



8x8 Essentials
Intelligence Research Series

Customer Experience: 2030 Vision Report

Mind the gap or get left behind

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Introduction

Customer experience (CX) leaders have weathered an unfair share of change since the start of the decade, including a sudden and unyielding demand for optimized voice and digital engagement, a talent shortage of epic proportions, and competitive disruption from players many never saw coming.

And did we mention Gen Z expectations, remote work demands, and the dawning of the metaverse? All these and more have set CX leaders back on their heels, bracing for a future that most could not have anticipated, nor were they remotely prepared for.

But where some see challenges, others see opportunities. Leaders are looking to the cloud and beyond. They're prioritizing employee experience (EX) as much as customer experience. They're shedding their shattered 2020 vision and looking boldly toward 2030.

We ask, "What's next?"

In this report, we reveal findings from a global survey of approximately 500 CX and IT leaders who share not just their view on today's challenges and competitive stance, but thoughts on the future of work and customer experience. We'll cut to the chase on the first finding:

Nearly half of the professionals surveyed (46%) believe the key differentiator for organizations in 2030 will be customer experience (figure 1). When it comes to CX leaders exclusively, that percentage rises to 56%. CX leaders, take note.

46% of CX and IT leaders believe the key differentiator between organizations in 2030 will be customer experience.

We also reveal survey findings around these five themes:

- One experience will rule them all
- CX challenges change and remain
- The forecast calls for cloud
- Hybrid is here to stay
- 2030 vision is required

The findings in this report illustrate a future of work that holds incredible promise when innovation and intuitive experiences come together over a CX leader's forward-looking vision.

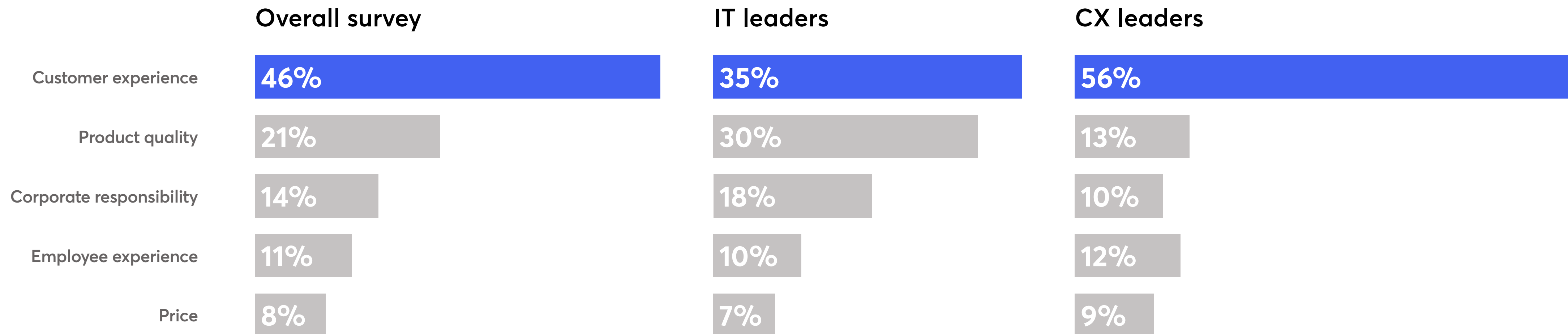
One experience
will rule them all



Customer experience before all else

In 2013, the widely-quoted Walker Customers 2020 report **predicted** that by 2020, customer experience (CX) would overtake price and product quality as the key brand differentiator. That prediction was not only spot on, but it still holds true for the next decade, according to our recent overall survey of approximately 500 CX and IT leaders. Customer experience trumped other key brand considerations, including product quality, corporate responsibility, employee experience, and price respectively, with 46% of CX and IT leaders saying customer experience would be the key differentiator in 2030. (figure 1).

Figure 1: By 2030, which of the following do you think will be the key differentiator for brands?



CX leaders proved even more firm in their belief with 56% leaning toward CX, followed by employee experience, product quality, corporate responsibility, and price in that order. This aligns with customer experience leaders' views on today's top challenges, as presented in future sections.

With great power comes great responsibility

The proverb "it takes a village to raise a child" holds true for organizations working to raise their customer experience game to the differentiation level. If CX is to become a brand's key differentiator, it will take more than just the organization's customer service or contact center teams, according to many CX leaders.



Figure 2: Within your organization, which departments are currently responsible, and then by 2030, will be responsible for customer service?



Today, approximately one-quarter of these leaders (24%) consider customer engagement and experience the role of every department within their organization (figure 2). But by 2030, 40% believe that customer engagement will be everyone's role.

Which leads us to the defining challenges and changes CX leaders are facing today.

CX challenges change and remain



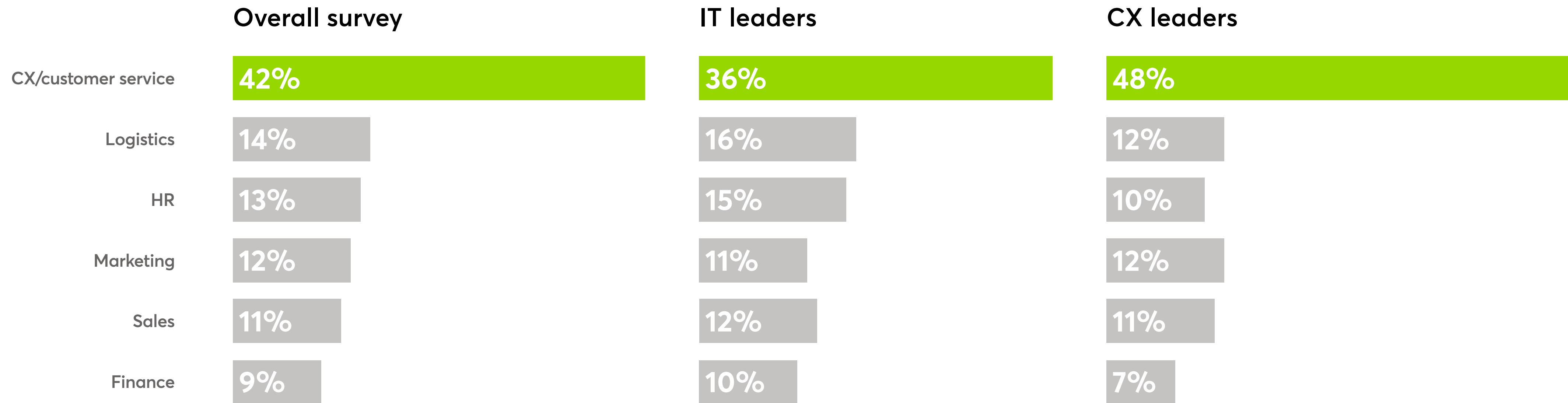
Brace for impact

In the introduction, we discussed the incredible amount of change customer experience leaders have weathered since the start of the decade, including the pandemic-accelerated move to remote work and demands for increasingly contactless customer engagement. Pragmatic CX leaders are quick to realize that change is far from over, especially when it comes to the future of work, defined here as the projection of how work, workers, and the workplace will evolve in the years ahead.



This is highlighted in figure 3, which shows that 42% of the survey's overall CX and IT respondents believe that customer experience and customer service will be the areas of the business (excluding IT) most impacted by the future of work. Polling CX leaders exclusively, that percentage jumps to 48%.

Figure 3: Between now and 2030, which department within your organization (excluding IT) will be most changed/impacted by the future of work?



Challenge accepted

Topping today's customer experience leader challenges is the ability to recruit and retain top talent. More than half (53%) view this as a concern following continuing fallout from events such as the Great Resignation and Great Reprioritization. Increasing demand for remote work options is also pushing this issue to the forefront in an area (especially customer service) where retention numbers have always been historically low. Rounding out today's top five top challenges for customer experience leaders are operating cost reduction (40%), cybersecurity, the reliability of current communications technology, and IT security (figure 4).

53% of CX leaders say their top challenge today is recruiting and retaining talent

Thinking ahead to 2030, CX leaders move "integrating humans, bots, and robots into a cohesive workforce" into their top five challenges, flagging that strategies and plans should be made with IT and other stakeholders now, as just one-fifth (20%) say their organization is prepared to handle this challenge. Also moving into the top ten of 2030 challenges are managing employee expectations for remote and hybrid work (with only 33% of respondents prepared to handle this challenge), as well as adapting to the changing customer expectations of Gen Z and other emerging customer segments (with just 29% of organizations prepared to handle this challenge).

Figure 4:

What are the top challenges at your organization today?

