



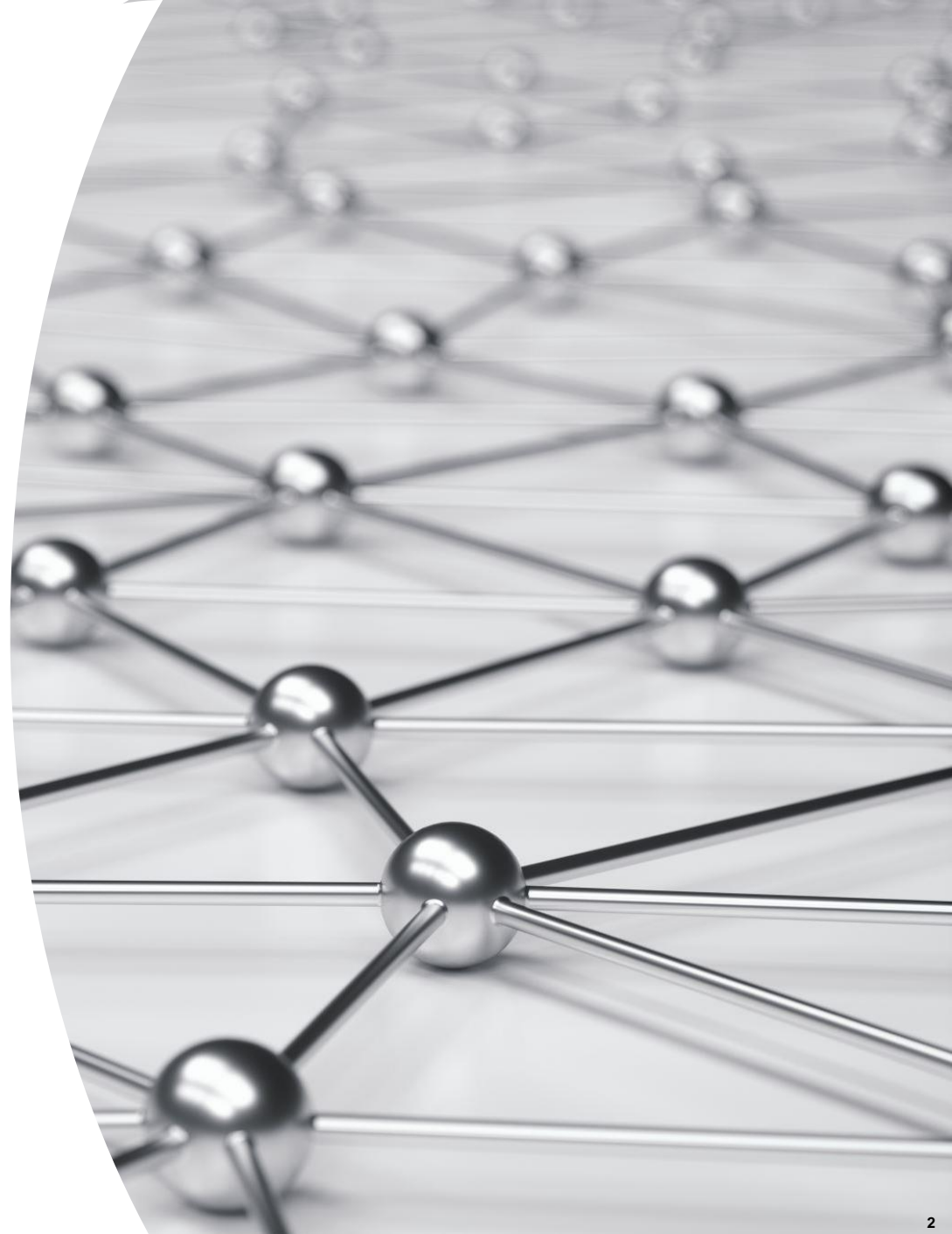
Uncovering the Hidden Drivers of Services Growth

Executive Summary

The RMI and Dayshape collaborated on this study, Uncovering the Hidden Drivers of Services Growth, to gathered insights from services leaders and resource managers across a range of industries. The survey explored organizational priorities, operational challenges, and strategic investments shaping the future of services delivery.

Respondents represented a diverse mix of Professional Services; Accounting, Audit, Tax, and Advisory; IT; Product Development, Marketing Agencies; Engineering; and Consulting firms, with a majority holding managerial or resource management roles. The findings reveal a strong focus on client service excellence, operational efficiency, and talent retention, while also highlighting constraints such as inefficient planning, market uncertainty, and data visibility gaps.

For analysis purposes, responses to this survey were organized into two segments: companies that serve external customers (Professional/Consulting Services; Accounting, Audit, Tax, and Advisory; and Marketing Agencies) and those that serve internal customers (Enterprise/IT Services, Product Development, and Engineering).



Survey Questions

Q1: What type of organization do you represent?

Q2: What is your level in your organization?

Q3: Which option best describes your role?

Q4: How many resources in total does your organization manage collectively with all resource managers?

Q5: What are your firm's top three priorities for the year ahead?
Select up to three

Q6: Which of the following do you see as the biggest constraints to growth in your firm? Select up to three

Q7: Has your firm missed billable utilization targets in the past 12 months?

Q8: What contributed most to missed revenue targets? Select up to two

Q9: How confident is your firm in accurately forecasting workforce needs?

Q10: Does your leadership team have visibility over project and team-level capacity across the business?

Q11: What is your firm's biggest challenge in retaining top performers?

Q12: To what extent do you believe your firm's internal talent is being used to its full potential?

Q13: What's the biggest workforce operational challenge your firm faces when working across geographies?

Q14: Where do inefficiencies most often arise in your delivery model?
Select up to two

Q15: Which of the following areas is your firm prioritizing the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)? Select all that apply

Q16: What's the biggest barrier to using AI more effectively in your operations?

Q17: What prevents you from making strategic or long-term workforce planning decisions?

Q18: Which insights or data points do you wish your firm had clearer, real-time access to? Select all that apply

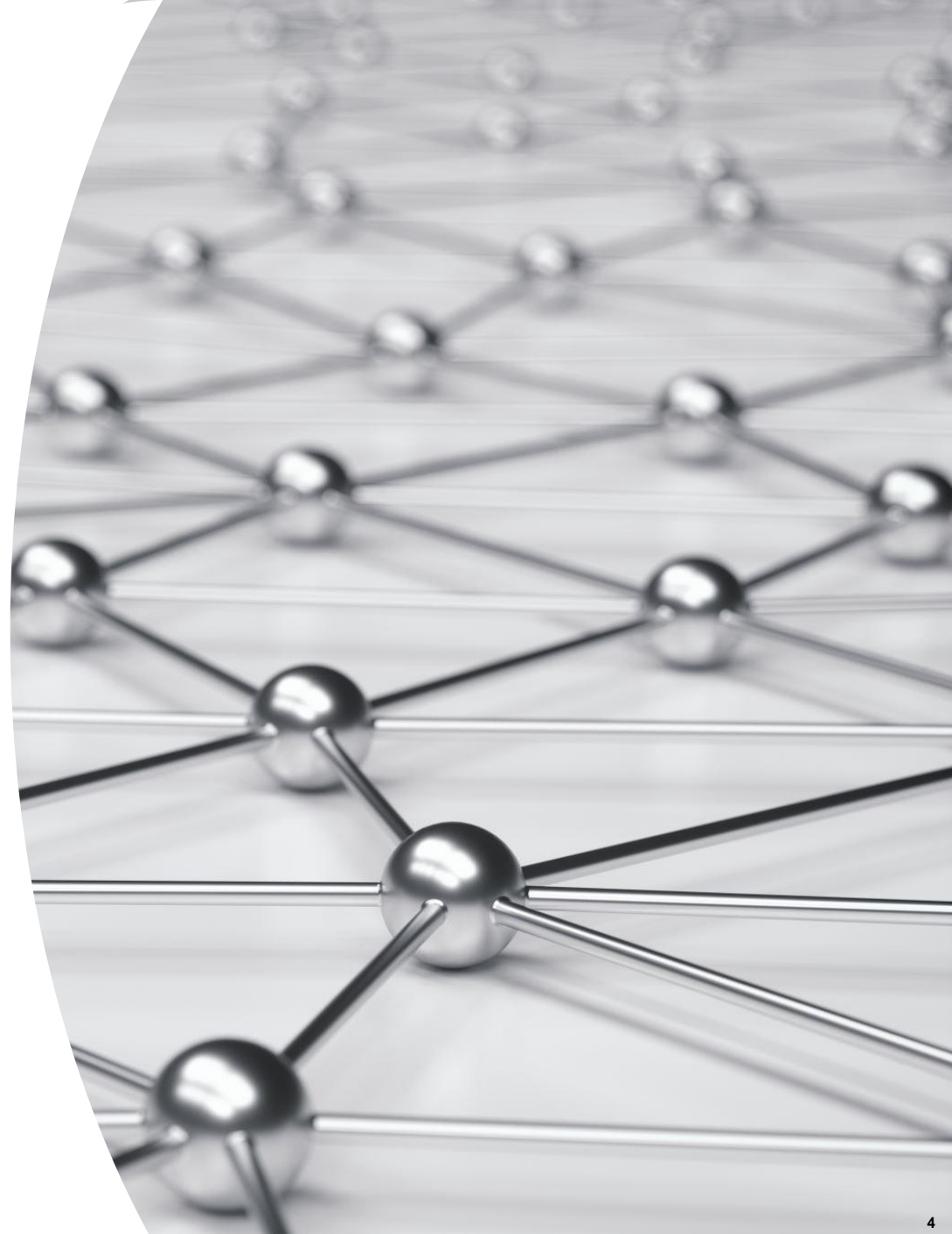
Q19: Do you currently invest in reskilling or internal mobility programs?

Q20: Is your firm currently expanding global delivery teams or offshoring capabilities?

Q21: If you could suggest one new insight or capability to improve your firm tomorrow, what would it be?

Key Observations

- 1 Strategic Priorities**
Client service excellence (61.8%) and operational efficiency (57.8%) emerged as the top priorities for firms in the year ahead, signaling a shift toward quality delivery and streamlined operations.
- 2 Growth Constraints**
The most cited barriers to growth were inefficient operational planning (40%) and market uncertainty (36%), underscoring the need for improved forecasting, agility, and cross-functional alignment.
- 3 Utilization Challenges**
A significant portion of firms (61%) reported missing billable utilization targets in the past year. The leading causes were inaccurate forecasting (49.1%) and resourcing/capacity constraints (17%), pointing to gaps in planning and workforce optimization.
- 4 AI Usage**
Firms are increasingly exploring AI to enhance service delivery, with top areas of adoption including data analytics (39%), client delivery tools (37%), and innovation (34%). However, integration with existing tools (25%) and cost/investment (16%) remain barriers.
- 5 A New Insight or Capability to Improve Your Firm Tomorrow**
When asked to suggest a new insight or capability to improve their firm tomorrow, respondents indicated that they are looking for better technology, cleaner and more actionable data, enhanced forecasting, skills-based resource management, and stronger organizational alignment—all aimed at driving smarter, faster, and more strategic decisions across their firm.





