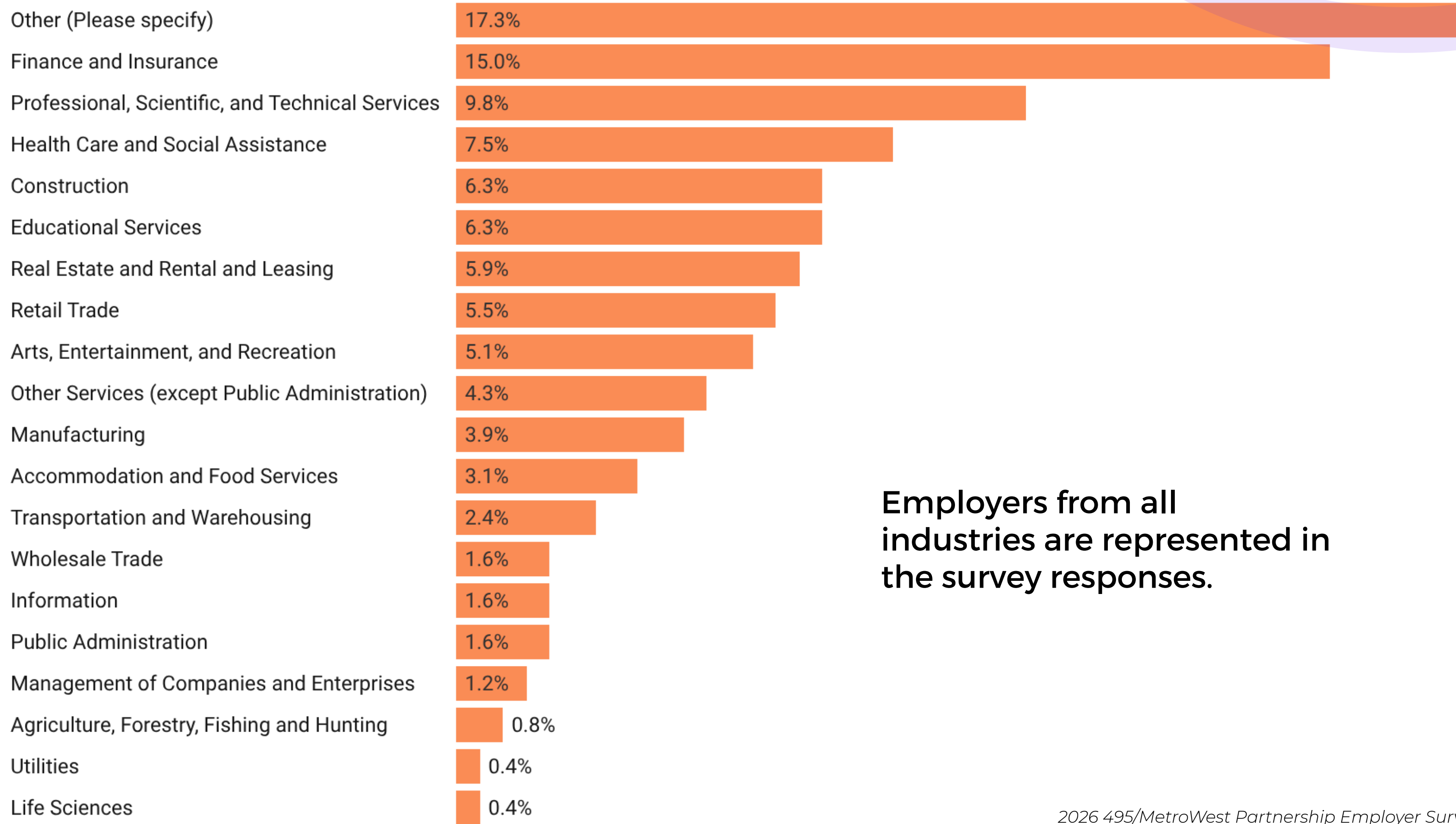
264 total respondents took part, a 27% increase in participation over the 2025 survey. The 2026 survey had the third highest number of respondents since the Employer Survey first began, and the highest since 2015.

Are you a member of or were you referred to this survey by your area chamber of commerce? If so, select your chamber below.



We thank the region's chambers of commerce and business associations who assisted with encouraging their members to participate!

What is the industry of your business?



Employers from all industries are represented in the survey responses.

How many people are employed at your organization?



Employers of all sizes are represented in the survey responses.

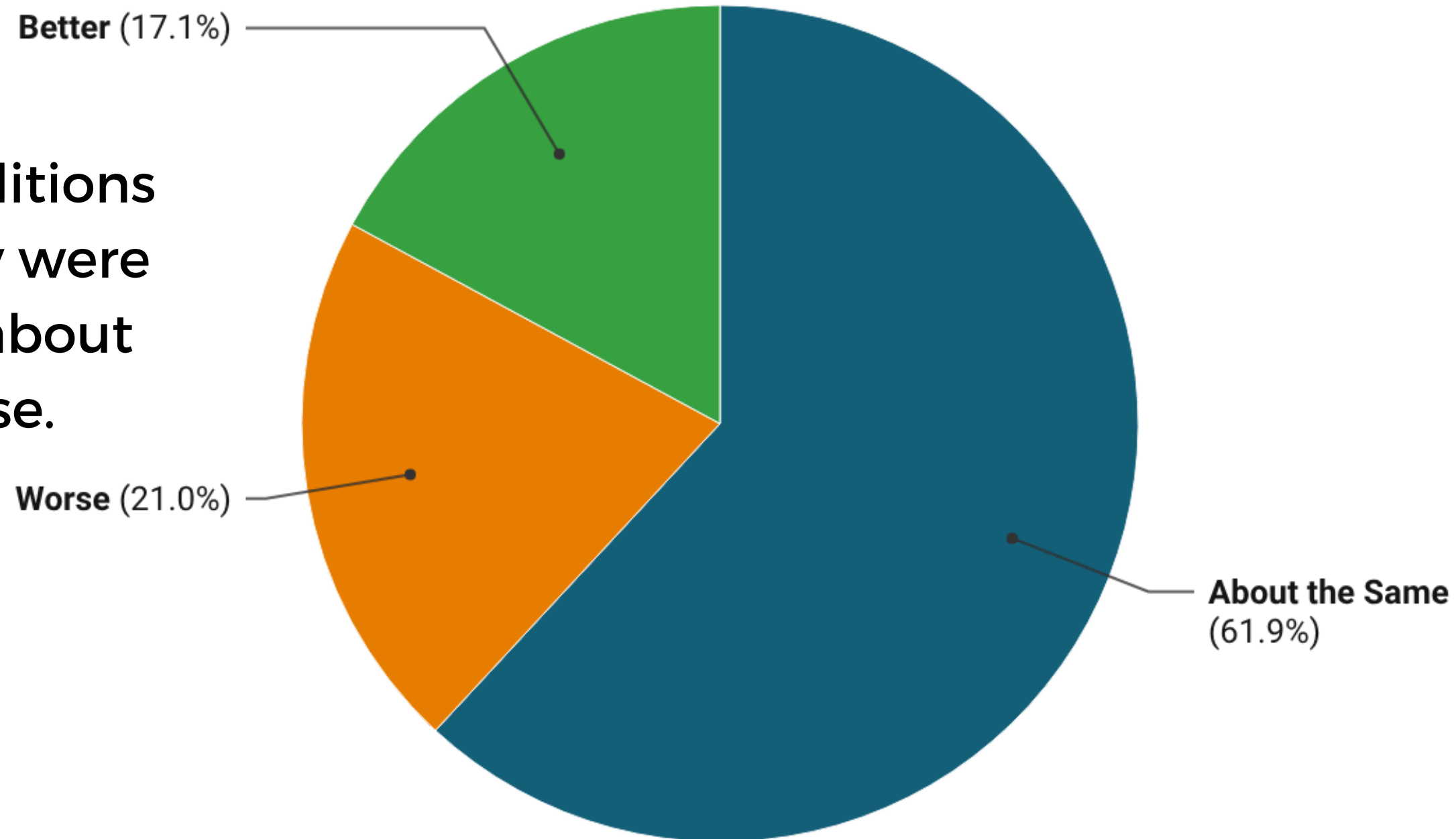
Of your total number of employees, how many are employed in your 495/MetroWest sites?



ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

Would you say business conditions in the 495/MetroWest region are better or worse than they were a year ago?

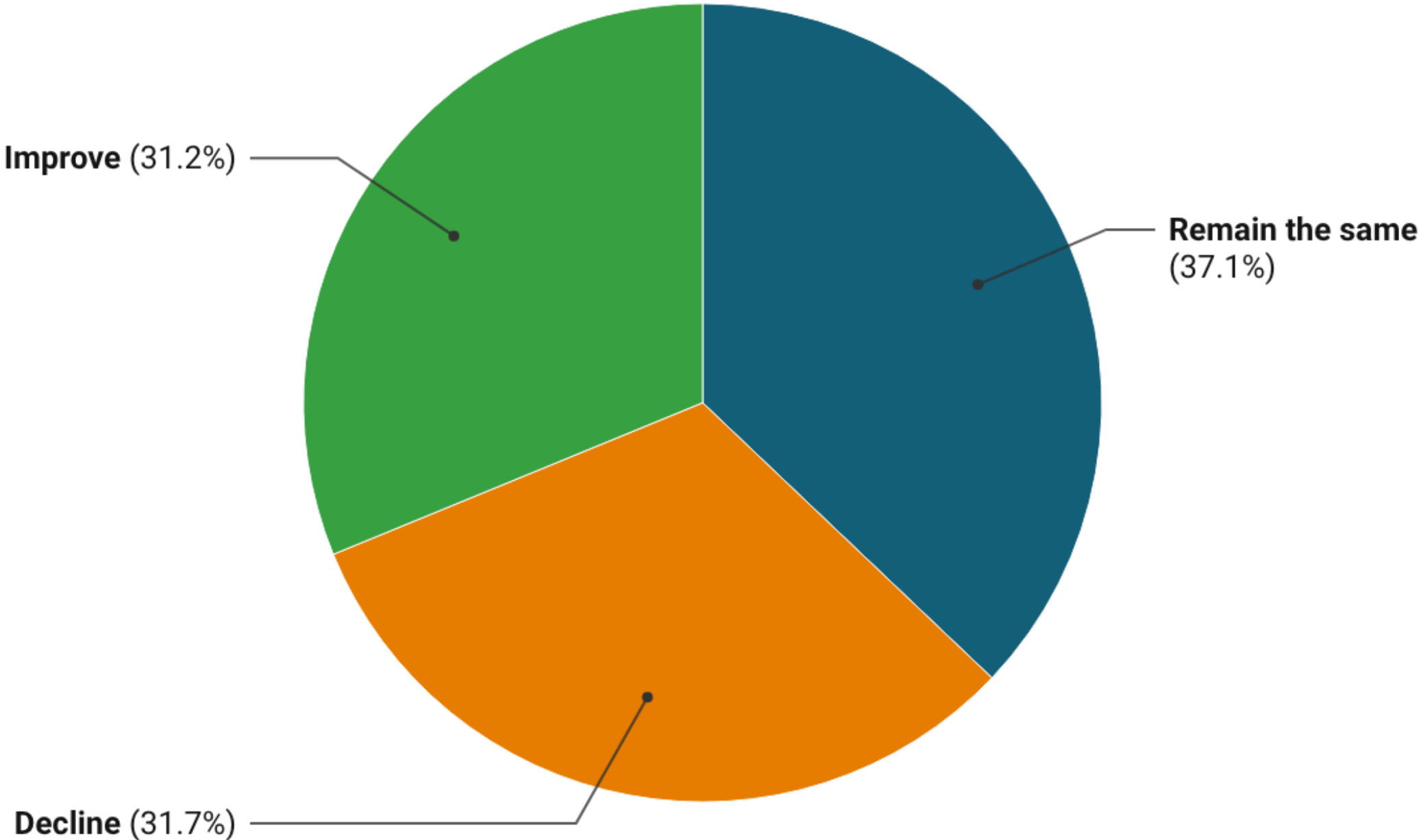
17% of respondents feel business conditions in 495/MetroWest are better than they were a year ago, with 62% feeling they are about the same. 21% feel conditions are worse.



In your opinion, over the course of the coming year, how will the economy in the 495/MetroWest region do?

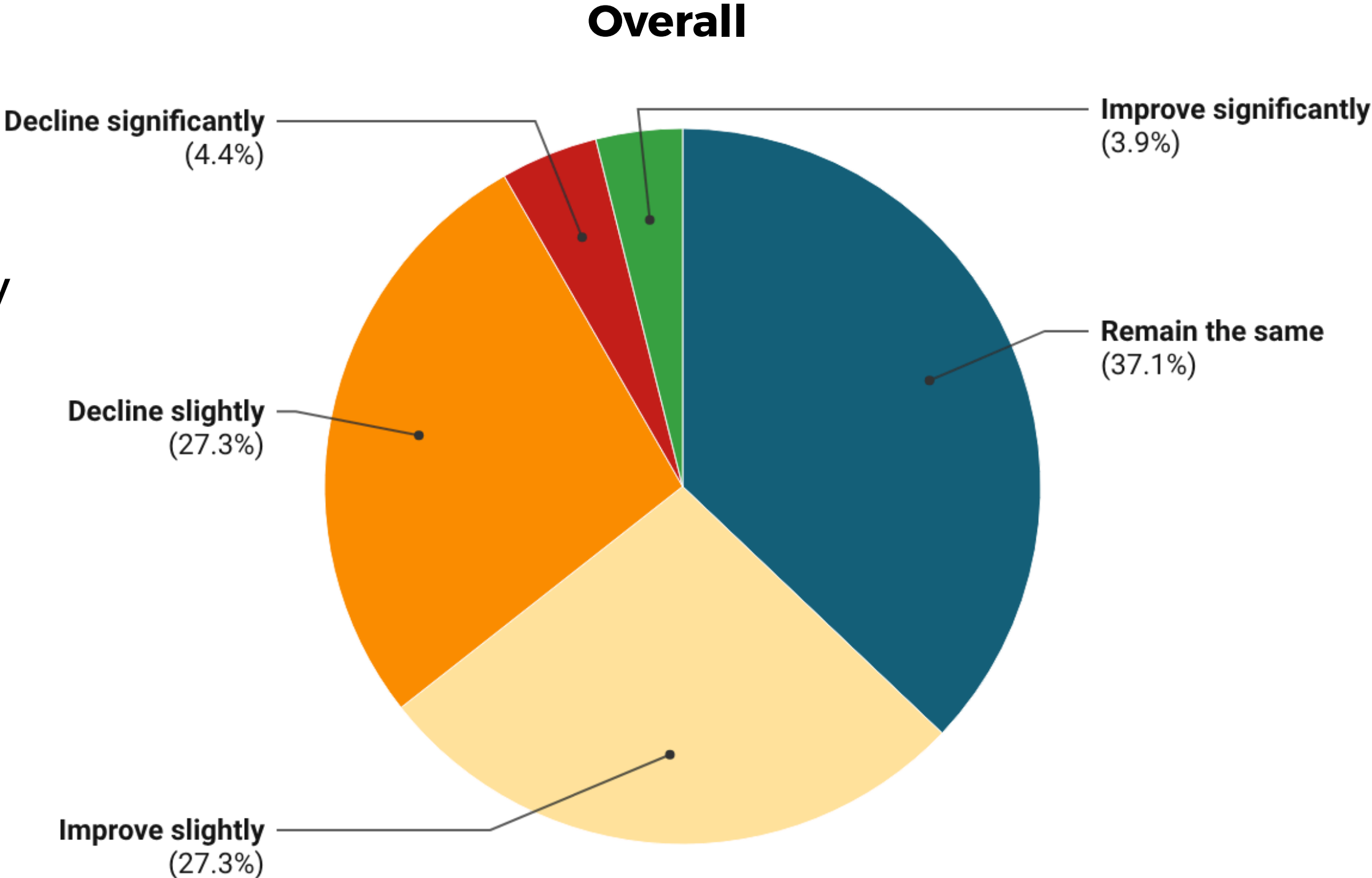
31% of respondents feel the economy in the 495/MetroWest region will improve over the coming year, while 37% expect conditions to remain the same and 32% expect a decline.

