

Background

The COVID-19 pandemic created stressors that overwhelmed healthcare workers, which placed them at a higher risk for burnout, mental health distress, and an overall lack of wellness. This is evidenced by the stark increase in burnout risk and prevalence among pharmacists across the United States of America. There is a gap in research that seeks to understand the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on pharmacists, especially in rural settings.¹⁻⁴

Goals of this Study:

- To understand lived experiences of Kansas pharmacists during and after the COVID-19 pandemic
- To allow for recommendations to leaders on strategies to improve well-being

Research Questions

- What were the perceived mental, emotional, and psychological health experiences of practicing Kansas pharmacists during the pandemic?
- What recommendations do pharmacists who practiced in Kansas during the COVID 19 pandemic have or sustainable, individual and organizational focused mental health interventions to support this group of healthcare professionals?

Methods

Qualitative Research Study

- Recruited licensed pharmacists utilizing emails distributed by Kansas pharmacy organizations and groups
- After informed consent, participants were voluntarily asked to complete a survey. No incentive was offered for participation.
- 15-minute, 28-question survey** using Qualtrics
- Questions about their **mental health experiences during the pandemic**

Limitations

- Lack of pre-pandemic survey data on mental health for comprehensive analysis (only one question asking about receiving care under mental health professionals prior to the pandemic)

Results

Sample demographics (*N* = 107; 83.59% completion rate):

- 13 different practice setting represented across 20 Kansas rural and urban counties
- Between ages 26 and 66 (*M* = 38.7)
- Female response rate exceeded that of males (72.57% vs 25.66%)
- Total of 84.48% of respondents identified as White
- Mean years of practice were 14.24 (*SD* = 10.94, range 1.5 to 42 years)

