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2026 Job Outlook

nace

national association of
colleges + employers





About the Job Outlook 2026 Survey

The annual Job Outlook survey is a forecast of employer's hiring intentions of new college graduates. Data for the Job Outlook 2026 survey were collected from August 7, 2025, through September 22, 2025. Data are calculated based on the number of respondents to each specific question. Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

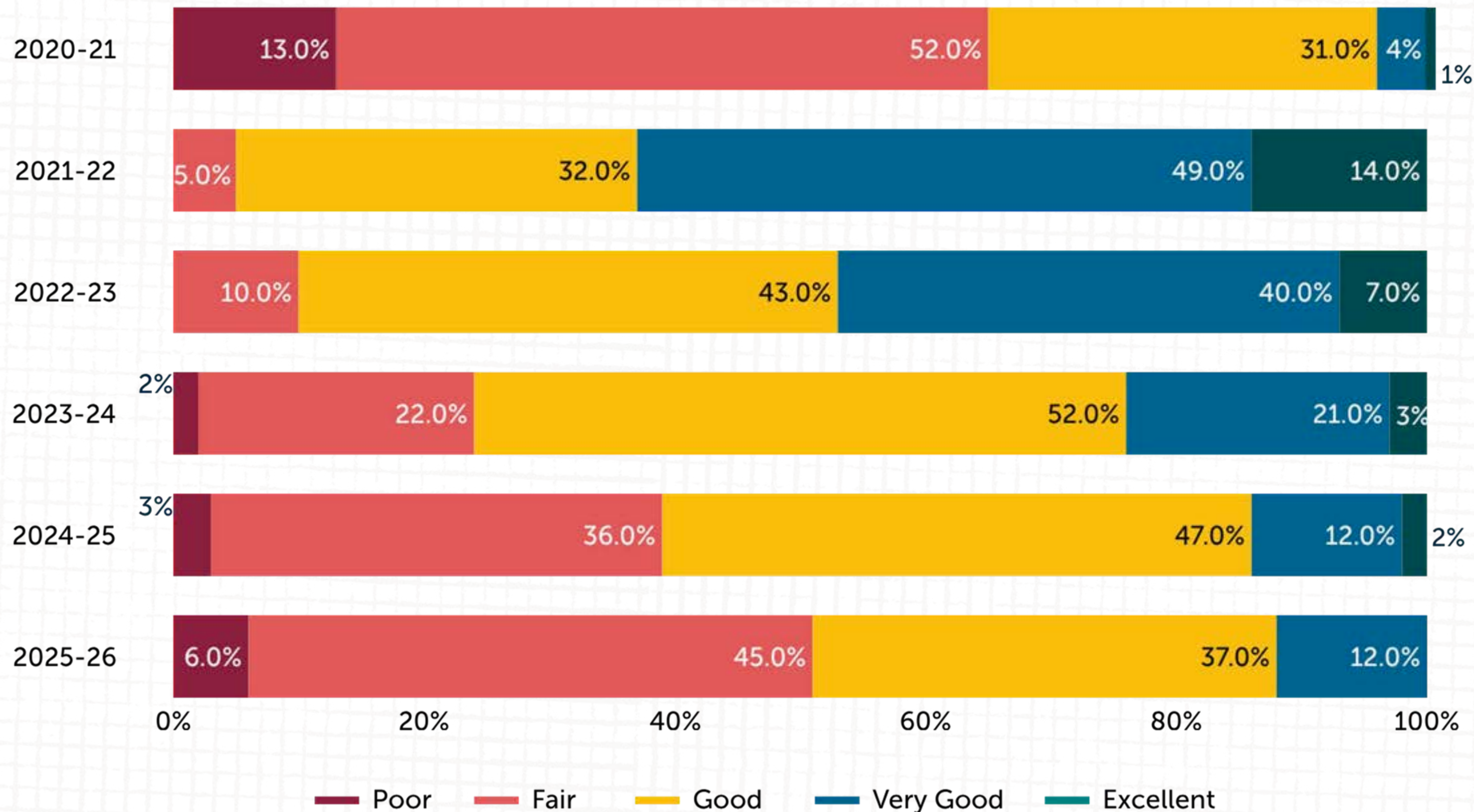
NACE expects to provide a formal job market update during the 2025-26 academic year. Based on data collected in February and March, the Job Outlook 2026 Spring Update report will provide a final update on hiring for 2025-26 graduates. The results will be available in early April.



