

FocusCore Salary Guide 2026



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Introduction

Japan's talent market in the past year has been defined by one word: compensation. That might sound a bit self-serving as this is a salary guide. However, for decades, Japanese professionals prioritized stability, culture, and career growth over compensation. That's changed.

In 2026, with the weakened Yen and inflation pushing costs higher (rice alone doubled in price this year!) and companies pushing for employees in office, compensation has become the top driver of career decisions.

This shift collides with a shrinking workforce and relentless competition for bilingual, skilled talent. Employers are paying more, not out of choice, but necessity. At the same time, hiring demand is heating up with 38.2% of employers telling FocusCore they are looking to hire immediately. In contrast, employee mobility remains low, as professionals stay cautious about job changes. The result? Companies continue to bid fiercely for a smaller pool of candidates.

Hybrid work is now the default, though some firms are already rolling back flexibility. Diversity and inclusion initiatives have been replaced with a focus on sustainability, while AI is beginning to reshape how finance, operations, and talent functions run. What hasn't changed is the unique subtlety of Japan's market: career decisions here are never about one factor alone. But salary has never been more central than it is today.

This year's FocusCore Salary Survey goes beyond pay bands. We asked leaders about what they value, how company size and structure are shifting, and which areas AI will transform next. The insights here are designed to help you not only benchmark compensation but also understand the deeper dynamics shaping hiring in Japan.

And as a company, FocusCore has continued to change and evolve in how we can service our customers.

First, we are proud to announce that we joined forces with IIC Partners. IIC Partners is ranked among the top 10 retained executive search groups in the world. FocusCore is now connected across 40 offices worldwide, partnering with senior executives and board directors to transform businesses and solve complex leadership challenges. Such a great network provides you with a greater depth of search excellence in Japan helping you focus on your core business.

In addition, to help bolster our already significant Finance and Accounting desk, we have added interim (業務委託) and temporary solutions (派遣). These services give our clients greater flexibility to respond quickly to market changes, fill urgent skill gaps, and manage transformation projects.

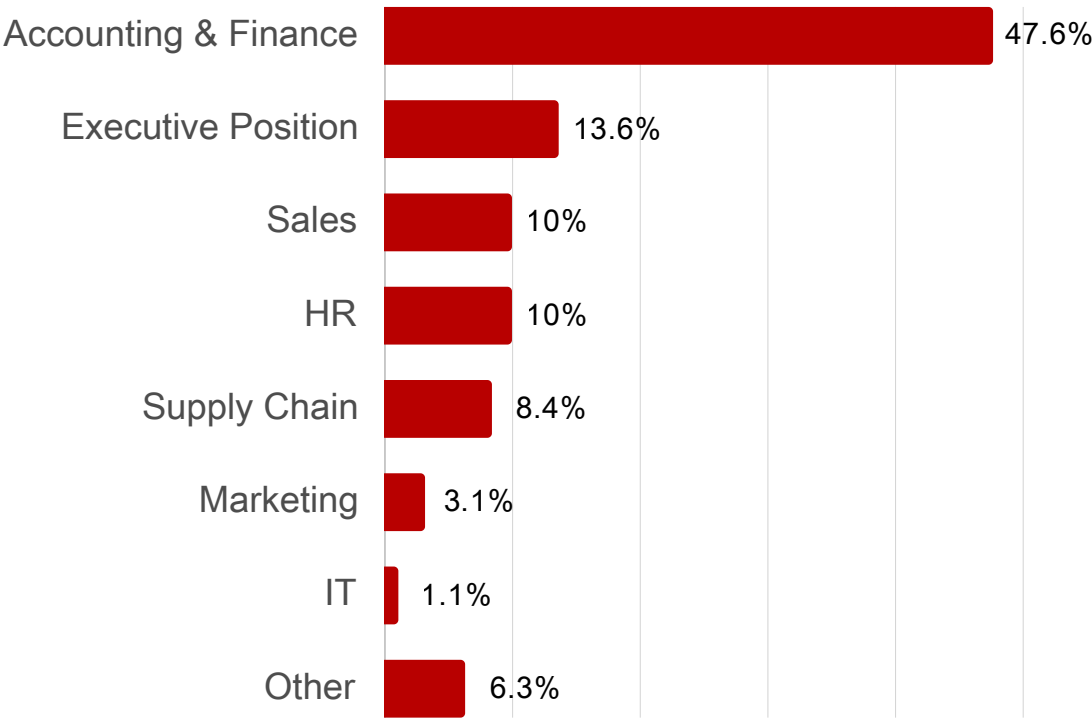
Thanks for making this another great year for FocusCore and partnering with us.

David Sweet, Ph.D.
Founder & CEO, FocusCore Group K.K.

