UCEA UNIVERSITIES & COLLEGES EMPLOYERS ASSOCIATION

Enhancing the Employee Experience

The Benefits of Working in Higher Education 2025/26



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Foreword

Dear UCEA member,

I am delighted to present to you UCEA's Benefits of Working in Higher Education Report 2025-26, presented this year in slide format for ease of reference. The Report is based on a survey of Higher Education Institutions and policy expertise at UCEA and is one of the deliverables of UCEA's Employee Experience Five Pillar Programme of Work.

The slides demonstrate HE employers' commitment towards offering progressive benefits to staff whilst also showcasing that working in a unique and fascinating learning environment can provide personal fulfilment.

During a period of significant change in the sector, the benefits offered to employees working in Higher Education remain positive and continue to evolve to support a positive employee experience.

Kind regards

Roshan Israni, Deputy Chief Executive, UCEA

About these slides

The information in these slides combines data from 82 responses to a UCEA survey of Higher Education Institutions run between December 2025 until March 2026, desk research and UCEA expertise. The slides provide quick reference on the benefits provided by HE employers.

Previous Reports, Benefits of Working in HE report 2021 and Benefits of Working in HE 2023 remain available on the UCEA website for reference. UCEA also provides a wealth of information on the HE workforce ranging from pay and sickness absence interactive dashboard benchmarking (for UCEA membership) to infographics covering gender pay gaps and contract types in HE.

UCEA's infographics provide further information on the benefits of working in higher education and can be read in conjunction with these slides. UCEA regularly updates data and infographics.

HEIs are actively developing their benefits offer to employees and if your HEI has information which it would like added to this set of slides, please email UCEA's Reward and Research team at research@ucea.ac.uk.

Note: UCEA received 82 responses to the Benefits of Working in HE Survey; however, not all questions were answered by every HEI. This may result in some totals not equalling 82.

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UCEA survey of membership with 82 respondents to date.
Commentary is based on wider research and UCEA policy expertise.

Click the links to go directly to the relevant sections.

1: What do employees value?

Working in higher education offers a uniquely rewarding experience that combines both:

- **Tangible benefits** (clearly measurable and can be assigned a monetary value), and
- **Intangible benefits** (non-financial rewards that improve an employee's experience, satisfaction, or well-being but are harder to measure).

Higher Education Institutions are clearly committed to making working in higher education far more than just a job.

What stands out is that working at an HEI often offers fulfilment, inspiration, and the chance to be part of something reaching beyond the workplace.

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1a. Introduction: tangible benefits

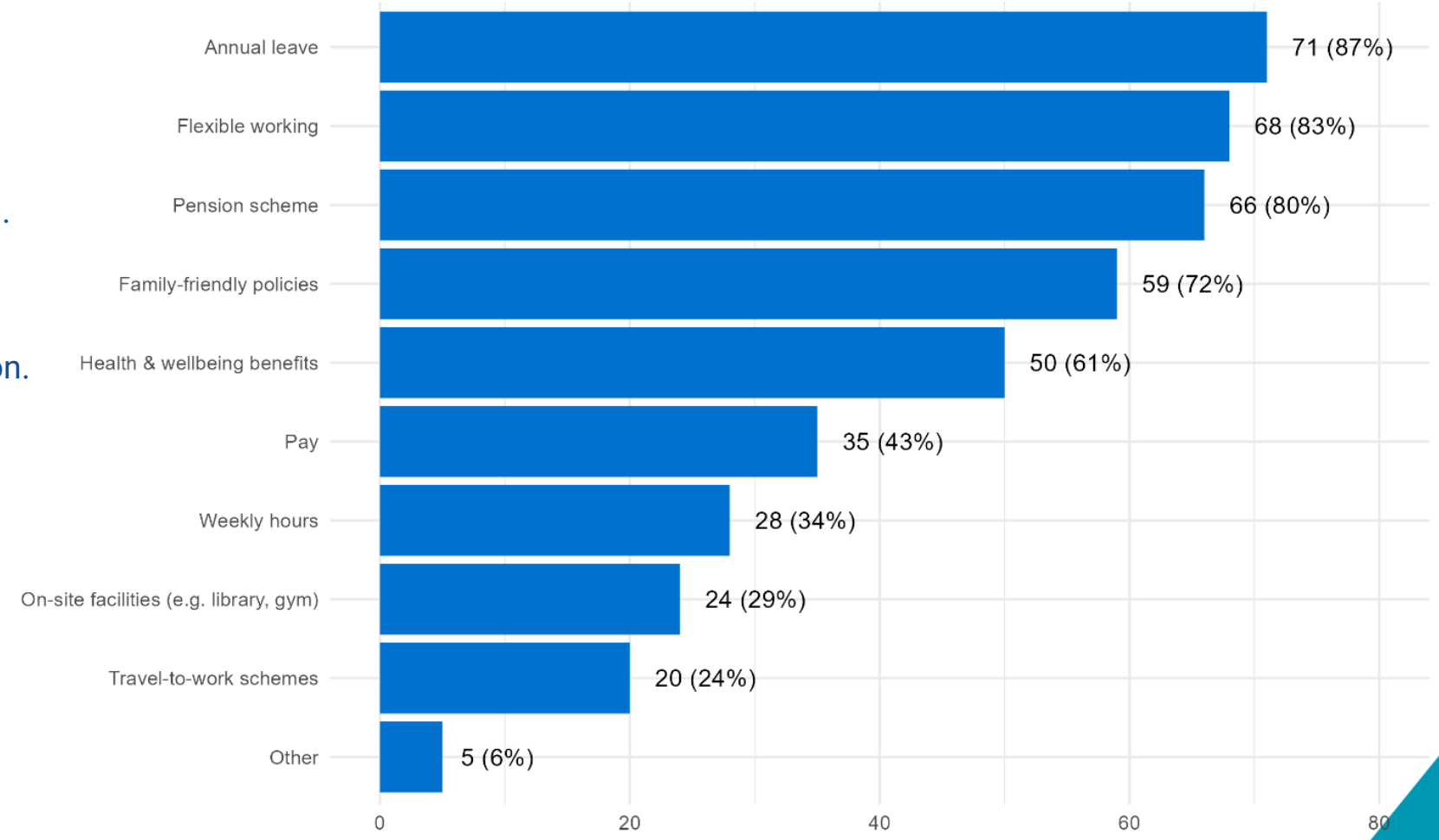
Institutions were asked:

Which of the following tangible benefits do you think that staff value about working at your HEI?

Tangible benefits are the practical rewards that employees can clearly feel.

The slides in this pack expand on some tangible benefits in higher education.

This table ranks the most valued benefits.



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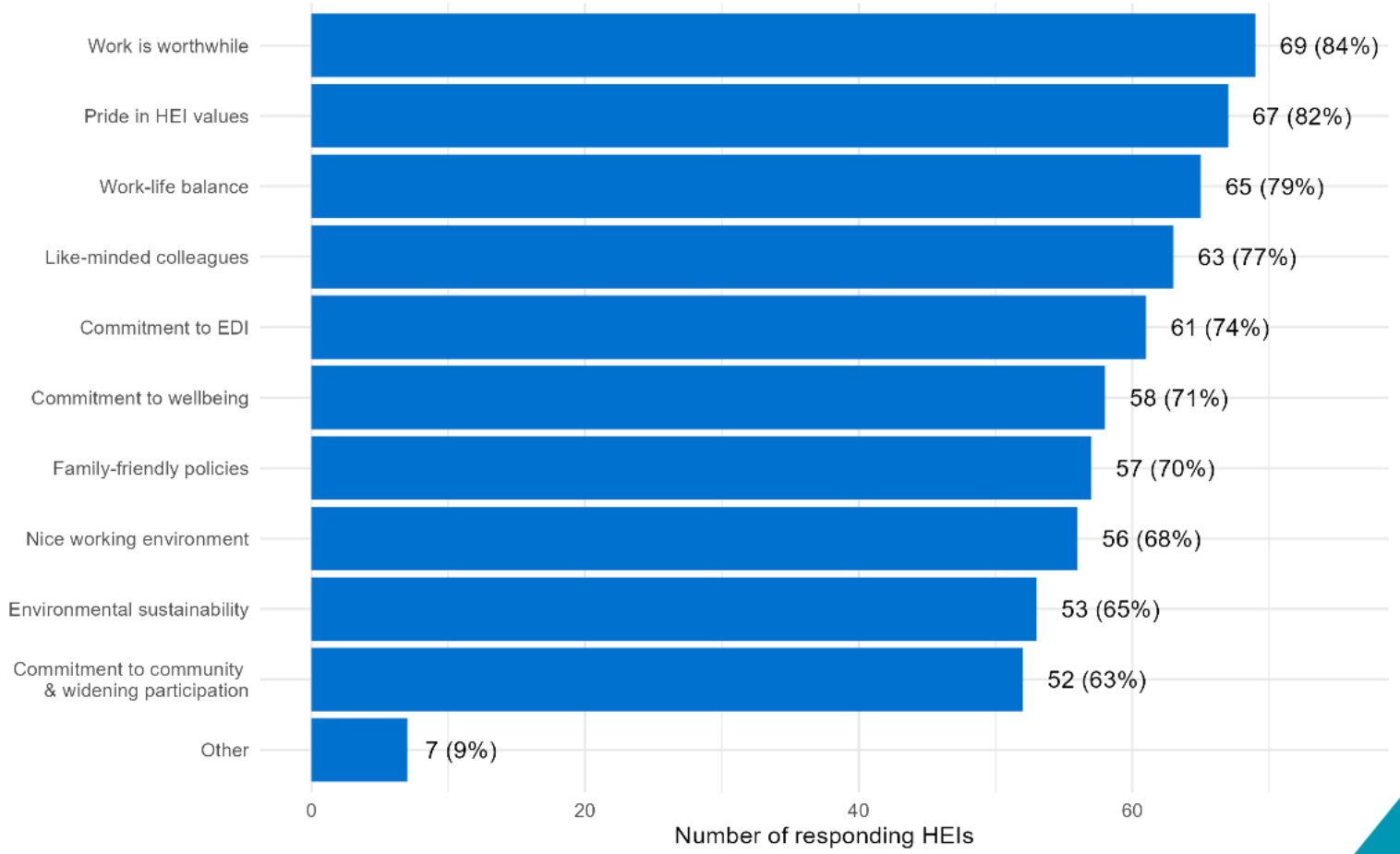
1b. Introduction: intangible benefits

Institutions were asked:

Which of the following intangible benefits do you think that staff value about working at your HEI?

Intangible benefits set higher education apart.

They include the opportunity to be part of a vibrant intellectual community, to contribute to life-changing research, and to education that makes a meaningful impact on society.



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2: Flexible and hybrid working

Higher Education Institutions' flexibility and hybrid working have become defining features of the employment offer, with leading institutions setting a strong example. Their approach demonstrates modern, adaptable working practices which enhance both organisational performance and workforce wellbeing.

Flexibility:

- Provides greater autonomy over when, where and how work is carried out
- Supports healthier work–life balance and overall wellbeing
- Helps to reduce workplace stress and improves day-to-day working experiences
- Contributes to higher levels of job satisfaction
- Enables sustained engagement, motivation and productivity
- Broadens accessibility, creating more inclusive and adaptable roles.

