



Rhetoric vs reality:

Tackling polarised
perceptions of corporate
health and well-being





Research Approach

The 2021 research approach focussed on employee only, rather than employee and employer – and although the broad theme of the employee questions was related to previous years (workplace health and wellbeing issues), the question sets were significantly different to 2020, when there was a marked emphasis on the impact of Covid -19.

As in previous years, surveying was conducted via online panels, targeted social media recruitment and free-found recruitment. We spoke to employees who were home and office based (or both home and office) and a small number who were neither home or office based.

A total sample of 3,520 response were achieved, with a minimum of 1,000 employee responses in 3 of our 4 target countries:

- Singapore
- UAE
- UK

and a minimum of 500 employee responses in the US.

Respondents were employed across a range of business sizes and sectors – and represented employees at all organisational levels from business owners (few) to team members (many). A limit was set on the number of respondents from small businesses of under 200 employees.

To be consistent with previous years, a minimum income threshold of at least the national average income was applied for each country to ensure appropriate employee respondents.

Beyond region, additional profiling characteristics that were captured for cross-breaks were:

- Gender
- Age
- Employment Type (Full Time, Part Time or Self Employed/Contract)
- Income (aggregated to 3 levels of Low, Mid and High)
- Job Level (Seniority)
- Company Size (Employee Numbers)
- Usual Place of Work

Average survey completion time was 11 minutes.

Fieldwork was conducted between the 13th August and 3rd September 2021.

Headlines

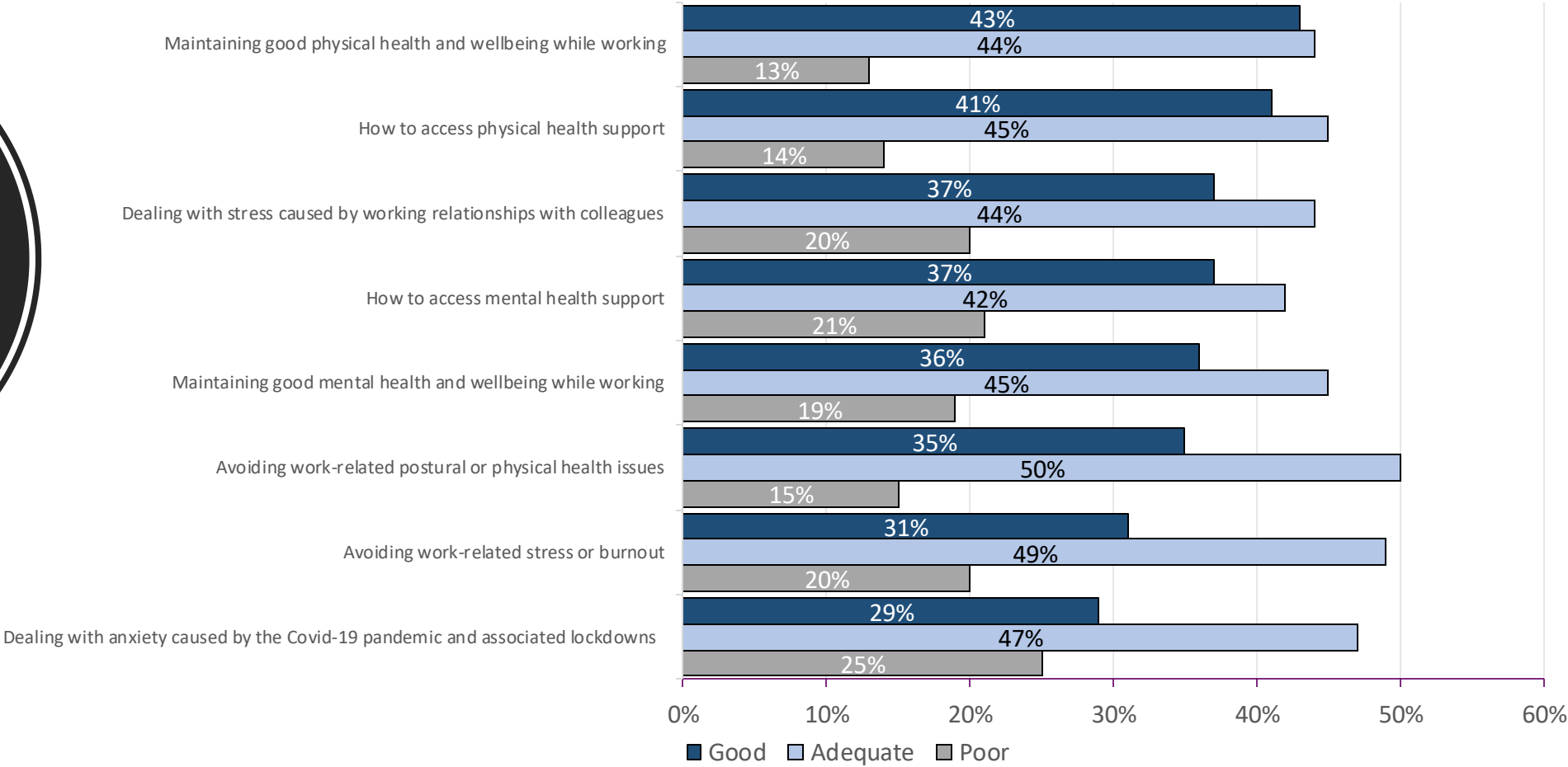
- A minority of employees rate the level of health and wellbeing communication from their employer as good – with the most positively viewed aspect still only achieving 43% rating it as good. However, an equal or higher number typically rate various communications as ‘adequate’.
- A similar level of response is seen when looking at the actions of employers – again, no aspect achieves a majority rating it as good.
- Communications and actions related to mental health and wellbeing are generally rated less positively than those related to physical health and wellbeing.
- A minority (45%) are able to agree that their employer really cares about their health and wellbeing – although a further 18% do feel that their employer cares but that they struggle to communicate it well.
- Although just over 50% feel that their employer shared clear information on how to access support over the last year and that their employer communicated more than normal – a significant minority (47%) say that their employer only shared information related to Covid-19.
- A majority (57%) agree that their employer has taken action to ensure people understand the health and wellbeing support available and that their employer has taken steps to improve existing health and wellbeing programmes (56%). However, there are meaningful numbers (more than 1 in 3) who agree that employers say they will support physical or mental health or invest in training but that there is no real action or evidence.
- Communication is recognised as a missing element of health and wellbeing support from employers, with better communication, a central hub and regular updates on how to access support being the 3 most frequently cited ‘missing’ aspects – more so than improved private healthcare, flexible gym or mental health apps.
- 30% of employees say that they worry it could impact their career progression if HR/management find out they are struggling.
- A majority (55%) say that their employer ‘tries’ to meet the needs of individuals but only 38% say that their employer listens to their individual health and wellbeing needs. 48% say that their employer takes a one-size-fits all approach to health and wellbeing.
- Less than half of employees (43%) feel that health and wellbeing is an important part of their company’s culture. A similar number (41%) feel that their company actively promotes a positive approach to health and wellbeing but that the internal culture doesn’t reflect that.
- Only a quarter agree that their company ‘regularly’ asks employees to assess the value of existing benefits.
- A significant minority (40%) feel that health and wellbeing support offered by their employer has improved in the last year but 15% say it has got worse.
- Only a quarter of employees completely trust their employer to prioritize their mental health and wellbeing in the workplace and only slightly more (29%) completely trust on physical health. However, a significant number do say that they trust their employer to a large extent – a further 37% and 46% respectively.
- There are some marked differences in overall opinions when looking at regions or different employee types. Those in the US and UAE are significantly more positive in many areas than those in the UK and Singapore. Positivity also increases for those on higher incomes or in more senior roles. Whilst not as marked, there is also a pattern of less positive views in a number of aspects when looking at the responses from female, part-time or home based employees.

Health
and
wellbeing
communication

Total

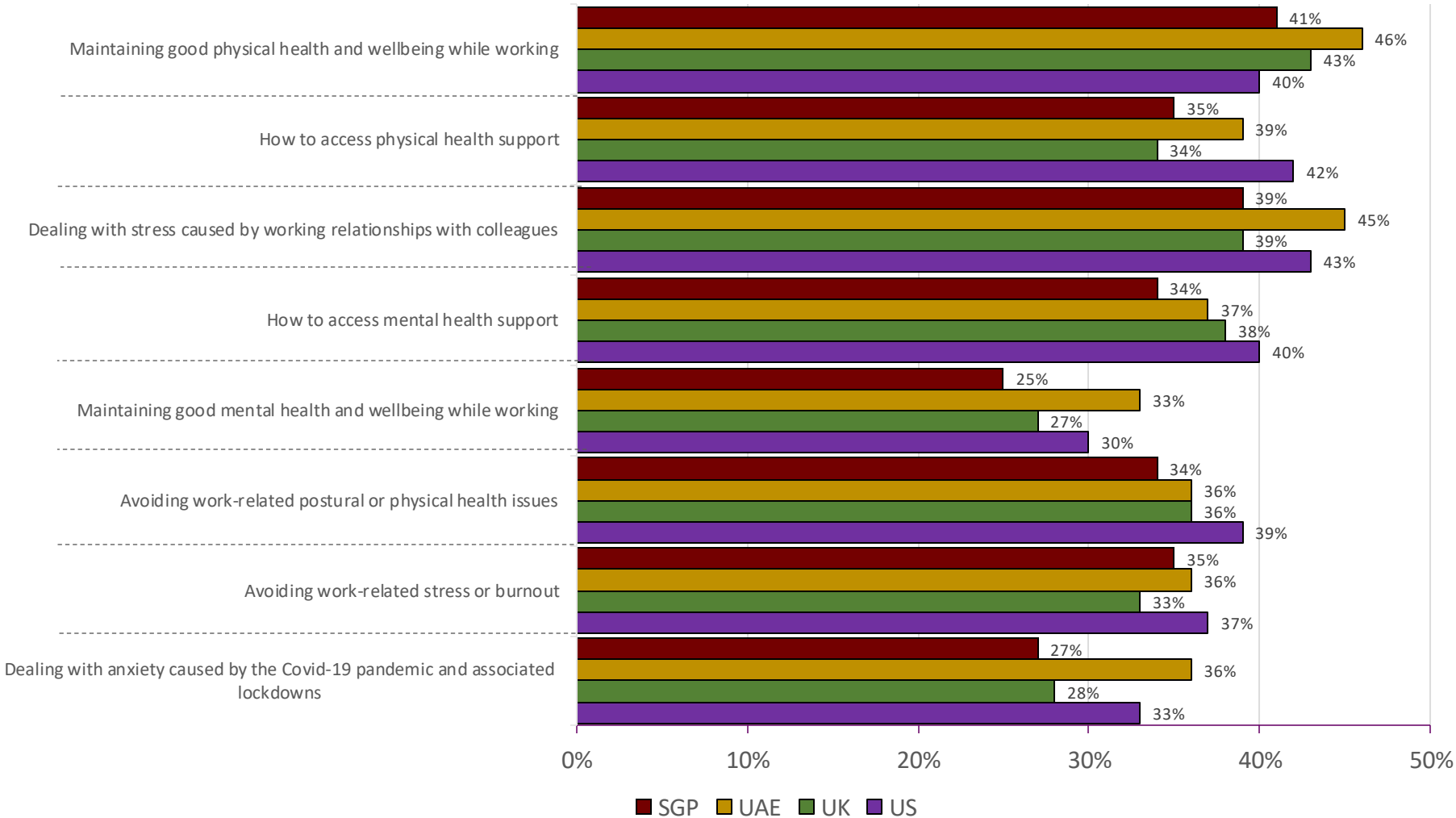
Ratings for the level of communication received from employers about health and wellbeing are generally adequate, with at least three in every four (76%) saying ‘Good’ or ‘Adequate’ for each of the different aspects tested - rising as high as 87% for ‘Maintaining good physical health and wellbeing while working’. This same metric achieves the highest percentage scoring ‘Good’ at 43%, with ‘How to access physical support’ a close second with 41%. Communications that address ‘Dealing with anxiety caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and associated lockdowns’ were rated least favorably, with one in four saying they were ‘Poor’.

How would you rate the level of communication from your employer about health and wellbeing?



By region, those in the UAE and US rate communications a little more highly than do respondents in Singapore and the UK. Almost every other respondent in the UAE (46%) scores 'Good' for 'Maintaining good physical health and wellbeing while working', which is the highest percentage charted here. Conversely, just 25% of respondents in Singapore think communications about 'Maintaining good mental health and wellbeing while working' are 'Good'.

How would you rate the level of communication from your employer about health and wellbeing?
(chart totals answering 'Good' only)



Health and wellbeing communication

Region

Other profiling observations
Full time employees are more likely than part-time employees, to rate communications positively.

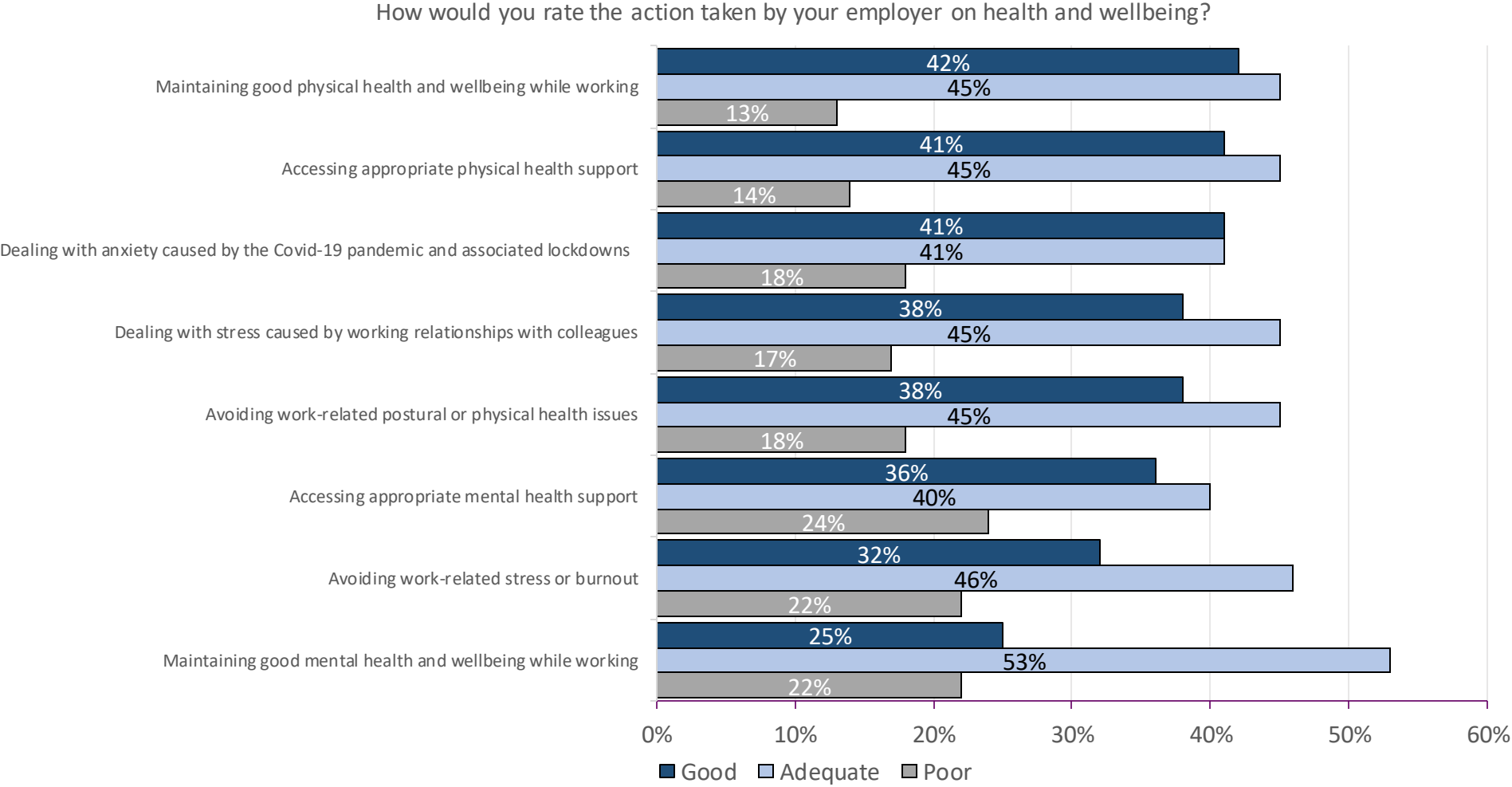
Office based employees are also more likely to be positive than home based, across most areas.

Older employees rate communications highly, whilst, in some aspects, the very youngest (under 25) rate them less well.