Overall

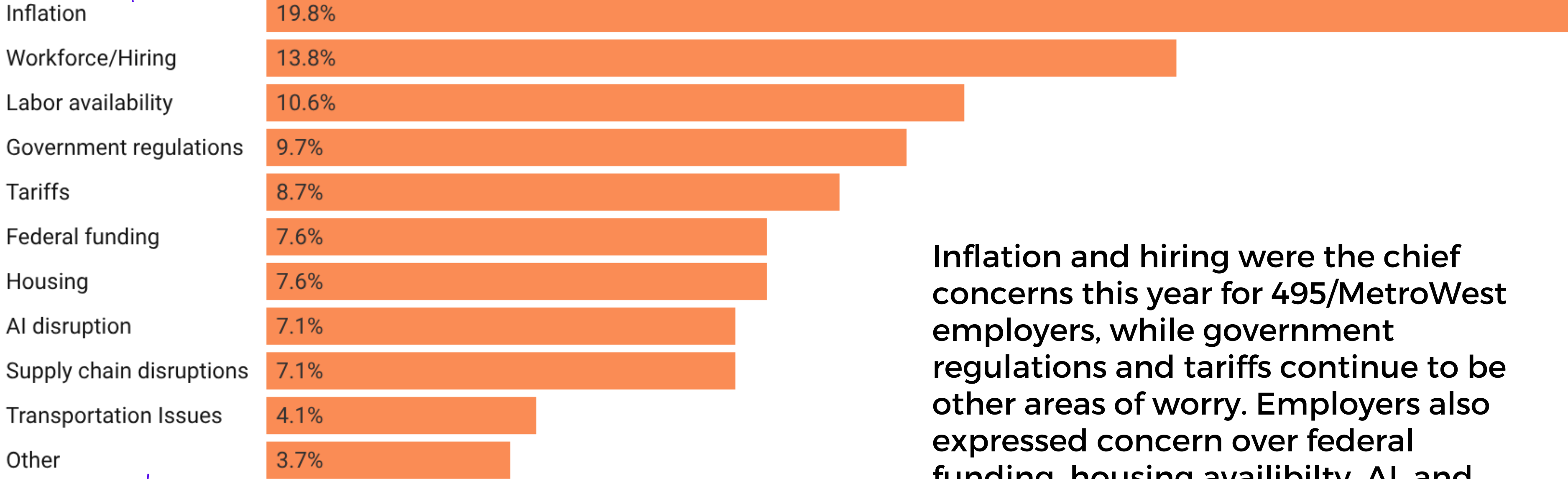


In your opinion, over the course of the coming year, how will the economy in the 495/MetroWest region do?

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What are your biggest concerns looking at the coming year?

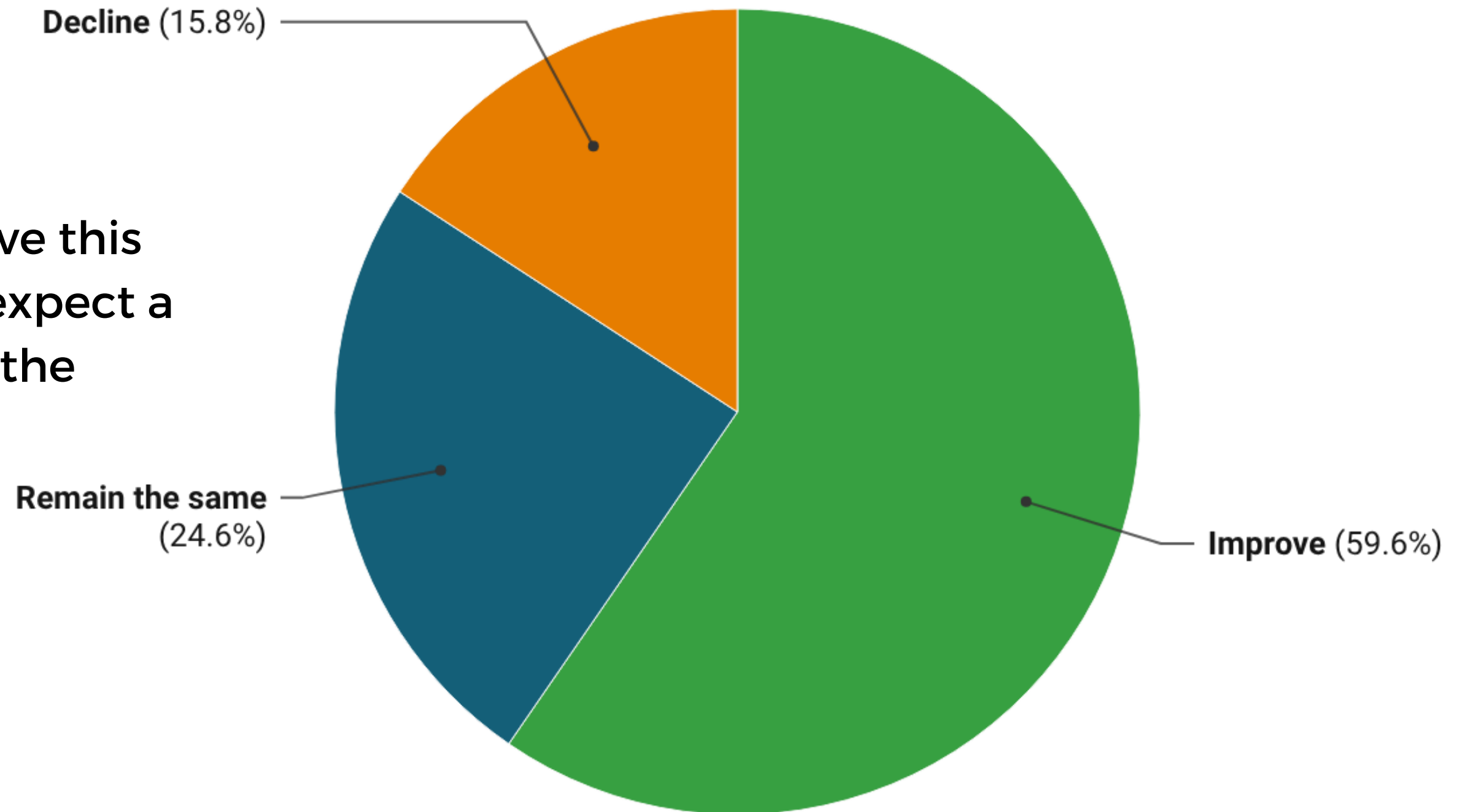


Inflation and hiring were the chief concerns this year for 495/MetroWest employers, while government regulations and tariffs continue to be other areas of worry. Employers also expressed concern over federal funding, housing availability, AI, and supply chain disruptions.