SERVICES TEAMS SERVING EXTERNAL CLIENTS

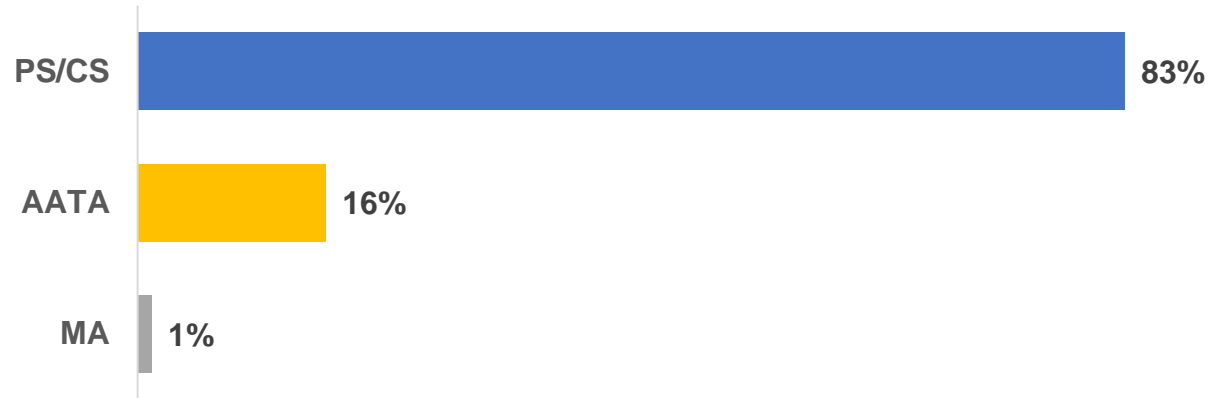
Professional/Consulting Services (PS/CS)

Marketing Agencies (MA)

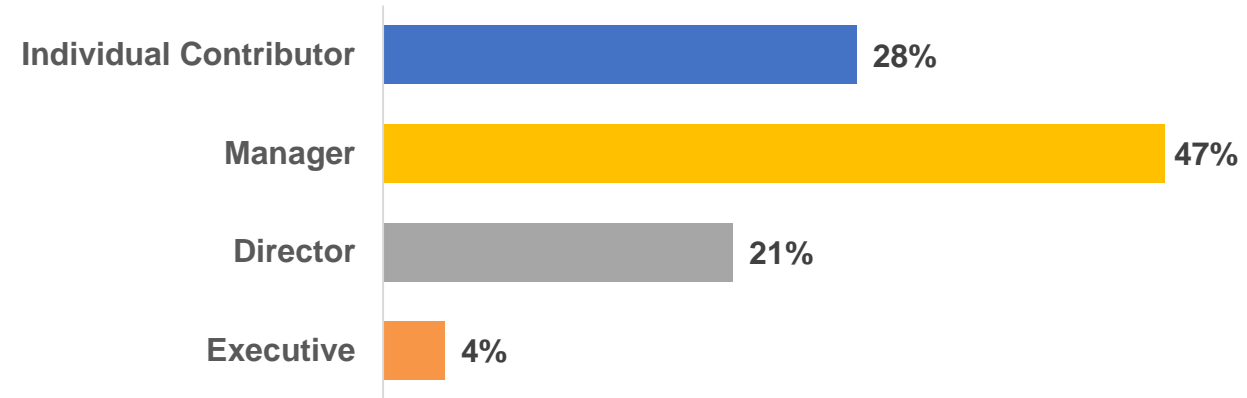
Accounting/Audit/Tax/Advisory (AATA)

Demographics

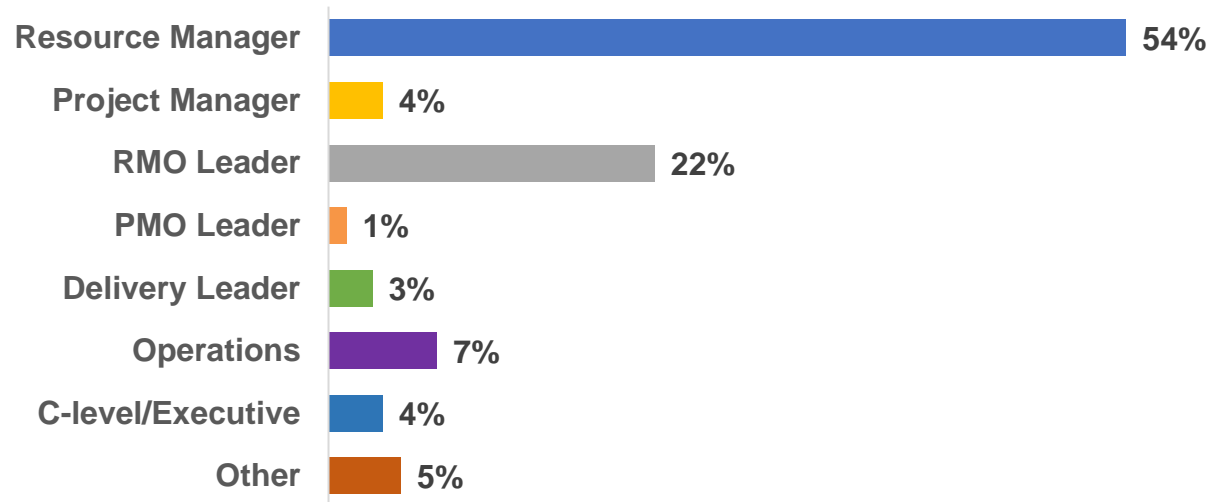
Domain



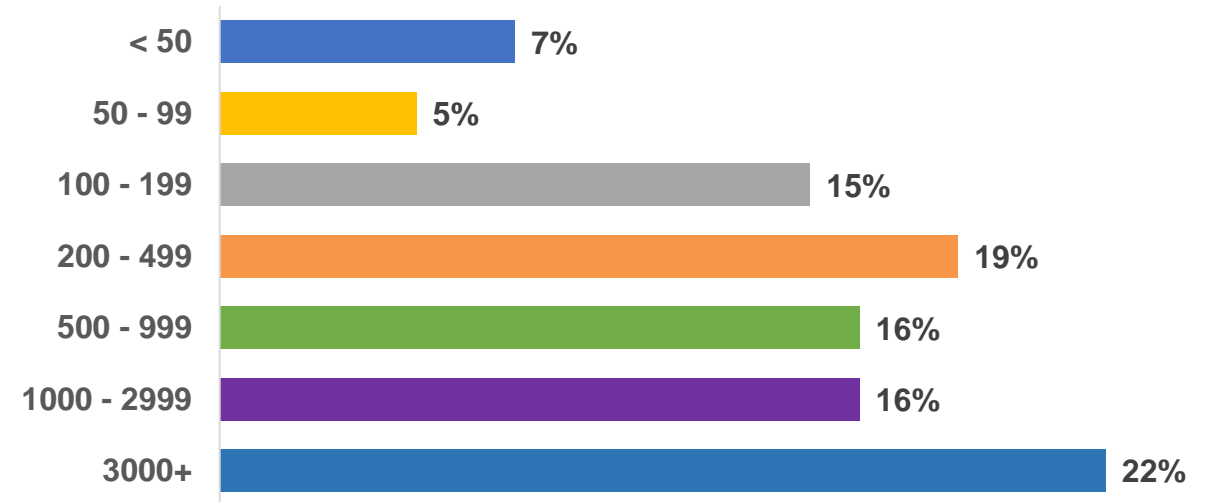
Level in Organization



Role



Resources Managed



PS/CS, AATA, MA

Q5: What are your firm’s top three priorities for the year ahead? (Select up to three)*

1	Client service excellence	59%
2	Margin improvement	55%
3	Operational efficiency	55%
4	Organic growth	29%
5	Client expansion	29%
6	Talent attraction and retention	24%
7	Technology investment	23%
8	International expansion	8%
9	ESG/sustainability impact	1%
10	Other	6%

* Multiple responses allowed. Table depicts % of respondents that selected each option.

- Other:
- Overall PS Revenue Growth
 - Top Line Revenue
- Workforce strategy and combination/merger growth
 - Data driven
- decisions/efficient reporting
 - AI

Q6. Which of the following do you see as the biggest constraints to growth in your firm? (Select up to three)*

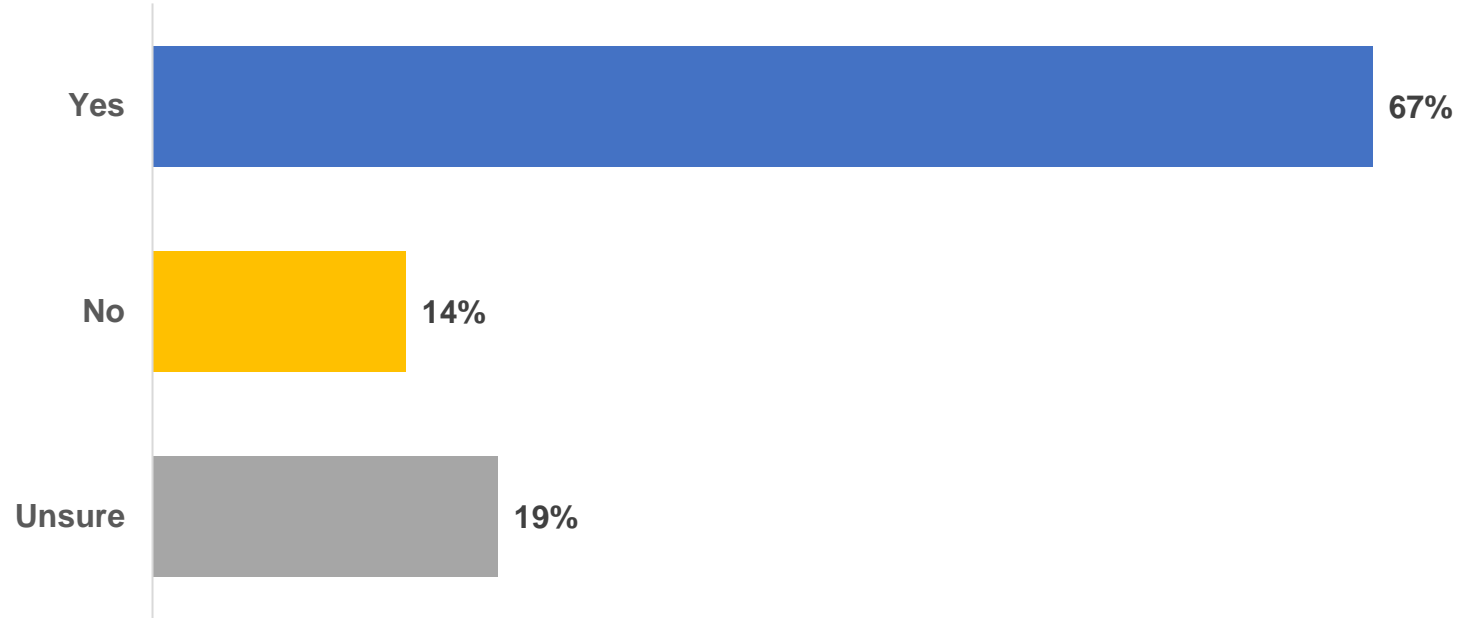
1	Inefficient operational planning	46%
2	Client pressure on cost or delivery	38%
3	Market uncertainty	34%
4	Poor cross-team alignment	32%
5	Leadership bandwidth	25%
6	Lack of real-time data	20%
7	Talent shortages	18%
8	Competition	18%
9	Legacy systems	15%
10	Lack of necessary skills	14%
11	Other	5%

* Multiple responses allowed. Table depicts % of respondents that selected each option.

- Other:
- Inefficient or lack of methodology
 - Poor Technology
 - Time

- Technology

Q7. Has your firm missed billable utilization targets in the past 12 months?



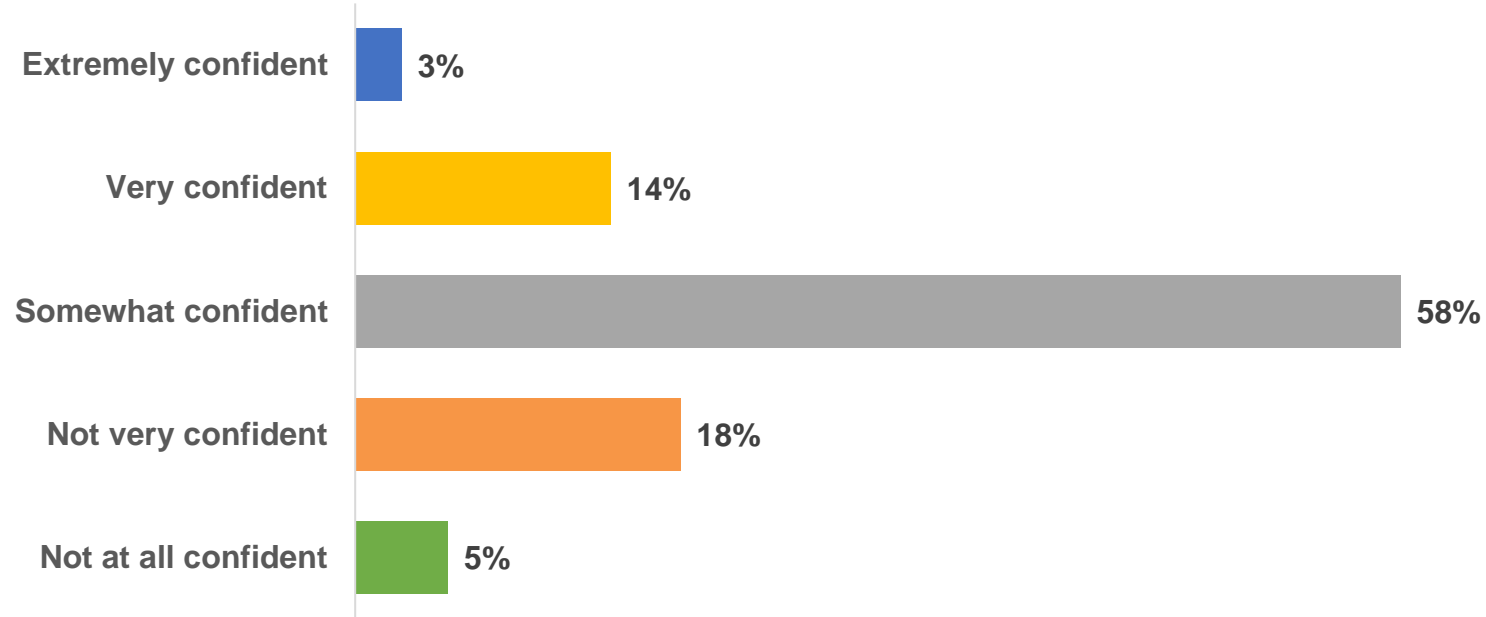
Q8. What contributed most to missed revenue targets? (Select up to two)*

