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PROJECT

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Introduction

The Burnt Chef Project rolled out a survey to explore issues around staffing within the hospitality sector, looking to ascertain why people had left the industry within the last 12 months and what might be done to help overcome some of the shortages.

"We're seeing it all over the media, and we're hearing it first-hand in the trade. The industry is facing a severe employment crisis right now, but what our survey has shown is that there is a way out of this. Hospitality 2.0 if you like, whereby we support our employees and give them a sustainable career choice."

Kris Hall, Founder of The Burnt Chef Project

The survey was run through June 2021 and rolled out in partnership with Peopleful and Umbrella Insight.

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Highlights: A total of 2,311 individuals participated in The Burnt Chef Project's survey exploring issues around staffing and the current shortages being observed in hospitality

The majority of respondents (84%) are still working in the industry: 45% of them were chefs, and most (75%) had been furloughed during the pandemic

60% of individuals report feeling "okay" or better about working in the industry

Work-life balance is the most frequently mentioned barrier to working in the sector <u>and</u> the most commonly cited reason for leaving

Nearly a third, 31%, of those <u>not</u> currently working in the sector are planning to return within the year, with 10% in the next 6 months

Hospitality doesn't come highly recommended: 1 in 5 is planning on leaving in the next 12 months and around a third (37%) is on the fence. When asked what changes would improve recruitment and retention, the majority said "feeling valued"

40% of respondents report having less than favourable experiences with their mental health over the past 12 months. General Managers, in particular, are experiencing challenges, with 42% reporting a decline in their overall level of mental fitness since re-opening

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Key themes for action

- Greater focus on ensuring staff feel valued, appreciated and respected, and are paid for overtime and extra hours worked

  > "As Executive Chef I always put my teams needs first: We work a 4-day week and rarely work over 50 hours. If we do a 5th day then I pay my brigade a fixed hourly rate at £15 per hour so they get a benefit. I currently have more chefs looking to join my brigade than I have spaces for, this is because I look after and respect my team."
  >
  > Chef, 35 – 44, South West

- Increased support for General Managers to be better equipped to manage their teams' readjustment as the sector re-opens

  > "Being a support network to a team of people straight out of lockdown was an added pressure that I do not feel GMs were given support and direction for. I am lucky enough to have a basic understanding of mental health, but some may not and the extra demand in our role is actually like a full time job…Going from zero to full speed can be very damaging, even for the strongest of characters."
  > General Manager, 35 – 44 years old, South East

- A more sustainable approach to work-life balance, alongside supporting and destigmatising mental health

  > "Few school leavers are interested in a career in catering. We need the reputation of the industry to change to recruit young people into the industry and to retain and upskill the existing staff. The maths do not work. For the same wage, better work-life balance and reduced stress you can get a job in many other industries"
  >
  > Front of House, 45 – 54 years old, South West

- A need for greater professionalisation within the industry to recruit, retain and prevent employment in the sector being viewed as just a "stop-gap"

  > "The industry needs to be sold as a going career not just a stop-gap for those going to universities. Make it fun again, less paperwork, bring back City & Guilds and Apprenticeship programs, part-funded by the Government to help businesses recover."
  >
  > Chef, 55+, Scotland
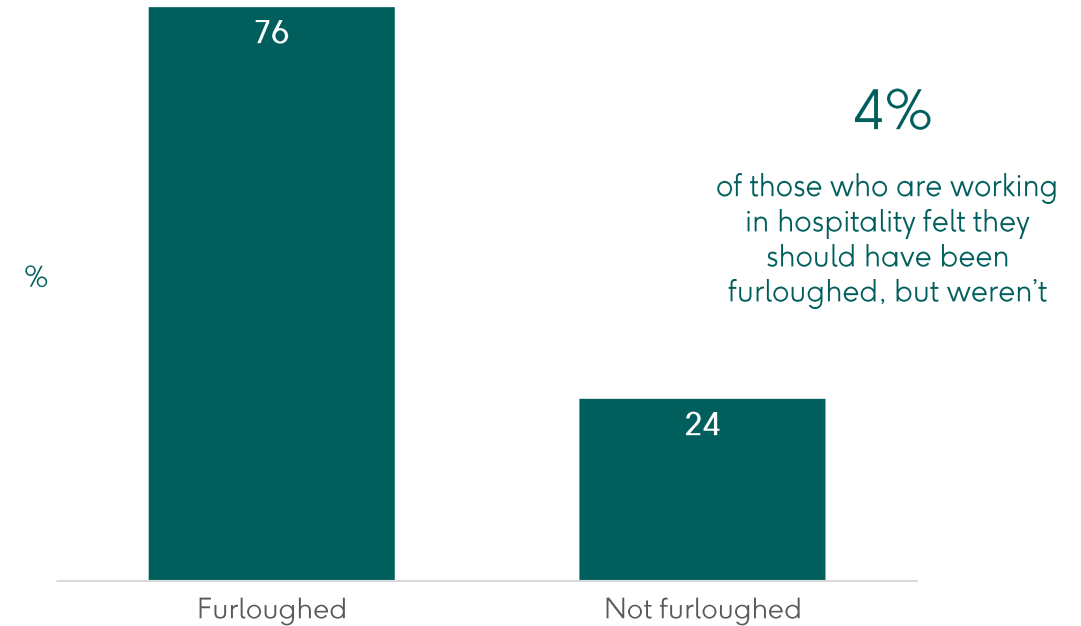
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Who took part?

