Remote Work and Leadership in the Time of COVID-19

QUANTIC

The Business School of the Future

We surveyed 453 Quantic students and alumni about their career, industry outlook, and their experience leading teams from home during the COVID-19 pandemic.
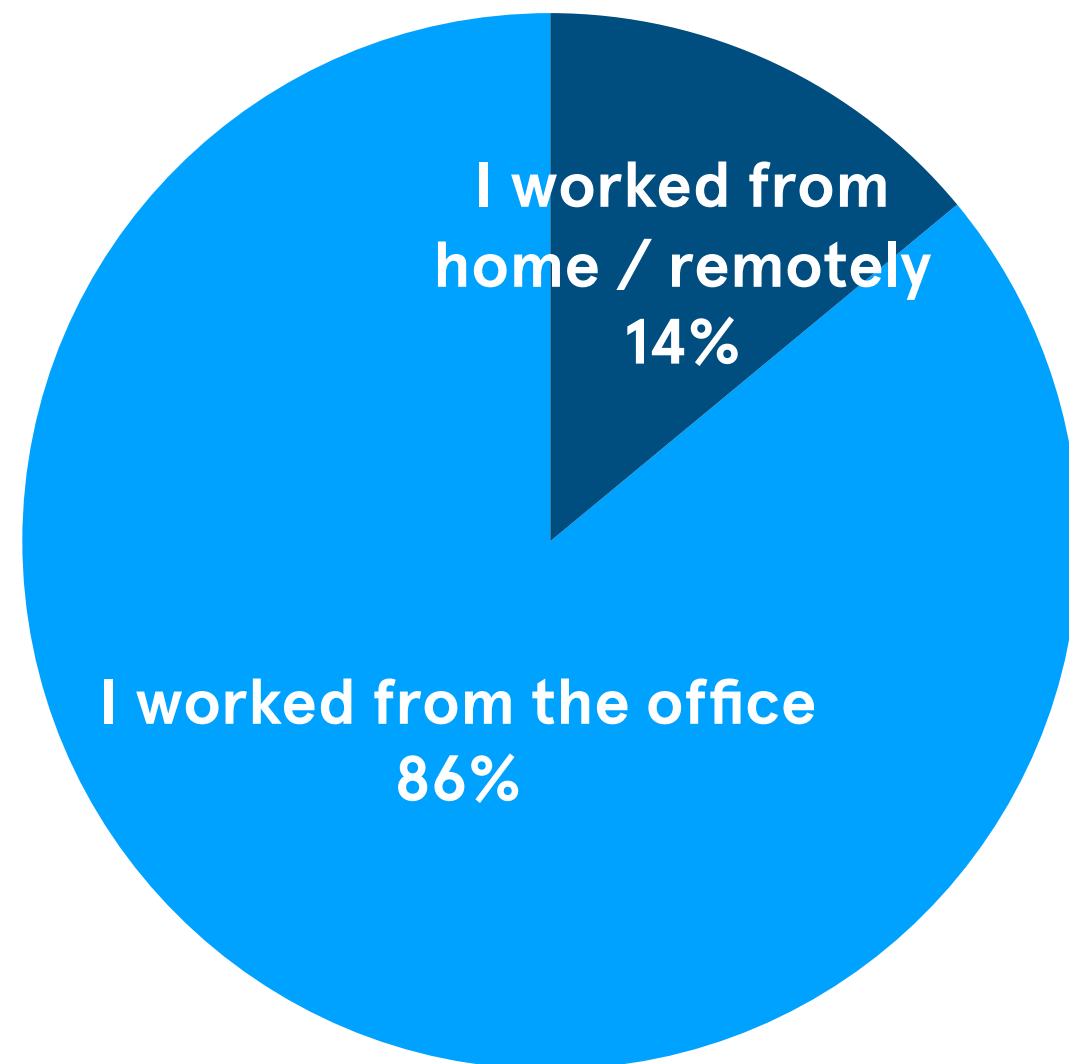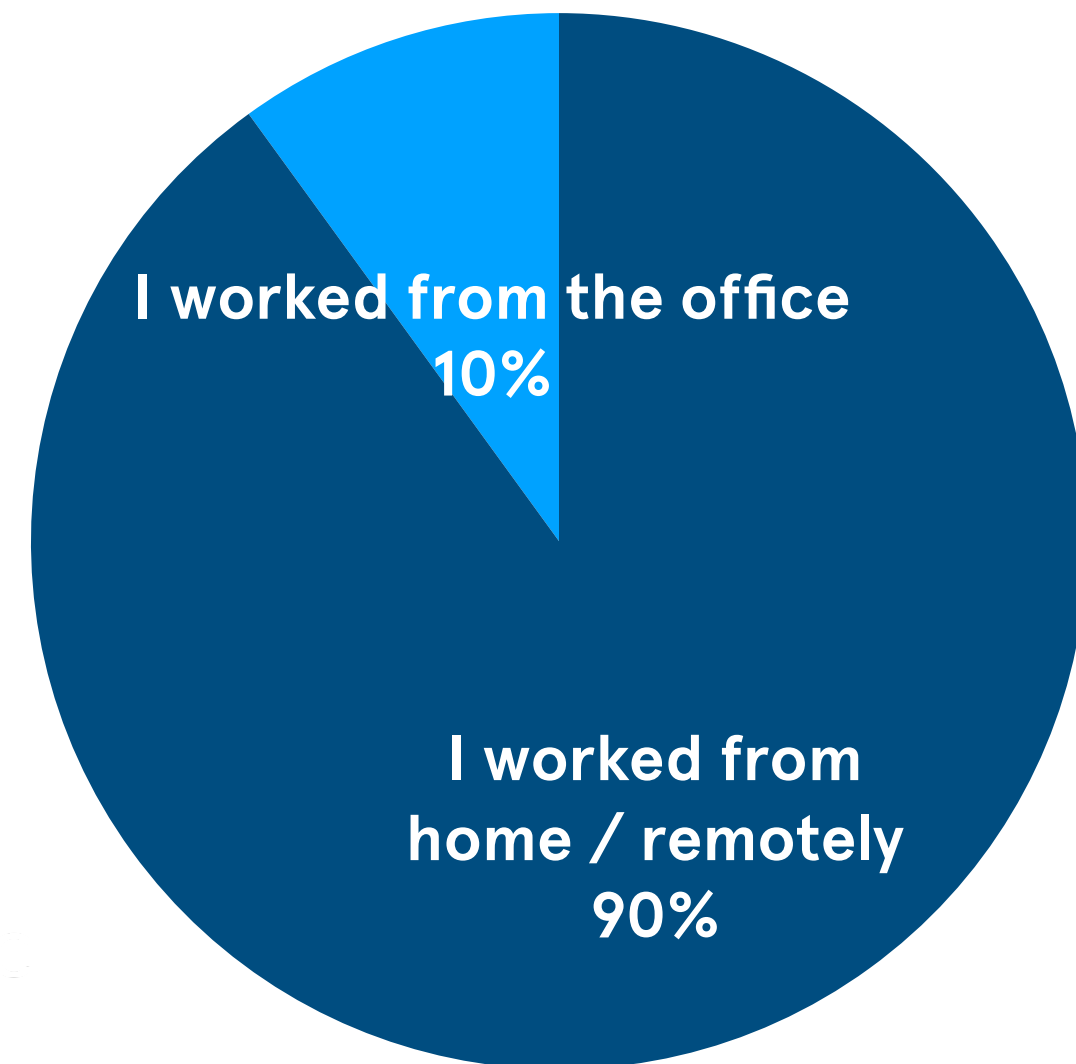
Here's what we found.

- Collaboration, creativity, communication, and productivity are suffering the most as WFH has become so prevalent (and not likely to go away anytime soon)

- We're missing human interaction — platforms that are more "human" have grown tremendously

- Necessary changes to managing teams remotely underscore the need for successful leaders to shift/add skills: people are up-skilling

- With newly acquired skills and higher incidence of insulated industries, Quantic students and alumni are optimistic and have been mostly spared from redundancies

- Looking forward, COVID-19 is inflicting permanent change - but the ways in which industries are changing may be for the better

Quantic students and alumni have gone from 90% working in an office to 90% working from home

I worked from home / remotely
14%

I worked from the office
86%

I worked from the office
10%
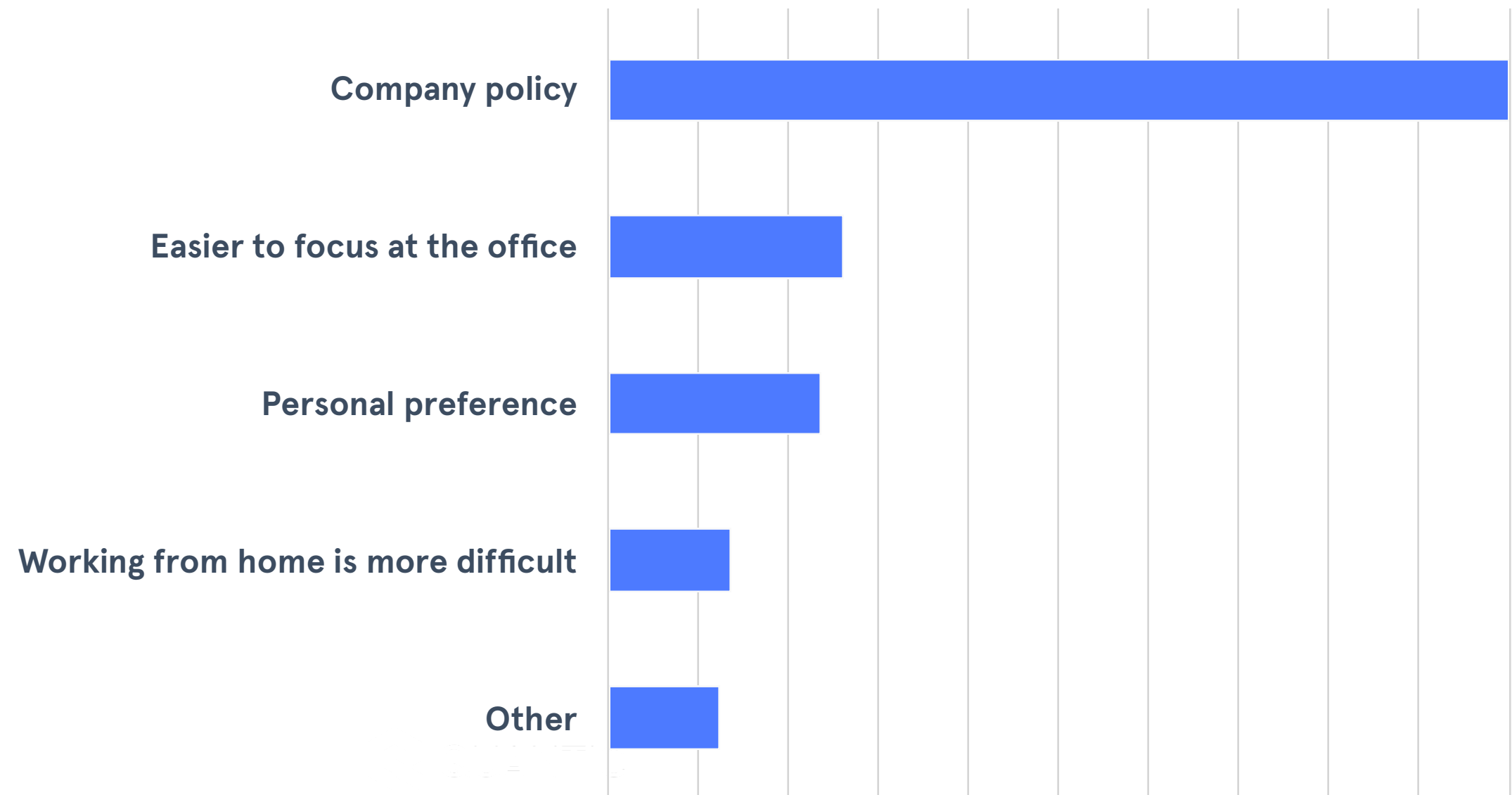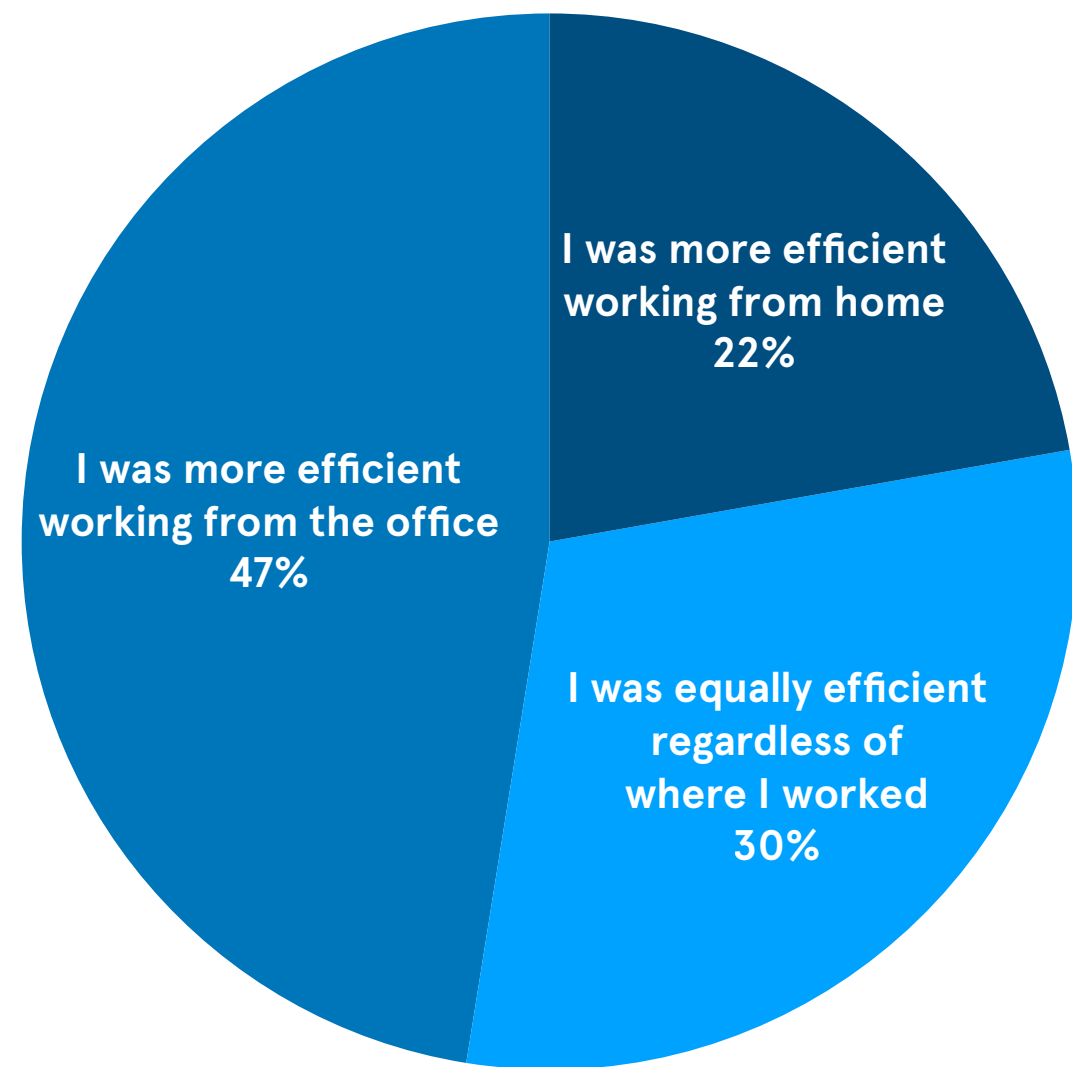
I worked from home / remotely
90%

Q
Before January 2020, what was your primary location for work?

