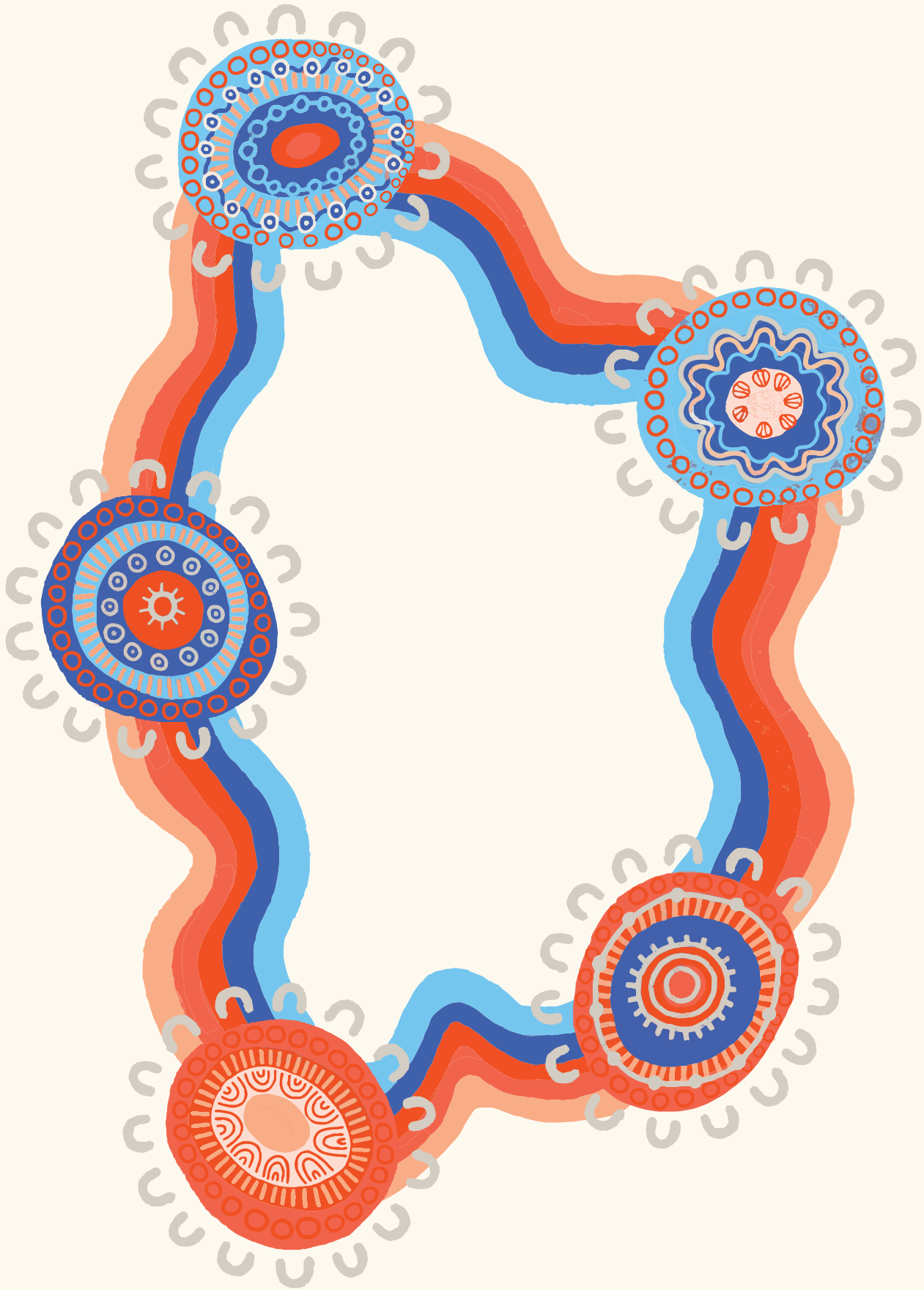




return on connection

How to make friends
and influence the
bottom line.





We recognise and acknowledge the existing, original and ancient connection Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have to the lands and waterways across the Australian continent. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present.

Welcome

**A problem shared,
is a problem halved.
An opportunity
shared, is an
opportunity
strengthened.**

Top 5 most common
business challenges:

- 1** Rising cost pressures
- 2** Driving innovation
- 3** Implementing new technology
- 4** Balancing short and long term organisational goals
- 5** Adopting sustainable work practices

Why do 1 in 3 senior business and public sector leaders have no external professional network of peers?

