

The Failure Paradox...

**B2B Survey Results
2025**



Research specifications



The survey was conducted on behalf of **EASE**, employing a mixed quantitative and qualitative approach among senior executives and entrepreneurs.

The results were presented on **15 October 2025** at the Goulandris Museum, as part of the event:

Leadership Summit | The Failure Paradox: Redefining Success through Setbacks

This section presents the findings of the quantitative research

Online interviews and structured questionnaire

Design / implementation / processing / analysis Focus Bari

Population: Senior business executives and entrepreneurs

Representative sample: 214 respondents

Conducted: 26/6-14/7/2025

Contents...

Failure & Personal attitudes

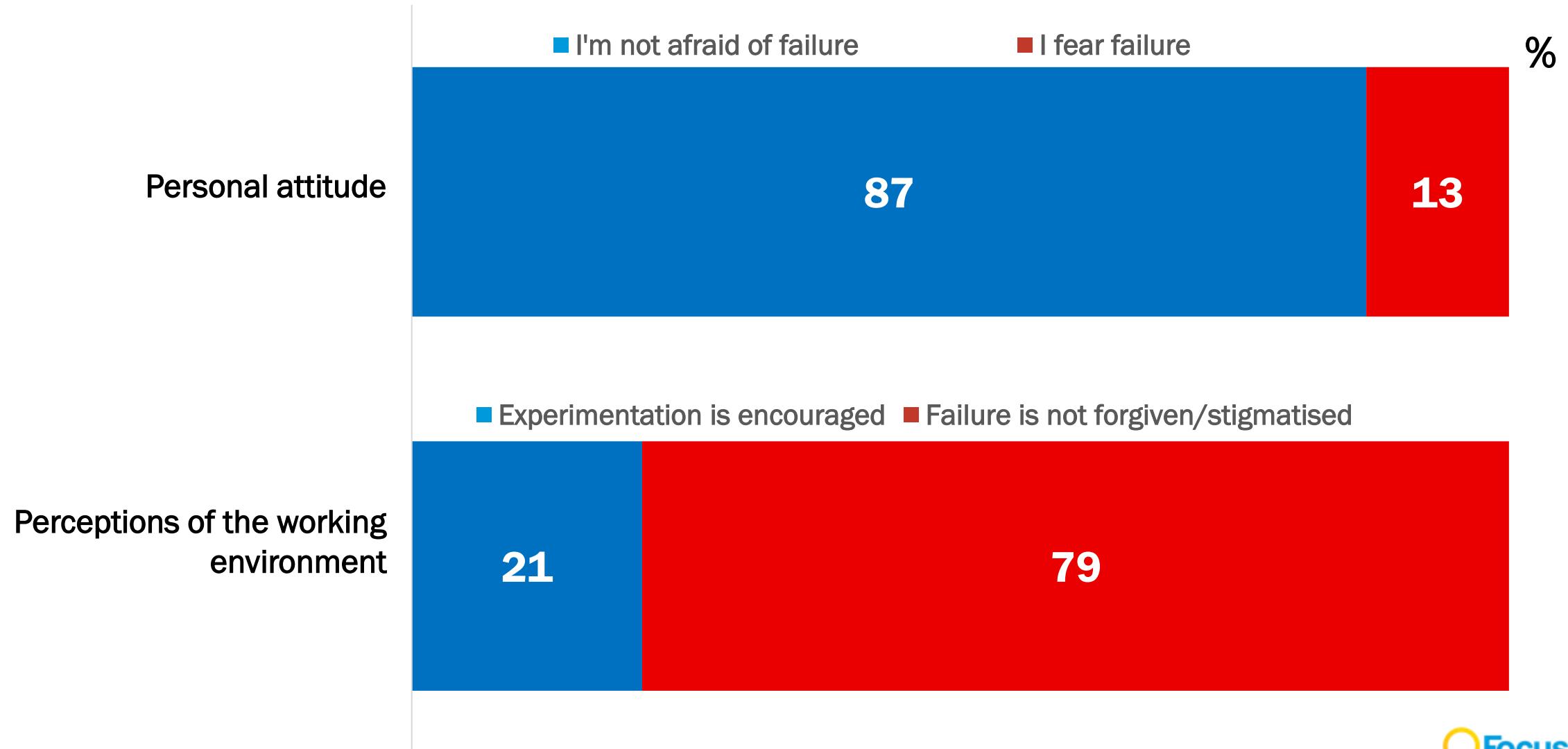
Organisational culture around failure

Leadership in managing and
transforming failure

A: Failure & Personal Attitudes

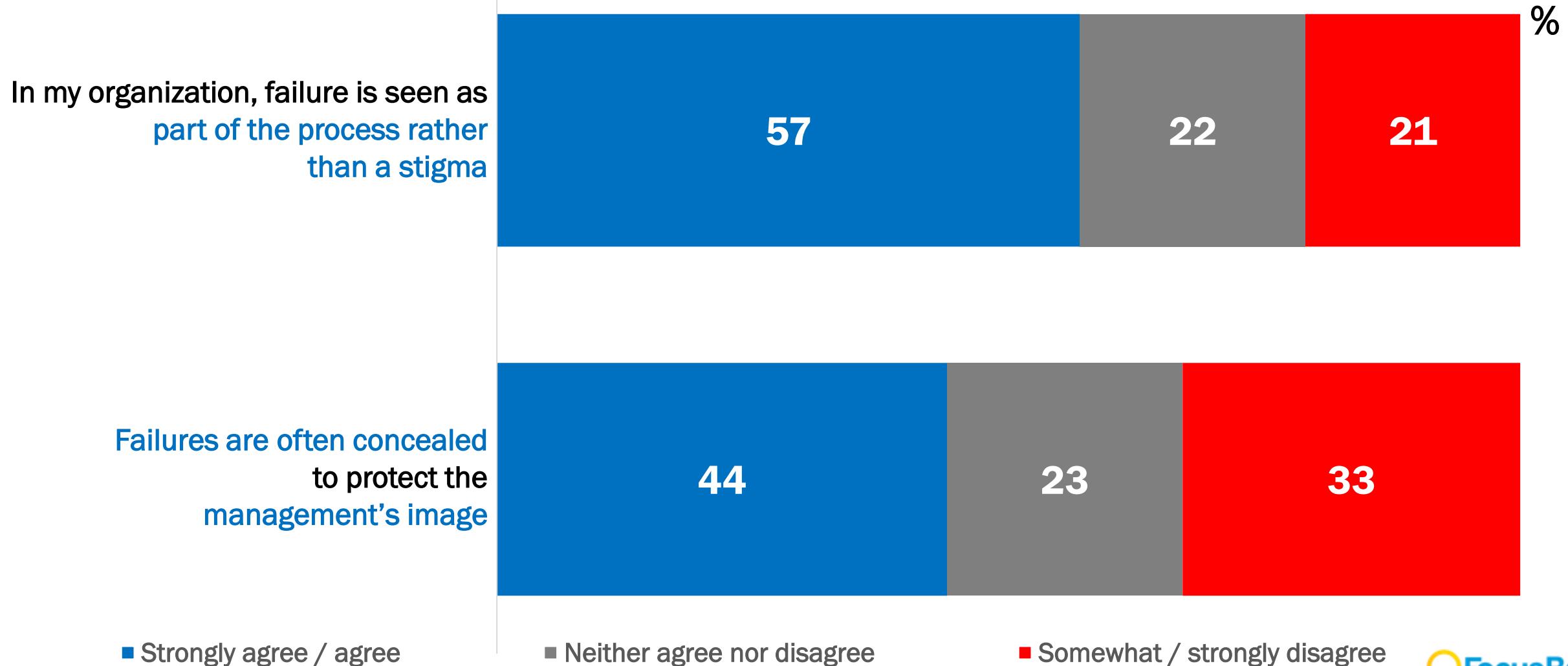


The paradox of failure: Personal attitude versus corporate culture



Failure in leadership: Words versus Reality

Acceptance may exist in the narrative, but not always in practice



The dual interpretation of failure

Discussing mistakes is encouraged, but it is still associated with weak leadership

