

Mental Health and Wellbeing in the Digital Preservation Community

2023 Survey Findings Report



<https://doi.org/10.7207/mhw2025>

Table of Contents

1. About the Digital Preservation Coalition	3
2. Acknowledgements	3
3. Executive Summary	4
4. Introduction	7
5. Methodology	8
5.1 Background Research.....	8
5.2 Survey Development.....	8
5.3 Survey Deployment.....	8
5.4 Data Analysis	9
6. Findings	10
6.1 Respondent Demographics.....	10
6.2 Organizational Approaches to Mental Health and Wellbeing	14
6.3 Personal Experiences.....	21
6.4 General Mental Health and Wellbeing Trends.....	40
7. Themes Identified	61
7.1 High Incidence of Mental Health and Wellbeing Issues in the Digital Preservation Community.....	61
7.2 Importance of Organization Culture	62
7.3 Significant Impact of the Digital Preservation Advocacy Burden	63
7.4 Impact of Unclear Role Descriptions and Unrealistic Workloads	63
8. Strengths and Limitations of the Research.....	65
9. Further Work.....	67
9.1 Communicating Survey Outcomes	67
9.2 Additional Research	67
9.3 Capturing Longitudinal Data	68
9.4 Community Activities	69
10. Appendices.....	70
10.1 Appendix One – Complete Survey Questionnaire	70
10.2 Appendix Two – Select Bibliography	82
10.3 Appendix Three – Communications Channels	83

1. About the Digital Preservation Coalition

The DPC is an international charitable foundation which supports digital preservation, helping its members, and the wider community, around the world to deliver resilient long-term access to digital content and services through community engagement, targeted advocacy work, training and workforce development, capacity building, good practice and standards, and through good management and governance. Its vision is to build a welcoming and inclusive global community, working together to bring about a sustainable future for our digital assets.

The Digital Preservation Coalition (DPC) is a registered company (Registered no: 4492292) and charity (Charity no: SC051077).

2. Acknowledgements

The project team would like to acknowledge the contributions of and give thanks to those who offered advice and guidance through the development, deployment, and analysis of this survey. In particular, Professor Paul Gooding, Colette Robertson, and the DPC's Workforce Development Sub-Committee. Thanks, are also offered to the team behind the free, open-source analysis tool, Taguette, which facilitated the qualitative analysis work carried out. Finally, we offer thanks to our DPC colleagues and everyone in the digital preservation community who encouraged and supported this work.

3. Executive Summary

Anecdotal evidence alongside the outcomes from the 2021 NDSA Staffing Survey¹ and the research described by the 2020 article “What’s Wrong with Digital Stewardship”² suggests there are a number of interrelated factors that, particularly when combined, not only impede digital preservation work but can also place a particularly heavy burden on digital preservation practitioners. These issues, in turn, can have a significant impact on their mental health and wellbeing. The research represented by this report was initiated as a first step towards gathering data on these contributory factors, the issues caused, and the resulting impacts. It looked to address a broad range of mental health and wellbeing experiences and the factors and issues that may influence them. The Digital Preservation Coalition (DPC) has undertaken this work as part of its commitment to supporting the development of a competent and responsive workforce that is ready to address the challenges of digital preservation.

Development of the investigation involved a robust research and review phase before the resulting survey was open to responses from the digital preservation community in March-April 2023. Analysis was then undertaken in various phases, looking at responses to individual questions as well as examining crosstabulations to identify where significant correlations could be observed. The results of this analysis are presented in this report.

The survey received 261 complete responses, with incomplete responses removed from the data set. The demographic data collected showed the make-up of the respondents was reasonably representative of the community when compared with other previous research endeavours such as the aforementioned NDSA survey. This included expected representation of gender identities, organization types, roles, and career lengths. Geographical representation was, however, skewed towards respondents from North America, Europe, and Australasia, likely due to the fact it was shared primarily through channels associated with organizations that operate largely in the global north.

Overall, the main themes that emerged from the research can be summarized as follows:

1. The evidence suggests that the issues experienced are having a significant impact on the mental health and wellbeing of members of the digital preservation community;
2. Organizational culture is an important factor, and if proactive steps are not taken to foster positive organizational culture, issues arise that impact employees’ mental health and wellbeing;
3. The lack of support for and engagement with digital preservation, despite substantial time and effort investments in ongoing advocacy, is having a substantial impact on the workforce; and
4. Issues relating to unclear roles and responsibilities and unmanageable workloads are impacting on mental health and wellbeing.

Around half of respondents reported that their organization has policy in place relating to mental health and wellbeing, although this is significantly lower compared with the existence of other relevant human resources policies on topics such as diversity, equity, and inclusion, flexible working, sexual harassment, and discrimination, which all available in more than 75% of organizations. It was also reported that while organizations generally took the positive step to provide support for professional development, the large majority did not offer opportunities for advancement and often continued to hire employees on

¹ 2021 NDSA Staffing Survey, <https://osf.io/emwy4/>

² Blumenthal et al, “What’s Wrong with Digital Stewardship: Evaluating the Organization of Digital Preservation Programs’ from Practitioners’ Perspectives” - <https://elischolar.library.yale.edu/jcas/vol7/iss1/13>

contingent contracts. Organizations were also less likely to provide paid leave for those experiencing mental health problems than for physical health.

Nearly all respondents (98%) reported having encountered at least issue in the workplace that has impacted their mental health and wellbeing. Survey results also show that a significant portion of digital preservation practitioners experience difficulties in relation to the clarity of their role and responsibilities, as well as having to manage unrealistic expectations and workloads. These were reported in the following proportions:

- 70% state they have to work to unrealistic expectations
- 63% feel overwhelmed by the burden of advocating for digital preservation
- 62% lack clarity on their responsibilities
- 60% manage an unrealistic workload
- 58% feel unsupported by their organization

Generally, however, these issues occurred less frequently at organizations which have and implement mental health and wellbeing policies.

In relation to the impact of these issues and/or their digital preservation work specifically, the following percentages of respondents reported that their digital preservation work had caused or contributed to experiencing:

- Stress – 88%
- Anxiety – 69%
- Fatigue – 67%
- Difficulty focusing – 61%
- Burnout – 57%

These represent incidence levels at the high end of or above averages reported for the general global population. In particular, published statistics suggest the incidence of stress in the general working population is around 60%, 28% lower than for those responding to this survey. There were also clear links between whether or not a respondent felt supported, the clarity of their role, their workload, and feelings of stress and fatigue.

There was a near-even split among respondents on the suitability of physical work environments. Only 49% of respondents felt that their physical work environment met their needs. The remaining 51% indicated that improvements were needed to their physical working environment to be suitable for their needs, with these including but not limited to furniture, equipment, lighting, sound, and privacy.

The written responses received for qualitative elements of the survey further point to practitioners experiencing issues in relation to:

- A lack of support from executives/managers and colleagues
 - Which is further compounded by difficult relationships
- Resourcing shortages, including financial, technological/infrastructure, and staffing resources
- Feeling isolated and that their work is undervalued

These responses offer a picture familiar to many digital preservation practitioners, of environments where they find it difficult to establish robust and sustainable digital preservation programs, facing resistance to and a lack of understanding of digital preservation from both superiors and colleagues. This then leads to the work being substantially under resourced, with many trying to solve their organization's numerous digital preservation challenges on their own or with only a small staff

complement, completely mismatched to the scale of the problem. Indeed, there were several responses to these questions that spoke of a lack of hope, a feeling of surrender, and the need to emotionally disconnect from their work for the sake of their mental health.

In regard to how these issues and their impacts could be addressed, respondents suggestions included the following: the provision of spaces where they could discuss the issues faced and their impacts; a greater emphasis at an organizational level on the importance of maintaining a good work/life balance; and a greater willingness amongst executives, managers, and colleagues to engage with, understand, and support digital preservation.

These findings carry with them the standard strengths and limitations of quantitative and qualitative analysis, but also strengths and limitations specific to the methodology and context of this research. These include a lack of available data on analogous professions that would allow direct comparisons. There is also the likelihood that those who have experienced issues are more likely to have replied, although, equally, researchers were made aware of community members who had not completed the survey for fear of exposure. Additionally, there are both benefits and disadvantages brought to the work by the researchers' position within the digital preservation community and their own experiences with mental health and wellbeing, these were consciously considered throughout the project. Finally, a robust methodology and review process has been implemented that should allow the results to be reproduceable, and the conclusions are consistent with the anecdotal evidence available and previous publications that examined these issues with a lighter touch.

This research represents only a first step in investigating and tackling the issues identified and their impacts on mental health and wellbeing. The next step will be around the communication of the findings presented here, but further research into specific issues and causation is needed, capture of longitudinal data, and comparison with those in analogous professions such as other information management practitioners. Proactive steps will also need to be taken to encourage organizations to acknowledge and address the issues, the factors causing them and the impacts they have. Collective action by those working in digital preservation will likely be needed to make this happen, and the DPC will have a role in facilitating this.

4. Introduction

As an emerging profession with highly distributed practitioners who often work in relative isolation, it has been suggested that the digital preservation workforce may be vulnerable to experiencing issues in the workplace that impact on mental health and wellbeing. There has been a growing amount of anecdotal evidence, gathered from stories shared by members of the digital preservation community at in-person and online events and meetings, that supports these suggestions. The issues they experience are especially felt when attempting to balance stresses of work with dedication to their duties.

The potential impact of the issues experienced while working in digital preservation on mental health and wellbeing was further brought into focus by the 2021 NDSA Staffing Survey. Among the responses received were reports of high levels of stress due to issues such as unrealistic workloads, fragmented roles, and the ongoing advocacy burden of digital preservation.

The DPC's mandate includes the development of a competent and responsive workforce that is ready to address the challenges of digital preservation. With this in mind, we recognize the need for more responsive support for the mental health and wellbeing of those working in digital preservation. But where to begin? It became apparent that a benchmarking exercise, that would capture data on the impact of digital preservation work on practitioners was required to establish what were the most pressing issues and help begin the process on understanding how they could be addressed.

The survey aimed to take a broad look at issues relating to mental health and wellbeing in the workplace and their impacts, covering policy and its implementation, roles and workloads, physical working environments, specific issues encountered, and respondent's perspectives in relation to potential causal factors such as organizational support, working relationships, and stress and fatigue. It was open to everyone working within the digital preservation community. The findings of the survey are shared in this open access report, and a separate dataset of the anonymized quantitative data from the survey will also be made available.

As indicated above, this survey is a first step in establishing a new program of work at the Digital Preservation Coalition. The information gathered from the survey will help guide the outputs of a new program of work from the DPC, which will aim to develop resources to support mental health and wellbeing in the digital preservation community.

To borrow a slogan from iPres 2022, hosted by the DPC in Glasgow, "People Make Digital Preservation." If we are to be successful in our work, we need to reach a place where the people of digital preservation feel valued, supported, and fit to take on the challenge. This survey and the findings reported here are a first step towards making that a reality for everyone.

5. Methodology

5.1 Background Research

As mentioned in the introduction, the starting point for the development of the survey was a combination of the 2021 NDSA Staffing Survey and the anecdotal stories shared by members of the digital preservation community at in-person and online events and meetings. During the preliminary research stage, the themes identified from these sources were explored further through a literature review of academic papers and online materials on the topic of mental health and wellbeing in the workplace. Several publications and resources from mental health and wellbeing charities and specialist organizations, such as Mind³, on the topic of good practice and support in the workplace were also consulted (see Appendix Two). The findings from this background research were collated and fed into the development of the survey questions.

5.2 Survey Development

The first step of the survey development was a mind mapping exercise where the findings from the research phase were used to identify key topics to be addressed and arrange these into themes. The survey team then worked this into a first draft of questions. The draft questions were put through two rounds of review internally at the DPC, before being sent to external advisors for further feedback. The advisors consulted include:

- A senior academic from the University of Glasgow, a world-leading research institution, who provided guidance on research efficacy and ethics.
- A clinical psychology researcher, who reviewed the questions with regards to terminology used, appropriateness of the approach taken, and breadth of enquiry.

Feedback from external advisors was incorporated into a further draft, which received a final internal review before being deemed ready for circulation.

5.3 Survey Deployment

The survey questions were shared with respondents using the Qualtrics platform⁴. It was chosen due to the wide range of functionality offered in relation to question presentation and data analysis, the options for respondents to complete their responses in multiple sessions, and the high level of security offered. Due to the sensitive nature of the topic and data being collected, security was a particular consideration, and the platform is ISO 27001 certified as well as facilitating GDPR and HIPAA compliance. The full list of questions and answer options and accompanying text was also made available as a separate downloadable document from the DPC website to facilitate visibility of what was included for those wishing to participate.

The survey introduction informed respondents that completion of the survey would be seen as tacit approval for the use of the respondents' data in the study. As such, only completed responses were included in the data analysis. All partially completed responses were held separately by Qualtrics and were inaccessible to DPC staff. The system deleted these entries automatically 48 hours after survey

³ Mind - <https://www.mind.org.uk/>

⁴ Qualtrics - <https://www.qualtrics.com/>

data collection closed and no information was retained on the number of responses that were started but not completed.

The survey was opened on 1st March 2023 and was distributed via several international listservs, social media, and the DPC website (see Appendix Three for full list).⁵ Those who received notification of the survey were also encouraged to share it with their own communities. Two rounds of reminders were also sent via the mentioned channels before the survey was closed on 12th April 2023. In total, 261 responses were received by the closing date.

5.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis was carried out through a combination of Qualtrics' inbuilt data analysis functionality, Excel, and use of the tagging tool Taguette. For all analysis carried out via Excel and Taguette, the data was held on a password protected external hard drive, and the computer in use was disconnected from the internet until the work session was completed and the external hard drive disconnected. The full dataset was also only accessible to the two members of staff from the DPC's Workforce Development team working directly on the survey. Progress of the analysis was tracked using a separate Excel spreadsheet, which was of particular importance when planning and executing crosstabulations.

Analysis for the main question types was carried out as follows:

- **Single-select multiple choice:** Pivot tables were used in Excel to summarise responses and relevant graphs produced in the same.
- **Multi-select multiple choice:** Data was summarised using Qualtrics in-built functionality before being exported to Excel format, tables and graphs were then produced as needed.
- **Free text questions:** Responses were inductively coded using the Taguette tool and more than one tag could be applied. For each question, two rounds of analysis were undertaken, with the first round producing a draft list of tags. This list was then refined before a second round of analysis was undertaken to ensure the consistent application of the refined tag list.
- **Crosstabulations:** Initial crosstabulation analysis was carried out within Qualtrics on a large number of question combinations. An initial assessment was then undertaken to determine if any significant correlations could be observed. Where correlations were present, the data was then exported in Excel format for further analysis and the production of relevant tables and charts.

⁵ Taguette - <https://www.taguette.org/>

6. Findings

The next section presents findings organized according to the sections of the survey as they appeared to respondents. These cover:

1. Respondent Demographics
2. Organizational Approach to Mental Health and Wellbeing
3. Personal Experiences
4. General Mental Health and Wellbeing Statements

The survey also contained a short “Wrap-Up” section and the two substantive questions from this section have been included within the Personal Experiences section within the findings. The complete list of questions, as well as the introductory text provided, is included in Appendix One.

Each sub-section works through the survey questions in turn, presenting the question as posed, a summary of results, and a discussion of cross-tabulations with other questions where notable trends have been observed. For a few specific questions, some comparisons have also been made with relevant statistics from other sources such as those provided by organizations such as The World Health Organization⁶ or from surveys on related topics such as the 2021 NDSA Staffing Survey.

A broader discussion of the main themes identified within the findings is included later in the Themes Identified section of the report.

6.1 Respondent Demographics

The first section of the survey focused on basic information about the respondents themselves, to help understand their demographic make-up and to facilitate analysis of the data to see if specific groups were impacted by certain issues to a greater or lesser degree. The structure and wording of the demographic questions largely mirrored those used in the 2021 NDSA Staffing Survey, to allow for some consistency between the data sets. To preserve the anonymity of respondents as much as possible, information that would help clearly identify respondents, such as their name or organization, were not collected. Other demographic questions were also kept as simple as possible whilst still providing useful data and Qualtrics was set to not record IP addresses amongst the data accessible to the researchers.

Q1: Which of the following most closely describes the type or function of your organization? (Select all that apply) [Required, 261 responses]

Almost half of the respondents (125, 48%) identified their organization as Academic Archive or Library, which was also by far the biggest group in the NDSA Staffing Survey. Other types most commonly identified by respondents were National, Federal, or Legal-Deposit Library or Archive (50, 19%), Government Entity (44, 17%), and Non-Profit Institution (25, 10%), which were also similar to those of respondents in the 2021 NDSA Staffing Survey. Interestingly, among the other organization types, each had 10 or less respondents (see Figure 1). Additionally, 25 respondents (10%) chose more than one answer to describe their organization.

⁶ World Health Organization - <https://www.who.int/>

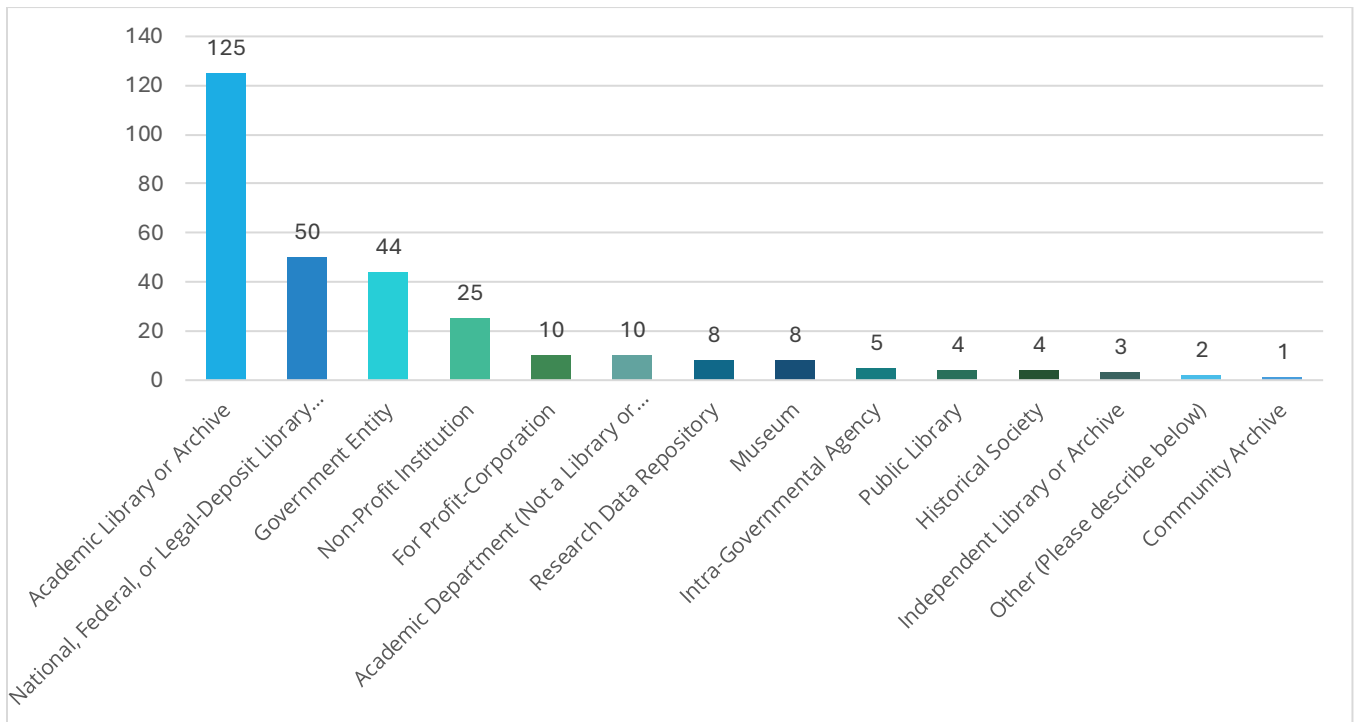


Figure 1: Responses to Q1 on Organization Types

Q2: Is your organization a member of the Digital Preservation Coalition? [Required, 261 responses]

Just under half of the respondents (127, 49%) indicated that their organization was not a member of the DPC, suggesting that the survey was successful in reaching beyond the core community of the survey's host organization. Of the remaining respondents, 107 (41%) indicated their organization was a member of the DPC and 27 (10%) were unsure (Figure 2).

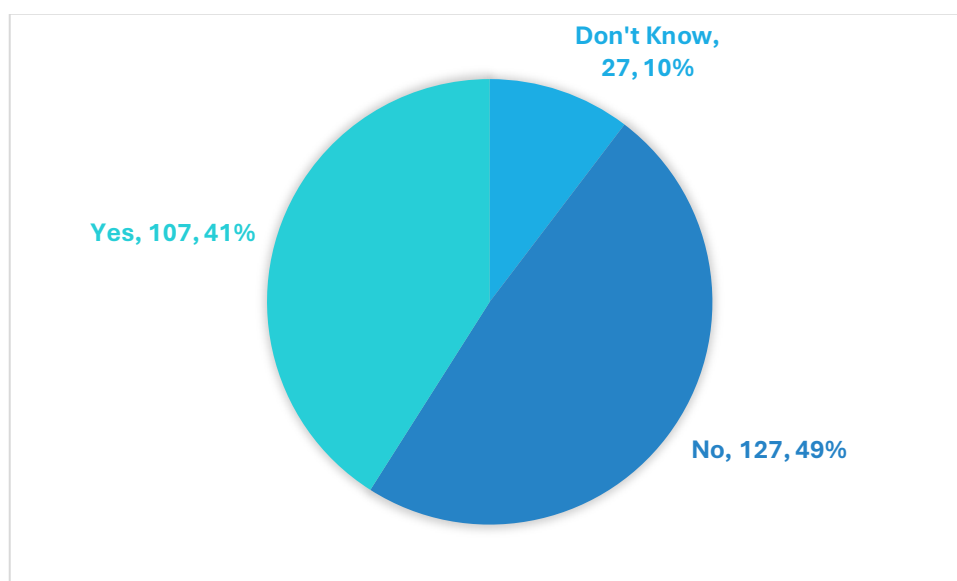


Figure 2: Responses to Q2 on membership of the Digital Preservation Coalition

Q3: In which continent is your organization based? [Required, 261 responses]

Due to the sensitive nature of the information being shared, and a desire to preserve anonymity as much as possible while making the data useful, it was decided to only capture location information at continent-level rather than country. The largest group of respondents were from North America (124, 47%), followed closely by Europe (104, 40%), and then Australasia/Oceania (23, 9%). A small number of responses (10, 4%) were received from Africa, Asia, and South America (Figure 3).

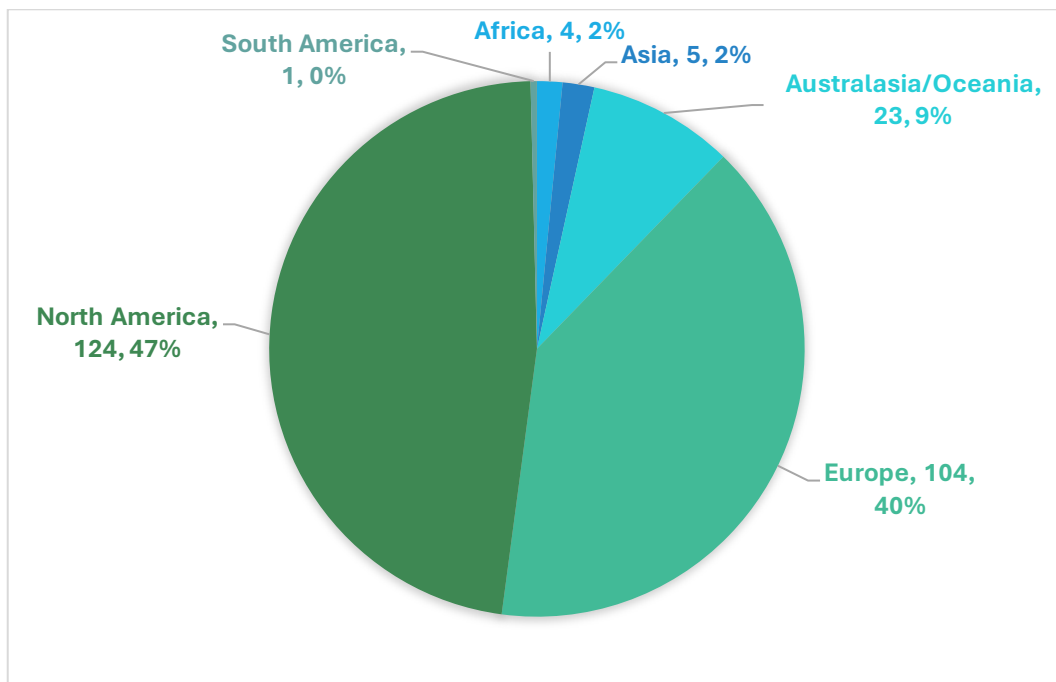


Figure 3: Responses to Q3 on respondent location

Q4: How long have you worked in your current field? ('Field' refers to the particular discipline or area of specialty in which you work. This question is meant to indicate your total years within your field, regardless of organization). Indicate using the year range below. [Required, 261 responses]

There was a relatively well spread distribution of responses to this question on digital preservation career duration. The largest group were those who had been in the field for 4-8 years (77, 30%), whilst the smallest group were those who had been in the field for less than a year (7, 3%), which was also the shortest time span covered by a grouping. The remaining groups, in order from largest to smallest, were 9-12 years (56, 21%), 17 or more years (52, 20%), 1-3 years (37, 14%), 13-16 years (32, 12%). Figure 4 shows the groupings in time span order.

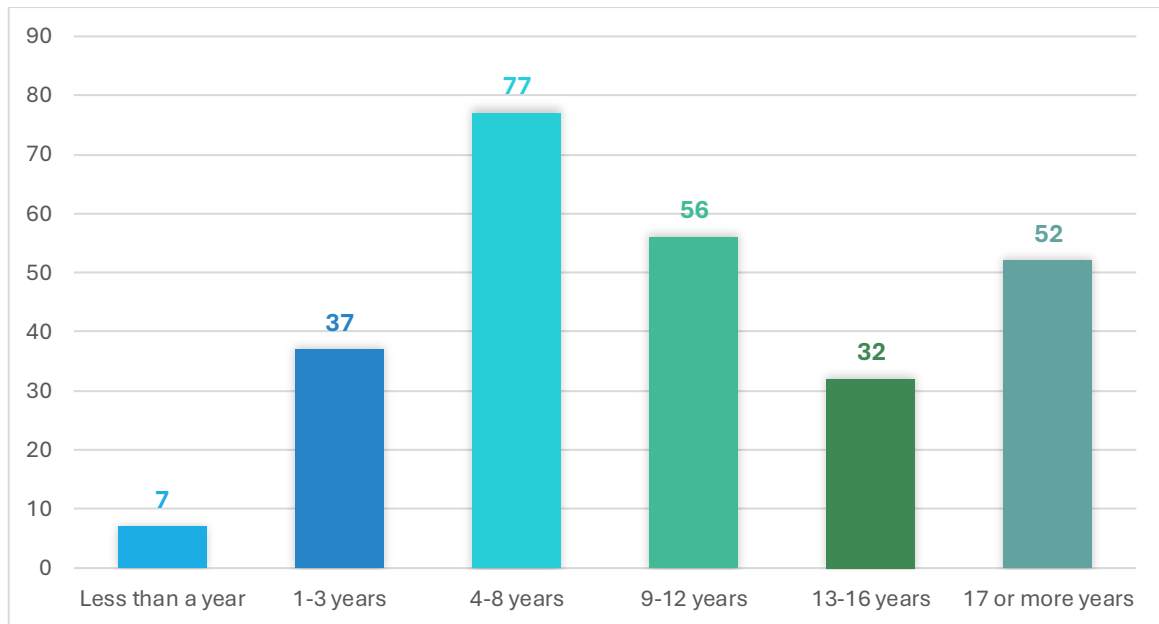


Figure 4: Responses to Q4 on duration of career in the digital preservation field

Q5: Which of the following options best describes your position within your organization? [Required, 261 responses]

More than half (151, 58%) of the respondents to the survey identified as senior practitioners, in roles such as a digital preservation archivist or librarian, or a web archivist. The remaining respondents identified as a team leader or manager (50, 19%), junior practitioner (28, 11%), technology specialist (12, 5%), senior executive or administrator (14, 5%), or as holding another type of role (6, 2%). Of those who responded with "Other" the roles listed included educator, standards assessor, researcher, and consultant.

