Ireland's Talent Landscape 2025

Future Skills Challenges of Irish Business

skillnetireland.ie

Skillnet IRELAND

Research Partner

Ipsos / Behaviour & Attitudes (B&A)

Skillnet Ireland Foreword

As Irish companies navigate the complexities of a rapidly changing global business environment, having a highly skilled workforce is crucial for leveraging the economic opportunities presented by hi-tech innovation, digitalisation, and the green transition. As a knowledge-based economy, our people are key to the future success of Ireland's economy, business competitiveness, and capacity to secure international investment. Supporting a strong, digitally resilient, and sustainable talent pipeline is a key priority for Skillnet Ireland.

Digital transformation, driven by artificial intelligence (AI), automation, and data analytics, is revolutionising how businesses connect with customers and make decisions. The demand for expertise in these areas, as well as broader digital literacy skills, is growing, and it is essential that we rise to the opportunity to meet this challenge. Equally important is the integration of sustainability into business practices, with increasing demands for skilled workers in green technologies, the circular economy, and other sustainable areas. Equipping Small Medium Enterprise (SME) business leaders with skills to traverse this complex landscape is crucial for long-term economic growth and innovation.

The aim of this report is to examine these key challenges facing businesses, framed within the context of their future skills needs. The findings are consistent across sectors and regions and reflect the importance of supporting both our current and future workforce, to develop fundamental skills for the digital world of work, and the transition to a net zero economy. Working together with enterprise, Skillnet Ireland designs supports for businesses to adapt to the changing demands of digitalisation and sustainability challenges.

We look forward to using the findings of this report as a basis to work with our industry partners and businesses across the economy, and to continue to advance the competitiveness, productivity and innovation of the Irish economy and society into the future. On behalf of Skillnet Ireland, I want to thank all of the companies that have generously given their time, expertise, and insights to this report. I would also like to express my thanks to our research partner Ipsos B&A for their work.

Tracey Donnery
Director of Policy,
Skillnet Ireland

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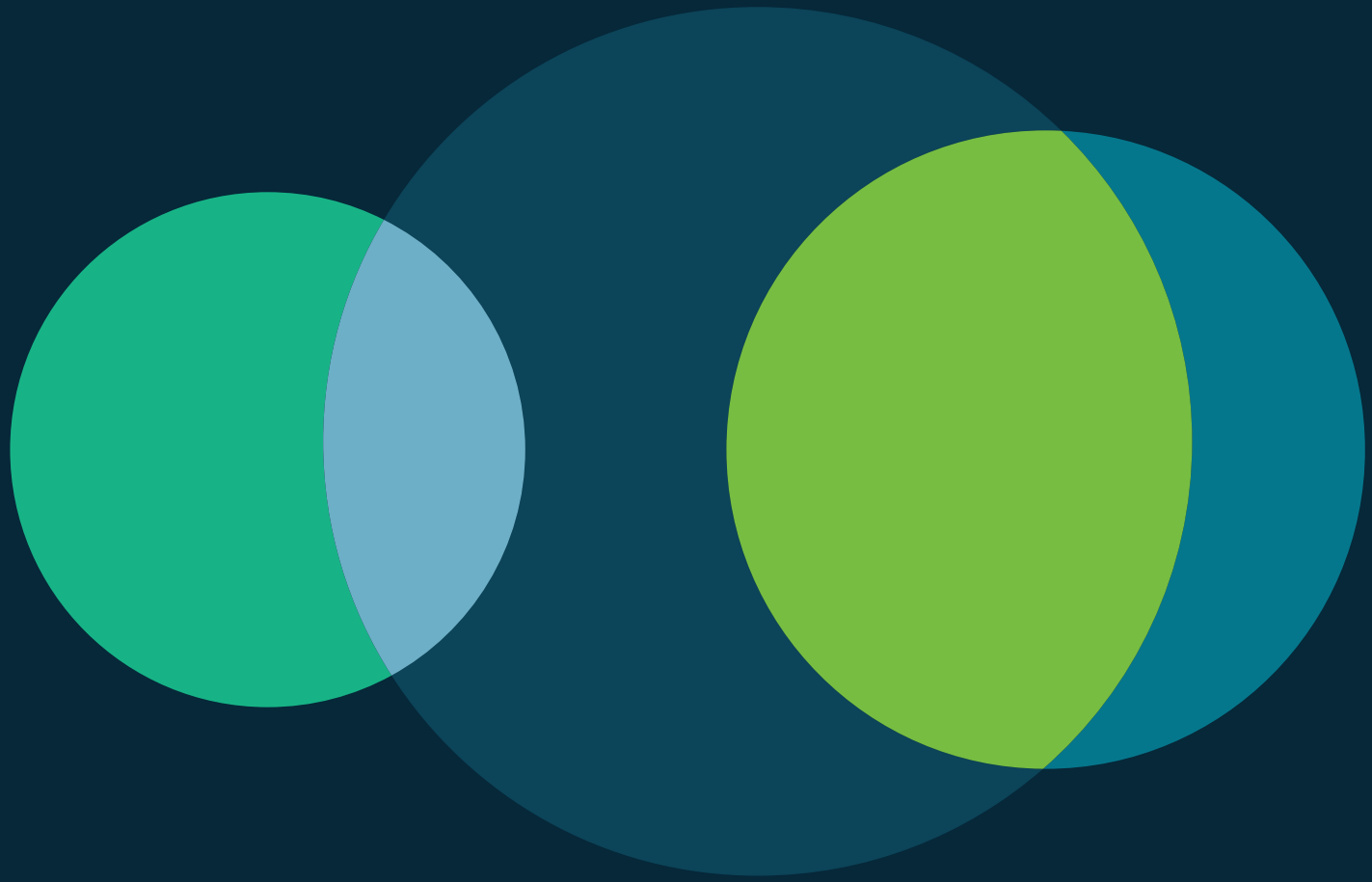
Executive Summary



Adapting to Economic Shifts and Future Skills Needs

Globally, geopolitical risks are impacting business confidence and although some countries and sectors are more resilient than others, uncertainty remains a key challenge for businesses in 2025. Irish businesses, particularly those within the multinational and export-driven sectors, are navigating the complexities of a shifting global order, where the risk of trade barriers is affecting international markets and potentially disrupting Ireland's economic model. Further disruption is presented by the rapid acceleration of technology and the demands of the climate transition. Many businesses are struggling to keep up with the rapid pace of change and SMEs in particular face difficulties with increased costs of doing business.

Despite this, Ireland's labour market remains characterised by employment growth, low unemployment, and an ambition for 300,000 more jobs by 2030 as set out in the Programme for Government. Our younger demographic which is relatively unique amongst EU member states, and the ability to attract mobile talent, have been two of the key drivers of Ireland's economic success in recent decades. Talent is one of the key levers in addressing the challenges of sustaining and growing the workforce to address digitalisation and climate challenges.

The Ireland's Talent Landscape 2025 report surveyed 500 business leaders across Ireland assessing the skills and talent development needs of their business and industry. The findings reflect both the current state, and aspirations of Irish businesses, revealing a strong awaremess of the importance of upskilling and lifelong learning.

Skills for the Future: Navigating New Transitions

As the Irish economy continues to evolve, skills needs are projected to become increasingly specialist in areas such as AI, cyber, advanced manufacturing, bioprocessing, big data analytics, robotics, and the green transition. Job roles will be redefined, and new roles will emerge in clean energy, environmental management, offshore wind, and disciplines that require new and different skillsets. Over time our ageing population will also influence labour market dynamics bringing new talent challenges in healthcare, digital health data, and financial literacy, amongst others.

A sustained focus on developing SME productivity and digitalisation skills is critical. For many SME companies a lack of talent with basic digital skills becomes a challenge for managing advanced technologies and limits their competitiveness, and ability to innovate. Whilst businesses are willing to play their part in reducing carbon emissions there are pressures associated with meeting new sustainability regulations and standards. The growing consumer demand for eco-friendly products and sustainable business practices, forces businesses to reevaluate and develop the skills and capabilities to innovate and evolve their offering.

In addition, today's workforces have higher expectations from employers when it comes to career development and are actively seeking access to training programmes, mentorship, and upskilling opportunities. To maintain a competitive edge, businesses must adapt to these challenges by encouraging innovation, leveraging advanced technologies, focusing on workforce development, and prioritising sustainability. As industry navigates these transitions business success can be achieved and reinforce Ireland's position as a leading destination for global investment and talent.

Executive Summary

Understanding Talent Challenges of Businesses

Ireland's Talent Landscape 2025 surveyed 500 business leaders across Ireland assessing the skills, talent and workforce development needs of their business and industry. The research was conducted by Ipsos Behaviour & Attitudes (B&A) through a random sample of 500 businesses, with the sample quota controlled by region, and size of the company to reflect the business demography as defined by the Central Statistics Office (CSO). The report provides insights into how Irish businesses of all sizes and regions are adapting to the skills challenges at this moment of significant change. It investigates several key issues including core business challenges, future skills needs, workforce development, as well as skills for the digital and green transitions. The report also undertakes a deep dive into how industry is responding and adapting to the emergence of AI and the range of skills businesses are seeking for AI across the Irish economy.

This report shows that business leaders are deeply aware of how our economic success relies on our highly skilled and talented workforce. More than half of businesses expect their core skills to shift within three years and see upskilling and workforce development as necessary, to sustain competitiveness. In addition, the majority of businesses have identified upskilling as a strategically important priority, reflecting the critical role of upskilling plays in fostering competitiveness and nurturing innovation. However, sourcing skills remains a challenge with 42% of businesses struggling to find employees equipped with essential skillsets. Technical and engineering expertise, sustainability competencies, and advanced digital proficiencies are among the most sought-after capabilities.

Executive Summary

Future-Proofing Ireland's Workforce Through Collaboration

Leadership has never been more important to strengthen the competitiveness of Irish businesses and enhance our reputation as an appealing environment for global industry. The insights in this report underscore the urgency for businesses, policymakers, and educators, to collaborate to address the workforce challenges of tomorrow.

As the agency responsible for leading workforce development the mission of Skillnet Ireland is to enhance the productivity, competitiveness, and sustainability of the Irish economy. Through our deep roots with enterprise, we engage proactively with talent and skills challenges, and work to equip Ireland's businesses with the essential skills, they need to succeed.

The findings reveal that upskilling and talent development are imperative for continued business success. As skills gaps widen in critical areas such as technology, engineering, and sustainability, the ability to foster a future-ready workforce will define Ireland's economic resilience.

Upskilling for Digital and Climate Transitions

In this era of accelerating technological change, businesses, and especially SMEs, need to harness new technologies as strategic opportunities. 57% of businesses categorise themselves as advanced in their digital integration. Large enterprises are leading the charge, leveraging technologies such as AI, cloud computing, and big data analytics to enhance productivity and competitiveness. However, the adoption of advanced digital skills remains uneven, with smaller businesses having less capacity to effectively harness these technologies.

The report also incorporates a spotlight on AI, gathering insights from companies on the upskilling supports employers are seeking to address AI skill gaps to capitalise on the potential opportunities AI and generative AI presents. Attitudes towards the impact of AI are broadly positive and there is a growing awareness of the importance of AI for business success. The research demonstrates that while 54% of Irish businesses are yet to use AI, 66% of companies believe AI adoption has the potential to grow their business within the next two years. 73% of respondents cited a current lack of necessary skills as the greatest barrier to integrating AI into their business.

Over two thirds of Irish businesses consider climate action and sustainability upskilling vital for growth over the next two to three years. Larger companies are at the forefront of this shift, driven by regulatory imperatives and market expectations. However, smaller businesses also recognise the benefits of developing sustainability capabilities and practices. Opportunities presented by sustainability upskilling in areas such as energy efficiency, sustainable supply chain management, and circular economy practices can help to bridge this gap.

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Innovation
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Accelerating Competitiveness and Growth Through Talent

This research demonstrates a strong commitment from enterprise to invest time and resources in people development, and a deep understanding of how important this is for business competitiveness and future success. It also shows how crucial business leaders are in providing strategic direction, and in recognising the value of lifelong learning and workforce development. While there is strong commitment from enterprise to talent and skills development, the report also emphasises the need to increase awareness amongst SMEs, of the range of enterprise-driven supports that are available.

The findings in this report have further informed Skillnet Ireland's strategic commitment to meet the talent requirements of a digital future, to foster the growth of a low-carbon and sustainable economy, and to enhance small and medium-sized enterprise leadership and capacity for innovation. Skillnet Ireland will continue to work closely with our Skillnet Business Networks and National Talent Initiatives to deliver the skills solutions companies need, and to integrate the findings of this report into industry driven solutions for businesses and the workforce. We look forward to engaging with businesses and supporting them to embrace workforce development.

Future Skills and Talent Challenges

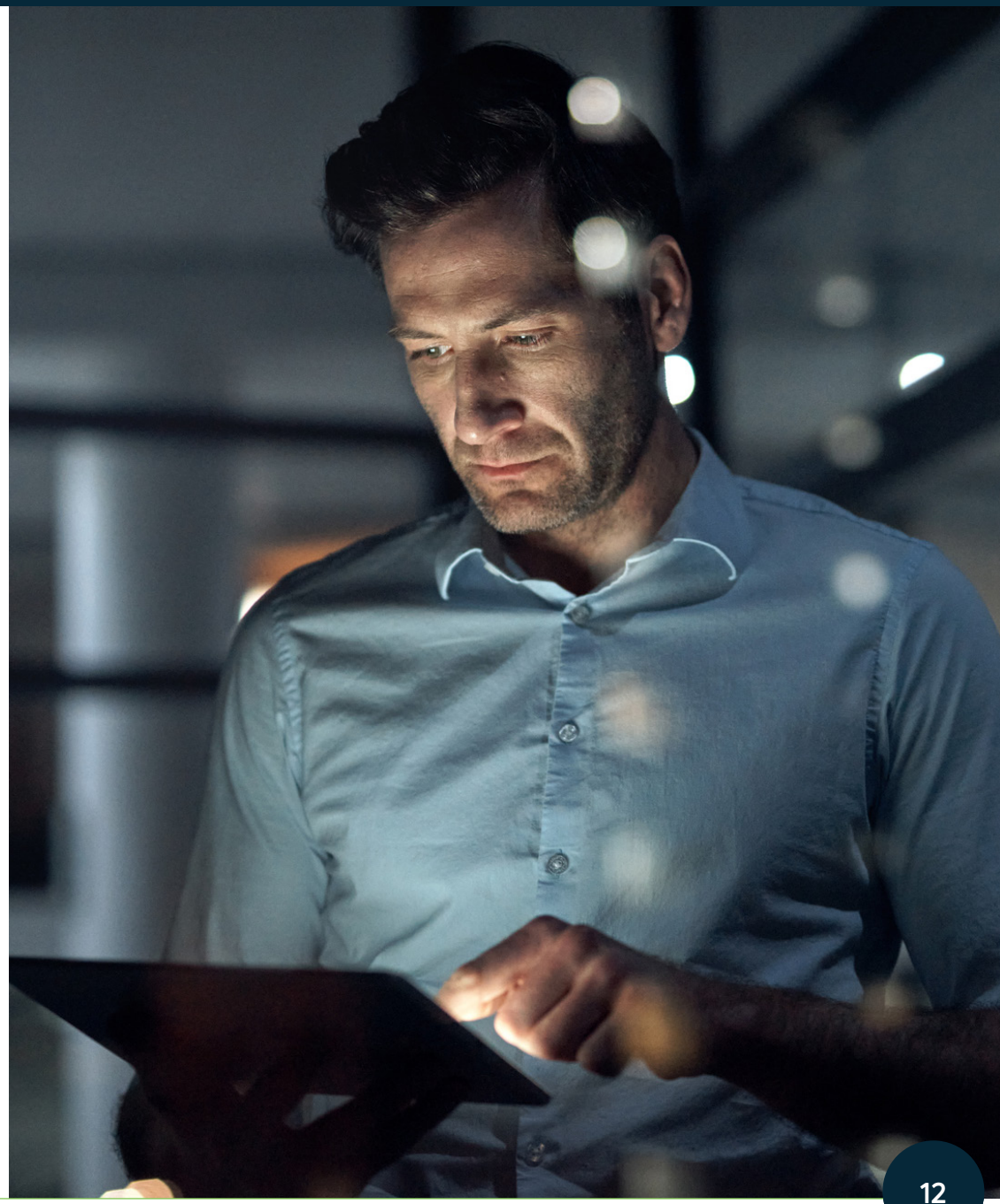
Future Skills and Talent Development

Irish businesses are navigating a period of significant change, driven by rapid technological advancements, sustainability demands, and evolving workforce expectations. These shifts are altering the skills landscape and intensifying competition for talent across industries, requiring businesses to adapt, or risk losing their competitive edge.

The Ireland's Talent Landscape 2025 report provides an insight into the skills and talent development experiences of Irish businesses of all sizes and regions. 91% of respondents classify their enterprise as either 'strong' or 'very strong' with 29% planning to expand their workforce over the coming 12 months. 56% expressed their employees core skills have changed in the past two years, and 59% expect similar changes in the coming years.

Sourcing employees with the required skills remains a challenge for Irish businesses, increasing slightly on last year's figure to 42% (from 41% in 2024). Business leaders reported technical and engineering (37%), digital technologies (29%), and regulatory (29%) as the employee skillsets that employers are finding difficult to recruit.

Engagement with upskilling remains high within Irish companies. 76% of businesses upskilled their staff in the past 12 months, in-line with the 74% reported in 2024. Maintaining high levels of upskilling among business leaders is crucial. This year 46% of business leaders reported undertaking upskilling and mentoring support over the past year, a marginal decline from the 49% reported in 2024. 34% of business leaders reported a lack of availability of supports relative to their stage of career, as a barrier to their development.



Bio
Pharma
Chem
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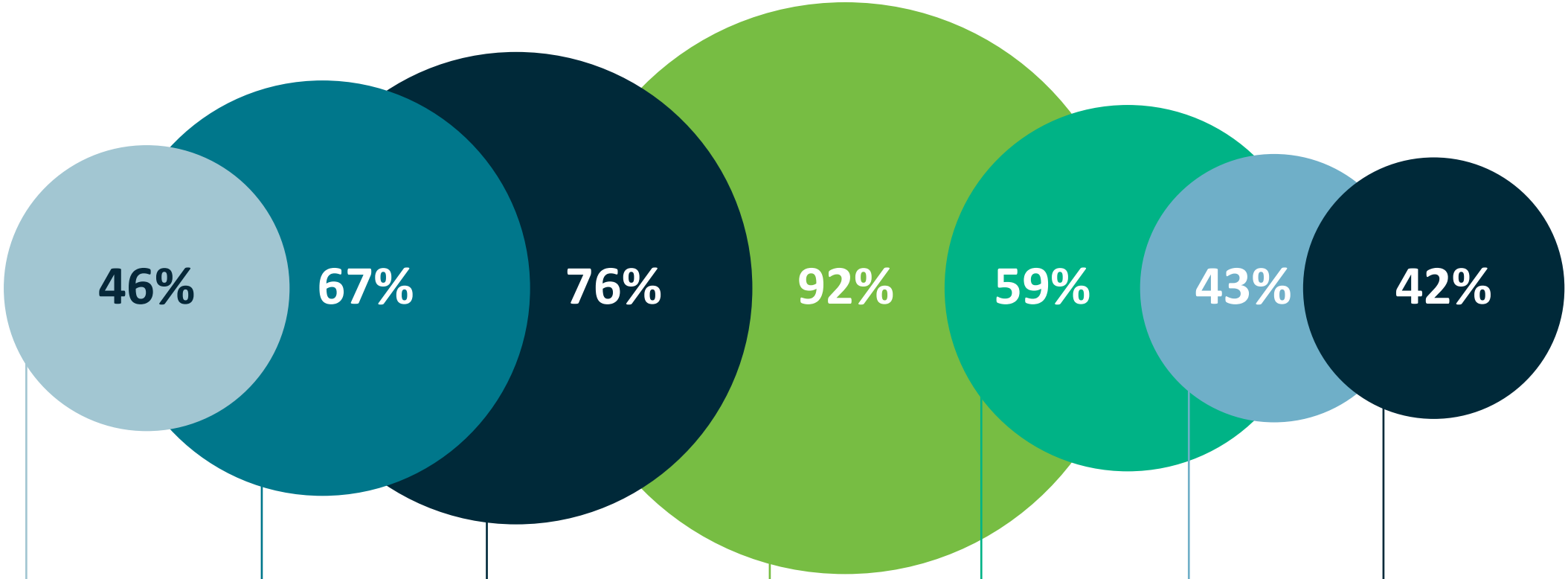
Future Skills and Talent Challenges Key Findings



46% of business leaders participated in upskilling and mentoring support over the past year.

67% of businesses highlight that upskilling has become a strategic priority and importance for future success.

76% of business employees have engaged in some form of upskilling in the past twelve months.

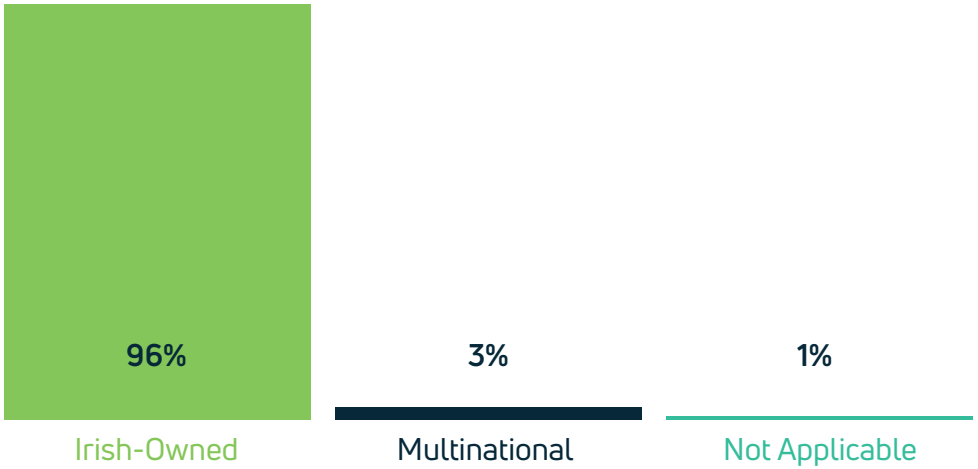
92% of business leaders consider their economic strength as strong or very strong.

59% expect their core skills to shift in the next two to three years. This reflects the accelerating impact of digital and green transitions on workforce requirements.

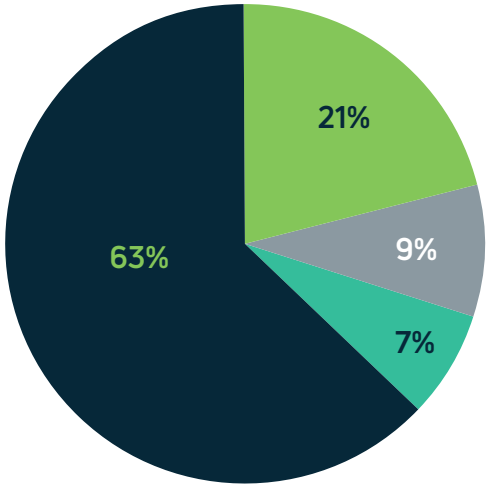
43% of businesses cite time constraints as a barrier to upskilling, while 32% highlight cost as a significant challenge.

42% of businesses are experiencing difficulties in finding employees with the necessary skillsets. Critical gaps are most pronounced in technology, engineering, and sustainability roles.