Through this leadership, Higher Education has established itself as a sector that prioritises progressive ways of working. Its widespread adoption of flexible practices positions it ahead of many other industries, demonstrating how a forward-thinking approach to work can benefit both institutions and their people.

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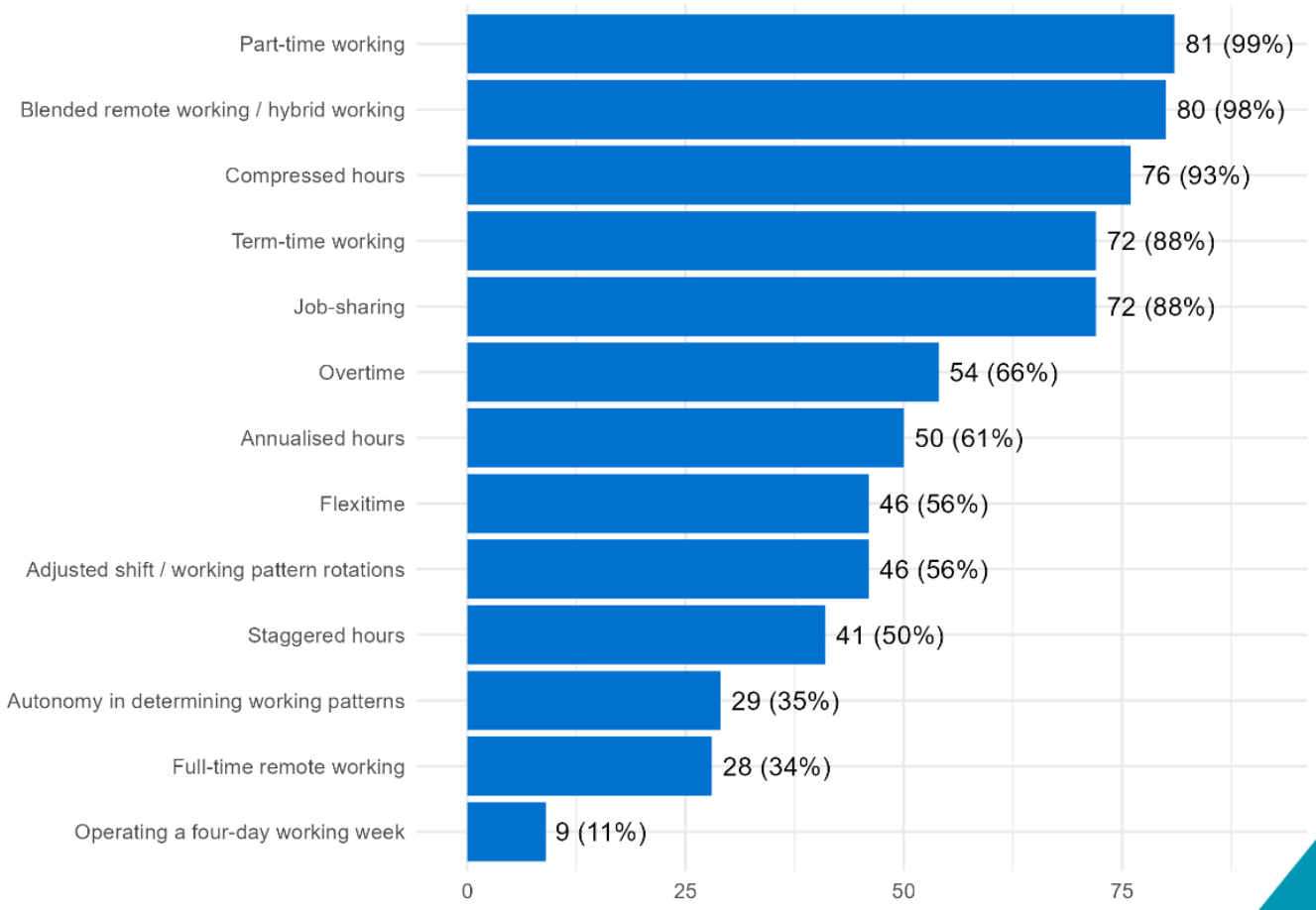
Higher Education offers strong flexible working arrangements

Institutions were asked:
In what ways does your HEI offer flexibility in employment

Part-time working and hybrid/blended remote working are the most prevalent in Higher Education, followed closely by compressed hours, term-time working, and job-sharing.

Mid-range options include overtime, annualised hours, and flexitime and less common are adjusted shift patterns, staggered hours, and employee autonomy over schedules.

Full-time remote working is relatively limited, while four-day working weeks are the least widely used option overall.



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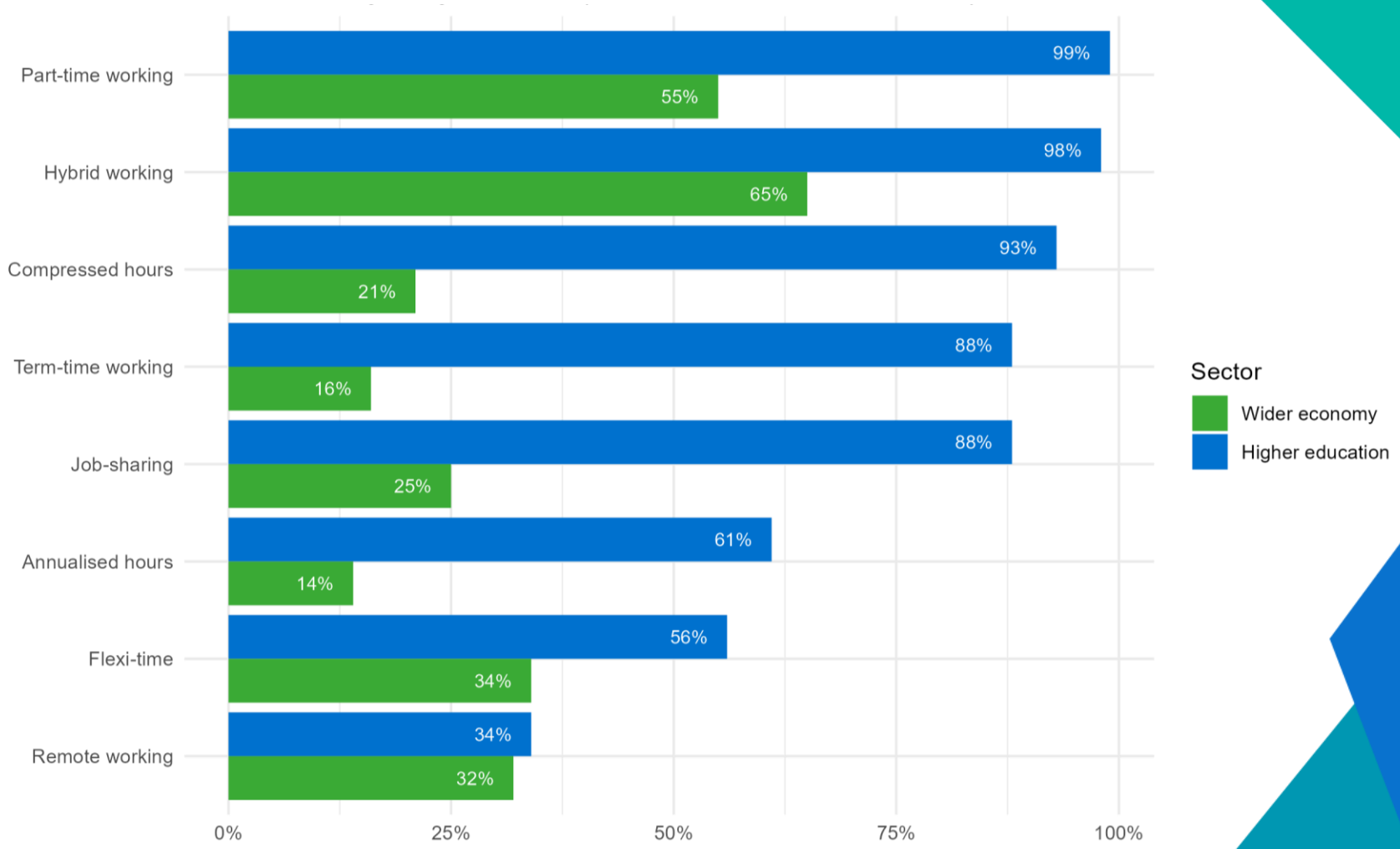
How does HE compare on flexibility?

Higher Education is one of the more progressive sectors in the UK's economy

Higher Education consistently exceeds the offer of flexibility arrangements compared to the wider economy.

It offers most options at very high levels (often above 85–95%).

Overall, Higher Education appears significantly more flexible than the wider economy.



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Proportion of the week staff are expected to work on site

Institutions were asked:
'What proportion of the week do you expect staff to be in the office/on campus when hybrid working?'

20% of contracted hours	40% of contracted hours	60% of contracted hours
2 / 82 HEIs	18 / 82 HEIs	29 / 82 HEIs

80% of contracted hours	We don't specify a proportion
1 / 82 HEIs	31 / 82 HEIs

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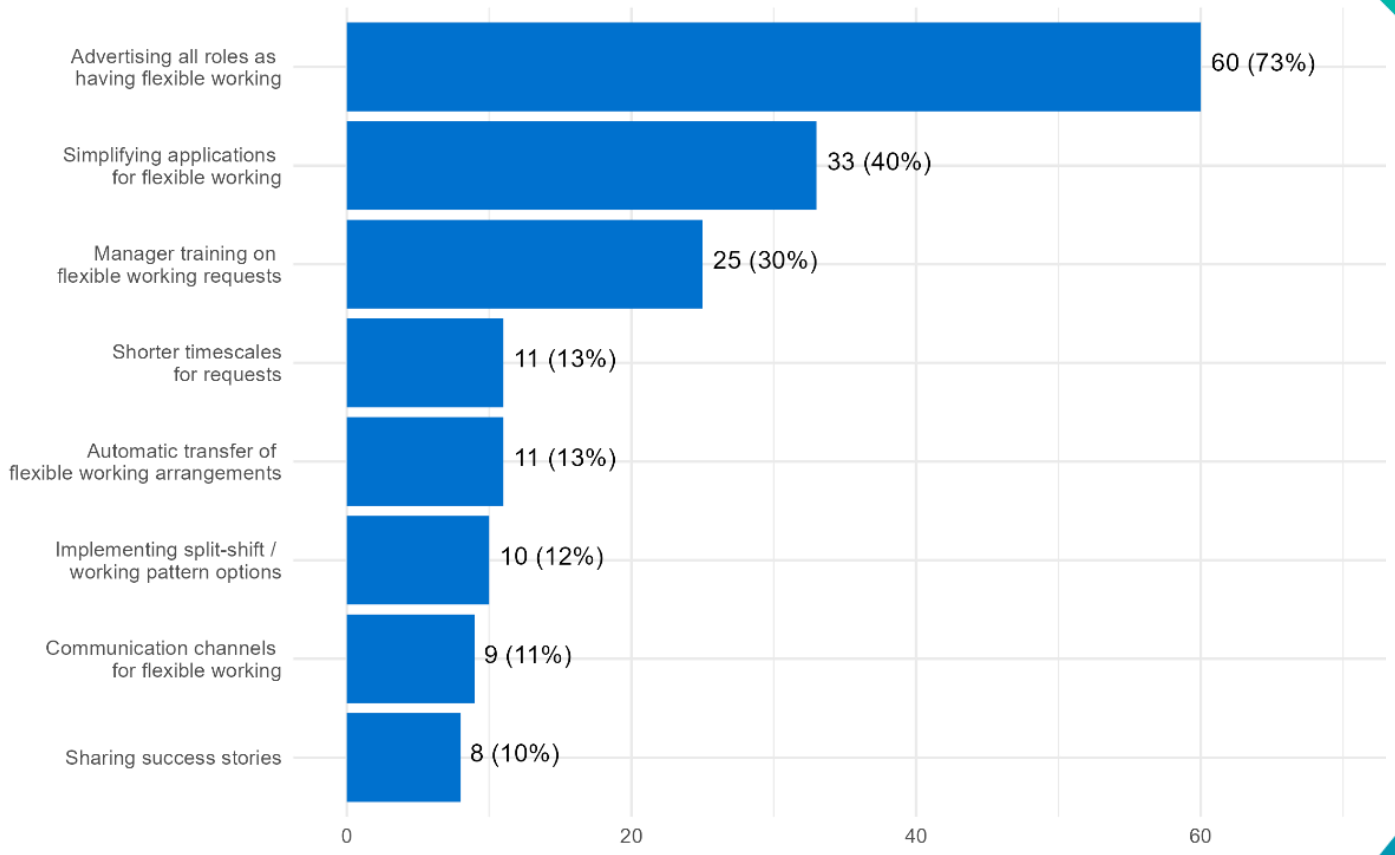
Supporting flexible working

