THE DATA YOU NEED *to retain employees, improve alignment, win on social issues, spend smarter, save time, and boost revenue*

INTRO

THIS YEAR *will be full of difficult workplace conversations*

The economy is stabilizing — where will you invest first? The presidential race is here — which issues will you address? The workforce is changing — how will your operations adapt?

- **In the past,** executives relied on instinct, experience, and a few close advisors to decide what to do and what to say.

- **In this report,** we have new data that can define, inspire, or affirm the path you're paving for your organization.

The challenge will be choosing to change. CEOs have a chance to make better-informed choices. Communication leaders will still be able to guide them. Teams and culture can be even more connected.

But there's also urgency for action because the way most executives approach internal communication is no longer working.

Across organizations of all sizes, we're seeing:

- **Salary waste:** 55% of workers lose up to two hours each day clarifying details they need to do their jobs.

- **Alignment breakdown:** Only 14% of workers feel entirely aligned with business goals.

- **Retention risk:** 49% of workers who don't feel aligned are planning to leave their jobs within two years.

- **Political stress:** Only 26% of workers say leaders define and accomplish an action plan when addressing tough issues.

- **Executive distraction:** 48% of C-level leaders have to get more involved in projects than they typically should.

These all tie back to ineffective communication. Left unaddressed, organizations will continue burning fuel in ways that aren't fruitful — wasting time when it isn't needed, following paths that don't lead to goals, and eroding the trust that keeps a workforce engaged.

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IN 2024, *data will be your savior*

High quality communication will be your anchor. And empowered communication leaders — standing firmly beside the CEO — who have the tools they need to do their job will be your imperative.

- **59% of C-level leaders** admit they're struggling to evolve their communication strategy for growing teams and hybrid work.

- **47% say it's hard to know** what employees care about most and what they need to hear.

But when you have the right data — from what topics workers care about to the ways they want you to deliver them — compile the right playbooks, and deliver effective information to a well-trained workforce, the most distracting leadership stressors start to fade.

We compiled our findings into four priorities, each exploring the data you can use to understand your organization's...

1. **Spending** — in time and salary productivity.

2. **Alignment** — with goals and strategy.

3. **Retention** — of top employees.

4. **Politics** — or what teams expect from leaders.

Effective communication can improve them all. To get a closer look at what's going on, why it's happening, and how executives can be more effective, we surveyed over 400 leaders sending internal communications and over 1,000 employees receiving similar updates.

As a leader, what direct results have you seen from effective internal communication?

Result	
45%	Better employee engagement
42%	Stronger teamwork and collaboration
40%	Higher employee satisfaction scores
39%	Greater team productivity
36%	Better alignment with culture and values
32%	Growing revenue or profits
32%	Longer employee retention
30%	Increased alignment with leadership vision
29%	More independent decision-making

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WHAT'S INSIDE

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Data on...

SPENDING — IN TIME AND SALARY PRODUCTIVITY

Let's start with a cold open: Time wasted is money wasted. And at an employee and a leadership level, a lot of both is getting lost. Team motivation is waning in real time, too, but most executives are not aware it's happening.

- **81% of leaders** say employees are energized and motivated.

- **52% of employees** agree.

Why it matters: An organization's ability to stay strong and scale depends on its ability to understand — and address — what's causing the disconnect. Often, the spark is a breakdown in alignment and communication.

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THE TIME *that's getting lost*

What should be true: The more senior a person is — from individual contributors to the C-suite — the more informed, unblocked, and fast to maneuver they are, too.

- **But that isn't happening.**

The more senior a person is, the more time they're losing every day dealing with the avoidable impacts of ineffective communication, like searching for information they need to do their jobs, chasing a timely response, or clarifying context in a communication they've received.
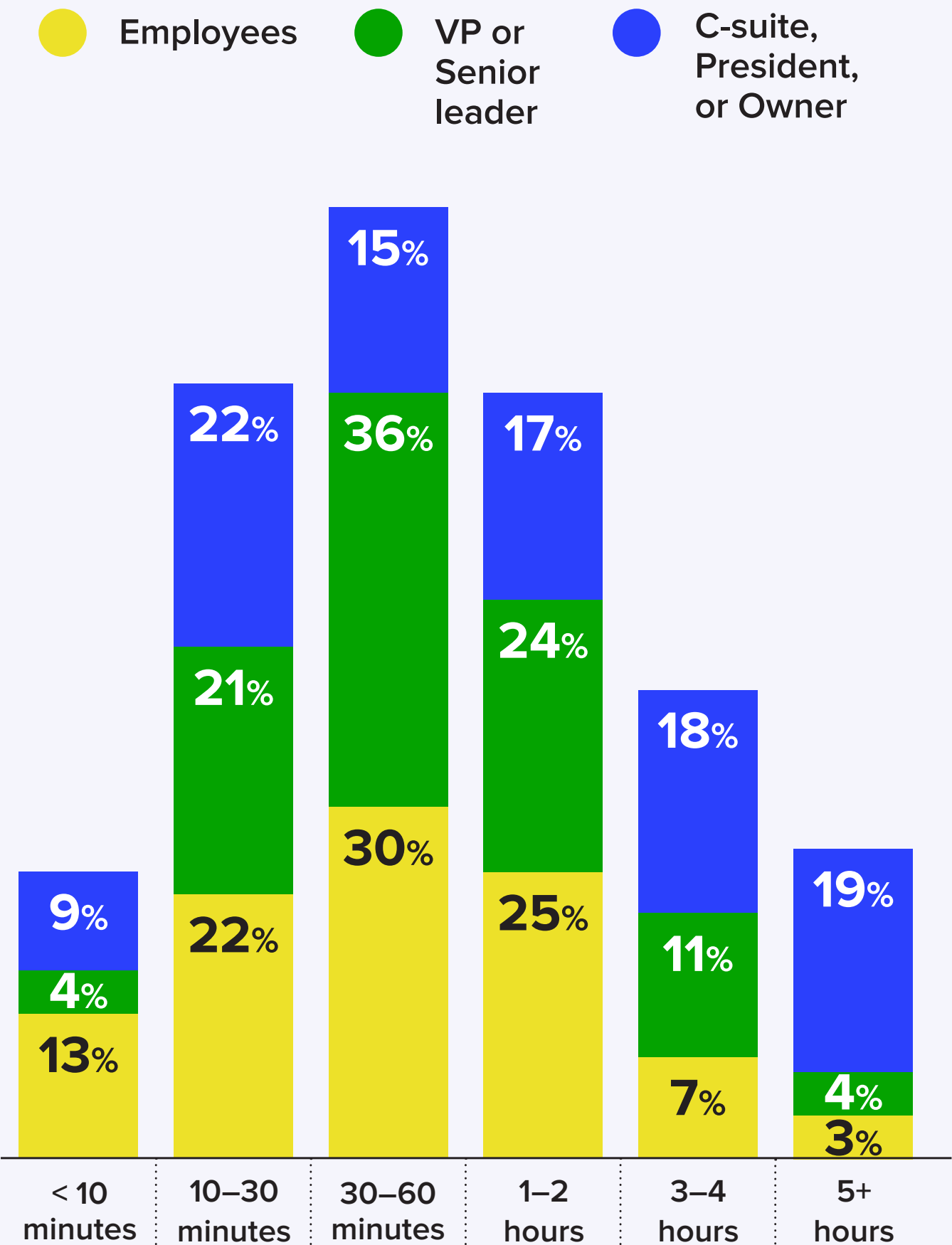
The irony: The more senior staff are, the more likely they are to be the ones deciding what details get shared at an all-staff and department level.

Among leaders who prepare critical updates:

- **10% spend 10+ hours** per week providing them.
- **20% spend 5–10 hours** per week providing them.
- **34% spend 3–5 hours** per week providing them.
- **27% spend 1–2 hours** per week providing them.
- **9% spend less than one hour** per week providing them.

This tells us two things. First, most employees are rarely taught how to communicate effectively, and without training or the expert support of a communication leader, that knowledge gap will follow them as they become leaders. Second, most executives are losing the thread on what insights teams need to be productive.

How much time do you spend each day dealing with the impacts of ineffective communication?

- Employees
- VP or Senior leader
- C-suite, President, or Owner

	< 10 minutes	10–30 minutes	30–60 minutes	1–2 hours	3–4 hours	5+ hours
C-suite, President, or Owner	9%	22%	15%	17%	18%	19%
VP or Senior leader	4%	21%	36%	24%	11%	4%
Employees	13%	22%	30%	25%	7%	3%

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THE MONEY *that's being wasted*

How an organization spends its time is also how it spends its money — and 57% of all payroll covers the cost of sending emails, responding to IMs, and sitting in meetings, according to a study from Microsoft.

- Some of those communications are necessary and helpful.
- Some of that time and salary is well spent.
- A lot isn't.

When we asked employees and leaders how much time they lose from ineffective communication, they also shared their salaries.

Let's take an average worker — making $100,000–$150,000 per year, working 8-hour days, 5 days a week, 52 weeks per year.

- They lose 46 work days per year.
- That wastes $22,360 in salary per year.

Next let's take a more senior colleague — making $200,000+ per year, working 8-hour days, 5 days a week, 52 weeks per year.

- They lose 63 work days per year.
- That wastes $54,860 in salary per year.

It is possible to capture, channel, and redirect that cash, but it requires leaders to first understand how much time their organization is losing, then address the cracks in the communication strategy creating them before people can get back to the jobs you're paying them to do.

The cost of ineffective communications across an organization

Annual salary	Average hours lost per year, per employee	Average salary lost per year, per employee
$10,000 – $50,000	**277** hours	**$3,900**
$50,000 – $100,000	**282** hours	**$10,140**
$100,000 – $150,000	**368** hours	**$22,360**
$150,000 – $200,000	**390** hours	**$32,760**
$200,000+	**507** hours	**$54,860**

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THE ADDED DRAIN on executive time

As more stress lands on operations, the more cross-functional the problem becomes. Systems slow down, productivity stalls, and the right source of intervention — someone at the organization with the perspective and context to put priorities back on track — becomes a more senior, more expensive person.

Nearly half of C-level leaders have found themselves stepping back into projects, clarifying details they've shared before, and working on tasks that aren't the organization's highest priority. They're also struggling to communicate effectively enough to prevent or assuage the issue.

Among their top communication challenges:

- **59% say evolving their communication strategy** for growing teams and hybrid work.

- **47% say understanding** what is most important to staff.

- **42% say allocating** time to create important communications.

- **35% say writing,** in a concise, engaging way.

- **27% say breaking through** information overload.

The irony: Despite all the time, salaries, and attention going to waste — and a self-aware assessment comms could be stronger — 62% of leaders still say their organization is doing a good or excellent job of keeping employees on the same page. In the next chapter, we'll dig into how well that tracks with employees' perception.

