



**Working
Families**

LAS helpline data deep dive

**A deep dive into our 2023-2024
Legal Advice Service helpline data**



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A deep dive into our 2023-2024 Legal Advice Service helpline data

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Informed, empowered, resolution: understanding rights and options, feeling confident to act on our advice, and longer-term outcomes and impact

01 Introduction and overview

In 2023-2024, our helpline received ...

- **1,172** contact form queries via our **website**
- **24** queries via **social media**
- Nearly **1,500 calls** to our helpline during opening hours, from **788 people** – over half got through to an adviser

We advised ...

- **1,062** people by **email** only (70% of cases)
- **275** people over the **phone only** (18%)
- **150** people via **phone and email** (10%)
- **25** people on **social media** (2%)

Our **online information and guidance pages** had **~1,000,000 unique visitors** (838,578 + an estimated 15% who rejected cookies)



**In 2023-2024, we responded to
1,512 queries from 1,470 people.**

We took an average of **eight working days** to respond.

Queries:
1,512



Pro bono support: Drafting query responses and ‘hackathon’

We couldn’t have provided all this in-depth specialist legal advice without ...

- over **70 volunteer lawyers**
- from **14 firms** (or working independently)
- helping draft **nearly 500 query responses**

... freeing up our expert in-house solicitors and advisers to help clients with the thorniest problems.

In February 2024, we also held our first ‘**hackathon**’ at **Linklaters LLP**, which brought together ...

- **20 employment law specialists**
- from **15 firms** (seven new to us)
- to review and update almost a **quarter of our 130 online employment law pages**.

These can run to the equivalent of 15-20 A4 pages each and can take hours to update.

Pictured, left to right, at February’s ‘hackathon’: **Katy Salt** and **Emily Pritty**, employment solicitors and joint heads of Working Families’ Legal Advice Service (job share); **Lizzie Harker-Noor**, Associate (Pro Bono), and **Sophie Brambley**, Managing Associate (Pro Bono), Linklaters



**Pro bono support:
The firms we're
working with**

The critical value of Working Families' Legal Advice Service during this cost-of-living crisis cannot be overemphasised and it's been **Linklaters' privilege and pleasure** to support the service by partnering to deliver the inaugural 'hackathon' event.

In light of the cost-of-living crisis, support to families is more important than ever, and ensuring that Working Families' advice pages are up to date allows families to obtain legal information which is relevant, comprehensible but most importantly, free to access. **Covington & Burling is delighted to collaborate with Linklaters and Working Families.**

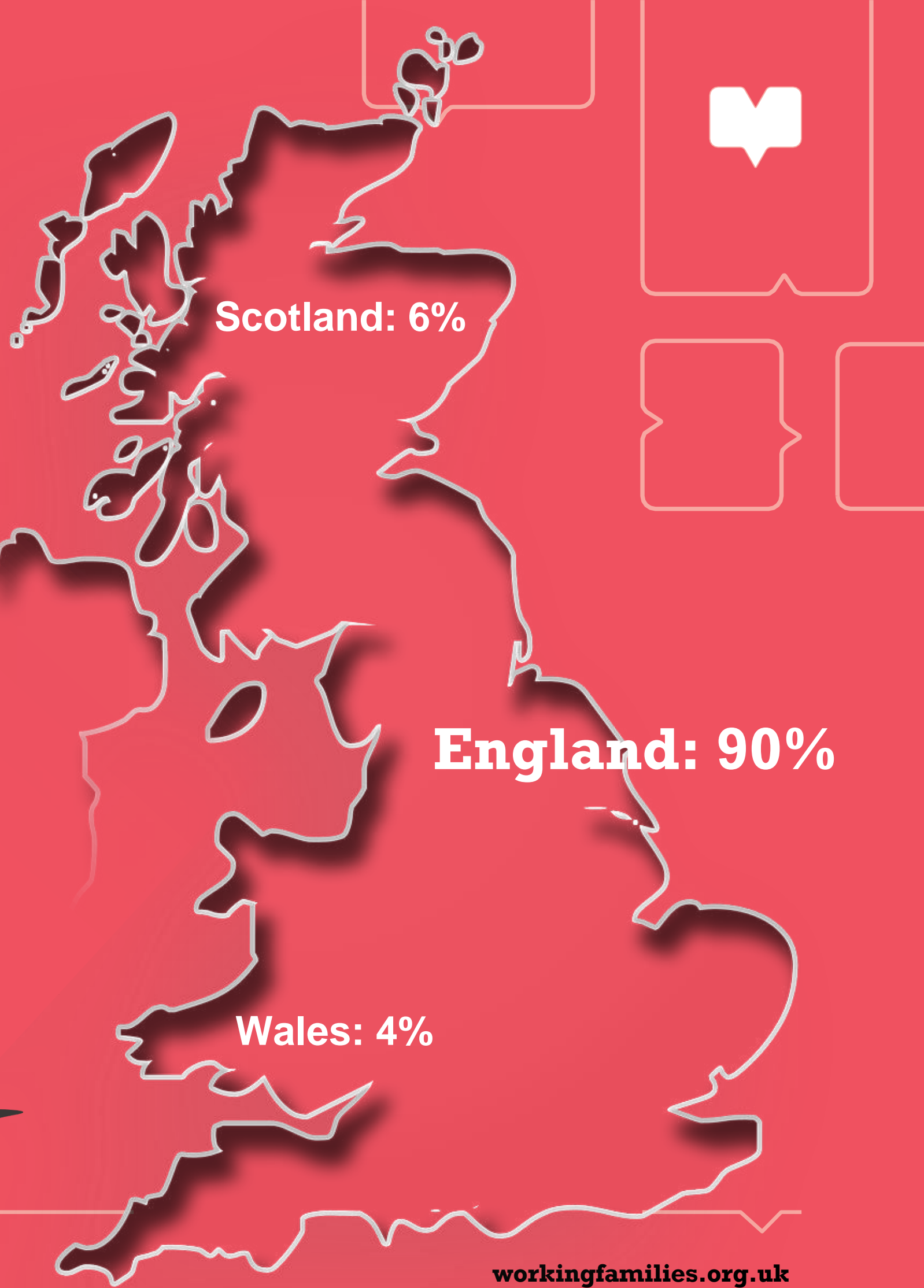
- | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Baker McKenzie | 8. GQ Littler | 15. Norton Rose Fulbright LLP |
| 2. Cooley LLP | 9. Herbert Smith Freehills LLP | 16. Reed Smith LLP |
| 3. Covington & Burling LLP | 10. Laceys Solicitors | 17. Shearman & Sterling |
| 4. Dentons | 11. Lewis Silkin LLP | 18. Simmons & Simmons LLP |
| 5. Eversheds Sutherland | 12. Lewis Silkin (N.I.) LLP | 19. Squire Patton Boggs (UK) LLP |
| 6. Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer | 13. Linklaters LLP | 20. White & Case LLP |
| 7. Gowling WLG (UK) LLP | 14. Mishcon de Reya LLP | 21. Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati |

02 WHO do we help?

Where do people contact us from?

19% of helpline users last year were **Londoners**

Londoners = 13% of the UK population



Protected characteristics and vulnerabilities

- **84%** of helpline users last year were **women** (previous year: 85%)
- **83%** of our helpline users were **aged 25-44** (previous year: 84%) – peak child-rearing years
- **19%** were from a **minority ethnic background** (unchanged from previous year; UK generally: 16%)
- Of 989 people who told us whether they were **living with a disability/long-term health condition**, **14%** said yes (previous year: 17%; UK generally: 20%)*

* Disabled people are underrepresented among our helpline clients because they are less likely to be working, and the vast majority of our clients are in work.

**22% of
helpline users
were single
parents**

(UK-wide, 15% of
families are lone-parent
families)



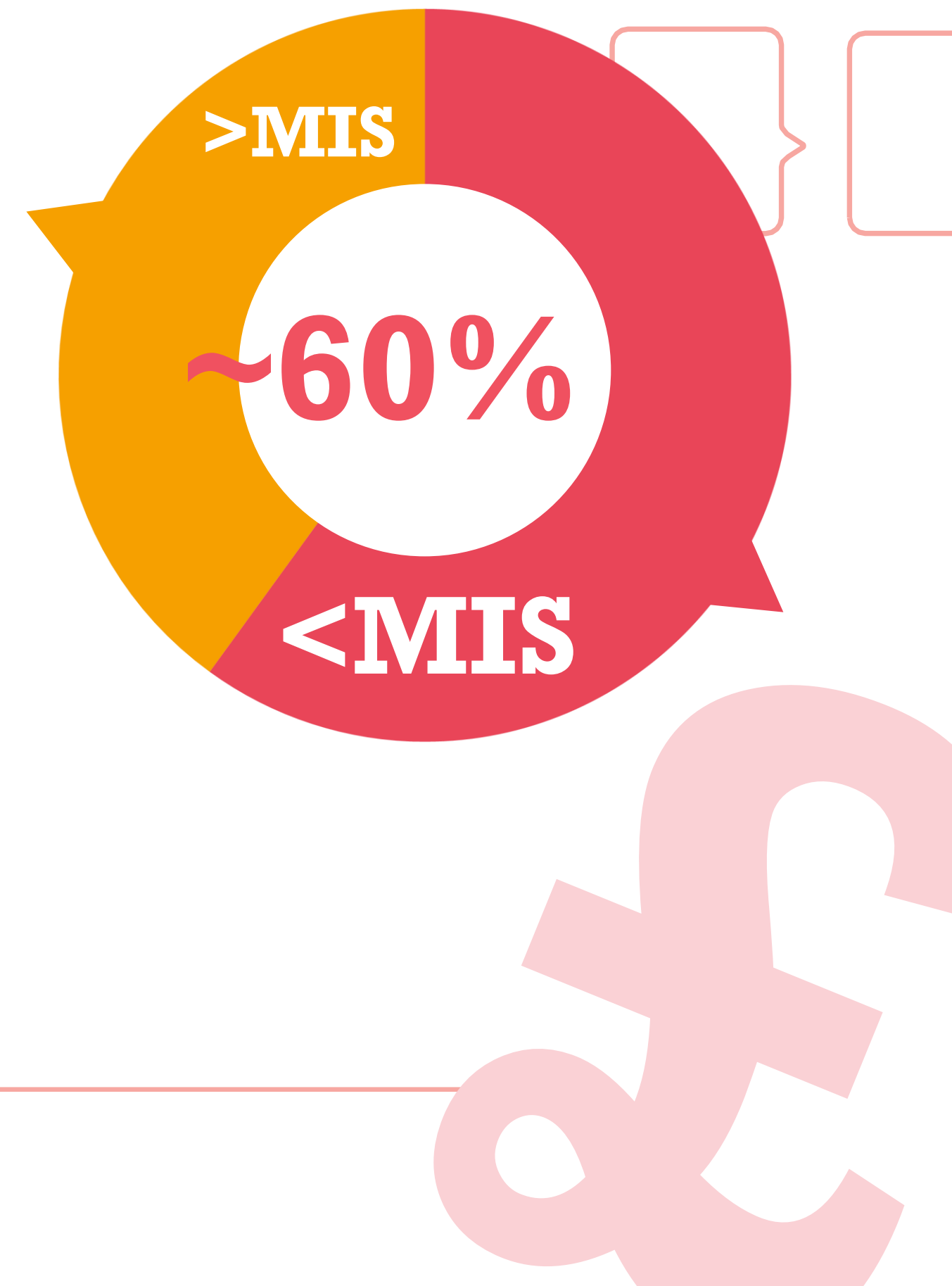
Lower income

We use the Joseph Rowntree Foundation's **Minimum Income Standard (MIS)** to calculate thresholds for lower incomes, using the MIS online calculator:
www.minimumincome.org.uk.

The MIS is what research suggests is needed for an acceptable standard of living. It has increased significantly in recent years due to sharply rising living costs. We use two different family make-ups, in London and outside London, to arrive at four MIS thresholds for our helpline client group.

