

DEVELOPER ENGAGEMENT REPORT:

Are Your Developers Happy or Halfway Out the Door?

What Developers Want — and [How to Keep Them on Your Team](#)



Only 48% of developers are confident they will be with their same company a year from now.

The surging digital economy is bringing with it a nearly insatiable demand for software developers to build the apps and cloud platforms that will power our future. Organizations around the world are feeling the developer squeeze, with more than 330,000 developer [jobs open today](#)¹ and demand reaching more than four million by 2025, according to research firm [IDC](#)².

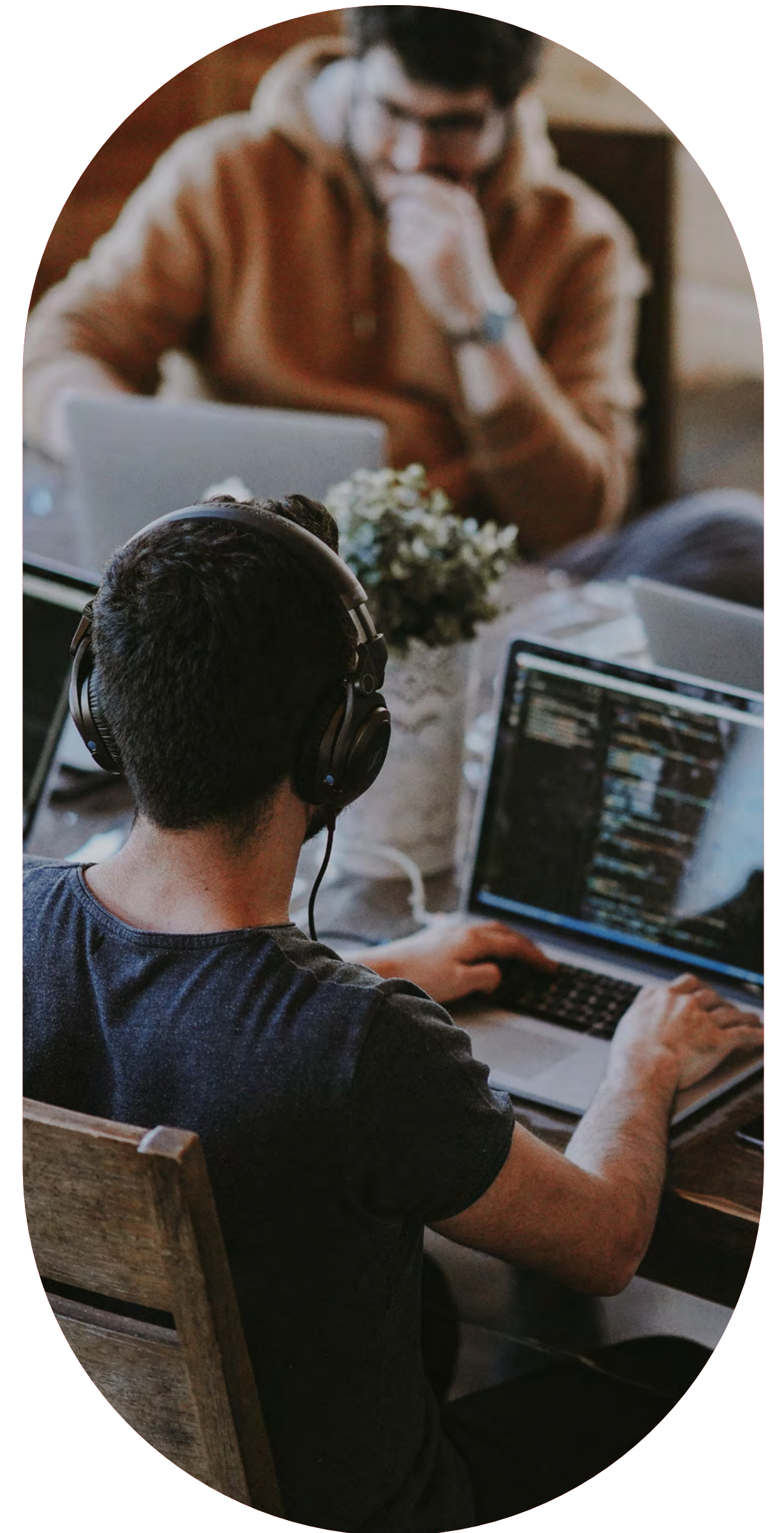
Unfortunately, there are not nearly enough developers to keep pace with the demand, which means companies need to work extra hard to attract and retain software talent. A new report from [OutSystems](#) shows that attracting and retaining software talent starts with understanding what developers want, what motivates or annoys them, and how to keep them feeling challenged and satisfied long-term.

What the research shows is that developers are, for the most part, exceptionally happy in their jobs. However, that doesn't guarantee that they'll stay in those jobs — quite the contrary. Only 48% of developers surveyed definitely plan to be with their current company for the next 12 months.

This leaves IT leaders with the difficult task of filling new positions while trying to keep their current employees happy and fulfilled.

However, changing employers does not always lead to satisfaction — 46% of respondents revealed that they were aware of colleagues who had left for new jobs, only to find that conditions were no better.

These findings identify a great opportunity for IT leaders to address talent gaps through understanding and addressing developer concerns. With increasing competition for developer talent, IT leaders should look for ways to keep their talent engaged. Data showed that among the toolkit of solutions, leaders should consider [deploying low-code platforms](#), which can help solve talent-related problems and give developers a competitive advantage.