And what is it costing them, their organisation and the industries they support?

We wanted to find out. And we wanted to share the findings because what we discovered is a big connection opportunity.

Telstra builds the networks that connect Australia, and Australia to world.

We're humbled by what our enterprise connectivity enables. From connecting emergency services in the most rugged terrain, to helping accelerate innovation in our mining and heavy industries. The list is long, and we couldn't be prouder of our connectivity partnerships across Australian industry and the public sector.

But the best connection is driven by humans - and enabled by technology. That's where the magic happens.

We wanted to understand three things with this research: The state of leader-to-leader connection across large businesses and government in Australia, its value and the connection opportunity.

So we worked with YouGov to survey 1000 senior business and public sector leaders right across Australia to find out.

First up, we found a connection gap, or as I like to see it – a connection opportunity.

We asked Australia's senior leaders what's keeping them up at night. It's a heavy list, from rising cost pressures to implementing new technology such as AI.

But what's surprising is that most leaders aren't connecting with others on these big, big challenges.

Secondly, we were able to put an indicative value on leader-to-leader connection.

Organisations with highly connected leaders saw revenue growth 5% higher on average compared to those with lesser professional networks. To put a dollar figure on that, it's a growth gap of around \$15.5 million in lost opportunity for each organisation.

Finally, we saw the opportunity that comes with leader-to-leader connection.

About half of all leaders who connect regularly with external peers told us these interactions led to the development of new or innovative ideas six or more times in the past year.

It's a strong case to have a deeper look at how we as leaders across Australia's industry and government connect and collaborate.

When leaders connect, we can find better solutions faster. When businesses and government share insights, it can lead to more confident decision-making, innovation and growth.

A win for the individual, a win for the organisation and a win for Australia.

This isn't about one ship rising above others, this is about all boats rising on the same tide.

So, in the spirit of connection and collaboration, we're pleased to share these learnings with you and start a bigger conversation on connection.



Oliver Camplin-Warner
Group Executive, Telstra Enterprise

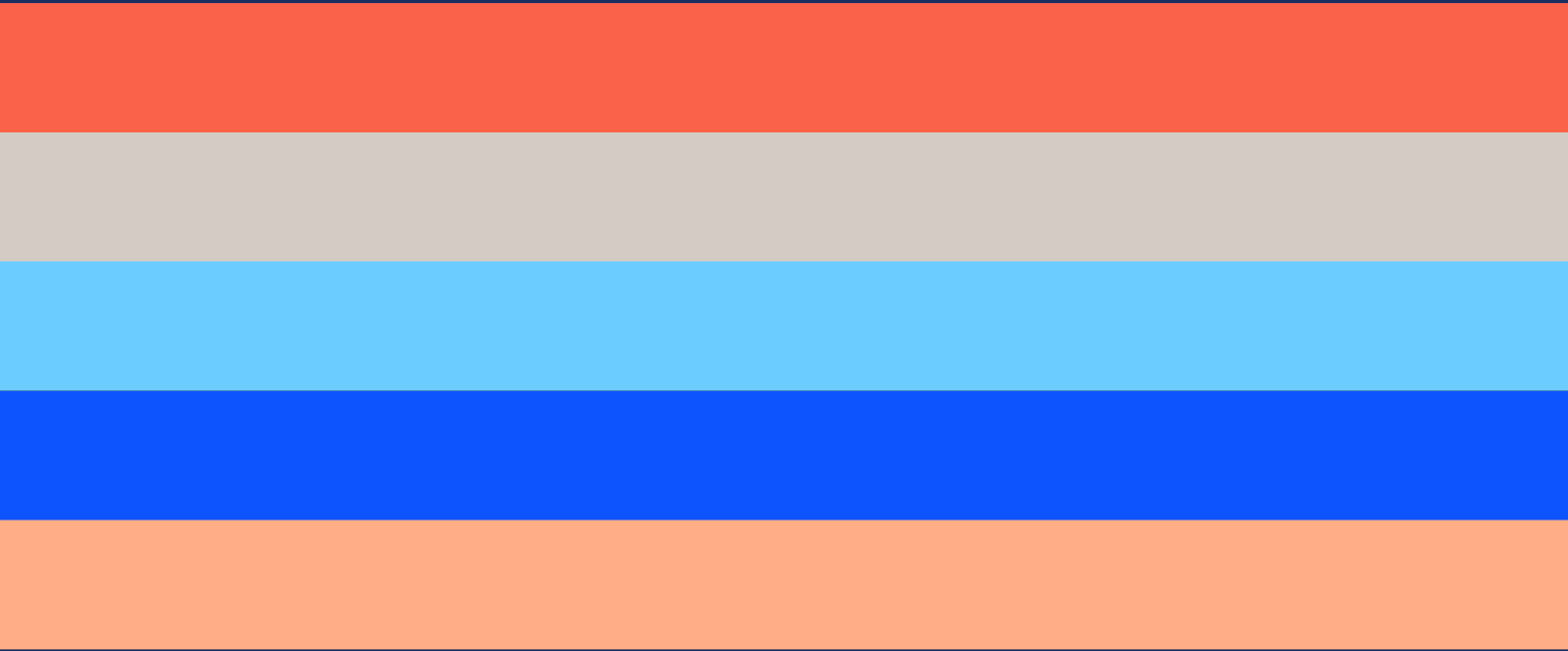
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**“Telstra builds
the networks that
connect Australia.
But the best
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happens.”**