Health
and
wellbeing
action

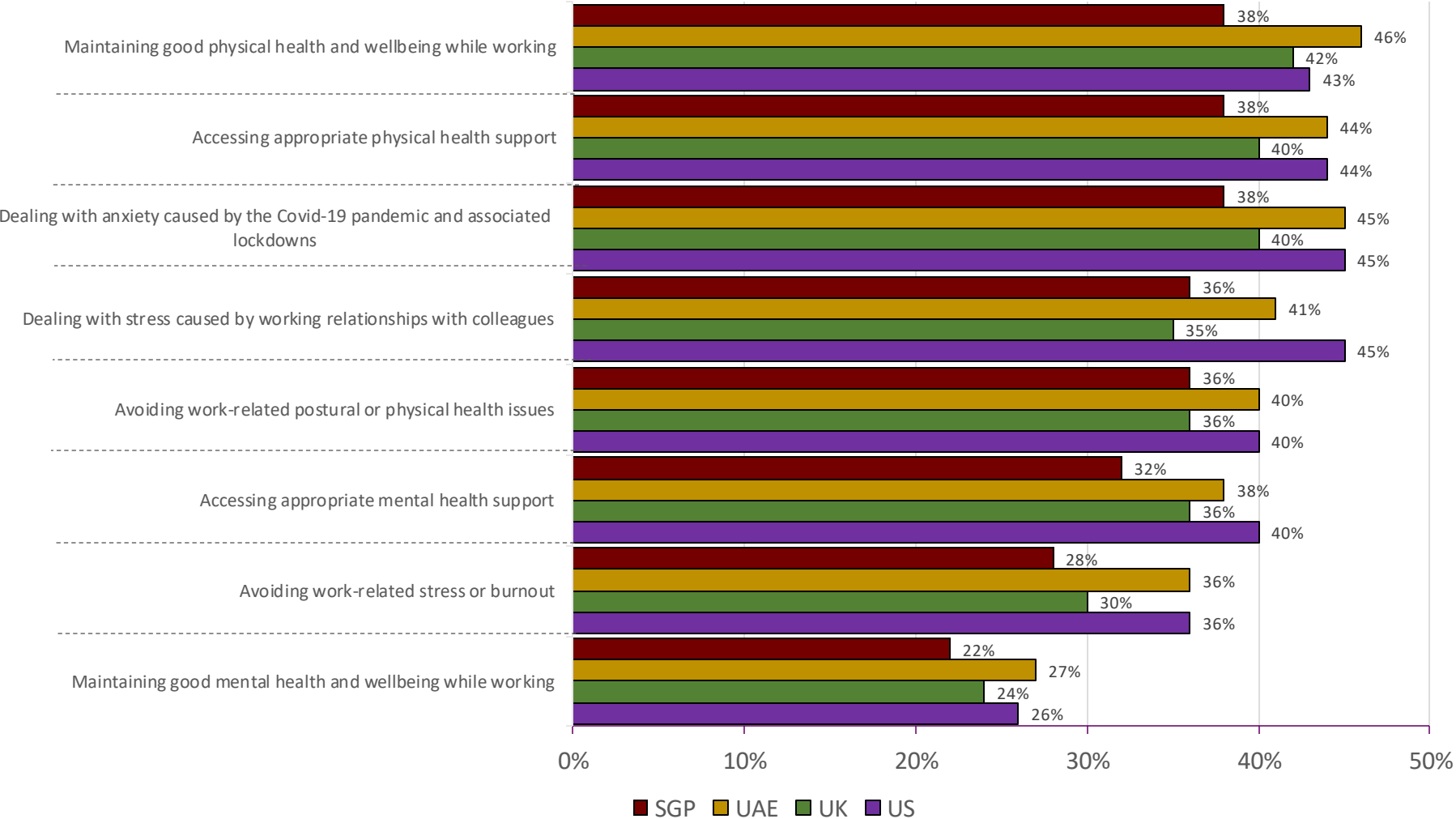
Total

When comparing actions with words, we see a similar looking set of results in terms of scores – with ‘Good’ or ‘Adequate’ numbers in the same range (76%-87%). No aspect achieves a majority rate it as ‘Good’ – but ‘Maintaining good physical health and wellbeing while working’ tops the list at 42% rating ‘Good’. Action taken on ‘Dealing with anxiety caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and associated lockdowns’ is regarded more favorably than communication on the subject, with 41% rating ‘Good’ and 18% ‘Poor’ (versus 29% and 25% respectively). Whilst only 25% think action on ‘Maintaining good mental health and wellbeing while working’ is ‘Good’, more than half (53%) say it is ‘Adequate’.



These similarities are again borne out by region, with scores for the UAE and US consistently higher than those received from respondents in Singapore and the UK - indeed 'Good' ratings for Singapore are between 4 to 9 percentage points lower than the top scoring region for each aspect tested. Again, the chart by region peaks at 46% for 'Maintaining good physical health and wellbeing while working' amongst respondents in the UAE.

How would you rate the action taken by your employer on health and wellbeing?
(chart totals answering 'Good' only)



Health
and
wellbeing
action

Region

Other profiling observations

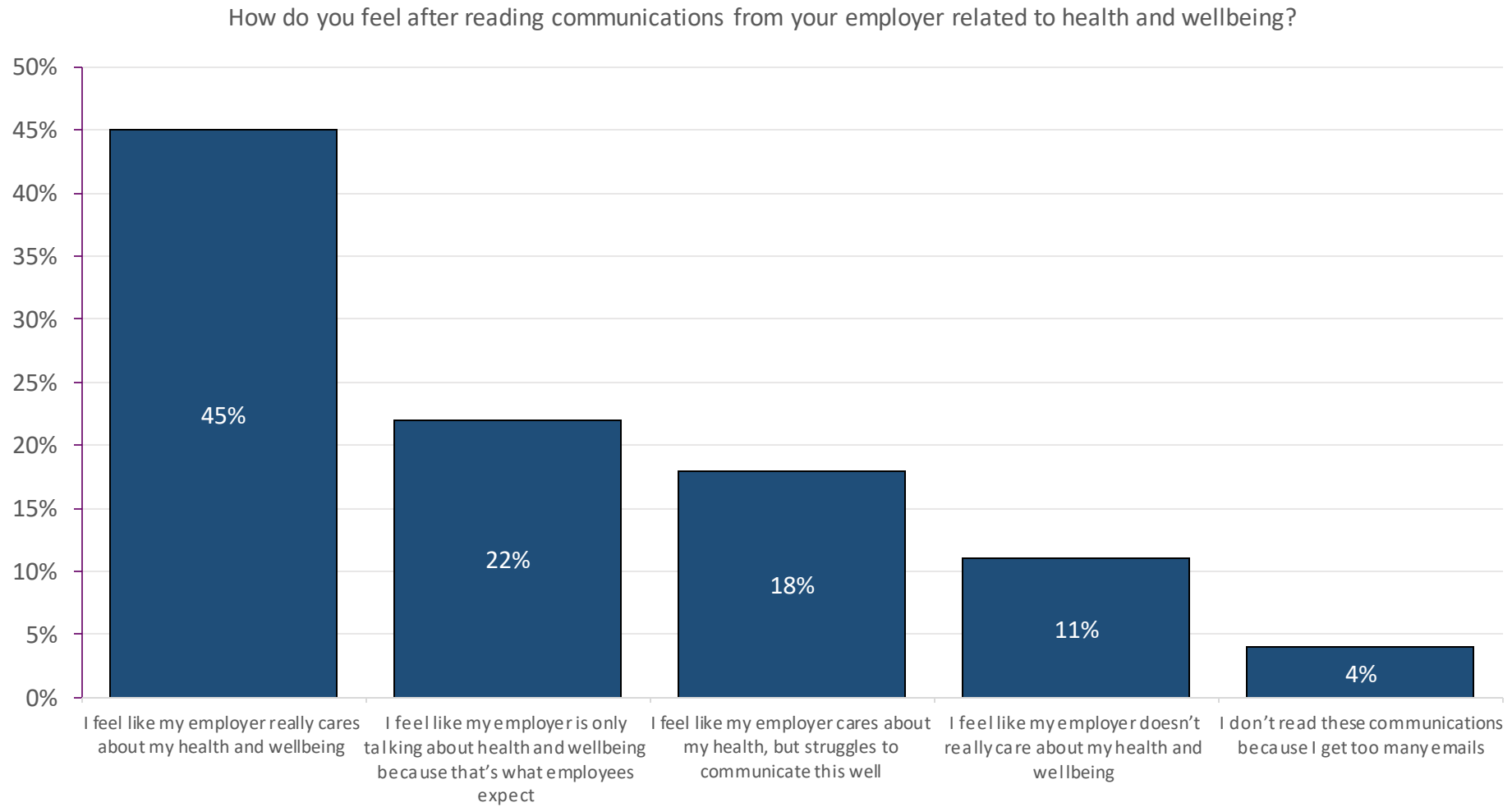
Males are more likely to rate the action taken by their employer as good, as are higher earners.
More senior staff (particularly owners and board level directors rate action positively).

Unlike the rating of communications, the rating of actions from employers is no more positive amongst office based workers – and in some areas home based rate action more positively.

The most commonly given answer, 'I feel like my employer really cares about my health and wellbeing' is selected by fewer than half of all respondents (45%). However, an additional 18% say 'I feel like my employer cares about my health, but struggles to communicate this well'. Negative responses are much lower, though not insignificant – around one in every three – with 11% stating 'I feel like my employer doesn't really care about my health and wellbeing'. A small number were willing to admit 'I don't read these communications because I get too many emails'.

Feelings
after
reading
communications

Total



Q3: How do you feel after reading communications from your employer related to health and wellbeing? Tick the statement you agree with most.

The majority of respondents in the US and UAE are positive, with 56% and 52% respectively answering most favorably – comparing starkly with scores for Singapore and the UK (37% and 42%). Employees in the UK say ‘I feel like my employer doesn’t really care about my health and wellbeing’ more often than do those in any other region.

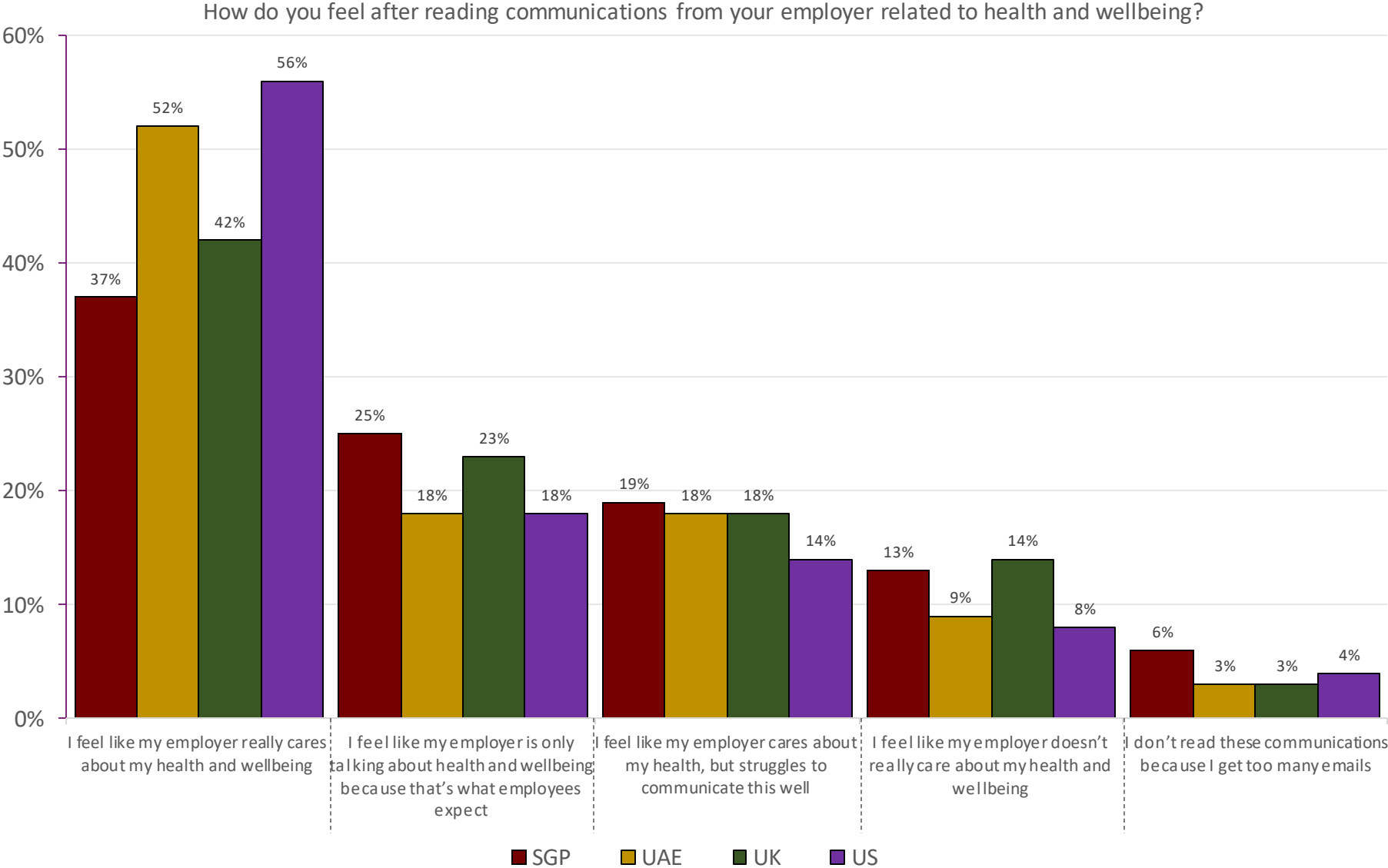
Feelings
after
reading
communications

Region

Other profiling observations

Males, older employees and those in more senior roles are all more likely to feel that their employer cares about health and wellbeing – as do those who are office based.

Under 25s, lower salaried employees and those working from home were noticeably less likely to feel that their employer really cares.