Flexible working is welcomed for most roles in most Higher Education Institutions

Flexible working can:

1. appeal to a wider talent pool, such as caregivers
2. increase employee engagement as employees feel trusted and valued
3. reduce unplanned absences as employees better manage personal commitments and health needs
4. lower overhead costs
5. reduce barriers for underrepresented groups – creating diversity
6. enhance employer brand
7. help organisations adapt to disruptions.

Flexible working supports both employee wellbeing and organisational performance.



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3: Health and Wellbeing

Higher Education Institutions are clearly committed to creating environments in which staff can thrive. This is reflected in a strong and consistent focus on wellbeing, supported by a broad range of sector-wide employment benefits, including:

- Support for both mental and physical wellbeing
- Access to confidential counselling and professional support services
- Generous annual leave that enables time to rest and recharge
- Inclusive workplaces that foster a strong sense of community
- Opportunities to stay active through campus facilities and wellbeing initiatives
- A culture that promotes a healthy work–life balance.

HE leaders place high value on the wellbeing of their workforce resulting in low staff turnover (c.6% in 2023-24) and sickness absence rates (c.6 days a year compared to the CIPD's 2025 figure of 9.4 days a year).

A strong offer on wellbeing contributes to the effectiveness of an organisation.

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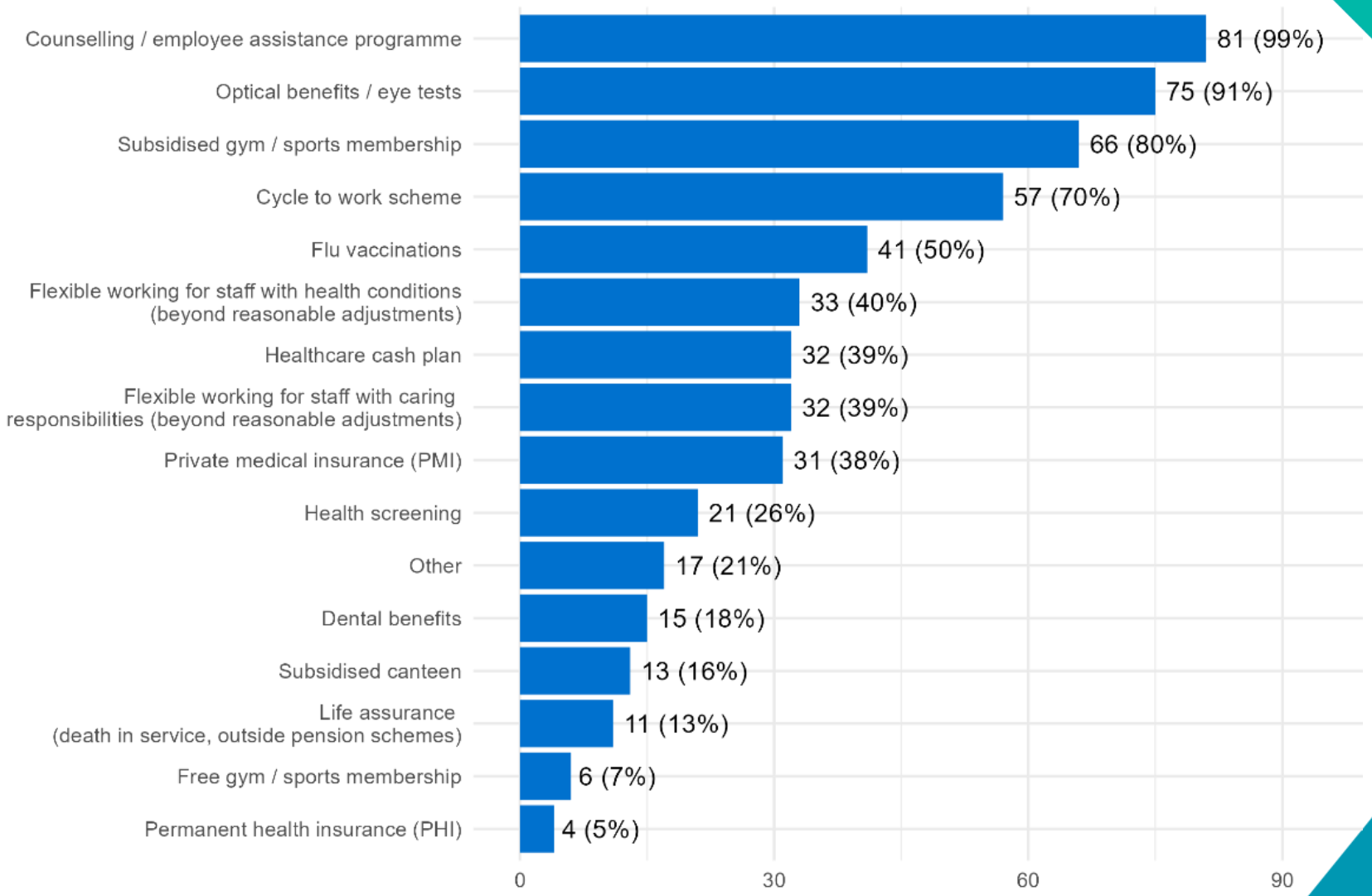
Supporting health and wellbeing

Higher Education employers place a strong emphasis on wellbeing and preventative health support.

Overall, HE employers prioritise accessible wellbeing initiatives to broadly support employee health with some access to high-end personalised benefits.



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4: Family Friendly Policies

Across HE, family-friendly policies are a core part of the employment offer, with leading institutions setting a strong benchmark for others. Enhanced maternity, paternity and shared parental leave arrangements reflect a long-standing commitment to supporting staff through different life stages.

These policies:

- Offer more generous maternity, paternity and shared parental leave than many other sectors
- Provide greater financial security during periods of family leave
- Support a balanced return to work through flexible arrangements
- Promote equality by enabling shared caregiving responsibilities
- Help to retain experienced staff by supporting long-term career continuity
- Contribute to a more inclusive and supportive working culture.

The following figures outline how Higher Education has established itself as a sector that prioritises family-friendly employment practices beyond statutory requirements. Family-friendly policies are developing – for example, the development of miscarriage leave – which will be reflected in the next edition of these slides.

These entitlements benefit individuals and institutions while setting a positive example across the wider labour market. See the Acas guidance on Time off for care and support | Acas for full comparison with statutory rights.

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4a: Statutory Maternity Leave

To compare the maternity entitlements offered in higher education, it is helpful to consider the statutory rights.

All employees are entitled to up to 52 weeks' maternity leave, made up of 26 weeks of Ordinary Maternity Leave and 26 weeks of Additional Maternity Leave, regardless of how long they have worked for their employer or how many hours they work.

Maternity leave can start at any time from 11 weeks before the expected week of childbirth. It will start automatically if the baby is born early, or if the employee is off work with a pregnancy-related illness in the 4 weeks before the expected week of childbirth.

Employees who meet the eligibility criteria may receive Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP) for up to 39 weeks:

- For the first 6 weeks, SMP is paid at 90% of average weekly earnings (before tax)
- For the remaining 33 weeks, SMP is paid at £194.32 (2026-27) per week or 90% of average weekly earnings (whichever is lower).

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Enhanced Maternity Leave

Institutions were asked:
'Do your maternity leave provisions exceed the statutory minimum?'

Responded yes, all staff	Responded yes, some staff	Responded no
77 / 82 HEIs	5 / 82 HEIs	0 / 82 HEIs

- All HEIs offer some maternity leave at full pay for an average of 18 weeks.*
- 64 out of 82 HEIs then offer half pay maternity leave for an average of 12 weeks.
- For the remainder of the statutory 52 weeks maternity leave, 80 out of 82 HEIs offer statutory pay, which for the respondents equated to an average of 19 weeks.
- Additionally, 48 out of 82 HEIs offer unpaid maternity leave beyond the first year, for an average of 13 weeks.
- Some HEIs also offer paid leave on some other percentage of full pay, such as 90%.

* Averages on this slide are medians

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4b: Enhanced Paternity Leave

76 surveyed HEIs exceed the statutory minimum for paternity leave.

Institutions were asked:
"Do your paternity leave policies exceed the statutory minimum?"

Responded yes, all staff	Responded yes, some staff	Responded no
72 / 82 HEIs	4 / 82 HEIs	6 / 82 HEIs

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4c: Adoption Leave

For comparison with Higher Education (see next slide) the statutory Adoption rights are that all employed adopters are entitled to up to 52 weeks of adoption leave, but unlike maternity leave, the adopter must have worked for his or her employer for at least 26 weeks by the date of being matched with a child.

Only one partner can take adoption leave, the other may be eligible for paternity leave. Leave can begin up to 2 weeks before the child's placement date.

Statutory Adoption Pay (SAP) is paid for up to 39 weeks:

- First 6 weeks - 90% of your average weekly earnings
- Remaining 33 weeks - £187.18 / week or 90% of earnings, whichever is lower.

Note: surrogacy rights can be compared with adoption rights where legal parenthood is transferred.

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Enhanced Adoption Leave

81 surveyed HEIs exceed the statutory minimum for adoption leave.

Institutions were asked:
"Do your adoption and surrogacy leave policies exceed the statutory minimum?"

Responded yes, all staff	Responded yes, some staff	Responded no
77 / 82 HEIs	4 / 82 HEIs	1 / 82 HEIs

- 79 out of 82 HEIs offer adoption leave at full pay for an average* of 18 weeks.
- 59 out of 82 HEIs then offer half pay adoption leave for an average of 12 weeks.
- 79 out of 82 HEIs offer statutory pay adoption leave for an average of 19 weeks.
- As an additional benefit, 47 out of 82 HEIs offer unpaid adoption leave for an average of 13 weeks.

* The average used here is the median.

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4d: Shared Parental Leave

Again, for comparison, statutory Shared Parental Leave allows eligible parents to share up to 50 weeks of leave and up to 37 weeks of pay between them.

