Executive Outlook on the Future of Work, 2030 and Beyond

Oxford-Protiviti Survey: Key Findings

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1 Introduction

Technology and innovation have long been recognised as key drivers for directing and defining the future of work: how will we be employed; how, who, and where will be employ and manage our labour force; and how will our work shape the way we live our lives, within and beyond the workplace? The COVID-19 pandemic has shaken up, refreshed, and forced new resolutions for many of our daily work patterns, and business strategies. This Executive Outlook on the Future of Work, 2030 and Beyond comes at a significant time. The report provides results of a global survey of 250 business leaders conducted in early 2022 to gain an insight into their experiences and predictions for the world of work, as we look beyond the pandemic. Many of the assessments and predictions in the World Bank's report in 2019 on the changing nature of work still hold muster, but this analysis came before the pandemic, before the working world changed, arguably forever. This current Executive Outlook arrives just at the right moment, as business and market leaders assess where they are, and more significantly, look towards where their operations will be going over the next decade.

Before the pandemic, reports on the future of work recognised that the rapidly growing role of automation was dramatically altering the sets of skills and knowledge required for exceptional business success, for both employers and employees. New ways of working had already scaled-up digital platforms, as emerging technologies further disrupted processes of production and consumption globally. The gig economy had altered the contractual engagement of employees across many labour markets, and a more enlightened business response to climate change increasingly was becoming a necessary, as well as potentially profitable, concern.

The business leaders responding to this current survey were aware of these trends, but they were asked to consider not only the changes they were making now, but critically, to use their knowledge and experience to place their organisation in 2030, and to look beyond. At the core of shared concerns, these prominent minds considered not only how much can business benefit from our recent past, but how much of the present will influence the future of our work.

2 The Oxford-Protiviti Survey: unpacking the questions

During January and February 2022, 250 board members, C-suite executives, and business leaders from across North America, Europe, and the Asia-Pacific region were surveyed to capture their thoughts and experiences on the future of work. Survey participants represent a broad range of industries, which include both publicly- and privately-held organisations. What would their companies look like in 2030? How would their colleagues' and their own work lives have changed over the next decade? Where will people be working, using what new technologies and innovations, and how will our ideas of work culture and collaboration have altered? This Executive Outlook on the Future of Work, 2030 and Beyond addresses these issues. The findings confirm some expectations, but also deliver surprises.

Regional differences emerge as always, but global trends hold sway. Traditional means of doing business will be disrupted, in positive ways, and changing forms of communication will continue to redefine employee-employer relationships. The following sections reveal these findings.

Four main themes were explored in the research: location and workplace; work culture and collaboration; skills and talent pools; and technology and jobs. Business leaders were asked to consider their organisation's current work practices as many emerged from the shock of the COVID-19 pandemic. Primary interest, however, was placed on their predictions for the future, looking to 2030 and beyond. What conditions and contexts did they foresee, and were they ready for the future's shifting economic, social, and technological workscapes? The following section highlights key findings before the breadth and depth of the survey is unpacked.

3 Findings in Brief: the global business perspective on the future of work to 2030, and beyond

Business leaders are largely optimistic, engaged, and ready for the shifting economic, technological, and work challenges ahead over the next decade, and beyond. The survey overall highlights the concerns over, and positive advantages to be gained from, being ahead of the market. It recognises the role of emerging technologies and innovations in reshaping workplaces, labour requirements, and processes of production and consumption. Adapting to rapidly changing technological and human capital needs lies at the heart of participants' visions for business in 2030.

To highlight key findings from the survey:

→ 78% of companies' employees worked full-time in the office before COVID-19. In 2030, it is expected that 70% of employees will have a hybrid home-office work model.

→ 57% of employers are very likely to mandate where and how their employees work in 2030.

→ The jury remains out as to whether home-working or onsite work leads to greater efficiency, better collaboration, or more effective business outcomes. For new employees, working from home was not believed to significantly reduce creativity, networking, professional development, or even social interaction.

→ The importance of responding to new technologies – notably artificial intelligence and automation; stakeholders' concerns over climate change and management diversity; system integration; – and re-training employees will be more important over the next decade according to over 80% of all participants.

→ 86% of business leaders believe that their company will face a shortage of skilled labour by 2030.

And some surprises for 2030, and beyond?

→ 66% of business leaders believe the standard working week of 5 days, 40 hours per week will remain the same, or become more prevalent.

→ 84% of business leaders believe that their employees will show increased loyalty to their company over the next decade.

→ 78% of business leaders in North America believe that quantum computing will have no relevance for their operations in 2030. This contrasts with over 50% of leaders in Europe and the Asia-Pacific region, who are focused on the transformative impact of quantum technologies.

4

Analysis: location & workplace

The locations of businesses and workplaces have been changing constantly. The rapid rise of digital market platforms and the growing impact of automation in many industries have reshaped our world of work over the last decade. The COVID-19 pandemic has evidently fast-forwarded aspects of these business configurations. The survey began by questioning business leaders about these most recent changes in work experience. Participants were asked to consider where the majority of their employees worked before the COVID-19 pandemic, and then reflect on the likely changes to work experience over the next decade (Figures 1 and 2). The findings were stark, and comparable across all regions: 78% of companies' employees worked full-time in the office before COVID-19. In 2030, it is expected that 70% of employees will follow a hybrid home-office work model.

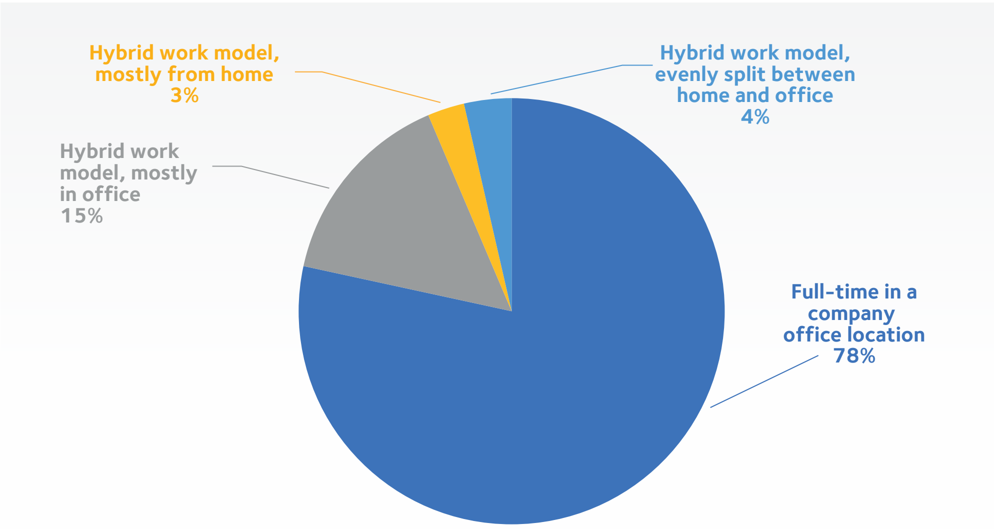


Figure 1. For a company like yours, where did the majority of your employees work before the COVID-19 pandemic?

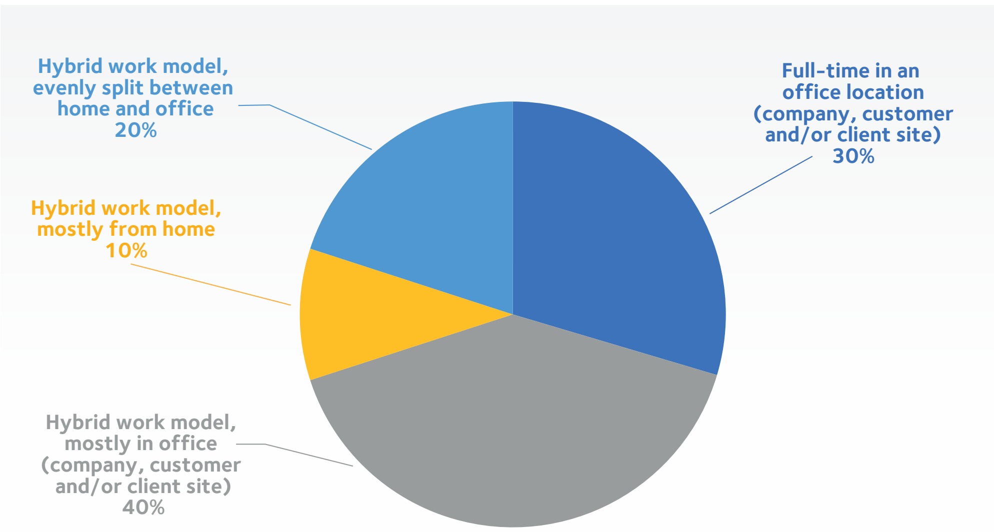


Figure 2. For a company like yours, what would you say will be the typical work experience for the majority of employees in 10 years' time?

While much has been made about the impact of hybrid working across a range of industries and markets, there have been accompanying suggestions that the 'standard working week' – 5 days, 40 hours a week – would change, as employees gained more say in how they would work, and marshalled their own weekly agenda.

The findings tend to dispute this notion of temporal work flexibility, despite the dramatic increase in hybrid working experienced by many (Figures 3 and 4). The survey revealed that 66% of business leaders believe the standard working week will remain the same, or become more prevalent by 2030. Of these, 57% of employers are very likely to mandate where and how their employees will work. Regional differences, however, stand out. In North America, 78% of participants believe that the 5 days-40 hours per week model will be more prevalent, whereas in the Asia-Pacific region, 35% of business leaders foresee more flexibility, believing this weekly routine will become less prominent.

