SCALING FINANCE, NOT COMPLEXITY

How European businesses can build a finance system to unleash growth and clarity

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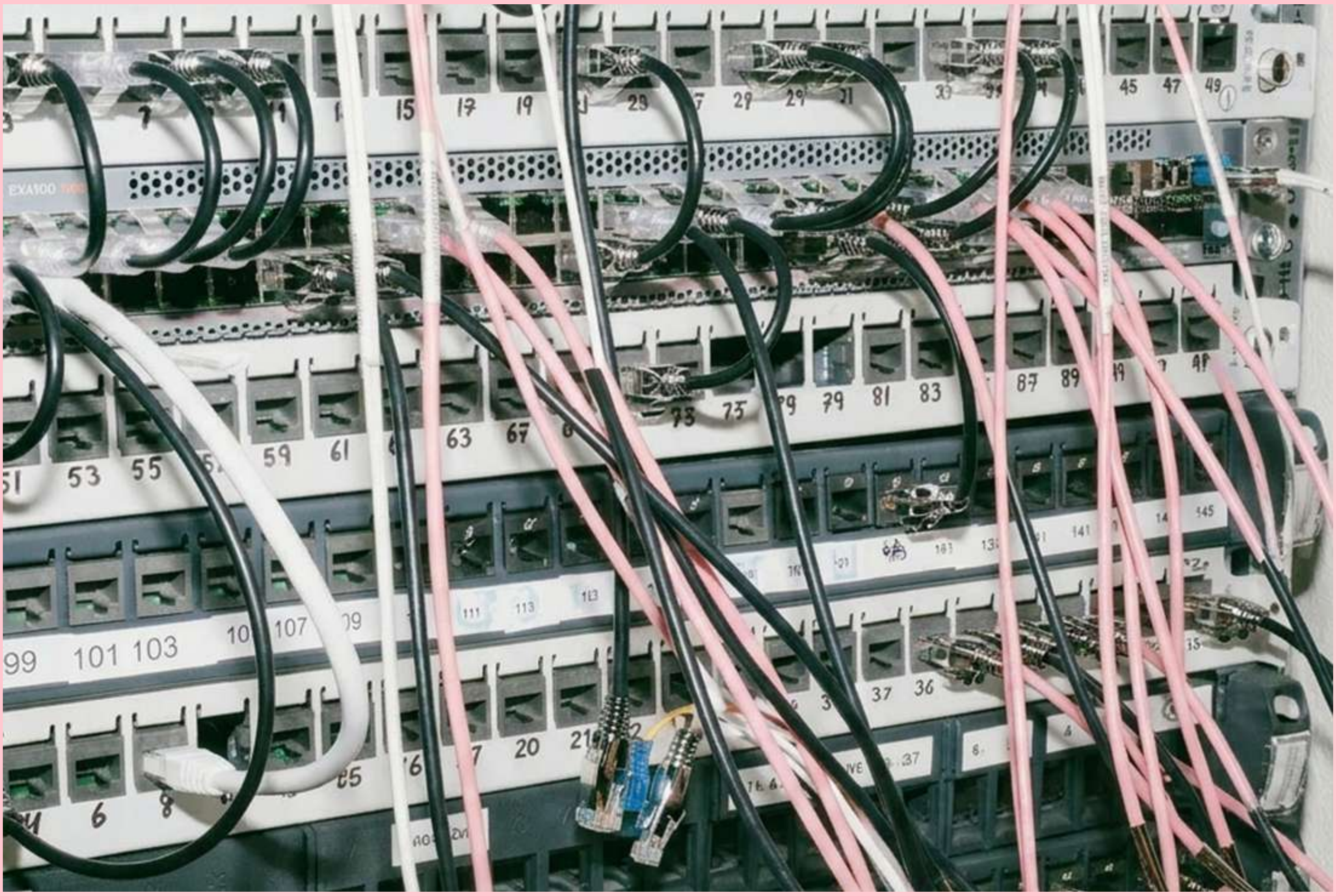
"Across Europe, mid-market businesses are ready to grow. Their finance operations aren't.

Our survey of 3,000 European finance leaders reveals a function full of potential, but one held back by reactive processes, fragmented systems and manual admin.

