

Hybrid Humans Report

A study
co-created
with all of you

Hybrid Humans



Talent
Garden

— Thanks to our community of digital workers, our partners at the Hub and all the kind people who shared our survey within their network, we have gotten access to some great insights about the future of work.

Our purpose with this study has been to find out, not only how the job market is changing in terms of skills, but also how individuals perceive these changes: The impact on their daily work, if they feel resilient and ready for a rapidly changing professional landscape, or if it sometimes is a race that wears them out. We also asked them what we can do as an ecosystem player to make work easier and more fulfilling day by day.

As a physical tech platform connecting startups with corporates, entrepreneurs with investors and professionals with new skills, it is our business to make sure that people feel equipped for the new worklife. This study is a first step.

ABOUT TALENT GARDEN

Talent Garden Rainmaking is the Copenhagen campus within a European network of entrepreneurs.

Founded in Brescia, Italy, Talent Garden has now grown its network across 18 European cities and is hosting over 4.500 digital professionals in 26 campuses across 8 countries. Unlike real estate driven international co-working operators, Talent Garden puts education and innovation at its core in developing its tech community. It focuses on new ways to transform and connect the flexible work and education environments that are being demanded by digital entrepreneurs and businesses undergoing digital transformation.

Our Copenhagen location on Holmen is at once a workspace for 300+ entrepreneurs and an innovation school. Start your morning drafting a new wireframe, take a class in UX after lunch, and finish off the day connecting with an interesting business angel. That is our take on how professional life should be. We're all about crossing borders too. The Talent Garden family allows you to share launch tips with fellow founders in Milan, recruit a growth hacker from Dublin, and find the right developer in Barcelona. What does it mean to be a European startup? That's something we're defining day by day. We hope you want to explore it with us.

A SUMMARY

Part I

Changing Roles

Gone are the days of narrow work descriptions, when we could show up to work and do - only - what we do best. Today, job roles are fusing together and new tools and technologies are constantly emerging, requiring quicker-than-ever adaptability and knowledge handling. In this first chapter of our survey, we look at how job roles are changing and what kind of skills are required from us - today and in five years.

Part II

Happiness at Work

We have seen that job roles are changing and posing new - both positive and more difficult - challenges for us as professionals. In this chapter, we look at this from an individual perspective and set out to find out how these changes are affecting our happiness inside the workplace. We also want to know what makes our respondents thrive and what would make them leave or stay in their current job.

Part III

New Forms of Education

Professionals are increasingly asked to combine strong task-specific skill sets with broader soft skills. Meanwhile, traditional job roles flow into others and technology cause an influx of new tools. This means great challenges for our education culture. In this last chapter we look at the way in which people are learning new skills today, and how we can build an educational system that fits an ever-changing labor market.

WHO ARE OUR RESPONDENTS?

The majority of our 125 respondents are digital and tech professionals from the Danish (and Nordic) startup ecosystem. Our respondents are individuals who work in the frontline of technological advance, often as agents of change themselves. This makes them a highly knowledgeable target group with an “inside” perspective on the effects of technology at the workplace. However, being a tech worker can also cause bias and it is important to be aware of this when reading the survey results. It is, for example, very plausible that a professional in a more operational position will be more concerned about AI taking over his or her job than a machine learning programmer. Likewise, tech workers are probably some of the most resilient - and optimistic - professionals on the market right now, as they are comfortable with many of the digital changes taking place.

Additionally, as digital natives (80% of our respondents are born after 1982), many of our respondents have an almost unconscious “feel” about the workings of technology, a fact that could turn negative aspects of technology into a blind spot for them. Similarly, their view on work-life balance and their career expectations most likely differ from that of previous generations for reasons not delved into in this survey. As with every survey with a fairly homogeneous demography, this is an important point to keep in mind.

WHO ARE OUR RESPONDENTS?

Furthermore, 72% of our respondents have been at their current workplace for less than one year and 70% only intend to stay there for another year or two. In other words, they show a great desire for mobility and a low sense of attachment to the companies in which they work.

As for company type, the majority of our respondents belong on the startup scene, with 69% of them working in companies with less than 50 employees. Some of them are high level management in these startups (20%) and the rest are juniors, professionals or managers (75%).

In terms of industries, the respondent pool is diverse and includes IT, HR, sales, marketing, project management and design roles. The majority of our participants earn between 30.000 DKK - 50.000 DKK per month, which is the standard salary range for professionals within the startup field in Denmark and the Nordics.

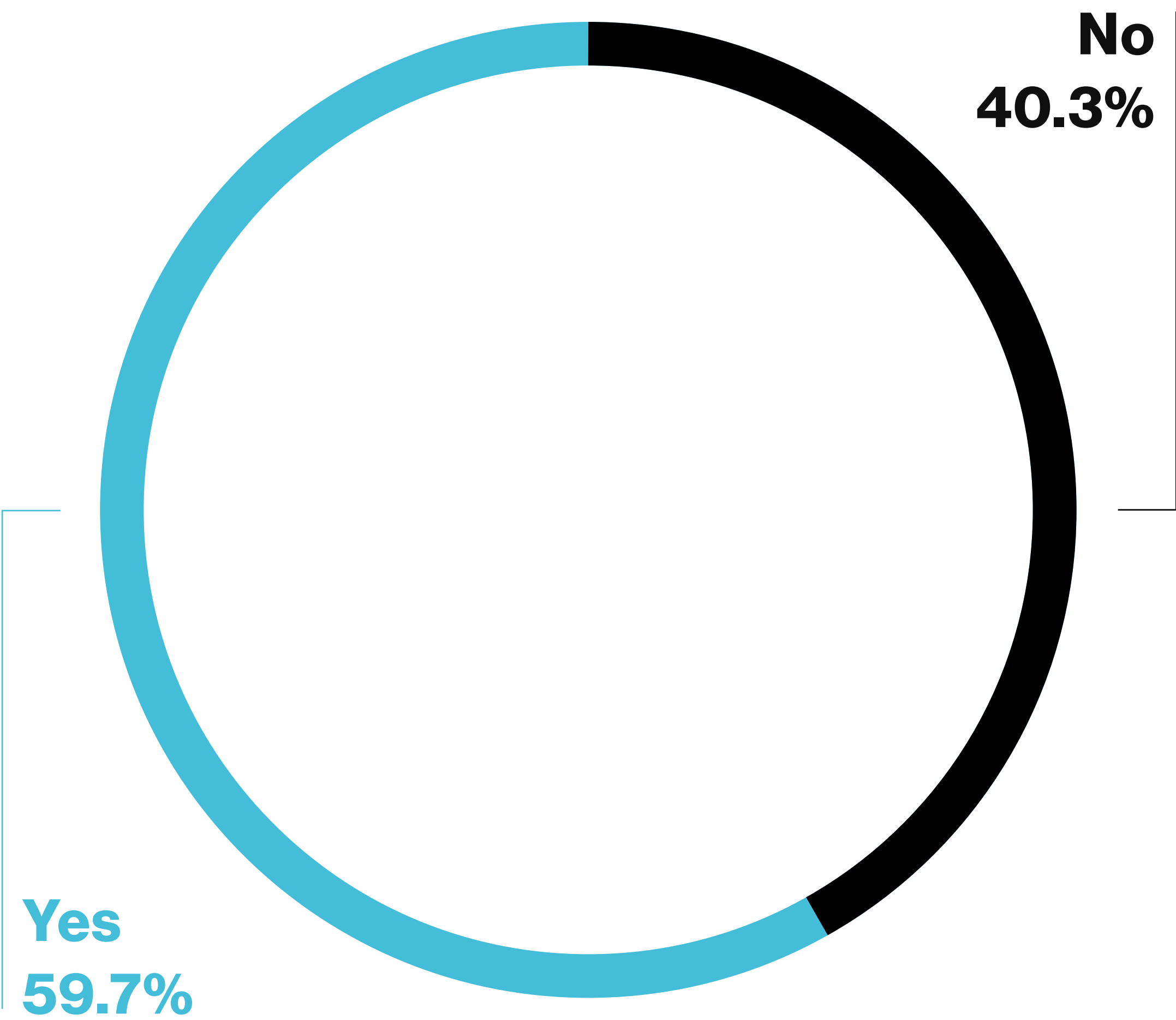
Part I

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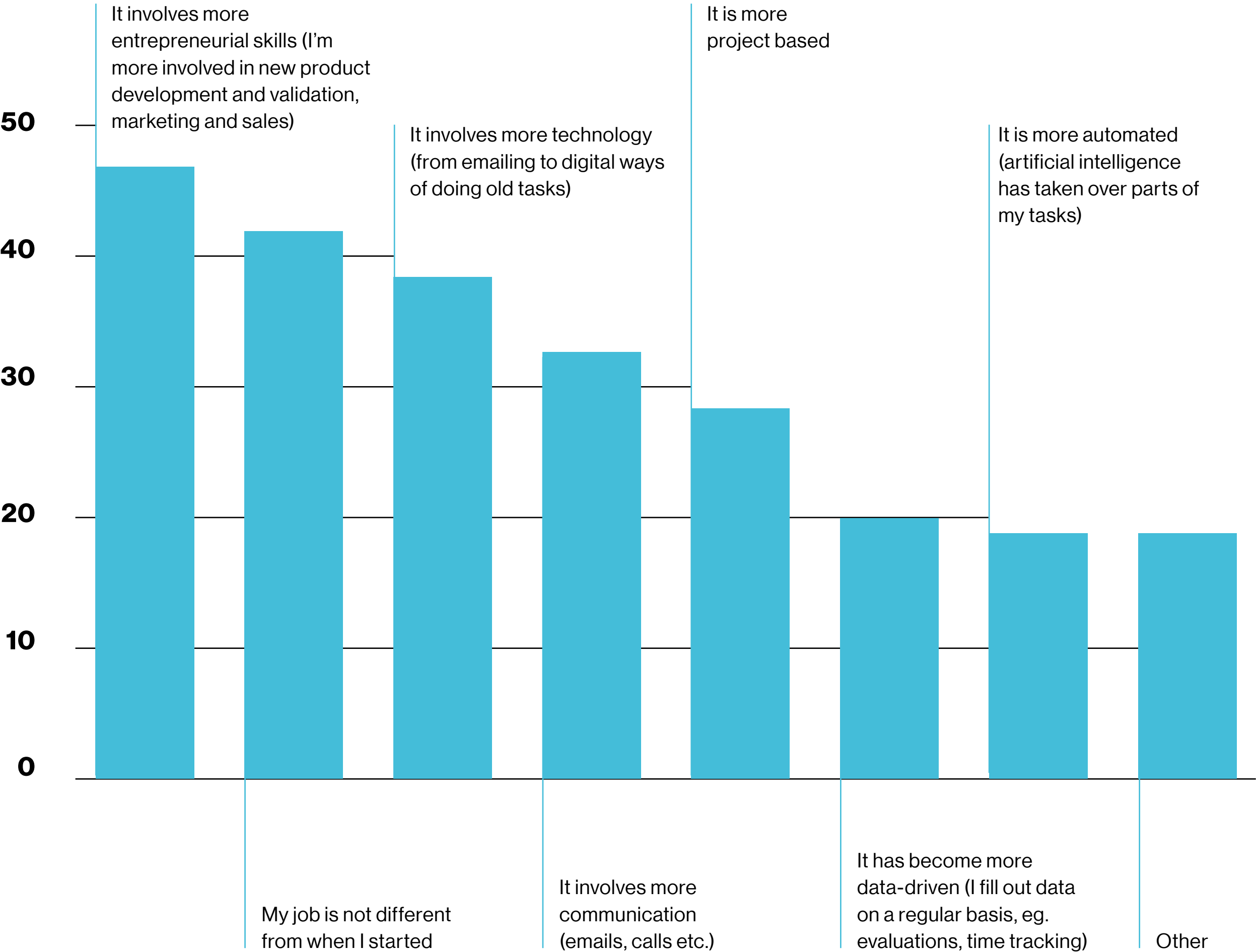
Is your role increasingly overlapping into others?



