



# HR BAROMETER 2024

HRM Trends and Challenges in Belgian Organisations

By Vlerick Business School & Hudson



## Dear HR professional

For the 10th year in a row, Vlerick Business School and Hudson have carried out an **HR Barometer** on HR trends and challenges. The study explores HR priorities of leading companies operating in Belgium.

The HR Barometer is an annual initiative and comprises two parts. The first, stable, part focuses on the **strategic importance of different HR practices** by investigating **priority** and **mastery** levels of 23 HR domains. For the second, variable, part we look into a specific challenge gaining momentum, which this year is: **strategic workforce planning**.

This HR Barometer report was created by the **Strategic Talent Management Centre** (Vlerick-Hudson). It contains an overview of the most important findings from the 2024 study. For this **10th-anniversary edition**, there is a special focus on evolutions of HR priorities over the last decade (2015-2024). We hope this report will provide you with interesting and useful insights!

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# INVEST IN THE FUTURE OF TALENT MANAGEMENT

Strategic Talent Management Centre (sTm)

**The HR Barometer is a research project initiated by the Strategic Talent Management (sTm) Centre of Vlerick Business School and Hudson.**



**FIND OUT MORE >**

## WHO WE ARE

> We are a **knowledge-driven network** with over 20 years of expertise and on a mission to put talent management on the map as a strategic decision science in organisations

## WHAT WE DO

> Achieve **thought leadership** in strategic talent management  
*We continuously monitor our field to stay ahead of new research, trends and business solutions*

> Be the **gatekeeper between theory & practice** in our field  
*We provide relevant and evidence-based insights*

> **Accumulate knowledge** in our field across industries via **applied and effective research & tool development**  
*We develop, share and validate knowledge and good practices*

> Build an impactful **community**  
*We facilitate networking amongst talent management professionals*

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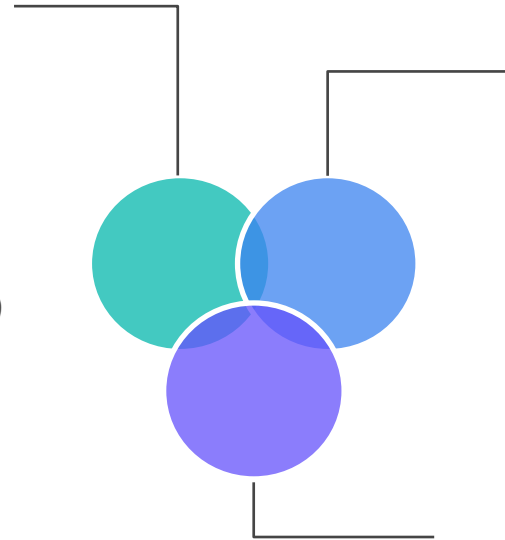
# 01 METHODOLOGY & SAMPLE





## Research design

- Online survey
- Target population:  
**250 largest organisations in Belgium** (including BEL 20)
- Target audience:  
**CHROs and HR Directors**
- Broad spectrum of industries



## Sample

- About 1/2 of target population participated (**N = 124**)

## Data collection

- January - February 2024

# HR BAROMETER SURVEY

1

## PRIORITY & MASTERY HR PRACTICES

Looking back at the past year (2023), HR leaders indicate the **priority** of 23 HR practices and how well they **master** these practices

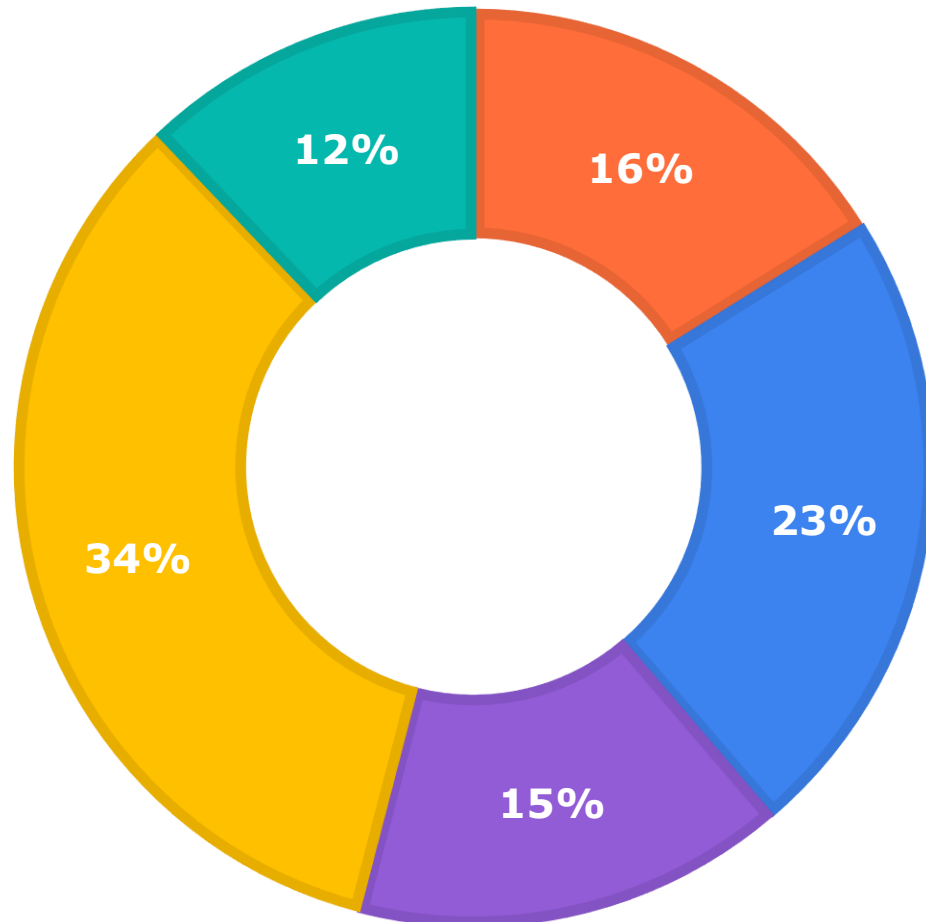
2

## STRATEGIC WORKFORCE PLANNING (SWP)

Each year, we look into a specific HR practice gaining momentum, which this year is strategic workforce planning (**SWP**)

# SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

## A. NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES IN BELGIUM



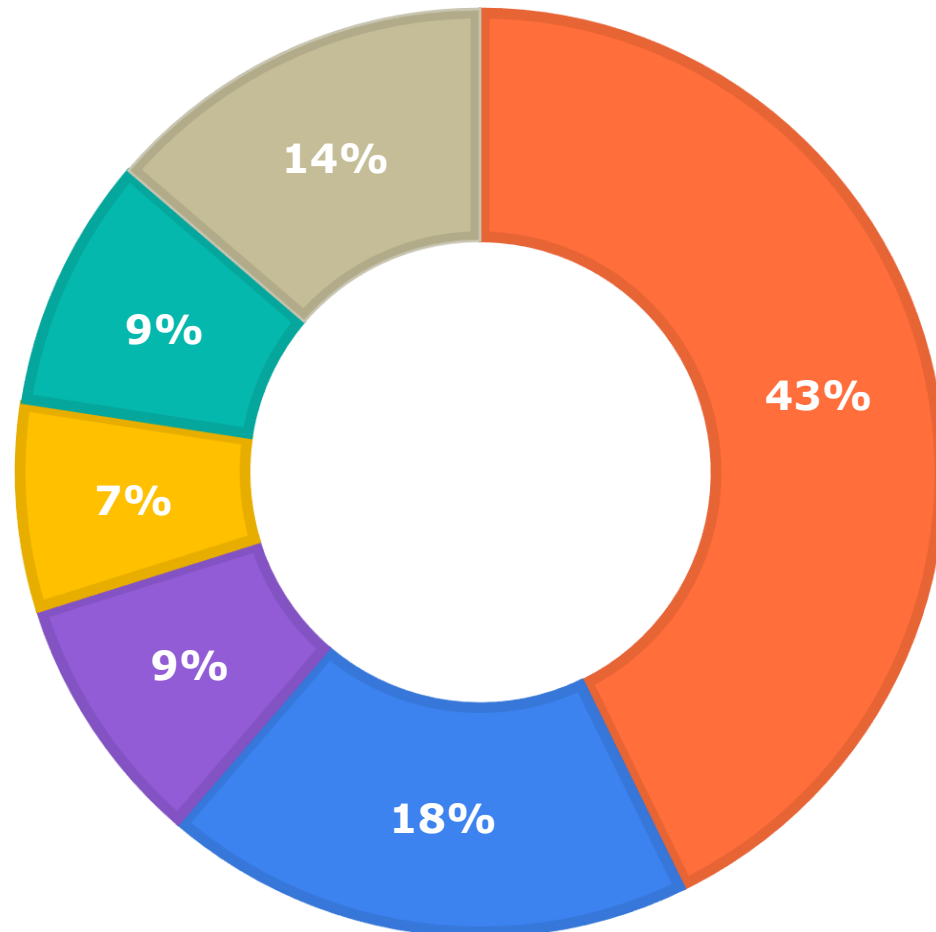
- < 1.000 employees
- 1.000 - 1.500 employees
- 1.501 - 2.000 employees
- > 2.000 employees
- Not specified

Total number of employees represented by all organisations in sample: **+/- 375.000**



# SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

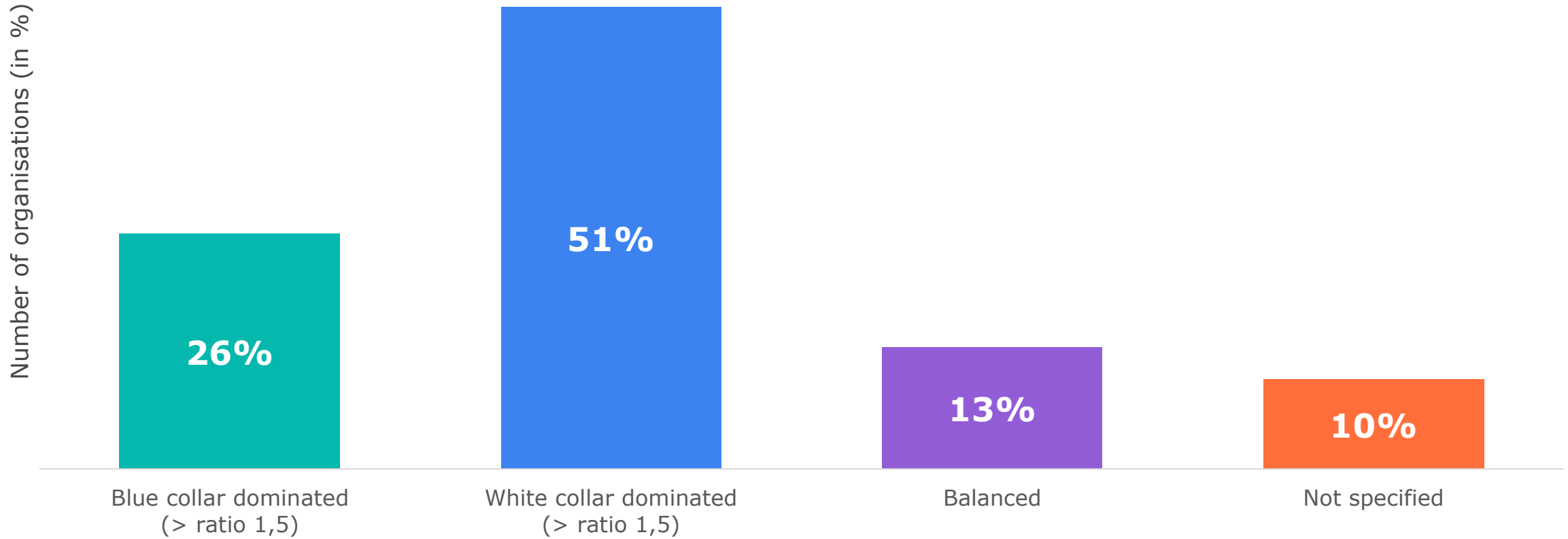
## B. NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES INTERNATIONALLY



- < 5.000 employees
- 5.000 - 25.000 employees
- 25.001 - 50.000 employees
- 50.001 - 150.000 employees
- > 150.000 employees
- Not specified

