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Workplace experiences and supports for pregnancy loss under 24 weeks: A national survey

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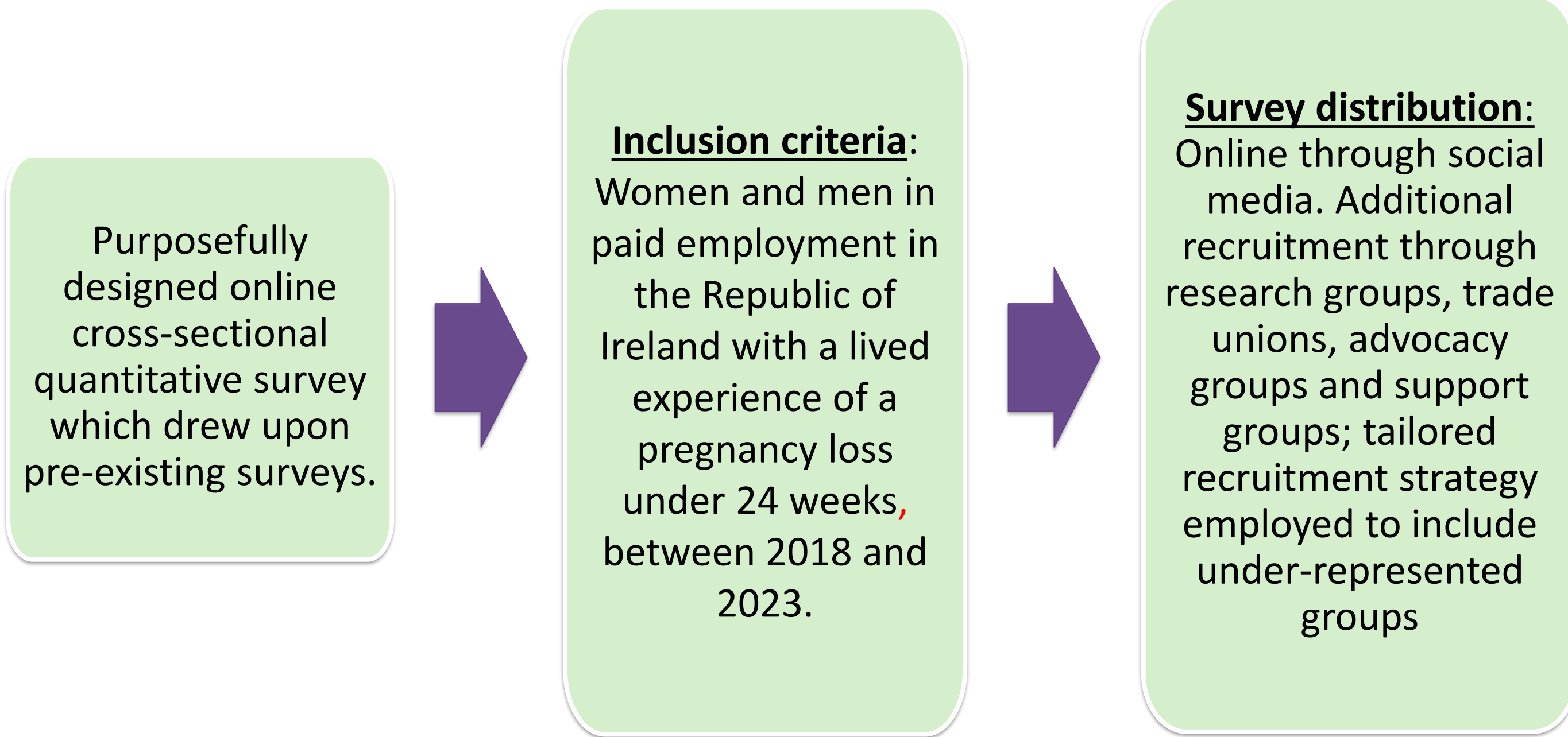


BACKGROUND

Pregnancy loss under 24 weeks is the most common complication of pregnancy and can have long-lasting physical and mental effects on individuals requiring supports that cover physical, psychological and social domains of care. Based on the 2022 Irish census, over two thirds of women aged 25-44 were in employment, therefore **pregnancy loss is an important workplace issue** as most people are in employment at the time of their pregnancy loss. In Ireland, currently there is no statutory leave entitlement for those who experience a pregnancy loss under 24 weeks gestation and access to leave after a pregnancy loss depends on an individual employer's policy. Additional supports beyond leave are also important in supporting individuals return to work after pregnancy loss.