The answer isn't more tools. It's a finance operation built to scale."

Jeppe Rindom,
Co-Founder and CEO, Pleo

CHAPTER ONE



BUSINESSES ARE SCALING INTO COMPLEXITY

New markets are vital to growth.

But every border adds complexity, and many businesses don't have the finance systems to cope.

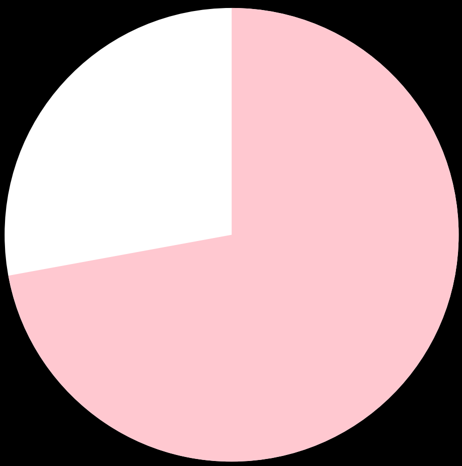
This is bad news for Europe's innovators and has broader consequences for the economy as a whole.

European businesses are all about scaling.

But, too often, this incurs a trade-off with control, red tape and cross-border déjà vu.

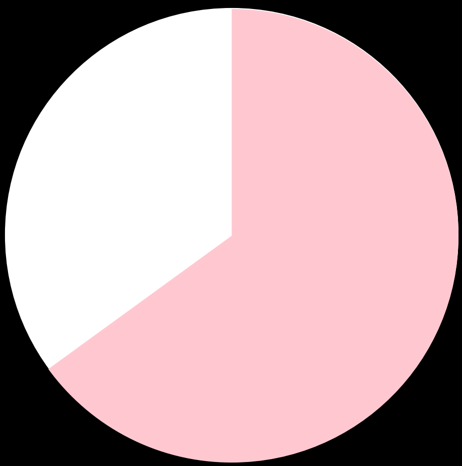
91% of finance leaders say their business is scaling or planning to scale

64% of scaling businesses say cross-border expansion is critical or highly important to growth



72%

say each market involves different, complicated processes



65%

say scaling cross-border can feel like launching a new business all over again

When 83% of European businesses currently scaling or planning to in the next 12 months have concerns about doing so, a better way is needed.

Because right now, bad, disconnected systems create duplication, limit visibility, slow decisions and erode confidence.

This isn't just bad news for Europe's innovators and its companies. It has wider consequences for the economy as a whole.

Mid-market businesses across Europe's four largest economies (the UK, Germany, France and Italy) contribute €1.1 trillion to GDP.

Yet all of this potential is being held back, with each hitting a ceiling imposed by poor technology choices.

CHAPTER TWO

FINANCE HAS THE RIGHT MINDSET, BUT THE WRONG TOOLS

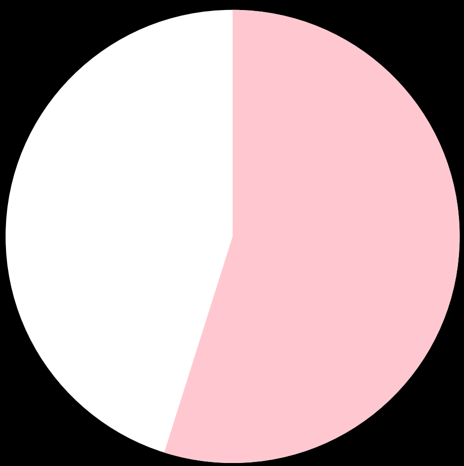
There is a widening gap between the ambitions of Europe's businesses and their capabilities.

Organisations are scaling into complexity that their tools were never built for. And it's the finance function that's absorbing the cost, with admin crowding out strategy.

This reality is felt most by finance teams, and CFOs in particular.

