PUBLISHED NOVEMBER 2025

2026 Job Outlook



nace
national association of colleges + employers

About the Job Outlook 2026 Survey

The annual Job Outlook survey is a forecast of employer's hiring intentions of new college graduates. Data for the Job Outlook 2026 survey were collected from August 7, 2025, through September 22, 2025. Data are calculated based on the number of respondents to each specific question. Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

NACE expects to provide a formal job market update during the 2025-26 academic year. Based on data collected in February and March, the Job Outlook 2026 Spring Update report will provide a final update on hiring for 2025-26 graduates. The results will be available in early April.

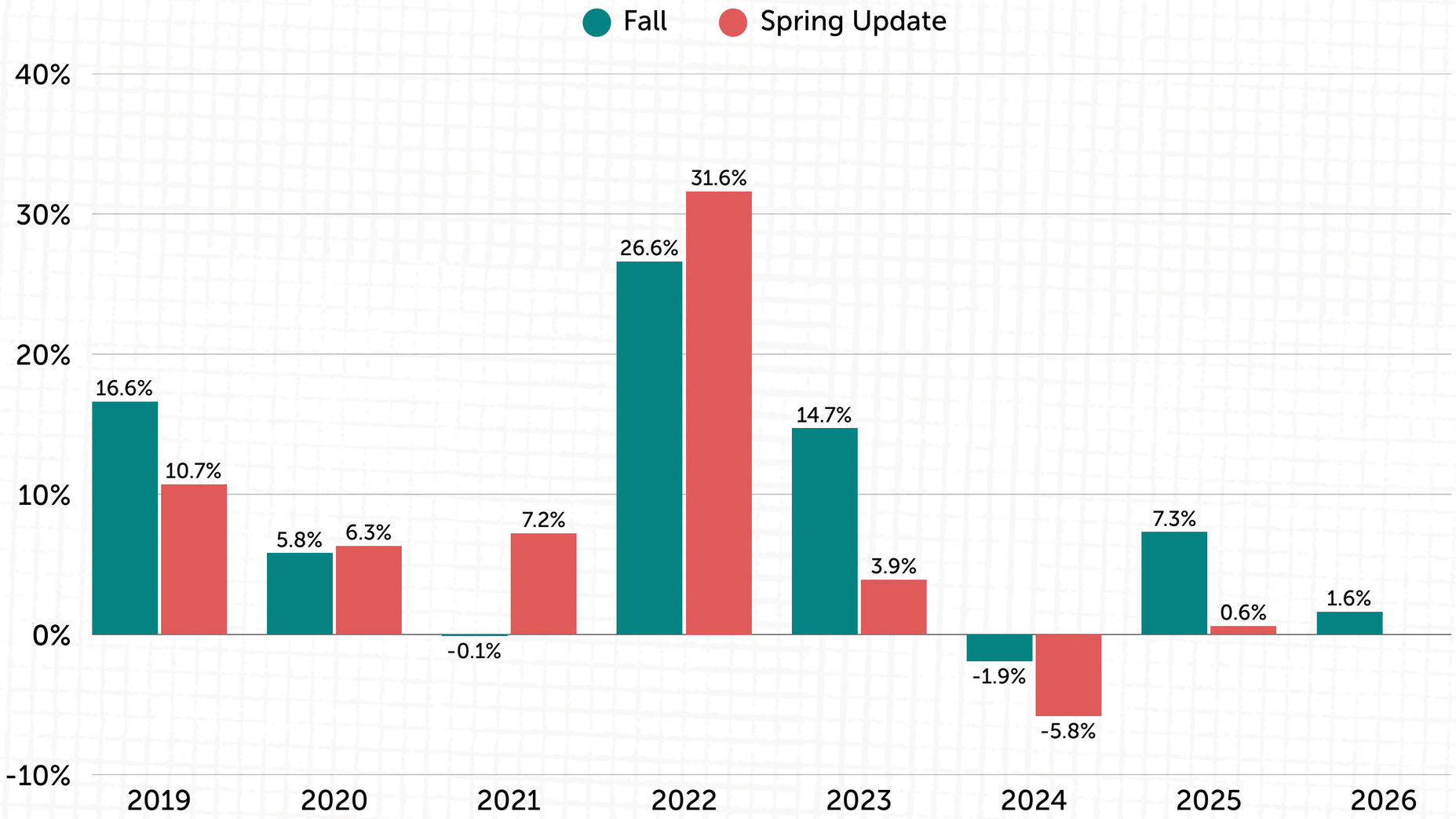


2026 Job Projections for Entry-Level Hiring

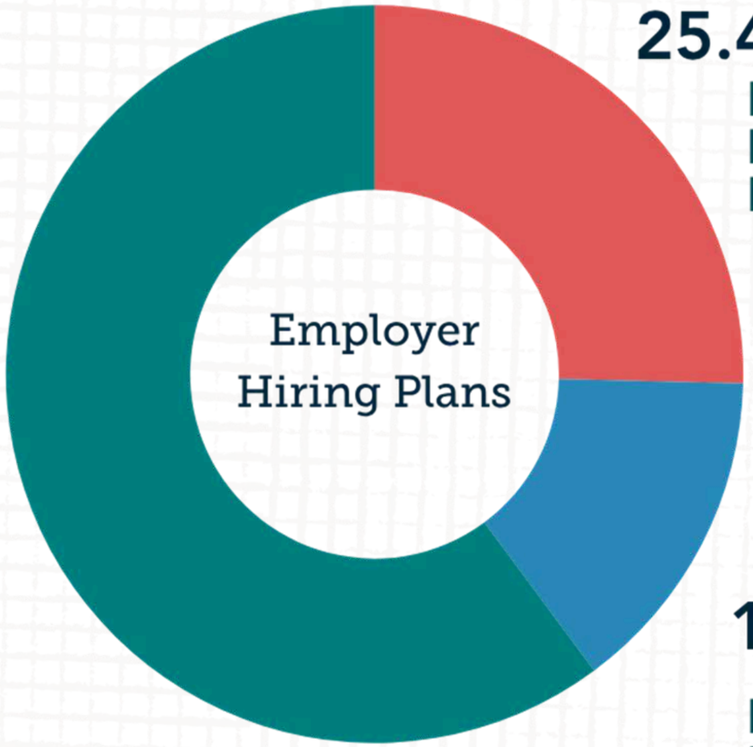
Employers Rate Overall Job Market



Job Outlook Hiring Projections, 2019 - 2026



Job Outlook Projections Class of 2026

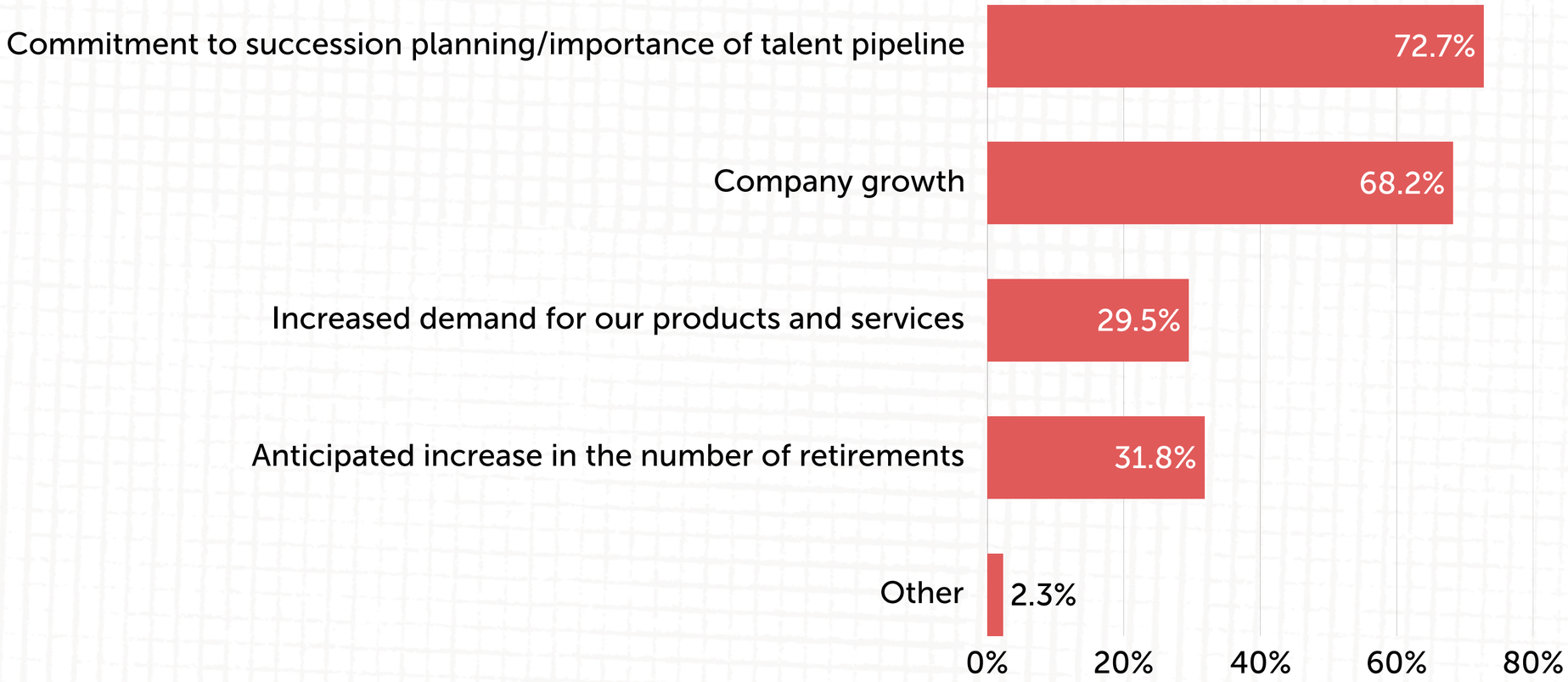


25.4%
Percent Increasing Hires

60.2%
Percent Maintaining Hires

14.4%
Percent Decreasing Hires

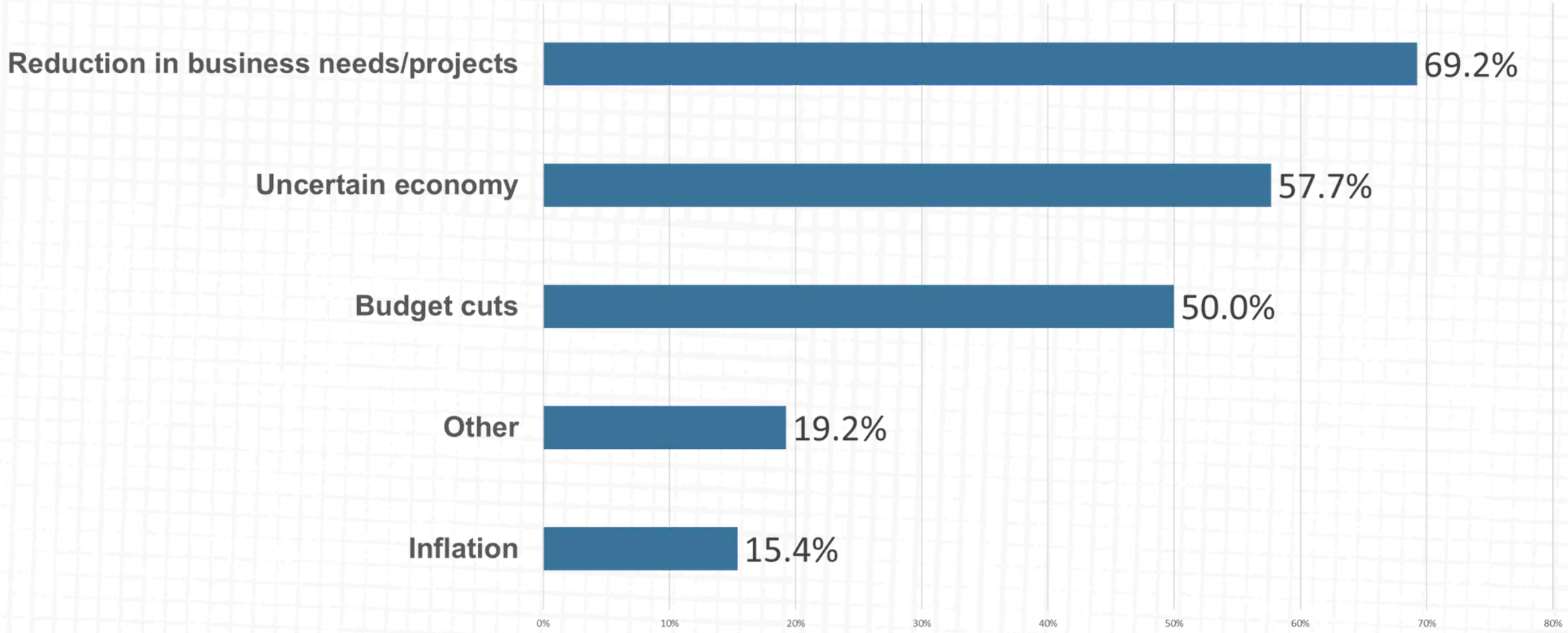
Key Factors for Increasing Hires



NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS = 44

*Percentages do not equal 100, as respondents were able to select more than one factor.