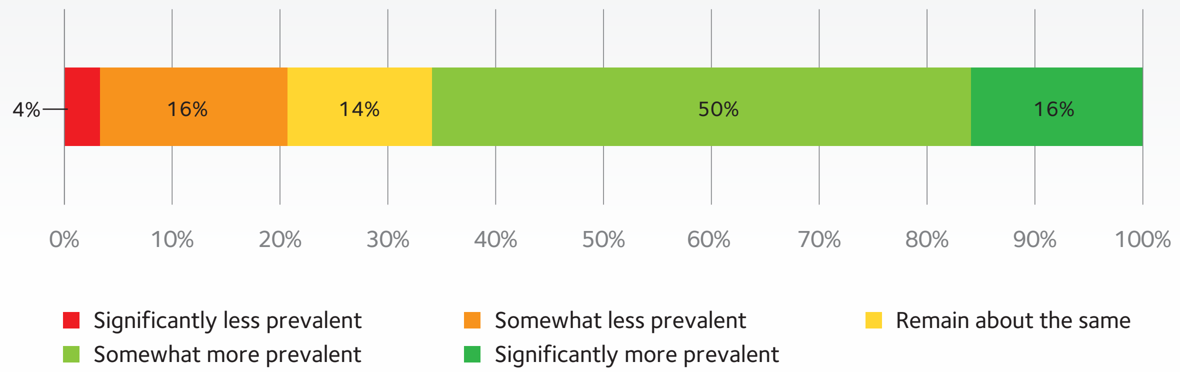


Figure 3. For a company like yours, how prevalent do you think the standard working week, say 5 working days, 40 hours, will still be a decade from now?

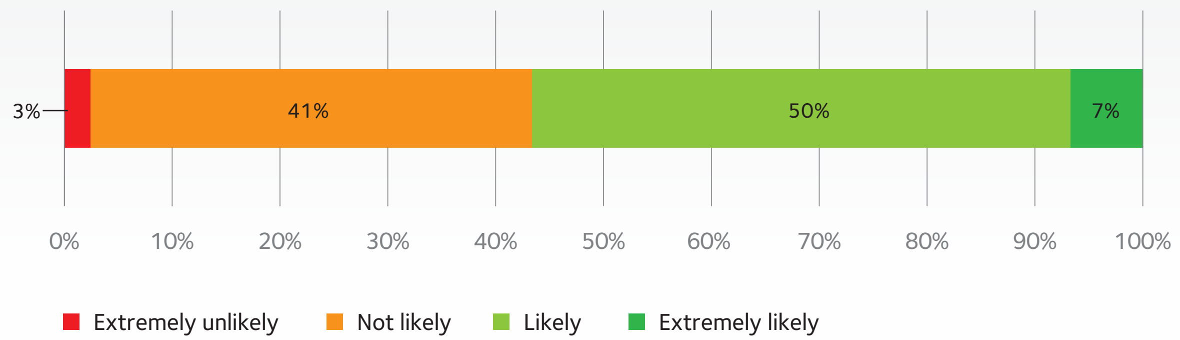


Figure 4. How likely do you think it is that you will mandate how and where your employees work over the next decade?

5 Analysis: work culture, collaboration & skills

New and emerging forms of future work will require different technical and socio-behavioural skills amongst workforces, and those who direct them. While the pandemic has shifted the way many of us work, manage, and arguably lead, business heads were asked to consider how they believed work culture, business collaborations, and skill requirements will be transformed over the next decade. The impact of home-working and the potential benefits of working together in the office were recognised in the survey, but the jury remains out as to whether home-working, as opposed to onsite work, leads to greater efficiency, better collaboration, or more effective business outcomes for new employees (Figure 5). Noticeably, home-working was not believed to reduce significantly work creativity, networking, professional development, or even social interaction. In many cases, working from home boosted individual motivation, access to training, and business engagement.

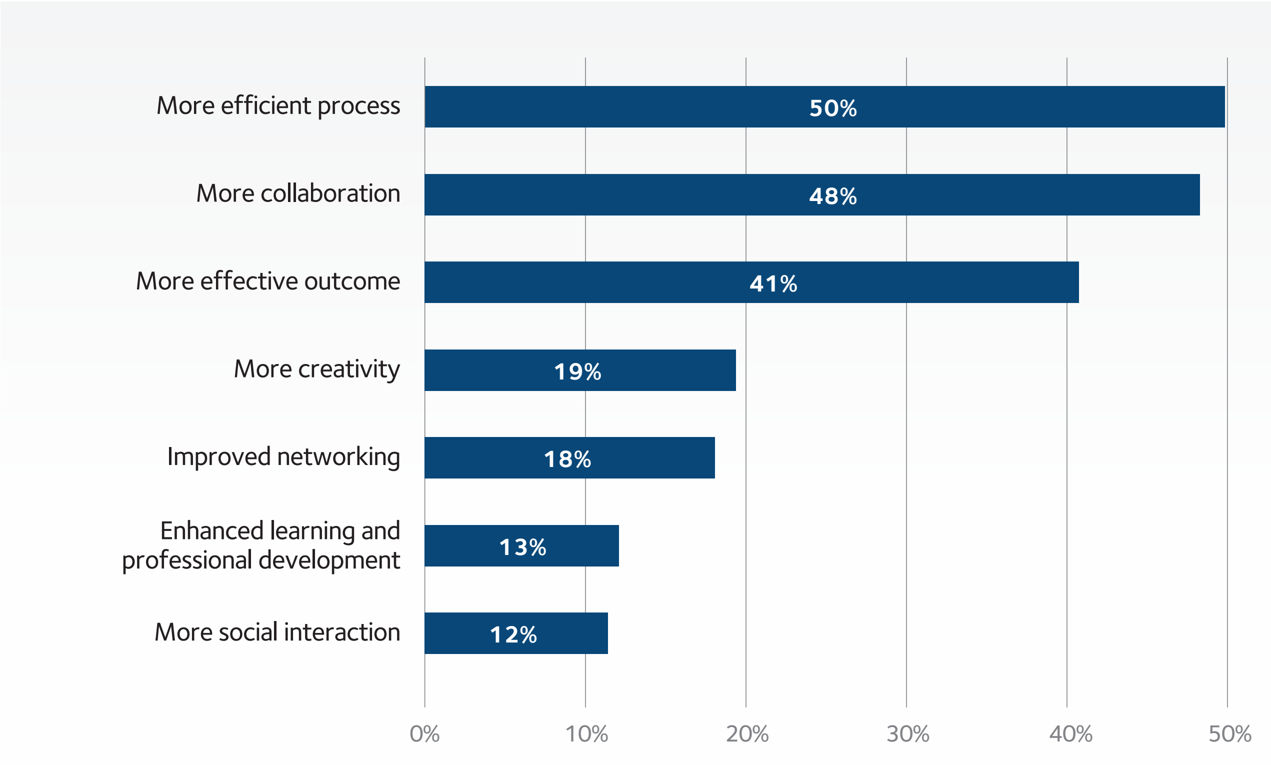


Figure 5. For a company like yours, what are the two most compelling advantages that new employees gain from being onsite in the workplace, i.e. not working from home?

Over the last decade, automation has been at the forefront of thinking about how businesses and industry may change, often in dramatic ways. Results from this survey also show the increasing awareness of the potentially positive impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on the future of work for 2030, and beyond (Figures 6 and 7). Three-quarters of respondents believe that AI would play a significant role in improving the training and skill base of employees. Investment in re-training work forces and developing human capital has long been understood by organisations, such as the World Bank and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, as a key factor to ready businesses for the future. It is notable that 52% of business leaders in North America view greater engagement with AI by 2030 as a significant improvement, compared with just 11% in Asia-Pacific. This may reflect the already high level of commitment to AI in the latter region. Across the board, 85% of all business leaders are looking to improve their use of AI and automated recruitment processes for staff hiring over the next decade.

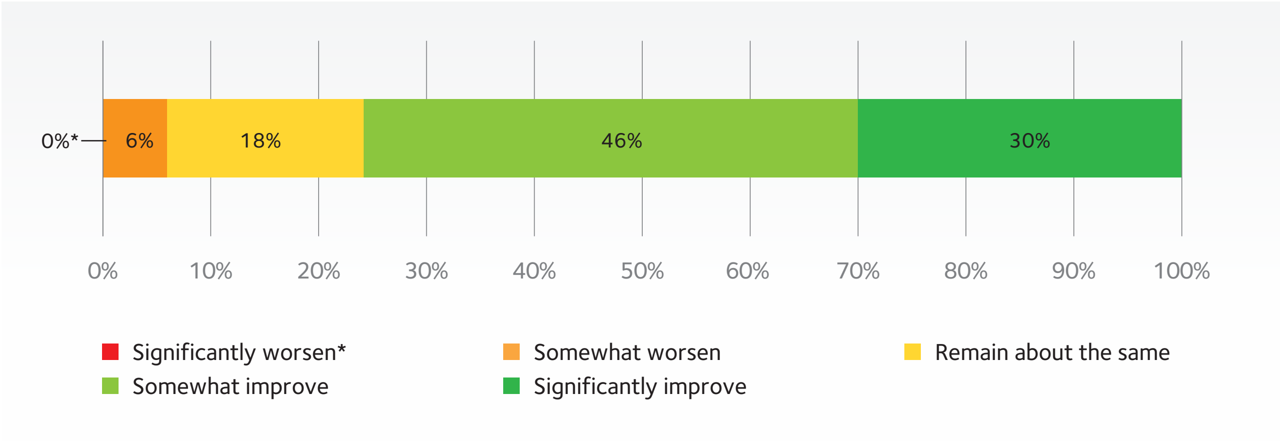


Figure 6. For a company like yours, how much do you expect the automated delivery of training based on artificial intelligence to improve the skills of your employees in 10 years' time?

