

*Executive Leadership*  
**BAROMETER**  
**2 0 3 5**

A study of Danish  
executive leaders' perspectives

OCTOBER 2024

**cfl**

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# **cfL**

CfL is an organisation owned by 500 Danish public and private companies, who are all part of the CfL community. Our purpose is to raise the quality of leadership in Denmark and to make good leaders even better. We do this through courses, consultancy services, networks and testing tools.

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STUDIES**



The Copenhagen Institute for Futures Studies is an independent, non-profit think tank founded in 1969. Our purpose is to help people and organisations imagine, work with and shape their future.

# Background

The past 10 years have been characterised by major upheavals for Danish organisations and businesses. Brexit, the Covid-19 pandemic, rising energy prices and geopolitical upheavals have had a significant impact on Danish organisations.

That's why the Copenhagen Institute for Futures Studies (CIFS) and the Centre for Leadership (CfL) have entered into a collaboration with the aim of focusing on the future challenges for organisations and leaders in the next 10 years.

In this context, CIFS and CfL have conducted a quantitative survey among executive leaders in Danish companies to gain deeper insight into their future perspectives towards the year 2035.

The purpose of the survey is to increase knowledge about Danish leaders' expectations for the future and their own role in meeting them.

The survey was conducted among executive leaders in Danish organisations with a minimum of 100 employees and includes 309 interviews collected from 23 August to 4 September 2024.

The survey seeks answers to the following questions:

- What expectations do executive leaders have for the development of society in general?
- Which themes are most important to Danish executive leaders in relation to the future of their own organisation?
- How do executive leaders assess that their organisations are equipped for the future demands and challenges of the future?
- Do executive leaders have the necessary competences to navigate the 2035 horizon?

The results of the survey will be presented at CfL's Executive Leadership Summit in October 2024.

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# Key findings

**Danish executives are positive about the future towards 2035. 72% are mostly positive and 17% are mostly concerned.**

**78% are confident** that their organisations are well equipped to meet the demands of the future towards 2035. Similar results apply to both themselves as executive leaders and Danish society as a whole.

**Public sector executives are slightly less optimistic than private sector executives about Denmark's future.** 67% of public executives believe that society is well prepared for 2035, while the figure for private executives is 80%.

**63% of executive leaders expect greater uncertainty** in society over the next 10 years compared to the past 10 years. 17% expect less uncertainty over the next 10 years.

**85% believe that digitalisation & AI will change Danish society significantly.** Along with **cybersecurity** and **the green transition** it's in the top three of topics they believe will change Danish society the most between now and 2035. The same three topics are in the top three when we ask about expectations for change in their own organisation.

**There is a difference in prioritisation between public sector executives. 85% of public sector executives** are more likely to expect cybersecurity to change Danish society compared to **72% of private sector executives.** 87% of private sector executives expect digitalisation & AI to transform Danish society compared to 78% of public sector executives.

**Trust in institutions and the state** is at the bottom of the list of topics respondents expect to change Danish society. **Only 11% believe** it will significantly change Danish society.

**Diversity and inclusion, and wellbeing and mental health** are two topics that executive leaders expect their own organisations to be well equipped to address, compared to how these topics will change their own organisations by 2035.

**Changes in wars & conflicts, macroeconomics and energy security** are the topics that leaders expect their own organisations to be **least equipped to** address.

**Data and digitalisation, change management and strategic foresight** are in the top three disciplines that executive leaders believe will equip them professionally to meet the changes they see towards 2035.



# Perspectives on the Executive Leadership Barometer results

The Executive Leadership Barometer 2035 uncovers Danish executive leaders' views on the future and the challenges and opportunities they expect towards 2035. The survey shows that Danish executive leaders are generally positive about the future, but that they are also concerned about a number of societal challenges.

Executive leaders are predominantly optimistic: 72% look forward to the future and 57% see many opportunities towards 2035. This optimism is shared across sectors and company sizes. However, 74% expect more uncertainty in the next 10 years, compared to the past 10 years.

## **Digitalisation & AI stands out**

Executive leaders have an eye for business-critical themes and point to digitalisation & AI, cybersecurity and the green transition as the three topics that will change both Danish society and their own organisations the most.

The Executive Leadership Barometer calls for both optimism and action, with executive leaders feeling well equipped to tackle the themes that will transform the future – digitalisation & AI being an exception.

We see a marked difference between senior leaders' expectations of how digitalisation & AI will change society and their organisations, and how well equipped they are to meet that change.

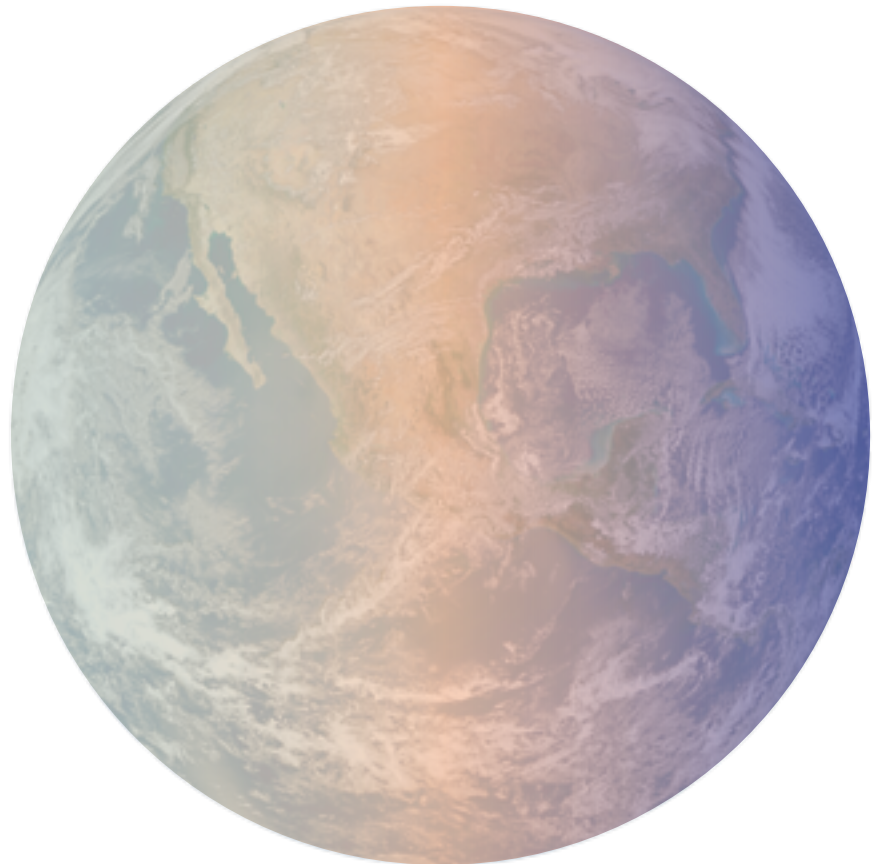
The green transition, diversity and inclusion, and wellbeing and mental health are the three themes that executive leaders feel best equipped to address towards 2035. This suggests that these topics are highly prioritised in Danish companies today.