6 out of 10 professionals experience that their job roles are overlapping into others.

Terms like “T-shaped” are turning up in job advertisements, expressing an increasing demand for professionals with strong vertical skill sets combined with softer and more general competences.

How is your job different today from when you started?



From product development and validation to marketing and sales, jobs today require more entrepreneurial skills than what is stated on the job description.

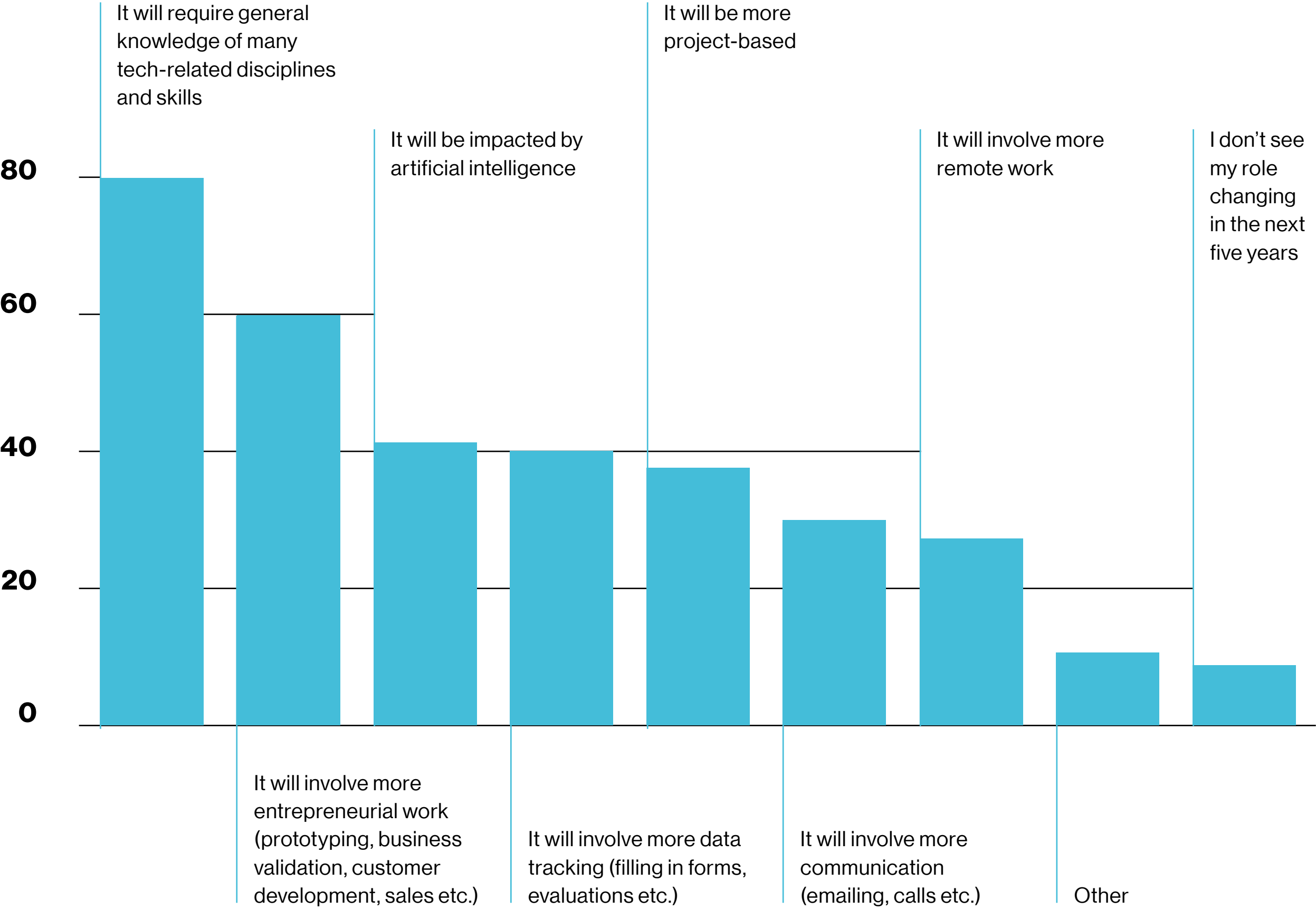
Almost one third of our respondents state that their jobs are increasingly project-based.

“It is common sense to cease the silo thinking. You need specialists, but you’ll develop faster and come up with better solutions if those specialists are capable of taking on the perspectives of other business entities in their work.”

Pia Tobberup

Communications and PR Manager,
McDonalds

How do you foresee your role changing within the next five years?



Within the next five years, jobs will require more technological know-how. Entrepreneurial skills, like prototyping, marketing and business development will also become a vital aspect of almost every job.

One out of five respondents state that their jobs have become more data-driven

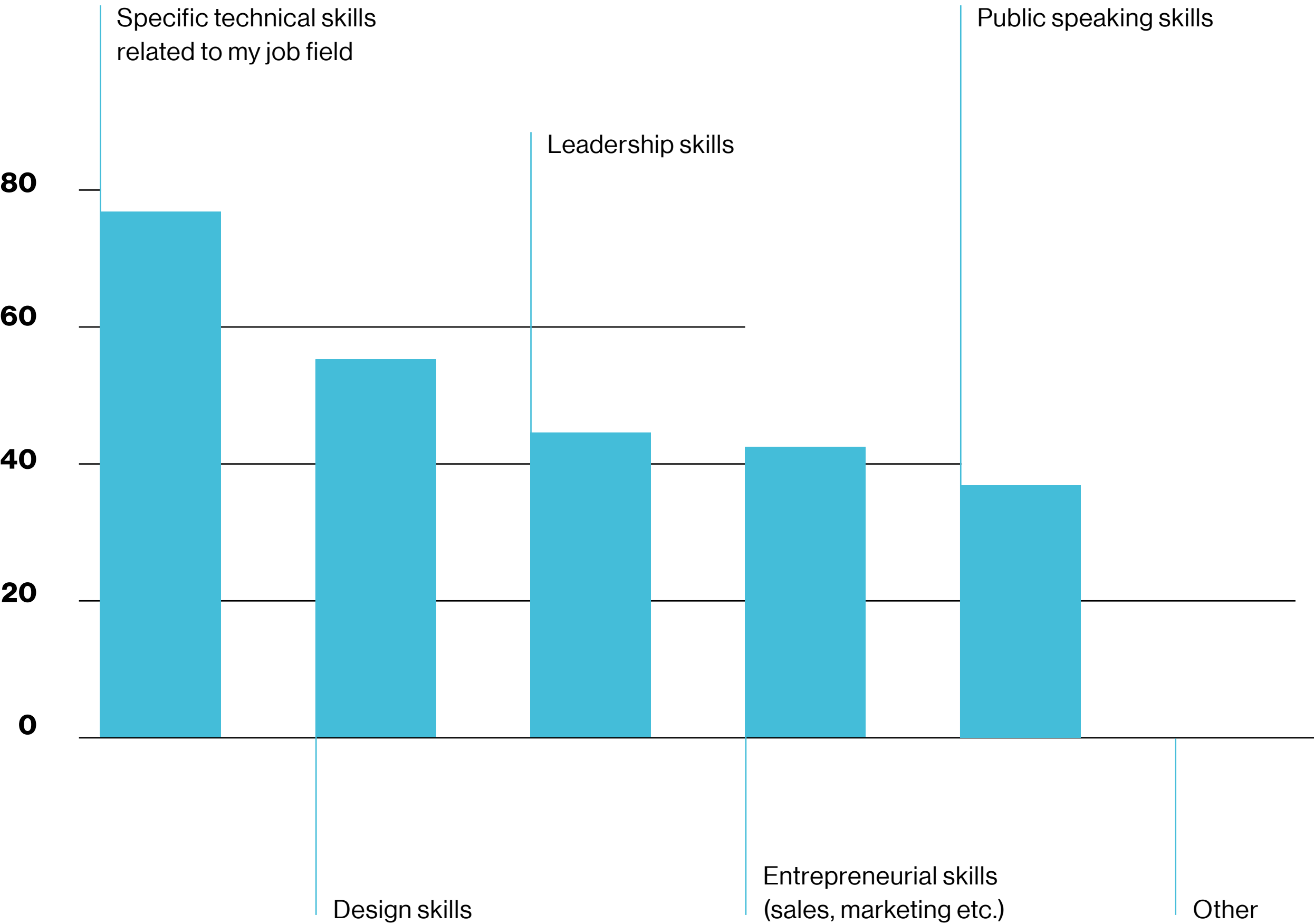
“No matter the industry or job role, it is paramount to understand people and find creative solutions to their specific problems. Then, test these solutions and find out what works. This is the essence of Design Thinking.

