



Reports

August 2019

# Improving Health Care Interoperability: Are We Making Progress?

Findings from a survey of IT and business leaders at hospitals and health systems



**himss** Media

# Introduction

## Data-sharing challenges continue to affect health systems

Health care's interoperability challenges have become a major focus for health systems, government regulators, tech companies, and others who recognize that the ability to easily share, consume, and analyze data is essential to improving health care for all involved.

Yet, despite this recognition and growing attention to the topic from all corners of health care, many stakeholders continue to struggle with interoperability.

To better understand the challenges, the Center for Connected Medicine (CCM) partnered with HIMSS Media to conduct survey research of health systems and hospitals in June 2019. The survey focused on how well health care organizations are prepared to advance interoperability, how interoperability challenges are impacting organizational priorities, and how effectively these challenges are being addressed.

Starting on a positive note, the survey found that a majority of respondents are aligning their technology plans with interoperability objectives and adequately addressing technical and non-technical aspects of

interoperability. But only 69% said they are effective at sharing data within their own organizations. And fewer than four-in-10 said their organizations are successfully sharing with other health systems.

This obstacle is standing in the way of key organizational goals, including enabling patient-facing apps, tapping into unstructured data, and reducing the cost of care. That last point is worth highlighting. It should be troubling that only 27% of respondents said their organizations' work to improve interoperability had allowed them to reduce the cost of care.

It is well known that health care costs are a chief concern of patients and employers – both of whom are weary of ever-rising premiums and out-of-pocket costs. At the same time, the opportunity to introduce greater efficiency into health care is driving some large tech companies, which have successfully disrupted other industries, to make moves into health care.

With these issues in mind, read on for detailed findings from the survey.

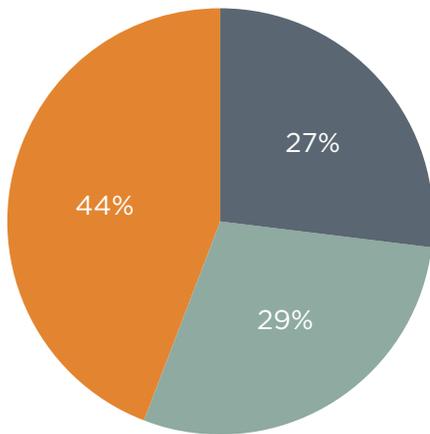
# Research overview

HIMSS Media conducted this research in June 2019 on behalf of the Center for Connected Medicine. The research was conducted to better understand how well health care organizations are prepared to advance interoperability, how interoperability challenges are impacting organizational priorities, and how effectively these challenges are being addressed.

- **A total of 100 qualified respondents answered the survey.**
- **Qualified respondents were employed in a mix of IT, informatics, business and clinical roles at U.S. hospitals and health systems.**
- **This was a blind data collection effort. The Center for Connected Medicine was not identified as a sponsor of the research.**
- **Qualified respondents were sent an email from HIMSS Media inviting them to participate in the research. Respondents were offered an incentive for completing the survey (opportunity to win a \$100 Amazon gift card).**

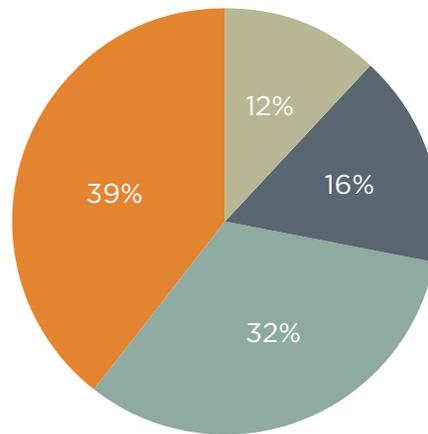
# Respondent profile

Worksite



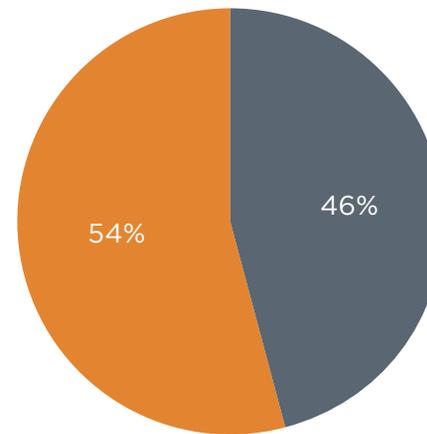
- IDN/Multi-hospital
- Academic Medical Center
- Stand-alone/Speciality