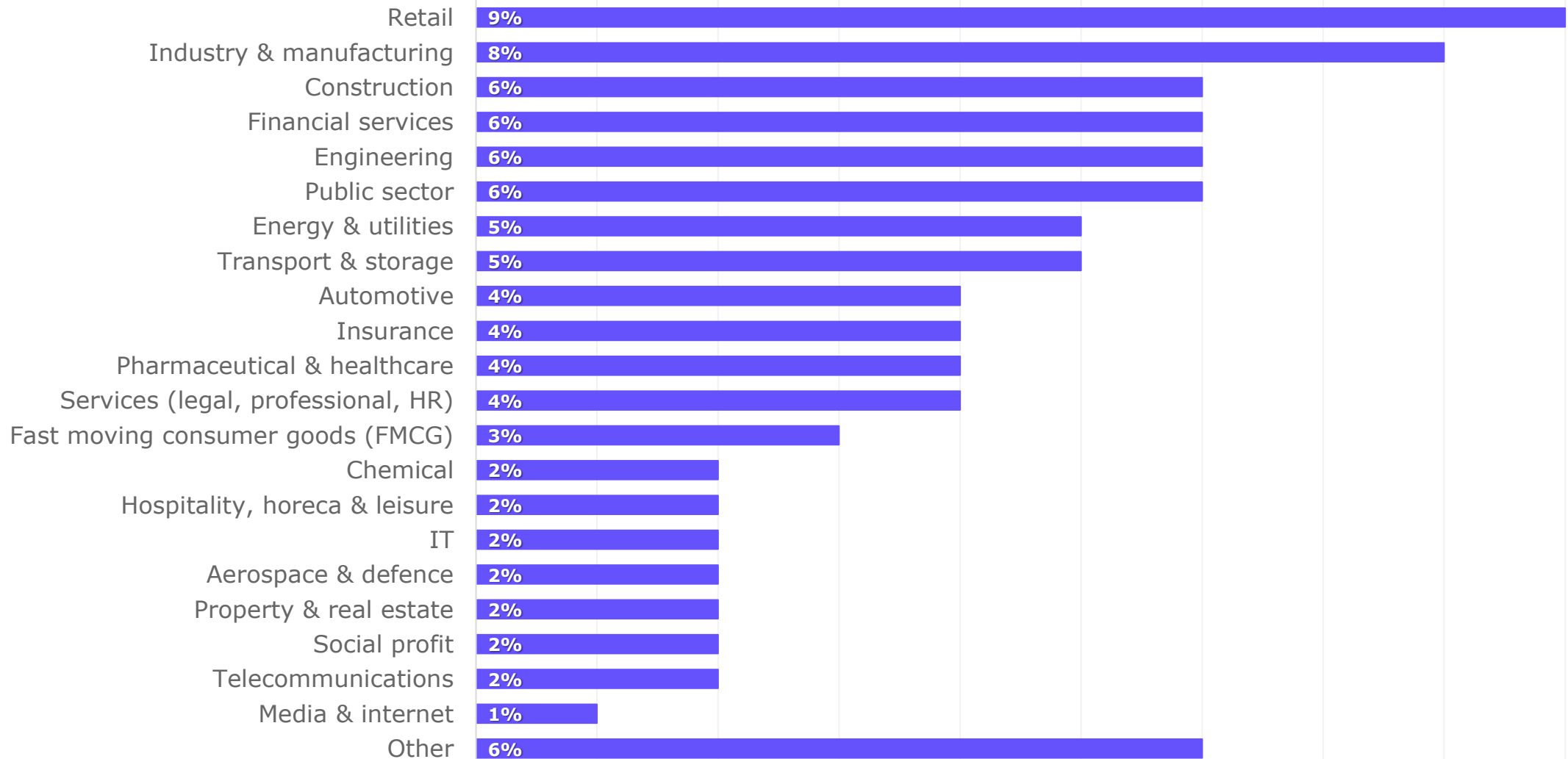
# SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

## C. PROPORTION OF BLUE & WHITE COLLAR EMPLOYEES



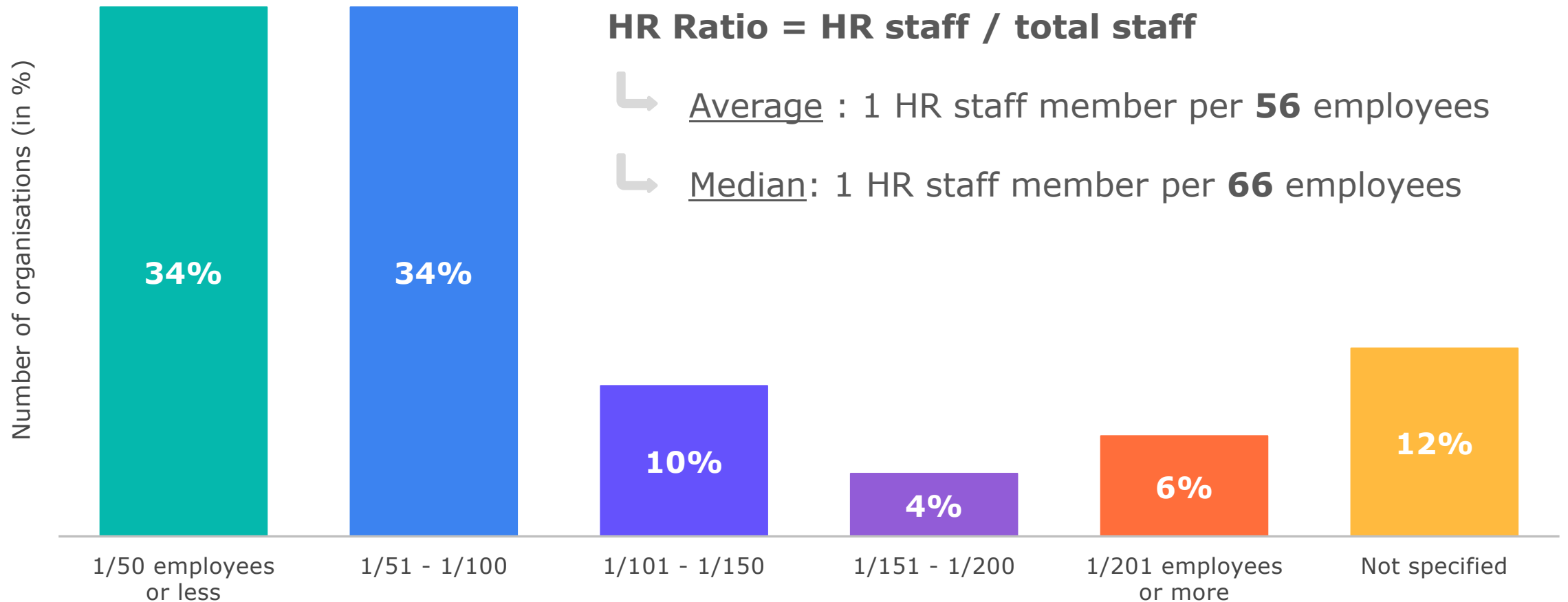
# SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

## D. SECTOR



# SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

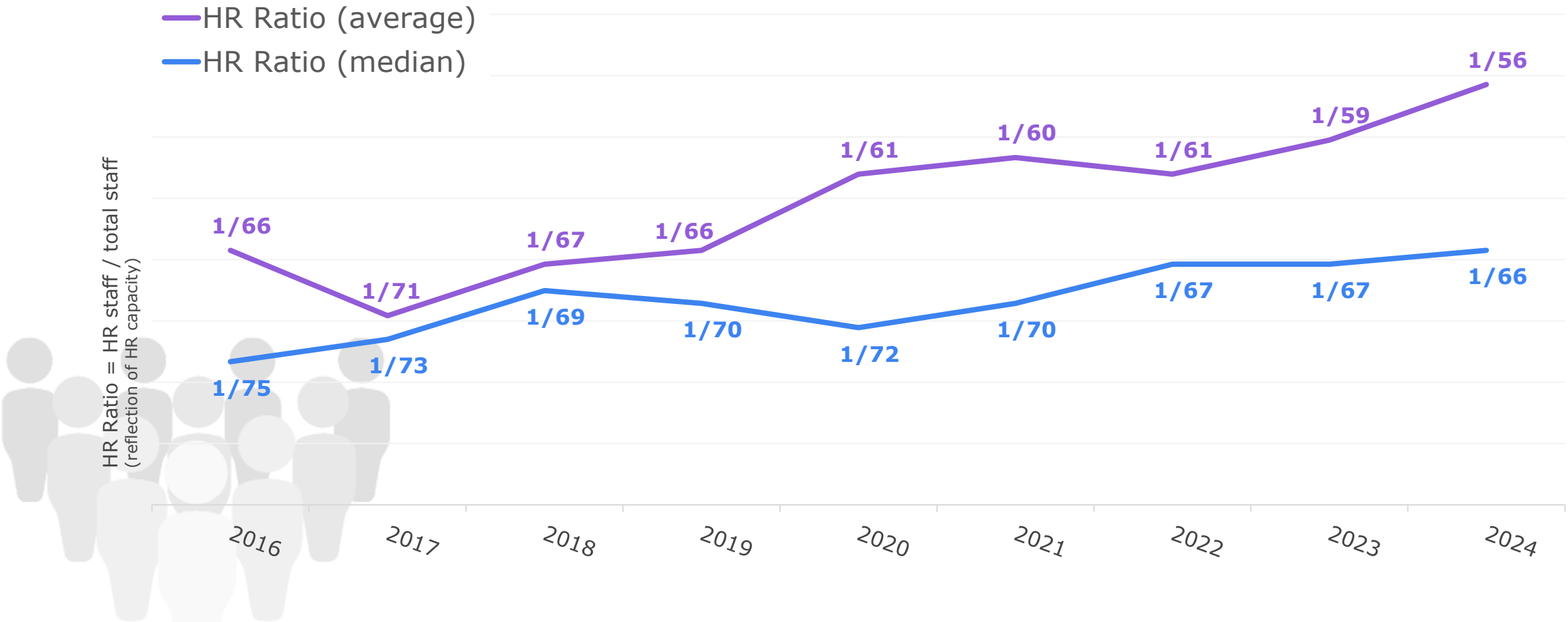
## E. RATIO OF HR STAFF TO EMPLOYEES





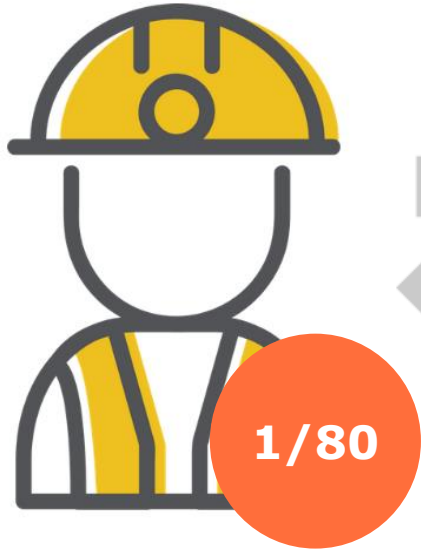
# EVOLUTION OF HR RATIOS OVER TIME

## HR BAROMETER 2016-2024



# CLOSER LOOK HR RATIOS

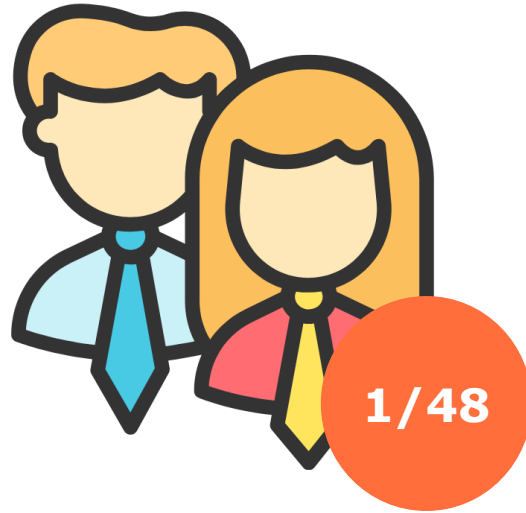
Organisations dominated by blue collar population



Average of 1 HR staff member per **80** employees

$F(1,79) = 13.508, p < .001$

Organisations dominated by white collar population



Average of 1 HR staff member per **48** employees

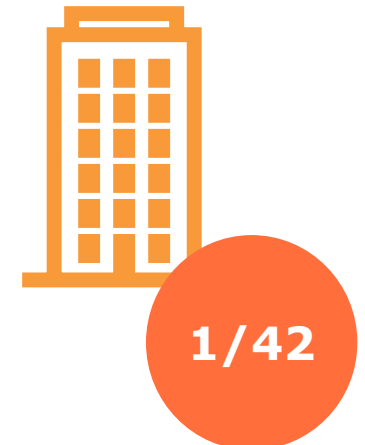
Largest organisations (> 2000 employees)



Average of 1 HR staff member per **58** employees

$F(1,58) = 4.749, p < .05$

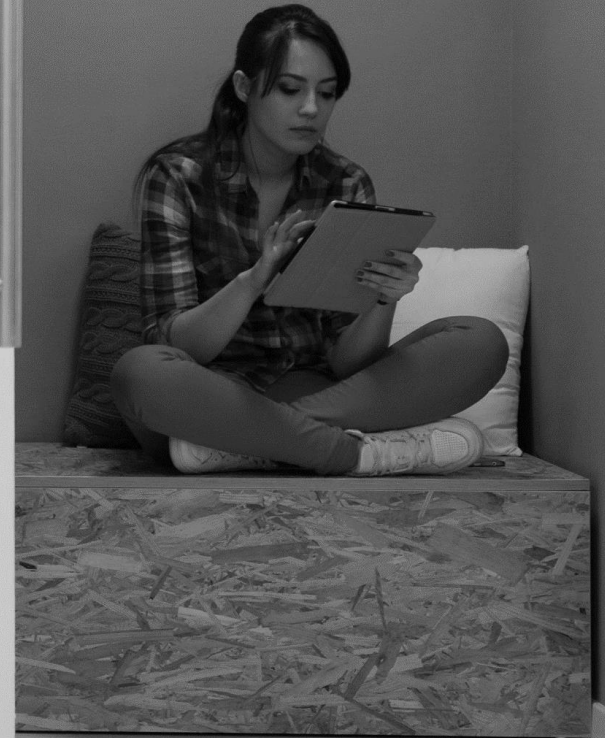
Smallest organisations (< 1000 employees)