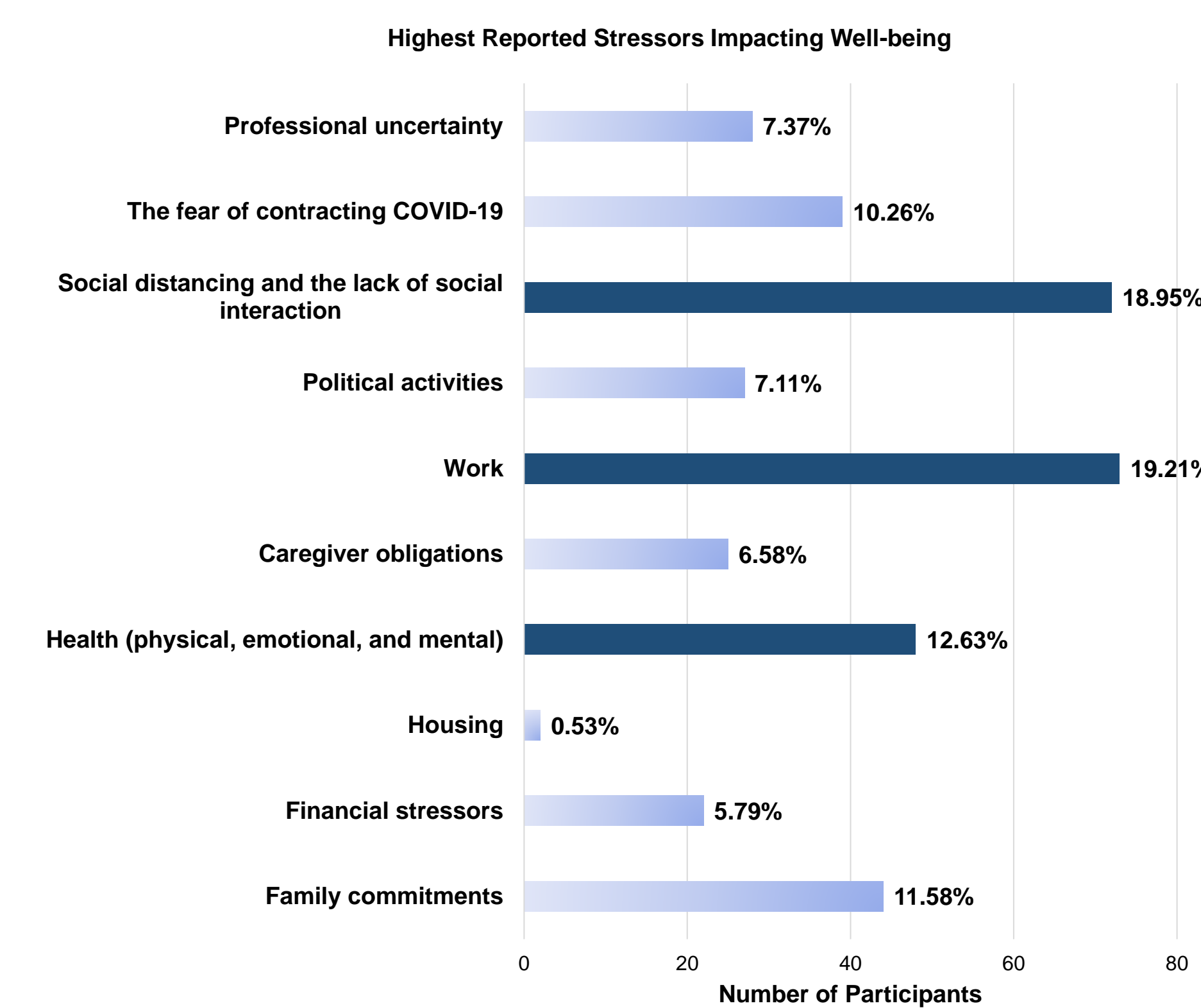


Figure 1. Stressors impacting well-being.