The aim of this study is to quantitatively examine the workplace experiences of people following pregnancy loss before 24 weeks according to their workplace characteristics.

METHODS



Have you experienced a pregnancy loss?

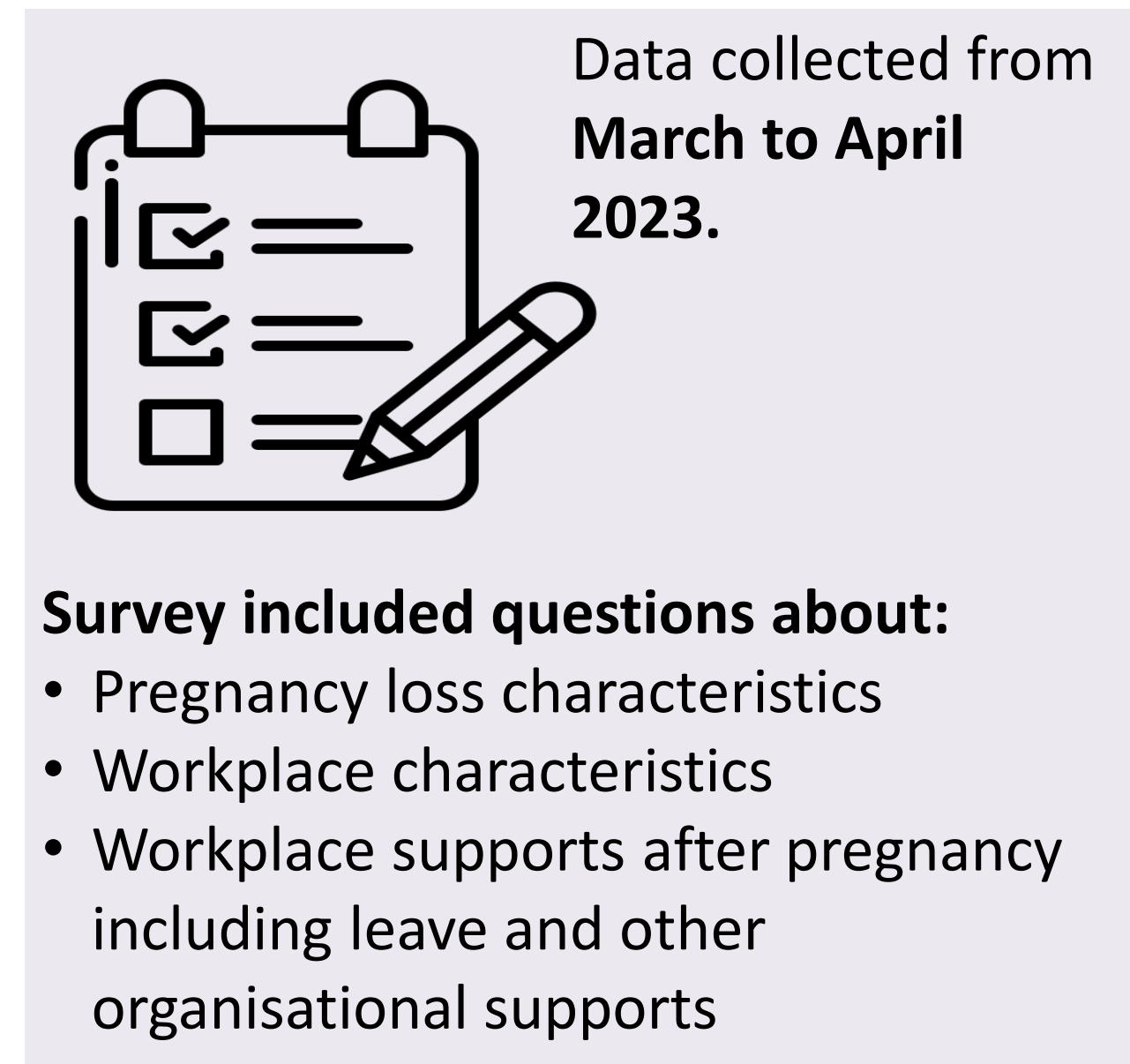
We want to hear from you

You are eligible to participate if:

- You are a woman or man over the age of 18
- You are living in Ireland