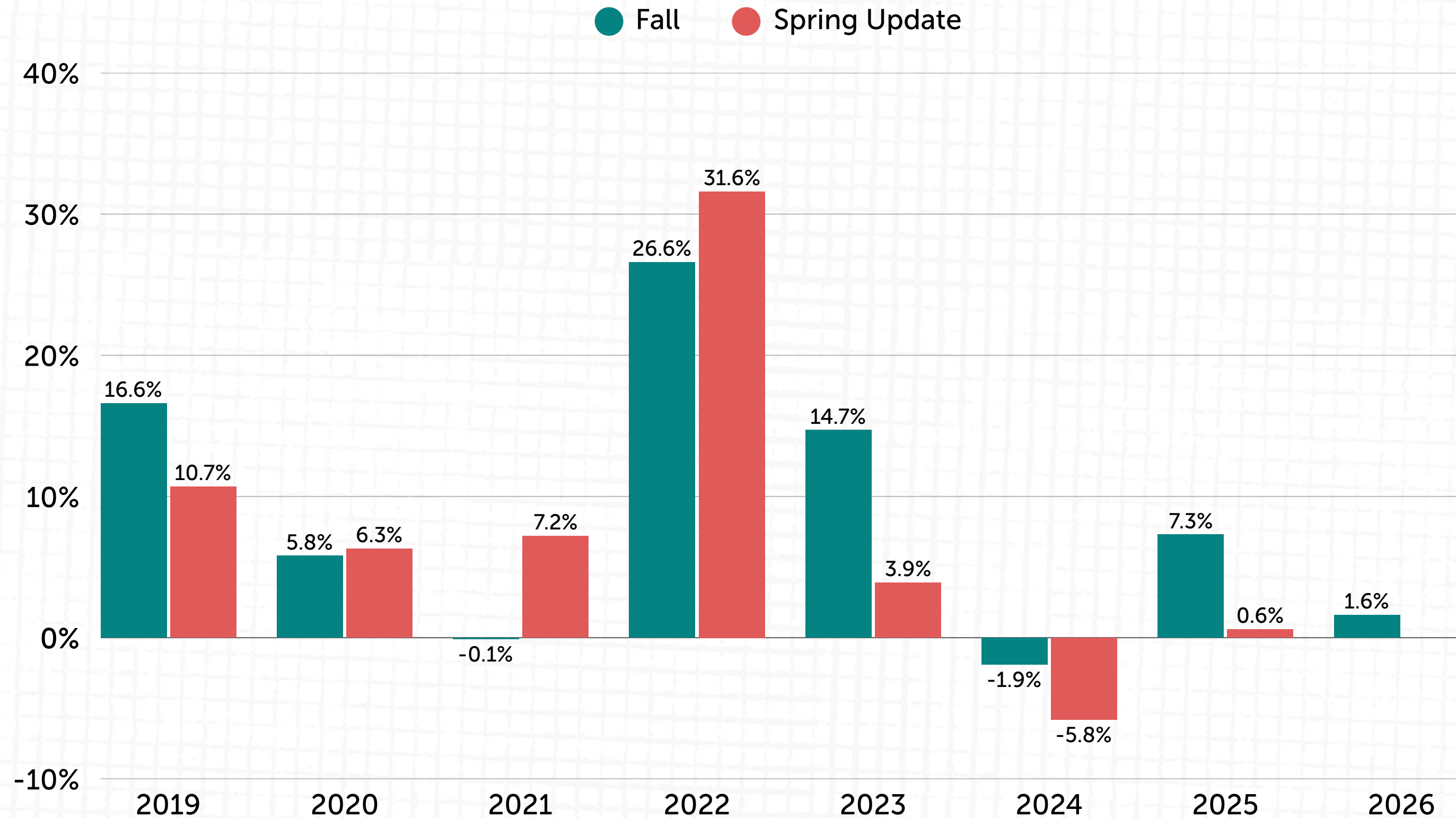


2026 Job Projections for Entry-Level Hiring

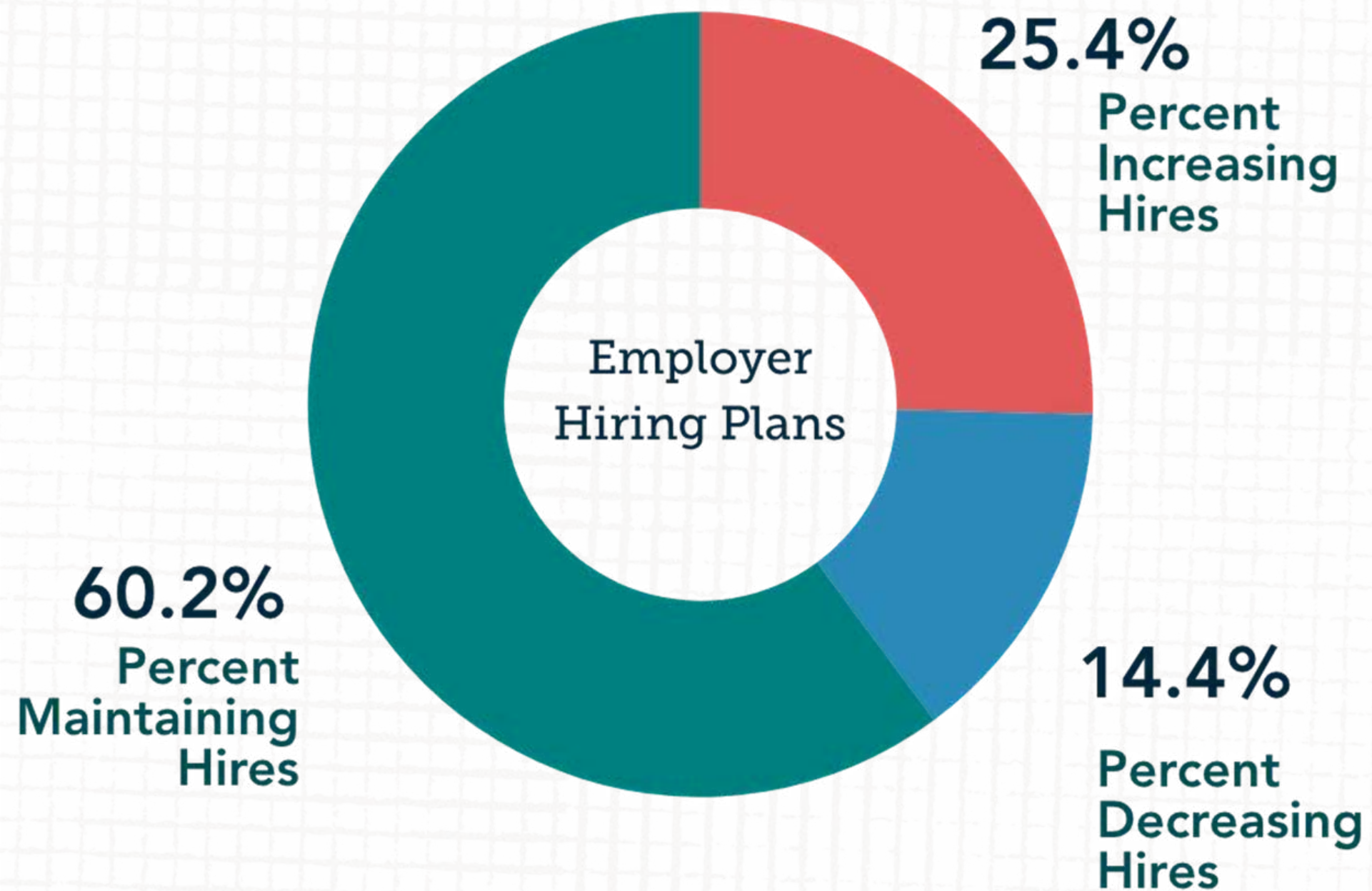
Employers Rate Overall Job Market



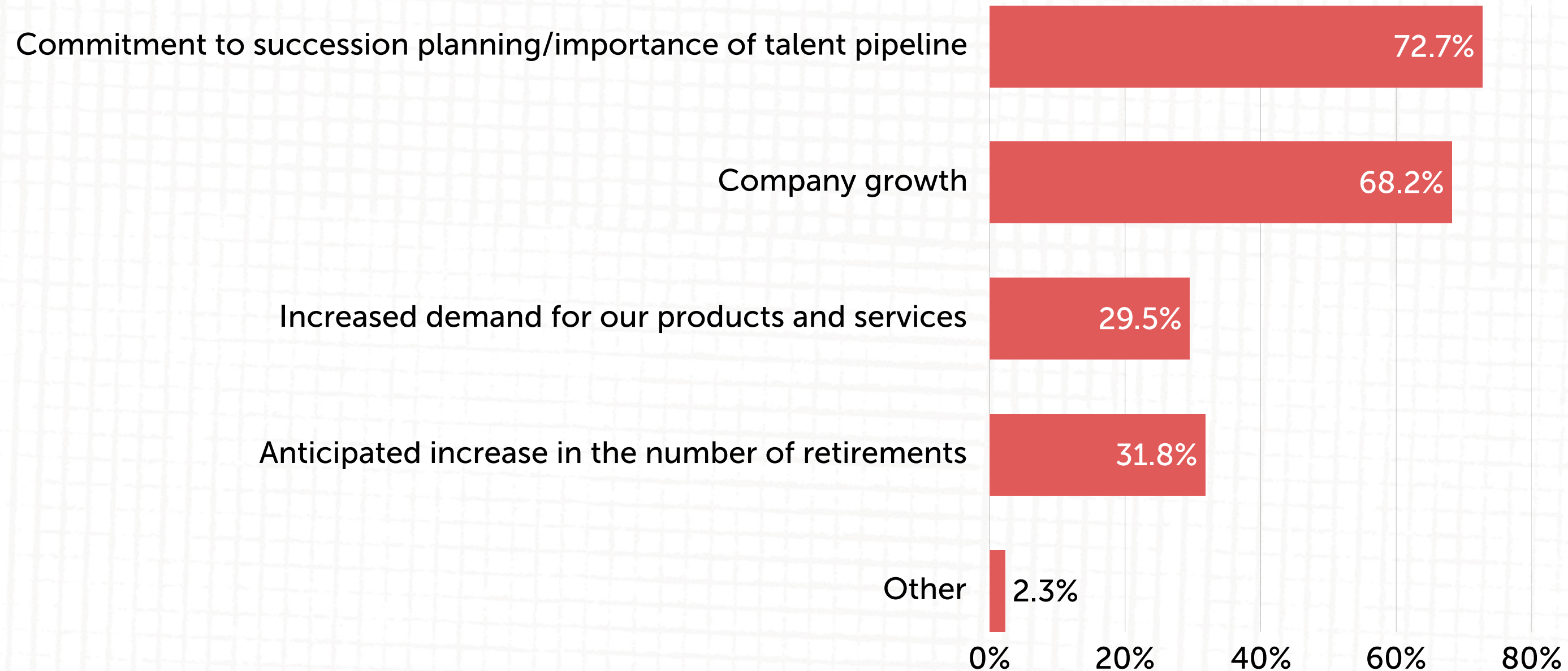
Job Outlook Hiring Projections, 2019 - 2026



Job Outlook Projections Class of 2026



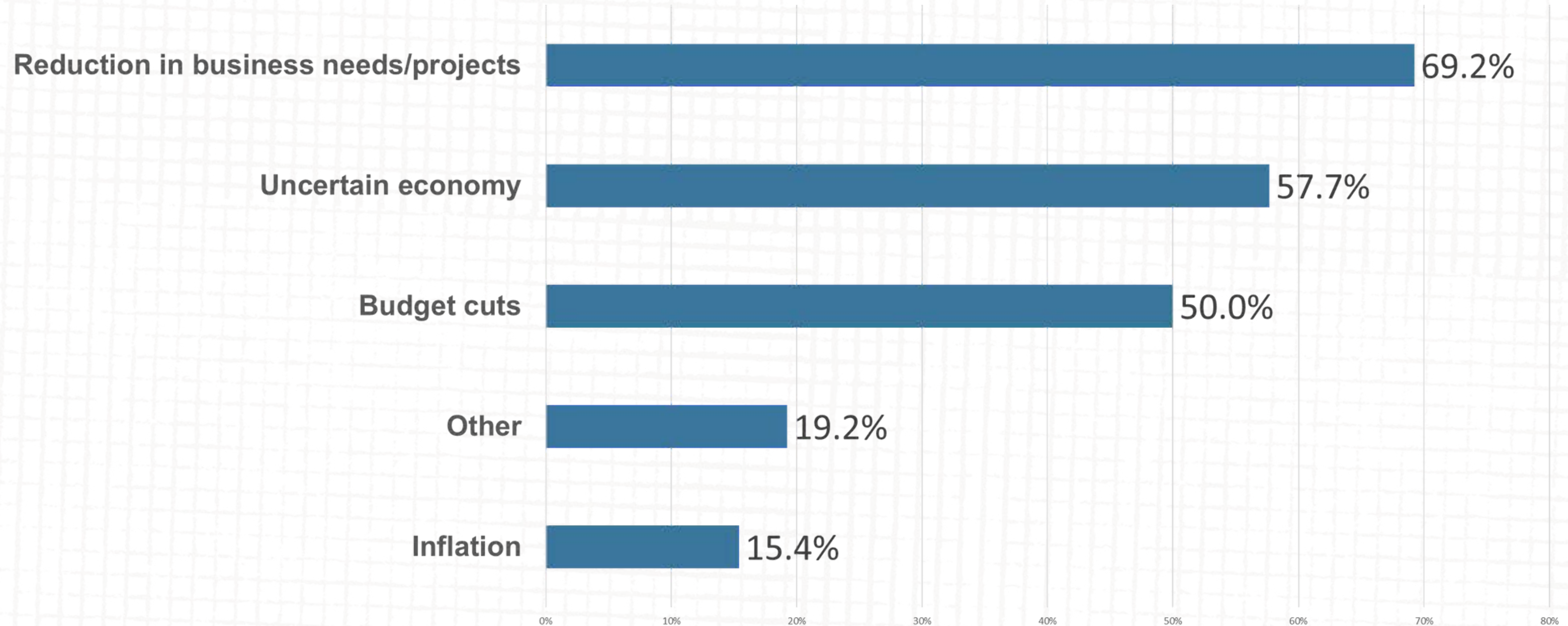
Key Factors for Increasing Hires



NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS = 44

*Percentages do not equal 100, as respondents were able to select more than one factor.

Key Factors for Decreasing Hires



NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS = 26

*Percentages do not equal 100, as respondents were able to select more than one factor.

Industries Hiring Changes

Top 5 Industries *Increasing* Hiring

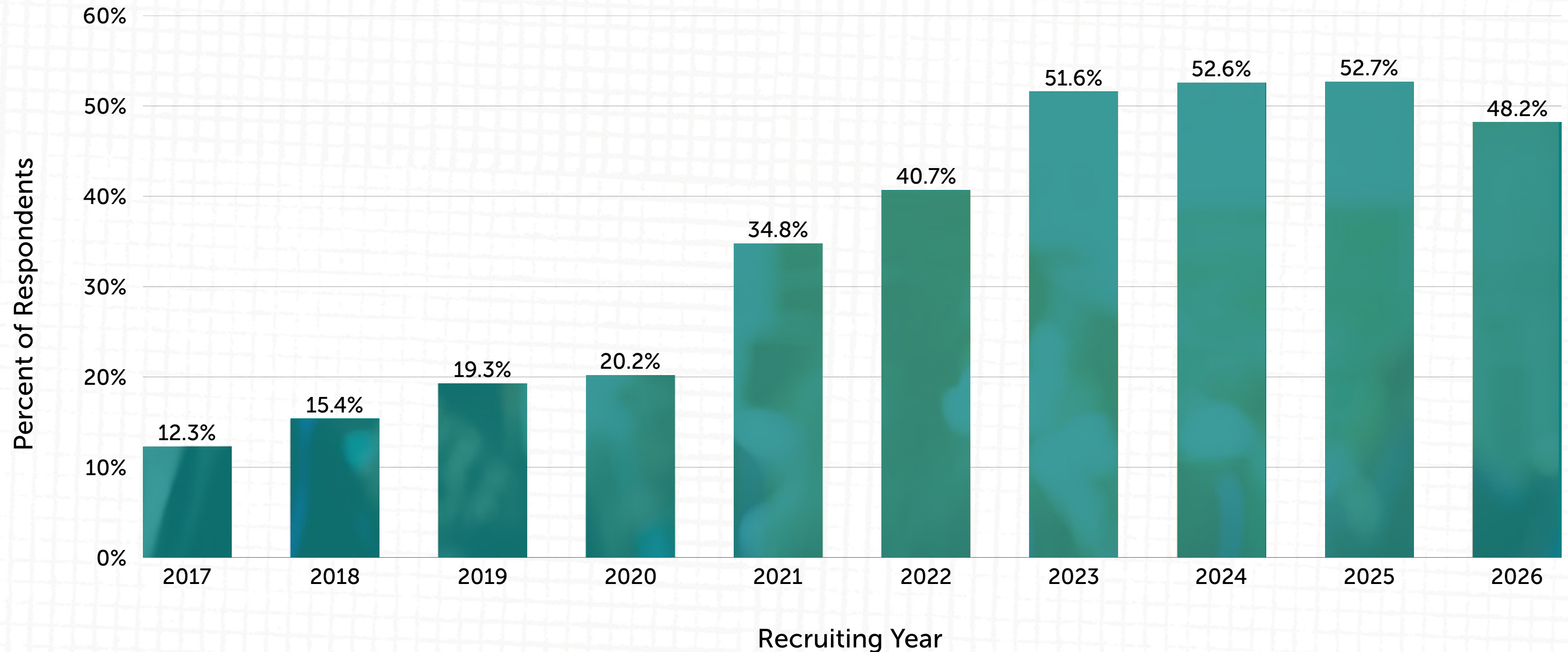
Misc. Prof. Services
Engineering Services
Construction
Finance, Insurance, & Real Estate
Management Consulting

Top 5 Industries *Decreasing* Hiring

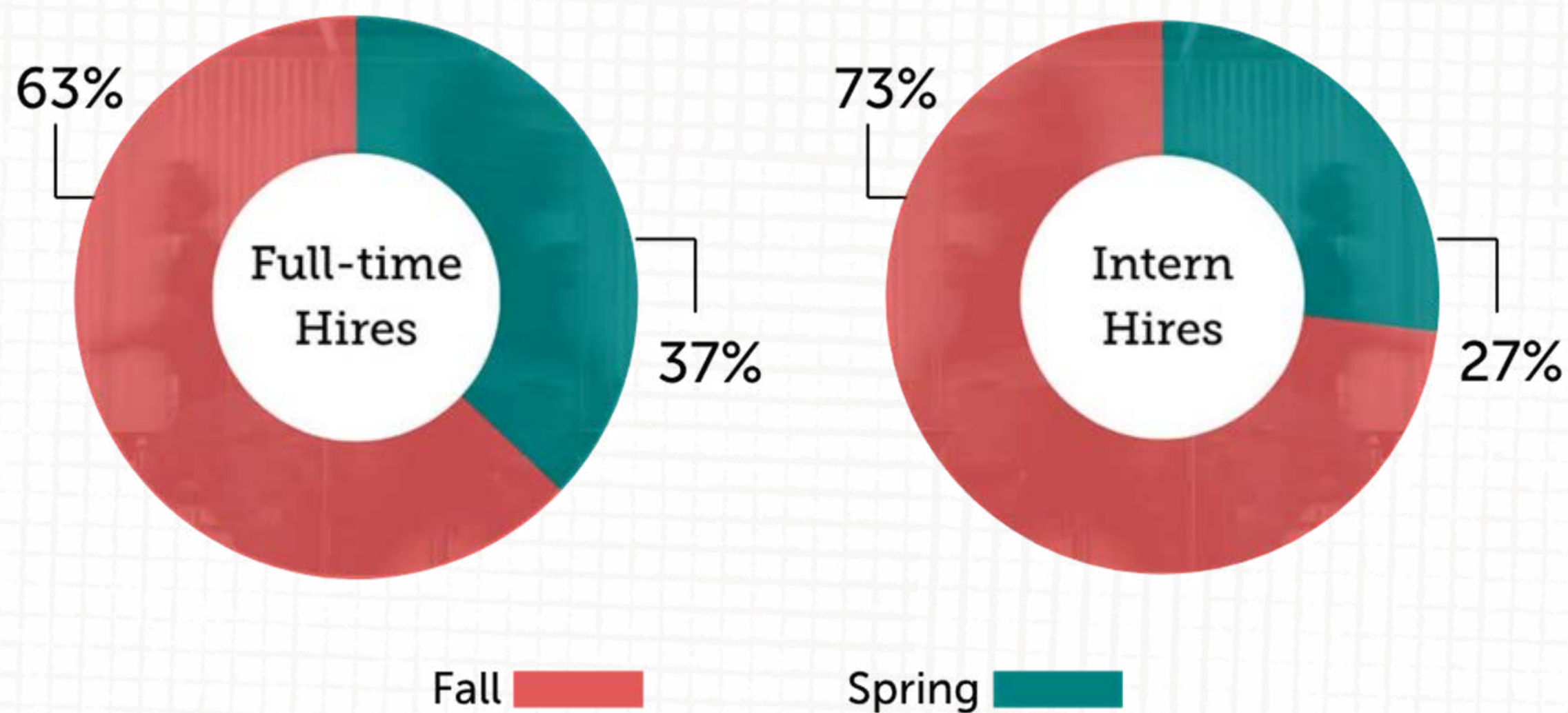
Chemical (Pharmaceutical) Mfg.
Transportation
Wholesale Trade
Food & Beverage Mfg.
Miscellaneous Mfg.



