

2024 NATIONAL NURSE SURVEY

From Good to Gold Standard: A Strategic View of Nurse Engagement

Updates from the national nursing workforce on job satisfaction, trust, loyalty, communications and technology

Building trust, improving engagement, leveraging technology

Over the past two years, we've tracked the state of the nursing workforce as healthcare emerges from the tail end of pandemic pressure and significant use of travel nurses into a new status quo with signs of stabilization among healthcare workers.

Here, we look at whether that stabilization is real. We also ask: How are nurses feeling about their jobs, organizations and leaders? Are healthcare leaders communicating effectively with employees and the public on key issues? And with the rapid rise of AI, where do nurses stand on the technology today?



Insights include:

- » Career satisfaction and reasons for changing jobs
- » Trust in colleagues, managers and leaders
- » Effectiveness of communications tools
- » Perception of communications and engagement
- » Views on nurse managers
- » Use of and trust in technology, particularly AI

The findings suggest that, with a somewhat stabilized workforce, the next step of strengthening it will require significant long-term, strategic initiatives developed in partnership with departments across the organization. And with that, a deep commitment from leaders to engage and communicate more than ever before.

The case for deep investment: The cost of turnover

**\$51K
to \$72K**

The average cost to replace a single full-time equivalent (FTE) staff registered nurse (RN)



[The cost of nurse turnover—and how to maximize retention](#)

BROKEN DOWN, HERE'S WHERE THE COSTS LIE:

18%
Annual turnover rate

\$44
Average hourly RN pay

\$132
Hourly premium labor rate

20%
Estimated fringe and benefits

\$4,700
Recruiting expenses per FTE

95 days
Average time to fill a nursing role

1 week
Accrued vacation payout

6 weeks
Of orientation (paid nonproductive time)



The state of the nursing workforce: 2024



Job satisfaction is holding steady

As has been the case for the past two years, **two thirds of nurses are satisfied with their job.** More than three-quarters plan on staying in healthcare. Among those who have changed jobs, work schedule, pay and work/life balance are cited as the top reasons.



Trust and loyalty are fragile

Nurses express a high level of loyalty to their department, but just over half feel very loyal to their team lead or organization. Better support for nurse managers may play a role in improving this.

Less than four in 10 express a great deal or fair amount of trust in executives and say that their leaders are making good operational and financial decisions. As was the case last year, **only a third have a great deal or fair amount of trust that executives are honest and transparent.**



Internal engagement is weak; external communications are better

More than half say that the *tools and methods* their organization uses to communicate internally are effective. However, **less than half say that leadership teams engage nurses on strategic decisions** or do a good job engaging them on issues that affect their work.

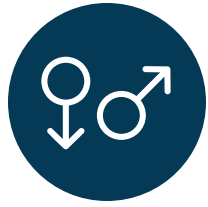
When it comes to the organization speaking publicly on key issues, about half of nurses agree that their leaders are thoughtful about how they do it, and **half say their organization speaks out about the right amount.** Still, more than a third want their organization to take more of a stand.



Technology is both a risk and opportunity

Nurses are highly skeptical about the use of AI in healthcare, but a slight majority express optimism about its future potential. **Overall, technology in general is viewed favorably,** particularly because it has improved communications for nurses.

Demographics



Gender

Female	88%
Male	12%



Years in Healthcare

< 2	2%
2-5	10%
6-10	20%
11-15	18%
16-20	14%
> 20	36%



Facility

Hospital	62%
Health Services Co	15%
Ambulatory Clinic	8%
Specialty Practice	11%
Surgery Center	5%



Years in Current Job

< 2	16%
2-5	27%
6-10	23%
11-15	11%
16-20	9%
> 20	15%

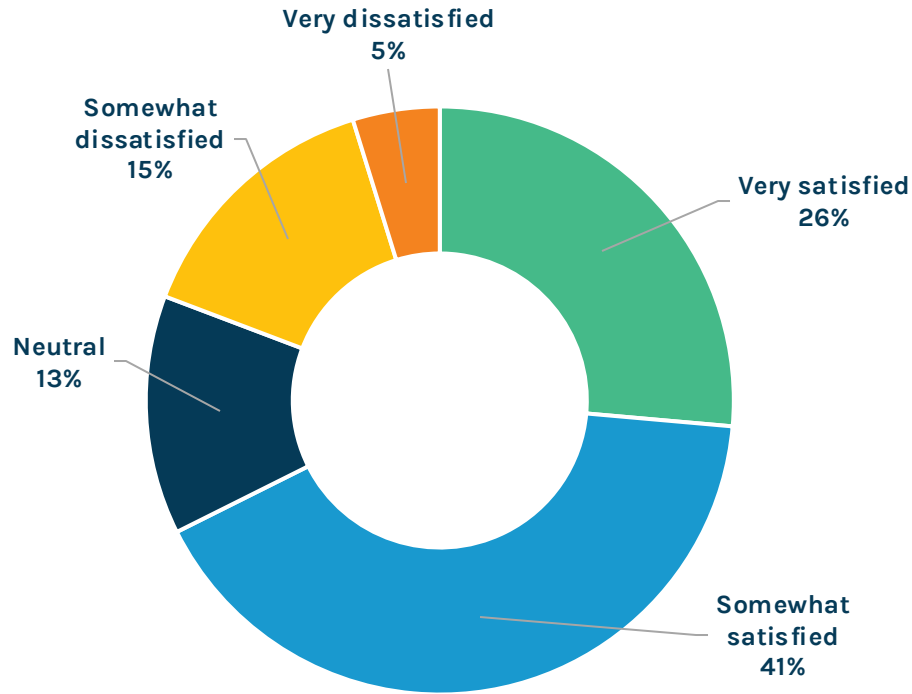


Career Satisfaction

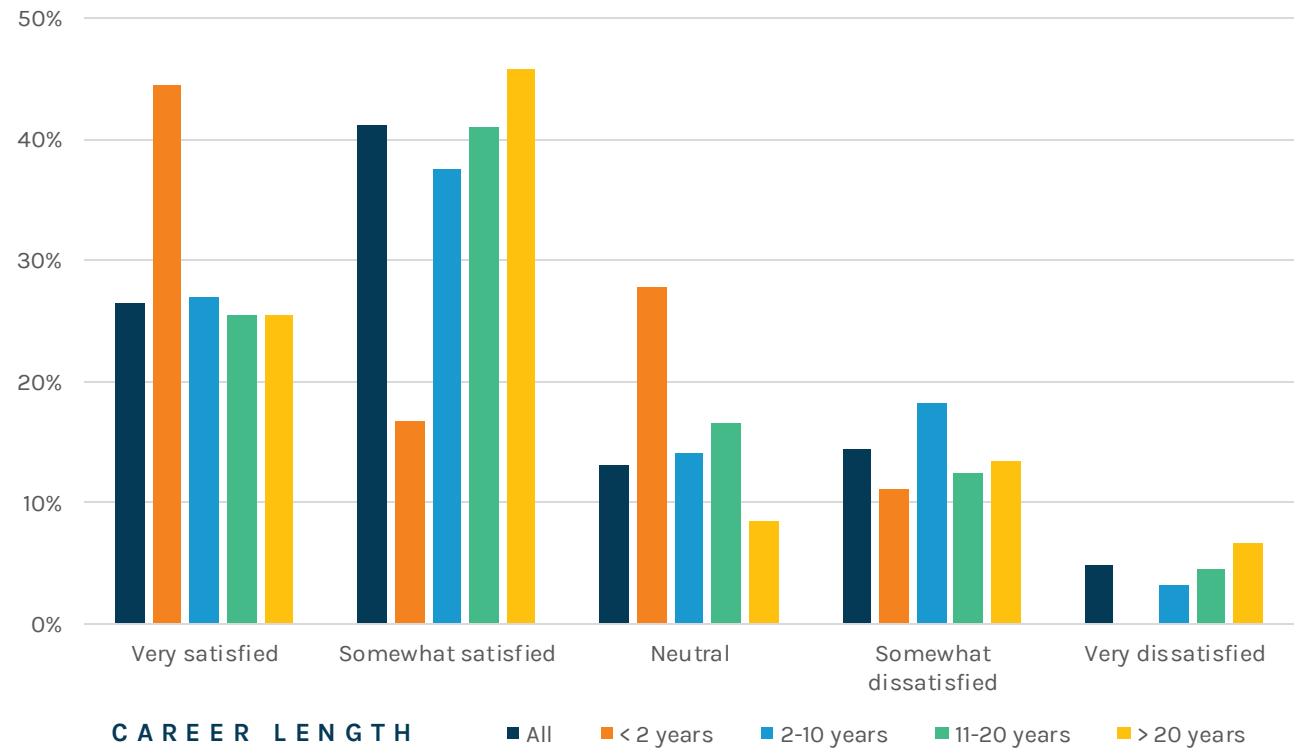
Most nurses are planning to stay in healthcare, with job satisfaction holding steady.