Job Role



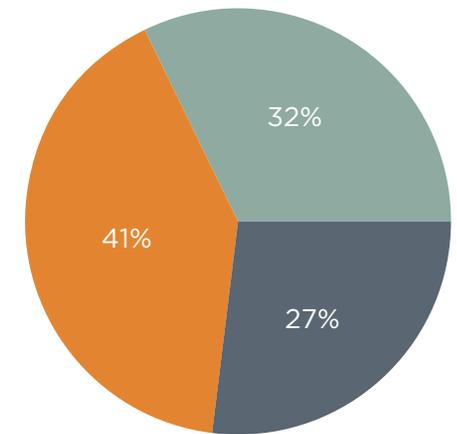
- IT/Tech/ Cybersecurity
- Business
- Informatics
- Clinical

Organization Size



- Greater than 500 beds
- 500 or fewer beds

Job Level



- Middle Management
- Executive Management
- Staff

Q.: Which of the following best describes your worksite?

Q.: What is the size of your organization?

Q.: Which of the following best describes your role at work?

Q.: What is your job level/title? Base: Total n=100

# Key takeaways

1

A majority of stakeholders agree that their organizations are aligning technology plans with interoperability objectives, staying up-to-date on regulations, and adequately addressing both the technical and non-technical aspects of interoperability.

2

However, beyond tasks required by regulations or related to basic functioning (such as sharing data within their own health system), interoperability still presents a challenge to organizations. Fewer than four-in-ten report success with sharing data with other health systems, effectiveness in tapping into unstructured data, and effectiveness in reducing the cost of care.

3

To address challenges presented by interoperability, organizations are taking diverse actions: just over half are switching to a single, integrated EHR, and four-in-ten are investing in new talent, collaborating with technology vendors, and increasing the training of existing employees.

4

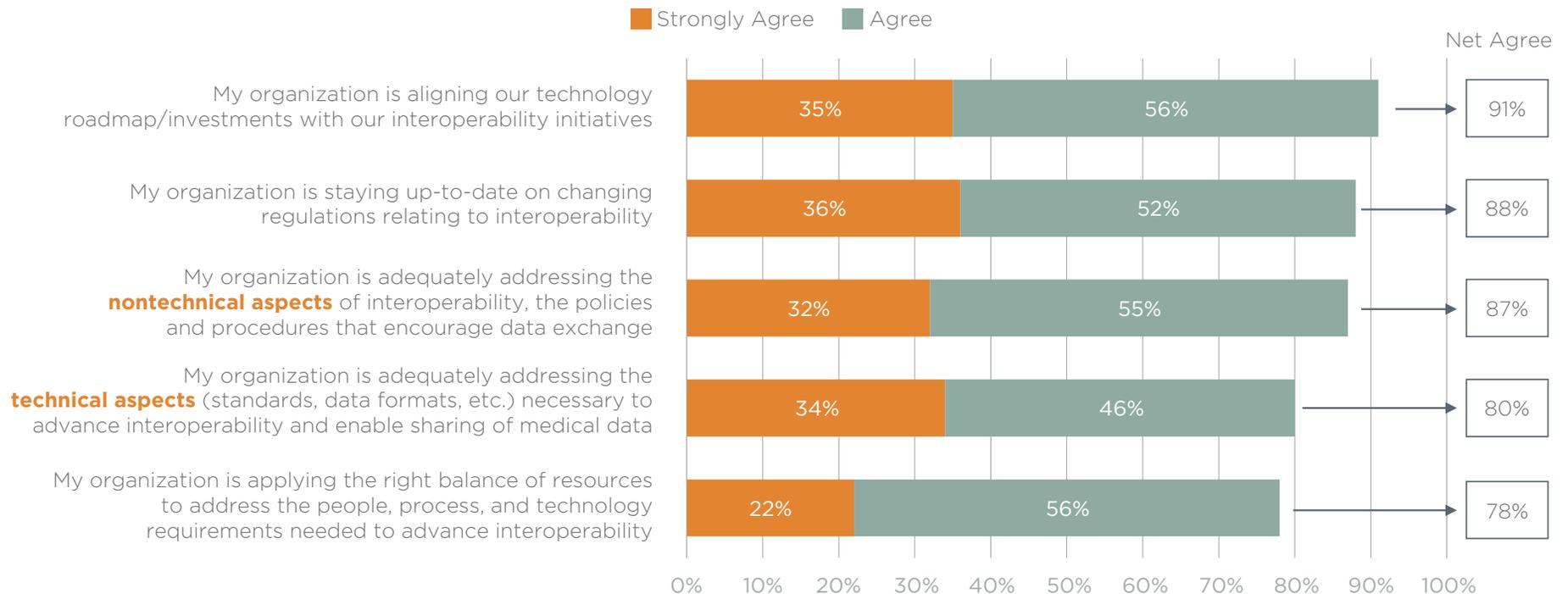
Perceptions of the impact of organizational efforts to overcome interoperability challenges differ by job title. Middle managers perceive current efforts to be less successful than executive managers and staff, while executive managers perceive greater limitations presented by interoperability challenges.