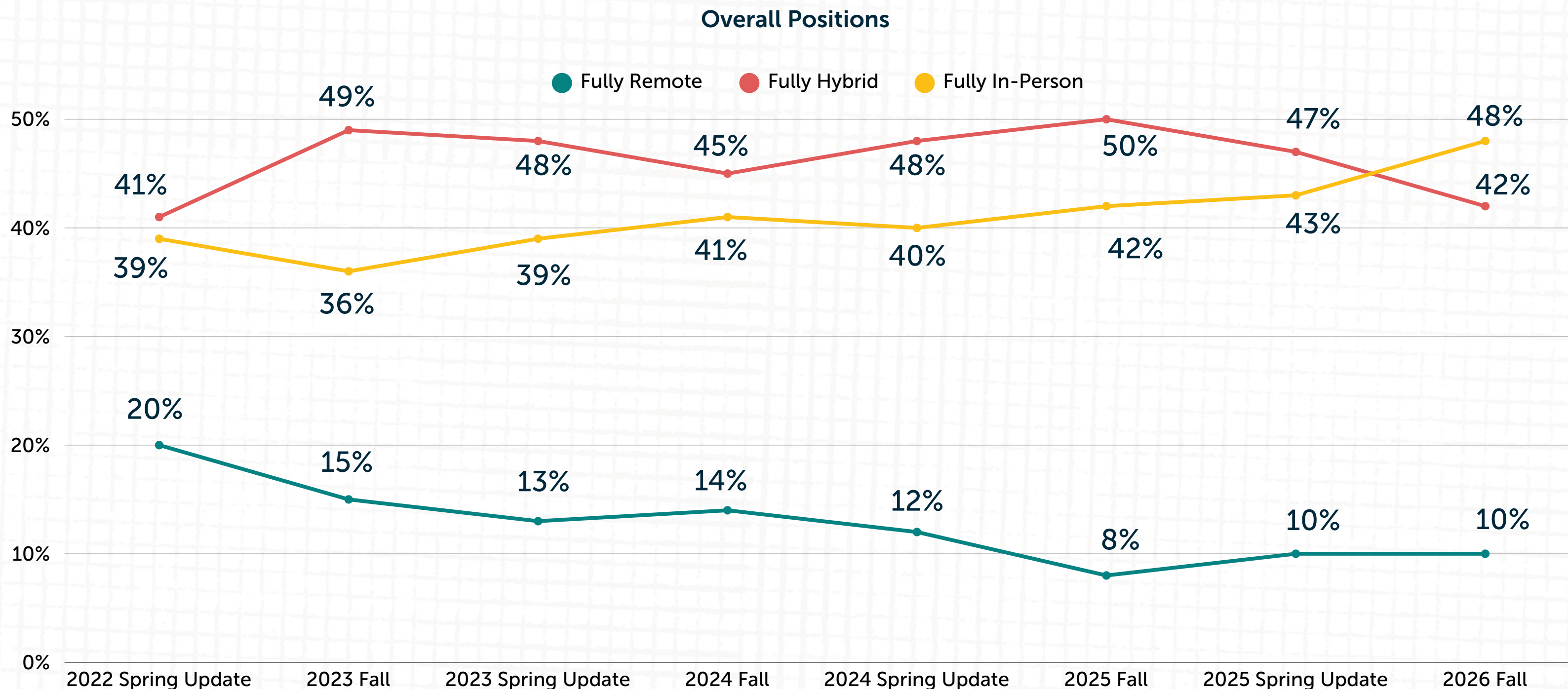
Associate Degree Hiring, by Percent of Respondents



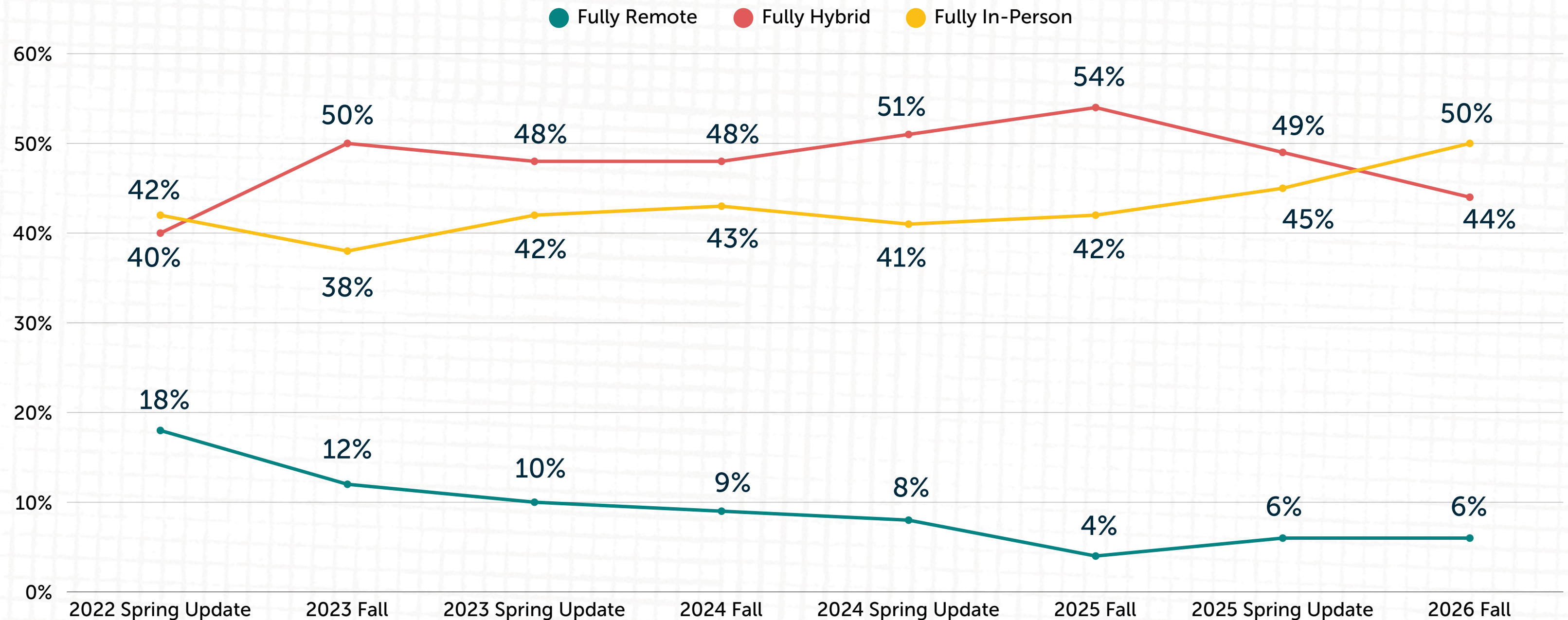
Fall vs. Spring Recruiting for the Class of 2026, by Percent of Respondents



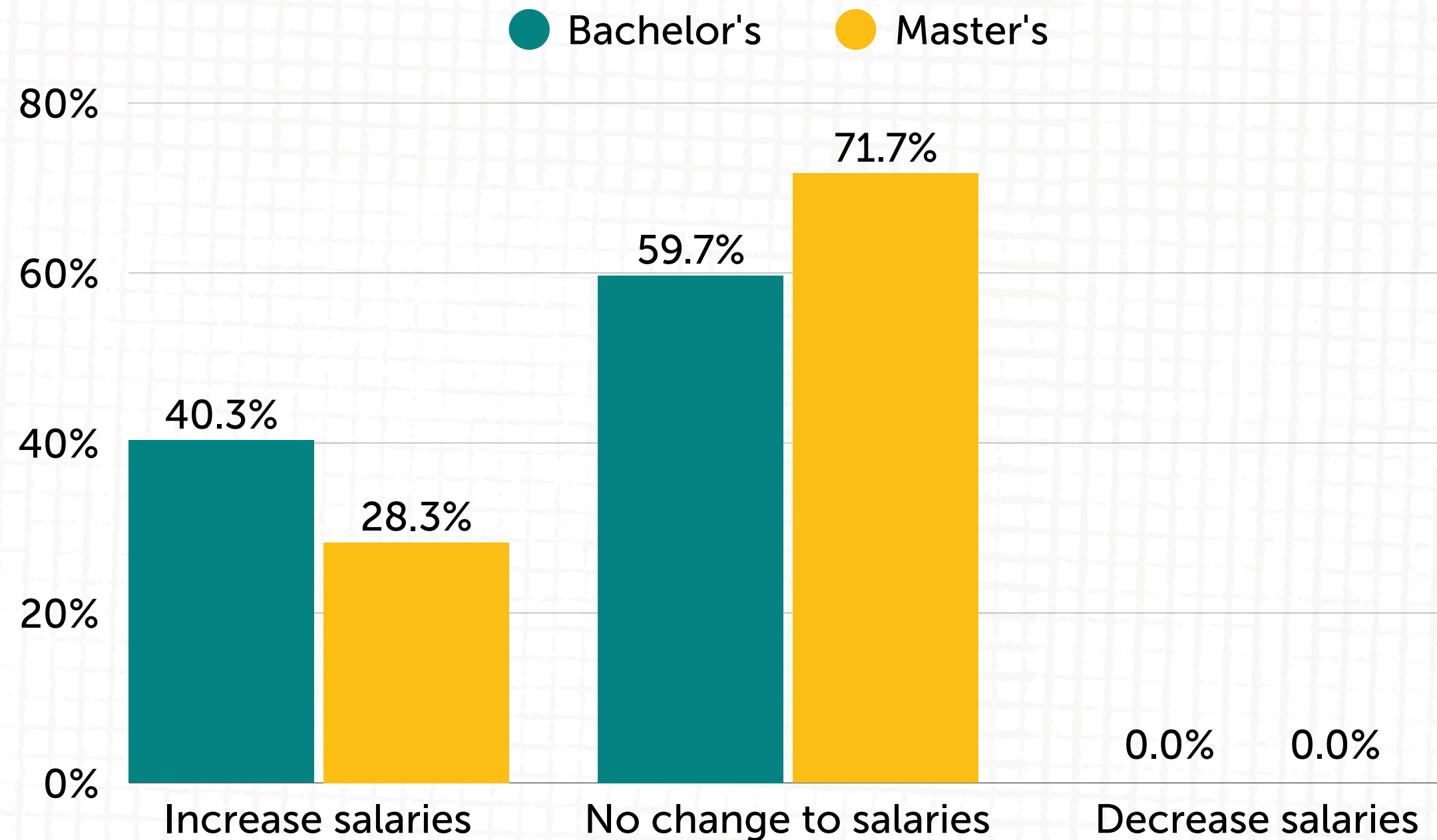
Modality of Overall Job Positions, by Percent of Respondents



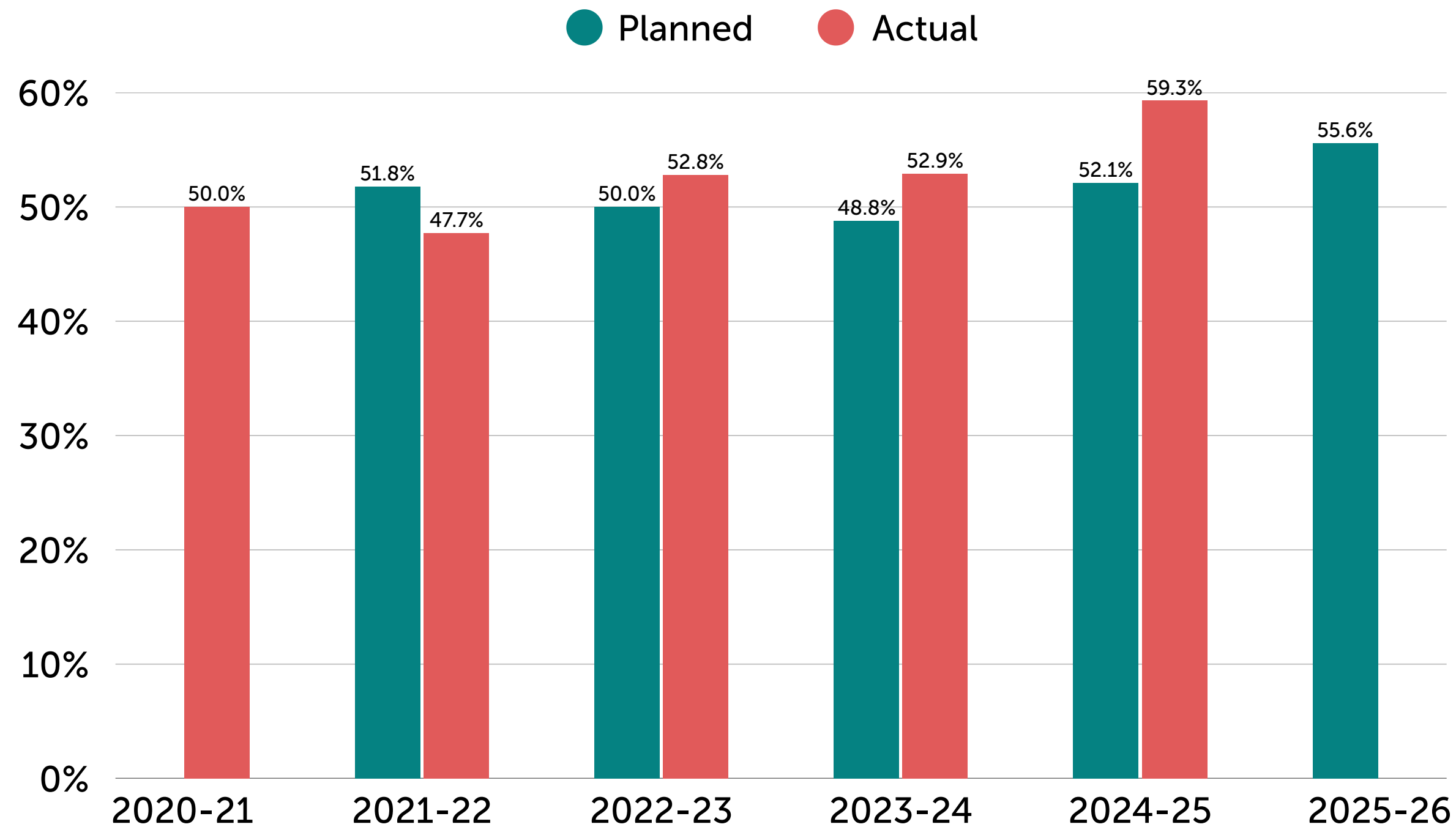
Modality of Entry-Level Job Positions, by Percent of Respondents