Average of 1 HR staff member per **42** employees

**02**

**HR BAROMETER  
RESULTS 2024**







**I.**

**HR BAROMETER 2024  
PRIORITIES**



# HR BAROMETER 2024: PRIORITIES

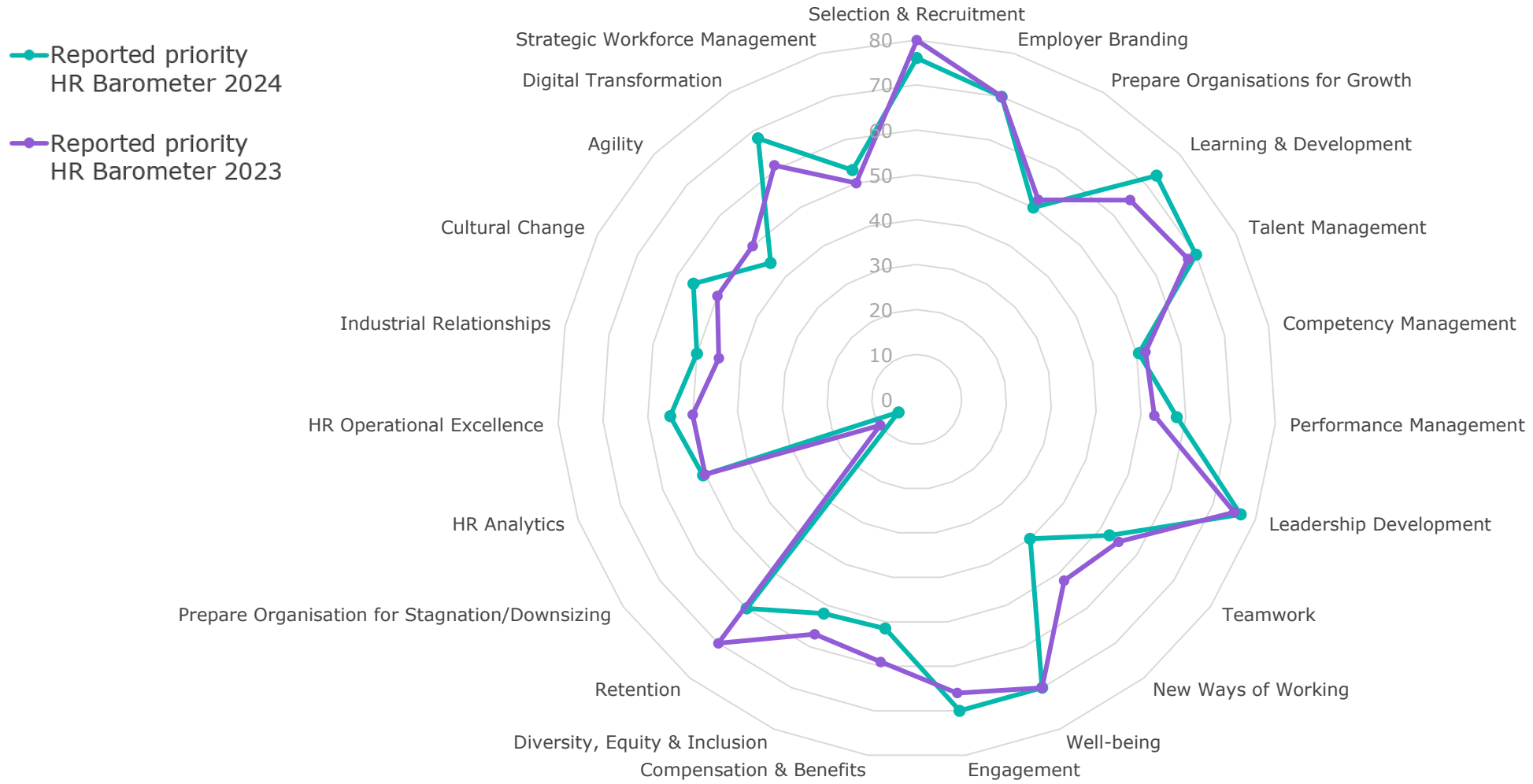
"Looking back at the past 12 months (Jan-Dec 2023), please indicate the priority level for each HR domain"

## TOP 3



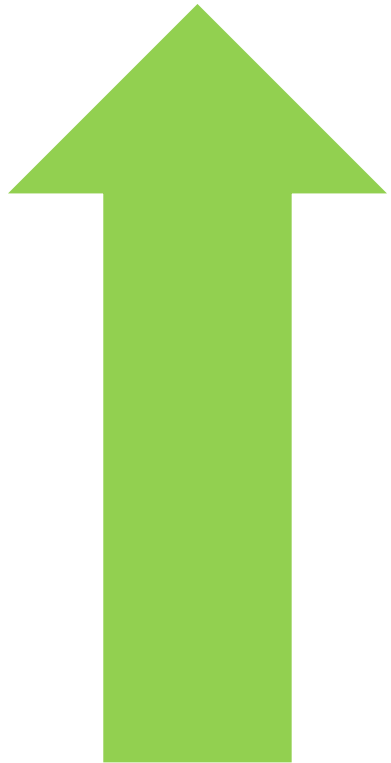
Reported HR priorities for the past year (Jan-Dec 2023)  
Scale: 0 - 100

# TRENDS IN HR PRIORITIES HR BAROMETER 2024 VERSUS 2023



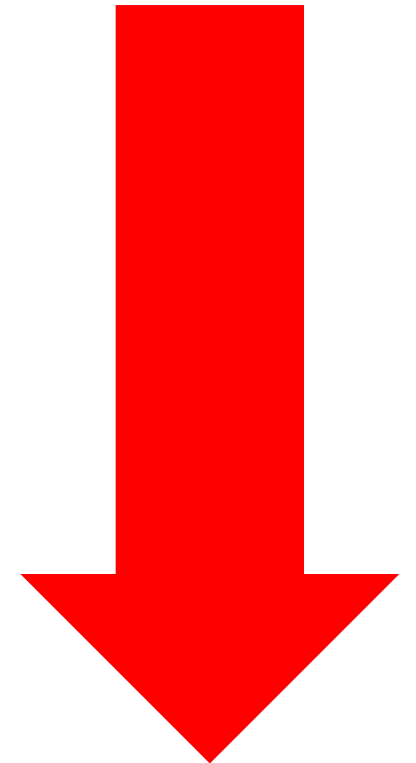
# TRENDS IN HR PRIORITIES

## HR BAROMETER 2024 VERSUS 2023



<b>Learning &amp; Development</b>	<b>+8</b>
<b>Digital Transformation</b>	<b>+7</b>
<b>Cultural Change</b>	<b>+6</b>
Performance Management	+5
HR Operational Excellence	+5
Industrial Relationships	+5
Engagement	+4
Strategic Workforce Planning	+3
Talent Management	+2
Leadership Development	+2
HR Analytics	+1

<b>New Ways of Working</b>	<b>-12</b>
<b>Retention</b>	<b>-10</b>
<b>Compensation &amp; Benefits</b>	<b>-8</b>
Agility	-6
Prepare Organisation for Stagnation/downsizing	-5
Diversity, Equity & Inclusion	-5
Selection & Recruitment	-4
Teamwork	-3
Prepare Organisation for Growth	-2
Competency Management	-2







**II.**

**HR BAROMETER 2024  
MASTERY**

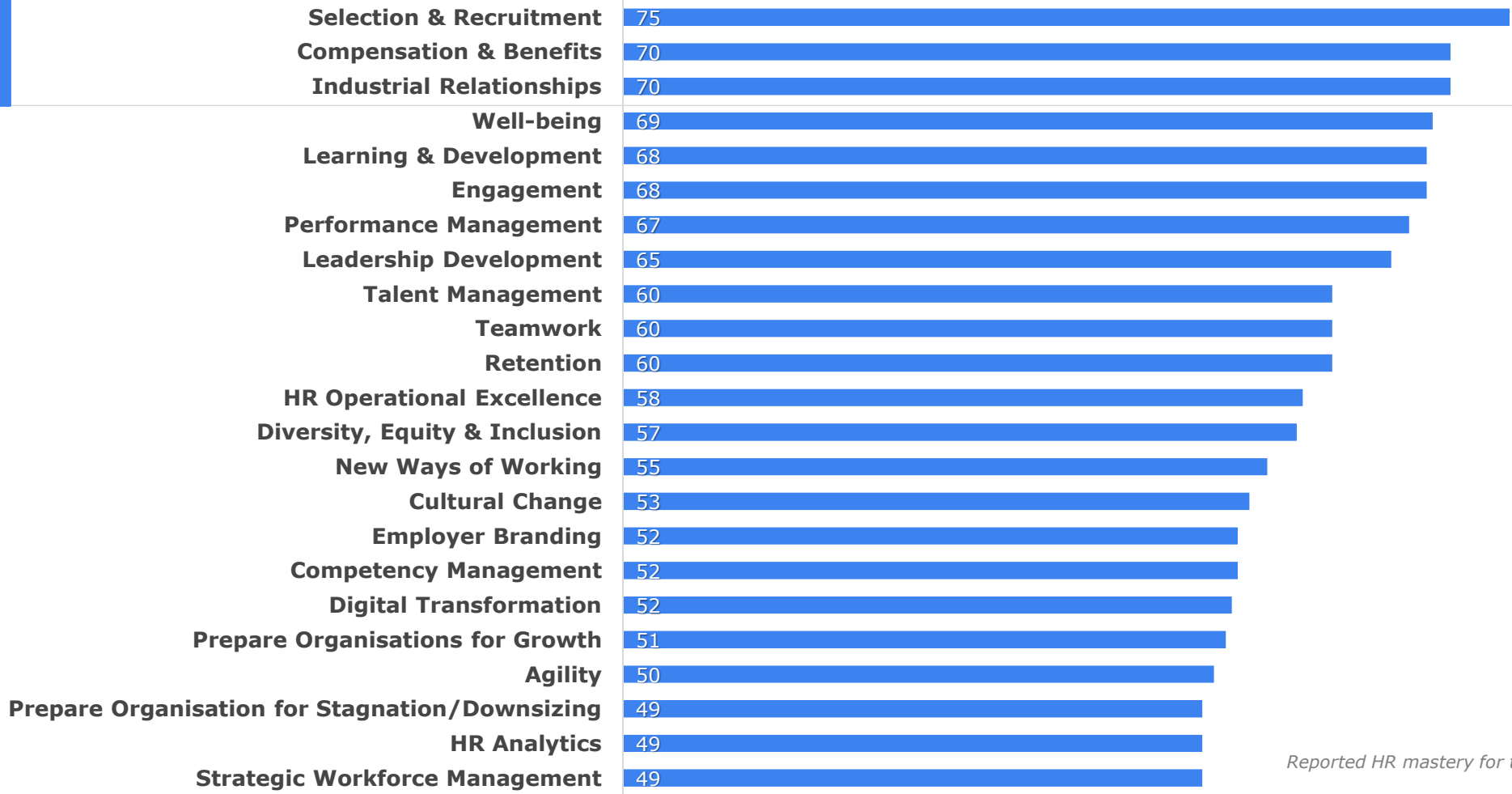


# HR BAROMETER 2024: PERCEIVED MASTERY

"Looking back at the past 12 months (Jan-Dec 2023), please indicate how well you master each HR domain"



## TOP 3

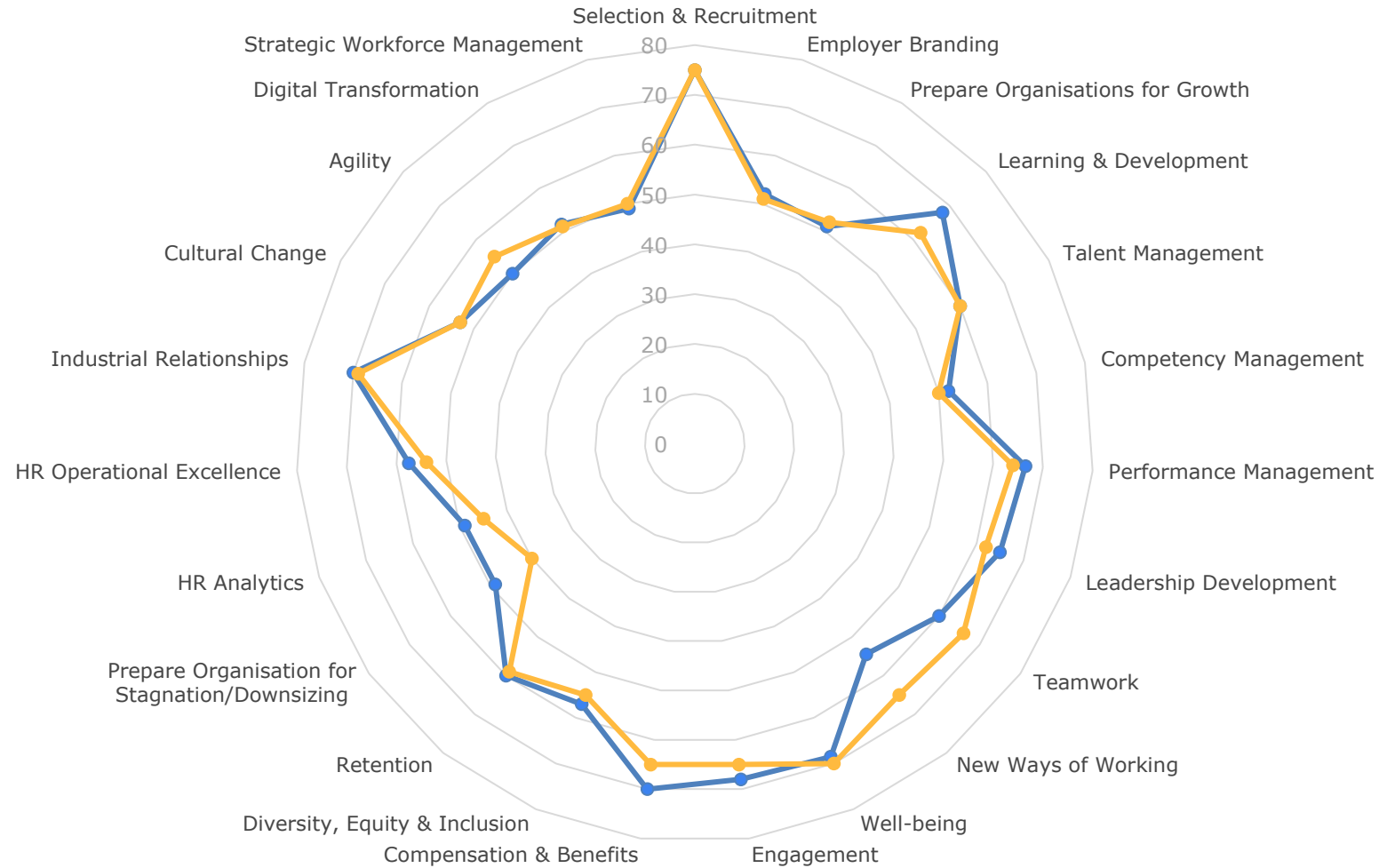


Reported HR mastery for the past year (Jan-Dec 2023)  
Scale: 0 - 100

# TRENDS IN HR MASTERY

## HR BAROMETER 2024 VERSUS 2023

—● Reported mastery HR Barometer 2024  
—● Reported mastery HR Barometer 2023



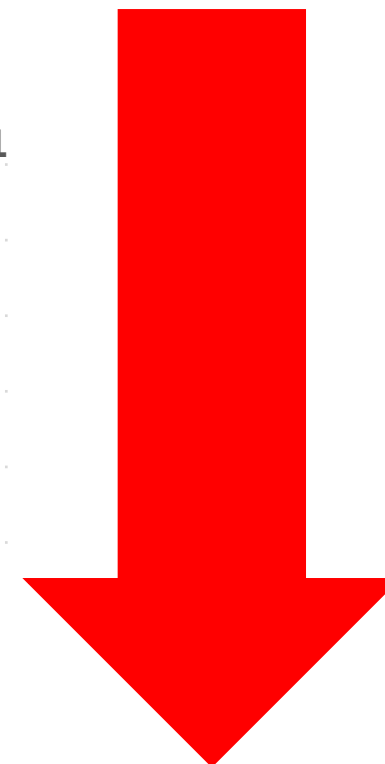
# TRENDS IN HR MASTERY

## HR BAROMETER 2024 VERSUS 2023



<b>Prepare Organisation for Stagnation/downsizing</b>	<b>+9</b>
<b>Learning &amp; Development</b>	<b>+6</b>
<b>Compensation &amp; Benefits</b>	<b>+5</b>
HR Analytics	+4
HR Operational Excellence	+4
Leadership Development	+3
Engagement	+3
Performance Management	+3
Competency Management	+2
Diversity, Equity & Inclusion	+2
Employer Branding	+1
Retention	+1
Industrial Relationships	+1
Digital Transformation	+1

