



Tempting
Talent

Executive Search & Market Insights *Report 2025*

● temptingtalent.com

Several standout trends define this year's findings:

Base salaries are on the rise.

Firms are placing greater emphasis on offering strong base pay over commission-heavy packages. This shift is driven by increased competition for experienced talent and a growing recognition that high earning potential alone is not enough to attract or retain top performers.

The market is more cautious.

Fewer professionals considered switching firms in 2025 compared to 2024, particularly among those in Full Desk or Partner roles. When performance is steady and the market is good, people are more reluctant to leave. On the other hand, Principals showed increased interest in exploring new platforms.

Pressure is building at the mid-level.

Principals reported the largest compensation gains and were the only group more likely to consider changing roles this year. This may suggest growing expectations on execution-focused talent to deliver in a competitive environment.

Work-life balance and learning are rising priorities.

Search professionals are placing more value on balance and personal development. Work-life balance is ranked more highly than in previous years, and the demand for strong Learning and Development programs is especially high among those early in their careers.

- This report is designed to support benchmarking, inform hiring strategies, and offer insight into how compensation in Executive Search is adapting to a changing professional landscape.

Overview

In a market where talent is the most valuable currency, understanding compensation trends can provide executive search professionals with the clarity needed to benchmark their earnings, identify areas for growth, and position themselves for success in a highly competitive field.

The 2025 Executive Search Compensation Report offers a detailed look at how compensation, benefits, and working models are evolving across the industry. With insights from over 400 professionals across roles, markets, and firm sizes, this year's data reflects a sector in transition, shaped by shifting market conditions, heightened competition for talent, and changing expectations around how search professionals want to work and be rewarded.

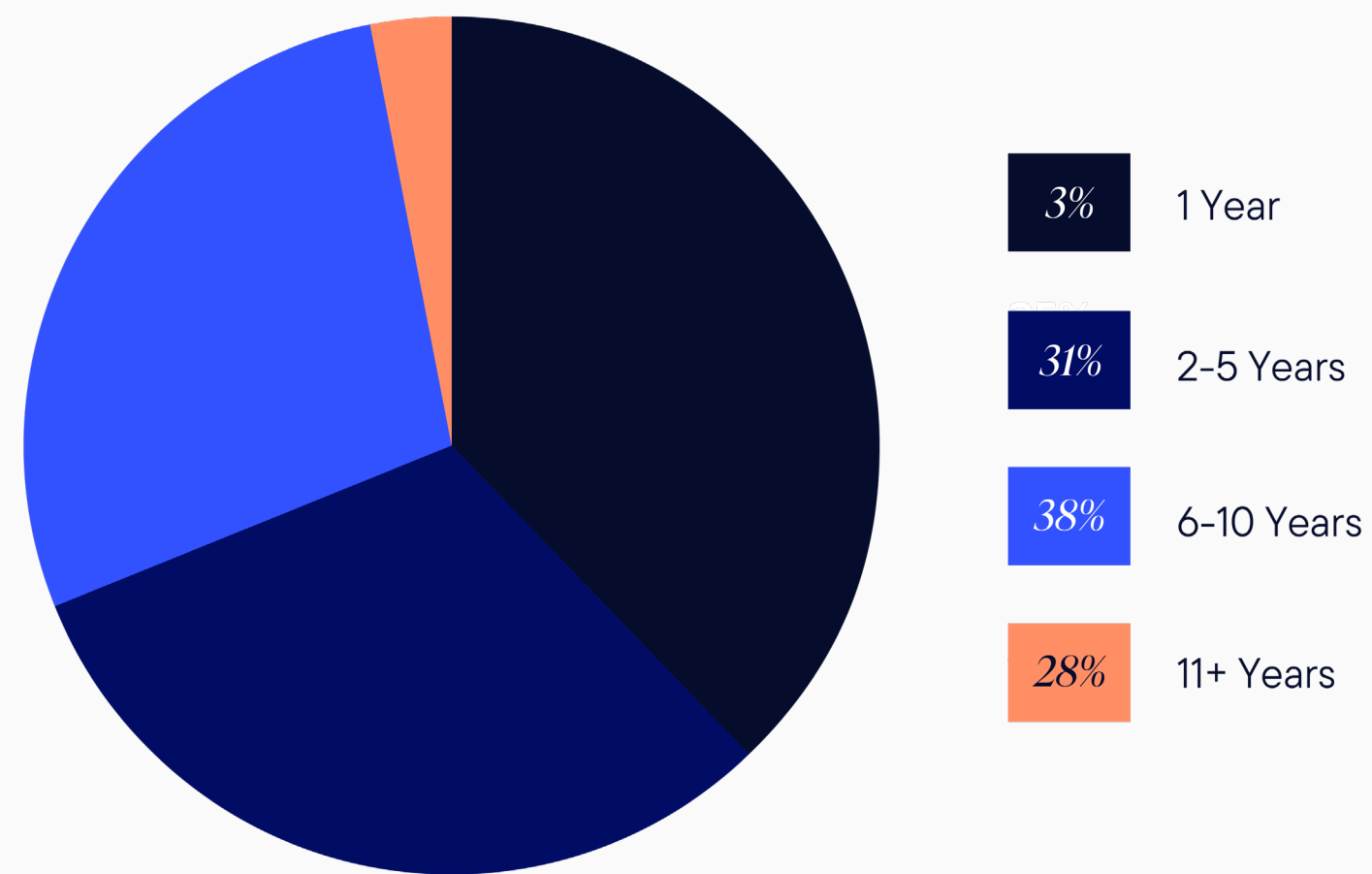
Tempting Talent – Search To Search Practice

Tempting Talent specializes in building Executive Search firms from Associate to Managing Partner level. If you would like to book a discovery call or a career consultation with our team, please contact us on the details below.