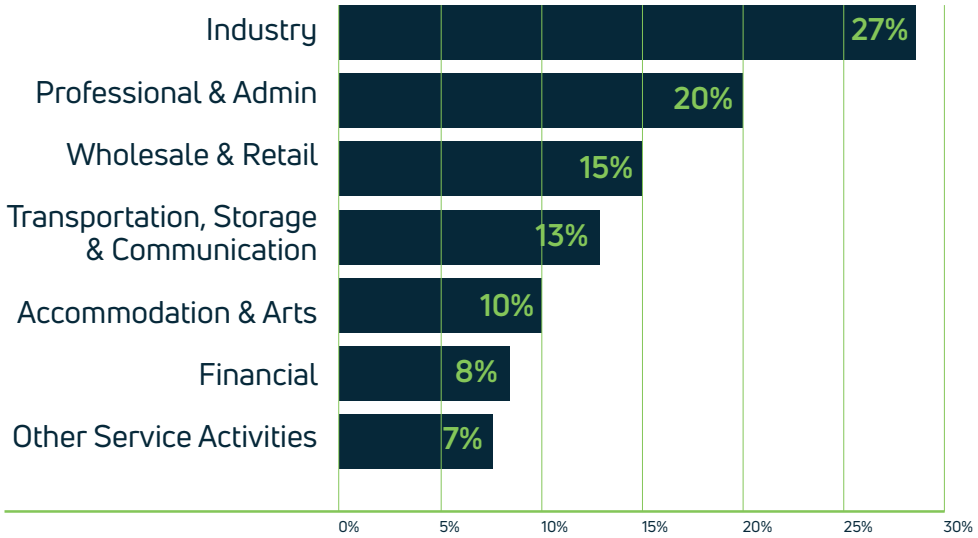
Ownership



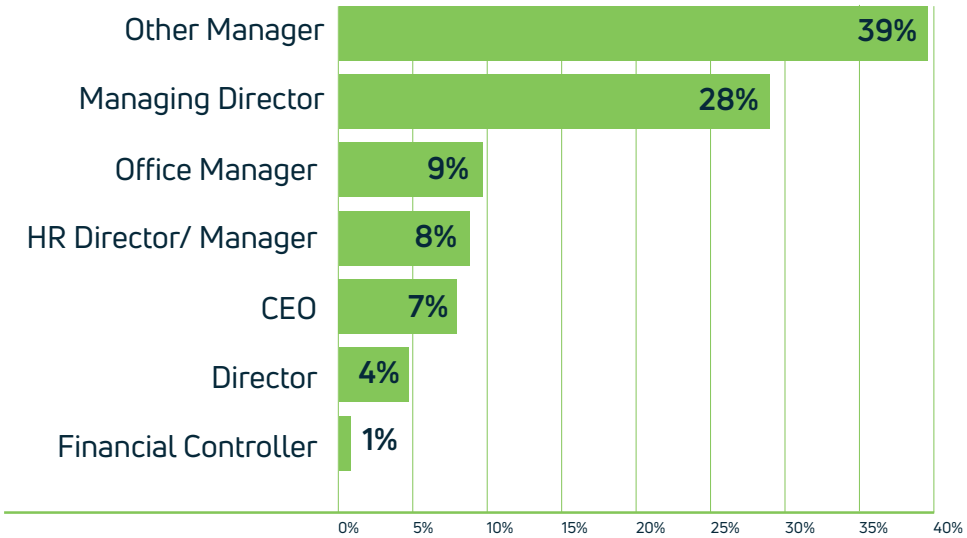
Number of Employees



Industry Profile

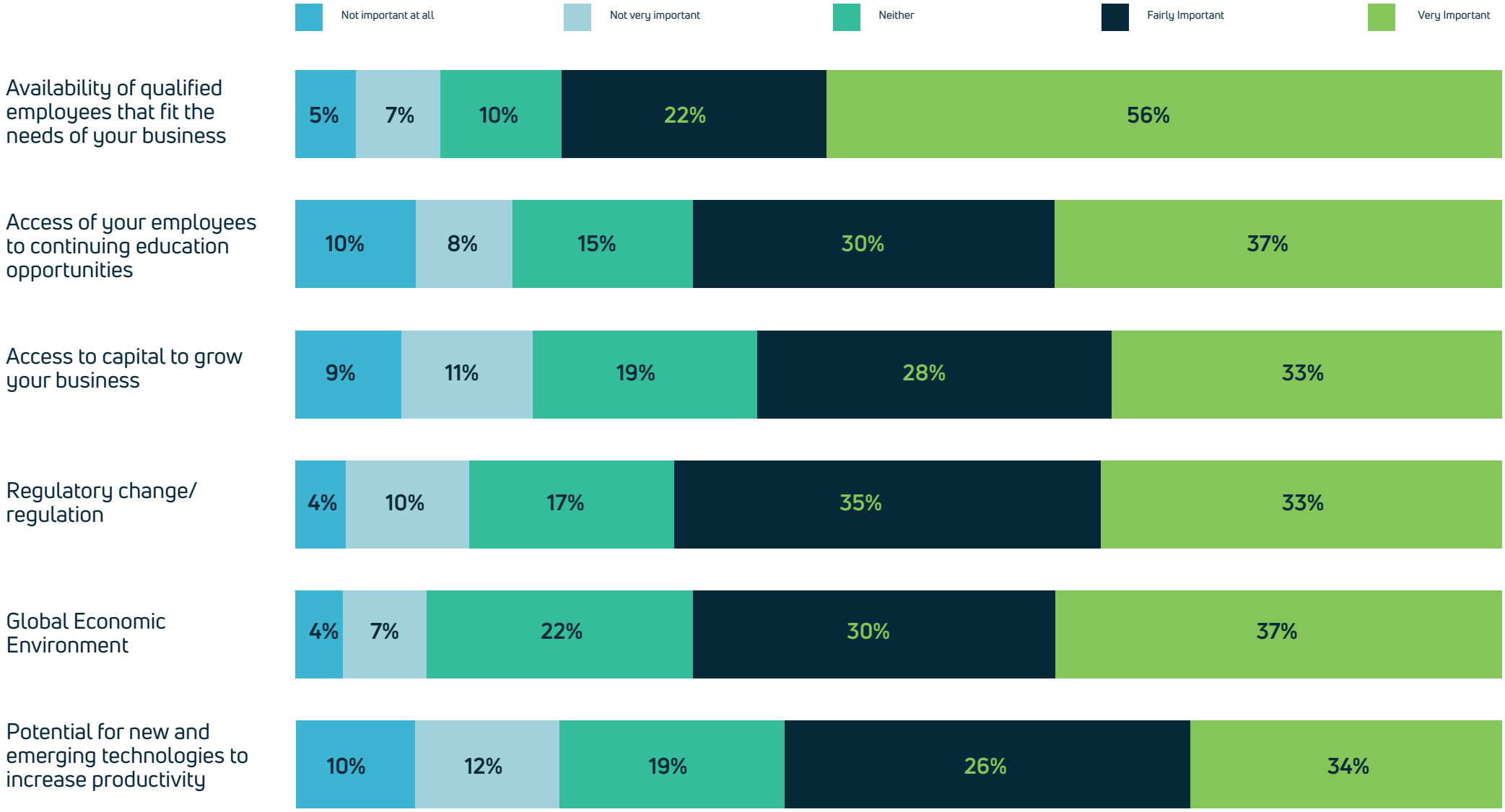


Role Type

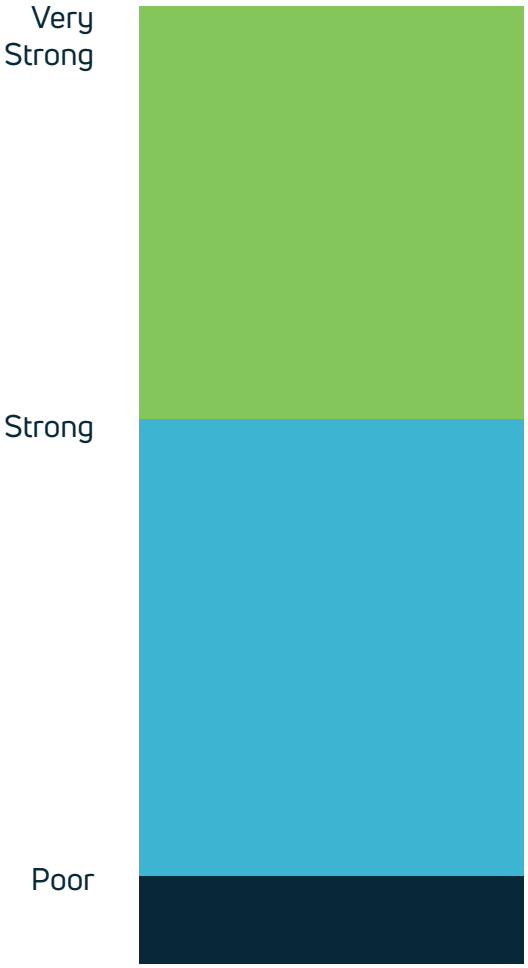


Future Skills and Talent Challenges Business Growth Factors

How important are the following factors for growing your business?



How would you rate the economic strength of your business?



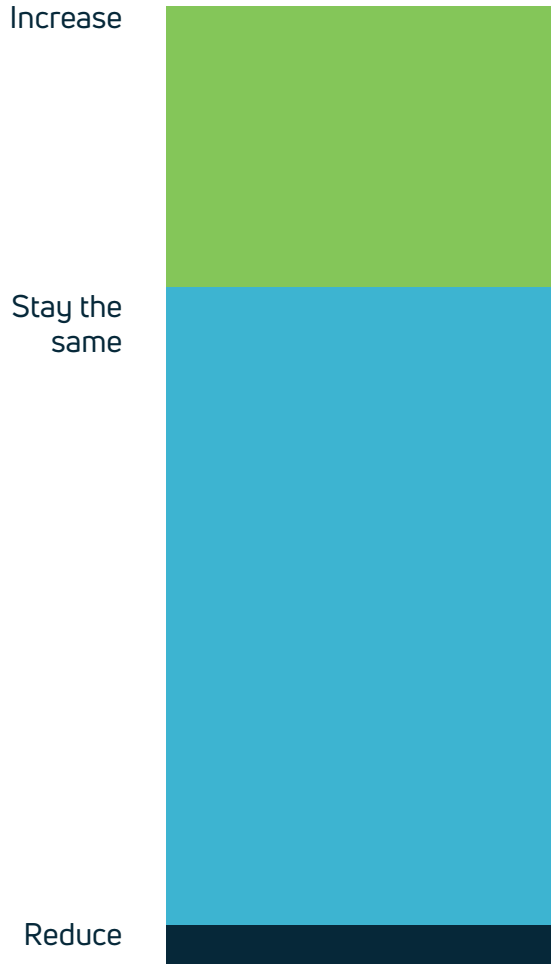
43%

250+ employees (93%);
50-249 employees (68%):
10-49 employees (34%);
0-9 employees (43%).

48%

9%

What are the plans of your business regarding staff numbers over the next twelve months?



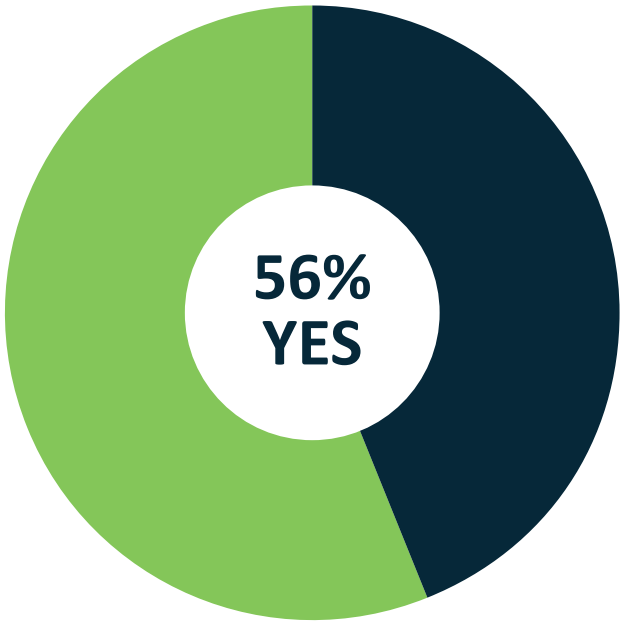
29%

250+ employees (46%);
50-250 employees (34%);
10-49 employees (52%);
0-9 employees (28%).

66%

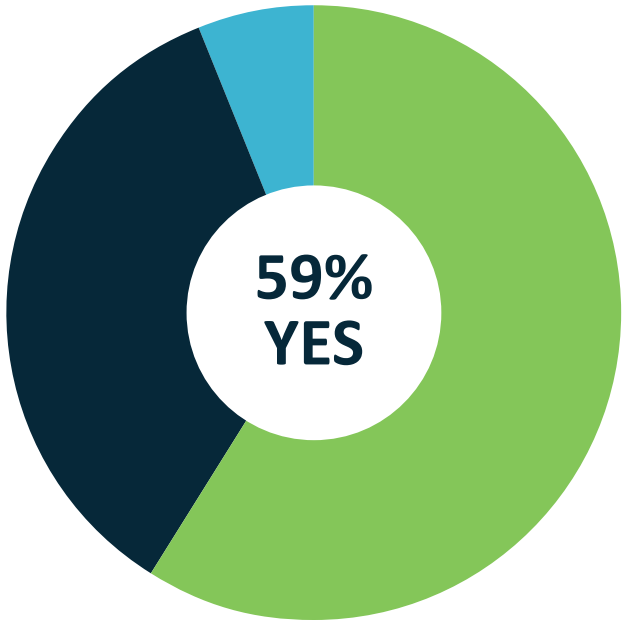
4%

Have your core business skills changed within the past two to three years?



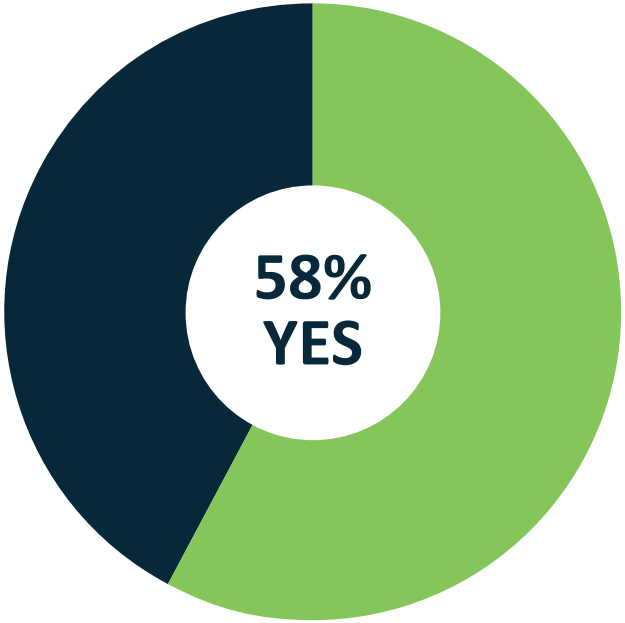
250+ employees (74%);
50-250 employees (50%);
10-49 employees (65%);
0-9 employees (55%).

Do you anticipate further changes in business core skills in the next two to three years?



250+ employees (82%);
50-250 employees (61%);
10-49 employees (71%);
0-9 employees (58%).

In relation to the skills requirement of your business, are you having any problems sourcing skills?

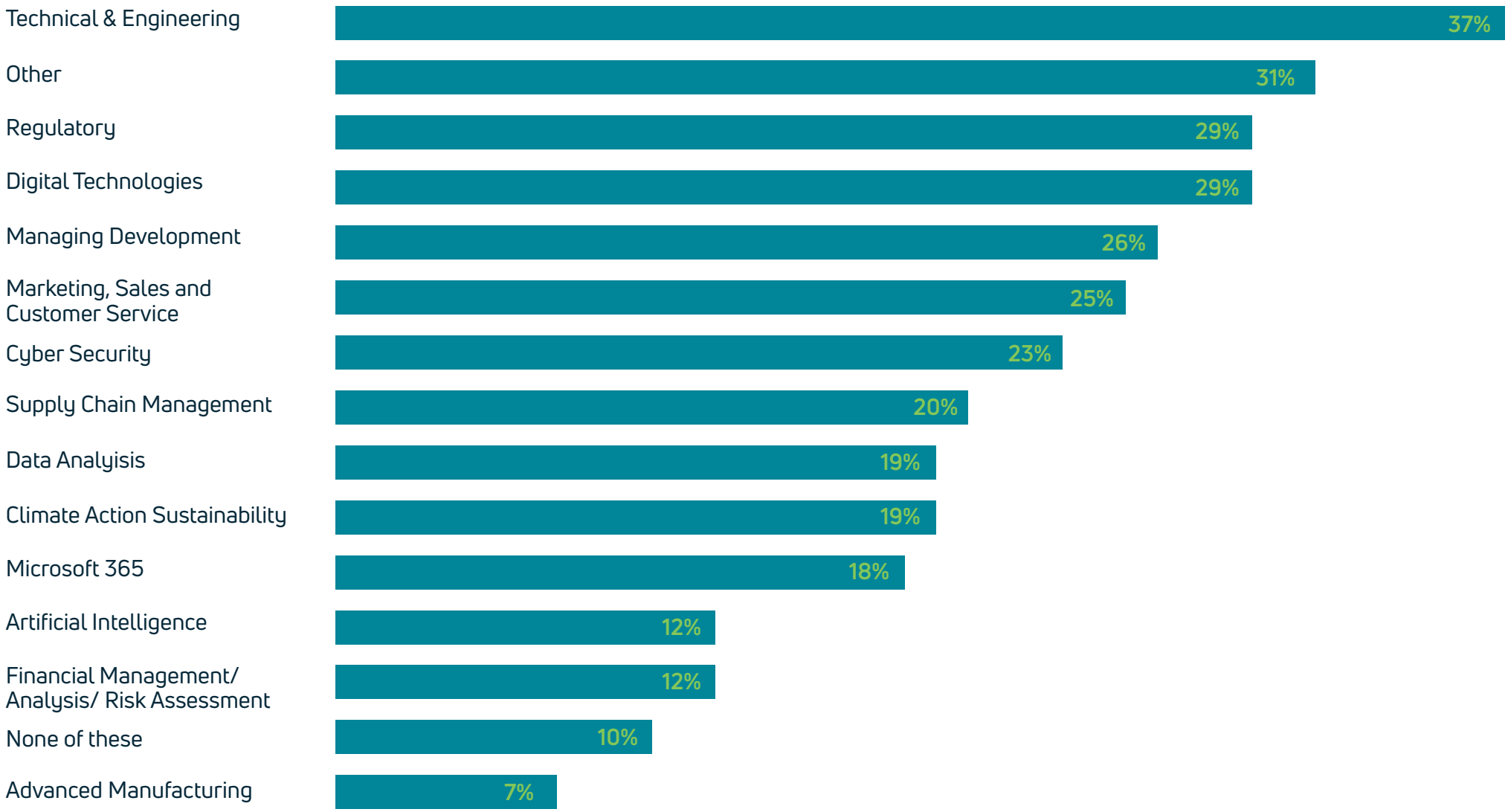


250+ employees (64%);
50-250 employees (57%);
10-49 employees (70%);
0-9 employees (40%).

Yes No Don't know

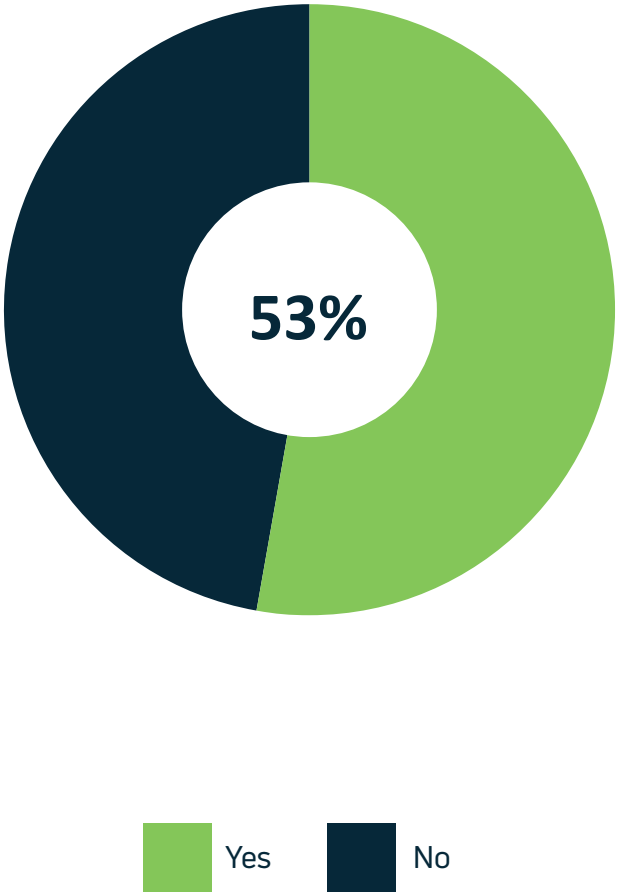
Future Skills and Talent Challenges Opportunities and Barriers

Which of the following skillsets is a challenge for your business to source?

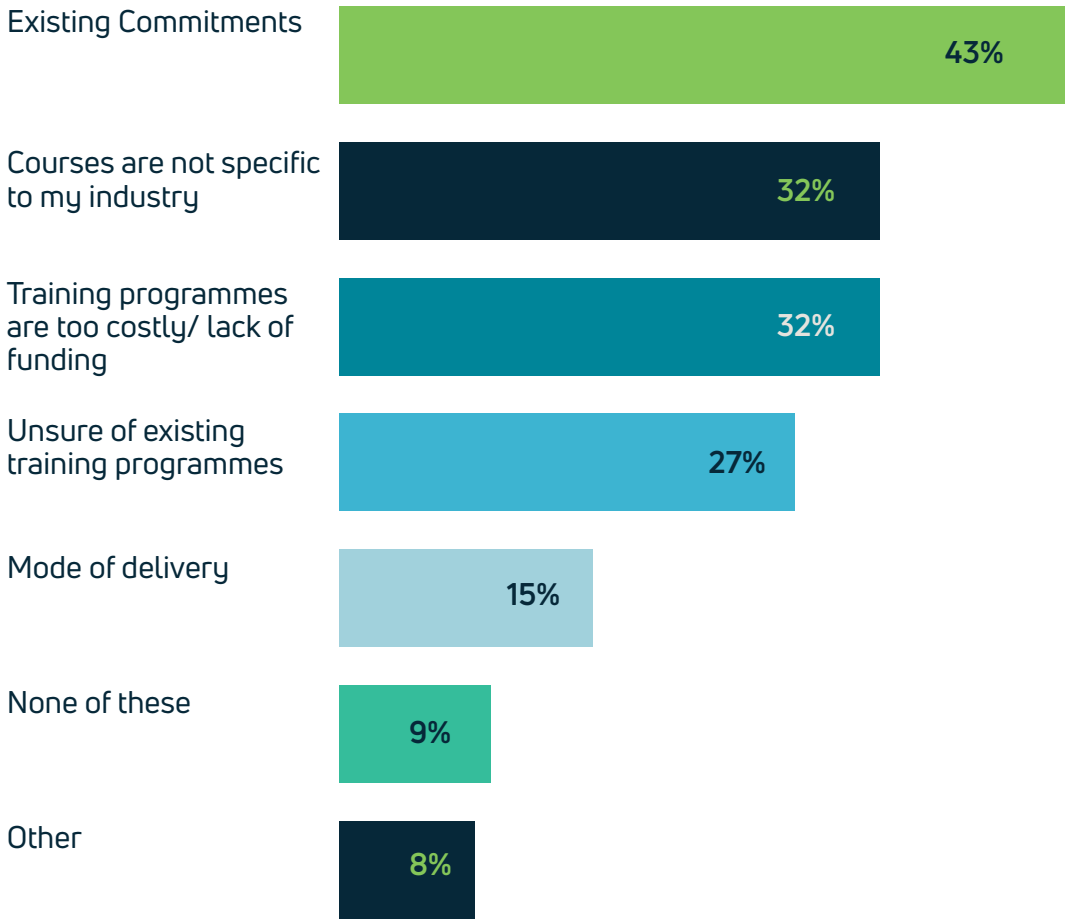


Future Skills and Talent Challenges Opportunities and Barriers

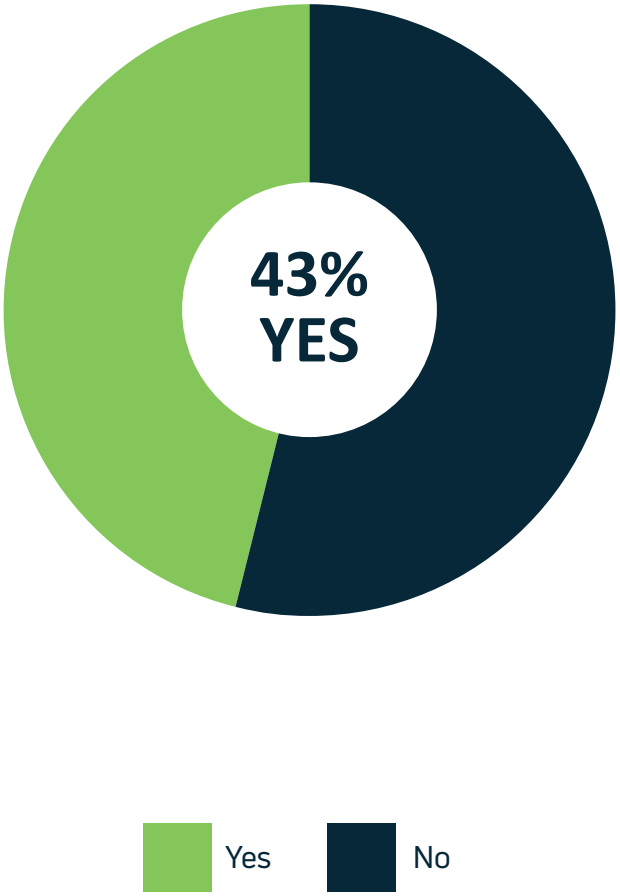
53% of industry sector businesses surveyed have faced challenges sourcing skills.



