

# OUR PEOPLE

Focus on leading organisational wellbeing

Annual Review **2021/2022**

*Warwickshire County Council, a great place to work where diverse and talented people are enabled to be their best.*



# Warwickshire's story



## **Message from Monica Fogarty Chief Executive, Warwickshire County Council**

The wellbeing of our people continues to be one of our top priorities and is central to supporting our people to be their best at work. Maintaining this focus enables the council to deliver its objectives.

As we have transitioned out of the Pandemic, unsurprisingly we have seen a slight increase in our absence levels, however we are delighted that we have remained on target.

One of our proudest achievements was to be awarded the Thrive at Work Bronze accreditation, which formally acknowledges our commitment to staff wellbeing. We are now working towards the silver award.

Warwickshire's success depends upon the passion, dedication and hard work of our people providing services to our County. And this commitment has shown no sign of diminishing, despite the increased pressures of the Pandemic. We do not underestimate the ongoing impact the last two years has had on our people, and we continue to prioritise our wellbeing approach to ensure colleagues are supported to stay well and be at their best.

# At a glance

1. Absence has increased throughout the year from 7.45 to 8.61 days per FTE colleague. The increase was to be expected as we moved out of the pandemic and social distancing restrictions were eased. The year-end figure is within the target of 8 days per FTE (+/- 1 day). Although we have seen an increase, we are still significantly below pre pandemic levels (21%) and many of our benchmark comparators, and our aim now is to now stabilise absence rates.
2. We have continued to check- in with our people regularly to see how people are feeling and tailor our wellbeing offer accordingly. Just below 80% of our people have been doing 'OK or better', and 83% of our people feel that wellbeing is promoted at work. We also asked for the first time whether work has a positive impact on wellbeing, with agreement from over half of those who responded.
3. The sustainable and resilient workforce project actions are now complete and this activity has transitioned into business as usual. The project has successfully achieved Thrive accreditation, launched the 'Approach to Wellbeing', refreshed and launched the attendance at work policy, as well as other target actions to maximise attendance. Other wellbeing activity has included collaboration with Public Health (Sugar Smart), providing a new on-site flu vaccination service and trialing a wellbeing and volunteering day
4. A refocused Leading Organisational Wellbeing group, a collaborative group of management and wellbeing representatives, continue to drive actions and involves colleagues in ways to maximise wellness at work.
5. The focus for 2021/2022 was to reduce absence relating to stress and mental health reasons and long-term absences. Stress and mental health remains our highest reason for absence, as a percentage of time lost has reduced from 33% to 28% and the days per FTE colleague has reduced from 3.17 in 2020, to 2.47 in 2021, to 2.43 in 2022. Long-term absence, lasting 4 weeks or more, as a percentage of time lost has reduced from 71.4% to 63.3%.
6. Over 54% of our people have taken no sickness absence over the last 12 months, this has reduced from 67% the previous year, but remains higher than pre-Pandemic levels.
7. Musculo-skeletal remains our second highest reason for absence, and has remained consistent at around 15%, for 2021/2022. Our third highest reason was coronavirus, which made up 12% of our absence, compared to 4.5% the previous year increasing from 0.3 days per FTE to just over 1 day per FTE.
8. As we move towards a 'new normal', absence is likely to continue to fluctuate, therefore it is proposed that the target for 2022/2023 is to remain the same at 8 days per FTE (+/- 1 day).
9. An area of focus for the Council Plan is to support people to live healthy, happy and independent lives. Ensuring health and wellbeing is integral to all aspects of the Council's work, informs our strategic priorities and the wellbeing of our people is integral to this.
10. Priorities for 2022/23 will be to stabilise absence levels and continue to focus on:
  - stress and mental health related absence (including workload management);
  - managing long term absence;
  - launching a managers absence dashboard to provide them with up-to-date data to support them in managing attendance at work;
  - progressing with gaining to evidence to achieve Silver Thrive at Work accreditation;
  - monitoring the success of the Our Approach to Wellbeing.

# Our People Strategy alignment



In 2020, the Council refreshed the 'Our People Strategy' to drive our vision that Warwickshire County Council should be a great place to work where diverse and talented people are enabled to be their best.

## Our behaviours

Our behaviours were first introduced in 2016 and these haven't changed. Our behaviours frame how we should behave at work. They help us to understand how we should go about our work and the way we should interact with each other and our customers.

 do what we say.	 move with purpose and energy.
 focus on solutions.	 help people and communities to find their own solutions.
 build strong working relationships.	 be the best we can be.

To support the achievement of our vision, five key organisational values have been identified:



High performing



Collaborative



Customer focused



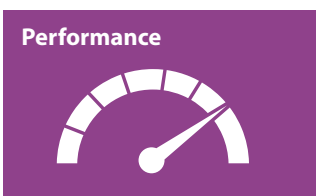
Accountable



Trustworthy

## Our People Strategy building blocks

The building blocks provide the foundations for the delivery of Our People Strategy vision. We have identified six key building blocks:



For each building block we have a clear set of outcomes we need to achieve so that we can fulfill our vision and transform as an organisation in a way which is sustainable.

# Looking back

One of the main enablers of the Our People Strategy is that **“We will listen, learn and act to create an inclusive organisation with a sustainable and resilient workforce.”** In order to do this, keeping our people well and at work remains a key priority.

In 2020 a sustainable and resilient workforce project was set up, with the aim of supporting the wellbeing of our people and reducing the level of sickness absence across the council. With the Pandemic response during 2020/2021 there was a significant reduction in sickness absence.

## Key focus areas for 2021/2022

In last year's annual review, the following were set as the priorities for 2021/2022

- To reduce stress and mental health related absence and workload management.
- managing long-term absence;
- understand the longer-term impact of the pandemic, continue to monitor how people are feeling as we enter the reinstatement phase and move to an agile working approach, where we will measure, listen learn and adapt;
- using data to target our actions;
- target areas with high levels of absence, correlate with other HR metrics and provide support to address specific issues;
- seek to maintain the improvement in attendance, with an employee absence target of 8 days per FTE (with a tolerance of +/- 1 day);
- launch wellbeing charter including managers must dos;
- achieve Bronze Thrive accreditation and develop an action plan for Silver;
- link Public Health and employee wellbeing initiatives; and
- review the sickness absence policy and procedure in line with our tone and voice work.

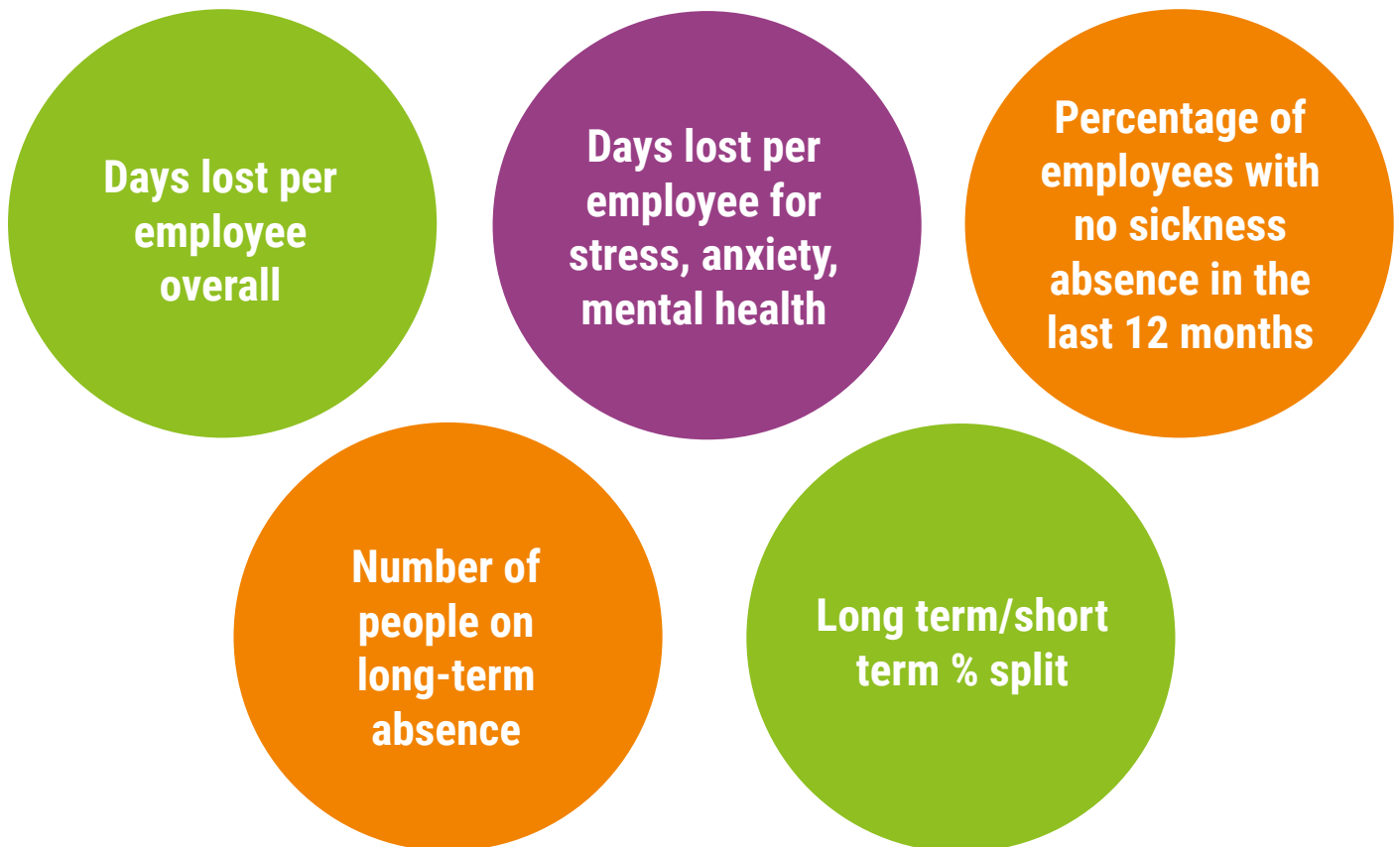
This document reviews absence statistics and actions taken to create a sustainable and resilient workforce through 2020/2021 along with the plans for 2022/2023.