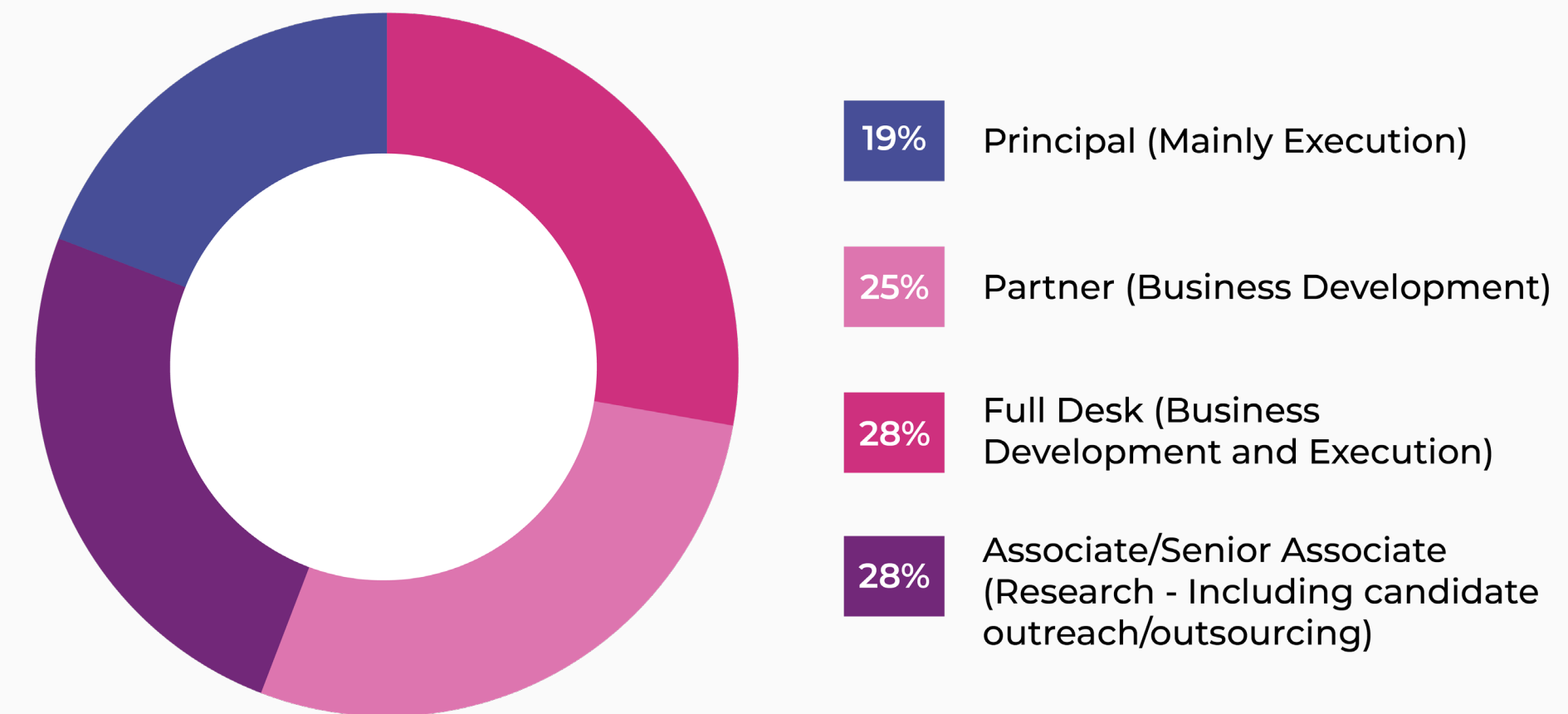
Respondents

Demographic Analysis

- This year's report reflects insights from a wide range of Executive Search professionals across experience levels, functions, and markets:

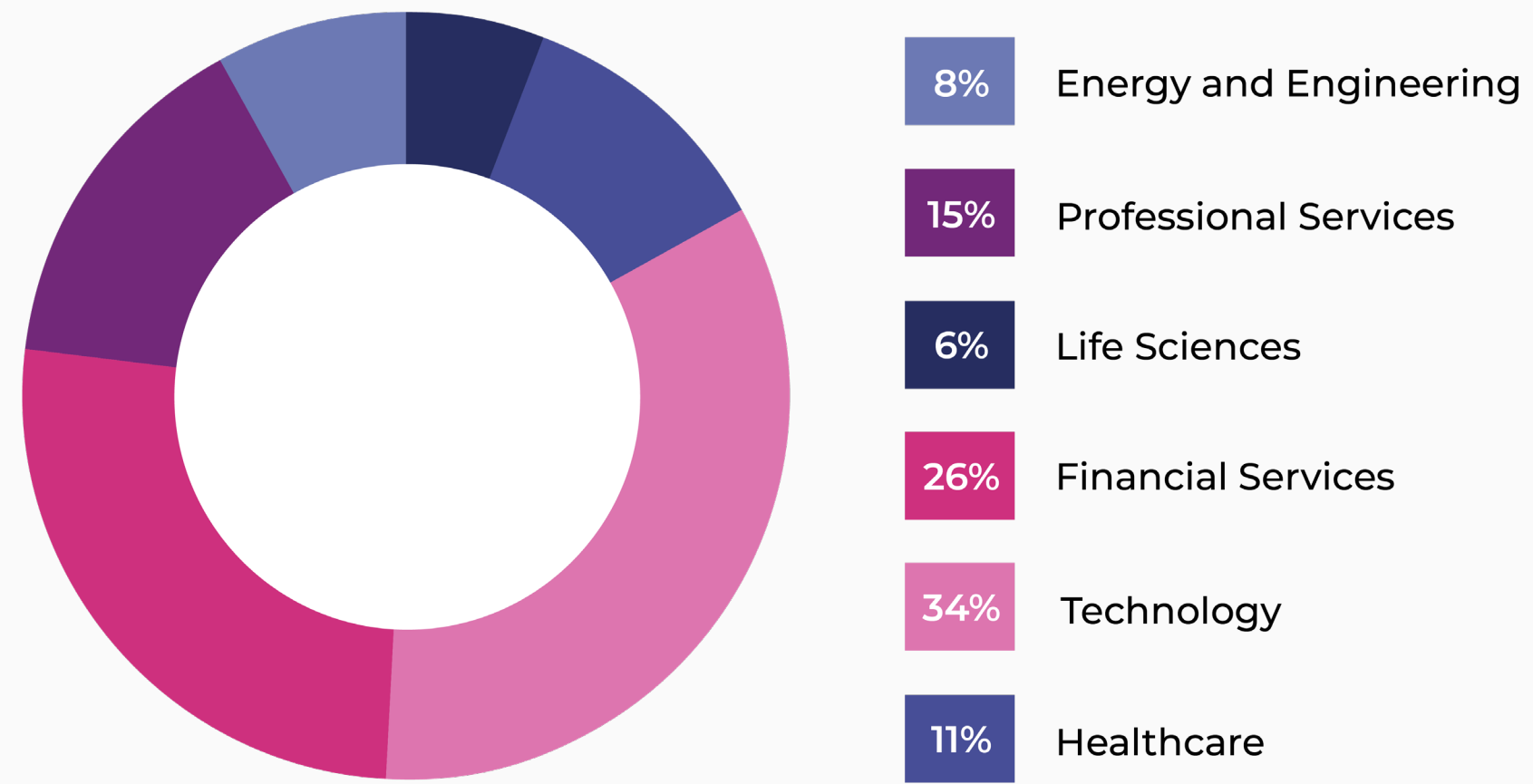


Years of Experience

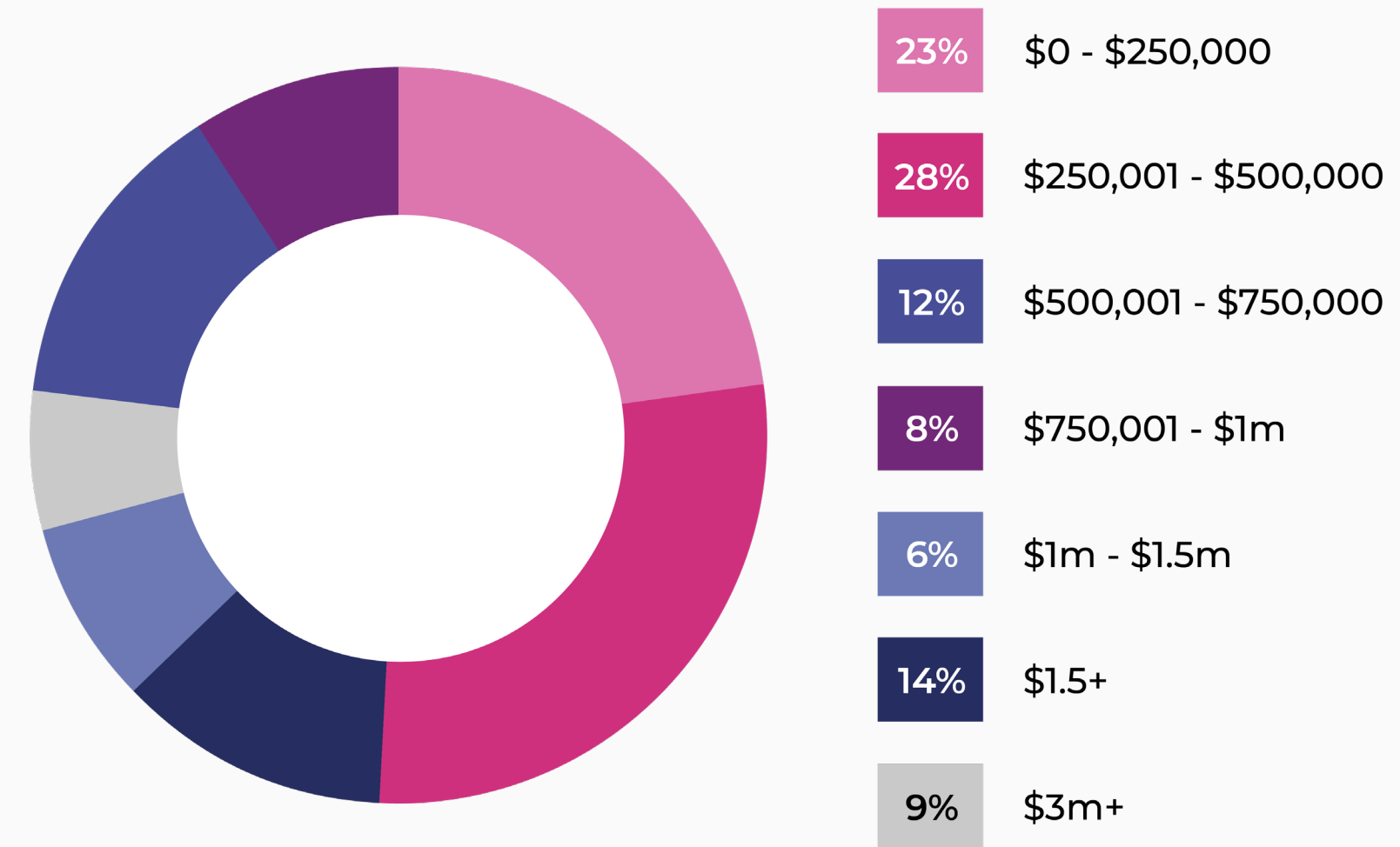


Roles