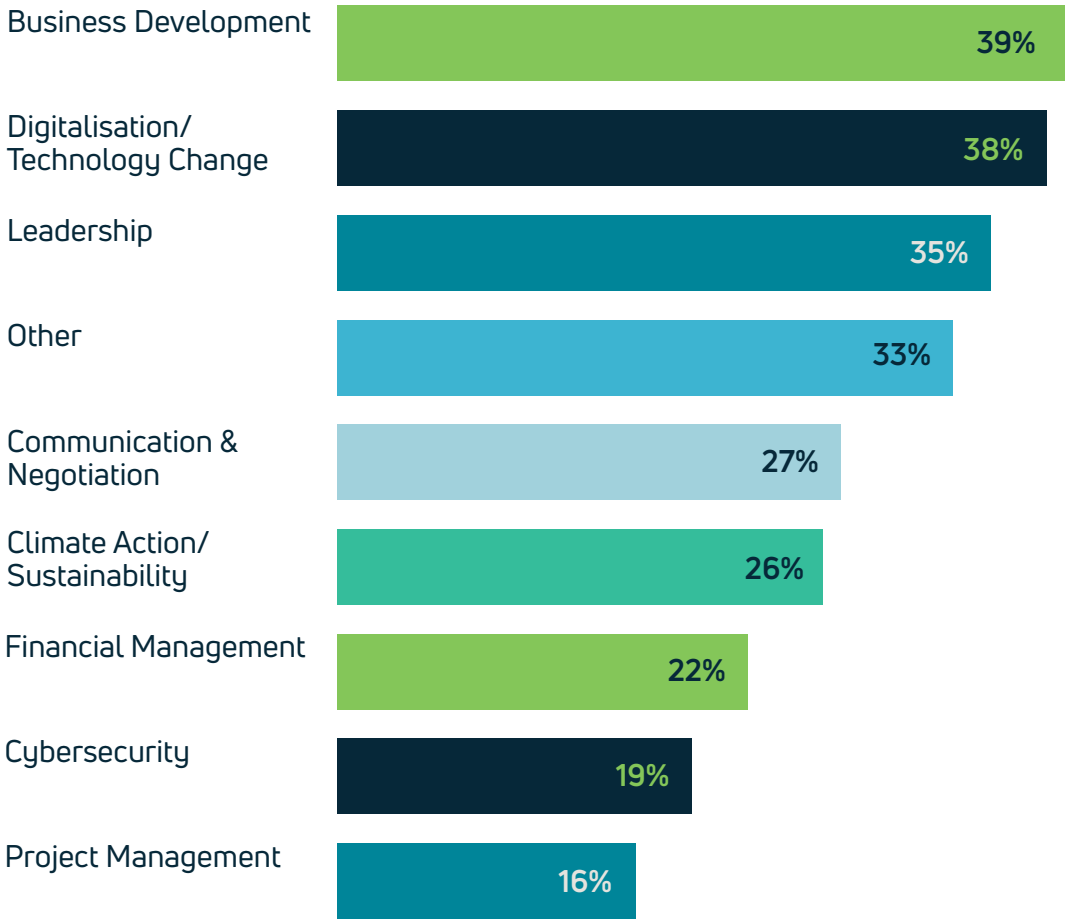
What are the main barriers preventing staff from upskilling?



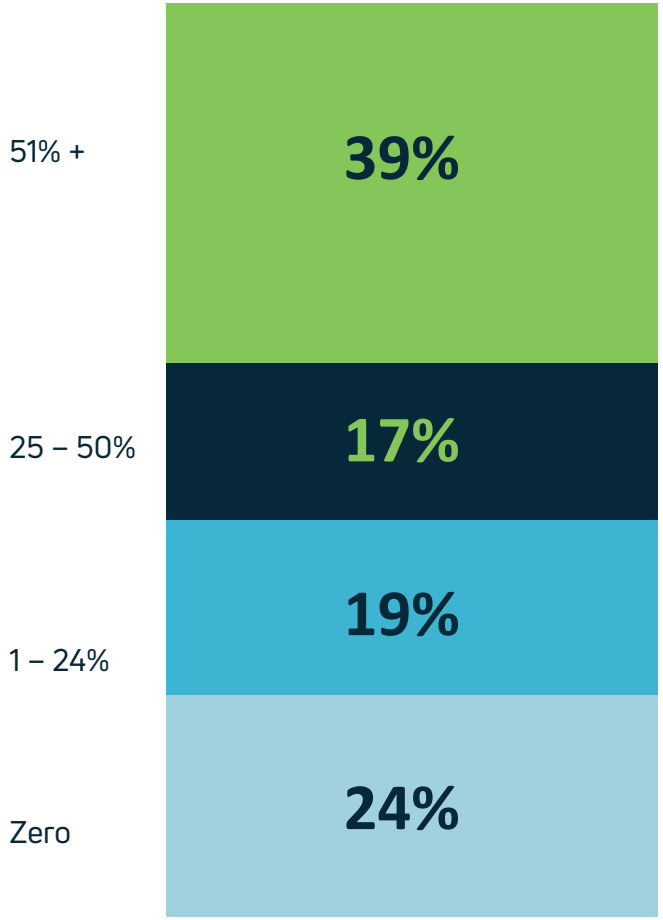
Have you taken any upskilling/ mentoring supports in the past twelve months?



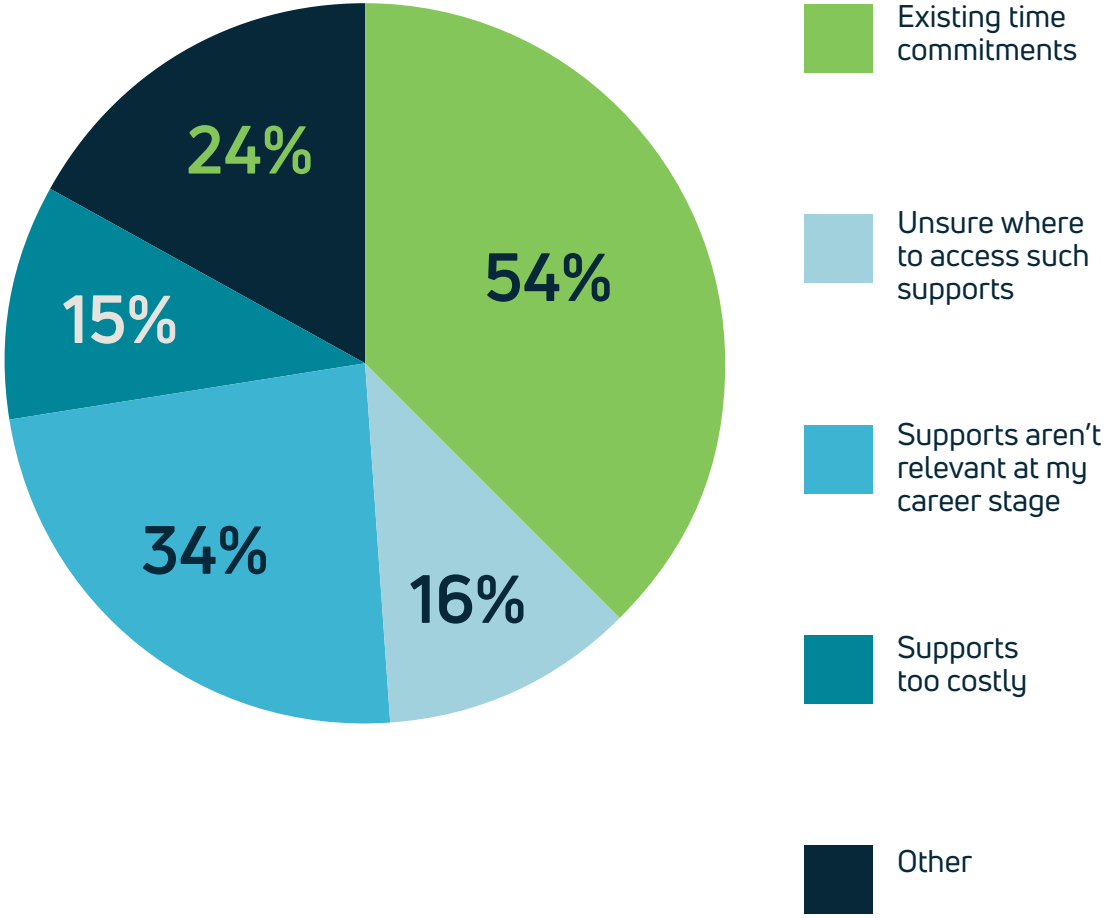
If so, what was the subject of your upskilling/mentoring support?



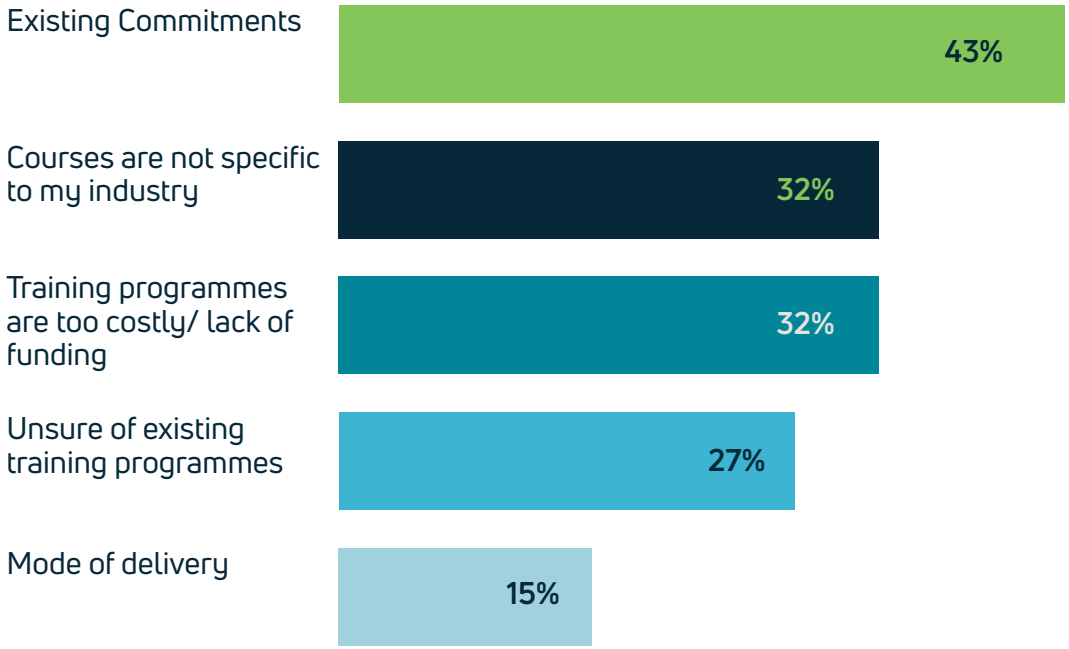
What percentage of your workforce recently engaged in upskilling/ training?



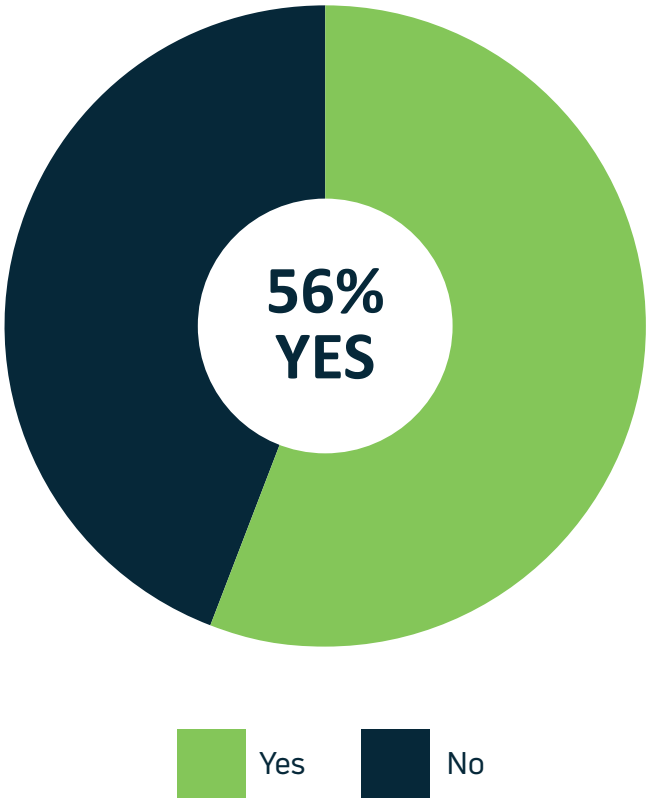
What leadership upskilling challenges have you encountered?



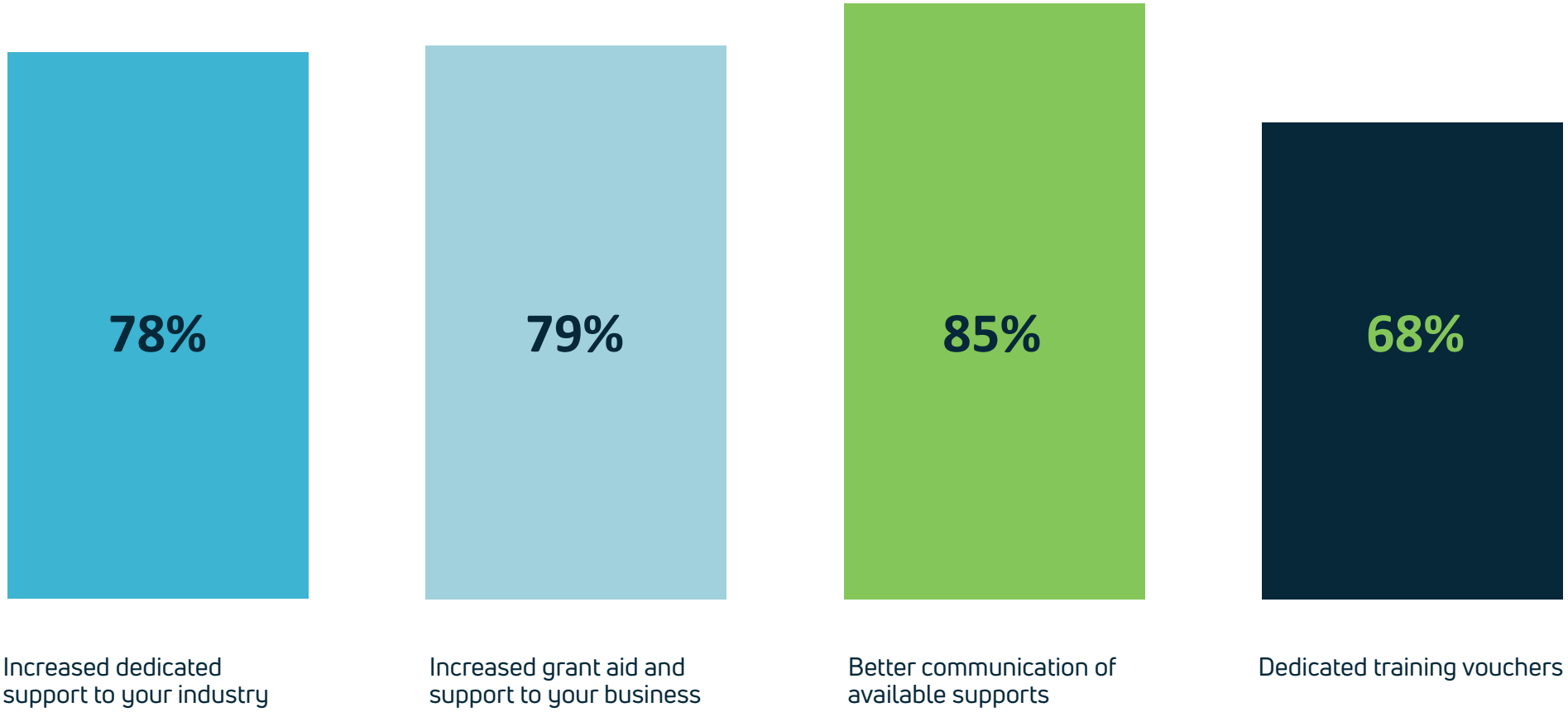
Current barriers to upskilling.



56% of businesses report changes to their core skills.



Solutions to encourage uptake of upskilling and training programmes among employees.



Small and Medium Enterprises
≤ 250 Employees

Small and Medium Enterprises: ≤ 250 Employees

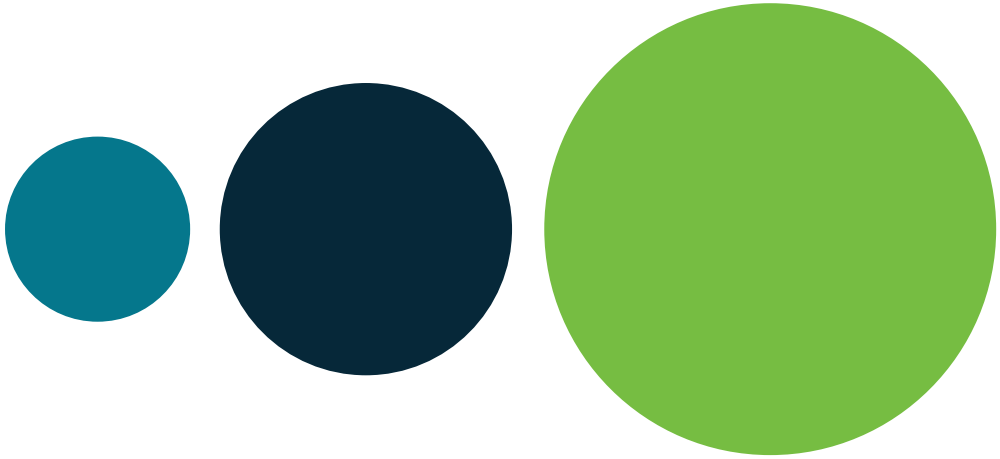
SMEs are the backbone of Ireland's economy, comprising 99.8% of all businesses, generating 43% of the nation's revenue, and employing 68% of the workforce1. The continued success of SMEs is critical to Ireland's overall economic prosperity.

92% of respondents from Irish SMEs classified the economic strength of their business as 'strong' or 'very strong' and 29% said they expected to increase their staff numbers over the coming months. A notable trend emerging from this year's report is the correlation between upskilling efforts and business optimism. SMEs with higher levels of workforce development report significantly stronger economic performance, reinforcing the value of continuous learning as a driver of productivity and competitiveness.

Only 26% of SMEs reported having a formal talent strategy in place, in contrast with 83% of larger enterprises, which benefit from greater access to resources and strategic frameworks. 42% of Irish SMEs reported that they had experienced difficulties in recruiting staff with the necessary skillsets for their businesses, with most difficulty in the areas of technology, engineering, and some digital skillsets. SMEs also report barriers to undertaking upskilling, with SMEs regarding the greatest barriers being time constraints (43%) and cost (32%).

The report shows there is a strong awareness among SME leaders on the importance of employee upskilling for economic success. 42% of SMEs facilitated over half of their employees to engage in some form of upskilling over the past year. This increased recognition of, and investment into upskilling amongst SMEs, is positive.

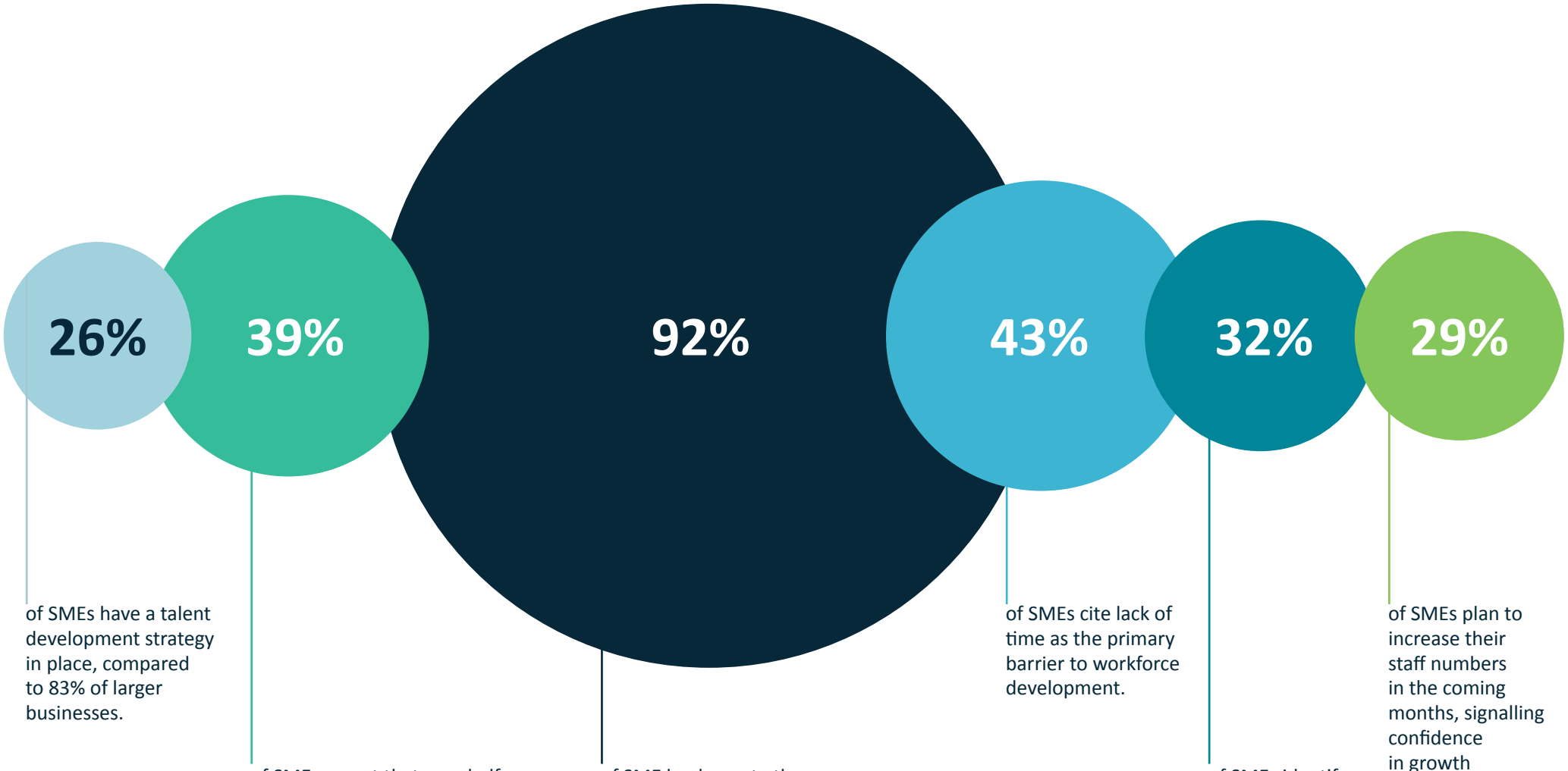
The percentage of SME leaders who engaged in upskilling and mentoring supports in the past 12 months is 46%, on par with last year's figure. The most common types of upskilling undertaken by leaders of SMEs is business development (39%), digitalisation (38%) and leadership development (35%).