From the data we have from people who submitted e-queries, we estimate that **around 60% of our clients last year were from households earning below the MIS** – around double the proportion in the UK population.

We cannot precisely work out the percentage of people we support who are from households earning below the MIS, because our clients don't tell us their exact earnings but which £10,000 income band their household income falls into. And we don't have enough data from the people who phone us.





Helpline clients living in relative poverty despite being from a working household:

The threshold for living in relative poverty is earning $\leq 60\%$ of median income for the year in question, so for 2023-2024, it's $\sim < \pounds 30,000$.

1
~
3

According to
2022-2023 DWP
data, around
one sixth of
people in the
UK were living
in relative
poverty.

(2023-2024 data won't be available until 2025, but we understand there is projected to be only a small change, so for 2023-2024, this data is likely to be accurate to a reasonable degree.)



Multiple disadvantage

- **Over 40%** of our **lower-income London** clients were **also lone parents** compared to 33% outside London.
- **58%** of **helpline clients** living with a **disability** had household income below **£30,000**.
- **41%** of helpline clients from a **minority ethnic background** were from households earning **less than £30,000**, compared to 29% of clients from a white background.



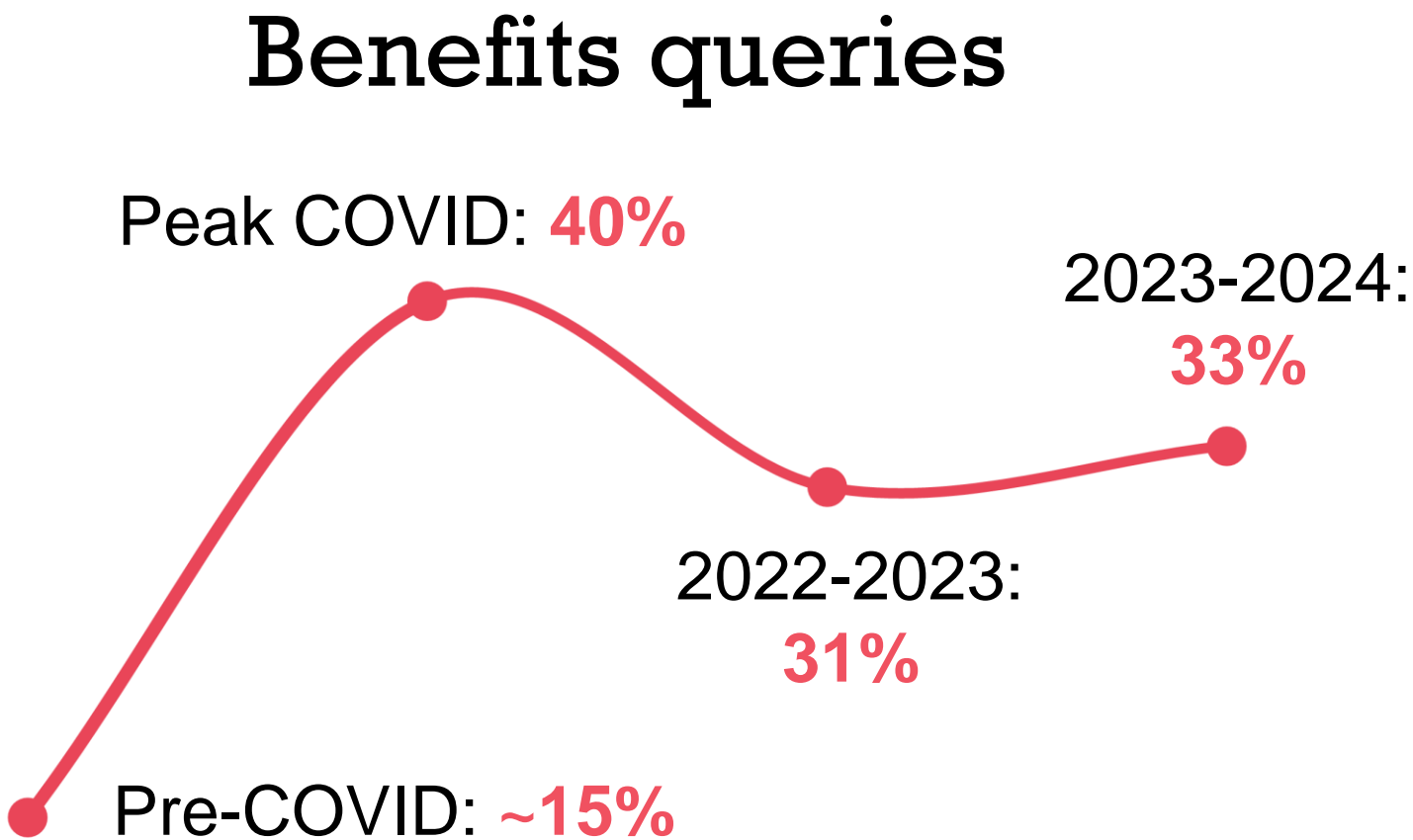
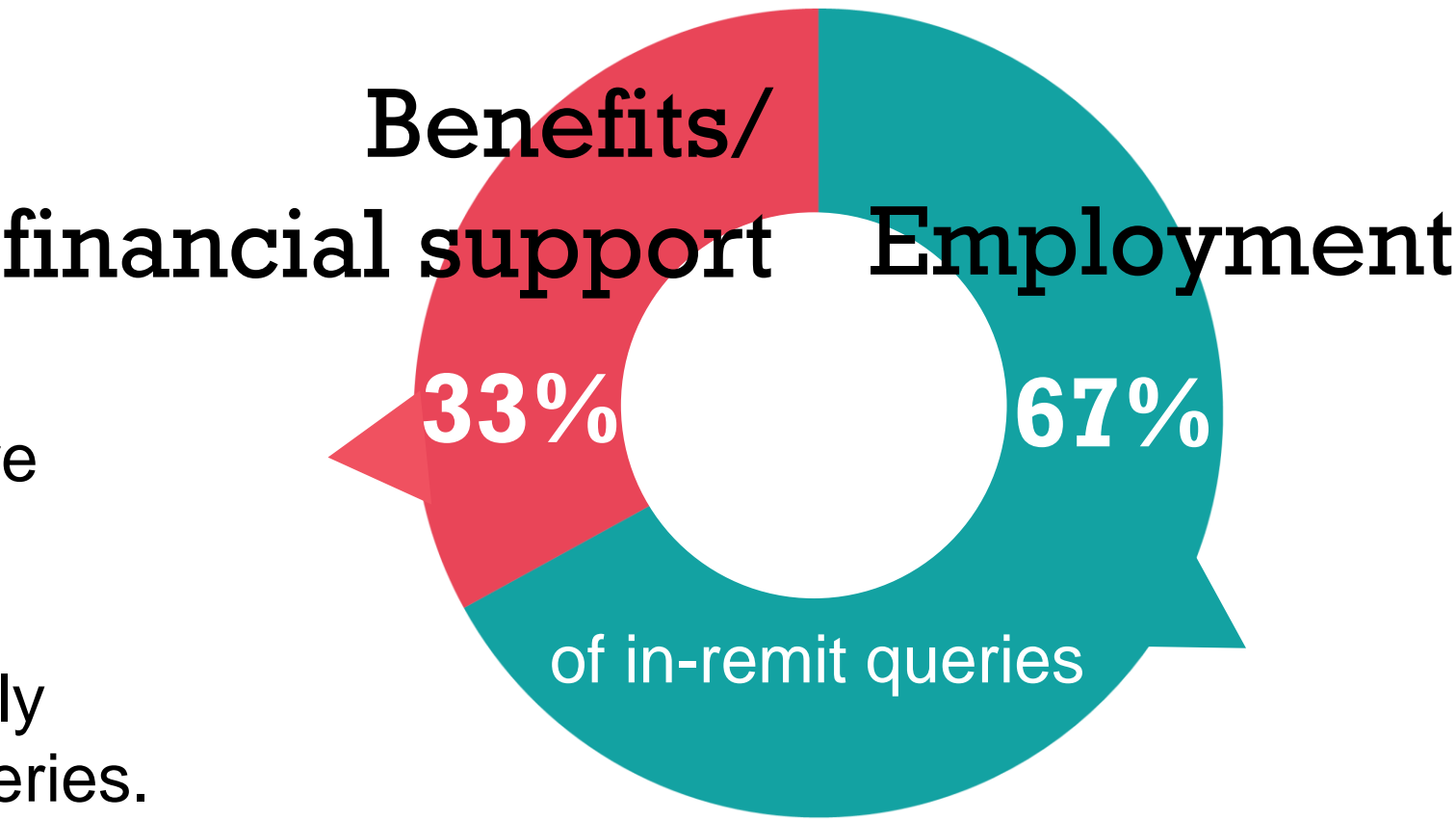
Nearly **80%** of the **single parents** who contacted us were living close to or in **relative poverty**