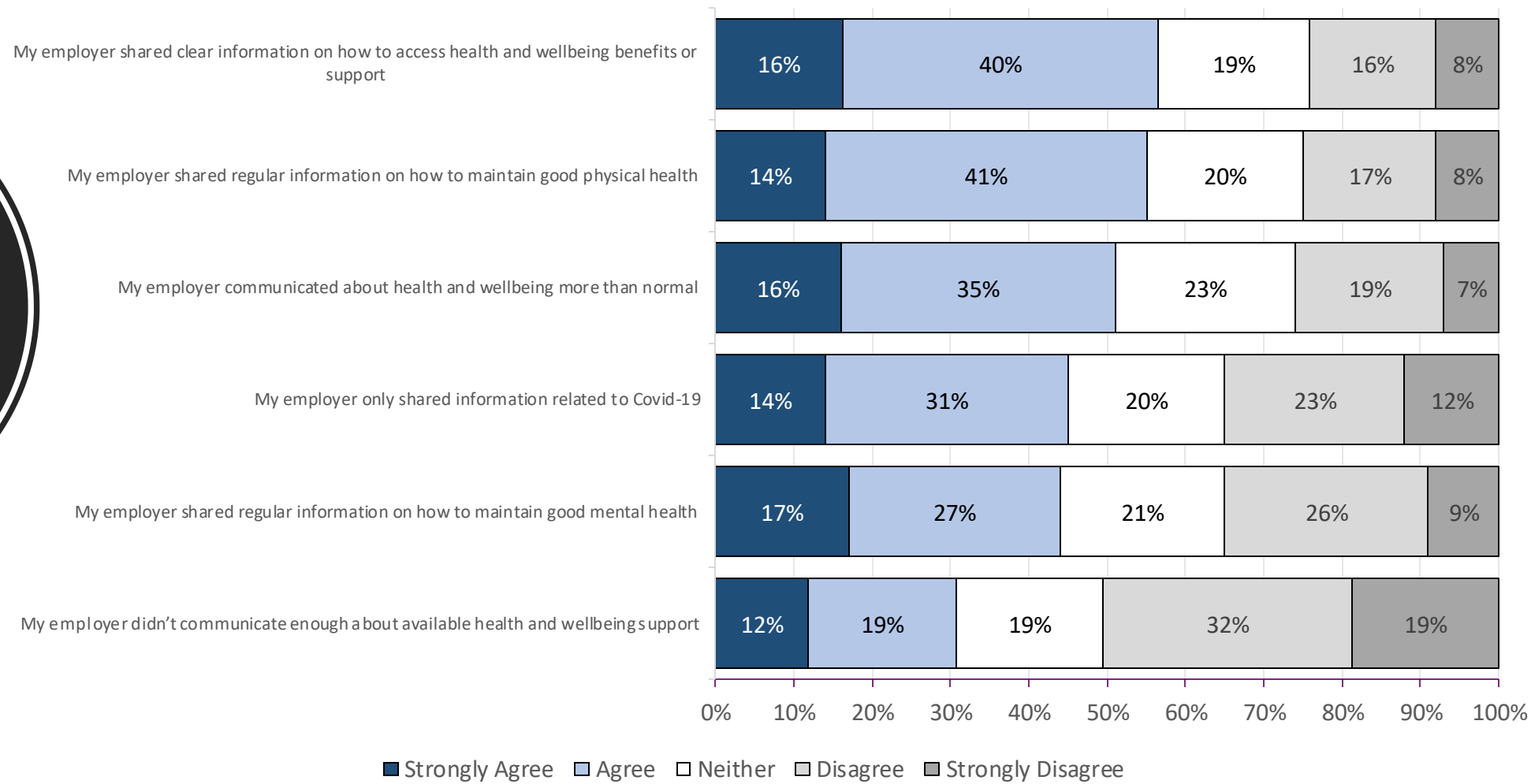


Health
and
wellbeing
information
shared

Total

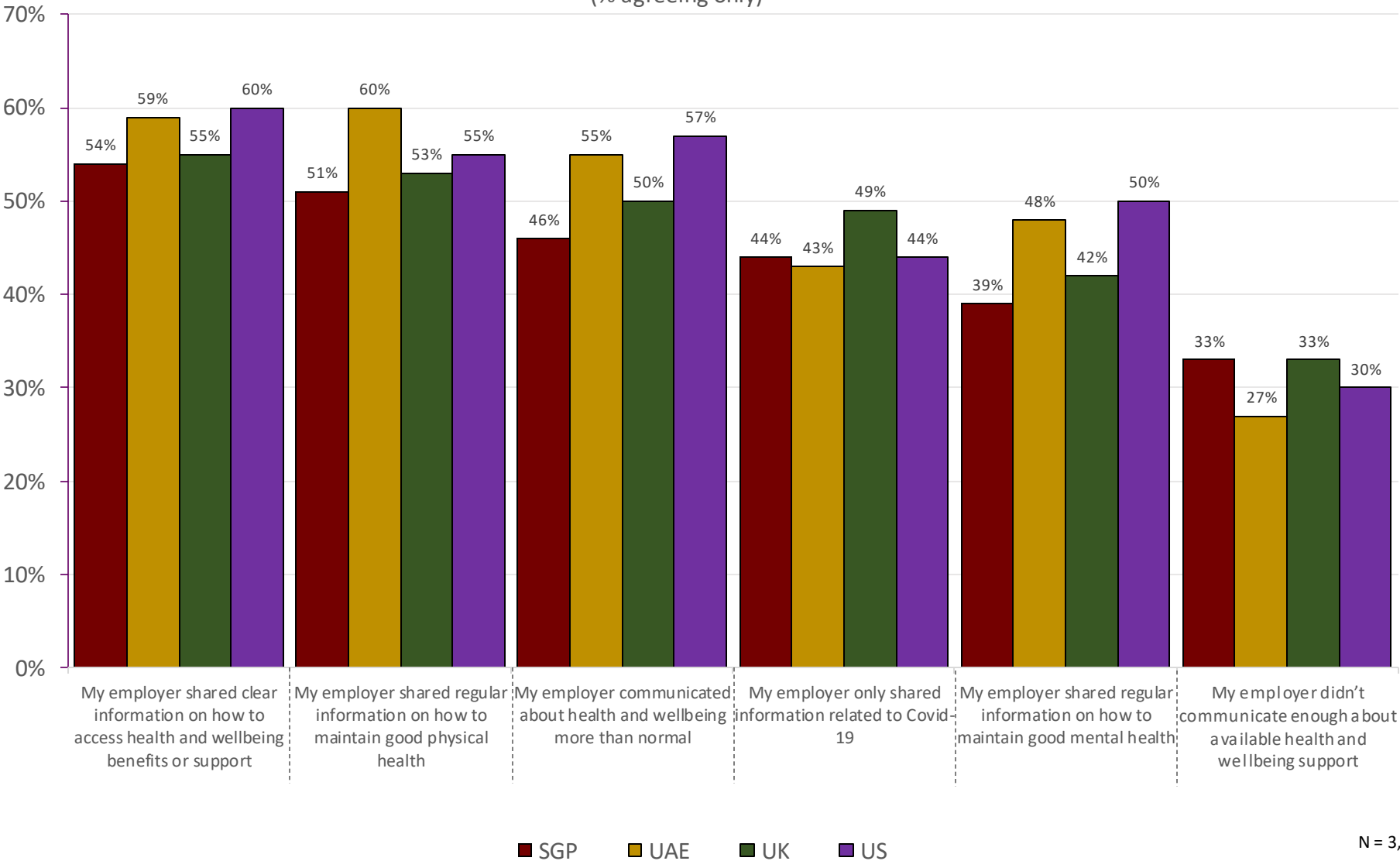
Charted here by total agreement order (those answering 'Strongly Agree' or 'Agree'), the majority concur with the top three statements listed – with the majority also disagreeing with the one negatively framed statement given ('My employer didn't communicate enough about available health and wellbeing support'). 'My employer only shared information related to Covid-19' and 'My employer shared regular information on how to maintain good mental health' see the most polarized results.

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?



Again, there are some differences in opinion by region. 'My employer shared regular information on how to maintain good mental health' sees the largest gap between best and worst scores - 50% agreement in the US but only 39% in Singapore. However, the majority in each region do agree 'My employer shared clear information on how to access health and wellbeing benefits or support' and 'My employer shared regular information on how to maintain good physical health'.

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?
(% agreeing only)



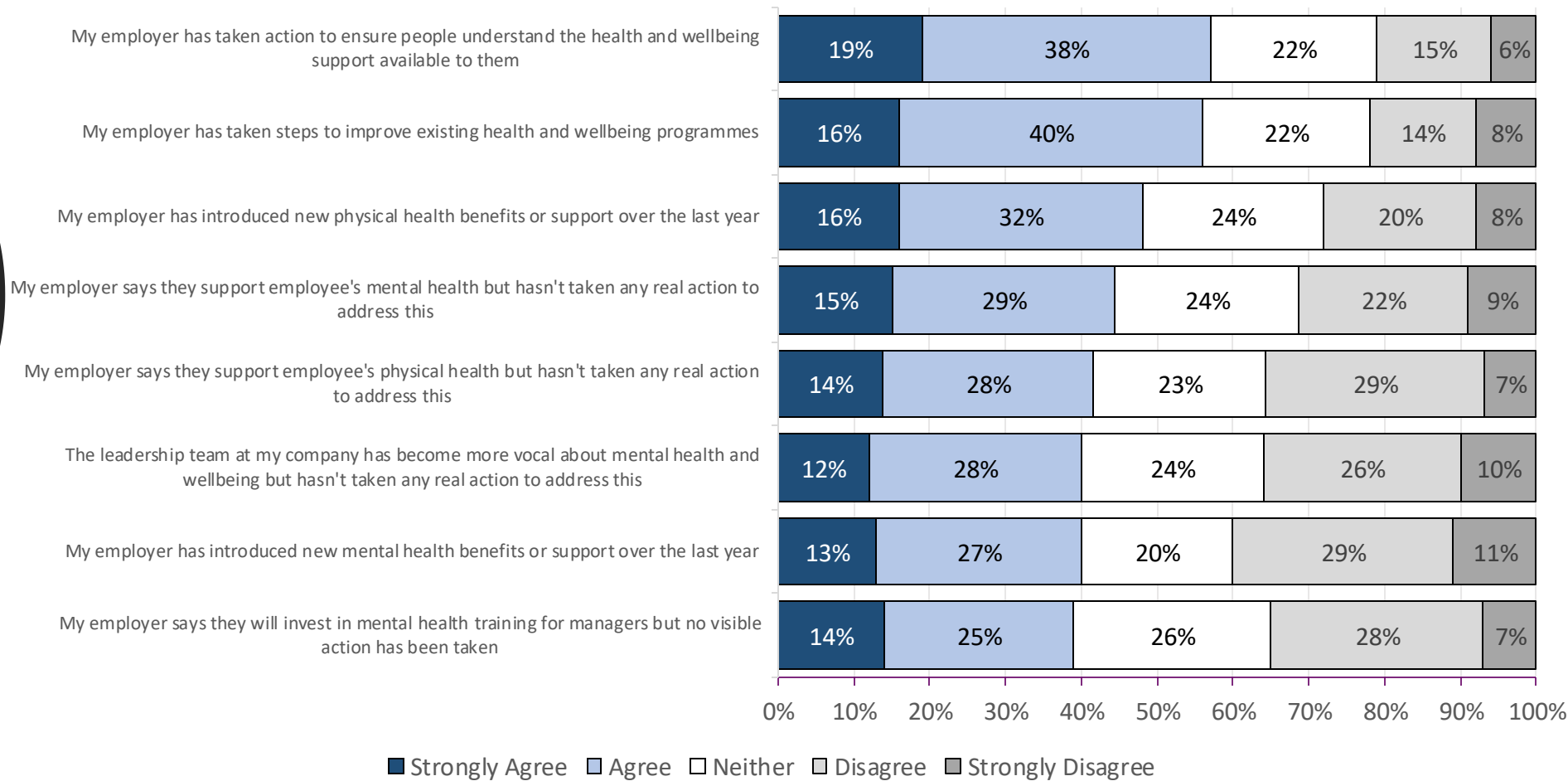
Health and wellbeing information shared
Region

Other profiling observations
Home based employees are more likely to say that their employer didn't communicate enough and less likely to say that they communicated more than usual.
Once again, higher earners, over 65s and male employees are more likely to agree with positive statements and less likely to agree with negatives.
Company size is not a meaningful indicator in most areas but those working for the largest companies are a little more likely to say that their employer shared physical health information but equally less likely to say they shared mental health information.

The majority agree 'My employer has taken action to ensure people understand the health and wellbeing support available to them' and 'My employer has taken steps to improve existing health and wellbeing programmes' – with the fewest numbers disagreeing with these two statements also. There follows more polarized results – 'My employer has introduced new mental health benefits or support over the last year' agreed with by 40% and disagreed with by the same proportion. A good number feel 'My employer says they support employee's mental or physical health but hasn't taken any real action to address this'.



To what extent do you agree with the following statements?



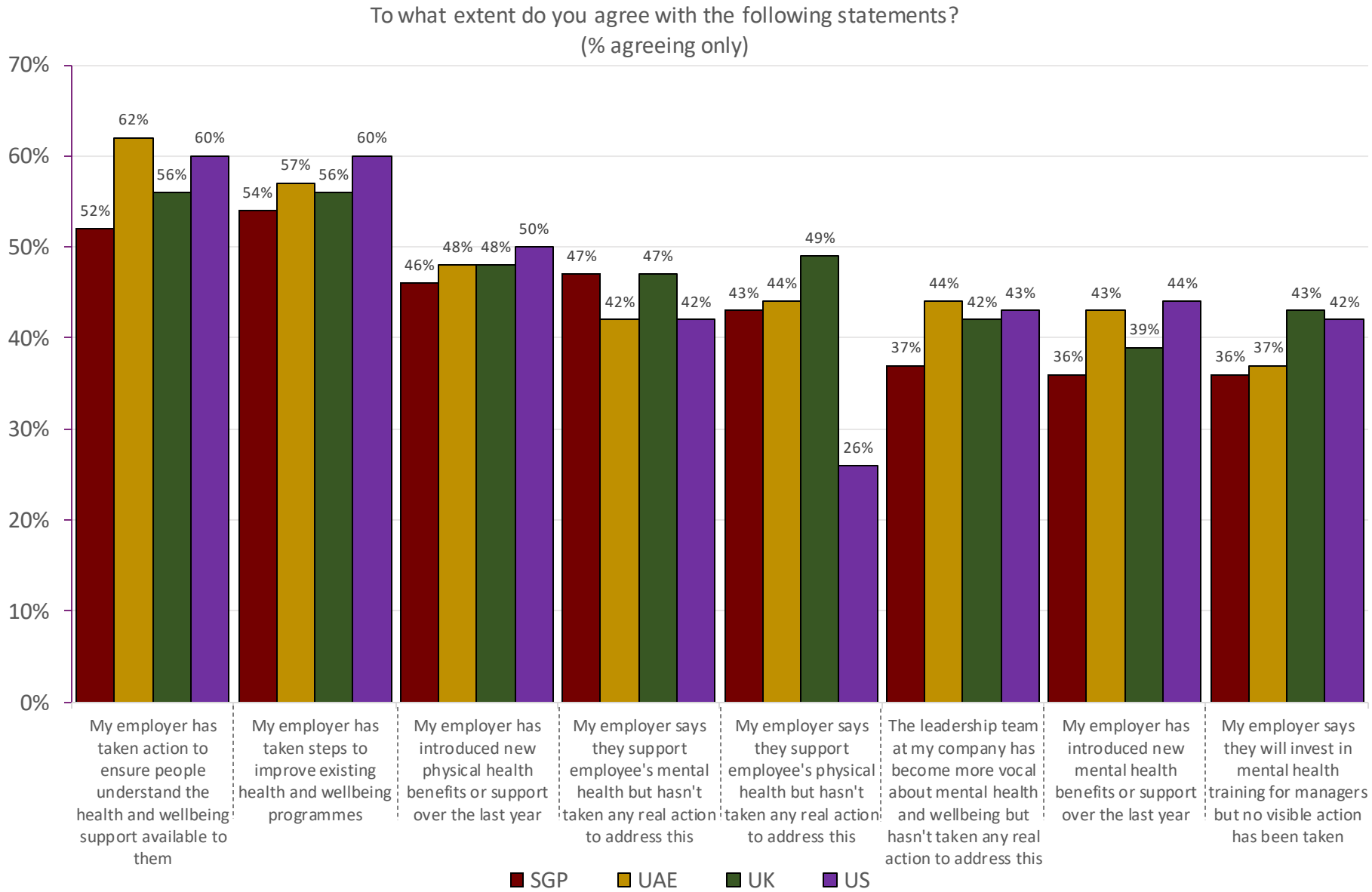
Total agreement by region broadly follows the same order seen in the previous slide, with the common caveat that positive responses (to the positively framed statements) are again more forthcoming from respondents in the UAE and US.

Action taken to support health and wellbeing
Region

Other profiling observations

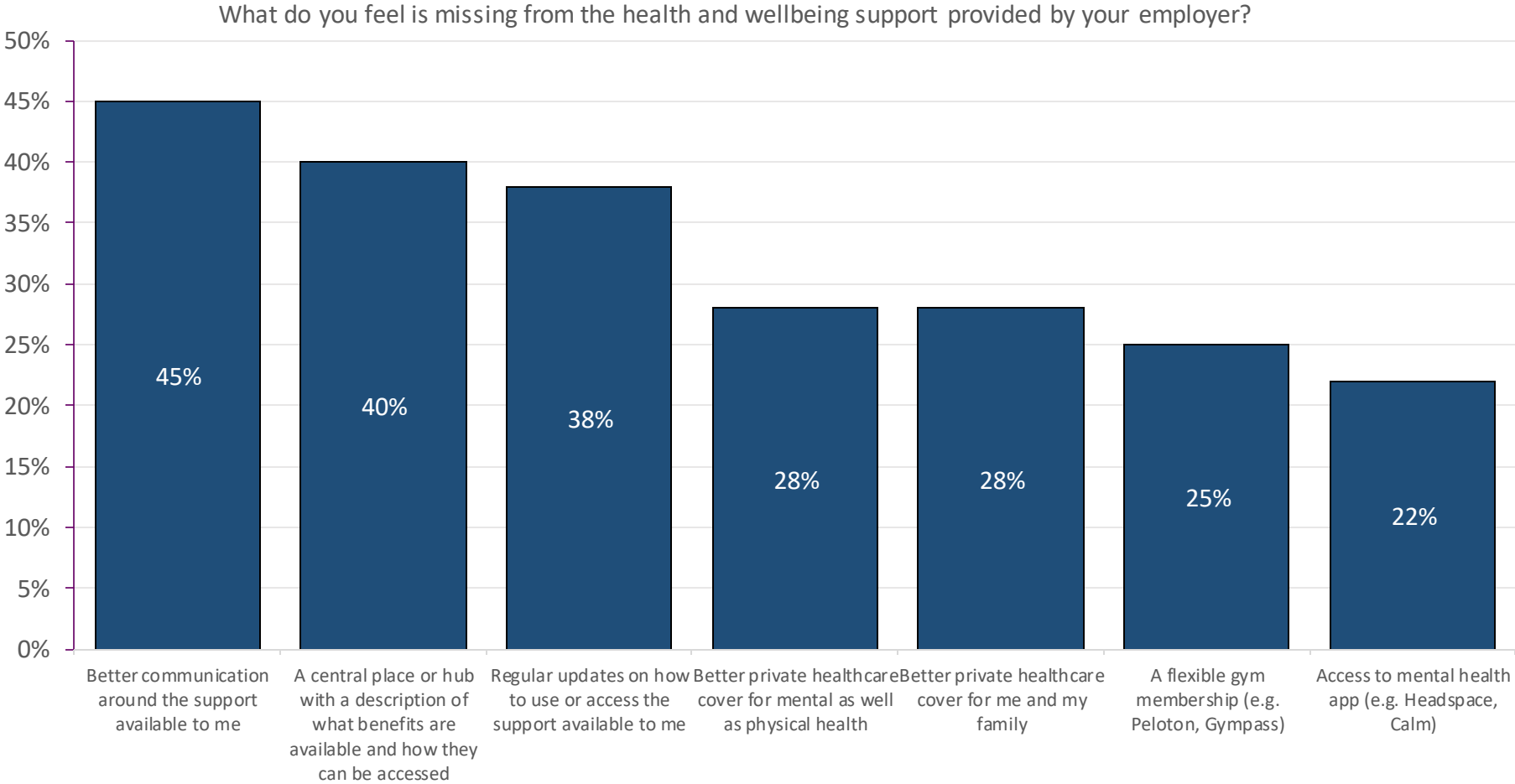
Employees in the largest companies are more likely to say that action has been taken to improve existing programmes over the last year but not more likely to have introduced new benefits.

