

Staff Shortages in Social Services across Europe



The Social Employers
January 2022

Context

Staff shortages appear more and more to be the main concern for many social services employers, this especially since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Social Employers launched a survey within its network in early January 2022 to better understand and map the extent of current staff shortages. The survey was answered by 47 organisations from 20 EU countries + the United Kingdom and Norway.

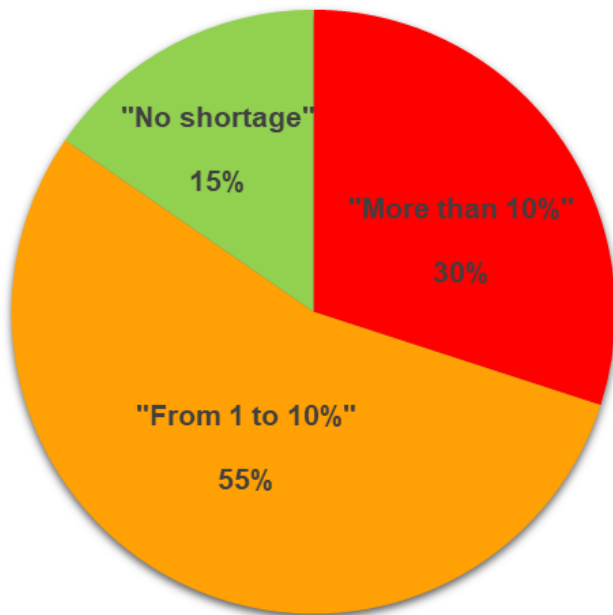
The key findings are presented below.

The Federation of European Social Employers is the voice of employers in the field of social services at European level and has, according to Eurofound, the most significant employer's representativeness in the private sector part of social services.

The Social Employers understand social services to comprise all care and support services, especially for older persons, persons with disabilities, children, and other excluded or disadvantaged persons.