And while empathizing, defining, ideating, prototyping and testing, may seem self-evident at this point - the skills and methods needed to do so effectively, certainly aren't. That's why we all need to keep getting better at design. Because bettering our design skills, is bettering our ability to make choices that solve real problems.”

Simon McGilbray

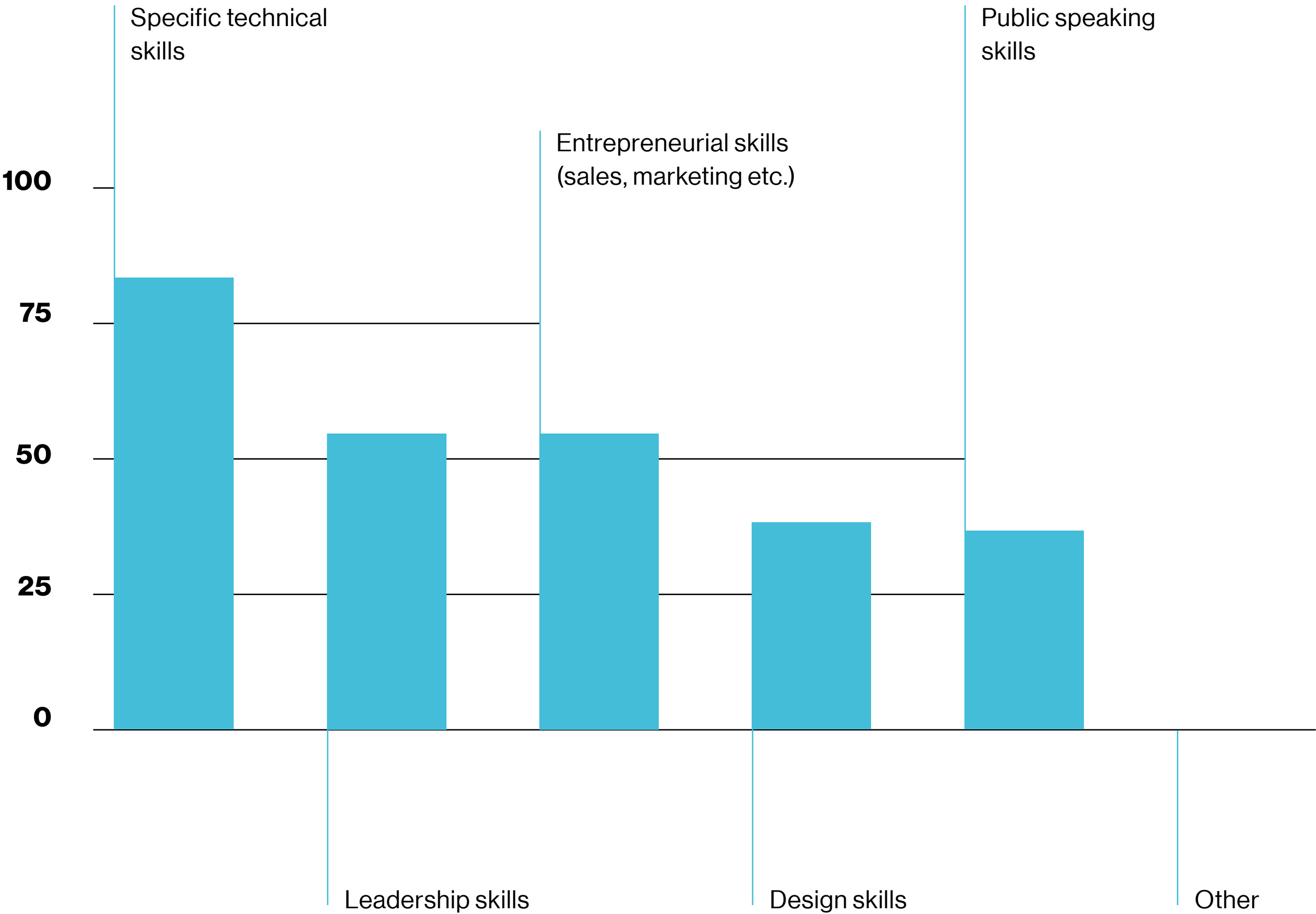
Service & UX Designer, Alm. Brand

What skill(s) do you feel that you lack today?



The most essential skills for digital workers today are, not surprisingly, job-specific, technical skills. This is followed by design skills, which transcends industry silos. Leadership skills and entrepreneurial skills share a third and a fourth place, followed by public speaking skills.

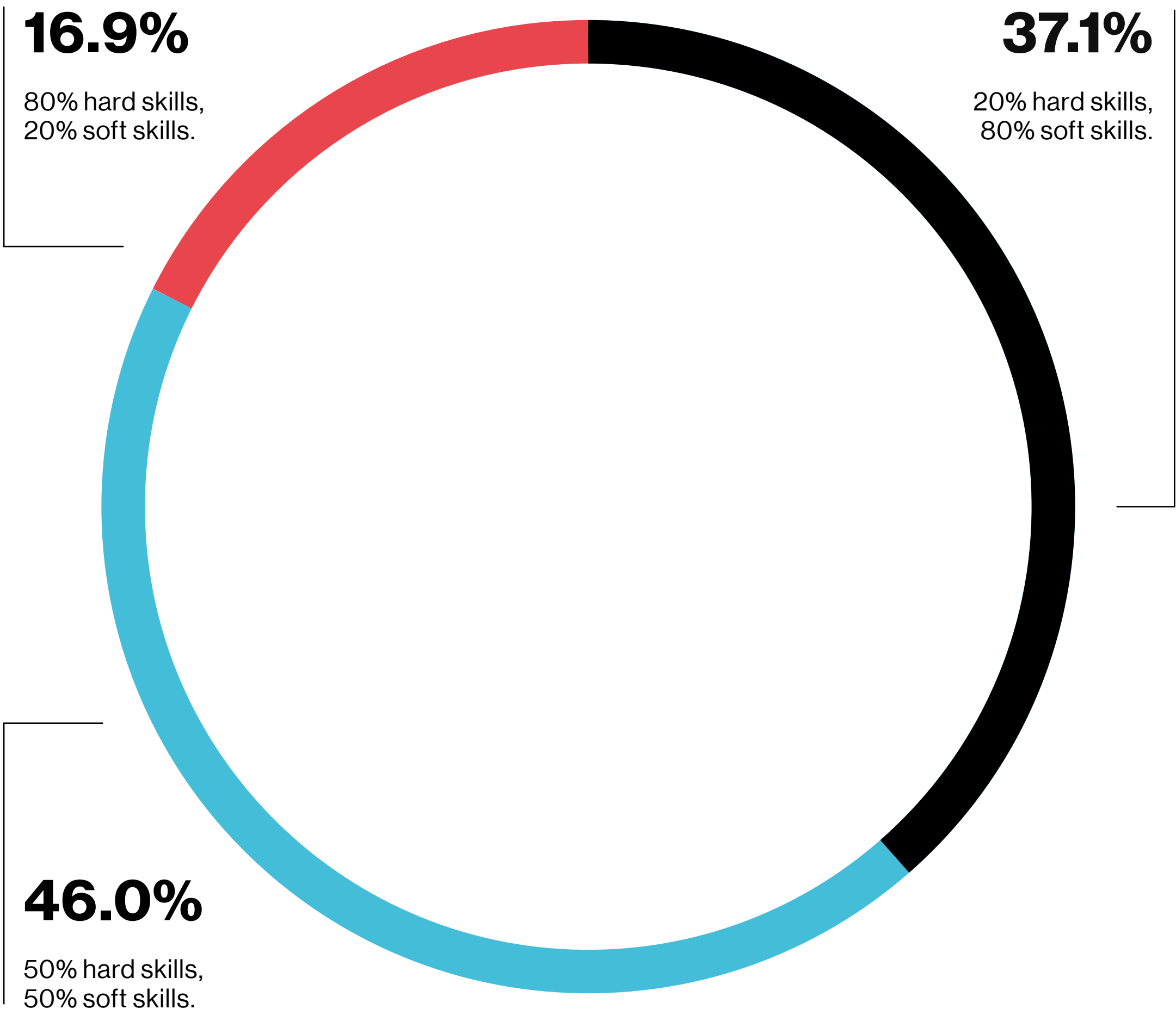
What skill(s) do you feel that you will need in five years that you don't have right now?



In five years, vertical technical skills will still be on top of the list. However, leadership skills and entrepreneurial skills will have taken the place of design skills, whose importance is diminished.

The majority of us use almost four times as many soft skills as hard skills during a work day.

How much of your job requires “hard skills” versus “soft skills”?



A 50/50 division between hard skills and soft skills is the most common requirement today. It is, however, twice as common to use soft skills than hard skills at the workplace.

Changing Roles: Our big learnings

— Gone are the days of the specialist. Today we are all Hybrid Humans, expected to be experts within our field, but also to be comfortable with, and competent at, performing tasks outside of our core area. Terms like “T-shaped” are turning up in job advertisements, expressing an increasing demand for professionals with strong vertical skill sets combined with softer and more general competences.

— This change is mirrored by the ratio between hard skills and soft skills required for jobs today. Even within an industry like technology, the majority of us use almost four times as many soft skills as hard skills during a work day. These soft skills mostly fall within the category of design or entrepreneurial skills. Perhaps you used to be a software developer who spent your workday coding away, but today this doesn't make the cut and you will find yourself more and more involved in other aspects of the business, such as user experience, product development, marketing and sales.

— Job roles are also following a more general digital transformation process, where technology is becoming the dominating work tool within most professions. This requires an agile and continuous training in specific technologies. Similarly, technology has taken over much of the ways in which we communicate at work. Digital channels for communication with internal and external stakeholders are many and varied. Emailing is not enough anymore, but is our digital communication being perceived as a support or a burden by workers? Our respondents mostly exhibit a positive view on technology at the workplace, but perhaps the answer would have been different coming from a less digitally savvy target group.

— Almost one third of our respondents also stated that their jobs are increasingly project-based. This can mean that you are hired for a particular project and that your contract ends with its completion, or it could simply mean a new way of structuring a workflow. Regardless, it implies a certain discontinuity at work, which might, again, call for new skills. Two projects often differ in terms of processes, tools, etc, and require both adaptability and a capacity to quickly absorb new skills from its participants.