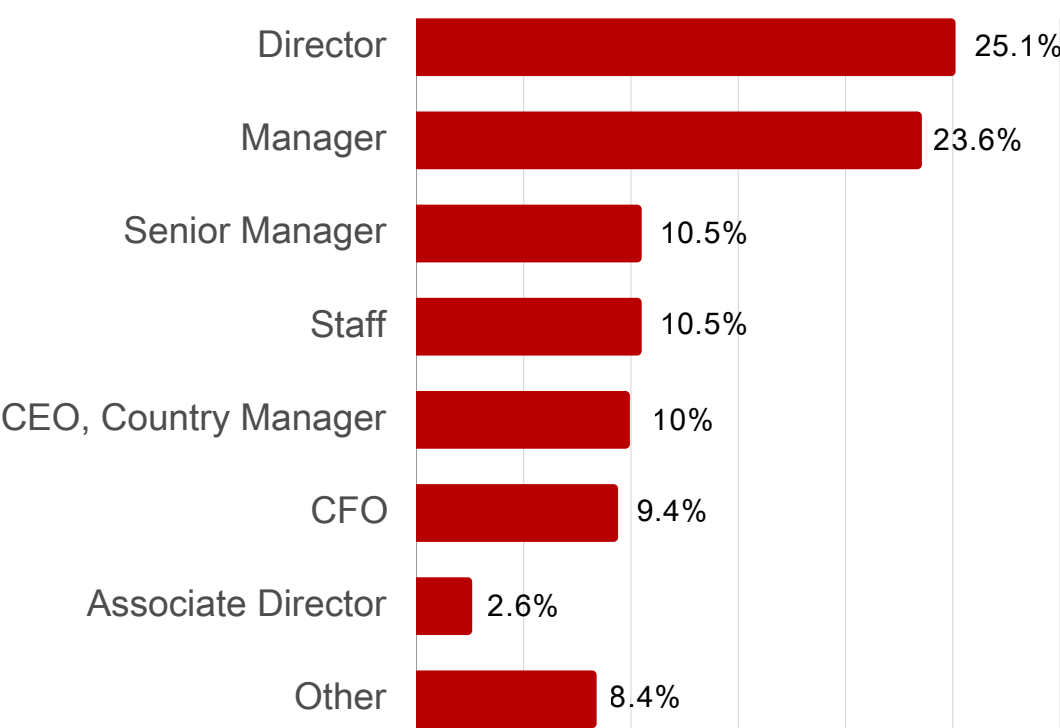


Insights from respondents

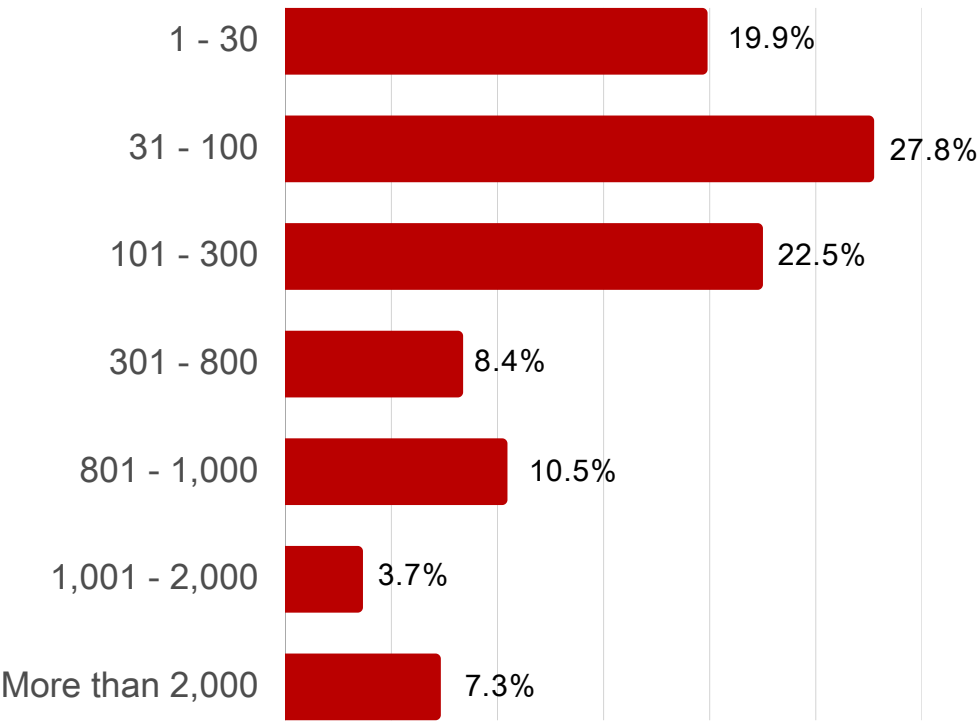
Specialization



Current Title



Company Size



Insights from our experts

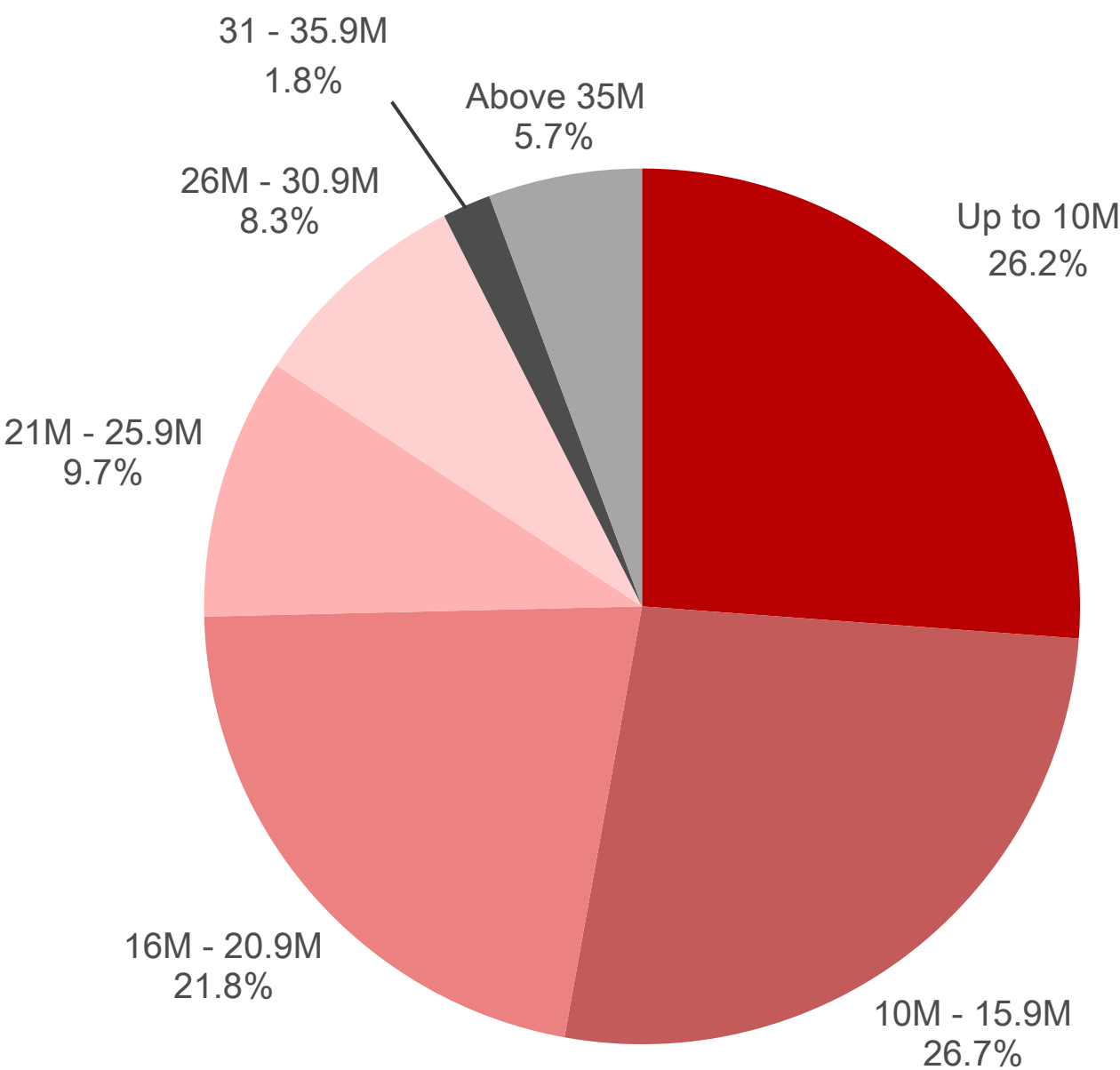
We guide CFOs and other leaders on their career progression. If you, or anyone around you are looking for opportunities, no matter the company size, we can help you take control of your career.

Tetsia Sweet
Consultant

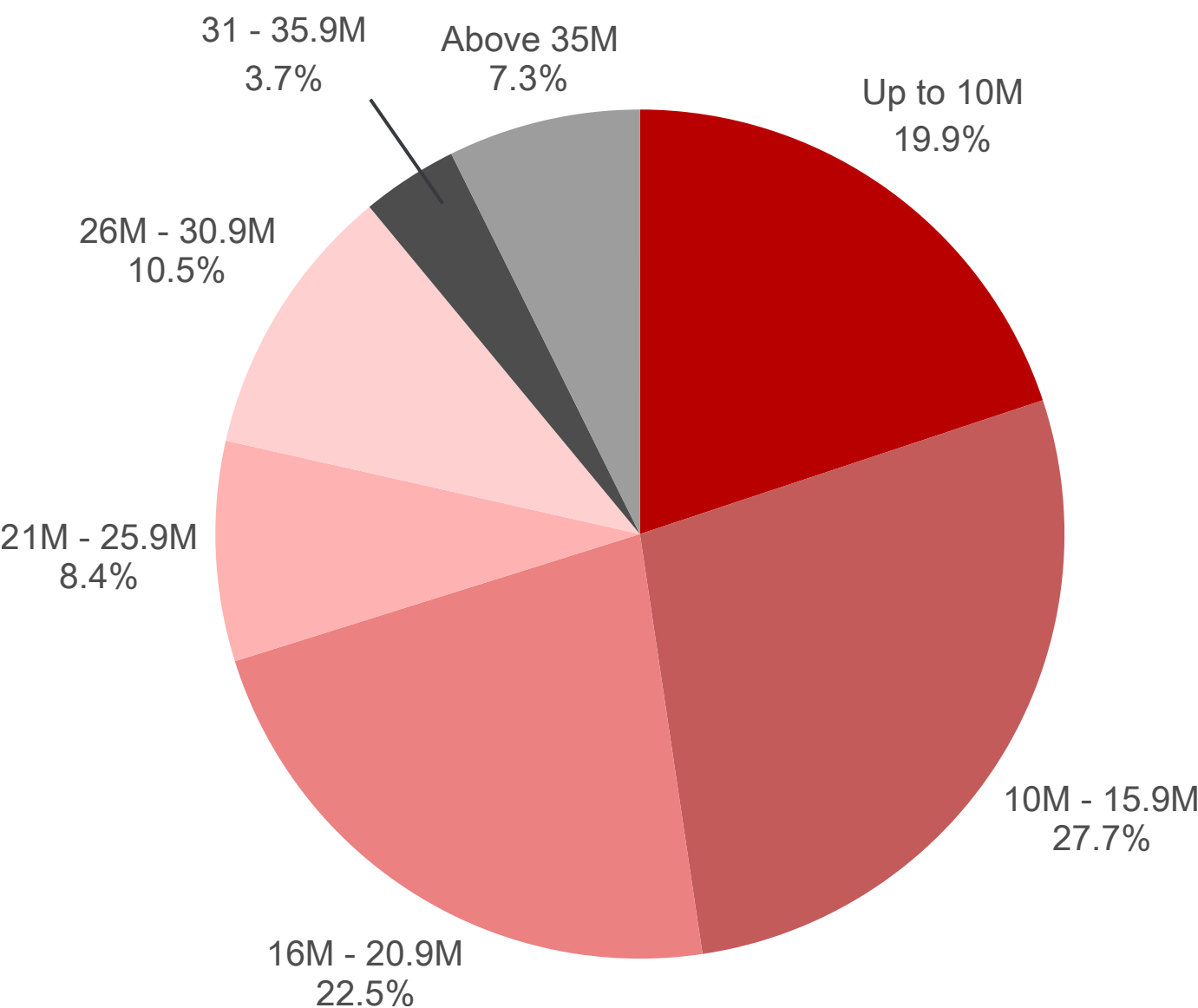


Current Salary

2025 Salary Guide

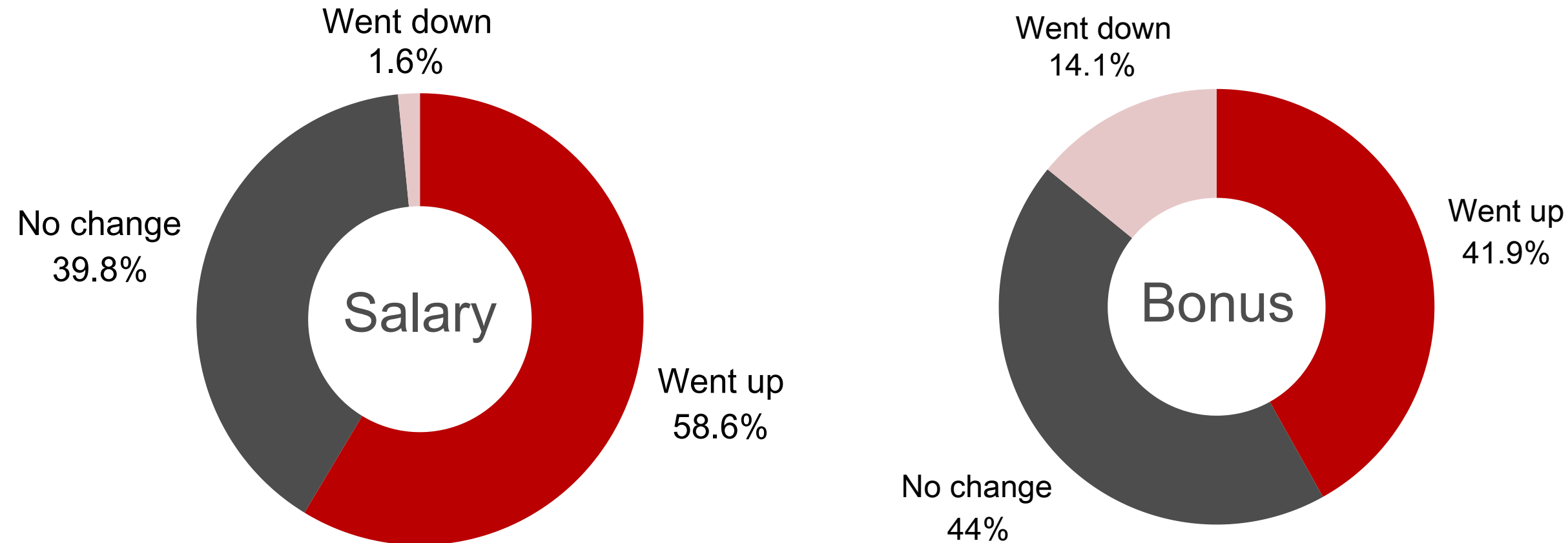


2026 Salary Guide



Has your salary and bonus changed this year?

This year, nearly 60% of respondents reported salary increases. However, 44% saw no change in their bonus.



Insights from our experts

For employers in Japan, especially foreign companies, the latest figures show that compensation increases are now standard for director-level leaders including accounting and finance, with almost 60% of professionals seeing higher compensation and very few experiencing decreases. Bonus changes are more uncertain, as only 42% received more, while most saw either no difference or a decrease.

