BLUE BOOK

On Knowledge Management 2023

Preface of authors

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Developing transparency about and insight into a subject or community helps making better decisions. Sun Tzu formulated it slightly differently, but it was, and still is, critical.

Learning about the global community of Knowledge Managers usually starts by asking questions. A long list is repelling for respondents, a short one is trivial. 26 questions are a start and revealed many interesting and some disturbing insights. Some will need further investigation. 42 figures present the data as well as some more integrated perspectives.

» As usual, the ones who do the reflecting - all those who contributed - learn the most. Others might confirm some of their positions, and some will hopefully have an accelerated start into the exciting field of Knowledge Management (KM) and the many different approaches of Knowledge Managers (KMers).

» We hope to provide some essential data on the state of Knowledge Management as well as to attract many more participants to our survey in our ambition to improve transparency of KM.

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Preface CHAIR KMGN

Knowledge Management Global Network (KMGN) endeavors to serve all KM practitioners and support the development of the KM profession globally- by facilitating platforms for connection, communication, collaboration and co-creation.

The Blue Book on Knowledge Management is the wonderful outcome arising from the KM community's ability to connect, communicate, collaborate and co-create for mutual benefit.

This Blue Book draws upon perspectives of more than 200 participants across 33 countries, to establish a sense of the state of KM practice, and to identify possible challenges as well as opportunities to progress the profession in the near future. These insights are highly relevant and useful to KMGN as it allows us to better strategize and optimize our resources in uplifting the KM community and profession.

KMGN looks forward to supporting initiatives driven by fellow network partners that contribute towards our common goal of serving KM practitioners, and uplifting KM as a profession.

Faiz Selamat
Chair KMGN 2023

Knowledge Management Global Network (KMGN)

Preface CHAIR GfWM

The German Association for Knowledge Management benefits from its federal structure with regional chapters to support face-to-face interaction. Digital structures for dedicated projects help to better leverage decentral competences and interest groups.

This survey revealed current positions of our members and provides an excellent benchmark to global communities. It confirms the benefit of some established formats, such as industry roundtables, and additionally reveals the continuing demand for developing a solid foundation of Knowledge Management essentials based on methods, guidelines and standards such as DIN SPEC 91443 to support ISO 30401.

GfWM will continue to work on these topics. After joining the KM Global Network last year, additional effort will be placed to open our communities and share our experiences in order to learn and gain new insights. Empirical evidence is the foundation for conversations and supports building bridges in turbulent times.

Sabine Wax
President GfWM

Acknowledgements

Thank you

Contents

01. Summary

- Networks of knowledge management

- Findings of survey

- Recommendations

KM is a global discipline, established in all industries, in organizations of all sizes and orientations. KMers contribute in all levels of hierarchy with very high formal education.

They need more case studies to communicate the benefits of KM, more industry roundtables and trainings for specific tools, as well as to learn from each other.

Networks of knowledge management

Global relevance

Many KM networks celebrated their 20th anniversary already. Academic conferences, industry roundtables and accredited KM master programs are available. ISO 30401 provides a standard for Knowledge Management Systems.

This evidence suggests maturity of Knowledge Management as a corporate function.

This survey reports on the state of the industry.

Context

Global value chains benefit from highly specialized expertise but create inter-dependencies and plenty options for misunderstandings. It is the duty of top management to create the context for leveraging knowledge and minimize risks in knowledge flow along the business model.

Knowing what knowledge will be needed in the near and mid-term future, setting objectives for its development and providing the means to operationalize it is crucial.

Benefits

Improved productivity and a better strategic positioning in competition are the rewards for those, who master the positive scale effects of knowledge.

Internal and external challenges offer opportunities for KMers. If they can combine the advantages of their human experts with state-of-the-art technology, increasing amounts of knowledge and digitalization create new jobs, innovative products and services, welfare and profitable growth.

Summary and key findings

Demography

- Experienced KMers are well connected in organizational hierarchies. The next generation is not yet well represented in KM.

- KM implementation is related to the size of the employing organizations: the larger the organization, the bigger the number of KMers.

- KMers are highly qualified. Differences among gender are low and not significant.

KM Role and Activities

- KM job titles show impressive diversity. Many KMers hold dual responsibilities for two or more functions and thus act interdisciplinary.

- KMers are established in all layers of hierarchy and well represented in the top management of several organizations.

- Core activities of KMers are equally represented and cover defining a knowledge strategy, reporting on the state of knowledge, knowledge preservation (documentation), utilizing (applying) knowledge, distributing and integrating knowledge, developing knowledge, acquiring new knowledge, and identifying new knowledge.

Learning Perspective

- About one third of participants identify as full time KMers with 80-100% of their time assigned to this function.

- KMers assign themselves to a comprehensive position of KM, balancing technology and behavioral priorities.

- Orientation on people (personalization) is second, while codification is only in a minority position. There are no major differences among countries.

- KMers primarily learn from Communities of Practices (such as KMGN and GfWM) and Conferences as well as in Seminars.

Recommendations to improve KM implementation

Collaboration of KMers

Although access to (digital) materials and networks seems easier than ever before, it appears to be difficult to transfer the potential benefits of KM to the context of organizations and convert it into profits.

- KMers with operational duties search for reliable tools, methods and guidelines
- C-level asks for measures and "evidence"

Industry roundtables help to share experiences, collaborate and get new insights into KM.

Bulletproof recipes

KM activities cover the full circle from knowledge generation (innovation) to application (in products and services) and capturing of learnings. Documentation helps partially to convert tacit to explicit knowledge but has high requirements on its own.

Transfer to peers and the next generation as well as deciding what knowledge is outdated complement the circle. Communication of the state of knowledge via Intellectual Capital Statements connect internal to external stakeholders.

Certificates to legitimize KM

ISO 30401 is available since 2017 and already attracted 11% of participants in this survey to certification. One third of organizations are considering the standard. There is room to grow, but only, if more formal certificates better legitimize KMers as individuals to represent the topic.

There is a need for a standardized competency framework that includes competencies relevant to knowledge management and that is recognized worldwide.

Training for KM is in high demand by respondents, as well as interaction with peers about advantages and disadvantages of specific offers.

Profile of the typical knowledge manager

Professional data

- Industry area: information and
- Role in senior management
- Job Title: Knowledge Manager
- KM related experience of +10 years

Professional development

- 134,5 hours per year to upgrade KM related skills
- Self-motivated progression to knowledge management
- Comprehensive understanding of KM strategy

Educational data

- Educational background: Master in applied sciences or social sciences
- Autodidact- no knowledge management specific certifications

Personal data

- Male
- Between 40-50 years of age

02. Demography

>> Where are most KMers?

>> What organizations are employing them?

>> What are their job titles?

>> Who are KMers reporting to?

Knowledge Management is global

More than 200 participants from **33 countries across all continents**
contributed to the collection of data- but there are many white spots
to be filled.

DEU	47	ZAF	5	CYP	1	PAK	1
IND	29	BRA	3	DEN	1	PER	1
AUT	18	ISR	3	EES	1	POL	1
USA	13	COL	2	GTM	1	PRT	1
NDL	9	IDN	2	IRN	1	RUS	1
FRA	7	MEX	2	KEN	1	SVK	1
GBR	7	SGP	2	LTU	1		
ESP	6	AUS	1	MNE	1		
CHE	5	BAN	1	MUS	1		

Table 1 Number of Participants by Country

Figure 1 Global Map of Knowledge Management – Source: Flourish Studio and World Bank

Timeline of first contact to KM

Some KMers already have a long career, and more are starting.
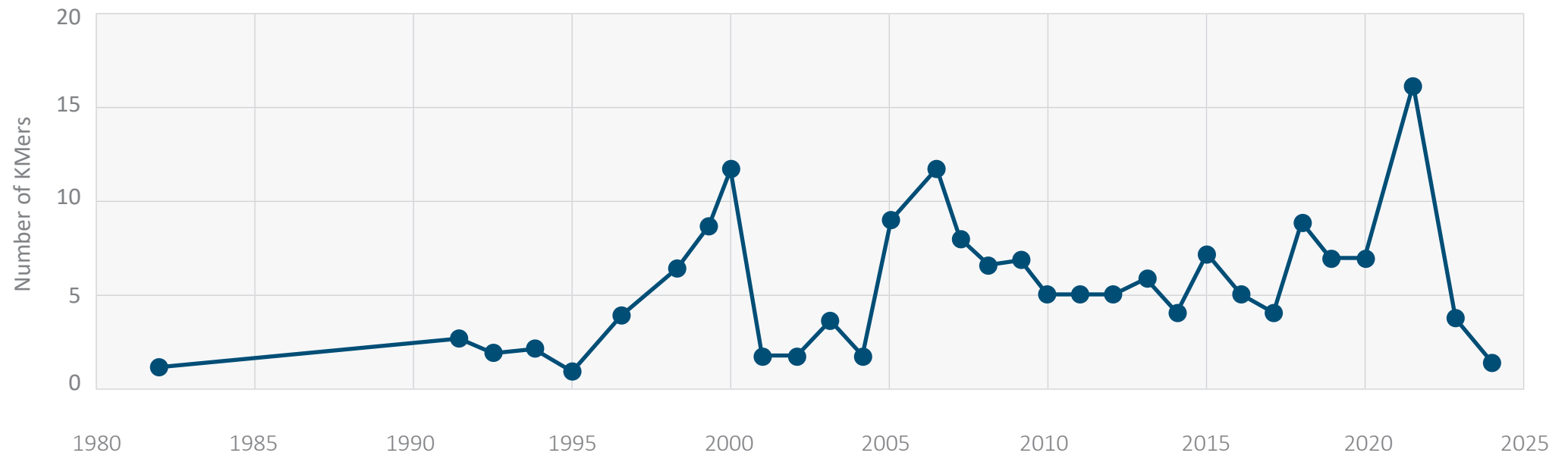
When did you start working on KM-topics?

Figure 2 Timeline of First Contact to KM

Basics on demography: seniority, age & gender

Seniority of KMers

5%
Laity- no KM role (yet)

17%
Most senior
(C-level)

15%
Lower
management

33%
Middle
management

30%
Senior
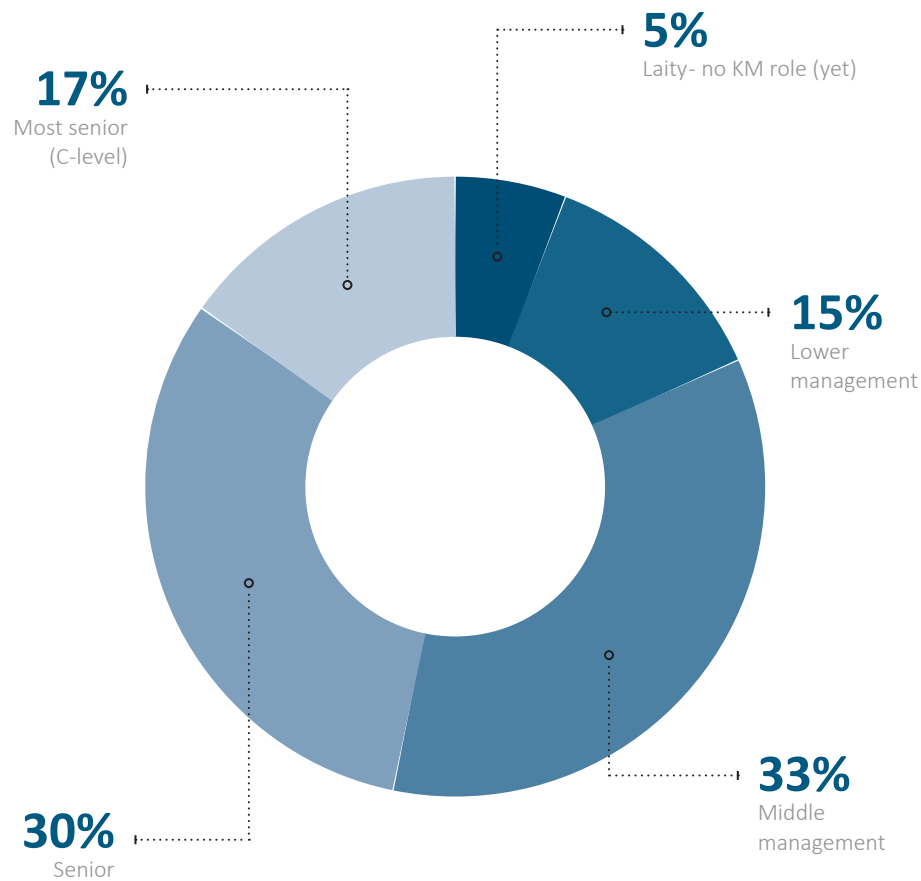
Figure 3 Seniority of Participants

Age of KMers

14%
+60

6%
21- 29

25%
30- 39

19%
50- 59

36%
40- 49

Gender of KMers

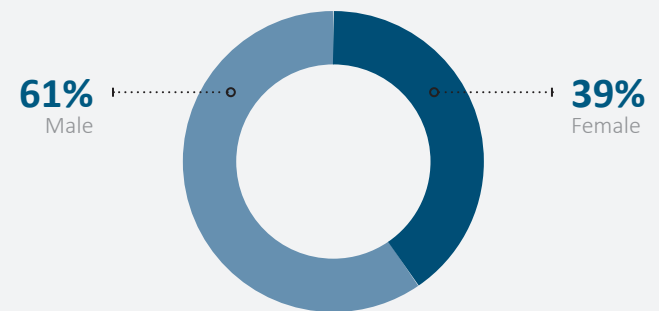**61%**
Male

39%
Female
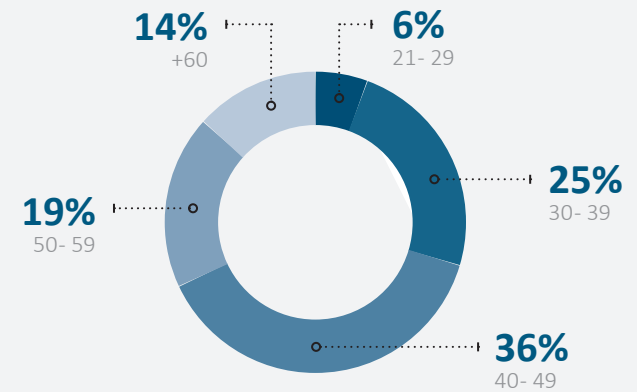
Figure 4 Age and Gender of Participants

Distribution of age, gender, and seniority among respondents

Men aged 60 plus dominate in senior and most senior level positions.

Men aged 40-49 dominate in senior and middle roles in the organizations.

Women aged 50 plus are well represented in leadership positions.

At age 40-49, the number of women employed in middle management is increasing.

Women aged 30-39 are more strongly represented at most senior level (C-level).
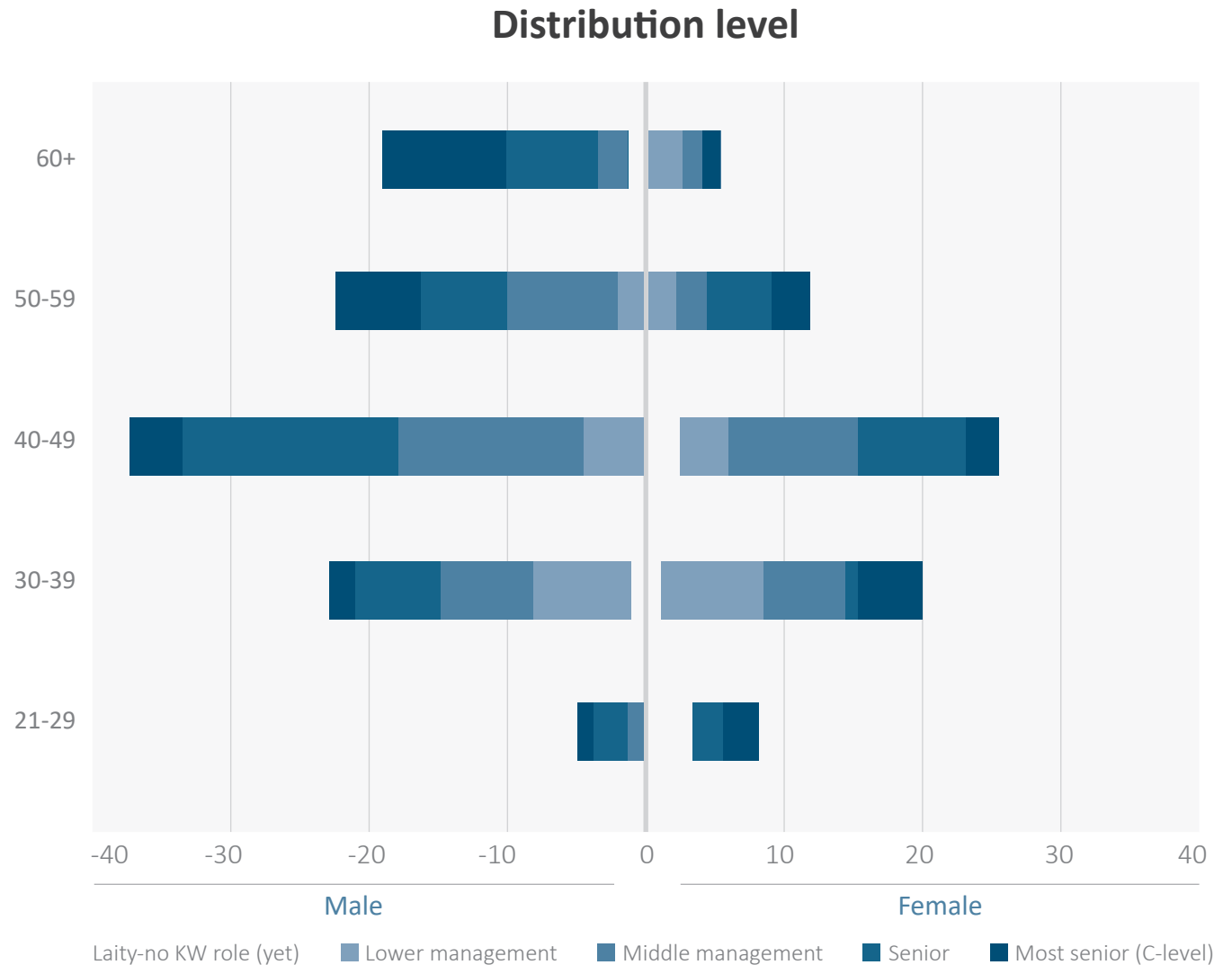
Distribution level

Figure 5 Distribution of Age and Gender and Seniority among KMers n=177

Distribution of industries among respondents

Knowledge Management is established in a wide range of industries.

