



2025 STATE OF DIGITAL & CONTENT MARKETING

BUILDING CONNECTION IN THE AGE OF AI

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2025 State of Digital & Content Marketing:
Building Connection in the Age of AI



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



John Corey

President &
Founding Partner,
Greentarget

“From *The Wall Street Journal* to key industry publications, business leaders value trusted editors who sift through the noise and spotlight what matters most.”

Building Connection in the Age of AI

In today’s AI-engrossed, post-pandemic economy, unpredictability may be one of the few constants business leaders can depend on.

So when it comes to content, it makes sense that decision-makers navigating this new era of upheaval are more focused than ever on the fundamentals, including a deeper embrace of trusted editorial sources and a bedrock insistence on relevance and utility.

Targeted AI advice

At the same time, business leaders are hungry for guidance on AI. Yet as the technology’s explosive growth accelerates digitization across global industries, our research suggests that decision-makers may not be getting the targeted and actionable AI insights that they need from their law and professional services firms.

Greentarget and Zeughouser Group’s 2025 State of Digital & Content Marketing report is our 11th iteration of research into what makes content stand out for C-suite executives and in-house counsel, a topic we’ve been tracking since 2010.



TRUST IN EDITORIAL CURATION

Our latest survey shows further evolution in content preferences.

On the one hand, executives value traditional media to a degree not seen since 2017, in stark contrast to the atomized and alternative political news ecosystem on display in the 2024 U.S. election. But those in-house lawyers and C-suites are also increasingly relying on digital platforms to gather the business intelligence they need to lead their organizations through turbulent times.

AI shifts supply and demand

Meanwhile, new technologies like AI are reshaping content demand among the clients of professional services firms, diverting attention from other critical topics. The noise about AI is amplified by the noise AI generates, as torrents of AI-generated “slop” flood the internet – and your target audience’s attention. High-quality, distinctive, useful owned content is an essential differentiator here, allowing professional services firms to showcase their expertise and point of view at a time when the contracting media landscape makes it more challenging to secure earned media attention.

NOTABLE FINDINGS IN OUR 2025 OUTLOOK

2x

As a distribution platform for obtaining business intelligence, LinkedIn is twice as valuable as other social platforms.

The share of decision-makers who value traditional media jumped significantly

Nearly 9 in 10 (88%) of all respondents see it as valuable, up from 79% in 2022 and the highest share in seven years.



LinkedIn continues to consolidate power, holding more than double the sway of other social networks as a distribution platform

The professional networking site is gaining influence as a distribution platform for obtaining business intelligence as the hold of X (formerly Twitter) wanes.

AI and cybersecurity/data privacy are the leading topics where decision-makers want actionable guidance

Yet only half of respondents are satisfied with AI insights from their service providers and law firms.



WHAT DECISION-MAKERS SAY

These insights are drawn from a survey of more than 285 in-house counsel and C-suite members between May and July 2024, and are informed by several dozen conversations with executives from the legal, consulting and financial services industries.

Respondents included general counsel, CEOs, managing partners, asset managers and other roles across a range of industries, from financial and legal services to healthcare and technology.

Evolution of content marketing

The changes are tracked against our 2022 report, which revealed how the attitudes, behaviors and preferences of those decision-makers had evolved since COVID-19 and the ensuing period of social and political unrest. Those developments accelerated digital transformation and helped reshape content priorities, including a stronger emphasis on diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) and environmental, social and governance (ESG) topics.

UPDATES & NEW AVENUES



Betsy Hoag

SVP, Director
of Research &
Planning,
Greentarget

“Now is the moment for professional services providers to develop accessible, industry-specific AI implementation guidance, along with best practices and watch-outs. Their clients are hungry for it, and a one-size-fits-all approach will not work.”

Content Preferences of Business Leaders

In what follows, we’ll dive deeper into the most recent findings, including the types of content business leaders favor most, and the No. 1 reason that content misses with decision-makers.

As in past years, our 2025 State of Digital & Content Marketing report compares the views of in-house counsel and C-suite members and also offers practical guidance on how to break through to difficult-to-reach audiences with content in the formats and channels they prefer.

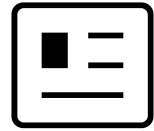
New industry-specific insights

From there, the report diverges from its predecessors with an examination of how AI is affecting thought leadership. We’ll also examine how professional services providers are falling short when it comes to providing actionable AI insights and guidance.

And we’ll preview our findings from a new line of inquiry into pain points across key industries – including legal services, asset management, energy, financial technology (fintech), private equity, healthcare and insurance – and the opportunities they present to professional services firms.

KEY FINDINGS

WHAT'S CHANGED



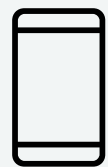
Traditional media is the most valued content source for C-suites and in-house counsel, notching an overall 9 percentage-point jump from 2022 levels.



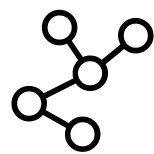
Research reports gain favor among C-suites, ranking as second-most preferred content type for both groups.



LinkedIn and blogs continue to gain ground; 66% of decision-makers see LinkedIn as a valuable content distribution platform for obtaining business intelligence, and 69% consider thought leader websites and blogs a valuable content source.



Accessibility is key. Audiences appreciate content that is easy to read, easy to listen to, and designed to reach them.



AI guidance is a priority, crowding out DEI and ESG demand as 90% of business leaders look to integrate AI into business functions.

CONTENT CONSTANTS



Lack of relevance is the No. 1 reason content misses with decision-makers.



Thought leadership continues to play a significant role in influencing hiring decisions; it ranks second among both groups as an important source in researching firms.



Articles are the most preferred content type for both C-suites and in-house counsel.



WHAT DECISION- MAKERS WANT FROM CONTENT

In a moment rife with misinformation, disinformation and AI-generated slop, corporate and legal decision-makers are placing an even higher value on editorial filtration and curation to cut through the noise.



MAJOR MEDIA MAKES AN IMPRESSION



Traditional media is a clear winner

Nearly 9 in 10 (88%) survey respondents selected traditional media (e.g., *The Wall Street Journal*) as a valued content source.

A return to influence

Traditional media made a significant jump from our 2022 survey – up 7 percentage points among in-house counsel, to 85%, and 11 percentage points among C-suites, to 90%.

Industry-specific insights gain ground

Trade publications covering industry news and outlets covering respondents' professions saw some modest year-over-year gains.

Defying a downward trend

These increases come despite ongoing challenges for news outlets, as economic pressures and layoffs shrink staff and limit coverage capacity. They also pose a contrast to the increasingly atomized general news landscape on display in the recent U.S. election cycle.

OWNED CONTENT IS INCREASINGLY CRITICAL



Earned media shares the stage

While earned media is key, owned is increasingly important for reaching decision-makers, with thought leader blogs and LinkedIn continuing to grow in popularity.

Changing (social) channels

C-suites showed more affinity for LinkedIn and social media compared with their legal counterparts, though there was a steep drop-off among both for X.

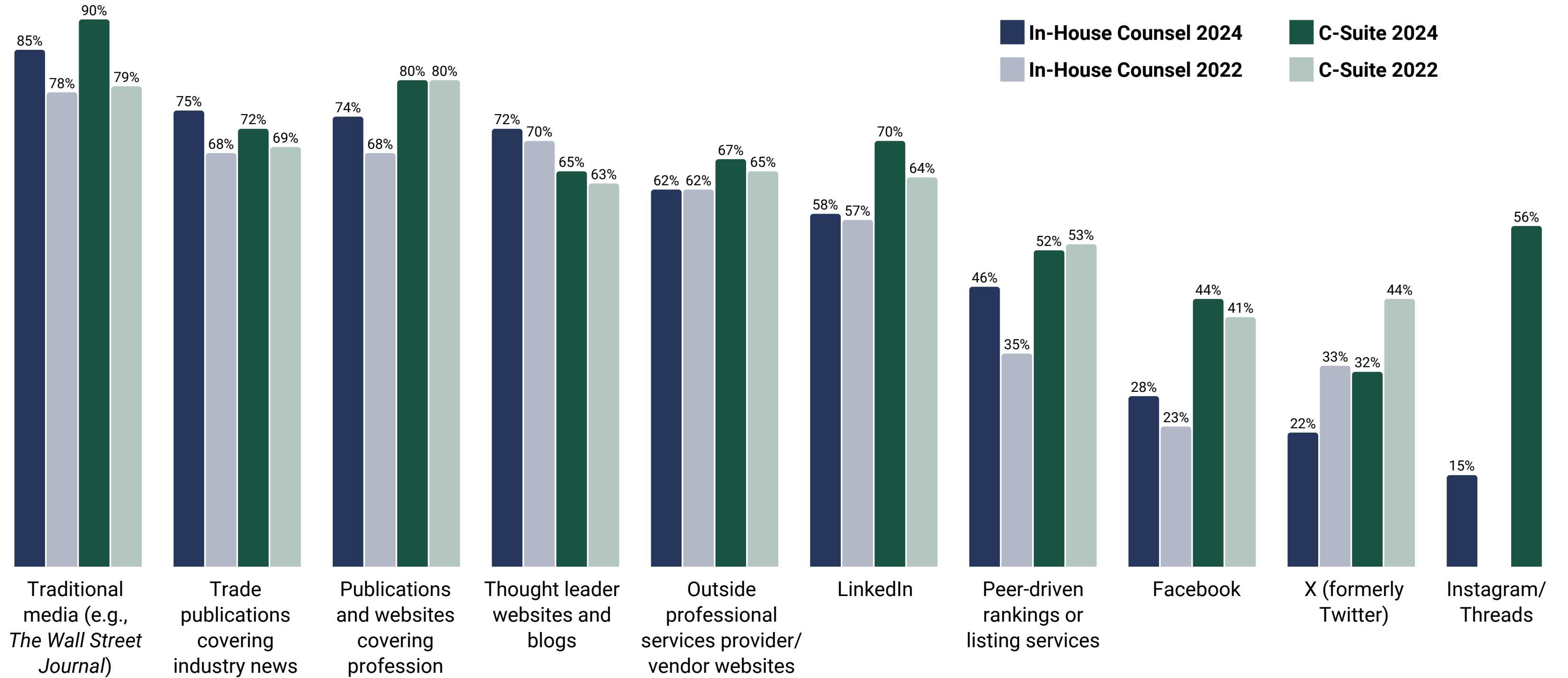
Rankings tip the scales

Meanwhile, the share of in-house counsel who value peer-driven rankings and listings services jumped considerably, to 46% from 35% in 2022.

