

# Managing ambition with reality

Commercial trends study 2026

January 2026





# What's in store?

Opinions and views

of over **1900** key stakeholders  
from various B2B industries

## Introduction to this study

In 2026, **B2B companies are entering with growth ambitions** following a turbulent period marked by inflation, cost pressure, and shifting customer behavior. While optimism is present, **many of the structural challenges from recent years remain unresolved**, revealing **execution capability** as the decisive constraint between ambition and results.



Commercial  
trigger points for  
2026























Priorities, trade-  
offs, and measures



Simon-Kucher  
perspective:  
turning ambition  
into excellence

Executive summary: **B2B companies enter 2026 with renewed optimism and clear growth ambitions, but performance in 2026 will be defined less by strategy choices and more by execution capability**

Topic	 <b>Market environment and sentiment</b>	 <b>Financial outlook and value creation</b>	 <b>Strategic response and differentiation</b>	 <b>Execution readiness and performance risk</b>
Observation	<div> Positive expectations for 2026</div> <div> Improved confidence in tech-driven change</div> <div> Economic uncertainty and talent constraints</div>	<div> Revenue expectations are positive</div> <div> Profit expectations are positive</div> <div> Margin upside remains limited</div>	<div> Priority of commercial measures over cost cutting</div> <div> Focus on operating model redesign, digital, and talent</div> <div> Sales execution is deprioritized in some regions</div>	<div> Companies show strong commercial ambitions</div> <div> Key priorities are widely recognized</div> <div> Capability to execute at scale is weak</div>
Implication	<div> <b>Plan for growth, but design for volatility</b></div>	<div> <b>Value depends more on discipline than growth</b></div>	<div> <b>Pricing power and execution quality will decide winners</b></div>	<div> <b>Closing the execution gap drives performance</b></div>

**For 2026, commercial excellence becomes the decisive differentiator between firms that grow and firms that outperform**





# Market environment and sentiment

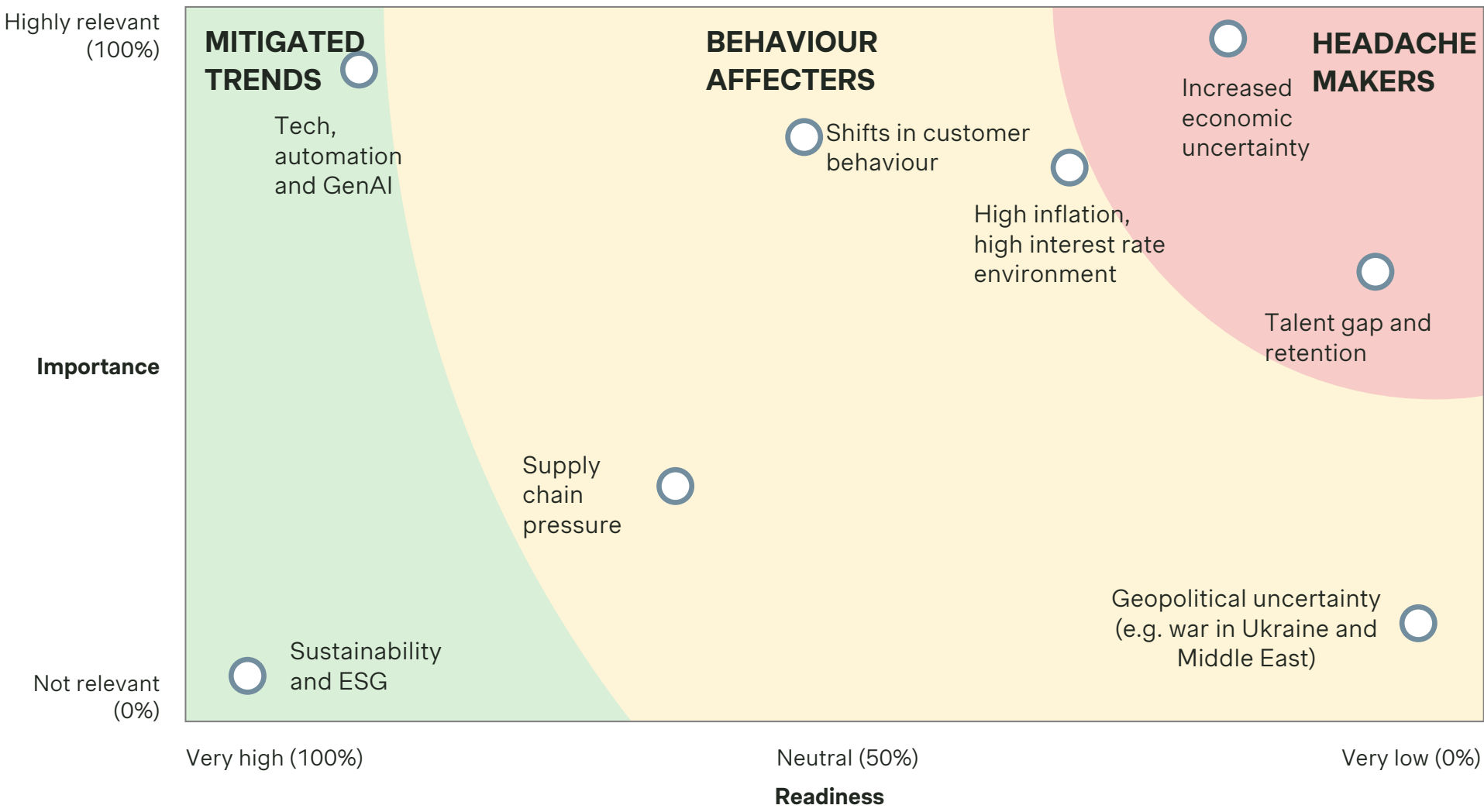
Growth expectations are present, but firms  
plan for volatility rather than momentum





# B2B outlook: Confidence in technology, vulnerability in resilience as 2025 pressures carry into 2026

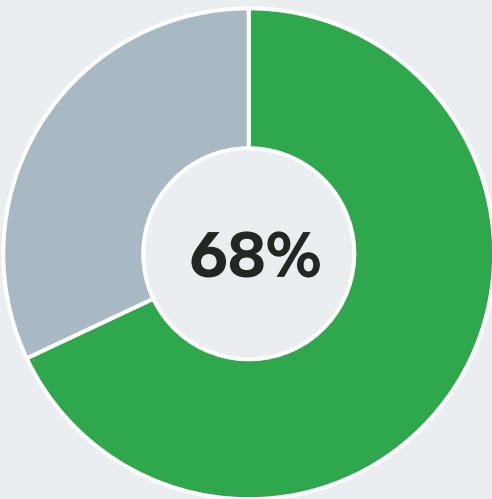
Importance and readiness of commercial trends, average rating relative to lowest and highest



- **Winning in 2026 will require balancing tech led transformation with stronger organizational and commercial resilience**
- **2025 market pressures are expected to persist into 2026**, but readiness is uneven across topics
- **Economic uncertainty and talent constraints remain highly important** and insufficiently addressed, while tech, automation, and GenAI are seen as well managed
- The **main challenges** are not new, but **unresolved**, leaving firms **exposed to macro volatility** and people related constraints that affect execution
- Confidence in technology will only matter if it strengthens organizational and commercial resilience



B2B outlook: **Economic optimism holds for 2026, but momentum weakens across Europe and the Americas**



Of respondents foresee  
**a positive** economic outlook  
for 2026  
**-3% pts** compared to 2025



**Europe**

- Southern Europe most positive sub-region with Italy, Portugal and Spain all expecting positive outlook for 2026
- UK least optimistic country with ~25% being negative about 2025 outlook



**Americas**

- Brightest outlook in Mexico with <3% seeing a negative outlook
- US outlook is least optimistic with 67% foreseeing a positive outlook , driving overall outlook in a negative direction



**APAC**

- APAC with most optimistic outlook for 2026, primarily driven by India
- India drives optimism where ~94% of respondents are positive, whereas in China 73% are positive about 2025 outlook, driving the optimism down



- **Optimism has softened compared to last year, particularly in Europe and the Americas, signaling growing caution rather than a reversal in sentiment**
- **The outlook suggests resilience rather than momentum, with firms expecting growth, but preparing for a more volatile and uneven macro environment**

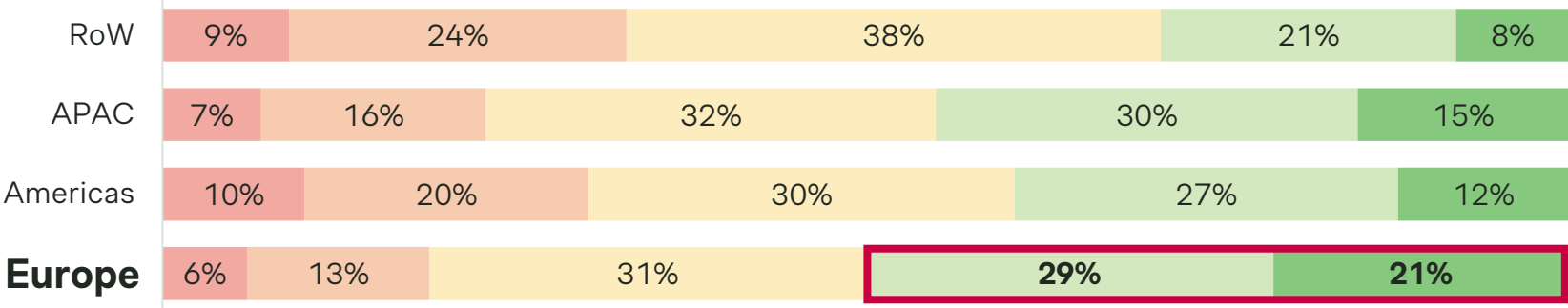
Source: Simon-Kucher, Commercial Trends Study 2026 conducted from Dec 8th 2025 to Jan 9th 2026 | Total n=1948 | Survey questions: "How would you describe the economic outlook for 2025 for your company?" | "Don't know" excluded