The mother/primary adopter must end their maternity/adoption leave and pay early to create a "pot" of leave and pay to share. For example:

- Mother takes 10 weeks of maternity leave → 42 weeks of SPL remain to share
- The remaining 37 weeks of pay can also be split between both partners.

Both parents can be on leave at the same time, or take turns.

Shared Parental Pay is paid at a flat rate for up to 37 weeks (no 6 weeks higher phase like SMP):

- The rate is £194.32 (2026-27) or 90% of average weekly earnings, whichever is lower

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Enhanced Shared Parental Leave

52 surveyed HEIs exceed the statutory minimum for shared parental leave.

Institutions were asked:
"Do your shared parental leave policies exceed the statutory minimum?"

Responded yes, all staff	Responded yes, some staff	Responded no
49 / 82 HEIs	3 / 82 HEIs	30 / 82 HEIs

- 49 out of 82 HEIs offer shared parental leave at full pay for an average* of 16 weeks.
- 33 out of 82 HEIs then offer half pay shared parental leave for an average of 6 weeks.
- 46 out of 82 HEIs offer statutory pay shared parental leave for an average of 19 weeks.
- As an additional benefit, 23 out of 82 HEIs offer unpaid shared parental leave for an average of 13 weeks.

* The average used is the median.

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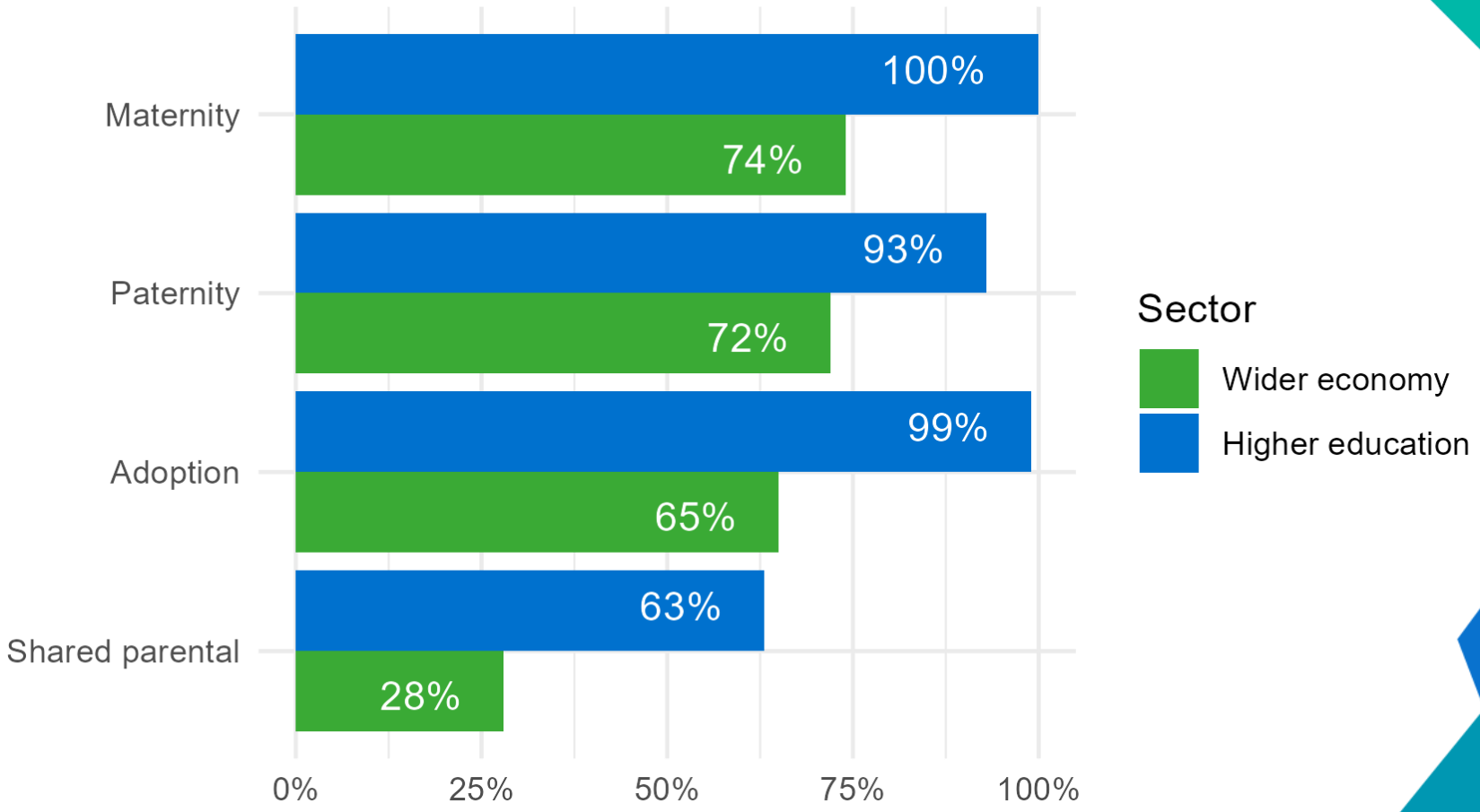
Higher Education and the Wider Economy

HEIs generally provide higher levels of family-orientated leave and pay than most employers in the wider economy.



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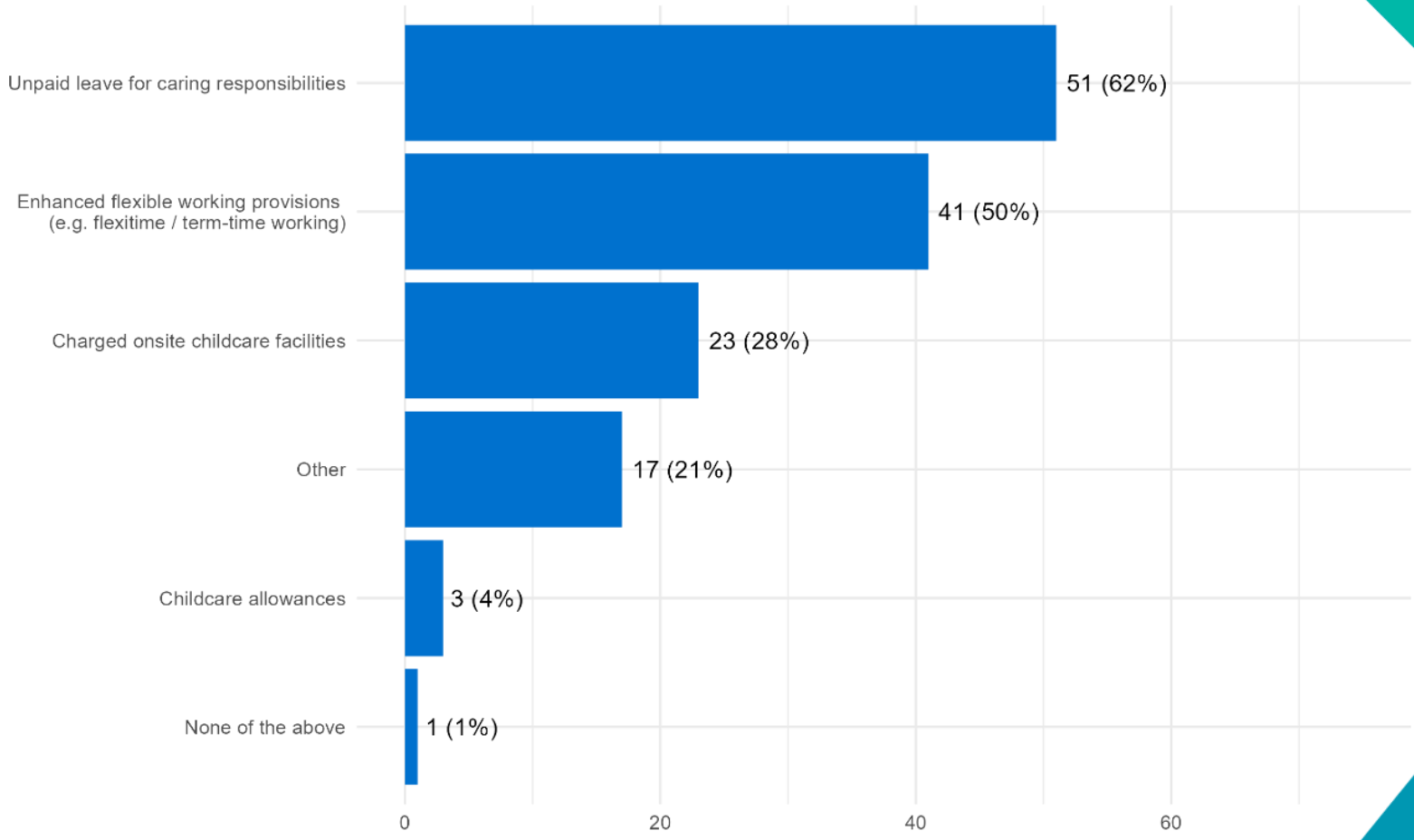
4e: Wider Family Friendly Policies

HEIs also provide support to parents with wider policies and facilities.

An example of ‘other’ which is developing is having specific ‘miscarriage policies’



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5: Pensions

The Higher Education sector offers access to a range of pension schemes such as the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS), the Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS), the Local Government Pensions Scheme (LGPS), National Health Service Pension Scheme (NHSPS) and Superannuation Arrangements of the University of London (SAUL). There are also some self-administered pensions trusts.

These pensions schemes use a mix of Defined Benefits (DB), Defined Contributions (DC) and hybrid arrangements which all offer above average retirement provision compared to the private sector.

Higher Education scheme participation rates are above national averages. The pension benefits which most HEI staff receive go beyond a simple income in retirement – e.g. also include death-in-service cover, spouse/partners pension, and ill-health provisions.

Further information on the schemes offered can be found in UCEA's infographics.

If you would like further information, please contact UCEA's pensions team at pensions@ucea.ac.uk

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6: EDI and ESG

Higher Education has a strong commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) and environmental, social and governance (ESG). EDI and ESG principles are widely promoted, with leading institutions setting the pace for sector and wider social progress. HE's leadership reflects their role in shaping a fairer, more sustainable future. Sector-wide approaches to EDI and ESG:

- Promote diverse, equitable and inclusive workplaces where all staff can thrive
- Embed fair recruitment, progression and reward practices
- Foster cultures that value different perspectives and experiences
- Advance environmental sustainability through research, operations and campus initiatives
- Support social responsibility and community engagement
- Strengthen governance through transparent and accountable leadership.

Higher Education increasingly advocates for positive change and demonstrates it in practice with sector work on employment policy, Gender Pay Gaps, Intersectional Pay Gaps and Gender Pension Gaps. UCEA conducts research to inform the development of EDI in higher education (some material is 'membership only').

