Case Management

Drive best practices in documenting issues.

Manager Support

Consistently document performance concerns.

Investigations

Conduct investigations **if they escalate.**

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The *Leader* in strategic employee relations from issue through aftercare.

Workplace Reporting

Enable your employees to **anonymously report** issues.

Analytics

Uncover trends to proactively **prevent future issues.**

The Leader in Employee Relations

Employee Relations Benchmark Study

The go-to resource for ER leaders, packed with valuable insights and data.

Employee Relations Quotient (ER/Q)

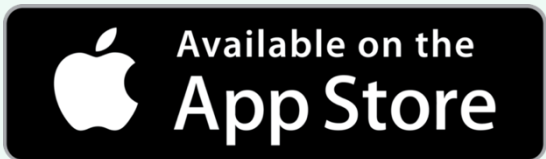The first-ever maturity model for Employee Relations.

EMPLOYEE RELATIONS QUOTIENT

ER/Q

empowER™

The largest free-to-join online community exclusively for ER professionals.

Available on the App Store

GET IT ON Google Play

ERroundtable™

Our annual event connects over 400 global ER leaders to learn, share ideas, network and more.

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Important Dense & Resources

July 22
12:00 PM ET

Sept. 16
12:00 PM ET

Oct. 28-29
In-Person Event

NEW!
empowER Group

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Donations

About **the Study**

Research Partner
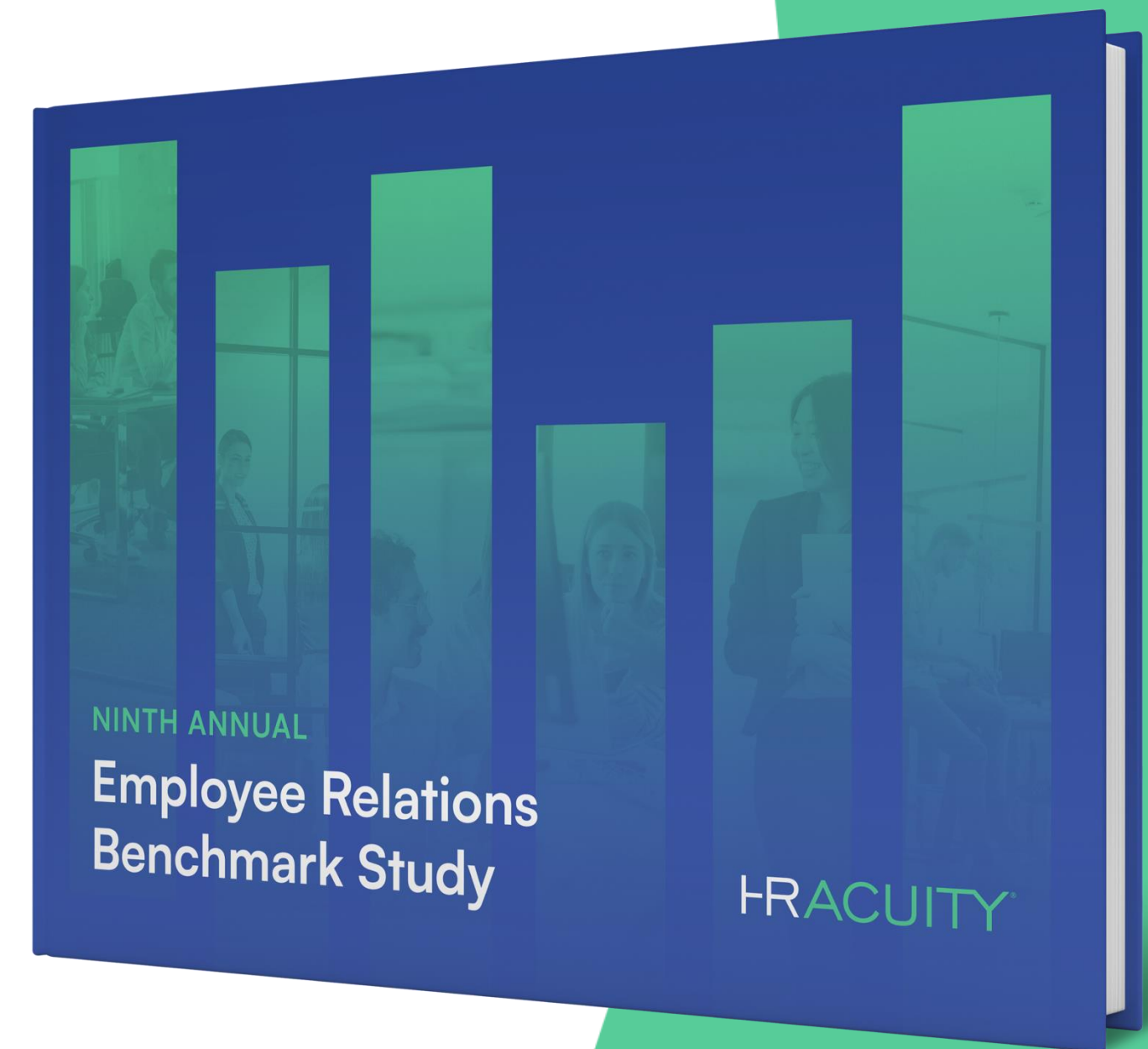
ISURUS

Enterprise U.S. ER Leaders

1,000+
employees

Data Collection Period

2024
calendar year

Confidence Interval

+/- 5.8
percentage points

NINTH ANNUAL
**Employee Relations
Benchmark Study**

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Who Answered the Call – Representation

By Size

- 21%
- 29%
- 15%
- 35%
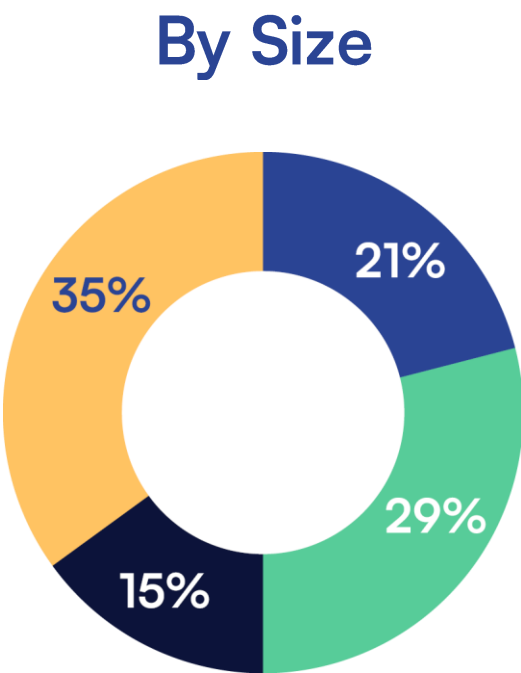
Legend:
- 1,000 - 3,499
- 3,500 - 9,999
- 10,000 - 19,999
- 20,000+

By Industry

- 16%
- 16%
- 15%
- 7%
- 6%
- 6%
- 34%
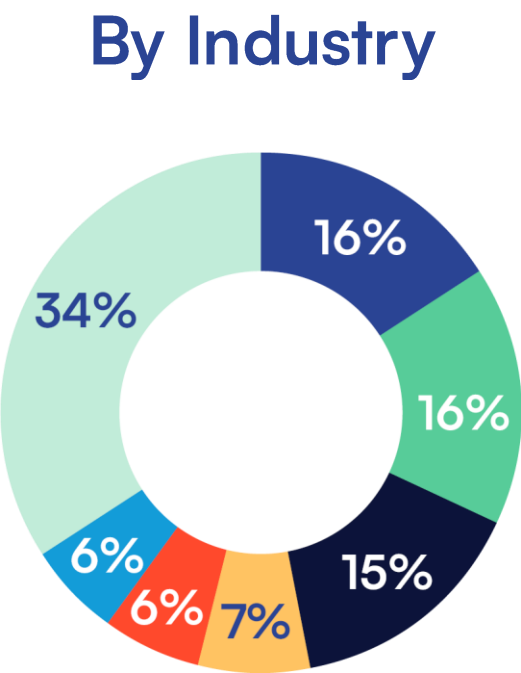
Legend:
- Financial Services
- Technology
- Healthcare/Hospitals
- Manufacturing/Distribution
- Pharma/Medical Devices
- Government, Public Sector
- Other

By Revenue

- 7%
- 19%
- 32%
- 10%
- 32%
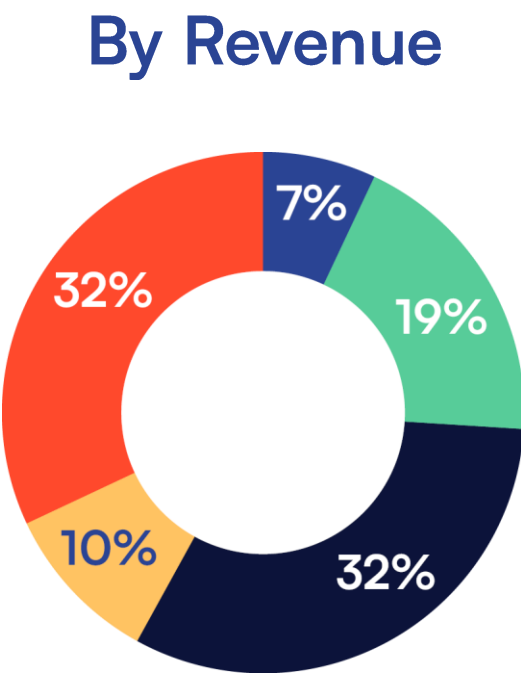
Legend:
- $100 million or less
- $101 - $999 million
- $1 - $5 billion
- $5 - $10 billion
- > $10 billion