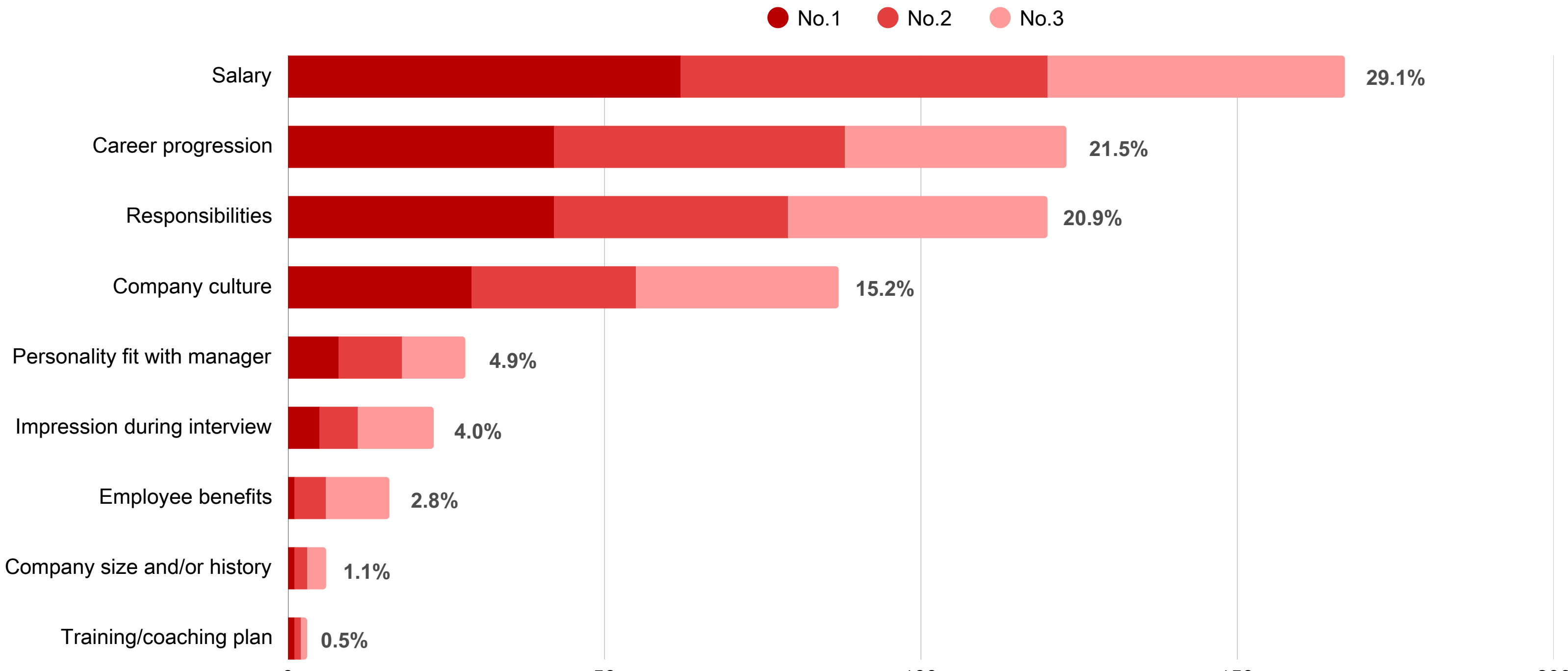
To compete for top executives in Japan, businesses must keep base salary offers attractive and transparent, not just for CFO roles but also for director and senior leadership positions across all functions. This investment in fixed pay is becoming one of the strongest tools for talent attraction and retention, especially as candidates focus more on salary stability when making career moves. Regularly benchmarking pay levels and communicating packages clearly will help international firms stand out and secure the best possible leadership talent in a competitive market.

Simon Jelfs
Managing Director



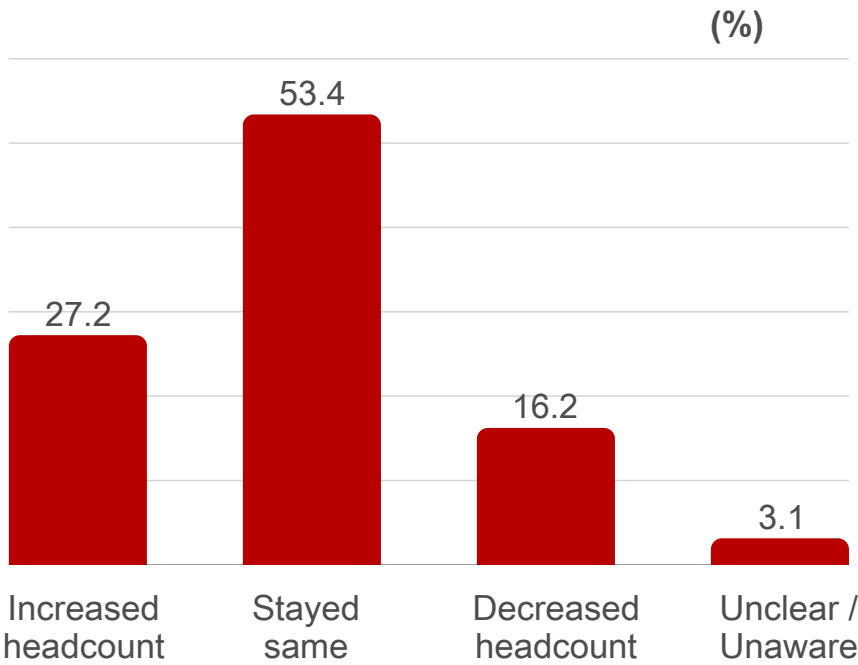
What are the 3 most important aspects you look for when searching for a new job?

Salary clearly stands out as the top factor when considering a new job, chosen by around 30% of employees and 28% of employers as their first priority. Career progression (22% vs 21%) and responsibilities (22% vs 19%) follow closely behind. Meanwhile, company culture and manager fit remain secondary considerations, though still important for some candidates.

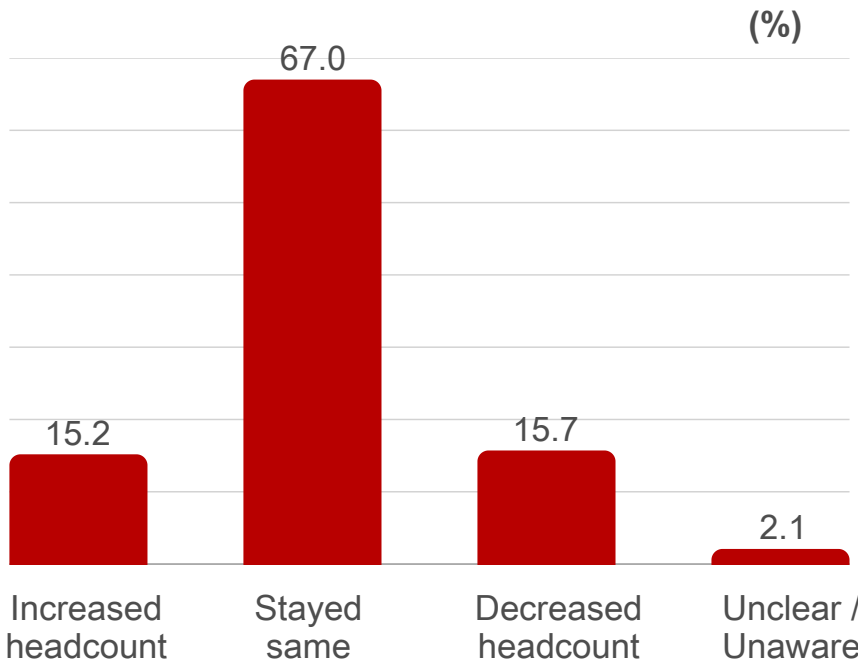


Has your company size changed this year?