Higher Education's own research and sustained focus on EDI and ESG as employers sets a strong benchmark for other industries

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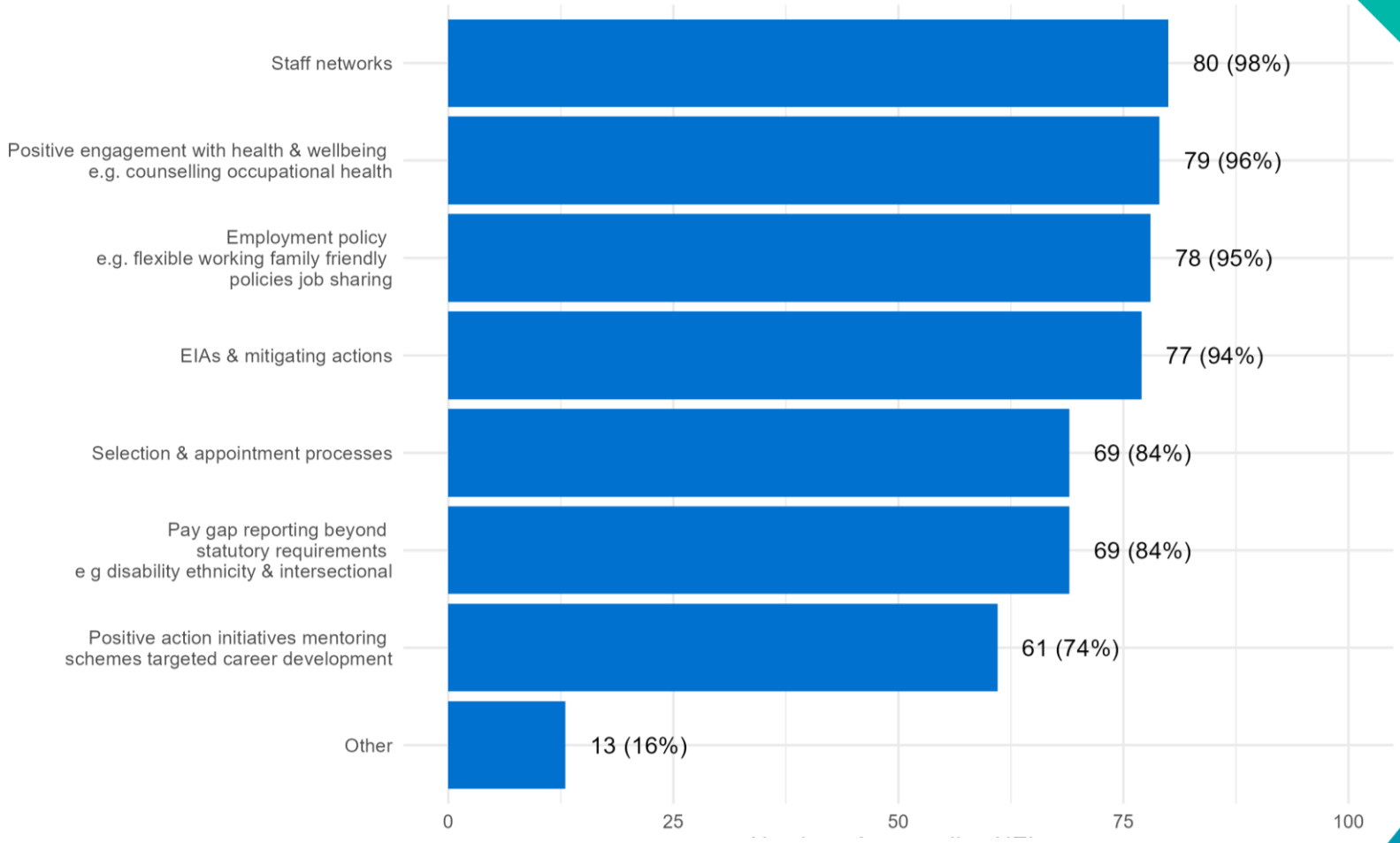
Initiatives to promote equality, diversity and inclusion

HE employers provide broad, accessible measures to promote equality and inclusion.

Expanded pay gap reporting, Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) and positive action initiatives like mentoring or career development are notable.



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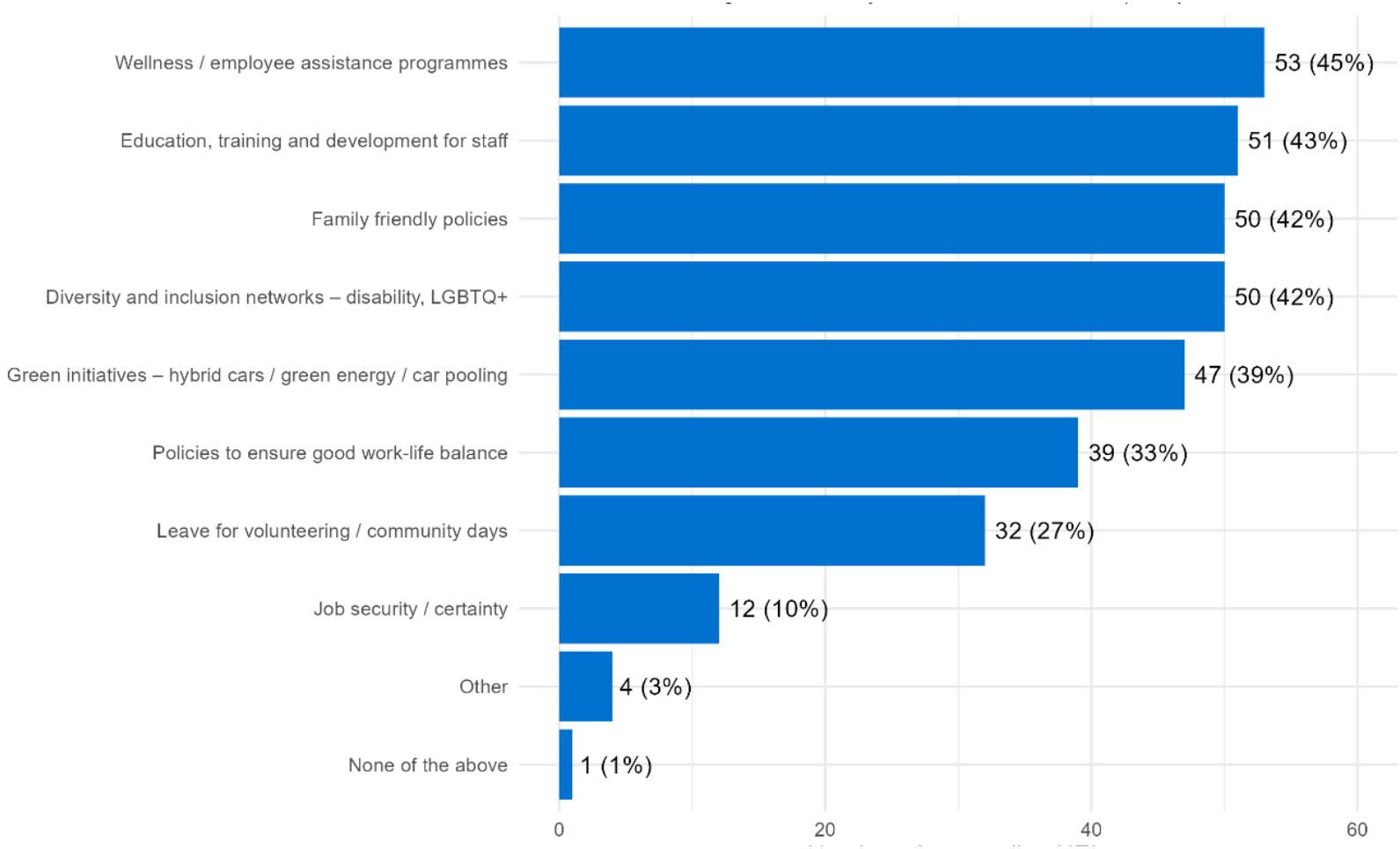
ESG-related benefits and programmes

Many employment-related benefits evidence the strong social purpose of Higher Education.

Higher Education is one of the environments in which Environmental, Social and Governance principles are researched and developed, which is reflected in its overall benefits offer.



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7: Sickness Absence

Occupational sick pay is a longstanding and valued component of reward in UK higher education, providing significantly greater financial protection than the statutory baseline. While Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) offers a limited, flat-rate payment for up to 28 weeks, university schemes typically provide enhanced entitlements combining periods of full and half pay that increase with service length.

In many institutions, this can equate to several months on full salary followed by additional support at reduced pay, delivering a far higher level of income security during periods of ill health.

This reflects the sector's wider commitment to employee wellbeing of staff whose retention is critical to institutional success.

It also positions higher education favourably against many parts of the wider labour market, particularly the private sector.

UCEA provides HEI's insight into sector sickness absence rates. It now provides benchmarking for HEIs in an interactive dashboard (contact research@ucea.ac.uk for log in permissions) which in 2025 included data from sickness survey responses from 114 universities, providing an authoritative source of data.

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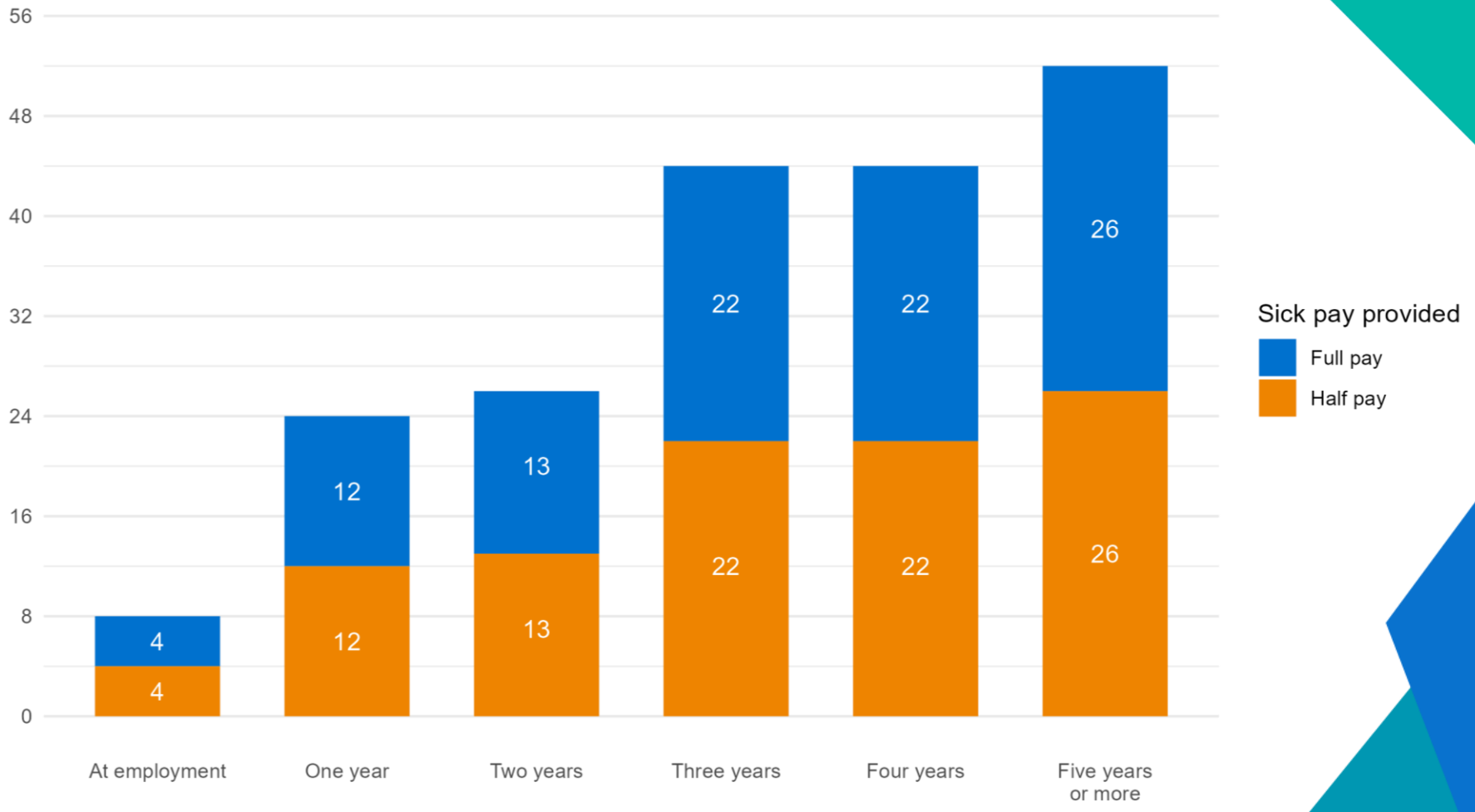
Weeks of sick pay by length of service (median provision)

Higher Education employers offer occupational sick pay which increases by length of service, exceeding the statutory minimum.



