

UCU, Open University Branch Associate Lecturer Survey

March 2021

- The survey was devised by the UCU branch executive, to explore current sentiment about working at The Open University amongst Associate Lecturers (including members and non members of UCU).
- An invitation to take part in the short online survey was sent via email to Associate Lecturer members of UCU, who were also asked to circulate the link to their AL colleagues. A link to the survey was also shared in the AL Common Room online forum. Comments on the forum suggested ALs were glad of the opportunity to make their views known, and found the survey well-designed to capture their experience.
- The survey was open to responses from lunchtime on Thursday 25th March, until midnight on Wednesday 31st March 2021. During this period a total of 584 responses were received.
- For context, the announcement of the delay to the implementation of the Associate Lecturer contract had been made on **Monday 22nd March 2021**, three days before the launch of the survey.
- The survey was conducted using Microsoft Forms, and was open to OU staff only, with a limit of one response per person. The survey consisted of 7 questions, as follows:
 - Two scale-based questions covering how AL staff are feeling about **working at The Open University** and **management at The Open University**. The statements used the same wording as the OU Staff Engagement Survey.
 - Two questions asked about **mental wellbeing** and the delay to implementation of the Associate Lecturer contract.
 - Two questions about the **financial impact** of the delay to implementation of the Associate Lecturer contract.
 - A final scale-based question about Associate Lecturer **workloads** (these questions matched the wording of a previous UCU workload survey of Staff Tutors, and also matched the previous OU Staff Engagement Survey).

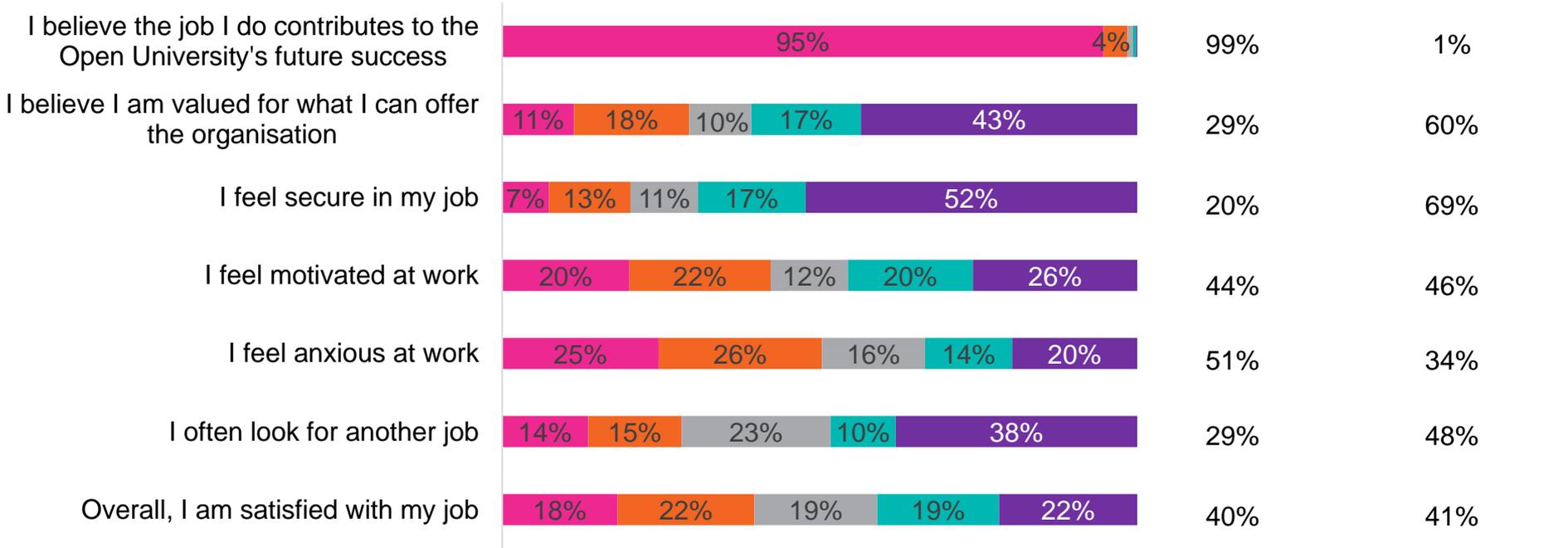
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- 99% of Associate Lecturers (ALs) responding to the survey agree that the job they do contributes to The Open University's **future success**. However, only 29% agree that they are **valued** for what they can offer the organisation and only 20% agree that they feel **secure** in their job. Around half of ALs say they are **anxious** at work.
- There are also strong views about the performance of senior management at The Open University amongst ALs:
 - Only 6% agree that this organisation **manages change successfully**, while 90% disagree that this is the case.
 - Only 14% of Associate Lecturers agree that senior management are **open and honest** in their communications with staff, while 76% disagree that this is the case.
 - Overall, only 14% of Associate Lecturers agree that they have **confidence in the leadership** within their organisation, while 77% disagree that this is the case.
- 72% of ALs responding to the survey felt that the delay to the implementation of the contract had negatively affected their **mental wellbeing**, with 78% reporting that they had experienced one or more symptoms potentially linked to stress in the last week (for example, difficulty concentrating, feeling overwhelmed, constantly worrying, plus a range of other physical and emotional symptoms),
- 52% of ALs responding to the survey said they expected they would suffer a **financial loss** due to the delay in implementation of the contract, but a further 37% were unsure whether this would be the case (bearing in mind that various announcements were being made about potential mitigations throughout the week of the survey, this is perhaps not surprising). Amongst those expecting a loss, the most common range was between £1,000 and £4,999 per annum (43%), followed by £5,000- £9,999 (24%). However, in total 15% of ALs estimated that they would lose **£10,000 or more** (with the highest amounts given around £30,000 for some individuals. 12% were unsure how much they might lose.
- The survey adds further evidence that, alongside the above points, there are also wider issues with **AL workload**. When asked about the last 6 month period, 63% said they have always/often found it difficult to complete their workload within their contracted hours and over half (53%) say their workload has always/often been heavier than they would like it to be.

AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENTS FROM STAFF BAROMETER SURVEY 1/2



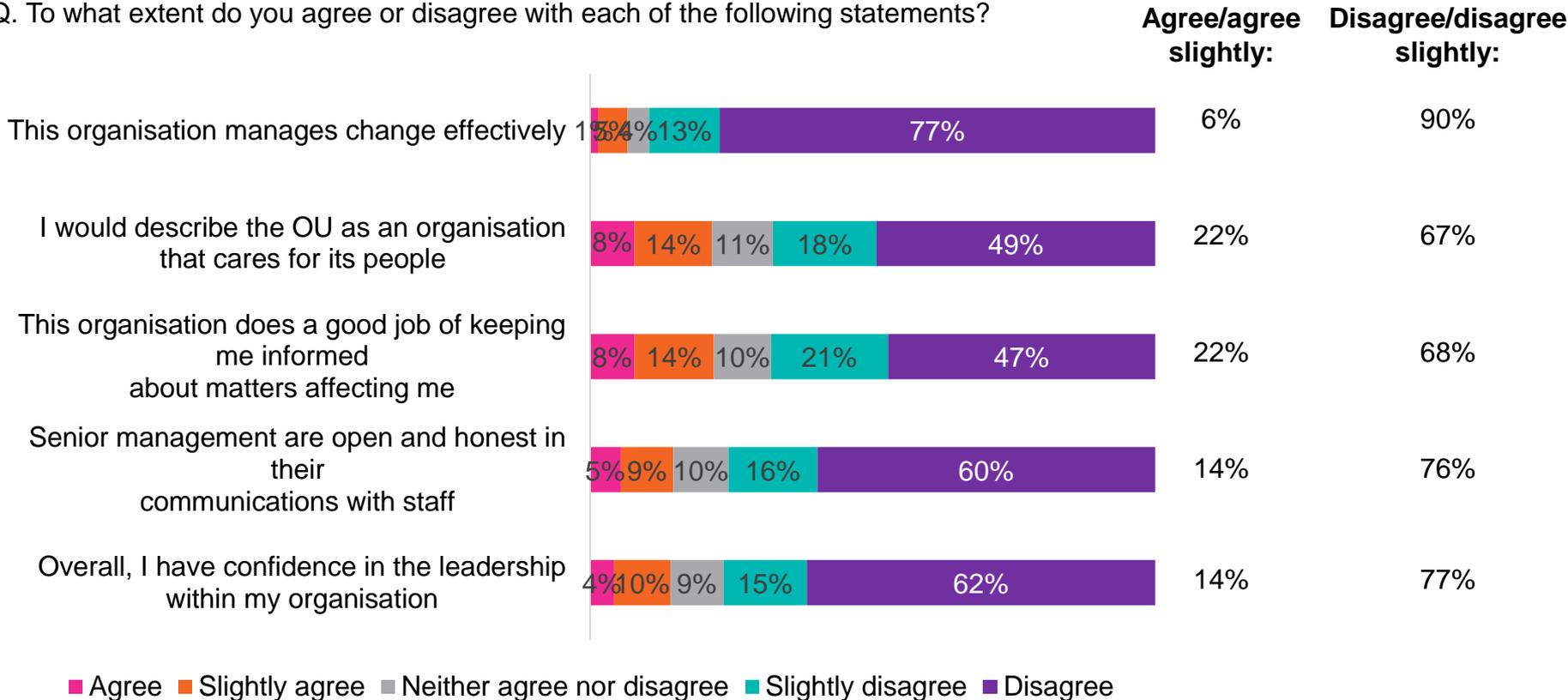
Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?