1. State of play of staff shortages in early 2022

Rate of staff shortages in terms of unfilled job positions

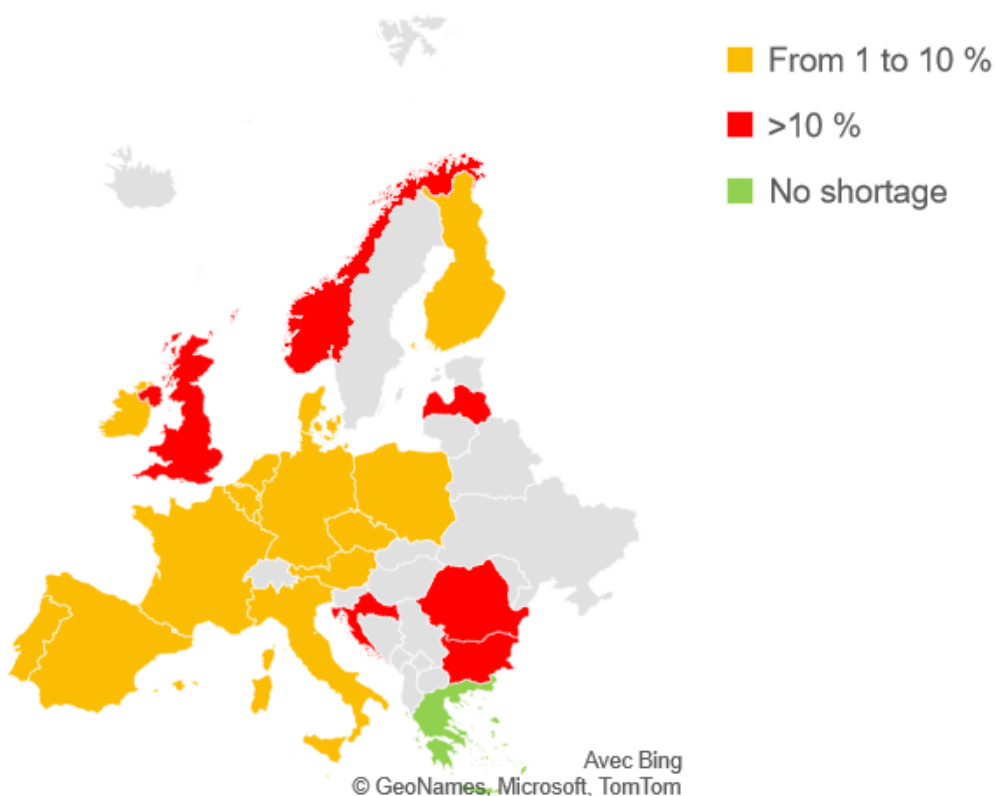


85% of respondents report facing staff shortages.

Close to 1/3 (30%) of respondents report strong staff shortages of more than 10% of unfilled job positions.

15% of respondents consider they don't face staff shortages.

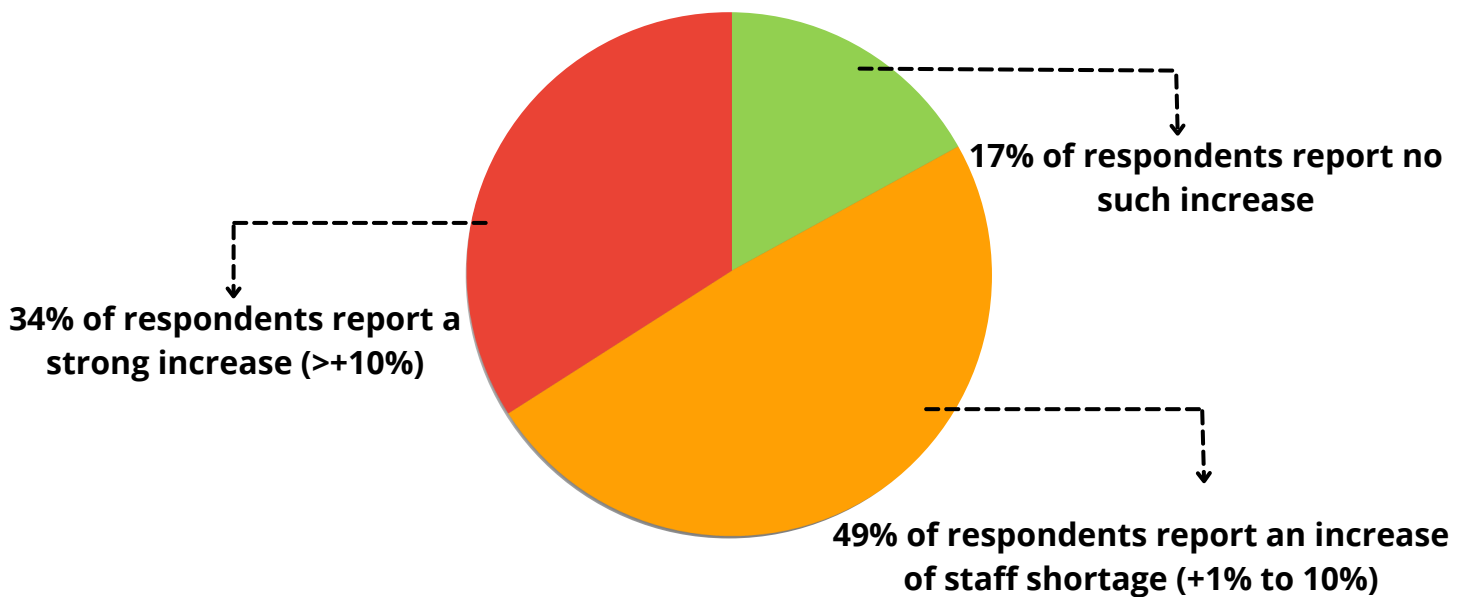
Rate of unfilled job positions in social service across Europe



For most of the EU countries, respondents (13) report that they currently face a rate of unfilled job positions ranging between 1 to 10% (Malta, not visible on the map, is in the same situation), 4 EU and 2 non-EU countries face strong staff shortages of over 10% unfilled job positions, while Greece faces none.

