

HR BAROMETER 2025

EDITION 11



**2025 Report on HRM Trends and
Challenges in Belgian Organisations**

Spotlight on AI in HR

By Vlerick Business School & Hudson

Dear HR professional

For the 11th year in a row, Vlerick Business School and Hudson have conducted 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 the **priority** and **mastery** levels of 25 HR domains. For the second (variable) part we look into a specific challenge that is gaining momentum, which this year is: **Artificial Intelligence in HR**.

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 2025 study. We hope this report will provide you with interesting and useful insights!

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The HR Barometer is a research project initiated by the Strategic Talent Management 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 solutions to talent management challenges.

> **Accumulate knowledge** in our field across industries via **research & tool development**.

Together with our member organisations, we develop, share and validate knowledge and good practices.

> Build an impactful **community**.

We facilitate networking through workshops, roundtable sessions, webinars, etc.

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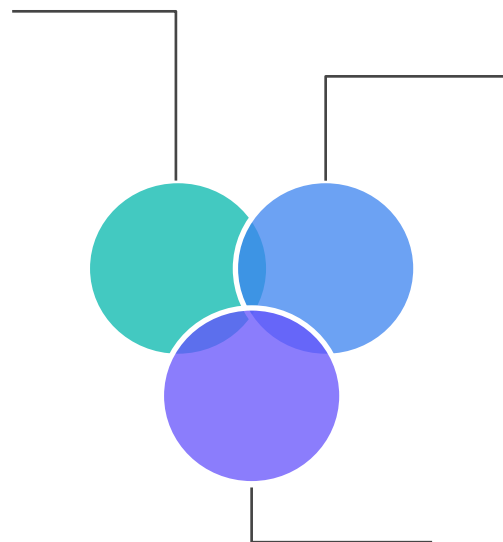
METHODOLOGY & SAMPLE



METHODOLOGY

Research design

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



Sample

- About 1/2 of target population participated (**N = 123**)

Data collection

- January - February 2025

**company size measured by employee headcount*

HR BAROMETER SURVEY

1

PRIORITY & MASTERY HR PRACTICES

Looking back at the past year (2024), HR leaders indicate the **priority** of 25 HR practices and how well they **master** these practices.

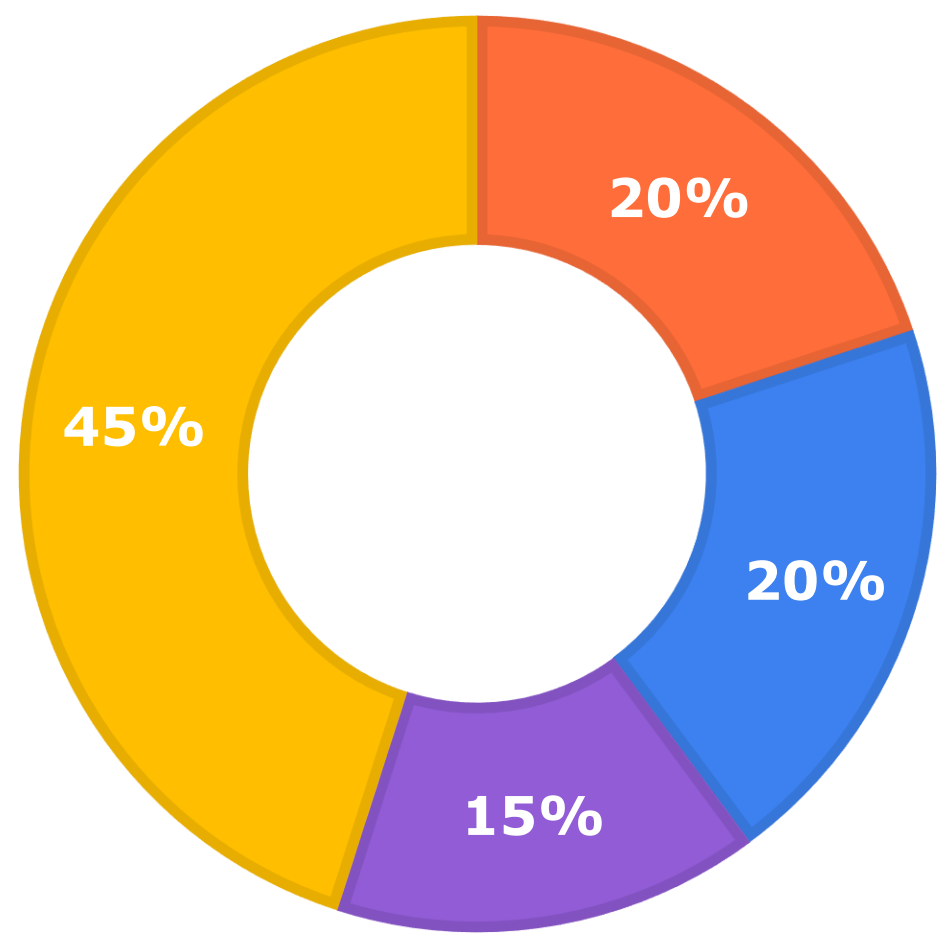
2

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN HR

Each year, we look into a specific HR practice that is gaining momentum, which this year is **artificial intelligence (AI) in HR**.

SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

A. Number of employees in Belgium

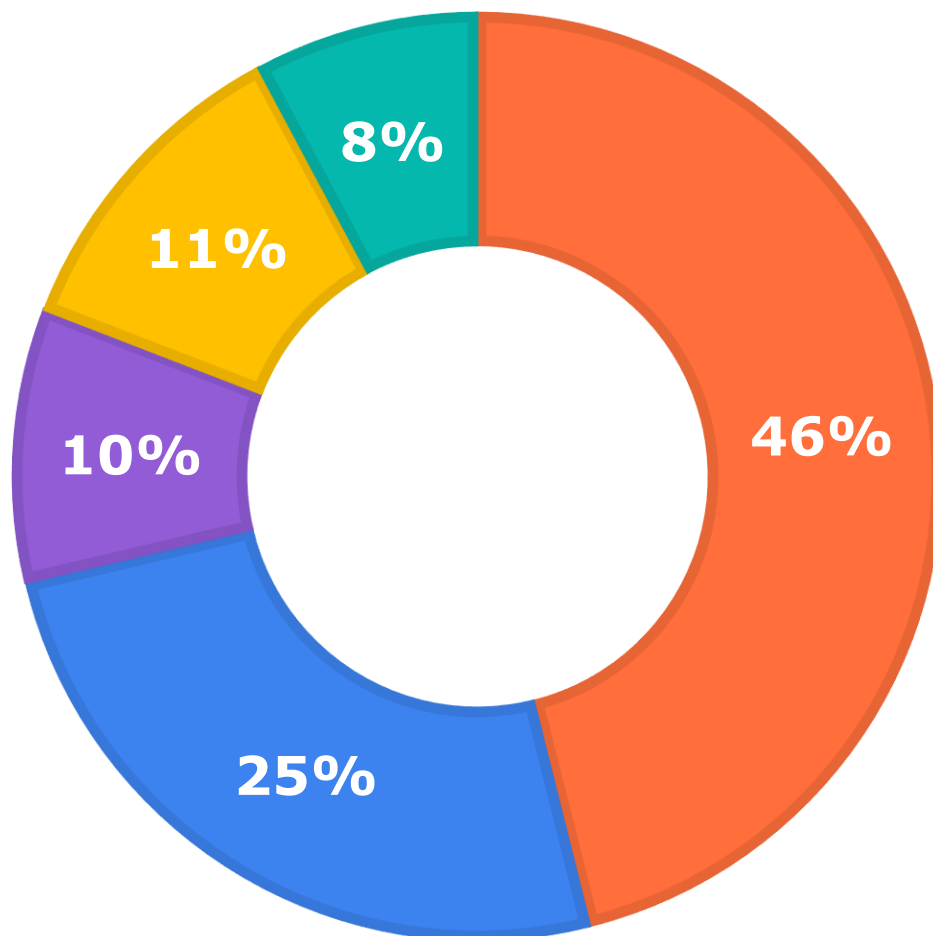


- < 1.000 employees
- 1.000 - 1.500 employees
- 1.501 - 2.000 employees
- > 2.000 employees

Total number of employees represented by all organisations in sample: > **420.000**

SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

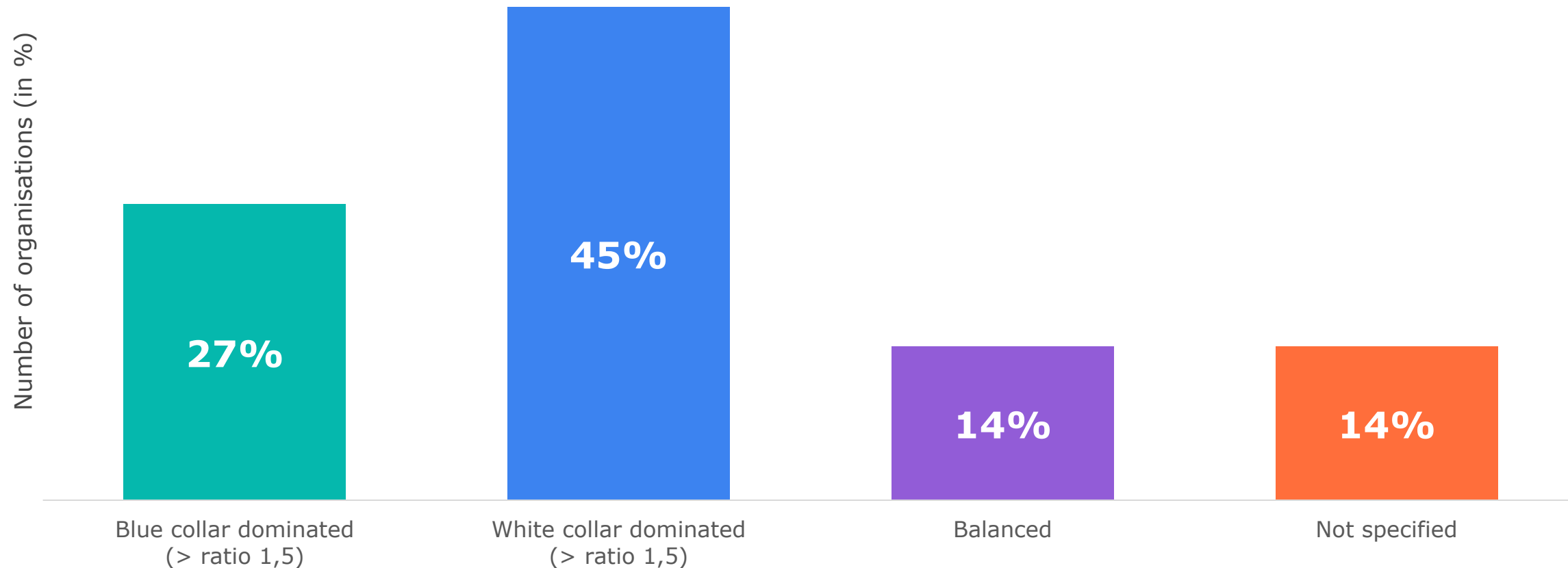
B. Number of employees internationally



- < 5.000 employees
- 5.000 - 25.000 employees
- 25.001 - 50.000 employees
- 50.001 - 150.000 employees
- > 150.000 employees