— As for the way in which our respondents believe that their jobs will change within the next five years, both data-drivenness and AI ranked high. The most important change, however, was believed to involve specific technical skills, which can be explained by the rapidity with which the technology landscape changes our work processes. New tools appear almost every week and for certain professions and businesses, competitiveness is dependent on a quick adaptation of these tools.

— When asked what professional skills the respondents felt that they lacked today, specific technical skills, quite expectedly, ranked high. The second skill set, however, was design skills, which was mentioned by almost 6 out of 10 respondents. Design thinking and UX belong to a set of competencies which transcends industry silos - at least in digital/tech jobs. Design thinking is now becoming a way to structure work flows, meetings, task management, stakeholder communication and more. Leadership skills were desired by just over 40% of the respondents, and so were entrepreneurial skills.

— All of these - except for specific technical skills - are what we could call “soft skills” - a result which corroborates the fact that the great majority of respondents stated that soft skills were more important for their jobs than hard skills - a somewhat surprising result considering that most of the respondents work in tech companies. It does, however, align with the notion that design skills and entrepreneurial skills are increasingly important across all job roles.

— When asked what skills they thought they would need five years from now, the answers turned out somewhat different. Specific technical skills were still believed to be the most important ones, but leadership skills and entrepreneurial skills suddenly became more important than design skills. This change could be explained by the career ambitions of our respondents, many of whom envisioned themselves in leadership positions - or perhaps as founders of their own startups - in the upcoming years.

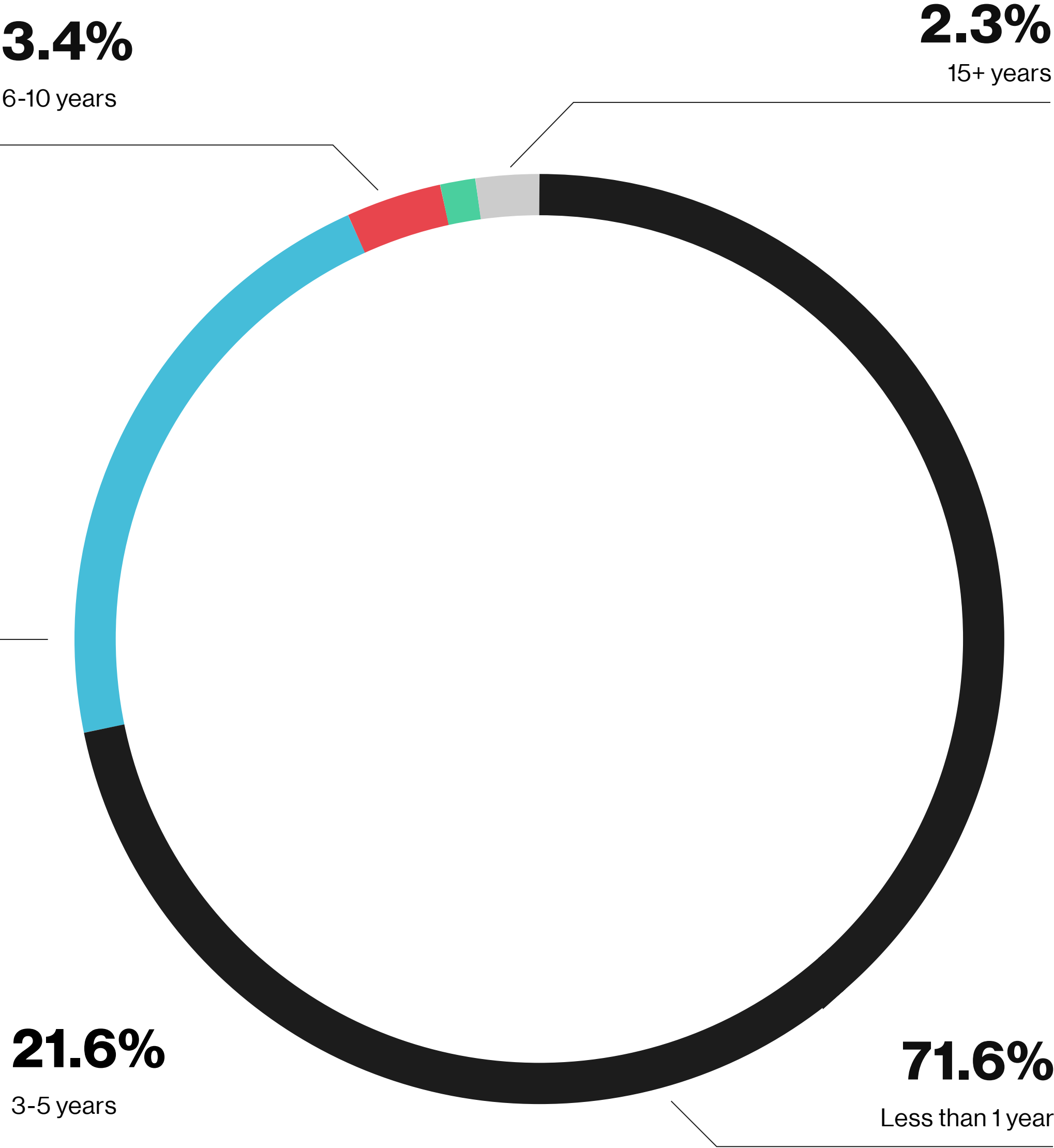
Part II

It's
time
to
start
your
own
network



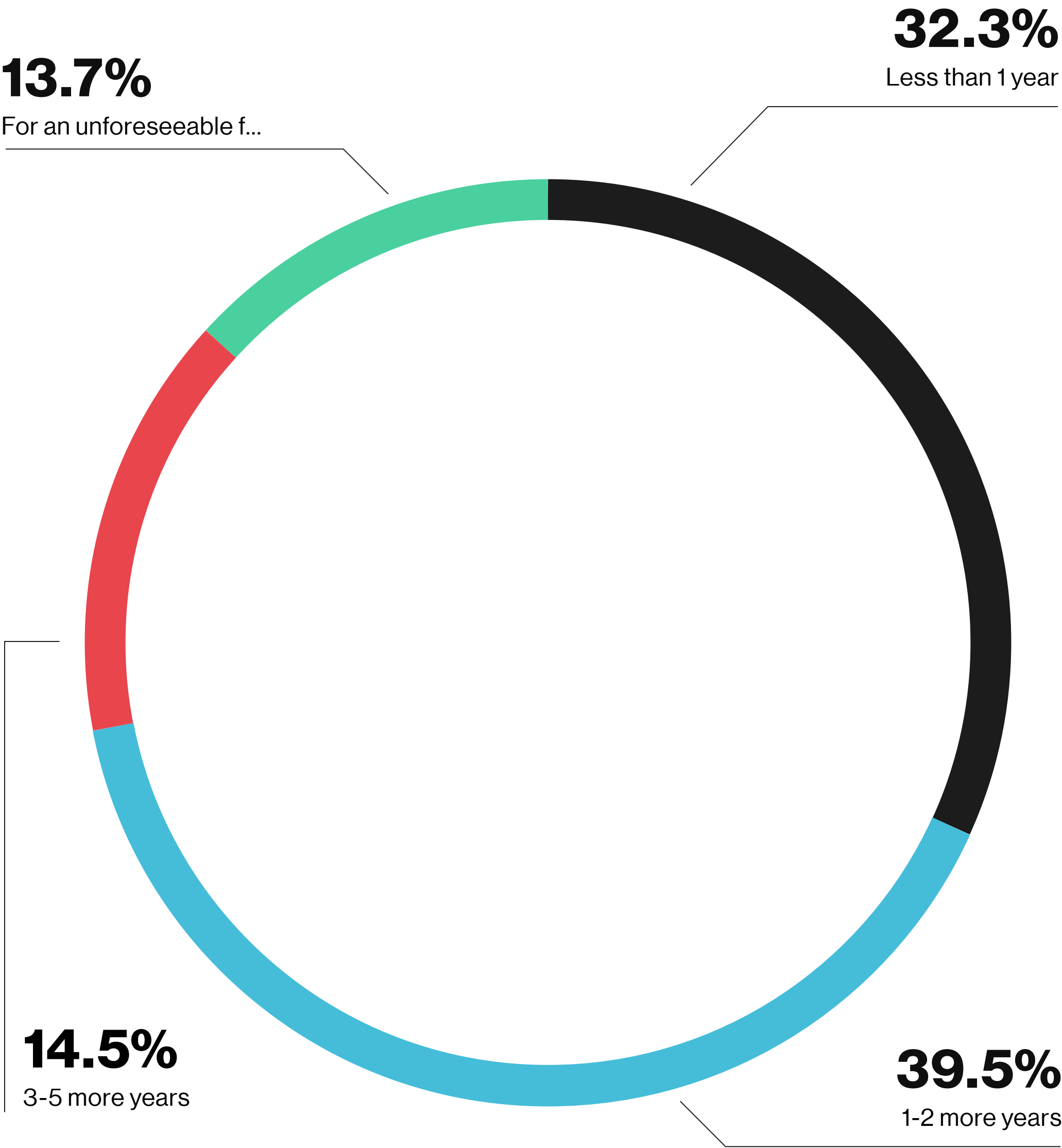
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How many years have you been in your current role?



72% have been in their current role for less than one year.

How long do you believe you will stay in your current role?