The vast majority of respondents who completed the TBCP survey are currently working in hospitality, with around 1 in 6 having left the sector

A total of 2,311 individuals completed the TBCP survey

84%

of those who completed the survey are currently working in hospitality
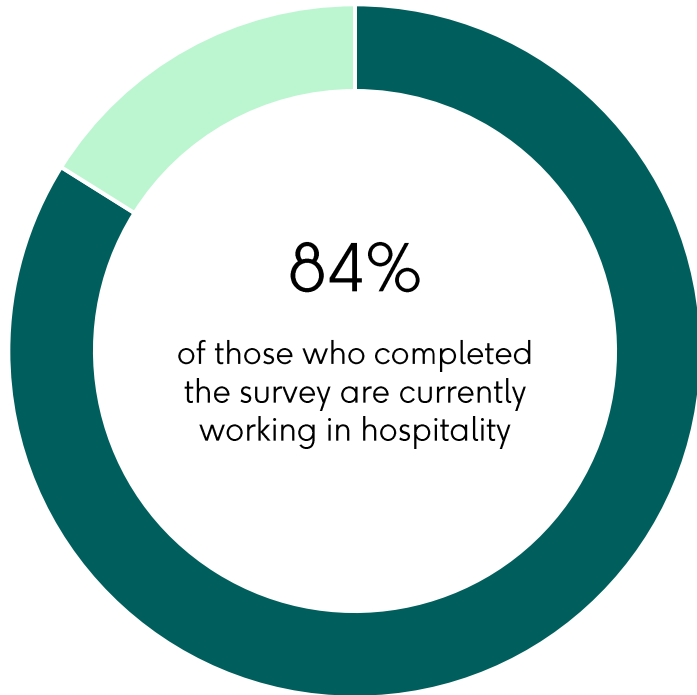
Of those currently working in hospitality, three quarters were furloughed during the pandemic

76

24

%

Furloughed

Not furloughed

4%

of those who are working in hospitality felt they should have been furloughed, but weren't

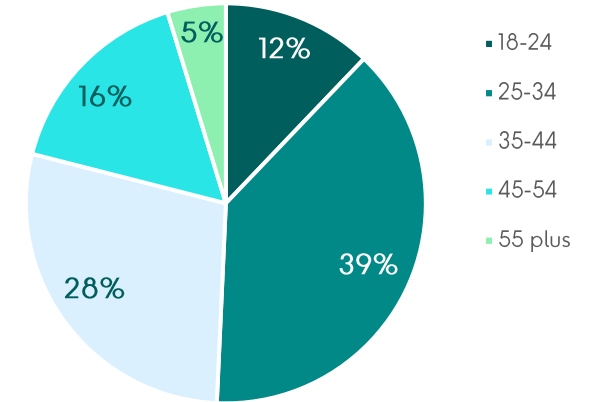THE BURNT CHEF
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The majority of participants were chefs. Two thirds (67%) of all respondents had over 10 years of experience, with a further 20% having spent between 5 and 10 years in the sector

Nearly half (45%) of individuals who competed the survey were chefs, with Front of House and General Managers being the next most commonly reported role

Respondents reported their current or most recent position for those who have left the industry

%

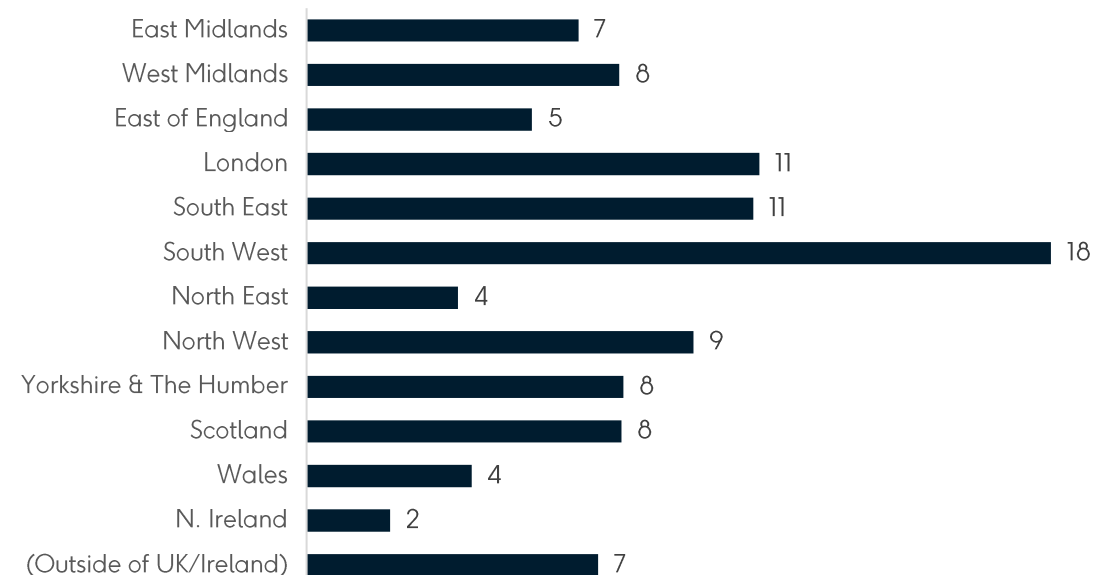| Role	Value
Back of house	7
Chef	45
Front of house	9
General Manager	9
Other	30
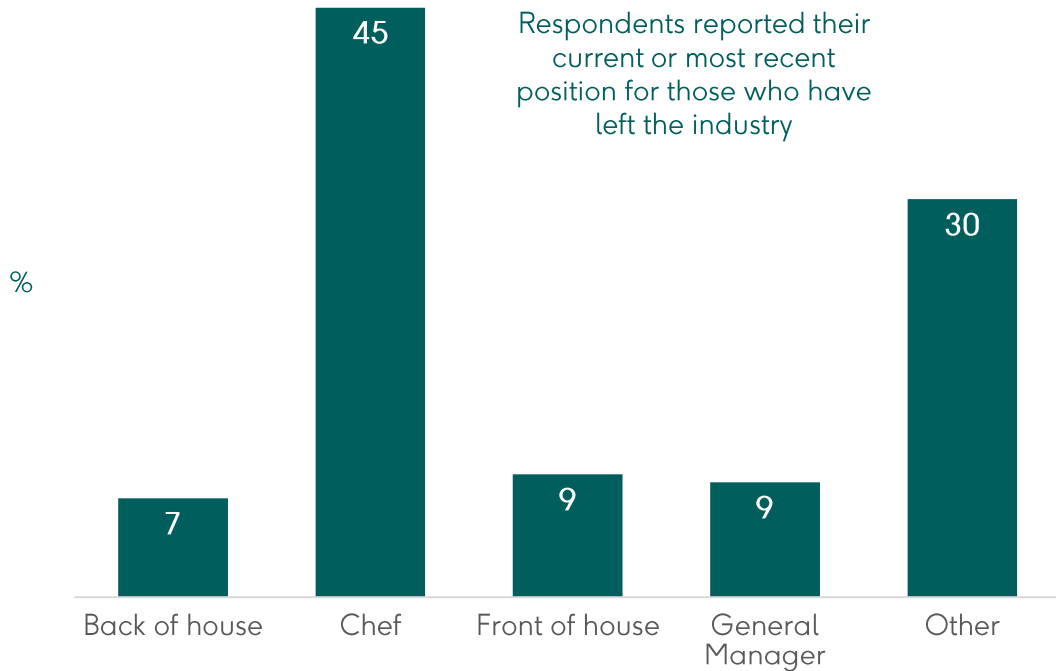
"Other – not specified" (27%); Operations (2%); Events Planner (0%); House Keeping (0%); Supply Chain (0%); Procurement (0%)

