



The State of General Practice Veterinary Care, 2026 Edition

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Digital Technology And AI In Veterinary Practices

AI is showing up in veterinary technology so subtly that some vets don't even know it's there. For the purposes of this survey, we looked at both non-AI digital technology (digital treatment sheets, client communication tools, digital imaging equipment, etc.) as well as AI tools. The most common AI tools are used for:

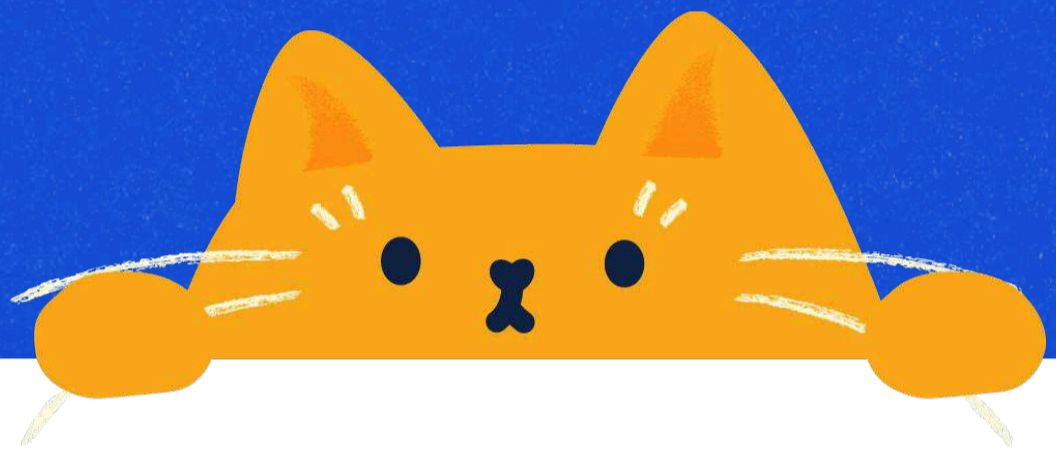
- ✓ **Medical record and SOAP creation.**
- ✓ **Assistance with diagnostic interpretation.**
- ✓ **Summarizing patient records.**
- ✓ **AI chatbots for managing appointments and other admin tasks.**

Throughout this report, we will specify whether we're talking about digital (non-AI) technology and AI technology.



Introduction And Methodology

General practice veterinary medicine is evolving, driven by technological innovation, shifting workplace expectations, and persistent staffing shortages.



To understand how practices are addressing these pressures, we surveyed

763 veterinary professionals

from emergency, specialty, and urgent care practices.



The results speak to an industry navigating fundamental shifts in

how work gets done,

who does it, and what it takes to keep teams happy and productive.

Key Findings



1. Technology is reshaping general practice.

Nearly everyone we surveyed (**91%**) implemented or changed at least one technology system this year. Digital imaging and diagnostic equipment have reached **90%** adoption, while digital client communication tools are now used by 75% of respondents, reflecting pet owners' expectations for digital interactions.

Technology is making a positive impact: since adopting new systems, **67%** of respondents report better workflow efficiency and **57%** see improved patient care quality.



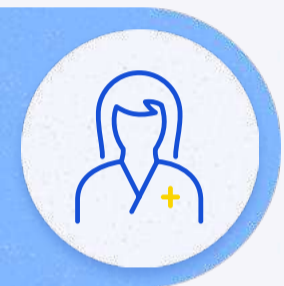
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2. AI adoption is accelerating as early adopters prove ROI.

Nearly half (**48%**) of practices are using AI in some form, and three-quarters of those report increased efficiency. Those positive outcomes will likely influence the **31%** of practices who say they're waiting to see where the industry goes before implementing AI.

The most popular AI application is medical record and SOAP creation (**63%**) and diagnostic assistance (**38%**), but practices are eager to use it for inventory management and administrative tasks in the future.



3. Turnover is manageable for now, but pressure is building to actively retain talent.

More than half of practices (**52%**) didn't see significant turnover in the last year, but for those who did, it's clinical support and client services staff who are hardest to retain.

Thirty-percent of practices reported losing nurses, technicians, or assistants last year. When asked what would improve retention, **70%** said better compensation. Yet only **48%** actually increased pay last year, suggesting that financial constraints are limiting what practices can offer.





4. **Workplace flexibility has gone from a perk to a necessity.**

The traditional full-time, fixed-schedule working model has nearly disappeared with less than one in ten practices operating that way. Most now offer some flexibility: **40%** have part-time roles and **24%** offer four-day workweeks. Practices seem eager to become more flexible, but **60%** say they're constrained by low staffing.

Relief vets have also become a common tool for managing flexibility, with **53%** of practices using them at least occasionally.

The data suggests flexibility is vital for recruitment and retention, but delivering it remains an operational challenge.

5. **Morale is solid, but many are overlooking the impact wellness investments can have.**

Despite the profession's reputation for burnout, morale in general practice seems relatively stable. Only **14%** report low team morale and **17%** report low personal morale. Still, 38% of practices say they offer no wellness programs, and half of those report low morale. Among those that invest in physical and mental wellness, Employee Assistance Programs (**33%**) and time off for mental health (**33%**) are most common.



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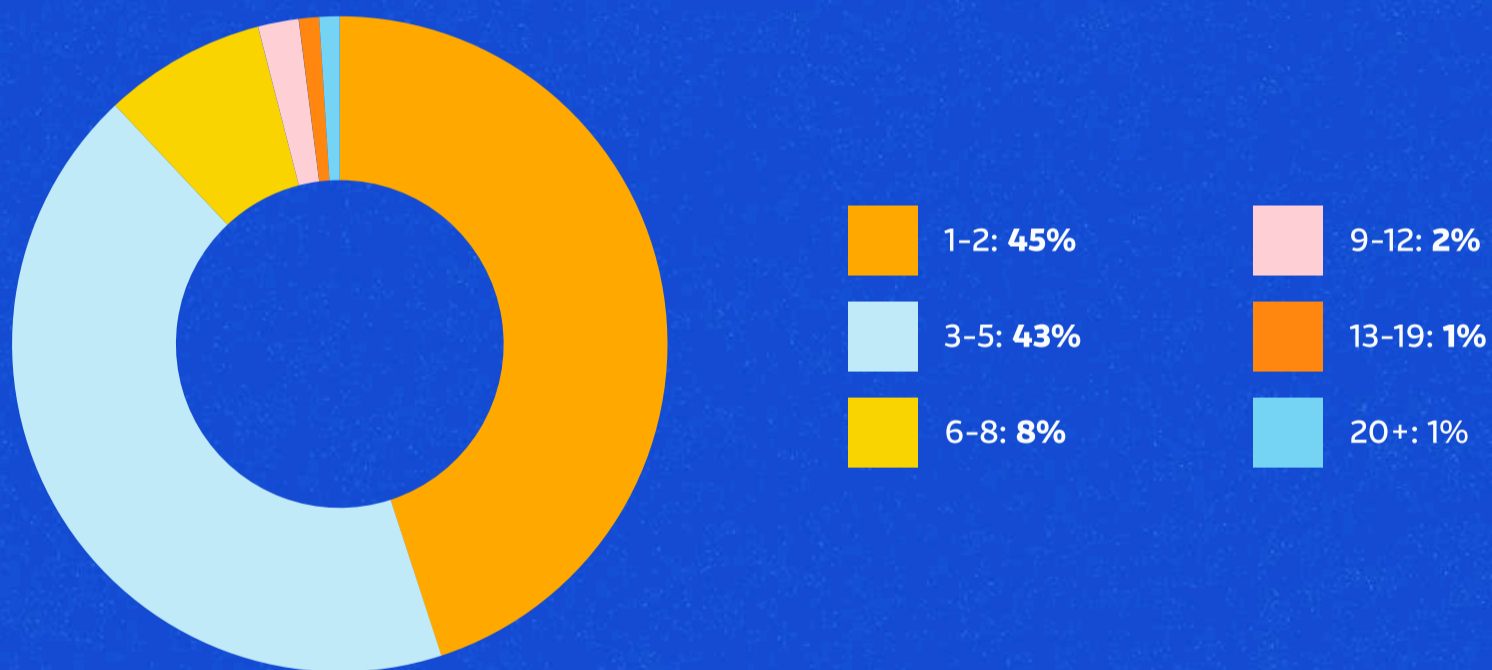
Demographics

For our first report on the state of general practice veterinary care, we surveyed **763 professionals**.

The vast majority (**73%**) work at either a multi-doctor independent practice or a multi-doctor corporate practice. Solo practitioners comprise **12%** of respondents and the remainder were split between multi-location practices, emergency/primary care/specialty hospitals, and relief practices.

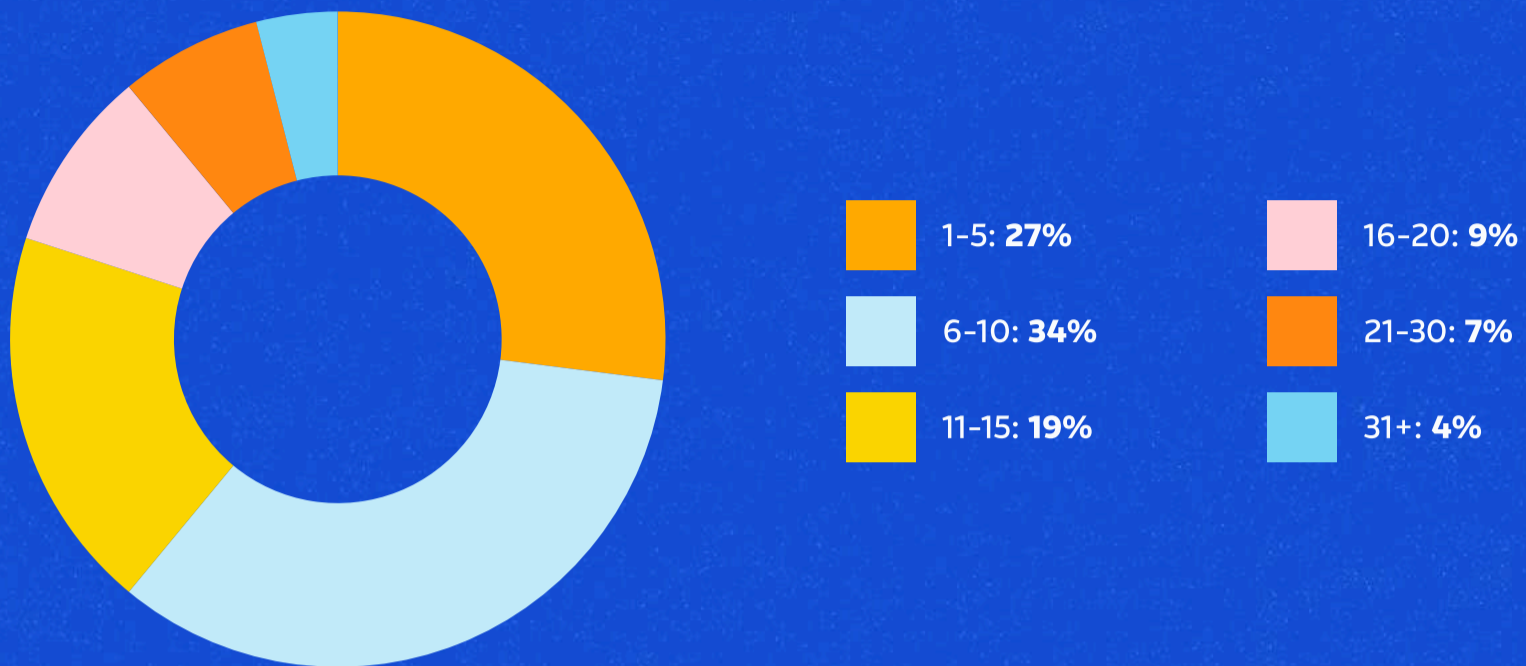
Most of those we surveyed (**82%**) work at a Monday-Friday or Monday-Saturday day practice (e.g., 8am-5pm). Others work at practices with extended hours (**5%**), 24/7/365 practices (**4%**).

