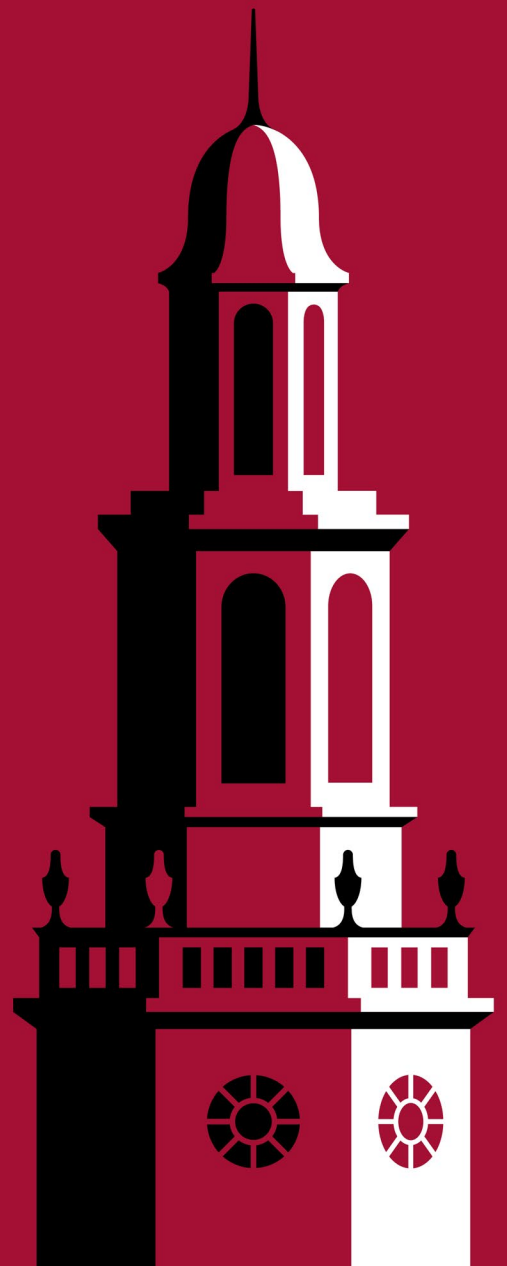
Building From the Bottom Up

Upward mobility survey of employers of low-wage workers (Overall Results)



Harvard Business School

Managing the Future of Work

Notes
Employer Survey – Overall

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Source: "Upward Mobility Survey of Employers of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S.," September–November 2020, Project on Managing the Future of Work, Harvard Business School.

Introduction:
This deck represents the overall results from an online survey of 1,150 U.S. employers of low-wage workers conducted September–November 2020 by the Project on Managing the Future of Work at Harvard Business School. The survey questionnaire is also available on our website.

Please direct inquiries to:
Manjari Raman, mraman@hbs.edu

Preferred citation:
"Upward Mobility Survey of Employers of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S.," September–November 2020, Project on Managing the Future of Work, Harvard Business School.

General notes:
- Numbers may not sum to 100% due to rounding. All numbers are rounded to the nearest integer. However, the data is recorded to two decimal places – thus some data points labeled "0%" may be nonzero but rounded down.
- For the purposes of this survey, we define low-wage employees as full-time or part-time employees who earn hourly wages that are 200% or below the federal poverty threshold. Depending on which part of the country they work in, these employees typically earn wages around $7 per hour (or approximately $14,000 per year) to $20 per hour (or approximately $40,000 per year).

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Survey Population
Employment Status

Source: "Upward Mobility Survey of Employers of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S.," September–November 2020, Project on Managing the Future of Work, Harvard Business School.

A1. Prior to COVID-19, in January 2020, which of the following best described your employment status?

N = 1,150

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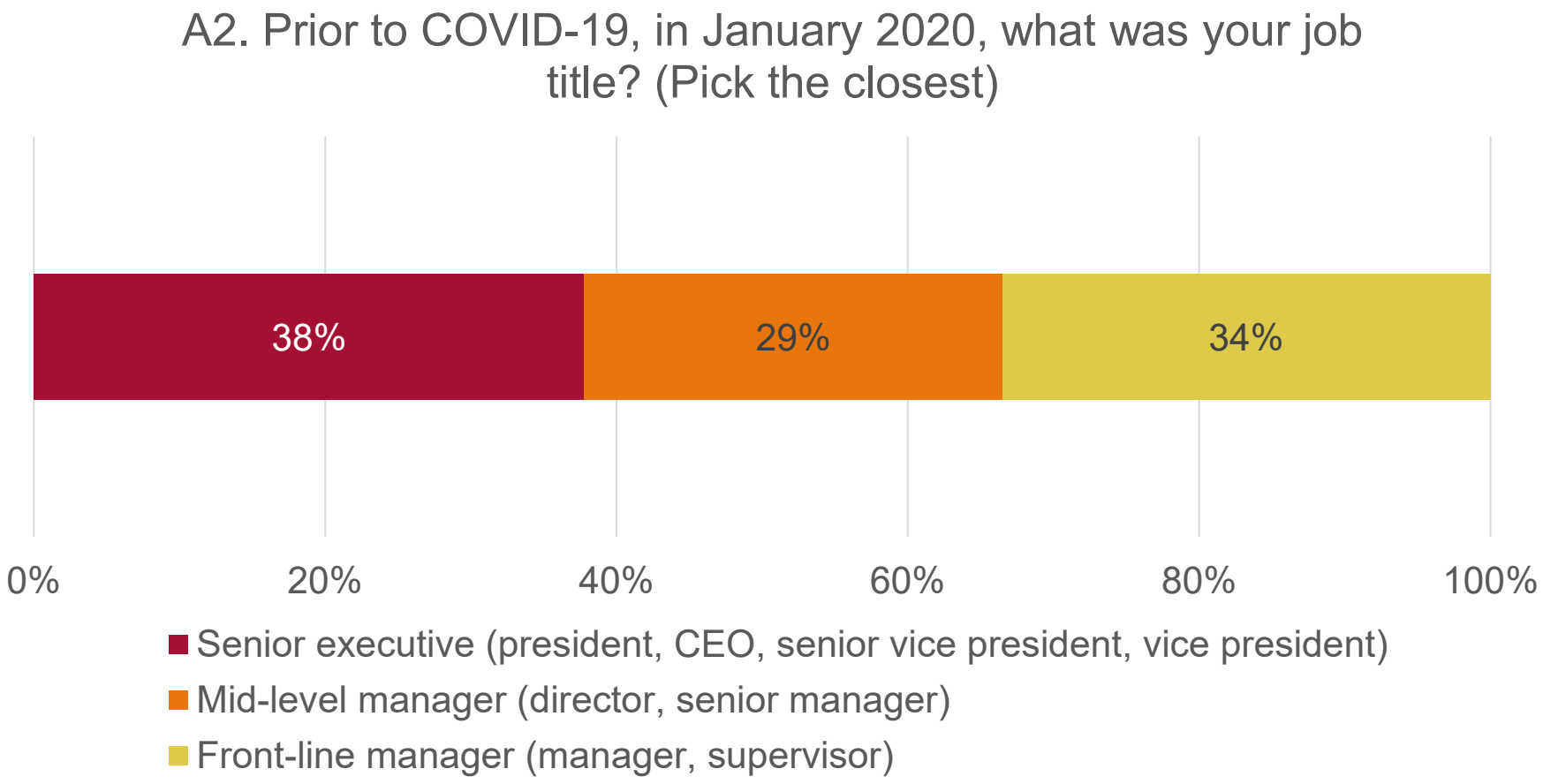
Survey Population

Job Title

Source: "Upward Mobility Survey of Employers of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S.," September–November 2020, Project on Managing the Future of Work, Harvard Business School.



N = 1,150

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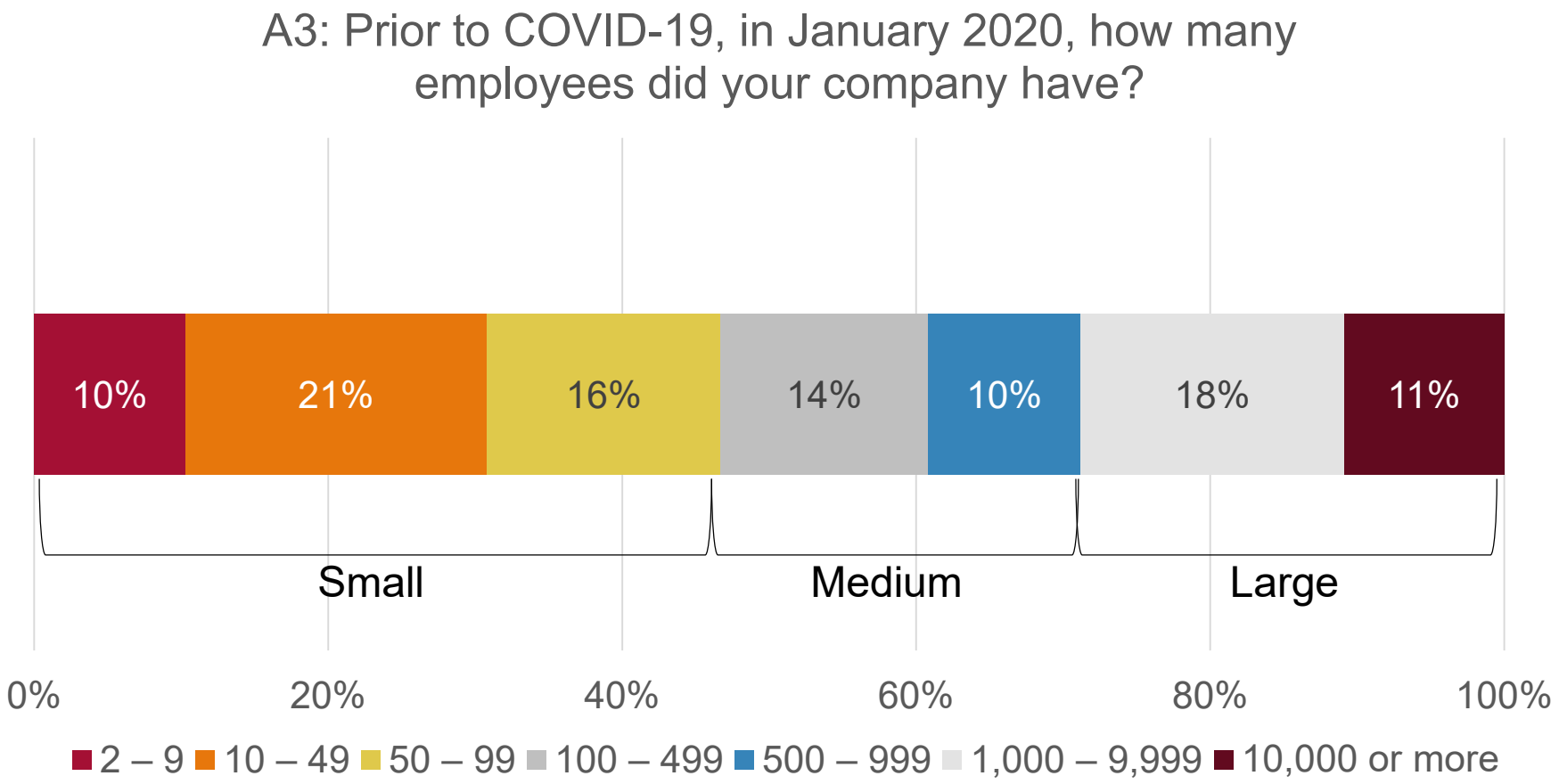
Survey Population
Firm Size

Source: "Upward Mobility Survey of Employers of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S.," September–November 2020, Project on Managing the Future of Work, Harvard Business School.



N = 1,150

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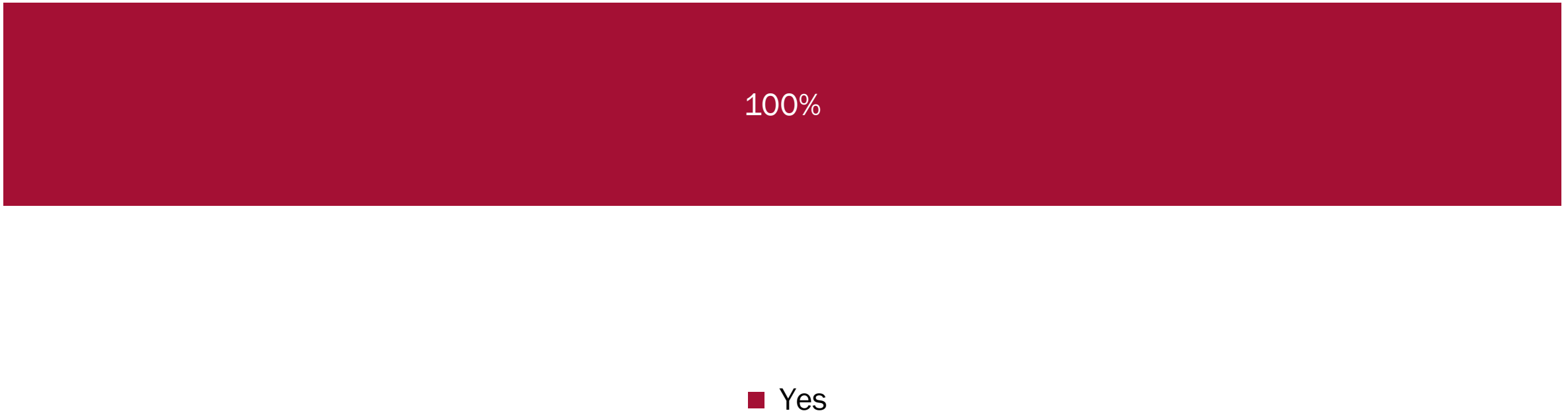
Survey Population
Employee Location

Source: "Upward Mobility Survey of Employers of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S.," September–November 2020, Project on Managing the Future of Work, Harvard Business School.

A4. Prior to COVID-19, in January 2020, did your company have employees in the United States?



N = 1,150

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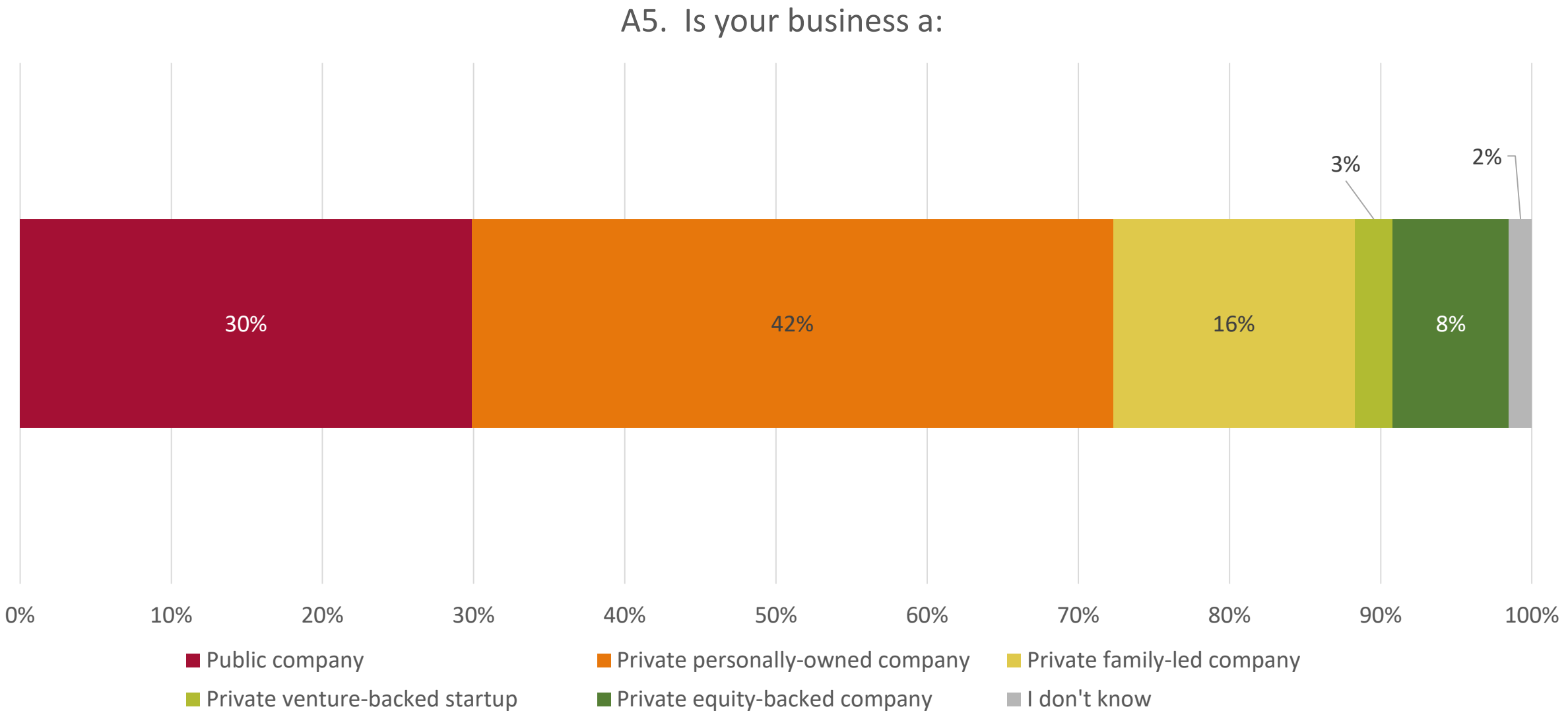
Survey Population
Public/Private

Source: "Upward Mobility Survey of Employers of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S.," September–November 2020, Project on Managing the Future of Work, Harvard Business School.



N = 1,150

Survey Population
Low-Wage Employees

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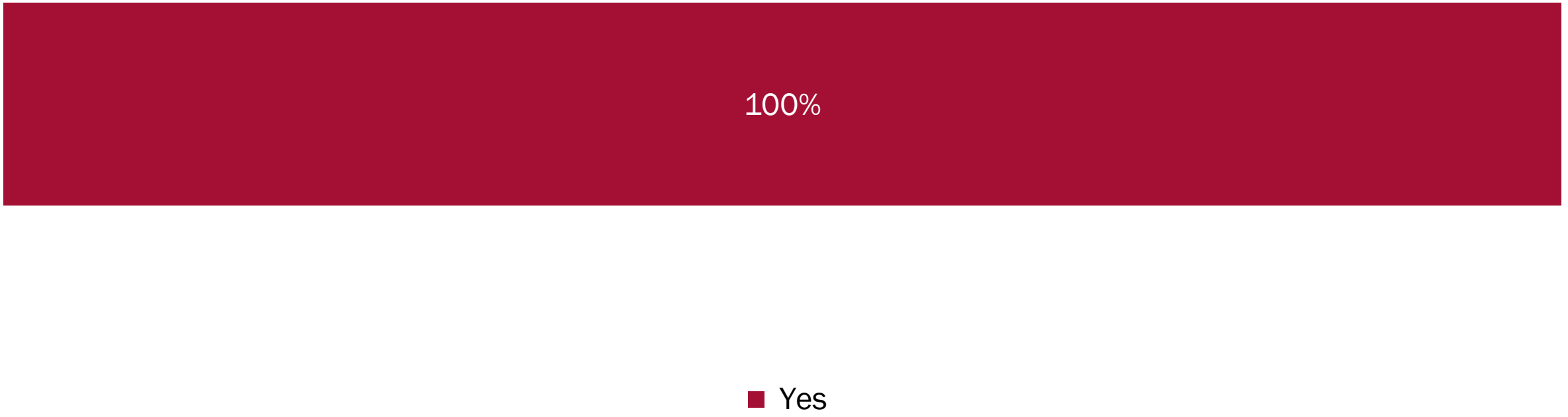
Source: "Upward Mobility Survey of Employers of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S.," September–November 2020, Project on Managing the Future of Work, Harvard Business School.

A6. Using this definition of low-wage employees, did your company have any low-wage employees prior to COVID-19, in January 2020?



N = 1,150

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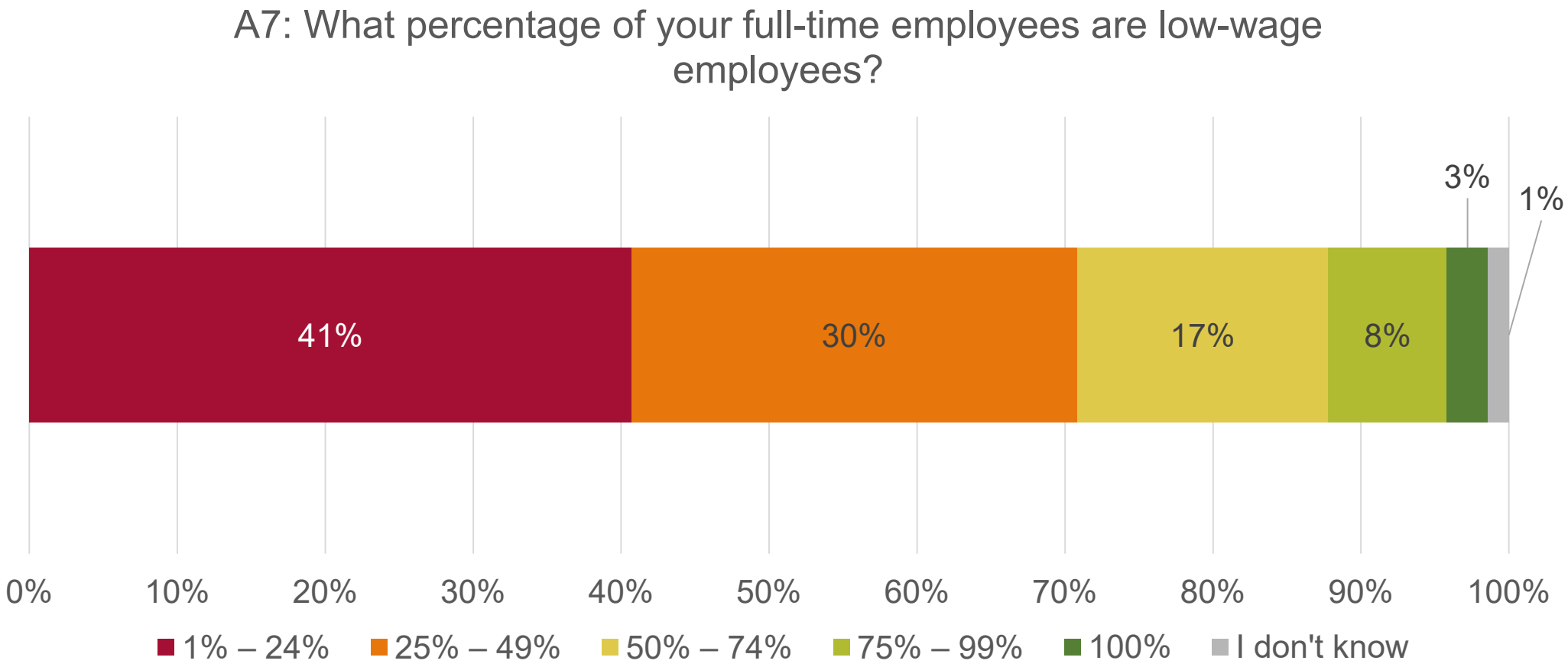
Survey Population

Percent of Full-Time Employees Who Are Low-Wage

Source: "Upward Mobility Survey of Employers of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S.," September–November 2020, Project on Managing the Future of Work, Harvard Business School.



N = 1,150

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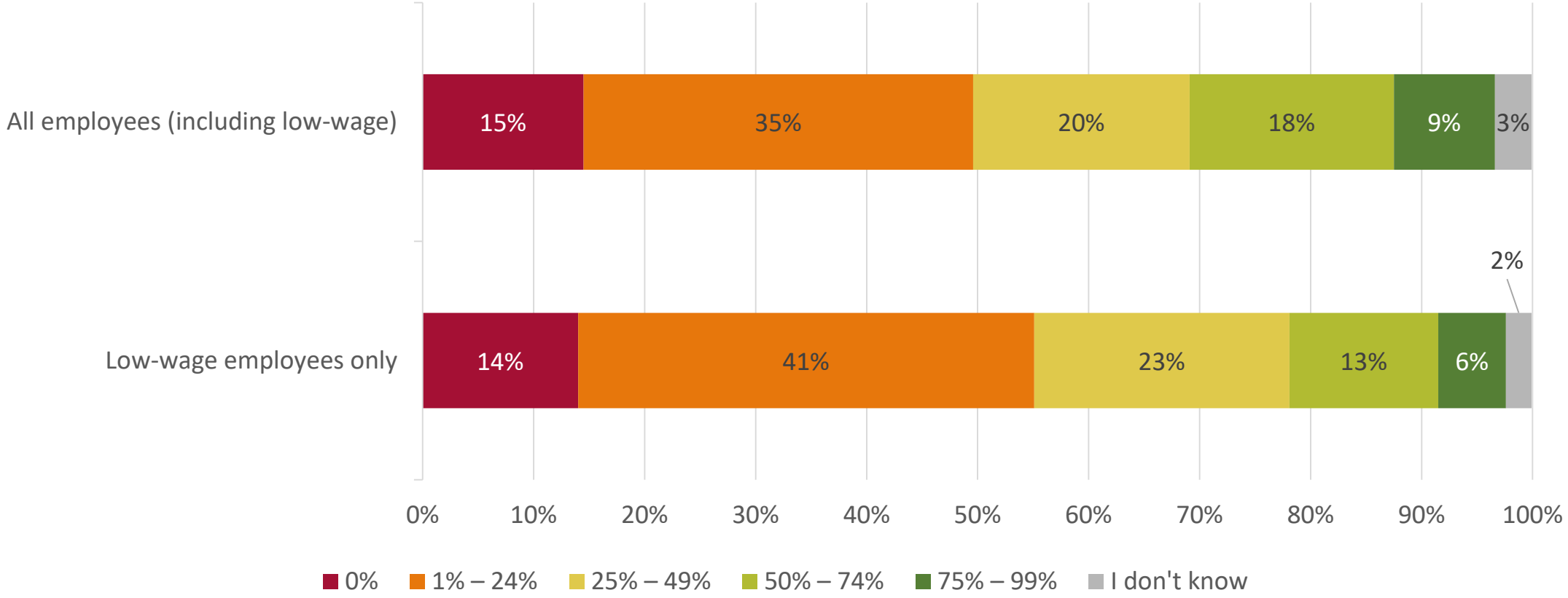
Survey Population

Percent of Employees Who Are Part-Time

Source: "Upward Mobility Survey of Employers of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S.," September–November 2020, Project on Managing the Future of Work, Harvard Business School.