Two thirds of respondents are aged between 25 and 44 years old…

- 12% — 18-24
- 39% — 25-34
- 28% — 35-44
- 16% — 45-54
- 5% — 55 plus

And they come from all over the UK…

Region	%
East Midlands	7
West Midlands	8
East of England	5
London	11
South East	11
South West	18
North East	4
North West	9
Yorkshire & The Humber	8
Scotland	8
Wales	4
N. Ireland	2
(Outside of UK/Ireland)	7

%

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What did they have to say?

It's clear that those who work in the profession are passionate about what they do, whilst acknowledging the difficulties inherent within it

"I love my job and what it entails. I don't see myself in another job. Because of the buzz I get from a busy service. And the faces of customers and the dishes leaving the pass, leaves you with a great feeling. It helps with organisations like The Burnt Chef Project getting the word out and helping to deal with the problems that are in the catering trade."

Chef, 35 – 44, Scotland

"I didn't enjoy life on furlough at all, and now I never want to retire! I love what I do and I love it with all my heart, without my job I felt sh*t. I love brutal shifts and I love the sense of fulfilment and team work and overcoming the situation no matter what...I love this life and always will, let's get some first back in this main reactor and teach the younger generation how beautiful working is"
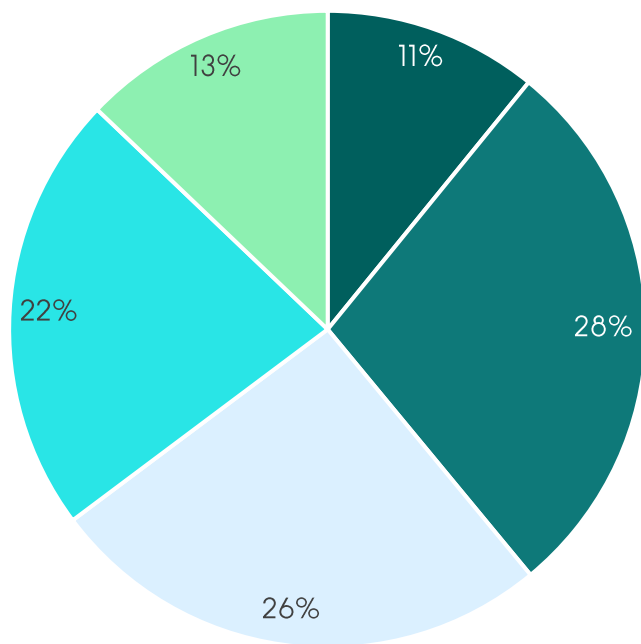
Chef, 35 – 44 years old, Yorkshire & The Humber

"PLEASE start showcasing the positives about working in the industry, social media is saturated with negatives, I have never seen so much "concern"... all these negatives are being read by parents and young chefs... "

Chef, 45 – 54 years old, South East

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Respondents were asked how they felt about working in hospitality and over 60% of individuals reported feeling okay or better about being employed in the industry
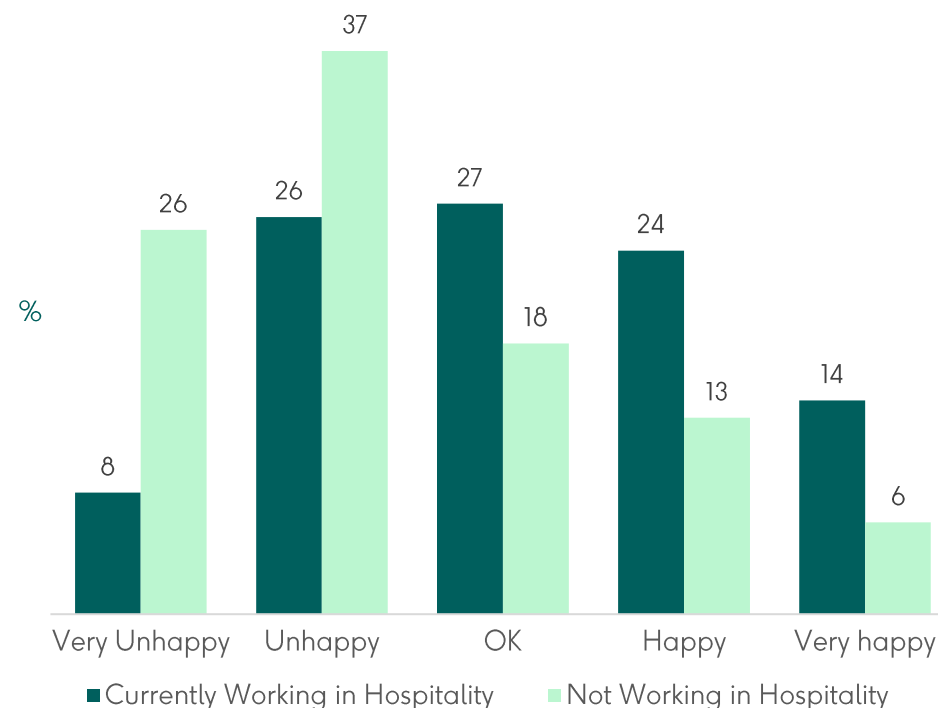
Just over 1 in 8 individuals report being "Very happy" about working in hospitality. However, at the other end of the spectrum, 11% of those asked said they were "very unhappy" in the sector.