CX challenges today

1. Recruiting and retaining top talent
2. Reducing operating costs
3. Cybersecurity
4. IT, communications platform reliability
5. Managing IT security
6. Maintaining, improving employee productivity
7. Adopting new technologies
8. Effective use of innovative technologies, i.e. AI
9. Reskilling employees for evolving, emerging roles
10. Digital transformation acceleration

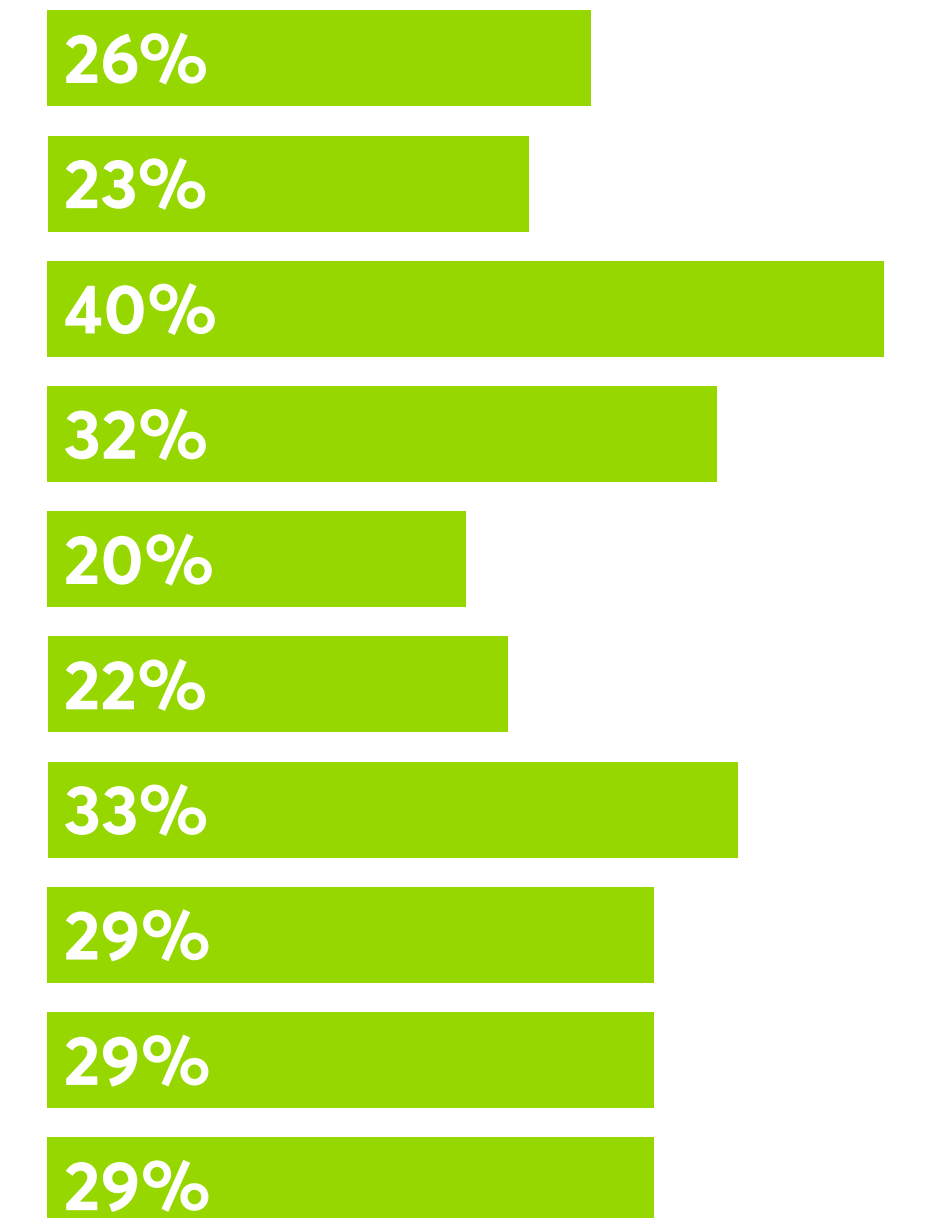
What do you expect your top challenges to be in 2030?

Is your organization prepared to take on these 2030 challenges?

CX challenges 2030

1. Recruiting and retaining top talent
2. Reducing operating cost
3. Cybersecurity
4. IT, communications platform reliability
5. Integrating humans, bots, robots into workforce
6. Effective use of innovative technologies, i.e. AI
7. Managing employee expectations for remote/hybrid work
8. Maintaining, improving employee productivity
9. Reskilling employees for evolving, emerging roles
10. Adapting to changing customer expectations, i.e. Gen Z

Prepared for 2030 challenge



Looking at the following survey results holistically, CX leaders should take heed that less than half of their peers feel their organizations are prepared to handle challenges that will manifest or increase in the coming years. This corresponds with the future of work strategy survey results that will be covered later in this report.

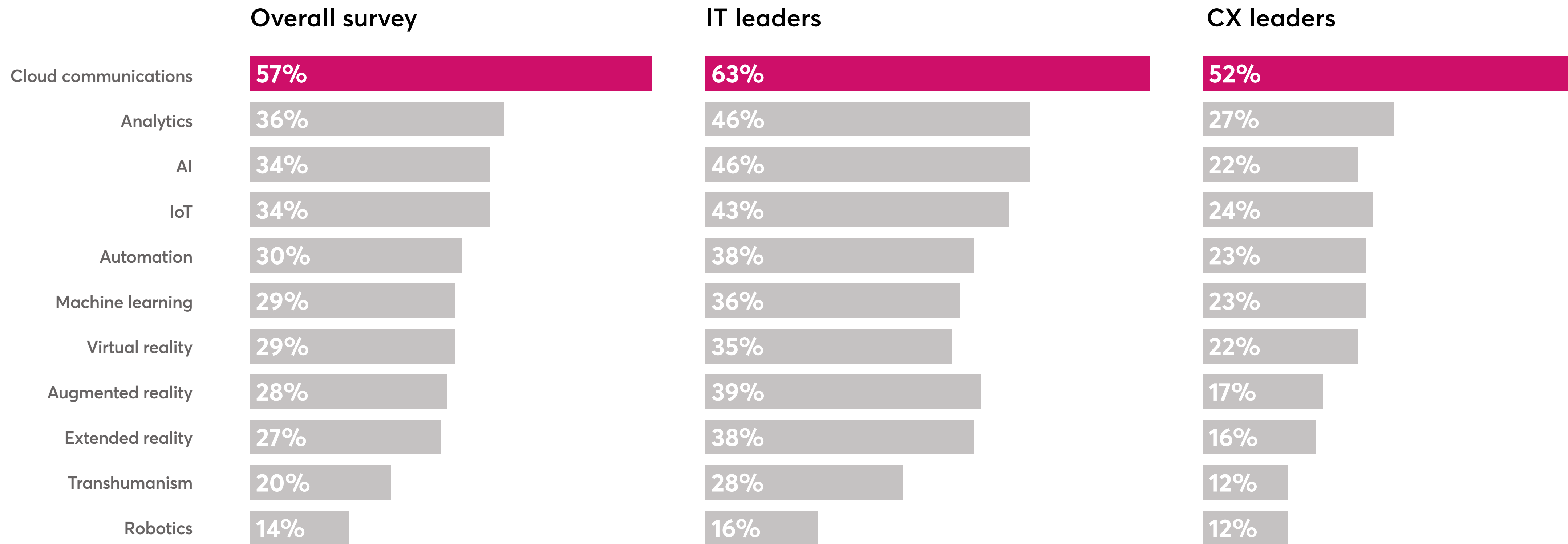
The forecast calls for cloud



Prioritizing communications

Following the unexpected move to primarily remote office work at the start of the decade, it's no wonder that far and away CX and IT leaders (57%) are currently prioritizing cloud communications over other technology focuses (figure 5).

Figure 5: Which of the following emerging technologies is your organization currently prioritizing?



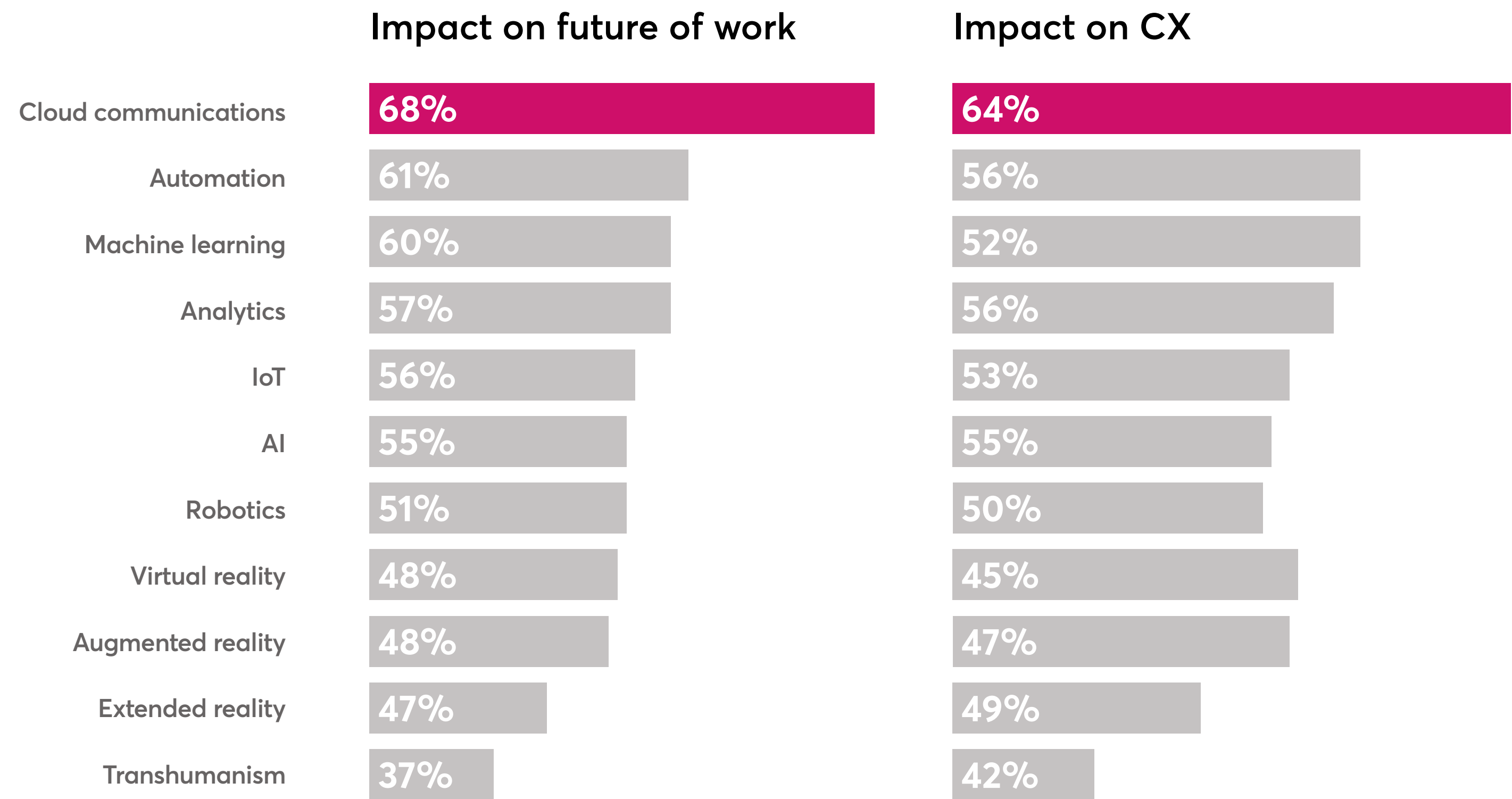
Getting cloud communications right across the organization (which may mean a complete overhaul of the band-aid solutions put in place a few years ago) could be a game-changer moving forward. This holds especially true for contact center employees who were traditionally siloed from the rest of the organization while working with disparate on-premises technology.