Key Factors for Decreasing Hires



NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS = 26

*Percentages do not equal 100, as respondents were able to select more than one factor.

Industries Hiring Changes

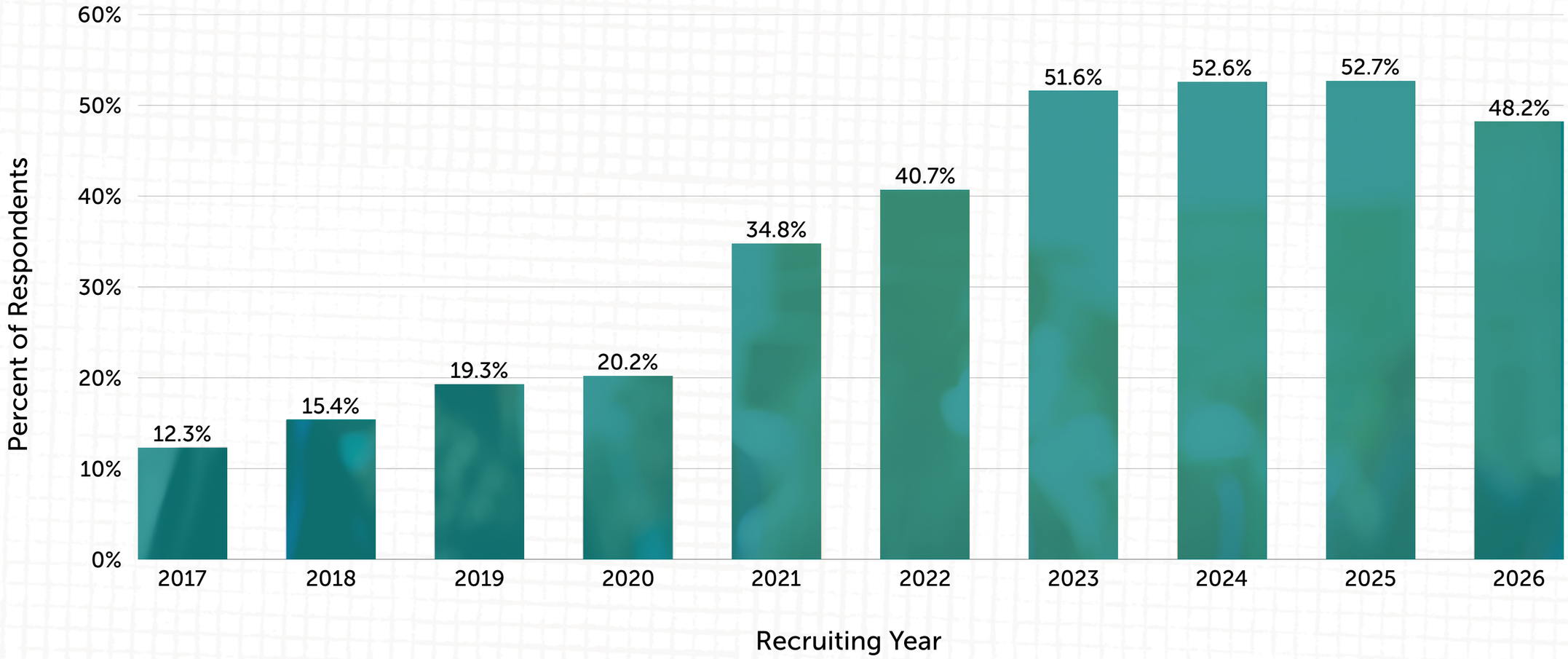
Top 5 Industries *Increasing* Hiring

Misc. Prof. Services
Engineering Services
Construction
Finance, Insurance, & Real Estate
Management Consulting

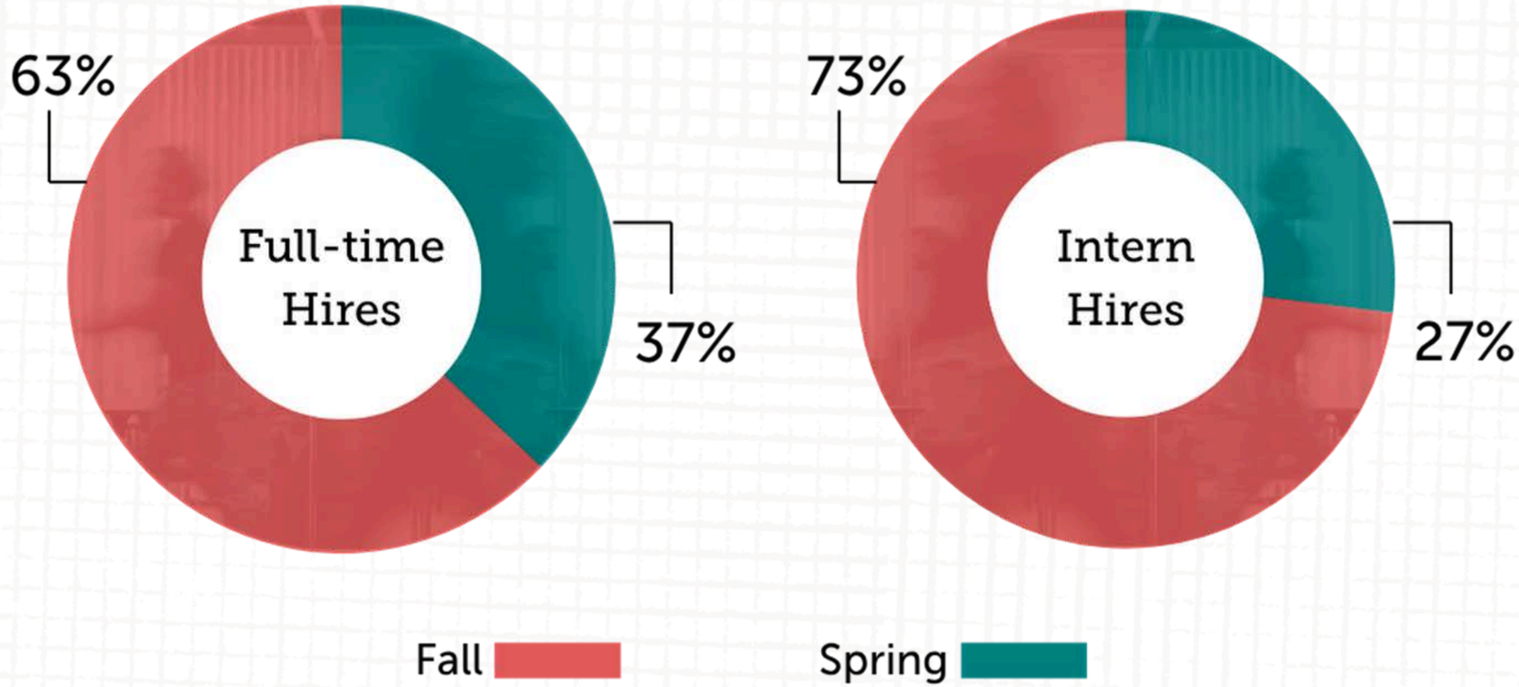
Top 5 Industries *Decreasing* Hiring

Chemical (Pharmaceutical) Mfg.
Transportation
Wholesale Trade
Food & Beverage Mfg.
Miscellaneous Mfg.

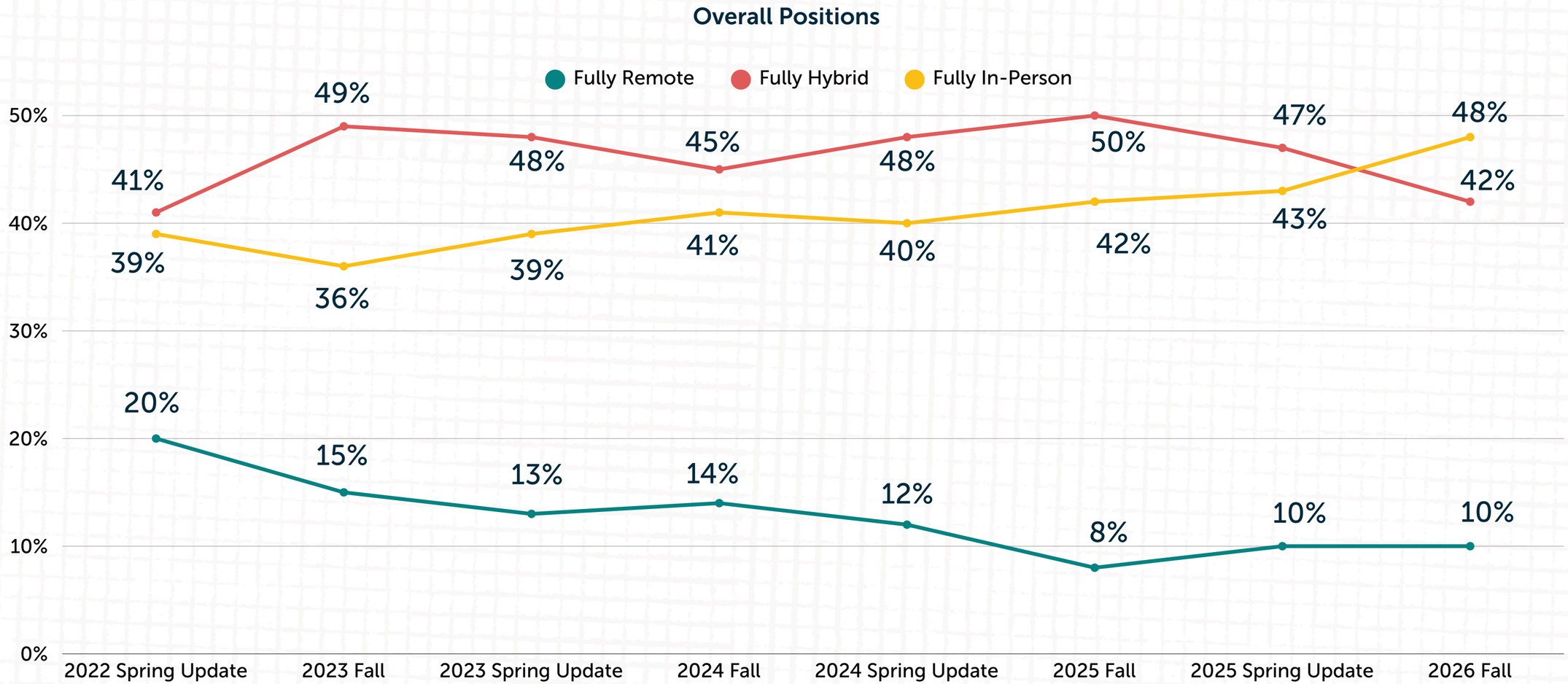
Associate Degree Hiring, by Percent of Respondents



