



# COVID-19 Unemployed Workforce Survey

**Workforce Development Board meeting  
April 12, 2021**



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# CSR project team



- **Neil Carlson**, Director  
*PhD, Political Science, Duke University, 2004*
- **Adriene Pendery**,  
Research & Development Manager  
*BS, Psychology, Calvin University, 2018*
- **Taylor Hartson**, Research Specialist  
*BA, Sociology, Calvin University, 2019*
- **Marcus Kamau**, Research Assistant  
*Major in Economics and International Relations  
Calvin University, class of 2022*



# Team distinctives

- Generalists in social research and data systems
- Learning focus on adaptability and collaboration
- Systems integration with client systems for sustained impact
- Rapid acquisition of subject-matter expertise
- Commitment to West Michigan community benefit
  - Individually
  - CSR team
  - Calvin University



# Research questions

Why is there an apparent **mismatch between supply and demand for talent** in a time of mass unemployment?

- How do unemployed or underemployed people perceive their **employment status**?
- Are they **actively looking** for work, or holding back?
- How do they rate **barriers** to working and to finding work?
- How likely would they be to use **new resources** that might be offered by employers and/or by the workforce development system?
- What are the **demographics** of the survey respondents?

# Survey methods

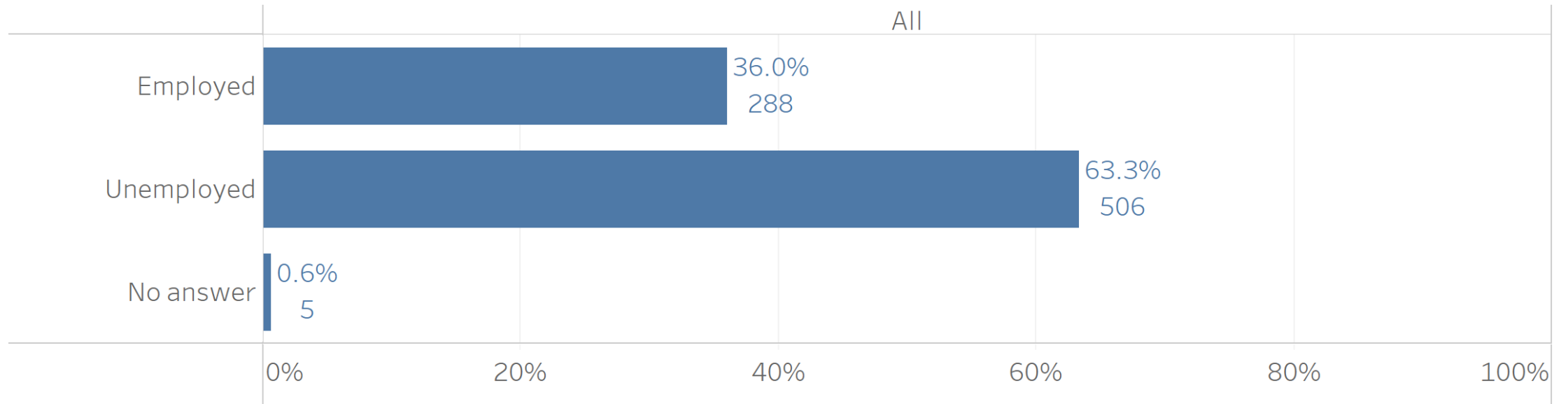
- Designed a 26-question survey questionnaire in Qualtrics
  - Welcome
  - Employment status
  - About your search for work
  - Barriers to work and potential new supports
  - About you
  - Closing comments
- Send email invitations and four reminders to a list of 9,787 people from West Michigan Works! sources.
- Received 792 responses between January 19 and March 2.
- Over half finished in under 8 minutes.