Perhaps not surprisingly, those who have left the hospitality industry felt unhappier working in it than those who are still there

13%
11%
22%
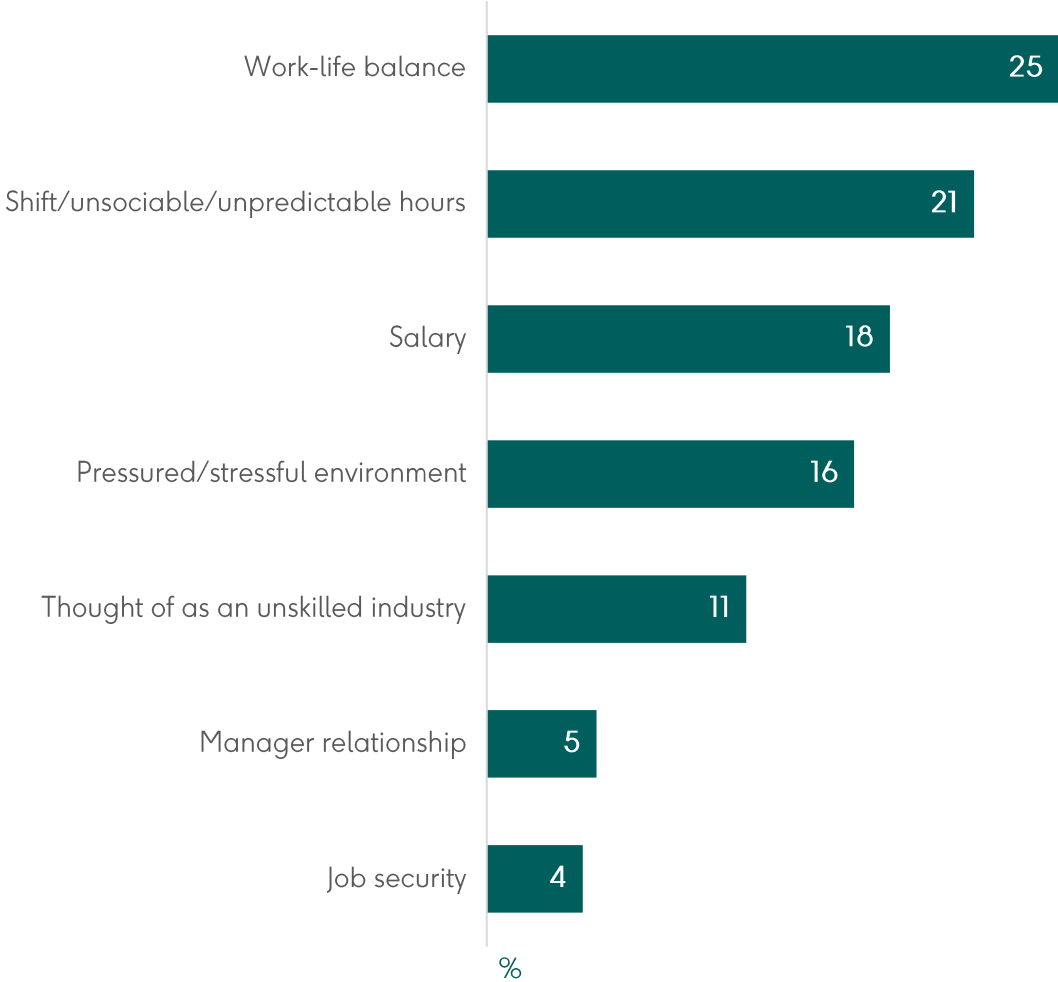28%
26%

- Very Unhappy
- Unhappy
- OK
- Happy
- Very happy

"I constantly keep up with the mental health of my staff. It's really important - if the staff is happy means that the service it's going to be super good"

Chef, 18 – 24 years old, Outside UK & Ireland

%

	Very Unhappy	Unhappy	OK	Happy	Very happy
Currently Working in Hospitality	8	26	27	24	14
Not Working in Hospitality	26	37	18	13	6

- Currently Working in Hospitality
- Not Working in Hospitality

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Individuals were also asked about barriers to working in the industry, with work-life balance being the most commonly cited concern for the sector

Barrier	%
Work-life balance	25
Shift/unsociable/unpredictable hours	21
Salary	18
Pressured/stressful environment	16
Thought of as an unskilled industry	11
Manager relationship	5
Job security	4

%

* Individuals could chose more than one response

"For the first time in a large portion of their career in Hospo, people are having the ability to wake up at normal times, get a decent amount of sleep and see that the world isn't all 15 hour shifts with barely a break in between. Many people have taken other jobs alongside to support themselves and their families through lockdown and have seen a drastic improvement in quality of life. This is what needs to be changed if we are to keep our high quality hard working staff."

Head Bartender, 25 – 34 years old, West Midlands

1 in 4 individuals say work-life balance is the greatest barrier to working in the hospitality industry

1 in 5 highlight the unsociable and unpredictable hours inherent in the profession

Salary and working in a stressful environment were also frequently cited barriers

Just 4% of those asked highlighted job security as a concern

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11

Around 1 in 10 stated that a key barrier facing the sector is that it's thought of as an unskilled industry. This was also widely echoed in the open response answers given, with concern over a lack professionalisation and training, as well as a widely held view that hospitality is too often seen as a "stop-gap" in employment

"Working in hospitality is seen as a stop-gap job in many instances. It needs to be viewed as a rewarding career choice, training and proper investment in all staff would help, along with better wages."

Operations, 45 – 54 years old, South West

"With the loss of the City and Guilds certification, hospitality skills and pride of career choice have diminished to the point that it is deemed as an unskilled dead-end job. It would take an enormous push to put the skills back into the trade, but it needs to be done if it will survive."