NOTE: Respondents could select multiple options.

Compared to the previous year, what are your expectations for your organization's revenue performance this year?

Overall

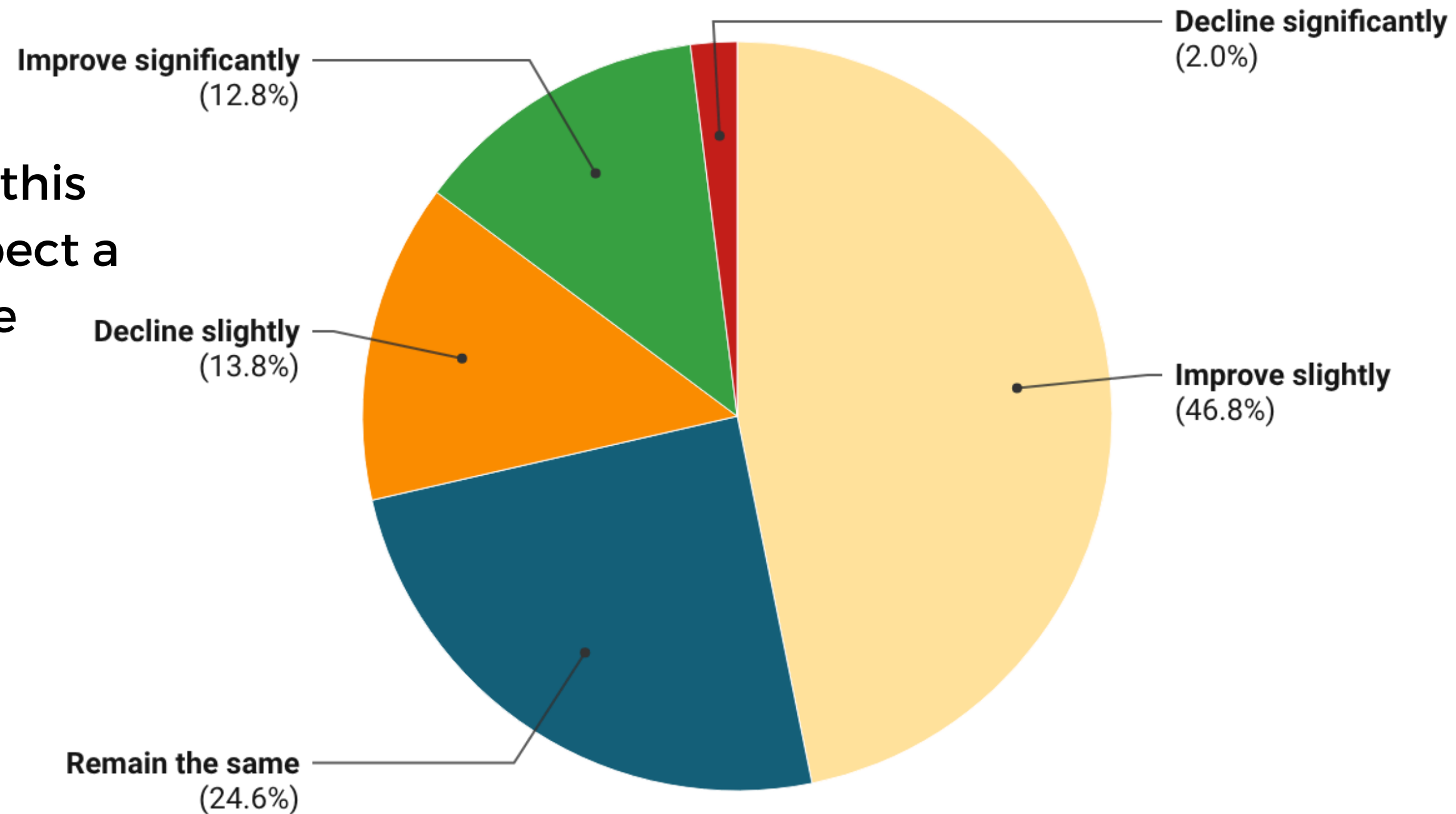


60% of respondents expect their organization's revenues to improve this year over the previous year. 16% expect a decline, while 25% expect about the same revenue performance.

Compared to the previous year, what are your expectations for your organization's revenue performance this year?

