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intelligence

DECODING THE COMPLEX B2B BUYER JOURNEY

The Power of Audience Insight and Thought Leadership



B2B PURCHASING DECISIONS ARE MORE COMPLEX THAN EVER

Stakeholder & driver landscape

A mix of stakeholders and underlying drivers shapes the environment in which brands operate.

Why it matters

A deeper understanding of these influencing forces enables brands to engage more effectively and with greater relevance.

Role of thought leadership

Authentic thought leadership helps build trust, create differentiation, and position the brand as the preferred partner.

From initiative to DNA

Strong thought leadership is built on a clear strategy and a structured programme — and becomes truly powerful when embedded into the company's DNA.

01

TRENDS B2B BUYING

02

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

TRENDS B2B BUYING

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP



COMPLEX MULTI-STAKEHOLDER BUYING JOURNEY

77%

of B2B buyers describe their latest purchase as “very complex or difficult”

Source: Gartner, B2B Buying Survey / B2B Buying Journey research

89%

of purchases span two or more departments

Source: Forrester, The State of Business Buying 2024

88%

of midlevel leaders claim to be caught between senior leadership demands and team needs

Source: Harvard Business Impact, Midlevel Leaders: The Bridge to Your Organization’s Future, 2025

IMPLICATION

Persuasion requires dual-track communication

- Middle management: operational relevance, implementation feasibility, workflow impact
- Higher management: strategic impact, ROI, growth, risk reduction

GENERATIONAL SHIFTS AND HUMAN DECISION DRIVERS

50%

more likely to purchase when they perceive personal value in a supplier

Source: Google, CEB (now Gartner), and Motista, From Promotion to Emotion: Connecting B2B Customers to Brands

2/3

two-thirds of buyers involved in large, complex B2B transactions are Millennials or Gen Z

Source: Forrester Buyers' Journey Survey 2024

TRUST & RISK REDUCTION

Buyers seek suppliers that reduce risk, build confidence and strengthen their professional reputation — not just functional performance

Sources: Bain & Company; Harvard Business Review research on B2B buying risk and trust

IMPLICATION GO-TO-MARKET

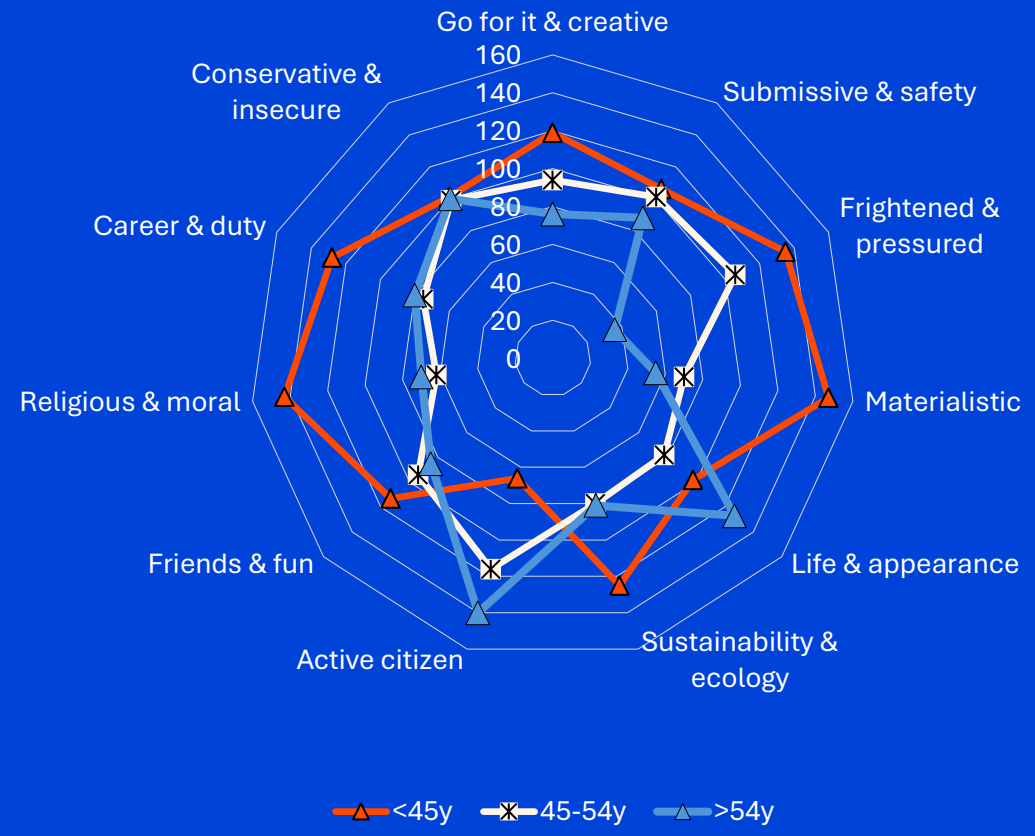
Age and generation should influence segmentation, tone, content format and channel mix — especially as younger buyers expect more digital, self-directed and personalized buying journeys

GENERATIONAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL DRIVERS

LIFESTYLE ATTITUDES



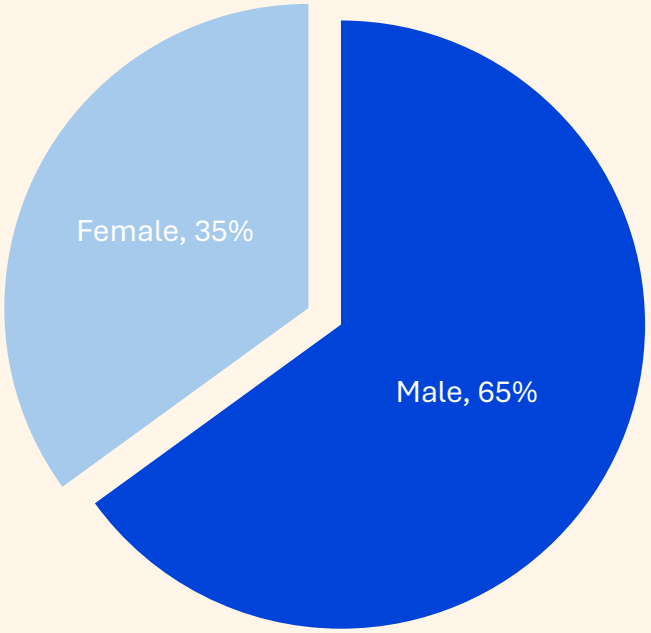
LIFESTYLE ATTITUDES MIDDLE & UPPER MANAGEMENT