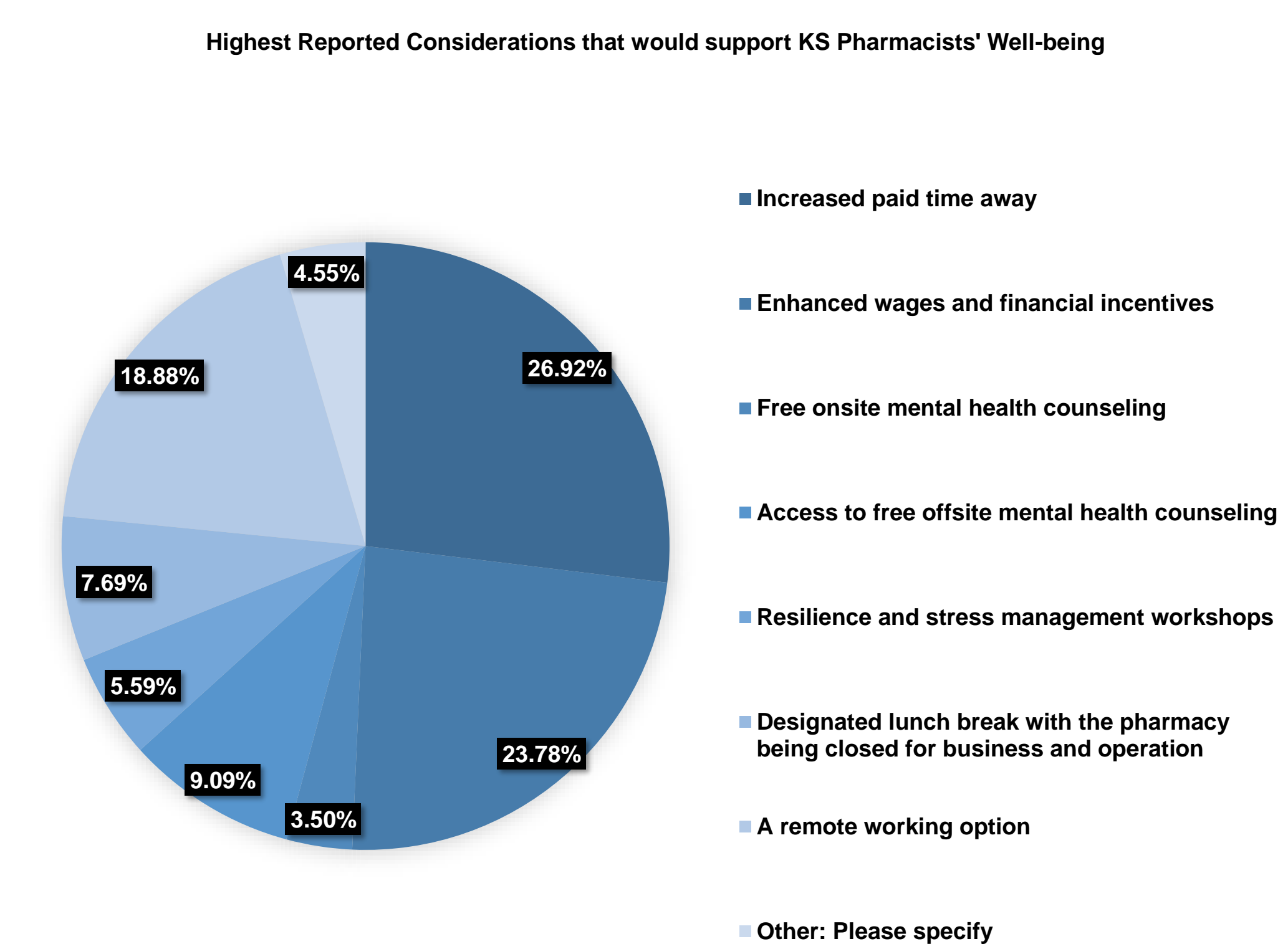


Figure 2. Considerations recommended to support the well-being of Kansas pharmacists.

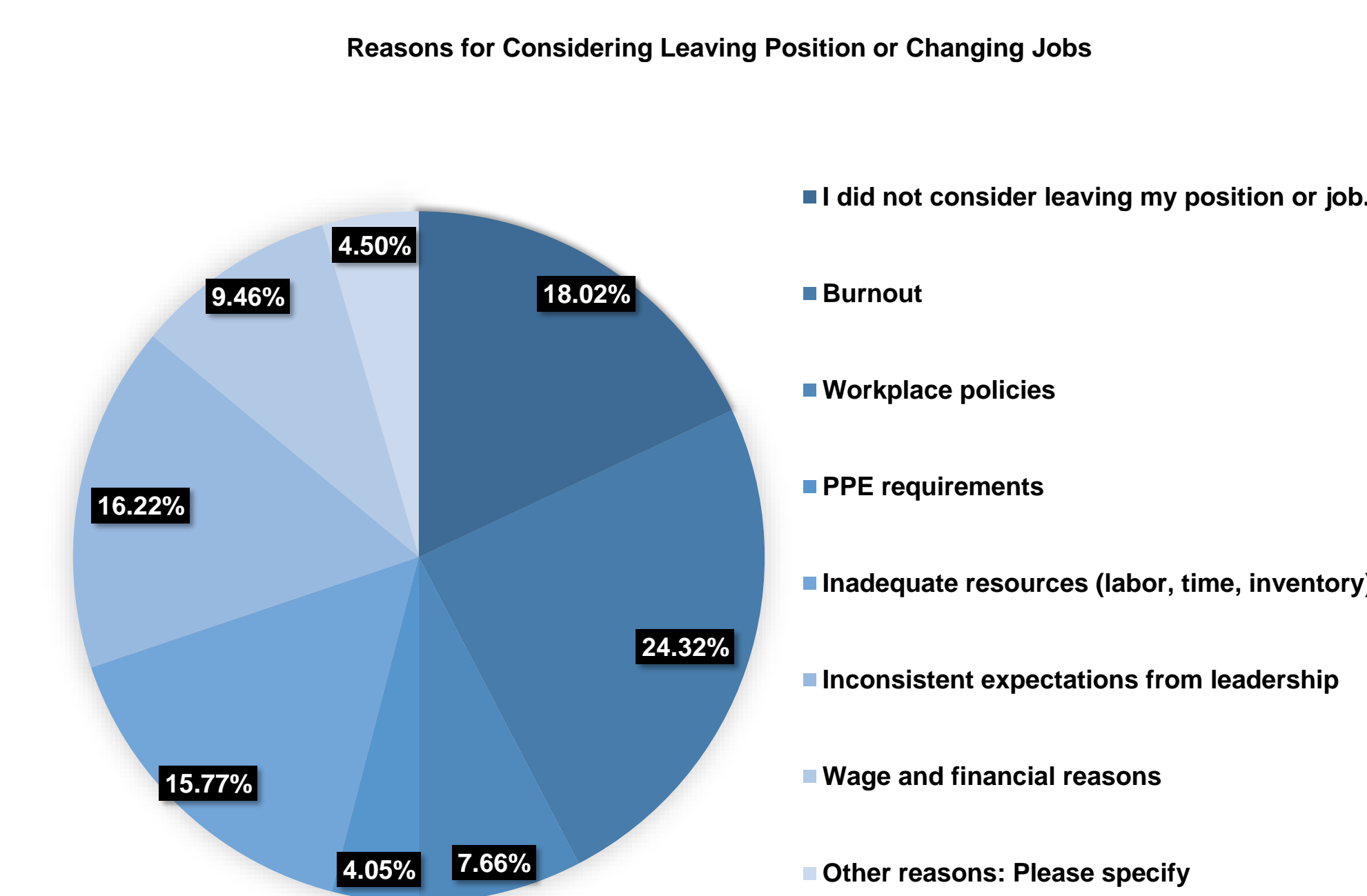


Figure 3. Reasons of Kansas pharmacists considering leaving positions or changing jobs.