Higher earners and more senior roles are a little more likely to be positive in this area. However, high earners are also more likely to say that senior leadership has become more vocal about mental health but not taken action.



'Better communication around the support available to me' is felt to be missing from the health and wellbeing support currently provided by employers, by the greatest number of respondents (45%). 40% would like 'A central place or hub with a description of what benefits are available and how they can be accessed'. The fewest numbers feel 'A flexible gym membership (e.g. Peloton, Gympass)' and 'Access to mental health app (e.g. Headspace, Calm)' are missing, suggesting these are seen more as 'nice to haves' by the large majority.

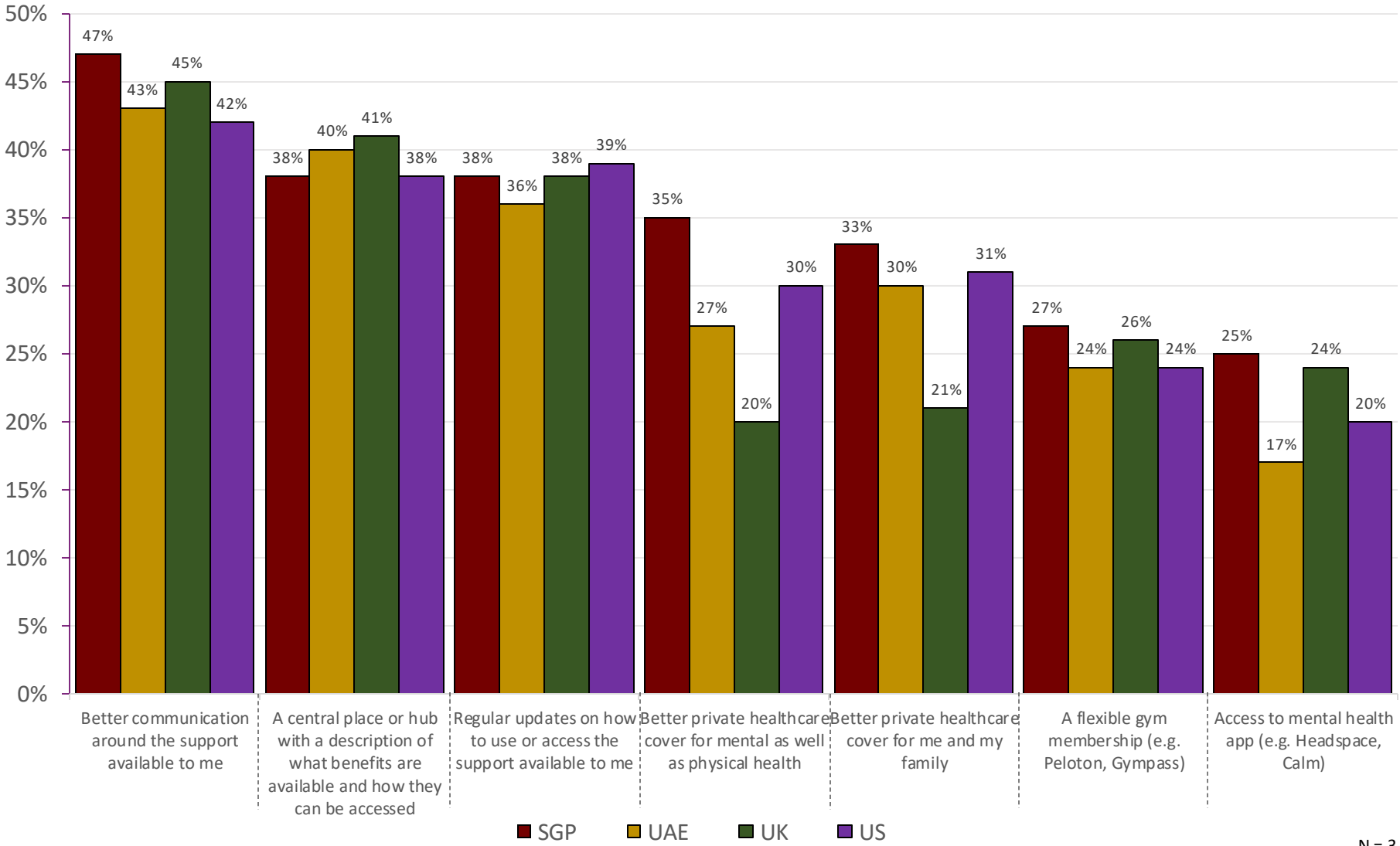
What support is missing?
Total



Q6: What, if anything, do you feel is missing from the health and wellbeing support currently provided by your employer? Tick all that apply.

There is some consistency by region here, in terms of the relative importance assigned to each option – with the first three listed here the most popular for each region. This is also true at the other end of the chart, with the previously described ‘nice to haves’ being selected in the smallest numbers by all, with one exception – only 21% of UK respondents said ‘Better private healthcare cover for me and my family’ was something they felt was missing.

What do you feel is missing from the health and wellbeing support provided by your employer?



What support is missing?
Region

Other profiling observations
Those under 25 and lower income earners are more likely to highlight a number of areas that they feel are missing.

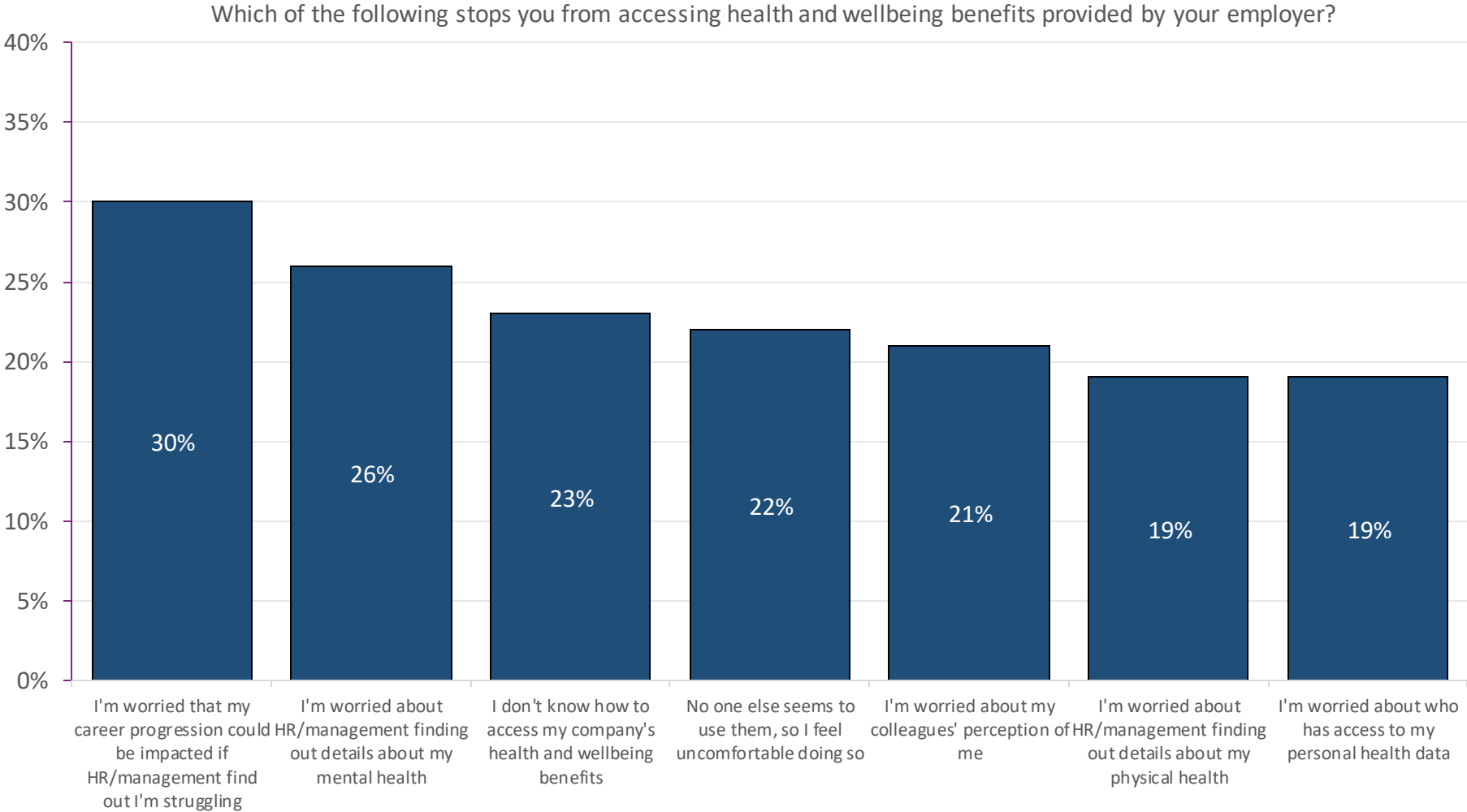
Females and part-time employees are more likely to highlight the need for better private healthcare.

Those in less senior roles are more likely to say that better communication is needed.

Those under 45 are more likely to highlight flexible gym membership and access to a mental health app as being needed.

There is a relatively even spread of reasons given when we ask ‘Which of the following, if any, stops you from accessing health and wellbeing benefits provided by your employer?’. Cited as the most common reason, three in 10 say ‘I’m worried that my career progression could be impacted if HR/management find out I’m struggling’. ‘I’m worried about HR/management finding out details about my mental health’ (26%) is more of a concern than when the same statement is framed around physical health (19%).

What stops you accessing benefits?
Total



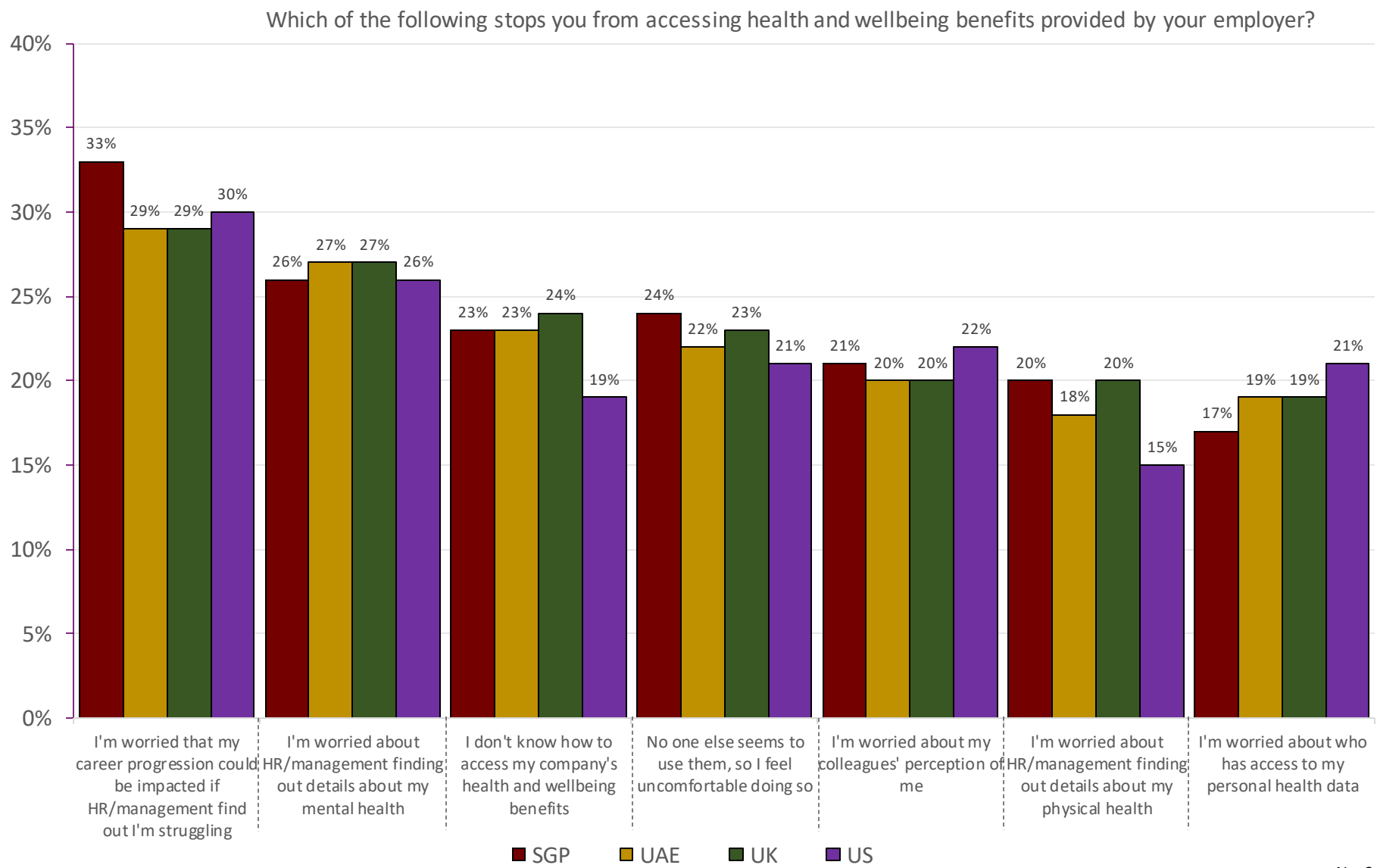
Q7: Which of the following, if any, stops you from accessing health and wellbeing benefits provided by your employer? Tick all that apply.

This question so far elicits the least obvious distinction by region, suggesting these concerns are universal in nature. Respondents in the US are more 'worried about who has access to my personal health data' (21%) than those in other regions. A chart high one in every three respondents (33%) in Singapore say 'I'm worried that my career progression could be impacted if HR/management find out I'm struggling.'

What stops you accessing benefits?