Many KMers are active in several industries.

Specialization of KM with dedicated priorities in specific industries might be an indicator for a maturing field.

Source of classification:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ International_Standard_Industrial_ Classification
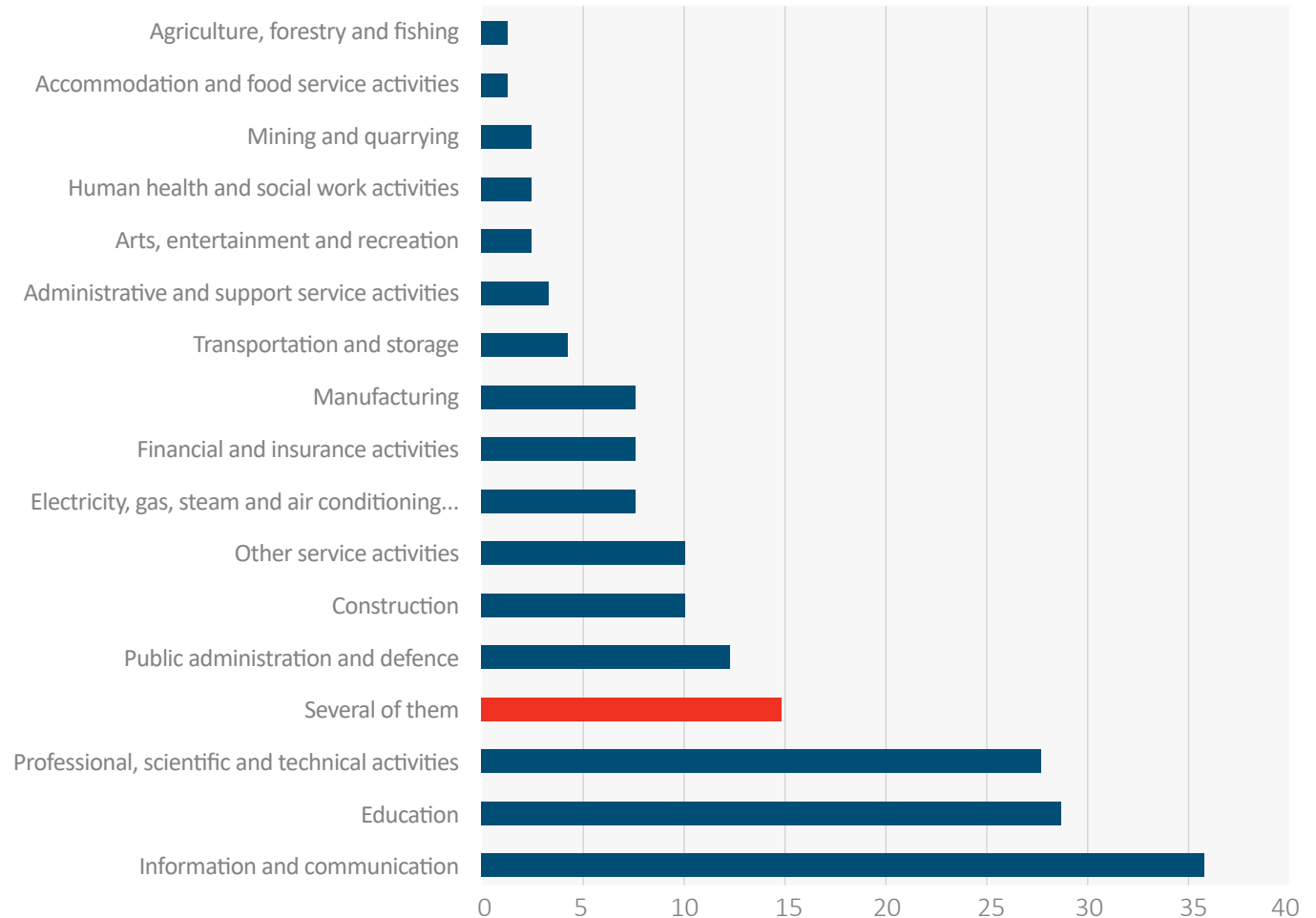
Industries that employ KMers

Figure 6 Distribution of Industries among respondents n=177

Industry and size of organizations matters for KM

The larger an organization, the more KMers are employed. Micro enterprises are usually home to individual experts and consultants supporting larger organizations.

Most KMers employed in micro or small enterprises are specialized on KM services for (very) large enterprises. Source: *https://singlemarket-economy.ec.europa.eu/smes/sme-definition_en*

Industry and size of organizations

Legend:
- Large > 1500 employees
- Micro enterprise < 10 employees
- Small < 50 employes
- Medium < 250 employees
- Regular 250-1500 employees
- Very large >10.000 employees
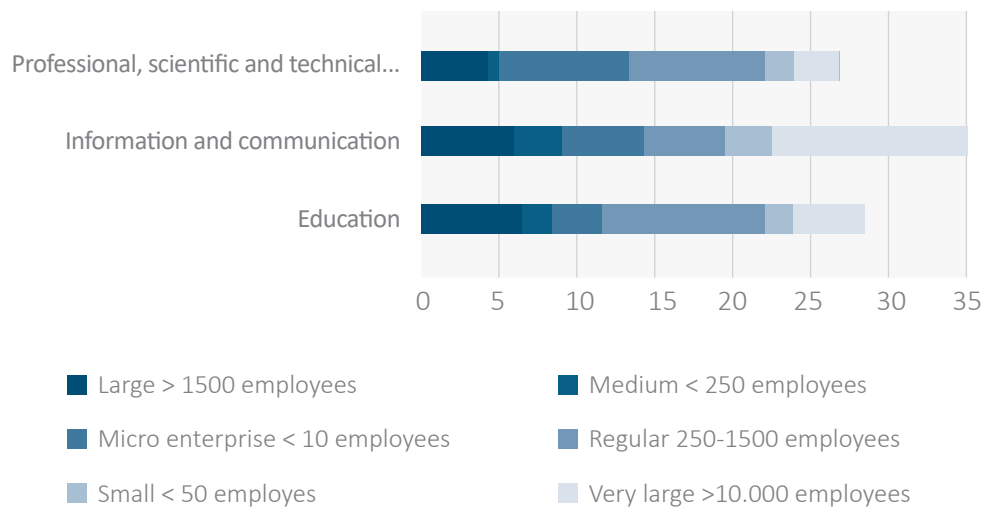
Figure 7 Industries best represented and the Size of Enterprises

Size of employing organizations

- **10** Micro enterprise
- **50** Small enterprise
- **<250** Medium enterprise
- **250-1500** Regular enterprise
- **>1500** Large enterprise
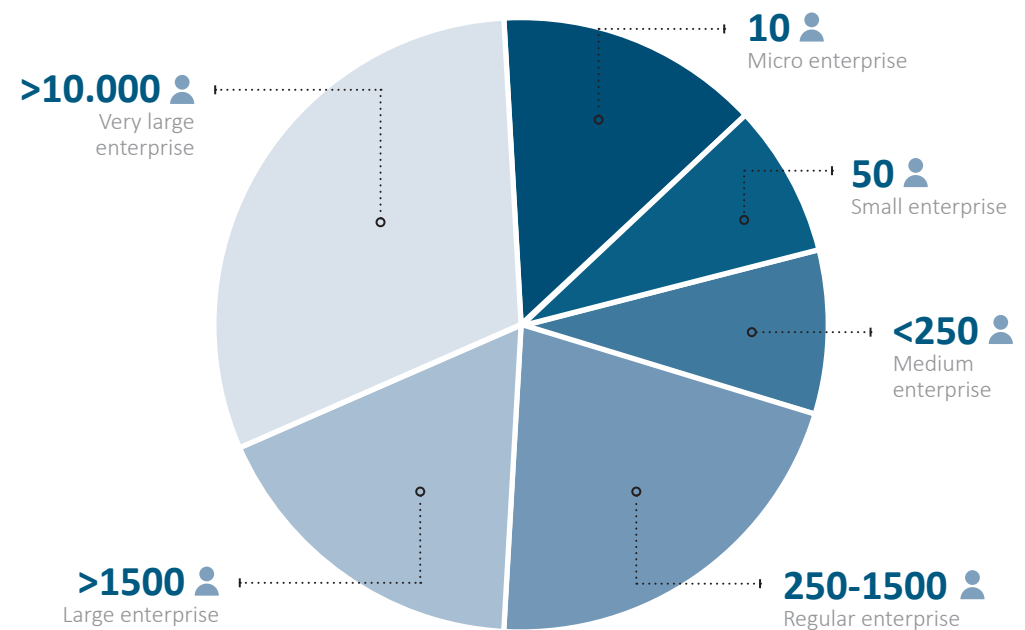- **>10.000** Very large enterprise

Figure 8 Distribution of size of employing organization among KMer respondents

Formal education by gender

Differences in formal education of female (inner circle) and male (outer circle) KMers are minor. Males reported more differentiated tracks of qualifications than females.

Compared to the "average employee profile", a share of more than 20% of respondents with a Doctorate and more than 50% with a master's degree, KMers have an excellent formal background.

The classification follows this source: *https://www.usajobs.gov/Help/how-to/account/profile/education/*

Highest level of formal education by gender

21,1%(F) **25,6%**(M)
Doctorate

2,8%(F) **8,9%**(M)
Other

18,3%(F) **12,4%**(M)
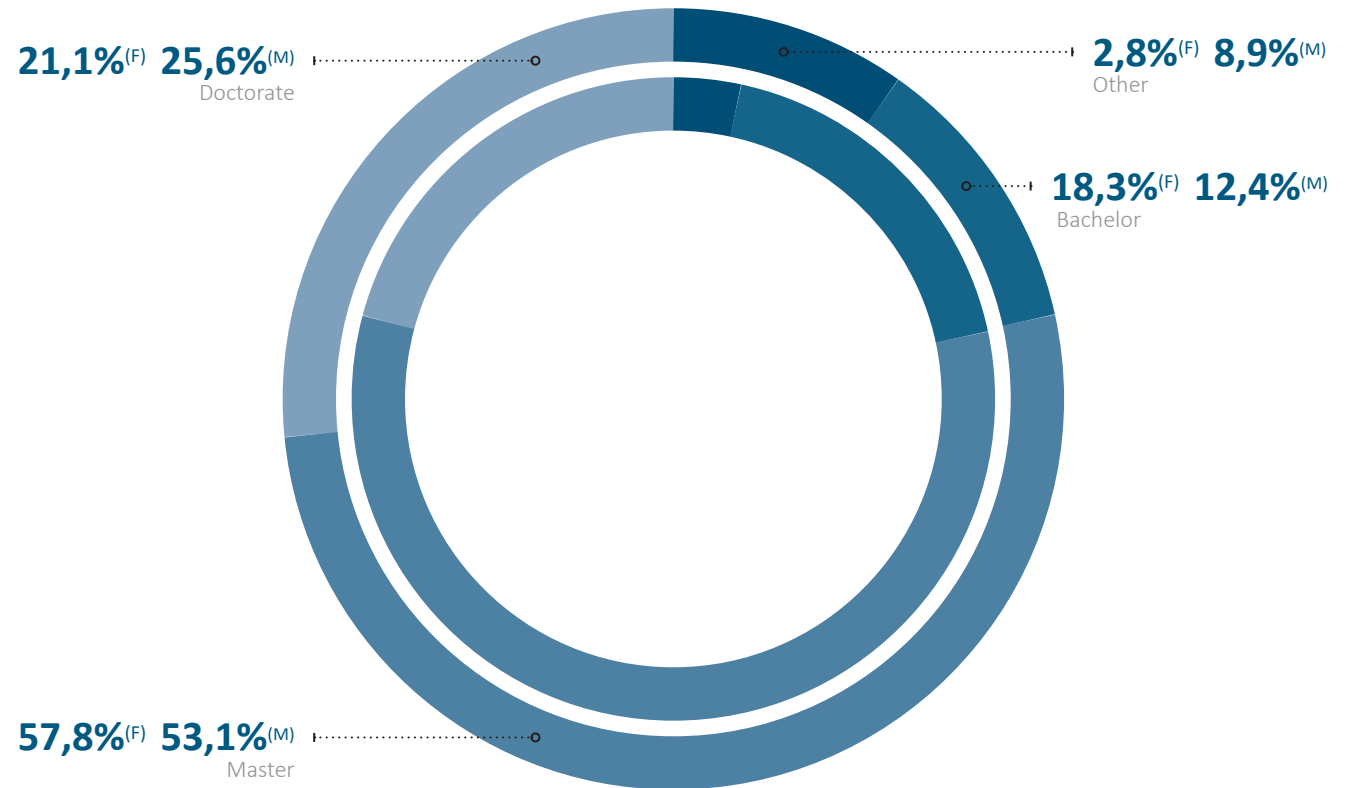Bachelor

57,8%(F) **53,1%**(M)
Master

Figure 9 Formal Degrees of KMers by Gender (n=194)

Focus of education

Definitions of disciplines vary substantially.

Thus this report follows a source independent of national preferences:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Outline_of_academic_disciplines

Focus of primary education

31% Social sciences

30% Applied sciences

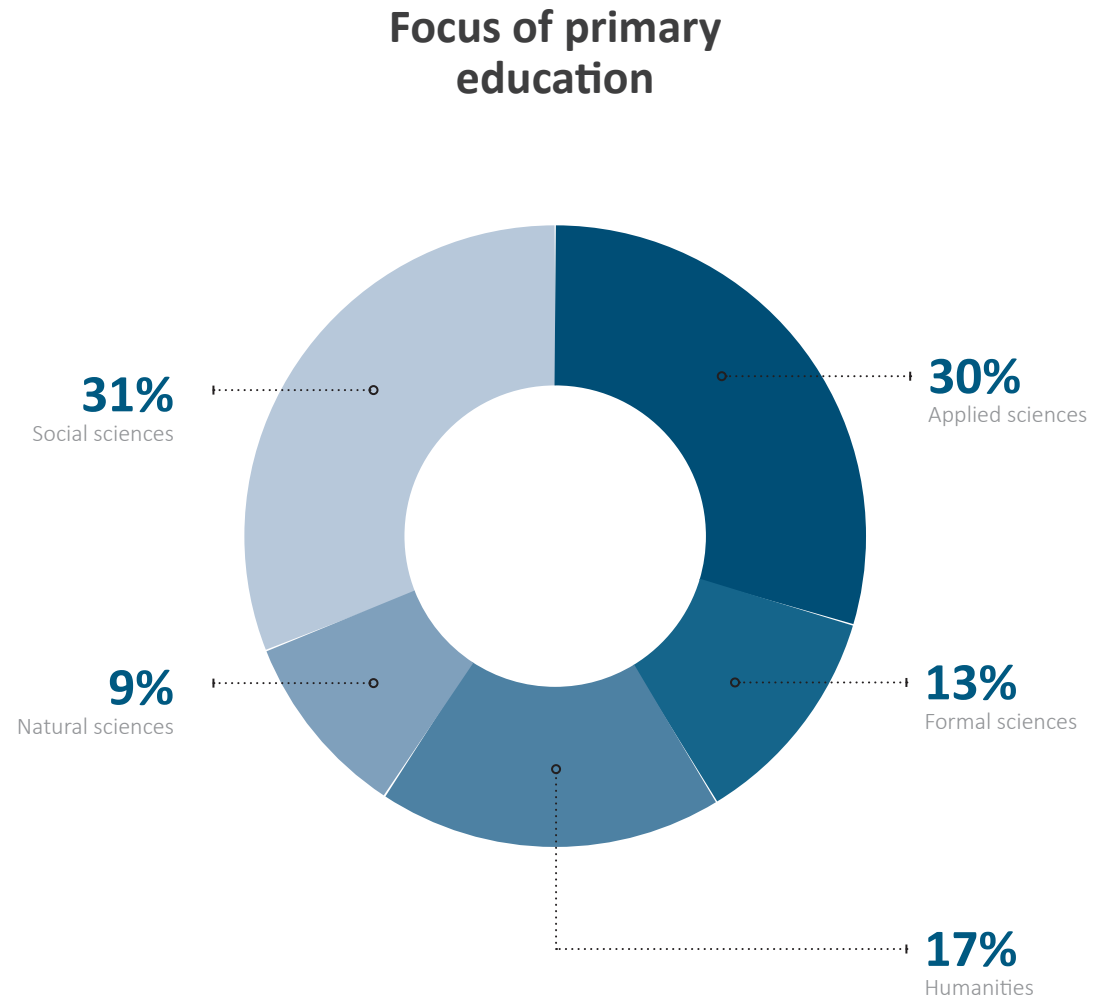9% Natural sciences

13% Formal sciences

17% Humanities

Figure 10 Focus of Primary Education (n=178)

Timelines of KM shows growth in selected countries

2/3 of responding KMers are from 7 countries.