- You were in paid employment at the time of your loss
- You experienced this loss before 24 weeks of pregnancy
- This loss occurred within the last 5 years

Follow the link below or scan the QR code to take part in important research

<https://tinyurl.com/PLACES-Survey>



Data collected from March to April 2023.

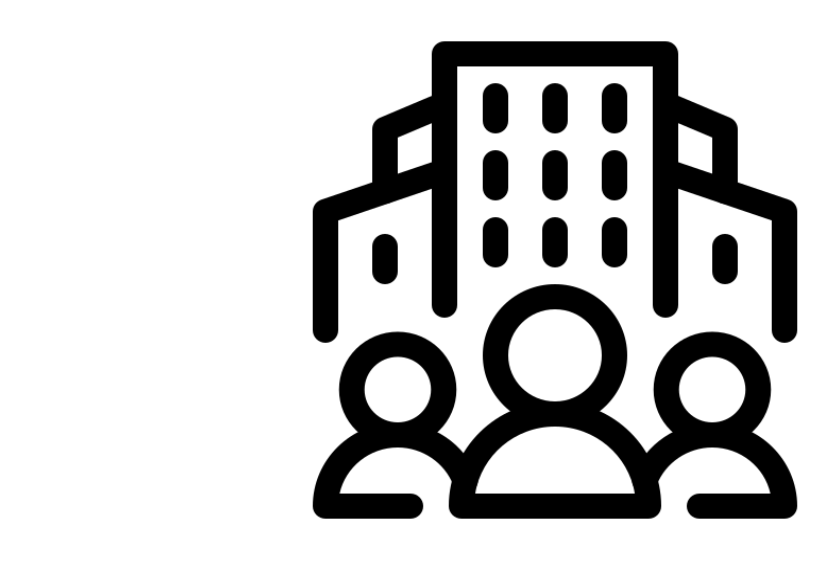
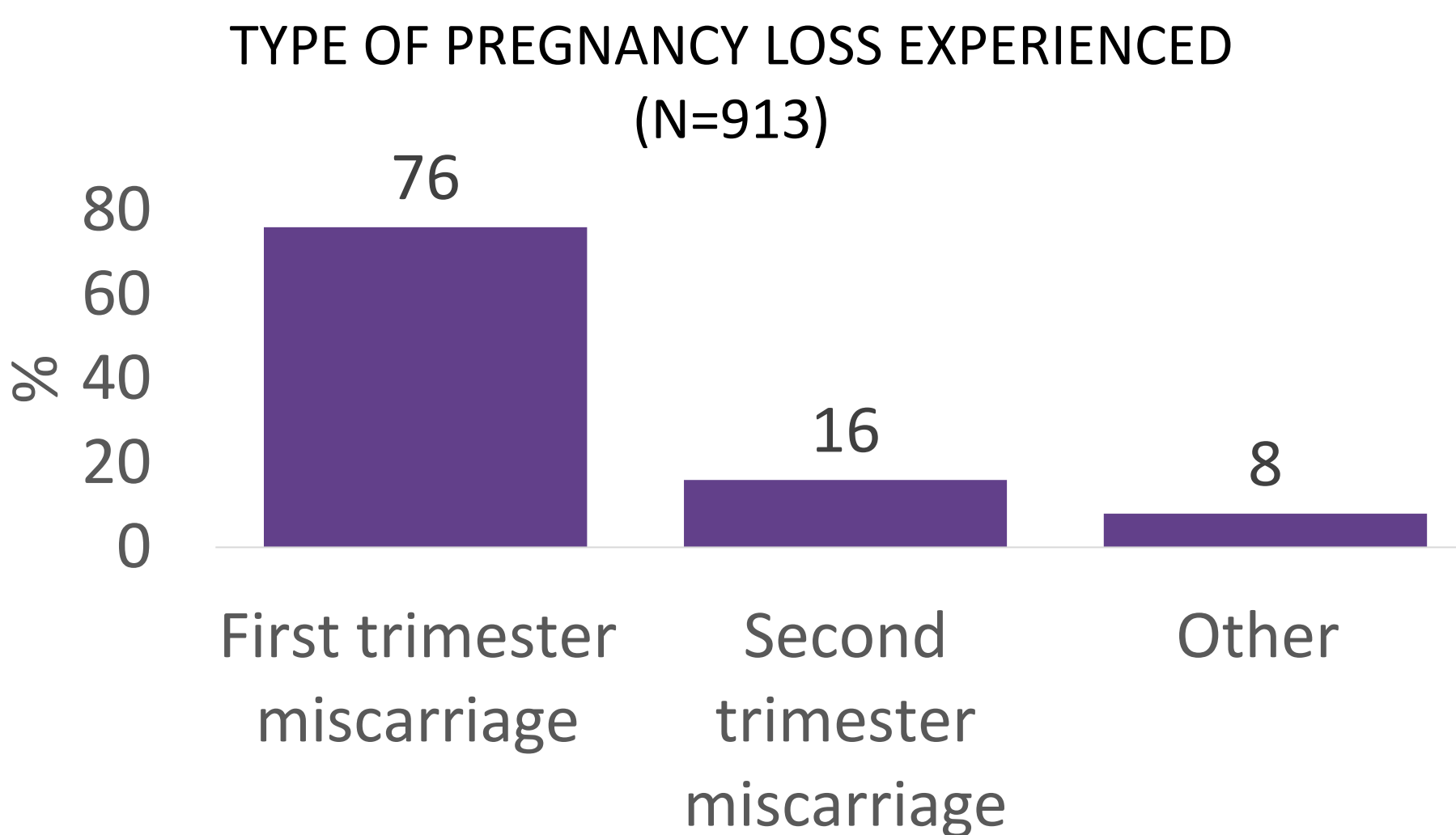
Survey included questions about:

- Pregnancy loss characteristics
- Workplace characteristics
- Workplace supports after pregnancy including leave and other organisational supports

RESULTS

Participant characteristics

- 913 responses were eligible for inclusion.
- 69% of participants were 35-44 years old.
- 95% carried the pregnancy themselves.
- 90% had post-secondary level education.
- Most (91%) participants were in full-time employment; 69% in the public sector, 30% in the private sector.

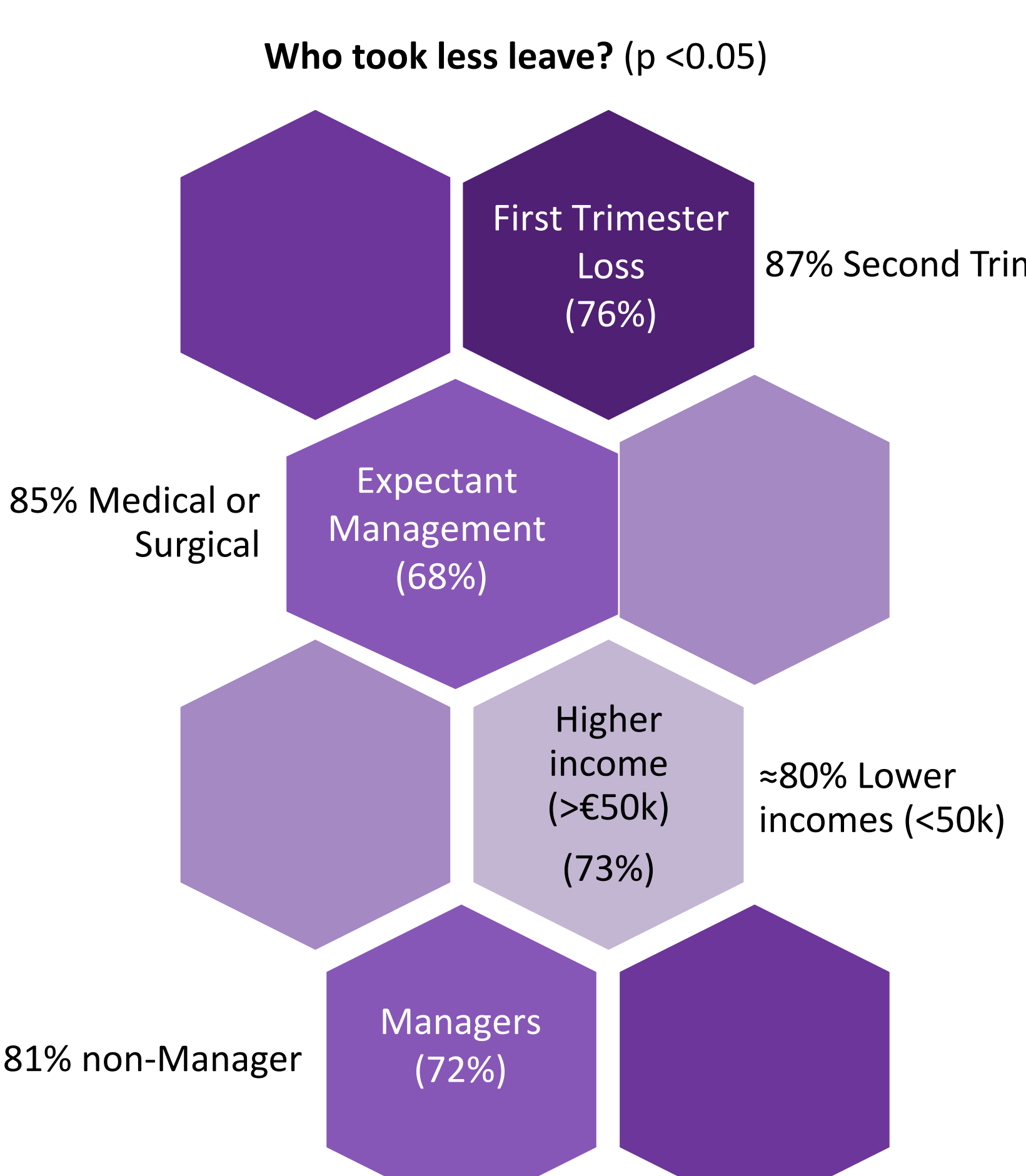


Participants' work characteristics:

- 28% were employed in education; 25% in healthcare or social work; 29% in the services industry; 6% in manufacturing or production.
- 30% were employed in managerial roles.
- 59% were employed in large businesses (>250 employees).
- 42% earned more than €50,000 per annum.

Supports at work: Leave

- Overall, 74% took leave following their pregnancy loss.
- 48% required certification to access leave.
- Sick leave was the most common type of leave taken (78%) with 15% taking unpaid leave from work and 12% using annual leave.
- 29% took 2-4 weeks from work following their loss.
- Not wanting to disclose the loss was the most common reason** for an immediate return to work (33%). Other common reasons included workload pressures (27%) and financial reasons (10%).