Chef, 55+, East Midlands

"Greater government support for the industry. Promotion of career potential and a real focus on education and training."

General Manager, 55+, South West

With issues such as work-life balance, unsociable working patterns and stressful working environments, it's not surprising that hospitality doesn't come highly recommended! But there are people on the fence about staying who could potentially be persuaded…
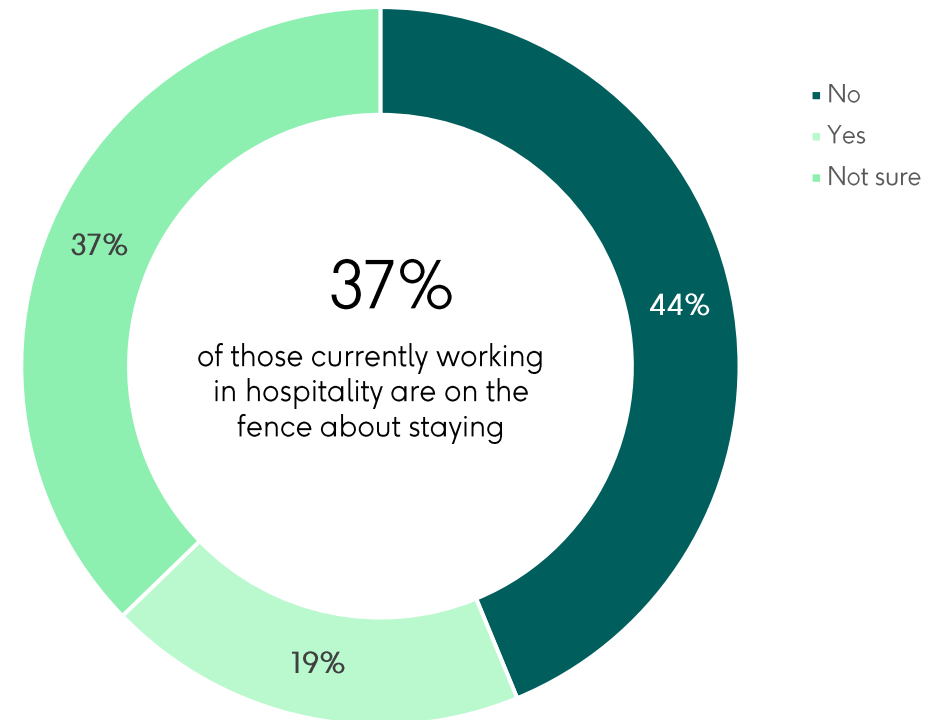
1 in 5 respondents are very unlikely to recommend working in the sector, and just 5% are very likely to do so.

"Why would anyone want to enter this industry when you work so many long and difficult hours for low salary!? I've enjoyed being furloughed for a simple thing such as being able to have dinner every evening at home. This barely ever happens now work has restarted."

Chef, 35 – 44 years old, Wales

%

21
10
14
10
14
10
8
7
2
5

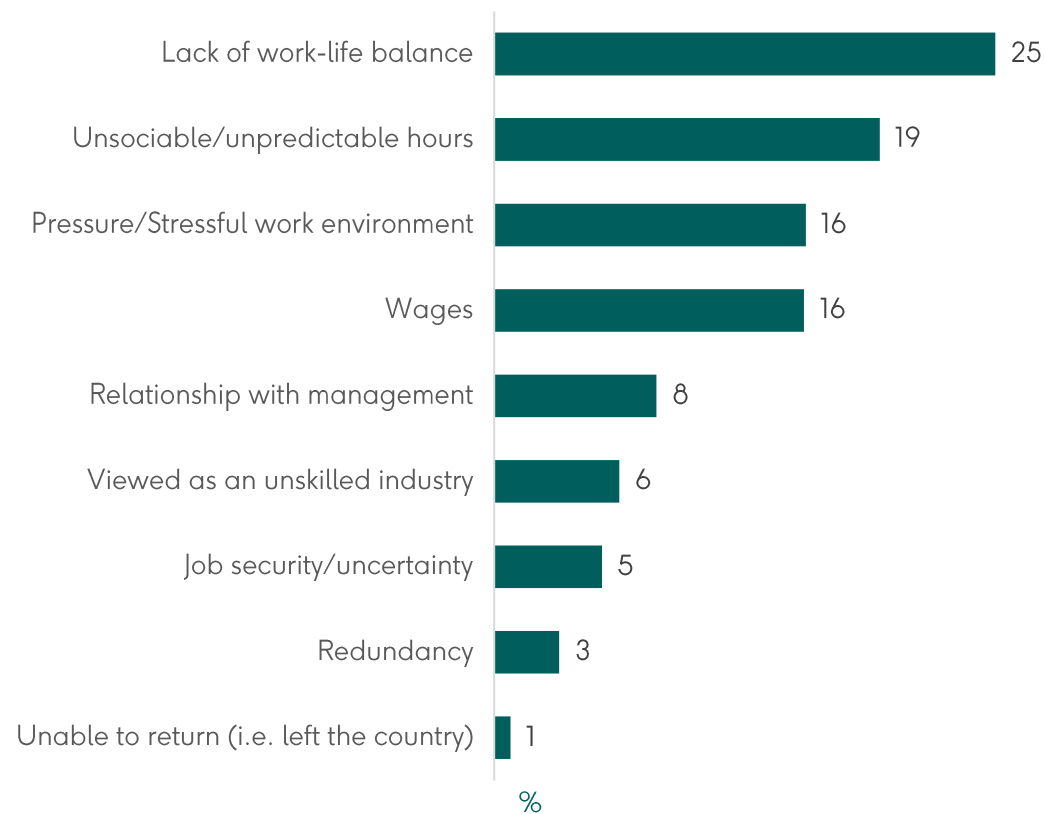| Very unlikely | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | Very likely |

The majority (44%) of respondents working in hospitality are not planning on leaving in the next 12 months, however 1 in 5 are and a further 37% are unsure