By Fortune List

- Fortune 100: 6%
- Fortune 500: 38%
- Fortune 1000: 60%
- Global 500: 11%
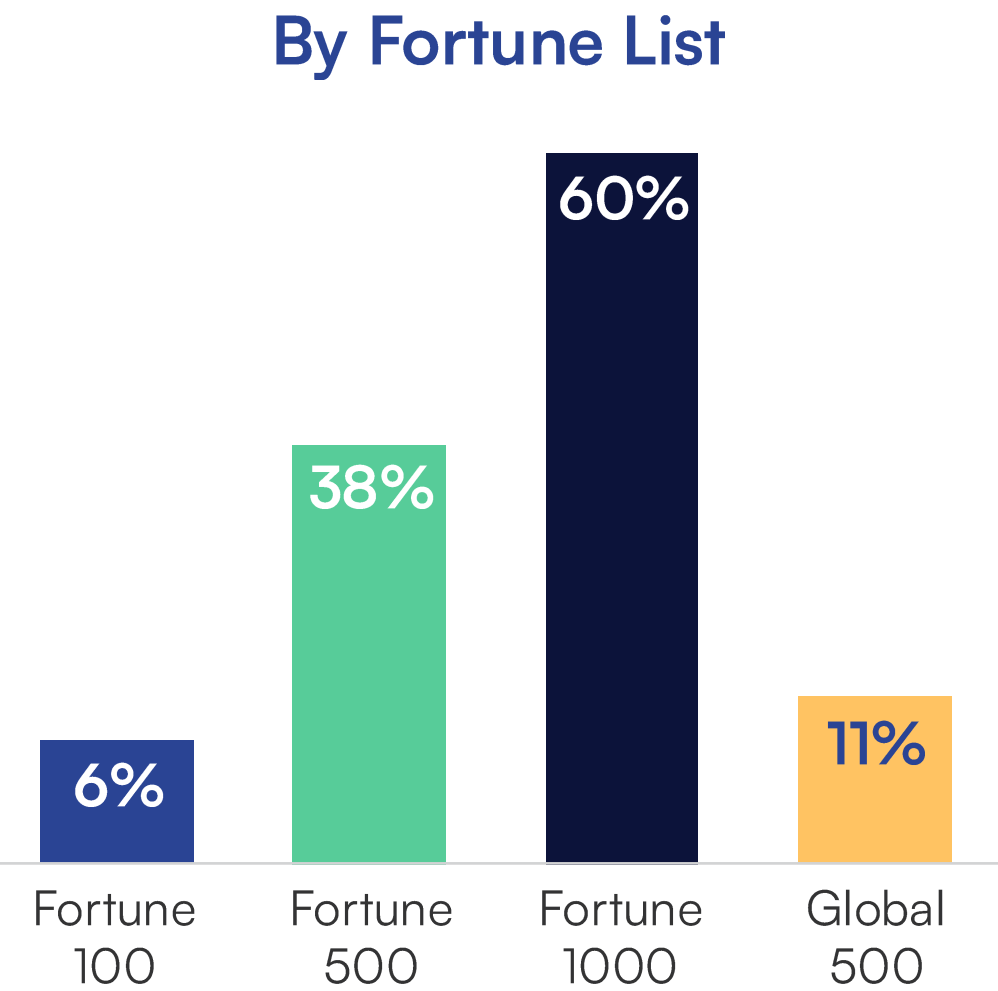
| 284 organizations | 8.7m employees globally | 17 Fortune 100 companies | 108 Fortune 500 companies |

The Baseline: Five Practices That Are Established ER Norms

Resource allocation remains steady per 1,000 employees.
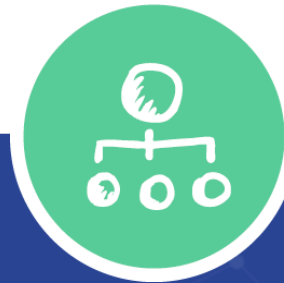
A **centralized or mixed model** is used by 94% of organizations.

Seven core employee relations case types are standard.

Additional ER scope of responsibilities includes **four key areas.**

Four core employee relations metrics are tracked.

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10 Essential KPIs **for Employee Relations**

Operational Efficiency

- Cases Per 1,000 Employees*
- **Issue-to-Case Ratio***
- ER Staffing Ratio*

Trust and Experience

- **Hotline Issues per 1,000 Employees***
- **Named vs. Anonymous Reports***
- eNPS

Risk and Compliance

- EEOC Cases per 1,000 Employees*
- **Case Disposition***
- Performance Management Impact
- Legal Cost per Employee

* KPIs tracked in the Benchmark Study
BOLD New to the Benchmark Study in 2024

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New Insights

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Key Insights

Discrimination, harassment and retaliation claims reached an **all-time high of 14.7 issues per 1,000 employees**

42% of organizations have lax investigation processes, increasing their exposure to legal, financial and brand risks

Only half of organizations track substantiation rates — and just **30% track substantiation by issue type,** affecting outcomes and trust
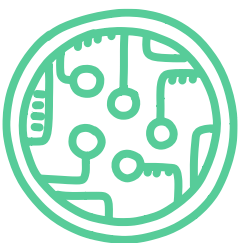
Nearly half (44%) of organizations reported AI adoption is non-existent, despite eagerness to ramp up productivity

The majority (68%) of organizations lack the data necessary to understand case complexity, impacting resource allocation & effectiveness

Highlights:

The state of Employee Relations

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Resource norms remain stable despite an increase in employee performance issues

Staffing ratio by number of employees
(FTE per 1,000 employees - median)

0.65 All companies

1.16 1,000-3,499 employees

0.62 3,500-3,999 employees

0.54 10,000-19,999 employees

0.40 20,000+ employees

Does your team handle performance issues?

21%
79%

■ Yes
■ No

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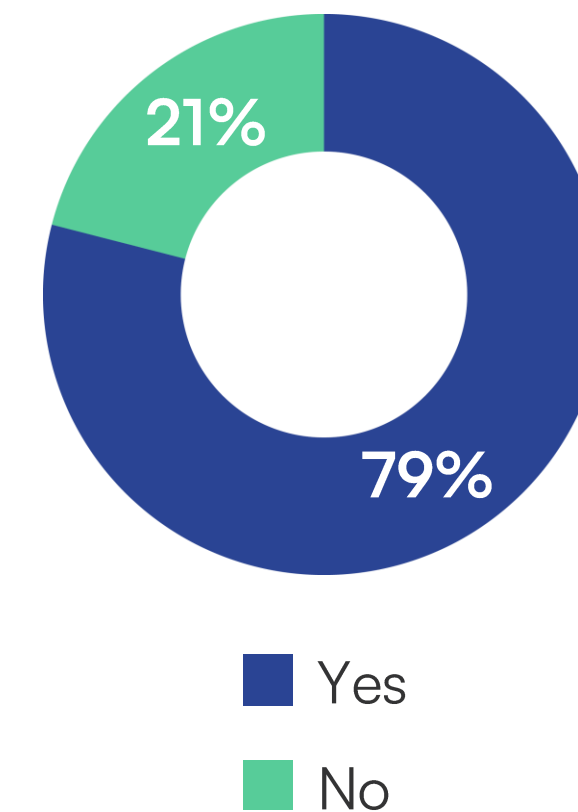
Mental health cited again as greatest issue driver, but growth is slowing

To what would you attribute any increase in employee-related events/issues over the course of 2024?

Category	Value	Change
Increased mental health challenges	64%	-6
Organizational changes	57%	
The political environment	54%	+19
Increased business expectations	43%	
Return-to-office policies, transition to hybrid	41%	-13
Increased awareness of perceived rights	40%	-11
Societal crises, issues or movements	39%	-11
The economy	30%	-16
*Generational differences, multi-generational workforce	30%	
Increased activism in the workplace	15%	-11
Broader use/availability of tech	15%	
Increased awareness of regulations	15%	-9
Other reasons	9%	

⬆️⬇️ Change from 2023

*New category added in 2024.