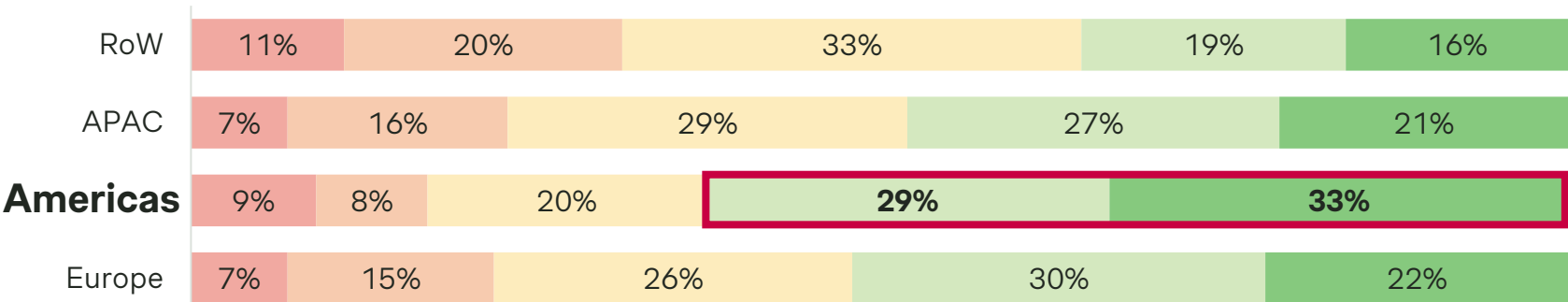
# Regional focus: Companies are more concerned about external regions than their own outlook

For your industry, which region do you expect will have the weakest economic outlook in 2026?

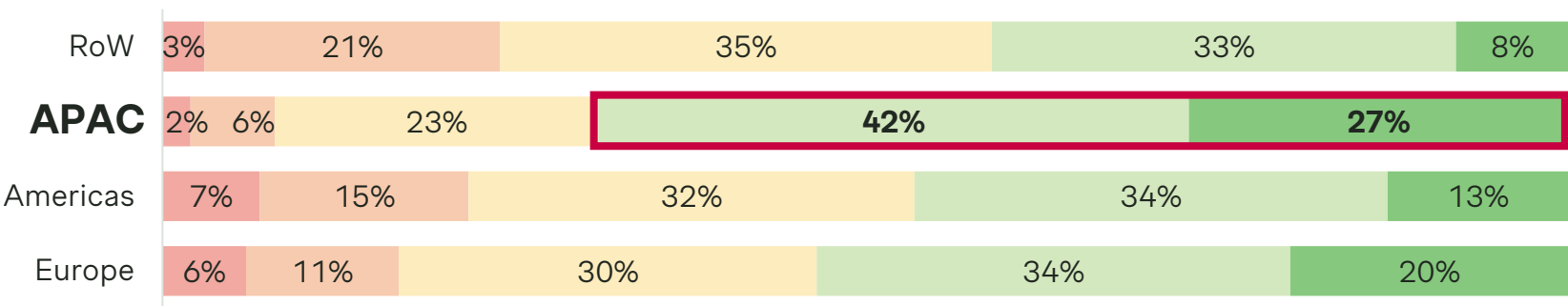
## Europe



## Americas



## APAC



■ Negative ■ Rather negative ■ Neutral ■ Rather positive ■ Positive

- Across all regions, companies **consistently expect weaker economic conditions outside their home region** than within it
- **Europe-based companies are more concerned about APAC and the Americas** than Europe itself, while APAC and Americas respondents also rate Europe among the weakest outlook regions.
- This pattern suggests that **pessimism is driven less by local conditions and more by perceived global exposure and uncertainty.**

Elevated **external risk perception** increases the **importance of resilience** and execution discipline over aggressive expansion

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# Financial outlook and value creation

Revenue and profit growth are expected, but limited price-cost headroom puts margin quality at risk

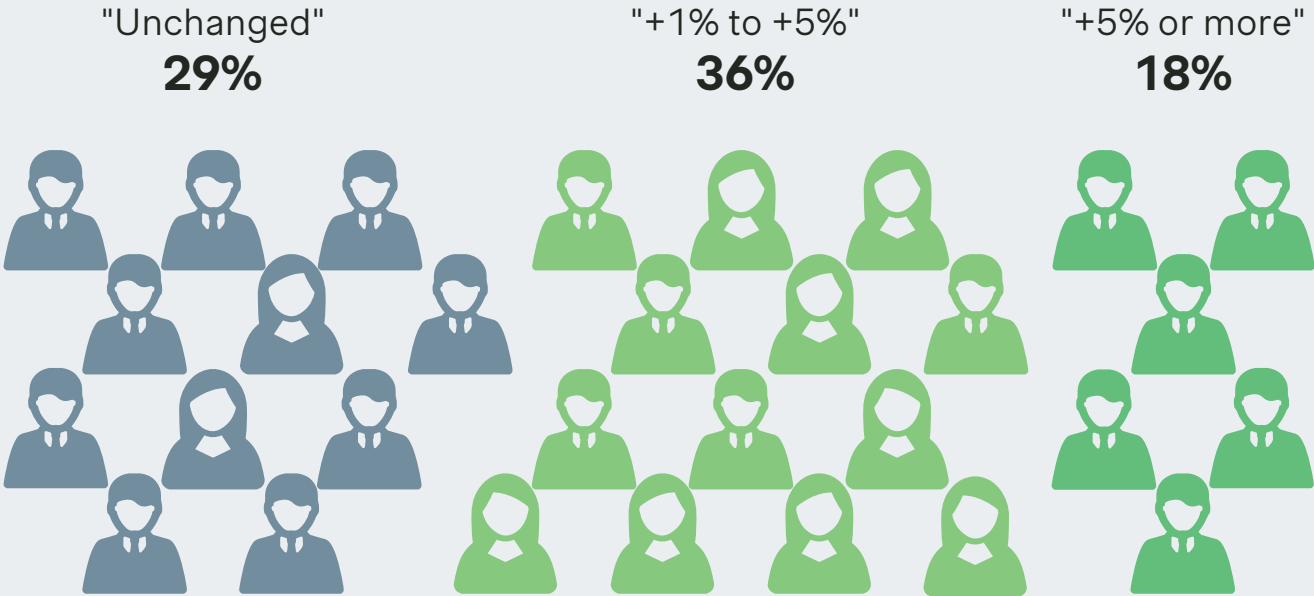




B2B outlook: **Profits are expected to rise, but expectations remain concentrated in modest growth**

Expected profit change in 2026 compared to 2025, distribution of responses<sup>1</sup>

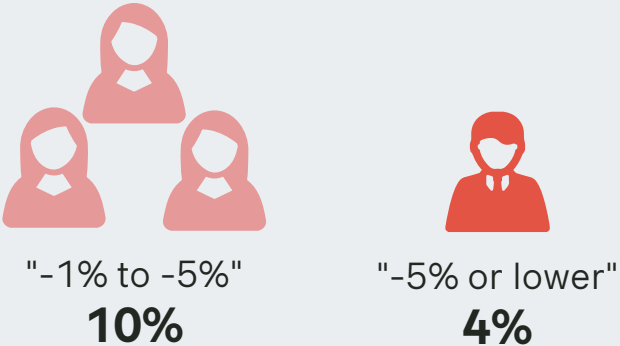
- Most optimistic country: **India**
- Most optimistic industry: **Paper & Packaging**



**~7/8<sup>th</sup>**  
of respondents expect  
stable or increasing profits

**-1%pts**  
from last year

- Most pessimistic country: **UK**
- Most pessimistic industry: **Chemical**



**~1/8<sup>th</sup>**  
of respondents expect  
declining profits

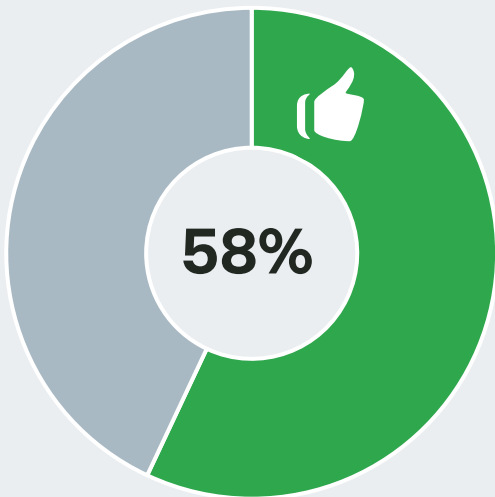
Source: Simon-Kucher, Commercial Trends Study 2026 conducted from Dec 8th 2025 to Jan 9th 2026 | Total n=1948 | Survey questions: "How much will your profit probably change 2026 vs. 2025 (in %)" | "Don't know" excluded | 1. Rounding difference in silhouettes