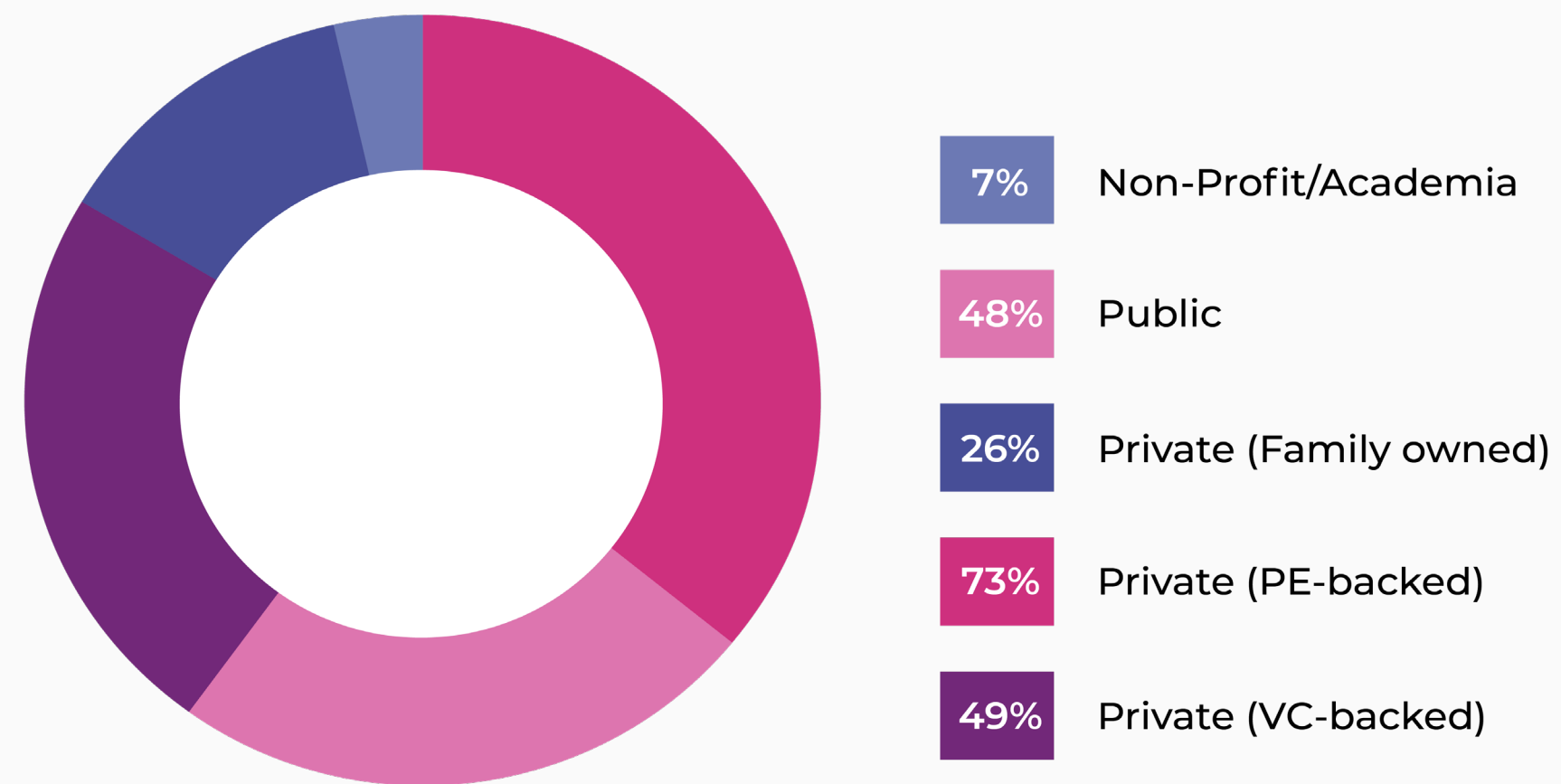
Market:



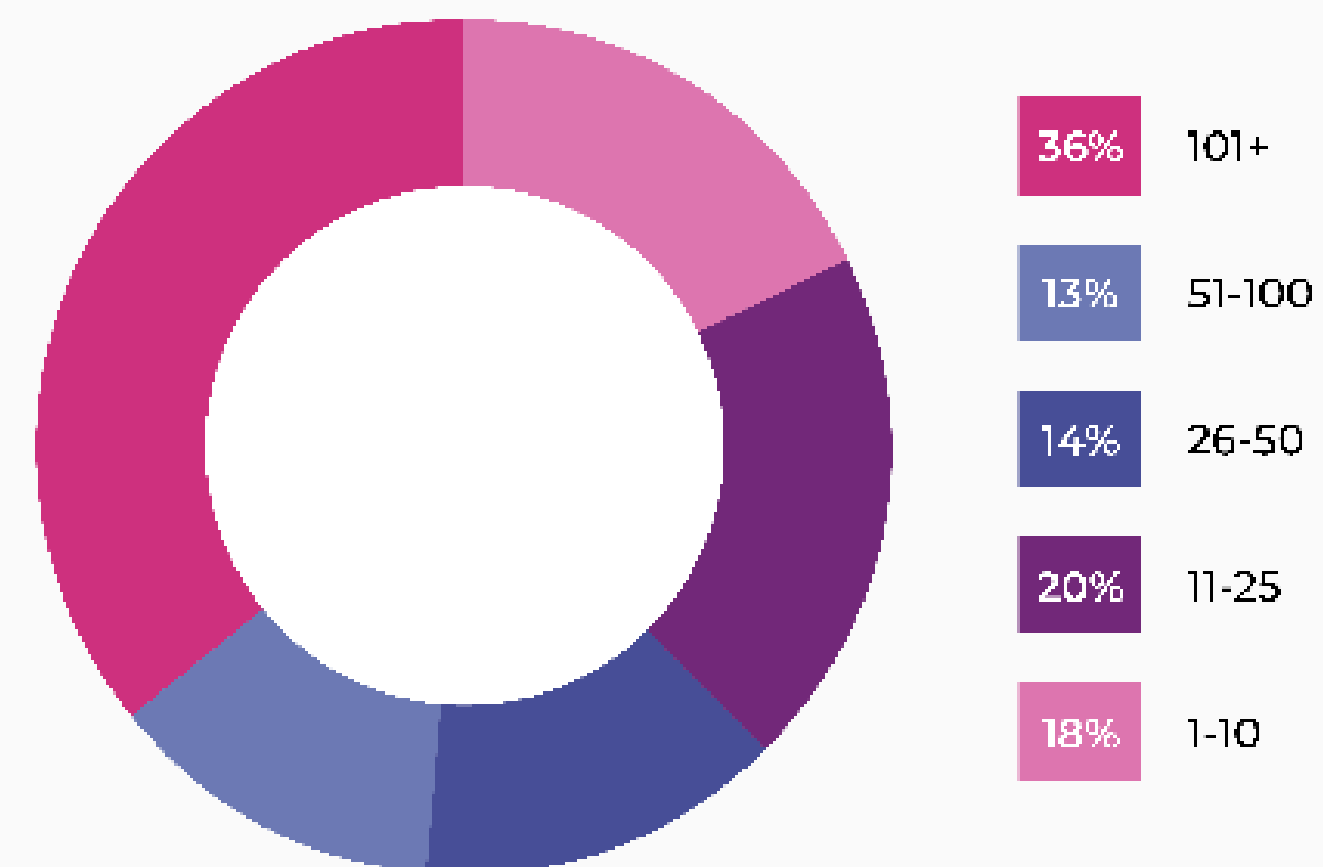
Attributed Billings:



Client Type:



Size of Business by Headcount:



Salary & Compensation *Overview*

Base Salary/Draw by Experience

<i>Experience</i>	<i>25th Percentile</i>	<i>50th Percentile</i>	<i>75th Percentile</i>
1 year	\$65k	\$85k	\$105k
2-5 years	\$70k	\$110k	\$174k
6-10 years	\$100k	\$154k	\$230k
11 years+	\$110k	\$150k	\$270k

Total Compensation by Experience

<i>Experience</i>	<i>25th Percentile</i>	<i>50th Percentile</i>	<i>75th Percentile</i>
1 year	\$85k	\$120k	\$150k
2-5 years	\$100k	\$140k	\$260k
6-10 years	\$155k	\$270k	\$605k
11 years+	\$220k	\$435k	\$1,100k

Compensation Breakdown by Role

<i>Role</i>	<i>Base Salary (median)</i>	<i>Total Comp (median)</i>	<i>Base Salary Growth % since 2024</i>	<i>Total Comp Growth % since 2024</i>
Associate/Senior Associate	\$95k	\$120k	12%	0%
Full Desk	\$138k	\$260k	20%	4%
Partner	\$215k	\$685k	-2%	1%
Principal	\$142k	\$250k	20%	25%



Attributed Billing Average Payout

Attributed Billing	Median base salary/draw	Average take home pay
\$0 - \$250,000	\$89k	\$130k
\$250,000 - \$500,000	\$122k	\$220k
\$500,001 - \$750,000	\$134k	\$266k
\$750,001 - \$1m	\$180k	\$370k
\$1m - \$1.5m	\$140k	\$620k
\$1.5m+	\$215k	\$714k

Attributed Billing	Average % payout
\$0 - \$250,000	52%
\$250,000 - \$500,000	44%
\$500,001 - \$750,000	35%
\$750,001 - \$1m	37%
\$1m - \$1.5m	41%
\$1.5m+	36%

Average Earnings by Industry

Market	Median base salary/draw	Average take home pay
Energy and Engineering	\$140k	\$245k
Financial Services	\$150k	\$433k
Healthcare	\$172k	\$300k
Professional Services	\$132k	\$265k
Technology	\$171k	\$310k
Life Sciences	\$150k	\$245k

“With the average highest payout percentage hovering around 45%, many are starting to question what’s realistically achievable.”

Compensation in 2025

Executive Search firms are placing more emphasis on offering strong base salaries, moving away from compensation packages that rely heavily on draws or commission-heavy structures when hiring new team members.

Competition for experienced search professionals has intensified. Talented individuals often have multiple options, and firms need to differentiate themselves. Our data shows that while top earners are making more than in previous years, the rest of the market has remained relatively flat. This disparity has only made it harder to attract and retain top-tier talent.

Search professionals themselves are also placing more value on strong base salaries. With the average highest payout percentage hovering around 45%, many are starting to question what’s realistically achievable. While roles may be advertised with eye-catching commission structures, experienced recruiters know that headline figures often don’t reflect day-to-day earnings.

Moving Roles in *Executive Search*

The most important factors when considering a new role:

1st

Immediate change in base salary / commission structure

2nd

Company vision/mission

3rd

Flexible working

4th

Equity

5th

Platform (brand/tech stack/team)

6th

Healthcare

Professionals that have considered moving roles in the last 12 months

Role	2025	2024
Associate/Senior Associate	64%	69%
Full Desk	71%	88%
Partner	44%	56%
Principal	76%	59%

Moving *Roles*

In 2024, we saw a higher percentage of Executive Search professionals actively considering a move, especially those in Full Desk roles where 88% had thought about changing firms. In 2025, that number has dropped to 71%, with similar declines across most seniority levels.

This reflects a broader trend: when the market is strong and performance is steady, people are less inclined to take risks. In contrast, when the market is difficult or individuals feel they are underperforming, search professionals become more open to exploring new platforms that offer better support, stability, or opportunity.

Interestingly, the one group that has moved against this trend is Principals. 76% considered moving in the past year, up from 59% in 2024. This may suggest growing pressure or shifting priorities at the mid-to-senior level.

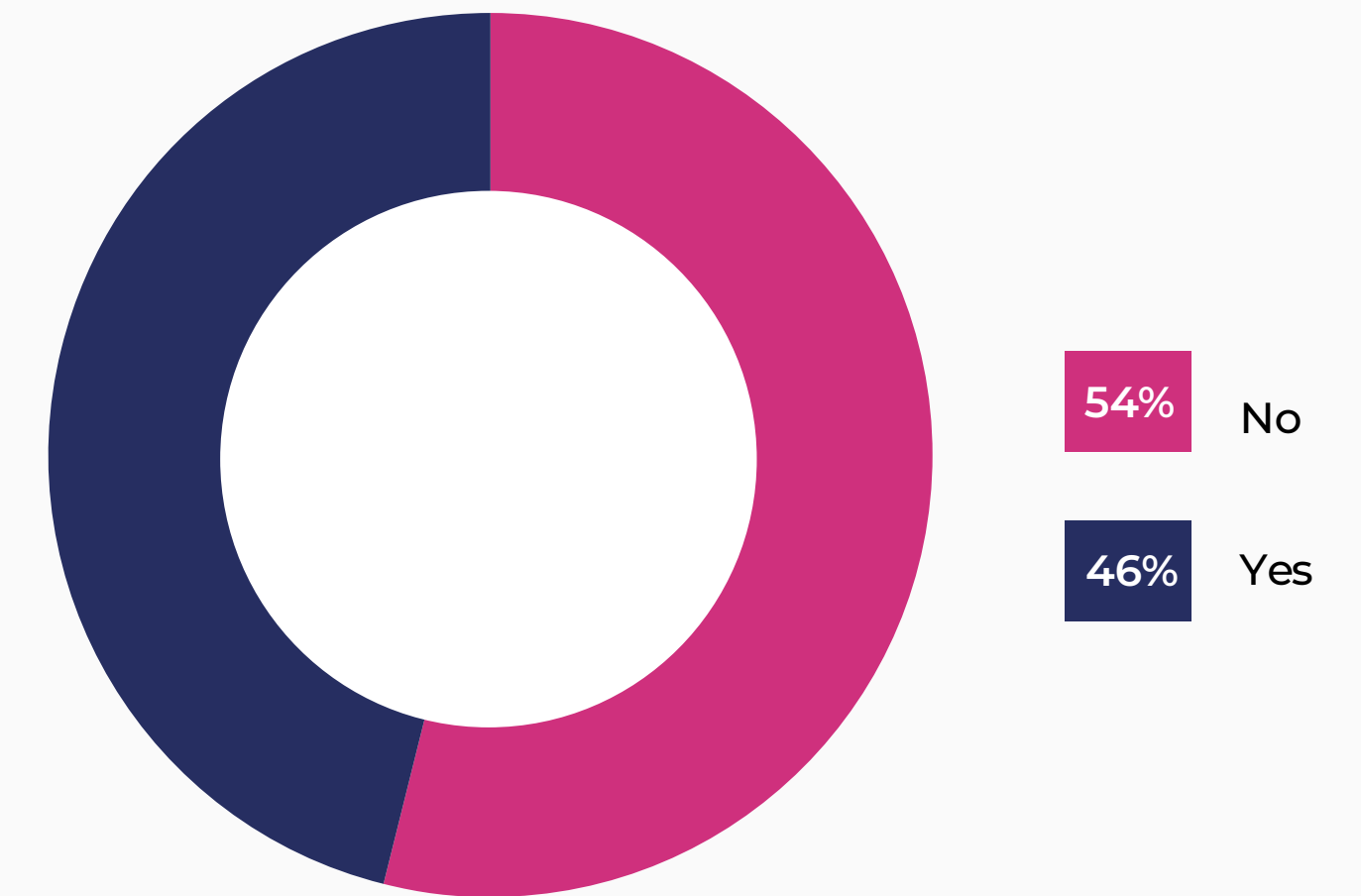
What's inhibiting search professionals from advancing their career?