While the increase is notable, the in-house counsel we've spoken with describe rankings as mere “icing on the cake” – following a referral from a trusted source and the lawyer’s demonstrated expertise and authority on the specific legal matter.

MOST VALUABLE CONTENT SOURCES

Q: *How valuable are the following sources of content for business, industry, and/or legal news and information?*





ARTICLES & RESEARCH REMAIN TOP FORMATS

Research is a leading priority for in-house counsel and C-suites. This year, research reports ranked as the second most preferred content type for both groups.

Conferences and webinars drop

In 2022, conferences and webinars ranked second in importance for C-suites, which may reflect the influence of remote work during the pandemic.

Writing still reigns

Articles remained the top choice for both in-house counsel and C-suites.

RESEARCH DELIVERS DATA TO DRIVE DECISIONS



Research helps COPE

For marketers, research-driven thought leadership is an engine that can help enact a “create once, publish everywhere” (COPE) strategy.

Data’s long tail

A research report doesn’t just live on your website, after all: It can be repackaged for distribution across multiple owned channels (including social, firm blogs and email newsletters), attract earned media attention, generate additional publishing opportunities through byline articles, drive paid LinkedIn campaigns, and draw speaking opportunities.

Ongoing ROI

In other words, this high-quality content is an investment that can reap lasting dividends and open doors for client development, with proprietary data and corresponding guidance that speaks to your target audience’s urgent needs and priorities.

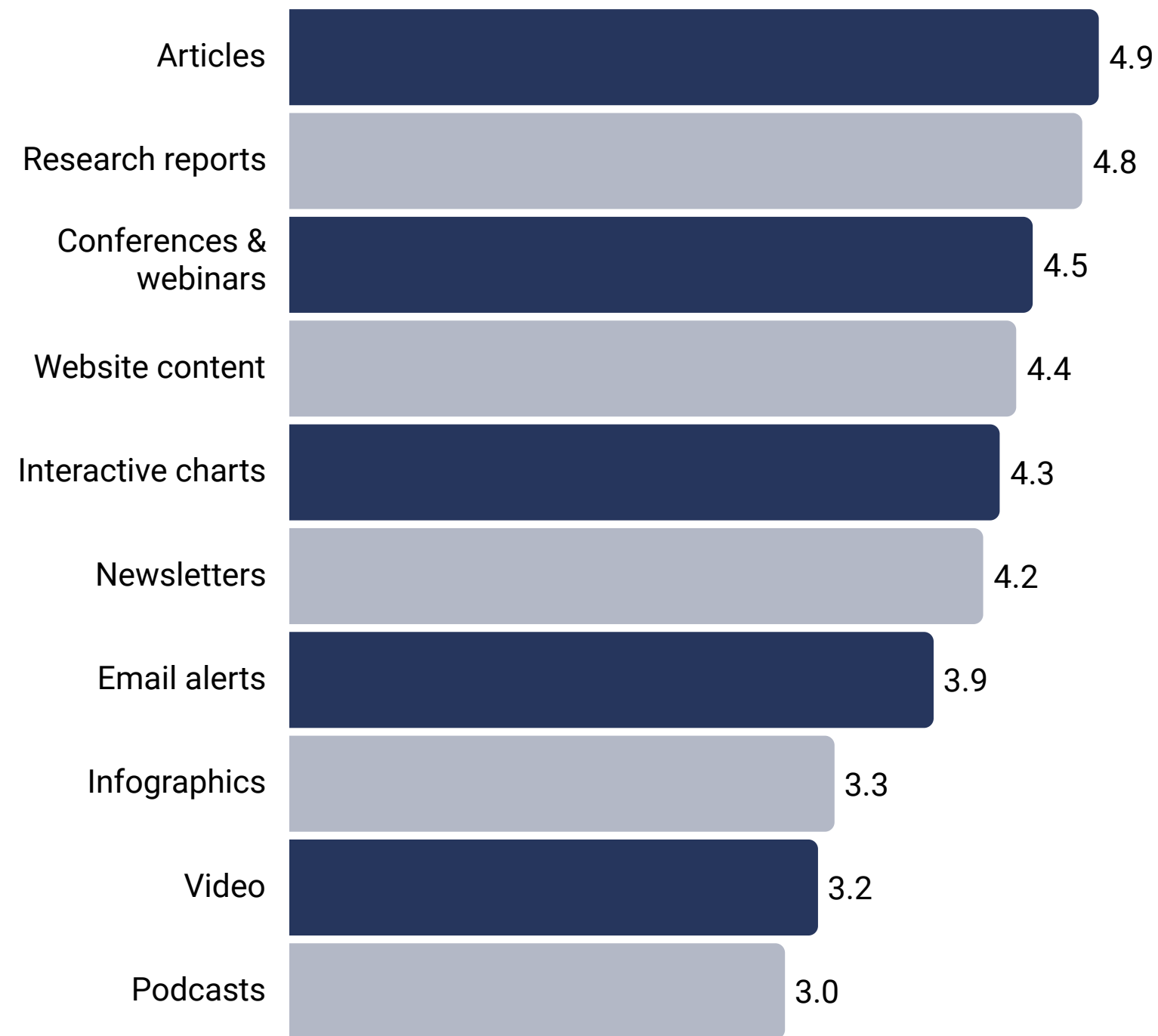
Multipronged approach

All content types were rated as “preferred,” to varying degrees — meaning a coordinated, multiformat approach still makes the most sense.

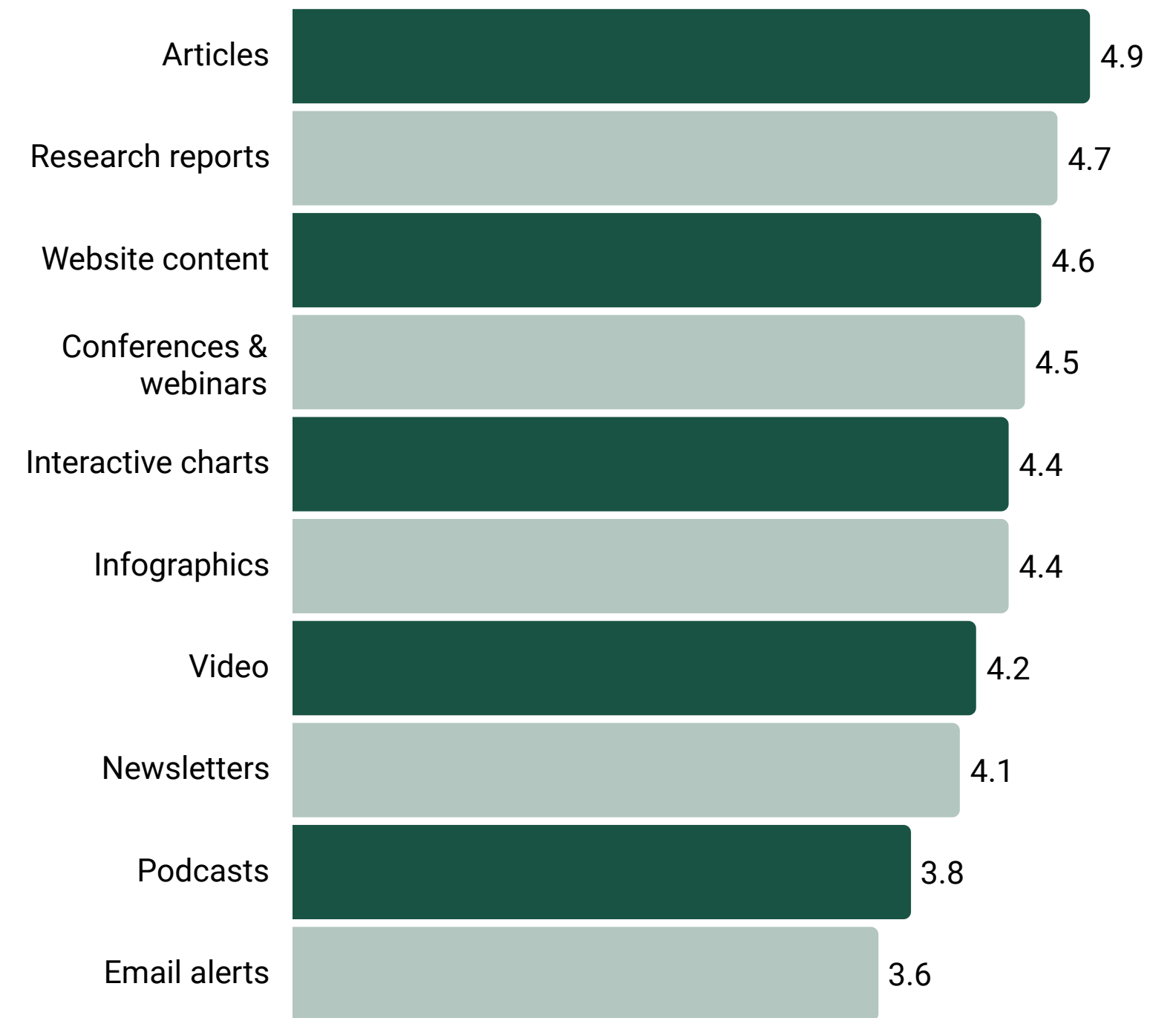
MOST PREFERRED CONTENT TYPES

Q: Please indicate your preference level for the following types of content. (Shown in order of average ratings on 0 - 5 scale, where 5 = highest preference)

In-House Counsel Preferences



C-Suite Preferences



ACCESSIBILITY & UTILITY ARE EVERYTHING

Relevance is a clear through line in the AI age.