A8. What percentage of your company's low-wage workforce and total workforce consist of part-time employees?



N = 1,150

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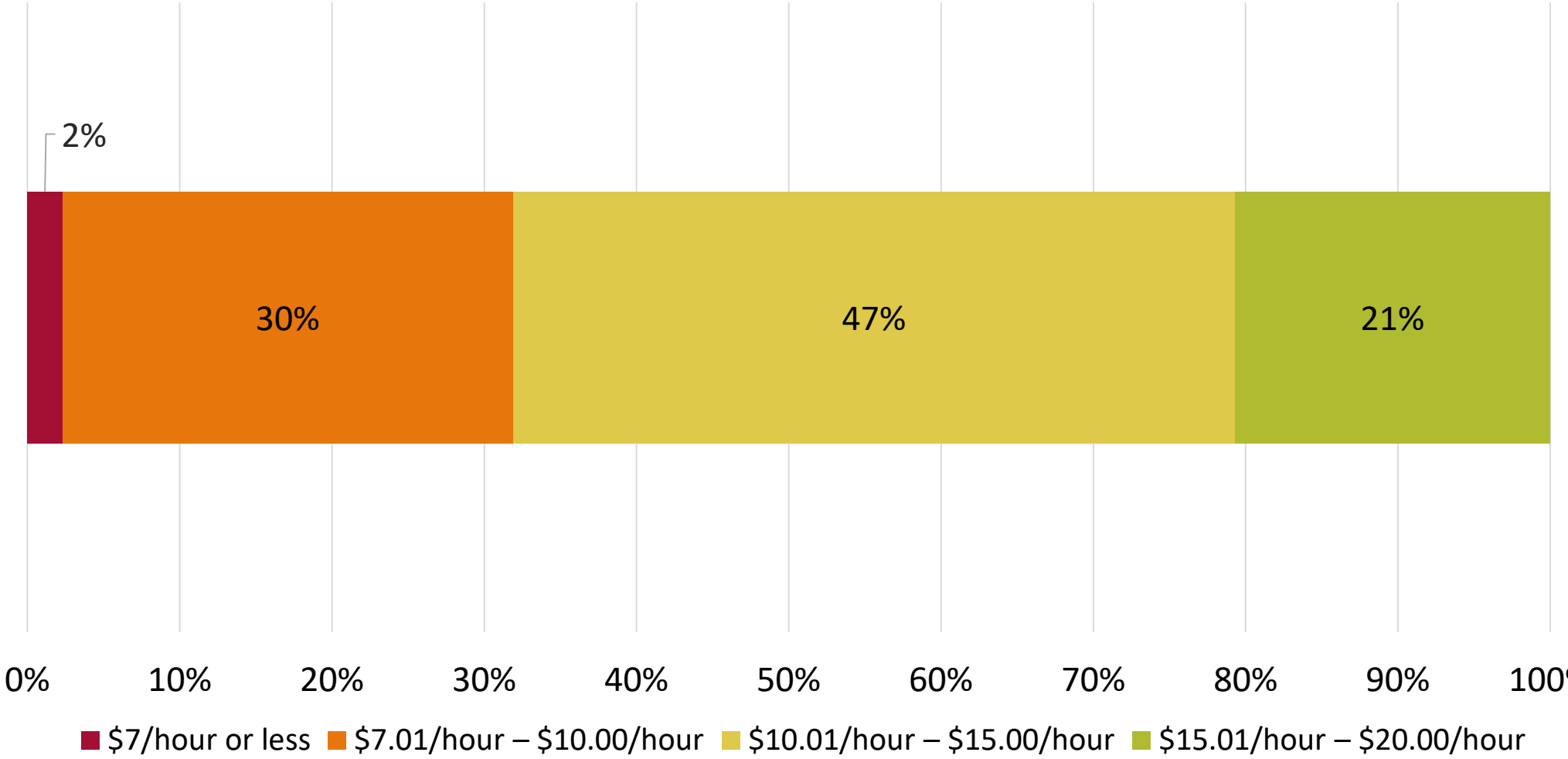
Survey Population
Average Hourly Wage

Source: "Upward Mobility Survey of Employers of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S.," September–November 2020, Project on Managing the Future of Work, Harvard Business School.

A9. What is the average hourly wage of your low-wage employees?



N = 1,150

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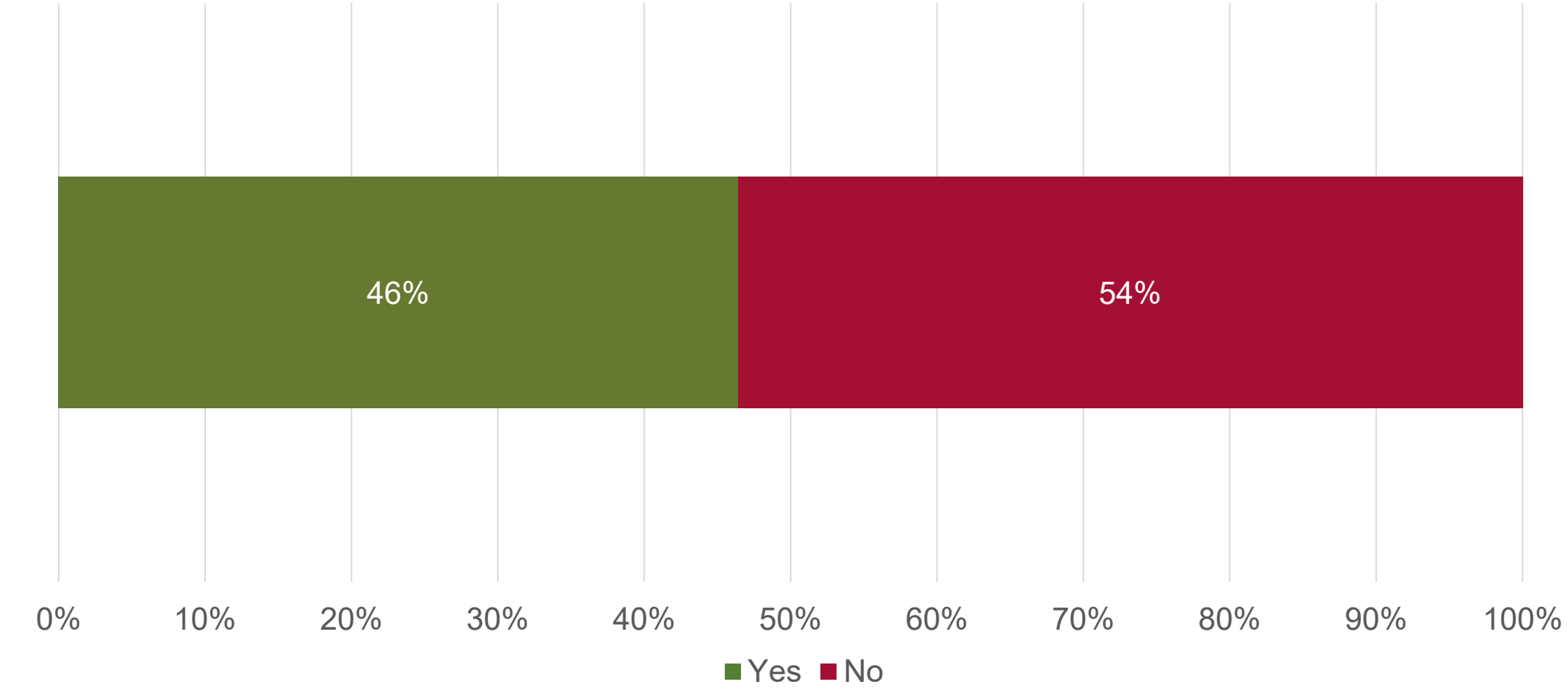
Survey Population
HR or Not

Source: "Upward Mobility Survey of Employers of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S.," September–November 2020, Project on Managing the Future of Work, Harvard Business School.

A10. Prior to COVID-19, in January 2020, were you primarily employed in a human resources function?



N = 1,150

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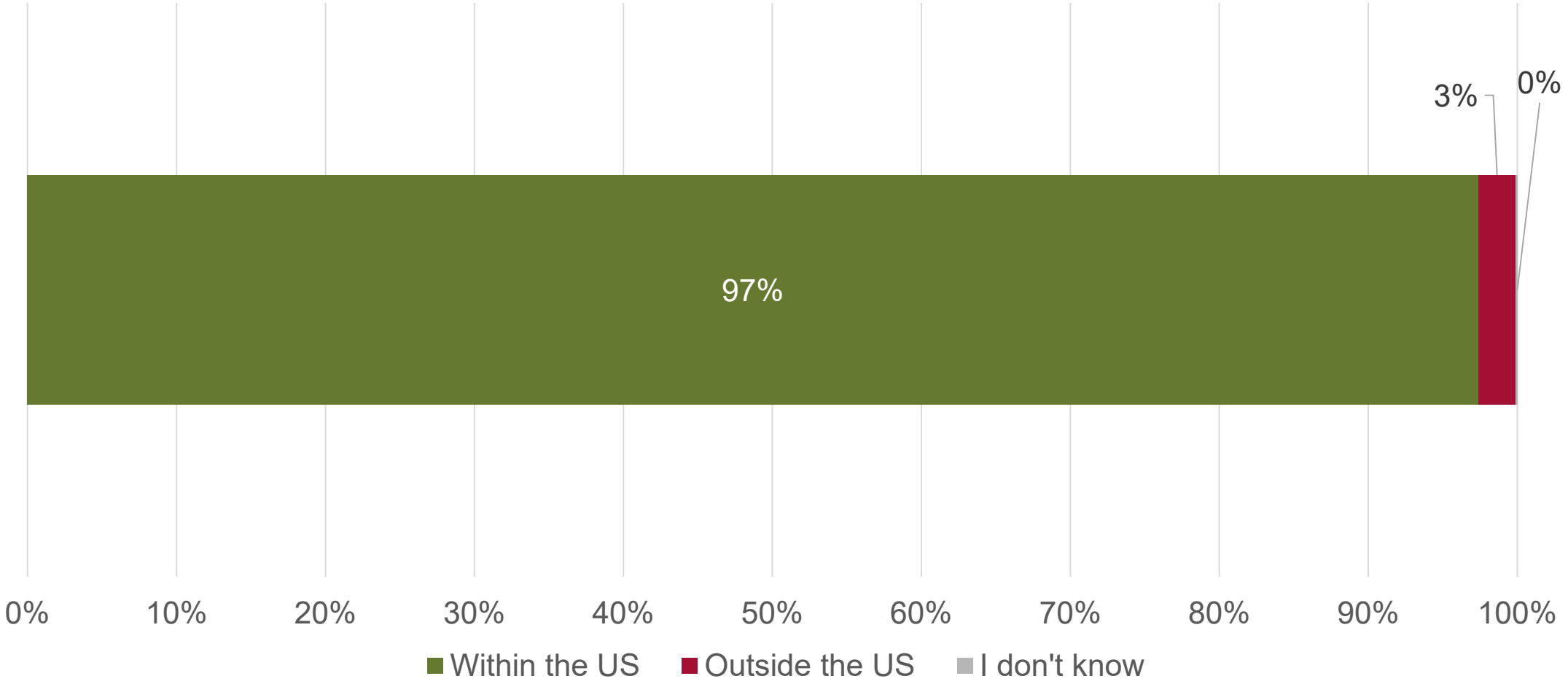
Survey Population
Company Headquarters

Source: "Upward Mobility Survey of Employers of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S.," September–November 2020, Project on Managing the Future of Work, Harvard Business School.

A11. Prior to COVID-19, in January 2020, was your company's headquarters located within the US or outside the US?



N = 1,150

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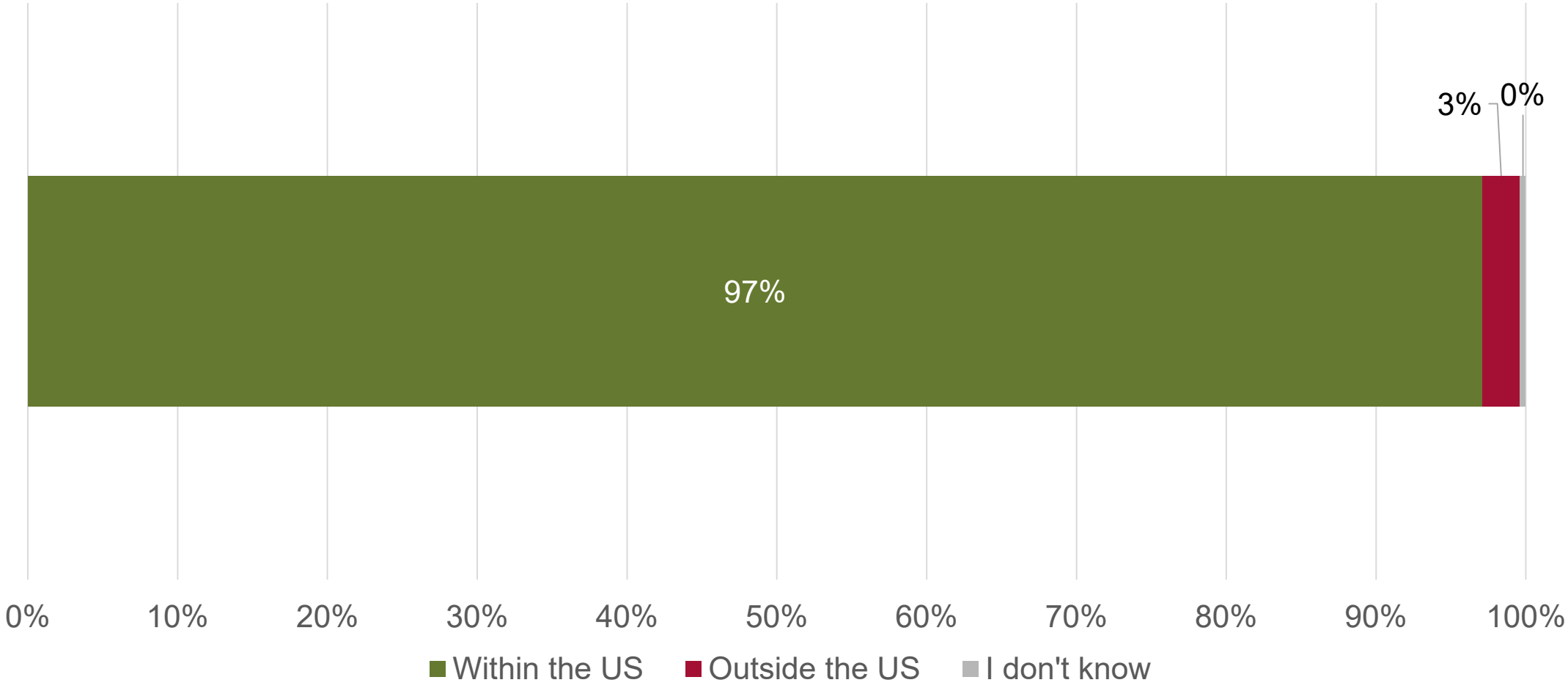
Survey Population
Employee Location

Source: "Upward Mobility Survey of Employers of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S.," September–November 2020, Project on Managing the Future of Work, Harvard Business School.

A12. Prior to COVID-19, in January 2020, were the majority of your company's employees located within the US or outside the US?



N = 1,150

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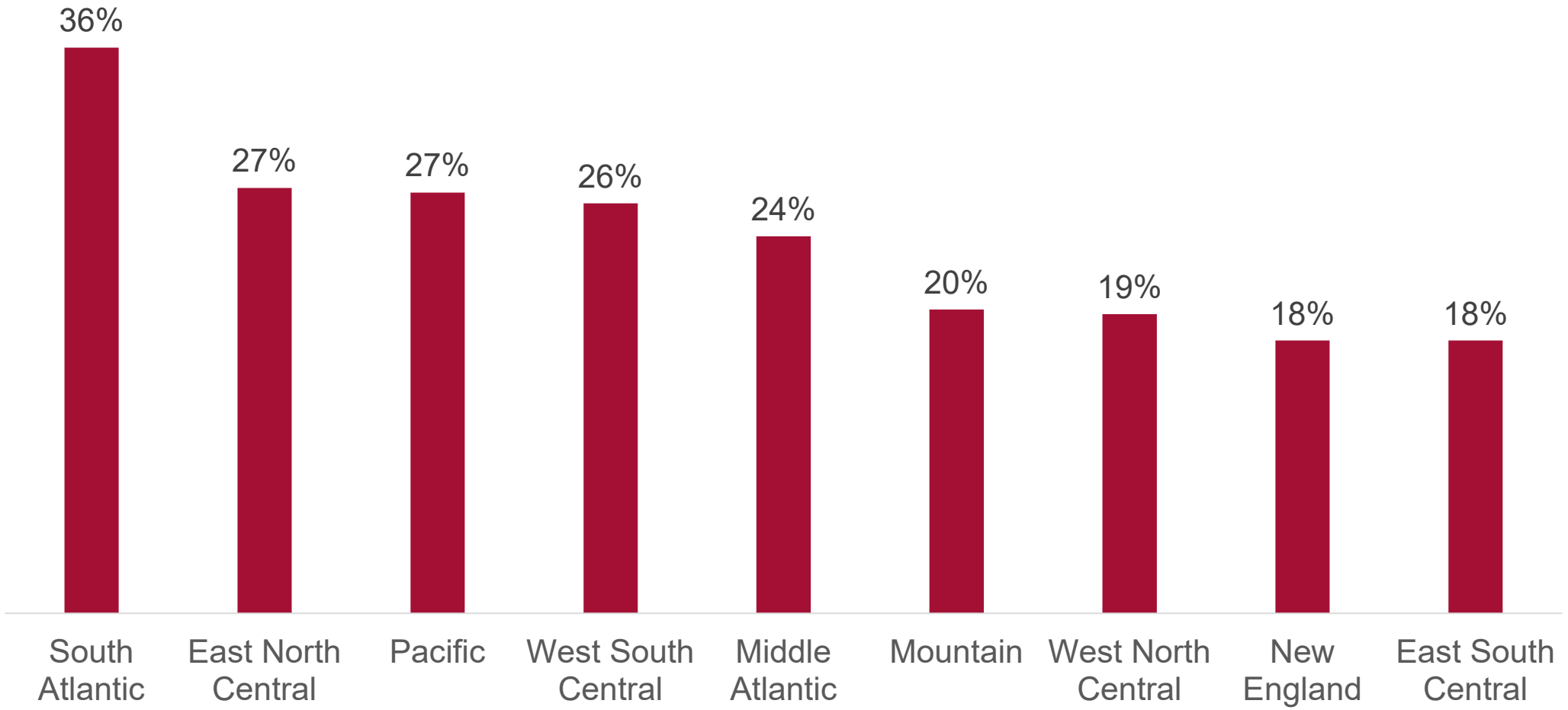
Survey Population
Geography

Source: "Upward Mobility Survey of Employers of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S.," September–November 2020, Project on Managing the Future of Work, Harvard Business School.

A13. Please indicate all the regions where your company had low-wage employees prior to COVID-19, in January 2020:



N = 1,150

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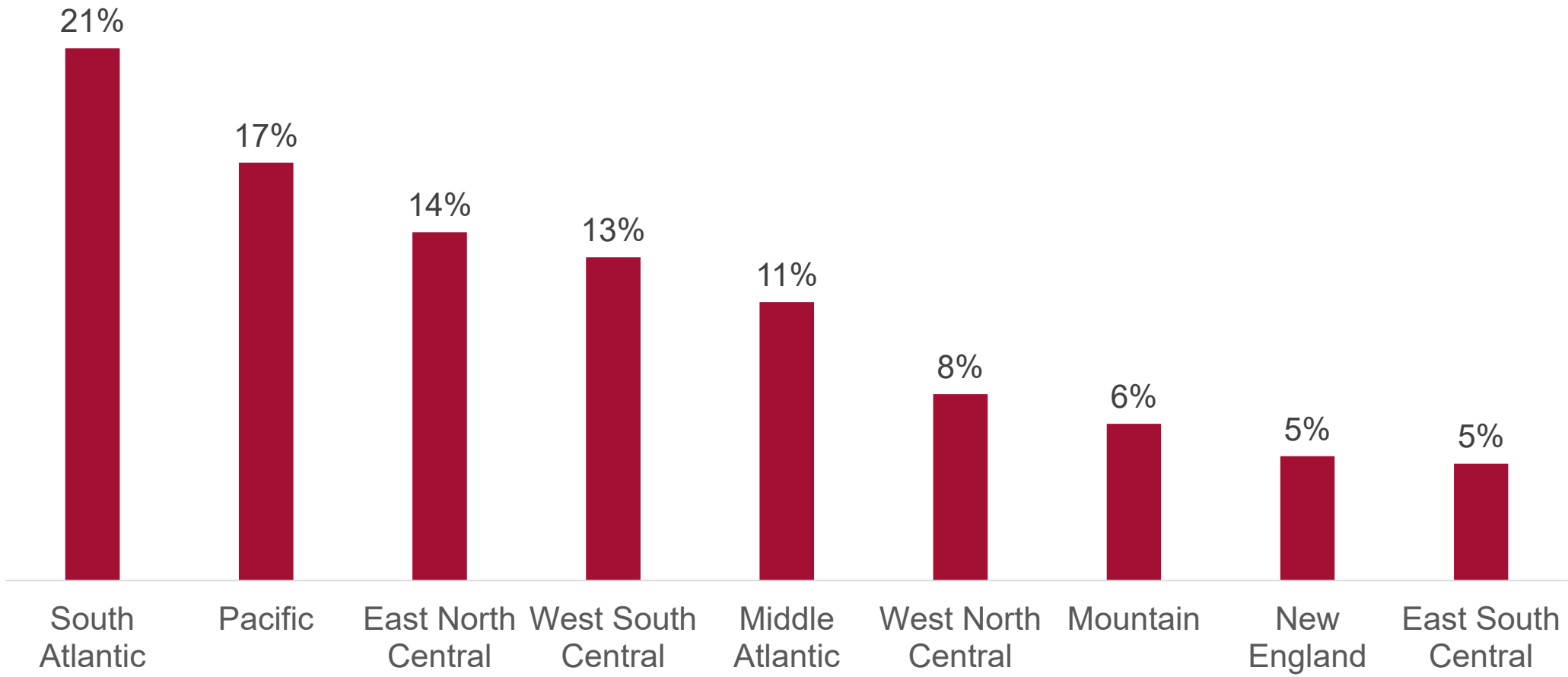
Survey Population
Geography of Company Headquarters

Source: "Upward Mobility Survey of Employers of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S.," September–November 2020, Project on Managing the Future of Work, Harvard Business School.

A14. Please indicate the region where your company was headquartered prior to COVID-19, in January 2020:



N = 1,120 (company is headquartered in the U.S.)

Survey Population
Gender

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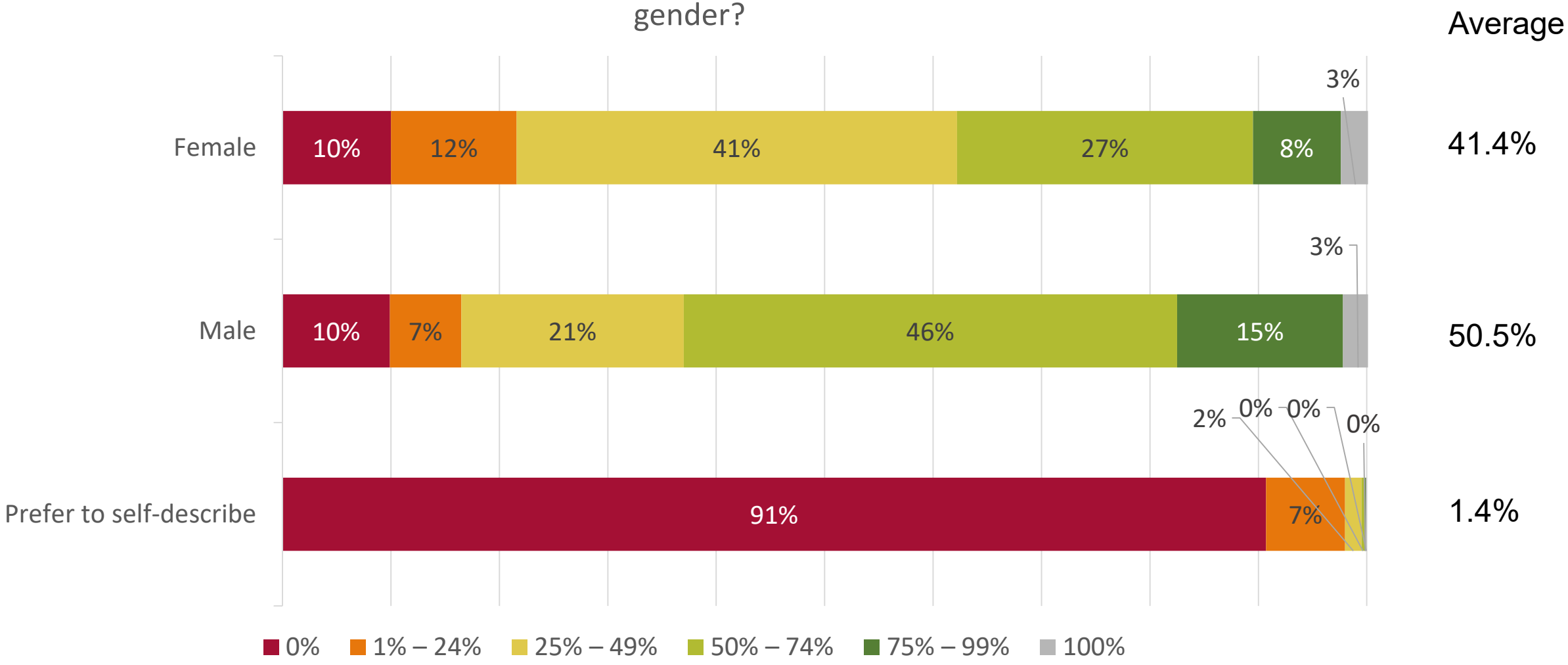
Source: "Upward Mobility Survey of Employers of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S.," September–November 2020, Project on Managing the Future of Work, Harvard Business School.