We encourage our people
to share their mistakes
for learning and development

69

17

14

In our field,
acknowledging failure is often seen
as a sign of weak leadership

32

23

45

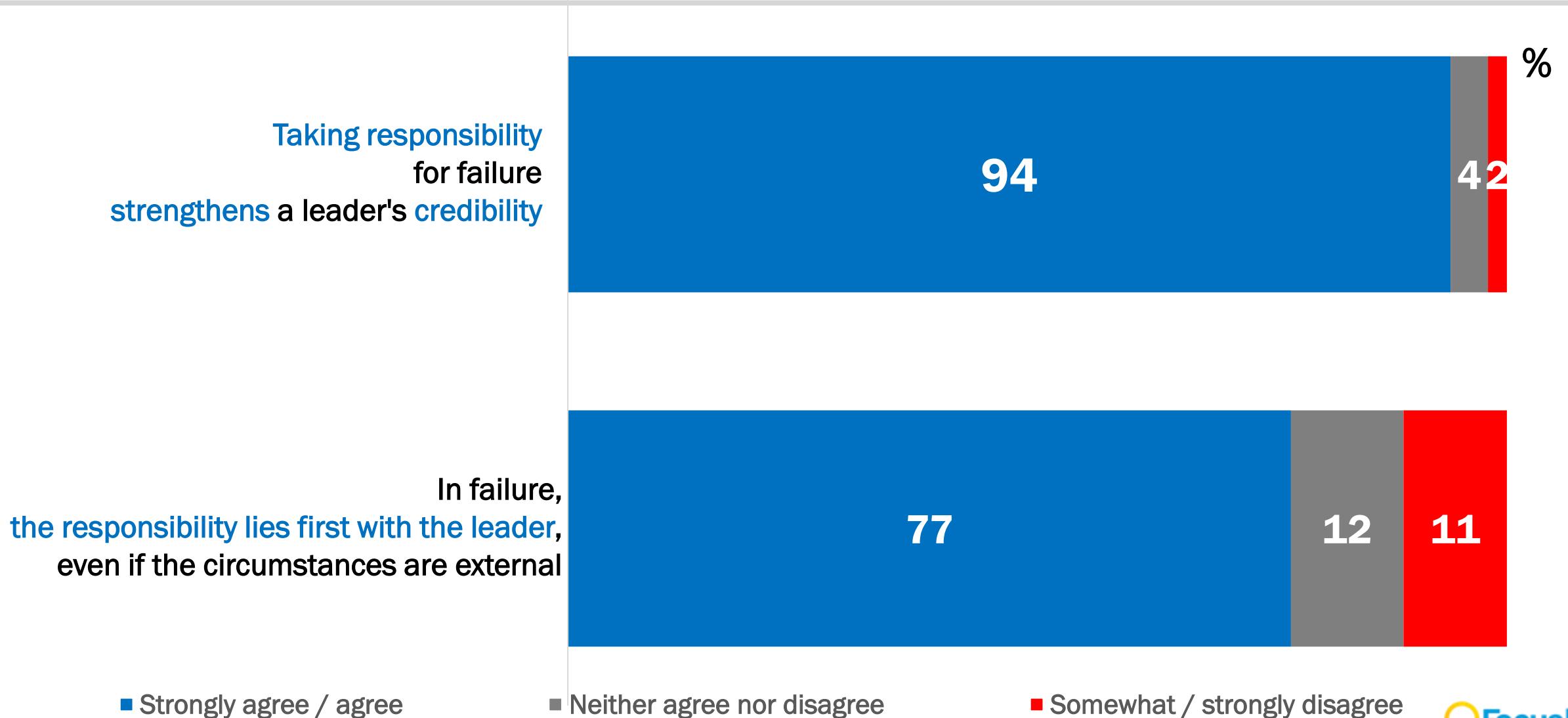
■ Strongly agree / agree

■ Neither agree nor disagree

■ Somewhat / strongly disagree

Failure does not judge, attitude judges

Taking responsibility strengthens leadership credibility





1 Key Learning

The dual interpretation of failure highlights the gap between rhetoric and corporate culture...

Is failure seen as a learning opportunity or as a stigma?

Ultimately, taking responsibility strengthens a leader's credibility.

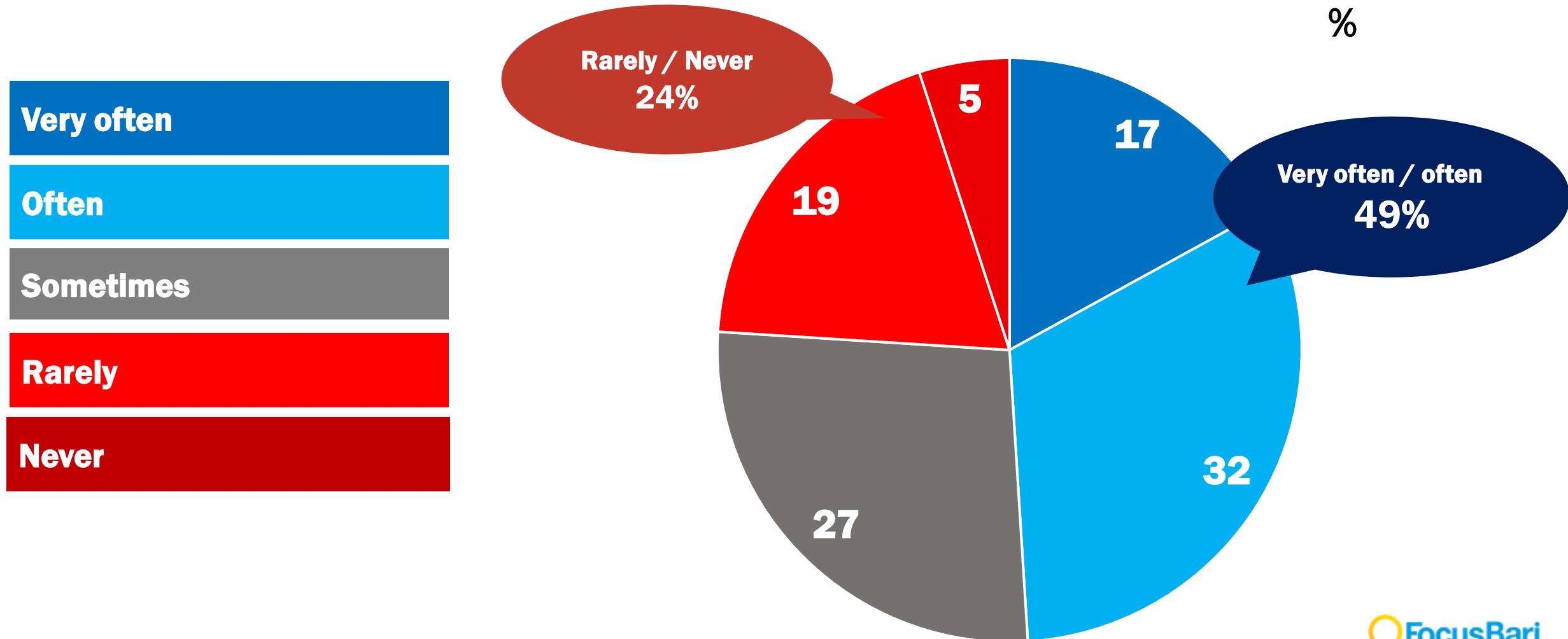
B: Organisation culture around failure



Management failure: Discussion or silence?