Two-thirds of nurses are satisfied with their job – holding steady from last year

As a practicing healthcare worker, how satisfied are you with your job?



Job satisfaction has held steady since August 2022 and August 2023

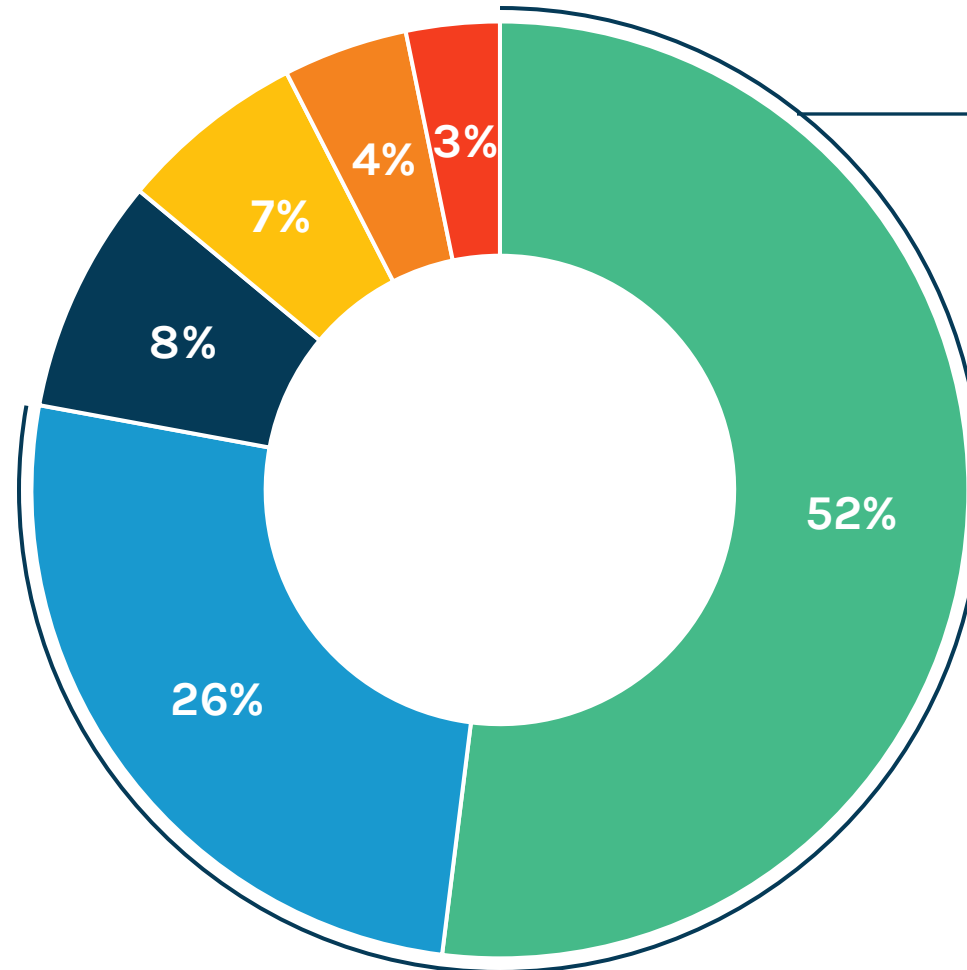


N: All = 837; < 2 yr = 18; 2-10 yr = 248; 11-20 yr = 266; > 20 yr = 305

The vast majority of nurses still plan to stay in the field

How likely are you to stay in nursing as a career?

- Very likely to stay
- Somewhat likely to stay
- Neutral
- Somewhat unlikely to stay
- Very unlikely to stay
- Actively preparing to leave

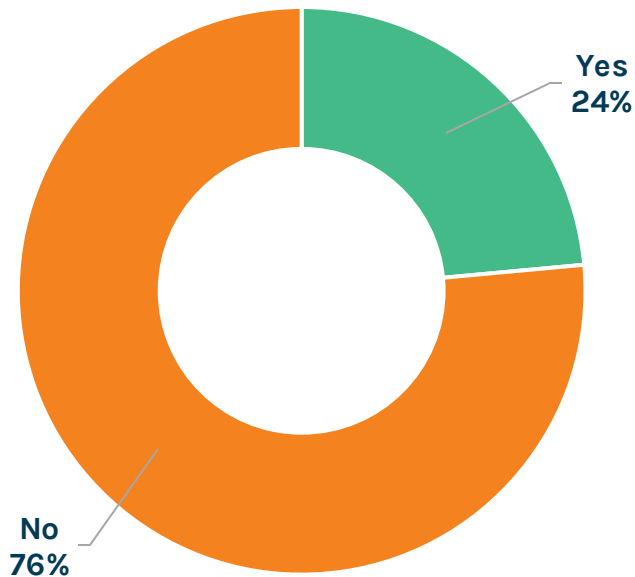


78%
Total Likely to Stay

In 2022, 75% of nurses said they were likely to stay in nursing. That number rose to 81% in 2023.

Work/life balance and schedule are among top reasons for changing jobs

In the past two years, have you moved from one organization to another (i.e., changed jobs but not within the same organization)?



N = 837, all respondents

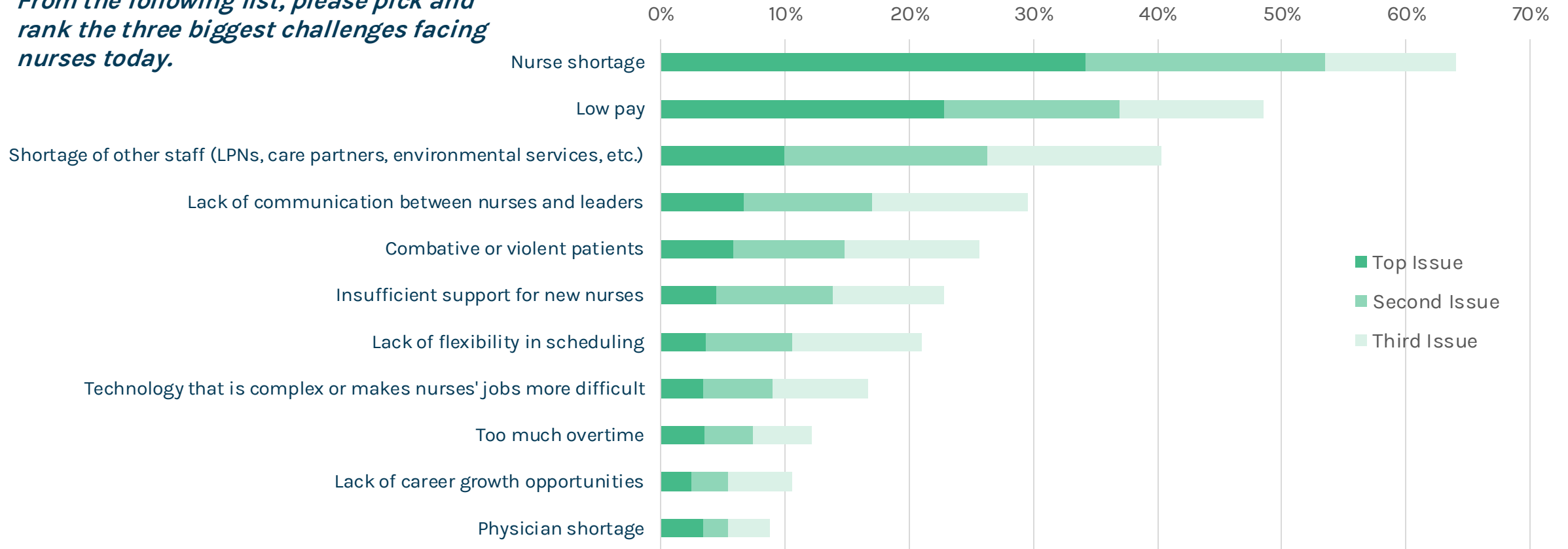
Why did you move? (select all that apply)



N = 198, those who have changed jobs in past two years

Poor communication is behind only pay and staffing as a top issue for nurses today

From the following list, please pick and rank the three biggest challenges facing nurses today.