How many full-time equivalent vets work in your practice?



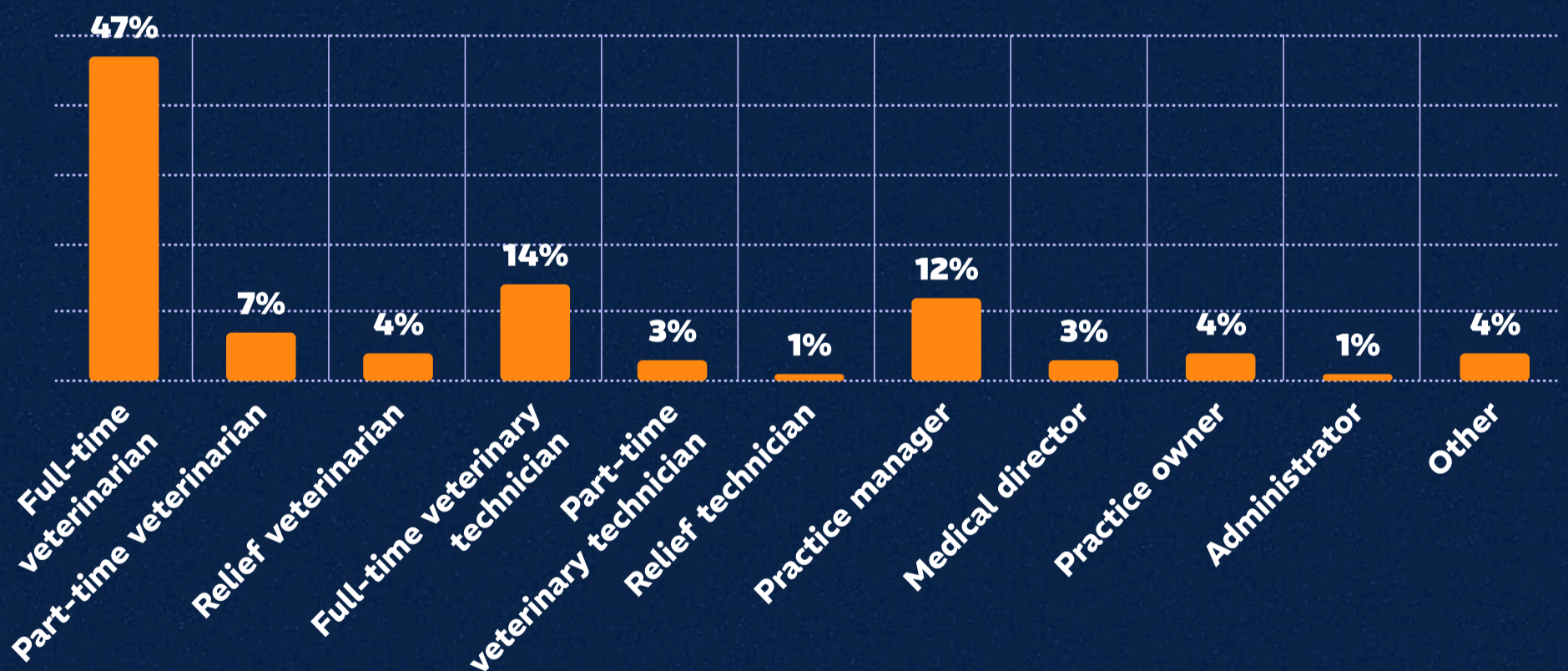
Nearly nine in ten (88%) of those we surveyed work in practices with five or fewer FTE veterinarians.

How many full-time equivalent support staff (nurses, technicians, assistants) work in your practice?



Again, most of our respondents work in practices with relatively small staff: **61%** have ten or fewer support staff at their offices.

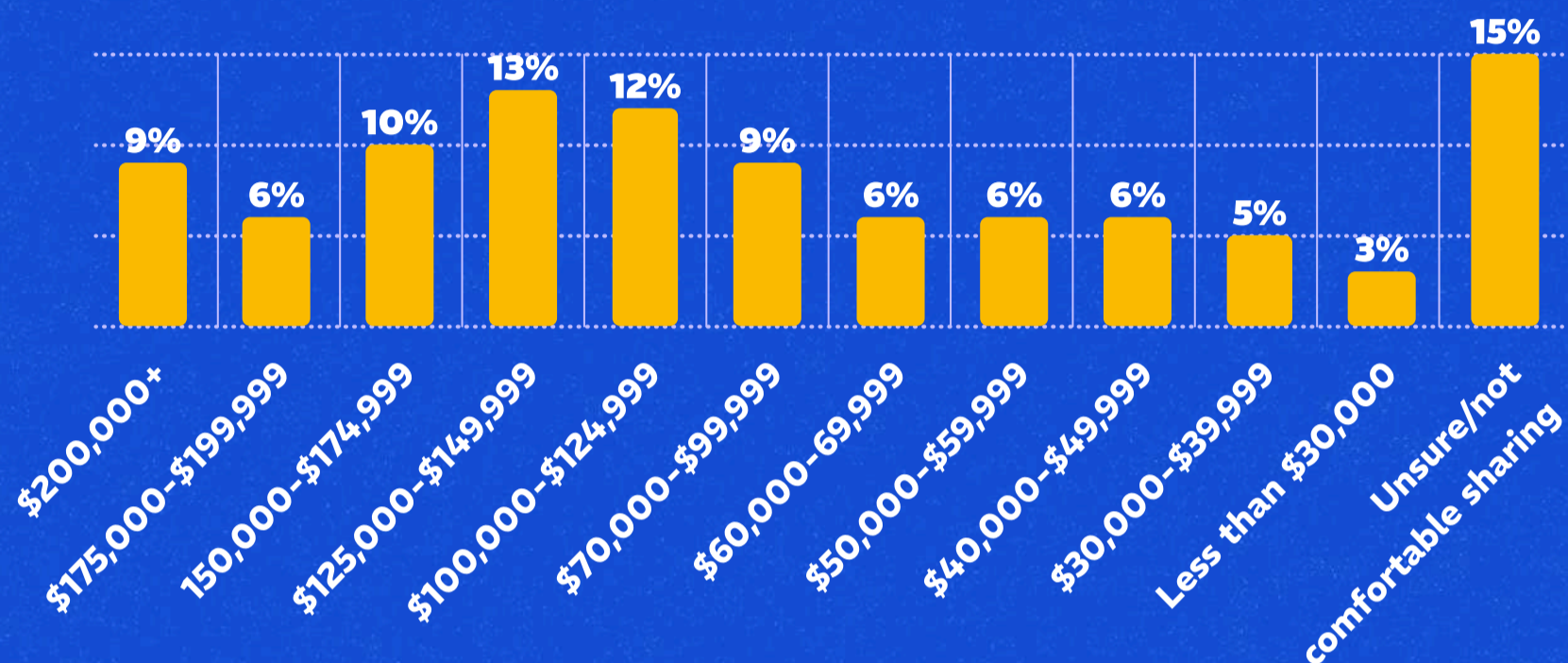
Which of the following best describes you?



Nearly half (47%) of survey respondents were veterinarians. Those choosing “other,” mentioned combination roles (e.g., practice owner and veterinarian), veterinary assistant, and customer service roles.

General Practice Salaries

What is your estimated annual compensation?



Salaries vary dramatically by role in general practice veterinary clinics. Full-time vets typically make between **\$125,000–\$150,000**, which is in line with the 2024 median veterinarian salary reported by The BLS (\$125,510).

Our median full-time veterinary technician salary was between **\$40,000–\$50,000**, which was also in line with the BLS median salary of \$45,980.

Practice managers make somewhere in between, with half reporting salaries of **\$60,000–\$100,000**.

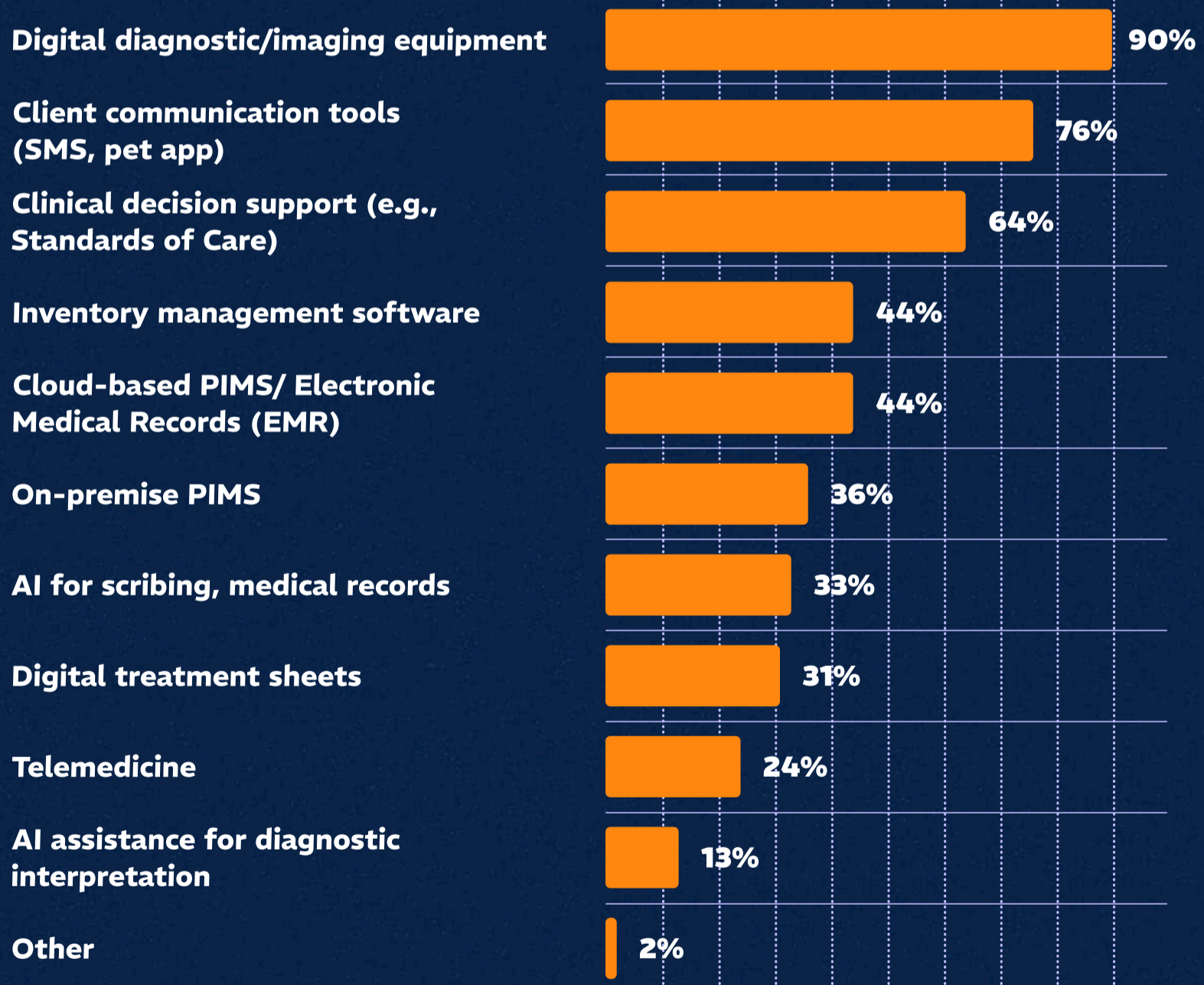
Reflecting a wide variety in practice size and profitability, practice owners show the widest pay range, with **29%** making \$200,000 or more while 12% earn under \$70,000.