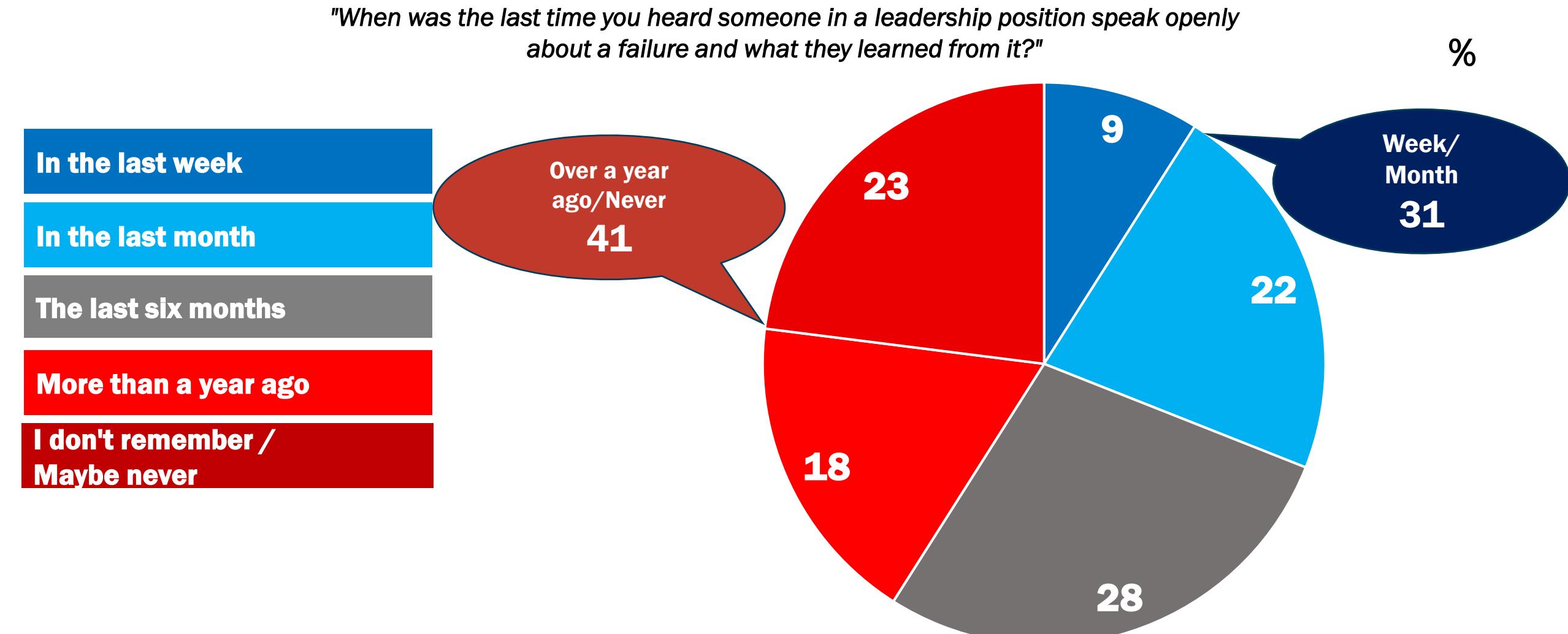
Half of organisations openly discuss about failures at the leadership level

"In your company, how often are failures at the management level discussed openly?"



Failure is rarely spoken about openly by leadership

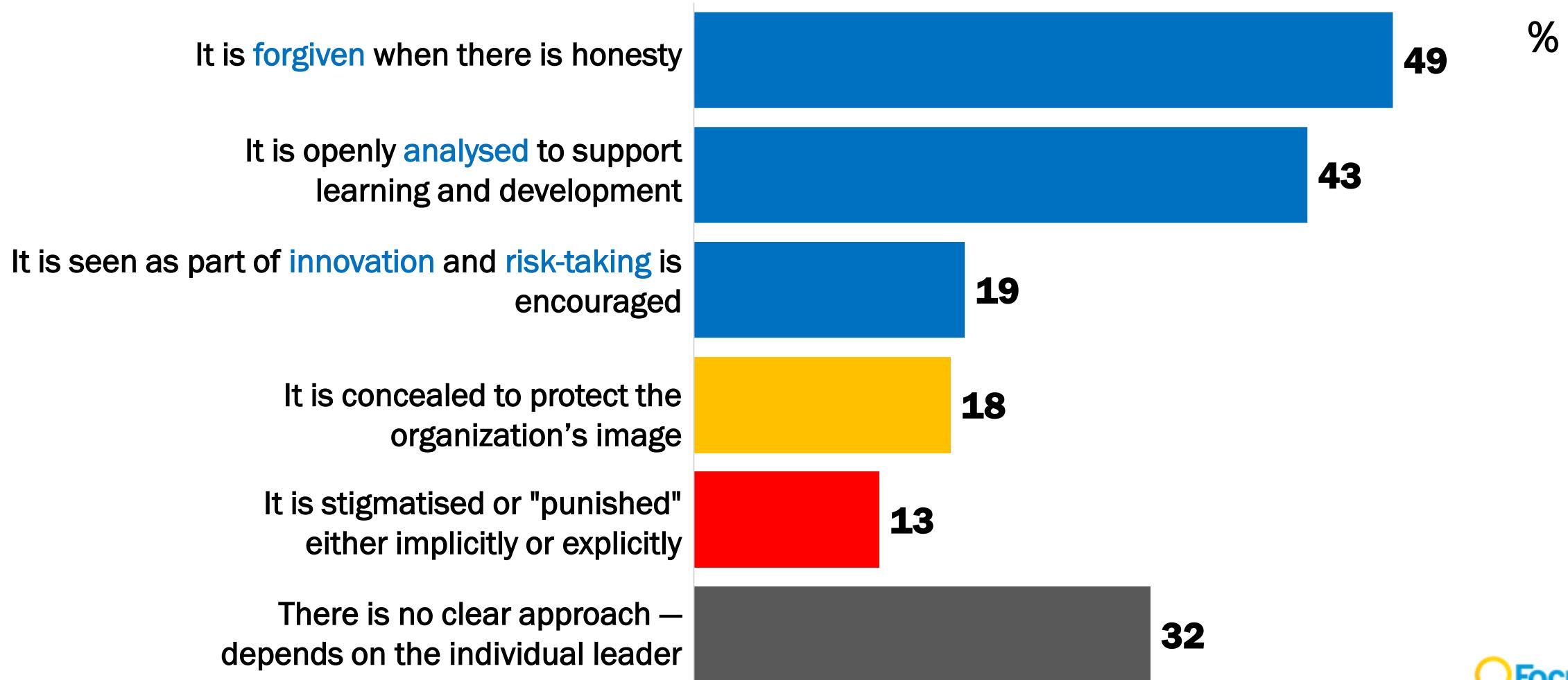
Avoidance is not neutrality – it is culture!