Q
After the COVID-19 pandemic began, what is your primary location for work?

"Pre-COVID-19, I was generally more efficient working in an office, and policy made me do it"

Pie chart:
- I was more efficient working from the office — 47%
- I was more efficient working from home — 22%
- I was equally efficient regardless of where I worked — 30%

Bar chart:
- Company policy
- Easier to focus at the office
- Personal preference
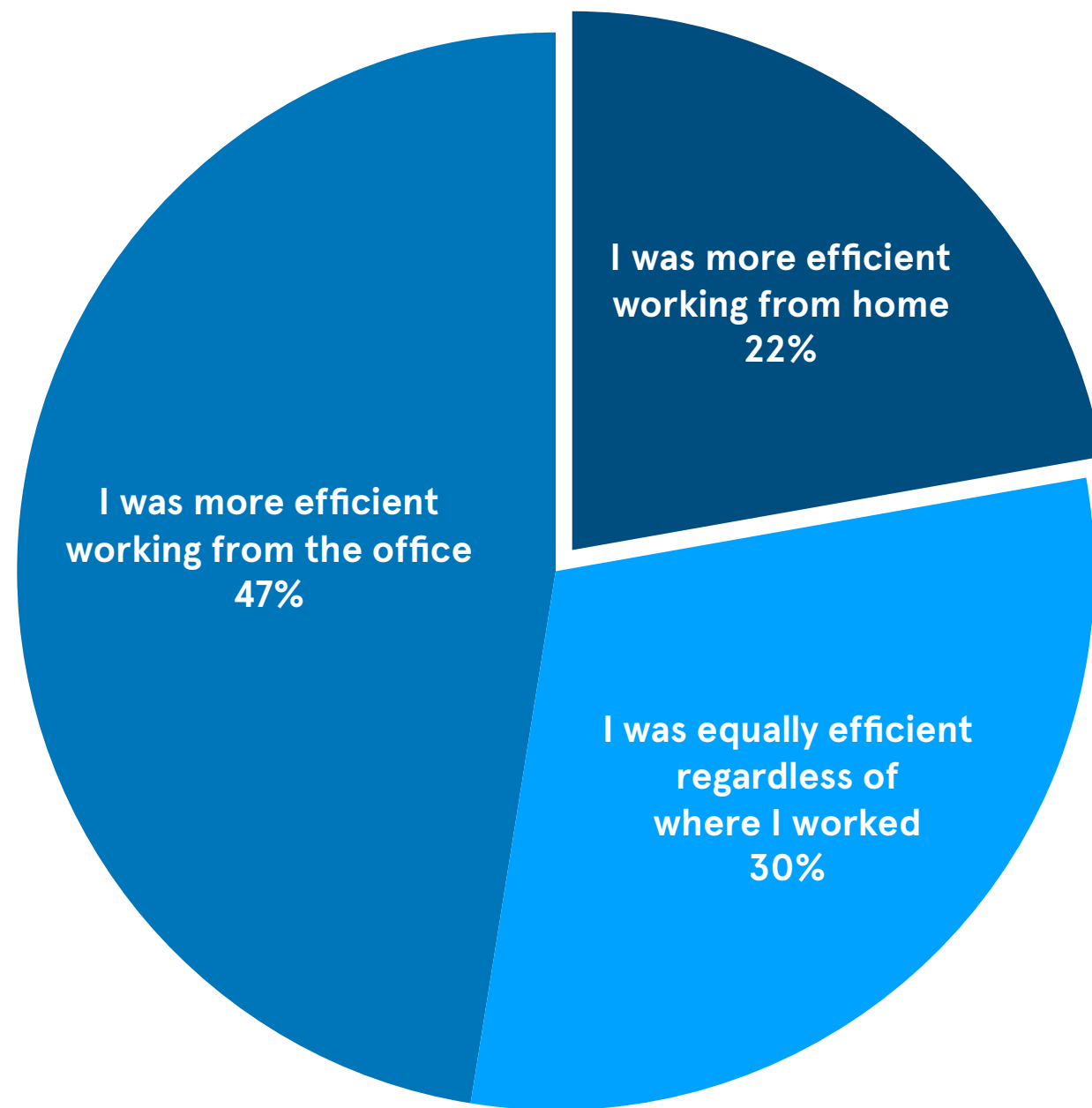- Working from home is more difficult
- Other

Q Before the pandemic, were you more efficient working from home or in the office?

Q Before the pandemic happened, why did you work from the office?

Post-COVID-19, many have adapted to being more efficient WFH or wherever they may be

I was more efficient
working from home
22%

I was more efficient
working from the office
47%

I was equally efficient
regardless of
where I worked
30%

I am more efficient
working from home
32%

I was more efficient
working from the office
32%

I am equally efficient
regardless of
where I worked
37%

Q

Before the pandemic, were you more
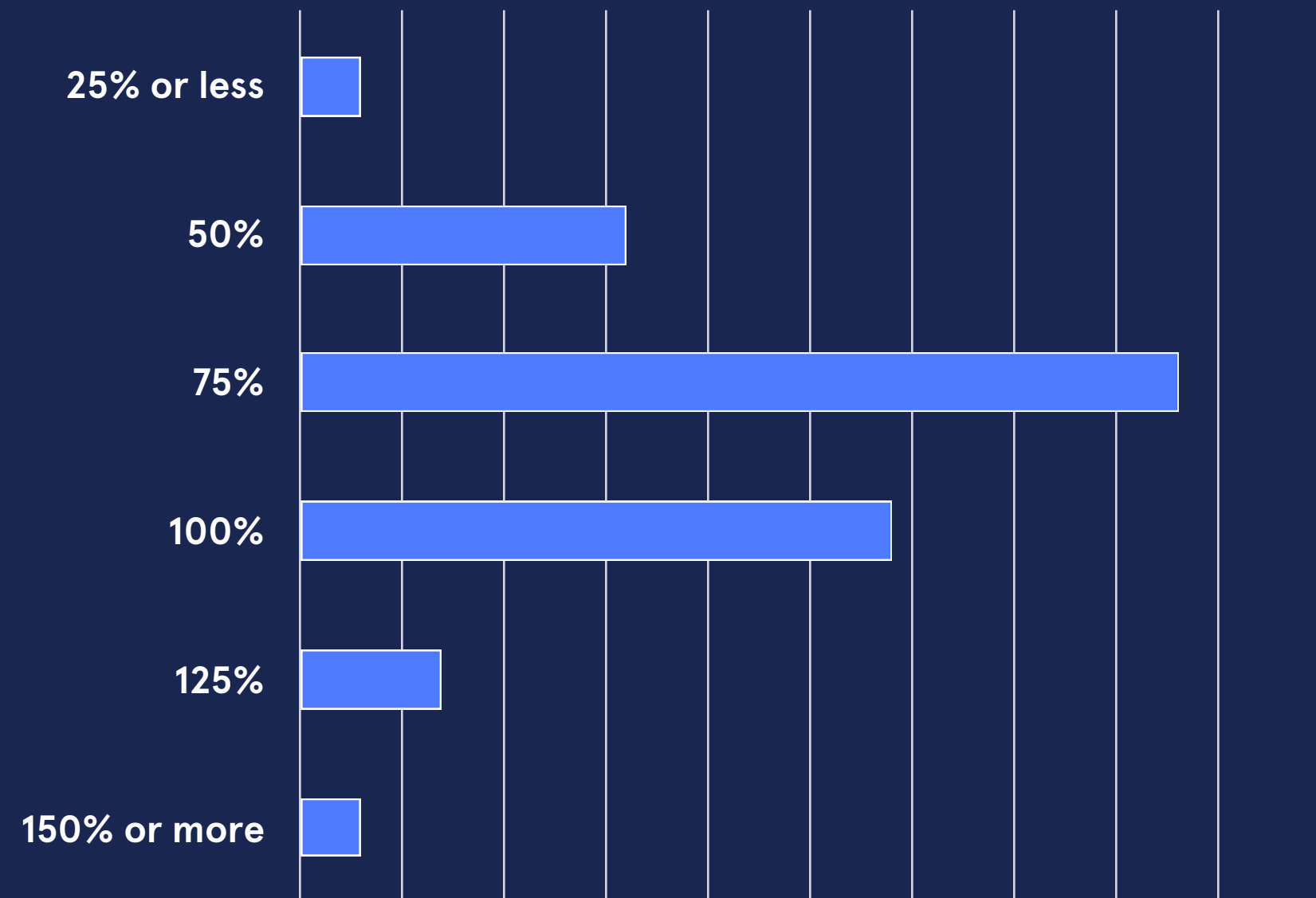efficient working from home or in the office?

Q
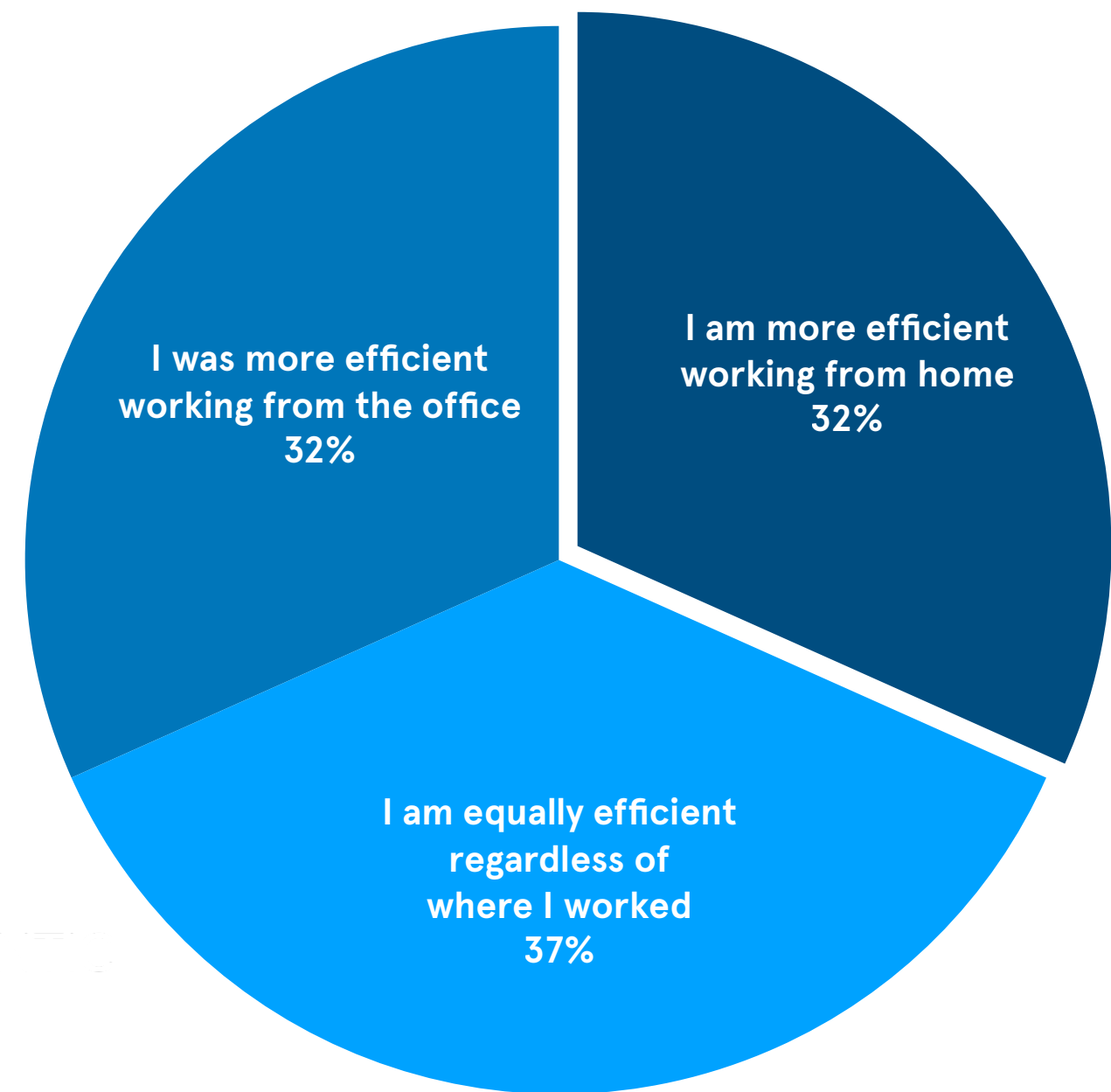
Now, after the pandemic, are you more
efficient working from home or in the office?