# Detailed findings



# Large majority perceive organization as aligning strategy and initiatives to advance interoperability

Perception of Organizational Stance Toward Interoperability



**Q.:** Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements as they pertain to your organization.

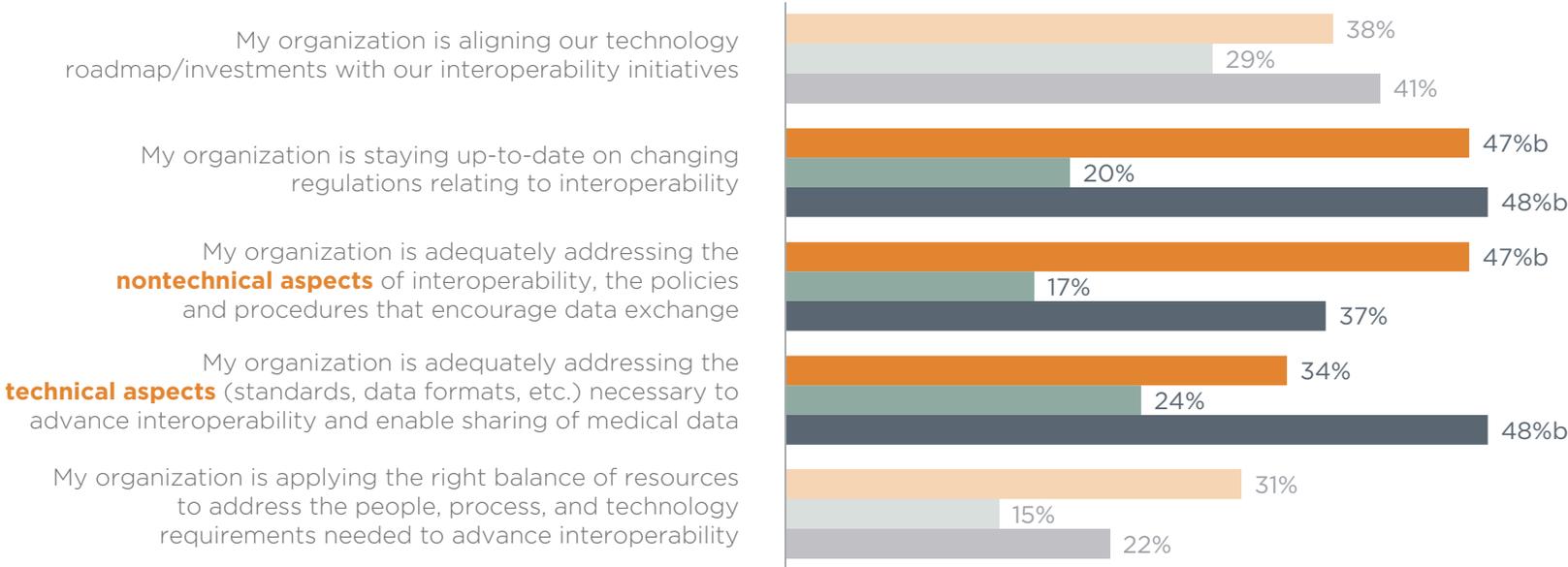
**Base:** total n=100

# Middle management perceive less success in addressing interoperability, compared with execs and staff

## Perception of Organizational Stance Toward Interoperability

(% who Strongly Agree)

Executive Management (a) Middle Management (b) Staff (c)