Whilst absence has increased slightly for 2022, it is still well below pre-Pandemic levels, and the increase was not unexpected as we moved away from social distancing restrictions.

# Looking back

## Measuring success

To measure our performance, we will continue to monitor and report the following:



## Leading with Data - Performance Measures 21/22

- **8.61 days lost per FTE** - increase from 7.45 in 2020/21 but remains on target and significantly below pre-pandemic levels of 10.9 days per FTE.
- **2.43 days lost per FTE stress, mental health, anxiety** reduced from 2.47 in 2021 and 3.17 days in 2020 and under the target of 3 days.
- **54% of our people have taken no absence** reduced from 67% in 2020/21, but remains above pre-pandemic levels of 50.45%.
- **88 individuals on long-term sick** increased from 59 in 2020/21 but remains nearly 50% lower than pre-pandemic level of 153.
- **63%:37% long term : short term split**, moving towards a more equal position from 71% in 2020/21, and 66% in 2019/20.

# Achievements 2021/2022

## Sustainable and Resilient Workforce Project

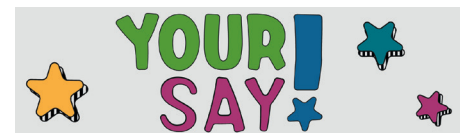
The project has continued to support the management of wellbeing, absence and attendance, by ensuring that the Council has the data and insight, culture, behaviours and skills to maximise wellbeing and attendance at work. The project is now moving to business as usual, with the renamed Leading Organisational Wellbeing group.

## Leading Organisational Wellbeing Group

The sustainable and resilient workforce group has now been embedded as business as usual, renamed and meets quarterly, the council wide collaboration includes a cross section of managers and leaders and professionals from HR, Health and Safety, Business Intelligence and Communications. The group monitors absence trends and wellbeing initiatives and scopes future activity as well as progressing the Silver Thrive at Work accreditation.

## Engagement

We are implementing a new approach to engagement in 2022, which continues to provide regular check-ins with our people. The main focus for 2021/2022 was wellbeing, and for 2022/2023 this will also include workload and increasing participation rates. Through 2021/2022 the response rates have ranged from 29% to 44%.



The wellbeing of our people continued to be a consistent theme, where we tracked how people had been feeling. Throughout, around 80% reported feeling OK or better, although the number of people not coping well increased. Therefore, supporting the wellbeing of our people continues to be a priority.

### The check-in results showed that:

- 83% of our people believe wellbeing is promoted at work, which is a slight reduction from 2020/21 but remains an 11% increase on pre pandemic levels;
- 88% are satisfied with internal communications, consistent with 2020/21 but a 10% increase on pre-Pandemic levels;
- employee engagement score remained consistent and above pre-pandemic levels at 74%; and
- 83% of our people believe WCC values equality and diversity in the workplace.

For the first time we measured the impact that work has on wellbeing, finding that 52% believe work has a positive impact. With the new approach to engaging with our people, we will combining the following questions to provide a wellbeing measure:

- I am able to prioritise my wellbeing;
- I know where to access support for my wellbeing; and
- I believe my manager cares about my wellbeing.

# Achievements 2021/2022

## Thrive at Work accreditation

In September 2021, WCC was awarded the Bronze accreditation through the West Midlands Combined Authority's Thrive at Work programme, recognising our commitment to employee wellbeing. Data from the associated Health Needs Assessment (HNA) has been used to tailor our wellbeing offer. We are now collecting the evidence required to achieve Silver, which will include a follow up HNA in Autumn 2022, and we aim to be assessed for Silver in 2023/2024.



## Approach to Wellbeing

The approach to wellbeing has been launched, which describes our commitment to wellbeing and outlines individual and managers expectations in managing wellbeing.



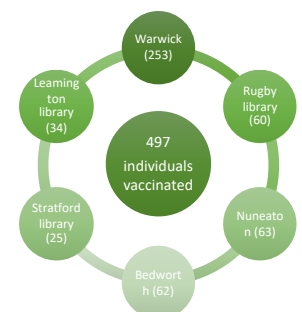
## Attendance at Work Policy

The former sickness absence policy has been replaced by the Attendance at Work policy, which includes the adult-to-adult, strengths-based tone and voice of Our People Vision: Warwickshire County Council, a great place to work where diverse and talented people are enabled to be their best.

The stages of the policy have not changed, but we have embedded a far greater emphasis on working in partnership and enabling our people to return to work positively and efficiently. Where levels of absence are problematic, formal processes remain.

## Flu vaccination campaign

Over the winter months we combined our usual offer of reimbursing our people for flu vaccinations, with an on-site clinic offer, where our people could attend a WCC location to be vaccinated. 497 people attended the on-site clinic and 125 people were reimbursed. This approach has been reviewed and, informed by feedback and lessons learnt, recommendations to continue the service are being made to Corporate Board for 2022/2023.





# Achievements 2021/2022

## Wellbeing initiatives

Our wellbeing offer has continued to support our people to be well at work; campaigns have included:

- Stress awareness messages and awareness raising around the menopause;
- sugar Smart and mental wellbeing activities, aligned with Public Health;
- healthy cooking demonstrations and an employee created digital cookery book;
- refresh and launch of the attendance at work policy and support;
- redefining the role of the listening mates and wellbeing champions;
- time to talk mental health lunch time conversations;
- launch of HighFive recognition and promotion of recognition overall;
- Implementation of 'Viva Insights' on MS 365 encouraging breaks, focus time and meditations;
- additional employee support networks and groups established; and
- for the last six months of 21/22 and linked to our recovery from COVID we trialled a wellbeing and volunteering day. This initiative was intended to encourage our people to proactively manage their own health and wellbeing by providing a dedicated opportunity to learn something new and/or connect with our communities.



Samantha Smith  
has received a  
Highfive

Move With Purpose and Energy  
Thank you for turning my request around at  
such short notice - you're always so  
efficient!  
from Jeffrey Morris



Sam Smith, Specialist Business  
Support Officer, recently  
received a *highfive* from  
manager Jeff Morris.



**Sam said:**

He needed an urgent invoice raising  
which I managed to turn around  
quickly. I was pleasantly surprised to  
receive a highfive - getting recognition  
from someone you work with is nice,  
makes you feel as though you're really  
doing a good job."



## Targeted support

Where services had absence rates above the target of 8 days per FTE, information and support was provided to SLT meetings to support reducing absence levels.

## Coronavirus

Coronavirus is the third highest reason for absence, equating to 12% of time lost. Our approach to agile working has supported our infection prevention and control during the pandemic. The long-term effects of the virus are still unknown as we are only just moving out of restrictions and therefore this action will carry forward into next year.

# Achievements 2021/2022

## How We Work

We launched the approach to agile working in Spring 2021, based on principles that included business need, trust and choice, supporting our people to work in a more flexible, empowered way that enables them to be their best. Through the Pandemic, a large number of our people worked from home, and a significant cohort (e.g. WFRS, social care, libraries) continued to operate from a work setting, taking opportunities to work in an agile way where they could. Our approach to how we work, will now move into business as usual, with a return to using business settings and an ongoing commitment to work being what you do, not necessarily where you do it, maintaining awareness of the messaging and those on our frontline.



With the changes to our property estate resulting from the Estate Masterplan Programme and early workplace redesign, it is anticipated that business settings will provide enhanced opportunities for collaboration. Key to our work culture is to improve opportunities for people to come together. This will look very different from one team to another, depending on the business needs of their service and they will be supported by bespoke Team Principles, which are designed and managed locally. Supporting all our people to be able to deliver great outcomes, whilst working in ways that enable them to do their best, is key to our success. Wellbeing considerations are an important element of this work.

## Insight and data for Managers

Managers have continued to be provided with monthly data to support them in managing attendance. Alongside this, work has been taking place to develop meaningful, relevant and accessible absence dashboards, which are due to be launched later this year.

# Looking forward

## Key focus areas for 2022/2023

- Developing a Wellbeing delivery plan that co-ordinates all wellbeing activity;
- launch the Managers' absence dashboard, providing up to date information to managers to support the management of attendance;
- review the success of the Approach to Wellbeing, particularly regarding return-to-work interviews, early referral to occupational health, long term sickness action plans and accurate and up to date absence information recorded in YourHR;
- understanding the longer term impact of the pandemic;
- target areas of high or increasing absence levels; and
- prepare for Silver Thrive at Work accreditation;

## Key measures and targets for 2022/2023

- 8 days per FTE (+/- 1 day) sickness absence
- 2.5 days per FTE stress / mental health / anxiety absence
- % wellbeing engagement score, setting the baseline
  - **I am able to prioritise my wellbeing**
  - **I believe my manager cares about my wellbeing**
  - **I know where to access support for my wellbeing**
- Monitor top 5 reasons for absence
- Monitor long-term : short-term absence split

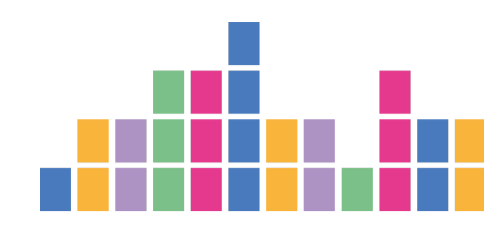
# Conclusion

2021/2022 produced some great achievements in our commitment to developing a sustainable and resilient workforce, all whilst navigating a global Pandemic. Absence rates have as expected increased slightly, however remain within target, below pre-Pandemic levels and below our average benchmark comparators.

