



When the going gets tough, female leaders succeed with agility, resilience and digital competencies

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Global Female Leadership Outlook 2025



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[illegible]

49%



Profiles of top female managers – who are our global female leaders?

475

participants
from 46 countries



33%

have more than 20 years of
management experience



Approx. half work for
companies that generate
annual revenue of at least

USD 500 million,

a good 10% reporting more than



C-level positions dominate with

44%

in top management

More than

two-thirds

work
at least predominantly in the office



82%

have changed companies
at least once to take their
next career step

25%

work in Finance, making it
the most represented area



75%

are mothers

Two-thirds

live in a
dual-income household with full-time
working partners



Á dagskrá hjá okkur í dag

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Economic outlook and strategy

How are companies reacting to geopolitical tensions and economic uncertainties?

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Why is artificial intelligence a top investment priority in times of crisis?

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Female careers in transition

What qualities really count in a complex environment?

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Violence against women in the digital sphere

What risks does a digital presence pose for female leaders?



01

Economic outlook and strategy

How are companies reacting to geopolitical tensions and economic uncertainties?

9 out of 10

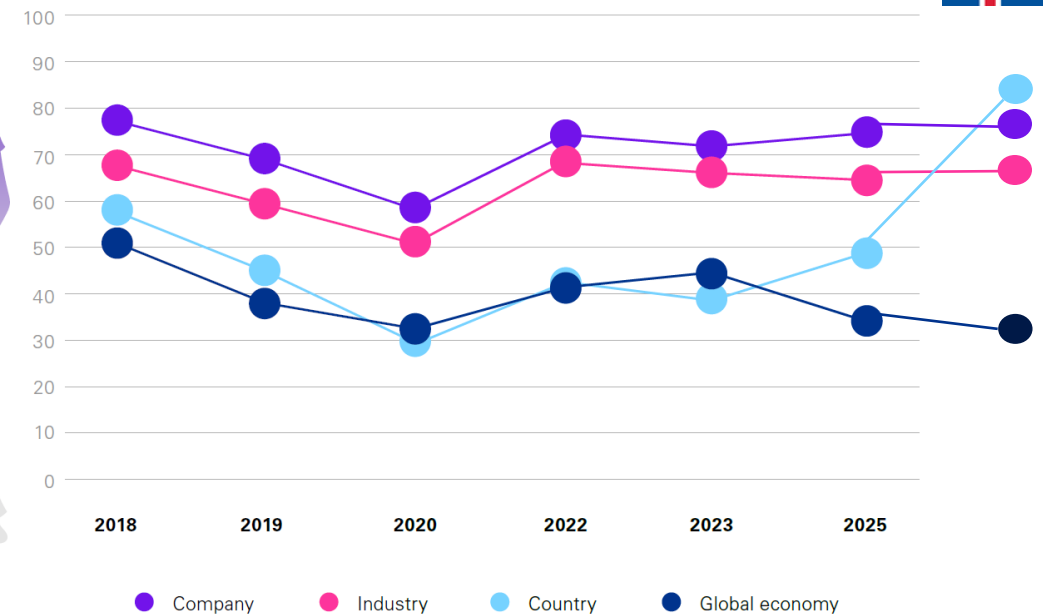
respondents anticipate an increase in revenue over the next three years



8 out of 10

Share of top female decision-makers with confidence in growth prospects, year-on-year

Figures are displayed in percentages



Greatest threat to organization's growth over the next three years

	Iceland	All*
Geopolitics and political uncertainty	22,5%	17,5%
Operational issues	12,5%	11,8%
Interest rates	12,5%	3,1%
Cyber security	10%	6,1%
Environmental / climate change	10%	7,1%
Supply chain	7,5%	3,3%
Economic decoupling between countries and the resulting pricing pressures	7,5%	9,4%
Talent	5%	8,7%
Regulatory concerns	5%	18,6%
Emerging / disruptive technology	2,5%	9%
Reputational risk, including misalignment with customer / public sentiment	2,5%	3,5%
Tax	2,5%	0,9%
Internal unethical behaviour	0%	0,9%

Top of mind challenges

	Iceland	All*
Rising uncertainty from potential (global) armed conflicts	56,1%	36,5%
Geopolitical complexities	48,8%	51,7%
The race to embrace and embed generative AI and other technologies	39,0%	40,4%
Economic uncertainty	34,1%	52,4%
Misinformation and disinformation (Fake news)	29,3%	24,9%
The growth prospects or challenges of your organization	19,5%	26,8%
Competition for talent	19,5%	26,1%
Growing protectionist attitudes in some markets	9,8%	16,9%
Changing working patterns including the long-term impacts of hybrid working	7,3%	9,9%

*Excluding Iceland

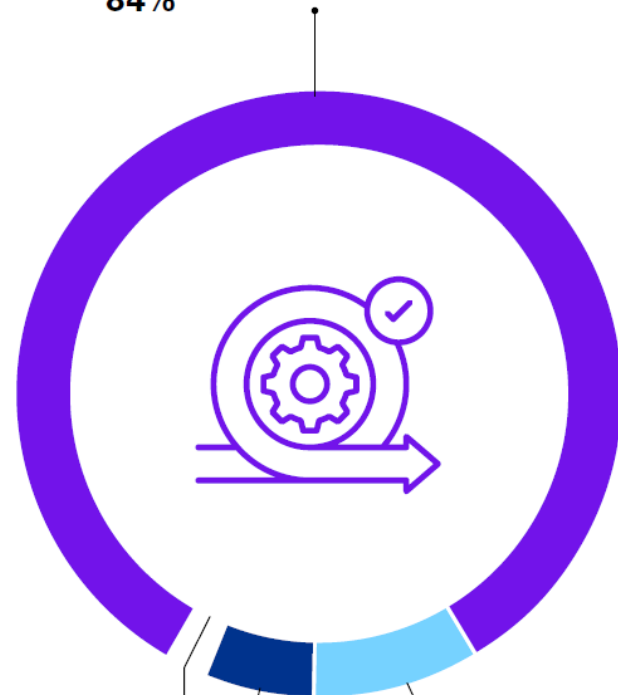
Agility as a success factor

Above all, in an uncertain business climate, a truly resilient business is one that ...

Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding

... adapts quickly to the changing business environment.

84%



71%



20%

* Source: KPMG in Germany, 2025



02

Artificial intelligence and the digital transformation

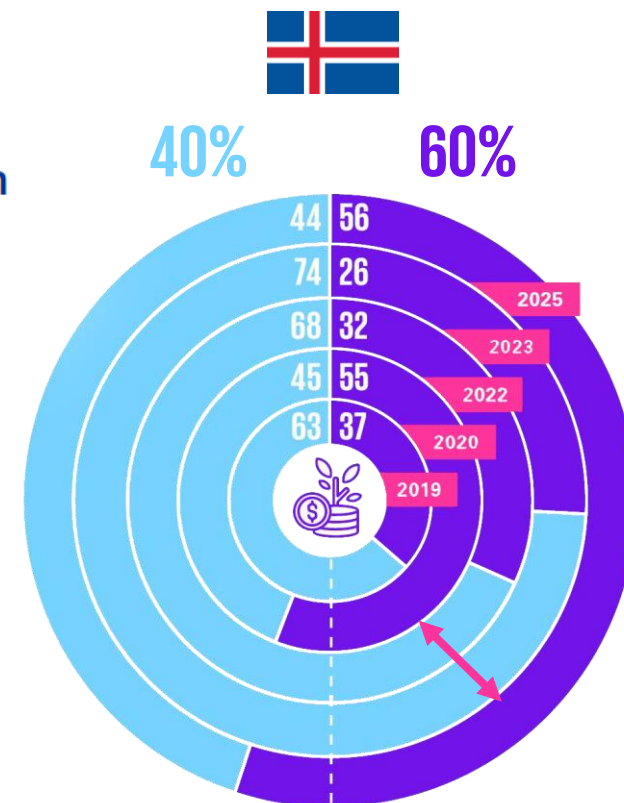
Why is artificial intelligence a top investment priority in times of crisis?

Change in strategy from employee development to investment in tech

Investment priorities with regard to achieving the company's growth and transformation targets

Figures displayed in percentages

- We are placing more capital investments in buying and implementing new technology
- We are placing more capital investments in developing our workforce's skills and capabilities





Satya Nadella

**„Umbreyting með gervigreind snýst
20% um tækni og 80% um fólk og
ferla.“**

More than half prioritise AI investments in times of crisis

Expectations regarding the impact of AI implementation on employment



80%

expect that **generative AI will not fundamentally impact the number of jobs**, but will require upskilling and redeployment of existing resources.

15%

expect that **generative AI will eliminate more jobs** than it creates.

5%

expect that **generative AI will create more jobs** than it eliminates.

68%

14%

8%

Greatest advantage of AI implementation for companies



Increased efficiency and productivity
(through automating routine operations)
(57%)



Faster data analysis
(15%)