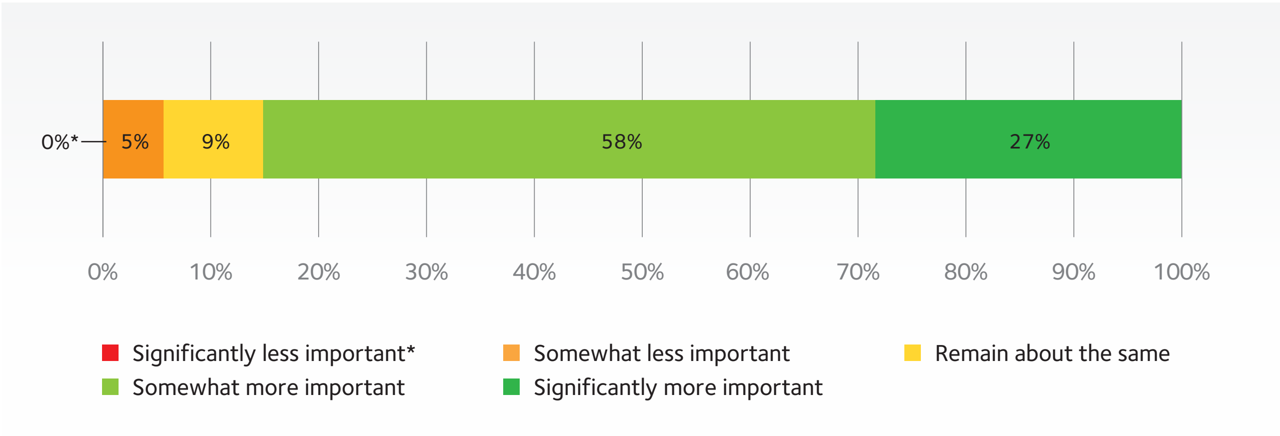


Figure 7. For a company like yours, will artificial intelligence and automated recruitment processes for your staff hiring over the next decade become...?

The focus on developing human capital as a core component of future workplaces is reflected in the wide recognition of stakeholders' demands for greater diversity in management, across a variety of contexts (Figures 8 and 9). Among business leaders, 70% foresee a change in the gender balance of management structures, most obviously in the promotion of women into leadership roles. In North America, 84% of respondents recognise that this change would occur, and in Asia-Pacific, 92% see overall diversity as a priority. This may mean that those business leaders being surveyed in 2030 will not reflect the 82:18 male:female ratio in the current survey (see Appendix).

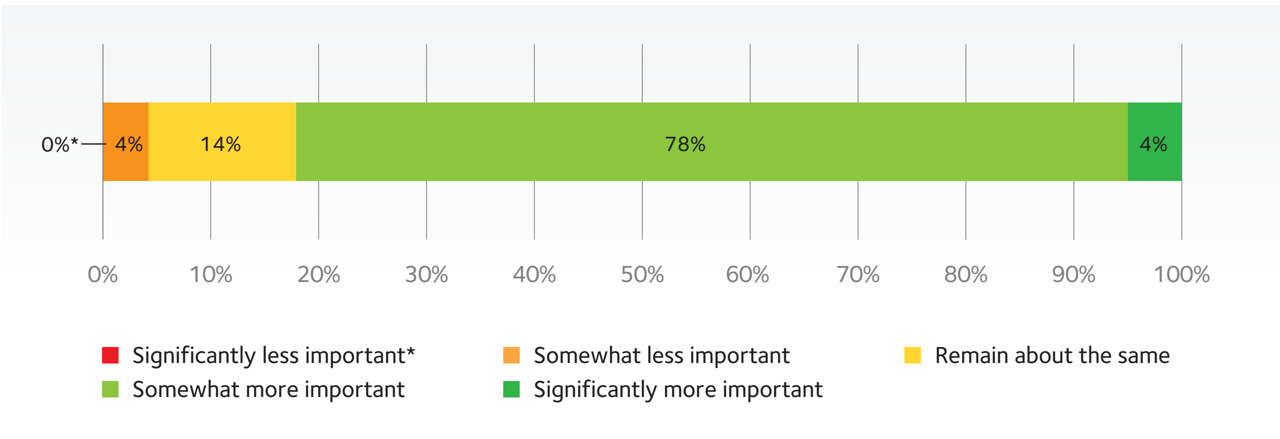


Figure 8. Over the next decade, for a company like yours, do you expect stakeholders' demands for greater diversity in management, including gender, ethnic, racial, physical ability, and other attributes, to become...?

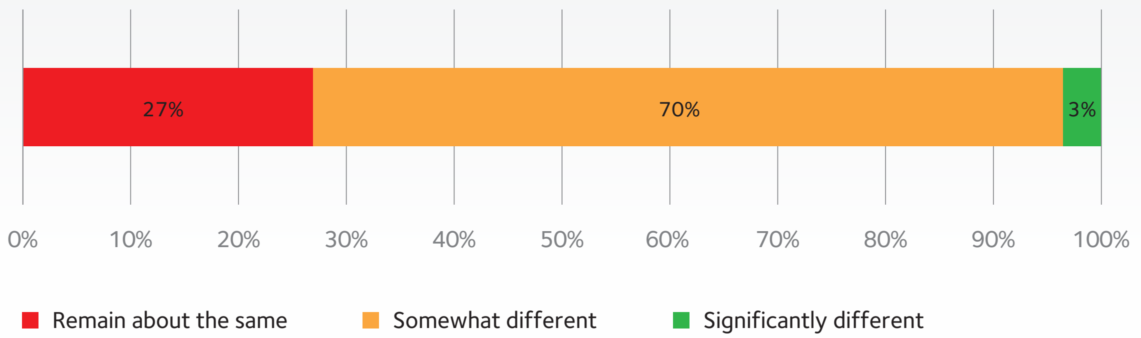


Figure 9. For a company like yours, do you expect the gender balance of management structures in 10 years' time to become...?

Employee engagement and retention have been a growing concern as the 'portfolio-career' path has become more prominent in recent years, and as companies recognise the need to train, and retrain, their workforce to face the evolving technical and socio-behavioural demands required for a successful, responsive, and responsible business. Over 80% of leaders express concern about worker retention today, and about future skilled labour shortages (Figures 10 and 11).

One of the anomalies of the survey is brought to light in this general area of employee retention and loyalty, which hosts an uneasy juxtaposition of concern and optimism. When business leaders are asked to reflect on staff retention and turnover in 2030, 84% of business leaders are convinced that loyalty to their company will increase (Figure 12). In North America, this incongruence was the most marked: 95% of respondents express concern about retaining staff today, yet 95% also believe that staff loyalty will be higher in 2030. This may reflect very high confidence in their own company, or in the importance of investing in human capital to encourage loyalty, but flies in the face of wider concerns about staff retention, especially given the increasing need to invest in capacity training to ensure access to workers with relevant skills.

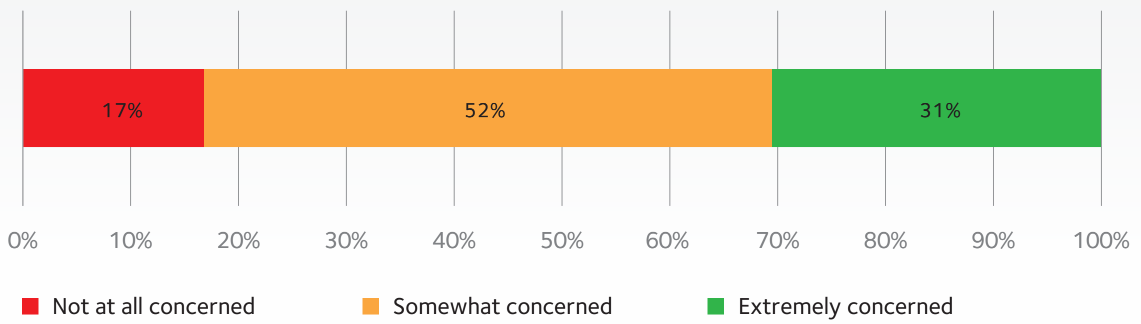


Figure 10. How concerned are you about retaining workers and reducing staff turnover today?

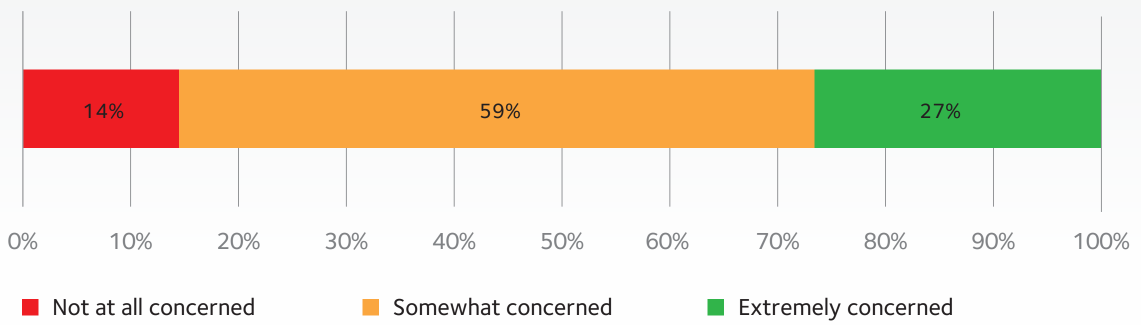


Figure 11. For a company like yours, to what extent are you concerned that there will be a shortage of workers with the required capabilities in 10 years' time?