[1.] Central Statistics Office (2022) Business in Ireland, 2020. Available at: Business in Ireland 2020 – CSO – Central Statistics Office

Small and Medium Enterprises: ≤ 250 Employees

Small and Medium Enterprises: ≤ 250 Employees



of SMEs have a talent development strategy in place, compared to 83% of larger businesses.

of SMEs report that over half their workforce has engaged in upskilling over the past year.

of SME leaders rate the economic health of their business as “strong” or “very strong,” a slight improvement over last year’s figure.

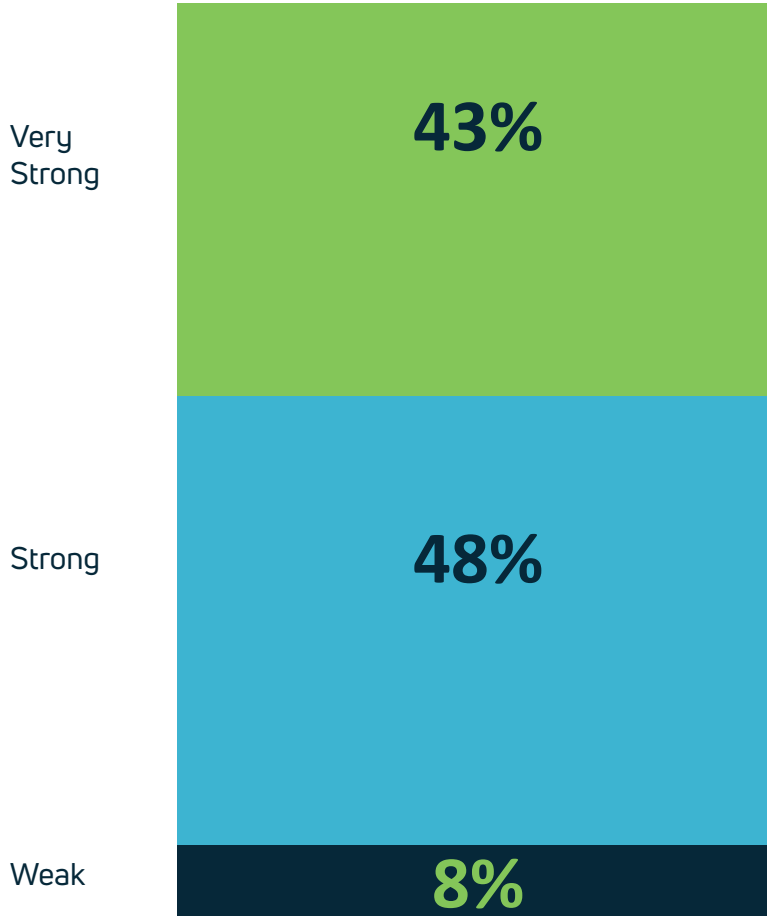
of SMEs cite lack of time as the primary barrier to workforce development.

of SMEs identify high costs as an additional obstacle to upskilling.

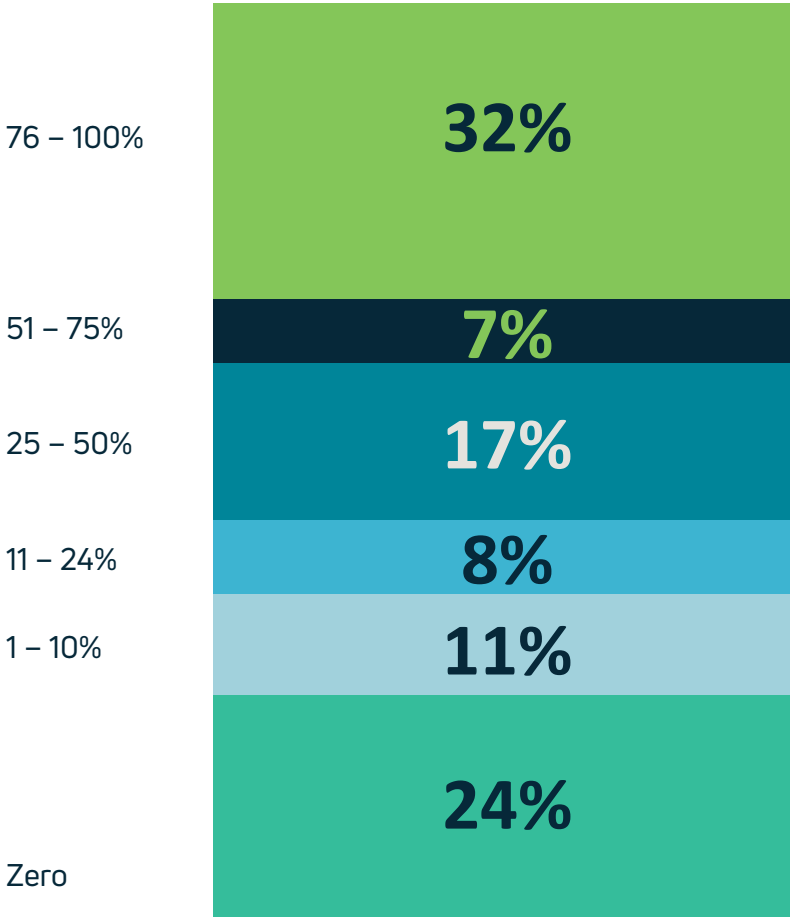
of SMEs plan to increase their staff numbers in the coming months, signalling confidence in growth opportunities.

Small and Medium Enterprises: ≤ 250 Employees

How do you rank the economic strength of your business?

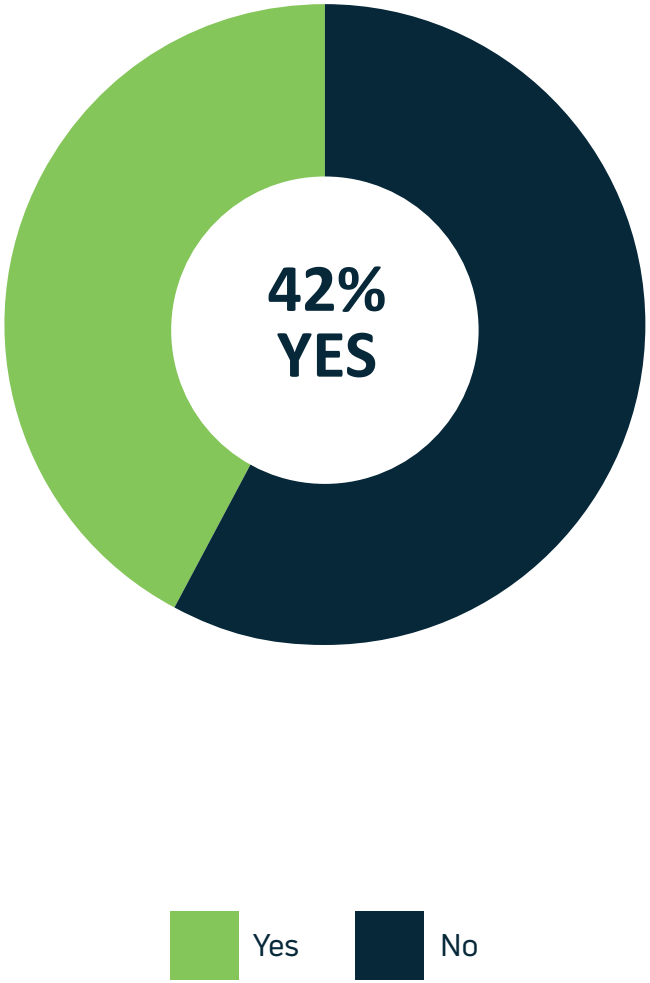


What percentage of your workforce have recently taken an upskilling programme?

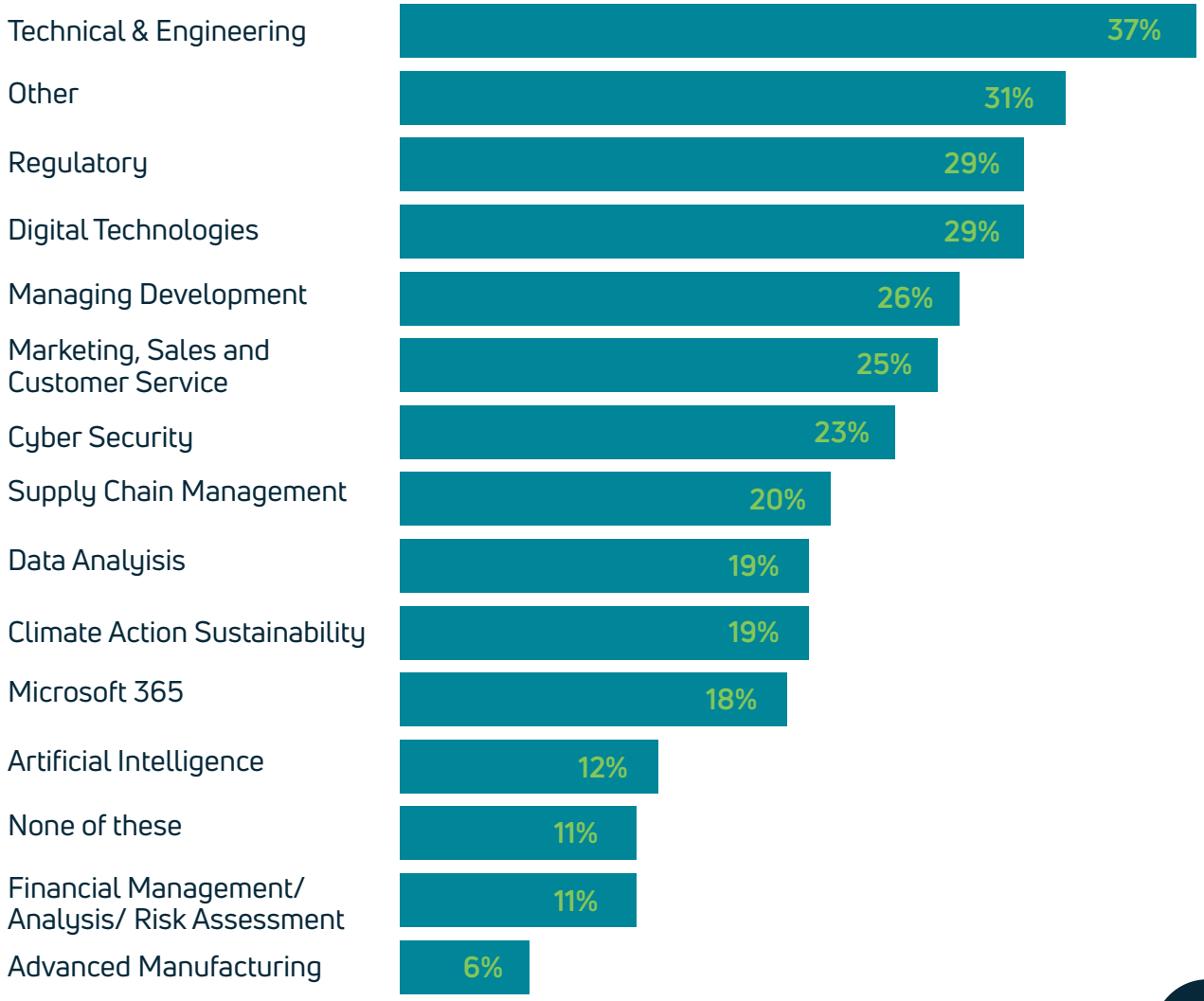


Small and Medium Enterprises: ≤ 250 Employees

Have you encountered problems hiring employees with the appropriate skillset?

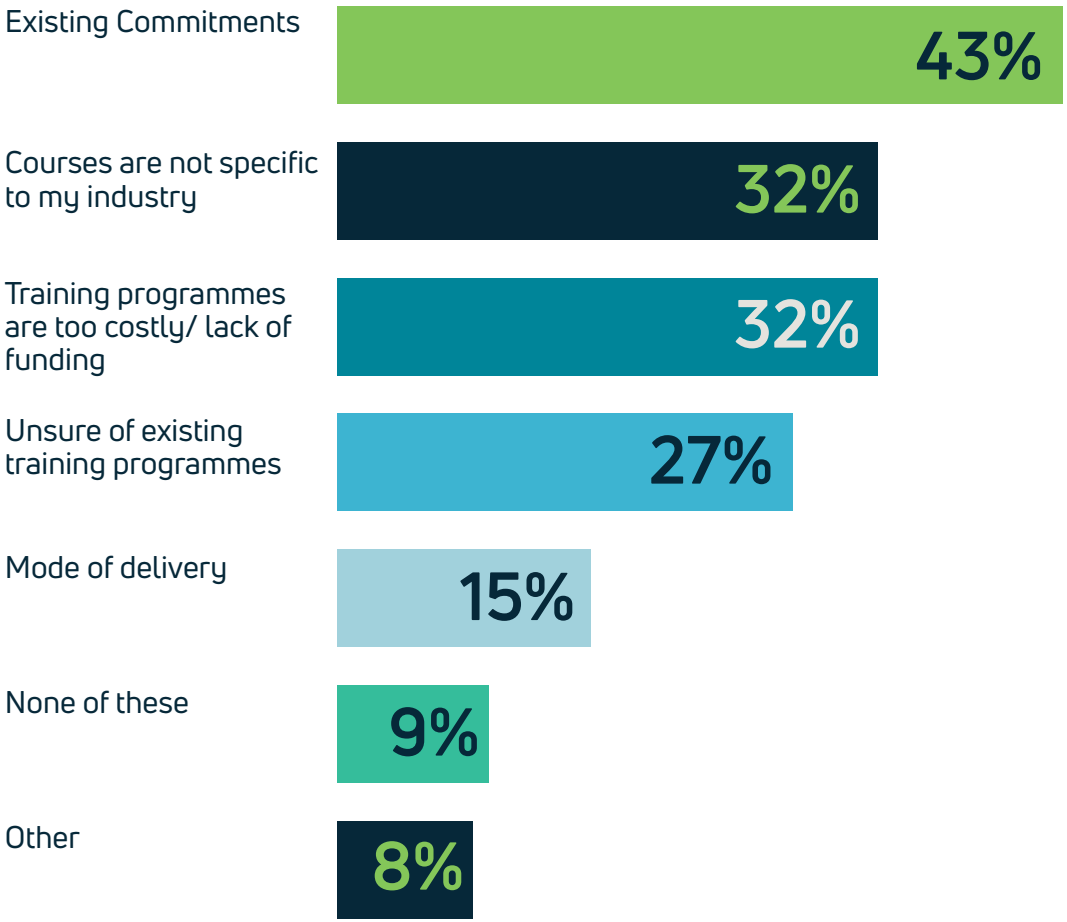


What speciality are you having difficulty hiring?

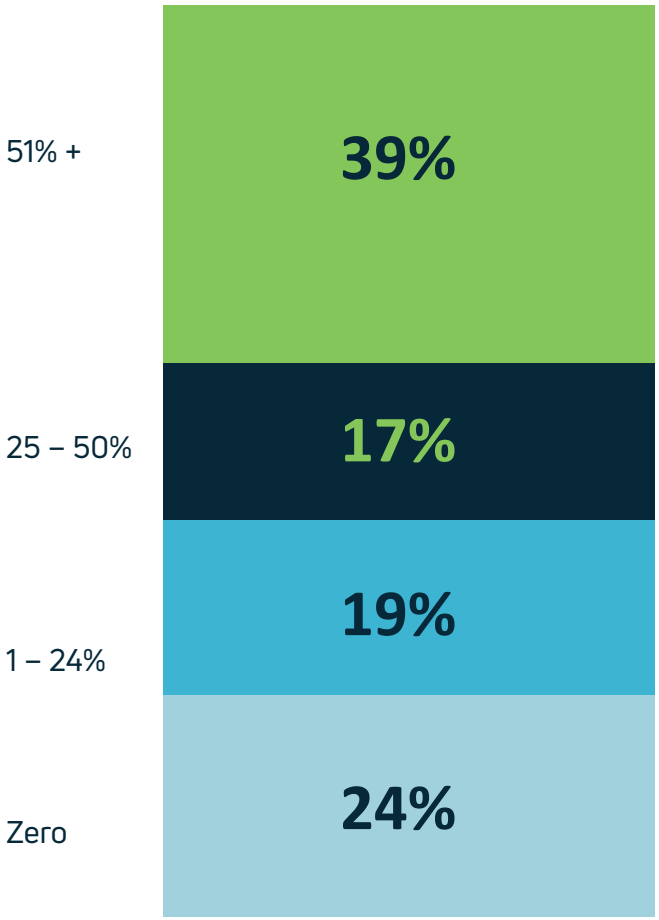


Small and Medium Enterprises: Critical Skillsets for Growth

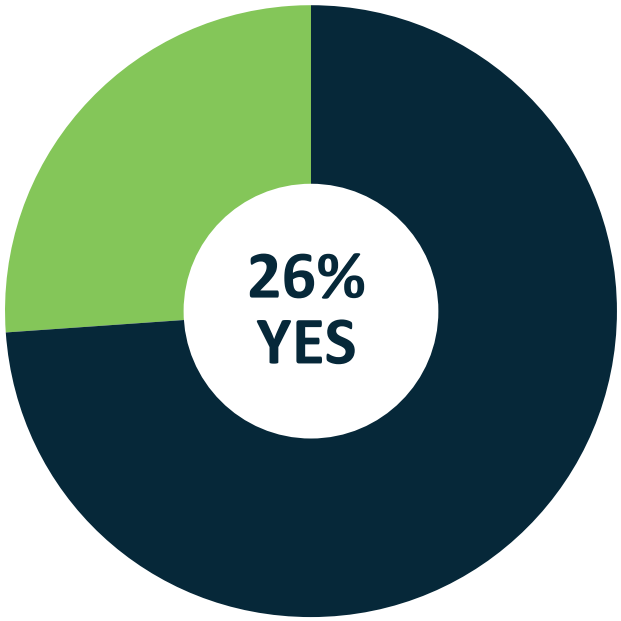
What are the main barriers preventing staff from upskilling?



What percentage of staff have recently taken an upskilling programme?

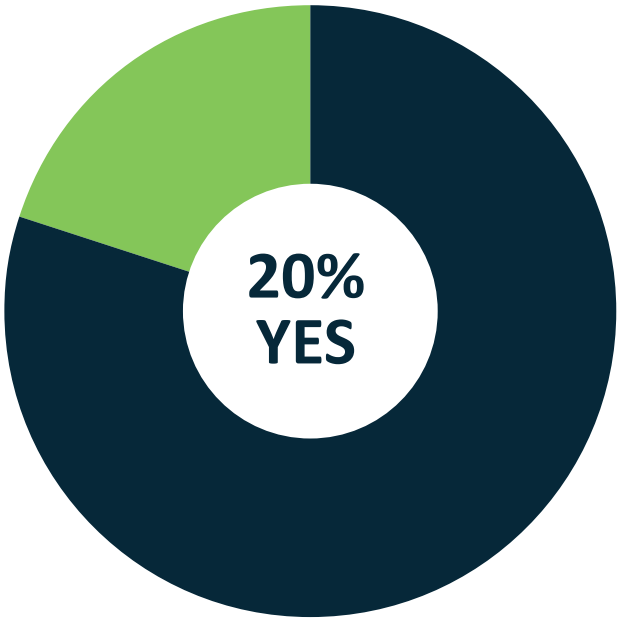


Does your business currently have a talent development strategy in place?



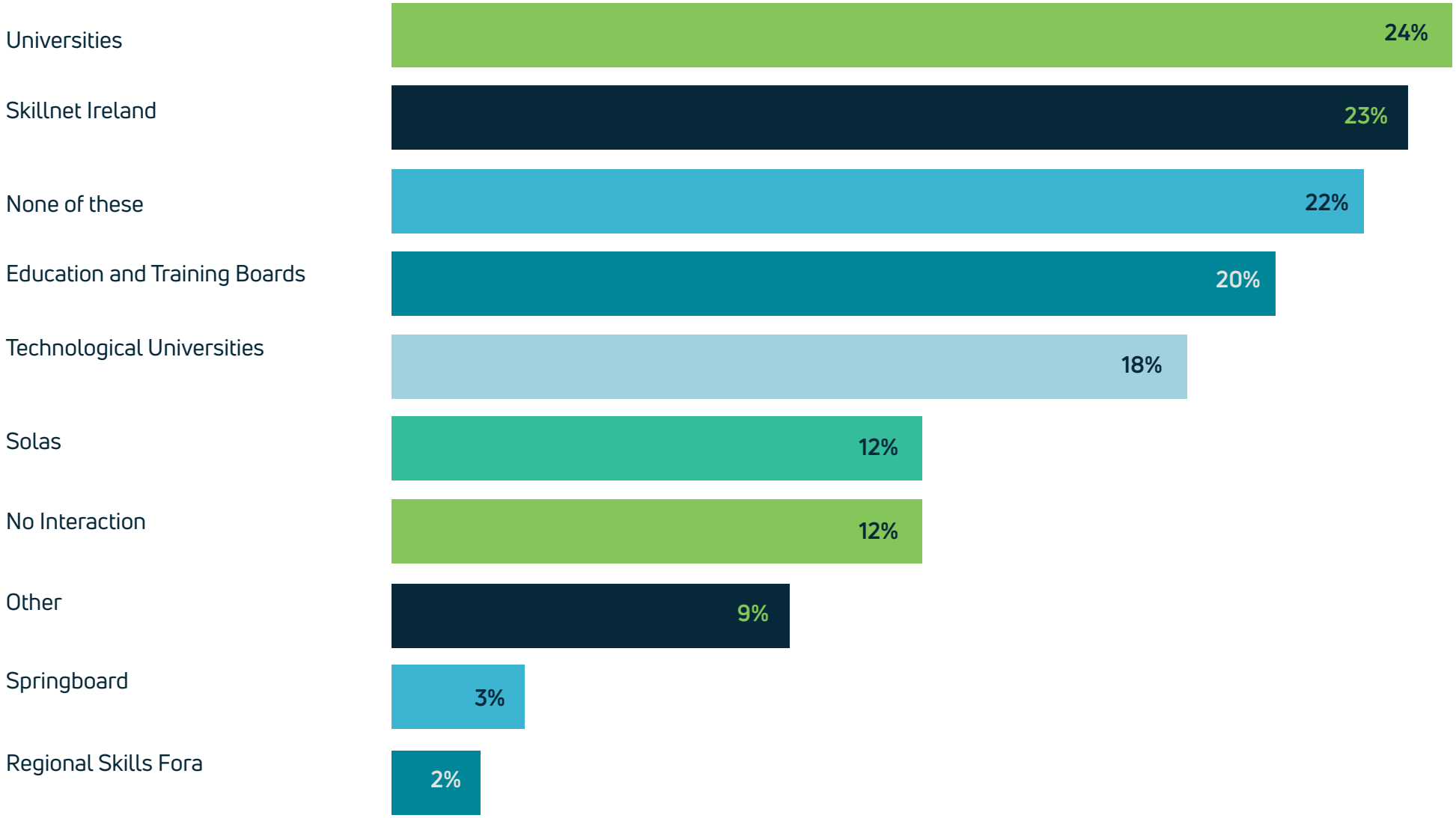
Yes No

Does your business intend to create a talent development strategy in the coming year?



Yes No

Which of the following national education providers does your business interact with?



Large Businesses
250+ Employees

Large Businesses: 250+ Employees

Large businesses play a pivotal role in Ireland's economy and despite accounting for just 0.2% of enterprises, large businesses generate 59% of the country's revenue and employ 32% of the workforce. Comprising both multinational corporations (MNCs) and scaled domestic enterprises, these businesses are central to Ireland's reputation as a global destination for innovation and investment[1].

All respondents categorised their business as either 'strong' or 'very strong' and 46% plan to increase their staff numbers within a year. All large businesses facilitated some degree of workforce upskilling this year, with 19% reporting that over 75% of their employees engaged in upskilling in the past 12 months.