----- All other aspects combined: 28% -----

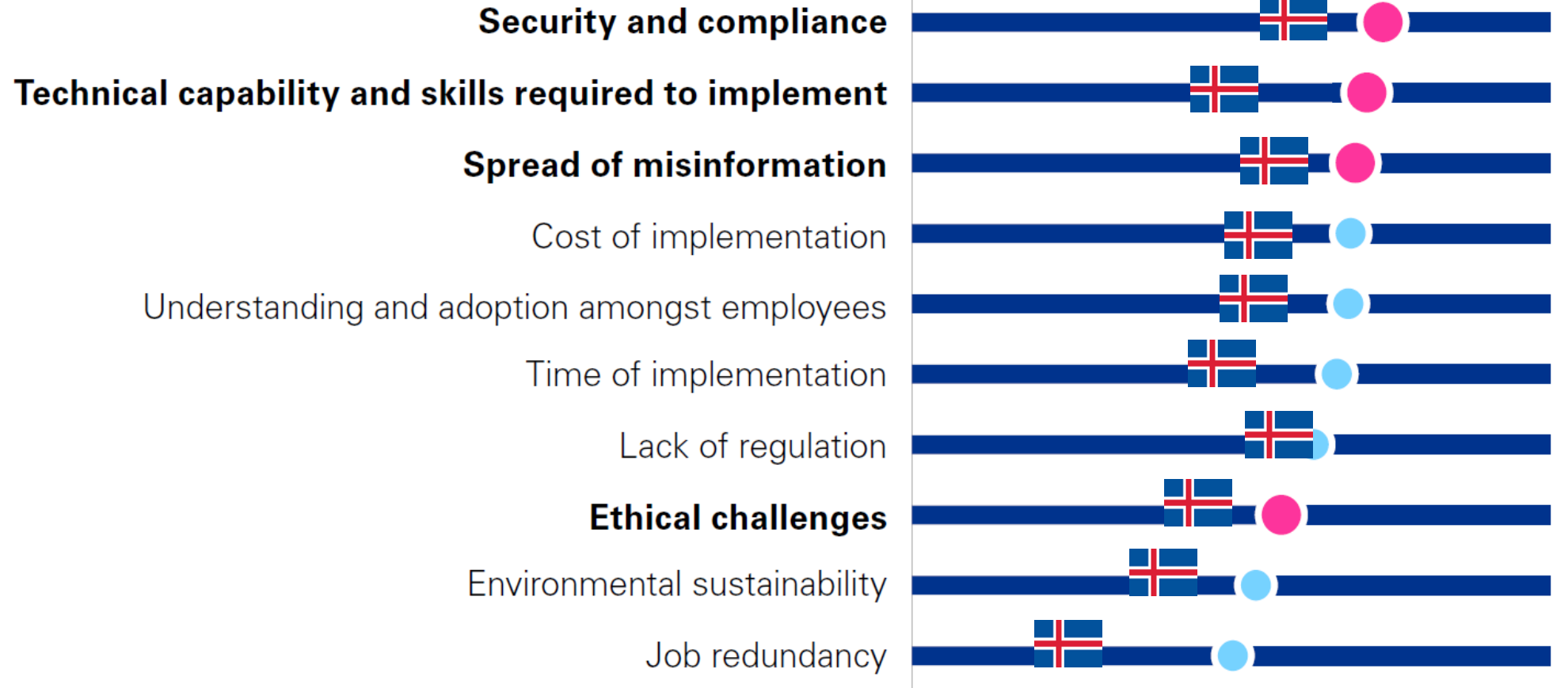
56%



15%

Artificial intelligence remains a priority – even in times of crisis

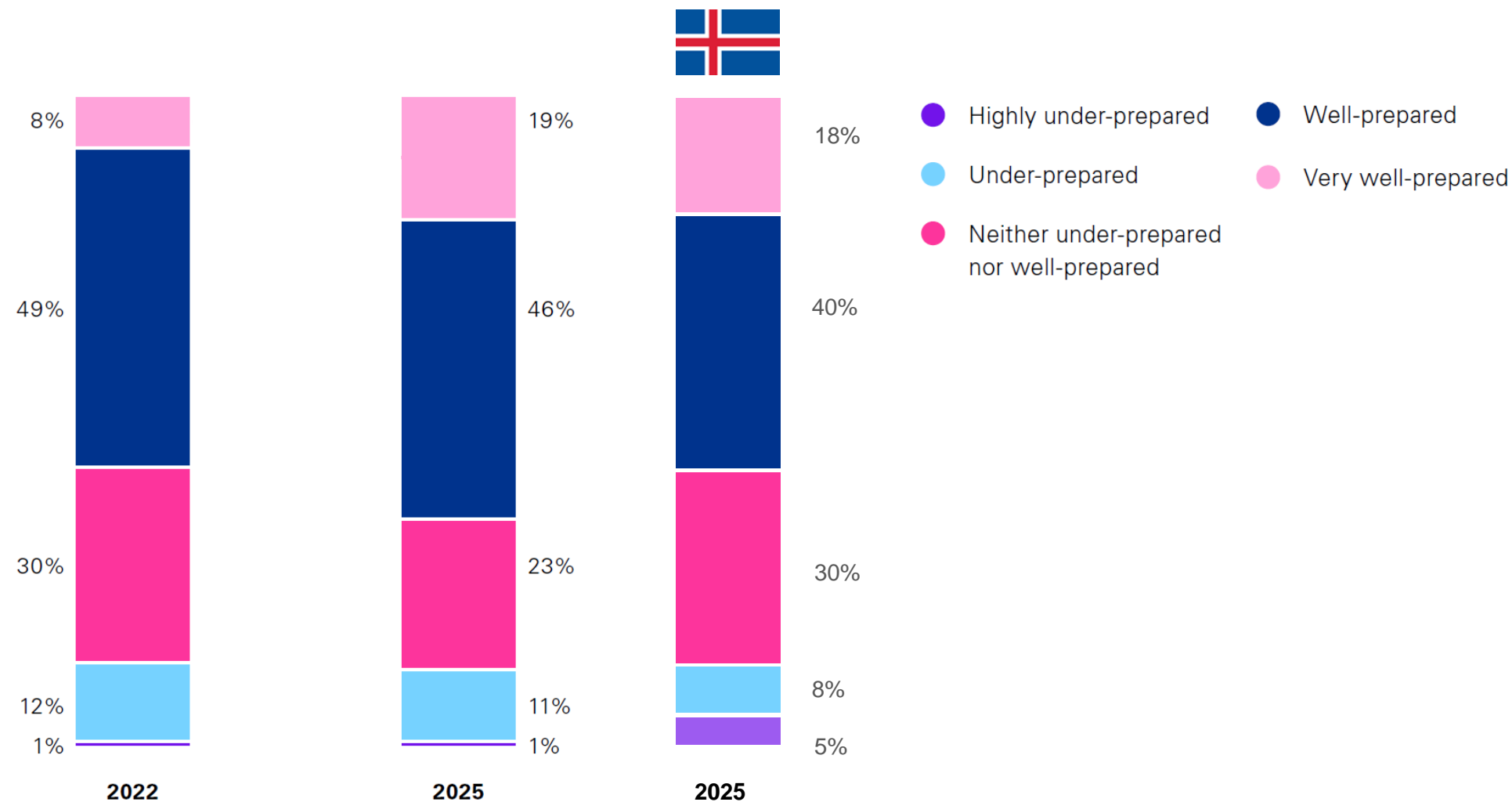
Greatest challenges for companies when implementing AI