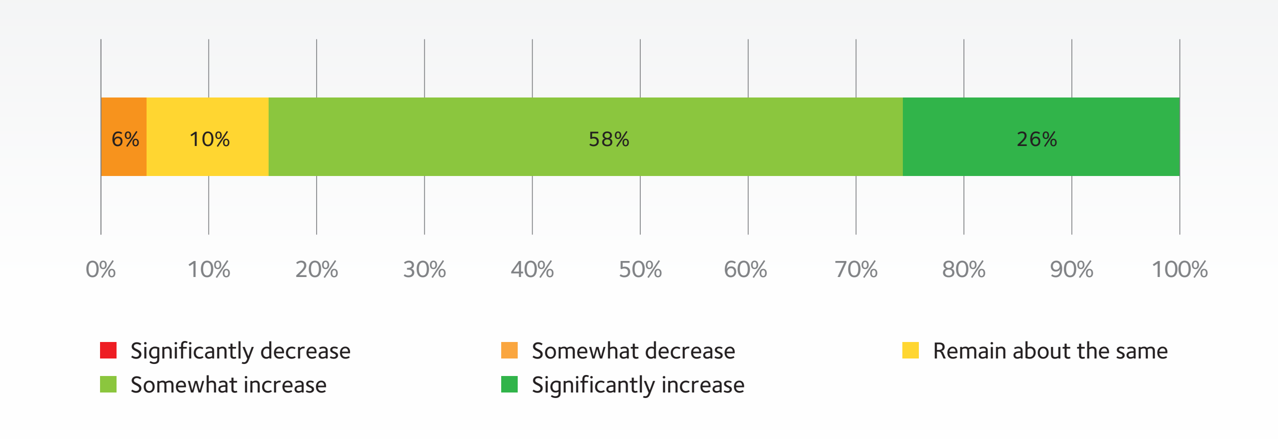


Figure 12. For a company like yours, in 10 years' time, do you expect employee retention and loyalty to...?

Agreement, however, is clear amongst business leaders that current trends in globalisation will continue, and be even more significant in 2030 (Figure 13). In North America in particular, 55% of respondents expect a significant increase, perhaps reflecting a move to explore more markets external to the region. In recognition of the transition to greater environmental responsibility, and possible consumer and market backlash against companies failing to take up the baton, 60% of business leaders thought that increased adherence to government pledges and regulations about net-zero carbon emissions and climate change will benefit their organisations (Figure 14).

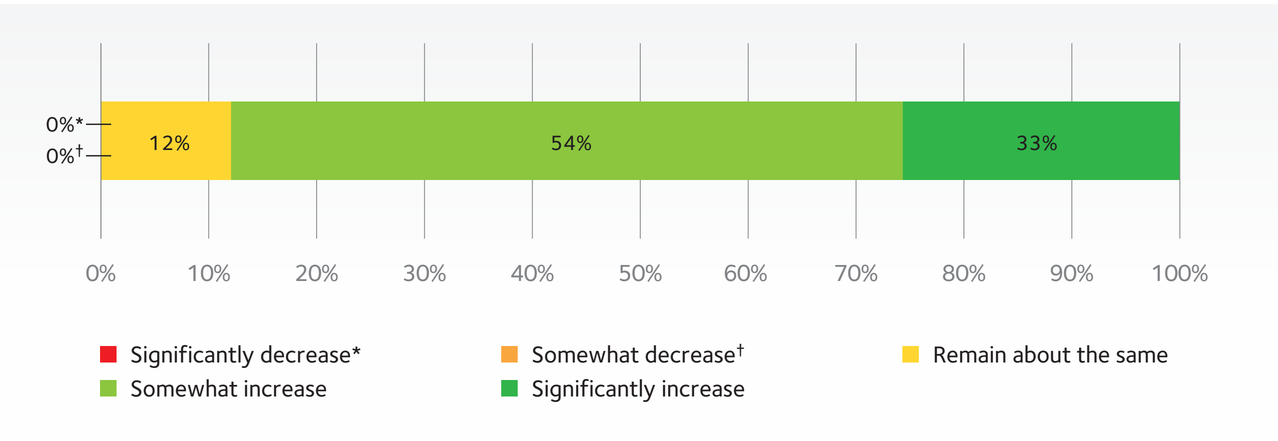


Figure 13. Over the next decade, how do you believe globalisation, in general, will change?

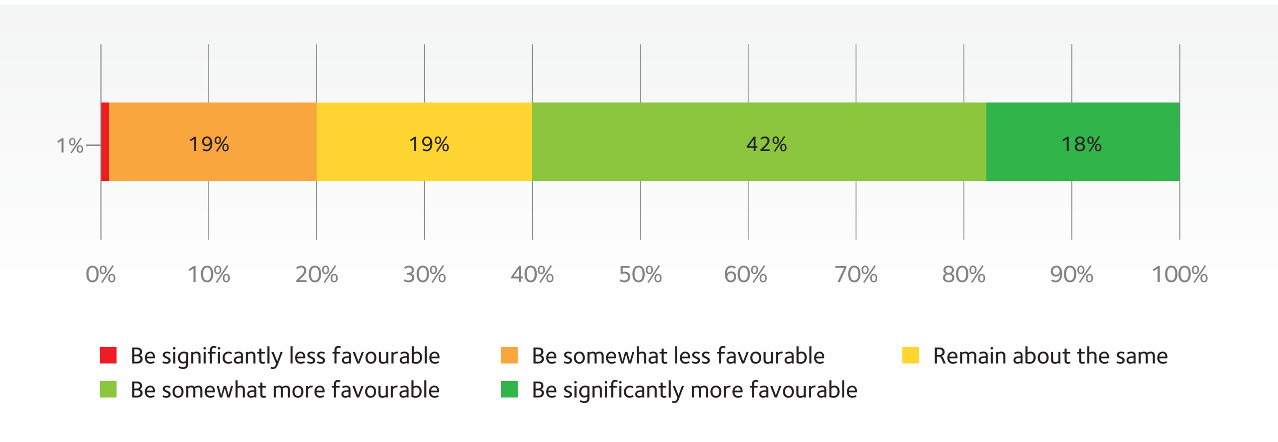


Figure 14. Over the next decade, how will government pledges and regulations about net-zero carbon emissions and climate change impact your business?

6 Analysis: technology & jobs

The final tranche of questions surveyed business leaders' opinions on the impact of future technologies and employment. This, as expected, elicited some of the clearest and united responses, despite the occasional regional anomaly. Three-quarters of respondents believe that new digital and other emerging technologies will serve to increase the size of their companies' workforce over time (Figure 15). When questioned on the transformative impact of individual technologies, the importance of responding to new elements – notably AI and machine learning, automation and system integration – will be more important according to over 80% of all participants over the next decade. Less extensive, but similarly counted as important by over 50% of those surveyed, are augmented and virtual reality and autonomous robots as key components in the future of work.

Incongruities appear, however, when assessing some of the regional responses. When asked about the future significance of quantum computing, 78% of business leaders in North America believe that it will have no relevance for their operations in 2030. This contrasts with over 50% of leaders in Europe and the Asia-Pacific region, who are focused on the potential transformative impact of quantum technologies. In a similar context, 59% of respondents in Asia-Pacific trust that additive manufacturing, such as 3D printing, will have a transformative impact on their businesses, compared with only 22% in North America. This may be due to the particular type of companies in which they are engaged, or more alarmingly, it may indicate a lack of awareness of such opportunities as they are emerging. This regional variation can, however, be expected given the various stages of industrialisation, particularly in the context of the fourth Industrial Revolution, and market development globally. For example, the evidence that only 22% of business heads in the Asia-Pacific region consider that AI and machine learning will be extremely transformative by 2030, compared to 73% in North America, may reflect an earlier engagement with such technologies.

