

EARLY CAREERS OF YOUNG GRADUATES FROM THE GRANDES ÉCOLES

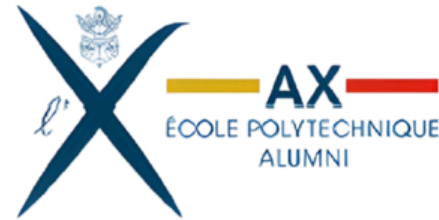
Expectations, ambitions and
commitments
2026

2nd edition of the study conducted by the  **EDHEC** | **NewGen Talent
Centre**
with the member associations of the G16 Careers

G16
CAREERS

THE ASSOCIATIONS OF G16

CAREERS



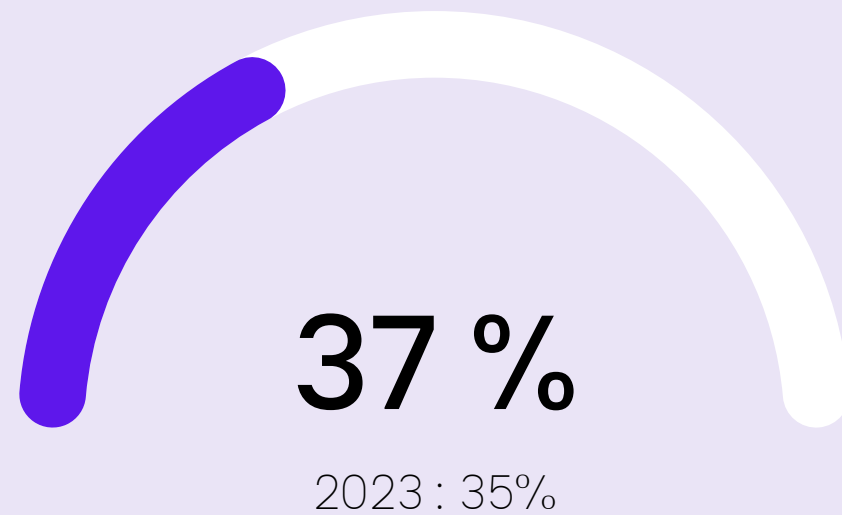
CONTEXT

In a job market disrupted by economic, geopolitical and technological uncertainties, have young graduates revised their professional aspirations?

In 2023, the first edition of this survey on early career paths followed the health and climate crises and the incentives to “change course“ from certain graduation ceremonies. It highlighted an evolution in professional ambitions.

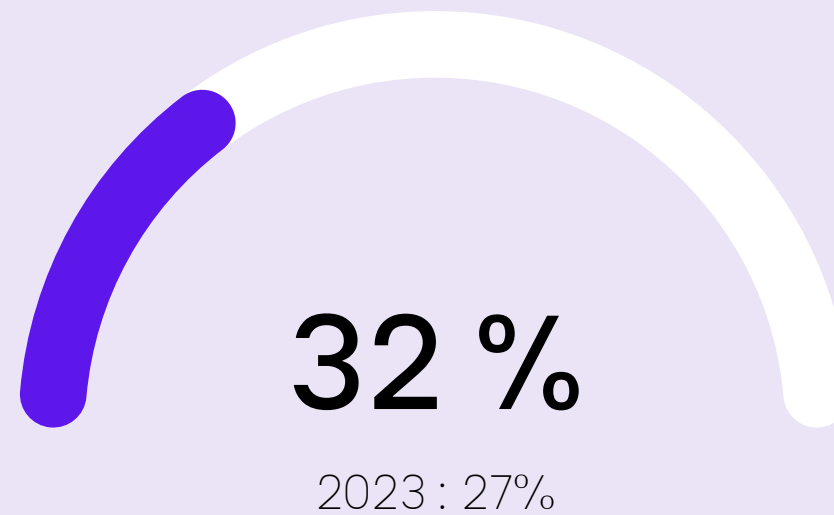
In this second edition, alumni associations wanted to examine how young people’s aspirations, expectations, and satisfaction with their jobs and management have evolved. Was their training aligned with their professional needs? Does their work fulfill them professionally and personally?

VARIETY AND BALANCE OF YOUNG GRADUATES' PROFESSIONAL AMBITIONS



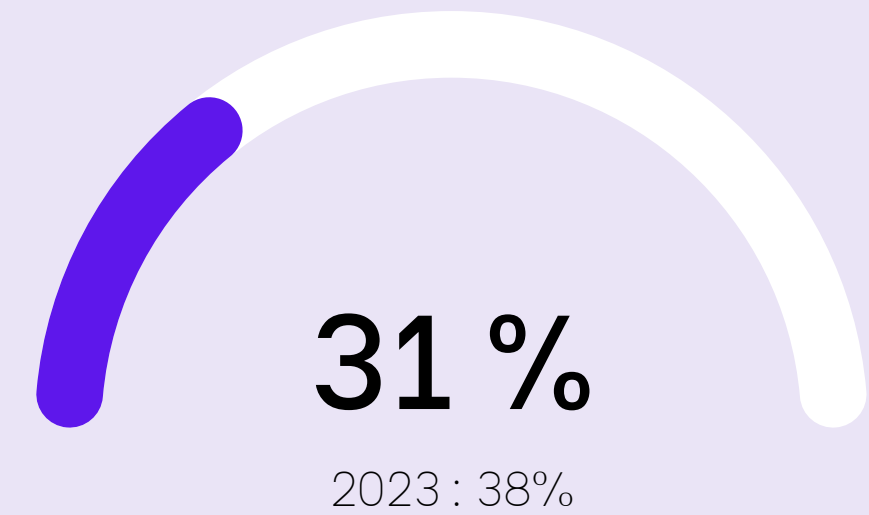
are focused on the desire to innovate, motivated by the challenge, freedom of action, autonomy in missions and project management.

“Intra-entrepreneur” profile



are focused on the ambitious development of their career, motivated by the prospect of a leadership position, hierarchical responsibility, and attractive remuneration.

“Competitor” profile



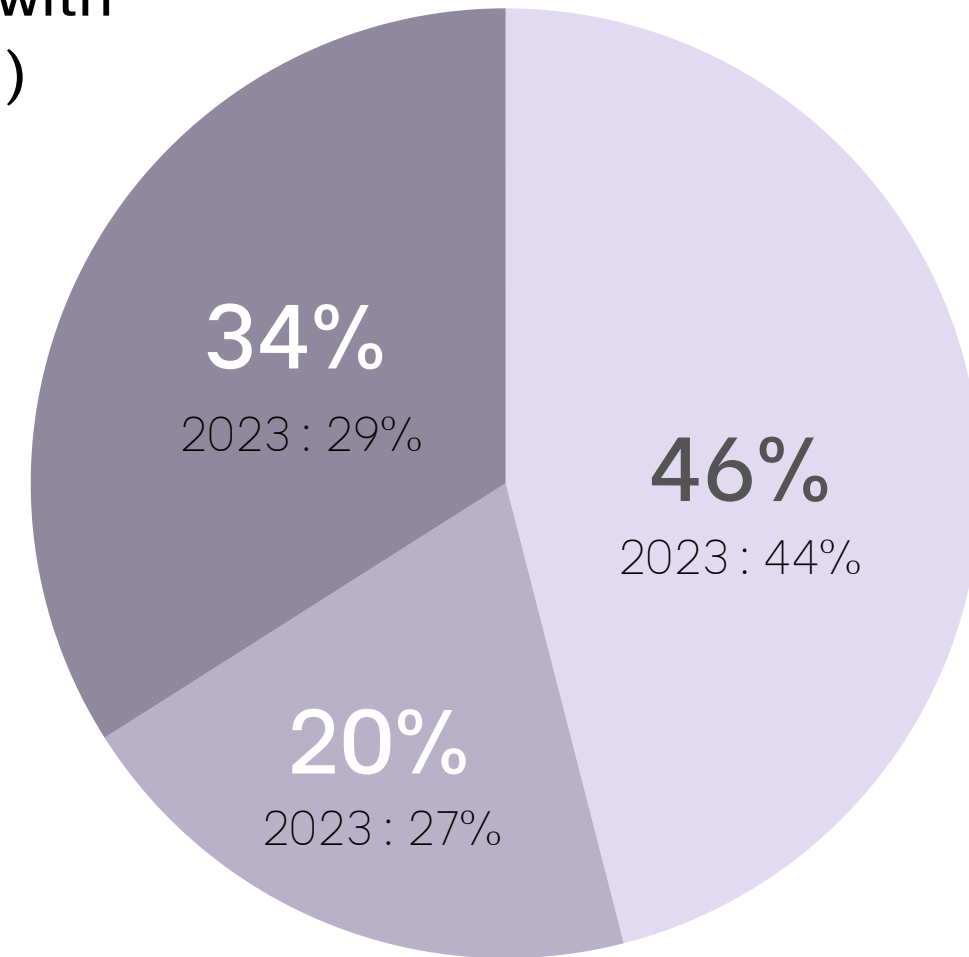
are focused on global issues, motivated by the general interest, the company's culture and values, and the usefulness of the mission.