As a leader, what direct results have you seen from ineffective internal communication?

● C-suite, President, or Owner   ● VP or Senior leader

	C-suite, President, or Owner	VP or Senior leader
I've gotten more involved in projects than I should have to	48%	34%
I've spent too much time with staff clarifying / reinforcing	43%	37%
I've seen higher employee turnover	41%	31%
I've had to set aside important tasks to put out immediate fires	40%	38%
My organization lost a customer or under-performed on a project	34%	29%
I've seen poor morale among employees	20%	22%

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THE DATA YOU NEED
to spend smarter and save time

Do a pulse check on your organization. Fill in the rough number of employees who work in each salary band, and follow the simple math to see how much of your annual payroll could be better spent with the help of stronger internal communications.

What's going on at your organization?

Annual salary	Numbers of employees		Yearly cost		Total
$10,000 – $50,000		x	$3,900	=	
$50,000 – $100,000		x	$10,140	=	
$100,000 – $150,000		x	$22,360	=	
$150,000 – $200,000		x	$32,760	=	
$200,000+		x	$54,860	=	
				TOTAL:	

Data on...

ALIGNMENT — WITH GOALS AND STRATEGY

Now that it's clear what so many organizations are losing each year in time and salaries, it's critical to understand why — and build a plan for leaders to slow or stop it.

Across organizations of all sizes:

- **44% of leaders** think their staff are entirely aligned with the organization's business goals.

- **14% of employees** agree.

Why it matters: Data shows a direct correlation between how effective an organization's internal communications are and how aligned its employees stay. And when alignment breaks down, leaders say they see internal divisions, team conflicts, and demotivated employees.

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ALIGNMENT is getting worse

An organization's success depends on two things: strong goals and an engaged workforce that's able to deliver on them. This time last year, there was a glaring gap — 77% of leaders thought internal communications were helpful and relevant. Only 46% of employees agreed.

This year, the gap grew:

- **85% of leaders** think their internal communications are helpful, relevant, and have the context teams need to do their jobs.
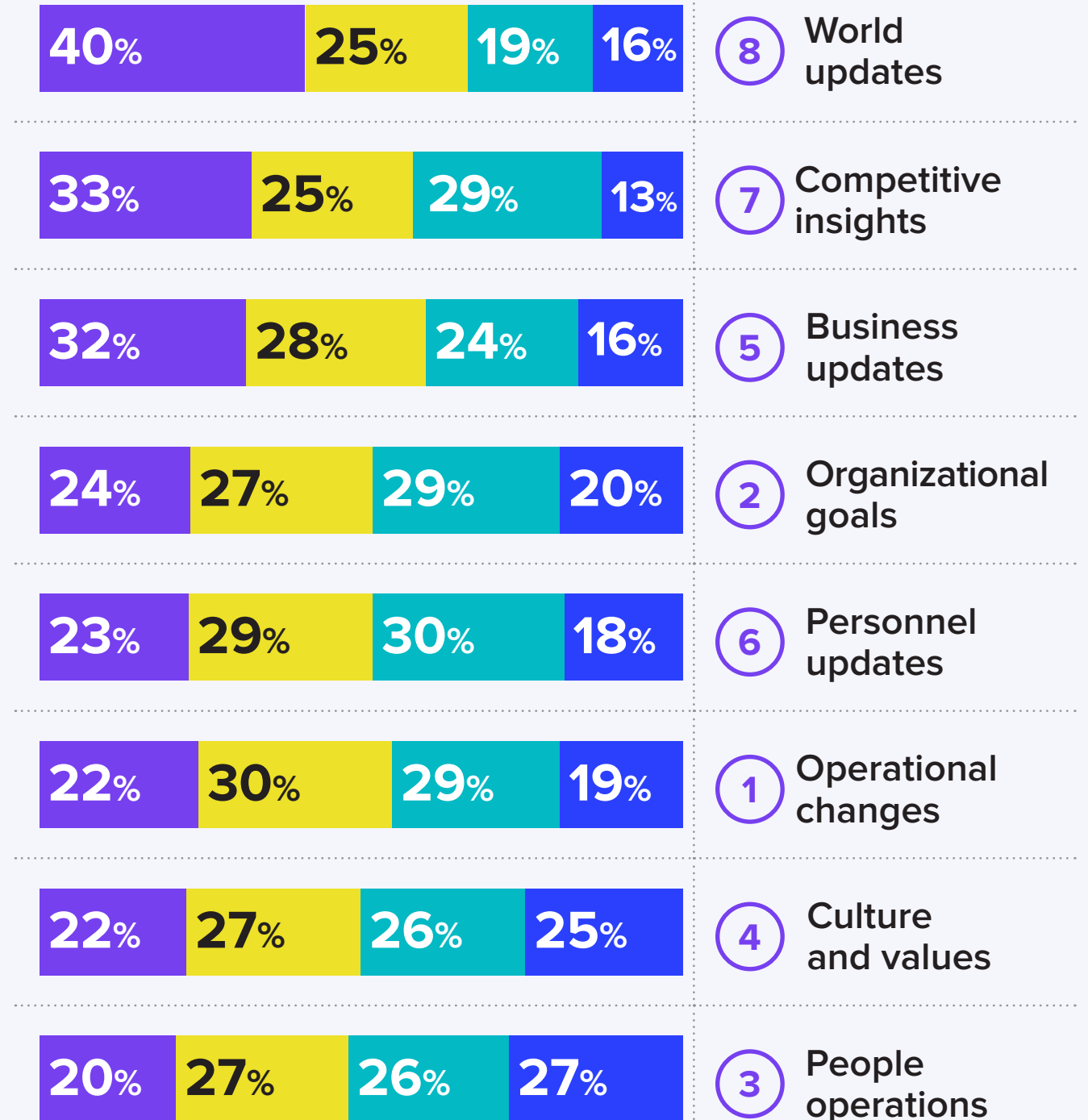
- **45% of employees** agree.

It's time to dismantle what "we believe to be true" or "what's served us so far" and start asking and embracing what a younger, different, and more distributed workforce is saying it needs.

Employees ranked a list of topics according to how critical they are to doing their jobs well:

1. Operational changes, like process and policy
2. Organization goals, plans, and new initiatives
3. People operations, like benefits and DEI initiatives
4. Culture and values
5. Business updates, like project, product, or client updates
6. Personnel updates, like team hires and departures
7. Competitive insights, like industry news
8. World updates, like the Middle East and Ukraine

The irony: The two topics employees say are least critical to staying aligned with their leaders are also the two topics they receive updates on most often — while the topics they value most arrive a few times a month or even less frequently.

We asked employees: How often do you get updates from leaders on key topics?

40%	25%	19%	16%	8	World updates
33%	25%	29%	13%	7	Competitive insights
32%	28%	24%	16%	5	Business updates
24%	27%	29%	20%	2	Organizational goals
23%	29%	30%	18%	6	Personnel updates
22%	30%	29%	19%	1	Operational changes
22%	27%	26%	25%	4	Culture and values
20%	27%	26%	27%	3	People operations

Legend:
- Weekly or multiple times per week
- A few times per month
- Every few months or so
- Once or twice a year, or not at all

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READER ENGAGEMENT is getting weaker

Even excellent goals will fail if the details leaders share are hard to parse or feel overwhelming. This time last year, there was another gap in organizations — 78% of leaders thought their communications were clear and engaging. Only 51% of employees agreed.

This year, that gap grew, too:

- **83% of leaders** think their internal communications are clear and engaging.
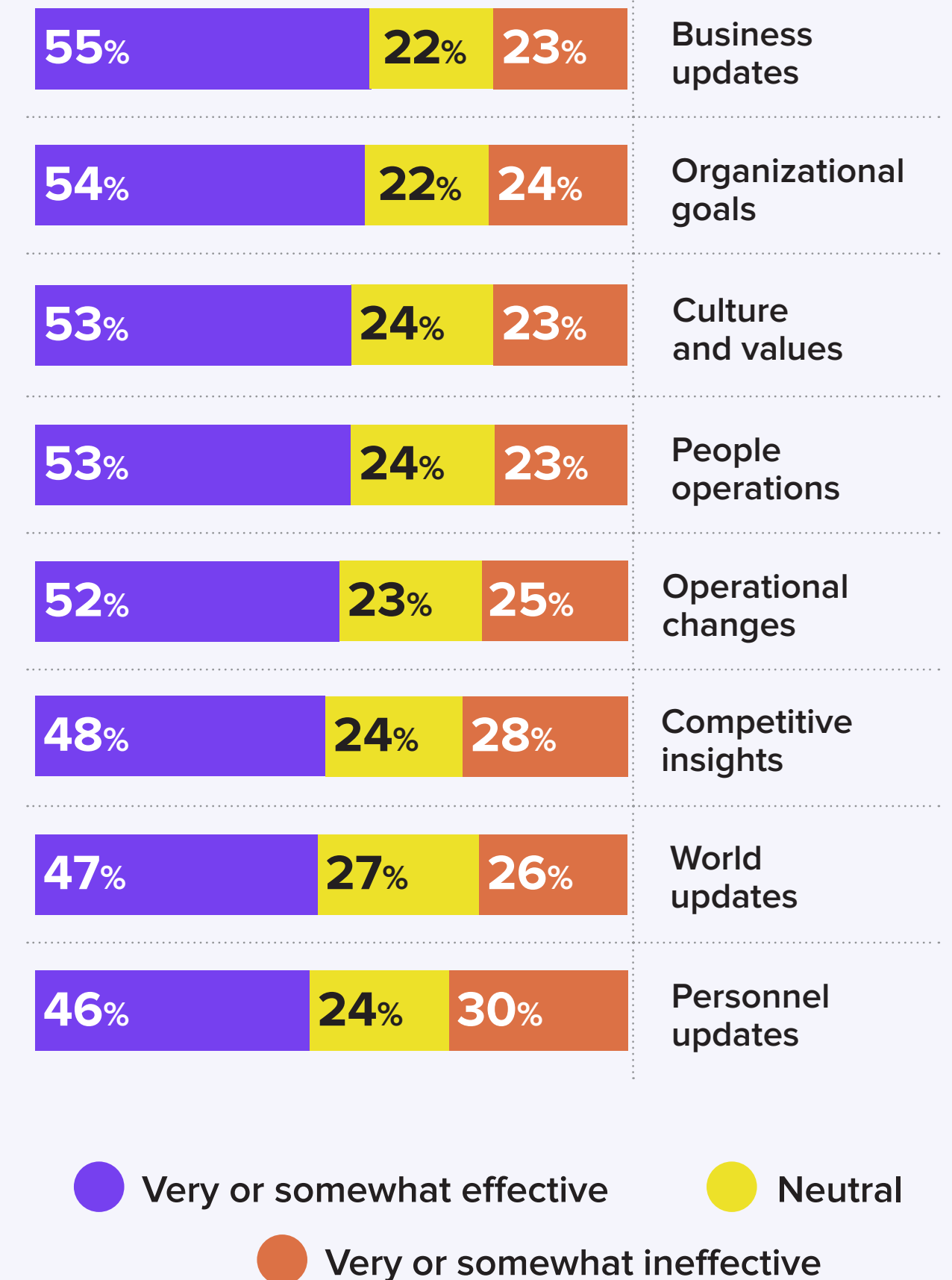
- **47% of employees** agree.