¹Forbes: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/stuartanderson/2022/09/27/tech-job-openings-remain-high-but-congress-is-not-taking-action/?sh=489dcfdc4e38>

²IDC: <https://www.idc.com/getdoc.jsp?containerId=US48223621>

Key findings

The major takeaway from the research is that IT leaders must look beyond financial benefits and “fun” perks to retain their developers. If you want developers to stay, you must look at talent retention in a new way – how developers feel about their work-life balance, productivity, and team can make all the difference.

→ **Developers love their work, but they may leave anyway.** 64% of developers love what they do, but only 48% “definitely plan” to be with their current employer in one year — and that percentage falls to 29% when looking two years out.

→ **Developers are looking for improvement in certain aspects of workplace culture.** 50% of developers said they need better work-life balance and 45% of developers said keeping up with business demands is one of their top challenges.

→ **Low-code developers are generally happier at work.** 63% of low-code developers indicate they are happy with their salary and benefits compared to 40% of traditional developers. Also, 51% of low-code developers feel satisfied with their job security compared to 39% of traditional developers.

→ **Low-code developers have teams that are, on average, one-third the size** of traditional development teams. However, 59% of low-code developers were satisfied with their teams’ productivity compared to 41% of traditional developers.

→ **More than 71% of low-code users are able to stick to a 40-hour work week** compared to only 44% of traditional developers.



50%

50% of developers strongly agree they need better work-life balance



51%

51% of low-code users said they are very satisfied with the number of developers working on their teams



59%

59% of low-code users said they were very satisfied with the productivity of their teams



64%

64% of developers said they love their jobs



71%

More than 71% of low-code users are able to stick to a 40-hour work week

THE INESCAPABLE CONCLUSION

Traditional retention strategies may not work on this uniquely **talented group of individuals.** While developers share common pain points, based on their background, they may be looking for different things to keep them engaged and in your employment.

Developers love their jobs
— but might leave anyway

While most developers love their jobs, satisfaction may not be enough and many are thinking of changing companies. Only half of developers (48%) felt they would definitely be at their same company in 1 year and less than one-third (29%) felt they would “definitely” be at their current job in two years. In the same vein, a comparable number (31%) are seriously considering changing jobs already.

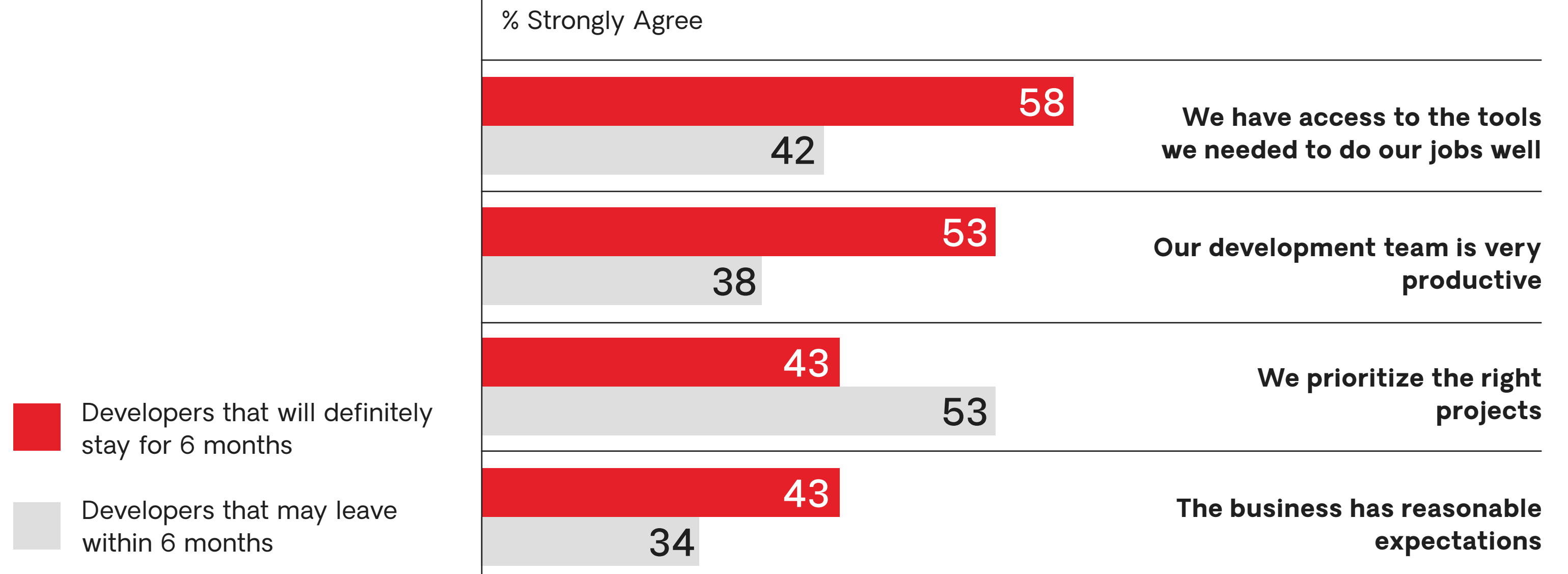
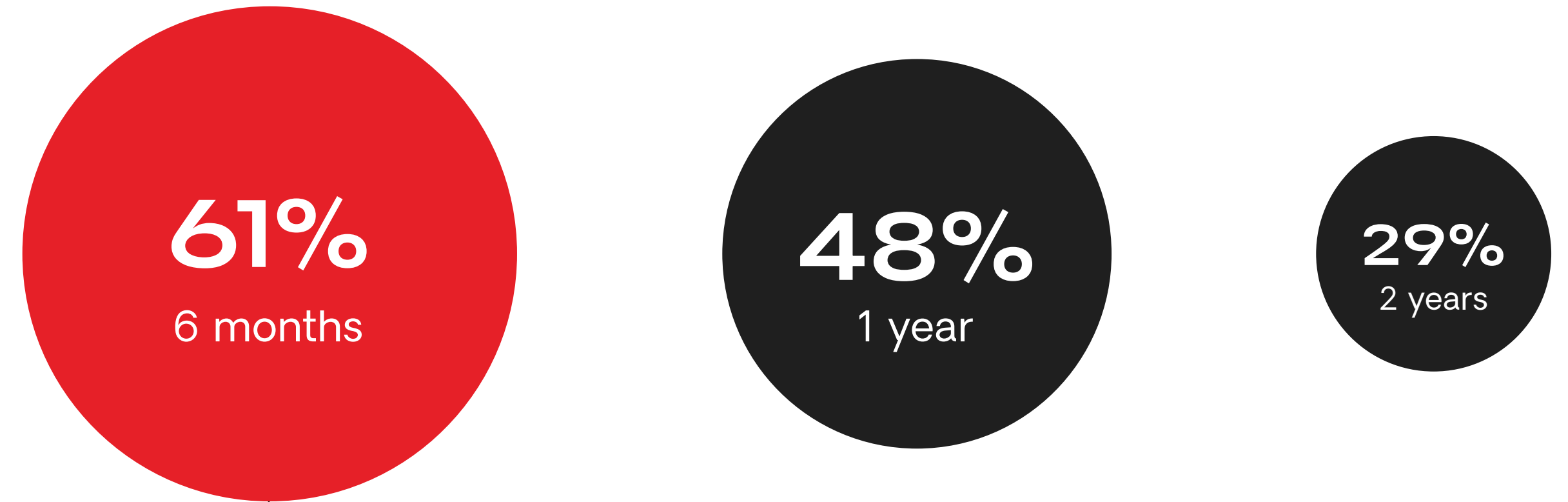
Developers who are more likely to leave don't have the tools they need to do their jobs well and, perhaps, consequently, they don't feel their teams are as productive.