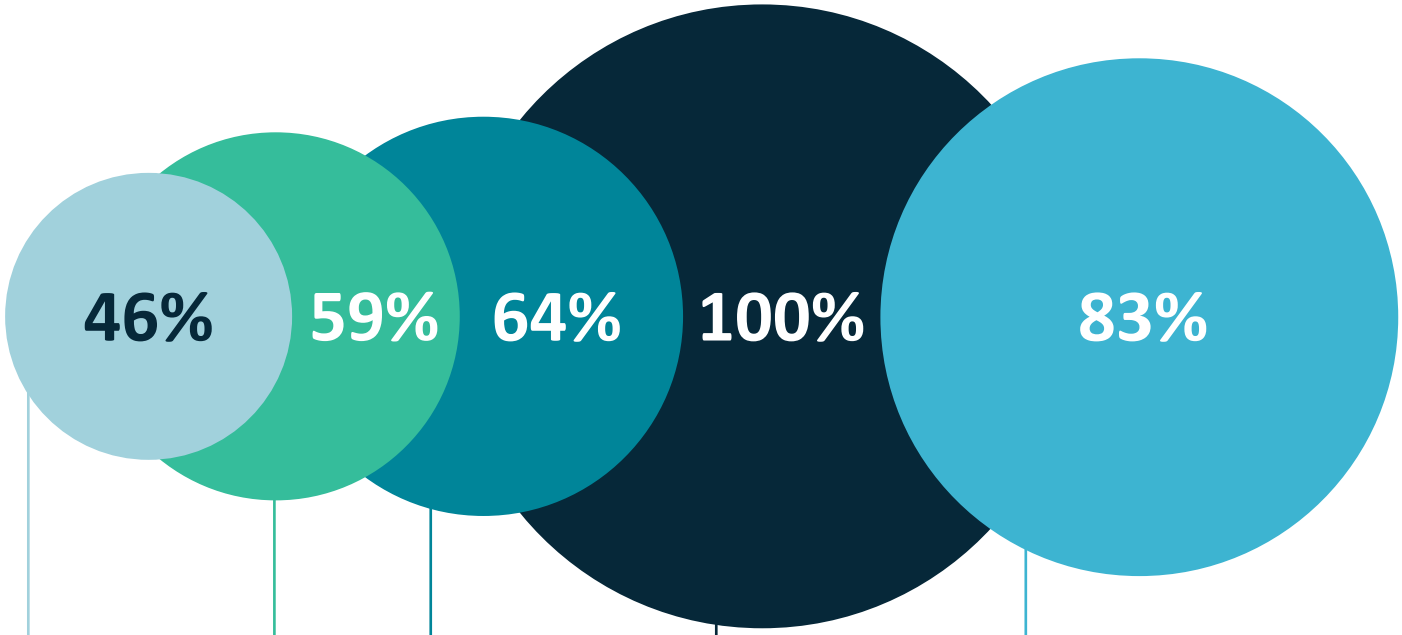
83% of large businesses reported that they had a talent development strategy in place, an 11% increase on last year's figure. 74% believed their businesses' core skills had changed over the past two to three years and 82% expected them to change over the next two to three years. Time commitments (59%) and a lack of awareness of existing training options (38%) were cited as the greatest barriers to engaging in upskilling for large businesses.

Large businesses are proactively responding to the impact of digital and green transitions with 73% of respondents saying that up to a quarter of their workforce will require green upskilling in the future, to perform their role and 52% reporting that up to a quarter of their workforce will need digital upskilling.

[1] Business in Ireland – CSO – Central Statistics Office

Large Businesses: 250+ Employees

Large Businesses: 250+ Employees



of large businesses plan to expand their workforce over the next 12 months.

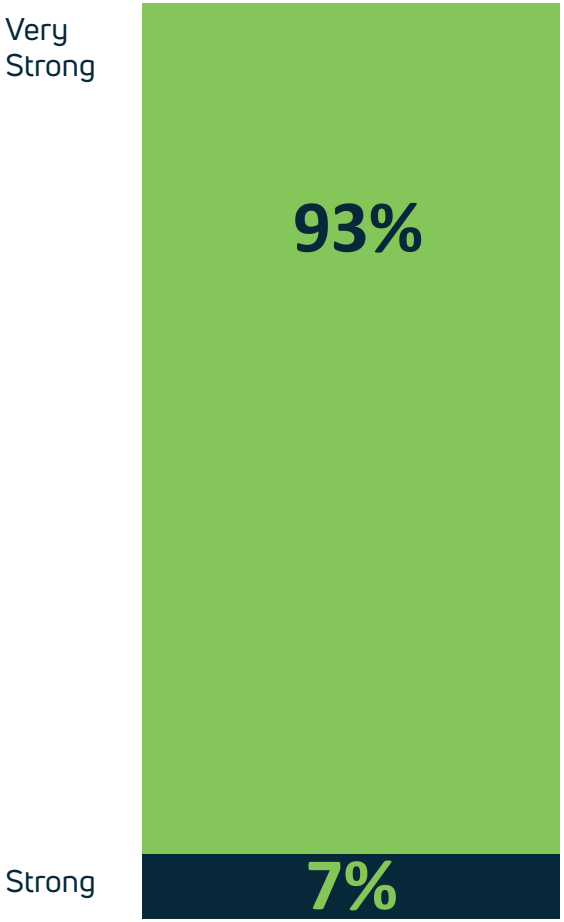
of respondents cited time constraints as a major barrier to upskilling.

of large businesses report difficulties in sourcing key talent, a sharp rise from 31% in the previous year.

All surveyed large businesses rated their economic condition as strong or very strong.

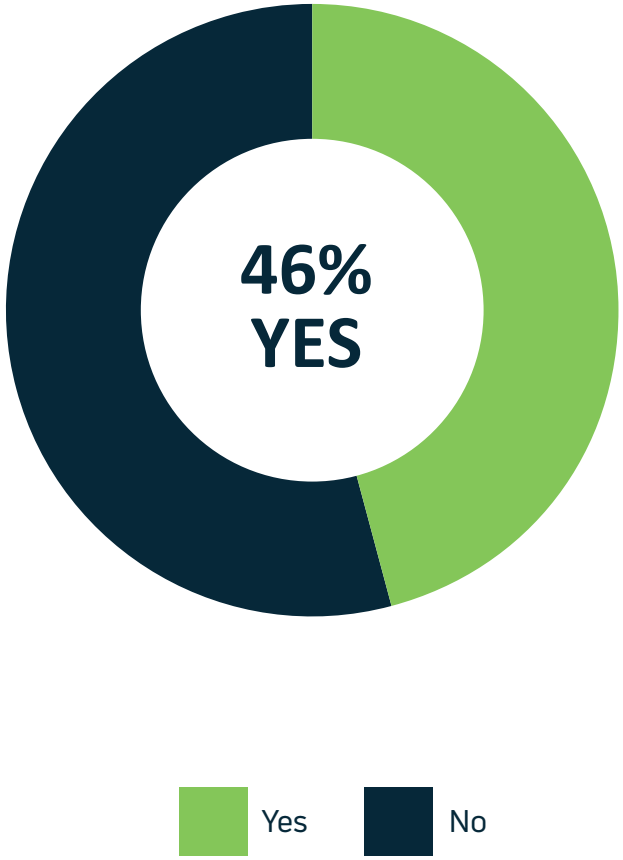
of large businesses have formal talent development strategies in place, an 11% increase from last year.

How would you rate the economic strength of your business?

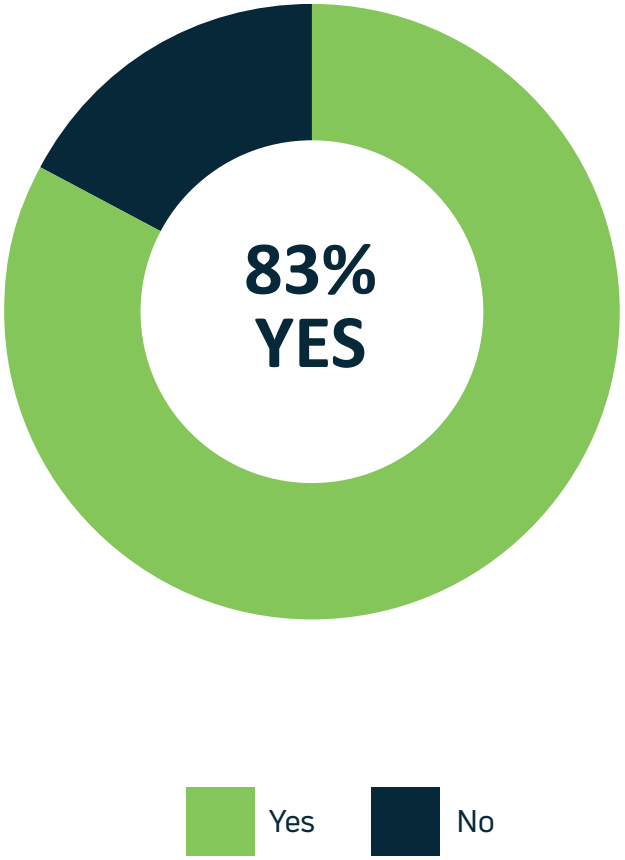


Large Businesses: 250+ Employees

46% of large businesses plan to increase their staff numbers in the coming 12 months.

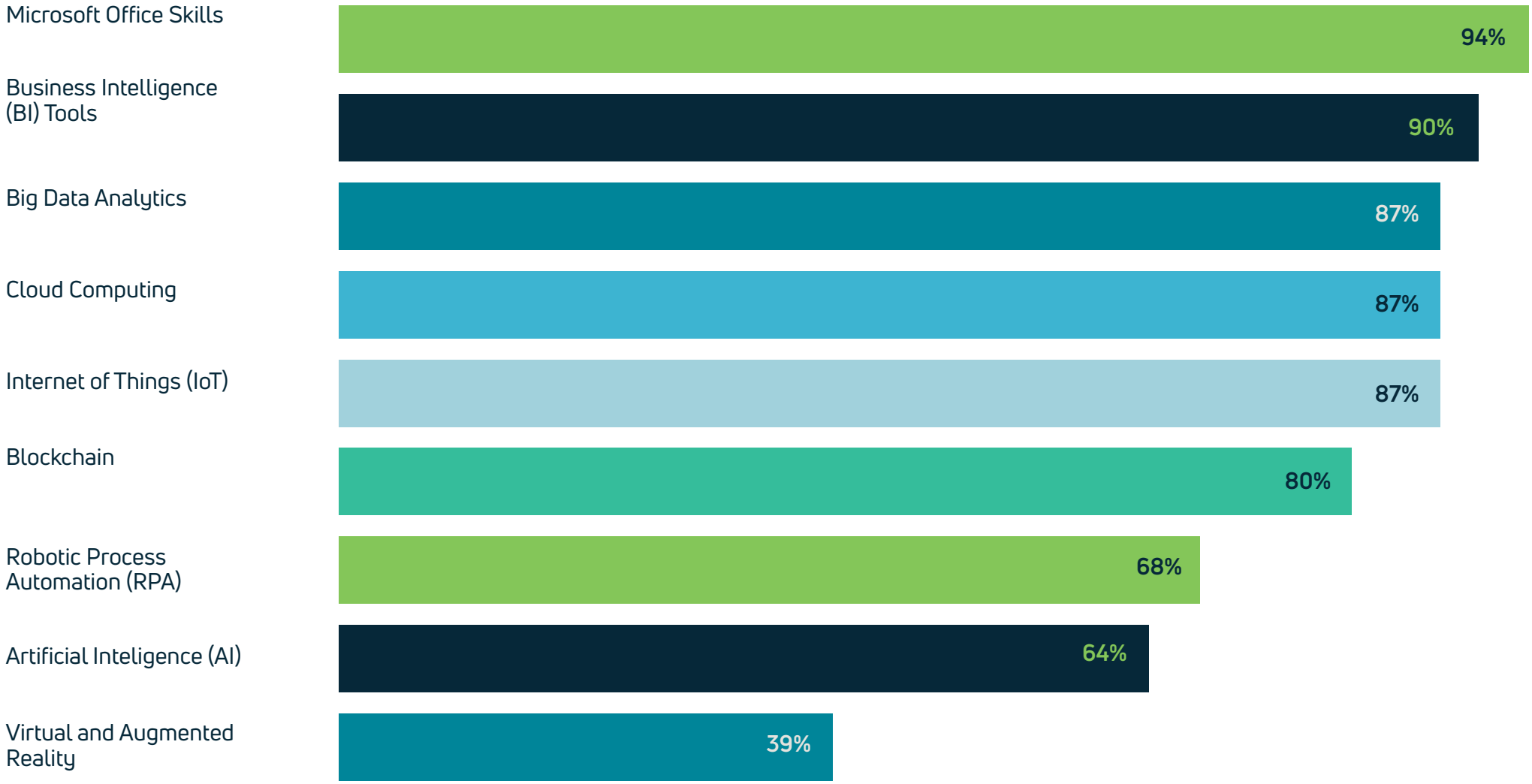


83% of large businesses have a talent development strategy in place.



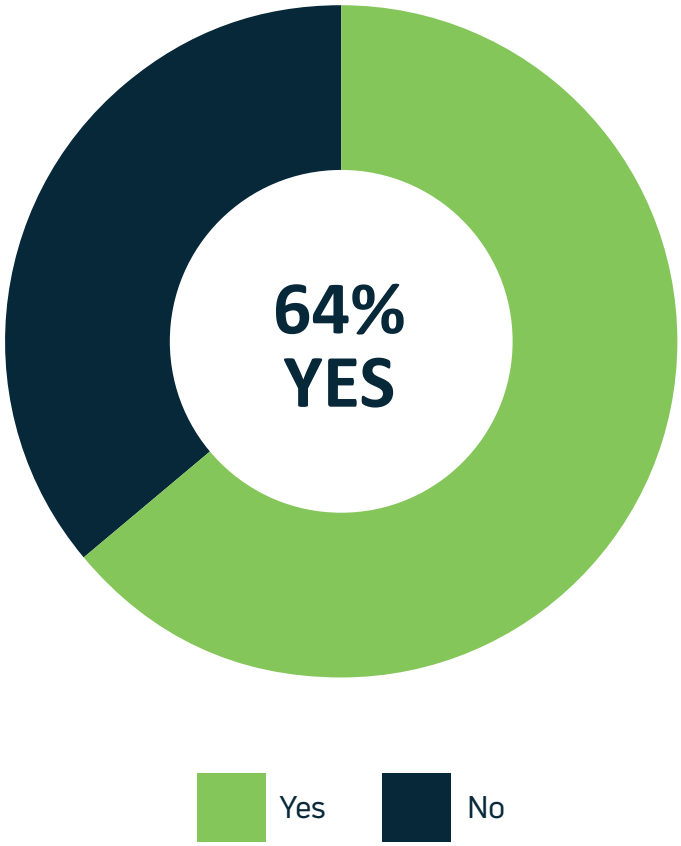
Large Businesses: 250+ Employees

Which of these digital skillsets has the potential to grow your business in the next two to three years?

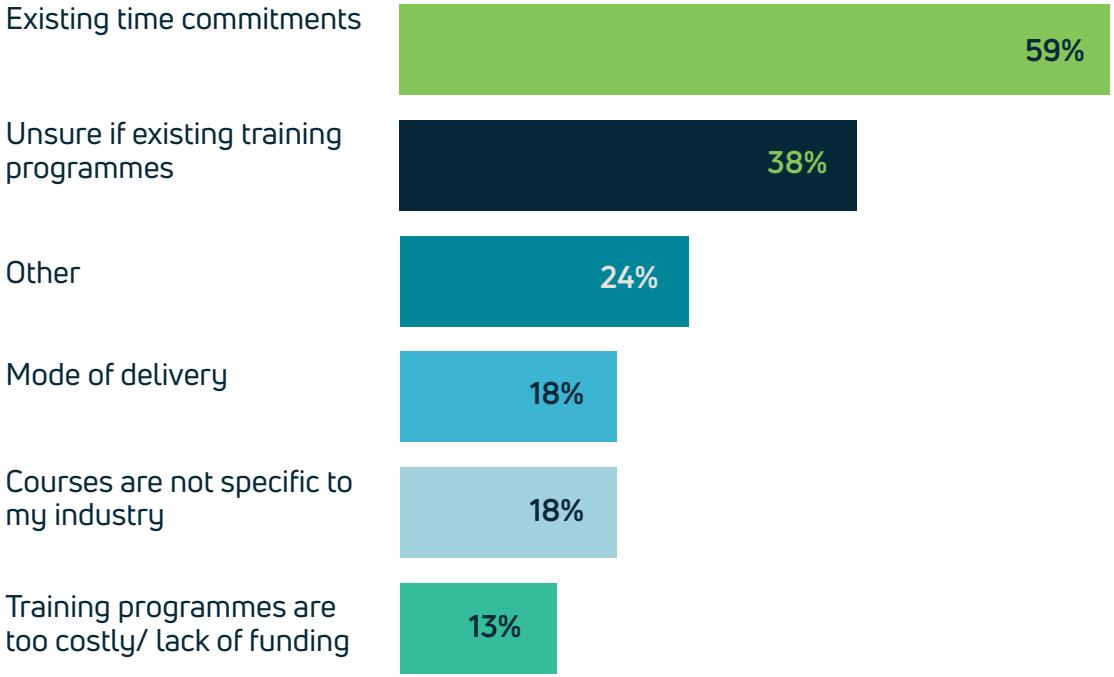


Large Businesses: 250+ Employees

64% of large businesses have difficulty hiring employees with the appropriate skillset.



What are the main barriers preventing staff from upskilling?



Digitalisation
Talent and Upskilling

Digitalisation: Talent and Upskilling

The Harnessing Digital Strategy sets a goal for Ireland to become a digital leader both within Europe, and globally. The framework includes the aim of 90% of SMEs achieving basic digital intensity and 75% utilising AI, cloud computing and big data by 2030. For Irish businesses, the digital transition is both an opportunity and a challenge, requiring significant investment in technology and workforce upskilling.

Irish businesses recognise the challenges and opportunities offered by accelerated digitalisation with 57% of this year's respondents identifying their company as either "advanced" or "very advanced" digitally. This is reflected in the high uptake of digital technologies being used by Irish businesses with 77% of respondents having a website for their business (98% of large businesses), 70% having a presence on social media, 69% availing of cloud computing, and 36% of businesses now employing a dedicated information and communication technology specialist.

79% of companies highlighted that their staff would require some form of digital upskilling in the coming years to perform their role, which represents a 14% increase on 2024. 60% of SMEs highlight that new and emerging technologies will increase productivity of their business in the coming years, with skills such as MS Office (77%), cloud computing (63%) and AI (37%) being some of the key skillsets with the potential for business growth in the next two to three years.

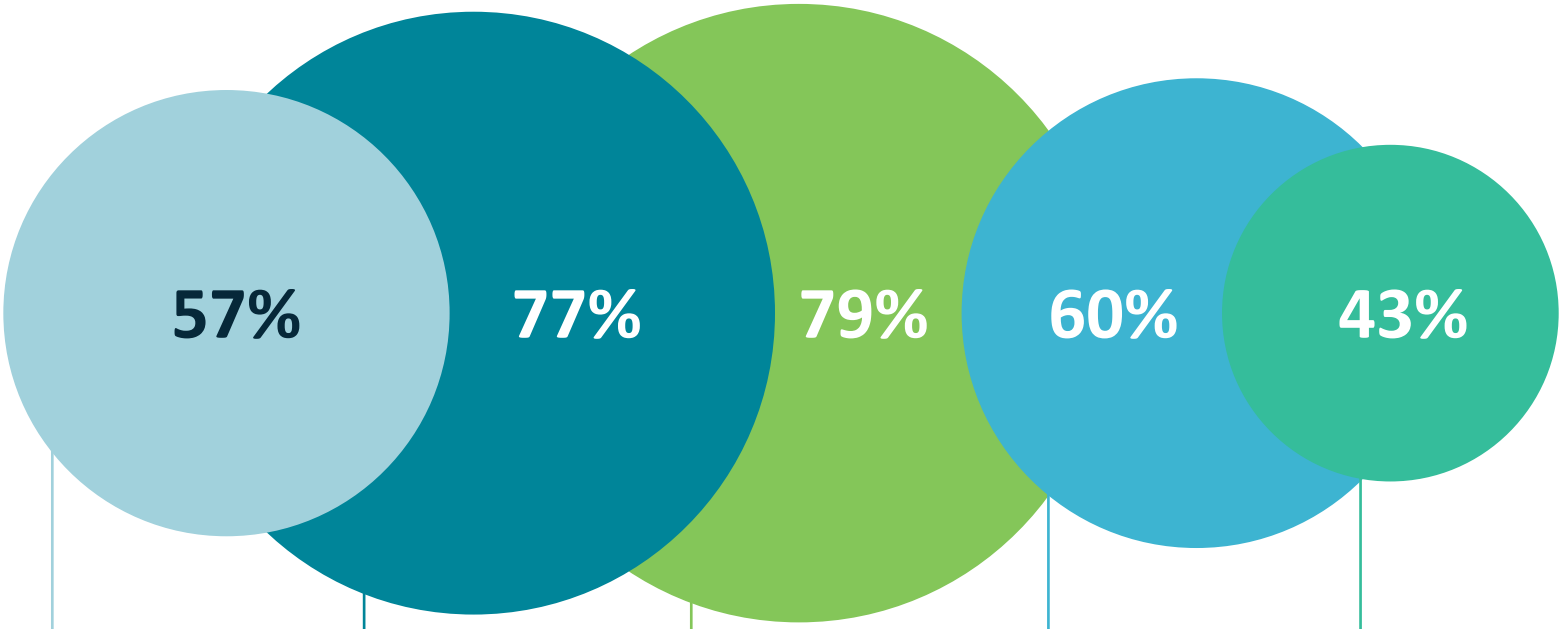
The desire from large businesses for more specialised digital skillsets is trending upwards with a noted increase across a multitude of digital specialist skillsets. Both blockchain (80%) and AI (64%) rose significantly for large firms when compared to the figures of 24% and 42% reported in 2024. Among other emerging needs, the demand for skills in business intelligence (90%), internet of things (87%), cloud computing (87%), and data analytics (87%) almost doubled on levels reported last year.

Large businesses also reported strong potential for traditional digital skills to drive future growth with skills in MS Office proficiency (94%), which aligns with research undertaken by Skillnet Ireland and IDA Ireland which assessed the digitalisation skills needs of large businesses in Ireland[3].

[3.] Study of data and digital skills for all non-IT roles across multiple industries, Skillnet Ireland and IDA Ireland 2024

Digitalisation: Talent and Upskilling

Digitalisation: Talent and Upskilling



of businesses classify themselves as either advanced or very advanced digitally.

of businesses highlighted Microsoft Office as pivotal for growth followed by , cloud computing (63%), and the Internet of Things (58%) are seen as pivotal for growth.

of businesses anticipate the need for workforce digital upskilling within the next 2 – 3 years.

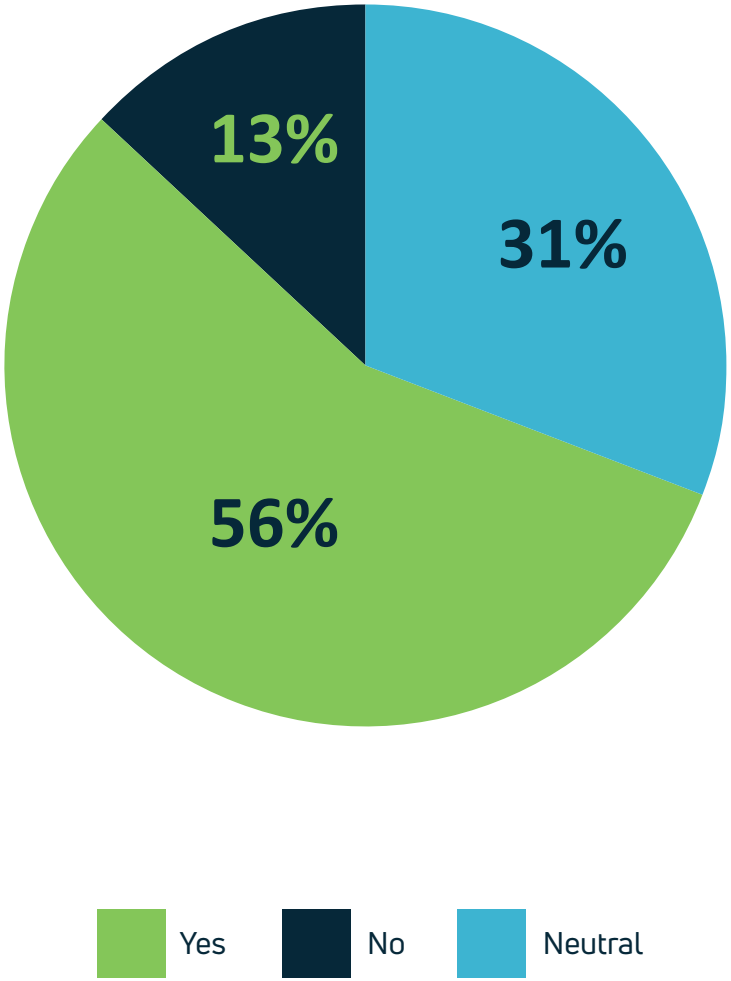
of SMEs highlighted that new and emerging technologies will increase productivity of their business in the coming years.

of highlighted time constraints and cost (32%) are the most cited obstacles to implementing digital training.

