

# Supply Chain Operations Challenges

*Survey Results*

March 2026

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Senior supply chain leaders—primarily from food manufacturing along with three additional industry sectors—report a strong focus on reducing costs while improving demand-signal accuracy and responsiveness. This emphasis is understandable, as the most significant planning disruptions over the past two years were driven by demand-accuracy issues. Because the demand signal sets the direction for all downstream supply chain resources within the S&OP process, the top improvement priorities logically center on enhancing demand accuracy through responsive demand monitoring, end-to-end visibility, and the ability to rapidly replan critical resources such as inventory and capacity.

Despite these needs, most organizations still depend on ERP systems, BI tools, and spreadsheets—tools that are not well-suited for effective demand planning. Only 18% use dedicated supply chain management platforms, and just 7% rely on purpose-built S&OP systems.

From a process perspective, only 23% of respondents report achieving true cross-functional alignment. Just 4% say Finance leads the S&OP process, while 89% indicate ownership by Supply Chain, Sales, or Operations—suggesting that many organizations are driving unit-based plans rather than steering toward financial performance targets.

Leaders clearly understand what's required to improve outcomes: more dynamic planning, better visibility across the value chain, optimized inventory and production, and faster data-driven decision-making. However, several foundational limitations must be addressed first, including data and analytics gaps, lack of real-time insights, unstructured S&OP process management, biased demand or supply inputs, and missing key performance metrics.

# WHO DID WE SURVEY?

Between September 2025 and March 2026, Gatepoint Research invited selected executives to participate in a survey themed *Supply Chain Operations Challenges*. Candidates from several industries were invited via email and 100 executives participated.

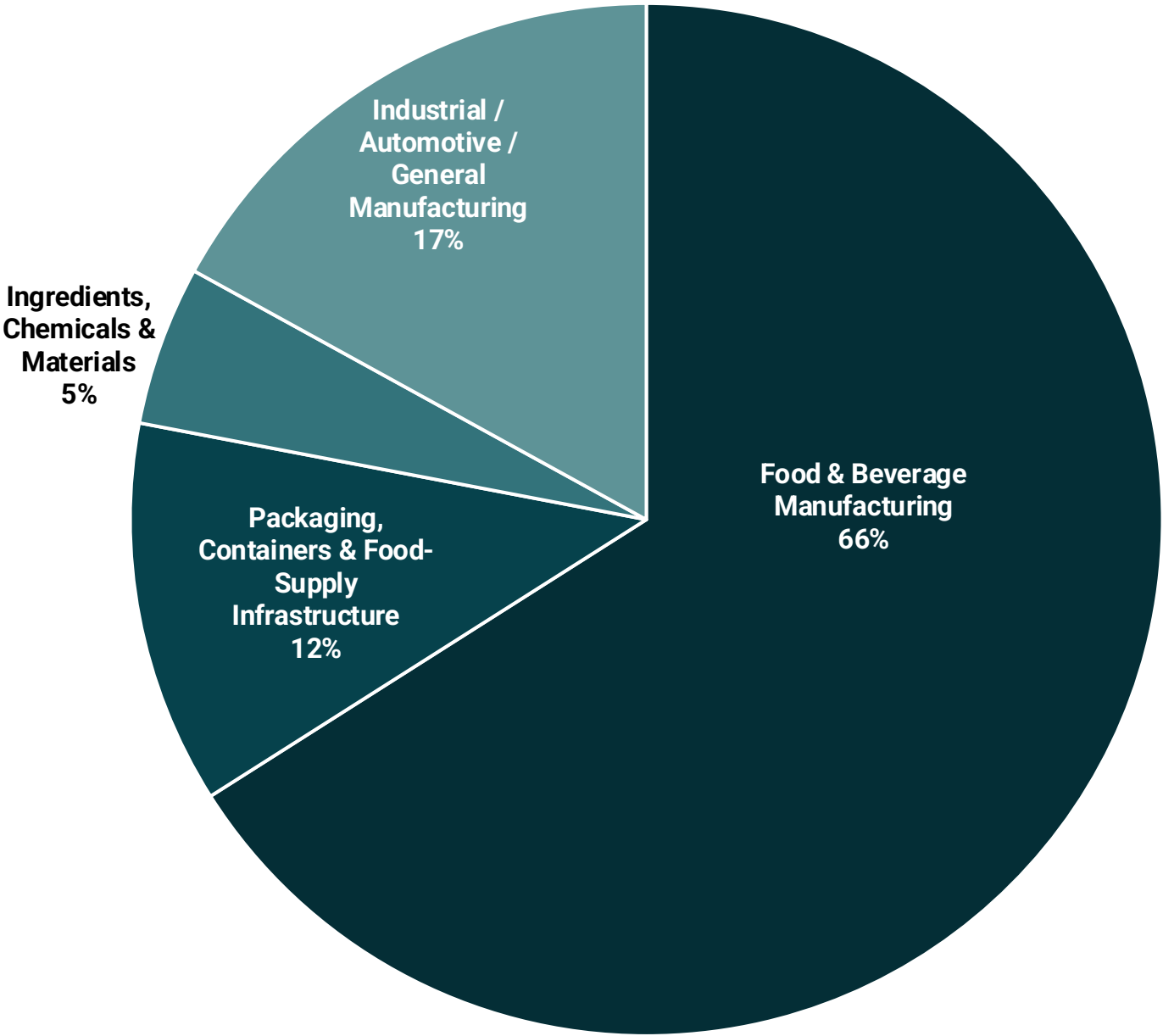
Respondents include 9% chief executives, 6% vice presidents, 22% directors, and 58% senior or department managers. This mix integrates perspectives from both senior leadership and hands-on managers, ensuring the findings reflect strategic priorities as well as day-to-day operational realities.

Respondents represent organizations with annual revenues ranging from less than \$250 million to those generating \$1.5 billion or more.