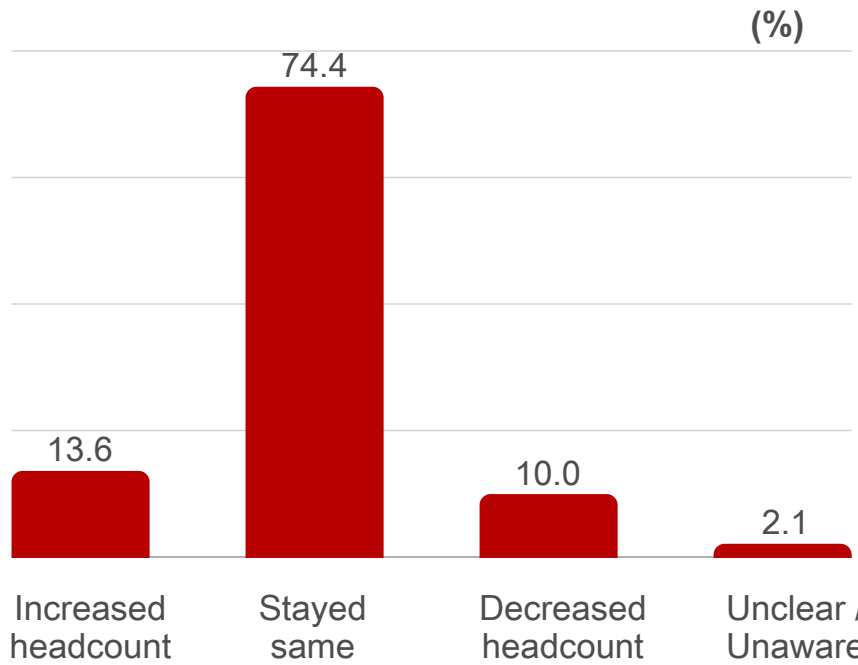
Operations Team



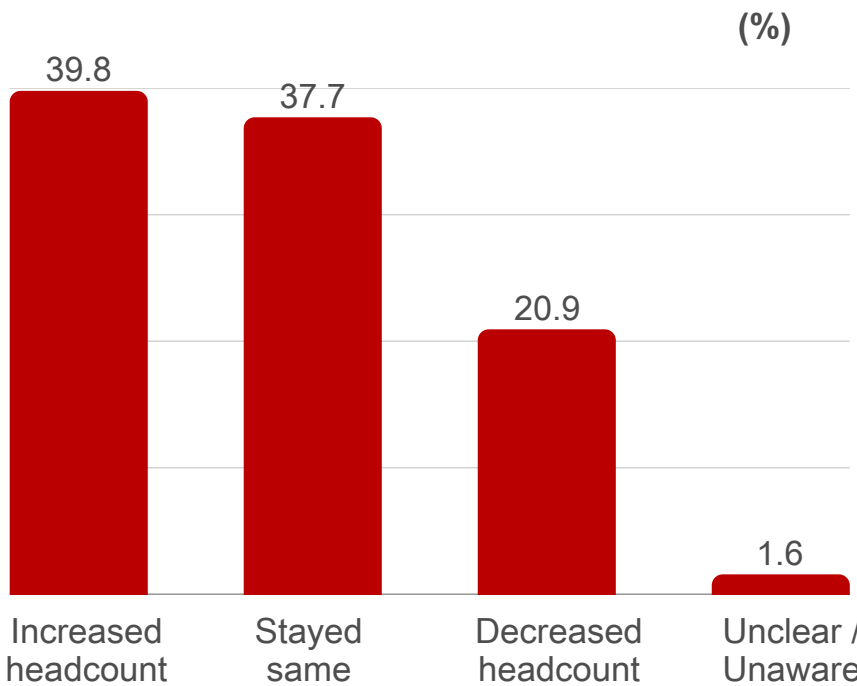
Finance Team



HR Team



Company Overall



Insights from our experts

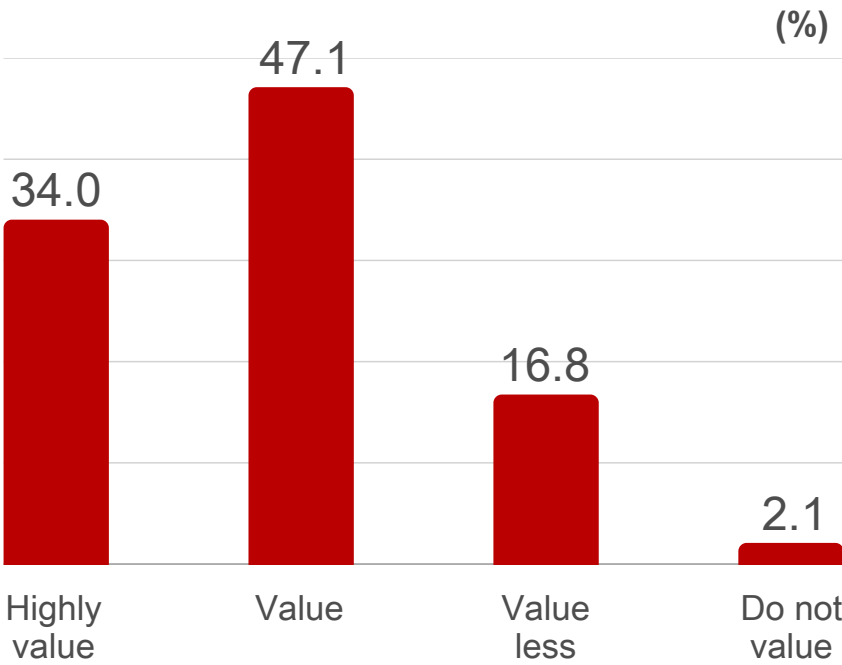
While most Finance and HR teams have held steady this year, Operations has seen more headcount growth, reflecting businesses prioritising execution and delivery capacity. Overall, with nearly 40% of companies expanding, growth is outpacing reductions, suggesting cautious optimism and selective investment in talent.

Jamieson Paling
Senior Consultant

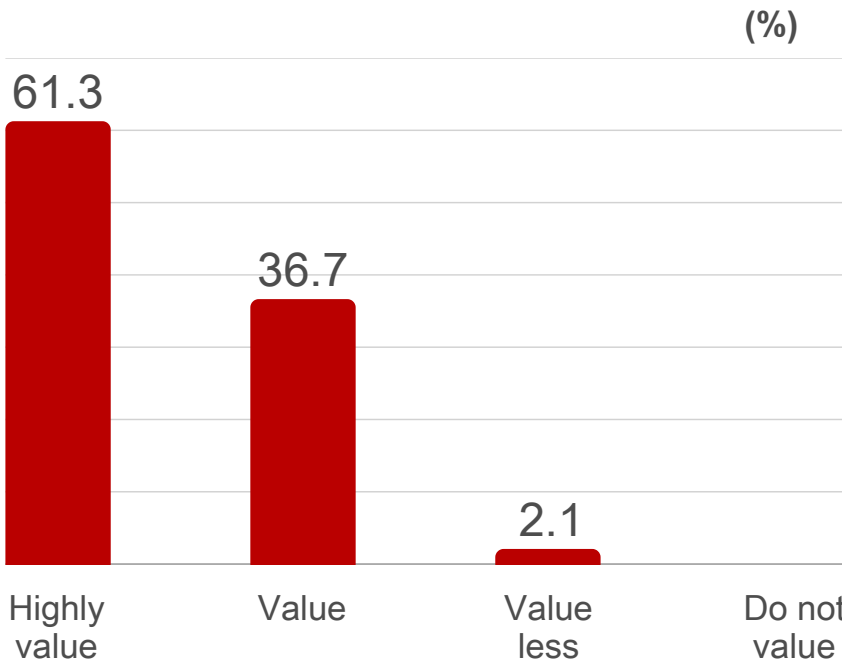


What are your core values for work?