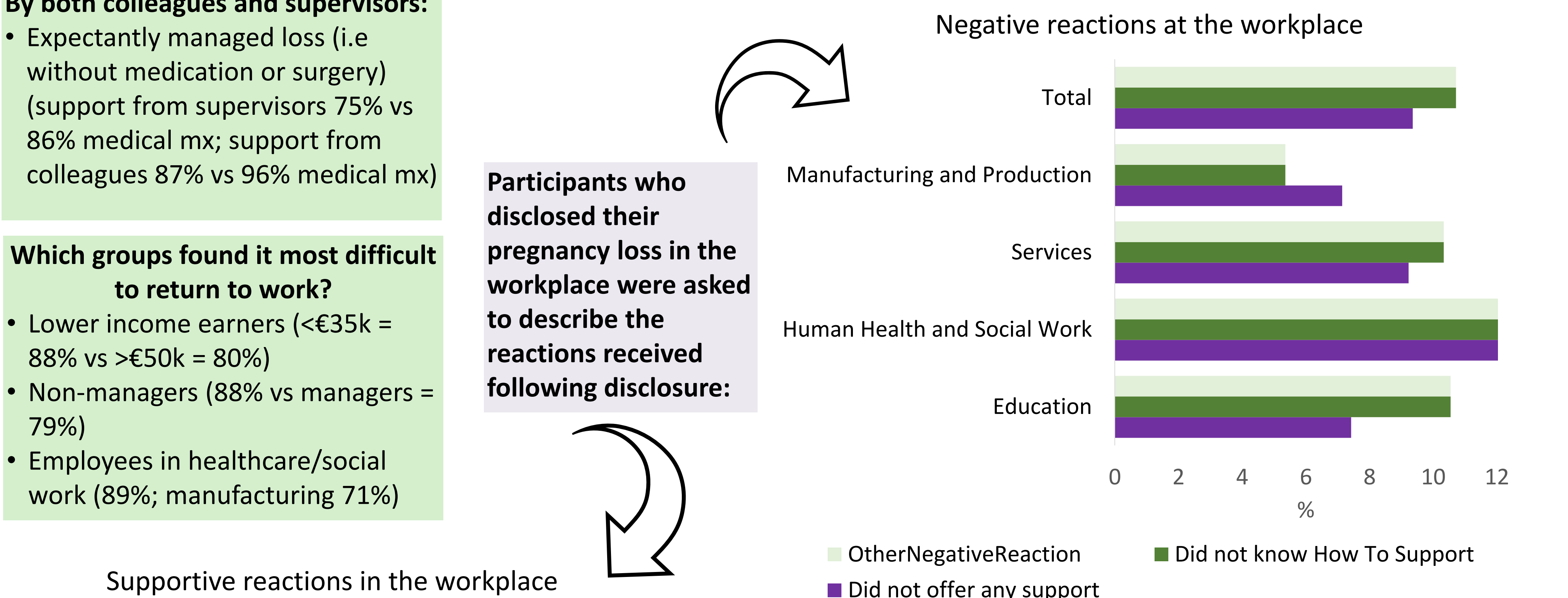
