
nten

2020

**Tech Accelerate
Report**

An NTEN Report
by Robert Hulshof-Schmidt



NTEN envisions a just and engaged world where all nonprofits use technology skillfully and confidently to meet community needs and fulfill their missions. We support organizations by convening the nonprofit community, offering professional credentials and training, and facilitating community skill and resource sharing.

NTEN reports support the growth and development of the sector through benchmarking the technology goals and challenges of nonprofits and identifying areas of need.

For more, visit nten.org/reports.

Tech Accelerate is a free online tool created by NTEN for nonprofits to find data and benchmarks to help you make better-informed decisions. It includes:

- a comprehensive assessment about technology use and policies across four major categories: **ENGAGEMENT**, **INFRASTRUCTURE**, **LEADERSHIP**, and **ORGANIZATION**.
- a full report that includes both overall and category rankings, prioritized targets for investment, and resources for the next steps.
- benchmarking tools to explore your data in comparison to organizations like yours.



Microsoft has proudly partnered with NTEN for the last 20 years, and we are excited to sponsor Tech Accelerate this year.

We believe that now is a great time to learn new skills to help your nonprofit transform. To that end, we've worked with TechSoup to create a robust set of technology-focused training courses, ranging from Word/Excel/PowerPoint to Teams, PowerBI, and Power Apps. [techsoup.course.tc/catalog?type=microsoft-digital-skills-center] Hopefully, you'll notice some of these courses in the customized report that you receive after completing the Tech Accelerate assessment.

Microsoft Tech for Social Impact (TSI) works to empower every nonprofit and humanitarian organization to accelerate social good, and we are committed to supporting your mission through these challenging times and beyond. You can learn more about how we work with nonprofits at microsoft.com/en-us/nonprofits.

For more than a decade, NTEN’s research has explored the many ways nonprofit staff use technology, where and how organizations invest in technology, and the challenges organizations face in selecting, budgeting for, and effectively using technology tools of all kinds.

In 2012, NTEN launched a beta version of an online assessment and benchmarking tool that used a small subset of questions from what was at that time an annual Tech Staffing and Investments survey. Building on the continued annual research and incorporating the full dataset into a more valuable and powerful tool we launched Tech Accelerate in 2017.

Tech Accelerate is a free comprehensive assessment tool that looks at both the practices and culture of technology in a nonprofit, as well as use and investment. With over 70 questions in four categories (Engagement, Infrastructure, Leadership, and Organization), Tech Accelerate assesses a nonprofit’s technology adoption level and highlights areas in need of the most investment.

With hundreds of assessments completed, we are launching this new report to replace the Tech Staffing and Investment report. Instead of surveying nonprofits annually, we are providing this analysis of all assessments included in Tech Accelerate.

How To Use This Report

The report includes graphs to show aggregate data for every question included in Tech Accelerate. When a respondent is completing the assessment, they provide answers along a scale of 1-4, in .25 increments. To make the graphs easier to read and to better identify trends, we’ve condensed the data you see included in the charts.

Original data increments:

1 1.25 1.5 1.75 2 2.25 2.5 2.75 3 3.25 3.5 3.75 4

Report data increments:

1+1.25 1.5+1.75 2+2.25 2.5+2.75 3+3.25 3.5+3.75 4

We produced this report to spark conversations in your organization and the sector about how technology is adopted, used, and invested in towards our missions and collective impact. We hope you will use this data not necessarily as a benchmark but as a checkpoint. There is room for all organizations to keep working towards more effective and strategic use of technology.

More than anything, we hope you will complete your own full assessment using Tech Accelerate. That's the best way to review your organization's standing and determine where you can invest in becoming more effective. You can complete your assessment for free at any time at NTEN.org/Accelerate.



Amy Sample Ward
CEO, NTEN

ENGAGEMENT

The eleven questions in this section assessed each participant's strengths in systems related to communications, marketing, and fundraising. This includes data collection, analysis, and management, as well as ensuring that communications and fundraising tools are useful for the intended audience(s).

Overall, participants rated themselves slightly higher on these categories than their average rating for the whole survey. The average ENGAGEMENT score was 2.60 compared to an overall average of 2.56. This close connection indicates that the surveyed organizations are aligning their efforts with the data activities that have the most obvious connection with users and customers.

Participants rated themselves most highly on their support for mobile communications and fundraising platforms. A majority scored a three or higher. This correlates with a significant increase in mobile use as the primary connection between customers and organizations.

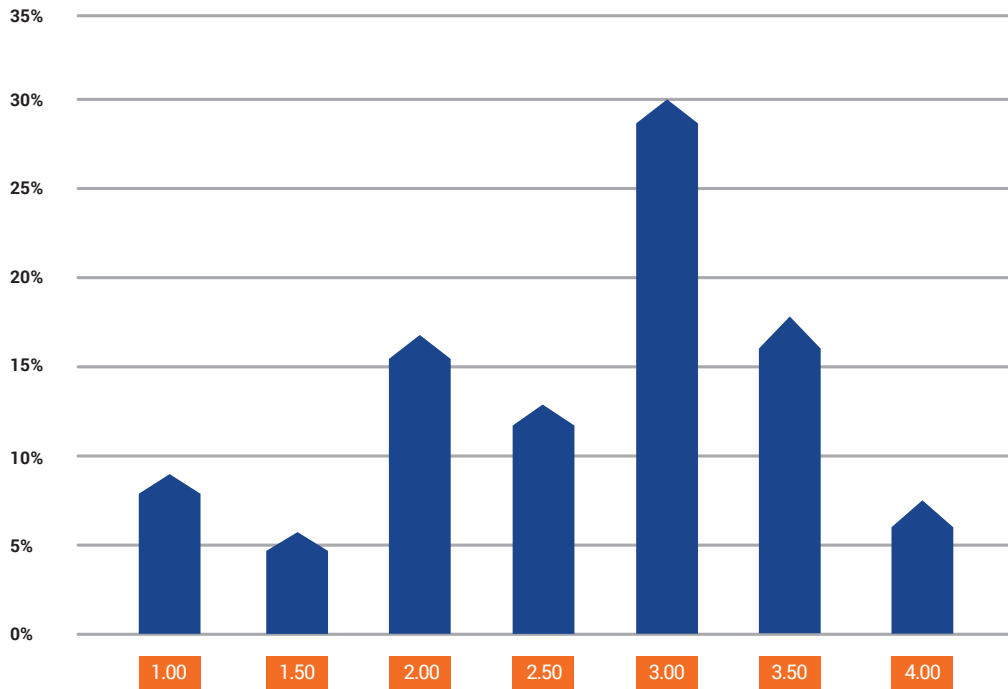
The other two areas of strength are also related to customer connectivity. Participants provided ratings near a 3.00 average for the ability to create accurate, targeted lists of users for marketing and communications and on the availability of multiple donation platforms. Clearly, customer connection and user-friendliness are priorities for these organizations.

Three areas result in the weakest average ratings for **ENGAGEMENT**, coming in at or below a 2.25 on the 4-point scale. Participants indicated somewhat low confidence in the quality and availability of volunteer information in their systems. Despite the importance of a strong volunteer pool for nonprofit success, it is not uncommon for organizations to prioritize donors and overall communications metrics. More sophisticated data analysis also had lower ratings. This includes evaluating diverse communications channels for their overall effectiveness and prioritizing investments and programming based on user engagement per channel. The more additional analysis a data point requires, the lower the participants rated themselves.

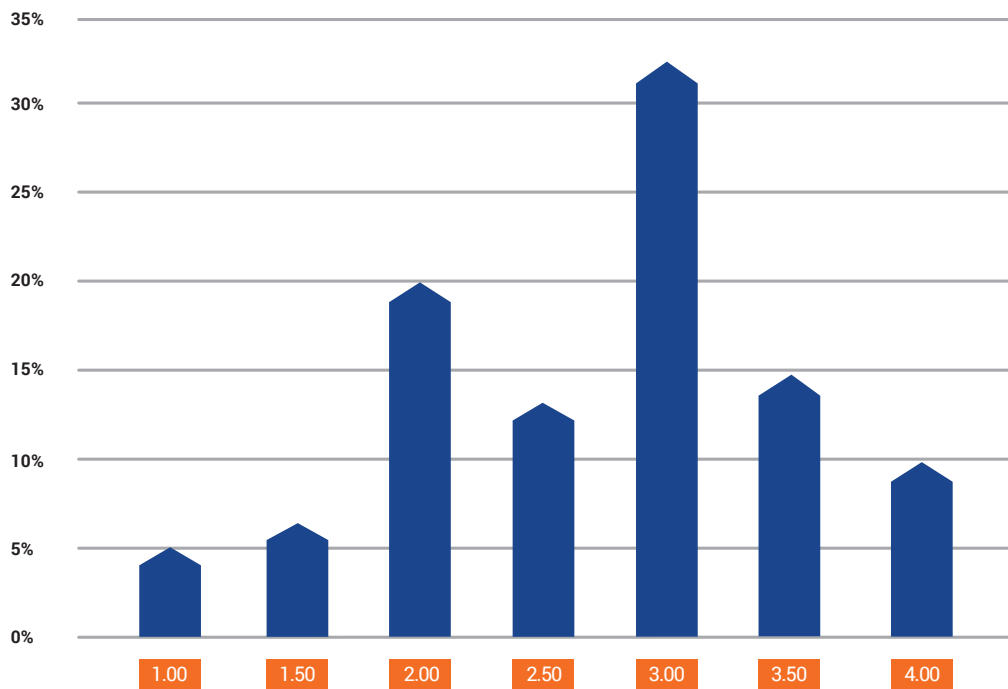
Organizational budget did not play a significant role in the participant ratings for **ENGAGEMENT**. The distribution of responses for organizations with budgets below \$250,000 was not significantly different than the distribution for organizations with budgets over \$1,000,000.

Size of staff did make a difference, however. Smaller organizations rated themselves about 10% lower (0.25 points on the 4-point scale) than larger ones. Having staff resources to devote to **ENGAGEMENT** activities clearly matters.

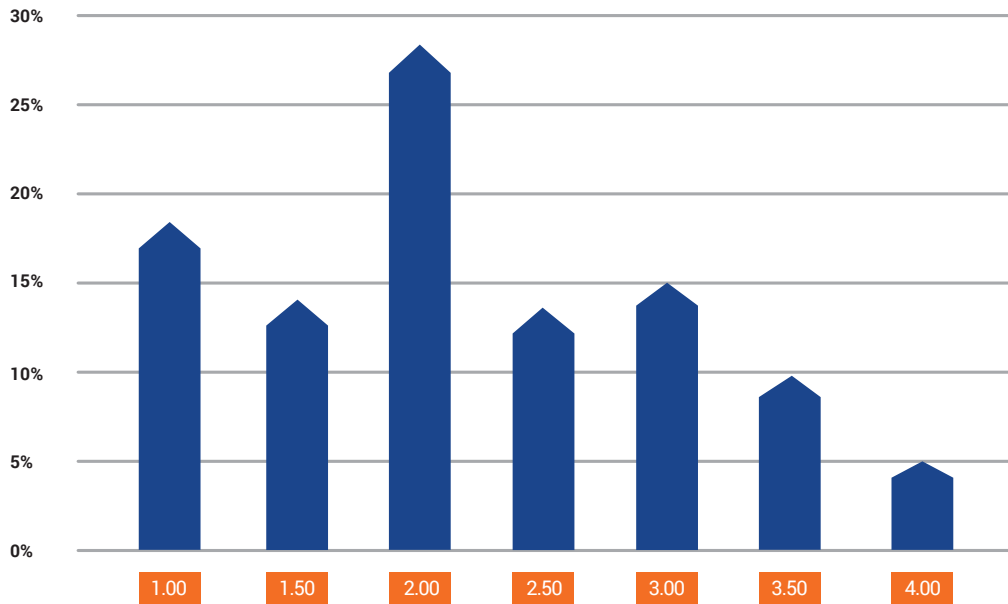
Roughly what proportion of data related to fundraising and communications is controlled in a managed business system (vs. stored in ad hoc spreadsheets, documents)?



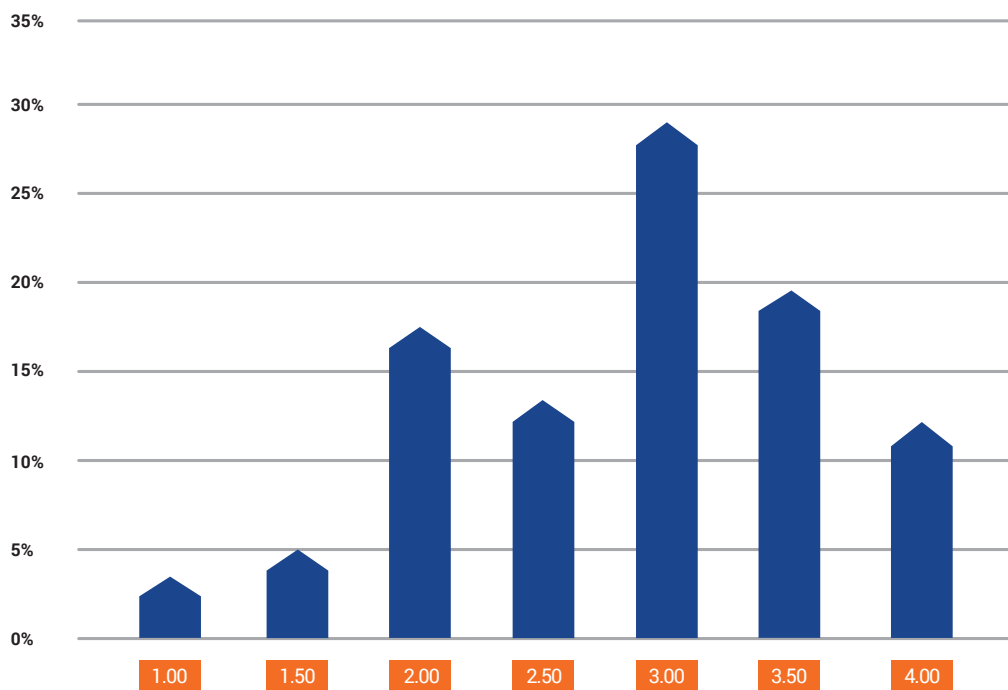
Do you have a complete, accurate history of information regarding donors, volunteers, and other supporters of your organization and its mission?



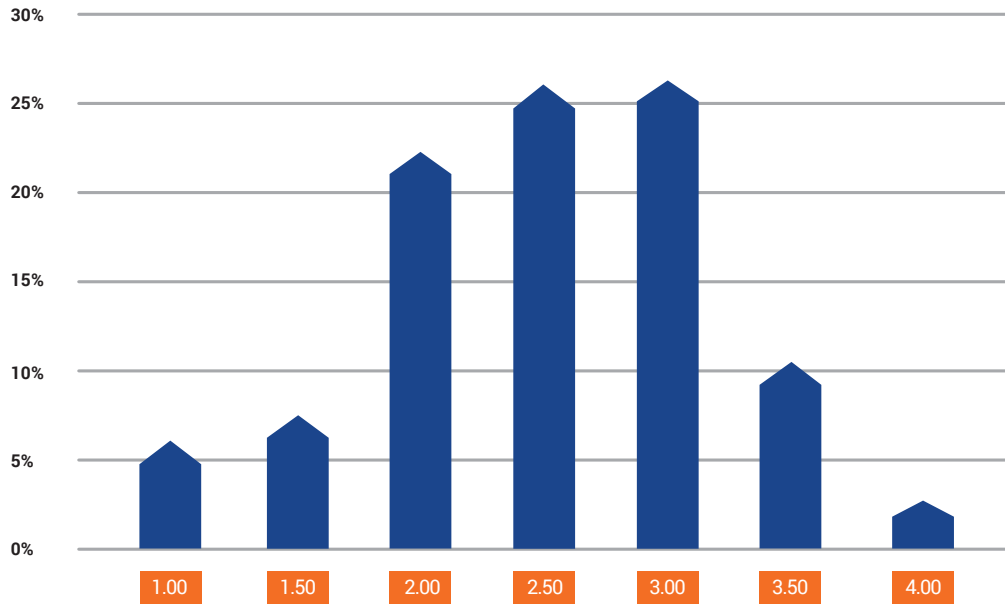
How accessible and usable is information about volunteers (e.g., clearances, hours served, interests)?



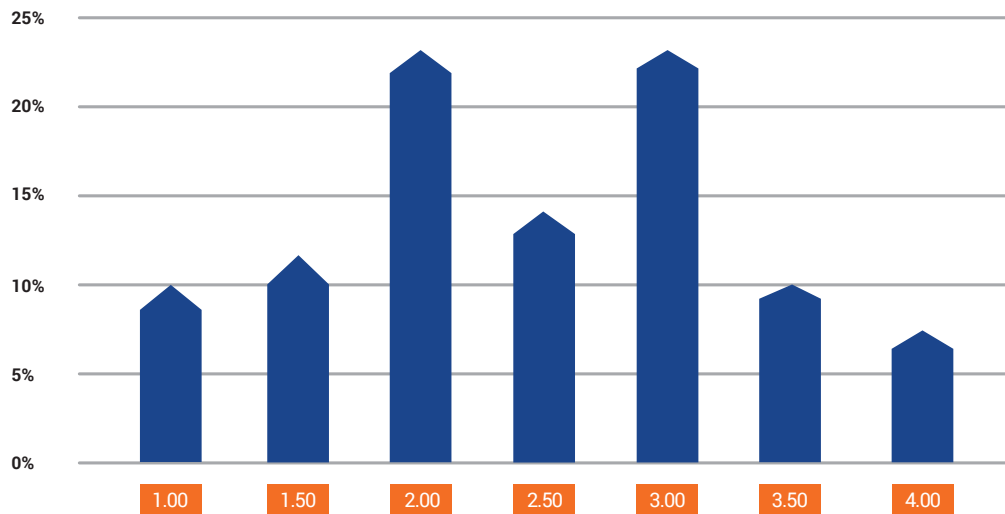
How capable are you of preparing accurate lists of addresses or emails for targeted communications to various constituent groups?



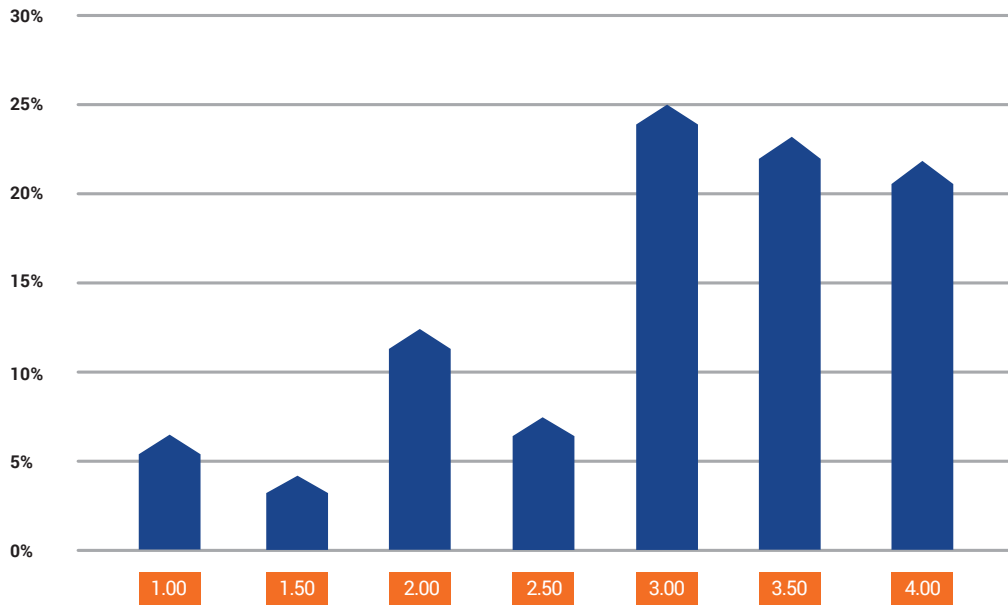
To what degree do you use the potential capabilities of the existing business systems that support your marketing and communications activities?



