STATE OF THE PROCUREMENT PROFESSION SURVEY 2026

Executive Summary

Christoph Bode | Ruth Schültken | Marcell Vollmer

UNIVERSITY OF MANNHEIM
Business School

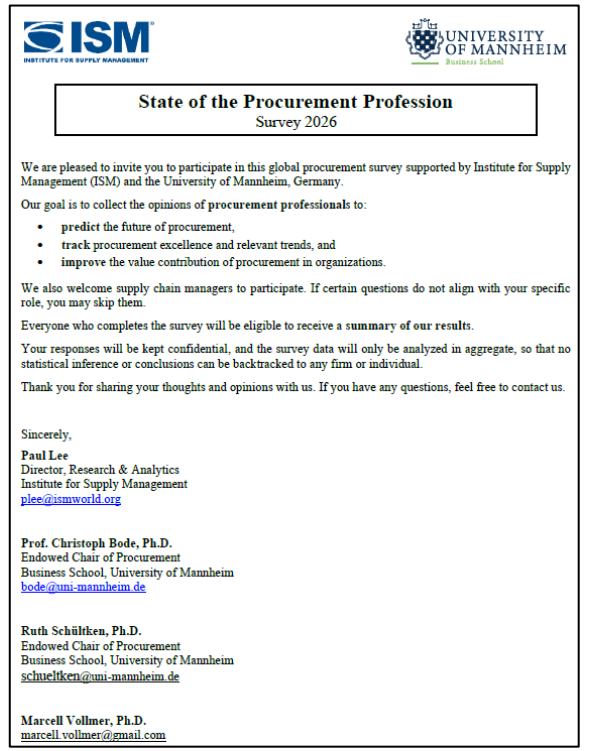
Data were collected in early 2026 by means of a global internet-based survey – for the fifth consecutive year in collaboration with ISM

Research design

- Annual study conducted since 2017
- The study collects the opinions of procurement professionals to:
  - **chart the direction of procurement**,
  - **track procurement excellence** and **relevant trend**s, and
  - **improve the value contribution** of procurement in organizations.
- Three nested levels of analysis:
  - **Firm** (buying organization)
  - **Function** (procurement organization)
  - **Individual** (procurement employee)

Data collection and sample

- Format: Online questionnaire
- Key informant approach
- Field period: February to March 2026
- Population frame (*N*): Global and cross-industry
- Median response time: 16 min
- Full responses: *n* = 70



ISM INSTITUTE FOR SUPPLY MANAGEMENT

UNIVERSITY OF MANNHEIM Business School

State of the Procurement Profession
Survey 2026

We are pleased to invite you to participate in this global procurement survey supported by Institute for Supply Management (ISM) and the University of Mannheim, Germany.

Our goal is to collect the opinions of **procurement professionals** to:

- **predict** the future of procurement,
- **track** procurement excellence and relevant trends, and
- **improve** the value contribution of procurement in organizations.

We also welcome supply chain managers to participate. If certain questions do not align with your specific role, you may skip them.

Everyone who completes the survey will be eligible to receive a **summary of our results**.

Your responses will be kept confidential, and the survey data will only be analyzed in aggregate, so that no statistical inference or conclusions can be backtracked to any firm or individual.

Thank you for sharing your thoughts and opinions with us. If you have any questions, feel free to contact us.

Sincerely,

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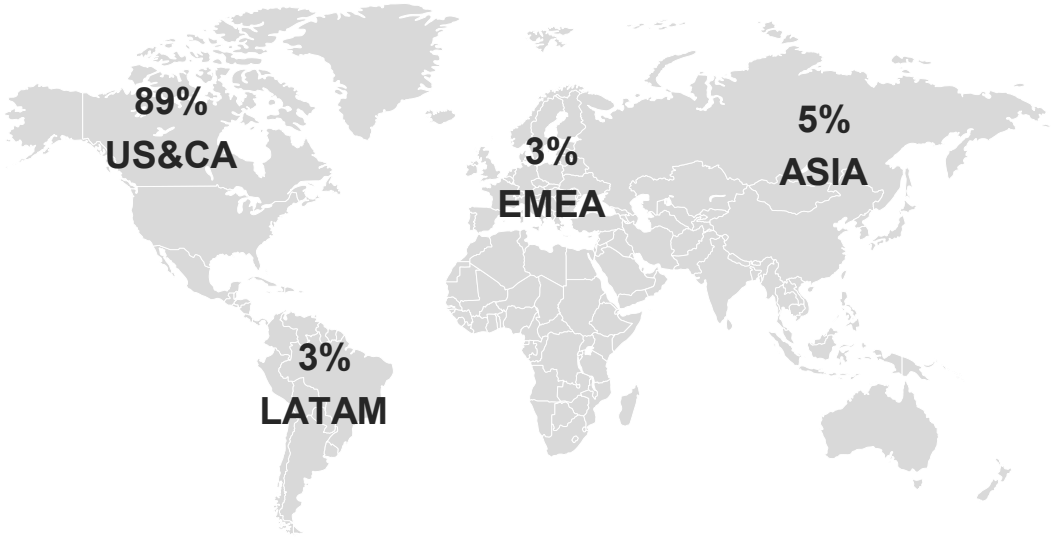
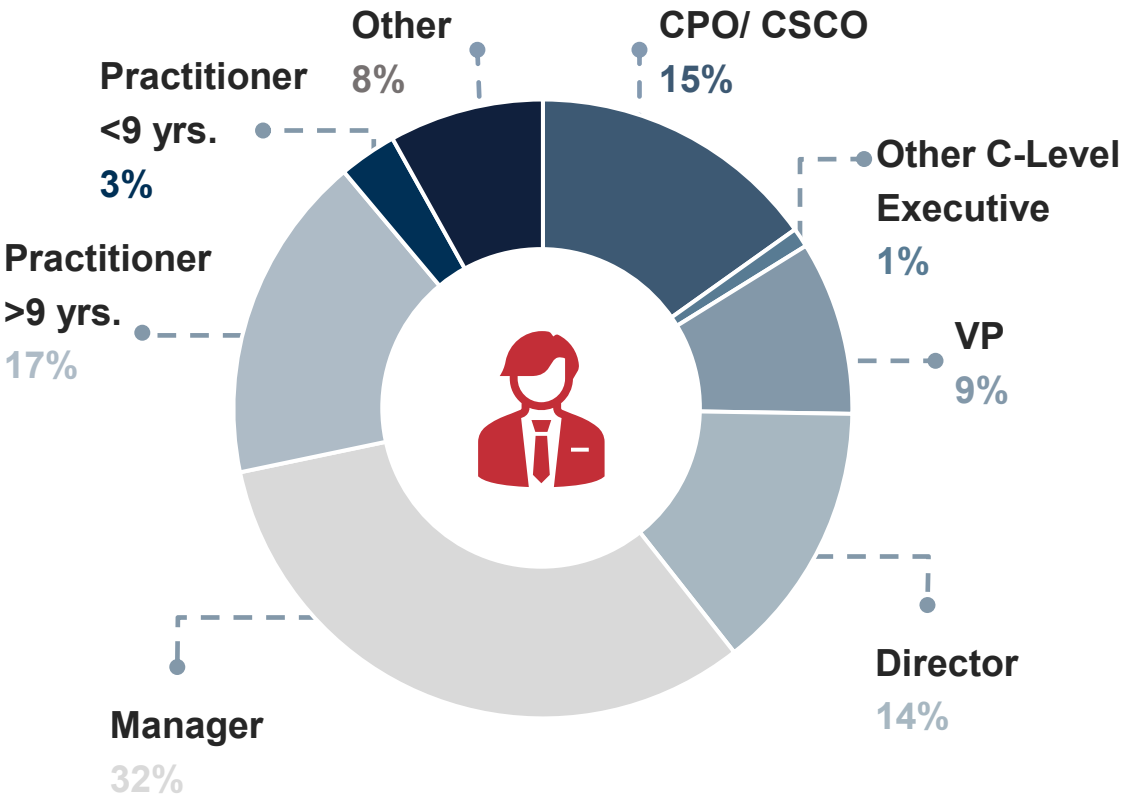
Respondents represent a senior cross-section of the procurement community, with strong North-American representation