Content tailored to the most pressing needs of your audience is more important than ever, as executives wade through a morass of AI-generated articles and self-promotional LinkedIn posts.

In-house counsel and C-suite leaders also cited *lack of relevance* as the top reason that content falls flat, highlighting the importance of targeted distribution strategies.

Practical is preferable

Both groups are increasingly turned off by content that is not strategic or actionable, suggesting that expertise and authority positioning can differentiate.



MOST APPRECIATED CONTENT ATTRIBUTES

In-House Counsel

Articles	Relevant • Educational • Easy to Read
Research reports	Relevant • In-Depth • Timely
Conferences & webinars	Relevant • Educational • In-Depth
Website content	Relevant • Easy to Read • Educational
Interactive charts	Easy to View • Timely • Educational
Newsletters	Timely • Easy to Read • Educational
Email alerts	Timely • Relevant • Easy to Read
Video	Relevant • Entertaining • Brief
Podcasts	Easy to Listen To • Entertaining • Educational

Q: *Select the attributes that you appreciate most when it comes to each of the following types of content.
(Select all that apply)*

C-Suite

Articles	Relevant • Educational • Timely
Research reports	Educational • Relevant • Technical
Website content	Educational • Relevant • Easy to Read, Interactive
Conferences & webinars	Educational • Relevant • Timely
Interactive charts	Relevant • Entertaining • Educational
Video	Relevant • Entertaining • Brief
Newsletters	Relevant • Timely • Easy to Read
Podcasts	Entertaining • Educational • Timely
Email alerts	Relevant • Timely • Brief

EASE ACCESS TO INSIGHTS



Take the shortest path

Both in-house counsel and C-suite members appreciate digestible content that's easy to access, demonstrating the importance of streamlining your audience's path to your content.

Clarity supports accessibility

That cuts across two areas.

- **The first:** Are your insights easy to access? Gating content and adding clicks both reduce reach.
 - **The second:** Is your content easy to read? Clear and succinct prose that gets right to the actionable payoff will out-perform dense and academic writing.
-

Streamline your objective

The above questions are even more critical to social and email promotion. Audiences want actionable insights where they are, not on your website. Teaser-style content that hides insights behind a click annoys busy leaders and LinkedIn algorithms alike. To build trust, embrace zero-click marketing and offer insights in the formats and language best suited to each platform.

UTILITY GUIDES BUSINESS DECISIONS

1.5x

The number of in-house counsel drawn to content with visual appeal more than doubled in 2024.

Show insights' importance

Here's what did change: In-house counsel and C-suites are paying closer attention to the look and feel of the content they digest.

Keep it brief

Legal respondents in particular showed an increased appreciation for content that is short — 46% selected it this year, up from 34% in 2022 — and has visual appeal, with the latter component jumping 23 percentage points.

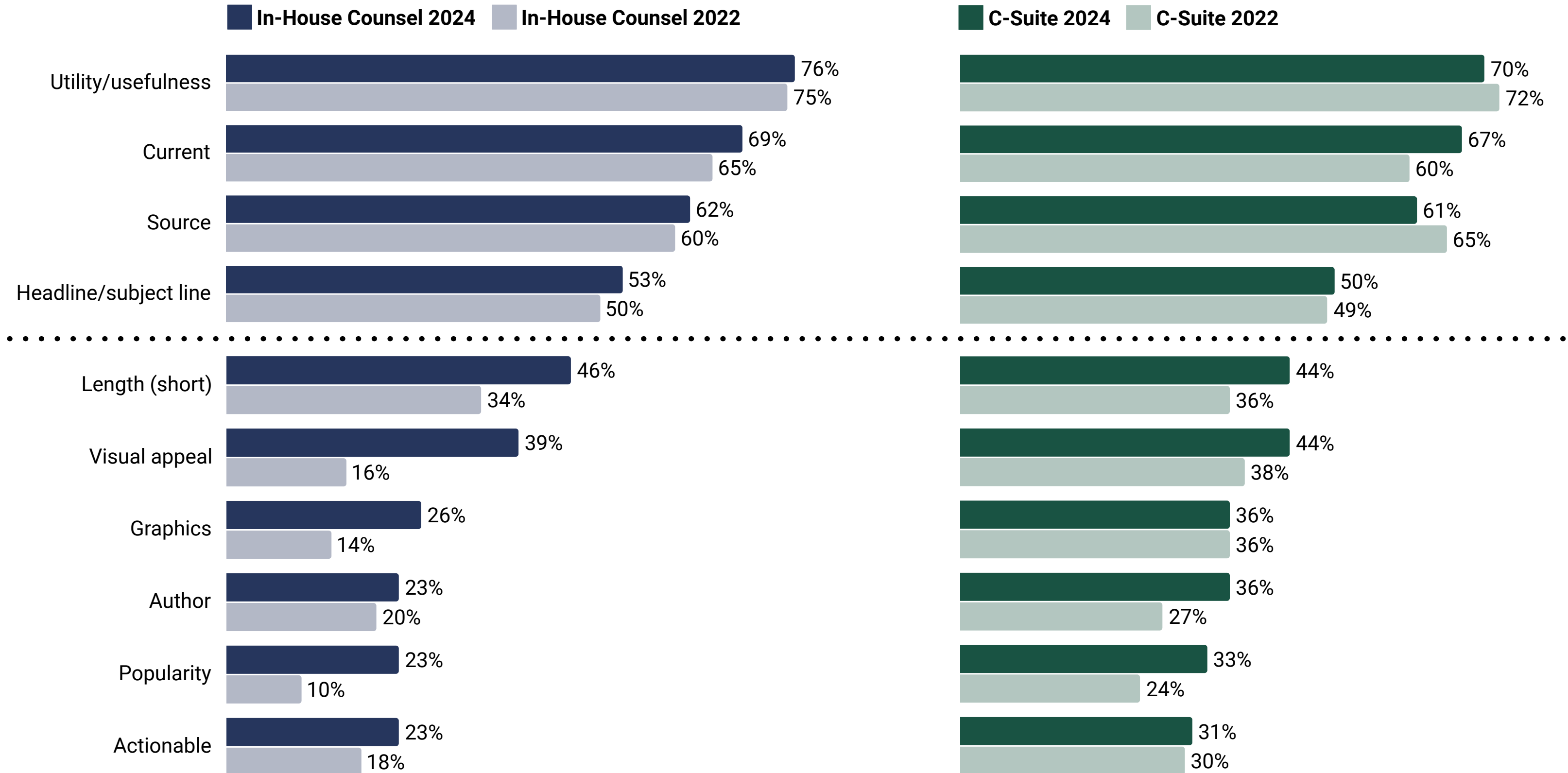
Graphic storytelling works

There was also a notable jump in the share of in-house counsel who place value on graphics (26%, up from 14%) and on visual appeal, which more than doubled (39%, up from 16%).

We're hearing this in our qualitative research efforts as well — given the bombardment of information flooding executives' inboxes and social feeds, decision-makers across groups expect content to have a look and feel that matches the substance of what they are reading.

MOST ATTRACTIVE CONTENT COMPONENTS

What attracts leaders to the content they consume most? It must be useful, above all else.



OWNED CHANNELS RISE IN POWER



LinkedIn expands its reach

Survey respondents report an increased reliance on LinkedIn, gaining ground on news aggregators, websites and search engines.

Websites gain influence

Eight in 10 in-house counsel respondents say firm or company websites are a valuable source of information – up from 72% in 2022 – and 79% of C-suites say the same, making websites second only to search engines in influence.

Owned influences earned

The quality and relevance of owned content can directly influence its visibility on earned channels like search and shared channels like social.