Though, 60% have seen productivity fall

Q

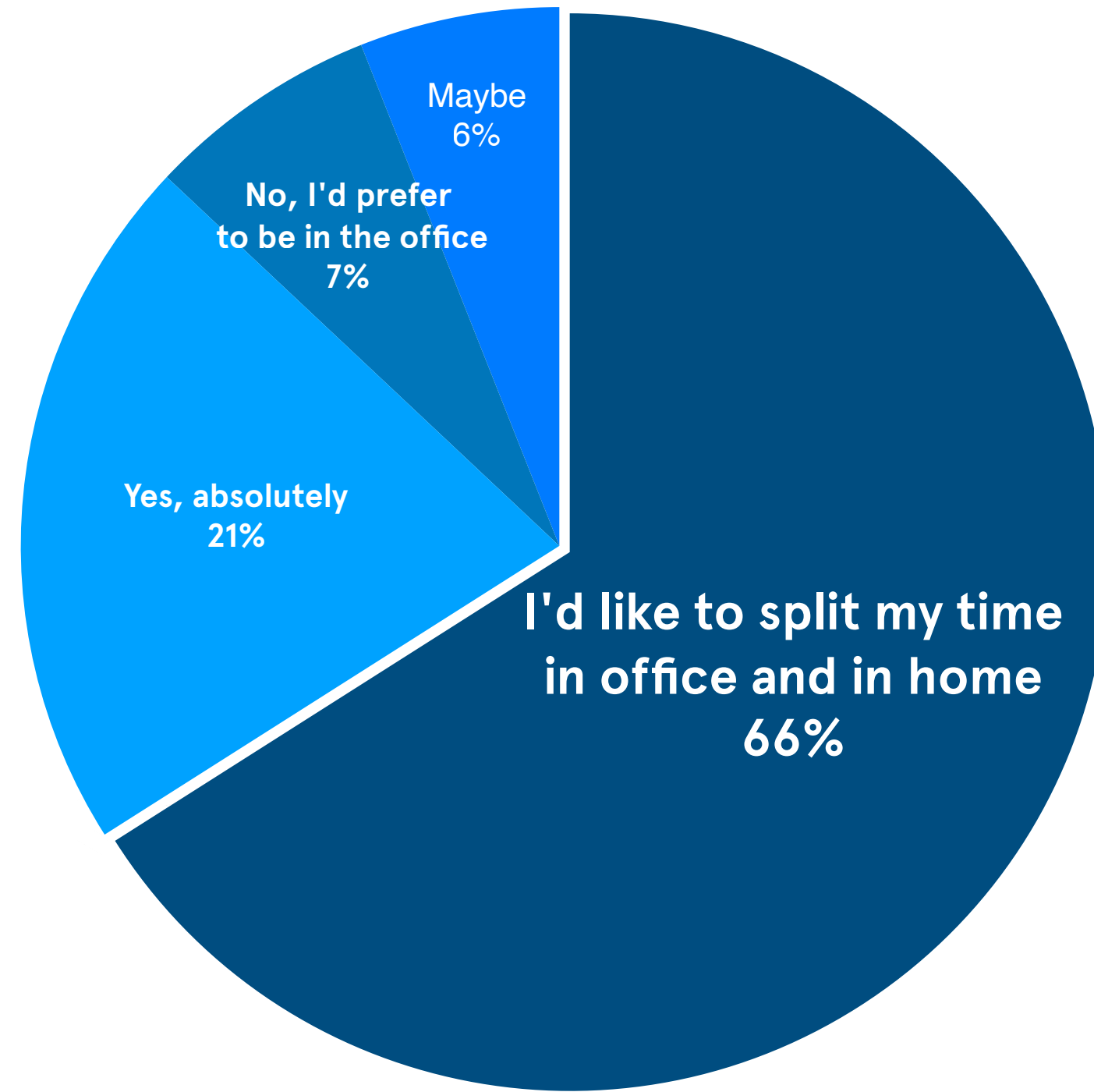Please fill in the blank: I believe my team is working at ___% of their pre-pandemic capacity.

Now that it's been tried, it's likely that the WFH phenomenon will be more prevalent
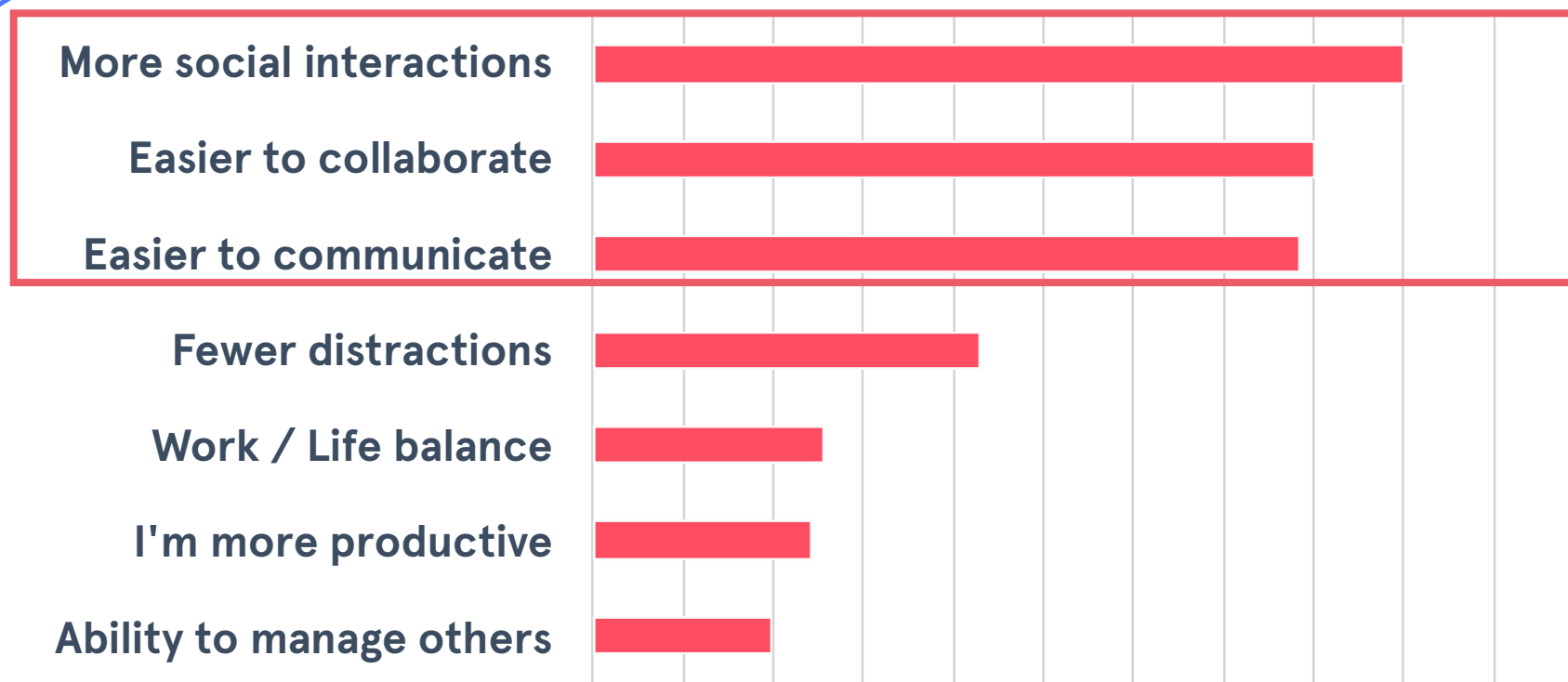
Q

After working from home for an extended period of time, do you want to keep doing it?

Maybe
6%

No, I'd prefer
to be in the office
7%

Yes, absolutely
21%

I'd like to split my time
in office and in home
66%

But what suffers when we WFH? Communication, collaboration, relationships.

Q

What are the **most valuable** aspects about **working from the office**? Check up to three options.

Aspect	
More social interactions	
Easier to collaborate	
Easier to communicate	
Fewer distractions	
Work / Life balance	
I'm more productive	
Ability to manage others	

Q

What are the **most challenging** aspects about **working from home?** Check up to three options.

Aspect	
Communication / Things lost in translation	
Maintaining relationships	
Leading / Inspiring / Mentoring	
Collaboration	
Staying motivated	
Oversight / Management	
Motivating others	
Maintaining focus	
Being productive	
Quality control	

**In the office we socialize, communicate and collaborate better.**

At home, we struggle to maintain human connections.

Tough conversations (discipline) and creative conversations (brainstorming) are becoming even more challenging

Q

What kinds of conversations are difficult to have when working from home? Please rank in order of most difficult to least.

Data showing percentages for *most* difficult only
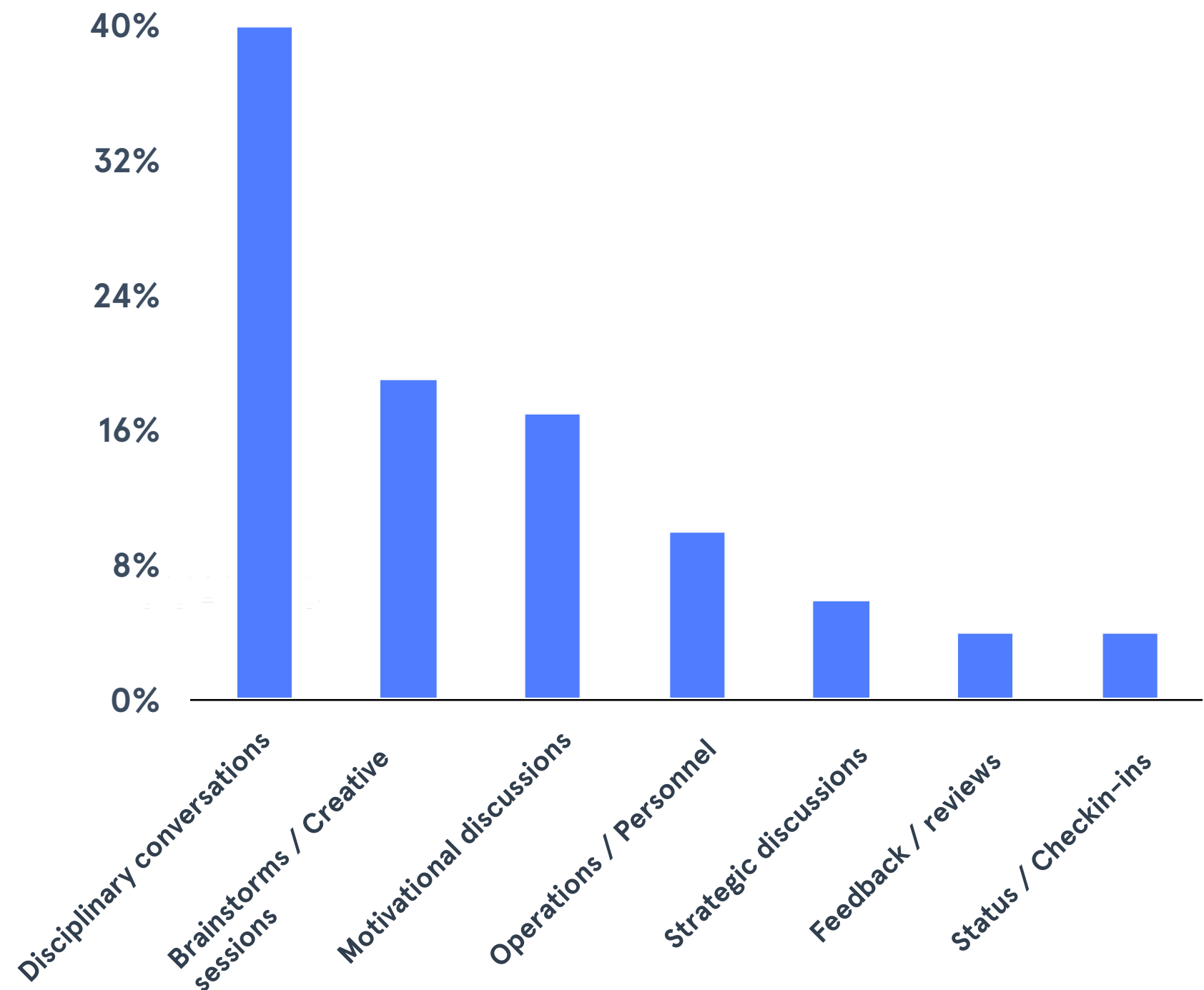
And creative sessions have all but disappeared now that we're WFH

Q

When working from home, how do you lead / manage people remotely? Check all that apply.

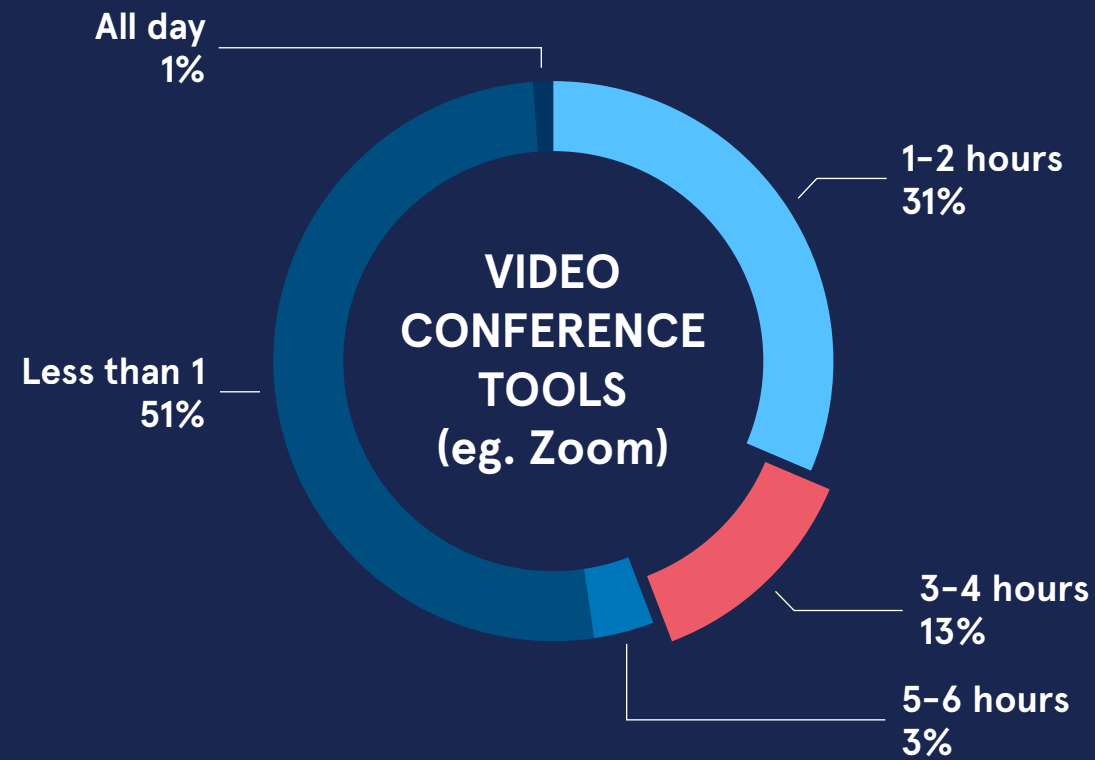| Category	
Video conference	
Messaging / Company chat	
Email	
Schedule a meeting	
One-on-one checkins	
Productivity tools (eg. Basecamp)	
I'm not managing people remotely	
Company-wide meetings	
Lunch or coffee meetings	
Post-it note brainstorm	
Whiteboard sessions	

Platforms that aid in connectedness and real-time communication have risen to the top

Q

When working from home, how do you lead / manage people remotely? Check all that apply.