# B2B outlook: While revenue and profit confidence remains, limited price cost headroom reinforces the need for commercial excellence

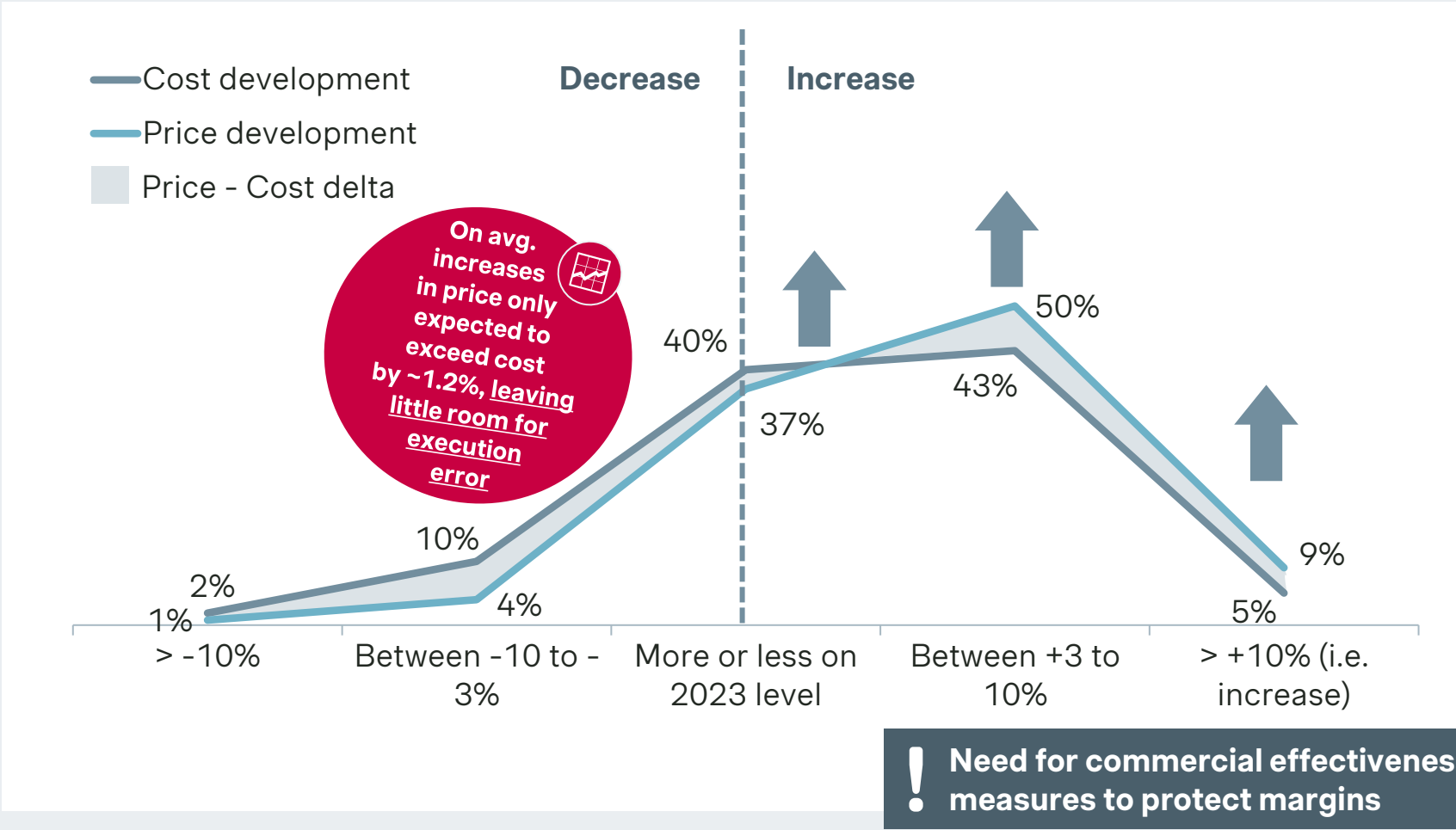
Expected revenue, cost and price change in 2026 compared to 2025, distribution of responses<sup>1</sup>

Majority of companies expect revenues to increase ...



Of respondents expect an **increased** revenue in 2025

... but the planned price increases are expected to only slightly outperform the development in cost



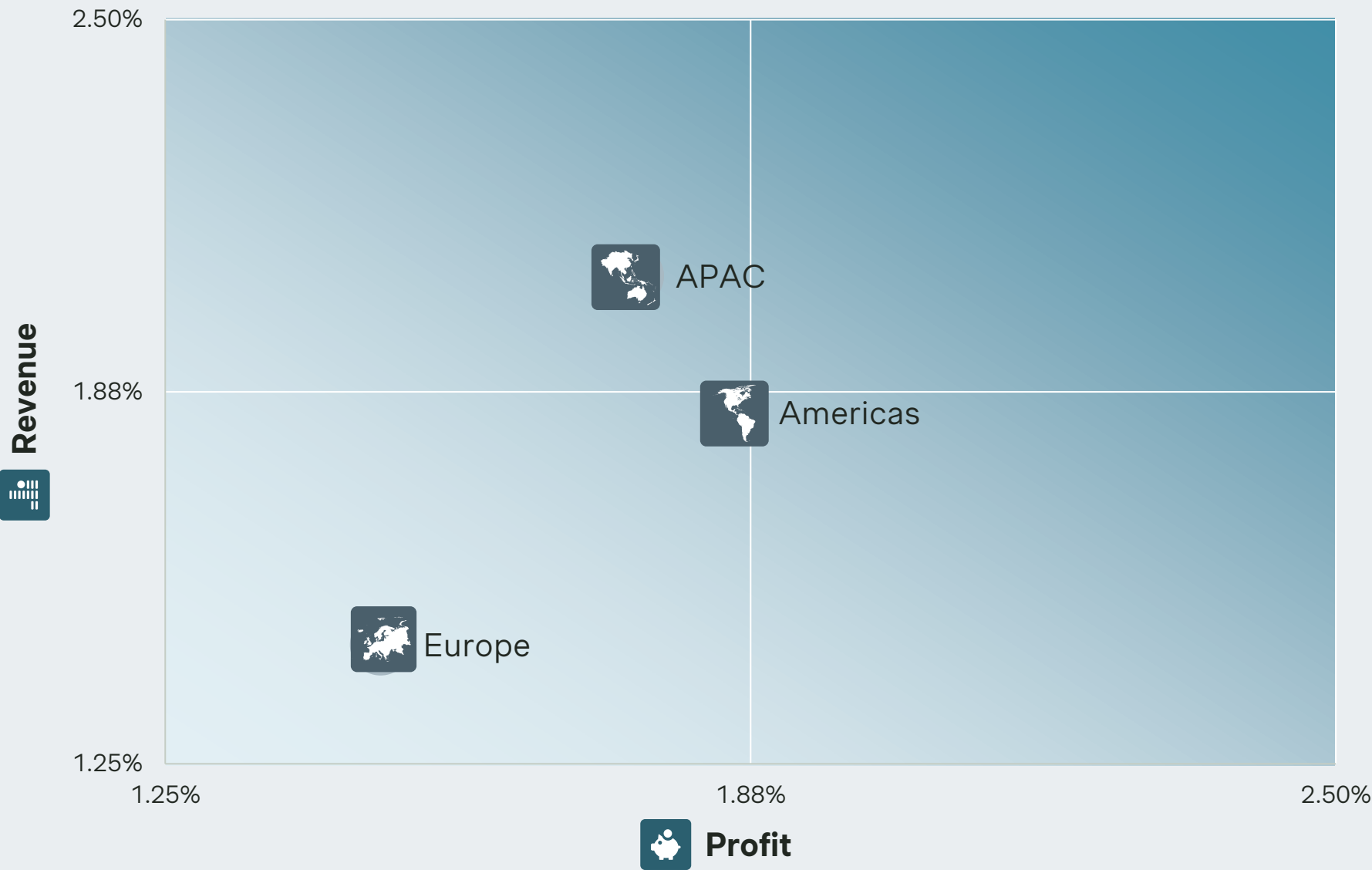
Source: Simon-Kucher, Commercial Trends Study 2026 conducted from Dec 8th 2026 to Jan 9th 2026 | Total n=1948 | Survey questions: "How much will your revenue probably change 2026 vs. 2025 (in %)" ; "Which per-unit cost base changes do you anticipate in 2026 compared to 2025 (i.e. less vs. more costly to produce/provide the same product/service in 2026)" ; "Which changes do you anticipate to make for your prices in 2026?" | "Don't know" excluded





# Next performance unlock will not come from demand alone, but from reconnecting revenue growth with profit through sharper commercial discipline

Expected revenue, and profit change in 2026 compared to 2025, weighted average of responses<sup>1</sup>