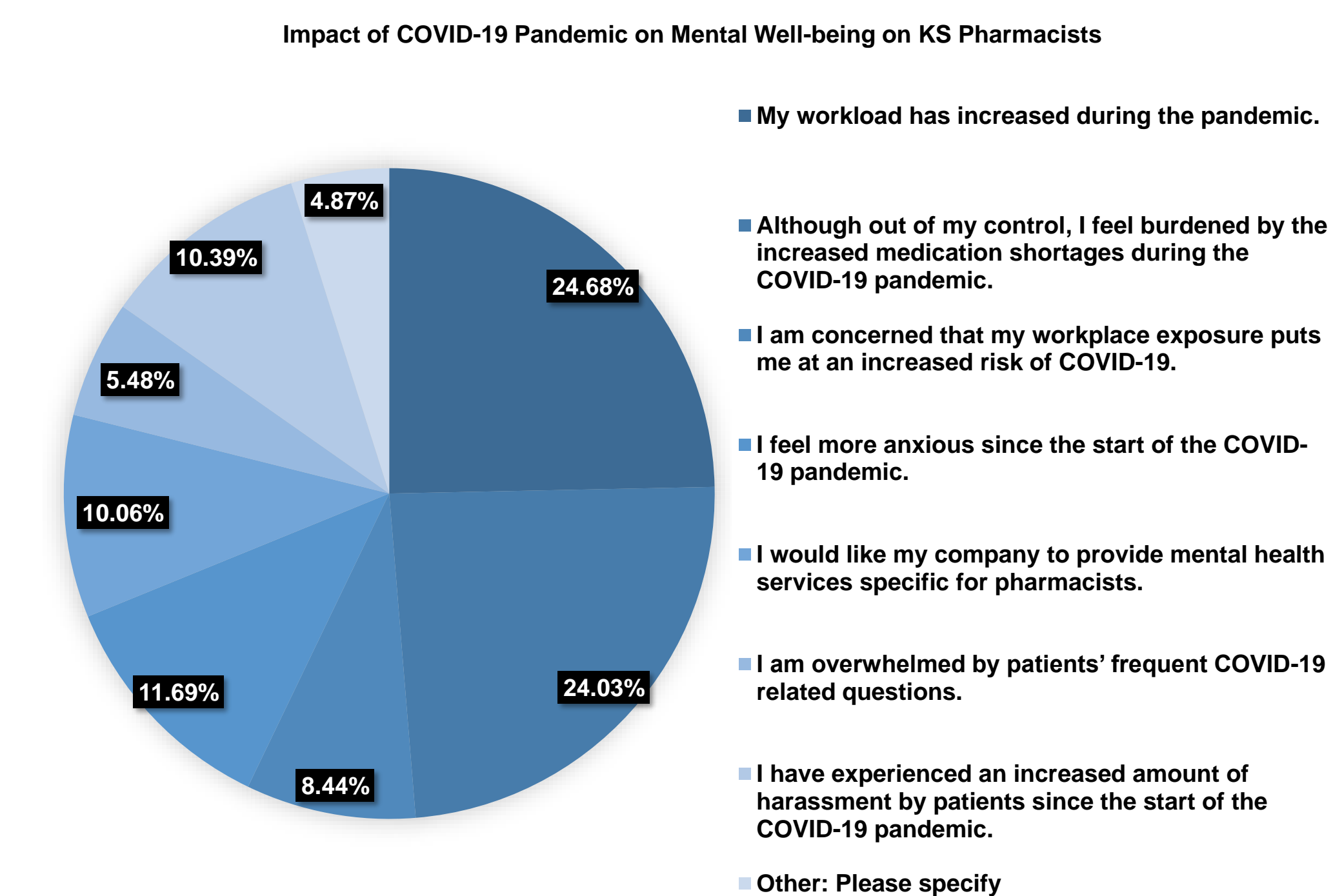


Figure 4. Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental well-being of Kansas pharmacists.