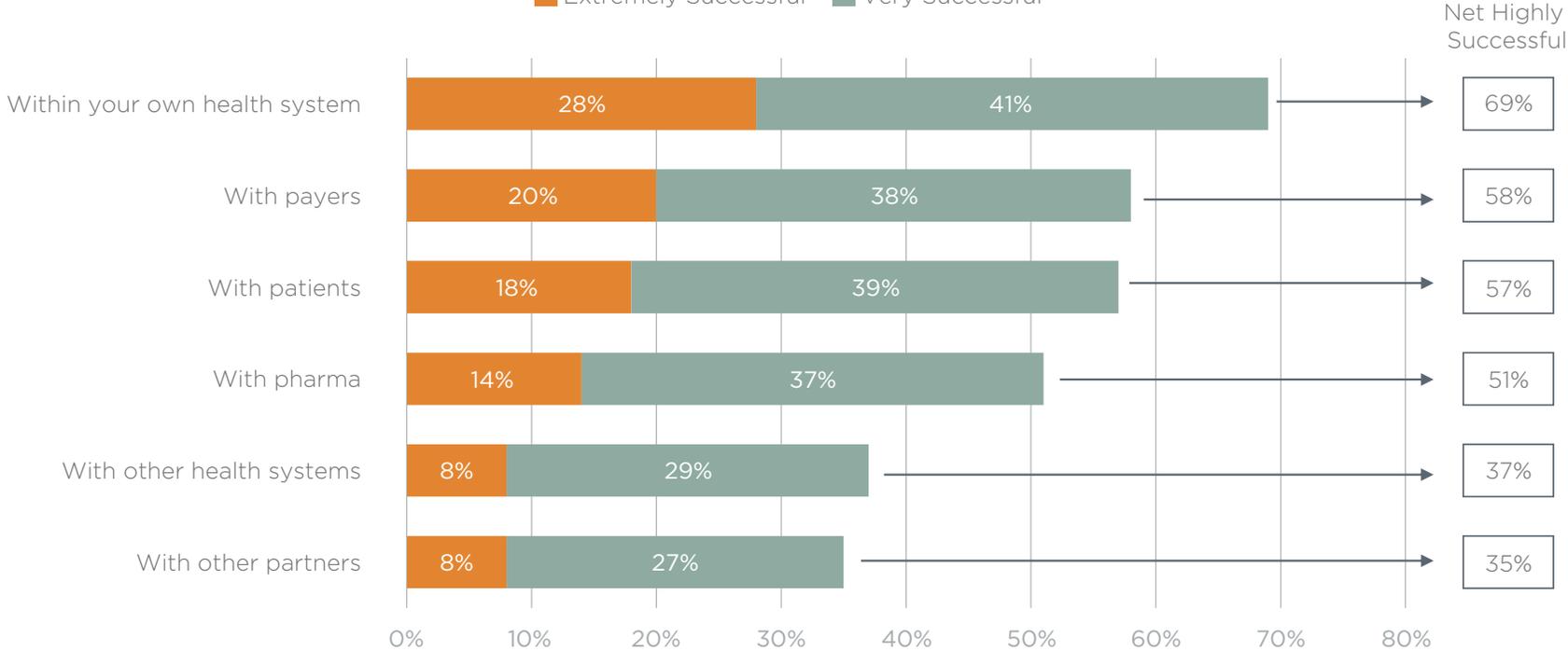
**Q.:** Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements as they pertain to your organization.

**Base:** Executive Management: n=32; Middle Management: n=41; Staff: n=27; a/b/c indicates significant difference at the 95% confidence level

# Greatest success in sharing medical data seen within organization's own health system

Successfulness at Sharing Medical Data

Extremely Successful Very Successful



**Q.:** To what extent do you feel your organization is successful at sharing medical data with the following stakeholders?