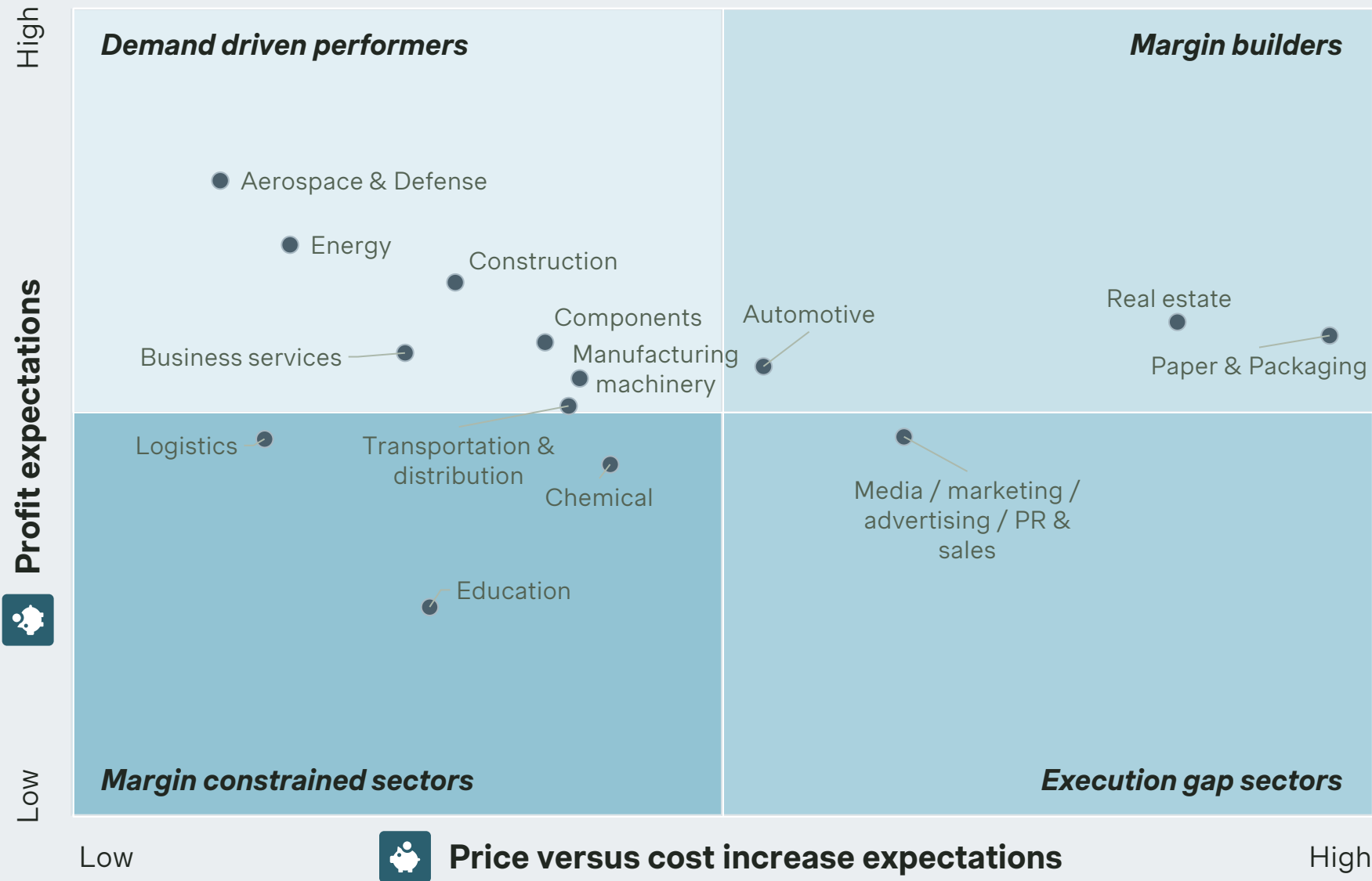


- Expected revenue and profit growth are closely aligned across regions, indicating confidence that growth will largely translate into profit
- APAC and the Americas show slightly stronger growth expectations than Europe, with a similar revenue to profit relationship
- The small but consistent gap suggests mild margin dilution likely driven by cost pressure
- As a result, **value creation will depend less on stimulating demand and more on improving the quality of growth** through stronger monetization and commercial discipline

Source: Simon-Kucher, Commercial Trends Study 2026 conducted from Dec 8th 2026 to Jan 9th 2026 | Total n=1948 | Survey questions: "How much will your revenue probably change 2026 vs. 2025 (in %)" ; "How much will your profit probably change 2026 vs. 2025 (in %)" | "Don't know" excluded

# Industry outlook: Pricing power, not demand alone, also differentiates profit outlooks across industries

Profit versus price-cost increase expectations going into 2026, split by industry, relatively distributed



- Industries with strong price cost headroom combine pricing power with higher profit expectations, positioning them as margin builders
- Several sectors show healthy profit outlooks despite limited pricing headroom, indicating reliance on demand, backlog, or volume rather than pricing
- Margin constrained sectors face structurally limited ability to convert growth into profit under continued cost pressure
- Execution gap sectors highlight unrealized pricing potential, where stronger pricing discipline and commercial execution could unlock additional margin
- Across industries, the **ability to translate pricing into profit will be the key differentiator** for 2026 performance

Source: Simon-Kucher, Commercial Trends Study 2026 conducted from Dec 8th 2026 to Jan 9th 2026 | Total n=1948 | Survey questions: "How much will your revenue probably change 2026 vs. 2025 (in %)" ; "How much will your profit probably change 2026 vs. 2025 (in %)" | "Don't know" excluded



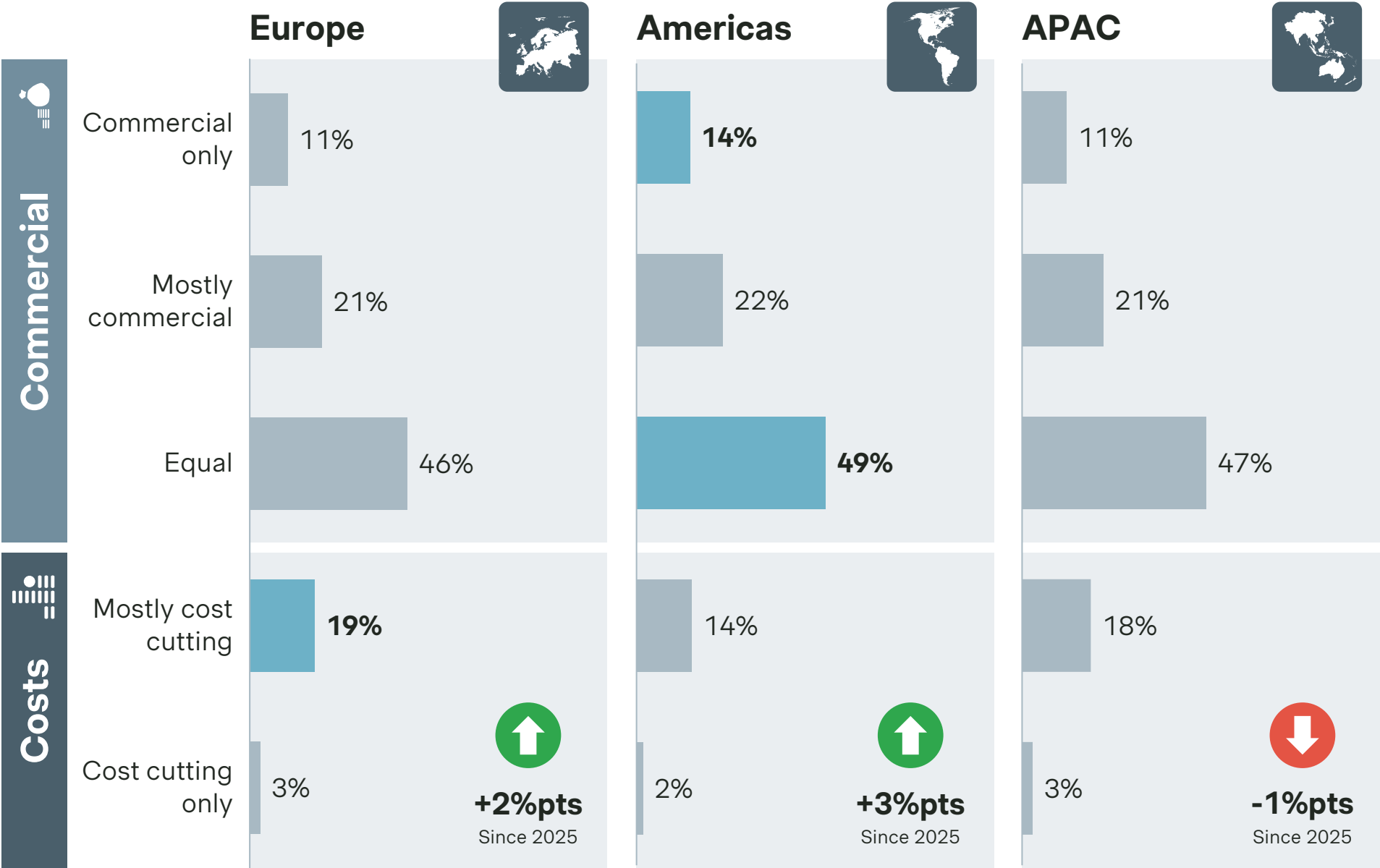


# Strategic response and differentiation

Companies focus on commercial levers,  
increasing both upside potential and  
execution risk