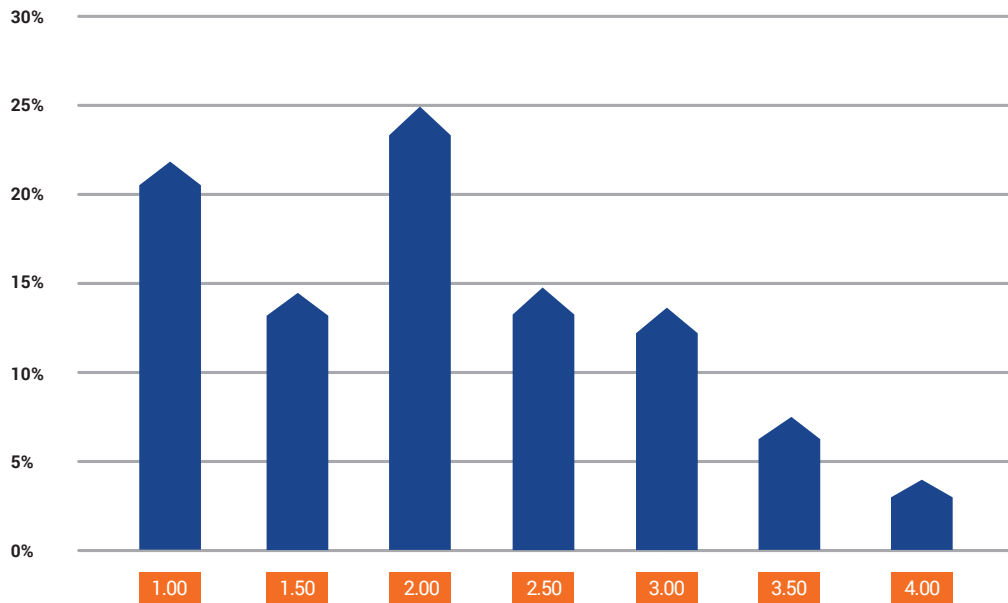
To what degree do you have a process to ensure information on websites is updated regularly?



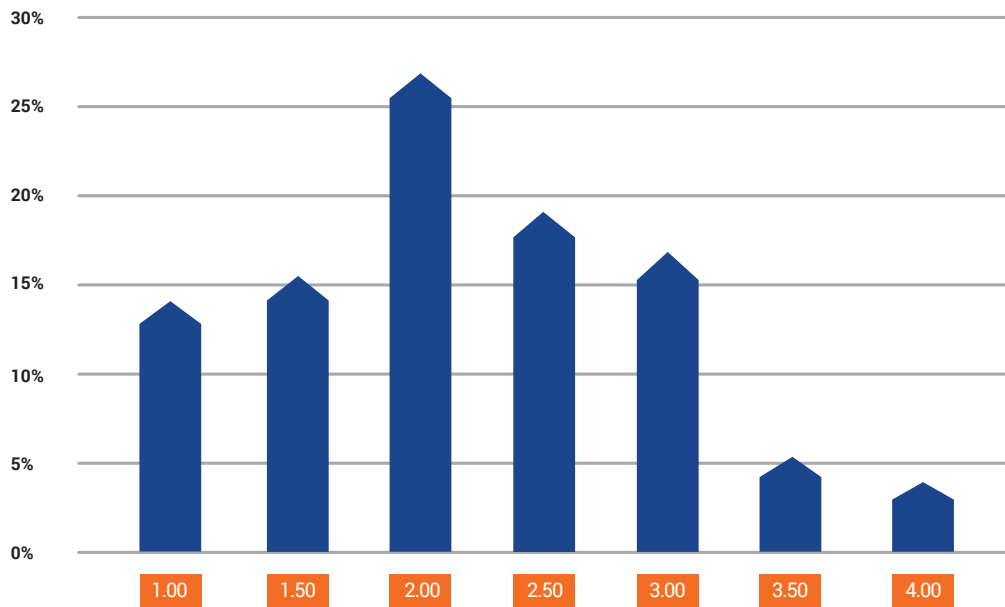
To what degree does your website support mobile users?



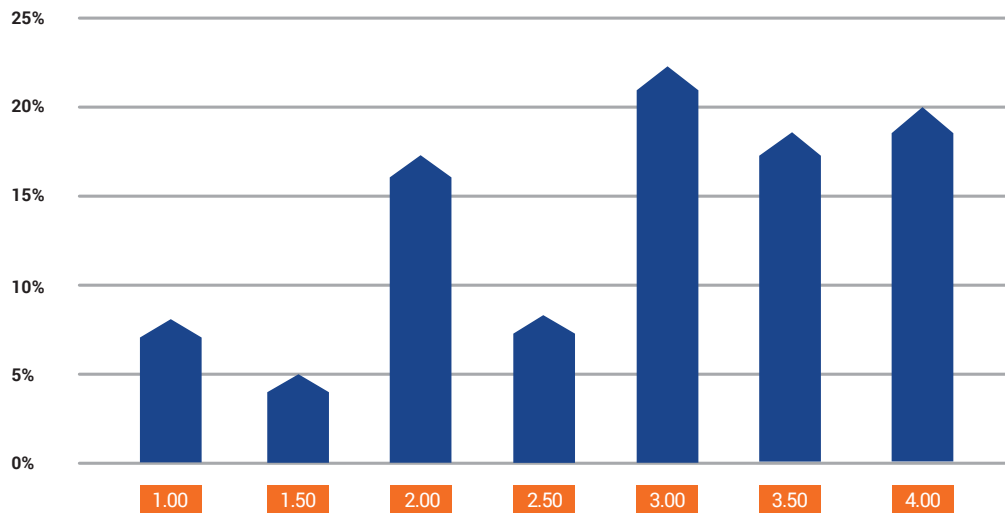
How often do you utilize information about engagement from visitors to your website, social media, and other online outlets to prioritize marketing investments and programs?



To what degree do you evaluate the effectiveness of the information you communicate to constituents through various channels?



Do you offer multiple options for donation payments (e.g., credit card, PayPal, automatic account withdrawal, recurring donations)?



INFRASTRUCTURE

The twenty-six questions in this section assessed the systems and tools that each participant has in place to manage their data, including security, access, and segmentation.

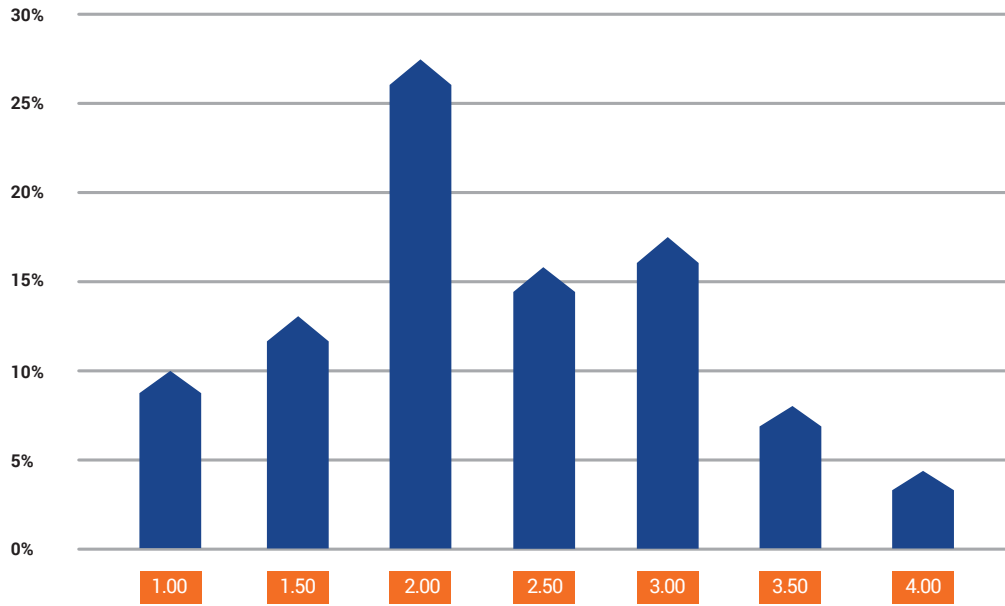
Overall, participants rated themselves highest on **INFRASTRUCTURE** questions, an average of 2.67 on the 4-point scale compared with an average for the full survey of 2.56. It is important to note, however, that this section also has the widest range of responses, including the highest and lowest scores for the entire survey. Participants rated themselves highest on the questions related to business integrity and security. Given the fundamental importance of keeping data safe, secure, and accurate, this is not surprising. The highest score is for PCI compliance, an impressive 3.45 out of 4.00. Since compliance helps insulate organizations from legal action and is a federal requirement for many transactions, the high rate of adoption here is no surprise. It is worth noting that HIPAA compliance, while not in the top five, is also highly rated.

The other categories with average scores higher than 3.00 are also related to security and protection. This includes securing financial transactions, having secure / guest / partitioned wireless access, and maintaining antivirus solutions. Related to these is ensuring that critical systems are accessible from outside the organization to ensure business continuity.

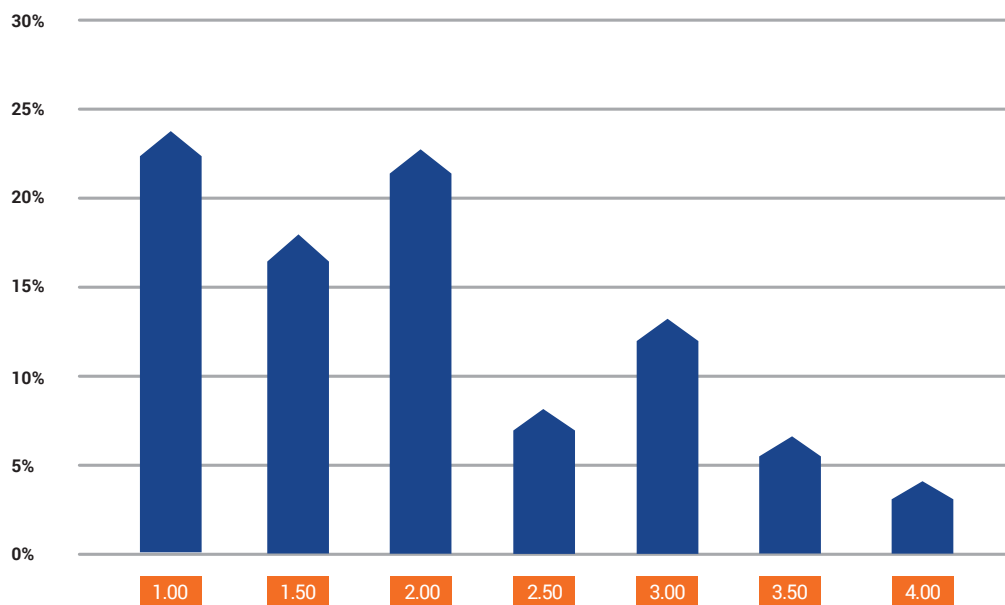
The final highly-rated category is the presence of modern features on phone systems. It is worth noting that all six of the most highly rated categories are areas where outside vendors, software, and tools can ensure success. Adoption of infrastructure solutions is easier when those solutions can be at least somewhat plug-and-play. On the other end of the spectrum are categories that require more internal investment of resources. The lowest-rated question (1.91 on the 4-point scale) is whether the organization has and tests a business continuity plan. Development, implementation, and testing of such plans – while important – is resource-intensive and highly organization-specific.

Another contextual and labor-intensive activity is the creation and maintenance of a policy for vendor-based systems. This also comes in below a 2.00. Tracking and logging of changes to hardware and software also come in close to 2.00, more activities that require specific, ongoing, internal effort with limited external options. These trends resonate throughout the **INFRASTRUCTURE** questions – the more internal effort and customization that is required, the lower the organizational rating. In general, budget and staff size have a limited relationship with these scores. Neither category moves the average rankings significantly. Participants with the largest budgets do have somewhat higher scores on the categories with the best overall scores. Conversely, smaller staffs correlate somewhat to lower scores on categories that are the lowest overall.

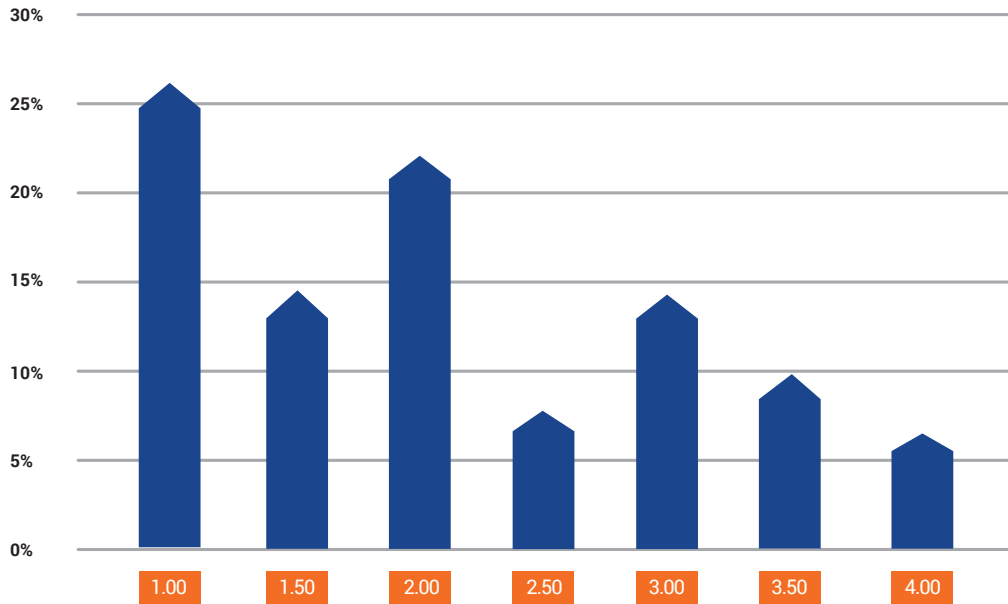
To what degree are you prepared to continue to operate if a staff member responsible for marketing or communications technology leaves the organization (e.g., processes documented, backup staff trained)?



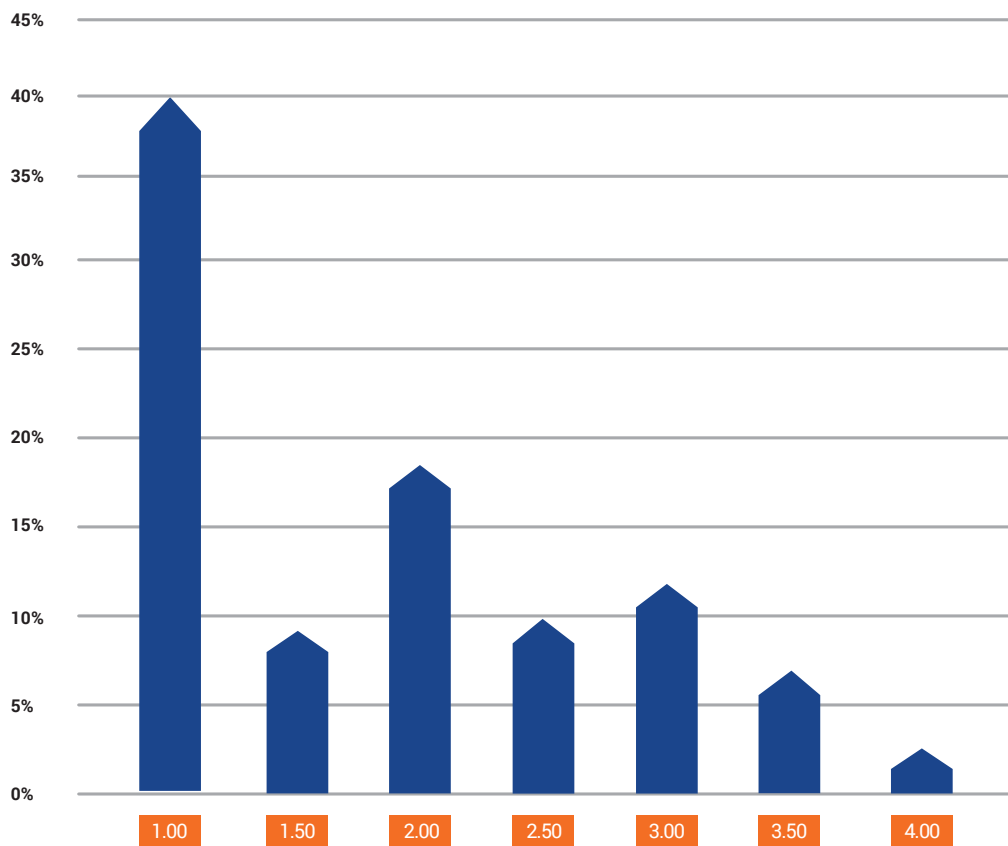
To what degree do you track and log changes to configurations of your software systems?



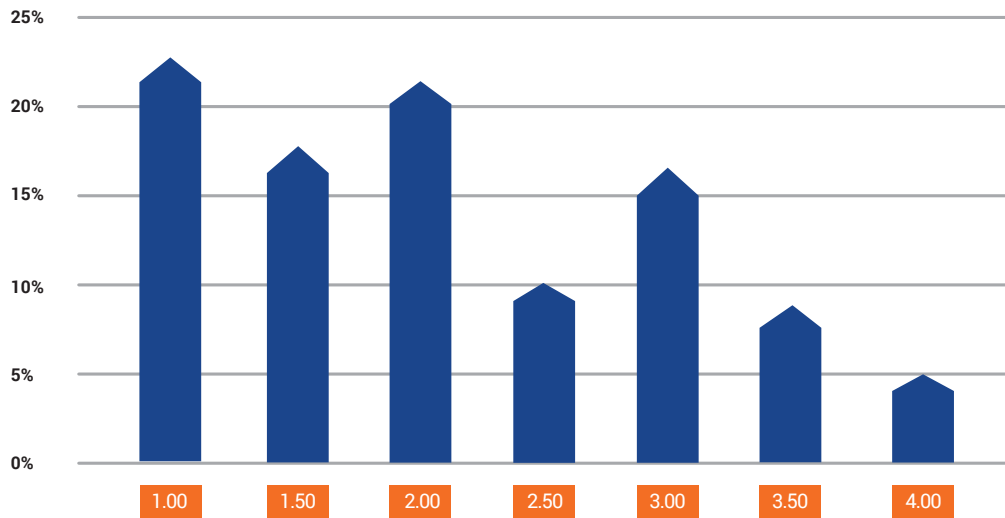
To what degree do you have a process in place to track and log changes to hardware?