2. Evolution of staff shortages since 2021

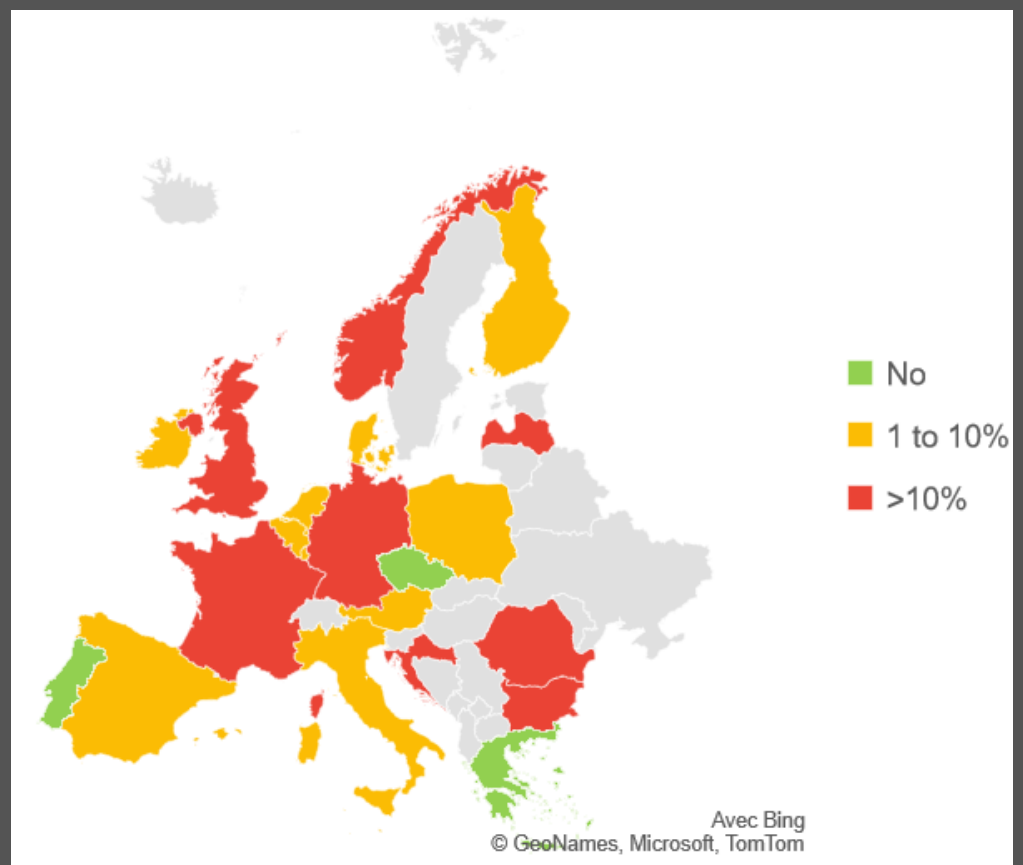
Staff shortages evolution in European social services since 2021