The longest tradition of KM can be traced to the USA, where KM already started to emerge in the 1980s. The awakening of KM started in the late 90s with a substantial downturn in the beginning of the millennium.

2021 showed a remarkable growth across the world, particularly in Germany and India. From 26 countries only few participants could be attracted.
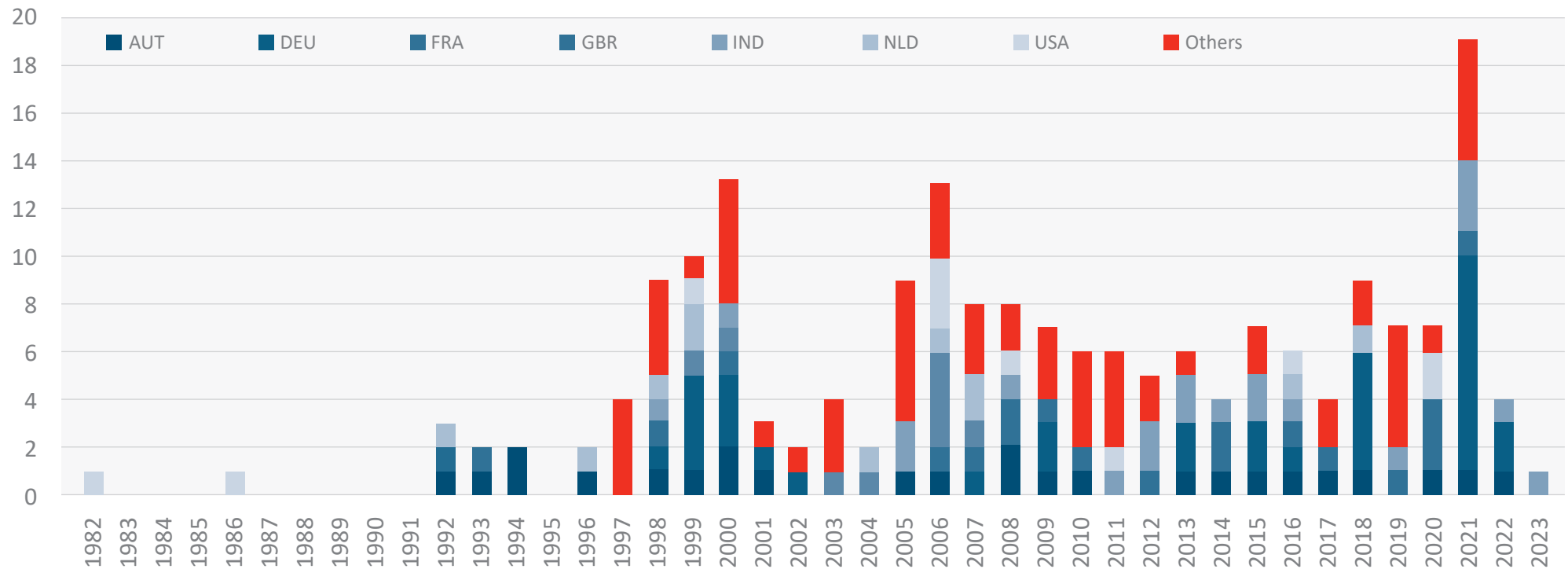
KMers in 7 countries over time

Figure 11 11 Seven Countries account for 2/3 of respondents n=193

KM is gender neutral

While the share of men is 60% in the KM cohort, both genders were attracted to KM evenly over time.
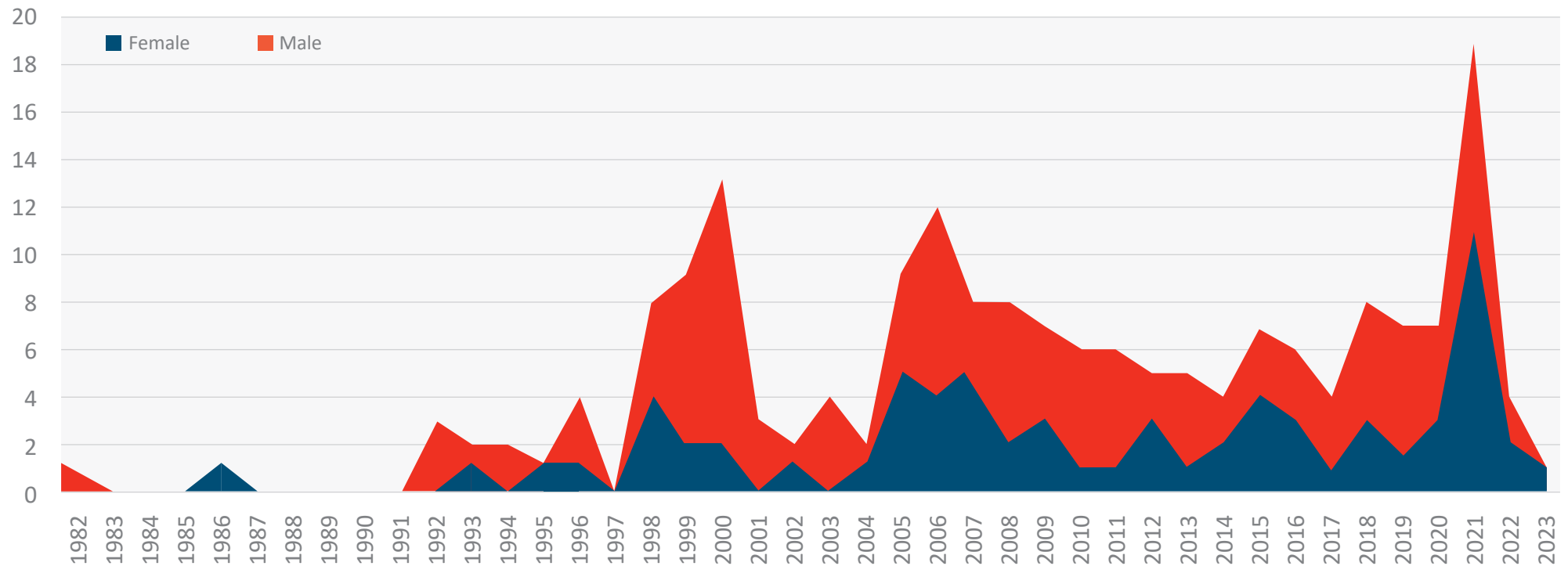
Attractiveness of KM by gender and time

Figure 12 Focus of Primary Education (n=178)

Distribution among disciplines and degrees of KMers by gender

KMers have a background in Applied and Social Sciences.

Female KMers are active in social sciences and in humanities.

Most male KMers are active in applied sciences and in social sciences with high formal qualifications.

The variety of degrees is higher for males. They report various forms of vocational training and alternative degrees.

Definitions of disciplines vary substantially, yhus this report follows a source independent of national preferences:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Outline_of_academic_disciplines
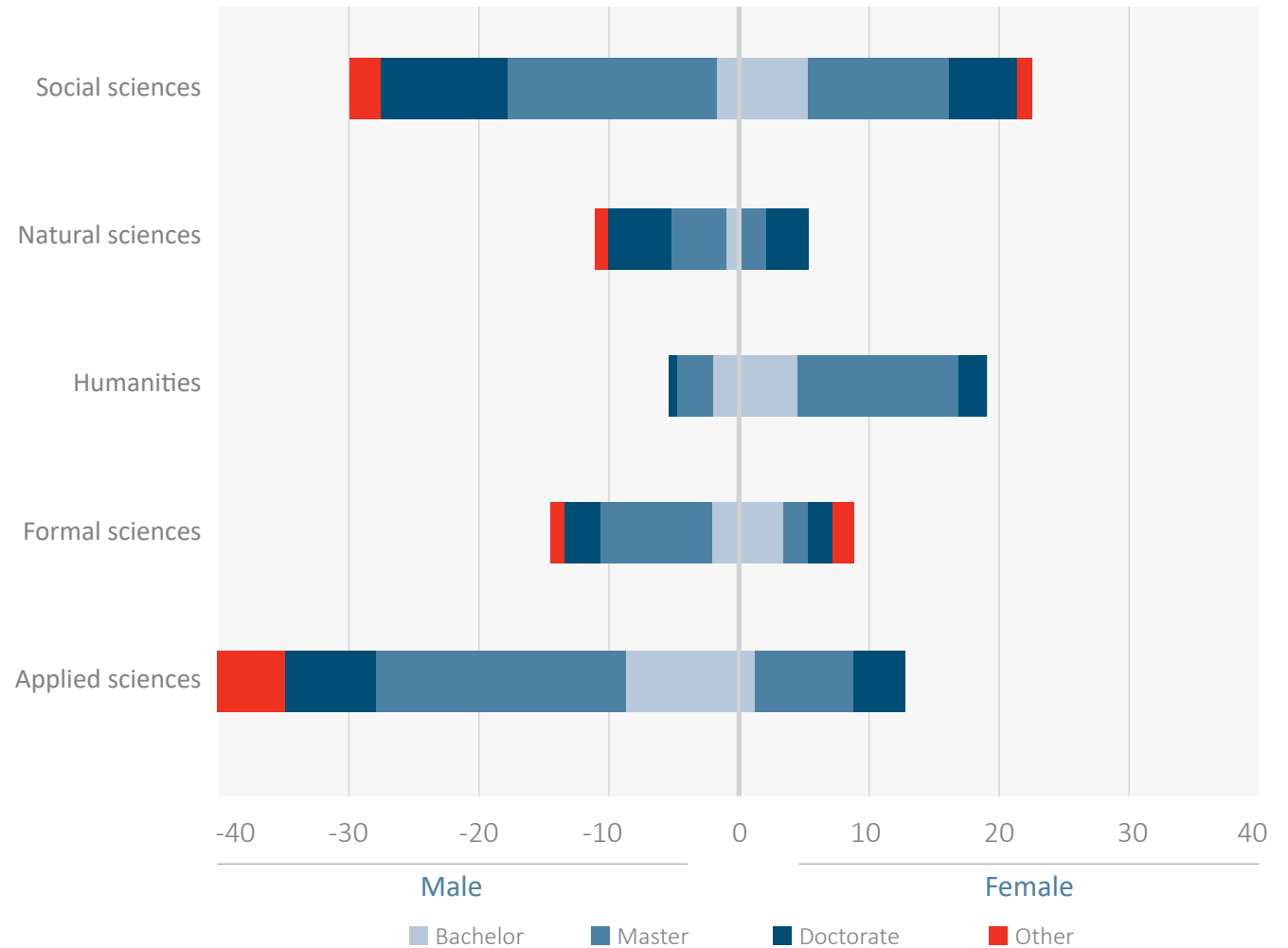
KMer by discipline and level of degree

Figure 13 Disciplines and Degrees of KMers by Gender

Job titles of KMers

Most titles include "knowledge".

Exceptions are the more general oriented Consultants, Project Managers or Professors.

Top level titles, such as CEO or General Manager don't benefit from functional limitations and thus avoid suffixes.

Frequency of KM job titles

Figure 14 Job Titles of KMers

KM hierarchies: to whom KMers report to

The list includes "Myself" and "Nobody" frequently. The accumulated number is higher than for CEO. This reflects representatives of small and microenterprises, who provide specialised KM services to customers.

A huge variety of different titles reflect the diversity of organizational structures.

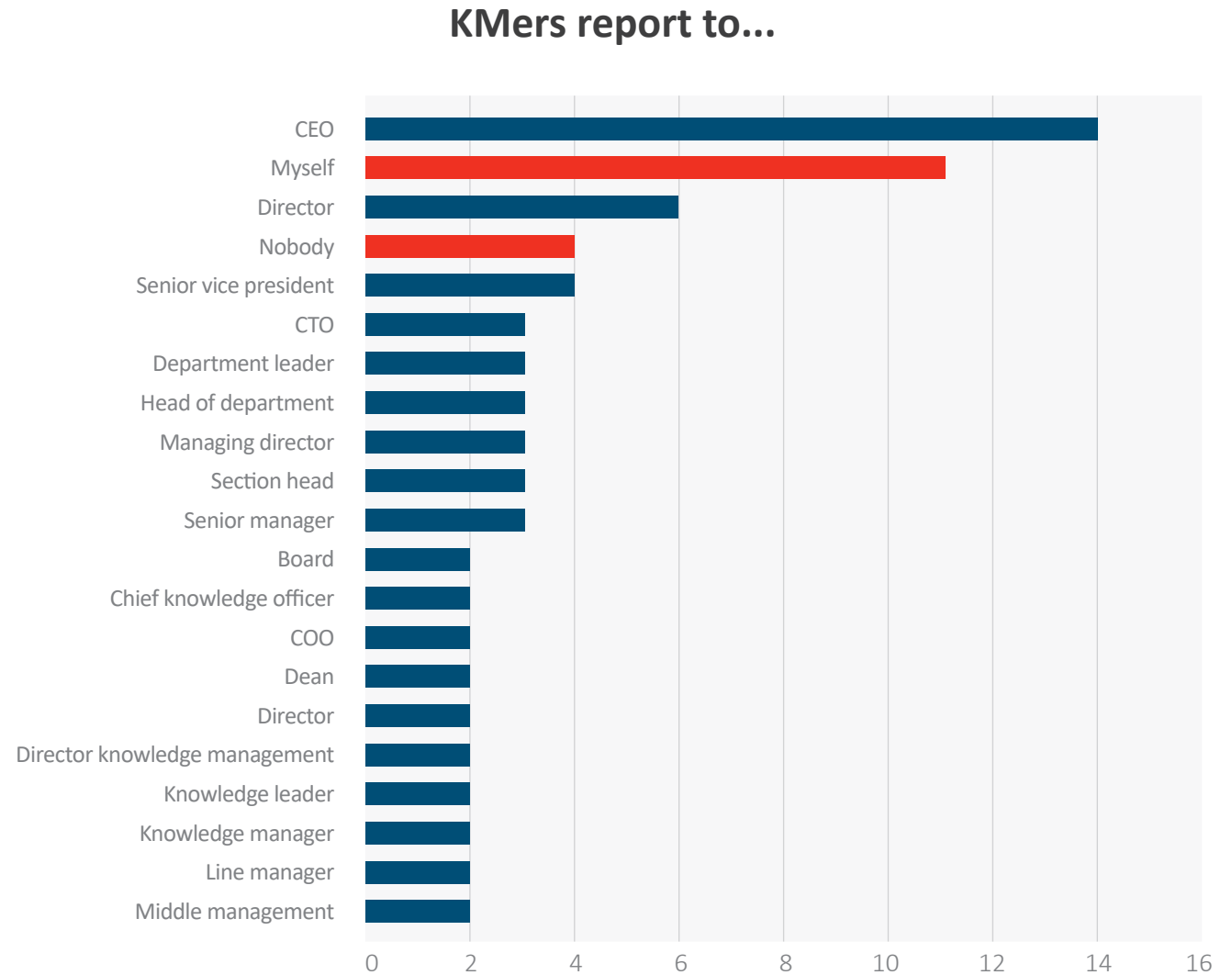Knowledge Managers serve in all hierarchical levels and many different functions.