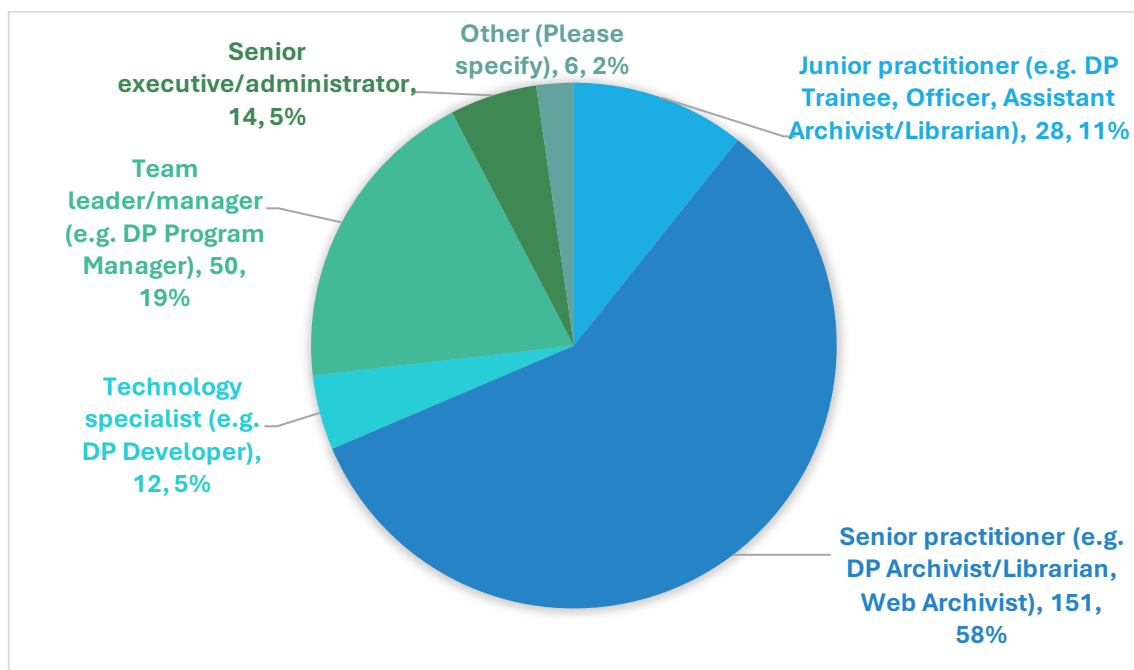


Figure 5: Responses to Q5 on role types

Q6: How would you describe your current gender identity? Select all that apply
[Required, 261 responses]

By far the largest group of respondents to the survey identified as female (183, 70%), with 56 (22%) identifying as male, 11 (4%) as non-binary or third gender, 10 (4%) preferring not to say, and 1 respondent choosing to self-describe. These results are reasonably consistent with the composition of the digital preservation community identified by the 2021 NDSA Staffing Survey, where the largest 3 groups were female (66%), male (29%), and non-binary/third gender (4%).

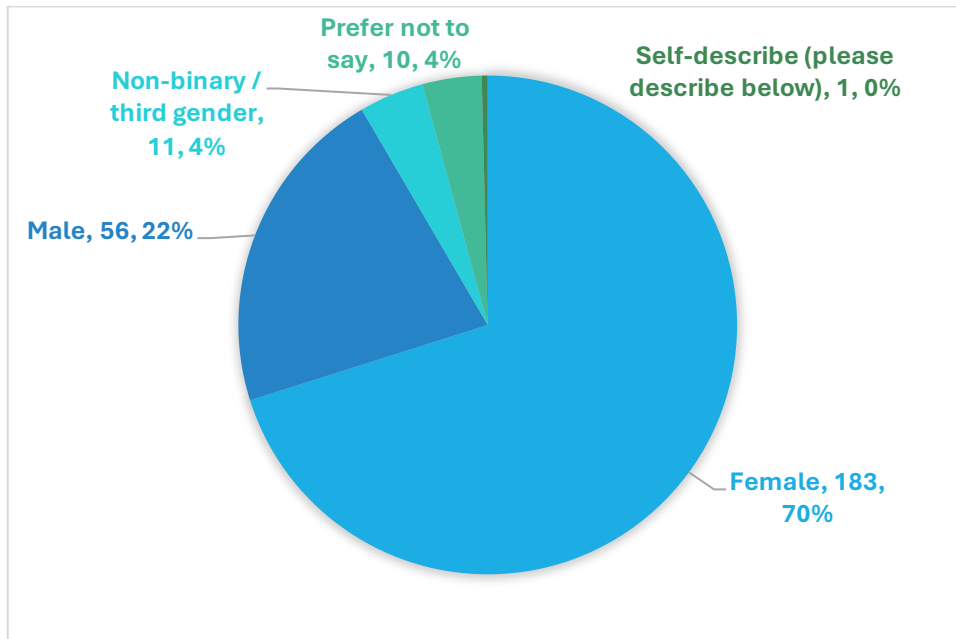


Figure 6: Responses to Q6 on gender identity

6.2 Organizational Approaches to Mental Health and Wellbeing

The second section of the survey posed questions that aimed to establish a benchmark for the provision of mental health and wellbeing support across the organizations represented by the respondents. This included questions on the existence of policy and what it covered, and if policy was actually implemented. The questions that followed then delved into specifics about the types of support offered, e.g. for professional development, career advancement, paid leave, and flexible working.

Q7: Does your organization have a policy (or similar document) to cover mental health and wellbeing issues? [Required, 261 responses]

Just under half of the respondents (128, 49%) replied that their organization had policy in place covering mental health and wellbeing issues. Of the remaining respondents, 75 (29%) stated that they did not know if their organization had a policy and 58 (22%) that their organization did not have one.

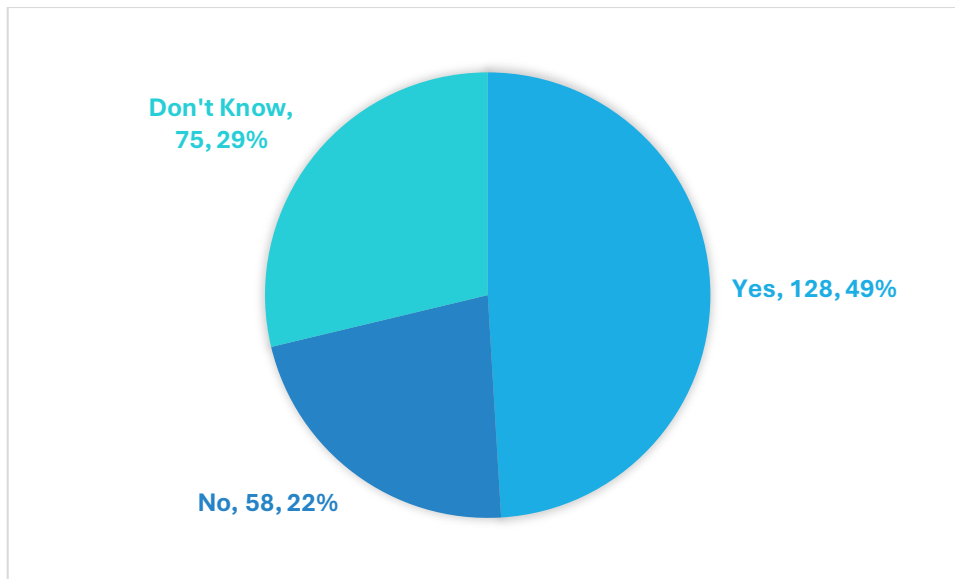


Figure 7: Responses to Q7 on the existence of organizational mental health and wellbeing policy.

Q8: Does your organization take practical steps to implement the policy? [Optional, skipped for those who replied “No” or “Don’t Know” to Q7, 107 responses]

This question was only asked of those who had responded that their organization did have a mental health and wellbeing policy in place. The vast majority of those who responded (92, 86%) said that their organization did take practical steps to implement the policy, with only 15 (14%) replying that their organization had not done so.

Q9: Does your organization have policy and/or procedures that cover the following issues? [Required, 261 responses]

This question aimed to assess which key issues that might impact mental health and wellbeing were covered in policies at the respondents’ organizations. It was not specified that these needed to be within a specific mental health and wellbeing policy. Inclusion and diversity, flexible working, sexual harassment, discrimination, and professional development were all covered by policy and/or procedures in more than three-quarters of organizations, with bullying just over half (152, 58%). There were slightly more respondents (131, 50%) who indicated coverage of mental health and wellbeing in this question than those who indicated in Q7 that their organization had policy in place covering mental health and wellbeing issues (128, 49%). One possible reason may be that the topic might be covered by procedures but not policy in the organizations of the 3 (1%) respondents. There were also 6 respondents who indicated the existence of other similar policies, with only 1 of those 6 providing a specific answer stating that their organization had a policy on stress. Only 3 respondents (1%) reported that their organization had no policy or procedures covering any of these issues.

Issue	Count	Percentage
Inclusion and diversity	214	82%
Flexible working	212	81%
Sexual Harassment	209	80%
Discrimination	200	77%
Professional development	199	76%
Bullying	152	58%
Mental health and wellbeing	131	50%
Don't Know	18	7%
Other similar (please specify below)	6	2%
None of the above	3	1%

Table 1: Responses to Q9 on issues covered by organizational policy and/or procedures

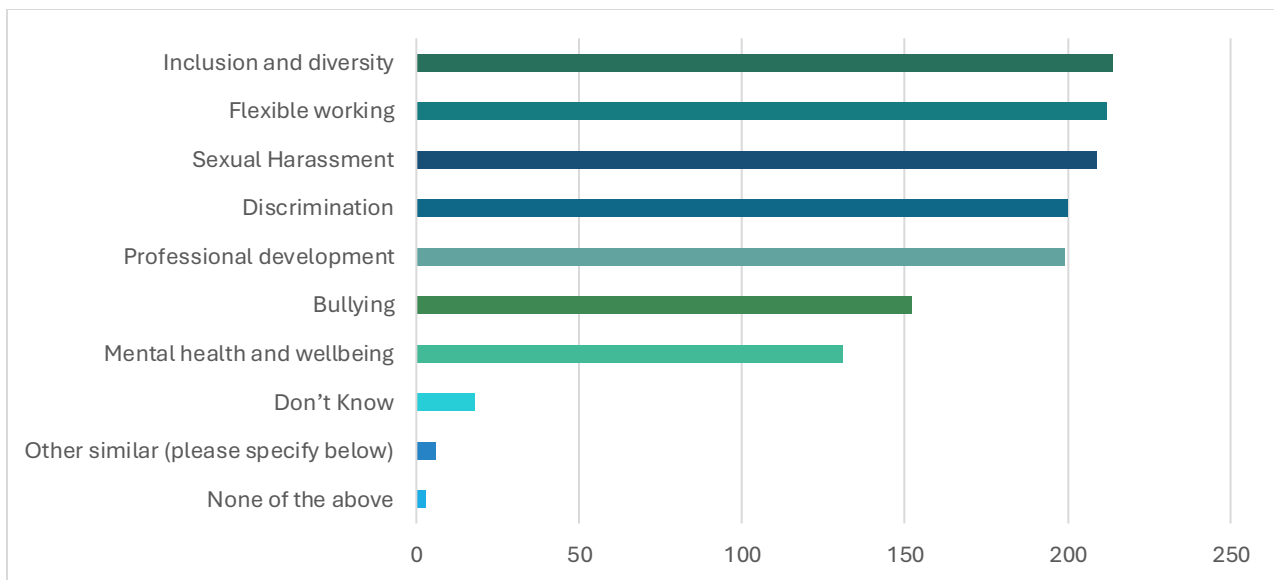


Figure 8: Responses to Q9 on issues covered by organizational policy and/or procedures

Q10: Does your organization provide support for professional development? (e.g. funding, internal training courses, time to attend events or study) [Optional, 260 responses]

The response to this question on organizational support for professional development was almost universal across respondents, with 250 (96%) reporting that support was available. Only 7 (3%) reported that no support was available, and 3 respondents (1%) replied that they didn't know if they could get support.

Q11: Does your organization provide opportunities for career advancement? (e.g. pathways for promotion or upgrading, management training programs) [Optional, 261 responses]

Support for career advancement was significantly lower than for professional development, with 151 (58%) respondents reporting that their organization offered opportunities. Of the remaining

respondents, 28 (11%) did not know if it was supported by their organization and 82 respondents (31%) said there were no opportunities for advancement (See Figure 9).

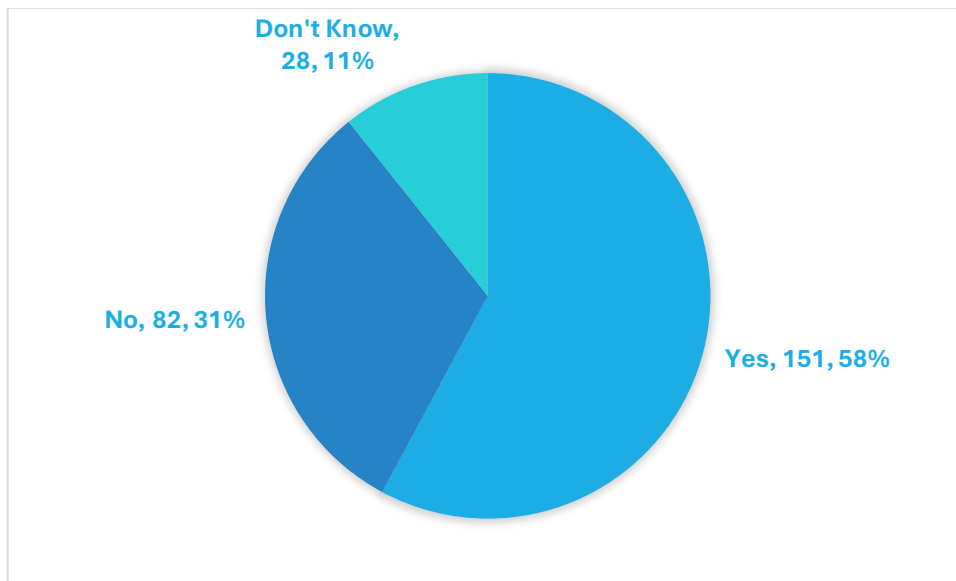


Figure 9: Responses to Q11 on opportunities for career advancement

Responses to this question were also cross tabulated against those to Q7 on the existence of policy relating to mental health and wellbeing. The results provided a clear indication that organizations that had such a policy were also more likely to offer opportunities for career advancement. As shown in Figure 10 below, for organizations with a policy, 71% of respondents reported career advancement opportunities were available, 13% higher than the average, and 21% did not have access to those types of opportunities, 10% lower than the average. For organizations without a policy, only 45% had access to career advancement opportunities, 13% lower than the average, and 47% did not have access, 16% higher than the average.

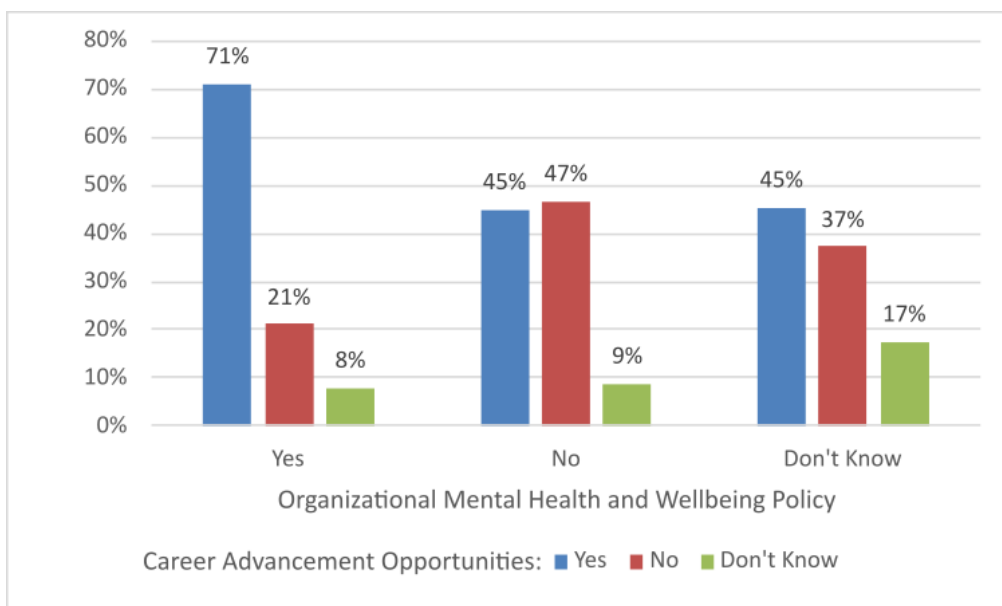


Figure 10: Crosstabulation of responses to Q7 on organizational policy and Q11 on career advancement

Q12: Does your organization hire staff on contingent/temporary contracts?
[Optional, 261 responses]

This question aimed to establish if temporary contracts were commonly used at respondents' organizations. A significant majority of respondents (228, 88%) reported temporary contracts were used 'Often' or 'Sometimes' by their organization, with the two options gaining an equal number of responses (114, 44%). A much smaller percentage replied that they were rarely used (27, 10%), with 4 respondents replying they 'Don't Know' if that type of contract was used, and only 2 (1%) stating they were never used.

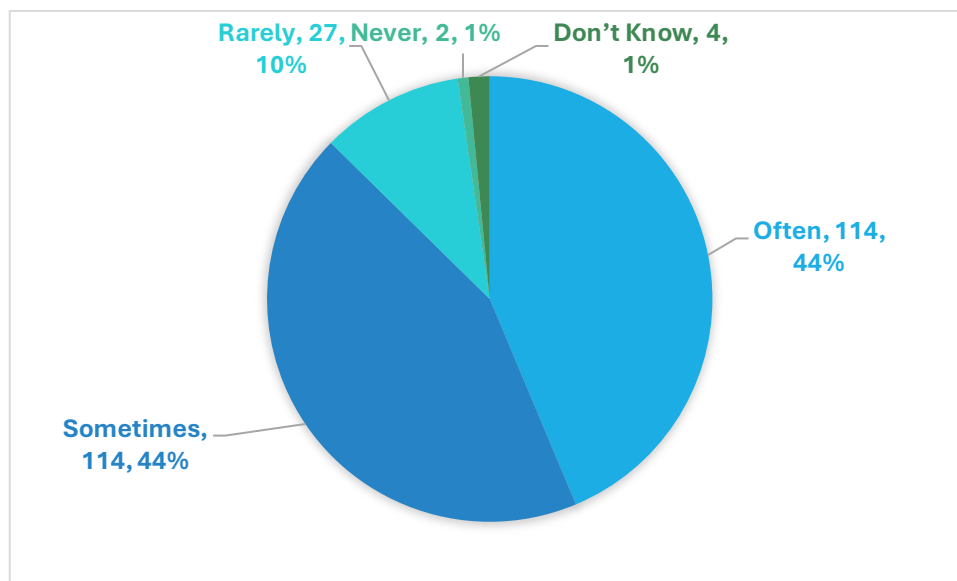


Figure 11: Responses to Q12 on the use of contingent/temporary contracts when hiring staff

Q13: Does your organization offer any of the following to support mental health and wellbeing? (Select all that apply) [Required, 261 responses]

A high percentage of respondents (205, 79%) reported that they received paid leave for physical health issues. From this percentage, it follows that 21% of respondents do not have paid leave support or, if there is this support, it is not clear to employees. A smaller number of respondents reported that they have access to paid leave for mental health issues, with 159 (61%) stating this was available to them. Even fewer have access to paid carers leave at 108 respondents (41%) offered this benefit. Levels of proactive support for mental health and wellbeing varied across different types of interventions, from 171 (66%) reporting the availability of resources on the topic and 164 (63%) able to access mental health support such as counselling or therapy, to 104 (40%) being able to gain training on the issues and 87 (33%) able to participate in fitness activities (see Table 2 and Figure 12 for more details). Finally, less than half of respondents' organizations were actively working to destigmatize discussing mental health and wellbeing, and only about a quarter of respondents (63, 24%) reported that their organization activity monitored the mental health and wellbeing of its staff.

Types of Support Offered for Mental Health and Wellbeing	Count	Percentage
Paid leave when experiencing physical health issues	205	79%
Resources on good mental health and wellbeing	171	66%
Access to mental health support (e.g. counselling/therapy)	164	63%
Health insurance/private medical care	162	62%
Paid leave when experiencing mental health issues	159	61%
Organized social activities	134	51%
Awareness raising of/communications to destigmatize discussing mental health and wellbeing issues	122	47%
Procedures for staff experiencing issues (e.g. supportive processes for reporting issues)	111	43%
Paid carers leave	108	41%
Training to support good mental health and wellbeing	104	40%
Organized fitness activities	87	33%
Monitoring of staff mental health and wellbeing (e.g. staff surveys or checks as part of appraisal processes)	63	24%
Don't know	14	5%
My organization does not offer any support for mental health and wellbeing	2	1%

Table 2: Responses to Q13 on types of practical support offered for mental health and wellbeing

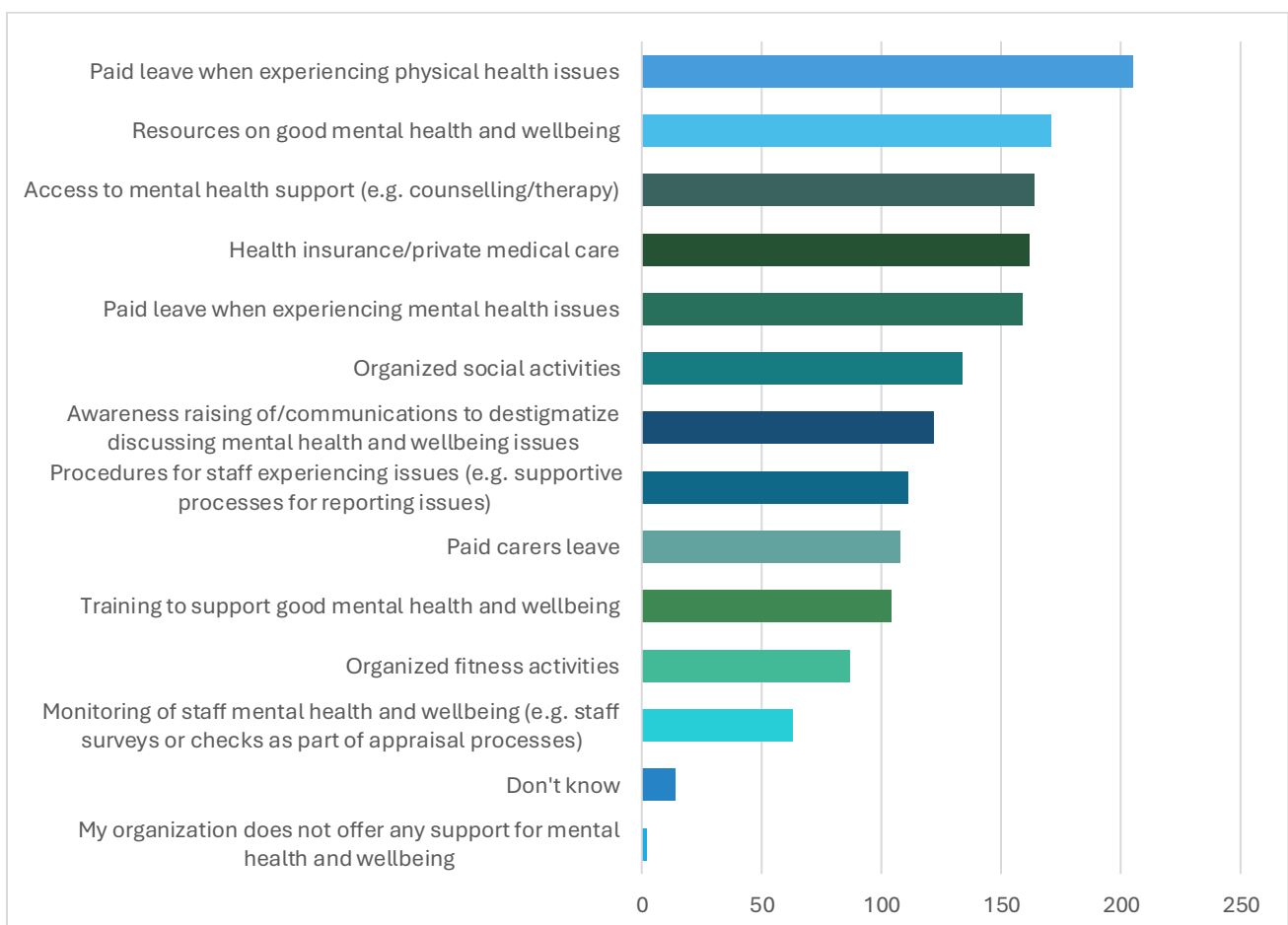


Figure 12: Responses to Q13 on types of practical support offered for mental health and wellbeing

Q14: Does your organization provide any of the following flexible working options? (Select all that apply) [Required, 261 responses]

Home working was the most readily available flexible working option available to respondents, with 226 (87%) reporting it was an option. This is not surprising in the post-COVID pandemic age, with statistics from the UK showing an increase both in the number of people working a hybrid of home and office and an increase in the percentage of time spent home working⁷. The majority of respondents also reported that they can work flexible hours (195, 75%) and can attend appointments during paid work time (166, 64%), with a further 68 respondents (26%) able to take unpaid leave for appointments. However, only around half of respondents (134, 51%) had the ability to claim back additional hours worked as time off in lieu. Support for more flexible alternative working patterns were also not available to the majority of respondents, with only 103 (39%) having the option of working part-time hours, 97 (37%) the option to work compressed hours, and 33 (13%) able to job share. Only 2 respondents (1%) reported their organization offered no flexible working options.

Flexible Working Options Offered	Count	Percentage
Home working	226	87%
Flexi-time (e.g. flexible start and end times, ability to take flexi-leave)	195	75%
Paid leave to attend appointments	166	64%
Time off in lieu (i.e. additional hours worked can be taken off at a later date)	134	51%
Part-time hours	103	39%
Compressed hours (e.g. full-time hours over fewer days)	97	37%
Unpaid leave to attend appointments	68	26%
Job sharing	33	13%
Don't know	3	1%
My organization does not offer flexible working options	2	1%

Table 3: Responses to Q14 on available flexible working options

⁷ Office of National Statistics, *Is hybrid working here to stay?*, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/articles/is-hybrid-working-here-to-stay/2022-05-23> [accessed 16/07/2024]

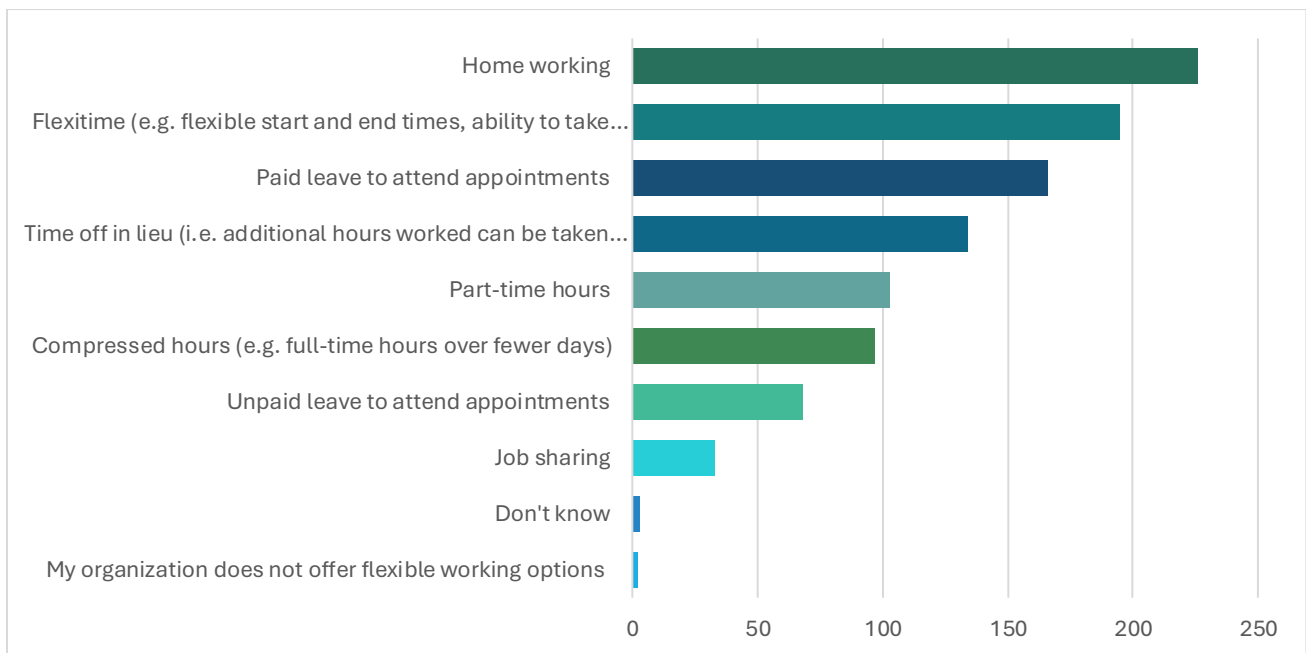


Figure 13: Responses to Q14 on available flexible working options

6.3 Personal Experiences

The third section of the survey aimed to capture information specific to the respondents' own experiences, in particular, the clarity of their responsibilities, their workload, their physical working environment, and mental health and wellbeing issues they have experienced and their potential causes. This included four free text questions that allowed respondents to provide more qualitative information in relation to their answers. During the analysis of the survey, it was discovered that there was significant overlap between responses provided to those four questions and the final two free text questions included in the final 'Wrap-Up' section of the survey (Q34, Q35). Therefore, an analysis of those two questions has also been included in this section on personal experiences.