Geography



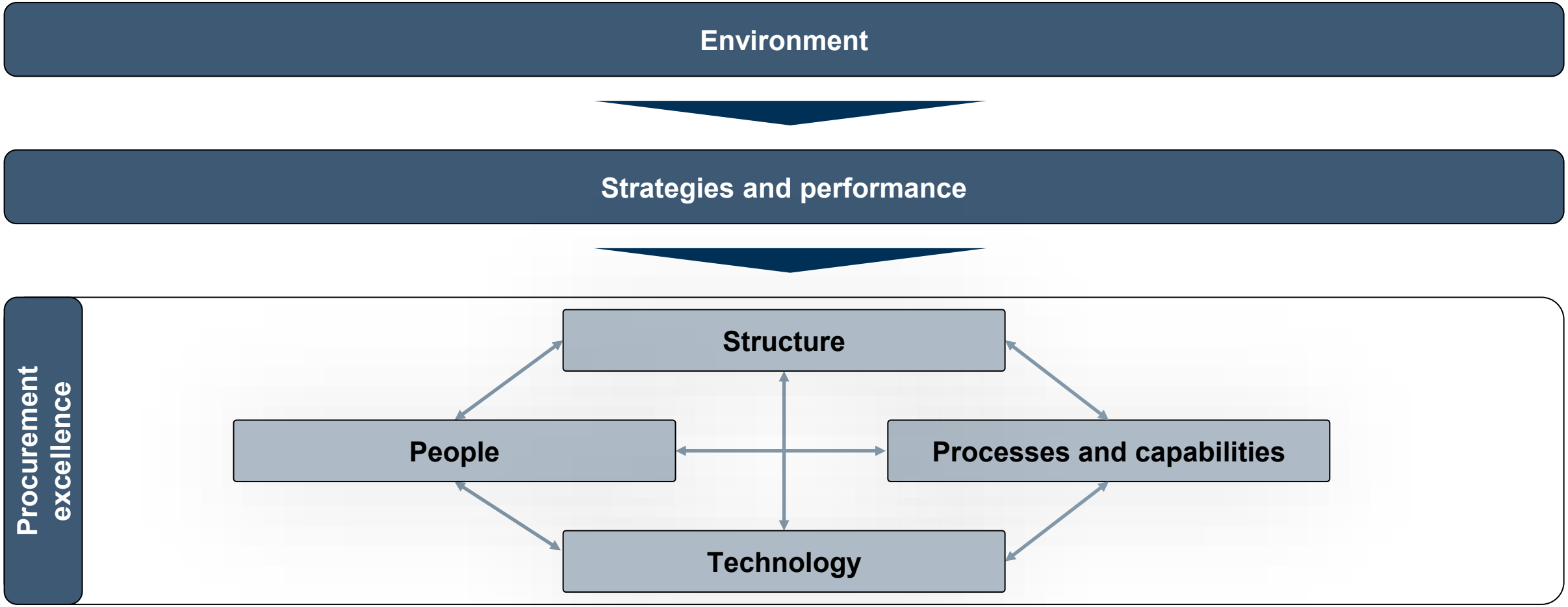
n = 70

Seniority



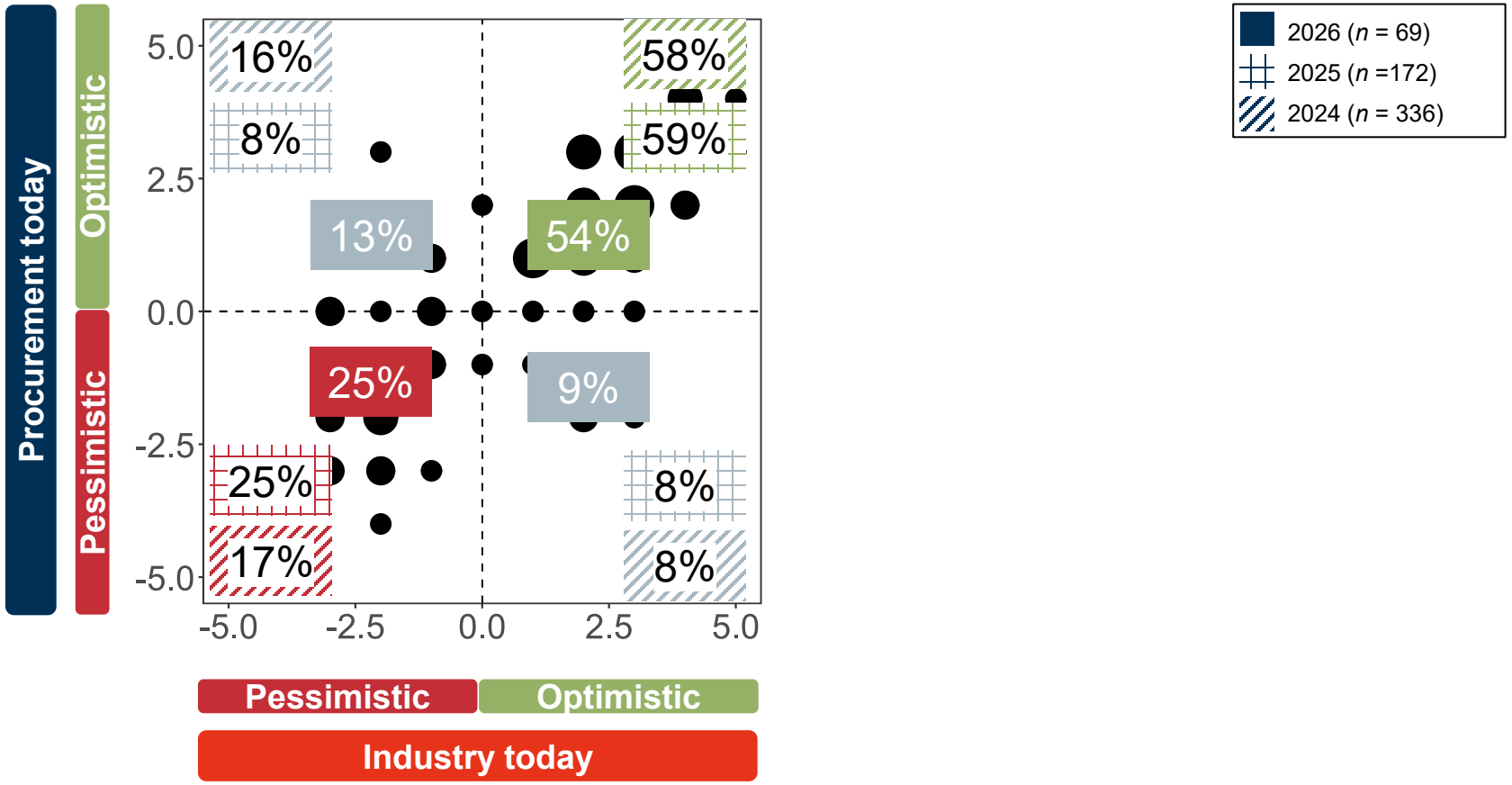
n = 70

The study analyzed procurement organizations from several angles, providing comprehensive insights into the current state of the profession



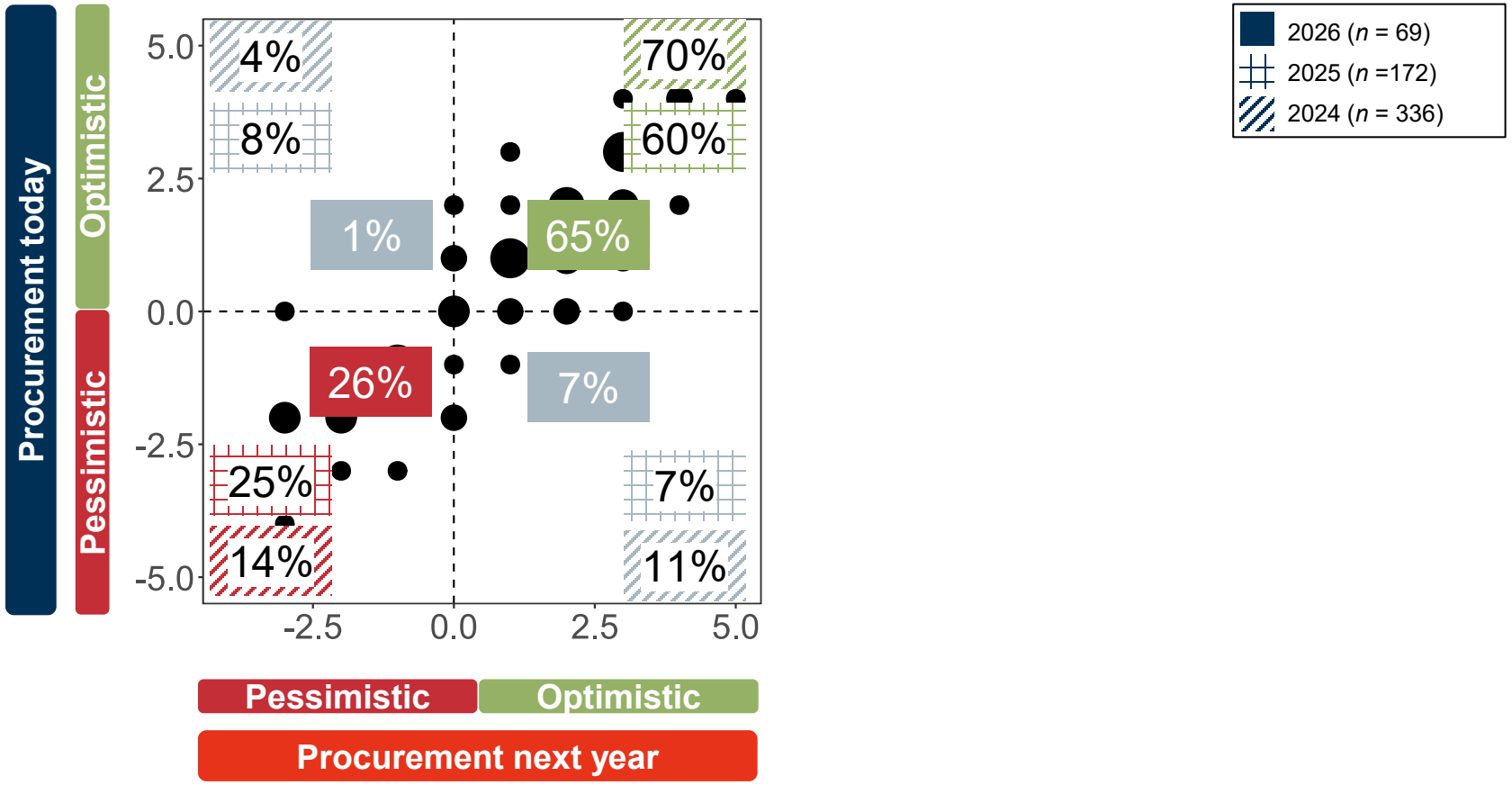
Optimism related to the procurement environment is contingent on perceived favorable industry conditions

Please assess the economic climate (i.e., the general economic conditions and "mood")…

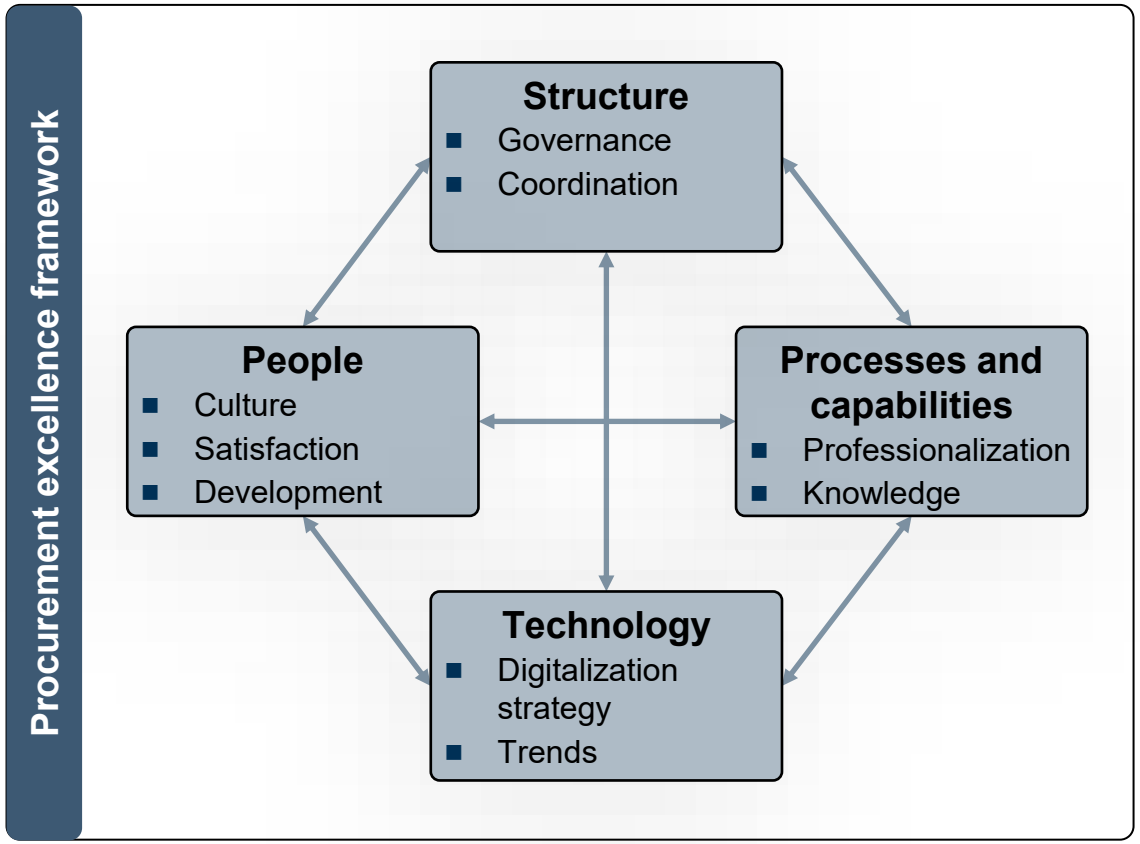


The procurement environment is expected to remain relatively stable over the next 12 months

Please assess the economic climate (i.e., the general economic conditions and "mood")…

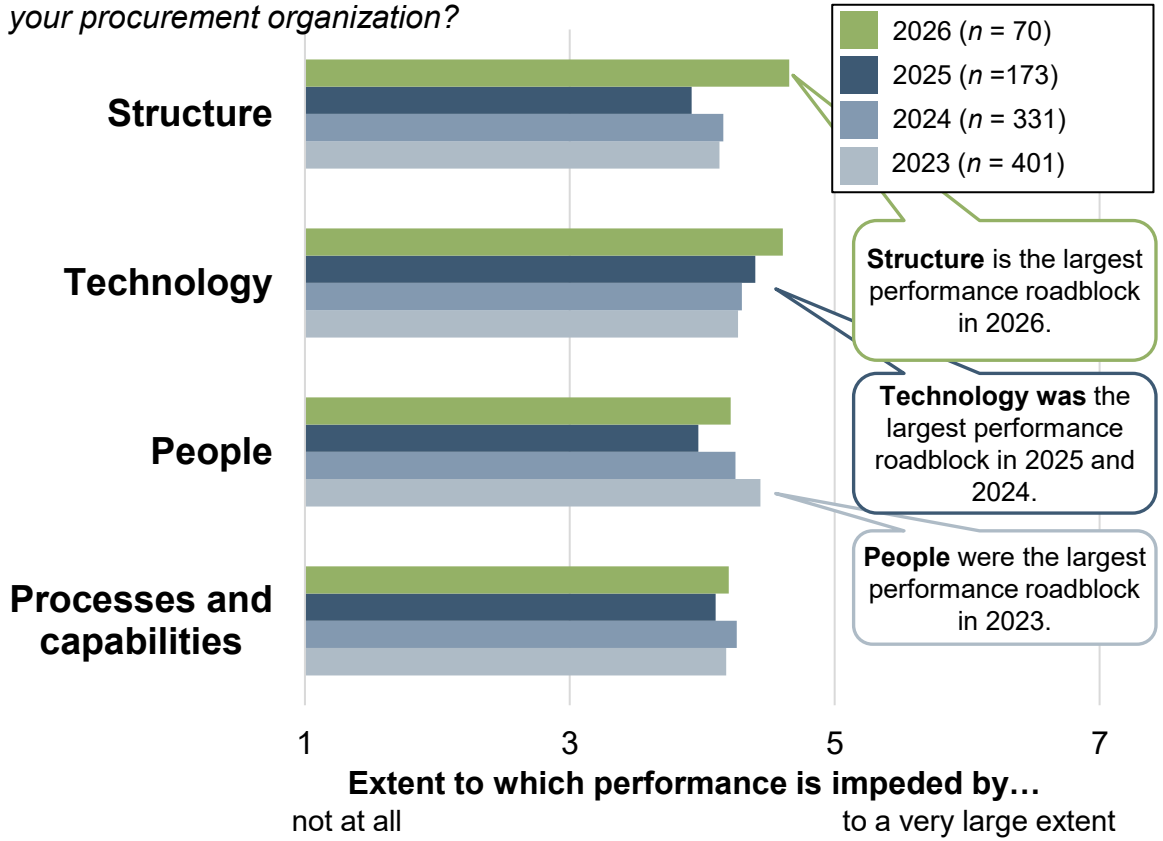


Across the four facets of procurement excellence, structure has overtaken technology as the most significant performance roadblock