“Committed” profile

Q: “When it comes to your professional ambition, which profile do you feel closest to?” Distribution of respondents according to the first profile they identify with

46% OF YOUNG GRADUATES WILL BE PRIMARILY MOTIVATED BY DEVELOPING EXPERTISE FOR THEIR CAREER

Managing a team (with hierarchical link)

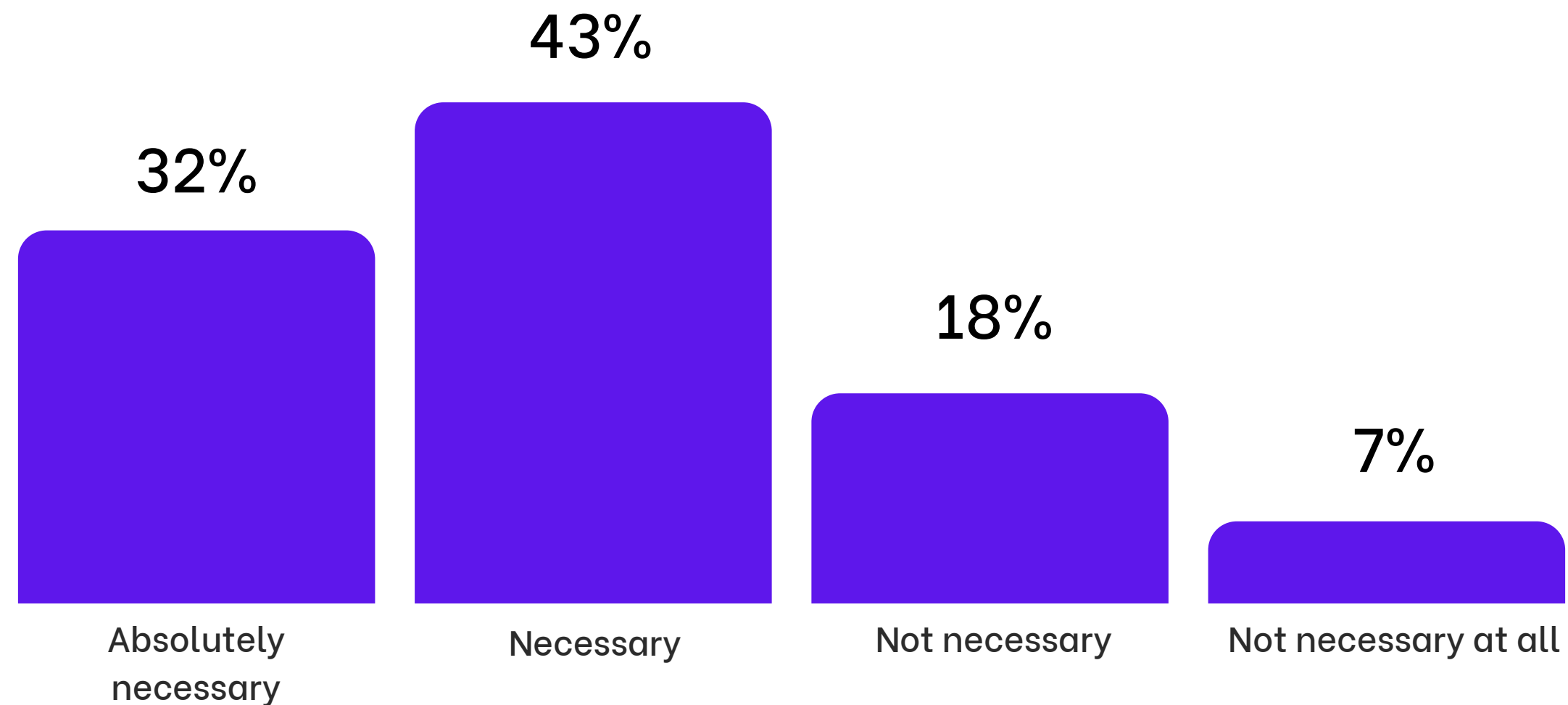


Developing expertise

Leading a team (networked work, without hierarchical links)

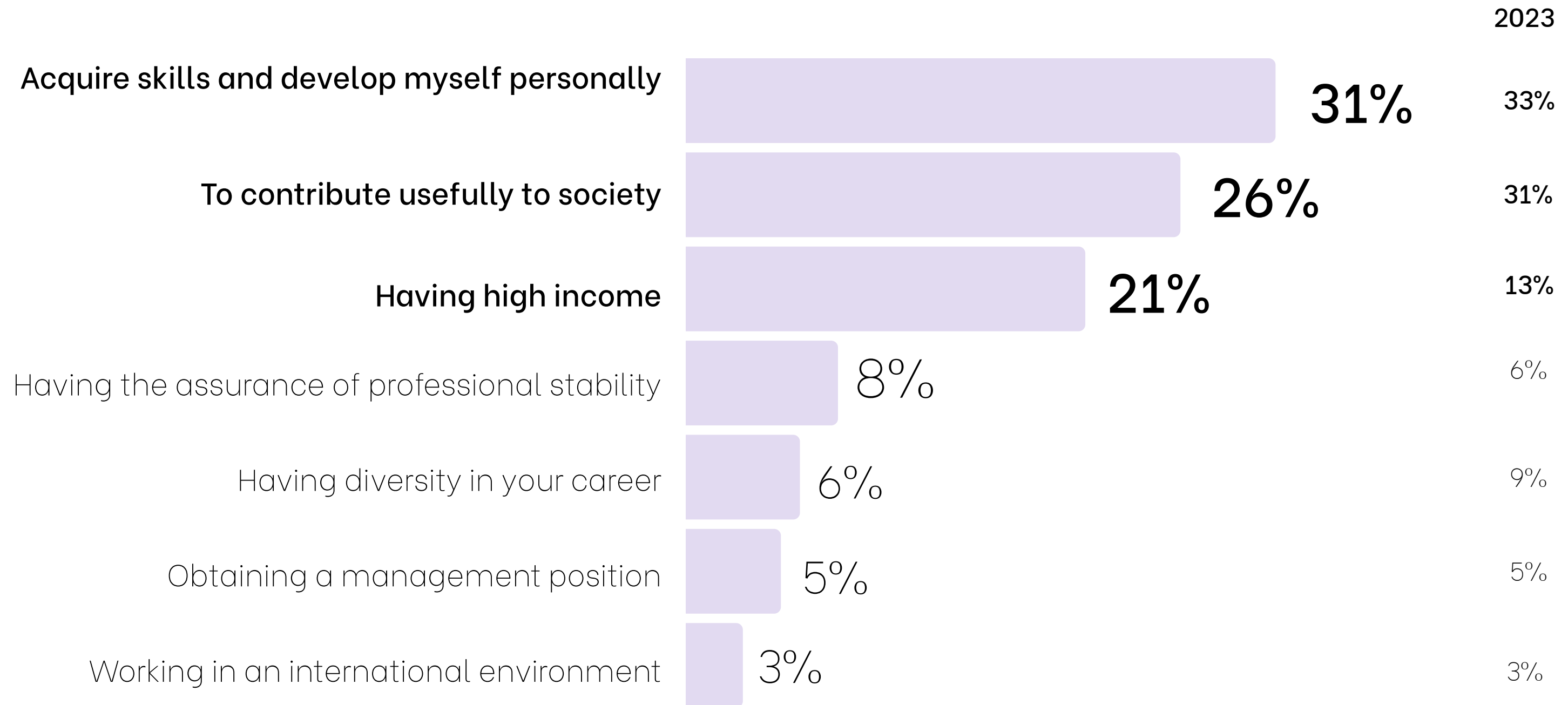
Q: “For your career, what will you be primarily motivated by?”

BUT TO TAKE ON A MANAGEMENT POSITION, 75% OF RECENT GRADUATES CONSIDER TRAINING NECESSARY.



Q: “Do you consider management training a necessary condition before accepting a management position?”

THE CAREER GOALS OF YOUNG GRADUATES: TO GROW, CONTRIBUTE, AND EARN HIGH INCOME



Q: “Regarding your aspirations for your professional life, please rank the following items from 1 to 7 in order of importance (1 being the most important)” (% of respondents who cited the item in 1st position)

SELECTION OF VERBATIM QUOTES

Q: “What are your aspirations for your professional life?”