# Representativeness

**Table 2** Comparison of survey respondent demographics vs. regional demographics

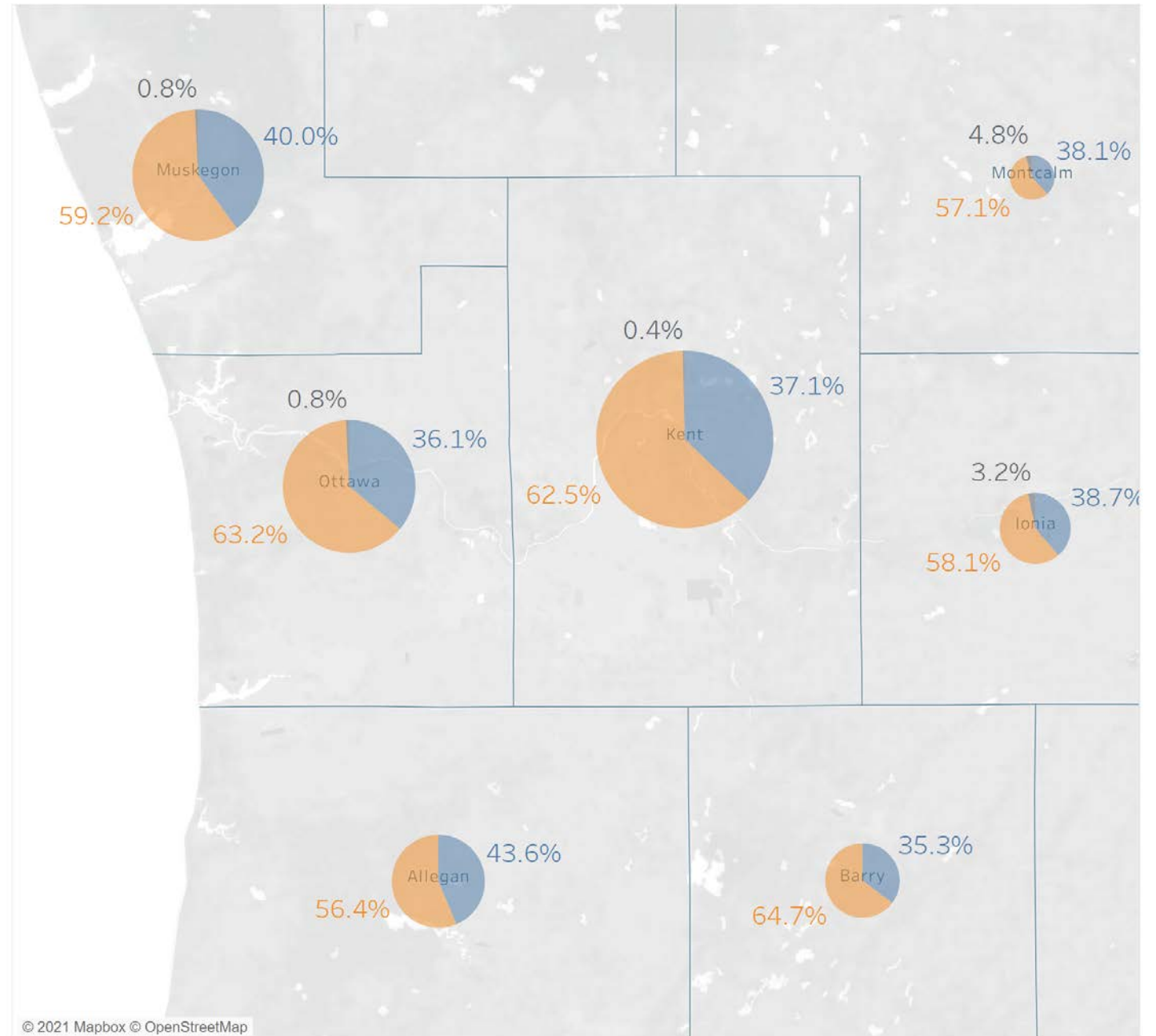
Demographic Characteristics	Survey %	Region %
County		
Allegan County	6.9%	8.3%
Barry County	4.3%	4.3%
Ionia County	3.9%	4.5 %
Kent County	34.4%	45.9%
Montcalm County	2.6%	4.5%
Muskegon County	16.3%	12.1%
Ottawa County	16.6%	20.4%
Race / Ethnicity		
White	73.0%	86.9%
Black or African American	7.4%	7.4%
Hispanic or Latino	5.3%	8.9%
Asian	0.8%	2.4%
Native American or Alaska Native	0.8%	0.7%
Multiracial	2.4%	2.5%

# Employment status



# Employment status by county map

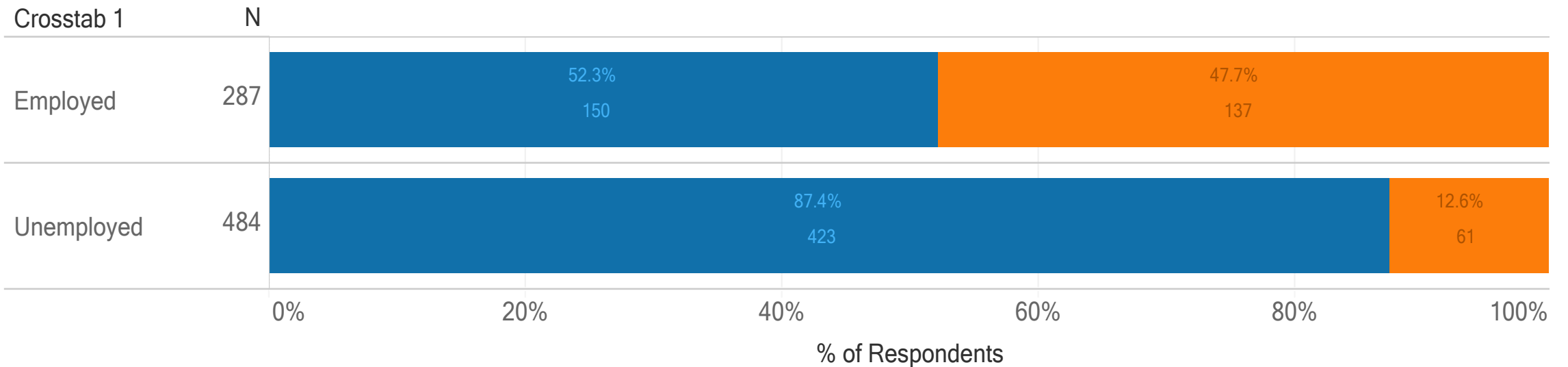
- Employed
- Unemployed
- No answer





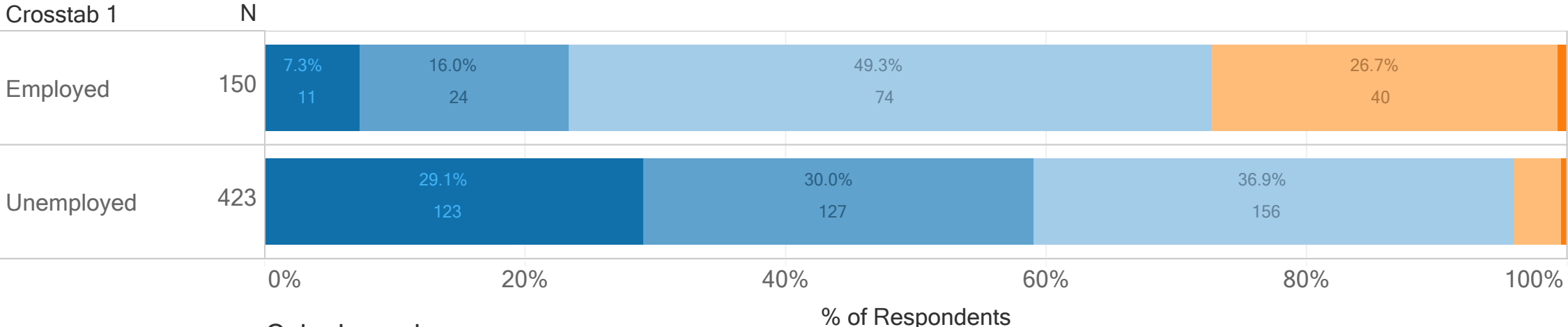
# About half of employed respondents say they are actively looking for work (Figure 2)