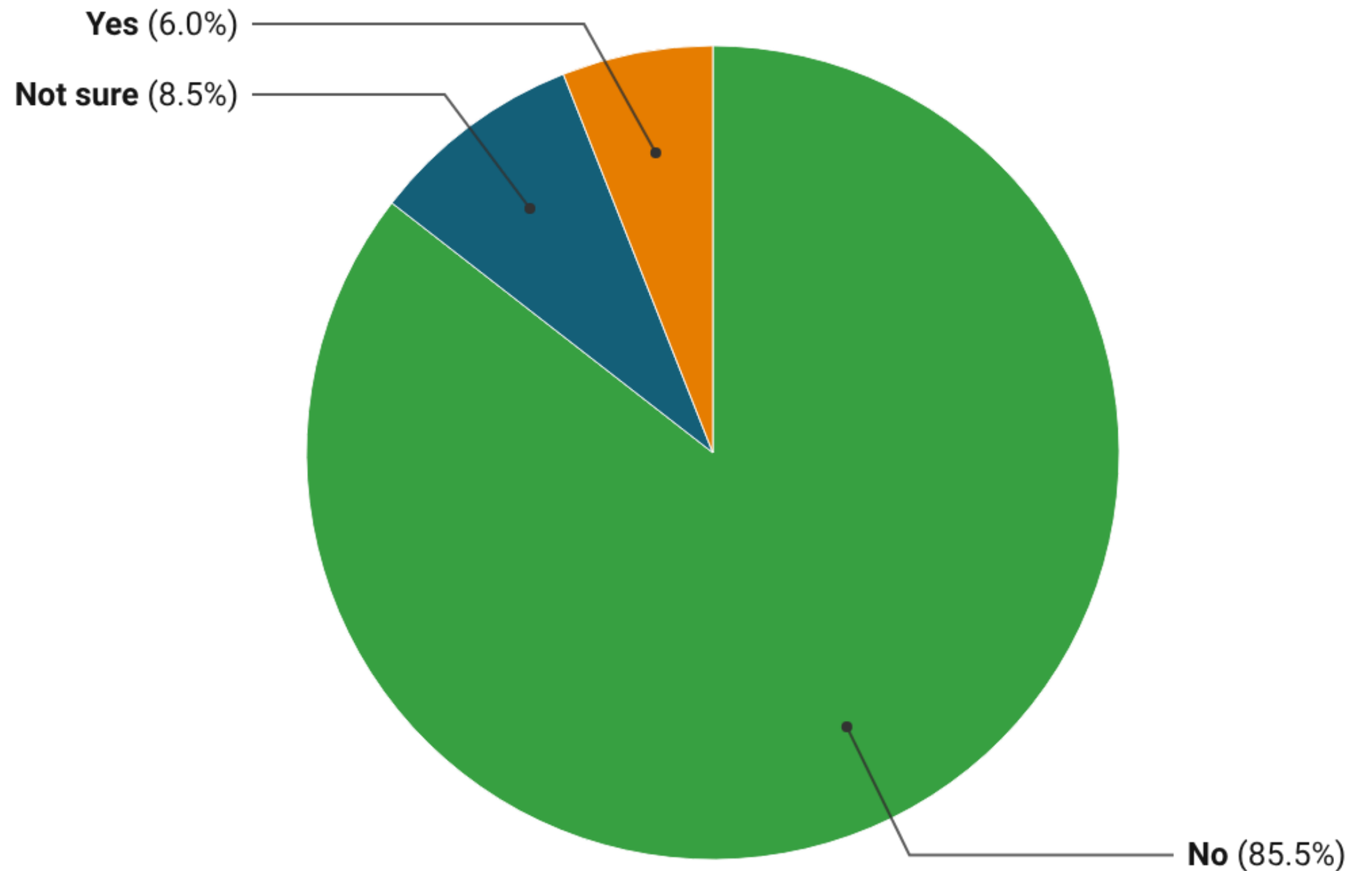
Overall

60% of respondents expect their organization's revenues to improve this year over the previous year. 16% expect a decline, while 25% expect about the same revenue performance.



Does your company intend to, or is your company considering, replacing staff positions with AI or automated processes?

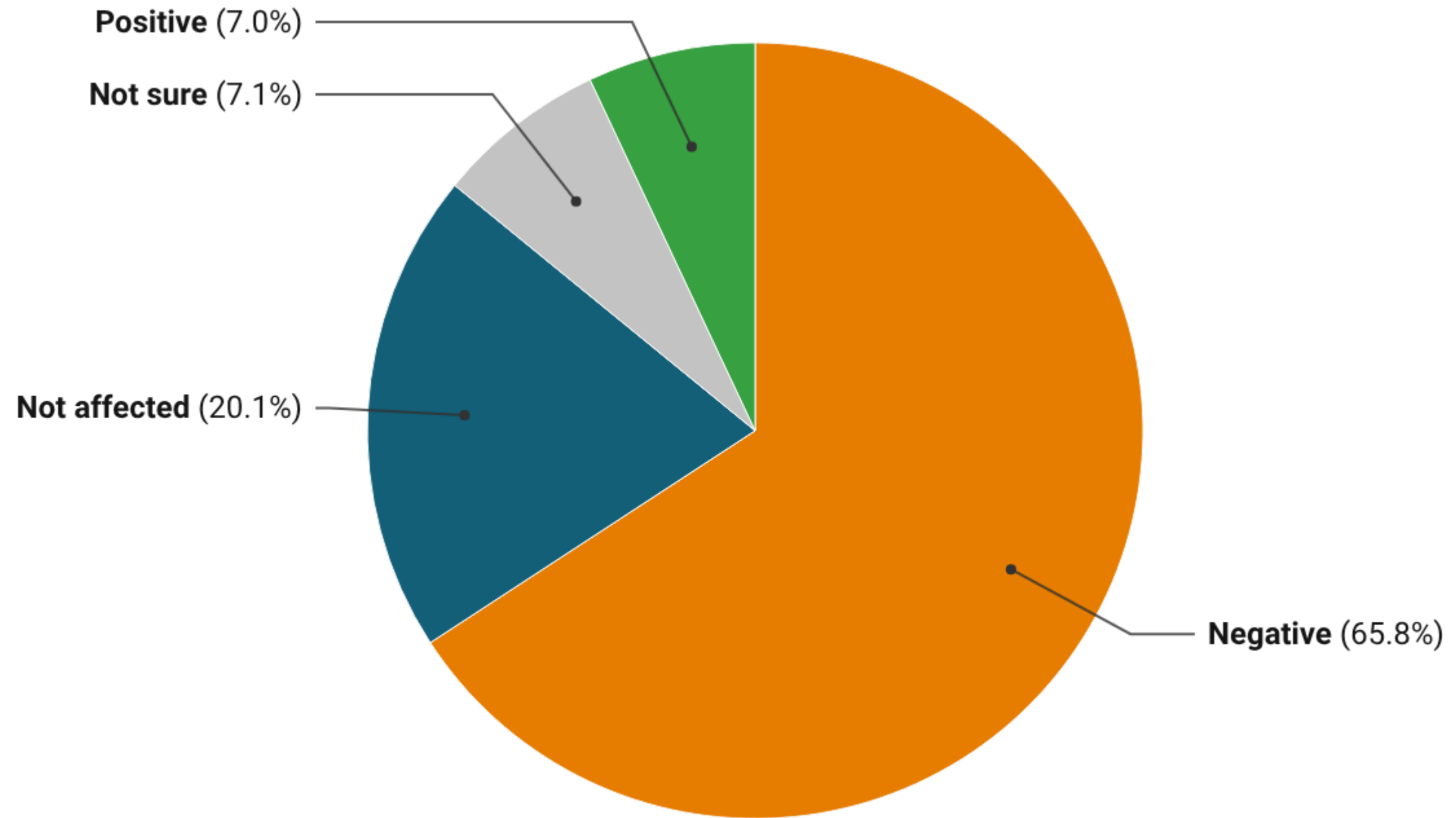
Overall



Over 85% of respondents stated that they are not currently considering replacing staff with AI, while 6% said they are. 9% said they are not sure.

Have inflationary pressures impacted the profitability of your business?