not challenging at all —————> very challenging



Degree of preparedness for cyber-attacks





03

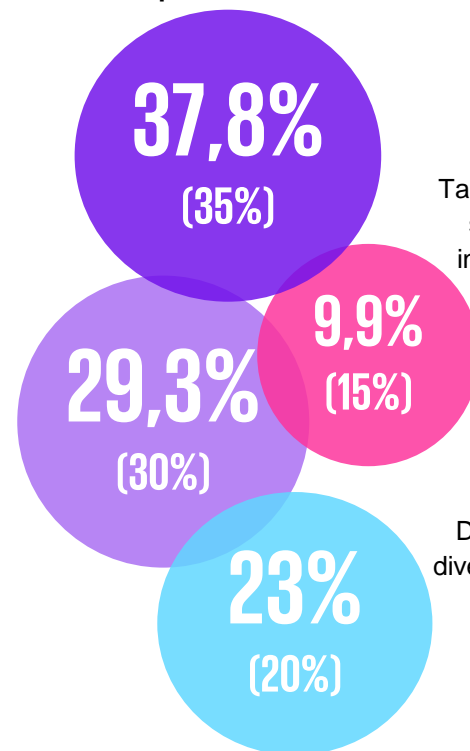
ESG and diversity

What is holding back sustainable and inclusive change?

Greatest levers for ESG strategy

Increasing measurement and governance to build a more robust and transparent approach to ESG.

Implementing a net zero strategy and/or measuring and acting on your company's carbon footprint



Taking a more proactive approach to societal issues, such as increased investment in a living wage, human rights and a just transition,

Delivering on an actionable inclusion, diversity and equity strategy to address equity in leadership (e.g. pay equity, diversity in leadership and boards),

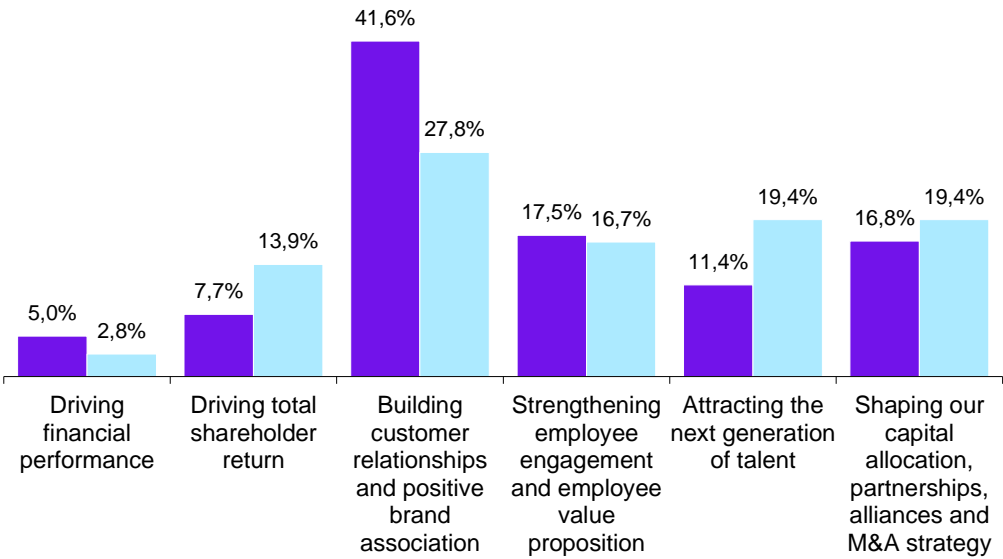


ESG losing importance as strategic investmet

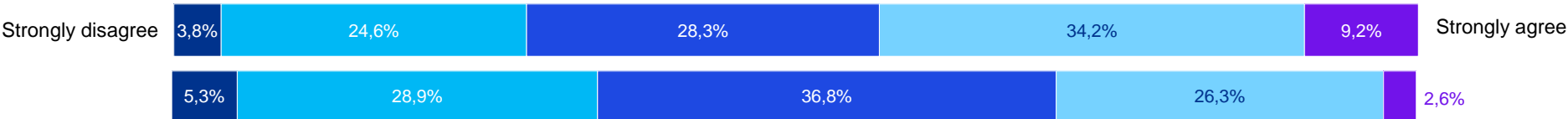
For 42%, the ESG strategy has the greatest impact on building customer relationships and positive brand association.

The most significant impact of the ESG strategy over the next three years will be seen in the improvement of customer relationships and brand perception, while measurable financial effects will scarcely play a role. While ESG creates added value in terms of communication, it is rarely perceived as an instrument for direct value creation. **This suggests that the strategic integration of ESG into corporate value creation continues to be insufficiently implemented.**

ESG strategy with the greatest impact over the next three years




“We have fully embedded ESG into our business as a mean to create increased value”



