SURVEY FINDINGS

We Asked Canadian HR Leaders About Flexible Schedules
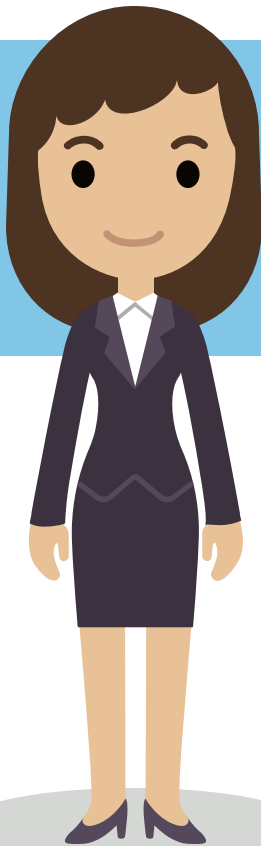
98%
agree that flexible scheduling contributes to employee well being

77%
feel flexible scheduling has a positive impact on productivity

87%
offer or considering offering some form of flexible scheduling

80%
have the ability to manage unique individual employee schedules

34%
offer flexible schedules as a policy

"A recent study of 2,202 employees by Flexjobs found that 41% gave not allowing flexible schedules as the reason for quitting their jobs."

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Flexible Schedules

Flexible schedules are now an employee expectation and have been linked to improved employee wellness.

Most organizations implemented flexible schedules as a response to the pandemic, and many are now reviewing their long term strategies.

We conducted a survey to understand the Canadian landscape as it pertains to the implementation and management of flexible schedules for knowledge workers within organizations.

Research indicates that flexible scheduling contributes to employee wellness and provides a more inclusive environment. 98% of respondents agree.

Here is how we have defined flexible schedules

- Flexible schedules are not unpredictable or unstable. They are defined schedules.

- Flexible schedules need to balance both the needs of the business and employee, with clear articulation on expectations, with policies in place so that everyone understands the rules.

- Flexible schedules define when an employee can work not where. Work from anywhere is different, however the challenges of implementing are similar.

- Flexible schedules can change based on the changing needs of the business and employee.

87% of respondents indicate their organization is offering or considering offering some form of flexible scheduling.
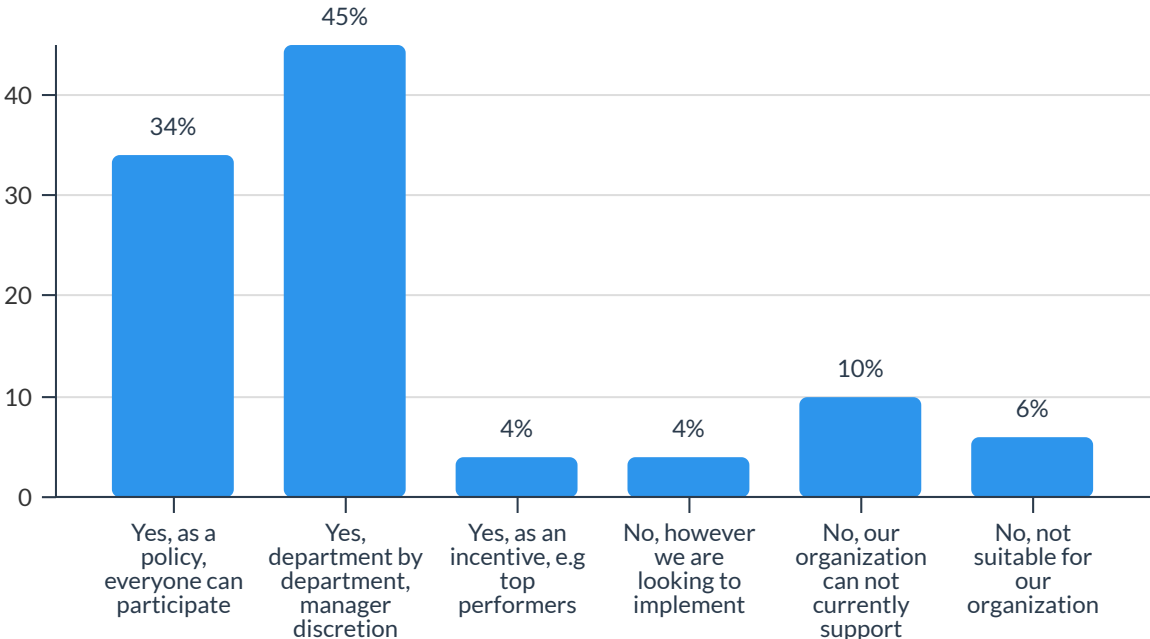
77% of respondents feel flexible scheduling has a positive impact on productivity.

Research agrees, flexible scheduling improves wellbeing and as a result of improved wellbeing employees are more productive.