<b>New Ways of Working</b>	<b>-11</b>
<b>Teamwork</b>	<b>-6</b>
<b>Agility</b>	<b>-5</b>
Well-being	-2
Strategic Workforce Planning	-1
Prepare Organisation for Growth	-1

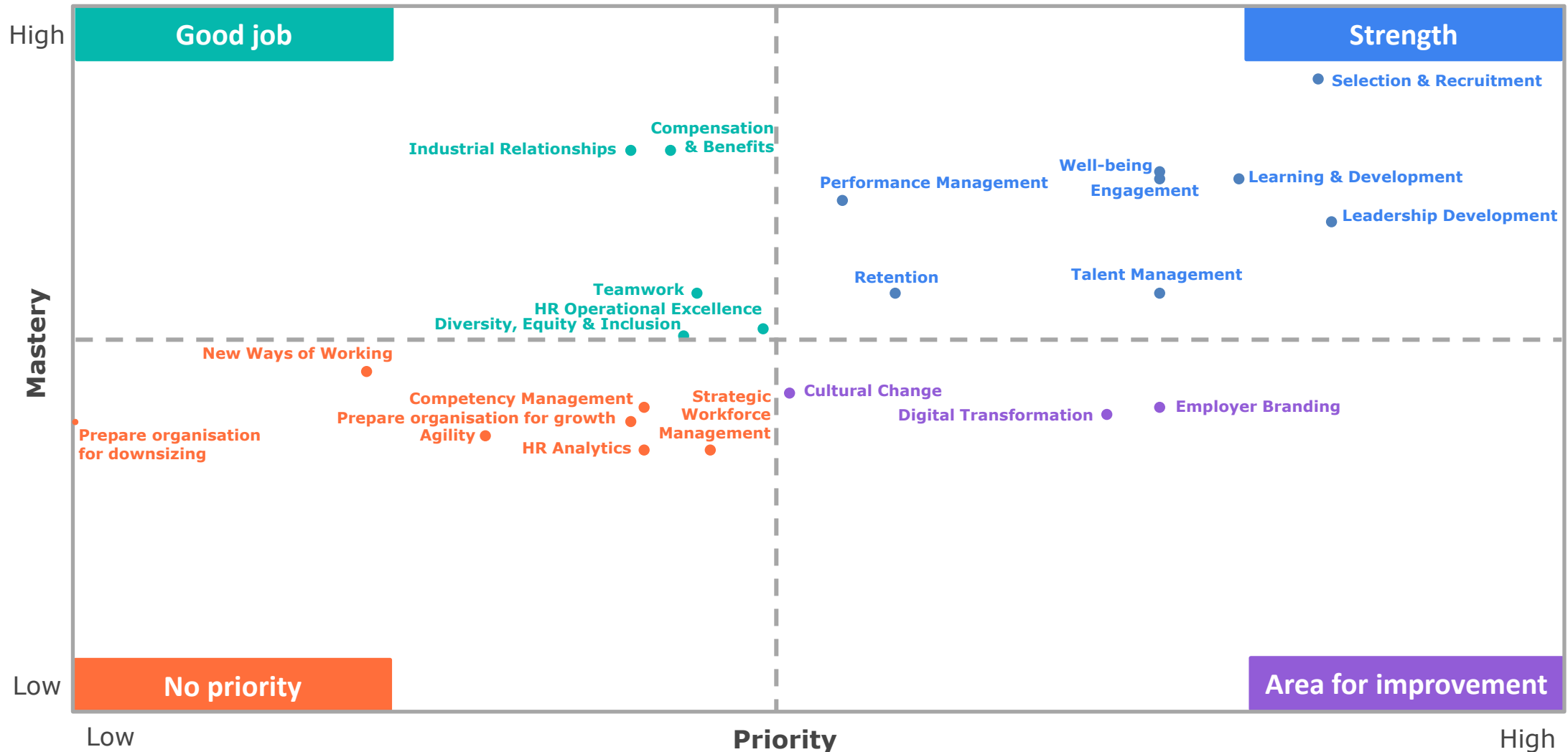




**III.**

**HR BAROMETER 2024  
PRIORITY VS. MASTERY**

# HR BAROMETER 2024: PRIORITY x MASTERY





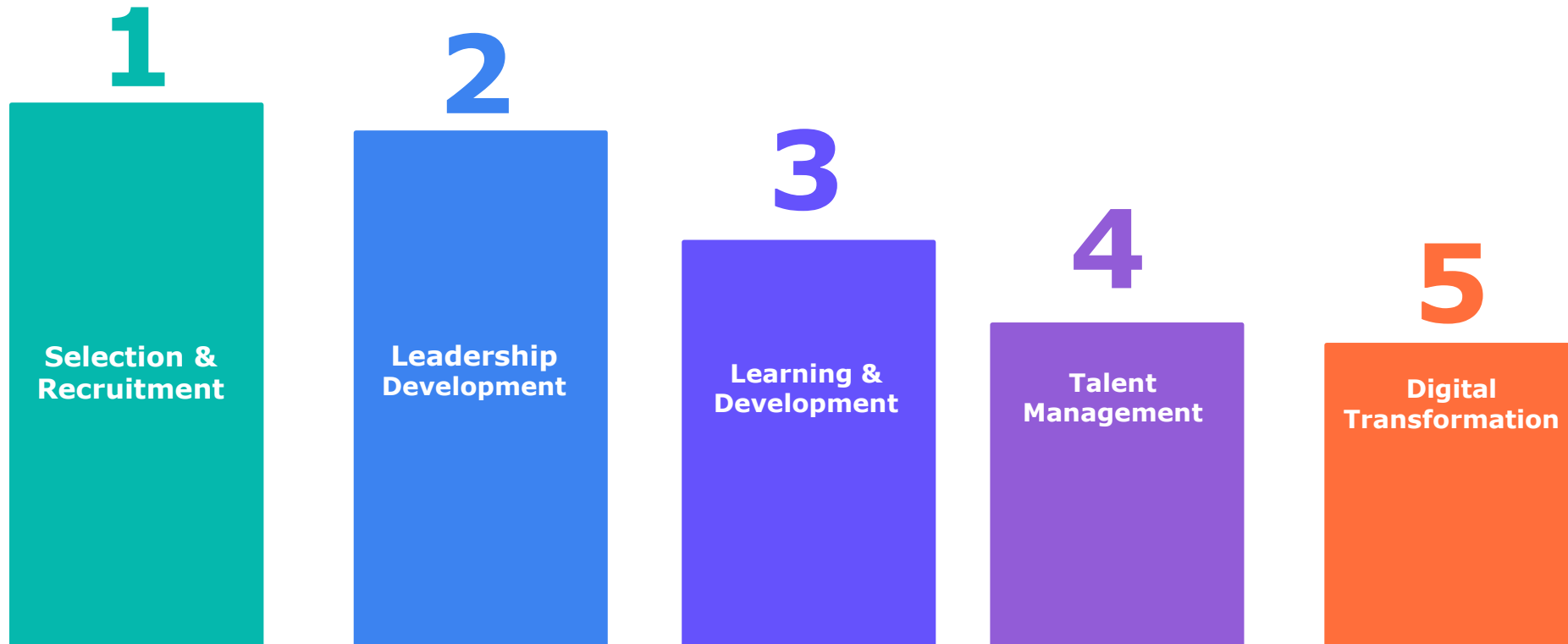


**IV.**

**HR BAROMETER 2024  
PLANNED PRIORITIES  
FOR 2024**

# PLANNED PRIORITIES FOR 2024

## TOP 5 PRIORITIES FOR THE COMING YEAR





03

10 YEARS HR  
BAROMETER



# 5 KEY LEARNINGS (1)

## FROM 10 YEARS HR BAROMETER

### 1 Despite trends and peaks HR has a **stable and full agenda**

> HR strengths have remained stable over the last 10 years:

**Selection & Recruitment, Leadership Development, and Learning & Development**  
consistently indicated as strengths

> Some HR domains never became a real priority (so far):

**HR Analytics** and **Strategic Workforce Management** consistently 'no priority'

> **Industrial Relationships** is the most stable HR domain:

Stable priority & mastery scores + consistent positive gap (mastery score at least 16 points higher than priority score)



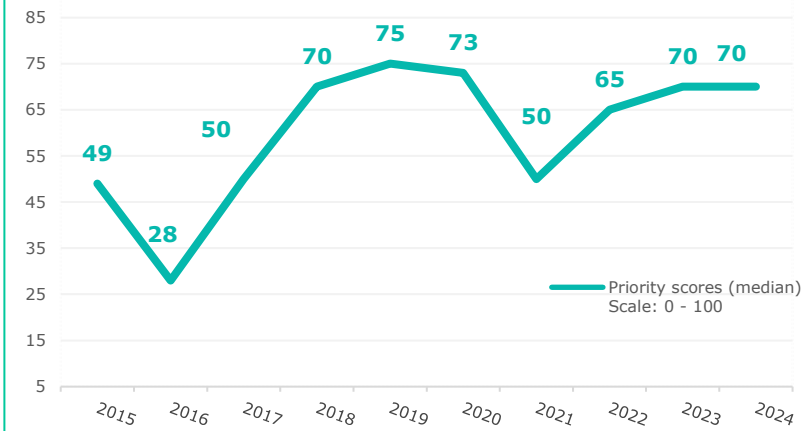


# 5 KEY LEARNINGS (2) FROM 10 YEARS HR BAROMETER

2 However, HR priority & mastery perceptions are also **dynamic**  
> **COVID-19** was a defining event for many HR domains and their priority