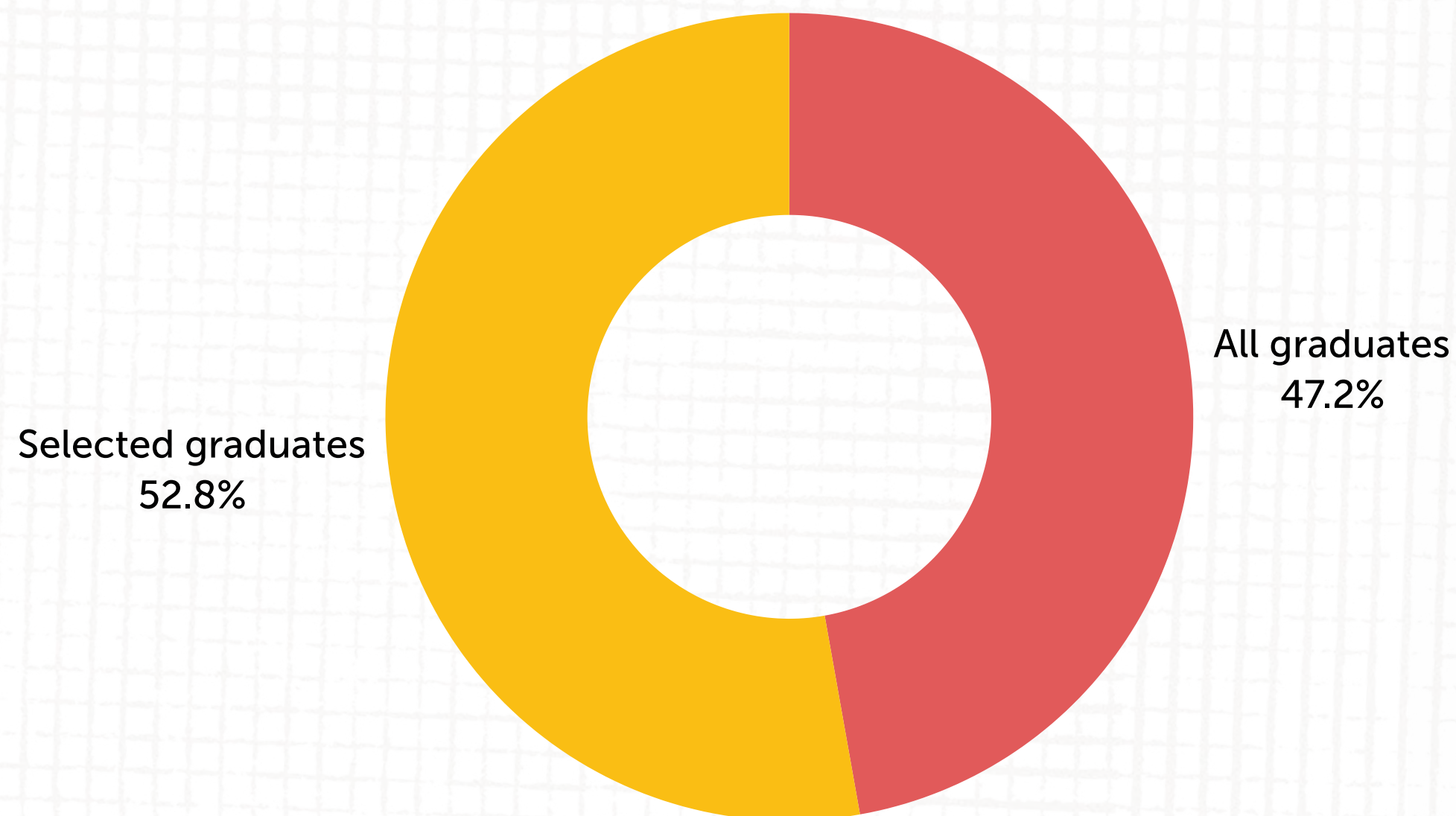
Change in Salaries for Bachelor's and Master's Degree Graduates



Employers Offering Signing Bonuses



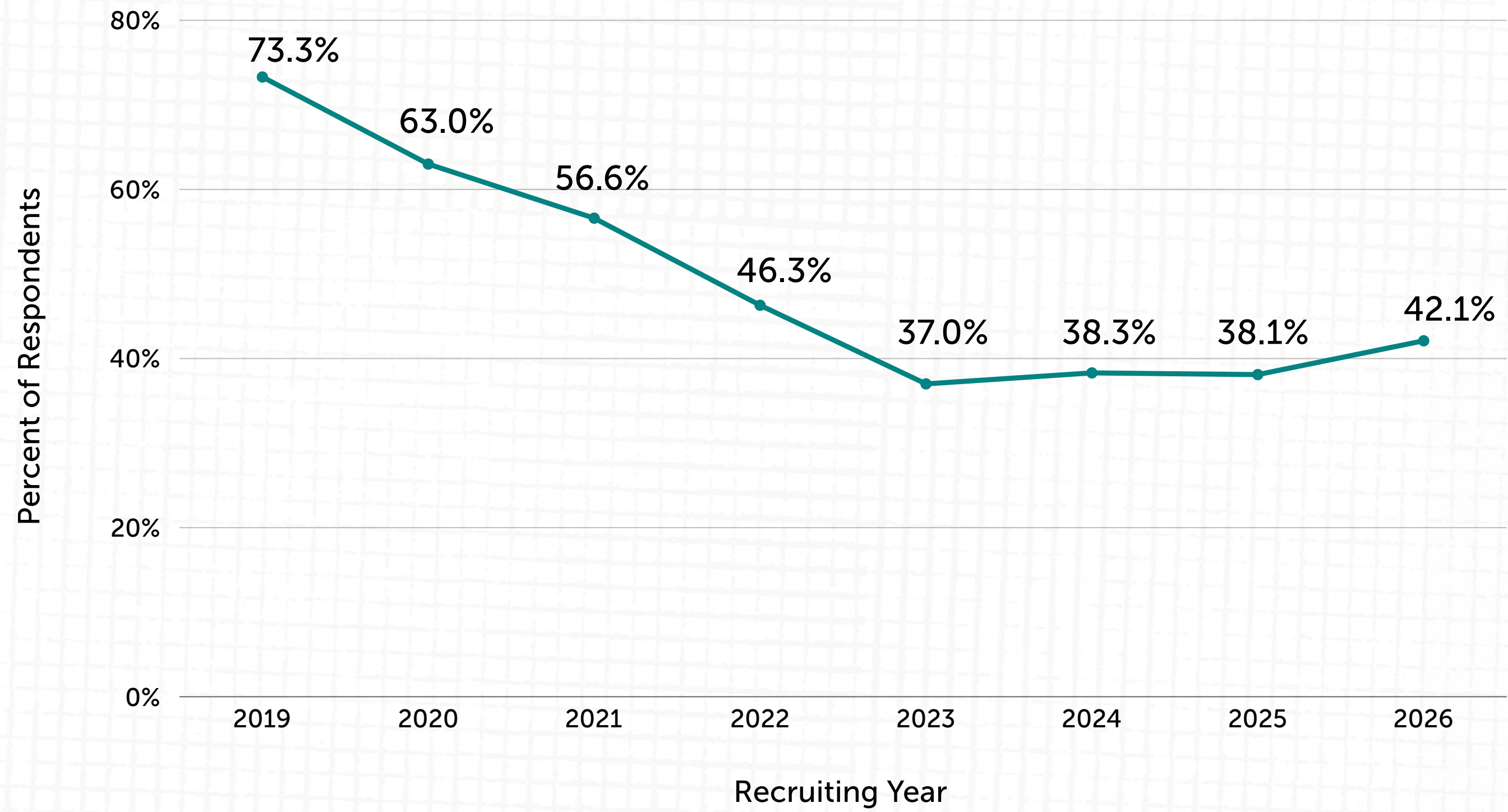
Signing Bonus Plans, by Percent of Respondents



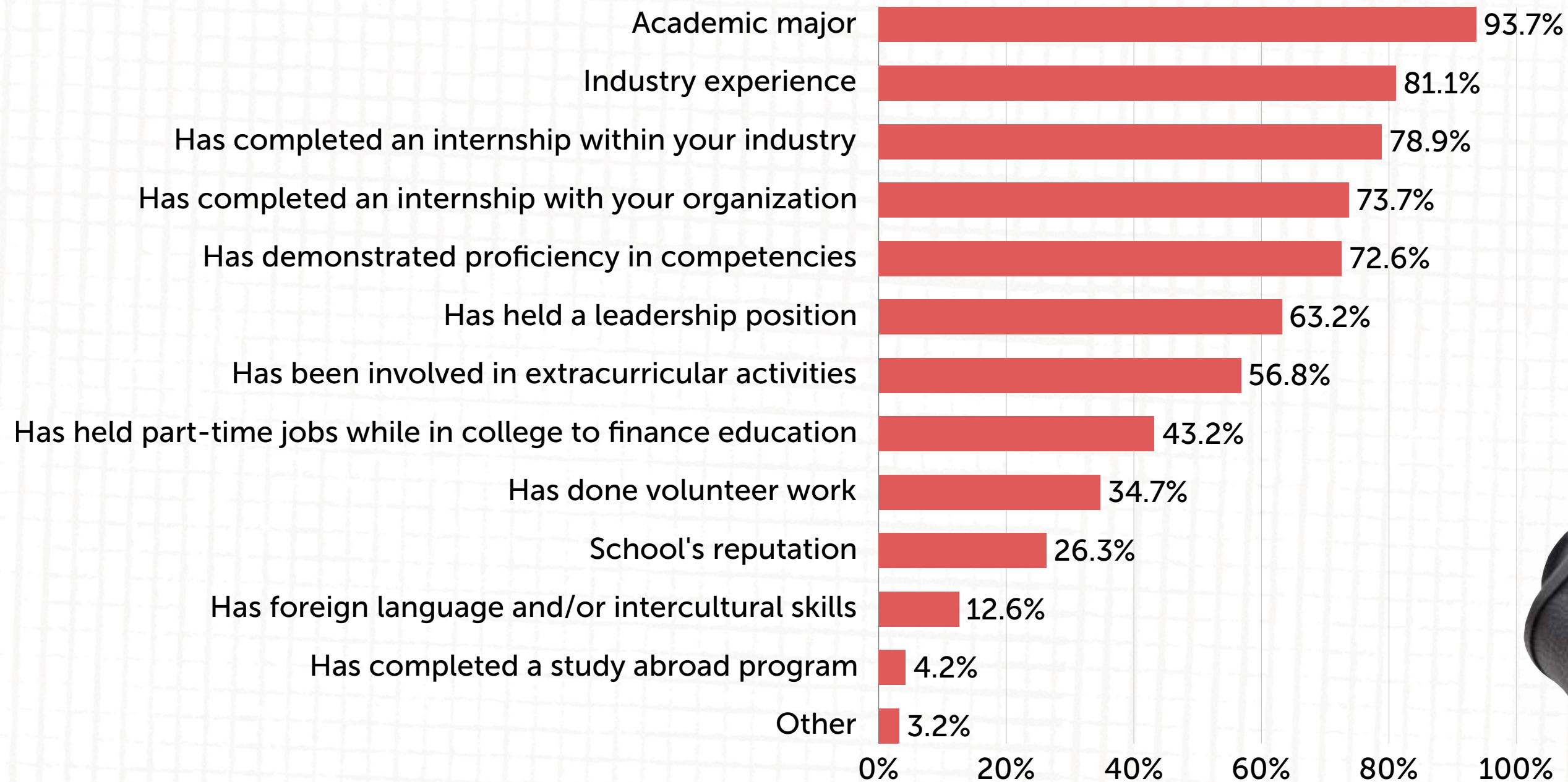


Skills-Based Hiring and College Graduates

GPA Screening



Additional Factors Considered by Respondents That Do Not Screen by GPA*



● Percent of Respondents*

*Percentages do not equal 100, as respondents were able to select more than one factor.