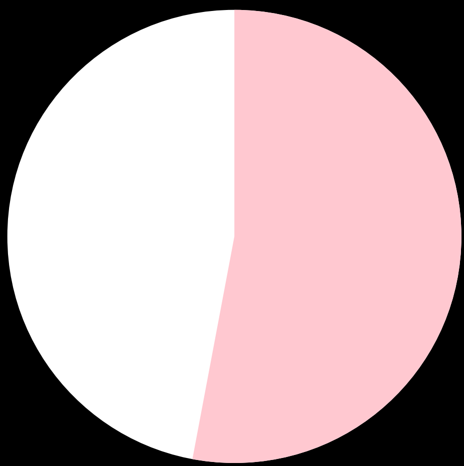
50% of companies currently scaling have seen their finance systems break

Growth is outpacing financial control, leaving no one at the wheel when it comes to financial stability.



56%

of finance leaders have not had a full uninterrupted day on strategic finance work in the past month



52%

of scalers[1] say finance teams are too focused on manual busywork to support scaling effectively

1. Those either currently scaling or planning to in the next 12 months.

Businesses are not short of excellent finance talent.

But they are not set up to succeed. Only 29% of finance leaders say their skills and experience are being utilised effectively at all times.

52%

say their business is scaling faster than their finance systems can keep up

38%

say their finance tech stack will not serve them in their next phase of growth

One major factor in all this is poor integration, with more than a third (36%) saying it creates too much finance admin.

The problem isn't necessarily the accounting software finance teams are using; it's the surrounding tools that don't speak its language.

CHAPTER THREE

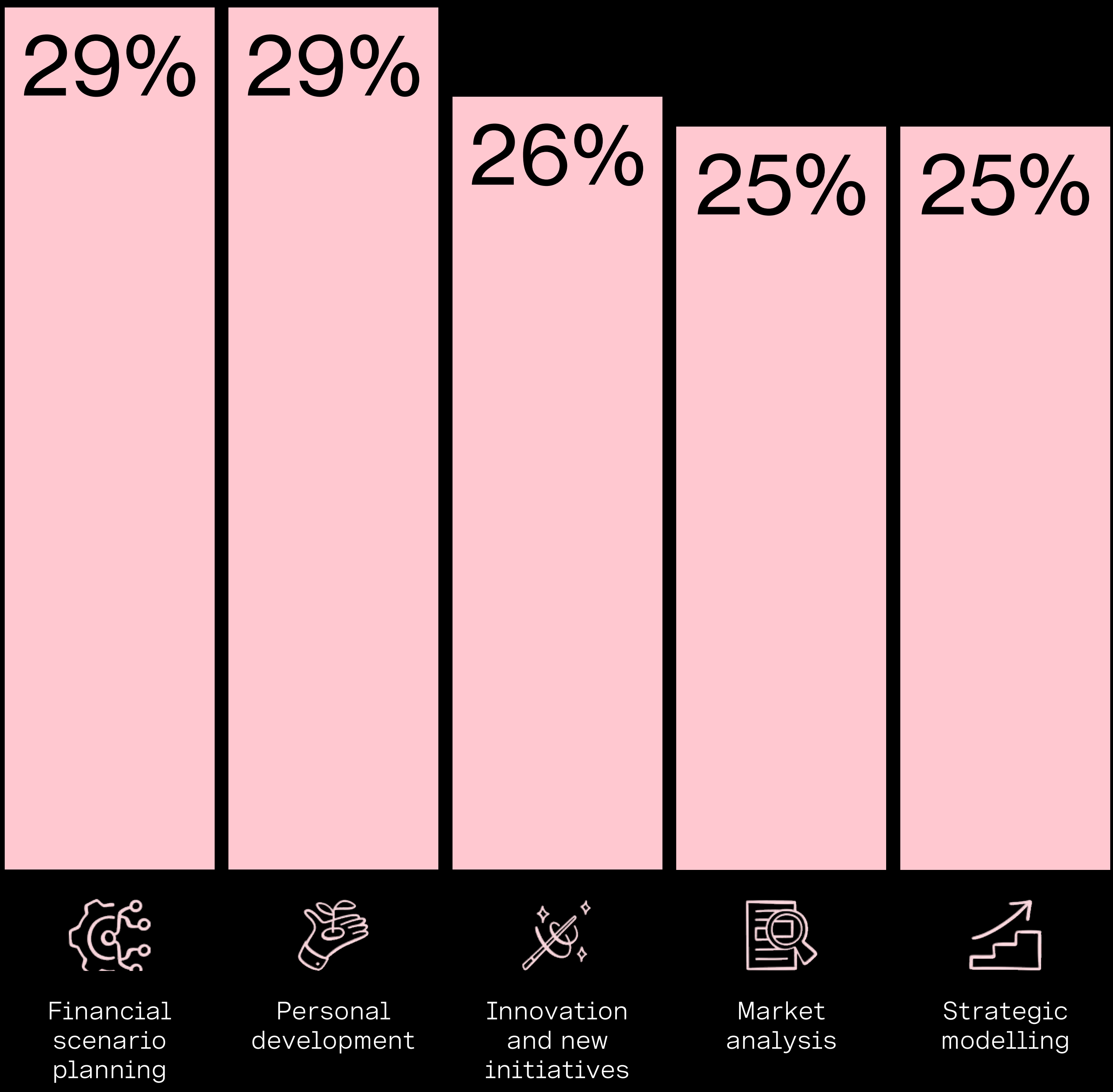
BUSINESSES ARE IN STRATEGIC DEBT.