Developers also were not shy about indicating what they expect from their employers and IT leaders. Across the board, developers want better work-life balance. Pay and staffing were also points of contention, especially among certain demographics. The data also revealed marked differences in the job satisfaction of developers based on which tools they are using — with interesting feedback about the role [low-code](#) can play in addressing common developer pain points.

Finding room for improvement

With approximately 50% of developers willing to commit to staying with their current employer in a year, the report indicates where their IT managers should hone in to keep them engaged: work-life balance, pay, and the staffing of their teams.

Time that developers will definitely stay with current employer



Unrealistic expectations?

Developers' openness to changing jobs may be due in part to how they view the labor market, more specifically how easily they believe they can get a job. 42% of respondents were confident, based on the sheer amount of job opportunities, they could easily find a better job right now.

There's a grain of hope for IT leaders: Developers don't seem to be finding fulfillment as they search for, or even begin, new positions at a different company. For starters, based on the data, many developers have one foot out the door but haven't committed to actually leaving. About two-fifths of developers surveyed (39%) said they started searching for a job but then later changed their minds.

Also, developers say their peers, who have taken a new job opportunity at a different company, aren't finding better work environments. Nearly half (46%) of respondents said they know people who have changed jobs, but found those new jobs weren't much better than their previous place of employment.

The fact that many developers aren't totally sold on leaving, presents a massive opportunity. IT leaders can act swiftly to create an environment in which developers will want to stay. And not all of the changes need to be drastic. Things like how productive a developer feels, the tools they have access to, and the expectations of their line of business colleagues can make a remarkable difference.

This is great news, as these are all things IT leaders can directly influence.

% Strongly Agree

46%

Many people I know who have changed jobs find their new jobs aren't much better

43%

The economic climate impacts my job change plans

42%

There are so many opportunities for me that I could easily get a better position right now