“A meaningful profession that works to improve living conditions for all and to enhance environmental awareness in our daily lives.” Engineer profile

“Always learning, surrounding myself with inspiring people, being financially independent to manage my schedule as I wish.” Hybrid profile

“In the medium term, to climb the ranks within my rapidly growing company. In the long term, to hold a management position.” Engineer profile

“Finding a job I enjoy, in a company whose values I share, having a meaningful mission, feeling useful, and having a good work–life balance.” Manager profile

“To become an expert in my field.” Engineering profile

“Learning and growing within a supportive and caring team.” Manager profile

“A stable job in a fulfilling professional environment (financially, socially, intellectually, and in line with my values).” Engineer profile

“I want to create jobs, and especially jobs that have value and impact in the humanitarian field.” Manager profile

**GOAL ACHIEVED:
THE FIRST JOB
ALLOWS YOU TO
CONTINUE LEARNING**

Achieving objectives in their current job

Acquire skills and develop personally

2023



81 %

80%

To contribute usefully to society



50 %

50%

Having high income



42 %

41%

Having the assurance of professional stability



66 %

71%

Having diversity in one's career



64 %

68%

Obtaining a management position



25 %

32%

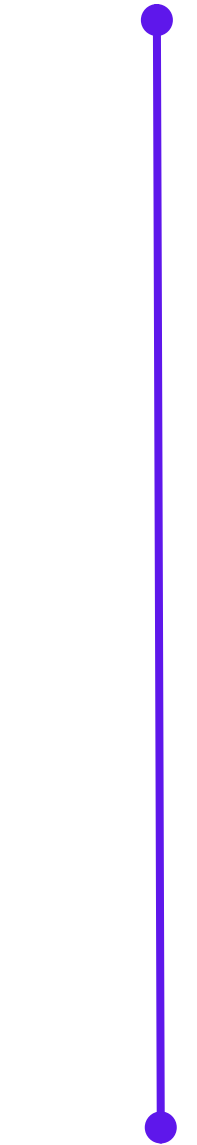
Working in an international environment



54 %

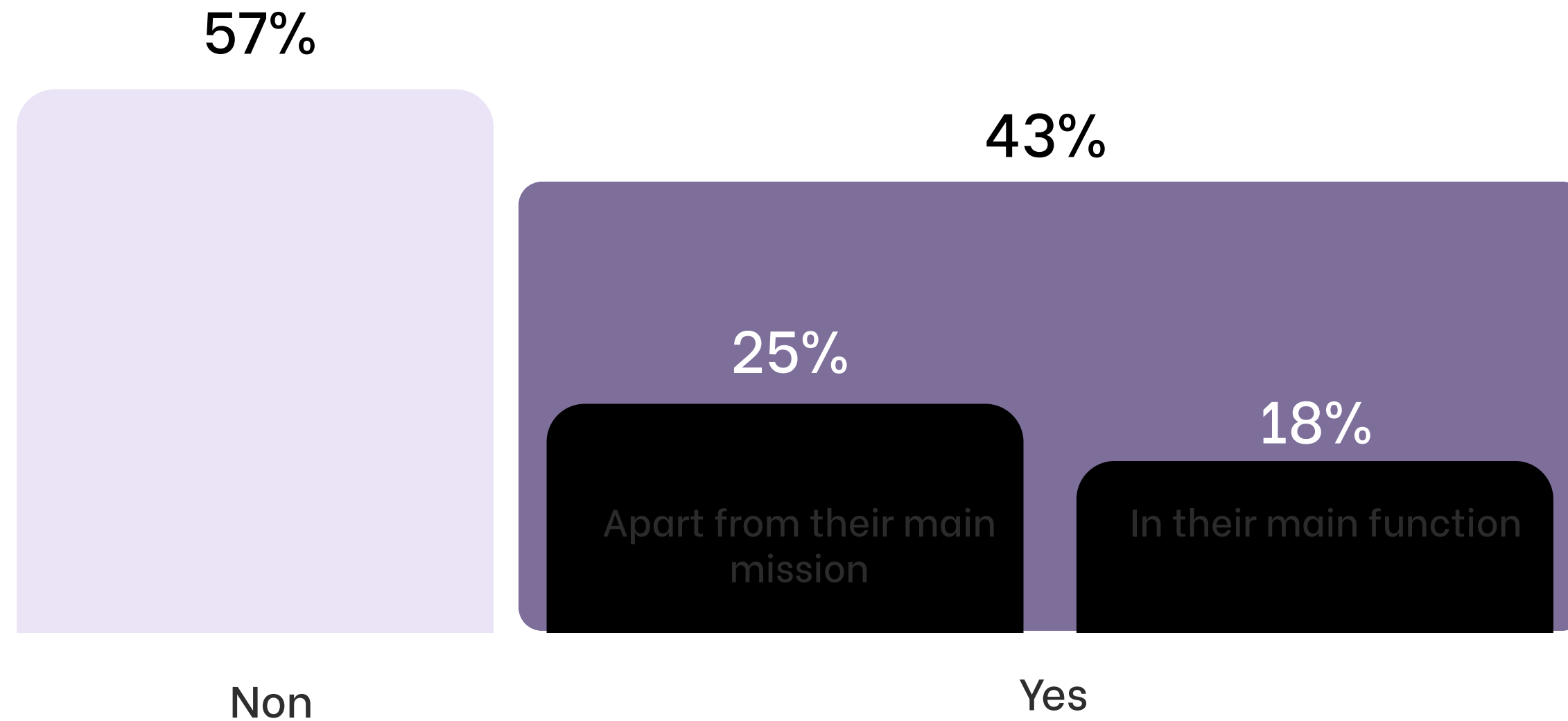
55%

Most
important
objective



Objective
- important

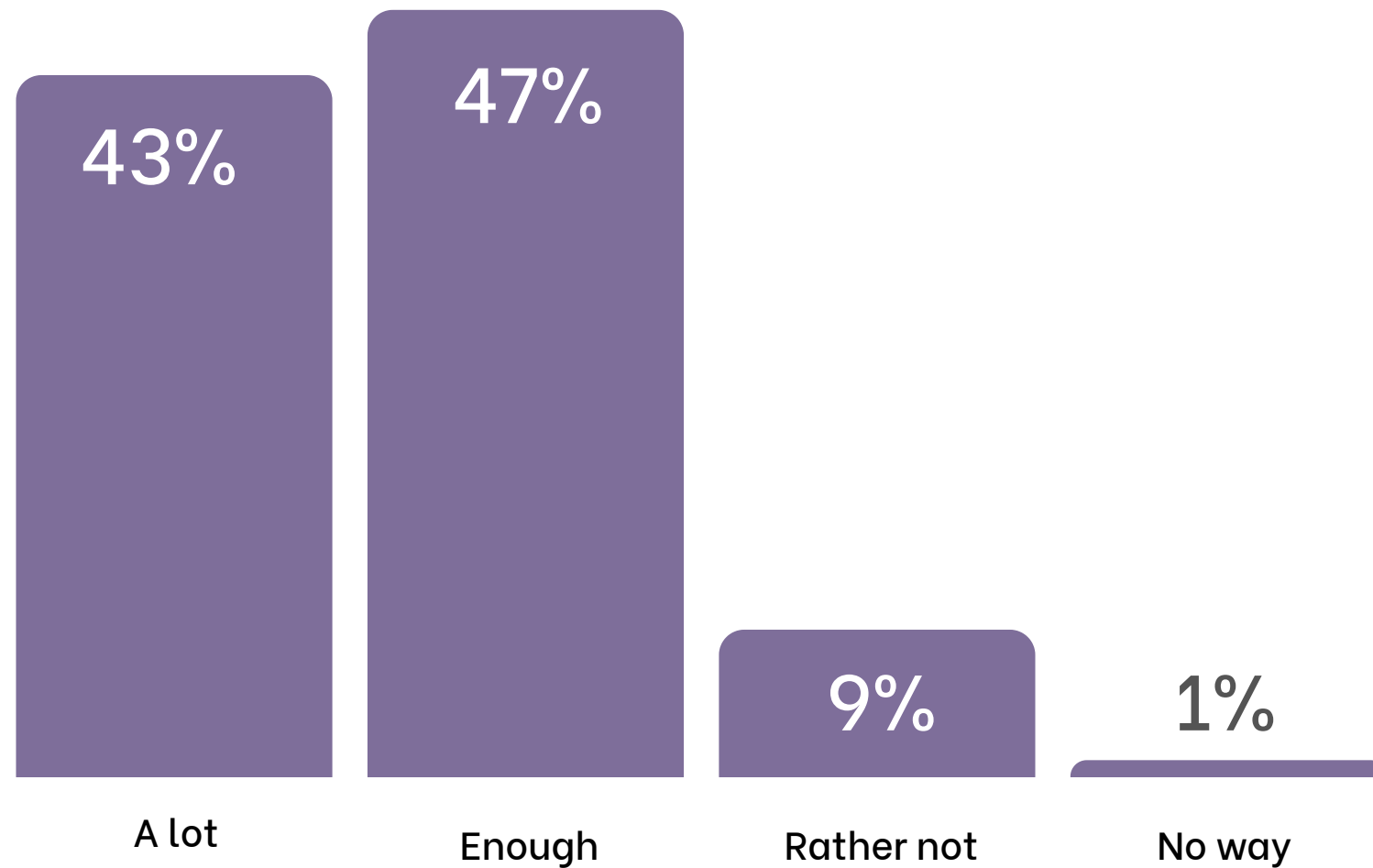
CSR/ESG ISSUES ARE ALREADY PRESENT IN 43% OF MISSIONS



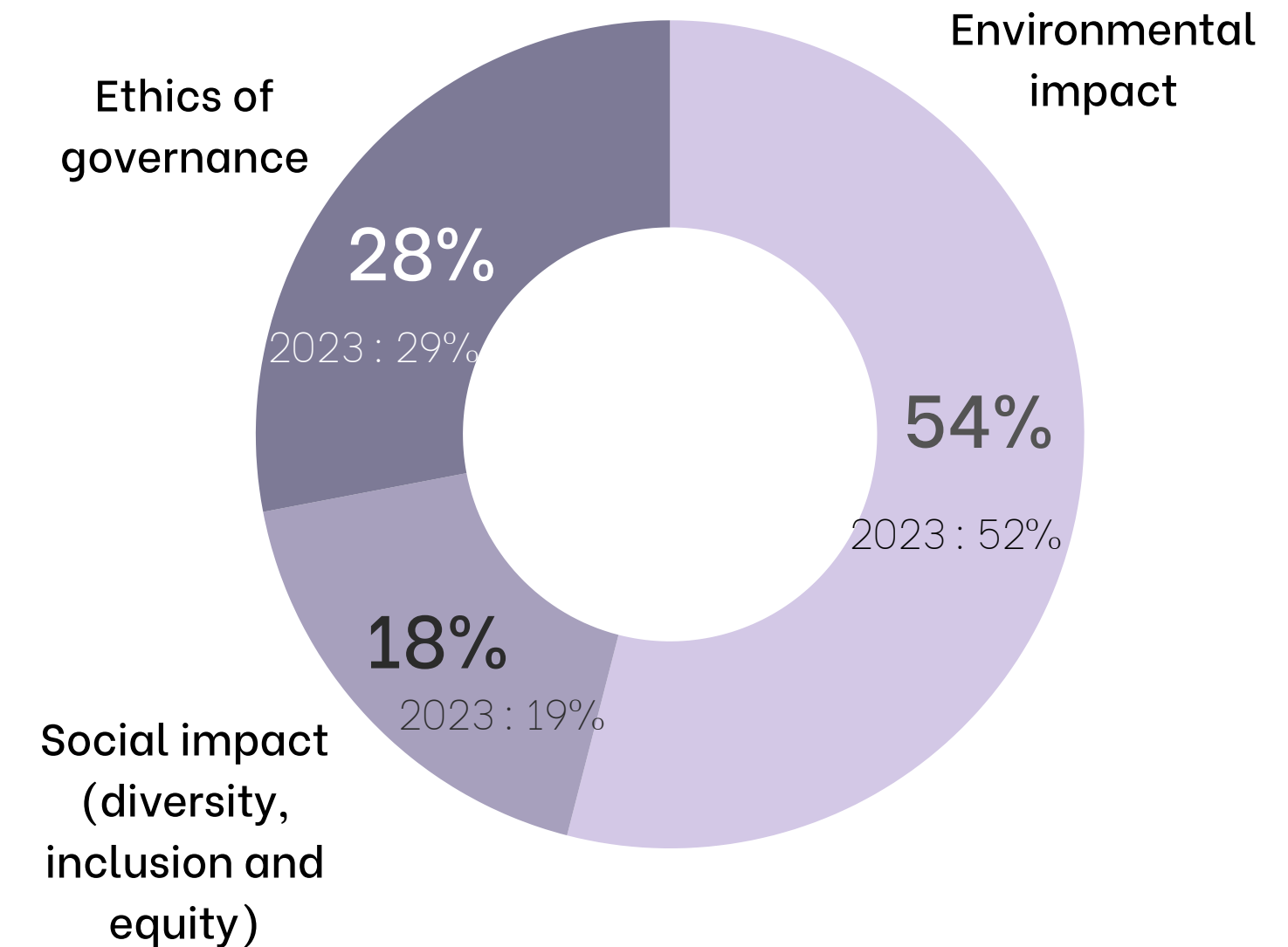
Q: “Are CSR/ESG issues part of your responsibilities?”

90% OF YOUNG GRADUATES BELIEVE THAT COMPANIES NEED TO TRANSFORM THEMSELVES

Q: “Do you think companies need to transform?”



Q: “Of these three business transformations, which one are you most concerned about?” (% of respondents who cited this item first)



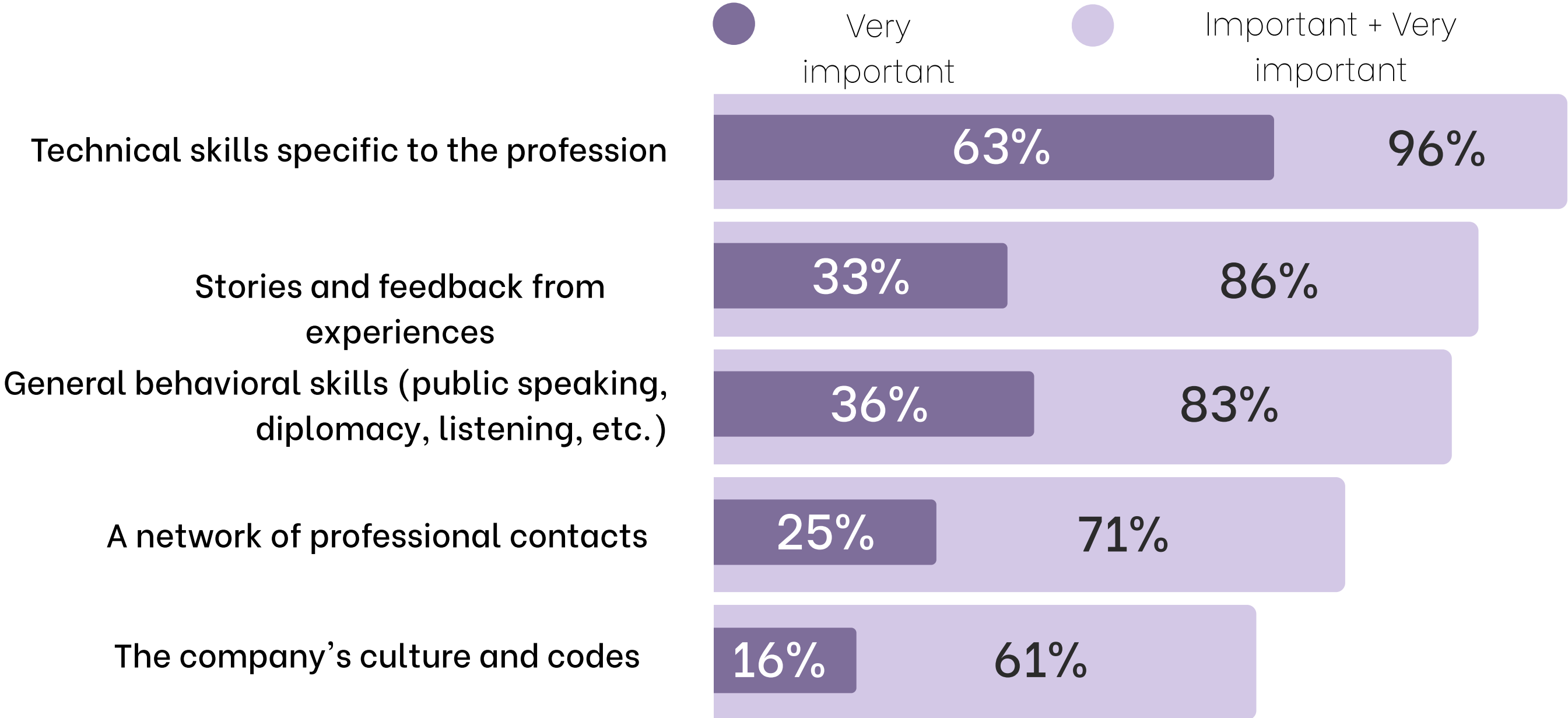
LISTENING, COMMUNICATION, AND EMPATHY: THREE CORE SKILLS FOR PRACTICING ONE’S PROFESSION EFFECTIVELY.

Q: “What behavioral skills do you consider most important to develop in order to practice your profession in an informed and responsible manner?”



INTERGENERATIONAL COLLABORATION IN THE SERVICE OF SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYABILITY

Q: “In your first jobs, what would you like to learn from experienced colleagues?”