Fewer organizations attribute increased issue volume to mental health

Year	Value
2024	64%
2022	79%

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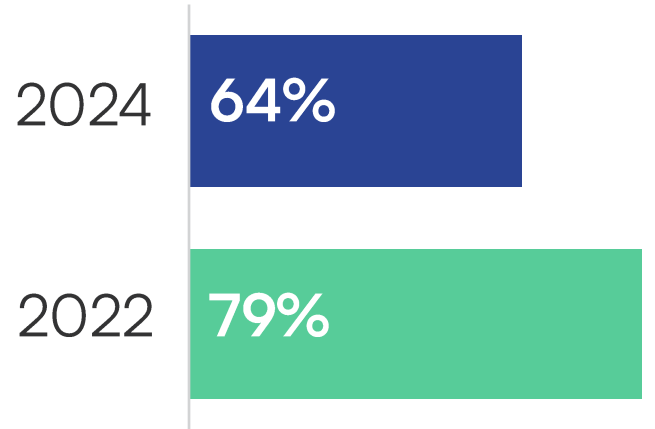
Lower case volumes, with a spike in harassment, discrimination and retaliation claims suggests cases are becoming more complex.

Total Number of ER Cases in the U.S
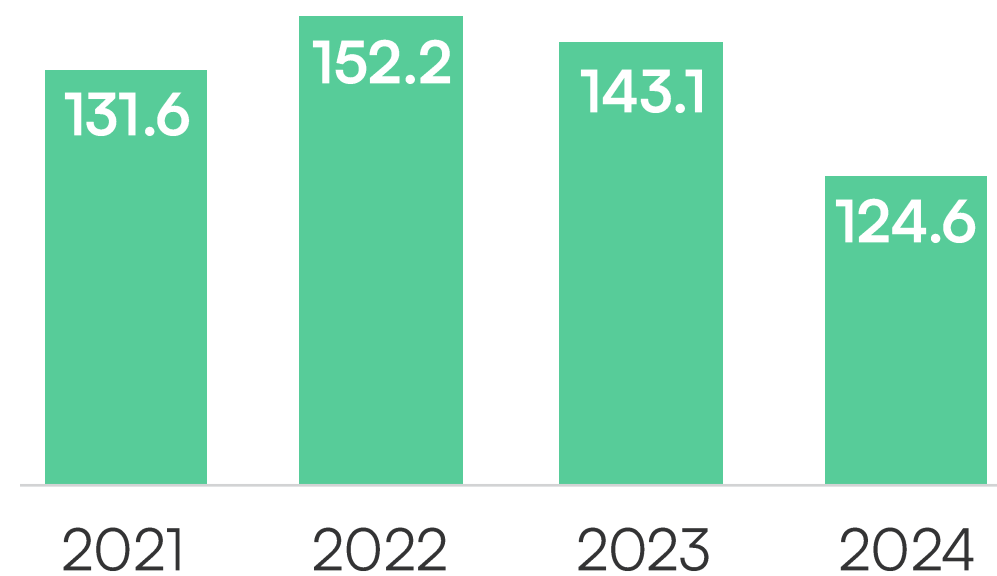
131.6 — 2021
152.2 — 2022
143.1 — 2023
124.6 — 2024

Average number of discrimination, harassment and retaliation allegations

(per 1,000 employees)

6.4 — 2021
8.1 — 2022
11.9 — 2023
14.7 — 2024

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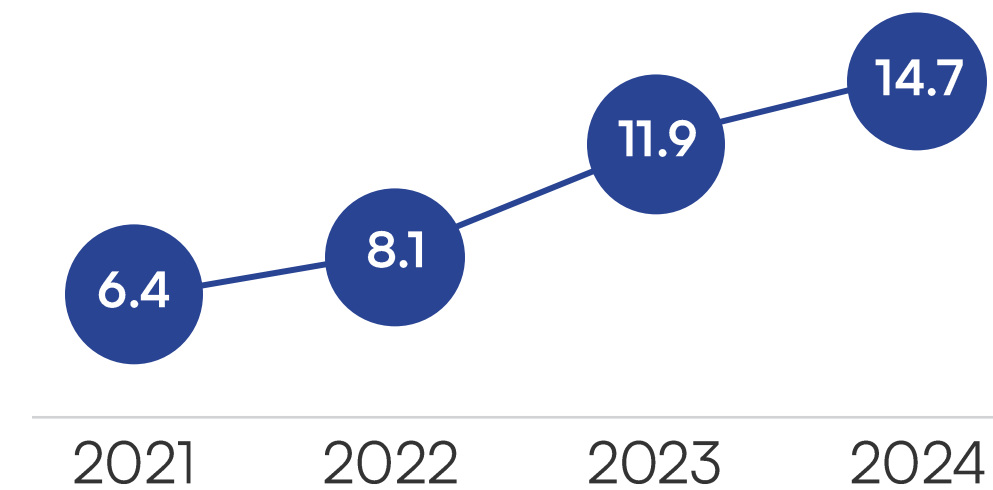
Refined time-to-close metrics help teams drive efficiency and timely resolution

Average number of days cases are open

Category	Lower quartile	Average	Upper quartile
Time and attendance	5	14	18
Wage and hours	6	16	30
Policy violations	8	19	30
Accommodations	9	22	33
Leave management	10	23	34
Behavioral issues	10	23	33
Non-sexual harassment	11	24	35
Sexual harassment	11	25	36
Retaliation	12	26	42
Performance	10	27	45
Discrimination	13	28	44
Response to EEOC or other agency	14	33	55

Lower quartile   Average   Upper quartile

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ER tech adoption remained consistent with 2023's findings

How does your organization primarily track ER issues and investigations?

58%	13%	16%	5%	4%	5%
ER tech platform	Spreadsheets or generic database	Ticketing system	HRIS	Other method or system	No tech used

⬆⬇ Change from 2023

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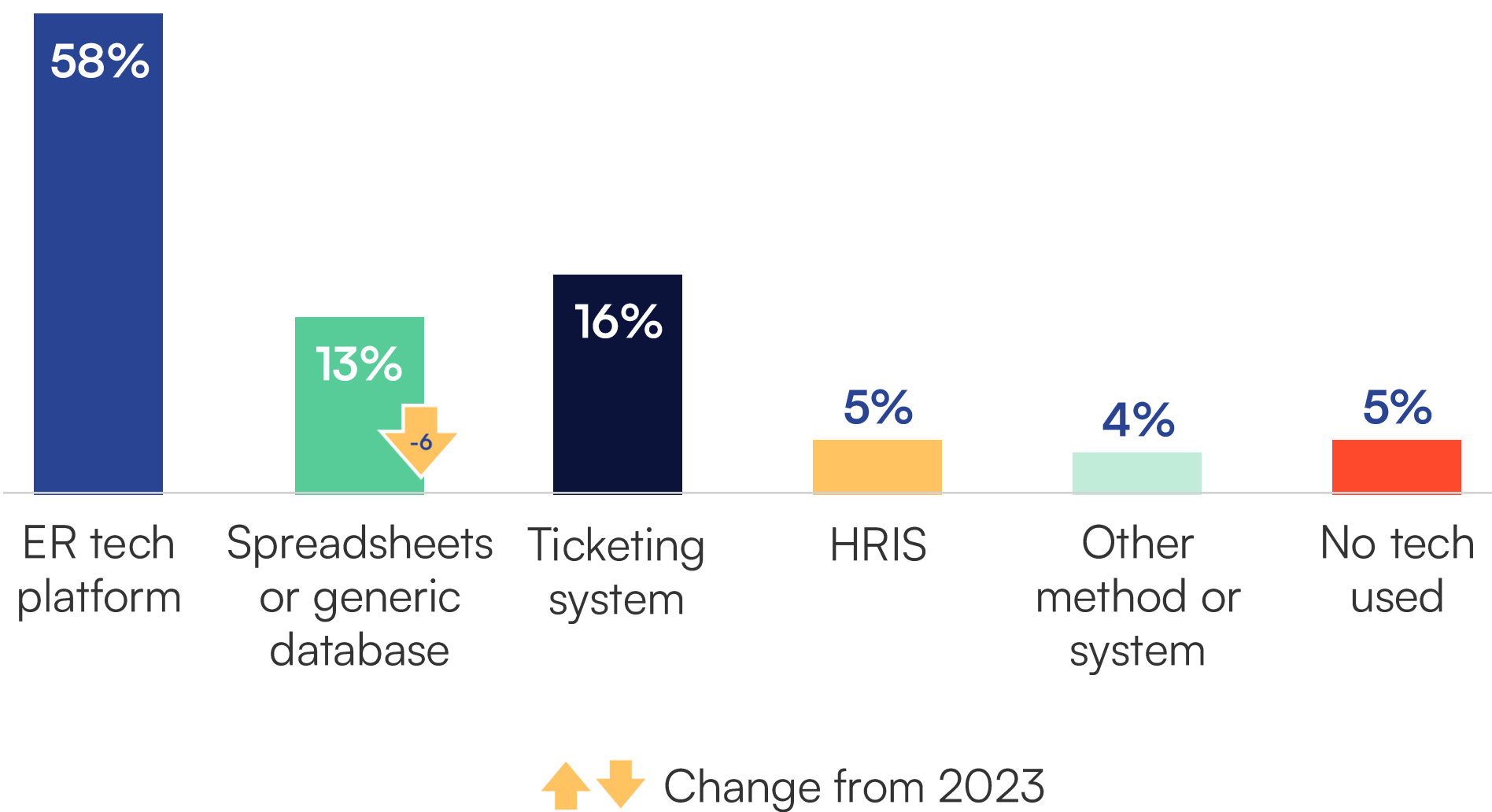
Organizations are leaning into data to minimize risk and prevent future issues proactively
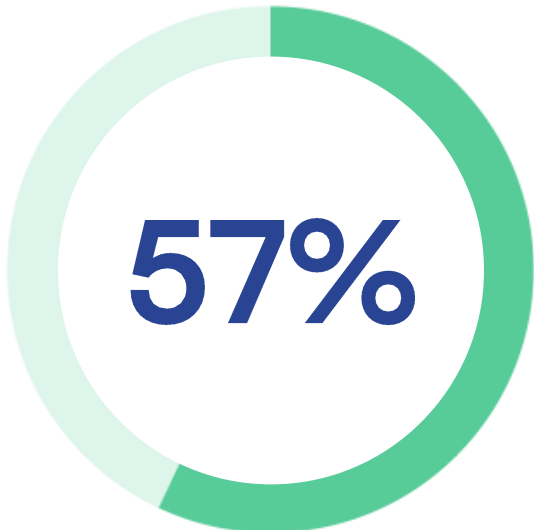
57%

of organizations have identified behaviors, incidents or events that ultimately lead to (or are predictors of) issues

How are you analyzing that information to minimize risk and prevent future issues?