### **Geopolitical unrest leaves its mark**

Executive leaders also have concerns regarding the next ten years. These concerns centre around geopolitical risks, global trade and energy security. At the same time, senior leaders feel least equipped to deal with these areas in their organisations.

The overall positive attitude towards the future is a good starting point for navigating an uncertain world, but the survey also points to a need to strengthen organisations' preparedness for potential threats. Executive leaders themselves point to competencies in areas such as digitalisation, risk management and strategic foresight to equip them for the future.

In conclusion: The Executive Leadership Barometer 2035 provides a unique insight into Danish executive leaders' thoughts on the future. By recognising both optimism and concerns, we can better prepare for the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.





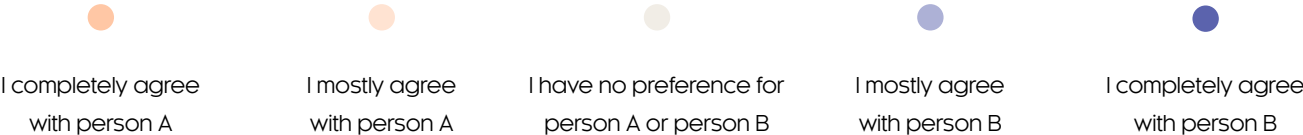
# Survey results

# **THE PERCEPTION OF SOCIETAL DEVELOPMENT IN DENMARK**

# How do you see the development of society in Denmark in the next 10 years towards 2035?

FOR EACH SET WE WILL ASK YOU TO SPECIFY WHICH STATEMENT YOU MOST AGREE WITH.

Base: n=309

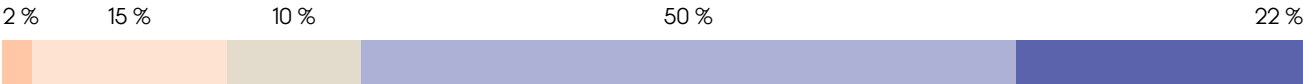


**PERSON A SAYS:**

**PERSON B SAYS:**

'I'm **worried** about the future towards 2035'

'I **look forward** to the future towards 2035'



'I see many **threats** towards the year 2035'

'I see many **opportunities** towards the year 2035'



'I expect **more uncertainty** in the next 10 years compared to the last 10 years'

'I expect **less uncertainty** in the next 10 years compared to the last 10 years'



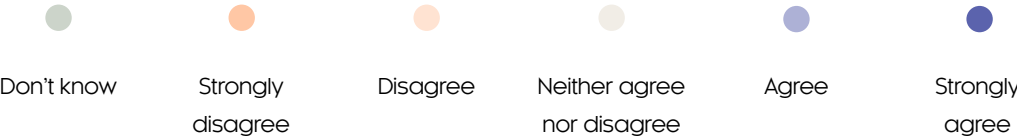
# *Comparison*



# **PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE TOWARDS 2035**

# To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Base: n=309



'It is my impression that as a leader, I am well equipped professionally to meet the future towards 2035.'

**TOP-2**



'It is my impression that my organisation/company is well equipped to meet the future towards 2035.'



'It is my impression that Danish society is well equipped to meet the future towards 2035.'



'It is my impression that Danish organisations and companies are well equipped to meet the future towards 2035.'



NOTE: TOP-2 REFERS TO RESPONDENTS WHO HAVE ANSWERED STRONGLY AGREE OR AGREE TO A GIVEN STATEMENT.

# *Comparison*

# To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Base: n=309

● Private company

Public, Semi-public, NGO ●

'It is my impression that as a leader, I am well equipped professionally to meet the future towards 2035.'



'It is my impression that my organisation/company is well equipped to meet the future towards 2035.'



'It is my impression that Danish society is well equipped to meet the future towards 2035.'



'It is my impression that Danish organisations and companies are well equipped to meet the future towards 2035.'

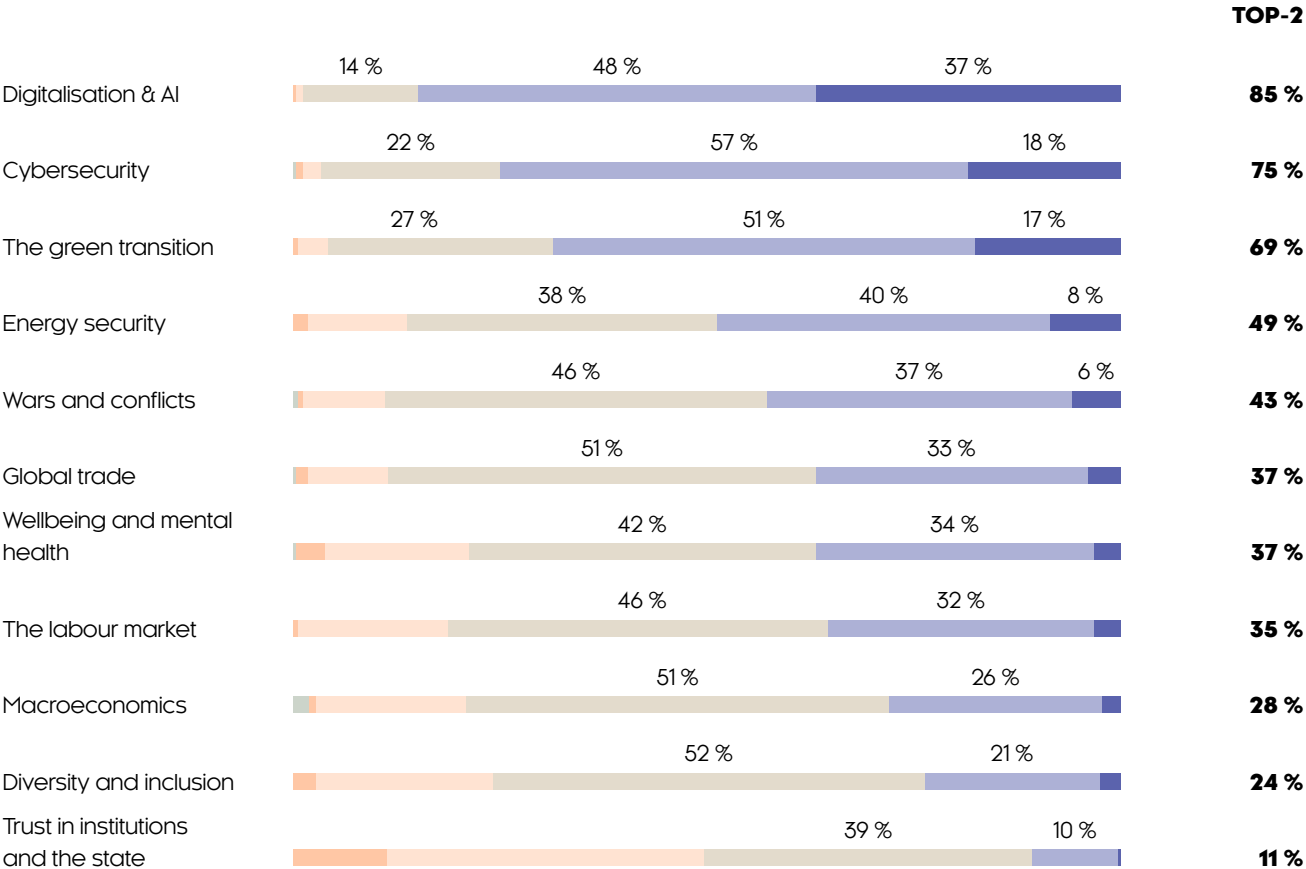


NOTE: PERCENTAGES REFER TO RESPONDENTS ANSWERING 'STRONGLY AGREE' OR 'AGREE' TO THE GIVEN STATEMENT.