03 What ISSUES are they facing?

Employment versus benefits/financial support queries

Last year, 6% of helpline queries were outside remit (2022-2023: 8%). We signposted these clients.

Of in-remit queries, 67% were mostly employment queries (previously: 69%) and 33% (previously: 31%) were mostly benefits/financial support queries.



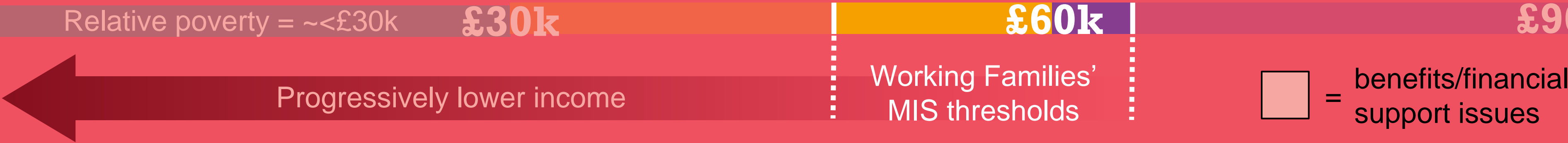


03 What **ISSUES** are they facing?

The top five issues we were contacted about in 2023-2024

1. Pregnancy and maternity issues: **26%** of in-remit queries
2. Discrimination: **17%**
- =5. Flexible working: **12%**
- =5. Statutory family leave: **12%**
- =5. Maternity benefits: **12%**

The top 10 issues by income bracket





I need advice on taking a **career break** to help my **youngest child**, who is **disabled**, transition to starting school.

He will be **starting school part-time**. I have **no support network** to help before and after school, and his father works away. My son **wouldn't cope with after-school care** so I can't balance work with caring for my son during this time.

I also have **ongoing health problems** from my son's birth and feel like I need the career break for my own **wellbeing**.

But I'm worried about **losing Tax Credits** if I take a career break. If I have to claim **Universal Credit**, I'm worried about being **penalised** for taking a career break and being **made to look for work** – work which would be **impossible** for me to do due to my disabled son's care needs.

Multiple issues:

- Low-income
- Carer to a disabled child
- No childcare: no support network; other parent unable to share load; available childcare unsuited to child's needs
- Health problems
- Risk of benefits penalties

04 The DIFFERENCE we make

Our theory of change

Working Families has a theory of change. This maps out the social change Working Families is trying to achieve and the steps along the way.

Our helpline sits within this roadmap, with its own target outcomes. Measuring the helpline’s outcomes helps us know if we’re effectively achieving what we set out to.

MEASUREMENT

- 1. Do Legal Advice Service users better understand their rights?
- 2. Do they plan/go on to use their rights?
- 3. Does this help resolve their issues?