TikTok usage up 2x in 2 years

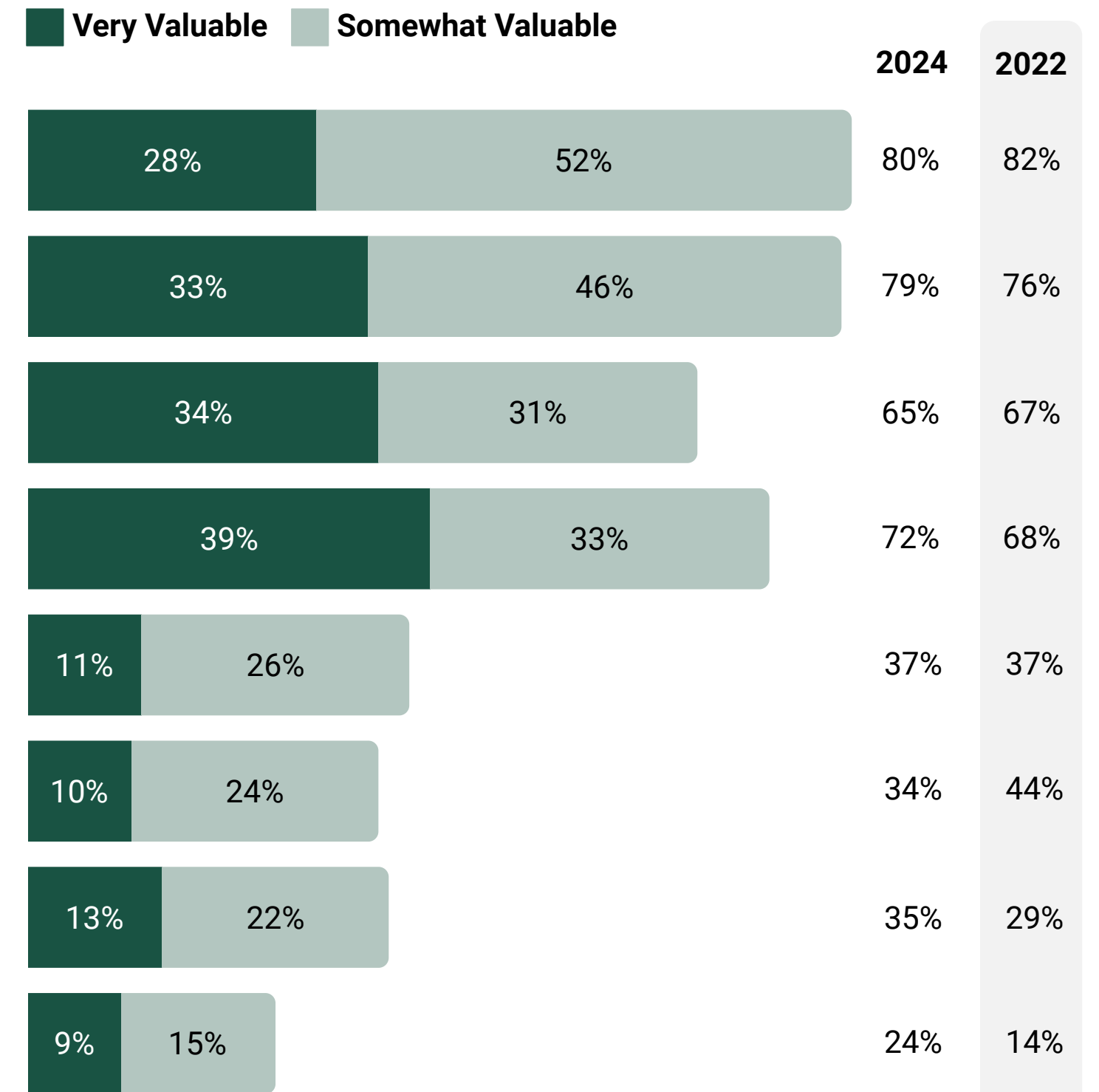
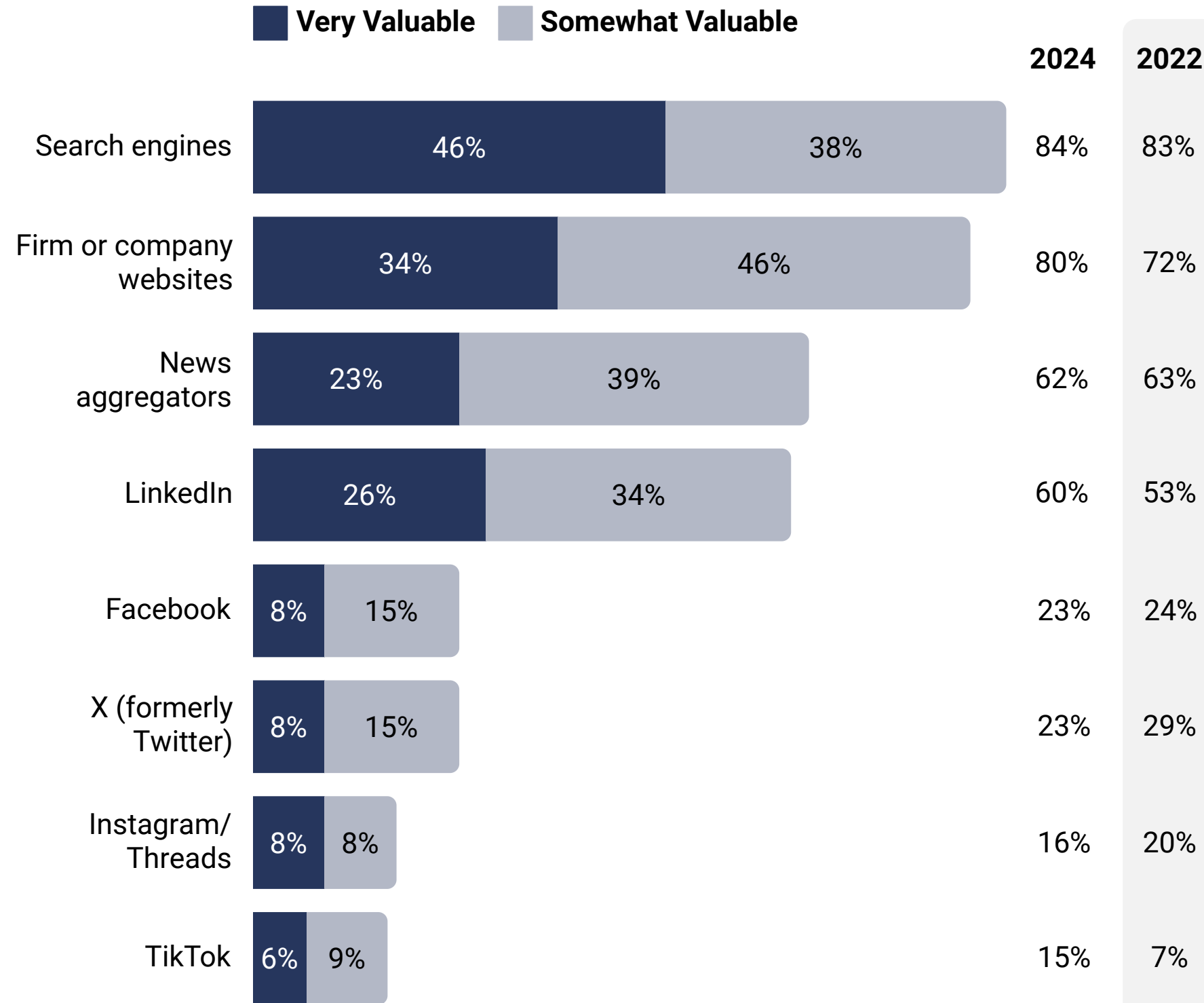
Still, less than a quarter of decision-makers cite TikTok as valuable.

Social switches focus

In-house counsel reported the largest leap in LinkedIn and TikTok usage – gaining ground on the early-to-adopt C-suite. All respondents, however, reported a decrease in the value of X.

LINKEDIN MAKES GAINS AS DISTRIBUTION PLATFORM

Q: *How valuable are the following content distribution platforms for obtaining business and industry news and information?*



EXPERTISE & AUTHORITY ARE KEY TO HIRING



Your word vs. word of mouth

Thought leadership is second only to trusted recommendations when it comes to influencing decision-makers.

Roughly three-quarters of respondents say articles and speeches by thought leaders are an important resource when researching outside firms for potential hire.

Social profiles pay off

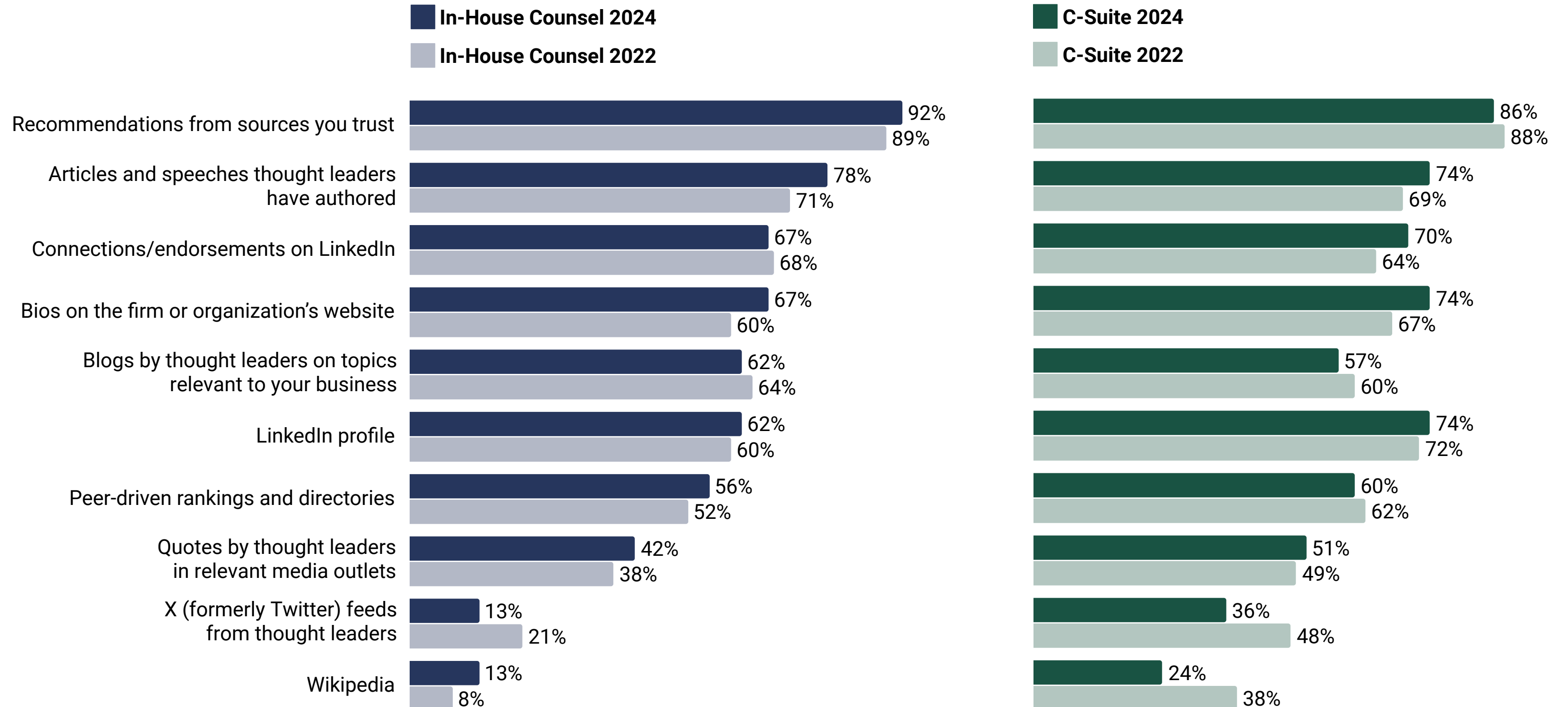
LinkedIn connections and endorsements are close behind, selected by 67% of in-house counsel and 70% of C-suite members – emphasizing the need to leverage thought leadership across channels.