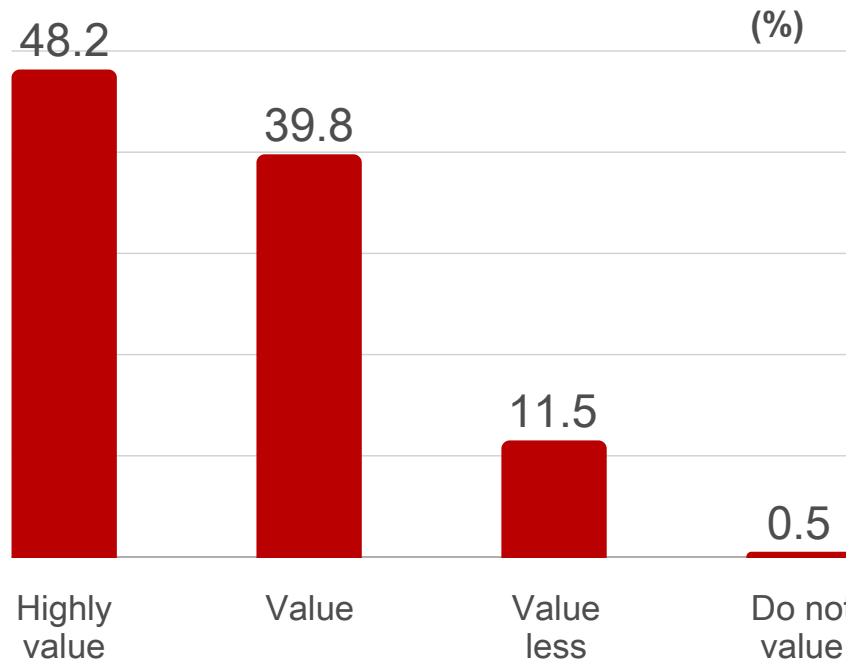
Management from my manager



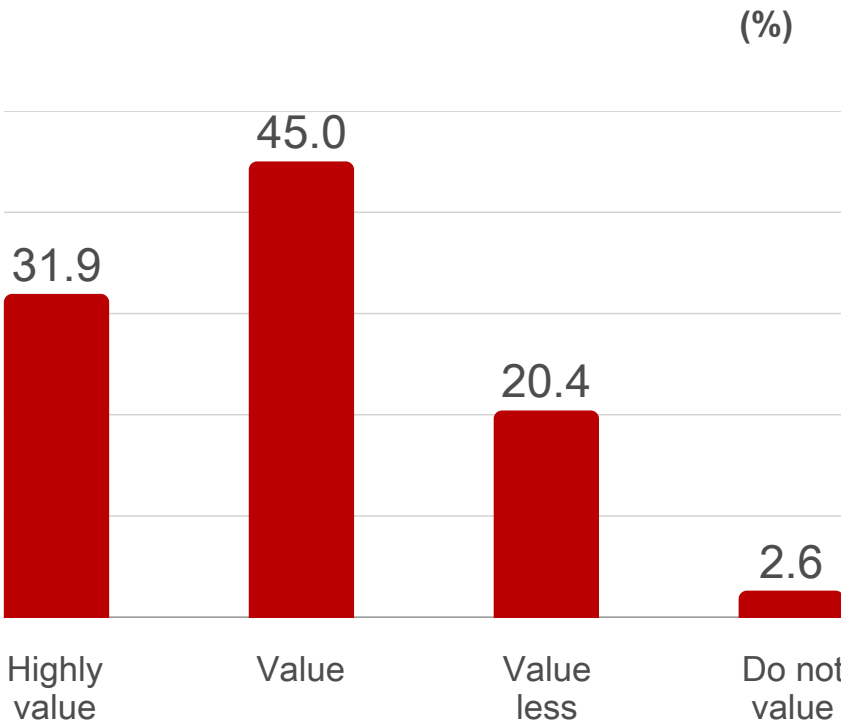
Respect of my independence



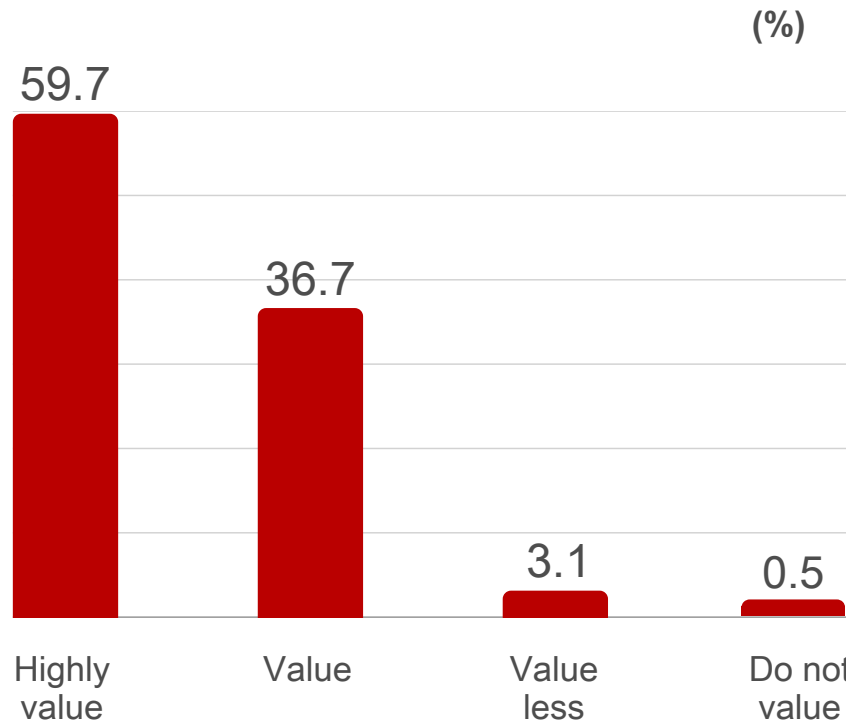
Career progression



Stability

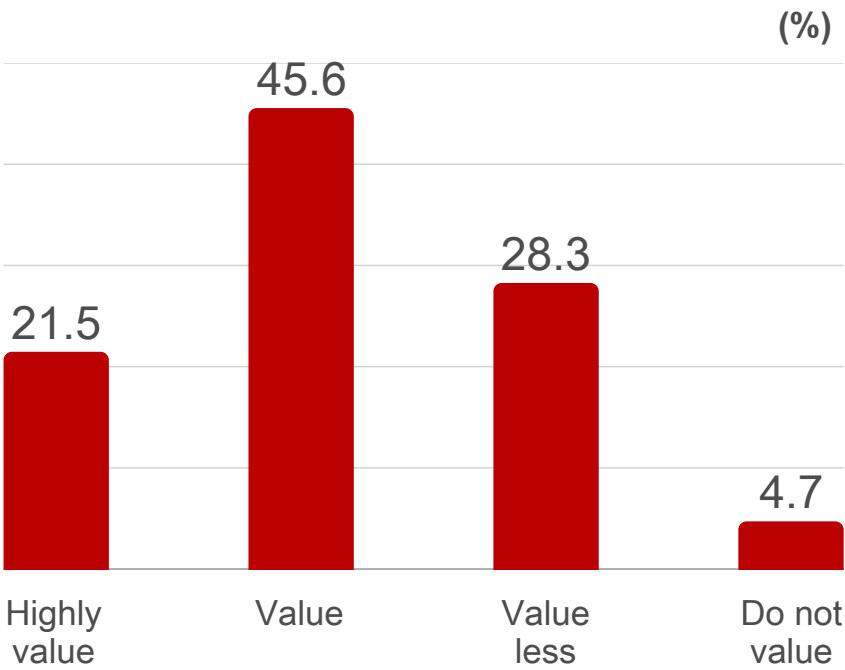


Salary

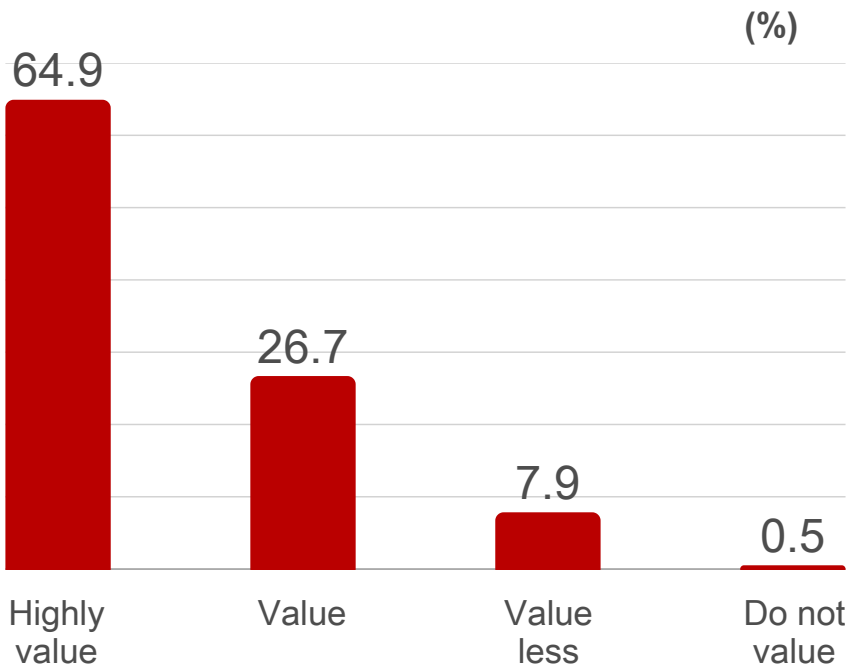


What are your core values for work?