It was good to see that no one feels that the impact is very negative.
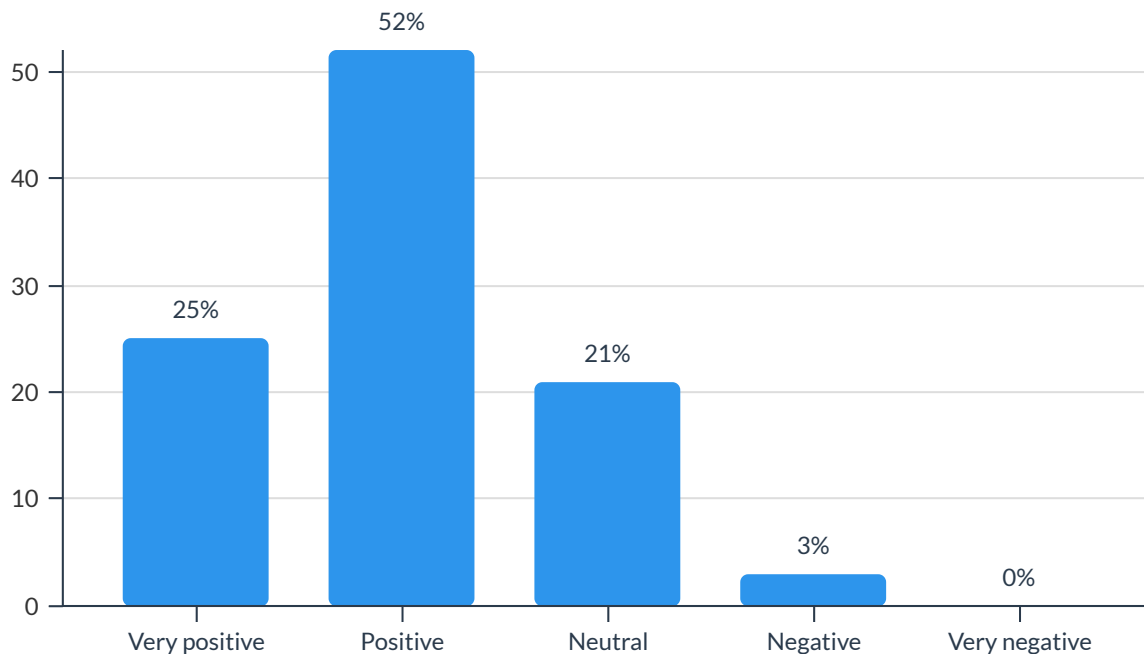
Respondents who replied negative were within Construction, Manufacturing, Technology, and Transport and Delivery.

80% of respondents indicate they have the ability to manage unique individual employee schedules in support of flexible schedules.
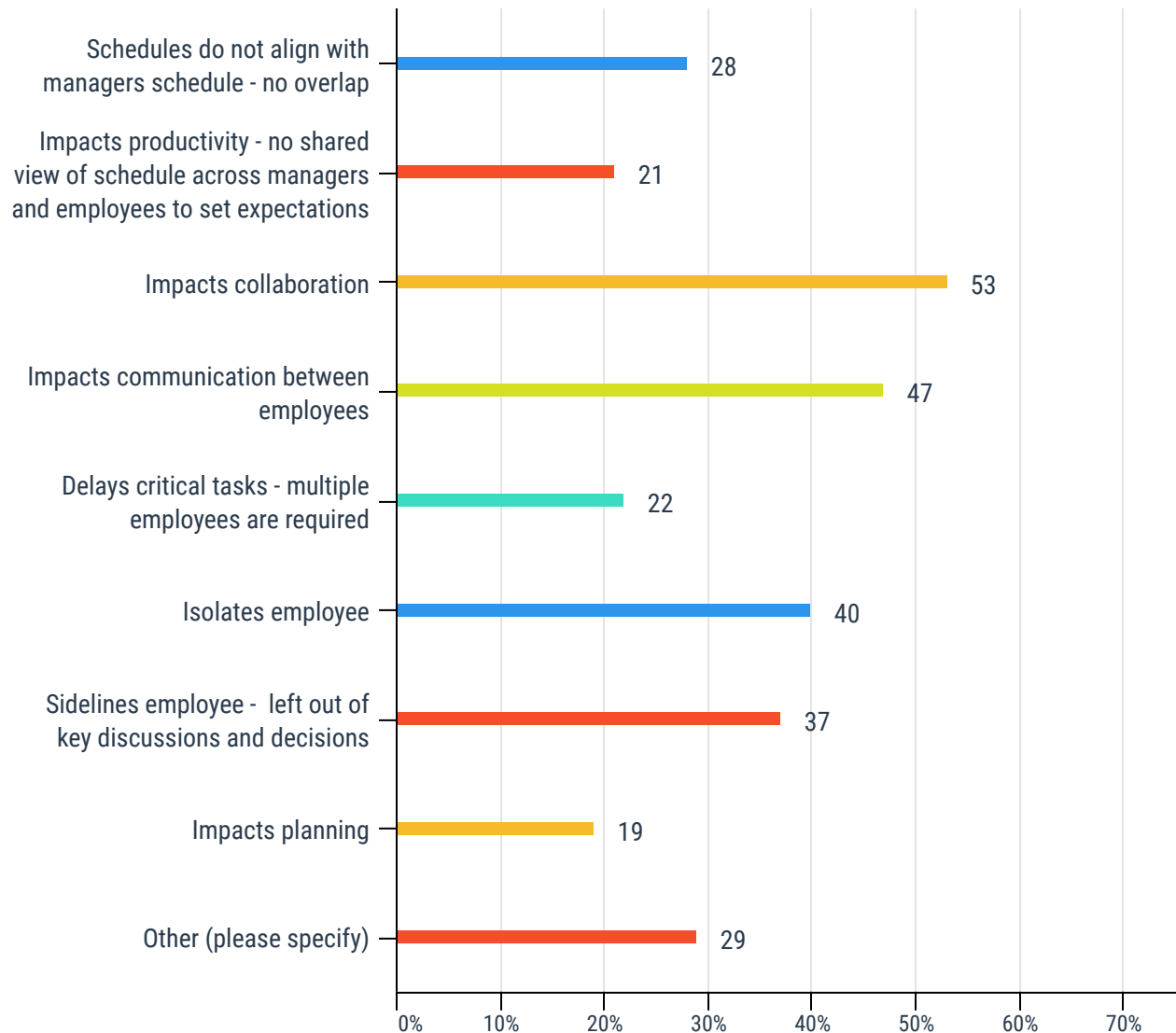
This is positive news as a critical success factor to offering flexible schedules is the ability to manage.