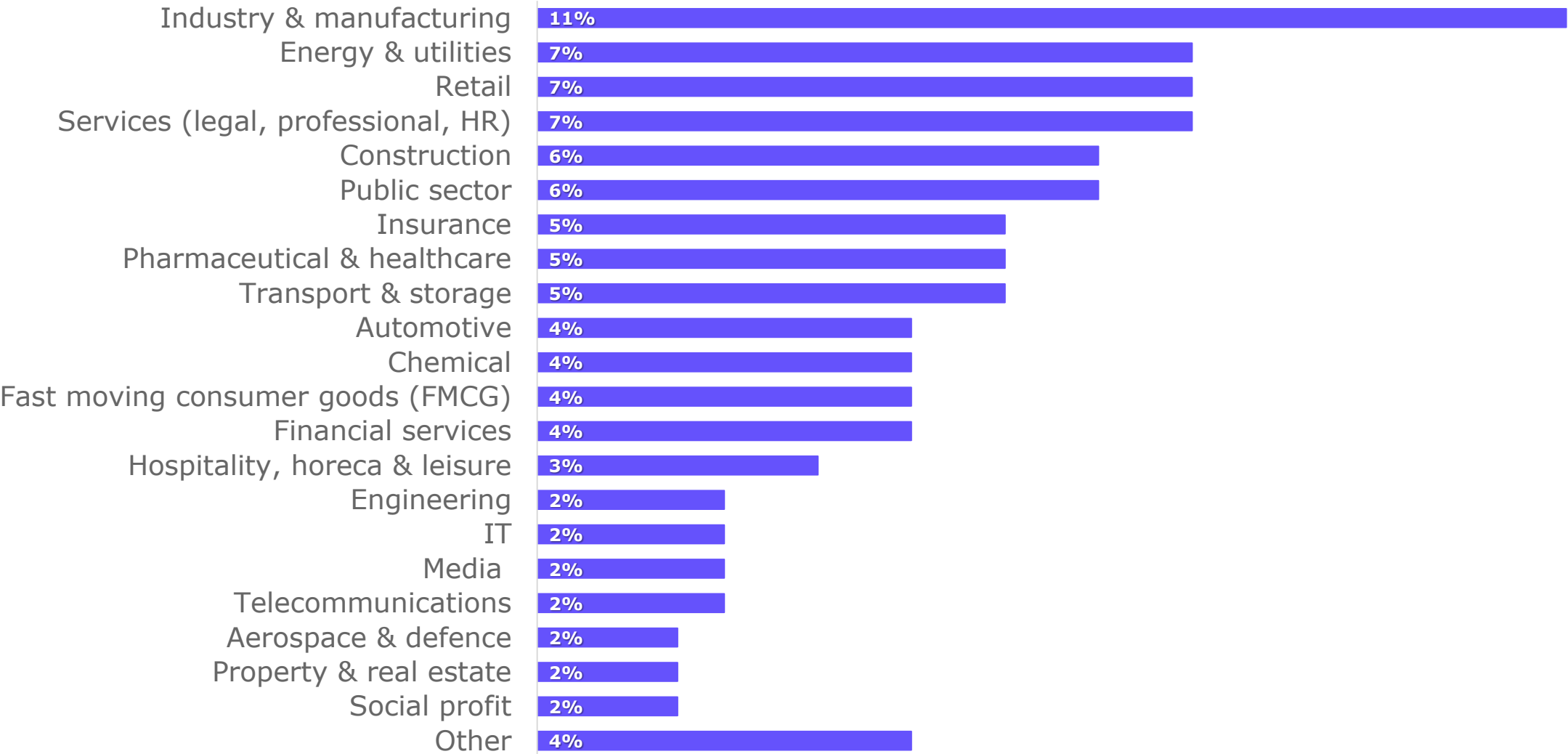
SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

C. Proportion of blue & white collar employees



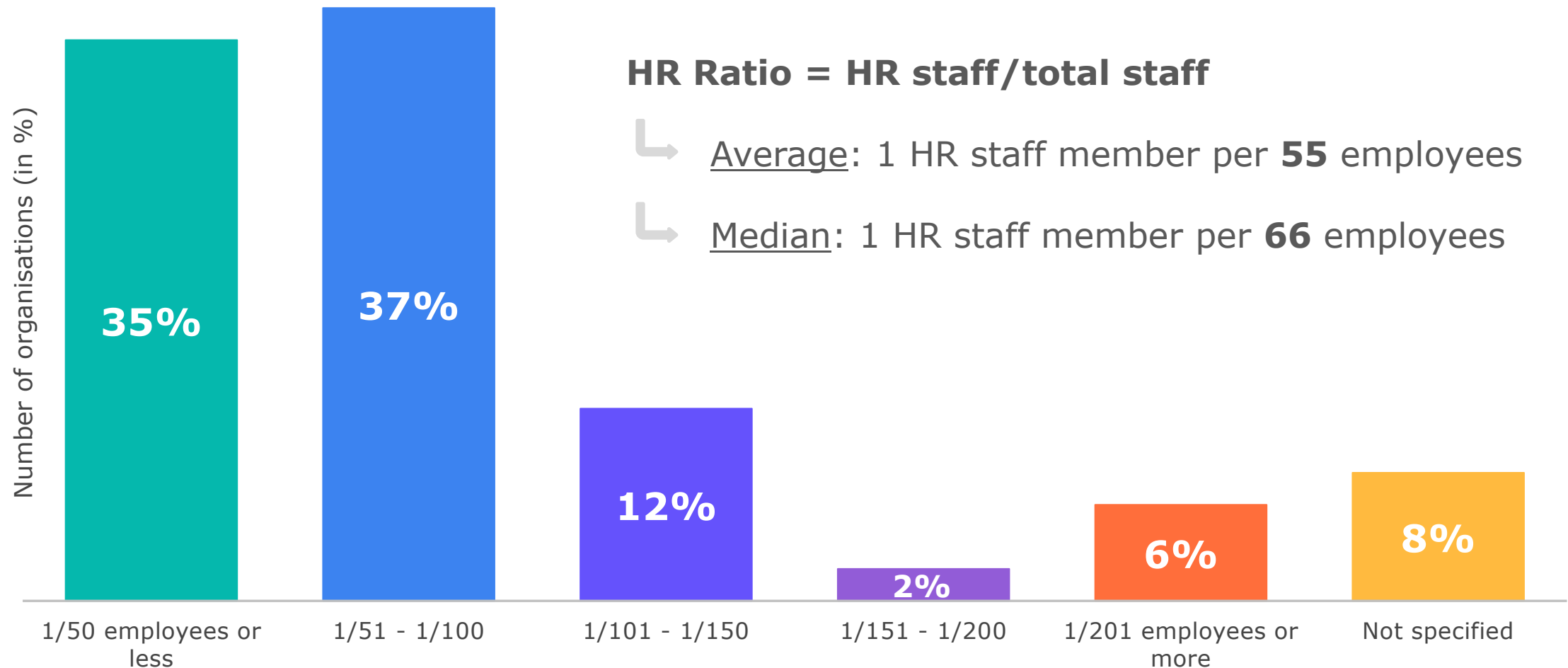
SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

D. Sector



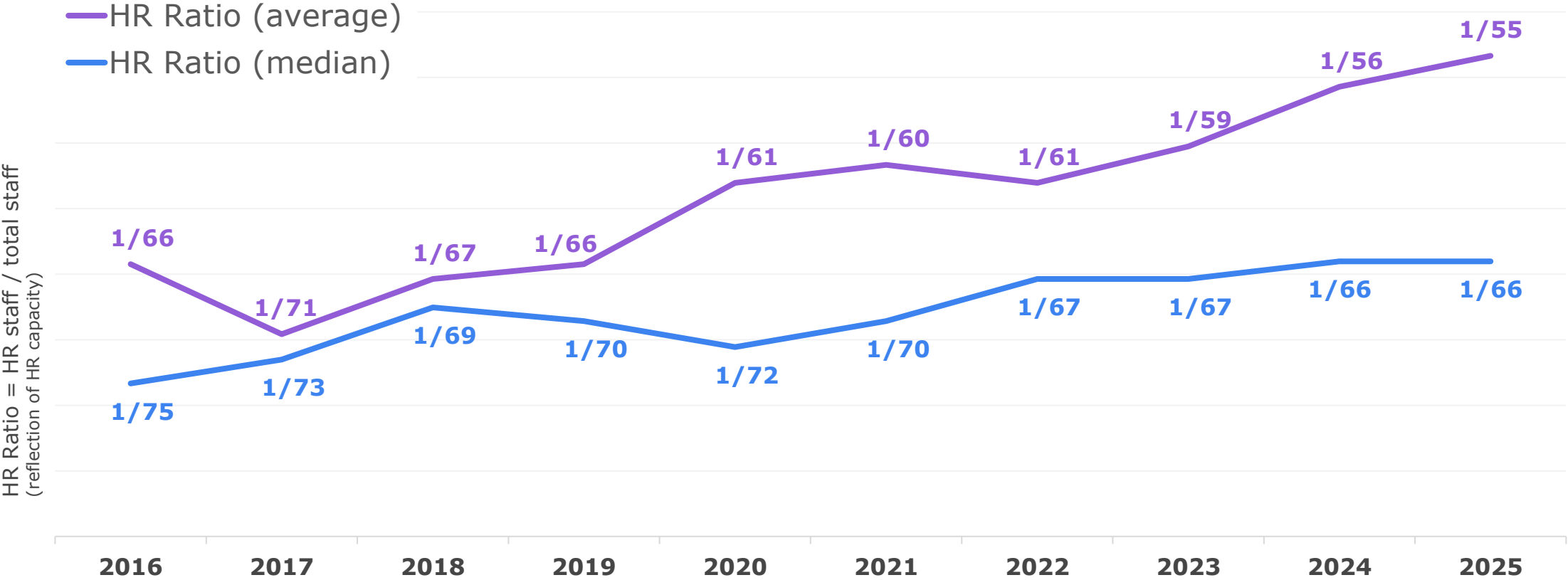
SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

E. Ratio of HR staff to employees



EVOLUTION OF HR RATIO OVER TIME

HR BAROMETER 2016-2025



02

HR BAROMETER RESULTS 2025





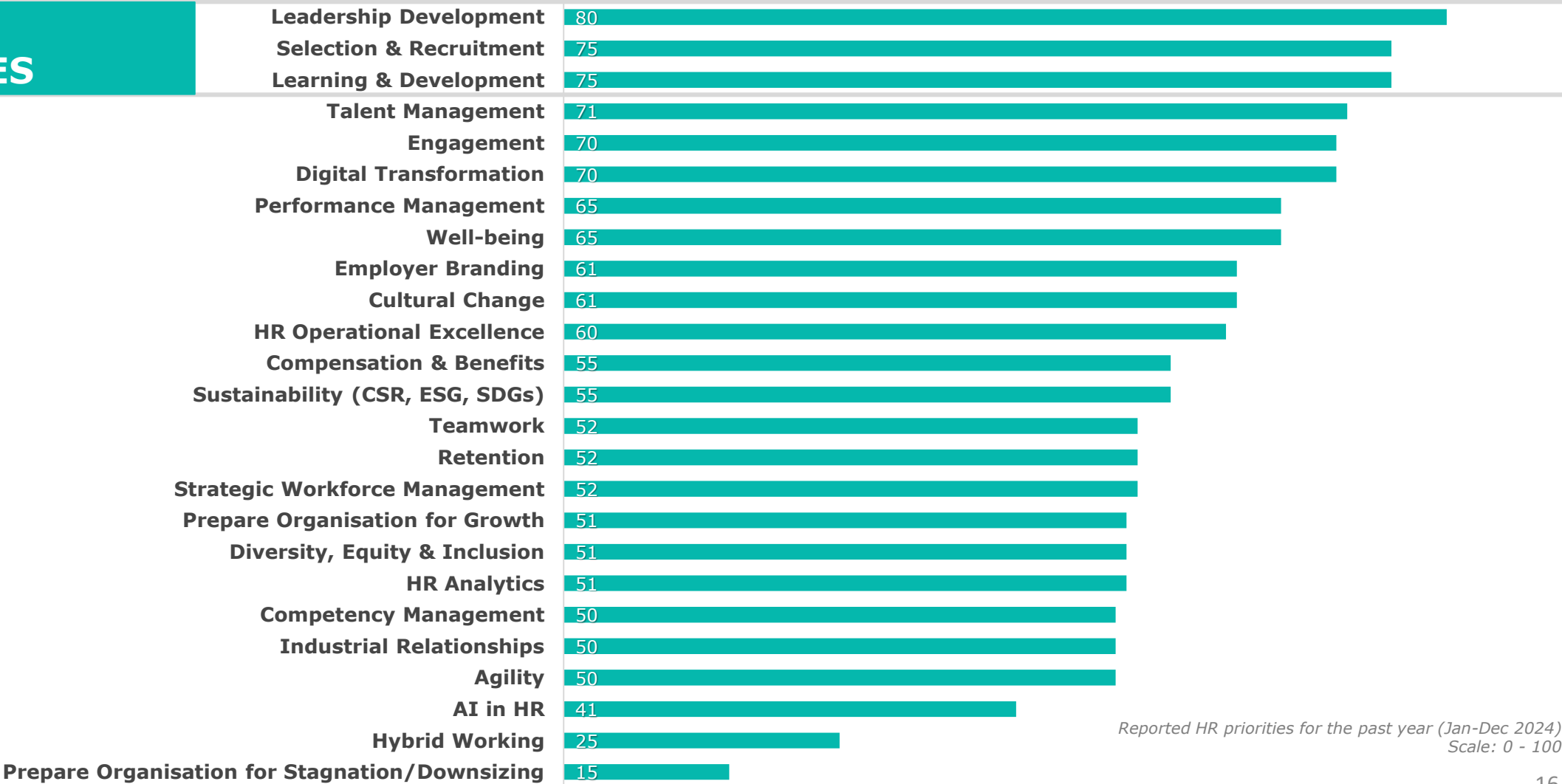
I.