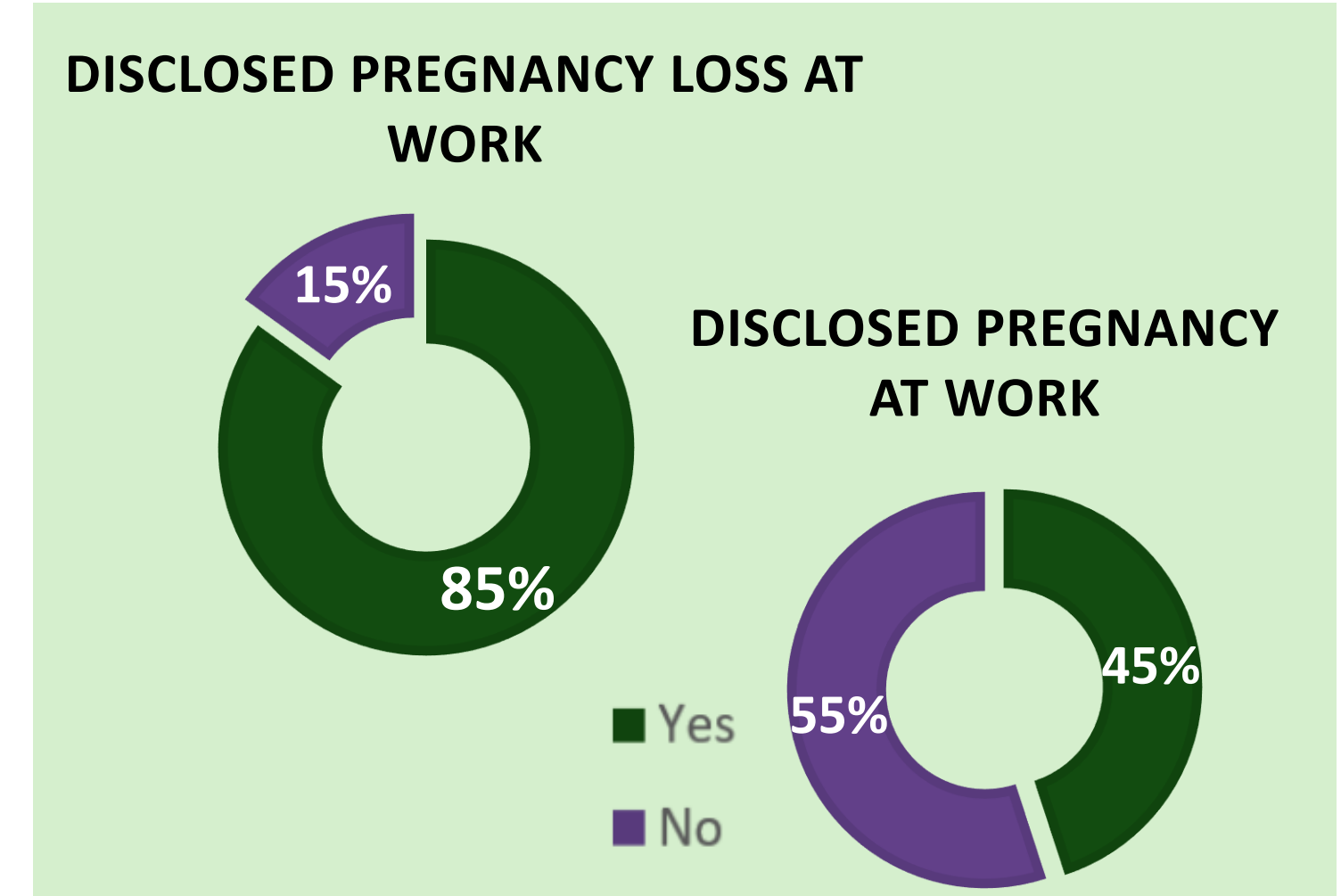