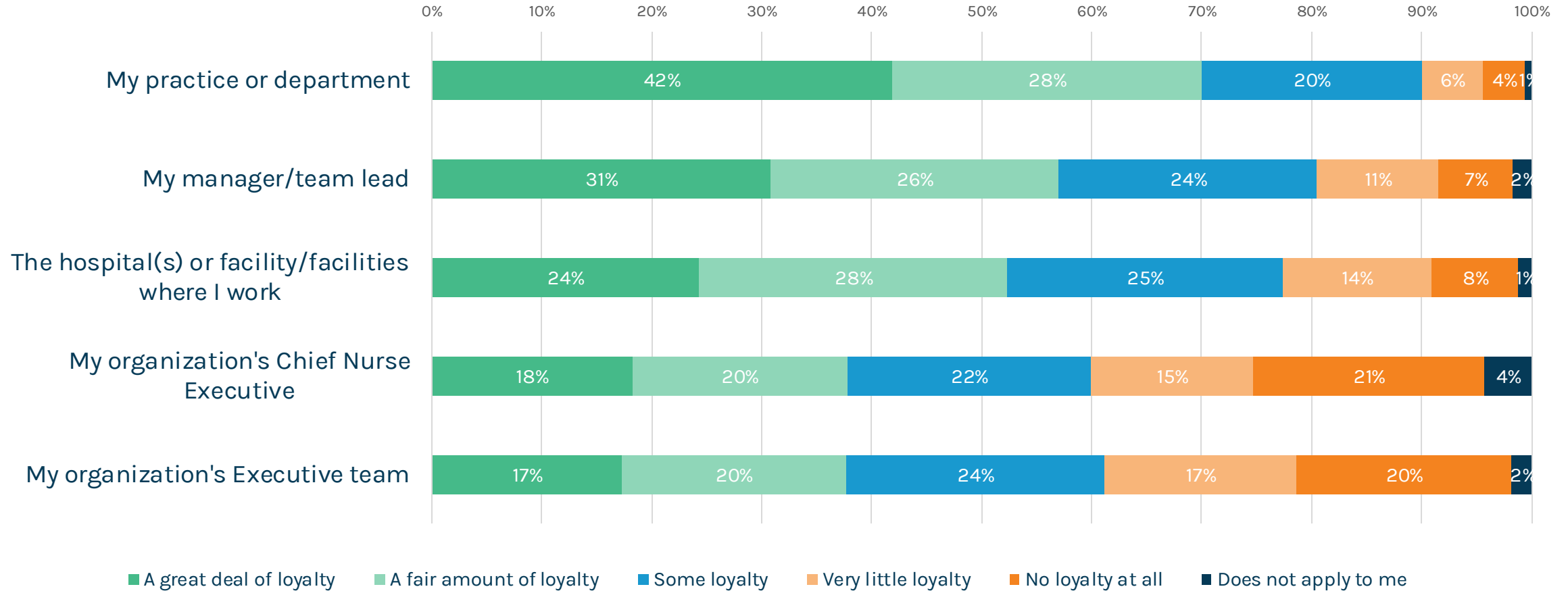


Trust & Loyalty

Trust in direct managers has improved, but loyalty and trust in leadership teams is lagging.

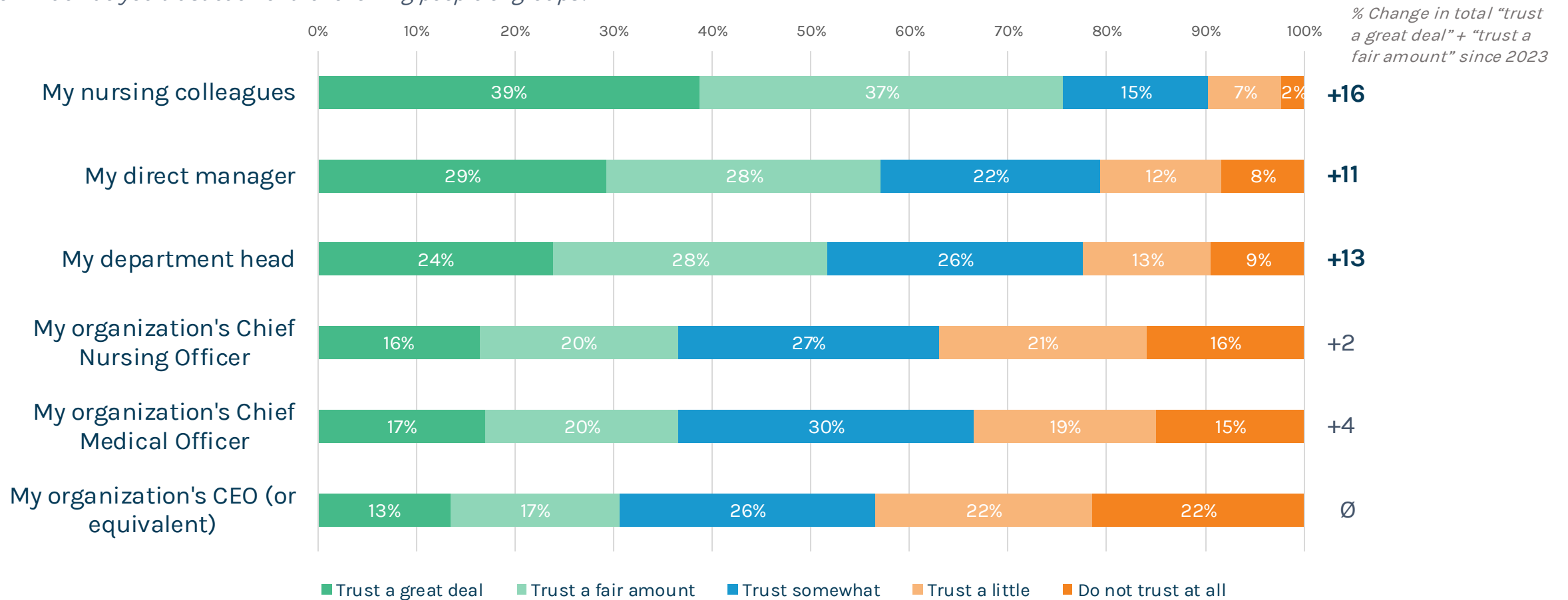
Seven in 10 nurses feel loyal to their department. More feel loyal to their organization than to that organization's leaders.

How much loyalty do you feel to...



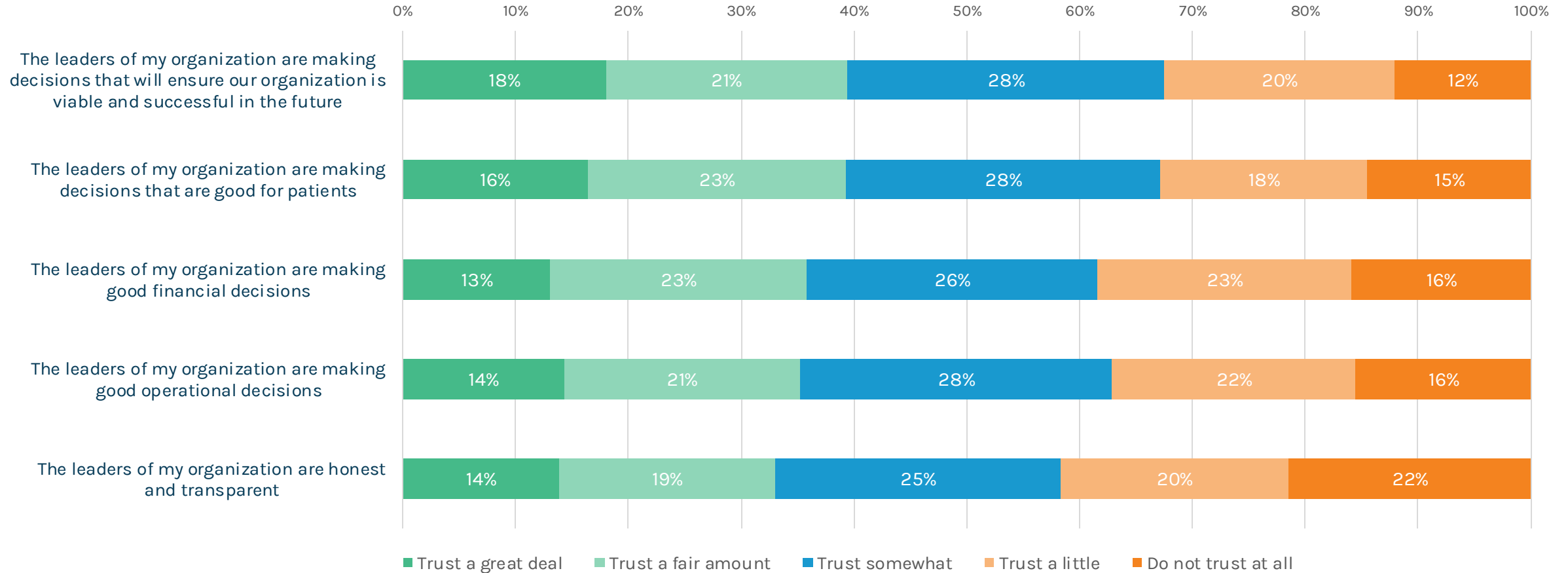
Trust in direct managers and department heads has improved, but notable percentages still lack trust

How much do you trust each of the following people or groups?