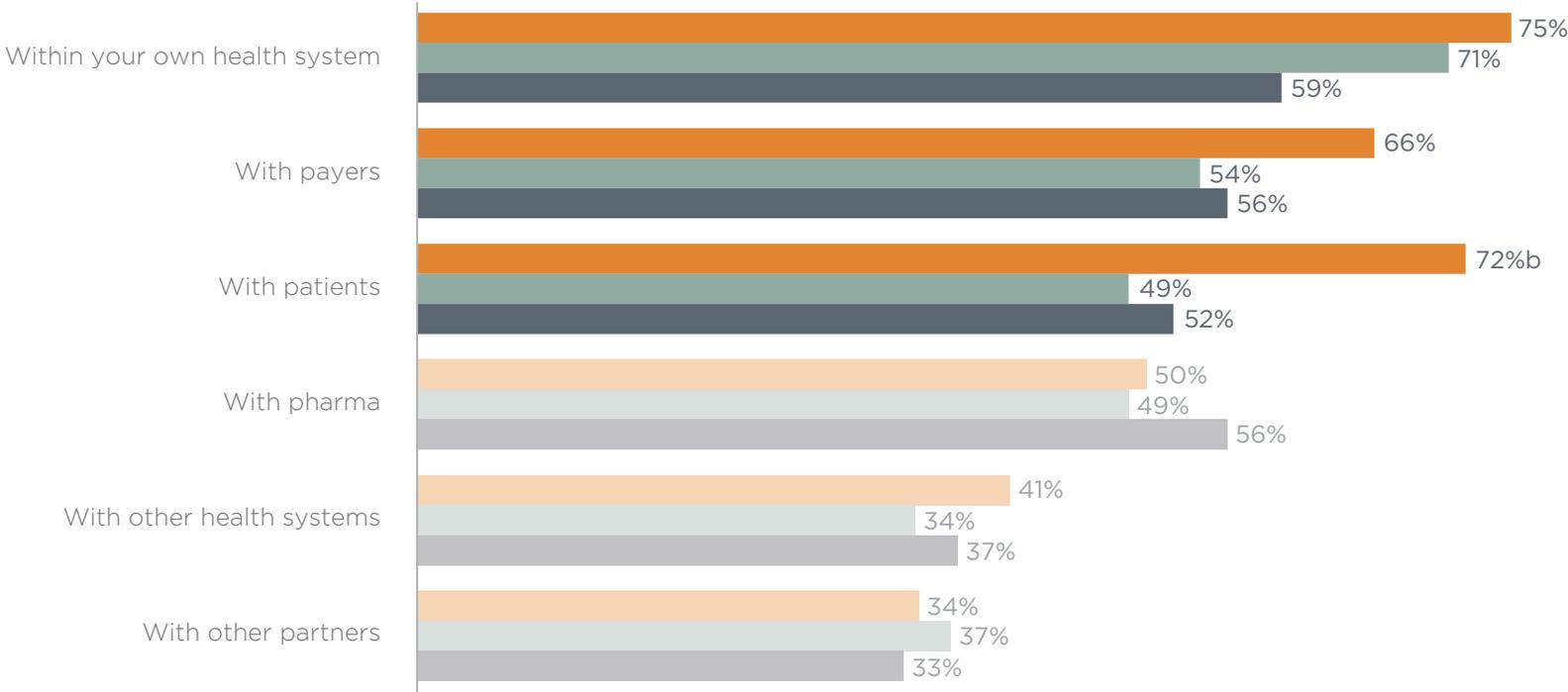
**Base:** total n=100

# Executive management see some greater success in sharing medical data than middle management and staff

## Successfulness at Sharing Medical Data

(Extremely and Very Successful)

Executive Management (a) Middle Management (b) Staff (c)



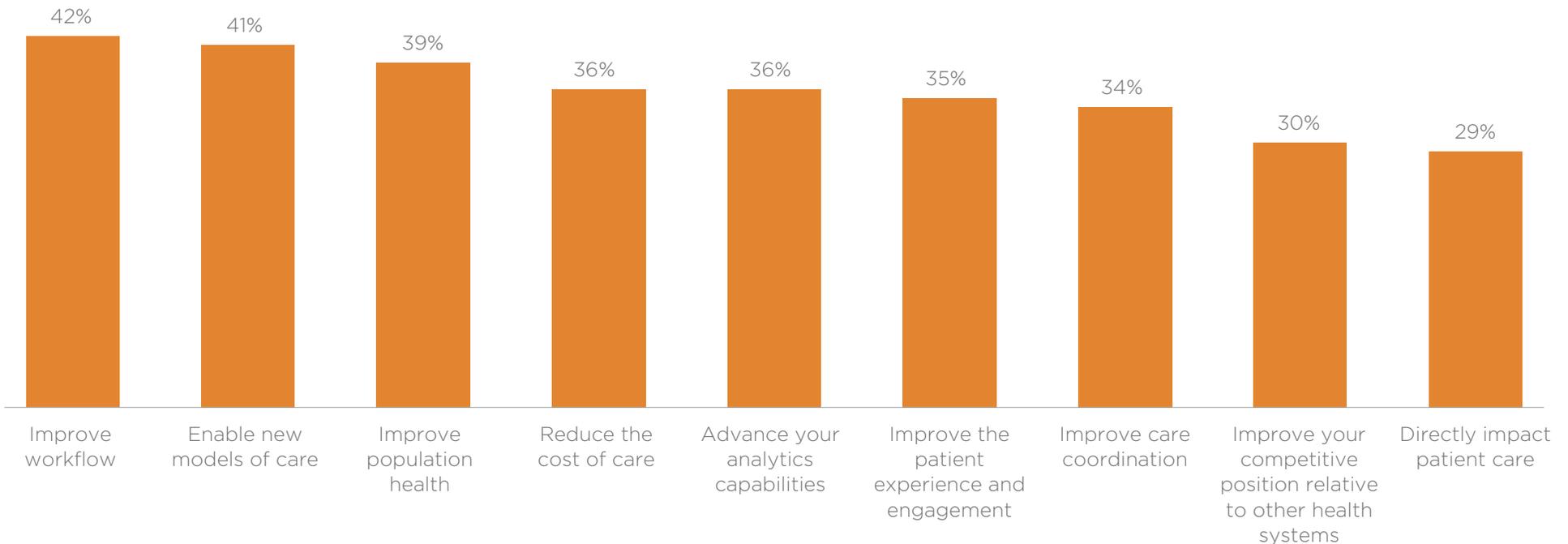
**Q.:** To what extent do you feel your organization is successful at sharing medical data with the following stakeholders?