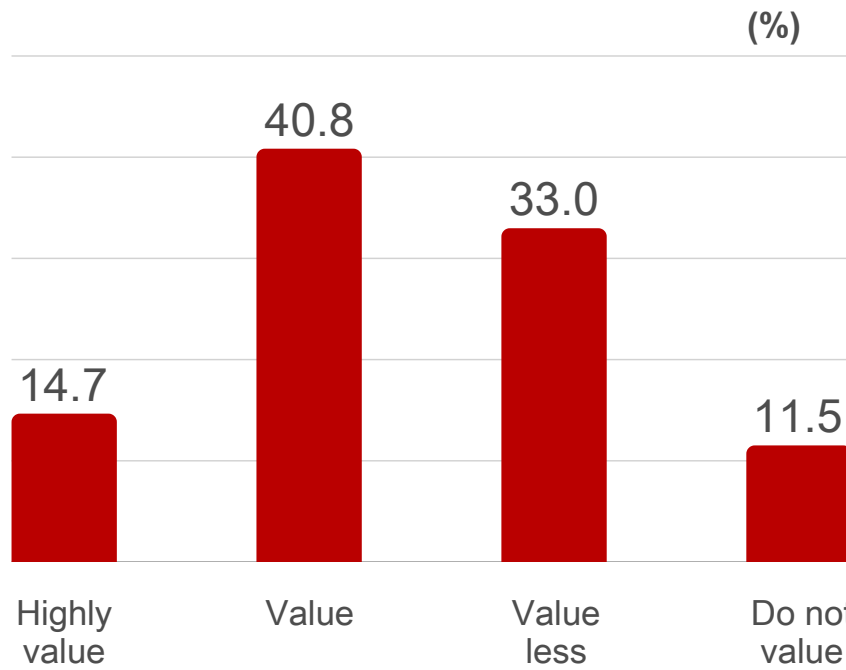
Employee benefits



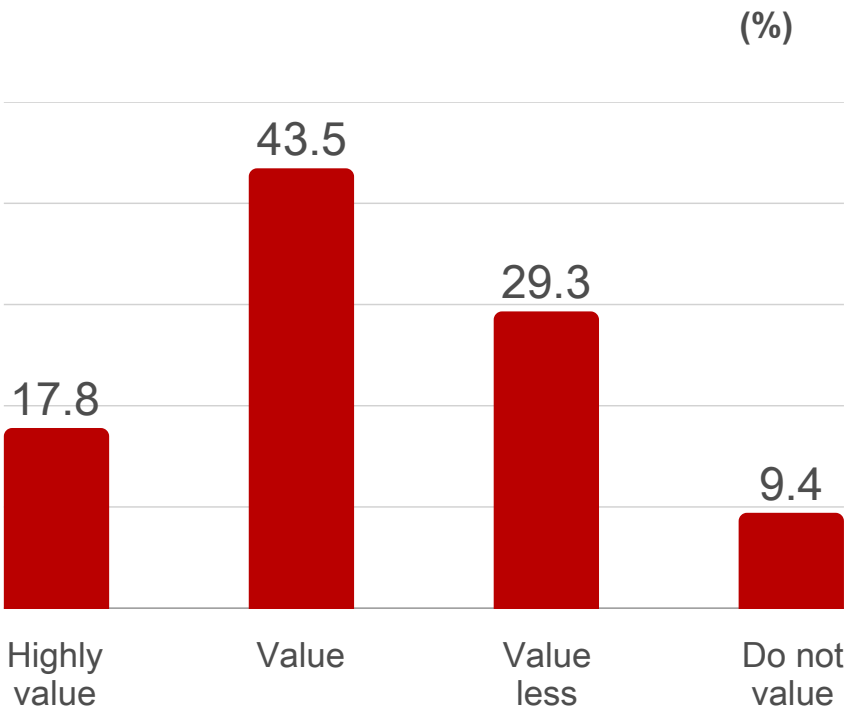
Company culture



DE&I



Commitment to sustainability



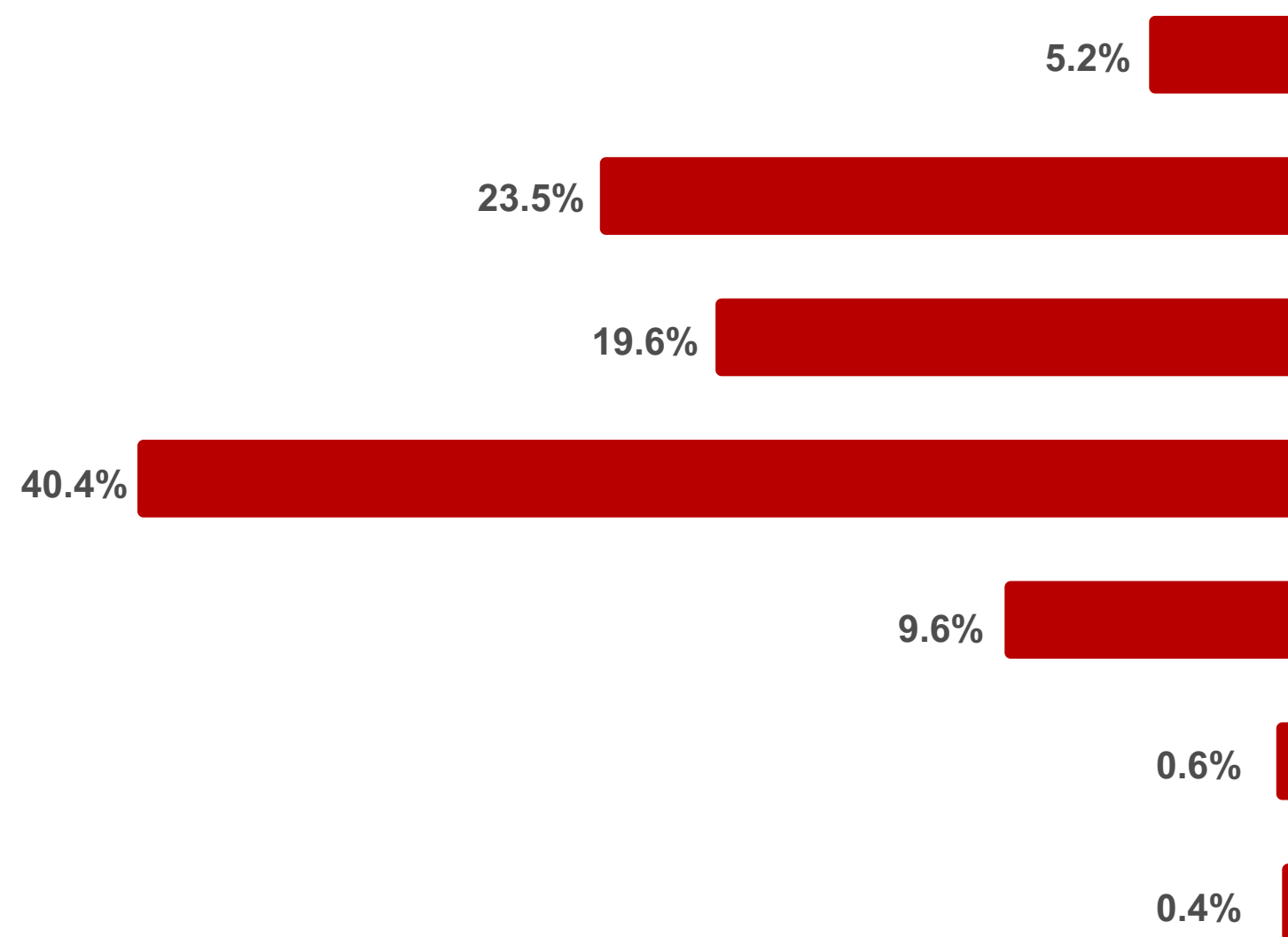
Insights from our experts

It's interesting to see that, as well as Salary, Company Culture and Independence are valued highly, and that job seekers place a great deal of importance on Career Progression and Stability. I see candidates searching for positions with longevity and opportunities for growth. A change from previous years, DE&I is less valued (currently less relevant?), as people place greater importance on other factors.

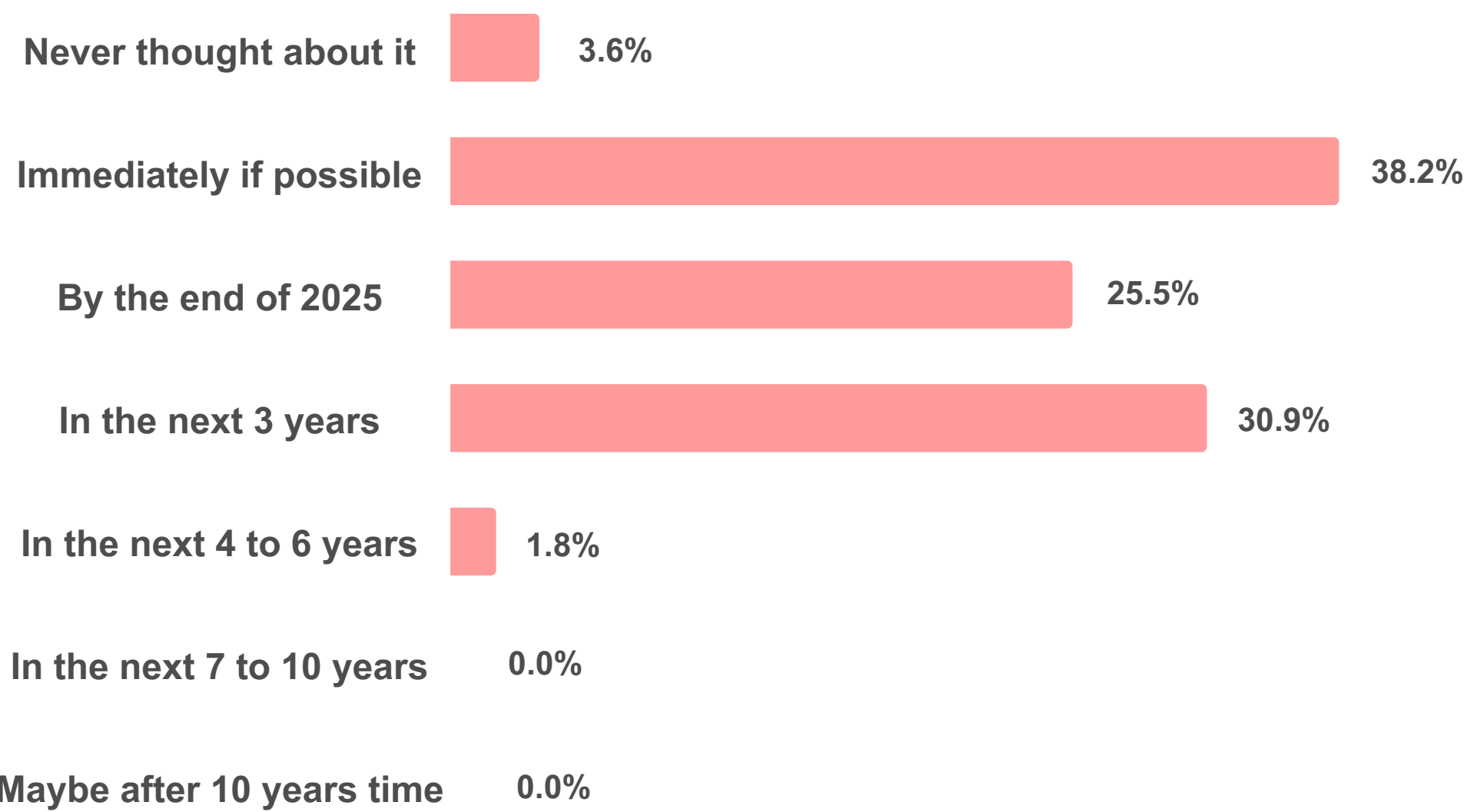
Jonathan Cant
Business Manager



If you were to change jobs, when do you plan to?



If you were to hire new talent, when do you plan to?



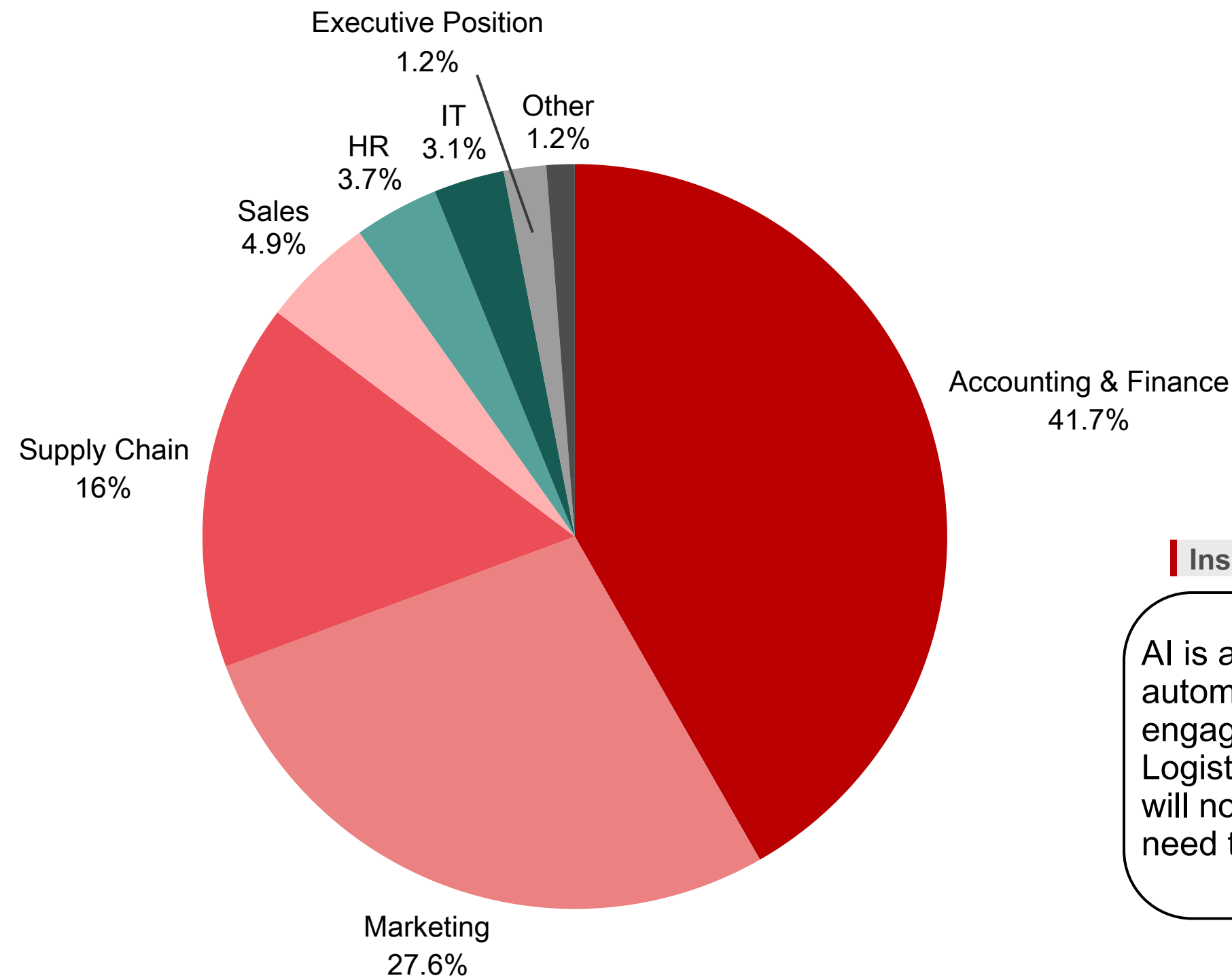
Insights from our experts

I believe that the data regarding patterns in job changes points to the weight that our candidates place on building a stable career. Regarding the data related to hiring, obviously it shows that our clients are also hiring in some areas, both now and in the future. It remains a talent scarce market.