39%

I recently explored new jobs but have changed my mind

33%

The job market is tightening

31%

I'm seriously considering changing companies right now

Valuing the differences in your developers

Generational differences

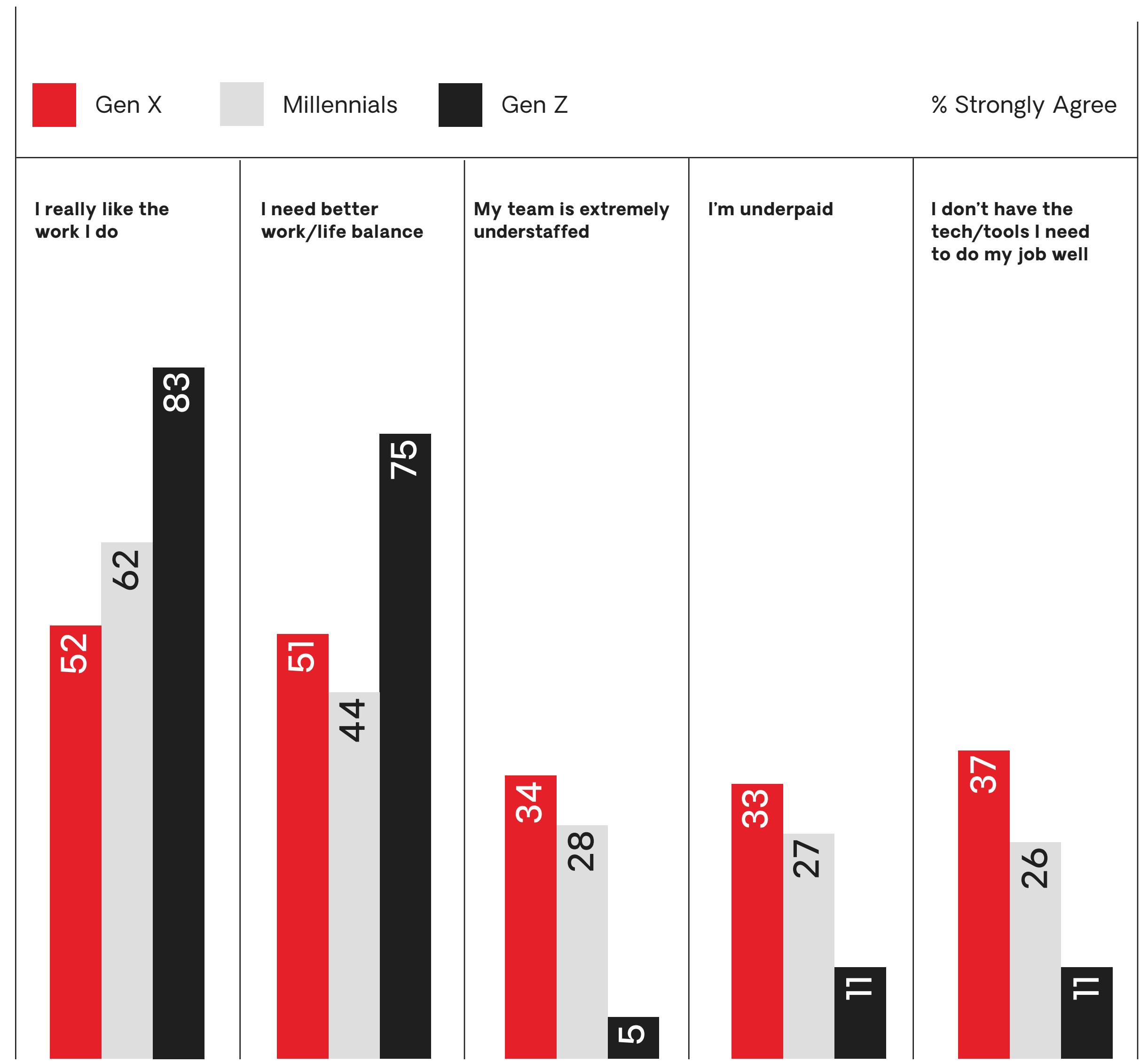
Before the Covid-19 pandemic, companies could attract and retain developers with creative office spaces, free lunch, and foosball. Now, with many employees working remotely by choice, leaders need to be much more thoughtful about how they support their teams. Some of the friction lies with pay and work-life balance, but in today's work-from-home world, self-motivation and productivity are some of the toughest challenges — which can be addressed with tools, processes, and support.

And developer age slices the data further, as significant demographic differences affect how developers feel about their work. Let's take a look.

Generational differences may contribute to the variance in points of developer frustration. For example, almost all of the Gen Z developers surveyed (96%) said they love their jobs, while 58% of Gen X and 62% of Millennials developers felt the same.

Diving further into the data, Gen Z developers felt better about specific aspects of their jobs. A very small number of Gen Z respondents strongly agreed they were underpaid (11%), faced extreme staffing issues (5%), or lacked the resources to complete their jobs (11%).

Developer feelings about their job



Gen Z also felt more satisfied with their personal productivity (66% were very satisfied). Unfortunately, that number declined sharply among their Millennial (44%) and Gen X peers (38%).

Taken together, this data suggests that leaders need to prioritize helping their junior staff take on more challenging, senior-level work. Meanwhile, they should ensure that senior staff are able to carve out time for deep work and provide the tools they need to be more productive.

Where Gen Z respondents did struggle was how apps are prioritized within their teams. Only 25% felt their team prioritized the right apps, compared to 44% of Millennial and 62% of Gen X respondents. IT leaders should take extra time to help their Gen Z employees understand why their projects matter and involve them in decision-making processes when possible.