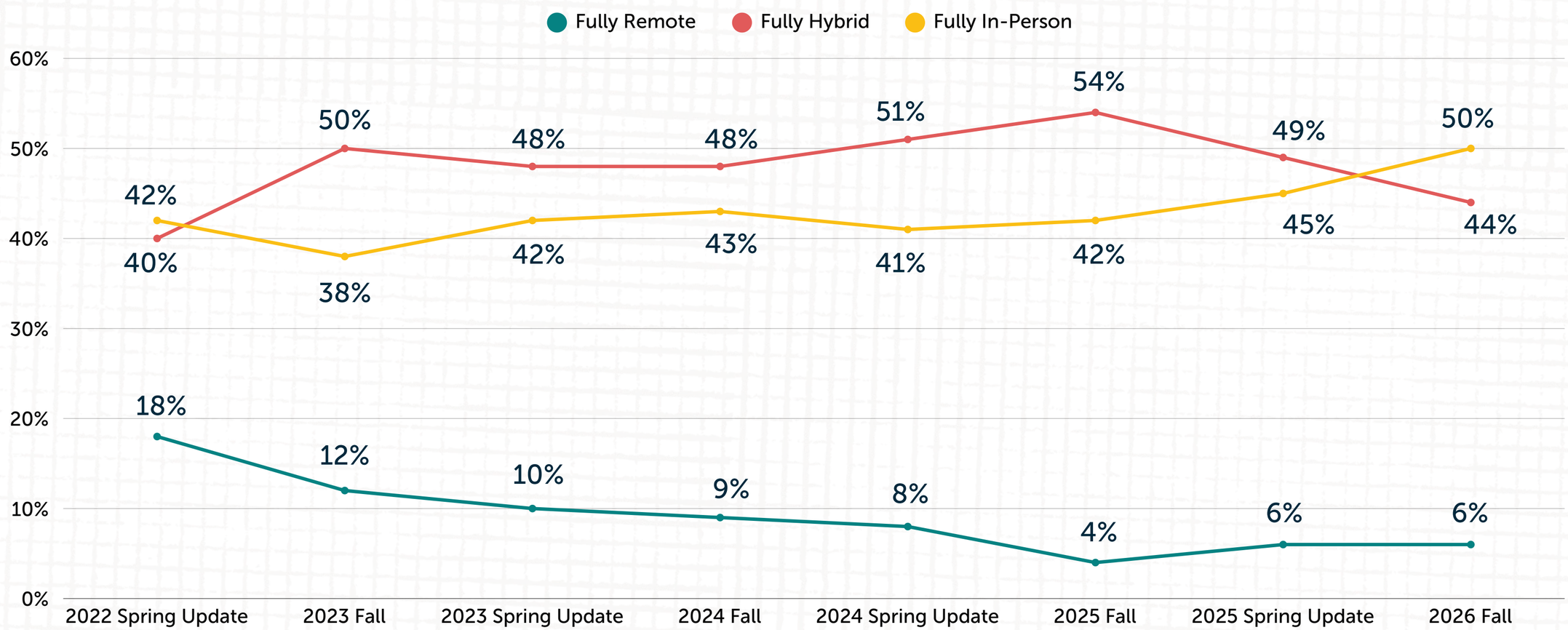
Fall vs. Spring Recruiting for the Class of 2026, by Percent of Respondents



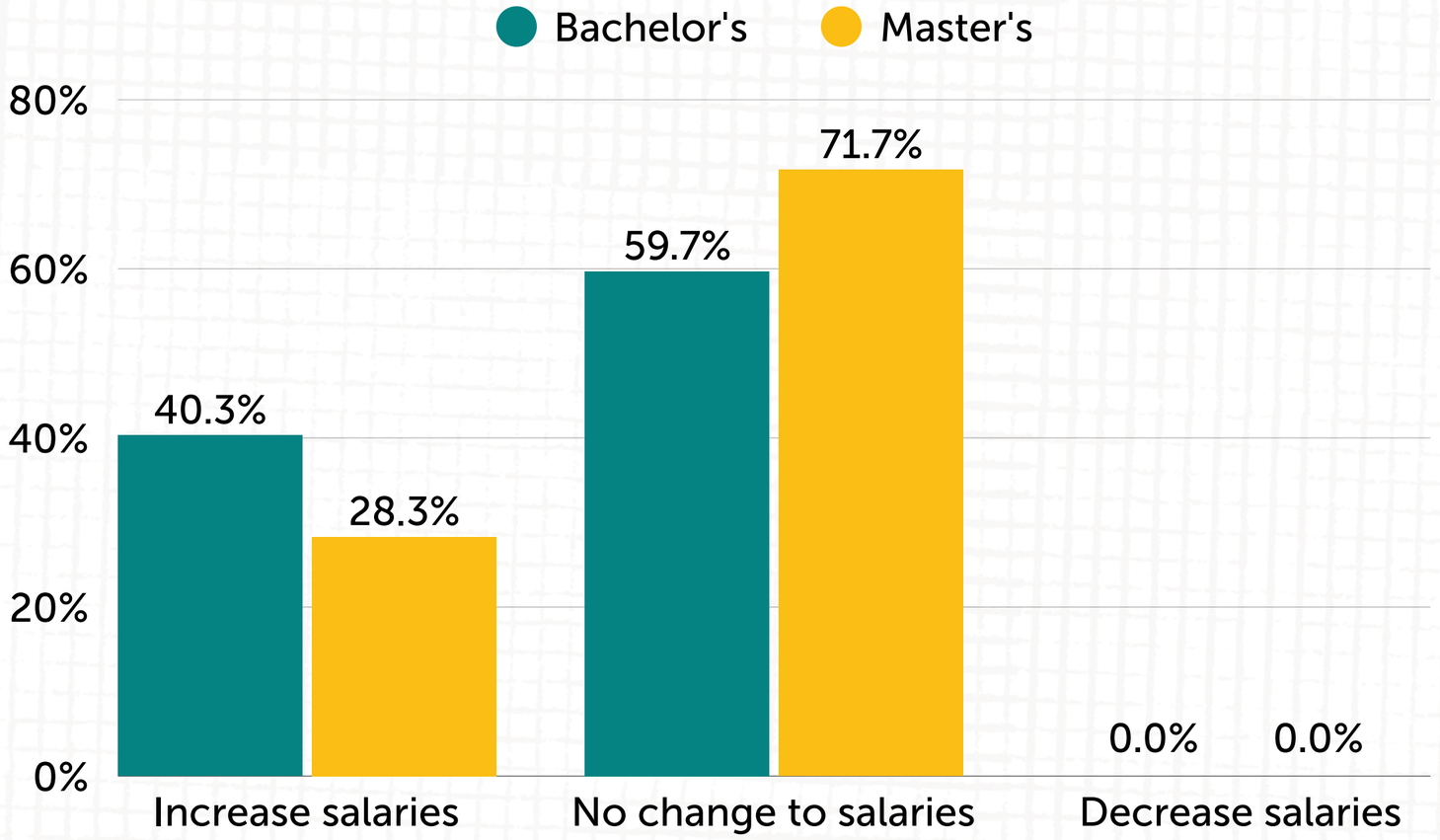
Modality of Overall Job Positions, by Percent of Respondents



Modality of Entry-Level Job Positions, by Percent of Respondents

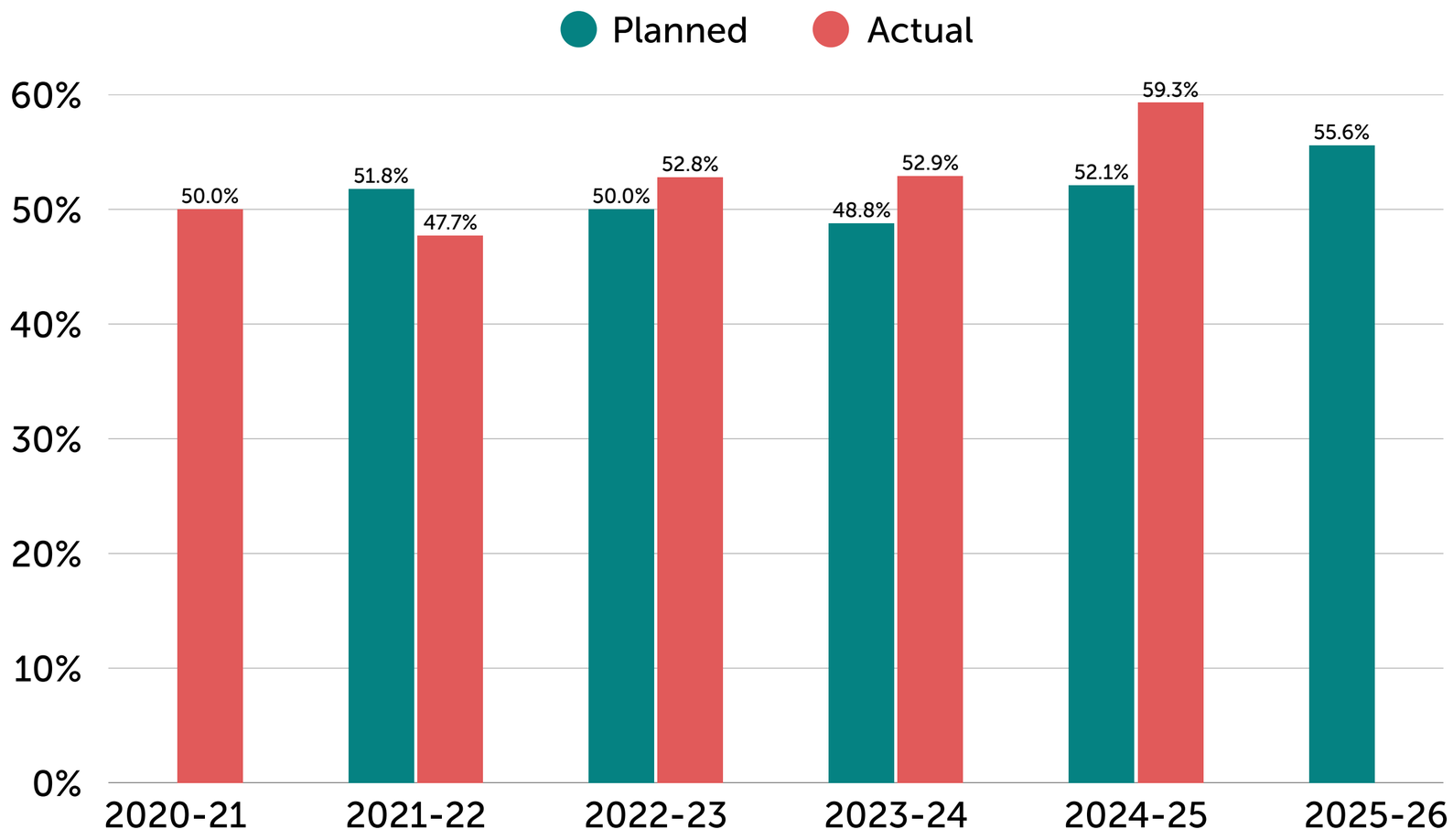


Change in Salaries for Bachelor's and Master's Degree Graduates





Employers Offering Signing Bonuses



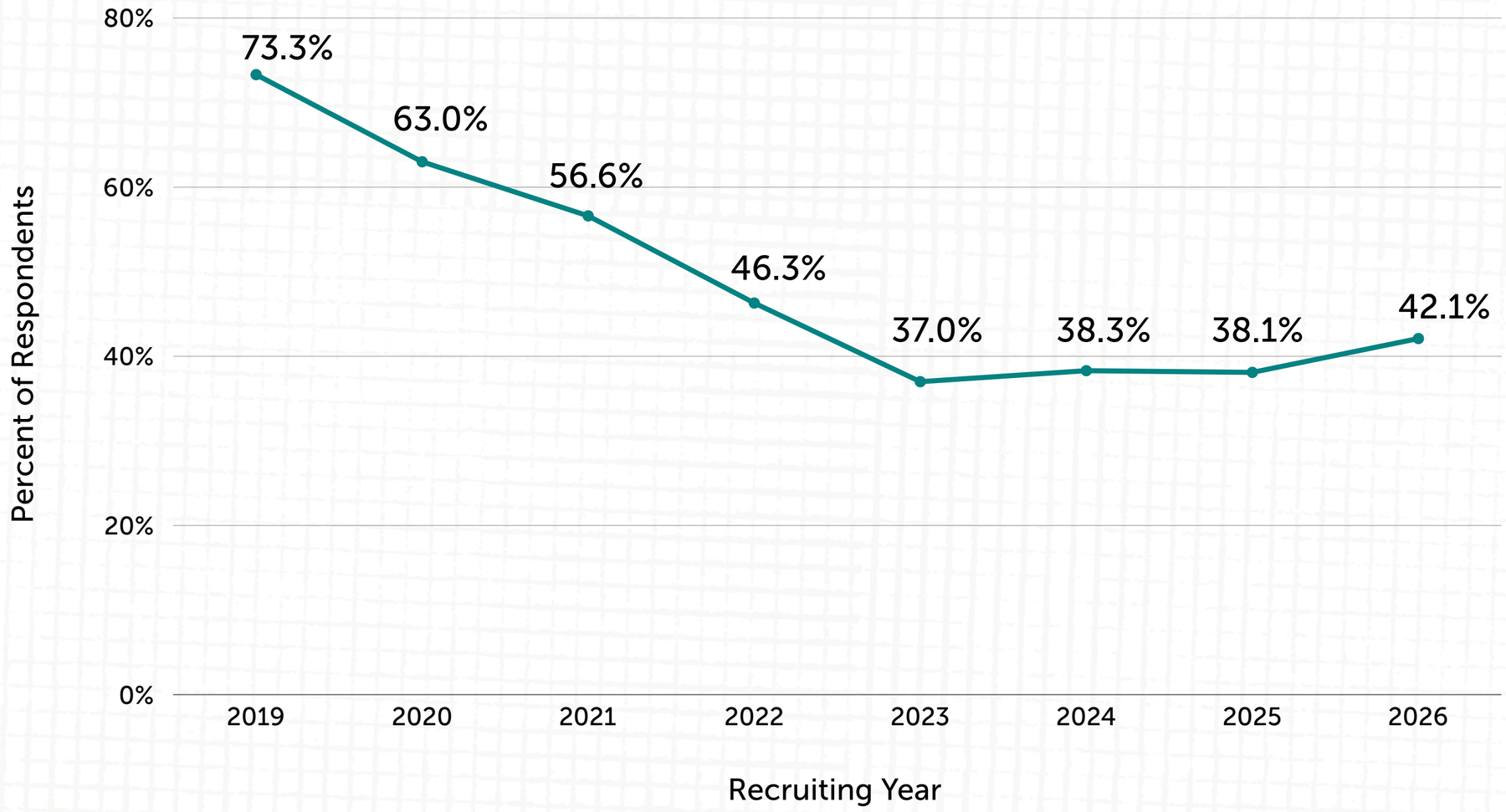
Signing Bonus Plans, by Percent of Respondents