A15. What percentage of your full-time employees report the following as their gender?



N = 1,150

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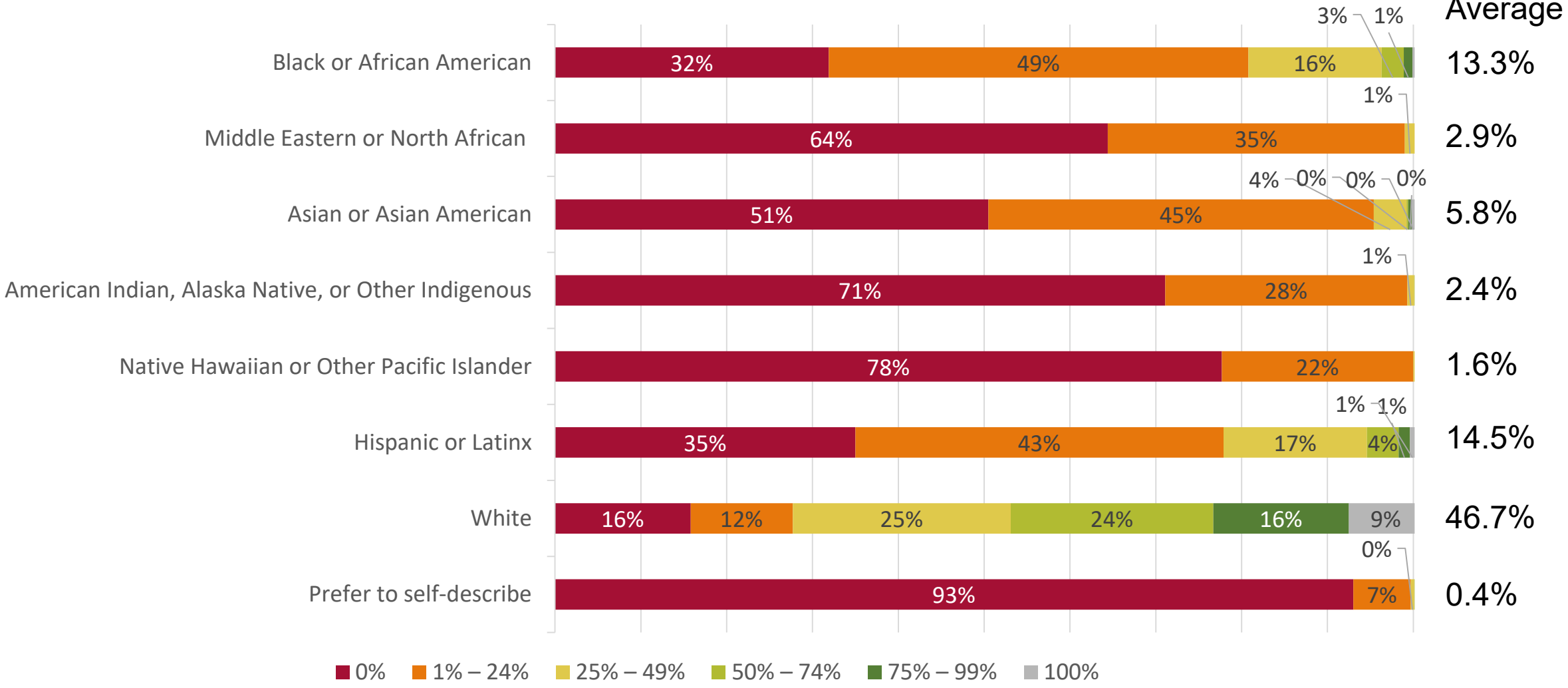
Survey Population
Race/Ethnicity

Source: "Upward Mobility Survey of Employers of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S.," September–November 2020, Project on Managing the Future of Work, Harvard Business School.

A16. What percentage of your full-time employees describe themselves as the following?



N = 1,150

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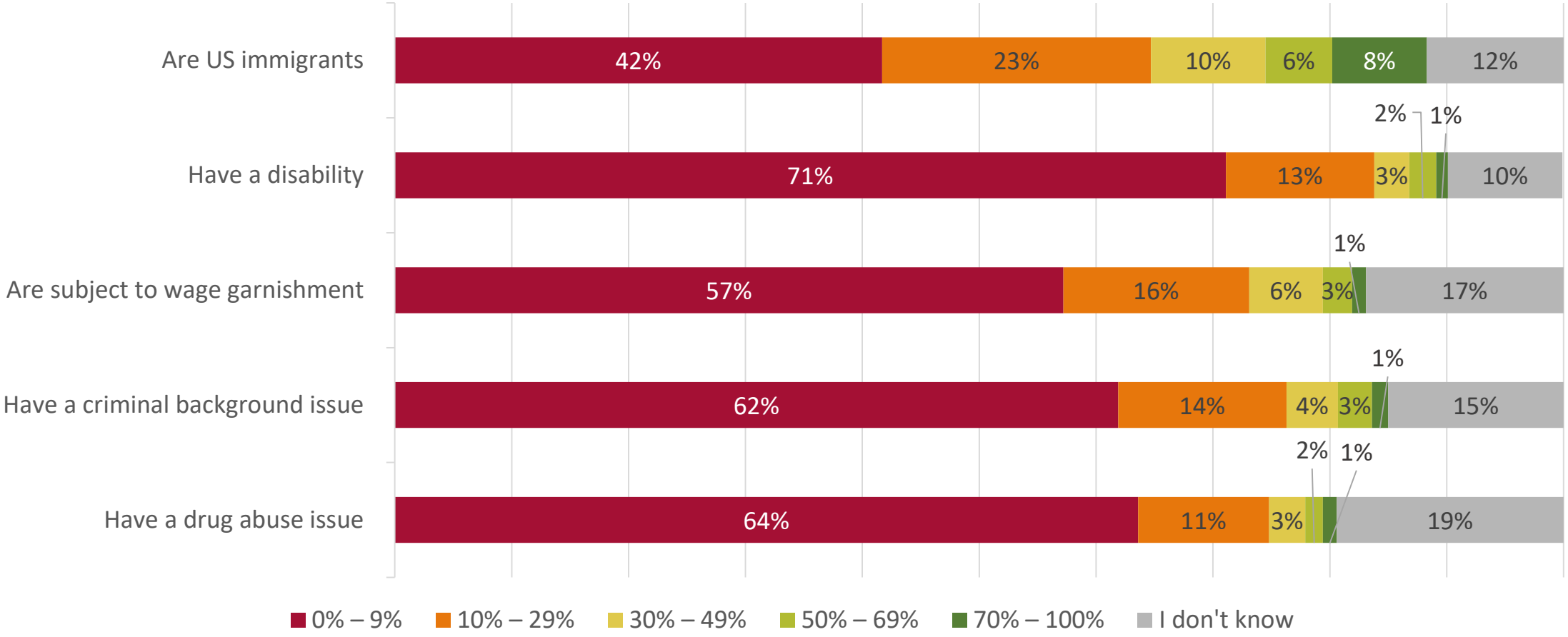
Survey Population
Personal Challenges

Source: "Upward Mobility Survey of Employers of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S.," September–November 2020, Project on Managing the Future of Work, Harvard Business School.

A17. In order to understand the personal challenges low-wage employees face which can inhibit upward mobility, please tell us the percentage of your full-time low-wage employees that you believe:



N = 1,150

Survey Population
Industry

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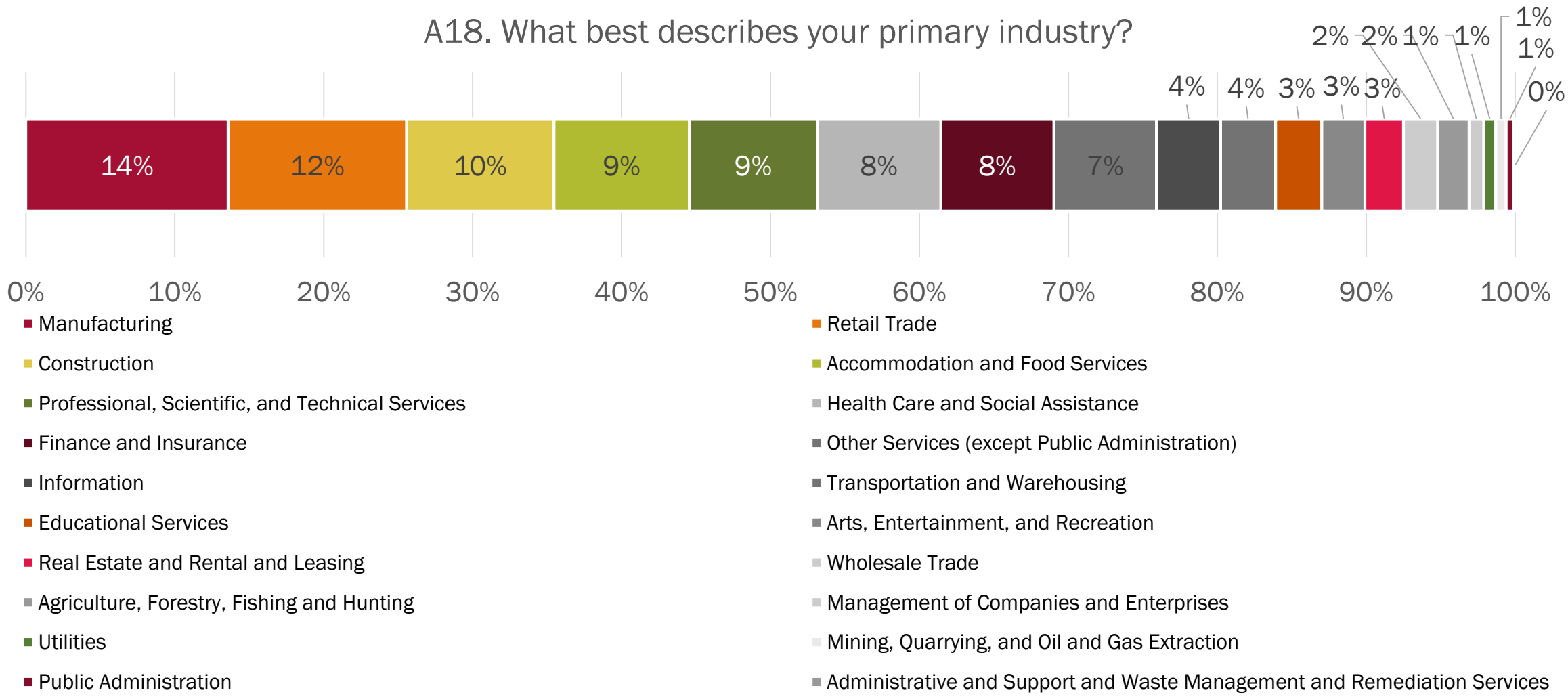
Source: "Upward Mobility Survey of Employers of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S.," September–November 2020, Project on Managing the Future of Work, Harvard Business School.



N = 1,150

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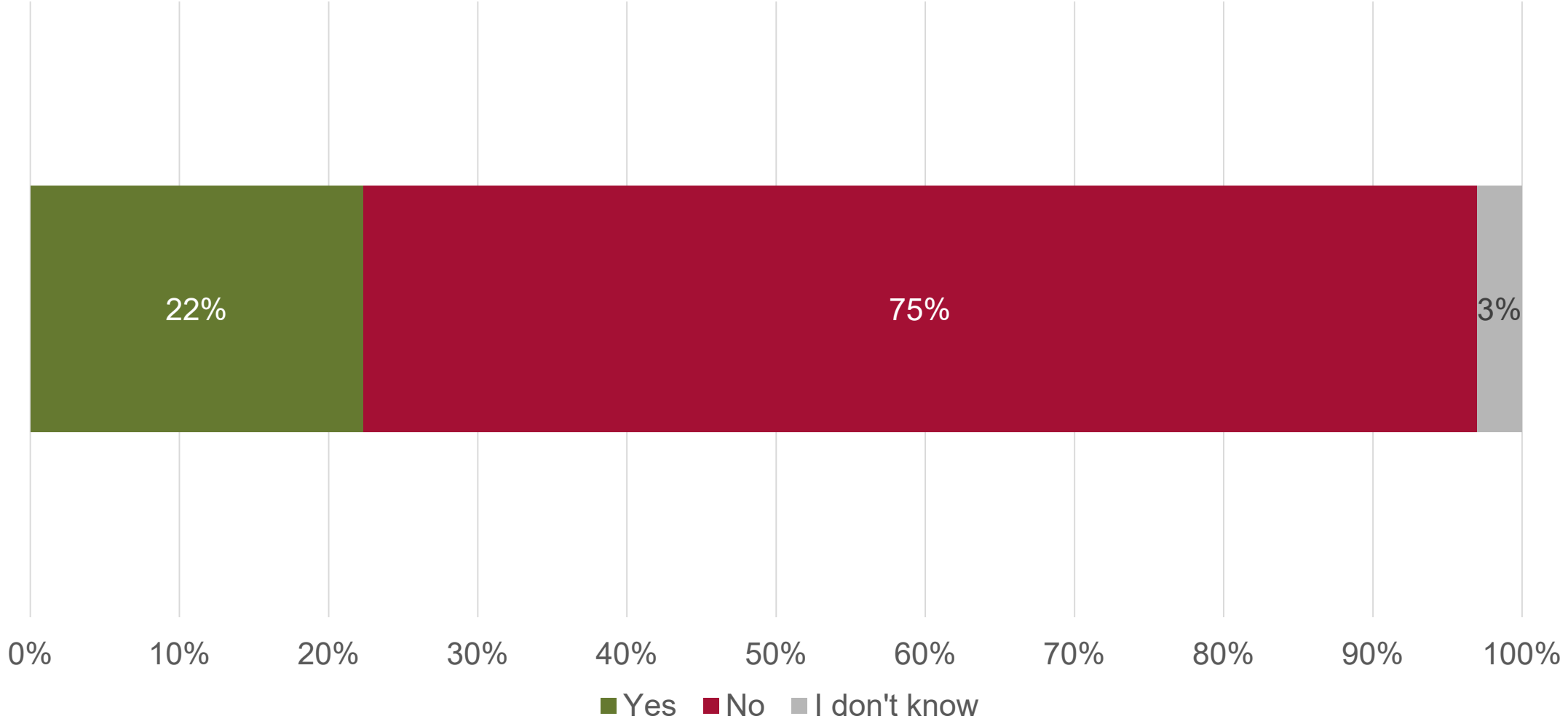
Survey Population
Franchise Model

Source: "Upward Mobility Survey of Employers of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S.," September–November 2020, Project on Managing the Future of Work, Harvard Business School.

A19. Does your company use a franchise model?



N = 1,150

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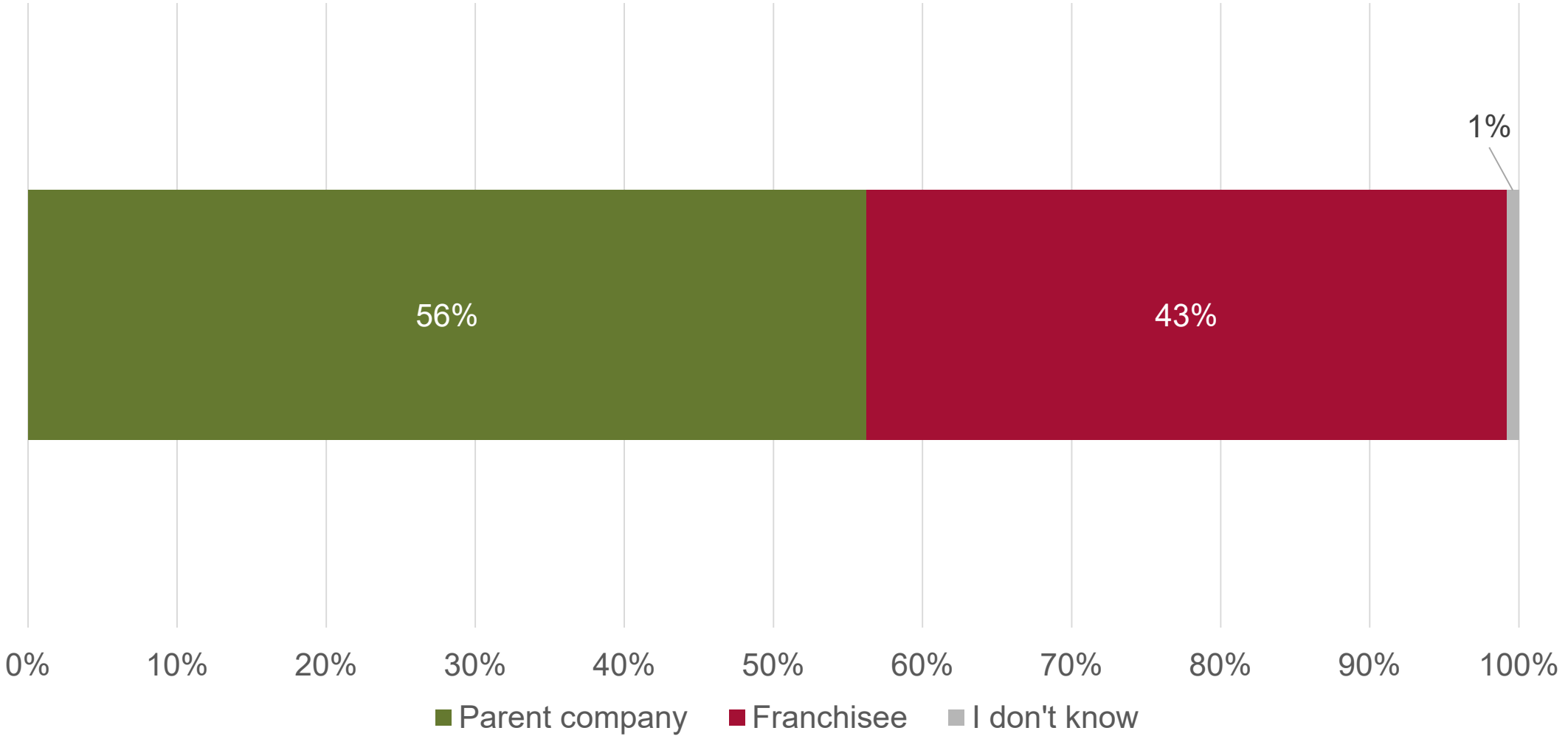
Survey Population
Parent or Franchisee

Source: "Upward Mobility Survey of Employers of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S.," September–November 2020, Project on Managing the Future of Work, Harvard Business School.

A20. Is your company the parent company or the franchisee?



N = 256 (company uses a franchise model)

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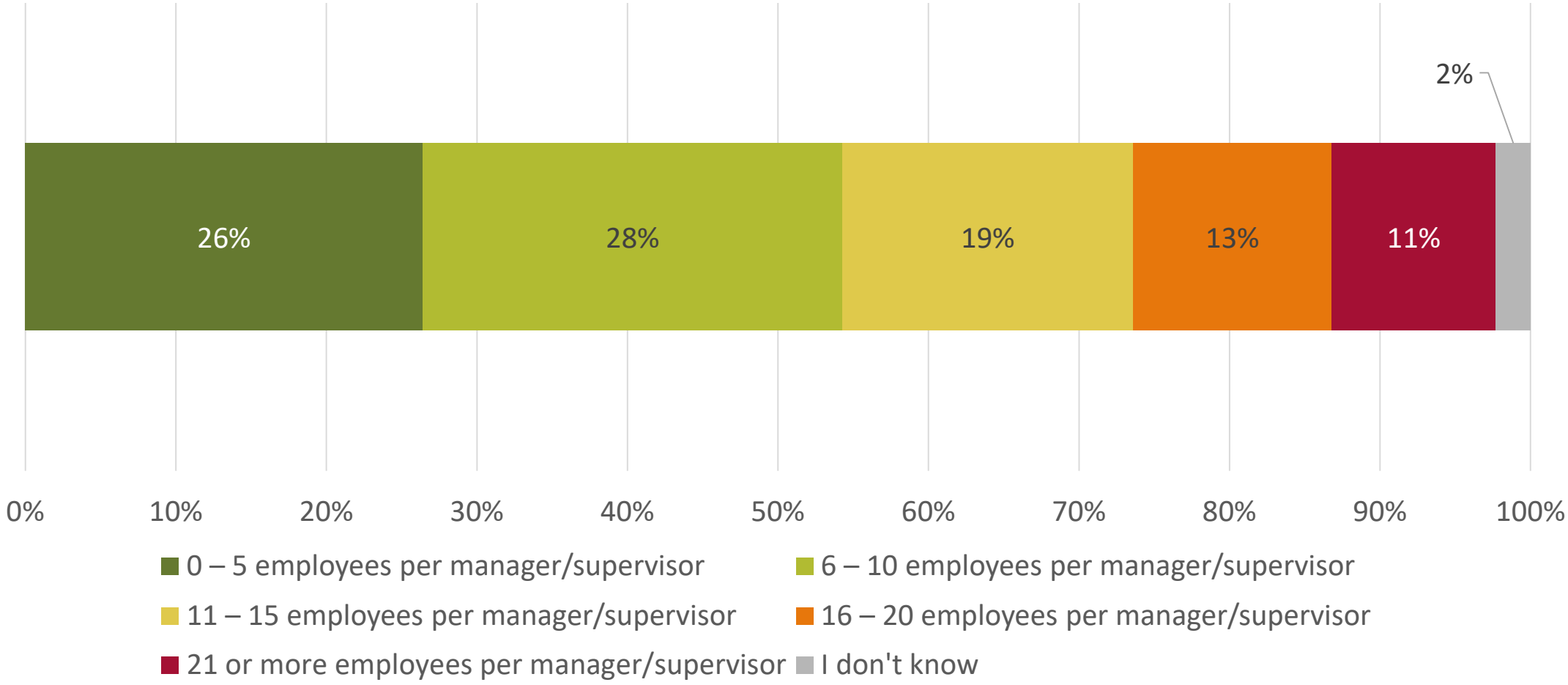
Survey Population
Supervisor/Employee Ratio

Source: "Upward Mobility Survey of Employers of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S.," September–November 2020, Project on Managing the Future of Work, Harvard Business School.

A21. For managers/supervisors who supervise low-wage employees, what is the average number of low-wage employees that each manager/supervisor supervises?



N = 1,150

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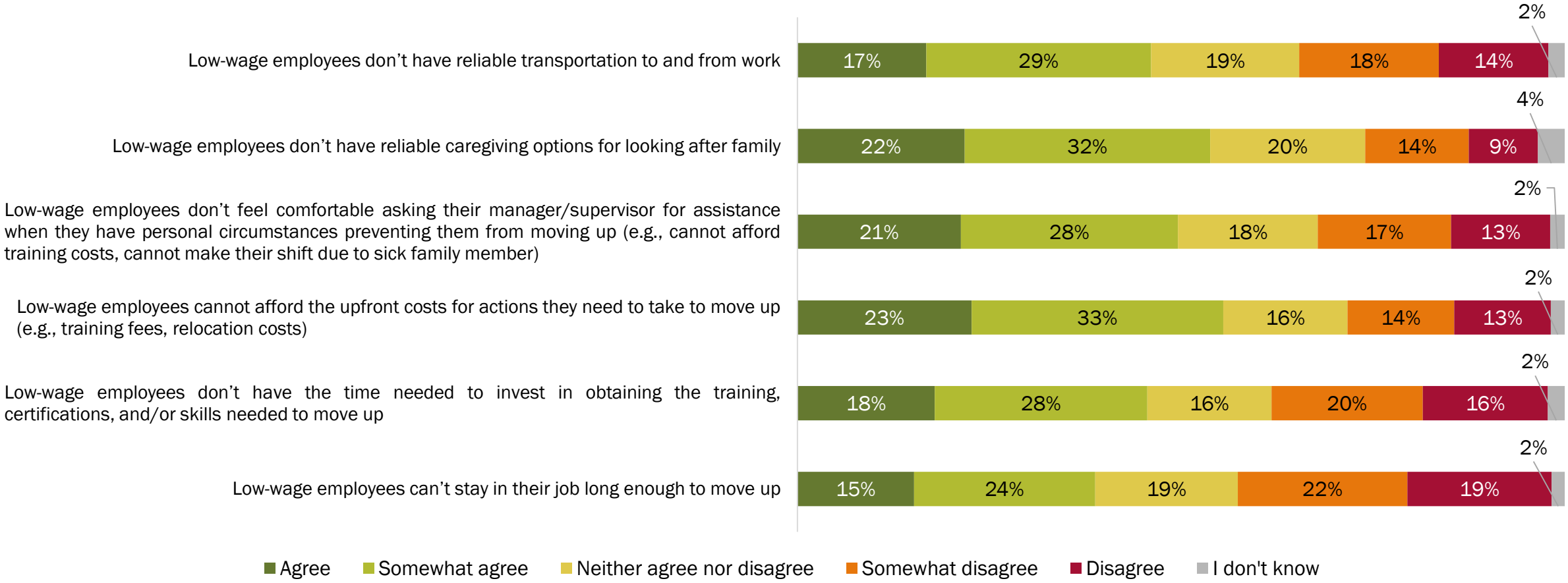
Awareness and Attitudes
Personal Circumstances

Source: "Upward Mobility Survey of Employers of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S.," September–November 2020, Project on Managing the Future of Work, Harvard Business School.