Additional Factors Considered by Respondents That Do Screen by GPA*



● Percent of Respondents*

*Percentages do not equal 100, as respondents were able to select more than one factor.

Employers Consider Hiring All Majors

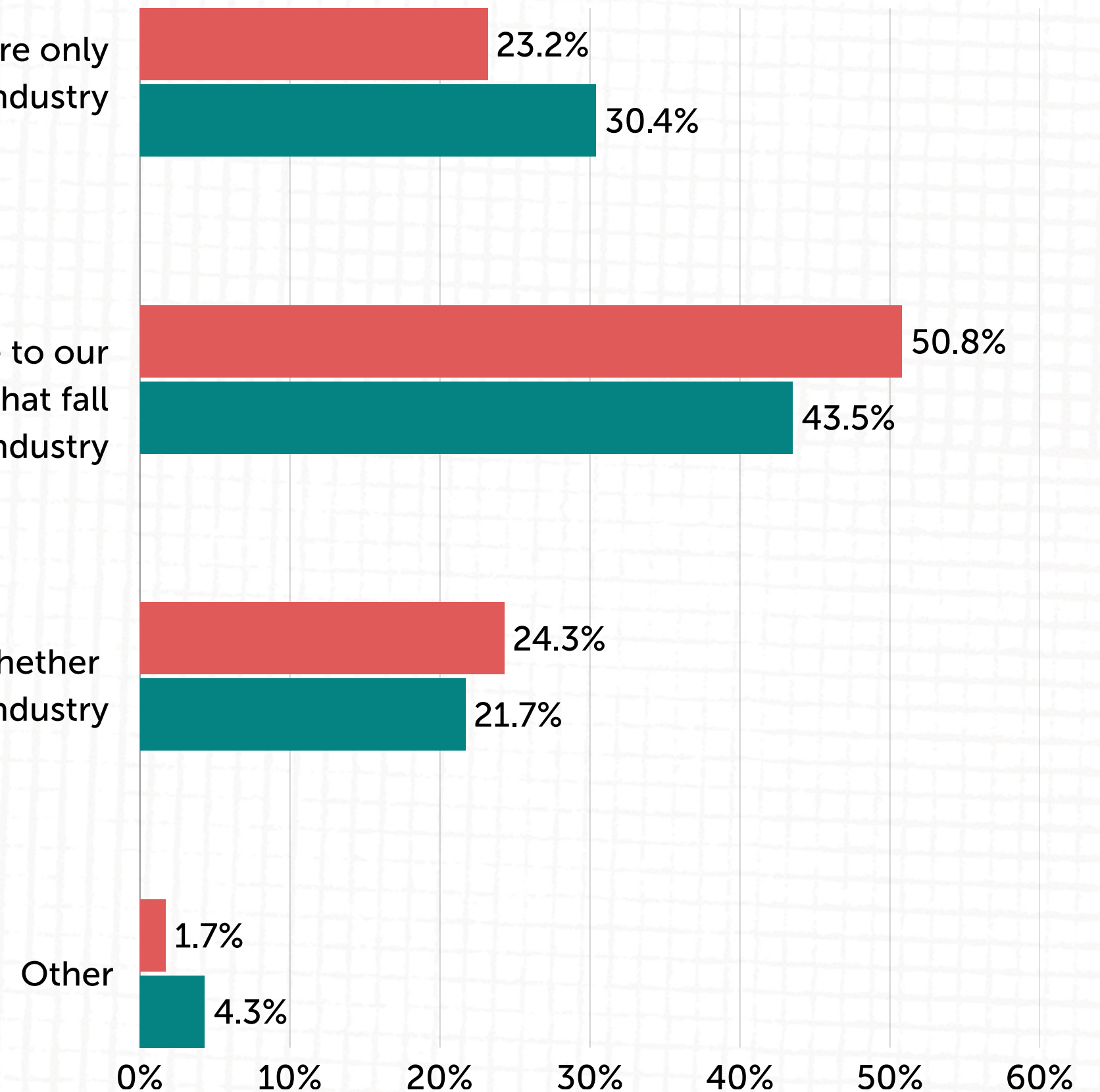
Majors that are only exclusive to our industry

Majors that are exclusive to our industry AND other majors that fall outside the realm of our industry

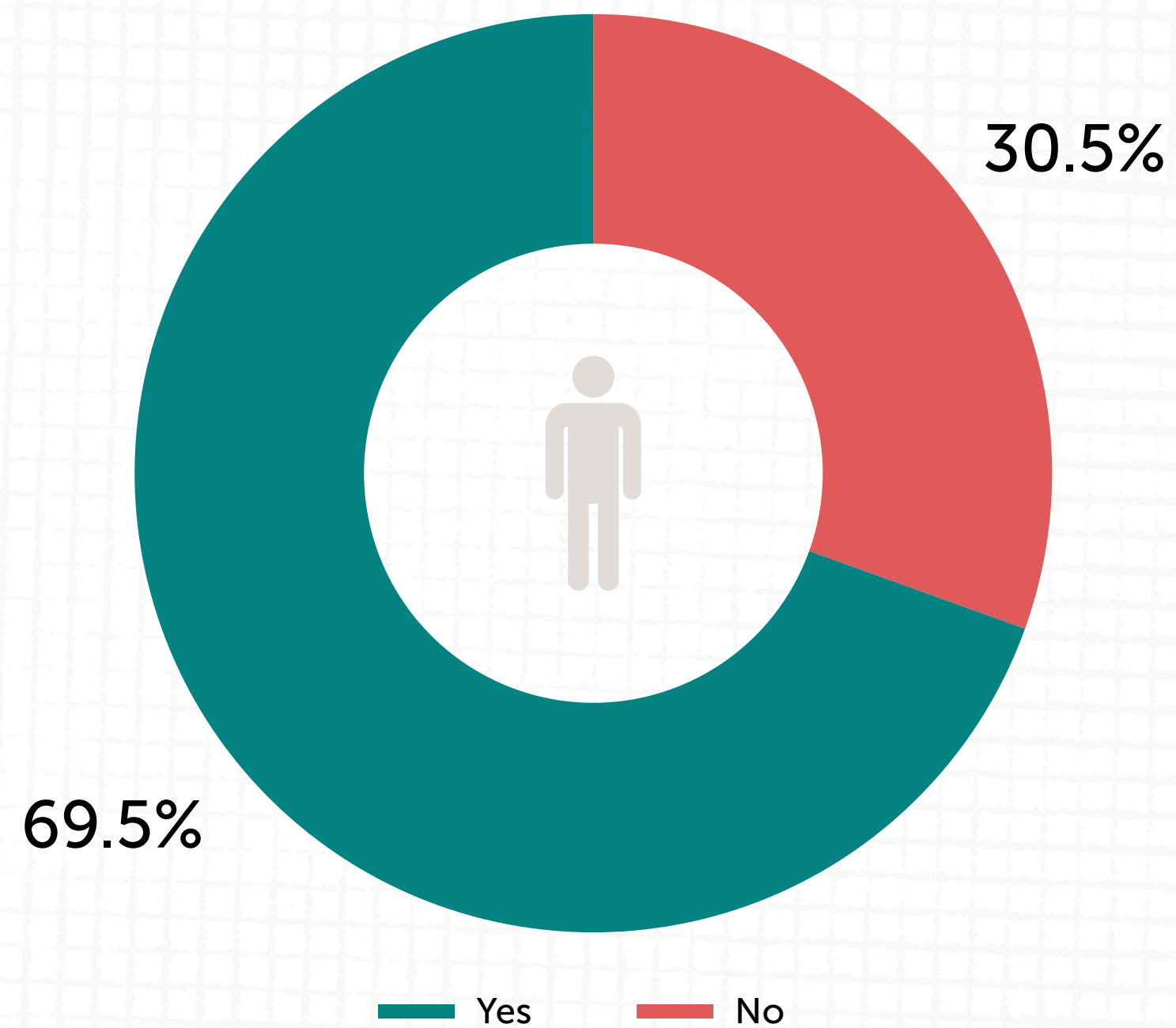
ANY majors regardless of whether they relate to our specific industry

Other

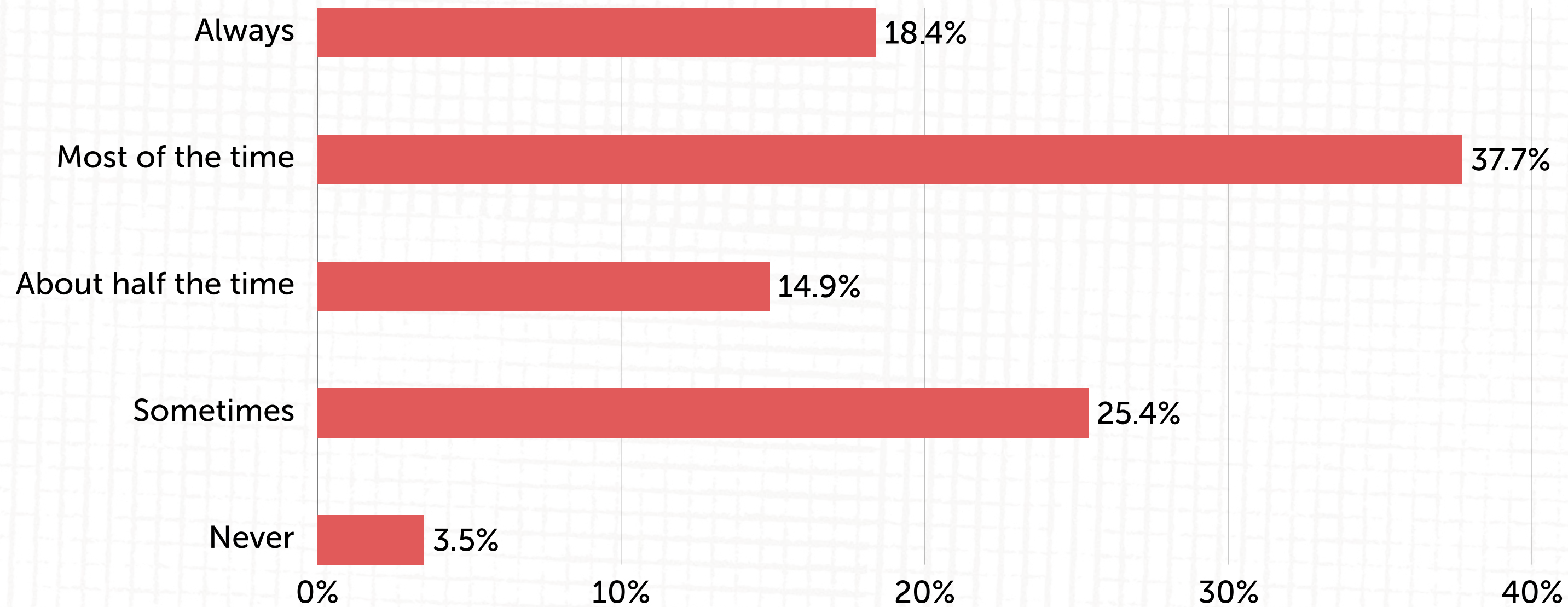
● 2025 ● 2026



Use Skills-Based Hiring (N=164)