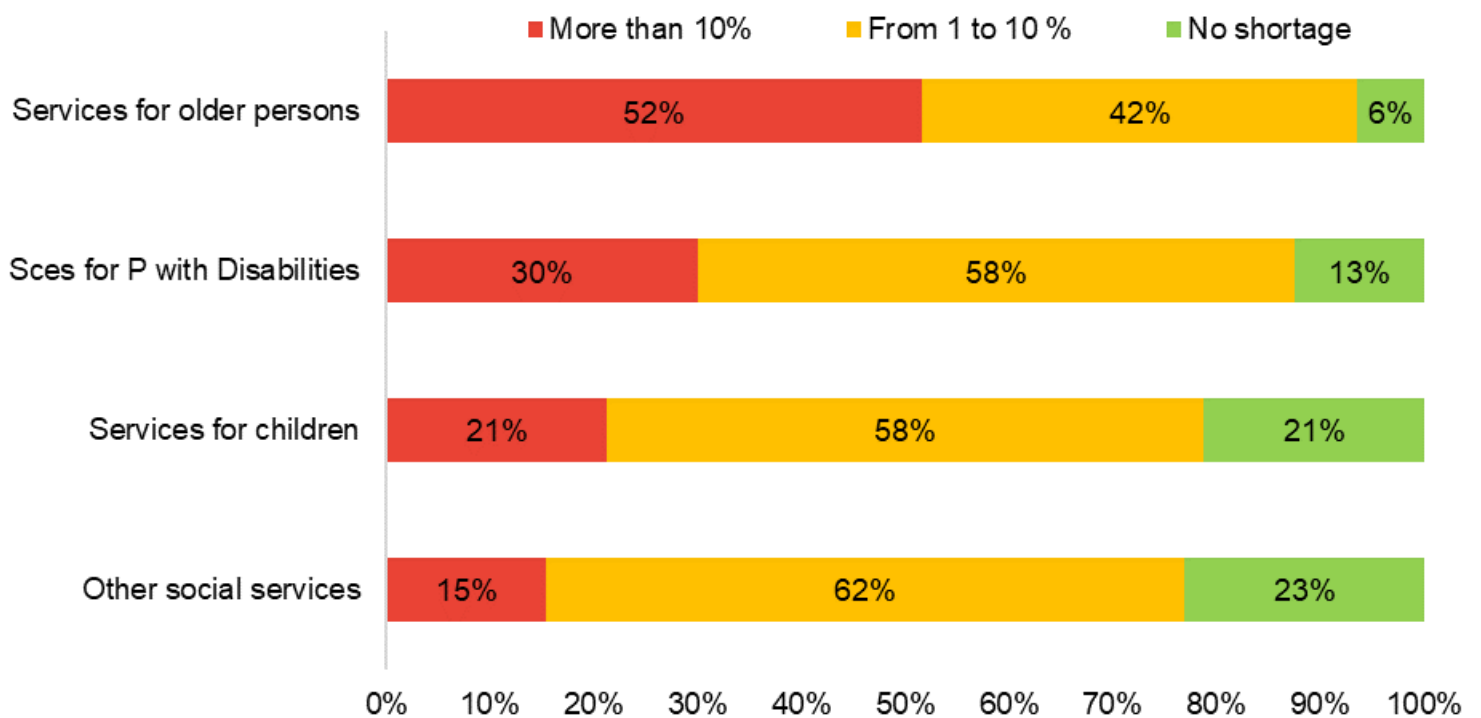
In comparison with 2021, are staff shortages increasing?

Out of the 20 EU countries and 2 other European countries for which answers were collected, 19 report an increase of staff shortages since early 2021 while 3 do not report any increase of staff shortages.

Malta (not visible on the map) faces an increase from 1 to 10%.