76% Implementing initiatives to address trends or spikes in issues ↑ +16

60% Identifying early warning flags, in order to offer targeted early interventions ↑ +10

35% Measuring impact of initiatives on issue volume and trend lines

13% Forecasting outcomes and anticipated cost avoidance

11% Constructing models based on issue trends to predict employee behavior ↑ +7

9% Gathering the data, but not really analyzing or using the data

1% Not sure   ↑↓ Change from 2023

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Key Themes

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Key Themes

1 Critical KPIs go untracked, **limiting strategic decisions** and insight into the **impact** of Employee Relations.

2 Surging allegations of harassment, discrimination and retaliation **demand structured investigations** to protect, ensure fairness, and prevent risk.

3 AI adoption in employee relations lags, leaving **productivity gains and insights unrealized.**

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1

Critical KPIs go untracked, **limiting strategic decisions** and insight into the **impact** of Employee Relations.

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Issue Reporting — Lack of data masks risks and erodes trust

93%

of organizations use a tool for employees to anonymously report issues or concerns

44%
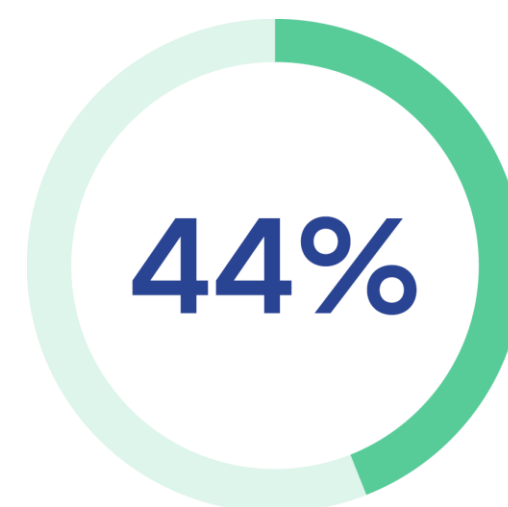
of organizations track anonymous vs. named issue volumes

76%
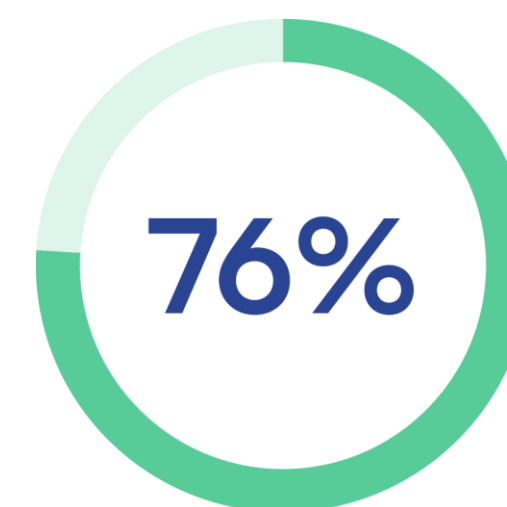
of issues are reported by name

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Align on what to measure in issue reporting for real impact

+ Are all employees **aware of the hotline** and how to use it? Are they comfortable sharing their name? Are **anonymous options available?**

+ Are reporting tools **accessible and inclusive?**

+ What types of issues are being reported? **What's missing?** Where are anonymous reports unusually high or low—and why?

+ What's being done to **address fears of retaliation?**

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Case Complexity — Lack of data hides resource gaps, case overloads and burnout risks

Does your organization track the number of issues per case?

32%

68%

- Yes
- No
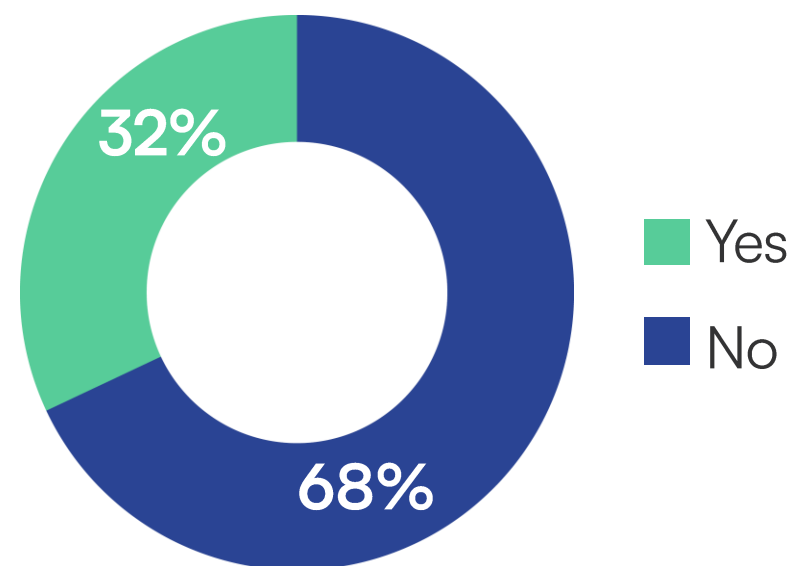
Overall issue-to case ratio

1.4

Case complexity, number of issues per case

70%	21%	4%	1%

- 1 issue
- 2-3 issues
- 4-5 issues
- 5+ issues

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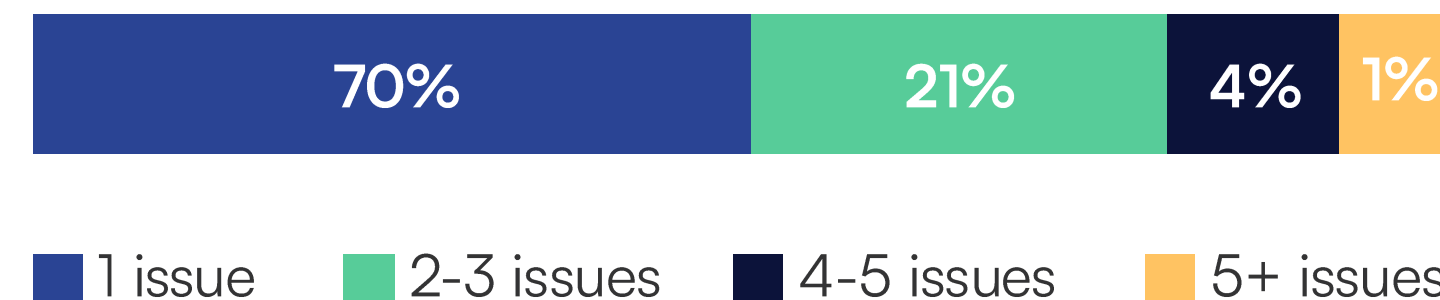
What does case complexity mean for your team and your organization?

+ How many cases have **more than one issue?**

+ Are **certain case types driving up** complexity (e.g., performance plus harassment, retaliation plus policy violation)?