Performance roadblocks: 2023-2026

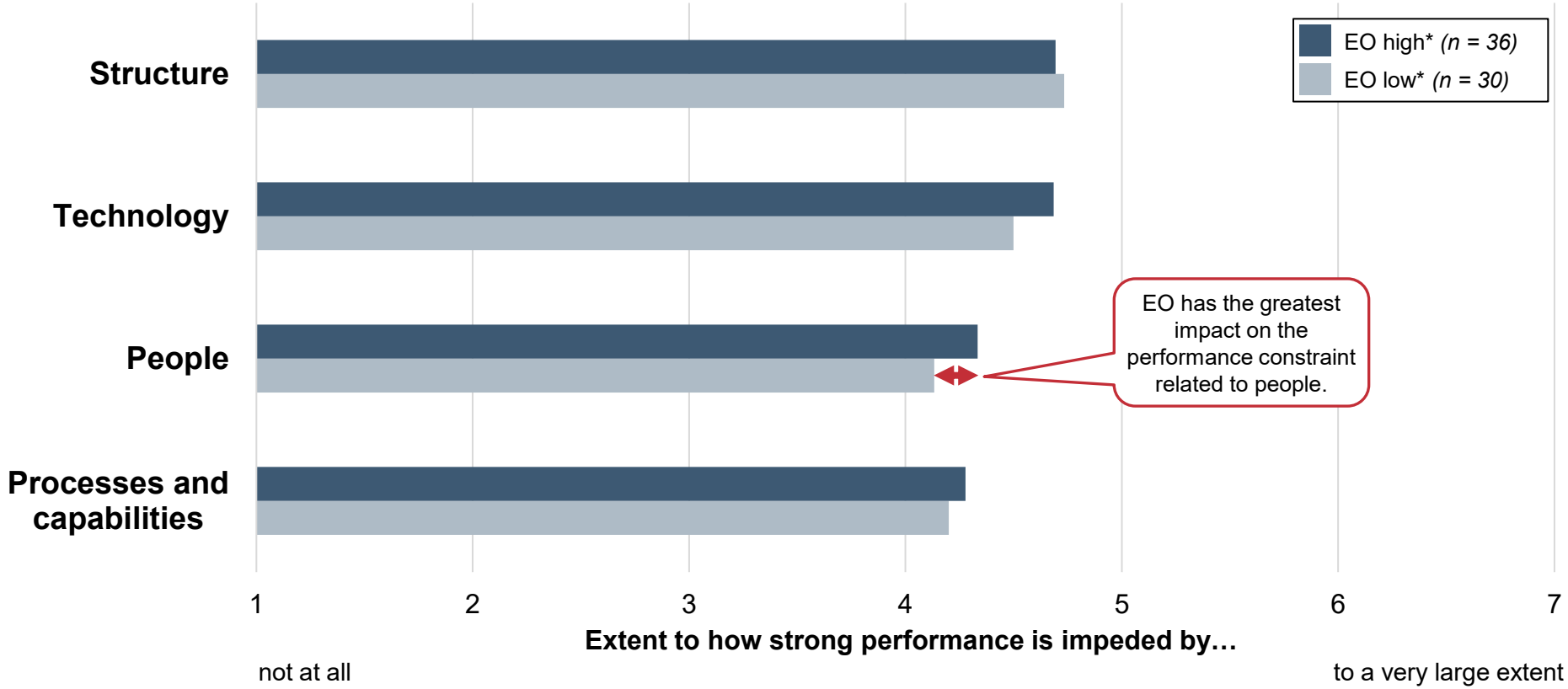
To what extent do the following thematic areas constrain the performance of your procurement organization?



Highly entrepreneurially oriented procurement organizations perceive performance constraints more sharply, particularly related to people

Performance roadblocks: Effect of entrepreneurial orientation (EO)

To what extent do the following thematic areas constrain the performance of your procurement organization?



Three dimensions of entrepreneurial orientation (EO):

Proactiveness
Tendency to emphasize foresight to seize opportunities in anticipation of future demands.

Innovativeness
Tendency to embrace new technologies, ideas, or practices and go beyond the current state of the art.

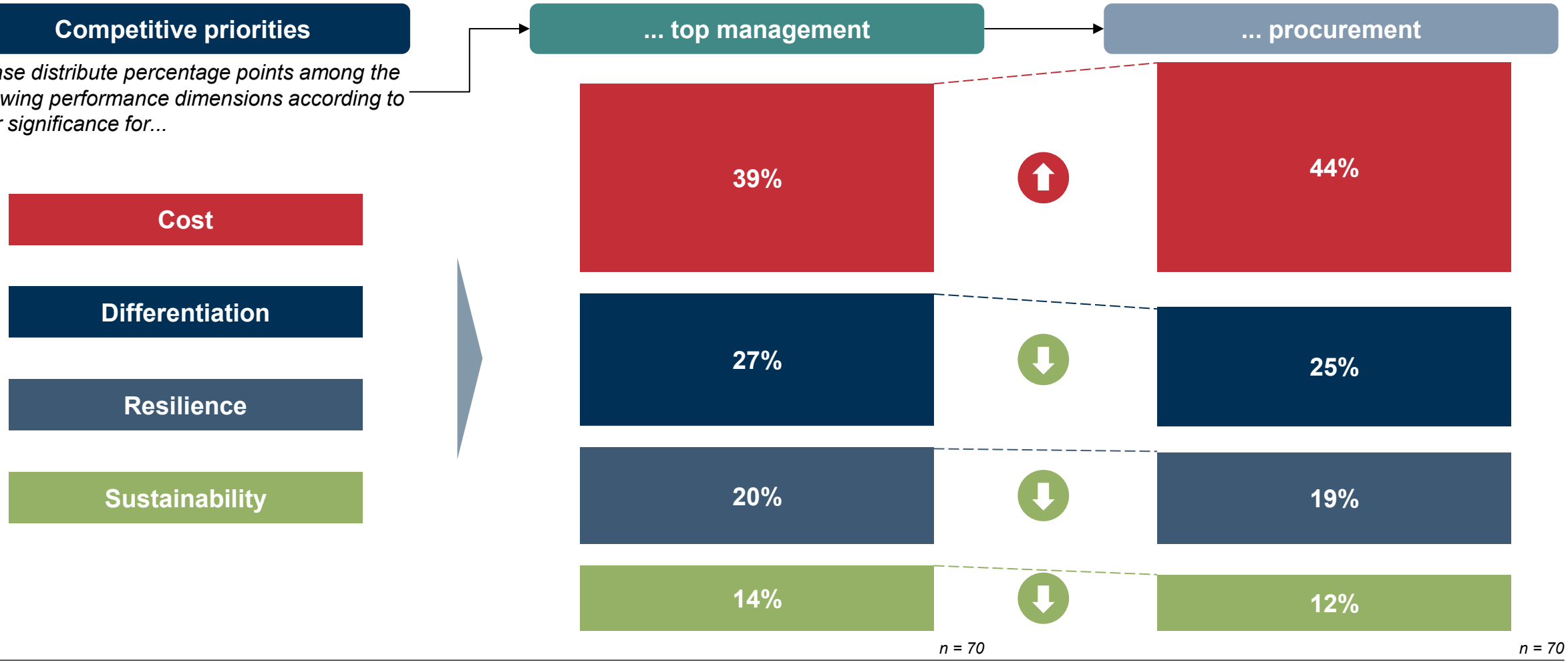
Risk taking
Tendency to make decisions and take action without certain knowledge of outcomes; may involve risky resource commitments in the process of venturing forward.

Note: Entrepreneurial orientation (EO) is conceptualized along the 3-components model suggested by Miller (1983) and Covin & Slevin (1989).
* Cut at median EO across all three dimensions taken together, red arrow indicates largest negative gap between high and low EO.

Cost is the dominant objective in the sourcing process and is more important in sourcing decisions than for top management in general

Competitive priorities

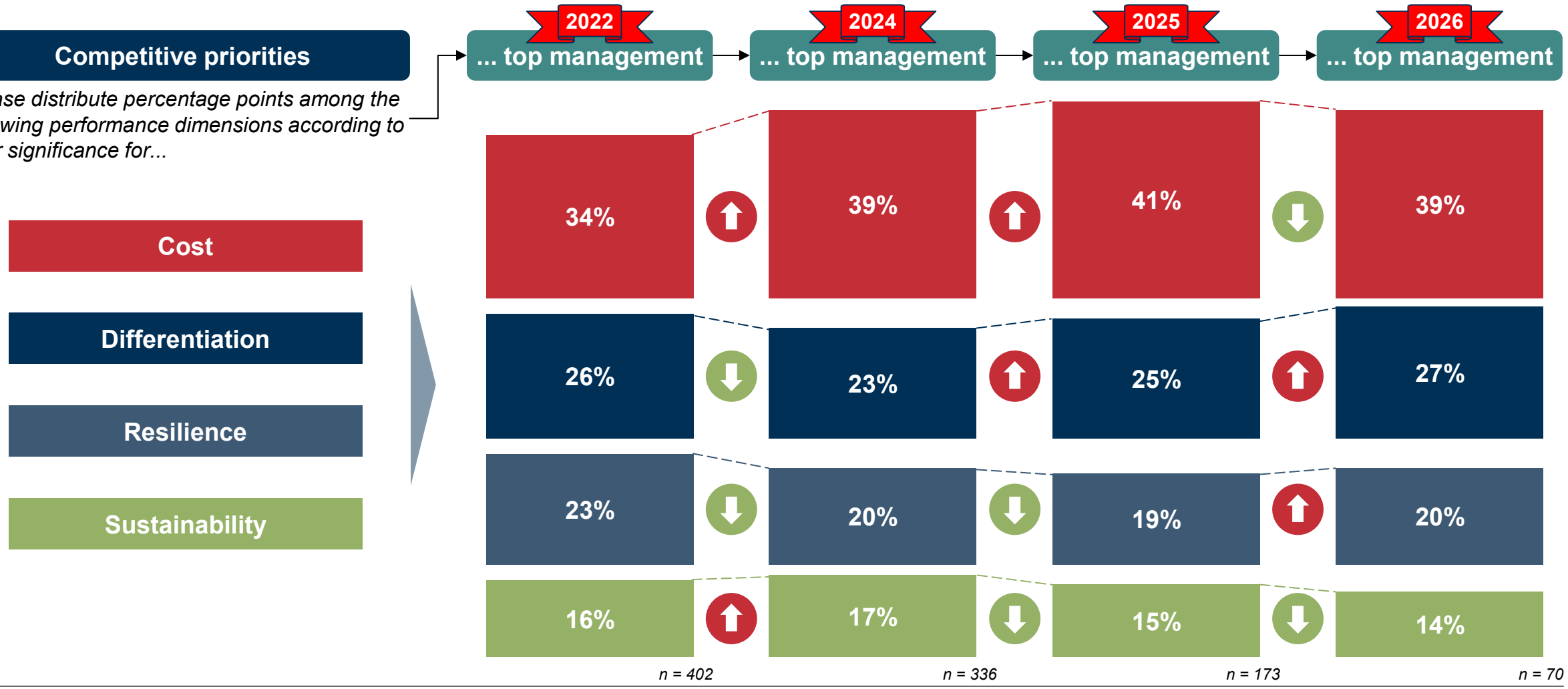
Please distribute percentage points among the following performance dimensions according to their significance for...