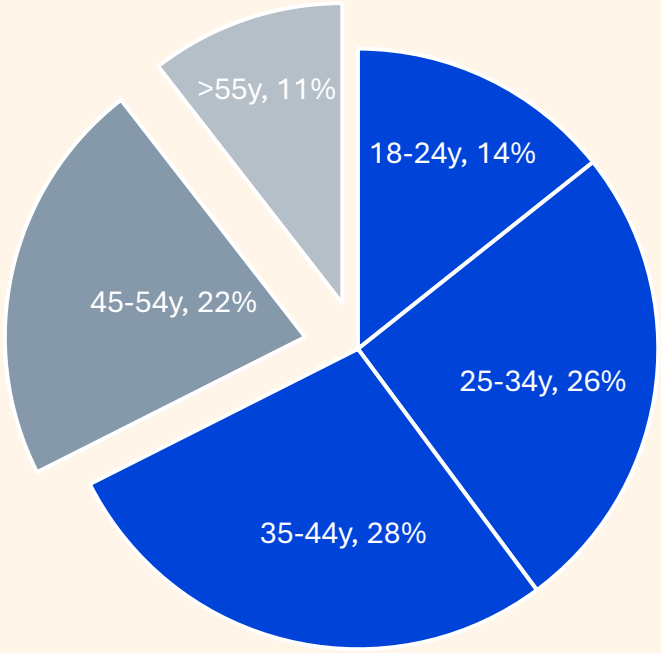
Source: Belgian TGM Survey CIM 2025

DIVERSITY DECISION MAKERS

GENDER

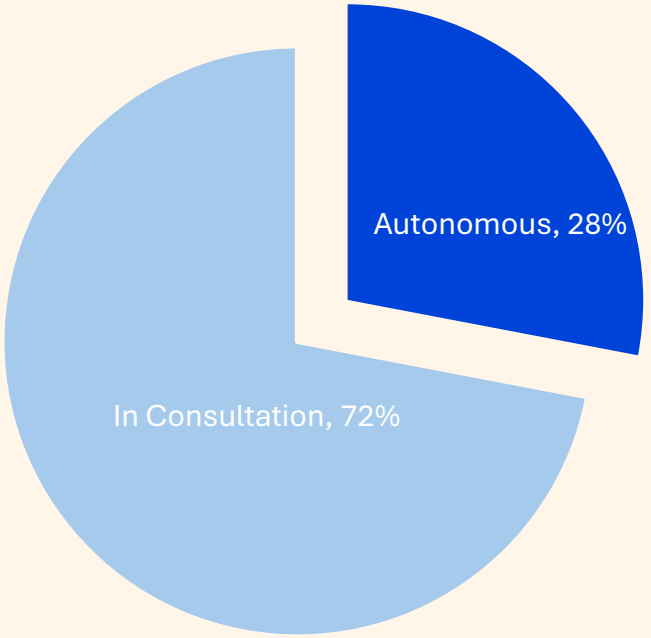


AGE



68% are under 45 year

DECISION MAKING



Source: Decision Makers Survey, Profacts | Belgium 2025

TOTAL REACH BELGIAN BUSINESS MEDIA

92 %

total reach on Decision Makers
in their professional domain

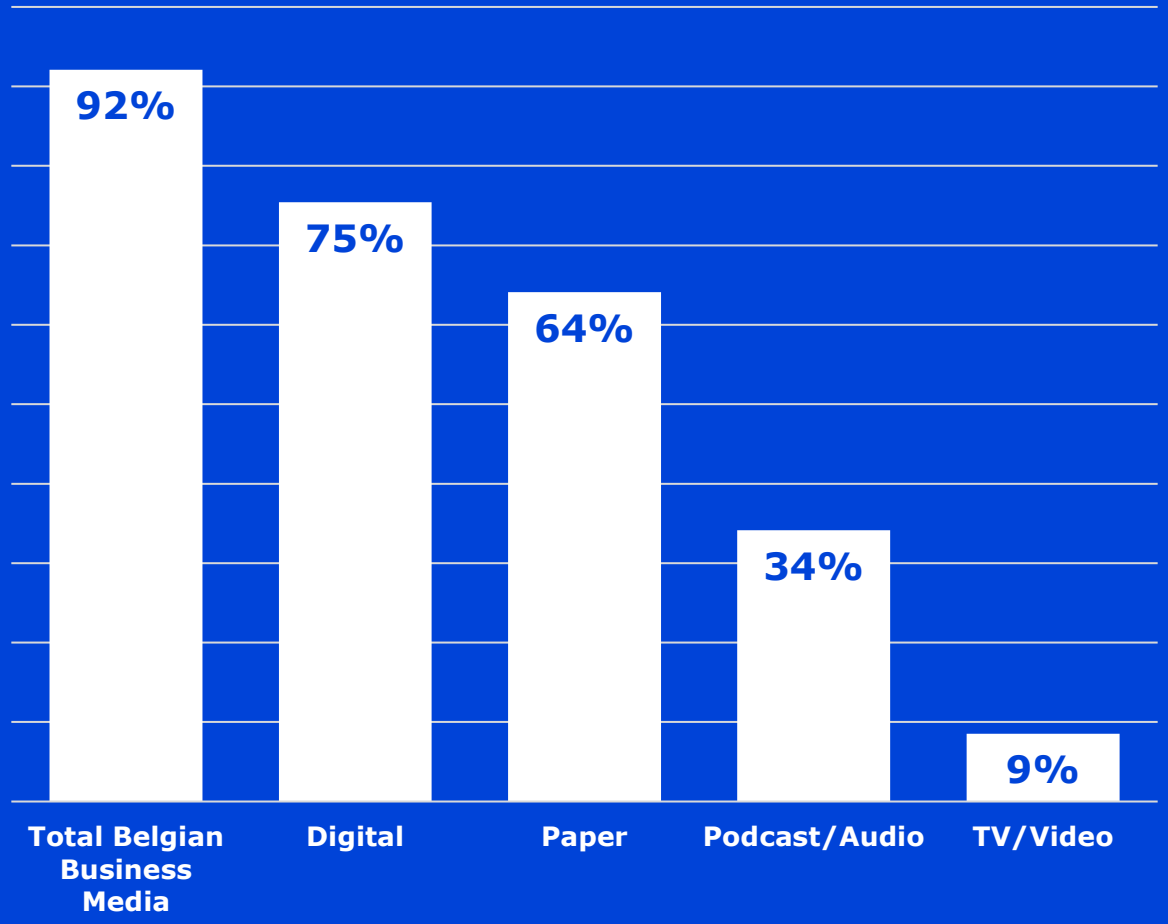


Belgian media reach 92% Decision Makers in Belgium

- Base: Total Reach - Belgian media (De Tijd | L'Echo | De Standaard | De Morgen | Le Soir | La Libre | Mijn Geld | Mon Argent | Trends | Trends Tendances | Sabato | CXO Magazine | Forbes | Data News | Business Vlaanderen | Entrepreneur | Voka Ondernemers | Voka Magazine | Sterck Magazine | Bloovi | KMO insider | Kanaal Z | Canal Z | LN24 | Business AM | Made in)