## Increasing trend since covid

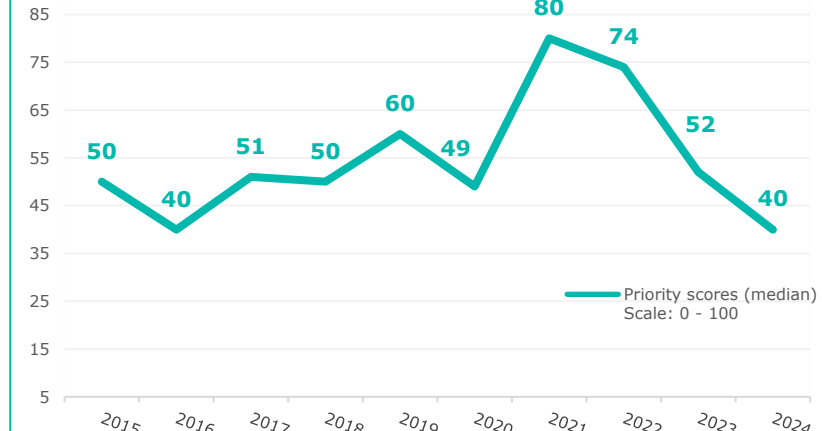
### Employer Branding



Employer Branding

## Declining trend since covid

### e.g. New Ways of Working



New Ways of Working

Preparing for Growth

Teamwork

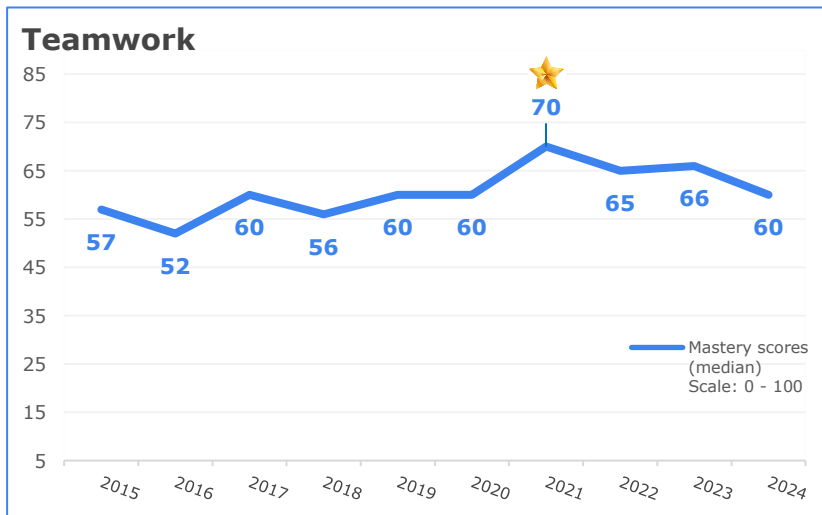
Well-being

Agility



# 5 KEY LEARNINGS (3) FROM 10 YEARS HR BAROMETER

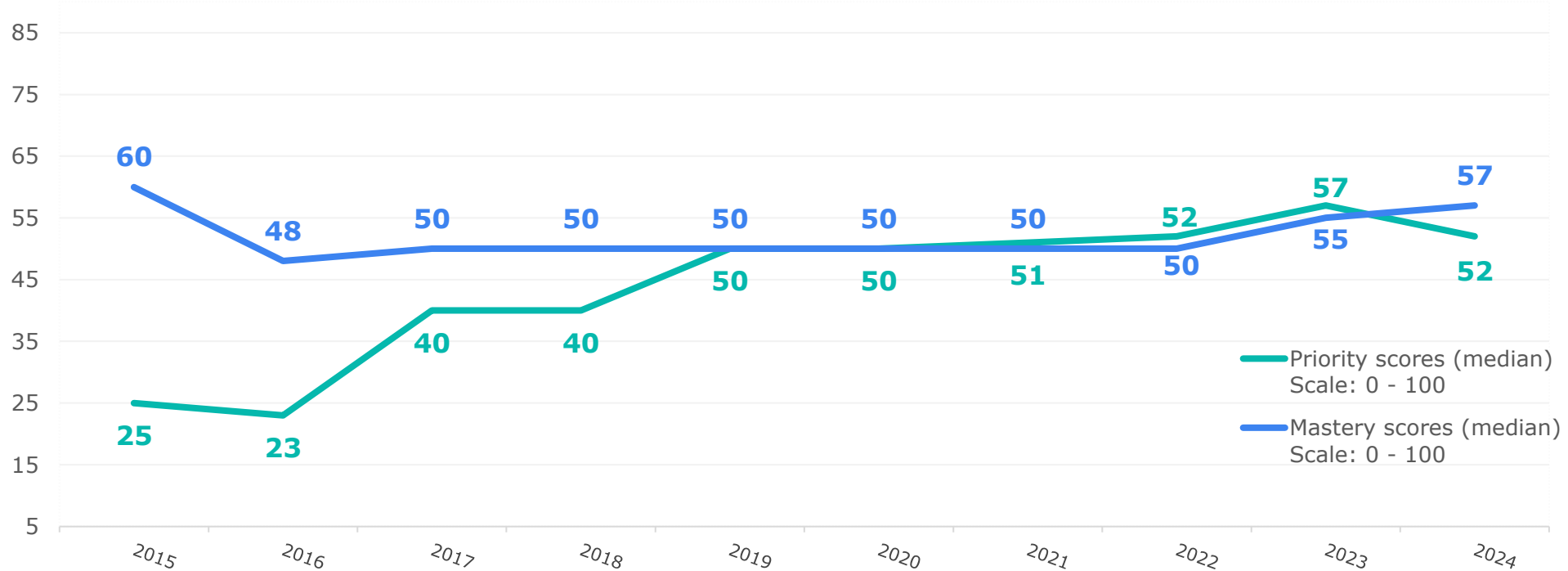
## 3 Covid-induced **mastery peaks** for Teamwork, Leadership Development & Operational Excellence



# 5 KEY LEARNINGS (4) FROM 10 YEARS HR BAROMETER

## 4 Dynamic and reverse relationship for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

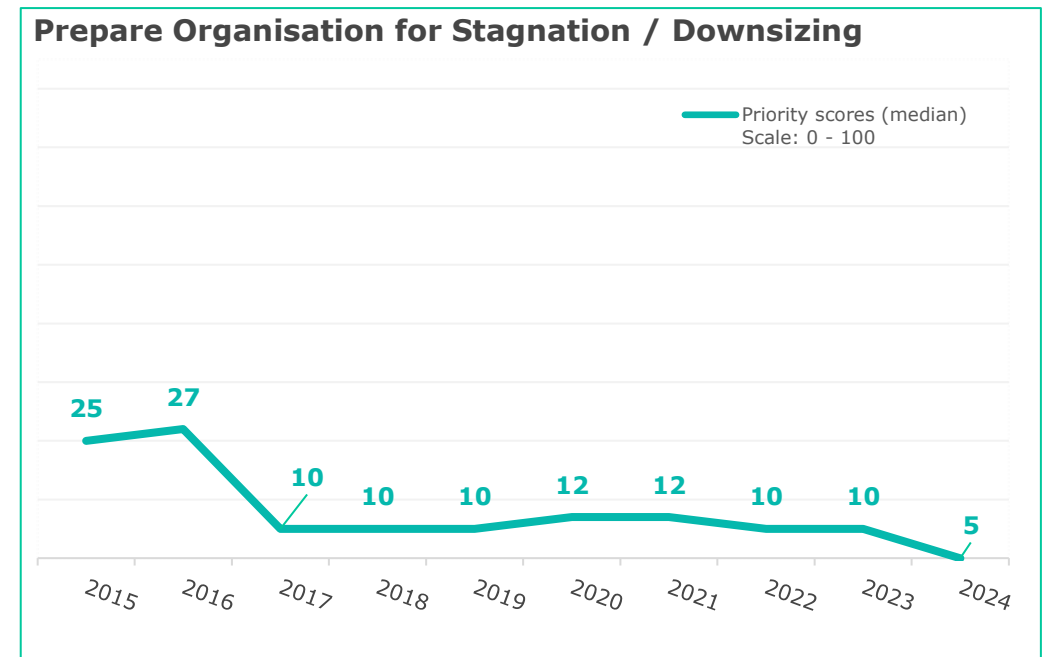
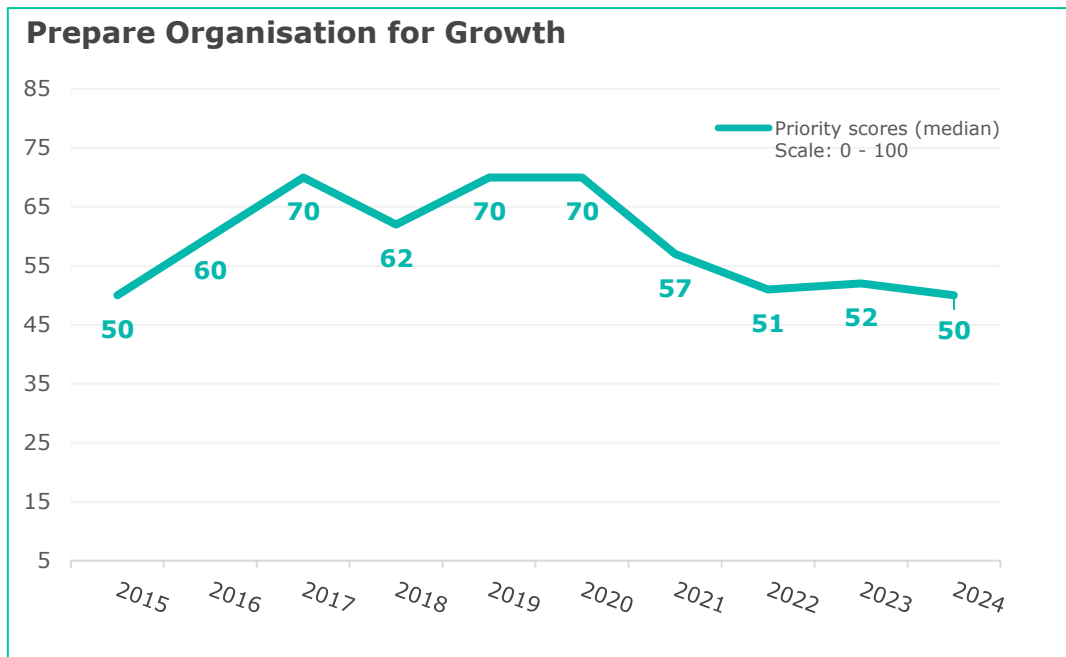
- > Growing priority perception triggers lower mastery perception (and vice versa)
- > Declining priority perception triggers higher mastery perception (and vice versa)





# 5 KEY LEARNINGS (5) FROM 10 YEARS HR BAROMETER

## 5 Preparing for Growth and Preparing for Downsizing are no opposites of the same continuum



**04**

**SPOTLIGHT ON  
STRATEGIC WORKFORCE PLANNING  
(SWP)**



A person in a dark suit and light-colored shirt is holding a tablet computer. The background is a high-angle, blurred view of a city street with buildings and cars. An orange semi-transparent box is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing white text.

# **I.**

## **SWP**

### **CURRENT STATE**

# STRATEGIC WORKFORCE PLANNING DEFINED

- > Strategic Workforce Planning (SWP) is a proactive business process that aligns organisational needs and external evolutions with an organisation's people strategy and staffing needs.
- > The goal of SWP is to ensure that an organisation has the right people in the right place at the right time to achieve its objectives.

## The five dimensions of SWP:

**DEMAND  
FORECASTING**

**SUPPLY  
FORECASTING**

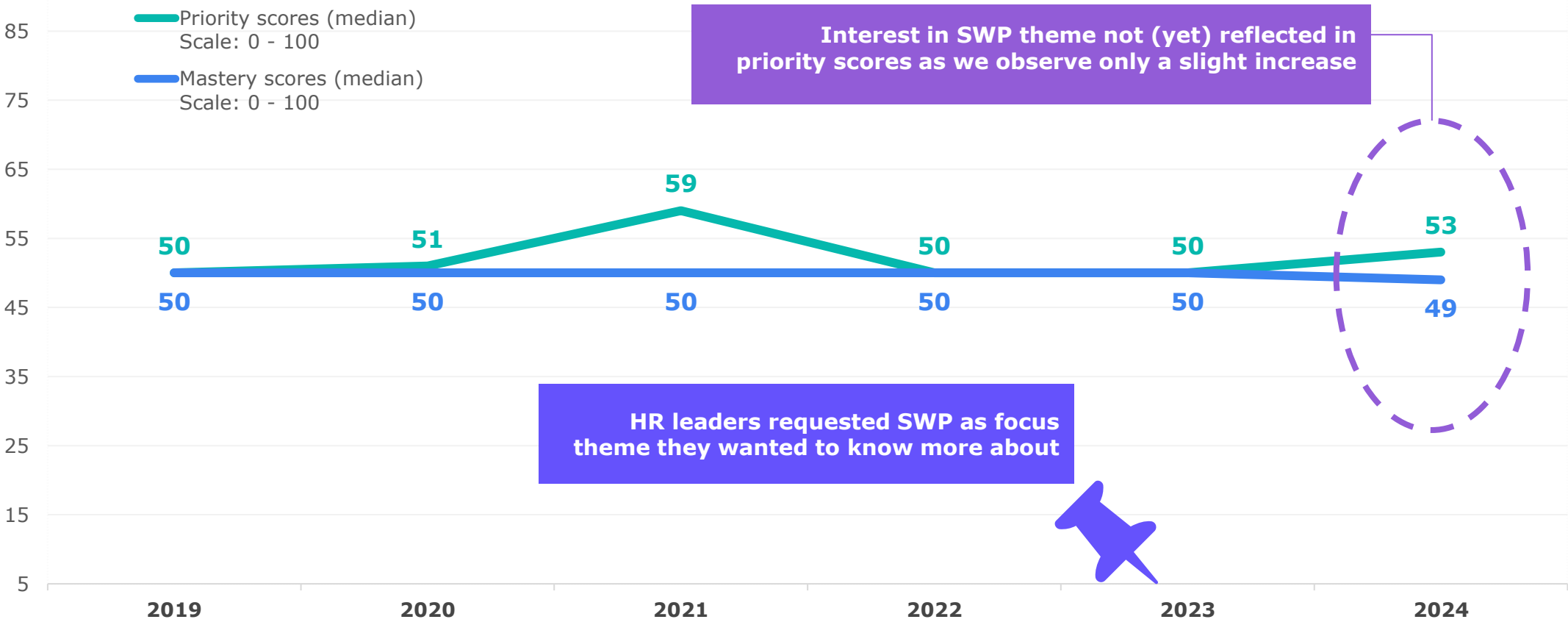
**WORKFORCE  
SEGMENTATION**

**SCENARIO  
PLANNING**

**ACTION  
PLANNING**



# SWP EVOLUTIONS OVER TIME



# HOW DO BELGIAN ORGANISATIONS LOOK AT SWP?

"SWP is **essential** for business survival"

"SWP is a **buzzword** and is not here to stay"