Jack Stone
Business Manager



What area do you think AI will empower the most in the near future?



Insights from our experts

AI is already delivering quick wins in Finance and Marketing - automating routine tasks and powering smarter customer engagement. But the bigger opportunity lies in Supply Chain and Logistics. Smarter forecasting, planning, and risk management will not only cut costs but also build the resilience companies need to thrive in an unpredictable world.

Thomas Bangert
Senior Consultant



Salary Range



Accounting and Finance

Demand for bilingual talent in accounting and finance in Japan remains very strong, but the supply of qualified professionals continues to be limited. This shortage is driving rapid salary growth as companies compete to attract skilled individuals who can bridge language and cultural gaps effectively. In particular, the FP&A talent pool is highly international and increasingly diverse, reflecting global business needs and bringing fresh perspectives to finance functions.

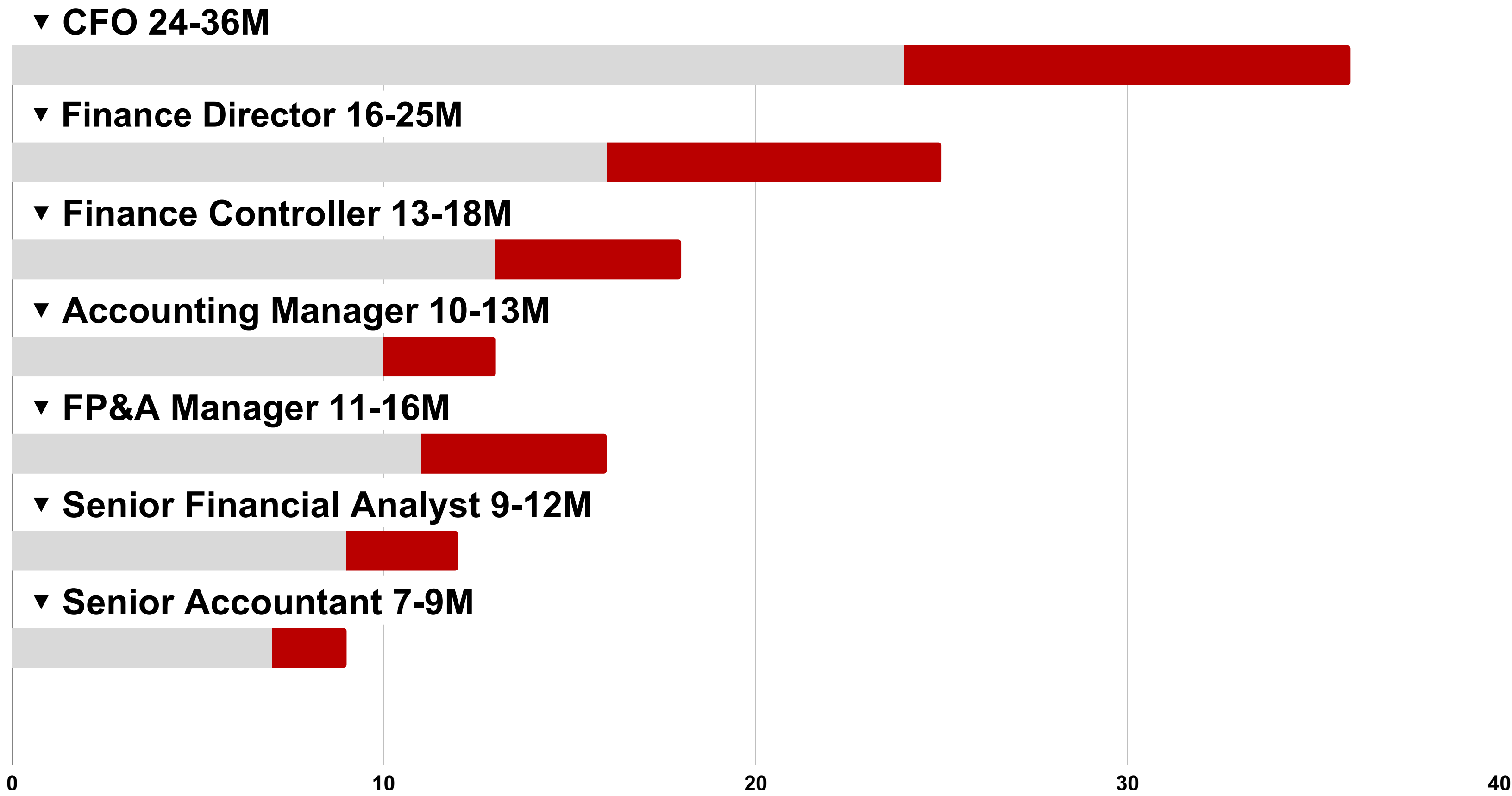
In contrast, the accounting candidate pool faces unique challenges due to Japan's demographics and language requirements. Most accounting roles require Japanese nationality or fluency in Japanese, which narrows the available talent base significantly. This makes recruiting competent accounting professionals more difficult, further fueling demand and compensation levels in this specialty. As a result, accounting roles remain significantly more difficult to fill compared to FP&A positions.

Professionals in both accounting and finance should focus on adding value through business partnering and perform the uniquely human tasks that AI cannot replicate. At the same time, embracing the latest AI technologies is essential to free up time for strategic work and increase effectiveness. Candidates should recognize that routine jobs involving only computer tasks without human interaction are increasingly vulnerable to outsourcing, making adaptability and continuous learning crucial for career longevity.

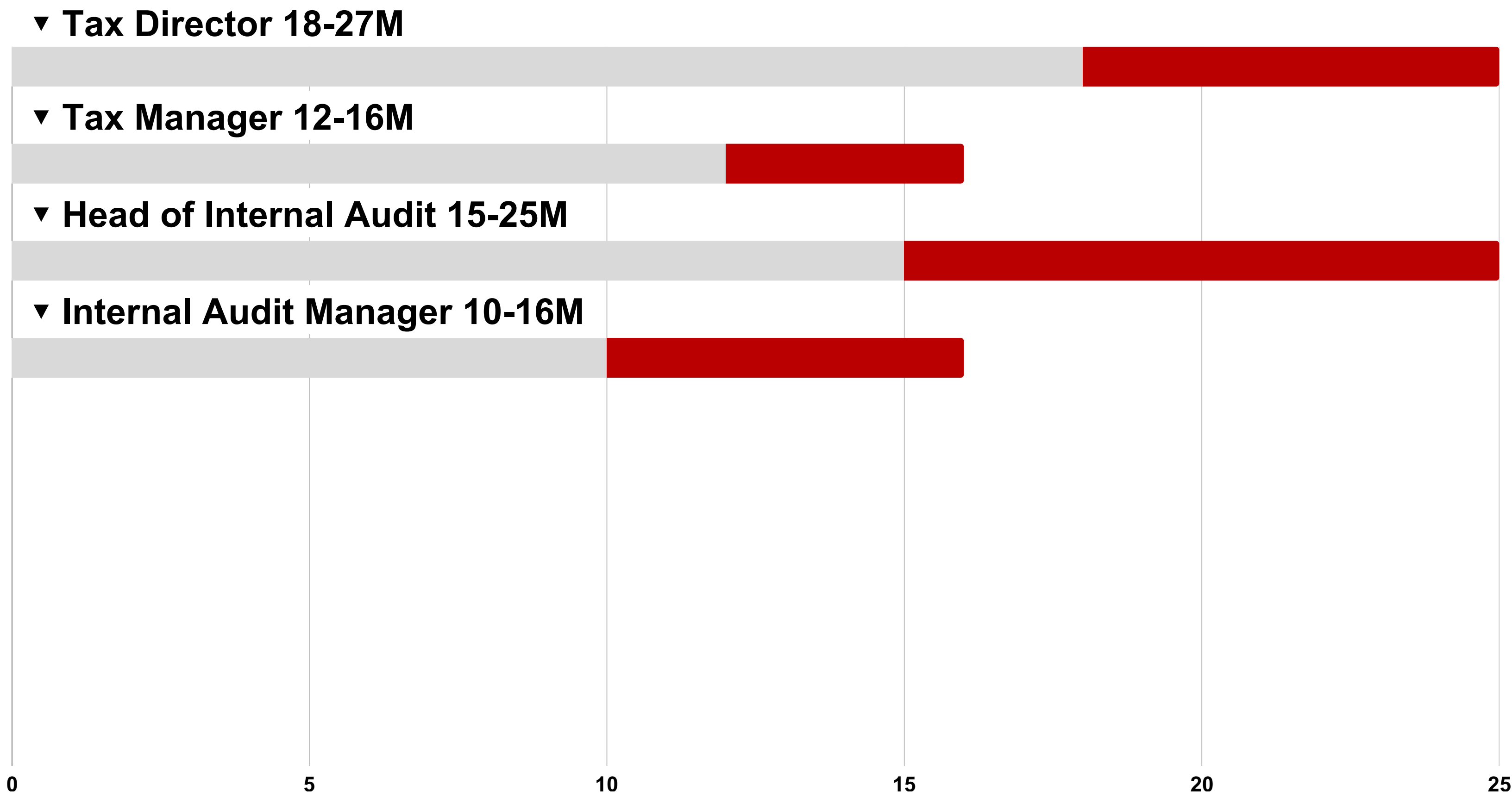
Simon Jelfs
Managing Director



Accounting and Finance



Accounting and Finance



Supply Chain and Logistics

The supply chain and logistics industry globally has faced yet another turbulent year. The lingering effects of the pandemic, Trump-era tariffs, and ongoing geopolitical tensions have continued to disrupt trade flows and create uncertainty. Rising energy costs, persistent supply bottlenecks, and the shift toward reshoring and diversification have further intensified the challenges. This constant state of disruption has underscored just how critical supply chains are to business continuity and growth.