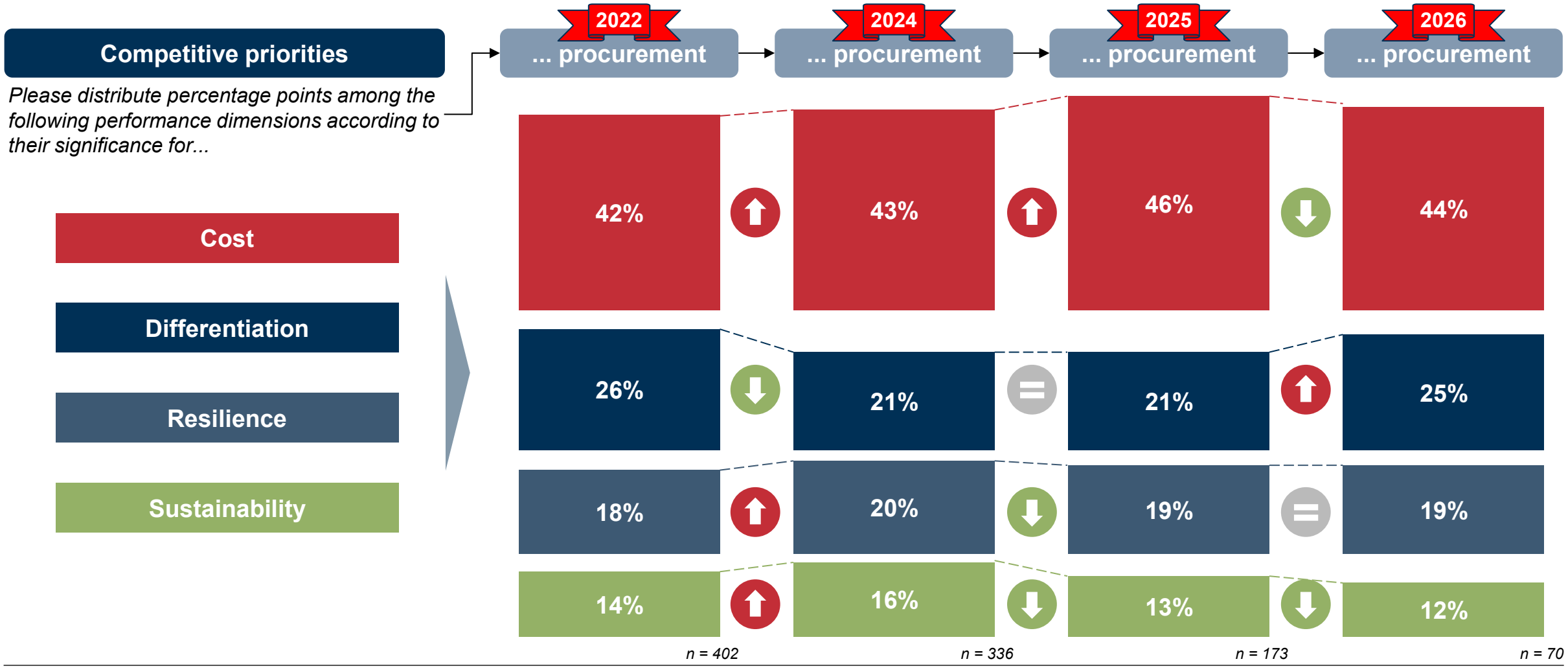
Today, top management is putting more pressure on cost than four years ago but slightly less than last year

Competitive priorities

Please distribute percentage points among the following performance dimensions according to their significance for...

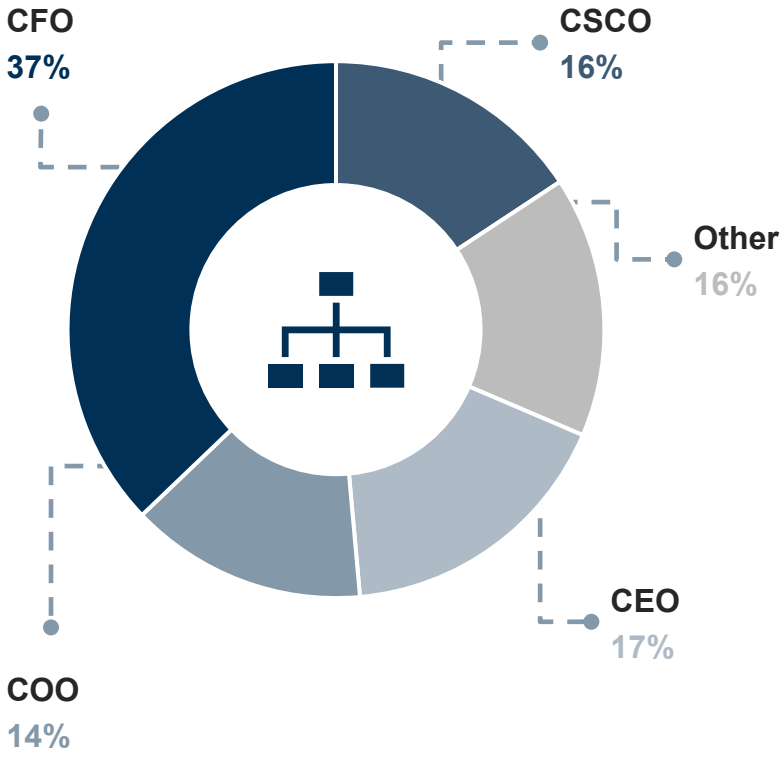


In sourcing decisions, cost has eased slightly versus last year but remains the dominant priority at 44%



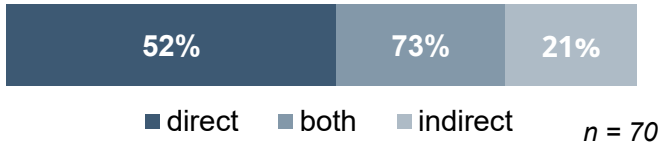
Hierarchically, procurement reports predominantly to the CFO and expects increasing spend volumes

Procurement reports to…



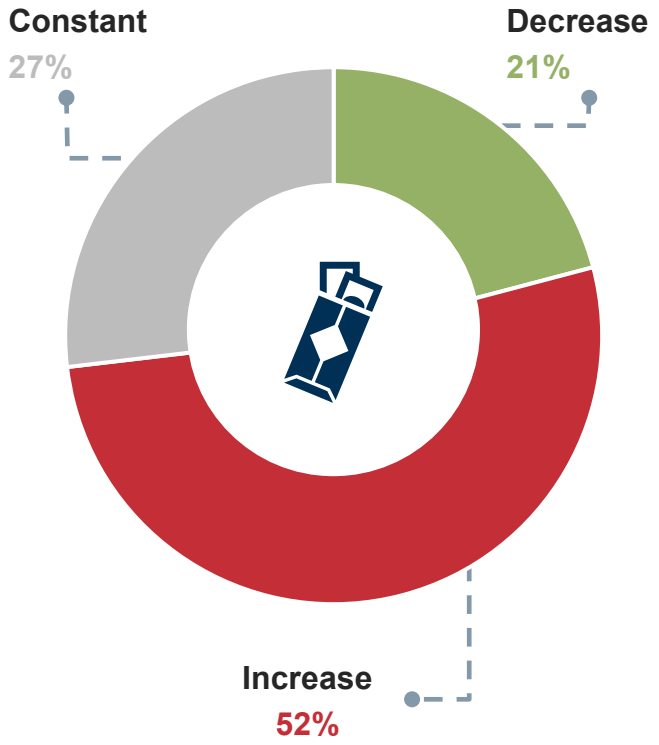
n = 70

Spend responsibilities



n = 70

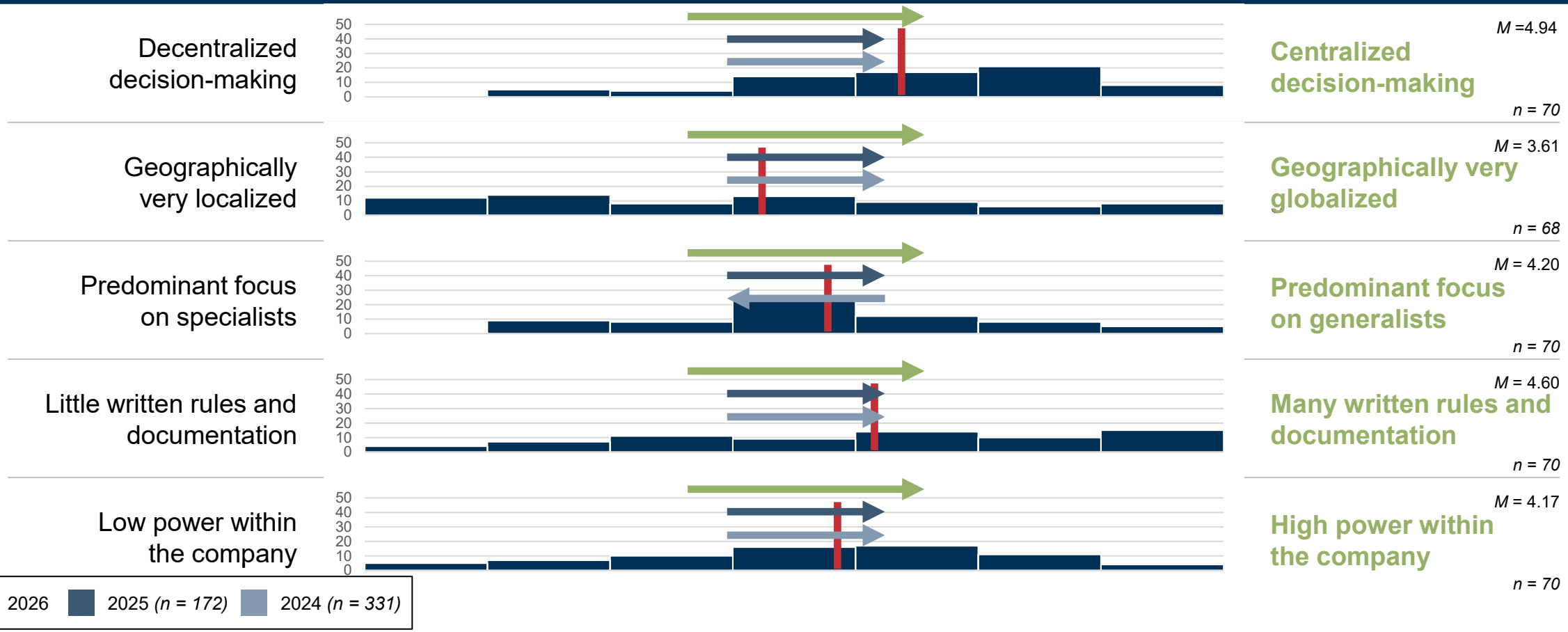
Spend in 2026 compared to 2025



n = 70

Procurement organizations are predominantly centralized and well-documented, but only moderately powerful within their own company