Following cloud communications, customer experience and IT leaders say their organizations are currently prioritizing the following technologies: data and analytics (36%), artificial intelligence (34%), the Internet of Things (34%) and automation (30%) in that order. Further down the list are virtual reality (29%), augmented reality (28%), and extended reality (27%), but interestingly, not for enterprise or United States-specific survey respondents who rate these technologies in their top five, signaling perhaps early initiatives already underway around emerging channels such as the metaverse.

Future of work focus

When asked which of the same emerging technologies would have the greatest impact on the future of work, overall CX and IT leader response order changed except for the top spot which remained cloud communications. Sixty-eight percent (68%) of respondents said cloud communications would have the greatest impact, followed by automation (61%), machine learning (60%), analytics (57%), and the Internet of Things (56%), respectively (figure 6).

Figure 6: Which of the emerging technologies do you think will have the greatest impact on the future of work? CX?



When it comes to the impact of technologies on customer experience specifically, the top five proved to be cloud communications (64%), automation and data and analytics in the number two and three spots at 56%, followed by artificial intelligence (55%), and the Internet of Things (53%).

The prioritization of cloud communications technology across the board as a great enabler both today and tomorrow, and especially for customer experience, leads to a current conundrum for many however: how to get there—or get there faster.

Mind the gap

Even though pandemic-driven change in the way we work and engage with customers made the move to the cloud even more necessary for organizations, that doesn't mean that all made it. Slow-to-change contact centers, especially, may still be holding organizations back on transformational forward motion.

“There is no business strategy without a cloud strategy.”

— **Milind Govekar**, Distinguished Vice President, Gartner

8x8's survey reveals that almost half (42%) of customer experience leaders say that their organization's communications and collaboration technology is still on-premises (figure 7), which corresponds with a whopping 69% who say their current communications and collaboration is only somewhat or not at all effective in supporting digital transformation and future of work initiatives (figure 8).

Figure 7: Which of the following best describes the communications and collaboration solution provided by your organization?

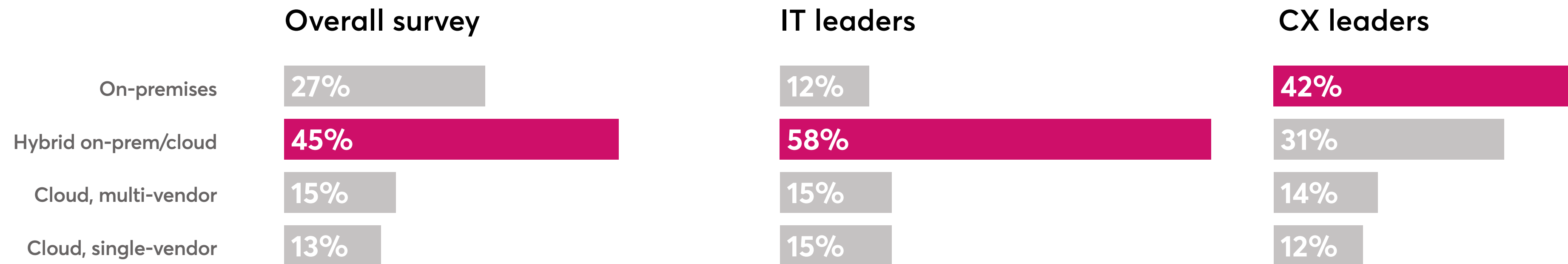
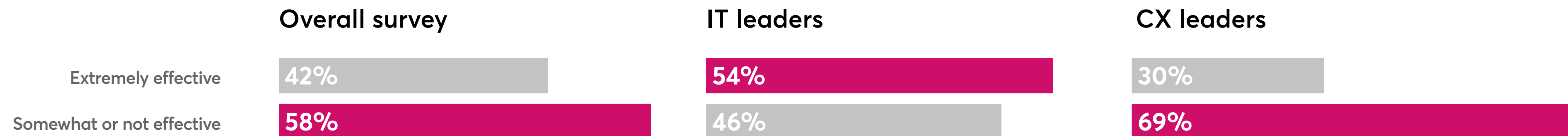


Figure 8: How effective is your organization's communications and collaboration solution in supporting digital transformation and the future of work?



Gartner analysts note that “cloud is the centerpiece of new digital experiences,” and warn that there’s no time to waste in getting there. [The analyst firm says](#) that more than 85% of organizations will embrace a cloud-first principle by 2025 and will not be able to fully execute on their digital strategies without the use of cloud-native architectures and technologies.

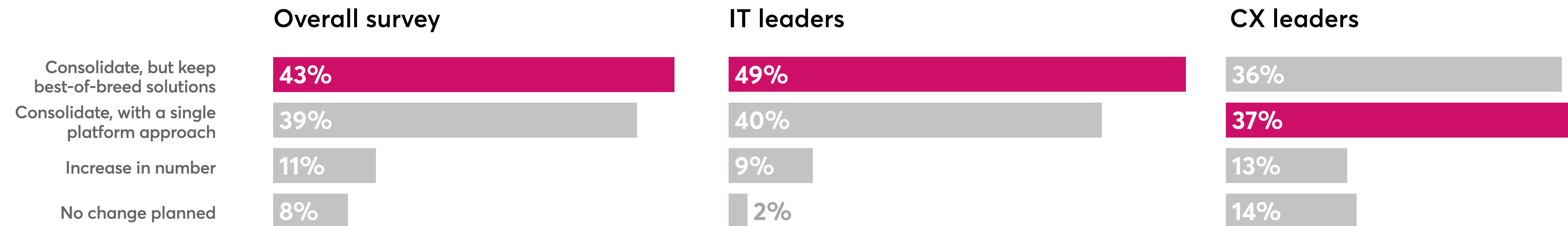
“There is no business strategy without a cloud strategy,” says Milind Govekar, distinguished vice president at Gartner.

Making the connection

It’s important to understand that moving to the cloud is just the first step in transformative change. Disparate cloud technologies can still create or retain organizational silos that inhibit collaboration, productivity, and employee and customer retention. And unfortunately, many organizations in their haste to move to the cloud at the start of the pandemic implemented a host of disparate, band-aid tools. On average, companies are using seven different tools for messaging, collaboration, file sharing, and meeting management alone, notes Constellation Research Vice President Dion Hinchcliffe in [Employee Experience - Moving to a Decisive New Model for the Future of Work](#).

To move beyond simply making remote work work and creating a truly connected agile enterprise, consolidation is also being planned, according to 8x8's survey (figure 9). With less than one-fifth (13%) of surveyed organizations operating in the cloud across a single-vendor platform, 43% say that they either plan to consolidate the number of communications applications it provides but keep best of breed-solutions, or move to the use of a single-platform across the organization (39%).

Figure 9: Over the next few years, will your organization consolidate or increase the number of communications and collaboration tools it provides to employees?



The easier organizations make it for all employees to communicate and collaborate has never been more important as distributed workforces will most likely be the norm from now on, according to the next set of survey results.