Failure as a mirror of leadership:

Attitudes toward failure are not always consistent — they often depend on the leader

"In your organisation, which of the following leadership attitudes prevails in the face of failure?"

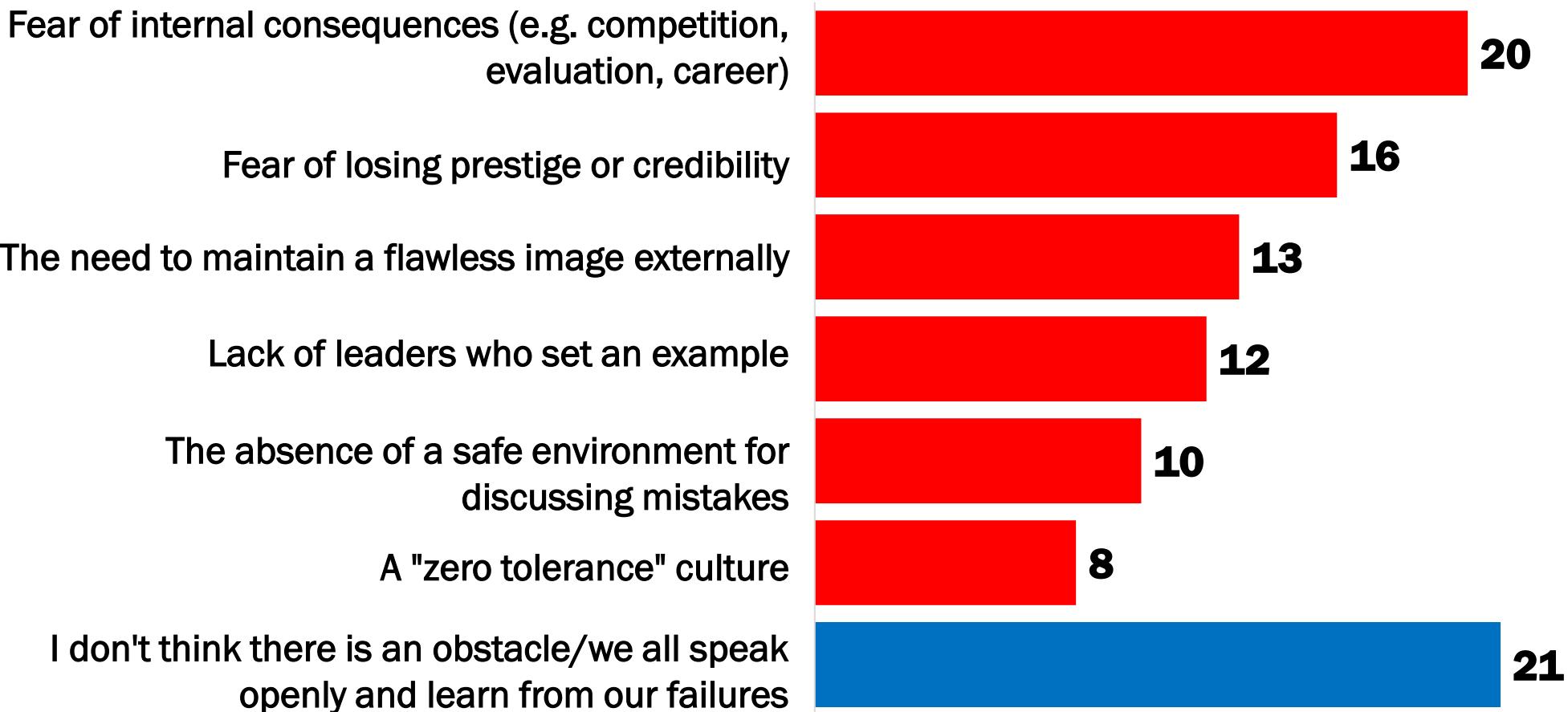


Fear prevents the management of failure

One in five organisations believes failures are discussed openly

*"What do you consider to be the **biggest obstacle** to managing failure in your organisation?"*