+ Are our **case assignment methods fair?** Do we have adequate resources to manage **increasingly layered cases?**

+ How does your case complexity compare to **industry benchmarks?**

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Substantiation: Data is critical to foster trust and prevent future issues

51%
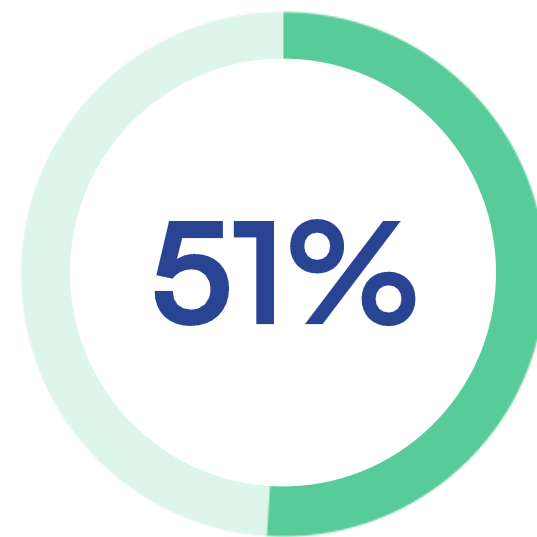
of organizations track overall substantiation rates

30%

of organizations track substantiation by issue type

43%
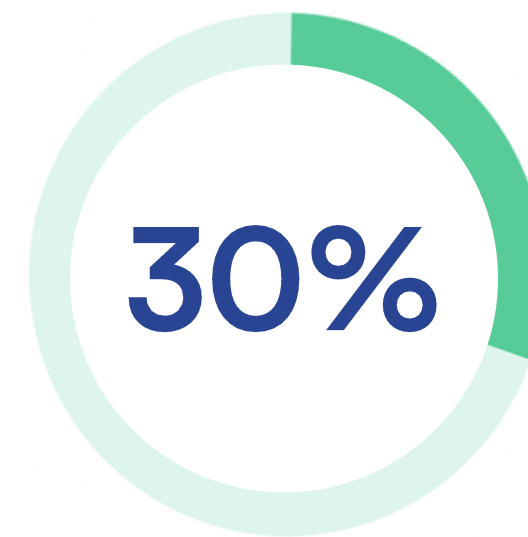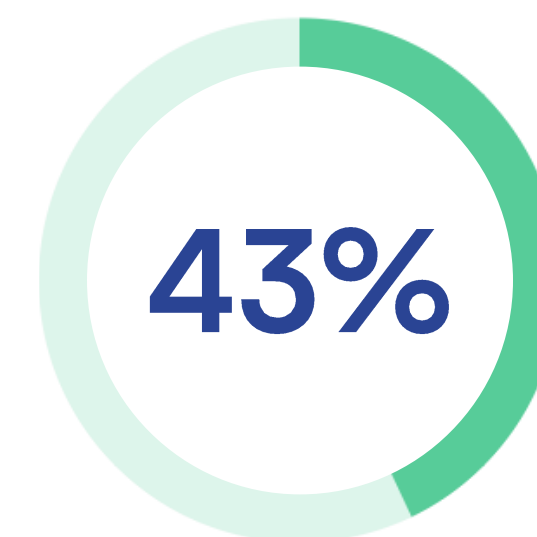
of overall issues were substantiated based on legal definitions, policy violations, or another finding (on average)

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Diving deeper into substantiation data reveals risks and highlights opportunities for improvement

Substantiation rates by issue type*

Issue type	Substantiated based on legal definitions and/or organization's policies	Substantiated with another finding*	Unsubstantiated
Sexual harassment allegations	48%	20% (+7)	45%
Policy violations	52%	16% (+8)	36%
Behavioral issues	44%	18%	43%
Non-sexual harassment allegations	26%	20%	56%
Discrimination	16%	11%	74% (+6)
Retaliation	15%	9%	75%

- ■ Substantiated based on legal definitions and/or organization's policies
- ■ Substantiated with another finding*
- ■ Unsubstantiated

⬆⬇ Change from 2023

Asking the right questions about investigation outcomes helps uncover risks and sheds light on employee experience

+ How are substantiated, unsubstantiated or mixed findings **defined and tracked?**

+ Are substantiation rates **unusually high/low** for certain issues, business areas or demographics?

+ What **feedback** do we gather and use following investigations?

+ What post-investigation steps are in place to identify policy or training gaps and **ensure true resolution?**

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2

Surging allegations of harassment, discrimination and retaliation **demand structured investigations** to protect, ensure fairness, and prevent risk.

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Harassment, discrimination and retaliation surged, despite a decline in case volume

Number of cases handled in 2024 (average number per 1,000 employees)

Issue category	2021	2022	2023	2024
Performance issues	32.7	40.1	43.6	**39.4**
Policy violations	30.2	35.9	48.3	**38.2**
Behavioral issues	16.2	22.4	30.7	**22.4**
Discrimination, harassment or retaliation	6.4	8.1	11.9	**14.7**
EEOC/federal/state/local agency charges	1.3	1.8	5.5	**1.7**

Average number of discrimination, harassment and retaliation allegations

(per 1,000 employees)

	2021	2022	2023	2024
	6.4	8.1	11.9	14.7

Total Number of ER Cases in the U.S

2021	2022	2023	2024
131.6	152.2	143.1	124.6

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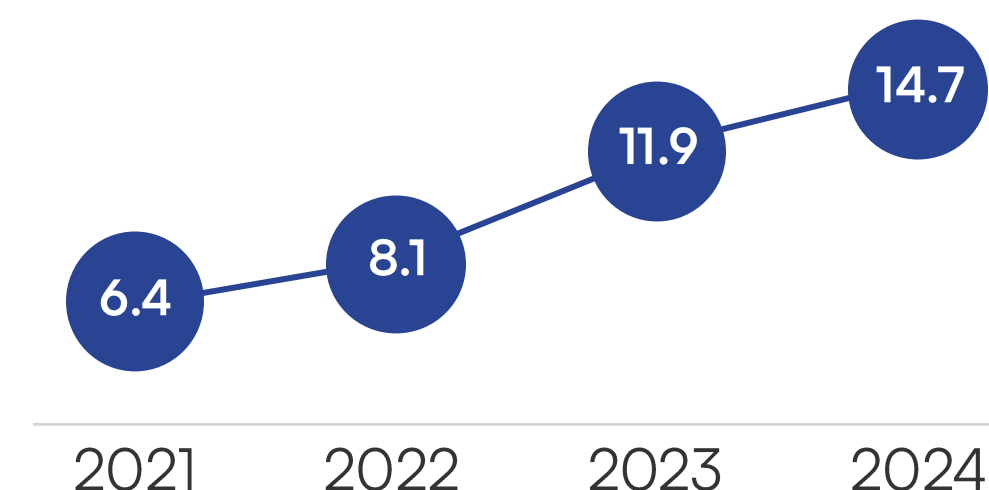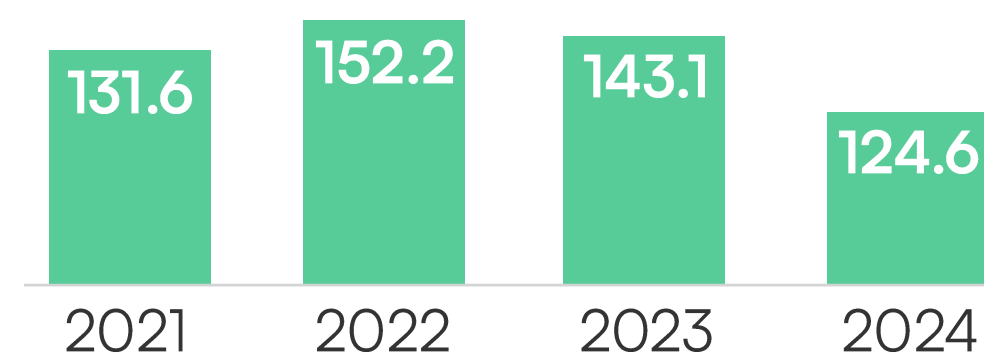
Limited insight into issue volume hinders proactive employee relations.

Average number of cases by category (per 1,000 employees)

Category	Value
Performance issues	39.4
Policy violations	38.2
Time and attendance	31.8
Leave management	30.2
Accommodations	26.2
Behavioral issues	22.4
Non-sexual harassment allegations	5.2
Discrimination	5.2
Wage and hours	4.2
Retaliation	3.8
Sexual harassment allegations	2.7
EEOC or other federal/state/local agency charges	1.7

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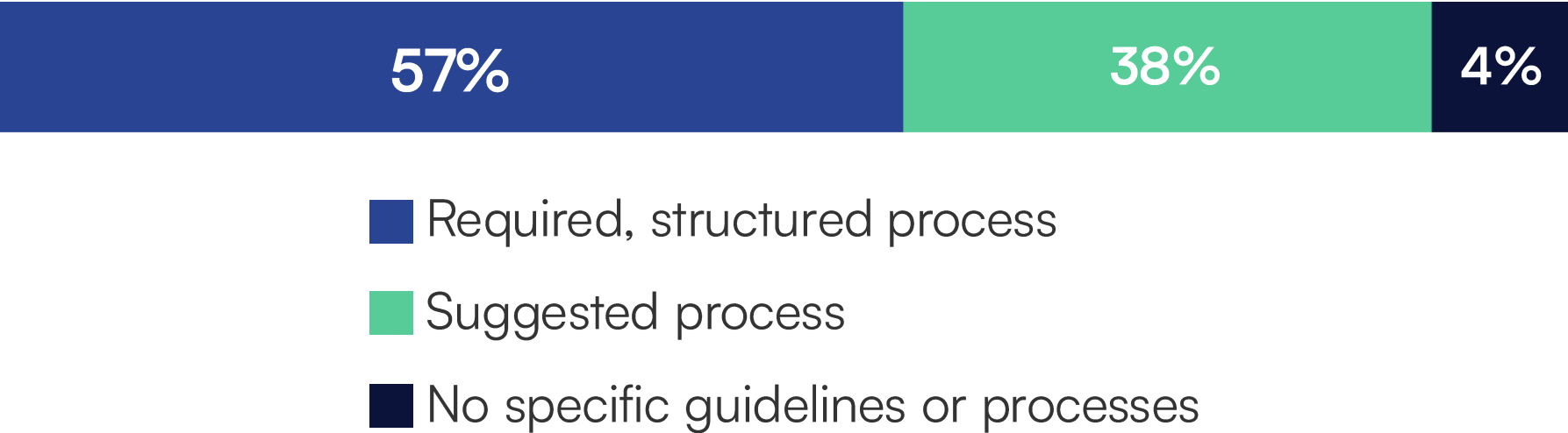# Explore the impact of issue volume trends and patterns on your team, employees and workplace culture

+ Where are issue volumes or EEOC claims **spiking—and why?**

+ Are certain departments, locations or teams **driving issue trends?**

+ How do our numbers compare to **industry benchmarks?**

+ What's **pushing** employees to escalate issues externally?