Less than four in 10 nurses trust their leaders on questions of honesty, finances and operations

How much do you trust that...





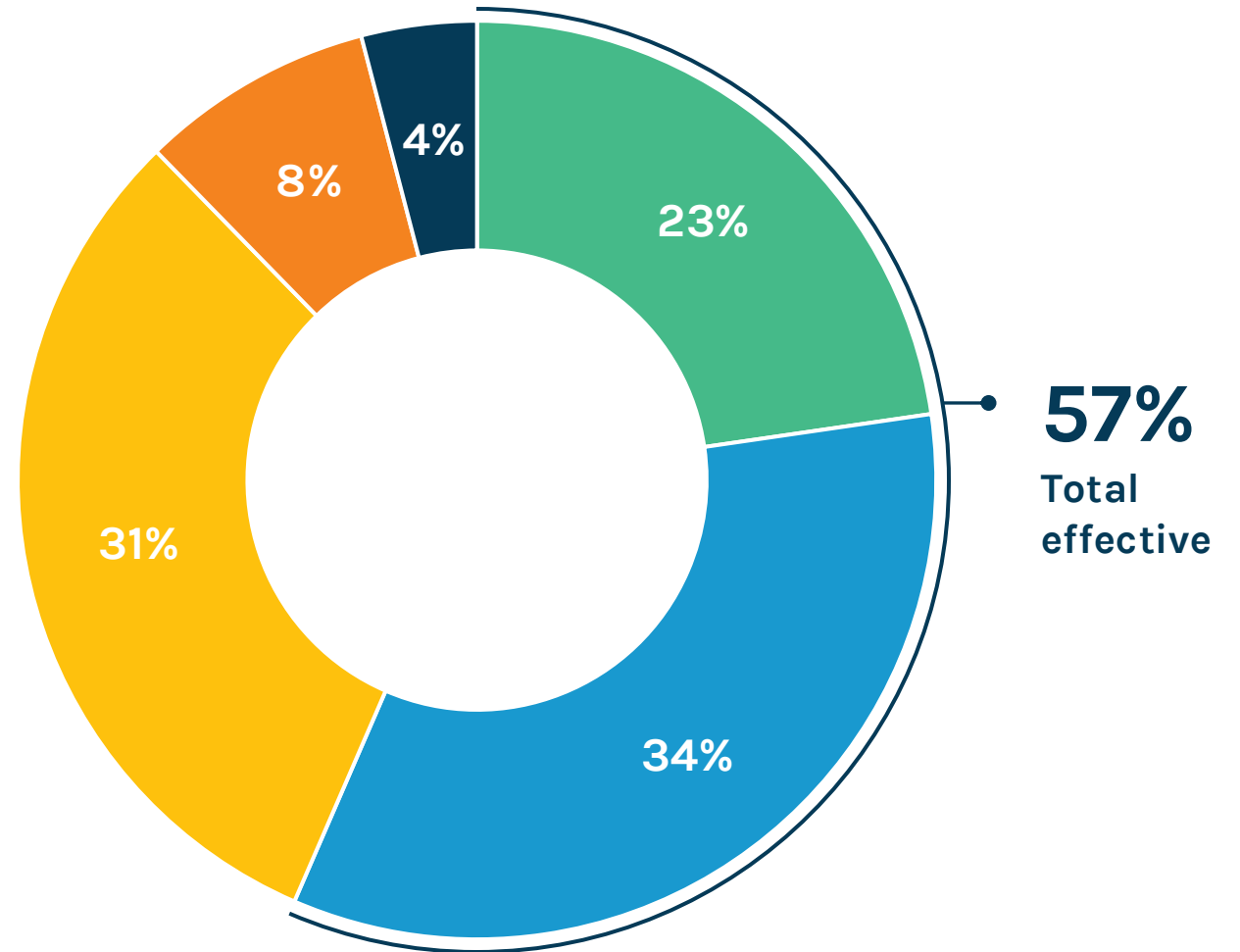
Perception of Internal and External Communications

While communications tools are viewed somewhat favorably, opportunities to engage with leadership are falling short.

More than half say internal comms at their organization are effective

How effective are the communications tools and methods your organizations uses to provide you with information?

- Very effective
- Effective
- Somewhat effective
- Not at all effective
- Unsure



Communication can be improved through more consistent updates and more engaged leadership

What is one thing your organization could do to communicate more effectively with you?

P R E S E N C E	E N G A G E M E N T	T R A N S P A R E N C Y	P E R S O N A L I Z A T I O N	C A D E N C E
<p>“BE VISIBLE, come to the floors/units to actually see what is happening and how hard it is to do the job with the staff provided.”</p> <p>“Face to face training, meetings.”</p> <p>“I would like to see higher executives rounding more often and making connections with staff. They need to care about care and less about the boardroom.”</p> <p>“Have representatives and heads of departments come to the various units to personally inform us about upcoming plans and or situations that are arising.”</p> <p>“Upper management could actually see what floor nursing is all about and what it takes to get through a 12-hour day before making up new rules that make no sense for bedside nursing practice.”</p>	<p>“Leaders should work with employees to solve problems instead of shirking responsibility.”</p> <p>“Have monthly gatherings with employees about concerns or areas for improvement.”</p> <p>“Have town hall meetings and actually listen.”</p> <p>“Listen to our point of view and ask questions about what we think is important.”</p> <p>“They could listen instead of always talking.”</p>	<p>“Be timely and truthful.”</p> <p>“JUST BE HONEST WITH THE PERSON THAT YOU ARE COMMUNICATING WITH.”</p> <p>“Stop covering their butts, be transparent and honest.”</p> <p>“I think they actually do hear us they just don't care.”</p>	<p>“More individual meetings and communication.”</p> <p>“One to one meetings.”</p> <p>“Have regular meetings/town hall meetings that fit different schedules.”</p> <p>“Provide more personalized feedback about my work.”</p>	<p>“Be consistent in their communications.”</p> <p>“In any changes in scheduling, communicate by texting and written notification.”</p> <p>“Weekly updates regarding administrative changes with staffing in emails to keep all of us on the same page.”</p> <p>“Have more blast out emails or zoom meetings.”</p>

Bright spot: Many nurses say their organization communicates well already

What is one thing your organization could do to communicate more effectively with you?

My organization communicates **fairly well**

Already done well in my opinion



Our organization **does all they can**

They currently communicate **effectively**

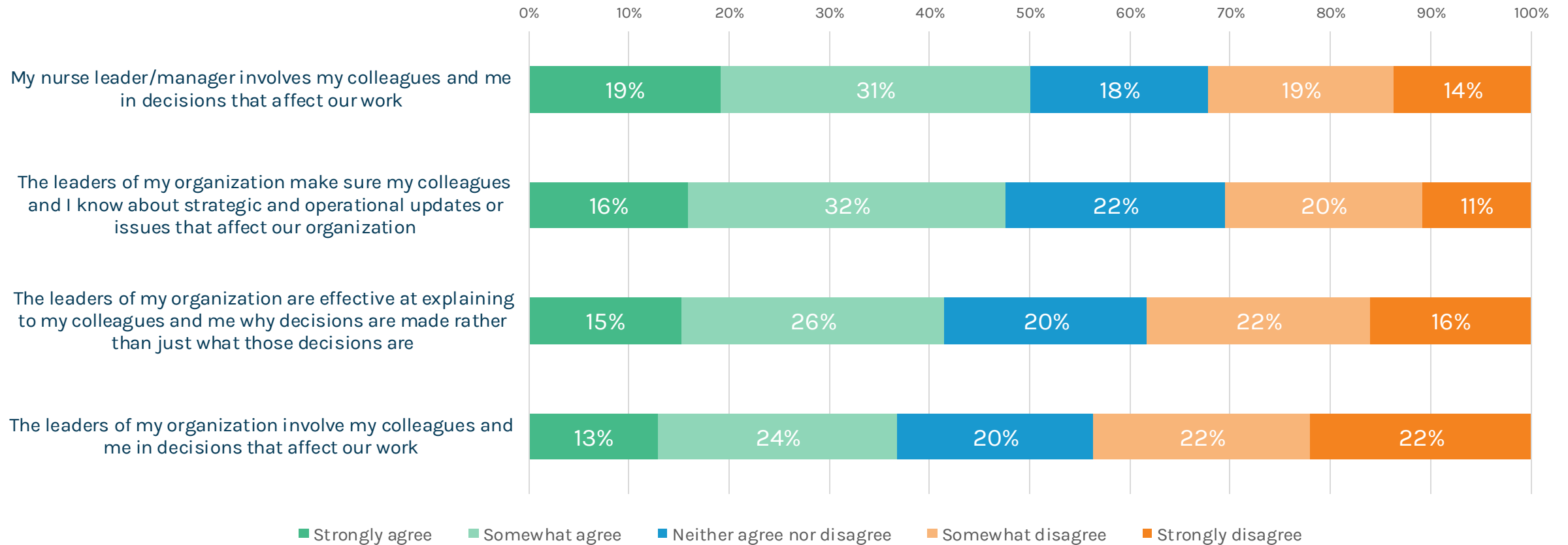
Nothing, they are very good

I can't think of anything.