OUTCOMES

Parents and carers are **informed** and **empowered** to make use of their employment rights and entitlements to **enter, progress and thrive in work**



GOAL

Parents and carers access, progress and thrive in work, while meeting their caring responsibilities

Outcomes
summary

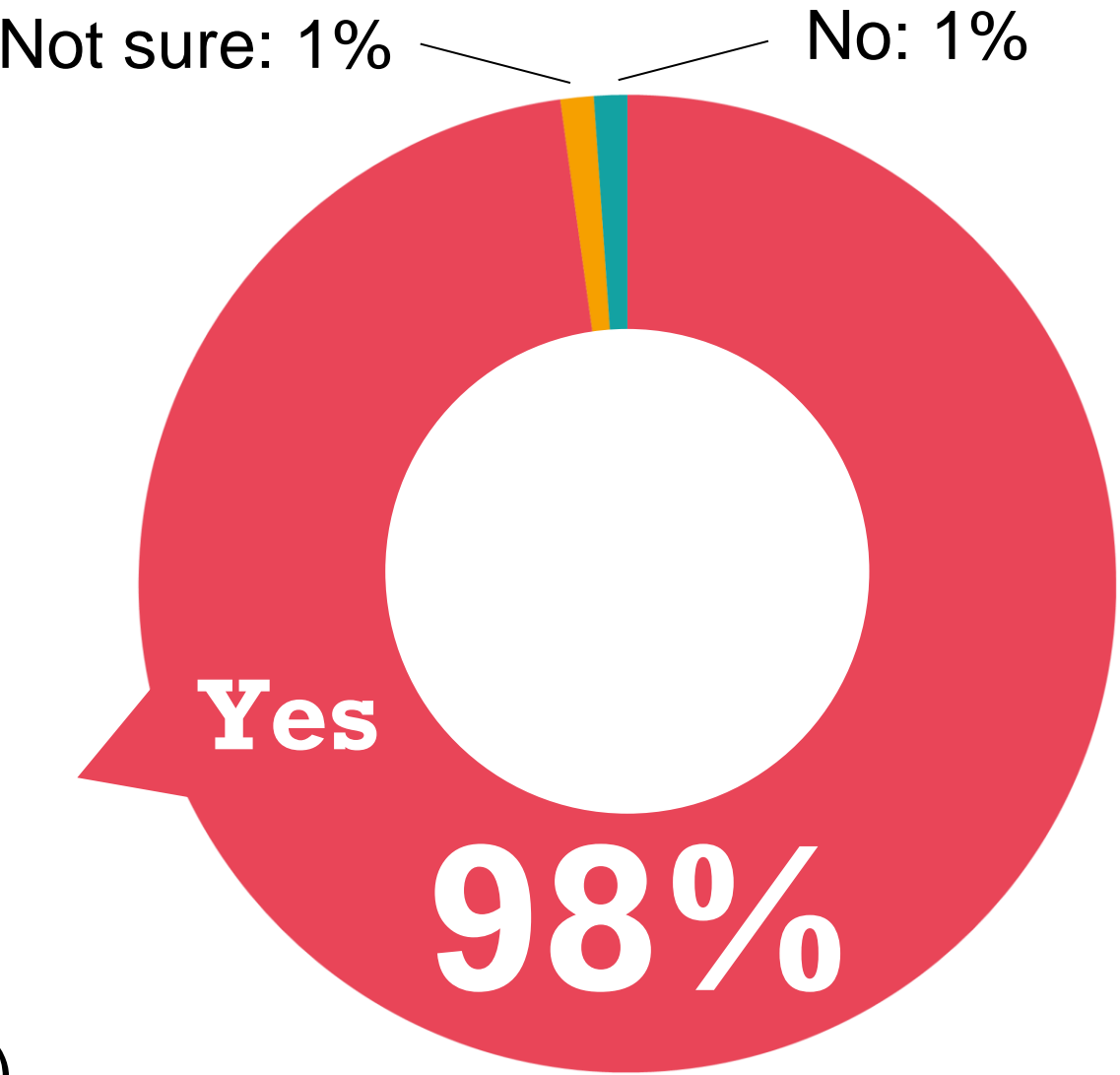
	INFORMED	EMPOWERED	RESOLVED
	Better understood rights, options and entitlements after accessing our advice	Intended to act on, or did act on, our advice	Resolved their work issue/increased their household income
Short-term outcomes – immediately after receiving our advice/viewing our webpages			
Helpline	98%	96%	N/A
Website	90%*	79%*	N/A
Long-term outcomes – two to three months later			
Helpline	95%	88%	80%

* Our website feedback data is from our employment rights pages only. We have found that visitors to our benefits pages often score our online resources more negatively, but not because our information and guidance is lacking or inaccurate, but because, for example, they are unhappy because the law doesn't help them, or the benefits system is too complex, or there is no financial support available to them. We have therefore made some changes to our website survey for 2024-2025 so that any frustration with the benefits system is not misrepresented as dissatisfaction with our resources.

INFORMED

Short-term impact:
“Do you better understand your rights and options after receiving our advice?”

(Survey link included in our advisers’ response emails to helpline clients. Completed by 91 people in 2023-2024.)



I feel more secure in knowing my rights and options to protect myself and my children from changes and behaviours at work impacting my wellbeing and family life.

I understood my rights and was able to go to tribunal.



INFORMED

I received **prompt, concise legal advice** about my case. It was written in a way that enabled me to **understand** the position I was in and **how to present the best case I could**. I was even **provided with quotes** to use. All the advice was **clear**. Your help was second to none.

I have a **greater understanding** of what steps I need to take immediately and what I can do in the future.