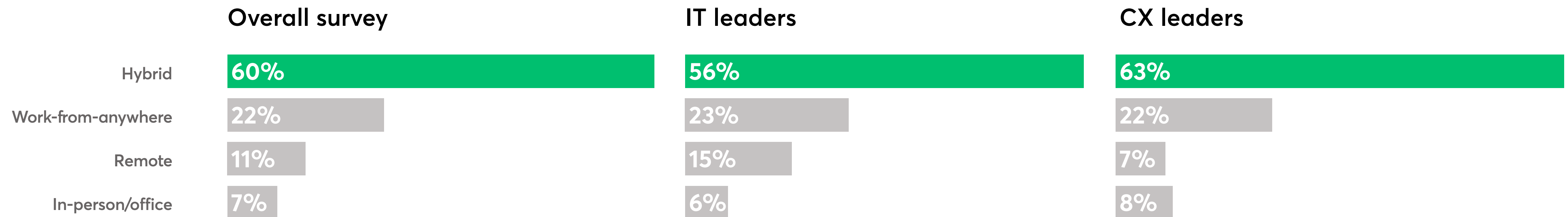
Hybrid is here to stay



Onsite is the new offsite

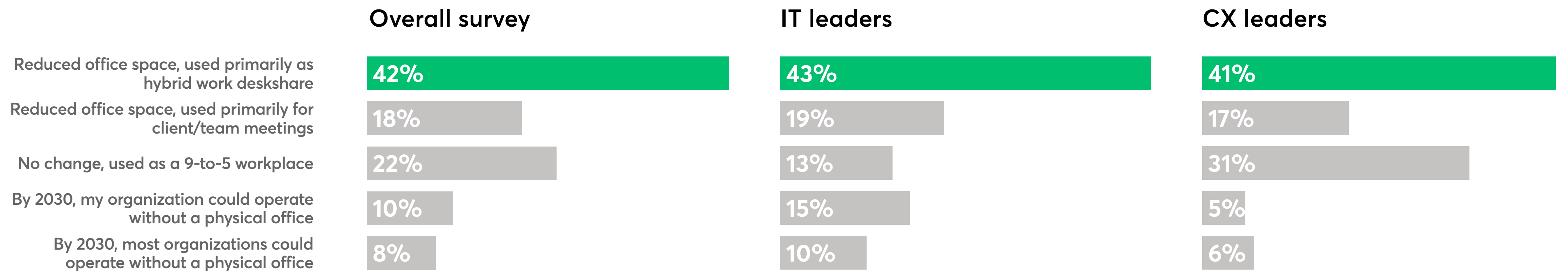
More than half (52%) of CX and IT leaders in 8x8's 2030 Vision survey said that cloud communications would have the greatest business impact in navigating and facilitating workplace change in the future—and the survey also revealed that business leaders anticipate a plethora of change. First, and probably of least surprise, is that overall, 60% of professionals believe that the future of work will be mostly hybrid (a mix of in-office and remote work). Just 7% believe that work will return to predominantly in-office in the future (figure 10).

Figure 10: What do you believe the future of work will predominantly be?



But anticipated change doesn't just come in the form of whether employees will work in-office more or less. Sixty percent (60%) of those surveyed believe that their organization's physical office space will be reduced and used primarily as deskshare space for hybrid workers or for client or team meetings (figure 11). Less than one-quarter of respondents believe there will be no change to their organization's real estate footprint before 2030. Of interest, 10% envision that their organization could operate without a physical office by 2030.

Figure 11: By 2030, how do you expect your organization's office space to change?



Equal pay for equal work

Should an employee's pay reflect whether they're in-office or remote? More than half (54%) of the CX and IT managers and above surveyed said that remote or work-from-anywhere options should be available to every employee whose role allows for it with the same rate of pay as an in-office peer.

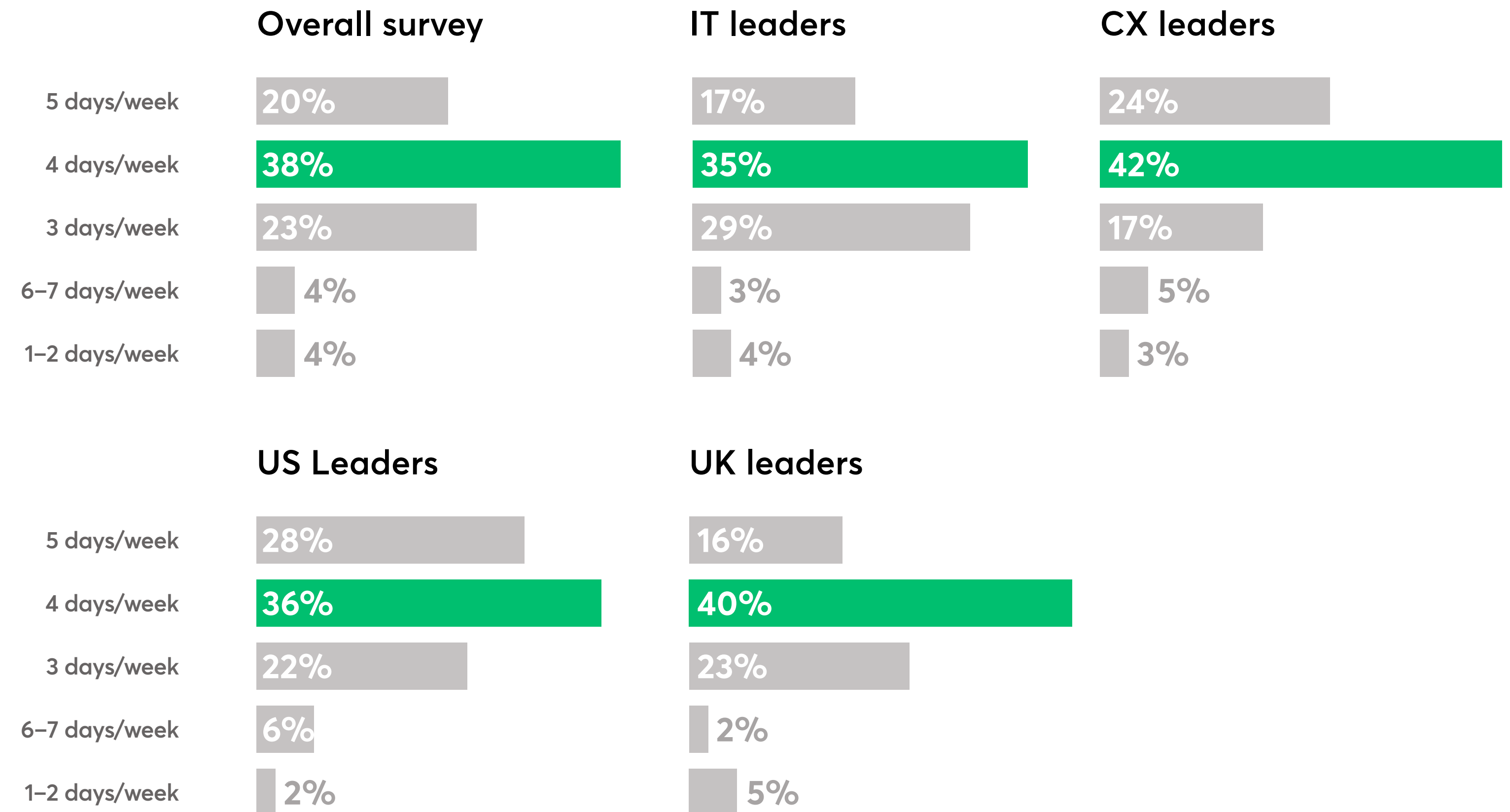
Forty percent (40%) said that remote or work-from-anywhere options should be offered on a case-by-case basis only, while just 7% said that remote workers should receive a lower pay because they're allowed to work from home.



Changing times

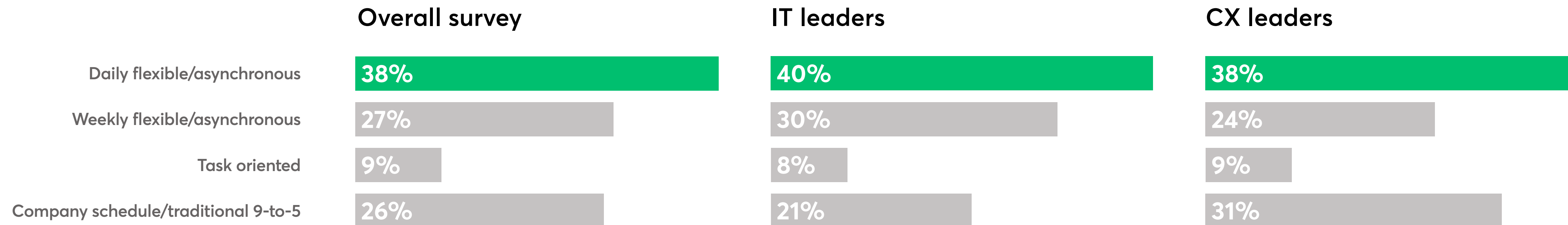
8x8 survey respondents anticipate that not only will many employees remain free of the daily commute, but that they will also work less and on their own schedule. Only one-fifth (20%) of surveyed CX and IT managers and above believe that full-time employees will need to work a traditional five-day workweek by 2030 (figure 12).

Figure 12: By 2030, how many days do you think the average full-time office employee will need to work?



Sixty-one percent (61%) believe that given productivity advances and work/life balance considerations, three or four-day workweeks will be most common, and a majority also believes that work will be primarily asynchronous, where employees choose to work whenever they want, as long as they work the total amount of hours requested by the company (figure 13).