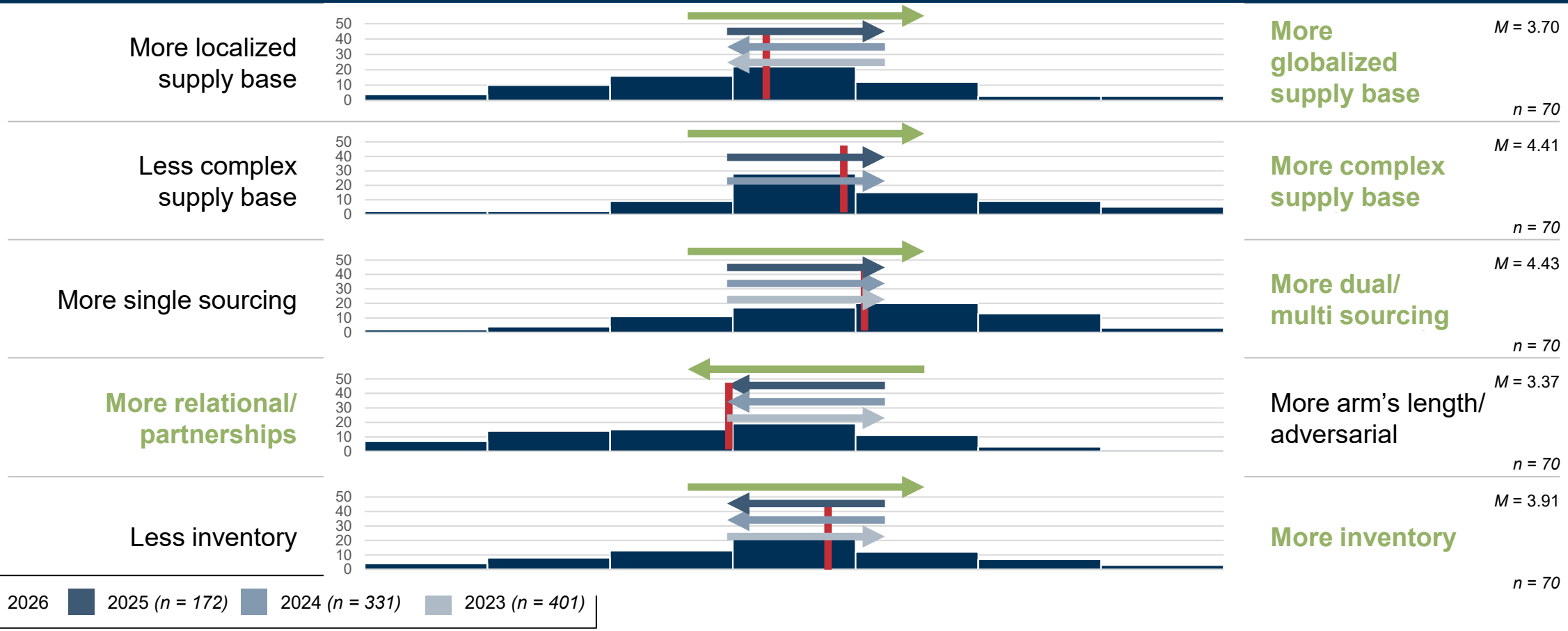
Operating model: ***How would you characterize your procurement organization on the following dimensions?***



Note: Plots show frequency distribution (histogram) over 7-point semantic differential scales. Red bars indicate mean values, arrows indicate whether most of the values are left or right of the center.

Sourcing strategies are tilting toward dual or multi sourcing, more complex supply bases, and stronger supplier partnerships

Sourcing strategies: ***To what extent have the following dimensions changed in your procurement organization during the last year?***

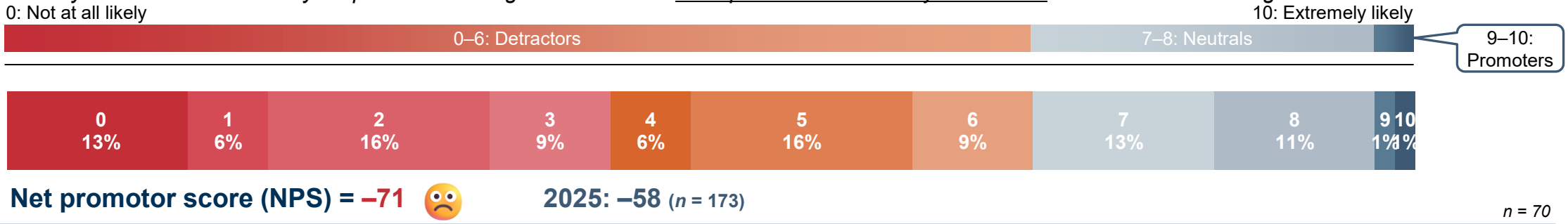


Note: Plots show frequency distribution (histogram) over 7-point semantic differential scales. Red bars indicate mean values, arrows indicate whether most of the values are left or right of the center.

The vast majority of respondents are not satisfied with their procurement organization's sustainability performance

Sustainability excellence: Net promoter score (NPS)

How likely is it that you would recommend your procurement organization as an exemplar for sustainability excellence to a friend or a colleague?

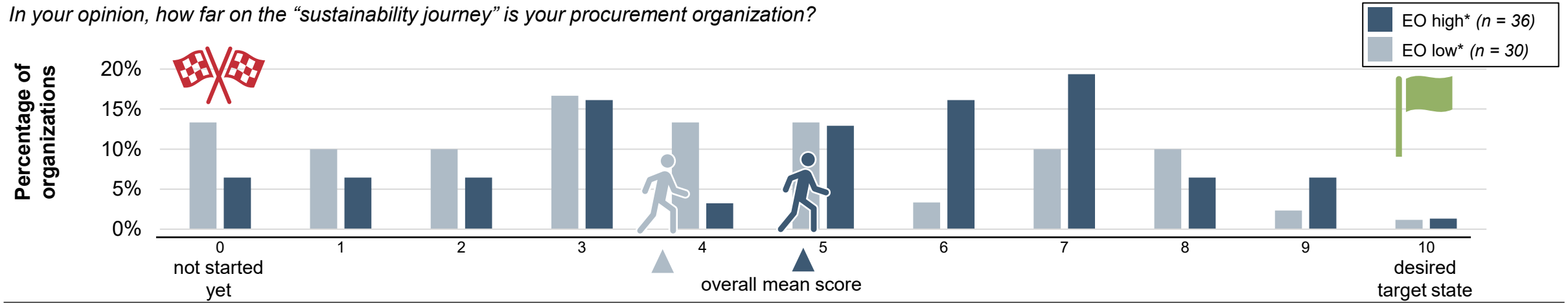


Net promotor score (NPS) = –71 😟 **2025: –58** (*n* = 173)

n = 70

"Sustainability journey": Effect of entrepreneurial orientation (EO)

In your opinion, how far on the "sustainability journey" is your procurement organization?

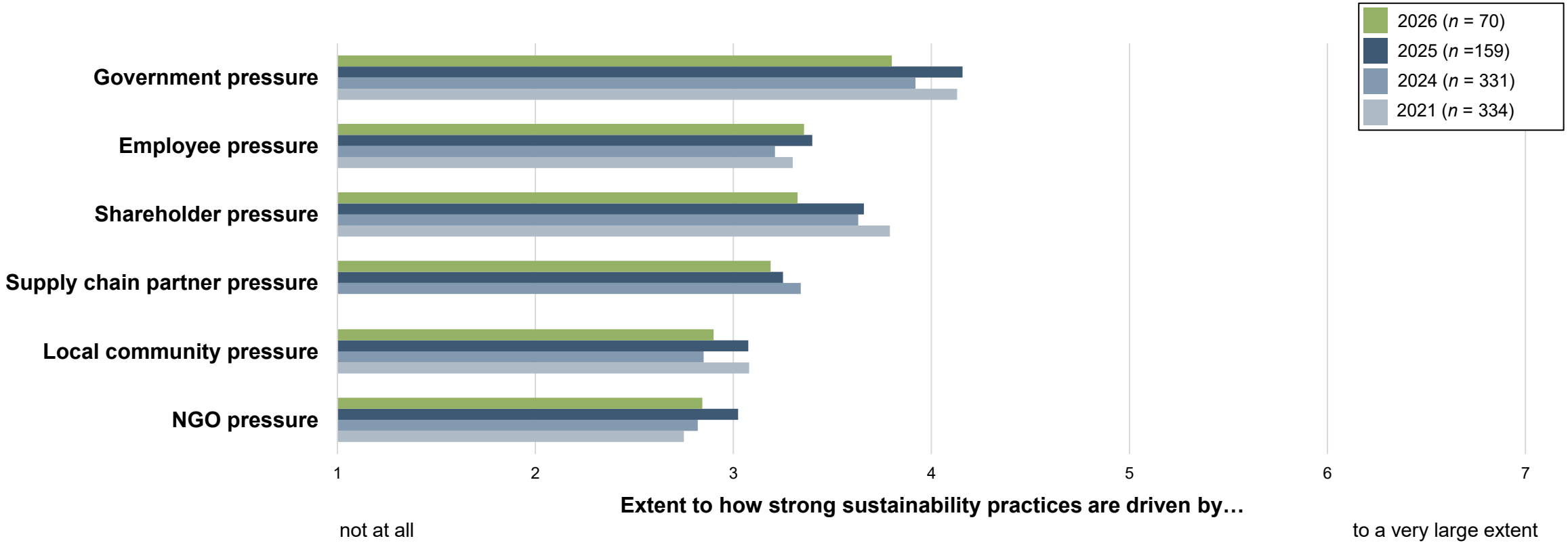


Note: Net promotor score (NPS) is calculated as %Promoters – %Detractors and varies from –100 (negative) to +100 (positive).
* Cut at median EO across all dimensions taken together

Sustainability pressure on procurement has eased in 2026, with government and shareholder pressure declining most

Sustainability-related stakeholder pressures: 2026 vs. 2025 *vs.* 2024 *vs.* 2021

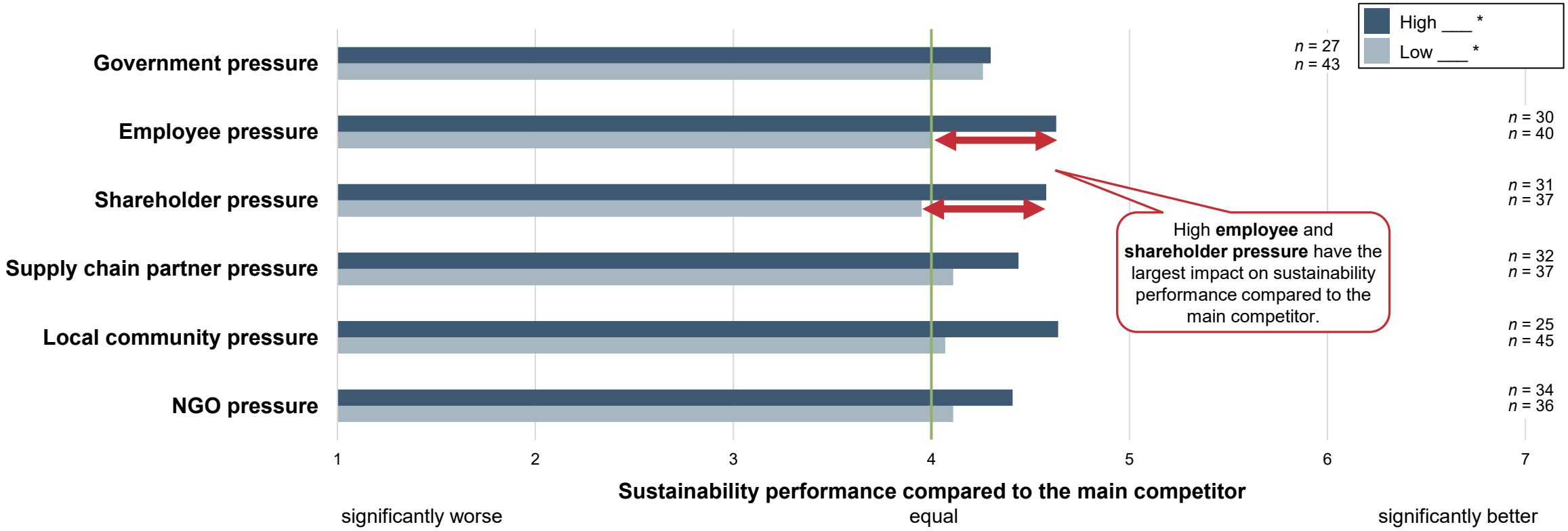
How relevant are the following stakeholder pressures for implementing sustainable practices in your procurement organization?