OLIVER CAMPLIN-WARNER
GROUP EXECUTIVE, TELSTRA ENTERPRISE







Section 01

Retreat alone or advance together

We're in a world that's more uncertain and divided than ever, and, right now, Australian industry has a choice. Do we retreat into silos? Or do we unite our knowledge, experience and ambition?

We have the opportunity to come together, share insights, and tackle these challenges head-on. But here's the thing: even though collaboration is key, the truth is we're not all that connected.

We asked business leaders about their external networks* and the results may surprise you. Many leaders don't have these networks, and the ones that do aren't working with them in a way to reap all the rewards.

The connection gap is clear on three fronts:

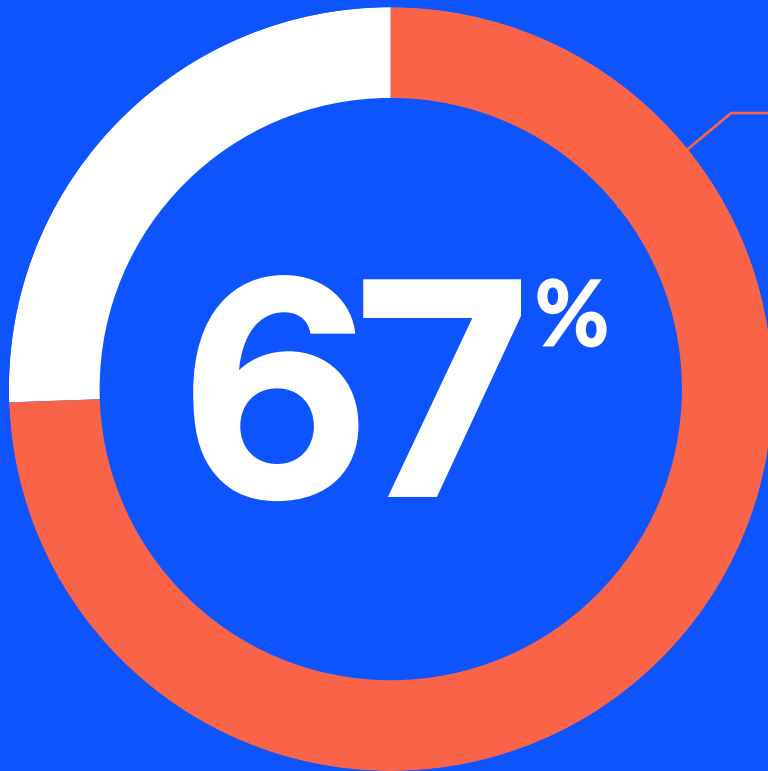
1 Leaders' networks are lacking

2 Leaders need stronger connections at every level

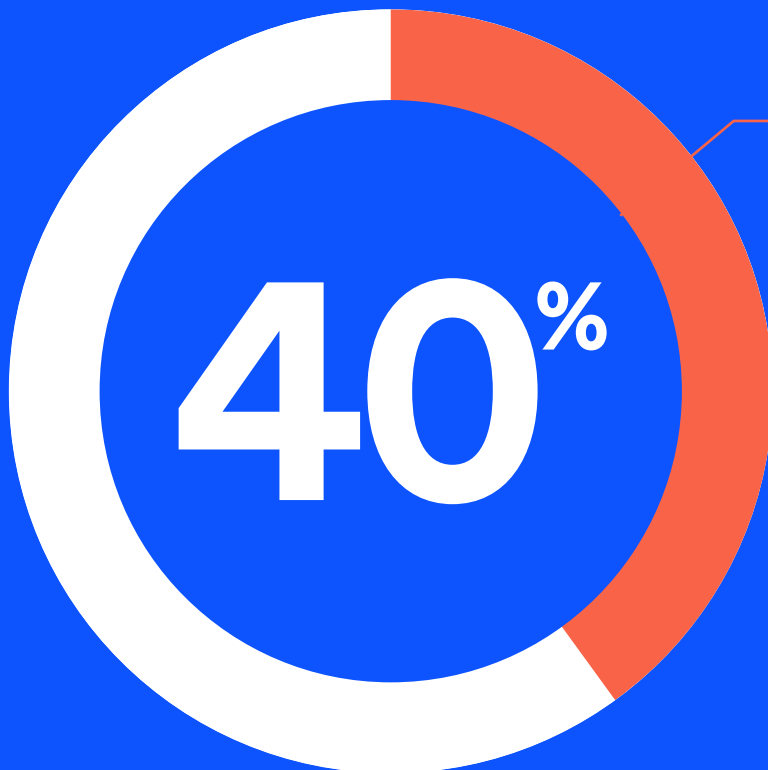
3 Leaders aren't connecting on what really matters