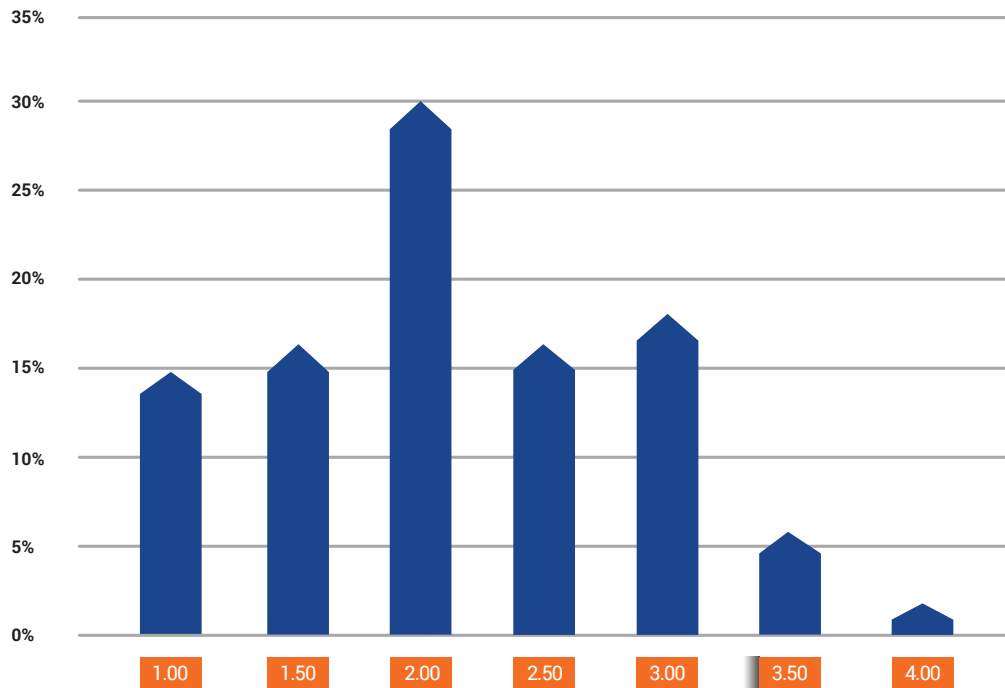
Do you have and test a business continuity or disaster recovery plan?



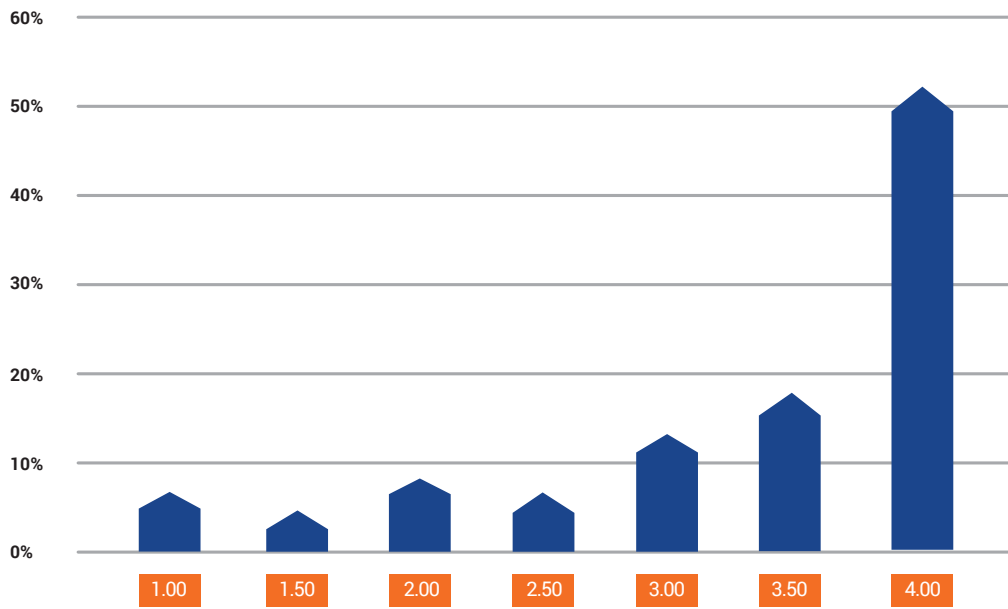
Roughly what proportion of data that is needed to manage technology infrastructure is controlled in a managed business system, as opposed to ad hoc documents?



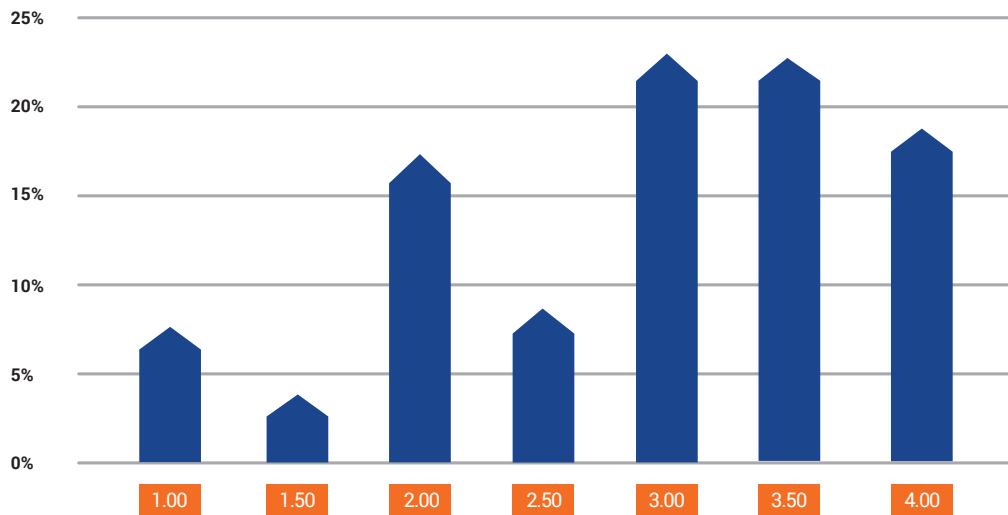
To what degree are your key business systems integrated?



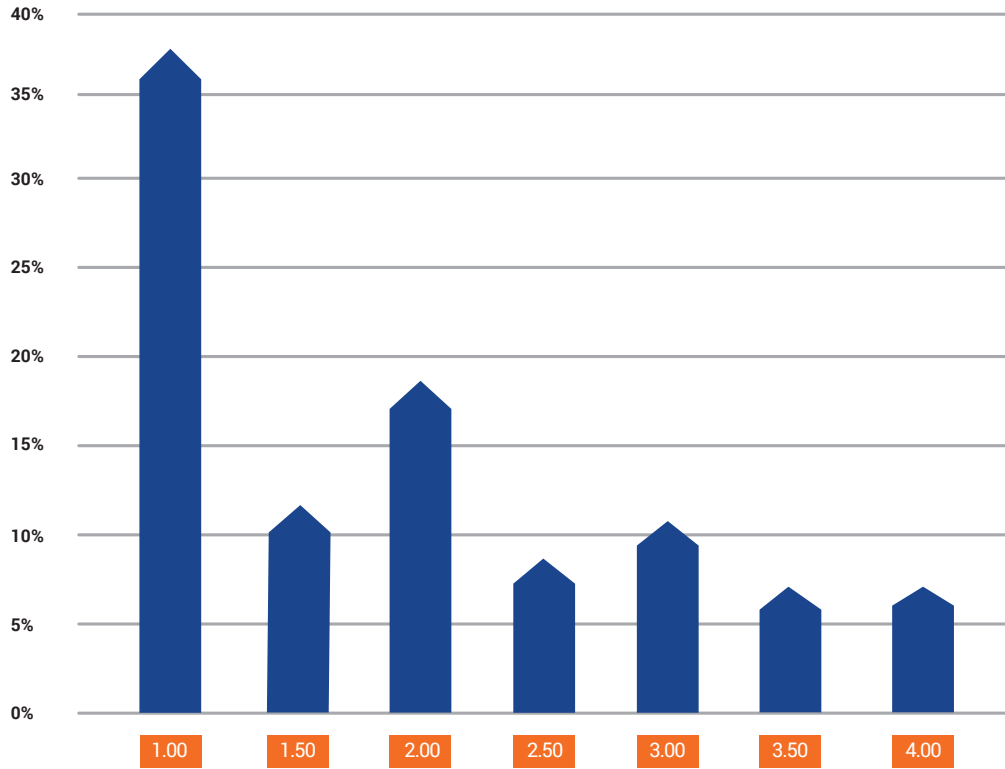
Are your systems that accept credit card information PCI compliant?



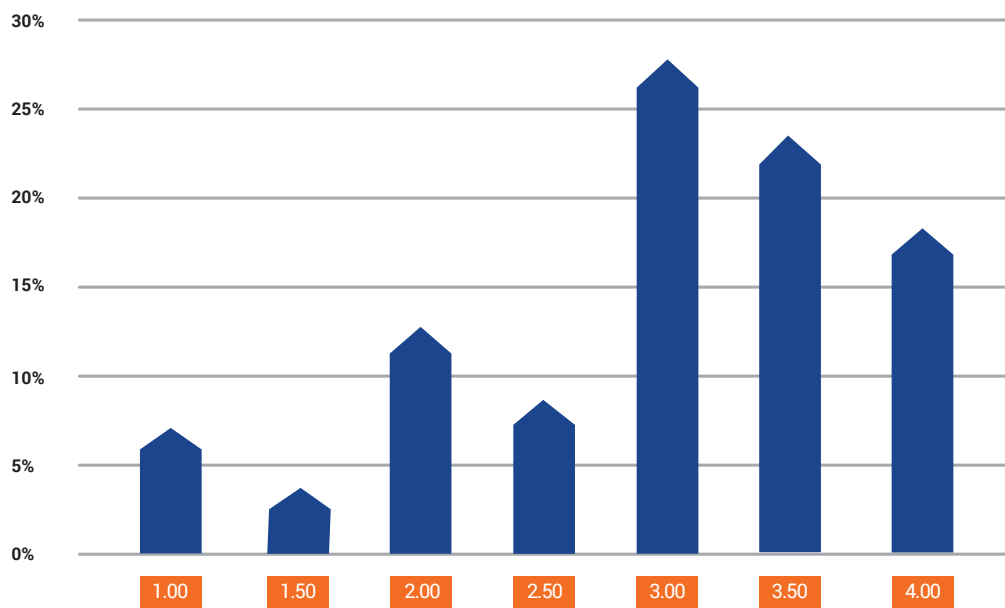
To what degree do your systems protect proprietary or sensitive data (other than credit card or HIPAA-related information), such as names, addresses, and social security numbers?



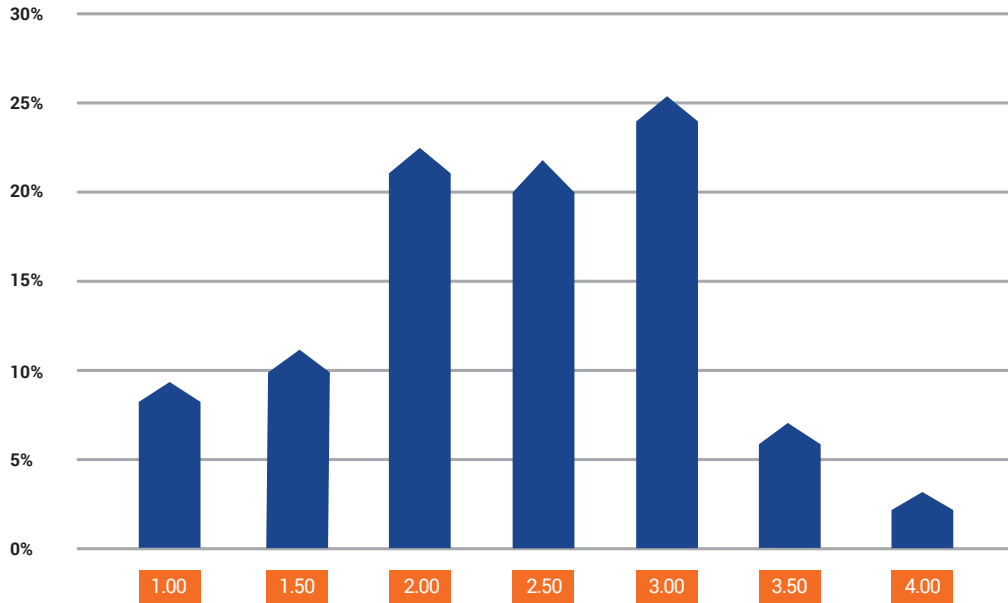
Do you have secure mechanisms for controlling the printing of sensitive documents?



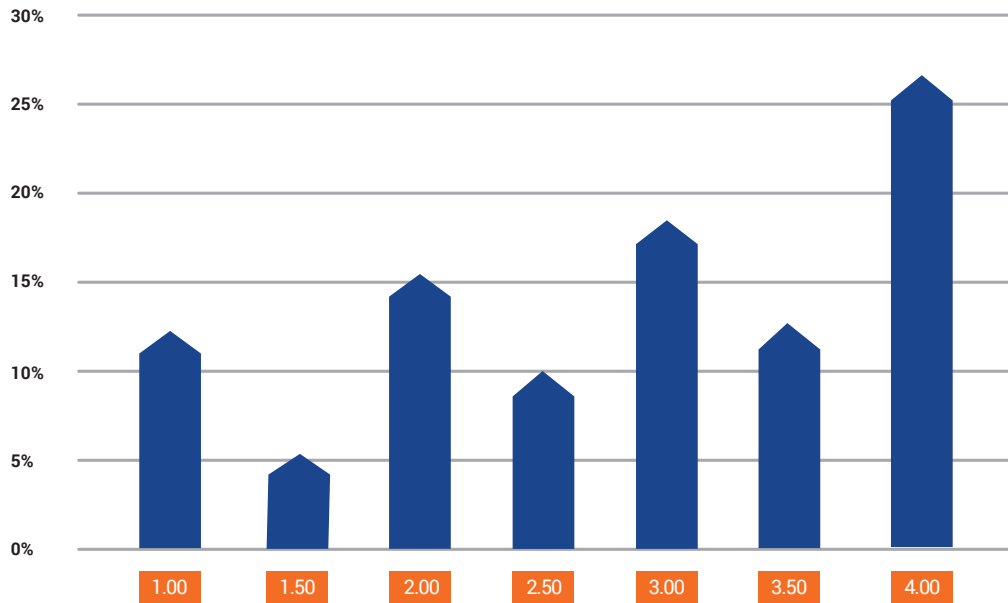
To what degree do you manage physical access to your facilities?



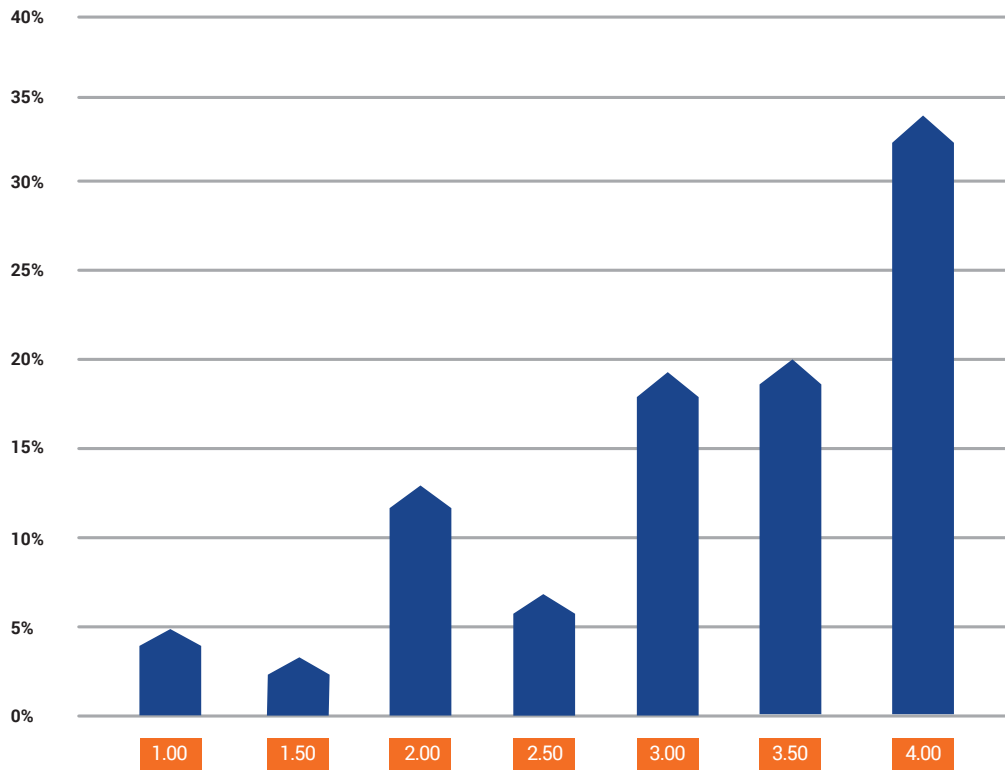
To what degree do you utilize the potential capabilities of the existing software that supports management of your technology infrastructure?



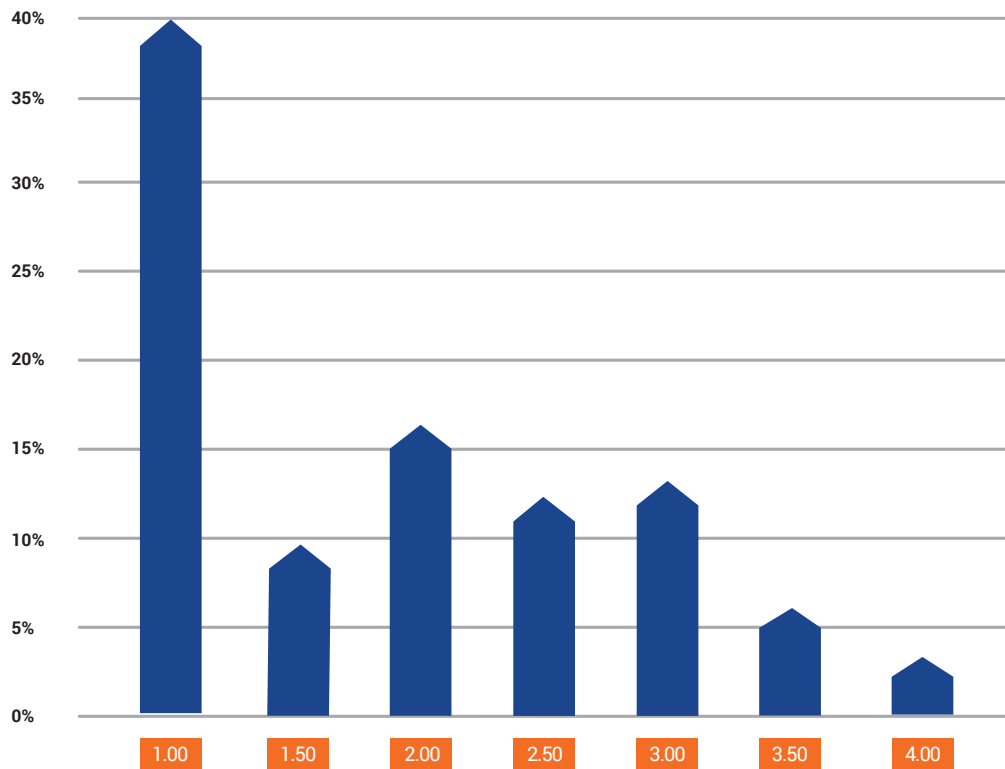
Do you provide staff with devices for remote access to information and systems (e.g., laptops, tablets, mobile phones)?