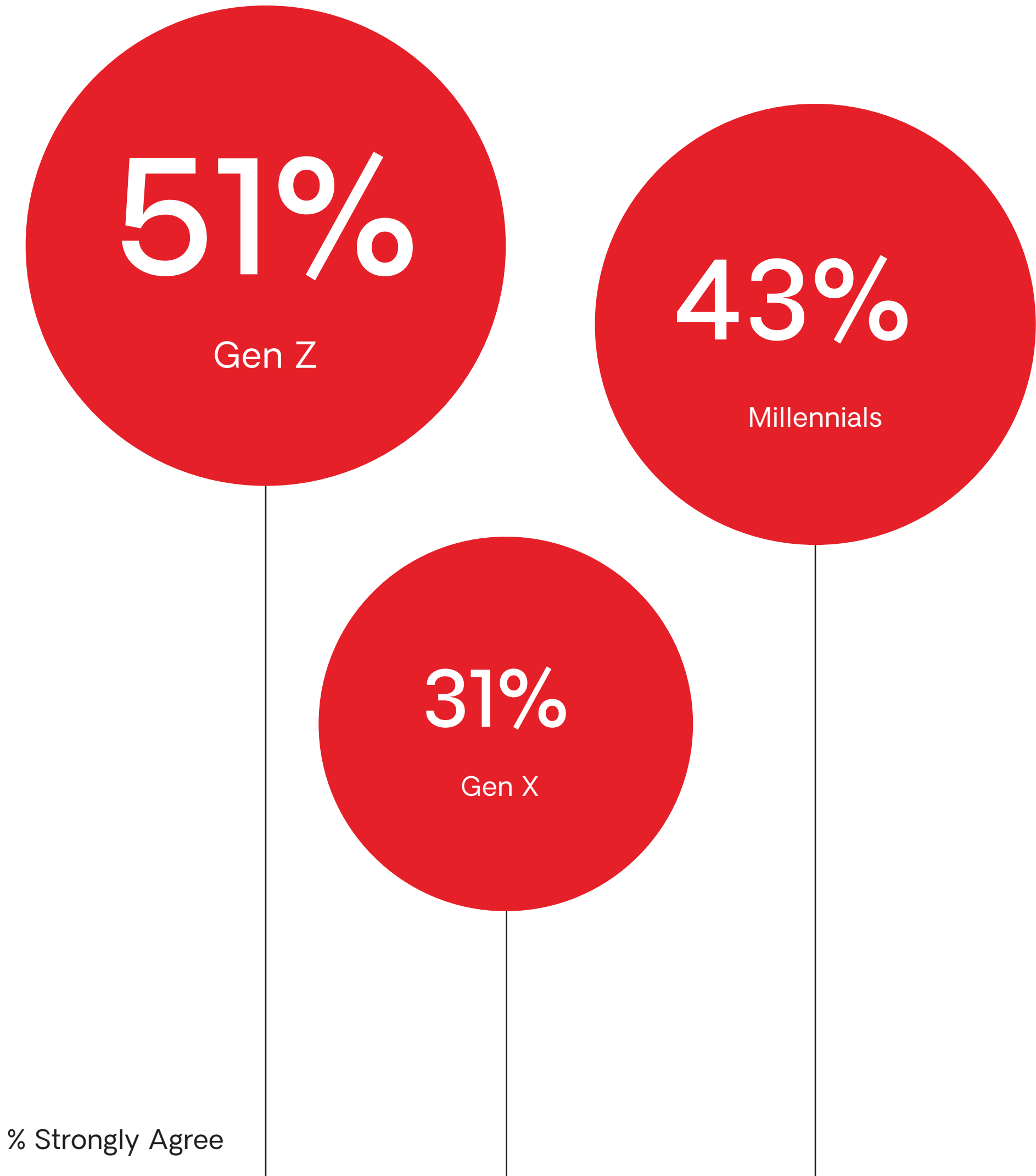
More tenured employees, those Gen X or older, struggled the most with the rising demands of the business. Only 31% of Gen X respondents felt the business has reasonable expectations, compared to 43% of Millennials and 51% of Gen Z. This presents an opportunity for leaders to find ways to support their teams in light of these high demands.



96%

of Gen Z developers love their jobs, but 75% acknowledge work-life balance issues