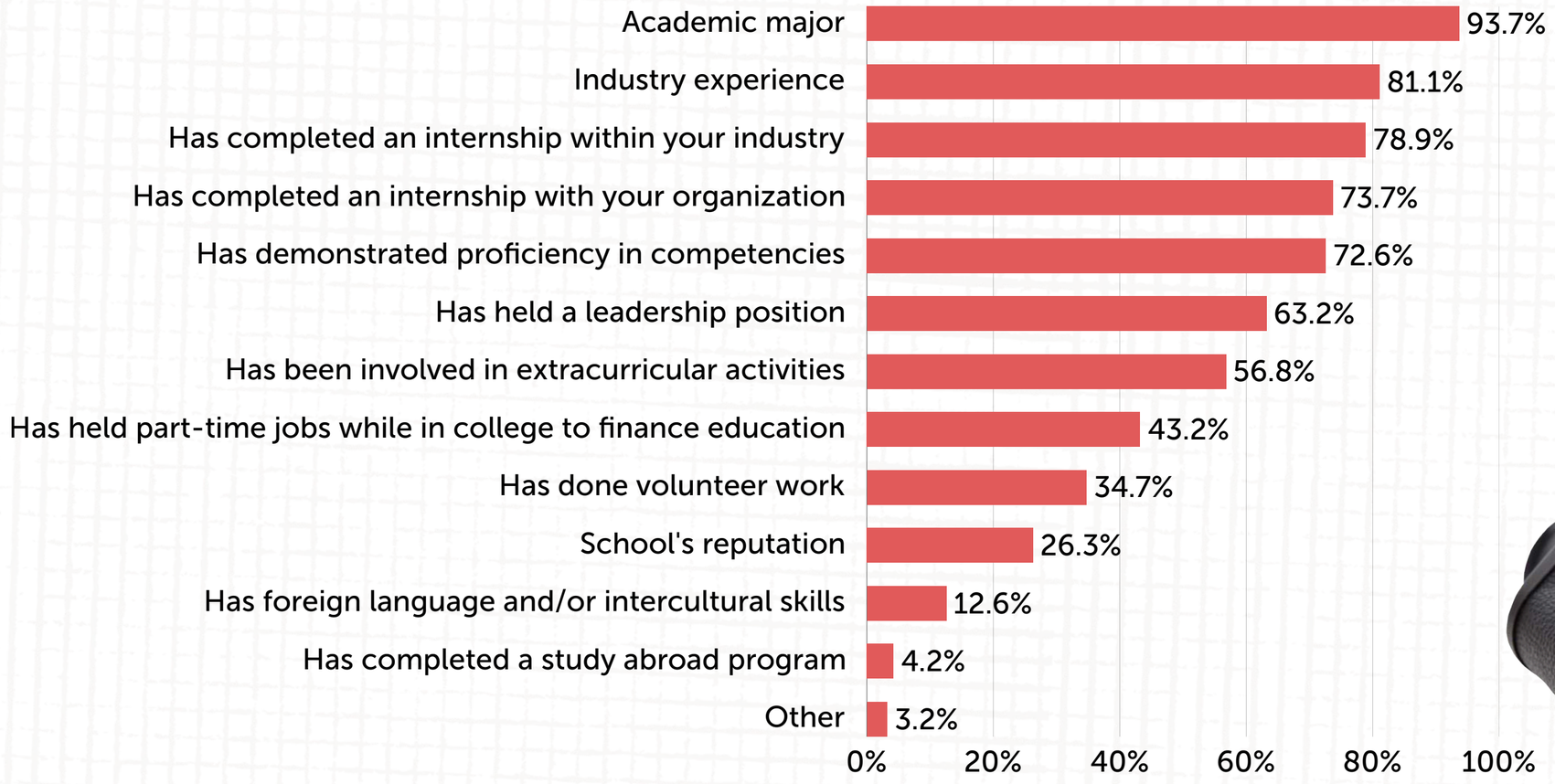


Skills-Based Hiring and College Graduates

GPA Screening



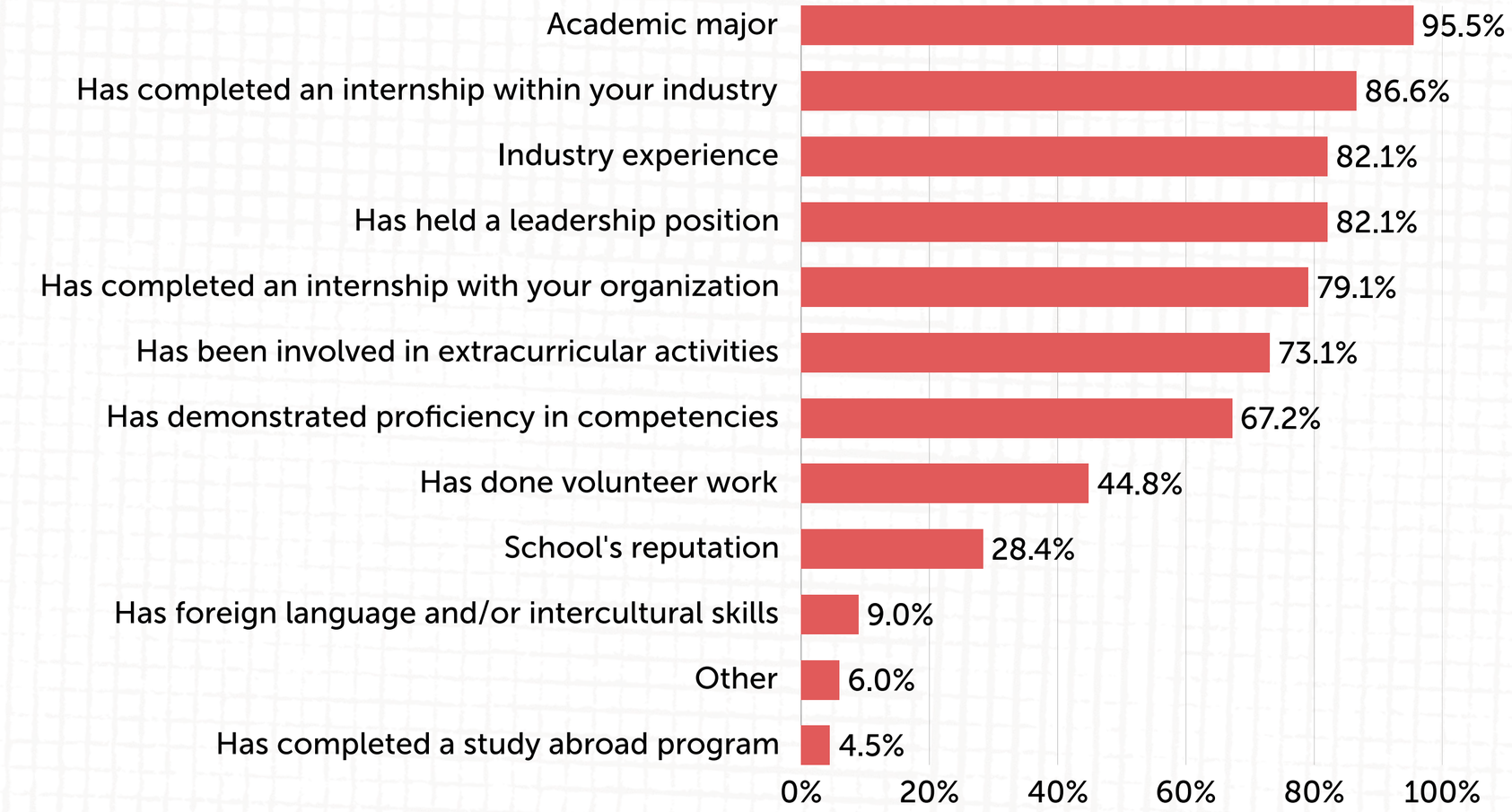
Additional Factors Considered by Respondents That Do Not Screen by GPA*





*Percentages do not equal 100, as respondents were able to select more than one factor.

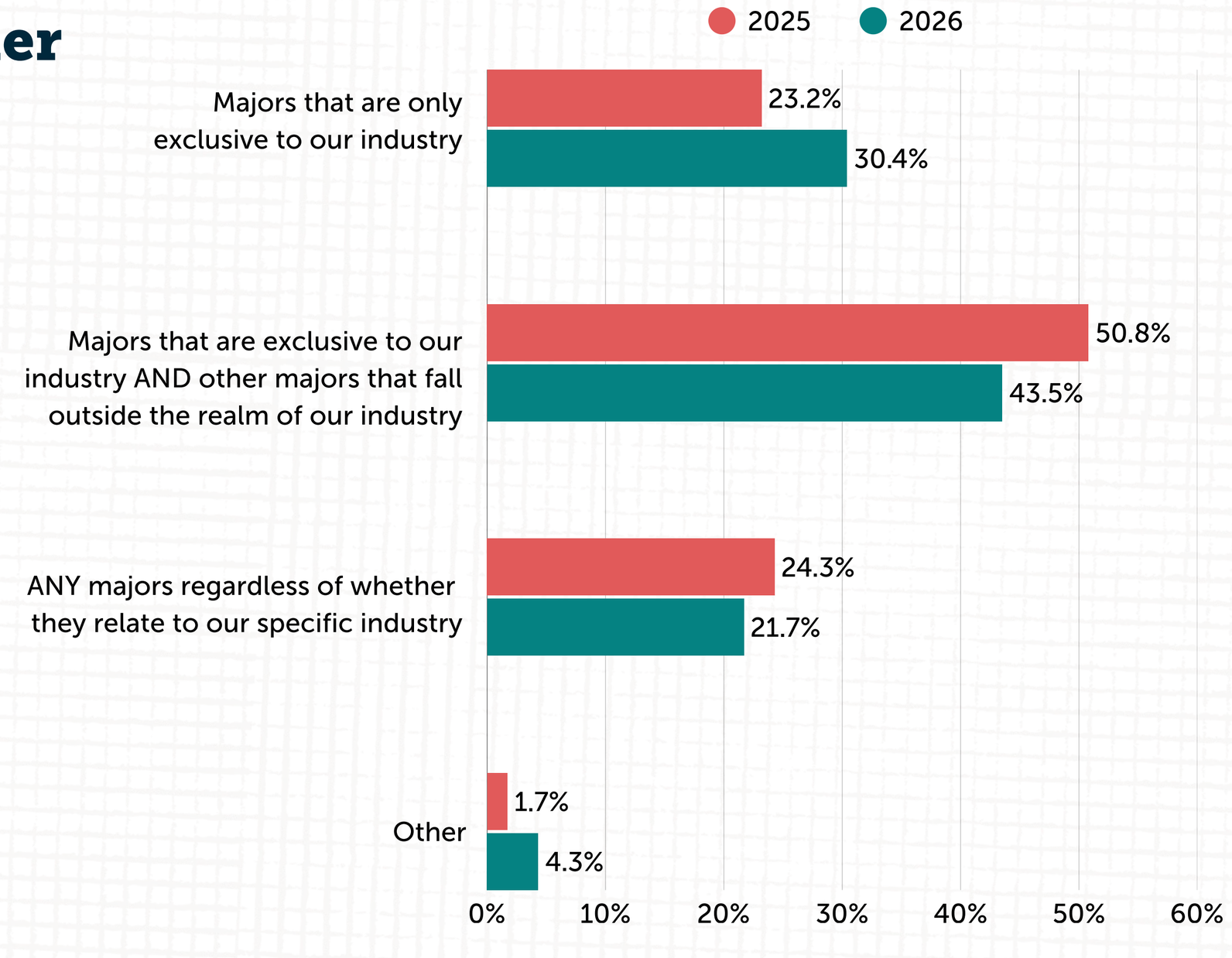
Additional Factors Considered by Respondents That Do Screen by GPA*