We have continued to demonstrate our prioritisation of wellbeing and enabling people to work at their best, which has been externally recognised through the achieving Bronze Thrive at Work accreditation. We explored new ways of working with our people to support wellbeing, including the trial of a wellbeing and volunteering day and the flu vaccination on-site clinics. A full, aligned and meaningful programme of wellbeing activity is planned for 2022/2023, providing the basis for absence levels to be sustained.

We are now embedding Leading Organisational Wellbeing, in partnership with Council leaders and key stakeholders, as business as usual and will continue to monitor trend, uptake of initiatives and identify priorities. The outputs of the Leading Organisational Wellbeing group have included the launch of Our Approach to Wellbeing and the new look Attendance at Work policy.

Stress and mental health continue to be priority areas, along with reducing our long-term absences, understanding the effects of long COVID-19 and the mental health impact of the pandemic. A continued target of 8 days per FTE (with a +/- 1 day tolerance) is proposed for 2022/2023 along with a target of maintaining stress and mental health absence below 2.5 days per FTE. A new wellbeing measure will also be reported, measuring agreement against a number of wellbeing specific YourSay engagement questions.



### Key Measures and Definitions

**Full Time Equivalent (FTE):** Full Time Equivalent relates to the number of hours an employee is contracted to work each week as a proportion of the number of hours per week defined as full-time as per contracts of employment. Thus, a full-time employee would have an FTE of 1/0 and an employee working 18.5 hours per week in a role based upon a 37 hours contract would have an FTE of 0.5

**Days per Full Time Equivalent (FTE):** Days per FTE relates to the number of days of sickness absence per FTE

### Key Highlights

**Absence** has **increased** over the last 12 months from **7.45** days to **8.6** days per FTE.

The balance between Long term and short term is moving toward becoming more **equal**.

**Mental Health** is the top reason for absence and the days per FTE has remained static this year, although we have seen an **increase** absence rates. **Covid** has had more impact on our absence figures this year, accounting for 12% and over 1 day per FTE.

The number of people on long term absence and those hitting triggers has **increased** this year

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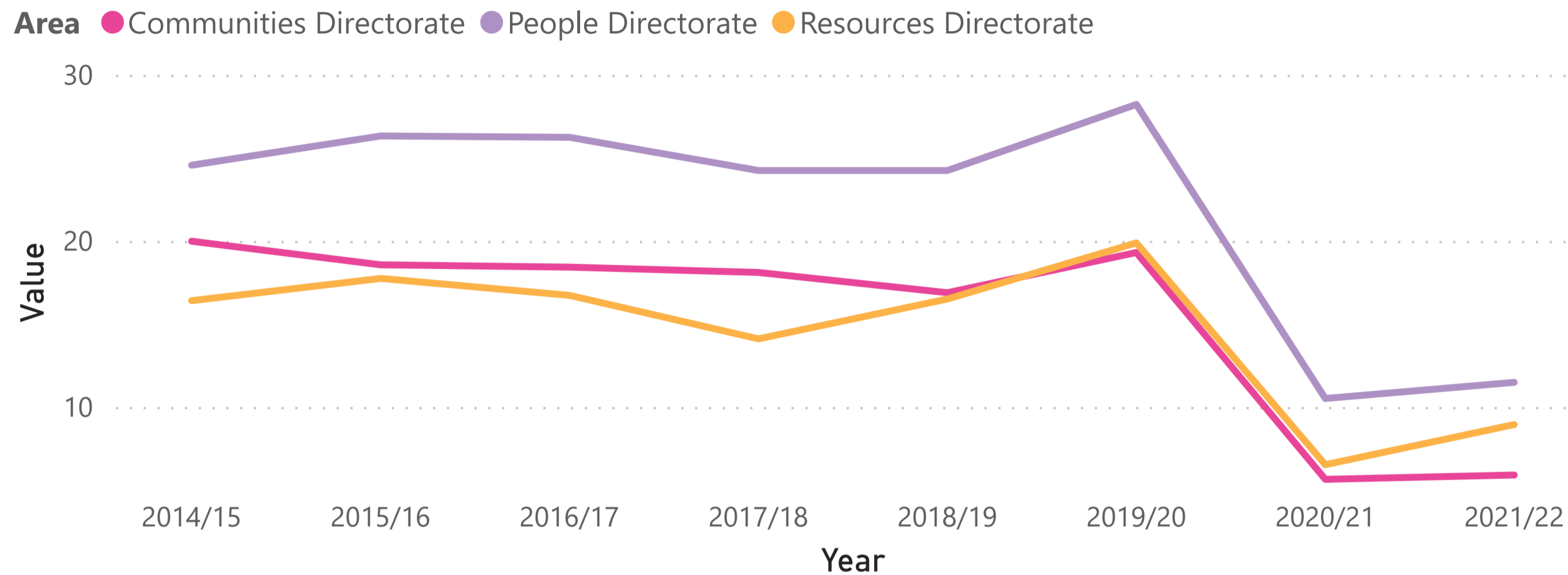


*We will listen, learn and act to create an inclusive organisation with a sustainable and resilient workforce.*

# Sustainable and Resilient Workforce Annual Report 21-22

## Absence

### Days per FTE



Days per FTE has **increased**

WCC Days per FTE 20/21	7.45
WCC Days per FTE 21/22	8.61

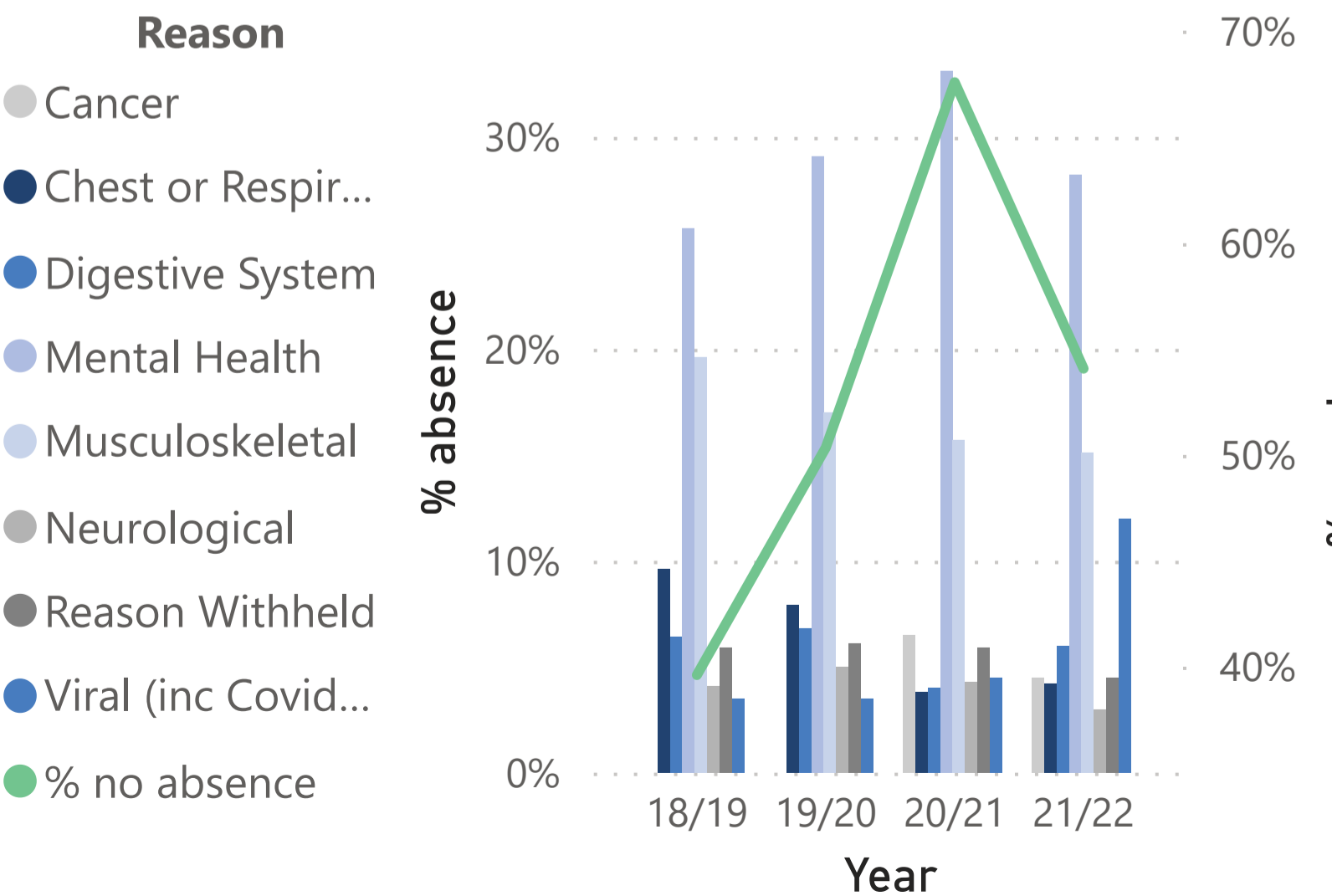
% of staff with no absence has **decreased**