Technology

General practices are embracing technology throughout their operations. From Practice Information Management Systems (PIMS), the core software that practices use to run their business, to AI-assisted diagnostics, let's take a look at what digital technology is being adopted, how it's working, and where we might be headed.

Prevalent Technology In 2025

What types of technology does your practice currently use?



Veterinary practices have almost universally adopted some core technologies that don't yet incorporate AI: **90%** use digital diagnostic/imaging equipment and three-quarters use client digital communication tools.

Practice information management systems (PIMS) have high adoption as well, with **44%** using internet-based PIMS/EMR systems and **36%** using systems that are installed on-site.

AI tools are still in their early days. About a third use AI for scribing or medical records, and only **13%** use AI for diagnostic interpretation.

We found that specialty and emergency practices have slightly stronger technology adoption. For instance, every single specialty and emergency hospital we surveyed uses digital treatment sheets, whereas only **31%** use these overall.

Corporate locations are more likely to invest in client communication tools (**87%**) than the average (**76%**), which makes sense when trying to standardize across offices.

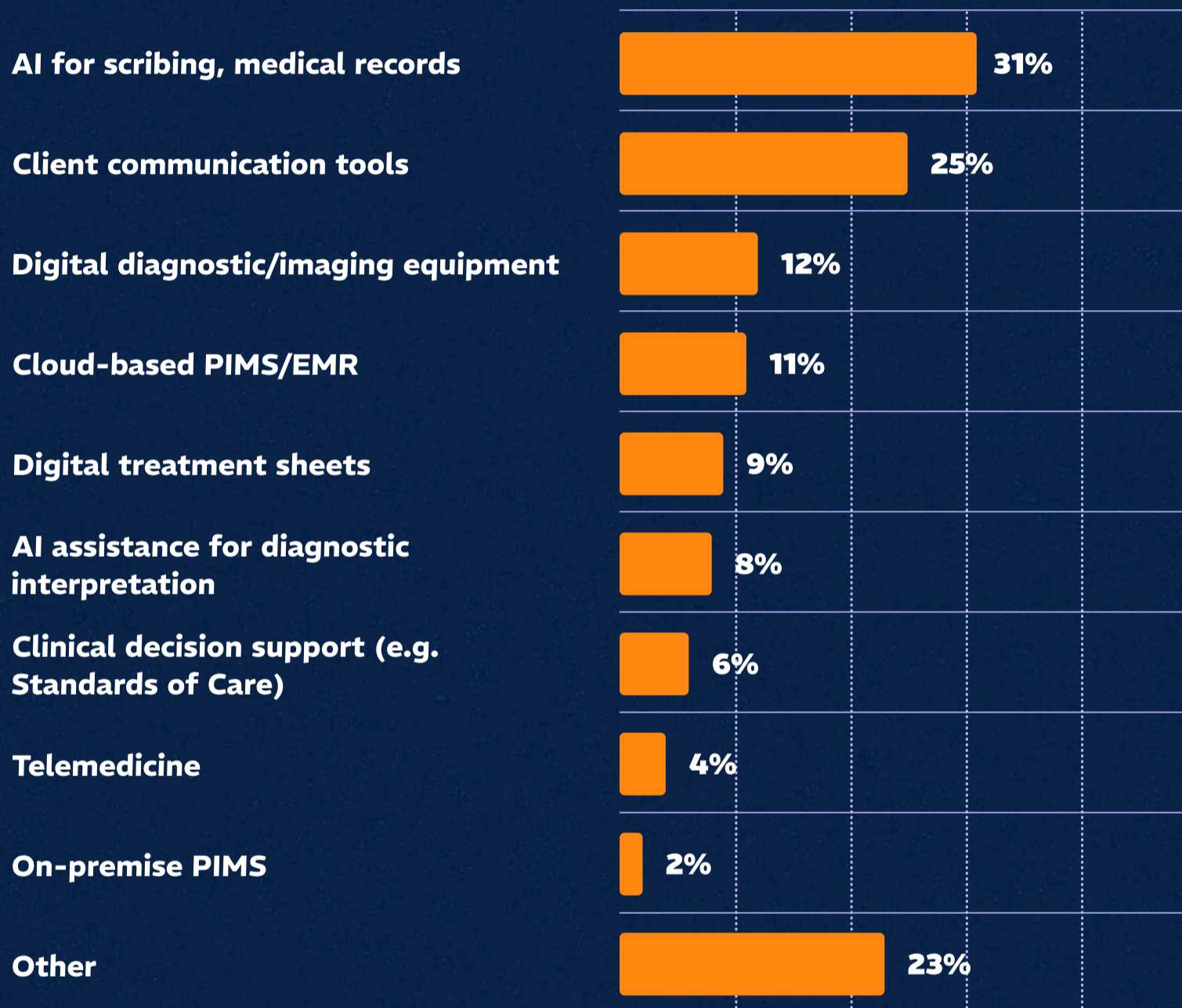
“ During an overnight shift, a nurse and I literally dumpster-dived for a paper treatment sheet from a critical ICU patient. It represented days of essential patient care. It's funny in hindsight, but it really highlighted how desperately we needed digital treatment tools—ultimately forming the foundation of Instinct.

Caleb Frankel, Founder and CEO of Instinct Science



Recent Technology Adoption

What new technologies did your practice adopt or change in the past year?

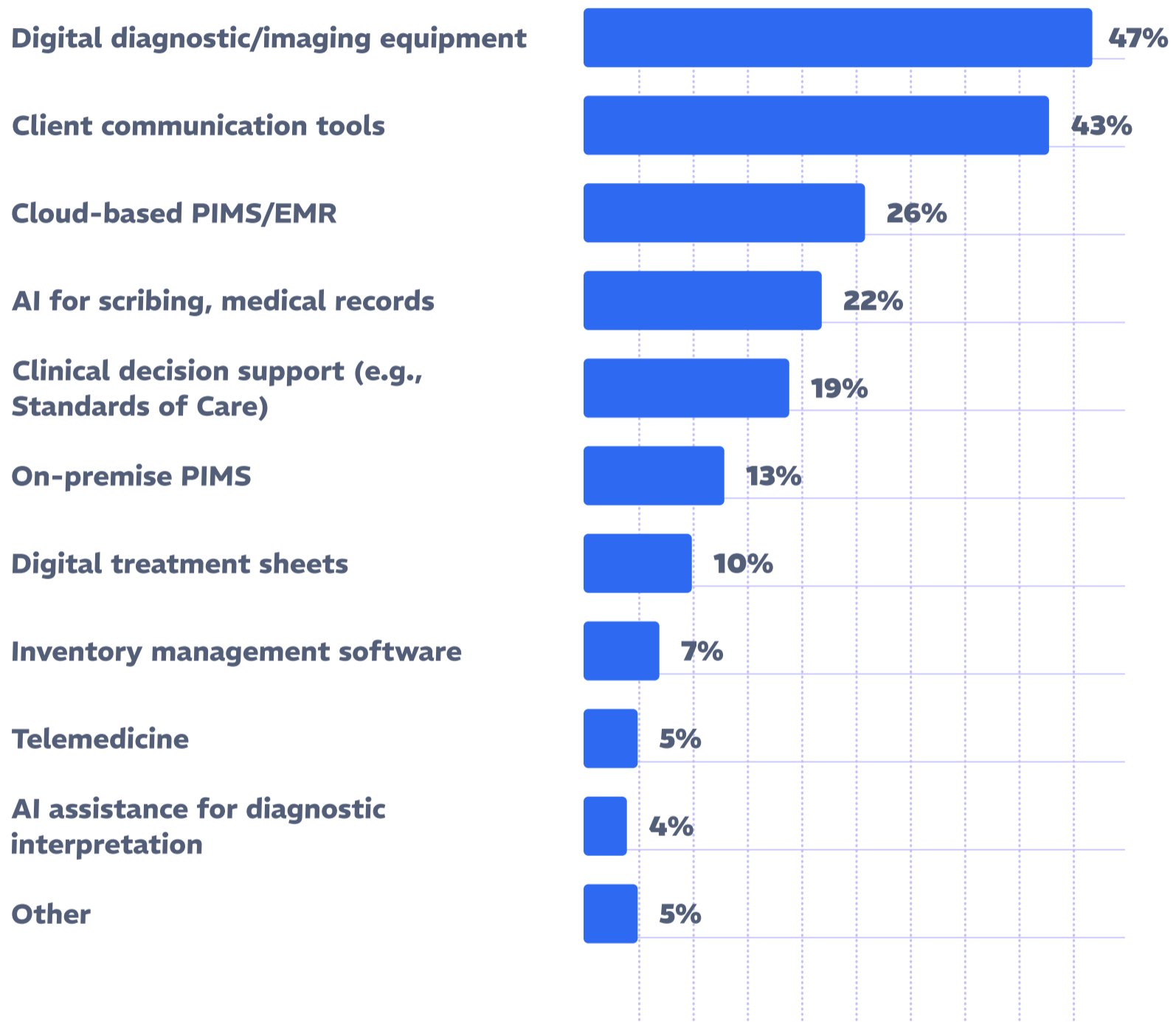


Client communication tools and AI for scribing/medical records were the most popular additions and changes, but even so, less than a third of practices adopted or changed them in the last year.