Are you actively looking for work? If you are currently employed, you may be looking for better or more secure employment.



# Just 29% of unemployed respondents (21% of total) say they are able to put “a great deal” of effort into finding work

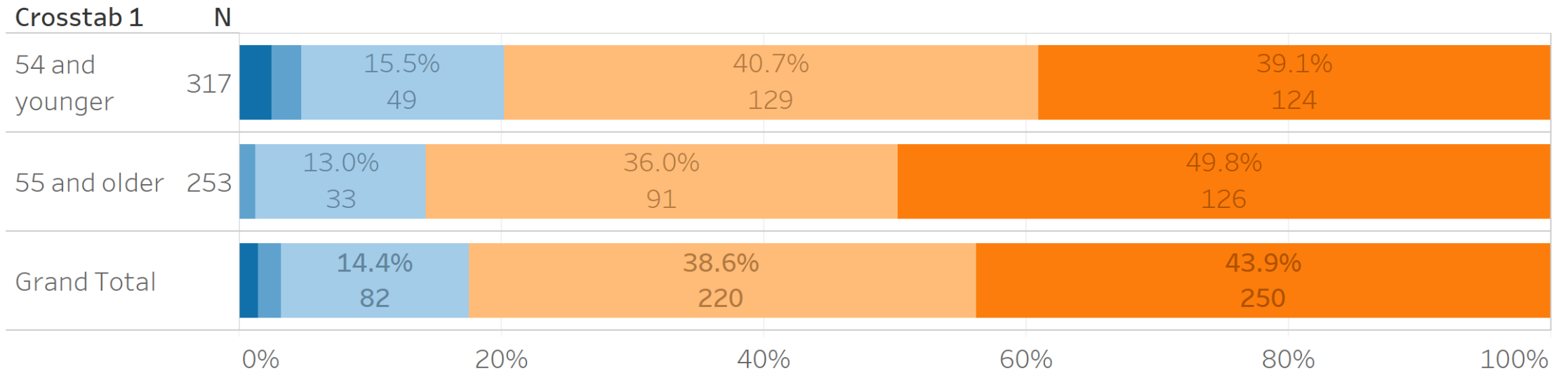
How much effort are you able to dedicate toward finding work?



- Color legend
- A great deal
  - A lot
  - A moderate amount
  - A little
  - None at all

# Greater difficulty for older job seekers (Figure 6)

How much success are you having looking for work?