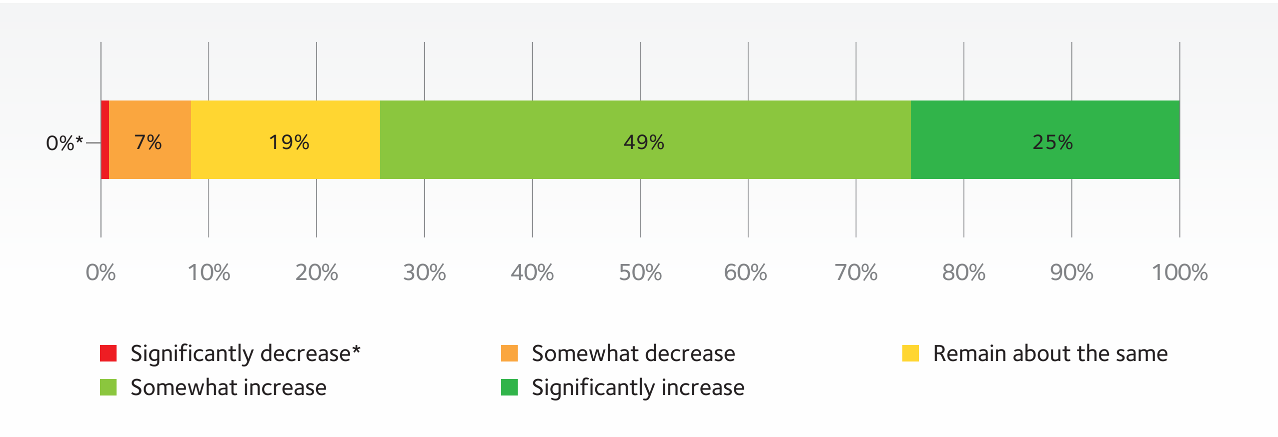
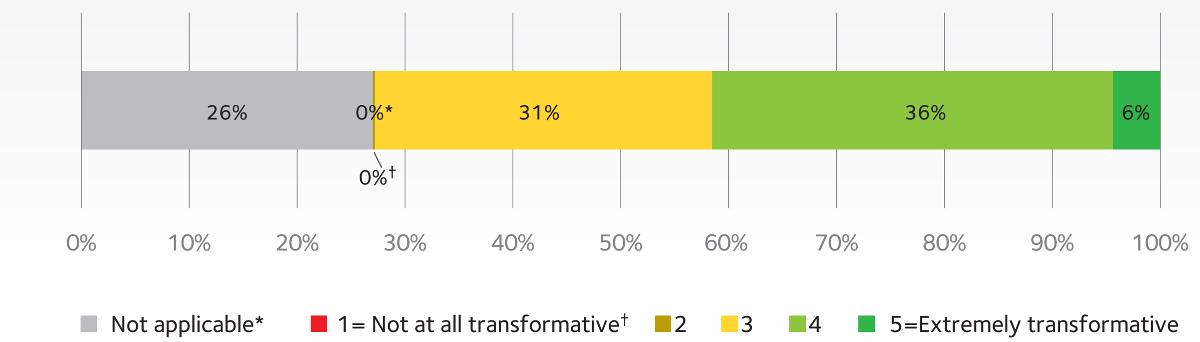
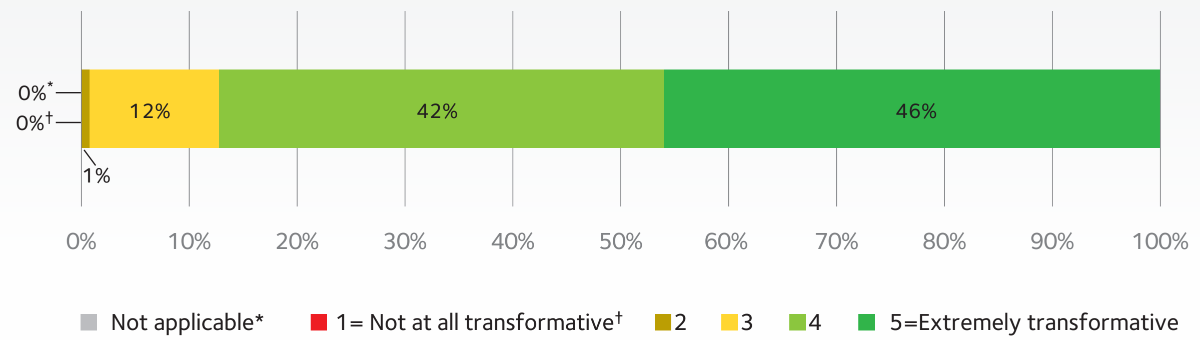


Figure 15. For a company like yours, what impact will new digital and other emerging technologies have on the size of your workforce in 10 years' time?

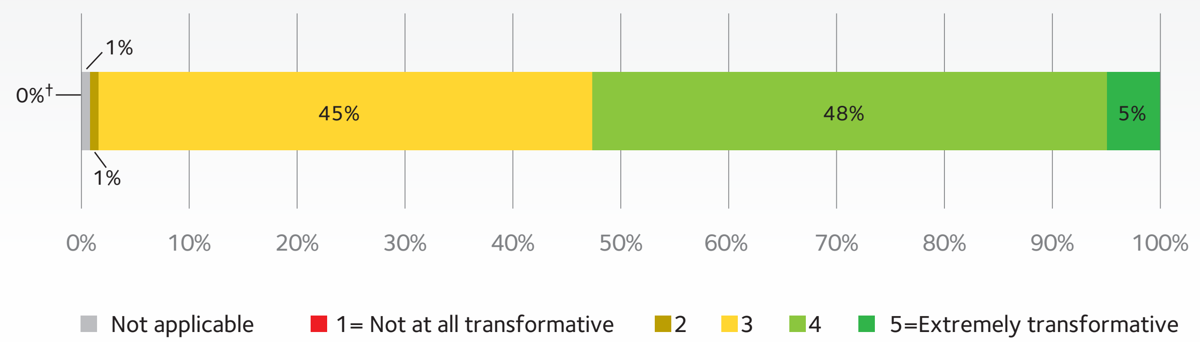
Figure 16: a – j Over the next decade, how transformative will each of these technologies be for your business?



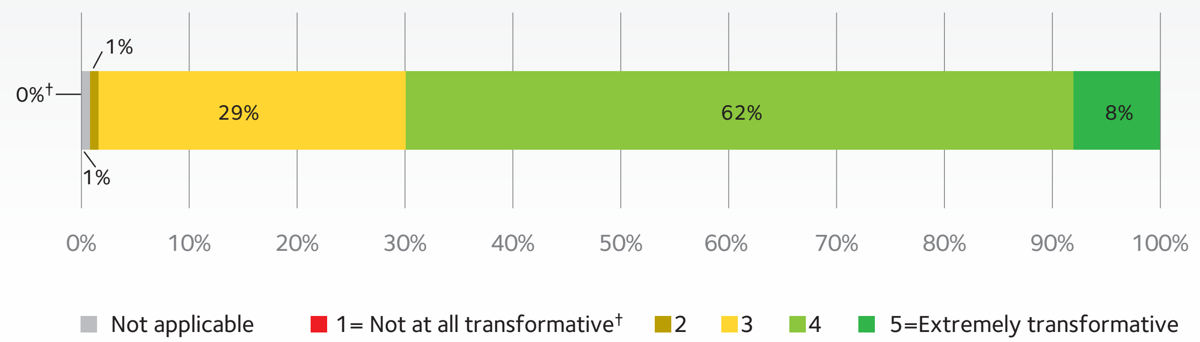
a. Additive manufacturing (for example, 3D printing)



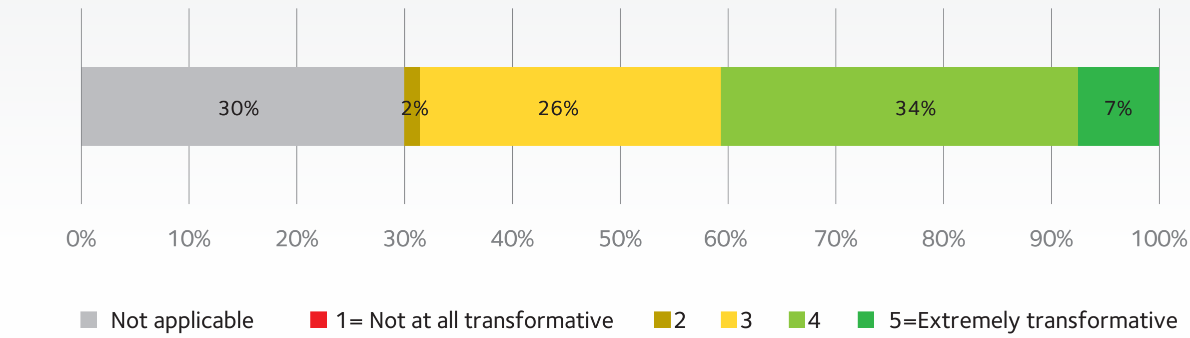
b. Artificial intelligence and machine learning