3. Are some sectors more concerned than others?

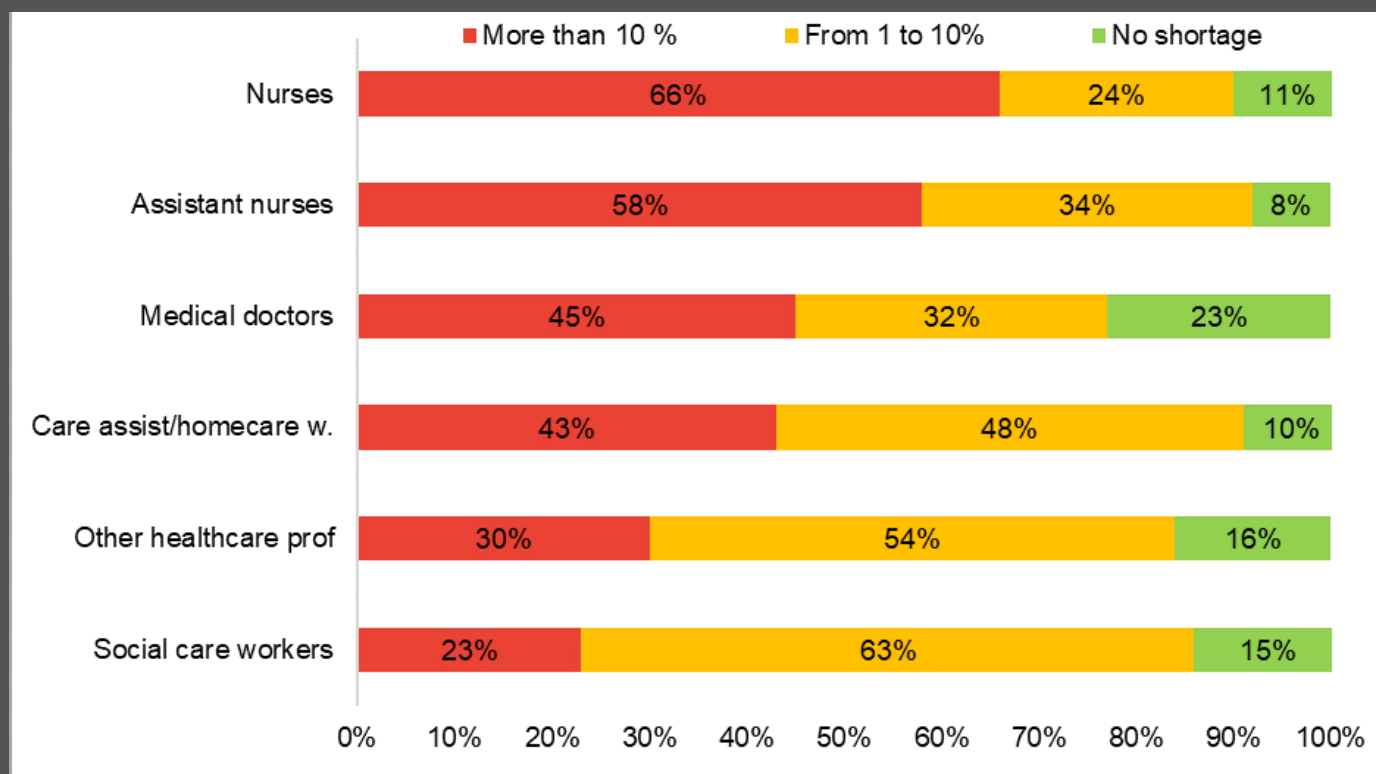


The survey results show that services for older persons are the most affected by shortages. In this sub-sector, 52% of respondents report a strong shortage with more than 10% unfilled job positions, while 42% report a smaller shortage of 1 to 10% of unfilled positions.

This sub-sector is followed by services for persons with disabilities and services for children where, respectively 88% and 79% of respondents report a shortage of either 1 to 10% or over 10% of unfilled positions.

For other social services, where many kinds of services can be found, 77% of respondents report shortages.