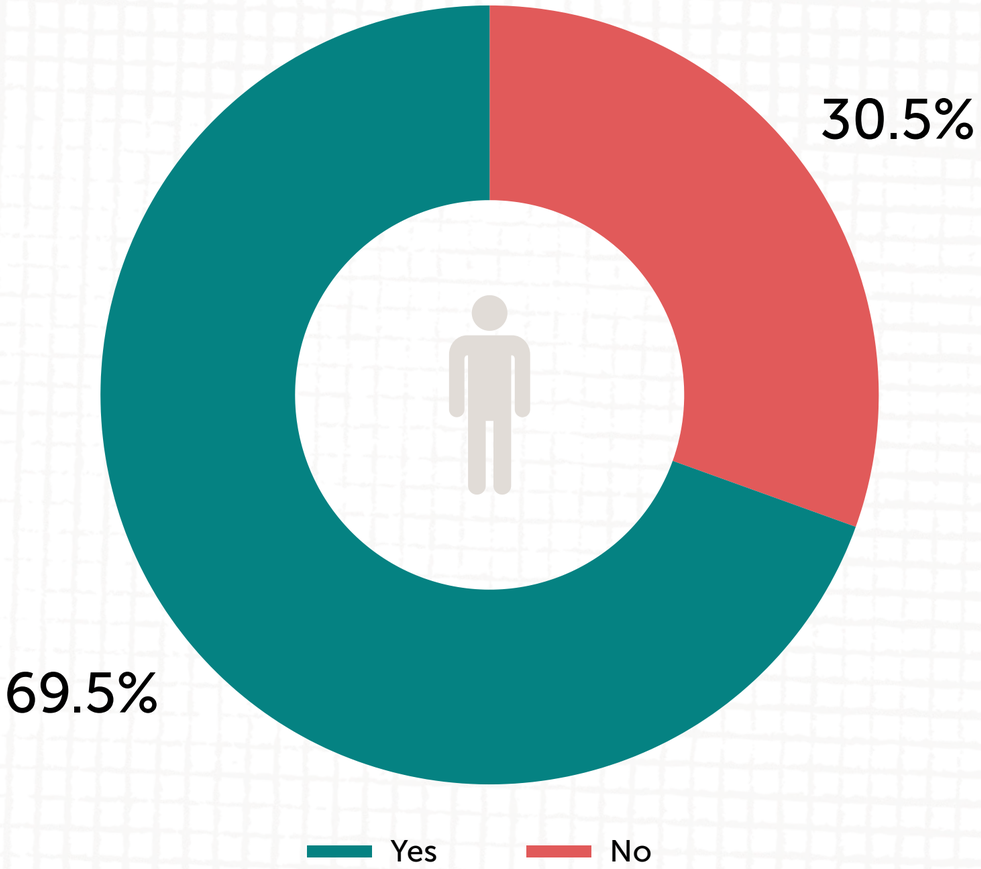
*Percentages do not equal 100, as respondents were able to select more than one factor.

Employers Consider Hiring All Majors



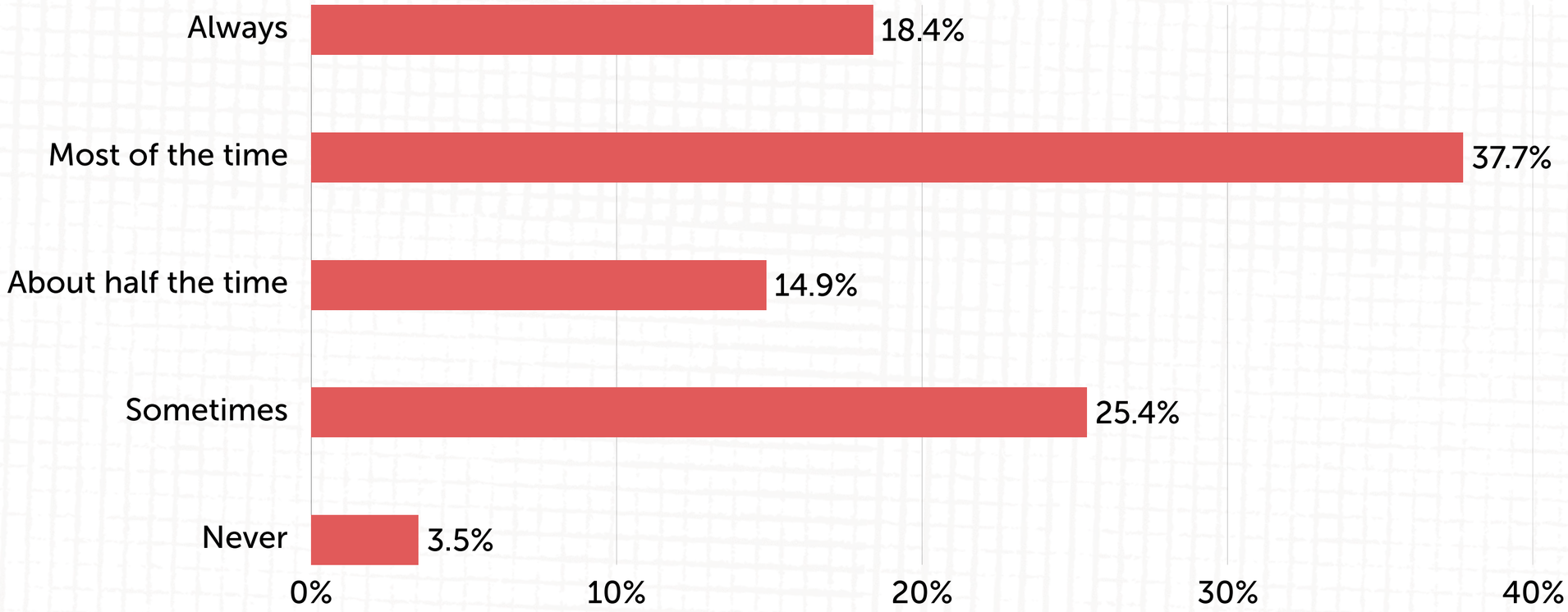


Use Skills-Based Hiring (N=164)