% staff with no absence 20/21	67.6%
% staff with no absence 21/22	54.1%

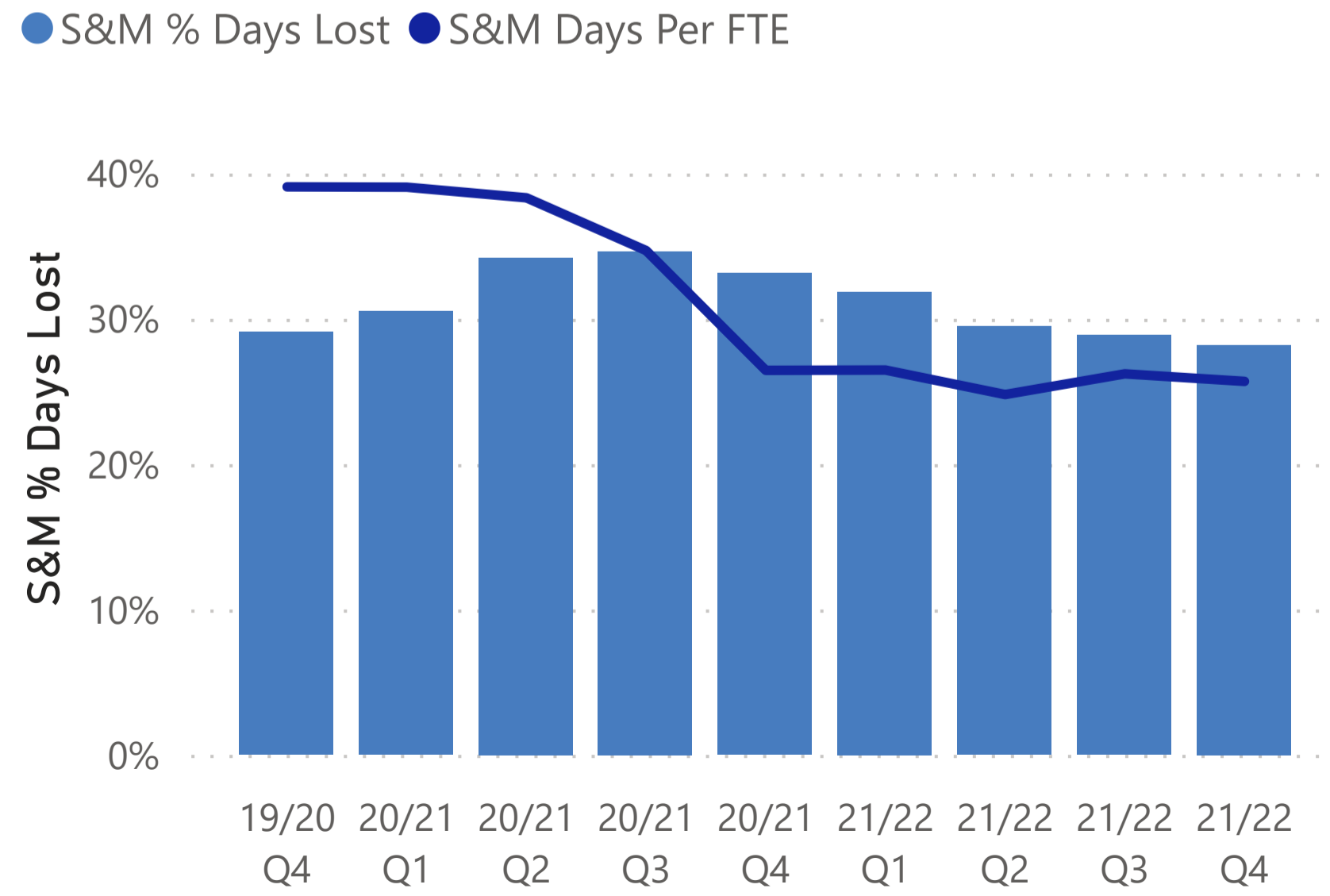
Top Sickness absence reasons 21/22

Stress and Mental Health	28.2%
Musculo-skeletal	15.1%
Coronavirus	12.0%

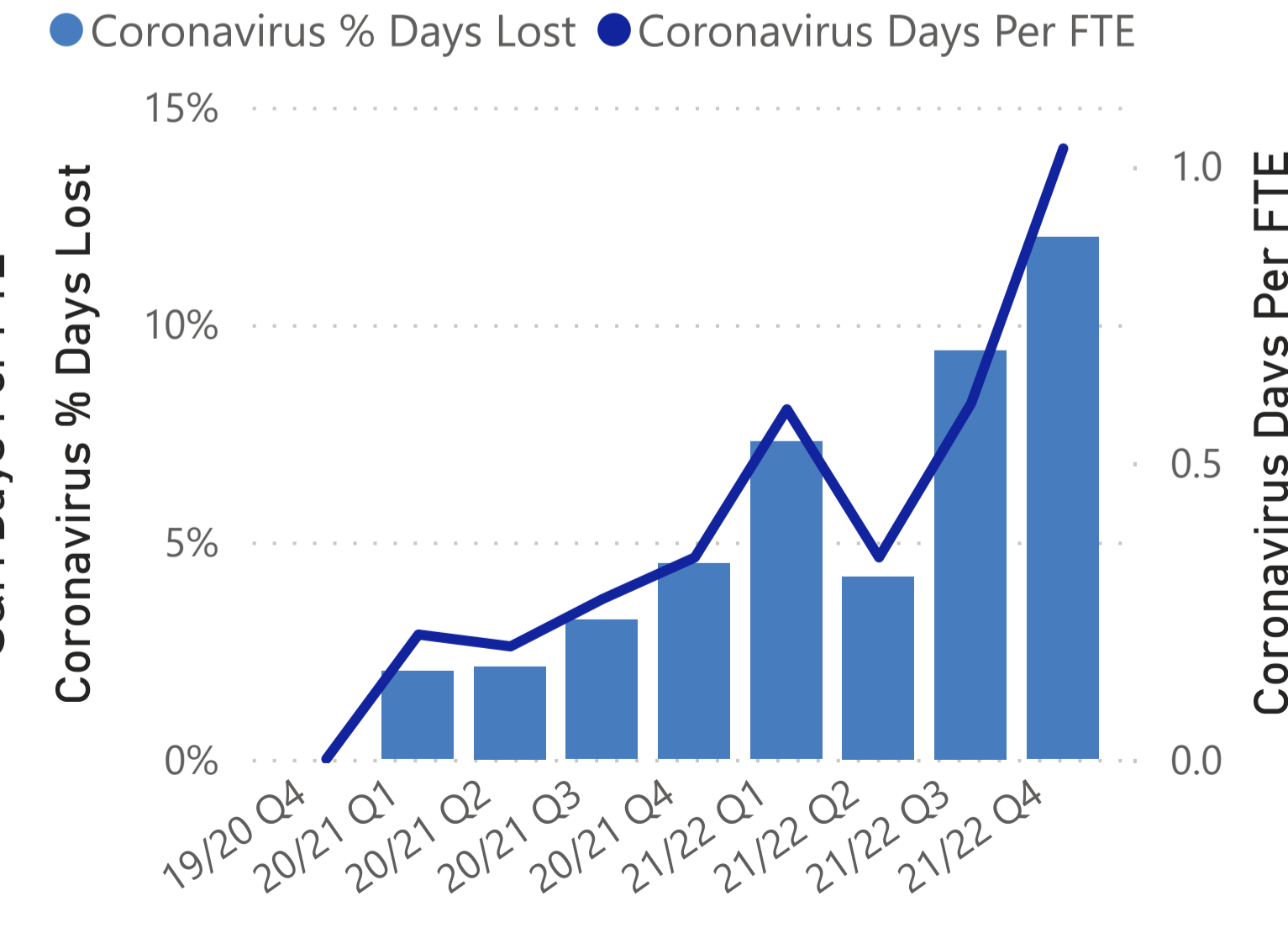
### Top Reasons for Absence and % of all staff with no absence trend



### Stress and Mental Health % of days lost



### Coronavirus % of days lost



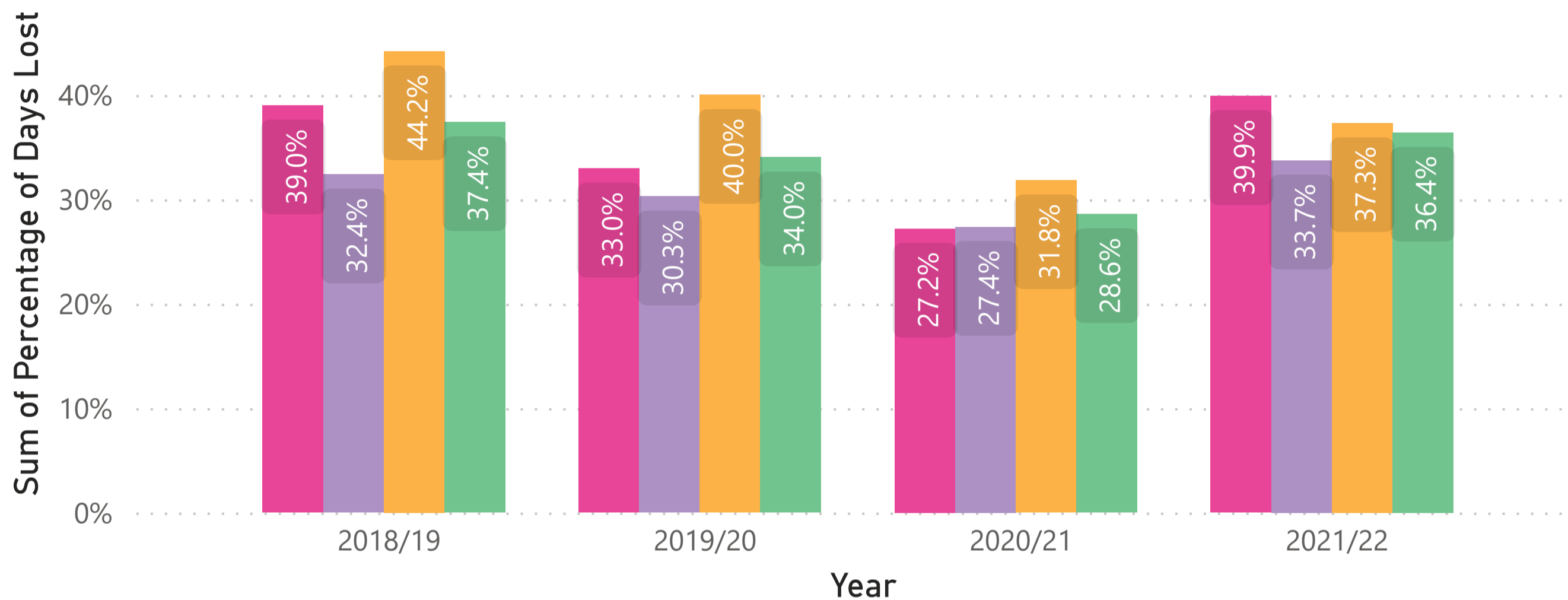
# Sustainable and Resilient Workforce Annual Report 21-22