KMers report to...

Figure 15 Job Titles to whom KMers report to

03. KM role and activities

>> How did KMers start their careers?

>> How congruent are formal qualifications and positions?

>> What degrees do KMers have?

>> What is the dominant understanding of KM strategy?

>> Can we identify regional differences?

Balanced allocation of time to KM activities

KMers seem to distribute their time evenly to all activities of KM. Defining a KM strategy is a minor exception and might be explained to the (high) seniority of the task.

This topic needs further investigation to better understand knowledge management activities.

The focus of my work is on...

Source of activities: *https://www.beuth.de/en/technical-rule/din-spec-91443/342178827*
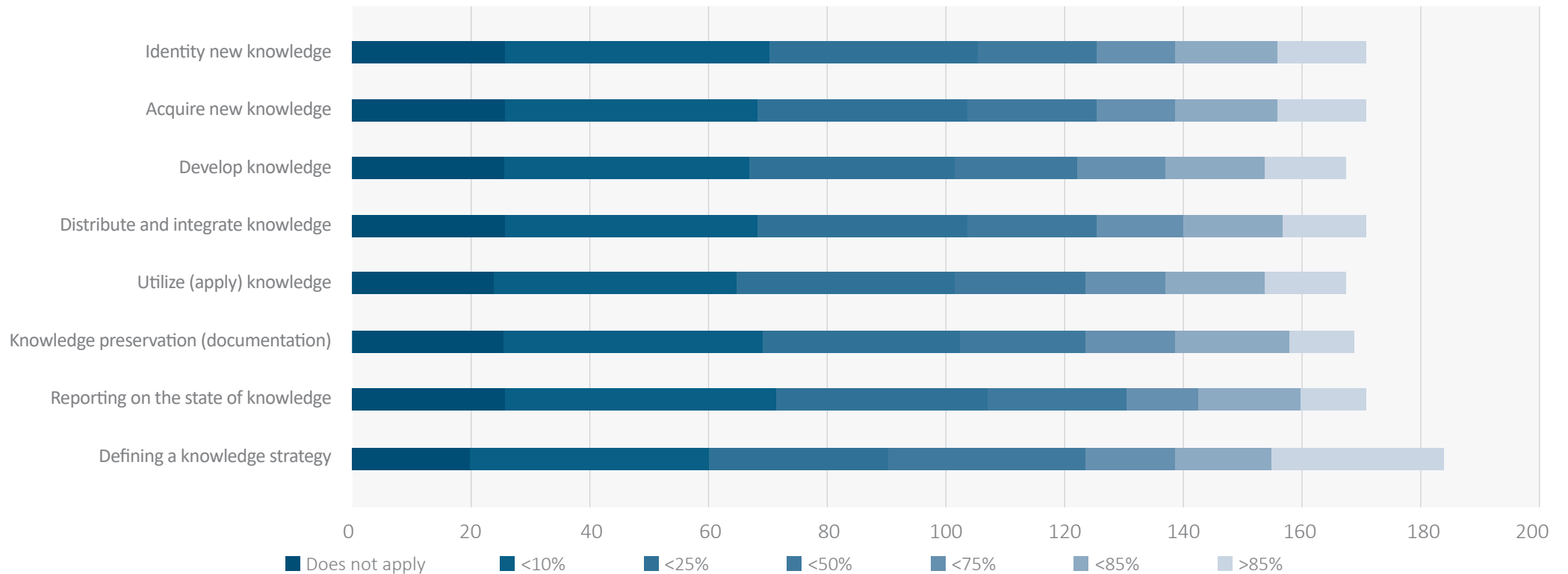
Figure 16 Distribution of time to KM activities

KMers are pioneers and innovators

Two thirds of KMers did not respond to a regular job offer, but moved into their position over time and are self-driven.

Formal trainings are not well established among KMers. Graduates of dedicated master programs and PhDs are a minority of 18%.
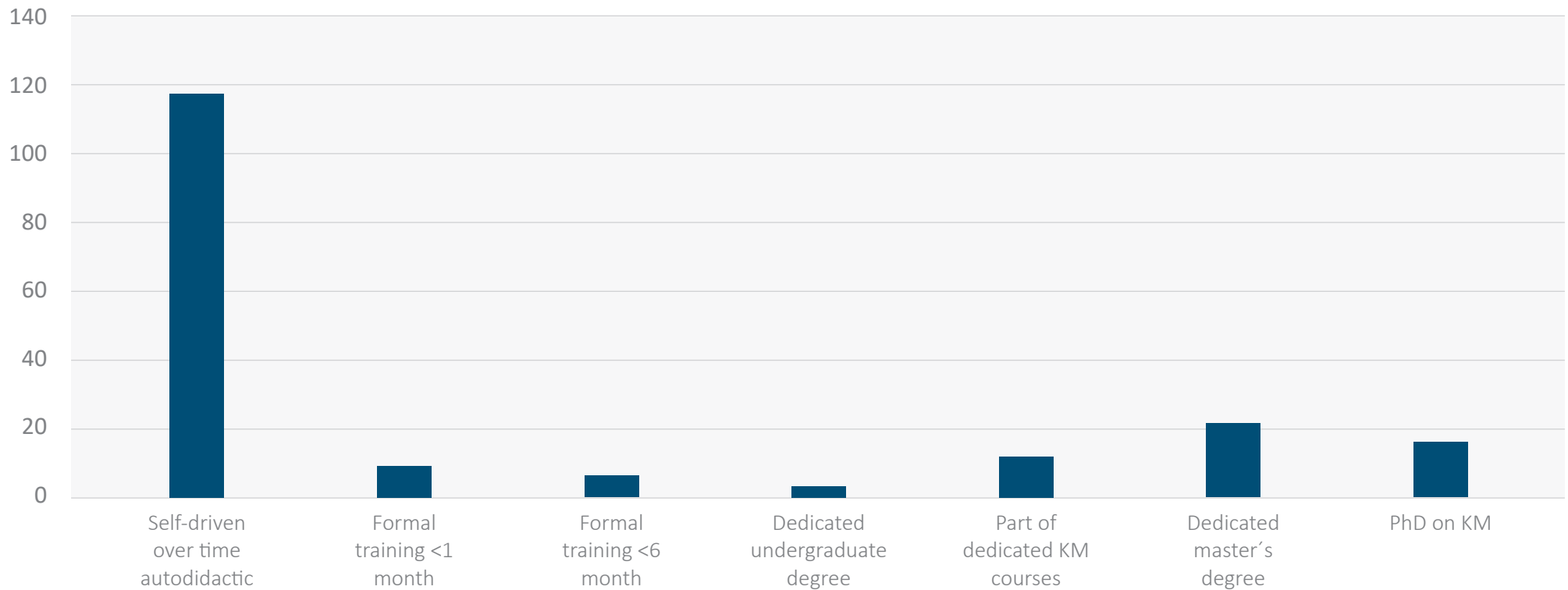
The focus of my work is on...

Figure 17 Transition of KMers into their current position

KM related degrees

6% of respondents hold a PhD in KM and thus the highest formal degree.

There might be a bias from the sample to overreport PhDs because of the connections used via professional ties on LinkedIn.
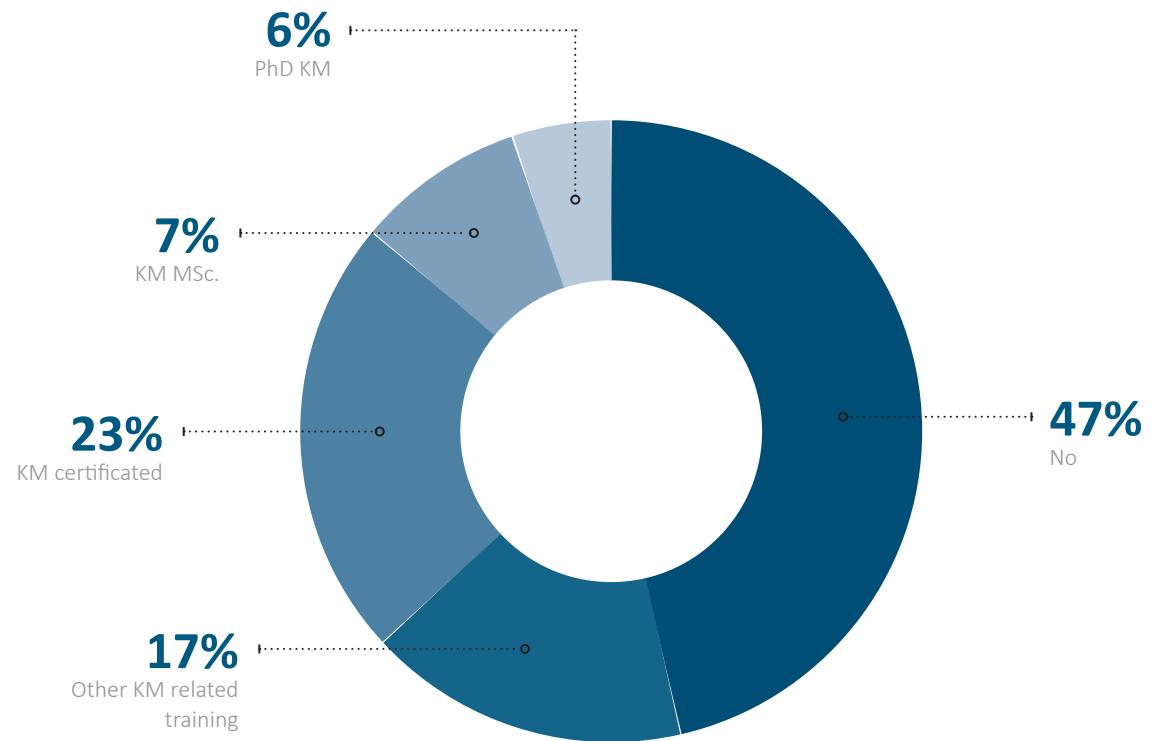
Distribution of KM related academic degrees

6%
PhD KM

7%
KM MSc.

47%
No

23%
KM certificated

17%
Other KM related training

Figure 18 Academic degrees of KMers

Maturity of KMers

The vast majority of respondents see them-selves as professional KMers.

"I consider myself..."

5%
Not yet a KMer, but interested

10%
Novice KMer focused on application and guided by others

55%
Professional KMer able to handle most of our tasks and leading a team

30%
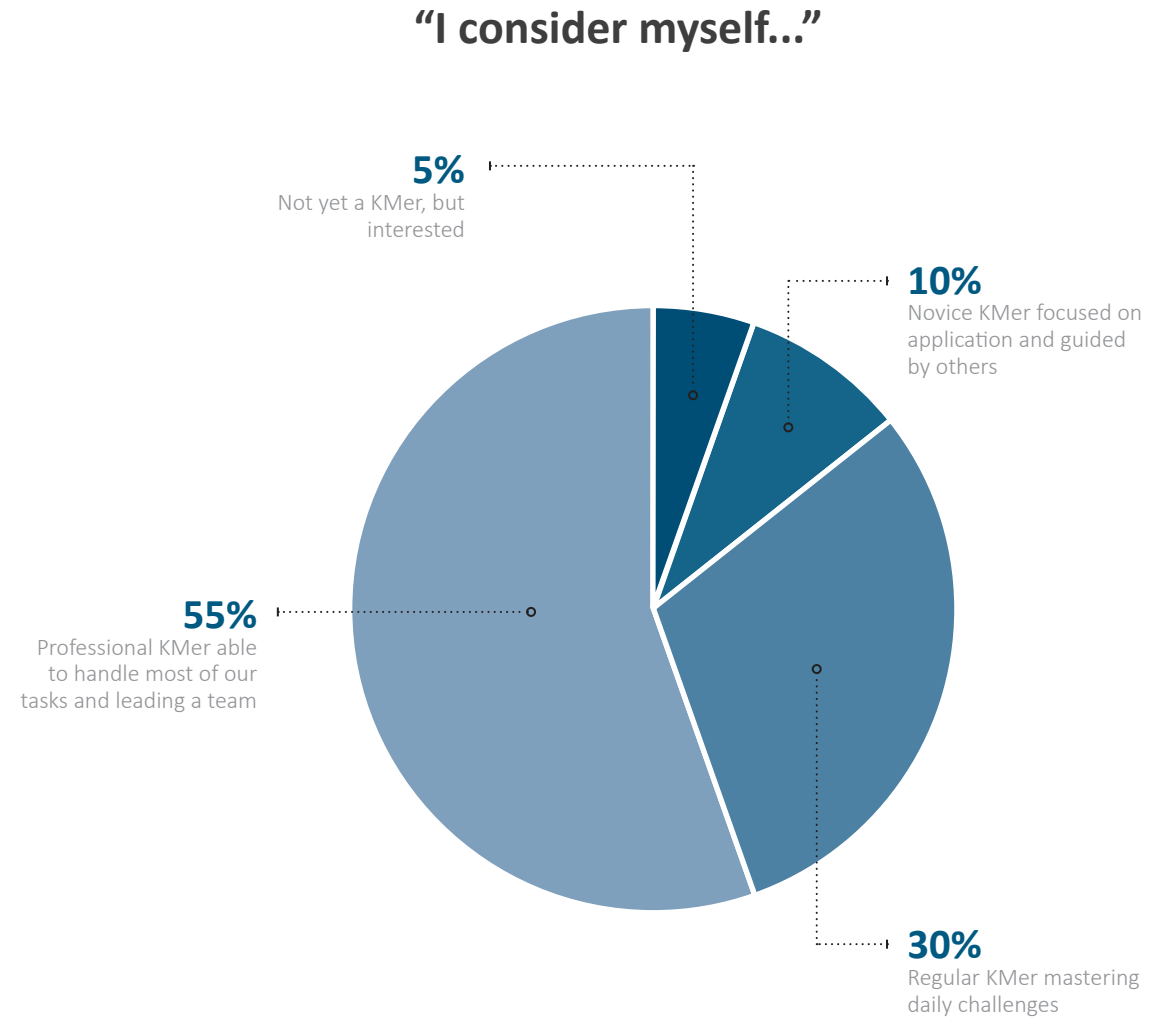Regular KMer mastering daily challenges

Figure 19 Self acclaimed Maturity of KMers

Formal degrees of KMers

The share of Knowledge Managers with dedicated formal KM training is higher for people holding a role as "Professional KMer".

KM Certificates become more widespread in higher positions.

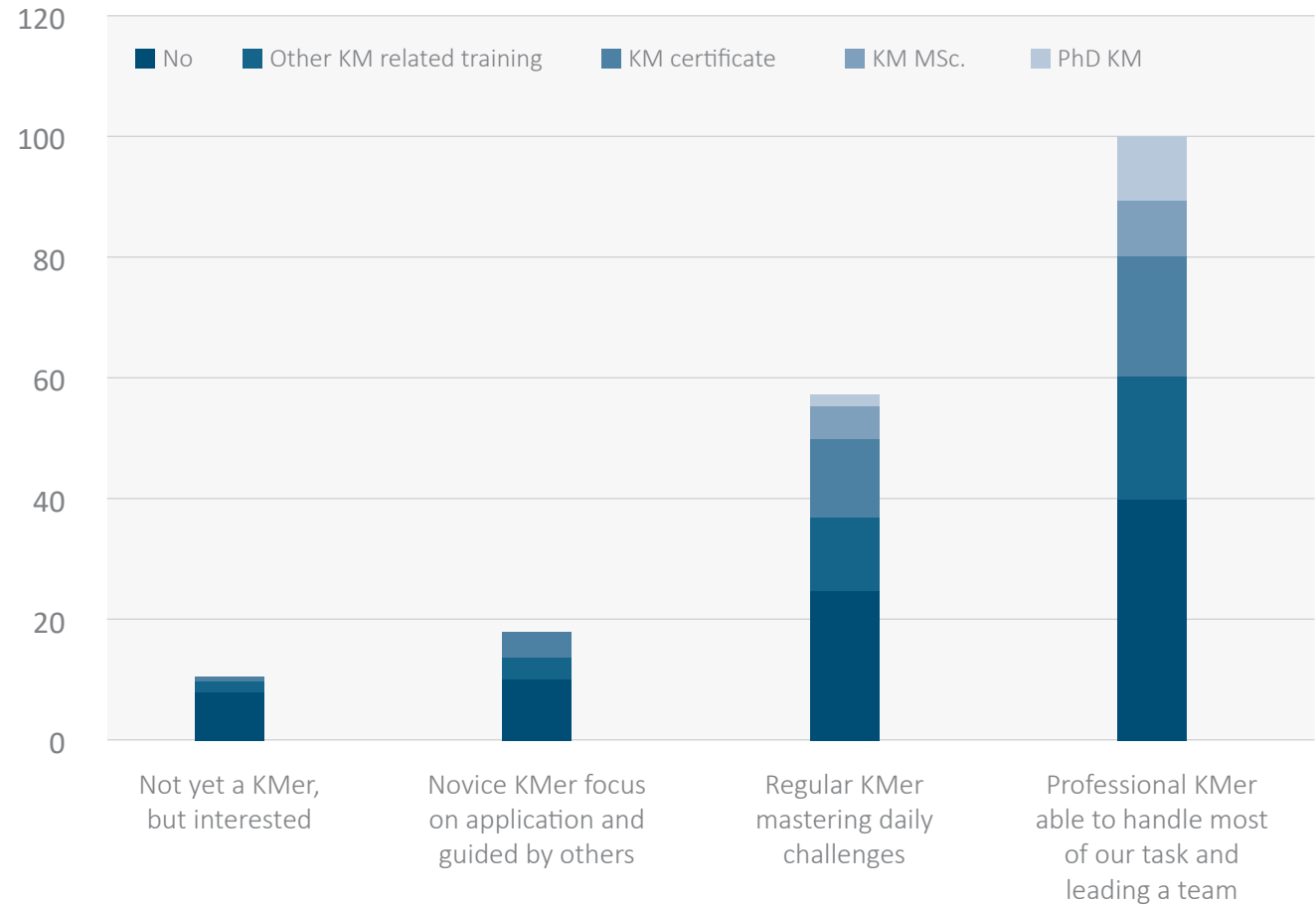All holders of PhDs - independent of discipline - consider themselves "Professional KMers".