Companies that are more under pressure have a higher sustainability performance than their competitors

Relative sustainability performance (compared to main competitor): Effect of different sustainability-related stakeholder pressures

How does your procurement organization compare to your major competitor on sustainability performance?

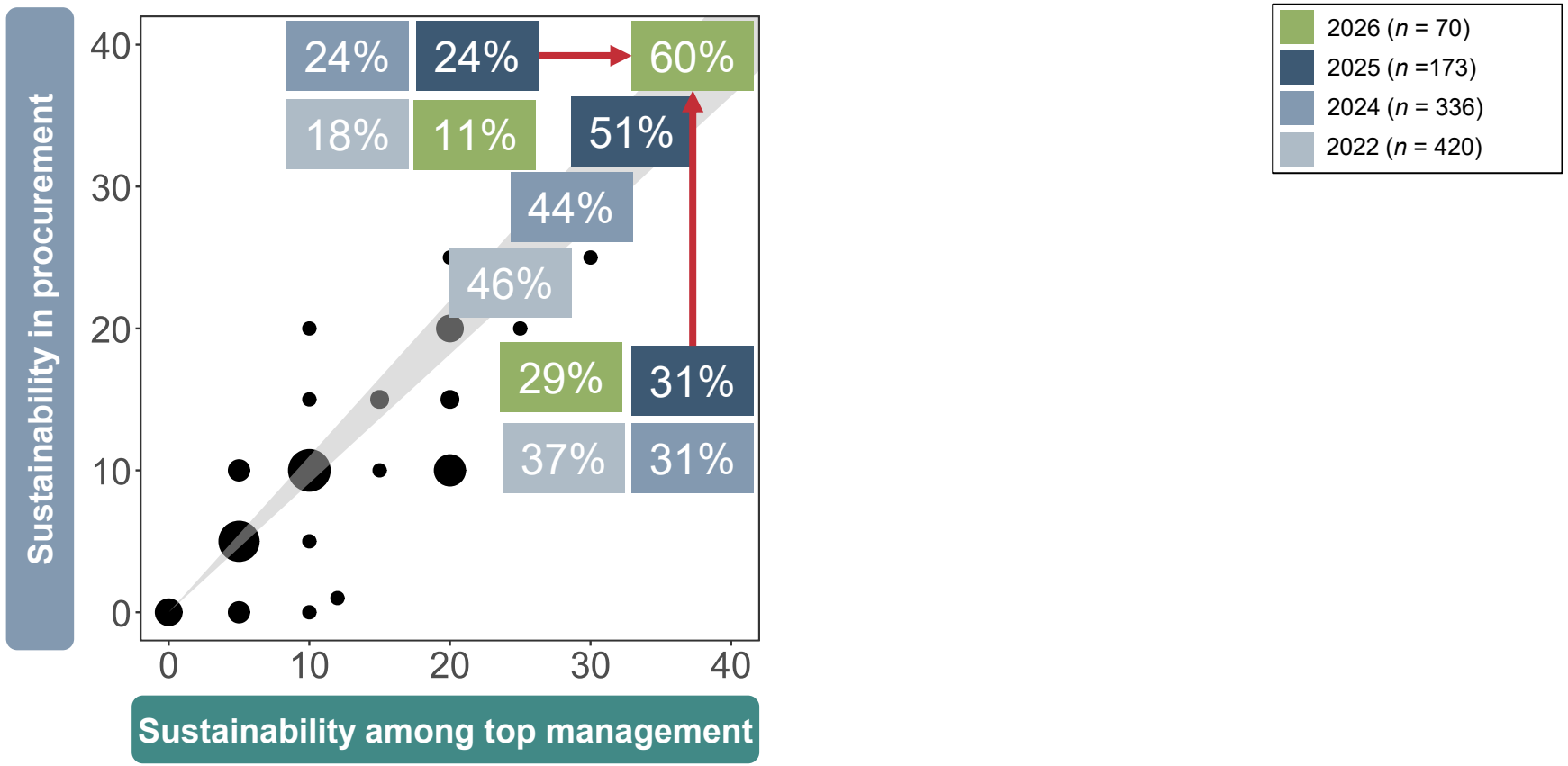


* Cut at mean pressure of the respective stakeholder, red arrow indicates largest gap between ”high” and ”low” pressure.

Corporate sustainability intentions among top management and the implementation in procurement are often decoupled from each other

Importance of sustainability: Top management *vs.* procurement in 2022, 2024, 2025, and 2026

Please distribute percentage points among the following performance dimensions according to their significance... (only "sustainability" is shown)

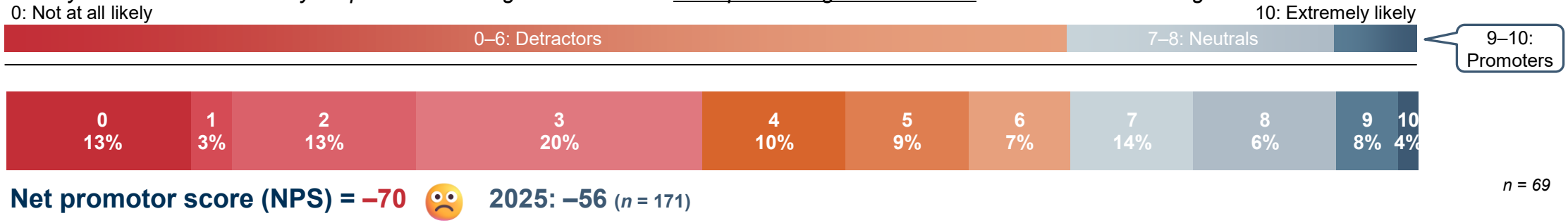


Note: Summative measure (100%) with the other dimensions being "cost", "differentiation", and "resilience".

The satisfaction with the digitalization strategy is low and the organizations are still far from reaching their desired target state

Digital excellence: Net promoter score (NPS)

How likely is it that you would recommend your procurement organization as an exemplar for digital excellence to a friend or a colleague?

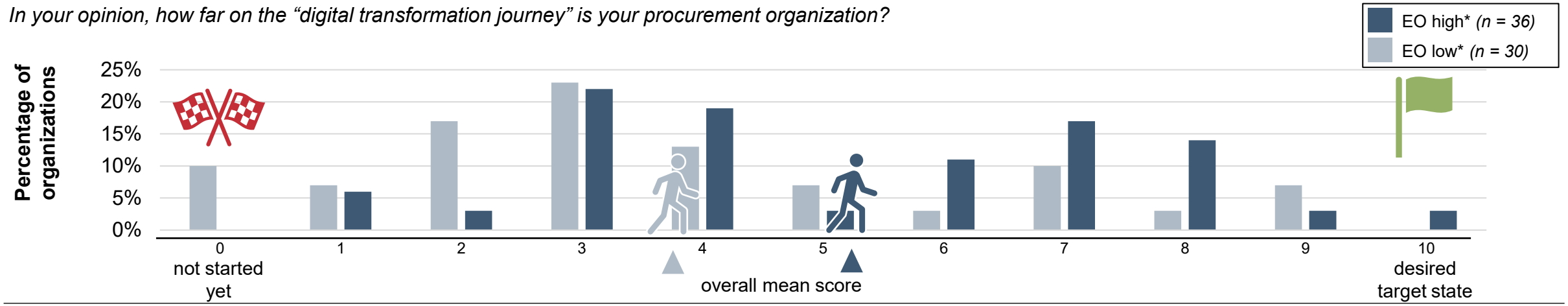


Net promotor score (NPS) = –70 😟 **2025: –56** (*n* = 171)

n = 69

"Digital transformation journey": Effect of entrepreneurial orientation (EO)

In your opinion, how far on the "digital transformation journey" is your procurement organization?

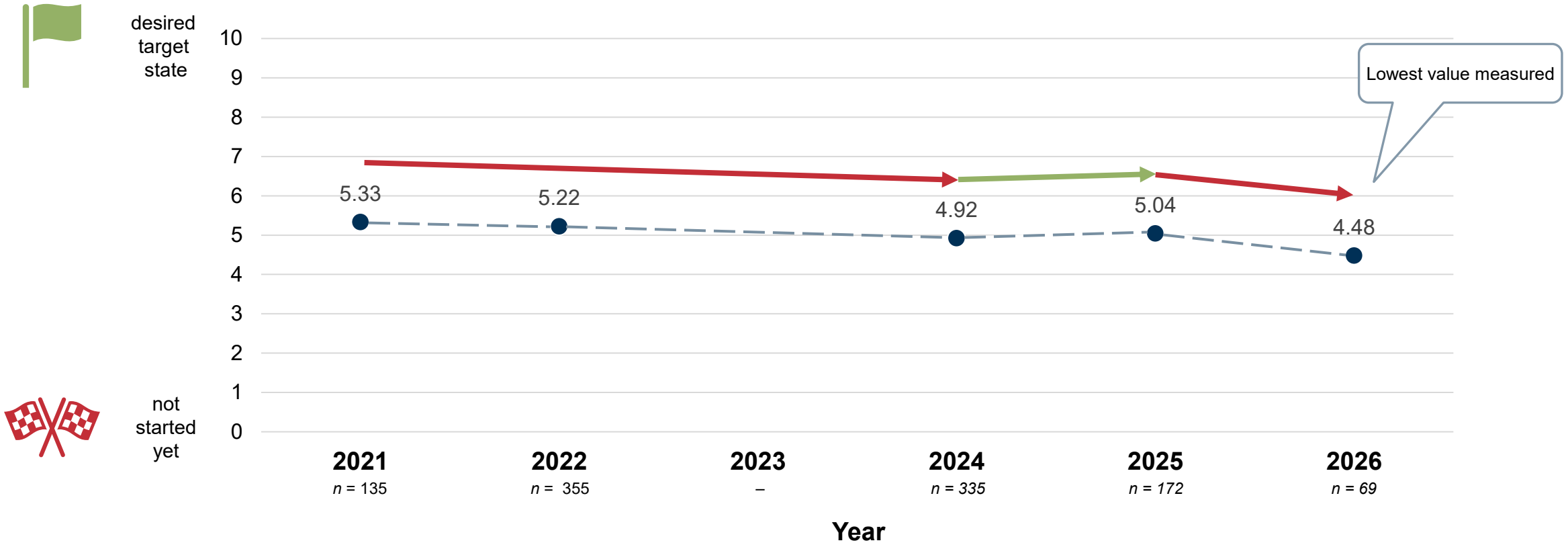


Note: Net Promotor Score (NPS) is calculated as %Promoters – %Detractors and varies from –100 (negative) to +100 (positive).