# INDUSTRY PROFILE

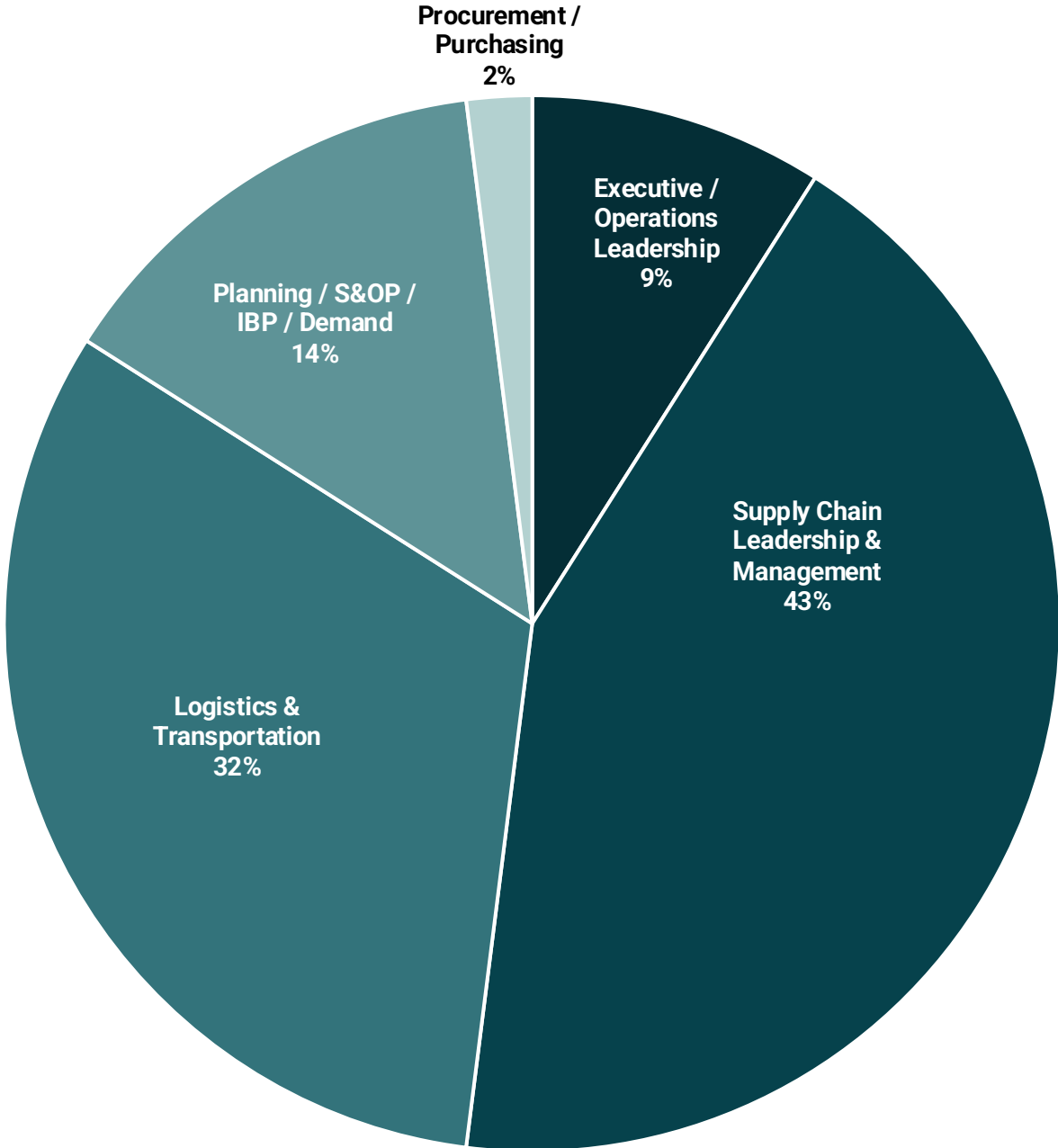
Survey participants were predominantly food and beverage manufacturers, complemented by packaging, ingredient, and industrial suppliers across the manufacturing ecosystem.



# RESPONDENT PROFILE

## FUNCTIONAL AREAS

Respondents were predominantly Supply Chain and Logistics leaders (74%), complemented by Planning/S&OP professionals (14%) and executive leadership (10%), reflecting an operational audience directly responsible for planning accuracy, inventory performance, and disruption response.