# **EXPECTED CHANGES IN DANISH SOCIETY**

# To what extent do you expect that developments in the following topics will change Danish society towards 2035?

Base: n=309



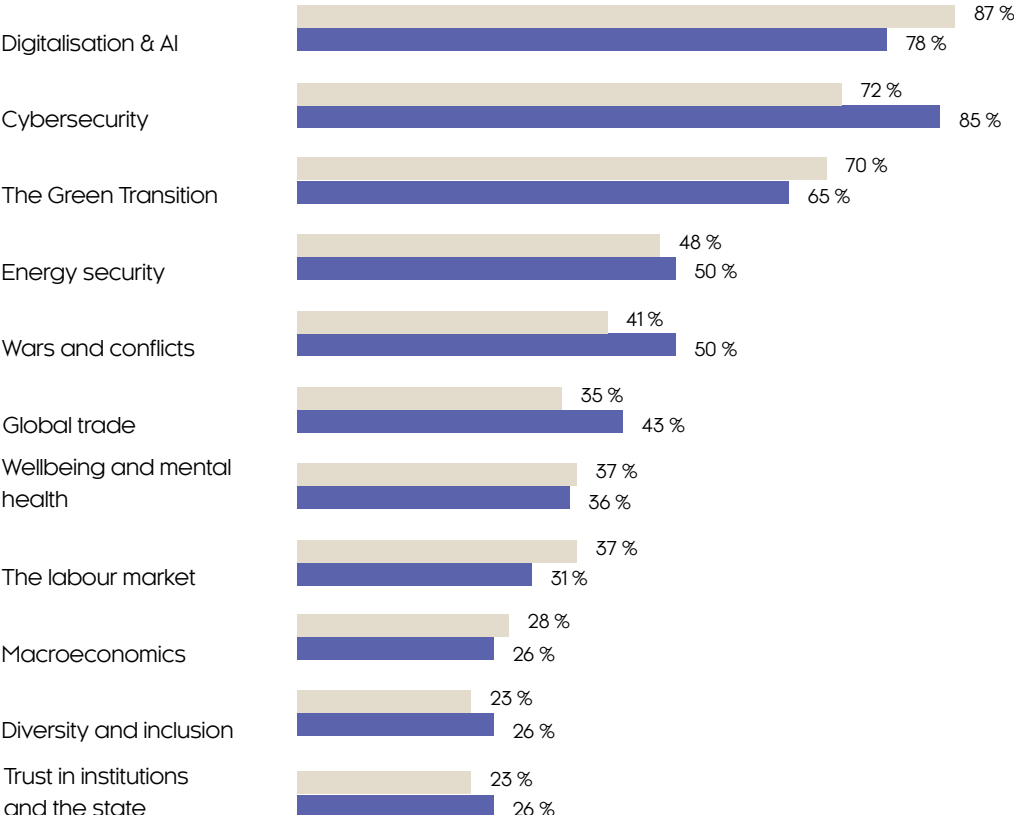
NOTE: TOP-2 REFERS TO RESPONDENTS WHO HAVE ANSWERED STRONGLY AGREE OR AGREE TO A GIVEN STATEMENT.

# *Comparison*

# To what extent do you expect that developments in the following topics will change Danish society towards 2035?

Base: n=309

- Private company
- Public, Semi-public, NGO

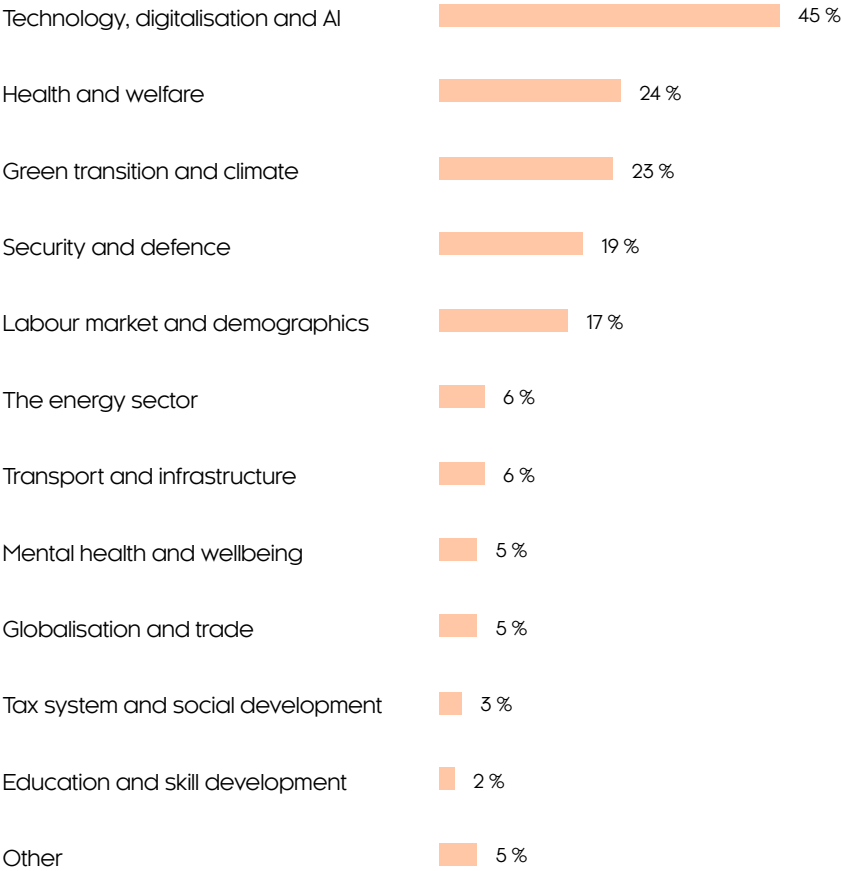


NOTE: PERCENTAGES REFER TO RESPONDENTS ANSWERING 'RADICAL CHANGE' OR 'SIGNIFICANT CHANGE' TO THE GIVEN SUBJECT.

**SELF-SELECTED  
TOPICS THAT ARE  
EXPECTED TO  
CHANGE DANISH  
SOCIETY**

# Which areas of Danish society do you expect to undergo the greatest development/change towards 2035? *(Open question)*

Base: n=200



NOTE: "DON'T KNOW" REPRESENTS 26% OF TOTAL AND IS EXCLUDED FROM THE FIGURE.

## Open answers

‘We will see massive pressure from Eastern Europe, Africa and certain countries in Asia and Latin America, which are far more efficient and quicker to adapt than we are, and this, together with demographic developments, will be a massive challenge for the Danish labour market. So I believe and hope that the labour market will change significantly.’