## Absence

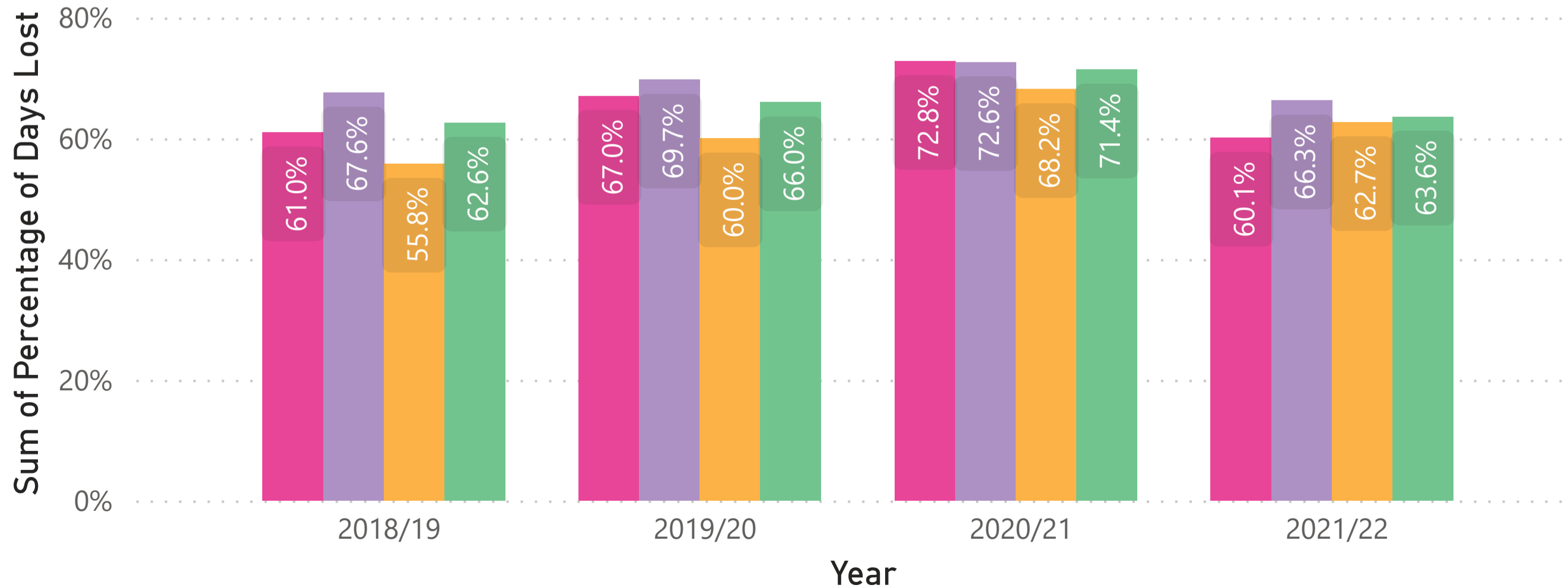
### % days lost to short term absence

Area ● Communities Directorate ● People Directorate ● Resources Directorate ● WCC



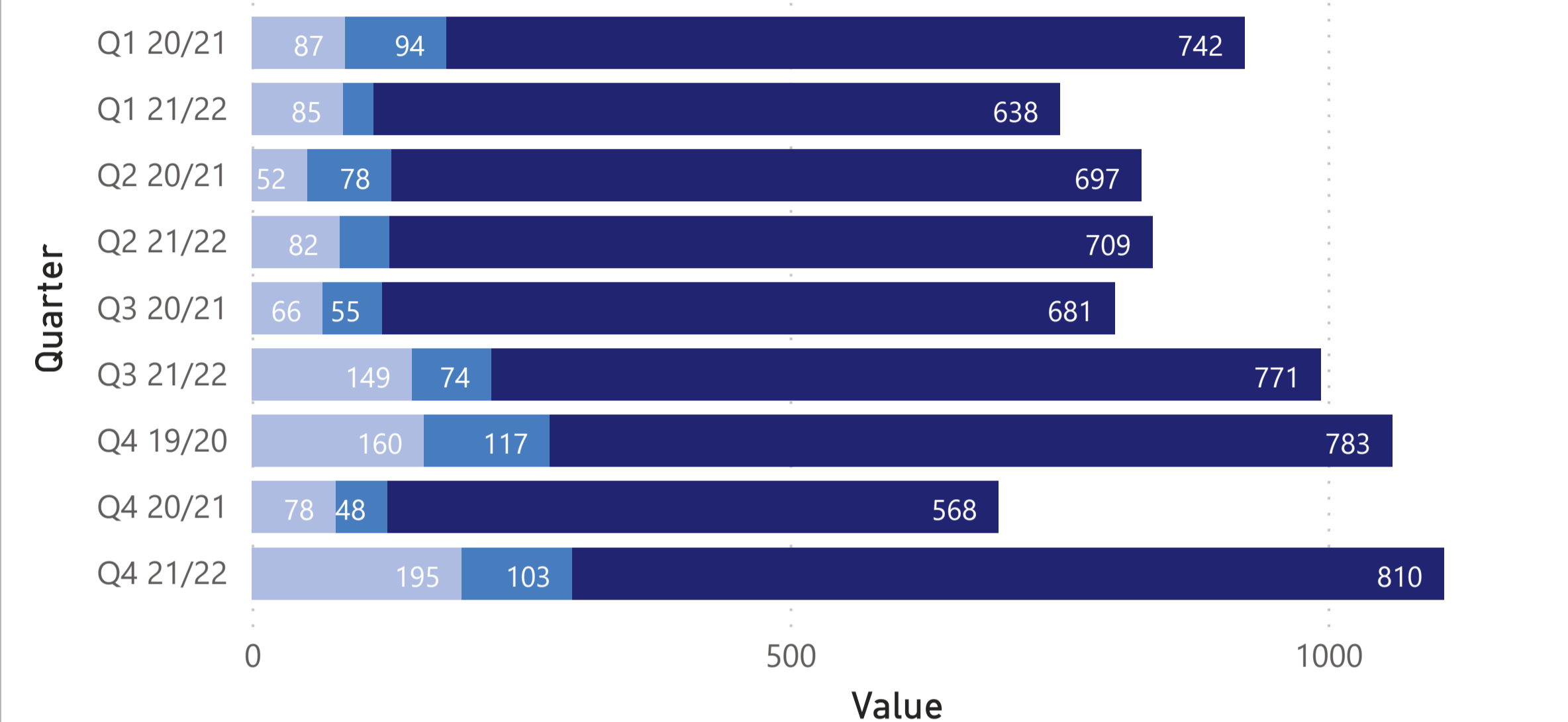
### % days lost to long term absence

Area ● Communities Directorate ● People Directorate ● Resources Directorate ● WCC



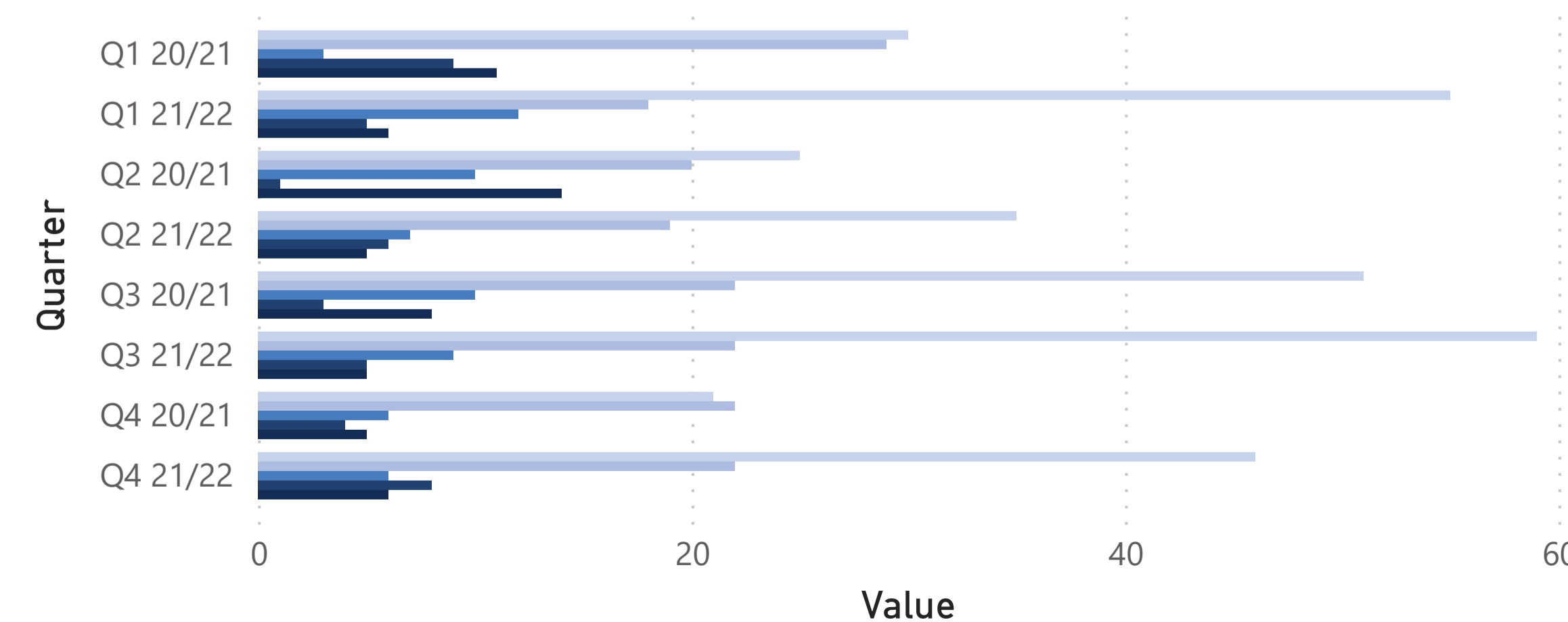
### Number of staff hitting trigger indicators