Q15: Are your role and responsibilities clear? (e.g. your job description accurately reflects the work you do) [Required, 261 responses]

Q16: If no, please describe why your role and responsibilities are not clear [Optional, skipped for those who replied "Yes" to Q15, 83 responses]

These first two questions focused on the clarity of respondents' roles and responsibilities at their organizations. Two-thirds of respondents (176, 67%) stated that their role and responsibilities were clear in answer to Q15. Of the 85 (33%) respondents who stated their role and responsibilities were not clear, 83 provided more details in response to Q16.

The most common issue experienced, affecting 38 of those who responded to Q16 (46%), was the need to take on additional tasks not included in their role description. Several reasons for this were discussed, including organizations taking advantage of very general job descriptions or "additional duties" clauses, being pulled into projects and workstreams tangential to digital preservation, and roles having evolved over time (specifically mentioned by 17 respondents, 20%), often with additional responsibilities without commensurate compensation. These can be illustrated by the following quotes from respondents:

I am asked to do things that are beyond the scope of my contract or my training. I am asked to weigh in on issues that merit more expertise than I currently have, and when I have voiced this concern, it has gone dismissed.

We are lacking a Co-ordinator/Supervisor [sic] & Archivist so parts of those roles have been pushed to my role so I am unclear on what my actual responsibilities are. I often get given tasks outside my PD from other units across the organisation that are often out of my area of expertise

As a digital preservation practitioner, it is assumed that I am the most tech savvy person on staff and so any project involving digital technology becomes my project regardless of whether it is related to digital preservation.

Actual tasks are more in quantity [sic] and diversity than the job description and job grade

Unclear roles and responsibilities were an issue for around a quarter of respondents to Q16 (20, 24%). Some stated this was due to poorly written role descriptions:

My duties as described in my job listing are very broad and difficult to translate to day-to-day responsibilities or priorities

My job description does not match my day-to-day work and there aren't clear guidelines on what is typically expected, only broad goals

The people who wrote my job description were unclear what the responsibilities of a digital archivist actually entailed

This was specifically mentioned by 7 respondents (8%) in relation to new roles that would need further definition:

I am the first person to do my role so I think that everyone is trying to figure out where I sit in the institution and what my responsibilities are

While others claimed it was due to a need for flexibility:

Digital Preservation functions are provided by a very small team and we need to be flexible about our roles so individual responsibilities are not always clear

A lack of guidance from management was also described:

What my bosses need from me is very often opaque and changes frequently with projects and so on

Issues with role descriptions and responsibilities were also attributed to insufficient resources for digital preservation (15 respondents, 18%) and unrealistic workloads (13, 16%).

Without enough staffing I frequently have to fill in gaps in an IT, archival or web developer capacity. These responsibilities are not defined in my job description

workload is larger than one person can reasonably accomplish

the breadth of responsibilities is too broad and does not reflect a realistic workload for one job

I am faculty, and I am the person who does the most work with born-digital materials and digital preservation. This should be a full-time job; however, I also do appraisal, accessioning, processing, exhibits, outreach, reference, and work with AV. Soon I will be taking on managing two faculty in addition to the staff person I manage. On top of all of that, I also have professional service

responsibilities and keep up with my own professional development. All of that is far more than one person can and should do

In addition to these issues, respondents also mentioned that their role descriptions were out of date (7, 8%), with 2 respondents (2%) having actively requested it to be reviewed, that the amount of time they have to spend on advocacy is not accurately reflected in their job description (4, 5%), and that there are issues with the terminology used (3, 4%). Finally, 7 respondents (8%) reported that no description exists for their role. A full listing of the issues mentioned is provided in Table 4 below.

Issue Experienced	Count	Percentage
Have had to take on tasks outside their role	38	46%
Responsibilities are not clearly defined in the role description	20	24%
Role has changed significantly since they were hired	17	20%
Unable to undertake full range of responsibilities due to lack of resources	15	18%
Assigned workload is unrealistic	13	16%
Digital Preservation not valued, supported, or understood by the organization	12	14%
Role very different to description	9	11%
Role description is old and out of date	9	11%
Responsibilities significantly exceed role description	7	8%
A new role that requires further definition	7	8%
No role description exists	7	8%
Language in role description is very open	5	6%
Spend a lot of time on advocacy	4	5%
Issues with understandings of terminology used	3	4%
Has requested a reevaluation of their role description	2	2%
Additional compensation has been received	1	1%
Digital Preservation not mentioned in role	1	1%

Table 4: Issues mentioned in responses to Q16 on unclear roles and responsibilities

Q17: Are you able to keep up with your workload during your regular contracted hours? [Required, 261 responses]

In reply to Q17 on workload, only 30 respondents (12%) stated they were always able to keep up with their workload during their regular contracted hours, with a further 115 respondents (44%) stating that were usually able to keep up, for a total of 145 (56%) between these two categories. With 44% (116) of the respondents replying 'Sometimes', 'Rarely' and 'Never', this finding indicates that there is a significant portion of the digital preservation workforce struggling to keep up with their workload (see Figure 14).

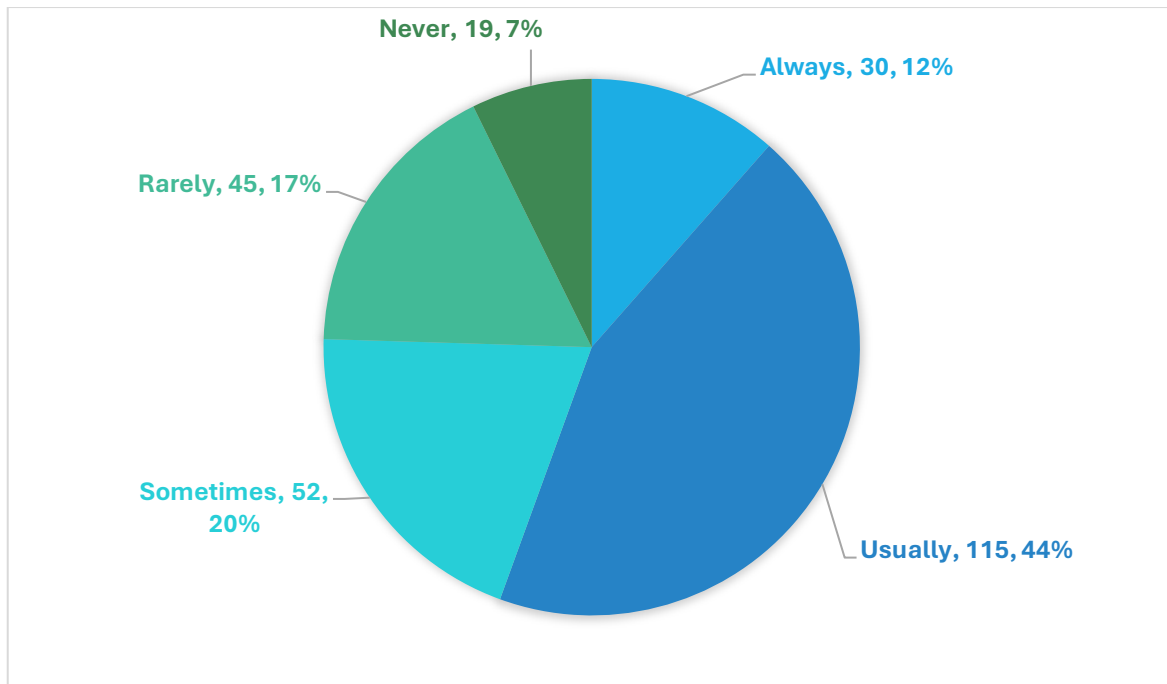


Figure 14: Responses to Q17 on ability to complete workload during regularly contracted hours

The data from Q17 was cross tabulated with Q15, with findings suggesting there is some correlation between how manageable a respondent's workload is and whether their role and responsibilities are clear. For those who replied that their role and responsibilities are clear, 63% selected the 'Always' or 'Usually' options for keeping up with their workload. For those who replied that their roles and responsibilities were unclear, the proportion was significantly lower, with 41% replying 'Always' or 'Usually'. At the other end of the scale, the difference was also evident, with only 17% of those with clear responsibilities responding they were 'Rarely' or 'Never' able to keep up with workload compared to 40% of those with unclear responsibilities.

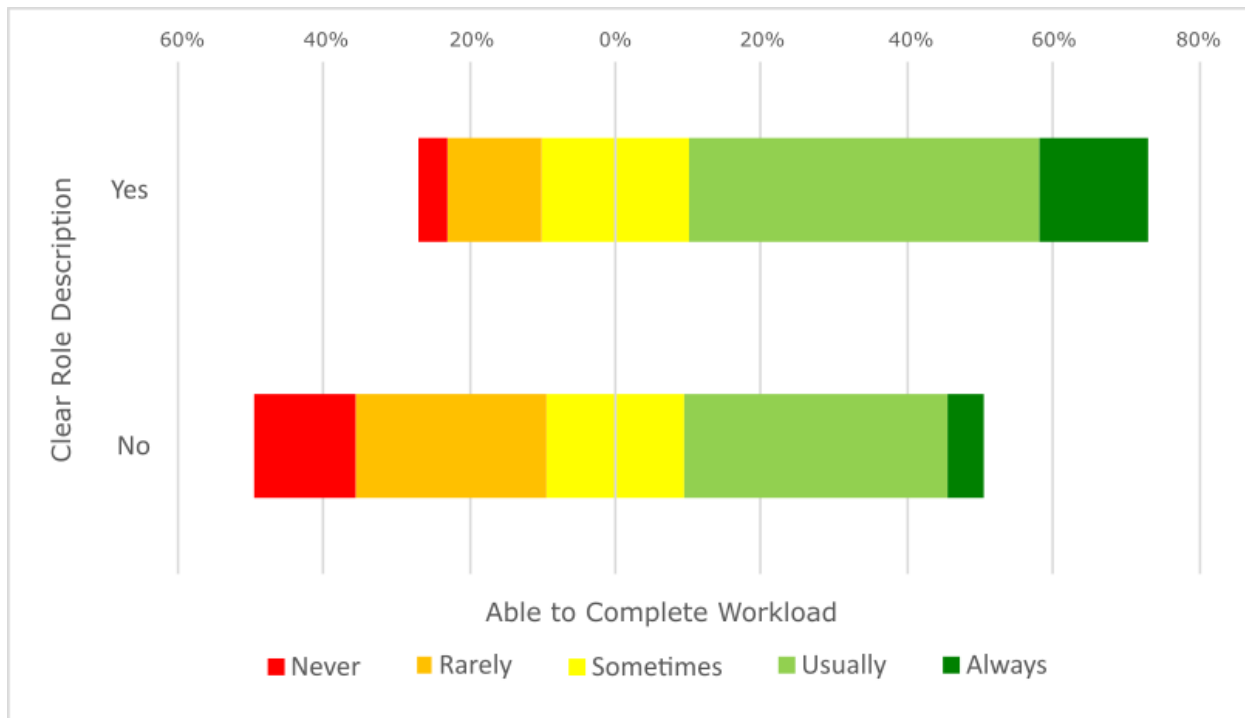


Figure 15: Comparison of responses to clarity of roles and responsibilities (Q15) and ability to complete workload (Q17)

Q18: Do you contribute to decision-making and planning that affects your workload? [Required, 261 responses]

Q19: If yes, please describe how you contribute [Optional, 181 responses]

These two questions focused on how contributing to decision making and planning affects workload. The proportion of respondents with the ability to contribute to decision-making that affected their workload was high, with 216 respondents (83%) stating they had this opportunity. Q19 allowed respondents to further elaborate on their contributions to decision making, but as responses were provided via a free text box, they may not be as representative as they might have been if options for selection had been provided, relying instead on respondents to independently identify matters (see Table 5).

There were, however, some clear indicators of the types of decision making those working in digital preservation participate in. The most common type of decision making was relating to their own role and activities, specifically influencing the types and number of tasks they are assigned (78 respondents, 43%), working autonomously (29, 16%), and contributing to forward planning for their role (66, 36%).

Contributing to collaborative decision making with colleagues and managers (74, 41%), particularly in relation to forward planning for their team/department (36, 20%) was also commonly mentioned. Decision making was also a key element of some of respondents' roles (28, 15%) as they are in managerial positions, which is in keeping with the 24% of respondents who identified as program managers or executives in Q5.

Respondents also highlighted issues with the current decision-making processes at their organization (19, 10%), with some feeling as though, despite being asked for advice, they are ignored (15, 8%). Others also mentioned that making decisions often led them to take on additional burdens rather than assigning them to other overworked colleagues (14, 8%), and that issues arose due to a mismatch

between executive/senior management priorities and those of more practice-focused staff members (4, 2%).

Response	Count	Percentage
Can directly influence the types and number of tasks they are assigned	78	43%
Contributes to collaborative decision making with colleagues and/or managers	74	41%
Can input to forward planning for their role	66	36%
Contributes to forward planning for their team/department	36	20%
Is able to work (reasonably) autonomously	29	16%
A part of being in a management role	28	15%
Contributes to the development of digital preservation strategy	26	14%
Project management an element of their role	20	11%
Have experienced difficulties with current decision-making processes	19	10%
Able to offer advice but it is often ignored	15	8%
Still leads to additional burden	14	8%
Able to raise issues that might affect decision-making	14	8%
Contributes to organization strategy development	5	3%
Contributes to agile planning at organization	4	2%
Issues to due mismatch of executive and staff priorities	4	2%
Can make decisions about what the organization collects	3	2%
Have to make decisions as no one else has the required knowledge/understanding of digital preservation	3	2%
Contributes to policy development	3	2%

Table 5: Counts of summarized types of response to Q19 on decision making contribution

Q20: Is your physical work environment suitable for your needs? [Optional, 258 responses]

In relation to the suitability of their physical work environment, just under half (126 respondents, 49%) replied that it met their needs. A further 104 respondents (40%) replied that their work environment 'Somewhat' met their needs, and 28 respondents (11%) said it did not (Figure 16).

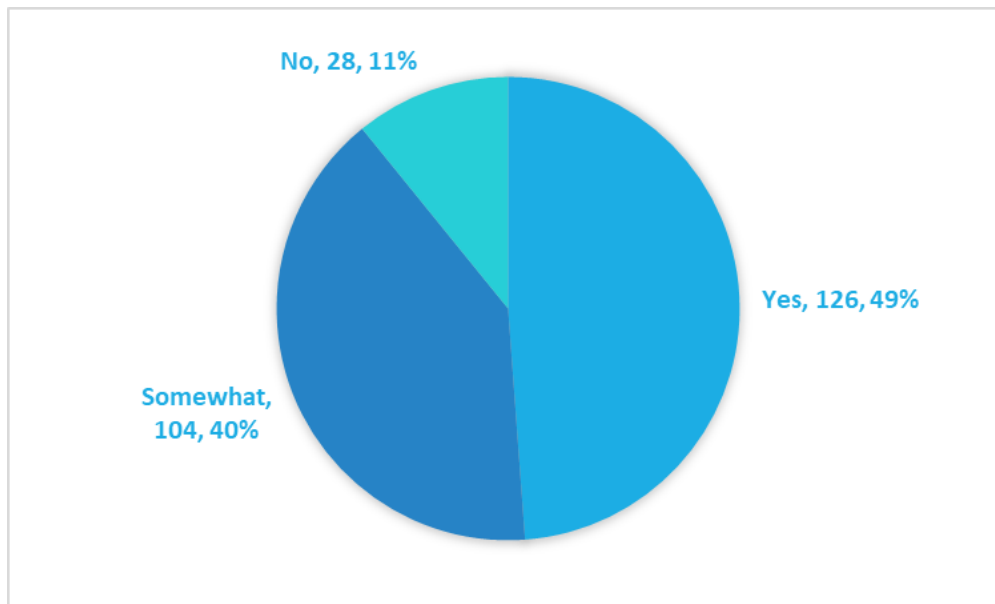


Figure 16: Responses to Q20 on suitability of physical work environment

The results of Q20 were also cross tabulated with Q7 to ascertain if there was any correlation between an organization having a mental health and wellbeing policy and providing suitable working environments. As can be seen in Figure 17 below, work environment suitability does seem to be poorer at those organization without mental health and wellbeing policy. For those with a policy, 61% said their environment was suitable, 33% replied it was somewhat suitable, and 6% that it was not, and for those without a policy, 35% said their environment was suitable, 46% that it was somewhat suitable, and 19% that it was not. The figures for those who did not know if their organization had a policy were similar to those at organizations who did not have one. As with the comparison of Q11 and Q7, this may be symptomatic of general organizational culture.

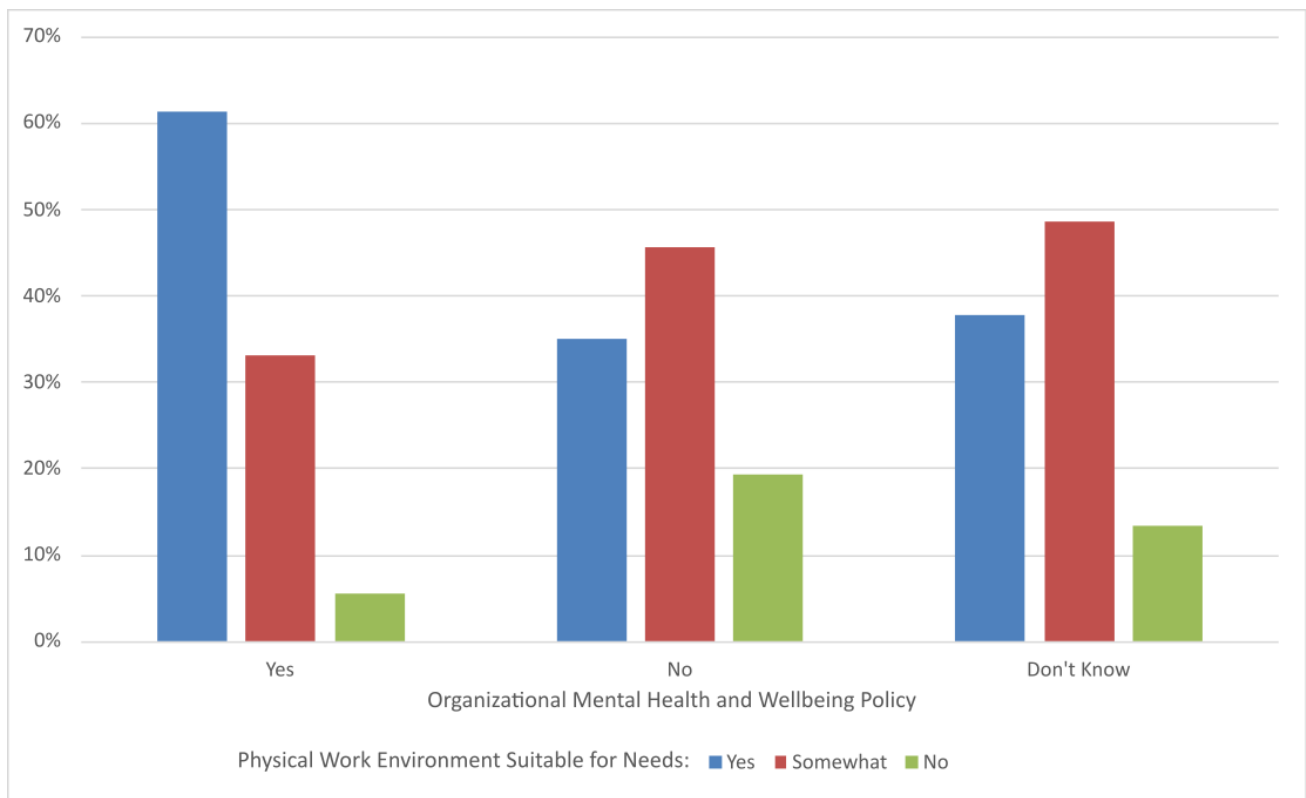


Figure 17: Comparison of the suitability of physical work environments (Q20) against the existence of mental health and wellbeing policy (Q7)

Q21: Please describe what is good and/or bad about your physical work environment. [Optional, 197 responses]

As with Q19, due to the free text nature of the responses to Q21, the response rates should be viewed as indicative rather than fully representative, but they match relatively well with the proportion of those reporting that there were or were not issues with their physical work environments. A full breakdown of the positive and negative responses are included in Tables 6 and 7 below, but there are a few topics that will be highlighted now.

Comments on home working environments were generally positive, with many appreciating the chance to personalize the space and select their own furniture, as well as it being more quiet, private and with the benefit of avoiding a lengthy commute. Some did, however, mention the costs of having to self-fund furniture and equipment, which could lead to sub-par and makeshift spaces.

Working from home is great. I have everything I need including a therapy cat, gym, healthy food, a good chair and desk as well as all the peripherals needed to conduct my work.

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic began, I had requested a primarily work-from-home arrangement, which has its benefits and drawbacks in terms of communication, collaboration, and inclusion in my "workplace", but has allowed me to shape my physical work environment to shape my own comfort/needs (and my workplace has been supportive in providing funds e.g. for necessary equipment)

Working from home I have a decent desk/chair but some of the other provision is less good (no screen, own wifi only, desk lighting is imperfect because of limited power sockets)

I could use a more ergonomic set up. I work from home and would have to pay for it.

As mentioned in the final quote above, several respondents mentioned the importance of adjustable furniture. Some noted that this had been provided by their employers (26, 11%), while others stated this was something they lacked (18, 7%). The quality of lighting was also commented on by a significant number of respondents. Of the 21 (9%) that reported a well-lit space, this often included mention of natural light and large windows. While those who mentioned badly lit spaces (18, 7%) often reported a lack of windows and fluorescent lights, with 2 respondents noting that the lighting triggered migraines.

Sufficient quiet and privacy were also highlighted as key issues. Having their own office (23, 9%), suitable privacy (7, 3%), and a quiet space conducive to work (5, 2%) were all reported as positives. While 33 respondents (14%) reported they experienced the issue of their workspace being too noisy. This was often linked to comments on open plan offices and hotdesking, mentions of these office styles were almost exclusively negative.

Finally, 13 respondents (5%) stated that their poor physical work environment had led directly to negative physical health outcomes such as headaches/migraines and back and joint pain.

Positive Responses	Count	Percentage
Has a good home office setup	48	20%
All equipment needs met	29	12%
Adjustable furniture provided	26	11%
Has own office	23	9%
Well-lit space	21	9%
Plenty of space	18	7%
Able to personalize space	13	5%
Has suitable privacy	7	3%
Facilities generally good	7	3%
Has a quiet space conducive to work	5	2%
Green space available for spending breaks	5	2%
Recently refurbished	3	1%
Has a secure space	3	1%
Accessible	3	1%

Table 6: Positive responses to Q21 on physical work environments

Negative Responses	Count	Percentage
Equipment provided is substandard	33	14%
Space too noisy	33	14%
Issues with temperature	26	11%
Poorly implemented open plan office	23	9%
Lack of privacy	22	9%
Limited space	20	8%
No equipment provided	19	8%
Badly lit space	18	7%
Furniture not adjustable	18	7%
Poor environment has had negative physical health ramifications	13	5%
Refurbishment needed	13	5%
Has to self-fund necessary equipment	12	5%
Poorly implemented hotdesking	9	4%
Lack of meeting space	8	3%
Denied or limited home working	6	2%
Lack of accessibility	5	2%
In an isolated location	5	2%
Uncomfortable	4	2%
Poor security	2	1%

Table 7: Negative responses to Q21 on physical work environments

Skip Statement: The next three questions will ask about specific negative experiences in the workplace that you may have encountered, and how they may have affected your mental health and wellbeing. The issues raised in these questions may, therefore, be upsetting or triggering. If you would prefer not to engage with this content, select "Skip" below, otherwise please select "Continue" to answer the questions.

Due to the sensitive and potentially triggering nature of the next three questions, respondents were given the option to skip the section if they thought it would be detrimental to their own mental health. Over 90% of respondents continued and answered the questions.

Q22: Have you encountered any of the following while working in a digital preservation role? (Please select all that apply) [Optional, 243 responses]

Prior to carrying out the survey, anecdotal evidence suggested that those working in digital preservation were struggling due to a range of issues, including the need for near constant advocacy, a lack of understanding about digital preservation from those in decision-making/strategy-making roles, and overwhelming workloads. Those issues were all highlighted by answers to Q22 (see Table 8 and Figure 18 for a full breakdown).

Significant majorities of respondents replied that they felt they were working to unrealistic expectations (171, 70%), felt overwhelmed by the advocacy burden (154, 63%), had a lack of clarity around their responsibilities (150, 62%), were having to manage an unrealistic workload (147, 60%), felt unsupported (141, 58%), and were the only one working on digital preservation at their organization (137, 56%). This

supports the conclusion that digital preservation practitioners are, indeed, struggling due to a widespread lack of organizational support for and understanding of digital preservation.

This is often then combined with more generic workplace issues. More than half of respondents (131, 54%) replied that they had experienced a difficult relationship with a colleague, and nearly half (111, 46%) a difficult relationship with a manager, contributing to an uncomfortable environment in the workplace. For many this is also combined with a lack of reward for their work, either financially or through validation of the efforts. Over half of respondents (129, 53%) reported that they have felt that their contributions were overlooked or diminished, while 106 (44%) reported receiving low pay or benefits and 84 (35%) stating that they had experienced a lack of job security.

The incidences of experiencing more potentially traumatic issues were also high. About a third of respondents had experienced or witnessed sexism (80, 33%), bullying (78, 32%), prejudice or discrimination (75, 31%), and/or working with problematic or traumatic content (67, 28%). These issues can all have potentially long-term consequences for an individual's mental health and well-being.

Only 6 (2%) of respondents reported not having experienced at least one of these, or other similar, issues in the workplace.

Issues Experienced or Witnessed While Working in Digital Preservation	Count	Percentage
Unrealistic expectations	171	70%
Overwhelmed by advocacy burden	154	63%
Unclear responsibilities	150	62%
Had to manage an unrealistic workload	147	60%
Felt unsupported	141	58%
Only person working on digital preservation	137	56%
Difficult relationship with a colleague	131	54%
Contributions overlooked or diminished	129	53%
Difficult relationship with manager	111	46%
Low pay/benefits	106	44%
Lack of job security	84	35%
Sexism	80	33%
Bullying	78	32%
Prejudice/discrimination	75	31%
Problematic/traumatic content	67	28%
Had to work long hours	47	19%
Other	10	4%
Not experienced any	6	2%

Table 8: Responses to Q22 on issues experienced while in a digital preservation role

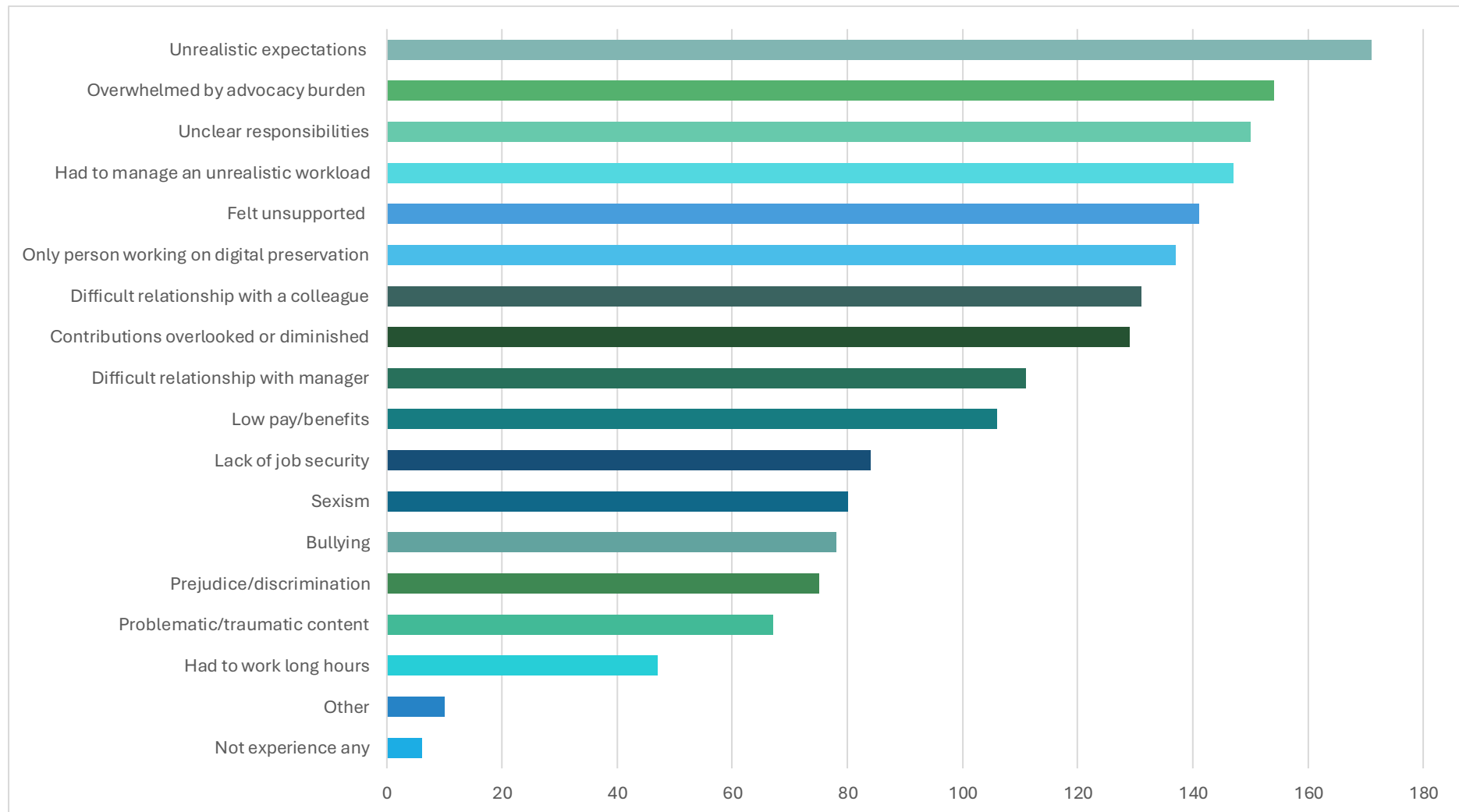


Figure 18: Responses to Q22 on issues experienced while in a digital preservation role

Q23: Do you feel your digital preservation work or any of the issues identified in Q22 have led to/contributed to you experiencing any of the following? (Please check all that apply) [Optional, 232 responses]

The number of respondents who replied that their work had caused them stress was high at 88% (204 responses), this is 28% higher than the reported global workplace average of 60%⁸. Anxiety (160, 69%) and Fatigue (155, 67%) were also reported by around two thirds of respondents. These are harder to compare to broader statistical data as information on concerns such as anxiety are readily available for those with an anxiety disorder (around 4% of people globally⁹) but less clear for those with more generalized anxiety or anxiety about a specific issue. Burnout was also reported by 137 (59%) of respondents, which is likewise difficult to compare to global statistics as the reports of levels of burnout varying significantly, from 77%¹⁰ to 43%¹¹ of workers. It is notable, however, that the survey rate sits very close to the mean of this range.