- 01 Flat hierachy
- 02 Achieved highest level possible at company
- 03 Limited market to develop new clients
- 04 Unable to support relocation

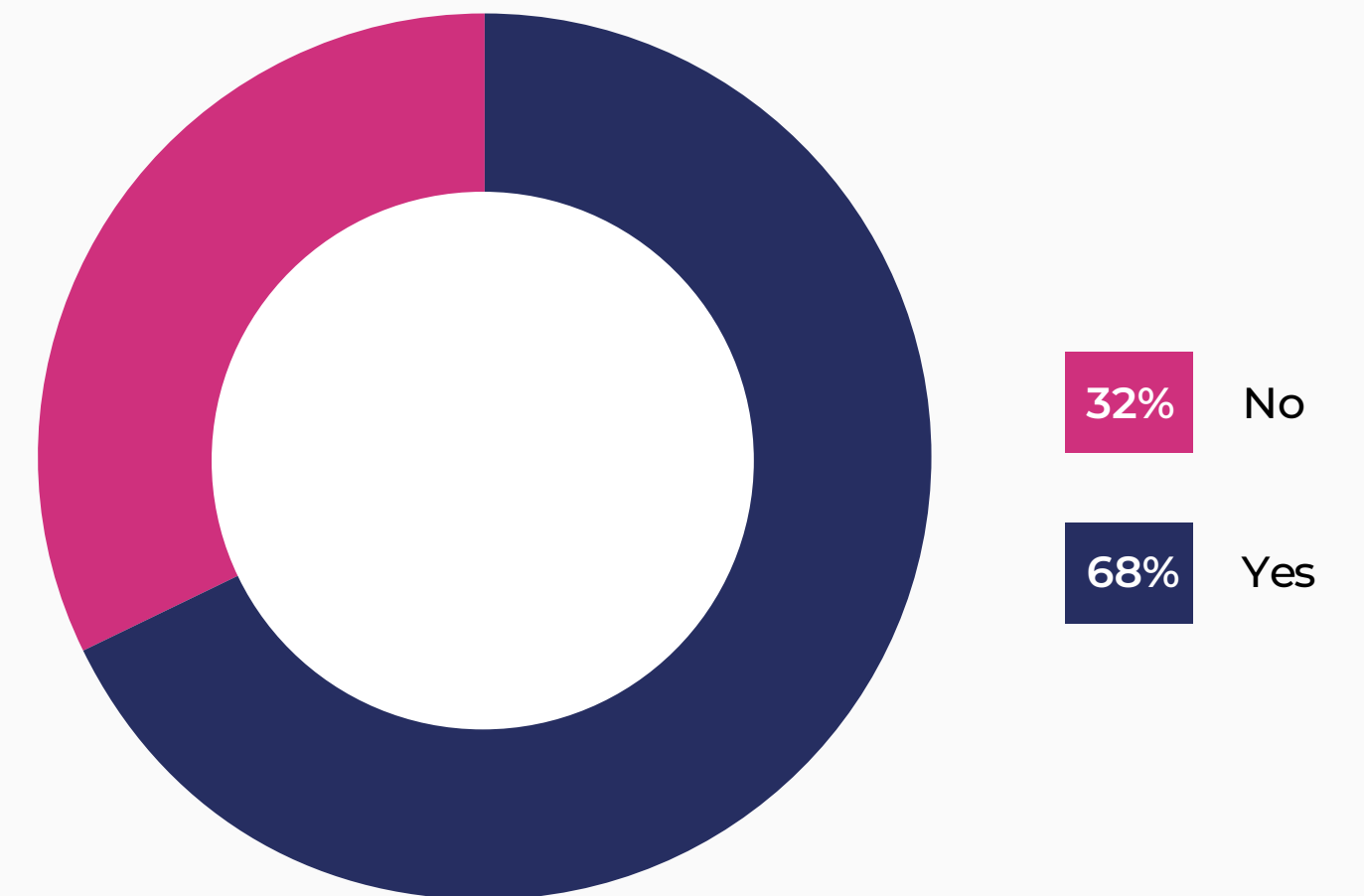
What's enabling search professionals to advance their careers?

- 01 Promotion oportunties
- 02 Equity opportunities
- 03 Developing new markets
- 04 Running a new location or practice

Would you be open to relocating to advance your career?

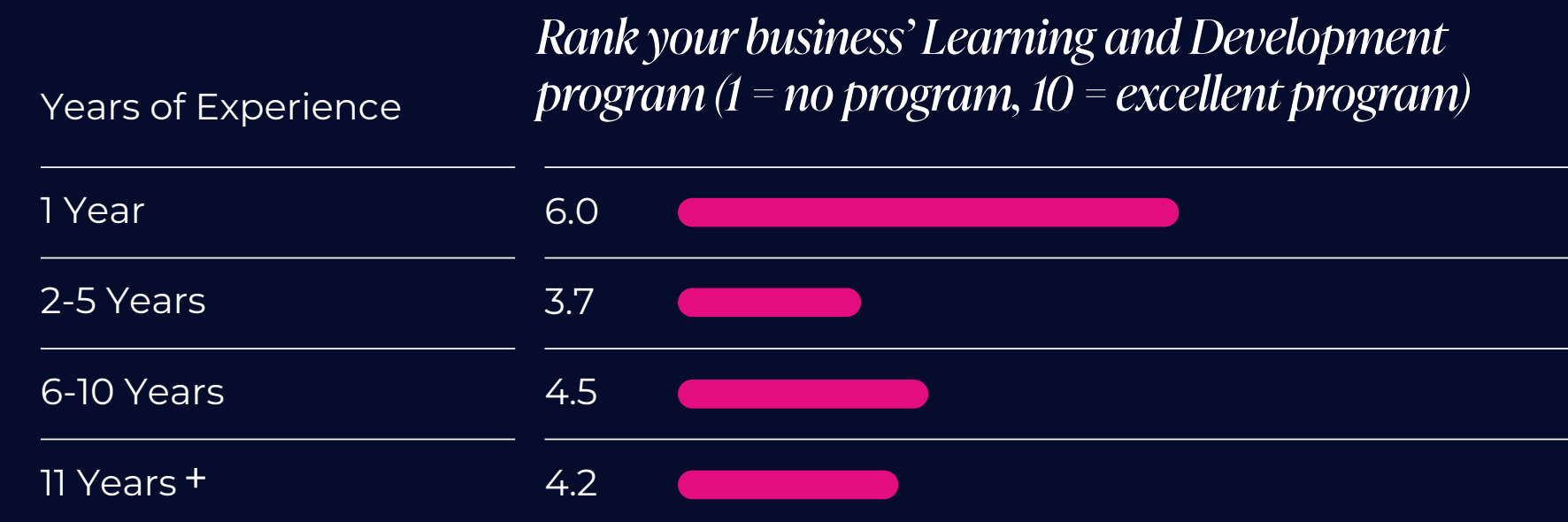
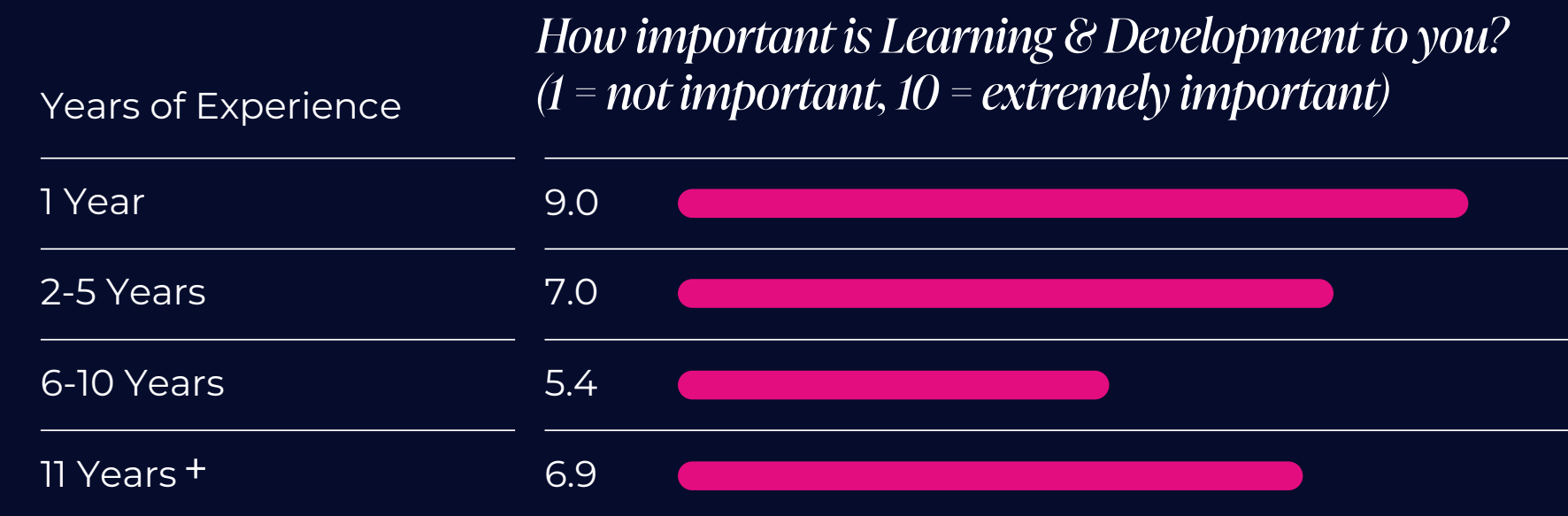