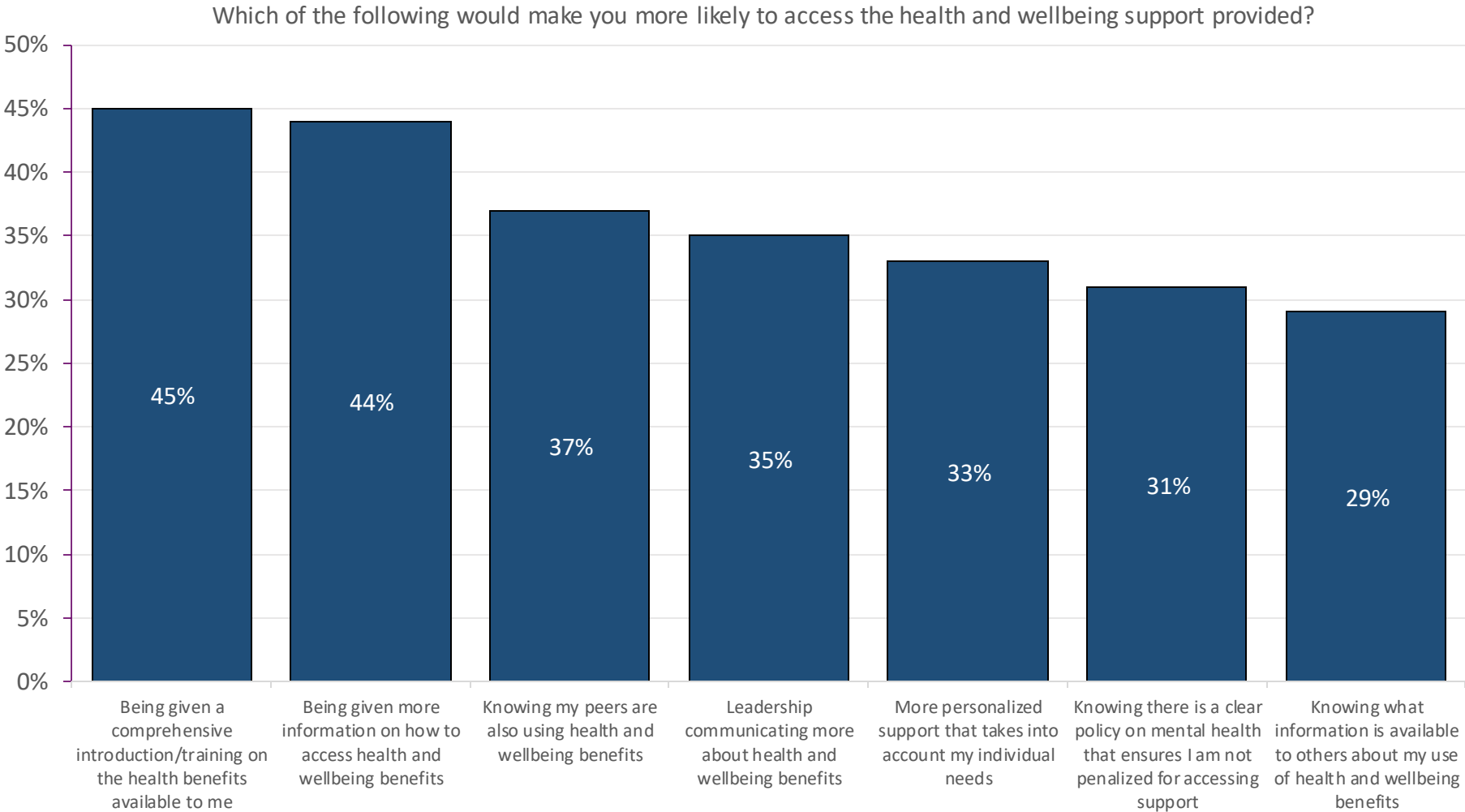
Region

Other profiling observations
Those employed part-time and lower income earners are more likely to agree with a number of these statements around access to benefits – most notably the view that they don't know how to access health and wellbeing benefits. Those in less senior roles also agree more with that statement



Greater dissemination of information is key when we ask ‘Which of the following would make you more likely to access the health and wellbeing support provided?’ – 45% say ‘Being given a comprehensive introduction/training on the health benefits available to me’ would help, with 44% agreeing ‘Being given more information on how to access health and wellbeing benefits’. Though propping up the list, a not insignificant 29% say ‘Knowing what information is available to others about my use of health and wellbeing benefits’ would make them more likely to access the support provided.

What would make you access benefits?
Total



Q8: Which of the following, if any, would make you more likely to access the health and wellbeing support provided by your employer? Tick all that apply.

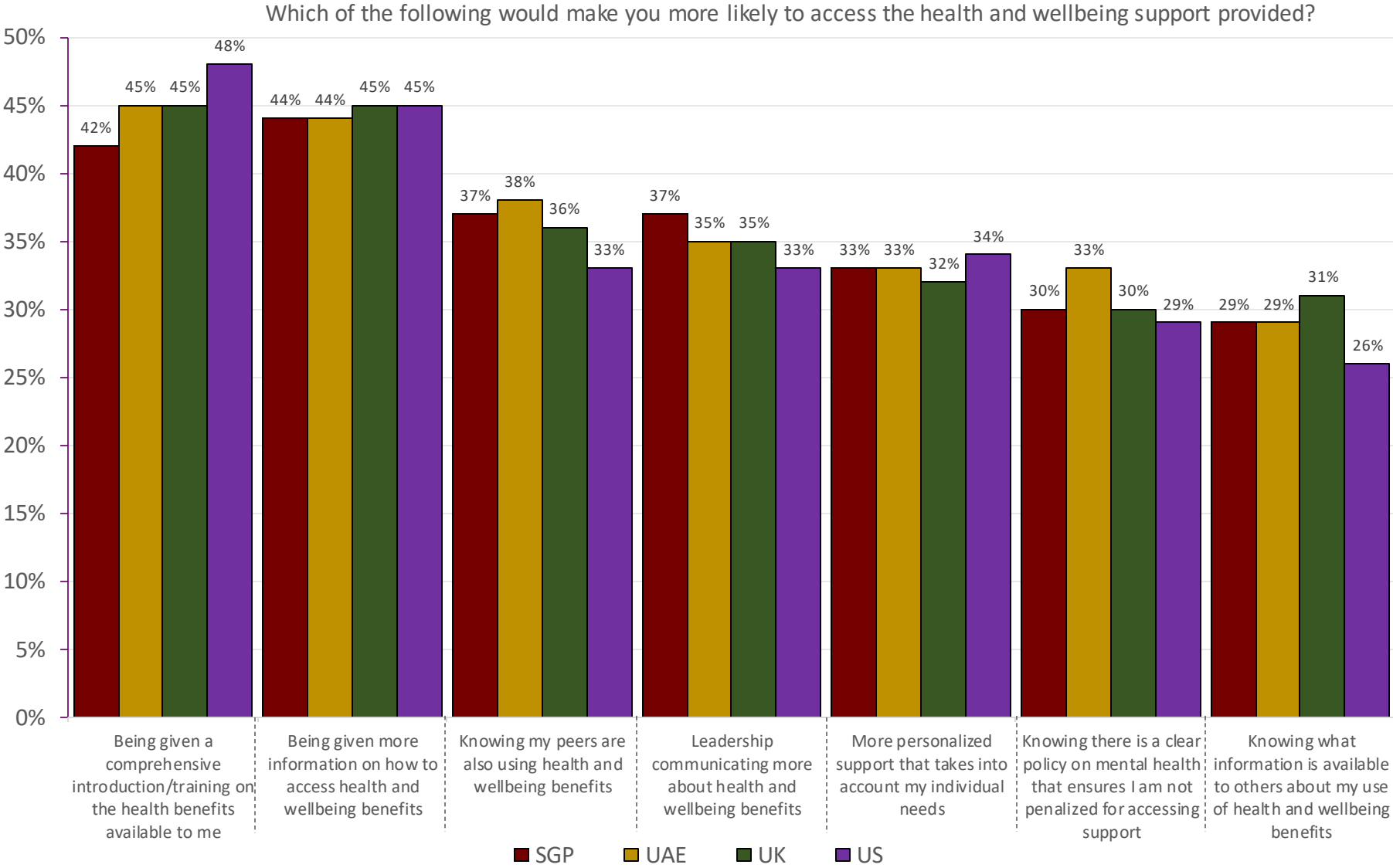
Almost every other respondent in the US (48%) said 'Being given a comprehensive introduction/training on the health benefits available to me' would make them more likely to access the support provided. Relatively, 'Knowing my peers are also using health and wellbeing benefits' and 'Leadership communicating more about health and wellbeing benefits' is of more concern to respondents in Singapore.

What would make you access benefits?

Region

Other profiling observations
Part-time employees are more likely to say that knowing what information is available and having more personalized support would make them more likely to access benefits.

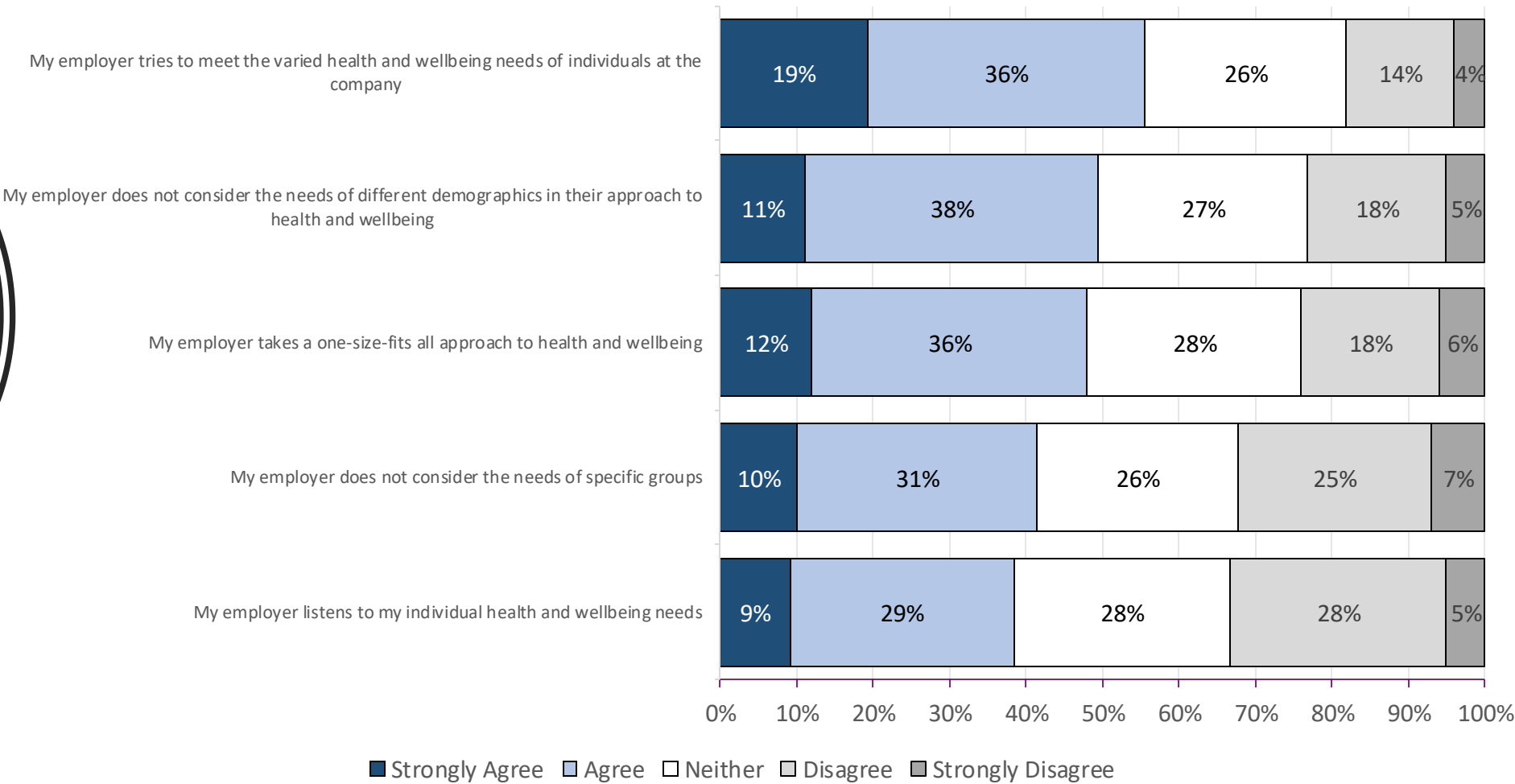
Home based workers are a little more likely to agree with a number of statements – but significantly more likely to say that leadership communicating more would help.



Employer approach to health and wellbeing
Total

‘My employer tries to meet the varied health and wellbeing needs of individuals at the company’ is the only statement agreed with by the majority of respondents. There is perhaps a distinction to be made between ‘trying’ and delivering, with the lowest number (38%) saying their employer actually does ‘listen to my individual health and wellbeing needs’. A good number of respondents report the opposite experience, with agreement in the 40% range seen for each of the negatively framed statements.

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?



There is majority agreement among all regions that ‘My employer tries to meet the varied health and wellbeing needs of individuals at the company’ but respondents in the US and UAE are notably more satisfied than their counterparts in Singapore and the UK.

Employer approach to health and wellbeing

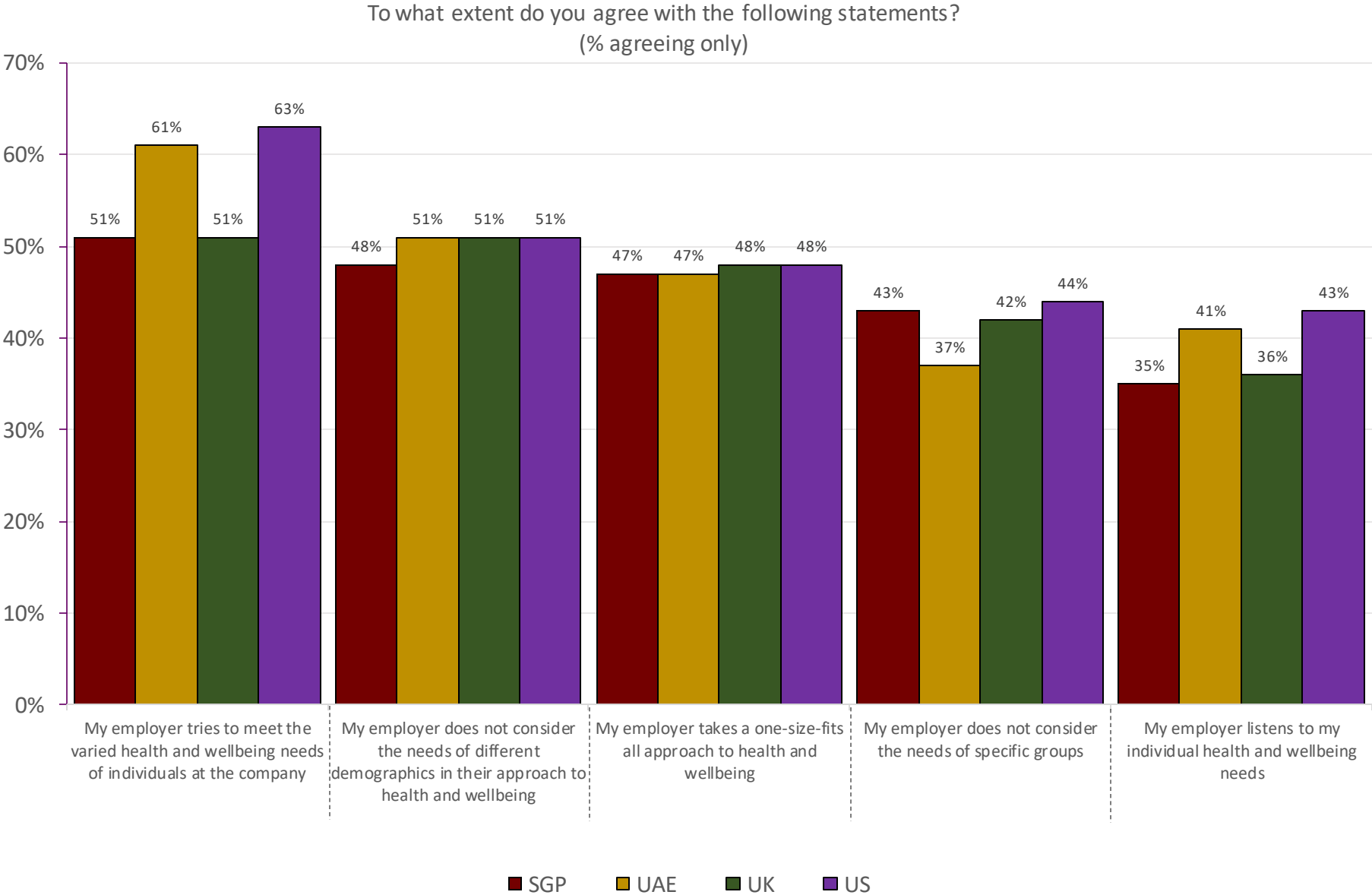
Region

Other profiling observations

Males are more likely to agree that their employer tries to meet the varied needs of individuals.

Home based employees are more likely to say that their employer does not consider the needs of different demographics.