# 2026 mitigating measures: Commercial topics seen as powerful mitigation measures by most of the companies



- Across regions, ~80 % consider commercial actions at least as important as cost cutting
- Pure cost cutting is rare, with only around one fifth focusing primarily on cost measures
- The Americas show the strongest tilt toward commercial led mitigation
- As firms prioritize growth and pricing over cost cutting, commercial execution becomes the key risk and reward lever for 2026 performance
- This places greater pressure on commercial capabilities to deliver margin, not just growth

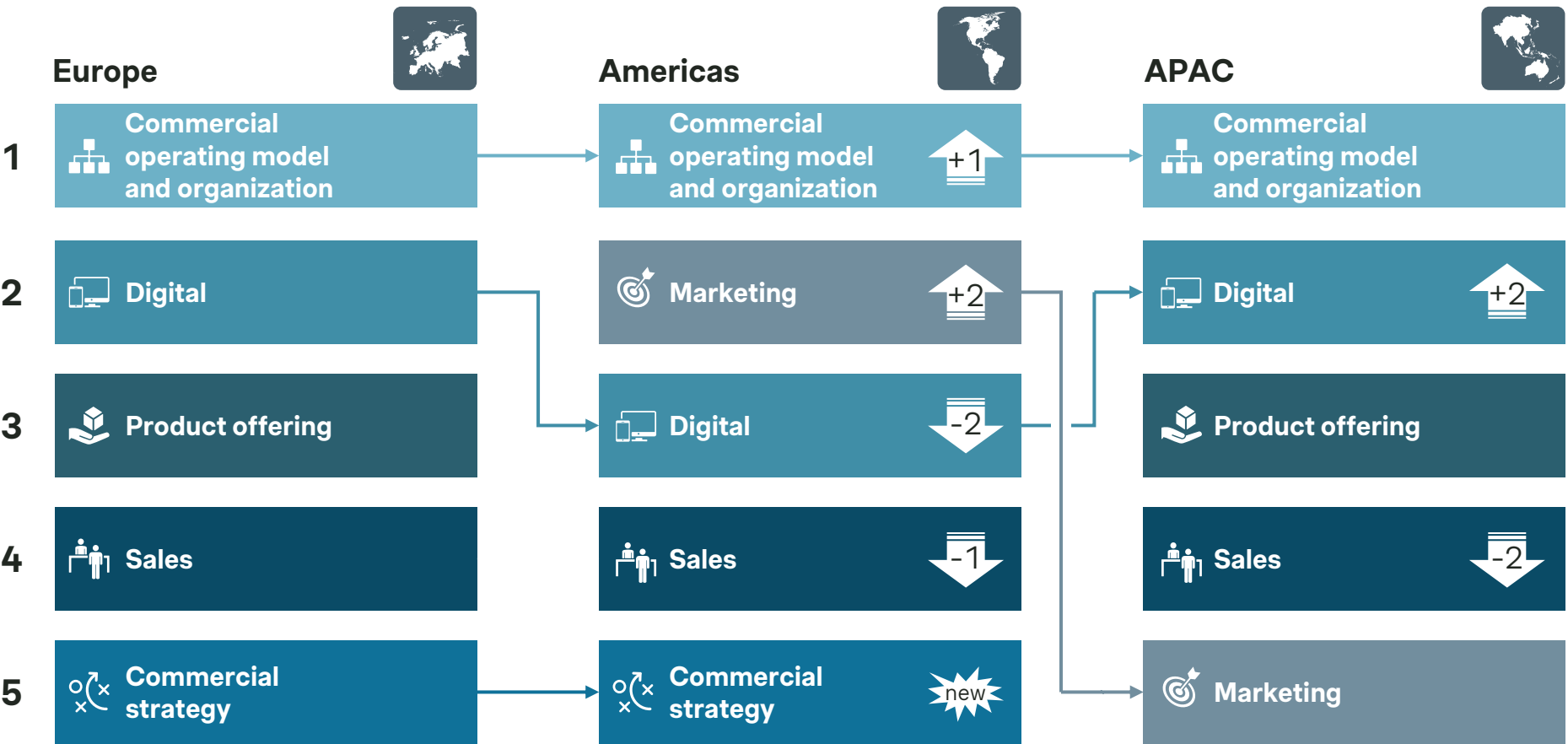
Source: Simon-Kucher, Commercial Trends Study 2026 conducted from Dec 8th 2025 to Jan 9th 2026 | Total n=1948 | Survey question: "For your company, how are you mitigating the challenges posed by the current macroeconomic environment?" | "Don't know" excluded





Commercial initiatives: **Organizations aim to redesign their operating models and attract talent, using digitalization as a key lever to navigate changing market dynamics**

Prioritized commercial areas of development for 2026 (top 5, by region)



- **Commercial operating model and organization and digital are the 2 major planned initiatives for 2026**
- **Sales has decreased in importance as an initiative in APAC and Americas**
- **Product offering being an important initiative in Europe and APAC**

- **Commercial operating model redesign and digital are top priorities** across all regions
- **Talent and capability building is a key differentiator**, especially in the Americas
- Product and digital innovation plays a stronger role in Europe and APAC
- Sales execution is deprioritized, increasing the need to translate structural change into frontline impact

**Companies are investing in the foundations of commercial performance, shifting focus from short-term results to structural change. The value will be realized only if operating model and digital initiatives materially improve execution, not just structure**

Higher than last year

Lower than last year

New top 5 area

Source: Simon-Kucher, Commercial Trends Study 2026 conducted from Dec 8th 2025 to Jan 9th 2026 | Total n=1948 | Survey questions: "How important are the following commercial initiatives for your business in 2026?" | "Don't know" excluded | Normalized results



# Execution readiness and performance risks

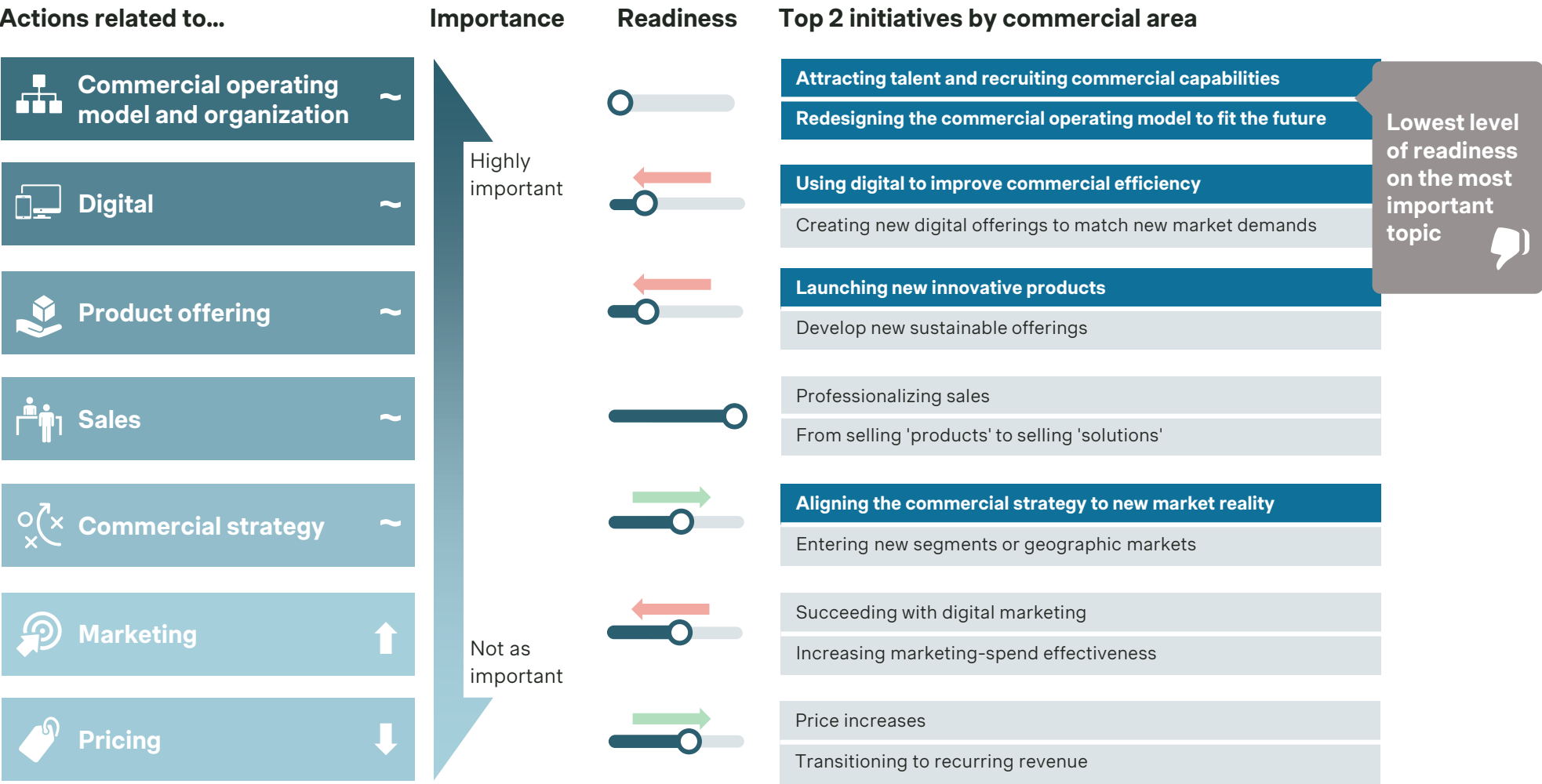
Commercial ambition increasingly outpaces readiness, creating a widening execution gap