HR BAROMETER 2025 PRIORITIES

HR BAROMETER 2025: PRIORITIES

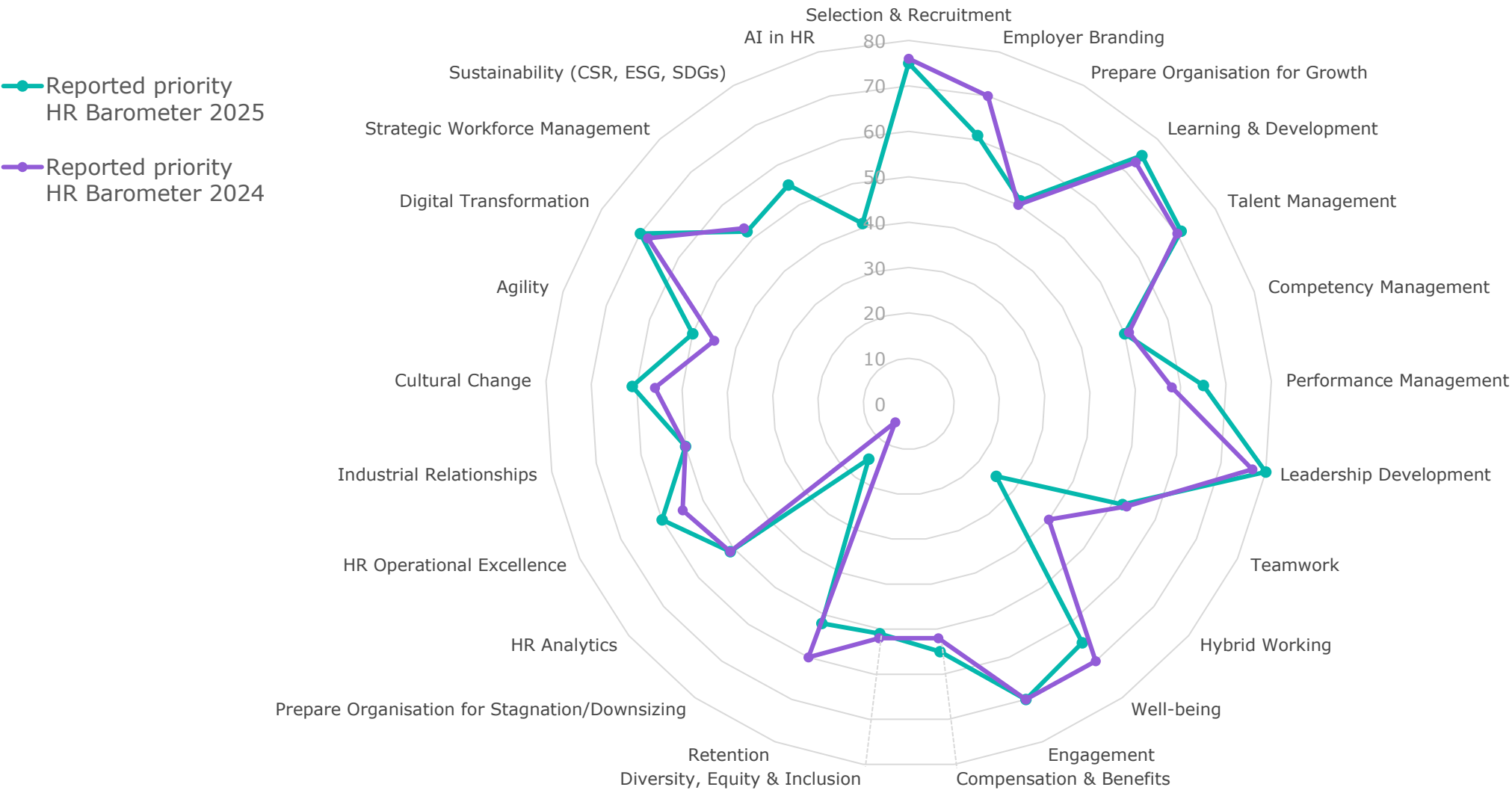
"Looking back at the past 12 months (Jan-Dec 2024), please indicate the **priority level** for each HR domain"

TOP 3 PRIORITIES



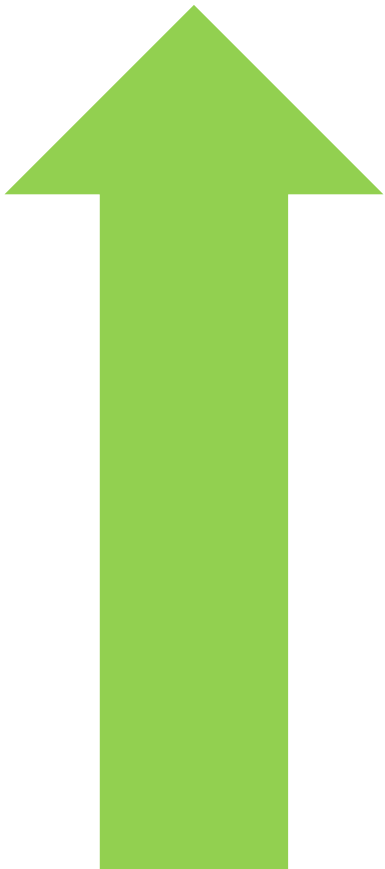
TRENDS IN HR PRIORITIES

HR BAROMETER 2025 versus 2024



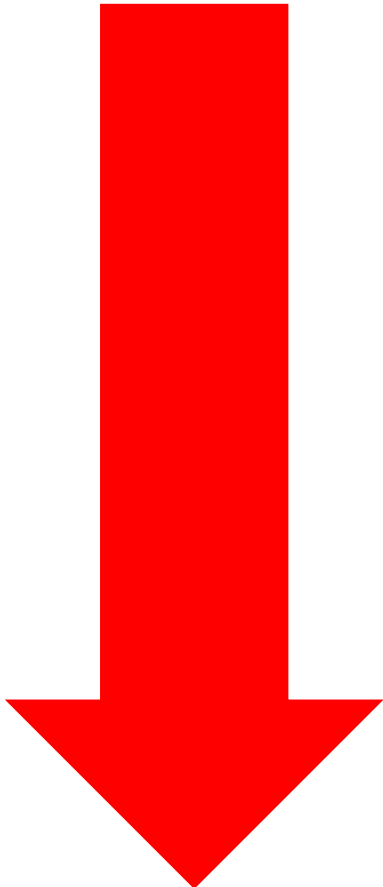
TRENDS IN HR PRIORITIES

HR BAROMETER 2025 versus 2024



Prepare Organisation for Stagnation/Downsizing	+10
Performance Management	+7
HR Operational Excellence	+5
Cultural Change	+5
Agility	+5
Leadership Development	+3
Compensation & Benefits	+3
Learning & Development	+2
Digital Transformation	+2
Prepare Organisation for Growth	+1
Talent Management	+1

Hybrid Working	-15
Employer Branding	-9
Retention	-8
Well-being	-5
Selection & Recruitment	-1
Diversity, Equity & Inclusion	-1
Strategic Workforce Management	-1
Competency Management	-1
Teamwork	-1



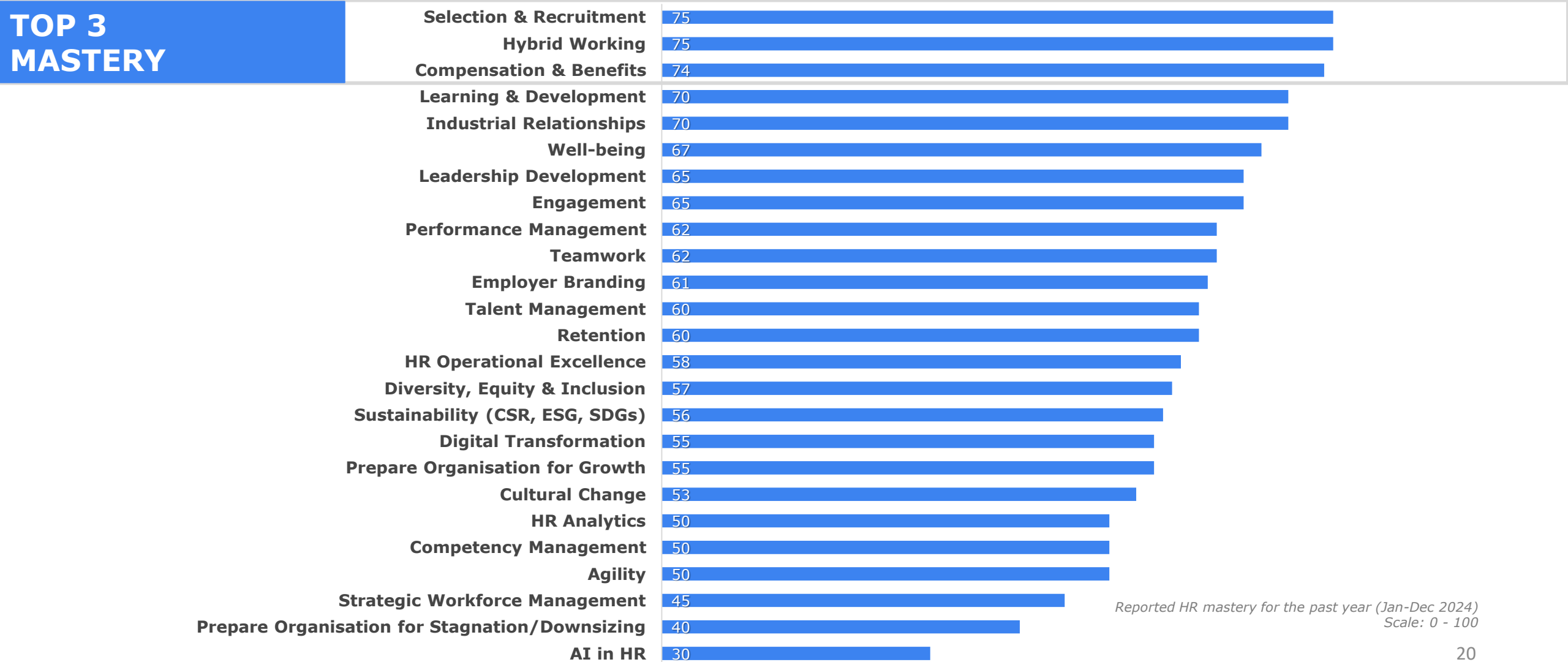


II.

HR BAROMETER 2025 MASTERY

HR BAROMETER 2025: PERCEIVED MASTERY

"Looking back at the past 12 months (Jan-Dec 2024), please indicate *how well you master* each HR domain"