4. Which are the jobs the most concerned by staff shortages in European social services?



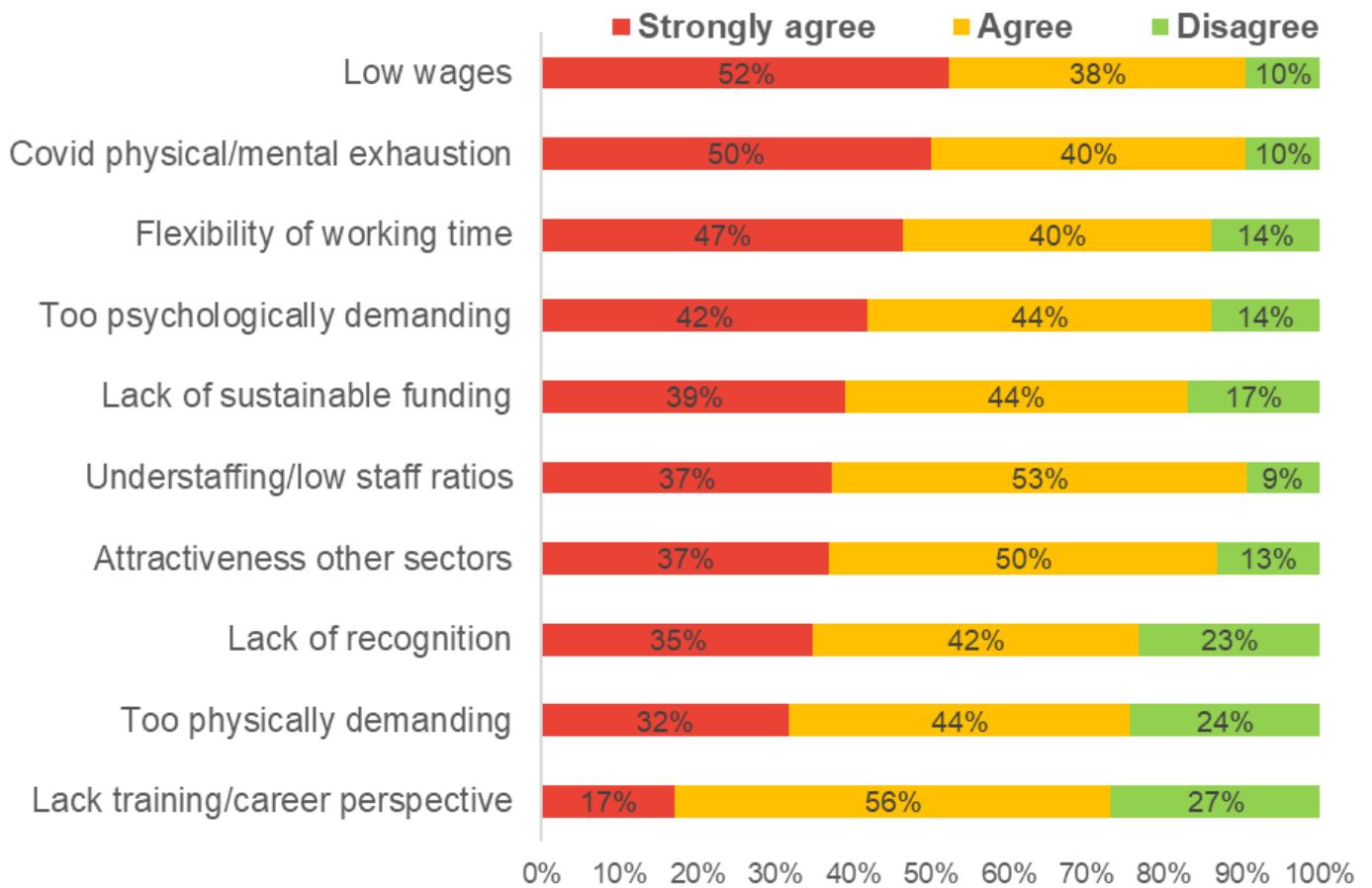
All the selected job positions reflect staff shortages.

Nurse is the job position the most affected by strong shortages, with 66% of respondents considering there is a strong shortage. Assistant nurses face comparable challenges.

Care assistants/homecare workers as well as other healthcare professionals and social care workers also face important shortages. When combining the answers "more than 10%" and "From 1 to 10%", more than 80% of respondents report a shortage for these professions.

Only half of respondents employ doctors, but they also face an important proportion of staff shortages of more than 10% (45% of respondents).