Figure 20 Hierarchy and formal degrees of KMers

Domains of activity by KMers

Inputs to the definition of Knowledge Management can be assigned to 4 types of KMers:

- **Organizational value drivers** secure that the right knowledge goes to the right people and then is promptly applied to business activities.

- **Process change agents** establish that employees are aware of the KM process, including the purpose of doing so.

- **Technology transformers** help capturing new knowledge by usage of a knowledge management system.

- **People and community** shapers encourage a culture of knowledge sharing and collaborative workflow among departments.

- **Others** defined KM as a "life mission", "heart issue" or "passion".

Types of KMers

5% Others

34% Organizational value drivers

24% People talent community shapers

21% Technology transformers
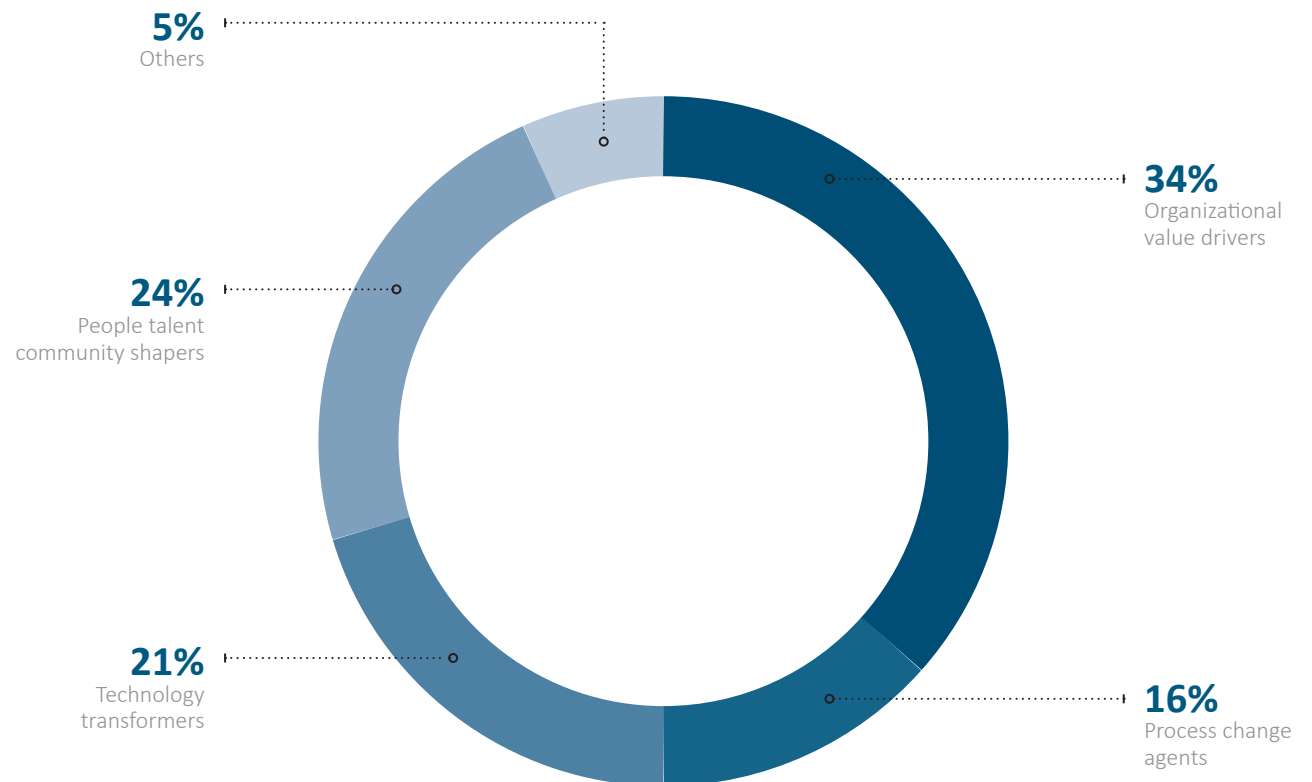
16% Process change agents

Figure 21 Types of KMers

Understanding of KM strategic positioning

Following Hansen and Nohria (1999), KM strategies span from two poles:

- **Personalization** strategy with focus on educating and training people to benefit from creativity, experience and insights.

- **Codification** with focus on data, machine learning and artificial intelligence to take advantage from technological scale effects.

- **The strategic** combination of both might be a comprehensive approach, leveraging strength of people with technology.

Source:

https://hbr.org/1999/03/whats-your-strategy-for-managing-knowledge Morten T. Hansen, Nitin Nohria, and Thomas J. Tierney, HBR, 1999.

KM for me is...

13%
Codification

32%
Personalization
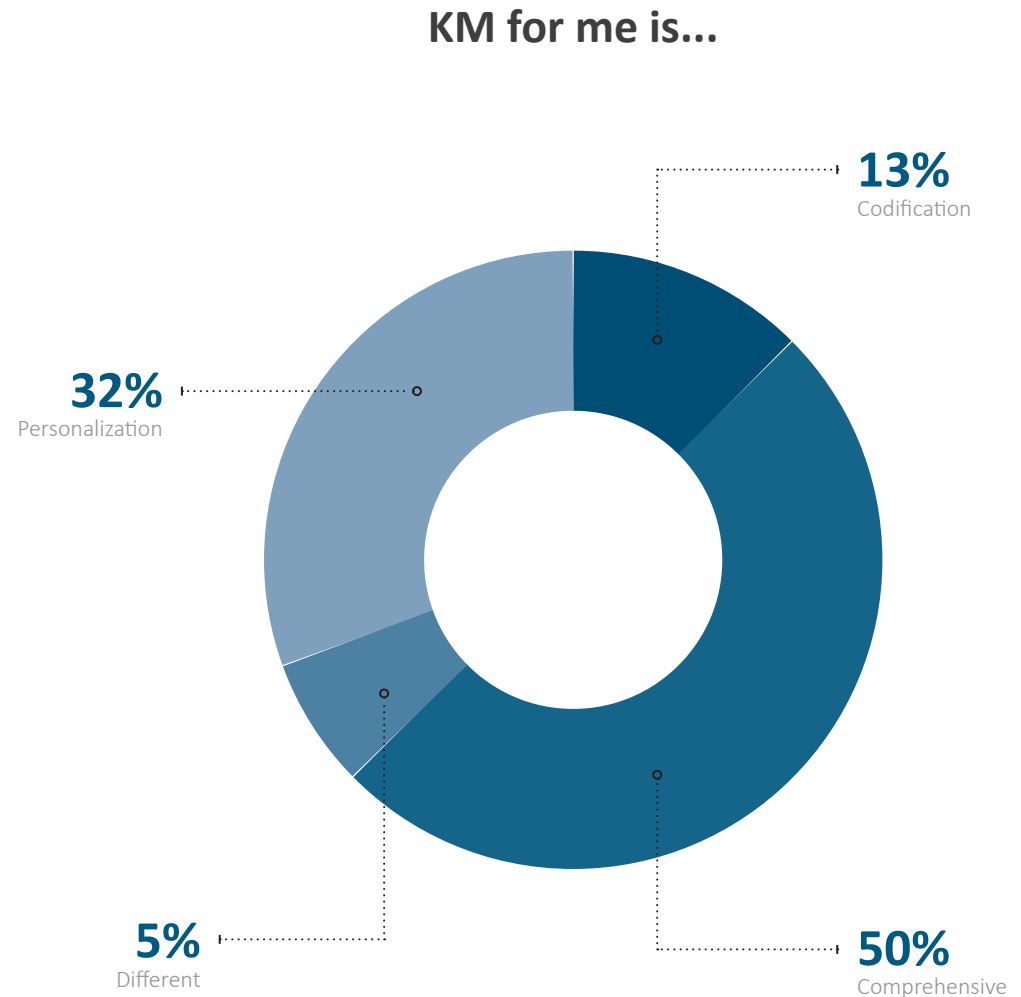
5%
Different

50%
Comprehensive

Figure 22 Understanding of KM Strategic Positioning

Preferences of KM by country

Compared to Germany, India, the USA and France have a slightly higher preference for codification of knowledge.

South Africa shows a high preference for personalization - but did not report repre-sentatively.
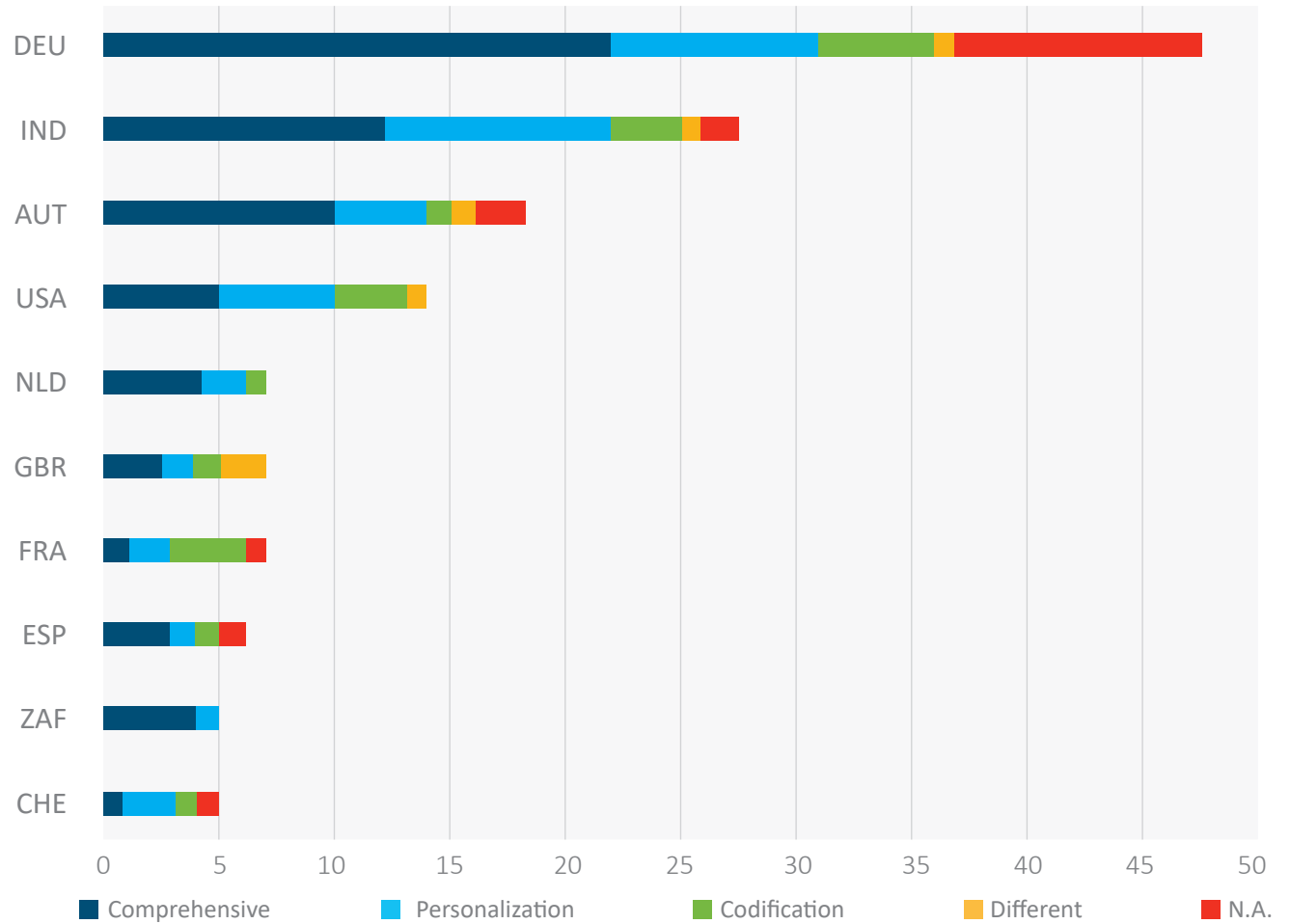
Preferences of KM by country

Figure 23 Understanding of KM Strategic Positioning in 10 Countries

KM is communication

Wordcount might be an indicator for the commitment of responders for their statement.

A single synonym (KM = networking or KM = strategy) might be to the point – or not. The longest statement is an 80-word elaboration from Poland: *"Knowledge management is the process by which an enterprise gathers organizes shares and analyzes its knowledge in a way that is easily accessible to employee's knowledge management makes the correct knowledge available to the right people at the right time. It is about making sure that your organization can learn and that it will be able to retrieve and use its knowledge assets in current applications as they are needed providing alignment and reducing redundancy duplication of effort and investment."*

Average wordcount for explaining KM by country and strategy type
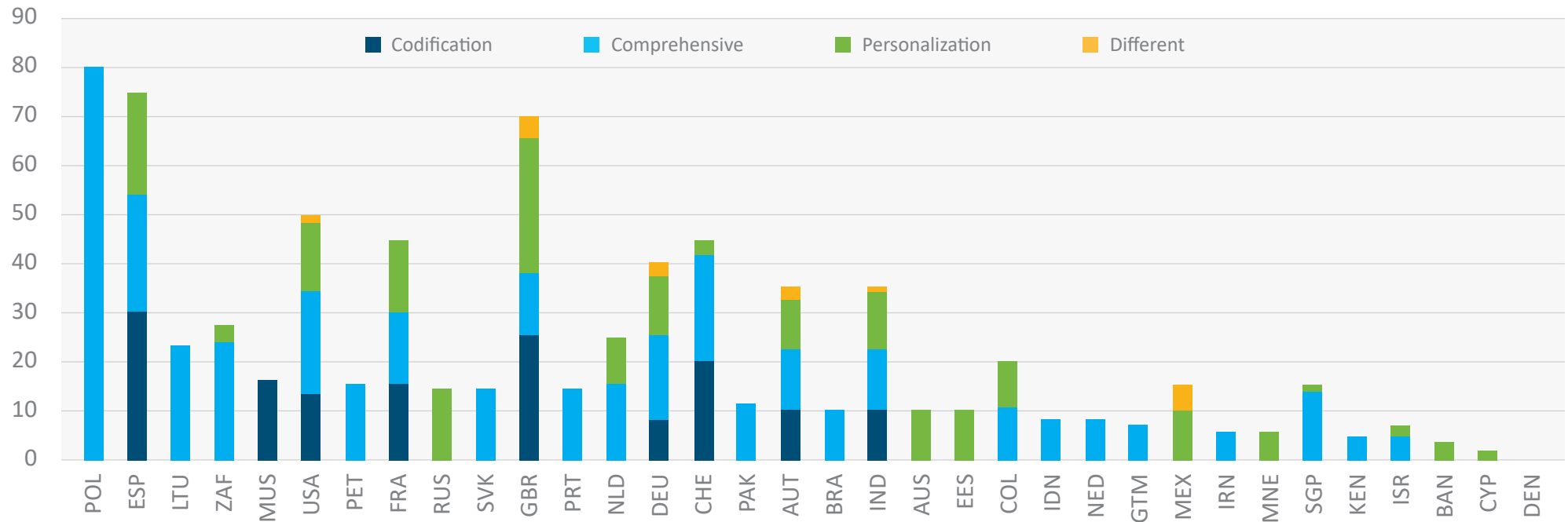

Figure 26 Understanding of KM Strategic Positioning and Word Count in 33 Countries