Category	
Video conference	
Messaging / Company chat	
Email	
Schedule a meeting	
One-on-one checkins	
Productivity tools (eg. Basecamp)	
I'm not managing people remotely	
Company-wide meetings	
Lunch or coffee meetings	
Post-it note brainstorm	
Whiteboard sessions	

14%   28%   42%   56%   70%

The shift to Video Conferencing and Chat Platforms has been massive...

PRE-PANDEMIC

VIDEO CONFERENCE TOOLS (eg. Zoom)

- All day: 1%
- 1-2 hours: 31%
- Less than 1: 51%
- 3-4 hours: 13%
- 5-6 hours: 3%

COMPANY CHAT PLATFORMS (eg. Slack)

- All day: 18%
- 1-2 hours: 30%
- Less than 1: 35%
- 3-4 hours: 15%
- 5-6 hours: 2%

POST-PANDEMIC

VIDEO CONFERENCE TOOLS (eg. Zoom)

- All day: 6%
- Less than 1: 2%
- 5-6 hours: 15%
- 1-2 hours: 33%
- 3-4 hours: 44%

COMPANY CHAT PLATFORMS (eg. Slack)

- All day: 26%
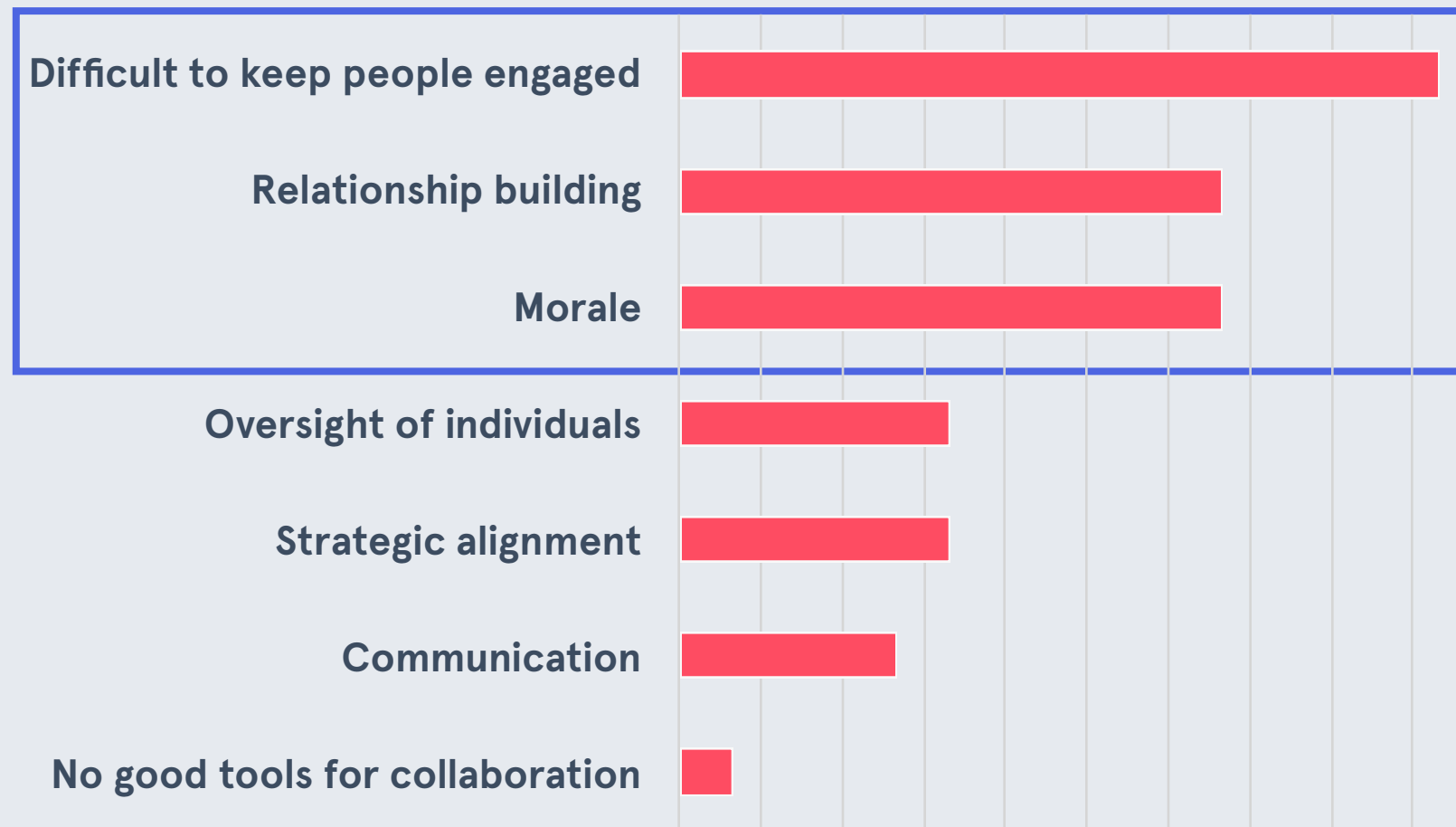- 1-2 hours: 29%
- Less than 1: 8%
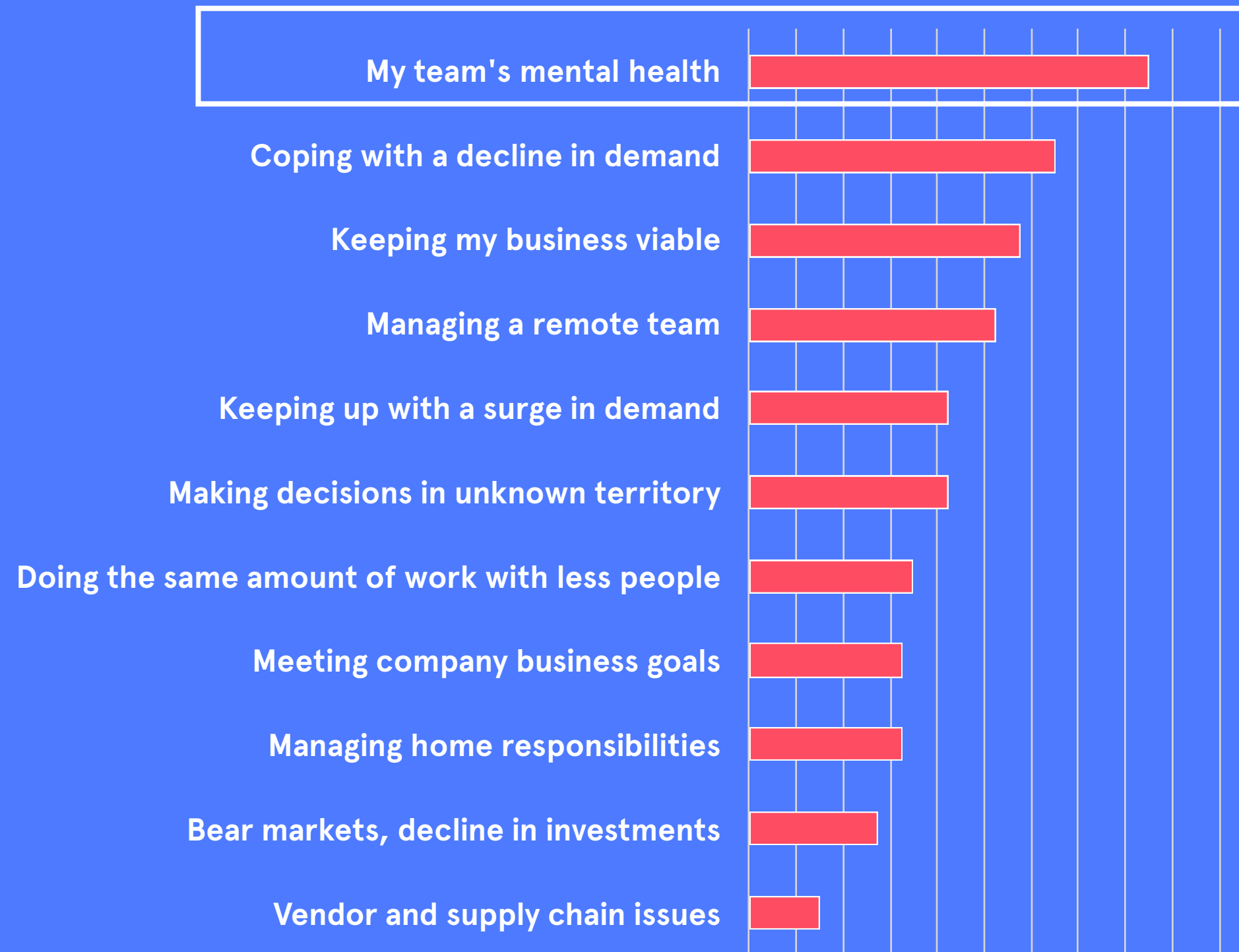- 5-6 hours: 7%
- 3-4 hours: 28%
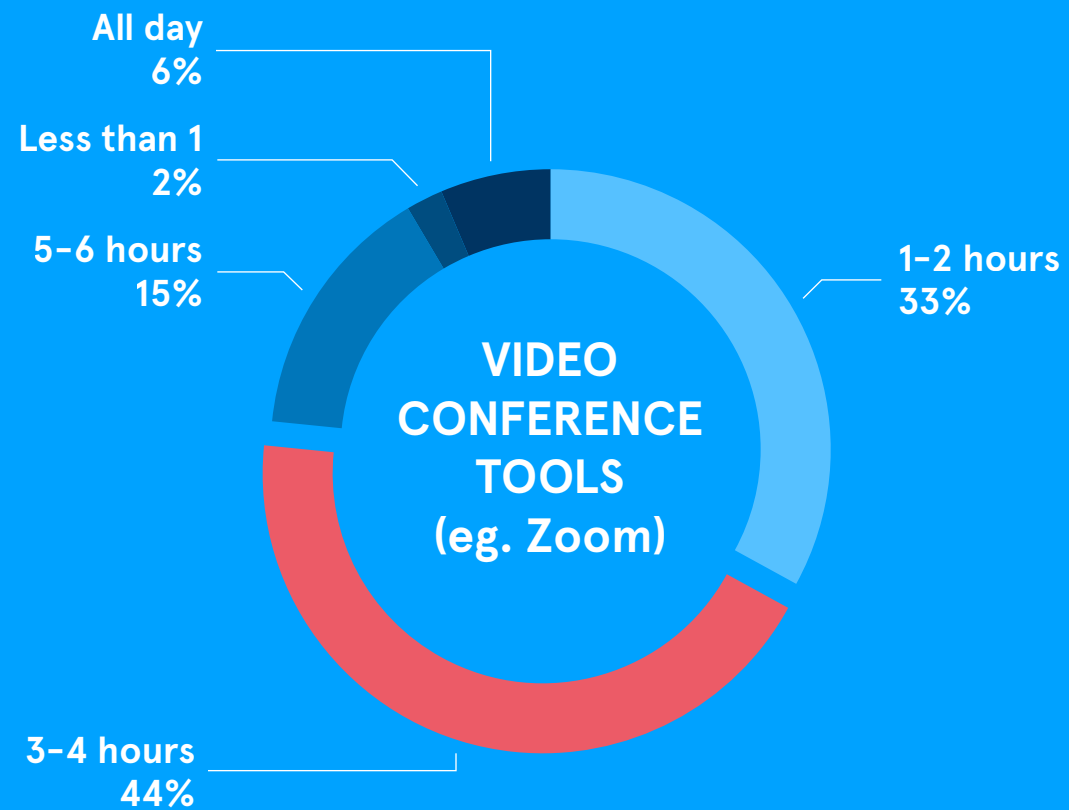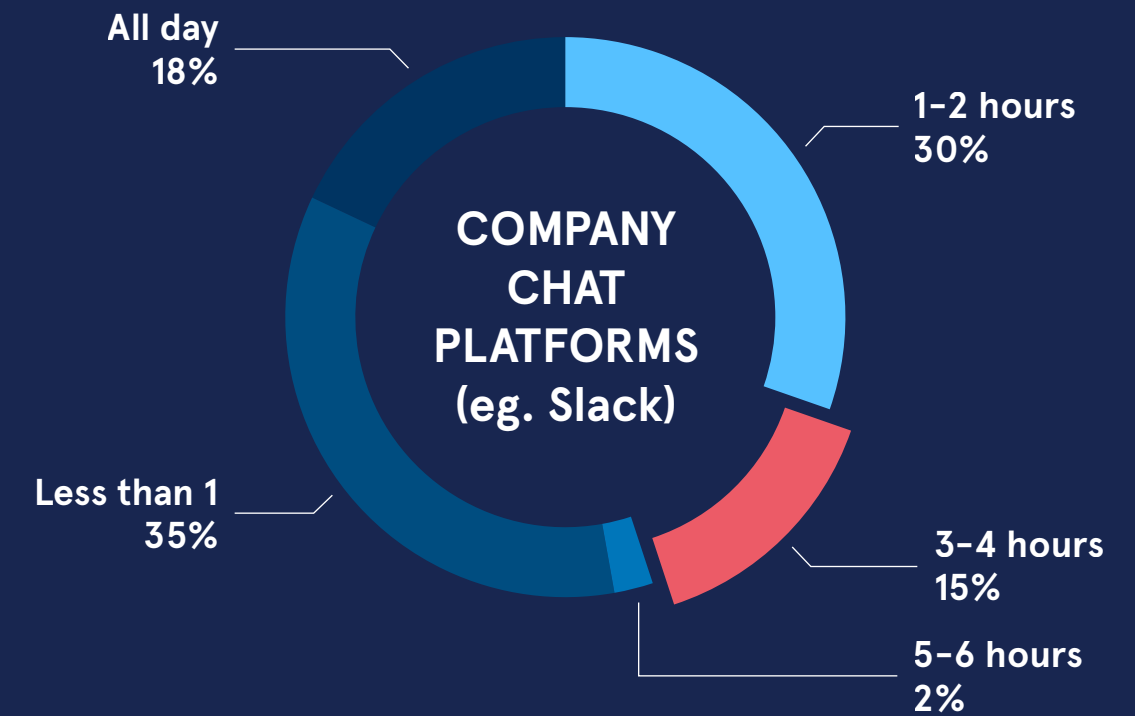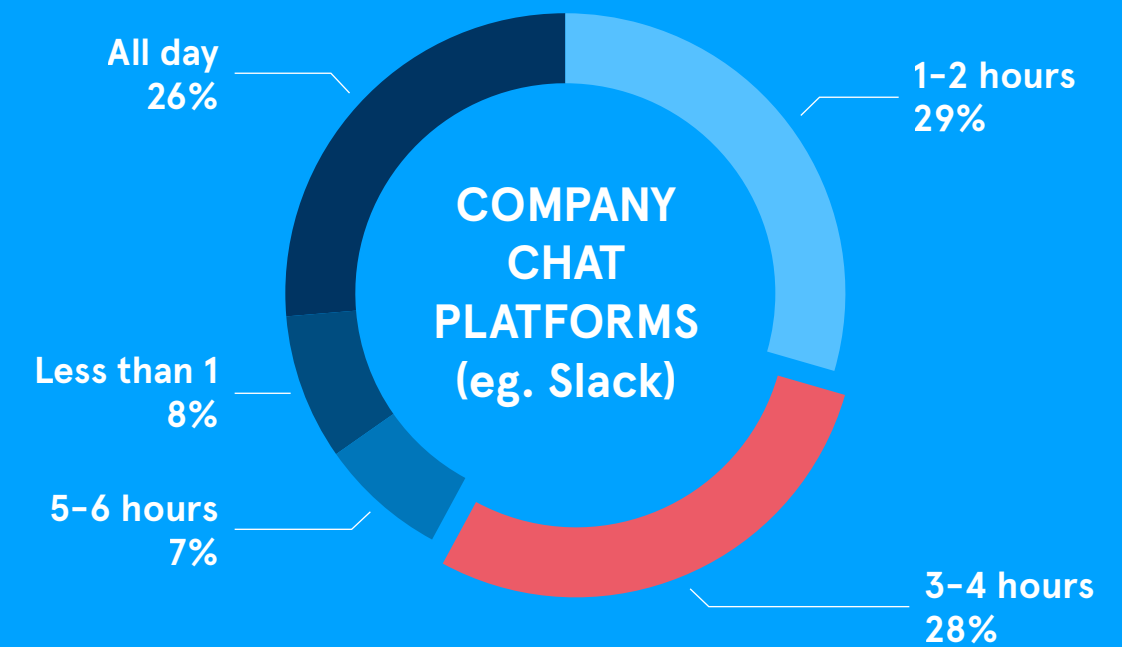
Real-time/face-to-face is better when morale, mental health, and relationships are becoming more challenging