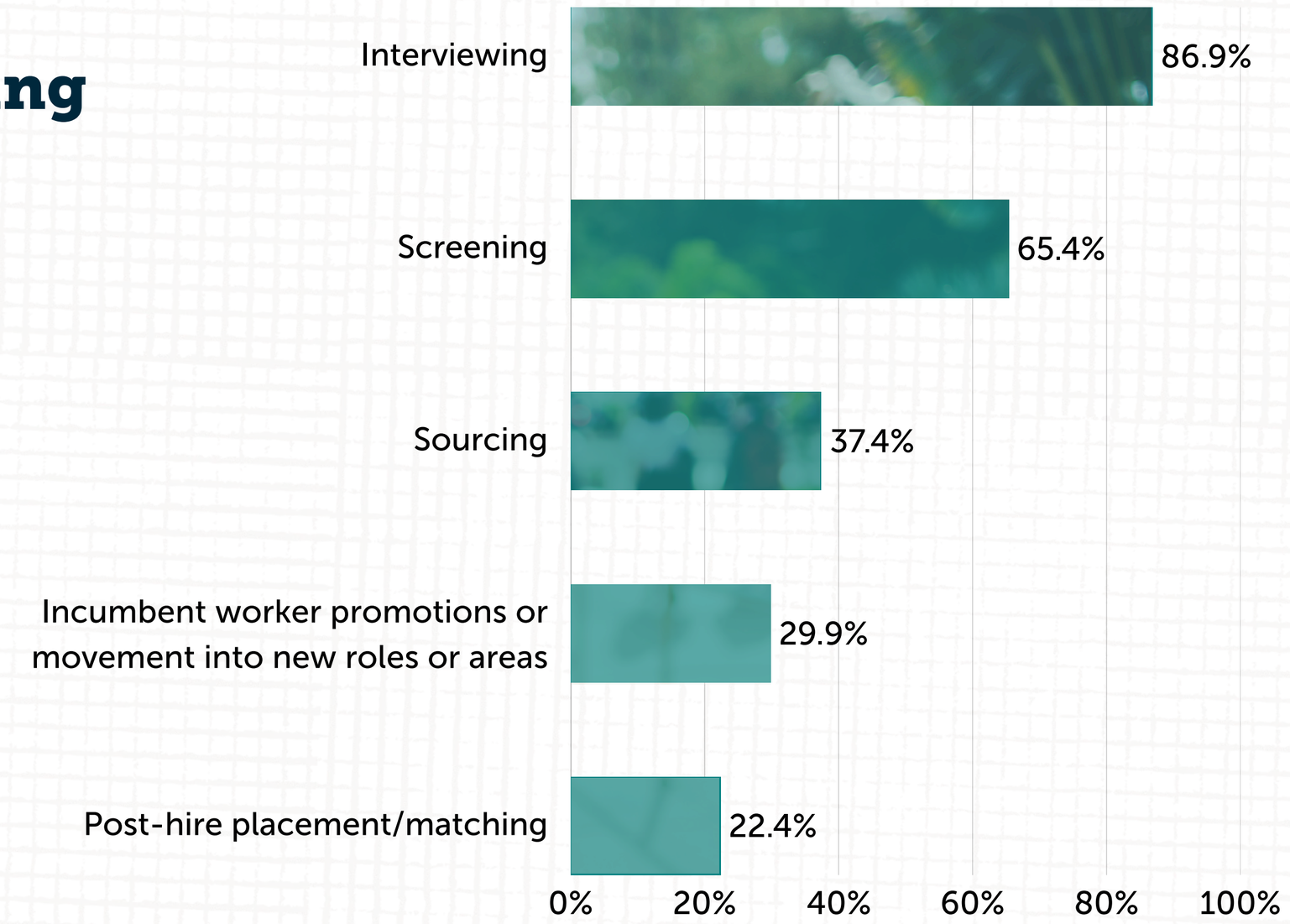
Skills-Based Hiring Frequency





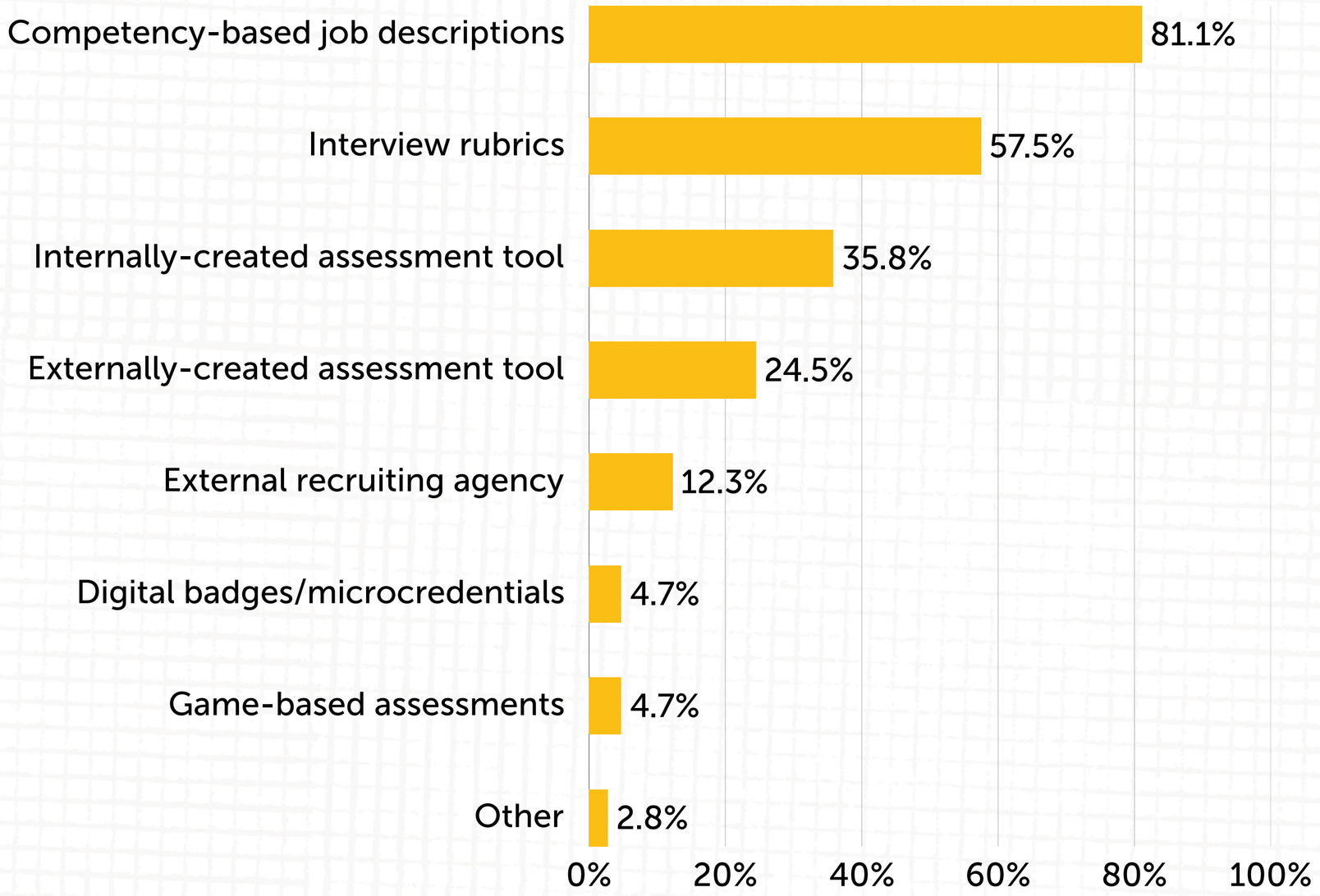
NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS = 114

Stages Using Skills-Based Hiring



NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS = 107

Skills-Based Hiring Practices Being Used

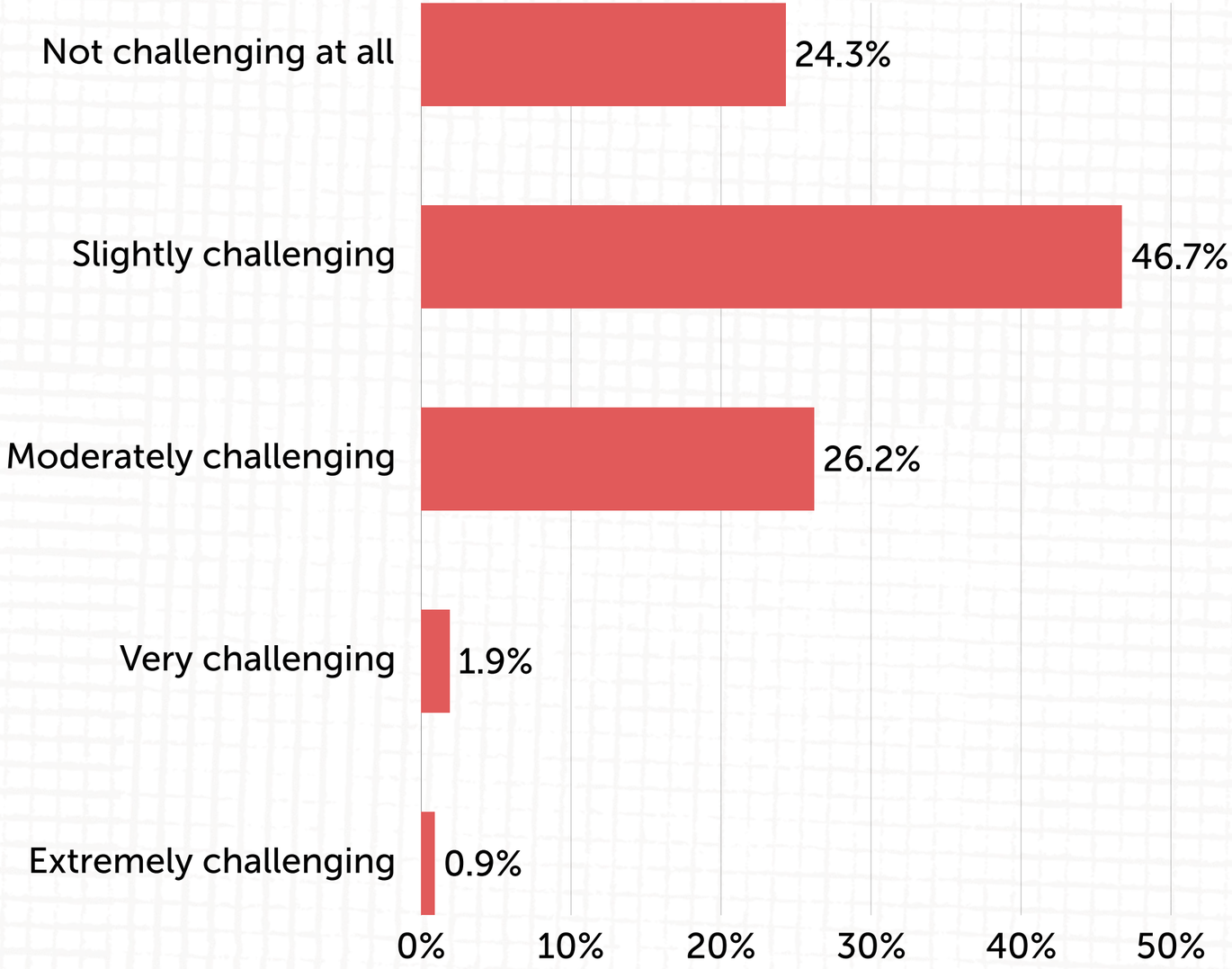


NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS = 106

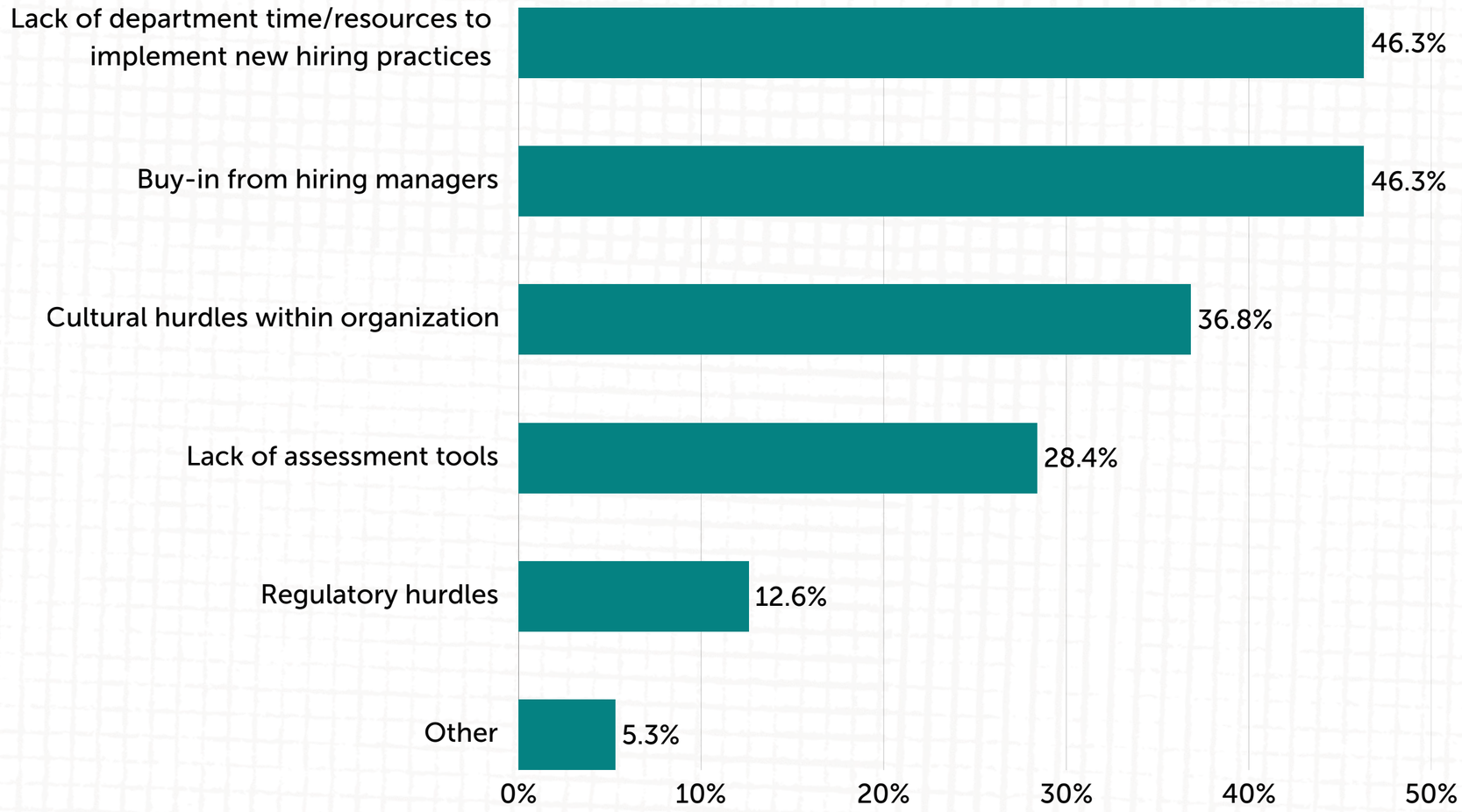
Level of Challenge in Implementing Skills-Based Hiring Practices



NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS = 107



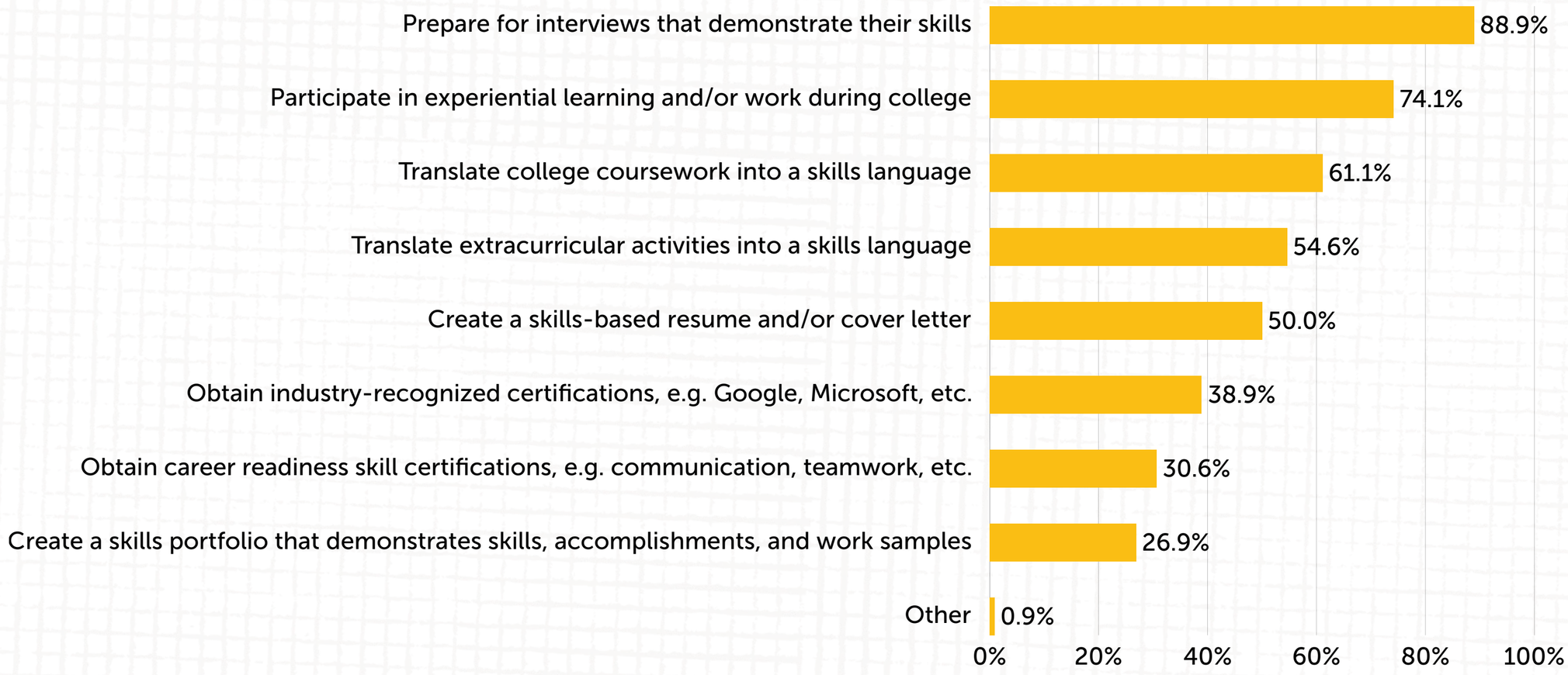
Roadblocks in Implementing Skills-Based Hiring