Understanding of KM strategic positioning by seniority

Knowledge Management Strategy is interpreted as comprehensive, and people oriented.
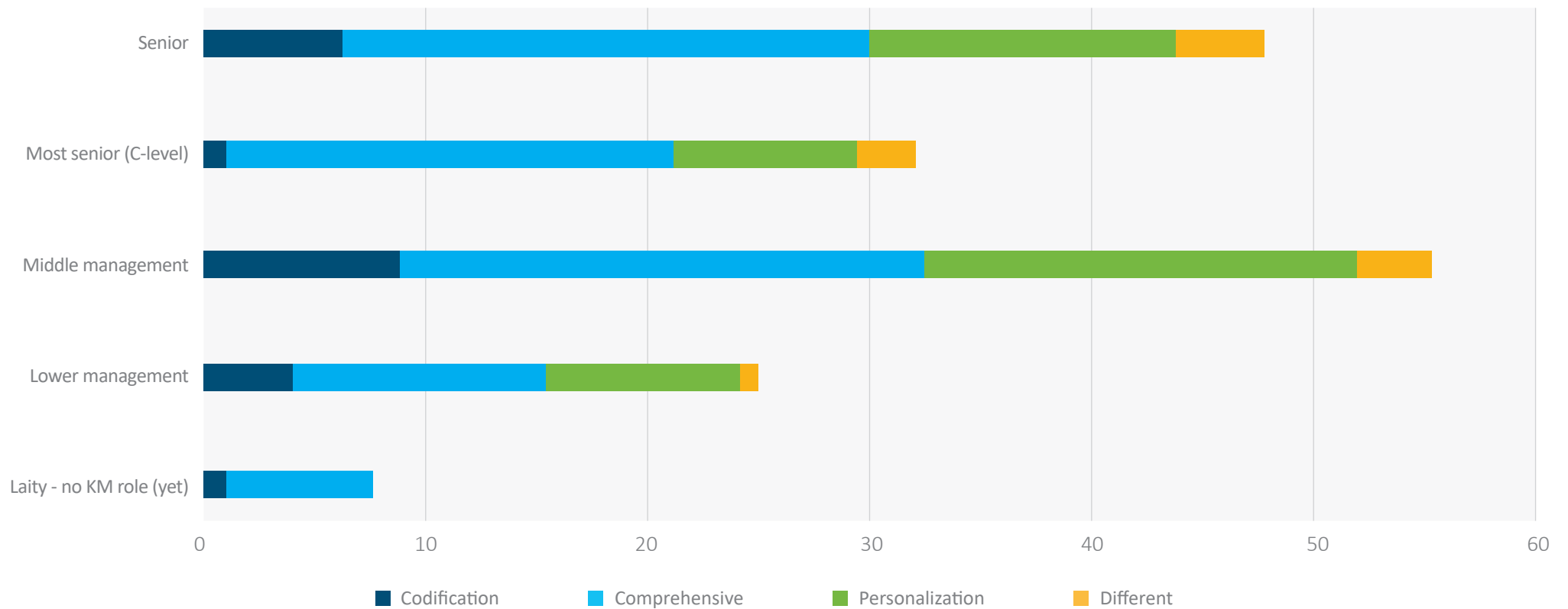

Figure 27 Understanding of KM Strategic Positioning by Seniority

Time spent on activities relevant to knowledge management

About 1/3 of KMers are working full time in their discipline.

Another 1/3 might be affected by KM activities and support – although with a substantially lower commitment.

Another 1/3 spent between 40 and 80% of their time with KM activities.

Percentage time KMers dedicated to supporting KM activities

4%
0- 10%

10%
11- 20%

8%
21- 30%

8%
31- 40%

5%
21- 30%

9%
51- 60%

8%
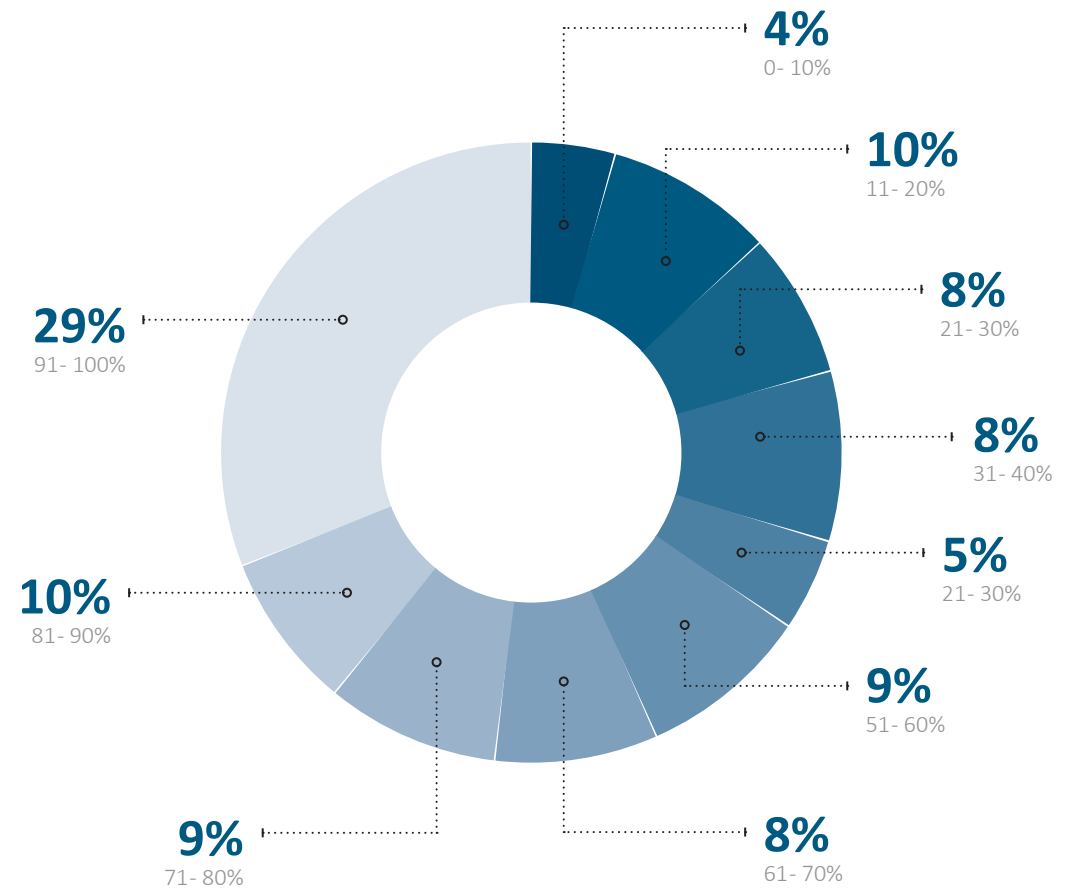61- 70%

9%
71- 80%

10%
81- 90%

29%
91- 100%

Figure 28 Workload, dedication of KMers for KM

04. Learning perspective

Sources for KMers

Communities of Practice are the most relevant source of New Knowledge for KMers. Followed by (academic) Conferences, Seminars, Journals, E-Learning and Industry Roundtables.
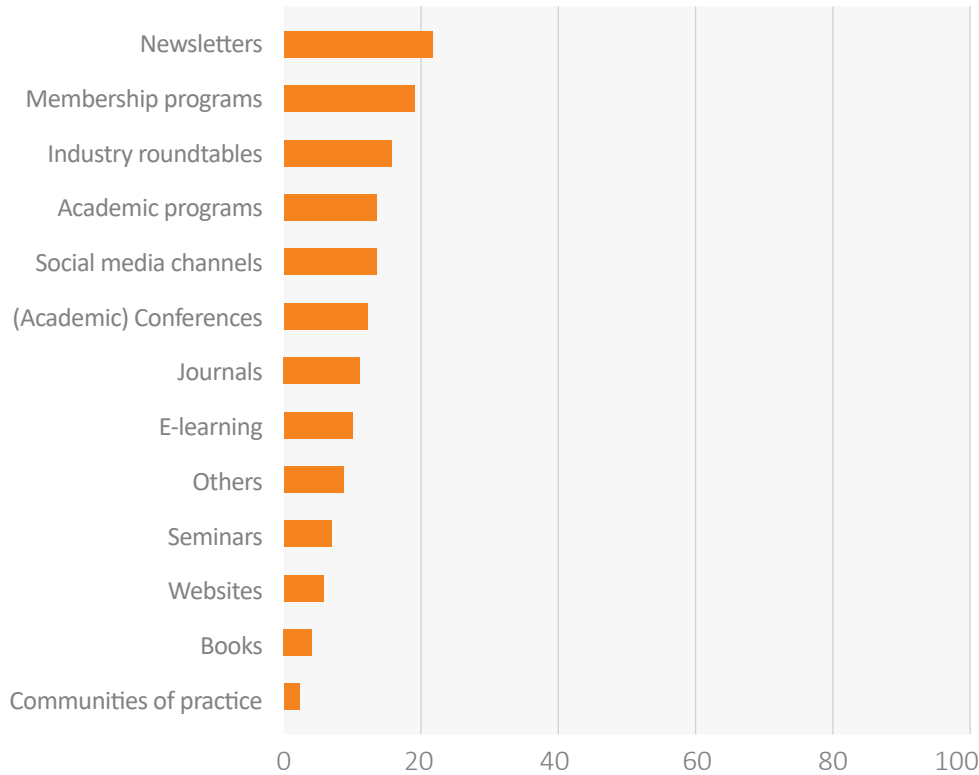
Sources of new KM knowledge? Not relevant

Figure 29 Not relevant sources of new KM Knowledge
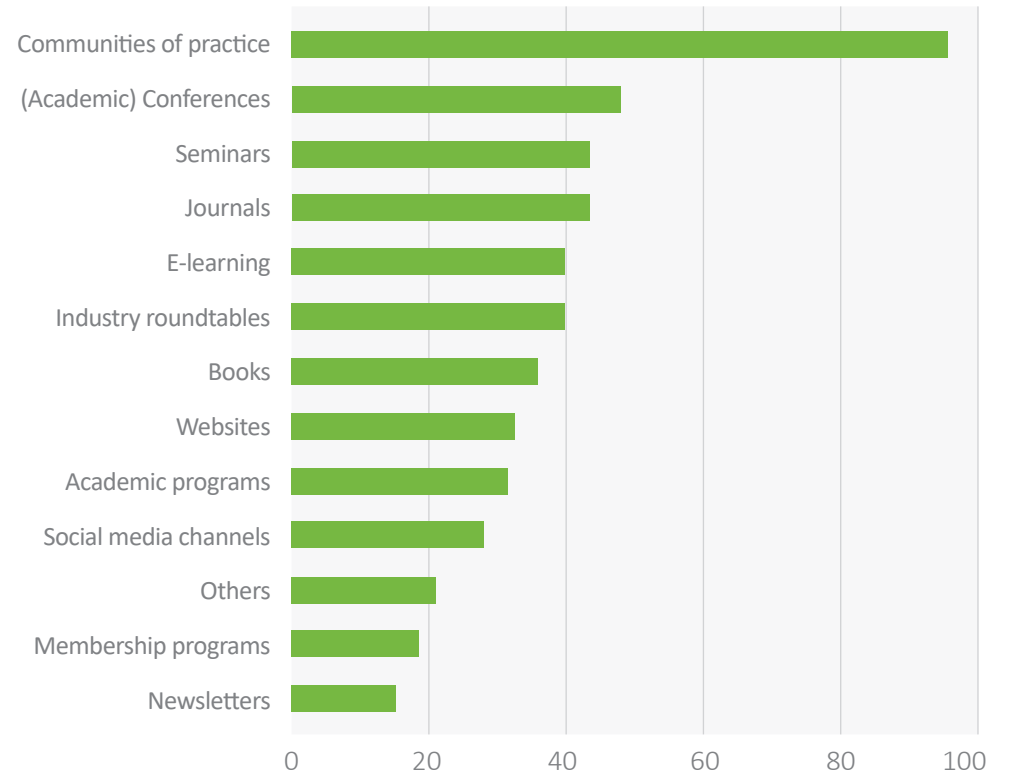
Sources of new KM knowledge? Very relevant

Figure 30 Very relevant sources of new KM Knowledge

Time investment for learning and upgrading KM skills

The average KMers invests 134,5 hours per year for learning and upgrading KM skills.
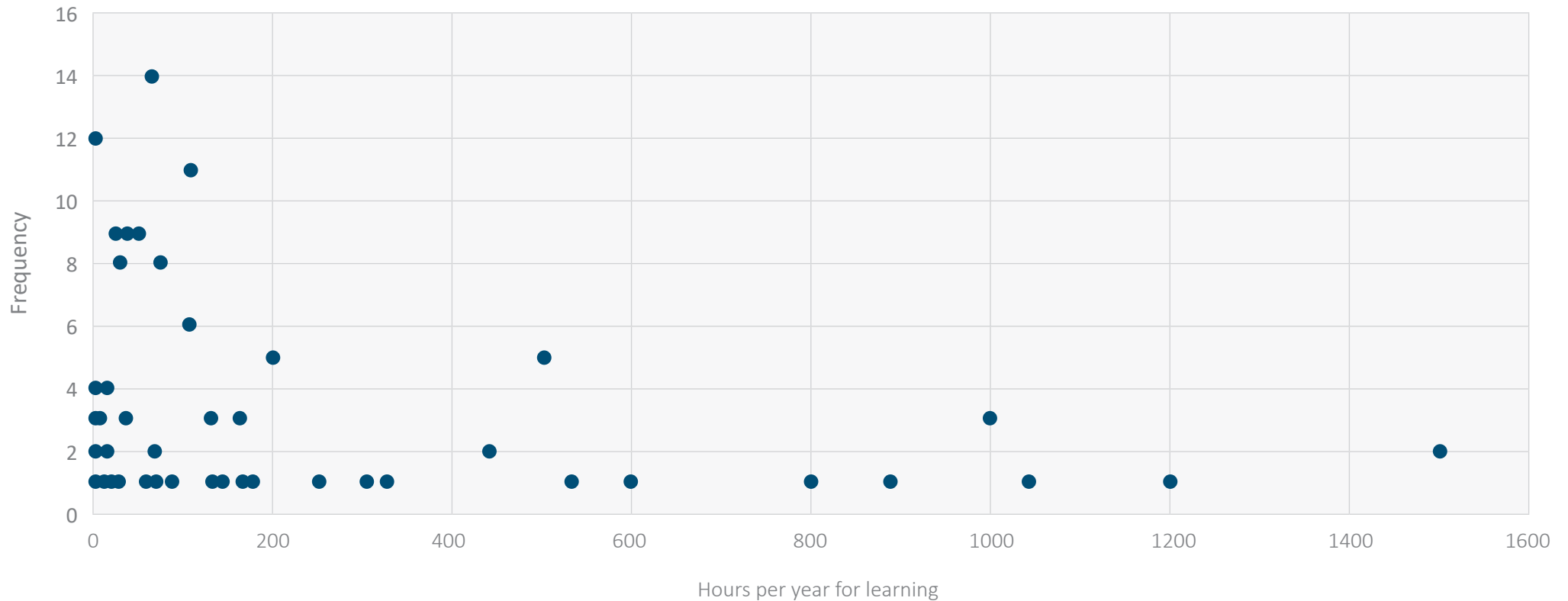
Time investment for learning per year

Figure 31 Time investment for learning and upgrading KM skills

Upgrading KM skills by country and gender

Regional differences are more significant than gender-related ones.

KMers from the USA and South Africa report the highest time investments.