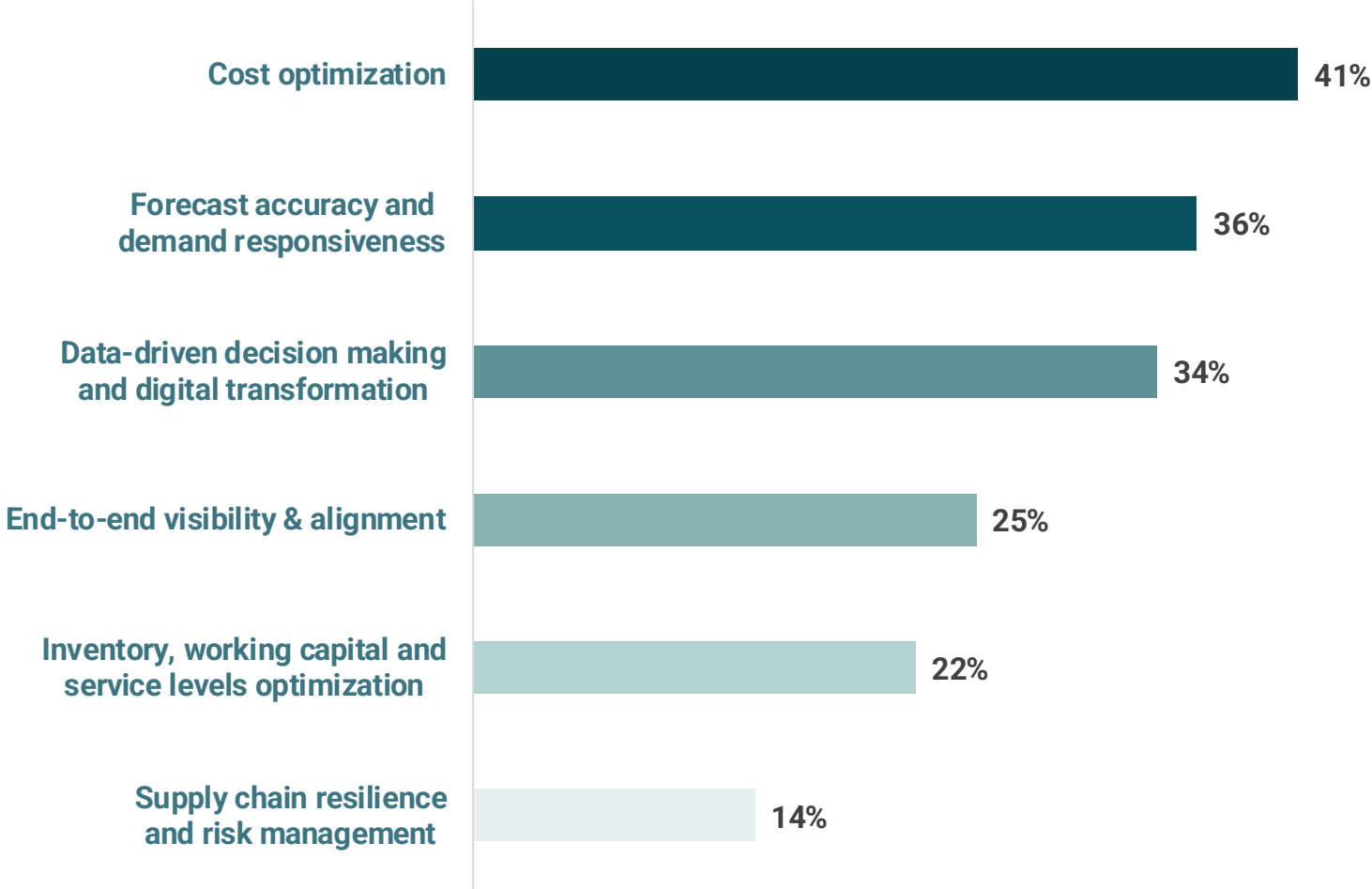


# Survey Results

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# SUPPLY CHAIN PRIORITIES

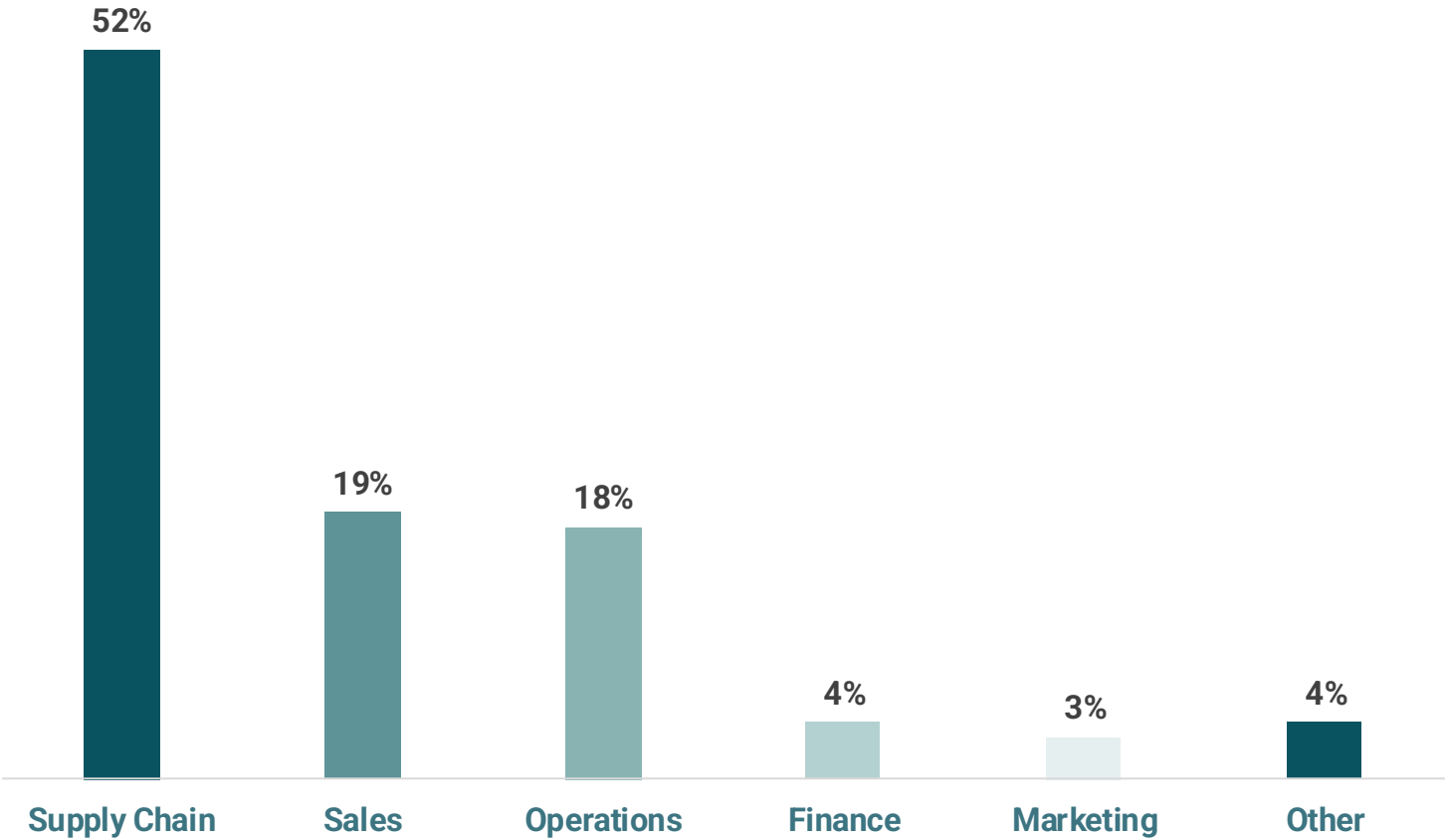
*Which of the following supply chain areas are you most focused on improving in the next year?*



Cost optimization leads with 41%, but the supporting capabilities needed to achieve it—better forecasts (38%), faster decisions and digital execution (34%)—are underdeveloped, requiring focused improvement.