Q

What are the top two most challenging aspects of leading teams from a remote environment? Choose the top 2.

Difficult to keep people engaged	
Relationship building	
Morale	
Oversight of individuals	
Strategic alignment	
Communication	
No good tools for collaboration	

Q

What are the top two challenges you're most worried about right now?

My team's mental health	
Coping with a decline in demand	
Keeping my business viable	
Managing a remote team	
Keeping up with a surge in demand	
Making decisions in unknown territory	
Doing the same amount of work with less people	
Meeting company business goals	
Managing home responsibilities	
Bear markets, decline in investments	
Vendor and supply chain issues	

With a different set of challenges, modern leaders must become better communicators, delegators, decision makers

Pie chart:
- No: 17%
- Yes: 83%

Bar chart — skills:
- Clear, effective communication
- Delegation and empowerment
- Decisive decision making
- Leading virtual meetings
- Time management
- Project management
- Nurturing team growth
- Efficient self-learning
- Command of tech apps

X-axis: 7% 14% 21% 28% 35% 42% 49% 56% 63% 70%
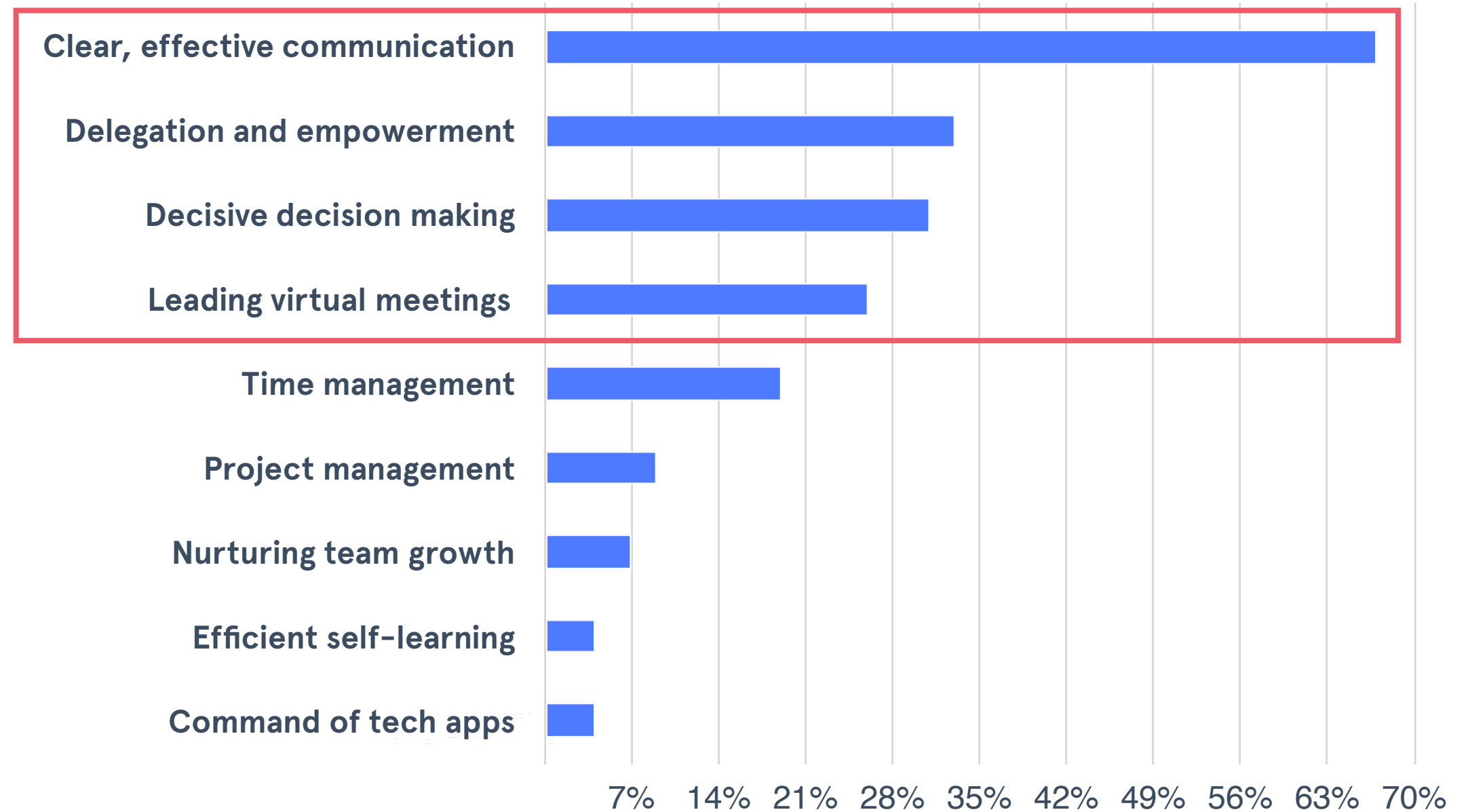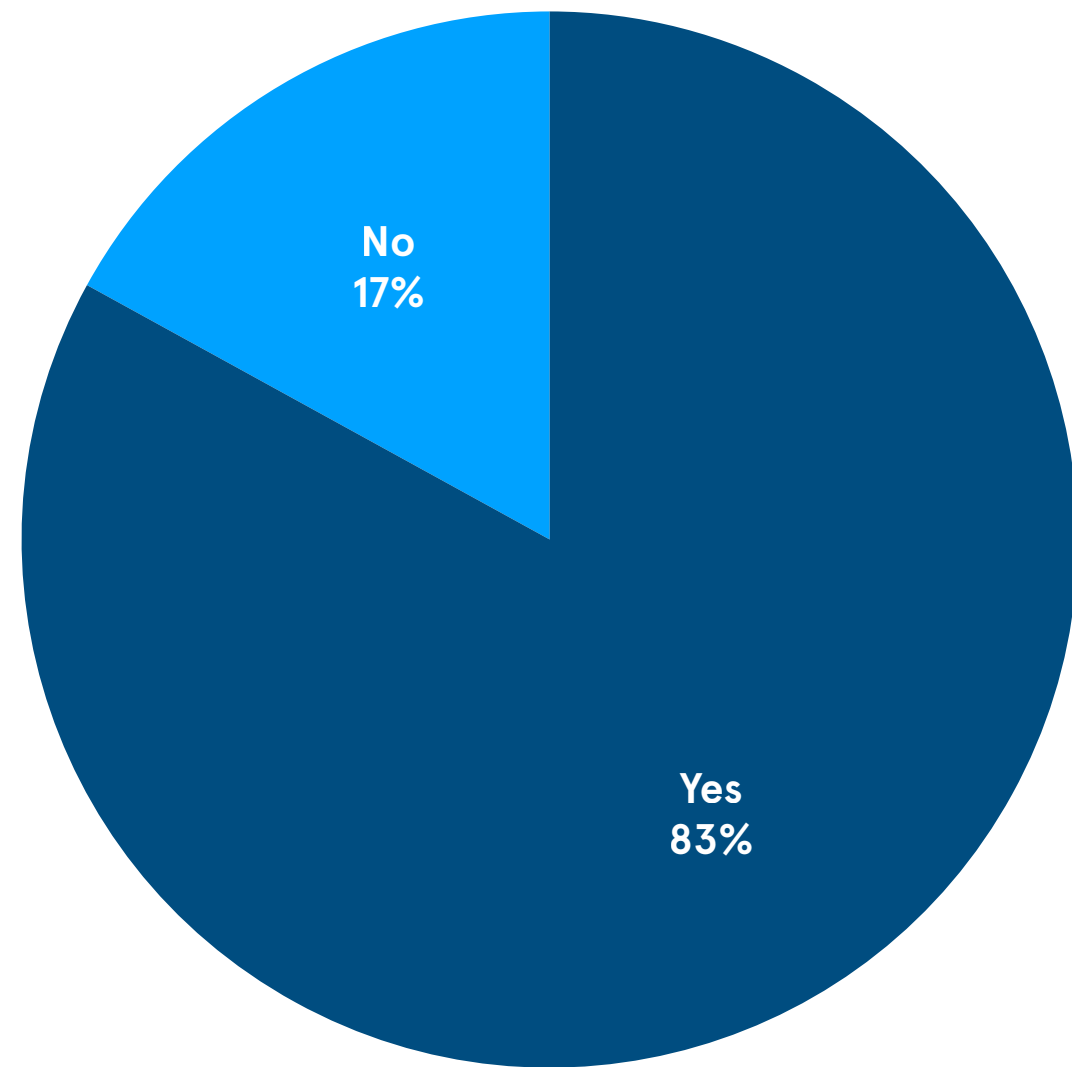
Q Do you believe that COVID-19 has changed the types of skills that leaders need to succeed?
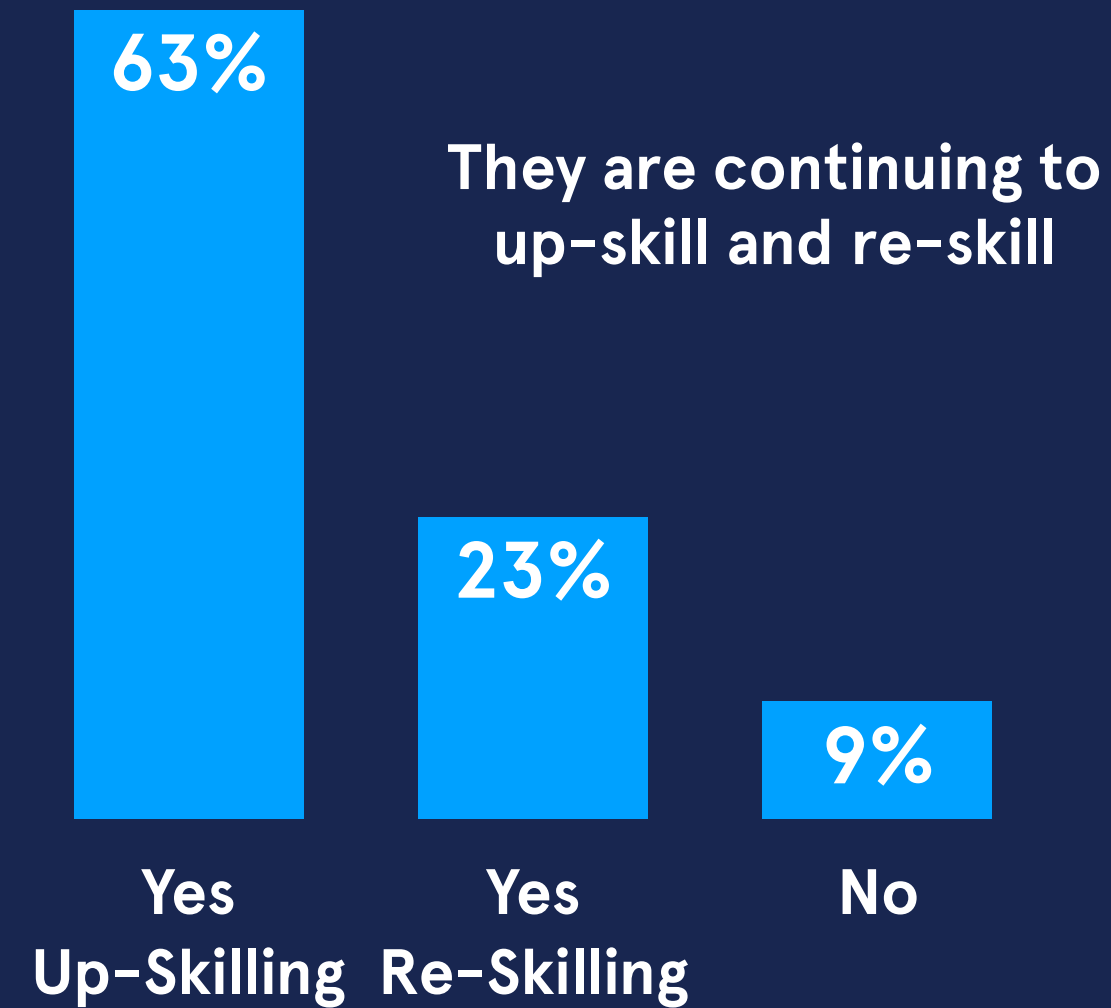
Q What are the most important skills you believe leaders like yourself need to succeed during COVID-19? Select the top two.