B1. Please tell us how strongly you agree or disagree that each of the following conditions is a barrier to the upward mobility of low-wage employees at your company.



N = 1,150

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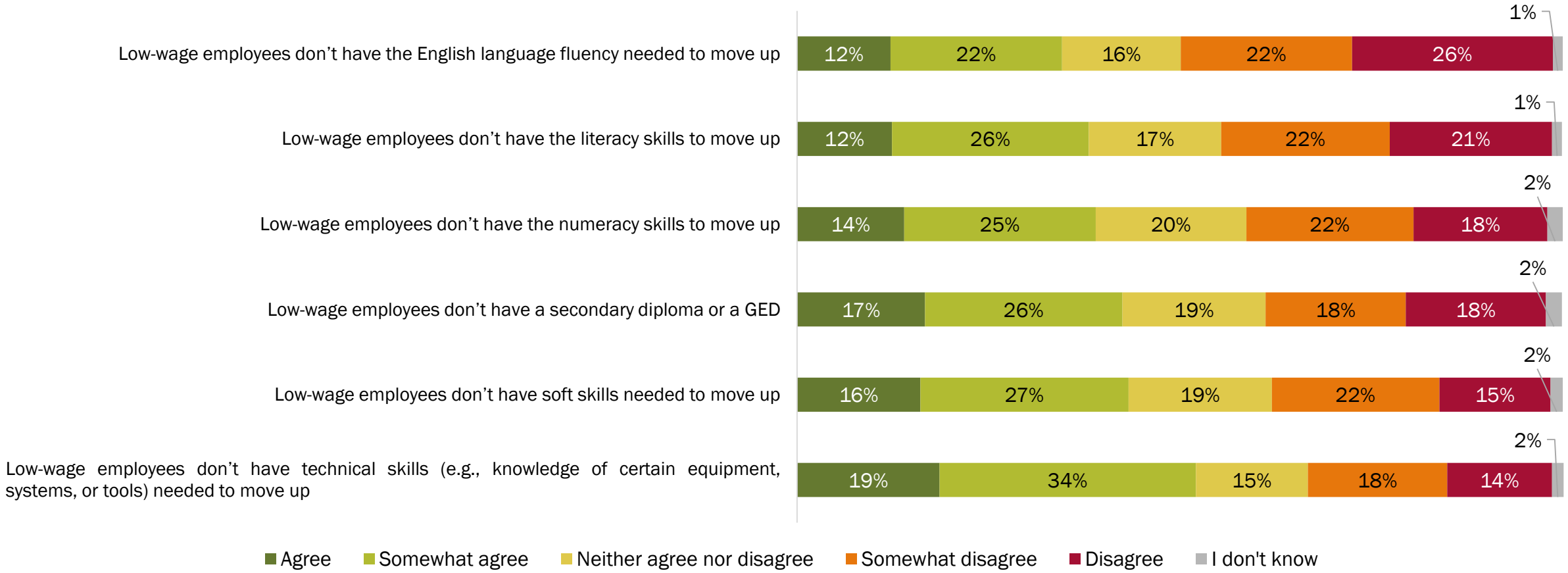
Awareness and Attitudes
Education and Skills

Source: "Upward Mobility Survey of Employers of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S.," September–November 2020, Project on Managing the Future of Work, Harvard Business School.

B2. Please tell us how strongly you agree or disagree that each of the following conditions is a barrier to the upward mobility of low-wage employees at your company.



N = 1,150

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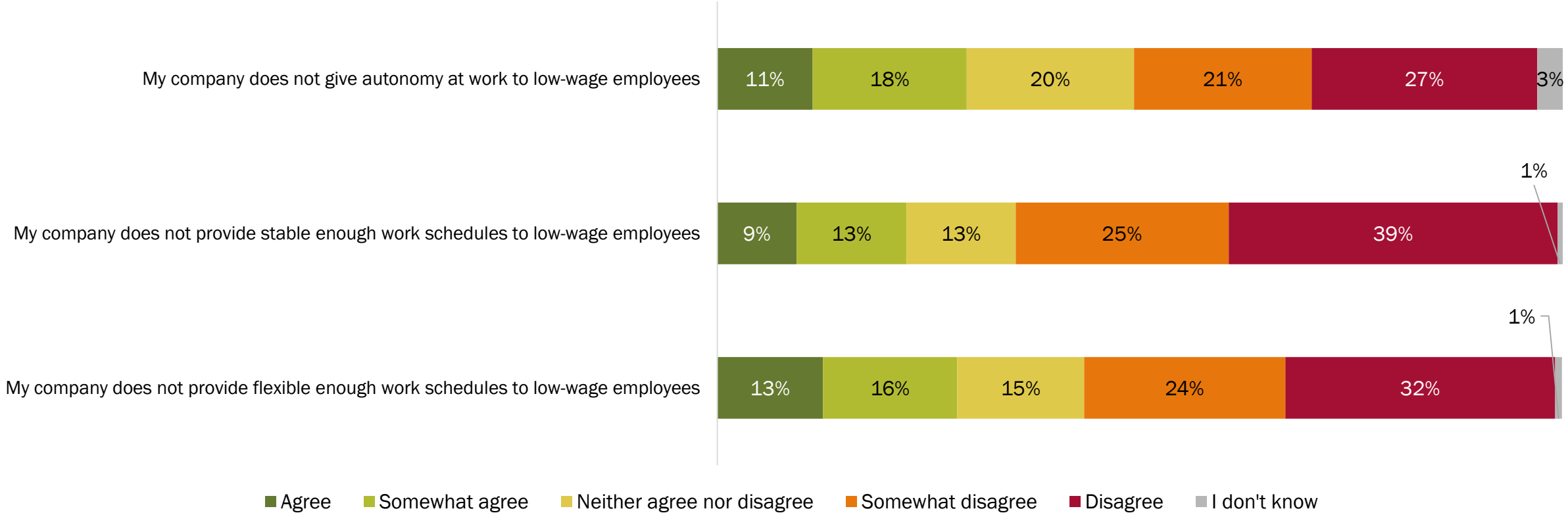
Source: "Upward Mobility Survey of Employers of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S.," September–November 2020, Project on Managing the Future of Work, Harvard Business School.

B3. Please tell us how strongly you agree or disagree that each of the following conditions is a barrier to the upward mobility of low-wage employees at your company.



N = 1,150

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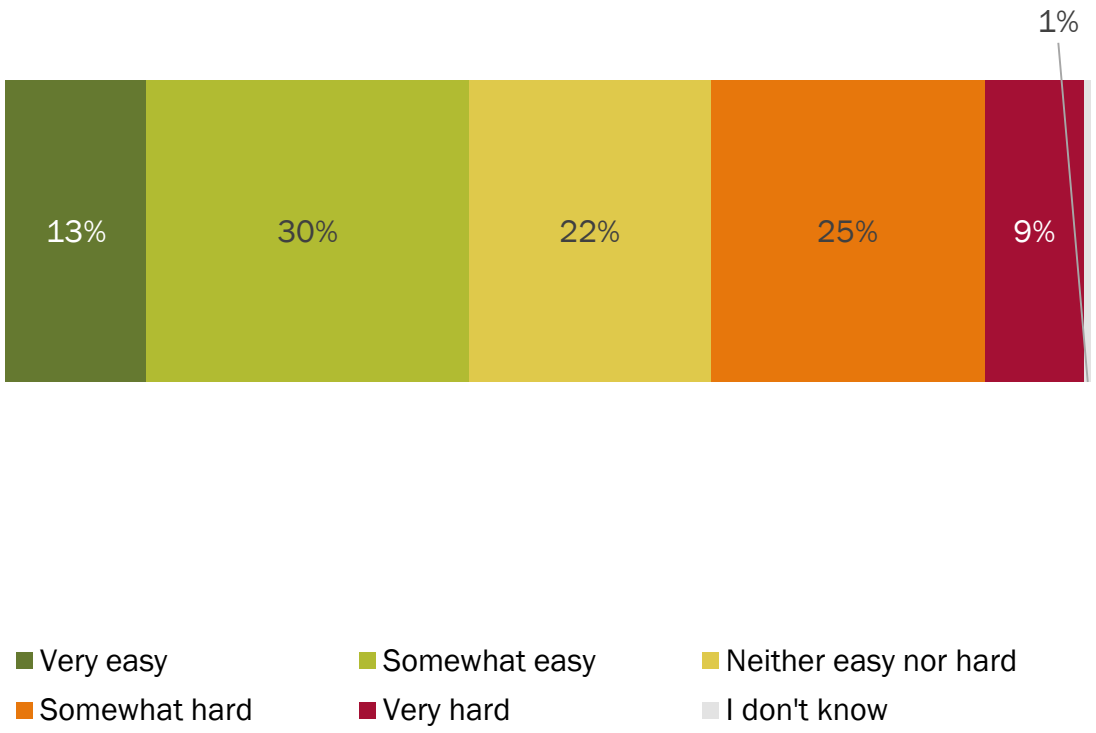
Awareness and Attitudes
Ease of Finding Applicants

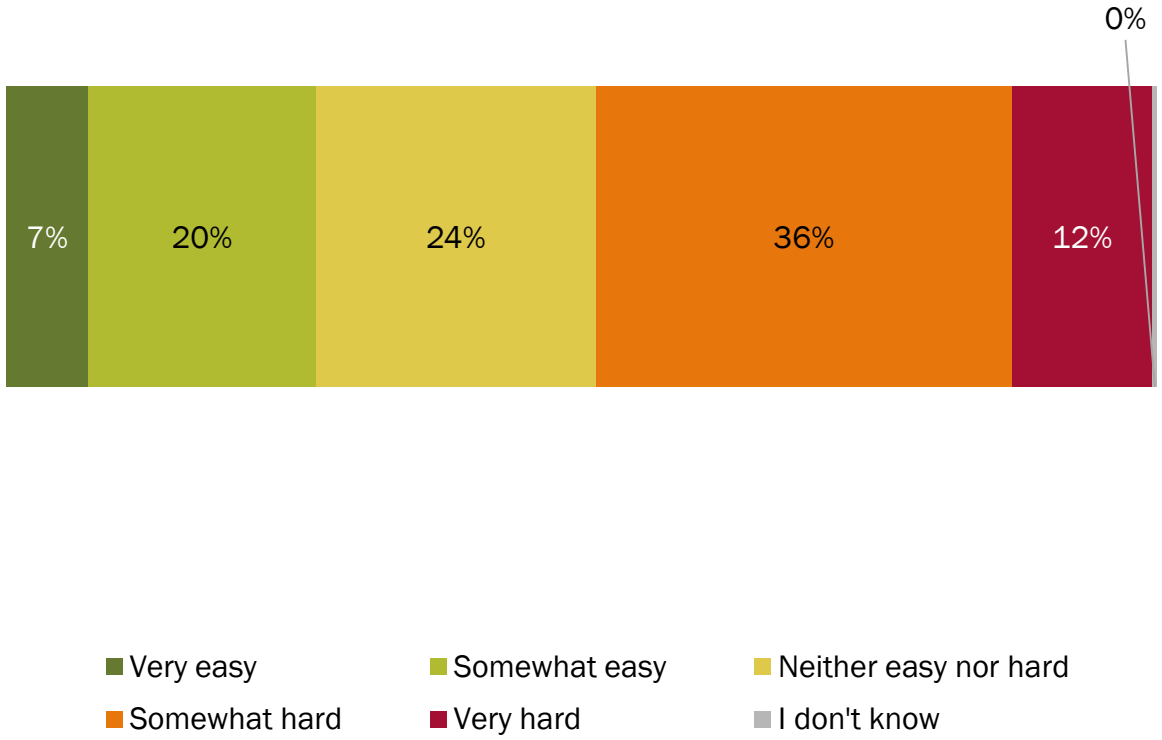
Source: "Upward Mobility Survey of Employers of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S.," September–November 2020, Project on Managing the Future of Work, Harvard Business School.

B4. Finding qualified applicants for low-wage jobs in my company is:



N = 1,150

B5. Finding qualified applicants for all other jobs is:



N = 1,150

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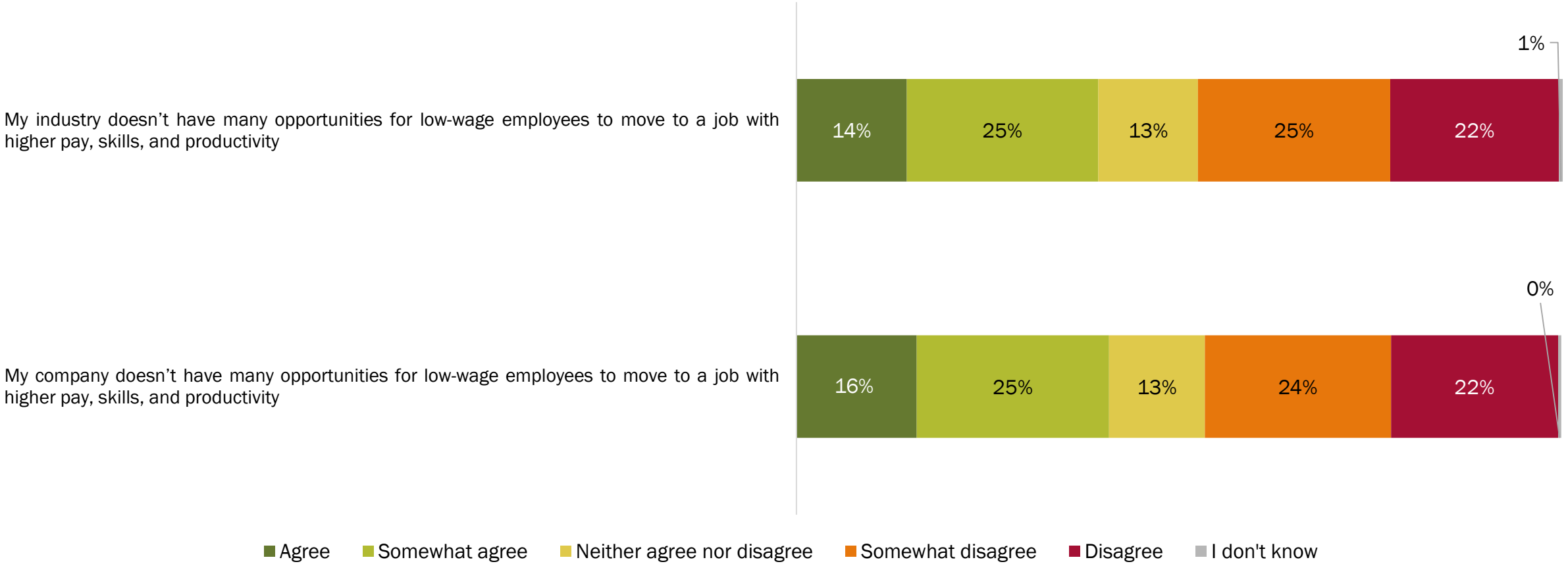
Source: "Upward Mobility Survey of Employers of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S.," September–November 2020, Project on Managing the Future of Work, Harvard Business School.

B6. Please tell us how strongly you agree or disagree that each of the following conditions is a barrier to the upward mobility of low-wage employees at your company.



N = 1,150

Awareness and Attitudes
Mentorship

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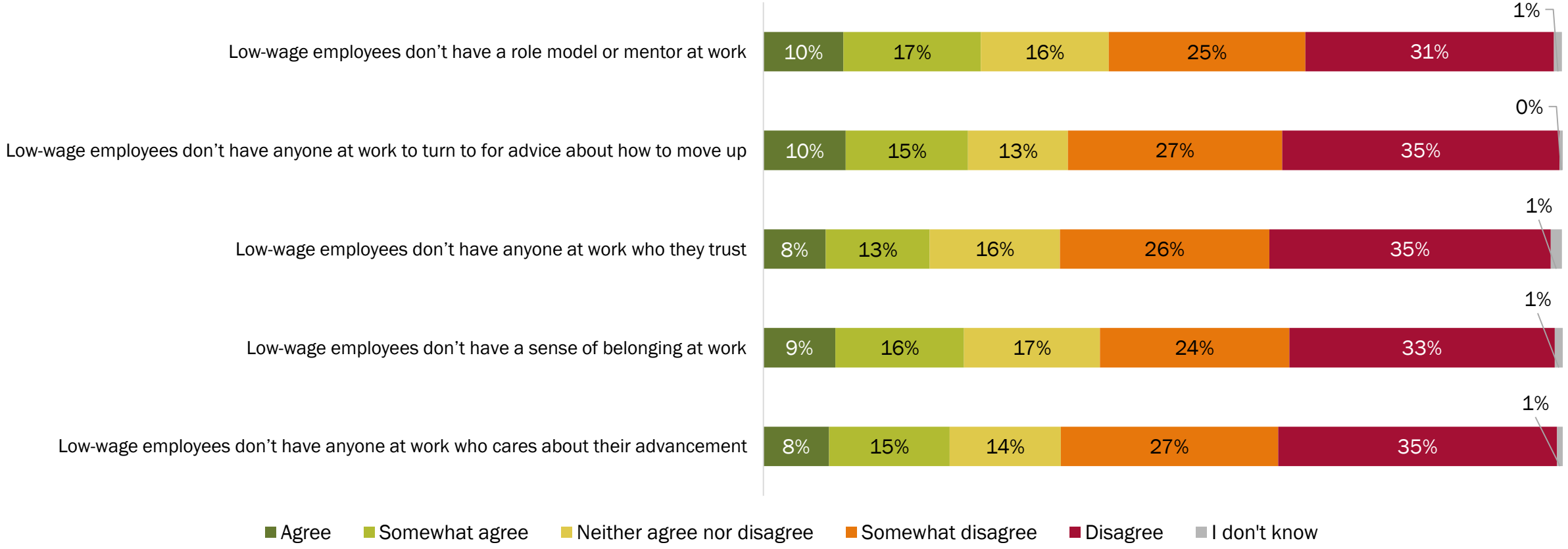
Source: "Upward Mobility Survey of Employers of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S.," September–November 2020, Project on Managing the Future of Work, Harvard Business School.

B7. Please tell us how strongly you agree or disagree that each of the following conditions is a barrier to the upward mobility of low-wage employees at your company.



N = 1,150

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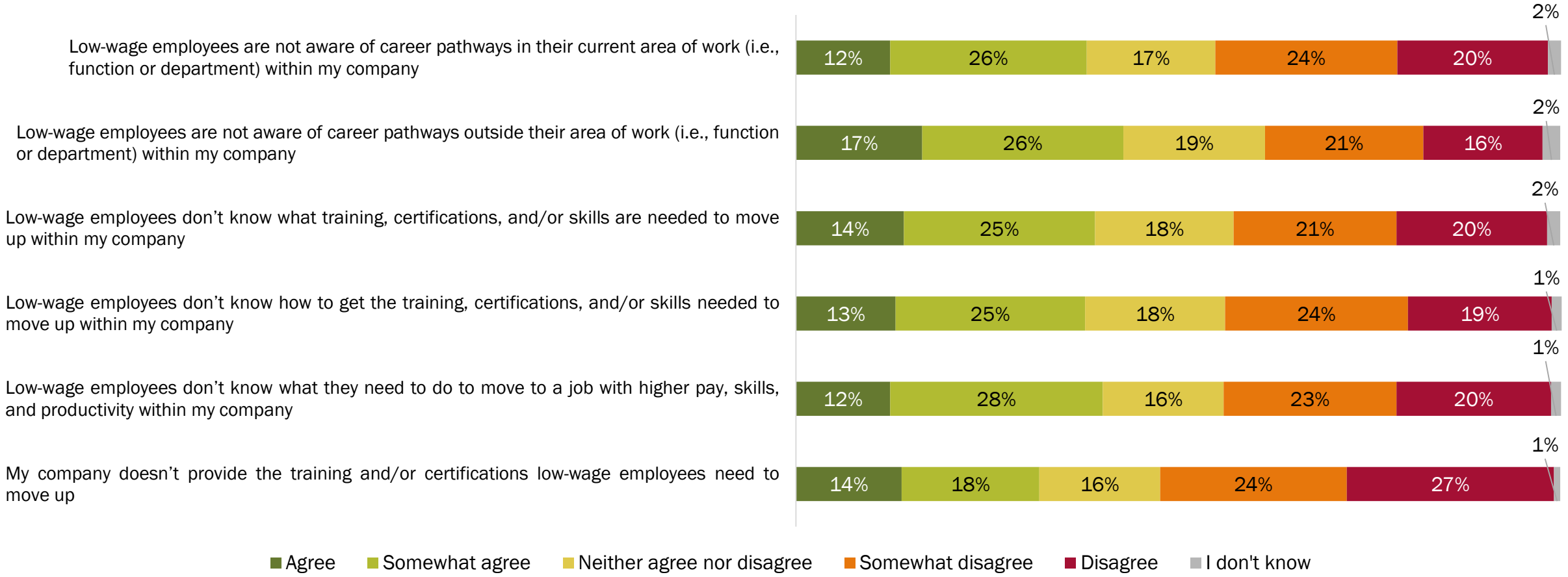
Awareness and Attitudes

Employee Awareness About Career Pathways

Source: "Upward Mobility Survey of Employers of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S.," September–November 2020, Project on Managing the Future of Work, Harvard Business School.

B8. Please tell us how strongly you agree or disagree that each of the following conditions is a barrier to the upward mobility of low-wage employees at your company.



N = 1,150

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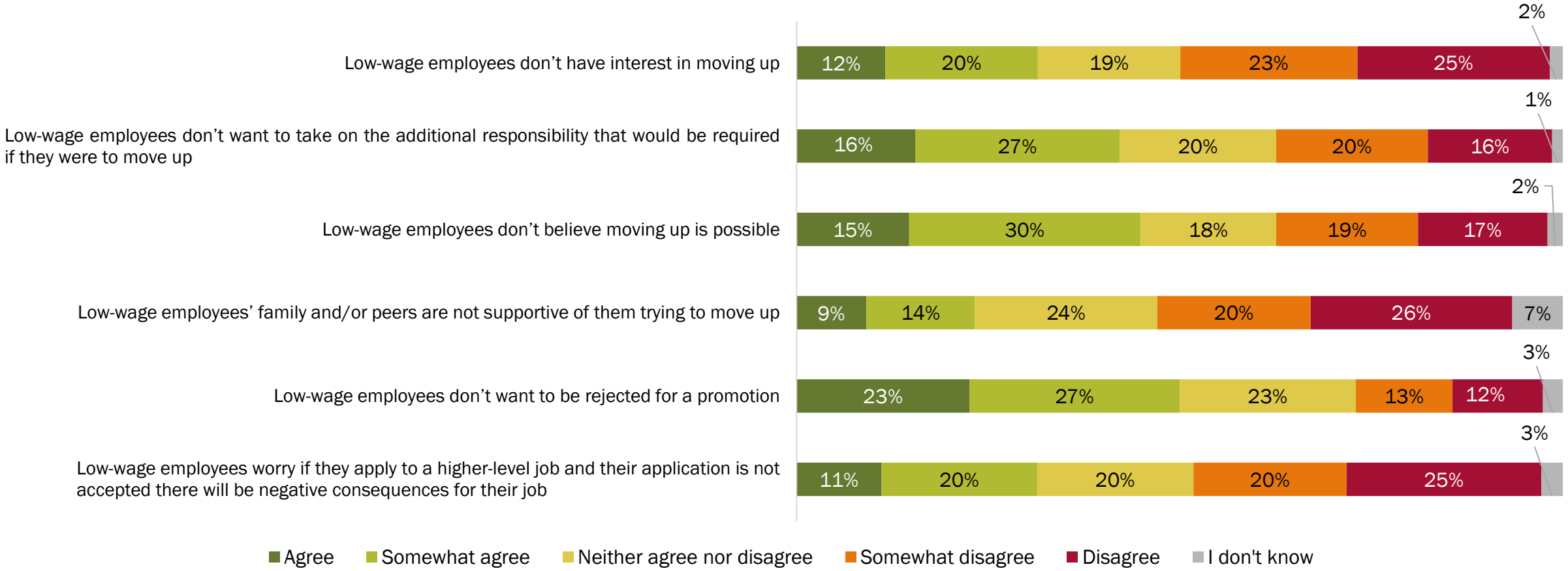
Awareness and Attitudes

Employee Attitudes to Upward Mobility

Source: "Upward Mobility Survey of Employers of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S.," September–November 2020, Project on Managing the Future of Work, Harvard Business School.