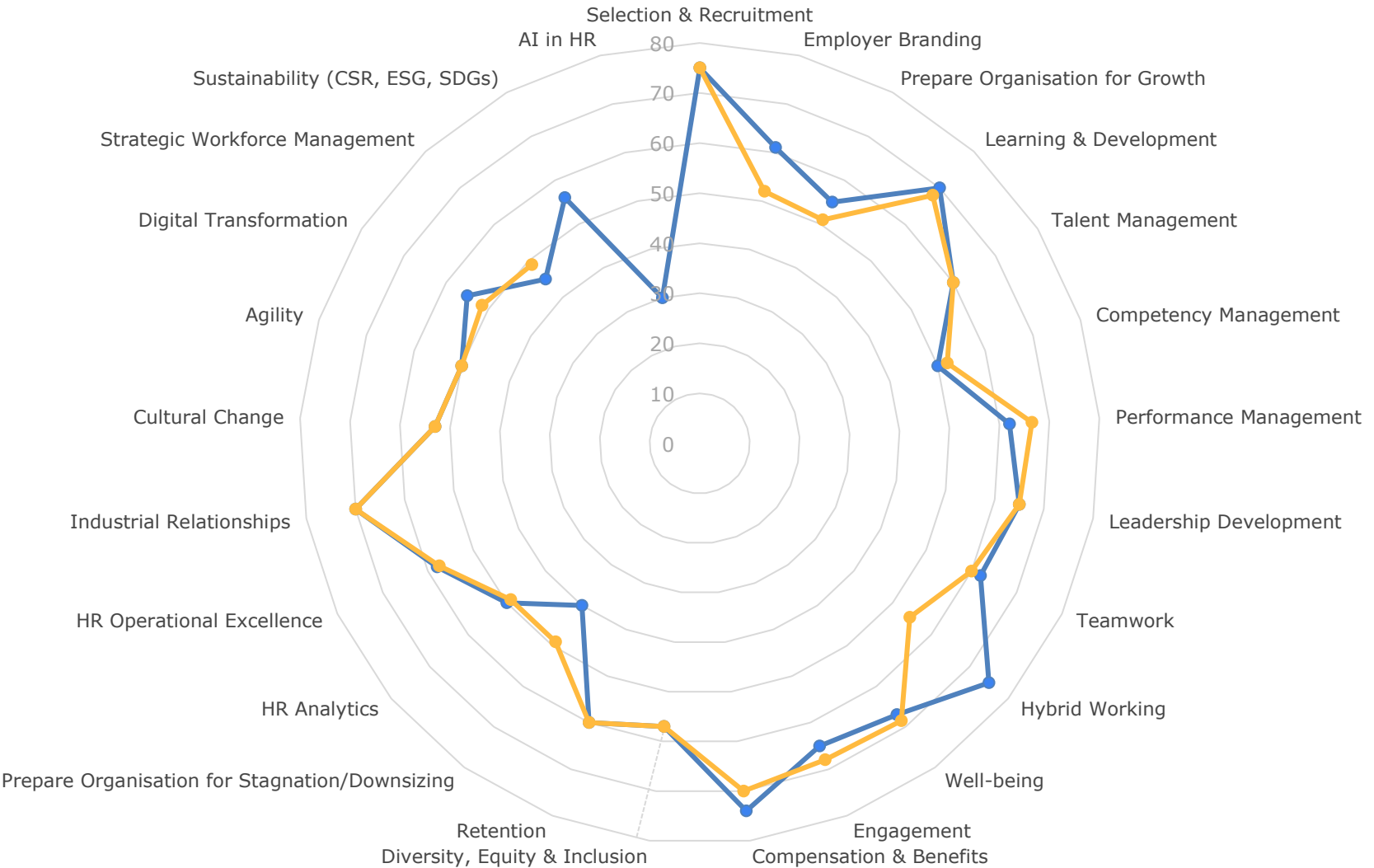


TRENDS IN HR MASTERY

HR BAROMETER 2025 versus 2024

Reported mastery
HR Barometer 2025

Reported mastery
HR Barometer 2024



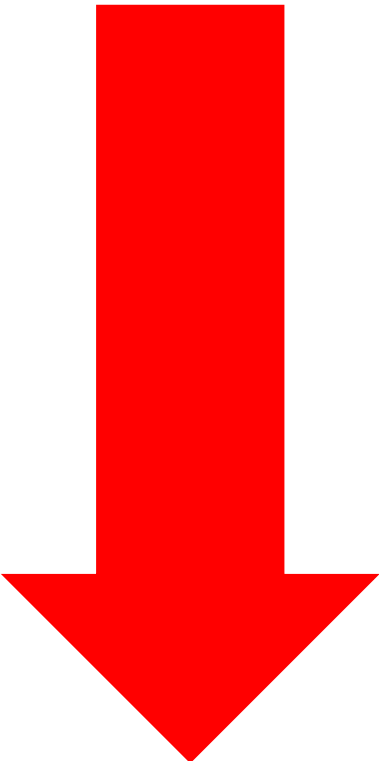
TRENDS IN HR MASTERY

HR BAROMETER 2025 versus 2024



Hybrid Working	+20
Employer Branding	+9
Prepare Organisation for Growth	+4
Compensation & Benefits	+4
Digital Transformation	+3
Learning & Development	+2
Teamwork	+2
HR Analytics	+1

Prepare Organisation for Stagnation/Downsizing	-9
Performance Management	-5
Strategic Workforce Management	-4
Engagement	-3
Competency Management	-2
Well-being	-2

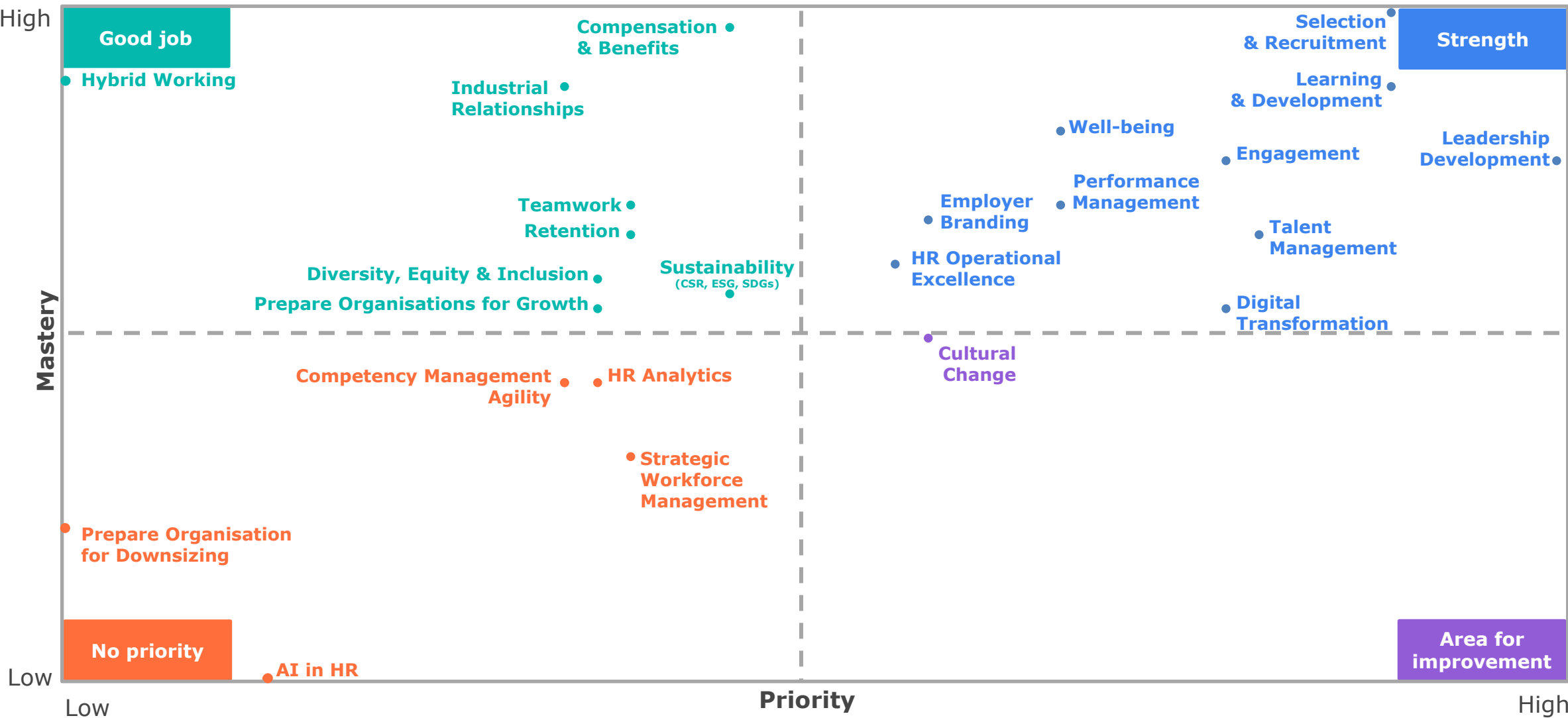


III.

**HR BAROMETER 2025
PRIORITY VS. MASTERY**



HR BAROMETER 2025: PRIORITY x MASTERY



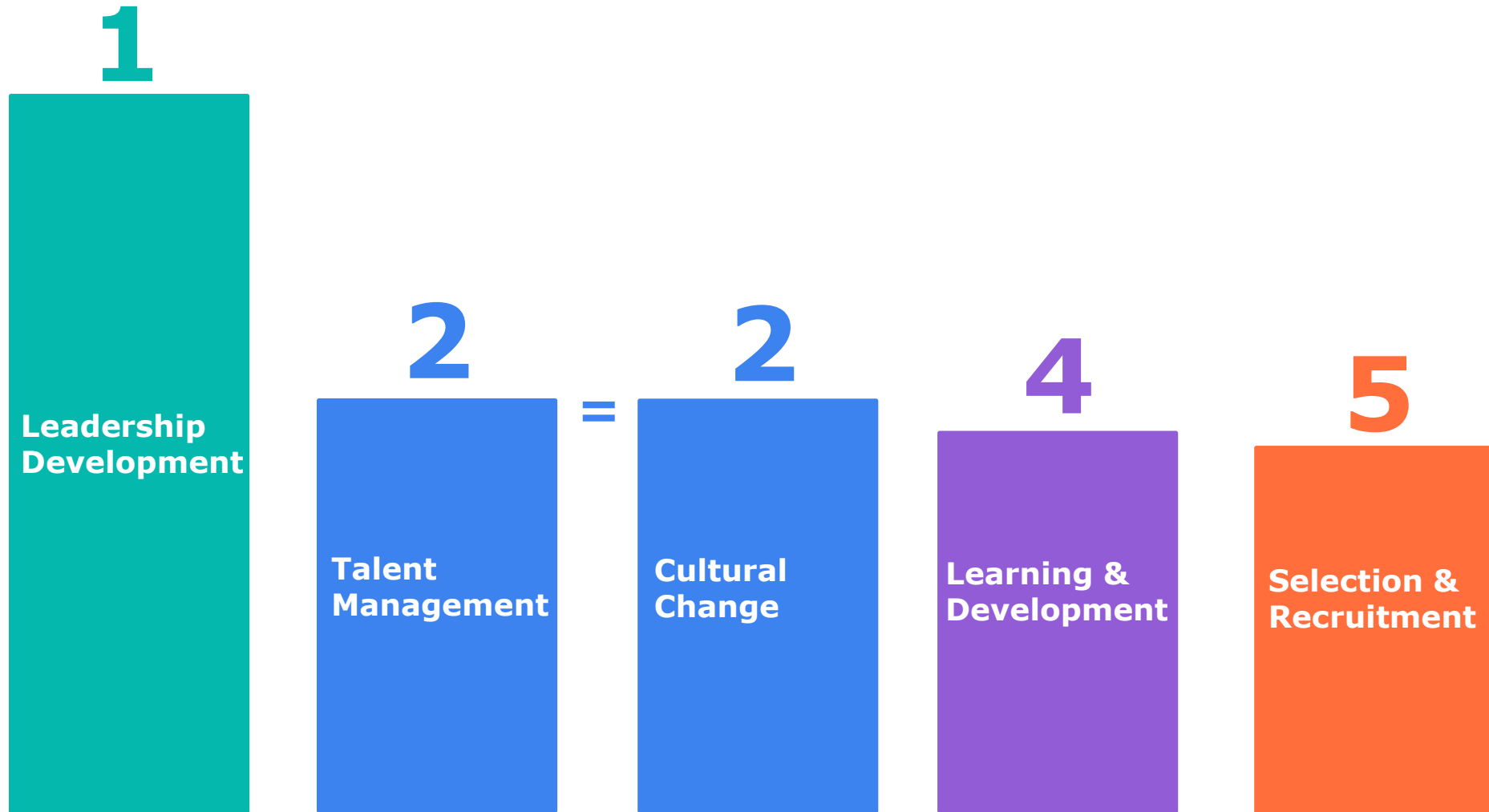


IV.

**HR BAROMETER 2025
PRIORITIES FOR THIS YEAR**

PLANNED PRIORITIES FOR 2025

*"Please indicate your **TOP 5 HR priorities** for 2025"*



A person in a dark suit is shown from the chest up, with their hand near their chin in a thoughtful pose. The image is heavily layered with semi-transparent digital graphics, including various charts, graphs, and data visualizations. A prominent purple rectangular box is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing white text. The background is a light, hazy grey.