**Base:** Executive Management: n=32; Middle Management: n=41; Staff: n=27; a/b/c indicates significant difference at the 95% confidence level

# For four-in-ten, interoperability challenges limit efforts to improve workflow and enable new models of care

## Interoperability Challenges Limit Organizational Efforts To...

(% rating 5,6,7 where 7 is significantly limiting)



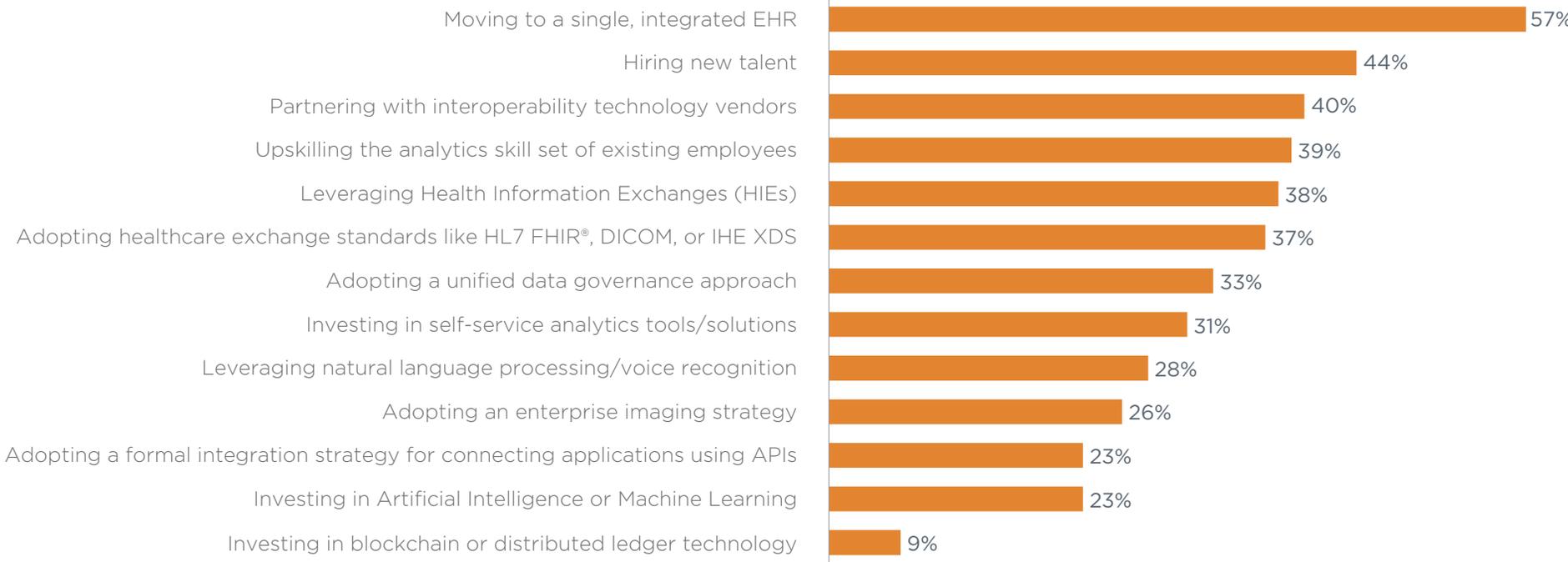
**Q.:** To what extent are interoperability challenges limiting your organization's efforts to achieve the following outcomes? 7-point

**Scale:** (1) Not limiting at all to (7) Significantly Limiting; Top 3 Box shown: (5) + (6) + (7) Significantly limiting;