5. Why are workers leaving or not applying for positions in social services?



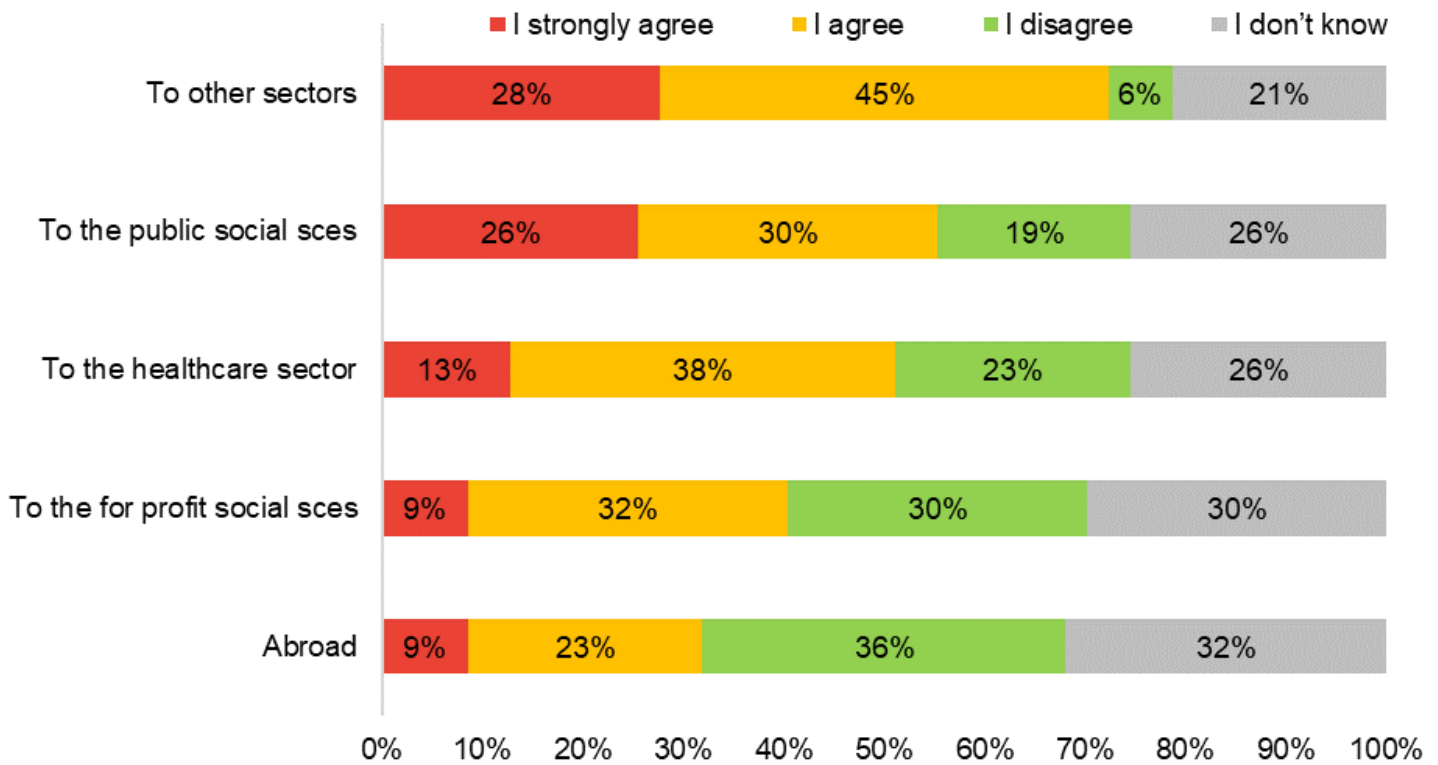
When ranking according to “strongly agree” answers, low wages appear to be the main cause for staff shortages. 52% of respondents strongly agree with the affirmation (and a total of 90% agree or strongly agree).

The 2nd most common reason is physical and mental exhaustion linked to the pandemic. 50% of respondents strongly agree (and a total of 90% agree or strongly agree).

47% of respondents indicate they strongly agree that flexibility of working time and the constraints linked to it are an important reason for leaving or not entering the sector.

It needs to be highlighted that “Understaffing/low user/staff ratio” comes in first place if answers for strongly agree (37%) and agree (53%) are added up.

6. Where do the workers leaving the sector go to?



The surveyed employers indicate that many employees do not leave for a comparable position within the sector but choose working in another sector altogether. That would explain both the answer “to other sectors” and the 37% of respondents strongly agreeing with the attractiveness of other sectors as a cause of departure in the previous chart.

According to more than 50% of the employers responding, the public social services and the healthcare sector attract the social services workers.

In this chart, it must be highlighted that a high proportion of respondents declares not knowing for which sectors/professions workers leave.