So, on top of the fact that the choice in topics and frequency of updates are both missing the mark for employees, the efficacy of those updates — when they do arrive — is still not strong enough.

Employees rated the top ways their leaders can improve:

- **37%** want them on a more consistent cadence.

- **36%** want the opportunity to provide feedback.

- **35%** want more thoughtful and insightful details.

- **34%** want to receive updates more frequently.

- **33%** want to receive more relevant topics.

Zoom in, and once again, the topic employees say is most critical to their success — operational changes — is middle of the pack for effectiveness, and all topics have room to improve by about 50%.

We asked employees: How effective are the updates you receive from leaders on key topics?

55%	22%	23%	Business updates
54%	22%	24%	Organizational goals
53%	24%	23%	Culture and values
53%	24%	23%	People operations
52%	23%	25%	Operational changes
48%	24%	28%	Competitive insights
47%	27%	26%	World updates
46%	24%	30%	Personnel updates

- Very or somewhat effective
- Neutral
- Very or somewhat ineffective

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RESURFACING INSIGHTS *is getting harder*

Once employees have what they need in an approachable format, the ability to revisit vital information is even more important. This time last year, 70% of leaders thought teams could revisit organizational goals and strategies. Only 46% of employees agreed.

This year, that gap also grew:

- **79% of leaders** think teams can quickly resurface goals, strategies, or key directives when needed.

- **44% of employees** agree.

So even when the right information is shared well, it can still be lost or overlooked if it doesn't live where employees spend their time or are conditioned to look. Fix that, and there's a lot of upside.
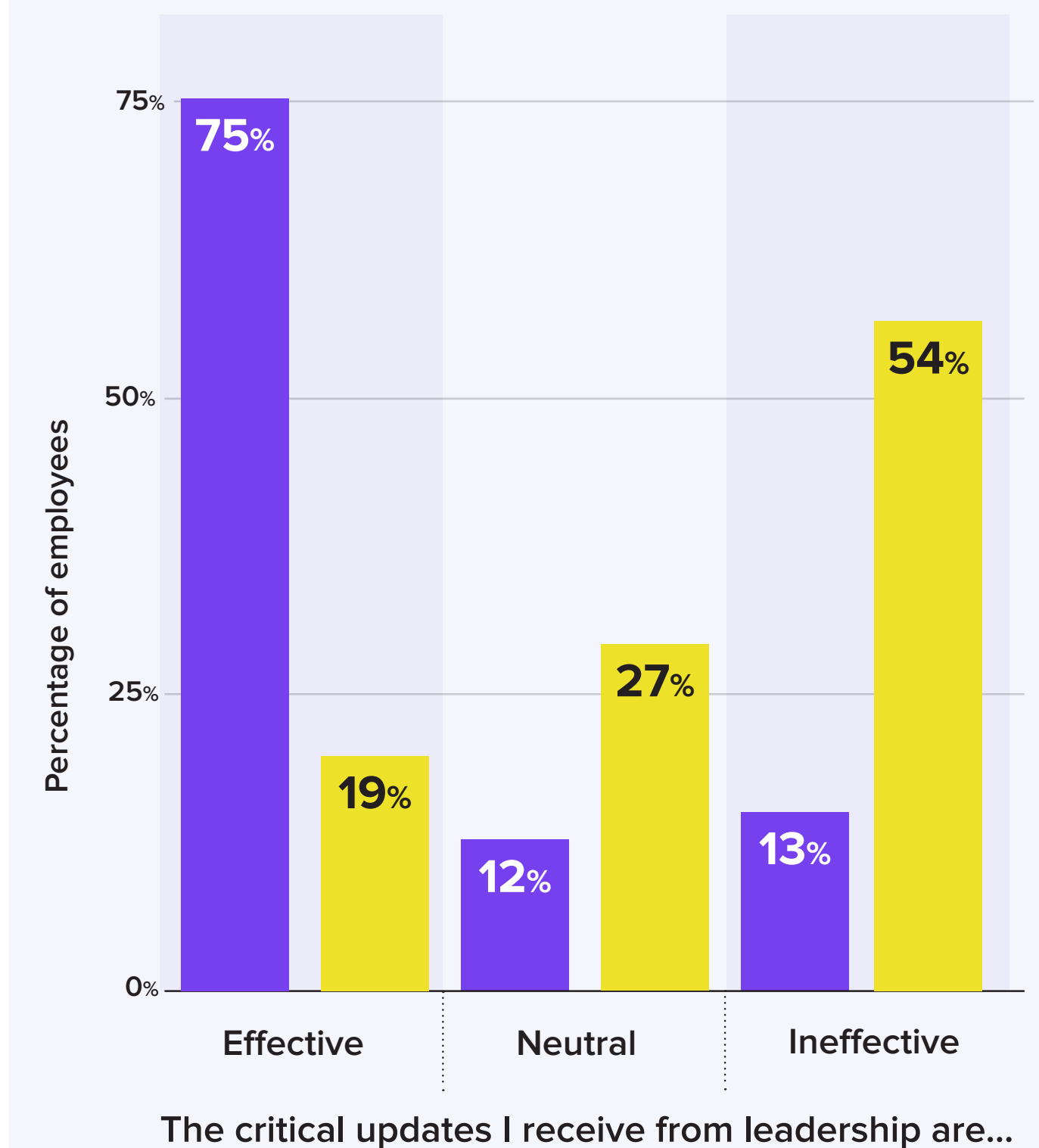
Leaders rated the direct results of more effective internal communication:

- **45%** say better employee engagement

- **42%** say stronger teamwork and collaboration

- **40%** say higher employee satisfaction scores

- **39%** say greater team productivity

- **36%** say better alignment with culture and values

- **32%** say growing revenue or profits

- **32%** say longer employee retention

- **30%** say increased alignment with leadership vision

- **29%** say more independent decision-making

Strong communication creates stronger alignment — and better business results. In the next chapter, we'll dig into the state of employee motivation, alignment, retention, and the communication channels staff wish their leaders would use.

Effective communication creates employee alignment

- Entirely aligned
- Not at all or slightly aligned

Percentage of employees

	Effective	Neutral	Ineffective
Entirely aligned	75%	12%	13%
Not at all or slightly aligned	19%	27%	54%

The critical updates I receive from leadership are...

THE DATA YOU NEED
to improve alignment and boost revenue

Do a pulse check on your communications. Their ongoing quality — and the engagement that comes from raising the bar and keeping it high — impacts alignment, collaboration, and revenue.

Ask your team:

1. How aligned do you feel with our business goals and strategic objectives?

☐ Not at all aligned
☐ Slightly aligned
☐ Somewhat aligned
☐ Mostly aligned
☐ Entirely aligned

2. Select the updates that are critical in helping you feel aligned with our org-wide goals and able to do your job well.

☐ **Culture & values**
☐ **Personnel updates** (hires, departure, team member profiles)
☐ **People operations & plans** (employee benefits, strategies, DEI)
☐ **Business updates** (projects, products, or client updates)
☐ **Organization goals** (targets, plans, or new initiatives)
☐ **Operational changes** (process/protocol/policy updates)
☐ **Competitive insights** (industry news, competitive insights)
☐ **World updates** (Middle East, Ukraine)
☐ **Other** _____

3. Rank each of the updates you said are critical, based on how important they are to doing your job well.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____

4. The communications I receive from organization leaders are helpful, relevant, and include the context I need to do my job well.

☐ Strongly agree
☐ Agree
☐ Neither agree nor disagree
☐ Disagree
☐ Strongly disagree

5. The communications I receive from my organization leaders are clear, engaging, and respectful of my time.

☐ Strongly agree
☐ Agree
☐ Neither agree nor disagree
☐ Disagree
☐ Strongly disagree

6. I know where I can quickly find the goals, strategies, or directives our leaders have shared when I need them.

☐ Strongly agree
☐ Agree
☐ Neither agree nor disagree
☐ Disagree
☐ Strongly disagree

RETENTION — OF TOP EMPLOYEES

A few direct lines are emerging in employee data. Effective internal communication creates alignment of employees. It also creates better engagement and collaboration among them and productivity and revenue from them.

Yes, but: Breakdowns in communication — and alignment — start to draw a less exciting line:

- **49% of unaligned employees** plan to leave their job in the next two years.

- **44% of unmotivated employees** plan to leave their job in the next two years.

Why it matters: Internal communications play a herculean role in employee retention. So we're picking up the thread on the quality, quantity, and channel mix you need to keep high achievers in-seat.

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COMMUNICATIONS *must be reliable*

In an ideal setup, employees build a routine around a small set of vital internal communications their leaders consistently send.