1	Inaccurate project/revenue forecasting	47%
2	Competitive losses/lost bids	29%
3	Inaccurate or inconsistent budgeting	25%
4	Lack of demand	20%
5	Economic conditions	20%
6	Resourcing/capacity constraints	14%
7	Project overruns/write offs	10%
8	Client retention	8%
9	Pressure on rates	4%
10	Other	14%

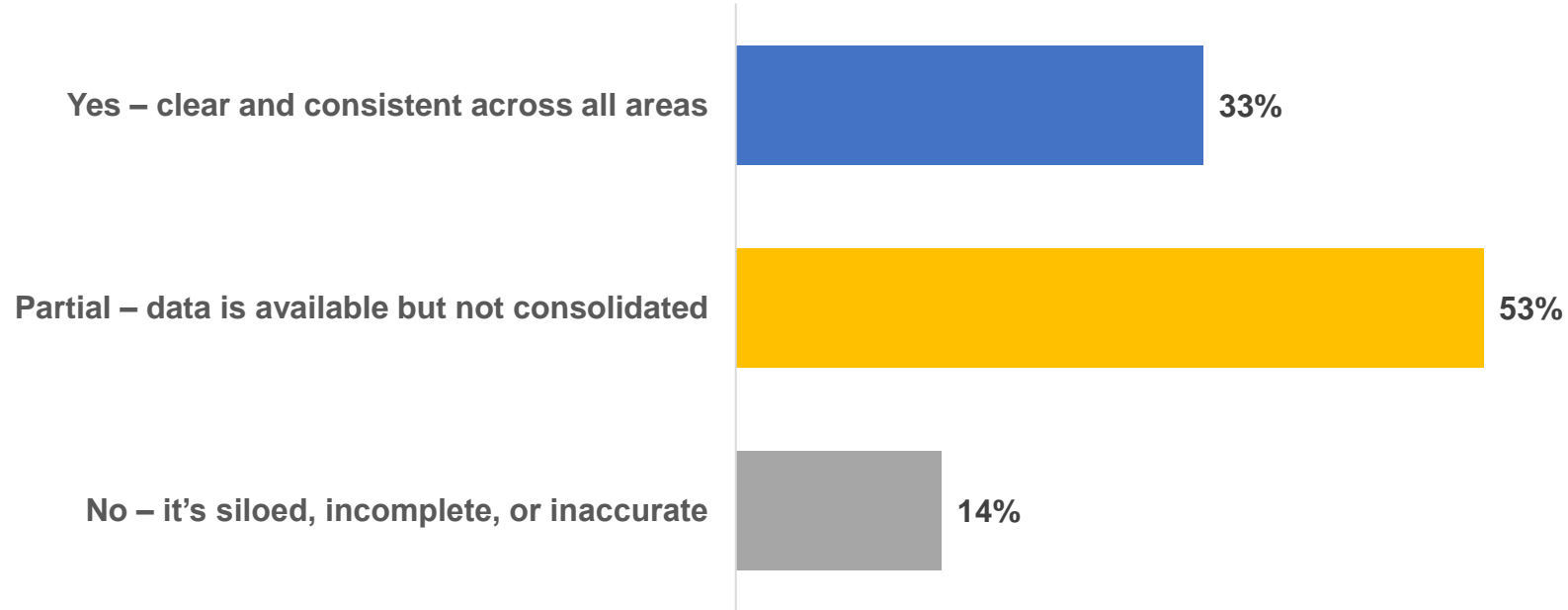
* Multiple responses allowed. Table depicts % of respondents that selected each option.

- Other:**
- Technology change
 - Project Pushes and Delays
 - Merger and integration
 - Did not miss revenue targets
 - Poor leadership
 - Project Structure
 - Cancellation of federal contract funding

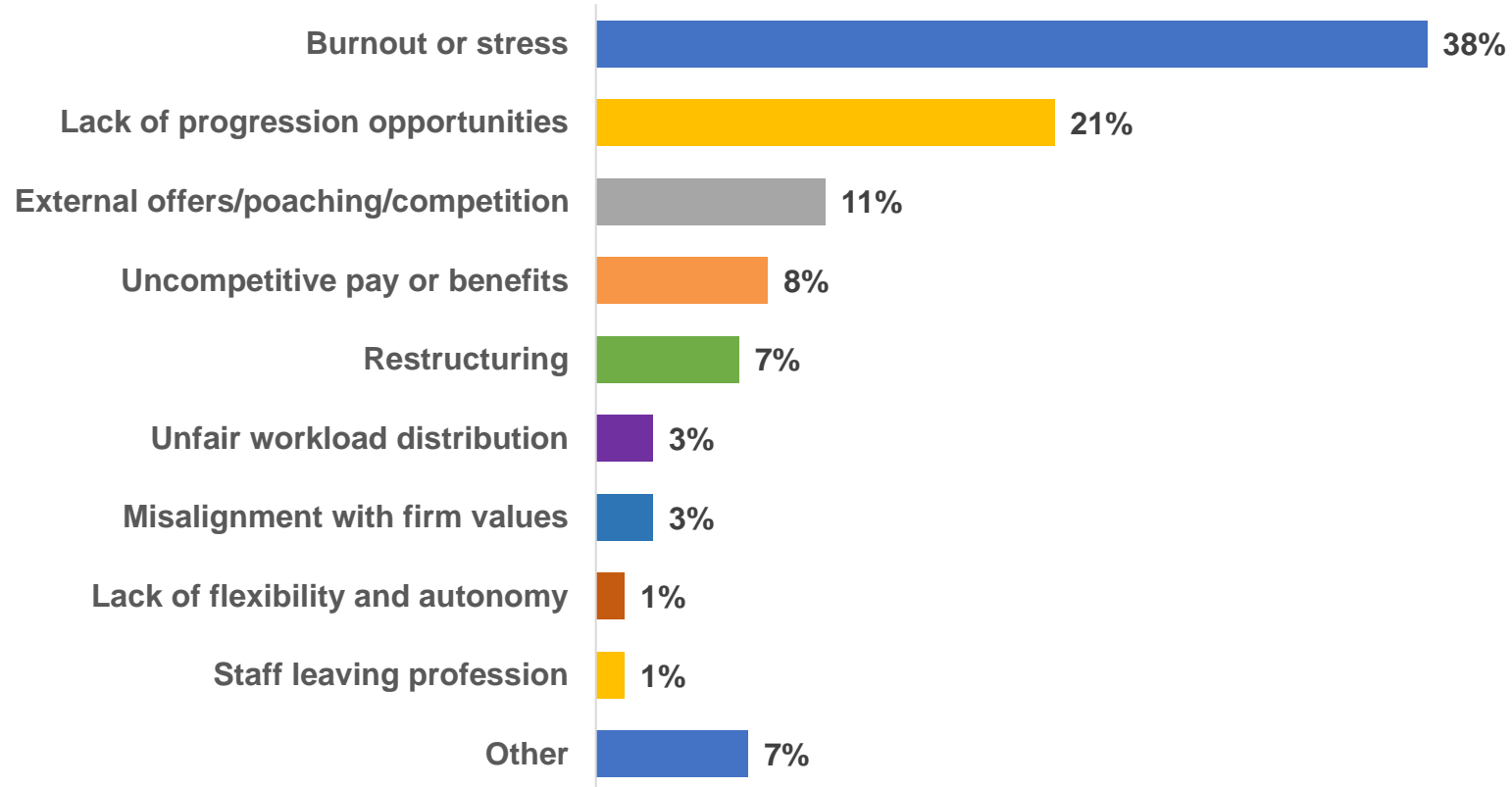
Q9. How confident is your firm in accurately forecasting workforce needs?



Q10. Does your leadership team have visibility over project and team-level capacity across the business?



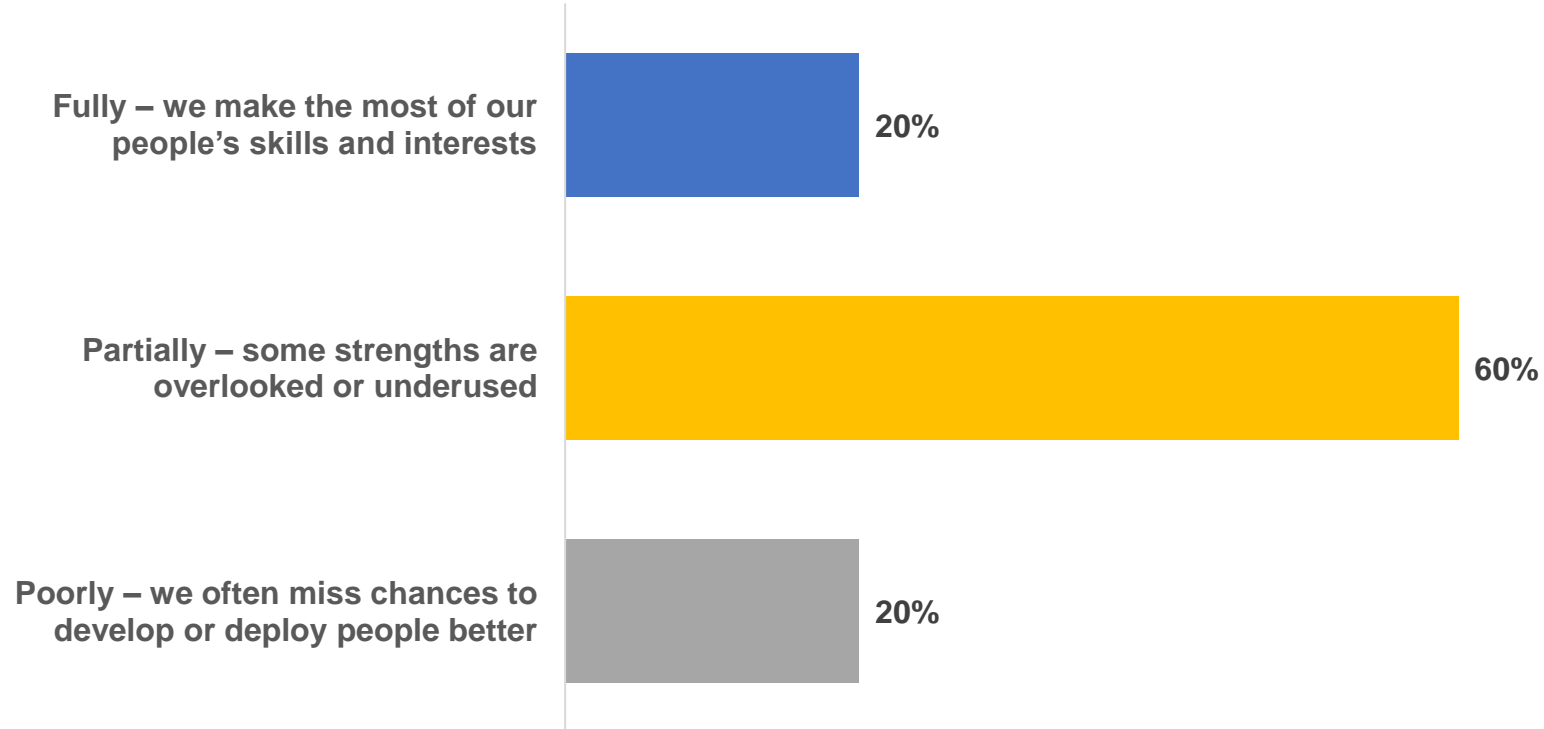
Q11. What is your firm's biggest challenge in retaining top performers?