# S&OP PROCESS OWNERSHIP

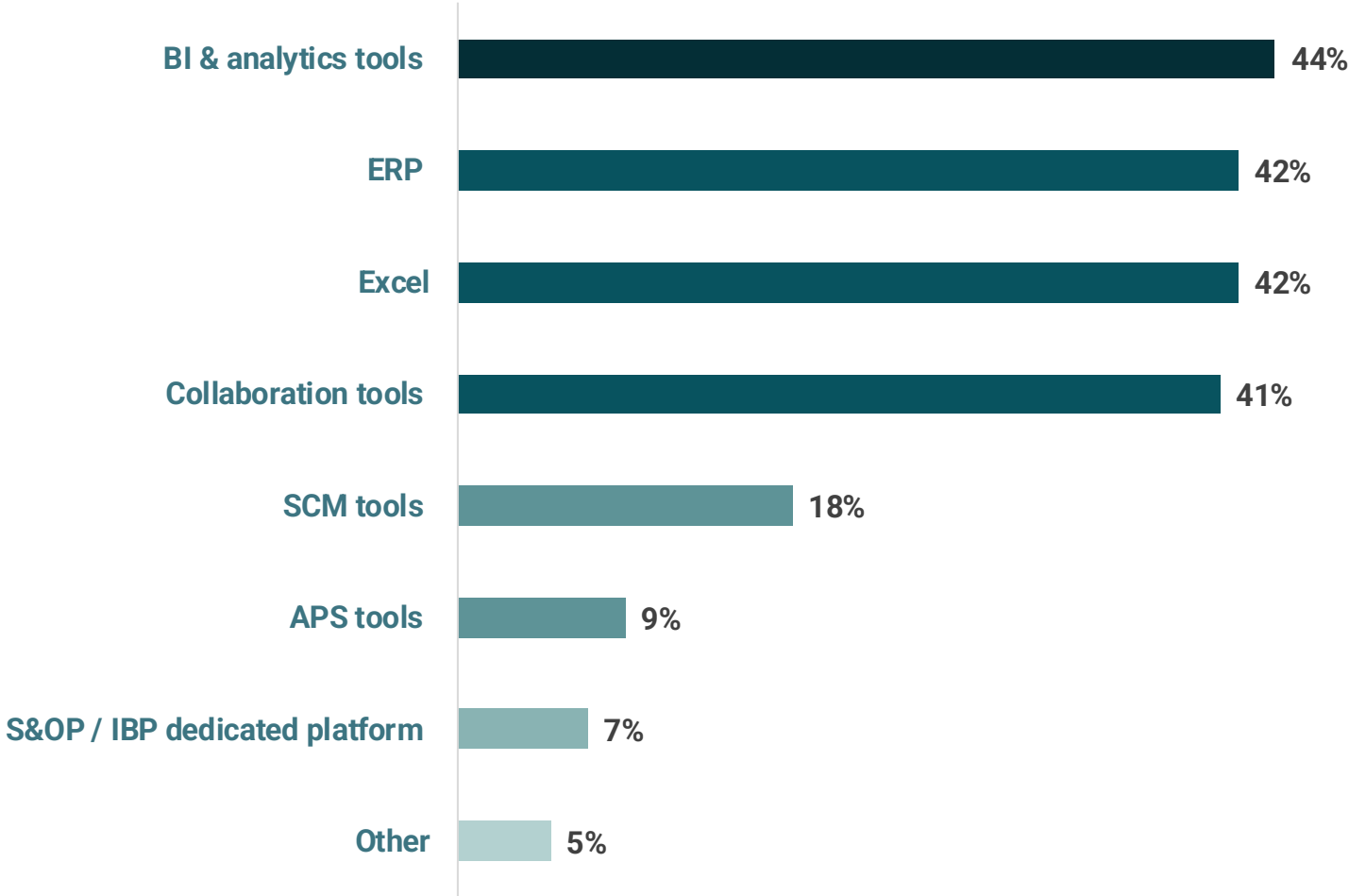
*Who owns or leads the Sales and Operations Planning (S&OP) process internally?*



Supply Chain owns S&OP in 52% of organizations, indicating the process is operationally driven rather than enterprise-owned.

# S&OP TOOLS

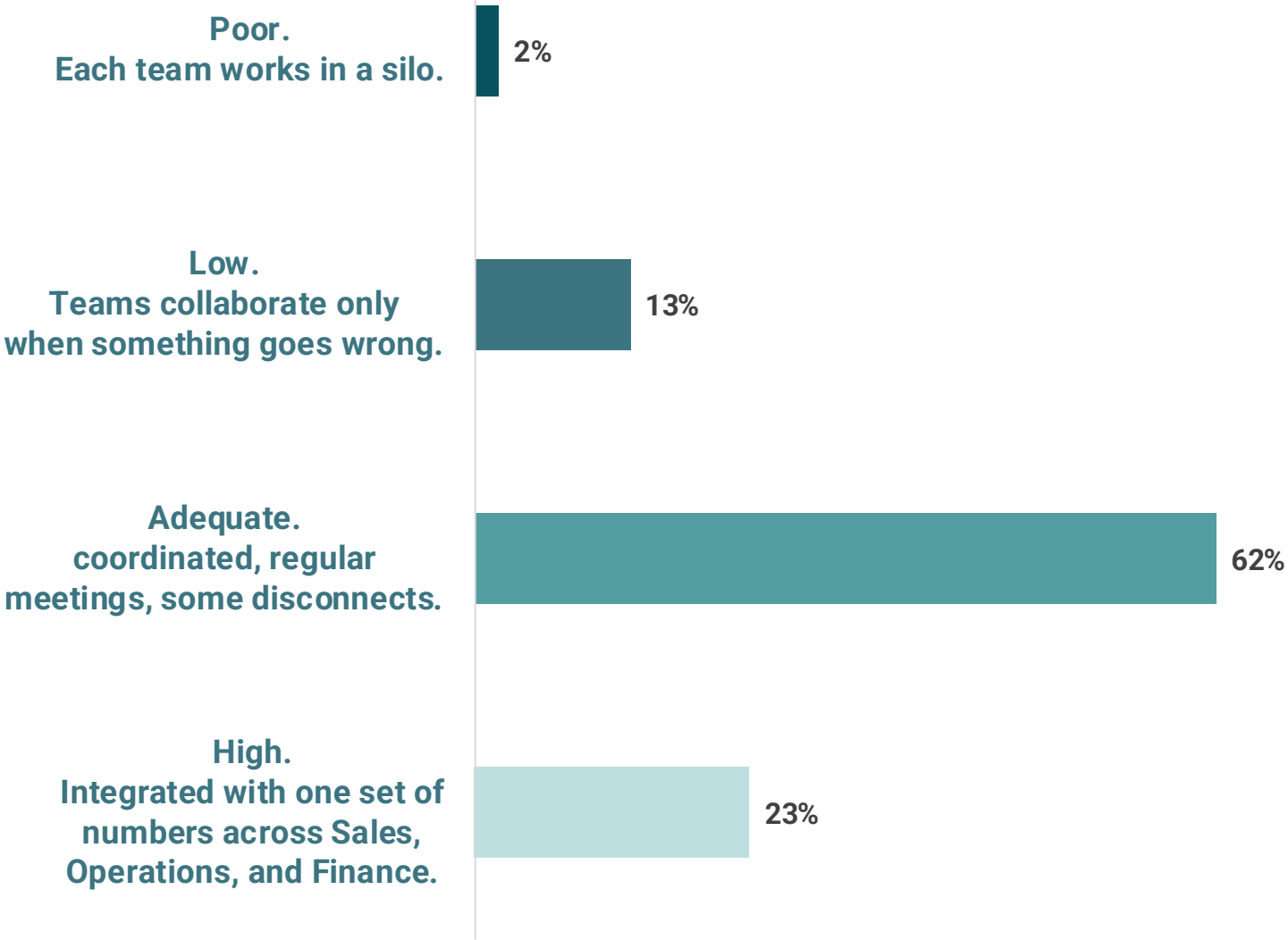
*What types of tools are you using to manage Sales & Operations Planning (S&OP) or Integrated Business Planning (IBP)?*