■ No
■ Yes
■ Not sure

37%
44%
19%

37%
of those currently working in hospitality are on the fence about staying

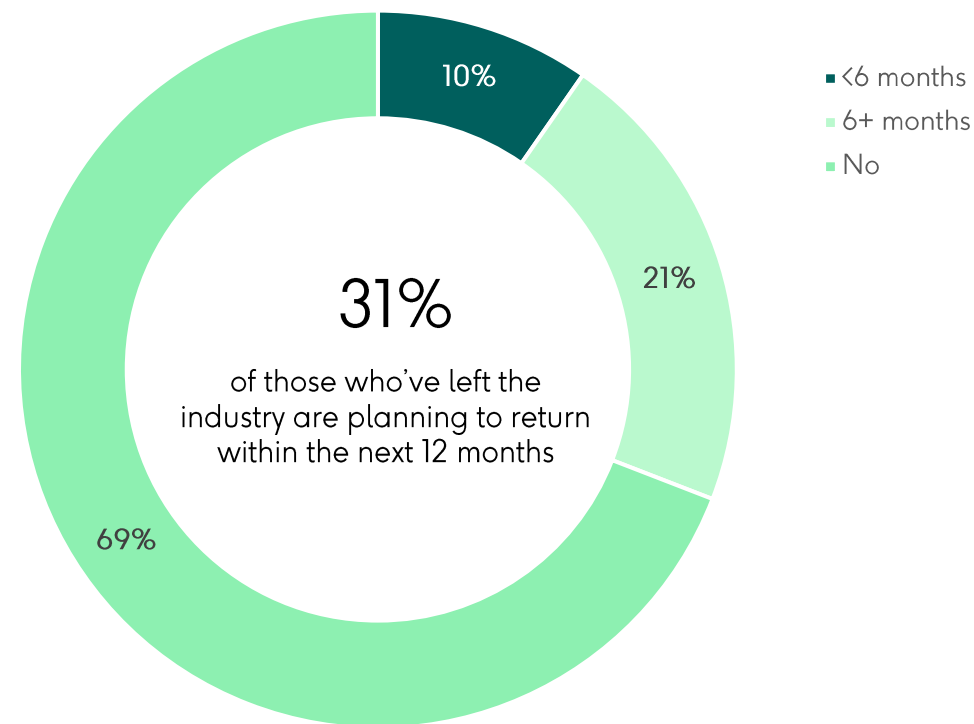THE BURNT CHEF
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Around 1 in 6 of respondents have recently left the industry. So why did they leave? And would they come back?

As with barriers, a lack of work-life balance was the most commonly cited reason for leaving the hospitality industry, mentioned by 25% of those who've left. Unsociable hours was also highlighted by 1 in 5 respondents

Nearly a third, 31%, of those not currently working in the sector are planning to return within the year, with 10% in the next 6 months – possibly coinciding with the end of the furlough scheme

Lack of work-life balance — 25
Unsociable/unpredictable hours — 19
Pressure/Stressful work environment — 16
Wages — 16
Relationship with management — 8
Viewed as an unskilled industry — 6
Job security/uncertainty — 5
Redundancy — 3
Unable to return (i.e. left the country) — 1

%

* Individuals could chose more than one response

31% of those who've left the industry are planning to return within the next 12 months

■ <6 months
■ 6+ months
■ No

10%
21%
69%

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And for those who have left the industry, issues relating to work-life balance, job stability and the need for more predictable working patterns are apparent

"I get paid pretty well for what I do but have no social or family life. Being on furlough and spending that time with my wife and children has opened my eyes. I'm going to retrain and leave my current role asap. Though I adore my job, I'll never return to a professional kitchen again."

Chef, 45 – 54 years old, North East

"Hospitality needs an overhaul and a much better work-life balance. I know many have left the industry as they have spent time with their families. Or like me, now have a basic entry level job that I work 37 hours and earn the same as I did as a Head Chef working 80-100 hours a week."

Chef, 25 – 34 years old, North West

"I feel like hospitality was on breaking point before Covid and once everybody was either on furlough or got made redundant like myself, they found other jobs and that there's more to life then working five days a week 14 hour days whilst not getting appreciated. I feel like for hospitality the only way of getting back to it is doing a four day week, i.e. 4 on 3 off or 4 on 4 off."

Chef, 25 – 34 years old, North East

"So much of hospitality earnings are bonus and tips based. Furlough didn't use this to calculate 80%. It's no wonder people have left - they needed the stability."

General Manager, 45 – 54 years old, Yorkshire & The Humber

Across all participants, when asked what changes they thought would improve recruitment and retention in hospitality, the majority said "feeling valued"

Legend: ■ All ■ Return within 6 months

Category	All	Return within 6 months
Feeling valued	19	18
Same wages, fewer hours	16	14
Better wages, same hours	16	24
2 days off consecutively	14	12
Consistent breaks	12	9
Employee perks & benefits	9	9
More skilled managers	8	7
2 days off together with the rest of the team	6	6

%

* Individuals could chose more than one response

1 in 5 individuals completing the survey said "feeling valued" was one of the key areas that could be improved to help recruitment and retention in the industry

"Same wages, fewer hours" and "Better wages, same hours" were also commonly cited areas for improvement

Interestingly, for those individuals who plan to return in the next 6 months, the most frequently cited improvement area was "Better wages, same hours"

There is little difference in the proportions reported for "All" and those planning to return in 6 months or more or not at all

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Again, individual comments reflect the lack of feeling valued, appreciated or respected, both within the industry from owners and managers, as well as by customers

"I would never have left the industry if I had been more valued. Maybe I was in the wrong job, maybe people just took what I did for granted. But I am benefitting more now for people realising what I can bring to a company and I am finally being rewarded without being overlooked. I must add, I am not better paid, I'm paid a lot less. But I am valued."