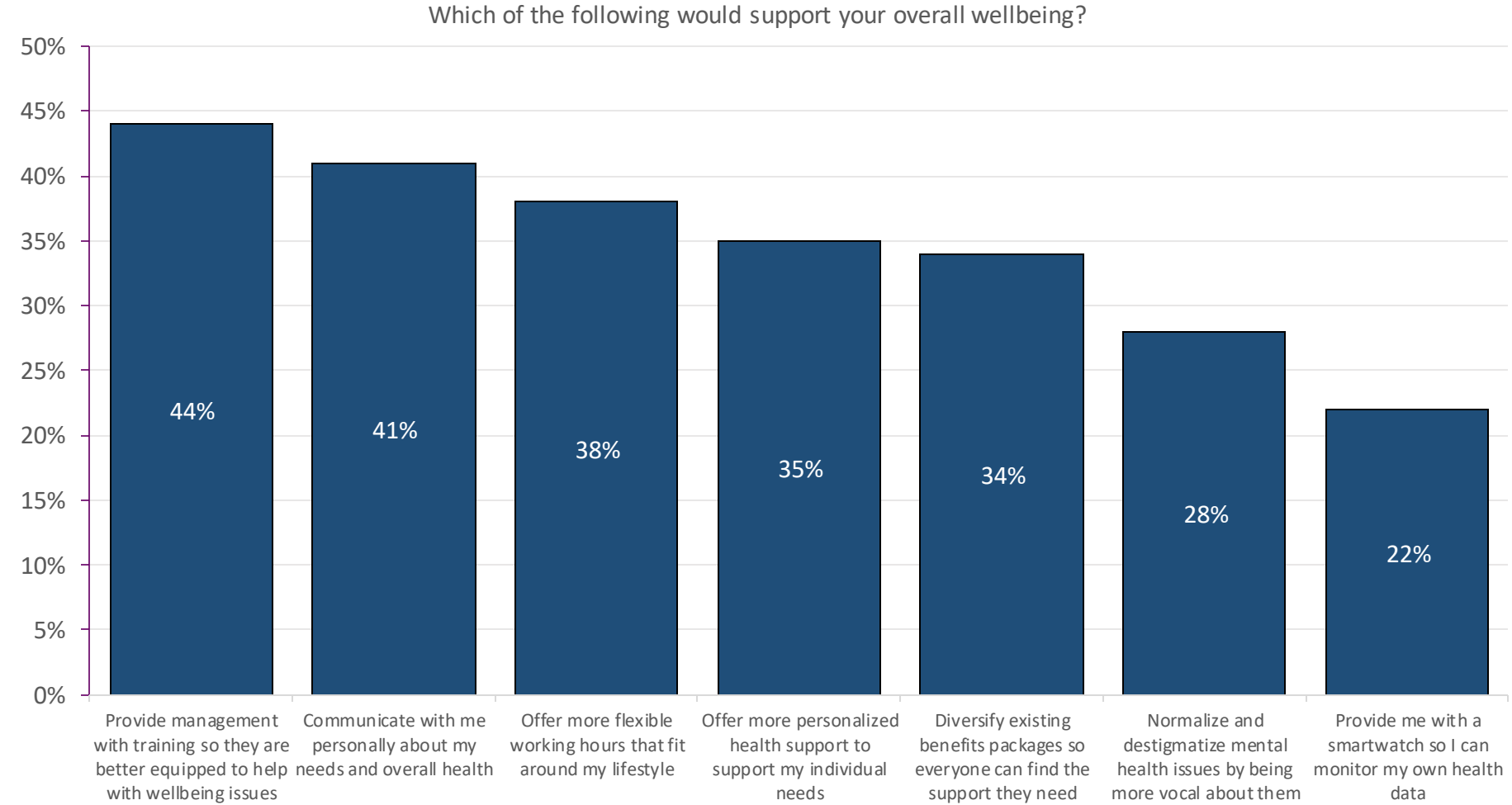
Higher earners, and more senior employees are more positive in their outlook across these statements.



We then asked respondents ‘Which of the following do you think your employer could do to support your overall wellbeing?’. ‘Provide management with training so they are better equipped to help with wellbeing issues’ was selected by the greatest number (44%). A desire for more personalized support is apparent too, with 41% saying ‘Communicate with me personally about my needs and overall health’ and 35% ‘Offer more personalized health support to support my individual needs’.

Provisions
to
support
overall
wellbeing

Total



Q10: Which of the following do you think your employer could do to support your overall wellbeing? Tick all that apply.

There is broad alignment here with the Total sample, in terms of the areas considered most to least important. Selection rates in Singapore are higher than other regions for the majority of the statements tested. 31% of respondents in the UK say 'Normalize and destigmatize mental health issues by being more vocal about them' – a relatively notable gap from the rest (all 27%).

Provisions to support overall wellbeing

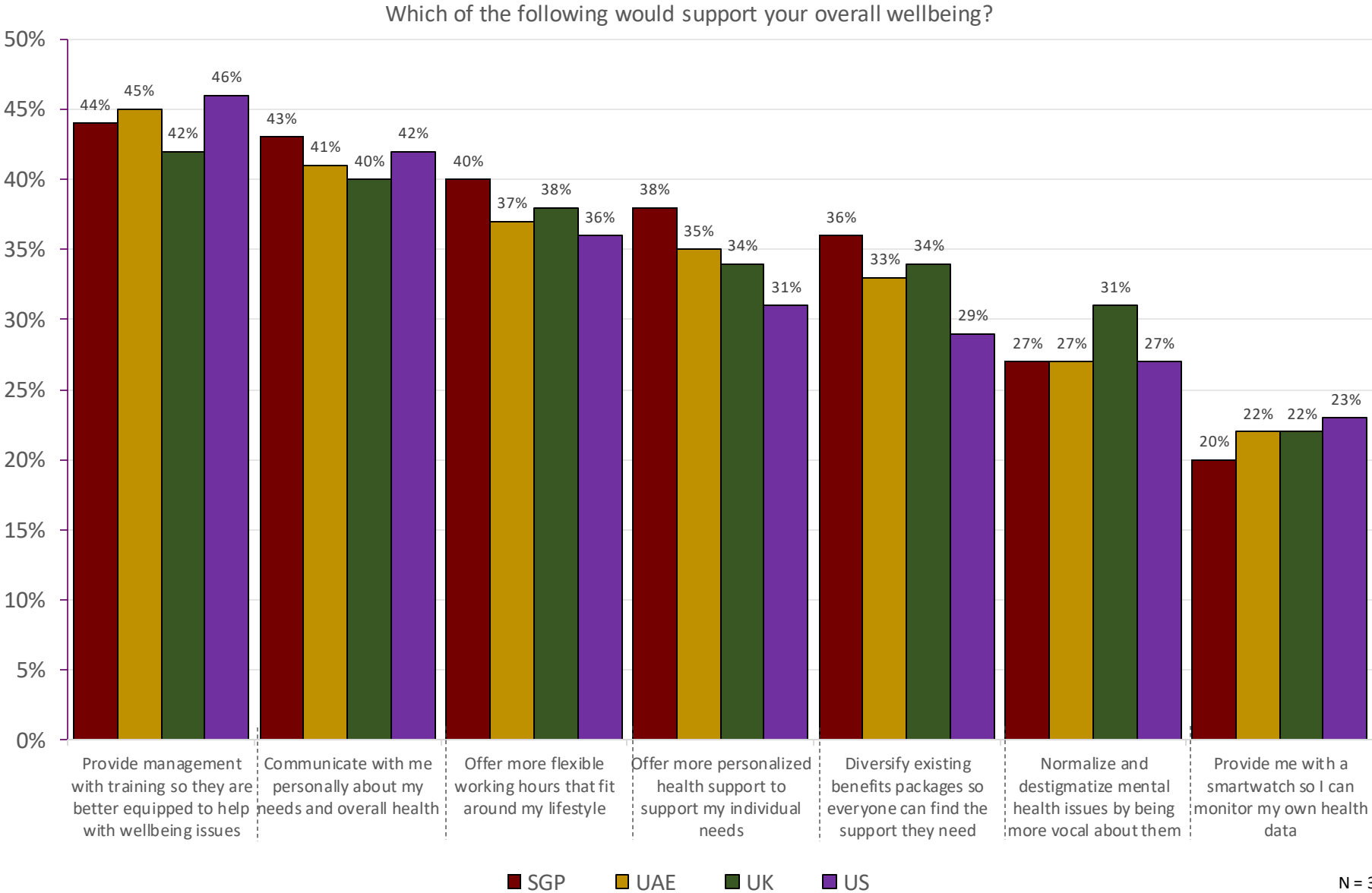
Region

Other profiling observations

Part-time employees, females and those aged 35 to 54 are all more likely to say that flexible working hours would support them.

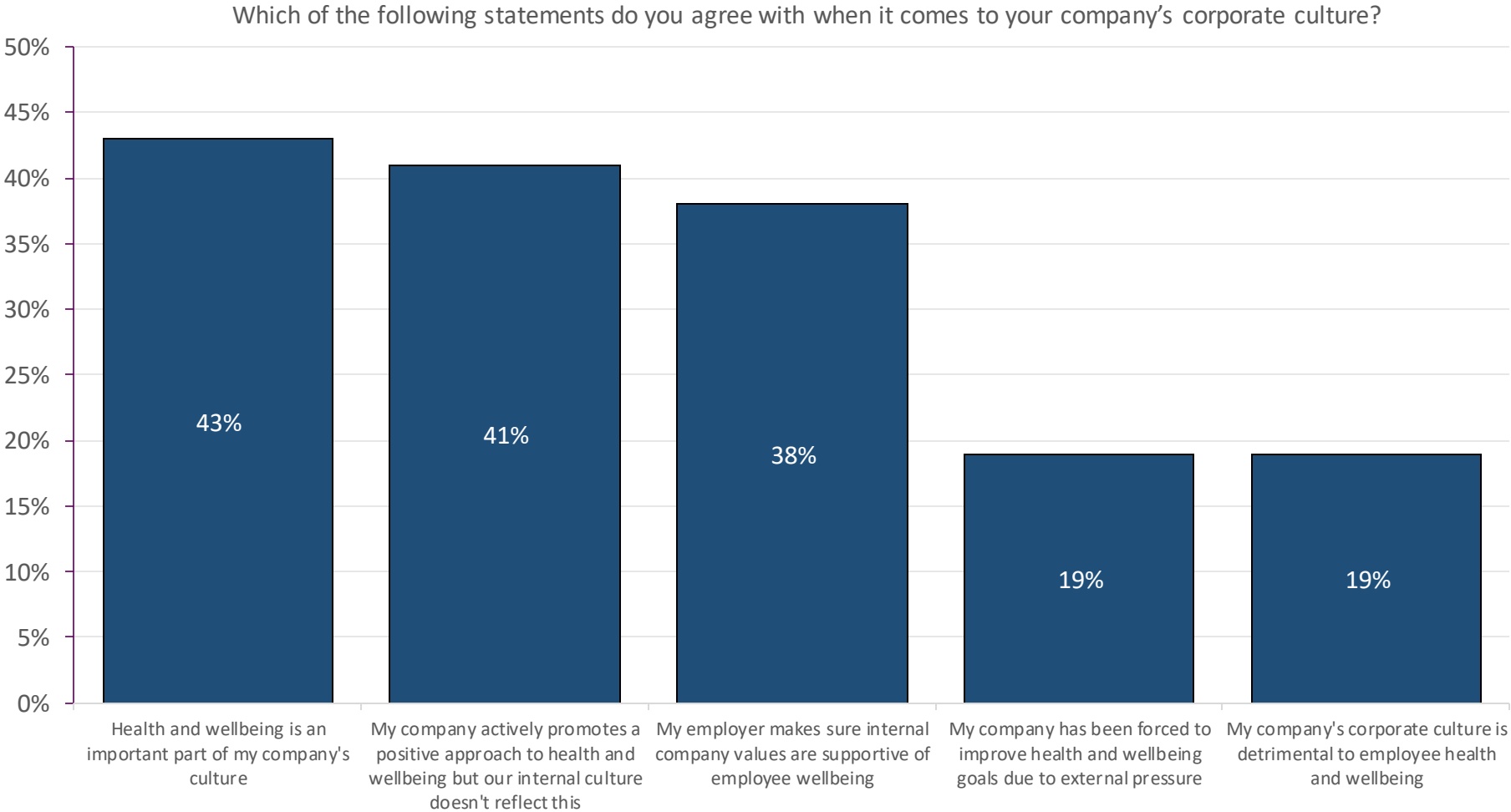
Team managers and team members are more likely to say that providing management with training would support them.

Mid/Lower income earners and the older age groups are more likely to say that diversified packages and more personalized support would help.



Under 50% (albeit a large minority) agree that health and wellbeing is an important part of their company's culture. Almost as many agree that their company promotes a positive approach to health and wellbeing but that the internal culture doesn't reflect that. Almost 20% say that their company's corporate culture is detrimental to employee health and wellbeing.

Corporate Culture
Total



Q11: Which of the following statements do you agree with when it comes to health and wellbeing and your company's corporate culture? Tick all that apply.

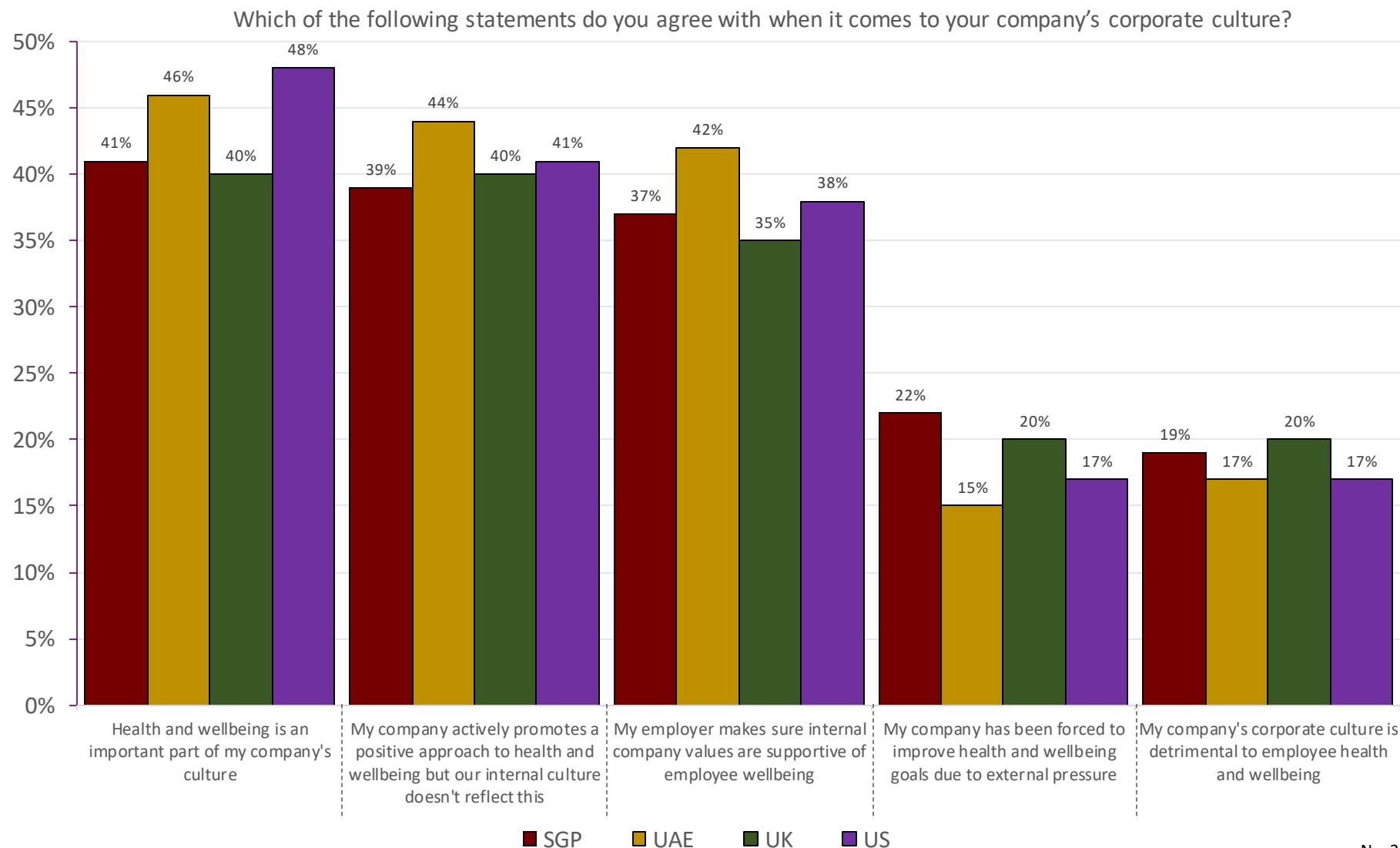
Approaching 50% of those in the US and UAE agree that health and wellbeing is an important part of their company's culture – compared to only around 40% in the UK and Singapore. Those in the UAE are also more likely to agree that their employer makes sure internal company values are supportive of wellbeing. Interestingly, in the least positive regions, there is more of a sense of change being forced due to external pressure – suggesting a generally more judgemental approach to their employers.

Corporate Culture Region

Other profiling observations

Males, higher earners and fulltime employees are more likely to say that health and wellbeing is an important part of their company's culture.