- **81% of leaders** say internal communications are timely and on a cadence teams can rely on.
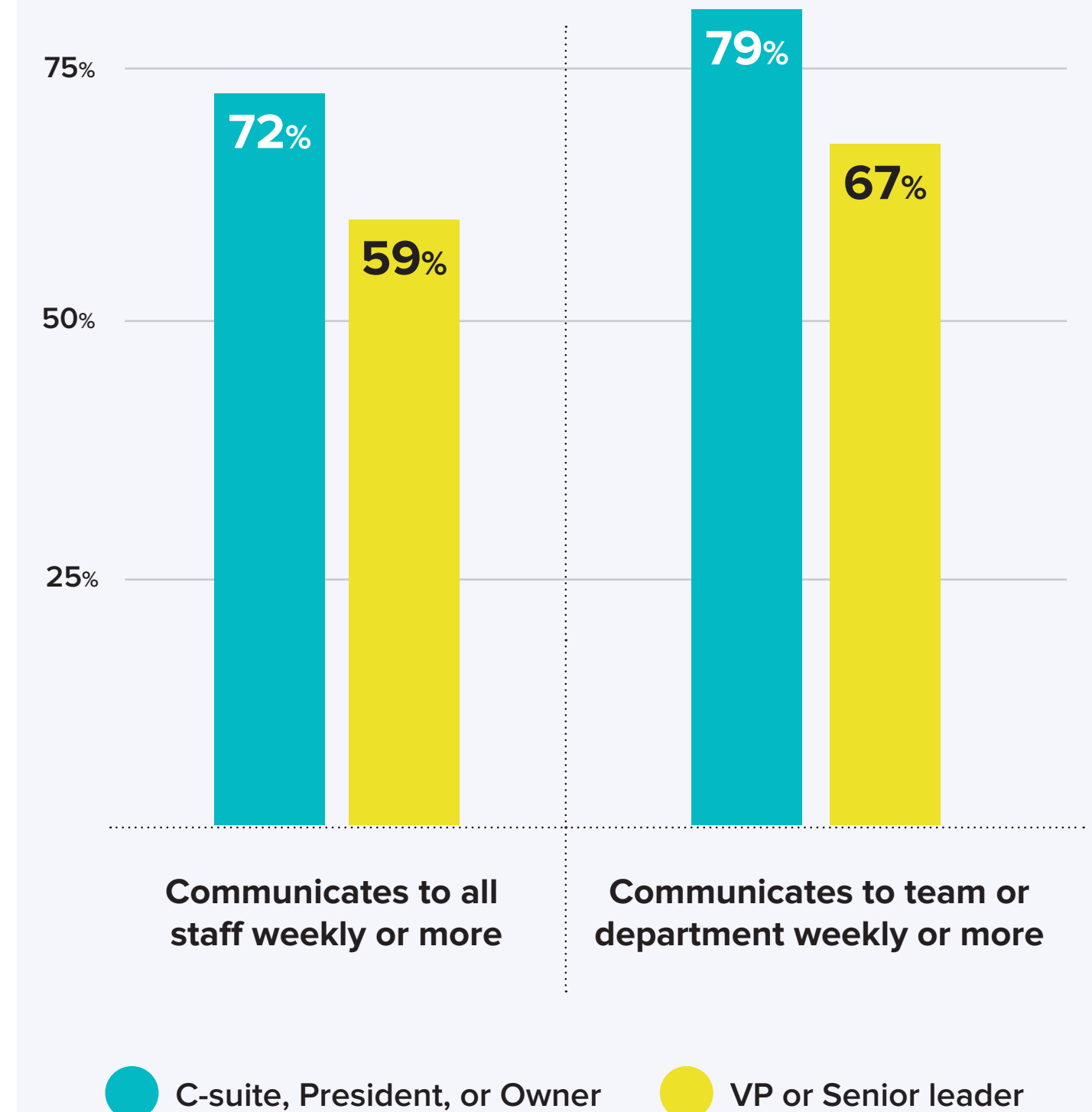
- **42% of employees** agree.

That gap is among the most glaring — or consequential — across all the data in this report. Without consistency, it's nearly impossible to establish trust, which is critical for leaders to build before they need it.

Trust will be essential in navigating the topics that leaders say are among their biggest communication challenges:

- **51%** say economic uncertainty and where to spend

- **41%** say easing burnout and strengthening culture

- **40%** say the safe adoption of AI

- **35%** say environmental commitments and transparency

- **29%** say political and social issues

- **24%** say navigating change and preserving trust

An opportunity: Treat communication like a team sport. Support and repetition among leaders can create consistency for staff. Right now, the C-suite are among the most active all-staff and department-level communicators. Leverage leaders at every level to add the context and dimension that only they can for the employees closest to them.

The C-suite is communicating with staff more often than lower level leaders

Bar chart:

	Communicates to all staff weekly or more	Communicates to team or department weekly or more
C-suite, President, or Owner	72%	79%
VP or Senior leader	59%	67%

Legend: ● C-suite, President, or Owner ● VP or Senior leader

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COMMUNICATIONS *must be accessible*

Once communications arrive more consistently, the channel strategy and feedback loops that make each more effective come in. This time last year, 67% of leaders said staff had an easy way to share feedback about communications. Only 43% of employees agreed.

This year, that gap grew:

- **81% of leaders** think teams have an easy and accessible way to share feedback about internal communications.

- **44% of employees** agree.

At organizations of all sizes, measuring the impact of communication is often a challenge — or sometimes entirely absent.

Across leaders, a batch of imperfect indicators help track internal communications:

- **41%** say employee survey feedback

- **39%** say unsolicited feedback from employees

- **39%** say overall business performance

- **35%** say time spent working vs. in meetings

- **30%** say email open rates

- **29%** say time spent reading key communications

- **29%** say email click-through rate

- **28%** say unsolicited feedback from leaders

- **22%** say emoji reactions or comments

- **4%** say they do not track internal comms

The irony: Most leaders wouldn't build a business plan without data — but they communicate without insight. Most wouldn't launch products without user input — but they share directives without asking staff which channels they prefer. Communication is the core of any strategy. Start with data. Be visible. Stay accessible.

Primary ways to share critical internal communications

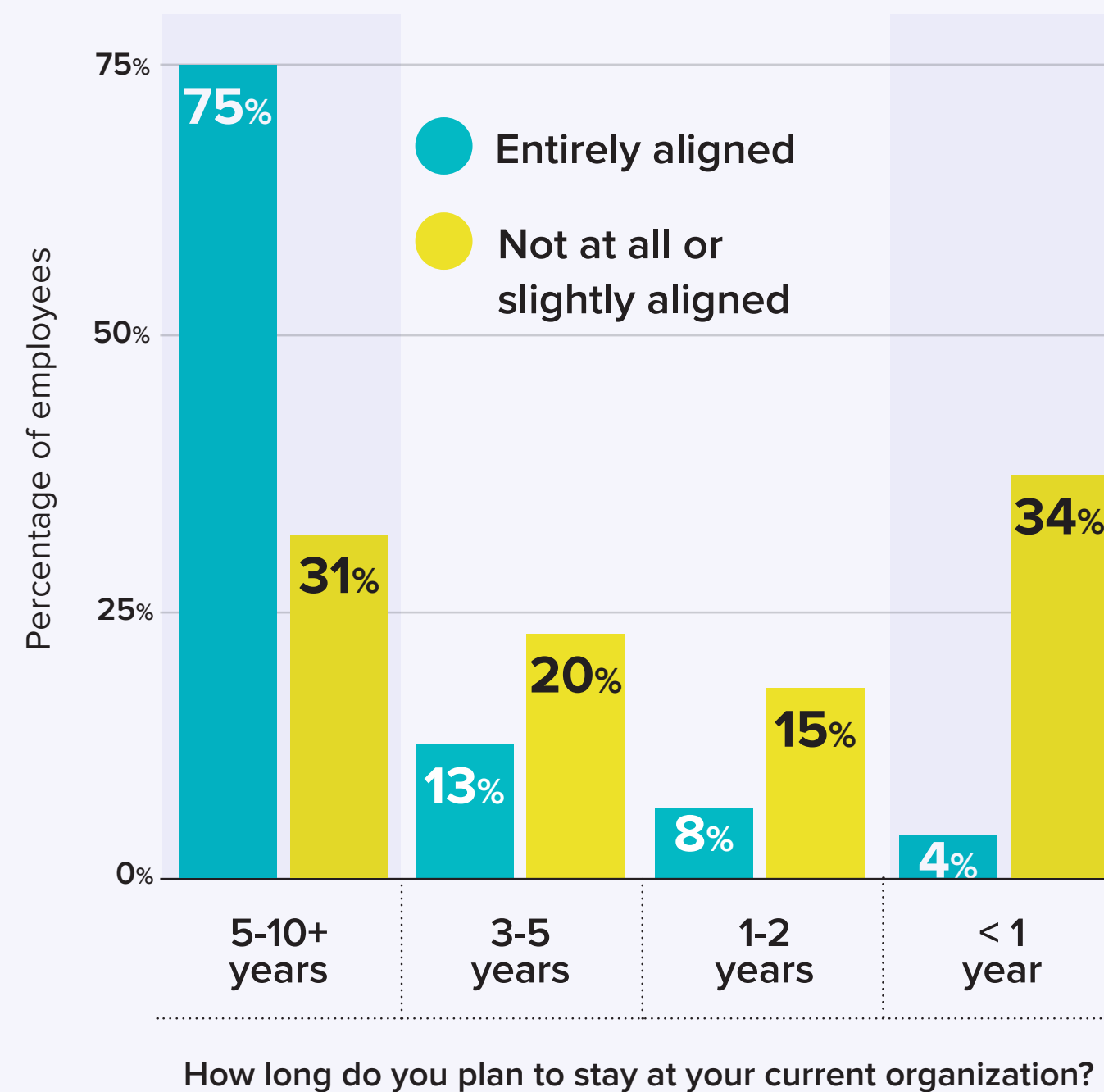| What staff prefer		What leaders do
36%	All-hands or department meetings	36%
30%	Ad hoc emails	32%
22%	Newsletters / recurring updates	24%
22%	Text messages	30%
18%	Chat / IM tools	33%
16%	Employee apps	34%
16%	Phone calls	33%
14%	Intranets	24%
11%	Video messages	27%
10%	Physical or digital signage	23%
4%	Podcasts	20%
5%	Other	1%

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COMMUNICATIONS are key to retention