65%

*of surveyed  
HR Directors agree*



30%

*of surveyed  
HR Directors agree*

# DRIVERS TO CONDUCT SWP

**The business**  
(e.g. production targets,  
budgets, cost savings,  
acute staffing needs)

**86%**

**Our strategy**  
(e.g. vision, mission,  
values, objectives)

**76%**

**The external  
environment**  
(e.g. industry  
transformation, labour  
market conditions)

**71%**

**Organisational  
change**  
(e.g. mergers &  
acquisitions, successions)

**51%**

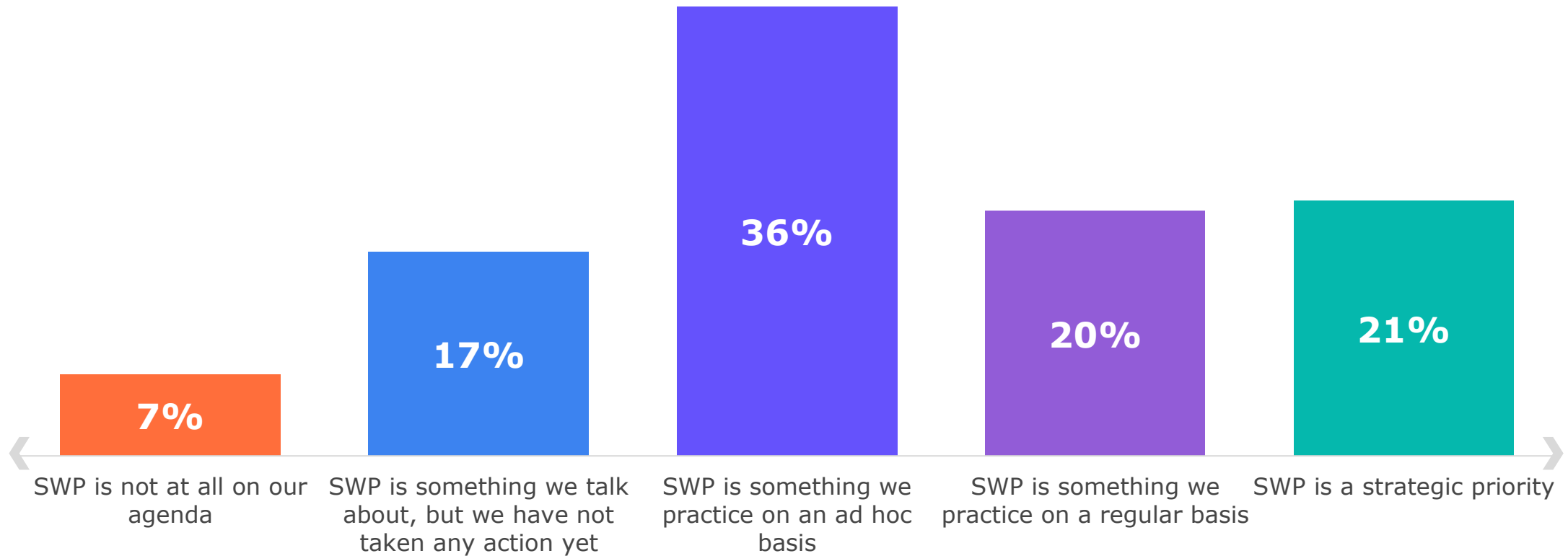
*% of companies stating to find a certain driver rather or very important*



# CURRENT STATE OF SWP IN ORGANISATIONS

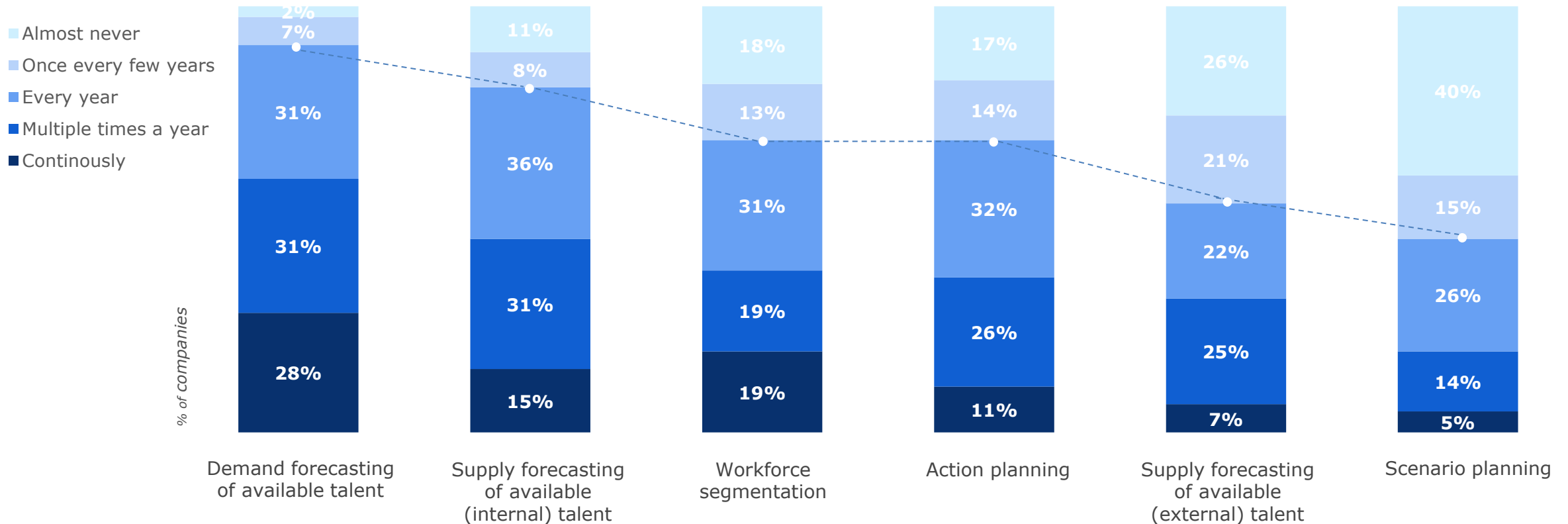
*"Which statement best describes how your organisation applies SWP?"*

*% of companies choosing a certain statement*



# IMPLEMENTATION OF DIFFERENT SWP DIMENSIONS

"How often does your organisation engage in the following SWP activities?"



# KEY FIGURES

% of HR Directors agrees with the statement that...

...They are satisfied with the outcomes of SWP actions in their organisation

**13%**

...They actively communicate about SWP

**14%**

...SWP remains a theoretical notion without clear actions in their organisation

**29%**

# LEARNINGS CURRENT STATE

- HR leaders who report a **more advanced current state** of SWP (reflected by the implementation of SWP activities\*), also report a **higher satisfaction** with SWP outcomes
- When SWP is driven by **strategic drivers**, HR leaders believe more in the **importance of SWP**, and the **active role HR** can play in further professionalising SWP
- **SWP mastery** is perceived higher when HR actively **communicates** about SWP and when SWP is **perceived essential** for business survival



\* Demand forecasting, supply forecasting, workforce segmentation, scenario planning, action plans to close gaps



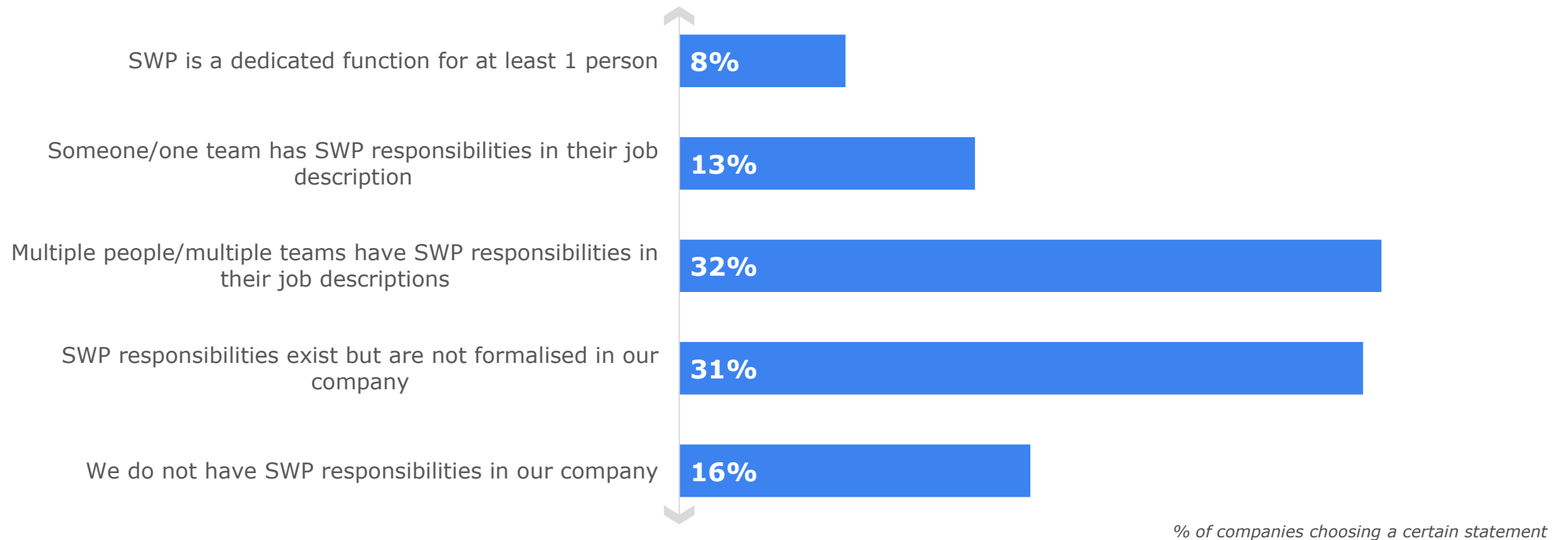


# **II.**

## **SWP ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

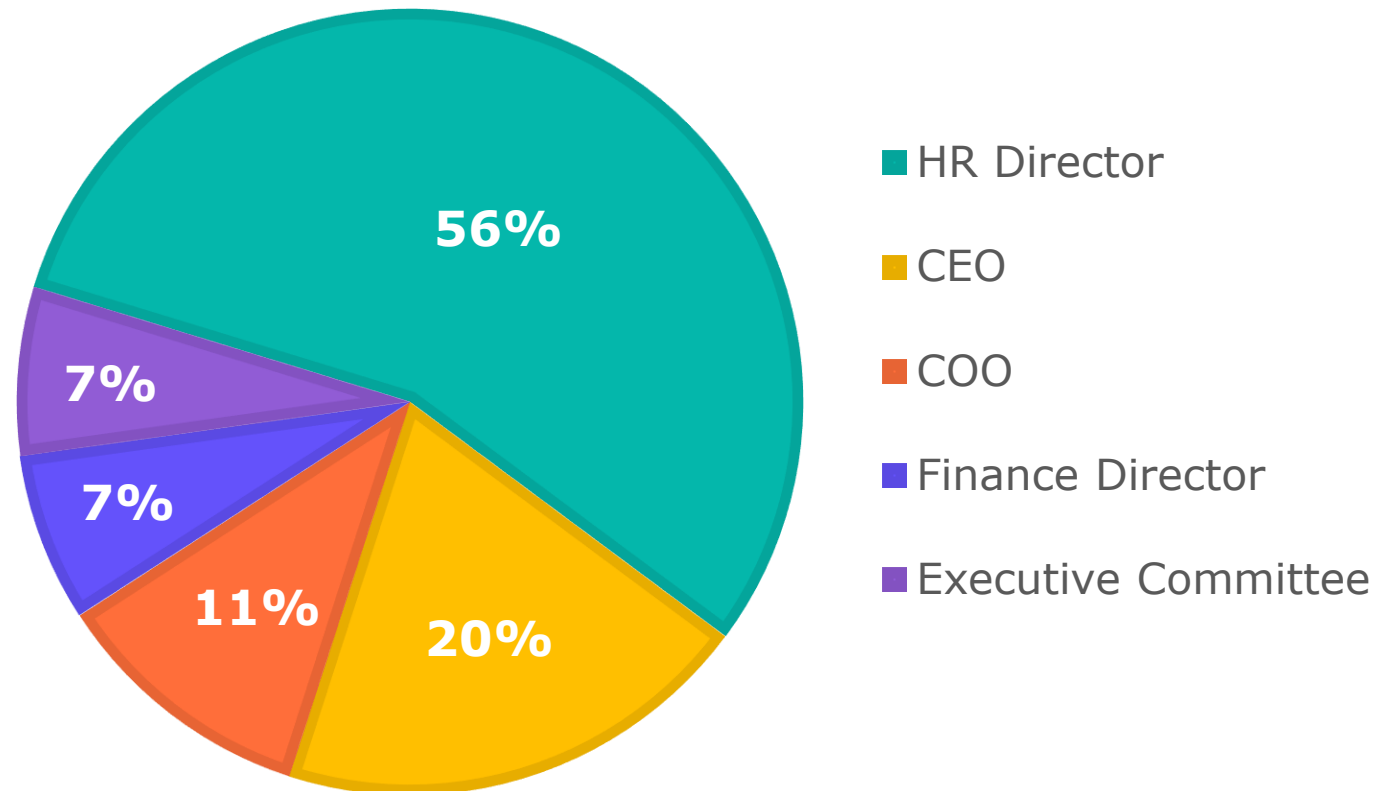
# FORMALISATION OF THE SWP FUNCTION

*"Which statement best represents how SWP responsibilities are formalised in your organisation?"*



# WHO HAS (END) RESPONSIBILITY OVER SWP?

*"If someone in the organisation has formalised SWP responsibilities, to whom does the person/team most responsible for SWP report?"*



*% of companies indicating a certain end responsible*

# PIVOTAL ROLE FOR HR

% of HR Directors agrees with the statement that...

...HR is **not** in the driving seat to further professionalise SWP

10%

...It is better to partner with external partners for SWP than to develop SWP expertise in-house

13%



# DOES HR RELY ON TECHNOLOGY FOR SWP?

% of HR Directors agrees with the statement that...

