

The Invisible Weight in Multiple Sclerosis

Uncovering the true drivers of unemployment and absenteeism in the MS workforce—and the data-driven interventions needed to retain them.

Based on cross-sectional analysis of working-age people with multiple sclerosis in Israel (Iron et al., 2025).



A working-age cohort with minimal to mild physical disability



The Demographic Profile

119 participants
65 females, 54 males
Mean age: 40.1 years
Mean education: 15.4 years



The Clinical Baseline

Mean disease duration of
10.0 years

Crucial insight: 57% of the cohort presents with minimal to mild levels of disability (EDSS score 0–2.0).

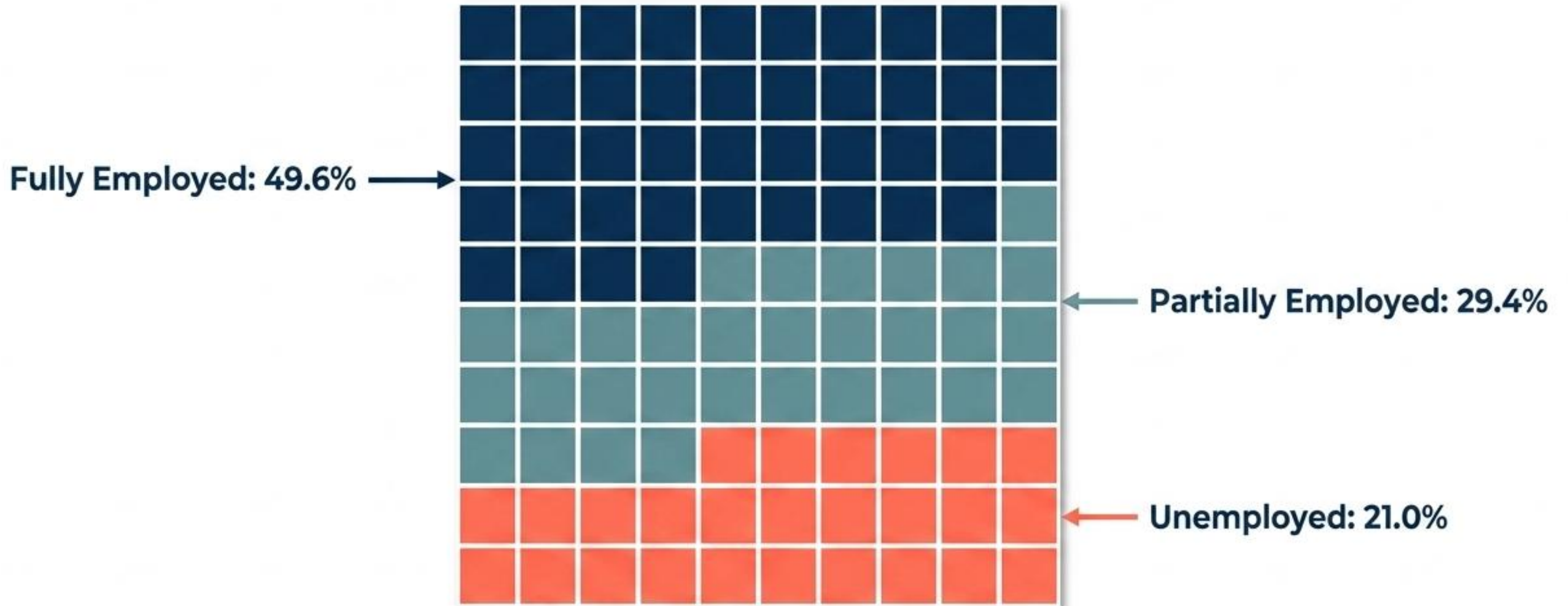


Exclusions

Carefully controlled for non-MS factors.

Excluded: Major depression, significant cognitive decline, clinical relapse within 6 months

The employment divide reveals a fractured workforce



At an average age of 40, more than half of the cohort (50.4%) has either lost their full-time career capacity or dropped out of the workforce entirely.

The invisible physical burdens vastly outweigh cognitive and emotional assumptions

What We Assume Matters

What Actually Drives Job Loss

Cognitive Function (SDMT): No significant difference across employment groups.