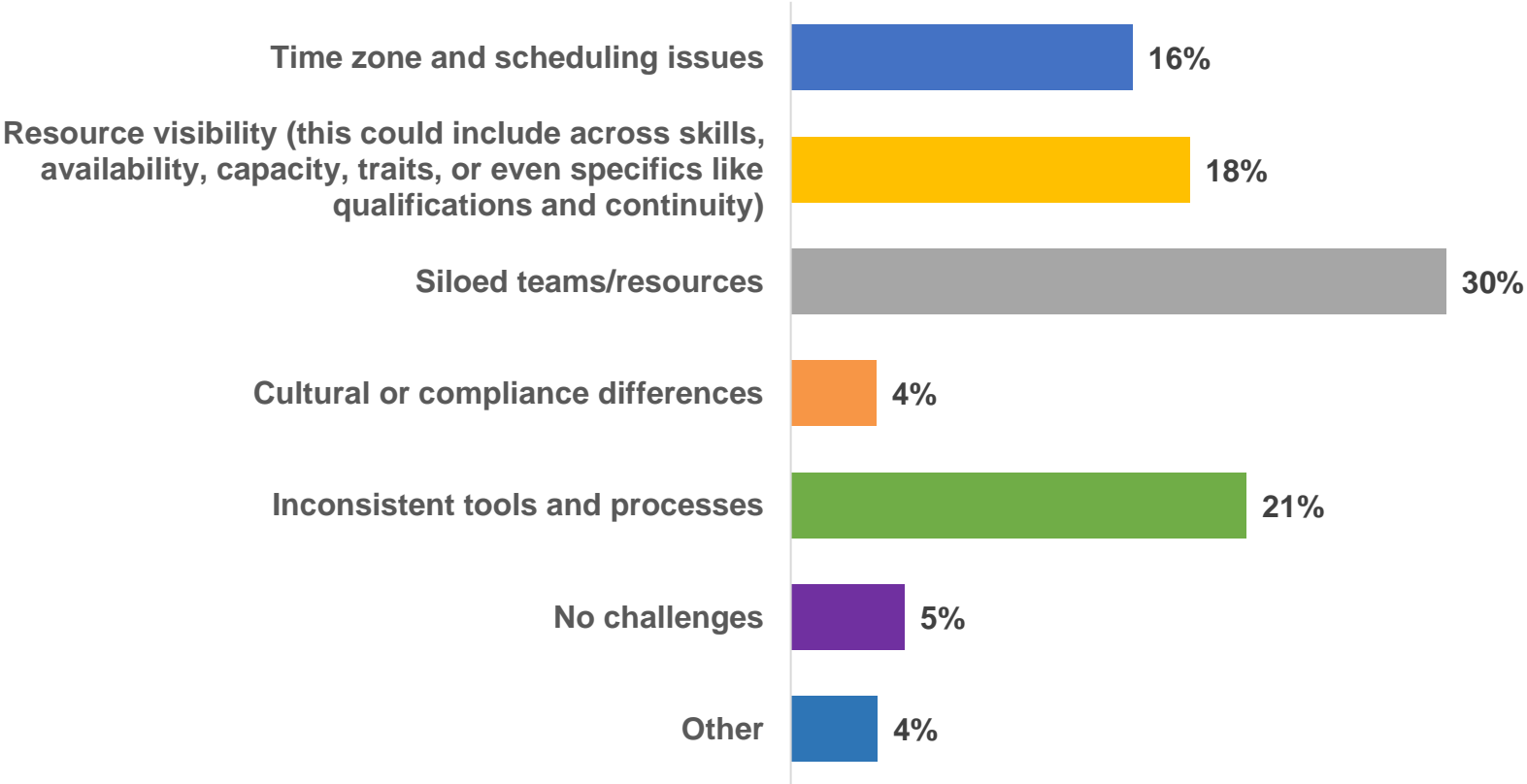
Other:

- Return to Office Requirement
- All of the above
- Retirement
- Lack of trust in leadership ability to strategically drive the business
- Our attrition rate is 11%. We rock retention.
- Customer timeline inaccuracy

Q12. To what extent do you believe your firm's internal talent is being used to its full potential?



Q13. What's the biggest workforce operational challenge your firm faces when working across geographies?



- Other:**
- Firm does not want to work across geographies
 - Quality of staff
 - This is a new idea for them, they need to get used to staffing across geos
 - Unwillingness to travel

Q14. Where do inefficiencies most often arise in your delivery model?
(Select up to two)*

1	Demand forecasting	43%
2	Communication breakdowns	26%
3	Scope changes or creep	25%
4	Manual processes	24%
5	Capacity planning	22%
6	Project overruns	20%
7	Inability to share resources	13%
8	Time to hire and onboard	12%
9	Other	1%

* Multiple responses allowed. Table depicts % of respondents that selected each option.

Other:

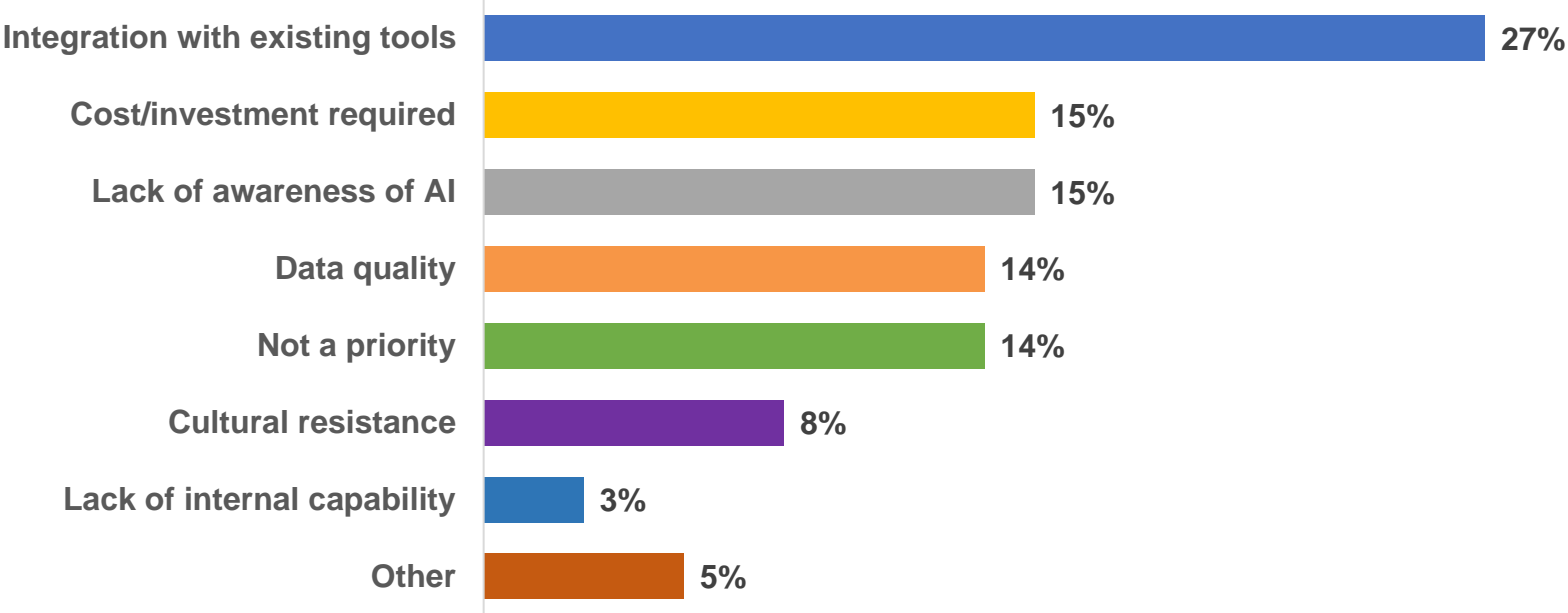
- RMO staffs prior to client readiness and requirements are confirmed

Q15. Which of the following areas is your firm prioritizing the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)? (Select all that apply)*

1	Client delivery tools	41%
2	Data analytics	36%
3	Innovation	35%
4	Communications	32%
5	Collaboration platforms	26%
6	None at the moment	24%
7	Workforce optimization	19%
8	Data entry	16%
9	Project/resource planning/scheduling	15%
10	Capacity planning	9%
11	Pricing	5%

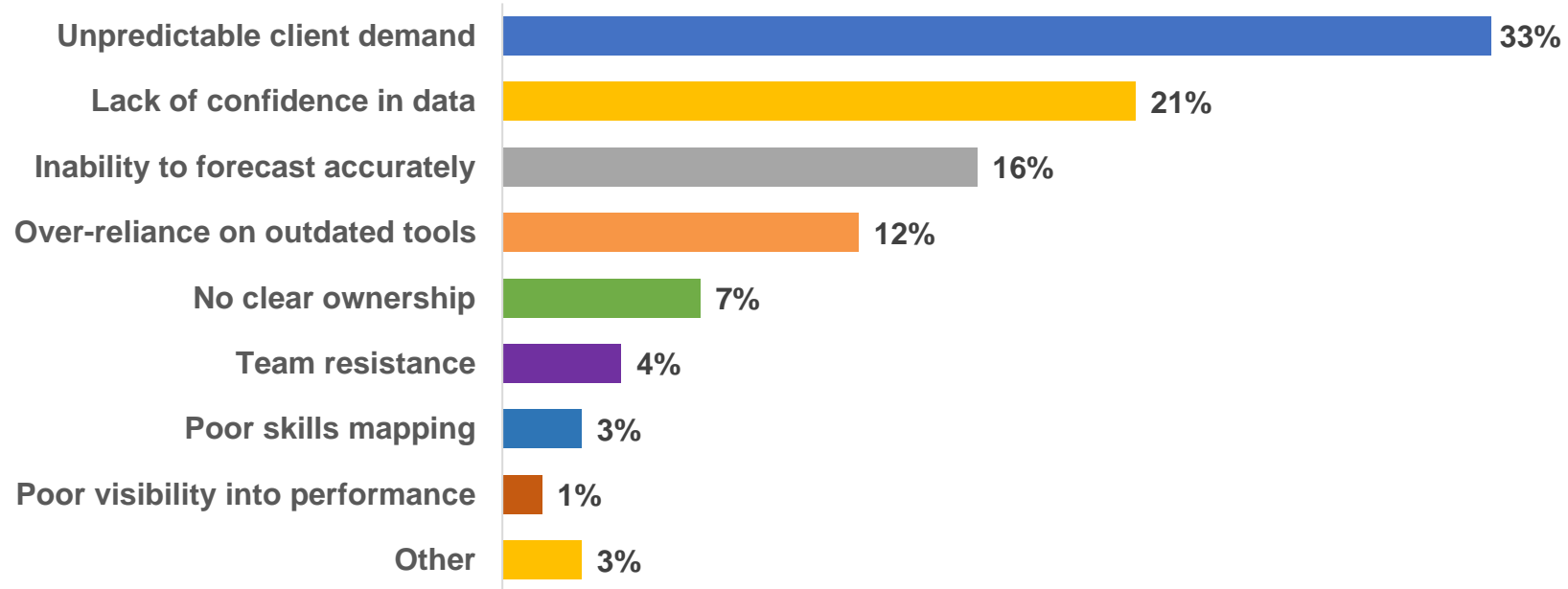
* Multiple responses allowed. Table depicts % of respondents that selected each option.

Q16. What's the biggest barrier to using AI more effectively in your operations?



- Other:**
- Capacity
 - Low maturity. AI readiness.
 - Federal requirements
 - Understanding

Q17. What prevents you from making strategic or long-term workforce planning decisions?



Other:

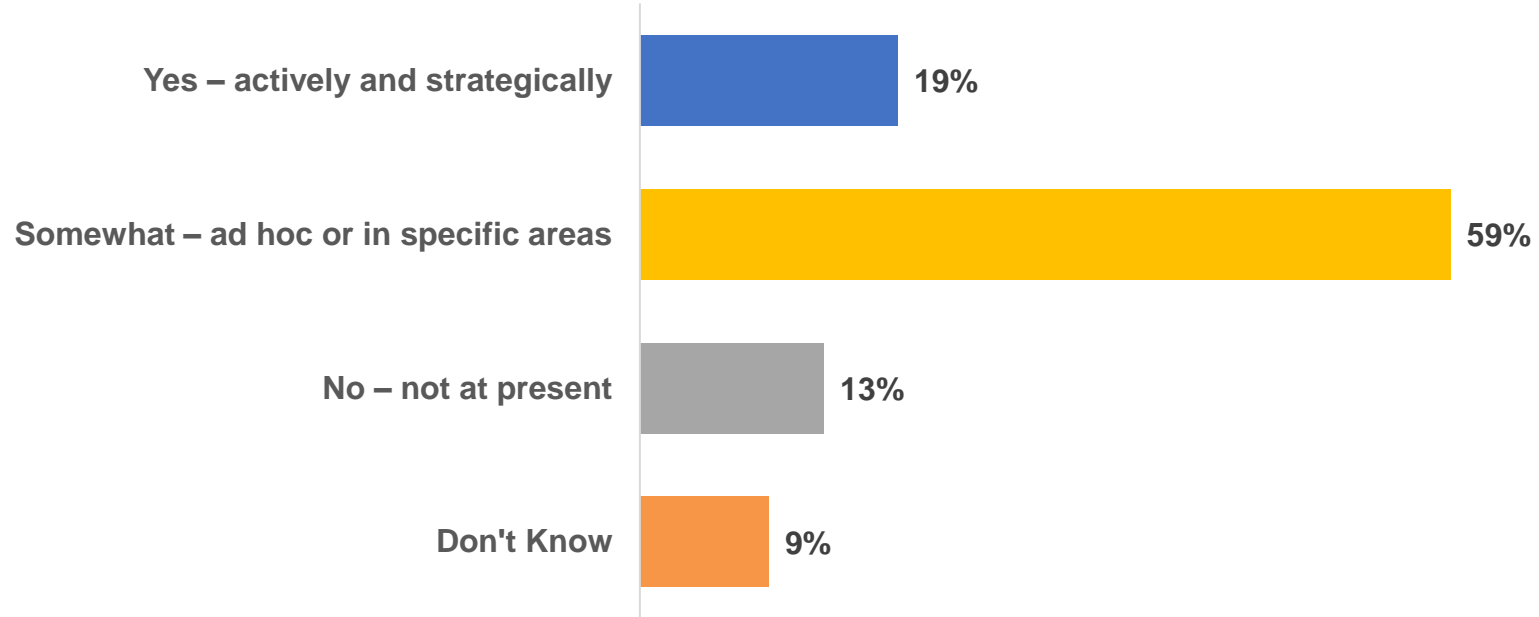
- Budget
- All of the above

Q18. Which insights or data points do you wish your firm had clearer, real-time access to? (Select all that apply)*