Communication is a force multiplier. It keeps people on the same page prioritizing work that's valued by leaders and valuable to team success. It's also one of the most critical ingredients in helping hybrid staff feel aligned, motivated, and connected with the organization.
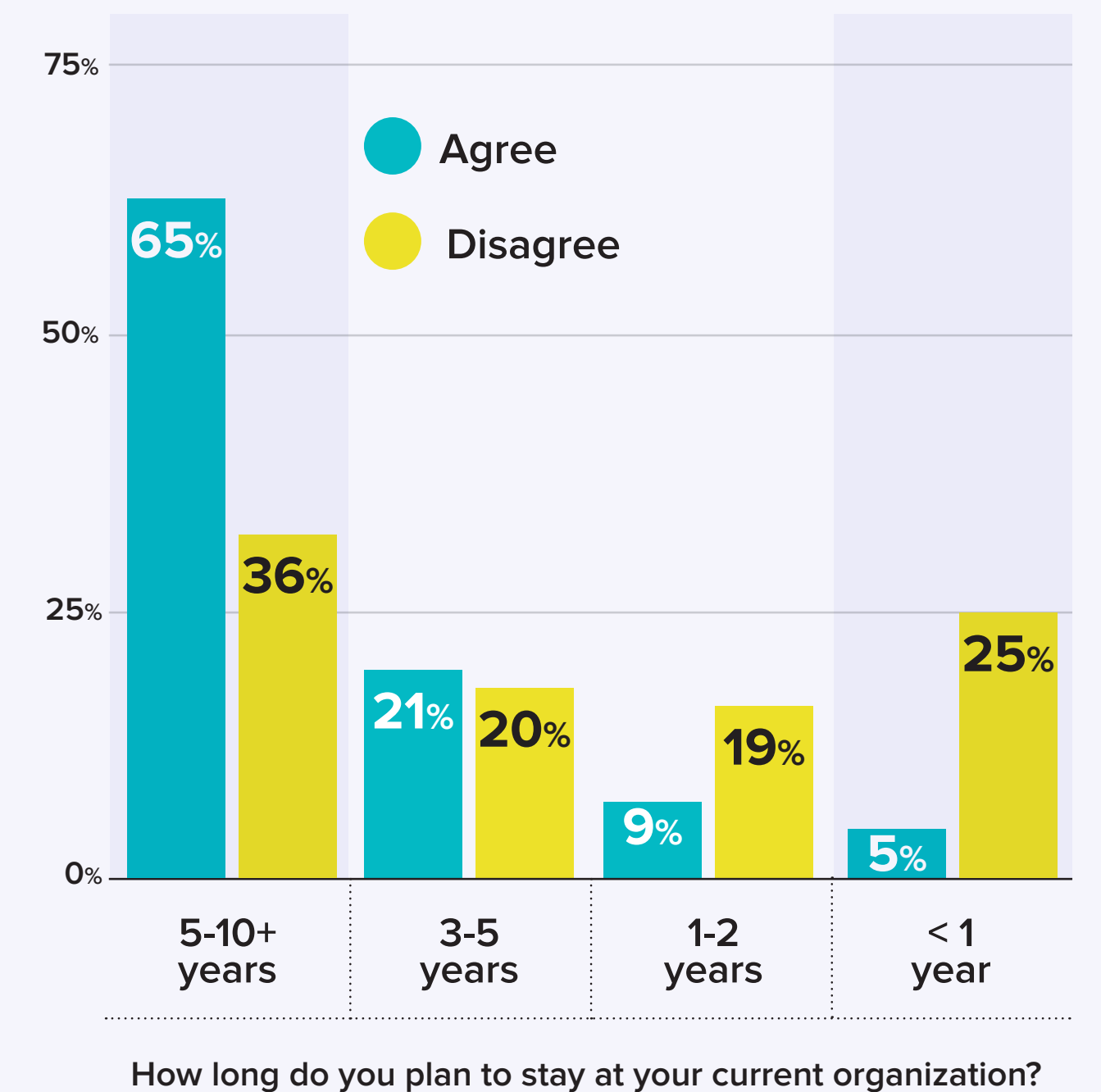
That alignment and motivation also ladders up to something equally important — retention. And when it's weak, you'll feel its impact. Nearly half of unaligned or unmotivated employees expect to leave their jobs within two years.

Employee alignment and motivation leads to employee retention

How aligned do you feel with your organization's goals?

Percentage of employees

- ● Entirely aligned
- ● Not at all or slightly aligned

	5-10+ years	3-5 years	1-2 years	< 1 year
Entirely aligned	75%	13%	8%	4%
Not at all or slightly aligned	31%	20%	15%	34%

How long do you plan to stay at your current organization?

Do you feel motivated and energized at work?

- ● Agree
- ● Disagree

	5-10+ years	3-5 years	1-2 years	< 1 year
Agree	65%	21%	9%	5%
Disagree	36%	20%	19%	25%

How long do you plan to stay at your current organization?

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THE DATA YOU NEED to retain employees

Ask your employees where they prefer to see important updates that they need to understand and — most likely — revisit. Once you know what your folks prefer, you can define an identity and communication strategy for each channel you use. What's included below is just one example.

Go deeper: This worksheet offers space to take stock of your current channels and strategies — including employee apps, department meetings, digital signage, and more — and identify opportunities to improve.

SLACK / TEAMS	AD HOC EMAIL
These instant messages are fast-moving updates with a short shelf life. **They are things you'd say in the hallway** or by tapping someone on the shoulder. They need a brief answer ASAP, like quick questions or clarifications that keep projects moving forward. Remember it's possible that busy employees or those on vacation may never see them.	**These are high-caliber,** all-staff announcements, or small group communications, on one topic. **Used sparingly, they synthesize** progress, monitor and report issues, and relay opportunities so stakeholders or collaborators stay informed. They're a good way to share information that you can't risk getting missed in an IM, where it's even tougher to resurface.
NEWSLETTER	**INTRANET**
These are more detailed than ad hoc emails, with reliable cadence and multi-topic coverage. **They are sent on a more consistent schedule.** They contain essential information, divided into several focused, digestible cards, making them an easy way to keep employees up to date on the topics they want — and need — to hear about to stay productive.	**These long-standing systems document** how teams work and what processes are. **They can be great sources** of historical context and insight — if you know where to look. Updates here should have a long shelf life and be relevant to a wide variety of readers. The tough part is navigating it. The more your organization grows, the deeper readers have to dig.

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Data on...

POLITICS — AND EMPLOYEES' EXPECTATIONS

Every election brings up sensitive issues, and the uncertainty of who will lead our nation — or what policies and protections may change as a result — can be deeply unsettling to staff.

- **48% of leaders** say they lay out an action plan and reliably execute it when navigating social or political issues.

- **26% of employees** agree.

Why it matters: This year, teams will turn up the temperature on their leaders, expecting them to stand up, speak out, and advocate for employees. And the trust teams place in executives can be heavily scrutinized, hard won, and easily lost in an election year.

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LEADERS ARE ENGAGING *on tough topics*

There are a lot of ways to look at this story. Leaders are engaging, but not all the time. They're willing to touch difficult topics, but most often after staff or social pressure is high.

All things equal, at least 50% of employees say their leaders have engaged on key issues internally:

- **70%** addressed employment
- **68%** addressed racial inequality
- **67%** addressed accessible healthcare
- **65%** addressed LGBTQIA+ inequality
- **64%** addressed gender inequality
- **63%** addressed inflation
- **61%** addressed benefit reform
- **56%** addressed climate change
- **52%** addressed global politics
- **52%** addressed gun violence
- **50%** addressed immigration

That's a strong start toward what will be a challenging year, but a leader's willingness to address tough topics is only one part of the equation. Staff are acutely focused on when and how leaders tackle these topics, too.

- **45% of leaders** say they proactively engage in difficult topics and communicate a perspective — 23% of employees agree.

- **44% of employees** say their leaders try to avoid difficult topics or simply never engage in them — 20% of leaders agree.

The way you choose to act, or not, will have an amplified impact on employee trust this year. And if teams feel what leaders are saying does not match up with what they're doing, you will hear it loudly.

We asked employees: Which topics should leaders engage on, and where?

Internally		Externally
43%	Employment	**40%**
34%	Inflation	**31%**
30%	Benefit reform	**24%**
29%	Accessible healthcare	**26%**
23%	Gender inequality	**22%**
22%	Racial inequality	**20%**
21%	LGBTQIA+ inequality	**18%**
17%	Climate change	**19%**
14%	Gun violence	**13%**
13%	Immigration	**12%**
9%	Global politics	**11%**
25%	None — my org should not engage	**27%**

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LEADERS seem to favor team-level talks

Employees may expect their leaders to provide clarity of thought and offer trustworthy direction. Internally, leaders have those discussions on a smaller stage internally than employees would prefer. Externally, leaders believe in action plans and accountability.

	How has your organization engaged internally?			How has your organization engaged externally?		
	Discuss the issue at an all-staff level	Have managers discuss the issue with their team	Create and execute an org-wide action plan	Make an external statement to the public	Create and execute an external action plan	Regularly report on its external commitments
Employment	51%	60%	36%	42%	63%	32%
Inflation	43%	58%	38%	45%	52%	34%
Benefit reform	38%	58%	45%	41%	57%	33%
Accessible healthcare	39%	63%	34%	46%	54%	39%
Gender inequality	54%	55%	42%	47%	57%	35%
Racial inequality	45%	53%	50%	44%	60%	36%
LGBTQIA+ inequality	54%	59%	49%	48%	65%	33%
Climate change	47%	63%	45%	51%	47%	39%
Gun violence	45%	58%	36%	48%	47%	40%
Immigration	46%	67%	36%	43%	53%	37%
Global	55%	54%	39%	42%	54%	32%

*Among 348 leaders who said their organization engages on each topic

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EMPLOYEES want org-wide discussions

Leaders have to be ready to discuss issues important to their teams and define or defend any actions that are — or could be perceived as — political. Employees want this to happen in open, internal forums. They agree with leaders on the importance of external accountability.

	How should your organization engage internally?			How should your organization engage externally?		
	Discuss the issue at an all-staff level	**Have managers discuss the issue with their team**	**Create and execute an org-wide action plan**	**Make an external statement to the public**	**Create and execute an external action plan**	**Regularly report on its external commitments**
Employment	52%	49%	48%	28%	61%	48%
Inflation	52%	42%	47%	27%	58%	48%
Benefit reform	55%	50%	49%	34%	61%	47%
Accessible healthcare	56%	46%	55%	35%	61%	50%
Gender inequality	54%	51%	60%	43%	61%	54%
Racial inequality	66%	58%	49%	47%	62%	56%
LGBTQIA+ inequality	64%	48%	55%	52%	60%	55%
Climate change	54%	42%	55%	43%	64%	48%
Gun violence	59%	50%	45%	49%	61%	43%
Immigration	45%	47%	45%	44%	56%	42%
Global	51%	52%	37%	43%	54%	36%

*Among 728 employees who said their organization should engage on each topic

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ON THE WHOLE, *employees aren't happy*

Leaders and employees may be generally aligned on which topics are important to address, but most employees have neutral to negative feelings about how well their organization is tackling those topics.