Rankings still resonate

While enthusiasm for peer-driven rankings may be flagging among some professional services marketers and business-development professionals, those rankings continue to have a solid audience among both groups.

INSIGHTS CONTINUE TO INFLUENCE HIRING

Q: Please indicate the importance of the following in helping you to research outside firms/organizations for potential hire.

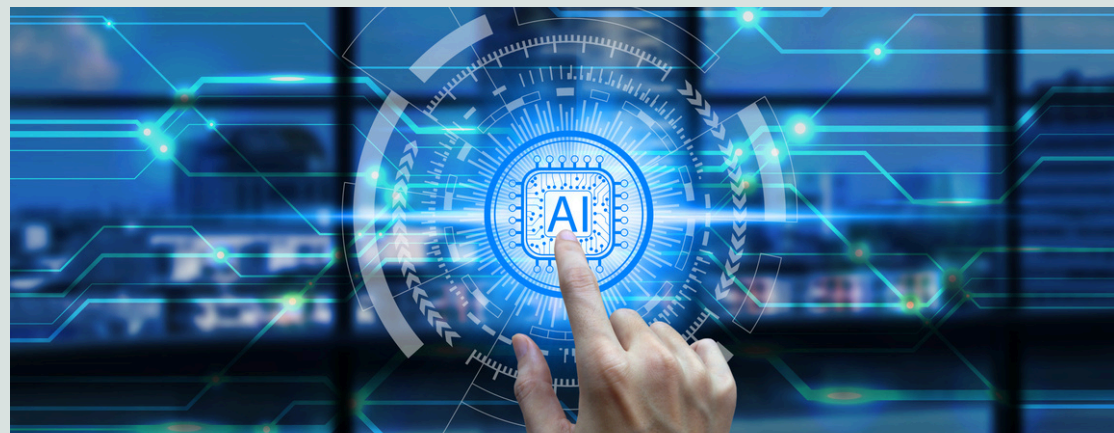


ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE DOMINATES THE DISCOURSE

At a time when the entire business world seems to have caught AI fever, it's no surprise that the hunger for AI guidance is outstripping demand for insights on other topics — particularly among executive decision-makers.



DEMAND FOR AI GUIDANCE TAKES ATTENTION FROM OTHER CRITICAL TOPICS



Top issue for C-suite leaders

AI topped the list of areas on which C-suite members want more guidance from their outside advisors (59%), surpassing cybersecurity and data privacy and DEI, the leading two such topics for that group in 2022.

In-house counsel also seek guidance

Legal decision-makers are also hungry for AI guidance (48%), though cybersecurity still came first.

AI, cybersecurity priorities overlap

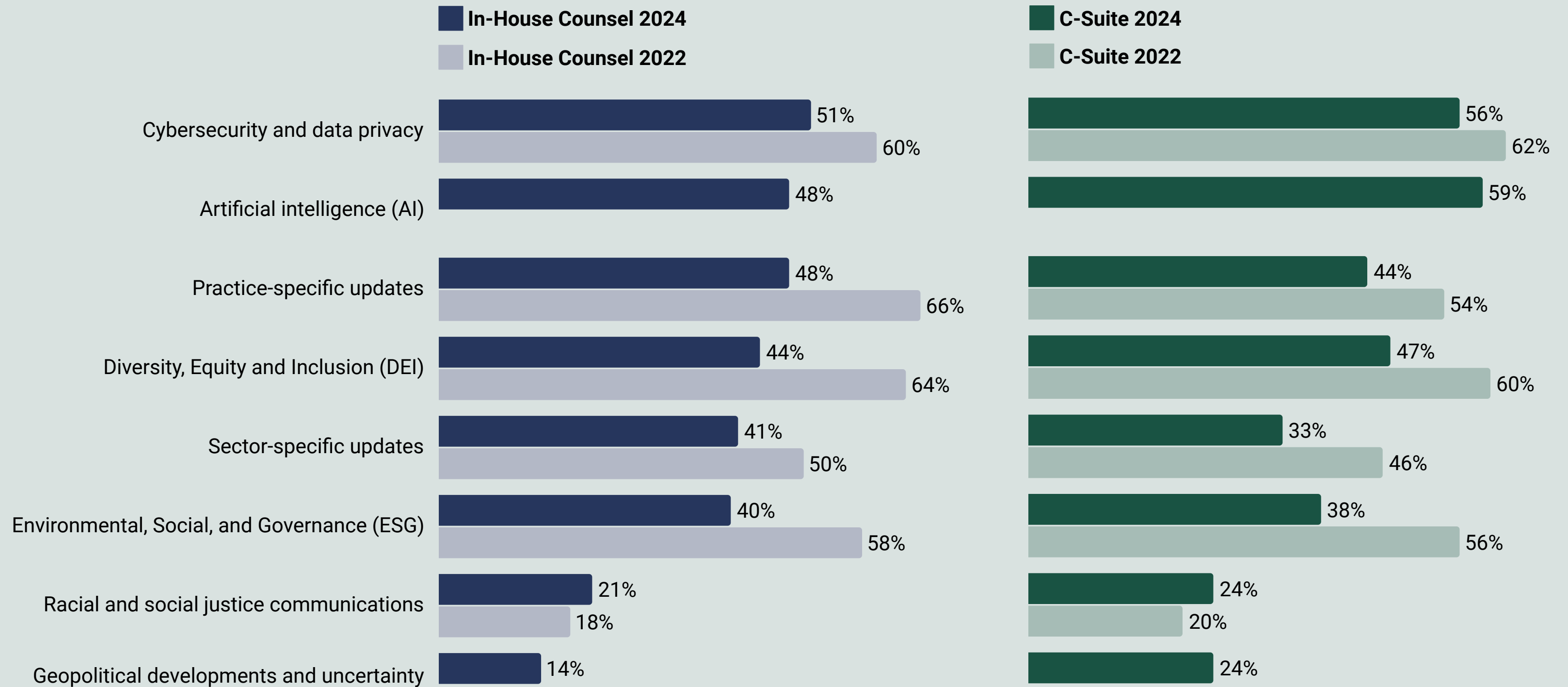
However, for both in-house counsel and C-suite leaders, it's worth noting that cyber and data-related concerns are likely also reflected in the AI selection — and vice versa.

Looking to the future

By contrast, demand for DEI and ESG guidance is down significantly since we last conducted this research in 2022. Will AI interest see a similarly precipitous drop — or at least level off — as a new trend rises?

TOPICS WHERE ACTIONABLE INSIGHTS & GUIDANCE ARE NEEDED

Q: *On which topics and issues would you like to see more content from law firms/professional services providers? (Select all that apply)*



WHAT AI INSIGHTS & GUIDANCE ARE MOST VALUABLE?



Caution is a driving factor in AI discourse

Leaders seek more guidance on avoiding AI risks than on realizing its opportunities.

Appetite for AI guidance is broad

Appetite for AI guidance is broad, with a fairly even spread across other selections, from industry trends and use cases to regulatory developments and ethical usage.

In-house counsel, C-suite concerns vary

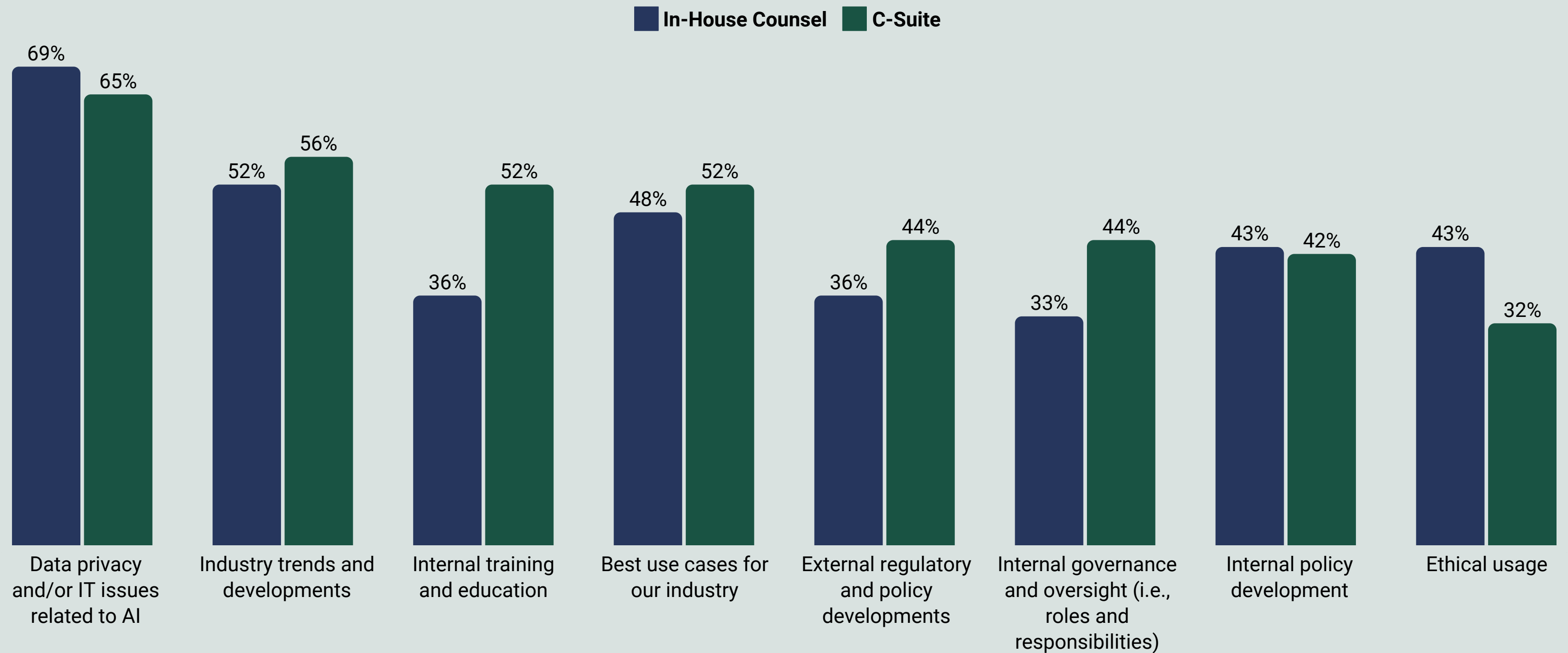
In-house counsel selected several options in lower proportions compared with C-suite respondents, suggesting legal decision-makers may have a less detailed sense of how professional services providers are equipped to guide them on AI implementation.