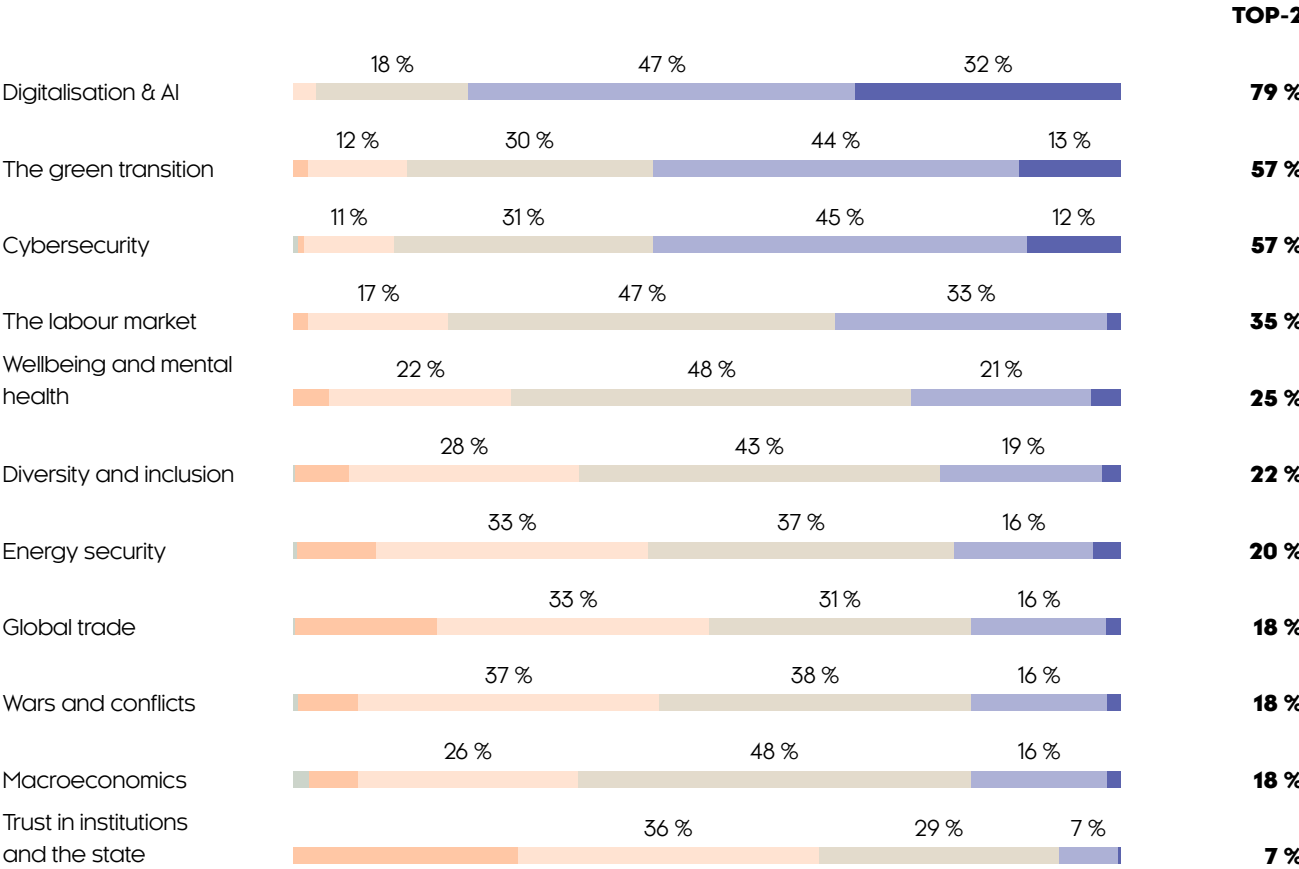
‘AI and digitalisation will radically affect the entire Danish society in the coming years and will be necessary for us to compete in the international market.’

‘The welfare system will be increasingly challenged in terms of recruitment and retention. Only a small part can be solved through streamlining, AI and digitalisation. So there will also be a need for real adaptations of services.’

# **EXPECTED CHANGES IN ORGANISATIONS**

# To what extent do you expect that developments in the following topics will change your organisation towards 2035?

Base: n=309



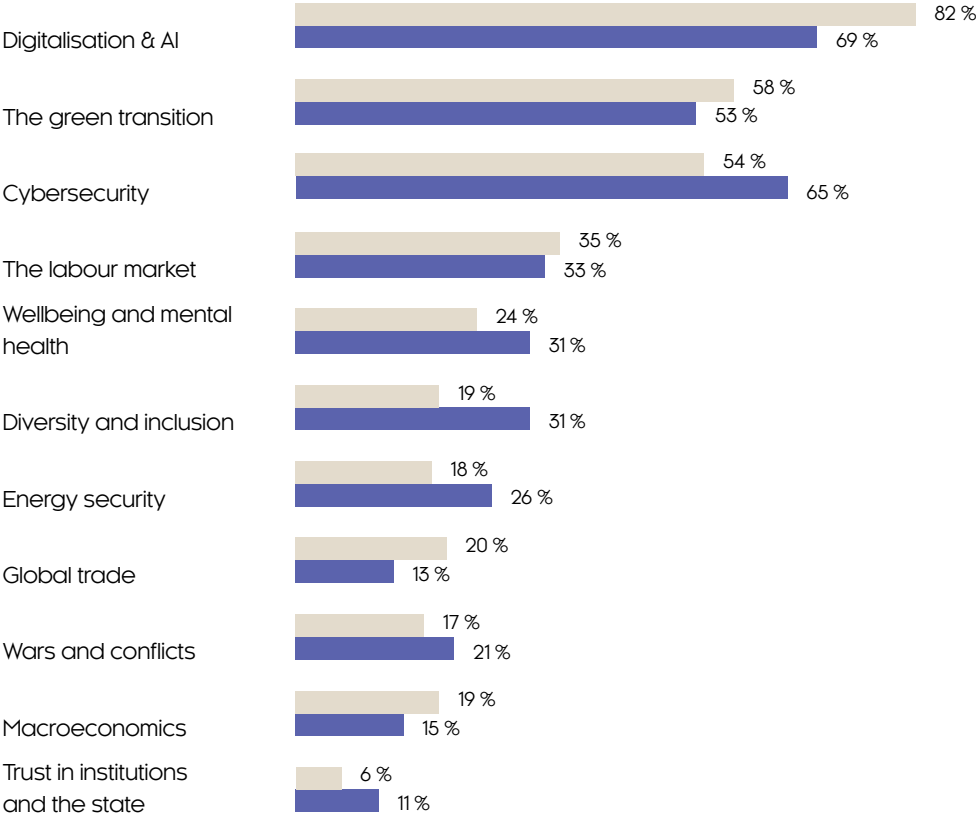
TOP-2 REFERS TO PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS ANSWERING 'RADICAL CHANGE' OR 'SIGNIFICANT CHANGE' TO THE GIVEN SUBJECT.