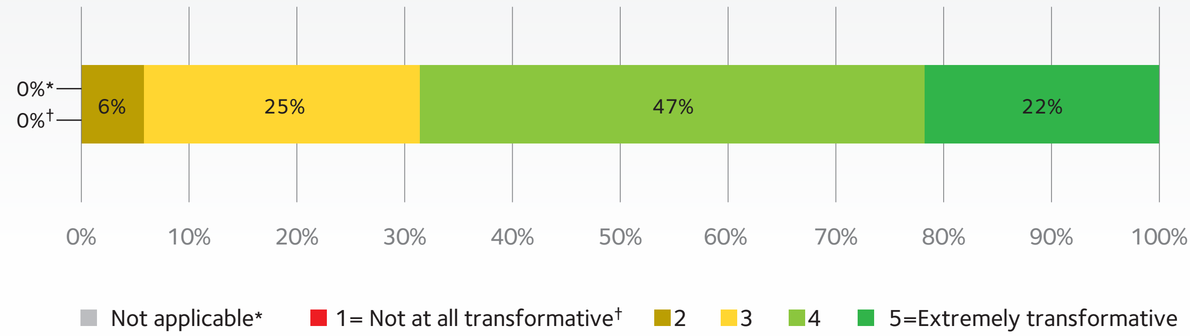
c. Augmented and virtual reality



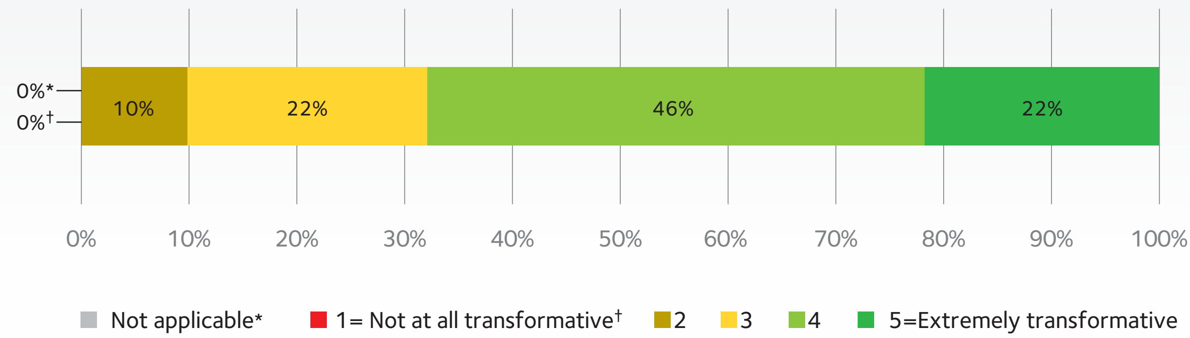
d. Autonomous robots



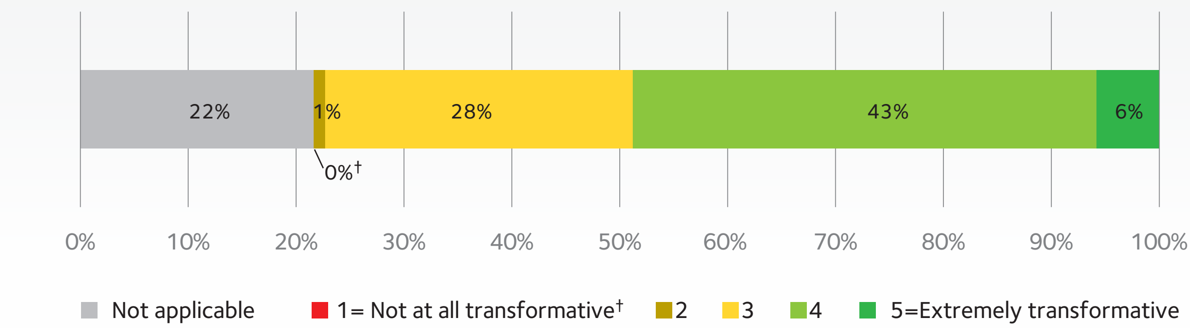
e. Autonomous vehicles



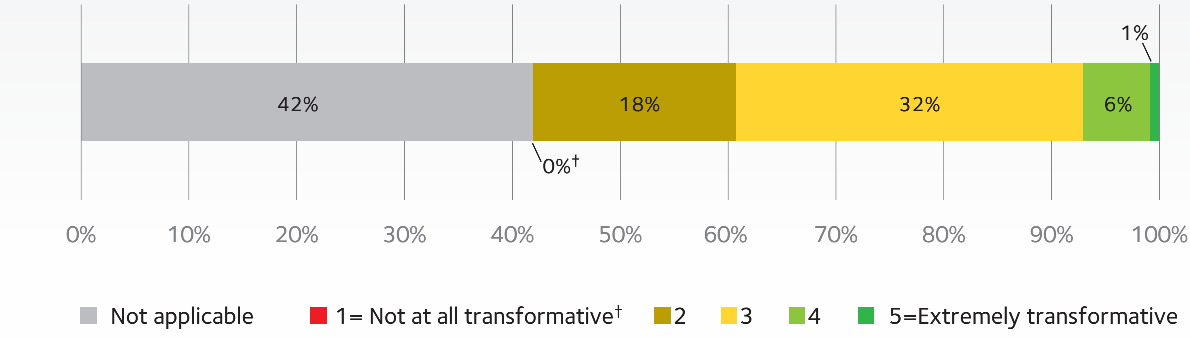
f. Cloud computing



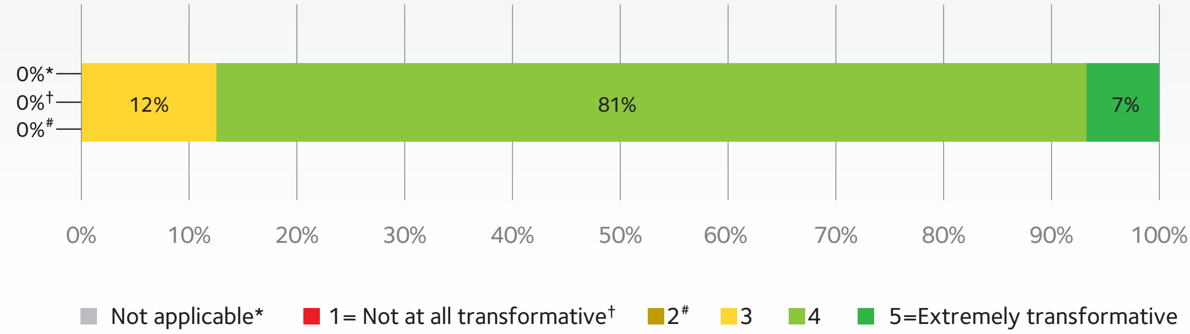
g. Cybersecurity



h. Machine tools



i. Quantum computing



j. System integration (for example, connecting front-office to back-office technology)

The concluding part of the survey looked towards overall changes that business leaders are predicting over the next decade, and beyond. Perhaps most striking, and a figure which underpins the dramatic shift in the future of work, which we can expect and must plan for, is that 86% of all participants agree that the type of jobs that their employees will perform in 2030 will be different from today (Figure 17). Pursuing the shared focus, concern, and opportunity to engage with tomorrow's workplace today, 88% also recognise that AI will generate a radical transformation of business in this relatively short time frame (Figure 18). As businesses and leaders emerge from the pandemic, the next changes and challenges are already upon us.

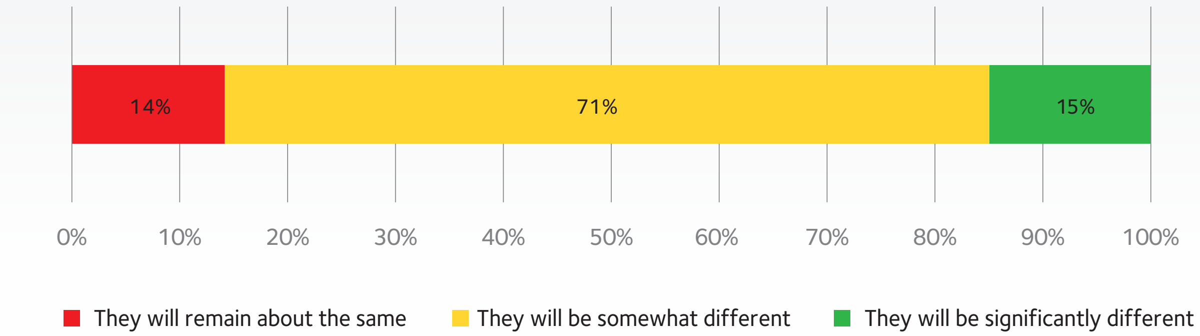


Figure 17. Compared to today, how would you characterise the types of jobs your employees will perform in 10 years' time?

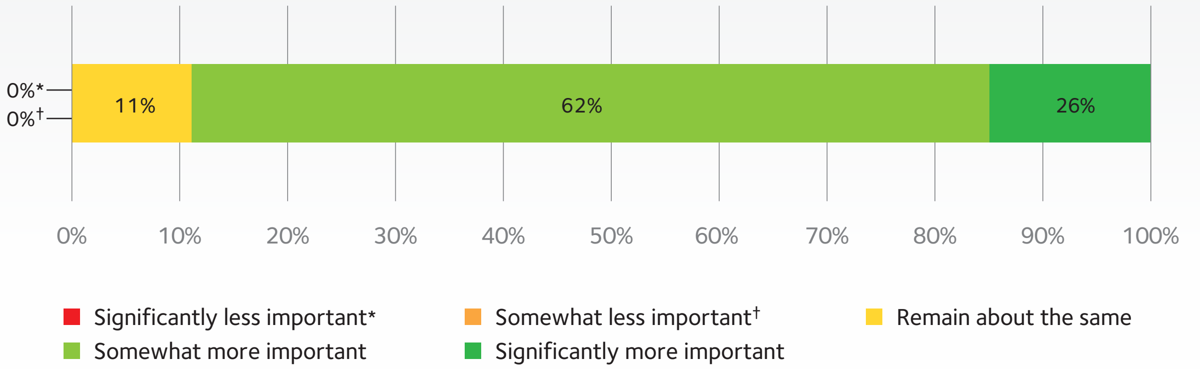


Figure 18. Compared to today, how important will artificial intelligence be for a radical transformation of a company like yours in 10 years' time?

7 Looking Ahead

Previous reports on the future of work have covered the perhaps expected concerns of automation, and the need to train and sustainably manage employees, while acknowledging the global differences in regional economies and individual entities, from informal workshops to global corporate networks. This Executive Outlook on the Future of Work, 2030 and Beyond is among the first surveys to seize the post-pandemic moment, in which many countries and businesses find themselves. It has shown not only that the world and marketplaces have changed, but that the most active, successful leaders in business are already looking ahead. They are seizing opportunities, particularly in new technologies and labour up-skilling where possible, or at least recognising that the world of work in 2030 will be different, very different from today. While many organisations focus on what has been termed a green, and hopefully just, recovery from the pandemic, the avant garde is already engaged with the next decade's developments.