Quantic students and alumni are proactively up-skilling and re-skilling to keep pace with these changes
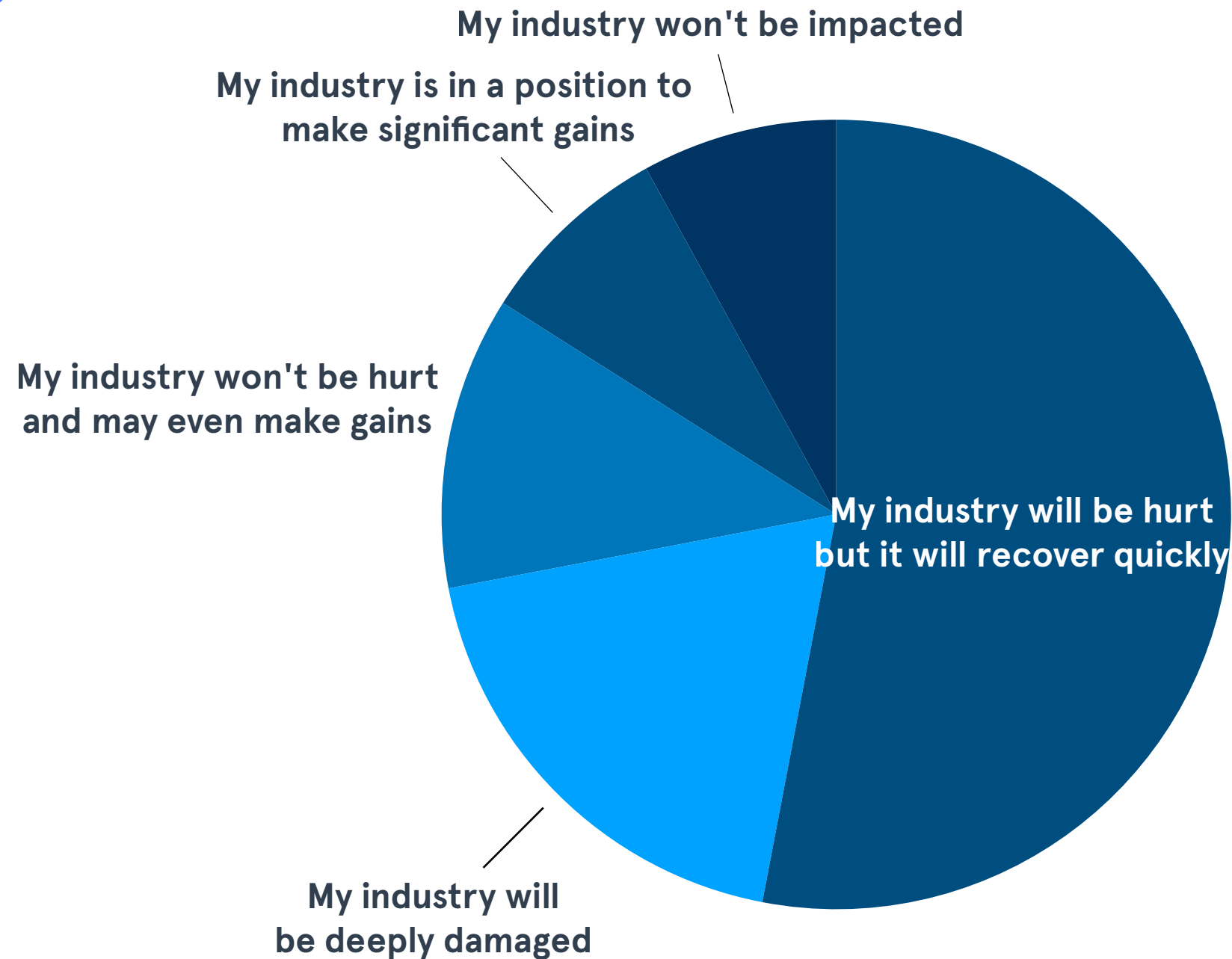
Q
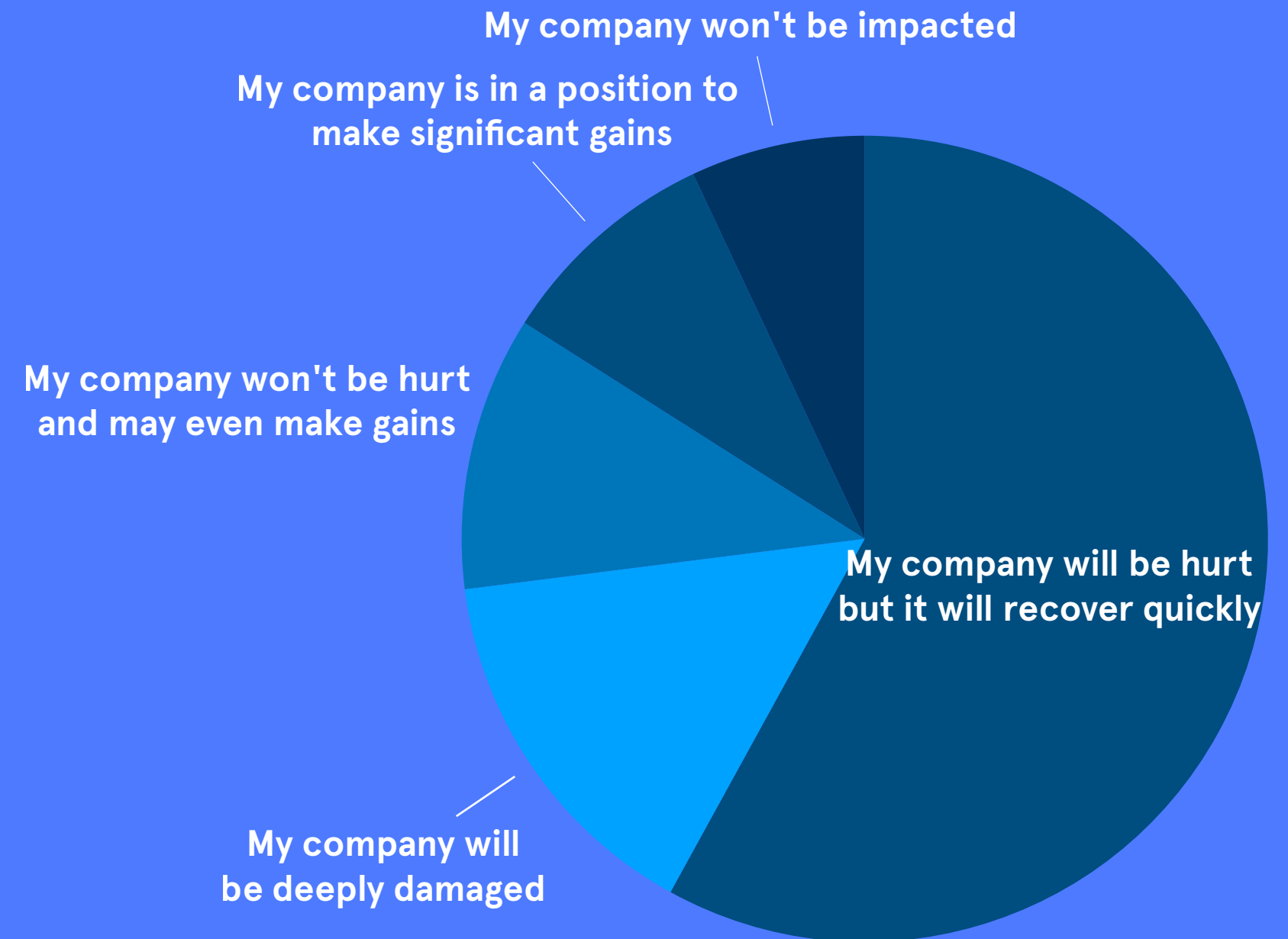Are you pursuing opportunities to up-skill (sharpening your existing skill set) or re-skill (learning a new skill set)?

They are continuing to up-skill and re-skill

63%

23%

9%

Yes Up-Skilling

Yes Re-Skilling

No

They're generally optimistic about their futures...

Q

My industry won't be impacted

My industry is in a position to make significant gains

My industry won't be hurt and may even make gains

My industry will be hurt but it will recover quickly

My industry will be deeply damaged

Q

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, how optimistic do you feel about your particular **company**?

My company won't be impacted

My company is in a position to make significant gains

My company won't be hurt and may even make gains

My company will be hurt but it will recover quickly

My company will be deeply damaged

They're optimistic because 85% still feel confident about their current employment situation

Q

What is your current status as it relates to employment and job security?

I was recently hired as a result of the pandemic

I've recently lost my job as a result of the pandemic

I'll keep my job and may even be promoted

I'm very worried about losing my job as a result of the pandemic

Stable - I feel comfortable with my job security

I'm confident I'll keep my current position
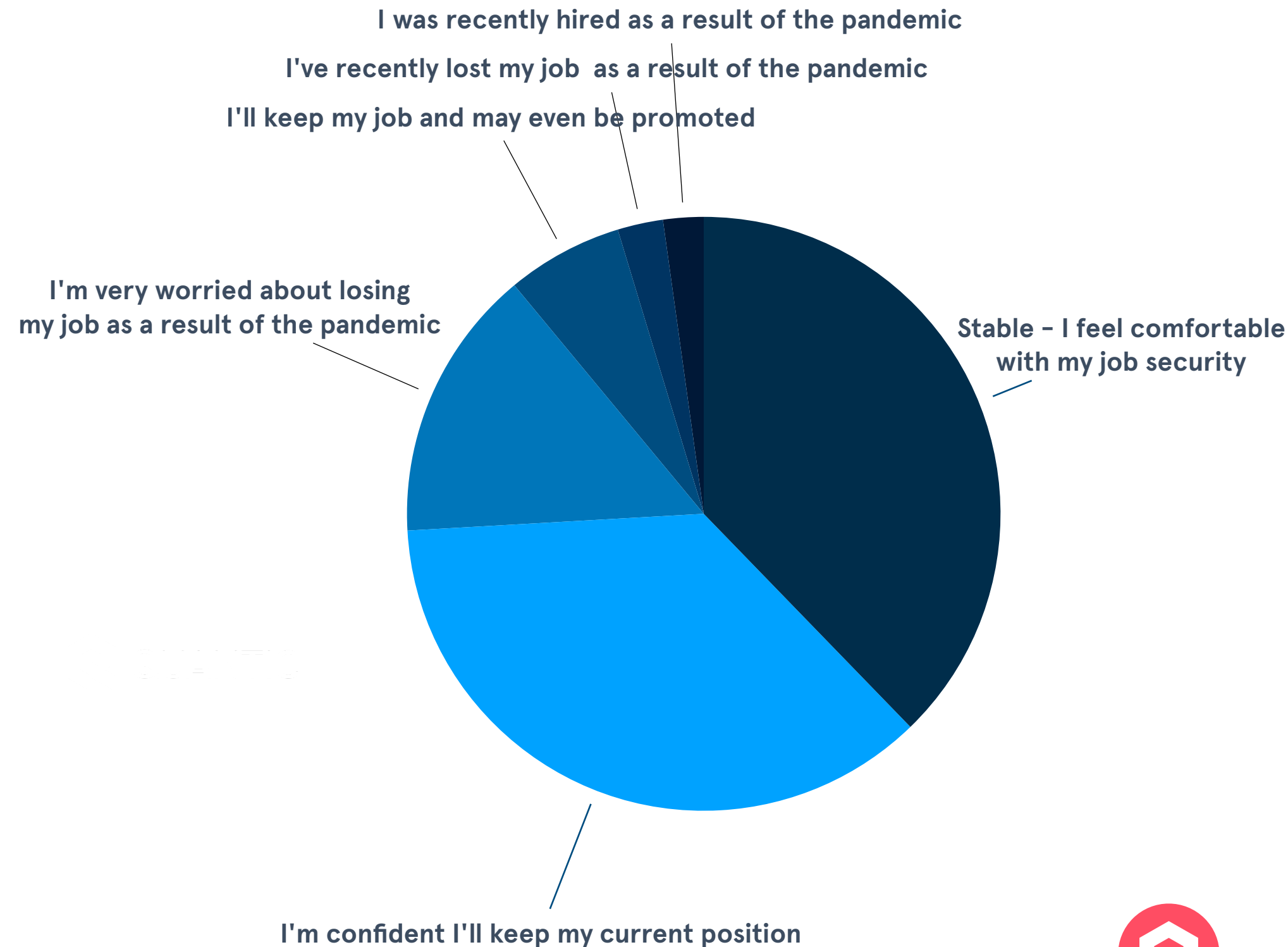
This job security stems from less exposure to traditional MBA jobs

Quantic students are 5x less likely to be consultants, where COVID redundancies are 5x higher.