*External networks are business/professional networks (not inside your own company), either formal or informal, with whom organisational issues and challenges can be discussed to get advice, guidance, ideas, support and encouragement. This may include mentors, ex-colleagues, and relationships with other business leaders you have built up over the course of your career.

1. Leaders' networks are lacking

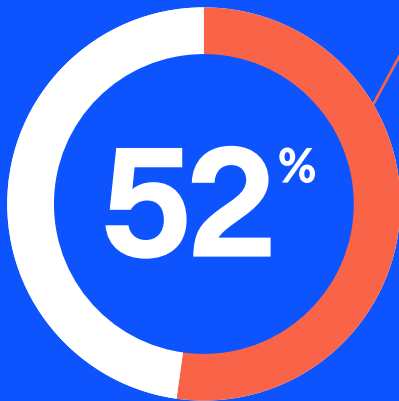


67% of business leaders have an external network to lean on

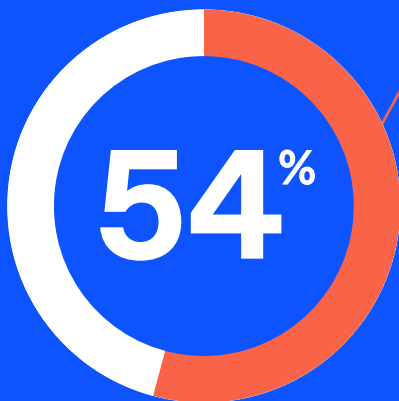


40% of public sector leaders have an external network to lean on

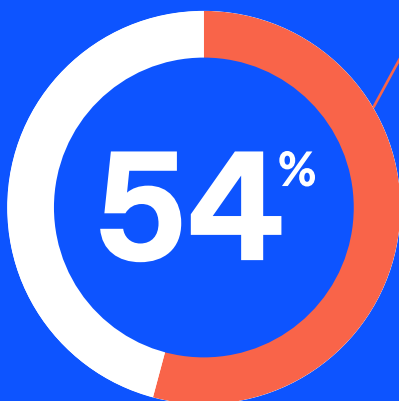
2. Leaders need stronger connection at every level



52% of leaders who connect with an external business network consider their connections to be limited or know they can improve their connections



54% of leaders know their organisations' connections outside of their industry are limited or they should improve them