Skills-Based Hiring Frequency

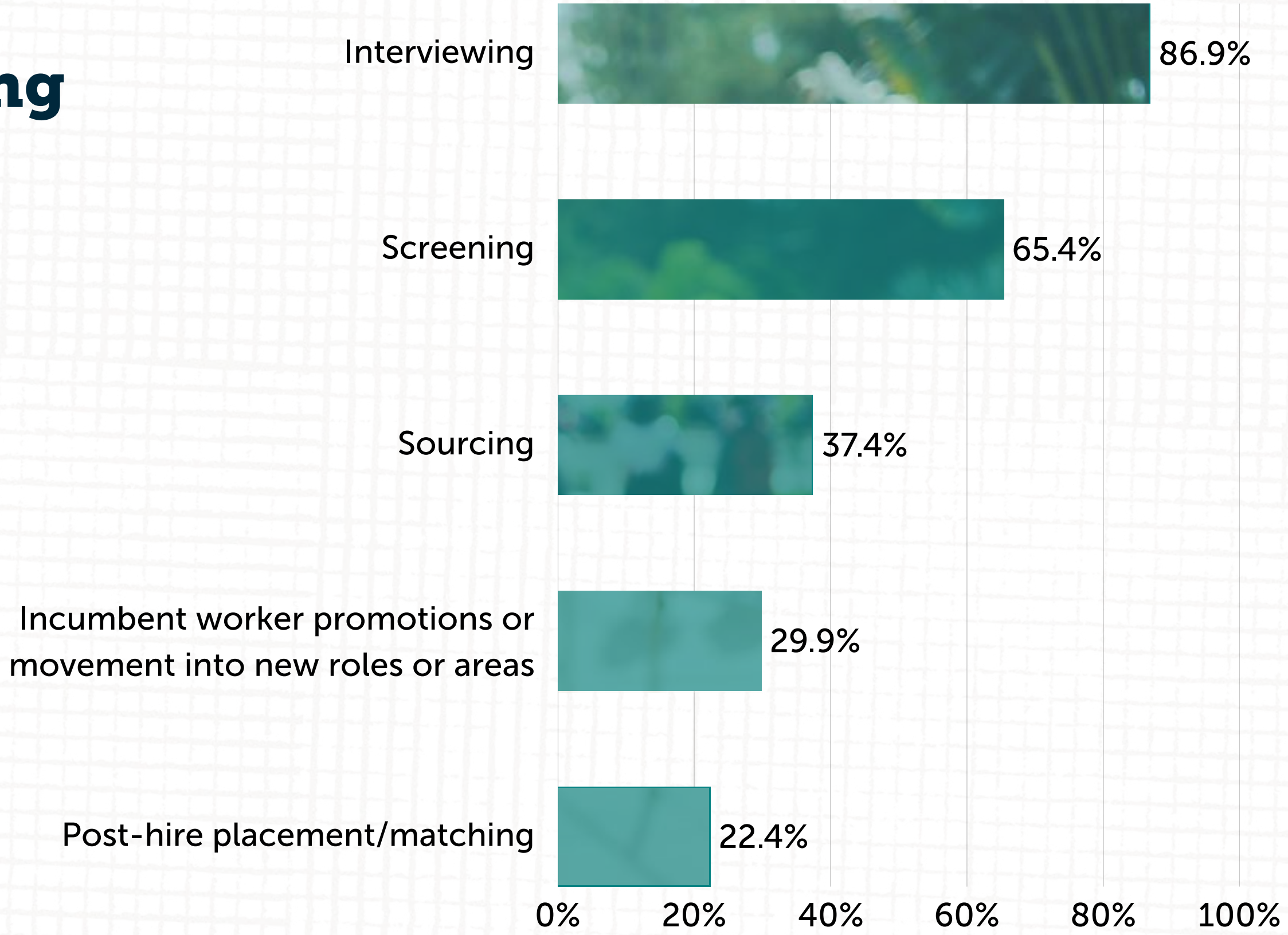


NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS = 114



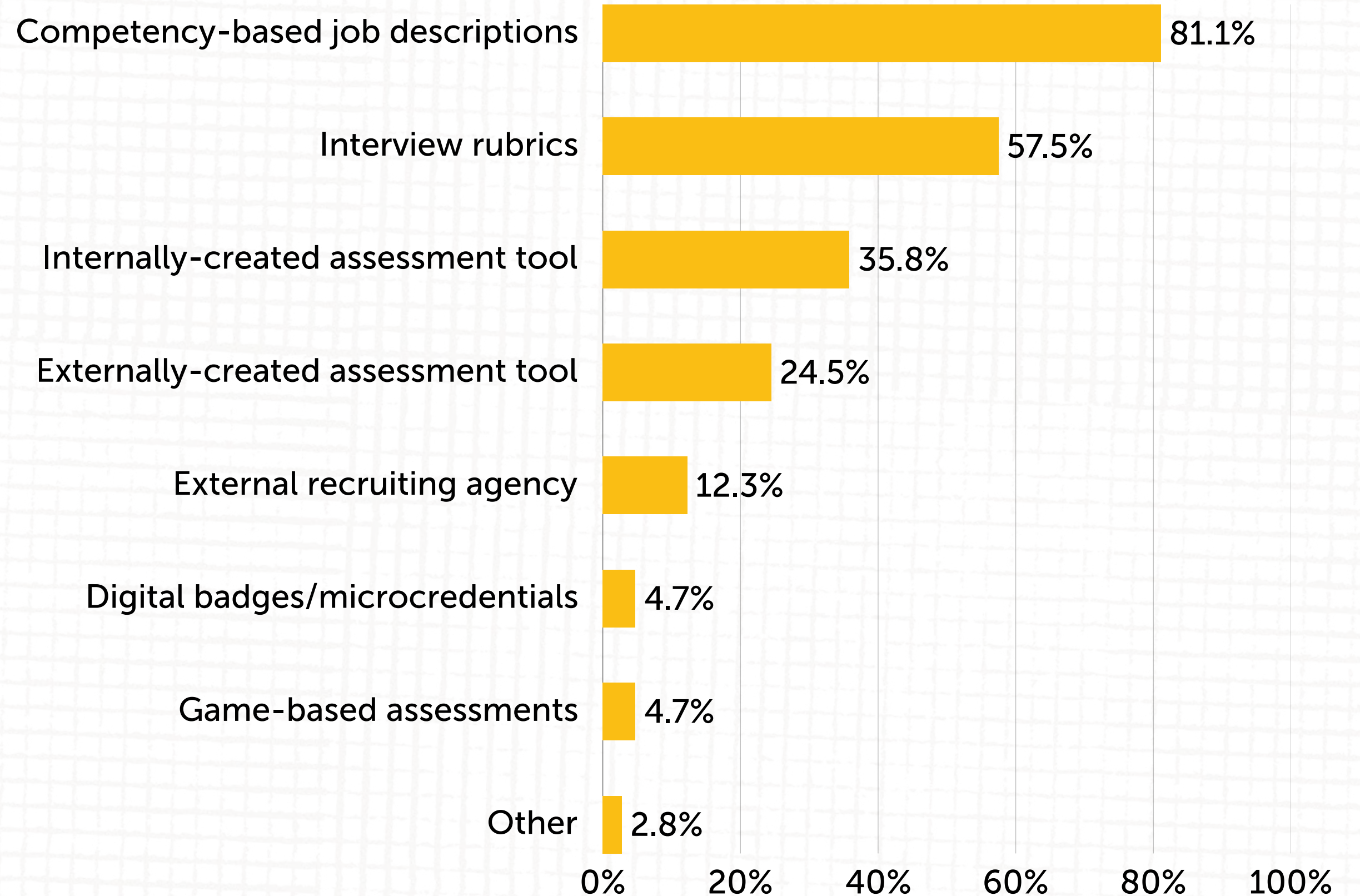


Stages Using Skills-Based Hiring



NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS = 107

Skills-Based Hiring Practices Being Used

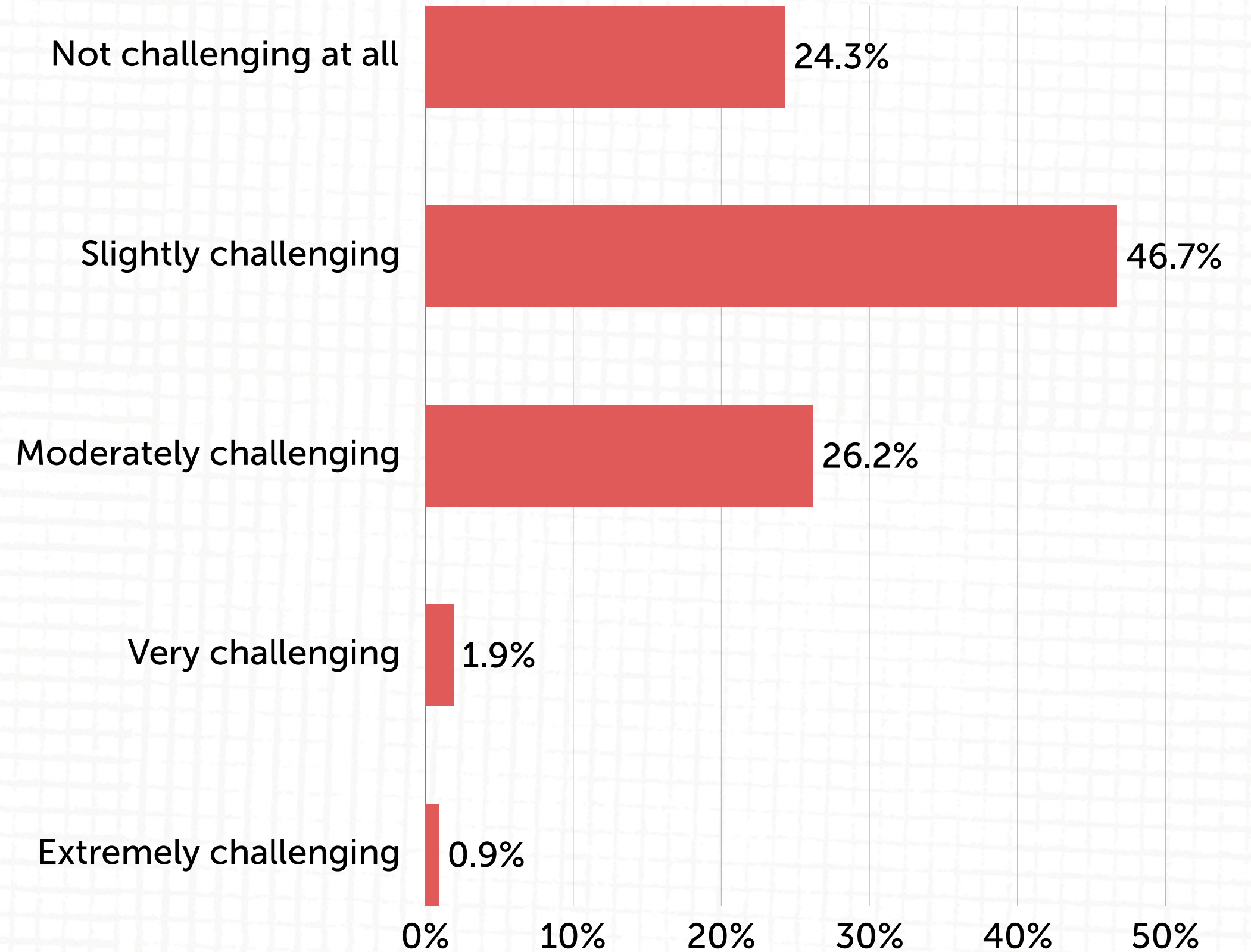


NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS = 106

Level of Challenge in Implementing Skills-Based Hiring Practices



NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS = 107



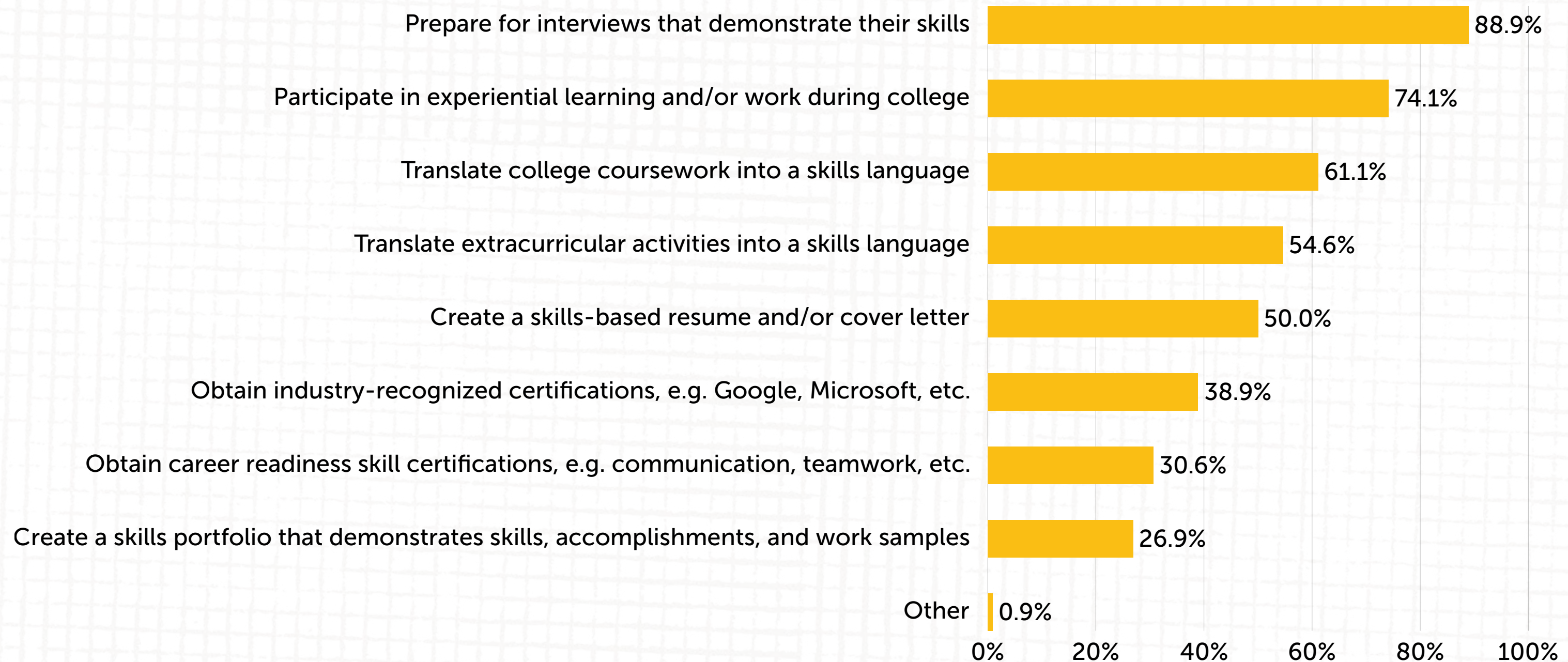
Roadblocks in Implementing Skills-Based Hiring



NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS = 95

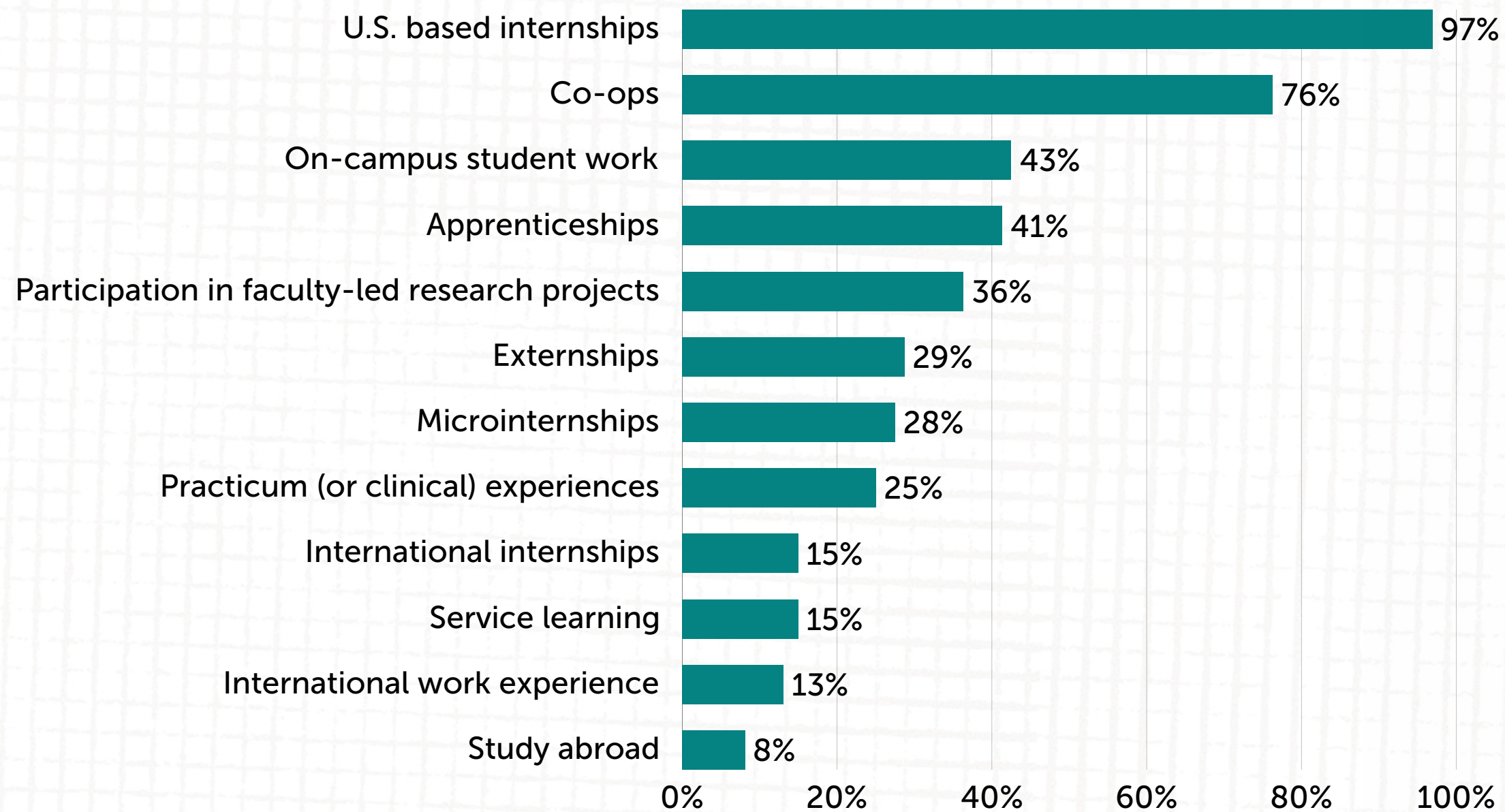


Most Important Ways Students Can Demonstrate Skills During a Skills-Based Hiring Process



NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS = 108

Most Valuable Experiential Learning Opportunities on a Student's Resume

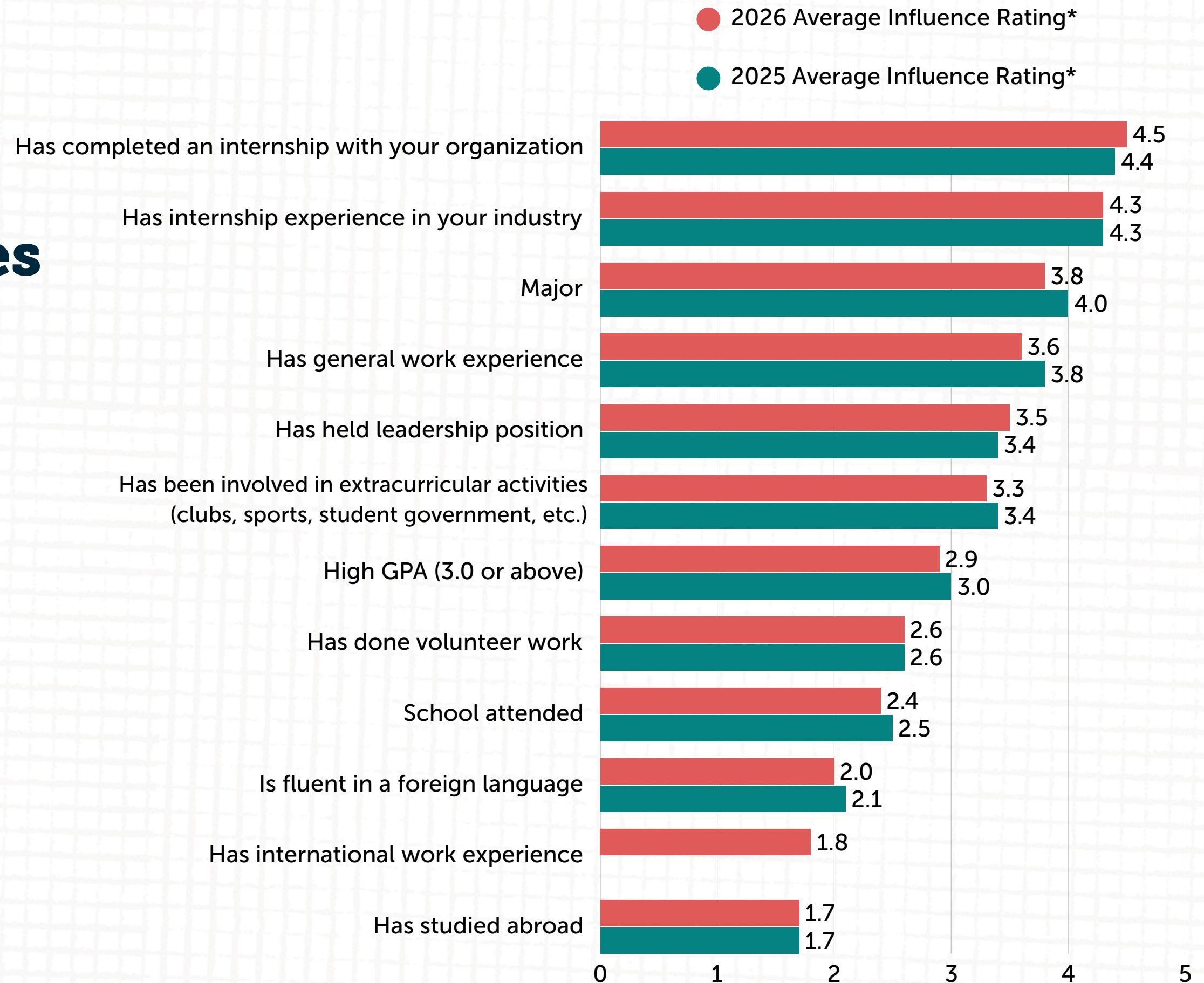


● *Percentages do not equal 100, as respondents were able to choose more than one learning opportunity.



Choosing Between Equally Qualified Candidates - Influence of Attributes

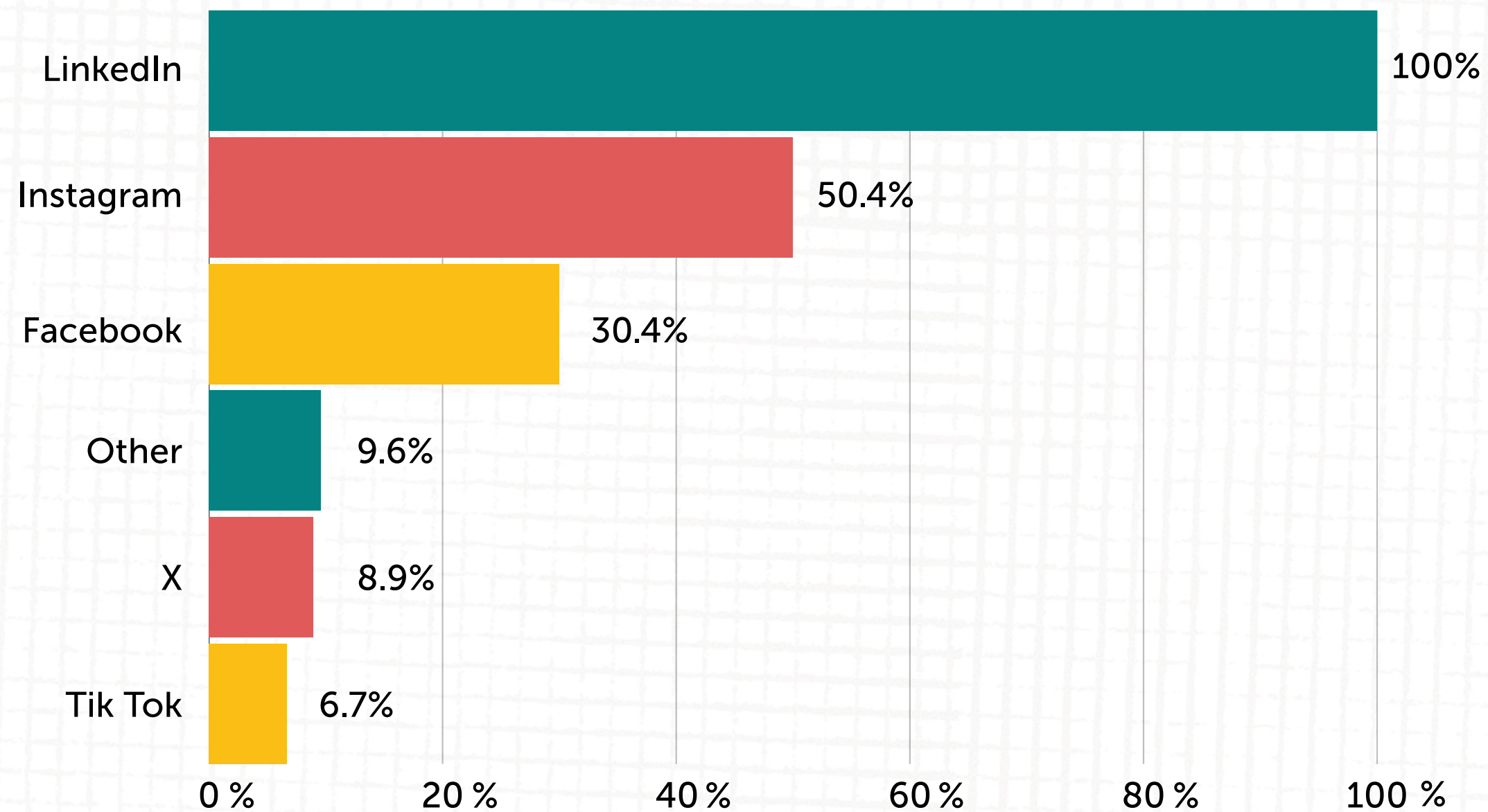
*5-point scale, where 1=No influence at all, 2=Not much influence, 3=Somewhat of an influence, 4=Very much influence, and 5=Extreme influence.