Figure 13: By 2030, which of the following do you think will most closely reflect your organization's average full-time employee work schedule?



According to figures highlighted in this section, CX leaders (31%) are far more likely to believe in a 9-to-5 future than their IT counterparts (21%), just as they are more likely to believe in a traditional five-day workweek in 2030.

The comparison between United States and United Kingdom respondents is also of note in figure 12. UK CX and IT leaders (40%) are more receptive to the idea of a four-day work week than their US peers (36%), and 28% of US CX and IT leaders believe that in 2030 we'll still have a traditional five-day workweek compared to just 16% in the UK.

Changing channels

Survey respondents were also asked to rank the communication tools they expected their organizations to use in the year 2030 by most and least used. In figure 14, with one being the most-used communication method and seven being the least-used, almost half of professionals (47%) believe video meetings will be the most used communication channel in 2030.

Figure 14: Rank the following communication tools that you expect your organization to use in the year 2030. Rank the methods from one to seven, with one being the communication method you expect your organization/employees to use most prevalently and seven being the method you expect them to use least prevalently.

Rank	Video meetings (mean: 3.15)	Messaging (mean: 3.61)	Email (mean: 3.63)	Virtual reality (mean: 3.98)	In-person meetings (mean: 4.14)	Softphone (mean: 4.51)	Desk phone (mean: 4.98)
1	21%	13%	18%	22%	14%	7%	6%
2	26%	17%	16%	11%	12%	9%	9%
3	15%	23%	16%	12%	15%	12%	8%
4	13%	15%	18%	12%	13%	16%	13%
5	10%	15%	13%	11%	15%	21%	15%
6	9%	8%	11%	10%	15%	23%	24%
7	6%	9%	10%	22%	16%	12%	26%

Half of professionals (50%) believe desk phones will either be the least or second-least-used communication tool in 2030, along with softphones and in-person meetings. Interestingly, professionals are split on whether virtual reality will be one of the most or least used communication tools in 2030. Only time will tell, but what our overall and final set of survey results reveals is that a 2030 vision is required.



2030 vision is required

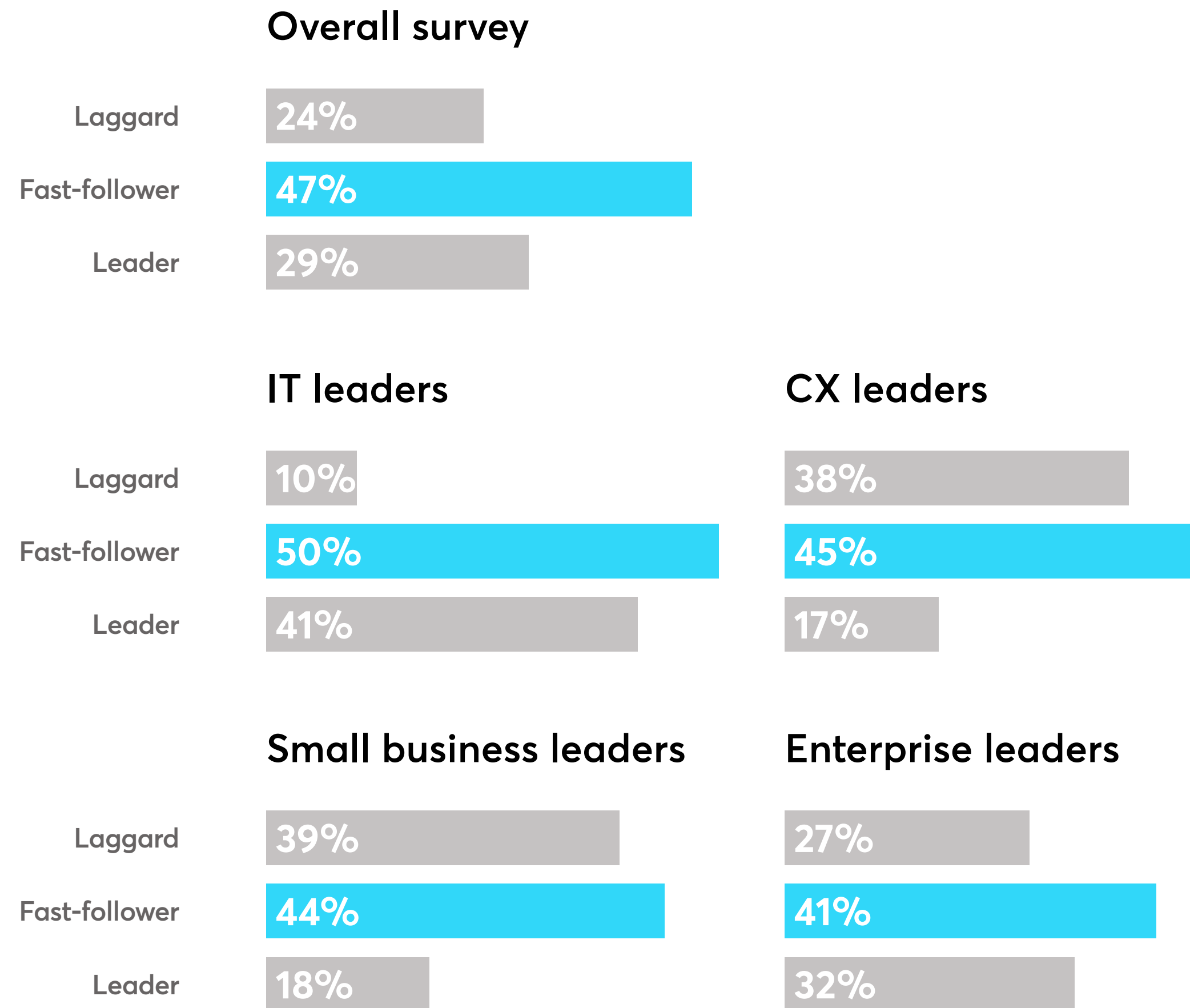


Follow the leader

If there's anything we've learned from the 2020s so far, it's that forward thinking and business agility will get you everywhere. Organizations that were already operating with a cloud-first, digital-first strategy in 2020 transitioned far more easily to the business environment we're operating in today, and will continue to accelerate their digital transformation and business resilience efforts through the adoption and use of emerging technologies.

Where do the respondents in 8x8's CX and IT leader survey see themselves today? Overall, less than a third (29%) of CX and IT leaders consider their organization a leader when it comes to adopting emerging technologies related to the future of work (i.e. cloud communications, AI, IoT). Most (47%) consider themselves fast followers (figure 15).

Figure 15: Which best describes your organization's approach to adopting emerging technologies related to the future of work?



When it comes to CX leaders specifically, however, less than a fifth (17%) consider their organization a leader when it comes to adopting emerging technology solutions related to the future of work; 38% consider their organization laggards.

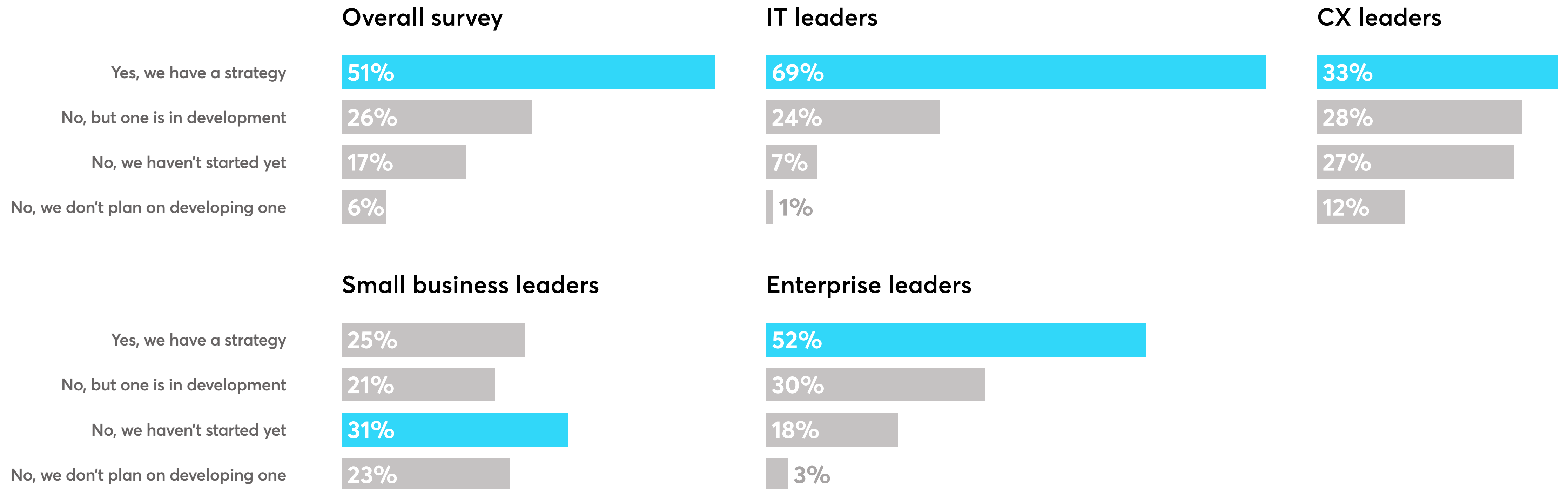
When it comes to small businesses, less than a fifth (18%) consider their organization a leader when it comes to adopting emerging technology solutions related to the future of work; 39% consider their organization laggards.