# *Comparison*

# To what extent do you expect that developments in the following topics will change your organisation towards 2035?

Base: n=309

- Private companies
- Public, Semi-public, NGO

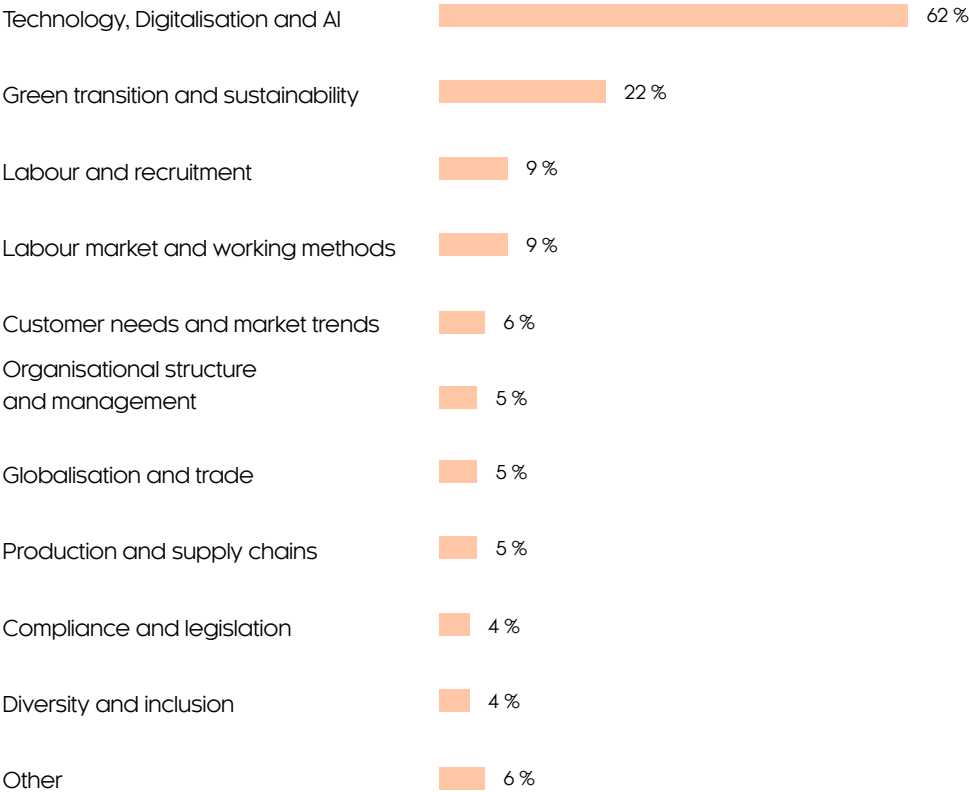


NOTE: PERCENTAGES REFER TO RESPONDENTS ANSWERING 'RADICAL CHANGE' OR 'SIGNIFICANT CHANGE' TO THE GIVEN SUBJECT.

**SELF-SELECTED  
TOPICS THAT ARE  
EXPECTED  
TO CHANGE  
ORGANISATIONS**

# What areas in your organisation do you expect will undergo the biggest development/change towards 2035? *(Open question)*

Base: n=175



NOTE: "DON'T KNOW" REPRESENTS 36% OF TOTAL AND IS EXCLUDED FROM THE FIGURE.

# Open answers

‘There will be increasing demands for our customers, especially around cybersecurity and green transition, which will require many more resources from us to fulfil these demands.’

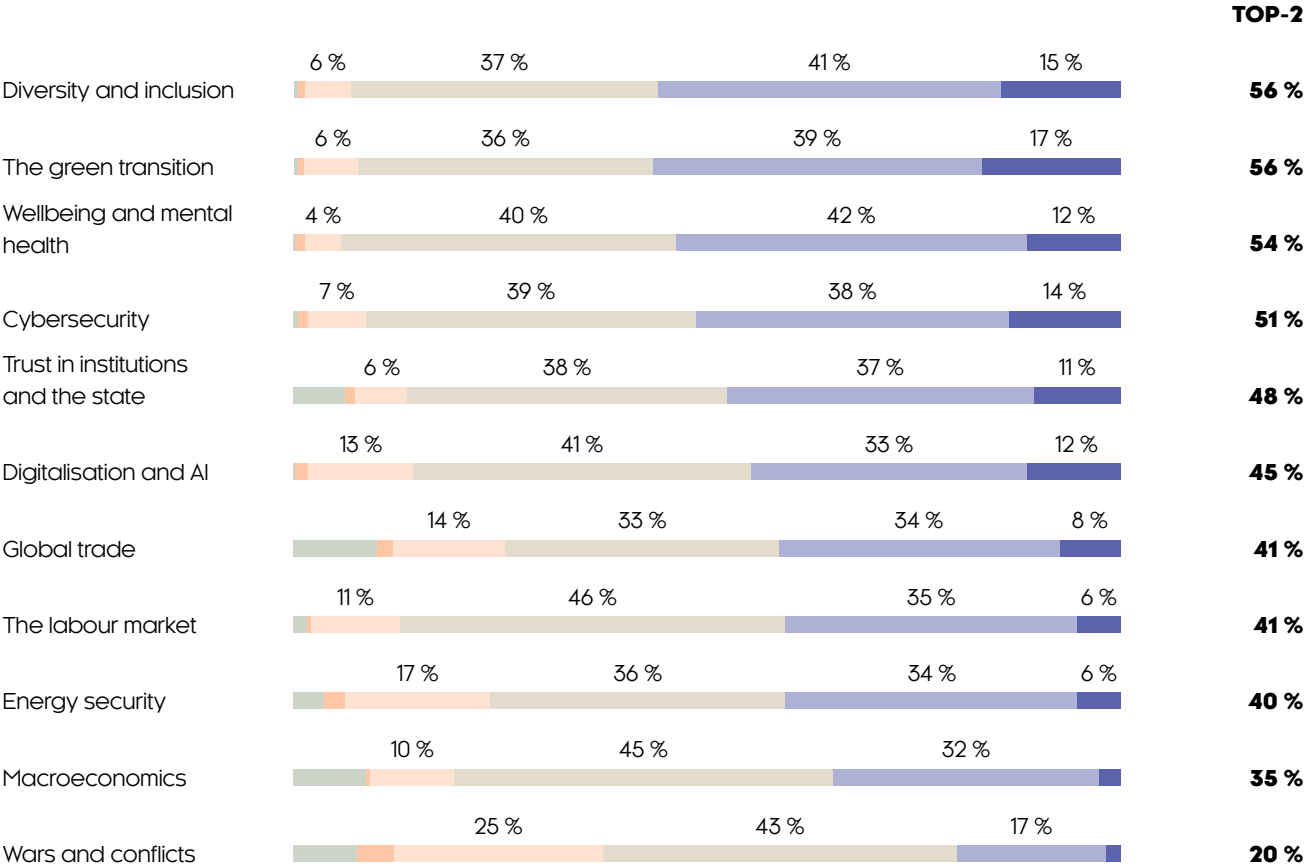
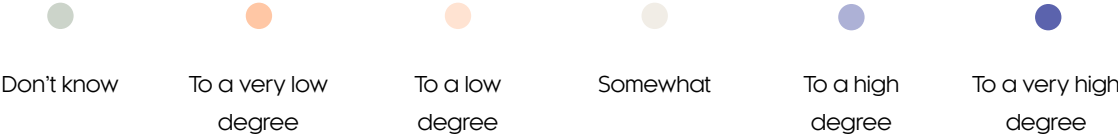
‘Digitalisation, automation and AI will drive completely new work processes while many will disappear. Likewise, the green transition will force innovation in product development.’