Only 7% use purpose-built S&OP platforms. Various system and tool exports and spreadsheets introduce data latency, version-control issues, and manual reconciliation—contributing to slow, disrupted planning cycles.

# CROSS-FUNCTIONAL INTEGRATION

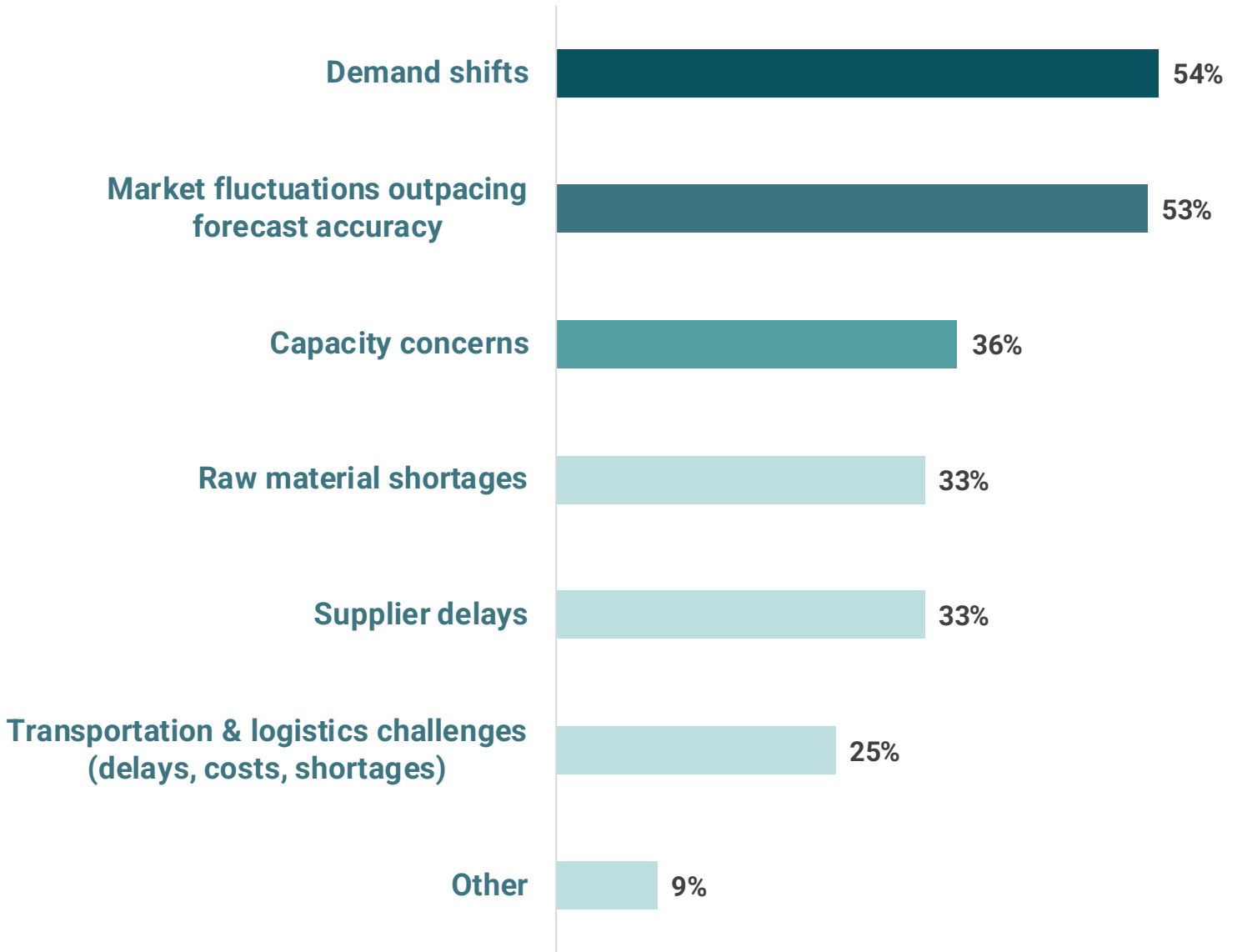
*How would you describe the level of alignment/collaboration between Sales, Operations, and Finance in your organization's planning and execution processes?*



Only 23% report highly integrated planning across Sales, Operations, and Finance—signaling that true cross-functional alignment is rare. Most teams are coordinating activity, not synchronizing decisions.