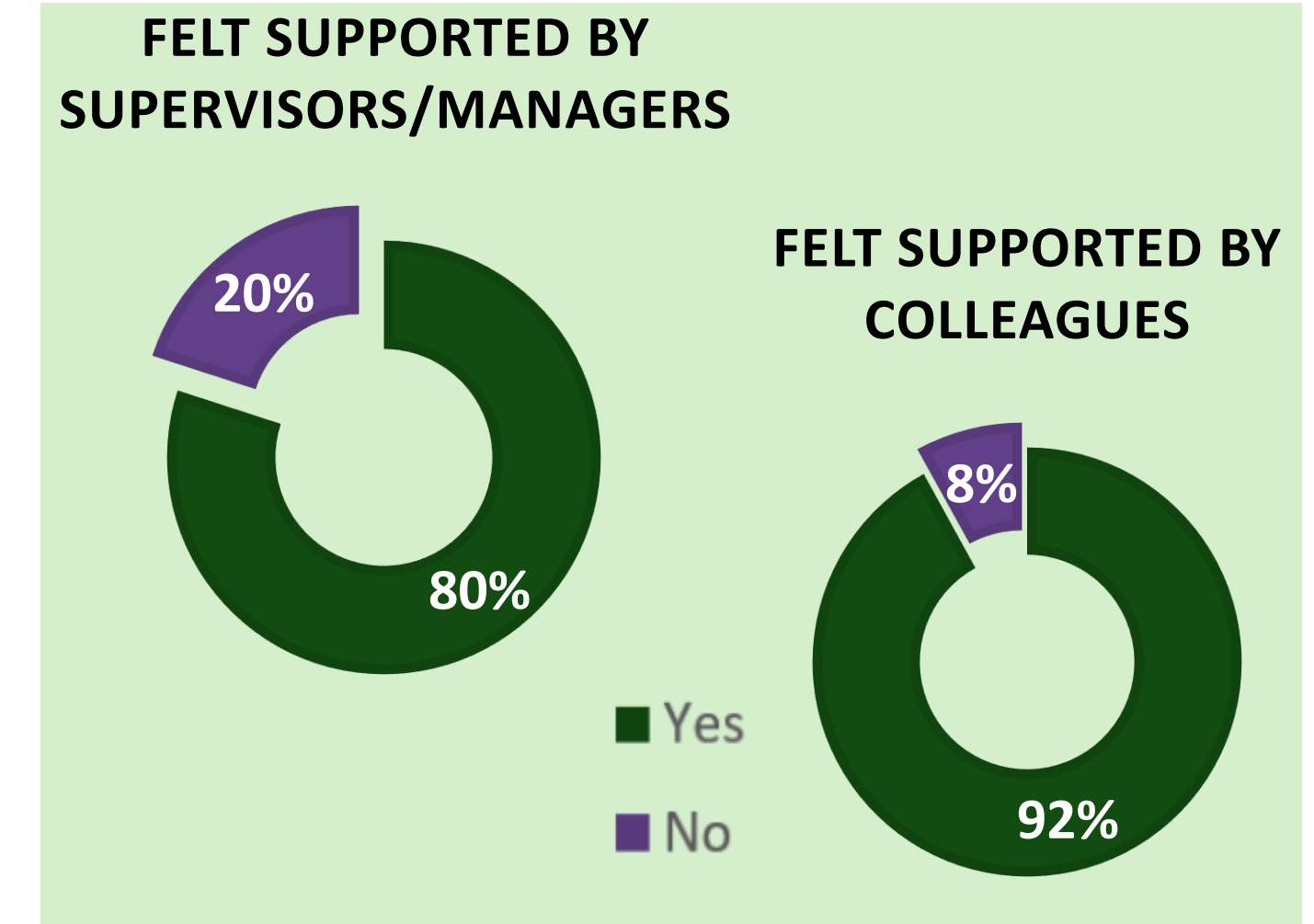