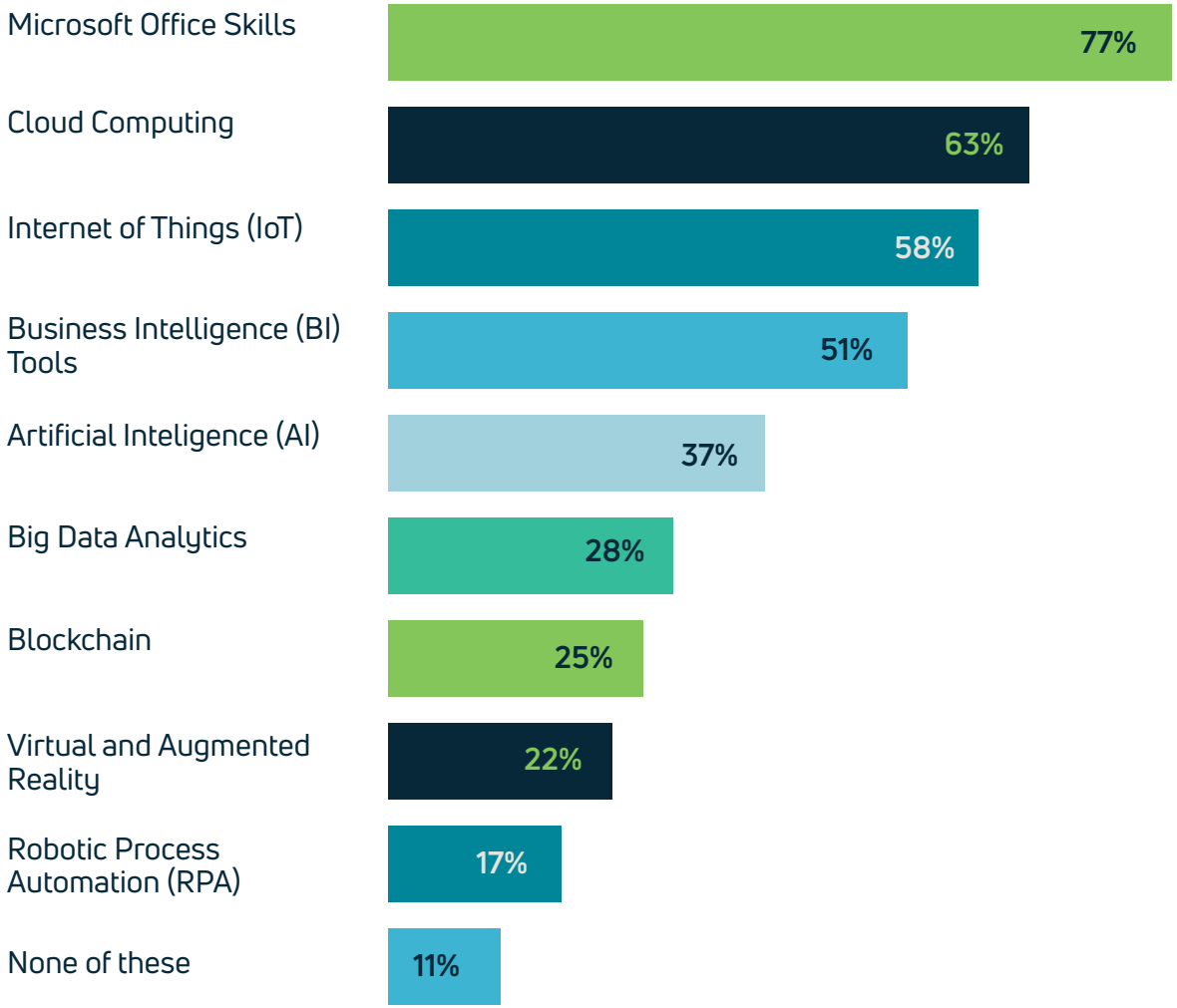
Will your business' workforce need digital upskilling in the coming two to three years?

Digitalisation: Talent and Upskilling

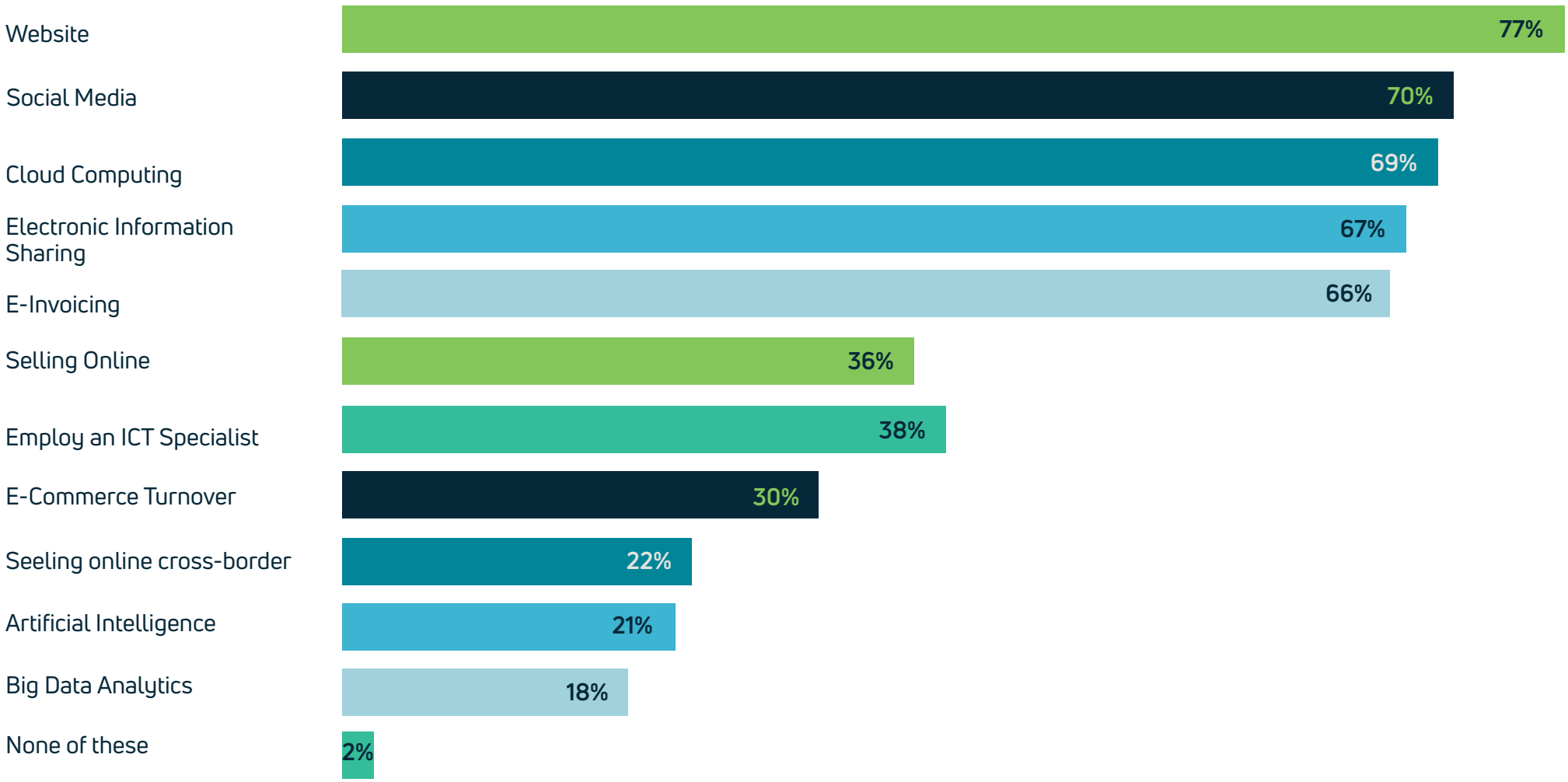
How digitally/technologically advanced do you consider your business to be?



Which of the following digital and data skills have the potential to grow your business in the coming years?

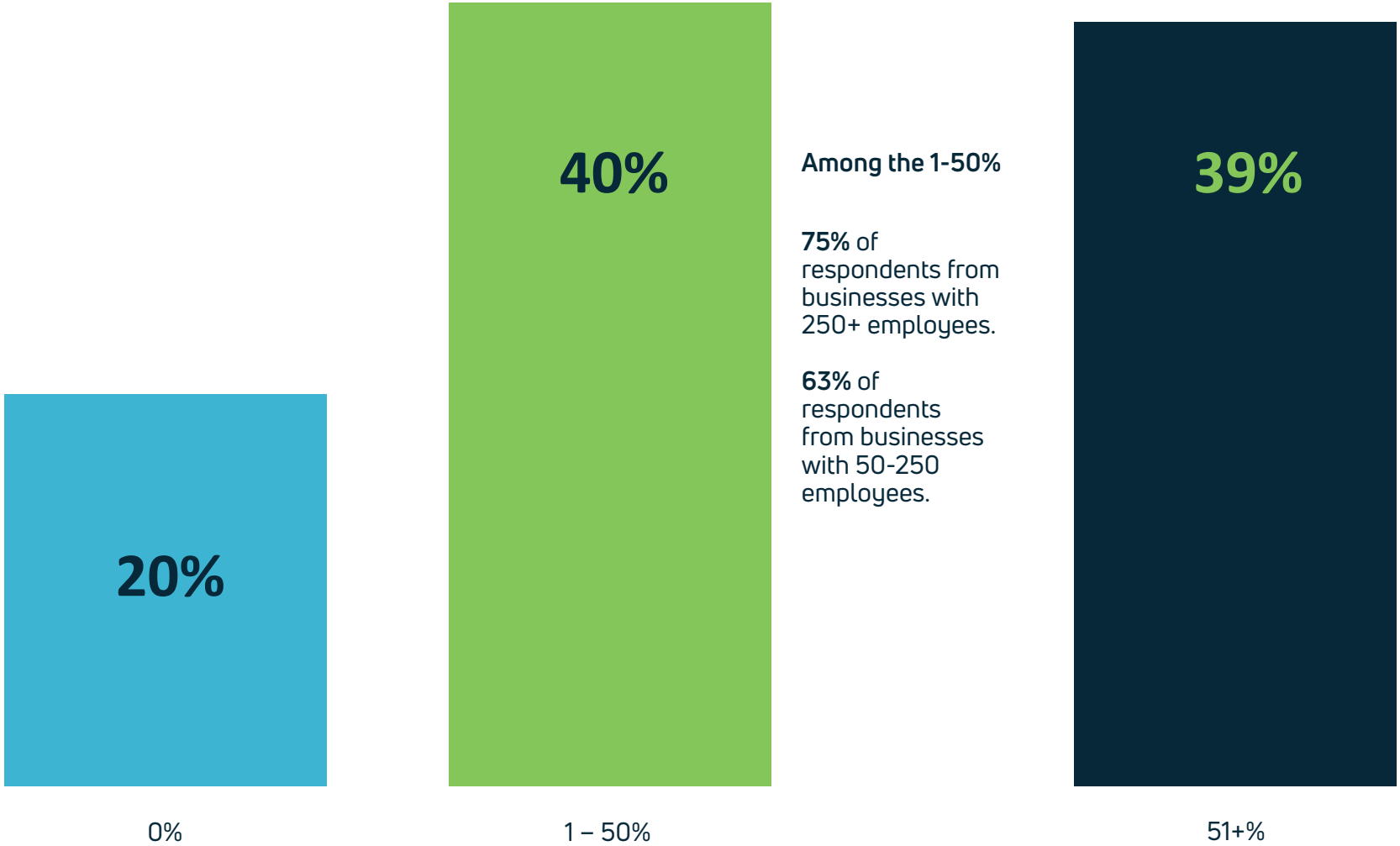


How many of the following digital technologies does your business utilise?



Digitalisation: Talent and Upskilling

What percentage of your workforce is likely to require digitalisation and data skill supports in the coming years?



Among the 1-50%

75% of respondents from businesses with 250+ employees.

63% of respondents from businesses with 50-250 employees.

Among the 51%+

40% of respondents from businesses with 10 – 49 employees.

Spotlight on Artificial Intelligence

Spotlight on Artificial Intelligence

Irish businesses are increasingly adopting AI and Generative AI technologies, however Irish companies are lagging multinationals in adoption rates. This report4 delved into the uptake of AI within enterprise in Ireland, with the aim of assessing the rate of AI adoption. It also identifies skills gaps related to AI implementation, and understanding the barriers facing businesses to successfully integrating AI into their business.

Overall, respondents revealed a cautiously optimistic and nuanced approach towards AI within Ireland's business community. Attitudes towards the impact of AI are broadly positive and there is an accelerating awareness of the importance of AI to business success. While 77% do not currently include AI in their business strategy, 47% said they aim to focus on AI in their business strategy in the next one to two years. 52% of business leaders say they believe AI presents an opportunity for their business while only 10% see the adoption of AI representing a threat.

There is an increasing awareness of the potential of AI for business growth, with 37% of respondents signalling that the use of AI could grow their business in the next two to three years. This focus on growth spiked to 77% among SMEs with more than 50 employees, a significant increase on last year's figure of 23%. When asked about the potential impact of AI on their sector over the coming five years, 39% said they believe the impact will be "moderate", compared to 9% who said they believe it will be "transformative".

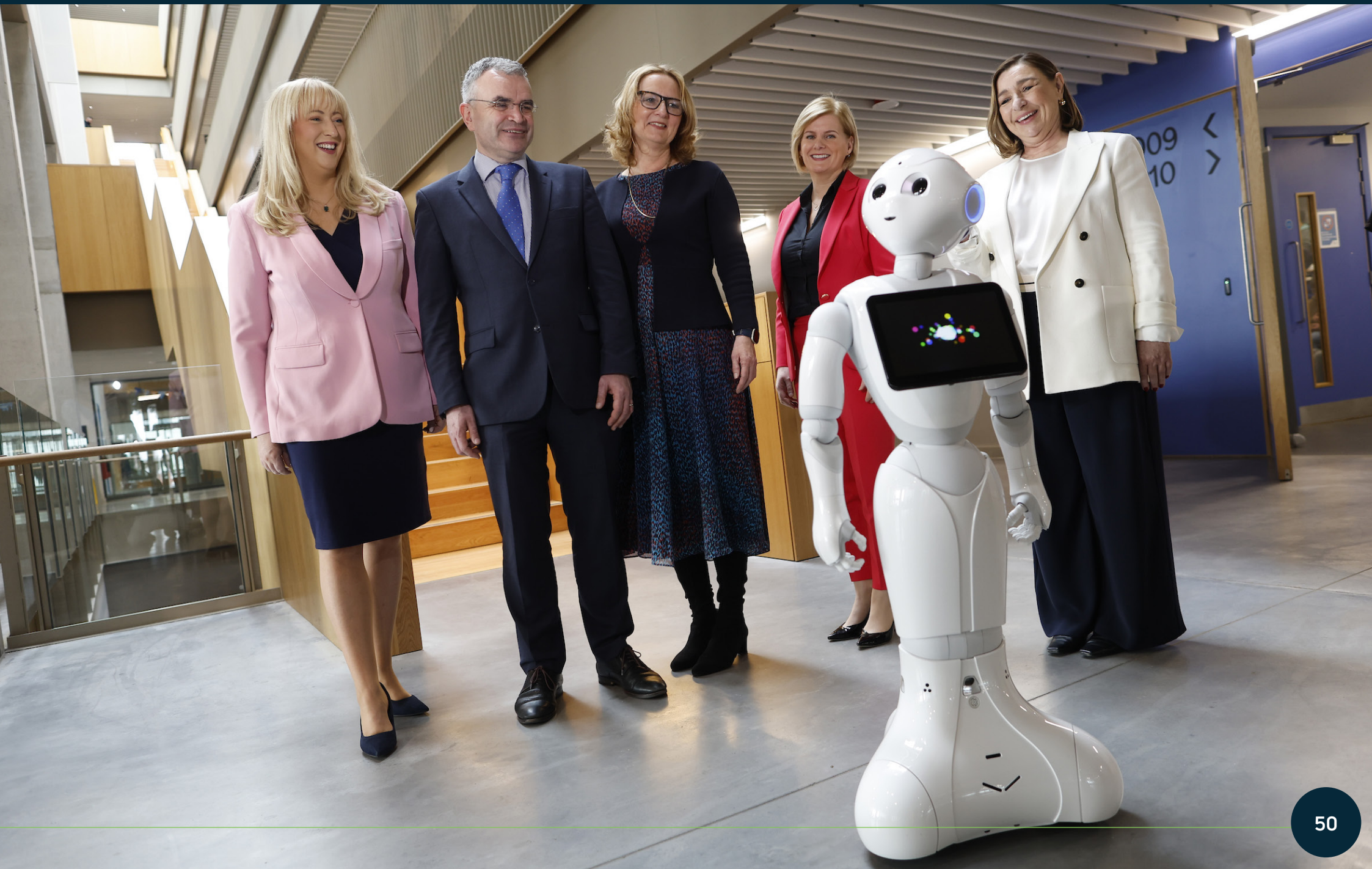
The findings revealed broadly equal levels of AI usage for both small and large businesses. 15% of businesses reported using AI every day with 54% reporting they had not used AI at all. Different levels of AI usage between sectors of the economy were as expected, with 29% of businesses in the tech sector reporting daily AI usage compared to just 14% of manufacturing enterprises, and 13% of businesses in the food industry. Only 7% of business leaders reported their workforce being "very skilled" in AI compared to 41% who claimed their employees were "not at all skilled".

Access to the required AI and data skills (73%) is the greatest barrier to implementing AI for Irish business followed by security concerns (68%) and implementation issues (62%).

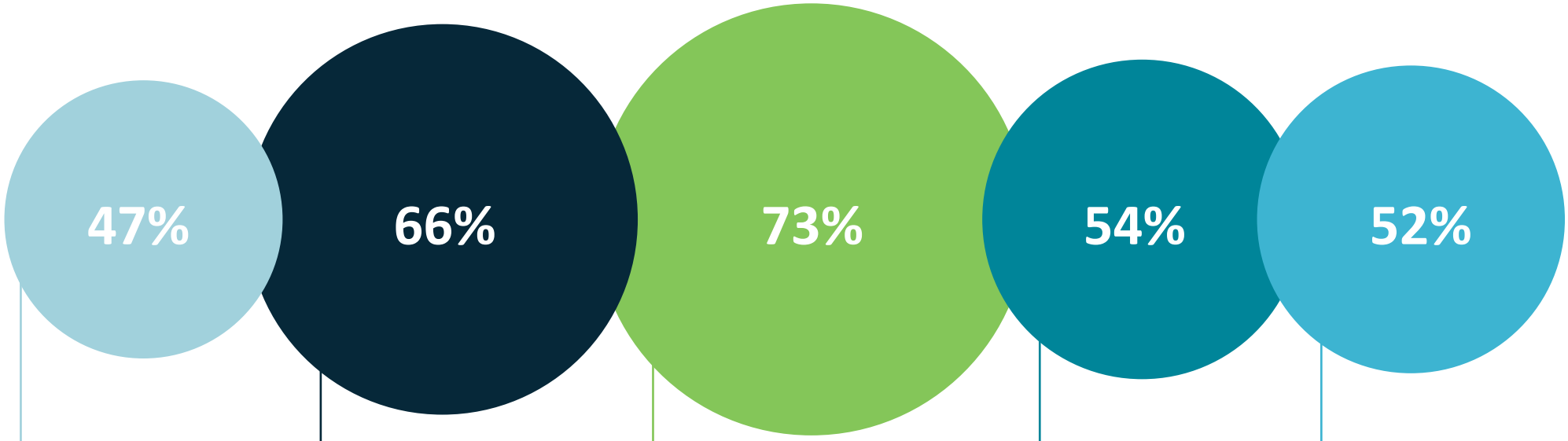
According to respondents, the skills most in demand to implement AI into a business are critical thinking (48%), followed by cyber-security and AI (46%), and data analysis (46%). The skills most in demand for accelerating AI are the uniquely human transversal skills of critical thinking, creativity, and problem solving cited by two-thirds of businesses.

Supporting businesses, and particularly SMEs, to unlock the potential of AI will become increasingly important to maintaining Ireland's capacity to compete globally. Maintaining a highly skilled pipeline of employees with AI and other advanced digital skills, is critical to achieving this goal and securing Ireland's reputation as a high-performing economy and hub of innovation for emerging technologies.

[4] A representative sample of 200 companies with between 10 and 250 employees participated in participated in the survey for the Spotlight on Artificial Intelligence section of this report.



Spotlight on Artificial Intelligence



of businesses aim to focus on AI in their strategy in the next 1-2 years.

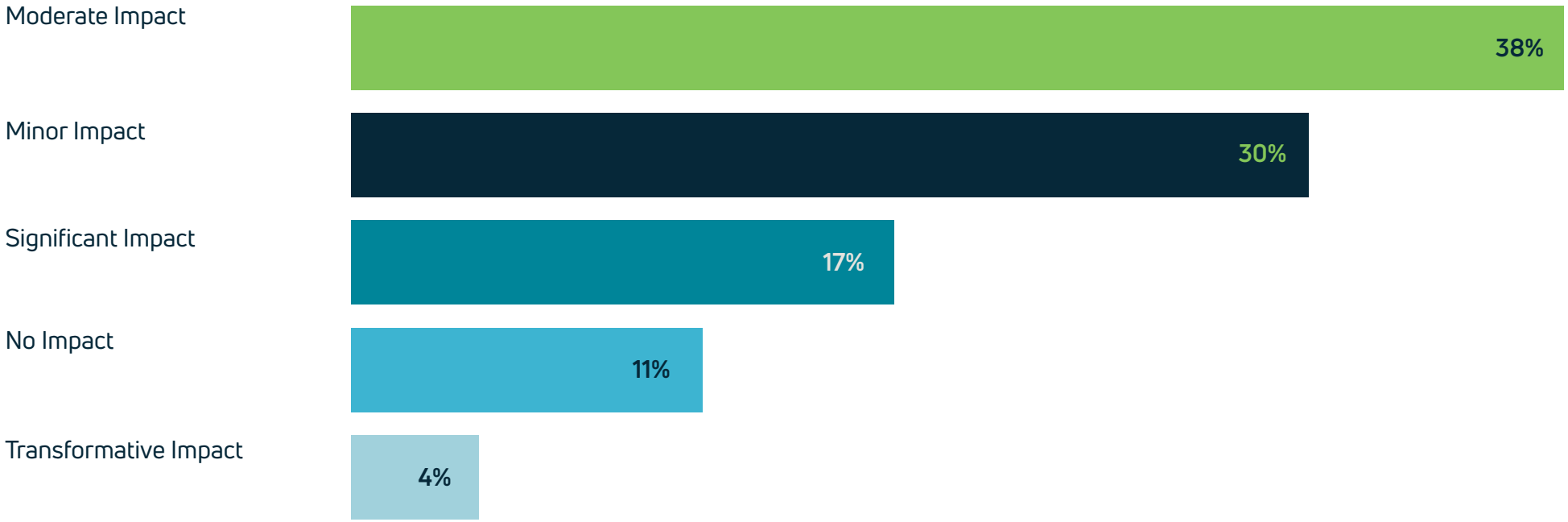
of businesses regard AI as an opportunity for their business in the coming 1-2 years.

of businesses highlight a lack of skills in their team as the key barrier to implementing AI.

of businesses have never used AI.

of businesses highlight that the opportunity of AI outweighs the threat to technology poses.