Perceived Fatigue (MFIS): Highly significant ($p < 0.01$).

Depression (HADS): No significant difference.

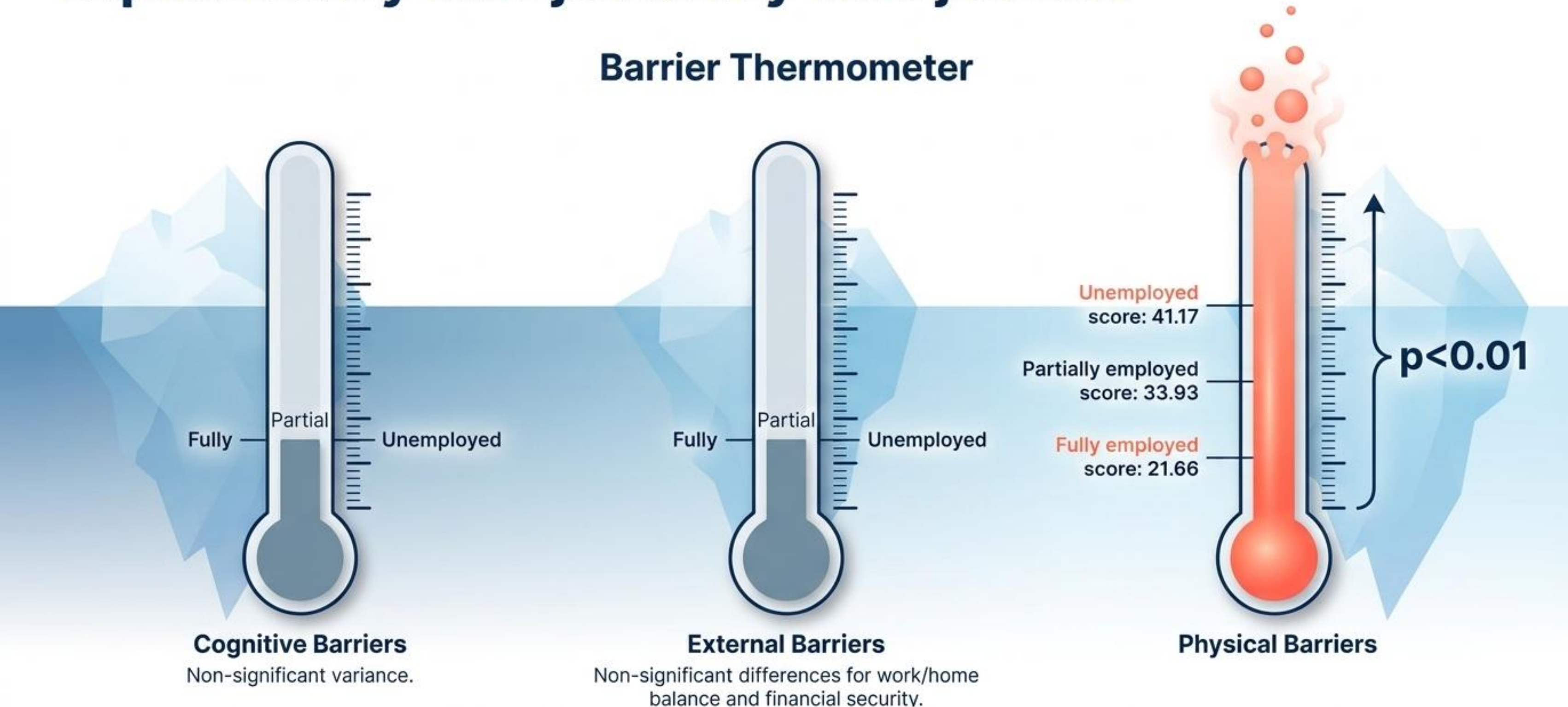
Perceived Mobility (MSWS-12): Highly significant ($p < 0.01$).

Anxiety (HADS): No significant difference.