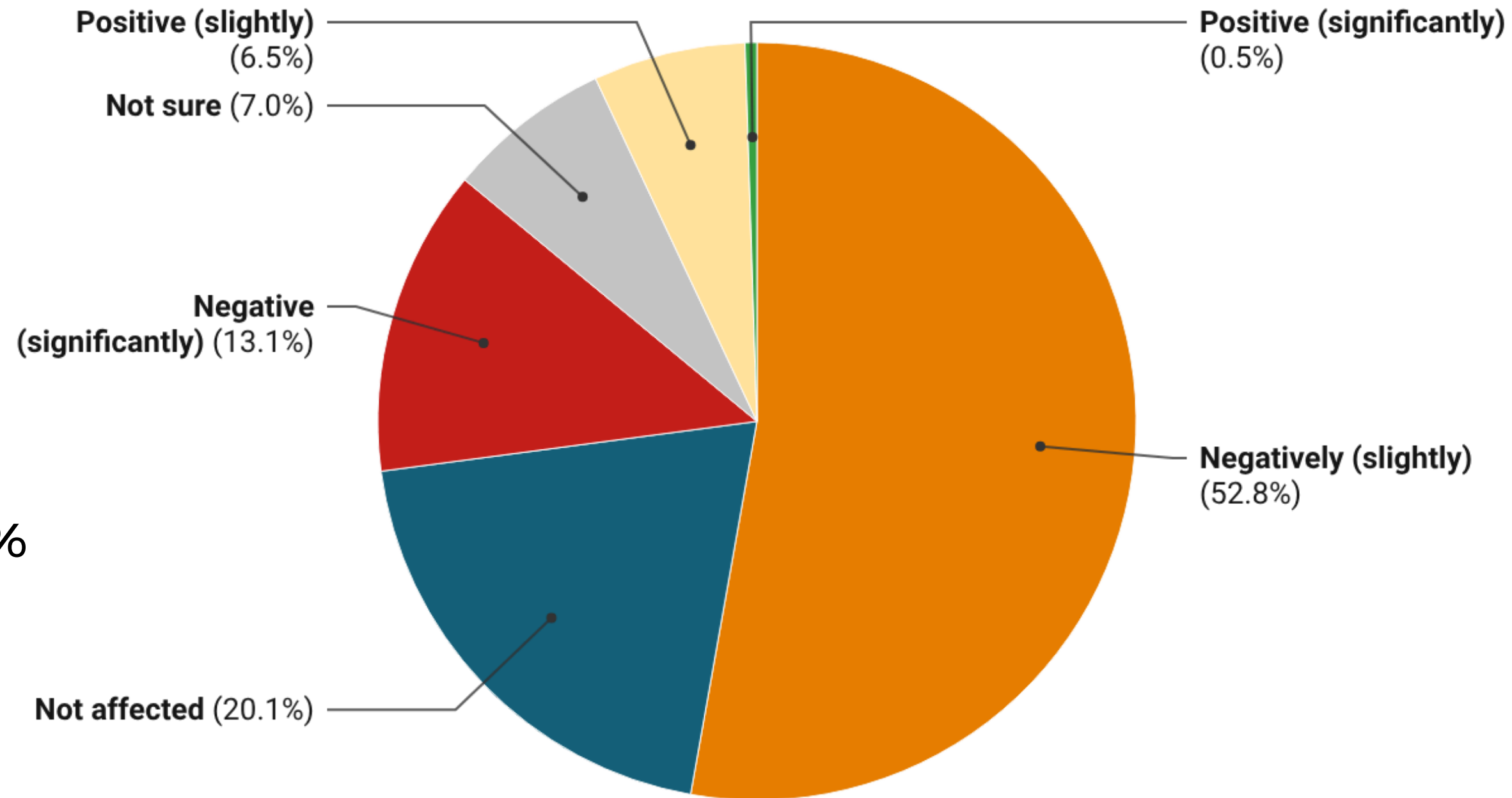
Overall



20% of respondents stated that inflationary pressures had not impacted profitability. 66% said that inflation had a negative impact on their business, while 7% said they had a positive effect

Have inflationary pressures impacted the profitability of your business?

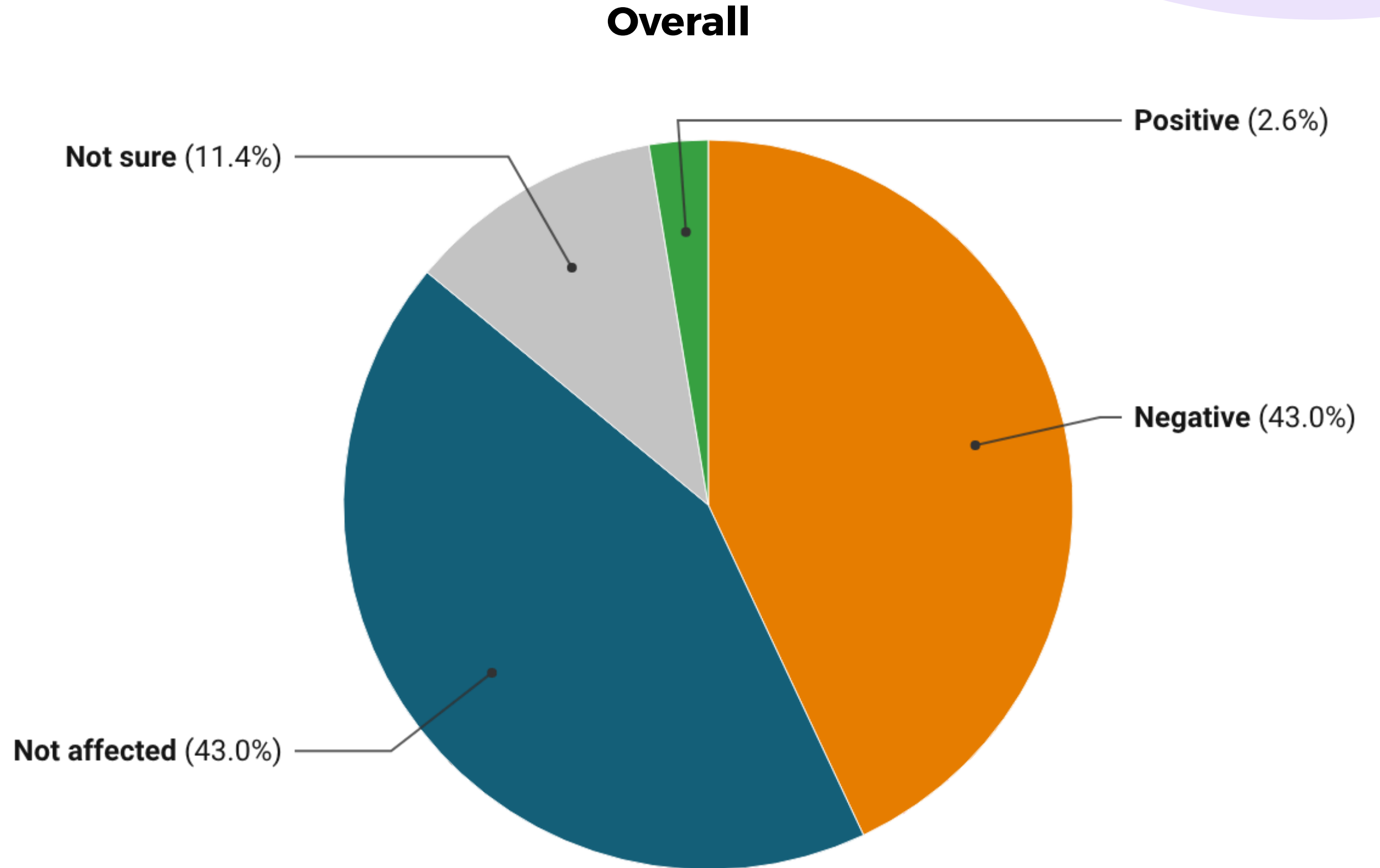
Overall



20% of respondents stated that inflationary pressures had not impacted profitability. 66% said that inflation had a negative impact on their business, while 8% said they had a positive effect