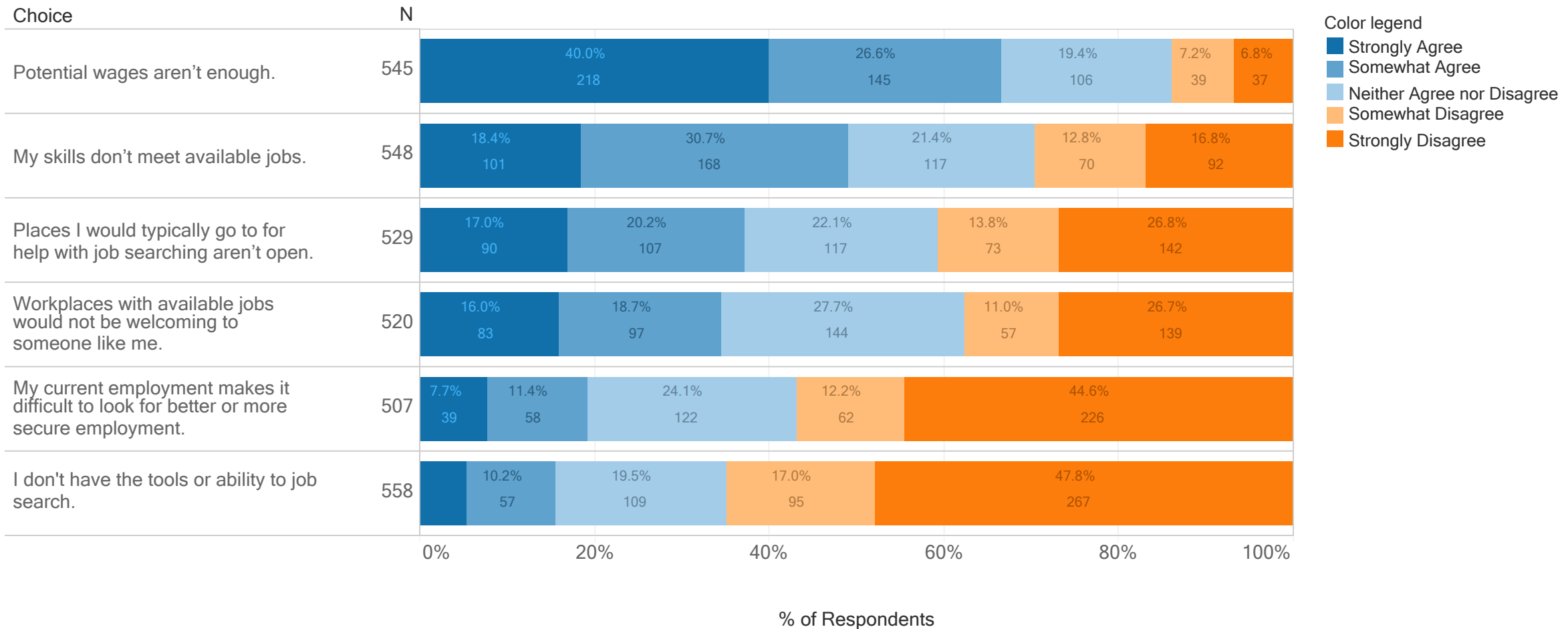


Color legend

- A great deal
- A lot
- A moderate amount
- A little
- None at all

# Low pay tops list of perceived barriers to finding work (Figure 7)

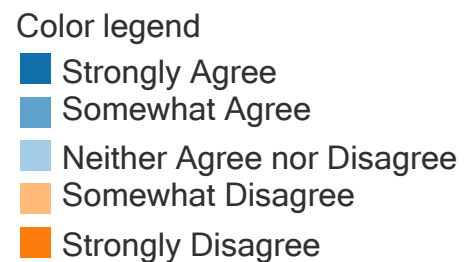
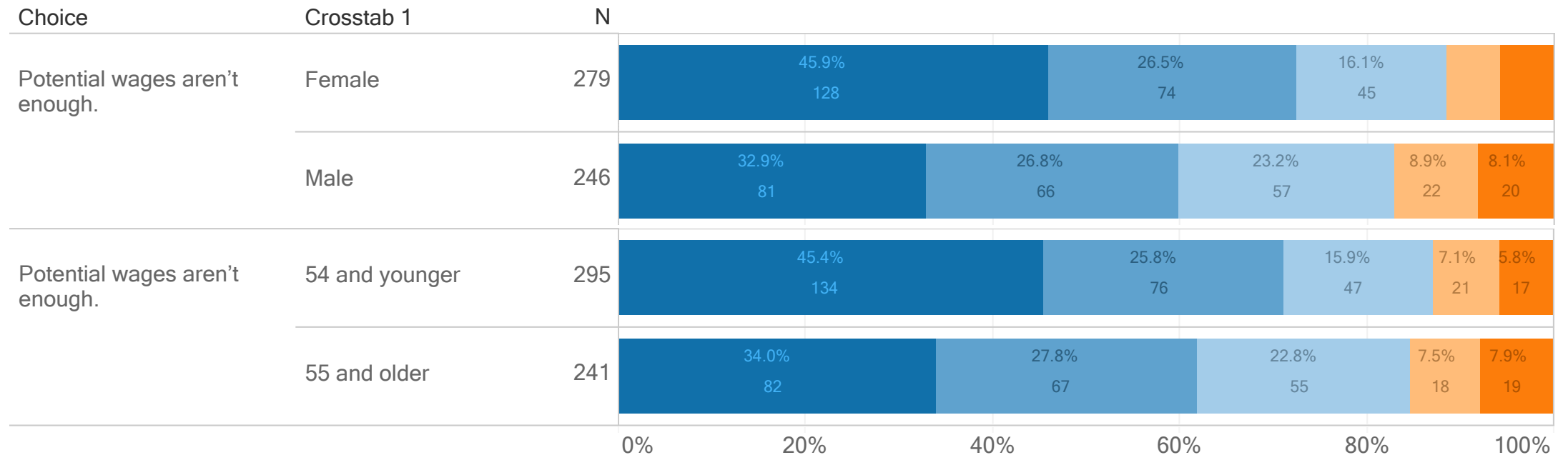
To what extent do you agree that each of the following is a barrier to finding work?



# Respondents say they perceive a mismatch between available jobs and their education, skills, and desire for a living wage

- “Despite having a college degree, **I cannot find appropriate, living wage jobs.** I’m great at supervising, but no medical or factory business will hire me due to lack of literacy in those areas.”
- “It is not that there are not plenty of jobs available. It is the fact that the **jobs pay very little and don’t match my skills and degrees.**”
- “The job market during COVID has been terrible. Nothing but poverty-level jobs and **back-breaking, low-paying labor** available currently. Combine that with COVID going around, and many employers are not doing enough to protect employees. It’s no wonder so many people are still on unemployment.”

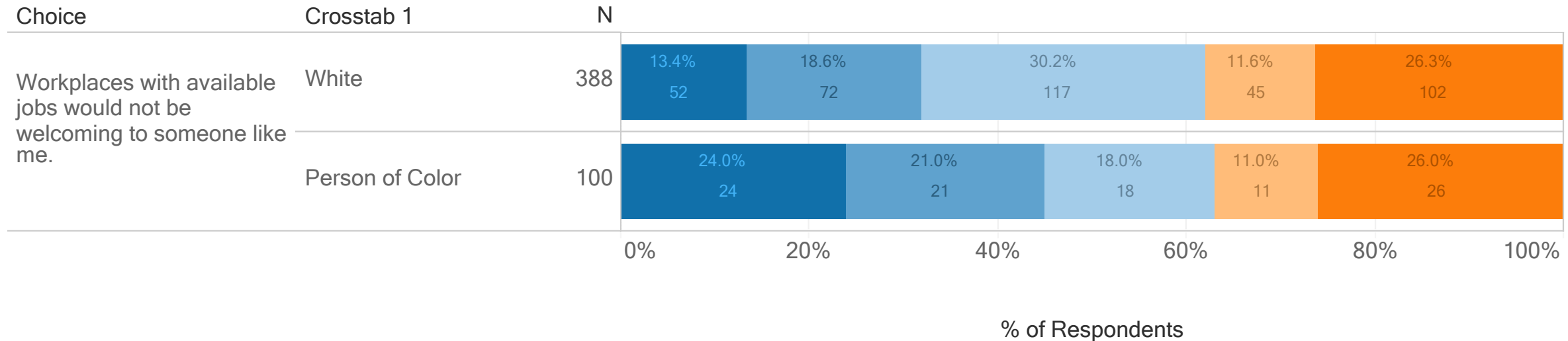
# Female and younger job seekers are more likely to cite low pay (Figures 8 and 9)