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8: Working hours and Annual Leave

Higher Education Institutions offer higher annual leave proposition than both the statutory requirements and typical employer practice.

The leave entitlement for HEI staff ranges from 36 to 39 days a year, including bank holidays and which can include university closure days (e.g. Christmas closures).

Generous annual leave is a visible, high-value benefit that supports recruitment, retention and wellbeing. HEIs' annual leave is a competitive advantage, ensuring staff and candidates recognise its value relative to the wider labour market.

HEIs also provide other benefits related to the use of annual leave (see following slides).

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Carrying over leave entitlement

81 (out of 82) HEIs allow staff to carry over some of their leave entitlement from one year to the next.

Institutions were asked:
"Are any staff able to carry over any of their leave entitlement from one year to the next?"

Responded yes	Responded no
81 / 82 HEIs	1 / 82 HEIs

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Exchanging and purchasing leave entitlement

40 surveyed HEIs allow staff to purchase additional leave entitlement.

Institutions were asked:
"Are staff able to purchase additional leave entitlement?"

Responded yes	Responded no
40 / 82 HEIs	42 / 82 HEIs

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9: Notice Periods

Notice periods vary considerably by staff group across UK higher education institutions.

- Professional services staff have the shortest requirements, with a median of 9 weeks across 69 HEIs.
- Academic staff sit in the middle, with a median of 12 weeks across 73 institutions.
- Executive team members require significantly longer notice, with a median of 19 weeks and a wide interquartile range of 13 to 26 weeks, reflecting greater variation in senior contracts across 70 HEIs.
- Across all staff combined, the median is 9 weeks.

Notice periods tend to become longer for more senior staff, which is a normal expectation, to allow for smooth handover periods in key roles.

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10: Shift Allowances and Overtime

Shift allowances and overtime pay in UK universities is primarily concentrated among professional services staff, particularly in operational areas where working hours are defined and service continuity is critical.

The following chart shows that entitlement is most common in estates and maintenance roles, followed by support staff, IT services and security functions, reflecting the need for out-of-hours cover and measurable working time.

By contrast, academic contracts are typically framed around duties and sessions rather than fixed hours. However, overtime-type payments can still be made in specific circumstances, such as additional teaching, project work, or exceptional operational pressures, usually through ad-hoc arrangements rather than structured schemes.

Shift allowances in Higher Education tend to be aligned to non-academic operational need rather than applied universally.

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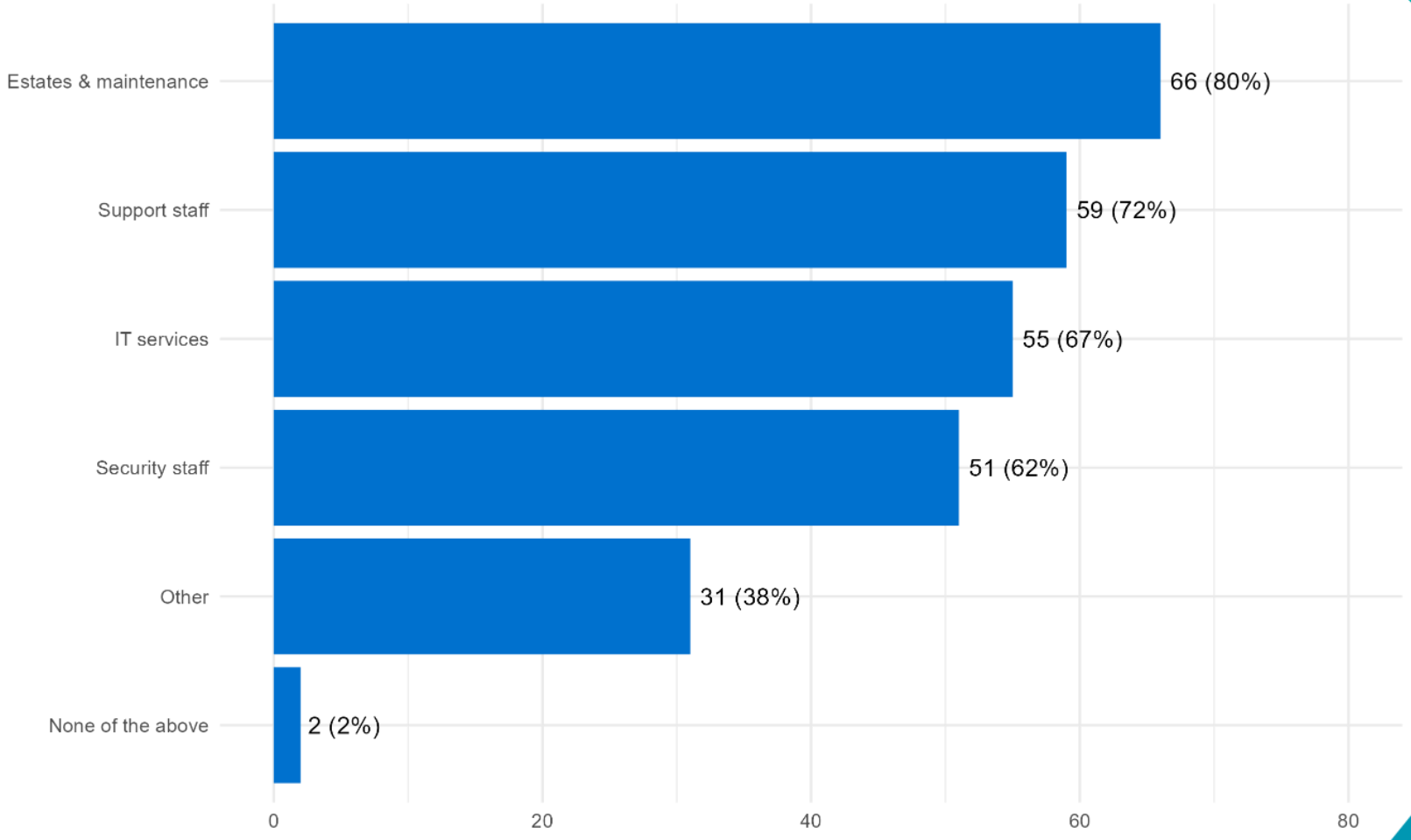
Eligibility for paid overtime by staff group

HEIs are often large-scale organisations requiring professional services support staff to work outside of normal office hours.



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Overtime rates

Overtime rates in HEIs show consistent patterns. During the **normal working week**, overtime is typically paid at around one-and-a-half times the standard hourly rate, with little variation between institutions. This same rate generally applies to the **first rest day (typically Saturday)**.

A step change is evident for work undertaken on the **second rest day (typically Sunday)** and on **bank holidays or institutional closure days,** commonly rising to double time, reflecting the greater expectation of unsocial or non-standard working hours.

Across all categories, variation between institutions is limited, as shown by the close alignment between lower quartile, median, and upper quartile values. This suggests a high degree of sector consistency in overtime practice.

Overall, the structure of overtime pay in higher education mirrors wider labour market norms.

Normal working week (75 HEIs)
- Lower quartile: 1.5
- Median: 1.5
- Upper quartile: 1.5

1st rest day (Saturday)(75 HEIs)
- Lower quartile: 1.5
- Median: 1.5
- Upper quartile: 1.5

2nd rest day (Sunday)(75 HEIs)
- Lower quartile: 2.0
- Median: 2.0
- Upper quartile: 2.0

Bank holidays and/or closure days (74 HEIs)
- Lower quartile: 2.0
- Median: 2.0
- Upper quartile: 2.0

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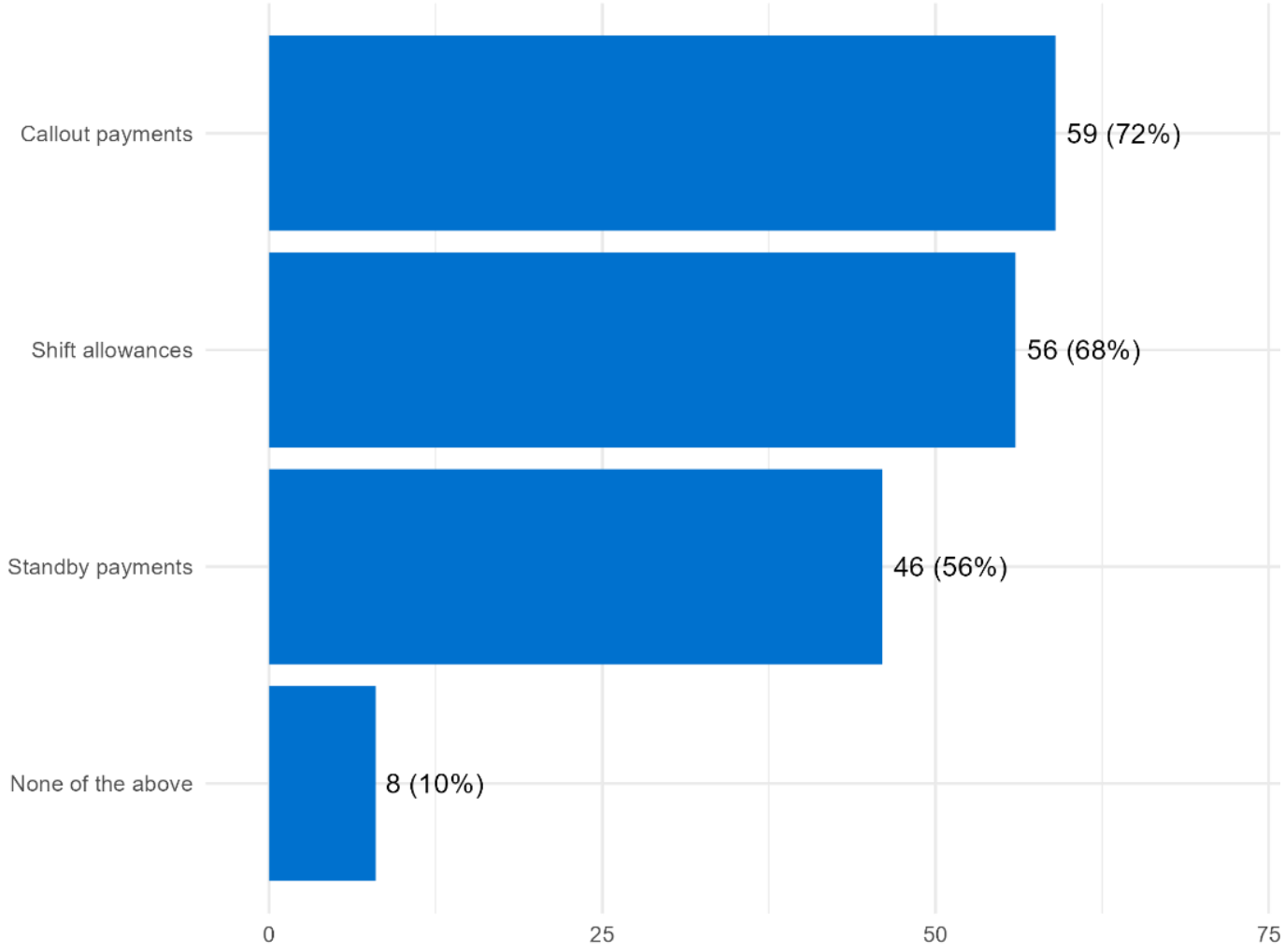
Other additional payments

Other allowances paid to staff in HEIs reflect the needs of the variety of workplaces within the sector.