...Their organisation relies on mapping tools to gather data relevant to SWP

23%

Organisations that use mapping tools also **communicate more** about SWP throughout the organisation ( $r = .378$ )



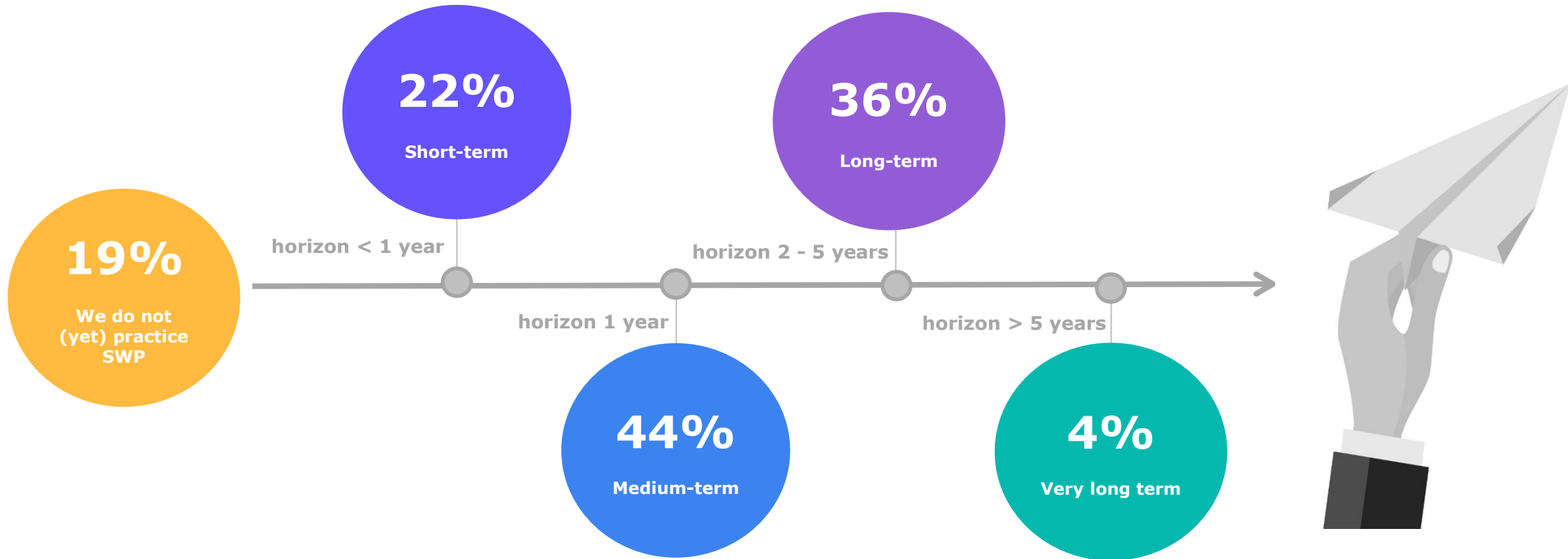


**III.**

**SWP**

**SCOPE OF SWP**

# WHAT TIME HORIZON IS ADOPTED?



*% of companies adopting certain time span for SWP*

# SWP & ANNUAL BUDGETING

## FINDING THE RIGHT BALANCE

% of HR Directors agrees with the statement that...

...The annual budgeting cycle has more impact than long-term SWP in their organisation

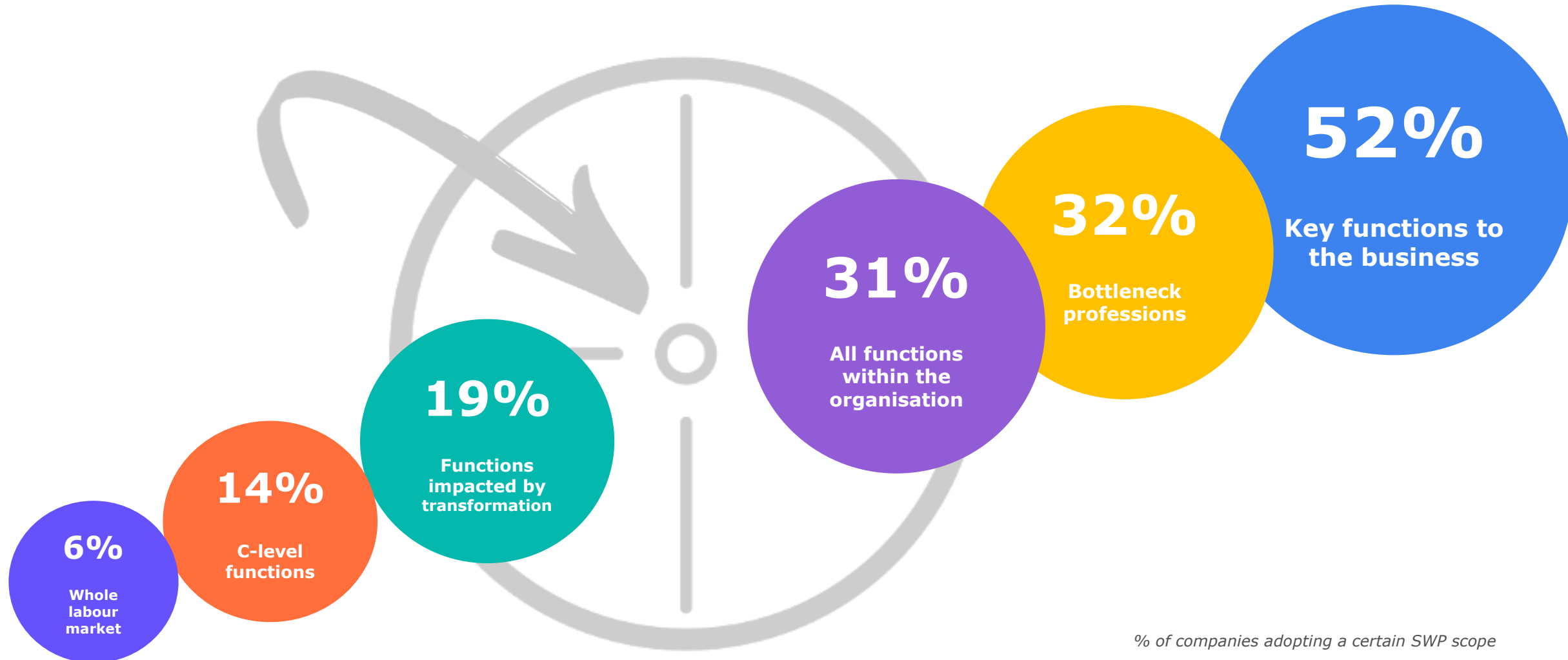
60%

In organisations where annual budgeting has more impact, HR is **less satisfied with SWP outcomes** ( $r = -.242$ )



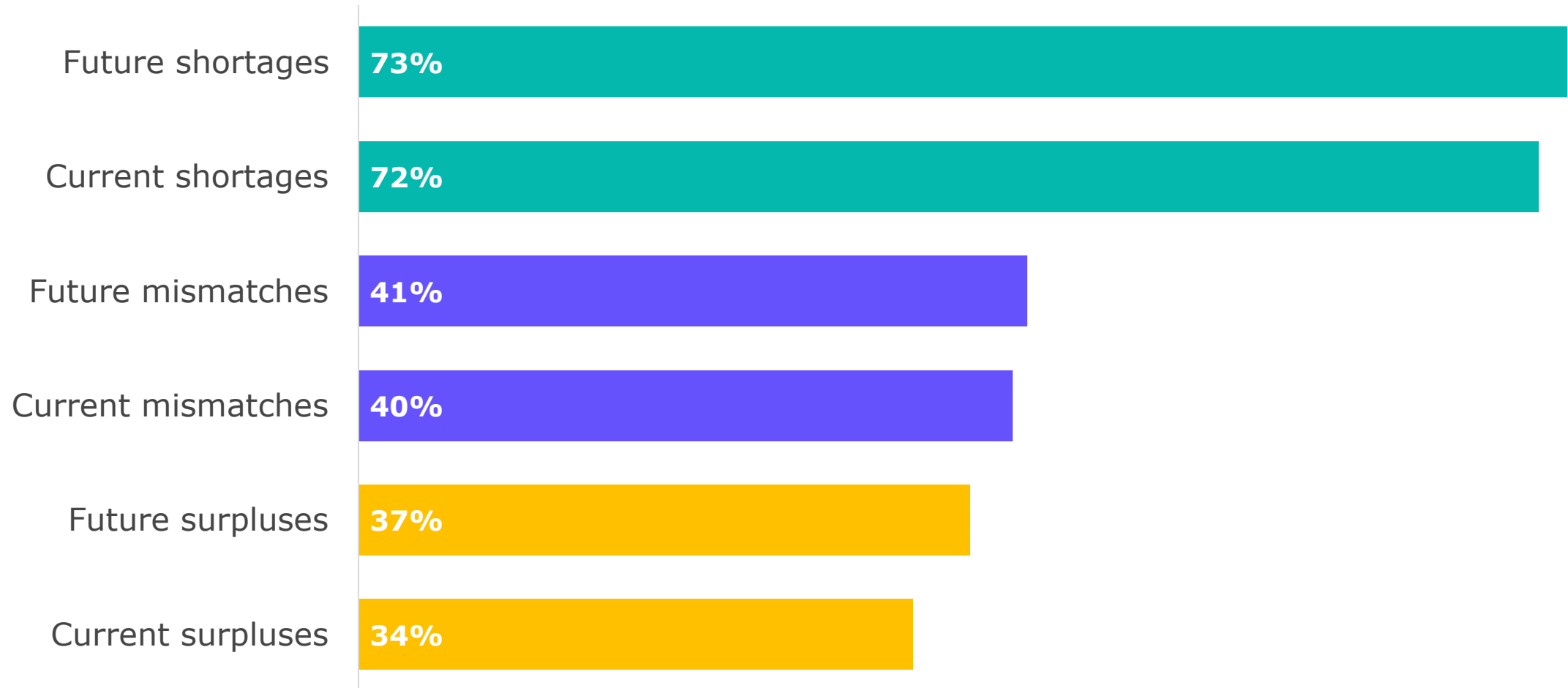


# WHICH FUNCTIONS ARE IN SCOPE?



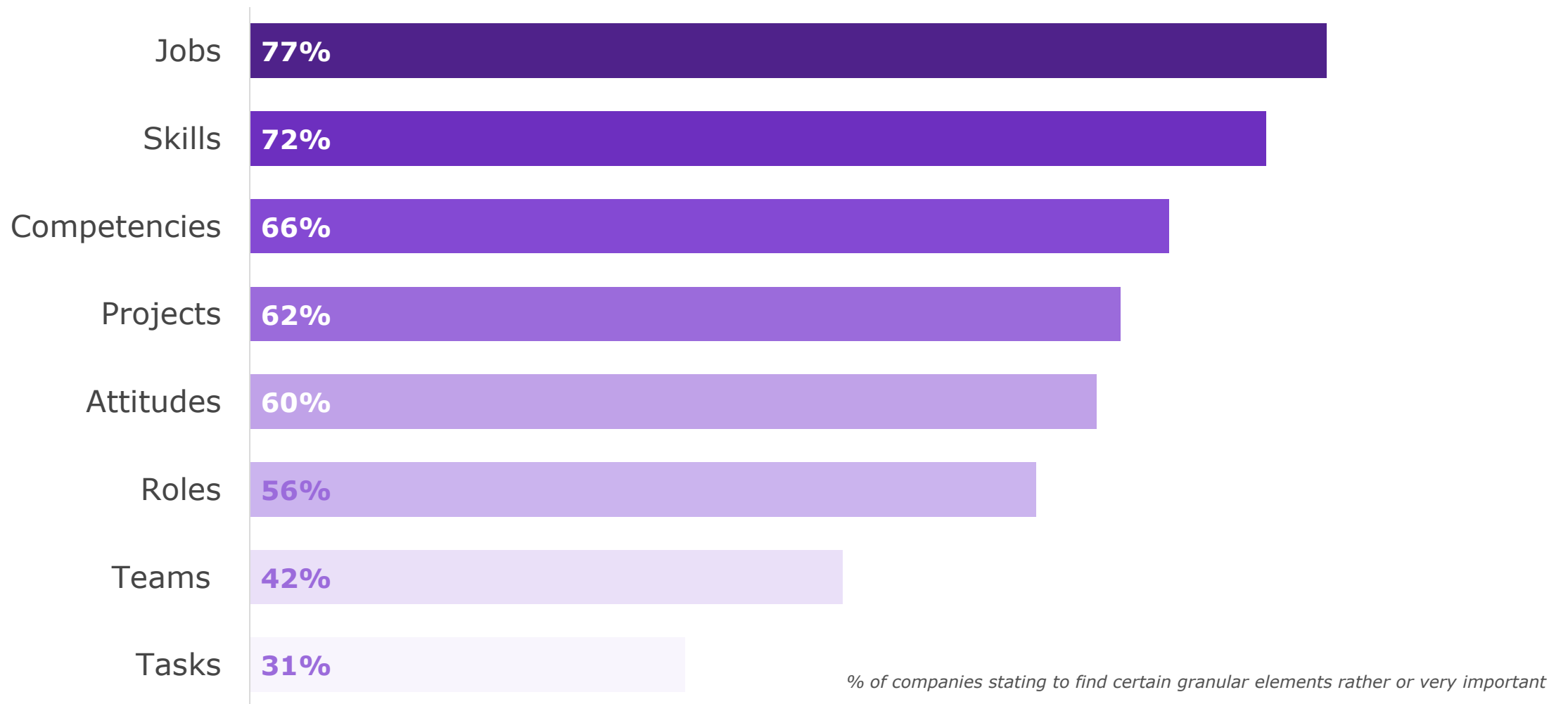
*% of companies adopting a certain SWP scope*

# WHICH GAPS ARE ANALYSED?



*% of companies stating to find certain gaps rather or very important*

# WHICH WORK ELEMENTS ARE CONSIDERED?



# WHAT ABOUT SKILL-BASED?

% of HR Directors agrees with the statement that...