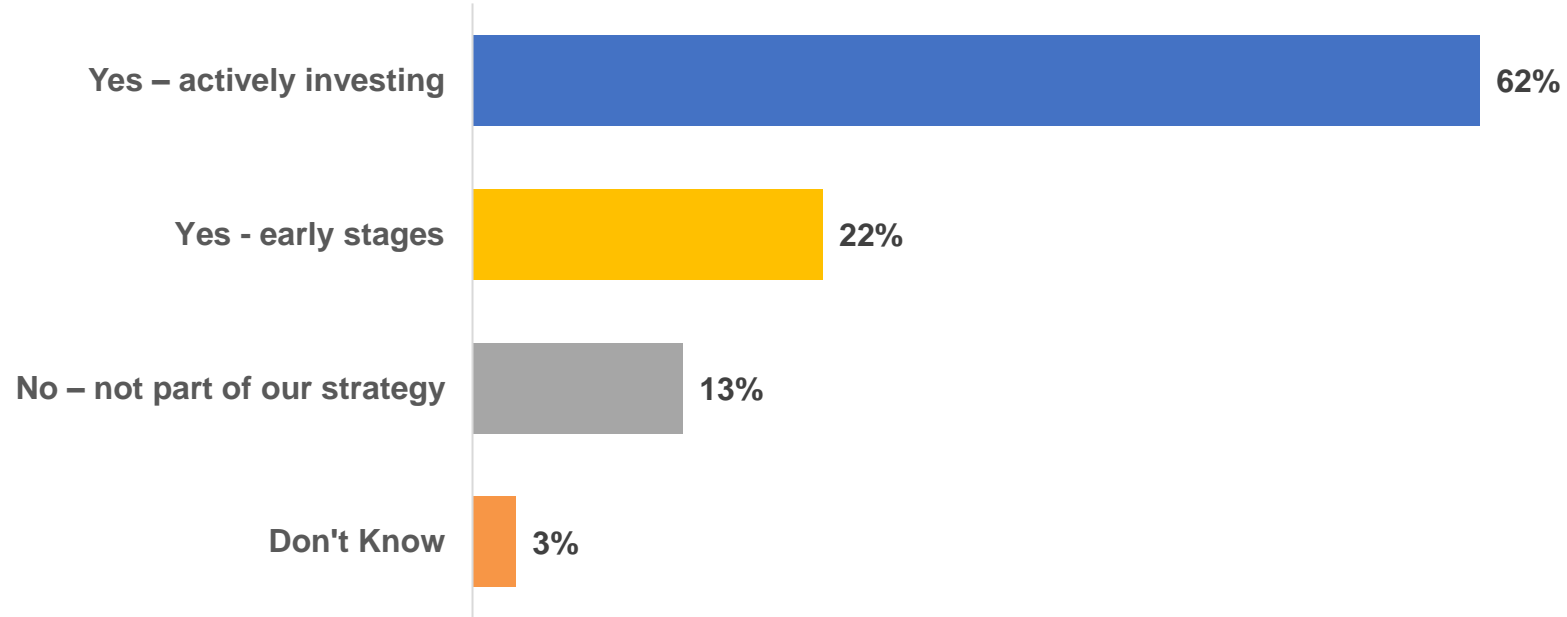
1	Client demand pipeline	67%
2	Live forecasting and scenario modeling	63%
3	Capacity and availability of resources	45%
4	Historical performance and trend analysis	44%
5	Forecasted revenue vs. actuals	33%
6	Project margins and revenue at risk	32%
7	Talent utilization and allocation	28%
8	Profitability by team, project or service line	28%
9	Project delivery status	25%
10	None – we have full access to the data we need	3%

* Multiple responses allowed. Table depicts % of respondents that selected each option.

Q19. Do you currently invest in reskilling or internal mobility programs?



Q20. Is your firm currently expanding global delivery teams or offshoring capabilities?



Q21. If you could suggest one new insight or capability to improve your firm tomorrow, what would it be?

- Invest and leverage in AI and more robust PSA tools
- Better tools
- Invest in a high-performance staffing & forecasting solution
- Data integrity along with tool enhancements to match legacy systems.
- Combination of HR headcount forecasting with rm schedule forecasting
- Hold line leaders accountable (along with PMs) for project success/failure, overruns, efficient use of resources, etc.
- Clear strategic goal alignment across leadership with clear communication to the firm.
- Supply data insights
- AI
- Improved skills database taxonomy that is linked to what we sell
- Quicker risk processes and approvals
- Better internal forecasting to support all customer projects
- Better way to forecast hiring needs based on the demand signal (sales & backlog)
- Increase and help drive compliance processes/tools as it relates to good project management practices
- Cross functional collaboration
- More surveys to understand better what employees need and take action on it
- Standardize utilization targets by service line and rank.
- Single platform to manage all of services
- Improved forecasting on demand, specifically more realistic project start dates
- Upgrade talent with partners in alignment with new values
- Use a RM tool and not just Power BI
- Client demand
- Pipeline
- Cleaner data from Sales
- Improved software for scheduling and forecasting resources
- More robust, uniform RM software
- Investment in RM technology and improved planning to introduce new tech or apps to ensure seamless and effective integration
- Move out of Excel and invest in real time cloud data tools.
- Invest in a more robust PSA tool that aligns with pipeline and forecasting
- Provide clear processes that are consistent across the firm
- Better collaboration/communication
- Better systems
- A single, integrated dashboard that combines backlog, forecast, project milestones, staffing allocations, and upcoming leaves—updated in real-time and accessible by Delivery, RDMs, Sales, and Leadership.
- Better project estimation
- Invest in your employees
- Reporting via dashboard, rather than generating spreadsheets on a scheduled or ad-hoc basis

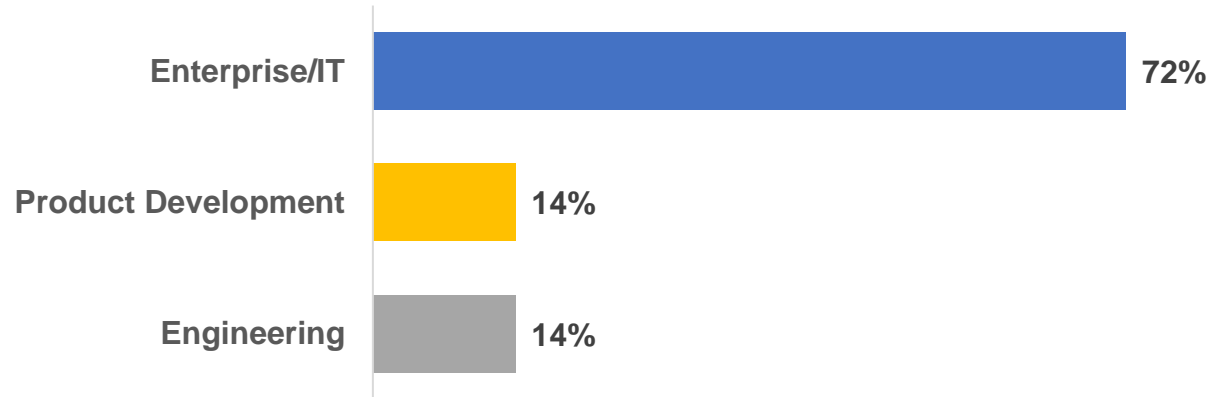


SERVICES TEAMS SERVING INTERNAL CLIENTS

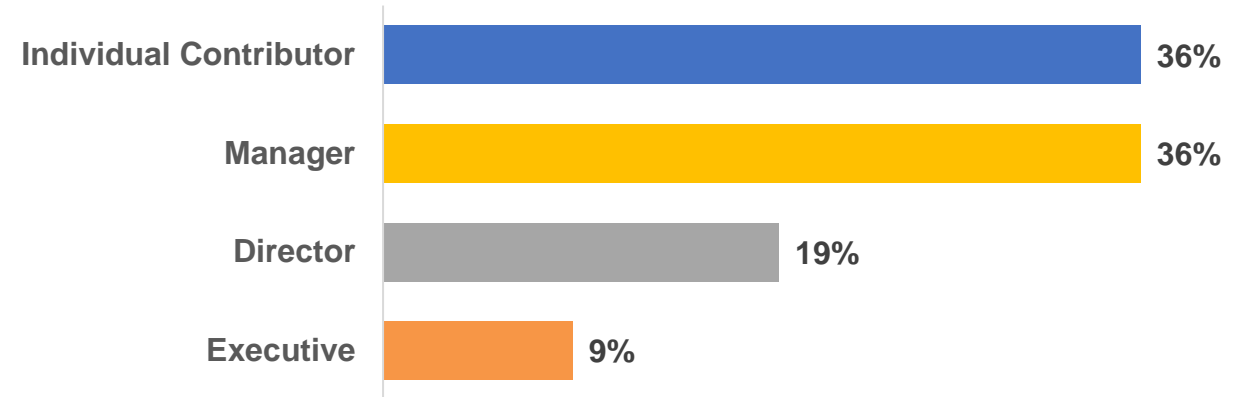
Enterprise/IT (E/IT)
Product Development (PD)
Engineering (E)

Demographics

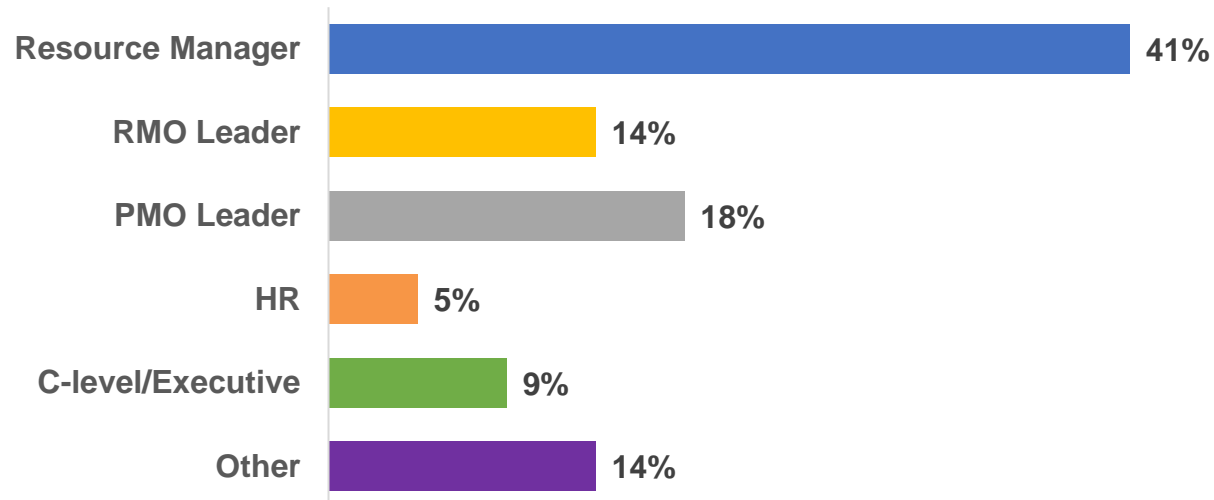
Domain



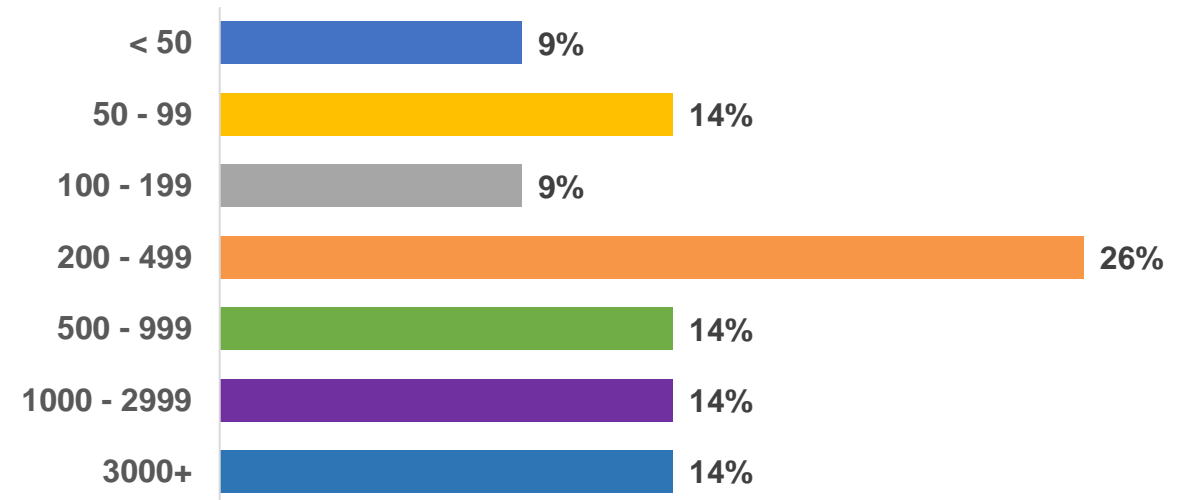
Level in Organization



Role



Resources Managed



E/IT, PD, E

Q5: What are your firm's top three priorities for the year ahead? (Select up to three)*

1	Client service excellence	73%
2	Operational efficiency	68%
3	Technology investment	41%
4	Margin improvement	32%
5	Talent attraction and retention	32%
6	Organic growth	27%
7	Client expansion	14%
8	ESG/sustainability impact	5%

* Multiple responses allowed. Table depicts % of respondents that selected each option.