HERE’S HOW THEY CAN GET OUT.

Scaling businesses understand the value of strategic finance, but are hampered by operational demands and low-value work.

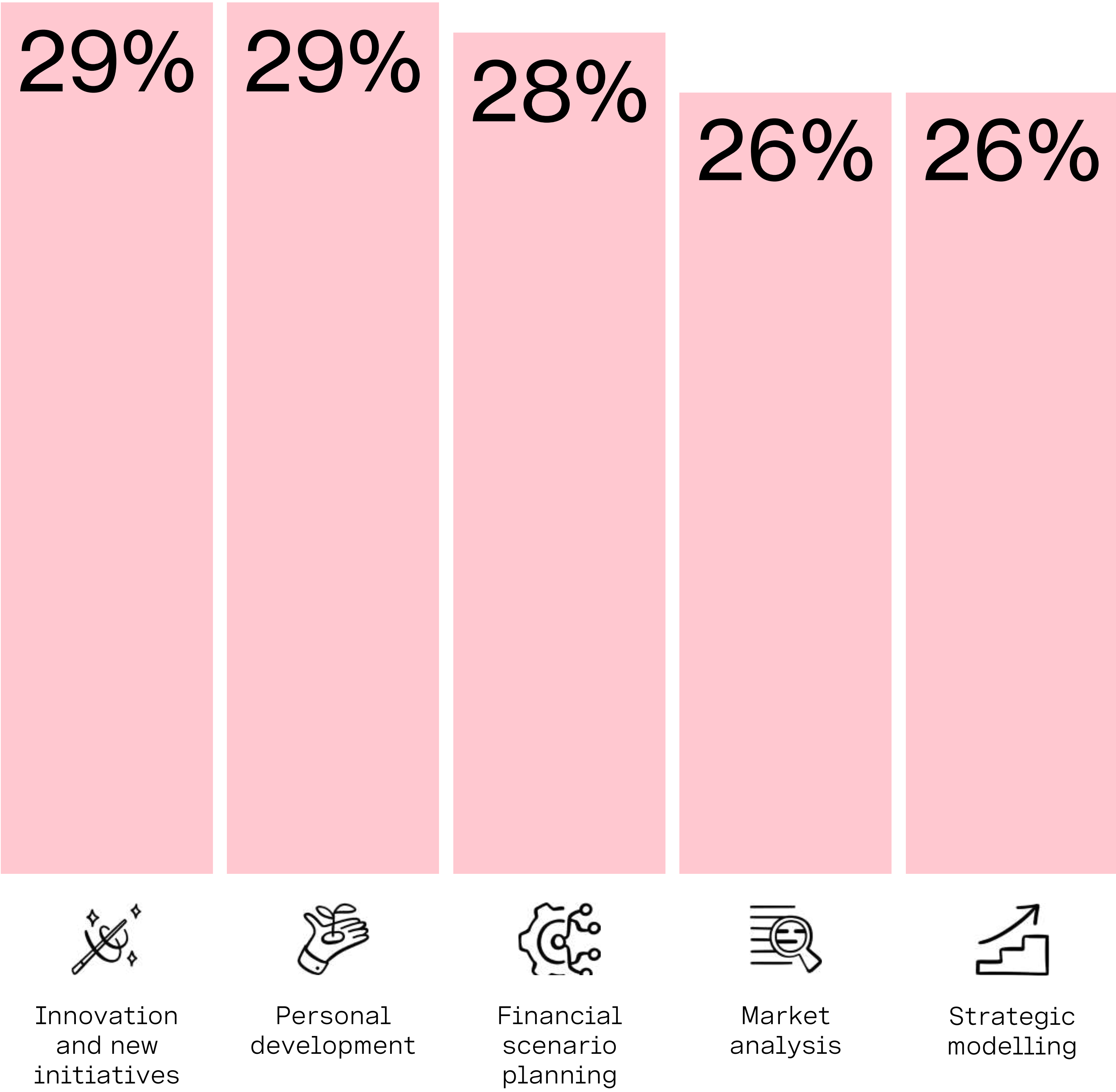
Without integrated, automated finance systems, unempowered finance teams lack the ability to guide growth at scale. Finance leaders are strategic architects of growth. But unless businesses give them the right tools to work with, they are knowingly accumulating strategic debt.