In relation to work performance, a significant majority of respondents (141, 61%) reported that at time they have difficulty focusing on work. Instances of presenteeism (i.e. the act of showing up for work without being productive, generally because ill-health prevents it) were also indicated by half of the respondents (117, 50%).

Without further investigation it is not possible to clearly identify the actual causes of these issues, but they may be a side-effect of stress, anxiety, and/or fatigue, and a lack of a supportive organizational culture. Some of the issues identified in questions 20 and 21 in relation to physical work environments may also have an impact to focus.

Instances of other mental and physical issues experienced were also high, with 109 respondents (47%) reporting feelings of isolation, 99 (43%) insomnia, 90 (39%) depression, and 79 (34%) other physical symptoms. Estimates of insomnia for the general population vary widely, from 5%-50% depending on the definition of insomnia used according to the UK's National Institute for Health and Care Excellence¹². This size of this range makes it difficult to make a direct comparison with the data from the survey, but the level experienced by digital preservation practitioners is towards the upper end of the range. The World Health Organization estimates that around 5% of adults experience depressive disorders in any one year¹³, but, as with insomnia, reported longitudinal data varies in range by source. One study reported in *Nature*, stated that the average lifetime estimate of the prevalence of major depressive

⁸ Spill, *70 Workplace Stress Statistics You Need to Know in 2024*, <https://www.spill.chat/mental-health-statistics/workplace-stress-statistics> [accessed 23/07/2024]

⁹ World Health Organization, *Anxiety disorders*, <https://www.who.int/news-room/factsheets/detail/anxiety-disorders> [accessed 23/07/2024]

¹⁰ Runn, *50+ Burnout Statistics That Will Shock You Into Action*, <https://www.runn.io/blog/burnout-statistics#:~:text=in%20the%20workplace.-,%2C%20and%2075%25%20experienced%20burnout> [accessed 23/07/2024]

¹¹ Spill, *64 Workplace Burnout Statistics You Need to Know in 2024*, <https://www.spill.chat/mental-health-statistics/workplace-burnout-statistics> [accessed 23/07/2024]

¹² National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, *Insomnia: How common is it?*, <https://cks.nice.org.uk/topics/insomnia/background-information/prevalence/#:~:text=Estimates%20of%20the%20prevalence%20of,2022%3B%20Riemann%2C%202023%5D> [accessed 24/07/2024]

¹³ World Health Organization, *Depressive disorder (depression)*, <https://www.who.int/news-room/factsheets/detail/depression>, [accessed 24/07/2024]

episodes in high-income countries is 14.6% and in low-income countries 11.1%¹⁴. Direct comparisons between those figures and those captured by the survey must be made with caution as the survey text used only the term ‘depression’ and not the more specific ‘major depressive episode’, so interpretations will likely vary. Additionally, it is important to remember that those who have experienced issues are more likely to respond to a survey of this type. At face value, the survey suggests a significant issue of depression, almost three times higher within the digital preservation workforce than in the general population. This initial finding needs urgent attention.

The issues reported in this section were, in turn, severe enough that 77 respondents (33%) felt the need to seek treatment to address them, have led to 60 of the respondents (26%) leaving the organization where issues have been experienced. 41 (18%) have had to raise a grievance against a colleague, and 33 (14%) have had to take a leave of absence. Respondents have also taken other proactive steps, including seeking additional compensation (54, 23%), requesting changes to their job description (44, 19%), and changing job within their organization (22, 9%). Of the 11 respondents (5%) who selected ‘Other’, a few left further comments which included mentions of unionization, a loss of confidence, and a discrimination lawsuit.

Experiences Caused By or Contributed To by Work Issues	Count	Percentage
Stress	204	88%
Anxiety	160	69%
Fatigue	155	67%
Difficulty focusing	141	61%
Burnout	137	59%
Presenteeism	117	50%
Feelings of Isolation	109	47%
Insomnia	99	43%
Depression	90	39%
Physical symptoms	79	34%
Seeking treatment	77	33%
Leaving the organization	60	26%
A request for additional compensation	54	23%
Changes to your job description	44	19%
Raising a grievance against a colleague	41	18%
Taking a leave of absence	33	14%
Changing job within organization	22	9%
Other (please describe below)	11	5%

Table 9: Responses to Q23 on experiences caused by or contributed to by work issues

¹⁴ Nature, *Prevalence of Depression in the Community from 30 Countries between 1994 and 2014*, <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-018-21243-x#:~:text=studied%2089037%20people%20from%2018,%2D%20to%20middle%2Dincome%20countries> [accessed 24/07/2024]

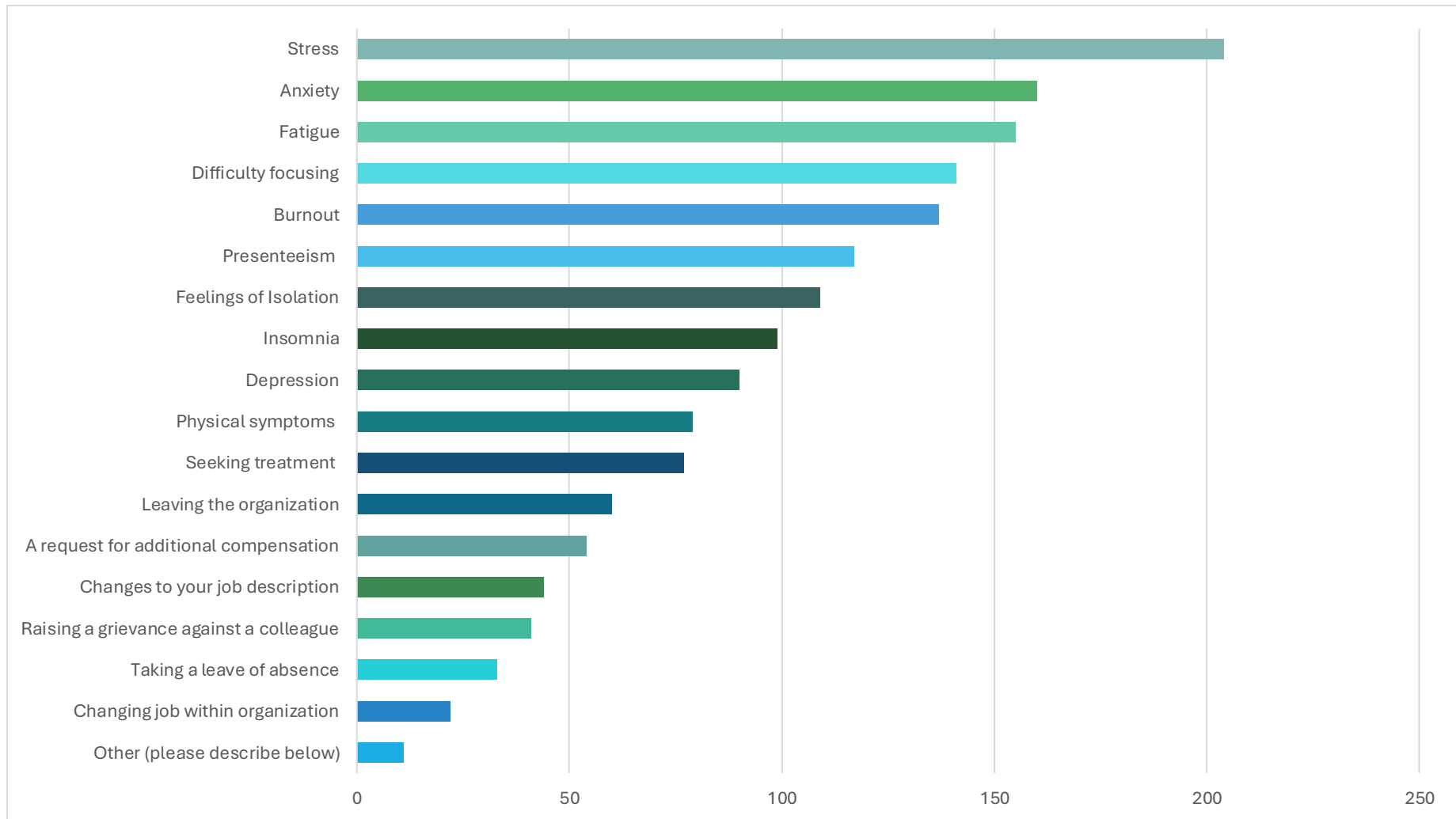


Figure 19: Responses to Q23 on experiences caused by or contributed to by work issues

Q24: If you wish to/feel able to, please share further details of the issues you have indicated above [Optional, 98 responses]

Q35: Is there anything else you would like to share about your mental health and wellbeing experiences in the workplace? [Optional, 82 responses]

As mentioned earlier, initial analysis of the free text questions Q24 and Q35 found significant crossover in the issues covered by the responses provided. It was therefore decided that respondents' answers to both questions should be combined in later rounds of analysis and for reporting here. Due to the wide range of issues mentioned in the responses to this question, it is not possible to address them all in the narrative of the report, but they have been summarised in the Tables 10 and 11 below, split between those that are more positive in nature, and those that describe more negative experiences.

The issues mentioned most frequently echo responses received to other questions within the survey. These included 33 respondents commenting on the unrealistic nature of their workload, 32 highlighting a lack of engagement with and support for digital preservation from colleagues, 30 describing a similar situation with those in management/executive positions, and 30 reporting struggles due to a lack of available resources (financial, technological, and staffing). Several (28) also mentioned feeling their work was undervalued, 20 described dealing with feelings of isolation (often due to being the only one working on digital preservation at their organization), 20 had experienced significant issues with stress, and 19 felt overwhelmed by the ongoing advocacy burden. Finally, 19 portrayed organizational culture as generally poor where they work, with 18 having difficult relationships with colleagues, and the same number with their manager.

These responses paint a picture familiar to many digital preservation practitioners of environments where they find it difficult to establish robust and sustainable digital preservation programs, facing resistance to and a lack of understanding of digital preservation from both superiors and colleagues. This then leads to the work being substantially under resourced and many trying to solve their organization's numerous digital preservation problems on their own or with only a small staff complement, completely mismatched to the scale of the problem. Indeed, there were several responses to these questions that spoke of a lack of hope, a feeling of surrender, and the need to emotionally disconnect from their work for the sake of their mental health.

At least 10% of respondents also reported quite serious breakdowns of relationships with their manager and/or colleagues. Comments indicated that respondents faced issues with a lack of respect being shown, ideas and opinions dismissed, and a general lack of empathy for a person's whole life needs (e.g. health and external commitments like family) and how they are balanced with their role at work. Issues with bullying and intimidation were also mentioned regularly in these responses with the majority reporting negative experiences in trying to resolve the issues. This was generally due to a lack of willingness by the organization to investigate the issues and take steps to address them. This, in turn, has led those respondents to consider leaving, or to actually leave their digital preservation role. This involved a mix of moving to a new role/department within the same organization, moving to a role at a different organization, or leaving the digital preservation profession entirely.

The following are a set of quotes taken from the survey responses that are representative of stories shared by respondents. Minor edits have been made to one quote to retain confidentiality, the changes do not impact on the meaning and tone of the information shared.

Lack of understanding from senior management regarding value and importance of digital preservation and what skills and resources are needed. This has led to burnout and anxiety to the point of stress leave.

Continual advocacy for the existence of my team and my role is a huge burden. It has taken many years to get roles funded in an ongoing capacity, but each new role/opportunity is short-term and the process starts all over again.

Burnout is part of [organization redacted] culture. All staff have experienced it within our unit. Partly due to the tremendous amount of work and that the lack of care taken by the organization of its staff. I was working alone for 4 years and a huge workload [two words redacted]. Thrown into places with little briefing, then having our work not properly resourced and fighting to be seen as core to the organization.

Being solely responsible for creating digital preservation at a place it has not existed before feels incredibly overwhelming. I also do not feel as though I have the technical skills to be good at digital preservation, which contributes to imposter syndrome, a lot of stress, and avoiding working on my digital preservation tasks (I have many other job responsibilities besides digital preservation).

This year my organisation is intending to purchase a digital preservation system which is a really positive step. However no additional staff resources have been dedicated to this project, so I am having to do all the procurement work in addition to my existing and time consuming digital preservation activities, and non digital responsibilities.

I have felt that the truth of what digital preservation work is and entails has yet to be realized here, and I am expected to work to the comfort levels (expertise base) of others. Being female has further exacerbated the situation as our current IT staff consists only of males.

The organisation pays lip service to digital preservation, in reality it does not understand or care about digital preservation or information management, or resource or support it adequately, which is very demoralising.

I have experienced deteriorating mental health due to the unrealistic expectations and lack of support. I have also attempted to leave the organization; however, the job listings I have seen often seem to echo current unrealistic expectations and responsibility overload at my institution giving me little motivation to embark on the highly stressful prospect of interviewing and uprooting my life. I feel like I am in a no-win situation and have been looking for employment that may take me out of the profession.

I've made some progress on the awareness side, and leadership now generally trust my recommendations. However, it's taken a lot of time and effort, and left me feeling pretty down about all the other important tasks that have been left on the back burner. I try to stay focused on the work itself and not worry about what a failure to demonstrate "value" will mean for my contract position, but the precarious work aspect also weighs heavy. The end result: I'm leaving this organization and digital preservation for a permanent job where I know I'll have supervisory support, advancement paths, and more clearly defined responsibilities. It's not as interesting an area, but it's the right move for my career progression and (most importantly) my mental health.

As a senior manager I am responsible for a number of specialist areas including digital preservation. I observe that junior members of staff often feel that they are carrying a burden on behalf of their

profession when things are not best practice, when actually it is organisational decisions about priorities that are responsible, not individual professionals.

I am early career, so I also have a sense that I am not competent enough. Combining this with the lack of attention focused on this work at an organizational level means that it is exhausting to try and advocate and also try to be sure that I'm not going to cause issues further down the line. I frequently feel overwhelmed.

About workload and advocacy burden in particular: while the importance of digital preservation has been cited in policies and communicated at meetings with senior leadership, the resource and practical support to implement the required work and infrastructure has not been allocated. Knowledge and understanding of the practicalities of digital preservation seem to exist at lower levels of staff (operational staff) but higher level managers don't have the necessary skills or understanding to dedicate the right type of resource or to plan effective digital preservation strategies. As a result, internal reports and even public-facing comms often over-inflate the level of digital preservation actually taking place. This makes it feel as if I've failed before I've even started.

Positive Experiences Mentioned	Count
Has a good relationship with their manager	8
Love working in digital preservation	5
Feel well supported by colleagues	3
Mental health/wellbeing services offered	3
Has a good work/life balance	3
Good job security	1

Table 10: Positive experiences that impact on mental health and wellbeing

Negative Experiences Mentioned	Count
Their workload is unrealistic	33
Lack of engagement with and support from colleagues for digital preservation	32
Lack of engagement with and support for digital preservation from executives	30
Issues caused by the lack of resources available for digital preservation	30
Feels their work is undervalued	28
Struggle with feelings of isolation and lone working	20
Experienced significant issues with stress	20
Burden of constantly needing to advocate for digital preservation	19
Organizational culture is generally poor	19
Has poor relationships with colleagues	18
Has a poor relationship with their manager/supervisor	18
Have felt the need to change job due hostile environments	16
Lack of job security	12
Experienced burnout	11
Struggled due to a lack of guidance and direction from more senior staff	11
Pay/benefits are low in comparison to the responsibilities of the role	11
The need to balance digital preservation with a range of other duties	9

Negative Experiences Mentioned	Count
Have been bullied by a co-worker or manager	9
Feel they are ignored	8
Set unrealistic expectations for themselves	7
Has (had) to work with problematic/traumatic materials	6
Significant issues with anxiety	5
Policy on mental health/wellbeing not implemented at their organization	5
Struggles to balance 'best practice'/professionalism and what is actually possible	5
Experienced sexism	5
Role has expanded significantly without additional compensation	5
Issues have led to a significant absence from work	4
Suffer from a lack of confidence and/or issues with imposter syndrome	4
Significant issues with depression	4
Has to work out of hours to get things done	4
Would describe experiences as traumatic	4
Issues exacerbated by COVID	3
Struggle to keep up with necessary professional development	3
Experienced racism	3
Poor provision of leave	3
Recognizes the need for more active dialogues about mental health	3
Has a poor work/life balance	3
A lack of opportunities for advancement	2
Issues when collaborating with external partners	2
Role is poorly defined	2
Found it difficult to fulfil their responsibilities due to territory guarding by colleagues	2
Have had to seek therapy due to issues experienced	2
Experienced ageism	1
Lost out on advancement due to favoritism	1
Experienced prejudice relating to gender identity	1
Has been threatened with physical violence	1

Table 11: Negative experiences that impact on mental health and wellbeing

Q34: Are there any particular examples of good mental health and wellbeing practice that you would like to share? [Optional, 99 responses]

Question 34 asked respondents to share their recommendations for mental health and wellbeing good practice in the workplace and all of the suggestions mentioned have been summarized in Table 12 below.

Positive communication was highly valued by respondents, both specifically about mental health and wellbeing issues (mentioned in 13 responses), and about more general work-related issues (18 mentions). Other ways to create positive work cultures were also mentioned several times. These included the provision of wellbeing services and resources (15 mentions), organized wellness activities (15), encouraging employees to not work beyond their contracted hours (11), managers and executives setting positive examples of healthy work/life balance (9), recognition by organizations that employees

have other (more important) priorities in their lives, and the proactive cultivation of a sense of belonging (3). In relation to more practical processes, suggestions relating to the offer of flexible working (e.g. home working or flexible hours) were mentioned (14), as well as the provision of adequate breaks (7), annual leave (5) and sick leave (1), encouraging shorter meetings and non-meeting days (2), and the protection of blocks of focus-time (1). Some respondents also provided advice for individuals, such as making sure to establish clear work/life boundaries (18), participating in mindfulness activities (15), and seeking help such as therapy when it is needed (6).

Good Practice Recommendations	Count
Providing spaces (e.g. meetings or online channels) for productive communication about work issues (internal to own organization and/or with external peers)	18
Establishing clear work/life boundaries	18
Access to wellbeing services and resources	15
Participation in mindfulness activities	15
Organized wellness activities	15
Offering flexible working	14
Open dialogues about mental health, leading to destigmatization	13
More encouragement for employees to keep to their contracted hours	11
Managers and executives setting a positive example, particularly in relation to establishing clear work/life boundaries	9
Greater recognition that employees have other (more important) priorities than work	9
Provision of adequate breaks	7
Practical and proactive implementation of mental health/wellbeing policy	7
Greater recognition of issues that are endemic to the organization (e.g. high levels of burnout) and their root causes	7
Getting therapy when it is needed	6
Provision of annual leave	5
Proactively cultivating a sense of belonging	3
More training on wellness issues	3
Setting of clear priorities	2
Shorter meetings and non-meeting days	2
Workspaces that are well-equipped and conducive to work	2
Support for professional development	1
Encouraging employees to create (and protect) blocks of 'focus time'	1
More honest reporting on achievements and failures	1
Provision of paid sick leave	1
Physical spaces for downtime during breaks	1

Table 12: Responses to Q34 on recommendations for good mental health and wellbeing practices

6.4 General Mental Health and Wellbeing Trends

The fourth section of the survey presented respondents with a series of mental health and wellbeing statements and asked them to respond using a Likert scale of 'Strongly Agree' to 'Strongly Disagree'. The purpose of this section was to establish benchmarks for the issues mentioned, whilst also facilitating

cross tabulated comparisons with answers to earlier core questions on demographics, organizational approaches, and personal experiences.

Q25: My supervisor/manager and I have the same understanding of what my role and responsibilities are. [Required, 261 responses]

The first question in this section asked respondents to reflect on how their understanding of their role may differ from their manager's understanding. The largest group of respondents replied positively to this statement, with 109 (42%) selecting 'Strongly agree' (Figure 20). The second largest group (101, 39%) also replied with a positive leaning 'Somewhat agree', although this does, of course, mean that there is not complete consensus on what the role entails. Of the remaining respondents, 17 (6%) replied with a more neutral 'Neither agree nor disagree' and, more negative leaning, 22 (8%) replied 'Somewhat disagree' and 12 (5%) 'Strongly disagree'.

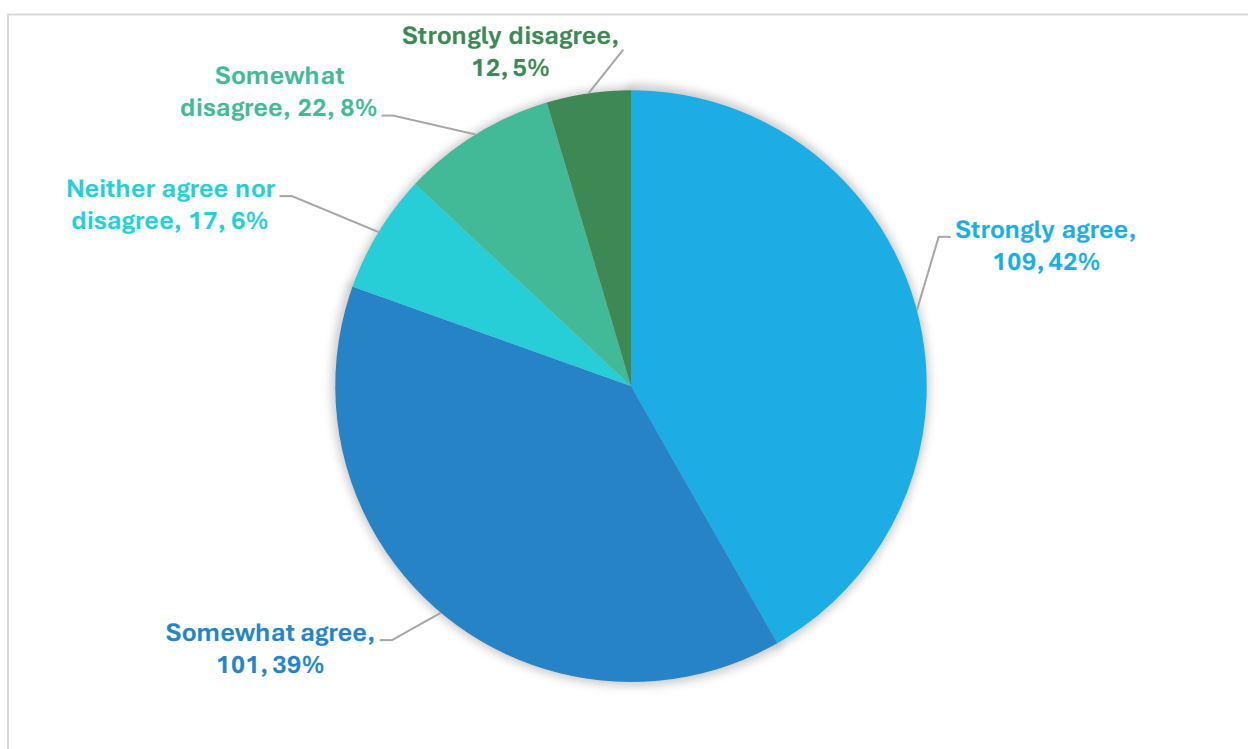


Figure 20: Responses to Q25 on if the respondent's understanding of their role matched their manager's

The responses to this question were also cross tabulated against those for Q15, which covered clarity of the respondent's role and responsibilities, and there does appear to be a correlation between those who identified a lack of clarity in relation to their role and a gap in understanding between themselves and their manager about the role. As can be seen in Figure 21, all of those who replied that they replied 'Strongly disagree' to having the same understanding of their role as their manager also answered that their role was unclear in Q15. The majority of those who responded with 'Somewhat disagree' also selected 'No' to Q15 (16 respondents chose 'No' and 6 chose 'Yes'). As might be expected, the opposite trend was evident at the other end of the scale with 98 of the respondents who replied 'Strongly agree' on the understanding of their role also replying 'Yes' with regards to clarity, and only 11 replying 'No'.

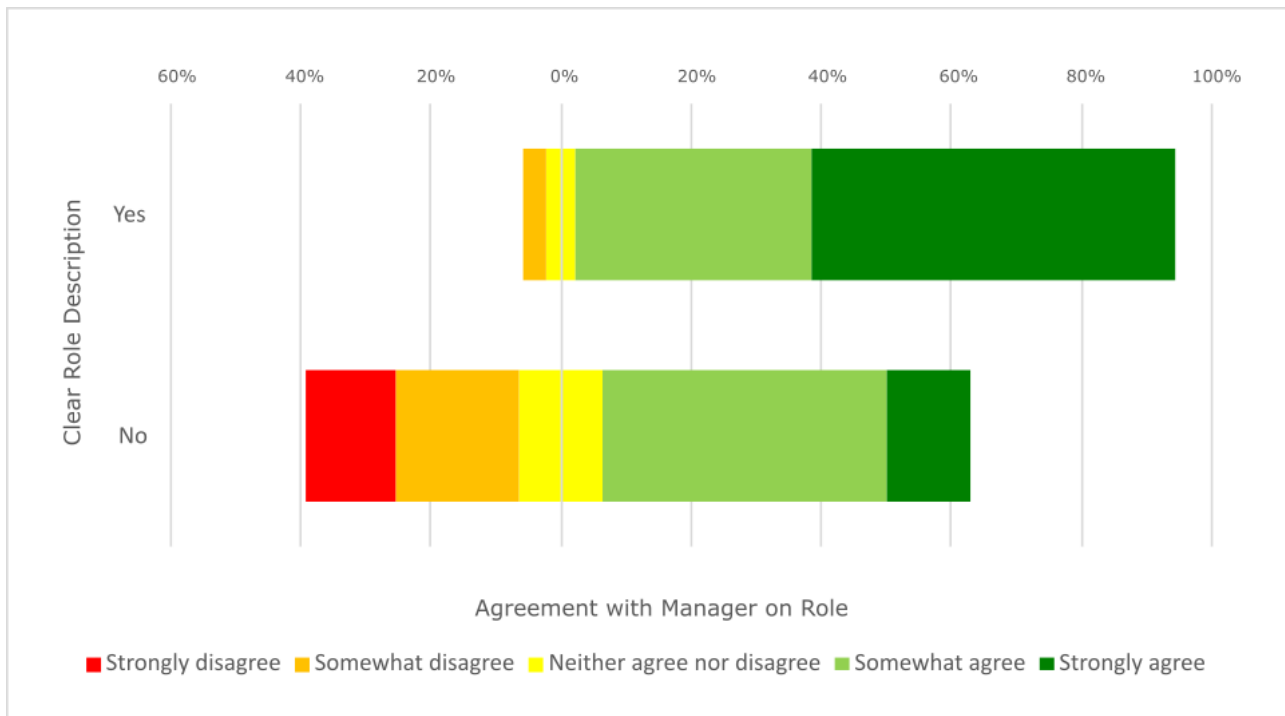


Figure 21: Crosstabulation of responses to Q15 (clarity of role description) and Q25 (agreement with manager on role)

Q26: I feel motivated to fulfil my responsibilities. [Optional, 261 responses]

Q27: I feel a sense of belonging at work. [Optional, 261 responses]

Q28: I feel like I am listened to at work. [Required, 261 responses]

Q29: I feel supported by my colleagues. [Optional, 261 responses]

Q30: I feel supported by my organization. [Required, 261 responses]

The next five questions asked respondents to reflect on their motivation level, their sense of belonging, if they felt they were listened to, and if they felt supported by colleagues and their organization (as separate statements). The results for these five questions have been compiled into Table 13 below as well as a single Likert scale graph (Figure 22) to allow easy visual comparison. In each case the majority of respondents replied with a positive leaning answer ('Strongly agree' or 'Somewhat agree'), with feeling motivated (Q26) and supported by colleagues (Q29) receiving the highest proportion of those responses (210 [80%] and 213 [82%], respectively). Those responding with positive leaning answers to Q30, however, was a very slim majority of 51% (132), significantly lower than the other four questions. Neutral responses of 'Neither agree nor disagree' to Q30 were offered by 20% (51) of respondents, and negative leaning by 30% (78).