Procurement organizations are not coming closer to their digitalization target state but are moving even further away

"Digital transformation journey": Time series

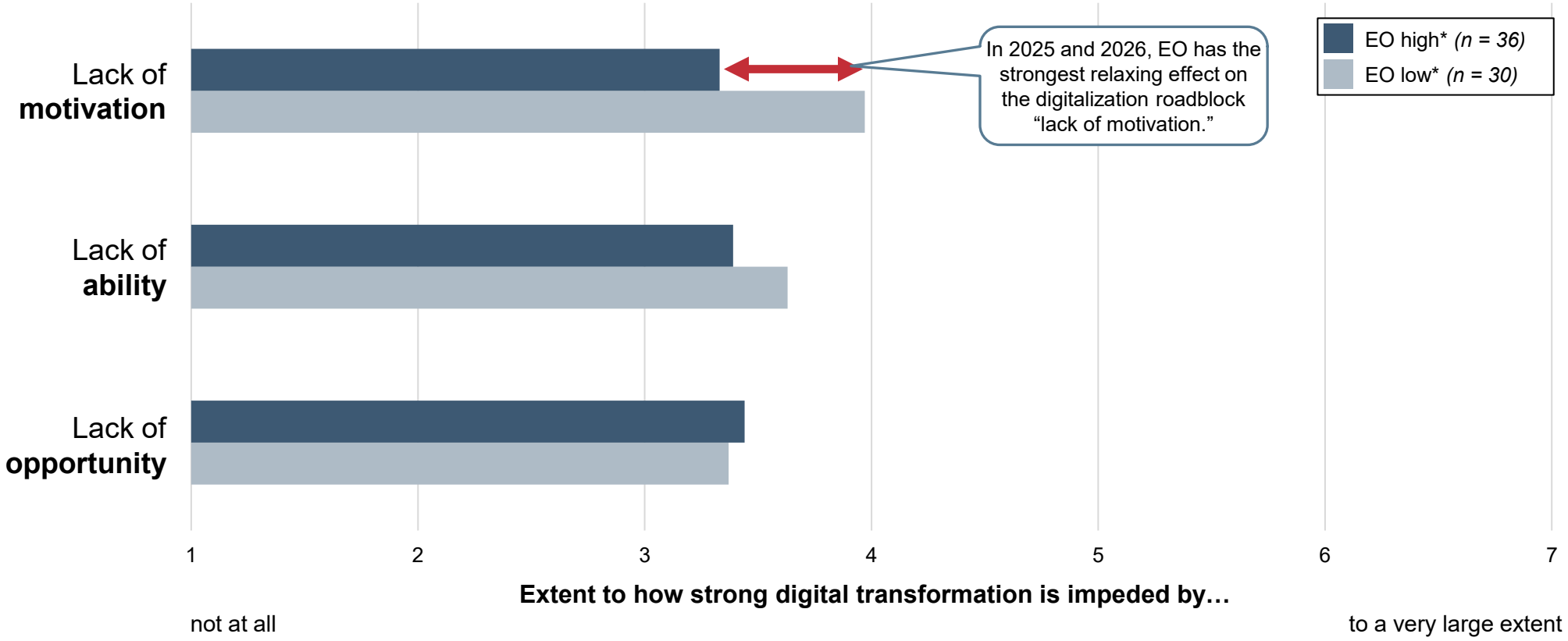
In your opinion, how far on the "digital transformation journey" is your procurement organization?



Entrepreneurial organizations face fewer digital transformation roadblocks, mainly in motivation, not in opportunity or ability

Digital transformation roadblocks: Effect of entrepreneurial orientation (EO)

To what extent do the following factors impede your procurement organization from undertaking further steps in digital transformation?



Three dimensions of entrepreneurial orientation:

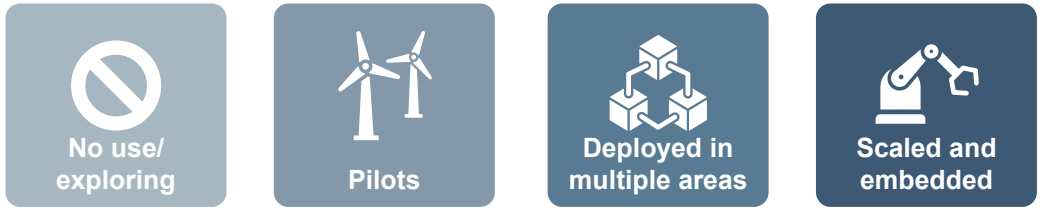
- Proactiveness
- Innovativeness
- Risk taking

* Cut at median EO across all three dimensions taken together, red arrow indicates largest gap between high and low EO.

Most organizations remain in AI exploration or pilot, while time spent on governance and data curation is already increasing

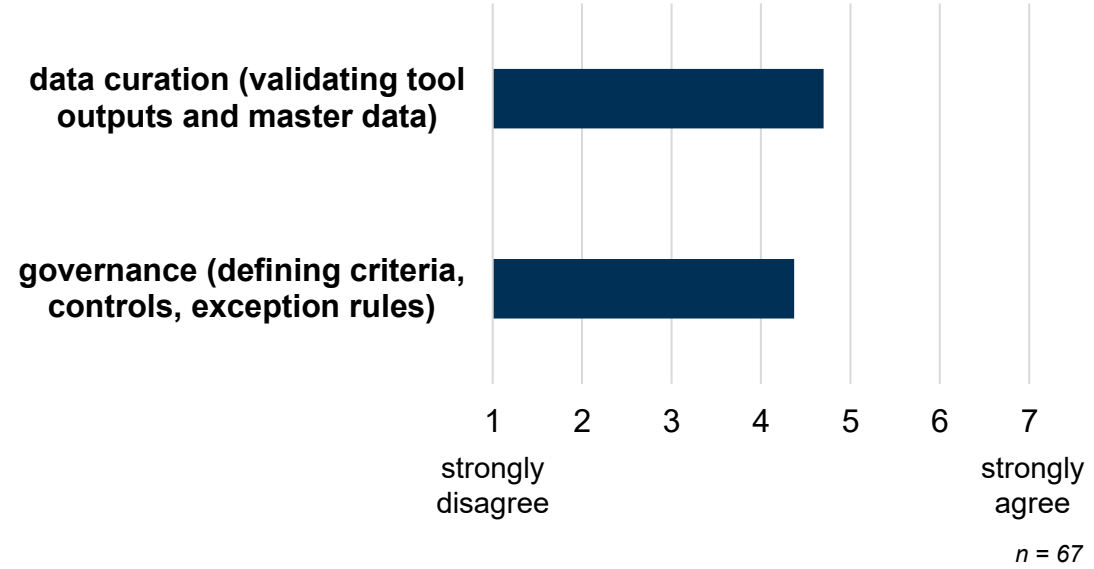
AI use

Which best describes your procurement organization's current use of AI?



n = 69

Over the last 12 months, procurement professionals' time spent on _____ has increased substantially.



n = 67

Procurement is structurally pre-scale on AI: 80% are still in exploration or pilot, 0% report AI as scaled and embedded.

But the human workload is already shifting toward setting the stage for AI by governing processes and curating data.

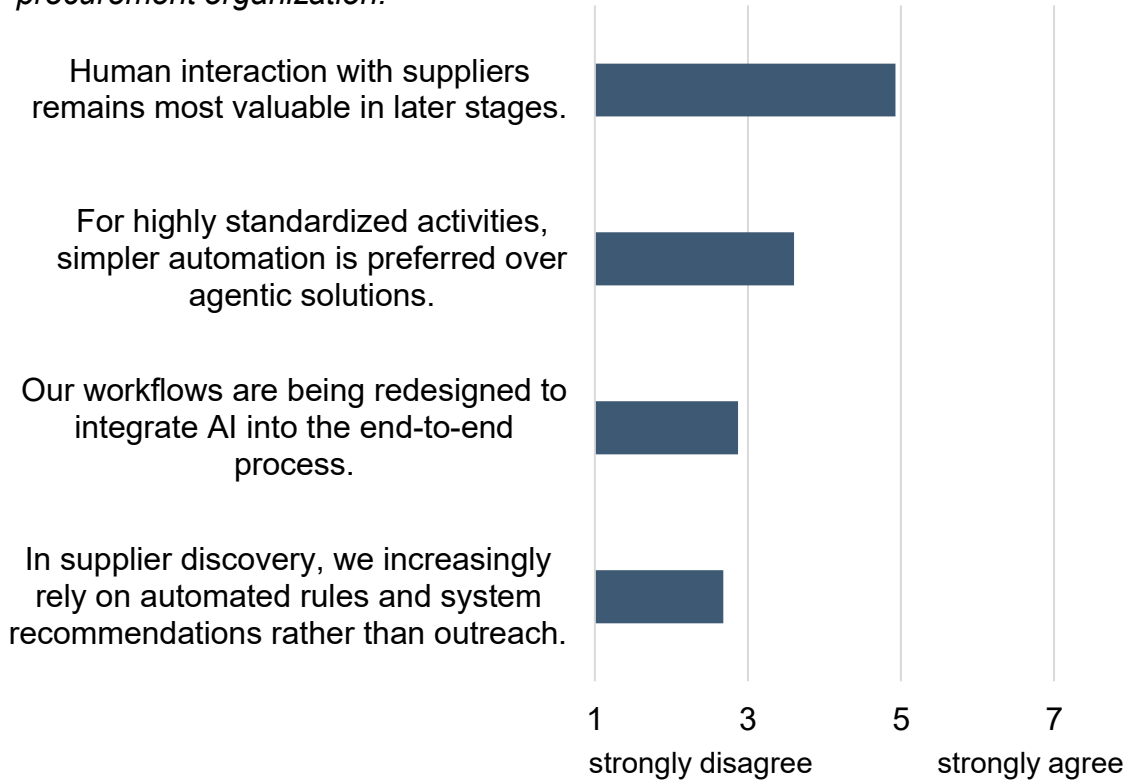
AI is most accepted in early procurement stages; humans remain in charge of negotiation and contracting

AI use

We are willing to allow AI-enabled systems to execute _____ without prior human approval (within predefined criteria).

n = 66

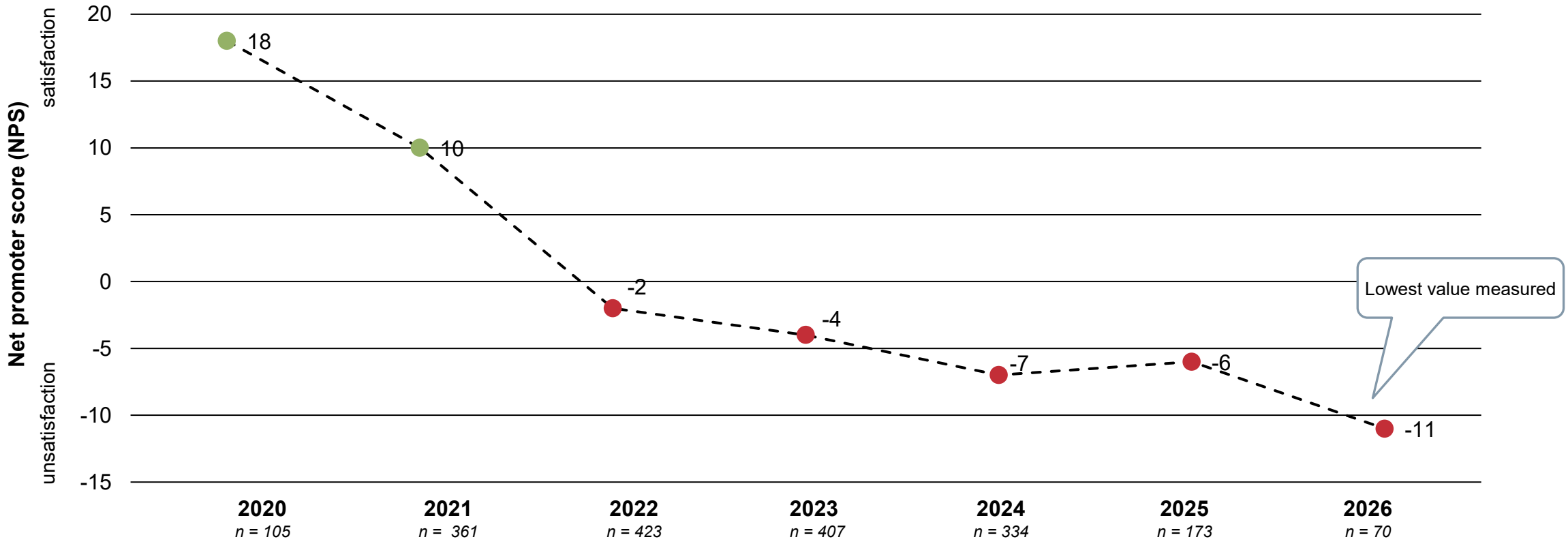
Please indicate your opinion on the following statements concerning your procurement organization.



n = 70

Procurement professionals' satisfaction with their own organization has hit a new seven-year low