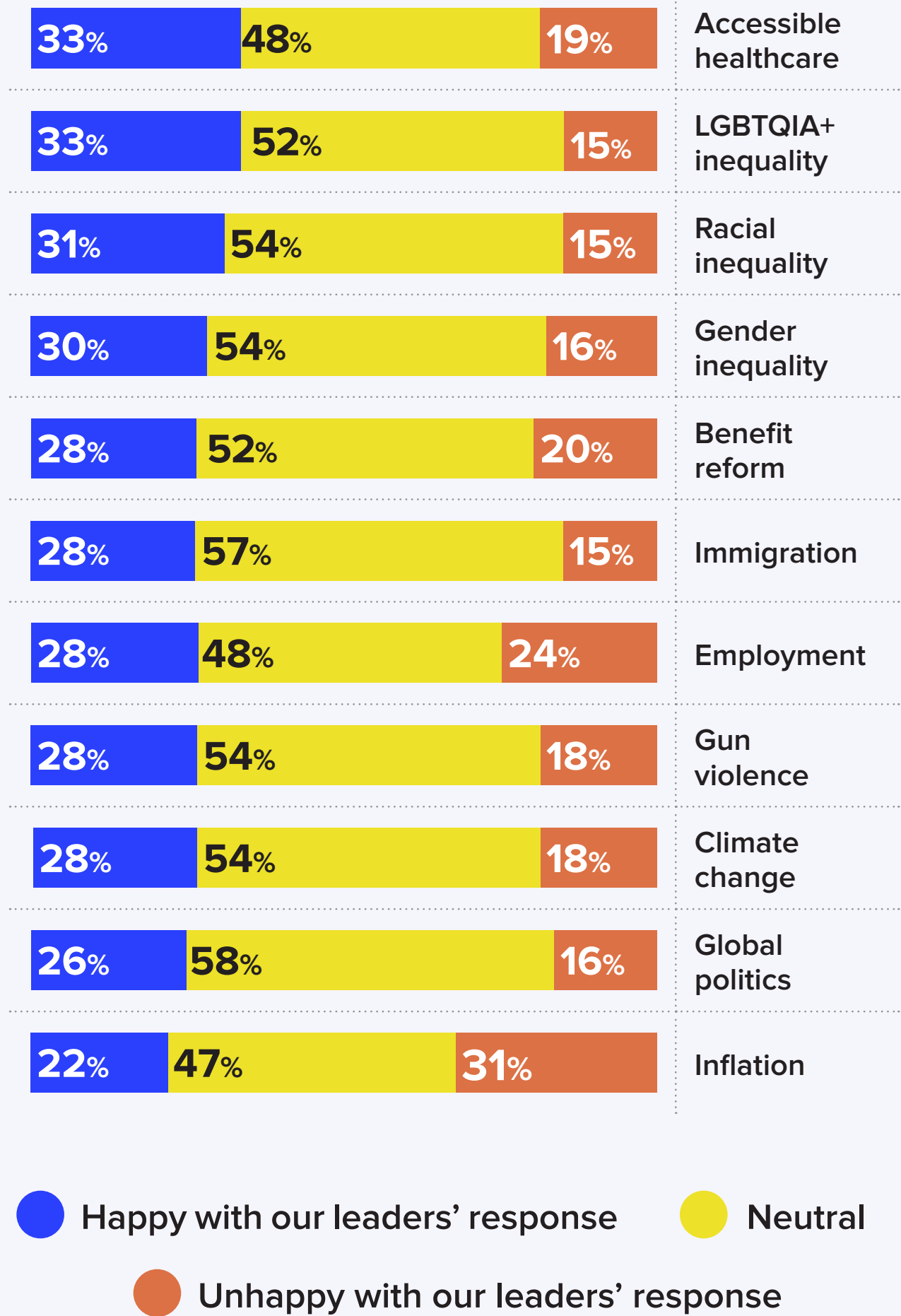**Leaders need a plan** for what to speak on and how to never waver.

- **Cross-reference key issues** with your mission, vision, and values. These are the areas where employees will push most.

- **Revisit issue management playbooks.** Walk leaders through them so they're close to the process before pressure hits.

- **Create listening groups.** Hear what issues your teams care about. Prep resources before you need them.

- **Host conflict management workshops** and webinars. Hone the skills to navigate disagreements and productive discourse.

- **Keep people in the process.** Transparency builds trust.

Every organization will be divided to an unknowable degree. Strong leaders will anticipate how deeply personal politics are and what support or space their employees may need in the year ahead.

Go deeper: This communication strategy cheat sheet shares advice from 90 of the nation's top communications on how to tackle:

- The 2024 presidential election

- AI in every workplace

- A stabilizing economy — finally

- Rising burnout, weak culture

- Dissatisfied frontline workers

- Evolving ESG reporting standards

- Social media, news, and trust

- The blurring of comms and marketing

Employees aren't all that happy
with how leaders are engaging

Topic	Happy	Neutral	Unhappy
Accessible healthcare	33%	48%	19%
LGBTQIA+ inequality	33%	52%	15%
Racial inequality	31%	54%	15%
Gender inequality	30%	54%	16%
Benefit reform	28%	52%	20%
Immigration	28%	57%	15%
Employment	28%	48%	24%
Gun violence	28%	54%	18%
Climate change	28%	54%	18%
Global politics	26%	58%	16%
Inflation	22%	47%	31%

● Happy with our leaders' response   ● Neutral

● Unhappy with our leaders' response

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THE DATA YOU NEED
to win on social issues

You don't have to act — or speak — on every issue, but you do need to be aware of what your workforce expects. It varies by topic and by age group. And even with this benchmark data, it's critically important to talk to your people to hear what they uniquely need and value.

Younger staff are more likely to want leaders to address issues like climate change, for example.

Older staff may not think leaders should engage at all.

	Should your organization engage internally?			Should your organization engage externally?		
	18-29	**30-44**	**45+**	**18-29**	**30-44**	**45+**
Employment	37%	46%	43%	36%	40%	43%
Inflation	38%	39%	31%	35%	35%	29%
Accessible healthcare	32%	29%	28%	28%	27%	25%
Benefit reform	29%	32%	29%	22%	30%	22%
Gender inequality	29%	21%	22%	27%	22%	21%
Racial inequality	23%	23%	22%	24%	19%	20%
Climate change	25%	18%	14%	26%	21%	15%
LGBTQIA+ inequality	22%	21%	20%	21%	20%	16%
Gun violence	19%	15%	12%	18%	14%	11%
Immigration	15%	16%	10%	21%	14%	8%
Global politics	18%	11%	6%	14%	16%	7%
None — my org should not engage	17%	22%	28%	20%	22%	32%

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THE BOTTOM LINE

We end where we began: This year will be full of difficult workplace conversations. But data can — and will — be a savior for executives.

The ones who acknowledge it, put in effort to collect and understand it, and prioritize improving their leadership strategy because of it will see an impactful difference: employees who are more motivated and better equipped to deliver business results.

Because there's a very clear progression...

1. **Strong revenue** requires strong teams and productivity.

2. **Strong productivity** requires strong energy and motivation.

3. **Strong motivation** requires strong insight and alignment.

4. **Strong alignment** requires strong awareness and communication.

5. **Strong communication** requires strong communicators.

An organization's success, profitability, employee motivation, team retention, and more — in any average year — have a direct tie to how effective internal communications are.

For the challenging year that lies ahead, the premium on not just communicating, but making your communications work will be even higher.
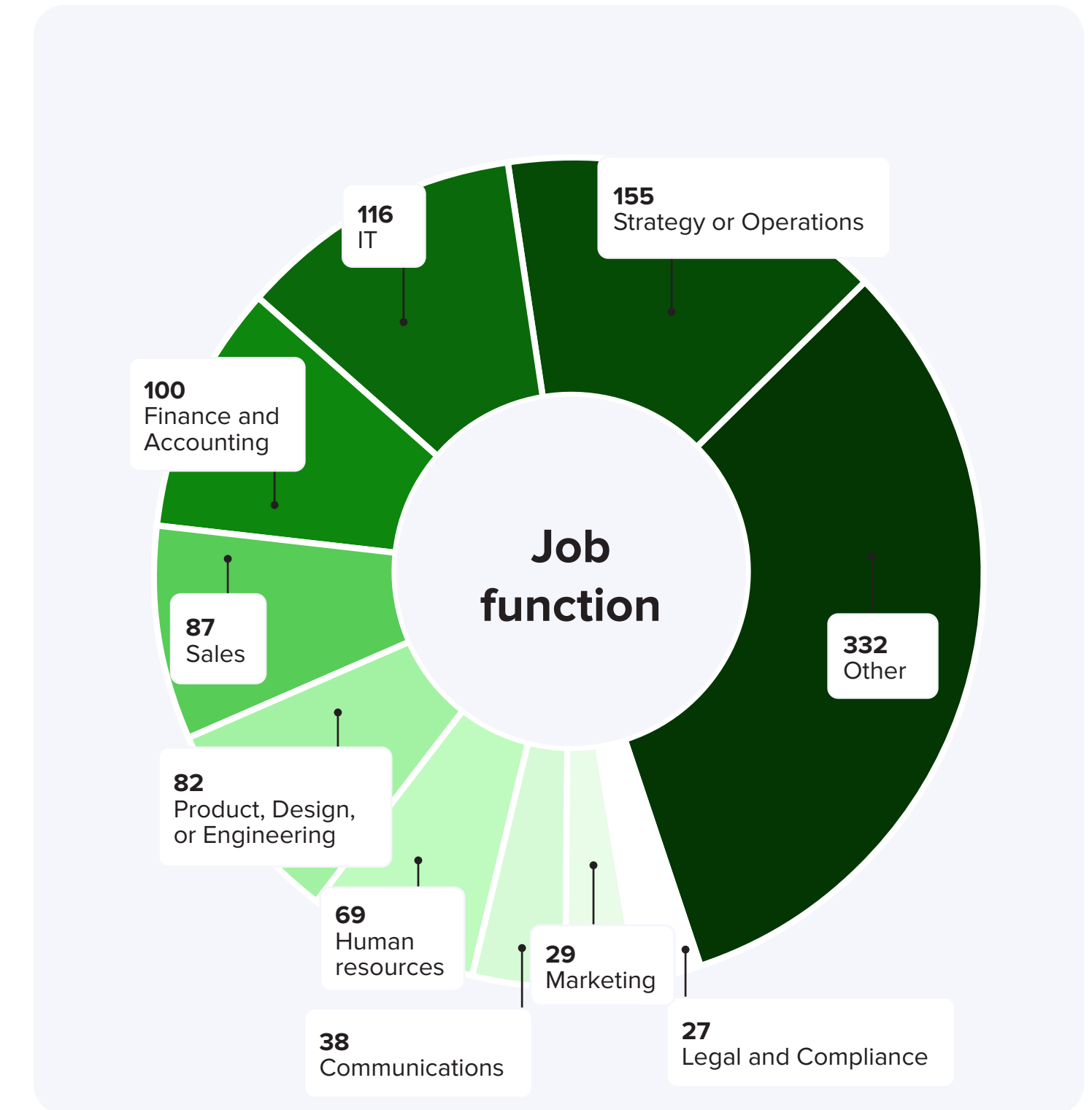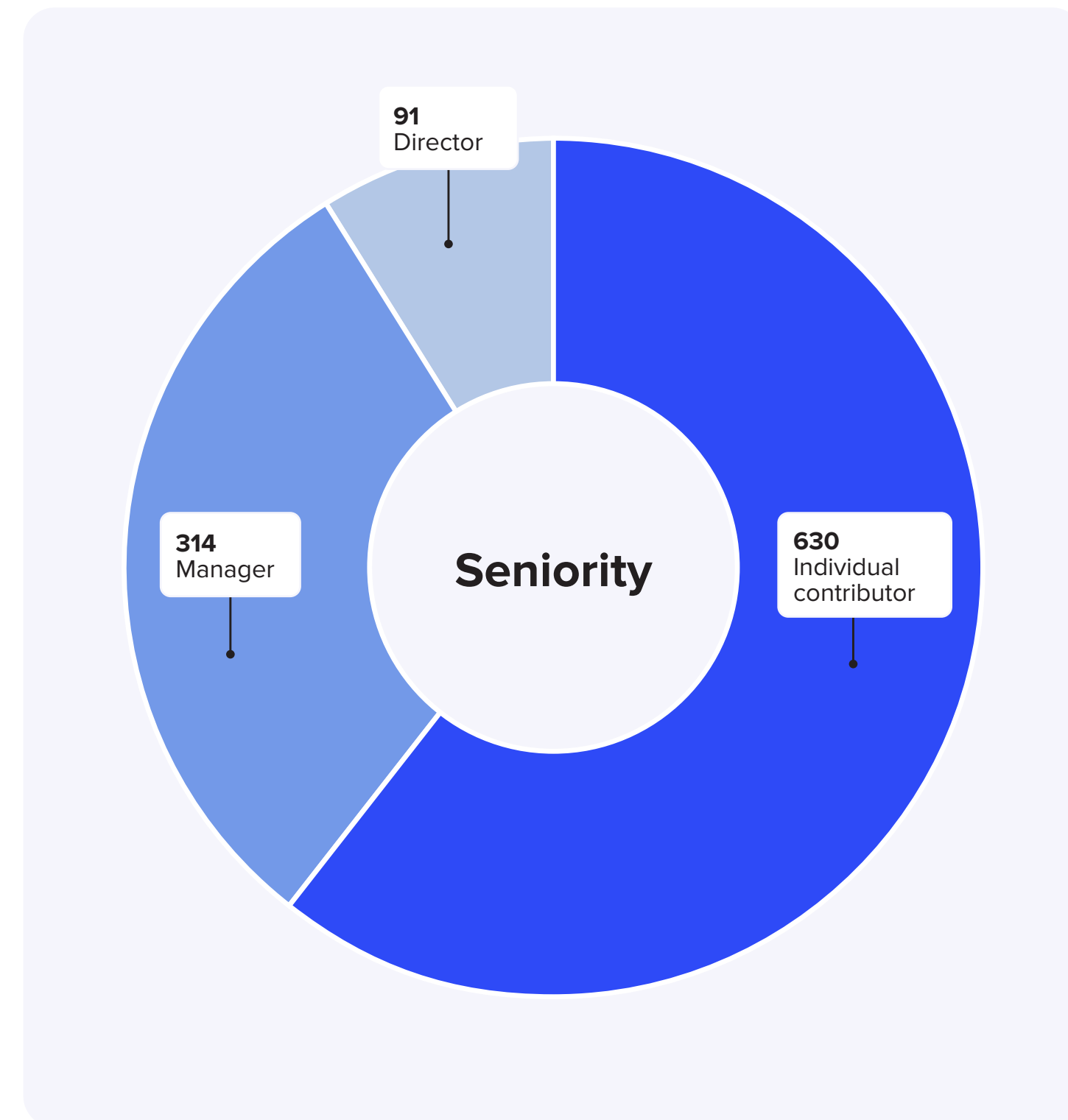
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WHO WE SURVEYED