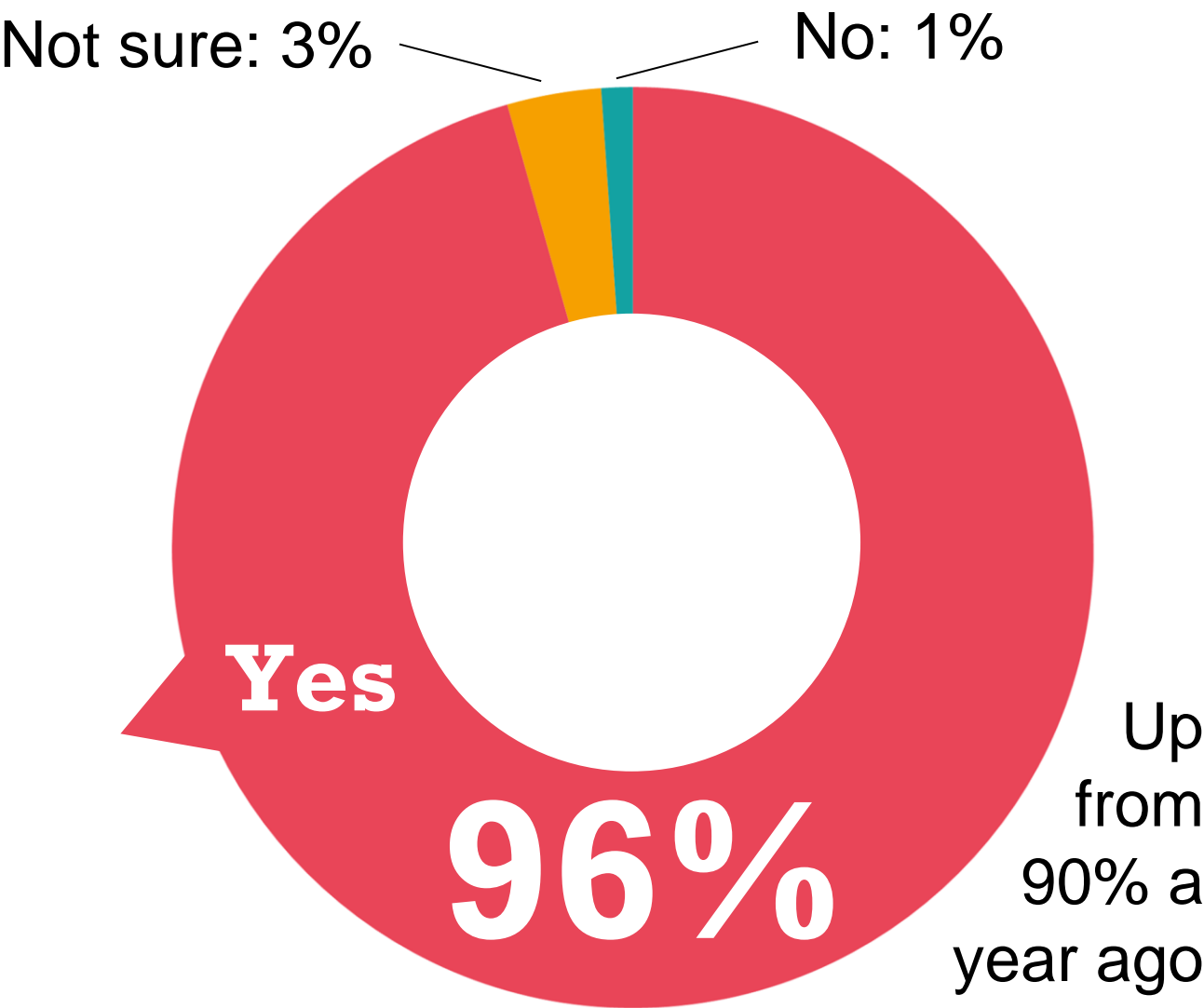
I just wanted to say a **HUGE** thank you for this **brilliant advice**. It is so **comprehensive** but also **totally clear** and **digestible**. The summary section was particularly helpful in helping me to **understand in a nutshell** what my main options are, and I felt Julie had **really tailored** this to my particular circumstances. Going into conversations with my employer armed with this advice **gave me real confidence** in what I should be asking for. I can't thank you enough. What a **wonderful service** you provide!

EMPOWERED

EMPOWERED

Short-term impact:
“Do you intend to
act on our
advice?”

(Survey link included in our
advisers’ response emails to
helpline clients. Completed by
91 people in 2023-2024.)



I felt
empowered and
supported to **act**
according to
the law.

“Do you intend to act on our advice?”

Your advice has given me **confidence** going into discussions with my employer. **I feel like I know what I’m talking about** and can say to my employer that I have sought legal advice.

I feel **confident** in **challenging my employer** regarding **changing my contract**.

I **definitely** **feel more confident**.

I feel more **confident** to deal with a stressful situation at a particularly **vulnerable time** in our lives.

EMPOWERED



EMPOWERED

Without this service I would be **completely lost**.