25 – 34 years old, Yorkshire & The Humber

"Hospitality must be treated as a career opportunity. Skilled workers and graduates should be on an appropriate wage, national living wage for this industry is a joke. Owners and investors must change their attitude, as this is make or break for the industry. Customers are rightfully angry with lack of service, however the disrespect hospitality workers have to endure is unheard of in other industries."
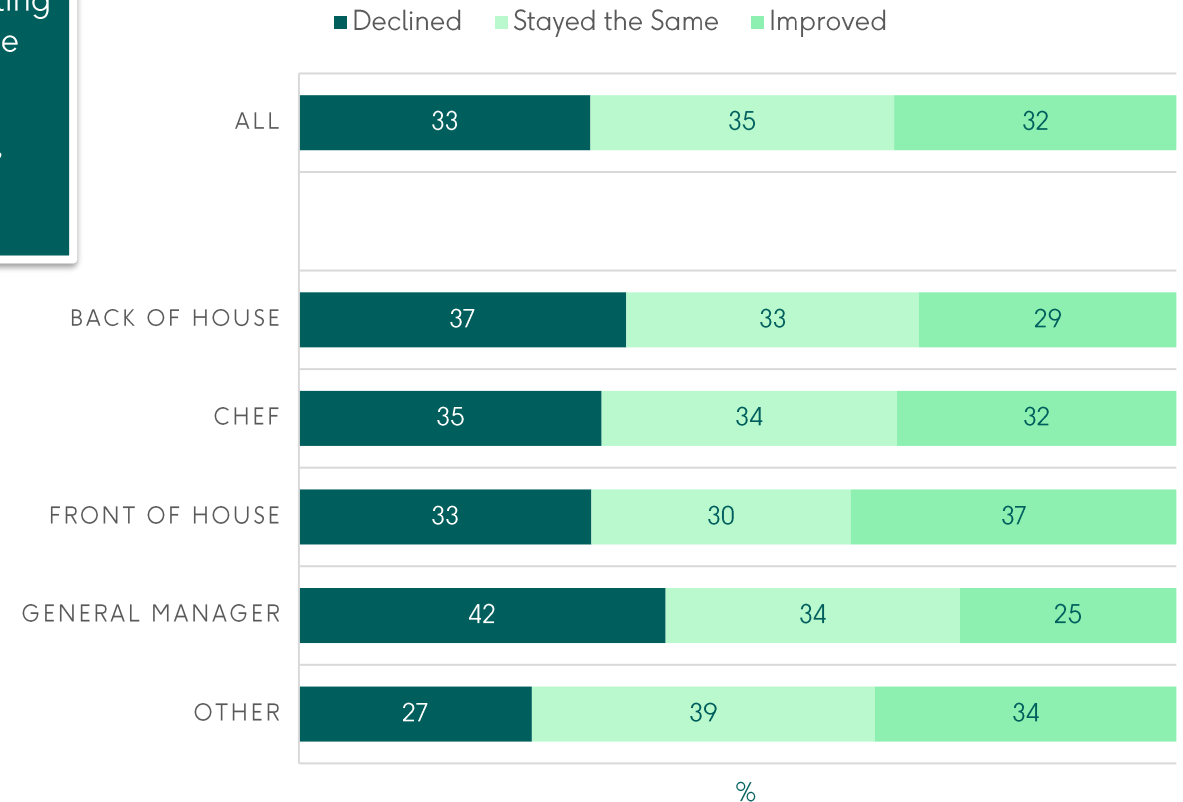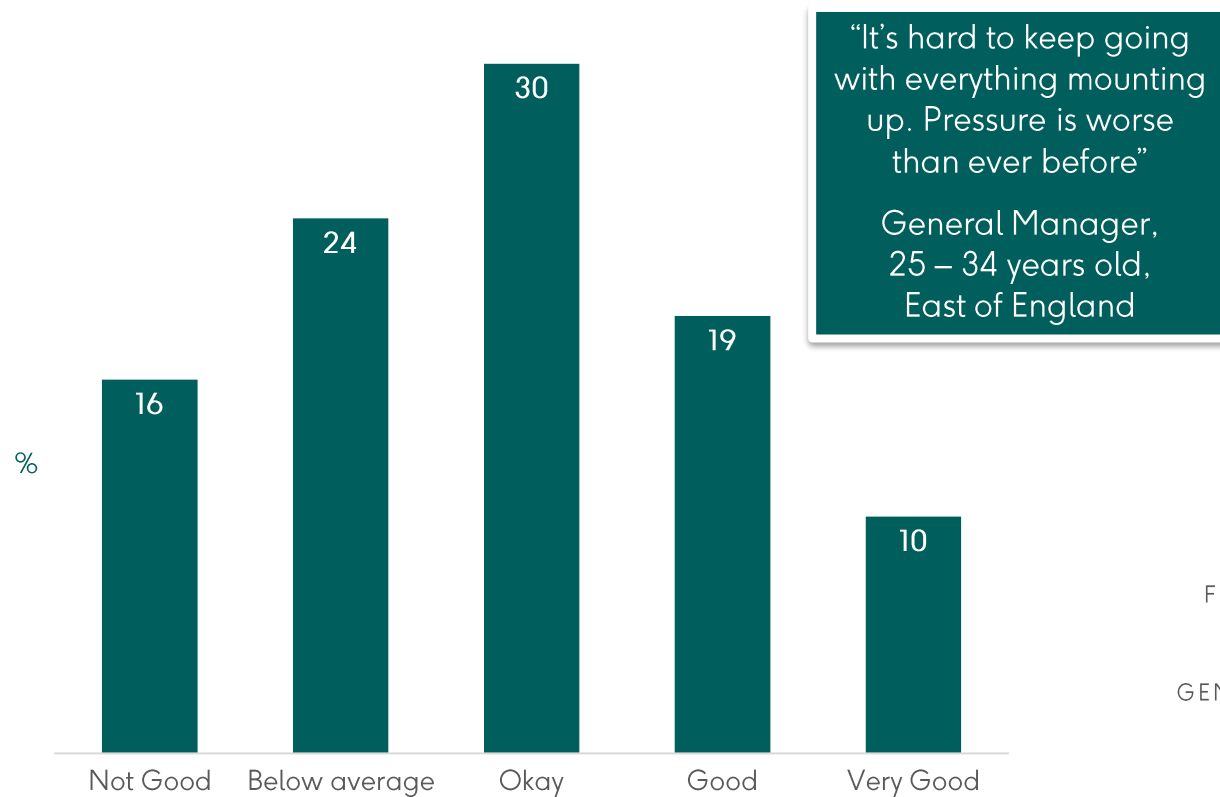
Front of House, 35 – 44 years old, South West

"Mental health and working conditions are important but so is the public culture and perception of those that work in the profession, and it is exactly that, a profession, something that the UK seems to have struggled to recognise. I wonder how many have left the industry (particularly FOH) who might have stayed had they been treated with respect."

