

# ***The Failure Paradox...***

B2B Survey Results  
2025



# Research specifications

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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

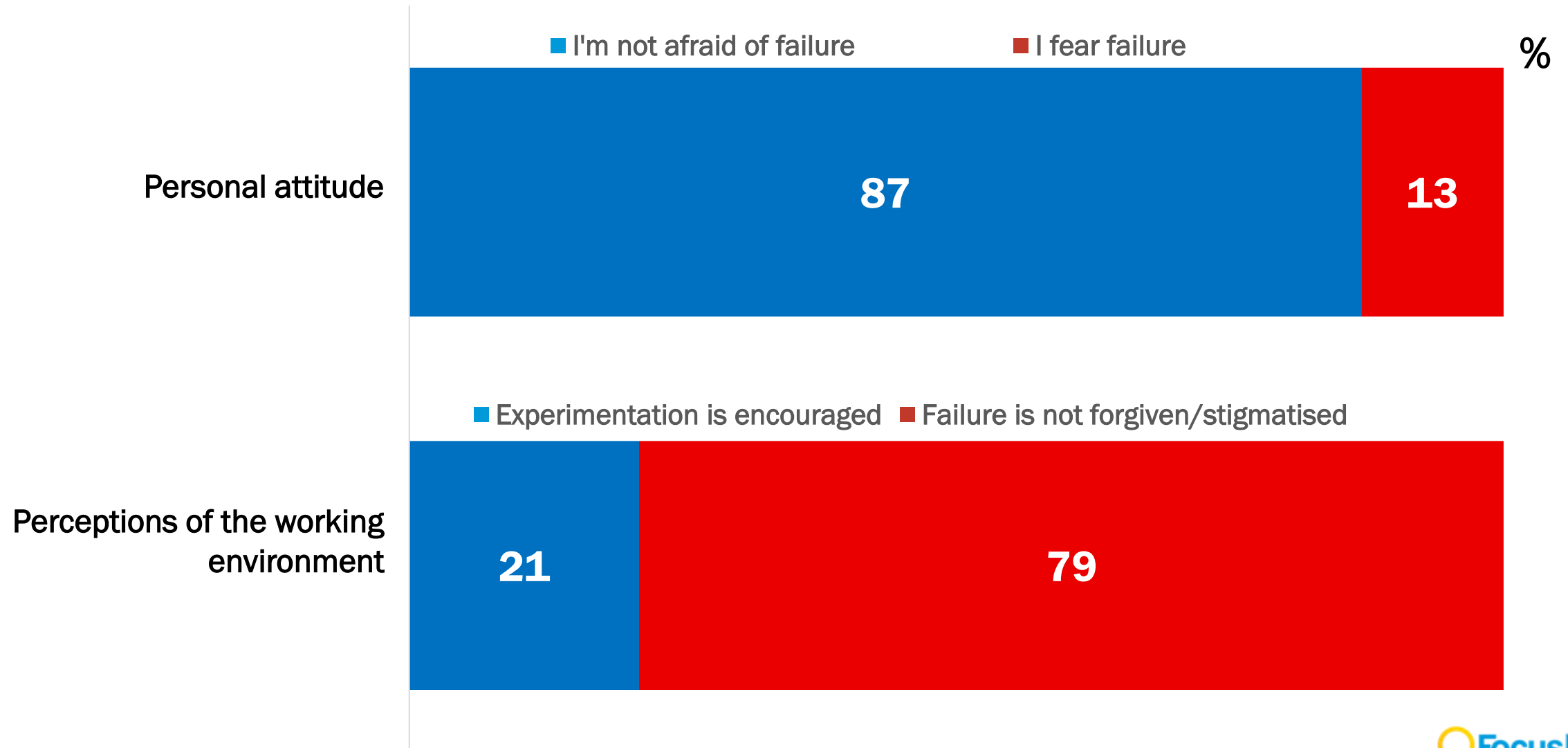
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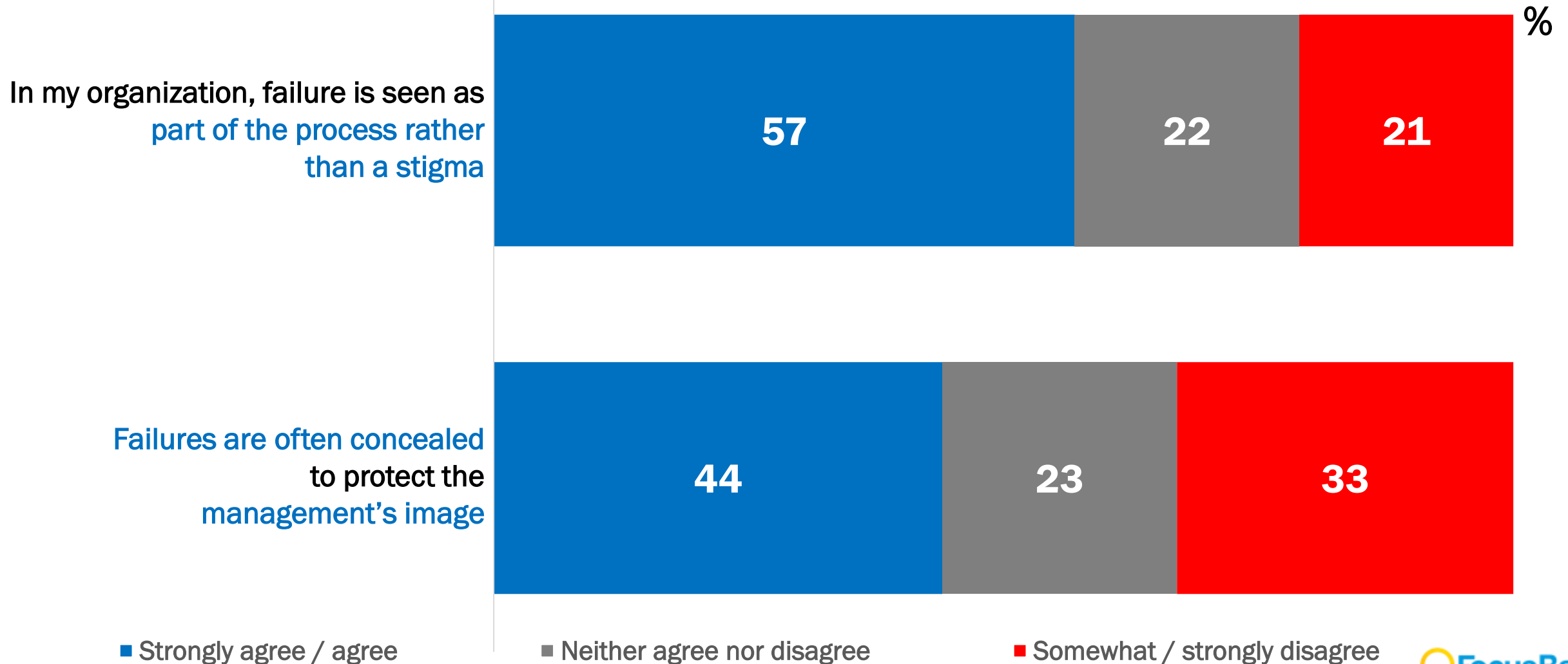
# The paradox of failure:

## Personal attitude versus corporate culture



# Failure in leadership: Words versus Reality

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



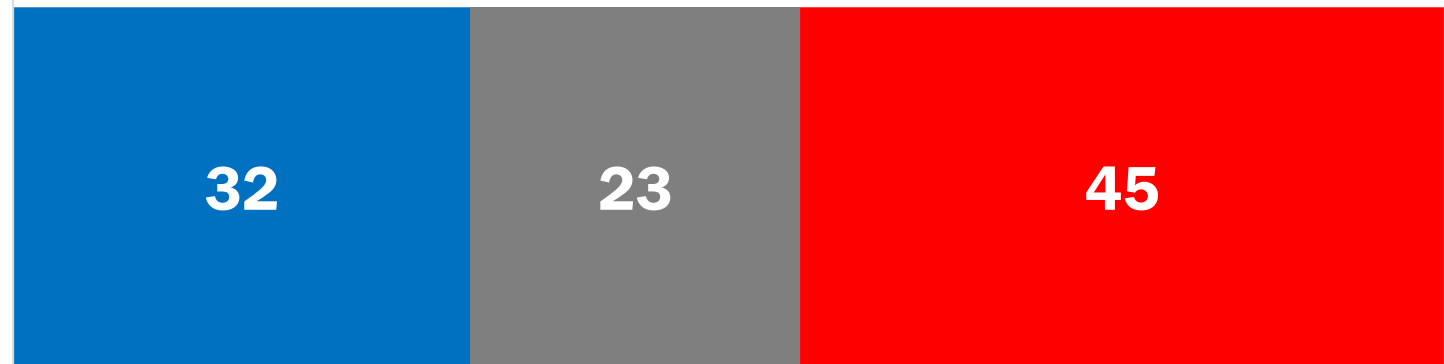
# The dual interpretation of failure

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

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