‘Increased internationalisation of the workforce and increased digitalisation and use of AI tools’.

# **THE ABILITY TO EMBRACE CHANGE**

# To what extent do you think your organisation is equipped to meet the changes you see towards 2035 in the following areas?

Base: n=309



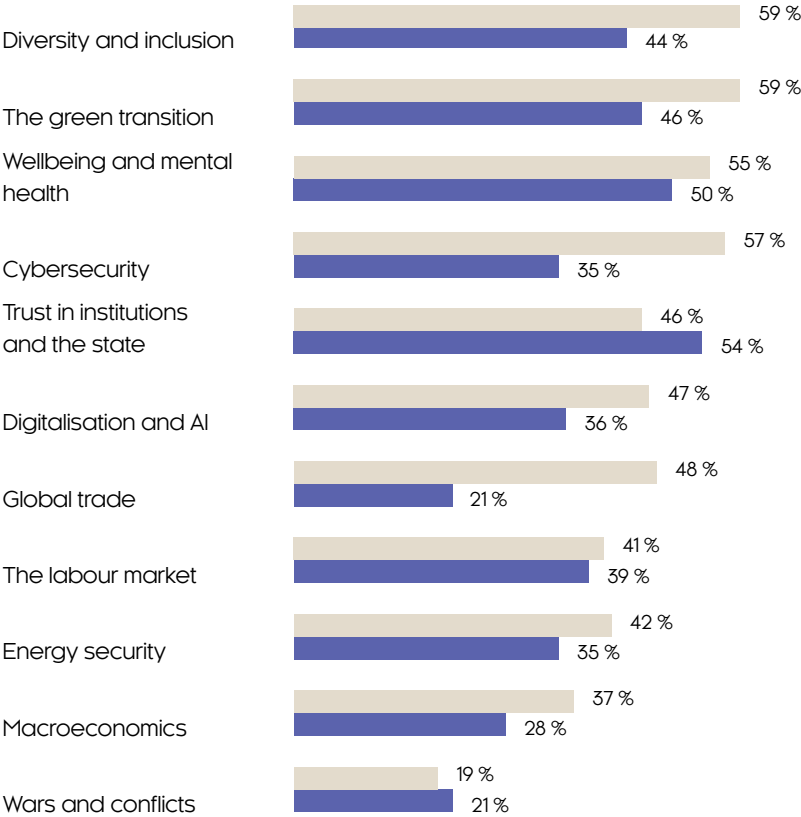
TOP-2 REFERS TO PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS ANSWERING 'TO A VERY HIGH DEGREE' OR 'TO A HIGH DEGREE' TO THE GIVEN SUBJECT.

# *Comparison*

# To what extent do you think your organisation is equipped to meet the changes you see towards 2035 in the following areas?

Base: n=309

- Private companies
- Public, semi-public, NGO



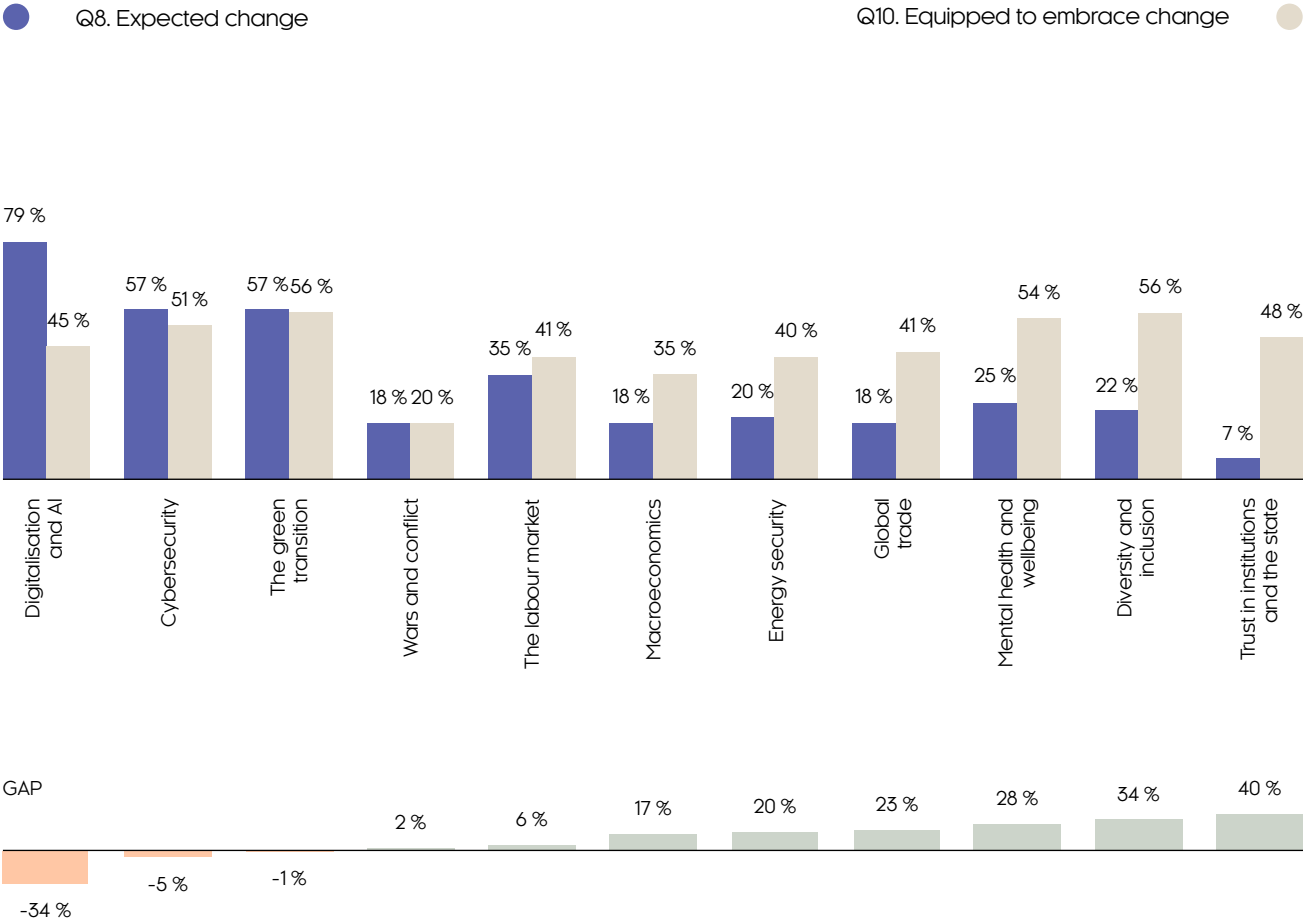
PERCENTAGES REFER TO RESPONDENTS ANSWERING 'TO A VERY HIGH DEGREE' OR 'TO A HIGH DEGREE' TO THE GIVEN SUBJECT.

# **THE ABILITY TO ACCOMMODATE EXPECTED CHANGES**

# Q8 To what extent do you expect that developments in the following topics will change your organisation towards 2035?

# Q10 To what extent do you believe your organisation is equipped to meet the changes you see in the towards 2035 in the following areas?