Look to the future

In addition, when it comes to a future of work strategy, CX leaders fall far behind their peers. Almost half of CX and IT leaders (49%) do not currently have a future of work or 2030 strategy (figure 16).

Figure 16: Does your organization currently have a future of work or 2030 strategy or plan in place?

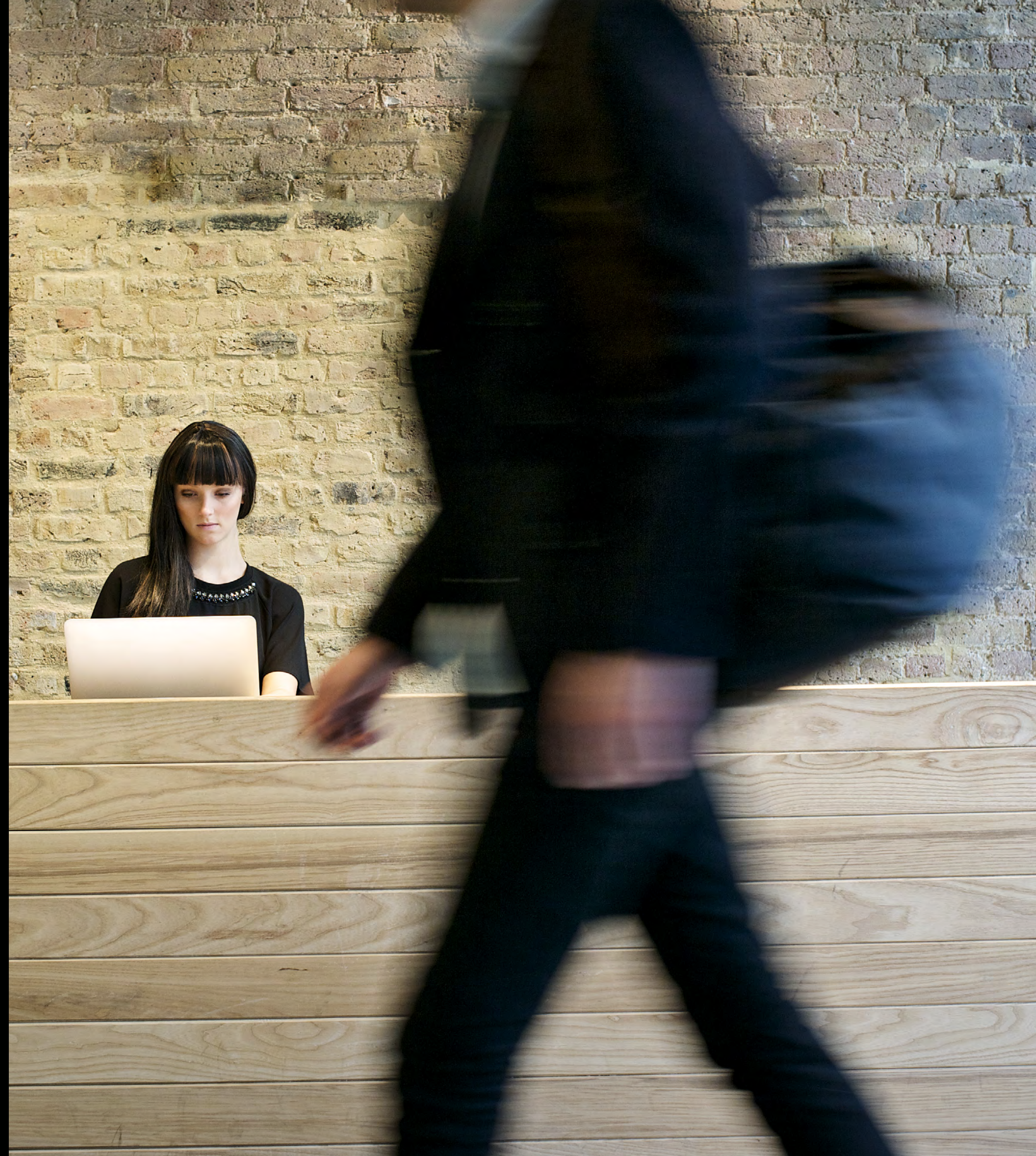


When it comes to CX leaders specifically, 67% do not have a future of work or 2030 strategy, and 12% said they don't ever plan on developing one, compared to just 1% of their IT counterparts.

Of additional interest, three-fourths of small business CX and IT leaders (75%) do not currently have a future of work or 2030 strategy, and 23% said they don't ever plan on developing one, compared to just 3% of their enterprise counterparts.



Conclusion



Mind the gap

Overall, the results of 8x8's CX and IT leader survey show that anticipated work and workplace evolution is far from over, and more than half of professionals are currently prioritizing cloud communications so that they can move beyond simply making remote work work and rather facilitate transformational change. Most consider themselves fast followers or laggards, however, when it comes to doing so, and almost half do not currently have a future of work strategy.



Key takeaways:

- 60% of CX and IT leaders believe the workforce will be predominantly hybrid by 2030. Just 7% believe that work will return to predominantly in-office.
- Three-quarters anticipate their organization will work four days or fewer by 2030, and that work will transition from a traditional 9-to-5 schedule to an asynchronous or task-oriented approach.
- More than half of business professionals are currently prioritizing cloud communications over other technologies to facilitate workplace change. Sixty-eight percent (68%) say cloud communications will have the greatest impact on the future of work.
- Less than a third (29%) of CX and IT leaders consider their organization a leader when it comes to adopting emerging technologies related to the future of work (i.e. cloud communications, AI, IoT). Most (47%) consider themselves fast followers.
- Almost half of CX and IT leaders (49%) do not currently have a future of work or 2030 strategy.

29% Less than a third of CX and IT leaders consider their organization a leader when it comes to adopting emerging technologies related to the future of work.

CX leaders risk falling behind

When it comes to customer experience leaders specifically, the gap between leaders and laggards is far more pronounced:

- Less than a fifth (17%) consider their organization a leader when it comes to adopting emerging technology solutions related to the future of work. Almost 40% consider their organization laggards.
- Almost half (42%) of customer experience leaders say that their organization's communications and collaboration technology is still on-premises, which corresponds with a whopping 69% who say their current communications and collaboration is only somewhat or not at all effective in supporting digital transformation and future of work initiatives.

- Sixty-seven percent (67%) do not have a future of work or 2030 strategy, and 12% said they don't ever plan on developing one, compared to just 1% of their IT counterparts.

If this pace continues, it will compound current and 2030 CX leader challenges which, at the top of the list, include recruiting and retaining talent, reducing operational costs, technology reliability, and IT security.

The cost of doing nothing in the current business environment is unaffordable. Mind the gap or risk falling behind.

67% of CX leaders do not have a future of work or 2030 strategy, and 12% said they don't ever plan on developing one, compared to just 1% of their IT counterparts.

Taking the next step

Whatever your future of work needs, 8x8 can help you tailor a flexible, powerful, cloud-based solution with an integrated contact center, voice, video, and chat. The **8x8 eXperience Communications Platform™** powers engaging, responsive communication experiences that delight customers and make your business more agile.

Unlike point solutions, 8x8 delivers personalized experiences that boost employee productivity and customer engagement, guarantees platform-wide uptime, and lowers costs.

Talk to one of our experts now. Visit 8x8.com.

Survey methodology



Background and objective

8x8, a leading provider of cloud communications and customer engagement solutions, commissioned Hanover Research to understand what the global workforce will look like in 2030. This includes the future and evolution of work, workplace arrangements, technologies used, current and future challenges, etc., and how prepared organizations feel they are for the future leading up to and through the year 2030.

Survey administration and survey sample

The survey was administered online and respondents were recruited via a panel. The analysis includes a total of 482 respondents across 16 industries following data cleaning and quality control.