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



■ Strongly agree / agree

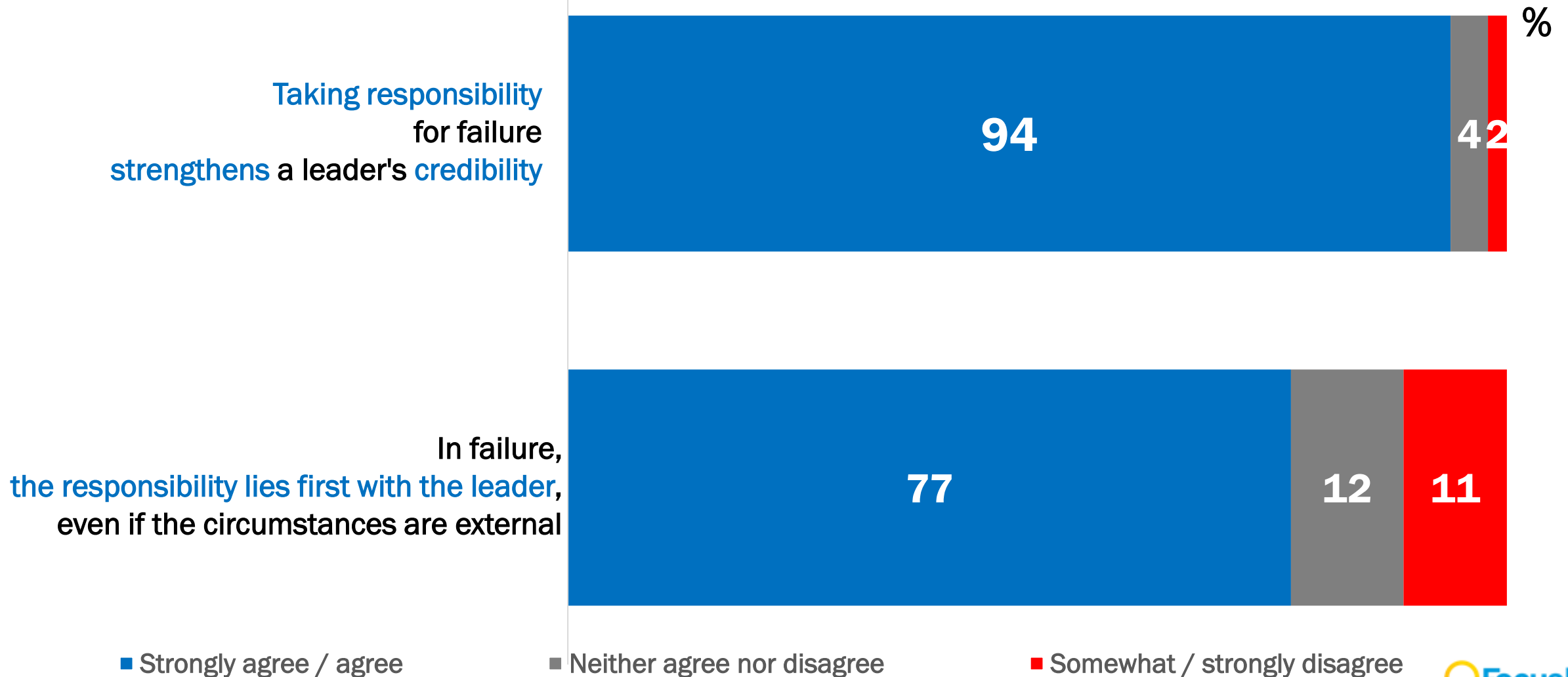
■ Neither agree nor disagree

■ 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**

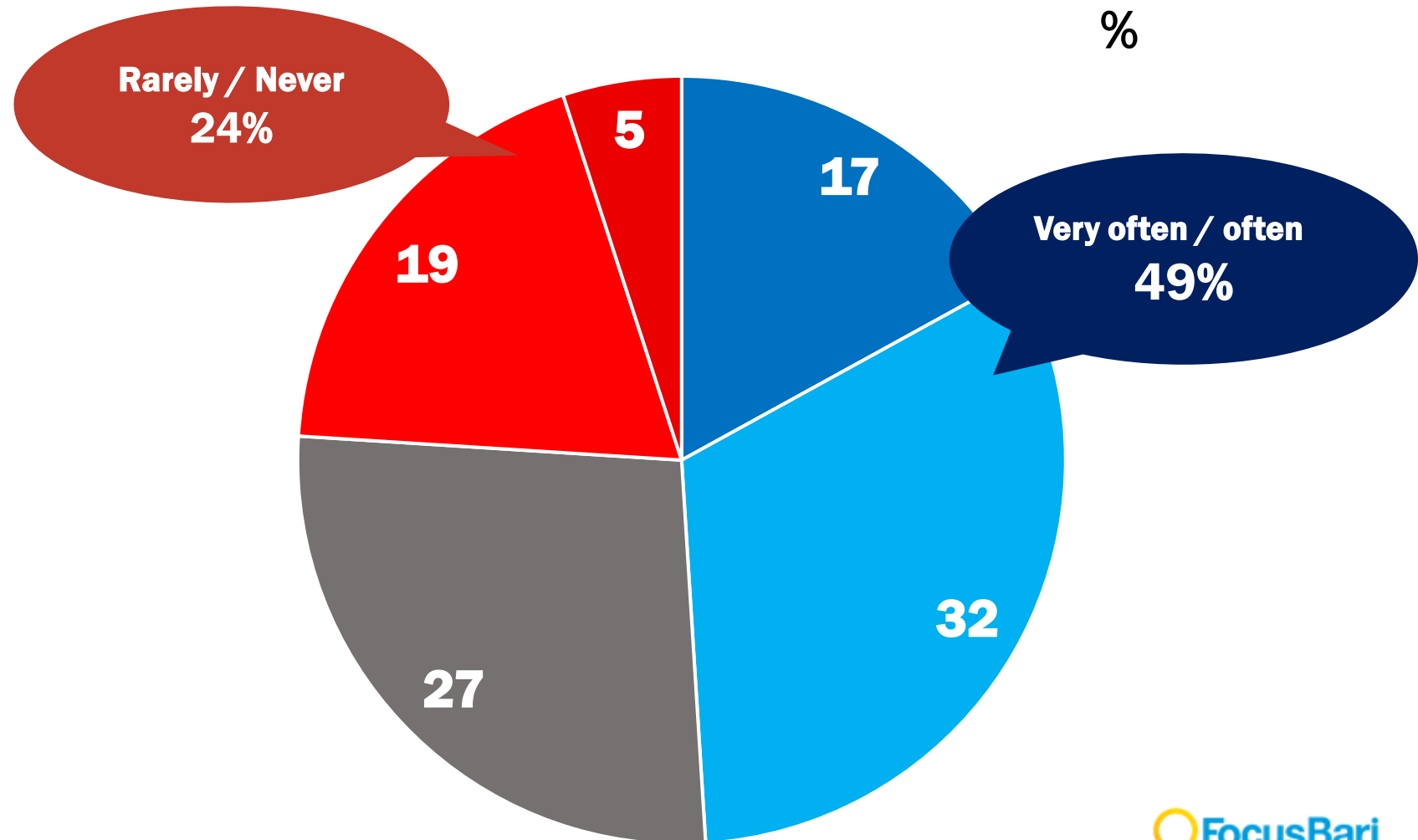
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# Management failure: Discussion or silence?