	Strongly Agree		Somewhat Agree		Neither Agree nor Disagree		Somewhat Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
Feel Motivated	100	38%	110	42%	28	11%	14	5%	9	3%
Feel a Sense of Belonging	70	27%	107	41%	35	13%	32	12%	17	7%
Feel I Am Listened To	83	32%	113	43%	30	11%	17	7%	18	7%
Supported by Colleagues	96	37%	117	45%	22	8%	16	6%	10	4%
Supported by Organization	36	14%	96	37%	51	20%	45	17%	33	13%

Table 13: Responses to statements in Q26-30

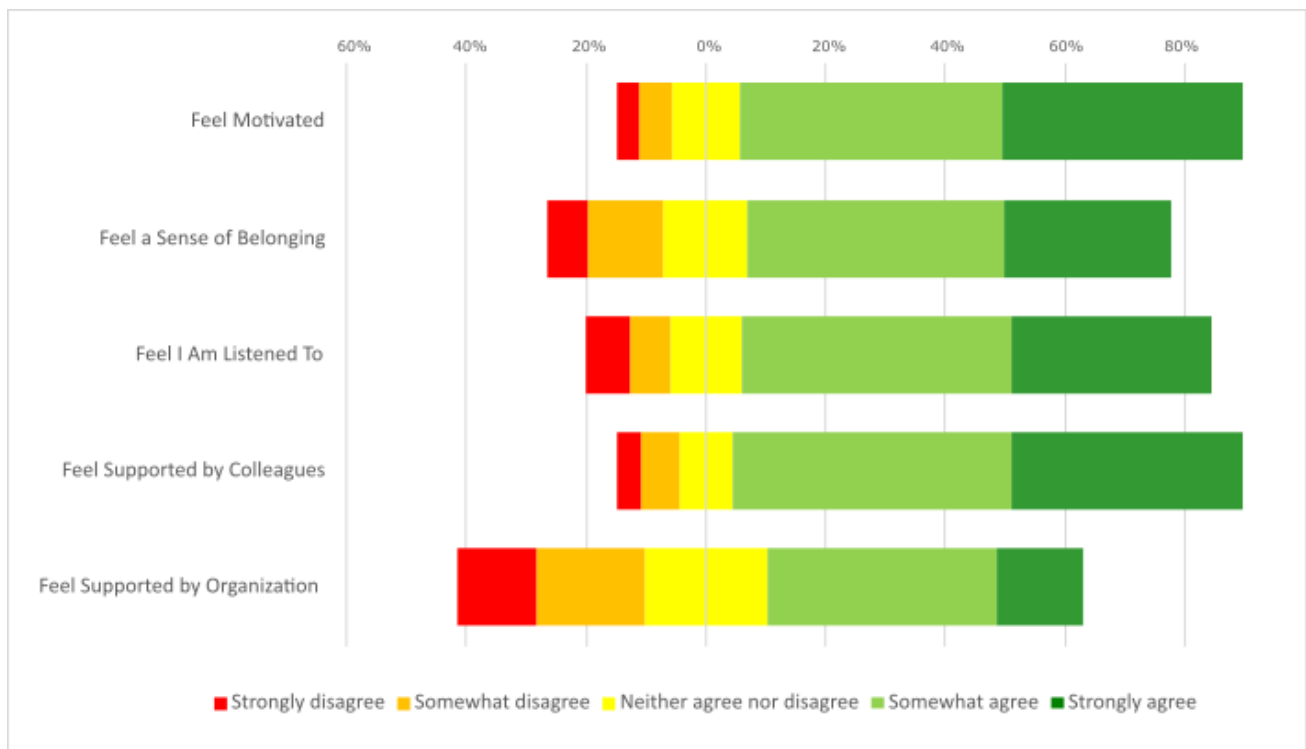


Figure 22: Responses to Q26-30 on motivation, belonging, being listened too, and support from colleagues and their organization

Q26 (I feel motivated to fulfil my responsibilities) Cross Tabulations

In terms of cross tabulations of Q26 on motivation with other questions, there were no significant trends identified when comparing answers to this question and Q7 (existence of organizational mental health and wellbeing policy) or Q17 (manageable workload). There was, however, some correlation between whether an individual felt their role and responsibilities were clear or not (Q15) and their level of motivation. For those with a clear role, 84% responded with a positive leaning 'Strongly agree' or 'Somewhat agree' to feeling motivated to fulfil their responsibilities, with only 5% selecting a negative leaning 'Somewhat disagree' or 'Strongly disagree'. For those who did not feel their role was clear, there was a noticeable shift in the proportions of responses, with positive leaning responses reducing to 66% and negative leaning increasing to 18% (Figure 23).

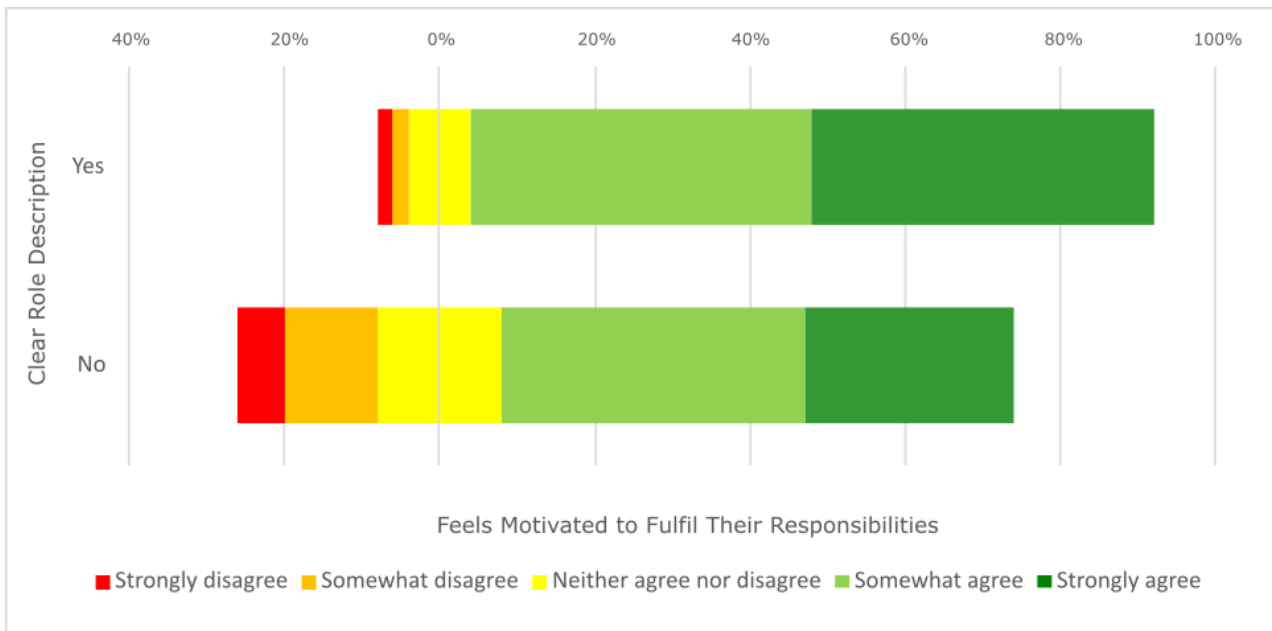


Figure 23: Result of the crosstabulation of Q15 (clear role) and Q26 (feels motivated to fulfil their responsibilities)

Q27 (I feel a sense of belonging at work) Cross Tabulations

For Q27, cross tabulations were examined against Q5 (type of role), Q6 (gender identity), Q7 (existence of organizational mental health and wellbeing policy), Q8 (implementation of relevant policy), and Q30 (feeling supported by their organization). No strong correlations were found in the cross tabulations with Q6, Q7, and Q8, but more noticeable trends were identified in relation to Q5 and Q30.

Those in senior executive or technology specialist roles were the most likely to feel a sense of belonging in their organization with responses being exclusively positive leaning (86% and 84%, respectively) or neutral (14% and 17%). Team leaders/managers provided the next most positive response with 74% responding that they 'Strongly agree' or 'Somewhat agree' that they feel a sense of belonging, 13% replying with a neutral 'Neither agree nor disagree' and 13% selecting the negative leaning 'Somewhat disagree' or 'Strongly disagree'. Those in more traditional information management senior or junior digital preservation practitioner roles were the least likely to feel a sense of belonging with 64% and 56%, respectively, responding with positive leaning options, 14% and 11% neutral options, and 22% and 33% negative leaning options (Figure 24).

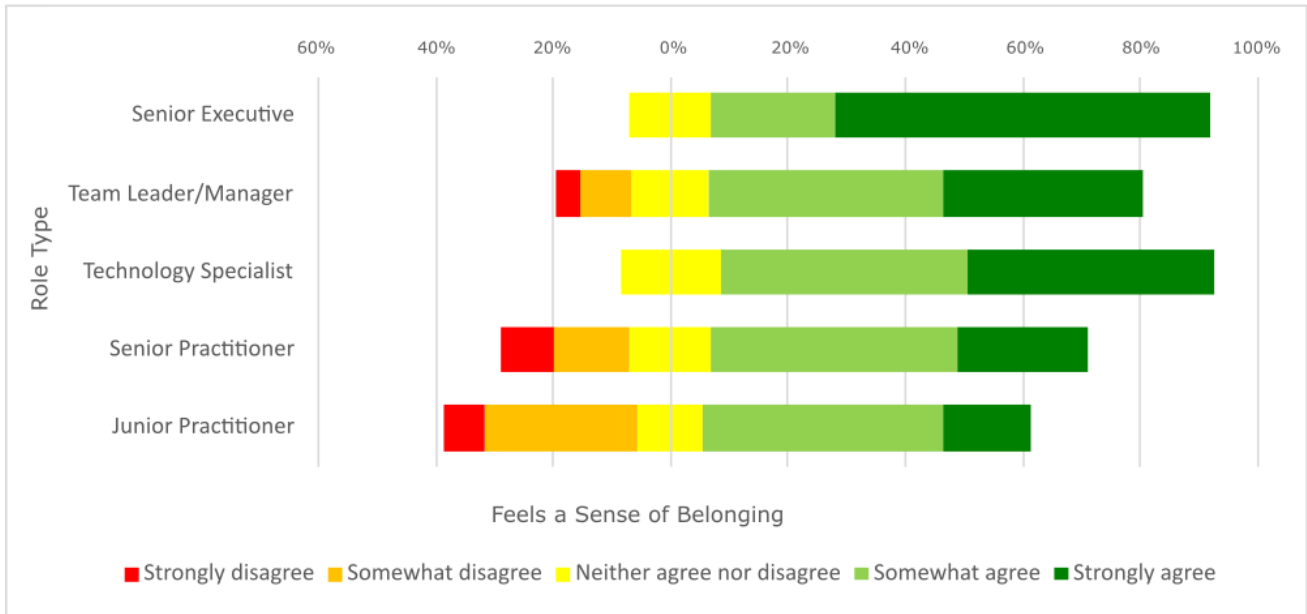


Figure 24: Results of the crosstabulation of Q5 (type of role) and Q27 (feeling a sense of belonging)

In relation to comparison with Q30 on feeling supported by their organization, it is not surprising that there is a direct correlation between feelings of belonging and feelings of being supported. The vast majority of those who answered that they strongly agreed to feeling a sense of belonging also responded with positive leaning answers to feeling supported by their organization (95%). Only 5% responded with a neutral answer, and no one responded with a negative leaning answer. Moving through the scale of responses to belonging, we can also see a gradual shift in feelings of organizational support (Figure 25). At the other end of the scale, for those who responded that they do not feel a sense of belonging, only 27% answered with a positive leaning answer on feeling supported by their organization, with 12% answering neutrally, and 60% replying with a negative leaning response.

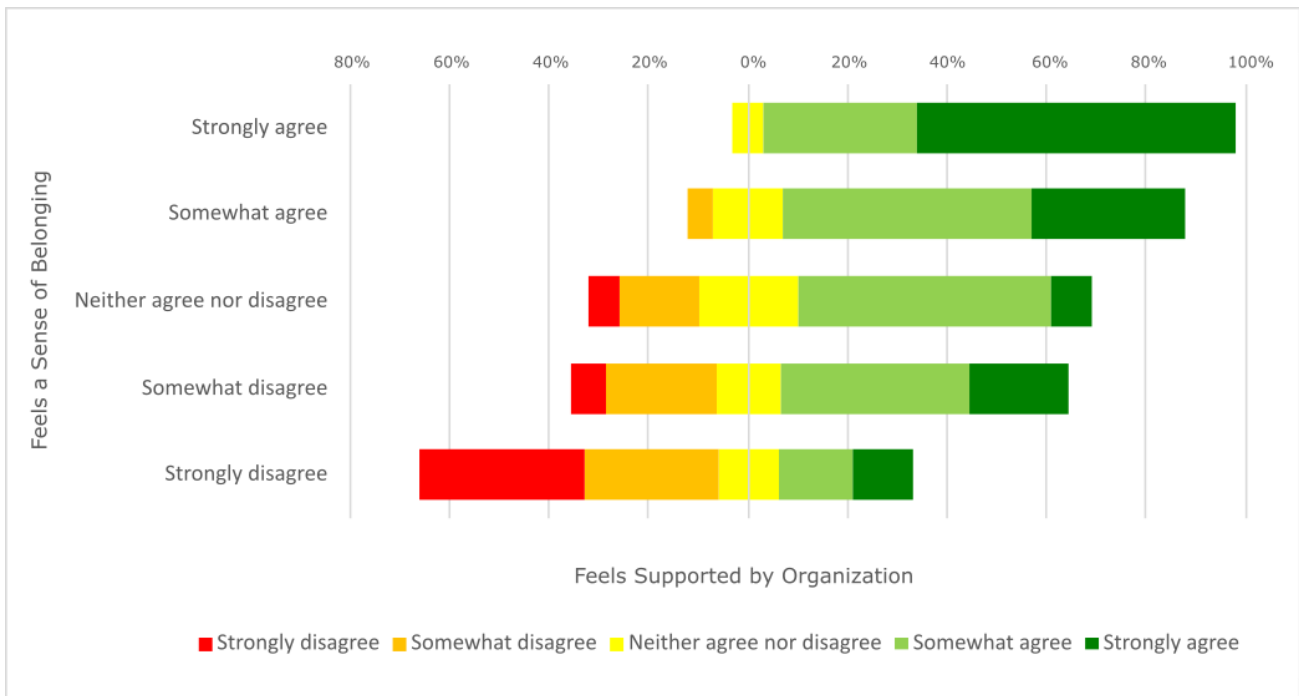


Figure 25: Results of crosstabulation of Q27 (feeling a sense of belonging) and Q30 (feeling supported by their organization)

Q28 (I feel like I am listened to at work) Cross Tabulations

Cross tabulations were carried out for Q28, on feeling listened to at work, against Q5 (type of role), Q6 (gender identity), Q7 (existence of organizational mental health and wellbeing policy), and Q30 (feeling supported by their organization), but a strong correlation between answers was only found in relation to Q30. Here, those who responded positively to feeling listened to also responded exclusively positively that they felt supported by their organization. The relative responses shifted across the range (Figure 26) with a particularly large shift when moving to the final option on the scale. Only 21% of those who strongly disagreed that they were listened to replying with positive leaning responses to organizational support, 15% responding neutrally, and the majority (63%) replying that they somewhat disagreed or strongly disagreed that they felt supported by their organization.

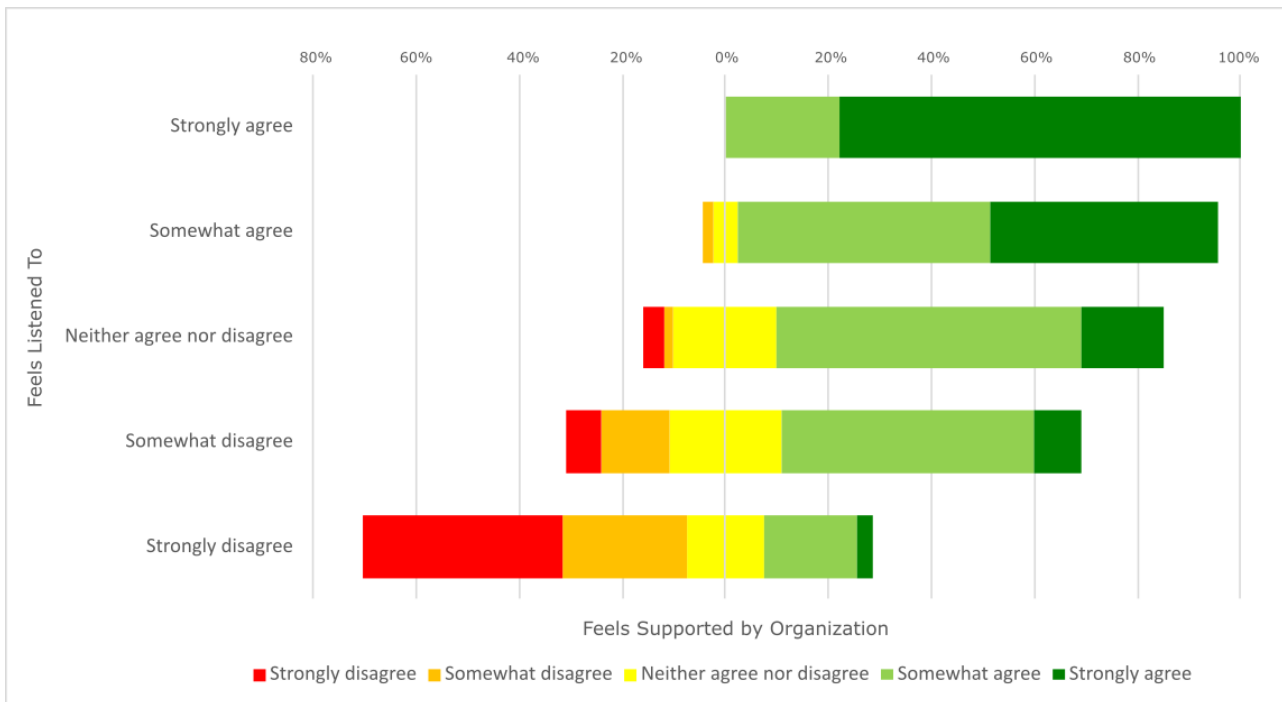


Figure 26: Result of cross-tabulation of Q28 (feeling listened to at work) and Q30 (feeling supported by their organization)

Q29 (I feel supported by my colleagues) Cross Tabulations

Answers to Q29 on feeling supported by colleagues were cross tabulated with Q5 (types of role), Q6 (gender identity), Q7 (existence of organizational mental health and wellbeing policy), and Q30 (feeling supported by their organization), but a strong correlation between answers was only found in relation to Q30. As with Q28, respondents who strongly agreed that they felt supported by colleagues also answered with exclusively positive leaning responses to feeling supported by their organization. The shift across the scale (Figure 27) was less dramatic than seen in the comparison between Q28 and Q30, but by the point of reaching those who strongly disagree that they feel supported by colleagues, there is a more even balance between those who feel supported by their organization (45%) and those who do not (42%).

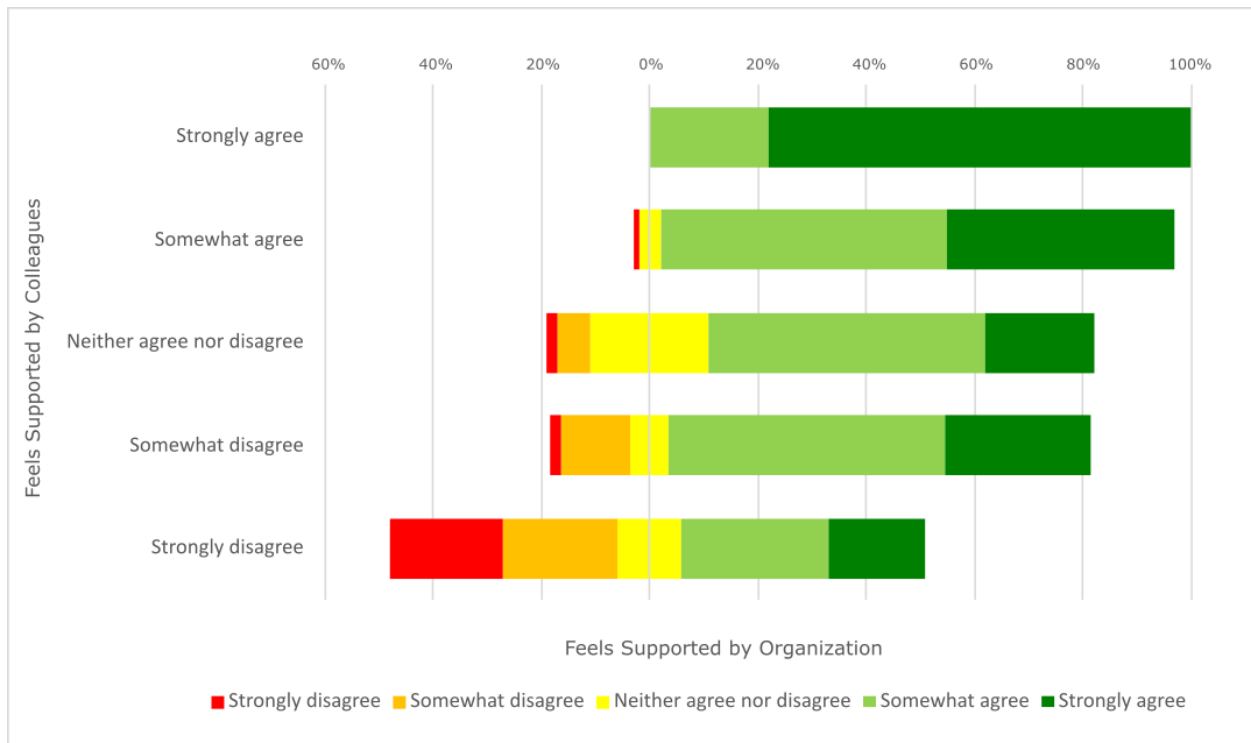


Figure 27: Results of cross-tabulation of Q29 (feeling supported by colleagues) and Q30 (feeling supported by their organization)

Q30 (I feel supported by my organization) Cross Tabulations

Comparisons of Q30 with Q27-29 have already been shared, but responses to the question were also cross tabulated against Q3 (location), Q5 (type of role), Q6 (gender identity), Q7 (existence of organizational mental health and wellbeing policy), Q8 (implementation of relevant policy), Q15 (clarity of role and responsibilities) and Q17 (ability to keep up with workload during regular contracted hours). No clear correlations were found with Q7 and Q8, but noticeable trends were identified in relation to Q3, Q5, Q6, Q15, and Q17.

The comparison of responses to Q3 on location was limited to those provided by respondents from Australasia/Oceania, Europe, and North America due to the small number of responses received from Africa, Asia, and South America. European respondents were the most likely to feel supported by their organization with 61% providing positive leaning answers and 25% negative leaning, Australasian respondents fell in the middle with 52% positive leaning answers and 30% negative leaning, and North American respondents were the least likely to feel supported with 41% positive leaning and 33% negative leaning (Figure 28).

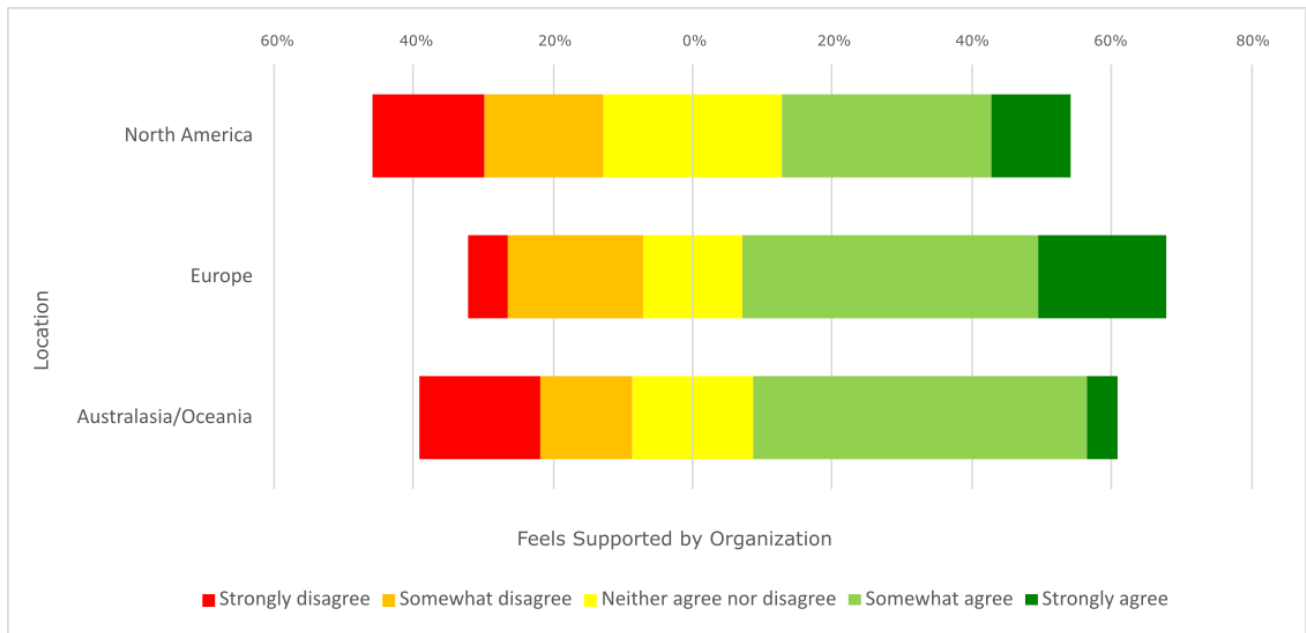


Figure 28: Results of crosstabulation of Q3 (location) and Q30 (feeling supported by their organization)

When comparing feelings of organizational support with role types (Q5), a similar pattern emerged as the comparison of sense of belonging with role. Again, those in senior executive roles and technology specialist roles felt the highest level of support, although in this case some negative leaning responses were received. The vast majority of senior executives (85%) and technology specialists (84%) felt supported by their organisations, with only 7% of senior executives and 8% of technology specialists replying with the negative leaning 'Somewhat agree' option. It is important to note, however, that while technology specialists selected equally the 'Strongly agree' and 'Somewhat agree' options, senior executives favoured the 'Somewhat agree' option (64%) over 'Strongly agree' (21%). Team leaders/managers once again filled the middle ground, but with a more noticeable shift towards the negative on this occasion. Positive leaning responses were selected by 49% of team leaders/managers, and negative leaning responses by 26%. As can be seen in Figure 29, the overall range of answers for senior practitioners and junior practitioners inhabit almost identical places on the scale of responses but, in this case, a large portion of junior practitioners selected neutral responses (30%), responding both less positively than senior practitioners (41% and 46% respectively) and less negatively (30% and 36% respectively).

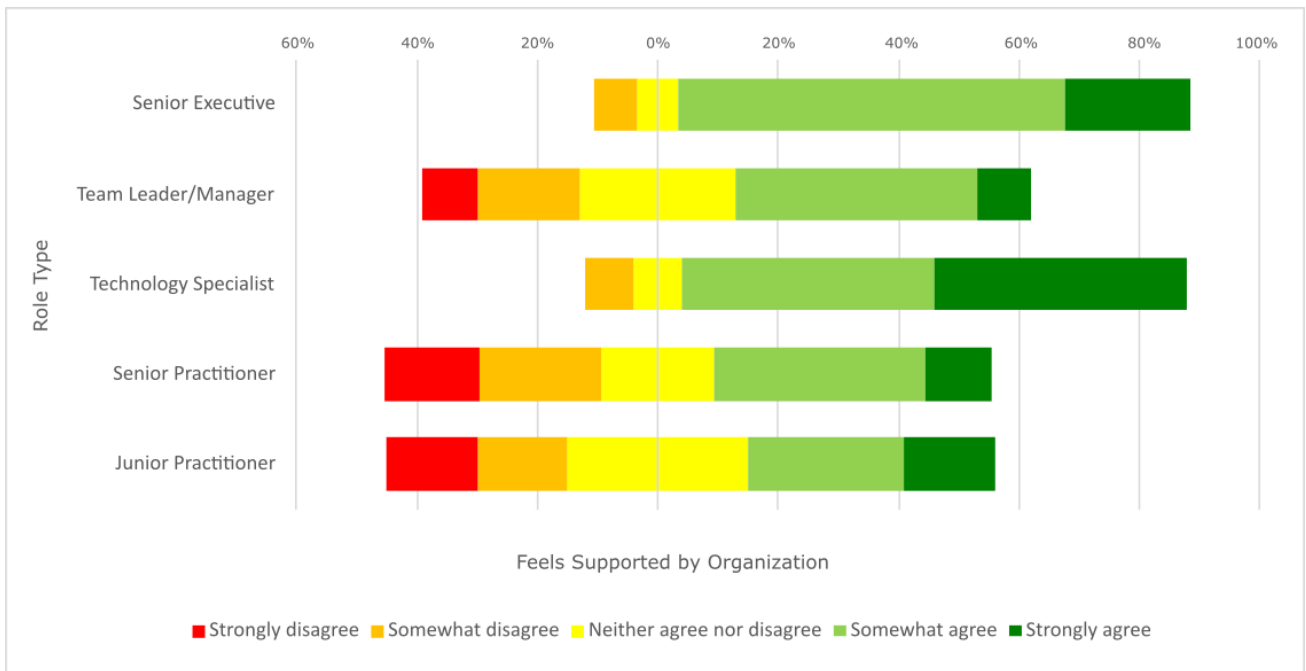


Figure 29: Result of crosstabulation of Q5 (type of role) and Q30 (feeling supported by organization)

In relation to the comparison of organizational support and gender identity (Q6), it seems that existing imbalances in the general workforce have been carried in to digital preservation despite it being an emerging profession where a majority of practitioners identify with genders other than male. Those who identified as male were the most likely to feel supported by their organization, with 57% responding with positive leaning responses and 16% responding with negative leaning. For those who identified as female, positive leaning responses fell slightly to 51% but negative leaning responses almost doubled to 32%. For those who identified as non-binary or third gender, the positive leaning response rates fell again to only 35% and negative leaning increased to more than half (54%). 'Other' responses to gender identity were not included in this comparison due to the very small sample.