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Two in five organizations still use lax investigation processes

Method that best describes how investigations are conducted within organizations in the U.S.

57%	38%	4%

- ■ Required, structured process
- ■ Suggested process
- ■ No specific guidelines or processes

Use of a required process for conducting investigations

2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
59%	44%	43%	45%	58%	57%

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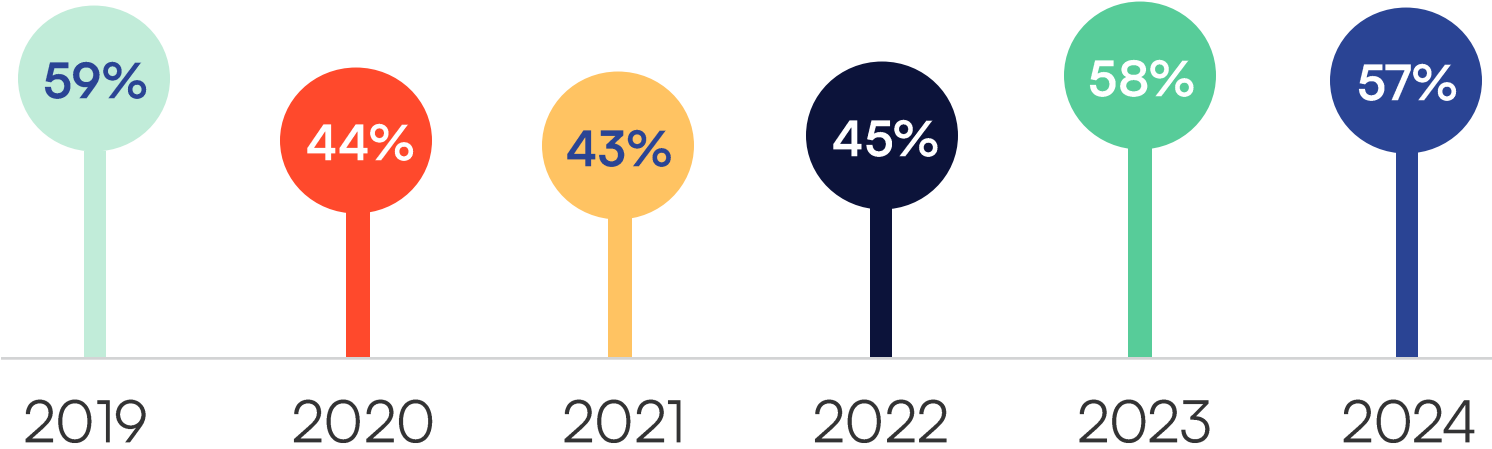
Thorough investigations are more time-consuming, but reduce risk

Average number of days cases are open by investigation process

Category	Suggested process	Required process
Time and attendance	14	14
Wage and hours	15	16
Policy violations	17	20
Accommodations	22	23
Leave management	21	25
Behavioral issues	20	25
Sexual harassment	23	26
Non-sexual harassment	20	27
Performance	26	28
Retaliation	21	28
Discrimination	24	30
Response to EEOC or other agency	35	32

■ Suggested process   ■ Required process

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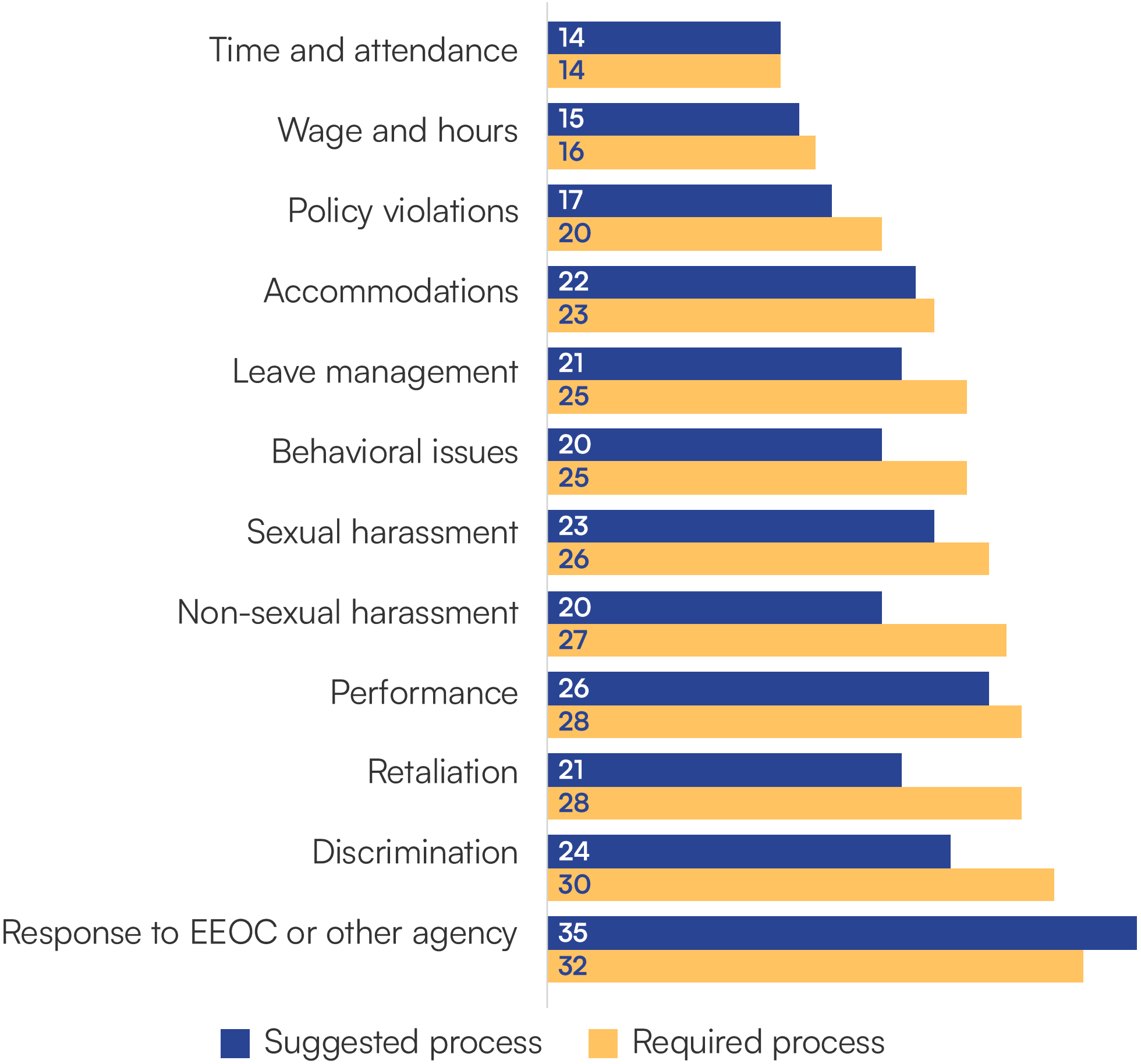
Confidence in investigations grows with required processes, a centralized model and ER tech