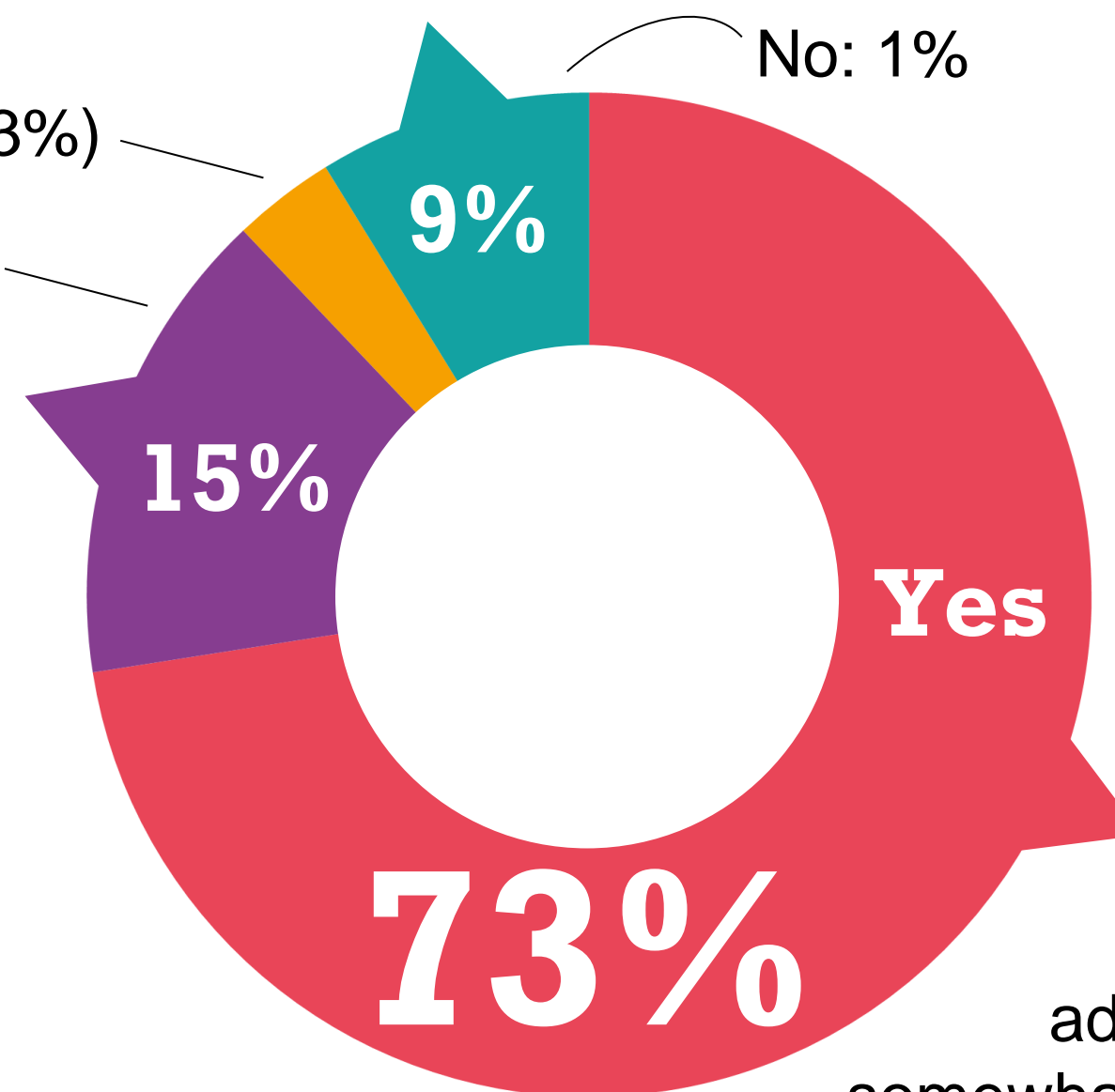
I have had advice from both Katy [**employment solicitor** and co-head of service] and Julie [**benefits adviser**] and both have been **invaluable** in helping me **build confidence** and know I have the relevant support to **move forwards** in a difficult situation.

I can't thank you enough for the **knowledge** and **support** you've provided. Thank goodness Working Families exists, as I have been **struggling so much** mentally and both Katy and Julie have been **godsend**s to me.



Helpline users who acted on our advice:

88%



Long-term impact:

Coincidentally, 91 people also completed our long-term outcomes survey, which we send to helpline clients a few months after they receive our advice.

When asked if they acted on our advice, 73% said yes and 15% said somewhat (88% in total took some action).

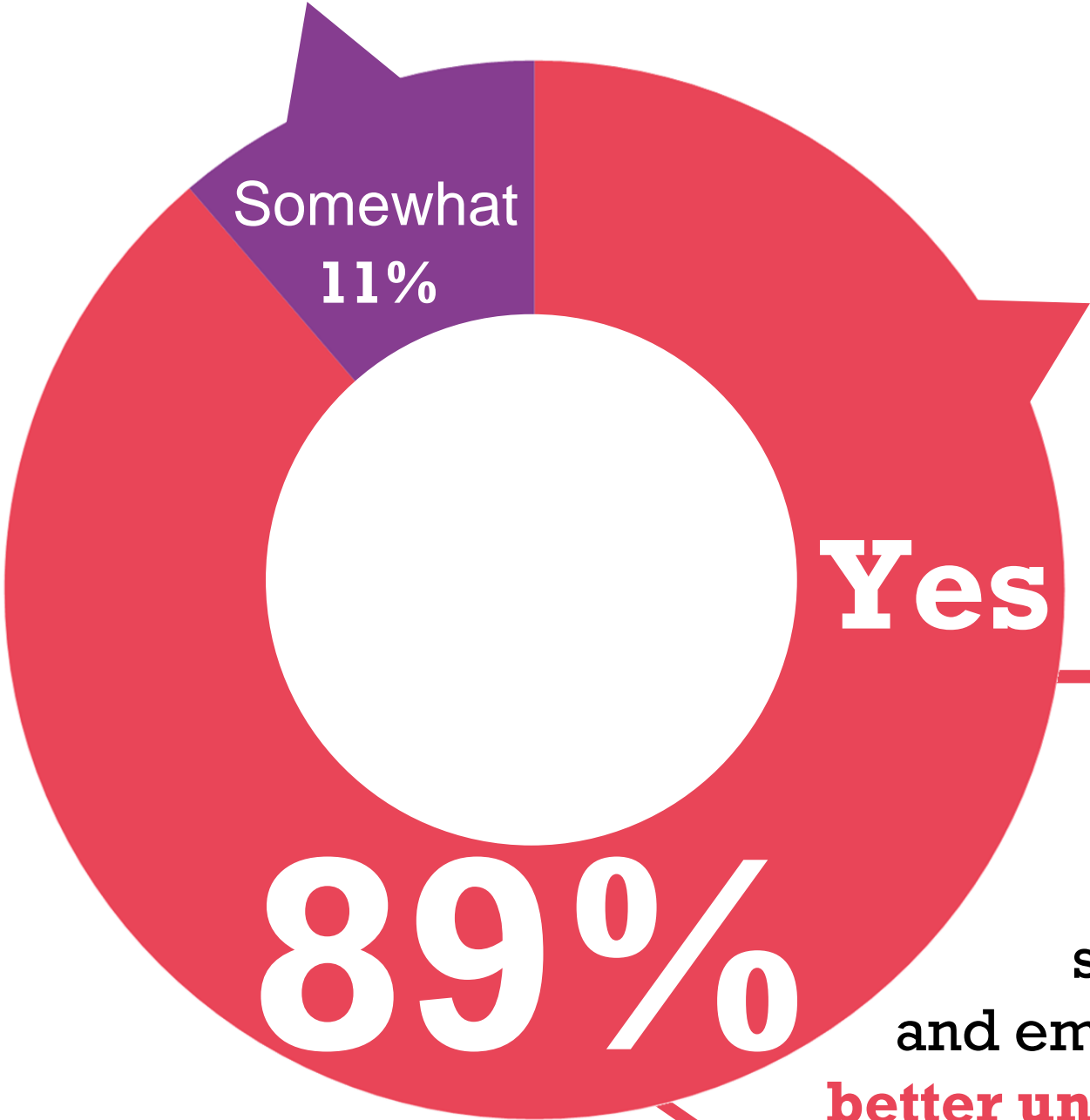
Three of the eight people who didn't act on our advice said their query was about understanding their rights and taking action wasn't necessary/relevant. One wanted to act but the process was too difficult. Another couldn't act because they weren't entitled to any/further benefits or financial support. Our advice was sound.