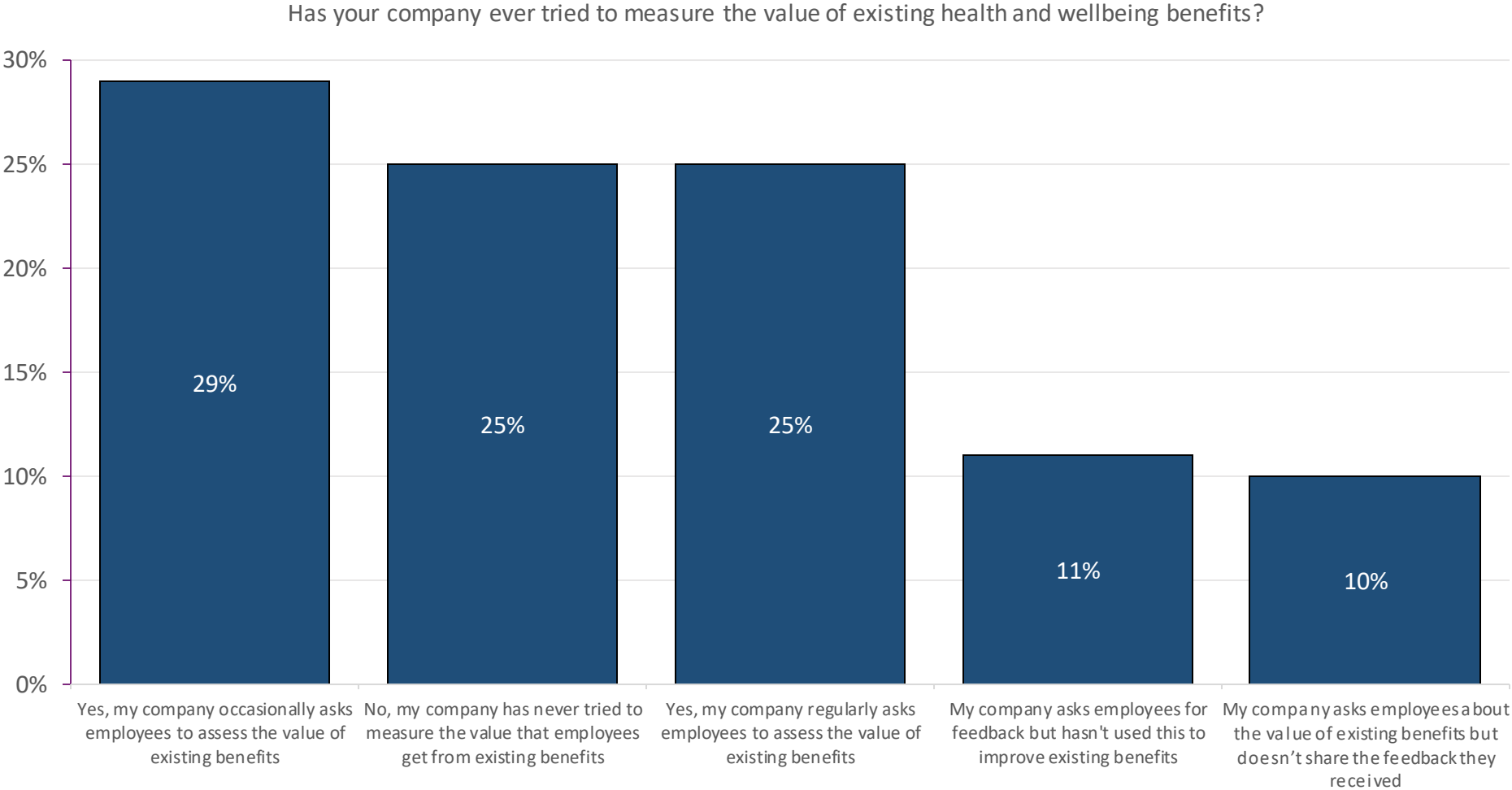
Under 25s are least likely to say that health and wellbeing is an important part of their company's culture and internal company values are supportive of wellbeing.



Only a quarter of employees say that their company regularly asks employees to assess the value of existing benefits – but a further 29% do say that their company occasionally does this. In total, 46% are more doubtful of their company’s approach in this regard - saying that their company has never measured the value of benefits, that feedback is not shared or that it is measured but is not used to improve things.

Measurement
of
existing
benefits

Total



Q12: Has your company ever tried to measure the value that employees get from existing health and wellbeing benefits (e.g. through surveys or direct feedback sessions)? Tick the statement you agree with most.

The UK and Singapore are least positive when looking at the percentage that say that their employer regularly (or even occasionally) asks employees to assess the value of benefits, with only around a quarter agreeing that this is done regularly and nearly 30% in both countries saying that this is never done.

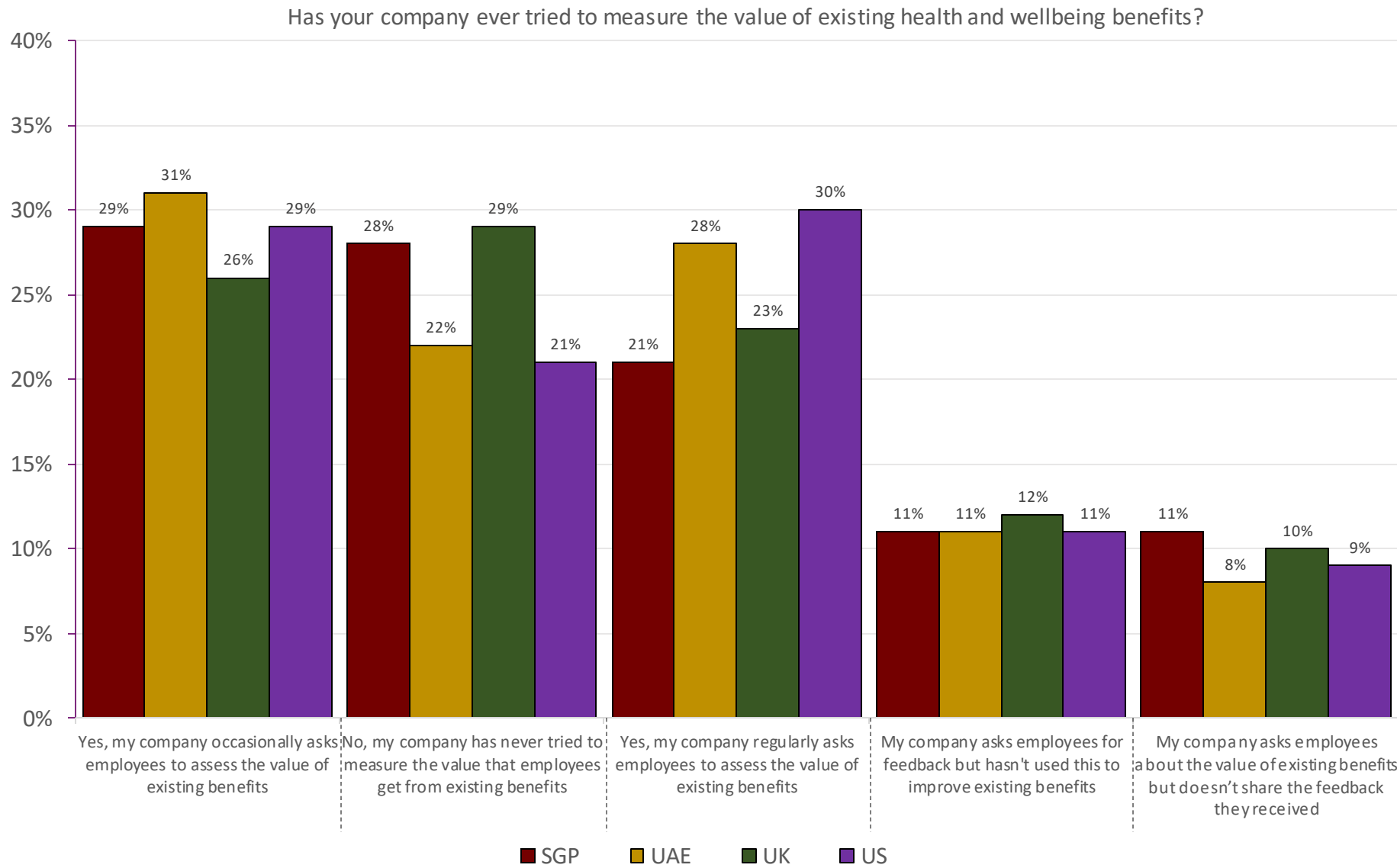
Measurement of existing benefits

Region

Other profiling observations

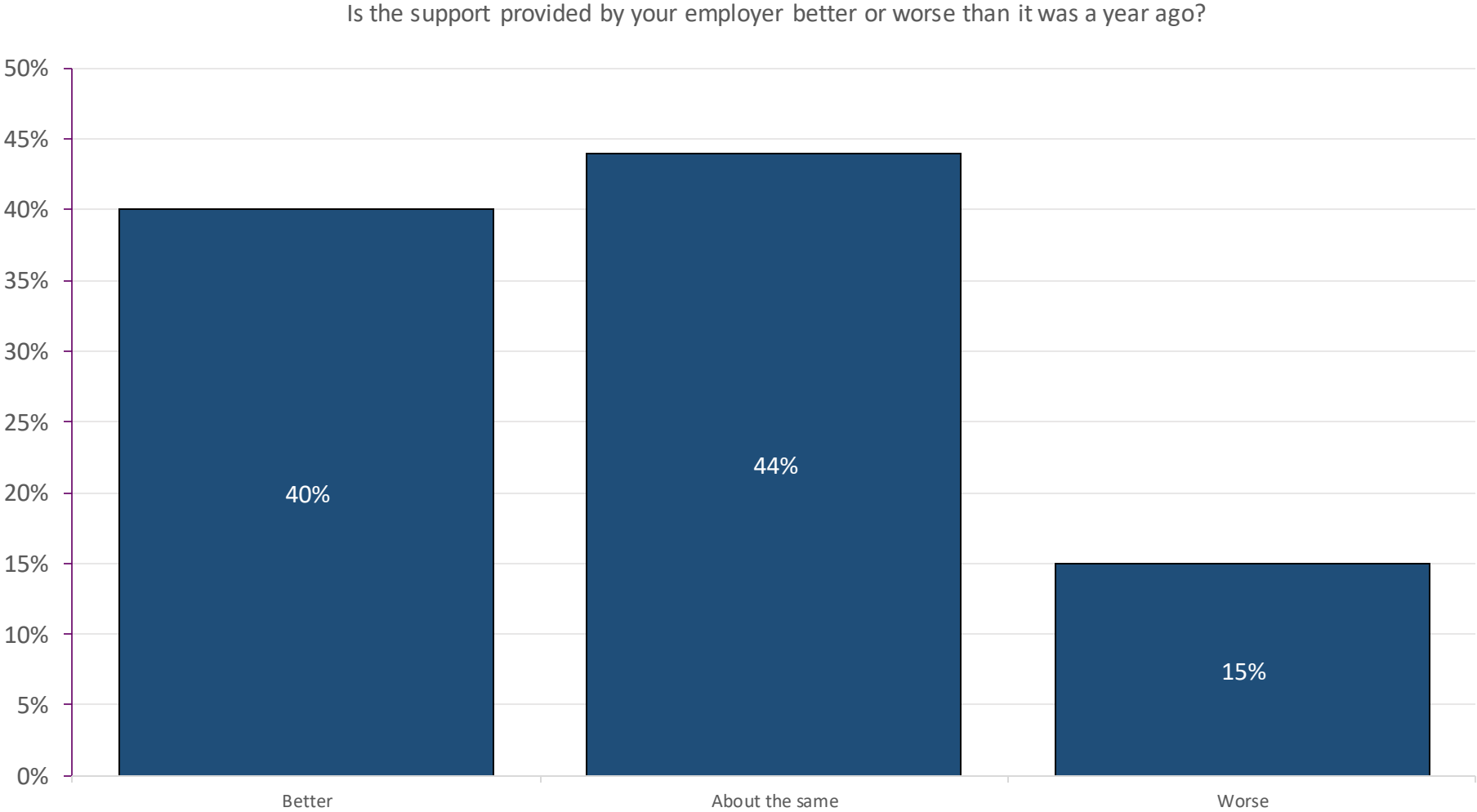
Higher earners and senior managers are least likely to say that their employer has never tried to measure the value of benefits – and more likely to say that this is done regularly.

Younger employees are more likely to say that this has never been measured – and females are somewhat more likely than males to say that value has never been measured.



Fewer than half believe that the health and wellbeing support provided is better than a year ago (40%) – although significantly more feel that it is better than worse. Only 15% say that provision is worse than last year.

Provisions compared with last year
Total



Q13: Do you believe the health and wellbeing support offered by your employer is better or worse than it was a year ago?

Regionally, the consistent picture of a more positive view in the UAE and US is borne out when looking at provision compared to last year. The US is the only region where they believe that support provided is better than last year but UAE also achieves mid-40% agreement. Conversely, the UK and Singapore have only around a third saying that provision is better than a year ago and around 20% saying it is worse than a year ago.