Believe that the business has reasonable expectations



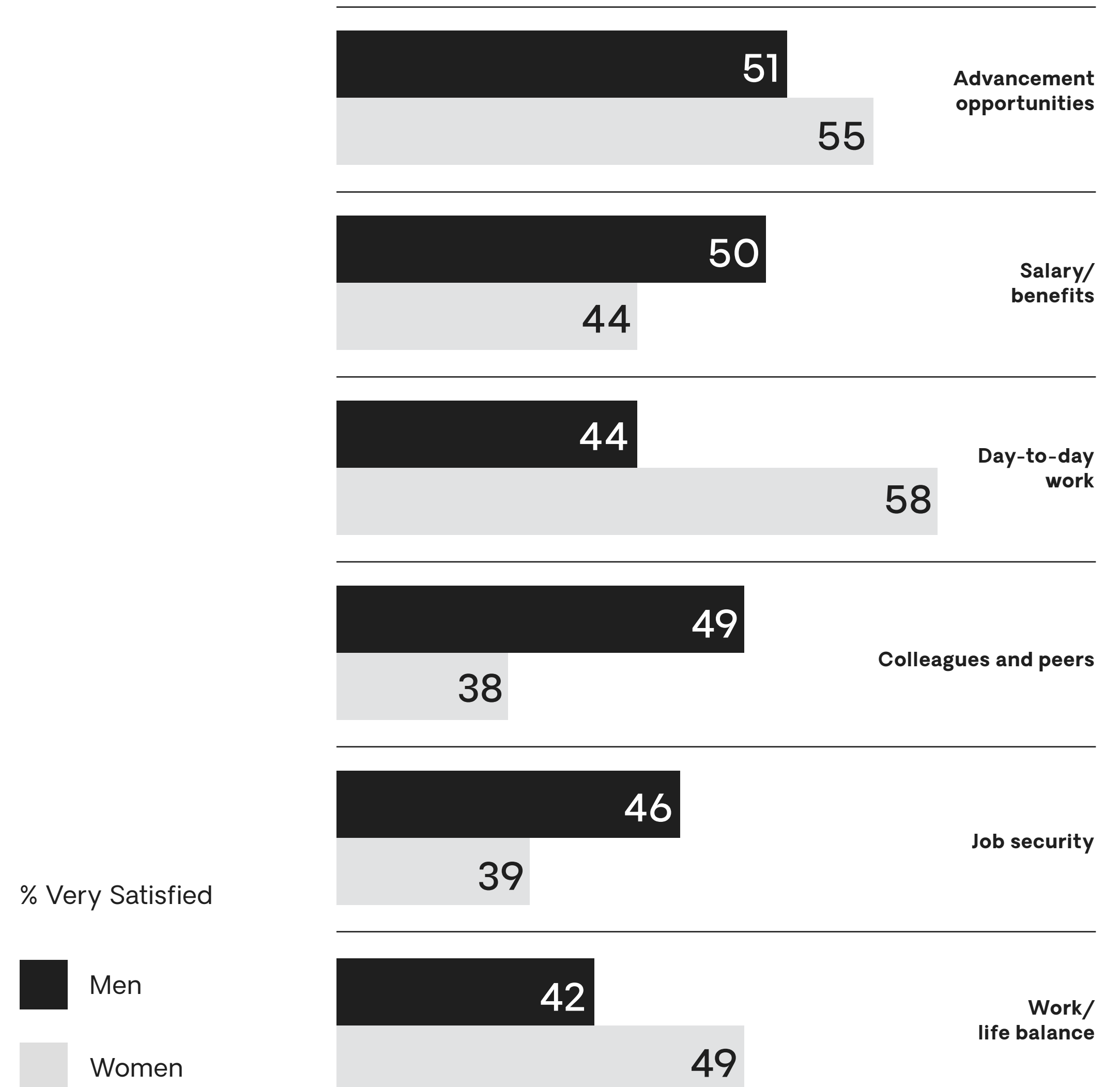
Gender differences

Not only is it important to consider generational differences but developers of different genders, who experience a variety of on-the-job difficulties.

More than one-third of women (37%) surveyed felt they were underpaid, while a quarter of men (25%) said they were underpaid. Women were also less satisfied with their job security, with only 39% saying they were very satisfied vs. 46% of men. Despite this, more women than men think they'll still be working for the same company in 2 years (33% vs. 29%), indicating stronger loyalty. Managers should take steps to ensure that women feel supported and well paid.

The data suggests that gender does not factor into job satisfaction and sentiment – until the communications begin. Women are more dissatisfied with communication during the development process than men. For example, 43% of men felt satisfied with communication with their line-of-business colleagues, while only 33% of women felt the same. However, both men and women reported the same levels of satisfaction regarding communication with their developer colleagues (43% of both were very satisfied).

Satisfaction with job elements



A FLEXIBLE RESPONSE

The big want: productivity and control.

Even the happiest developers are a potential flight risk and could be tempted to bring their talents to another organization. While not every organization can afford large salary increases or embrace a four-day workweek, there are things IT leaders can do to keep their teams engaged. Providing support (or technology) to help developers feel **more productive and in control** of their workload, could be the key to retaining top performers, and creating a culture where developers want to stay.

Capitalizing on the low-code opportunity

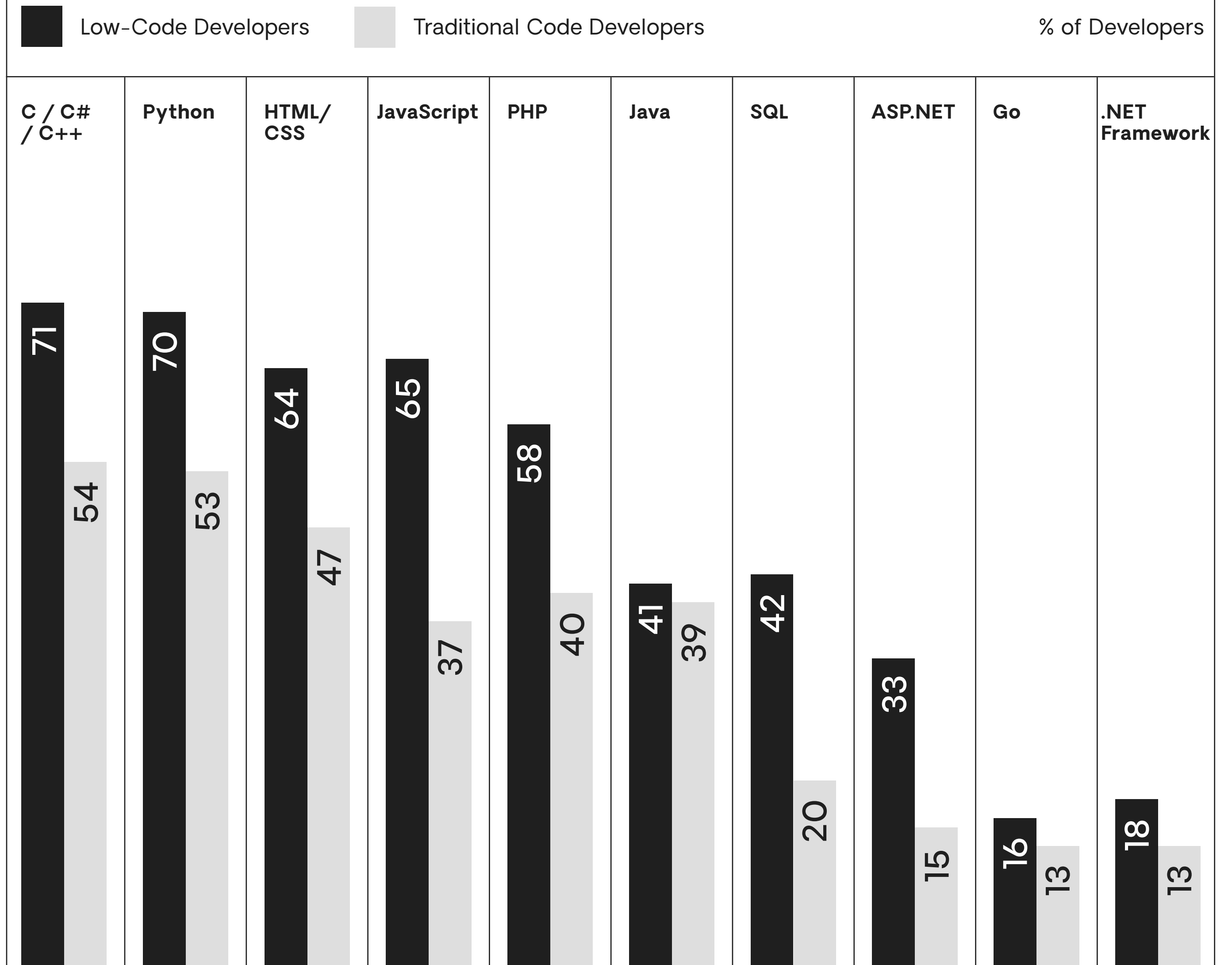
Capitalizing on the low-code opportunity

[Low-code and no-code development](#) solutions have been the subject of some debate and confusion within the software community. Our survey suggests that the debate may be overblown, as it is common for low-code users to also use traditional coding languages. In fact, more than half of low-code users (65%) acknowledged they use at least one traditional language such as PHP, JavaScript, Python, HTML/CSS and C / C# / C++.