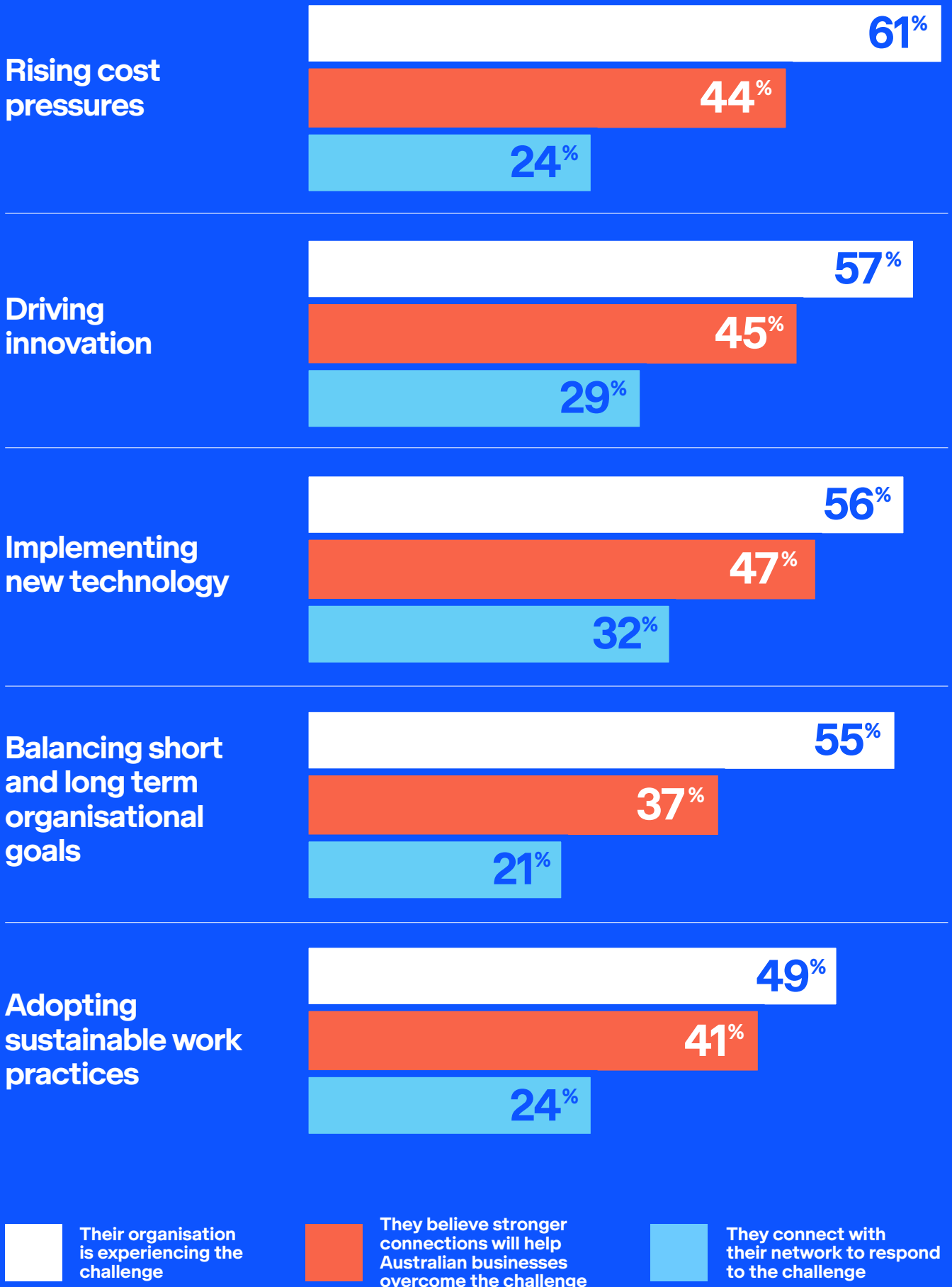
54% of leaders feel there is scope to improve their organisation's connections within their industry or that their organisation's connections within industry are limited