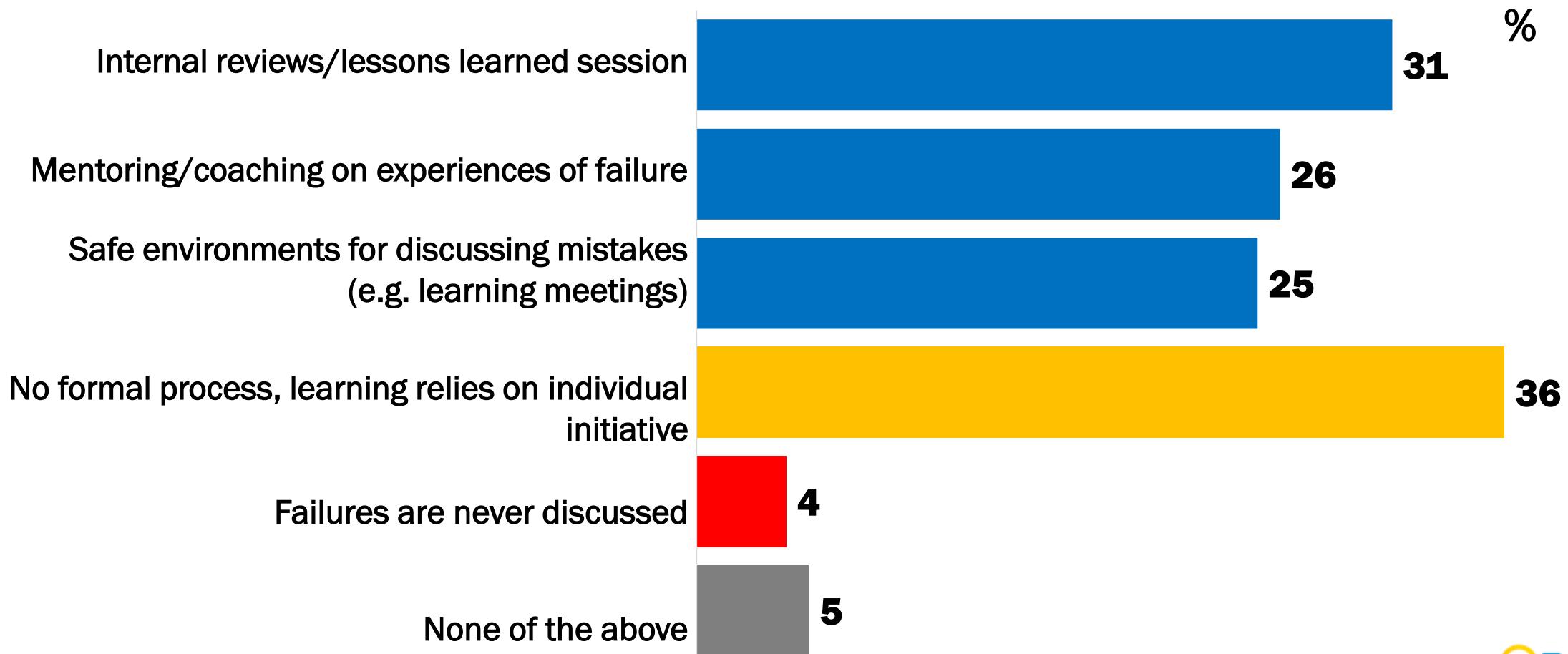
%



Learning from failure is not (yet) an organised practice

In more than one in three organisations, learning relies on individual initiative

"Which of the following practices have your company established for learning from failures?"





2 Key Learning

The data reveal a clear cultural paradox: failure is said to be acceptable, yet it is often concealed.