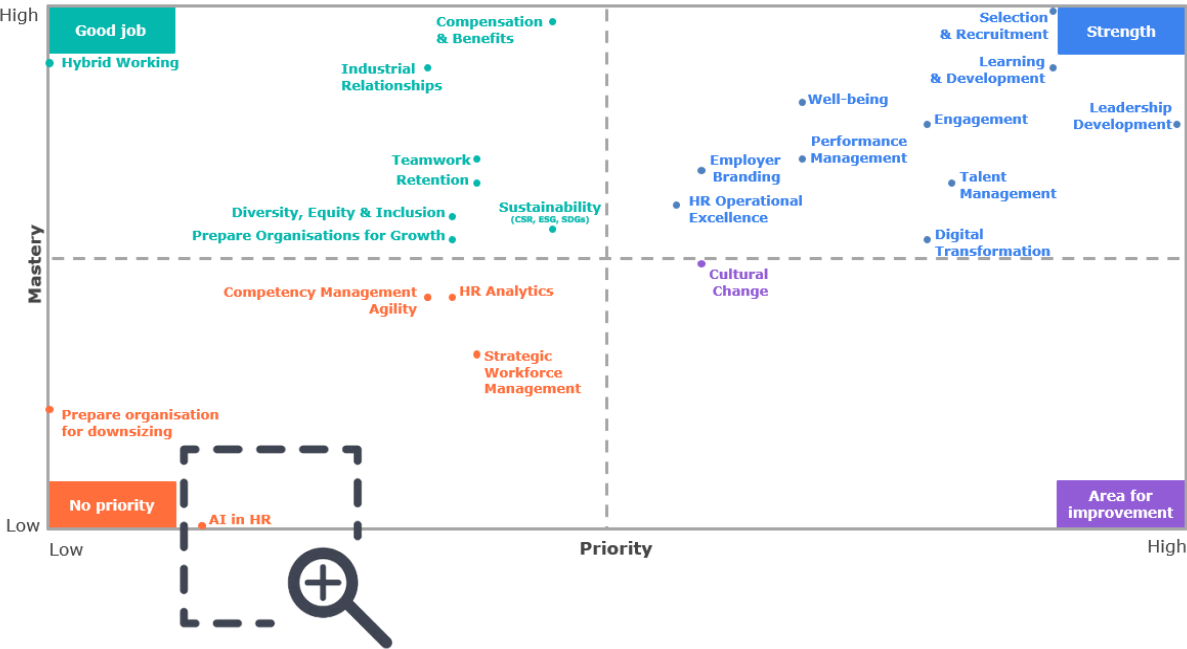
03

**SPOTLIGHT ON
ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) IN HR**

PRIORITY OF AI IN HR

Looking back at the past year (2024), HR leaders indicate AI in HR as a **'no priority'** HR domain.

Also, in the planned priorities for 2025, AI does not seem to be a priority compared with other HR domains.



**'AI in HR' in place 21*
on the priority list**

**out of 25*

Yet, in 2024, AI in HR was the **n°1 requested HR theme** to spotlight in this edition of the HR Barometer.

OVERALL AI SENTIMENT

"The current attention given to AI is overrated"

7%

% of HR Directors that agree or strongly agree

"AI will soon overrule human intelligence"

16%

% of HR Directors that agree or strongly agree

SPOTLIGHT ON AI IN HR

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**SPOTLIGHT ON
ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) IN HR**

I. AI WITHIN THE ORGANISATION

II. AI WITHIN HR

III. AI AND THE HR DIRECTOR

I. AI WITHIN THE ORGANISATION



CORPORATE PERSPECTIVE ON AI

"In my organisation, it is a strategic decision to embrace AI and implement it company-wide"

agree / strongly agree

57%

neutral

29%

disagree / strongly disagree

13%

% of HR Directors

32

AI USE BY BUSINESS AREA

HR versus other business areas

To what extent is AI currently used in the following business areas?



Average score indicated by HR Directors on a 5-point scale (1 = not at all, 5 = to a very large extent)

AI USE BY BUSINESS AREA

Business areas with most and least extensive AI use

Business area with
most extensive AI use

IT

30% of HR Directors indicate that AI is used to a (very) large extent in IT

Business area with
least extensive AI use

HR

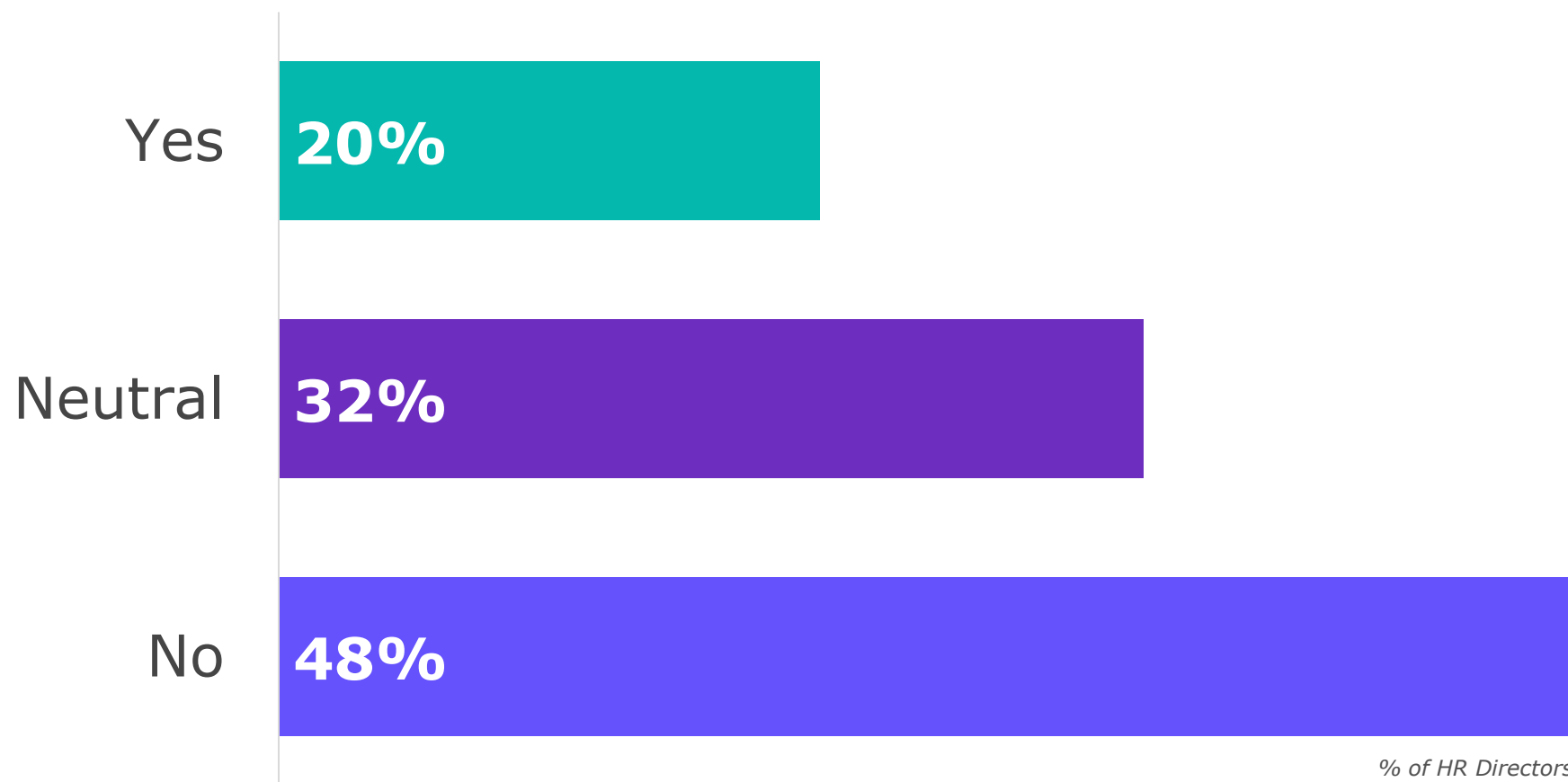
59% of HR Directors indicate that AI is used to no or little extent in HR

"In my organisation, AI adoption is too slow"

58% of HR Directors (strongly) agree that AI adoption is happening too slowly in their organisation

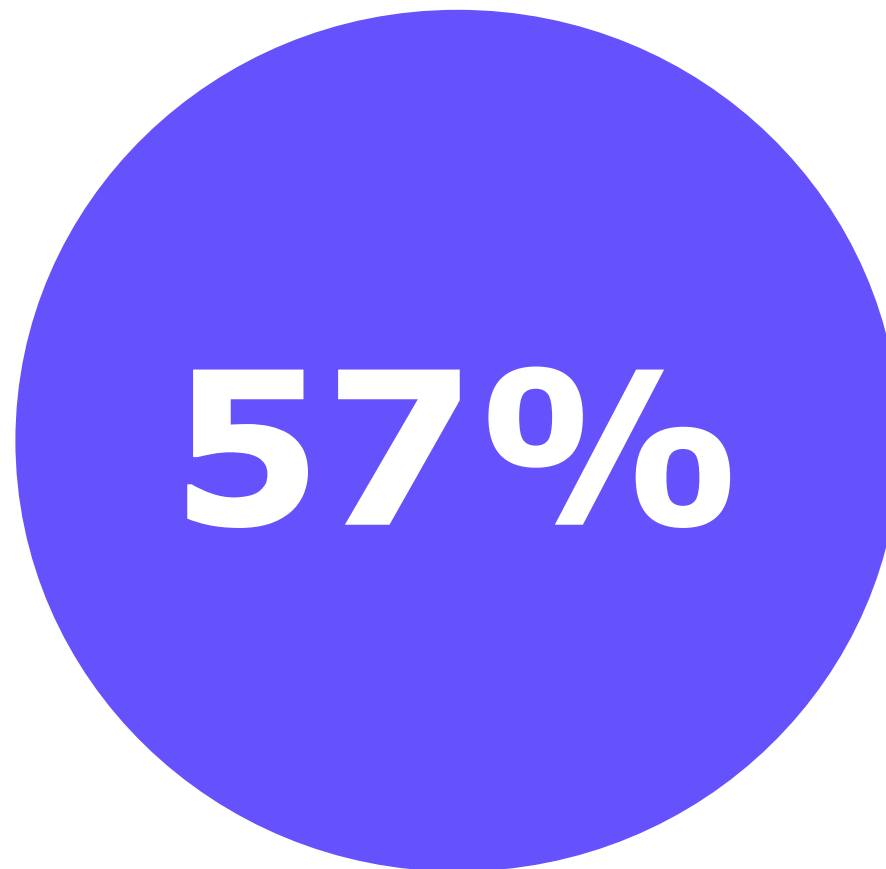
ESTIMATED IMPACT OF AI ON JOBS

Will the use of AI lead to job losses in your organisation?



AI BUDGET

"In my organisation, we have a separate budget for AI projects"



% of HR Directors that agree or strongly agree

CORPORATE POLICY ON GENERATIVE AI

"In my organisation, the use of free GenAI tools (such as ChatGPT) is allowed"

56%

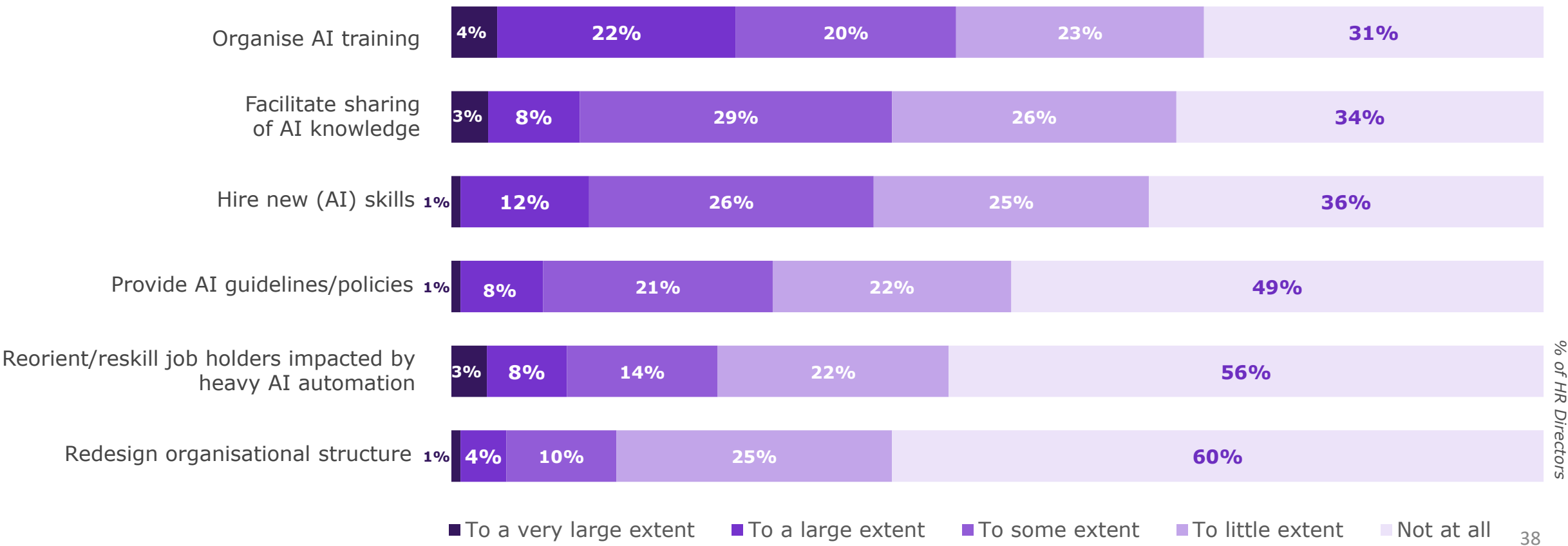
of HR Directors indicate
that free GenAI tools are
allowed