## Half of organisations openly discuss about failures at the leadership level

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

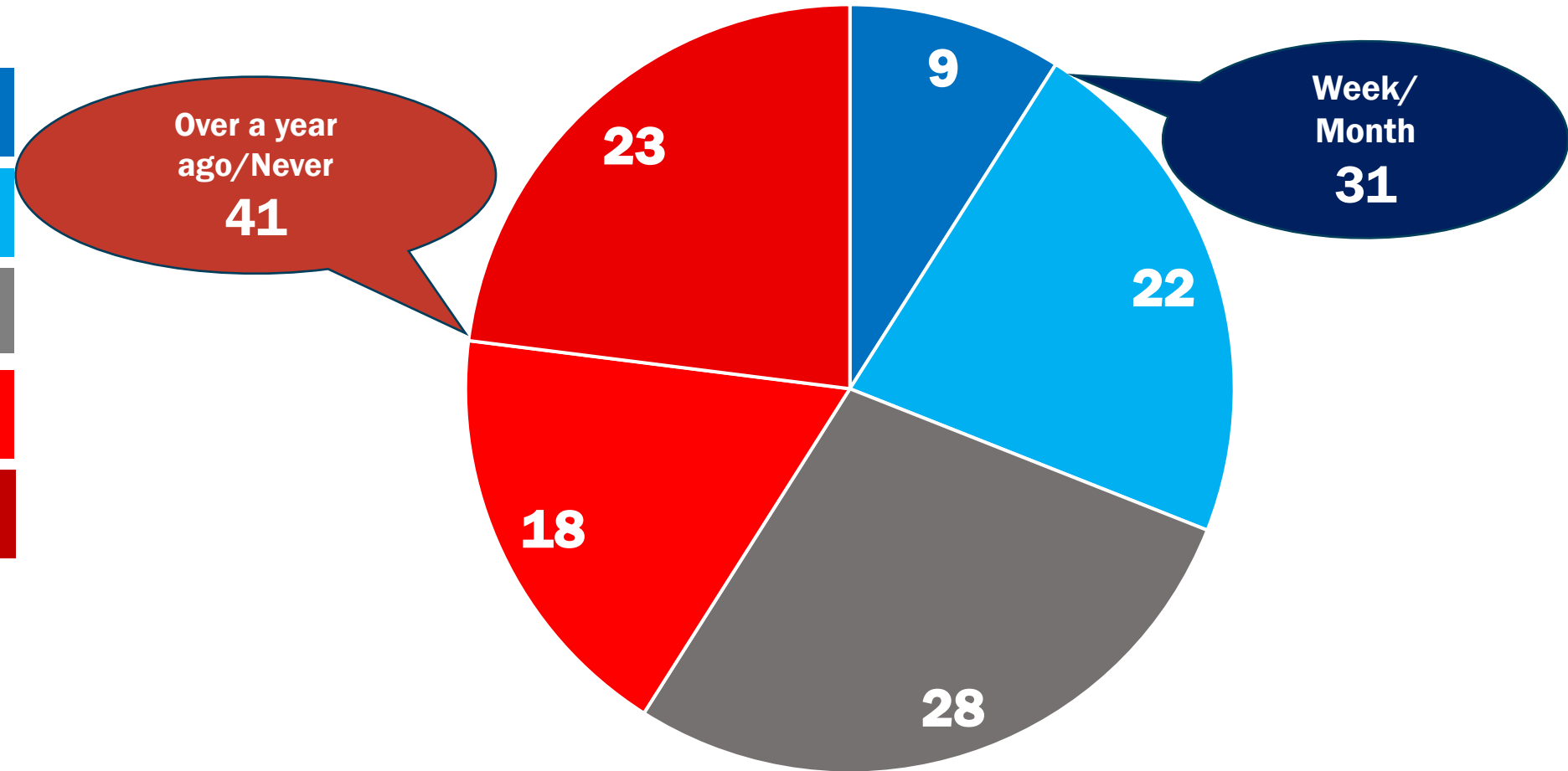


# Failure is rarely spoken about openly by leadership

## Avoidance is not neutrality — it is culture!

*"When was the last time you heard someone in a leadership position speak openly about a failure and what they learned from it?"*