Base: n=309



NOTE: PERCENTAGES REFER TO RESPONDENTS ANSWERING 'TO A VERY HIGH DEGREE' / 'RADICAL CHANGE' OR 'TO A HIGH DEGREE' / 'SIGNIFICANT CHANGE'.

**SELF-SELECTED  
TOPICS THAT  
ORGANISATIONS  
ARE LEAST  
EQUIPPED FOR**

# What areas in your organisation do you think you are least equipped to handle towards 2035? (Open question)

Base: n=142



NOTE: "DON'T KNOW" REPRESENTS 49% OF TOTAL AND IS EXCLUDED FROM THE FIGURE.

## Open answers

‘Changes in the labour market, because it's a bit out of our hands. Parts of the green transition can only succeed if certain political decisions are made and implemented. Since we make our living from the green transition, it's pretty crucial.’

‘Wars, conflicts, new political winds, crises of confidence in Danish institutions and potential negative consequences of digitalisation/AI for the Danish labour market.’

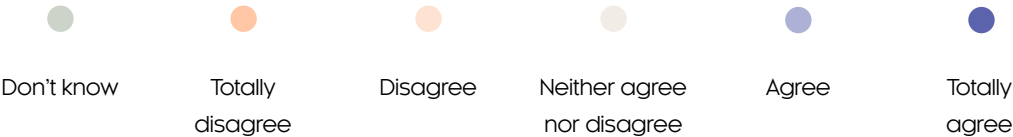
‘I expect that we will be spending a lot of resources to follow the development of AI and digitalisation.’

# **EXECUTIVE LEADERS' ABILITY TO MEET THE FUTURE**

# We want you to think of yourself as an executive leader in your organisation/company.

TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS?

Base: n=309



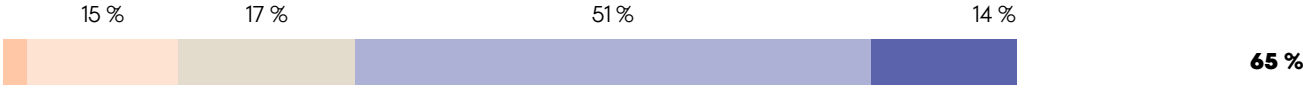
I have the professional skills to work in a structured way towards the future by 2035 **TOP-2**



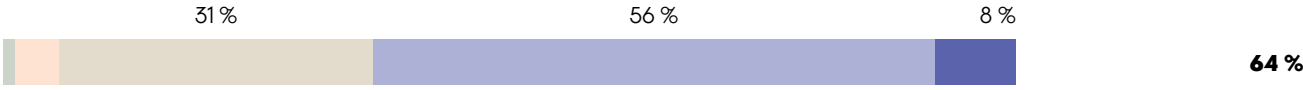
I feel well equipped to meet the changes I foresee by 2035



I generally think that my organisation works and plans with a sufficiently long time horizon



I have the professional skills to face the future towards 2035



NOTE: TOP-2 REFERS TO RESPONDENTS WHO HAVE ANSWERED STRONGLY AGREE OR AGREE TO A GIVEN STATEMENT.

# *Comparison*

# We want you to think of yourself as an executive leader in your organisation/company.

TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS?

Base: n=309

● Private company ● Public/semi-public/NGO

I have the professional skills to work in a structured way towards the future by 2035



I feel well equipped to meet the changes I foresee by 2035



I generally think that my organisation works and plans with a sufficiently long time horizon



I have the professional skills to face the future towards 2035

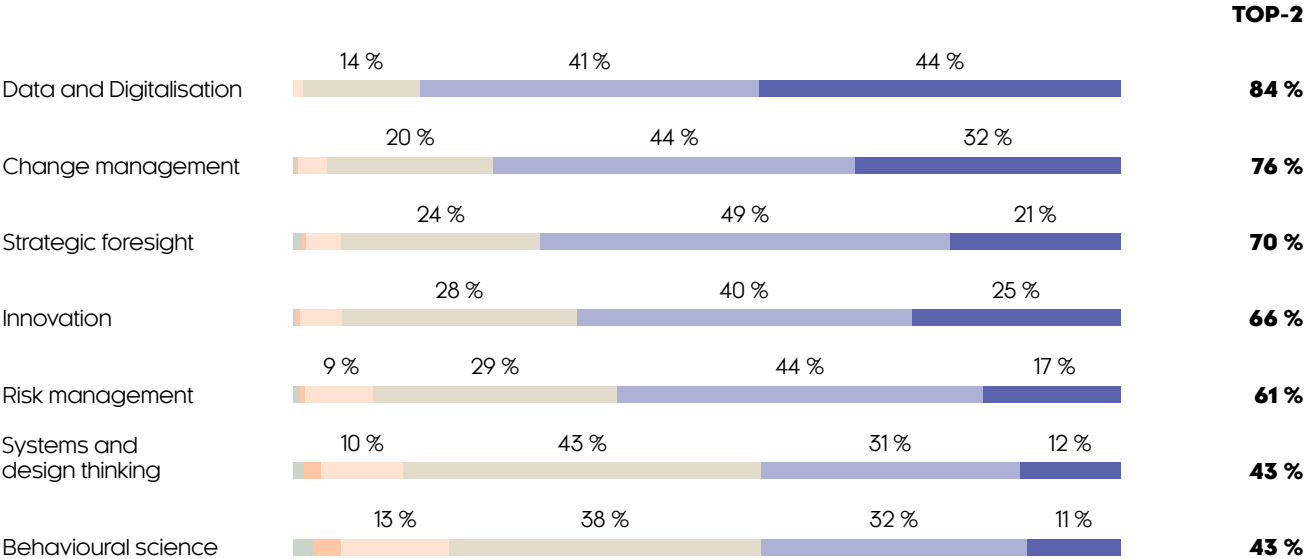
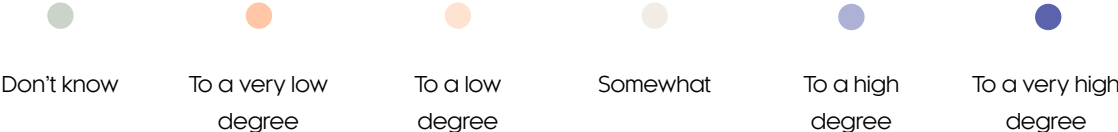


NOTE: PERCENTAGES REFER TO RESPONDENTS ANSWERING 'STRONGLY AGREE' OR 'AGREE' TO THE GIVEN STATEMENT.

# **DISCIPLINES THAT CAN EQUIP LEADERS FOR THE FUTURE**

# As an executive leader, to what extent do you think the following disciplines can equip you to meet the changes you see towards 2035?