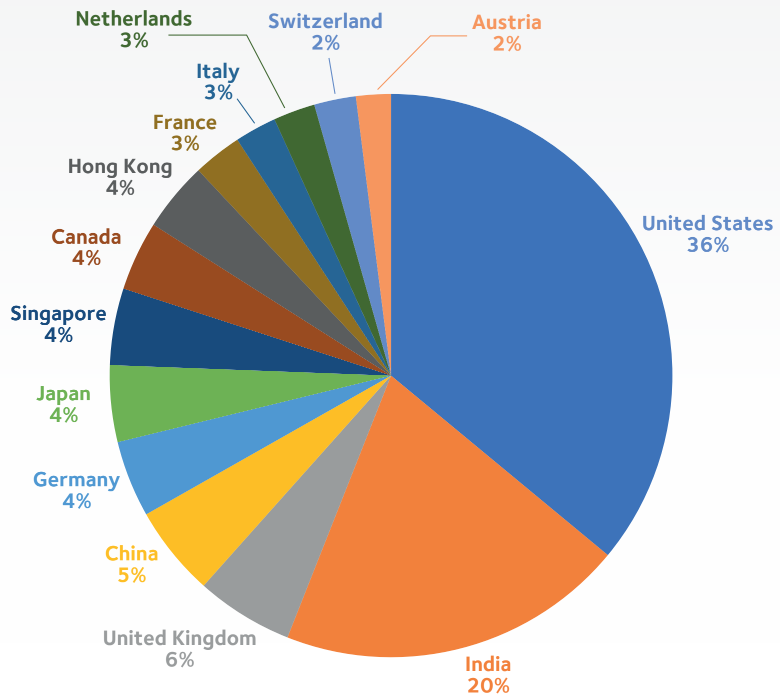
Appendix: Oxford – Protiviti Survey Methodology and Demographics

The Executive Outlook on the Future of Work, 2030 and Beyond captures insights from 250 board members, C-suite executives, and business leaders across North America, Europe, and the Asia-Pacific region. Survey participants represent a broad range of industries, which include both publicly- and privately-held organisations. Data, which was collected in January and February 2022, was obtained via one-on-one computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI). Participants were asked a series of questions about the future of work in 2030, compared to current practice, concerning their own organisations. Additional questions were asked about the size and location of their organisation, as well as their gender, age, and job title: these results are summarised below. All data were collected confidentially, and organisations and individuals were not disclosed.

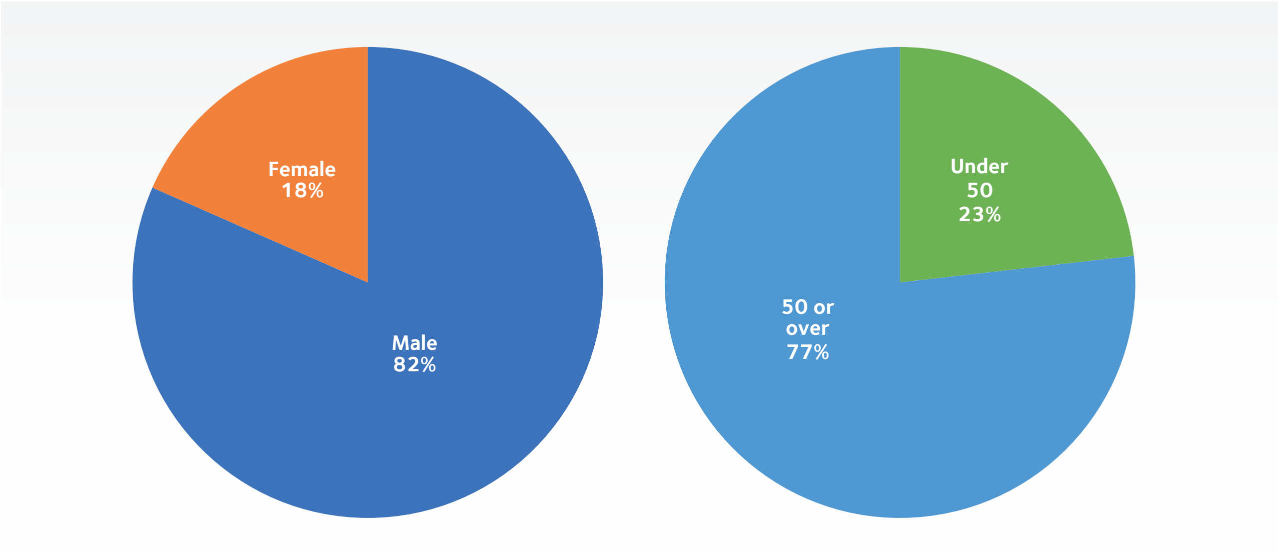
In which part of the world is your company headquarters?

The total number of board members, C-suite executives, and business leaders surveyed was 250, of which 40% were located in North America; 40% in the Asia-Pacific region, and 20% in Europe.

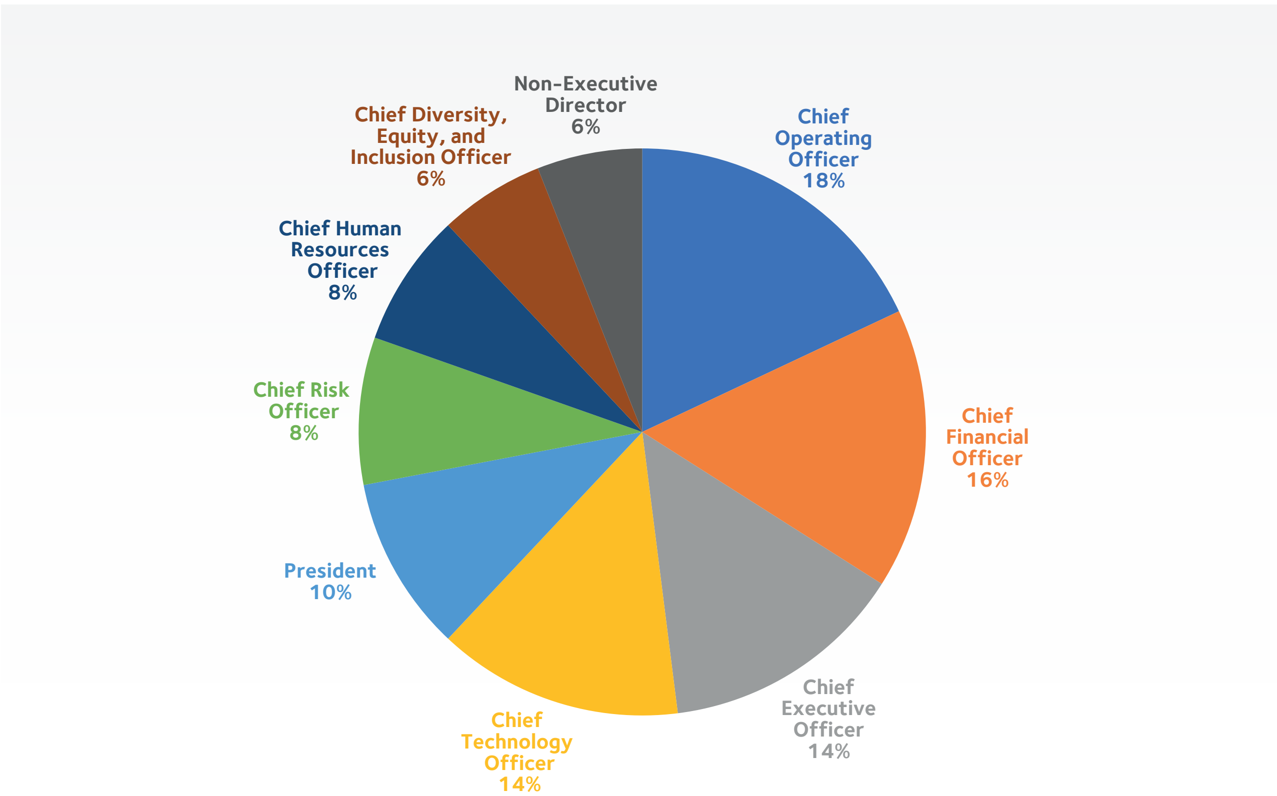
In which country is your company headquarters?