%

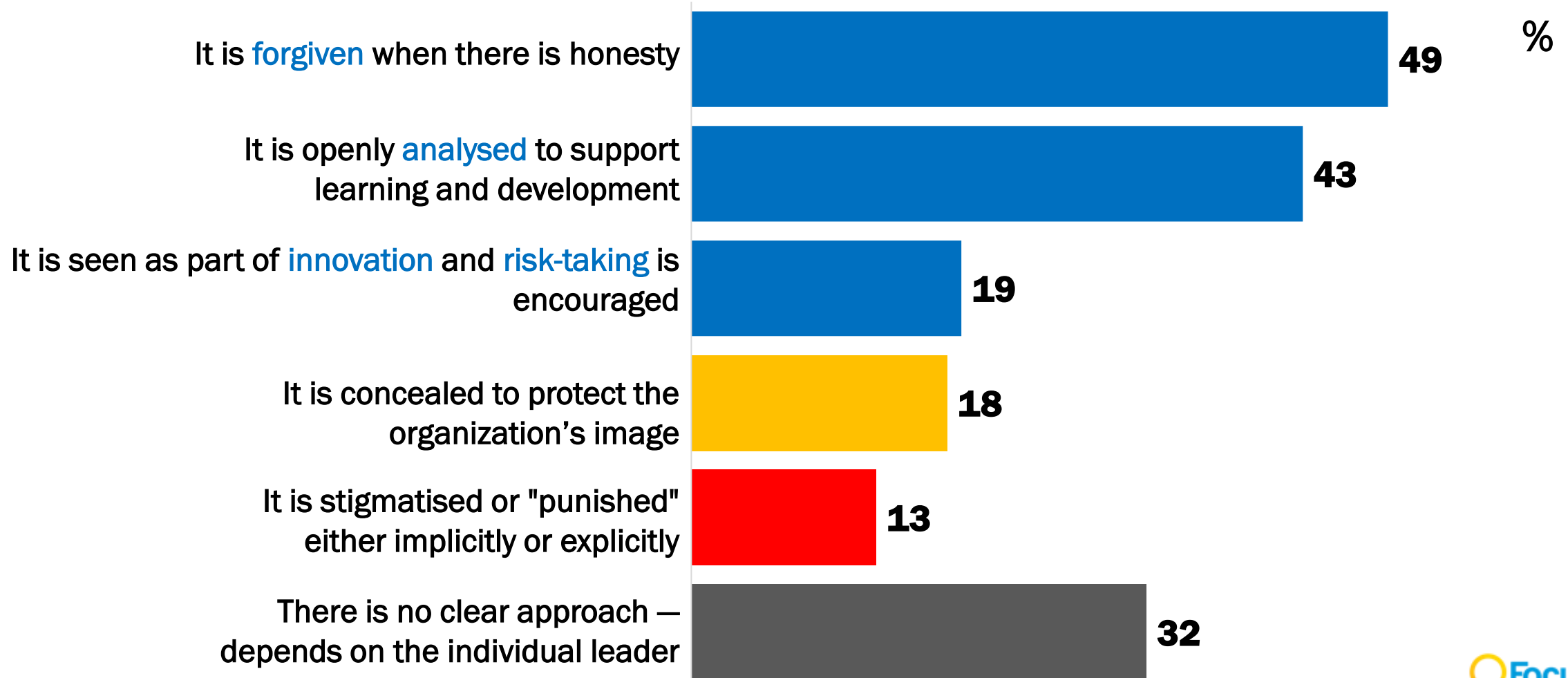




# Failure as a mirror of leadership:

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

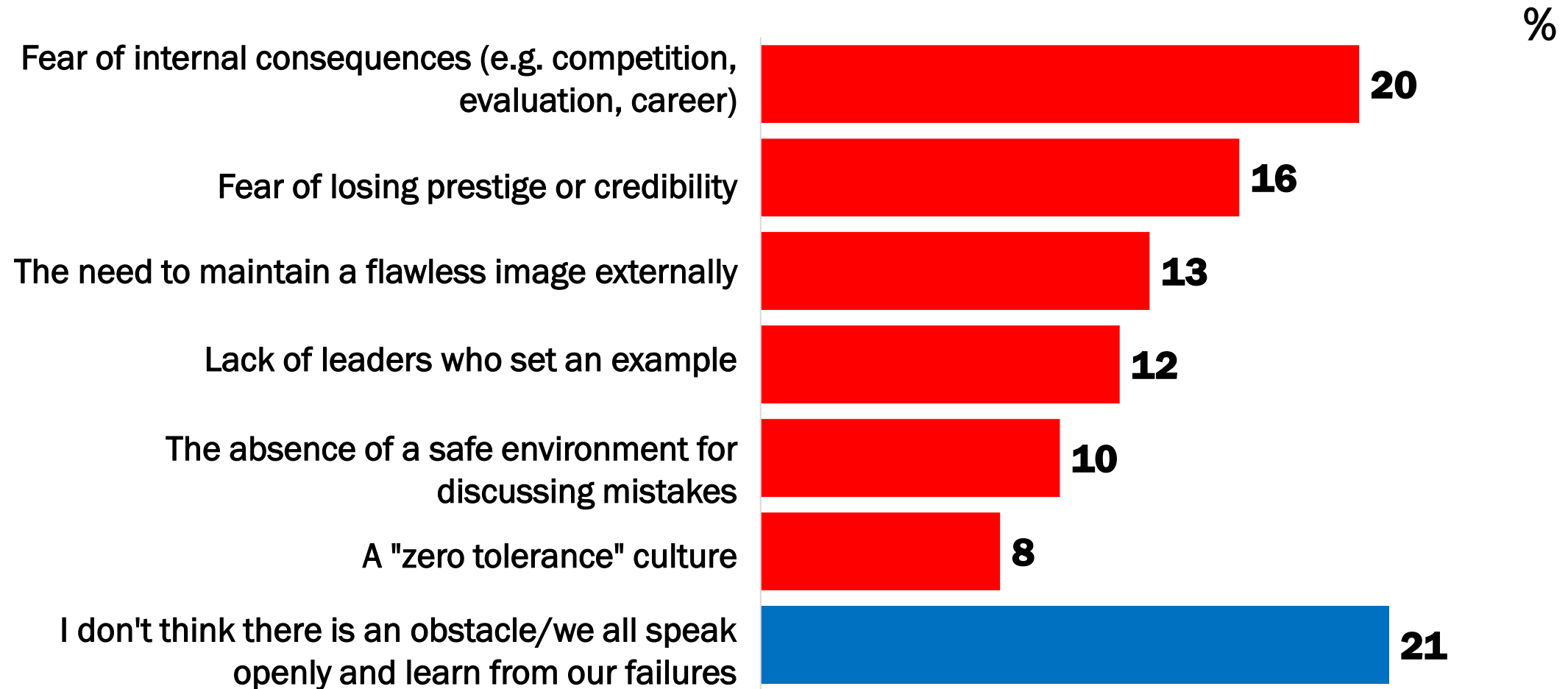
*"In your organisation, which of the following **leadership attitudes** prevails in the face of failure?"*