Respondent qualifications

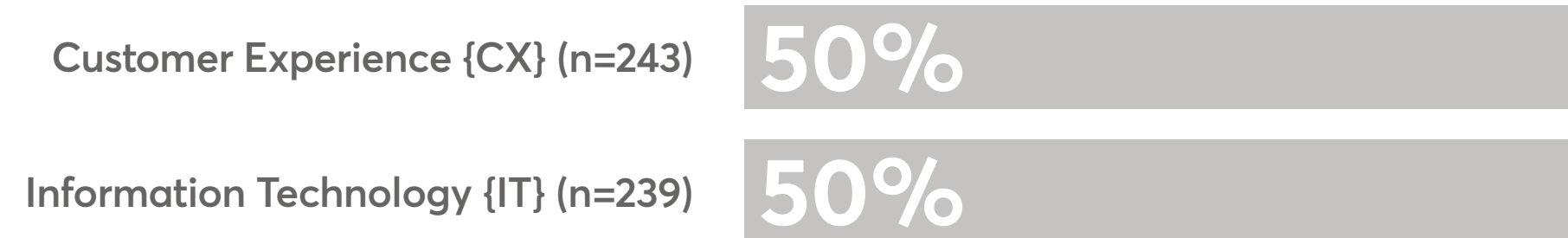
- Age 18+, living in the United States, United Kingdom, France, Canada, New Zealand, and Australia
- Full-time/part-time employment in an IT or CX department in a managerial or more executive job role

Average respondent

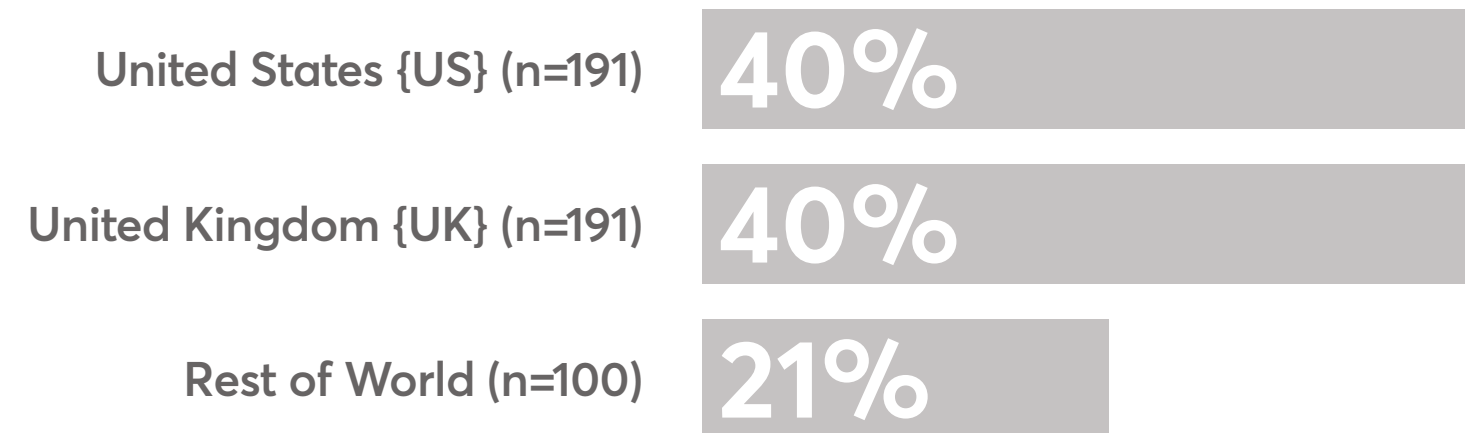
IT or CX manager, senior manager, or director over age 35 with more than five years of experience, serving an organization with more than 500 employees and more than \$10M revenue.

Respondent characteristics

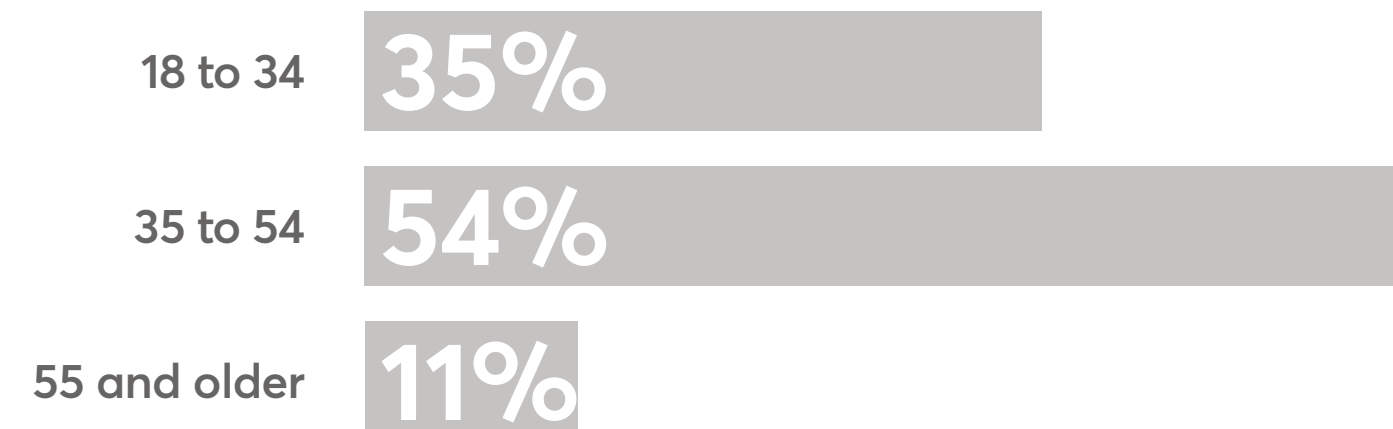
Department (n=482)



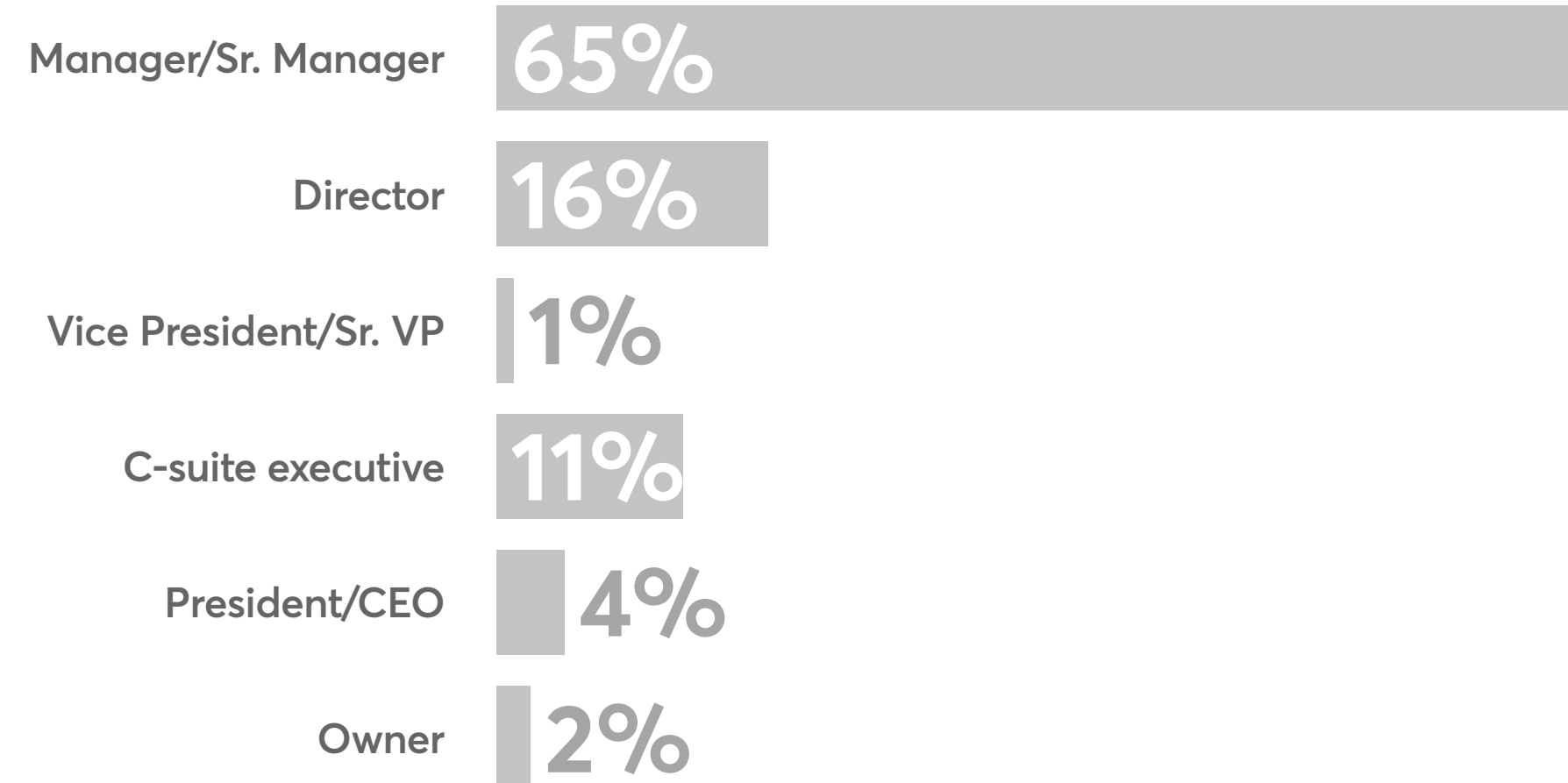
Country/Region (n=482)



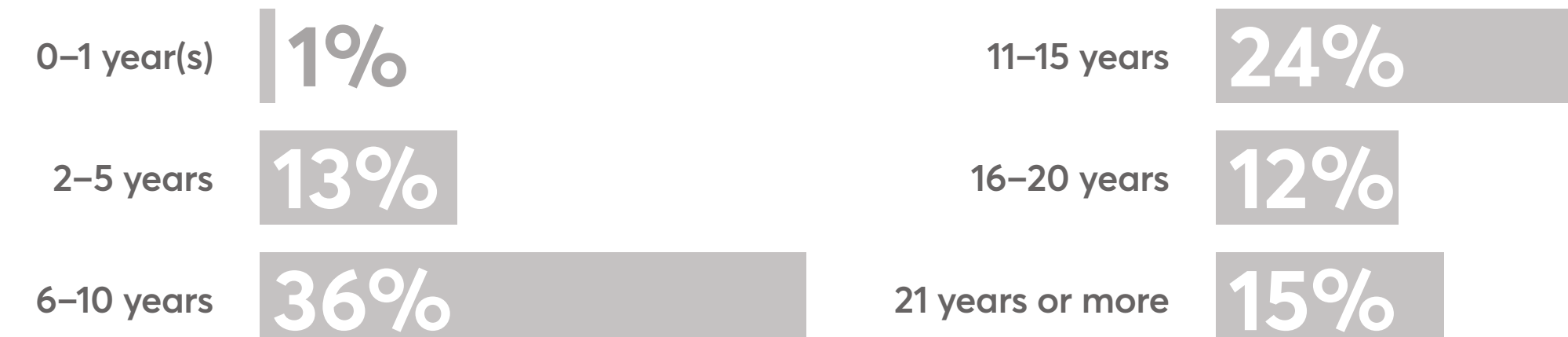
Age (n=482)