AI, A TRANSFORMER OF JOBS AND A PRODUCTIVITY ASSET

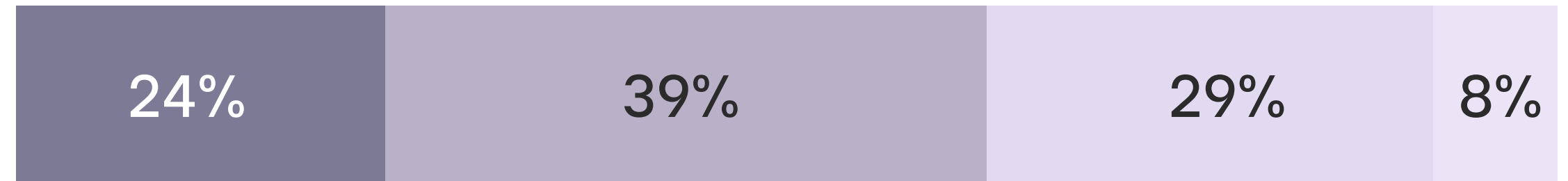
Q: “Do you think that:“

● Quite ● Instead ● Rather not ● No way

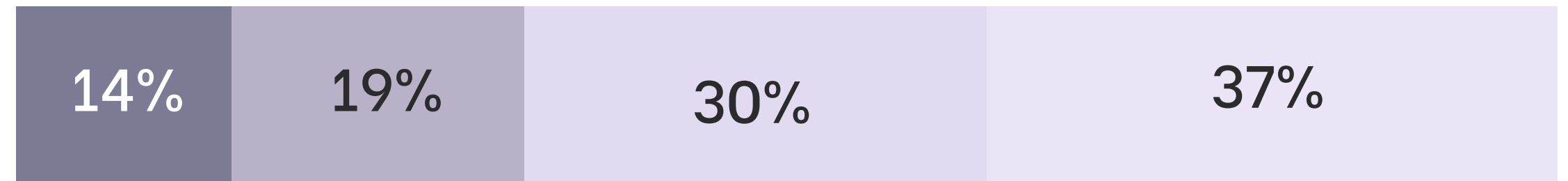
Using AI will allow you to increase your productivity in your (future) profession



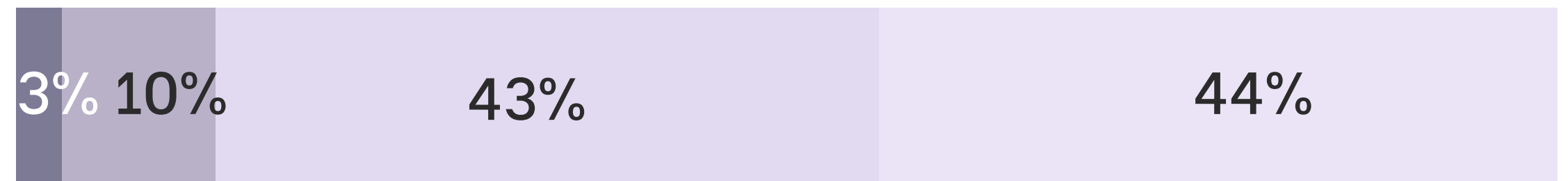
AI will fundamentally change the way you do your (future) job



You received sufficient training in AI during your studies.

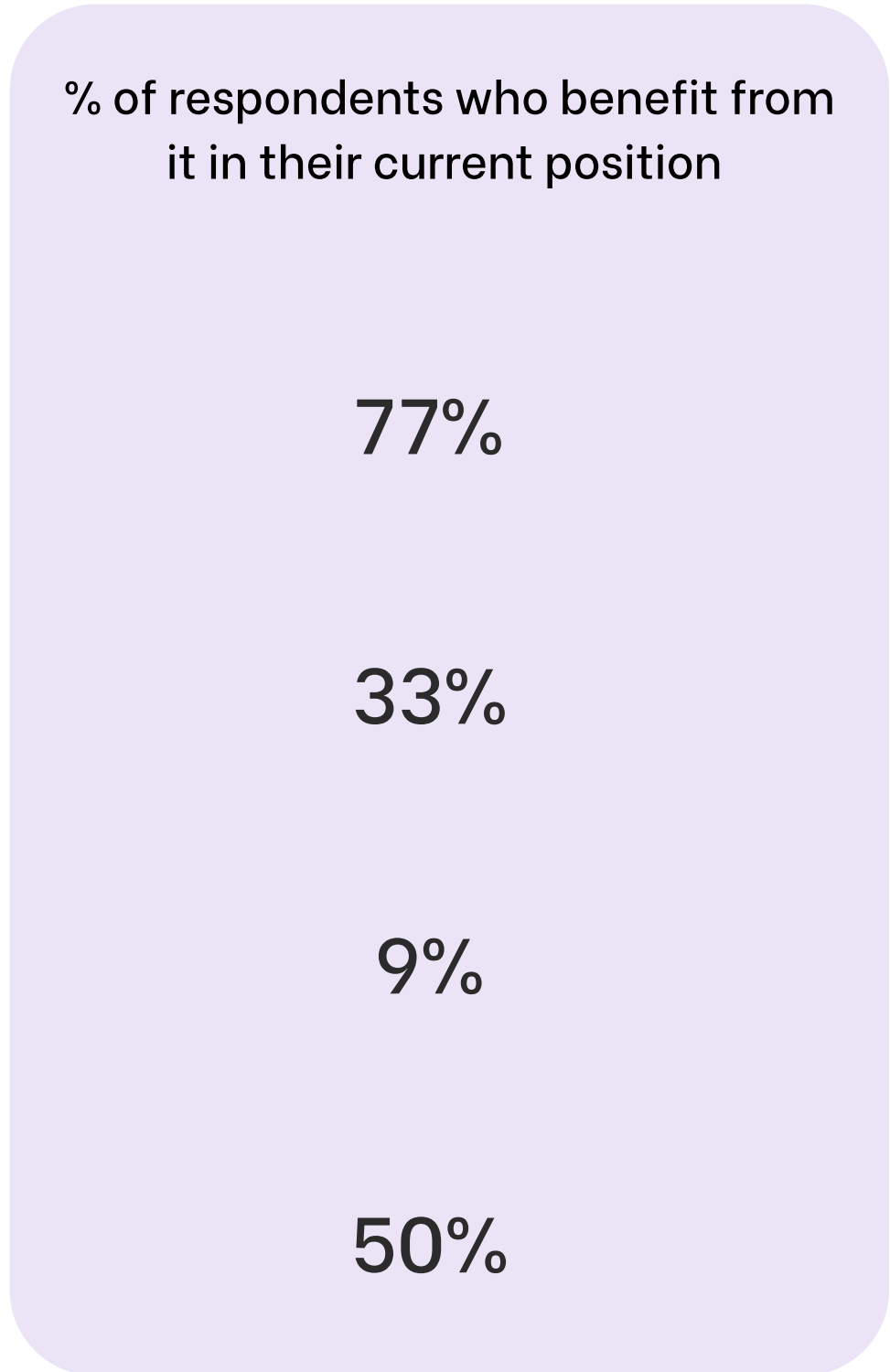
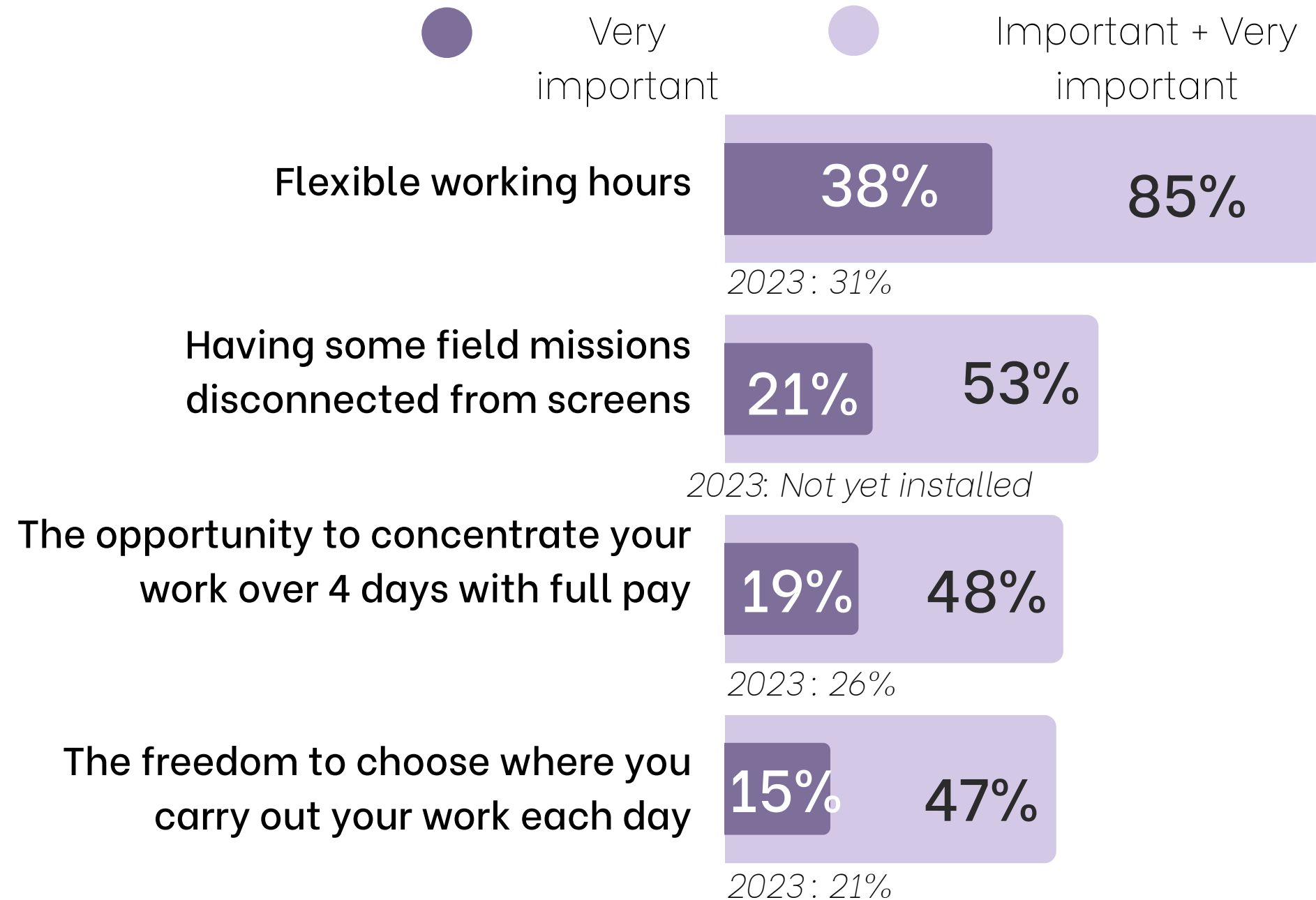


Your (future) job may become obsolete in the coming years



PREFERRED WORK PRACTICES: FLEXIBLE HOURS AND FIELD ASSIGNMENTS

Q: “How important do you consider each of these work practices?”