**Base:** total n=100

# Single, integrated EHR most common step toward addressing interoperability challenges

Organizational Steps Toward Overcoming Interoperability Challenges

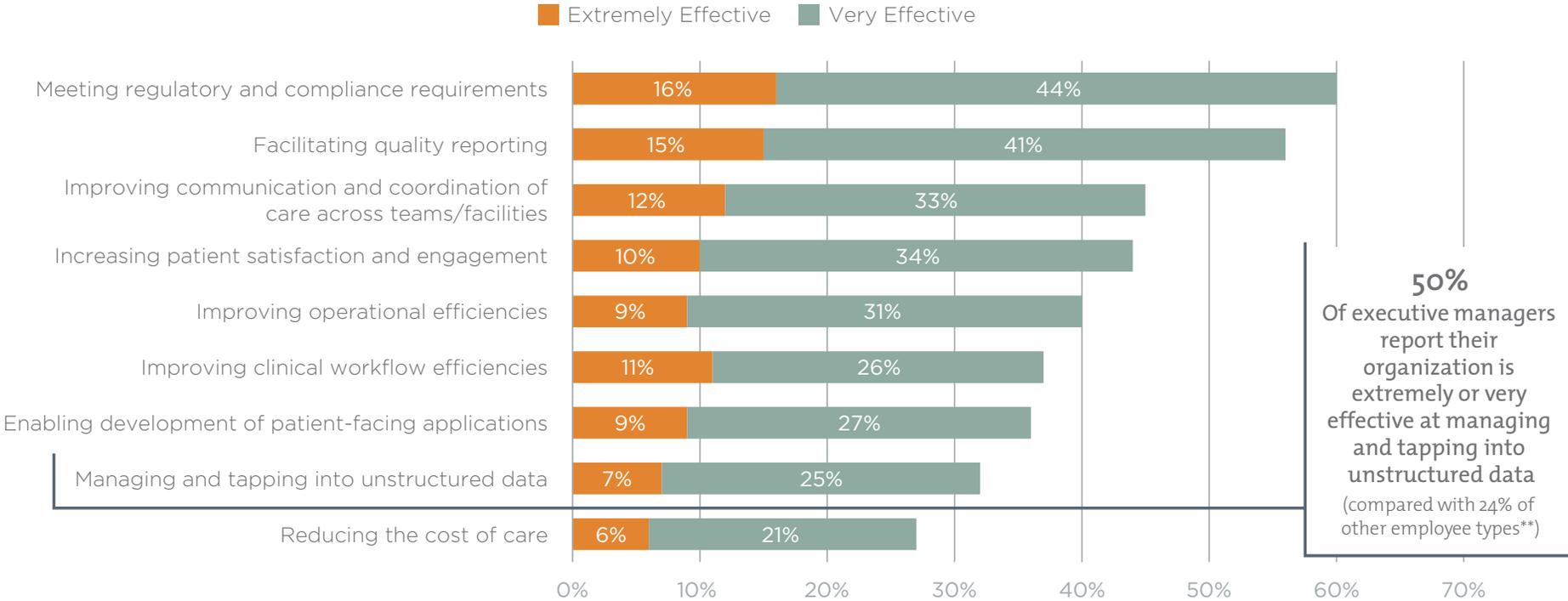


**Q.:** What steps is your organization taking to address its key interoperability challenges?

**Base:** total n=100

# Greatest levels of effectiveness perceived in addressing interoperability challenges related to compliance

Effectiveness at Solving Specific Challenges Posed By Interoperability



**Q.:** How effective have your organization’s interoperability efforts been at solving the challenges below?

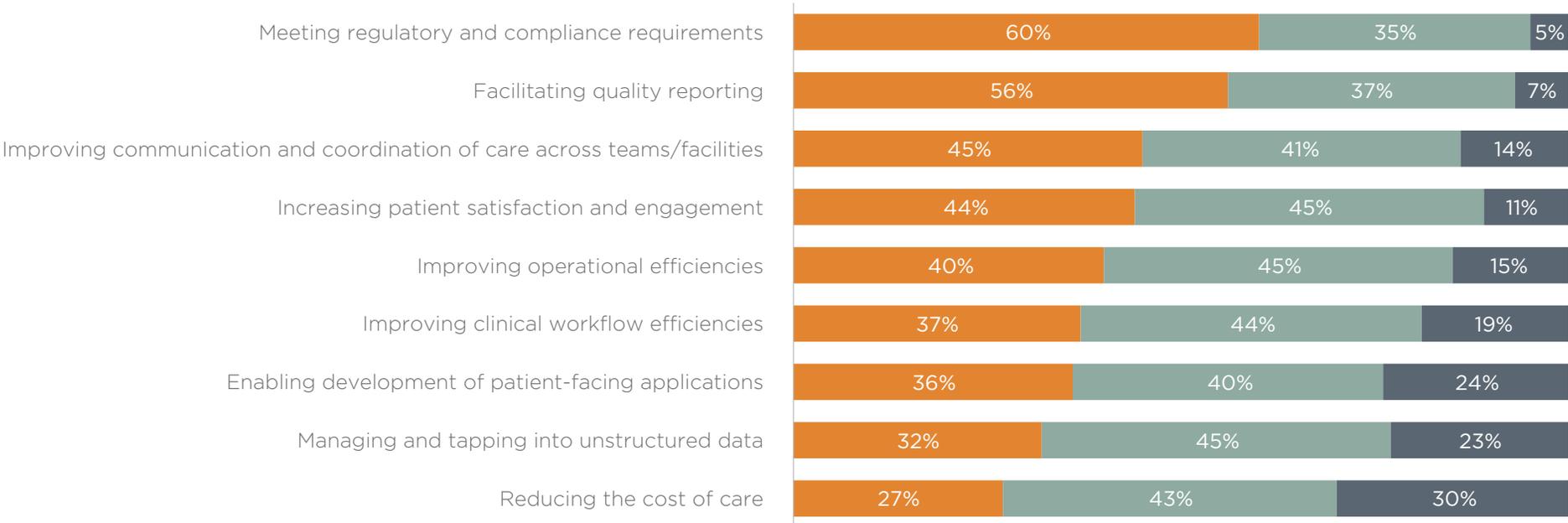
**Base:** total n=100; \*\*

**Base:** Executive Management: n=32; All other positions: n=68

# Lowest levels of effectiveness perceived in reducing the cost of care

## Effectiveness at Solving Specific Challenges Posed By Interoperability

■ Extremely or Very Effective  
 ■ Somewhat Effective  
 ■ Not Very or Not At All Effective

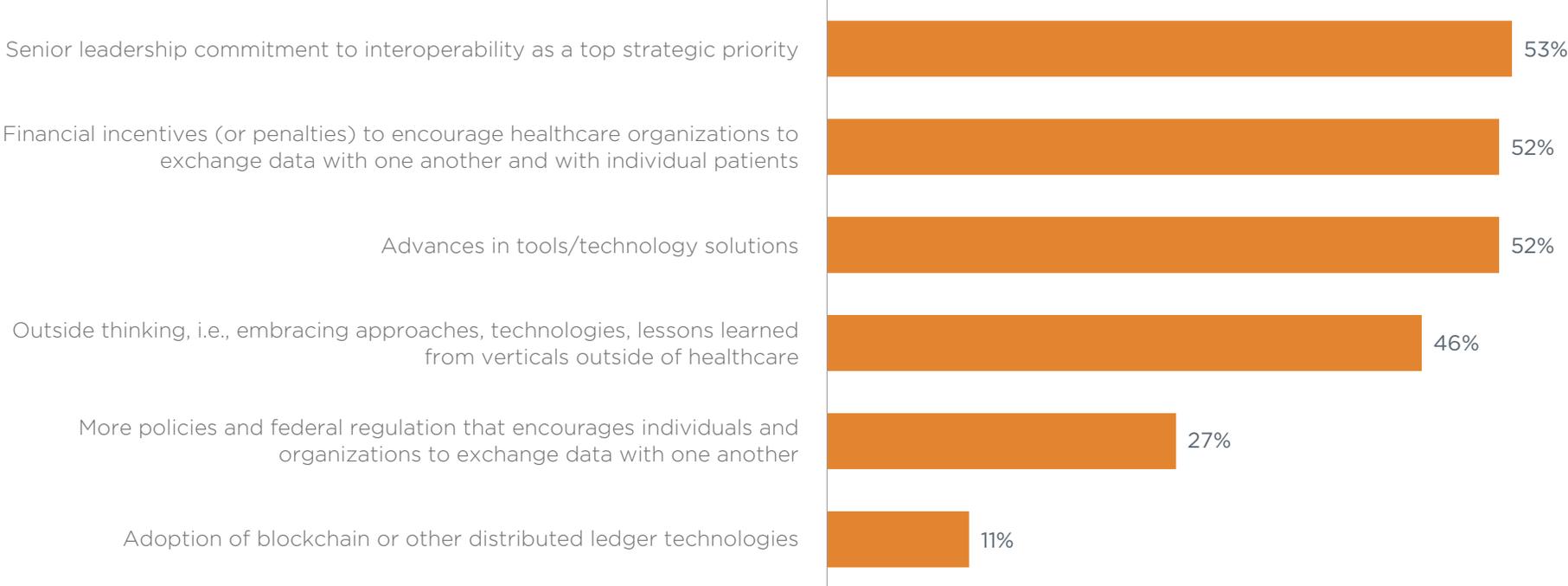


**Q.:** How effective have your organization’s interoperability efforts been at solving the challenges below?

**Base:** total n=100

# Leadership commitment, financial incentives, and tech advances seen as top ways to address interoperability

Most Crucial Elements to Pushing Interoperability Forward in Health care



**Q.:** In your opinion, what is needed most to push interoperability forward in healthcare?

**Base:** total n=100

# About the Center for Connected Medicine

The Center for Connected Medicine (CCM) is a gathering place where those seeking to drive improvements in health care through technology come to connect and inspire each other, both in the real and digital worlds. The CCM, jointly operated by GE Healthcare, Nokia, and UPMC, connects and inspires leaders and innovators through original research and industry analysis, virtual events, and on-site experiences.

Learn more at [connectedmed.com](http://connectedmed.com)



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View more about interoperability  
in health care from the CCM and its  
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