Can you advance your career at your current business?





Learning and Development



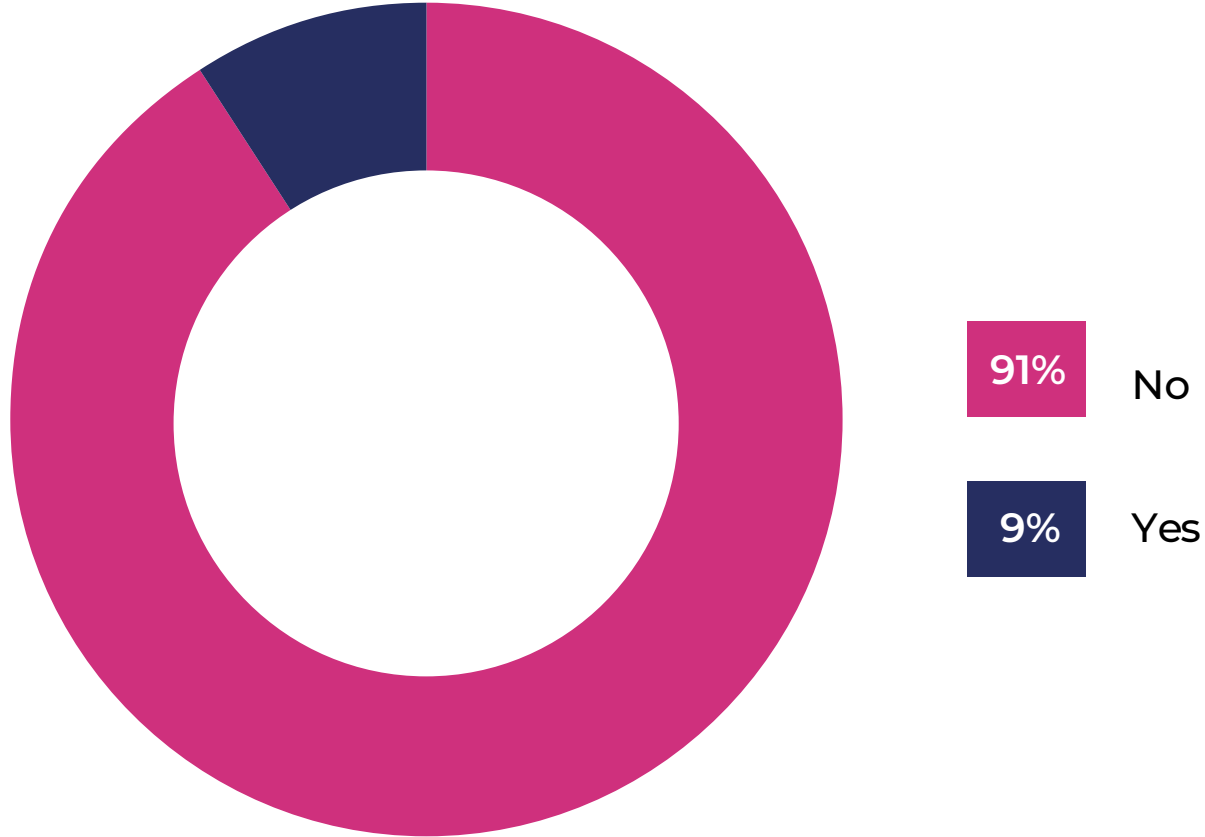
Benefits

Equity Pay Outs 2025

<i>Low</i>	\$11,500
<i>Mid</i>	\$30,000
<i>High</i>	\$130,000

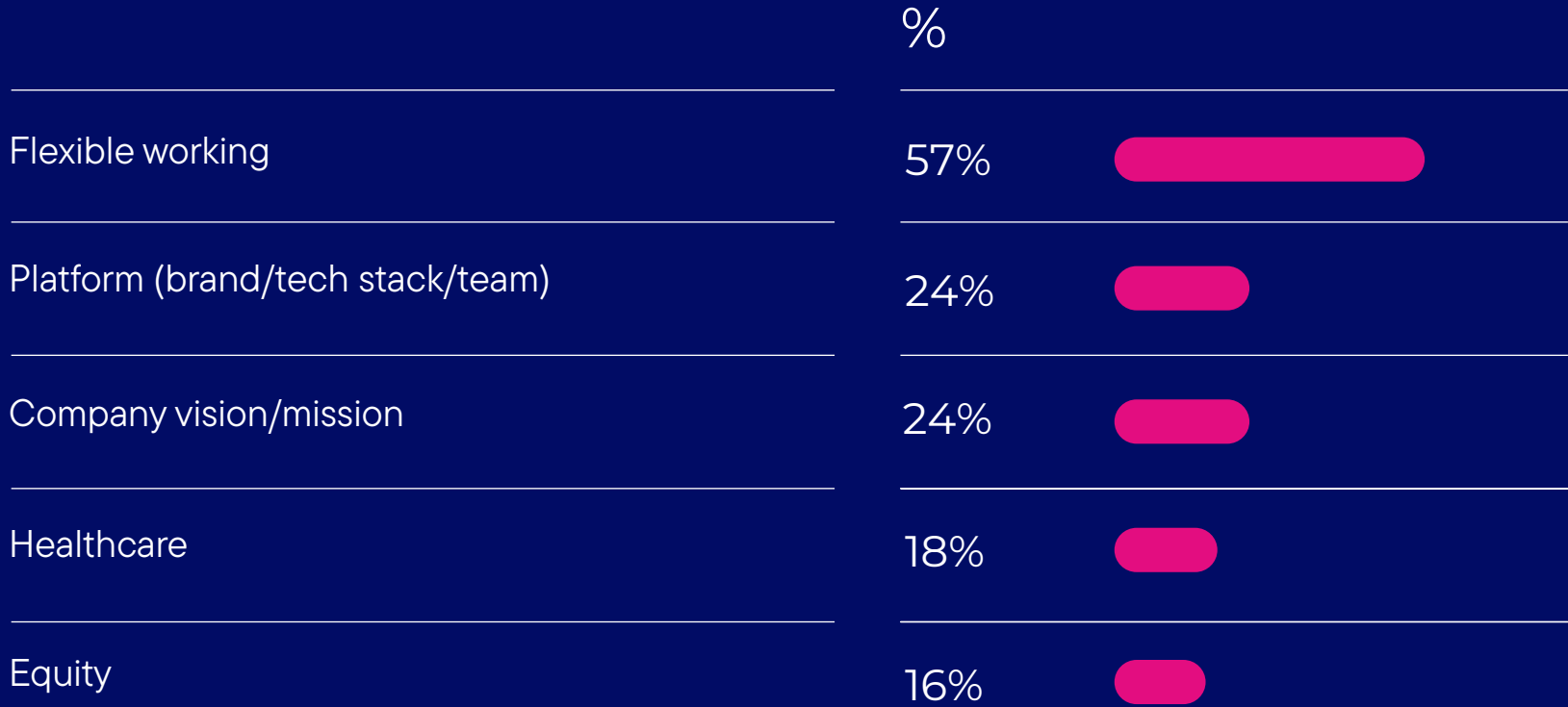
Compared to 2024

<i>Low</i>	\$9,500
<i>Mid</i>	\$20,000
<i>High</i>	\$80,000

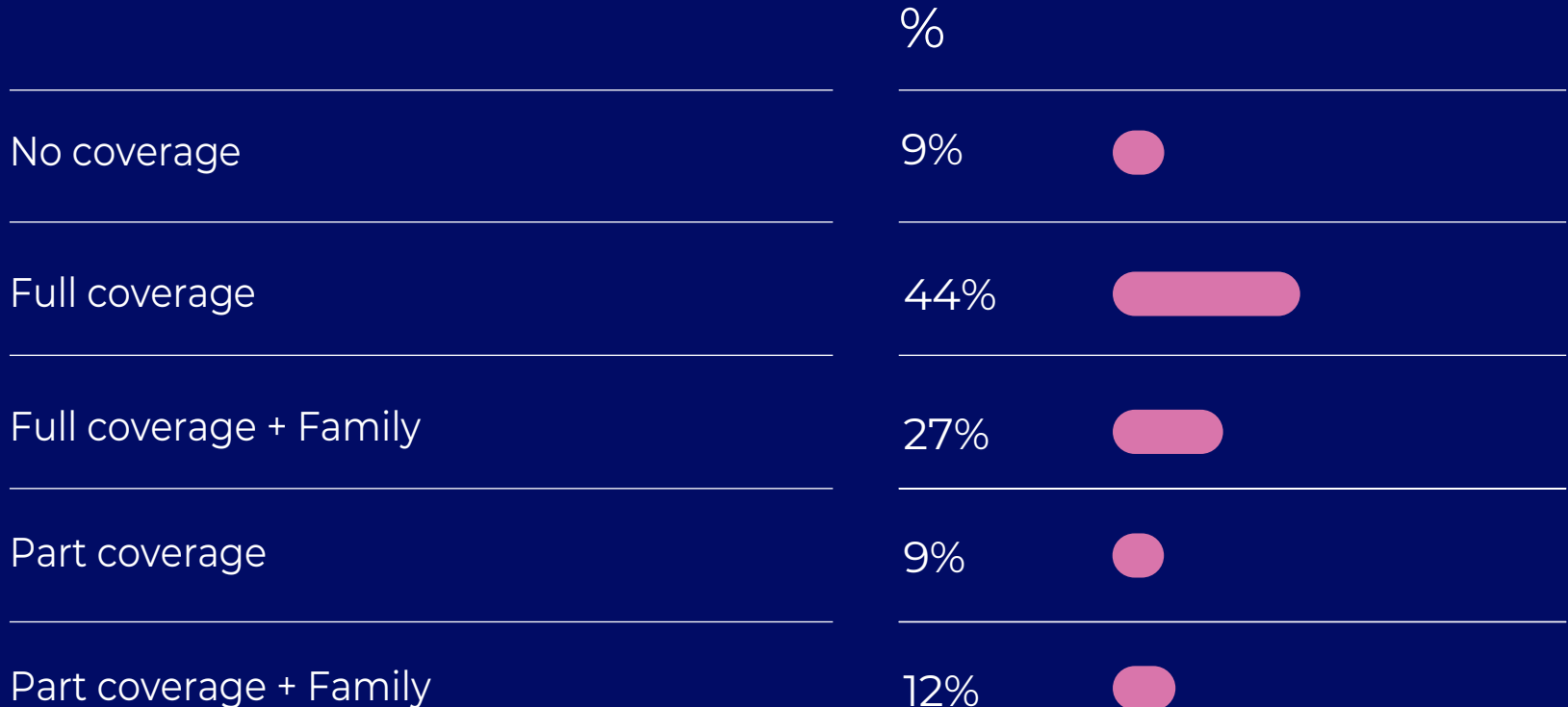


Search Professionals Holding Equity

What non-monetary benefit is most important to you?