Source: Decision Makers Survey | Belgium 2025

TOTAL REACH BELGIAN BUSINESS MEDIA



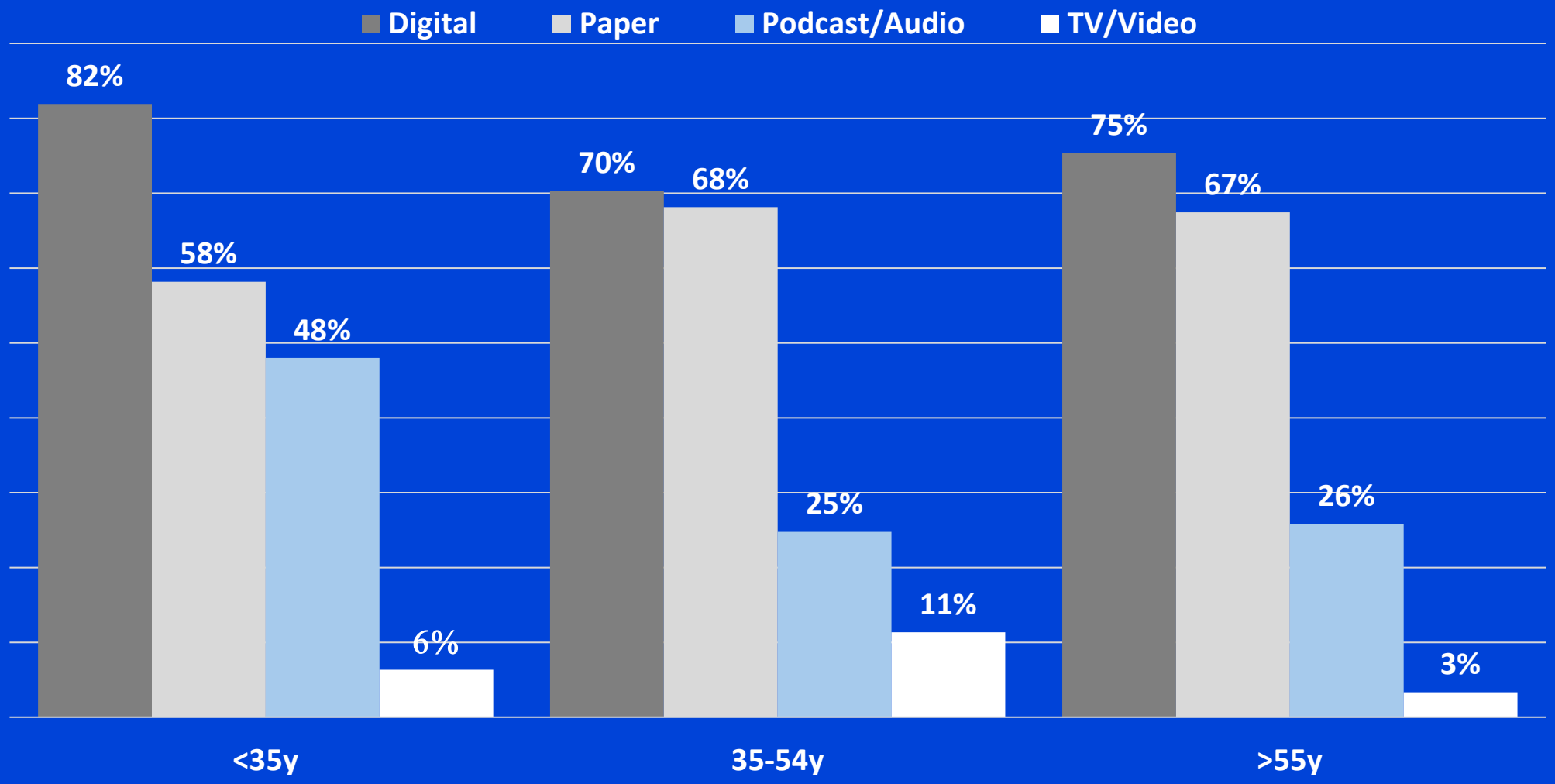


==> Digital = website including all content formats
==> TV/Video = Kanaal/Canal Z + LN 24

- Base: Total Reach - Belgian media (De Tijd | L'Echo | De Standaard | De Morgen | Le Soir | La Libre | Mijn Geld | Mon Argent | Trends | Trends Tendances | Sabato | CXO Magazine | Forbes | Data News | Business Vlaanderen | Entrepreneur | Voka Ondernemers | Voka Magazine | Sterck Magazine | Bloovi | KMO insider | Kanaal Z | Canal Z | LN24 | Business AM | Made in)

Source: Decision Makers Survey | Belgium 2025

USAGE LOCAL BUSINESS MEDIA BY AGE



Source: Decision Makers Survey | Belgium 2025

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP BY AGE

The impact of thought leadership is significantly stronger among decision makers under 45

94%

of decision makers *under 45* say thought leadership helps them understand products & services

88%

of decision makers *under 45* say weak thought leadership damages their perception & trust

Thought Leadership was defined as
“Sharing expert insights through native, content-driven communication”

Source: Decision Makers Survey | Belgium 2025



THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

TWO AUDIENCES, ONE BUYER JOURNEY

mediafin intelligence

500
B2B professionals

profacts

50%
INFLUENCERS

People who advise decision makers but do not take the final call on which B2B service provider or supplier their organisation partners with.

50%
DECISION MAKERS

People with the final authority to approve or reject the choice of B2B service provider or supplier their organisation partners with.

01

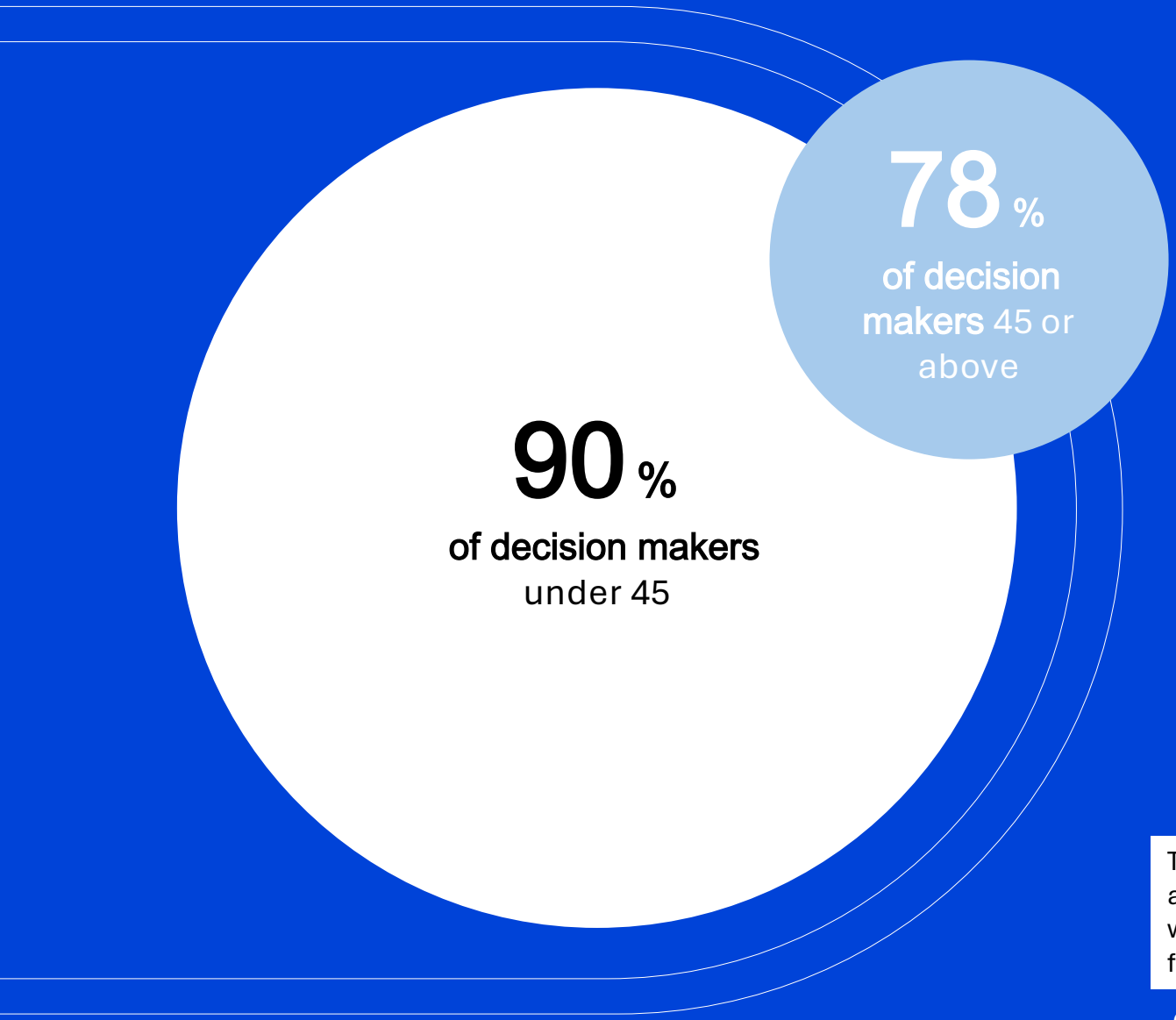
THOUGHT LEADERSHIP MATTERS, BUT NOT IN THE SAME WAY FOR EVERYONE

BROAD RECOGNITION OF THE “THOUGHT LEADERSHIP” TERM

87%

of decision makers are familiar with “thought leadership” as a term.