We conducted two surveys in November 2023 — one reaching communicators and leaders across industries and organizations of all sizes and one reaching employees inside similar organizations.

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EMPLOYEES

1,035 employees in full-time entry-level, intermediate, or middle-manager roles at organizations with 11+ employees responded to this survey.

Seniority

- **91** Director
- **630** Individual contributor
- **314** Manager

Organization size

- **189** 10,000+ employees
- **206** 11-99 employees
- **86** 5,000-9,999 employees
- **91** 2,500-4,999 employees
- **266** 100-499 employees
- **197** 500-2,499 employees

Job function

- **116** IT
- **155** Strategy or Operations
- **100** Finance and Accounting
- **87** Sales
- **332** Other
- **82** Product, Design, or Engineering
- **69** Human resources
- **29** Marketing
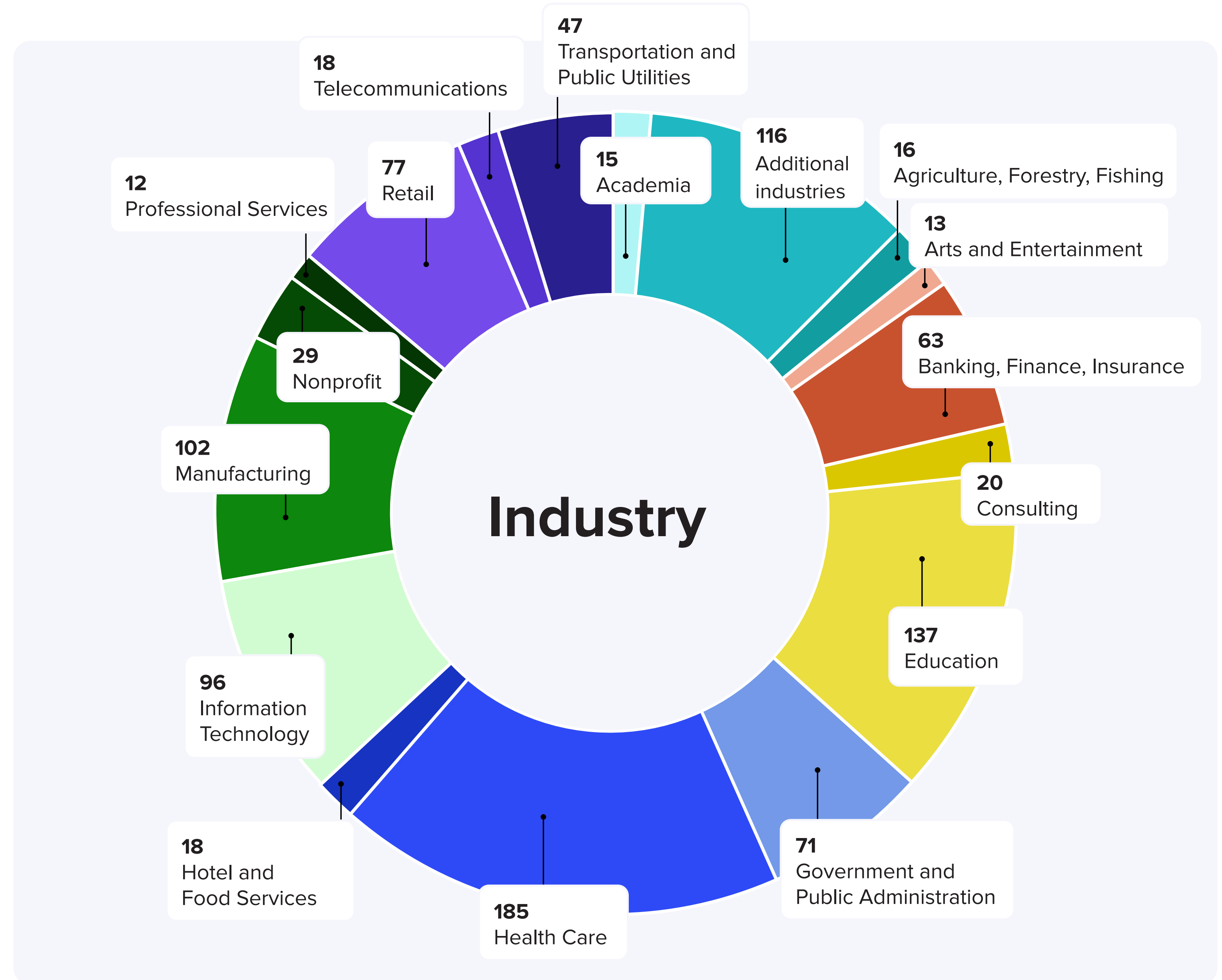- **38** Communications
- **27** Legal and Compliance
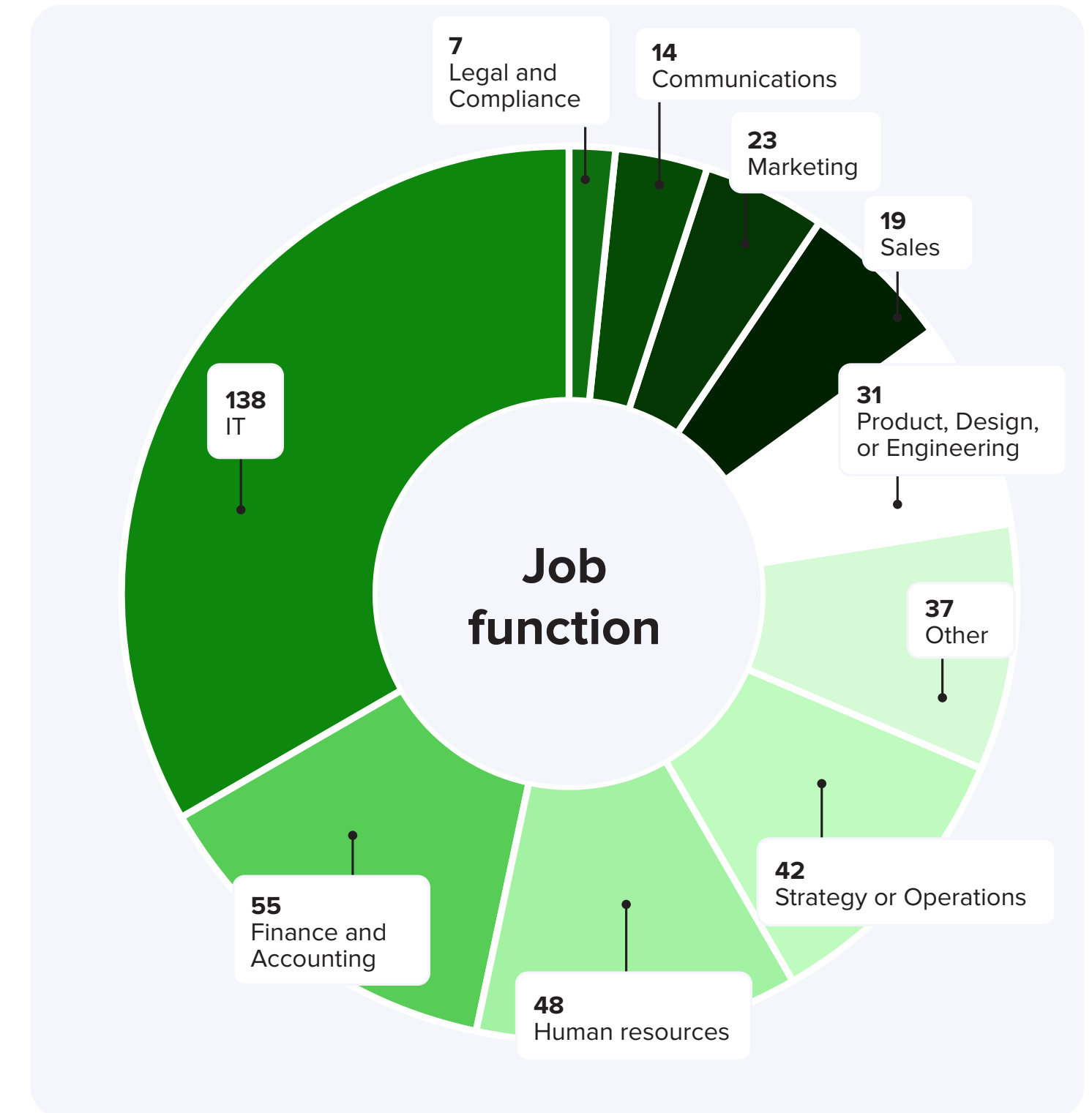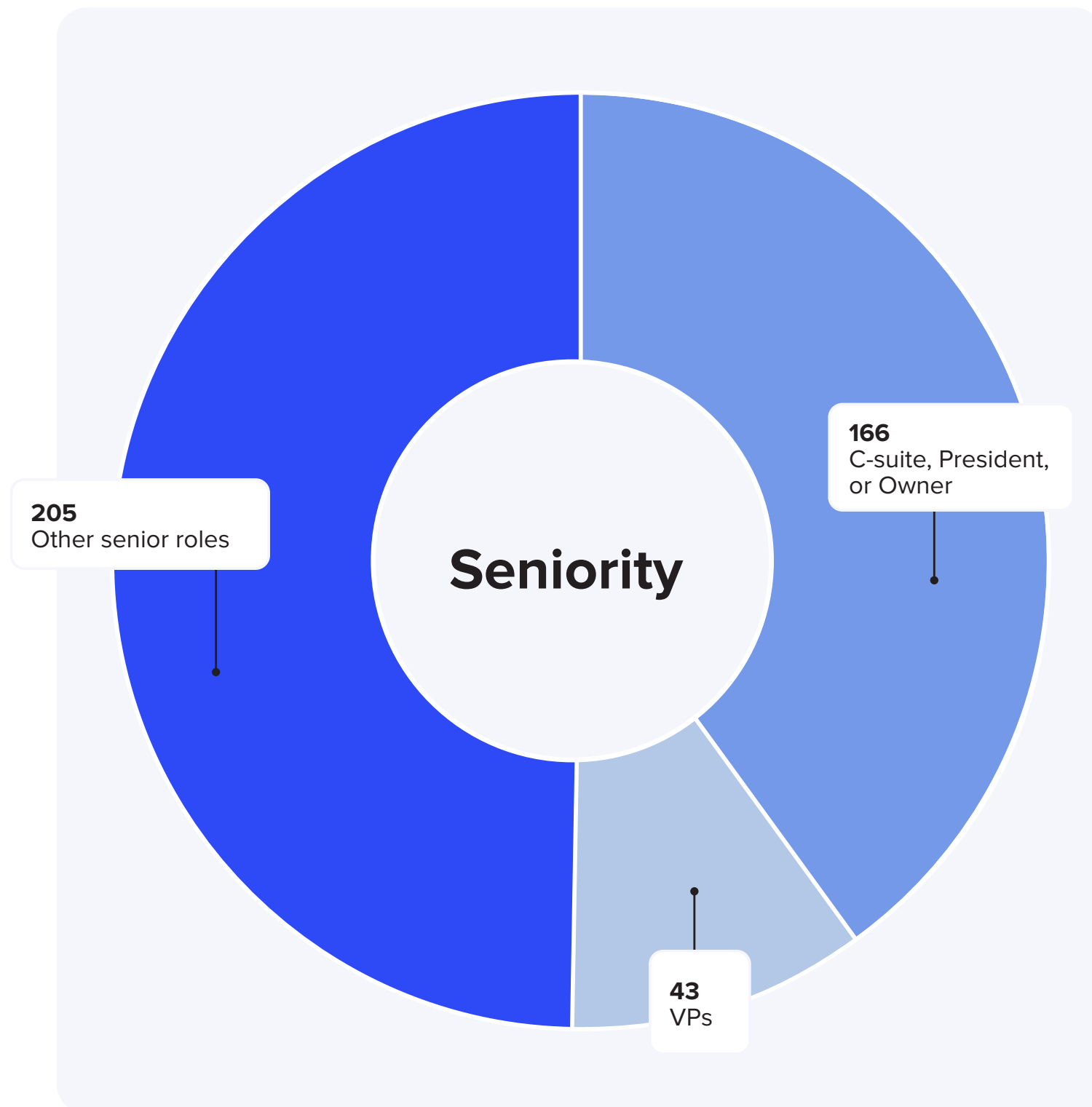
METHODOLOGY