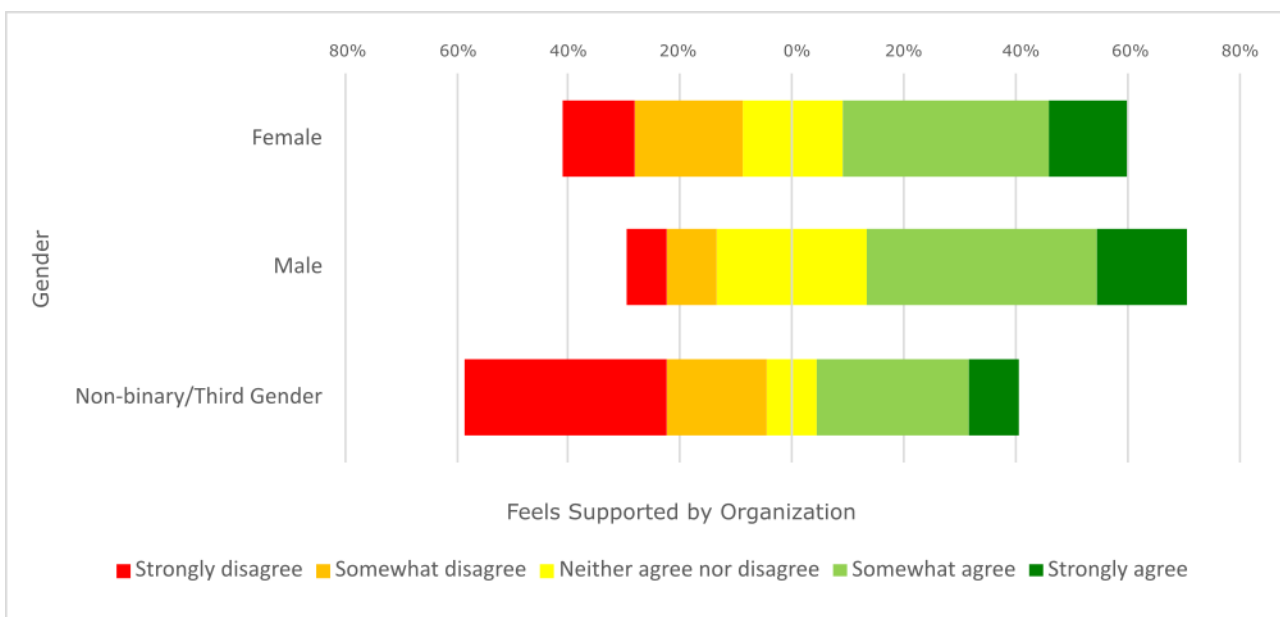


Figure 30: Result of crosstabulation of Q6 (gender identity) and Q30 (feeling supported by their organization)

The correlation between feeling supported by their organization and whether an individual's role and responsibilities were clear (Q15) was strong (Figure 31). Those who felt their role was clear responded with 64% positive leaning responses, 20% neutral, and 16% negative leaning. For those who felt their role was unclear, the positive leaning response rate fell to just 23%, with 19% providing neutral responses, and 58% negative leaning. Having a clear understanding of one's role seems to have a significant impact on feeling supported by one's organization.

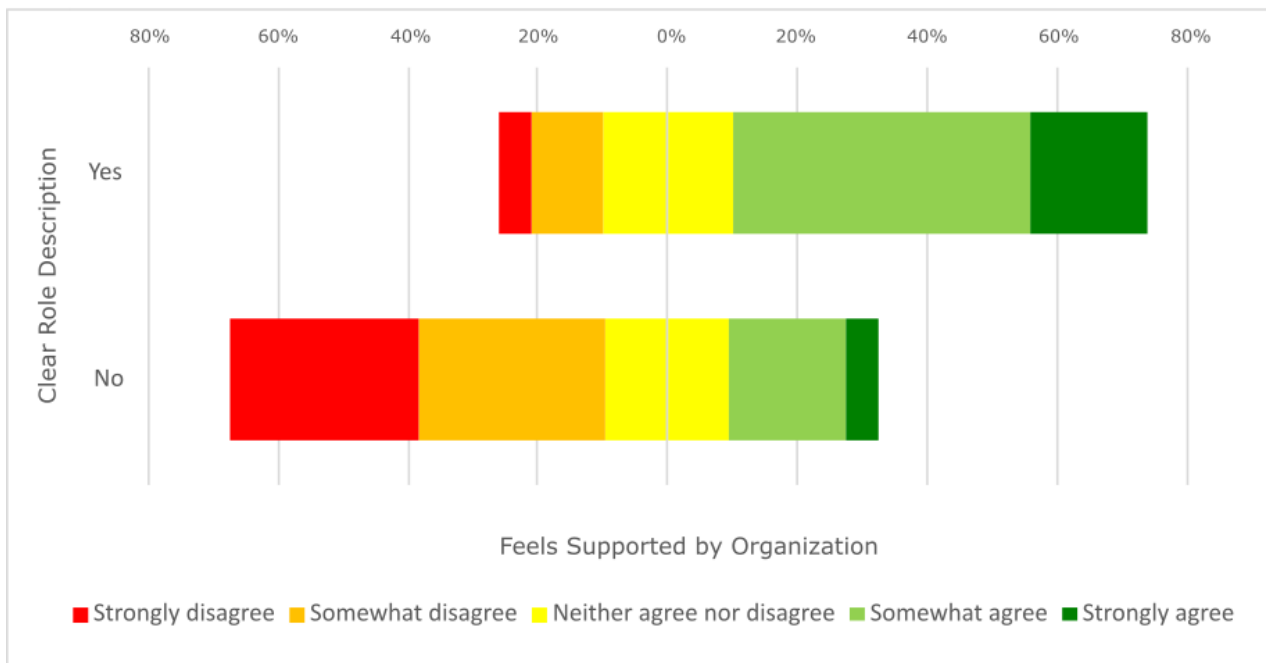


Figure 31: Result of crosstabulation of Q15 (clear role) and Q30 (feeling supported by their organization)

The final cross tabulation of the organizational support question that produced a noticeable trend, was against Q17 on the ability to keep up with their workload during their regular contracted hours. As with other questions, there was a clear correlation between positive responses to both questions and negative (Figure 32). For those who responded that they could always keep up with their workload, 77% supplied positive leaning responses on organization support and only 7% responded with negative leaning responses on support (all 'somewhat disagree'). The proportions of responses shift across the scale, and for those who respond that they were never able to keep up with their workload, only 16% responded with positive leaning responses on organization support (all 'Somewhat agree') and 74% responded with negative leaning responses.

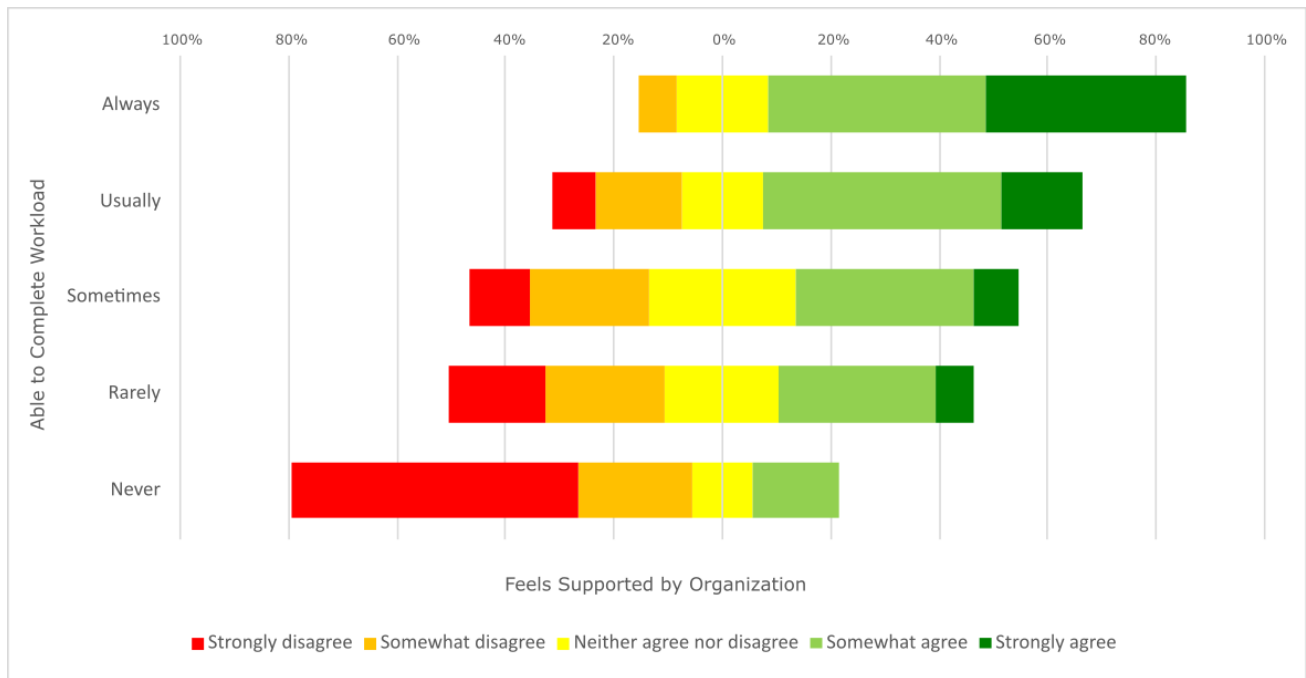


Figure 32: Result of crosstabulation of Q17 (ability to keep up with workload) and Q30 (feeling supported by their organization)

Q31: I would feel comfortable approaching my line manager to discuss a concern regarding my mental health or wellbeing. [Required, 261 responses]

Respondents were then asked to comment on their level of comfort in sharing mental health and wellbeing issues with their line manager (Figure 33). Less than half of the respondents (117, 45%) replied with a positive leaning answer of 'Strongly agree' or 'Somewhat agree', with 28 (11%) selecting the neutral 'Neither agree nor disagree', and 116 (44%) selecting a negative leaning answer of 'Somewhat disagree' or 'Strongly disagree'. The size of the negative leaning section of responses is quite closely aligned with the 46% of respondents to Q22 who indicated they had experienced a difficult relationship with a manager/supervisor. This suggests a concerningly large proportion of digital preservation practitioners would likely be unable to raise issues with their superiors, which could compound other issues.

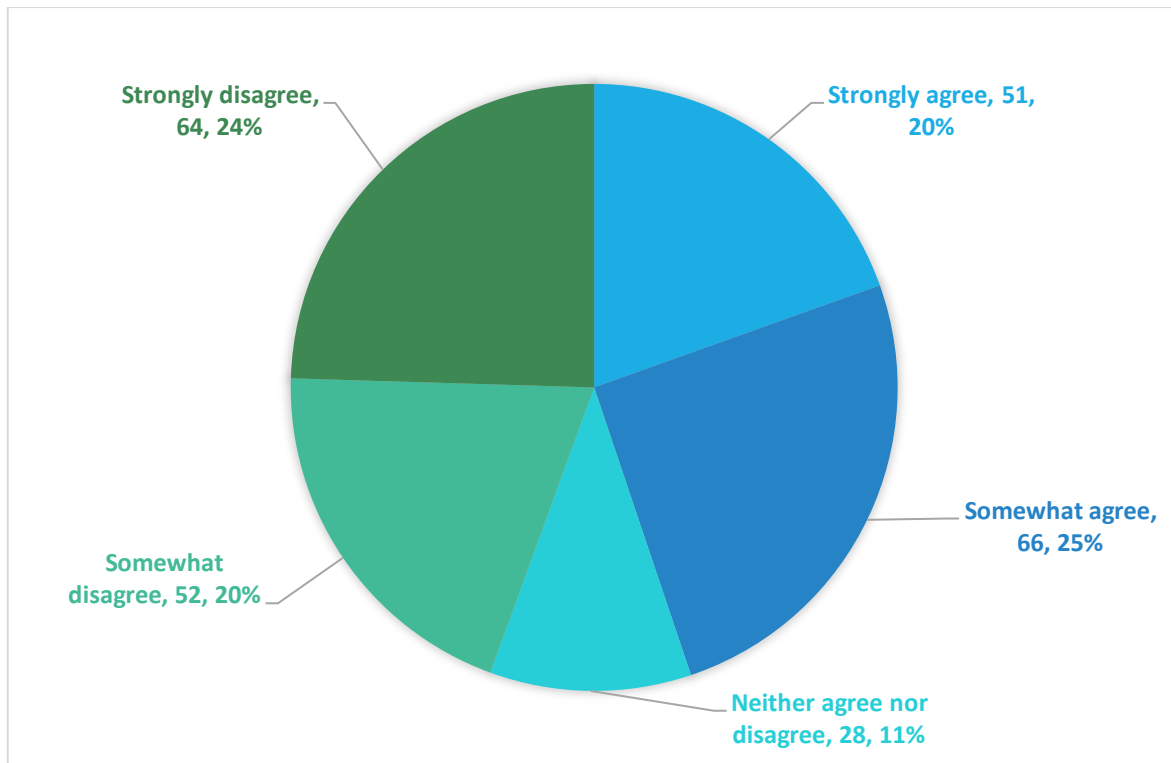


Figure 33: Results of Q31 asking if respondents would be willing to share mental health and wellbeing issues with their manager

Answers to Q31 were also cross tabulated against answers to Q3 (location), Q5 (type of role), Q6 (gender identity), Q7 (existence of organizational mental health and wellbeing policy), Q29 (feeling supported by colleagues), and Q30 (feeling supported by their organization), but the only significant correlation was in relation to Q3. As with earlier cross tabulations, data was only examined for more sizeable cohorts of respondents. Here we see the possible impact of different regional cultures (Figure 34), Australasian respondents being the most comfortable with discussing mental health and wellbeing issues with their manager/supervisor, with European respondents occupying the middle ground, and North American respondents being the least likely to share. Australasian respondents answered with a clear majority of positive leaning responses (74%) and a minority of negative leaning responses (22%), European responses were more evenly balanced at 46% positive leaning and 40% negative leaning, whilst North American responses showed a small majority of negative leaning responses (51%) against a minority of positive leaning responses (38%).

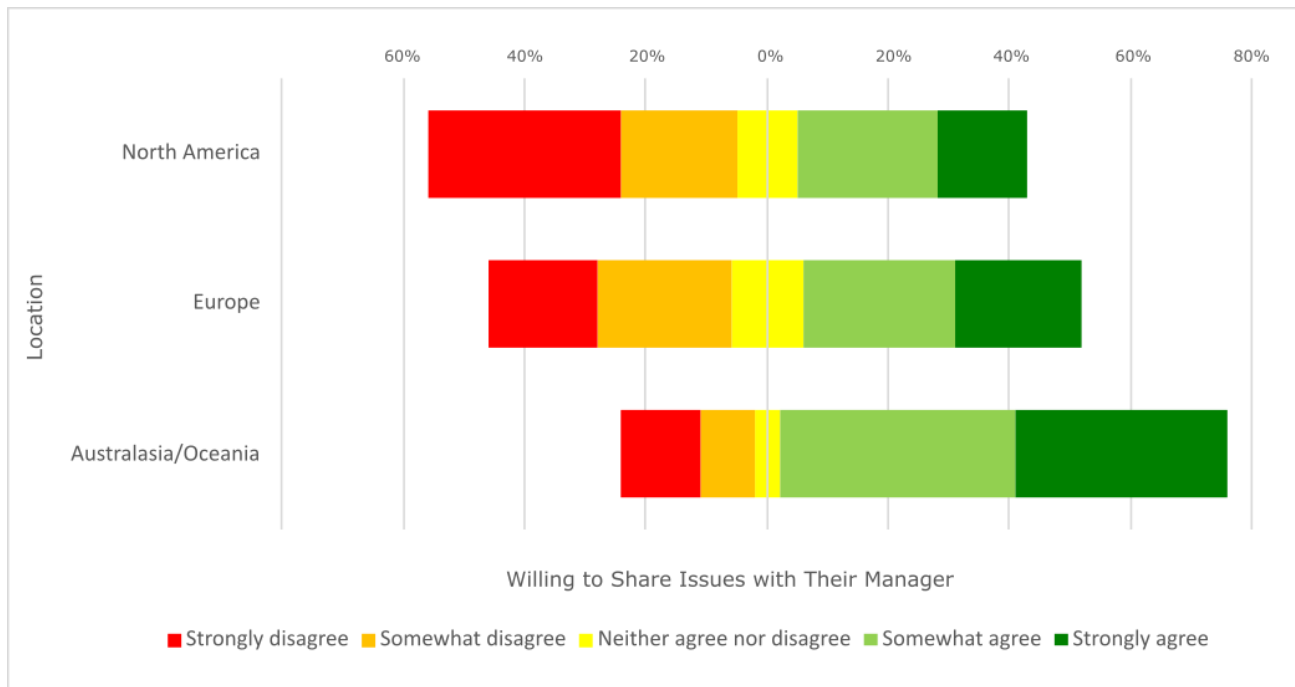


Figure 34: Result of crosstabulation of Q3 (location) and Q31 (willing to share issues with their manager)

Q32: My work often leaves me feeling stressed. [Required, 261 responses]

Q33: My work often leaves me feeling fatigued. [Required, 261 responses]

The next two questions asked respondents to comment on whether or not their work often left them feeling stressed or fatigued (Figure 35). Both statements received a large majority of responses that indicate negative experiences. In relation to feeling stressed, 64% of respondents replied that they 'Strongly agree' or 'Somewhat agree', 12% replied with the neutral 'Neither agree nor disagree', and 23% replied with a positive leaning 'Somewhat disagree' or 'Strongly disagree'. For feelings of fatigue, the majority of negative leaning responses were slightly larger, with 71% responding with 'Strongly agree' or 'Somewhat agree', 12% replying with a neutral answer, and only 17% replying with positive leaning responses.

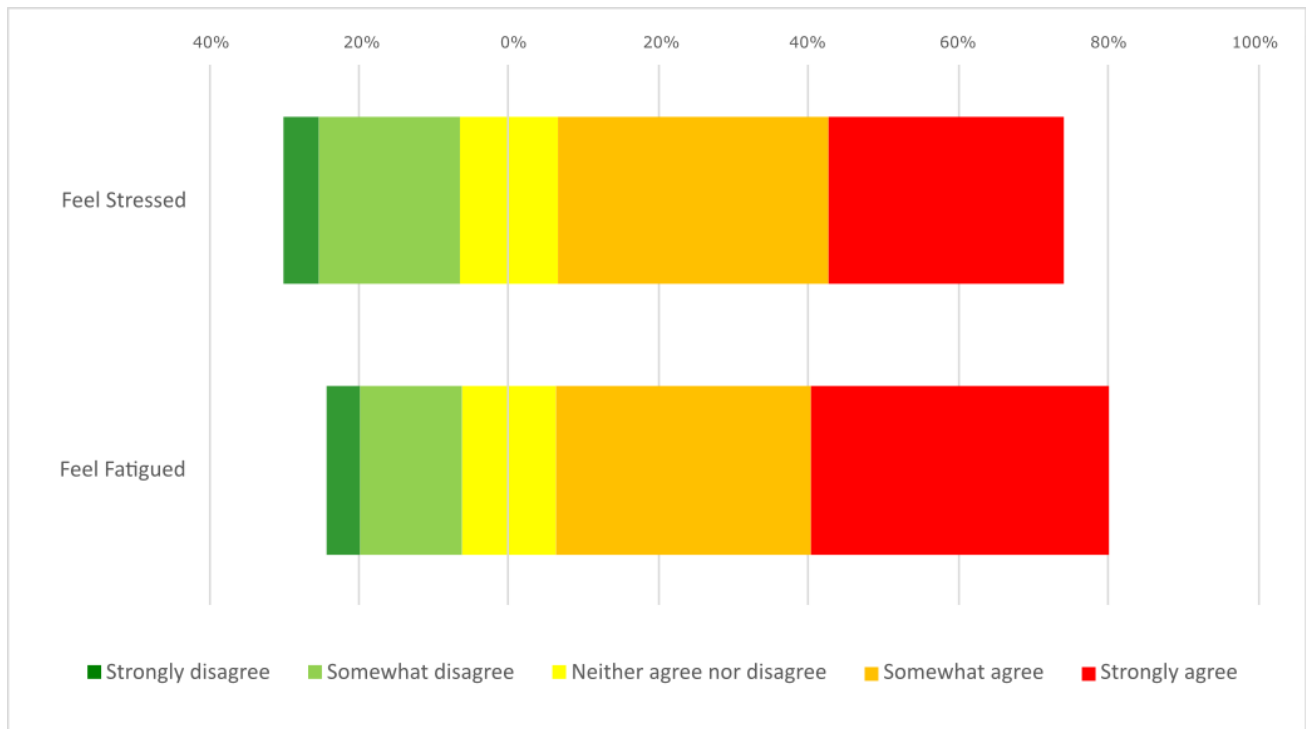


Figure 35: Responses to Q32 on feeling stressed and Q33 on feeling fatigued

Q32 (My work often leaves me feeling stressed) Cross Tabulations

Cross tabulations of Q32 against Q5 (type of role), Q7 (existence of organizational mental health and wellbeing policy), Q15 (clear role and responsibilities), Q17 (ability to keep up with workload), and Q30 (feeling supported by their organization) were examined, and noticeable trends were identified in relation to Q15, Q17, and Q30.

The vast majority of those who replied that their role and responsibilities were not clear also reported that their work often left them feeling stressed (85%) with only 7% of respondents reporting positive leaning answers (Figure 36). Those with a clear role and responsibilities also replied in the majority to feelings of stress (55%) but the level was significantly less than those without role clarity and 9% lower than the general responses to Q32. Additionally, an increased minority of 30% responded with positive leaning answers.

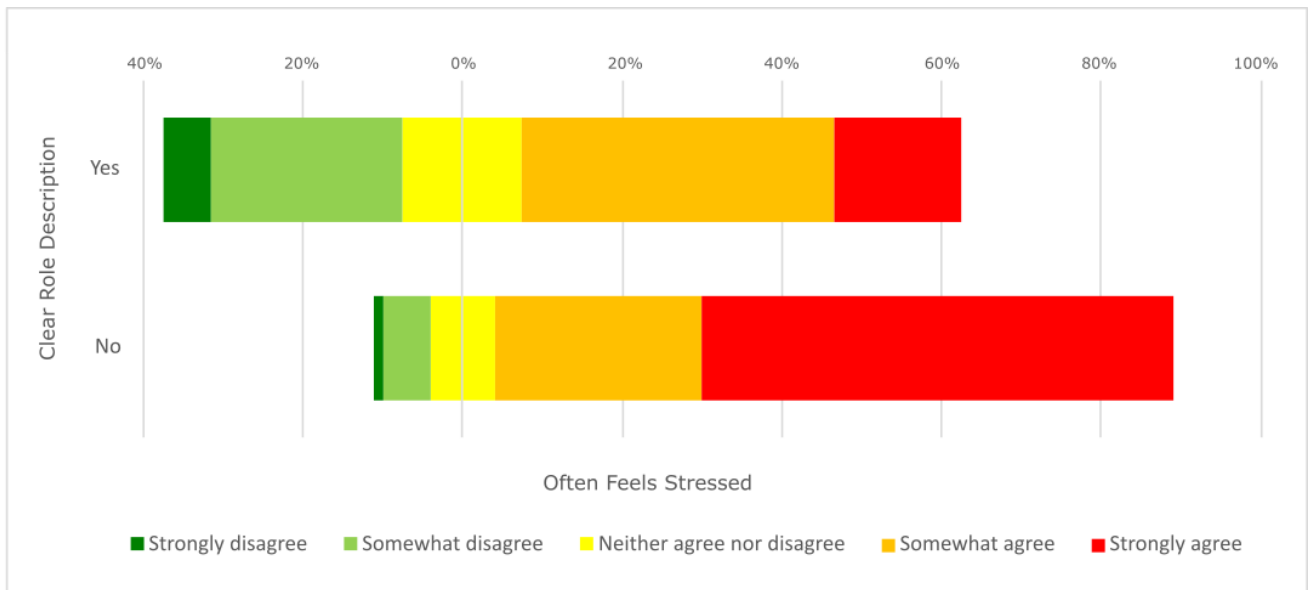


Figure 36: Result of crosstabulation of Q15 (clear role) and Q32 (feeling stressed)

In relation to stress and workload (Q17), there was a clear link between experiencing stress and an individual's ability to keep up with their workload during their regular contracted hours (Figure 37). At one end of the scale, those who responded that they are always able to keep up with their workload reported a majority of positive leaning responses to Q32, with 53% reporting that they 'Strongly disagree' or 'Somewhat disagree' with the statement on feeling stressed. This group's neutral responses sat at 20%, with 26% reporting that they 'Somewhat agree' or 'Strongly agree' with feeling stressed. At the other end of the scale, 89% of those who stated they could never keep up with their workload reported negative leaning responses on stress, with only 5% answering with a neutral response and 5% positively.

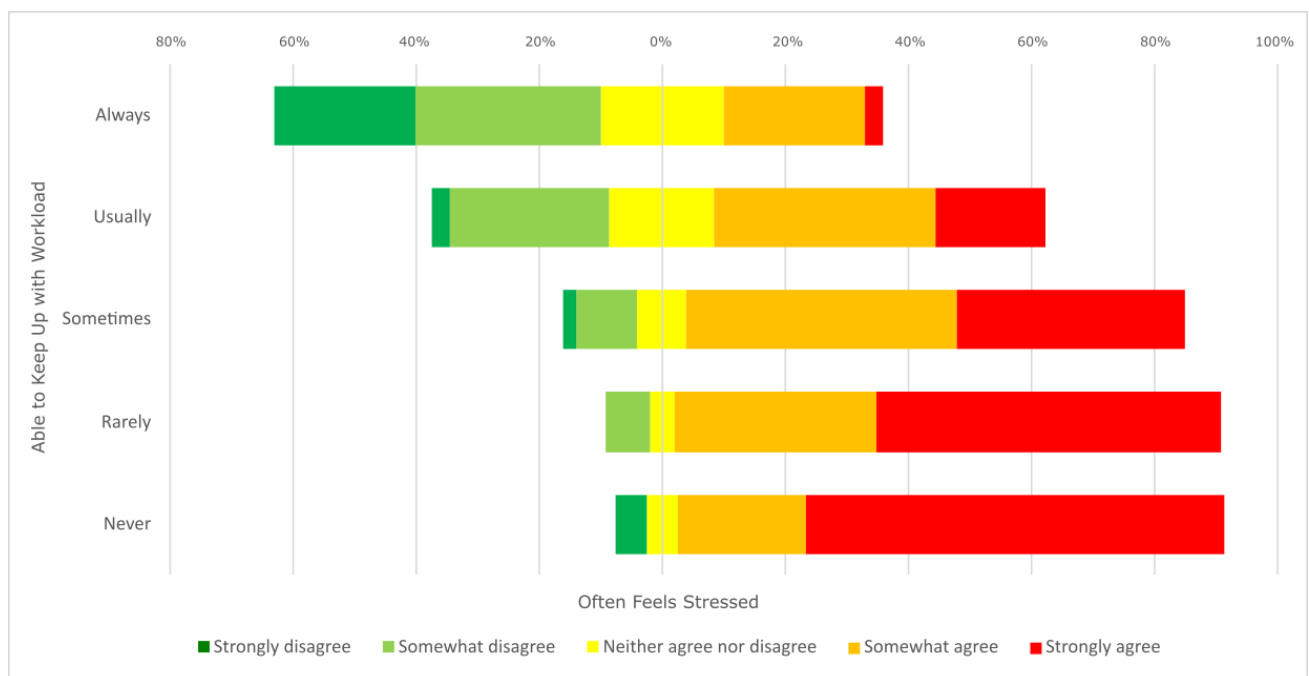


Figure 37: Result of crosstabulation of Q17 (ability to keep up with workload) and Q32 (feeling stressed)

A similar pattern can be seen in relation to feelings of stress when compared to whether respondents felt supported by their organization or not (Figure 38). Those who replied that they 'Strongly agree' that

they feel supported by their organization responded with a majority of ‘Strongly disagree’ or ‘Somewhat disagree’ that they feel stressed (50%), with 11% responding neutrally, and 39% responding with negative leaning answers. The proportion of positive versus negative leaning responses shifts quite evenly across the scale, until reaching an overwhelming majority (94%) of those who ‘Strongly disagree’ that they feel supported by their organization also stating that they ‘Strongly agree’ (79%) or ‘Somewhat agree’ (15%) to feeling stressed. This is another potentially clear indication of the importance of organizational support and culture to employees.