Social Media and Recruiting

Social Media Platform Use, by Percent of Respondents*

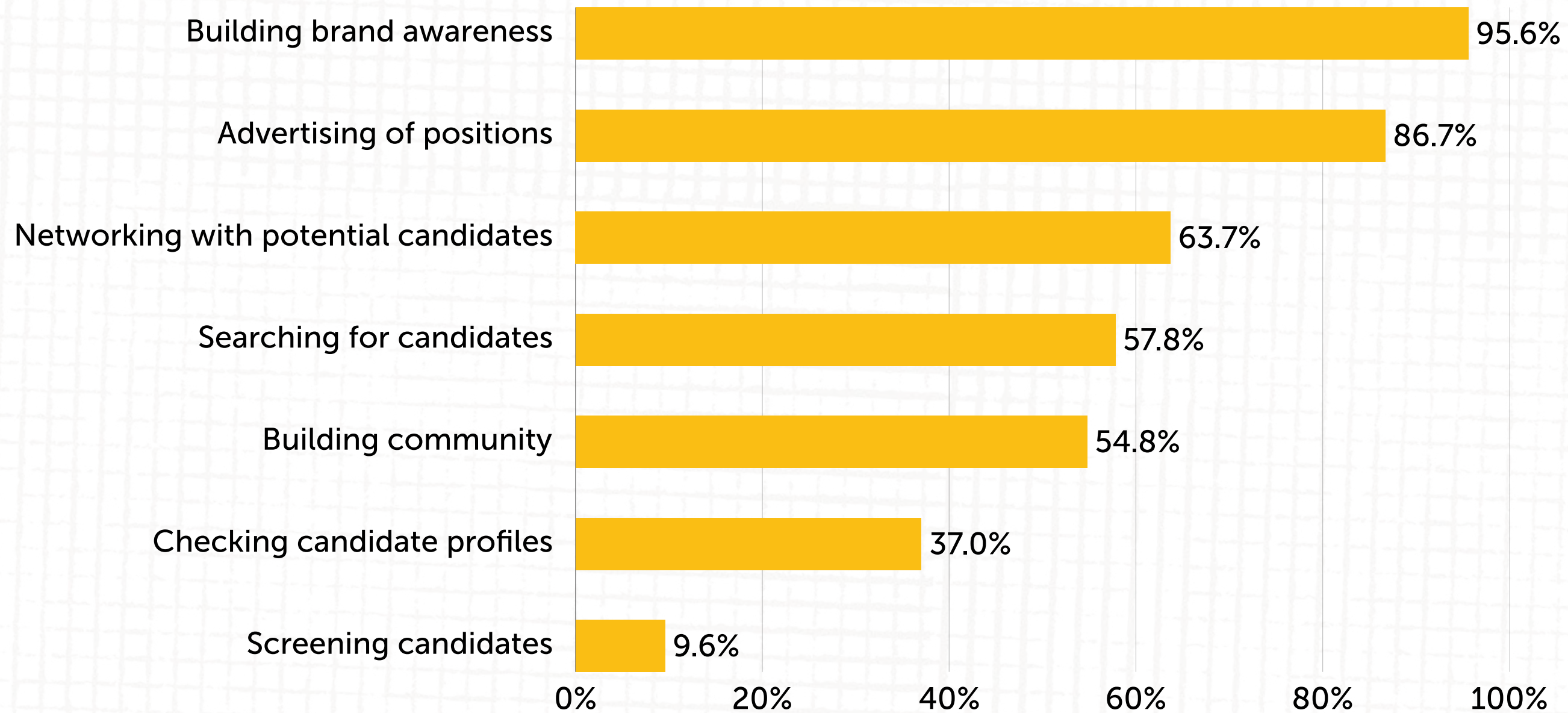


NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS = 135

*Percentages do not equal 100, as respondents were able to select more than one platform.



Ways Early Talent Recruiters Use Social Media, by Percent of Respondents



NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS = 135



AI and Entry-Level Jobs

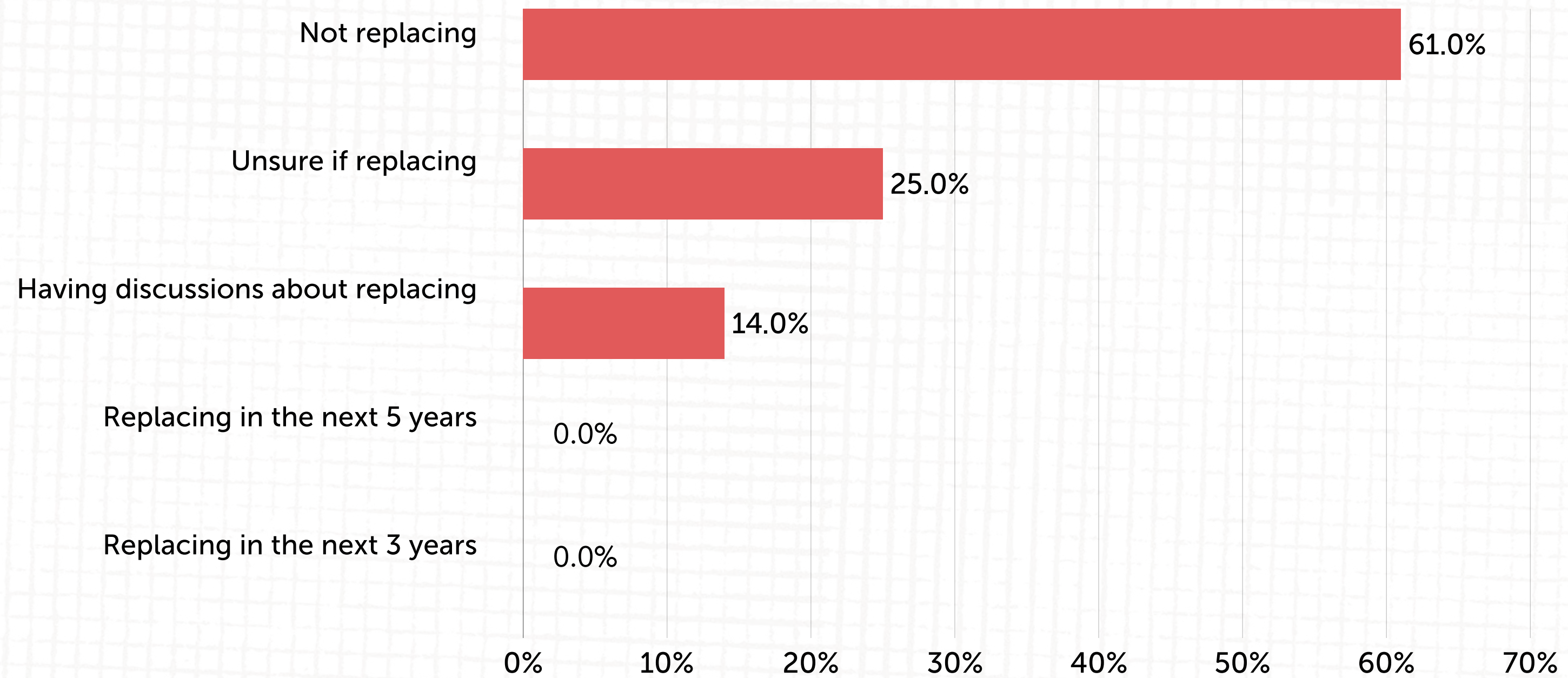
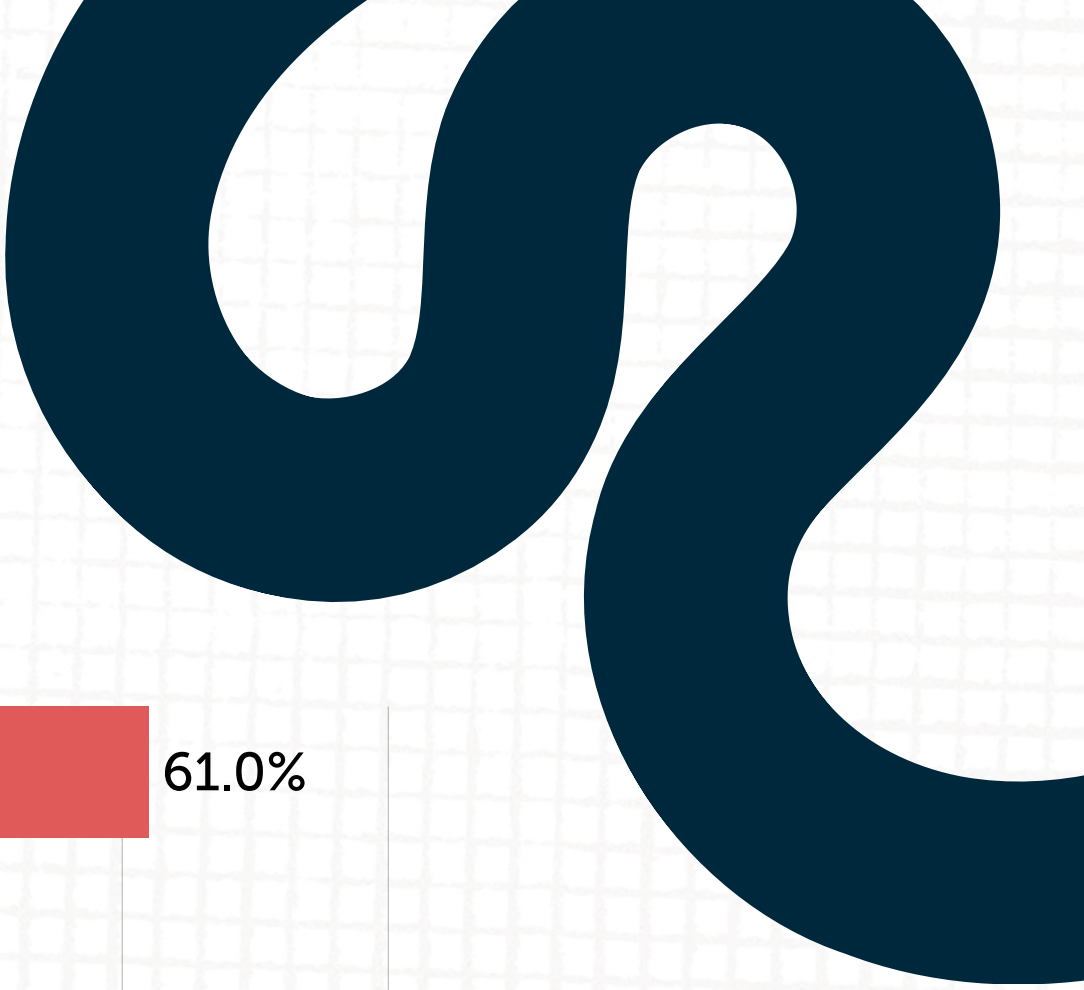
AI Skills

13.3% of jobs require AI skills

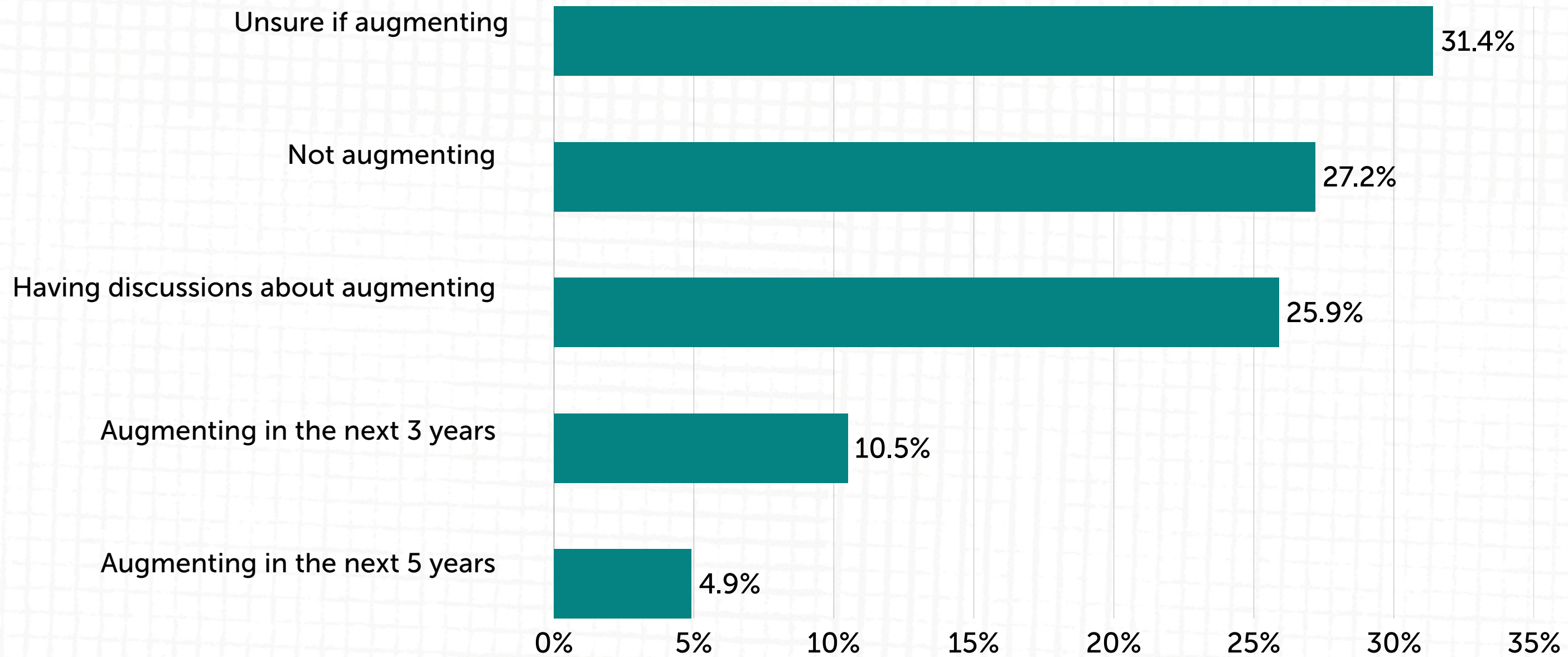
10.5% of entry-level jobs include AI in job descriptions



Replacing Entry-Level Jobs With AI, by Percent of Respondents



Augmenting Entry-Level Jobs With AI, by Percent of Respondents





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