Q6. Which of the following do you see as the biggest constraints to growth in your firm? (Select up to three)*

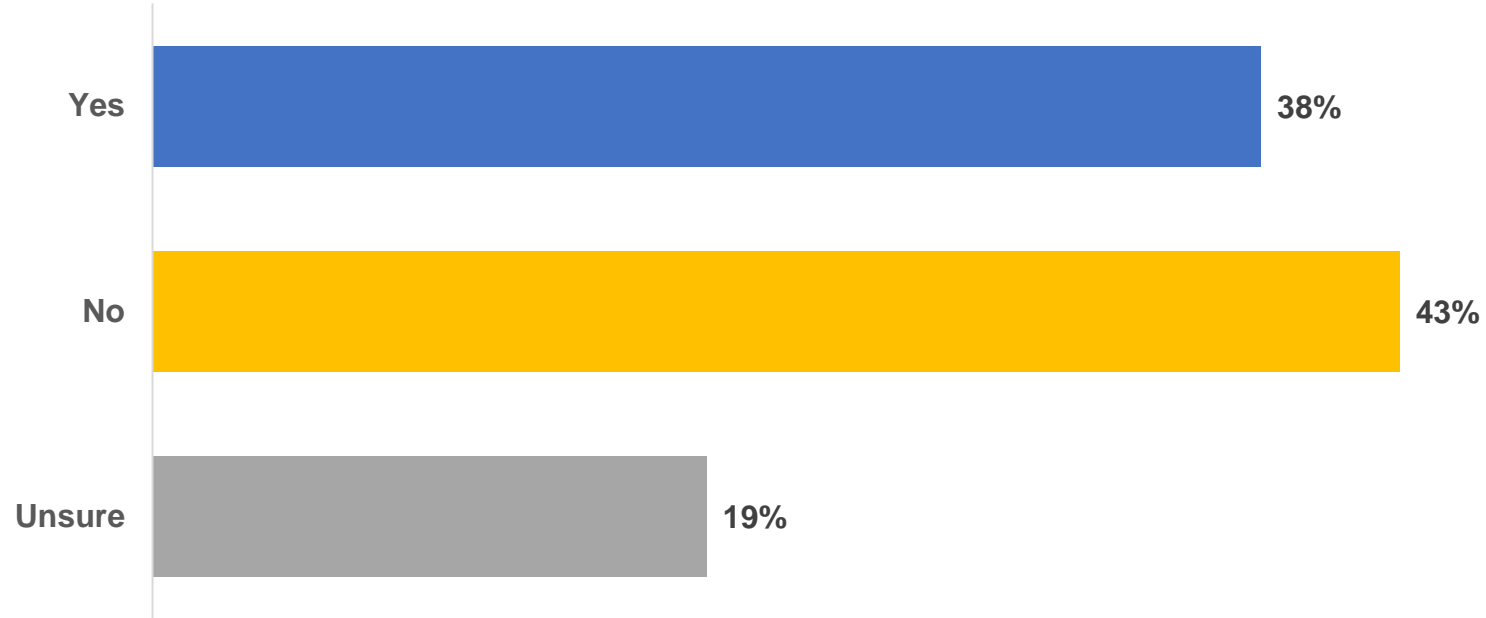
1	Talent shortages	52%
2	Market uncertainty	43%
3	Client pressure on cost or delivery	33%
4	Lack of real-time data	29%
5	Poor cross-team alignment	29%
6	Legacy systems	24%
7	Inefficient operational planning	19%
8	Lack of necessary skills	19%
9	Leadership bandwidth	14%
10	Competition	5%
11	Other	5%

* Multiple responses allowed. Table depicts % of respondents that selected each option.

Other:

- Project demand exceeding capacity

Q7. Has your firm missed billable utilization targets in the past 12 months?

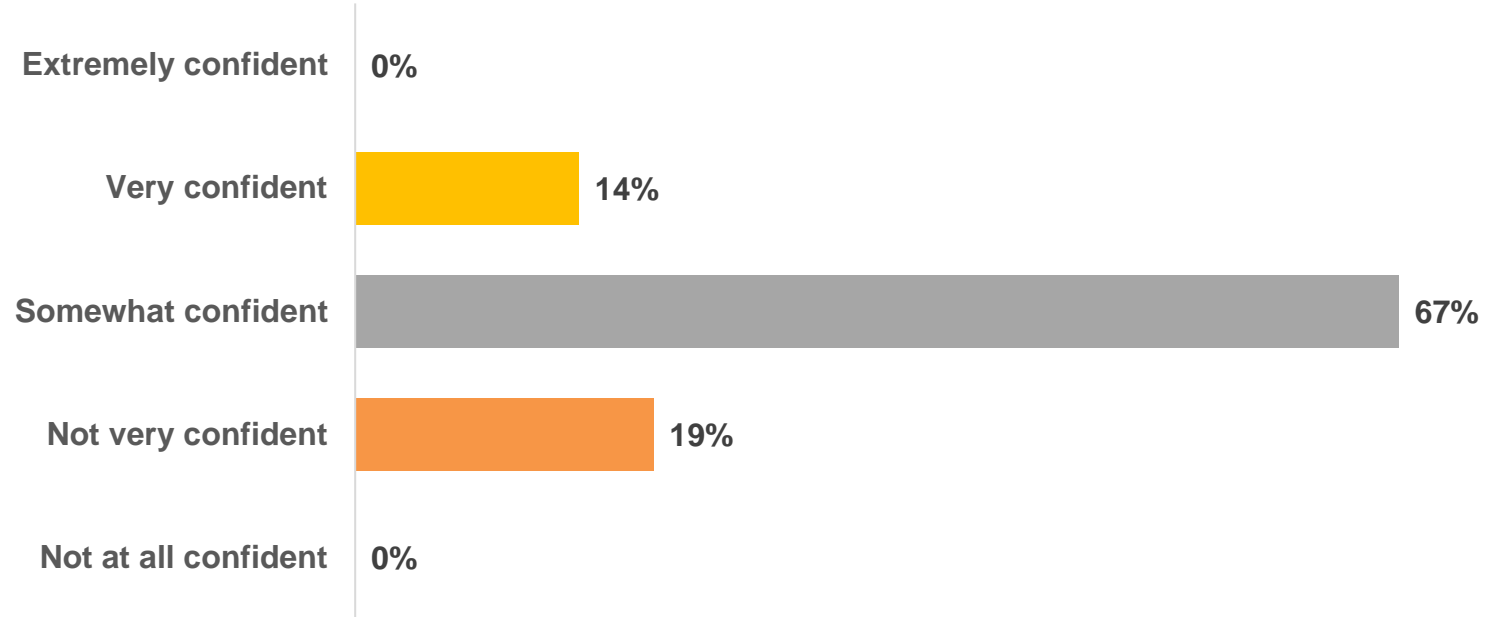


Q8. What contributed most to missed revenue targets? (Select up to two)*

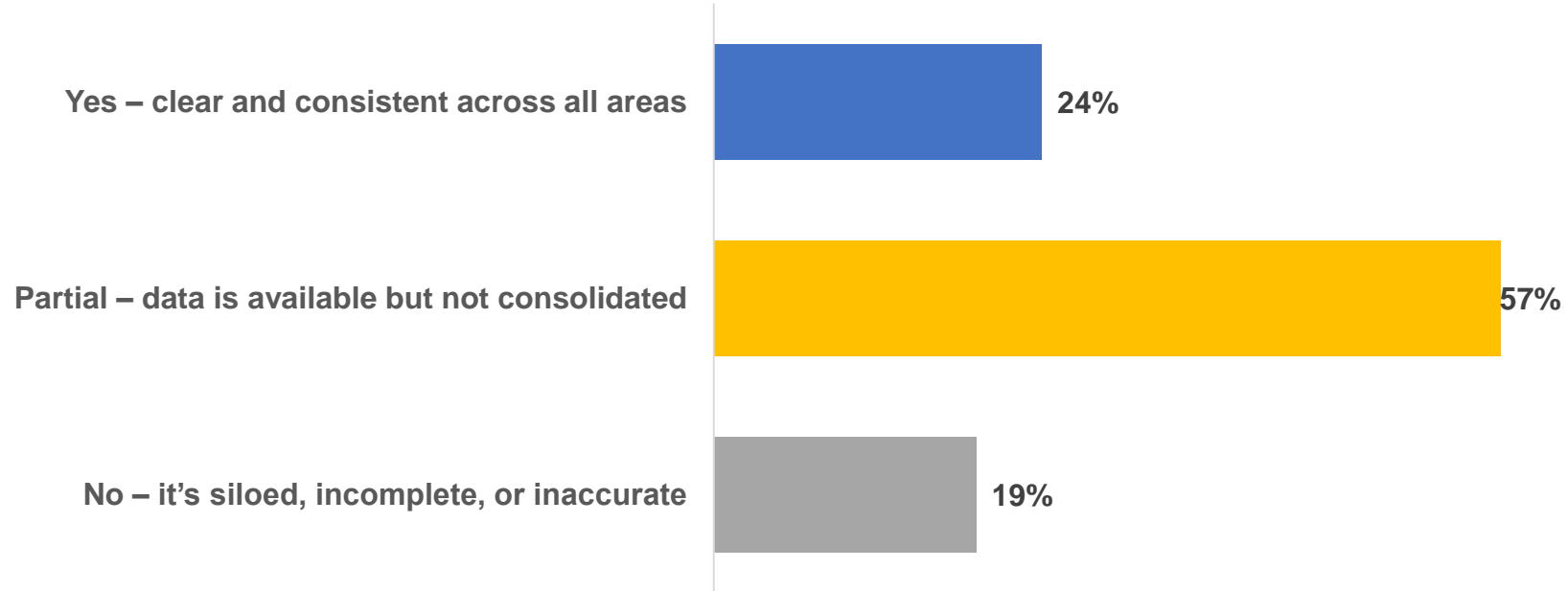
1	Inaccurate project/revenue forecasting	47%
2	Competitive losses/lost bids	29%
3	Inaccurate or inconsistent budgeting	25%
4	Lack of demand	20%
5	Economic conditions	20%
6	Resourcing/capacity constraints	14%

* Multiple responses allowed. Table depicts % of respondents that selected each option.