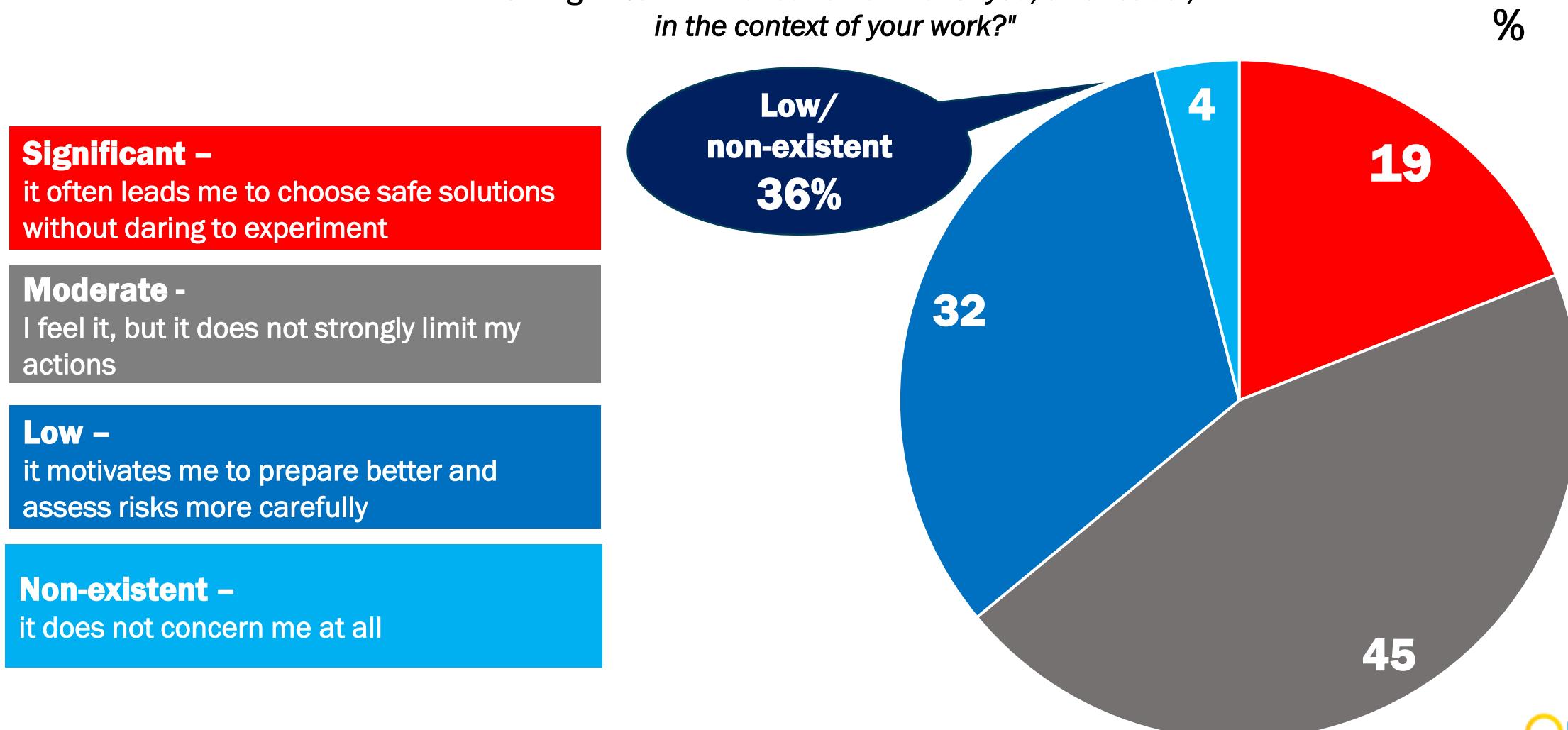
Open discussion is especially limited at the leadership level, while the absence of a safe environment and organised learning mechanisms makes the management of mistakes dependent on individual leaders rather than the system.

C: Leadership in managing and transforming failure



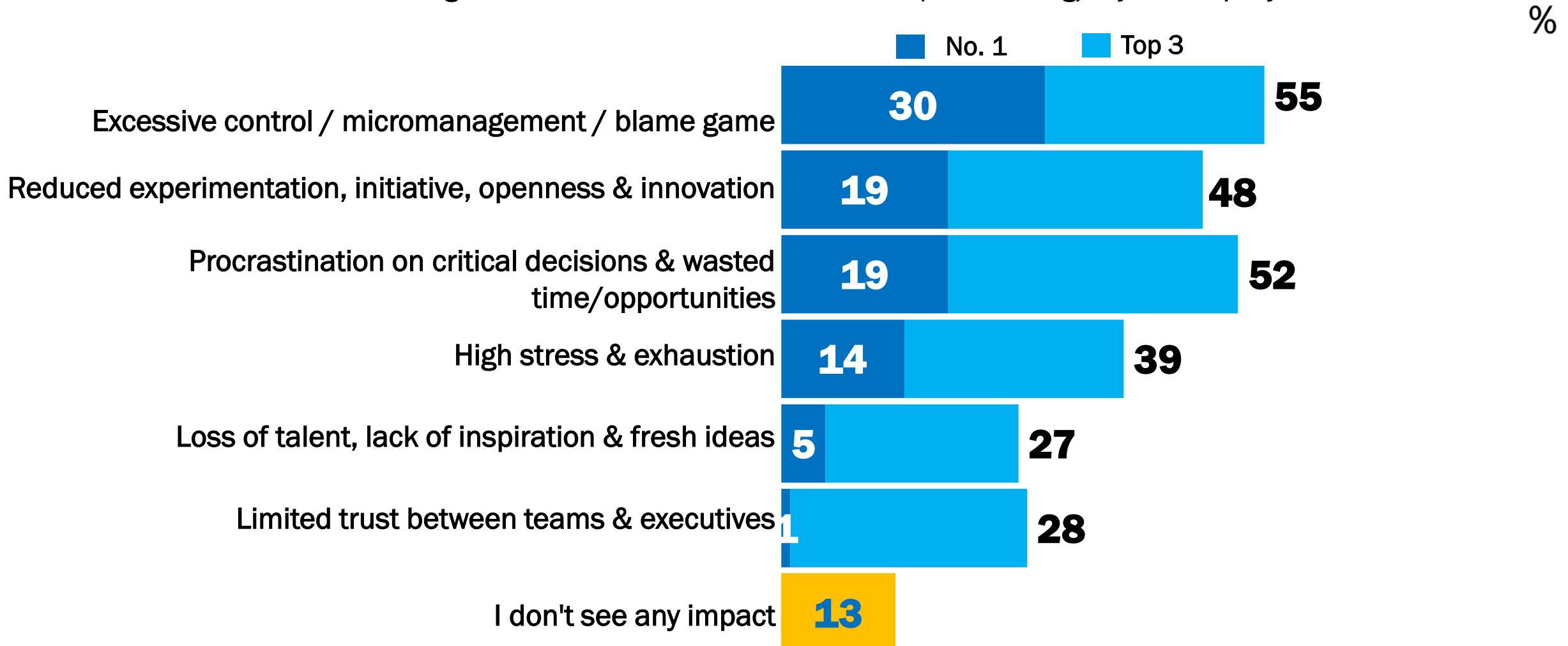
Does the fear of failure slow you down or motivate you?