31%

of HR Directors
indicate that free
GenAI tools are
not allowed

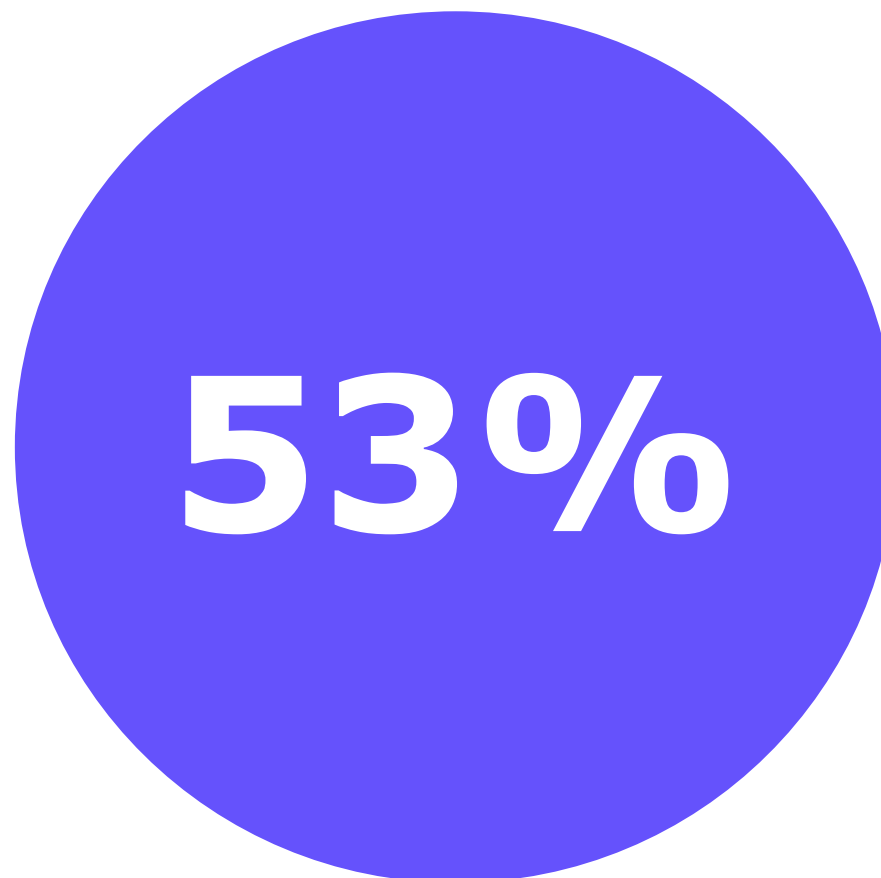
FACILITATING ROLE OF HR IN THE ORGANISATION

To what extent is HR facilitating the use of AI across business areas through concrete actions?



TRAINING OFFER FOR GENERATIVE AI PROMPTING

"In my organisation, we offer training in prompting for GenAI"



% of HR Directors that agree or strongly agree



II. AI WITHIN HR

AI STRATEGY WITHIN HR

Which statement best describes the AI strategy within your HR department?

% of HR Directors choosing a certain statement

0%
"We decided **not to use AI** in HR"

24%
"We **lack a strategy** on the use of AI in HR"

14%
"We are **waiting** to know more about AI technology before using AI in HR"

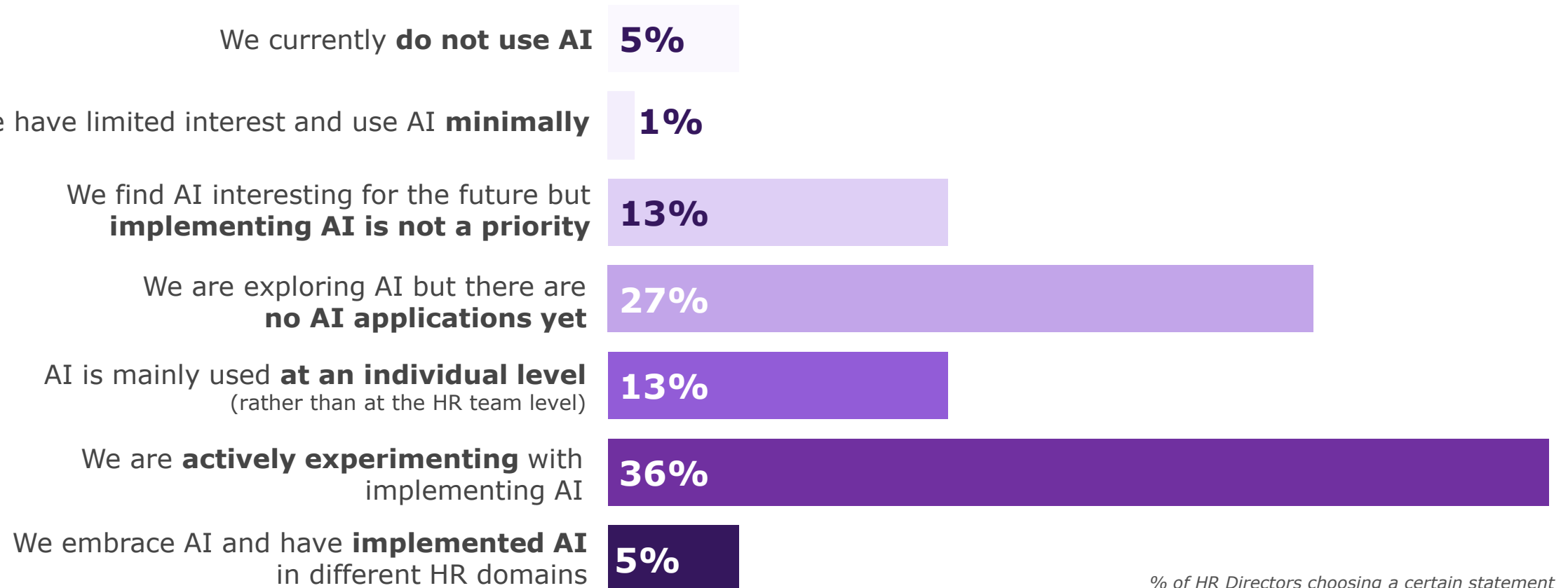
14%
"We use AI in only a **few admin HR processes**"

45%
"We are **gradually introducing** AI in HR"

3%
"We are going for the **full integration** of AI in HR"

CURRENT USE OF AI IN HR

How does your HR department currently use AI?



DRIVERS OF AI ADOPTION IN HR

What drives AI adoption in your HR department?

**Employee
Experience 67%**

Time Saving 62%

**Productivity
Increase 59%**

**Quality
Enhancement 54%**

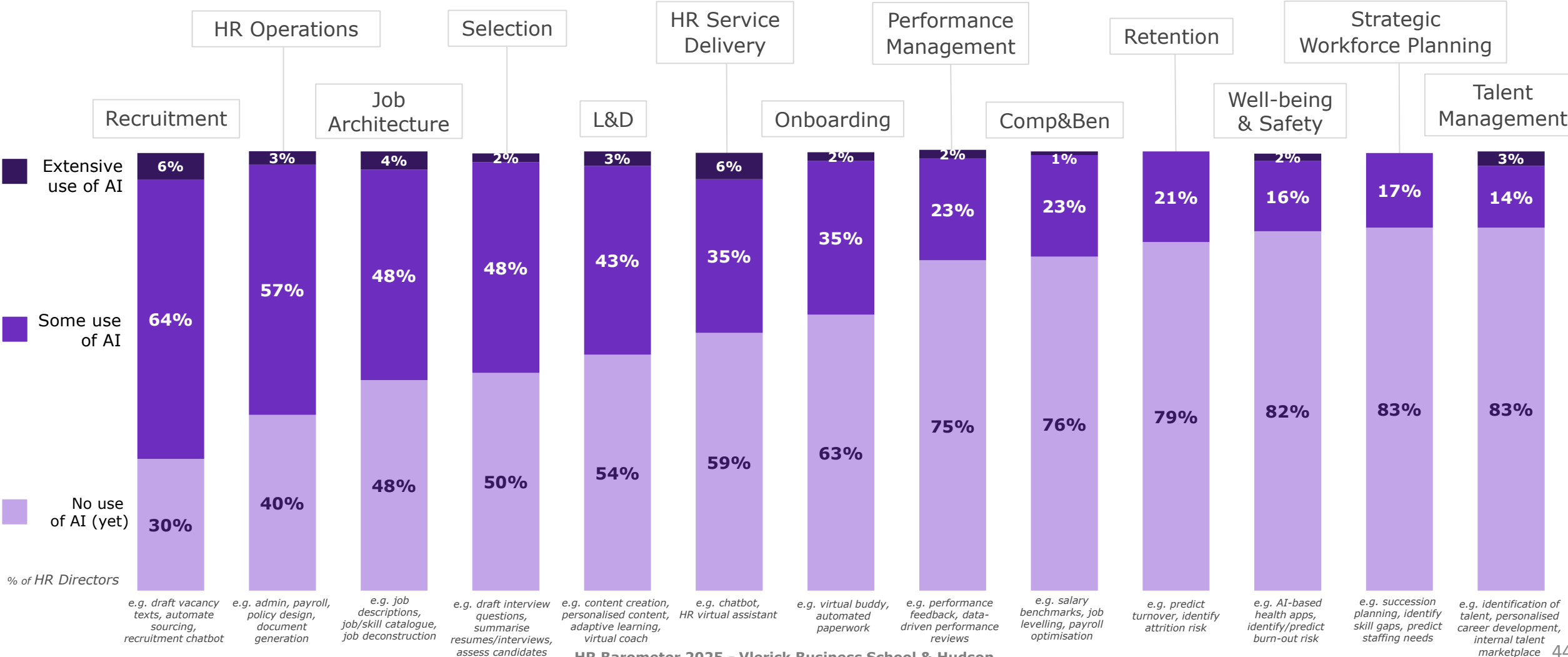
Innovation 50%

Cost Optimisation 44%

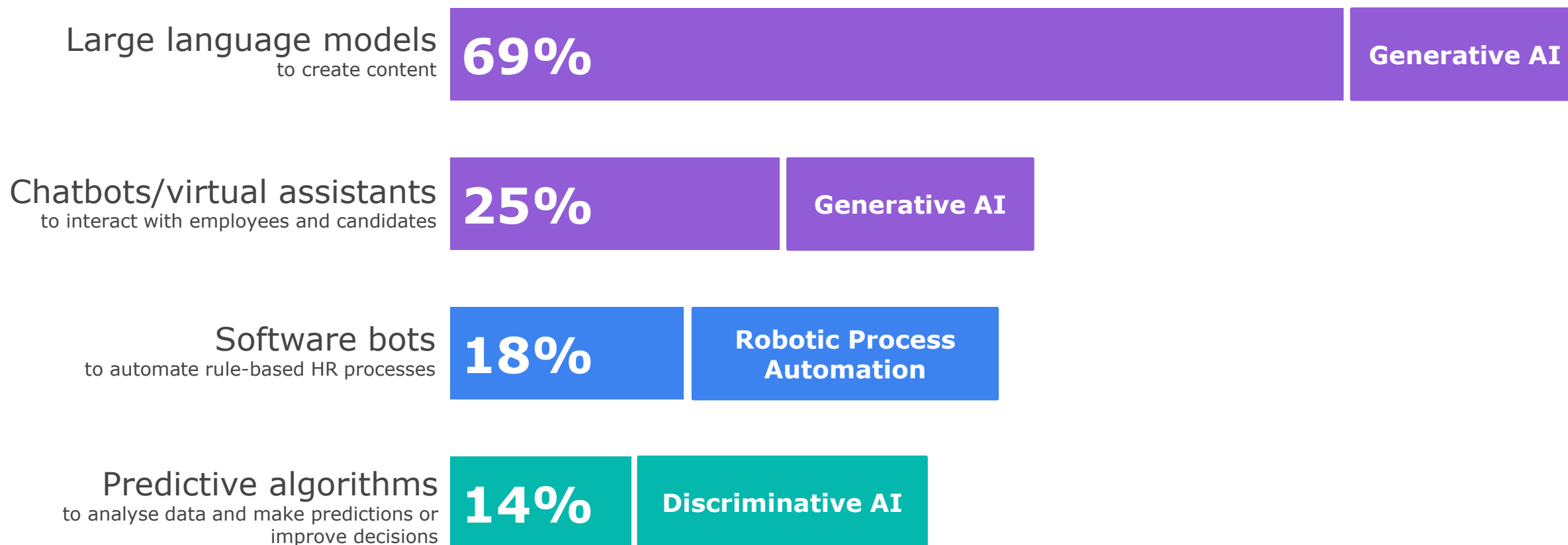
% of HR Directors that indicate something is driving AI adoption to a large or very large extent

AI ADOPTION ACROSS HR DOMAINS

To what extent is AI currently used in the following HR domains?