# PLANNING DISRUPTIONS

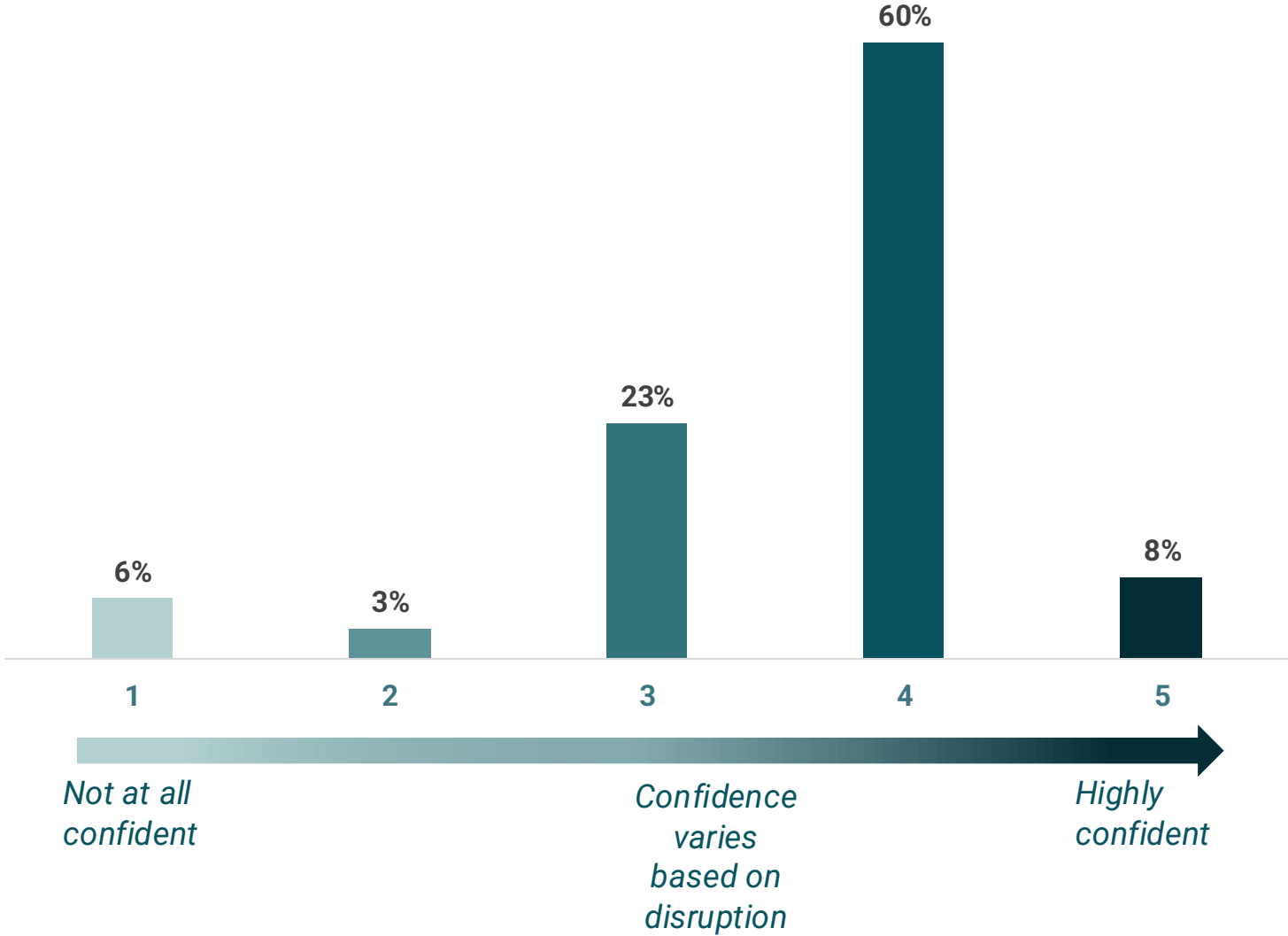
*What were the causes of any planning disruptions you've experienced in the last two years?*



Demand shifts and market volatility are key factors in planning disruptions. In food manufacturing especially, rapid shifts in consumer behavior can overwhelm traditional forecasting approaches.