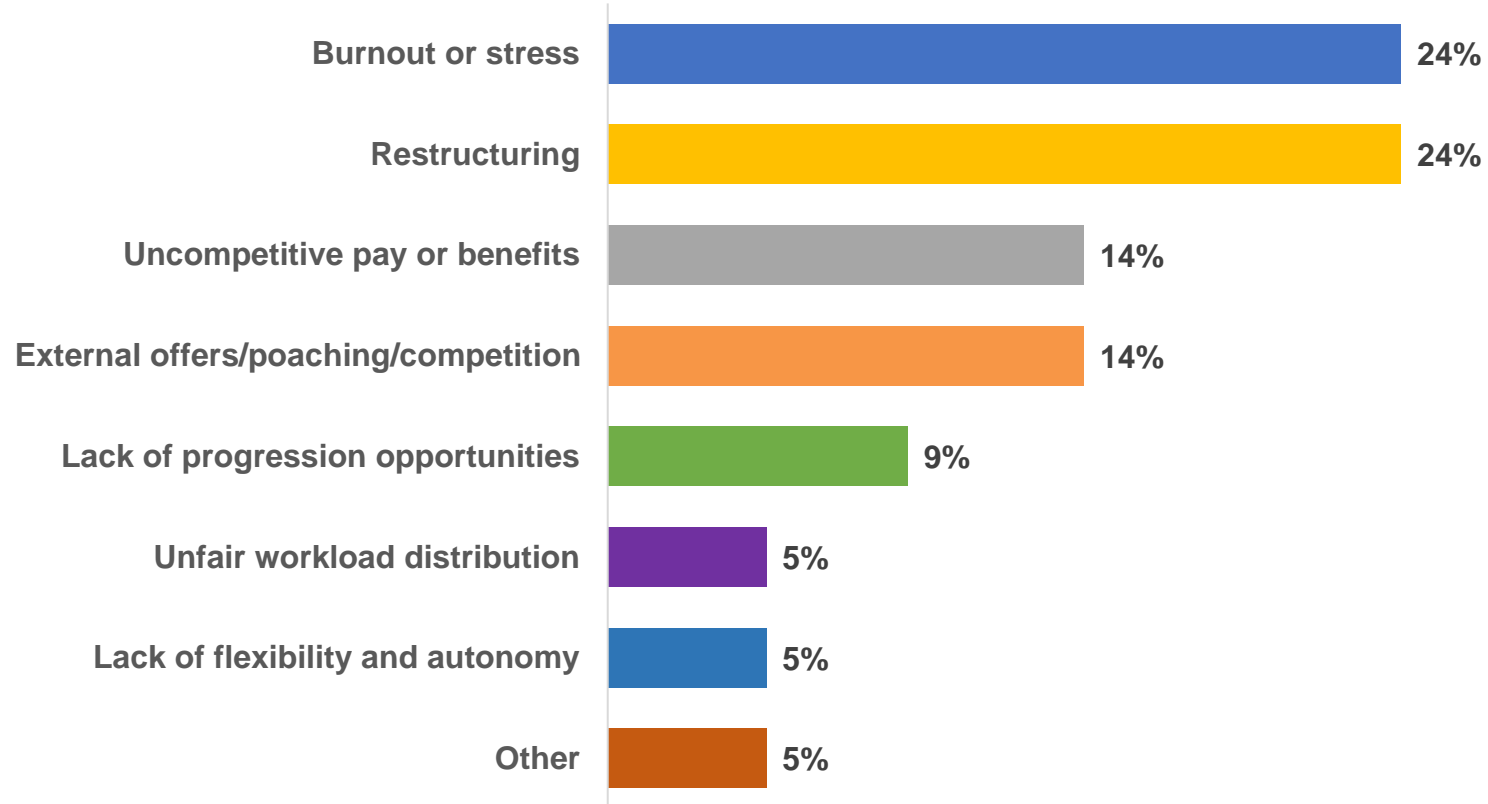
Q9. How confident is your firm in accurately forecasting workforce needs?



Q10. Does your leadership team have visibility over project and team-level capacity across the business?



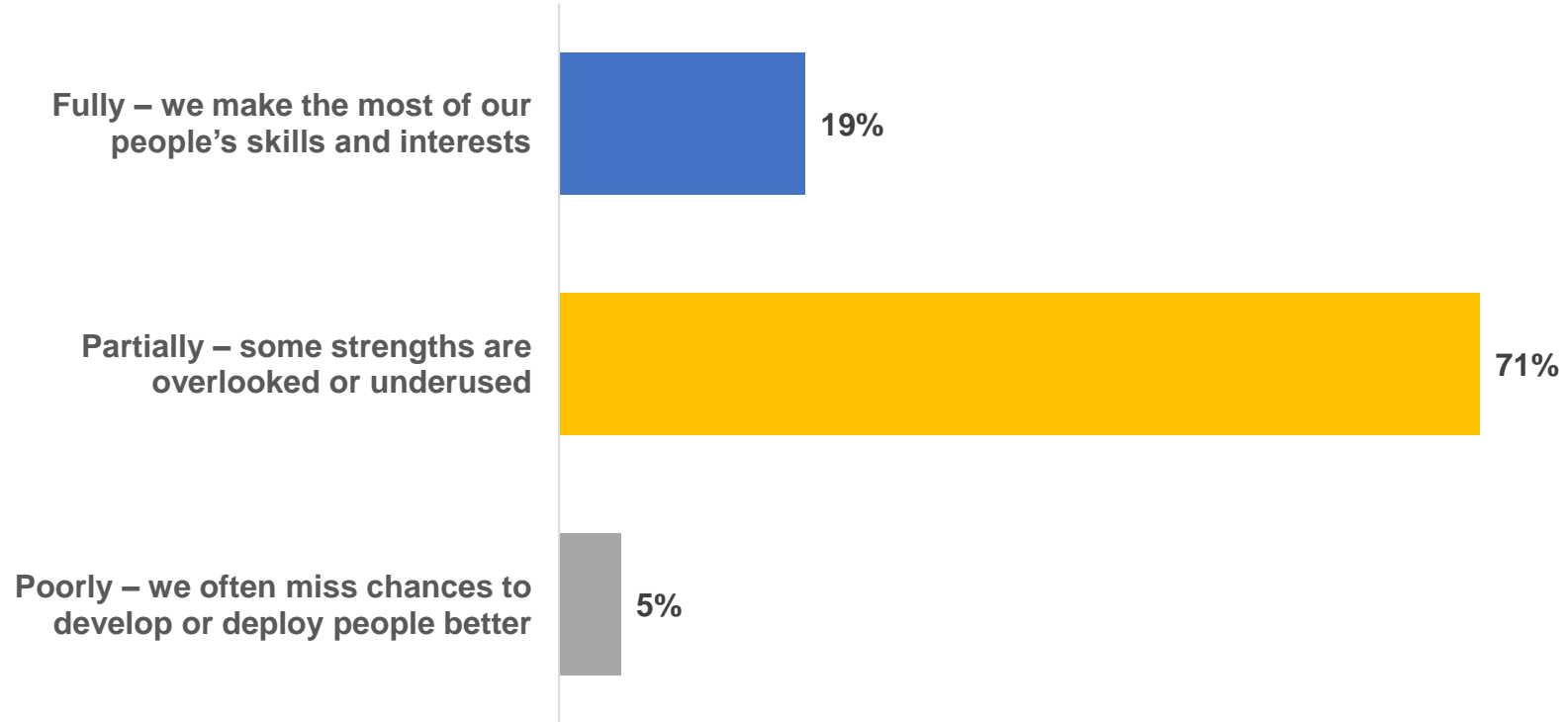
Q11. What is your firm's biggest challenge in retaining top performers?



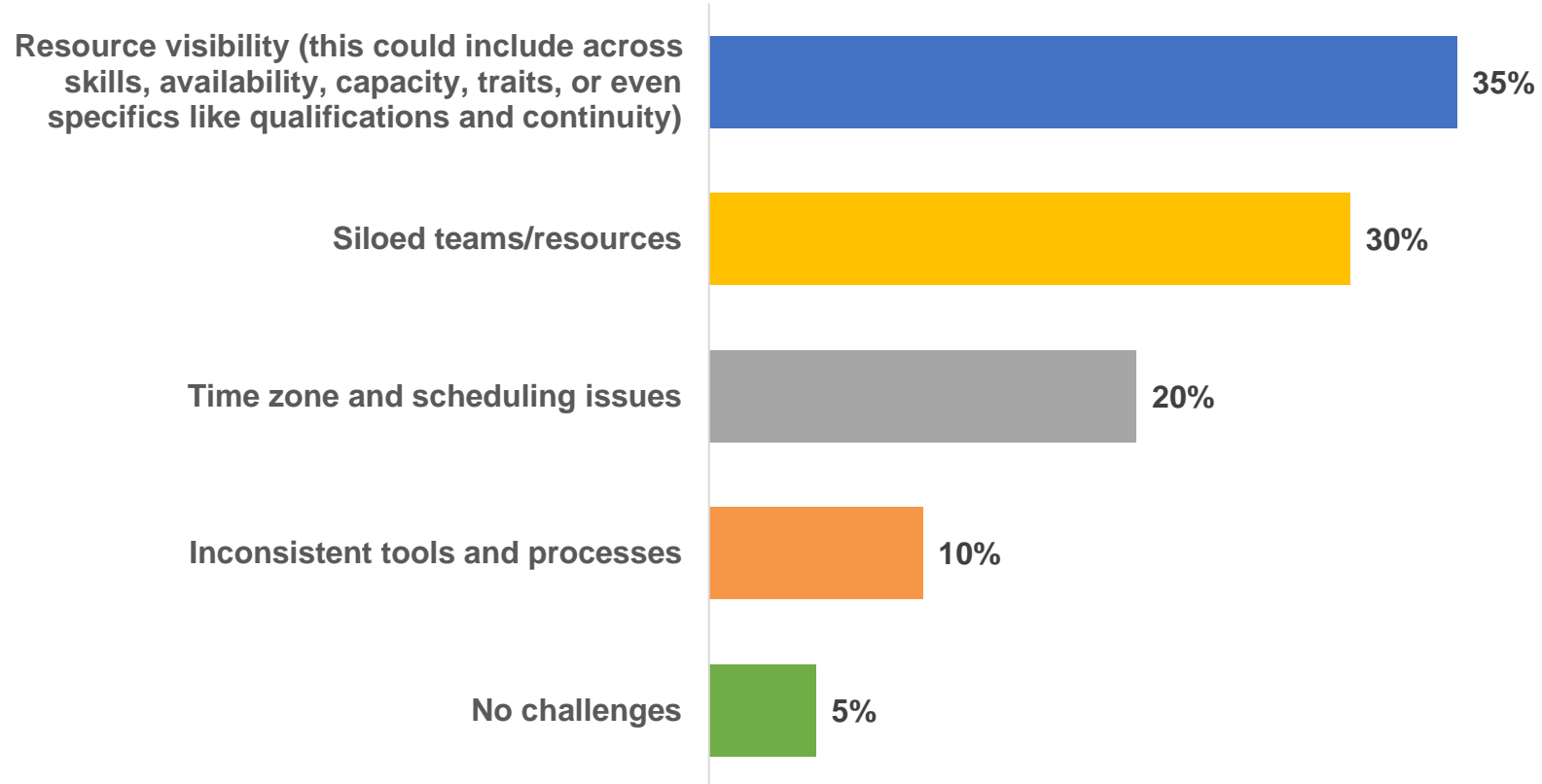
Other:

- Location

Q12. To what extent do you believe your firm's internal talent is being used to its full potential?



Q13. What's the biggest workforce operational challenge your firm faces when working across geographies?



Q14. Where do inefficiencies most often arise in your delivery model? (Select up to two)*

1	Demand forecasting	38%
2	Capacity planning	38%
3	Communication breakdowns	33%
4	Manual processes	29%
5	Scope changes or creep	24%
6	Inability to share resources	14%
7	Time to hire and onboard	10%
8	Project overruns	5%

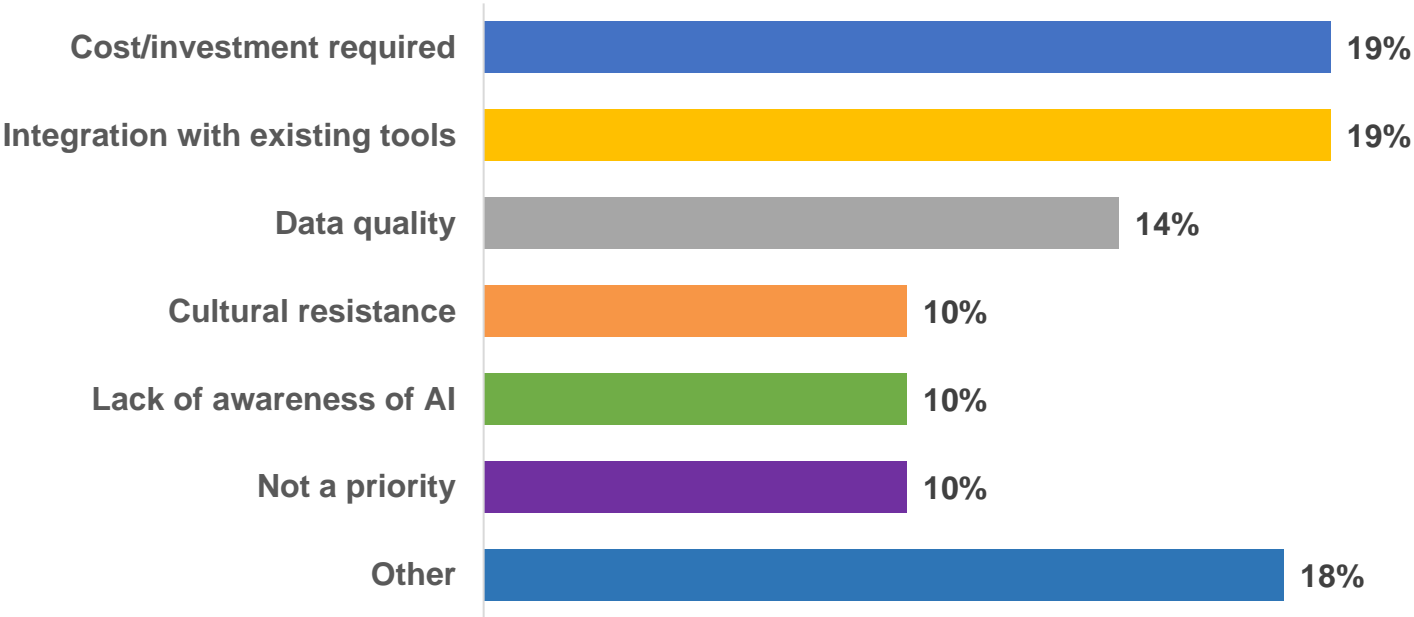
* Multiple responses allowed. Table depicts % of respondents that selected each option.