A majority seek urgent guidance

With more than a quarter of respondents already using generative AI (GenAI), and 4 in 5 respondents surveyed saying their organizations are at least considering implementation, guidance is needed urgently.

MAJORITY SEEK GUIDANCE ON DATA PRIVACY & IT ISSUES RELATED TO AI

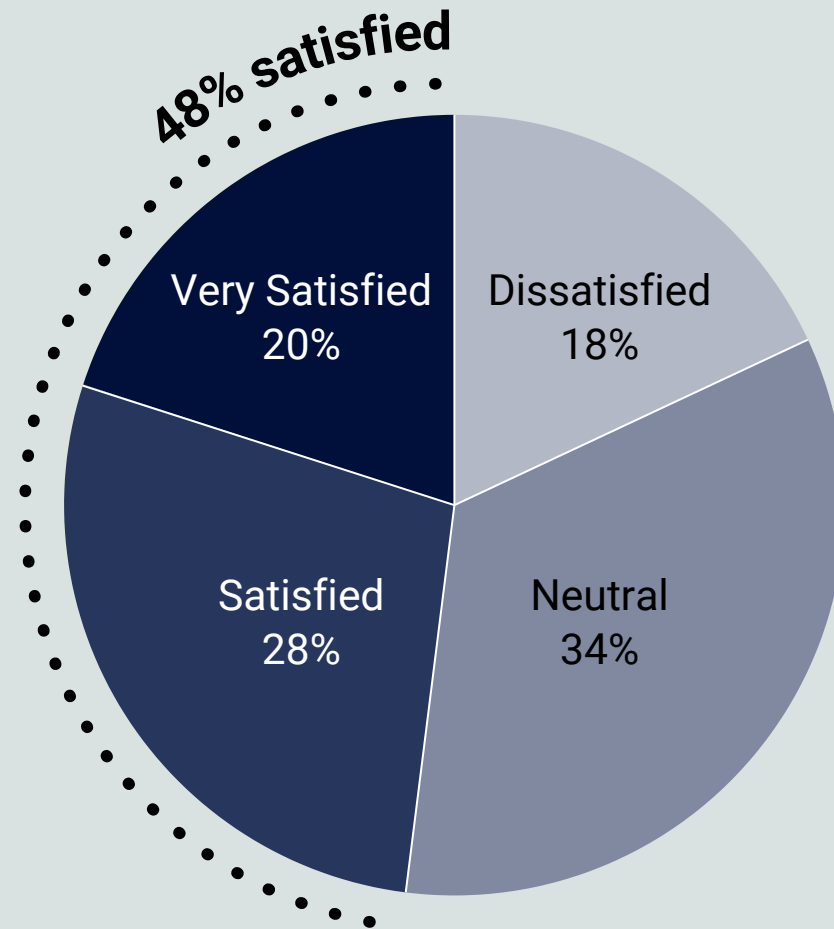
Q: Which of the following types of AI-related insights and guidance would be most valuable to receive from law firms/professional services providers? (Select all that apply)



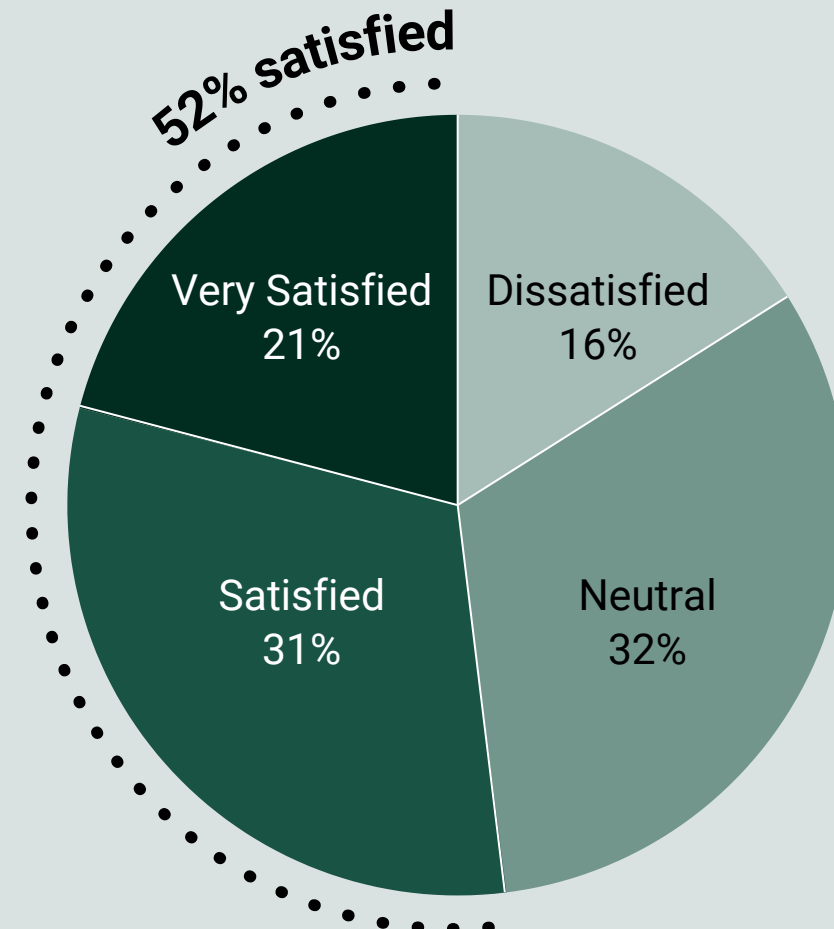
CONTENT FALLS SHORT

Q: *How satisfied have you been with content from professional services providers/law firms that relates to artificial intelligence (AI) trends and developments and the specific implications these will have on your business?*

IN-HOUSE COUNSEL



C-SUITE



Room for improvement

Less than half (48%) of legal decision-makers are satisfied with the AI-related content received from law firms; an additional third had a neutral reaction.

'One-size-fits-all' doesn't fit

Satisfaction among C-suite members was barely higher (52%). Both groups dislike the "one-size-fits-all" approach from professional services providers and law firms.

Opportunity knocks

This represents a strong opportunity for professional services firms to show that they can provide trusted guidance in emerging areas like AI.

Customization is key

The key? Offering differentiated counsel that targets the most urgent questions their clients have around AI in an industry- and matter-specific way.

AI ADOPTION WILL DRIVE DEMAND

This year our research looked at pain points and opportunities for professional services providers across key industries. Here's what we found when it comes to AI.

As clients move from testing to full-fledged AI adoption, professional services firms that provide targeted, sophisticated counsel will have an edge in the evolving digital economy. For more insights into our industry-specific findings, Greentarget can provide the guidance you need to lead a smarter conversation.

Leading industries

Fintech is leading the way in GenAI implementation, followed by healthcare and private equity.

Insurance industry in progress

In insurance, AI has long been leveraged in claims administration – GenAI could be similarly transformative, with 43% of respondents reporting their organizations have GenAI implementation in progress.

Asset management, energy underway

Asset management and energy are also mid-implementation, with 37% and 36% of respondents, respectively, saying programs are underway.