They communicate effectively through text, phone and email

Half or fewer nurses say their manager and leadership teams engage them on issues and decisions affecting their work

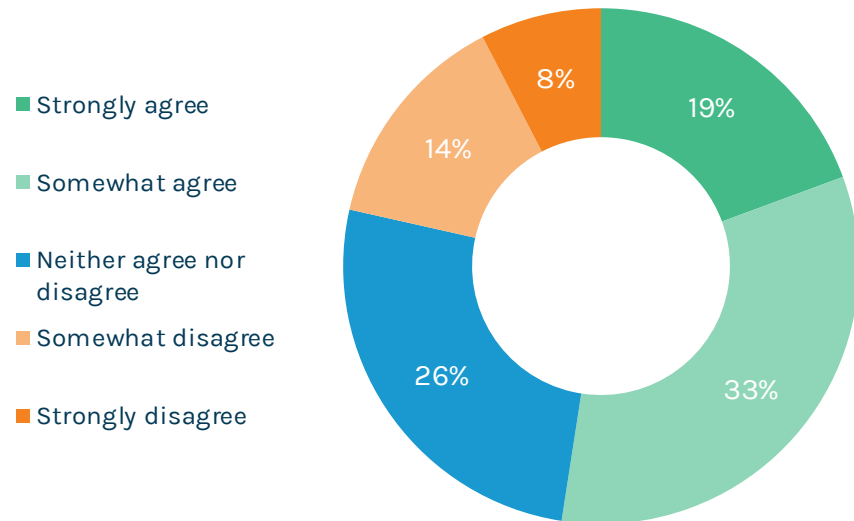
Thinking about the leaders at the facility where you work, please indicate how much you agree with each of the statements about their approach to sharing information with you or the general public.



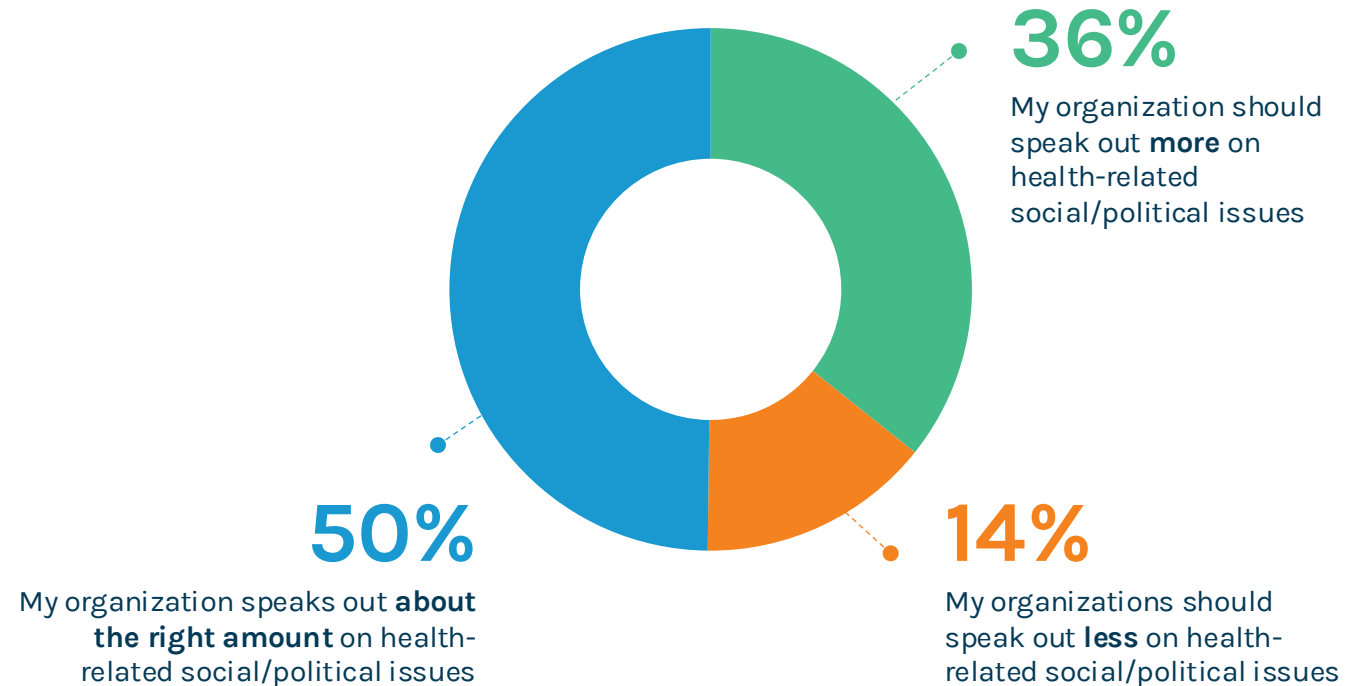
About half of nurses say their leaders thread the needle on speaking about sensitive public issues

Thinking about the leaders at the facility where you work, please indicate how much you agree with each of the statements about their approach to sharing information with you or the general public.

The leaders of my organization are thoughtful about when and how they speak out to the public on important health and health-related social issues



Thinking about political and social issues that involve health and healthcare, such as abortion, gun violence, gender, please indicate which statement comes closest to your opinion.