B9. Please tell us how strongly you agree or disagree that each of the following conditions is a barrier to the upward mobility of low-wage employees at your company.



N = 1,150

Awareness and Attitudes
Low-Wage Employees

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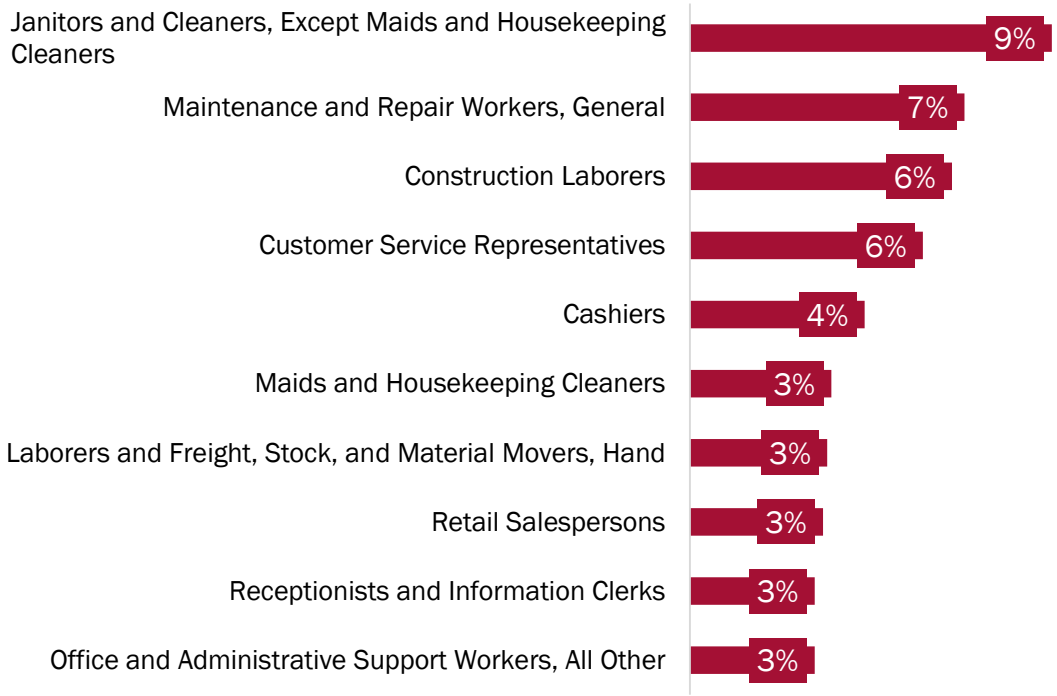
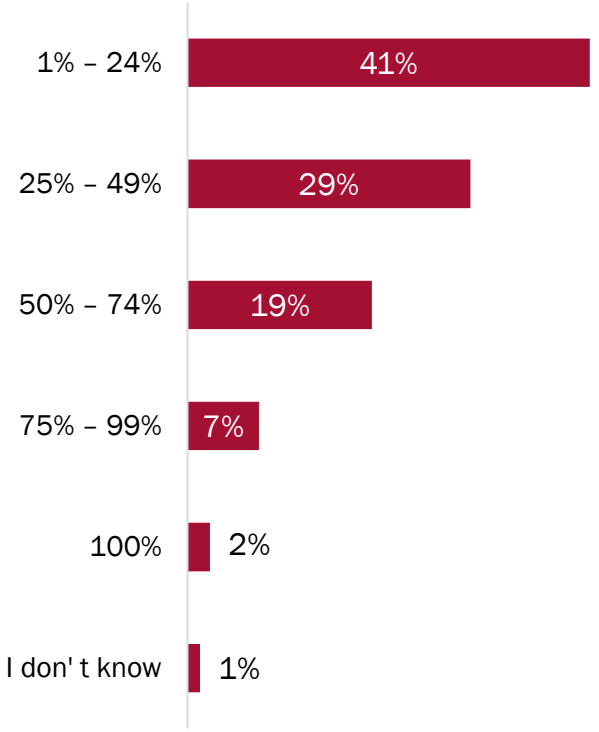
Source: "Upward Mobility Survey of Employers of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S.," September–November 2020, Project on Managing the Future of Work, Harvard Business School.

B10. What is the most common occupation among low-wage employees at your company?



B11. What percentage of your overall workforce is in this occupation?



N = 1,150

Awareness and Attitudes
Upward Mobility

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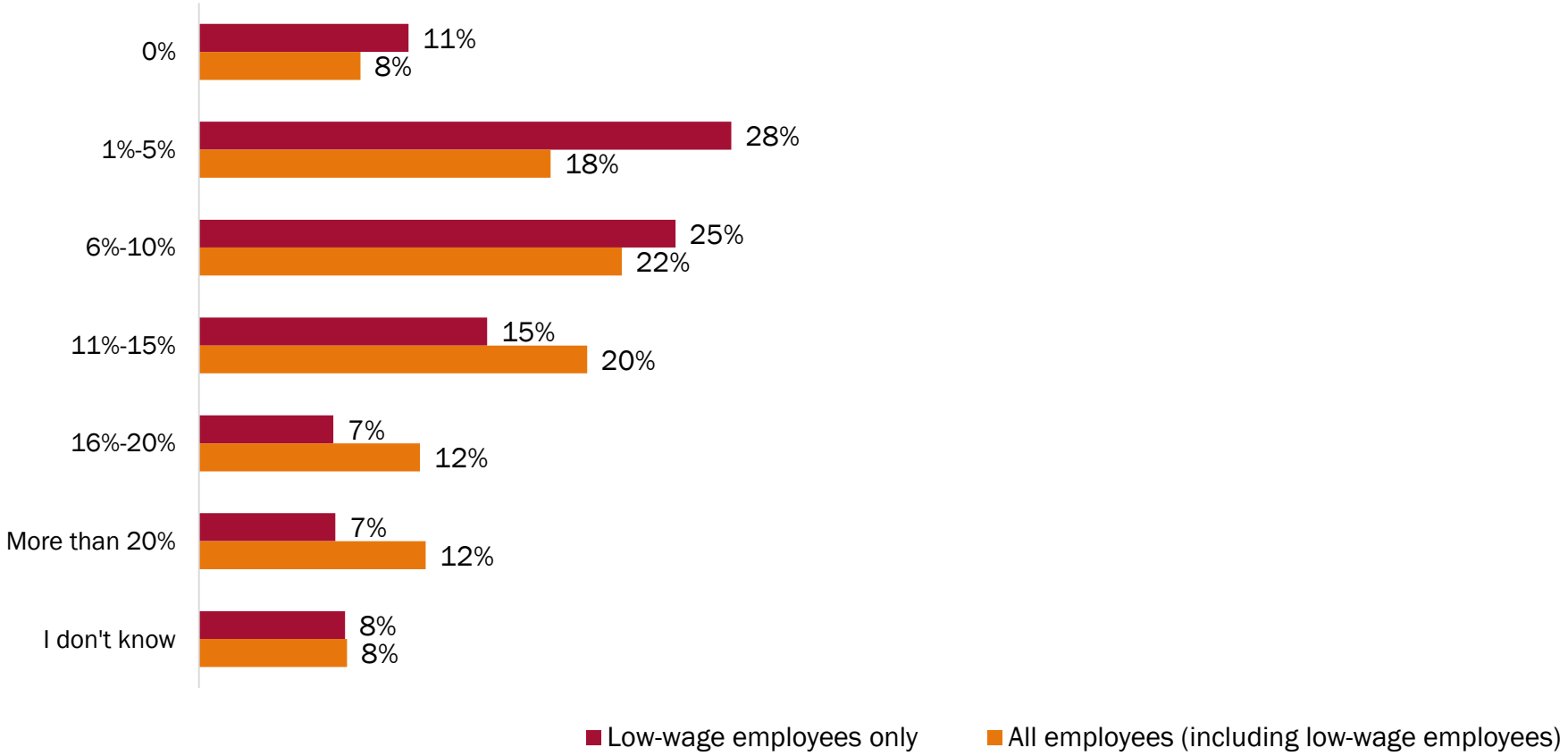
Source: "Upward Mobility Survey of Employers of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S.," September–November 2020, Project on Managing the Future of Work, Harvard Business School.

B12. From January 2019 to January 2020 (the year prior to COVID-19), what percentage of your company's low-wage workforce and total workforce experienced upward mobility?



N = 1,150

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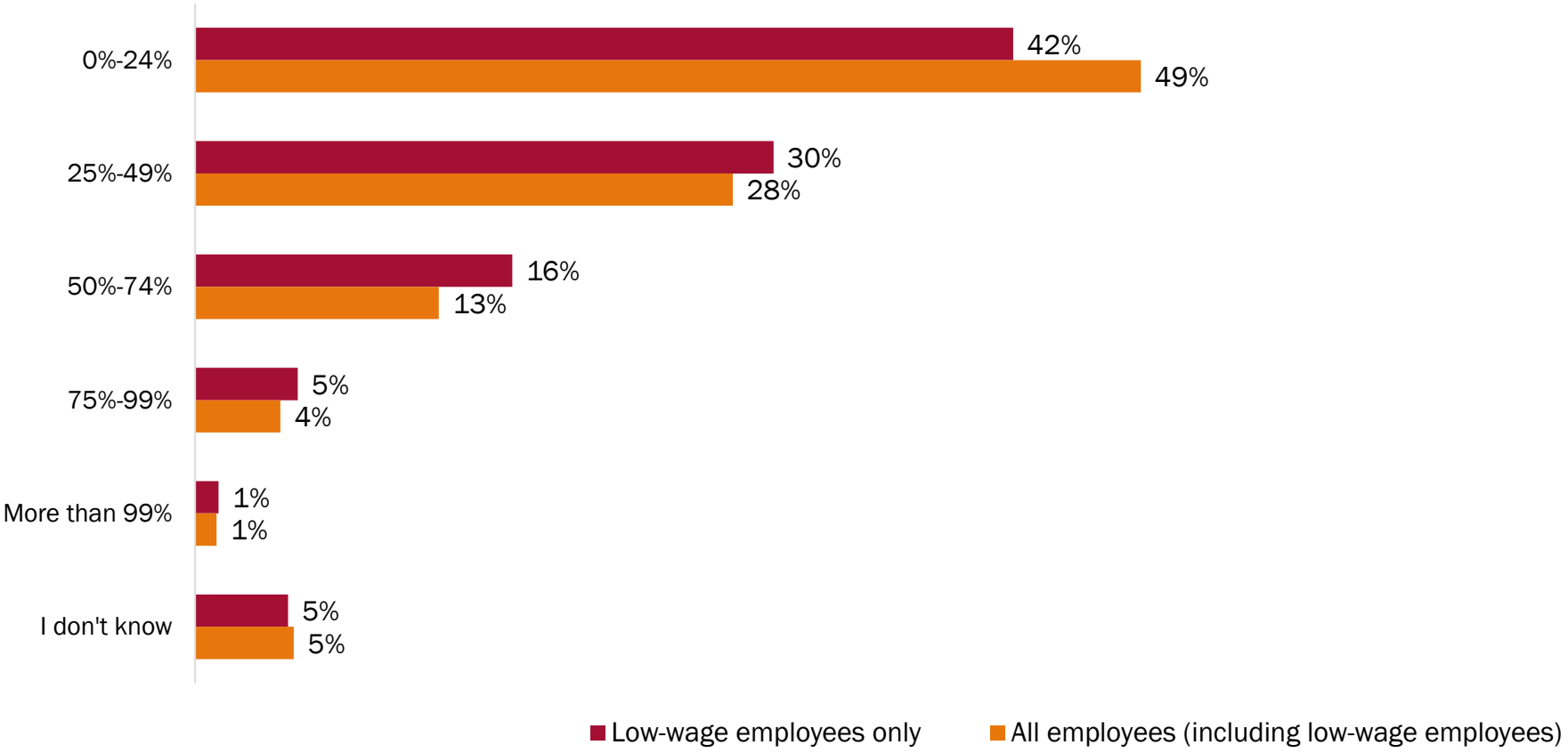
Awareness and Attitudes

Turnover Rates

Source: "Upward Mobility Survey of Employers of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S.," September–November 2020, Project on Managing the Future of Work, Harvard Business School.

B13. From January 2019 to January 2020 (the year prior to COVID-19), in your company, what would you estimate were the turnover rates of:



N = 1,150

Awareness and Attitudes
Tenure

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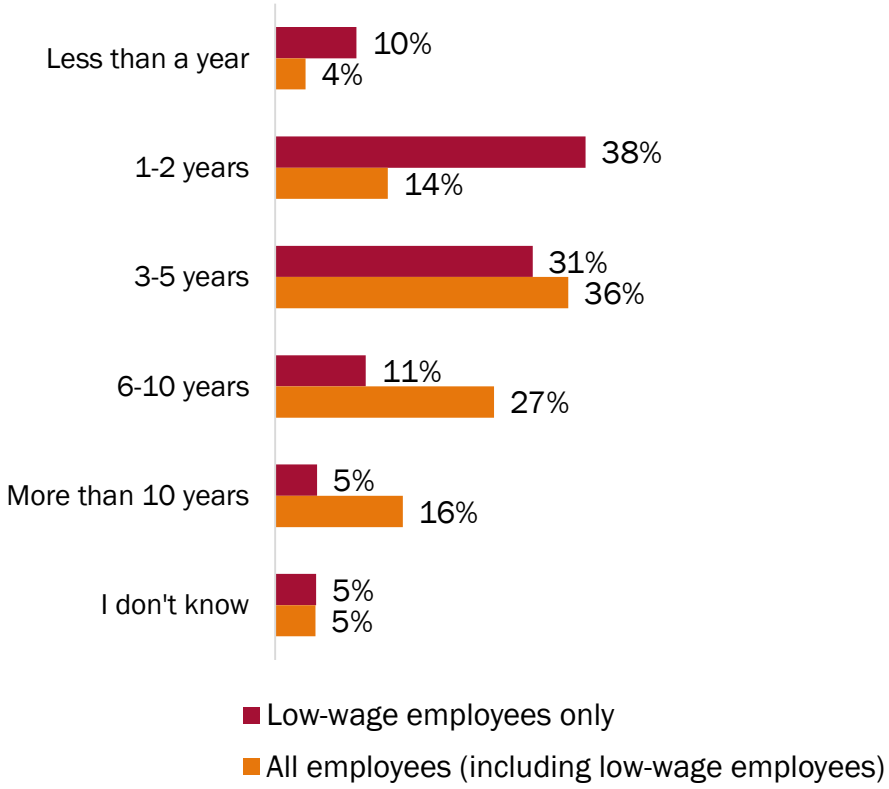
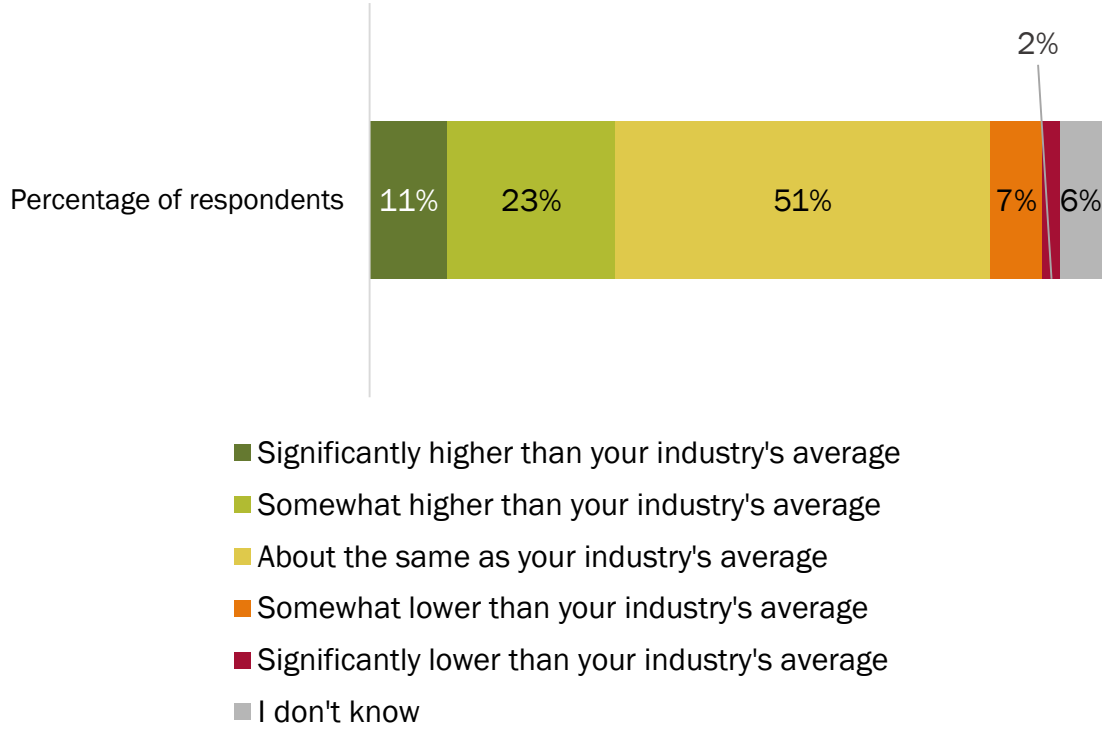
Source: "Upward Mobility Survey of Employers of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S.," September–November 2020, Project on Managing the Future of Work, Harvard Business School.

B14. Prior to COVID-19, in January 2020, what would you estimate was the average tenure employed at your company of:



B15. You previously said that the average tenure of low-wage employees at your company was [Pipe in tenure from B14]. In your experience, is this:



N = 1,150

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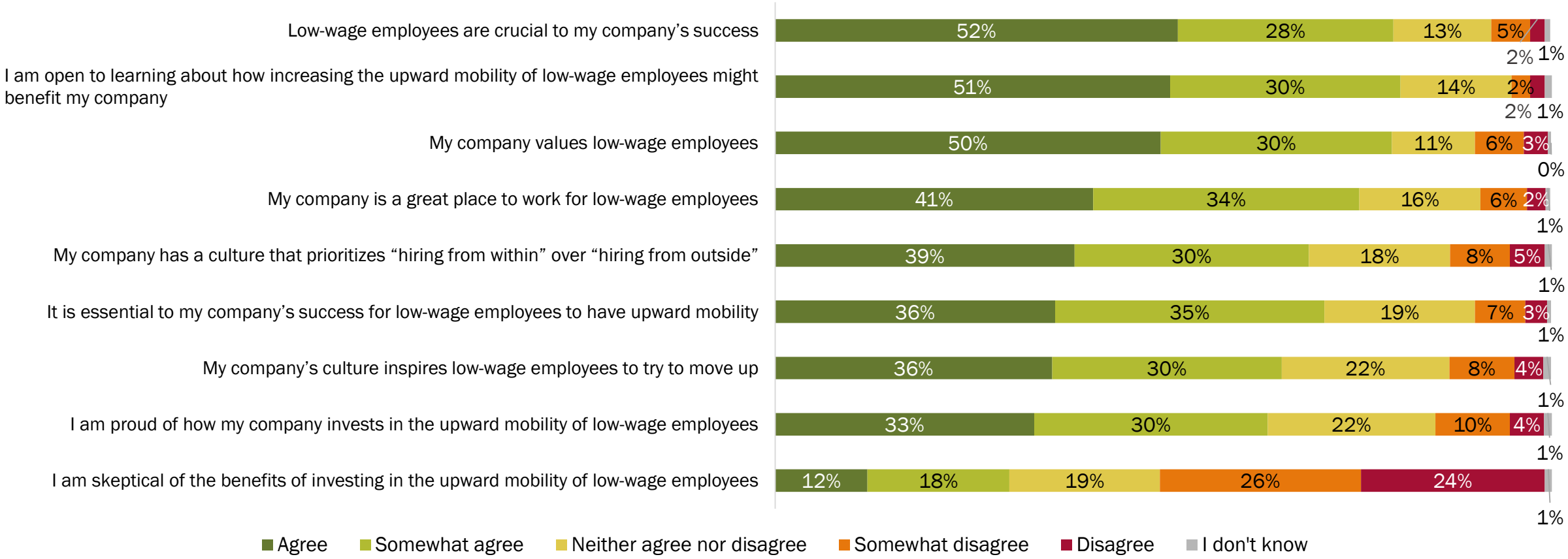
Source: "Upward Mobility Survey of Employers of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S.," September–November 2020, Project on Managing the Future of Work, Harvard Business School.

C1. For the following questions, please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following set of statements.



N = 1,150

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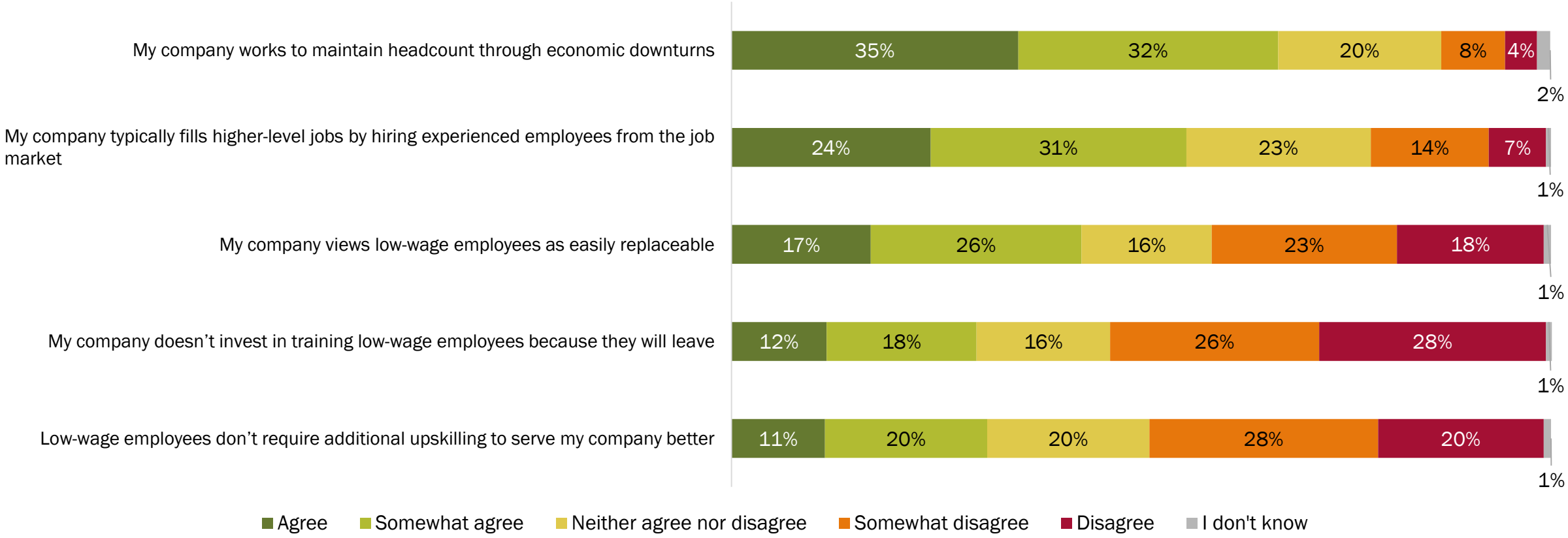
Source: "Upward Mobility Survey of Employers of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S.," September–November 2020, Project on Managing the Future of Work, Harvard Business School.

C2. For the following questions, please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following set of statements.



N = 1,150

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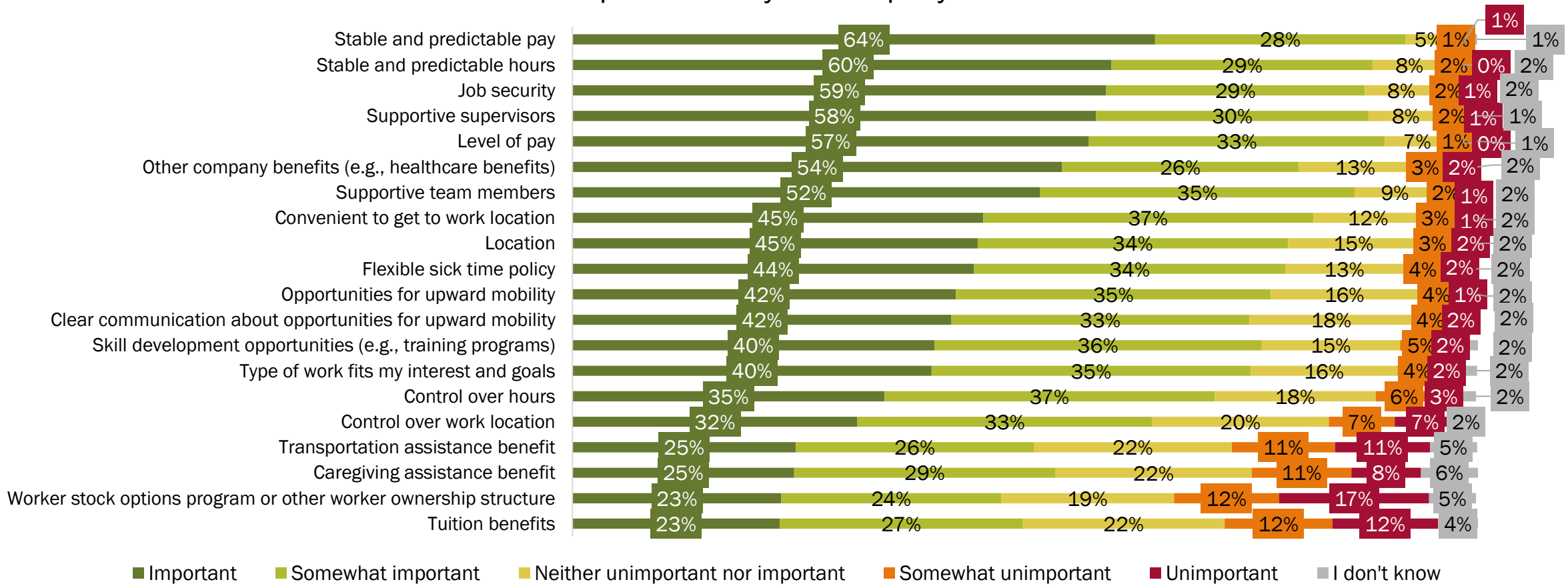
Source: "Upward Mobility Survey of Employers of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S.," September–November 2020, Project on Managing the Future of Work, Harvard Business School.