EMPLOYEES

Additional industries:

1: Investing

1: Professional Association

2: Mining

3: Military

4: Government Lobbying

5: Sports

7: Gaming

7: Legal Services

7: Media, Publishing, or Broadcasting

7: Real Estate

72: Other

Industry

18 Telecommunications

47 Transportation and Public Utilities

77 Retail

15 Academia

116 Additional industries

16 Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing

12 Professional Services

13 Arts and Entertainment

29 Nonprofit

63 Banking, Finance, Insurance

102 Manufacturing

20 Consulting

137 Education

96 Information Technology

71 Government and Public Administration

18 Hotel and Food Services

185 Health Care

LEADERS

414 leaders employed full-time in a C-level, executive, or senior role at organizations with 11+ employees responded to this survey.


Seniority

- **166** C-suite, President, or Owner
- **205** Other senior roles
- **43** VPs

Organization size

- **22** 10,000+ employees
- **26** 5,000-9,999 employees
- **63** 2,500-4,999 employees
- **90** 11-99 employees
- **94** 100-499 employees
- **119** 500-2,499 employees

Job function

- **7** Legal and Compliance
- **14** Communications
- **23** Marketing
- **19** Sales
- **31** Product, Design, or Engineering
- **138** IT
- **37** Other
- **42** Strategy or Operations
- **48** Human resources
- **55** Finance and Accounting

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LEADERS

Additional industries:

2: Academia

5: Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing

4: Arts and Entertainment

2: Government Lobbying

8: Hotel and Food Services

7: Legal Services

2: Professional Association

9: Telecommunications

8: Transportation and Public Utilities

19: Other
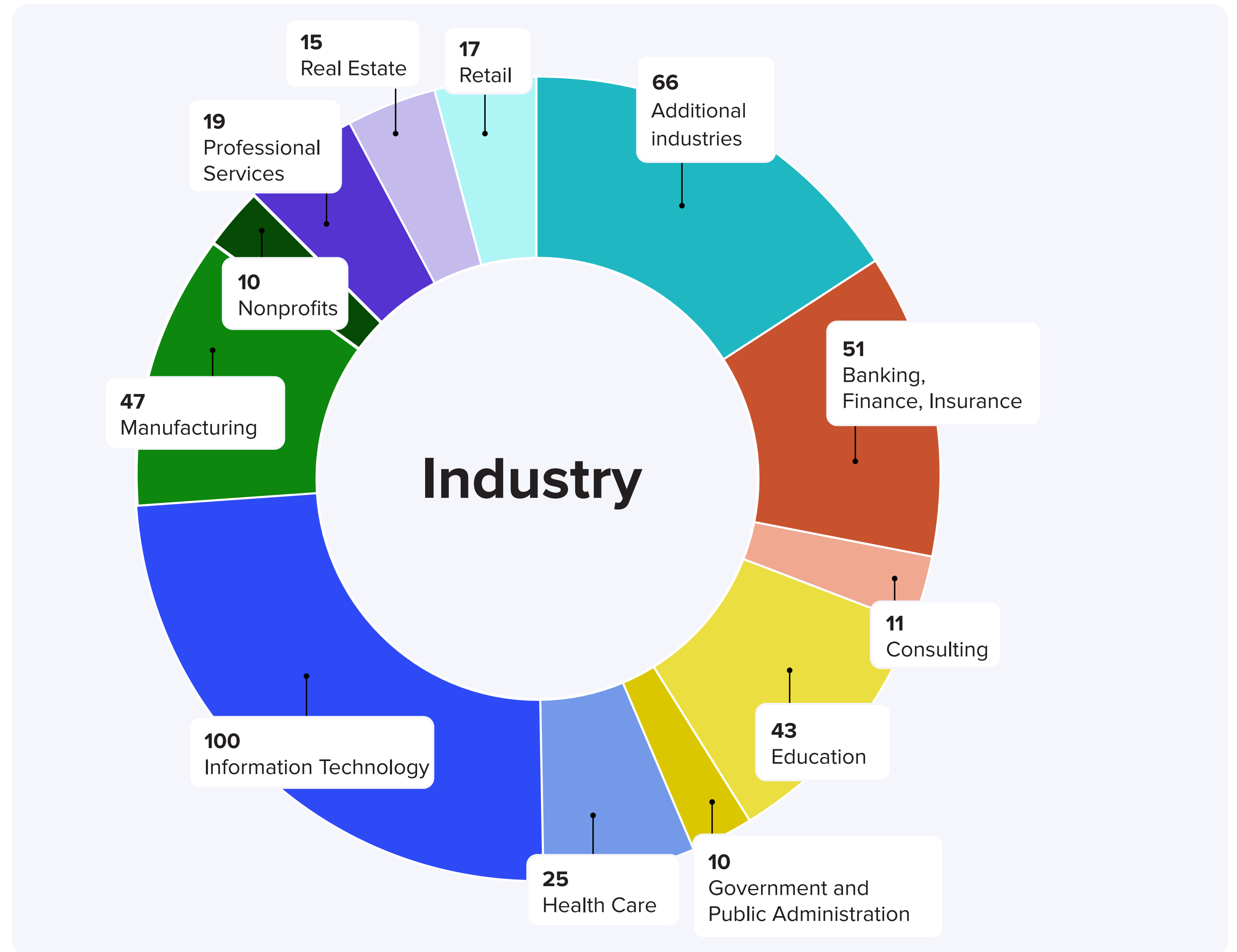
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ABOUT AXIOS HQ

See how Axios HQ has helped hundreds of organizations plan, write, send, and measure what matters.

REQUEST A DEMO

Axios HQ makes internal comms work, harnessing the...

- **Simplicity** of software purpose-built for internal comms
- **Clarity** of award-winning journalists
- **Efficiency** of workflow and authoring automation
- **Authority** of advanced analytics
- **Insight** of ongoing reader feedback

...to force-multiply a more engaged, more aligned workforce.

Our AI-powered tool is the only internal communication platform with our patented Smart Brevity® Guidance system that makes messages clearer, more actionable, and more memorable. Or as we say it — worthy, not wordy.

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MAKES INTERNAL COMMS WORK