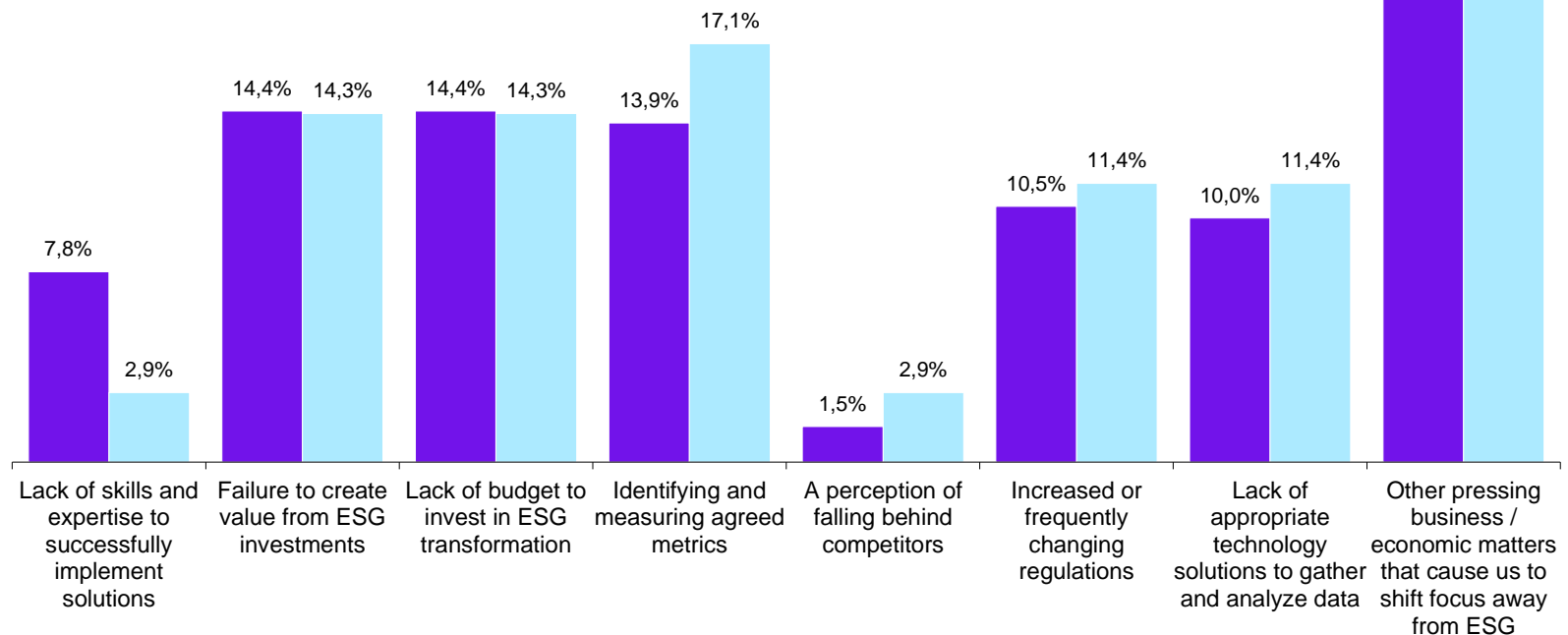


Creating value from ESG remains a challenge

While more than half of companies consider AI investments to be a top priority even in difficult times, the same is not true for ESG investments. **In times of crisis or when other business areas require attention, respondents find it difficult to maintain and prioritise investments in ESG.**

65%  **68%**
anticipate a significant rate of return on ESG investments within five years