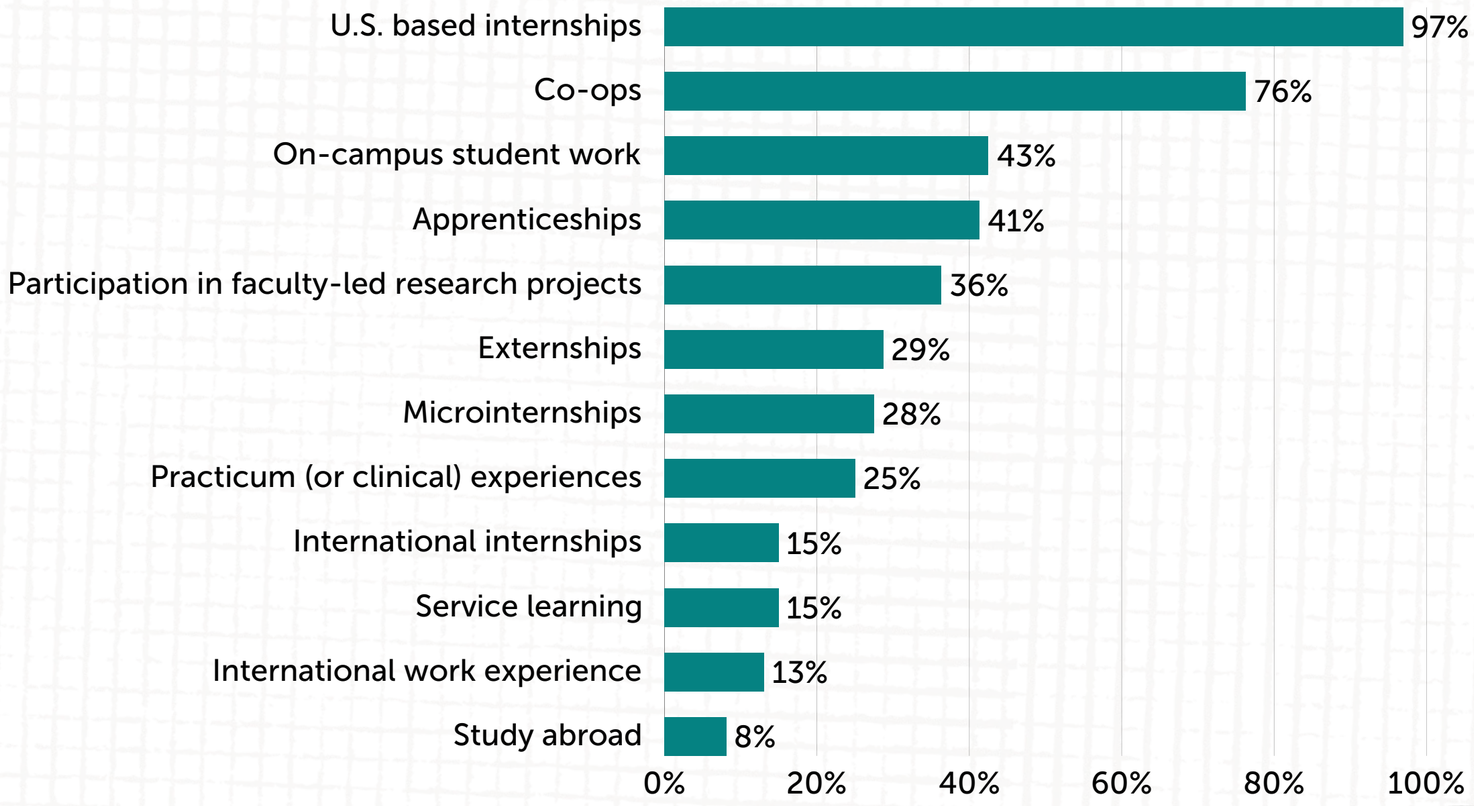
NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS = 95

Most Important Ways Students Can Demonstrate Skills During a Skills-Based Hiring Process



NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS = 108

Most Valuable Experiential Learning Opportunities on a Student's Resume

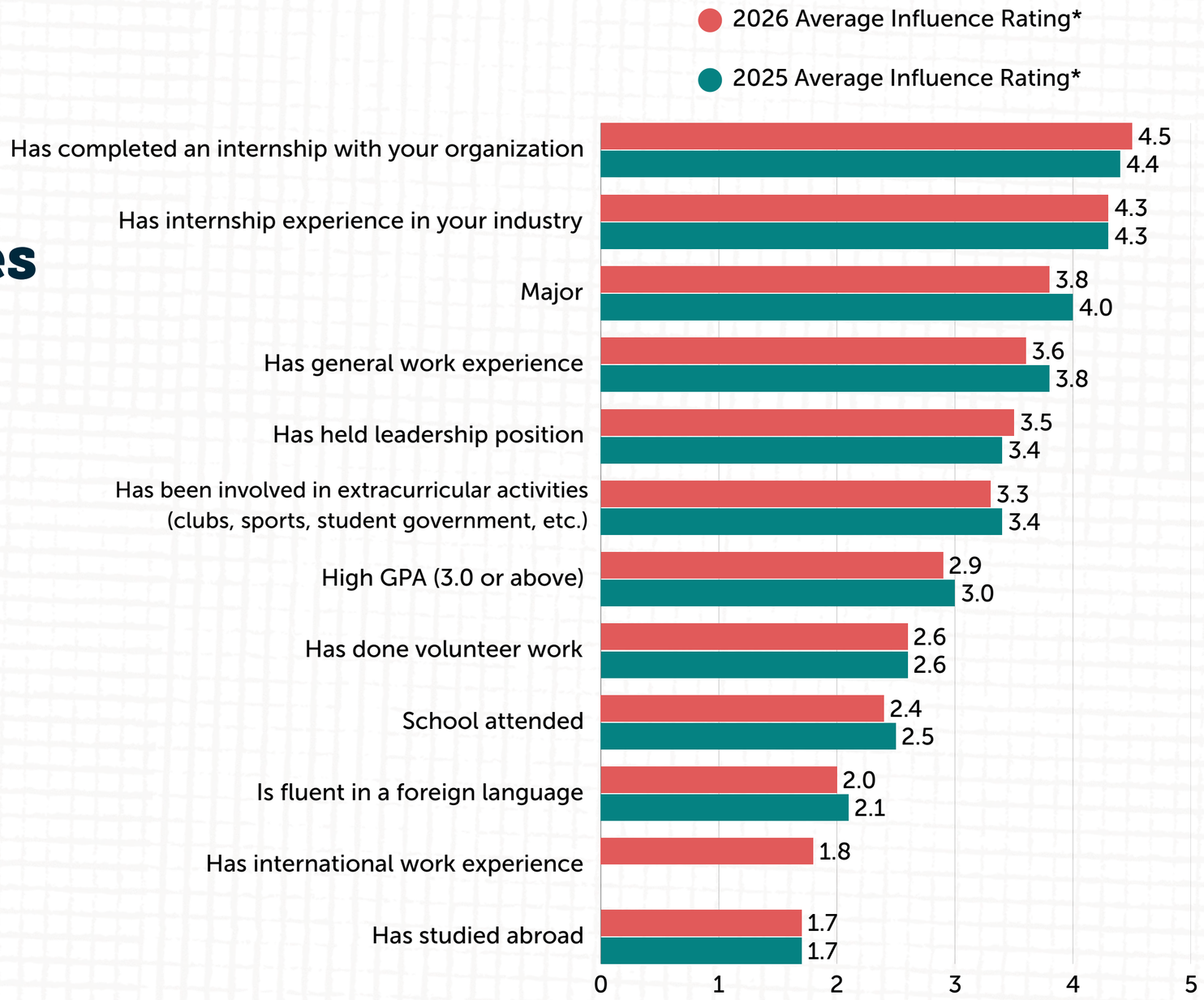




*Percentages do not equal 100, as respondents were able to choose more than one learning opportunity.

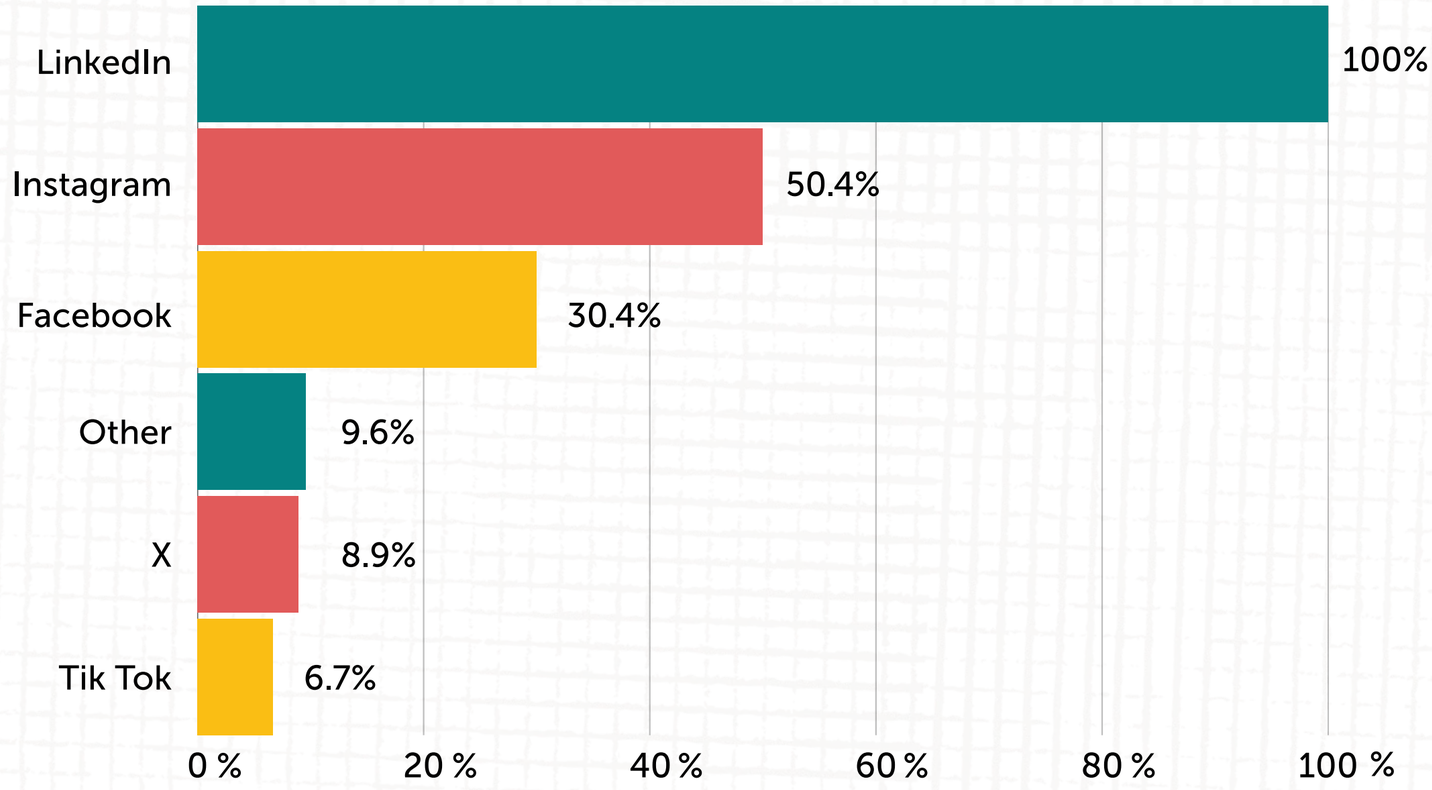
Choosing Between Equally Qualified Candidates - Influence of Attributes

*5-point scale, where 1=No influence at all, 2=Not much influence, 3=Somewhat of an influence, 4=Very much influence, and 5=Extreme influence.