ADOPTION OF DIFFERENT AI TECHNOLOGIES - OVERVIEW



% of HR Directors stating to use AI to some or a large extent

ADOPTION OF DIFFERENT AI TECHNOLOGIES - DETAILS

Large Language Models

*To what extent does your HR department use **language models** (such as ChatGPT or Copilot) to create content?*



% of HR Directors

e.g. draft/improve a vacancy text, create videos, create images, etc.

ADOPTION OF DIFFERENT AI TECHNOLOGIES - DETAILS

Chatbots

*To what extent does your HR department use **chatbots and virtual assistants to interact** with employees/candidates?*



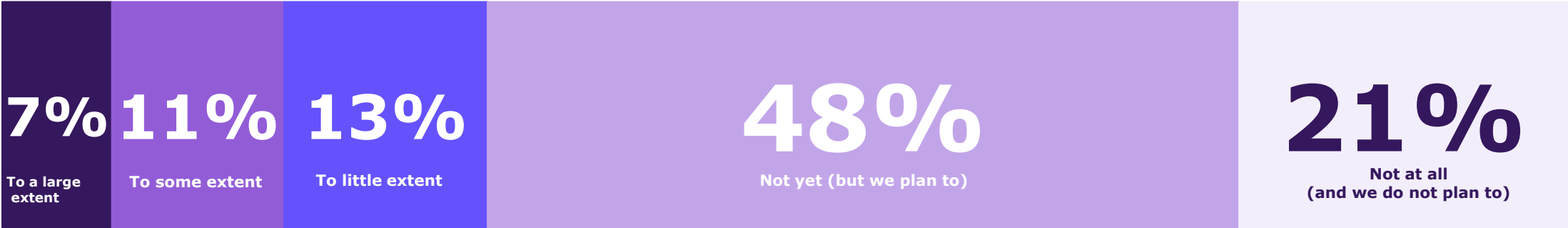
% of HR Directors

e.g. automate employee queries

ADOPTION OF DIFFERENT AI TECHNOLOGIES - DETAILS

Software Bots

*To what extent does your HR department use **bots** to automate rule-based HR processes?*



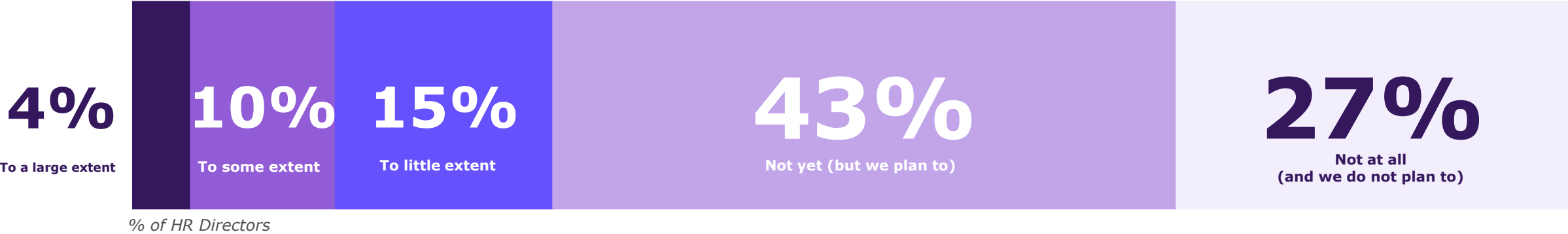
% of HR Directors

e.g. automate data entry, document screening in software systems, etc.

ADOPTION OF DIFFERENT AI TECHNOLOGIES - DETAILS

Predictive Algorithms

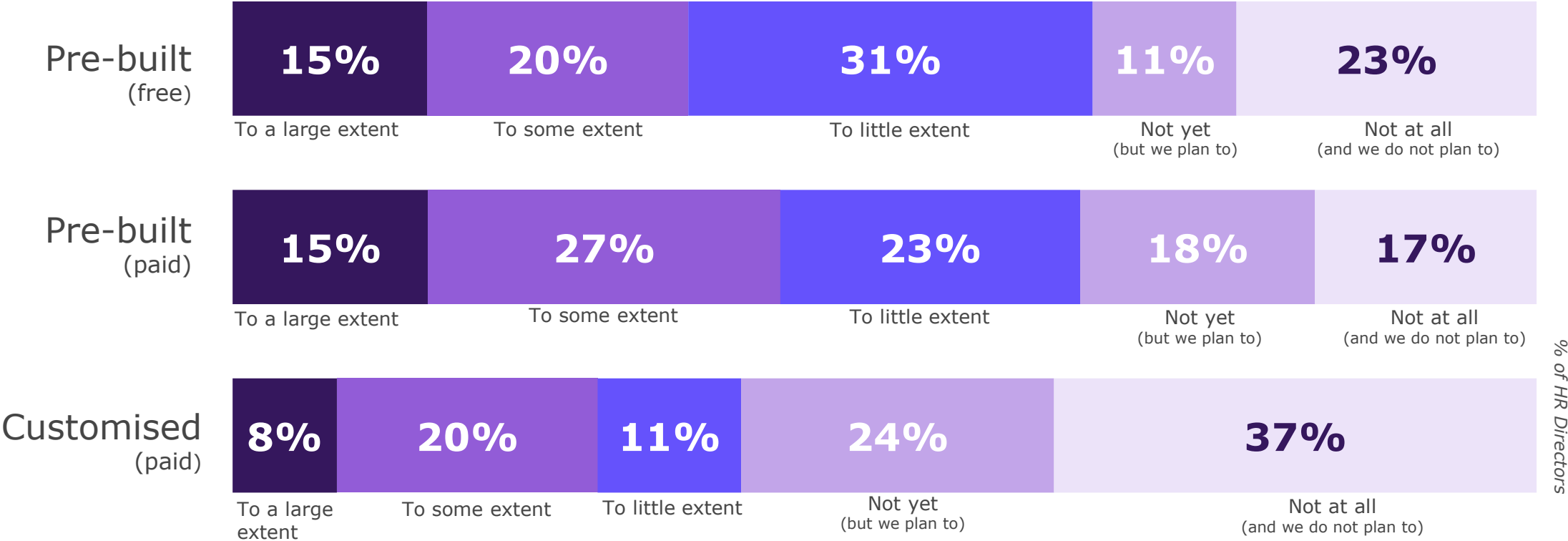
*To what extent does your HR department use **algorithms to analyse existing data and make predictions** or improve HR decisions*



e.g. analyse resumes, predict employee performance, predict turnover, etc.

PRE-BUILT VERSUS CUSTOMISED SOLUTIONS

To what extent does your HR department use pre-built and/or customised AI solutions?



TOP 10 CHALLENGES FOR HR TO ADOPT AI

1
**Expertise
within HR**

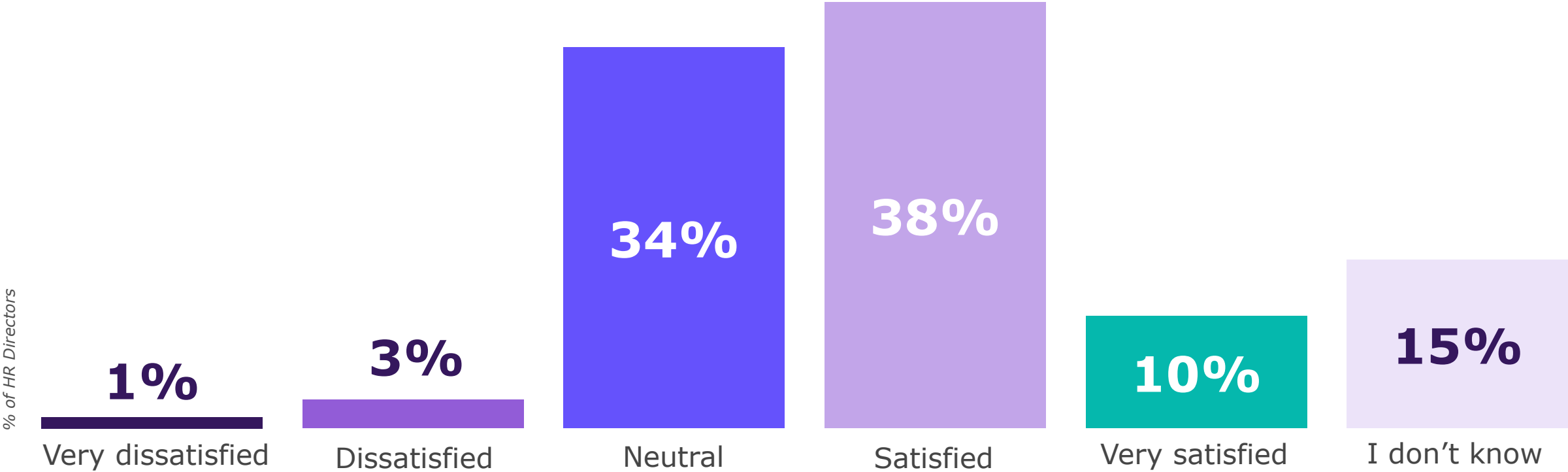
2
**Resources
(budget/time)**

3
Data quality

4 Regulation & compliance (GDPR, EU AI Act)
5 Ethical concerns
6 Quality of AI tools
7 AI infrastructure
8 Buy-in from HR employees
9 Cybersecurity
10 Trust in AI

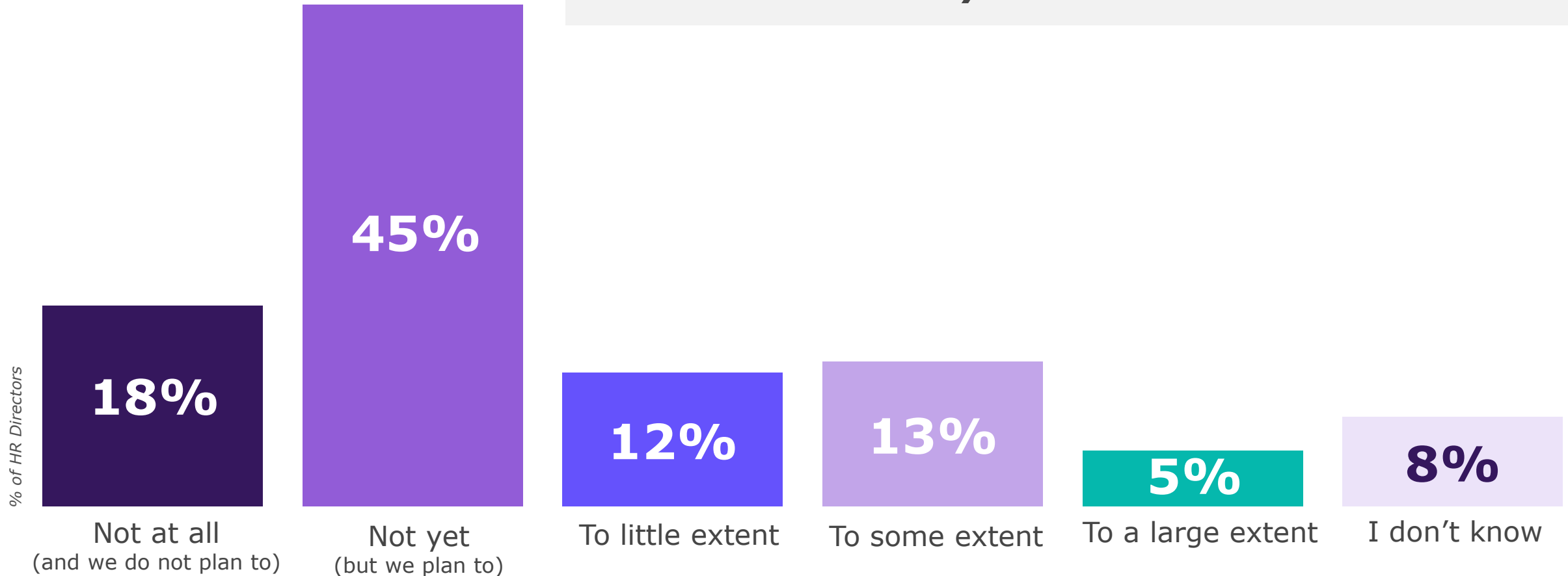
SATISFACTION WITH AI

In general, how satisfied are you with the outcomes of AI across different HR domains?



RETURN ON INVESTMENT OF AI IN HR

To what extent do you measure the ROI of AI in HR?



AI AS COST SAVER AND/OR VALUE CREATOR?

*"AI has led to significant
cost saving"*

Yes	5%
To some extent	24%
No	50%
I don't know	22%

*"AI has led to significant
value creation"*

Yes	19%
To some extent	29%
No	34%
I don't know	18%

A black and white photograph of a person in a suit holding a tablet. The tablet screen displays a bar chart with several bars of varying heights. The person's hands are visible, holding the tablet from the sides. The background is blurred, showing what appears to be an office or city street scene.