Q: To what extent are you familiar with the term ‘thought leadership’ in a business context?



AGE AMPLIFIES IMPACT

Significantly more decision makers under 45 say thought leadership plays a large role when choosing external B2B service providers, compared to those 45 and above.

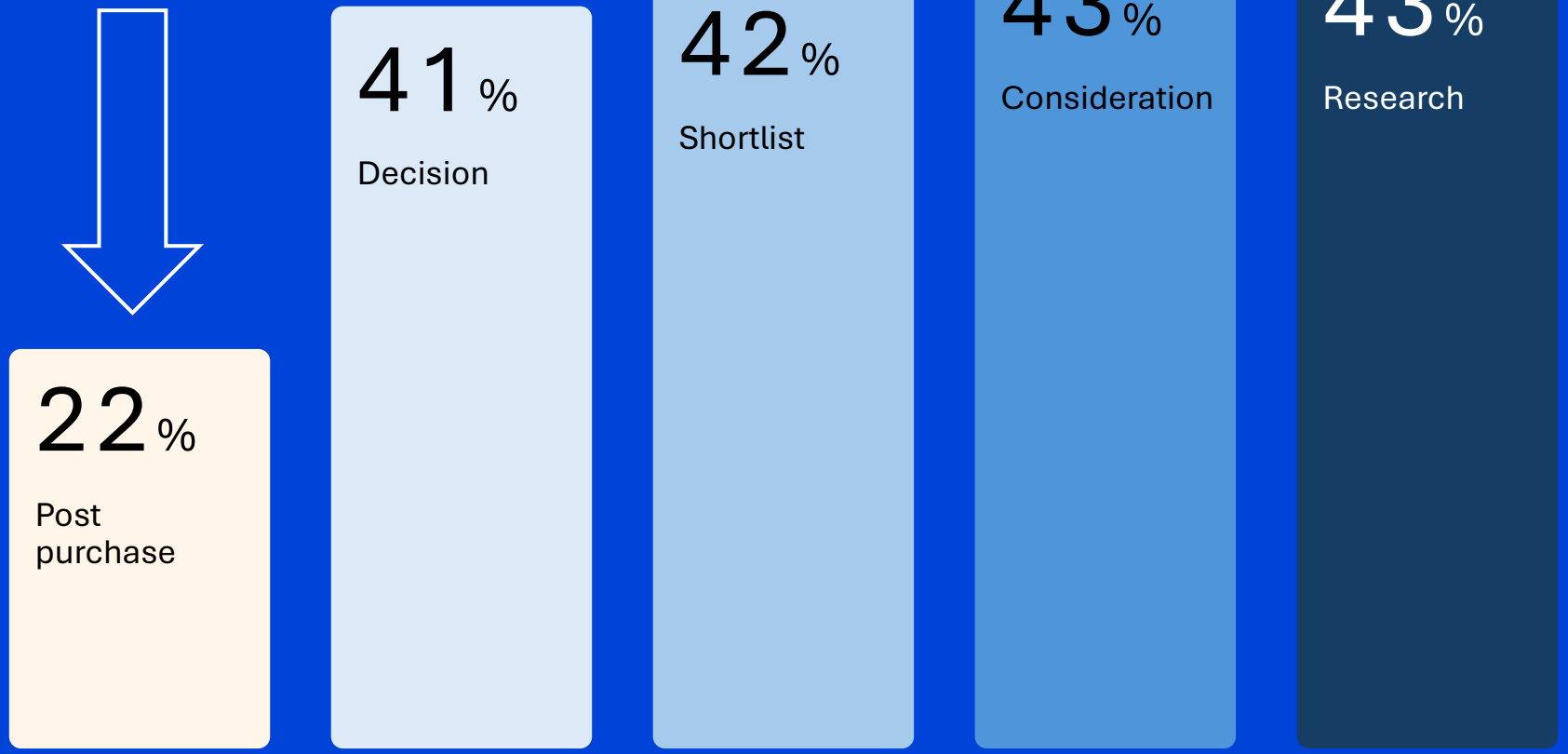
Thought leadership defined as “refers to the sharing of valuable, original insights and expertise that help you better understand your profession or sector, and which position an individual or organisation as an authority within a particular field.”

Q: To what extent does the thought leadership of a B2B service provider or supplier influence your decision to consider or work with that provider?

02
DIFFERENCES IN STAGES TRANSLATE INTO DISTINCT BUYER BEHAVIOURS

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP IS ACTIVELY SOUGHT BEFORE RFPS GO OUT

Near-universal engagement across all buying stages.

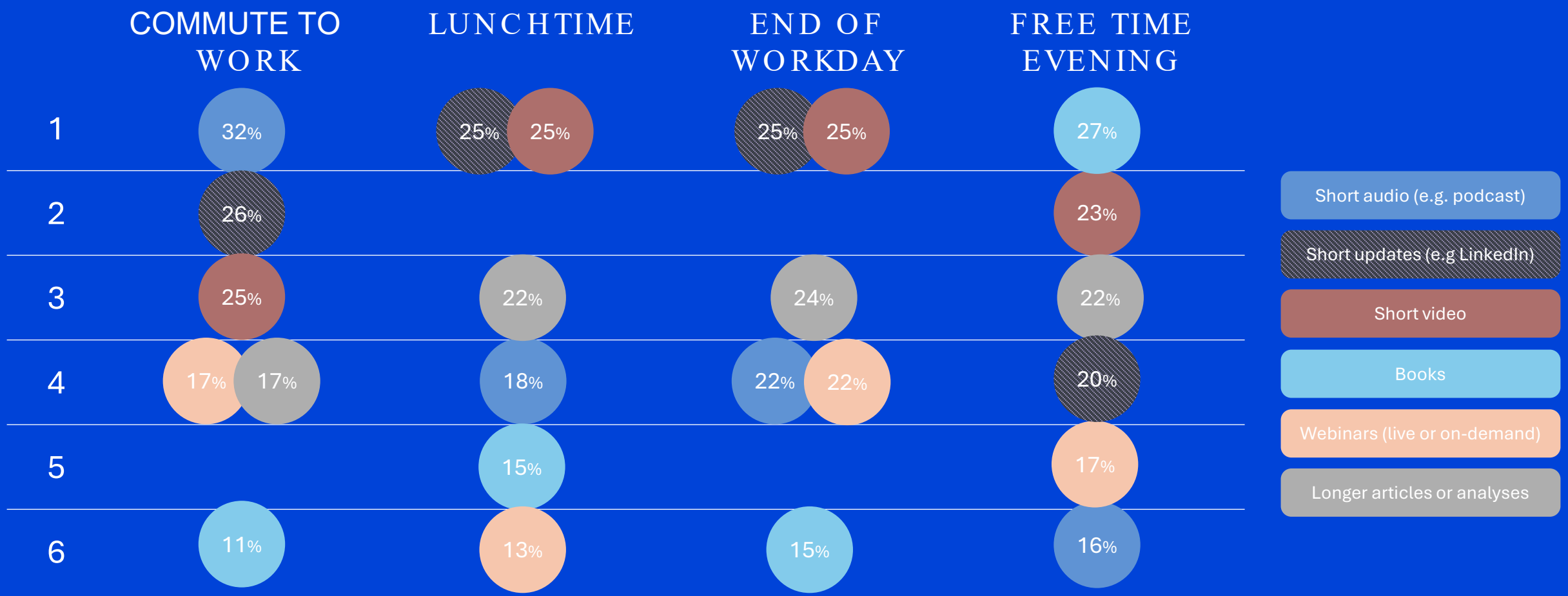


98%

of decision makers actively seek thought leadership for decisions.