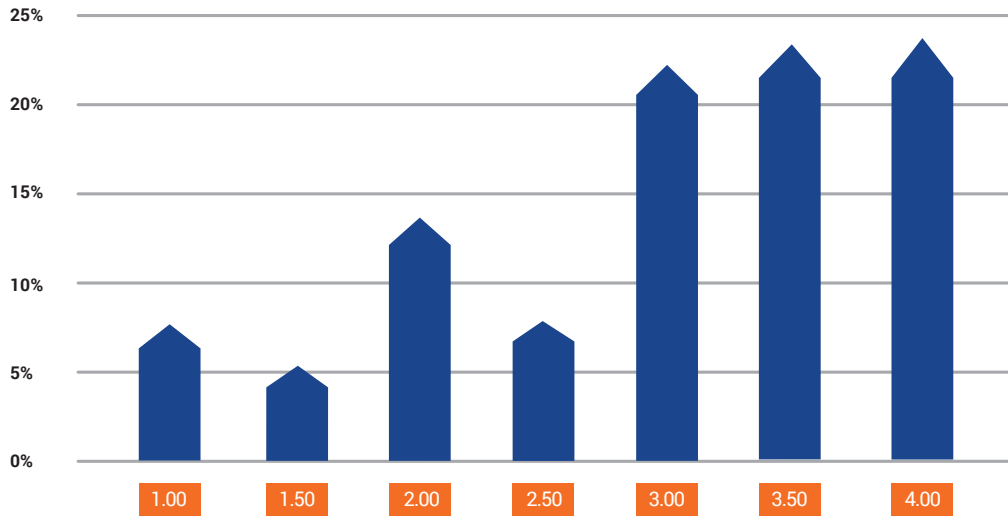
Are your key business systems and documents accessible from outside the office (e.g., via a cloud, VPN)?



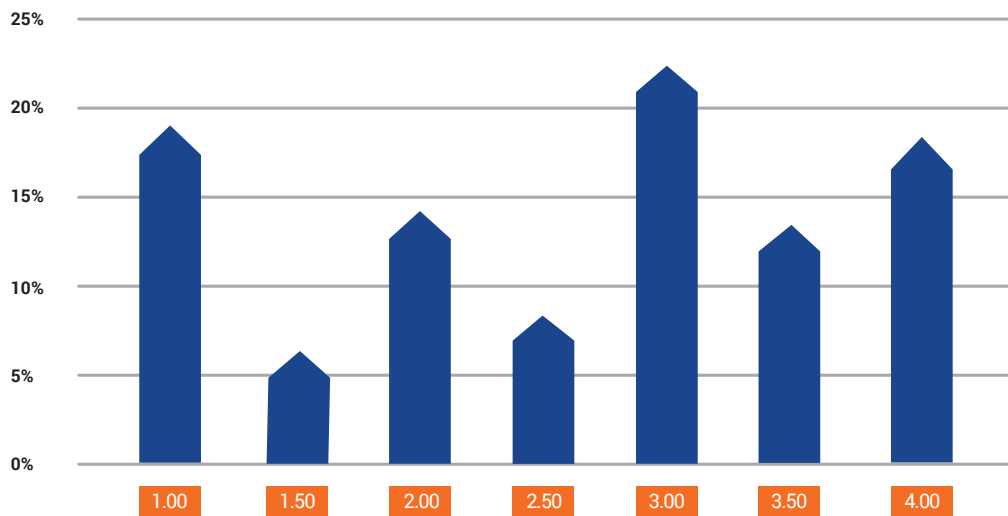
Do you have policies for vendor-maintained systems?



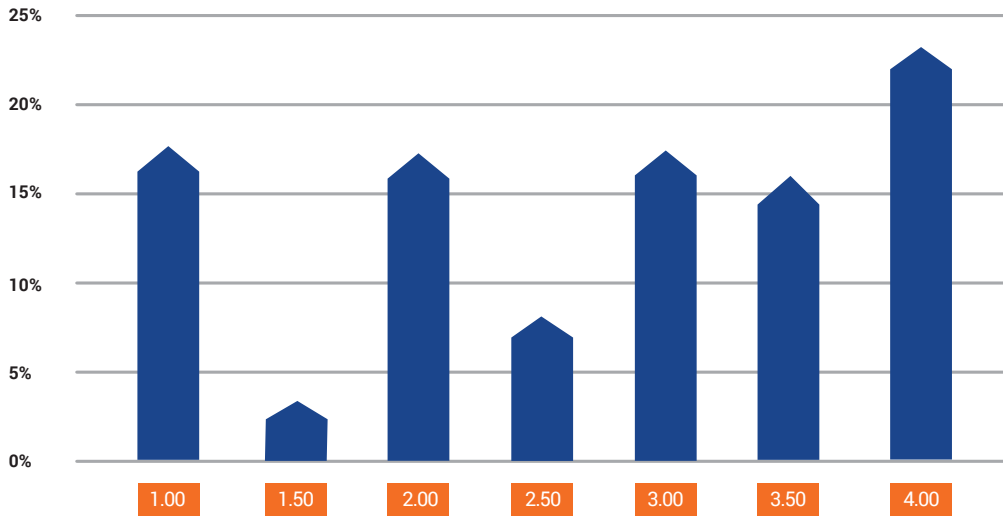
How completely, consistently, and quickly do you disable access to all systems, both internally hosted and cloud-based, upon employee departure?



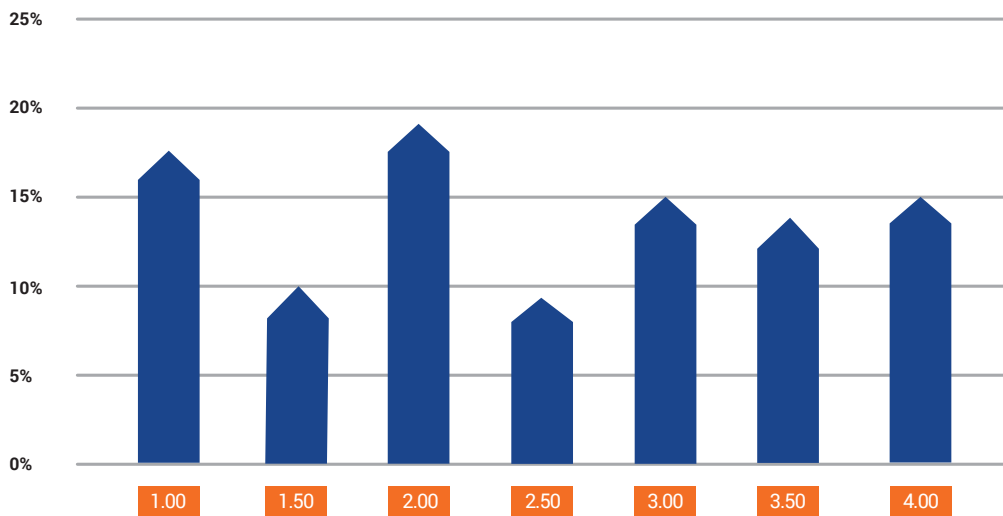
If you have physical servers, to what degree are they secured (such as in a locked room) and protected from environmental damage (such as fire and water)?



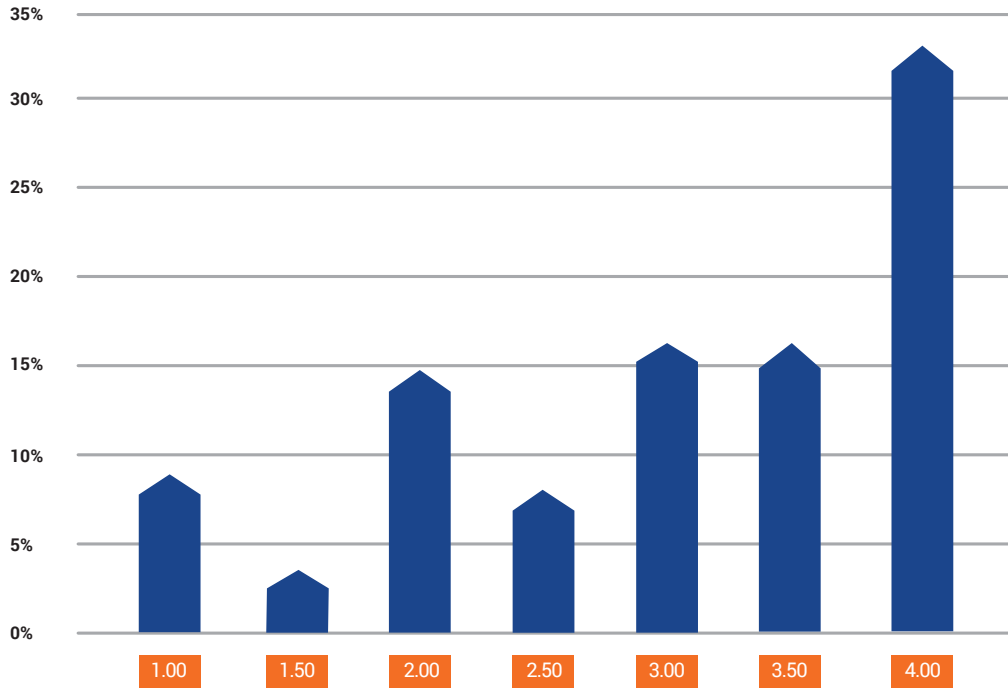
If you have physical servers and a need for staff to access them remotely, to what degree is your remote access controlled and monitored?



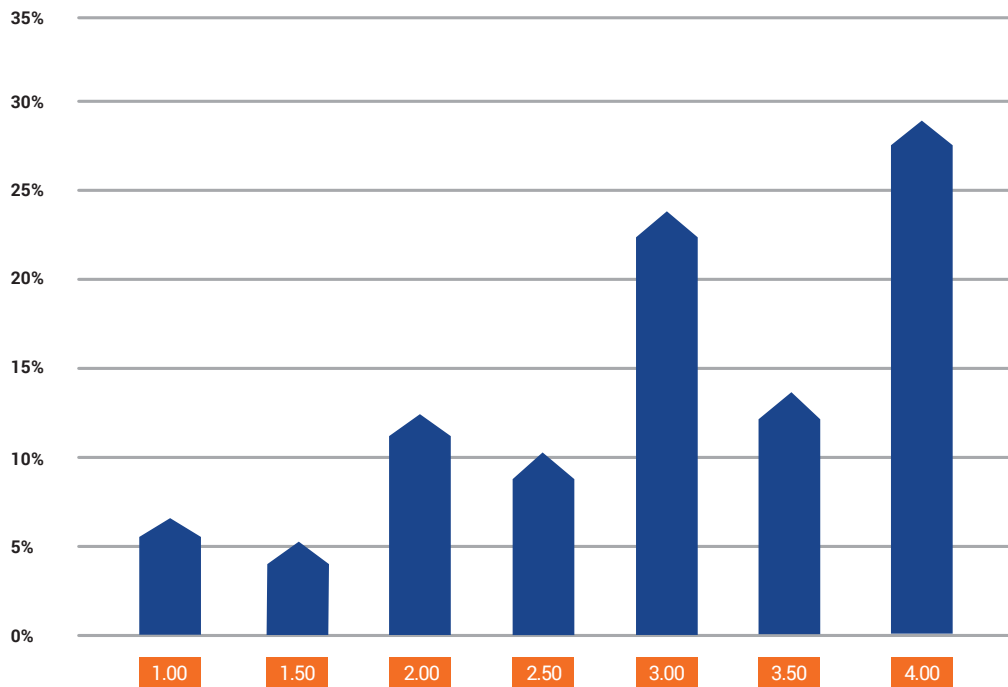
How comprehensive is your password policy for staff computers and accounts?



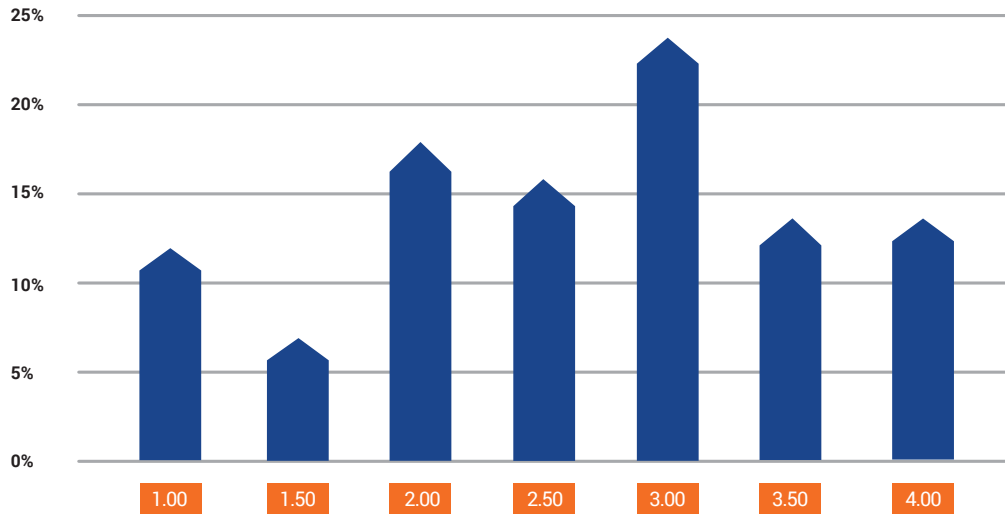
To what degree is antivirus software deployed, updated, and run on staff computers?



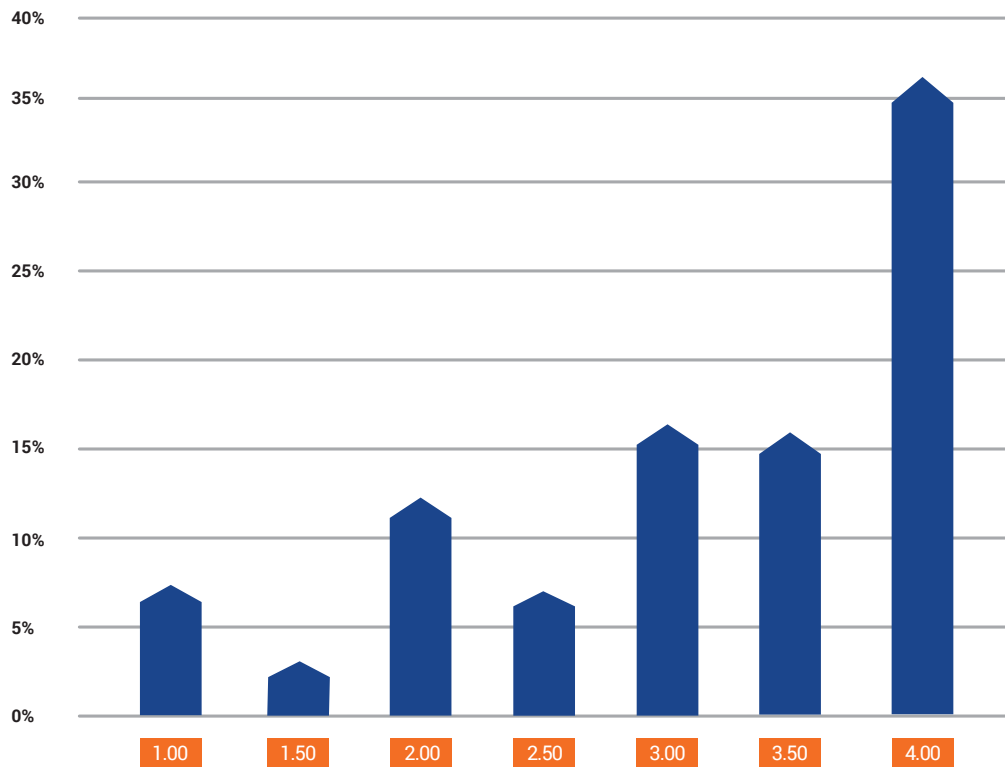
To what degree is your wireless network secured, including partitioned wireless access for guests or visitors?



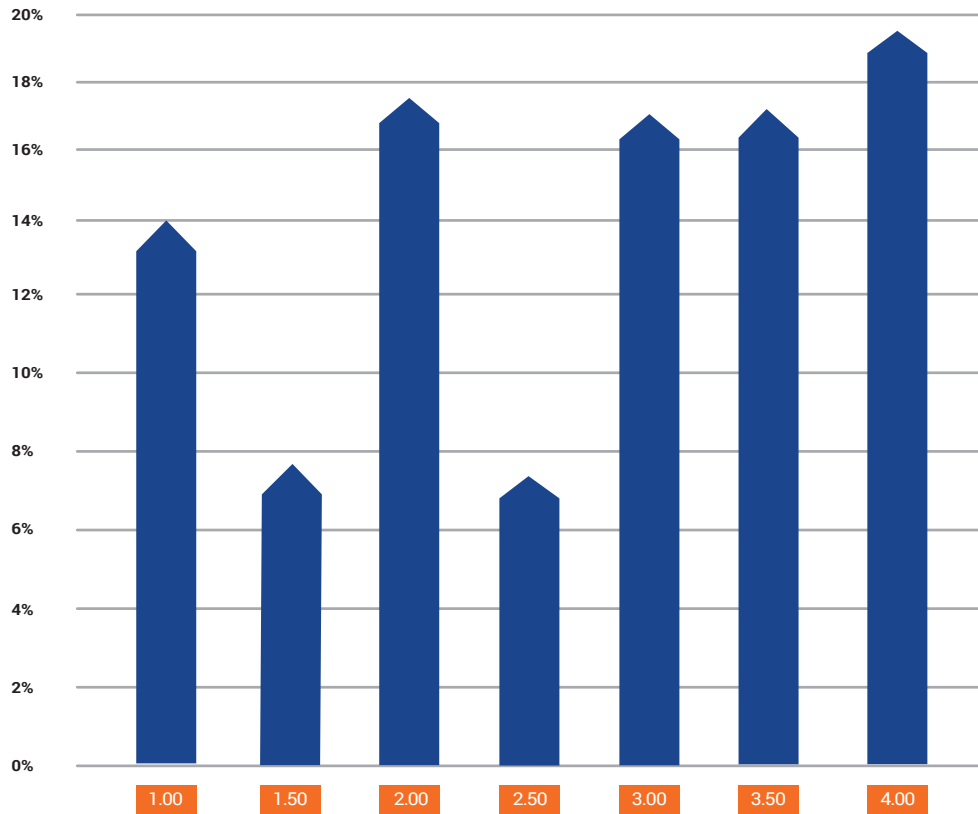
Are your websites closely monitored for inappropriate activity from external parties, such as hackers?