Overall, **91%** of respondents said they changed or adopted some new technology over the past year, with the remaining **9%** using the “other” field to indicate they didn’t change anything.

Impact Of Technology

Which technologies have had the most positive impact on your daily work (select top two)?



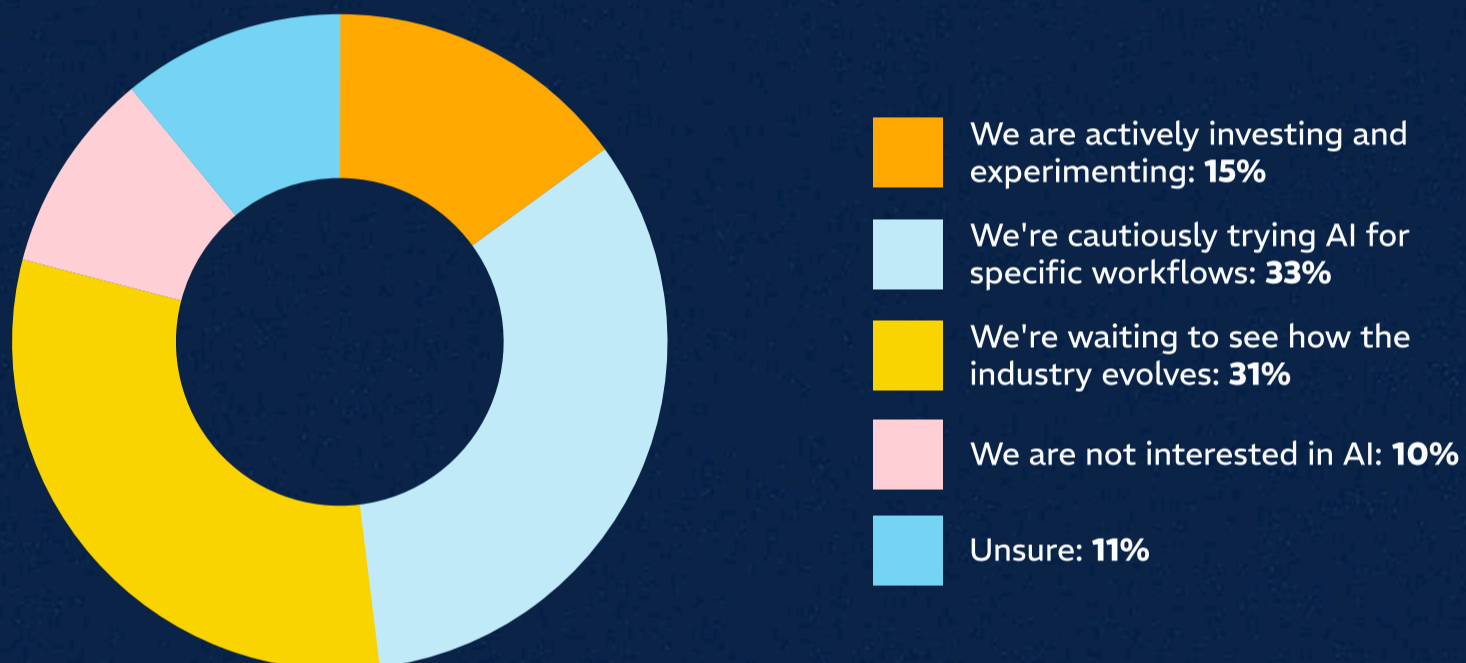
Digital diagnostics, client communication, and Cloud PIMS are driving the most value for practices.

AI On The Rise

AI adoption in general practices is still in its early days, but it's gaining momentum. Here's how practices are using AI today, what's working, and what's holding others back.

AI Readiness And Approach

Which of the following best describes your practice's approach to AI?



Combined with the third of practices who are cautiously using AI, the **31%** of practices waiting to see how the industry evolves demonstrate that AI adoption will take off very quickly once early adopters prove the value.

What types of AI tools are currently being used in your practice?

AI-enabled medical record and SOAP creation



Assistance for diagnostic interpretation



Summarizing patient records



AI-driven chatbots to help manage appointments, reminders, followups



Administrative tasks (billing, coding, record management)



Inventory management



Predictive analytics



Personalized treatment plans



Other



While AI is being used often for time-consuming medical record keeping/summarizing records, and SOAP creation, there's a lot of room for AI to help more with admin tasks.

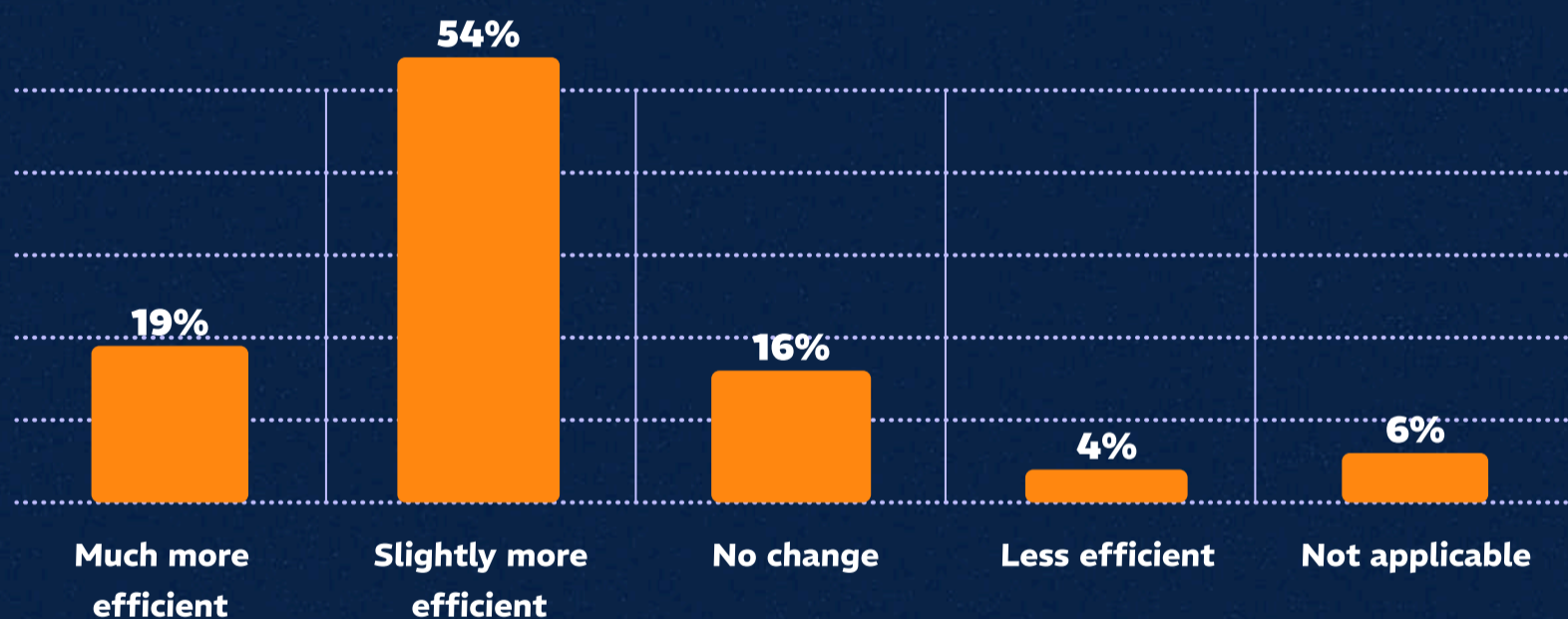
The relatively low adoption of AI for more critical tasks like treatment plans and predictive analytics validates our earlier finding that veterinary professionals are waiting for AI to be proven before implementing it more widely.

“ When it comes to AI risk, I don’t lose much sleep. Veterinarians are smart, thoughtful, and ultimately accountable for their decisions. AI isn’t fundamentally different—it’s another source where judgment matters.

Caleb Frankel, Founder and CEO of Instinct Science

AI Efficiency Gains

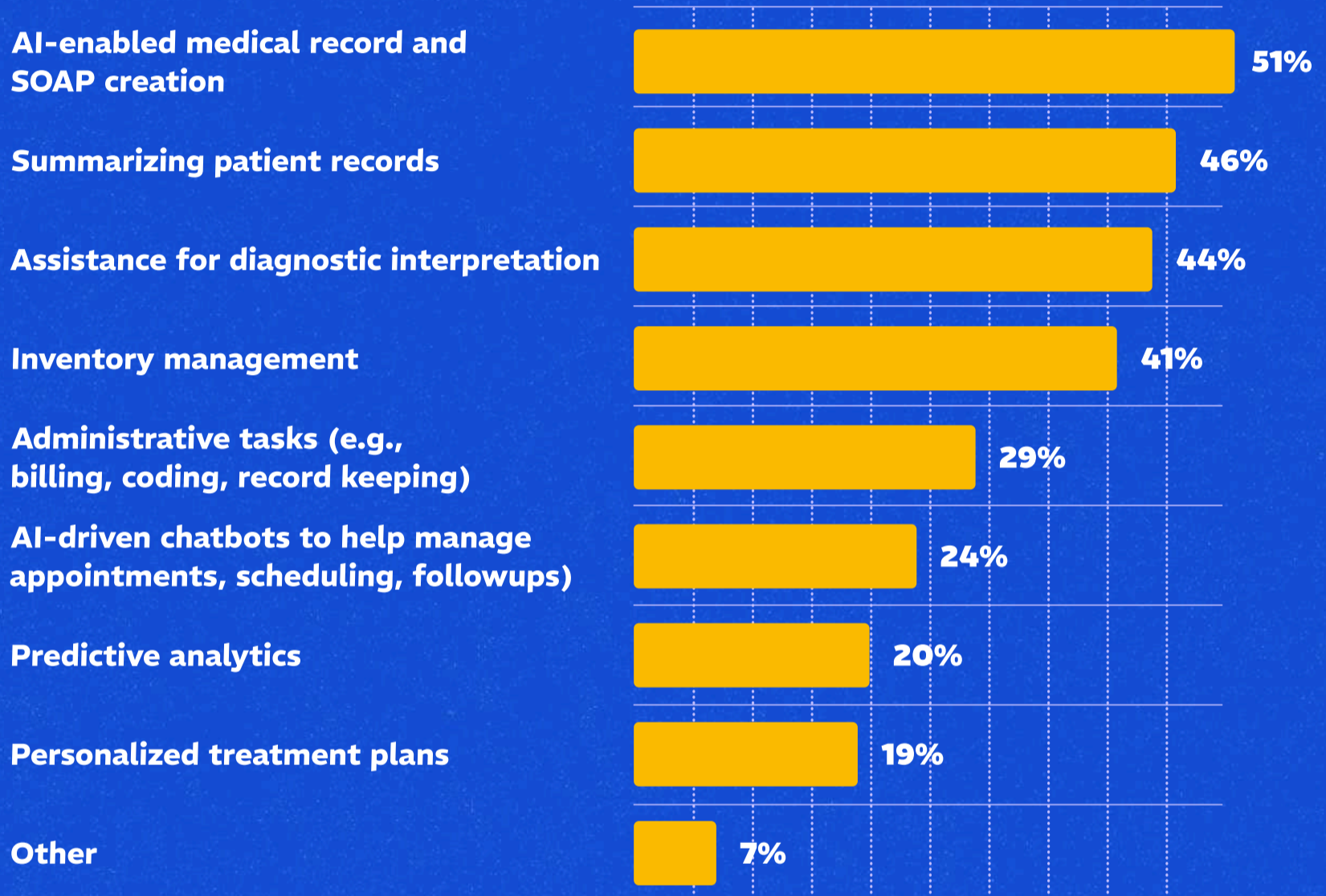
How has your practice's efficiency changed since adopting AI tools?