Greatest barrier to achieving net zero or similar climate ambitions

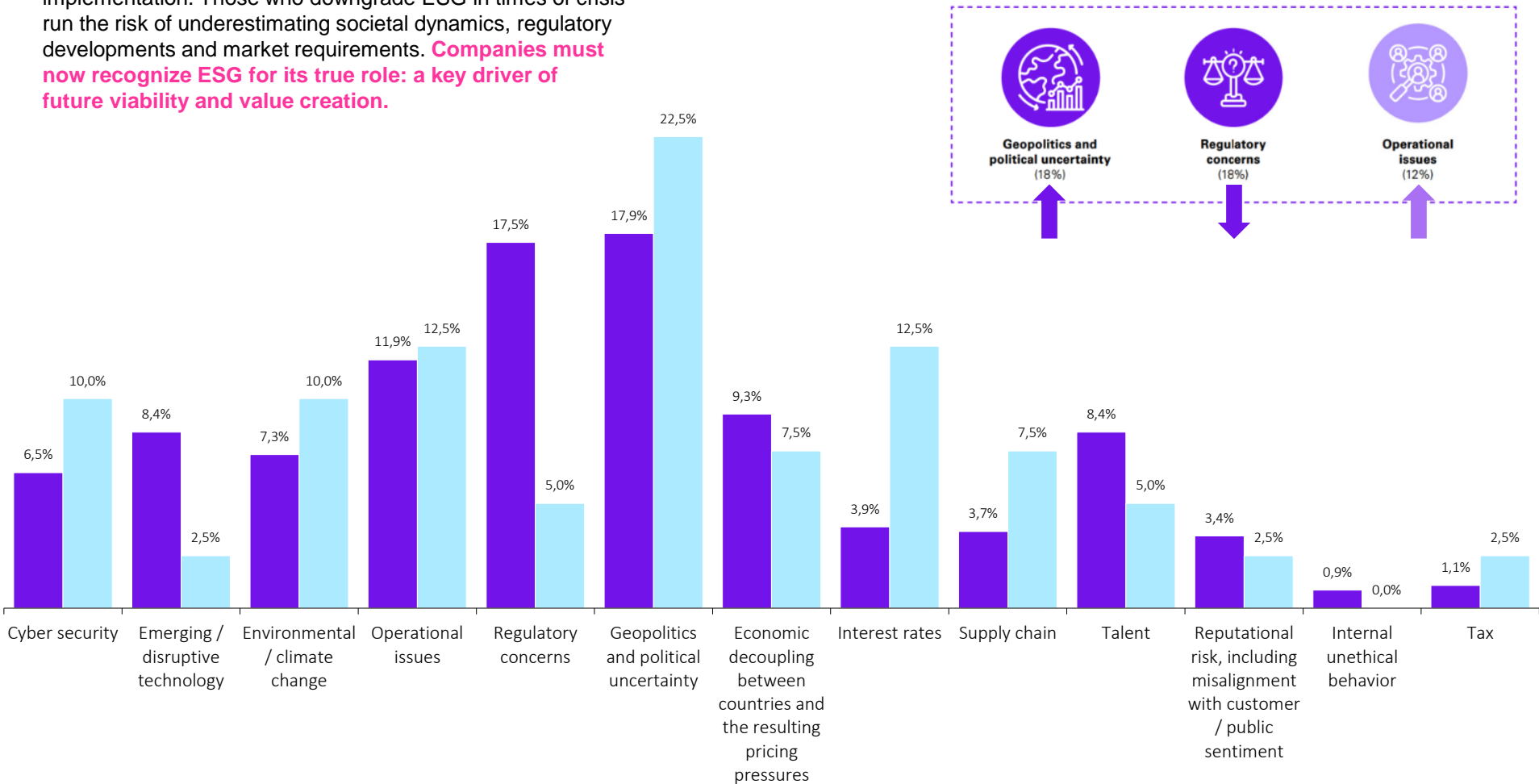




ESG and risks to corporate growth

Change is not driven by intention, but by rigorous implementation. Those who downgrade ESG in times of crisis run the risk of underestimating societal dynamics, regulatory developments and market requirements. **Companies must now recognize ESG for its true role: a key driver of future viability and value creation.**

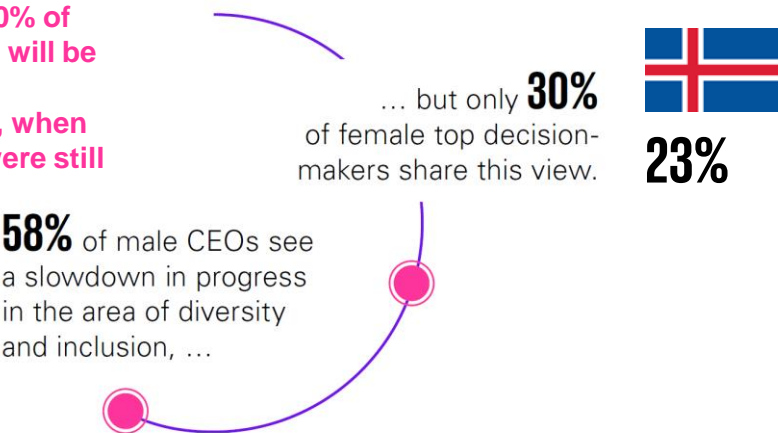
Top three greatest risks to corporate growth over the next three years





Diversity and inclusion are stagnating

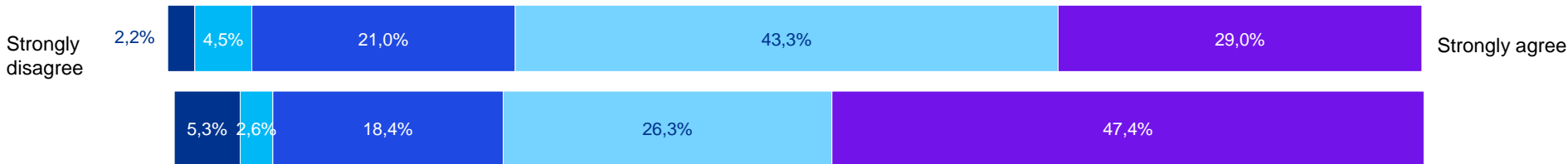
Although female leaders rate progress in terms of diversity & inclusion more positively overall than their male CEO colleagues, as before, they have a more negative view of developments over the medium term: **only 58% (vs. 70% of male CEOs) are confident that efforts will be intensified in the next three years – a significant decline compared to 2023, when 75% of female top decision-makers were still confident**



72% concur that gender parity at C-level will facilitate reaching growth objectives.



„Achieving gender equity in our C-suite will help us meet our growth ambitions“






Gender equality on boards as a long-term goal


Gender equality at board level is considered to be very important.

Almost three quarters of respondents agree that achieving this goal will lead to better company performance and higher growth targets. Interestingly, this consensus is greater among male CEOs than among female top decision-makers.