Healthcare insurance for Search Professionals

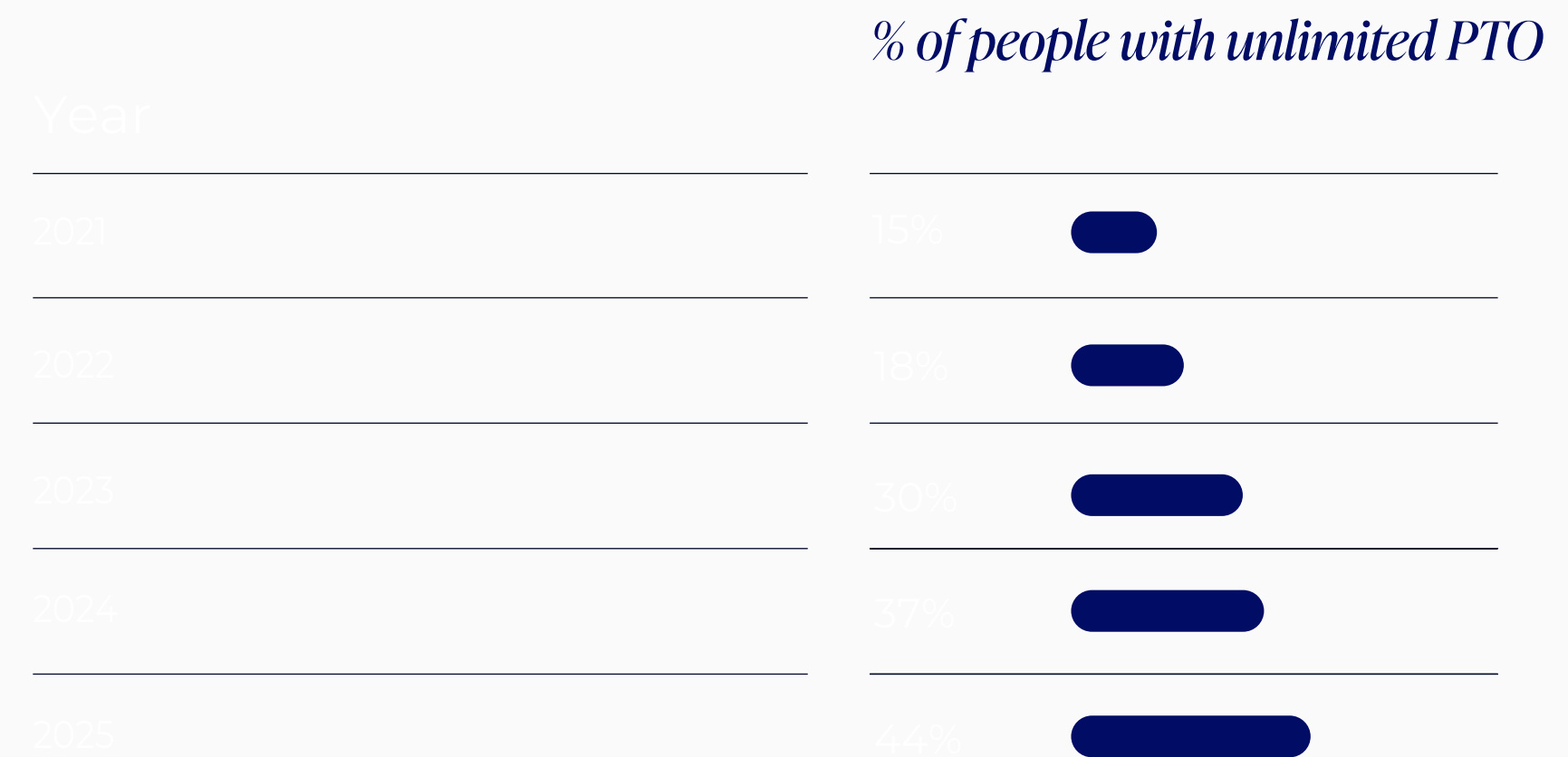




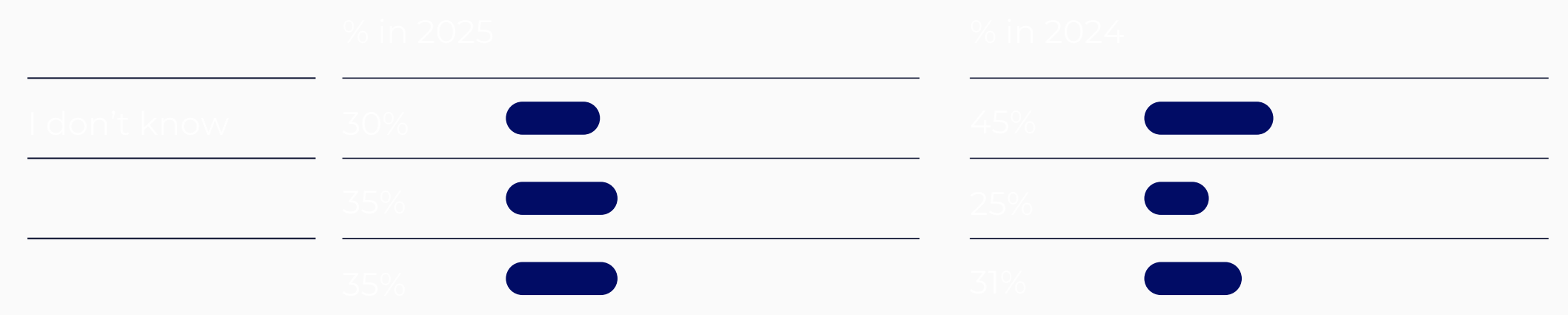
20 days

Median PTO Allowance Per Year

Unlimited PTO



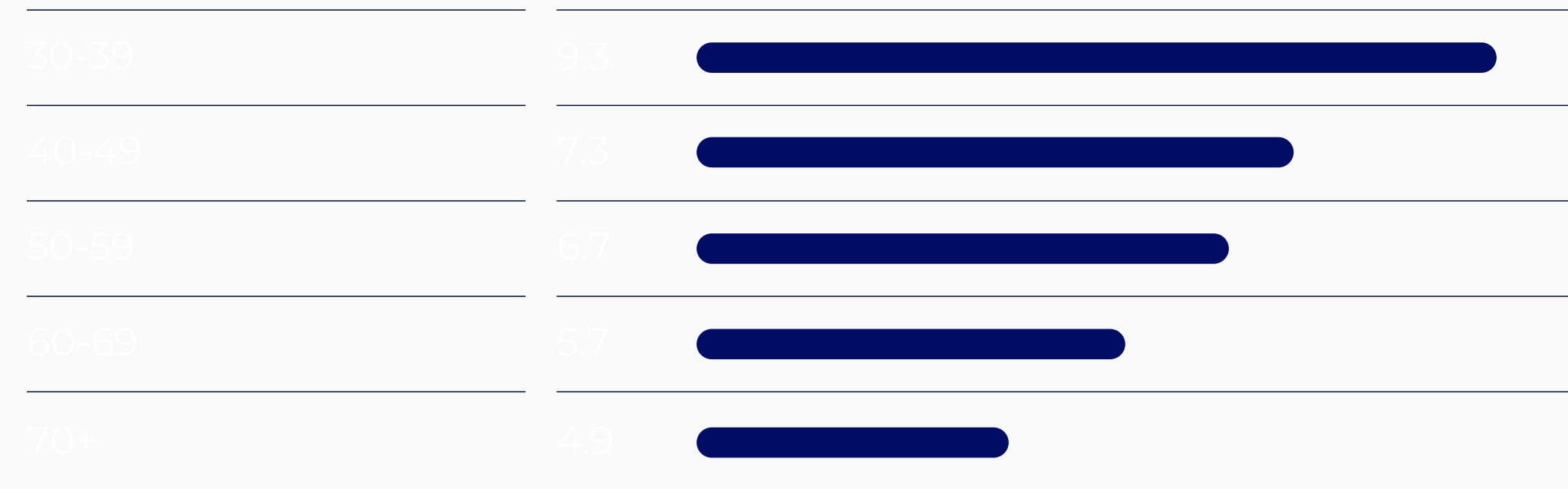
Search Professionals receiving enhanced maternity or paternity leave



Work Life Balance

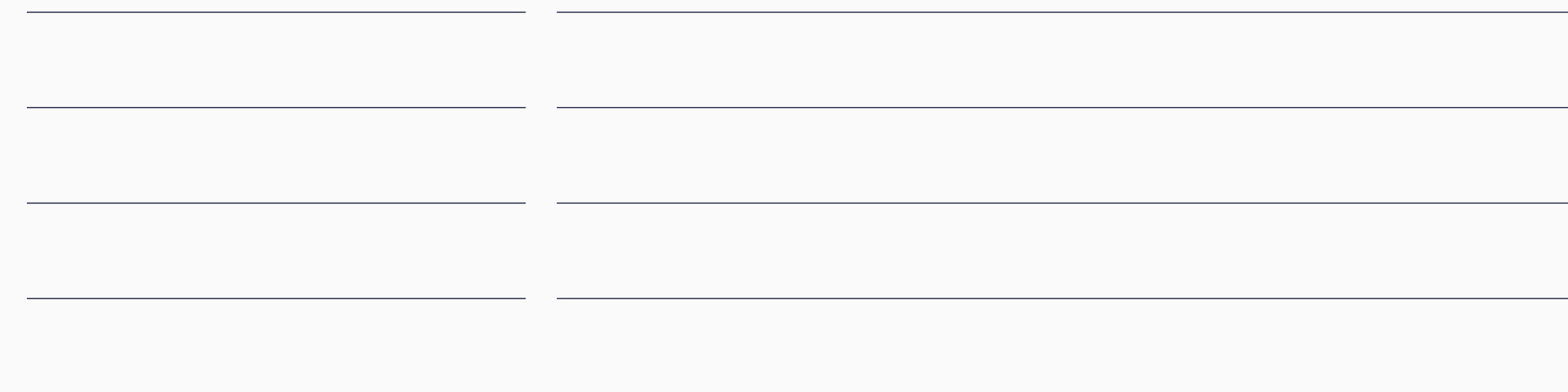
Search professionals ranking work-life balance (1 poor, 10 excellent)

Hours worked per week



Working model

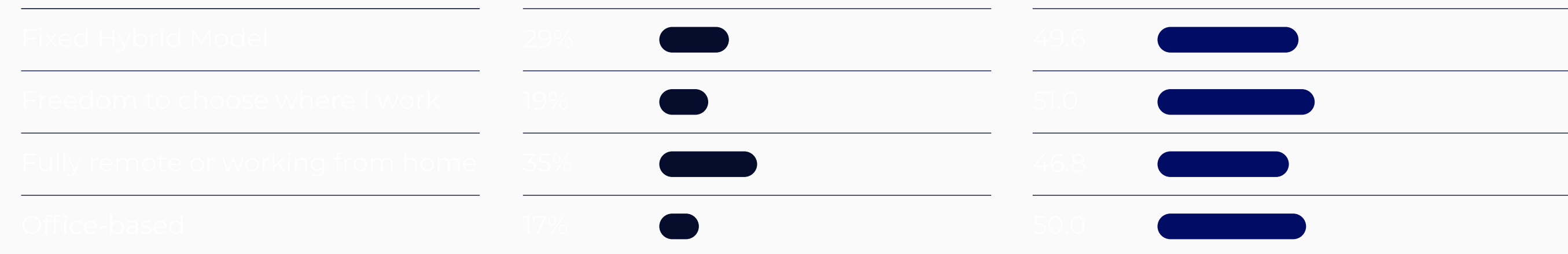
Search professionals ranking work-life balance (1 poor, 10 excellent)



Working model

%

Average hours worked in a week



Contact *us*:

Tempting Talent specializes in building Staffing firms, placing professionals from entry level positions to C-suite.

If you would like to book a discovery call or a career consultation with our team, please contact us on the details below.



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