TELEWORKING, A WELL-ESTABLISHED PRACTICE

88%

YOUNG GRADUATES BENEFIT FROM THE POSSIBILITY OF WORKING REMOTELY

Q: “How many days per month can you work remotely?”



54%

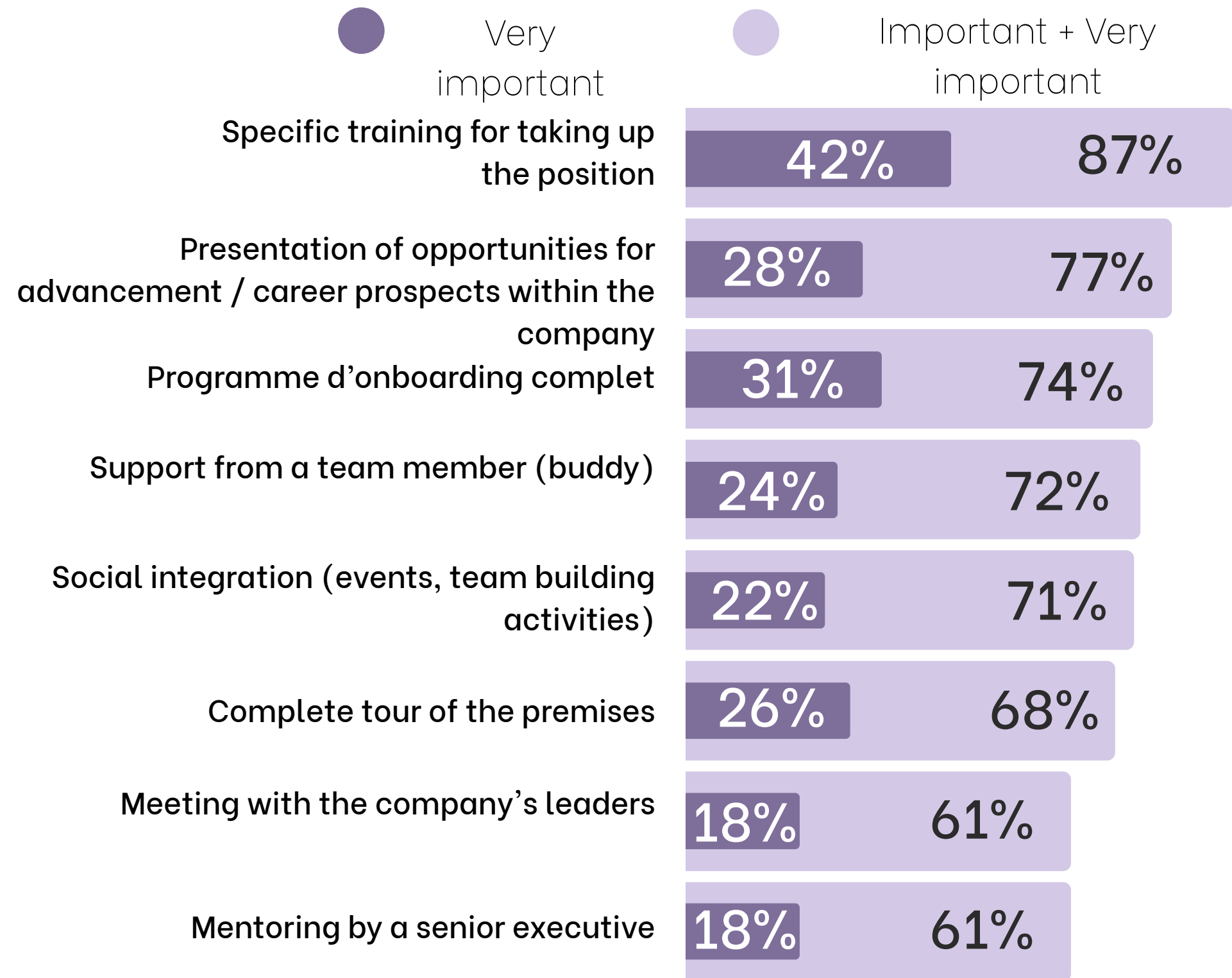
YOUNG GRADUATES WOULD REFUSE A JOB OFFER IF REMOTE WORK IS NOT POSSIBLE

58%

New generations feel they have benefited from a specific onboarding and integration program upon starting their new positions.

2023 : 51%

Q: “Do you now have any specific expectations regarding the integration process?”



THEIR EXPECTATIONS OF THEIR MANAGER WERE VERY WELL MET.

Q: “Do you think your current manager meets these criteria?” % Yes



SELECTION OF VERBATIM QUOTES

**Q: “What, in your opinion,
are the characteristics of
the ideal manager?”**

“A good listener who helps their teams grow and has a strategic vision of the challenges.” Engineer profile

“Available, supportive of his teams, clear in his direction, open to discussion, visionary.” Engineer profile

“He must encourage creativity and autonomy, while remaining available to guide and support.” Manager profile

“Transparency about mistakes, no room for unspoken issues, allows for mistakes at the outset.” Engineer profile

“Confident, no micromanagement, supportive of management.” Engineer profile

“Empowering and exposing his team to the rest of the company.” Engineer profile

“Motivation, exemplary conduct, competence, charisma.” Engineer profile

THEIR COMMITMENT WAS FUELED BY THE APPEAL OF AMBITIOUS MISSIONS.

Q: “How important are each of these elements to you in strengthening your commitment to work?”

1

The value of the assigned missions

2

An ambitious/challenging job

3

Freedom of action and innovation

4

Aligning his values with those of the company

5

The work environment and the collective adventure

Option chosen in 1st position out of 7 criteria

SELECTION OF VERBATIM QUOTES

Q: “What motivates you to be committed to your work today?”

“The prospect of learning new things, and the opportunity for rapid advancement.” Manager profile

“A vision of social utility, working with people who share the same personal values.” Engineer profile

“The feeling of being useful to the team, the recognition of my work, and the autonomy I’m given on the tasks I’m responsible for.” Engineer profile

“Excellent working conditions and a manager who listens and adapts to our needs, with great attention paid to work–life balance.” Engineer profile

“Friendly relationships with colleagues, long-term career advancement, attractive salary.” Manager profile

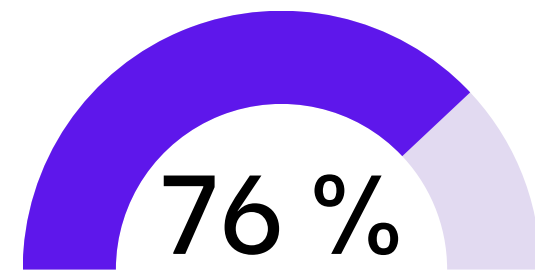
“Having a stimulating and challenging job, with good relationships with colleagues. Believing in the team’s or even the company’s mission/objective is also a big plus.” Engineer profile

“Meaning, work atmosphere, and fair compensation versus cost of living.” Manager profile

“I commit when I clearly understand the objectives, when I see how my work contributes to the results, and when I have the space to propose ideas and put them into action.” – Manager Profile

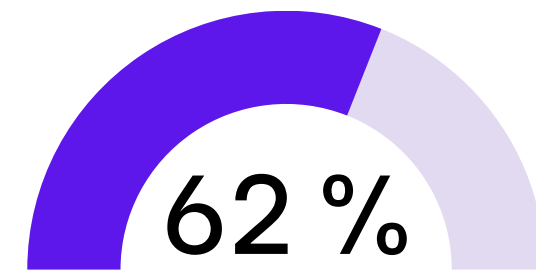
“The prospect of constant growth (salary and responsibilities) and the daily challenge.” Engineer profile

THE COMPANY'S PURPOSE STILL MATTERS



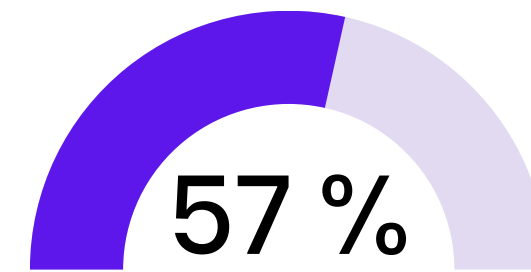
2023 : 80%

know “fairly precisely” or “very precisely” the reason for their company’s existence



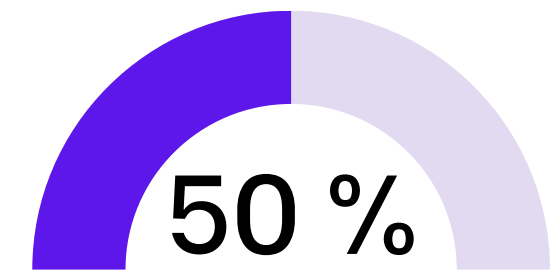
2023 : 71%

say that the company’s purpose could “greatly” or “totally” motivate them to join this company.