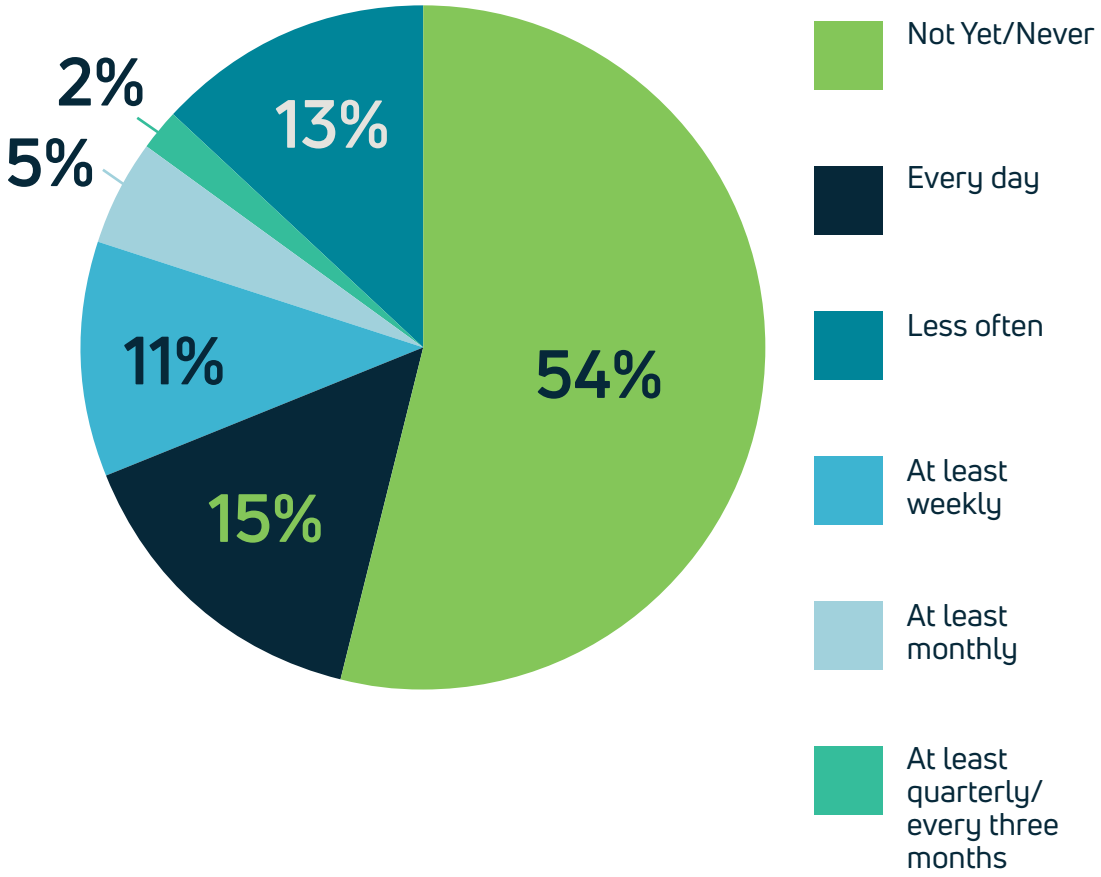
How would you rate the potential impact of AI on your industry in the next five years?



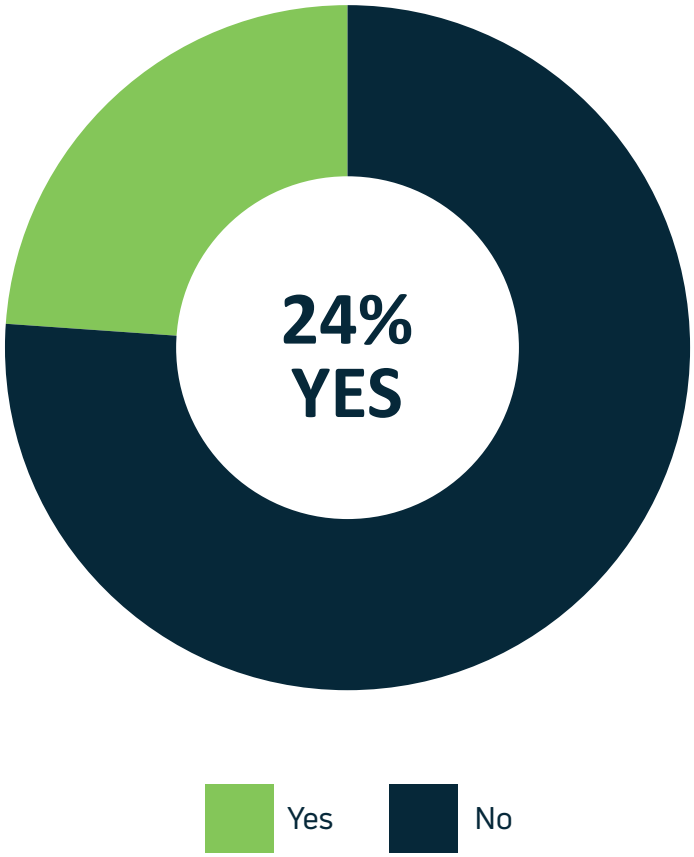
Spotlight on Artificial Intelligence

Top five areas where business anticipate AI will help their business in the next 12 months.

How frequently, if at all, does your business currently use AI?

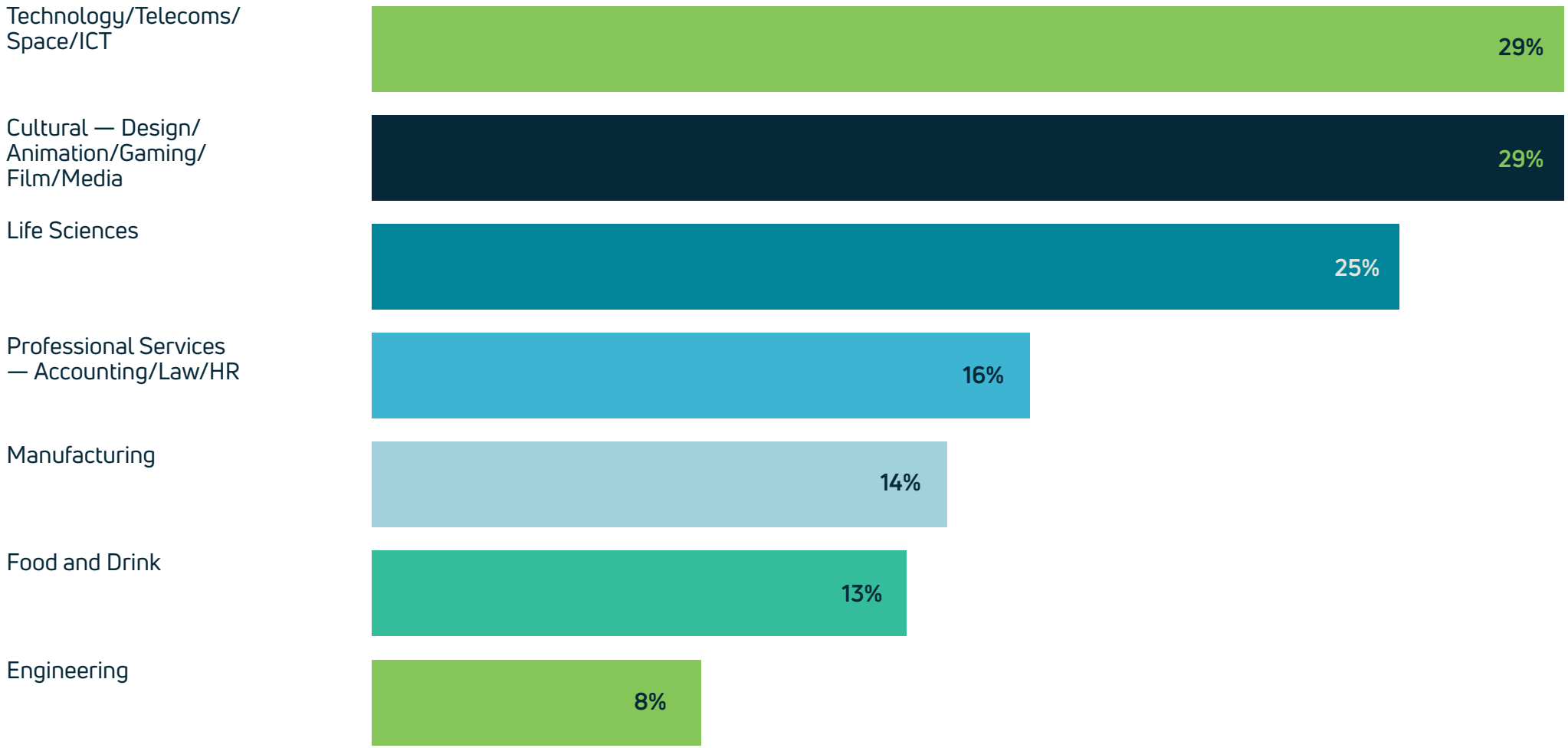


Does your current business strategy include AI?

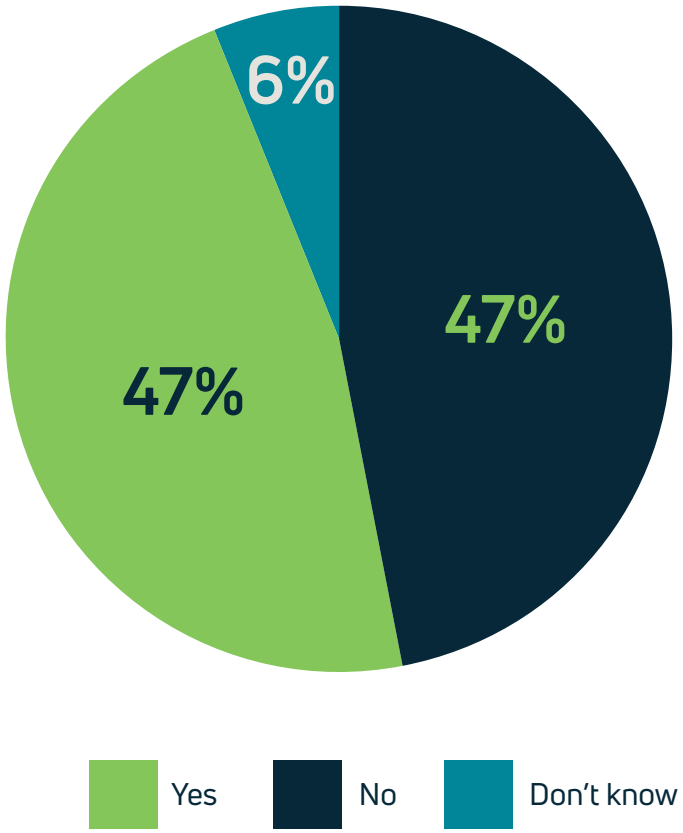


Spotlight on Artificial Intelligence

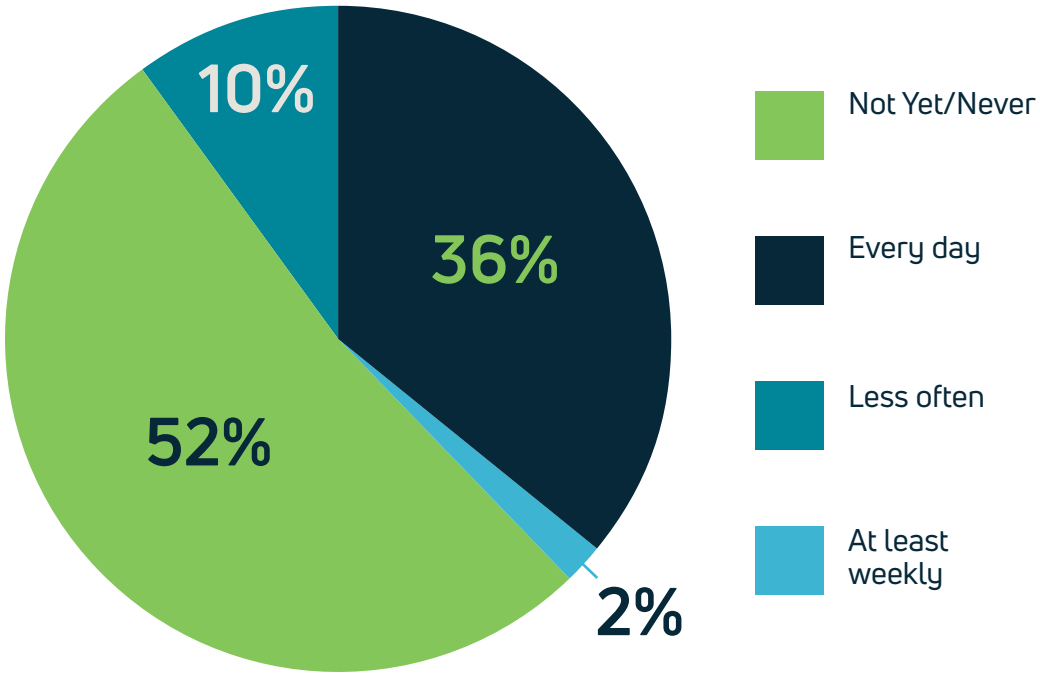
Percentage of businesses using AI on a daily basis.



Do you plan to focus on AI in your strategy in the next one to two years?

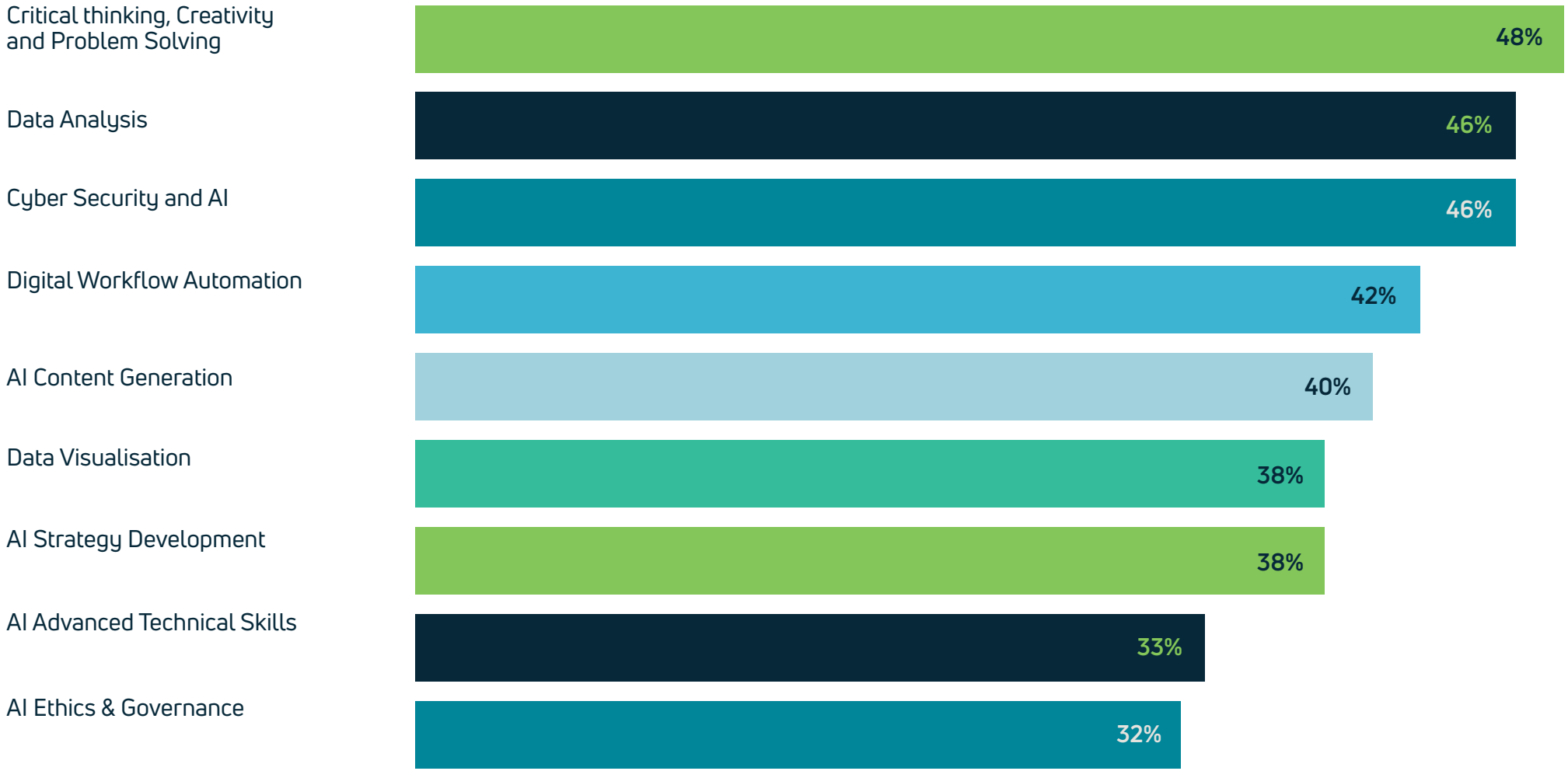


Do you feel AI presents more of an opportunity or a threat to your business in the next one to two years?



What, if any, are the main barriers to adopting AI in your business?

Which, if any, of the following skills do you see a need for upskilling your employees in the next twelve months?



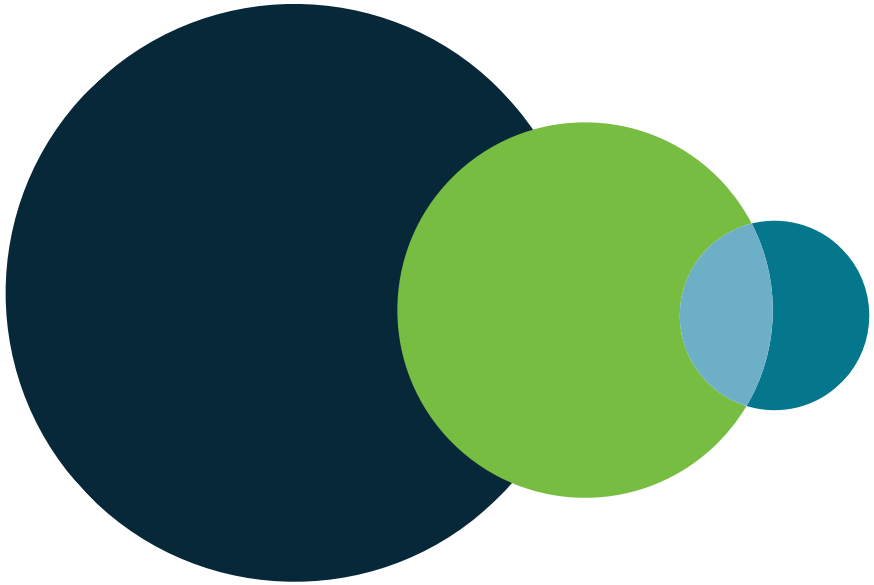
Climate Action
Talent and Upskilling

Climate Action: Talent and Upskilling

One of the key factors for Ireland to halve carbon emissions by 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality by 2050, is access to the right skills and talent. Irish businesses are increasingly recognising the importance of developing climate-related skills to address sustainability challenges and capitalise on emerging opportunities. However, one in five businesses reported difficulties in sourcing staff with these skills, and nearly two thirds indicated a need for upskilling for their staff in this area. 66% of businesses require climate action and sustainability related upskilling in the coming two to three years, which represents a 12% increase over the past 12 months.

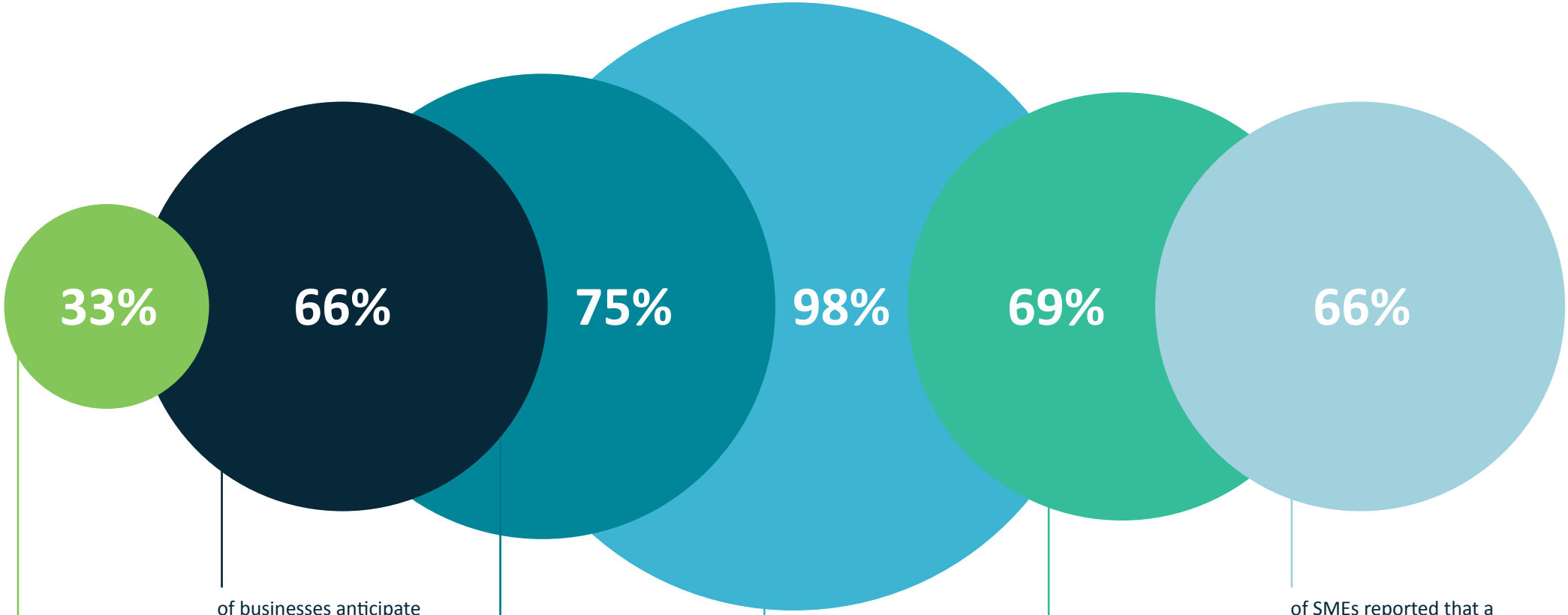
The transition to a low-carbon economy is creating a demand for upskilling in many climate-related areas. Knowledge of energy saving practices and technologies has risen by 10% to 75%, in the last year. 33% of business leaders reported that over 50% of their workforce will need climate action or sustainability supports in the future. The primary challenges businesses report in moving towards a more sustainable future are skills shortages and regulatory changes. 74% of businesses responded that regulatory changes pose a challenge to their business, up from 44% in 2024.

For larger companies the need to upskill in climate action and sustainability is particularly pressing. 98% of respondents report the need for upskilling compared to 65% of respondents from SMEs. 98% of large businesses underline the importance of developing sustainable supply chains. This figure is underpinned by the fact that 60% of all businesses believe that supply chain disruption presents a significant challenge in progressing towards more sustainable business practices in the future. These findings emphasise the importance of the availability of climate action upskilling supports so that all businesses can fully capitalise on climate transition opportunities.



Skillnet
CLIMATE
READY
ACADEMY

Climate Action: Talent and Upskilling



of businesses highlight over half of their workforce will require upskilling in climate action programmes in the coming years.

of businesses anticipate that their staff will require sustainability-related upskilling.

of businesses see energy efficiency as critical to growth, with large companies (98%) particularly focused on improving sustainable supply chains.