- No differences in leave taken was observed across employment activity, sector or contract type.
- 95% of participants said they would prefer to take leave that was specific to pregnancy loss under 24 weeks** were it available.
- Slightly fewer would avail of this leave if disclosure (87%) or certification (85%) were required.
- 98% believe this should be a statutory entitlement.**

RESULTS

Experiences at work

- Who felt less supported?**
- By colleagues:**
- Participants experiencing first trimester loss (89%, second trimester = 96%)
 - Employees in larger companies (>250 employees (90%, smaller companies = 94%)
- By managers/supervisors:**
- Lower income (<€35k) (69%; >€50k = 86%)
- By both colleagues and supervisors:**
- Expectantly managed loss (i.e without medication or surgery) (support from supervisors 75% vs 86% medical mx; support from colleagues 87% vs 96% medical mx)
- Which groups found it most difficult to return to work?**
- Lower income earners (<€35k = 88% vs >€50k = 80%)
 - Non-managers (88% vs managers = 79%)
 - Employees in healthcare/social work (89%; manufacturing 71%)



CONCLUSIONS

Significant barriers exist to people taking leave after pregnancy loss. A **leave that is specific to early pregnancy loss** is preferred which has important practical and symbolic benefits.

One in five do not feel supported at the workplace following pregnancy loss under 24 weeks. This may be more pronounced for **lower income earners and those in larger companies**.

The introduction of a pregnancy loss specific leave should be considered on a **statutory level** however supports should extend beyond leave and **supportive workplace policies and training** should be carefully implemented to best support individuals following pregnancy loss.