...They want to adopt a more skill-based perspective to prepare their organisation for the future

78%

Organisations that consider skills as an important work element to SWP, also seem to invest more in 'advanced' SWP techniques, such as: **scenario planning** ( $r = .184$ ) and **action planning** to close gaps ( $r = .246$ )





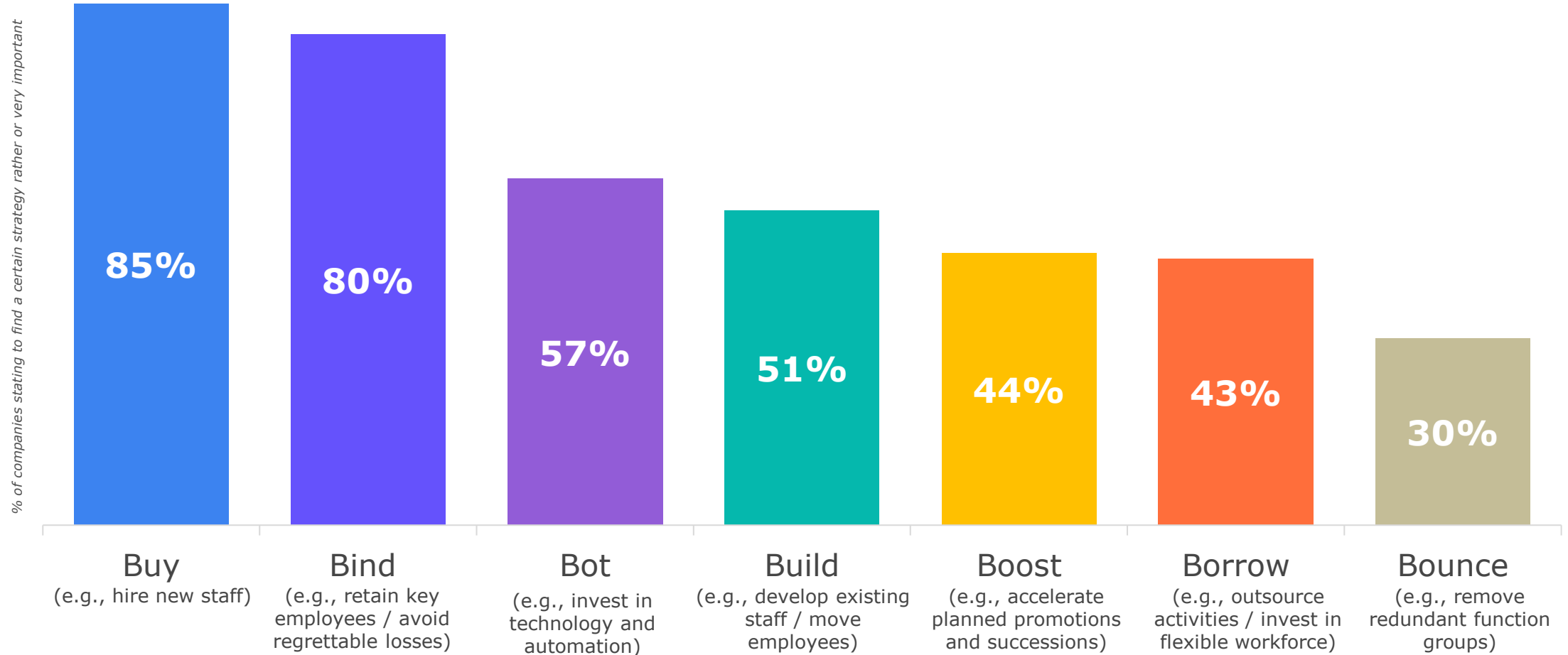


**IV.**

**SWP**

**TAKING ACTION TO  
MOVE FORWARD**

# WHICH HR ACTIONS ARE TAKEN TO CLOSE IDENTIFIED GAPS?



# HOW ARE HR ACTIONS LINKED TO REPORTED PRIORITIES?

- > **Buy strategy** correlates most strongly (-) with **Well-being**
- > **Bind strategy** correlates most strongly (+) with **Retention**
- > **Bot strategy** correlates most strongly (+) with **SWP, Digital Transformation, and DEI**
- > **Build strategy** correlates most strongly (+) with **L&D, Retention, and Engagement**
- > **Boost strategy** correlates most strongly (+) with **Leadership Development and Engagement**
- > **Borrow strategy** correlates most strongly (+) with **Agility, Teamwork, and Operational Excellence**
- > **Bounce strategy** correlates most strongly (-) with **Selection & Recruitment, and (+) with Cultural Change, Agility, and Preparing for Downsizing**





# MAIN CHALLENGES FOR HR TO FURTHER PROFESSIONALISE SWP

**01**

**Complexity of  
implementation**

**02**

**Lack of skills to  
conduct SWP**

**03 Lack of resources (e.g. budget)**

**04 Time constraints**

**05 Lack of data**

**06 Lack of clear strategy/ vision**

**07 Lack of awareness**


**08 Limited executive support**

**09 Resistance to change**

**10 Belief that the future is too volatile to prepare for**

**11 Belief that the labour market is too scarce**





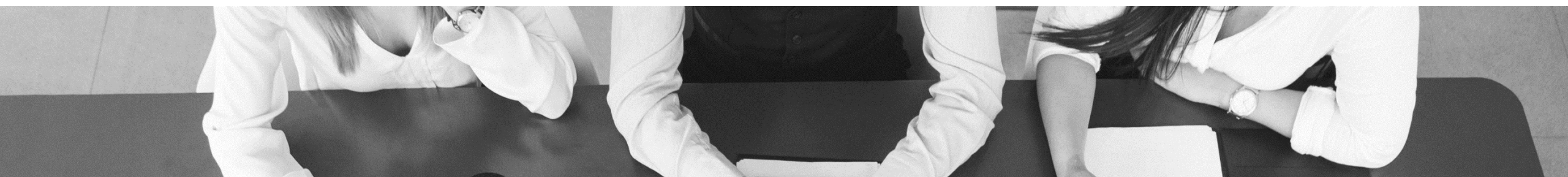
# 05 FINAL TAKEAWAYS



# TAKEAWAYS

## HR PRIORITY & MASTERY

1. Reported **HR Priorities**:
  - > Development is seen as the way to go: **Leadership Development** becomes n°1 priority, **Learning & Development** is this year's biggest riser
  - > **Selection & Recruitment**, although decreased slightly, is still a key priority (n°2 priority)
  - > Biggest loss of priority reported for: **New Ways of Working** (became the new normal) and **Retention** (stabilised after a peak last year)
2. Reported **HR Mastery** to **Prepare Organisations for Stagnation/Downsizing** increased substantially (+9) for the second year in a row, but mastery score remains one of the lowest, together with **HR Analytics** and **Strategic Workforce Management**
3. Gaps between reported mastery and reported priority indicate that:
  - > **HR is most insecure** about **Employer Branding** and **Digital Transformation** (- gaps ; area for improvement)
  - > **HR is most confident** about **Industrial Relationships** and **Compensation & Benefits** (+ gaps ; good job area)





# TAKEAWAYS

## TRENDS 10 YEARS HR BAROMETER

- 1. HR has a stable and full agenda:**
  - > **Stable HR strengths** (high priority, high mastery): Leadership Development, Selection & Recruitment, Learning & Development
  - > **No priority:** HR Analytics, Strategic Workforce Planning
  - > **Most stable HR domain:** Industrial Relationships (high mastery, lower priority)
- 2. Dynamics in HR priority and mastery perception:** Covid-19 was a defining event:
  - > **Increased priority** since covid: Employer Branding became more important
  - > **Decreased priority** since covid: New Ways of Working, Well-being, Preparing for Growth, Teamwork, Agility
  - > **Mastery peaks** during lockdowns: Teamwork, Leadership Development and Operational Excellence (mastery normalised after 2021)
- 3. Reverse relationship for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion:** Grown priority triggers the realisation that DEI is not an easy topic (reflected in lower mastery). However, this year (2024), the balance seems to shift again (mastery again slightly higher than priority)
- 4. HR Preparing the Organisation for Growth versus Downsizing** are not necessarily linked to each other: Growth remains most dominant, downsizing seems less relevant for most companies



# TAKEAWAYS

## STRATEGIC WORKFORCE PLANNING (SWP) – PART 1

1. Many (65%) HR leaders are convinced about the **importance** of SWP, but few (13%) are happy with current **outcomes**
2. In most organisations (77%) SWP is already **conducted on an ad hoc or regular basis**, and SWP responsibilities are not often formalised in a dedicated function or job description
3. The perceived **mastery level of SWP is the lowest** of all 23 HR practices
4. SWP is a **complex theme** for HR:
  - > The main **bottlenecks** are (1) the complexity of implementation and (2) lack of skills to conduct SWP
  - > HR does not use specialised **technology** or mapping tools to gather data for SWP (23%)
  - > There is not a lot of active **communication** on SWP (14%)
  - > HR does not believe it is better to partner with **external partners** for SWP than to develop SWP expertise in-house (13%).
5. HR seems to be in the driving seat for SWP: 90% finds **HR in charge** to further professionalise SWP and in many organisations (42%) CHROs already have **end responsibility**





# TAKEAWAYS

## STRATEGIC WORKFORCE PLANNING (SWP) – PART 2

6. Key **drivers** for SWP are the **business** (86%) and **organisational strategy** (76%); SWP is less driven by organisational change (51%)
7. **Most popular SWP activities** are **demand forecasting** (91%) and **supply forecasting** of internal talent (81%); Least implemented SWP dimensions are scenario planning (45%) and supply forecasting of external talent (54%)
8. Current SWP seems to be focused on a **1-year horizon** (44%) or **2-5 years horizon** (36%), and on **critical business functions** (52%) or **bottleneck professions** (32%); only 31% of organisations applies SWP to all their functions
9. **Gap analyses** are mainly directed towards:
  - > **Quantitative shortages**, with no clear distinction between current (72%) or future (73%) ones;  
There is less emphasis on qualitative mismatches (40%-41%) or quantitative surpluses (34%-37%)
  - > **Traditional jobs** (77%) and **skills** (72%): 78% wants to adopt a more skill-based lens in the future;  
There is less emphasis on tasks (31%) or roles (56%)
10. HR leaders indicate **'Buying'** new staff (85%) and **'Binding'** existing staff to the company (80%) as most popular **talent strategies** to close identified workforce gaps

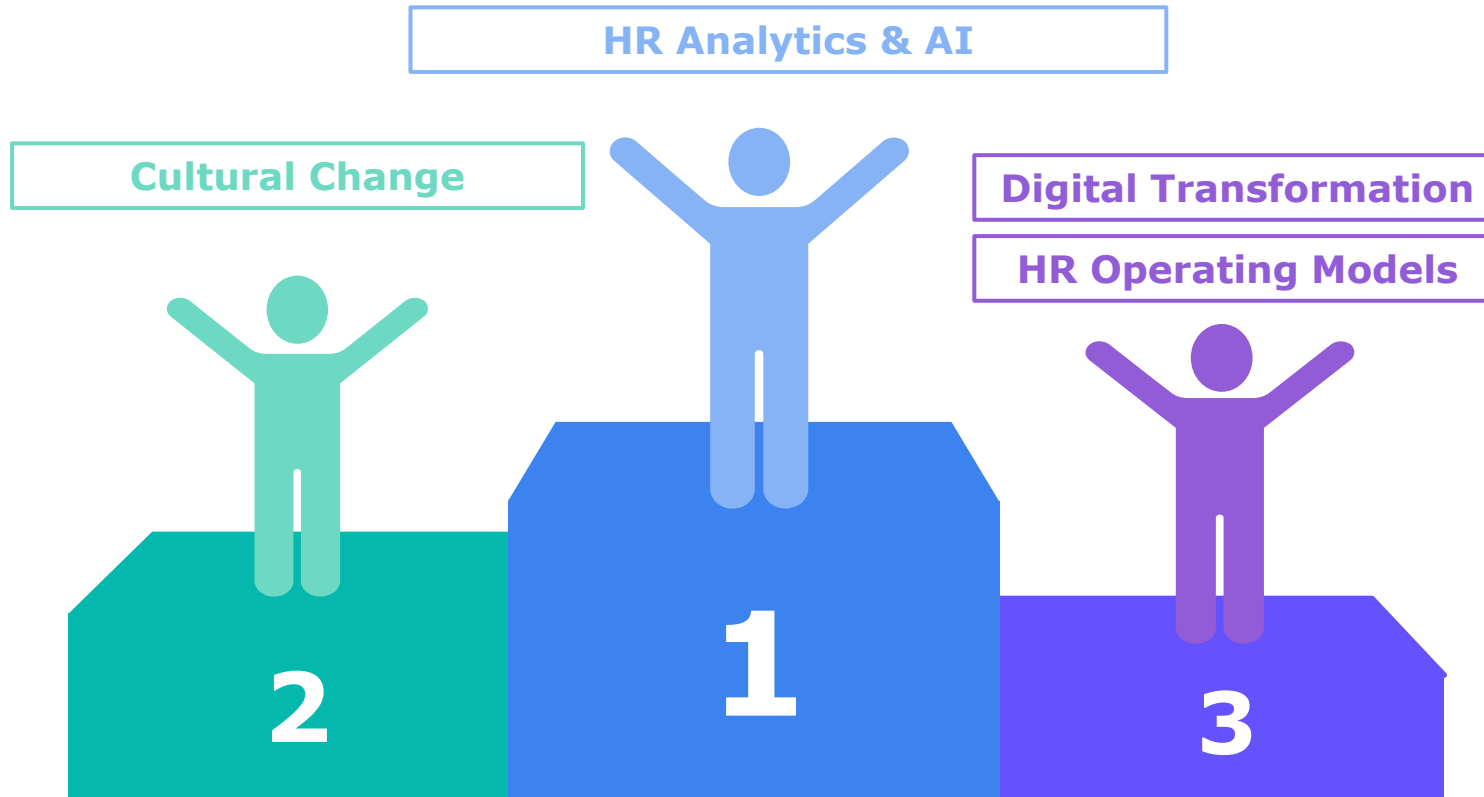




**06**

**TOPIC NEXT HR  
BAROMETER**

# NEXT HR BAROMETER TOPIC: TOP 3 RANKING



*\*The topic for next year is subject to re-evaluation within the next six months*



**07**  
**MORE**  
**INFORMATION**





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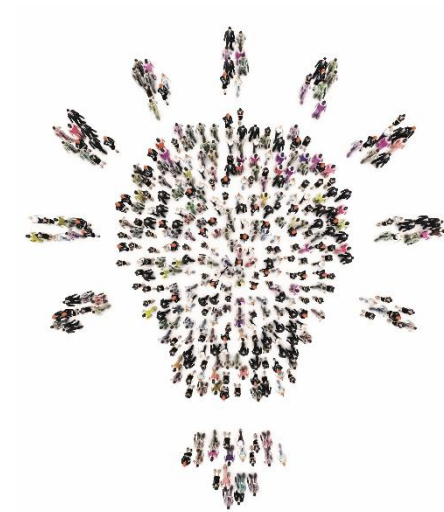
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