Country selection based on available data.
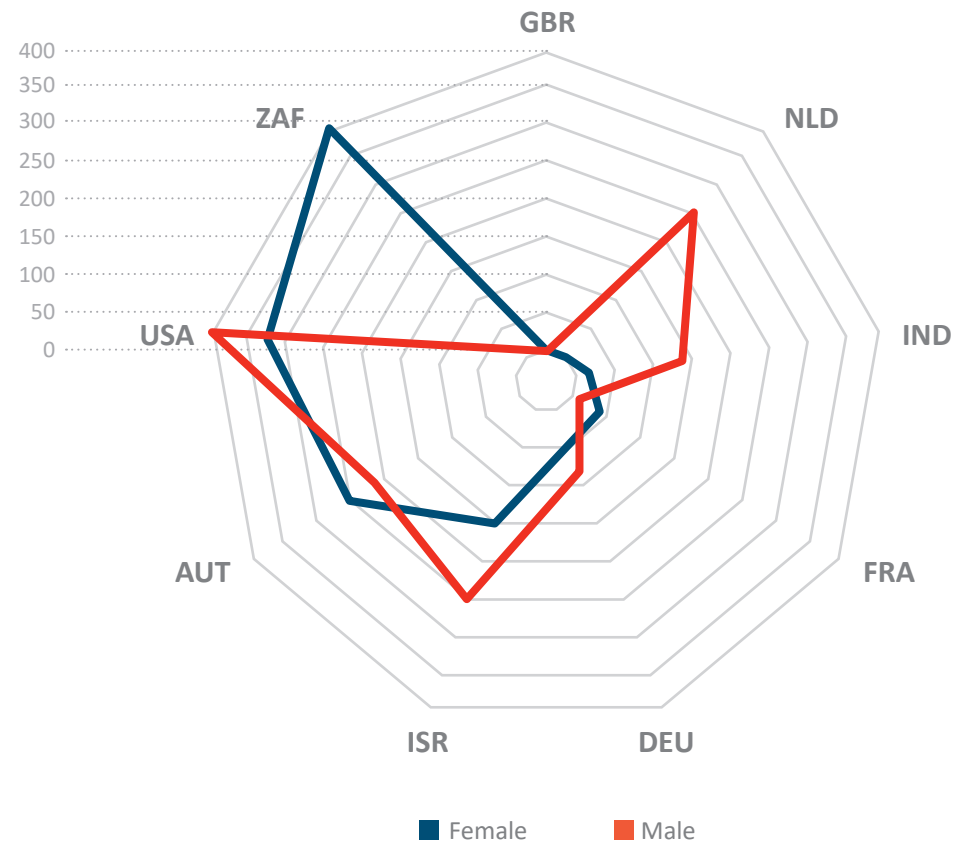
Investment in KM-upgrades by country and gender

Figure 32 Time investment for learning and upgrading KM skills in 9 Countries in hours per year [hours/year]

Learning behavior

We see differences in learning behavior depending on the assumed KM orientation. Interestingly, proponents of codification report substantially lower hours for learning per year than others.
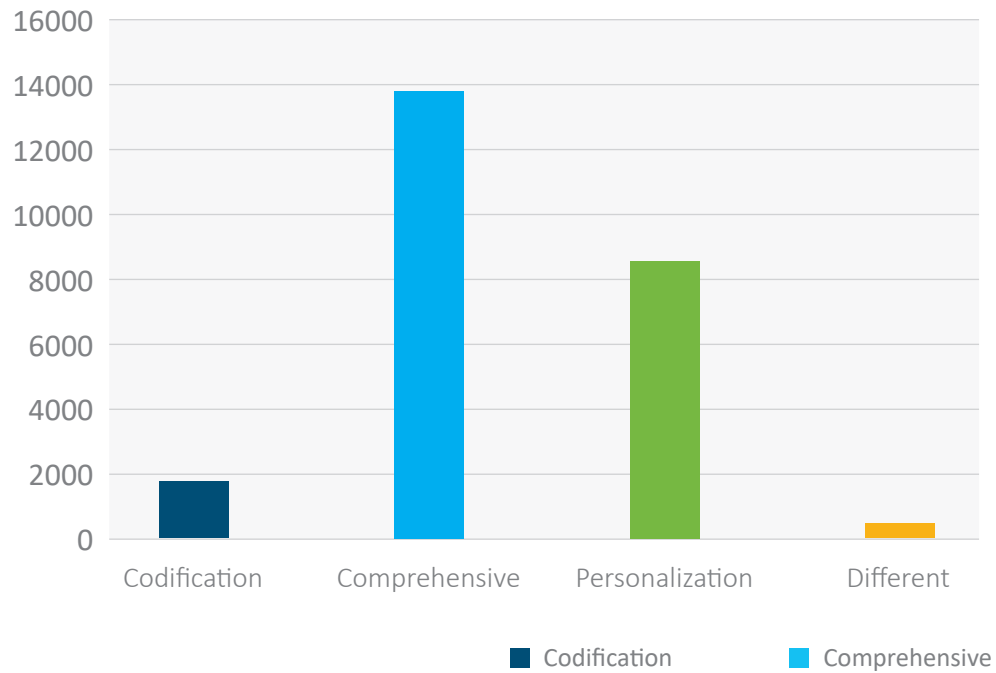
Learning hours and KM orientation (Total)

Hour invested to learning per KMer and KM orientation

Figure 33 Time investment for learning and upgrading KM skills and strategy preference
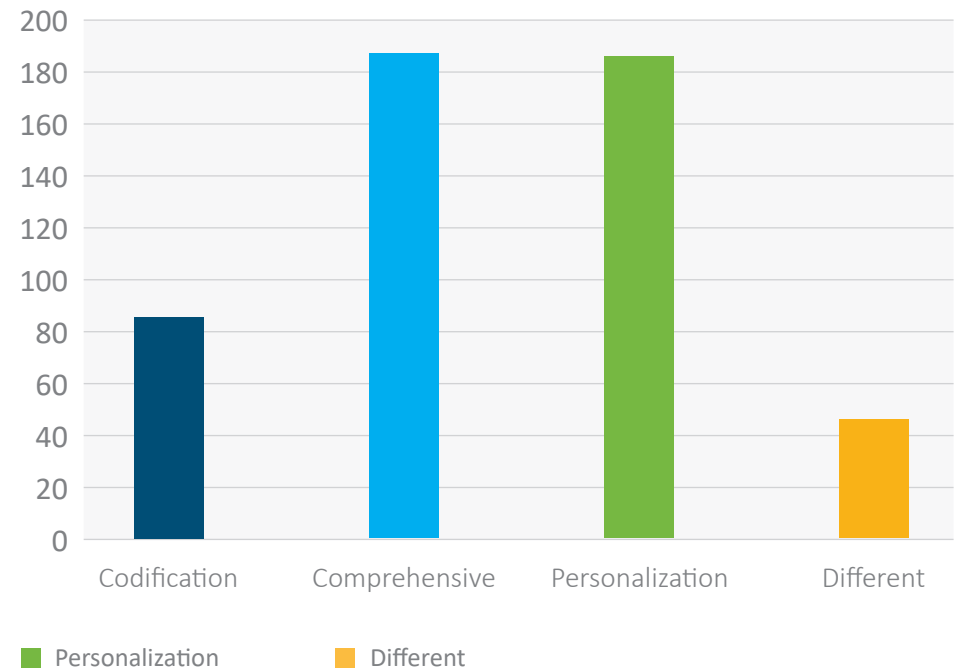
Figure 34 Time investment for learning and upgrading KM skills and strategy preference per Person

External risks and new chances

Topics mentioned frequently are represented with larger circles and placed from the center. Topics mentioned less frequently are more central and might shift in either direction.

The changes in technology, society and increasing competition are substantial risks, which can be perceived as threats.

Organizations not investing in KM might fall prey to those who do.

The biggest chance and best argument for KM seem to be the profitability of organizations, benefiting from scale effects of knowledge.

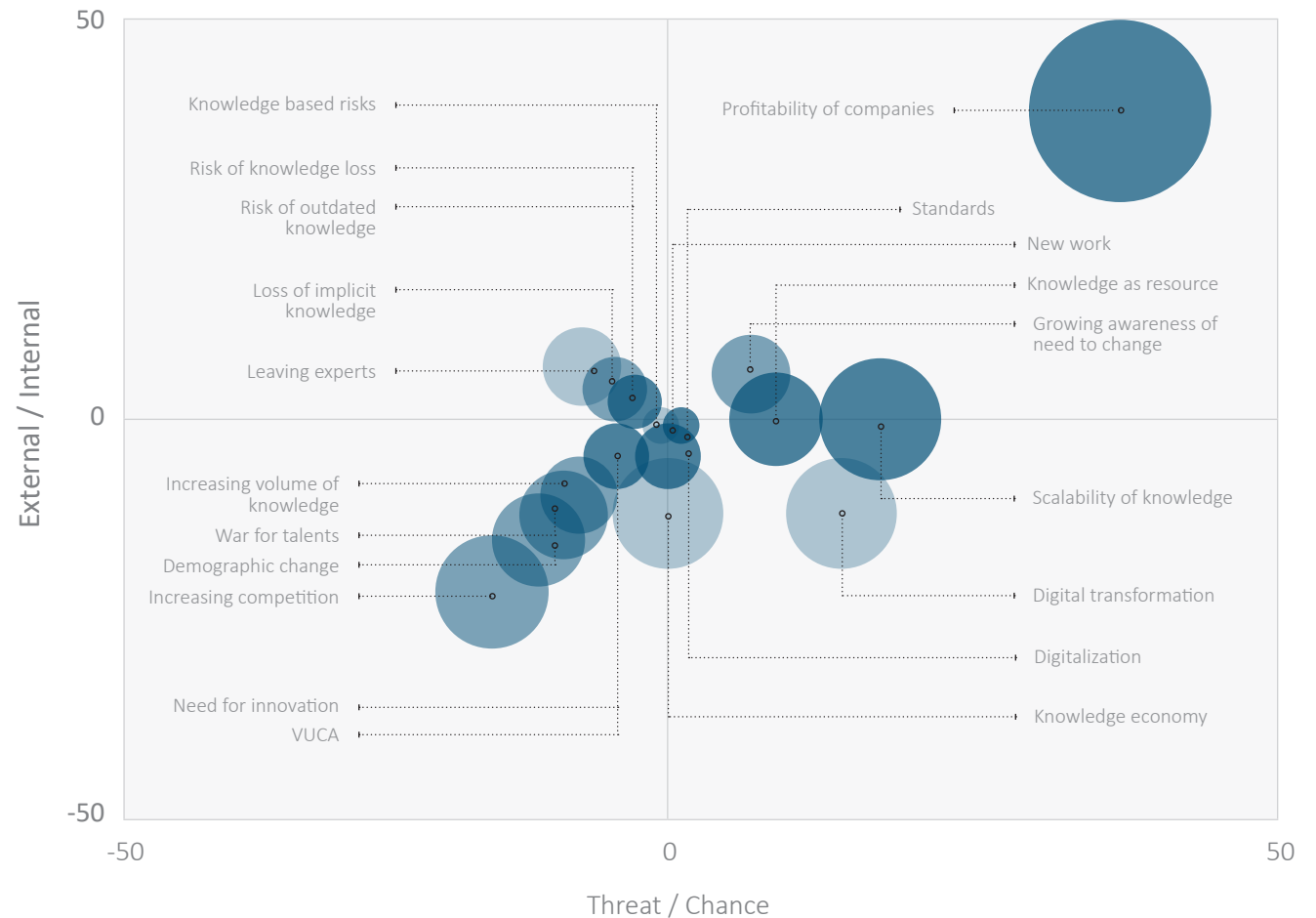## Opportunity portfolio of KM

Figure 35 Threats and Chances for KM from Internal and External

Pioneers and opportunities for expansion

ISO 3040 is a Standard for Knowledge Management Systems and on the same level as the more widely recognized ISO 9001. It was published in 2017 and is now in the stage of the first review.

Already 11% of respondents are using ISO 30401, with 7% more investigating.

Does your organization use ISO 30401?

11%
Yes

3%
We looked into it but decided against

7%
We are currently looking into it

52%
No, this was not a topic yet
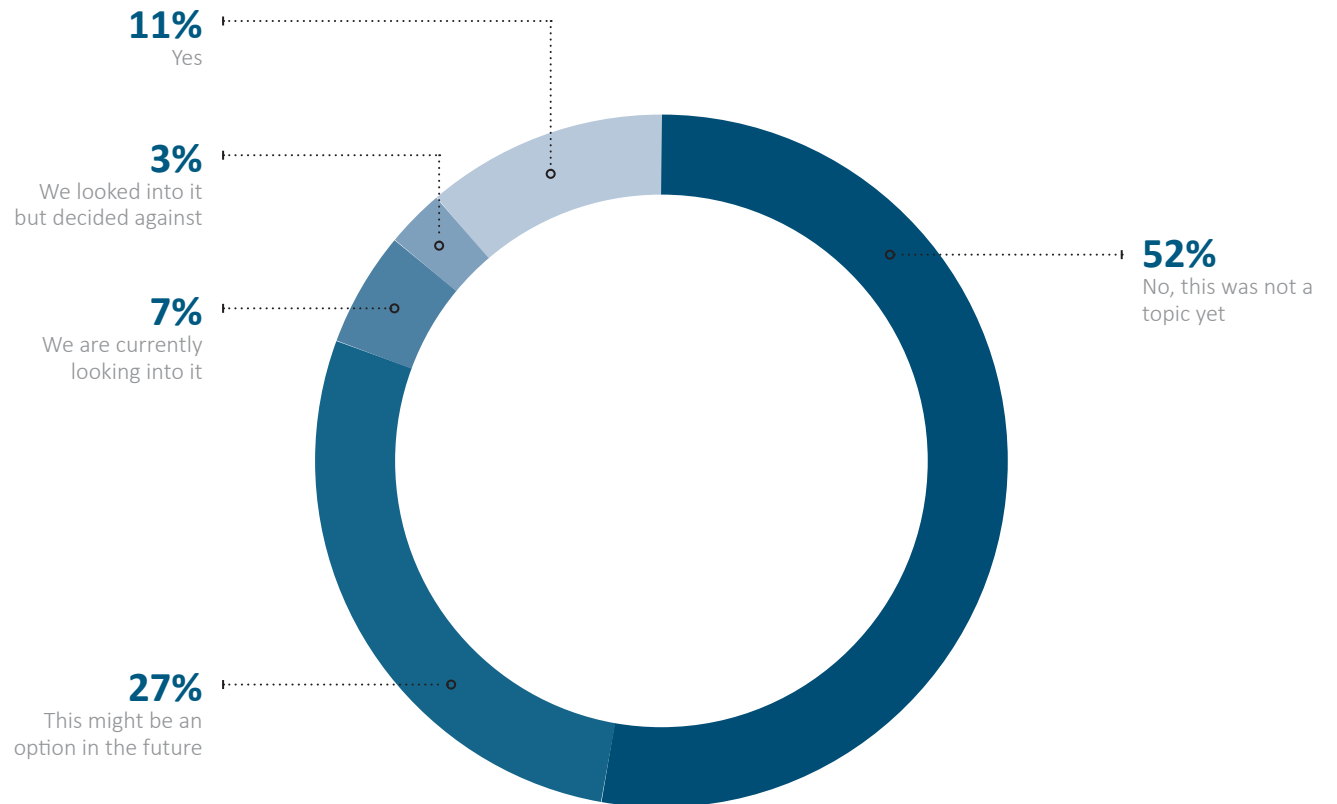
27%
This might be an option in the future

Figure 37 Reasons preventing KM Implementation

KM as a missed opportunity to grow?

A chain of reactions starts with lack of Top Management Awareness about KM. In combination with "other priorities", time and resources are not assigned.

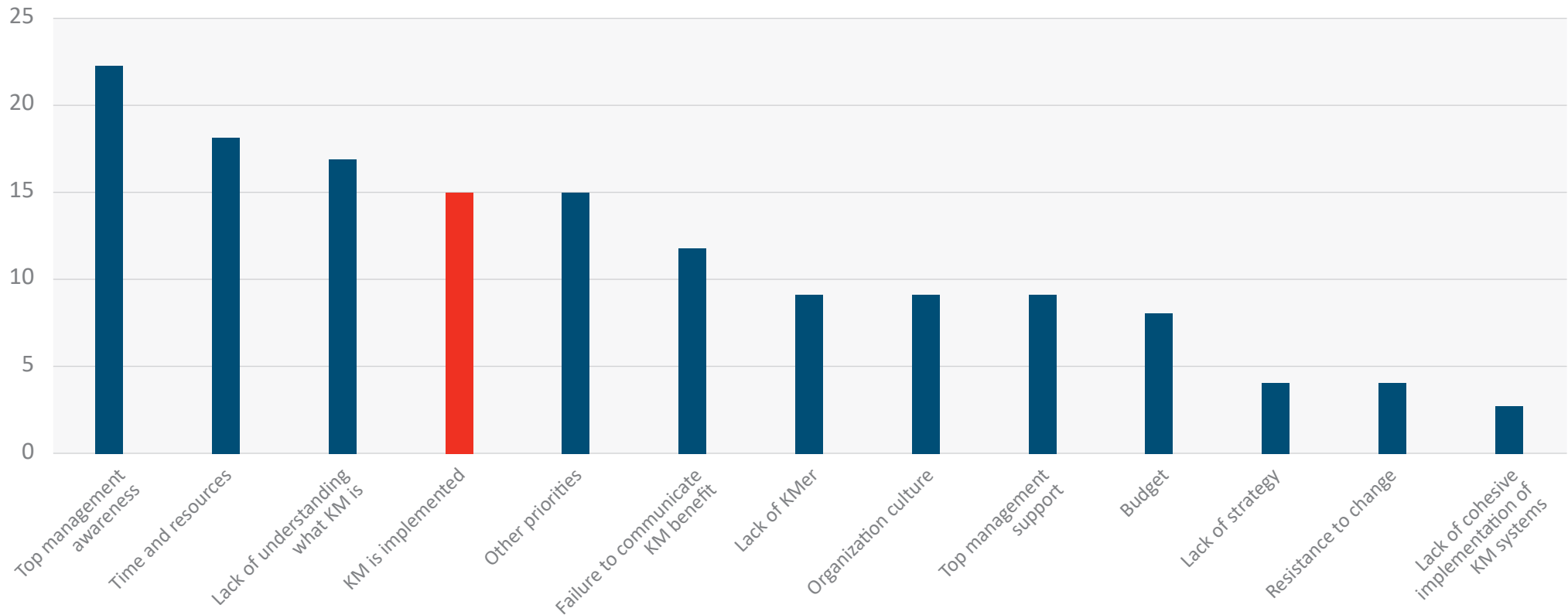## What is currently preventing KM implementation?