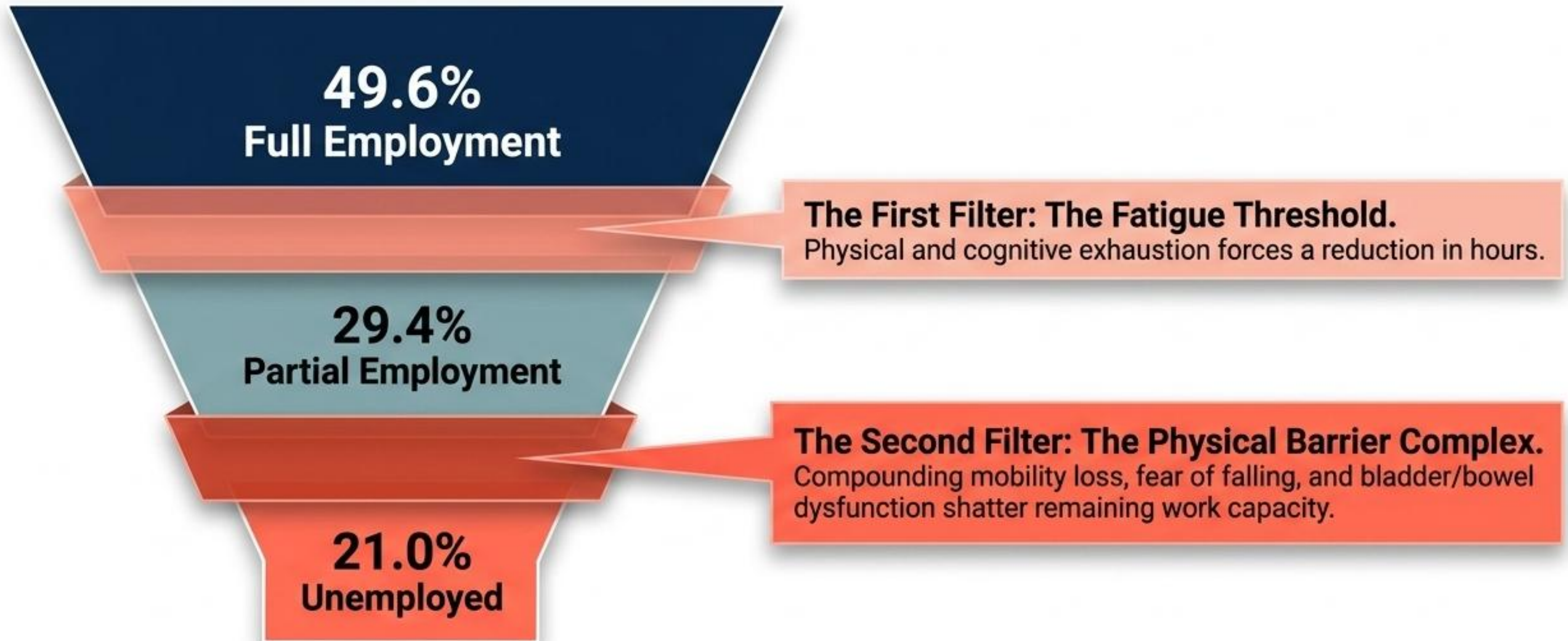
Fear of Falling (FES-I): Highly significant ($p < 0.01$).

Patients report physical barrier barriers escalating exponentially with job loss

Barrier Thermometer



Fatigue acts as the primary mechanism filtering patients out of full-time work



The Shadow Metric: Employment does not mean an absence of struggle

52.7%

of employed participants reported missing work due to MS in the past 6 months.

40.1 average days missed by the absentee subgroup.

Employed individuals with mobility limitations may have adapted their physical work environments, but the unpredictable nature of fatigue fundamentally disrupts schedule consistency.

The clinical footprint of losing a job versus missing a day

Predictors of Unemployment (Job Loss)		Predictors of Absenteeism (Missed Days)	
Mobility Difficulties	✓ (Yes)	✗ (No - Suggests accommodations are in place)	
Fear of Falling	✓ (Yes)	✓ (Yes)	
Perceived Fatigue	✓ (Yes - Core Driver)	✓ (Yes - Core Driver)	
Depression/Anxiety	✗ (No)	✓ (Yes - Elevated in absentee subgroup)	

Closing Takeaway: Interventions addressing psychological support are valuable, but employment retention fundamentally relies on structural accommodations that offset profound physical fatigue