2023 : 67%

say that the company’s purpose could be “very much” or “totally” the driving force behind their engagement in the company



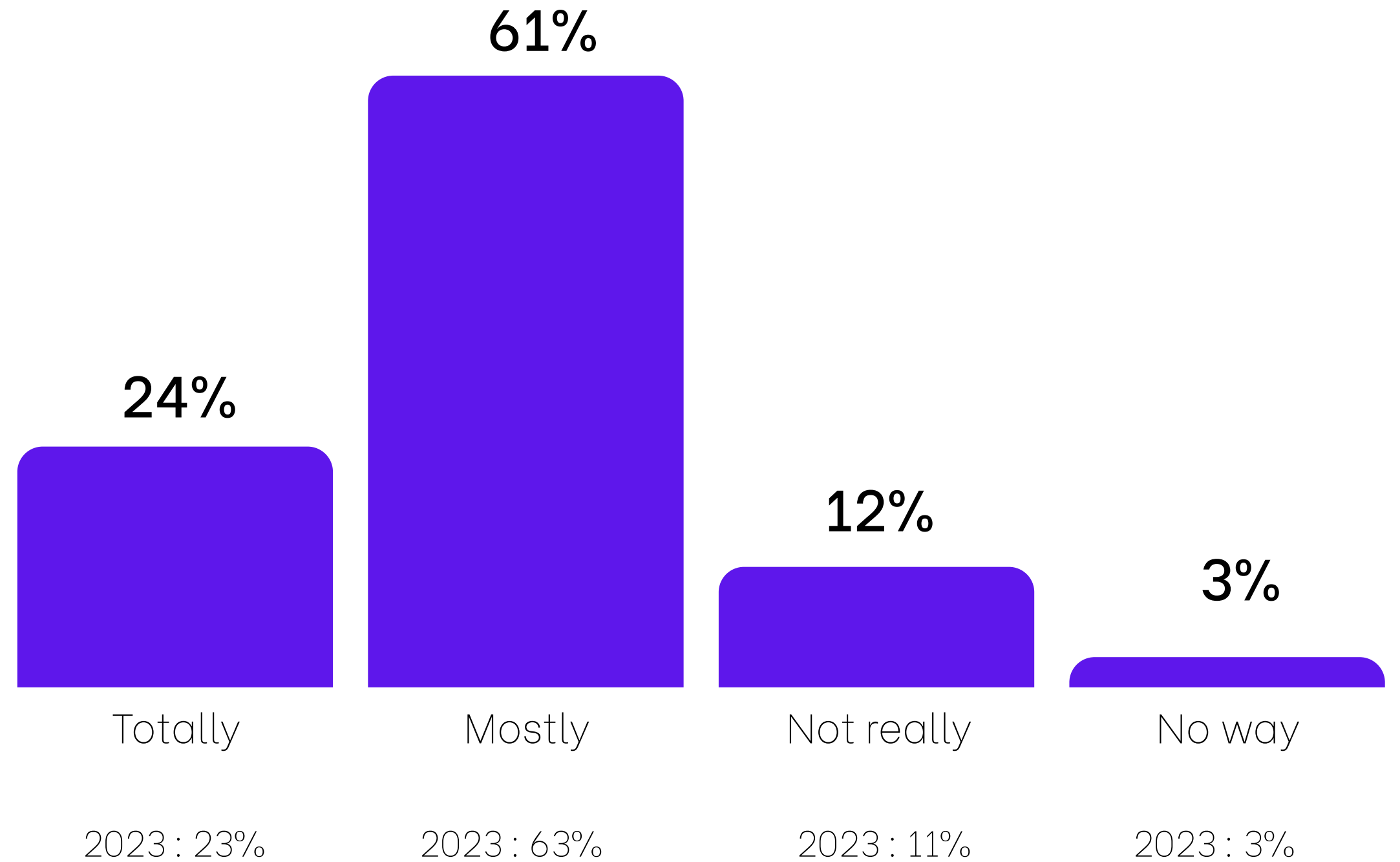
2023 : 55%

would find it appealing if part of their remuneration were linked to achieving the company’s non-financial objectives.

85% OF NEW GENERATIONS BELIEVE THAT THEIR JOB HAS ALLOWED THEM TO ACHIEVE PROFESSIONAL FULFILLMENT.

(Cumulative “Mostly” or “Totally”).

Q: “Overall, does your job (last job) allow (did it allow) you to achieve professional fulfillment?”



SELECTION OF VERBATIM QUOTES

**Q: “What allows you to
achieve professional
fulfillment today?”**

“What fulfills me professionally is learning, progressing, and feeling that I bring real value.” Engineer profile

“Working on impactful projects, continuous learning, and growing within a stimulating and supportive team where trust and autonomy are valued.” Manager profile

“Free management of my time, the ability to take initiative to steer my mission in the direction I want.” Engineer profile

“Recognition from my managers and peers, [...], an attractive salary, the prestige of the [legal] profession.” Manager profile

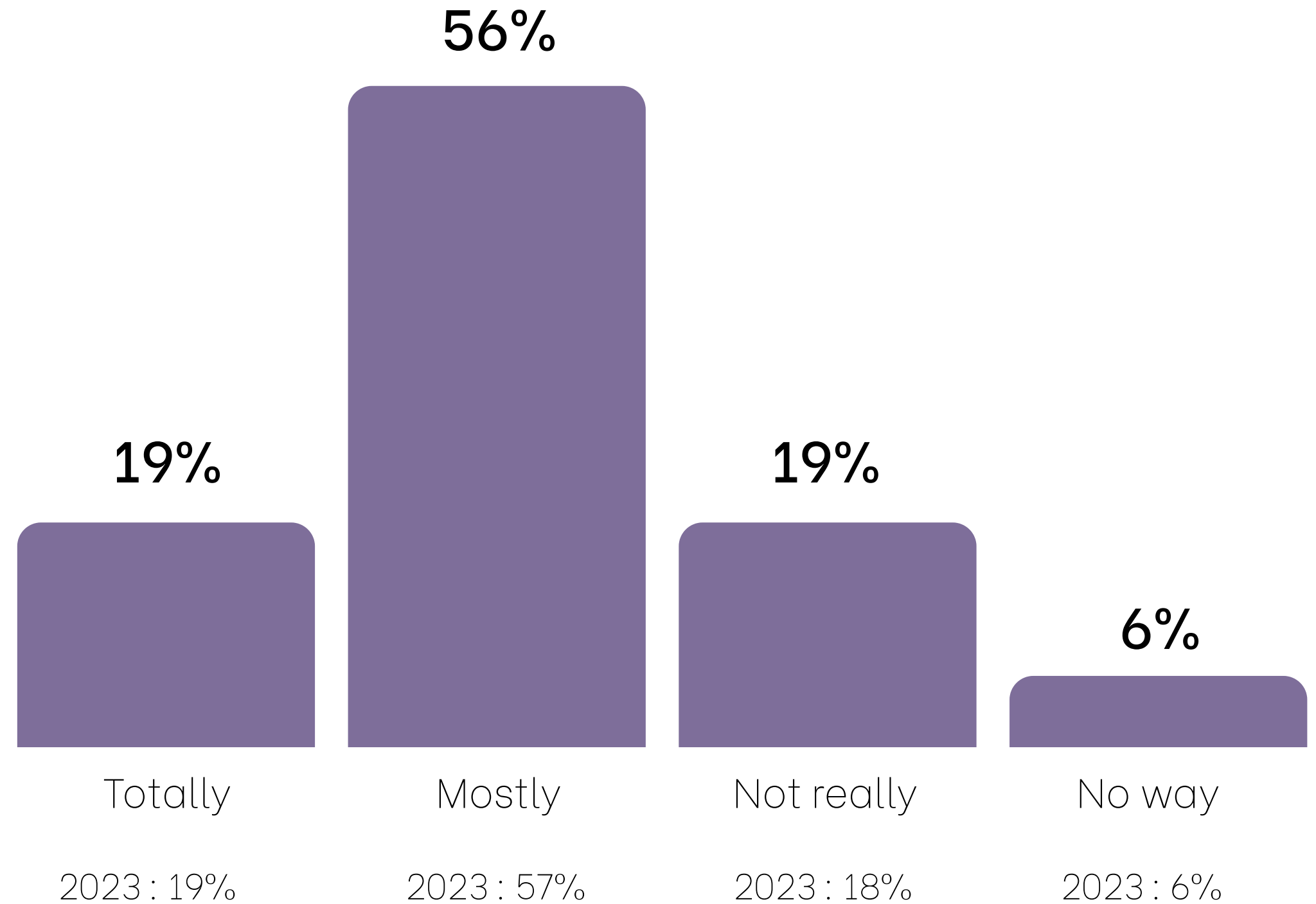
“The diversity of missions and stakeholders requires integrating a great deal of information, mastering a variety of subjects, and adopting diverse approaches.” Engineer profile

“The flexibility of remote work allows me to work on my personal projects in parallel.” Manager profile

75% OF YOUNGER GENERATIONS BELIEVE THAT THEIR JOB HAS ALLOWED THEM TO FLOURISH PERSONALLY

(Cumulative “Mostly” or “Total”)

Q: “Overall, does your job (last job) allow (did it allow) you to flourish personally?”