In addition to having calendar capability, there should be the ability to provide transparency of schedules within a team, or department to set expectations on response times and to enable respect for other's schedule.
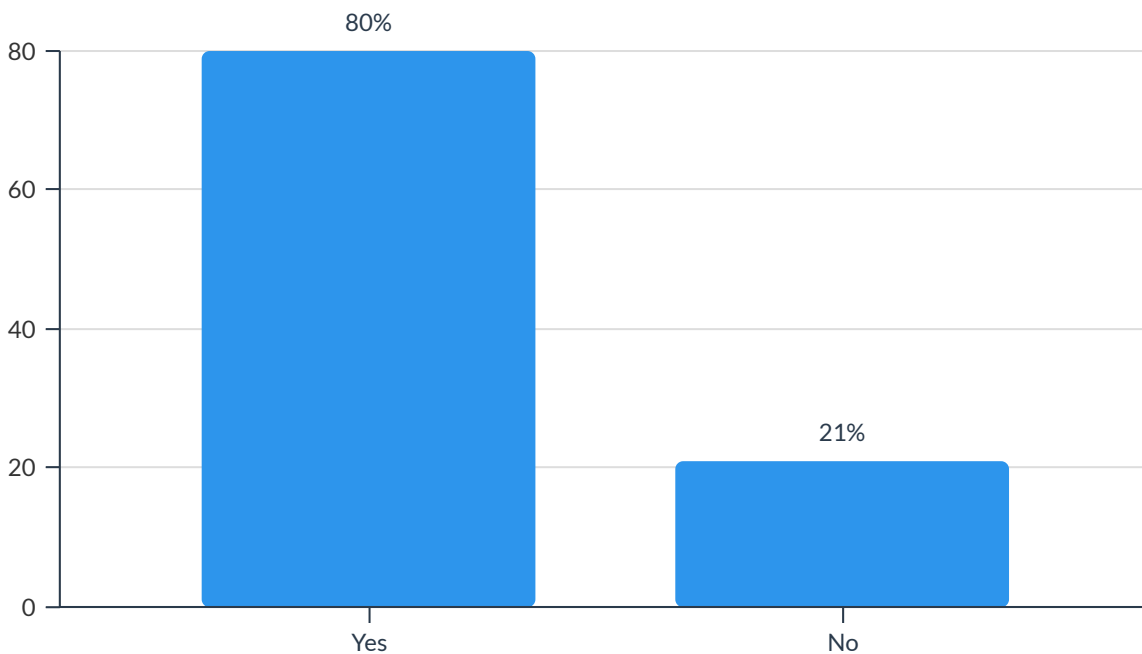
Collaboration followed by communication were the top challenges when implementing flexible schedules.

Challenges with implementing and managing flexible schedules

Challenge	Value
Schedules do not align with managers schedule - no overlap	28
Impacts productivity - no shared view of schedule across managers and employees to set expectations	21
Impacts collaboration	53
Impacts communication between employees	47
Delays critical tasks - multiple employees are required	22
Isolates employee	40
Sidelines employee - left out of key discussions and decisions	37
Impacts planning	19
Other (please specify)	29

The survey offered an opportunity for respondents to share additional challenges and comments. We grouped comments together and offer a perspective with the understanding we have not done due diligence on individual organization's situations.

Our clients don't allow us to offer flexible schedules
This group of comments implies all clients adhere to the same schedule. An example would be retail where everyone shops at the same time because that is when the store is open and there are often logistically reasons why extended hours cannot be offered.

The question to be explored is are you clients adhering to your schedule or are you adhering to theirs? Clients today want the flexibility to interact on their schedule. There may be an opportunity to explore flexible schedules and increase client experience.

Our organization structure and defined roles do not allow us to offer flexible schedules
Due to varying roles within an organization (knowledge worker, manufacturing lines) flexible schedules cannot be offered to all employees. This can be a very true statement, and if implemented for some roles and not others it can cause issues. However, doing nothing for everyone is probably not the right answer as no one is happy.

Here are a few things to consider.

Regarding defined roles, employees understand their roles are different particularly when comparing manufacturing lines to office workers. Have you asked those that can't be offered flexible schedules what their concerns are, and how these concerns could be mitigated? Is the decision based on data? Is it a fear the leadership team has or a real concern with the employees?

Regarding global organizations, flexible schedules could help global organizations with varying time zones by having more people flex with their counterparts in the other time zones.

Our leadership is preventing us from offering flexible scheduling

There are many reasons why leadership is not comfortable with offering flexible scheduling. Most stem from the following.

Lack of Trust. Until trust is earned, backup trust with data, and trust the hiring process. Implement a solution that enables managers to empower employees with confidence, and allow the opportunity for both managers and employees to validate decisions.

Lack of Data. Lack of data can create a void resulting in fear. It is unfair to ask managers to make decisions if they lack data and the tools to enable flexible schedule.

Lack of Training. Appropriate training to effectively manage remote employees, or employees that are not always working the same hours as a manager is required. The right set of data can facilitate the training.

Lack of Governance. Varying policies throughout the organization can cause disparity across teams. Look to define a corporate policy with departmental flexibility. This mitigates the roll out of flexible schedules based on individual views.

It is important to understand the root cause as to why management (board, executive, front line) does not support flexible schedules for their organization given the positive effect it has on wellness and ultimately productivity.

Our ability to collaborate is preventing us from offering flexible schedules

Working across teams and time zones can be challenging at the best of times. Assuming you have adequate collaboration tools for employees, look for opportunity for partial flex. This could be allowing certain flex days or hours, and include defined periods of overlap to enable time for meetings. Try a few things, learn, and enhance your approach.