EMPOWERED

RESOLVED

Long-term impact:
“**Did our employment advice help you [resolve your issue]?**”

(Sample size: 62 people who, two to three months after contacting us, said they had acted on our advice.)



I was very confused by **conflicting information** regarding a **maternity dispute** with my employer. I then spoke with Emily [co-head of service and employment solicitor] and had a **much better understanding** of my entitlement. This gave me the **confidence** to **challenge my employer**, which led to them **paying me what I was owed without having to go to tribunal.**

I understood my rights and felt empowered knowing how to act on them

97%

I understood what I needed to do if I couldn't resolve the issue

56%

I resolved a dispute with my employer

15%

I kept my job

13%

My employer treated me more reasonably during pregnancy/maternity leave

11%

I was able to take time off to care for my family

8%

I was able to increase my income

6%

I was able to secure flexible working

6%

I secured a settlement from my employer

5%

I was able to progress in my work

2%

Long-term impact: How acting on our employment advice helped our clients

(Sample size: 62 people who, two to three months after receiving our advice, said they had acted on it.)

RESOLVED

100%

of 26 benefits advice
clients who completed our
outcomes survey said our
advice was helpful





1 in 2

people who acted on our
benefits advice
increased their
household income

Long-term impact:

Twenty-one long-term outcomes survey respondents who had received benefits advice, went on to act on our advice.

Eleven of these (52%) went on to **increase their household income**, by as much as **£500/month**.

All said Working Families' advice had contributed to their family's financial situation improving.

& RESOLVED



I work **part-time** due to **caring responsibilities** for my **disabled wife, elderly parents who have Alzheimer's/dementia**, and **autistic children**. I had questions about some of the **benefits** our family receives and how these might be affected by my work hours/income. Some of my queries were 'technical' and **Citizens Advice couldn't answer** them. HMRC and the DWP gave **conflicting advice**. So I contacted Working Families. Your advice is **always 100% accurate**, even with **complicated circumstances**. I have since been able to **increase my family's income by £500/month**, making our financial situation much more manageable.

Value of unclaimed in-work benefits/financial support calculated for our helpline clients in 2023-2024:

£150,000+

- 22 cases
- Highest one-off value: £7,280
- Lowest one-off value: £369
- Highest recurring value: £2,297/month
- Lowest recurring value: £104/month

Previous year: £98,032

RESOLVED

Outcomes examples

I feel **less anxiety** regarding work. I was able to have an **honest and open conversation** with my boss and **felt empowered** by the advice you gave me.

I no longer have to try and find overnight childcare due to being pressured into overnight work.

I feel **less stressed** as I was able to **resolve my issue** based on the advice given. All communication was very helpful.

When I was off sick due to a **pregnancy-related illness**, I was paid statutory sick pay. Meanwhile, a male colleague who was off sick received an enhanced sickness payment. Working Families clarified my position with respect to **discrimination** and **helped me set the tone for contacting my employer**. I successfully **secured a back payment of enhanced sick pay** from my employer.

RESOLVED

Our outstanding employment solicitors and advisers – in our clients' words

Your helpline is an outstanding way to gain help, advice and information. It was great to have **Génevie** listen and provide information on my query; she was genuinely interested. I received a very speedy, personalised response. I feel so much better having discussed my issue and have been able to put a plan in place to try and resolve this. Your knowledge and help has been invaluable. Thank you.

Katy has been so helpful, caring and thoughtful in her replies. She has given such clear and detailed information and advice, and really promptly. We have exchanged several emails due to the nature of my situation. I am very grateful for Katy's insights and time – thank you so much.

Incredibly helpful, clear and detailed comprehensive guidance. Thank you so much, **Julie**. I kept calling the DWP and HMRC and they cut me off as they were too busy. Their websites were not clear for my scenario. Your advice has been invaluable. Thank you so much for your time and support. So lucky to be able to access your service and I will make a donation.

Our outstanding team (continued)

I am over the moon and can't thank **Hollie** enough for all her advice and support through this. I honestly wouldn't have had the conviction or self-belief to stand my ground the way I have, if it hadn't been for you. Thank you from the bottom of my heart. I will never forget you.

Thanks so much for your help and detailed advice, **Emily**. I was so confused but you answered all my questions. I much better understand the law and my options. I will write to my employer to ask for flexibility around my caring responsibilities and hopefully better protect my position if things go wrong. You have clearly explained the overlapping legal positions and helped me to understand what I can do going forwards. I will let you know how I get on.

Connie's advice was detailed and easy to understand. It was more than I'd expected and I'm very grateful. My work colleagues are also very appreciative of your help.

Mandy, I just wanted to say a huge thanks to you for this extensive email and the telephone conversation we had around my issues at work. Following your advice, I was able to take these points to the HR department and they have finally granted me two days working from home. I paid for a solicitor and had help from my RCN union rep, but I found your help to be the most supportive and effective. I cannot thank you and Working Families enough – **what important work you do!**