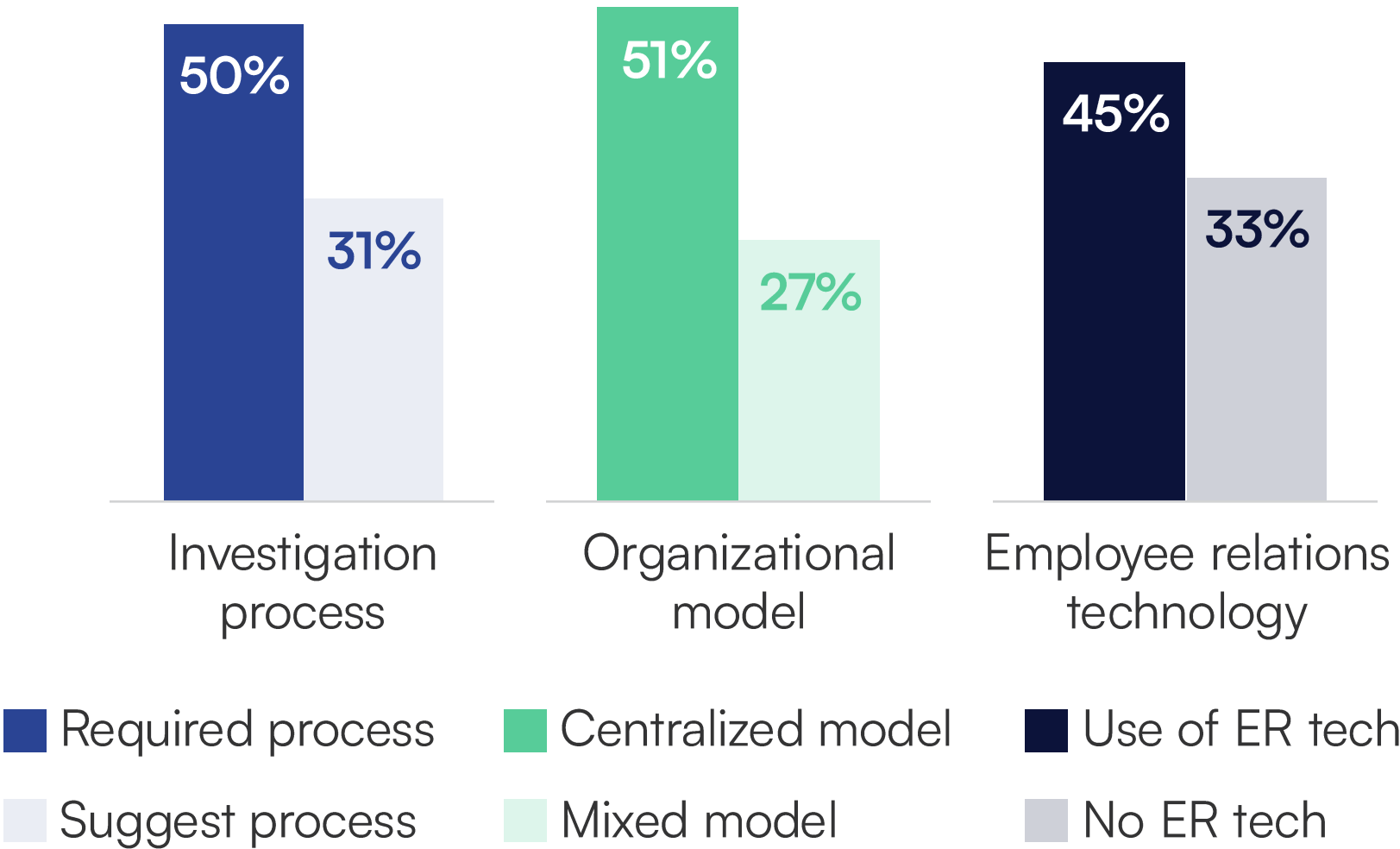"I feel confident that our workplace investigators consistently follow the suggested or required process for conducting investigations"

88%	6%	6%

- ■ Agree
- ■ Neither agree nor disagree
- ■ Disagree
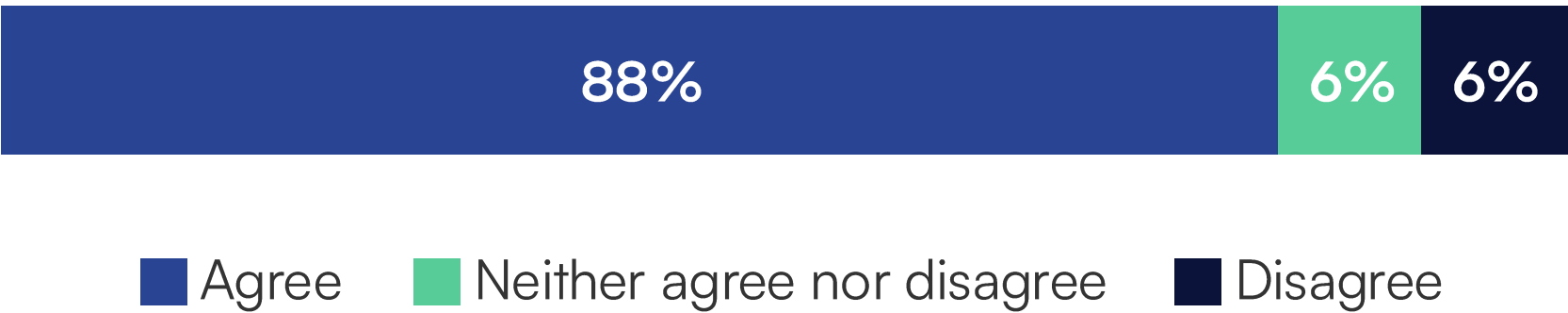
Confidence in investigation consistency based on process, model and tech

Investigation process
- 50%
- 31%

Organizational model
- 51%
- 27%

Employee relations technology
- 45%
- 33%

- ■ Required process
- ■ Suggest process
- ■ Centralized model
- ■ Mixed model
- ■ Use of ER tech
- ■ No ER tech

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Define what "thorough, fair and compliant" should look like for your organization

+ Are our interview protocols clear, accessible and consistently followed?

+ How do we ensure neutrality and compliance at every step?

+ Are we leveraging technology to guide and document our process?

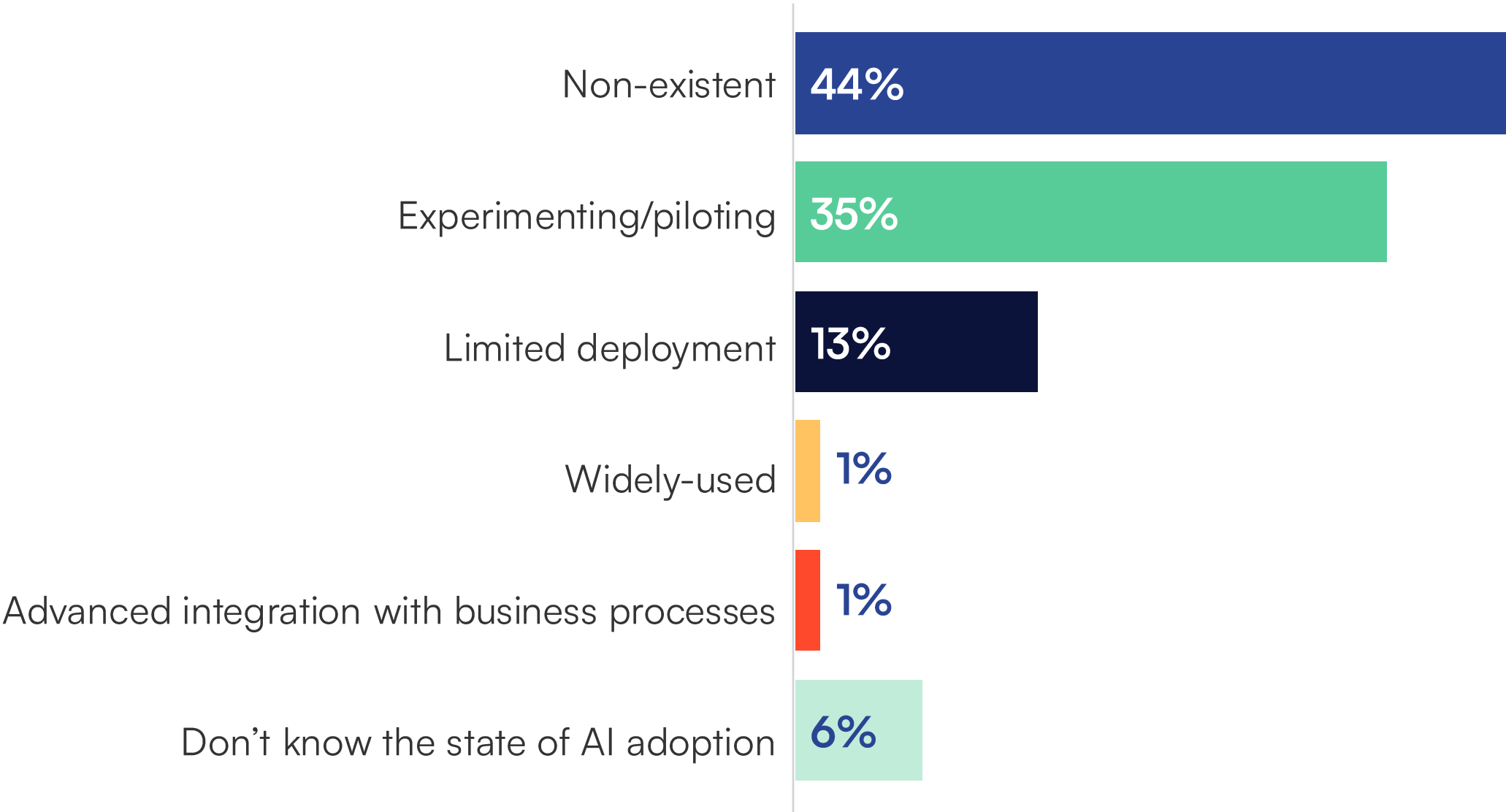+ What criteria do we use to monitor and audit investigation quality?