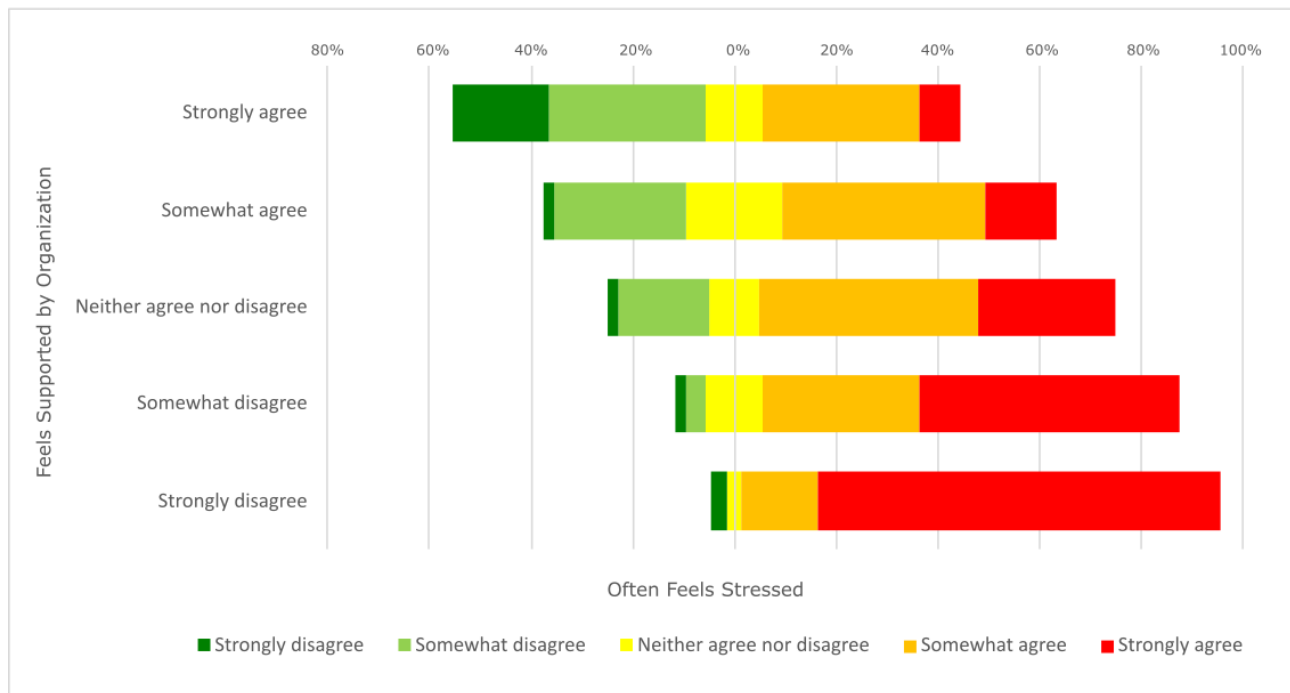


Figure 38: Result of crosstabulation between Q30 (feeling supported by their organization) and Q32 (feeling stressed)

Q33 (My work often leaves me feeling fatigued) Cross Tabulations

The final set of cross tabulations were carried out in relation to Q33 comparing results against those of Q5 (type of role), Q7 (existence of organizational mental health and wellbeing policy), Q15 (clear role and responsibilities), Q17 (ability to keep up with workload), and Q30 (feeling supported by their organization) and correlations were found against all of the questions except Q5.

The comparison of answers to Q33 and Q7 found that those working for an organization with mental health and wellbeing policy were less likely to feel fatigued than those who worked for an organization without policy in this area (Figure 39). Positive leaning answers were provided by 21% of respondents from organizations with policy and by 8% for those at organizations without. Those who were unsure if their organization had policy fell in the middle, with 16% of respondents replying with positive leaning answers. At the other end of the scale, 63% of those from organizations with policy reported fatigue, the figure was 76% of those who didn't know if their organization had a policy, and 82% for those at organizations without a policy.

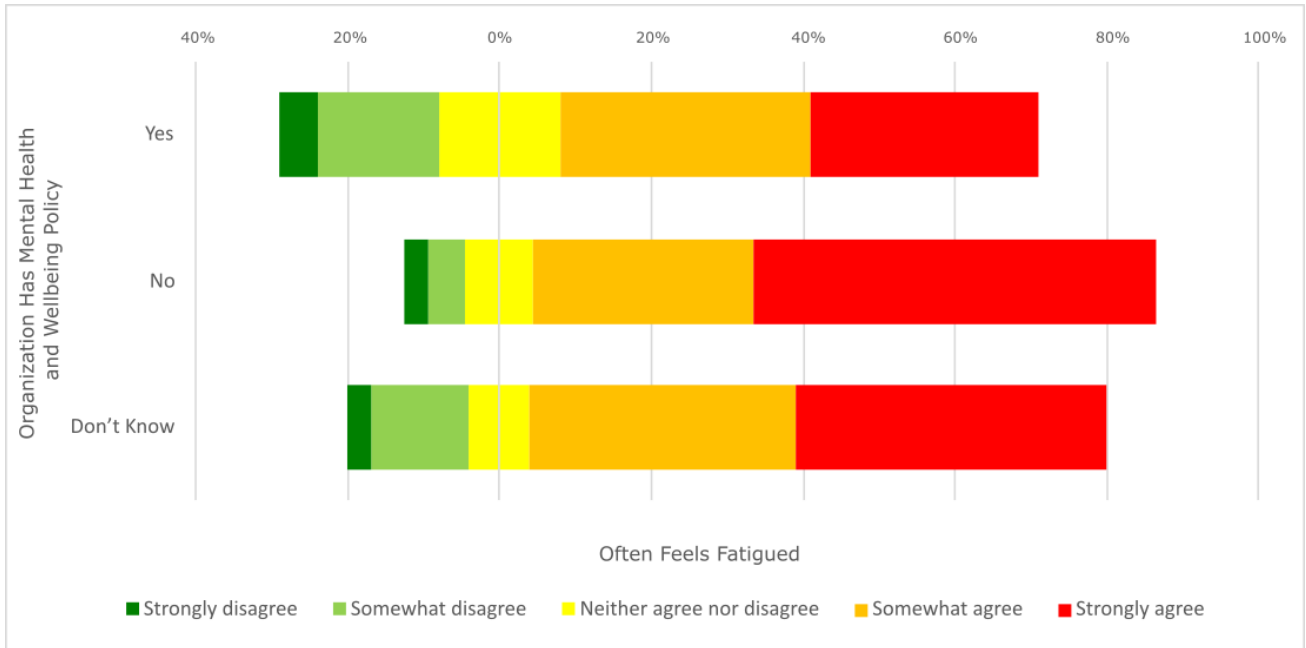


Figure 39: Result of crosstabulation of Q7 (existence of organizational mental health and wellbeing policy) and Q33 (feeling fatigued)

As with stress, reported levels of fatigue were also lower for those with a clear understanding of their role and responsibilities, as opposed to those without clarity (Figure 40). For those who responded positively to role clarity, 24% provided positive leaning responses on fatigue and 64% were negatively leaning. For those without role clarity, the figures were just 7% positive leaning on fatigue and 85% negative leaning.

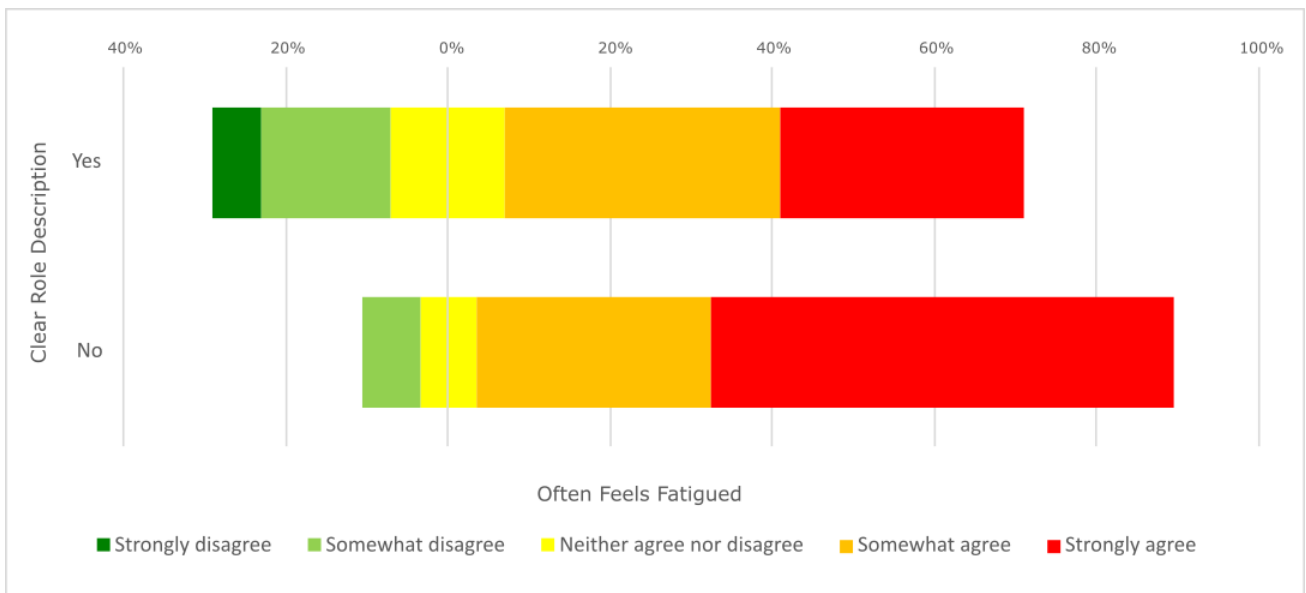


Figure 40: Result of crosstabulation of Q15 (clear role) and Q33 (feeling fatigued)

In relation to fatigue and the ability to keep up with their workload, a similar trend to the one identified for stress was present (Figure 41). At one end of the responses on workload, those who could always keep up, positive and negative leaning responses on fatigue were quite evenly reported (43% and 40%

respectively). As with stress, the proportion shifted across the respondents' levels of ability to keep up with their workload and by the other end of the scale, those who could never keep up, 100% of their responses were negative leaning in relation to fatigue (11% 'Somewhat agree' and 89% 'Strongly agree').

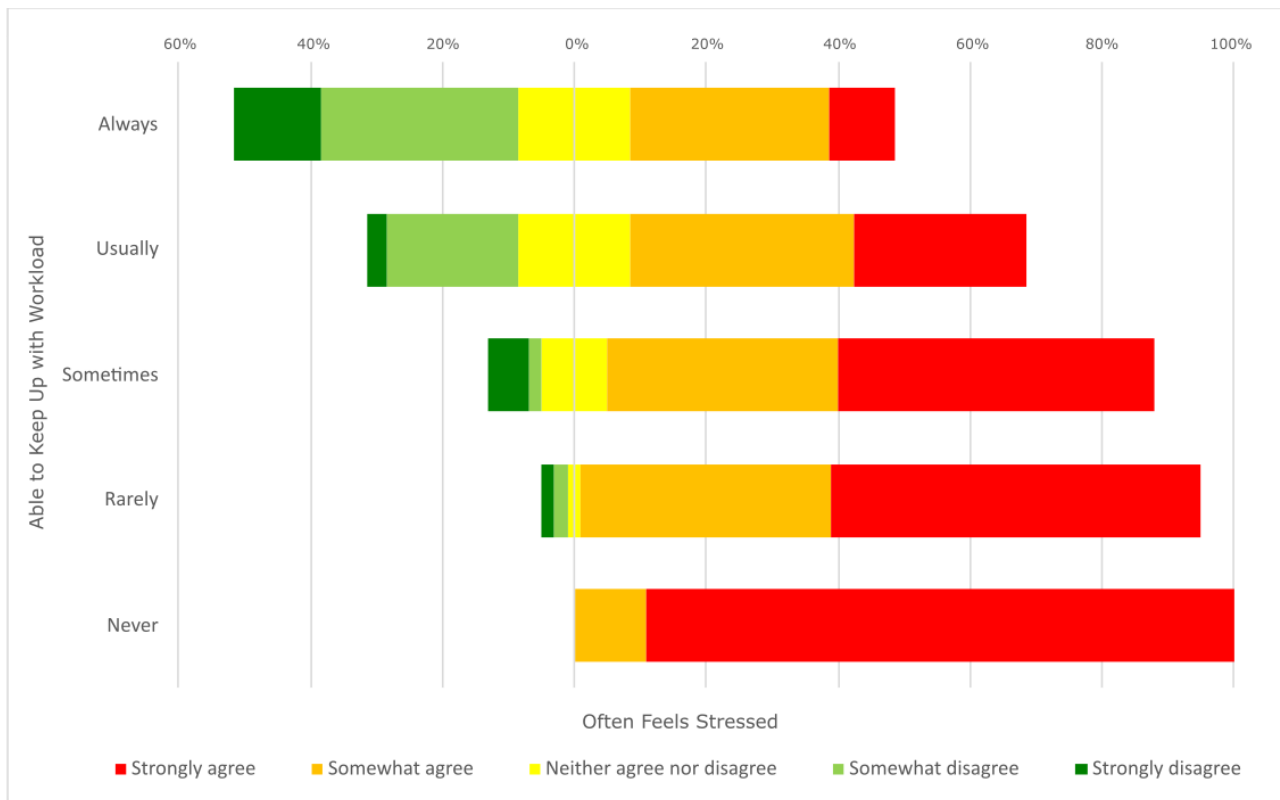


Figure 41: Result of crosstabulation of Q17 (ability to keep up with workload) and Q33 (feeling fatigued)

The final cross tabulation of Q33 compared results relating to fatigue with those from Q30 on organizational support. As with other comparison with Q30, those who replied with positive leaning responses on organizational support were more likely to reply with positive responses on fatigue and vice versa (Figure 42). Those who replied 'Strongly agree' to feeling strongly supported by their organization responded fairly evenly in relation to fatigue, with 45% experiencing little or no fatigue, and 42% indicating that fatigue was an issue. At the other end of the spectrum, those replied 'Strongly disagree' to feeling supported by their organization almost exclusively reported issues with fatigue (97%), with only 3% responding neutrally and no positive leaning responses.

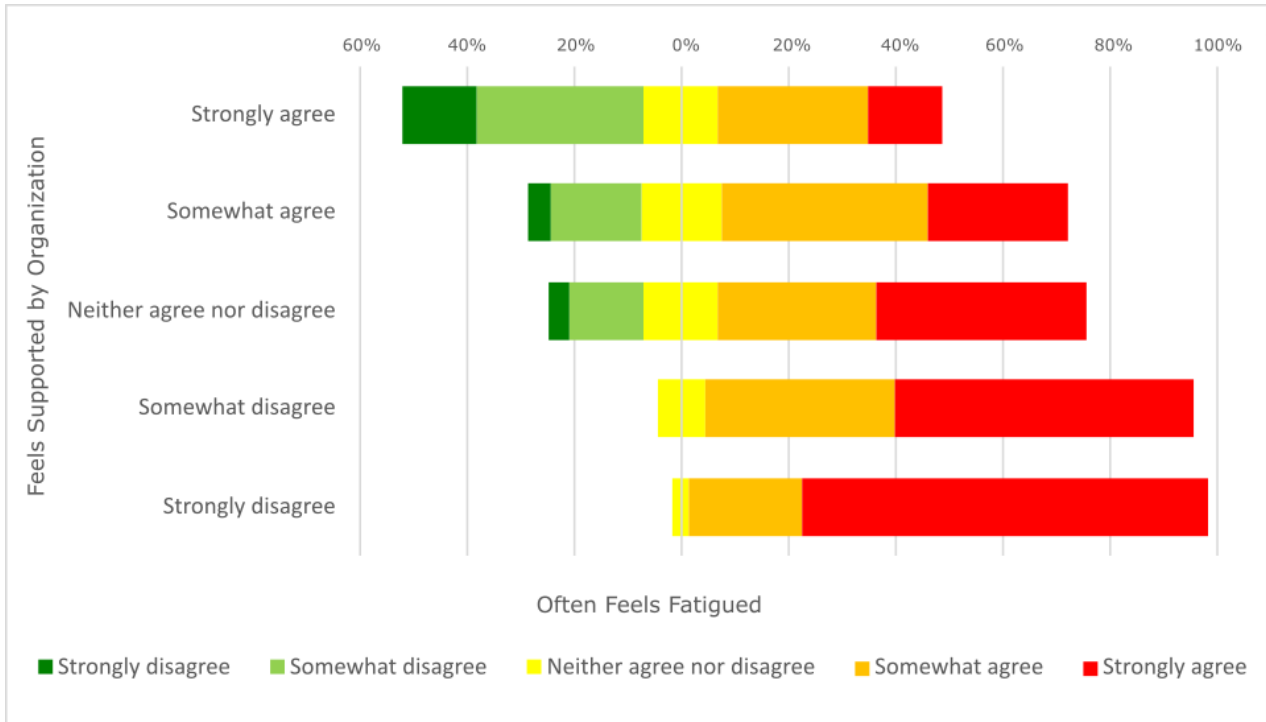


Figure 42: Result of crosstabulation of Q30 (feeling supported by their organization) and Q33 (feeling fatigued)

7. Themes Identified

In addition to the findings identified in the previous section for individual questions and for crosstabulations, four significant themes have also been identified which represent the main conclusions that can be drawn. These are that:

1. The evidence suggests that the issues experienced are having a significant impact on the mental health and wellbeing of members of the digital preservation community;
2. Organizational culture is an important factor, and if proactive steps are not taken to foster positive organizational culture, issues arise that impact employees' mental health and wellbeing;
3. The lack of support for and engagement with digital preservation, despite substantial time and effort investments in ongoing advocacy, is having a substantial impact on the workforce; and
4. Issues relating to unclear roles and responsibilities and unmanageable workloads are impacting on mental health and wellbeing.

This section will examine each of these themes in turn.

7.1 High Incidence of Mental Health and Wellbeing Issues in the Digital Preservation Community

The survey results show that the majority of those who responded have experienced stress (88%), anxiety (69%), fatigue (67%), and burnout (59%). Digging into this a little further, 64% of respondents replied that they 'Strongly agree' or 'Somewhat agree' that they often feel stressed, and 71% replied that they 'Strongly agree' or 'Somewhat agree' that they often feel fatigued. Also, significant portions of the respondents have also experienced feelings of isolation (47%), insomnia (43%), depression (39%), as well as physical symptoms (34%) that they wholly or partially attribute as resulting from the impact of the issues identified in the report.

These figures indicate that managing and supporting digital preservation activities is taking a toll on the workforce. Potential causes are represented by several common themes within responses, including a lack of support and resources, unrealistic expectations and workloads, being the only person working on digital preservation (56% of respondents) and an undervaluation of the work. With 26% of respondents to Q23, on the impact of issues, also noting they have moved organizations due to issues, and some mentioning that they have left, or are considering leaving, the field, this may have a negative effect on the sustainability of skills and capabilities within the sector.

Additionally, there is some evidence that issues are impacting those in junior and senior practitioner roles more often than those in management and technical roles. It is important to note, however, that while there are some indicators of a higher incidence of issues experienced amongst those in these role types, the evidence was not consistently clear across relevant and related questions.

The clearest indicators of this trend were lower rates of feeling a sense of belonging and feeling supported amongst those in junior and senior practitioner roles. Indeed, it is worrying that a third of junior practitioners feel little or no sense of belonging at their organization. There were also some weaker correlations found between those in junior and senior practitioner roles and being less willing to share issues with their managers, being more likely to feel stressed and fatigued, and feeling less like they are listened to.

Junior practitioners were also more likely to report in their written answers' issues relating to feeling their work was undervalued, and feelings of imposter syndrome or not having the skills to fulfil their

responsibilities. They were also more likely to indicate that they had moved jobs because of issues experienced and/or were considering leaving the field because of its impact on their mental health and wellbeing.

7.2 Importance of Organization Culture

One of the clearest themes that has emerged from the survey is the potential impact that issues linked to organizational culture have on mental health and wellbeing. Respondents who suggested that their employer takes proactive steps to create a positive organization culture were more likely to respond positively across the range of issues addressed by the survey, and vice versa. For example, organizations with mental health and wellbeing policy in place seem more likely to offer opportunities for advancement, to provide suitable physical working spaces, and to have employees who feel supported. Further examination of causation would be useful here, to determine the impact of the policy itself, versus factors such as the size of the organization and the corresponding levels of resources and/or services available.

On the other hand, those at organizations without mental health and wellbeing policy were less likely to feel supported. In turn, there were strong correlations between those who did not feel supported by their organization and a range of issues, such as:

- Not feeling a sense of belonging;
- Not feeling listened to;
- Not feeling supported by colleagues;
- A lack of clarity about their role;
- An inability to keep up with their workload;
- Experiencing fatigue; and
- Feeling stressed.

The existence (or lack thereof) of mental health and wellbeing policy is, however, likely not the only factor in the occurrence of these issues. Gender also seems to play a role, with women feeling less supported than men, and non-binary/third gender people feeling less supported yet. Additionally, location may be a factor, with those in North America reporting lower rates of feeling supported and feeling comfortable with sharing their issues, than those in Europe and Australasia.

Additionally, in written responses, there were many accounts of poor relationships with managers and colleagues and the considerable impact they had on mental health and wellbeing. These accounts spoke not only of a lack of willingness to engage with and understand digital preservation, but also several instances of bullying and a lack of empathy with regards to seeing and supporting employees as people with lives and needs beyond their roles and utility for the organization. This was also often exacerbated by a lack of accountability for those in management roles, and organizations being unwilling to address problematic behaviours.

Overall, there is significant room for improvement with regards to the creation of more positive organizational cultures. Fewer respondents reported that their organizations have mental health and wellbeing policy (49%) than other relevant policies, such as diversity and inclusion (82%), sexual harassment (80%), or discrimination (77%). They are also less likely to have access to paid leave when experiencing mental health issues (61%) in comparison with physical health issues (79%). And while support for professional development is relatively high, there are still significant gaps in the availability of other opportunities that have a positive effect on mental health and wellbeing. These include career advancement, and support for options such as alternative working patterns. The use of contingent

contracts is also still prevalent, which can have a substantial negative effect on employee mental health and wellbeing.

Finally, only about a quarter of respondents (26%) replied that their organization looks to monitor mental health and wellbeing of their employees, indicating that, even where policy is in place, steps are not being implemented to test its effectiveness and impact. It seems there remains a lot of work still to be done in ensuring organizations appropriately support their employee's mental health and wellbeing.

7.3 Significant Impact of the Digital Preservation Advocacy Burden

The third main theme that emerged relates to the ongoing advocacy burden of digital preservation. This has long been acknowledged as an issue within the digital preservation community based on anecdotal evidence and articles such as "What's Wrong with Digital Stewardship", but it is confirmed here by 63% of participants indicating that it has had an impact on their mental health and wellbeing.

This is also supported by the fact that responses relating to the level of organizational support felt by the respondents are noticeably lower than for similar experiences such as feeling motivated and a sense of belonging. Indeed, four out of the top five written responses on issues experienced relate to a lack of support for and understanding of digital preservation. Those issues are summarised as:

- Lack of engagement with and support from colleagues for digital preservation;
- Lack of engagement with and support for digital preservation from executives;
- Issues caused by the lack of resources available for digital preservation; and
- Feels their work is undervalued.

These were also reflected regularly in individual written responses which mentioned issues such as executives not taking digital preservation seriously, an unwillingness amongst colleagues and managers to understand and engage with digital preservation (that is "not their problem"), the lack of recognition of the long-term nature and scale of the work, and issues of autonomy (especially working without guidance) without the authority to make decisions¹⁵.

Additionally, one of the strongest correlations between responses is in relation to Q28 on feeling listened to and Q30 on feeling supported by their organization. In the cross tabulation between these questions, there was a strong link between those who felt listened to and supported and, at the other end, between those who did not feel either.

While the survey did not look to definitively identify causation, it seems clear that the advocacy burden and lack of support for digital preservation is closely correlated with high levels of stress, anxiety, and burnout experienced by those within the digital preservation community.

7.4 Impact of Unclear Role Descriptions and Unrealistic Workloads

The final theme to emerge from the responses to the survey highlighted the potential impacts felt due to a lack of clarity around roles and responsibilities and trying to manage unrealistic workloads. As seen above, a third of respondents identified a lack of clarity around their role and responsibilities, and only 12% of respondents reported that they were always able to keep up with their workload.

Crosstabulations also indicated that those without role clarity were also more likely to experience issues with their manager around mismatched understandings of their responsibilities.

¹⁵ This phraseology is a specific reference to "What's Wrong with Digital Stewardship"

In the written responses, there were several mentions of issues of “job creep” where additional responsibilities not directly related to digital preservation were often being added to workloads. Some respondents reported that additional tasks were often assigned due to the perception that preservation practitioners were more technically competent than other information management staff, whilst others reported that this issue was caused by an abuse of vague role descriptions or “any other duties” clauses. In several cases, respondents stated that despite the complexity and scale of digital preservation work, it was only one element of a broad range of responsibilities.

Respondents identified several causes for issues with lack of role clarity and unrealistic workloads, they included:

- A lack of understanding of and engagement with digital preservation amongst executives and managers, leading to a lack of understanding of the scale of the work and the skills required.
- The lack of understanding of the skills required also leads to issues with recruitment, with several respondents reporting that roles were being under hired (i.e. a mismatch between the skills required to secure the position and those required to perform the role). This was also then linked to roles being undercompensated.
- A failure to prioritize digital preservation work and provide the resources and staffing required to meet the challenge.
- Problematic organization cultures where working to the point of burnout was expected of employees.

In relation to the impacts of poor role clarity and unrealistic workloads, crosstabulations between questions showed links with lower levels of motivation, feeling less supported by their organization and higher levels of stress and fatigue. Indeed, 100% of those who replied they could never keep up with their workload also indicated issues with fatigue.

8. Strengths and Limitations of the Research

This research provides a thorough investigation of the current landscape with regards to mental health and wellbeing across the digital preservation community. However, this is an underexplored area, and, as discovered through the collection and analysis of the data, there are both strengths and limitations of the research to consider and this section will note and reflect upon these.

The design and implementation of the survey with both quantitative and qualitative questions align with the nature of the research and the aims of the study. The survey offers a means for measuring and scaling different aspects and finding statistical correlations between them. There are, however, limitations in any attempt to fully quantify aspects relating to perceptions and attitudes from a quantitative perspective, as it can lead to false or misleading analysis.

This is why a more in-depth qualitative analysis of responses was important to identify and consider emerging themes arising from the data. In particular, the free-text responses allowed for the inclusion of what might not typically be considered and a starting point for further analysis. Qualitative research is an effective way to explore perceptions and attitudes and capture the often complex and nuanced experiences involved. A strength of the qualitative approach employed in this research lies in the depth, rigour, and detail it provides.

Strengths and limitations may also occur in relation to attempts to draw statistical conclusions from the qualitative data collected due to a reliance on the issues having occurred to respondents. A clear example of this can be found in relation to responses relating to the burden of advocacy. In free text responses to Q16 on clarity of roles and responsibilities, only 5% of respondents mentioned the impact of the advocacy burden, whereas in response to Q22 on issues experienced, when prompted with the burden of advocacy as a possible answer, 63% of respondents identified it as an issue. This limitation of the data was to some degree expected, given typically lower nonresponse rates for open-ended free text versus multiple choice survey questions, and the exploratory nature of the research. Indeed, the presence of advocacy in both structured and open-ended responses points to a need for further exploration.

It is worth noting that the study does not make direct comparisons between the data captured and findings drawn here and experiences in analogous professions. Attempts to identify similar investigations of other groups, such as other information management professionals, did not identify any research with a comparable scope, focus and/or depth. For example, there is mention of wellbeing in the 2023 Workforce Mapping¹⁶ research on the UK Information Management sector led by CILIP and the Archives and Records Association, but the report includes only a few short statements on the topic.