# **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?"

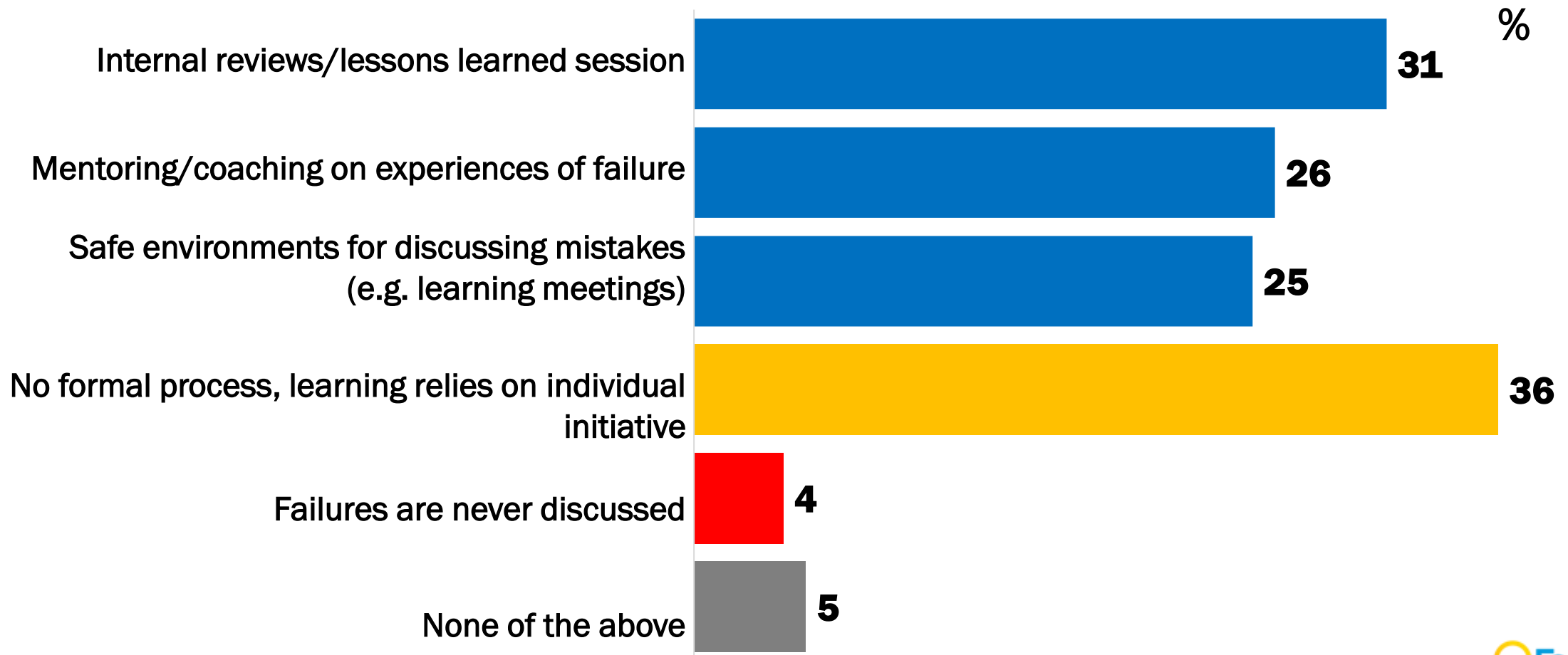




# Learning from failure is not (yet) an organised practice

## 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**

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# 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