Trigger ● 3 in 6 months ● 5 in 12 months ● 10 days in 12 months



### Long term absence by length

Length ● 1-3 Months ● 3-6 Months ● 6-9 Months ● 9-12 Months ● 12+ months

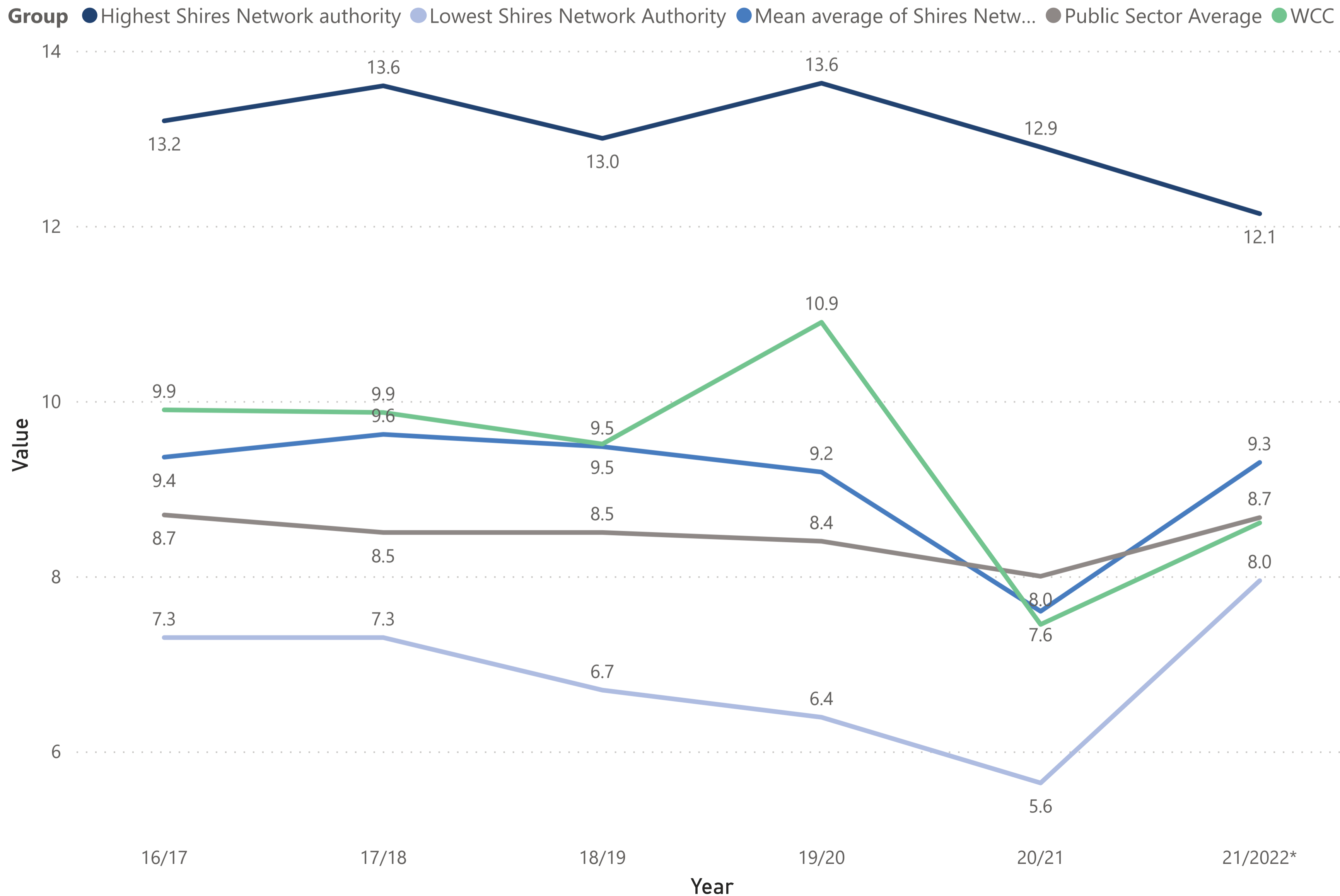




# Sustainable and Resilient Workforce Annual Report 21-22

## Benchmarking

### Benchmark by year



Benchmark data on average days absence has been obtained from 19 local authorities across the Shire Counties network to provide comparative data. The data compares the highest, lowest and mean average against Warwickshire's annual days per FTE figure.

CIPD have not released a public sector rate for 2021, however the ONS has stated a 0.3% increase, which has been applied to the 8 days for illustrative purposes.

\*= Interim Figures  
Please note that the Public Sector Average for 21/2022 is an Estimated Figure