# PIVOTING IN DISRUPTION

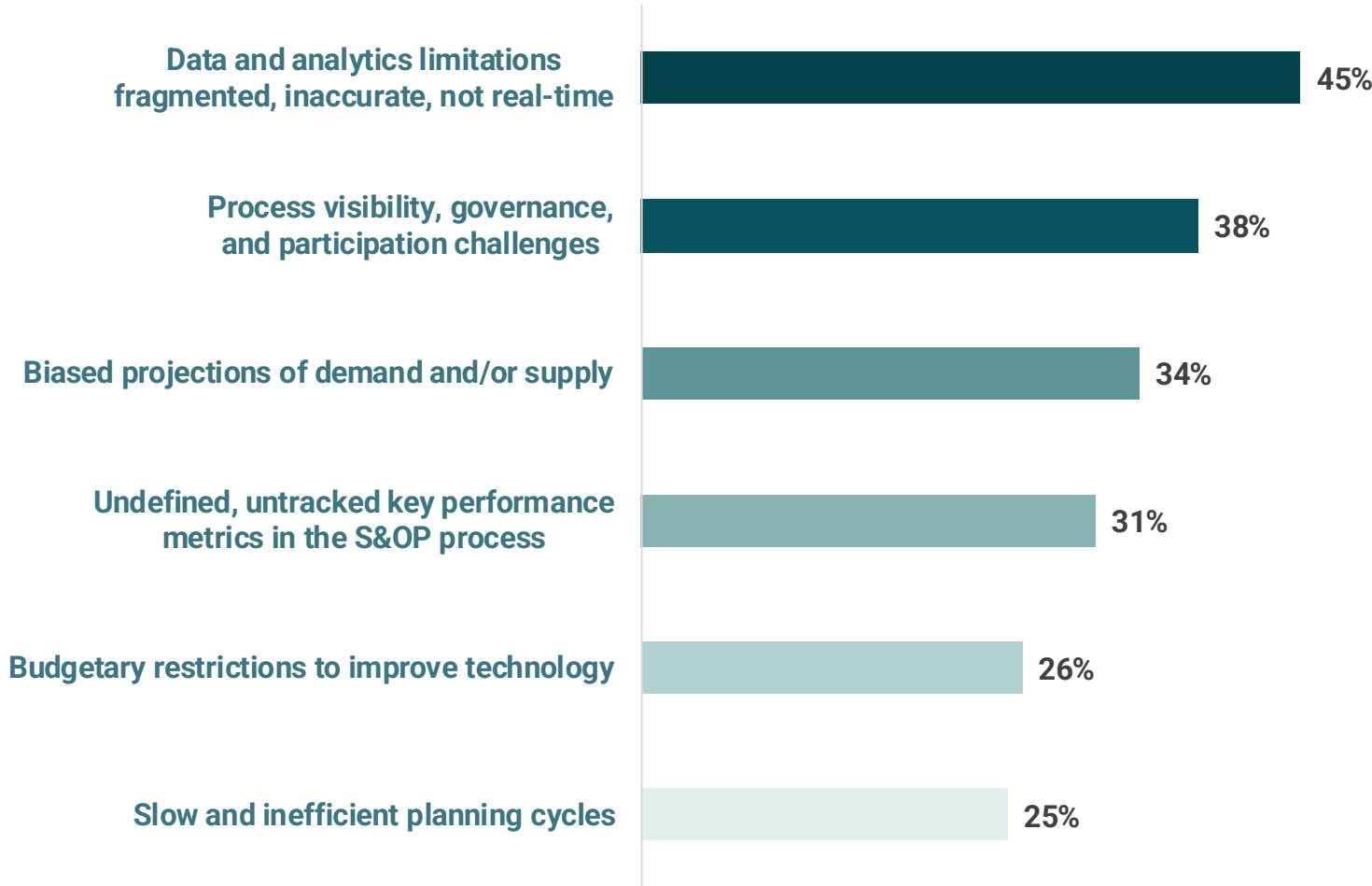
*How confident are you in your team's ability to quickly adapt to unexpected supply chain disruptions?*



While 68% rate themselves a 4 or 5 in disruption adaptability, nearly one in three fall into “confidence varies,” where readiness depends heavily on the scenario. This points to firefighting and workarounds—not systemic resilience.

# PERFORMANCE OBSTACLES

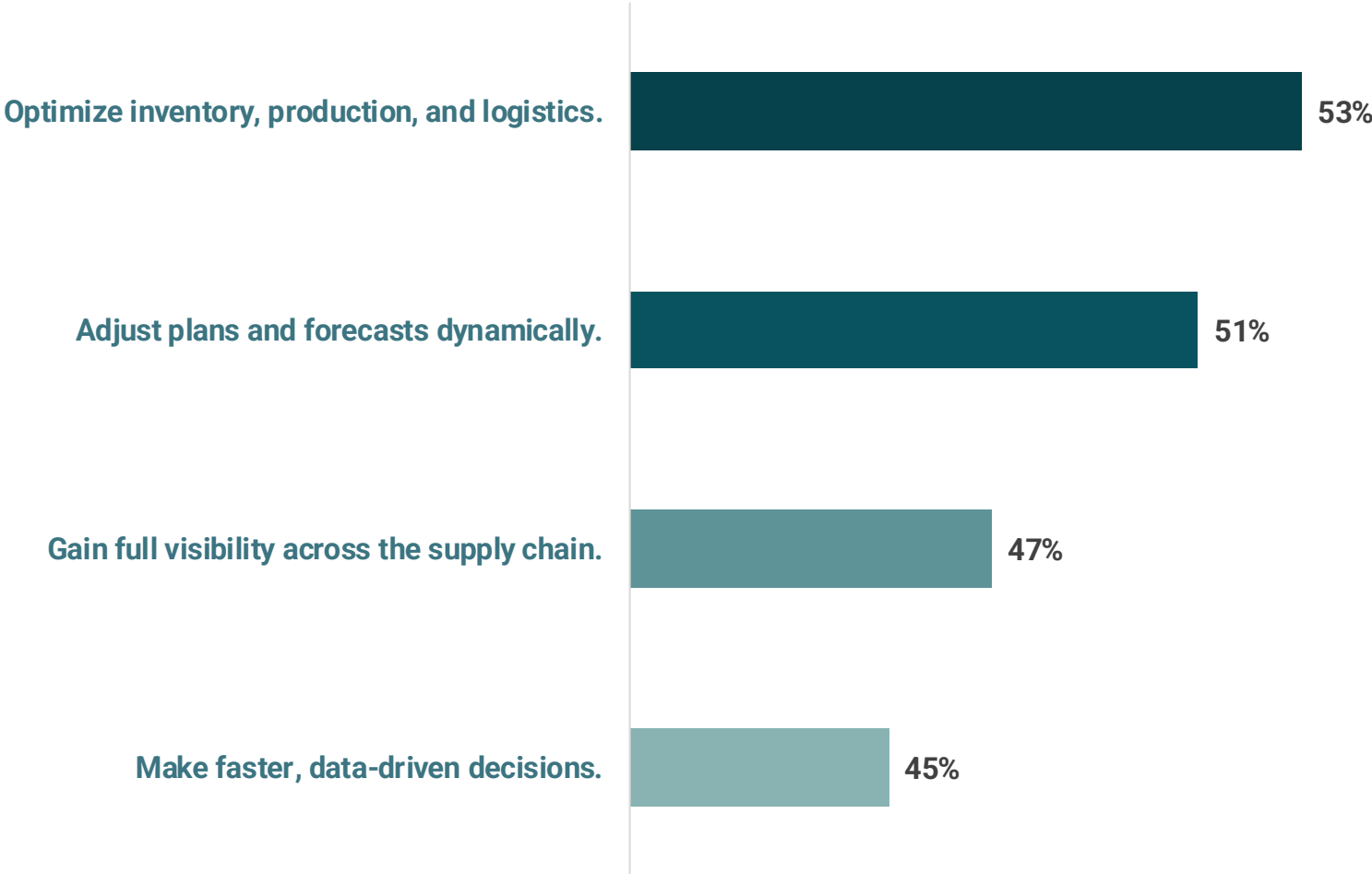
*Which of these common S&OP process issues are obstacles to meeting your key performance metrics?*



Performance is constrained by limited data and analytics (45%), visibility and governance challenges (38%), and inaccurate projections (34%), along with undefined KPIs, budget limitations, and slow planning cycles.