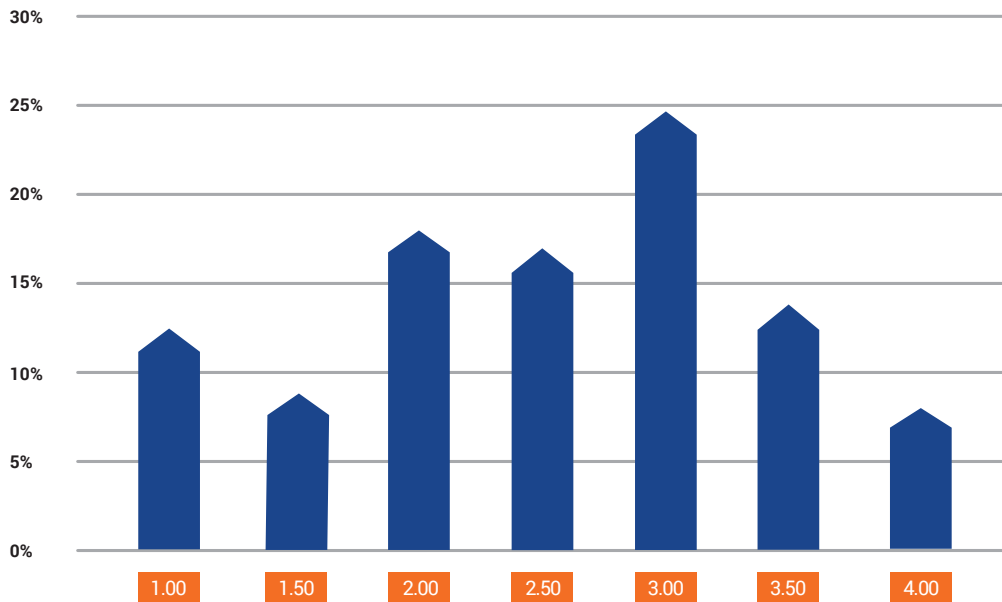
To what degree do your phone systems support modern features such as call forwarding, remote access to voicemails, or voicemails sent to email?



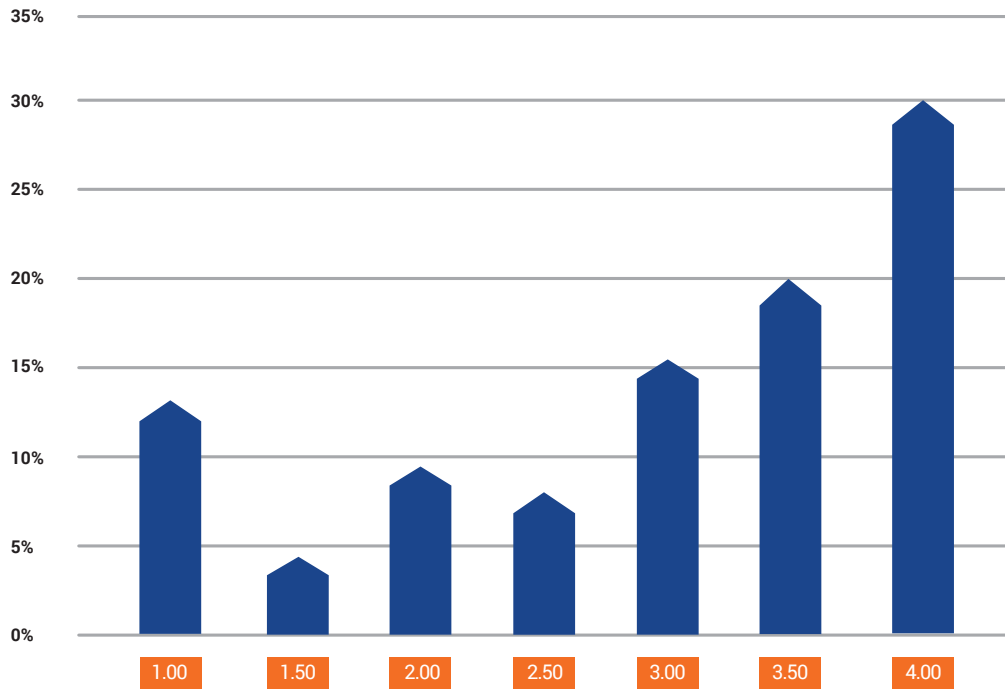
To what degree are organization sites remote from your headquarters set up with the same level of technology as the main site?



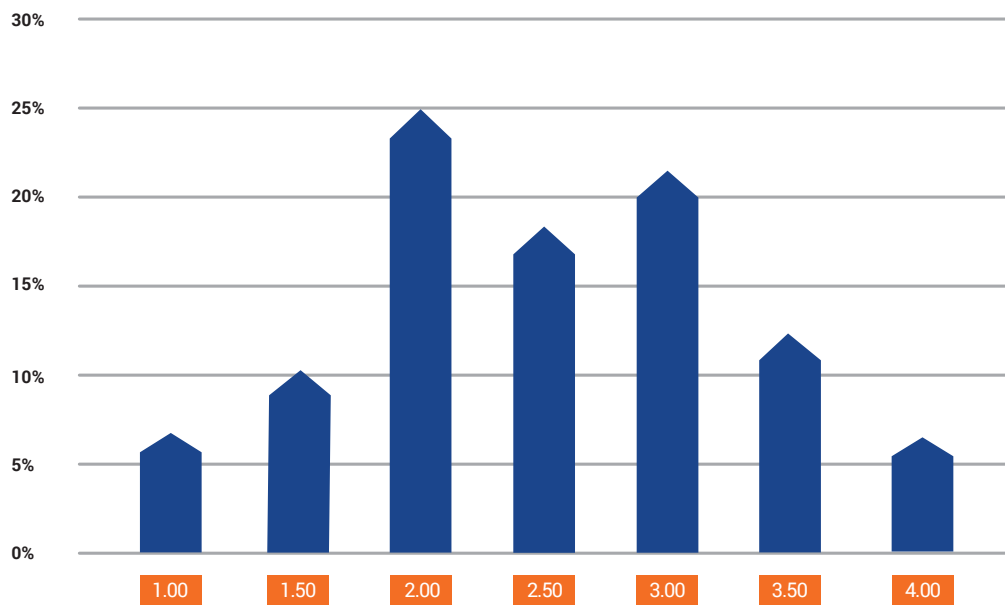
Roughly what proportion of data that drives program management operations is controlled in a managed business system (vs. stored in ad hoc spreadsheets or documents)?



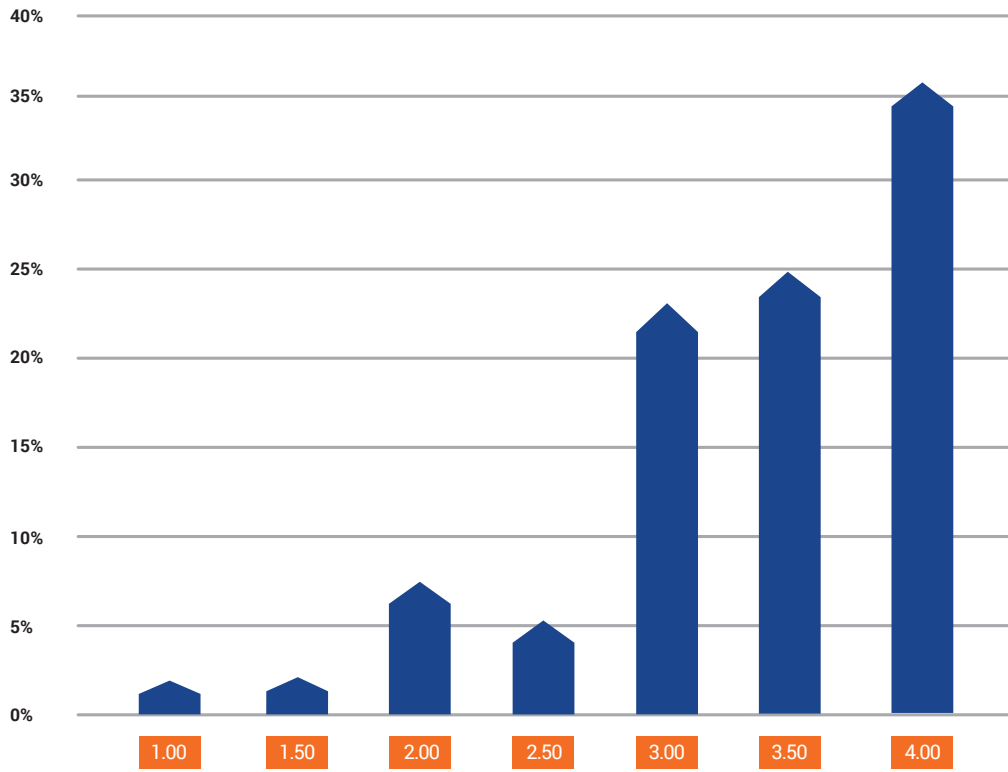
If you collect HIPAA-protected information, to what degree are you HIPAA compliant?



To what degree do you review how technology can strategically improve your organization's administrative efficiency?



Are all of your financial transactions managed in secure business systems?



LEADERSHIP

The sixteen **LEADERSHIP** questions address intentional efforts by the participating organizations to integrate technology practices with organizational priorities, ensure top-level buy-in and engagement with technology decisions and activities, and participate in the broader technology community.

The scores in this section were the lowest on average by a noticeable margin. Participants gave **LEADERSHIP** questions an average score of 2.36 on the 4-point scale, a big drop from the overall average of 2.56. No category averaged 3.00 or better, and many clustered closer to 2.00.

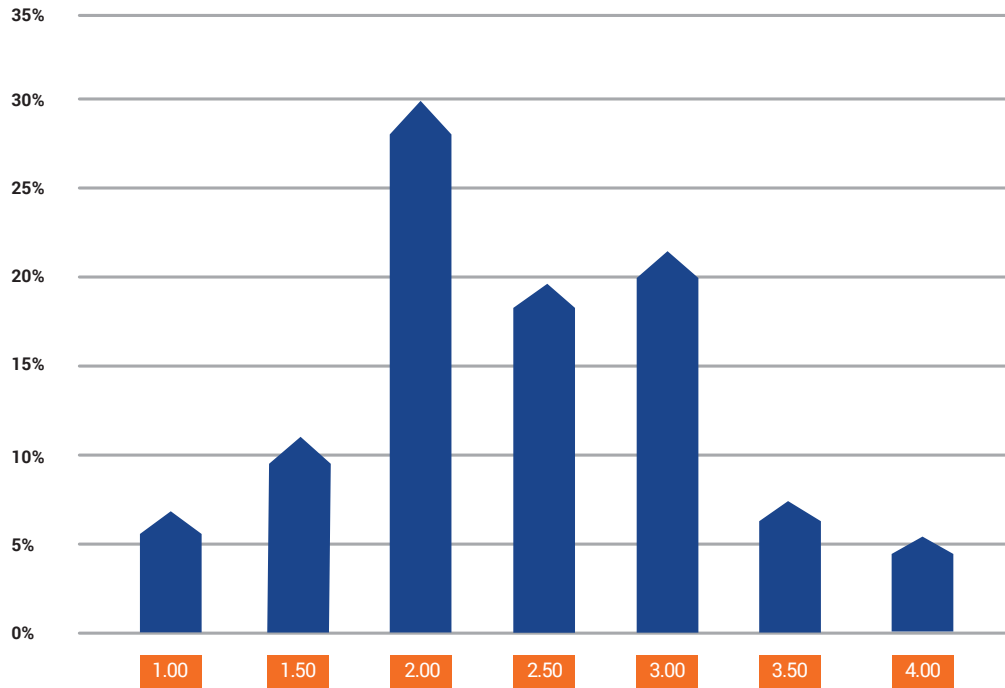
Participants rated themselves highest on having an organizational champion for technology activities. This is a critical component of a successful technology environment. A related category, the involvement of IT staff in strategic planning with executive staff, also received high marks. The final question rated 2.60 or higher was ensuring that technology meets the needs of the organization's board.

The lowest-rated category – 1.90 on the 4-point scale – is the performance of technology return on investment analysis. Given the resource-intensive nature of ROI work, this is not surprising. Similarly, high effort activities – surveying staff for technology satisfaction and sharing best practices with other organizations – also rate close to 2.00.

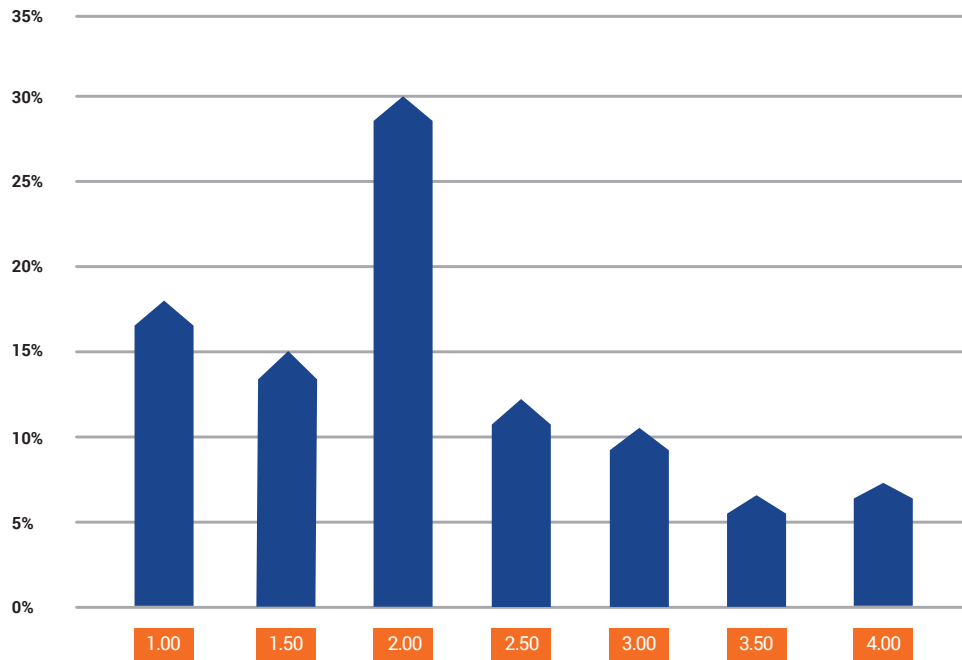
Most of the other leadership categories have responses clustering around 2.00 with long trails of higher ratings and averages closer to 2.40. Internal communication, education, modeling, and investment demand time, money, and effort, which can be in short supply for nonprofits.

Money seems to have the least impact, however. Organizational budgets have a very low correlation with the participants' responses. Staff size, however, is very important. The larger the organization, the higher they ranked themselves on almost every **LEADERSHIP** category.

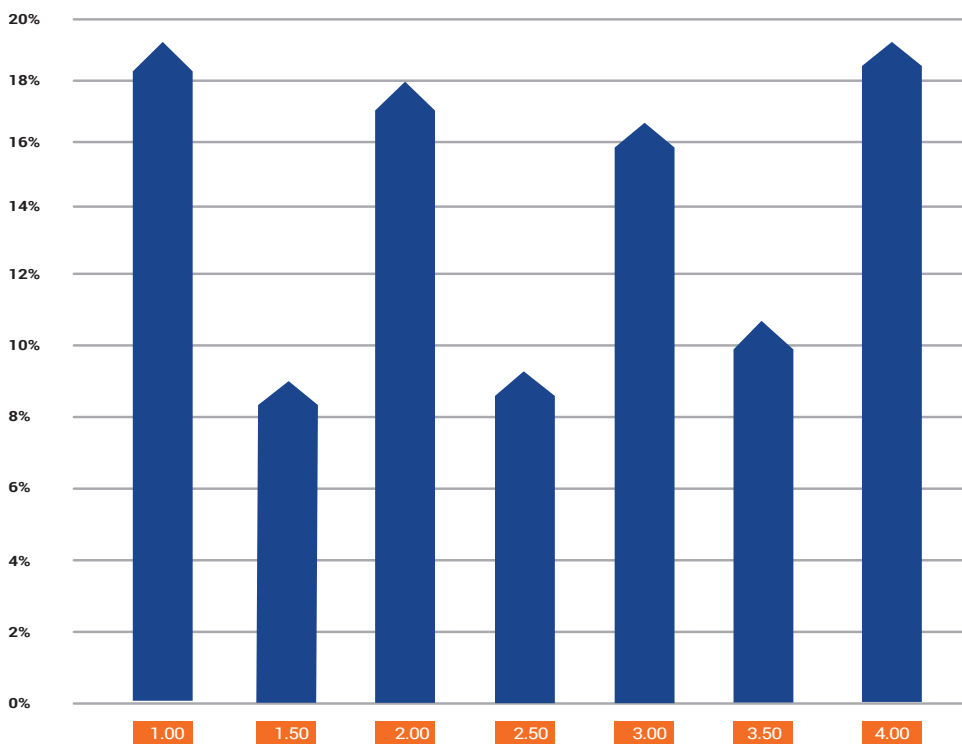
To what degree do you review how other organizations or industries are using technology to address the challenges faced by your organization?



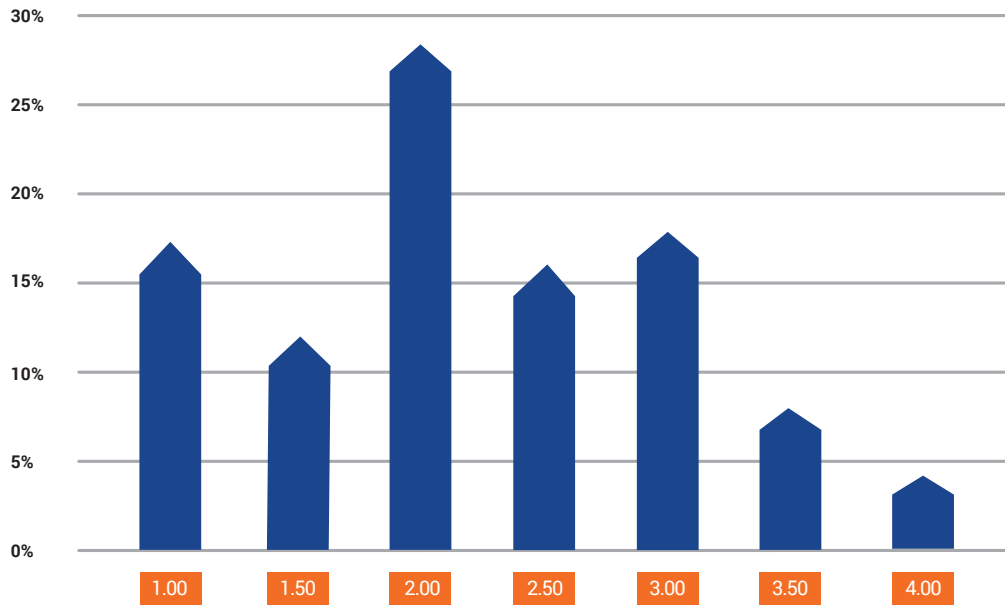
To what degree does your organization's leadership share best practices or other information about your technology experience with other organizations?