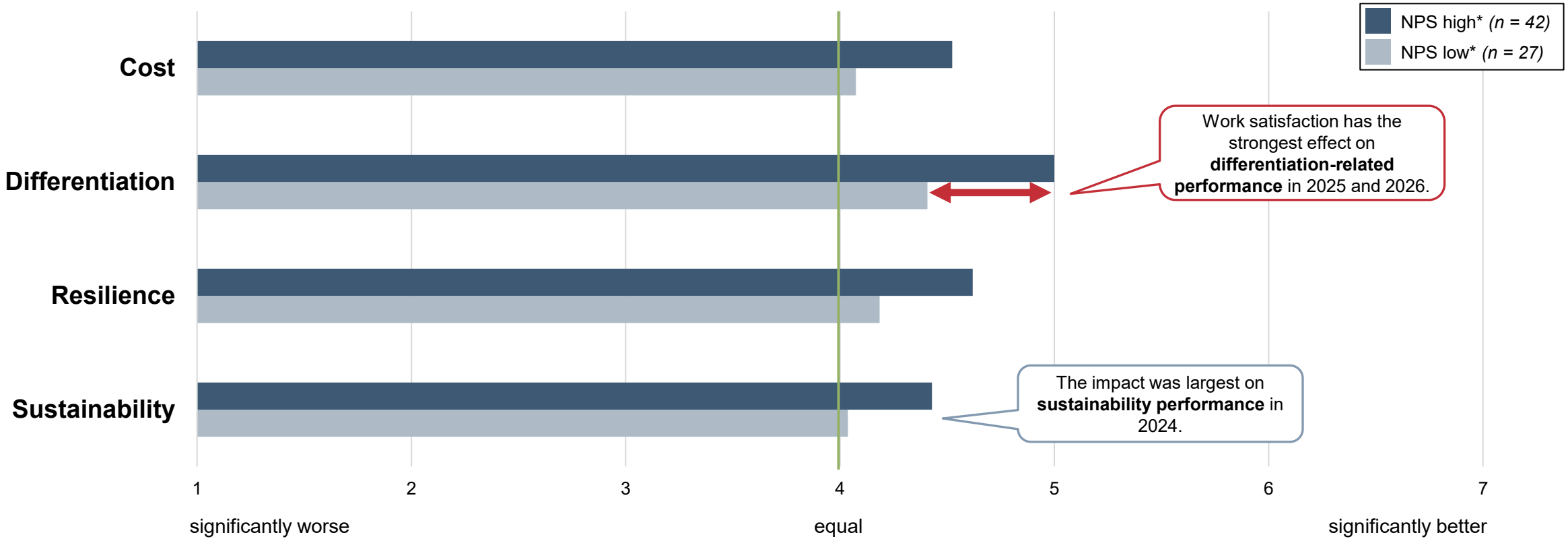
How likely are you to recommend working with your procurement organization to a friend or colleague? (NPS)



Procurement organizations with higher employee satisfaction outperform their competitors, most strongly on differentiation

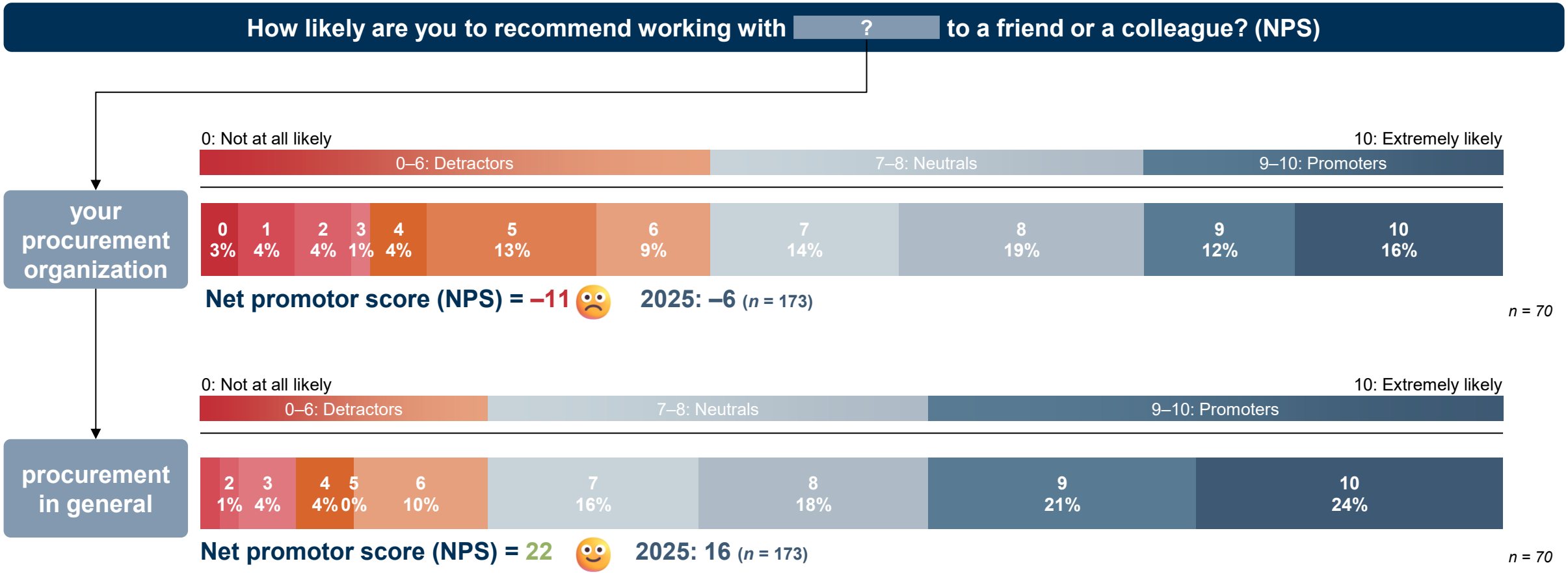
Relative performance (compared to main competitor): Effect of satisfaction with procurement organization (NPS)

How does your procurement organization compare to your major competitor on the following performance dimensions?



* Cut at median NPS (satisfaction with one's own procurement department), red arrow indicates largest gap between "NPS high" and "NPS low".

However, despite professionals being unsatisfied with their organization, they are still satisfied with procurement in general

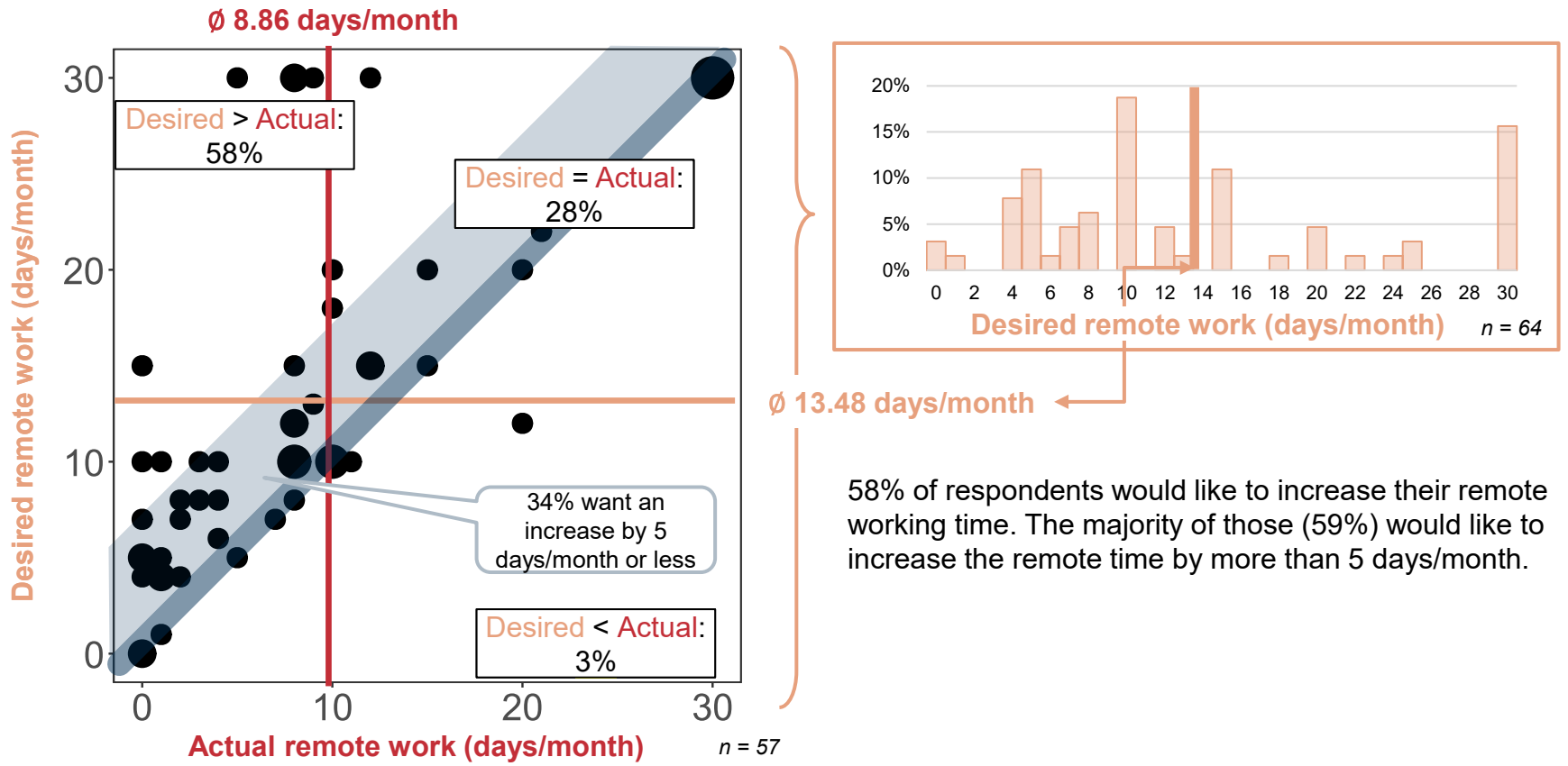


Note: Net Promotor Score (NPS) is calculated as %Promoters – %Detractors and varies from –100 (negative) to +100 (positive).

Respondents work an average of 9 days per month remotely and the majority would like to further increase this time

Remote work: Actual *vs.* desired

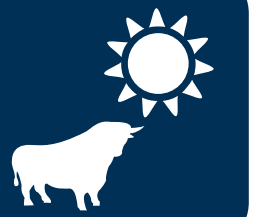
On average, how many days per month do you work remotely [x-axis] / would you like to work remotely [y-axis]?



58% of respondents would like to increase their remote working time. The majority of those (59%) would like to increase the remote time by more than 5 days/month.

Note: Average values indicated are means.

Key insights of the “State of the Procurement Profession Survey 2026“



The procurement environment is **cautiously constructive** today and expected to drift **slightly more positive** over the next twelve months.

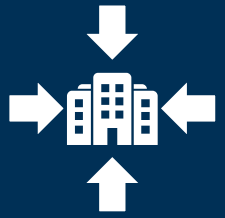
“**Structure**” has overtaken “**technology**” as the most significant **performance roadblock** for procurement since 2024.

Cost remains the dominant priority for procurement professionals – often pursued even more rigorously than by their own top management.

Procurement organizations are predominantly **centralized**, **globally** networked, and **well-documented** – and moderately powerful within their own company.

Dual (or multi) sourcing and increasing **supply base complexity** remain the most consistent trends or developments in the sourcing context.

Procurement organizations that cultivate an entrepreneurial orientation and mindset navigate digital and sustainability transformation more effectively.



Stakeholder pressure to advance **sustainability** has eased in 2026, even though **pressure** remains the **strongest driver of sustainability performance**.

Procurement organizations are **still falling short of their digital transformation goals**, primarily driven by a **lack of motivation**.

A persistent concern remains: For the fifth consecutive year, **procurement professionals report low satisfaction with their respective organizations –** even though they continue to value the profession itself.

Authors of the 8th “State of the Procurement Profession Survey”

Christoph Bode

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Ruth is a postdoctoral researcher at University of Mannheim’s Business School. Her research interests are in procurement, supply chain management and sustainability. Prior to pursuing her PhD at the University of Mannheim, she studied business administration at the University of Cologne, the Estonian Business School (EBS) in Tallinn, and the Dublin City University (DCU).

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