Job role (n=482)

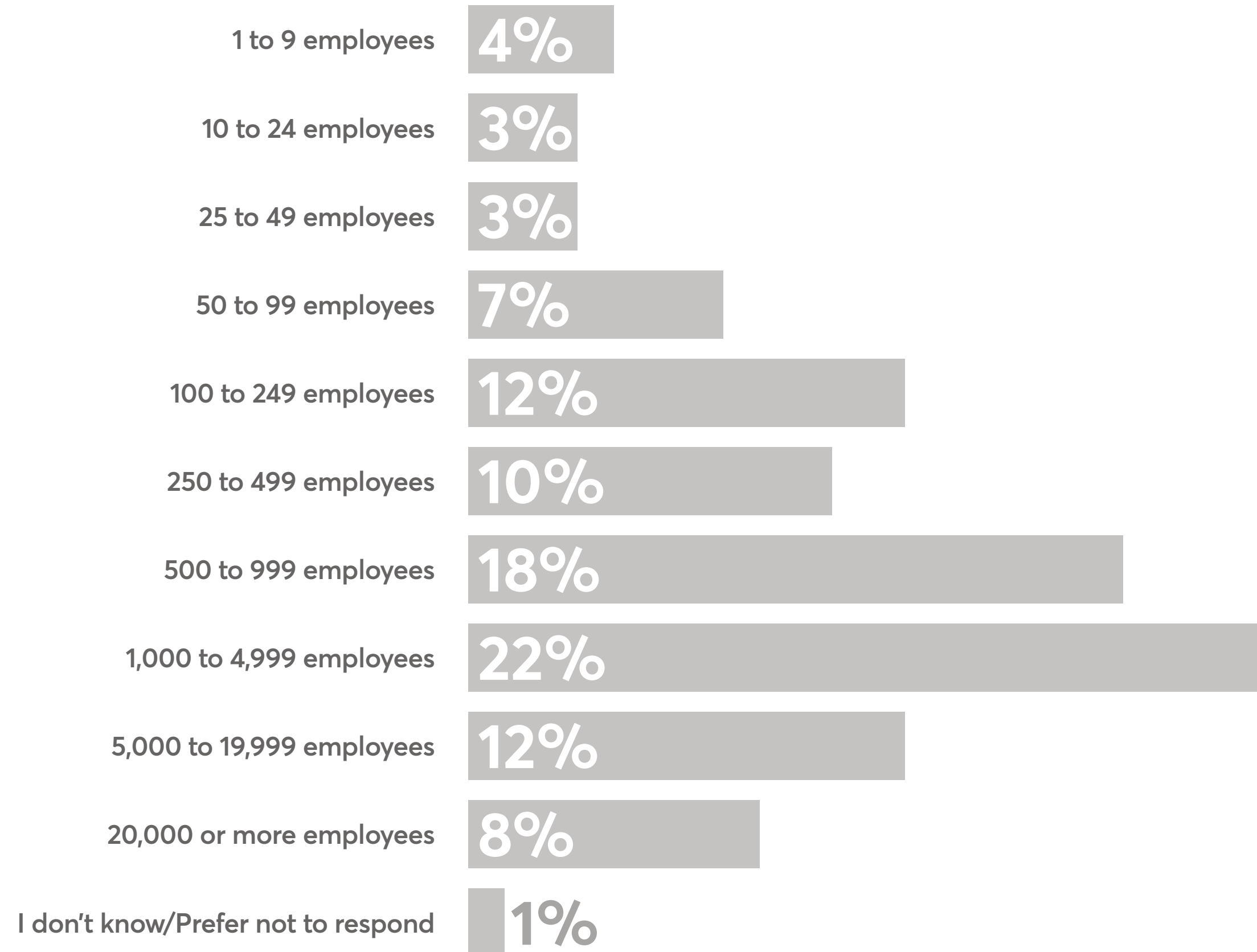


Years experience (n=482)

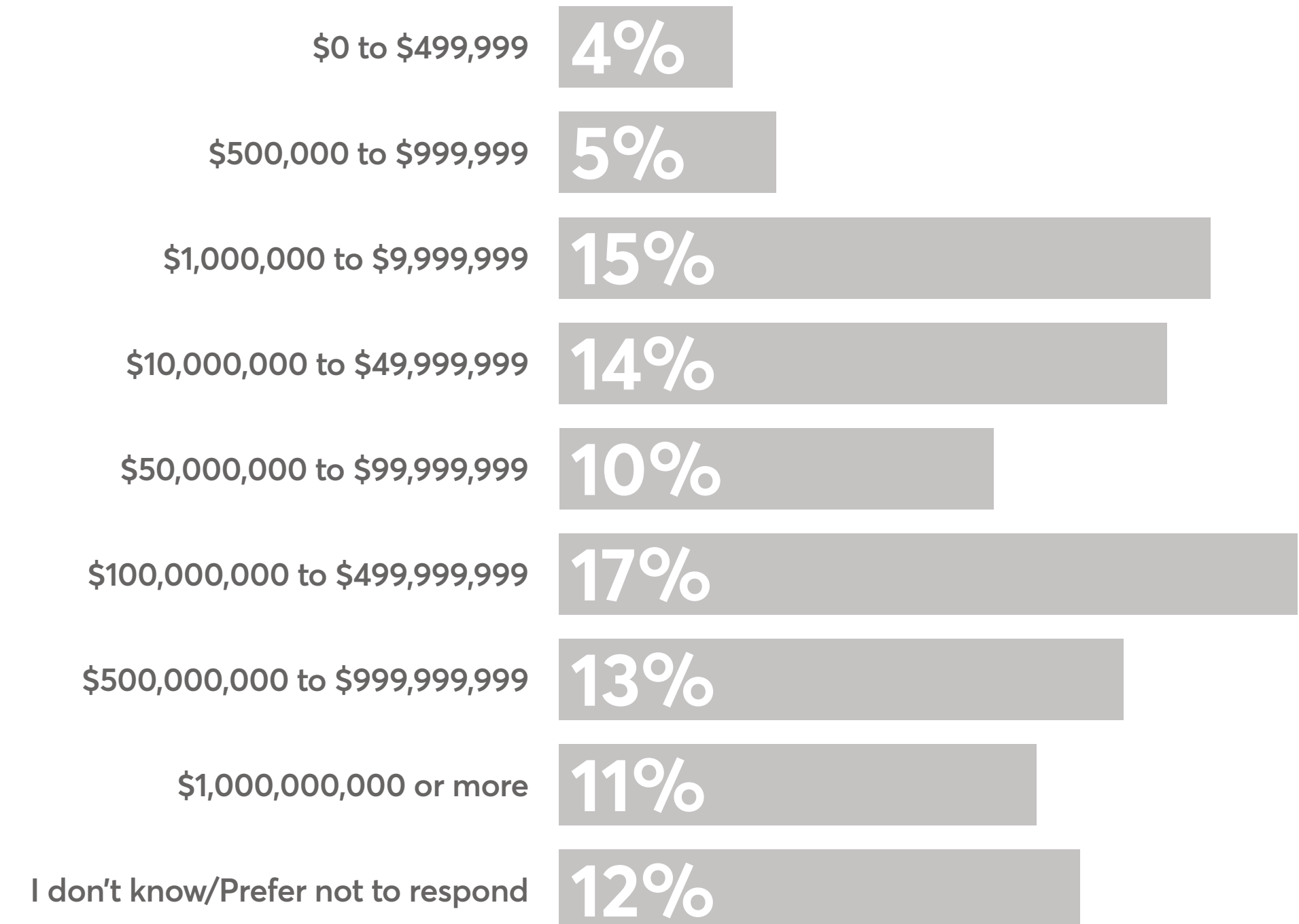


Respondent characteristics

Organization size (n=482)



Company revenue (n=482)



About 8x8

8x8, Inc. (NYSE: EGHT) is transforming the future of business communications as a leading Software as a Service provider of 8x8 XCaaS™ (eXperience Communications as a Service™), an integrated contact center, voice communications, video, chat, and API solution built on one global cloud communications platform. 8x8 uniquely eliminates the silos between Unified Communications as a Service (UCaaS) and Contact Center as a Service (CCaaS) to power the communications requirements of all employees globally as they work together to deliver differentiated customer experiences. For additional information, visit www.8x8.com, or follow 8x8 on LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook.

The 8x8 logo consists of the text "8x8" in white, bold, sans-serif font, centered within a red square.

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