What gets pushed aside by operational demands:



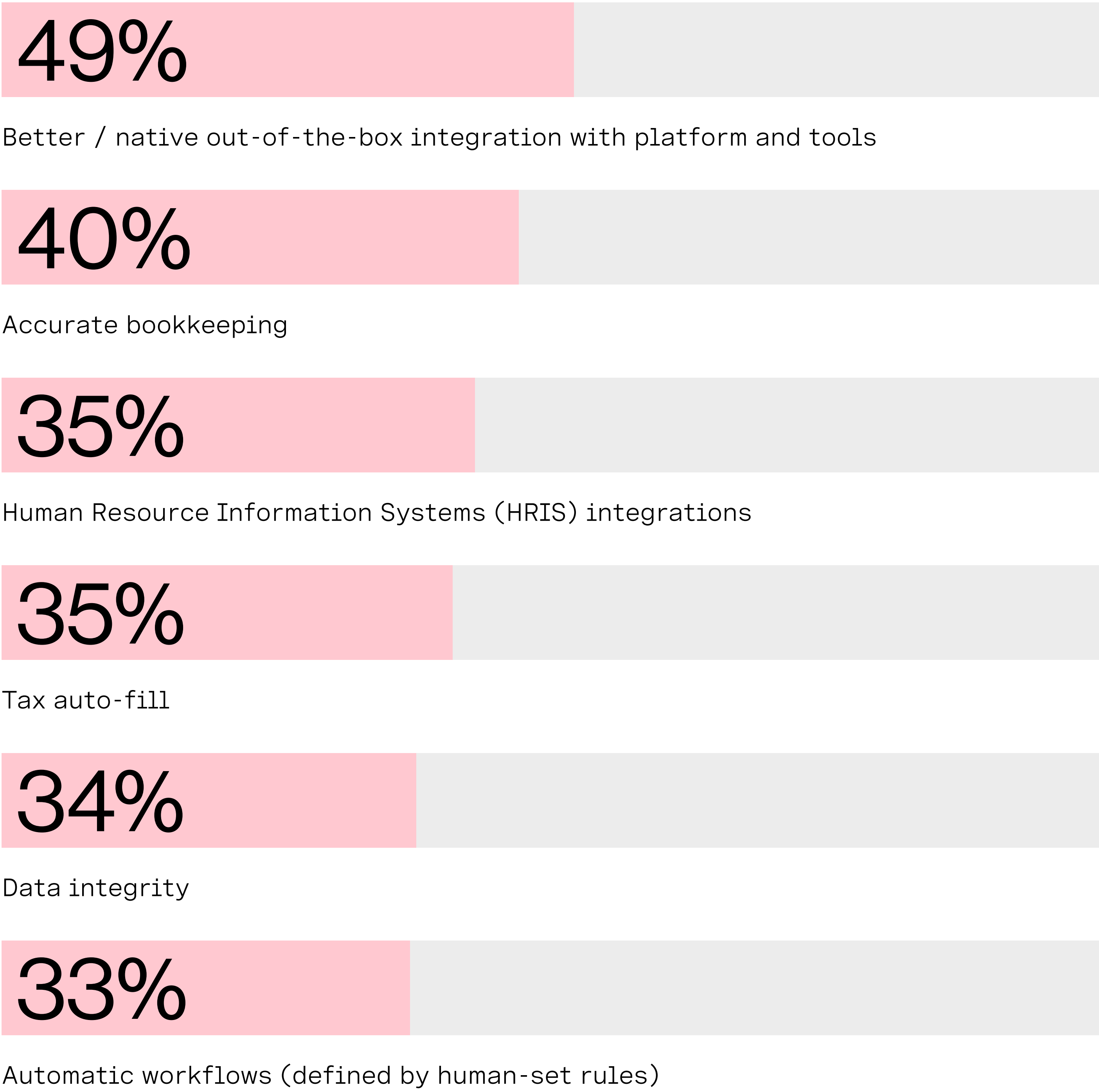
This wouldn’t be the case if decision-makers could free up more of their time – especially the 19% being spent on finance busywork.