Commercial initiatives: **While companies are focusing on commercial topics, readiness and execution capabilities remains low on most important actions**

Importance and readiness of commercial initiatives, average rating relative to least and most relevant



Prioritized planned commercial initiatives for 2026 include:

- The redesign of commercial operating model and strategy to fit a changing market and different requirements
- Launching new innovative products
- The recruitment of new talents and commercial capabilities that drive the business
- The use of digitalization to improve commercial efficiencies

Organizations are de-prioritizing inorganic growth (M&A) as a strategy to address 2025 challenges, ranking it among the least important levers

Change since 2024

↑ Increased importance   ~ Same importance   ↓ Decreased importance

Compared to 2024

← Decreasing readiness   → Increasing readiness

Top 5 initiatives overall

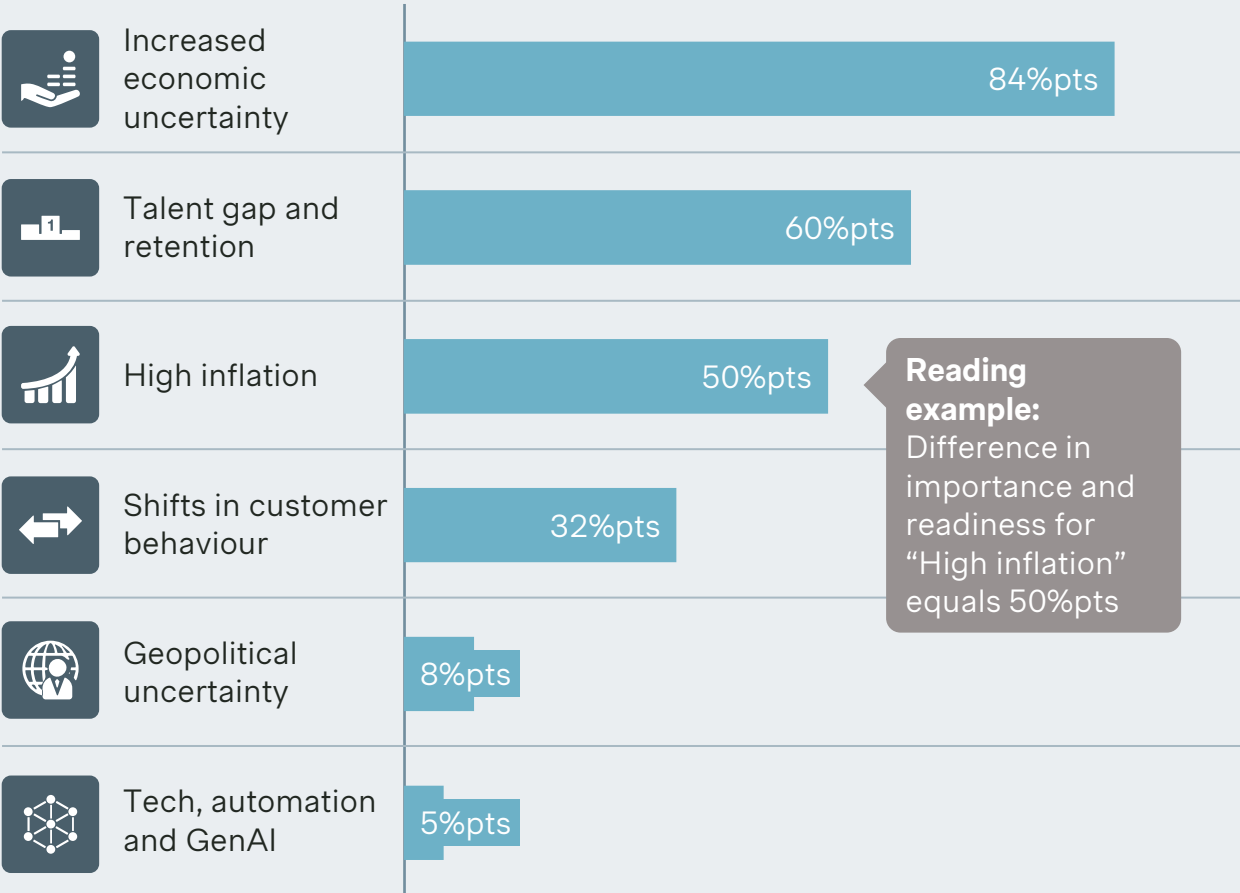
Source: Simon-Kucher, Commercial Trends Study 2026 conducted from Dec 8th 2025 to Jan 9th 2026 | Total n=1948 | Survey questions: "How important are the following commercial initiatives for your business in 2026?" ; "How ready is your company with its current set-up to carry out those important commercial initiatives?" | "Don't know" excluded | Normalized results



# Execution gap index: **Economic uncertainty and talent show the largest readiness shortfalls**

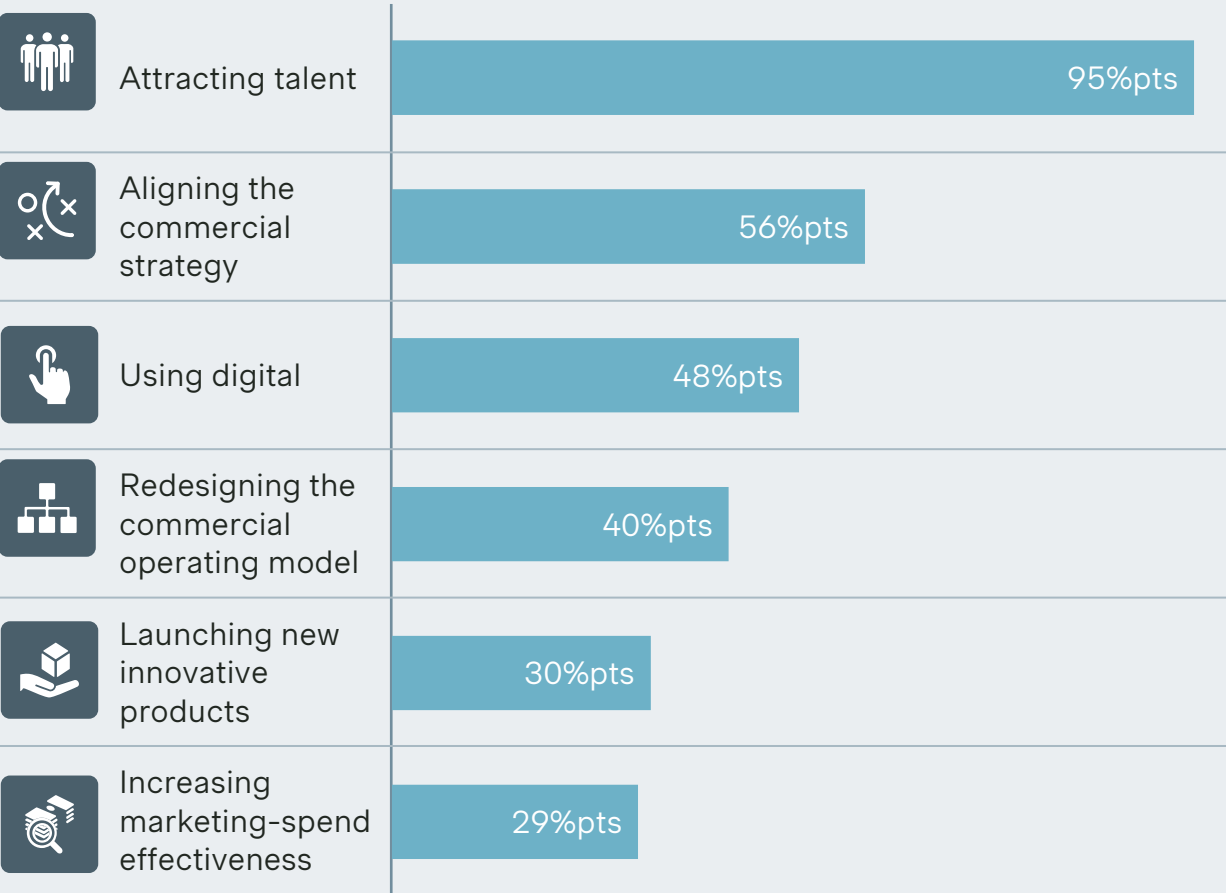
## Increased economic uncertainty leads in importance but lacks in readiness