# Too oldie-but-a-goodie to be true?

“I strongly believe being 63 years old with [an] MBA is why I haven’t found a job. An honest H.R. person told me I was **too old** (too near retirement) **and too educated** (could leave at anytime for a better opportunity) for them to risk investing in hiring me.”

# People of color were more likely to feel unwelcome (Figure 10)



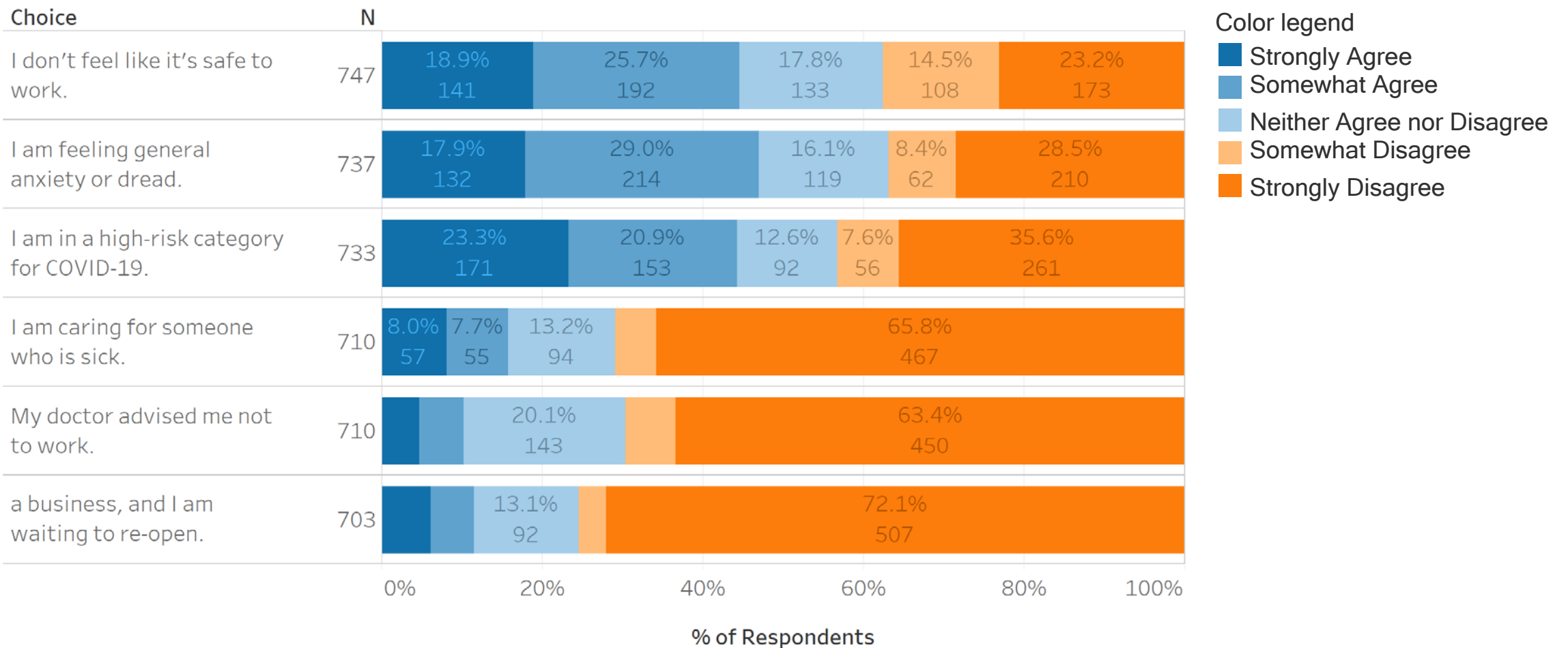
### Color legend

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

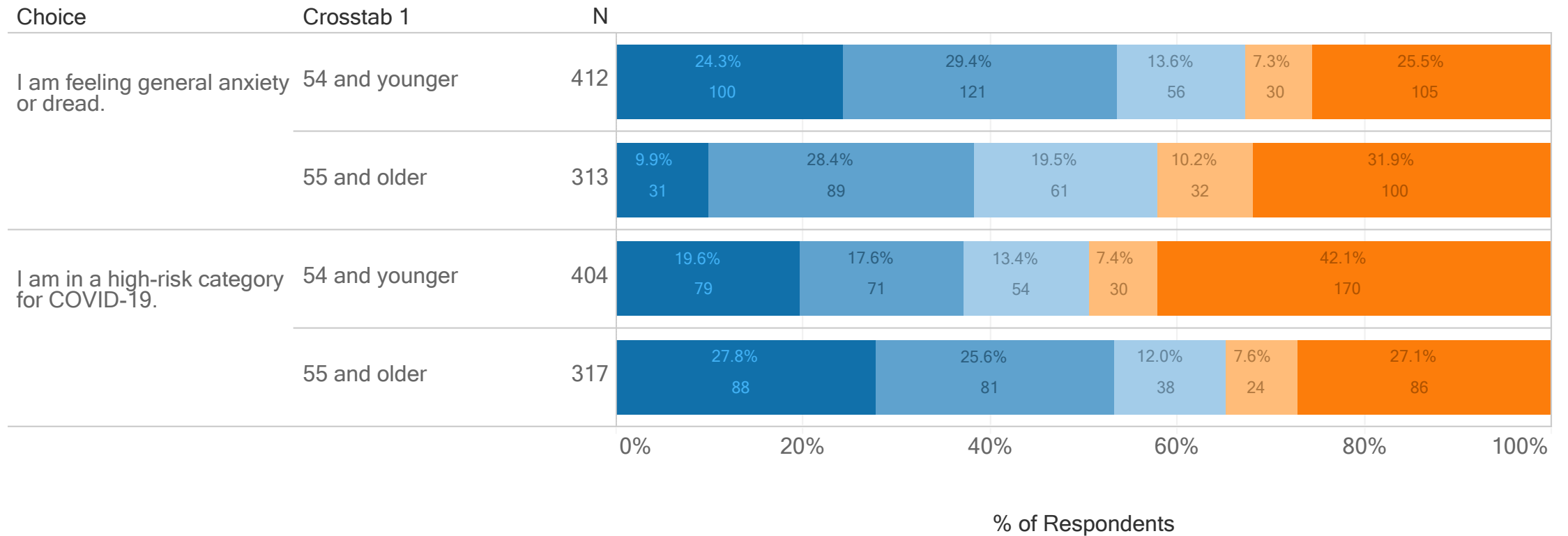


# Safety concerns, anxiety, and risk top barriers to working (Figure 11)

To what extent do you agree that each of the following is a barrier to working?