Nearly three-quarters of those using AI say that it has made them more efficient. That’s exactly the kind of ROI proof that could convince those practices still waiting on the sidelines.

AI Aspirations

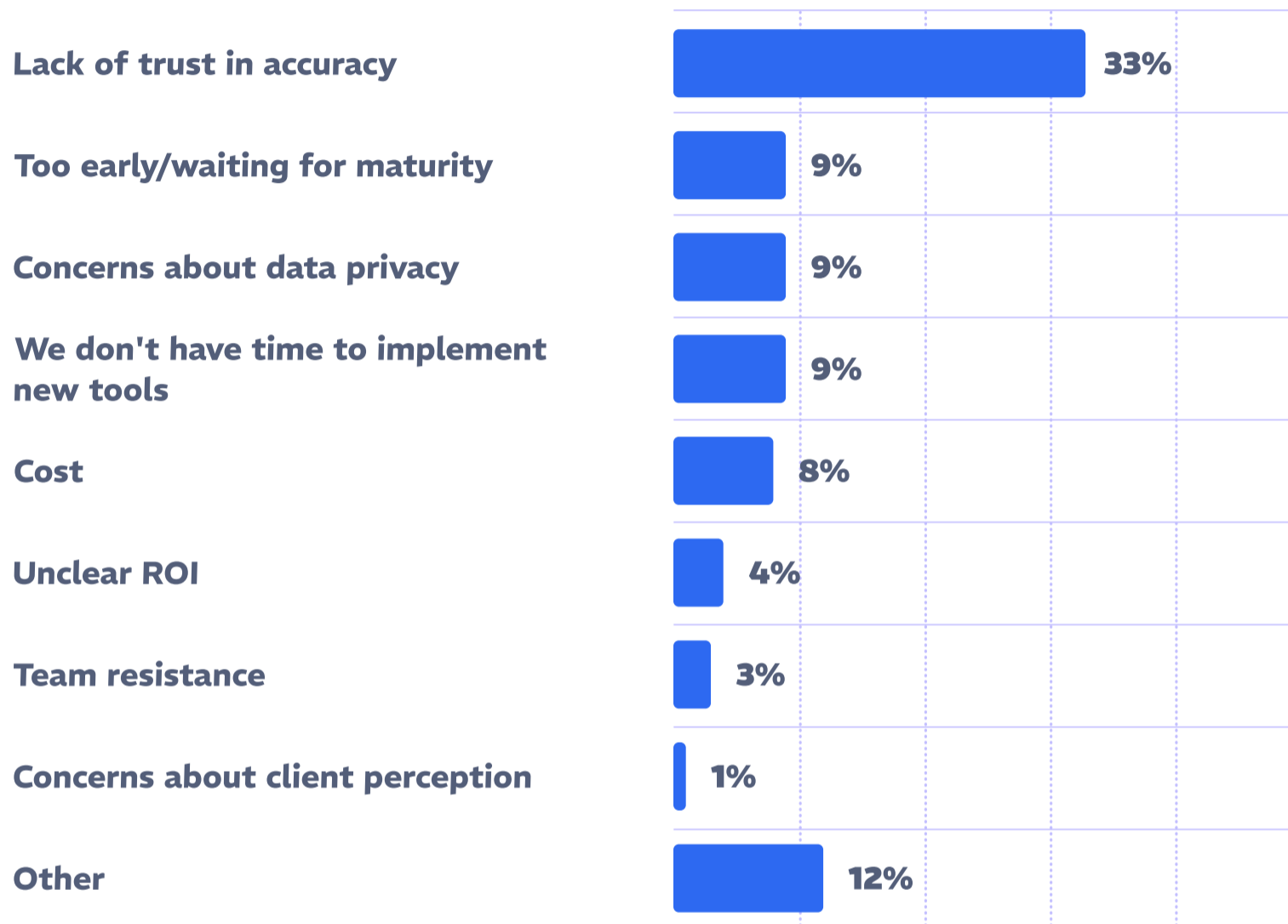
How would you like to use AI in practice, now or in the future?



Practices largely want more of what they're already using AI for: medical records/SOAP creation, summarizing records, and diagnostic assistance. But here's where it gets interesting: **41%** want AI for inventory management and **29%** want it for administrative tasks, but current adoption for those tasks sits at only **7%** today. They seem to appreciate AI for clinical uses and are now ready for it to help tackle operational issues, too.

AI Roadblocks

What's holding your practice back from trying AI tools?



When we asked those not using AI what's stopping them, lack of trust and waiting for maturity top the list.

“ There’s a lot of excitement—and some concern—about how AI is being used in the veterinary clinic. At Instinct, the AI tools we’re launching are built on something unique we have: trusted, deeply vetted clinical content like Plumb’s, Clinician’s Brief, Standards of Care, and other evidence-based resources.

Caleb Frankel, Founder and CEO of Instinct Science

Tips For Implementing AI

1 Start with the most tedious paperwork.

See what administrative tasks are taking the most time away from patient care. Things like manually transcribing treatment sheets or doing SOAP notes are great candidates for AI that can deliver immediate value.

2 Pilot one application.

Once you identify your first AI initiative, make it as specific as possible (e.g., automated discharge summaries, AI-assisted medical records) and test it for 30-60 days with tech-savvy team members. This approach will help you understand how the new tech fits into your workflows before rolling out to the whole practice.

3 Build in medical oversight.

Don't let the fear of AI making a critical mistake scare you out of using it. Establish protocols for what gets auto-generated vs what requires manual documentation. Train your team on reviewing AI output for accuracy, especially for diagnostic interpretations.

4 Involve skeptics early.

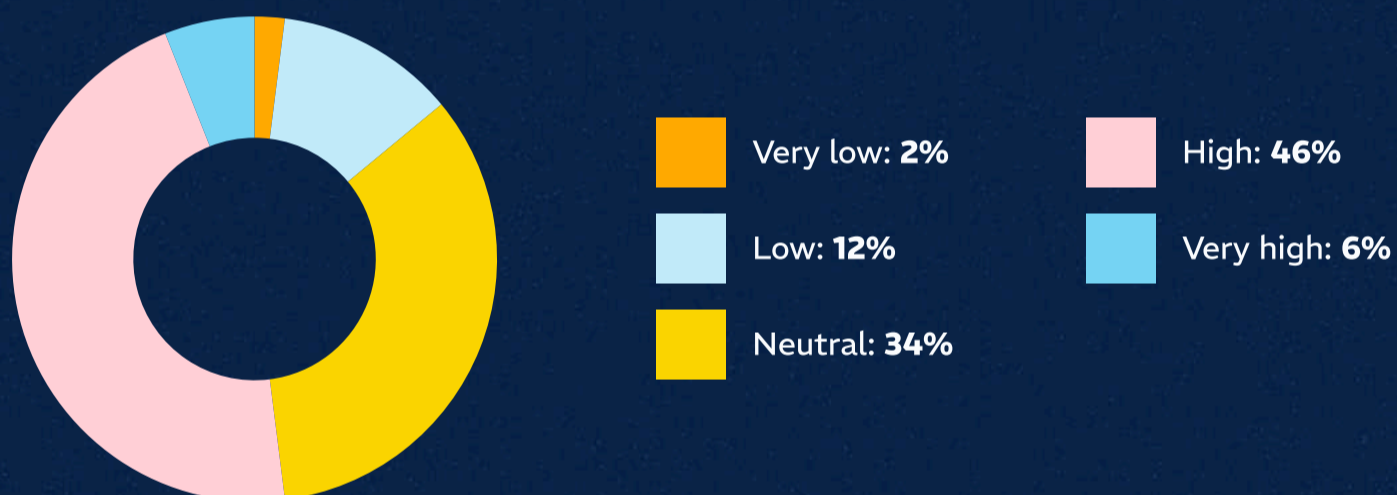
The most resistant team members often have legitimate concerns about workflow disruption. Address their concerns in your pilot and you'll create a strong advocate when you're ready to roll your AI initiative out widely.

The General Practice Workforce

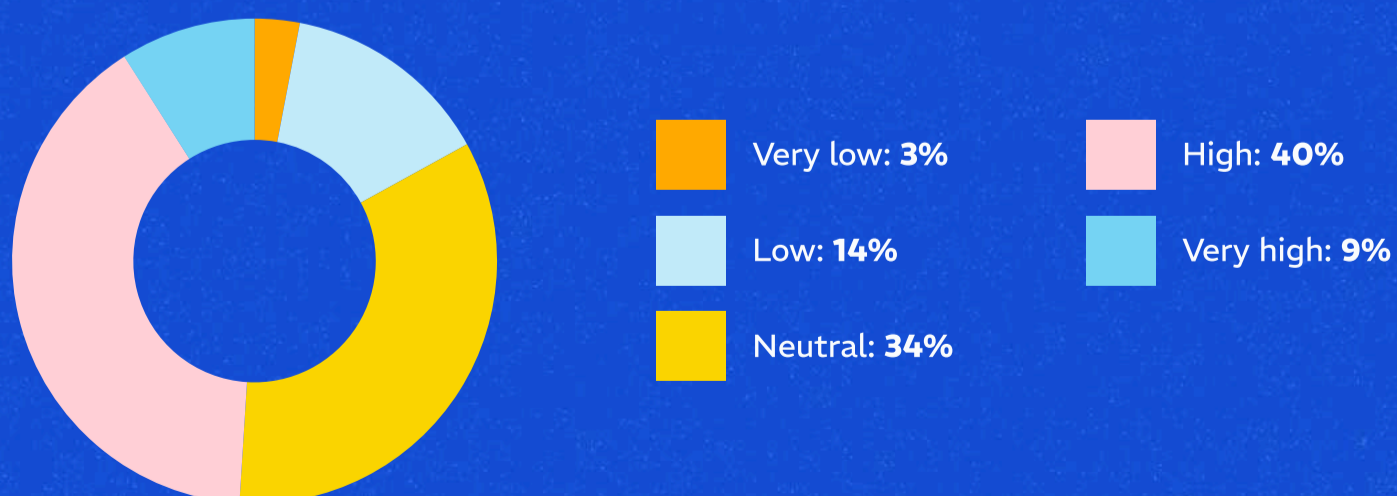
The workforce landscape for general practices is a mixed bag. Morale is good overall. In fact, GP professionals are happier than their veterinary ER counterparts (49% vs 36% high morale). But hiring technicians is still a big challenge, and retaining workers requires effort. Here's what the data reveals about current morale, turnover concerns, and how practices are taking care of their teams.