C3. How important do you think the following benefits are to people applying to low-wage positions at your company?



N = 1,150

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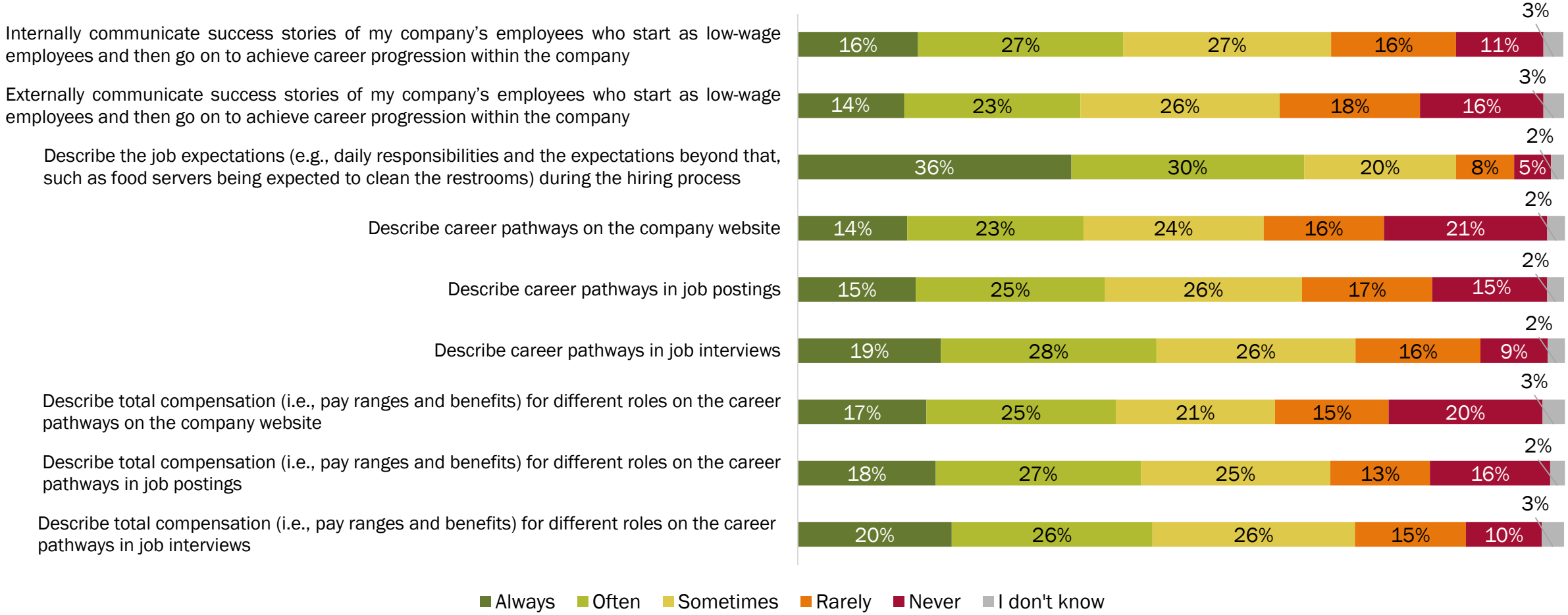
Actions
Pre-employment

Source: "Upward Mobility Survey of Employers of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S.," September–November 2020, Project on Managing the Future of Work, Harvard Business School.

C4: How often does your company:



N = 1,150

Actions
Pre-employment

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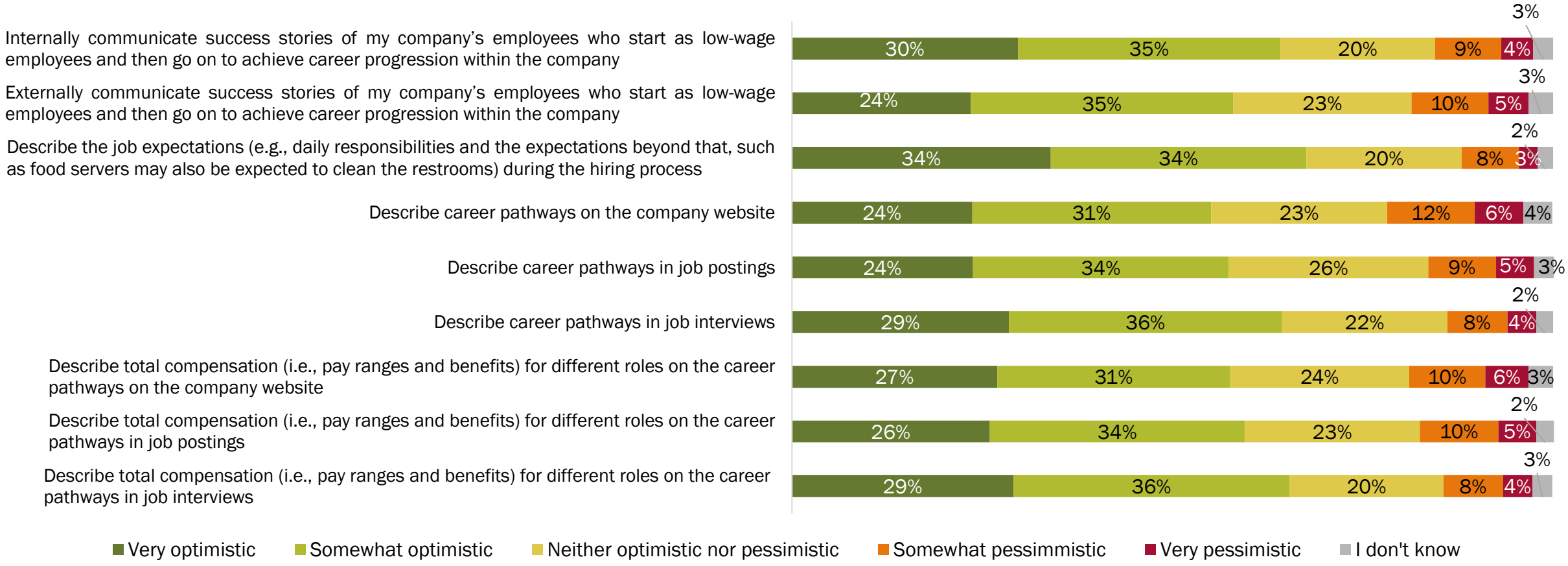
Source: "Upward Mobility Survey of Employers of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S.," September–November 2020, Project on Managing the Future of Work, Harvard Business School.

C5: Please rate how you feel about the value each of the following actions has to the competitiveness of your company.



N = 1,150

Actions
Hiring

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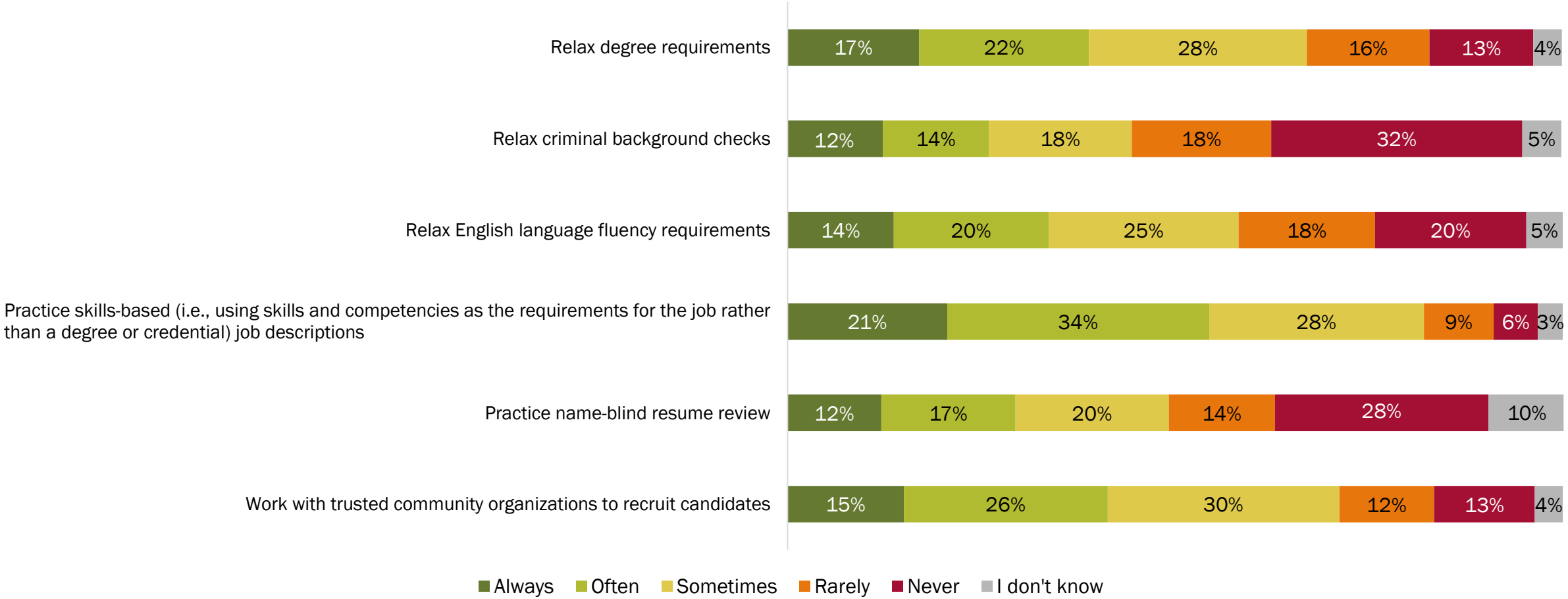
Source: "Upward Mobility Survey of Employers of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S.," September–November 2020, Project on Managing the Future of Work, Harvard Business School.

C6: How often does your company:



N = 1,150

Actions
Hiring

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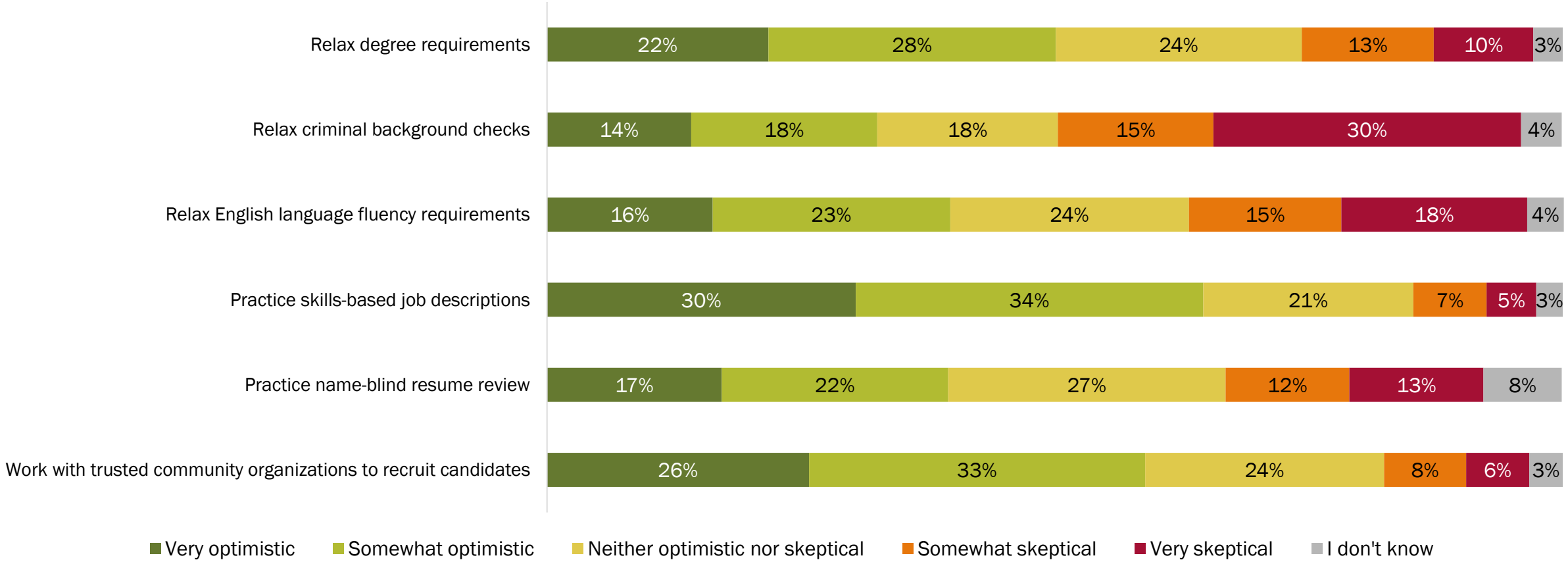
Source: "Upward Mobility Survey of Employers of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S.," September–November 2020, Project on Managing the Future of Work, Harvard Business School.

C7: Please rate how you feel about the value each of the following actions has to the competitiveness of your company.



N = 1,150

Actions
Onboarding

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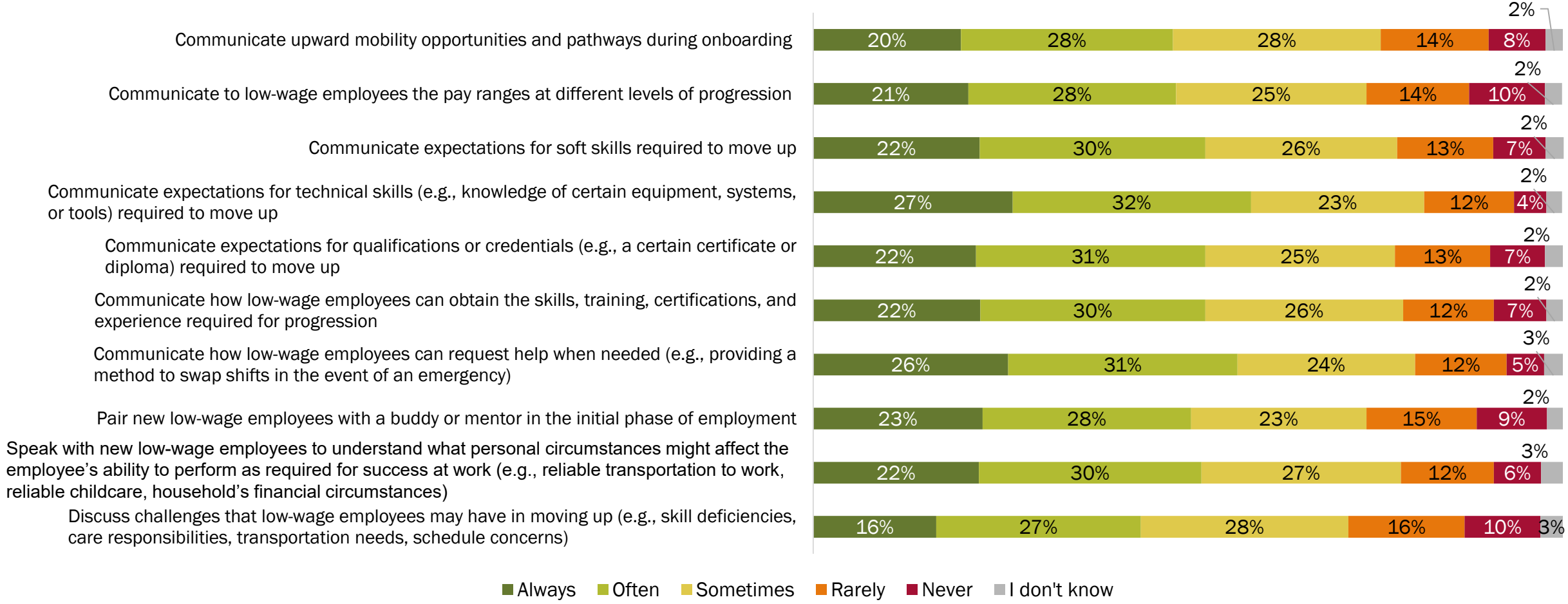
Source: "Upward Mobility Survey of Employers of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S.," September–November 2020, Project on Managing the Future of Work, Harvard Business School.

C8: How often does your company:



N = 1,150

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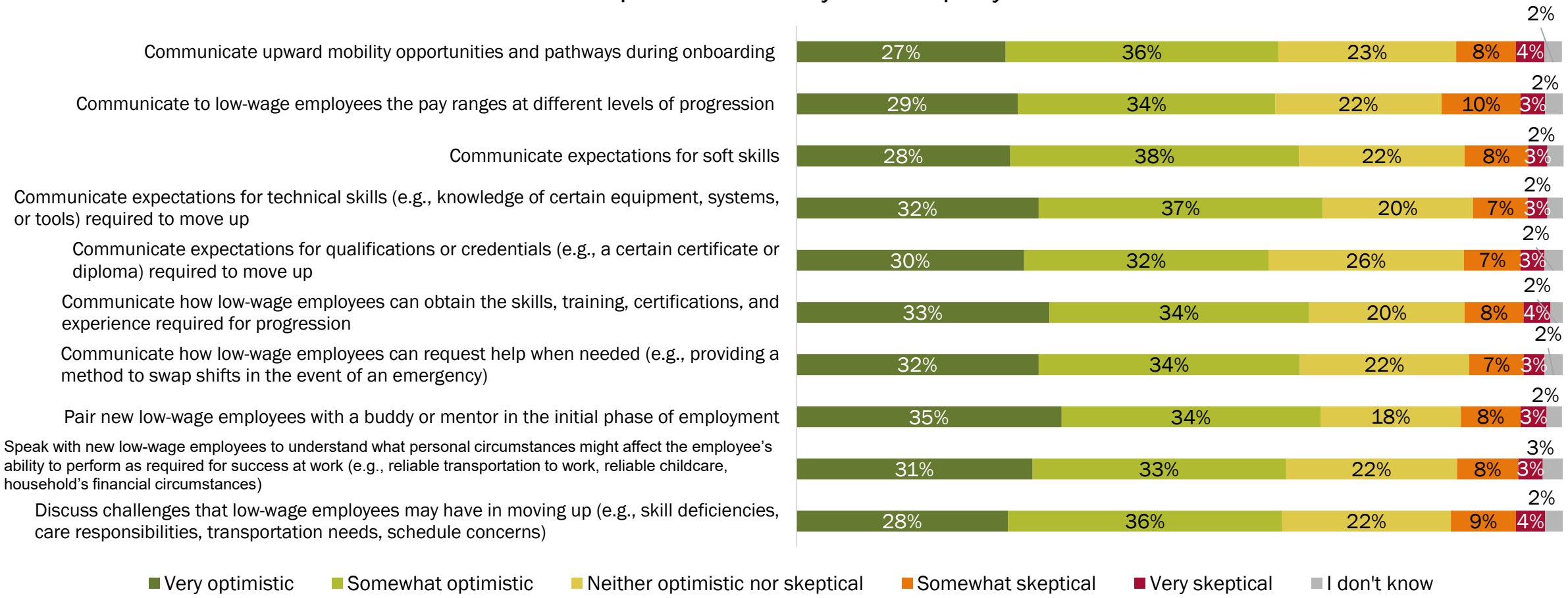
Source: "Upward Mobility Survey of Employers of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S.," September–November 2020, Project on Managing the Future of Work, Harvard Business School.

C9. Please rate how you feel about the value each of the following actions has to the competitiveness of your company.



N = 1,150

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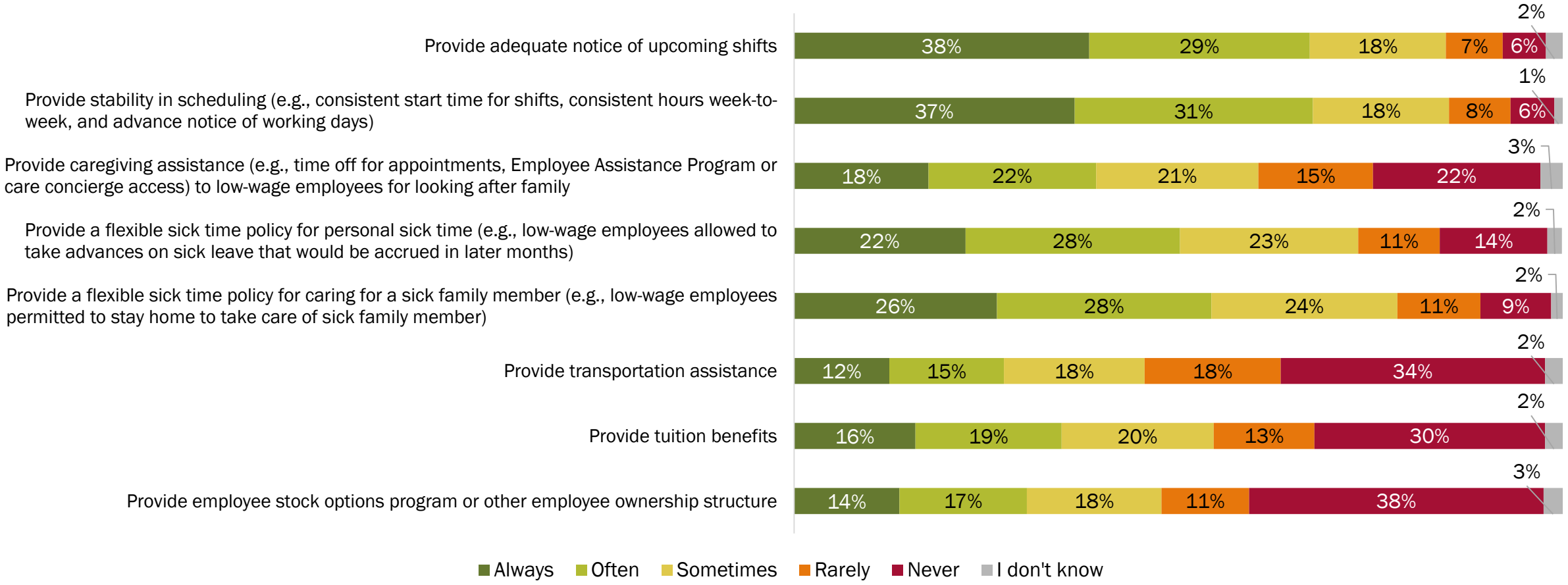
Actions
On-the-job Support: Benefits

Source: "Upward Mobility Survey of Employers of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S.," September–November 2020, Project on Managing the Future of Work, Harvard Business School.

C10. How often does your company:



N = 1,150

Actions
On-the-job Support: Benefits

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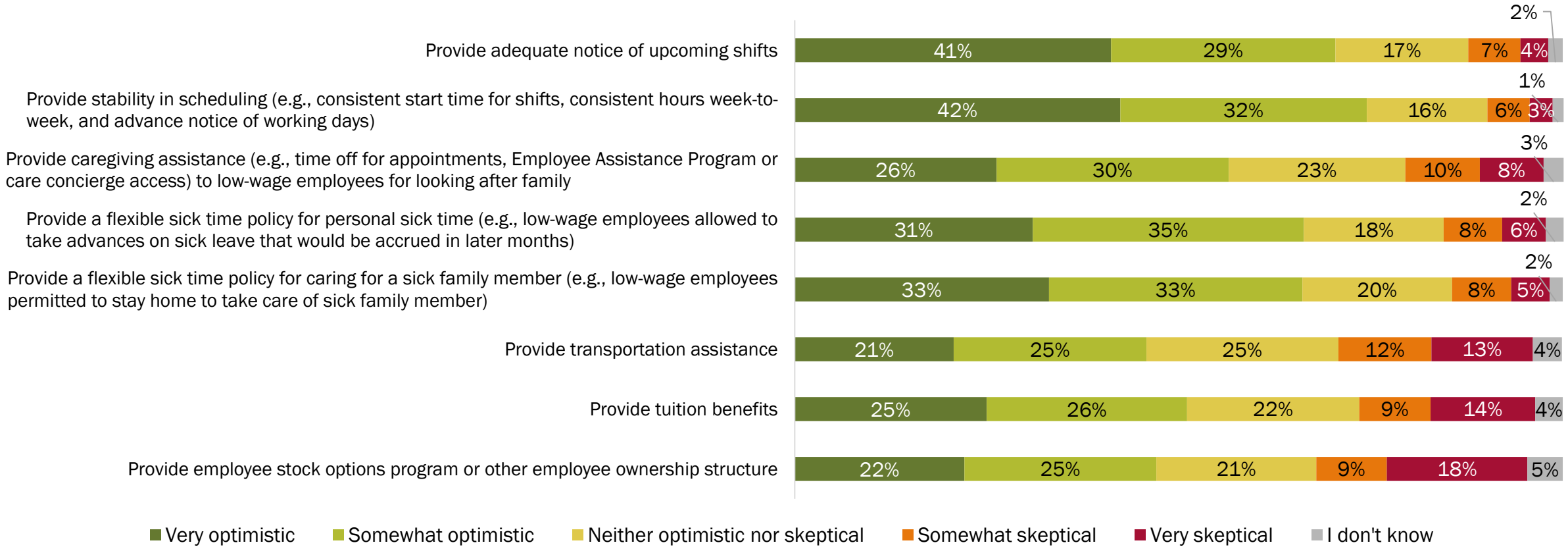
Source: "Upward Mobility Survey of Employers of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S.," September–November 2020, Project on Managing the Future of Work, Harvard Business School.