The Right to Disconnect

Ontario added new requirements to the Employee Standards Act (ESA), 2000 effective June 2022 that requires employers with more than 25 employees to have a written policy on disconnecting from the workplace. Included in the "disconnecting from work" definition is work related communications (emails, phone calls, video calls, sending or reviewing messages).

Quebec is evaluating Bill 799 which if passed could include fines of up to $100,000 for violating employees right to disconnect.

Currently, we are not aware of other provinces looking at implementing such laws.

There is much debate over the effectiveness of these laws in terms of the ability to enforce. However, what is clear is that the lines between personal and work hours is blurred which is contributing to employee burnout, which has a negative effect on productivity. The pandemic exasperated the issue with work from home but did not create the issue.

Employers and employees have and are looking to implement practices that will enable employees to disconnect regardless of provincial mandates.

This survey is looking at the impact if any on flexible schedules.

No Impact: The right to disconnect does not seem to be impacting organization's ability to offer flexible scheduling

Although the right to disconnect does not seem to be impacting organization's ability to offer flexible scheduling with the challenges facing organizations and the fact that most organizations are relying on the employee to report, we could see a greater impact in the future if organizations do not take action to implement processes and solutions to help them manage.

97% of HR leaders have indicated that the right to disconnect mandate is not impacting their ability to offer flexible schedules.
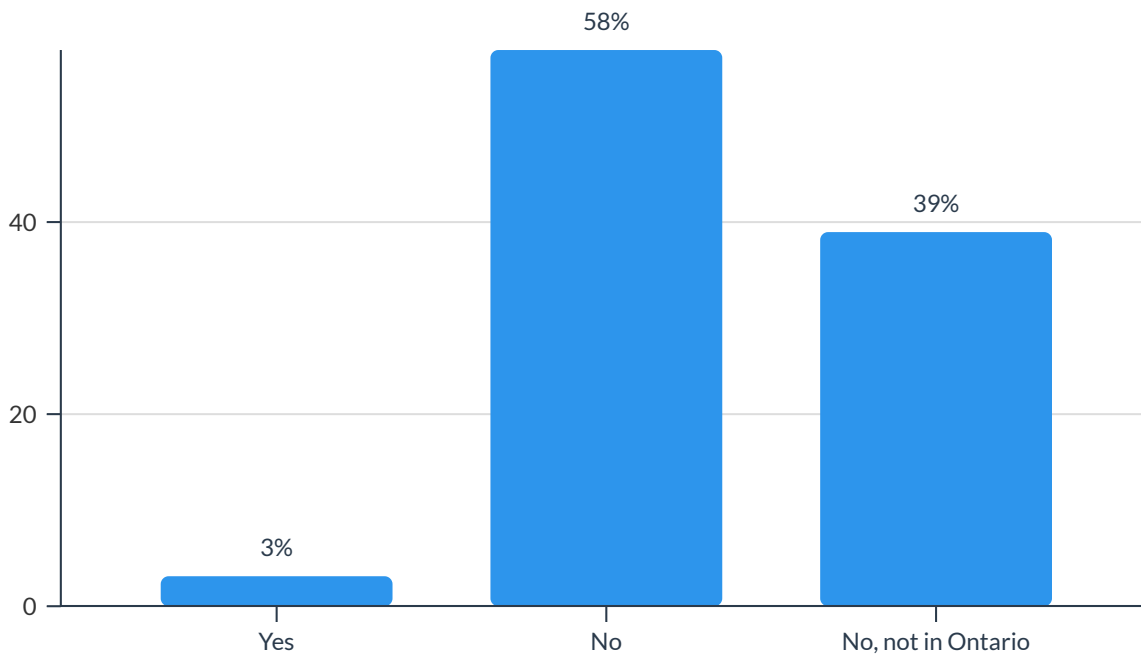
This chart represents the responses across Canada, and we hope this trend holds.

**Only 5% of Ontario organizations can understand when an individuals' right to disconnect has been impacted.**
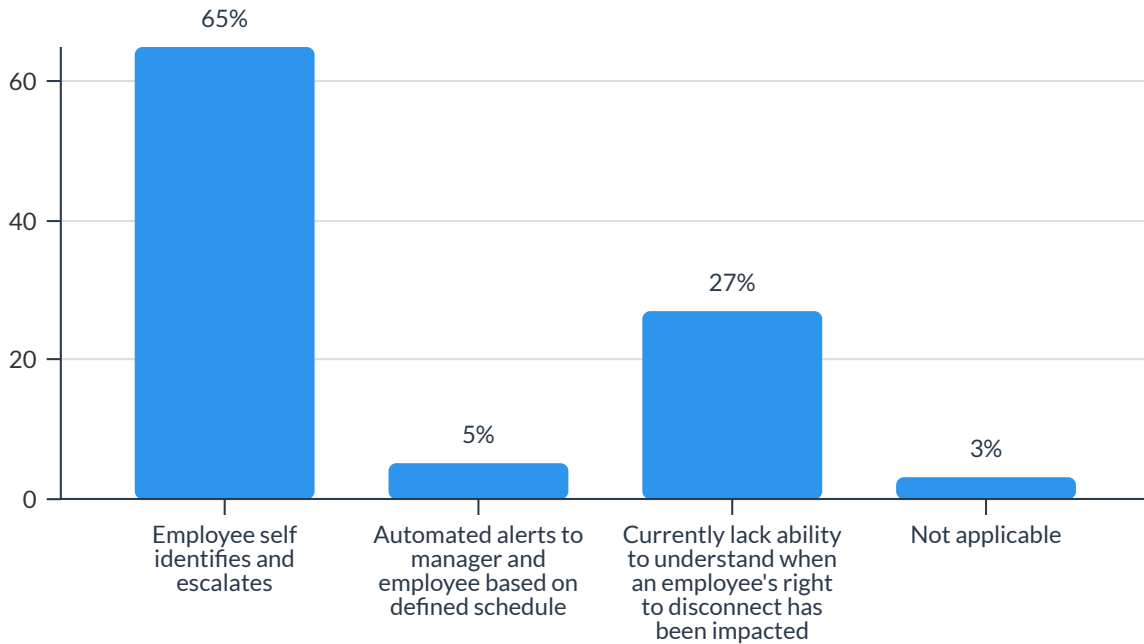
65% rely on the employee to self-identify and escalate, and 27% indicate they currently lack ability to understand when an employee's right to disconnect has been impacted.