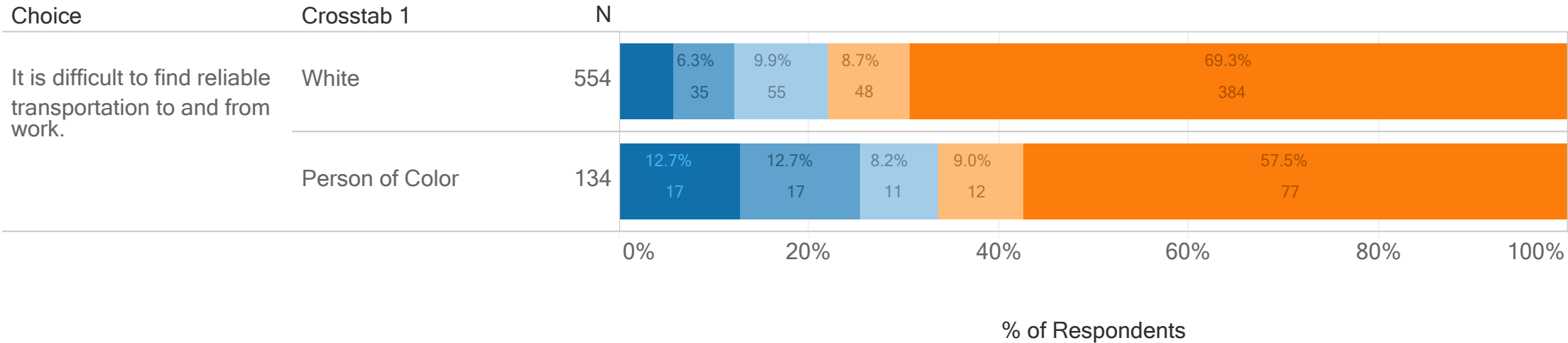


# Anxiety for the younger, risk for the elder (Figure 12)



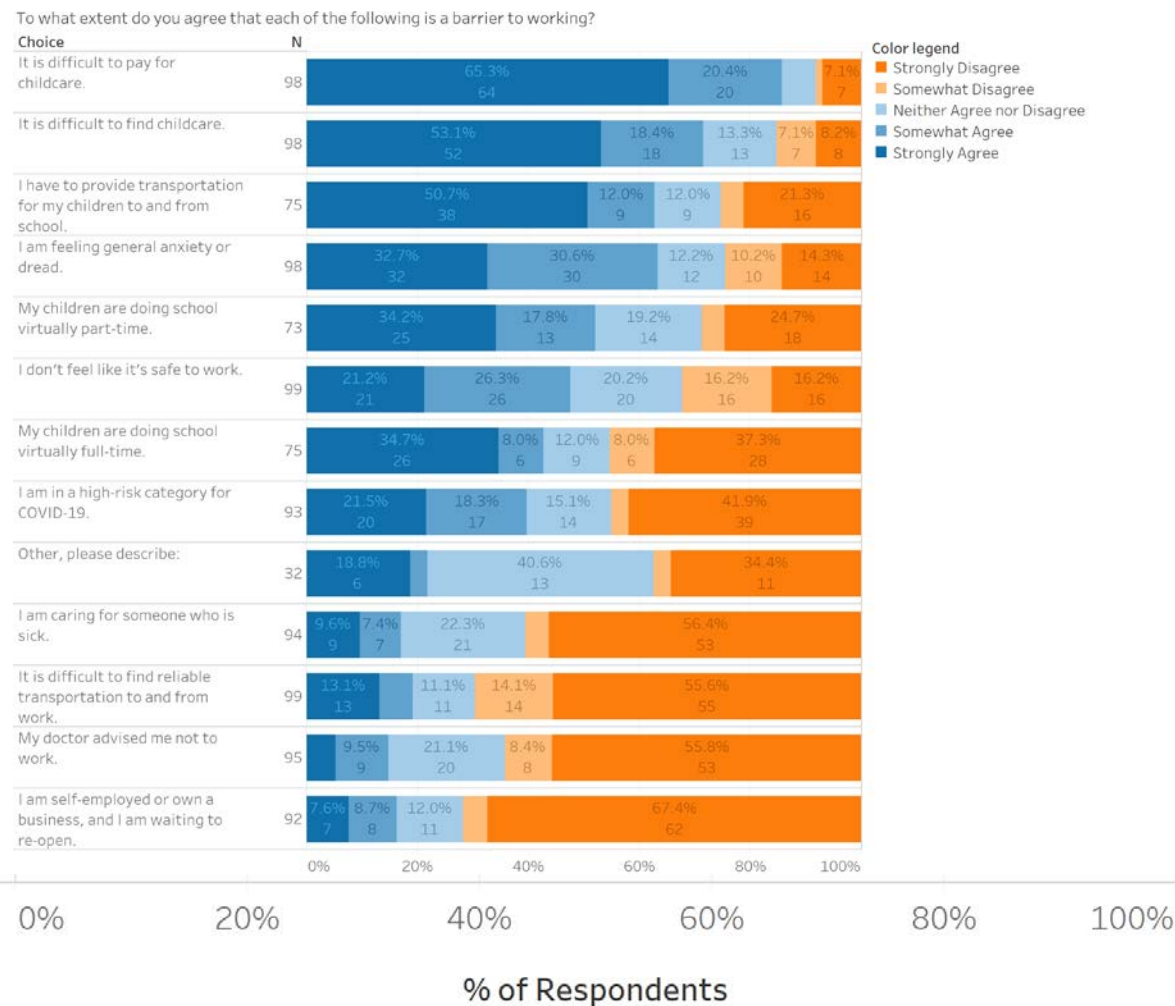
- Color legend
- Strongly Agree
  - Somewhat Agree
  - Neither Agree nor Disagree
  - Somewhat Disagree