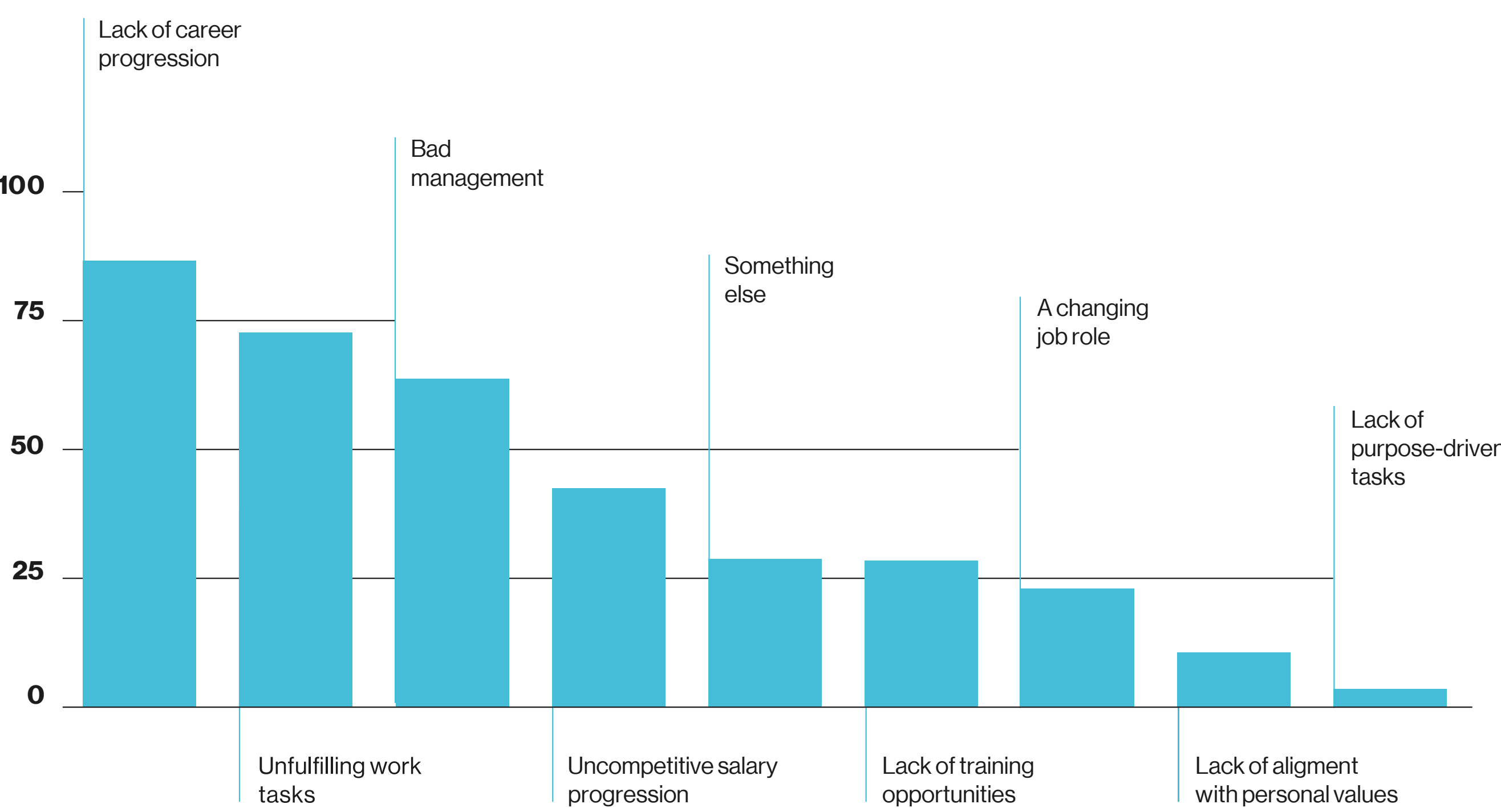
72% only plan on staying for 1-2 more years

“I see the job market becoming more and more flexible in terms of contracts and working relationships. Companies will acquire the skills they need without permanent contracts, but with more freelancers and this kind of flexible agreements. Workers will become more independent and fulfilled by impactful projects and short-mid term gigs, and they will have more freedom to choose where they want to be and who they want to contribute to”.

Lorena Perez

Chief of People and Culture, Talent Garden

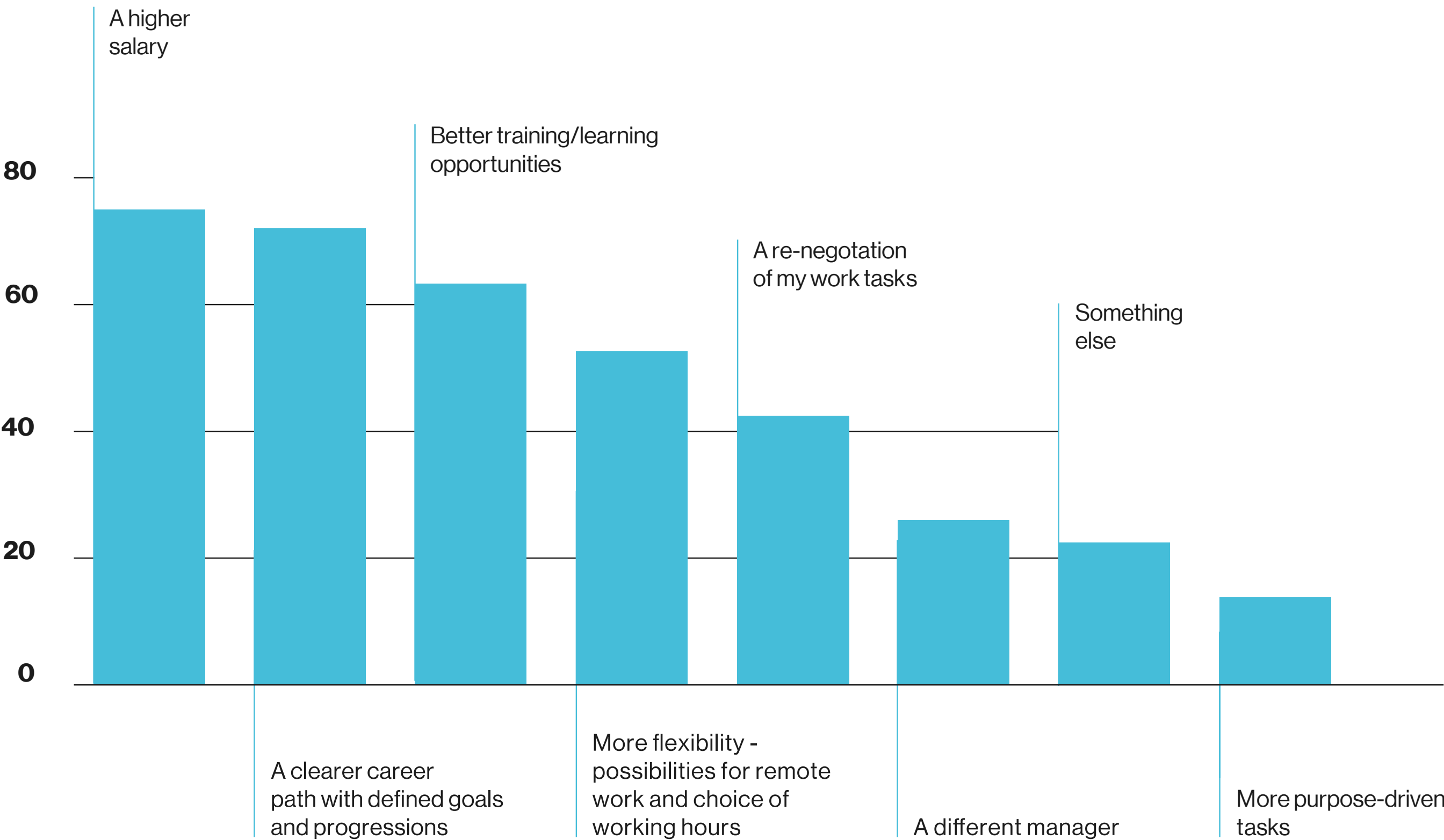
What would be your three main reasons to leave your company?



The three top reasons for leaving their company is

- 1 Lack of career progression,
- 2 Unfulfilling work tasks, and
- 3 Bad management

What would be the three main things that would make you stay?



The three main reasons for staying are

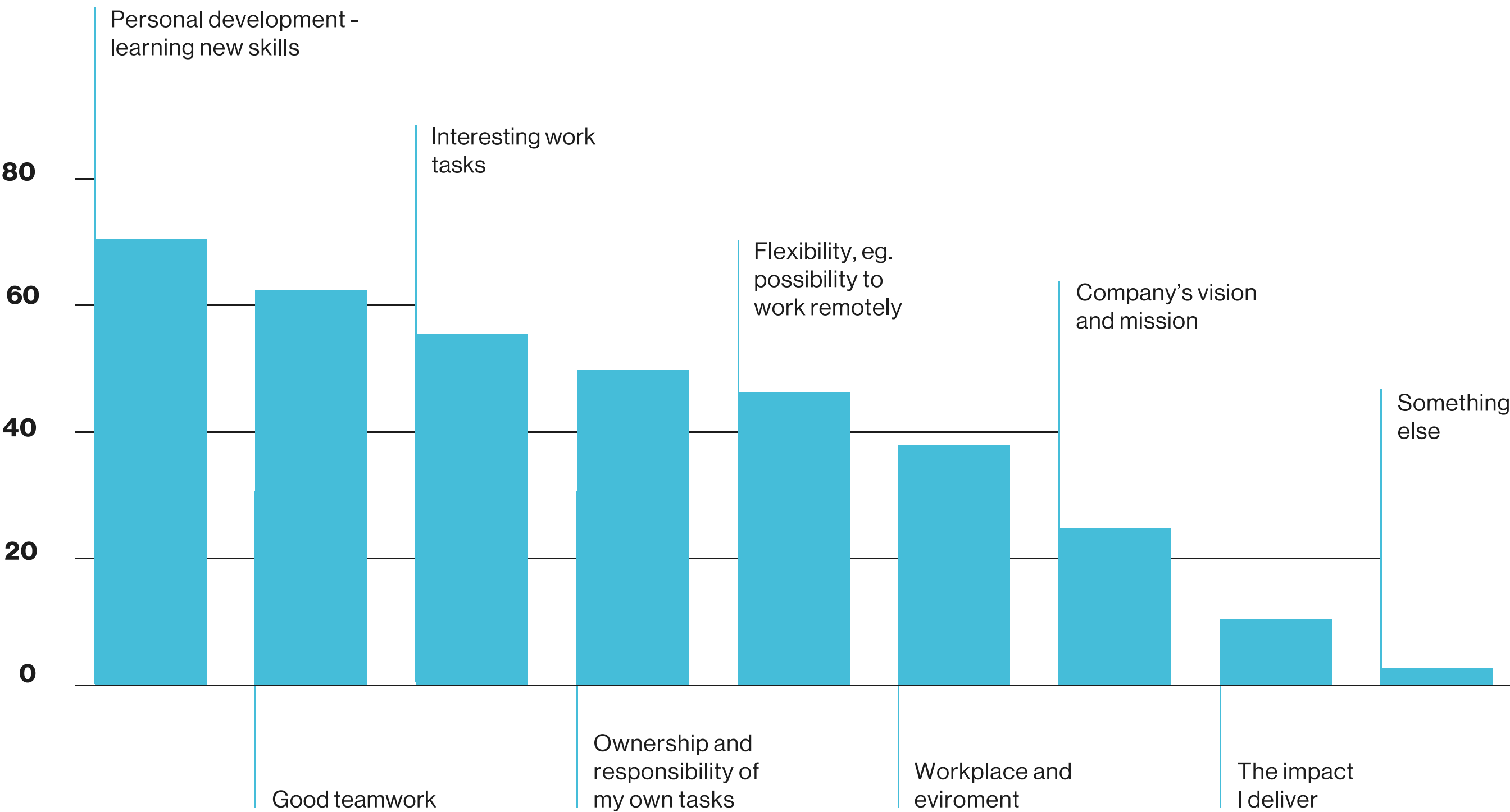
- 1 A higher salary,
- 2 A clearer career progression, and
- 3 Better training/learning opportunities

“Project or freelance hires often do interesting tasks, but lack basic stuff like pension and maternity leave. So aside from the expectation that work should not be repetitive, I also see a new awareness about basic rights. Some of those things our parent’s generation took for granted - and rightly so - because their employment was more fixed.”