Q: At which stage(s) of the B2B buying process do you actively seek out thought leadership? Multiple answers possible.

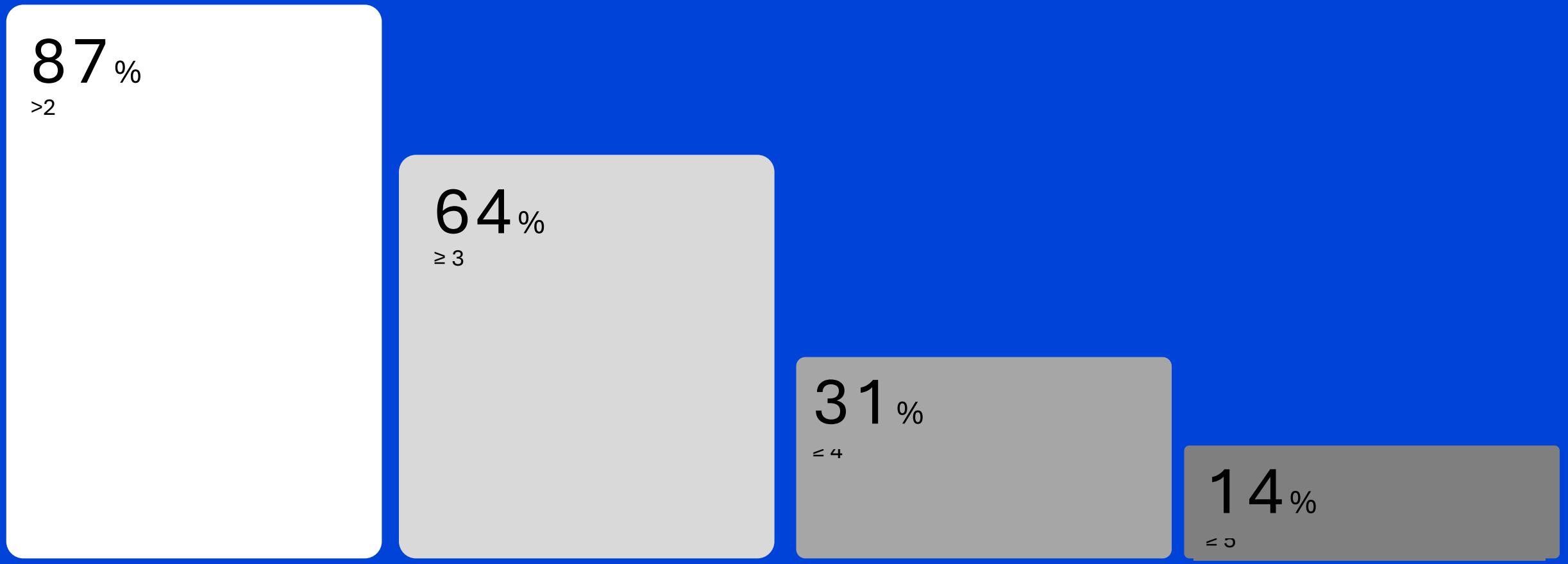
SEGMENT THOUGHT LEADERSHIP BY MOMENT OF CONSUMPTION



Q: Thinking about a typical workday or workweek, for each of the moments below: which type of content best fits that moment for you when it comes to professional content about your profession or sector?

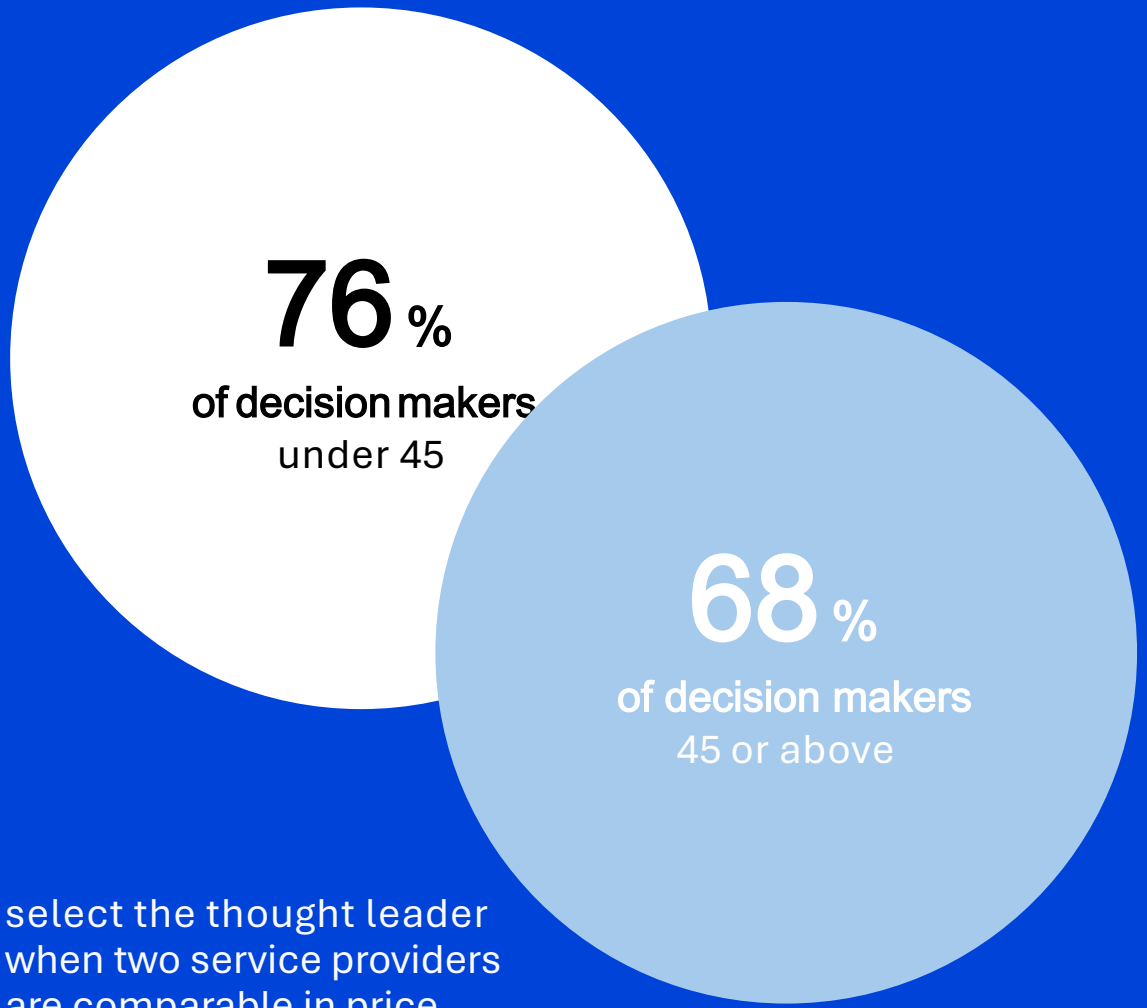
THOUGHT LEADERSHIP REQUIRES MULTI CHANNEL APPROACH

Number of Channels Consulted to Access Expert Content



Q: Through which types of channels and media formats do you usually encounter professional content about your profession or sector? Multiple answers possible.