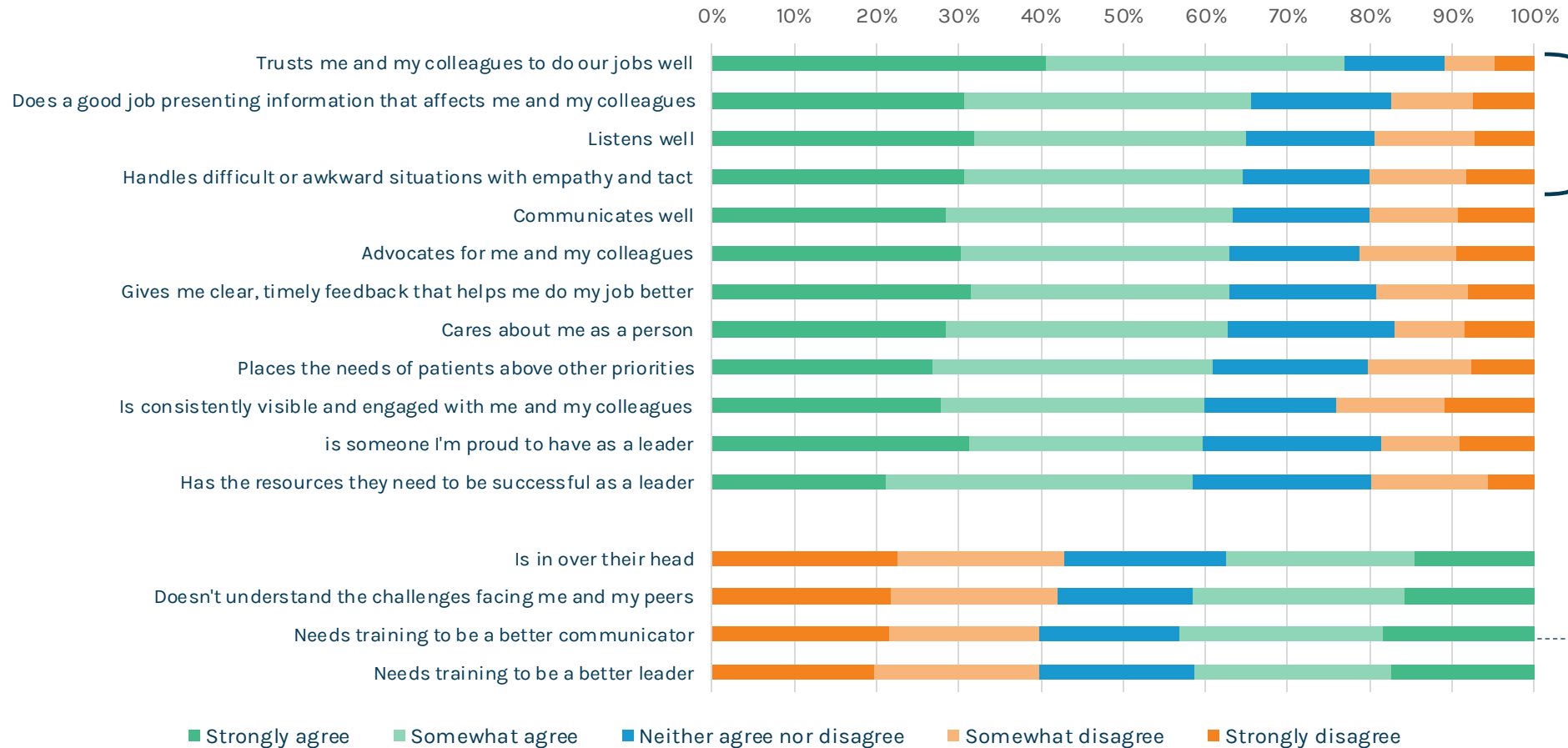


Nurse Managers

Giving managers training, time and resources to be more involved with their teams and communicate more effectively will go a long way toward building trust, creating unity and giving nurses a reason to stay.

Nurses have a somewhat positive view of their supervisor

My manager/team lead...



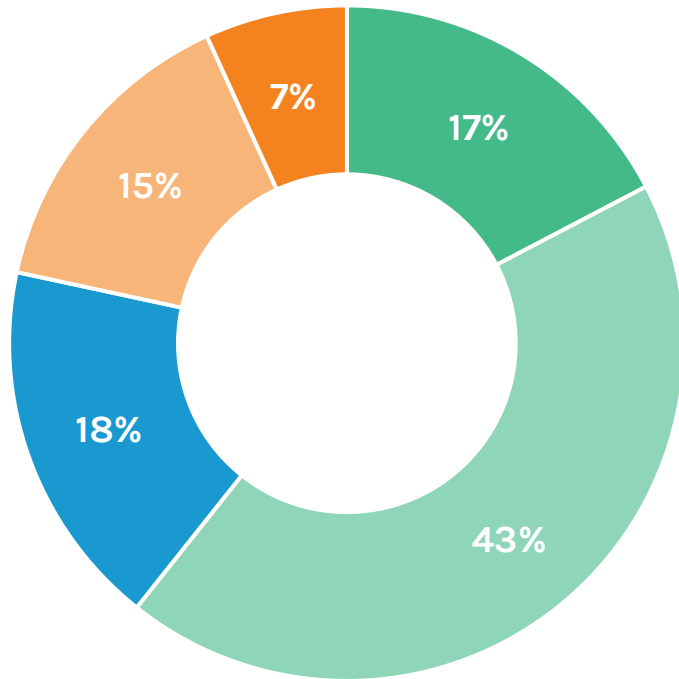
Nurses' agreement with the top four statements has improved by 5-8 points since 2023. There is little change among the other traits

Nurses feel better about their managers' communications than in 2023, with 8 points more *disagreeing* that their manager needs training in this area

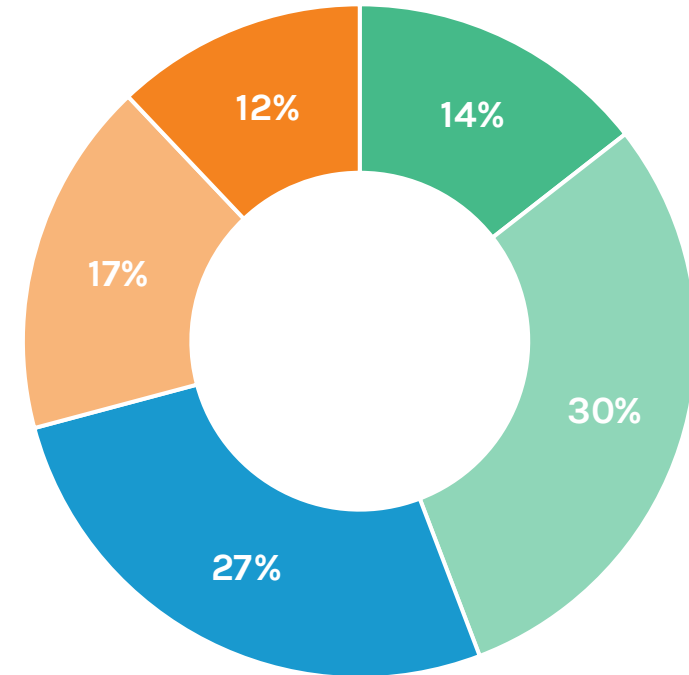
A majority agree that lack of support due to busy managers is key reason for nurses leaving

A recent study looked at possible connections between nurse manager workload and nurse turnover. Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements.

Nurse managers being too busy to train and support their team members is one of the biggest reasons nurses are leaving the healthcare industry.



Reducing the number of nurses each nurse manager at my organization supervises would help reduce turnover.



- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

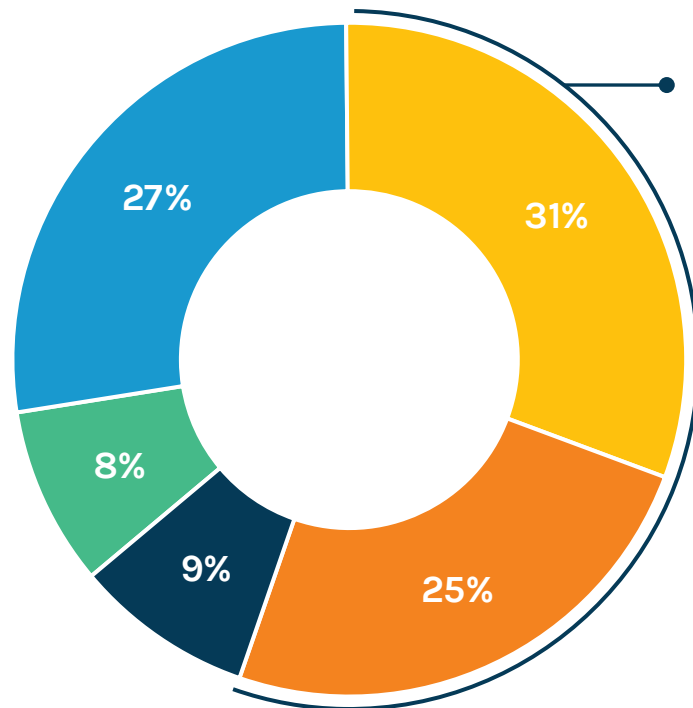


Technology

Skepticism about AI abounds, but nearly half think it will be good for nurses in the long run. Communications is seen as a key area where tech in general has had a positive effect.

Only about a third of nurses trust AI in healthcare settings

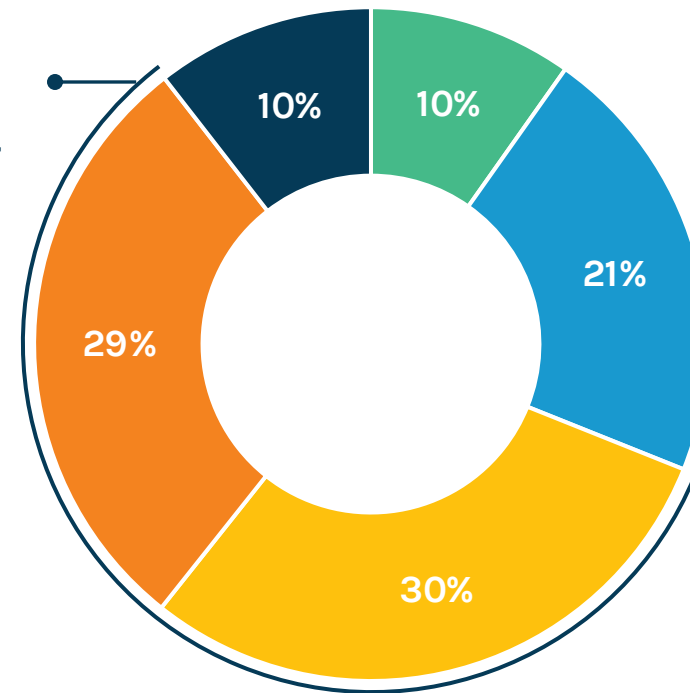
Thinking about the expanding use of artificial intelligence in healthcare, how much do you trust AI-enabled tools for administrative tasks?