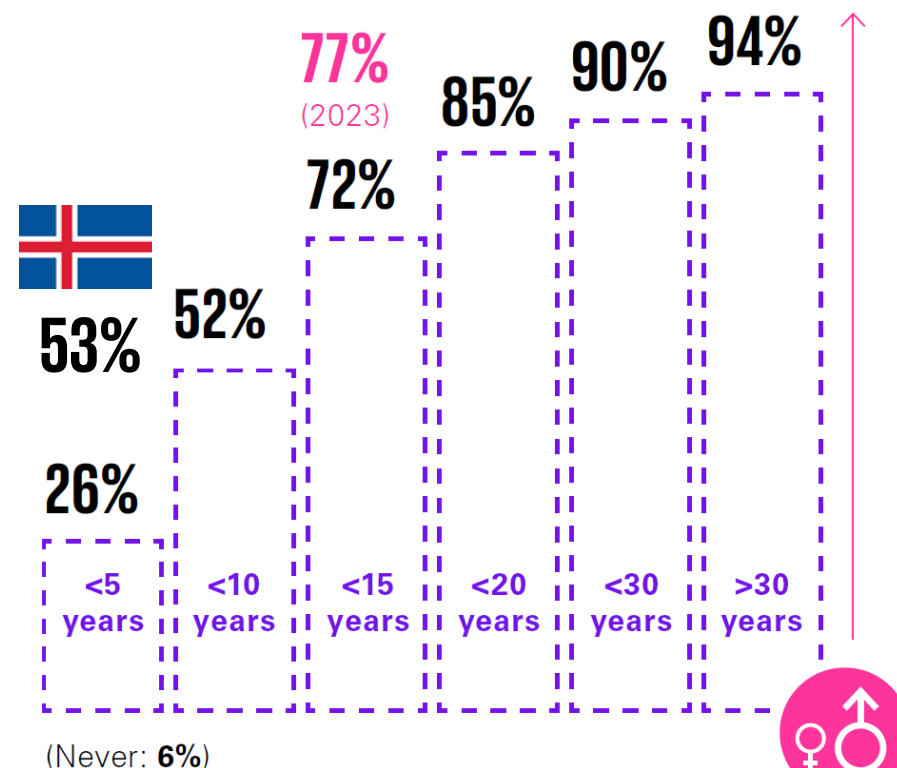
62% have experienced bias and discrimination in the work environment in the past three years.

54% 

47% still have no transparency on equal pay.

18% 

Expected time horizon until gender equality on the board is achieved



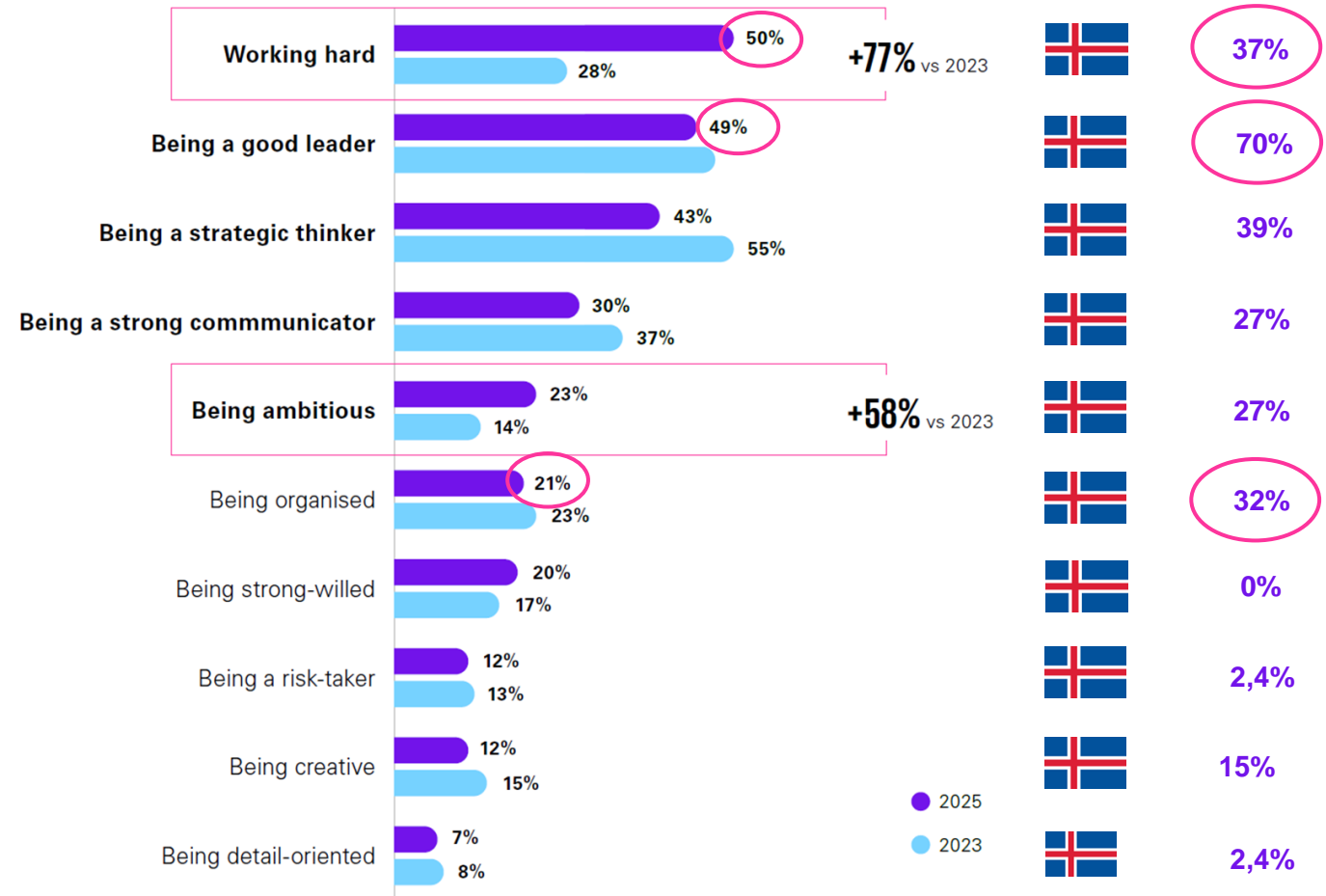


04

Female careers in transition

What qualities really count in a complex
environment?