C11. Please rate how you feel about the value each of the following actions has to the competitiveness of your company.



N = 1,150

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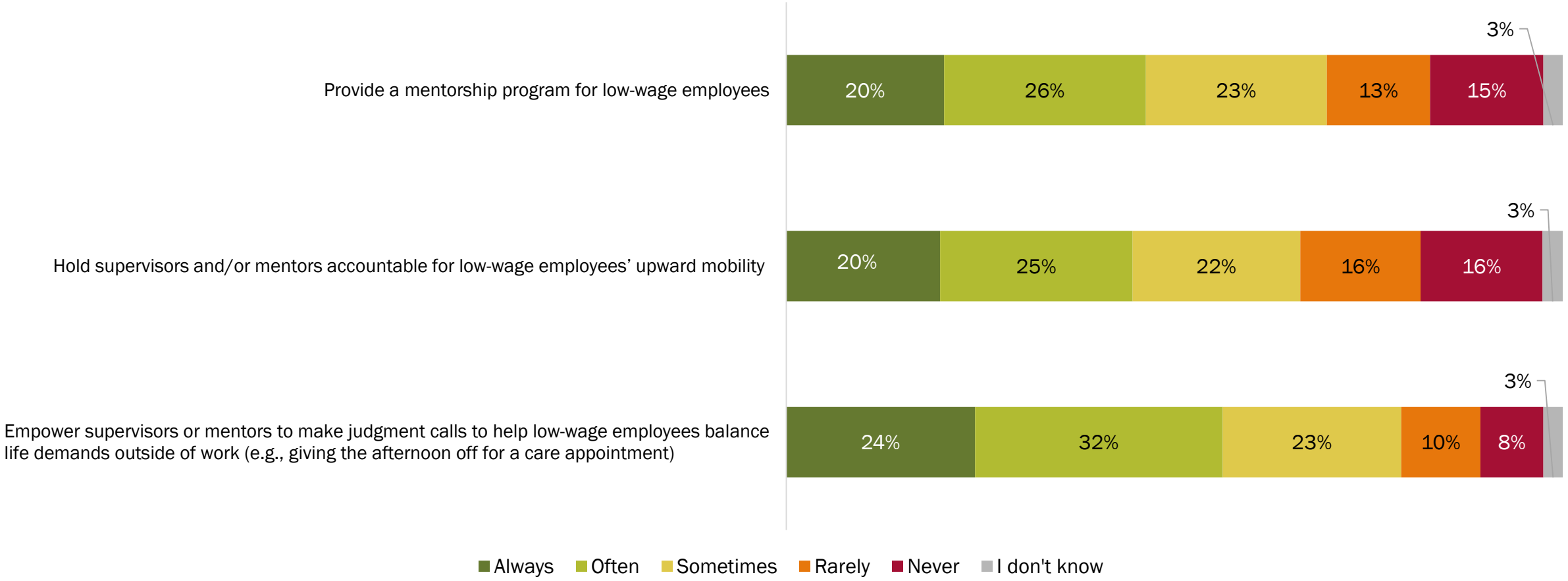
Actions

On-the-job Support: Mentor and Supervisor Support

Source: "Upward Mobility Survey of Employers of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S.," September–November 2020, Project on Managing the Future of Work, Harvard Business School.

C12. How often does your company:



N = 1,150

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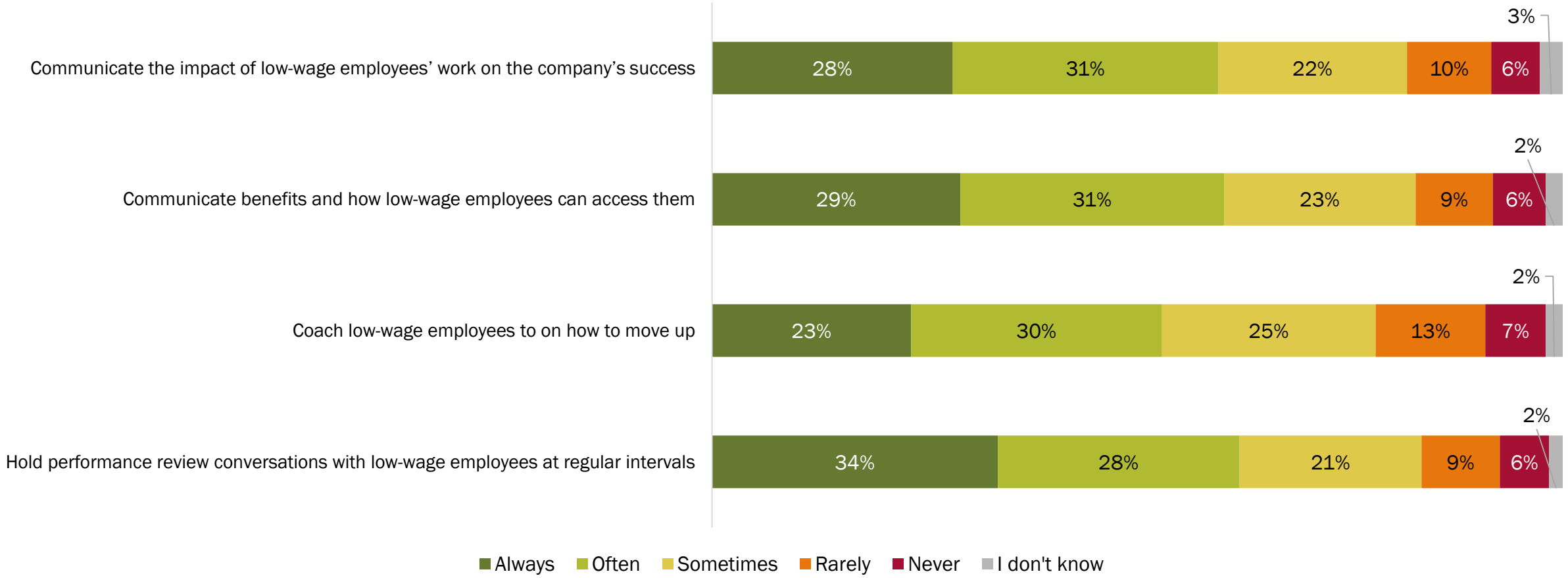
Actions
On-the-job Support: Mentor and Supervisor Support

Source: "Upward Mobility Survey of Employers of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S.," September–November 2020, Project on Managing the Future of Work, Harvard Business School.

C13. How often do supervisors and/or mentors at your company:



N = 1,150

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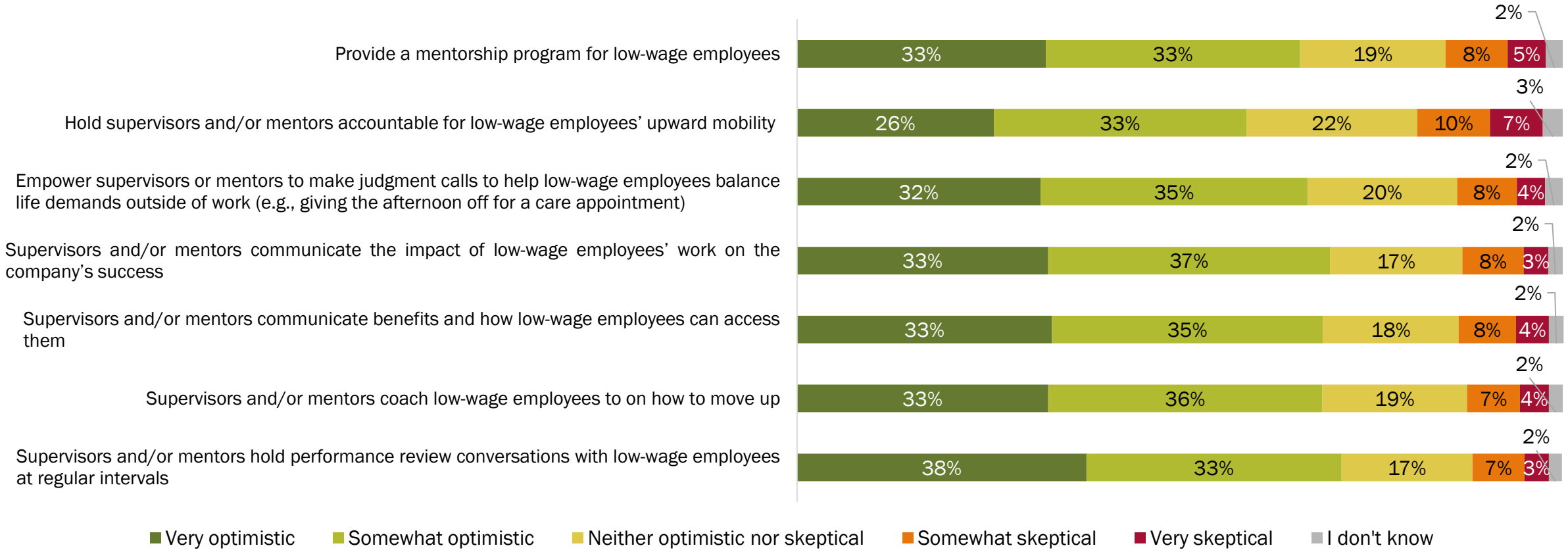
Actions
On-the-job Support: Mentor and Supervisor Support

Source: "Upward Mobility Survey of Employers of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S.," September–November 2020, Project on Managing the Future of Work, Harvard Business School.

C14. Please rate how you feel about the value each of the following actions has to the competitiveness of your company.



N = 1,150

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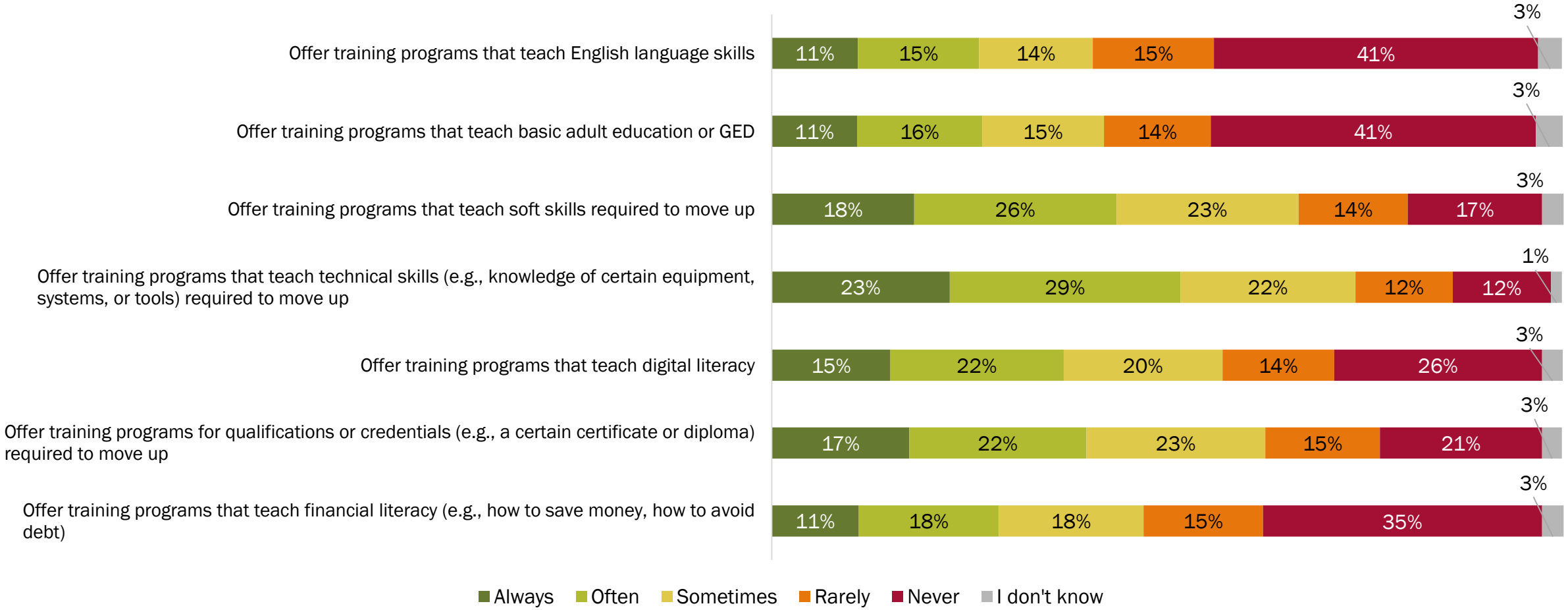
Actions
On-the-job Support: Learning and Development

Source: "Upward Mobility Survey of Employers of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S.," September–November 2020, Project on Managing the Future of Work, Harvard Business School.

C15. How often does your company:



N = 1,150

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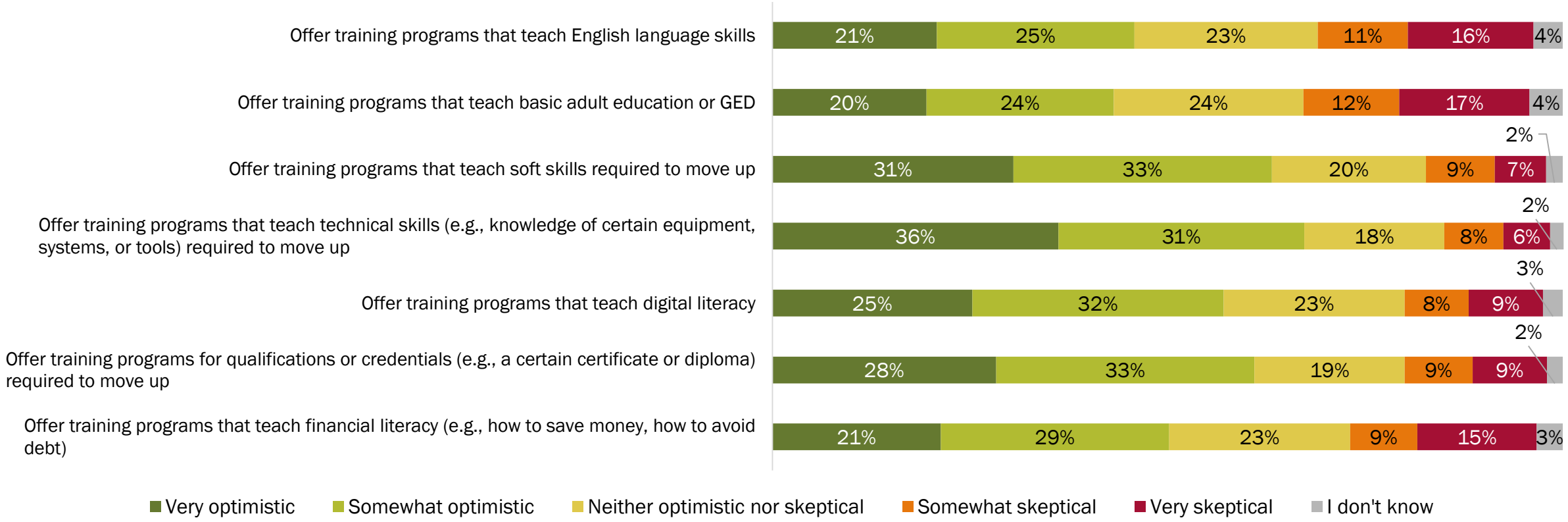
Source: "Upward Mobility Survey of Employers of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S.," September–November 2020, Project on Managing the Future of Work, Harvard Business School.

C16. Please rate how you feel about the value each of the following actions has to the competitiveness of your company.



N = 1,150

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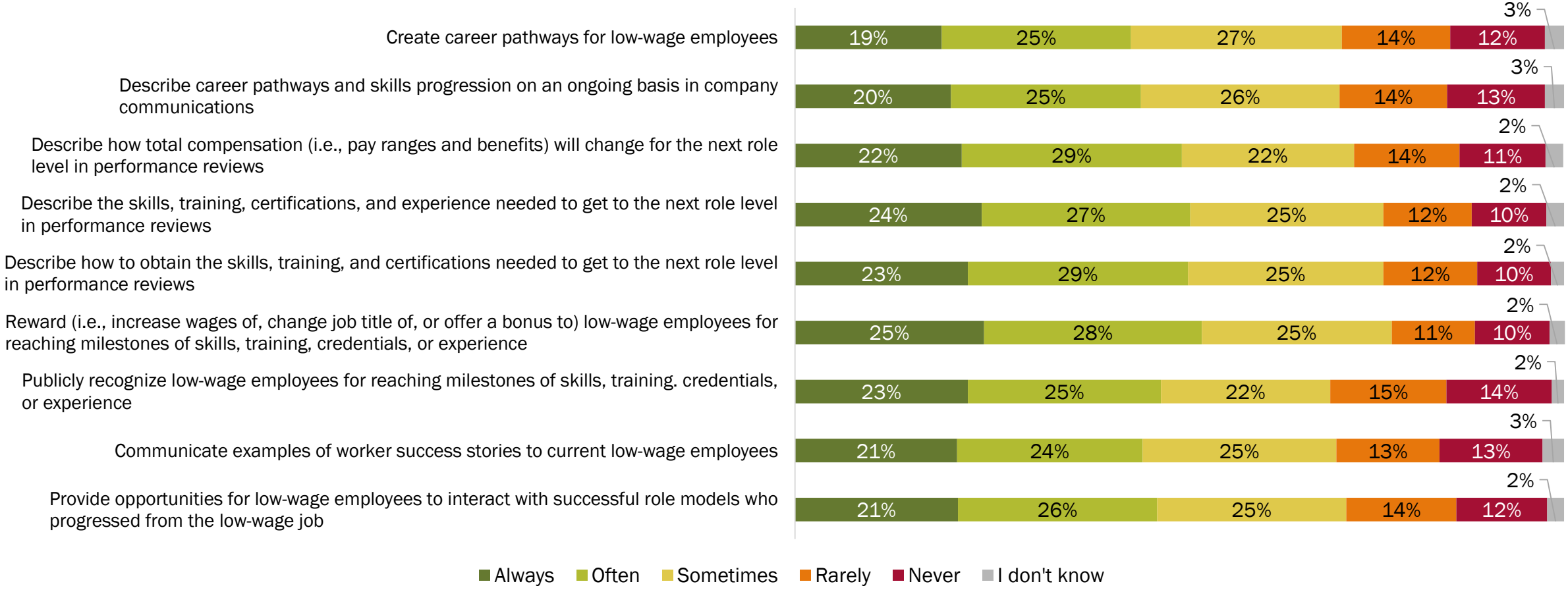
Source: "Upward Mobility Survey of Employers of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S.," September–November 2020, Project on Managing the Future of Work, Harvard Business School.

C17. How often does your company:



N = 1,150

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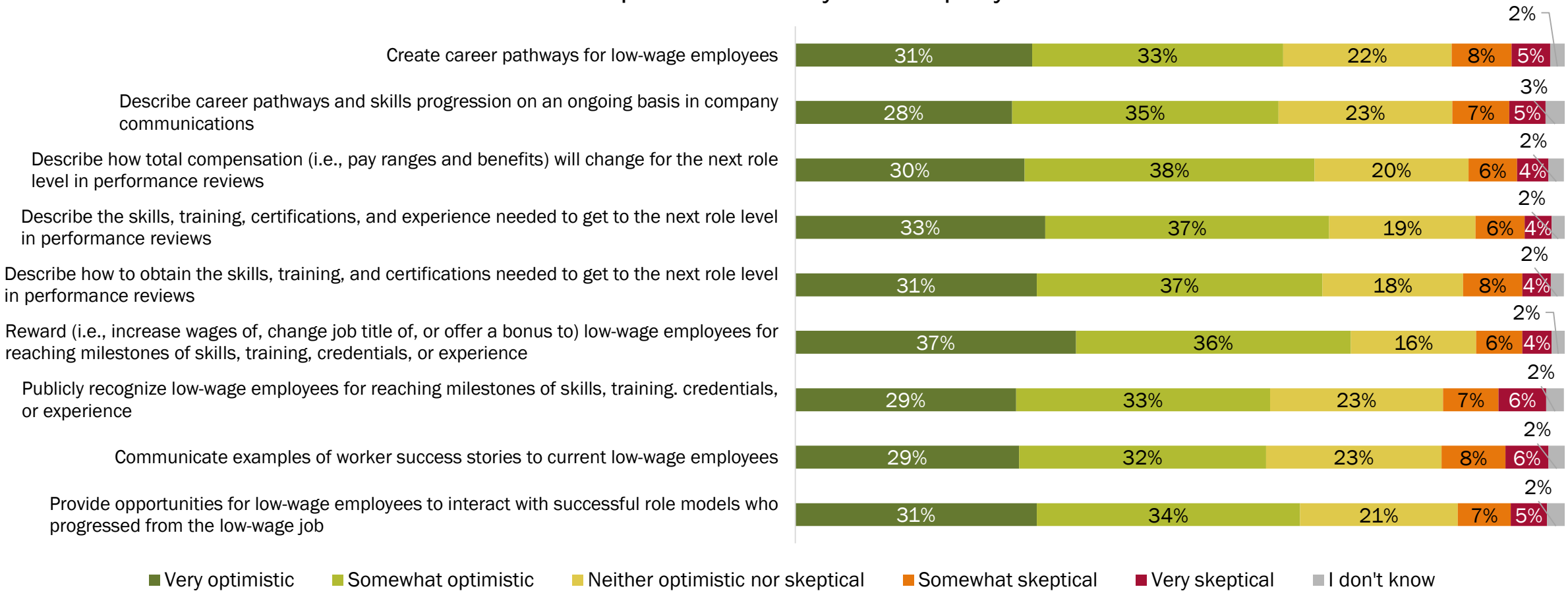
Source: "Upward Mobility Survey of Employers of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S.," September–November 2020, Project on Managing the Future of Work, Harvard Business School.

C18. Please rate how you feel about the value each of the following actions has to the competitiveness of your company.



N = 1,150

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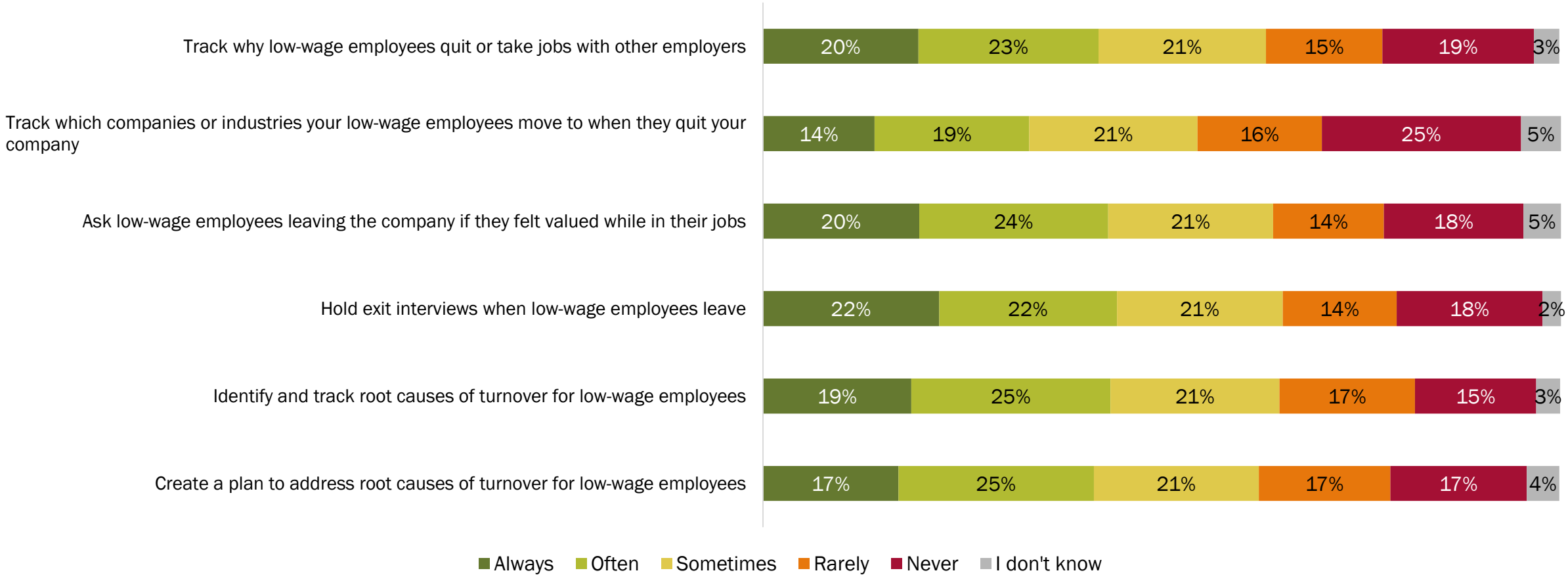
Actions
Offboarding and Post-exit

Source: "Upward Mobility Survey of Employers of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S.," September–November 2020, Project on Managing the Future of Work, Harvard Business School.