65%
of low-code developers
also use traditional
programming languages

Development tools used



While some may be hesitant to embrace low-code, our data found clear benefits to leveraging it. This offers IT leaders an opportunity to understand how low-code tools fit into the development ecosystem as a complement to the process, rather than a replacement. When used together in the development environment, low-code tools bring flexibility and speed that augments the productivity of all developers. Understanding the benefits of various tools can support their teams' coding preferences, while easing the friction, productivity, and resource issues around which developers expressed frustrations.

Low-code tools and the developer process

Regardless of which coding method developers use, certain aspects of the job — productivity, resources, and communication — hold universal importance. The data shows that developers using low-code tools experience higher satisfaction in these areas.

More than half of low-code developers reported that they were very satisfied with team productivity (59%) and the quality of tools at their disposal to complete their work (57%). Conversely, less than half of traditional code users reported similar feelings around team productivity (41%) and developer tools (36%).

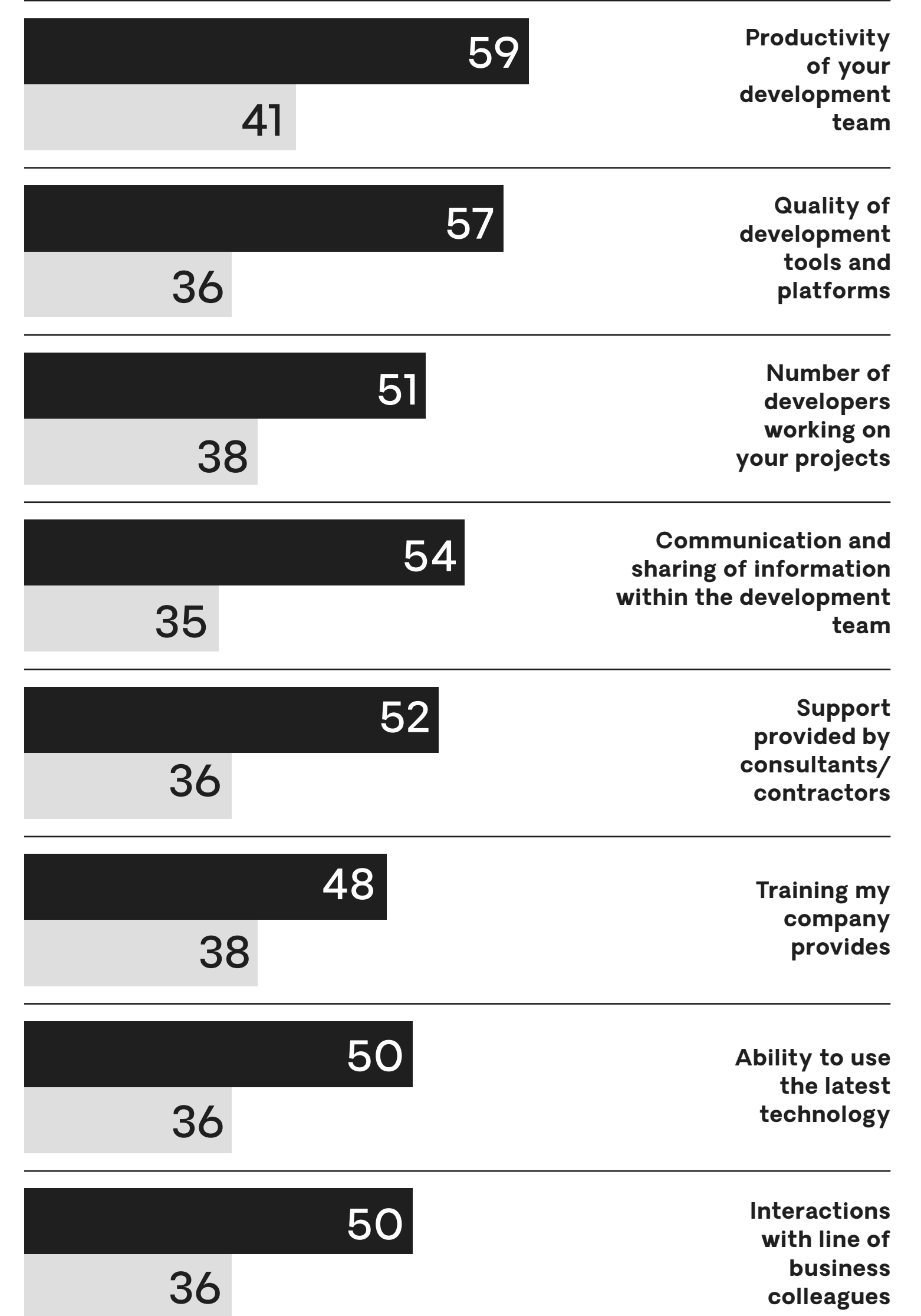
When it comes to communication, being able to effectively share ideas and information within a development team and across the business is vital for achieving business goals. 54% of low-code developers reported satisfaction with communication and sharing information within the development team. Only 35% of traditional developer respondents felt the same.