56%
Little or no trust

- Trust a great deal
- Trust a fair amount
- Trust a little
- Do not trust at all
- Unsure

How much do you trust AI-enabled tools for clinical decision support, such as helping physicians diagnose patients or read radiology films?

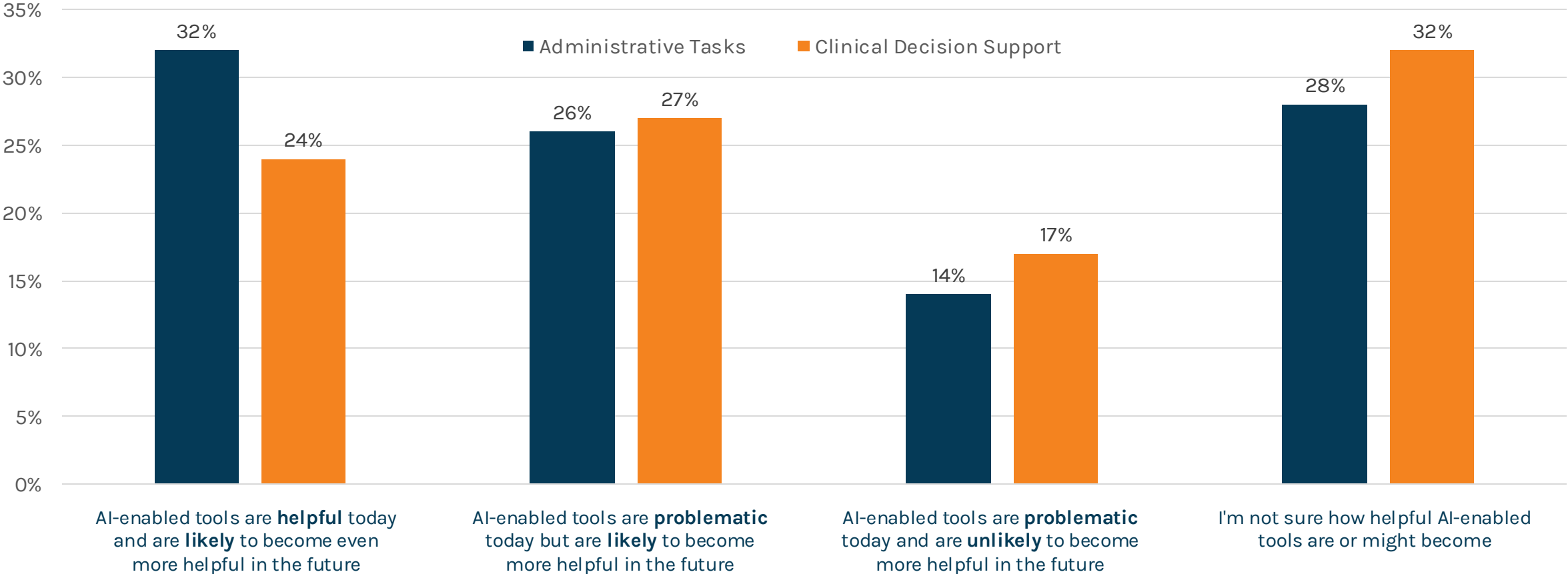


59%
Little or no trust

22%
of nurses say they are using AI for administrative tasks, 20% are using it for clinical decision support and 66% are not using it at all

A slight majority have a positive view of AI's potential

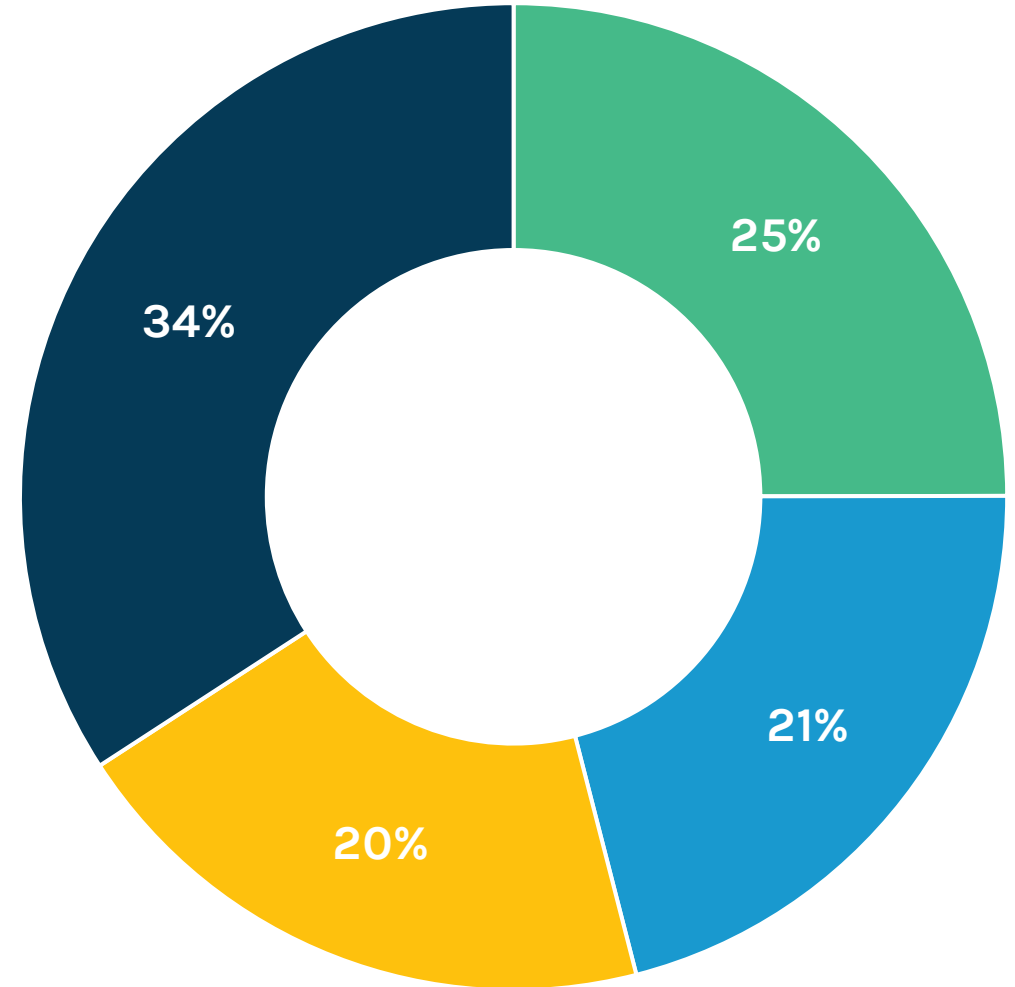
Which of the following statements most closely matches your opinion about AI's uses for...



Nearly half think AI will have a positive impact on nurses. A third aren't sure.

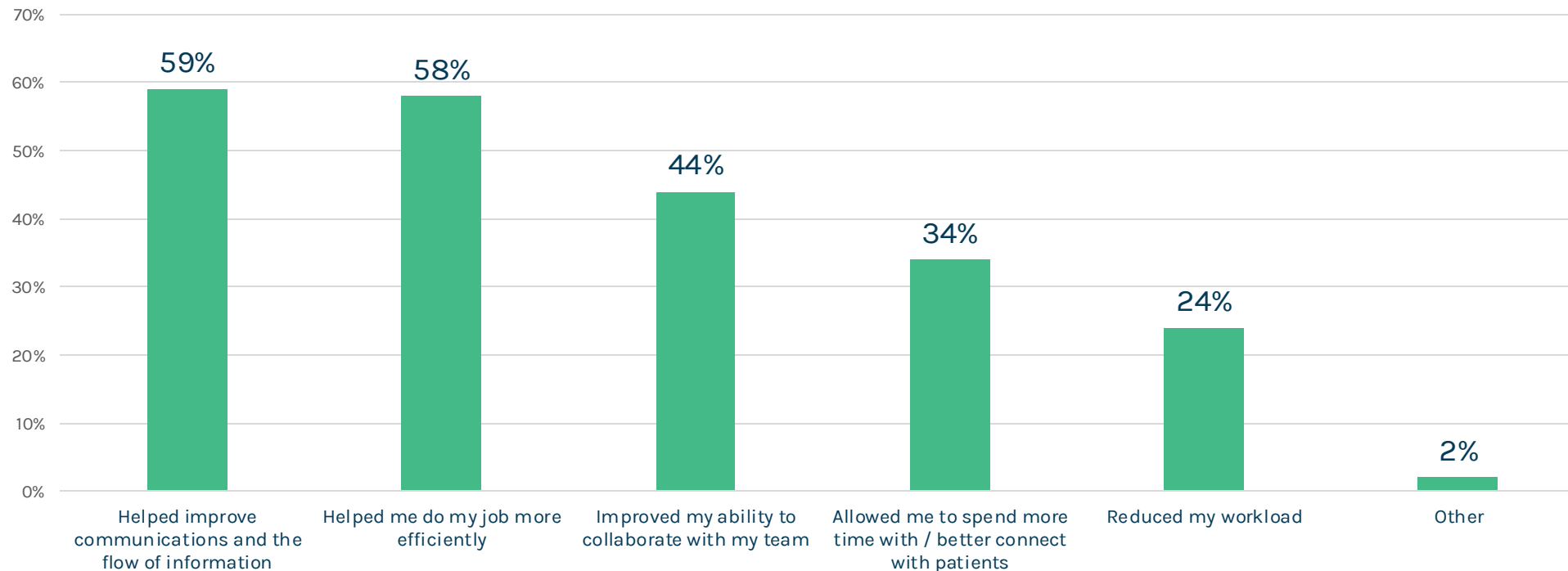
Which of the following statements most closely matches your opinion about how AI in general might affect nurses in the near future?