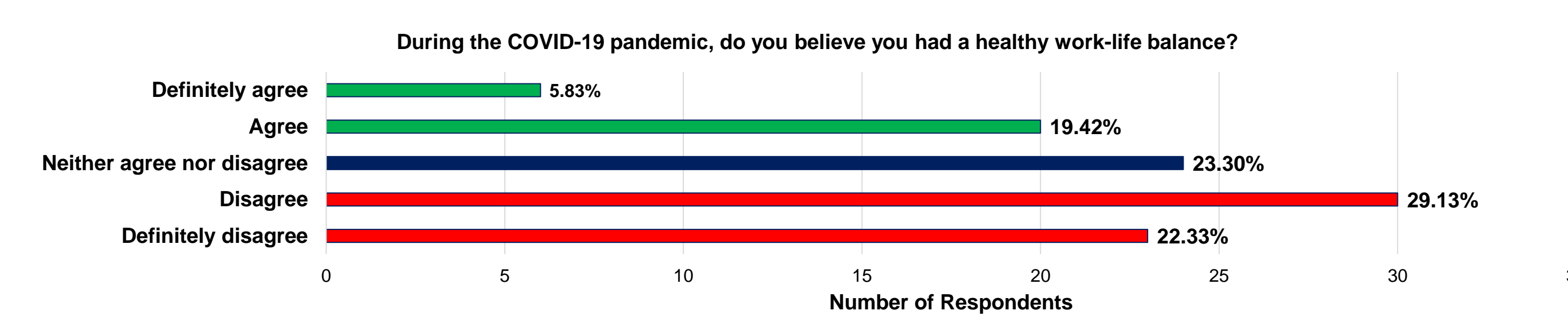


Figure 5. Healthy work-life balance for Kansas pharmacists during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Discussion

Respondents were primarily direct facing with patient care.

- Positive level of job satisfaction was expressed by 59 respondents (56.73%)
- 40 respondents (18.02%) reported that they did not consider leaving their position or changing job during the pandemic

Majority of respondents worked over 40+ hours per week (*n* = 61).

Highest reported stressors:

- Increased workload
- Health (physical, emotional, and mental)
- Social distancing and lack of social isolation.

Many respondents felt a lack of sufficient mental and emotional health support and resources from employers or their workplace (43.27%).

Highest reported recommendations:

- Increase compensation
- Provide additional paid time off
- Offer remote work opportunities.

Conclusions

The pandemic impacted the mental, emotional, and physical health of Kansas pharmacists. This resulted in burnout, feelings of negativity related to the job, and reduced professional efficacy. This study highlights a call to action to address concerns and implement effective support strategies for pharmacists experiencing burnout, compassion fatigue, and emotional exhaustion. Interprofessional collaboration is needed to provide sustainable individual and organizational focused interventions that reinforce well-being policies.

Future Research & Recommendations

- Develop an understanding for antecedents and consequences of burnout and strategies for supporting healthcare professionals
- Engage in interprofessional collaboration by working with pharmacy organizations and employers in Kansas to implement well-being policies, through providing sustainable individual- and organizational-focused interventions

References

- About COVID-19. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Updated July 10, 2023. Accessed February 8, 2024. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/about-covid-19.html>
- Hagemann TM, Reed BN, Bradley BA, et al. Burnout among clinical pharmacists: Causes, interventions, and a call to action. JACCP: JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN COLLEGE OF CLINICAL PHARMACY. 2020;3(4):832-842. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1002/jac5.1256>
- Jones AM, Clark JS, Mohammad RA. Burnout and secondary traumatic stress in health-system pharmacists during the COVID-19 pandemic. American Journal of Health-System Pharmacy. 2021;78(9):818-824. doi:10.1093/ajhp/zxab051
- McQuade BM, Keller E, Elmes A, DiDomenico RJ, Jarrett JB. Stratification of burnout in health-system pharmacists during the COVID-19 pandemic: A focus on the ambulatory care pharmacist. JACCP: JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN COLLEGE OF CLINICAL PHARMACY. 2022;5(9):942-949. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1002/jac5.1672>

Disclosures

The authors have no disclosures to report.

Contact Information