This suggests that the policies organizations have put in place to satisfy the new ESA requirements cannot be easily managed if it all.

Outside of Ontario the results are consistent with 42% indicating that the employee would be required to self-identify and escalate.
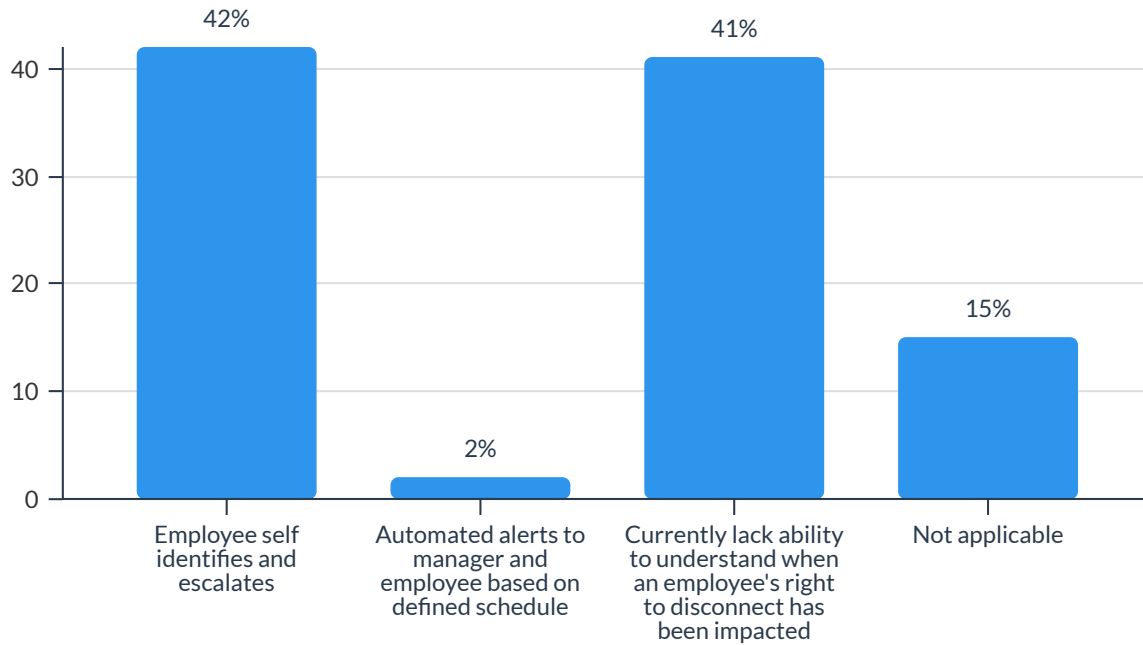
Should legislation be implemented in other provinces, organizations and employees will experience similar challenges as is currently faced in Ontario.

54% of Ontario respondents selected "Employee must initiate" as a challenge with managing the right to disconnect.