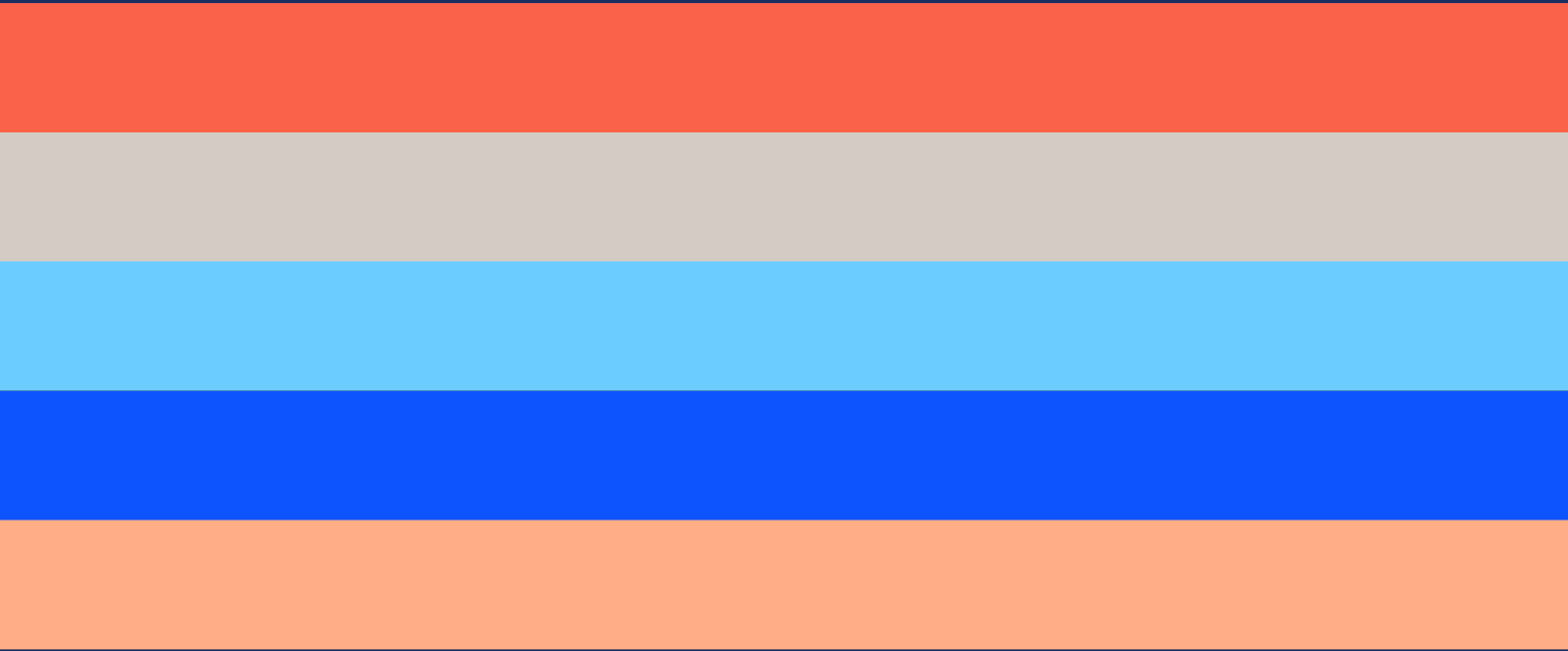
Leaders ranked the five biggest challenges facing their organisation.

And guess what?

They aren't necessarily collaborating on these critical issues, even though most leaders believe that stronger connections with external networks can help organisations in Australia overcome these challenges.

3. Leaders aren't connecting on what really matters







Section 02

**53 billion
reasons not
to go it alone**

**So why does this really matter?
More connection, more
collaboration = more growth.**

**Over the past 12 months,
organisations where all/most
leaders were connecting with
external networks had five percent
higher revenue growth on average,
compared to businesses where
less leaders had these networks.**

**That's a total potential
of \$53 billion in lost revenue
every year for large businesses
across Australia where fewer
leaders are connected.**

More connected
leaders

↑ \$15^M

in growth per
organisation

Fewer connected
leaders

↓ \$15^M

lost opportunity cost
per organisation

More connected
leaders

↑ \$22^B

in growth across all large
businesses

Fewer connected
leaders

↓ \$53^B

lost opportunity cost
across all large businesses

**Being better connected
can help us solve the biggest
challenges.**

**The top challenges leaders believe
Australian organisations would be
better able to address through
stronger connections are:**

1	Implementing new technology	47%
2	Driving innovation	45%
3	Rising cost pressures	44%
4	Adopting sustainable work practices	41%
5	Balancing short and long term organisational goals	37%

“We won’t be able to solve complex problems like the energy transition if we don’t work together. With the right partners and experience you can reimagine outcomes that you never thought were possible.”



AYESHA RAZZAQ
EXECUTIVE GENERAL MANAGER,
RETAIL, ENERGY QUEENSLAND

With more connection, comes more innovation. Leaders who have higher quality connections and connect with their external networks more, innovate more.

In the last 12 months, interactions with external networks led to the development of new or innovative ideas six or more times for:

42%

of high quality connectors*

29%

of leaders with scope to improve connections

22%

of leaders with limited connections

28%

of leaders who connect with external networks monthly-annually

*high quality connectors are senior leaders that say they themselves are very well connected or who connect specifically to collaborate and find solutions to shared challenges at least weekly.

“A network gives you a sense of belonging. When you’re helping someone else and sharing problems, it helps you see and be part of that bigger picture.”

RICHARD WEIR
CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER,
EHEALTH NSW







Section 03

Connection, a case of “yeah, nah”

Australian business leaders want to do what’s required to strengthen connections.

91% are willing to partner and work with other organisations

93% are willing to share their organisation’s challenges

93% are willing to share their organisation’s opportunities

And see the positive impact of connecting with their network.