  - Strongly Disagree

# Transportation woes concentrate among people of color (Figure 13)

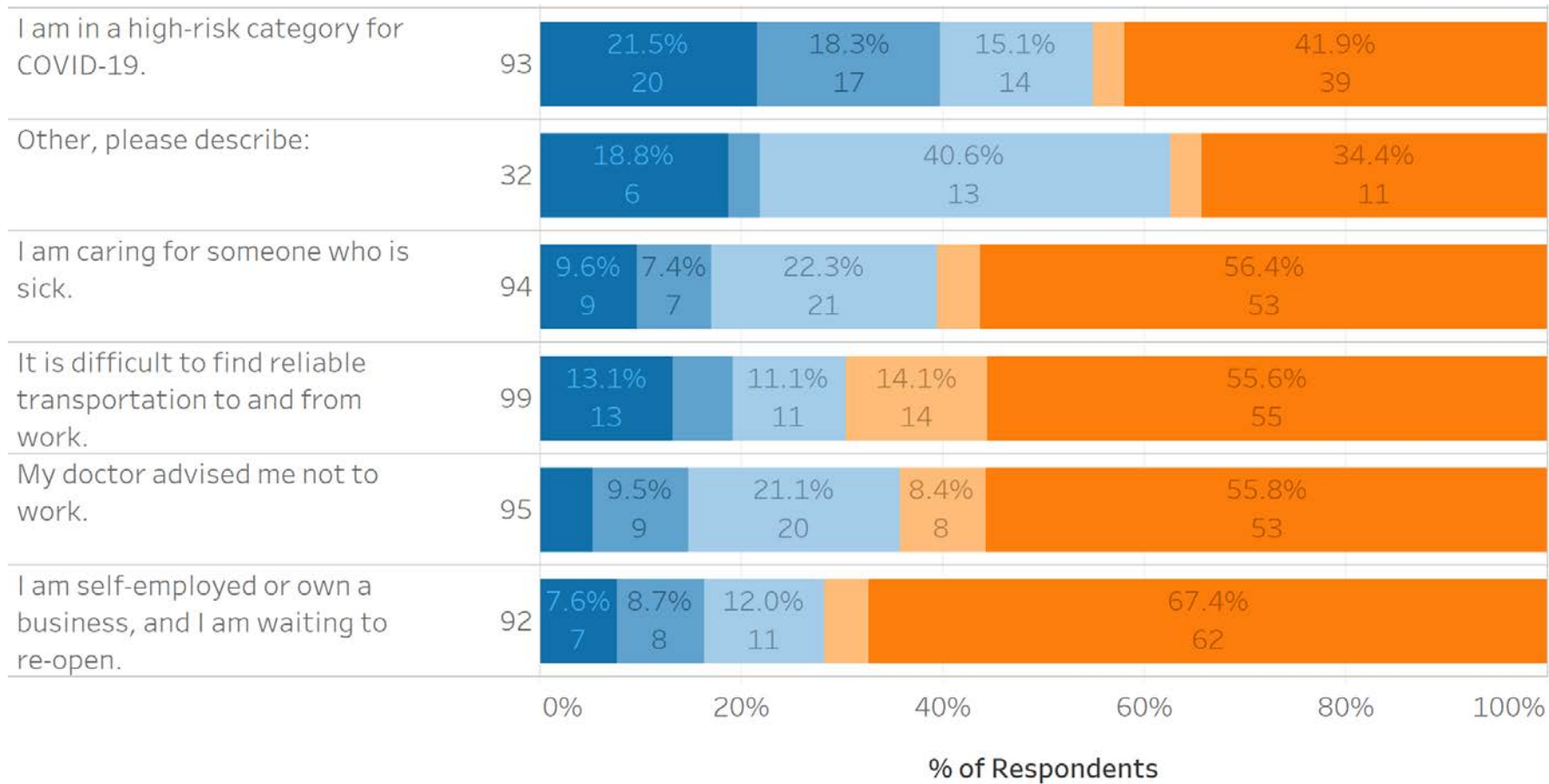


- Color legend
- Strongly Agree
  - Somewhat Agree
  - Neither Agree nor Disagree
  - Somewhat Disagree
  - Strongly Disagree