03
THOUGHT LEADERSHIP DRIVES COMMERCIAL DECISIONS, NOT JUST AWARENESS



select the thought leader when two service providers are comparable in price, service offering and references.

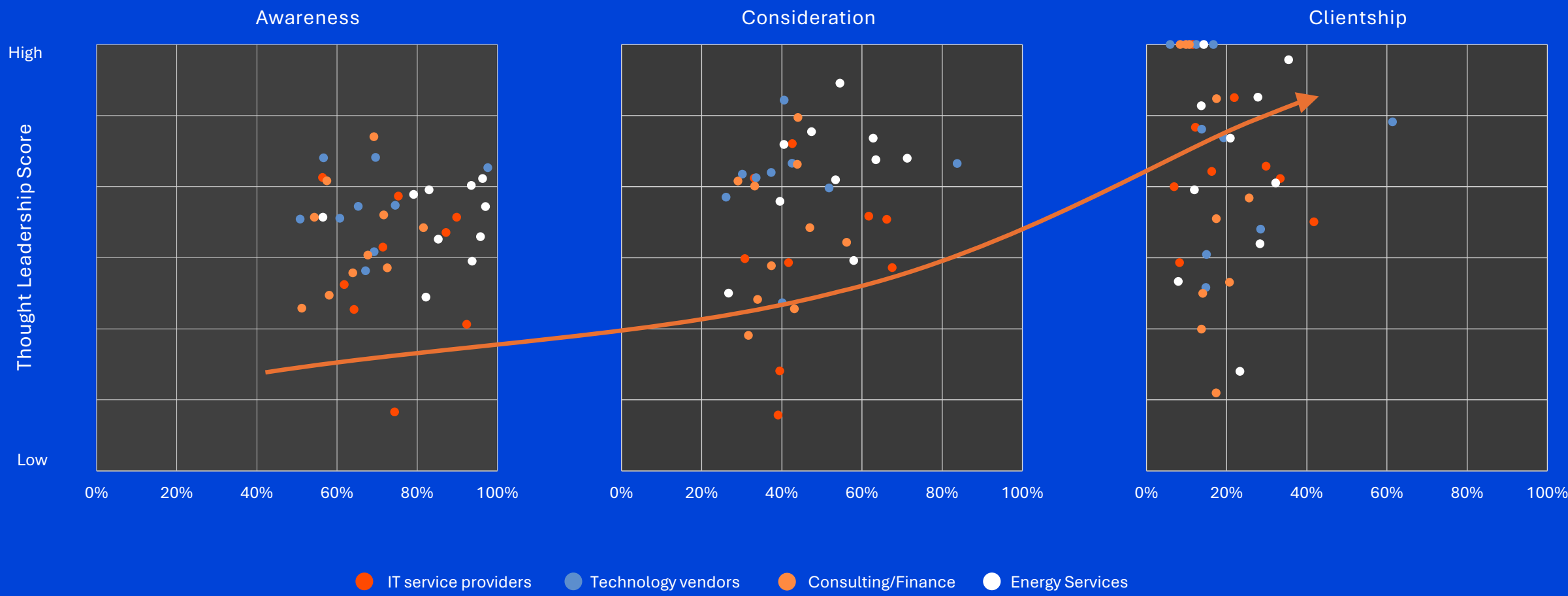
THOUGHT LEADERSHIP TIPS
THE BALANCE WHEN EVERYTHING ELSE IS EQUAL

Clear majority choose the thought leader, with those under 45 showing strongest preference for content differentiation.

Q: Suppose two service providers are comparable in terms of price, service offering, and references, but one of them stands out by regularly sharing strong insights and expertise in the market. Would this have an impact on your decision to work with that provider?

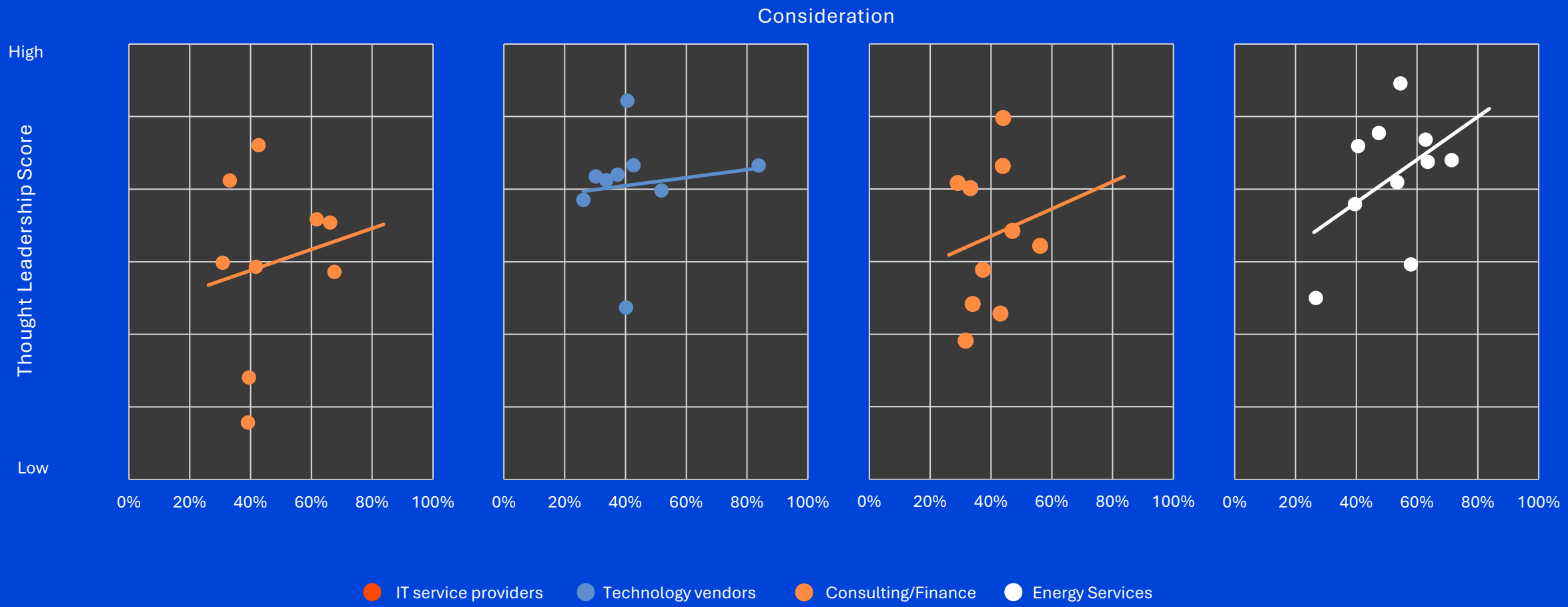
THOUGHT LEADERSHIP AND COMMERCIAL ENGAGEMENT TRAVEL TOGETHER

Providers closest to selection tend to earn the highest thought leadership scores.