92%

leave interactions feeling positive

99%

say interactions have led to new or innovative ideas 5 times on average in the past year

92%

anticipate negative consequences for their organisation if they didn't have strong connections

Connection, a case of “yeah, nah”

Top 3 ranked feelings after leaders are connecting:

1 Energised and inspired

2 Valued

3 More confident

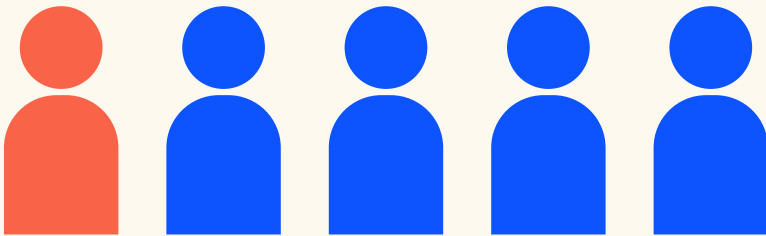
Top 3 ranked consequences of leaders not connecting:

1 Ineffective problem solving

2 Reduced business development

3 Increased risk of professional isolation

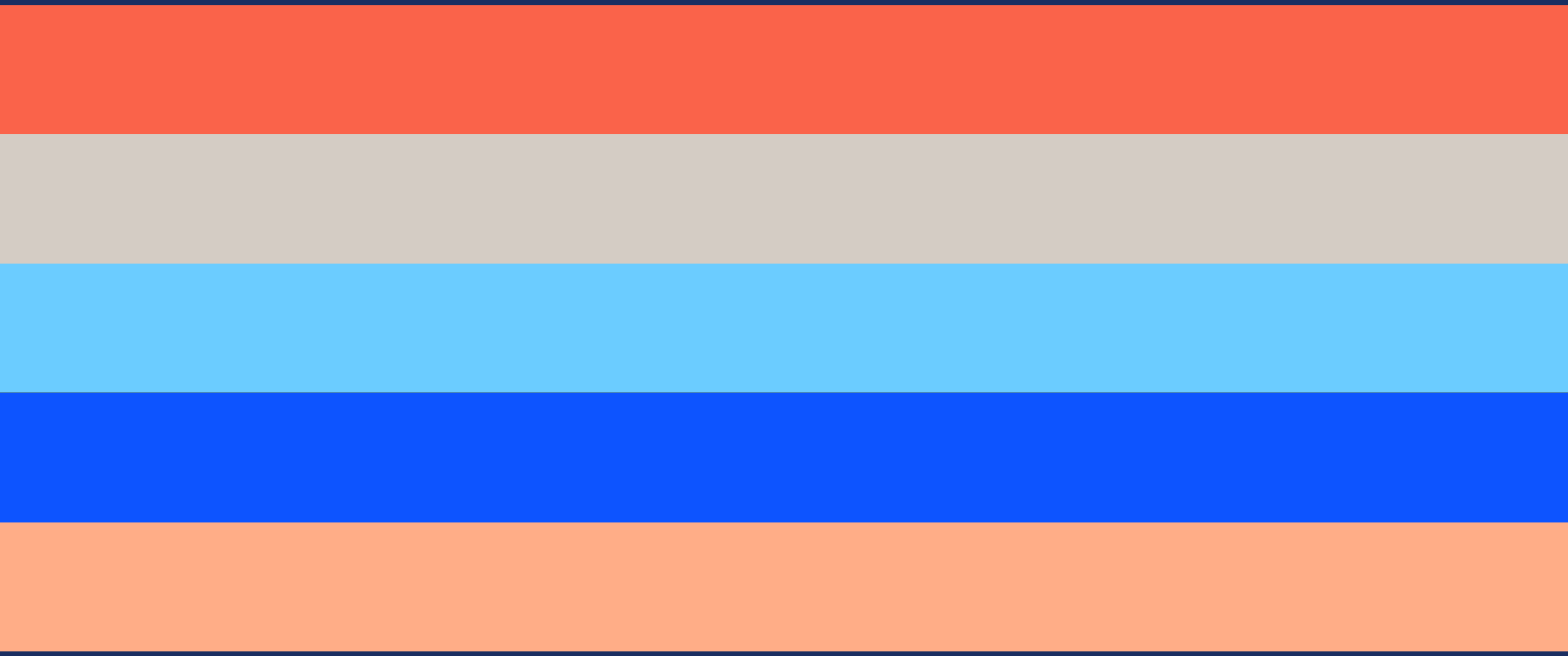
**What’s holding leaders back?
1 in 5 leaders find it difficult to build
trusted and meaningful connections
with other leaders outside their
organisation.**