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11: Career Breaks and Sabbatical Leave

Career break provision in UK higher education is both widespread and flexible, supporting a broad range of employee needs. The following tables show the most common reasons for career breaks are caring responsibilities and study or personal development, further highlighting the sector's strong focus on wellbeing and continuous learning.

A significant proportion of HEIs also allow breaks for travel, reflecting a progressive approach that recognises the value of wider life experience. External secondments are often supported, alongside provision for more specific circumstances such as bereavement-related needs. A minority of respondent institutions reported having no career break arrangements.

This breadth of provision suggests that career breaks are becoming established across the sector. For those institutions that do not yet offer formal arrangements, the data highlights an opportunity to review their position. Introducing or expanding career break policies could strengthen the overall employment offer, supporting retention, engagement and workforce sustainability in an increasingly competitive labour market.

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Eligibility for career breaks, excluding sabbaticals

50 surveyed HEIs have a policy regarding career breaks.

Institutions were asked:
"Do you have a policy regarding career breaks (excluding sabbaticals)?"

Responded yes, all staff	Responded yes, some staff	Responded no
42 / 82 HEIs	8 / 82 HEIs	32 / 82 HEIs

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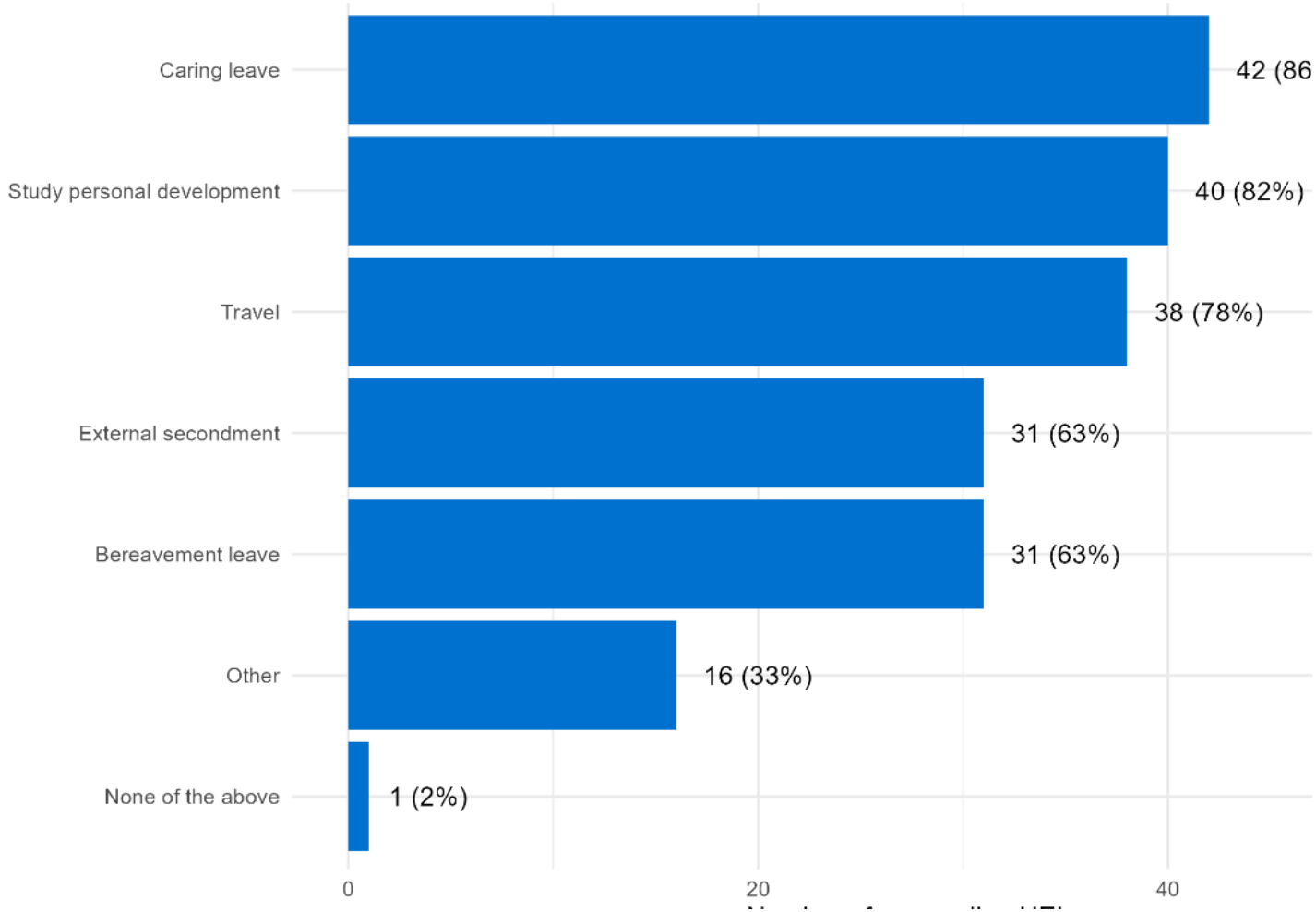
Reasons for which staff are granted career breaks?

HEIs respond to individual personal and professional needs when granting career breaks.



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Conditions on career breaks

The data indicates that career break policies in UK higher education are typically structured around clear service-related thresholds and limits, with a high degree of consistency across institutions.

Most universities require a minimum period of service before eligibility, commonly around two years, although some institutions set shorter or longer qualifying periods. Similarly, where restrictions apply between successive career breaks, the typical interval is also around two years, though in practice this can extend significantly in some cases, reflecting institutional discretion and workforce planning considerations.

In terms of duration, career breaks are generally capped at around one year of unpaid leave, with some variation above this level. While a number of institutions allow longer maximum periods, the one-year benchmark appears to be the most commonly applied standard.

Overall, the data suggests that career break arrangements are structured but flexible, balancing employee access with organisational needs. Qualification periods, repeat access rules, and duration limits are all designed to ensure that career breaks remain sustainable while supporting staff retention and development.

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Eligibility for sabbatical leave

45 surveyed HEIs have a policy regarding sabbatical leave.

Institutions were asked:
"Do you have a policy regarding sabbatical leave?"

Responded yes, all staff	Responded yes, for academic staff only	Responded yes, for some staff
10 / 82 HEIs	32 / 82 HEIs	3 / 82 HEIs

Responded no
37 / 82 HEIs

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Conditions for being granted sabbatical leave

Sabbatical leave arrangements in UK higher education are typically structured around longer service thresholds and more defined intervals than career breaks, reflecting their role in supporting academic development.

Eligibility usually requires **around three years' service**, though some institutions require slightly less or more. Similarly, the interval between sabbaticals is commonly set at **approximately three years**, with some HEIs applying longer gaps between successive periods.

In terms of duration, the most common approach is to provide up to **six months of paid sabbatical leave**, although some institutions offer longer paid periods, in some cases extending up to a year. Paid provision is therefore a central feature of sabbaticals, distinguishing them from career breaks. In addition, some institutions allow for **longer periods of unpaid sabbatical leave**, typically capped at around one year.

Overall, UCEA's data indicates that sabbatical leave is a **structured and periodic benefit**, balancing institutional needs with the objective of supporting research, scholarship, and professional renewal among staff.

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12. Paid special/emergency leave

Entitlement to special and emergency paid leave varies by leave type across UK higher education institutions.

Most personal and caring-related leave, including compassionate, emergency care, general caring, fertility treatment, and study leave, clusters around a median of five days.

- Compassionate leave / bereavement — **5**
- Emergency care / support to dependents — **5**
- General caring responsibilities — **5** Study leave — **5**
- Jury service / acting as a witness — **10**
- Fertility treatment / antenatal care — **5**
- Performing other public duties — **12**

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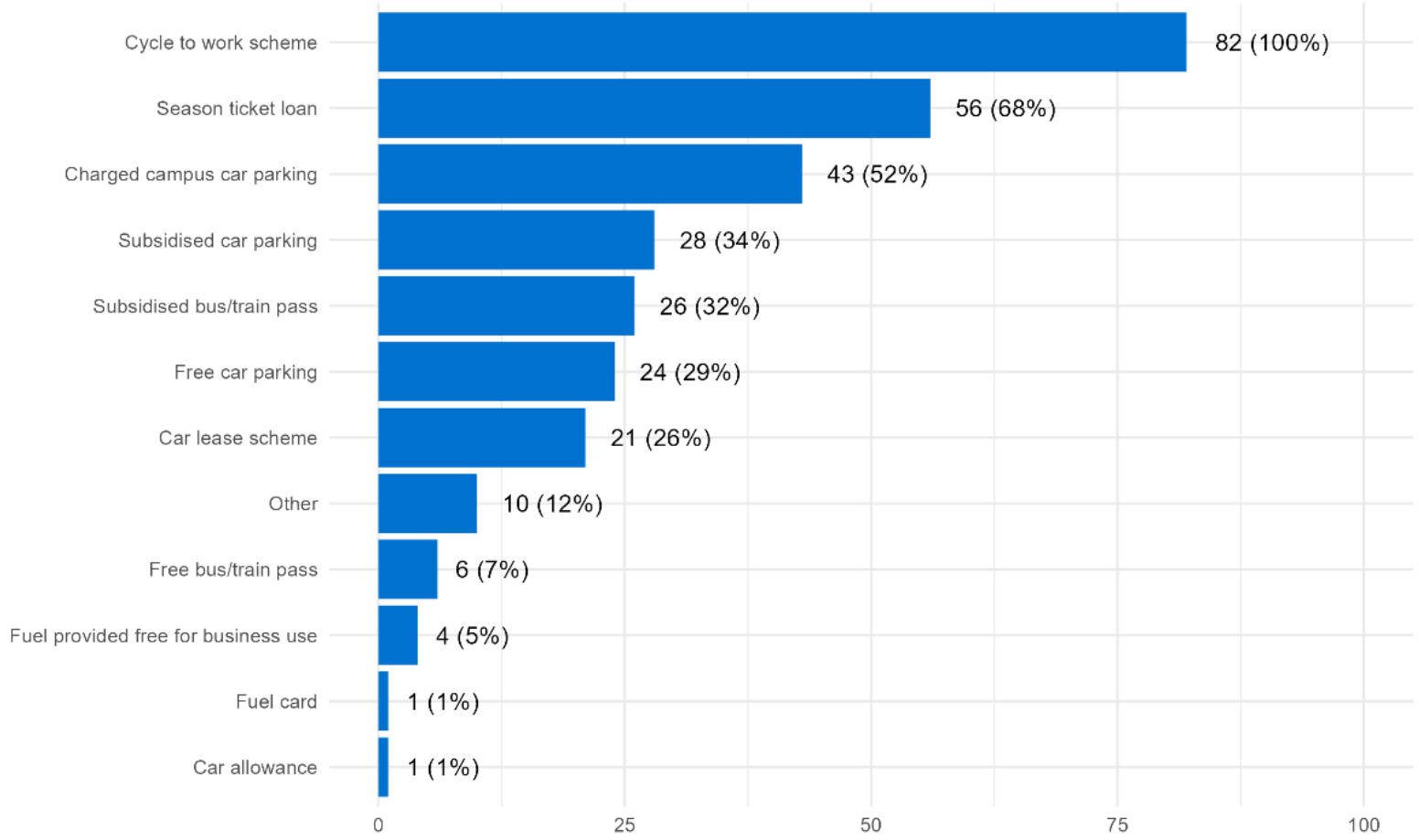
13: Travel to Work Schemes

HEIs also offer a range of travel to work schemes to help staff manage the costs and the practicalities of working.