C19. How often does your company:



N = 1,150

Actions
Offboarding and Post-exit

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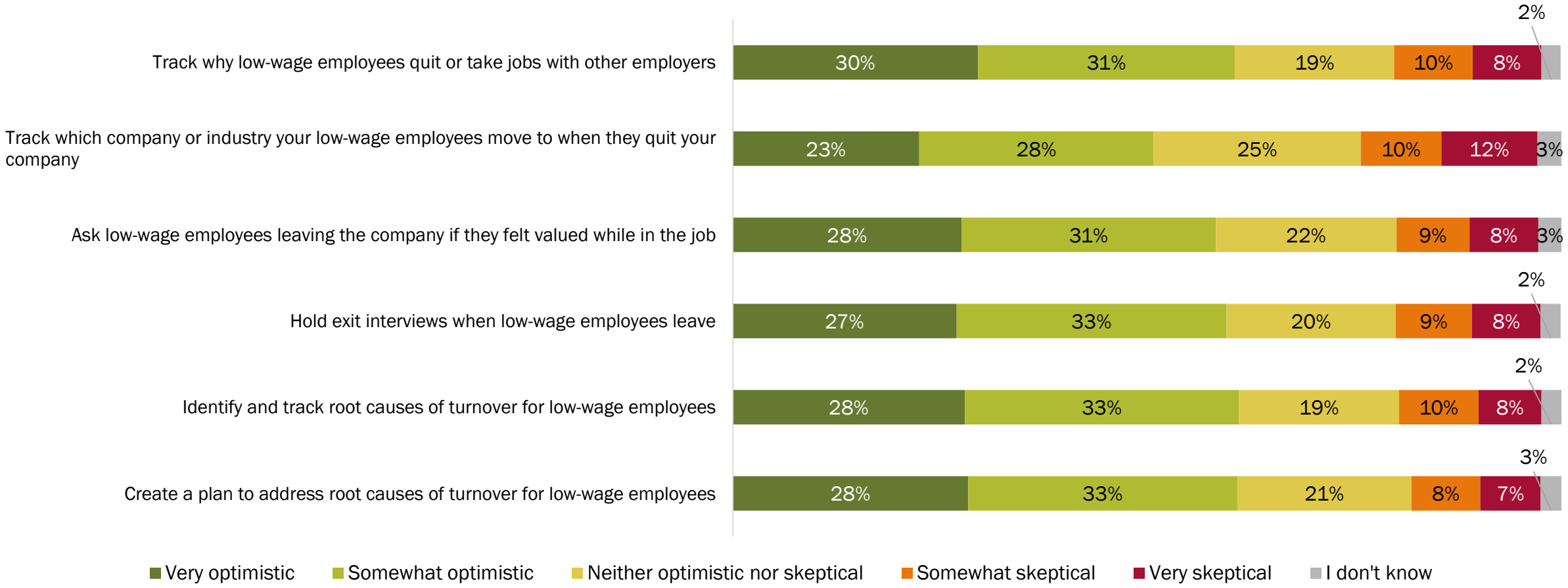
Source: "Upward Mobility Survey of Employers of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S.," September–November 2020, Project on Managing the Future of Work, Harvard Business School.

C20. Please rate how you feel about the value each of the following actions has to the competitiveness of your company.



N = 1,150

Actions
Offboarding and Post-exit

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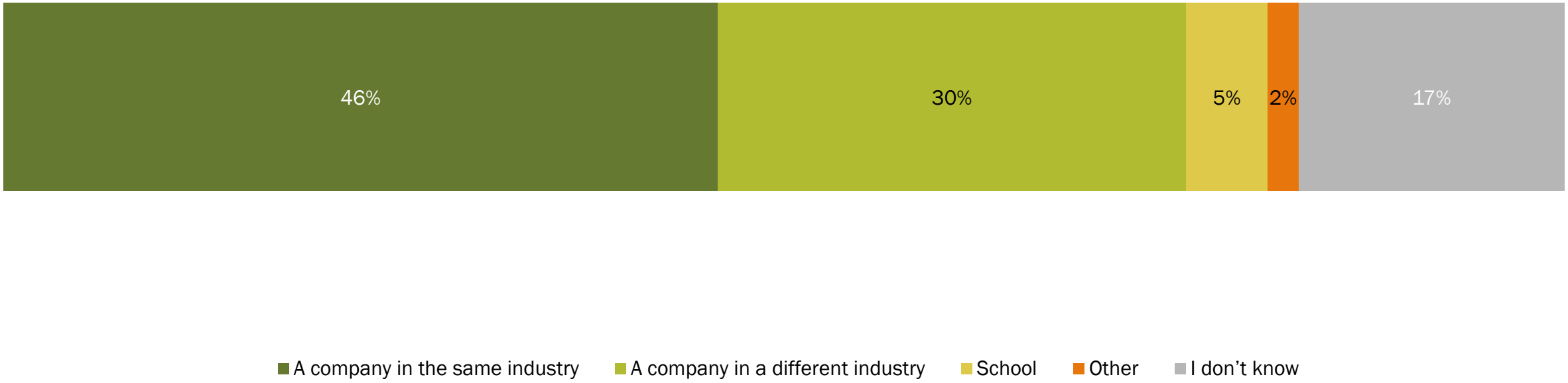
Source: “Upward Mobility Survey of Employers of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S.,” September–November 2020, Project on Managing the Future of Work, Harvard Business School.

C21. Typically, when a low-wage employee leaves your company, where do they go?



N = 1,150

Final Thoughts

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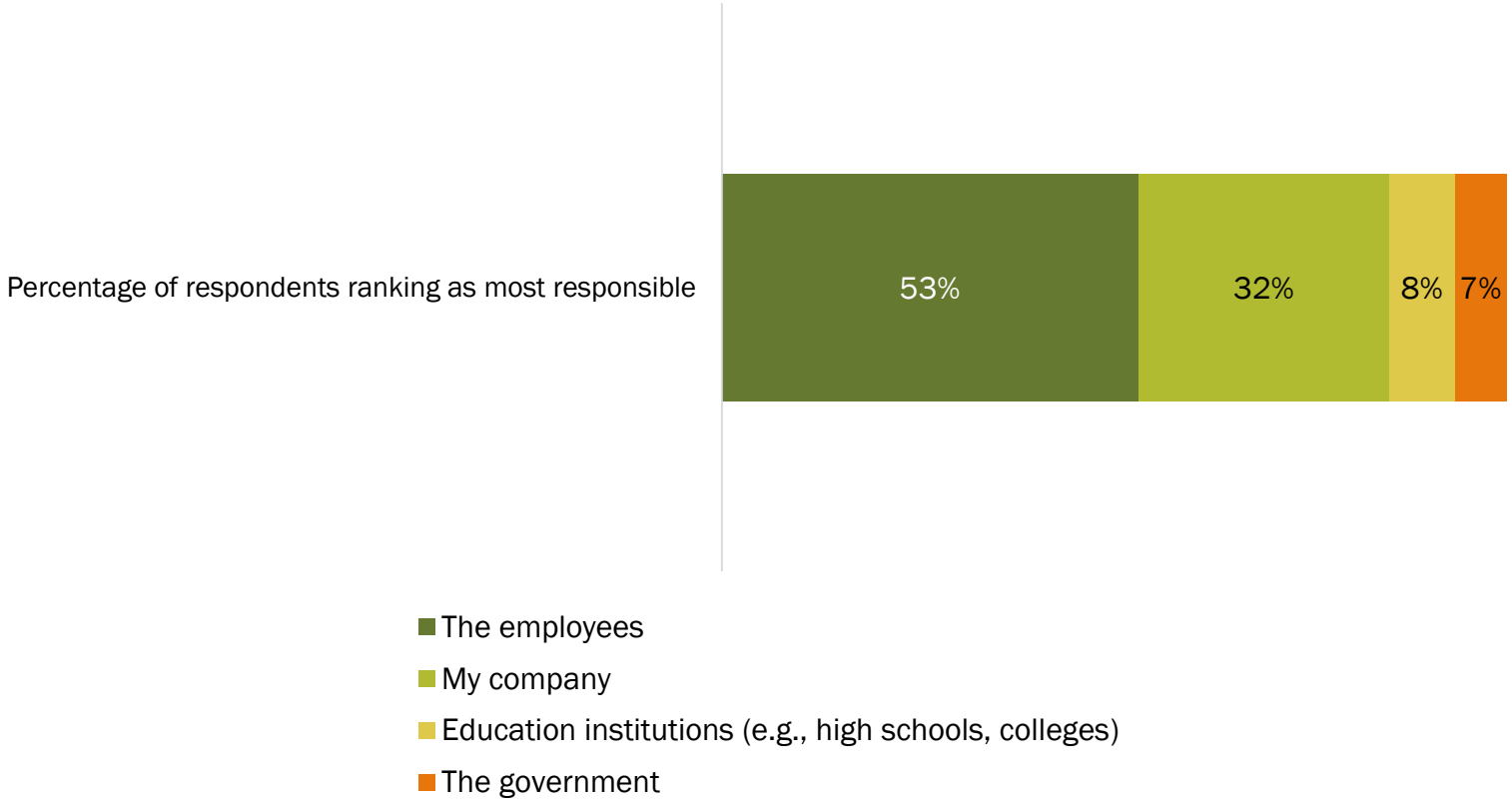
Source: "Upward Mobility Survey of Employers of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S.," September–November 2020, Project on Managing the Future of Work, Harvard Business School.

D1. Who is responsible for the overall upward mobility of low-wage employees? Please rank the following options from most responsible to least responsible:



Stakeholder	Average rank (4= most responsible, 1 = least responsible)
The employees	3.3
My company	2.9
Education institutions (e.g., high schools, colleges)	2.3
The government	1.5

N = 1,115 (35 respondents responded "I don't know")

Final Thoughts

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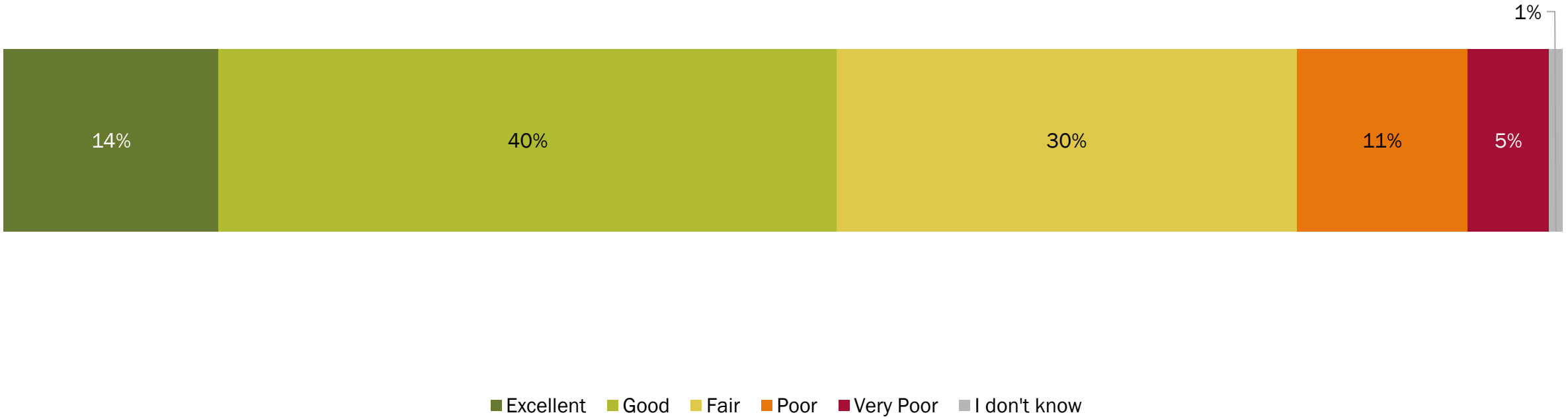
Source: "Upward Mobility Survey of Employers of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S.," September–November 2020, Project on Managing the Future of Work, Harvard Business School.

D2. How would you grade your company's performance in increasing the upward mobility of your company's low-wage employees?



N = 1,150

Final Thoughts

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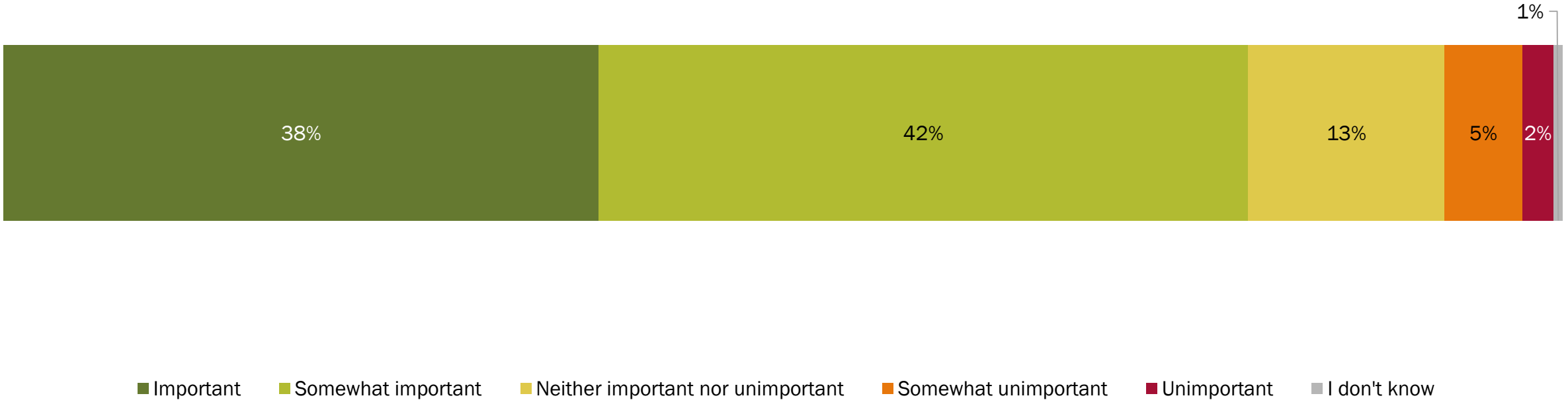
Source: “Upward Mobility Survey of Employers of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S.,” September–November 2020, Project on Managing the Future of Work, Harvard Business School.

D3. How important is it for your company’s future success and competitiveness to invest time and effort in the upward mobility of your low-wage employees in the future (e.g., through implementing more actions like those listed above)?



N = 1,150

Final Thoughts

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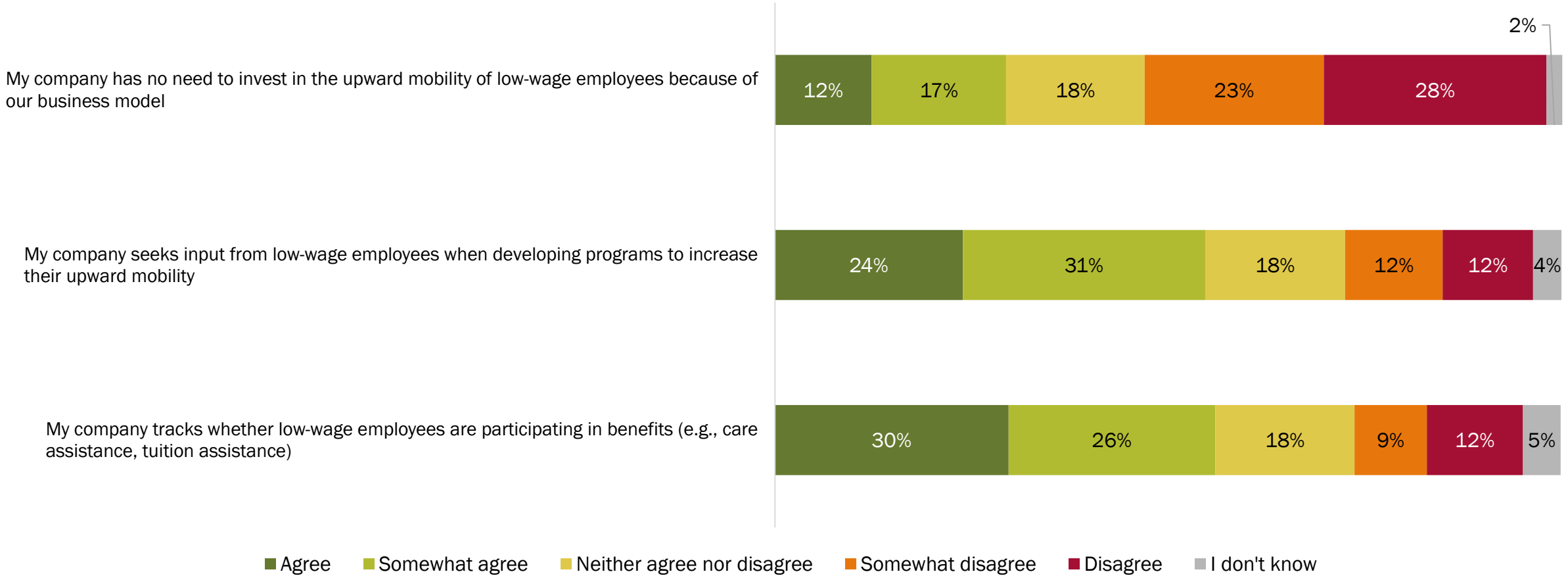
Source: "Upward Mobility Survey of Employers of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S.," September–November 2020, Project on Managing the Future of Work, Harvard Business School.

D4. Please tell us how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements.



N = 1,150

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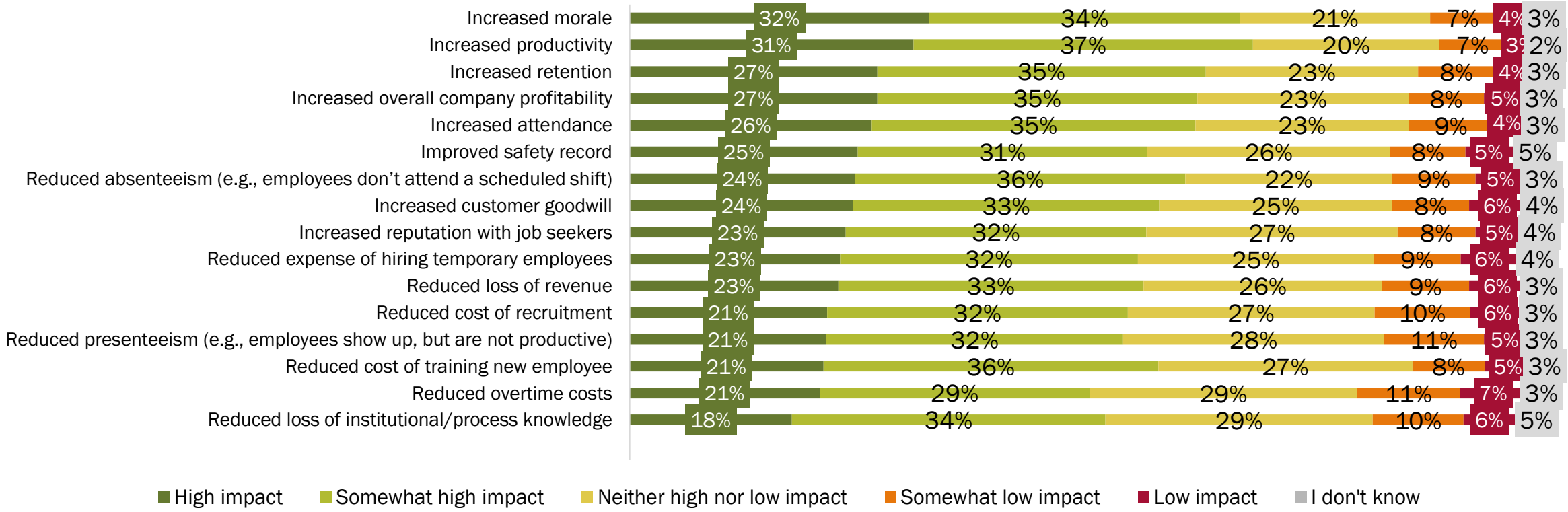
Final Thoughts

Source: "Upward Mobility Survey of Employers of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S.," September–November 2020, Project on Managing the Future of Work, Harvard Business School.

D5: Think about the upward mobility practices your company has already implemented. Rate the impact of these practices on the following contributors to your company's competitiveness:



N = 1,150

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Final Thoughts

Source: "Upward Mobility Survey of Employers of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S.," September–November 2020, Project on Managing the Future of Work, Harvard Business School.

D6. There are many influences from whom you might learn best practices for upward mobility. Please rank your choices from most trusted to least trusted.

- Industry associations and industry experts
- Other business leaders in my region
- Membership organizations who instruct in best practices (e.g., U.S. Chambers of Commerce, Society for Human Resources Management [SHRM], etc.)
- Vendors and providers of company employment benefits to my employees
- The large (e.g., Fortune 500) companies whose supply chain my company is a part of
- Vendors and providers of IT tools that shape employment (e.g., Applicant Tracking Systems [ATS] like Taleo, Human Capital Management [HCM] like Workday)
- Business journalism (e.g., Wall Street Journal) and business schools (e.g., Harvard Business Review)

N = 1,063 (87 people responded "None of the above")

Final Thoughts

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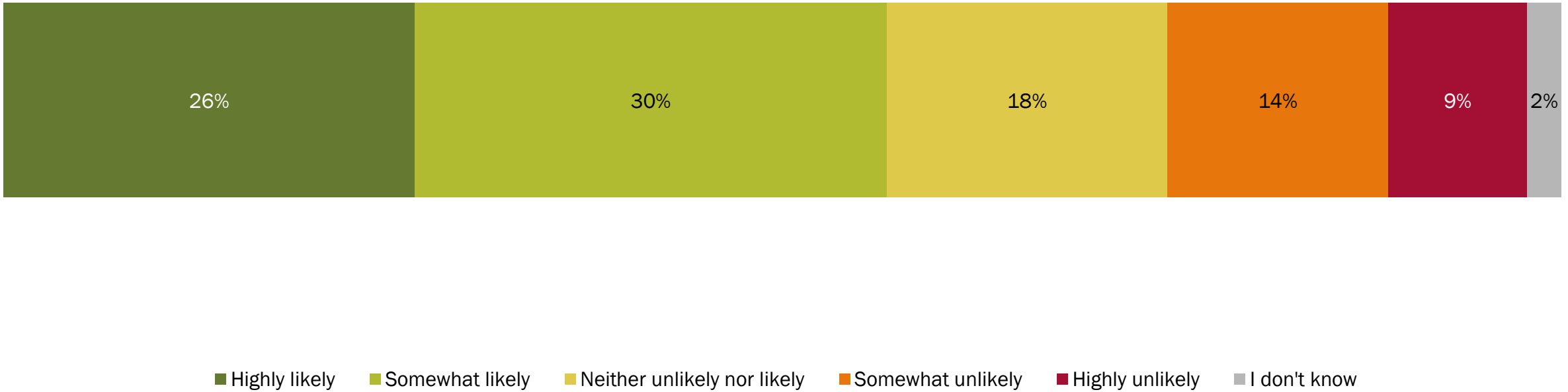
Source: "Upward Mobility Survey of Employers of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S.," September–November 2020, Project on Managing the Future of Work, Harvard Business School.

D10. Please rate your company's willingness to implement practices for increased upward mobility.



N = 1,150

Final Thoughts

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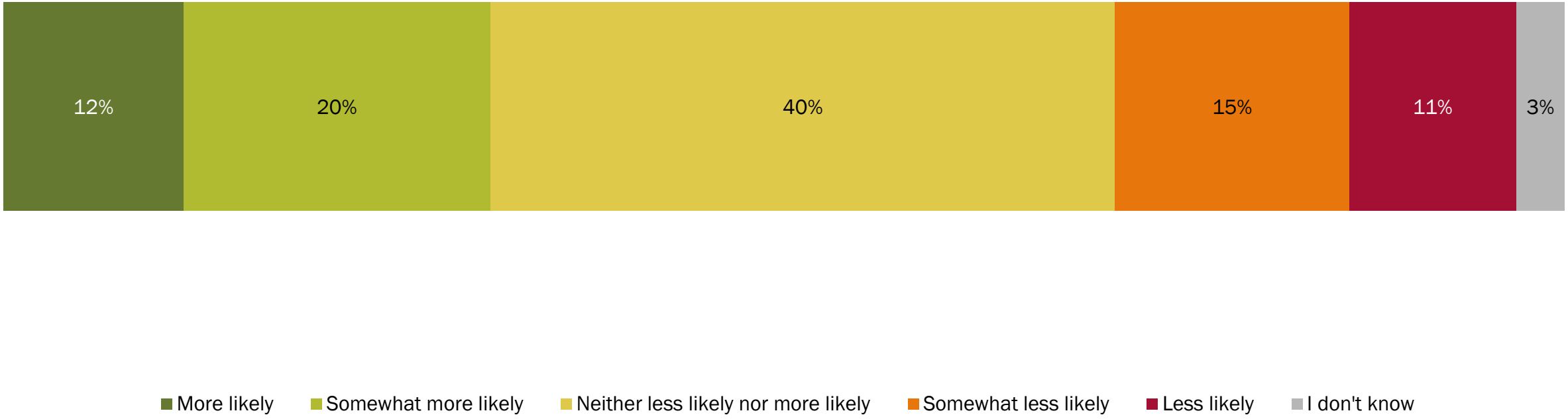
Source: “Upward Mobility Survey of Employers of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S.,” September–November 2020, Project on Managing the Future of Work, Harvard Business School.

D11. Please rate the effect of COVID-19 on your company’s willingness to implement practices for increased upward mobility.



N = 1,150