Communications with business colleagues followed a similar trend. Half of low-code developers (50%) were very satisfied with their interactions with line-of-business colleagues, while less than half (36%) of traditional developers shared that feeling.



Developers who use low-code are much more likely to report high satisfaction about their tools than traditional developers.

Satisfaction with development process



% Very Satisfied

- Low-Code Developers
- Traditional Code Developers

The road to job satisfaction

Low-code development teams are smaller, but more satisfied

Low-code developers have teams that are, on average, one-third the size of traditional developer teams within organizations of roughly the same size (with an average of 106 vs. 320). Despite the smaller size of those teams, however, 51% of low-code developers report satisfaction with the number of developers on their team, while 38% of traditional developers feel the same.

However, more than 71% of low-code developers said they were able to stick to the typical 40-hour work week compared to only 44% of traditional developers.

Compensation and career growth

Advancement, benefits, and salary are also important for developers. A higher percentage of low-code developers (63%) said they were very satisfied with their salary and benefits compared to traditional developers at 40%. As for job opportunities, 46% of low-code developers are very satisfied with job opportunities compared to 40% of traditional developers.

Low-code developers have received an average of 3.5 job promotions at their current company, while traditional developers have been promoted just 2.0 times. Seniority most likely accounts for the difference: 55% of low-code developers have been in the field for 6 or more years, while only 44% of traditional developers have been coding for the same period. Also, 92% of low-code developers are involved in platform decisions, while only 75% of traditional developers are so involved.

As IT leaders are responsible for both sizing teams and selecting development tools, they would do well to consider low-code solutions, which seem to empower team agility, productivity, and stability, all while contributing to workplace culture.

At a time when talent is tight and satisfaction is critical, it's important for supervisors to offer tools that produce great results, while creating an environment where engineers want to stay.



GIVE DEVELOPERS WHAT THEY WANT

IT leaders have a **unique chance to retain developer talent** by fostering an environment of productivity and professional growth for their teams. In the survey, developers pointed to multiple reasons they gravitated to software development, including the promise of work-life balance, the quantity of job options, advancement opportunities, and the chance to solve interesting problems with interesting solutions.

When developers search for new employment, they may be searching for jobs that help them realize these ideals.

Main takeaways

If IT leaders want to retain talent — and help developers find satisfaction in their roles — they must take intentional steps in a few key areas.

For many organizations, introducing low-code solutions could help address multiple problems for developers. While some developers may be hesitant to change their development process, our data on low-code users (many of whom also use traditional coding languages) suggests they experience greater satisfaction around workload, shorter work weeks, and fewer other factors that contribute to burnout.

While 45% of respondents acknowledged low-code technology speeds up the development process, they do not look at low-code as a shortcut. Rather, 49% of respondents strongly agreed low-code improves creativity and 50% of developers surveyed said low-code improves the quality of apps. And, despite having significantly smaller development teams, low-code developers are more satisfied with the size of their teams, not less.

As developer demand continues to rise, IT decision makers won't be able to simply hire their way out of a talent gap. They need to implement operational and technology changes that optimize resources, while alleviating workload on current teams. That technology mix should include low-code development tools, which create greater job satisfaction, productivity, and retention.

HOW IT LEADERS CAN RETAIN TALENT AND HELP DEVELOPERS FIND SATISFACTION



Reduce the number of hours teams are working

This may be disrupting work-life balance, especially for people earlier in their careers.



Highlight advancement opportunities

It is important to communicate these opportunities with all members of the company, regardless of age, gender, or any other identifier. IT leaders should be transparent about growth opportunities and job security.



Provide resources and tools to address workload

Access to the right tools can help developers build applications more productively and improve satisfaction. This can deliver better business performance and staff retention.



As developer demand continues to rise, IT decision makers won't be able to simply hire their way out of a talent gap.

IT decision makers should invest in technologies that optimize development productivity, thereby reducing workload strain on their teams. That technology mix should include low-code development tools, which create greater job satisfaction, productivity, and retention.

Learn how leading companies are leveraging OutSystems high-performance low-code to eliminate their backlogs, develop business-critical apps faster, and get more done with their existing teams.

Methodology

Survey respondents (N=860) sourced from Evans Data Corp global panel. All were employed full- or part-time as a developer and fulfilled at least one of the following roles in their organizations:

- Defining business requirements and application scope
- Architecting/specifying/designing
- Evaluating development tools, vendors and/or partners
- Writing code and deploying software applications
- Maintaining and updating applications once they've been deployed

The panel of developers surveyed spanned multiple industries and regions, including the Americas (United States, Mexico, Brazil), EMEA (United Kingdom, Germany, France, Portugal, Netherlands), and APAC (Singapore, India, and Australia). OutSystems weighted this data set to reflect industry distribution across the countries included in this report.

For most questions, OutSystems used a four-point scale rather than a five point scale (for example: "very satisfied, satisfied, dissatisfied, very dissatisfied"), eliminating the option of neutral or middle-ground answers to each question. In this report, the analysis focused on the top responses for each question (e.g. "very satisfied" or "strongly agree") as the primary metric. This reflects our belief that an 'extreme' response is more likely to align with potential action(s) that a respondent may take on an issue.

The study defined generational cohorts based on which year respondents were born:

- **Boomers** (Before 1965)
- **Gen X** (1965 – 1980)
- **Millennials** (1981 – 1996)
- **Gen Z** (1997 – 2012)

Regarding gender, researchers asked respondents to indicate which of the following terms described them, if any: "man," "woman," or "non-binary, genderqueer, or gender non conforming."