At the same time, the talent market remains under severe strain. Japan's aging workforce is shrinking, while strict language requirements and the perception of logistics as a less attractive career path for young graduates narrow the pipeline of new talent even further. As a result, many positions remain unfilled for extended periods, and highly qualified candidates often find themselves with several competing offers.

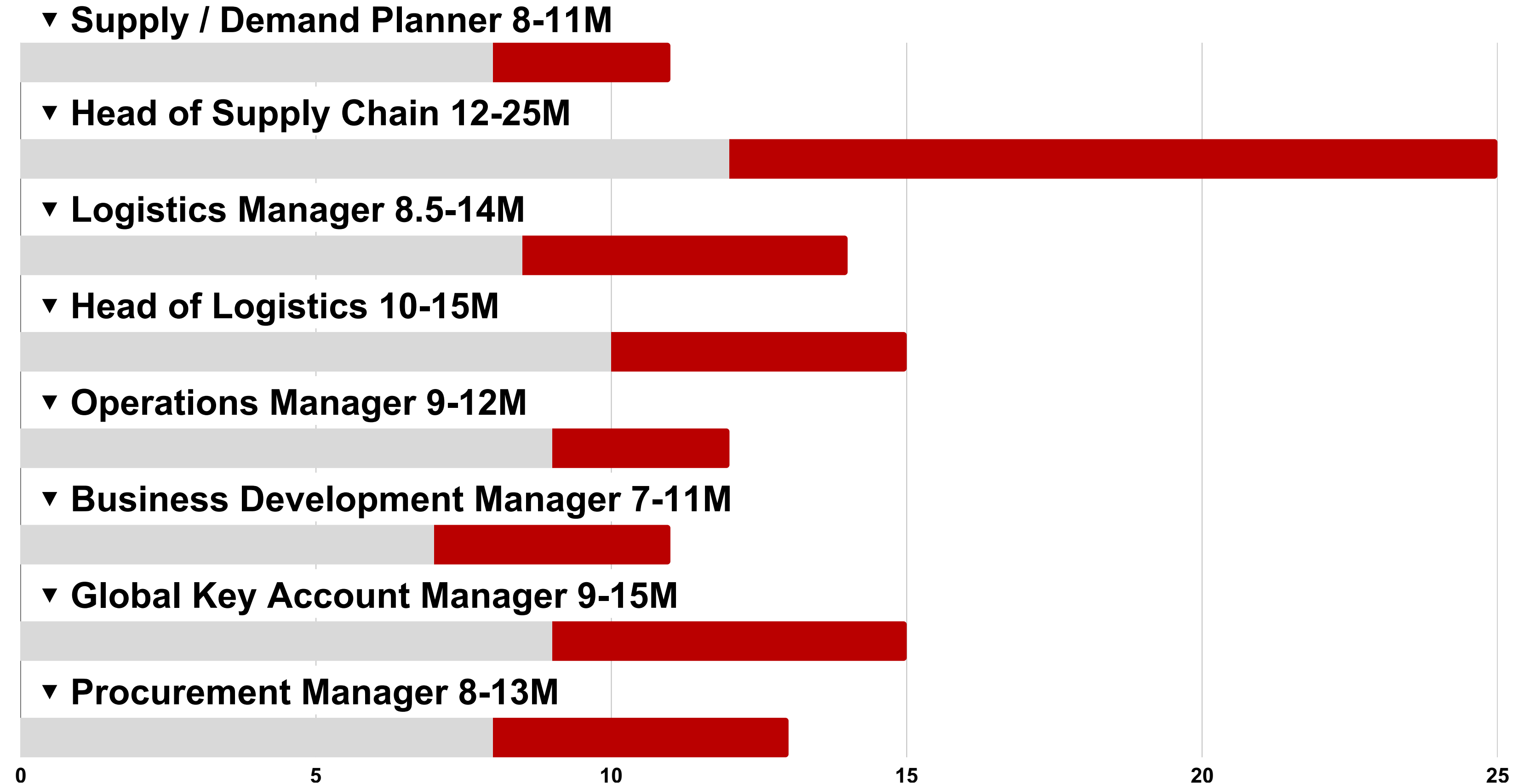
This scarcity has driven salaries steadily upward across the industry, with companies increasingly forced to pay a premium to secure and retain talent. Yet focusing only on salary overlooks alternative strategies. Businesses should also consider broadening their hiring criteria: experienced professionals who can deliver immediate impact, or international candidates whose Japanese skills may not be native level but whose technical and leadership expertise can far outweigh language gaps. In an industry long associated with long hours, offering greater flexibility in working style can also help open doors to a wider talent pool.

Looking ahead, salaries will likely continue to rise, but companies that complement competitive pay with more flexible hiring practices and greater attention to work-life balance will be best positioned to attract and retain the talent needed in this evolving sector.

Thomas Bangert
Senior Consultant



Supply Chain and Logistics



Human Resources

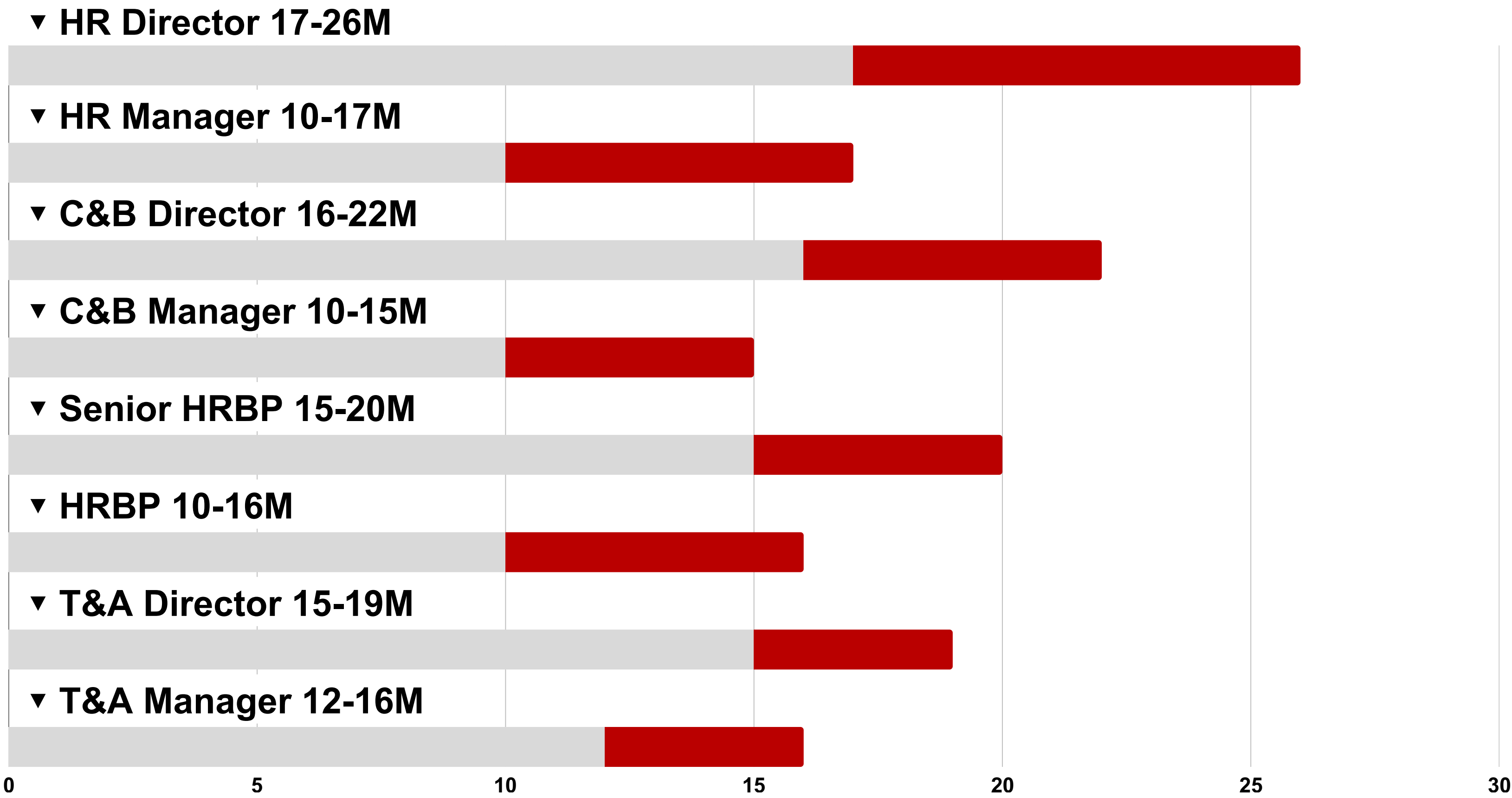
There has been a larger shift than usual in regards to the salaries our clients are paying and our candidates are receiving. I put this down to several factors. Firstly, the majority of our clients are international companies so the weak yen has created a need to raise salaries in order to remain competitive and retain talent.

Secondly, I think organizations are putting a greater emphasis on HR departments compared to immediately post covid. It is also a department that in my opinion will be more resilient to any sort of AI takeover as the entire point of HR is the Human factor.

Jack Stone
Business Manager



Human Resources



Country Manager and Managing Director

The leadership market in Japan has significantly shifted over the past few years. Where companies once relied on traditional expat packages with the intent of eventually handing over to a local MD, the trend today is more nuanced: hybrid expat packages and an increasing preference for locally based bilingual, bicultural leaders who can operate with a truly global mindset.

Competition has intensified for executives who can bridge Japan with global HQs and regional hubs with leaders who not only understand the local market, but also partner seamlessly across borders while delivering quick, measurable profit wins. This skillset is now a priority over purely “local experience” or “global pedigree” alone.

Looking ahead, as Japan’s workforce shrinks and global competition increases, companies will double-down on leaders who combine local fluency with global agility making these executives some of the most sought-after in the market.

David Sweet
Founder & CEO



Country Manager and Managing Director

▼ Small Size Company 18-25M



▼ Medium Size Company 25-50M



▼ Large Size Company 65-180M



0

50

100

150

200



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