Trends: Execution gap index



## Attracting talent and recruiting commercial capabilities is a top priority, but capability is not there yet

Initiatives: Execution gap index

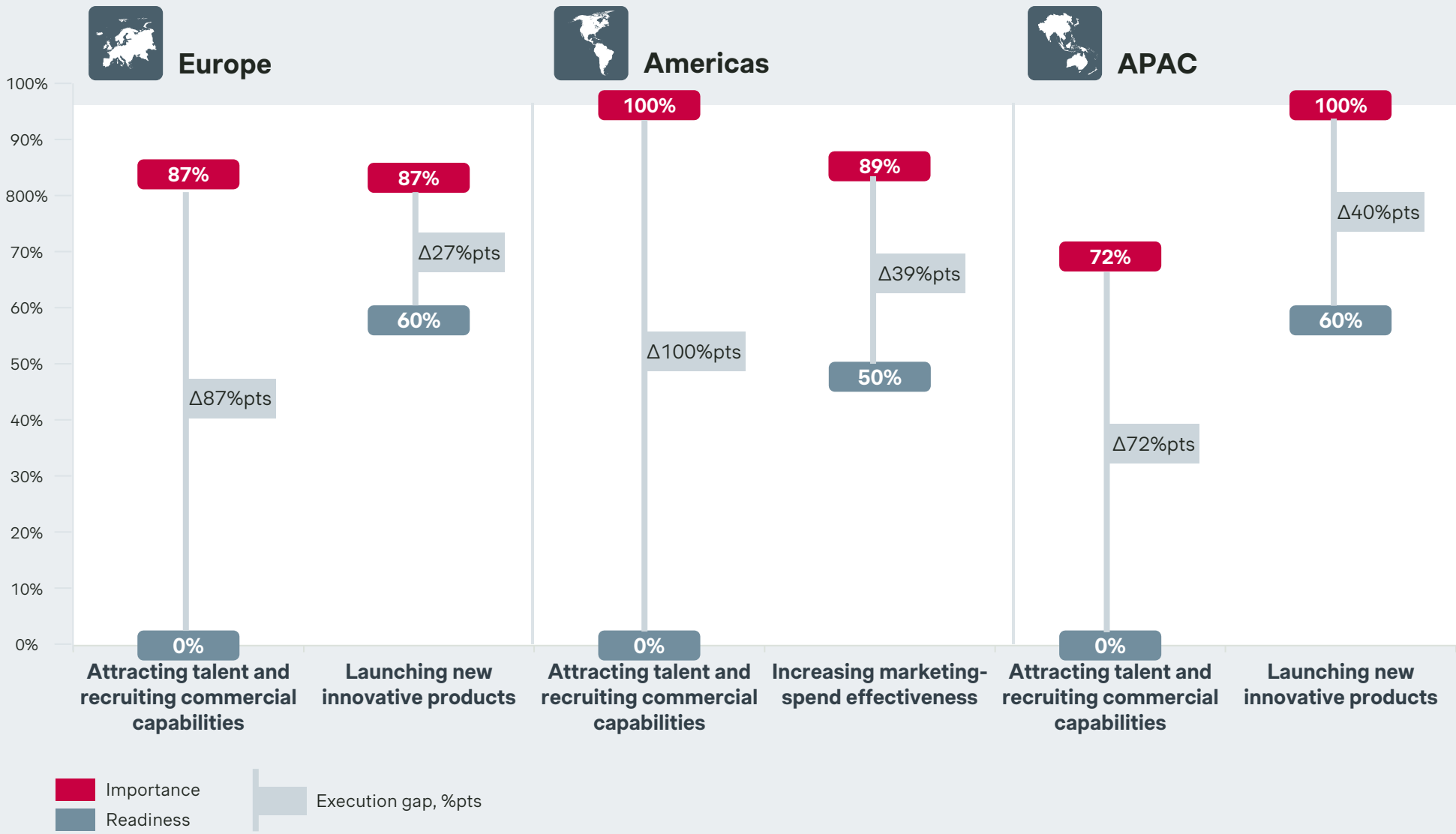


Source: Simon-Kucher, Commercial Trends Study 2026 conducted from Dec 8th 2025 to Jan 9th 2026 | Total n=1948 | Survey questions: "How important are the following commercial initiatives for your business in 2026?" ; "How ready is your company with its current set-up to carry out those important commercial initiatives?" ; "How important are the following trends for your business in 2025?" ; "How ready is your company with its current set-up to react to those important trends?" | "Don't know" excluded | Normalized results





# Importance vs readiness by region: Talent is the number 1 gap globally, then innovation and marketing by region



- **Talent is the largest execution gap everywhere.** All regions struggle most with building commercial capabilities fast enough.
- **Europe and APAC’s next-largest execution gap is innovation**, where readiness doesn’t match importance.
- **The Americas differ on their second gap.** Their next-largest execution gap is increasing marketing-spend effectiveness.

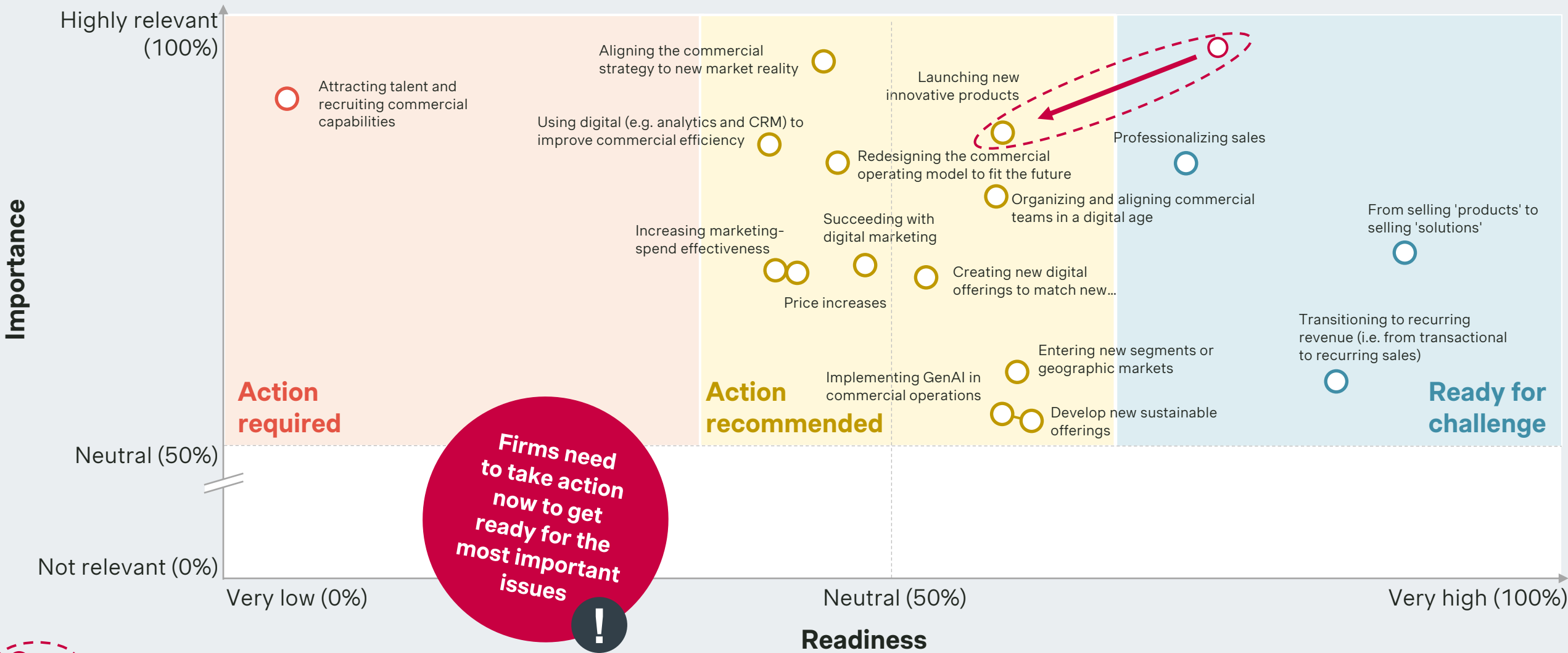
**Closing execution gaps will require building real capabilities in people, innovation, and go-to-market, not just redefining strategies or structures.**

Source: Simon-Kucher, Commercial Trends Study 2026 conducted from Dec 8th 2025 to Jan 9th 2026 | Total n=1948 | Survey questions: "How important are the following commercial initiatives for your business in 2026?" ; "How ready is your company with its current set-up to carry out those important commercial initiatives?" | "Don't know" excluded | Normalized results



# Readiness: **While commercial actions, particularly the operating model, are a management priority, companies still lack readiness in key areas**

Importance and readiness of commercial initiatives, average rating relative to lowest and highest



Significant move from last years study

Source: Simon-Kucher, Commercial Trends Study 2026 conducted from Dec 8th 2025 to Jan 9th 2026 | Total n=1948 | Survey questions: "How important are the following trends for your business in 2026?" ; "How ready is your company with its current set-up to react to those important trends?" | "Don't know" excluded| Normalized results

## From optimism to outperformance: **Execution capability will define winners in 2026**

### Three reasons why to act

#### Optimistic outlook

**68%**

have an **optimistic outlook on 2026**, with even higher numbers in Americas and APAC where >75% think of 2025 as a positive year indicating opportunities for growth