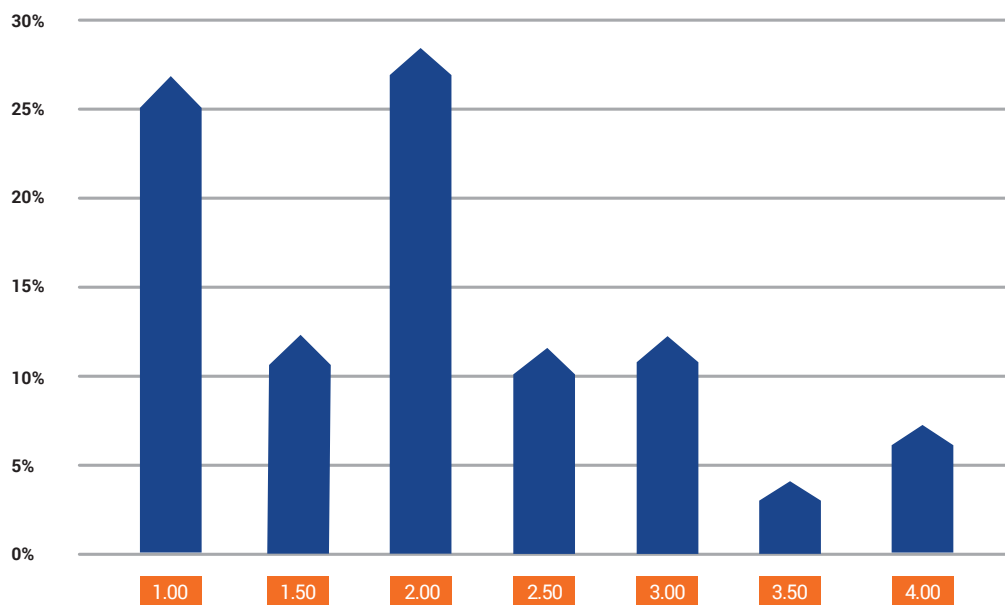
Do you have policies for conflicts of interest with vendors, consultants, clients, or other relevant constituents?



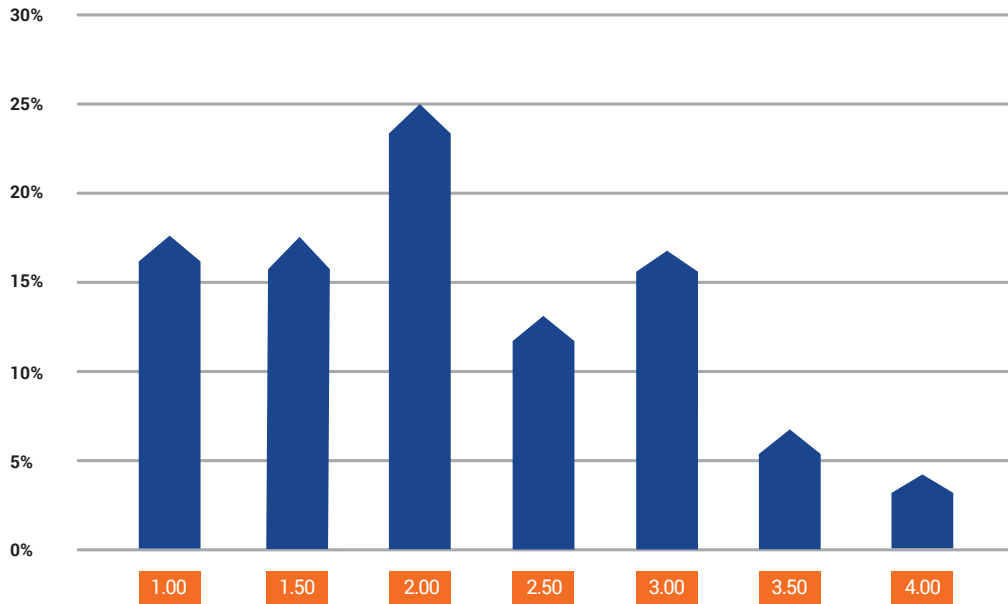
To what degree are key reports generated automatically from standard business systems?



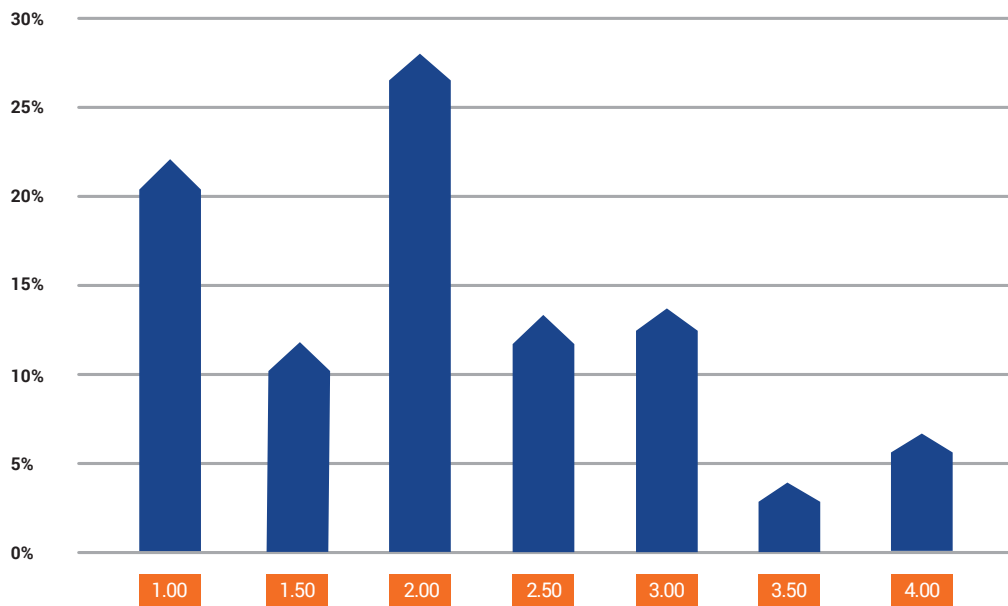
Do you survey your staff to assess their satisfaction with your organization's available technology?



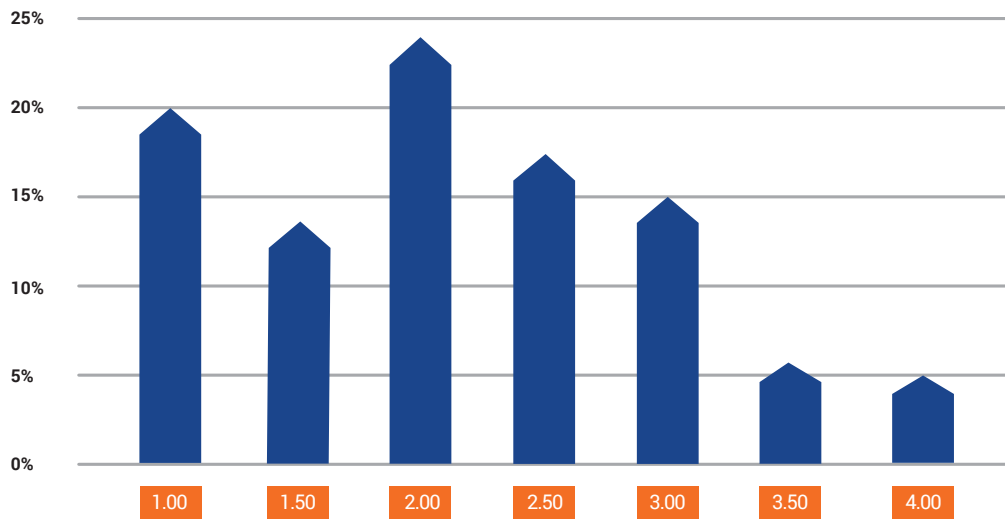
To what degree do you educate employees about how the organization's data and IT systems benefit the organization and its mission (e.g., reimbursement, regulatory compliance, client safety)?



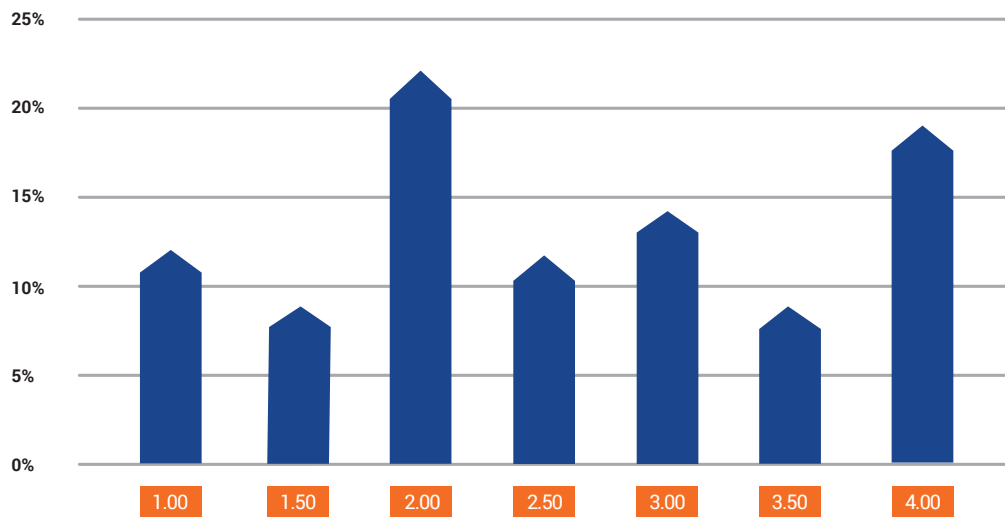
To what degree do your IT or technology-responsible staff share with other organizations best practices or other information about your technology experience?



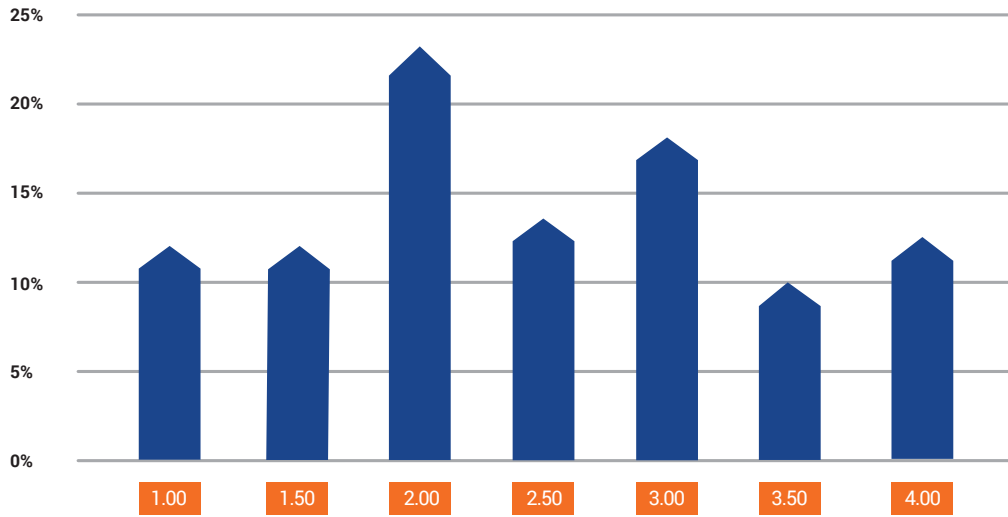
To what degree do you review how technology is affecting your staff interactions and organizational culture?



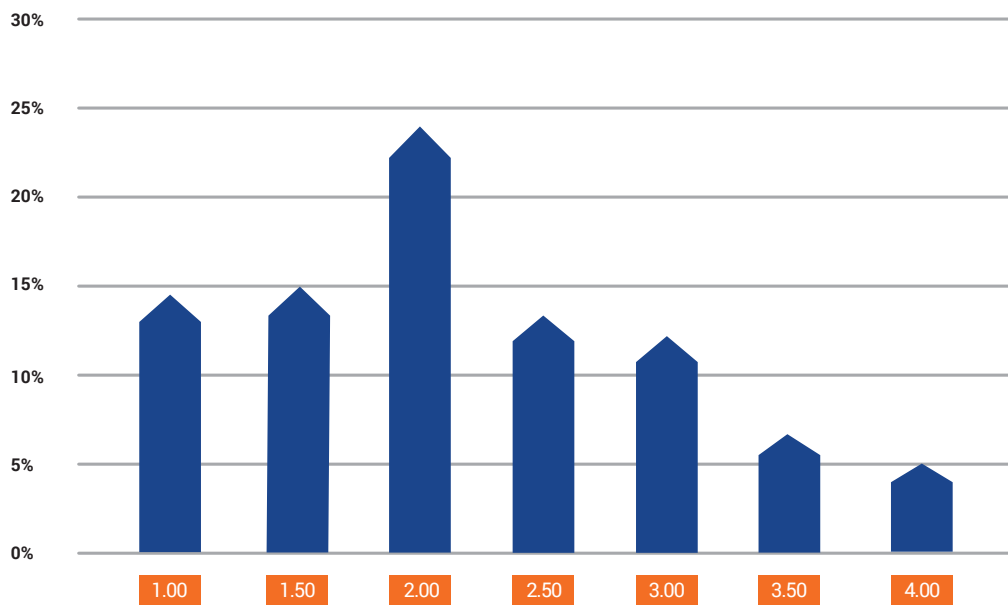
To what degree do IT or technology-responsible staff members participate in strategic and planning discussions with the executive team?



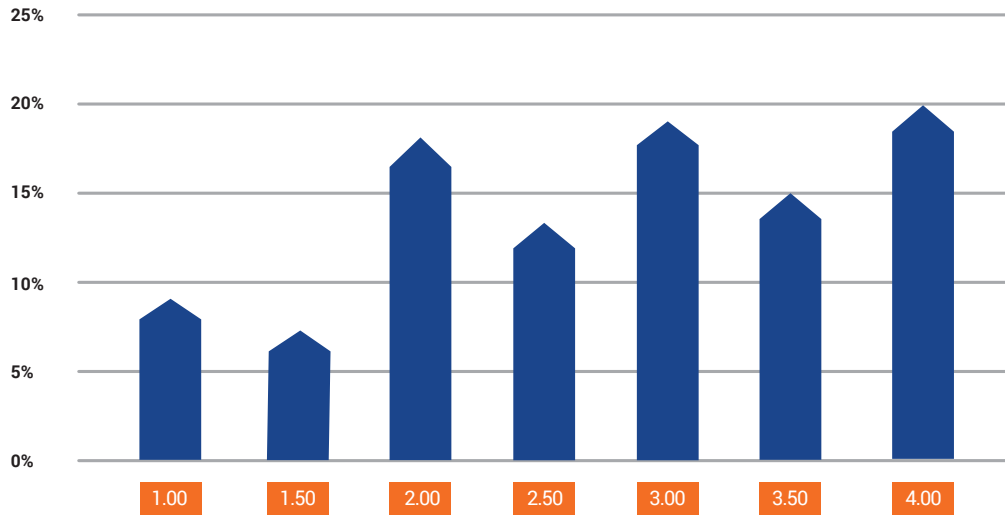
Does your organization integrate technology into your strategic plan?



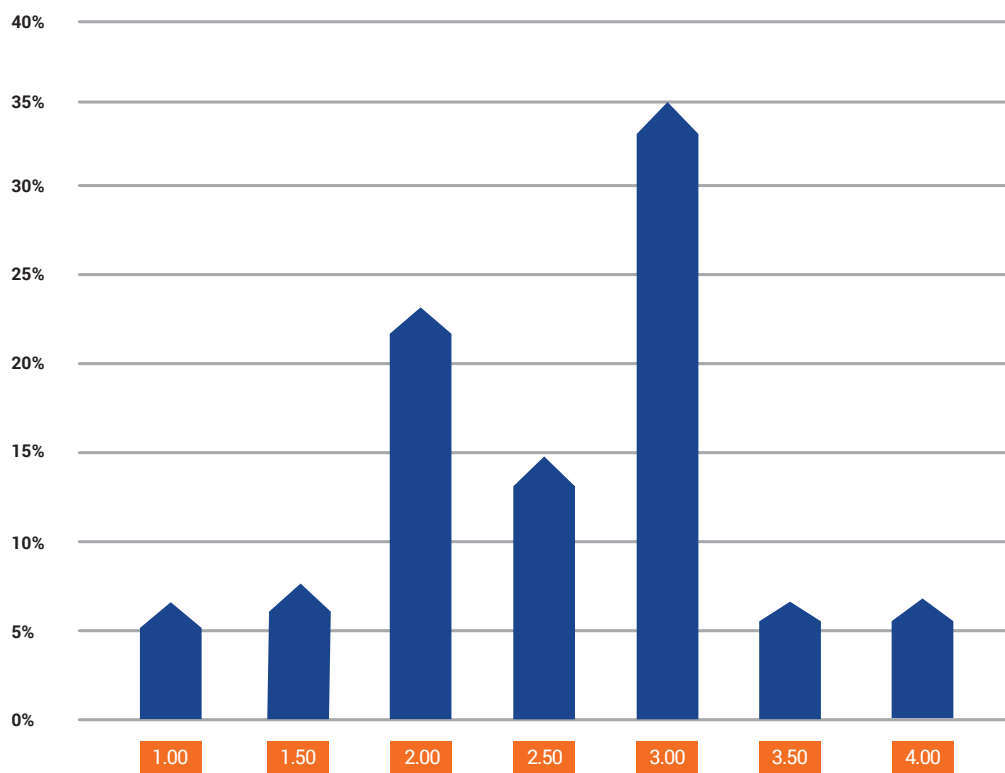
To what degree does your board incorporate technology considerations in its planning and review activities?



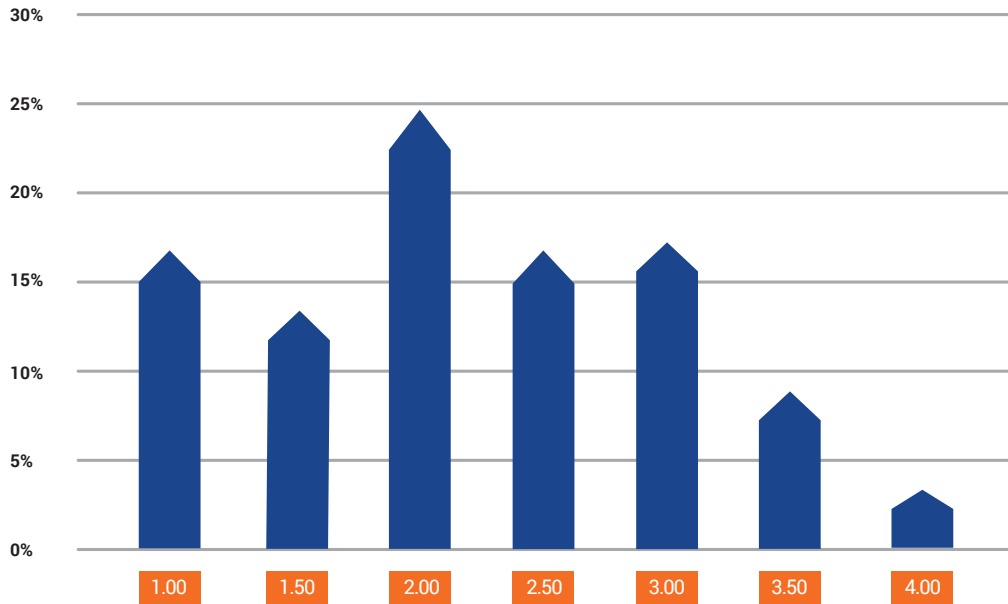
Is there a champion in the leadership of the organization who obtains buy-in for technology strategy and investments?