Johanne Aarup Hansen

Relational Designer, Flexwerker

What makes you happy at work?



The five main things that bring happiness at work are

- 1 Learning new skills,
- 2 Good teamwork,
- 3 Interesting work tasks,
- 4 Ownership and responsibility,
- 5 Flexibility and possibility to work remotely.

— Tech talents are fickle, have a relatively low sense of loyalty towards their companies and put their personal growth journeys first. This is one way to interpret the results of this part of our survey. A different interpretation is that our labor market as it is today - in particular within the startup ecosystem - is not mature enough to foster and retain the tech talent it so badly needs.

— 72% of our respondents have only been in their current role for less than one year and the same percentage do not plan on staying there for longer than one more year or two. Our immediate question is, of course, why? Why do they want to leave so soon and what would make them stay? Again, we need to remember the specificity of our respondent pool. It might be a startup thing. It could, of course, also be a generational thing, or simply a Danish thing, where a (relatively) easy access to new jobs might make professionals more prone to move around and try out new places.

— This question is difficult to answer in a quantitative study. What we do know, however, are the reasons the respondents themselves give for wanting to leave their workplace, of which the most common answer is a lack of career progression, followed by unfulfilling work tasks and bad management. It would be interesting to know what kind of promotion the respondents are envisioning, and if it even is a promotion. Perhaps it is a matter of being given more ownership or responsibility, which is what they mention as one of the things that make them happy at work.

— The work task topic is particularly interesting to relate to our question about overlapping roles and blurred out job descriptions. In theory, this could mean that we are working with new and exciting things every day, but in reality it could mean just the opposite - that we are asked to perform tasks that we never would have signed up for in the first place. In startups, the latter is often par for the course, as there are not enough people employed for clear job divisions and everyone has to “pitch in” where needed.

— Bad management is not a startup thing per se, as it is in general a top reason for unhappiness at work in all industries and company sizes. However, management within startups is a topic meriting its own study. Leadership in a company which is already under huge time and work pressure - as startups often are - is of a different character than leadership in an established corporation. Managing talents without a big budget and the benefits possible in a larger organisation can also be difficult and might require CEOs to offer alternative incentives to their teams. A CEO who is fantastic at entrepreneurship might also not have the skill set needed to be a great leader, as these are two very different things.

— Interestingly, when asked what would make our respondents stay, the three most common answers were a higher salary, a clearer career path with defined goals, and better training/learning opportunities. Again, these might be difficult things to do in a startup, where budget is tight (both for salary and benefits like training) and the career paths depend on where the company is going - which, again, is a topic of high uncertainty for many.

— As for what actually makes people happy at work, the most common answer given is learning new skills. This supports the thesis that young tech talents see their careers as a path of personal development. A higher salary would make them stay (at least for a while), but personal growth makes them happy. The second most frequent answer was good and productive teamwork. Again, this could be read against the startup context. In a company with less than 15 employees (which is the case for 46% of our respondents), a good team is vital for wellbeing in the workplace.

— The third most common answer was interesting work tasks, whose opposite was one of their main reasons for wanting to leave their companies. Another reason given for happiness at work is ownership and responsibility, along with flexibility and a possibility to work remotely. Again, these two answers concern personal development and freedom - two important happiness factors for our respondents.

— So, what can we conclude from all this? Is it per se impossible for startups to retain talent for more than a year or two? Is this even a problem, or are we moving towards a “gig economy” that will be beneficial for both workers and employers? Are young tech talents nomads at heart or would it be possible to make them stay and grow within a company, with the right incentives and context? These are all vital questions for both startups and larger organisations to ponder, and, depending on the strategy, work culture and values, solve.