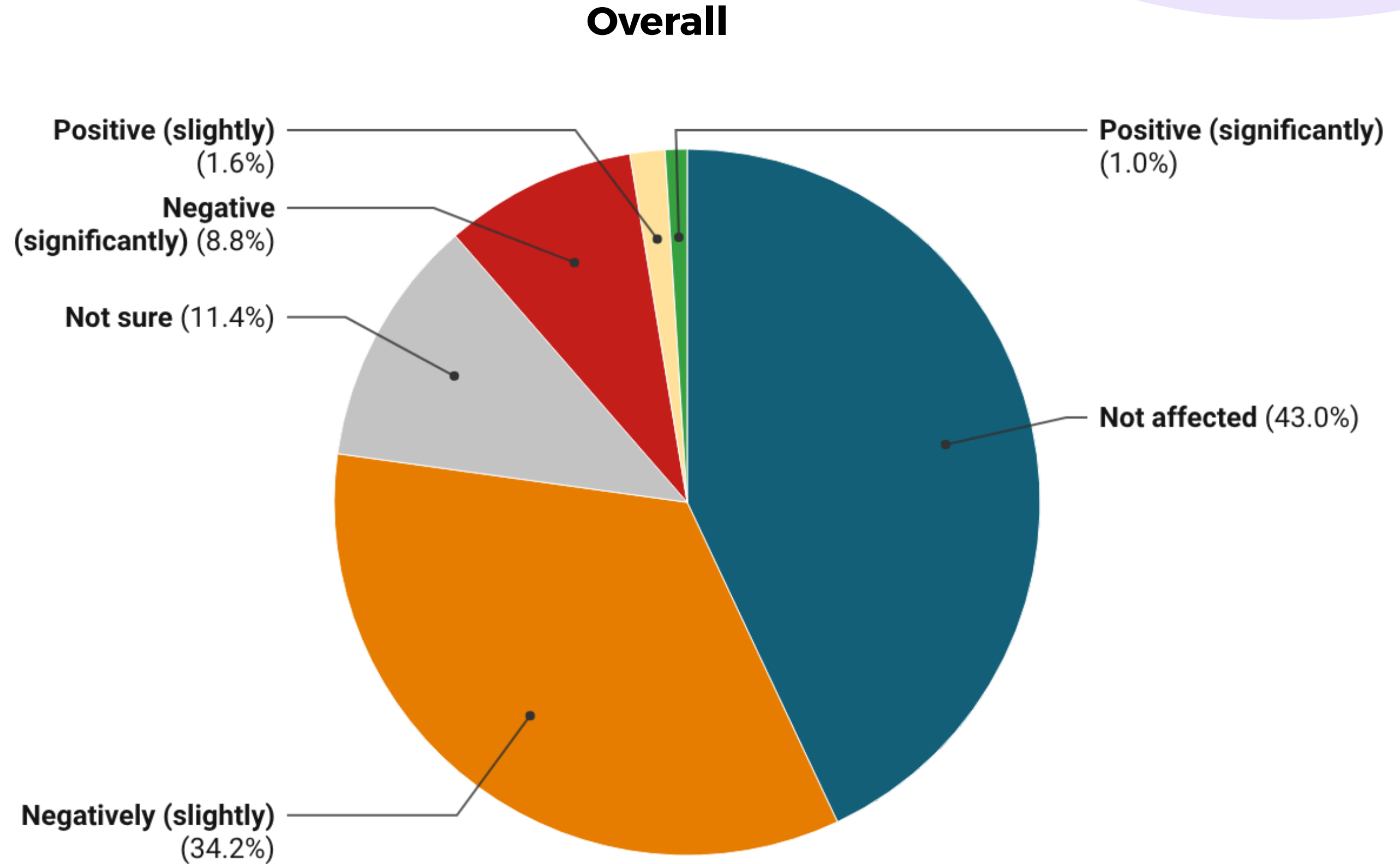
Have tariffs affected the profitability of your business?

43% of survey respondents are concerned that tariffs at the federal level will negatively impact the profitability of their business, while 3% believed they will positively impact their business. 43% stated that tariffs will have no impact on their business, while 11% were unsure.



Have tariffs affected the profitability of your business?

43% of survey respondents are concerned that tariffs at the federal level will negatively impact the profitability of their business, while 3% believed they will positively impact their business. 43% stated that tariffs will have no impact on their business, while 11% were unsure.



WORKFORCE & HIRING

Over the course of the coming year, do you expect to grow your workforce in the 495/MetroWest region?

Overall



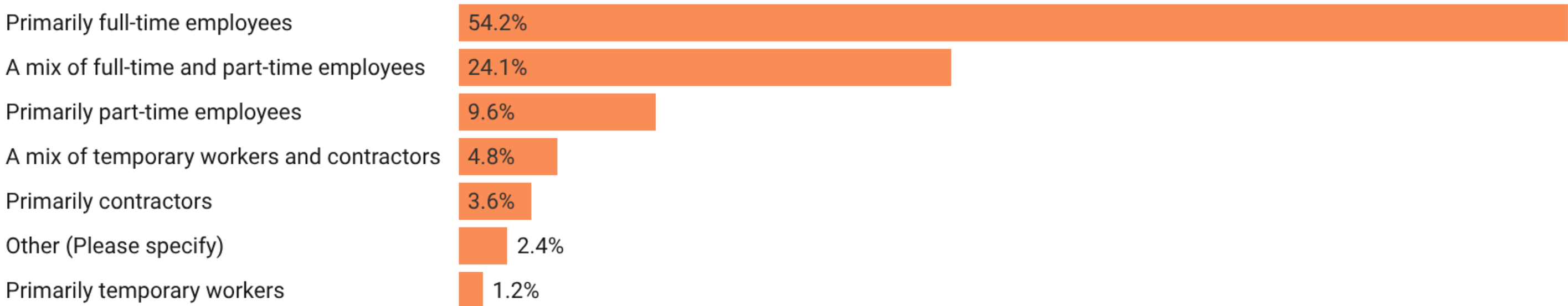
42% of total employers taking the survey expect to grow their workforce in the 495/MetroWest region over the course of the coming year, up from 38% last year. Less than 3% are contemplating a staffing reduction. 30% are not intending to make any changes in staffing levels, with 26% unsure.

What level of additional hiring do you expect over the coming year in the 495/MetroWest region?



Almost 50% of respondents anticipate minimal levels of additional hiring in the coming year, with 16% expecting more than 10% additional hiring. The majority of employers expect these hires to be primarily full-time employees, or a mix of full-time and part-time employees

What type of additional workers do you expect to hire over the coming year in the 495/MetroWest region?

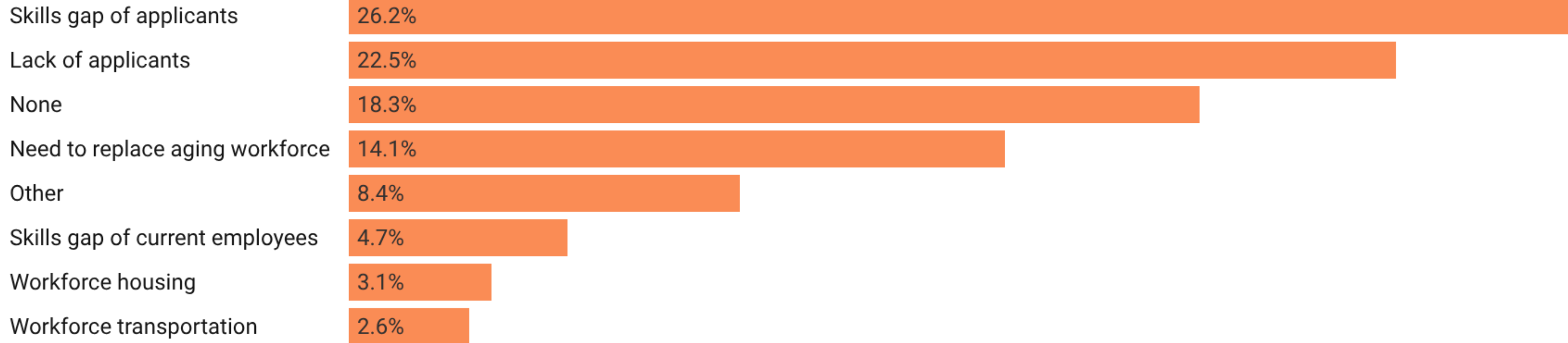


Have you encountered any difficulties in hiring qualified staff this year?