Pie chart segments labeled:
- Transportation
- Legal
- Travel/Hospitality
- Construction
- Arts/Media/Entertainment
- Non Profit
- Consumer Goods
- Marketing/Sales
- Manufacturing
- Professional services
- Govet./Public Sector/Defense
- Oil/Gas/Energy
- Other
- Education
- Banking/Finance Insurance
- Healthcare/Pharma
- Consulting
- Science/R&D Engineering/Tech
- IT/Software/Data/Security
- Agriculture/Mining
- Telecom
- Operations/Logistics

*33% of Quantic MBA/EMBA respondents that were let go due to COVID-19 were **consultants***

*In a population where **less than 10%** are in consulting (compared to eg. 49% at INSEAD)*
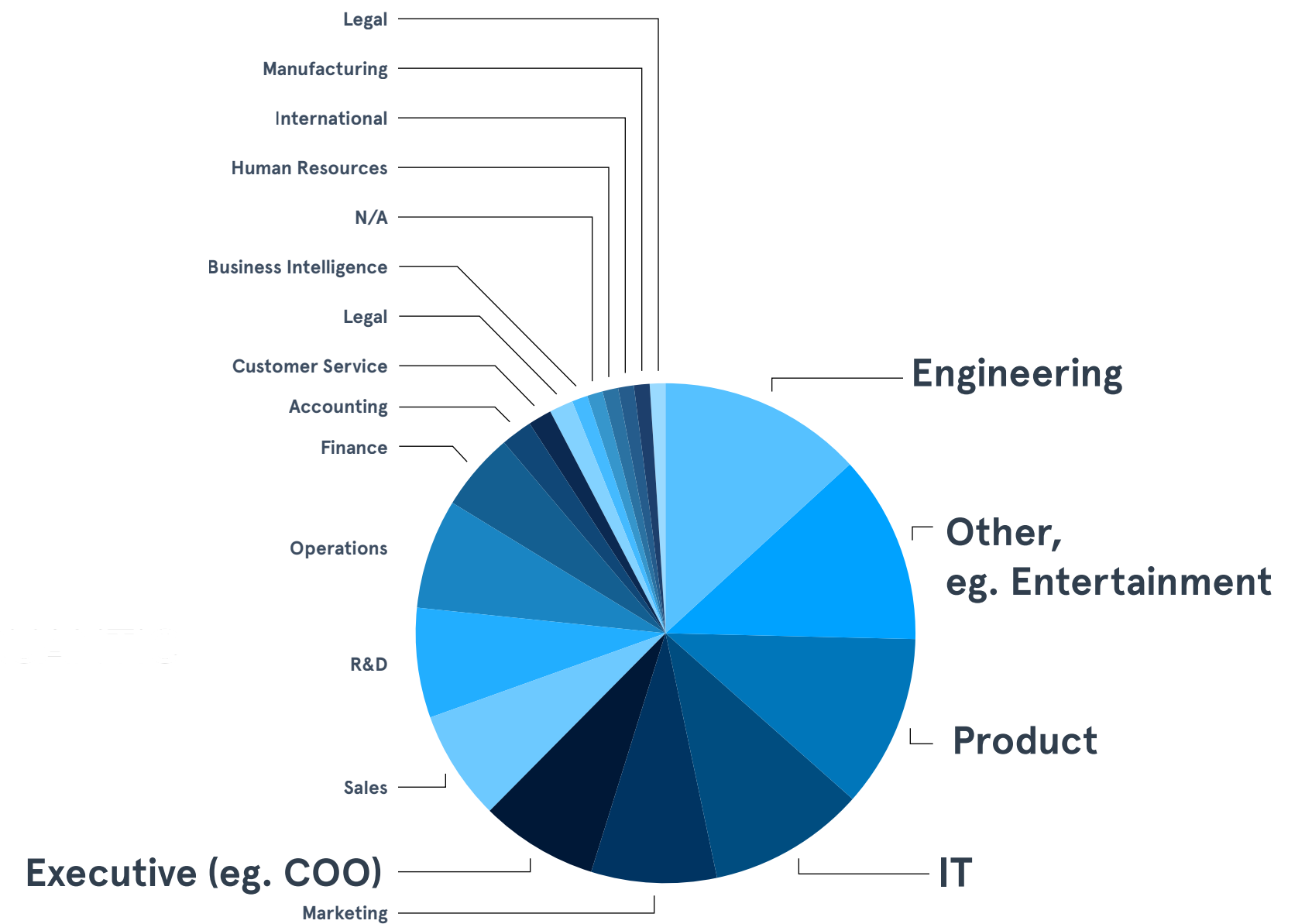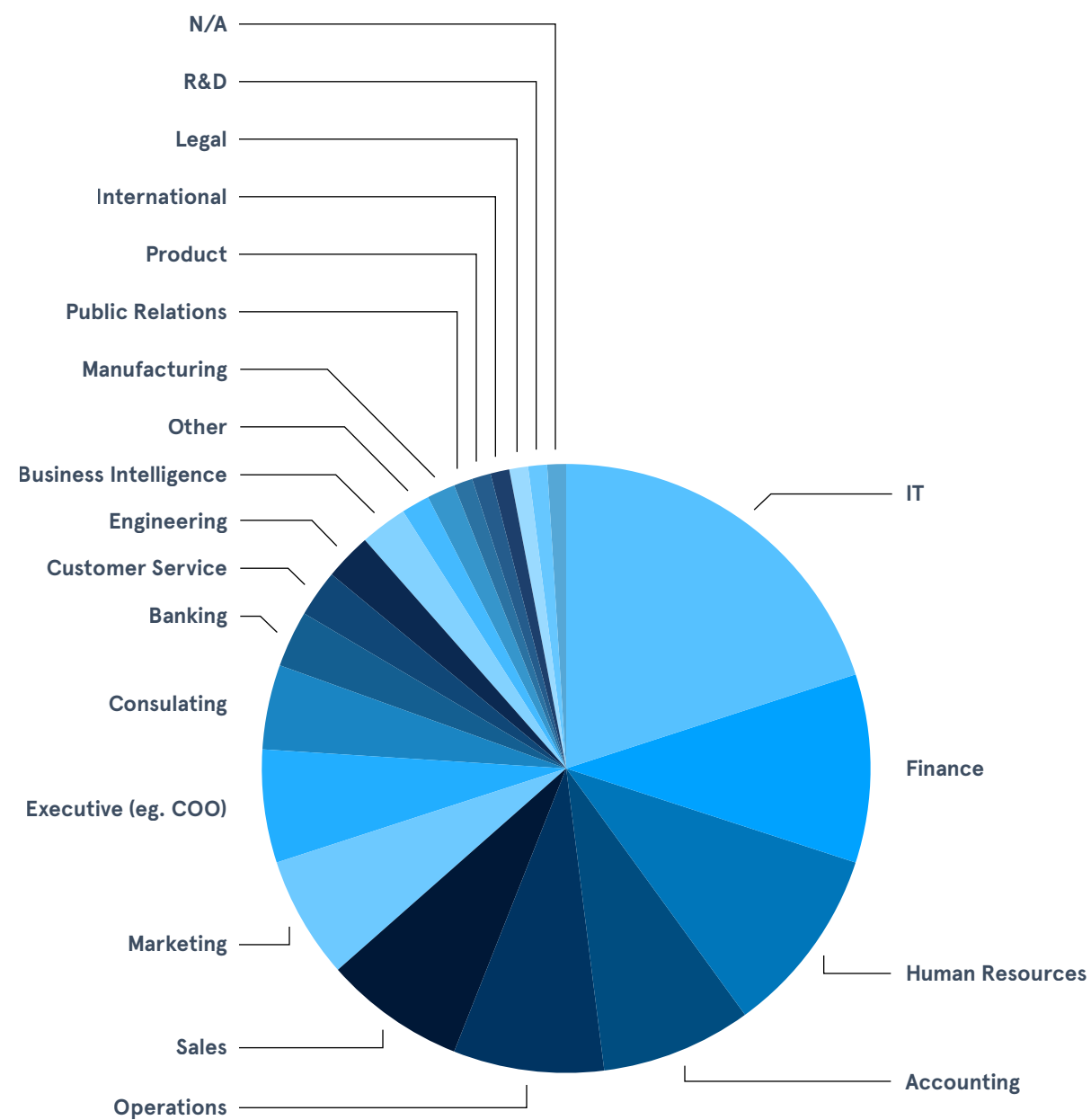
*Consultants are **5x more likely to be let go due** to COVID-19 than other execs/professionals*

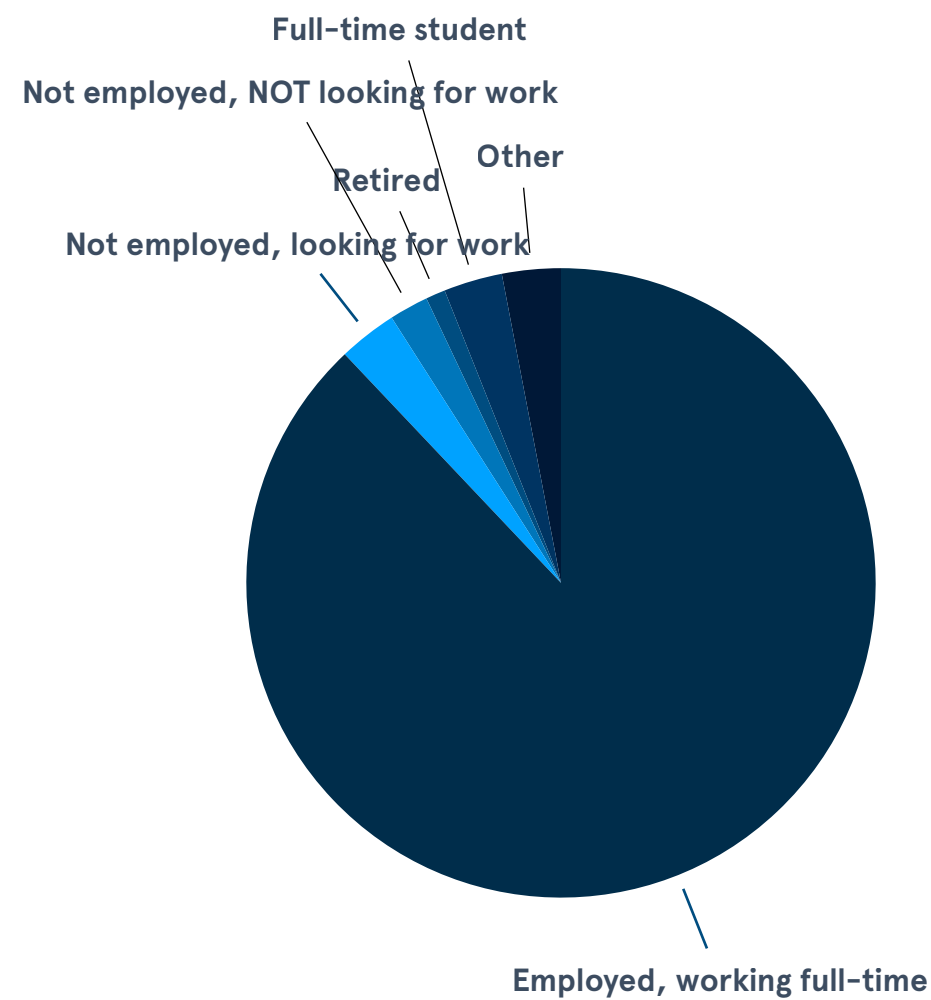# Quantic students and alumni skew more towards product and technology than traditional MBA/EMBA programs

Those in the general population that are interested in an MBA or EMBA are likely to work in Finance, HR, IT, Accounting, Operations, and Sales & Marketing

Quantic students stem from Engineering, Product, Technology, and Executive roles.

Left pie chart labels: N/A, R&D, Legal, International, Product, Public Relations, Manufacturing, Other, Business Intelligence, Engineering, Customer Service, Banking, Consulating, Executive (eg. COO), Marketing, Sales, Operations, Accounting, Human Resources, Finance, IT

Right pie chart labels: Legal, Manufacturing, International, Human Resources, N/A, Business Intelligence, Legal, Customer Service, Accounting, Finance, Operations, R&D, Sales, Executive (eg. COO), Marketing, IT, Product, Other, eg. Entertainment, Engineering
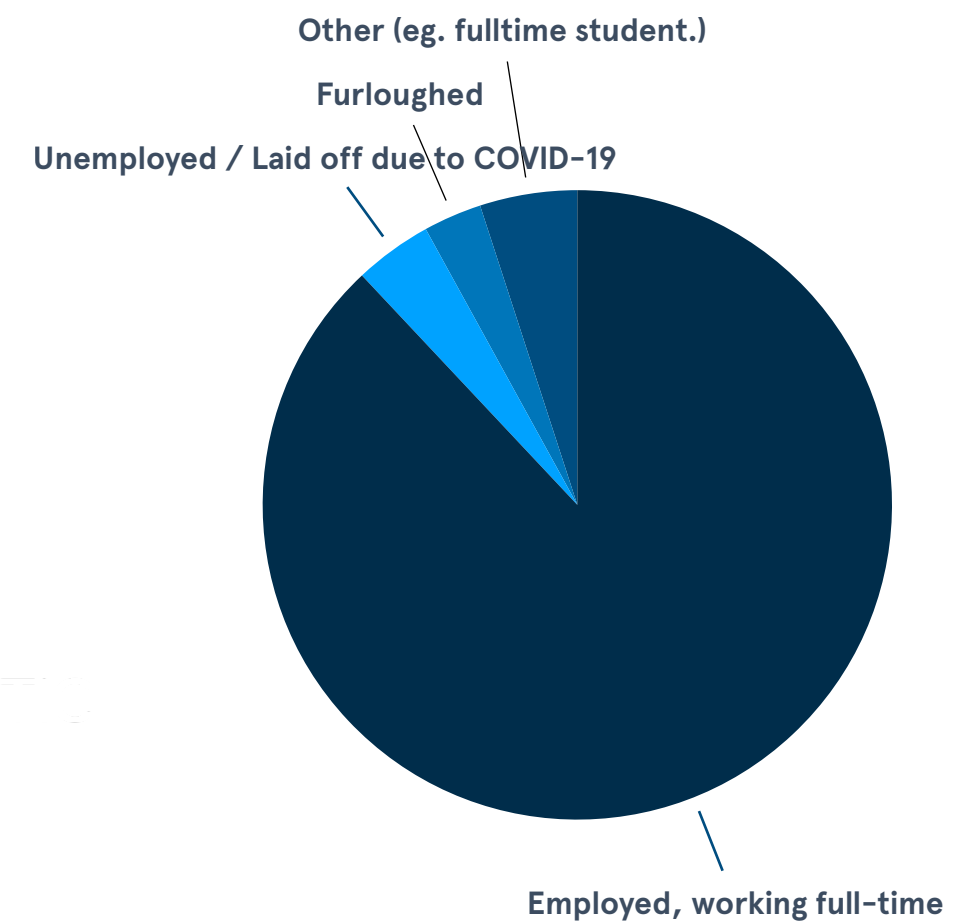
In fact, Quantic students and alumni are faring well in the COVID-19 job market - we've gone from 95% employment to 90%

95% employed full time pre-COVID-19

Full-time student

Not employed, NOT looking for work

Retired   Other

Not employed, looking for work

Employed, working full-time

90% employed full time post-COVID-19

Other (eg. fulltime student.)

Furloughed

Unemployed / Laid off due to COVID-19

Employed, working full-time

Q

Which of the following describes your employment status currently?