■ Agree
 ■ Slightly agree
 ■ Neither agree nor disagree
 ■ Slightly disagree
 ■ Disagree

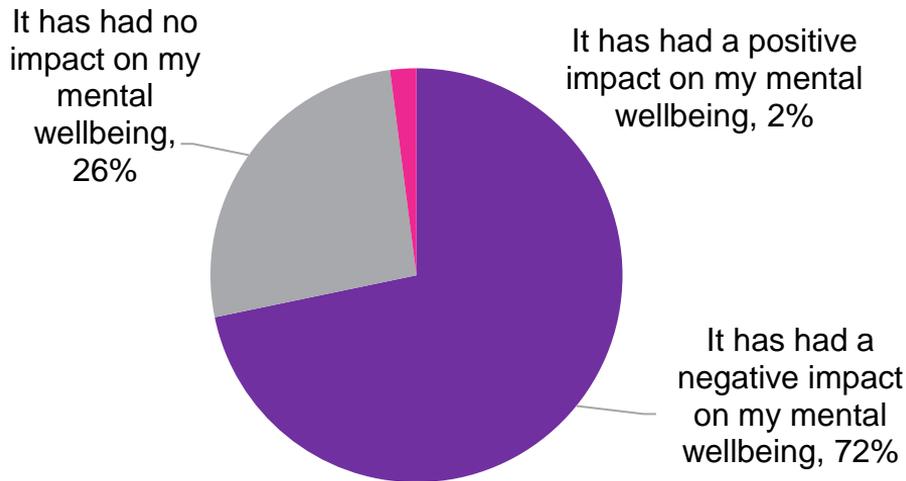
AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENTS FROM STAFF BAROMETER SURVEY 2/2

Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

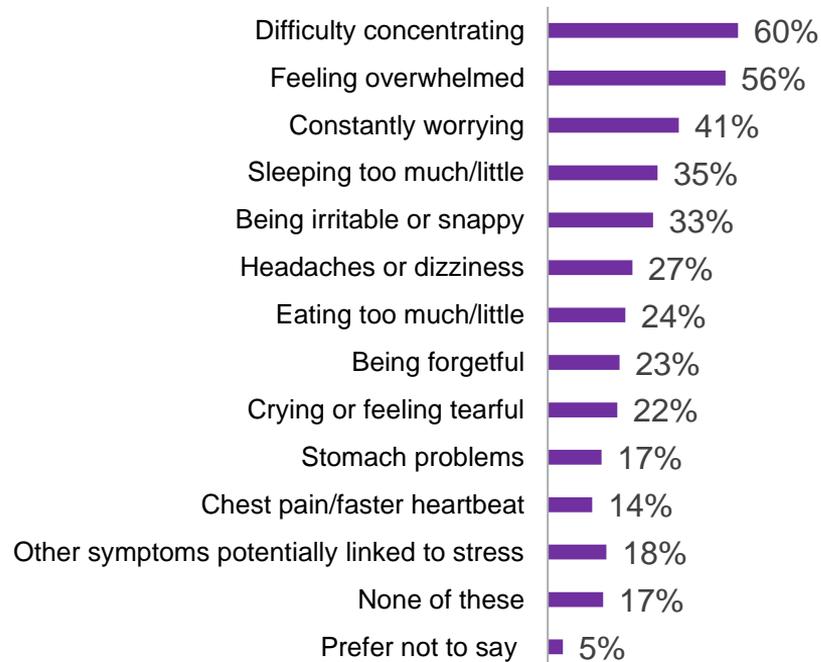


IMPACT OF DELAY TO AL CONTRACT IMPLEMENTATION ON MENTAL WELL-BEING

Do you feel that the recent announcement from The OU regarding the delay to the implementation of the Associate Lecturer contract has had an impact on your mental wellbeing?