# Respondents with children who need childcare rate it as the top barrier (Figure 14[a])

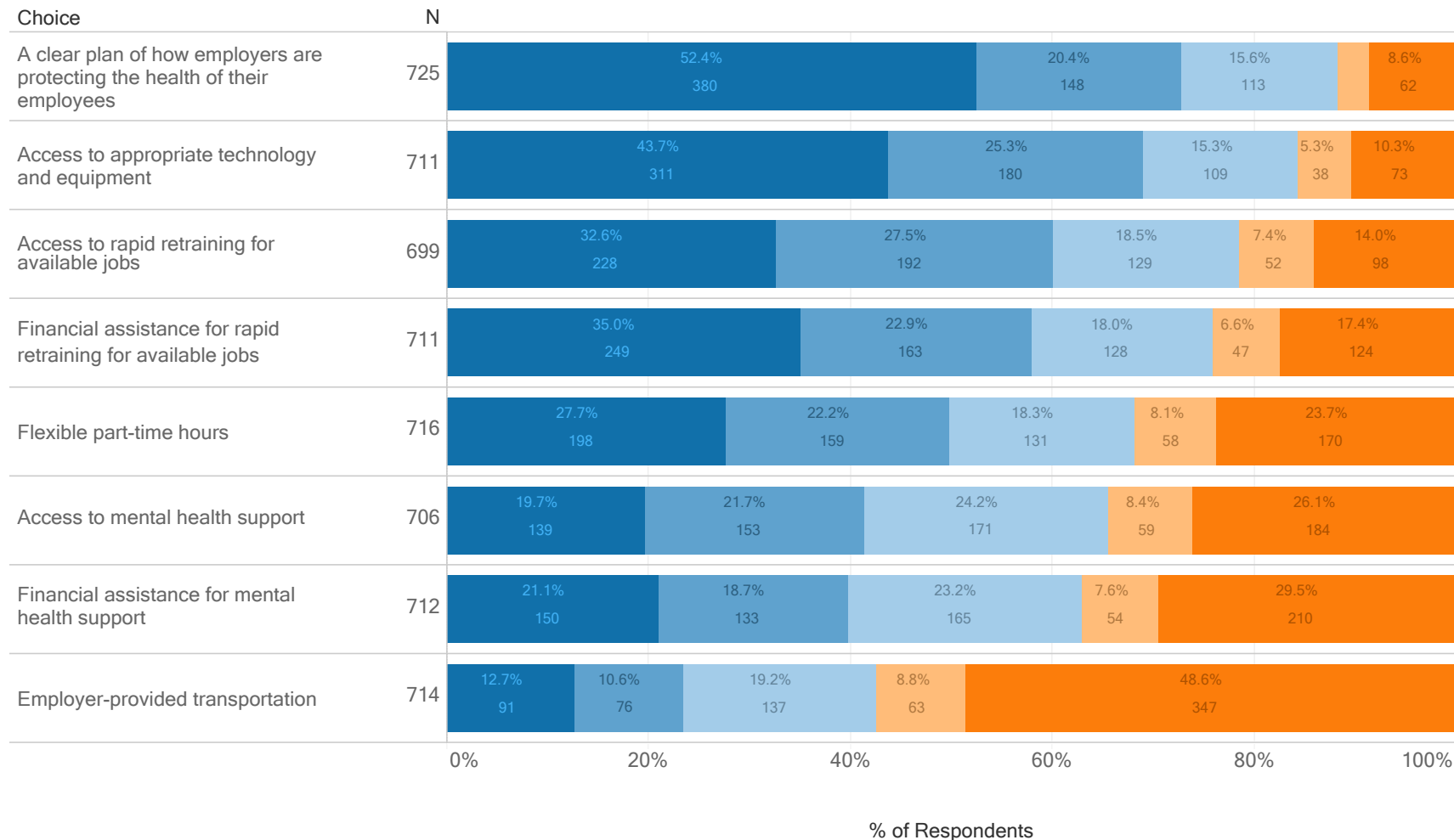


# Self-employment and doctors' advice last to be affirmed (Figure 14[b])



# Clarity about safety tops resources, followed by access to technology and training (Figure 15)

How likely would you be to use each of these resources?



Color legend

- Extremely likely
- Somewhat likely
- Neither likely nor unlikely
- Somewhat unlikely
- Extremely unlikely

Women, people of color, and people 54 years of age and younger are generally more likely to use all of the resources listed.

# Childcare financial aid leads, on-site lags (Figure 20)

Among respondents who had children requiring childcare:



**Financial assistance for childcare** is the second-*most* likely resource to be used among respondents who need childcare.



**On-site childcare** at employer was the fourth-*least* likely resource to be used for the same group.



**Flexible part-time hours:** Over two-thirds of respondents indicated they would be at least somewhat likely to use this resource.

# Next steps and future improvements

- **Coding of open-ended comments** is in progress.
- **Final report** with executive summary, methodology, conclusions, etc.
- Possible multivariate **statistical model(s)** to rule out confounding variables.
- More specificity on barriers such as **racism, sexism, and homophobia**.





# Questions and discussion

- How can we help you learn from this data?



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