"How significant is *the fear of failure* for you, as a leader, in the context of your work?"

%

### Significant –

it often leads me to choose safe solutions without daring to experiment

### Moderate -

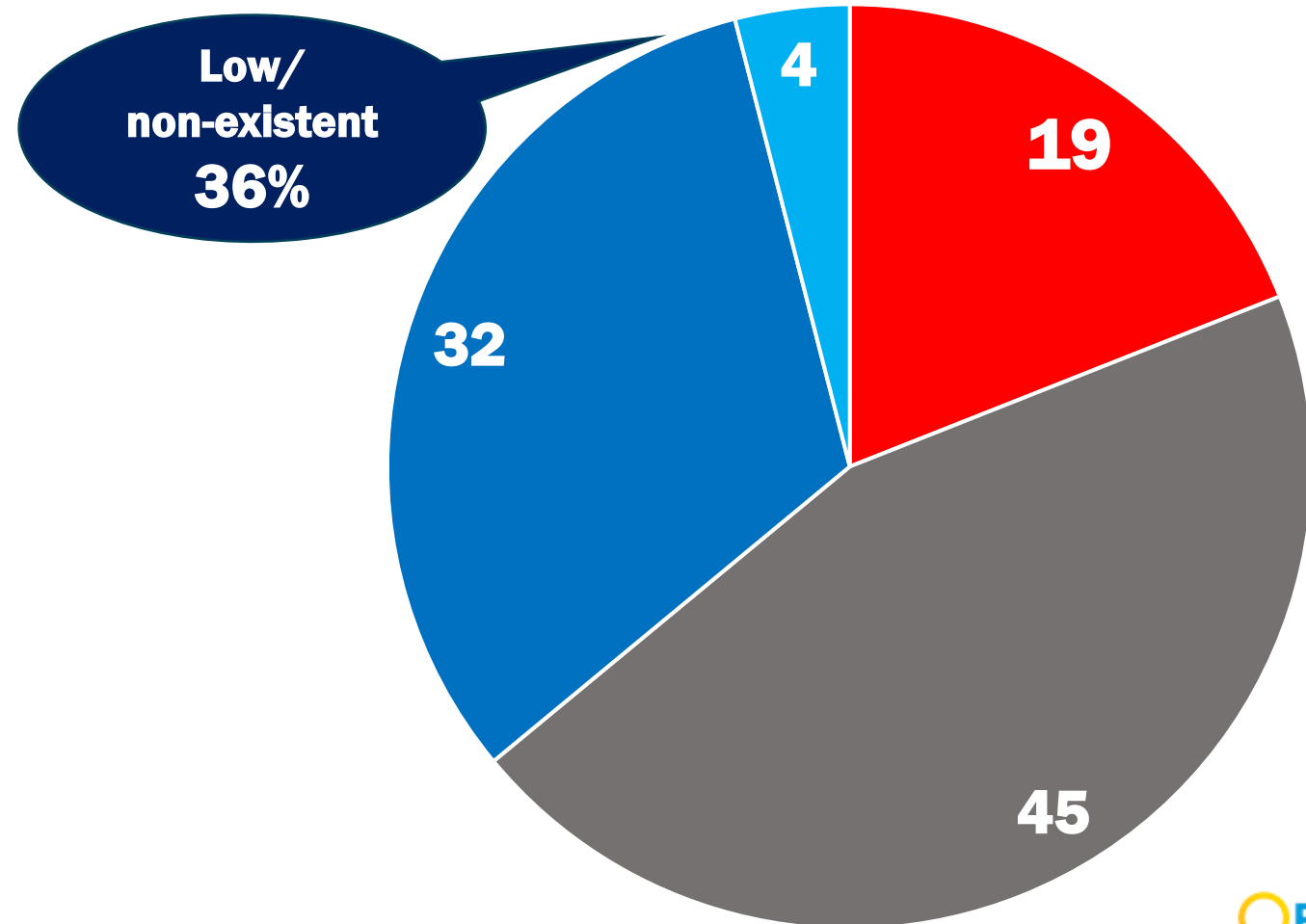
I feel it, but it does not strongly limit my actions