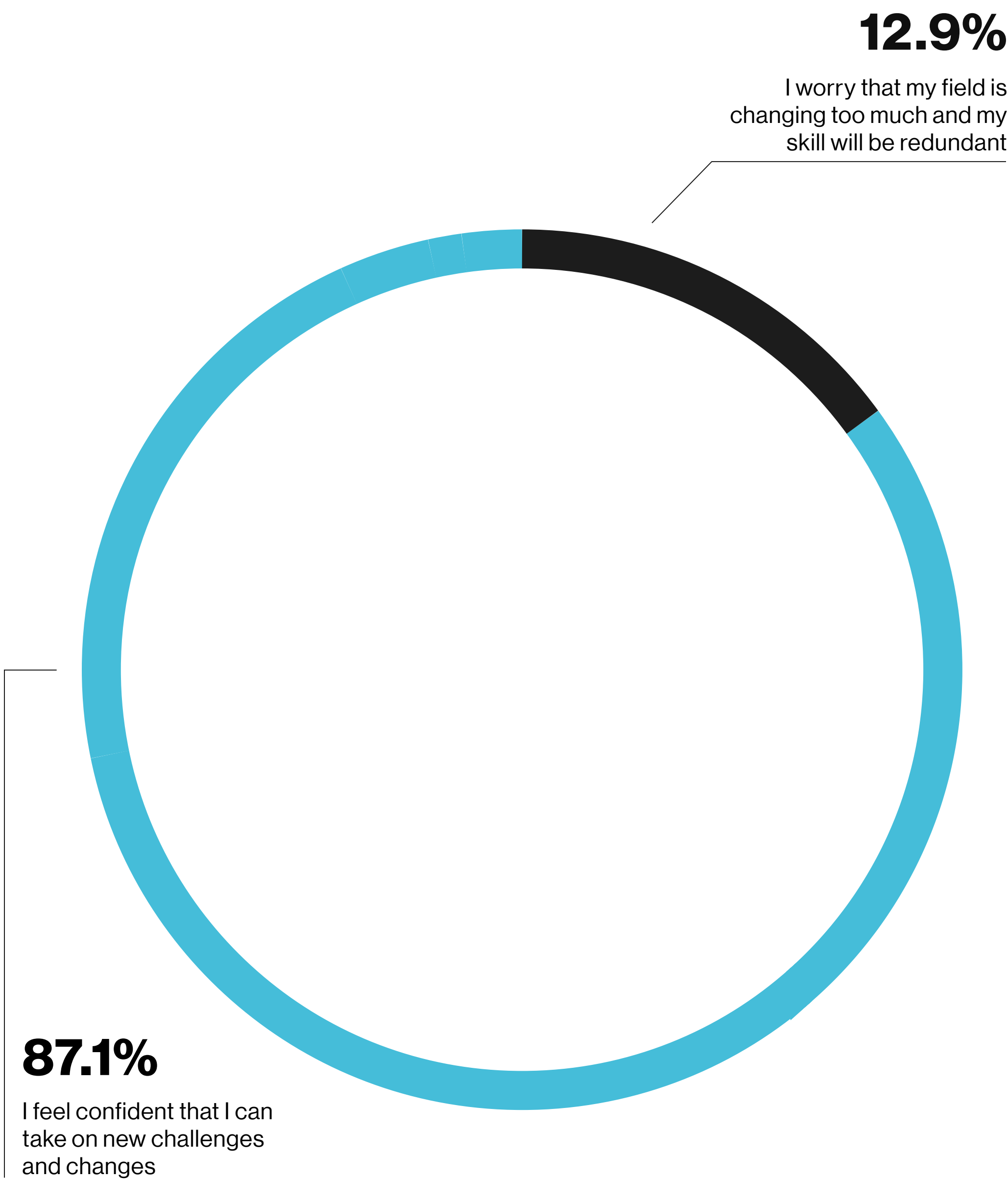
Part III

A new
education



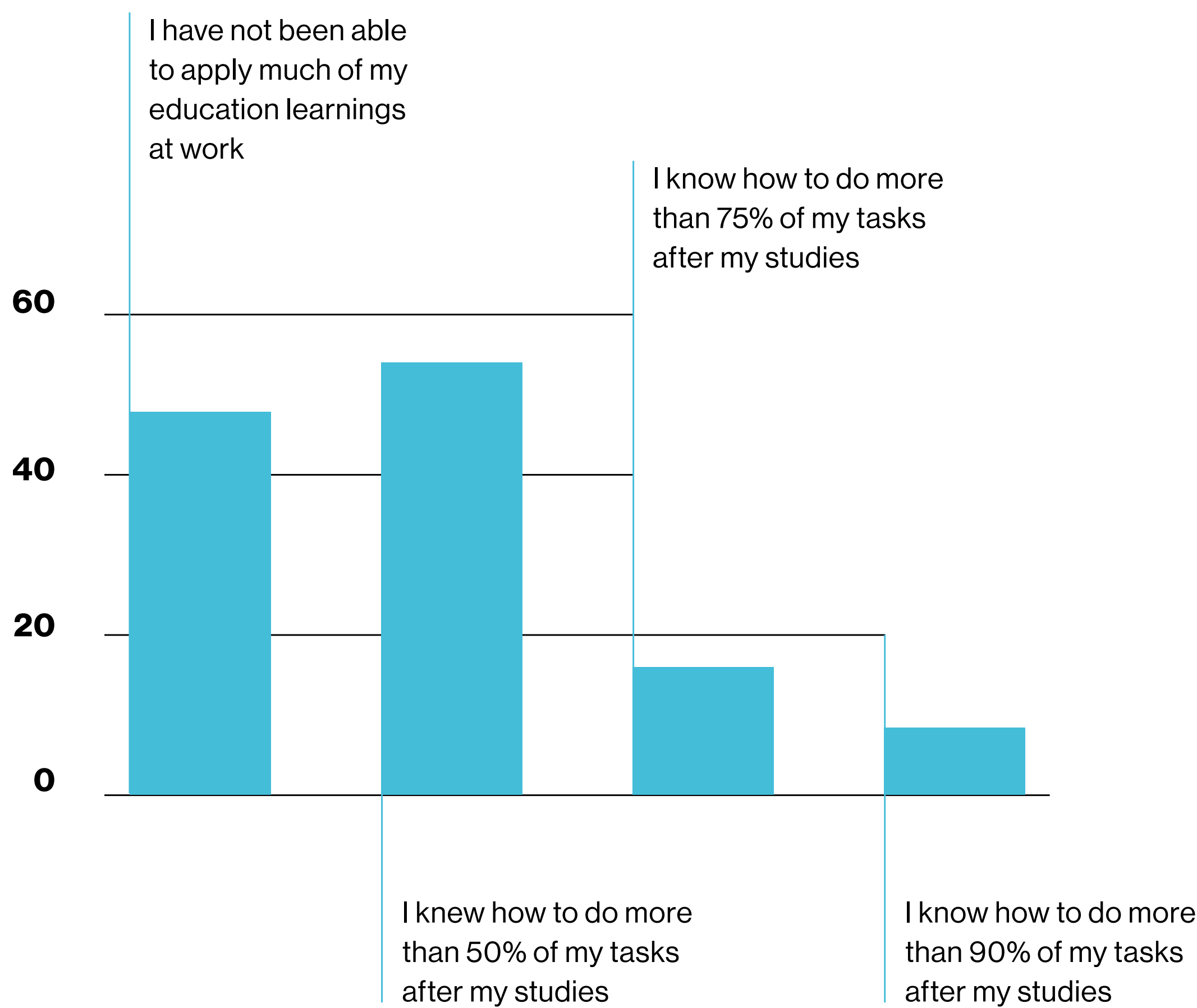
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Do you feel equipped to deal with uncertainty in your professional life?



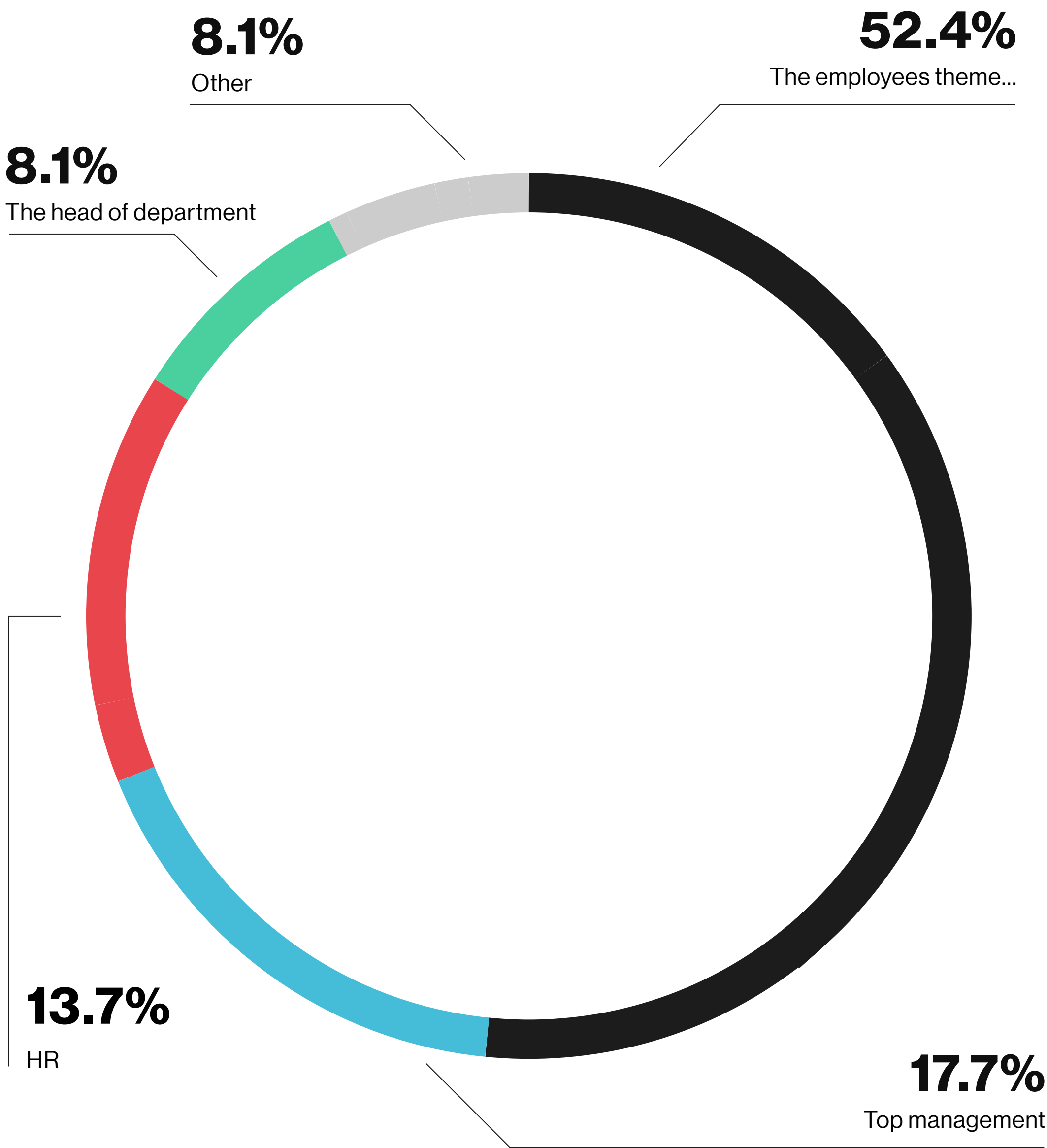
87% feel equipped to deal with uncertainty in their professional lives.

What skill(s) do you feel that you lack today?



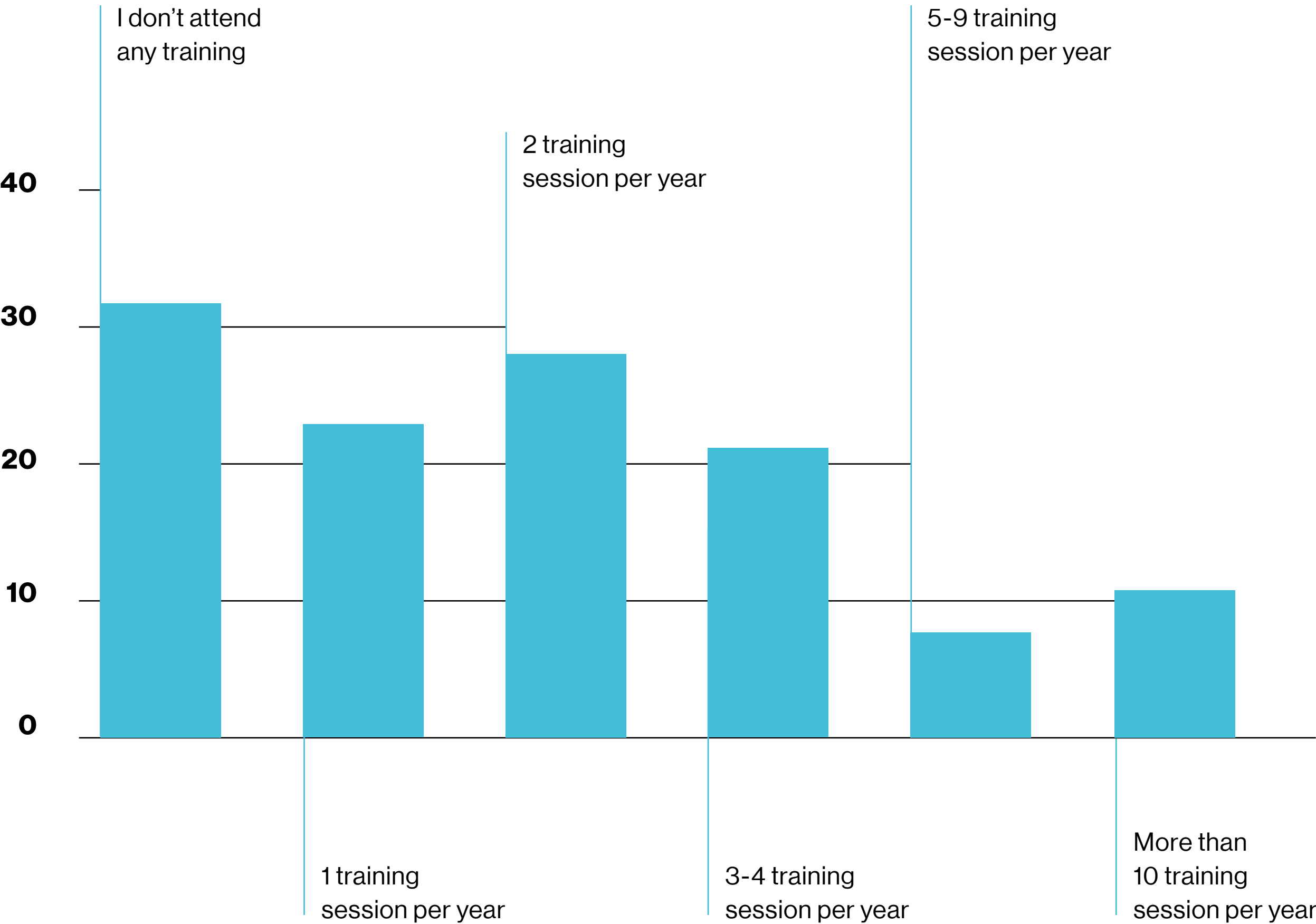
85% did not learn more than half the skills they are using at work today during university.