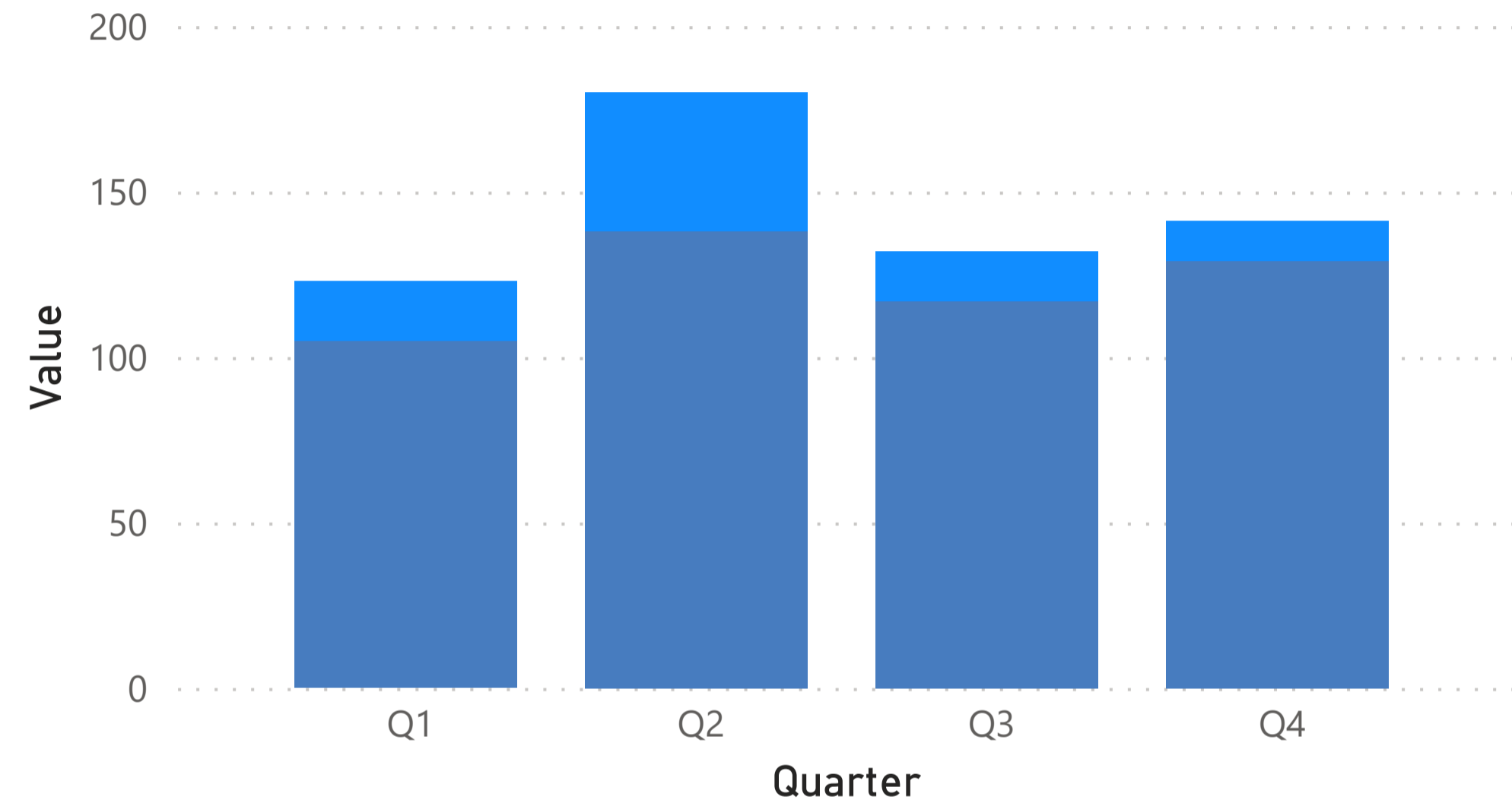


# Sustainable and Resilient Workforce Annual Report 21-22

## Employee Assistance Programme & Occupational Health

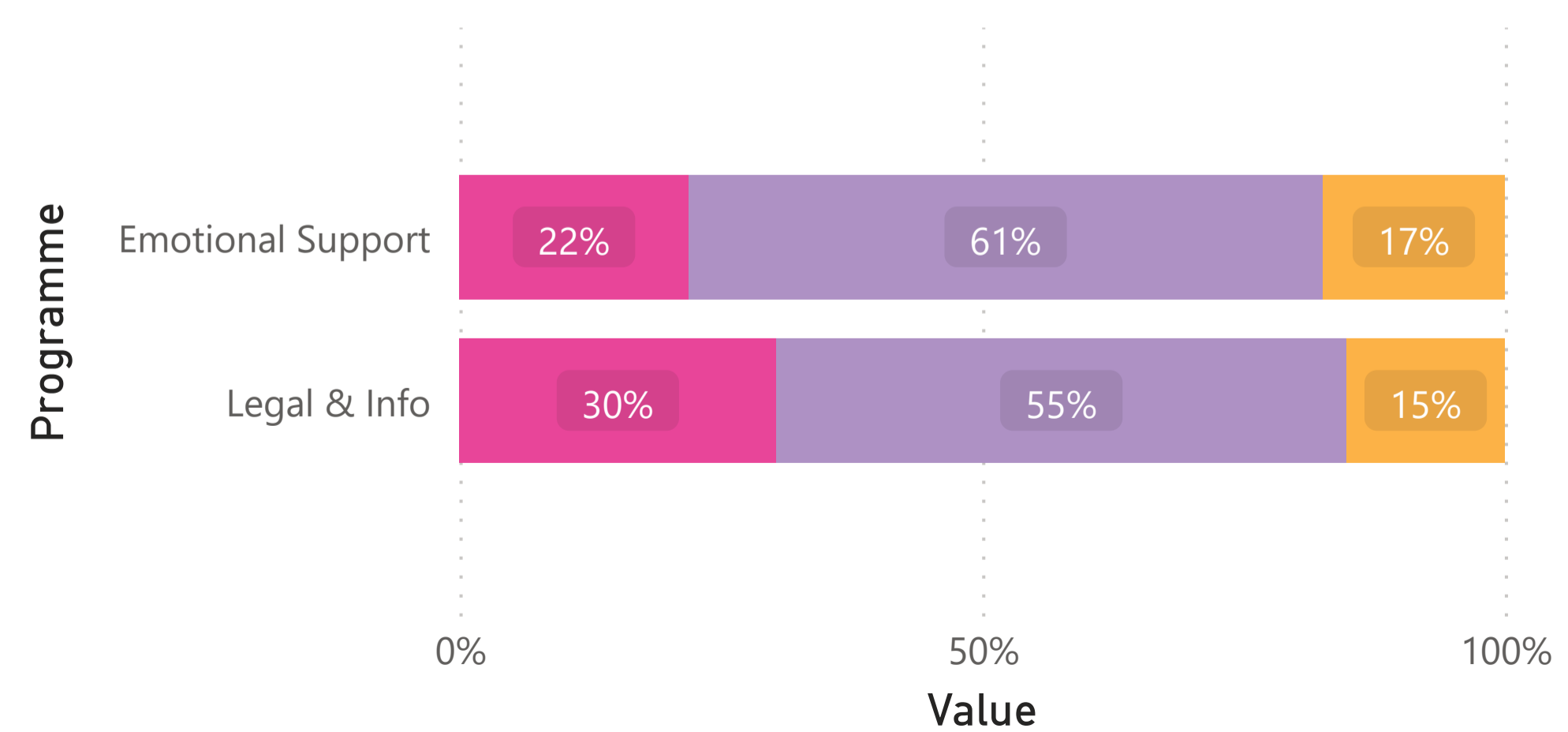
### Employee Assistance Programme

**Programme** ● Emotional Support ● Legal & Info



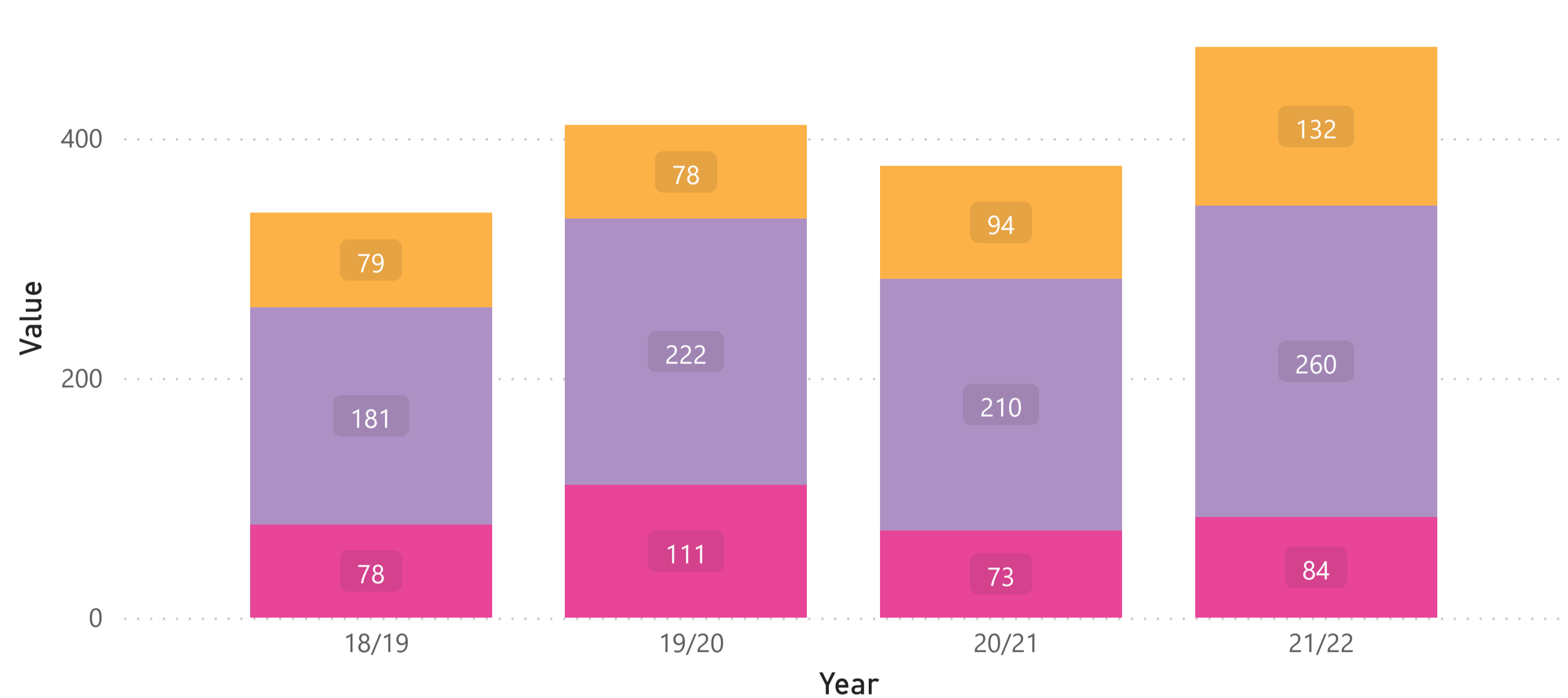
### Programme by Directorate

**Area** ● Communities ● People ● Resources



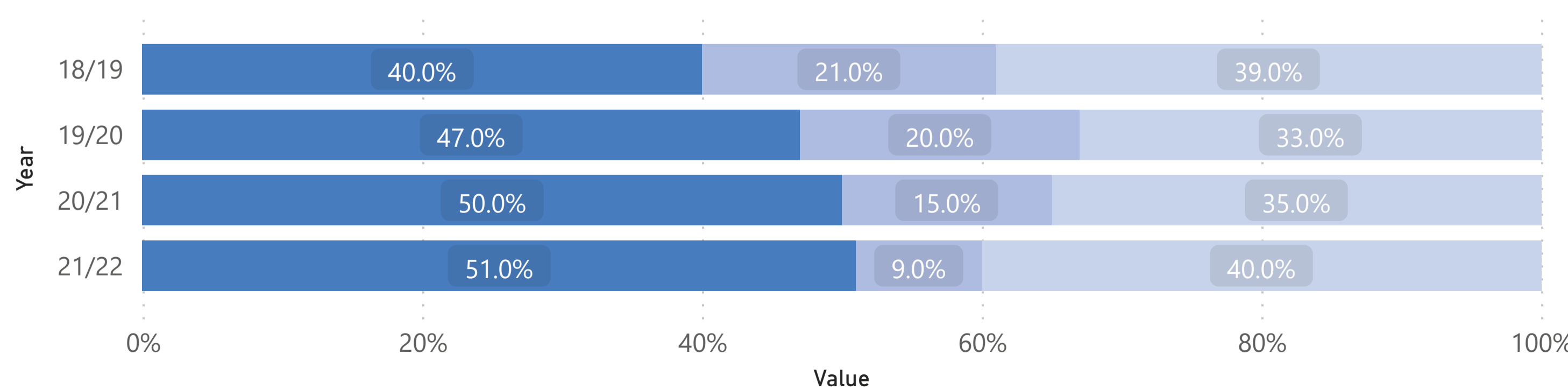
### Number of Occupational Health Referrals by Year and Directorate