THOUGHT LEADERSHIP AND COMMERCIAL ENGAGEMENT TRAVEL TOGETHER

Focus consideration.

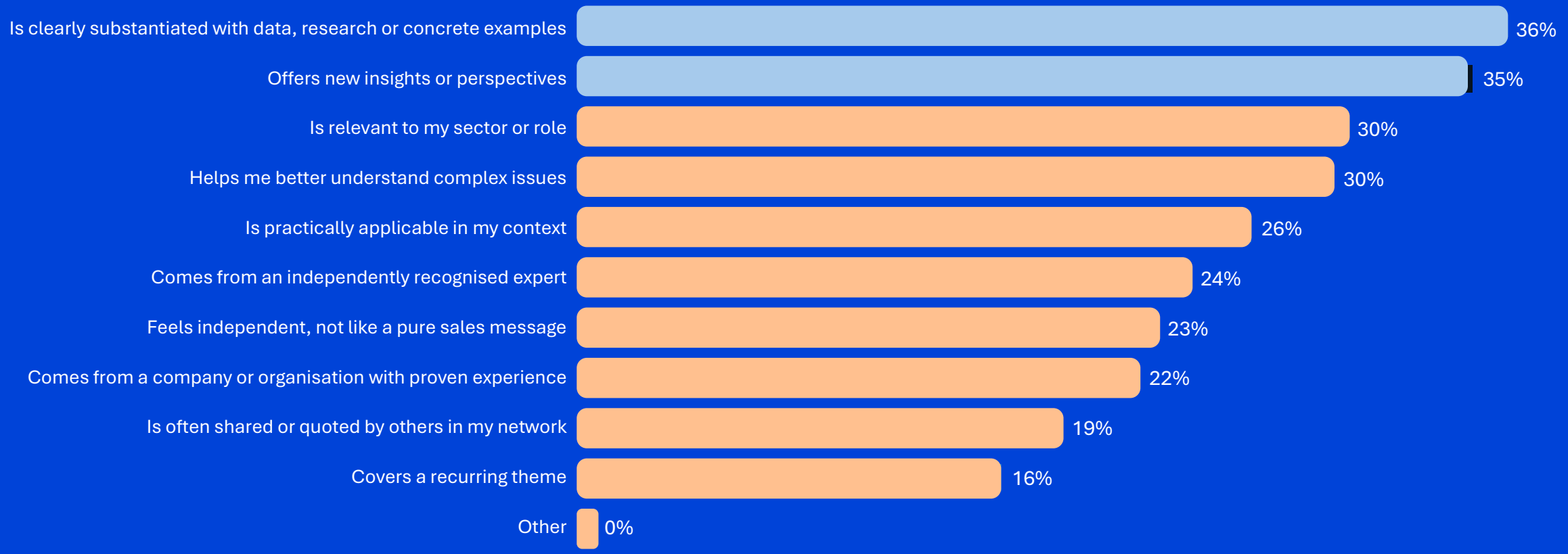


04

NOT ALL PROVIDER CONTENT IS THOUGHT LEADERSHIP. BUYERS KNOW THE DIFFERENCE

QUALITY THOUGHT LEADERSHIP STARTS WITH DATA, NOT OPINIONS

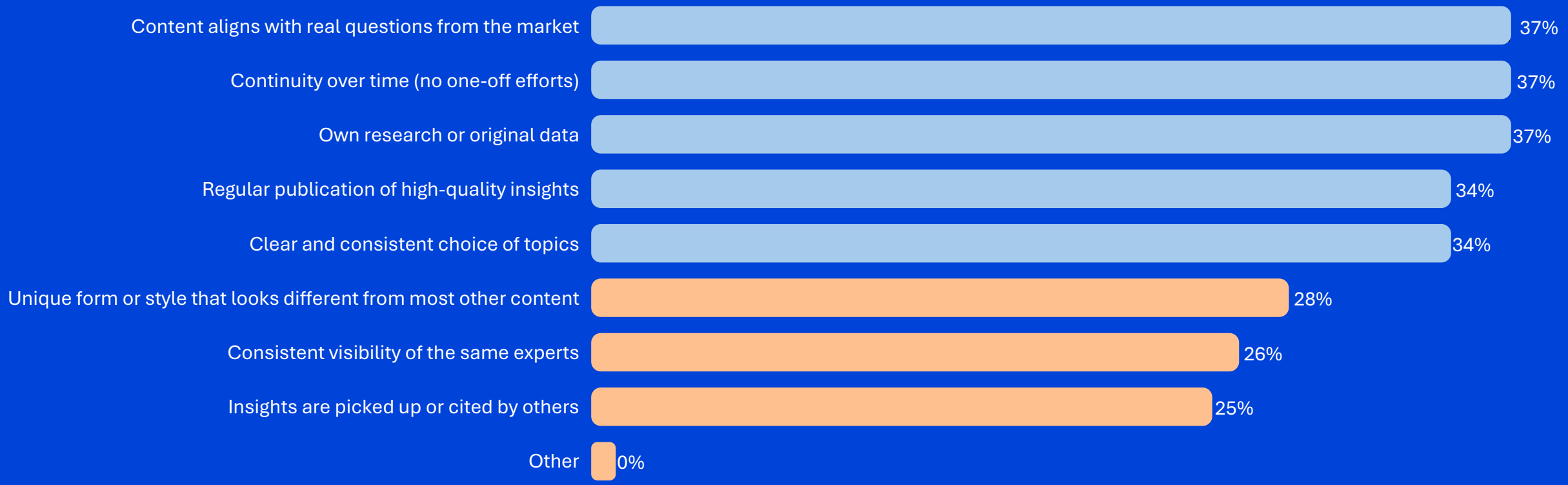
Evidence-based arguments and novel perspectives ranked as top two essentials. Buyers reject unsupported assertions.



Q: Which elements do you consider essential for content to qualify as ‘thought leadership’? Please select the 3 elements that are most essential to you.

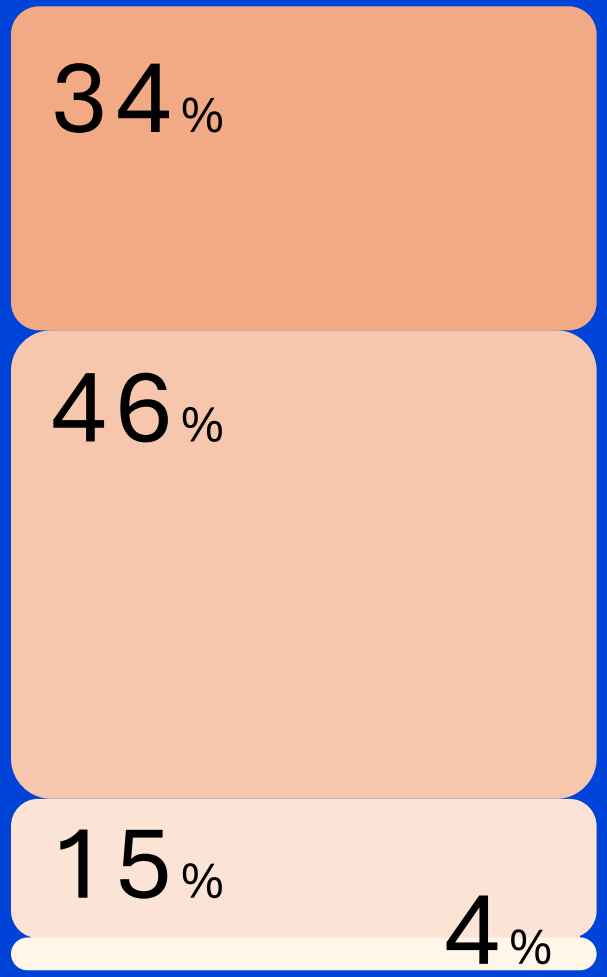
SERIOUS THOUGHT LEADERSHIP LOOKS LIKE A PROGRAM, NOT A CAMPAIGN

Consistent themes, continuous publication, and original research signal a serious thought leadership strategy.