Challenges with managing the right to disconnect - Ontario view
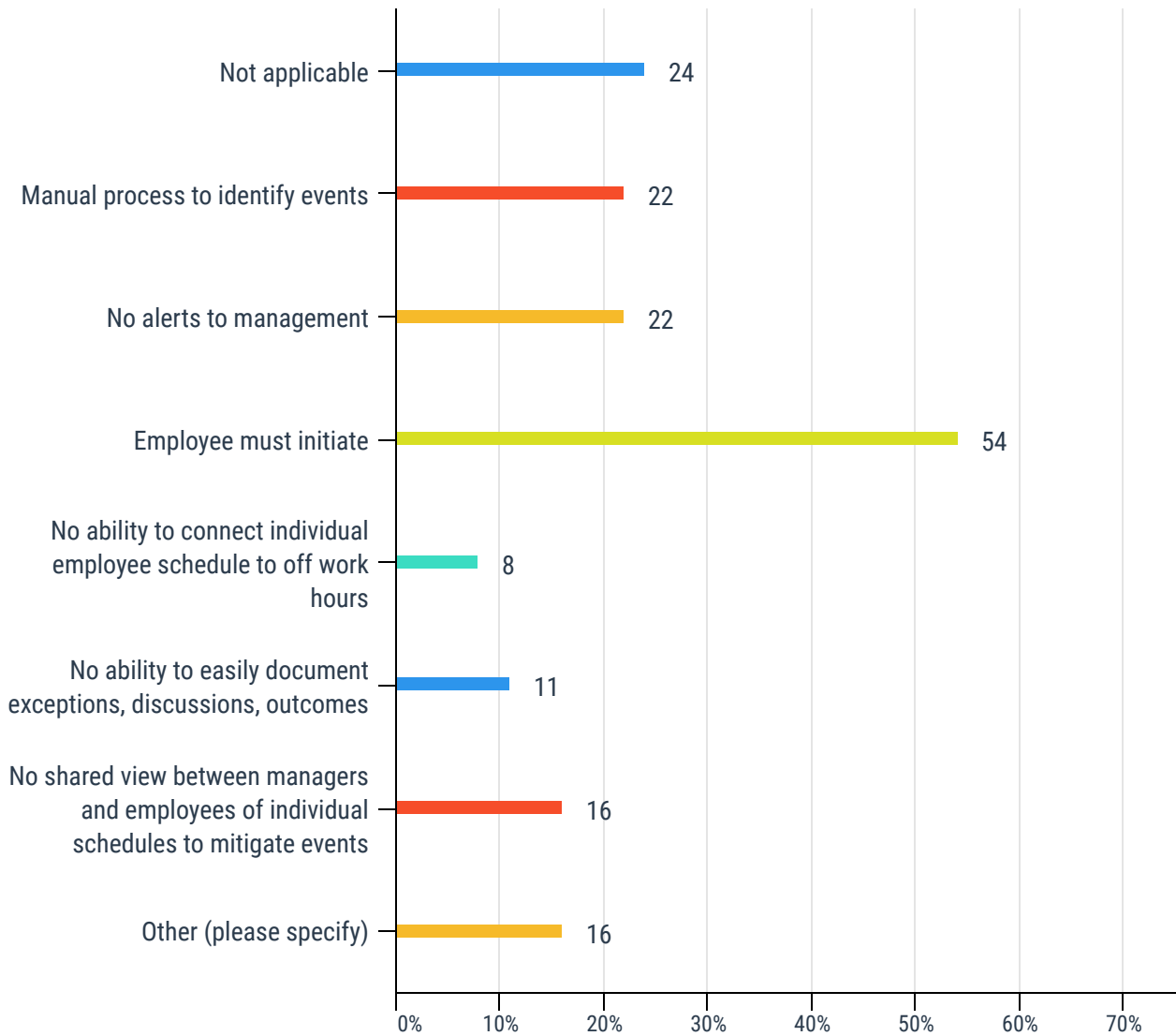
Outside of Ontario, 63% of respondents selected "Employee must initiate" as a challenge with managing the right to disconnect.
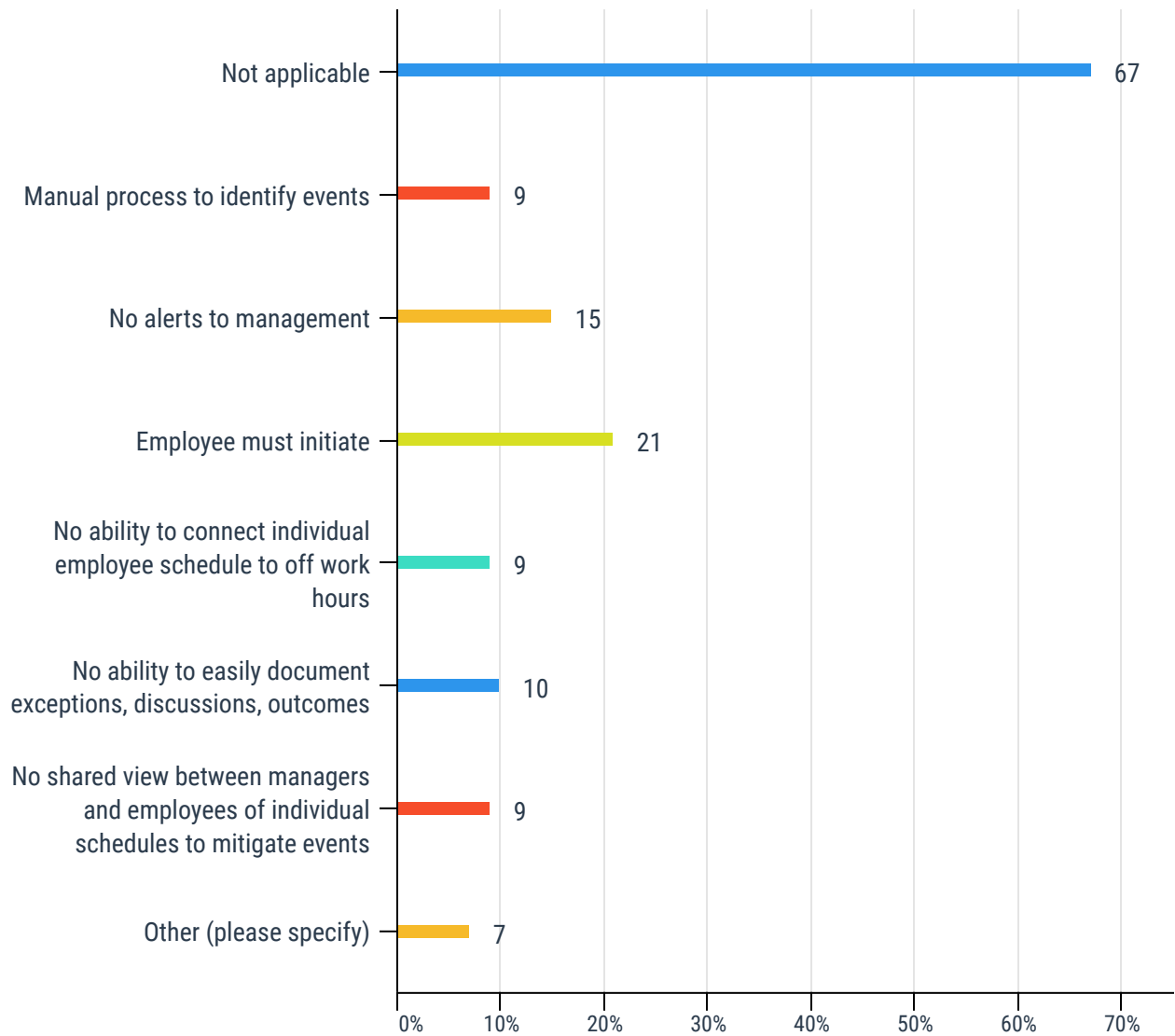
Challenges with managing the right to disconnect - Outside of Ontario

Category	Value
Not applicable	67
Manual process to identify events	9
No alerts to management	15
Employee must initiate	21
No ability to connect individual employee schedule to off work hours	9
No ability to easily document exceptions, discussions, outcomes	10
No shared view between managers and employees of individual schedules to mitigate events	9
Other (please specify)	7

The survey offered an opportunity for respondents to share additional challenges and comments.