SELECTION OF VERBATIM QUOTES

Q: “Compared to the vision you had of the professional world when you were studying, what are the main discrepancies you experience now that you are employed?”

“I thought the majority of the work time was dedicated to technical matters. In reality, a lot of time is spent managing the human element.” Engineer profile

“I think I underestimated the importance of soft skills and the need to continue working on personal development.” – Manager Profile

“Personal interests and affinities often take precedence over the actual progress of a project, or even its implementation, even if it is contrary to the company’s interests.” (Engineering profile)

« Office politics and how to build an influence beyond just doing your work is very important skill which I didn’t anticipate till I came to the real company. » Profil manager

“Corporate cultures are rigid and difficult to change. Questioning the status quo, so prevalent in academia, is very rare in professional settings.” – Engineer Profile

“Slow work processes (each project takes much longer than I expected).“ Engineer profile

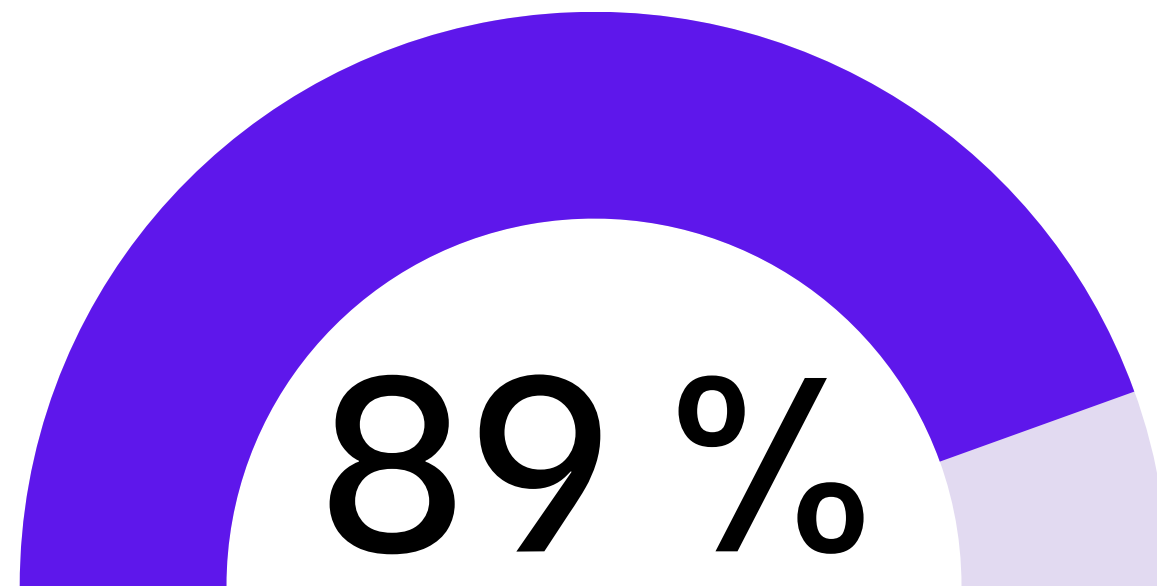
“The internships and volunteer experiences, plus the courses, allowed me to imagine what it would be like.“ Manager profile

“It was easier to take on responsibilities quickly than I expected, without feeling adequately trained for it (management in particular).“ Engineer profile

“There are many tasks that are somewhat tedious and intellectually uninteresting, and they take up a lot of time. The definition of ‘well done’ is constantly evolving, even within a large company with many established conventions.“ – Engineer profile

“Need to be proactive in changing one’s own situation, whereas this came naturally during studies.“ Hybrid profile

THE ALIGNMENT OF TRAINING IN TOP SCHOOLS WITH PROFESSIONAL NEEDS



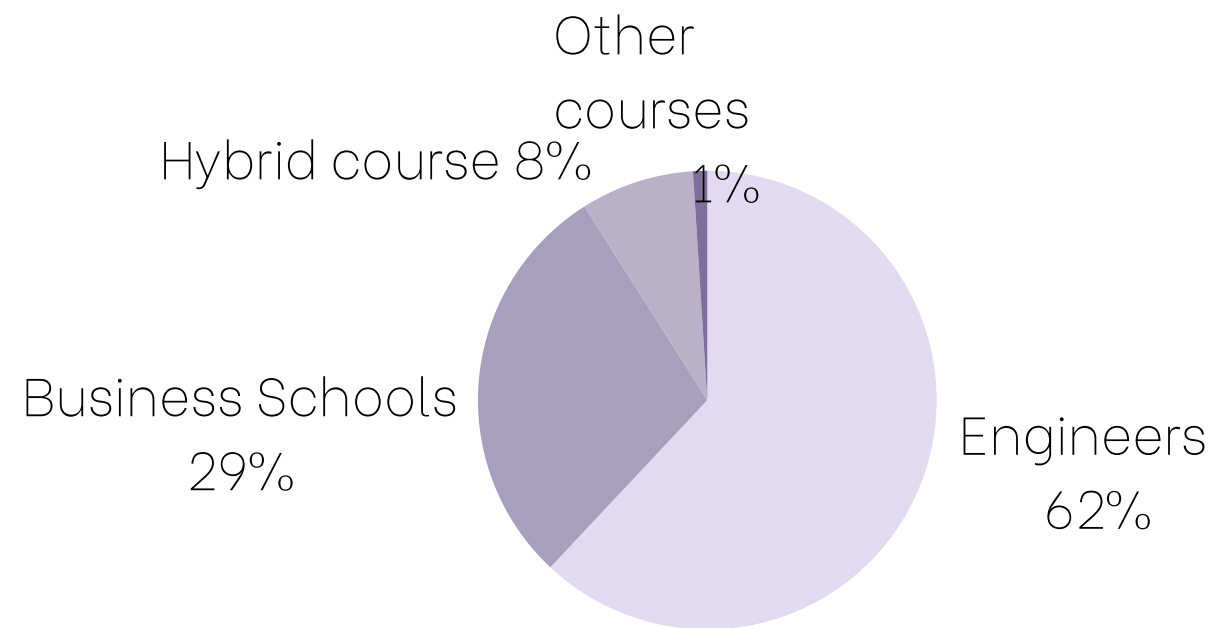
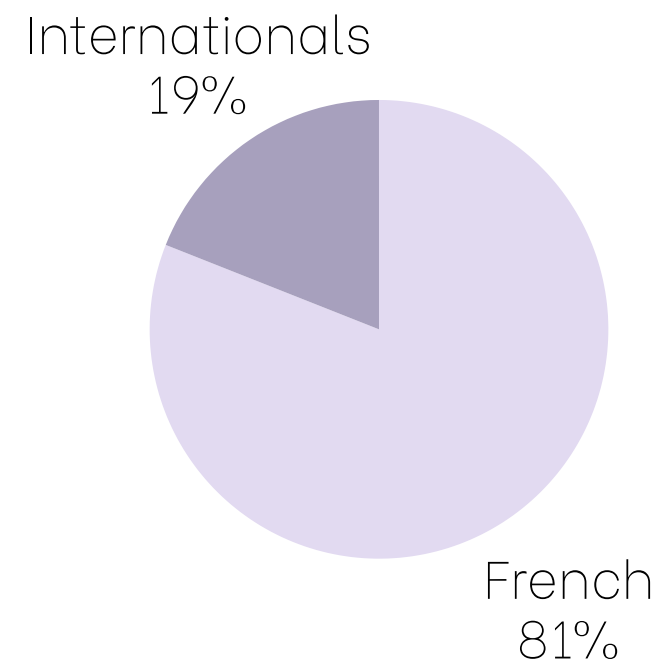
2023 : 86%

Newer generations would recommend their academic background for the jobs they hold.

METHODOLOGY AND RESPONDENT PROFILE

Survey conducted by the EDHEC NewGen Talent Centre from August to November 2025 among graduates of G16 business schools: 2100 responses from graduates with less than 6 years of experience were analyzed.

Respondent profile:



The themes of this survey:

The professional aspirations and motivations of new generations of graduates.

How young graduates want to be integrated, managed and engaged.

Their level of professional achievement and personal fulfillment.

ABOUT THE NEWGEN TALENT CENTRE

Created in 2013, the NewGen Talent Centre is EDHEC's center of expertise dedicated to the professional aspirations, behaviors and skills of new generations of graduates.

Its mission: to analyze and anticipate the evolution of young people's expectations regarding their professional lives, in order to help companies better meet their challenges of attracting, retaining and engaging talent.

To learn more about our studies and to contact us:

[Visit the EDHEC NewGen Talent Centre website](#)