Team And Personal Morale

How would you rate your overall team morale?



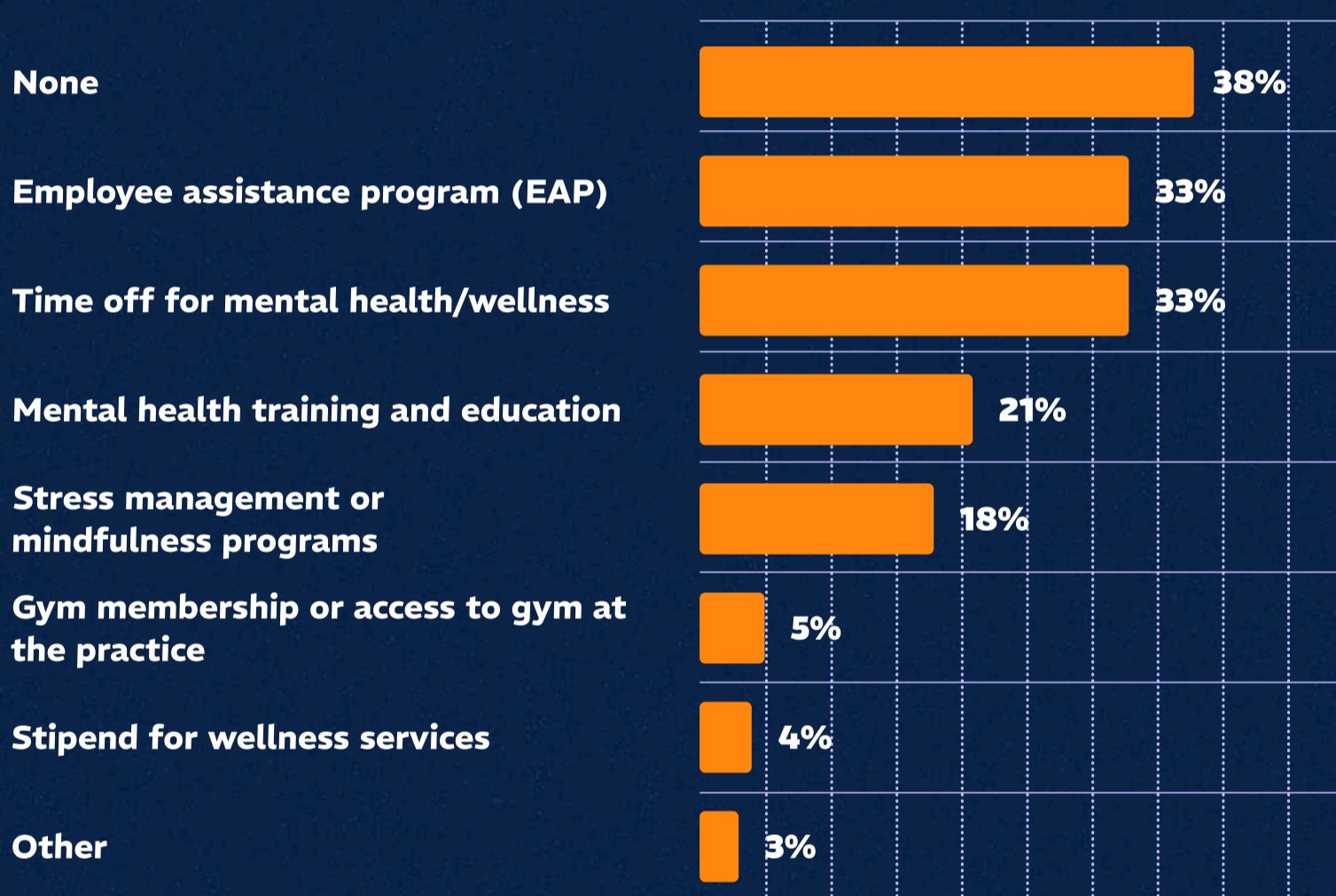
How would you rate your current job morale?



Despite the field's reputation for stress, morale is fairly high among veterinary professionals with only 14% reporting low team morale and only 17% saying their own morale is low. Morale levels are consistent across veterinarians and technicians, with roughly half reporting high morale and one in five experiencing low morale.

Wellness Offerings

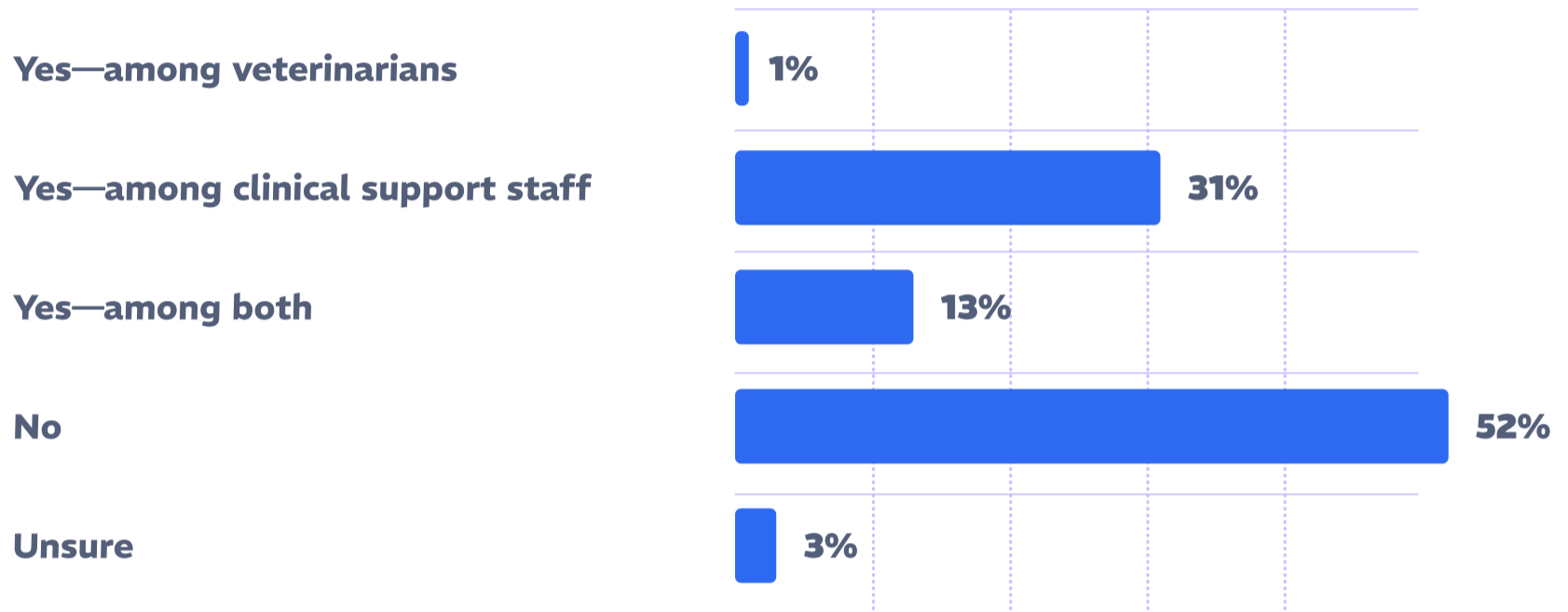
What types of wellness offerings does your practice provide?



Nearly 40% of practices offer no wellness programs, and more than half of those report low morale. The practices that do offer programs tend to focus on foundational support, like **EAPs (33%)** and time off for **mental health (33%)**.

Turnover Reality

Has your practice experienced significant staff turnover in the past year?

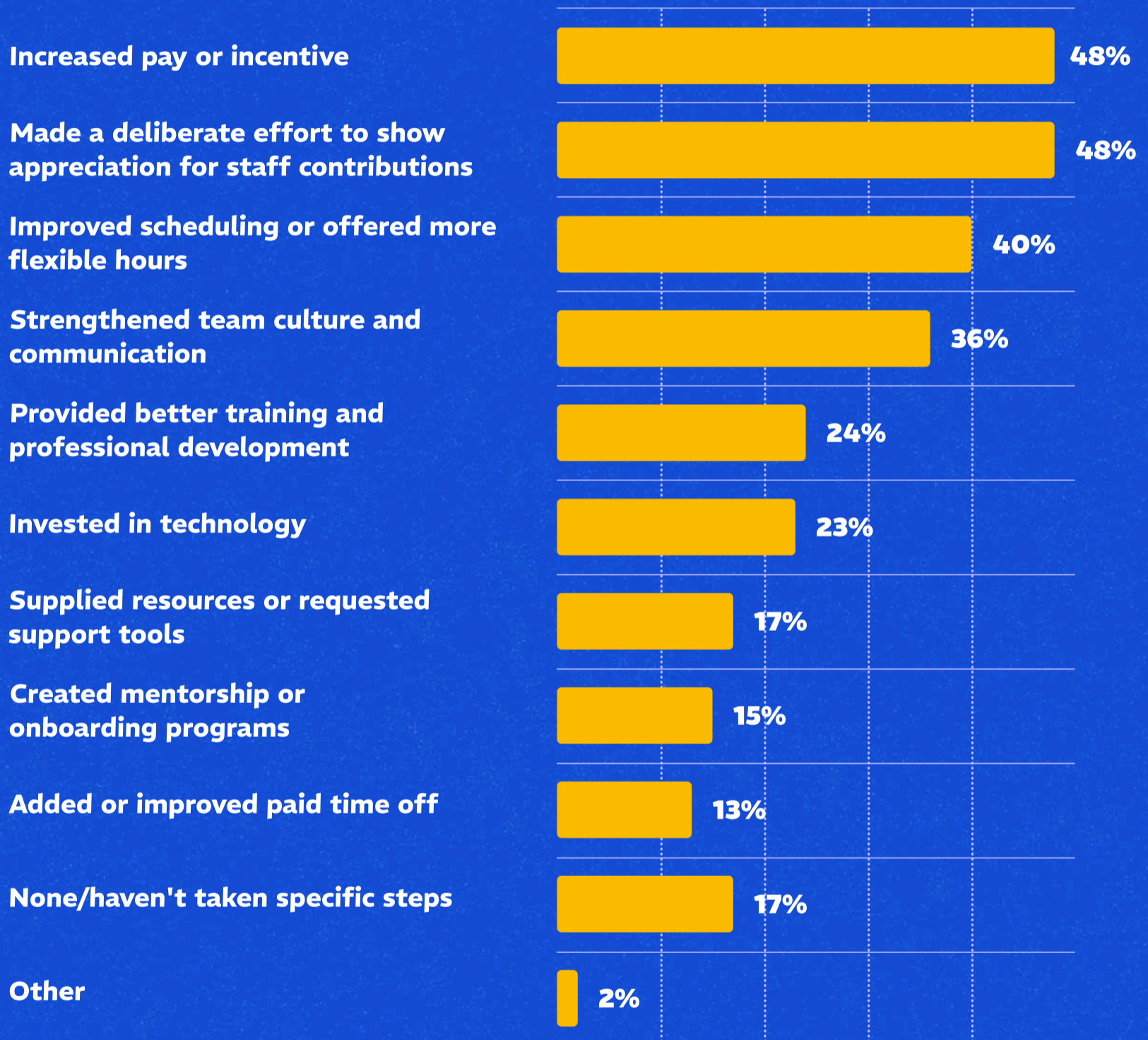


More than half of practices haven't seen significant turnover, but for those who have lost staff, it's clinical support staff—not veterinarians—who prove hardest to retain. Nearly a third of practices report losing nurses, technicians, or assistants.