How finance leaders would spend an extra 20% of time:



Fixing this requires integrated, automated systems that deliver clean data, built-in compliance and real control from day one.

The finance leaders' wish list for simplified operations:



This is what will free finance teams from busywork to focus on strategy and growth, and ensure finance delivers, at scale.

PLEO – BUILT FOR EUROPE

PLEO IS THE SPEND PLATFORM BUILT FOR HOW EUROPEAN BUSINESSES CLOSE THEIR BOOKS.

Founded in 2015 by Jeppe Rindom, Pleo became an integration-first business because of what he experienced as a CFO. Today, the finance teams of more than 40,000 businesses across 16 markets are in control and able to scale confidently and without the associated burden.

While others are still translating for European finance, Pleo is already native because we integrate with more finance tools than anyone else. We don’t just connect to your stack, we live inside it.

CLEAN DATA. EVERY TIME.

38% of finance leaders say their finance tools lack clean, structured data

Automation is only as strong as the data behind it.
Pleo captures, enriches transactions at the source.

By staying synced with your team's core data, we ensure every expense is mapped to the right person and department before it ever reaches the books.

SET THE RULES. STAY IN COMMAND.

42% of finance leaders say they are missing automated workflows

Pleo turns finance expertise into automated workflows.
Define rules and manage tags to direct data automatically.

Meanwhile, team-based visibility and saved views let finance focus on what matters; processing large volumes of data quickly and accurately before export.

YOUR BOOKS. CONNECTED.

35% say they are lacking integrations and connectivity

Pleo, an official Fortnox partner, is native by design and ensures efficient, accurate bookkeeping by automatically syncing every transaction, reimbursement and invoice across Europe's most used finance tools.

Finance teams gain real-time visibility and confidence. No manual workarounds or messy CSVs.

Get in touch with the Pleo team today about how you can scale without complexity.

Book a demo

ABOUT PLEO

Pleo is Europe's first and most trusted spend platform for financial strategists, meticulously built by a CFO to put an end to fragmented finance. Scattered tools and manual processes result in time waste, compromised data, and compliance risk. Pleo empowers finance to focus their specialism where it matters.

Trusted by over 40,000 businesses across 16 markets, including Unity, Lyst, IDC and HelloFresh, Pleo unifies every aspect of company spending in one place.

Smart cards, automated expenses, invoice payments, subscription management, real-time spend categorisation, and cash management: all connected, all visible, all built specifically for how European businesses operate.

Pleo integrates with over 100 accounting and workspace tools, giving finance teams the real-time visibility and AI workflow automation they need to lead with clarity, control, and confidence in every decision.

Powering billions of euros in spending each year, and having secured a record-breaking Series C in 2021, Pleo continues to set the standard for how finance leads and drives business growth across Europe and beyond.

METHODOLOGY

The survey was conducted among 3,000 finance decision-makers and finance professionals (defined as finance leaders in this report) in organisations with 51-1,000 employees in the UK, Spain and Germany.

The interviews were conducted online by Sapio Research in April 2026 using an email invitation and an online survey.

PLEO