Where do training initiatives come from at your workplace?



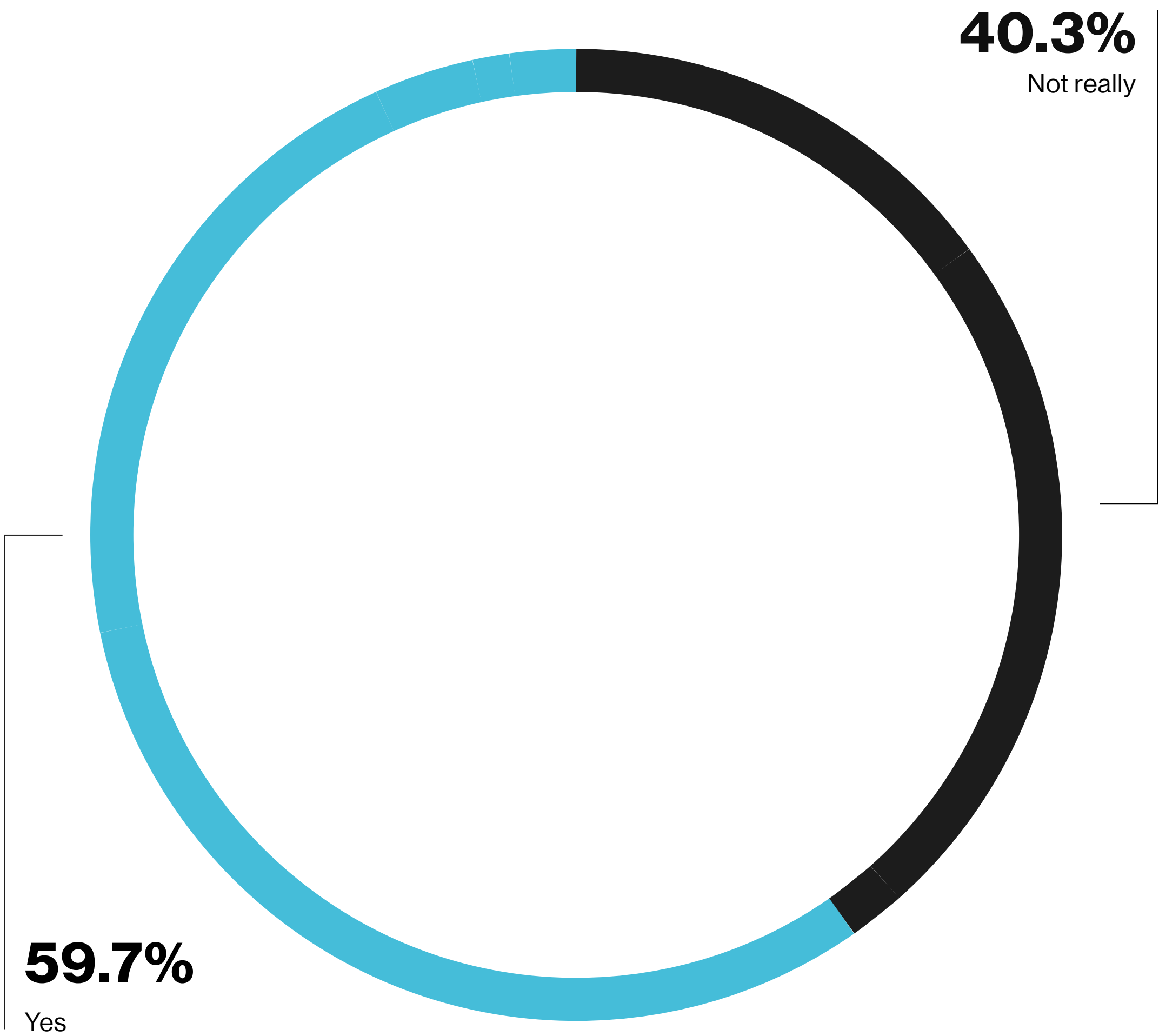
More than 50% of training initiatives come from the employees themselves.

Currently, how often do you learn (participate at various trainings) something related to your future and professional development at work?



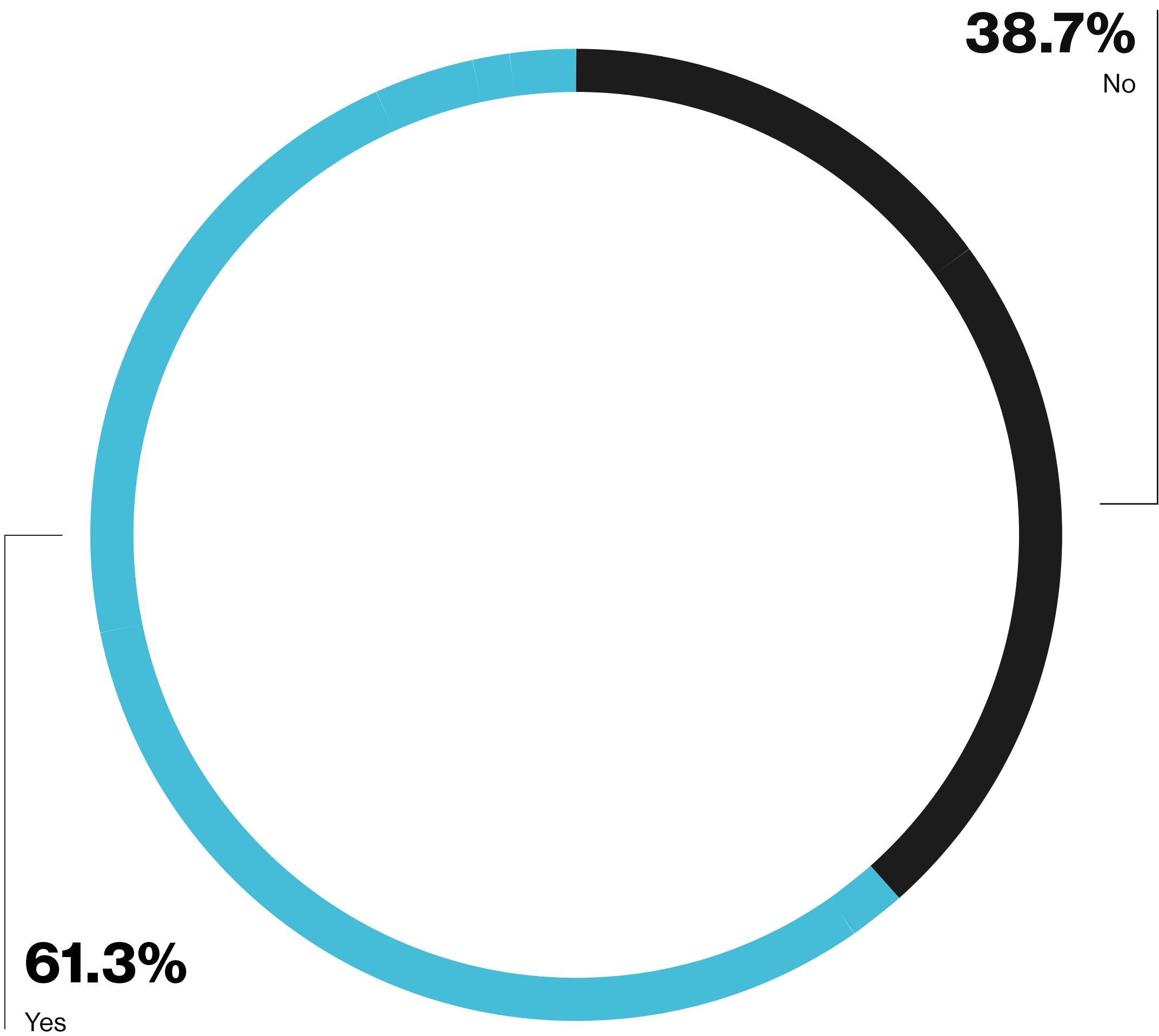
75% do less than two training sessions per year.

Has the training you have received so far made you better at your job?



60% feel that the training they have received while employed has made them better at their job.

Has it been easy to implement learnings from your training sessions at work?



39% feel that it has been difficult to implement training takeaways once back at the office.

— Let's start with the good news. Out of our respondent pool, 87% state that they feel equipped to deal with uncertainty in their professional lives, meaning that they feel secure in changing roles both within an organisation and on the labor market in general. Keeping in mind that our target group is young, technology savvy and already working in fairly small and unstable companies, this is perhaps not surprising. It may, however, tell us something about what we could - and should - be doing for the rest of the population.

— When asked about their university education, 85% of the respondents stated that this was not where they had learned to do more than half of their current job tasks. Instead, people seem to learn on the job - during training sessions or simply by onboarding or watching colleagues. At a glance, this seems problematic. Are universities failing the young generations? Is the academic system not equipped to cater to the needs of a fast-changing market where technology is king? Perhaps. However, this may not be what university should be doing (mainly). It is possible that a foundational university education instead is supposed to provide students with analytical skills; project working skills; collaboration competences and more, and that the rest of the training should be taking place during working hours.

— In this case, however, we would need a well-functioning, efficient and lean training model that is supported and prioritized by management and HR alike. As it would seem, this is not the case today. 75% of our respondents do less than two training sessions per year, which is admittedly not a lot. On top of that, 40% of them feel that it has been difficult to implement their training takeaways once back at the office.

- Some of the fault for the lack of implementation lies with the training supplier, whose sessions have been too theoretical; too generic (not specific to industry or company size, for example); too simplified or lacking in concrete action points and follow-ups. The most common reasons why training take-aways are difficult to apply at the workplace, however, are due to management.
- Often the time and energy required to revisit and reflect on classroom learnings are missing and not set off for it. It is easy to fall into a “time is money” trap and ignore long-term benefits of training. Furthermore, new processes are time-consuming to put in place and it might be both too expensive and too difficult to take the time to do so while still complying to other deadlines and client projects. Another reason for lack of implementation is a conservative management who simply does not want to invest in new solutions and processes because the feeling is that current ones are working just fine.
- As for the kind of training that our respondents believe would give them value, the common denominator in the great majority of the answers is practice. Case/project based learning; 1-on-1 mentoring and coaching sessions; and micro-learning with challenges/assignments to be completed throughout the week are all suggested formats.

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