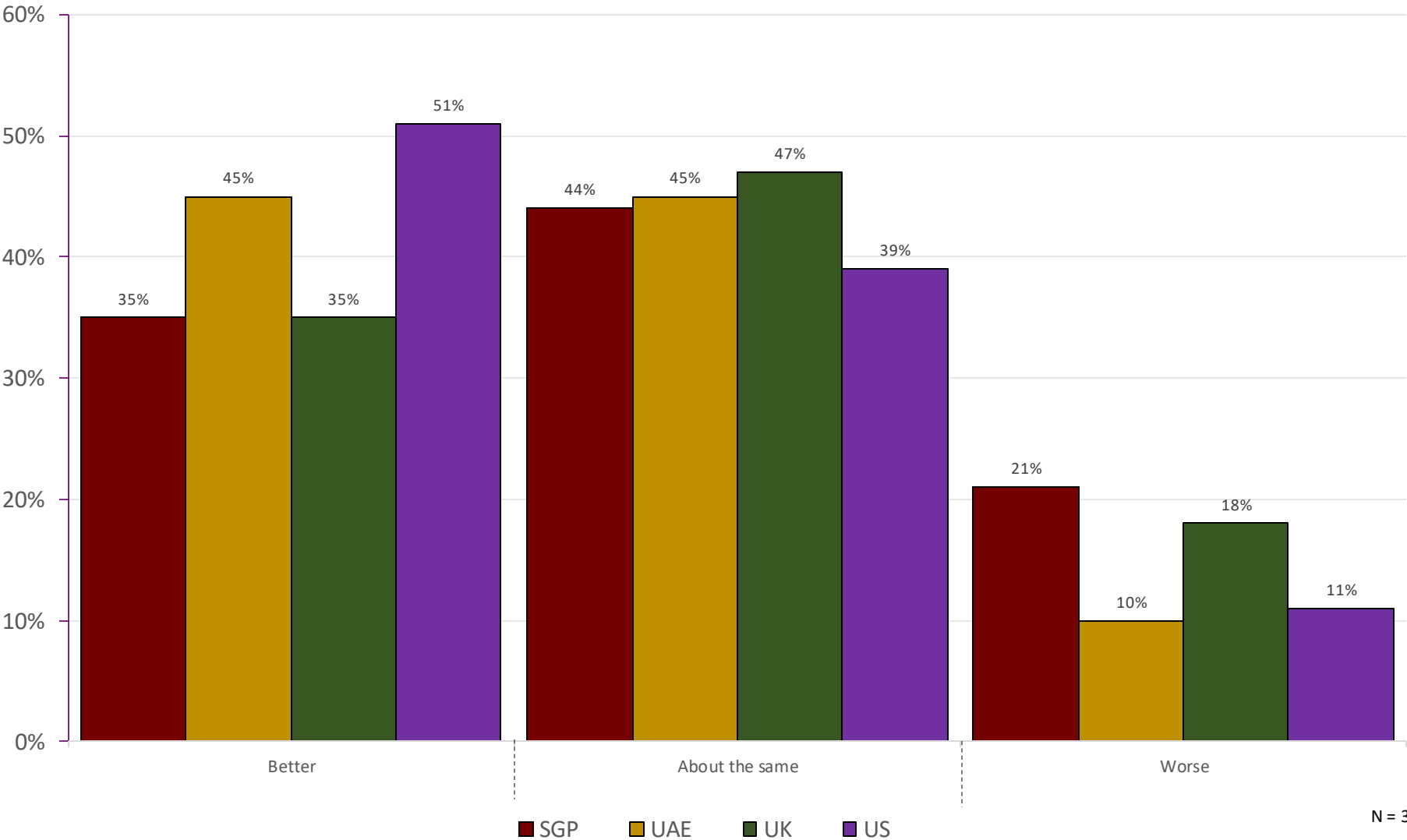
Provisions compared with last year

Region

Other profiling observations

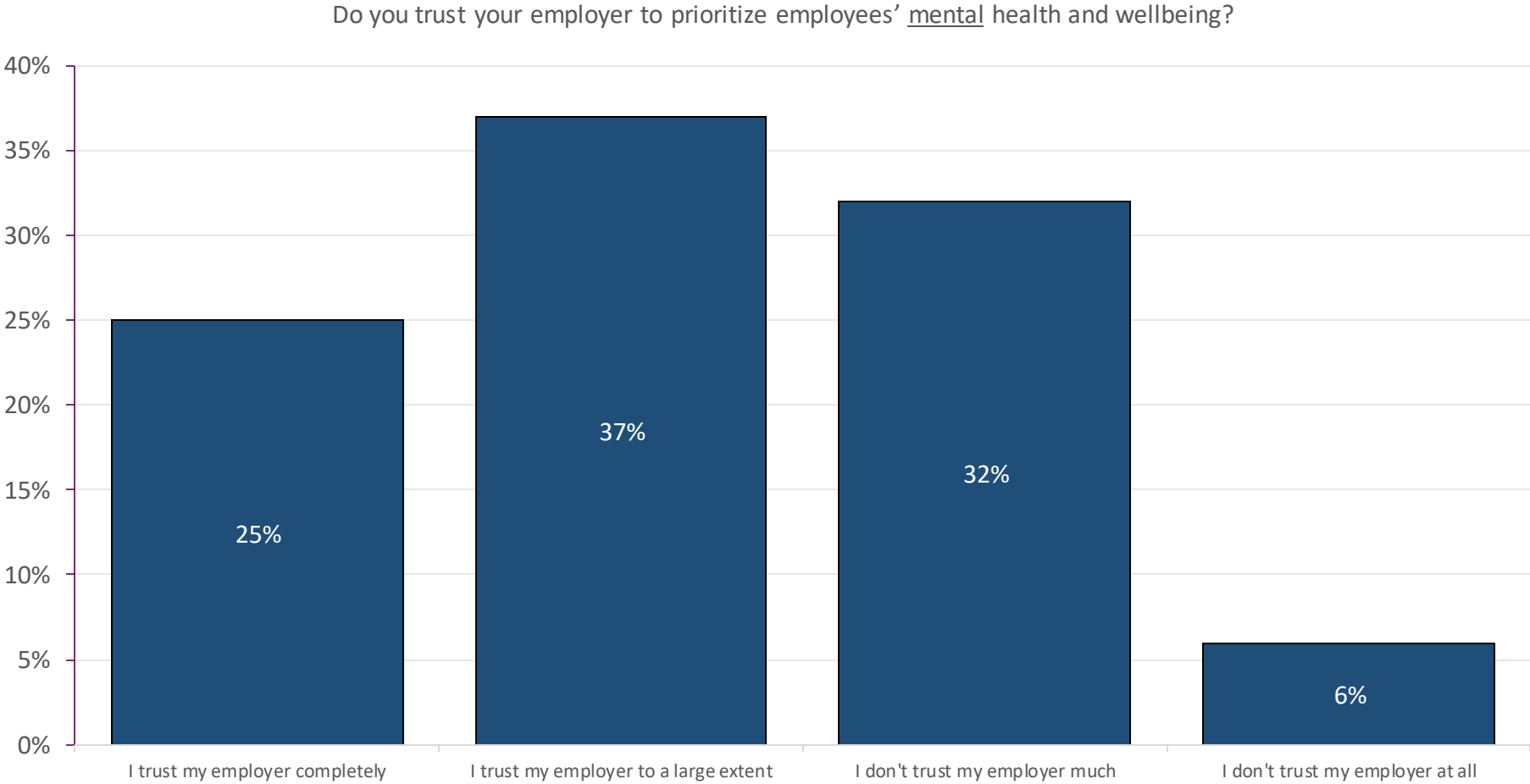
Males, higher earners, full-time employees and those in more senior roles are more likely to say that support provided has got better in the last year.

Is the support provided by your employer better or worse than it was a year ago?



The majority of employees (62%) trust their employer to a large extent, at least, when it comes to prioritizing mental health and wellbeing – however, this still leaves a significant number, almost a third, who don't trust their employer much and a small number who don't trust them at all in this respect. Only a quarter completely trust their employer.

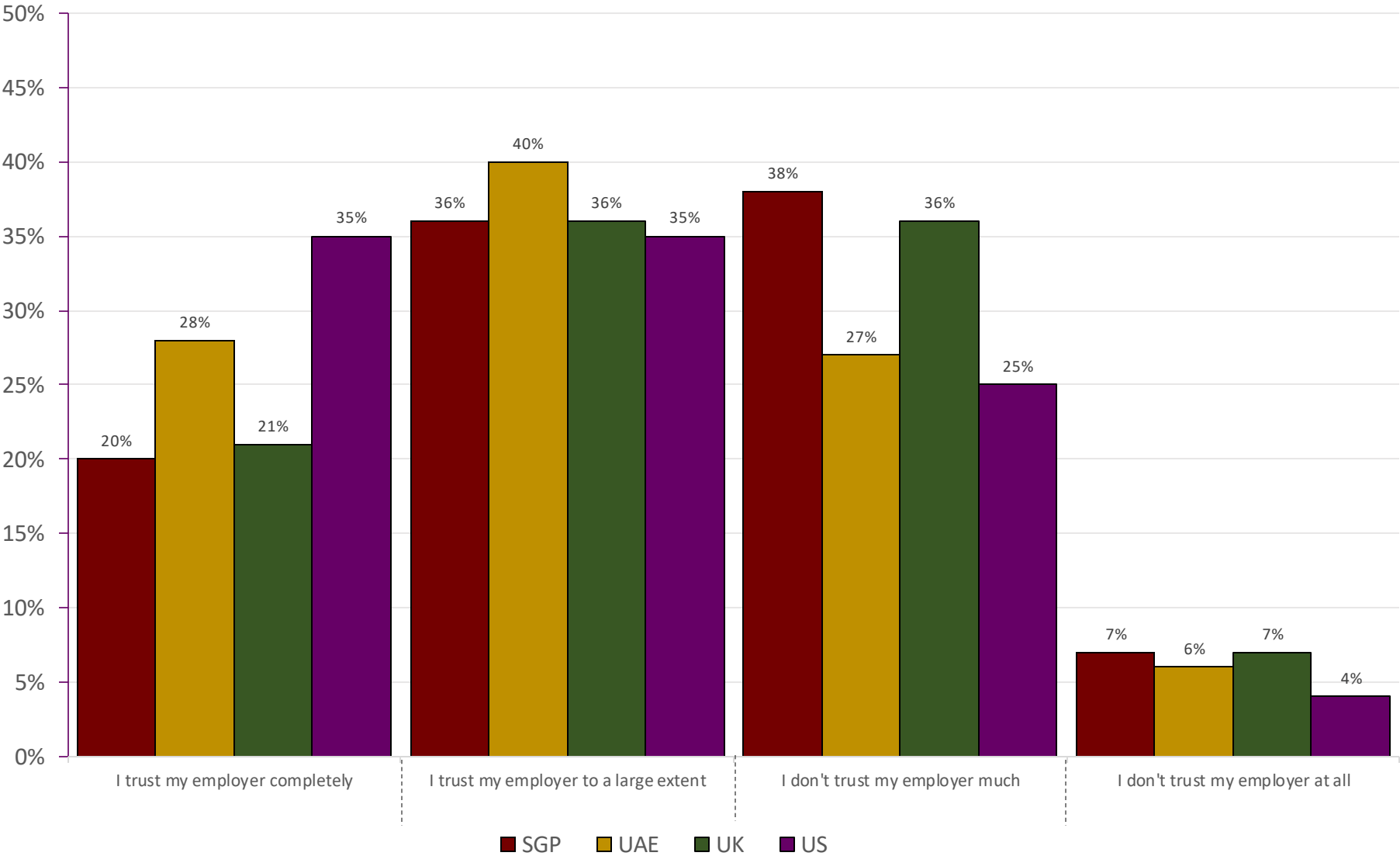
Trust in mental health prioritization
Total



Q14: To what extent do you trust your employer to prioritize employees' mental health and wellbeing in the workplace?

At the regional level, we see that those in the US are significantly more likely to trust their employer completely to prioritize mental health and wellbeing. Both the US and UAE sees trust levels (completely or to a large extent) that are well ahead of Singapore and the UK. However, the numbers who don't trust their employer at all, are similarly low across all regions.

Do you trust your employer to prioritize employees' mental health and wellbeing?



Trust in mental health prioritization Region

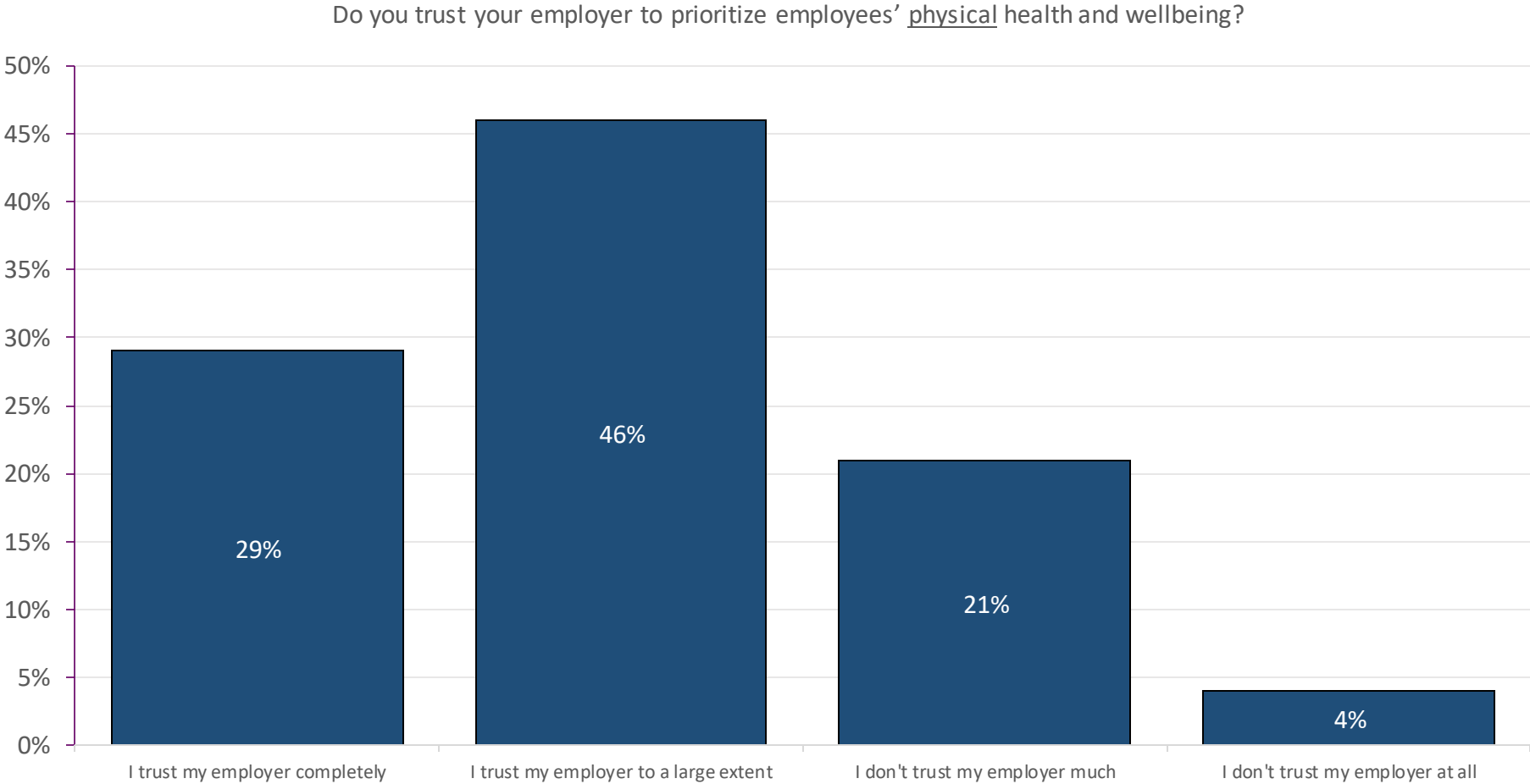
Other profiling observations

Consistent with a number of other aspects, males, higher earners, full-time employees, those in more senior roles and those who are office based are all more likely to say that they trust their employer to prioritize employee's mental health.

The extent to which employees trust their employer to prioritize physical health and wellbeing is significantly larger than for mental health prioritization – with 75% saying they trust to a large extent or completely. A quarter say they don't trust their employer much or at all – but very few say they don't trust at all (just 4%). Just under one in three say they completely trust their employer.

Trust
in
physical
health
prioritization

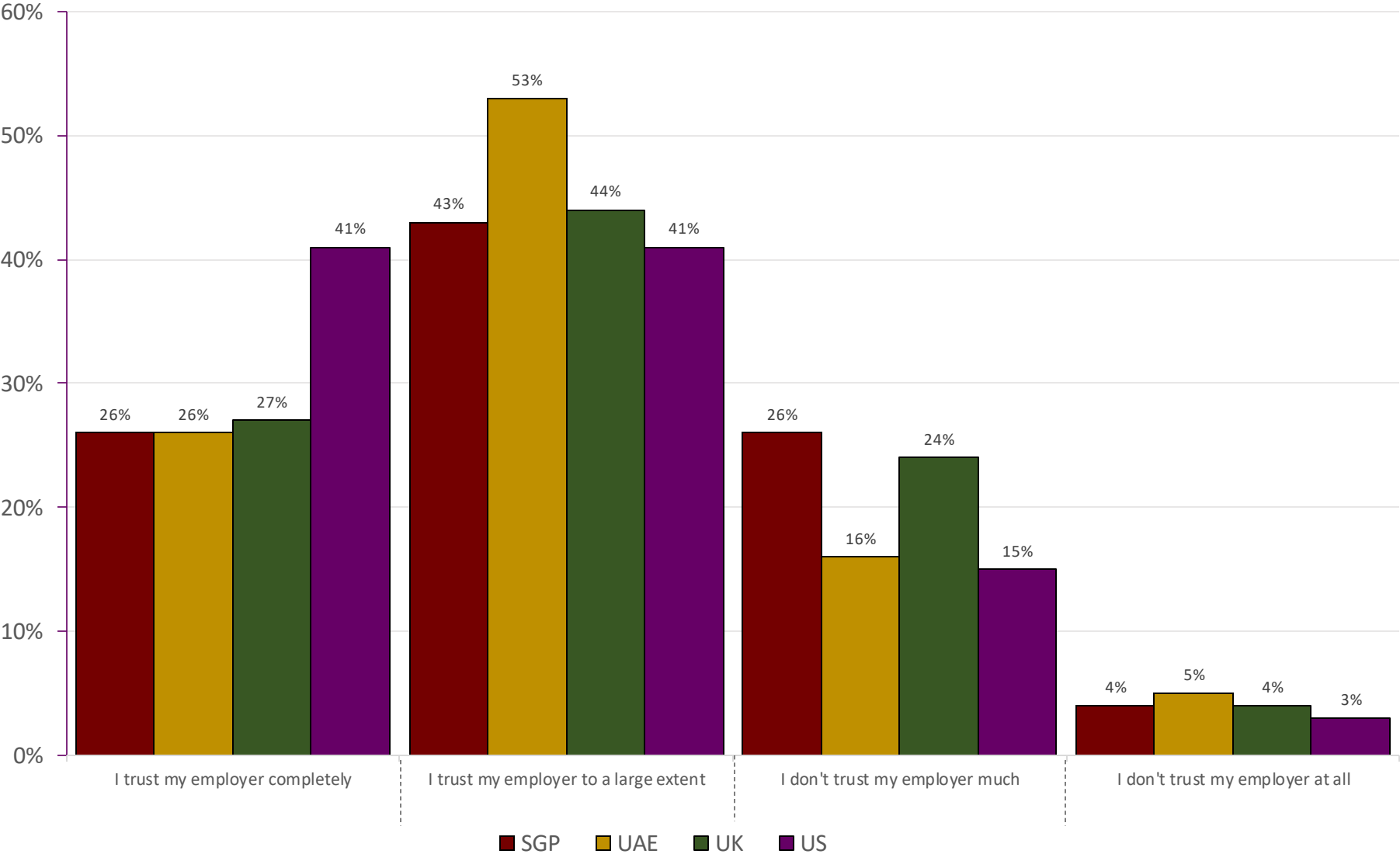
Total



Q15: To what extent do you trust your employer to prioritize employees' physical health and wellbeing in the workplace?

The regional perspective for trust in employers with regard to physical health prioritization, mirrors that for mental health, with the US and UAE noticeably more positive than the UK and Singapore – and the US having more saying they trust their employer completely. Consistent with the overall picture, all regions see higher levels of trust for physical wellbeing than mental wellbeing.

Do you trust your employer to prioritize employees' physical health and wellbeing?



Trust in physical health prioritization
Region

Other profiling observations

We see the same pattern for trust in prioritizing physical health too, with males, higher earners, full-time employees, and those in more senior roles more likely to say that they trust their employer – suggesting that trust in this context is largely a product of more generally positive perspectives.

Rhetoric vs reality:

Tackling polarised perceptions of
corporate health and well-being