Chef, 35 – 44 years old, South West

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Finally, how have individuals in hospitality been faring over the last year and since the re-opening of the sector?

40% of respondents report having a less than favourable experience with their mental health over the past 12 months, with around 1 in 6 noting it has been "not good"

In terms of how mental health might have changed for those working in the sector since it re-opened in April, General Managers, in particular, seem to be struggling, with 42% reporting a decline in their overall level of mental fitness

"It's hard to keep going with everything mounting up. Pressure is worse than ever before"

General Manager, 25 – 34 years old, East of England

	Not Good	Below average	Okay	Good	Very Good
%	16	24	30	19	10

	Declined	Stayed the Same	Improved
ALL	33	35	32
BACK OF HOUSE	37	33	29
CHEF	35	34	32
FRONT OF HOUSE	33	30	37
GENERAL MANAGER	42	34	25
OTHER	27	39	34

%

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The impact on mental health was another common theme amongst respondents with a focus again on training needs within the industry and the availability of mental health resources

"I want to feel like I can talk about my mental health more openly with my management. There should be more programs in the workplace to support people with mental health issues similar to those with physical health issues."

Chef, 18 – 24 years old, Scotland

"As a manager I know I have lost a few people over the last lockdown, but also the majority of my team seem very unmotivated since reopening. It has been busy, the job role has increased and the labour budgets have remained the same - if not been reduced! Attitude has been a huge barrier the last two weeks, whether it be team going AWOL, being generally unhappy, being able to go out and come in hungover and unable to work, these are all huge challenges I've been facing. I believe their workload has a huge part to play in this and that if the restrictions (i.e. table service only) were to be lifted then my team and I can relax knowing that their job roles will have basically been halved!"

General Manager, 25 – 34 years old, London

"Hospitality has had underlying issues. I'm fortunate that I work for a good employer, but In the past I haven't. And I feel those experiences have shown me why younger people will not get back into this industry for now. It's not a respected career path, wages and mental health are not great within it and the hours are just not fair."

General Manager, 25 – 34 years old, South East

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Concluding Comments

Concluding Comments

The Burnt Chef Project wanted to try and better understand what's underlying the current staffing shortages across the sector, giving those working in the profession a voice and us some real numbers to respond to.

Whilst our data largely corroborate what we've been hearing in the media and anecdotally, it also helps provide a sense of where the industry needs to focus in the short term to attract and retain talent.

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Concluding Comments

The good news is that concepts such as improving recognition feel highly actionable in the immediate future.

Work-life balance requires a more systemic approach but there's the opportunity to work with a diverse, cross-section of roles to co-create some new approaches or experiments to address this.

There are some great resources available – often at no cost – to help support the mental health and wellbeing of employees.

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Concluding Comments

"The hospitality profession has notoriously struggled with retention rates in the past and this data shows some of the reasons why. It's not uncommon for us (The Burnt Chef Project) to work with businesses that have high turnover of staff in excess of 120%.

When the average cost of sourcing, recruiting, training and upskilling a new member of the team runs anywhere between £2,500 - £5,000 we must take action in order to retain our most valuable assets – the people.

By enabling our teams to feel valued and respected through management training and developing more robust structures to promote a fairer work-life balance, we will begin to see the health of the people in our industry improve. We will also see happier customers and, in turn, healthier longer-term profits as our businesses retains its workforce and increases productivity.

It's been a tough year for our profession, but we now need to look to the future and take a pro-active approach to address the issues highlighted in this report rather than look to the past and "how it's always been" and repeat our mistakes."

KRIS HALL – Founder of The Burnt Chef Project

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We'd like to thanks all those who participated in this survey for their time and valuable insights

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The Burnt Chef Project Resources

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SUPPORT SERVICE

Text **BURNTCHEF** to **85258**
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This innovative service seeks to support individuals within the hospitality industry who are facing a whole wealth of challenges

THE BURNT CHEF
ACADEMY

An online training and resource centre dedicated to providing a market leading level of knowledge and understanding around the subject of wellbeing and mental health

THE BURNT CHEF
JOURNAL

Podcasts hosted with leading industry voices to talk openly about working in hospitality and the link to mental health and wellbeing

Peopleful

Peopleful helps organisations understand their greatest people risks, the root causes and the cost of inaction.

Our approach brings objective metrics to employee wellbeing and performance.

We partner with The Burnt Chef Project to deliver a programme that is quick and straightforward to roll out.

Our focus is on amplifying the positive and working with our client teams to start effecting change where it's most needed.

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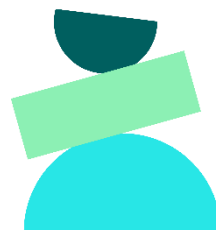
We help businesses with:

- Customer experience and loyalty
- Employee engagement, recruitment, retention and wellbeing
- Brand protection and promotion, as well as ancillary up-sell

Our platform helps the business engage and communicate far more efficiently and effectively with both customers and employees. Individuals feel they can speak-up honestly, whether it's concerns, suggestions or asking for assistance. Giving insight and trends to make educated business decisions, to help the employees, customers and business succeed.

We ensure the organisation has a holistic and detailed view across the business ensuring interlock and integration to build and support great teams, who understand their customer, as well as represent and promote the brand.

Contact us to see just how agile our platform is and the many benefits it can bring.

For further detail on The Burnt Chef Project, please contact:
info@theburntchefproject.com

For more information on Peopleful and the analysis in this report, please contact:
kate@peopleful.io

For further information about the Umbrella Insight experience and engagement platform, please contact:
Hello@UmbrellaInsight.com

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ANXIOUS?
OVERWHELMED?

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