In relation to the representation of the digital preservation community, the sample size was comparable with that captured by the 2021 NDSA Staffing Survey. Indeed, the size of the sample was nearly identical, with 269 responses for the NDSA Survey and 261 for this Mental Health and Wellbeing Survey. The breakdown of demographics for both sets of research were also relatively well aligned, as referenced in the findings section above. Both surveys do, however, also share similar limitations in relation to the global reach of the data. Both were published in English only and were shared primarily through channels associated with organizations that operate largely in the global north. This is reflected in the geographic representation of respondents to the Mental Health and Wellbeing Survey, with 87% from North America and Europe. With participation in the digital preservation community from those in other

¹⁶ CILIP and ARA, *2023 Workforce Mapping report*, <https://www.cilip.org.uk/page/workforcemapping>

regions noticeably increasing, it might be hoped that a repetition of this work in the future might be more geographically representative.

Additionally, in relation to the representative nature of the sample, there may be some bias due to the likelihood that those who have experienced issues that have impacted on their mental health and wellbeing are more likely to respond to a survey of this nature, than those who have not. Indeed, researchers were approached by a number of members of the community who reported that their wish to share issues and impacts experienced was a significant motivator for completing the survey. However, there was also anecdotal evidence that the opposite was true for others. Researchers were informed of members of the community who had experienced issues and impacts but had chosen not to complete the survey for privacy reasons, in particular, fear of being identified and the potential negative ramifications of this.

There is always a risk of introducing bias on the part of the researcher when undertaking qualitative analysis, but also ways to minimise this through rigour and clarity in the research design and outputs. With this in mind, the methods used for this research are presented in this report, and the accompanying dataset made available for anyone to access, to promote transparency and enable reproducibility, with the recognition that the qualitative analysis of others may lead to different conclusions.

For example, the research team's position within the digital preservation community offers potential strengths and weaknesses to interpretations of the findings and resulting conclusions. In terms of strengths, the position has allowed the development of a survey that reflects the lived experiences of digital preservation practitioners, allowing questions to be tailored to address issues that have previously been identified by anecdotal evidence as well as reflecting the nature of work in this unique and developing sector. On the other hand, researchers bring with them their own experiences of the digital preservation community, personal histories in relation to mental health and wellbeing, and observations formed through direct involvement in previous research such as the 2021 NDSA Staffing Survey. In an attempt to address these potential biases, we have aimed to remain conscious of these concerns throughout the development and analysis of the survey and the preparation of the findings report.

Additionally, the research scope was narrowed to digital preservation specifically for a small purposive sample, which means there are some limitations in terms of generalisability, in the same way other studies of specific subjects might. The delimitations of this study focused specifically on mental health and wellbeing of digital preservation practitioners may limit the transferability of findings to some extent. However, by providing the dataset, detailing the methods of data collection and analysis, and offering an account of researcher assumptions and potential biases, the dependability and credibility of the research is made evident to readers. This findings report has also been thoroughly reviewed by colleagues within the DPC to assess the efficacy of the approach taken by the main author. This included review by a project team member who collaborated on the preparation of the survey questions, and a senior member of staff external to the project who has significant research experience.

Despite any potential limitations of the dataset and research, it is, important to note that the findings included in this report support both anecdotal evidence offered by members of the digital preservation community, as well as issues expressed in responses to the NDSA Survey and in Blumenthal et al's "What's Wrong with Digital Stewardship". Thus, we can have reasonable confidence in the veracity of the conclusions shared here.

9. Further Work

This section looks to identify potential further work that could be undertaken to continue investigation of the topics and themes covered by the survey. It will also aim to identify some of the steps that might be taken to address issues and help support the digital preservation community.

9.1 Communicating Survey Outcomes

Communicating the outcomes of the survey to key stakeholders will be the first step taken. This will not only include publication of the findings reports itself, but also a planned campaign of communications to share the main themes and encourage engagement with the issues raised. Those communications will include activities such as:

- Separate publication of the Executive Summary and targeted communications aimed at those in senior management/administrative roles
 - Translation of this publication will also hopefully be actioned
- Creation of a “eye-catching” graphical summary of the key themes/pain points
- Presentation at key digital preservation conferences
 - A related Birds of a Feather session was already held at iPRES 2024 in Gent. The session was well attended and demonstrated a desire within the community to engage with the topic of mental health and wellbeing
- Formal publication in a relevant academic journal

A full communications plan will be developed in due course to help guide these activities.

9.2 Additional Research

The data captured by this survey represents first steps in the investigation of mental health and wellbeing in the digital preservation community, but there is still substantial room, and need, for further work. In the first instance, there is scope for additional analysis of the survey data to be undertaken.

Due to time restraints and the limitations of the tools in use, it was not possible to undertake cross-tabulations of questions that had been posed in a matrix format, i.e. those to which a respondent could provide multiple answers. This excluded the questions covering organization types (Q1), policies in place (Q9), mental health and wellbeing support offered (Q13), flexible working options offered (Q14), issues encountered (Q22), and impact of issues on mental health and wellbeing (Q23) from crosstabulations. It would be of interest to compare responses to these against those questions where a high number of correlations have already been identified, e.g. if the organization has mental health and wellbeing policy (Q7), if the respondent feels supported by the organization (Q30), and if the respondent’s work leaves them feeling stressed (Q32) or fatigued (Q33).

Deeper dives into some of the main themes identified would also be possible, for example around the role played by organizational culture, the impact of the ongoing advocacy burden, and issues with unclear role descriptions and unrealistic workloads. It would also be useful to examine further some of the correlations between questions, to identify if causal links can be established. Some of this work is already in progress, led by Brett Loughheed and colleagues at the University of Winnipeg. Their timely

work on stress and its impacts on digital preservation practitioners in Canada was presented via a poster at the iPRES 2024 conference in Gent¹⁷.

Opportunities also exist to extend the scope of the research to investigate the impact of factors such as growing data volumes and changing technologies. Similar research for analogous professions would also be useful to allow comparison. Creation of a research roadmap, in collaboration with other interested parties, could be a useful first step in continuing the work represented here.

9.3 Capturing Longitudinal Data

This survey has now established a baseline of data on the topic of mental health and wellbeing in the digital preservation community. It will likely be useful to repeat the survey in the future to capture comparative longitudinal data. In this case, a period of five years from the original survey launch is suggested, i.e. a second survey might be circulated in early 2028.

A number of “lessons learned” have been identified during the analysis of the data and preparation of the findings report that should be considered when planning to repeat the survey. In particular, the following are recommended changes to the survey questions to allow capture of more consistent data and to capture more information on issues raised in the current survey:

- A question should be added or amended to specifically ask if respondents have ever experienced feelings of imposter syndrome. A number of respondents explicitly mentioned or alluded to this issue in their written response. This could be added as a standalone question or as one of the potential answers to Q22 on issues experienced.
- New or updated questions on key issues, such as stress, fatigue, and burnout, using time-based metrics for responses would be useful, particularly to allow comparison with general statistics from other sources. This could be done by structuring the responses to allow respondents to identify when the issue in question has been experienced (e.g. within the last 6 months, year, two years, five years, etc.)
- Some respondents mentioned that they are neurodiverse in their answers, whilst others provided responses that suggested this was the case. It might, therefore, be useful to include a question specifically on this. However, any decision to include such a question should take into consideration the following:
 - The reluctance of many neurodiverse people to openly identify as such due to negative experiences in the past.
 - Terminology that is and is not acceptable according to those in the neurodiverse community themselves, and not just the medical profession or advocacy groups run by non-neurodiverse people.
 - The need to be inclusive of those who self-identify as neurodiverse, and not just those who have received a formal diagnosis.
 - Whether there is a need to ask respondents or not with which type(s) of neurodiversity they identify (e.g. Autism, ADHD, Dyslexia, etc.).
- It might also be useful to include a question on what changes respondents believe could have a positive impact on their mental health and wellbeing, taking in options relating to support for digital preservation (e.g. additional staffing, more decision-making powers, or strategic prioritization) as well as more direct mental health and wellbeing interventions (e.g. more

¹⁷ Loughheed, B., & Hinds, A. (2024). Self-Preservation: Stress and Its Impacts on Digital Preservationists in Canada. Zenodo. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.13629614>

wellbeing resources and activities available). Potential responses to be included could be sourced from those provided from the data of this survey.

- Use of fewer questions with free text responses to help with consistency, completeness, and to reduce analysis time. The reduction of this type of questions can be facilitated by the responses received to this version of the survey. For example, responses to Q21 on physical workspaces could be used to create a list of options for a subsequent version.

9.4 Community Activities

The final area of further work to be considered is how can the results of this survey be used to provide practical support for the digital preservation community? While some recommendations of good practice for supporting mental health and wellbeing were provided in response to Q34, it would be premature to say this is even close to actionable advice. More work will be required to prioritise the issues that need to be addressed and to identify possible steps that can be taken, and bringing interested parties from the digital preservation community together to collaborate would likely be the most effective approach.

The DPC will have a role in helping to enable this process, in line with the organization's strategic goal of helping members to "acquire, develop and retain competent and responsive workforces that are ready to address the challenges of digital preservation".¹⁸ The creation of a mental health and wellbeing task force has already been raised with the organization's Workforce Development Sub-Committee. As a priority, this task force could work to develop actionable recommendations based on the findings presented here. It could also help to facilitate an approach to collaborative advocacy within the community, both for the support of mental health and wellbeing and digital preservation more generally, perhaps through an activity such as a community statement.

¹⁸ DPC Strategic Plan for 2022-2027, <https://www.dpconline.org/docs/2607-dpc-strategic-plan-2022-2027>

10. Appendices

10.1 Appendix One – Complete Survey Questionnaire

This appendix contains the introductory text and full list of questions presented to respondents. It was possible to download as a separate document to allow full visibility of questions before participation.

Digital Preservation Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Survey Questions

Introductory Text

Info for Survey Header

Time to complete: 10-30 minutes

Survey link: <https://bit.ly/DPMHWSurvey>

Survey open until: Wed 12th April 2023, 23:45 UTC

Survey completion: Qualtrics allows respondents to return and complete partially finished survey responses as long as they access the survey using the same IP address. Your IP address will not be captured as part of the survey data, this is used by the system for managing access only.

Organizational context: Several questions in this survey cover organization context. If you are not currently in employment, please answer these questions with reference to your most recent employer.

Context

As an emerging profession with highly distributed practitioners who often work in relative isolation, the digital preservation workforce is unusually vulnerable. There is a growing amount of anecdotal evidence that pressures experienced by digital preservation¹⁹ practitioners in the workplace may be impacting on their mental health and wellbeing. The pressures they experience are especially felt when attempting to balance stresses of work with dedication to their duties.

These have recently been brought into focus by issues raised in the [2021 NDSA Staffing Survey](#). The DPC's mandate includes the development of a competent and responsive workforce that is ready to address the challenges of digital preservation, and we recognize the need for increased support for the mental health and wellbeing of those working in digital preservation.

About The Survey

This survey is the first step in a new program of work aimed at helping address the issues described above. The survey aims to gather information on the issues faced, how they affect mental health and wellbeing, and what support organizations currently provide. It is open to everyone one working within the digital preservation community.

¹⁹ Where Digital Preservation refers to "the series of managed activities necessary to ensure continued access to digital materials for as long as necessary." *Digital Preservation Handbook, 2015*, <https://www.dpconline.org/handbook>

To ensure our approach to this topic and the research meet good practice, the following actions were undertaken during the preparation of this survey:

- Consultation with a major UK mental health charity on key mental health and wellbeing issues in relation to the workplace;
- Advice sought from an experienced university researcher on the ethical approach taken by the project; and
- Survey questions were reviewed by a researcher in clinical psychology.

The information gathered from this survey will be used to help guide the outputs of a forthcoming DPC task force which will work to develop resources to support mental health and wellbeing in the digital preservation community. The aggregated results of the survey will also be shared in an open access published report of findings, and anonymized quantitative data from the survey will be made available.

To steal a slogan from iPres 2022, “People Make Digital Preservation”, if we are to be successful in our work, we need to reach a place where the people of digital preservation feel valued, supported, and fit to take on the challenge. We hope this survey is a first step towards making that a reality for everyone.

Data Privacy and Security

We acknowledge that the topics covered in this survey are likely to be sensitive and data protection is of the utmost importance. Keeping responses confidential will be a priority and the DPC will ensure this happens through each step of the data gathering, processing, report drafting, and publication. Completion of the survey will be seen as tacit approval for the use of the respondents’ data in this study. As such, only completed responses will be included in the data analysis. All partially completed responses are held separately by Qualtrics, inaccessible to DPC staff. The system has been set to delete these entries automatically 48 hours after survey data collection closes.

Data is being collected using Qualtrics, an industry leading survey platform which employs several types of security, is ISO 27001 certified, and facilitates GDPR and HIPAA compliance²⁰. After the survey closes, data collected will be held offline on an encrypted drive, accessible only to the two members of staff from the Workforce Development team working directly on the survey report, and will be managed as described in the DPC’s Privacy Policy. In the published report, individual responses will be combined together with those of other respondents and reported as a group. Anonymization of the data to be shared will include, at a minimum, removal of all text-based responses and redaction of all responses to the following questions:

- Q2 - Is your organization a member of the Digital Preservation Coalition?
- Q3 - In which continent is your organization based?

²⁰ Qualtrics Security Information: <https://www.qualtrics.com/uk/platform/security/>

Demographic Questions

Number	1
Question	Which of the following most closely describes the type or function of your organization? (Select all that apply)
Required?	Yes
Type	Check boxes
Options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academic Library or Archive Academic Department (Not a Library or Archive) For Profit-Corporation Government Entity Historical Society Independent Library or Archive Museum National, Federal, or Legal-Deposit Library or Archive Non-Profit Institution Public Library Research Data Repository Other (Please describe below)
Logic	Go to Q2

Number	2
Question	Is your organization a member of the Digital Preservation Coalition?
Required?	Yes
Type	Multiple Choice
Options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes No Don't Know
Logic	Go to Q3

Number	3
Question	In which continent is your organization based?
Required?	Yes
Type	Multiple Choice
Options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Africa Asia Australasia/Oceania Europe North America South America
Logic	Go to Q4

Number	4
Question	How long have you worked in your current field? ('Field' refers to the particular discipline or area of specialty in which you work. This question is meant to indicate your total years within your field, regardless of organization). Indicate using the year range below.
Required?	Yes

Type	Multiple Choice
Options	Less than a year 1-3 years 4-8 years 9-12 years 13-16 years 17 or more years
Logic	Go to Q5

Number	5
Question	Which of the following options best describes your position within your organization?
Required?	Yes
Type	Multiple Choice
Options	Junior practitioner (e.g. DP Trainee, Officer, Assistant Archivist/Librarian) Senior practitioner (e.g. DP Archivist/Librarian, Web Archivist) Technology specialist (e.g. DP Developer) Team leader/manager (e.g. DP Program Manager) Senior executive/administrator Other (Please specify)
Logic	Go to Q6

Number	6
Question	How would you describe your current gender identity? Select all that apply
Required?	Yes
Type	Multiple Choice
Options	Woman Man Non-Binary Prefer Not to Say Self-Describe (please use write-in option)
Logic	Go to Q7

Organizational Approach to Mental Health and Wellbeing

Number	7
Question	Does your organization have a policy (or similar document) to cover mental health and wellbeing issues?
Required?	Yes
Type	Multiple Choice
Options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No • Don't Know
Logic	If "Yes", go to Q8 If "No" or "Don't Know", go to Q9

Number	8
--------	---

Question	Does your organization take practical steps to implement the policy?
Required?	Optional
Type	Multiple Choice
Options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No • Don't Know
Logic	Go to Q9

Number	9
Question	Does your organization have policy and/or procedures that cover the following issues? (Select all that apply)
Required?	Yes
Type	Check boxes
Options	Inclusion and diversity Discrimination Flexible working Professional development Mental health and wellbeing Sexual Harassment Bullying None of the above Don't Know Other similar (please specify below)
Logic	Go to Q10

Number	10
Question	Does your organization provide support for professional development? (e.g. funding, internal training courses, time to attend events or study)
Required?	Optional
Type	Multiple Choice
Options	Yes No Don't Know
Logic	Go to Q11

Number	11
Question	Does your organization provide opportunities for career advancement? (e.g. pathways for promotion or upgrading, management training programs)
Required?	Optional
Type	Multiple Choice
Options	Yes No Don't Know
Logic	Go to Q12

Number	12
Question	Does your organization hire staff on contingent/temporary contracts?

Required?	Optional
Type	Multiple Choice
Options	Often Sometimes Rarely Never Don't Know
Logic	Go to Q13

Number	13
Question	Does your organization offer any of the following to support mental health and wellbeing? (Select all that apply)
Required?	Yes
Type	Check boxes
Options	<p>Awareness raising of/communications to destigmatize discussing mental health and wellbeing issues</p> <p>Resources on good mental health and wellbeing</p> <p>Training to support good mental health and wellbeing</p> <p>Monitoring of staff mental health and wellbeing (e.g. staff surveys or checks as part of appraisal processes)</p> <p>Organized social activities</p> <p>Organized fitness activities</p> <p>Procedures for staff experiencing issues (e.g. supportive processes for reporting issues)</p> <p>Paid leave when experiencing physical health issues</p> <p>Paid leave when experiencing mental health issues</p> <p>Paid carers leave</p> <p>Health insurance/private medical care</p> <p>Access to mental health support (e.g. counselling/therapy)</p> <p>My organization does not offer any support for mental health and wellbeing</p> <p>Don't know</p> <p>Other (please specify)</p>
Logic	Go to Q14

Number	14
Question	Does your organization provide any of the following flexible working options? (Select all that apply)
Required?	Yes
Type	Check boxes
Options	<p>Home working</p> <p>Flexitime (e.g. flexible start and end times, ability to take flexi-leave)</p> <p>Time off in lieu (i.e. additional hours worked can be taken off at a later date)</p> <p>Compressed hours (e.g. full-time hours over fewer days)</p> <p>Job sharing</p> <p>Part-time hours</p> <p>Paid leave to attend appointments</p> <p>Unpaid leave to attend appointments</p> <p>My organization does not offer flexible working options</p> <p>Don't know</p>

	Other (please specify below)
Logic	Go to Q15

Personal Experiences

Number	15
Question	Are your role and responsibilities clear? (e.g. your job description accurately reflects the work you do)
Required?	Yes
Type	Multiple Choice
Options	Yes No
Logic	If "Yes", go to Q17 If "No", go to Q16

Number	16
Question	If no, please describe why your role and responsibilities are not clear
Required?	Optional
Type	Free Text
Logic	Go to Q17

Number	17
Question	Are you able to keep up with your workload during your regular contracted hours?
Required?	Yes
Type	Likert Scale
Options	Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never
Logic	Go to Q18

Number	18
Question	Do you contribute to decision-making and planning that affects your workload?
Required?	Yes
Type	Multiple Choice
Options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No
Logic	If "Yes", go to Q19 If "No", go to Q20

Number	19
Question	If yes, please describe how you contribute
Required?	Optional
Type	Free Text
Logic	Go to Q20

Number	20
Question	Is your physical work environment suitable for your needs?
Required?	Optional
Type	Multiple Choice
Options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • Somewhat • No
Logic	Go to Q21

Number	21
Question	Please describe what is good and/or bad about your physical work environment.
Required?	Optional
Type	Free Text
Logic	Go to Skip Statement

Number	Skip Statement
Text	The next three questions will ask about specific negative experiences in the workplace that you may have encountered, and how they may have affected your mental health and wellbeing. The issues raised in these questions may, therefore, be upsetting or triggering. If you would prefer not to engage with this content, select "Skip" below, otherwise please select "Continue" to answer the questions.
Required?	Yes
Type	Multiple Choice
Options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skip • Continue
Logic	If "Skip", go to Q25 If "Continue", go to Q22

Number	22
Question	Have you encountered any of the following while working in a digital preservation role? (Please select all that apply)
Required?	Optional?
Type	Check Boxes
Options	<p>Worked in a role where your responsibilities were unclear</p> <p>Been expected to manage an unrealistic workload</p> <p>Had to work to unrealistic expectations (e.g. not enough resources provided to meet objectives)</p> <p>Been expected to work long hours (e.g. well beyond those contracted)</p> <p>Been the only person working on digital preservation at your organization</p> <p>Had your contributions overlooked or diminished</p> <p>Felt overwhelmed by the ongoing advocacy burden relating to digital preservation</p> <p>Experienced a lack of job security</p> <p>Held a role where your compensation (e.g. pay, benefits) were lower than would be expected</p> <p>Had to work with problematic/traumatic content</p> <p>Felt unsupported by colleagues and/or management</p>

	Experienced a difficult relationship with a colleague Experienced a difficult relationship with a manager/supervisor Been the subject of/witness to prejudice and/or discrimination Been the subject of/witness to sexism Been the subject of/witness to bullying Other (please describe below) I have not experienced any of the above
Logic	Go to Q23

Number	23
Question	Do you feel your digital preservation work or any of the issues identified in Q18 have led to/contributed to you experiencing any of the following? (Please check all that apply)
Required?	Optional?
Type	Check Boxes
Options	Stress Difficulty focusing Presenteeism (i.e. the act of showing up for work without being productive, generally because ill-health prevents it) Fatigue Insomnia Burnout Anxiety Feelings of Isolation Depression Physical symptoms (e.g. high blood pressure, weight gain) The need to raise a grievance against a colleague Taking a leave of absence Seeking treatment (e.g. counselling/therapy) Changes to your job description A request for additional compensation Changing job with your organization Leaving the organization Other (please describe below)
Logic	Go to Q24

Number	24
Question	If you wish to/feel able to, please share further details of the issues you have indicated above
Required?	Optional
Type	Free Text
Logic	Go to Q25

Mental Health and Wellbeing Statements (please indicate your level of agreement with each statement as it applies to you in the context of your work)

Number	25
Question	My supervisor/manager and I have the same understanding of what my role and responsibilities are.
Required?	Yes

Type	Likert Scale
Options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly agree • Somewhat agree • Neither agree nor disagree • Somewhat disagree • Strongly disagree
Logic	Go to Q26

Number	26
Question	I feel motivated to fulfil my responsibilities.
Required?	Optional
Type	Likert Scale
Options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly agree • Somewhat agree • Neither agree nor disagree • Somewhat disagree • Strongly disagree
Logic	Go to Q27

Number	27
Question	I feel a sense of belonging at work.
Required?	Optional
Type	Likert Scale
Options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly agree • Somewhat agree • Neither agree nor disagree • Somewhat disagree • Strongly disagree
Logic	Go to Q28

Number	28
Question	I feel like I am listened to at work.
Required?	Yes
Type	Likert Scale
Options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly agree • Somewhat agree • Neither agree nor disagree • Somewhat disagree • Strongly disagree
Logic	Go to Q29

Number	29
Question	I feel supported by my colleagues.
Required?	Optional
Type	Likert Scale
Options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly agree • Somewhat agree

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neither agree nor disagree • Somewhat disagree • Strongly disagree
Logic	Go to Q30

Number	30
Question	I feel supported by my organization.
Required?	Yes
Type	Likert Scale
Options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly agree • Somewhat agree • Neither agree nor disagree • Somewhat disagree • Strongly disagree
Logic	Go to Q31

Number	31
Question	I would feel comfortable approaching my line manager to discuss a concern regarding my mental health or wellbeing.
Required?	Yes
Type	Likert Scale
Options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly agree • Somewhat agree • Neither agree nor disagree • Somewhat disagree • Strongly disagree
Logic	Go to Q32

Number	32
Question	My work often leaves me feeling stressed.
Required?	Yes
Type	Likert Scale
Options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly agree • Somewhat agree • Neither agree nor disagree • Somewhat disagree • Strongly disagree
Logic	Go to Q33

Number	33
Question	My work often leaves me feeling fatigued.
Required?	Yes
Type	Likert Scale
Options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly agree • Somewhat agree • Neither agree nor disagree • Somewhat disagree

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strongly disagree
Logic	Go to Q34

Wrap-Up

Number	34
Question	Are there any particular examples of good mental health and wellbeing practice that you would like to share?
Required?	Optional
Type	Free text
Logic	Go to Q35

Number	35
Question	Is there anything else you would like to share about your mental health and wellbeing experiences in the workplace?
Required?	Optional
Type	Free text
Logic	Go to Q36

Number	36
Question	We may conduct further in-depth research to expand on the issues addressed in this survey. If you would be willing to be contacted to provide additional information and/or participate in an interview, please leave your name, and preferred email address here. This information will not be shared.
Required?	Optional
Type	Free text
Logic	Go to thank you.

Sign-Off Text

Thank you for completing this survey. Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact either Sharon McMeekin (sharon.mcmeekin@dpconline.org) or Amy Currie (amy.currie@dpconline.org). We appreciate your input and contribution to this work, and hope to publish the findings and anonymized dataset in May.

10.2 Appendix Two – Select Bibliography

The following bibliography lists key resources consulted as preparation for the research and to aid in the design of the questions for the survey.

Adams JM. (2019) "The Value of Worker Well-Being", *Public Health Reports*, 134(6):583-586. Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0033354919878434>

Atkins, Winston, et al. "Staffing for Effective Digital Preservation, 2017: An NDSA Report." National Digital Stewardship Alliance, September 13, 2017. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17605/-OSF.IO/3RCQK>

Blumenthal, Karl; Griesinger, Peggy; Kim, Julia Y.; Peltzman, Shira; and Steeves, Vicky (2020) "What's Wrong with Digital Stewardship: Evaluating the Organization of Digital Preservation Programs from Practitioners' Perspectives," *Journal of Contemporary Archival Studies*: Vol. 7, Article 13. Available at: <https://elischolar.library.yale.edu/jcas/vol7/iss1/13>

Danna, Karen and Griffin, Ricky W. (1999) "Health and Wellbeing in the Workplace: A Review and Synthesis of the Literature", *Journal of Management*, Vol 25, No. 3, p357-384. Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/014920639902500305>

De Simone, Stefania (2014) "Conceptualizing Wellbeing in the Workplace", *International Journal of Business and Social Science*, Vol. 5, No. 12, November 2014. Available at: https://ijbssnet.com/journals/vol_5_no_12_november_2014/14.pdf

Meister, Jeanne (2021), "The Future of Work is Employee Well-Being", *Forbes*. Available at: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jeannemeister/2021/08/04/the-future-of-work-is-worker-well-being/>

Mind, "How to Promote Wellbeing and Tackle the Causes of Work-Related Mental Health Problems". Available at: https://www.mind.org.uk/media-a/4662/resource3_howtopromotewellbeingfinal.pdf

Mind, "How to Take Stock of Mental Health in Your Workplace". Available at: https://www.mind.org.uk/media-a/4664/resource_2_take_stock_of_mh_in_your_workplace_final.pdf

Mind, "Introduction to Mentally Healthy Workplaces". Available at: https://www.mind.org.uk/media-a/4663/resource1_mentally_healthy_workplacesfinal_pdf.pdf

Work, Lauren et al (2022), "2021 Staffing Survey Report: An NDSA Report", National Digital Stewardship Alliance, August 2022. Available at: <https://osf.io/2rb7k>

World Health Organization (2022), "Guidelines on Mental Health at Work". Available at: <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240053052>

Wu, Ashley MHS; Roemer, Enid Chung PhD; Kent, Karen B. MPH; Ballard, David W. PsyD, MBA; Goetzl, Ron Z. PhD (2021) "Organizational Best Practices Supporting Mental Health in the Workplace", *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, 63(12):p e925-e931, December 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1097/jom.0000000000002407>

10.3 Appendix Three – Communications Channels

The following communications channels were used to circulate the call for responses to the Mental Health and Wellbeing Survey by DPC staff. Community members were also encouraged to share the survey details via their own networks.

DPC Website

- News item “DPC Launches New Survey on Mental Health and Wellbeing in the Digital Preservation Community” - <https://www.dpconline.org/news/dpc-launches-new-survey-on-mental-health-and-wellbeing-in-the-digital-preservation-community>
- Blog post “Treat People with Kindness – A Personal Reflection on the Digital Preservation Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Survey” - <https://www.dpconline.org/blog/mhwsurvey-smm>

Mailing Lists

- Archives-NRA (Aimed at archivists in the UK and Ireland)
- AusPreserves (Digital preservation practitioners in Australasia)
- Digital-Preservation (Digital preservation practitioners)
- DPC-Discussion (DPC members)
- HEArchivists (Higher education archivists in the UK)
- NDSA-ALL (Members of the National Digital Stewardship Alliance, primarily in the USA)
- PASIG (Preservation and Archiving Special Interest Group)

Social Media

- LinkedIn
- Twitter/X
- Mastodon

<https://doi.org/10.7207/mhw2025>

01001101 01100101 01101110 01110100 01100001
01101100 00100000 01001000 01100101 01100001
01101100 01110100 01101000 00100000 01100001
01101110 01100100 00100000 01010111 01100101
01101100 01101100 01100010 01100101 01101001
01101110 01100111 00100000 01101001 01101110
00100000 01110100 01101000 01100101 00100000
01000100 01101001 01100111 01101001 01110100
01100001 01101100 00100000 **01010000** 01110010
01100101 01110011 01100101 01110010 01110110
01100001 01110100 01101001 01101111 01101110
00100000 **01000011** 01101111 01101101 01101101
01110101 01101110 01101001 01110100 01111001



Digital**P**reservationCoalition

www.dpconline.org