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3

AI adoption in employee relations lags, leaving **productivity gains and insights unrealized.**
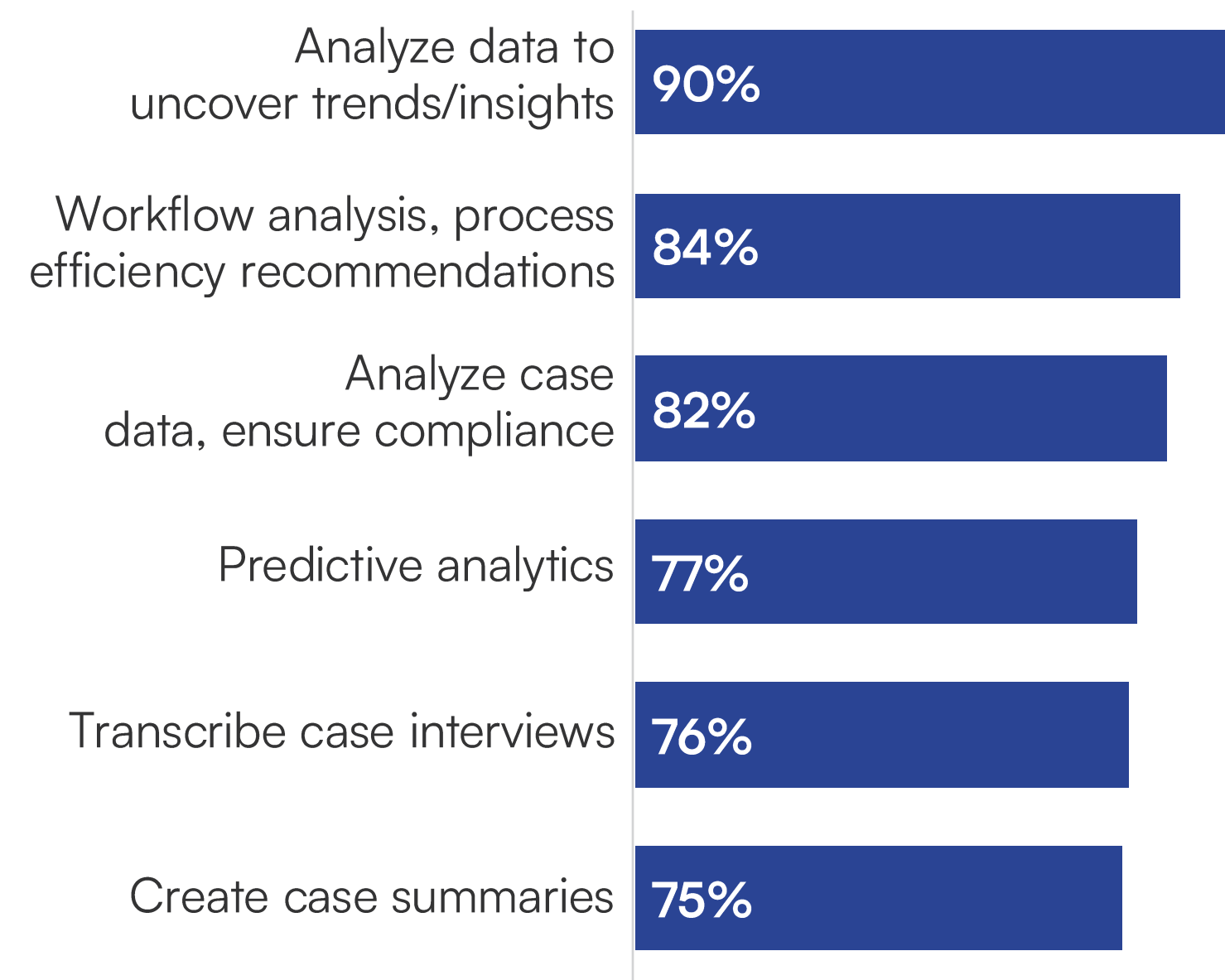
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Some are experimenting with AI, but limited adoption suggests barriers exist

Which statement best describes your organization's approach to AI for employee relations?

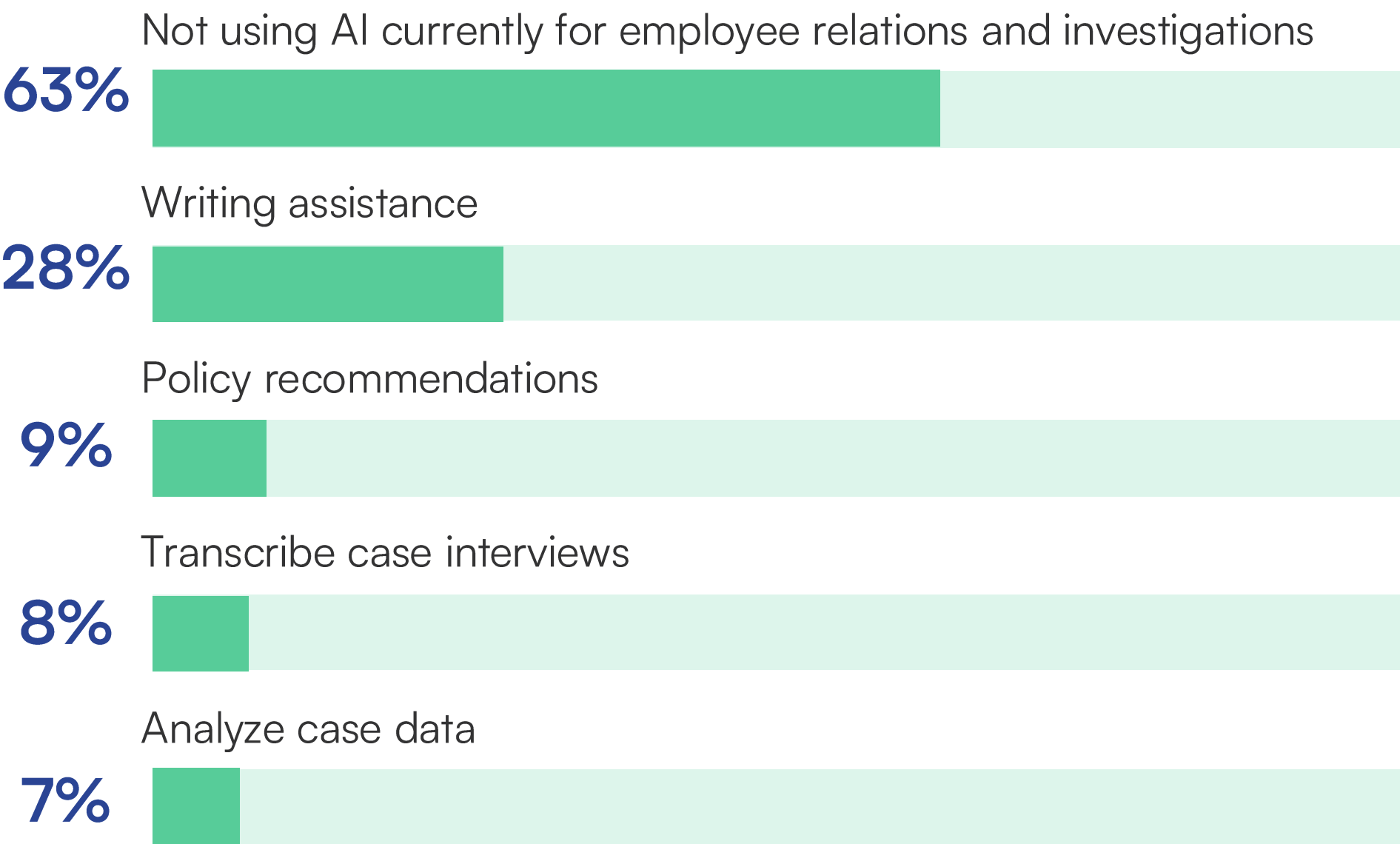| Response	Percentage
Non-existent	44%
Experimenting/piloting	35%
Limited deployment	13%
Widely-used	1%
Advanced integration with business processes	1%
Don't know the state of AI adoption	6%

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Low adoption implies that organizations face challenges getting started and ensuring ethical, responsible use

2023 Results: Top areas of interest for AI

Area	Percentage
Analyze data to uncover trends/insights	90%
Workflow analysis, process efficiency recommendations	84%
Analyze case data, ensure compliance	82%
Predictive analytics	77%
Transcribe case interviews	76%
Create case summaries	75%

Use of AI for employee relations and investigations in 2024

Use	Percentage
Not using AI currently for employee relations and investigations	63%
Writing assistance	28%
Policy recommendations	9%
Transcribe case interviews	8%
Analyze case data	7%

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Align with Stakeholders to Set the Right Course for AI adoption

+ What **challenges are we addressing with AI**, and why is AI the right solution?

+ What criteria will we use to evaluate/select AI tools and guide proper usage to ensure they **align with our values, culture and risk tolerance?**

+ How will we **identify, monitor and mitigate** potential bias, protect employee privacy and ensure compliance with relevant regulations in AI-driven processes?

+ What level of **transparency** will we provide to employees about how AI is used in ER processes and investigations?

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Questions + Answers

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