Q: Which signals make you feel that a provider has a truly well-developed thought leadership approach? Please select the 3 signals that are most essential to you

Strong Majority Expect Transparency About AI Use in Thought Leadership



84%
of decision makers
under 45

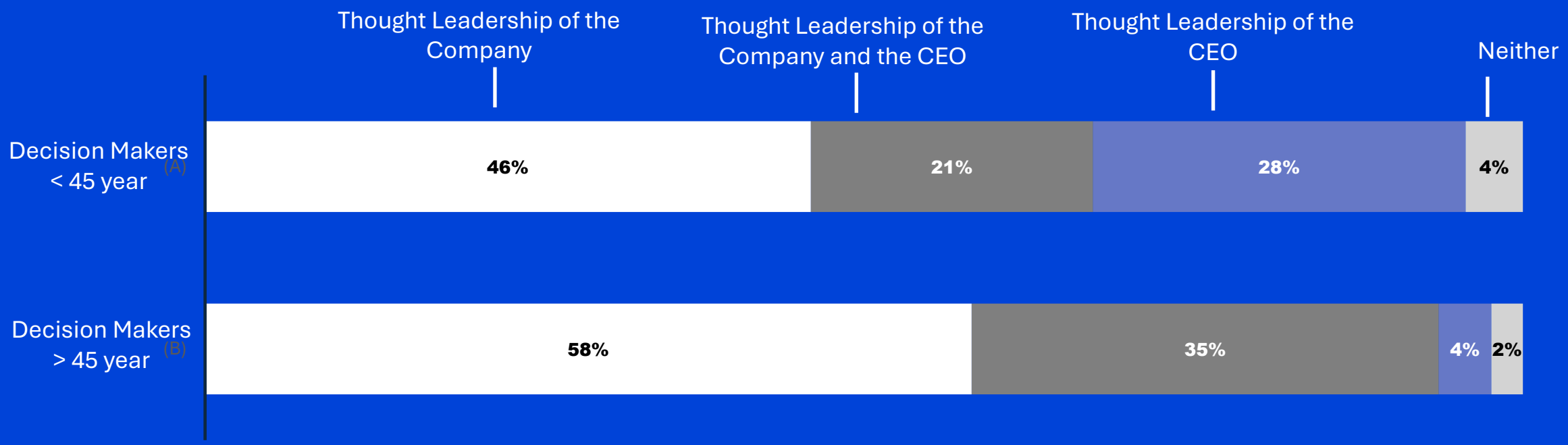
83%
of decision makers
45 or above

expect transparency about the use of AI in producing thought leadership content.

Q: To what extent do you expect organizations to communicate transparently about the use of AI in creating thought leadership content?

05
Driving Thought Leadership through CEOs and Experts

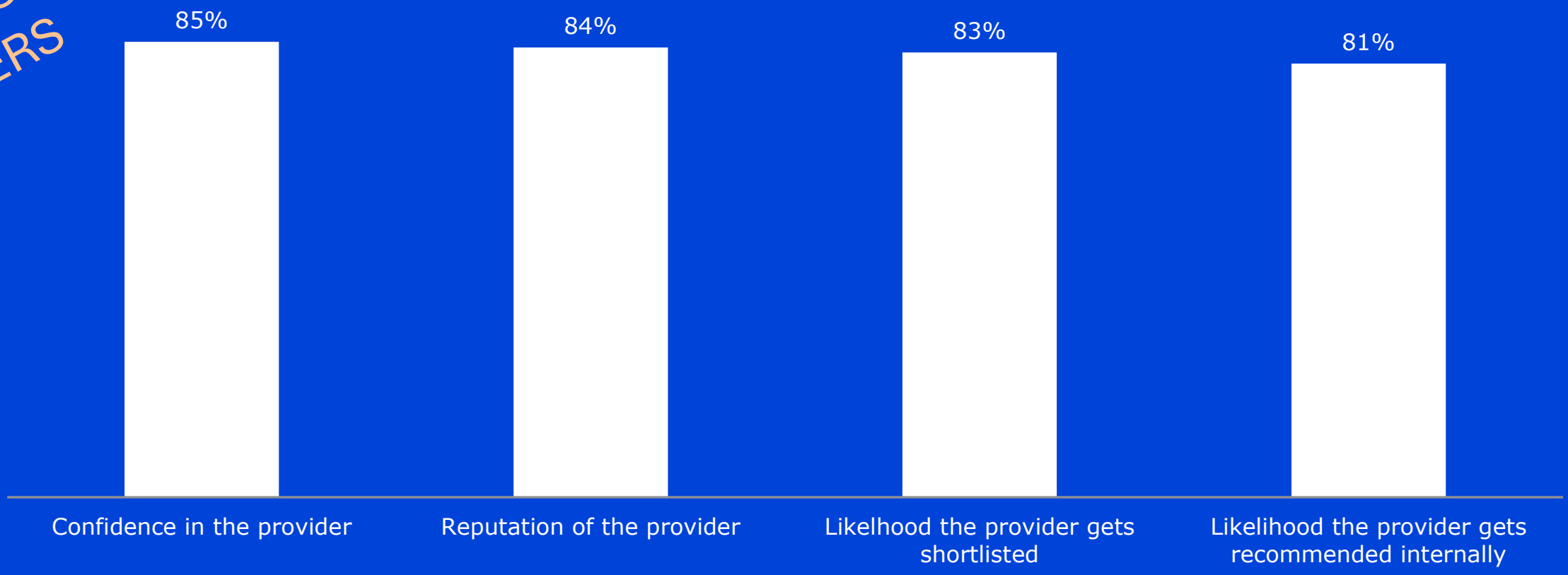
CEO THOUGHT LEADERSHIP ADDS LIFT



Q: When it comes to your trust in a vendor or supplier, what influences you the most?

CEO VISIBILITY STRENGHTENS ALL FOUR BUYING INDICATORS

DECISION MAKERS



Q: To what extent does the visibility of a CEO or other prominent leader at a supplier contribute to...?

B2B BUYING IS INCREASINGLY COMPLEX AND FRAGMENTED, INVOLVING MULTIPLE STAKEHOLDERS

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP MATTERS, EVEN MORE PRONOUNCED AMONG UNDER-45s

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP IS NOT ABOUT OPINIONS, BUT ABOUT WELL-FOUNDED EXPERTISE

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP TURNS COMPANY STRATEGY INTO EVIDENCE-BASED CONTENT THAT BUILDS PREFERENCE

CEO VISIBILITY STRONGLY BOOST TRUST, BUT A BROADER BENCH OF VISIBLE EXPERTS IS NEEDED TO KEEP THAT TRUST RESILIENT WHEN LEADERSHIP CHANGES

Thank you

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