Employees are ignoring their right to disconnect.

Given that only 5% of Ontario organizations can understand when an individuals' right to disconnect has been impacted, and the remainder have put the onus on the employee to manage this is not surprising.

Here are a few areas to explore if this is occurring at your organization.

Culture and change management. Is there an unstated expectation, or peer pressure that response is required?

Concerns on fairness. Do employees feel that if they don't respond after hours they will be overlooked for promotion or not seen as a team player?

Clarity on expectations. Are polices clearly understood and published both in terms of expectations, and how events are managed? Is there a clear understanding that they are not required to respond? Is there a way to understand/view everyone's schedule to know why someone is not responding or when to expect a response?

Emergencies negate the right to disconnect. Employees should be open to modifying their schedule occasionally to help the business.

Most employees come to work to do a good job and understand that on occasion situations arise where their schedule may be impacted. If this is an issue for your organization, explore the occurrence of these events to ensure they are not a result of poor planning, occurring too frequently, or that select individuals are continually called upon to lean in.

Having a solution that understand the occurrence of these events would help define mitigating strategies.

Our Perspective

Studies show that flexible schedules have a positive impact on productivity, and that employees now expect the ability to have some flexibility in their schedule.

Flexible schedules may not be suitable for all roles or organizations. However, we would challenge that for knowledge workers the opportunity to offer flexible schedules is high.

Where full flexibility cannot be offered there may be an opportunity for partial flexibility. A good approach is to have an intent to offer flexible schedules and make conscious decisions as to why it can't be done.

To be successful you need a solution that can support flexible schedules, along with the appropriate change management and training.

Defined corporate policies are a must to ensure fairness across the organization. Department by department implementations should be monitored for disparity and what could be deemed unfair. For example, managers with different abilities may have different levels of confidence in their ability to manage a team with flexible schedules.
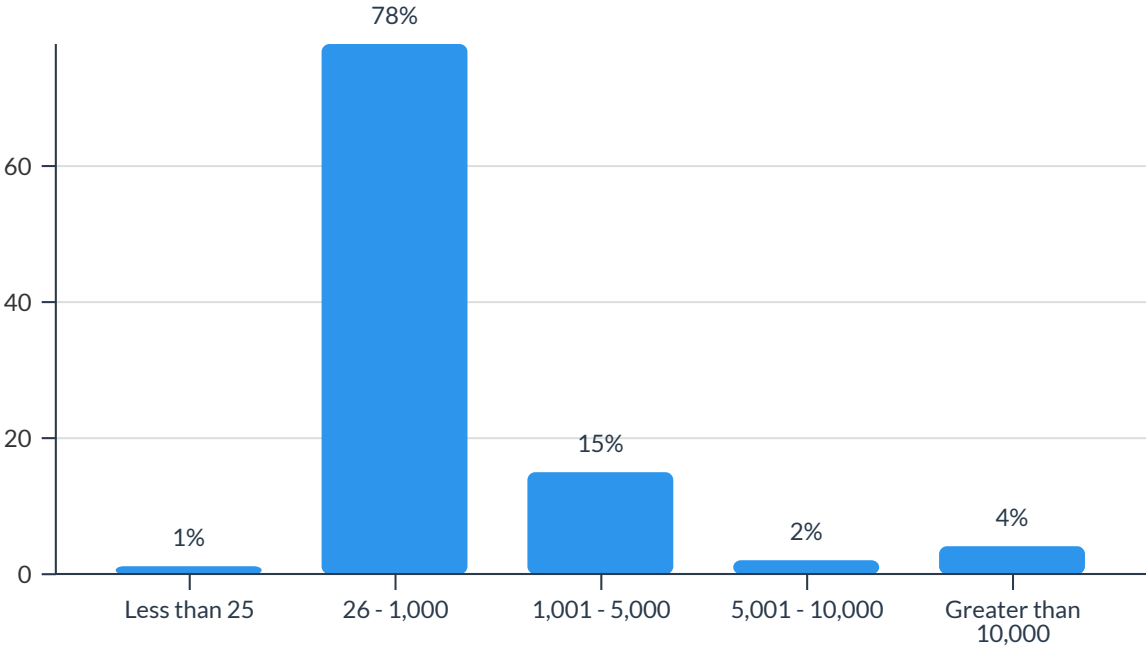
To manage flexible solutions you should implement a solution that can support the following:

- **Schedule transparency** within and possibly across teams. This allows for employees to understand when others are disconnected and enables respect for individual schedules.

- **Employee driven schedules**. Provide the flexibility for employees to create their own schedules, guided by the manager or department schedule, enabling them to choose times when they are most productive.

- **Data driven insight** on most productive times to help define the best possible schedules.