Base: n=309



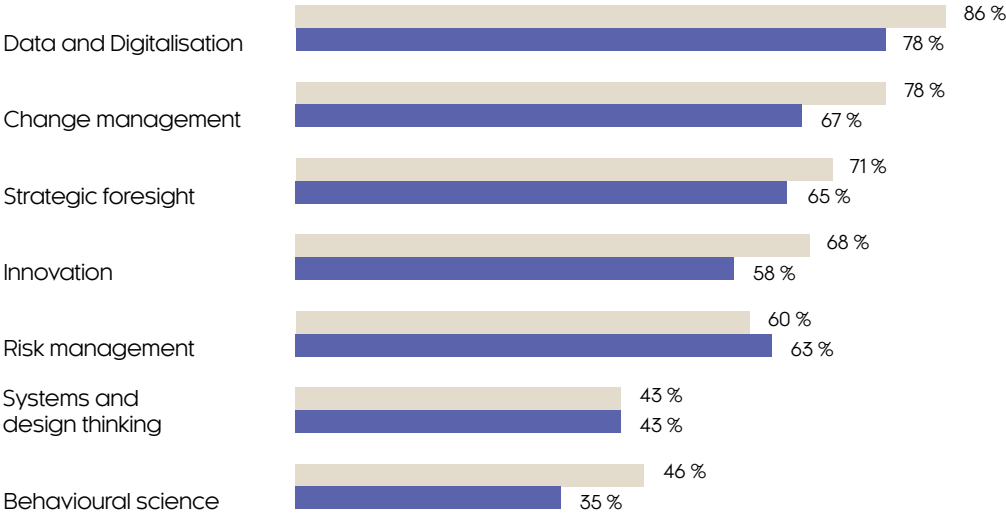
TOP-2 REFERS TO PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS ANSWERING 'TO A VERY HIGH DEGREE' OR 'TO A HIGH DEGREE' TO THE GIVEN SUBJECT.

# *Comparison*

# As an executive leader, to what extent do you think the following disciplines can equip you to meet the changes you see towards 2035?

Base: n=309

- Private company
- Public/Semi-public/NGO



PERCENTAGES REFER TO RESPONDENTS ANSWERING 'TO A VERY HIGH DEGREE' OR 'TO A HIGH DEGREE' TO THE GIVEN SUBJECT.



# **Background data**



# Methodology

The results are based on an online survey conducted by Human Engage in collaboration with CfL and the Copenhagen Institute for Futures Studies.

The survey includes 309 interviews with executive leaders in Denmark, collected from 23 August to 4 September 2024.

The questionnaire was sent to 2,040 executive leaders, 591 of whom are CfL members, while the contact details of the remaining 1,449 came from a database of publicly available contact details. This resulted in an overall response rate of 15%.

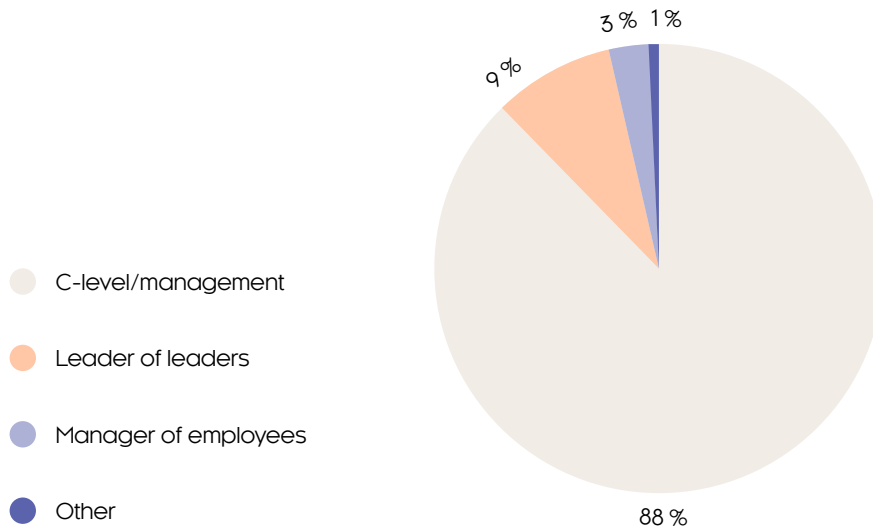
The questions are designed to minimise the influence of previous questions on respondents' answers in subsequent questions.

Within each question set, statements have been randomised. In addition, both questions and statements have been thoroughly quality assured to ensure a balanced presentation to respondents.

**HUMAN ENGAGE** is a consultancy founded on the need for valid knowledge and insights that can be translated into concrete actions and development initiatives.

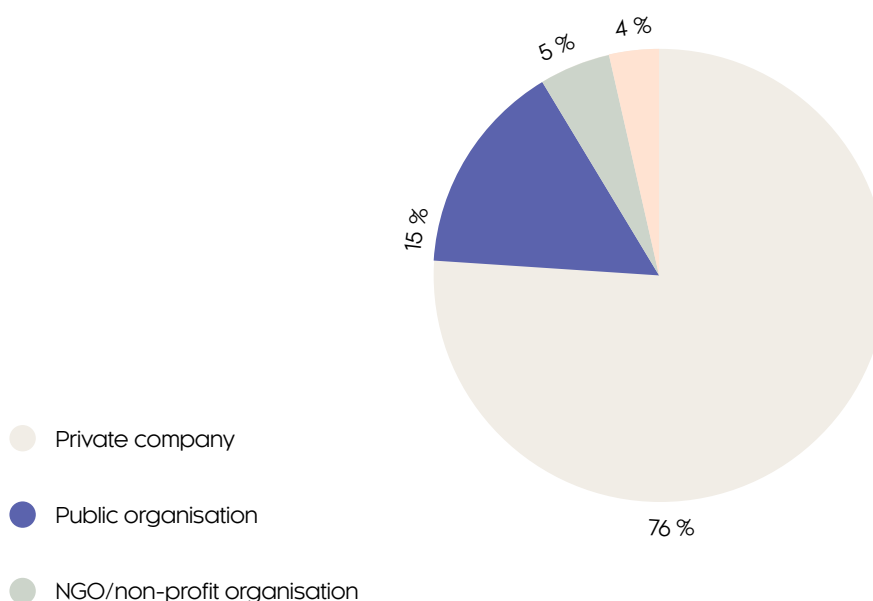
# Which of the following best describes your level of leadership?

Base: n=309



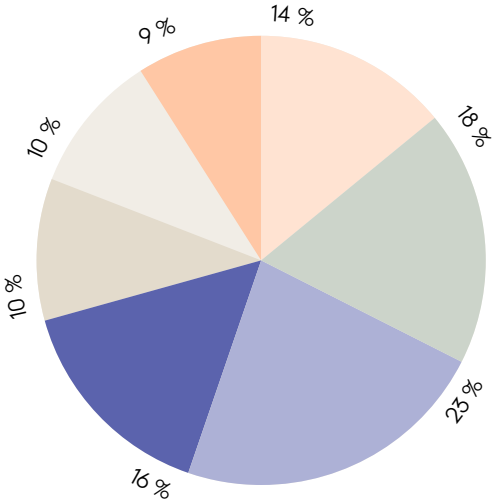
# What type of organisation are you a leader in?

Base: n=309



# How many employees are there in the organisation you manage?

Base: n=309



- Less than 200 employees
- 200 - 300 employees
- 300 - 500 employees
- 500 - 1,000 employees
- 1,000 - 2,000 employees
- 2,000 - 5,000 employees
- More than 5,000 employees



## Contact

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