Survey participants' self-identified gender and age



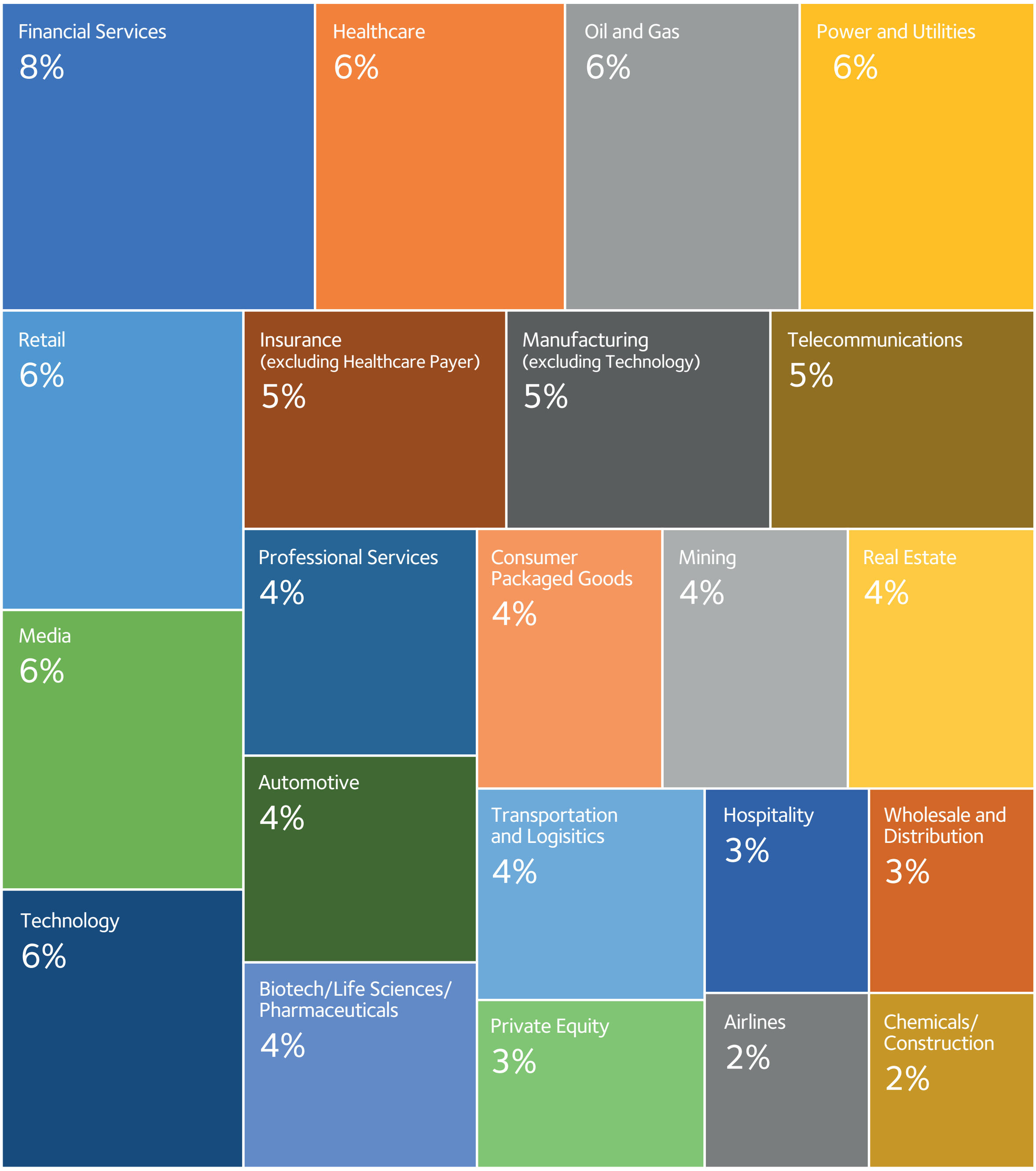
What is the title of the most significant / senior position you hold within your organisation?



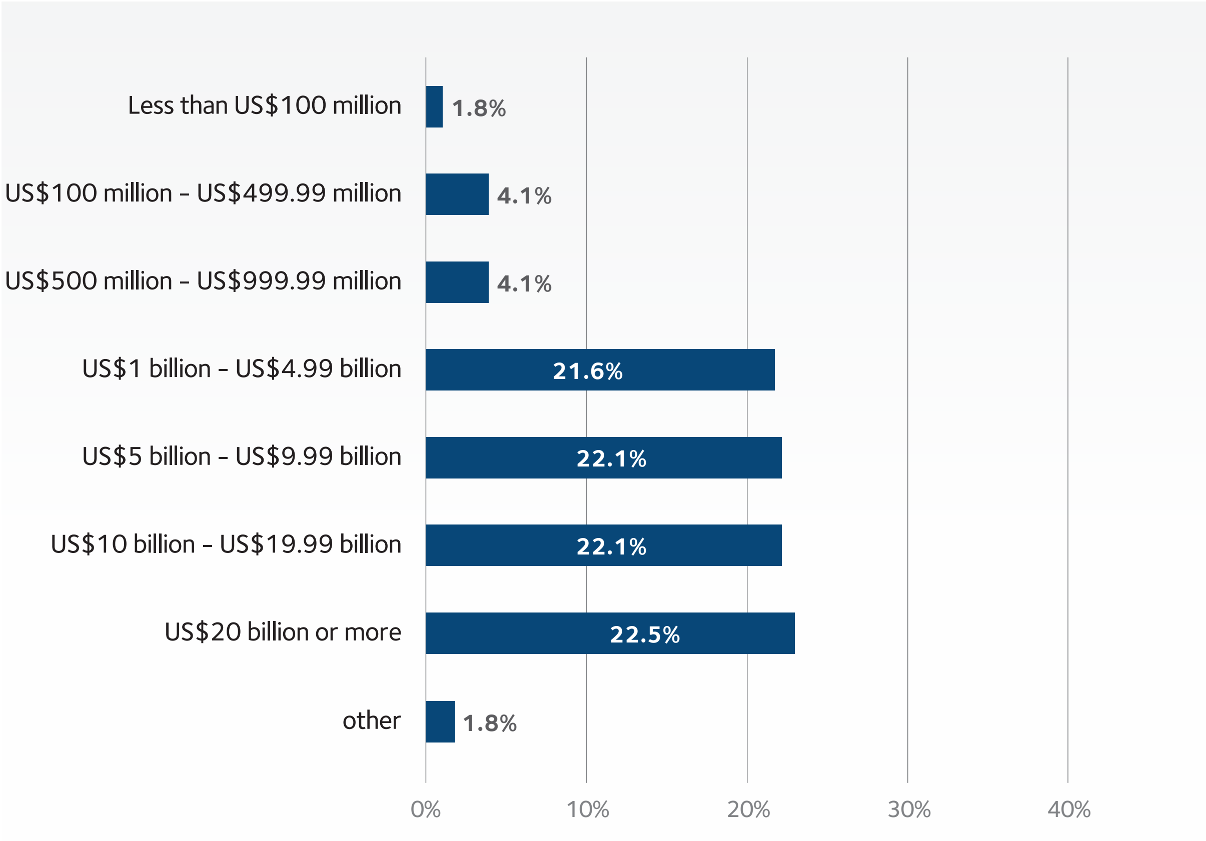
Which is your organisation type?

Publicly-held organisations accounted for 68% of those surveyed, with privately-held organisations accounting for 32%.

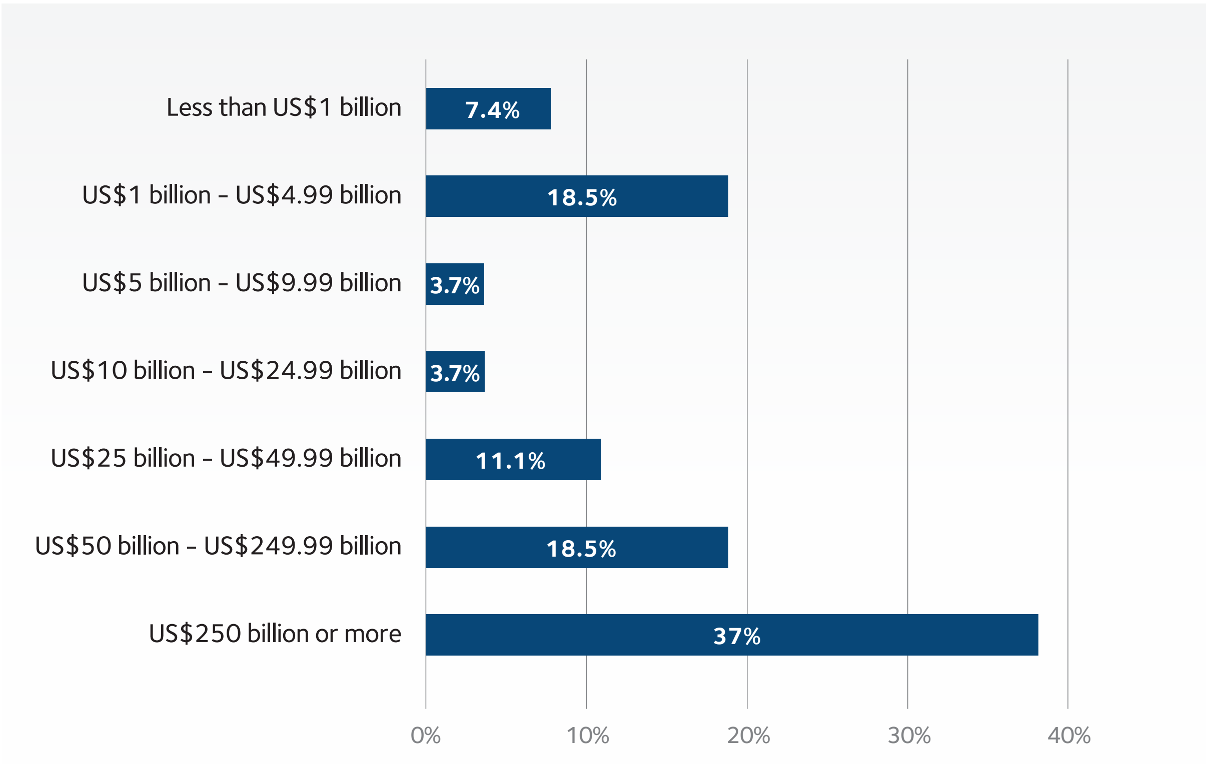
What is your organisation's primary industry?



What is your organisation's size by gross revenue in U.S. dollars? (223 out of 250 participants were asked this question, with asset management companies asked a separate question, see below)



What is your organisation's size by assets under management in U.S. dollars? (Asset management companies only, which accounted for 27 out of 250 participants)



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