**OH referrals** ● Communities ● People ● Resources



### Occupational Health Referral reason by year

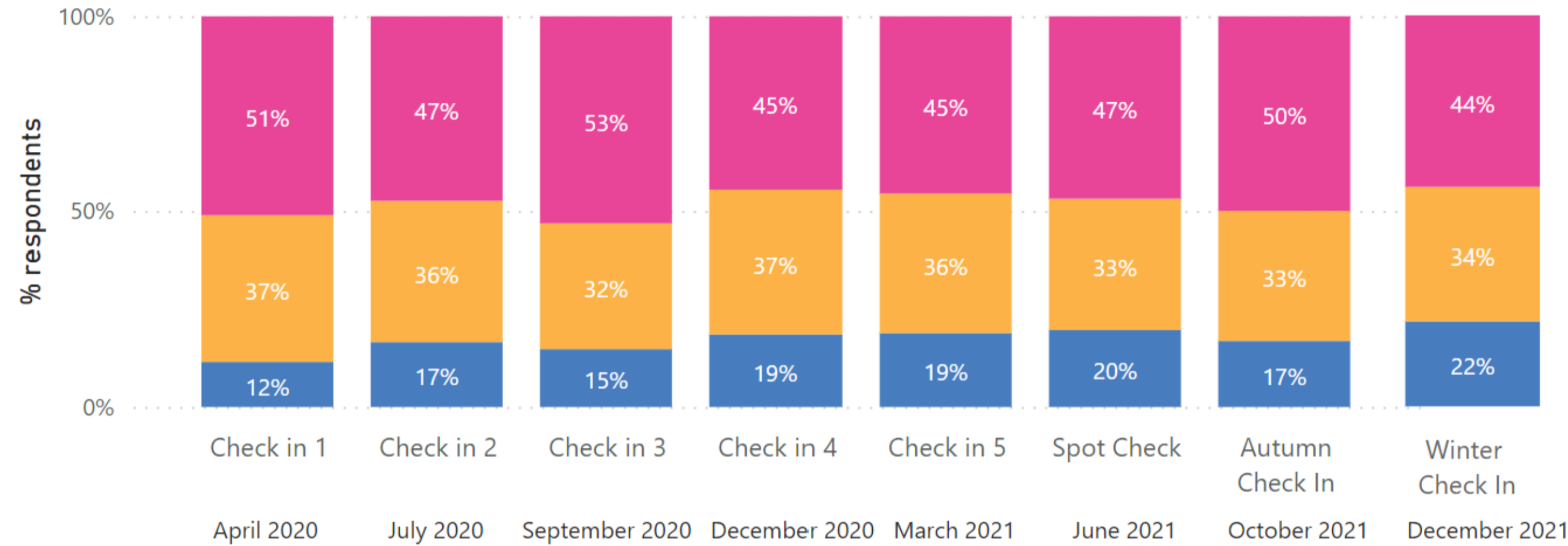
**OH referral reason** ● Mental Health ● Musculo-Skeletal ● Other Reasons



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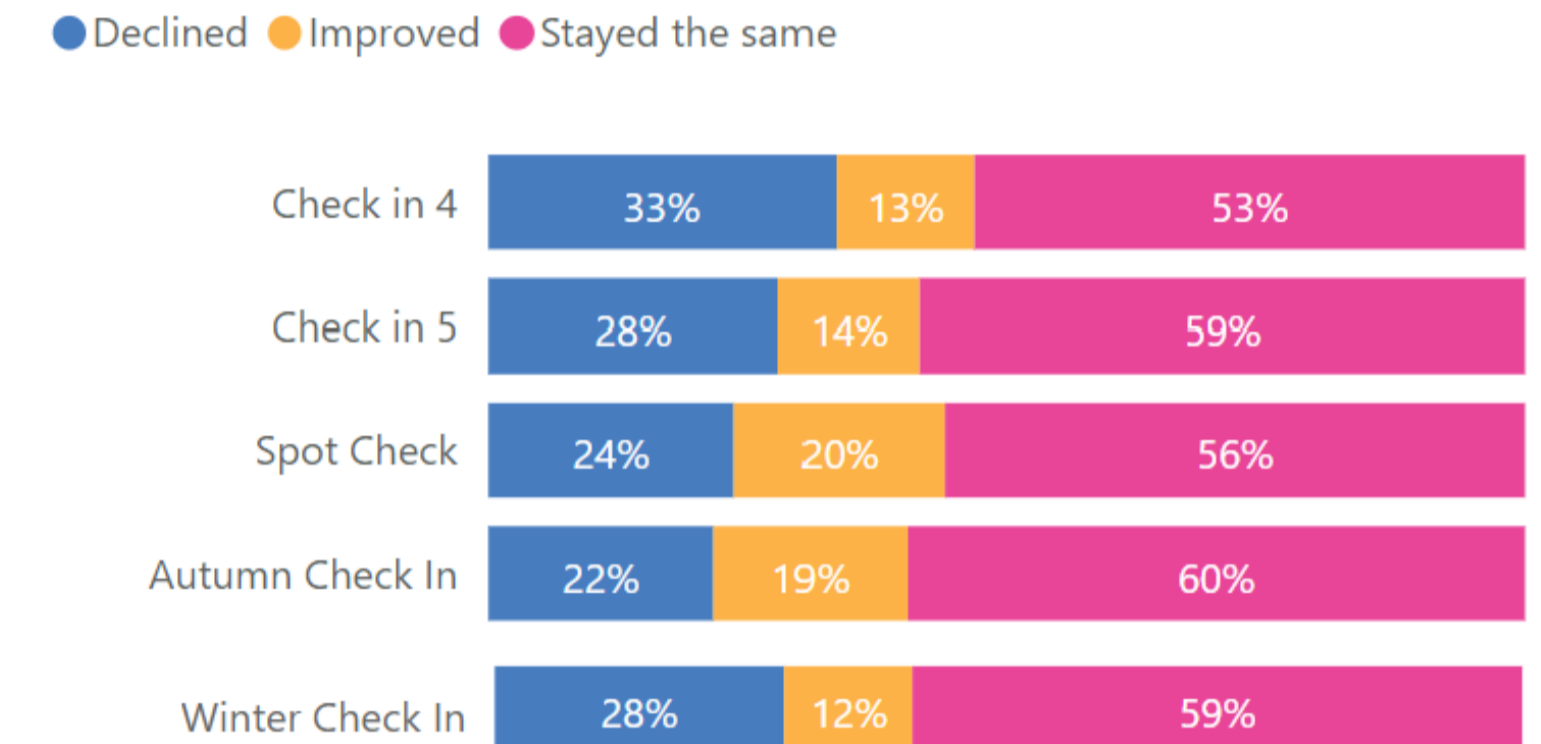
## Engagement and Wellbeing

**Wellbeing Score (groups)** ● 1-2: I'm not feeling great ● 3: I'm OK ● 4-5: I'm doing well



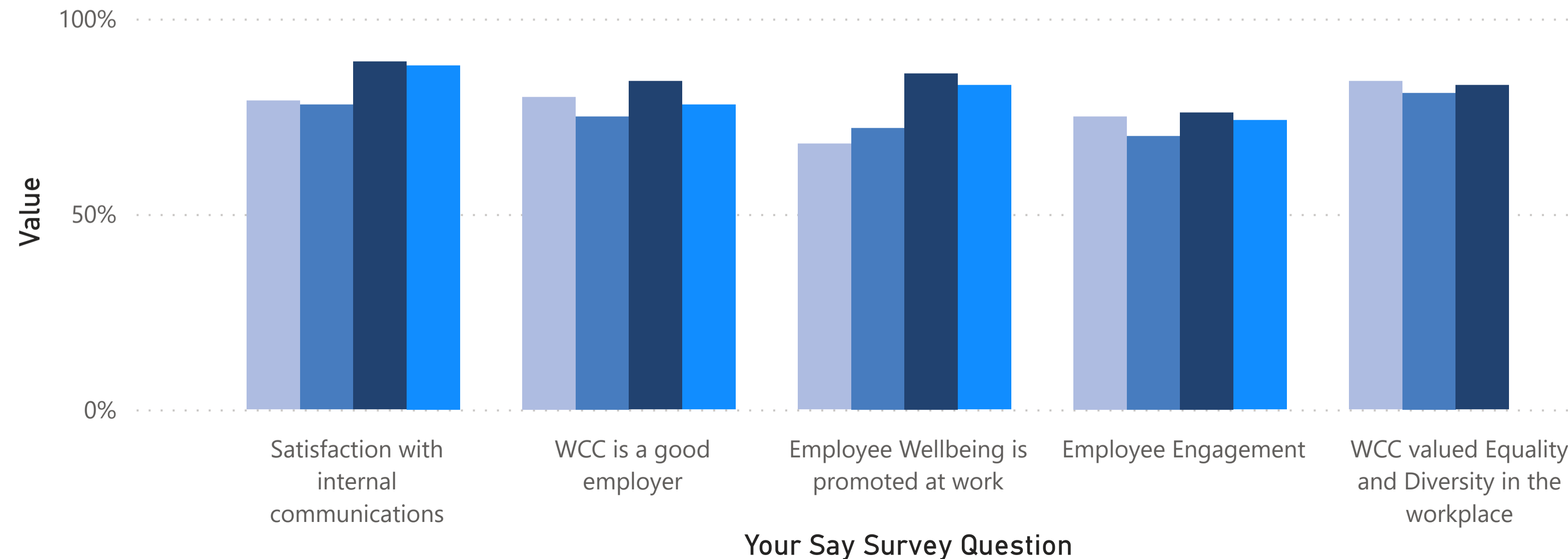
Employee wellbeing and engagement has been monitored through a series of check-in surveys from April 2020 to present.

**Has your wellbeing changed?**



### Your Say Survey Questions

**Year** ● 2018 ● 2019 ● 2020/21 ● 2021/22



**% of respondents reaching out for help**