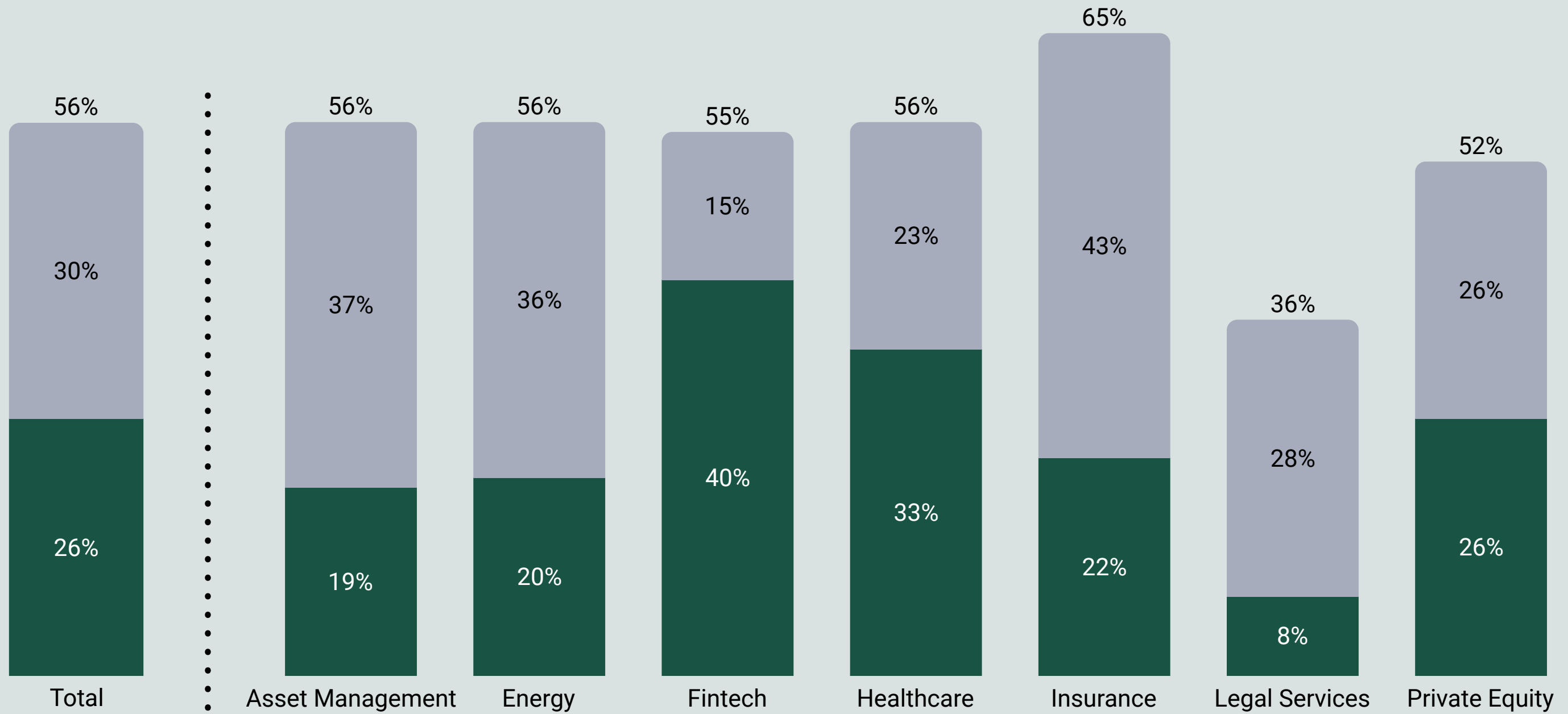
Most cautious industry

Legal services has the highest rate of respondents who are not considering AI implementation at all, at 28%, the same percentage who said AI implementation is in progress.

GENERATIVE AI IMPLEMENTATION BY INDUSTRY

Q: *To what extent has your organization implemented GenAI into its business functions?*

■ **Already implemented/Using now** ■ **Implementation in progress**



9 RULES OF ENGAGEMENT FOR MARKETERS IN 2025

From this year's research, we've pulled together a practical set of takeaways for professional services marketers to keep on hand as they adapt and refine their content and communication strategies for 2025.



- 1 Earned media: still the gold standard for credibility and reach**
- 2 Owned content fuels earned opportunities**
- 3 As attention spans shrink, accessibility is everything**
- 4 Concise, targeted content goes a long way**
- 5 Tackle the relevance problem, one channel at a time**
- 6 To beat AI-powered search, give readers what no one else can**
- 7 Clients prefer research which fuels all other content types**
- 8 To engage top leaders, create content for LinkedIn**
- 9 Clients want tailored AI guidance – give it to them**

METHODOLOGY

This online survey of more than 285 in-house counsel and C-suites was conducted May to July 2024.

Participation was anonymous and data was analyzed in the aggregate. The survey included approximately 30 respondents each in the following industries:

Asset Management

Energy

Fintech

Healthcare

Insurance

Legal Services

Private Equity

Due to rounding and multiple-select questions, percentages may not add up to exactly 100%.

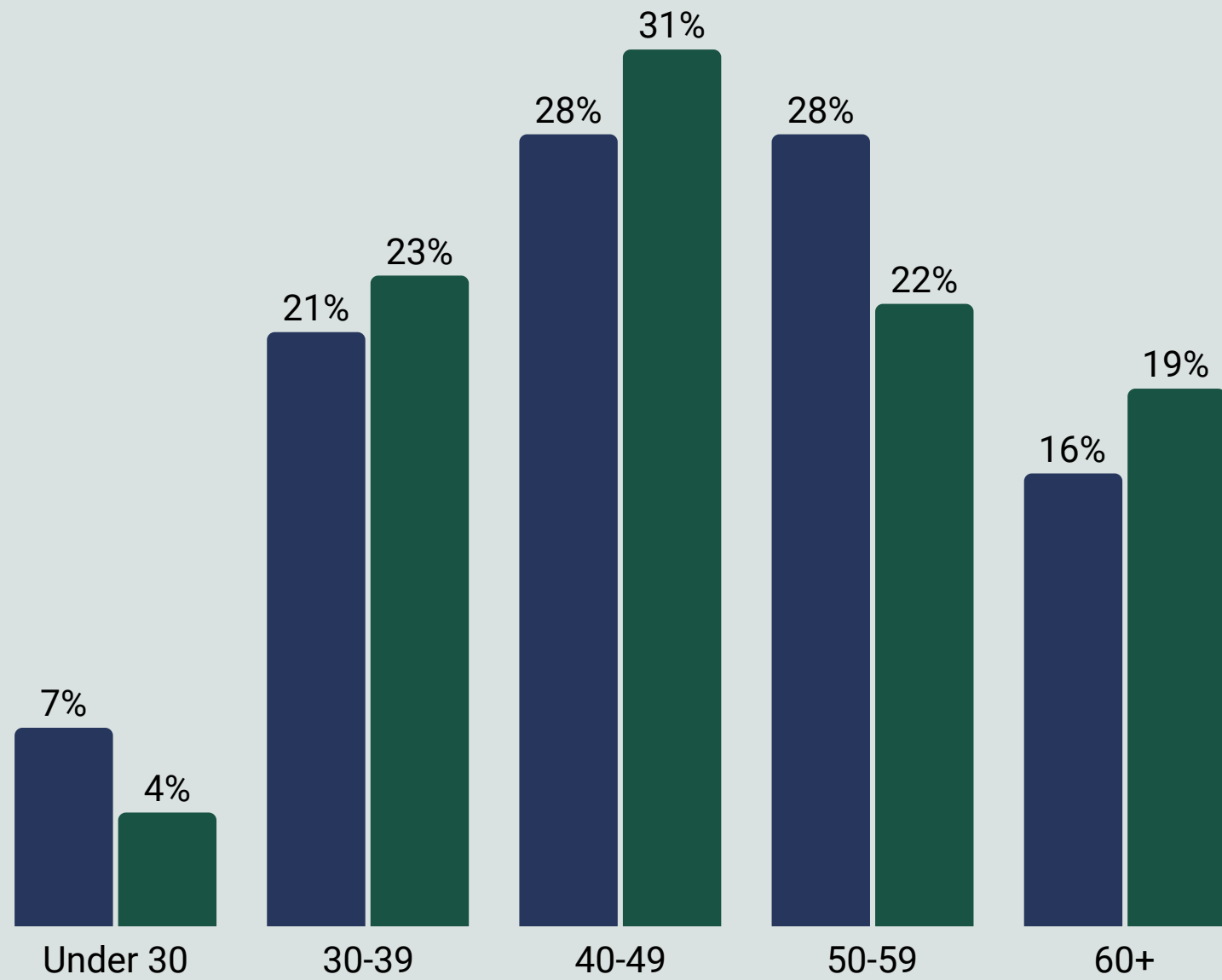


DEMOGRAPHICS

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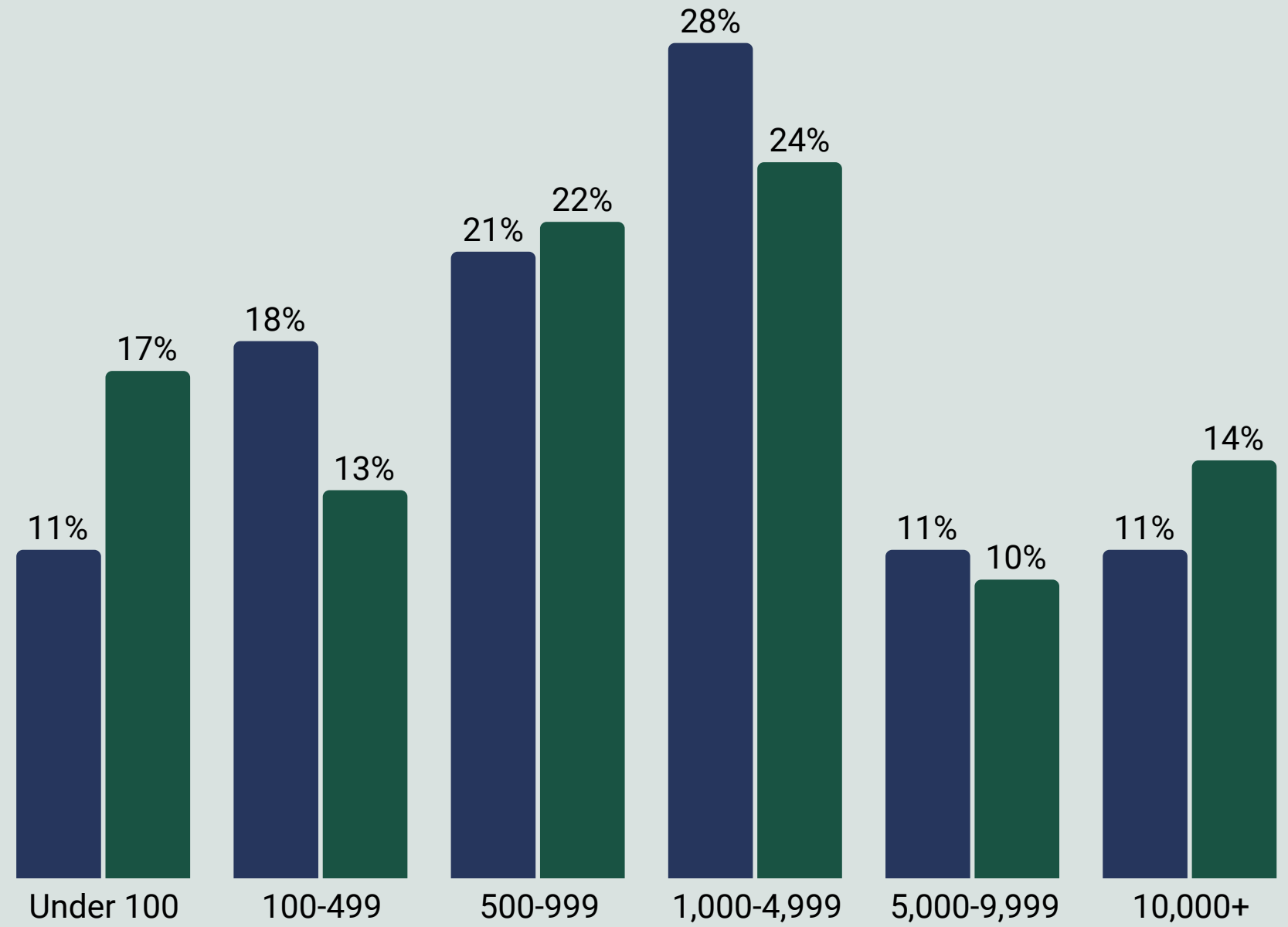
AGE