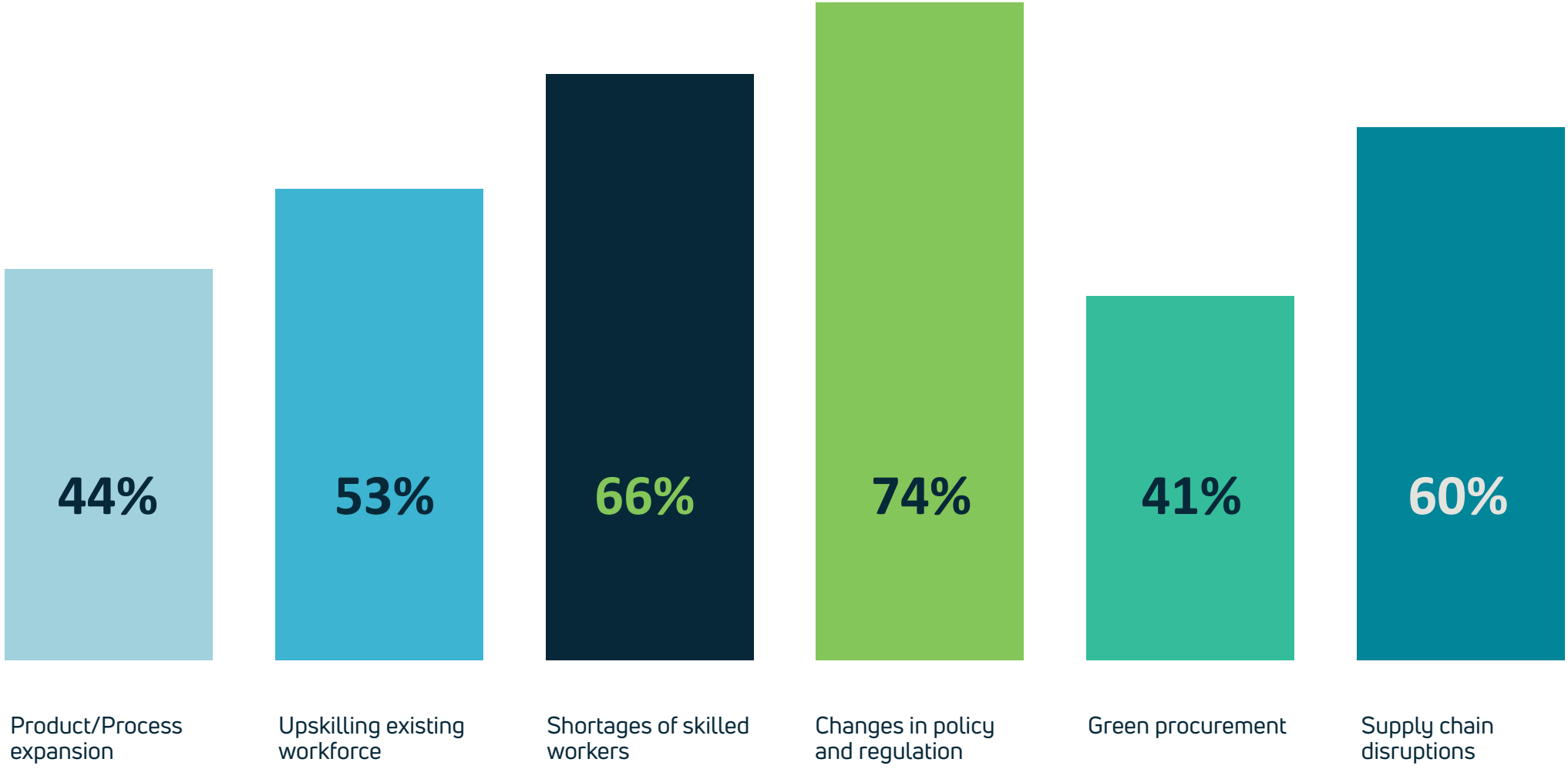
of large businesses have expressed the importance of developing sustainable supply chains.

of SMEs plan to develop skills in circular economy practices to meet sustainability targets and reduce waste.

of SMEs reported that a shortage of skilled workers is a challenge in moving to a more sustainable future for their business. With 53% of businesses highlighting the necessity of upskilling the workforce as important.

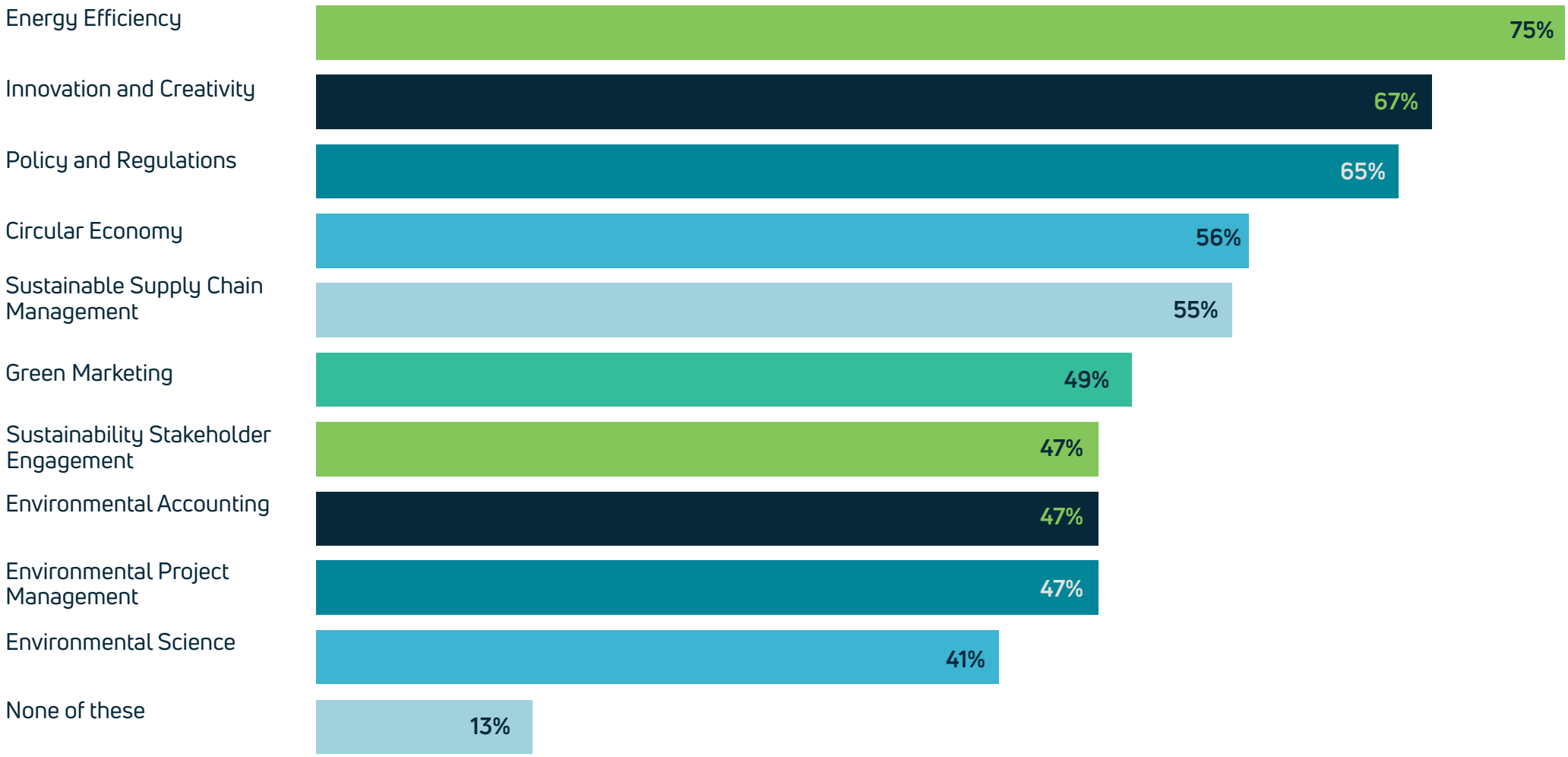
Climate Action: Talent and Upskilling

Key challenges in moving towards a sustainable future.

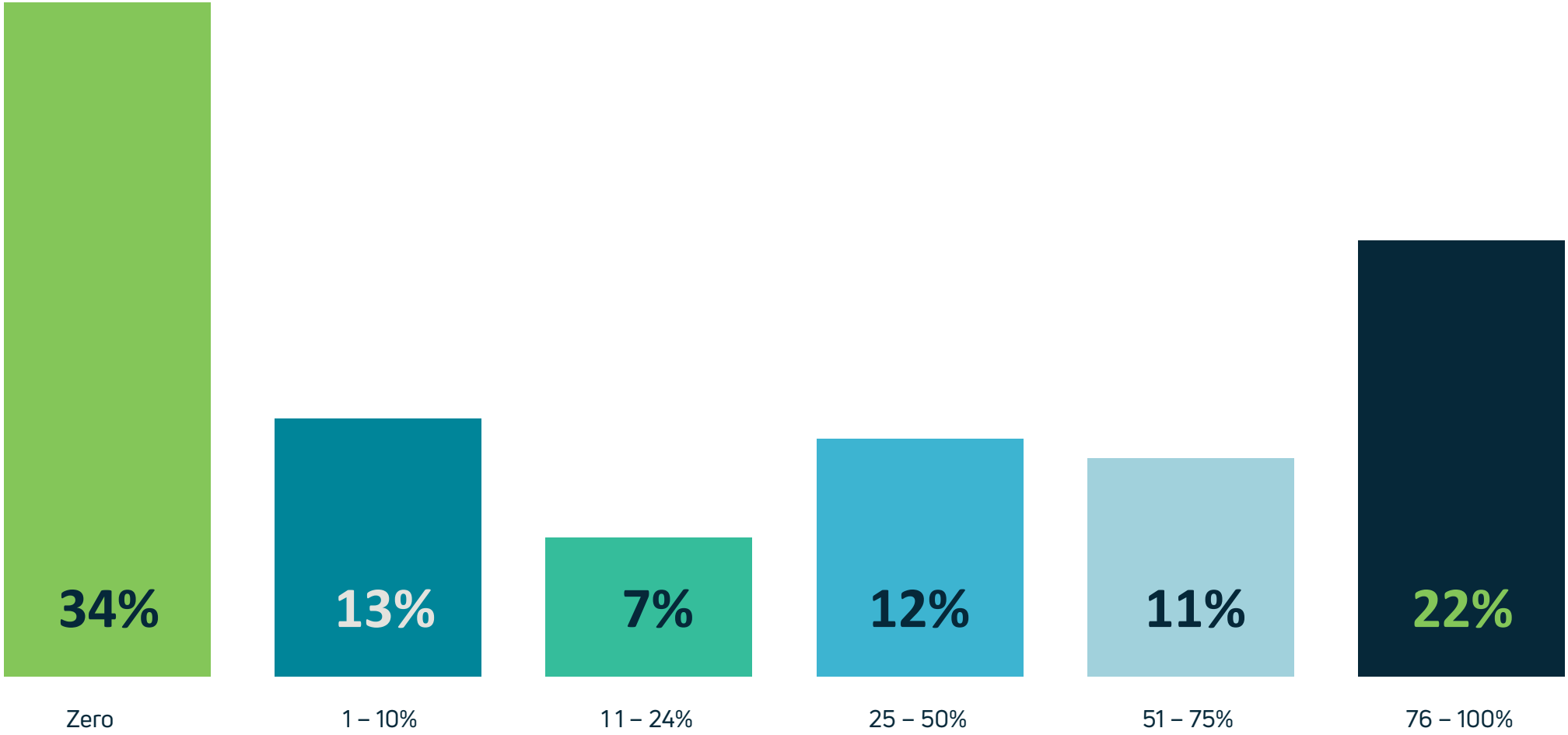


Climate Action: Talent and Upskilling

Which of the following climate action and sustainability skills have the potential to grow your business in the coming years?

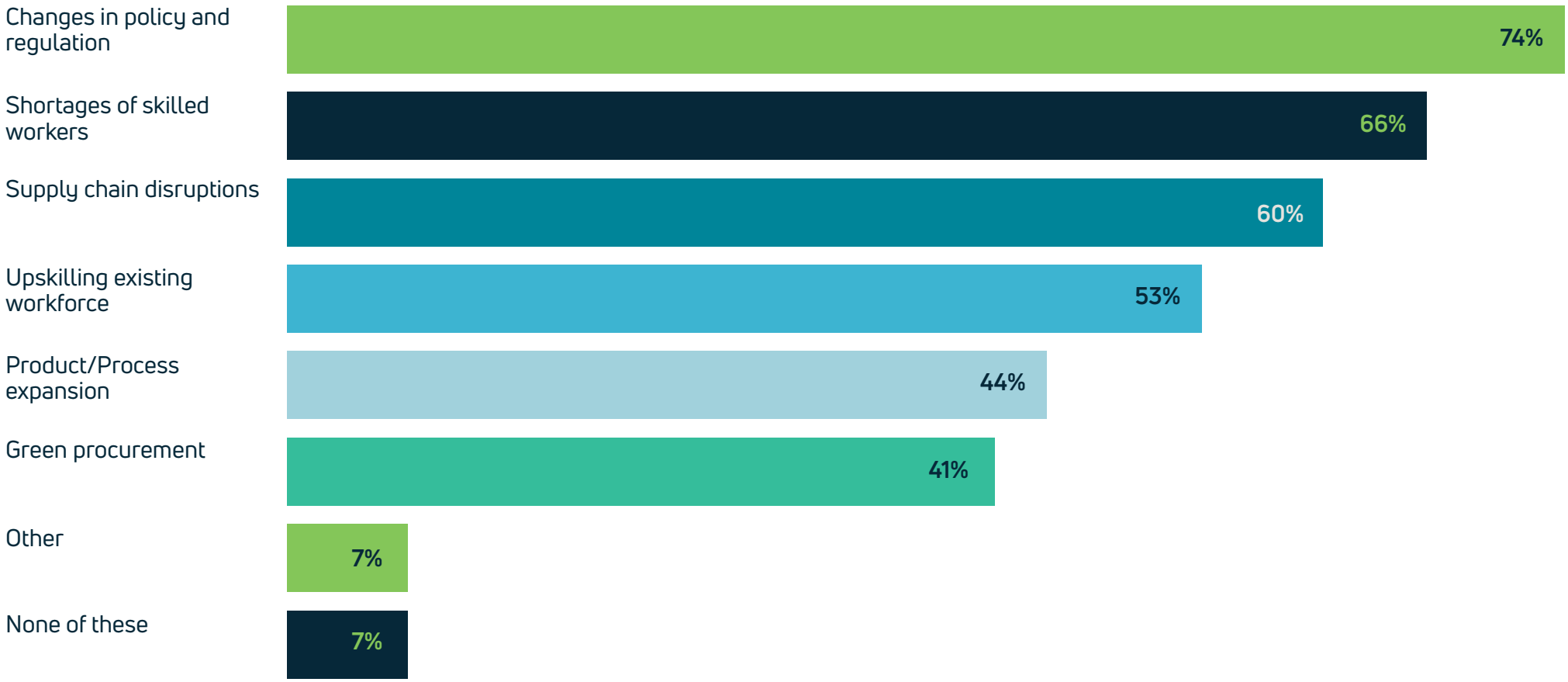


What percentage of your workforce is likely to require digitalisation and data skill supports in the coming years?



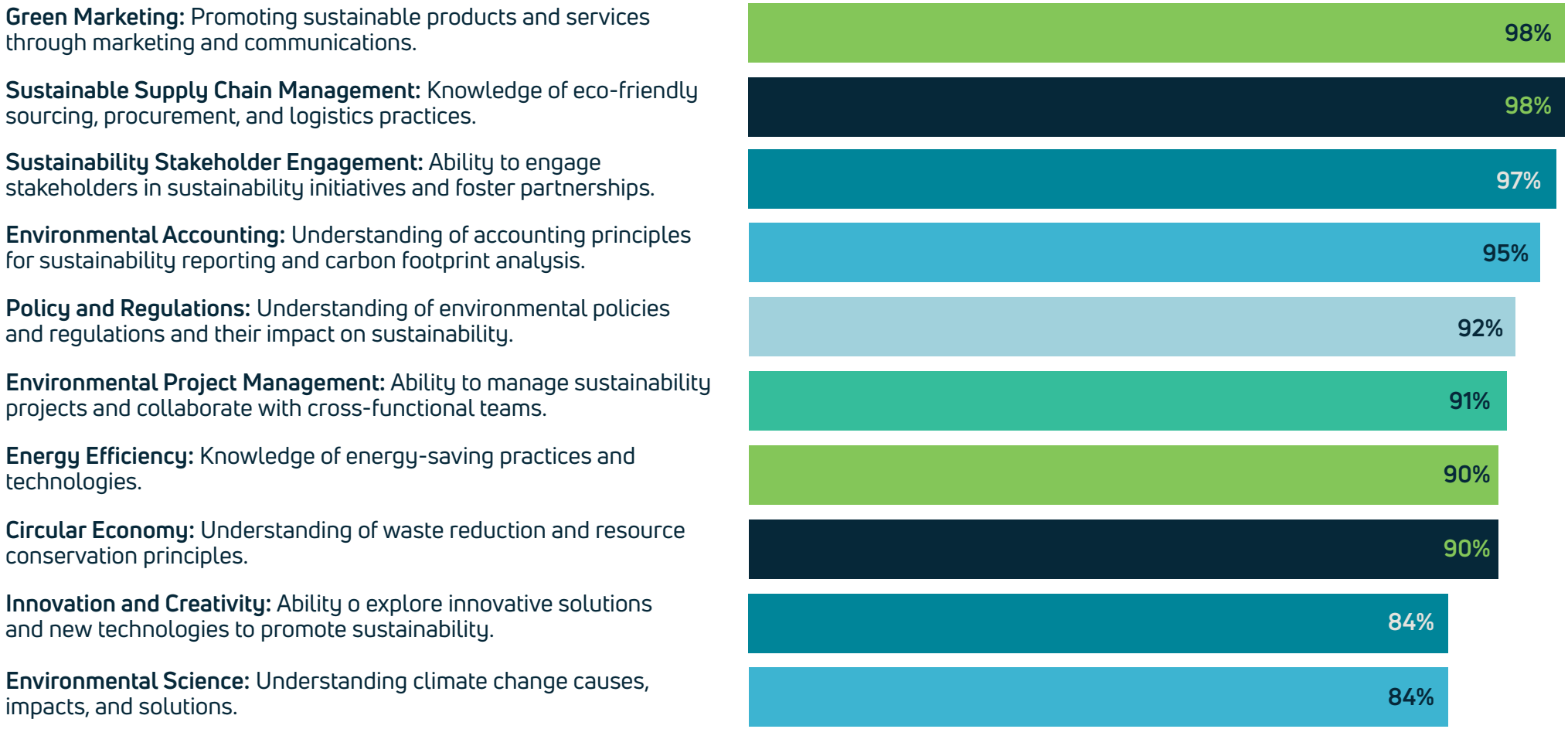
Climate Action: Talent and Upskilling

In relation to moving towards a more sustainable future, what do you consider to be key challenges facing your business?



Climate Action: Talent and Upskilling

Which, if any, of these skill areas related to climate action and sustainability, has the potential to help you grow your business over the next two to three years?



Conclusion

Conclusion

For three decades, Ireland's skilled workforce has been the backbone of its economic success, attracting global investment and driving innovation across industries. The challenges ahead are significant, but the opportunities are equally transformative. As skills gaps widen in critical areas such as technology, engineering, and sustainability, the ability to develop a future-ready workforce will define Ireland's economic resilience.

This report is based on a nationally representative survey of business leaders across 500 businesses operating in Ireland. It reveals clear insights into the skills requirements of businesses, alongside the challenges they are facing in meeting those needs. Businesses remain steadfast in the stated belief that upskilling, reskilling, and talent development are crucial in enabling continued competitiveness in the marketplace.

The competitive edge Ireland gains from our excellent workforce is largely driven from within the business sector, by employers collaborating with their workers and through investing in upskilling and career development opportunities. The insights in this report stress the urgency for businesses, policymakers, and educators to collaborate to address the workforce challenges of tomorrow.

By prioritising skills development, embracing change, and fostering innovation, Ireland can consolidate its position as a global business leader and secure a sustainable and prosperous future for its workforce and the economy. Skillnet Ireland will continue to lead the talent and workforce development agenda in Ireland and work closely with the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, our industry partners, and the tertiary sector, to design innovative upskilling solutions that meet the needs of Ireland's businesses and workforce.

Conclusion

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Sectors we support

ADVANCED MANUFACTURING
- Cobotics Skillnet
- First Polymer Training Skillnet
- ICBE Advanced Productivity Skillnet
- ICBE Business Excellence Skillnet
- Irish Medtech Skillnet
- MIDAS Electronic Systems Skillnet

AGRI-FOOD
- Farm Business Skillnet
- Food Drink Ireland Skillnet
- ICOS Skillnet
- Macra Agricultural Skillnet
- National Organic Training Skillnet
- Rural Food Skillnet
- Taste4Success Skillnet
- XL Vets Skillnet

BIO-PHARMACEUTICALS
- BioPharmaChem Skillnet
- Irish Medtech Skillnet

CONSTRUCTION
- CitA Skillnet
- Construction Professionals Skillnet
- Industry 4.0 Skillnet
- Skillnet MMC Accelerate

DIGITAL/TECHNOLOGY
- itag Skillnet
- MIDAS Electronic Systems Skillnet
- Tech Industry Alliance Skillnet
- Tech Northwest Skillnet
- Technology Ireland ICT Skillnet
- Technology Ireland DIGITAL Skillnet
- Skillnet Innovation Exchange

ENGINEERING
- Aviation Skillnet
- Engineering Skillnet
- MIDAS Electronic Systems Skillnet
- Space Industry Skillnet

FINANCIAL SERVICES
- Chartered Accountants Ireland Skillnet
- International Financial Services (IFS) Skillnet
- Law Society Skillnet

FOOD & DRINK
- Food Drink Ireland Skillnet
- National Organic Training Skillnet
- Rural Food Skillnet
- Taste4Success Skillnet

GLOBAL BUSINESS SERVICES
- Next level Skillnet
- Technology Ireland ICT Skillnet

GREEN/ENERGY
- Green Tech Skillnet
- Sustainable Enterprise Skillnet
- Skillnet Climate Ready Academy
- Skillnet Offshore Wind Academy

LOGISTICS & TRANSPORT
- CILT Mobility & Supply Chain Skillnet
- SIMI Skillnet

MEDIA/CREATIVE
- Cultural & Creative Industries Skillnet
- Design Skillnet
- Design, Print & Packaging Skillnet
- Gréasán na Meán Skillnet
- Learning Waves Skillnet

MEDICAL TECHNOLOGY
- Connected Health Skillnet
- Irish Medtech Skillnet

Sectors we support

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES
- Chartered Accountants Ireland Skillnet
- Employment & Recruitment Federation (ERF) Skillnet
- IRDG Innovation Skillnet
- ISME Skillnet
- Law Society Skillnet
- L&D Skillnet
- Sustainable HRM Skillnet
- MentorsWork

RETAIL
- ISME Skillnet
- Retail Ireland Skillnet

SERVICES
- IMAGE Skillnet
- ISME Skillnet
- Leading Healthcare Providers Skillnet
- Midland Border East Skillnet

TOURISM, HOSPITALITY & LEISURE
- Irish Hotels Federation Skillnet
- Leisure, Health & Fitness Skillnet
- Restaurant & Hospitality Skillnet

MIXED SECTOR BUSINESS NETWORKS
- Carlow Kilkenny Skillnet
- Cork Chamber Skillnet
- County Tipperary Chamber Skillnet
- County Wexford Chamber Skillnet
- Duhallow Skillnet
- Dundalk Chamber Skillnet
- Fingal Chamber Skillnet
- Galway Executive Skillnet
- Limerick Chamber Skillnet
- M1 Drogheda Chamber Skillnet
- Midland Border East Skillnet
- Next Level Skillnet
- Positive2Work Skillnet
- Rural Enterprise Skillnet
- Shannon Chamber Skillnet
- Sligo Chamber Skillnet
- South Kerry Skillnet
- South West Gnó Skillnet
- Tech Northwest Skillnet
- Waterford Chamber Skillnet

TALENT INITIATIVES
- MentorsWork
- Skillnet Climate Ready Academy
- Skillnet Innovation Exchange
- Skillnet MMC Accelerate
- Skillnet Offshore Wind Academy

Ireland's Talent Landscape 2025

Future Skills Challenges of Irish Business

Your business is our business.
We are here to help.

To learn more about the Skillnet Ireland model and business supports we offer visit:
skillnetireland.ie

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Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

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