Reinforcing these findings, qualified technicians were the hardest to bring on board in the last year: **79%** said that techs were difficult or somewhat difficult to hire.

Retention Strategies

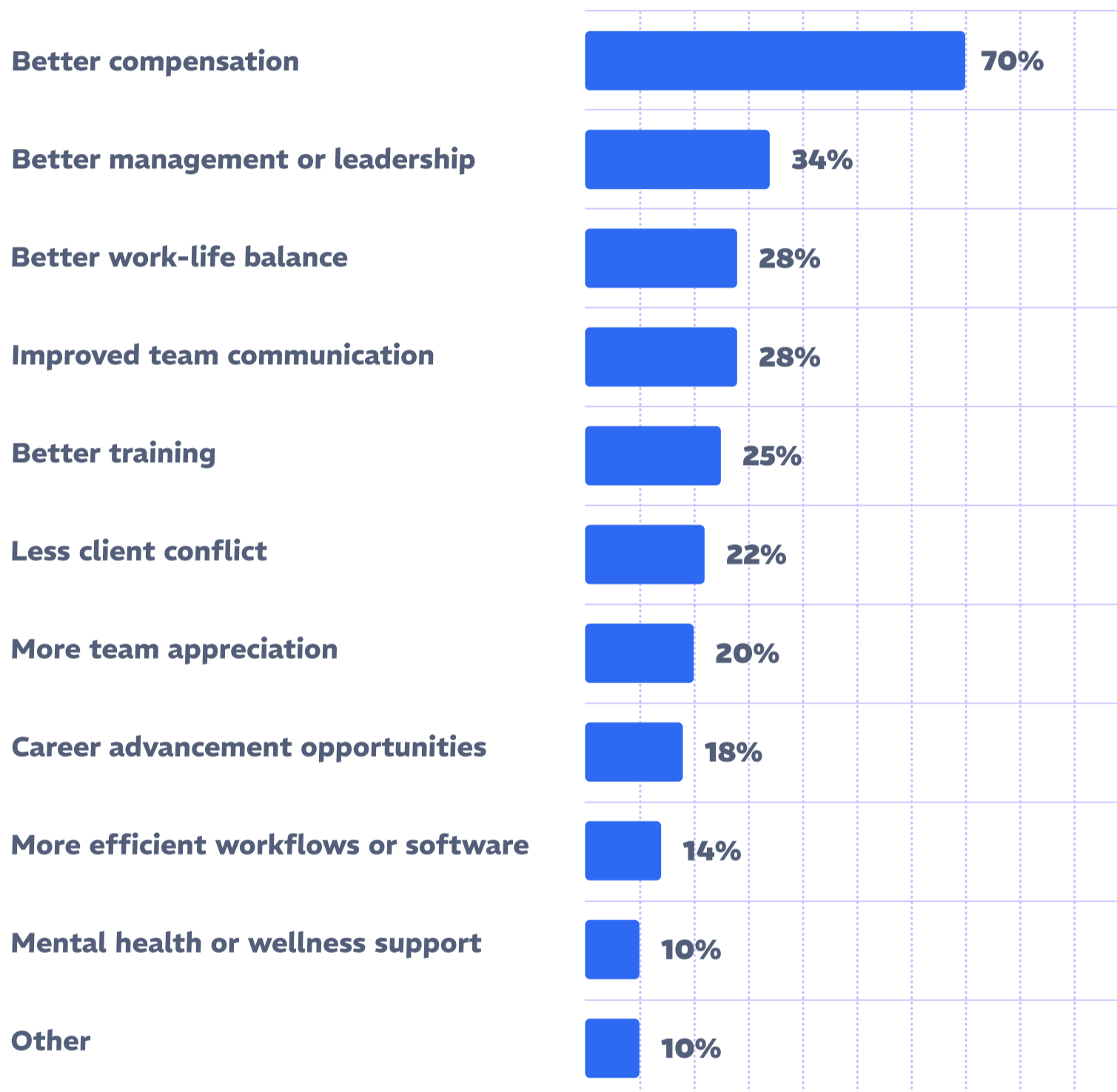
Which of the following has your practice done to attract or retain staff in the past year?



The vast majority of practices (**83%**) have implemented at least one retention strategy, with increased pay and showing appreciation tied at **48%** each. Improved scheduling and flexible hours was almost as common, with **40%**.

Retention Strategies

Which of the following do you believe would most improve staff retention in your practice?



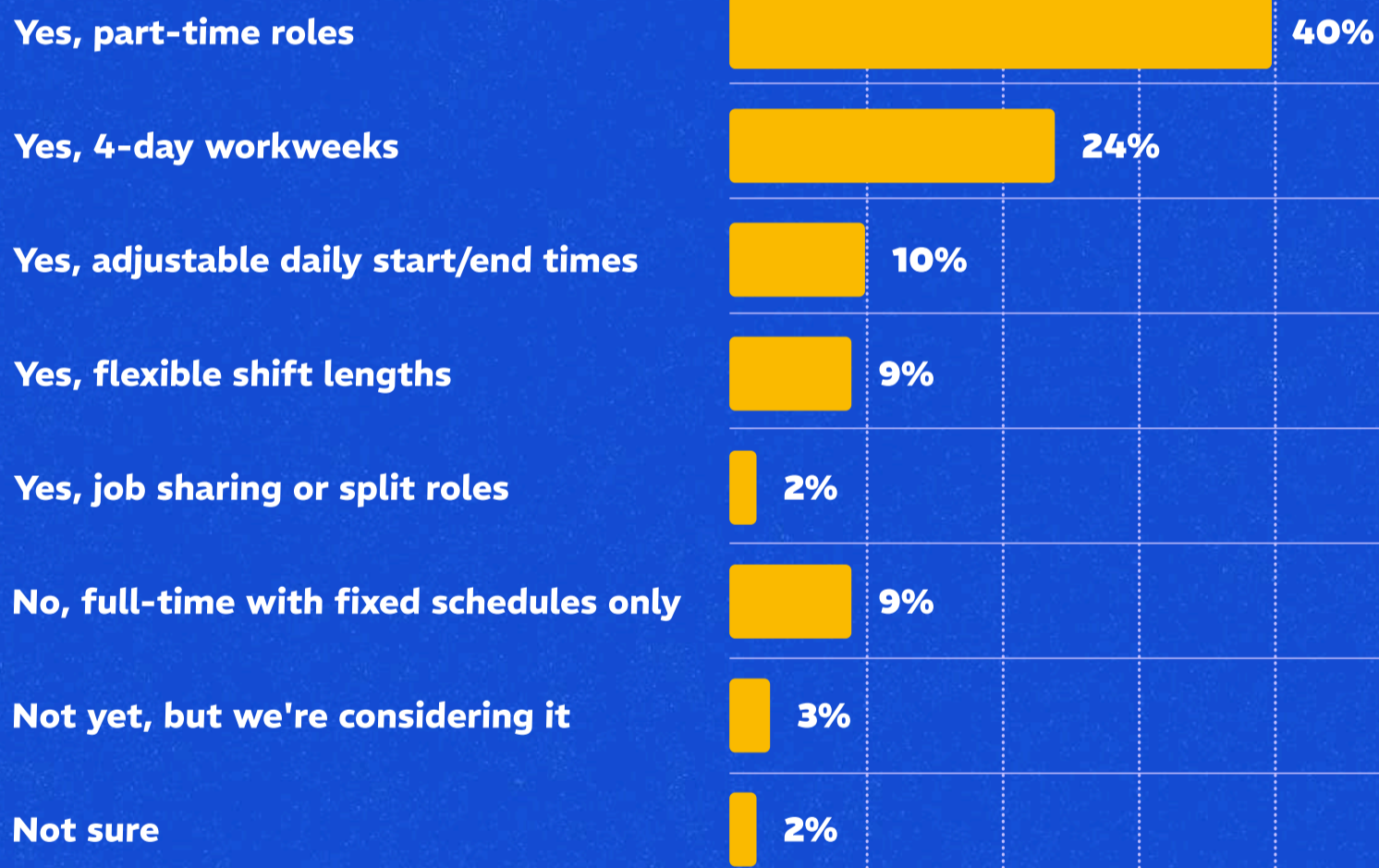
Compensation tops the wishlist: **70%** said it would improve retention, but only **48%** actually increased pay last year. This suggests financial constraints might limit what practices can offer. Interestingly, only **20%** said more team appreciation would improve retention, but it was the top retention strategy practices employed last year. Probably because, unlike pay raises, appreciation doesn't strain budgets.

Workplace Flexibility

Flexible scheduling has become expected in general practices, but implementing it can be difficult amidst staff shortages and client demands. Here's where practices stand on flexibility today.