- **Schedule deviation alerts**. Alert both managers and employees on schedule deviations such a not enough defined work hours which could have an impact on productivity, or a right to disconnect violation.
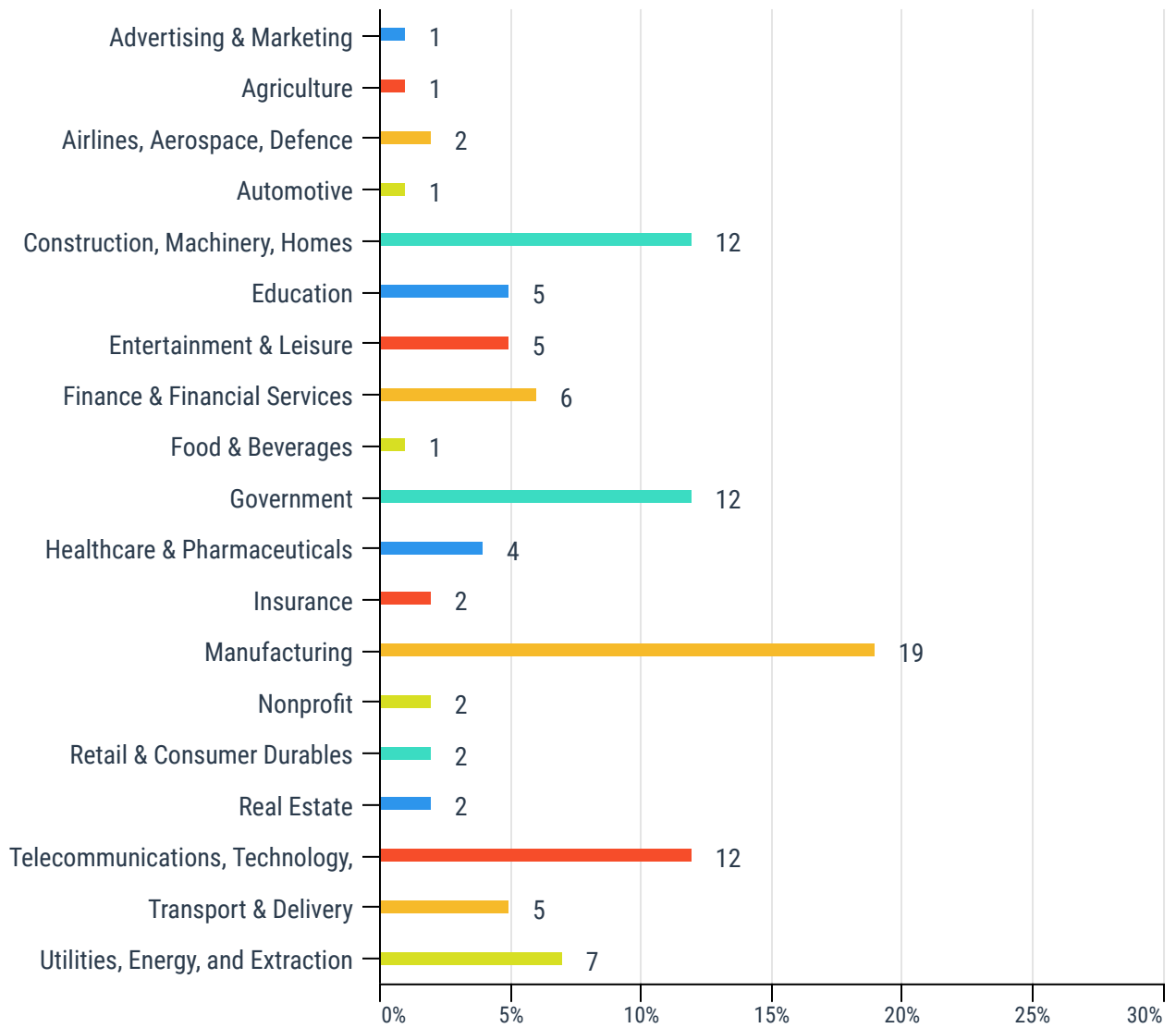
Survey Participants

HR Leader across Canada were asked to participate in the survey.

Participant's Organization Size

Participant's Industry

Industry	Percentage	Count
Advertising & Marketing		1
Agriculture		1
Airlines, Aerospace, Defence		2
Automotive		1
Construction, Machinery, Homes		12
Education		5
Entertainment & Leisure		5
Finance & Financial Services		6
Food & Beverages		1
Government		12
Healthcare & Pharmaceuticals		4
Insurance		2
Manufacturing		19
Nonprofit		2
Retail & Consumer Durables		2
Real Estate		2
Telecommunications, Technology,		12
Transport & Delivery		5
Utilities, Energy, and Extraction		7

About Kunin AI

Kunin AI, is focused on creating high performing teams and an environment that supports the individual. We believe in challenging the status quo to redefine how we work, leveraging Artificial Intelligence in a socially responsible way.

We provide employees a view into how they work with insights that can change behaviour patterns to increase their productivity, increase focus, decrease stress, and promote balance.

We provide managers the information they need to create high performing teams with a solution that supports the individual. This includes providing real-time insights on productivity, enabling flexible schedules and work from anywhere.

Our Mission is to create work environments to be inclusive, transparent, empowering spaces where individuals and teams can perform at their absolute best. Our belief is that data drives insights and we believe that capturing data and metrics are an integral part of understanding how to improve, and that insights should be empowering to maximize individual potential.

Our solution has been designed as an "employee first solution" with full transparency on data collected, how data is used, and transparent insights between employees and managers holding everyone accountable.

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Lisa is the co-founder and CCO of Kunin AI. She has been helping organizations for over 25 years to challenge the status quo with openness, integrity, and transparency, to see new perspectives, share new ideas, and positively impact change resulting in increased productivity, employee and customer engagement.

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