- AI is generally a **good thing** and will help nurses like me be **more effective** in our jobs
- AI is generally a **good thing** and will help address the nursing shortage by **handling some tasks** nurses currently do
- AI is generally a **bad thing** and will take nurse jobs away by handling some tasks nurses should be doing effectively
- I'm not sure how AI in general might affect nurses



Two-thirds say tech in general has been a positive force. Of those, six in 10 say it has improved communications.

Which of the following reasons best explain why technology has had an overall **positive** effect on your work?

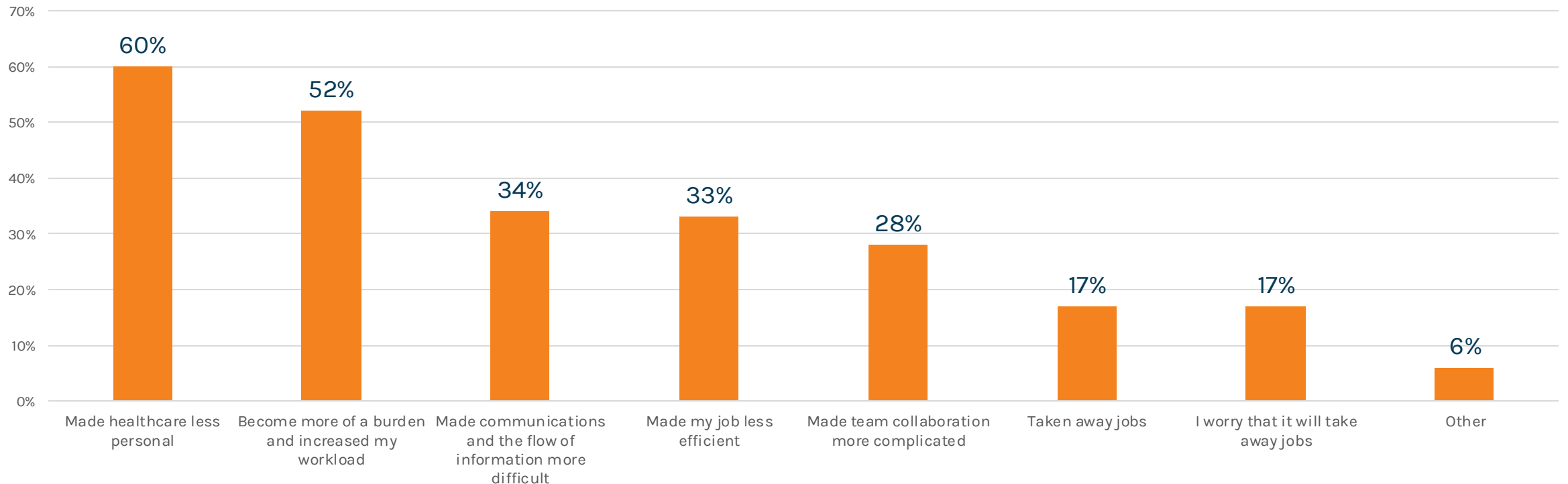


65% of nurses say **technology in general** (not just AI) has had a somewhat or very positive impact on their work. Only 18% say it has had a negative impact.

N = 542, those who say tech has had a positive impact on their work

Making healthcare less personal and adding workload are cited by those who say tech has had a negative influence

Which of the following reasons best explain why technology has had an overall **negative** effect on your work?



N = 149, those who say tech has had a negative impact on their work

What it means

Today's stabilization of the nursing workforce has been an undoubtedly positive development after the pandemic crisis and its aftermath.

Still, too many metrics around trust and loyalty remain fragile, even if steady. The hard truth is that there are few tactical measures and low-hanging fruit that will move those numbers in a quick way and help reach gold-standard level engagement, unless focused on nurses' core needs.

Work – such as better equipping nurse managers and providing more flexible internal communications mechanisms to open lines of communication between nurses and leadership – remains necessary. But those tactics fit within the context of a comprehensive strategy. **Building trust and loyalty will require:**

- 1 Dedicating time during planning season to map out a clear nurse engagement strategy and establish resources and accountability.
- 2 Establishing strong internal partnerships. Comms teams can't build engagement through a new and improved newsletter, nor can HR do it through a more defined annual review process. Leadership across the enterprise must collaborate on a comprehensive engagement strategy and a unified message to take to nurses.
- 3 Ensuring that nurses have the basics they need to do their jobs effectively. Providing them with necessary tools and resources – think working thermometers in each room – shows commitment to their wellbeing that builds trust and credibility for big initiatives, such as introducing new technologies.
- 4 Commitment from and accountability for leaders at every level to spend more time with nurses. People trust who they know, and there is no better way to get to know someone than time together.

Priorities for Action



Strategize collaboratively

Dedicate strategic planning time to bringing leaders together from HR, clinical, operations, finance and communications. Establish ways in which each department can influence nurse satisfaction and loyalty. Critically, build trust and credibility for big change by ensuring the basics are met. Through it all, give nurses opportunities to give input, discuss and provide feedback.



Engage. Full stop.

The sentiment of shaky loyalty to and trust in leaders and their decisions is deeply concerning. While job satisfaction may be high, lack of trust is a crack in the foundation that could cause a break under the wrong conditions. Leaders must regularly spend time with nurses and their managers and listen to concerns. Create simple resources so that front line staff actually know who their CEO and CNO are and can recognize them. Build familiarity through direct engagement and collaboration.



Empower managers

Managers are the link between leadership and front-line staff. Provide them with time and training to improve as communicators and, critically, to spend time with those they supervise. Create opportunities for managers to have positive, uplifting conversations and moments with nurses so that not every conversation is about a problem. Similarly, create an imperative for leaders to have positive, uplifting conversations with manager to show support and care.



Communicate about communications tools

Assess your internal communications tools and platforms, soliciting feedback from nurses on why they say technology has improved comms and how to continue improving. Provide opportunities for nurses to become more familiar with AI, building trust through use. But also, have a clear plan – and communicate that plan – for how the organization will be moving forward and how nurses can be involved.

Ready to assess your nursing culture and engage with your nurses more effectively?

We can help.

The Jarrard team stands ready to partner with you on:

- » Fielding and analyzing nurse-specific communications surveys
- » Creating nurse personas for comms leaders to better understand this audience, their unique needs and preferences
- » Defining your employee value proposition for nurses to help reduce turnover and increase retention
- » Developing communications training (both in-person and online) specifically for nurse managers

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About us

Our mission is to make healthcare better through our work.

Jarrard Inc. is a U.S. Top 10 strategic communications consulting firm focused exclusively on healthcare and the unique opportunities and challenges inherent in this sector. Founded in 2006, the firm has worked with more than 1,500 clients across 48 states and has led communications and political strategy on \$75+ billion in announced M&A and partnership transactions.

With offices in the healthcare hubs of Nashville and Chicago, Jarrard partners with leaders across the spectrum of healthcare in high-stakes moments of growth, innovation, change, and reputational/public affairs challenges. This array of specialized services is tailored to support leaders in the most impactful parts of the ecosystem that are essential in transforming U.S. healthcare for the better. Jarrard Inc. is a division of Chartis, one of the nation's leading healthcare advisory firms. For more information, visit jarrardinc.com.