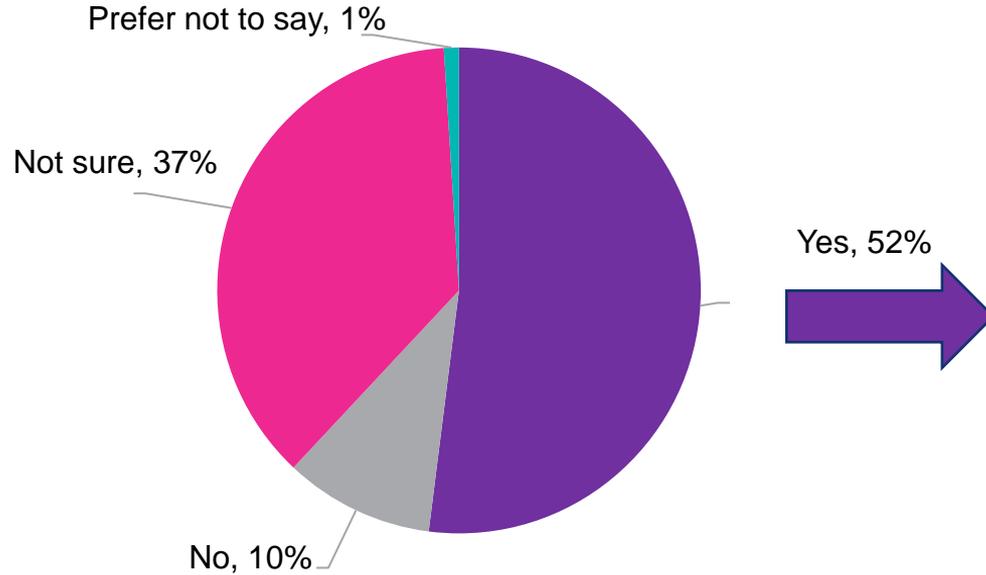


Which, if any, of the following have you experienced in the last week? (choose any that apply)

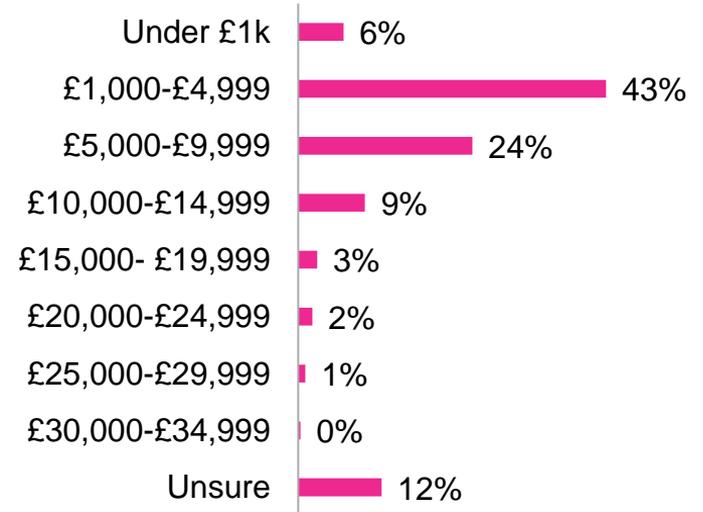


IMPACT OF DELAY TO AL CONTRACT IMPLEMENTATION ON FINANCIAL SITUATION

Do you expect there to be a financial loss for you as an individual, as a result of the OU's decision to delay the implementation of the Associate Lecturer contract?



What do you estimate will be the overall size of the financial loss for you as an individual? Please give your best estimate of the loss as a number of pounds.



WIDER WORKLOAD QUESTIONS

Q. Over the last 6 months, how often have each of the following situations occurred in relation to your workload?