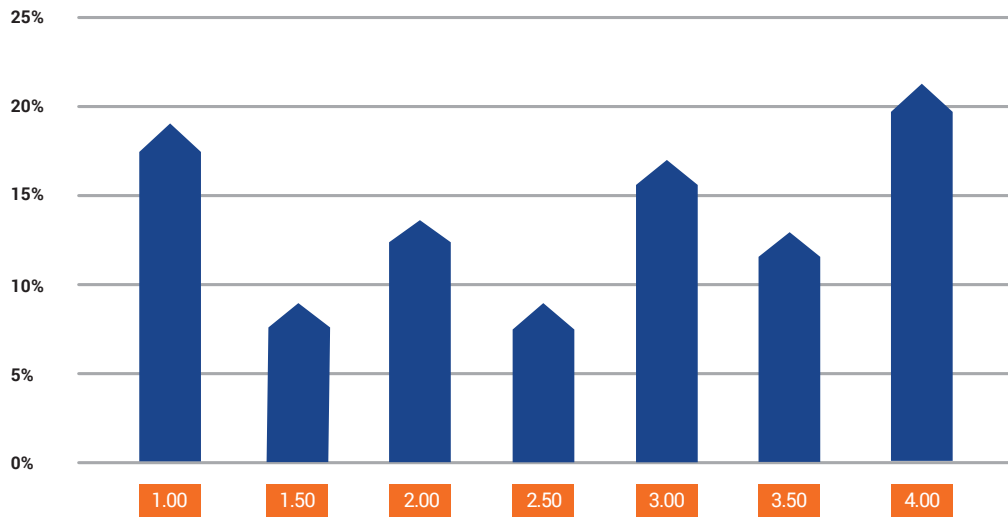
How well does your use of technology to communicate with your board meet your needs?



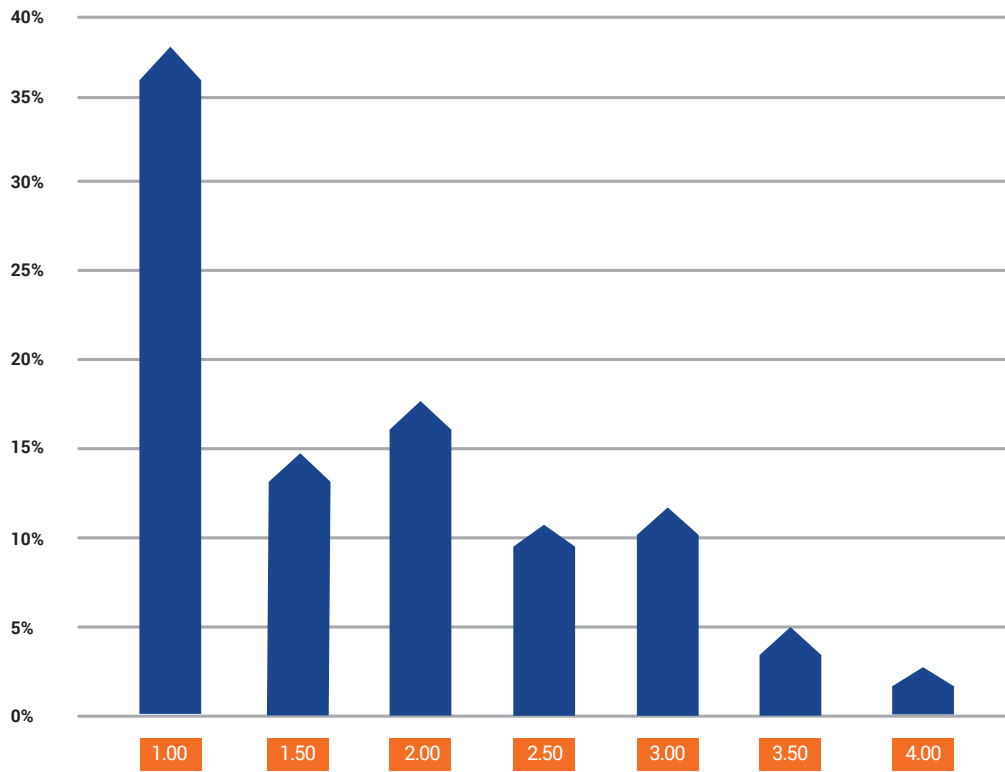
To what degree do you review how technology is affecting interactions between your staff and clients?



Does your organization have a defined technology budget that in some way separates technology expenses from other general "overhead" or "supplies" line items in your annual operating budget?



To what degree does your organization conduct a return on investment (ROI) analysis or study as part of its technology investment process? For example, in planning a software, hardware, or service purchase, is an evaluation of costs and impact on the organization conducted?.



ORGANIZATION

The seventeen **ORGANIZATIONAL** questions describe the ways that technology and data use are integrated into the fabric of the participating organizations. This includes policy development and implementation, staff behavior and investment, and data accessibility.

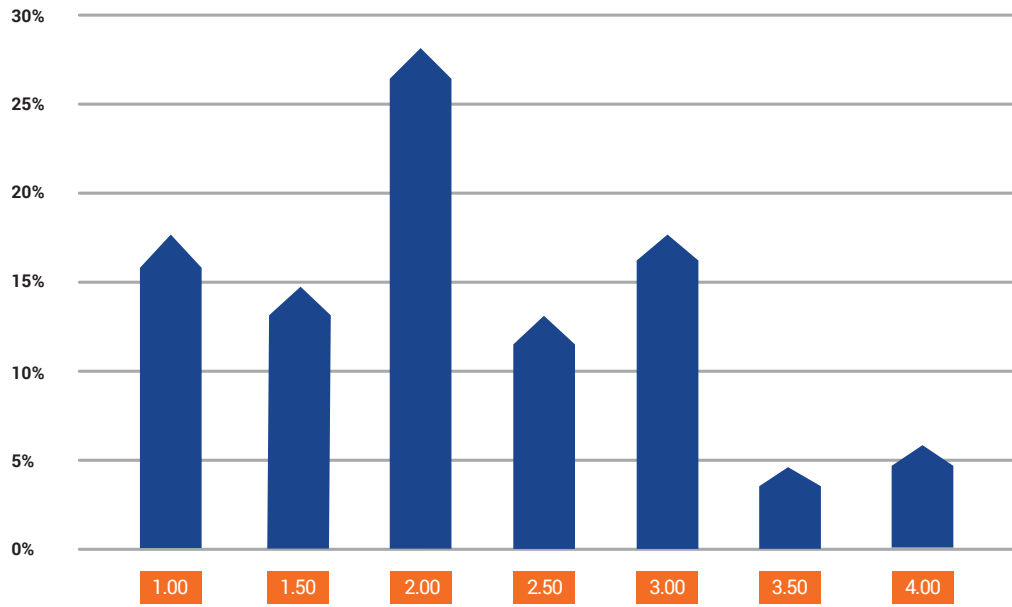
The average scores for these questions track closely to the survey overall. **ORGANIZATION** categories average 2.53 on the 4-point scale, nearly the same as the 2.56 overall average.

Staff support and needs come in the highest, with four categories averaging near 2.90. Participants rated long-term storage and access for critical files (including emails) the highest. The ease of finding necessary files came in close. Availability of IT support for staff and the match between staff needs and technology options rounded out the most highly-rated questions.

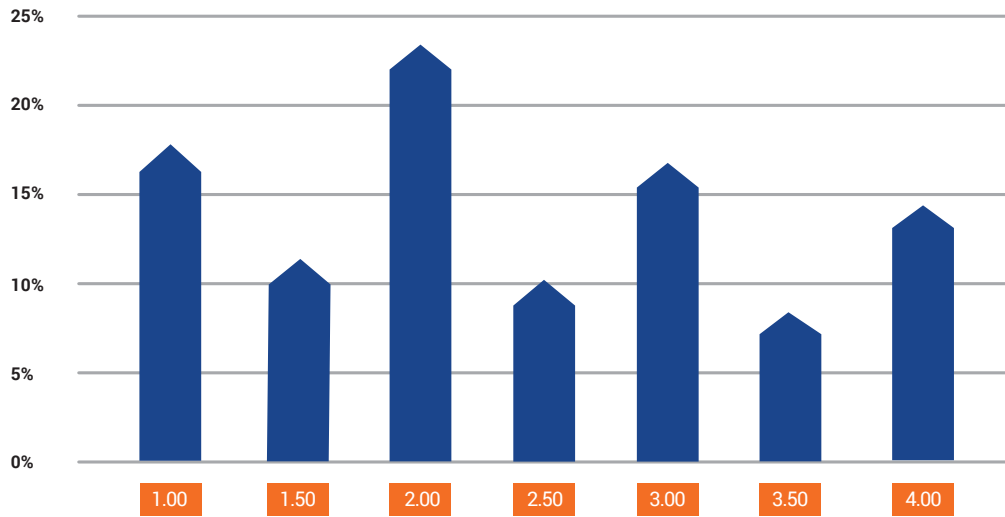
Policies and processes tended to be rated lower. The three bottom categories all clustered around 2.25. The lowest was the existence of a policy on staff use of personal devices for work. While this is an important consideration, it requires more effort to regulate and enforce. Having a clearly defined technology priority process and a clear, well-implemented upgrade policy rated similarly low.

As with **INFRASTRUCTURE**, neither budget nor staff size had a significant correlation with **ORGANIZATION** responses.

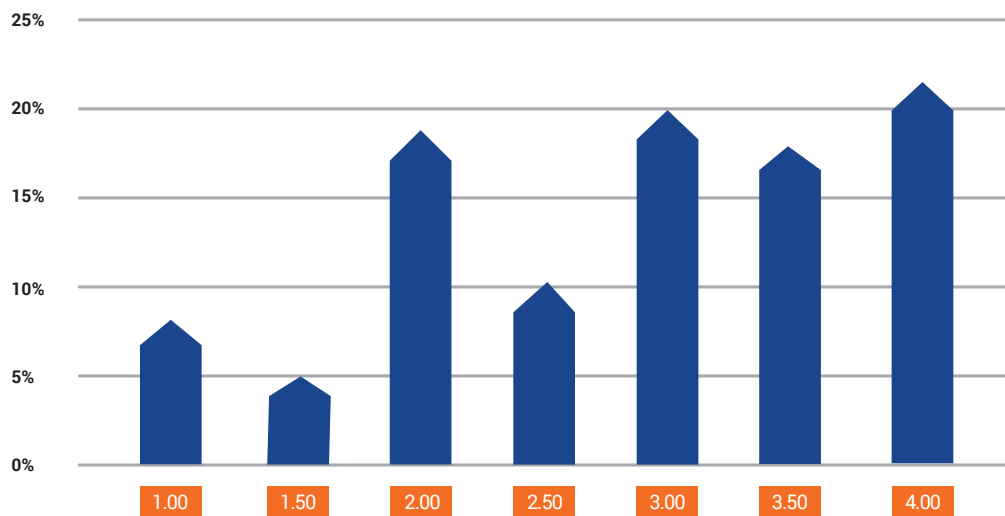
To what degree do you use a defined process for prioritizing technology needs, selection, and implementation?



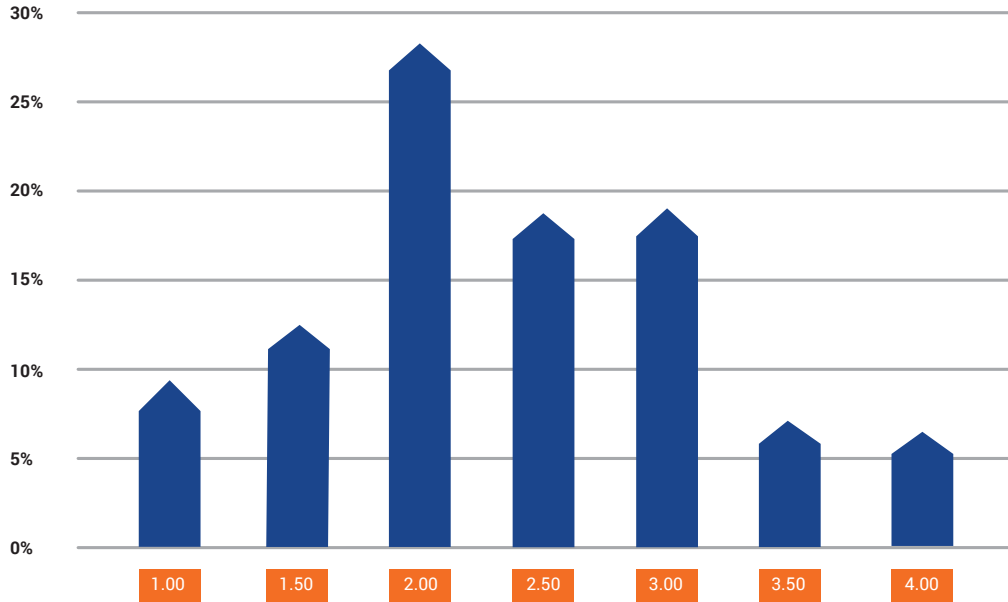
Does your organization provide a budget for technology-related professional development, such as training, memberships, conferences, or certifications?



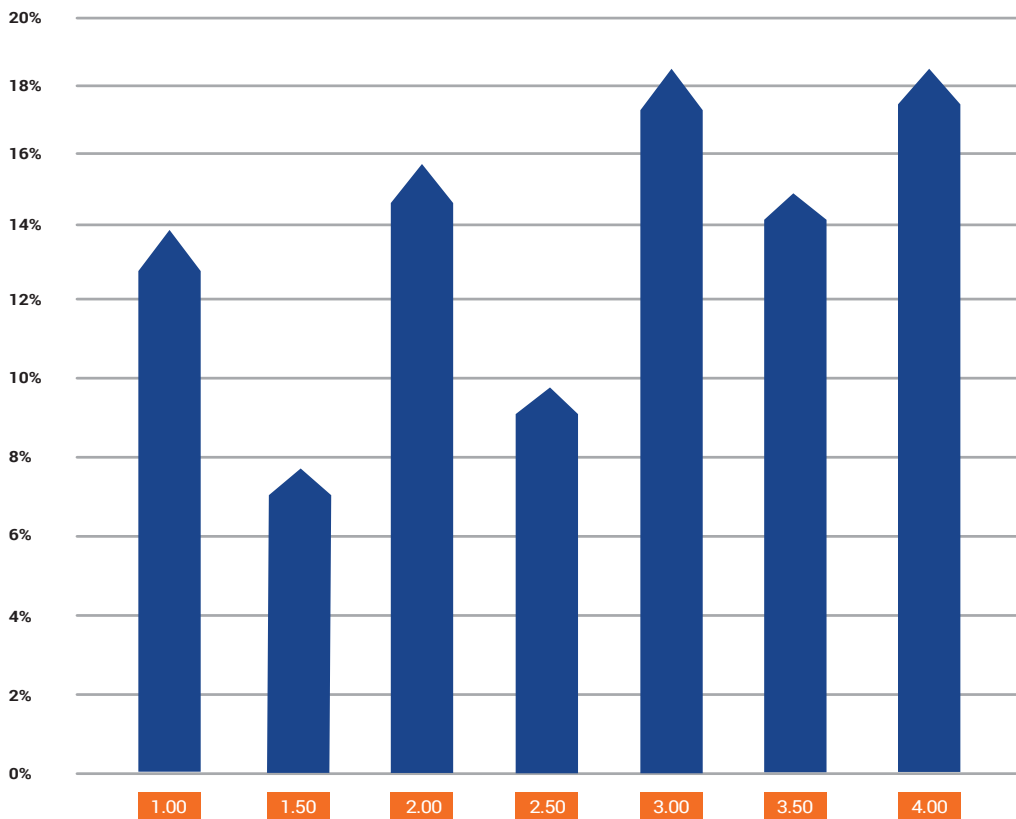
To what degree do you provide technical support to staff for device and business system issues?



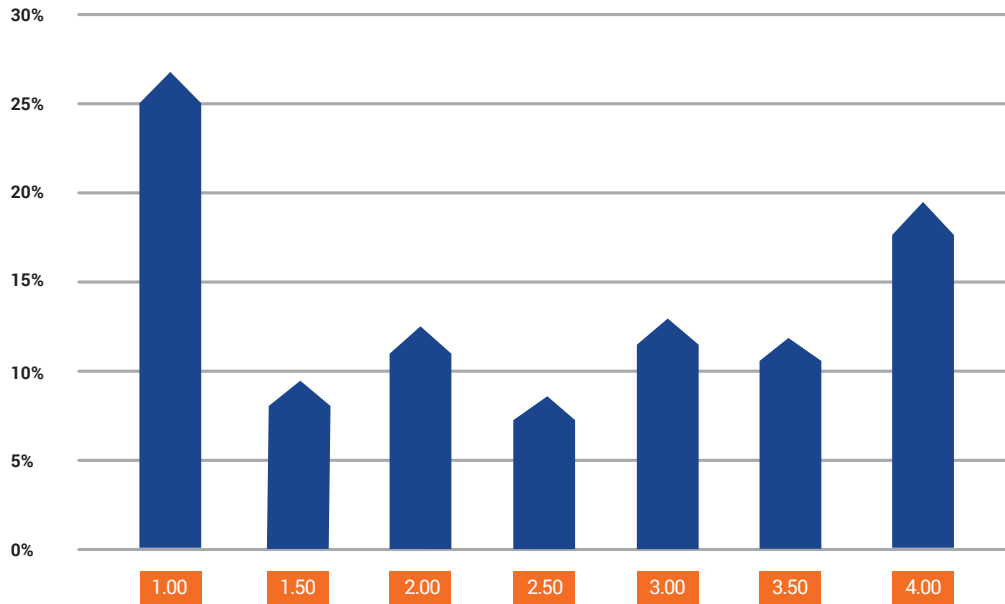
How often do you train your staff about how to use IT tools and systems effectively?



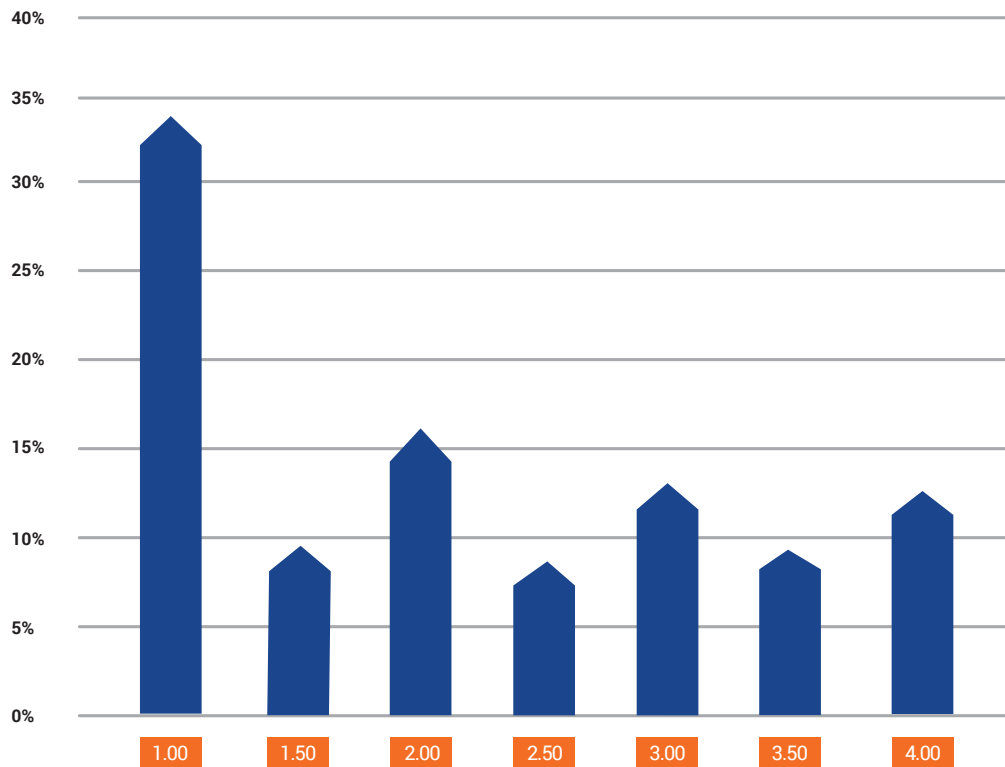
To what degree is information about the treatment of confidential information incorporated into new employee onboarding and employee handbooks?