While over 60% of total respondents said they haven't encountered any hiring difficulties this year, responses varied between small and large employers. 69% of small employers said they have not encountered any difficulties with hiring qualified staff this year, whereas 44% of respondents from large businesses said the same.

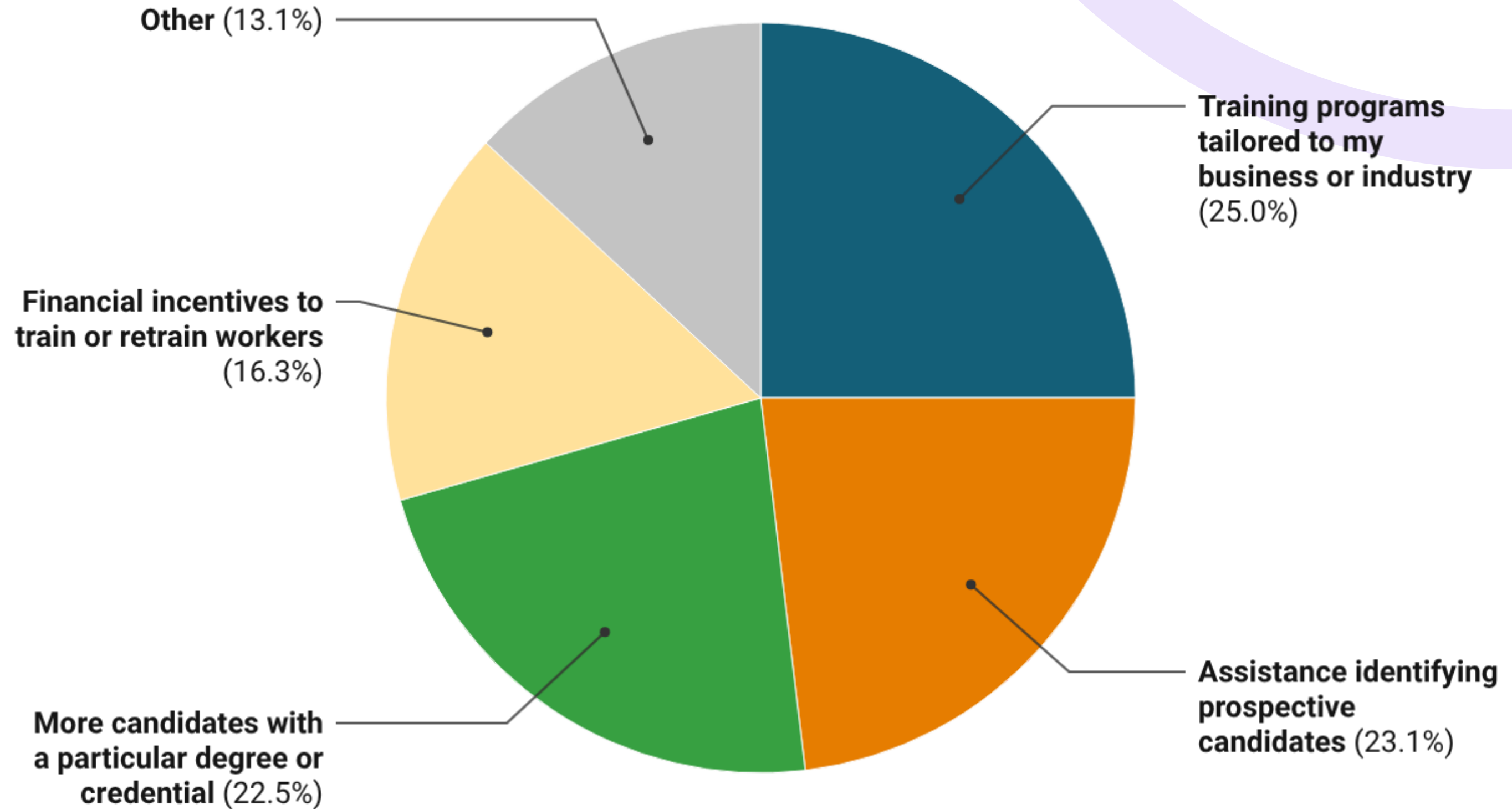
What workforce need concerns you the most?



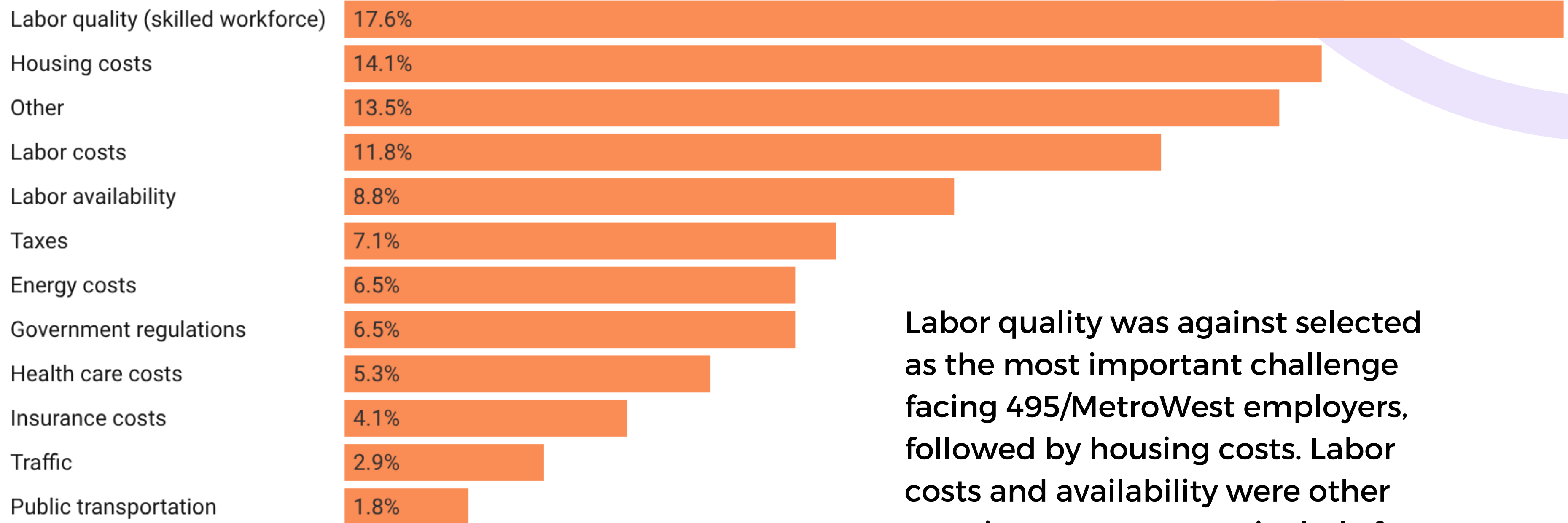
The skills gap of applicants was a primary concern for many respondents, followed by a lack of applicants. An ageing workforce also emerged as a primary concern for larger employers in particular.

Which of the following would be most helpful in hiring new staff?

Tailored training programs was the most selected choice by survey participants, followed by assistance identifying prospective candidates. The most selected choice from last year, more candidates with a particular degree/credential, finished third.



What is the single most important challenge in the 495/MetroWest region facing your organization today?



Labor quality was against selected as the most important challenge facing 495/MetroWest employers, followed by housing costs. Labor costs and availability were other pressing concerns, particularly for small employers.

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