One in five people freeze up, while more than one in three draw strength from it



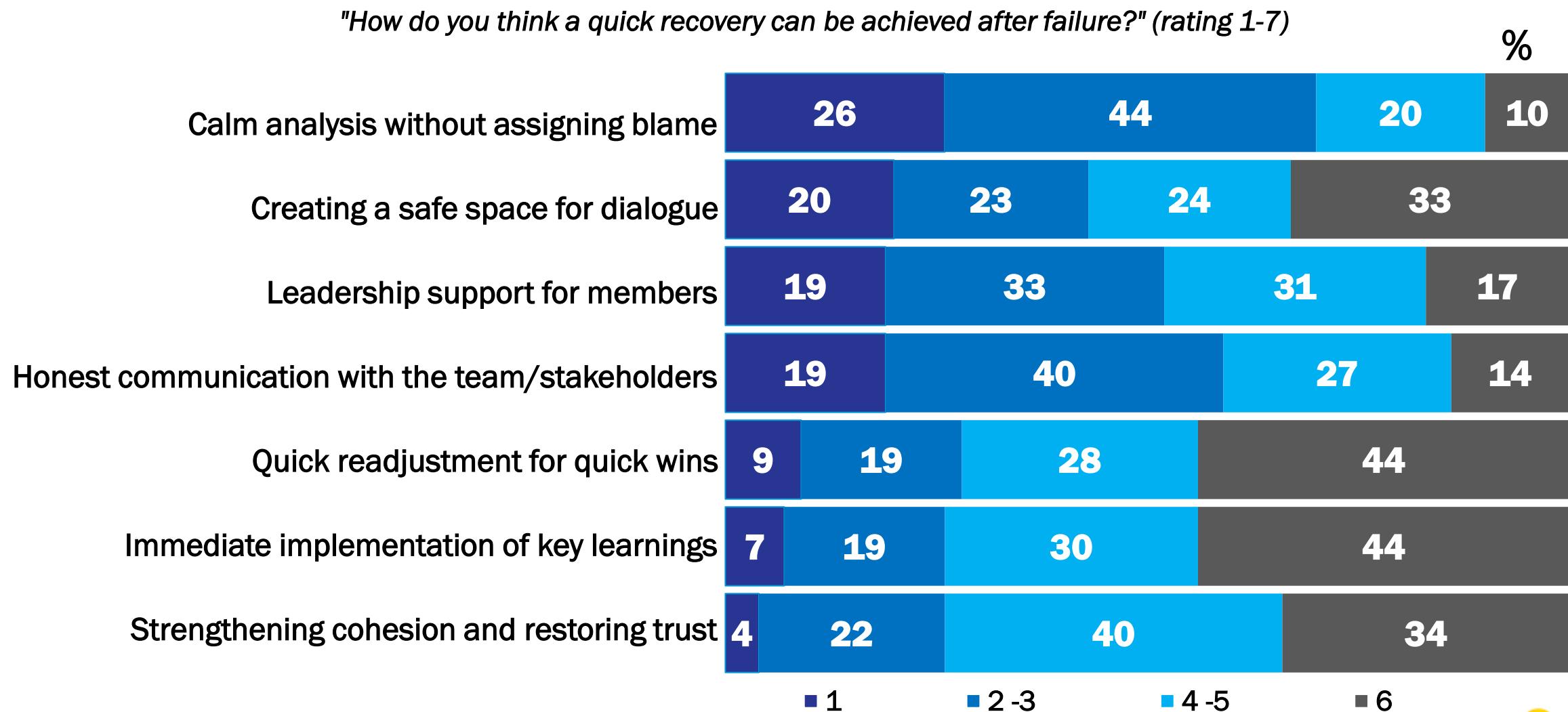
Micromanagement, over-control, procrastination & stress: The "side effects" of the culture of fear surrounding failure

"Which of the following **effects** have this fear of failure created (or is creating) in your company?"



Recovery after failure: the key drivers

Calmness, dialogue and leadership support lead to recovery





3 Key Learning

Fear of failure is not just a personal matter; it spreads throughout the organisation and gives rise to over-control and procrastination, ultimately slowing innovation.

Real recovery comes when leadership responds to mistakes constructively, creates a safe space for dialogue, and turns failure into learning and trust.

**The goal is not to live under the stress of failure, but
to learn to use it to our advantage!**



The Big Picture

***How an organisation handles failure
reveals its culture.***

***When fear prevails, failure leads to
silence, over-control, and stifled
innovation.***

***True recovery begins when leadership
creates psychological safety,
encourages open dialogue, addresses
mistakes constructively, and turns
them into collective learning and
development.***

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Thank you!

Want more info? Ask xenia@focus.gr