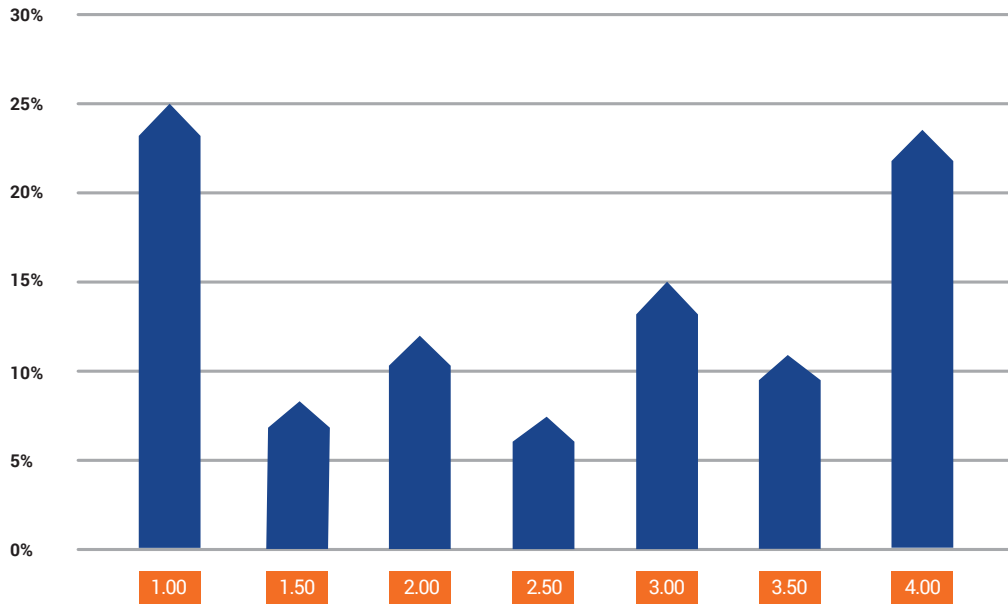
Do you have a policy defining appropriate use of social media by employees related to their work?



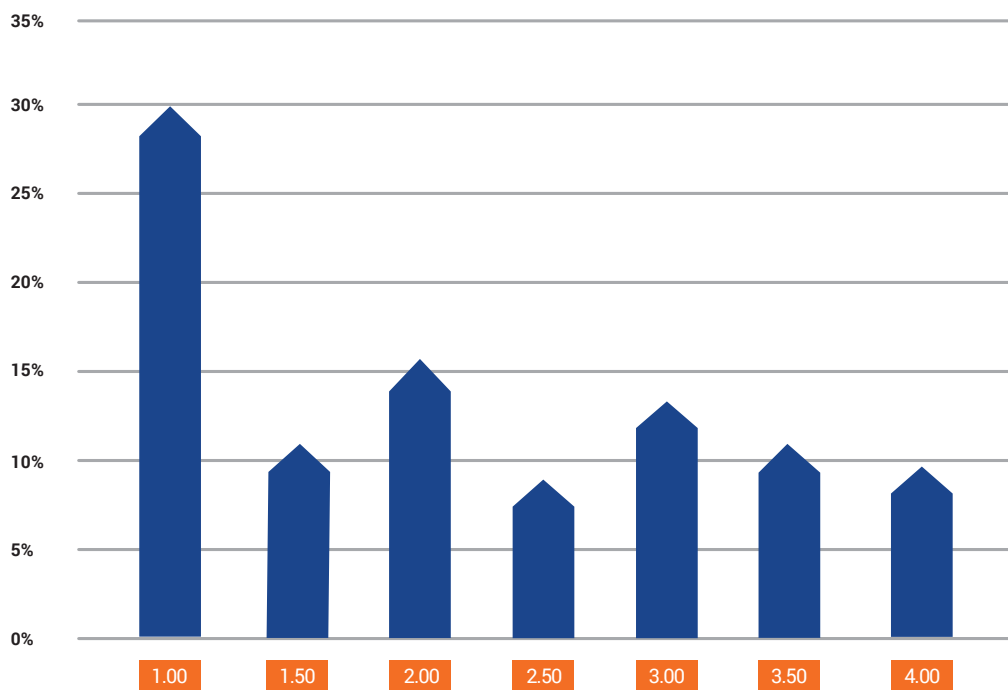
Do you have a policy for staff using their own devices for work?



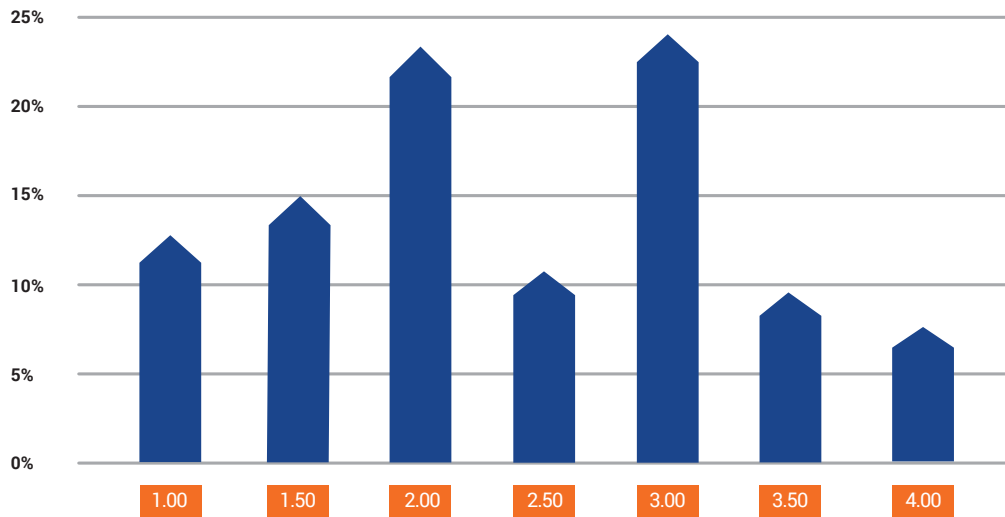
Do you have a policy defining appropriate use of the internet at work?



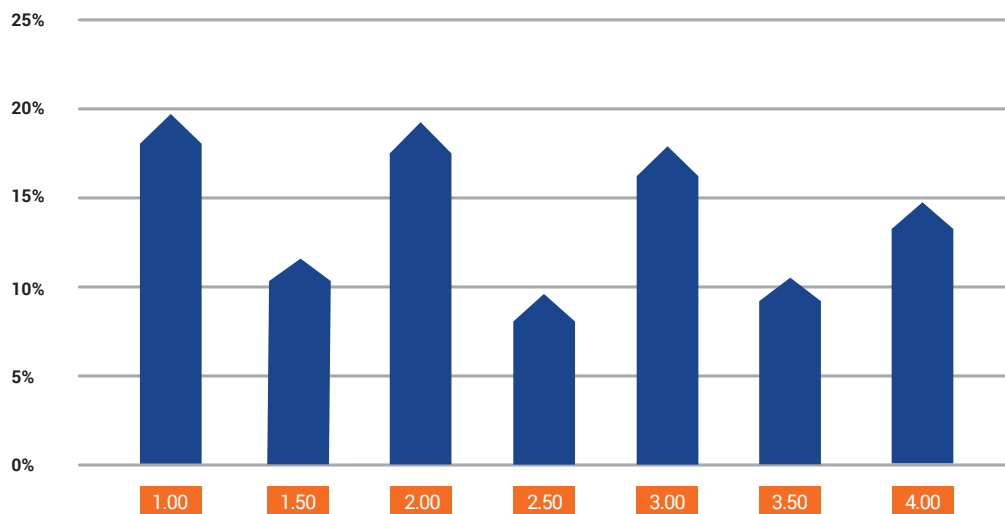
To what degree do you have and implement a policy for upgrading staff devices such as computers and mobile phones?



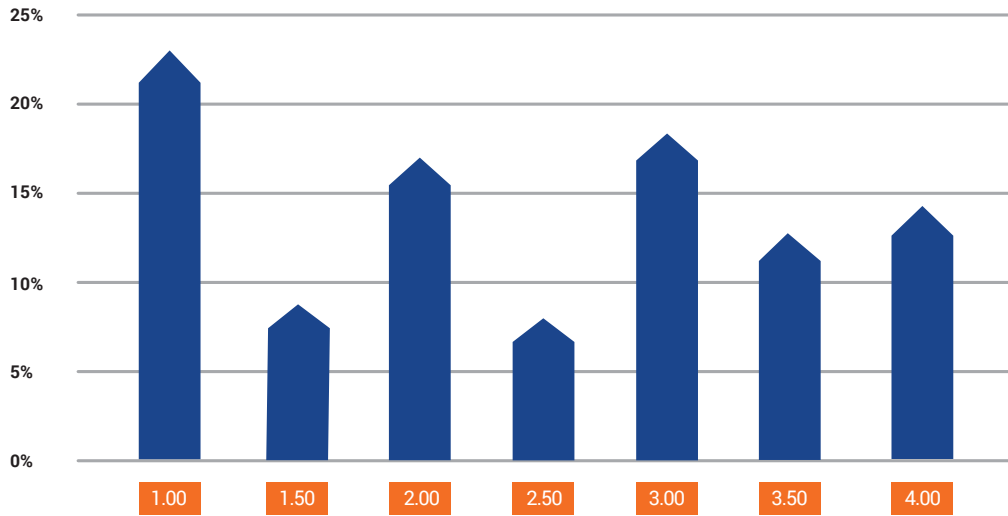
To what degree are you prepared to continue to operate if an IT or technology-responsible staff member leaves the organization (e.g., systems documented, backup staff trained)?



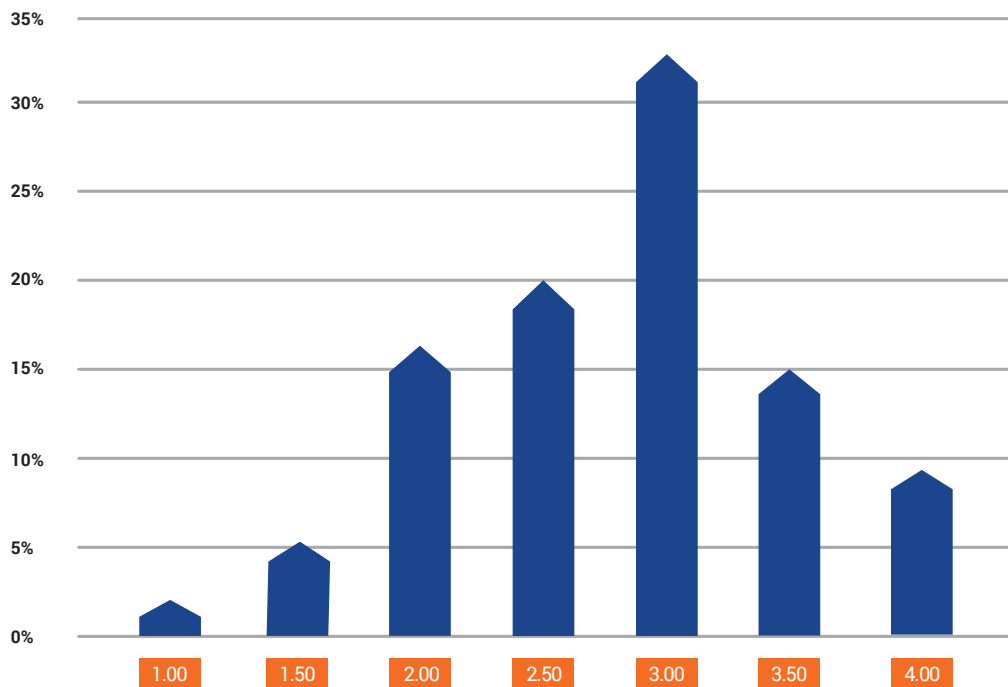
To what degree is information required by finance from staff collected through self-serve systems (e.g., expense submission, billable time reporting)?



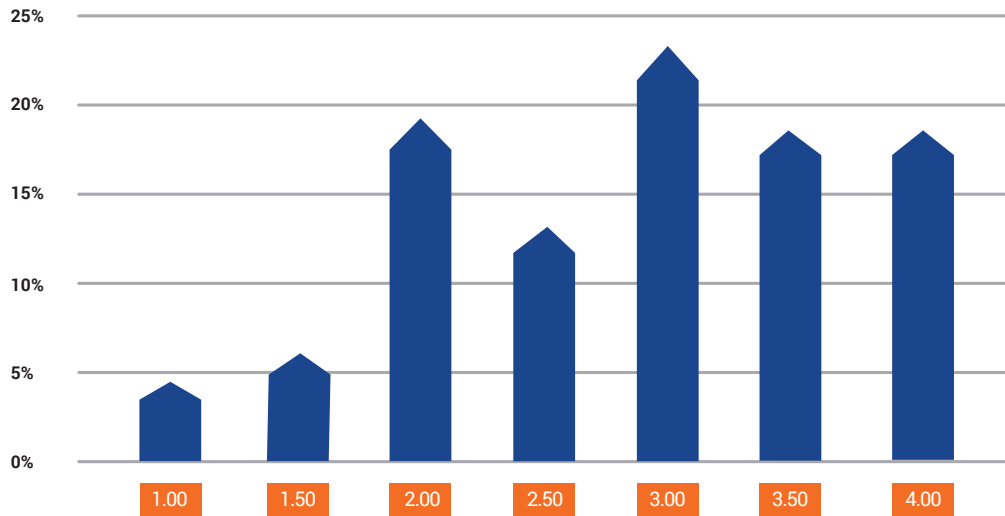
To what degree is information required by human resources from staff collected through self-serve systems (e.g., vacation time or performance reviews)?



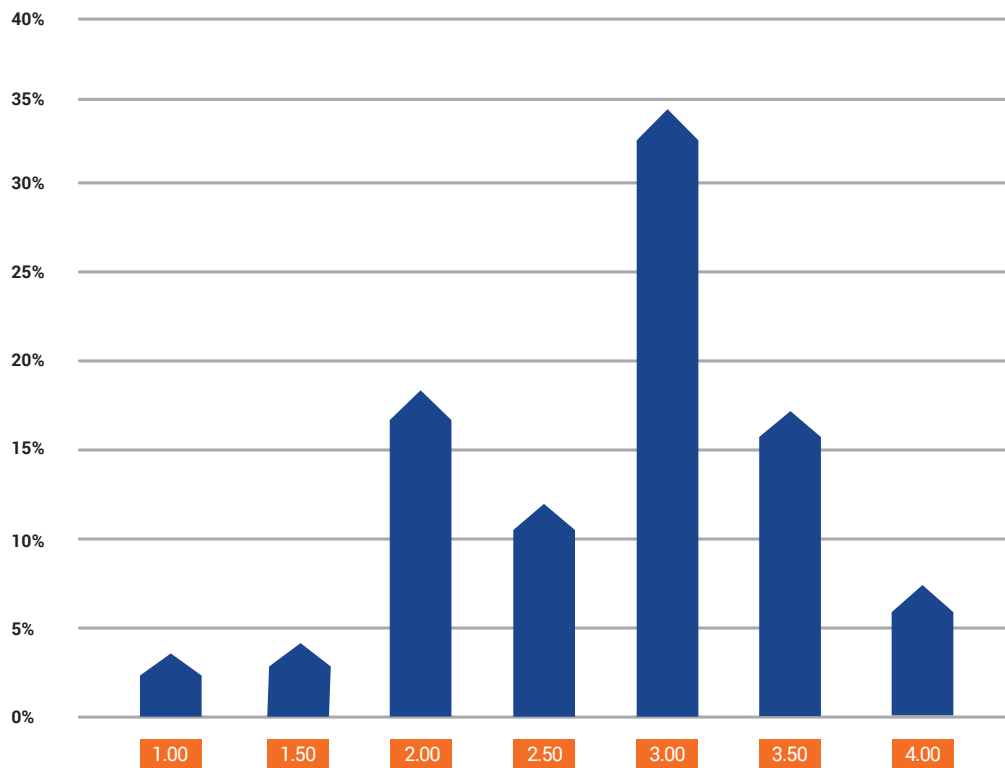
How easily can staff find necessary files to support their work (e.g., spreadsheets, contacts, other documents)?



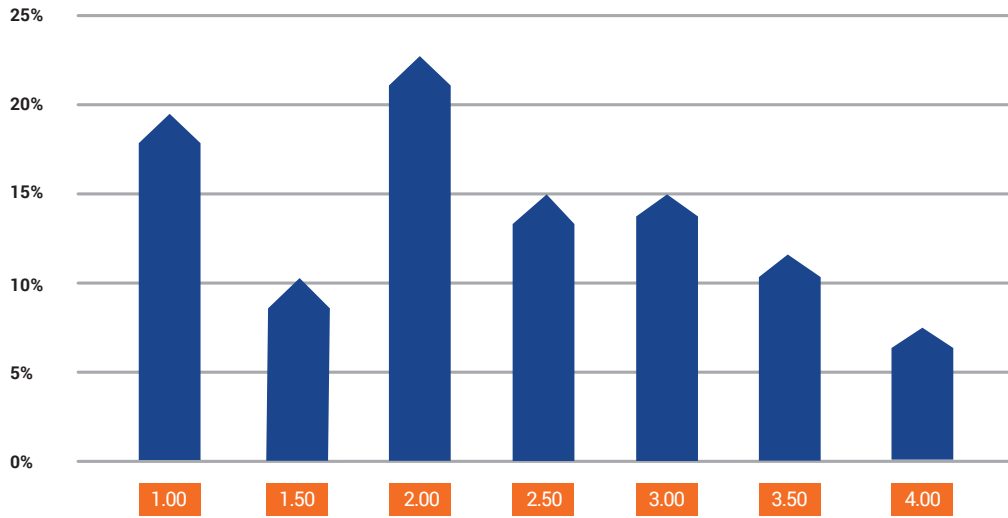
Do you store all critical email and files for future reference (e.g., legal issues or e-discovery)?



How does staff use of internal communications and collaboration tools (e.g., email, instant messenger, text messaging) meet organizational needs?



To what degree do you use a structured approach for implementing IT projects?



To what degree do you have a process in place to track and log non-technology business assets (e.g., vehicles, material inventory, donated items)?