### Low –

it motivates me to prepare better and assess risks more carefully

### Non-existent –

it does not concern me at all





# 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?"

%

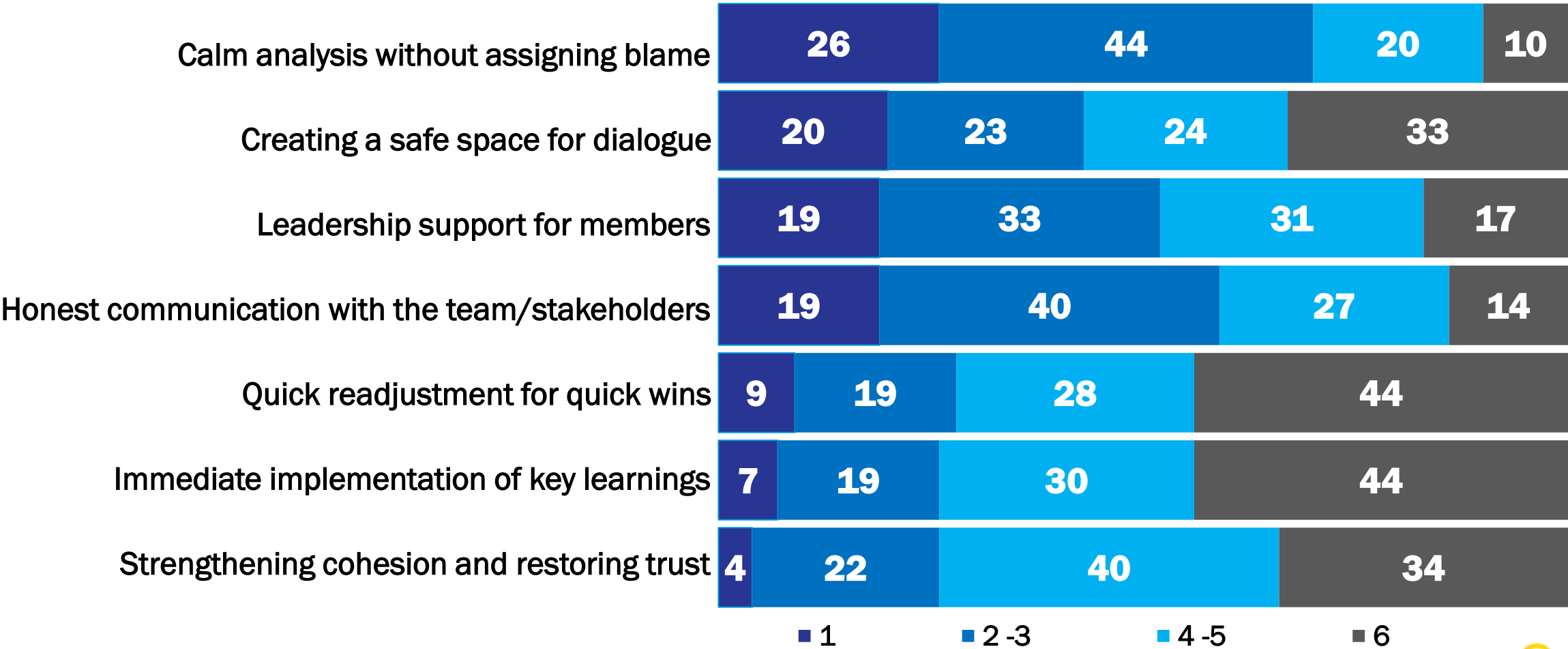


# Recovery after failure: the key drivers

## Calmness, dialogue and leadership support lead to recovery

"How do you think a quick recovery can be achieved after failure?" (rating 1-7)

%





## # 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](mailto:xenia@focus.gr)