Q15. Which of the following areas is your firm prioritizing the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)? (Select all that apply)*

1	Data analytics	48%
2	Workforce optimization	29%
3	Collaboration platforms	29%
4	Innovation	29%
5	Communications	29%
6	None at the moment	24%
7	Client delivery tools	24%
8	Data entry	19%
9	Capacity planning	10%
10	Project/resource planning/scheduling	10%
11	Pricing	5%

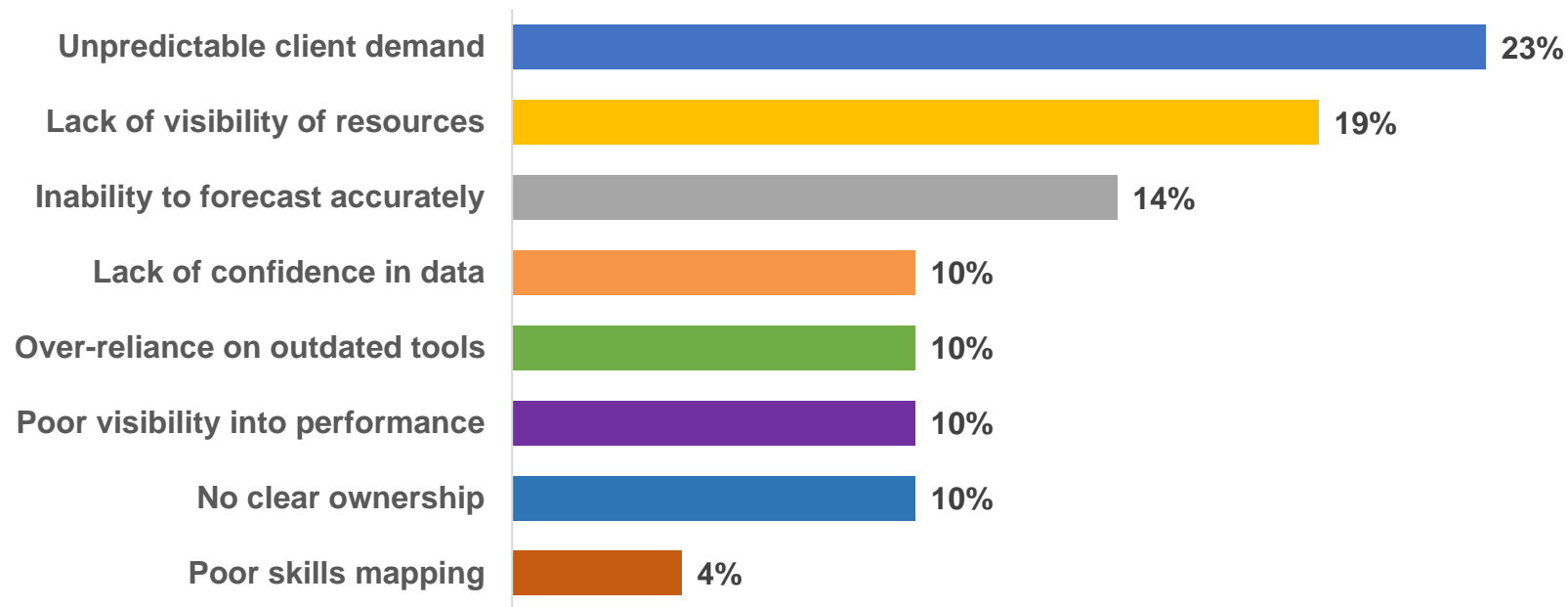
* Multiple responses allowed. Table depicts % of respondents that selected each option.

Q16. What's the biggest barrier to using AI more effectively in your operations?



- Other:**
- Concern with security of accessed data when using AI
 - Security Concerns
 - Development time and required expertise
 - Education and understanding of data privacy requirements

Q17. What prevents you from making strategic or long-term workforce planning decisions?

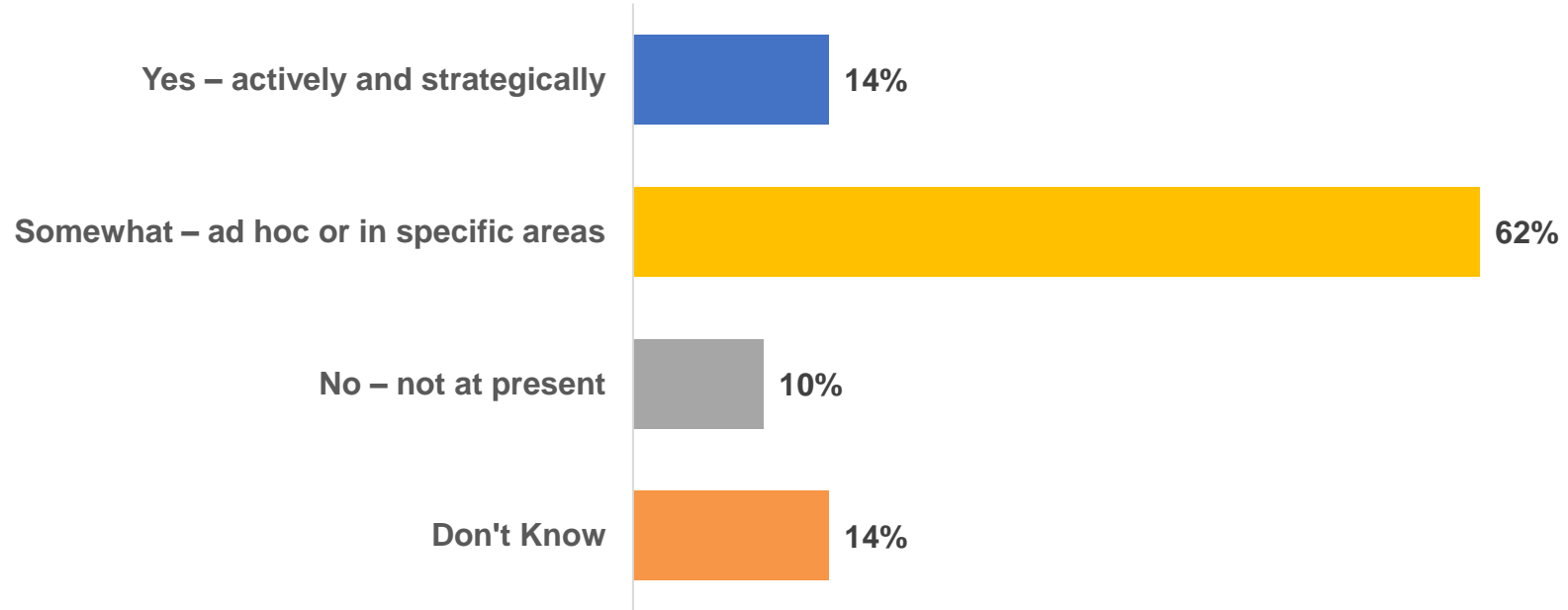


Q18. Which insights or data points do you wish your firm had clearer, real-time access to? (Select all that apply)*

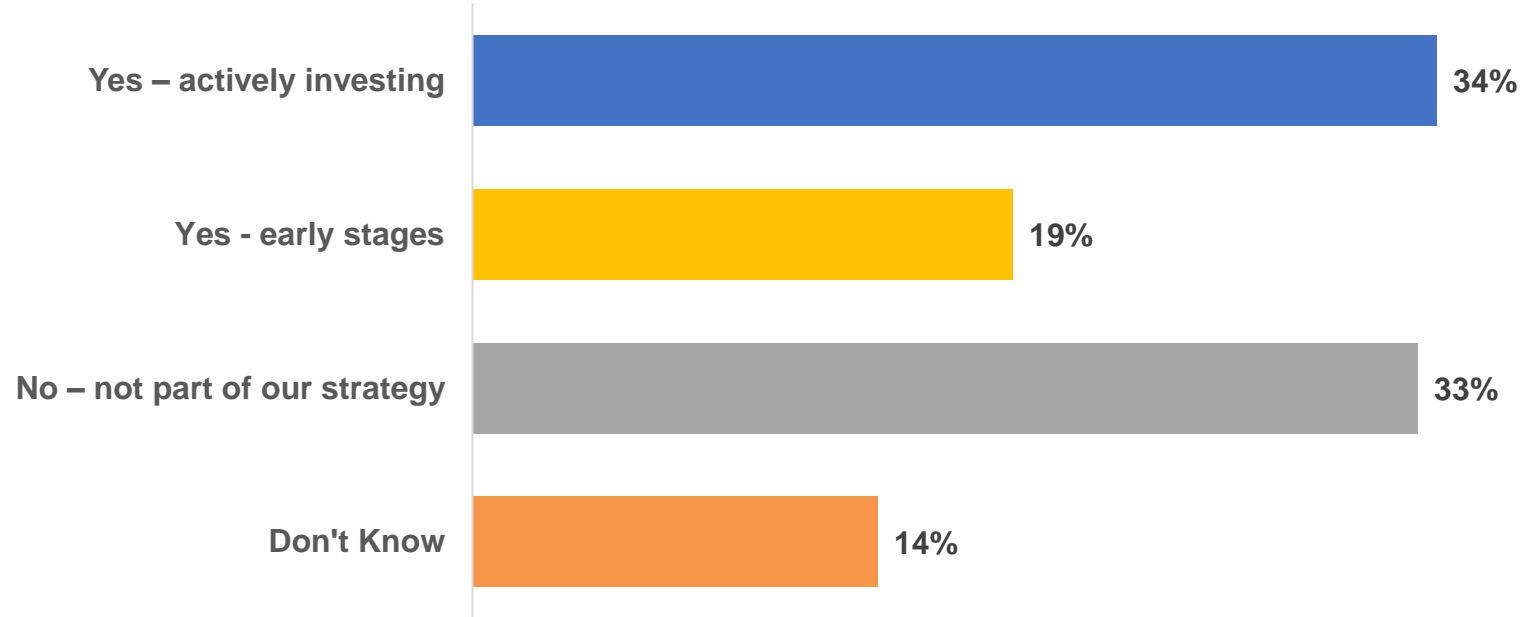
1	Capacity and availability of resources	67%
2	Talent utilization and allocation	52%
3	Client demand pipeline	43%
4	Live forecasting and scenario modeling	43%
5	Forecasted revenue vs. actuals	33%
6	Profitability by team, project or service line	24%
7	Historical performance and trend analysis	24%
8	Project margins and revenue at risk	19%
9	Project delivery status	19%

* Multiple responses allowed. Table depicts % of respondents that selected each option.

Q19. Do you currently invest in reskilling or internal mobility programs?



Q20. Is your firm currently expanding global delivery teams or offshoring capabilities?



Q21. If you could suggest one new insight or capability to improve your firm tomorrow, what would it be?

- Good tool to manage demand, supply, skills of resources
- Teams understanding fully the importance of their forecast data being reviewed/updated regularly. The upstream impact cannot be stressed enough for executive decision making
- Best practices to capture and manage capability information
- Skills Based Inventory usage
- Value calculation on projects completed
- Resource Management that takes place across P&L boundaries and is anchored by accurate skill information, availability data, and backlog; creating confidence, and therefore high engagement, across all intended users.
- Integration across the platforms we utilize
- Insight into roles (not people) that are open in each team. Bench reporting is very manual currently
- Allow for realistic lead times to customers for project starts

Key Observations

1

Strategic Priorities

Client service excellence (61.8%) and operational efficiency (57.8%) emerged as the top priorities for firms in the year ahead, signaling a shift toward quality delivery and streamlined operations.

2

Growth Constraints

The most cited barriers to growth were inefficient operational planning (40%) and market uncertainty (36%), underscoring the need for improved forecasting, agility, and cross-functional alignment.

3

Utilization Challenges

A significant portion of firms (61%) reported missing billable utilization targets in the past year. The leading causes were inaccurate forecasting (49.1%) and resourcing/capacity constraints (17%), pointing to gaps in planning and workforce optimization.

4

AI Usage

Firms are increasingly exploring AI to enhance service delivery, with top areas of adoption including data analytics (39%), client delivery tools (37%), and innovation (34%). However, integration with existing tools (25%) and cost/investment (16%) remain barriers.

5

A New Insight or Capability to Improve Your Firm Tomorrow

When asked to suggest a new insight or capability to improve their firm tomorrow, respondents indicated that they are looking for better technology, cleaner and more actionable data, enhanced forecasting, skills-based resource management, and stronger organizational alignment—all aimed at driving smarter, faster, and more strategic decisions across their firm.