# IMPROVEMENT IDEAS

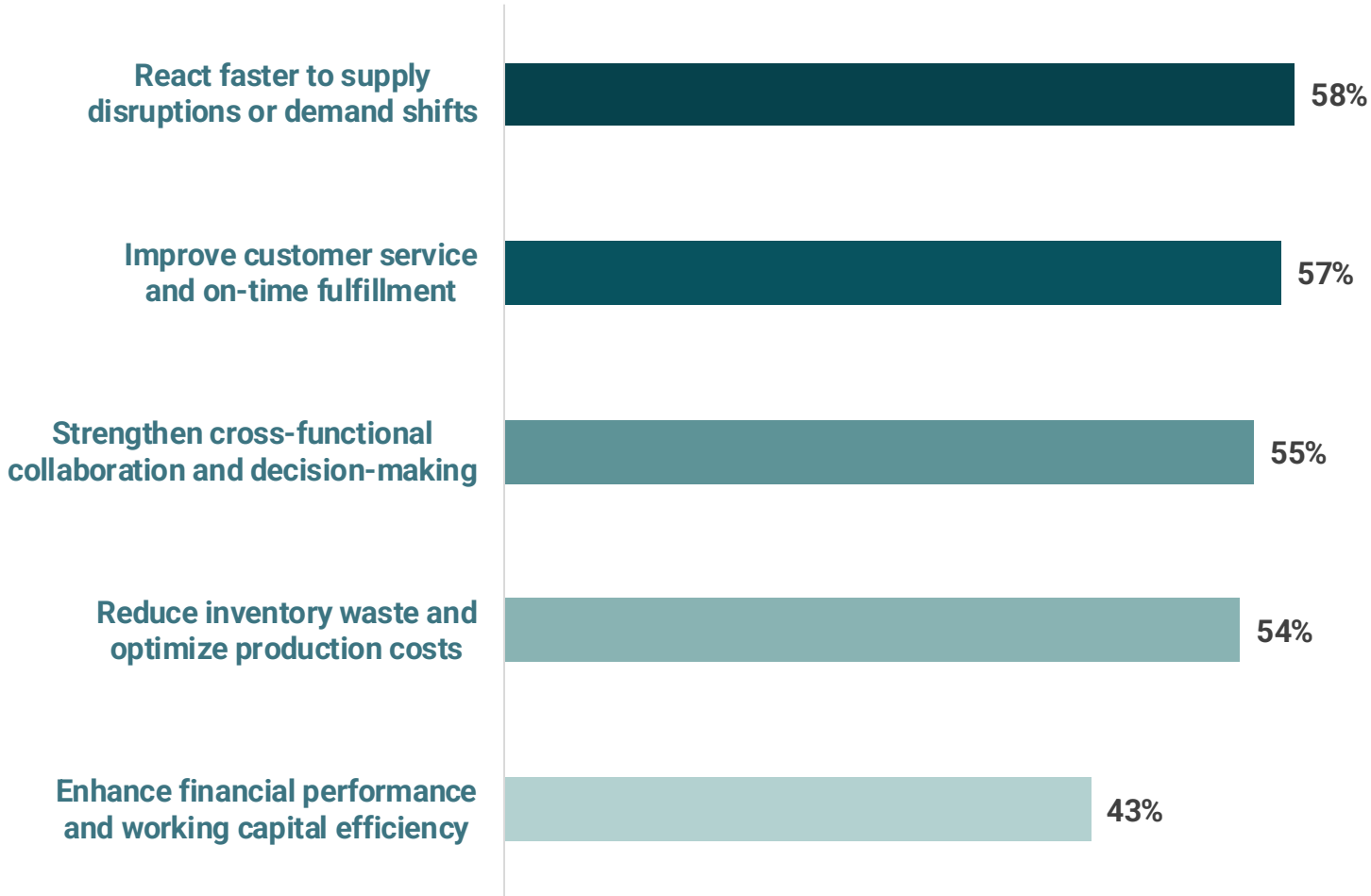
*What would you need to change to improve how you respond to disruptions?*



The improvements leaders need align directly with the obstacles they report. Data and analytics limitations prevent operational optimization, while gaps in team alignment hinder dynamic planning. Leaders clearly understand what’s broken—but lack the platform and process maturity to fix it.

# DYNAMIC RESPONSE

*If your team could dynamically respond to supply chain changes every day, rather than being locked into a rigid monthly planning cycle, how would that improve your business outcomes?*



Daily Plan monitoring enables faster response to disruptions and exceptions to shift resources and targets more quickly with resulting improved service levels, stronger collaboration, reduced inventory waste, and better financial performance.

ORI offers a data and software platform that helps organizations mature their S&OP process by replacing static, spreadsheet-driven planning with a dynamic, collaborative, and decision-oriented approach. Unlike general-purpose tools, ORI brings together data, people, and workflows in a single, intuitive platform that helps teams reduce risk, respond faster to change, align more closely across functions, and make smarter, forward-looking decisions rooted in real-time visibility and scenario planning.

[Learn more at ORI.io.](https://ori.io)

The SCPI Team specializes in supply chain design, planning, and operations improvement. Since 2003, we've helped organizations strengthen key planning processes across S&OP, Demand Planning, Capacity and Labor Planning, and Working Capital/Inventory Planning.

Across all engagements, our focus is simple: improve your analytics, enhance performance, and ensure planning practices align with your business goals. Our experienced team delivers personalized support and data-driven solutions. We build lasting client partnerships by providing clear recommendations, actionable improvement plans, and accountable execution—ideal foundations for powering ORI's S&OP Decision Support tool.

[Learn more at SCPIteam.com](https://scpi.team)



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