Students' companies are perhaps handling the crisis well, too

Q

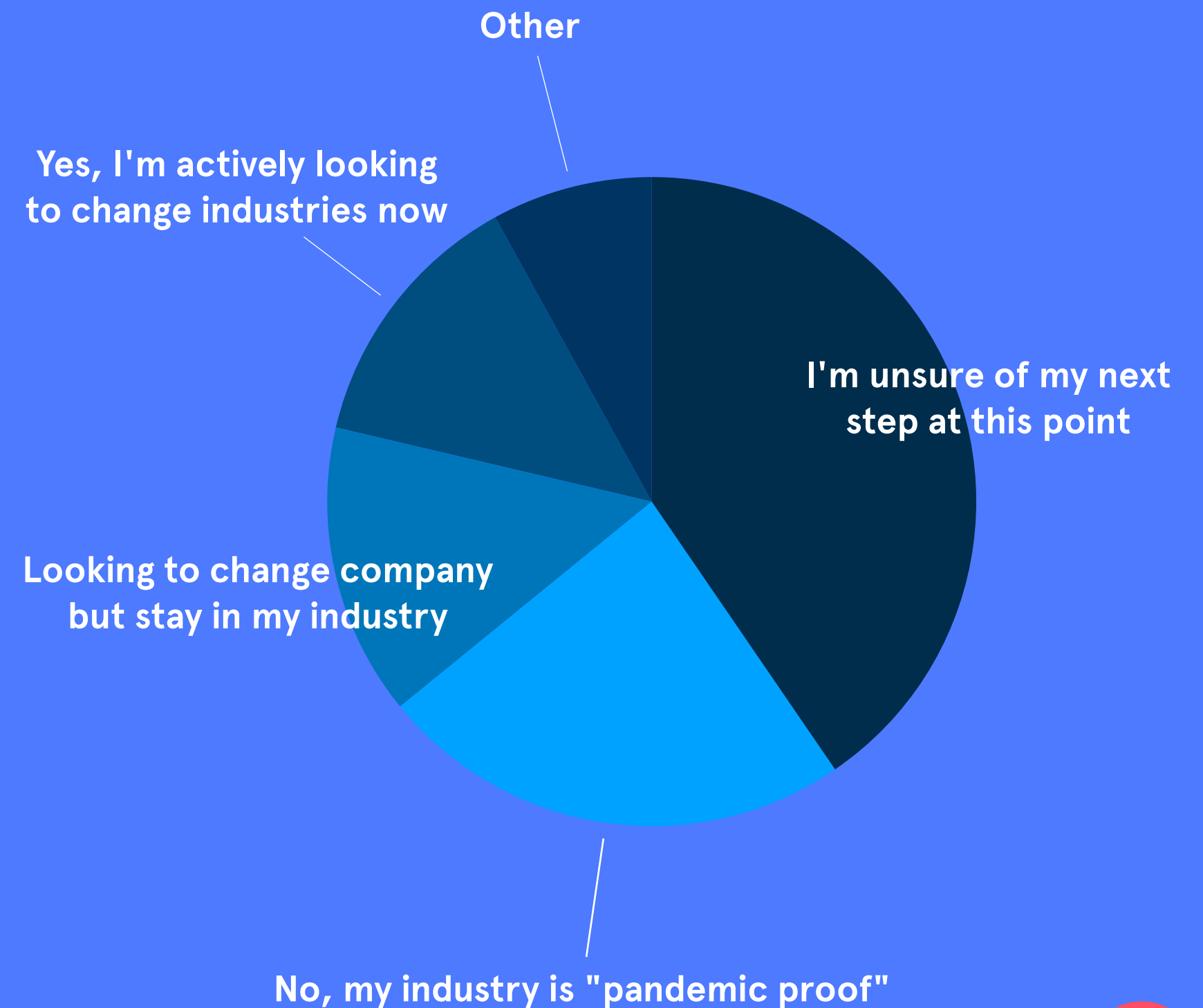How is your company handling downsizing as a result of the pandemic?
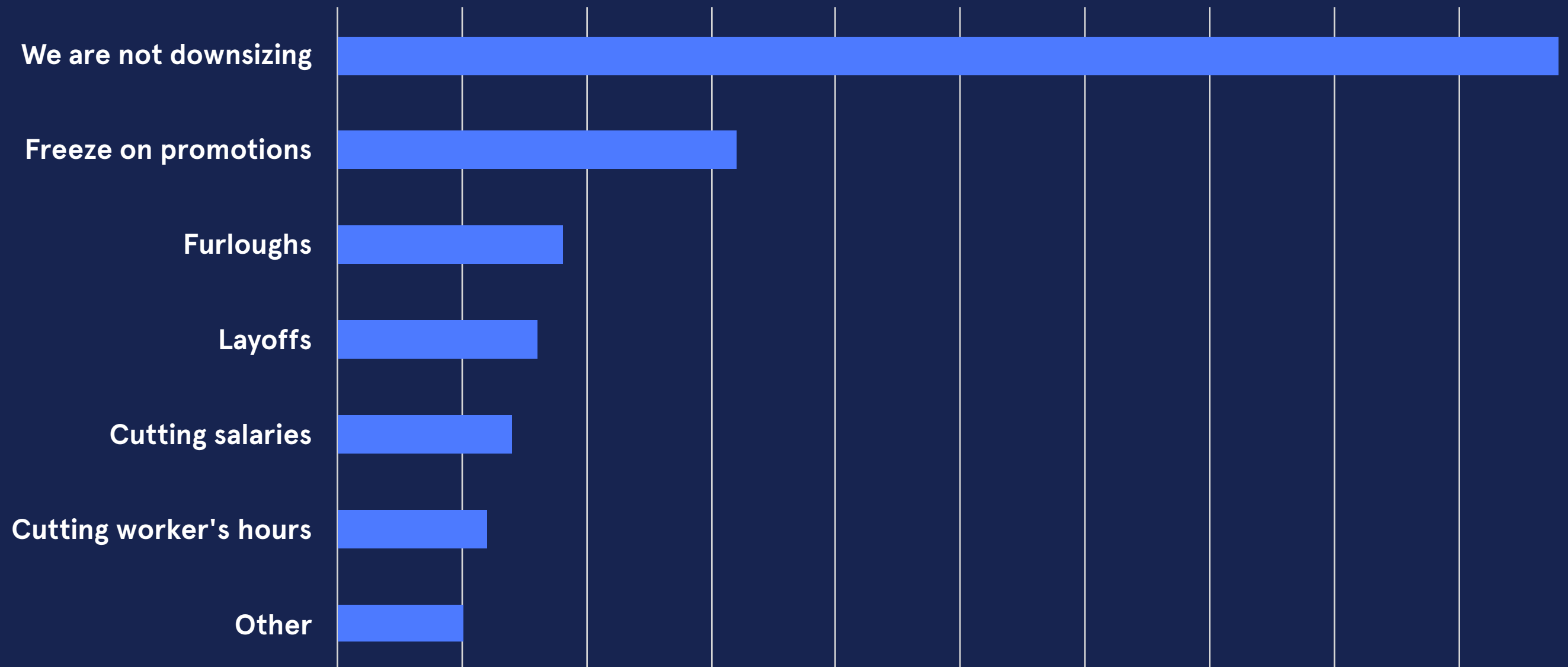
Interestingly, Quantic students and alumni are NOW looking at making bolder changes in their career

Q

Has this pandemic caused you to rethink the companies and industries you choose to work in?
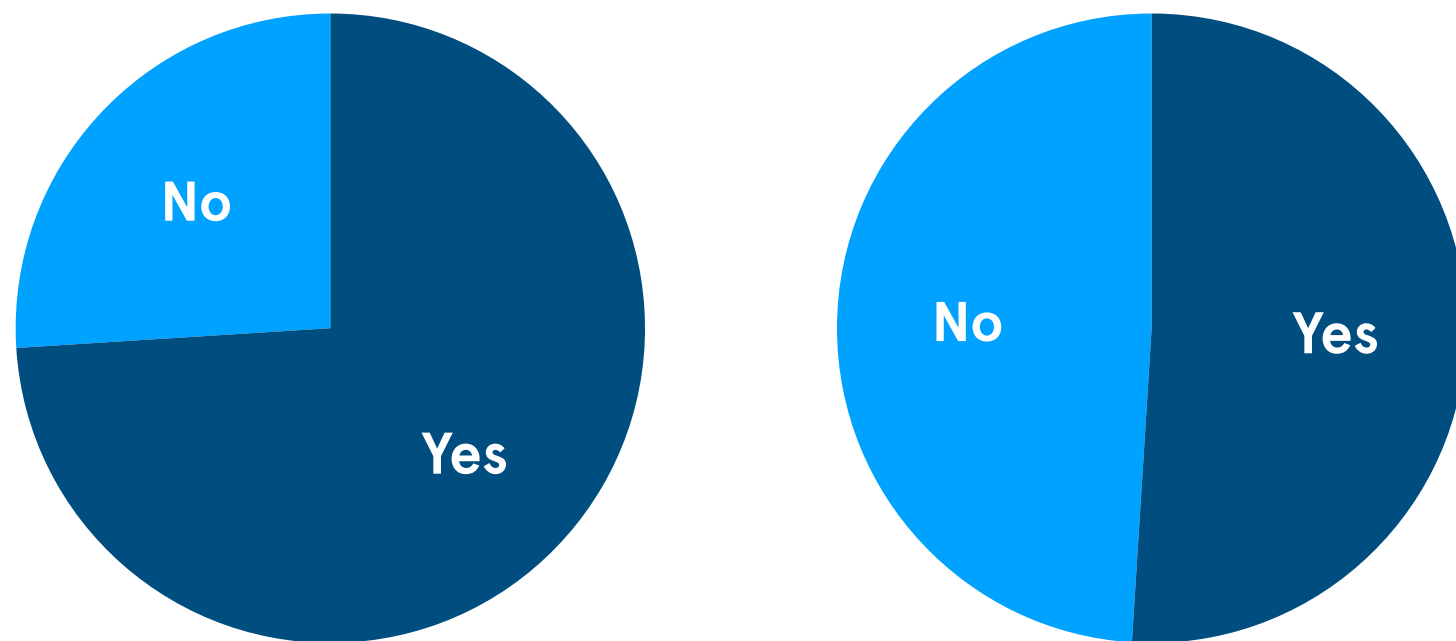
Only 25% see their industry as pandemic proof, so many are thinking about alternatives.

Other

Yes, I'm actively looking to change industries now

I'm unsure of my next step at this point

Looking to change company but stay in my industry

No, my industry is "pandemic proof"

And two thirds of those looking to add teammates before the crisis are still doing so

Q

Were you looking to add talent before the pandemic hit?

No

Yes

Q

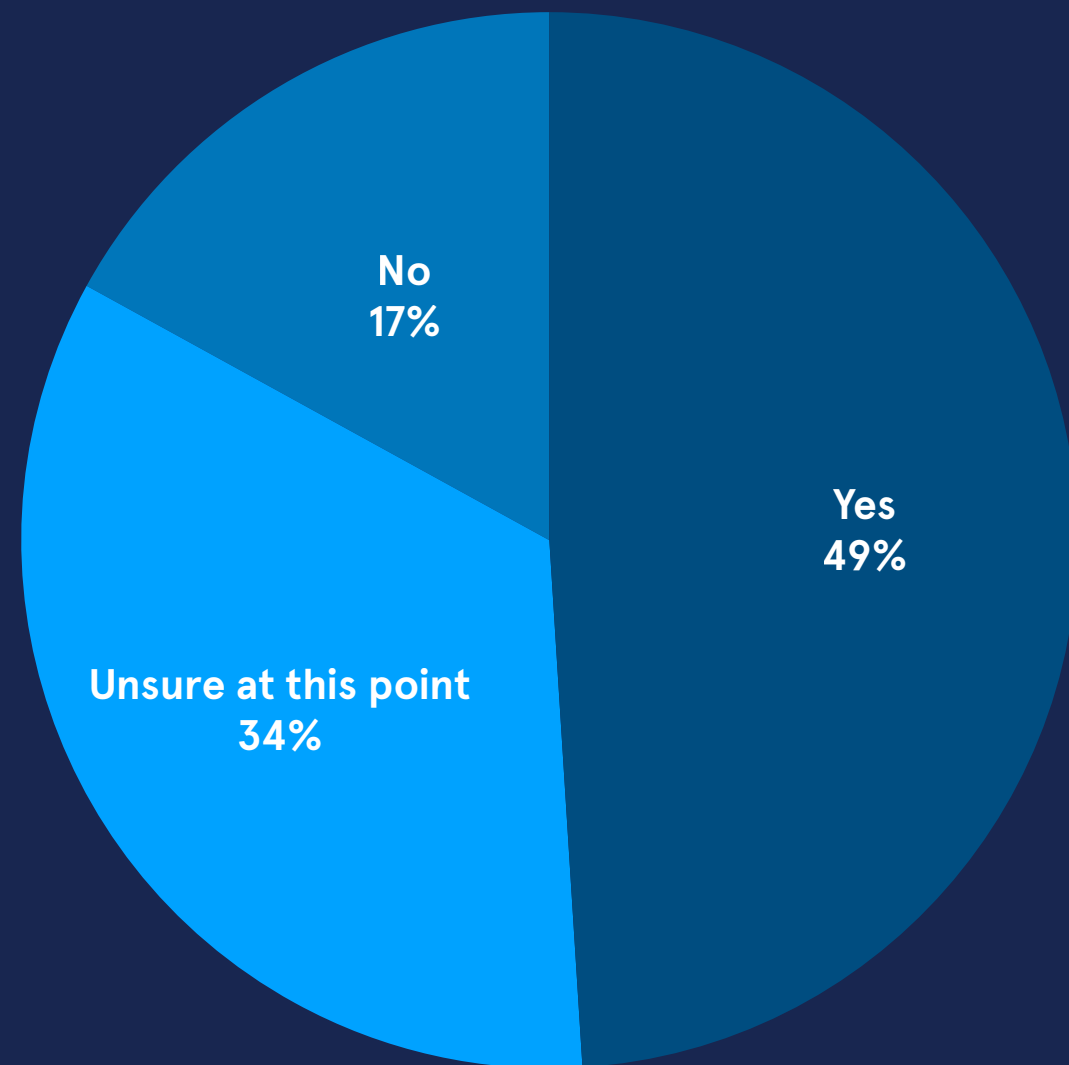Were you looking to add talent after the pandemic hit?

No

Yes

Q

If yes, which roles were added?

69%
43%
22%
18%
5%

Junior level
Mid-management
Adminstrative roles
Senior Management
VP and C-level roles