Figure 33 Time investment for learning and upgrading KM skills and strategy preference

Resources and services in demand by KMers

The demand for resources and services by KMers is very diverse, reflecting diverse roles, experience and job requirements.

The three top priorities in KM are:

- Case Studies
- Industry Roundtables
- Training

KMGN is addressing them already and will continue to do so in 2023 and beyond.

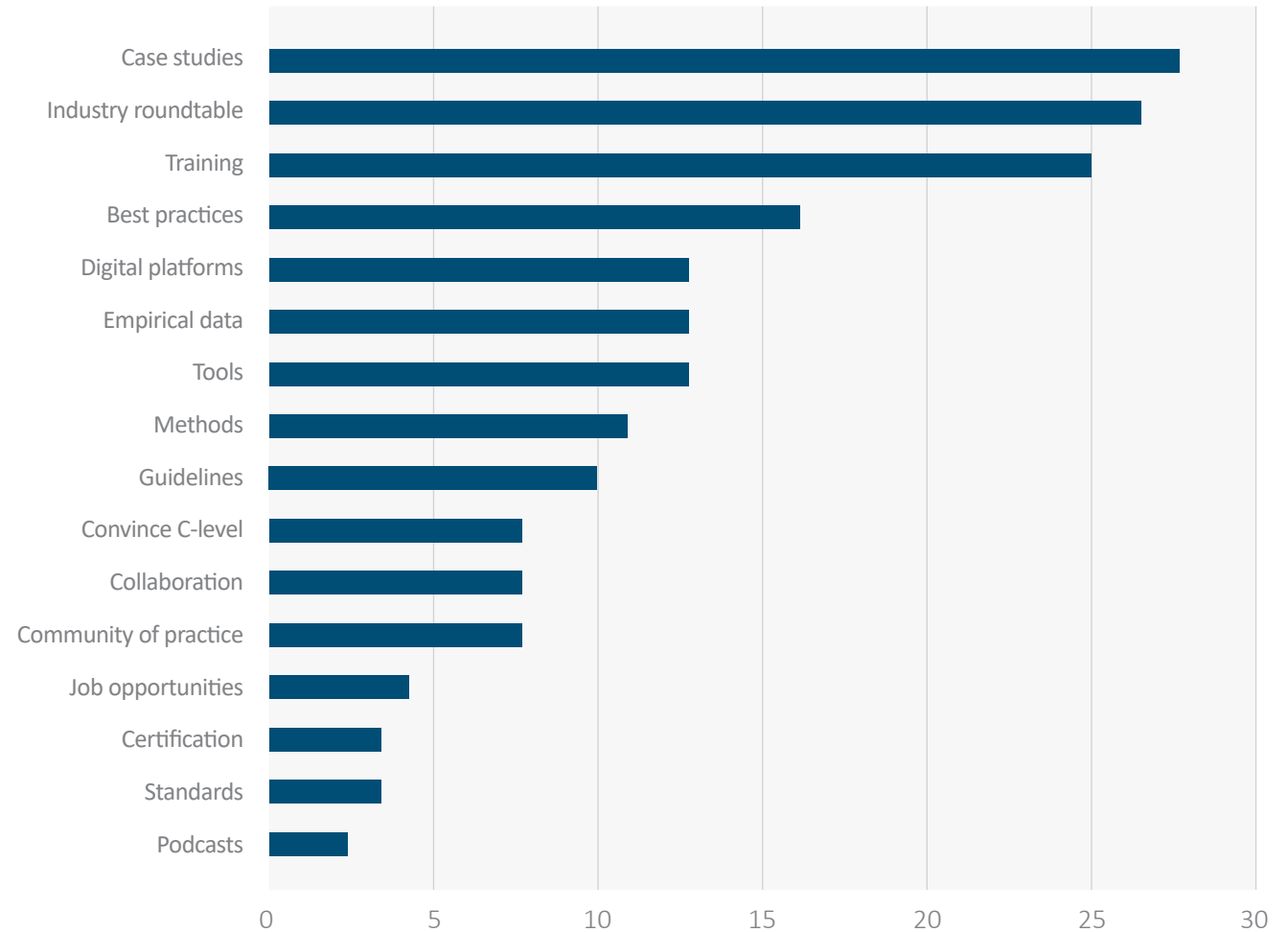## Resources or services demanded by KMers

Figure 38 Resources and Services in Demand by KMers

05. Method

How was the data collected?

What procedures were applied for data cleaning?

What context is needed to interpret data?

Data collection

Number of collected responses by Jan 20th: 194

Five Waves of invitations over 8 weeks (December –January) helped to engage international participants aside the established networks.

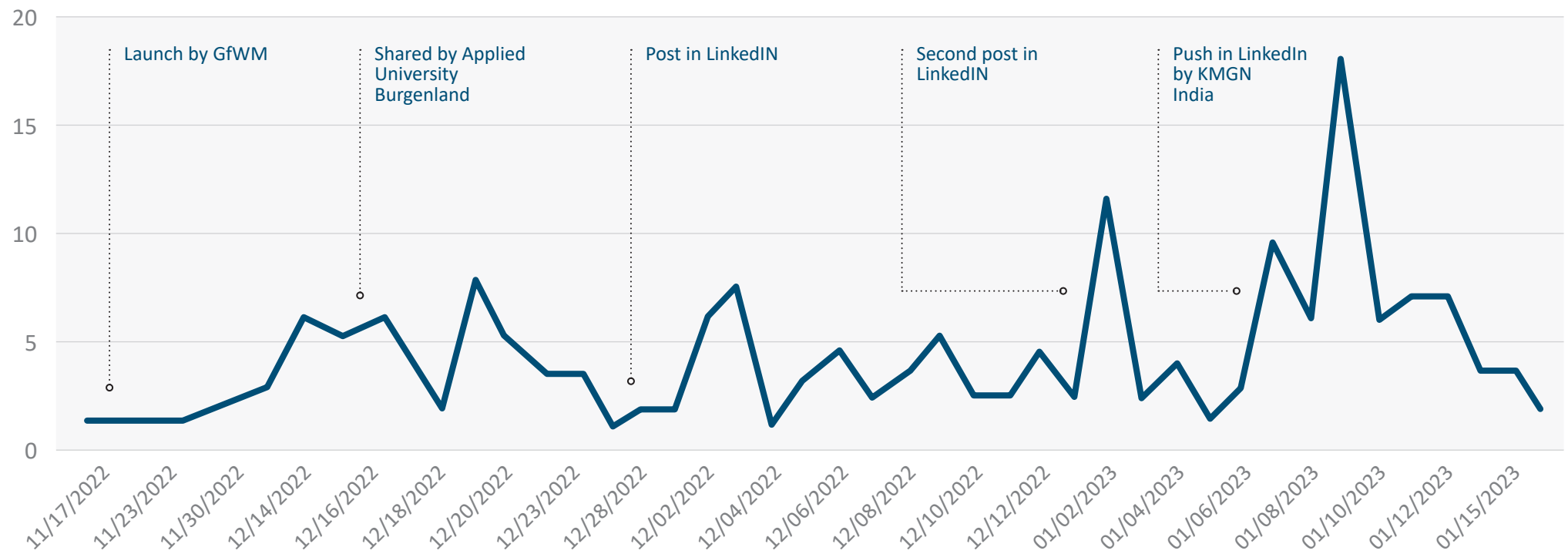## Evolution of contributions/participation

Figure 39 Flow of Responses over Time

Self-assessment of the quality of inputs by respondents

An open call for participation sometimes attracts random participants who might not be in the focal group.

Participants therefore were invited to self-assess the quality of their inputs.

Quality of answers

25%
Medium accurate-
I am not confident
in all dimensions

75%
Very accurate- I
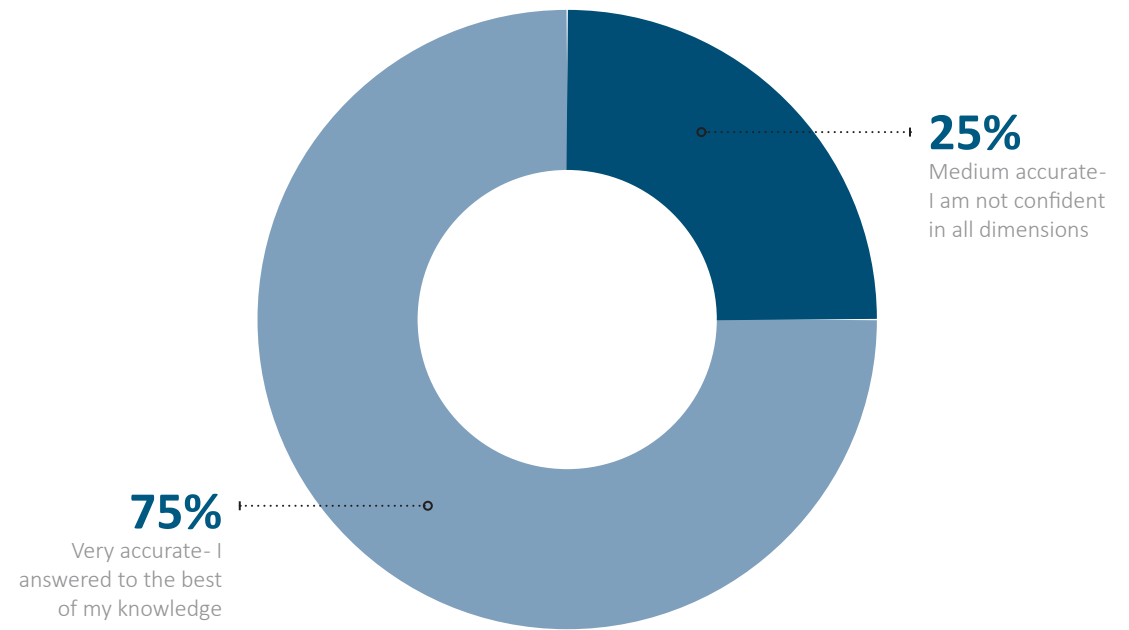answered to the best
of my knowledge

Figure 40 Self-assessment of the Quality of Inputs by Respondents

High quality of inputs

A test checks for differences in word counts for question 17 (definition of KM) by the confidence in answers expressed in Q27 (quality of answers). The number of inputs shows an uneven distribution, the average number of words by input shows a lower value for "medium accurate" and a higher value for "very accurate". However, definitions for the 3 strategy categories show no substantial difference.

Number of inputs by confidence and KM strategy

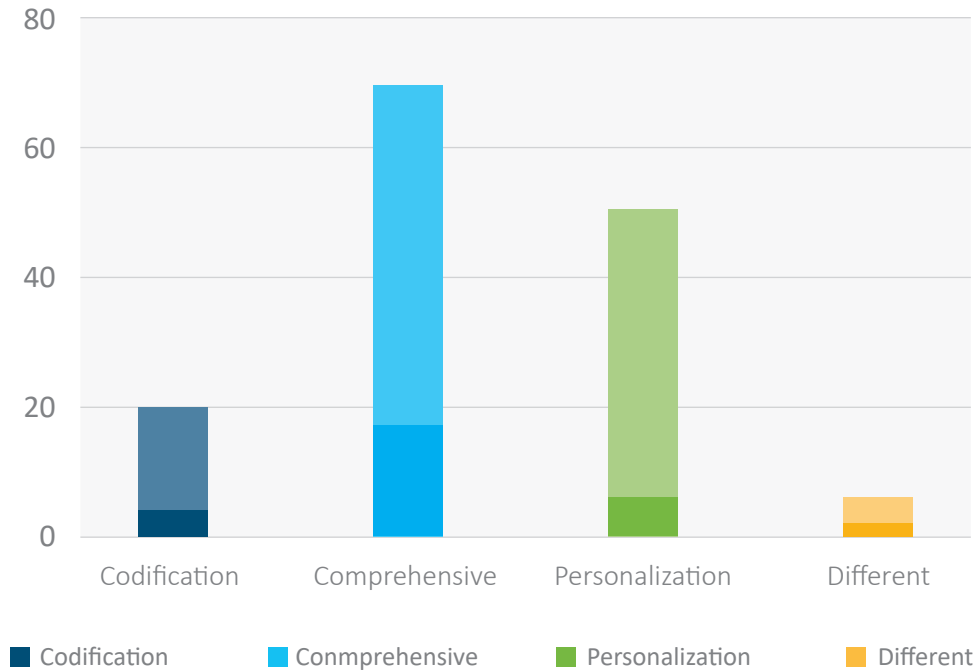Legend: ■ Codification ■ Conmprehensive ■ Personalization ■ Different

Figure 41 Number of Inputs per Strategy type by Confidence
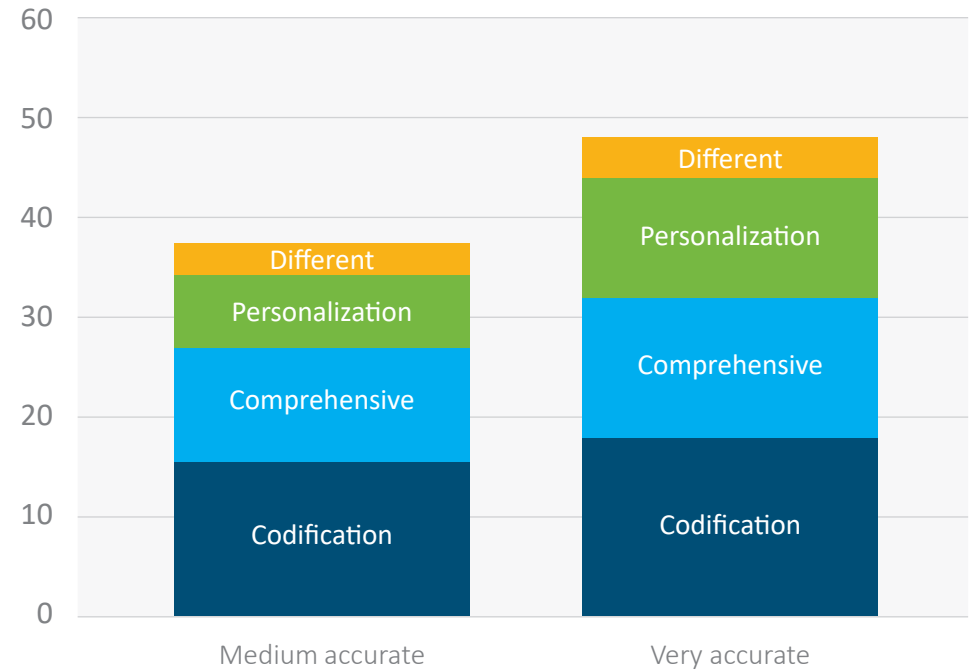
Wordcount of KM definitions and confidence (Average)

Figure 42 Wordcount per Strategy Type and Confidence

Data cleaning

01

Respondents did not fully follow the suggestions of the survey and offered substantial varieties in their answers. Country codes frequently did not follow the suggested three-digit ISO structure. For Germany, the official code is DEU, while many respondents identified as GER, DE, de, or "Deutschland". One respondent offered the telephone code. These obvious deviations were adjusted with greatest attention.

02

Qualitative inputs show a substantial variety – from not answering or just a few key words to elaborate statements. They were interpreted to the best knowledge or eliminated if no context could be established.

Basic qualitative analyses were conducted using both inductive and deductive approaches. To find categories, a frequency analysis or concepts from the literature (e.g. KM Strategies) were applied.

03

Tools for data visualization deliver better results when text inputs are corrected beforehand. Typical typos, such as "knowelgde" or similar were corrected. Abbreviations were completed, if easily attributable; for specific visualization of job titles (Q19) or reports (Q20), all inputs were adjusted to male and singular forms.

Imprint

The content of this report is in the sole responsibility of the authors. The inspiration came from discussions in the context of GfWM and KMGN, but these networks are not liable in any case.

For questions, please contact: **bornemann@ia-consulting.at**

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Data collected with Google Forms; Figures created with MSOffice 365, Gephi and Flourish.studio

Please help to upgrade our data and participate in this survey:

https://forms.gle/TapjBcicPB2s8Bxn6

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Intangible Assets Consulting GmbH was established in Austria in 1998. IAC focuses on Intellectual Capital Statements as a reliably reproduceable method supporting strategy development, change management and reporting to internal and external stakeholders.

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