Personality impacts on professional SUCCESS – when the going gets tough the tough get going





Crucial success factors

Personal network as a key to success

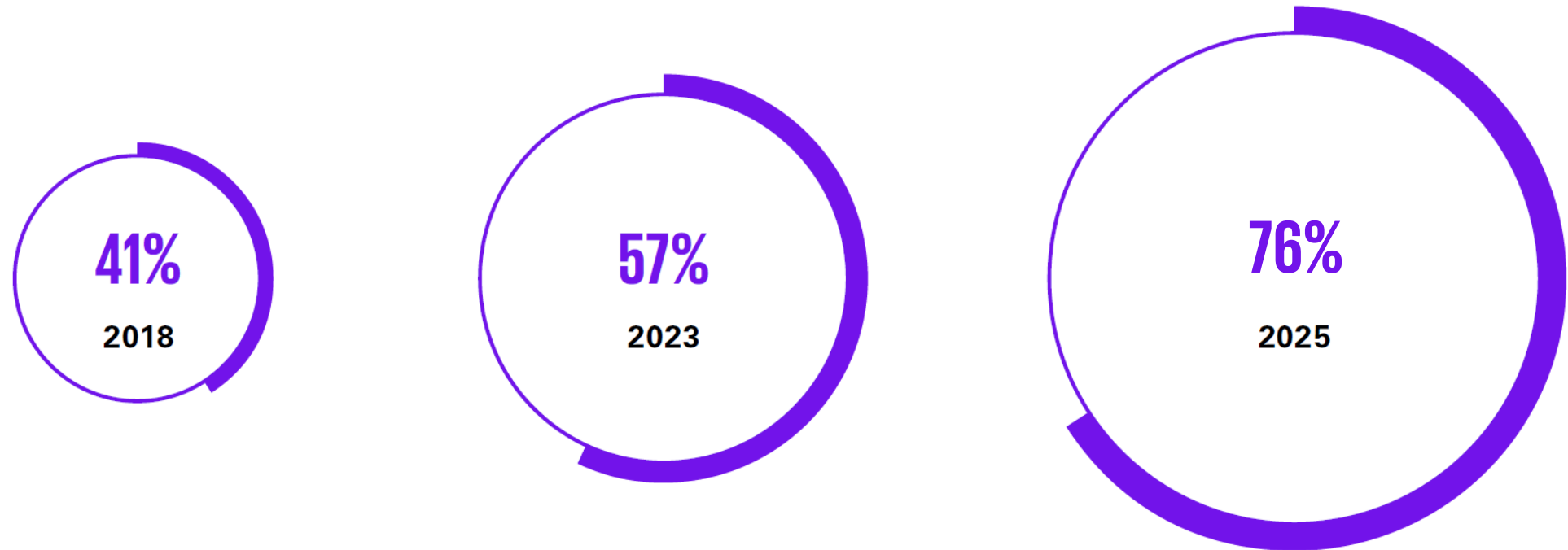
	Iceland	All*
(Female) leadership programs	20%	23%
Personal network	74%	76%
Quotas for female leadership	3%	9%
Organizational flexibility (e.g., for part-time work)	26%	22%
Other	14%	20%

*Excluding Iceland



Personal network as a key to success

Trend in the proportion of respondents who consider their personal network to be of great importance to their professional success





Career steps

82% needed to switch companies to advance in their careers.



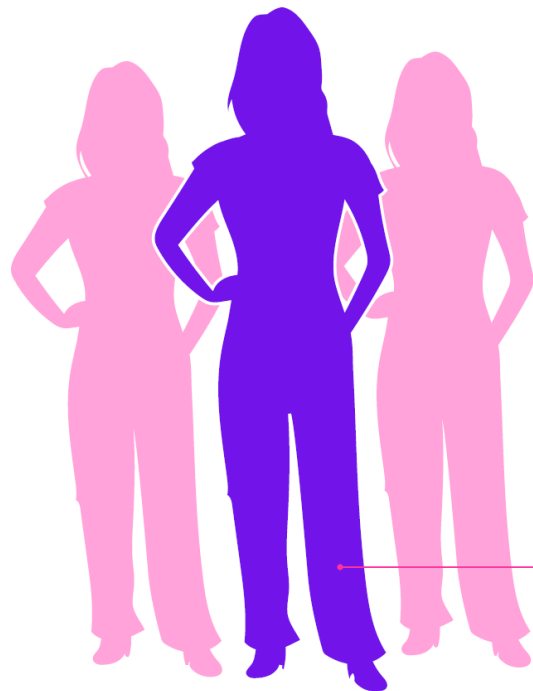
	Iceland	All*
Never	31%	18%
Once	26%	23%
2 – 3 times	29%	36%
4 – 5 times	6%	16%
More than 5 times	9%	7%



05

Violence against women in the digital sphere

What risks does a digital presence pose
for female leaders?



Almost

**one in three
women**

surveyed
had already experienced
digital violence or observed it
in their immediate personal
environment.

Almost



one in seven

Digital violence is not to be underestimated

81% use social media for professional purposes, with over one third using it regularly.

—  **78%**

52% see this development as being particularly prevalent among women in leadership positions or in other positions with increased public visibility.

—  **46%**

57% report having perceived an increase in cases of digital violence against women over the past three years.

—  **51%**

Those affected are resilient in how they deal with violence. Nevertheless, **four out of five** perceive a negative impact on their well-being.

—

Digital violence is not to be underestimated

One in ten reported that the digital violence transferred into real-life violence

68%

of those affected by digital violence identify strangers as the perpetrators, ...

... but **36%**

have also been victims of digital violence at the hands of colleagues or subordinates.



Ekki næg svörun