Flexible Work Options

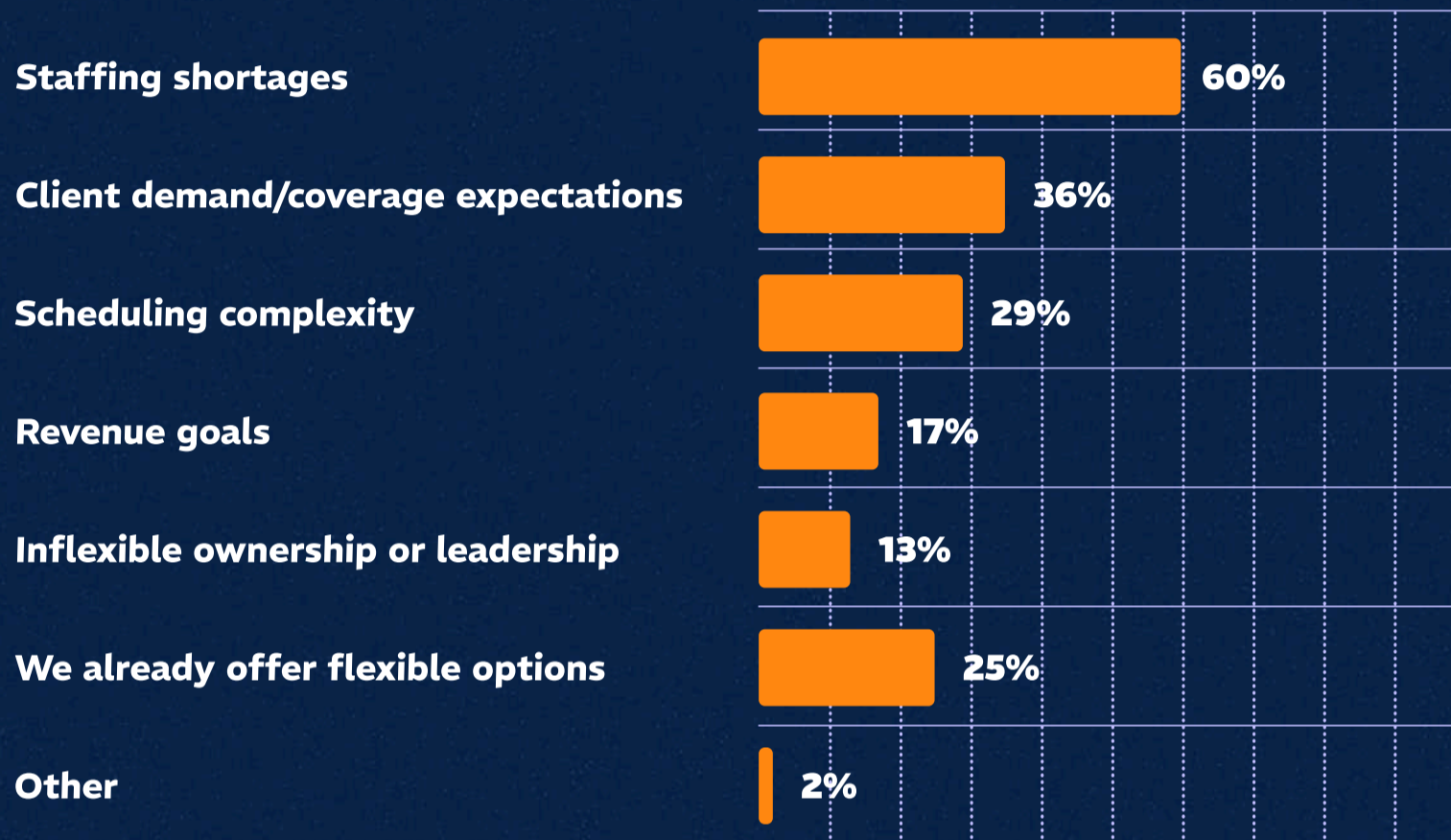
Does your practice offer flexible scheduling or part-time options?



The traditional full-time fixed schedule model is becoming less common; only **9%** still operate that way. Most practices now offer some flexibility—**40%** have part-time roles and nearly a quarter offer a four-day workweek. Flexibility is becoming a key element of practice management.

Barriers To Flexibility

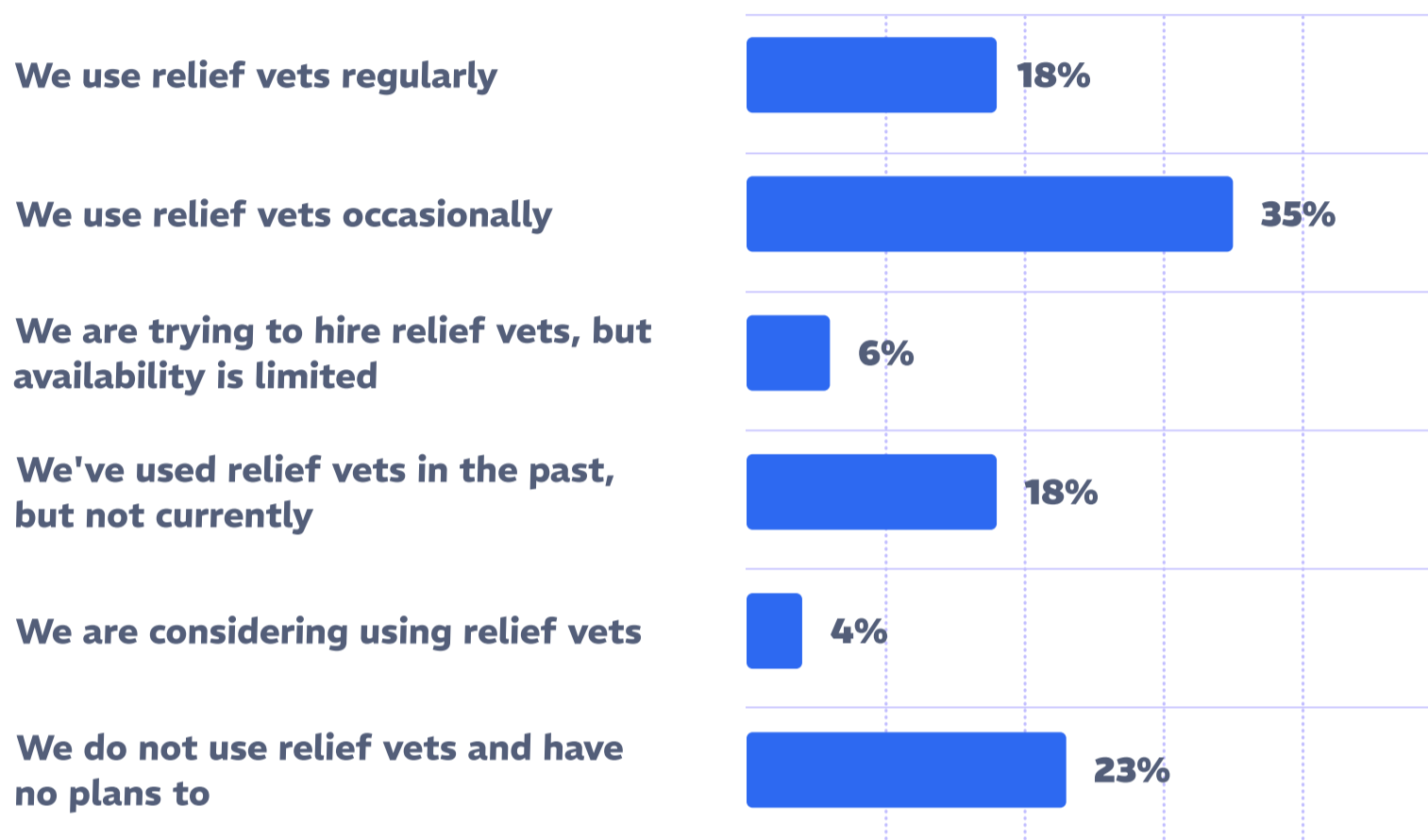
What is the biggest barrier to offering more flexible scheduling at your practice?



Practices want to offer flexible scheduling, but **60%** say they don't have enough staff to implement it. Another **36%** say client and coverage expectations get in the way, again indicating they don't have enough people to fully staff the office on a flexible schedule.

Relief Veterinarian Usage

How does your practice currently use relief veterinarians?



Relief vets are a common solution for more than half of practices; **18%** use them regularly and **35%** use them occasionally. Relief coverage can offer a flexible solution to alleviate staffing shortages while giving full-time staff a break.

Conclusion: Taking Care Of Caretakers In 2026

While morale is generally good, pressures for general practice veterinary clinics are mounting. The practices that thrive in 2026 will be those who invest strategically in both technology and their teams. Here's how to get started:

Leverage technology to reduce the burden.

Useful technology will help employees reclaim their time and work more efficiently—AI for documentation, digital client communication, streamlined inventory management. Our research shows that many practices have room to employ technology (especially AI) to lessen the load of administrative tasks that keep teams from doing the work they love.

“Software will increasingly automate the tedious parts—billing, compliance checks, typing, clicking, double-checking—so clinicians can focus on what they actually love: talking with clients and practicing medicine.

No one went to vet school to be a data-entry clerk. If we do this right, the future of veterinary software will help keep people happy, fulfilled, and in the profession longer.

Caleb Frankel, Founder and CEO of Instinct Science



Focus on comprehensive retention strategies.

Compensation matters a lot, but it's not the only thing that keeps people in a job. Teams also want flexible scheduling, opportunities to grow, and a culture where their contributions are recognized. This is especially critical for technicians, who have the highest turnover. Sustainable staffing ratios, professional development opportunities, and recognition can make the difference between staying and leaving.

The practices that invest in their people and the tools that support them will be positioned to thrive through 2026 and beyond.



About Instinct

“ At Instinct, we want to arm veterinarians with critical information, reduce cognitive load, and prevent errors—even on the most exhausting days. Our goal goes far beyond what traditional practice management systems aim to do. We want to protect clinicians and elevate care.

Caleb Frankel, Founder and CEO of Instinct Science

Instinct is an animal health technology company on a mission to transform veterinary medicine through thoughtfully designed software and essential clinical resources that support veterinarians in delivering lifesaving, compassionate care.

Serving over 360,000 veterinary professionals worldwide, Instinct brings together innovative software with trusted clinical tools like Standards of Care, Plumb's, and Clinician's Brief—resources that veterinary teams rely on every day to make critical, informed care decisions.

Founded in 2017 by Dr. Caleb Frankel, an experienced emergency room veterinarian, Instinct empowers veterinary hospitals with the tools to enhance patient outcomes, boost team efficiency, and support continuous learning and professional growth. Through its technology and unique industry expertise, Instinct is redefining what's possible in veterinary medicine, committed to making life easier and care better for veterinary teams and the animals they serve.

For more information, connect with us on LinkedIn @Instinct or visit instinct.vet.

About User Evidence

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These principles guide all research efforts at UserEvidence—whether working with a vendor’s users for our Customer Evidence offering, or industry practitioners in a specific field for our Research Content offering. The goal of these principles is to give buyers trust and confidence that you are viewing authentic and verified research based on real user feedback, without interference, bias, and spin from the vendor.

1 Identity Verification

In every study we conduct, UserEvidence independently verifies that a participant in our research study is a real user of a vendor (in the case of Customer Evidence) or an industry practitioner (in the case of Research Content). We use a variety of human and algorithmic verification mechanisms, including corporate email domain verification (i.e., so a vendor can’t just create 17 Gmail addresses that all give positive reviews), and pattern-based bot and AI deflection.

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UserEvidence Research Principles

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4 Transparency

We believe research should not be done in a black box. For transparency, all UserEvidence research includes the statistical N (number of respondents), and buyers can explore the underlying blinded (de-identified) raw data and responses associated with any statistic, chart, or study. UserEvidence provides clear citation guidelines for clients when leveraging research that includes guidelines on sharing research methodology and sample size.