III.

AI AND THE HR DIRECTOR

PERSONAL INTENTION OF HR LEADERS TO INCREASE USE OF AI

"I intend to use more AI in the future"

86%

*of HR Directors indicate
that they intend to
use more AI
as HR leader*

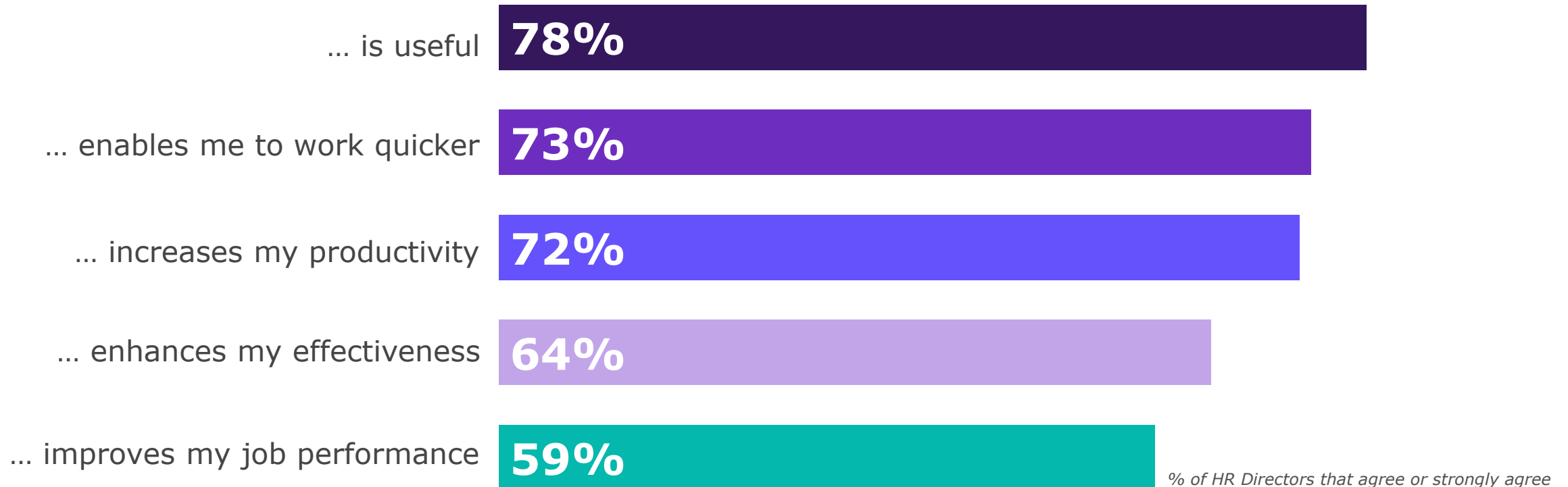
71%

*of HR Directors indicate
that they also
use AI in their
private life*

IMPACT OF AI ON HR DIRECTOR EFFECTIVENESS

To what extent do you agree at a personal level with the following statements about yourself and your role as HR Director?

Using AI in my job as HR Director...



PERSONAL MASTERY OF HR DIRECTORS

% of HR Directors that agree or strongly agree

“I find AI easy to use”

43%

**“It is easy for me to become skilful
at using AI”**

32%

UNDERSTANDING RELATIONS



UNDERSTANDING RELATIONS (1)

1. Corporate perspective on AI & ROI of AI in HR

When HR Directors **believe that their organisation considers embracing AI as a strategic decision**, it is more common that the **ROI** of AI in HR is measured (.260), and that HR Directors report a more positive ROI in terms of cost saving (.353) and value creation (.414).

2. ROI of AI & facilitating role of HR

Indicating a positive ROI of AI in HR in terms of cost saver versus value creator is linked to the **facilitating role of HR** in company-wide AI adoption:

- When **AI** is seen **as a cost saver**, HR's facilitating role is most focused on **reorienting and reskilling people** impacted by AI automation (.328). Offering AI training and growing AI expertise by hiring new AI skills is less important.
- When **AI** is seen **as a value creator**, HR's facilitating role is most focused on **providing guidelines and policies** (.380). **Offering AI training** (.295) and growing AI expertise by **hiring new AI skills** (.256) are also important.

3. Drivers behind AI adoption & expected impact on jobs

Considering **time saving** (.201) and **innovation** (.198) as reasons for AI adoption is linked to the belief that AI will lead to **job loss** in the organisation.

UNDERSTANDING RELATIONS (2)

4. Perceived usefulness by the HR Director & AI use and perspectives

The **perceived usefulness of AI** by HR Directors is associated with:

- Their **intention to use more AI** in the future (.710).
- A **corporate perspective** that embraces AI (.319).
- Reported **satisfaction with outcomes** of AI across HR domains (.564).
- **Use of AI in HR** across all HR domains (except: Operations, Service Delivery, Onboarding & SWP).

5. Use of free AI tools & application of AI in different HR domains

The use of **free AI tools** (such as free versions of ChatGPT) is associated with the use of AI in **Recruitment**.

The use of **paid AI solutions** and customised AI tools is linked to a broad range of different AI applications in **different HR domains**.

6. Use of AI in private & professional context

The **use of AI** by HR Directors in their **private life** is linked to their intention to use more AI their **professional role** (.454).

04

FINAL TAKEAWAYS



TAKEAWAYS: HR PRIORITY & MASTERY

1. Reported **HR Priorities**:

- > Top HR priorities remain largely unchanged: **Leadership Development** remains the N°1 priority, followed by **Selection & Recruitment** and **Learning & Development** (tied for N°2).
- > While **Preparing the organisation for stagnation/downsizing** increased substantially in priority, it remains the lowest priority of all HR domains.

2. Reported **HR Mastery**:

- > Highest mastery scores reported for **Selection & Recruitment & Hybrid Working**, closely followed by **Compensation & Benefits**.
- > Lowest mastery score reported for this year's spotlight theme: **AI in HR**.

3. Changes in priority and mastery show **interdependencies**:

- > **Hybrid Working** and **Employer Branding**: largest decrease in priority, largest increase in mastery.
- > **Preparing for stagnation/downsizing** and **Performance Management**: largest increase in priority, largest decrease in mastery.

4. Overall, HR seems **more confident** about their ability to master HR challenges:

- > Only **Cultural Change** is indicated as an 'area for improvement'.
- > A **higher level of mastery** was indicated for many other HR domains, resulting in more 'strengths' and 'good jobs' (instead of 'areas for improvements' and 'no priorities').

5. Median **HR over total employees** ratio : **1 HR per 66** employees.

TAKEAWAYS: AI IN HR

1. Although AI in HR was **chosen as the spotlight theme** for this HR Barometer, the topic is given a **low priority** and has **the lowest mastery** compared with all other HR domains. Also, AI in HR will not be a high priority for 2025.
2. However, most HR Directors consider the current **attention on AI to be legitimate**. HR Directors are **convinced of the usefulness** of AI in their role as HR leader (78%), with 86% of them planning to increase their professional use.
3. Not a single HR leader indicates a strategic decision not to use AI in their HR department. However, compared with rates in other business areas (such as IT, Customer Service, and Marketing/Sales), **AI adoption is lower in HR** and is taking place **too slowly** according to 58% of HR Directors.
4. Most HR Directors believe in taking a **cautious approach** to AI adoption: 45% decided to go for a gradual introduction of AI in HR. The current state of AI in HR is characterised by **experimentation** (36%), **exploration** (27%) and ad hoc **individual initiatives** (13%).
5. The dominant AI technology in HR is **Language Models** (69%), more than **chatbots** for interaction (25%), **software bots** to automate HR processes (18%) or **algorithms** for data-based decisions (14%).
6. AI is used most extensively in HR in **Recruitment** (70%) and **HR Operations** (60%), while adoption is lowest in **Talent Management** (17%).
7. Nearly half (48%) of HR Directors are **satisfied with the outcomes** of AI in HR, yet only 18% measure its ROI. As ROI, **value creation** (48%) is more common than **cost saving** (29%).
8. Main **challenges** for HR are linked to **a lack of expertise** within HR, **limited resources** and **data quality**.
9. **HR's facilitating role** primarily focuses on organising **AI training** (46%), facilitating **knowledge sharing** (40%), and **hiring** new AI skills (39%).
10. Only 16% of HR leaders believe that AI will soon overrule **human intelligence**, and only 20% believe AI will lead to **job losses** in their organisation.

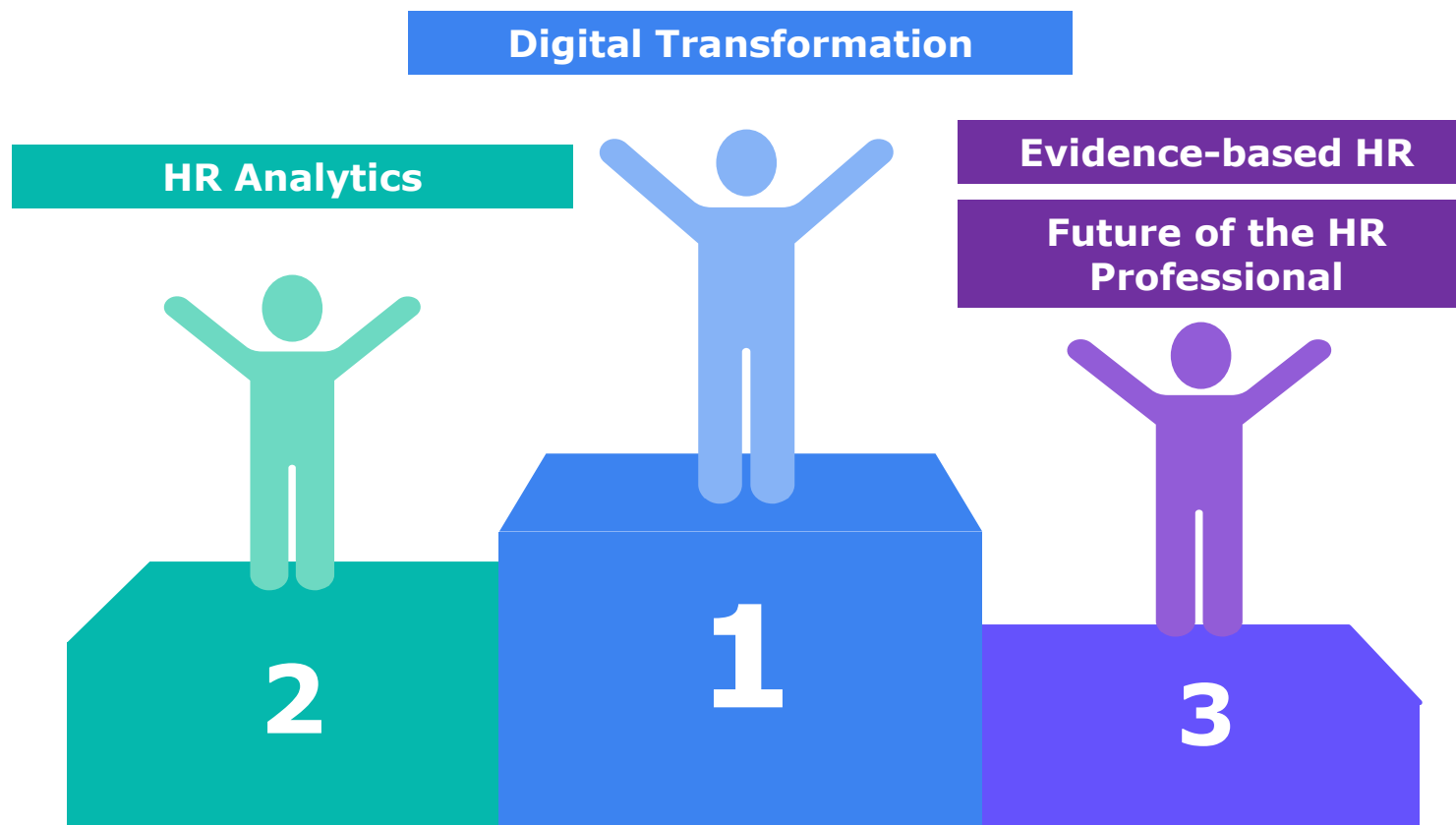
05

**TOPIC NEXT HR
BAROMETER**



HR BAROMETER SPOTLIGHT THEME FOR 2026

TOP 3



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

06

MORE INFORMATION



CONTACT US



Interested in this research?

Find out about other projects of the
Strategic Talent Management Centre

Or join our network

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