In-House Counsel **C-Suite**



SIZE OF FIRM

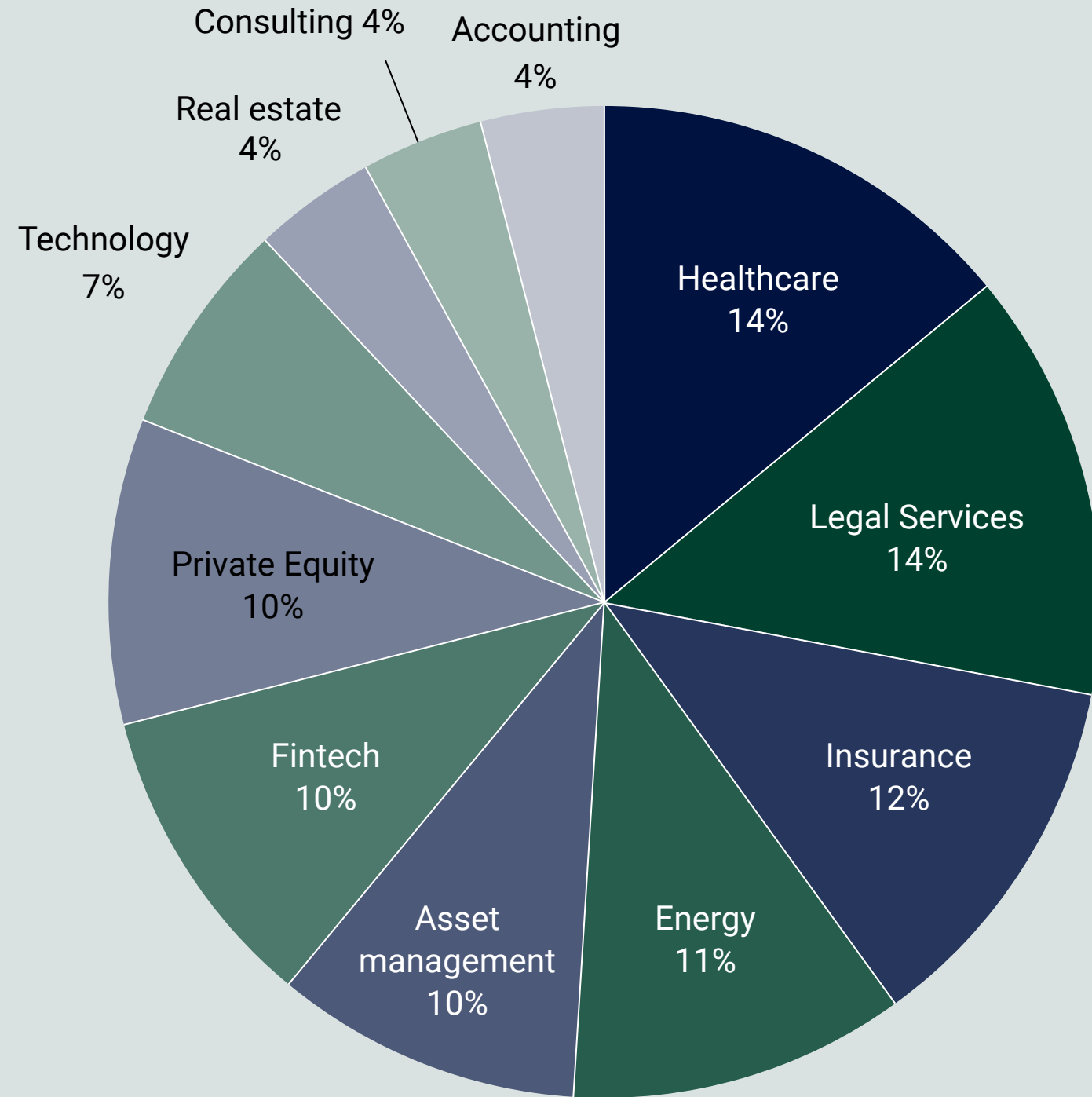
In-House Counsel **C-Suite**



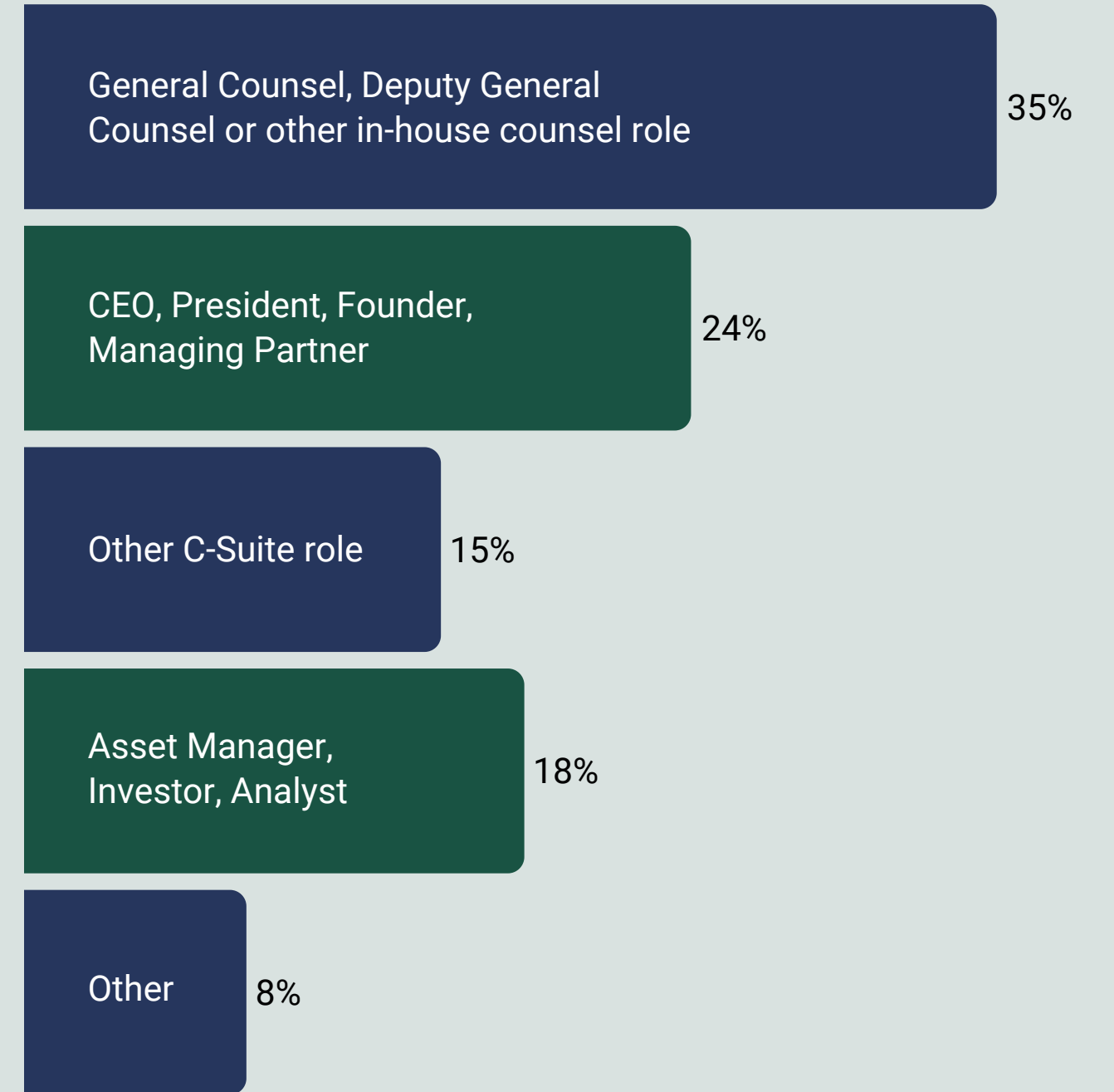
DEMOGRAPHICS

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INDUSTRY REPRESENTATION



TITLE/ROLE





CONTACT US



John Corey
PRESIDENT & FOUNDING PARTNER
312-252-4102
jcorey@greentarget.com

Aaron Schoenherr
FOUNDING PARTNER
312-252-4103
aschoenherr@greentarget.com

greentarget.com



Mary K Young
PARTNER
Zeughauser Group
301-346-9878
young@consultzg.com
consultzg.com