#### Launching commercial initiatives

**80%**

are looking into **launching commercial initiatives** that not only enhance their business but transforming and adapting them to the new reality

#### Lacking readiness

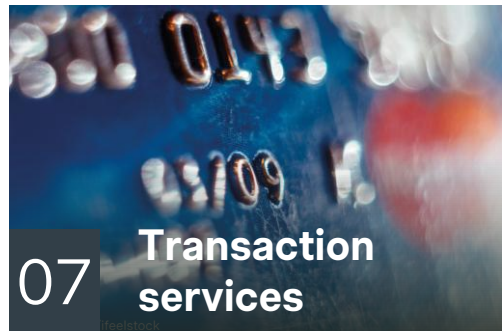
**37%**

find themselves **lacking readiness to implement and launch** the desired initiatives despite high ambitions of commercial excellence in 2026, presenting an opportunity for getting ahead of competition

**Choose your battles wisely - embrace the opportunities of the digital age and prioritize the commercial strategies that will define success in 2026 and beyond**



## Simon-Kucher is your trusted advisor on commercial topics to excel in 2026

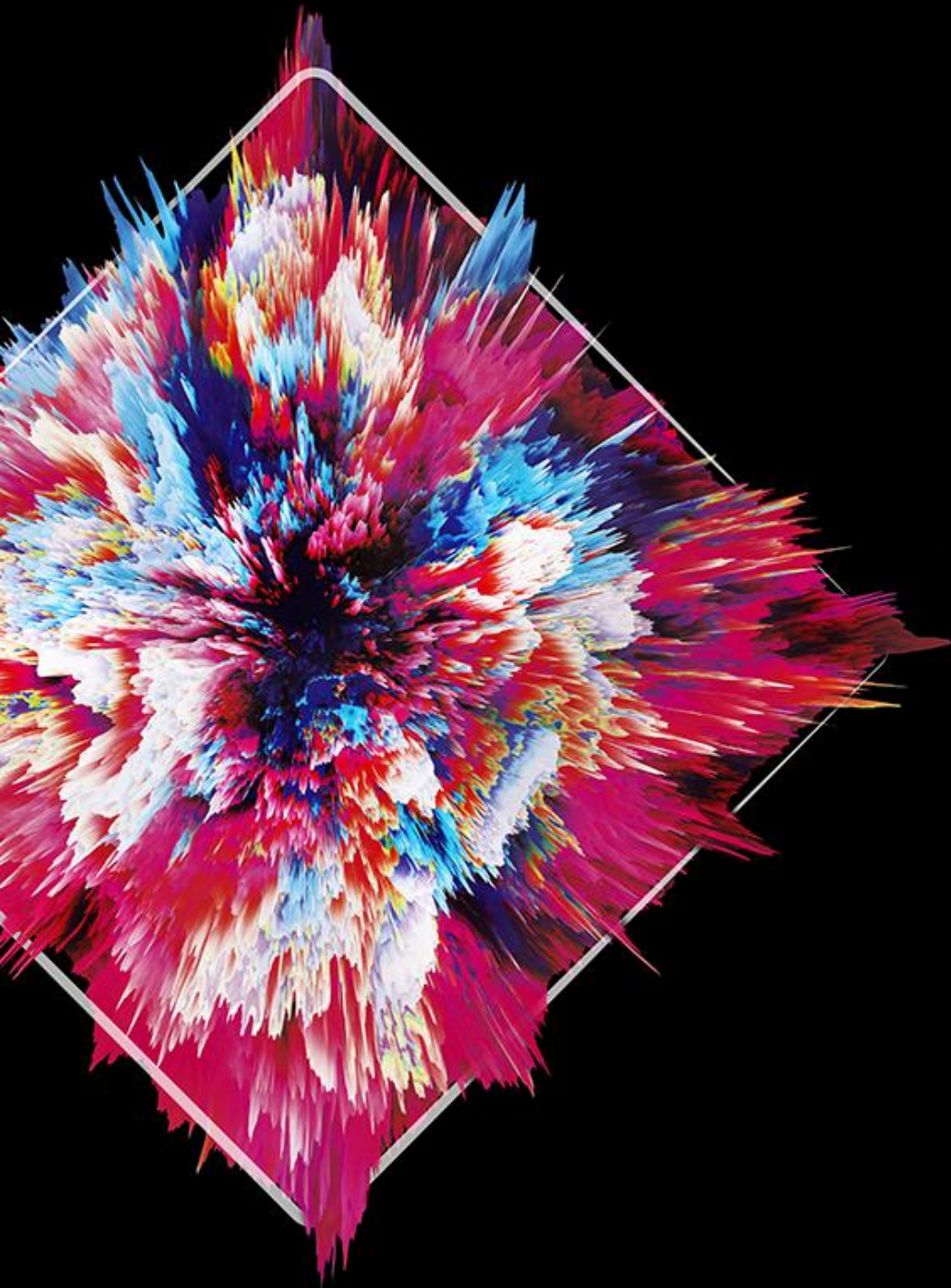


# 40 Years

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# Unlocking Better Growth.

Simon-Kucher is the world-leading pricing and profitable growth specialist.



## Simon-Kucher is the world-leading commercial growth and pricing specialist.

### Our people

- Specialists in Commercial Strategy & Pricing Consulting, Transaction Services & Private Equity, Digital and Software
- Our partners and experienced leadership team are hands on, delivering results at pace

### Our sector expertise

- Consumer
- Financial Services
- Healthcare & Life Sciences
- Industrials
- Technology Media and Telecoms

### Our clients

Our clients come from 120+ industries and range from Fortune 500 and FTSE 100 firms to unicorns

### Our reputation

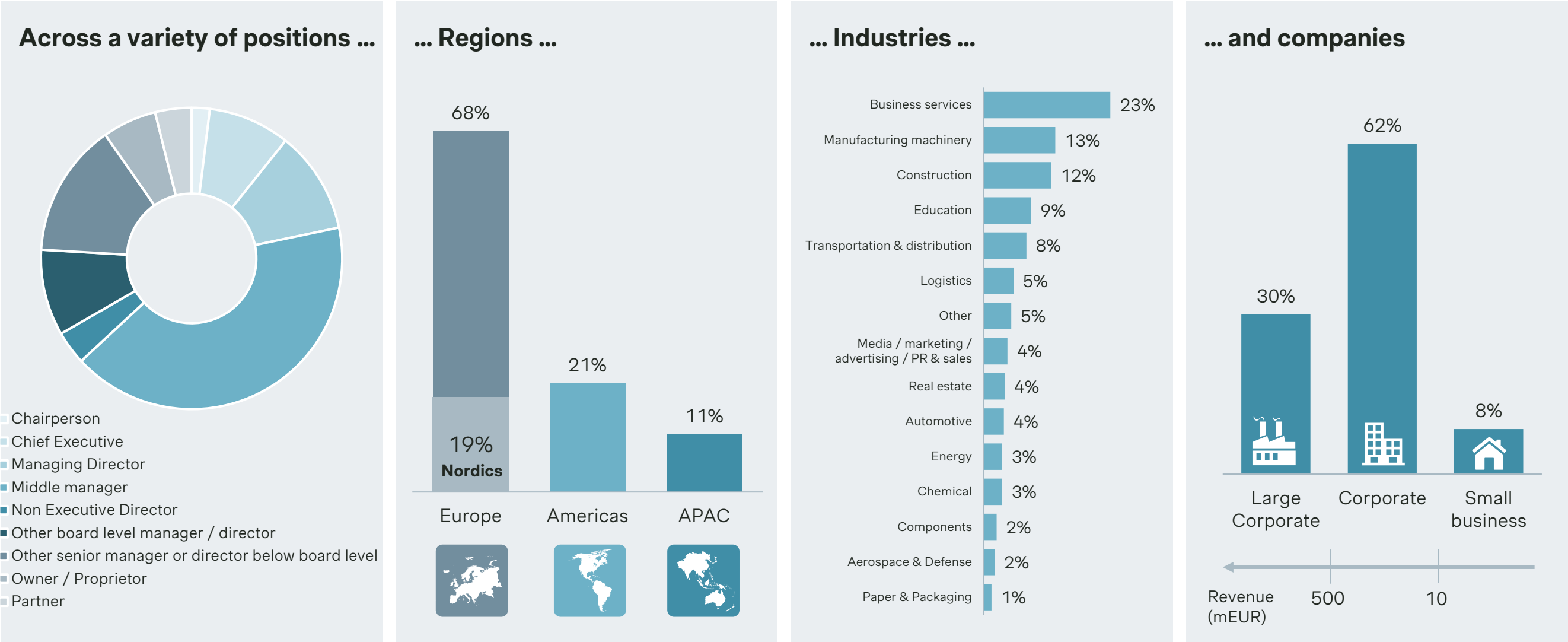
Pioneering pricing for decades, Simon-Kucher defined the discipline – it's part of our DNA





# Sample overview

In total we have had **1948** respondents surveyed in the period between December 8<sup>th</sup> and January 9<sup>th</sup>



Source: Simon-Kucher, Commercial Trends Study 2026 conducted from Dec 8th 2025 to Jan 9th 2026 | Total n=1948



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