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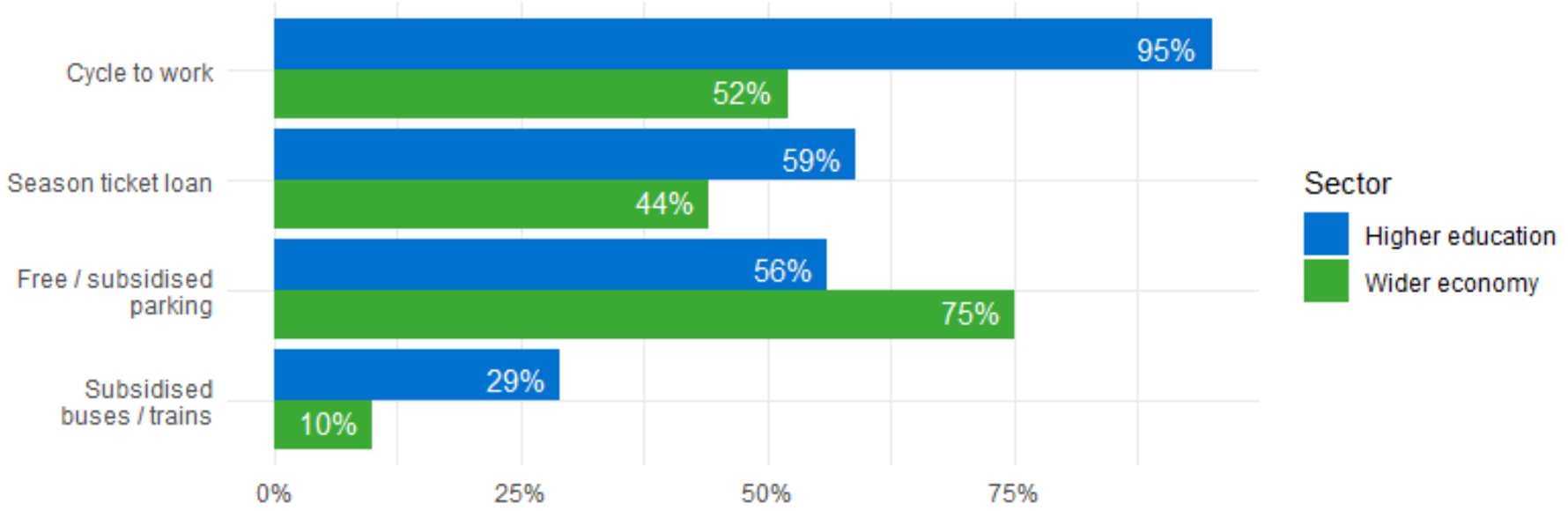
Travel schemes

HEIs are more likely to offer most travel schemes to a greater degree than in the wider economy. Cycle to work schemes are common. Whilst less common, HEIs still offer subsidised public transport schemes than in the wider economy, with 29% offering subsidised buses or trains versus 10% elsewhere, and on season ticket loans (59% vs 44%).

However, the wider economy is more likely to provide free or subsidised parking. Overall, HE supports sustainable and public transport options, while the wider economy continues to prioritise car-based benefits such as parking.



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14: Other Benefits

Non-pay benefits play an important role in making work more attractive and supporting day-to-day wellbeing. They can help with the cost of living, improve work–life balance, and make employees feel valued, even where pay is constrained. Simple, practical benefits often make the biggest difference to how people experience their workplace.

Our survey shows a clear emphasis on everyday benefits. Discounts at shops or restaurants (around 70%) are the most common, suggesting a focus on helping staff manage living costs. Subsistence allowances for meals or overnight stays (just over 40%) and vouchers (around 30–35%) are also widely used.

Other less common benefits include a subsidised canteen (just over 20%) and legal services (around 20%) are provided in some organisations, while vocational courses (around 15–20%) appear more limited. Only a small proportion offer insurance protection (under 10%).

Overall, most HEIs offer some form of non-pay support, but the mix is uneven. There is an opportunity to broaden the range of benefits and ensure they meet different needs across the workforce.

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15: Career Development Support

Career development is a core part of a good workplace. It helps people build skills, stay engaged, and see a clear future in their organisation. When staff feel supported to grow, they are more likely to perform well and stay, which is especially important during periods of change.

Conference attendance support (c.70–75%) is the most common, suggesting organisations value external learning and networking. Subsidised courses and qualifications (c.65–70%) and financial support for study skills (around 60%) are also widely available, highlighting a focus on formal development.

More tailored support is also common. Mentoring or coaching (just under 60%) and time off for development (mid-50%) give staff space to build skills in practice. By contrast, professional body membership reimbursement (around 30%) and other approaches (around 15%) are less widespread.

Overall, most organisations offer meaningful development support, but there is still room to make access more consistent and inclusive.

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16: Employee Voice

Employee voice gives people a say in how their work is organised and how decisions are made.

When staff know they will be listened to, it builds trust, improves day-to-day working relationships and helps organisations spot problems early. It also supports fair treatment, as people are more likely to raise concerns about workload, wellbeing, or consistency before issues escalate.

Our survey shows that most organisations have a mix of practical ways of hearing from staff. The most common is departmental meetings with senior leadership (around 60%), suggesting that direct, visible contact still matters the most. Pulse surveys and annual employee surveys (both around the 50%) are also widely used, giving organisations a regular awareness on staff views. Alongside these, focus groups and team meetings with senior leaders (just under or around 50%) provide opportunities for more open discussion.

Other methods are used less often. Online forums (c.35%), other approaches (c,30%), and one-to-one meetings with senior leadership are less common.

Few organisations report having no Employee Voice channels.

Overall, HEIs make real efforts to listen, but there is still room to widen how people can be heard and to make that voice have further impact.

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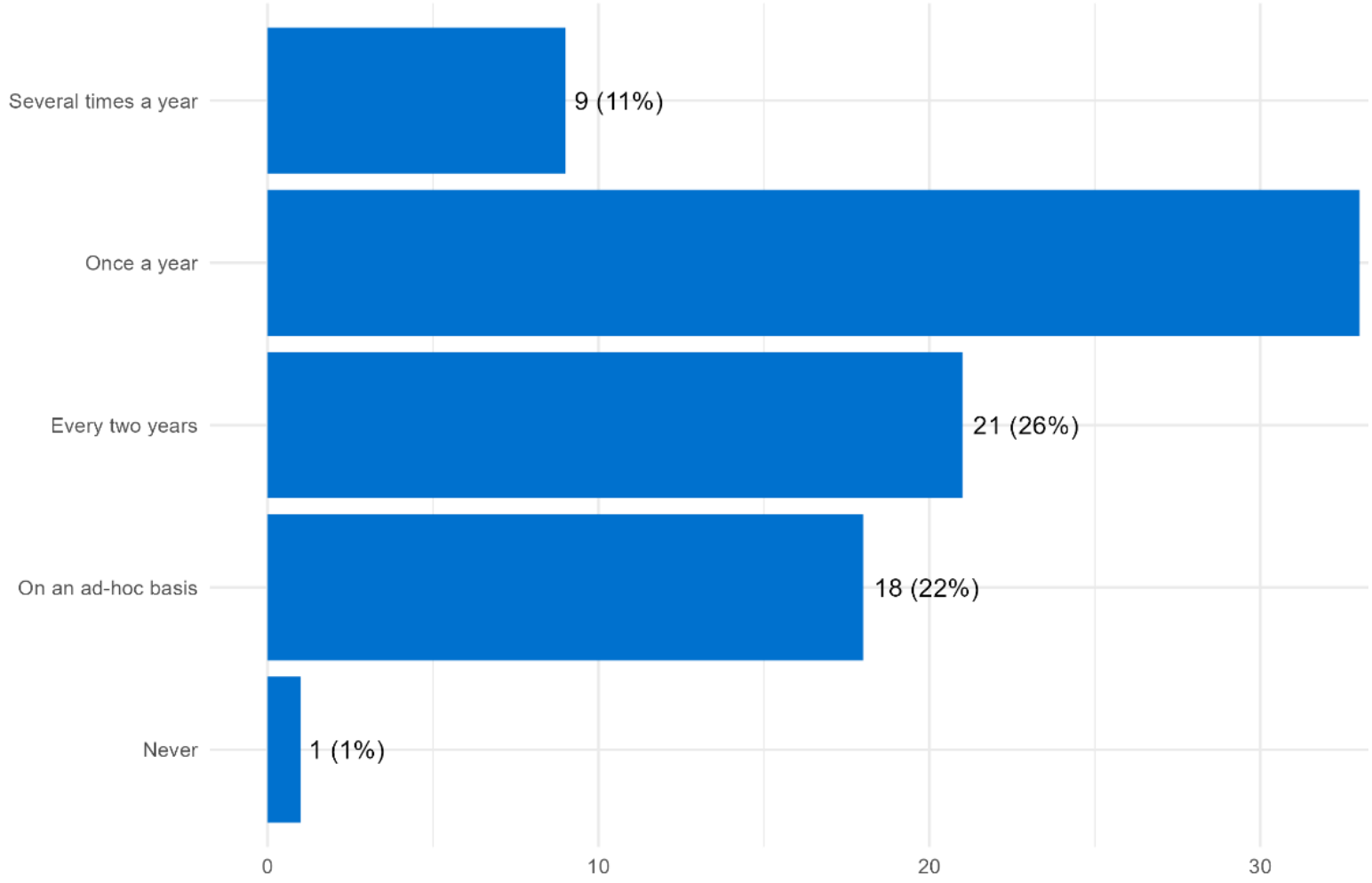
Frequency of staff surveys

The timing of staff surveys in HEIs varies.



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The information contained in these slides is designed to help provide Higher Education Institutions with benchmark their own practices. Those practices are evolving so these slides will be updated periodically.

If you are a member of UCEA and would like further information or would like to contribute information on the benefits of working at your HEI, please contact the Reward and Research team on research@ucea.ac.uk.

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