Social Media and Recruiting

Social Media Platform Use, by Percent of Respondents*

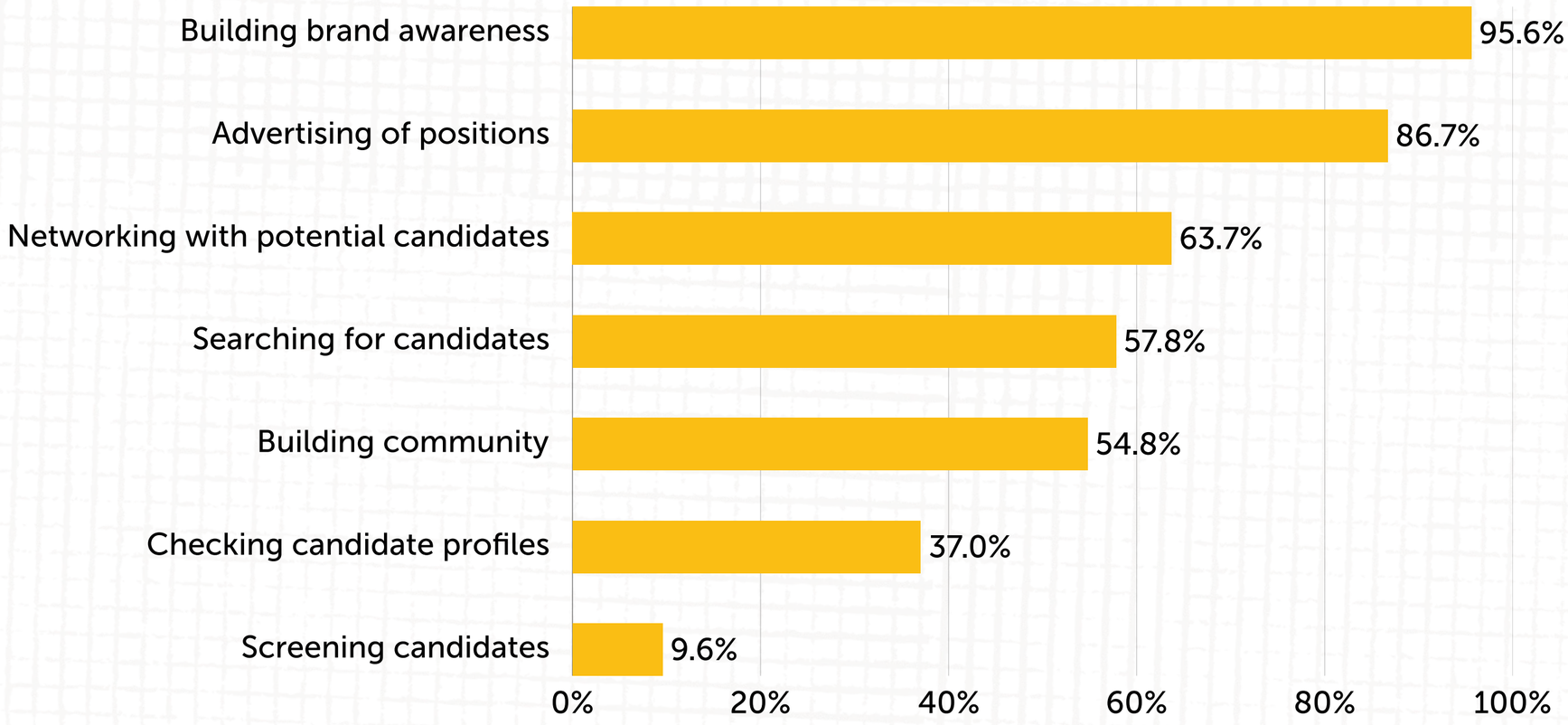




NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS = 135

*Percentages do not equal 100, as respondents were able to select more than one platform.

Ways Early Talent Recruiters Use Social Media, by Percent of Respondents



NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS = 135

AI and Entry-Level Jobs

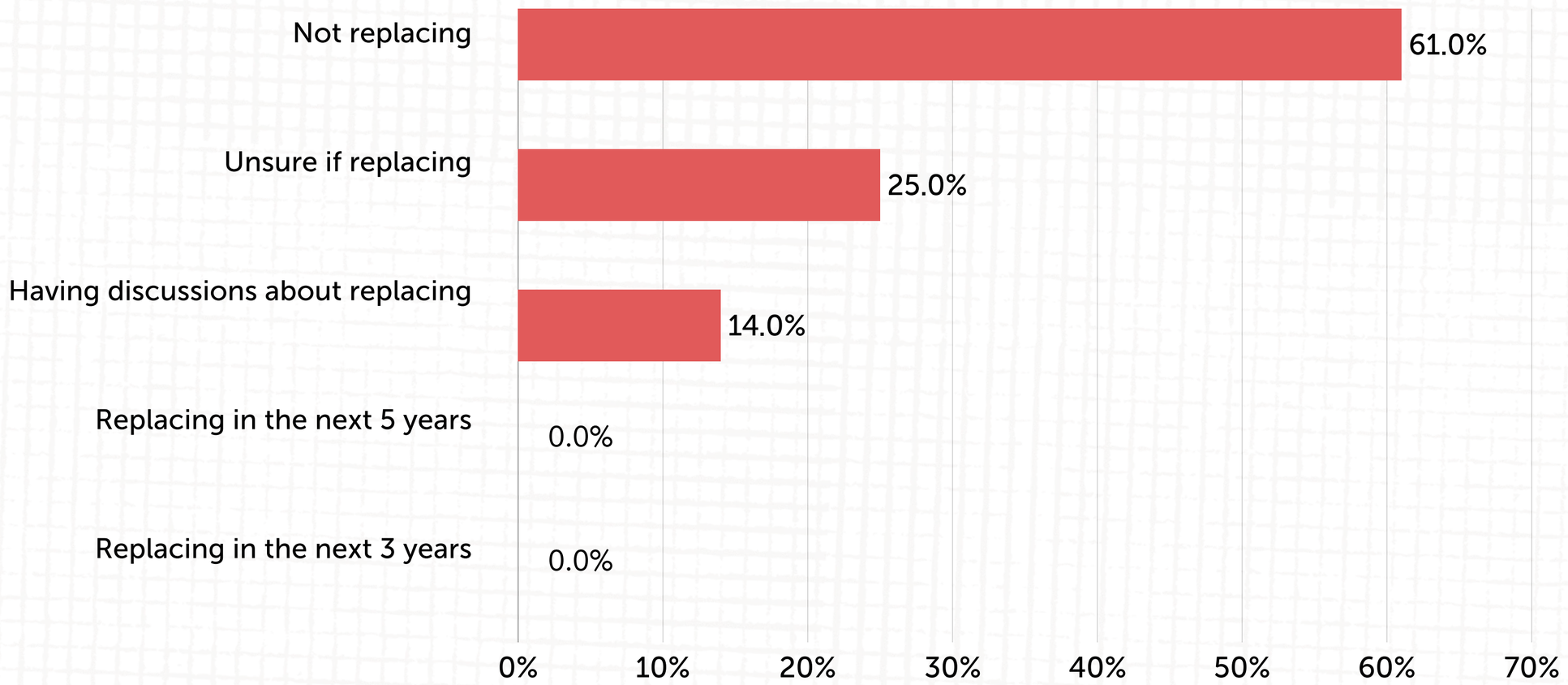
AI Skills

13.3% of jobs require AI skills

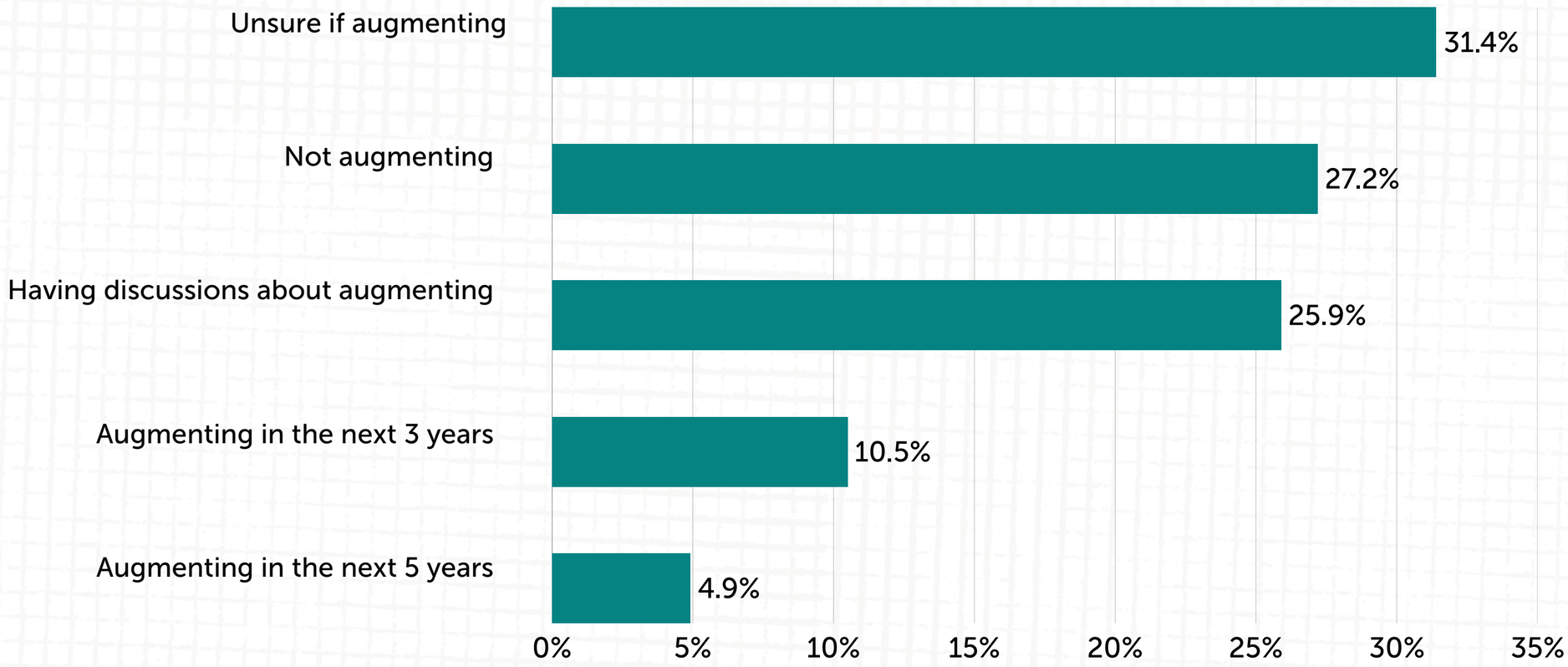
10.5% of entry-level jobs include AI in job descriptions



Replacing Entry-Level Jobs With AI, by Percent of Respondents



Augmenting Entry-Level Jobs With AI, by Percent of Respondents



Research Staff

Mary Gatta, Ph.D., Director of Research and Public Policy

Joshua Kahn, Ph.D., Associate Director of Research and Public Policy

Andrea J. Koncz, Senior Research Manager

Angelena Galbraith, Researcher

Sasha Patil, Researcher

Anna Longenberger, Research Coordinator

nace
national association of
colleges + employers

1 E. Broad Street | Suite 130 - 1005 | Bethlehem, PA 18018
610.868.1421 | www.naceweb.org | nace@naceweb.org