**Most senior leaders say they
face at least one barrier to building
stronger relationships.**

Top barriers to stronger connections:

1	Competitive dynamics	38%
2	Lack of time	35%
3	Different priorities	34%

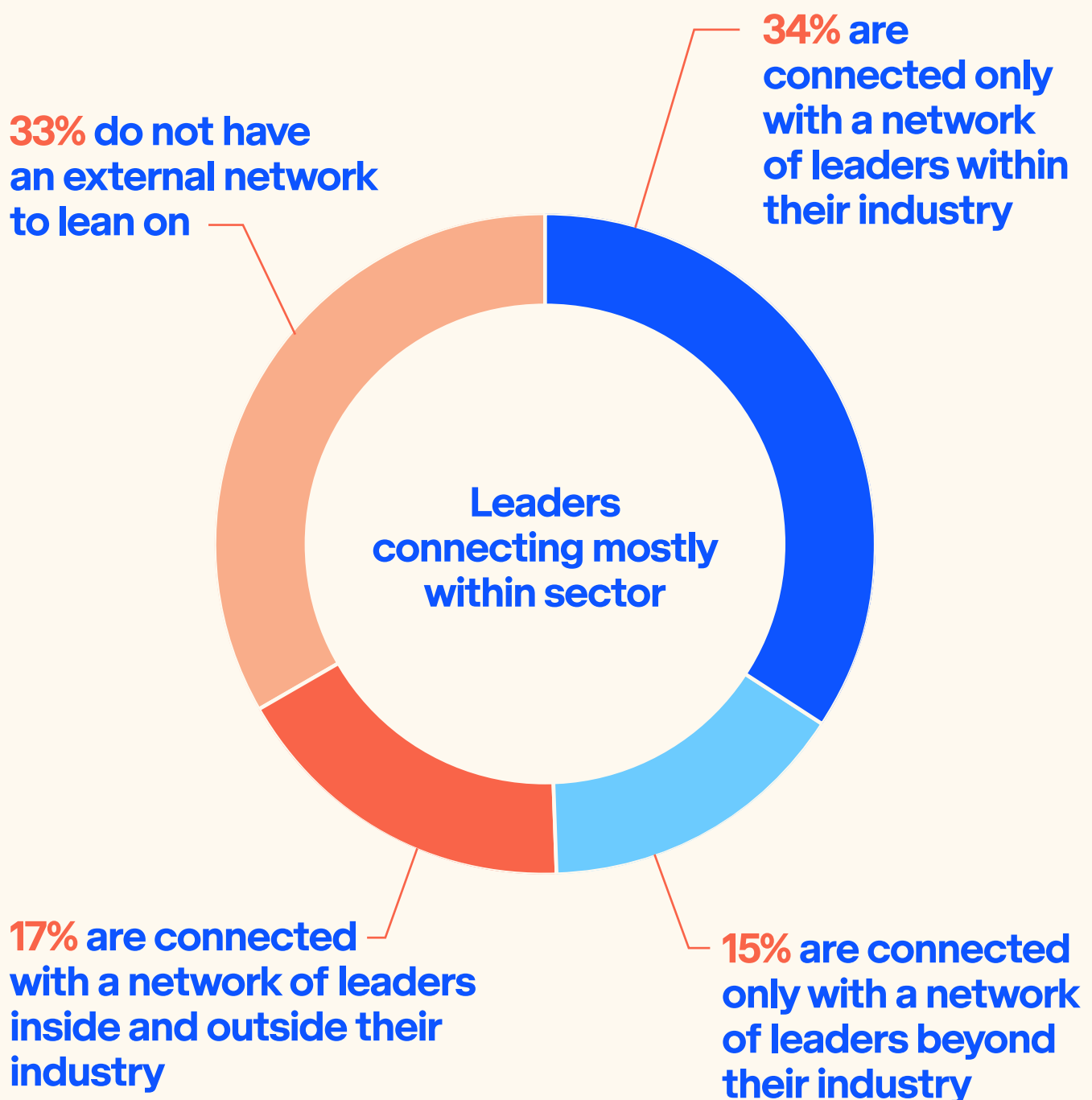




Section 04

**Where
industries
collide,
ideas ignite**

Overall, leaders connect more within their sector than beyond (not a surprising one!) There are often more opportunities and reasons to connect within your own industry. But some industries are more connected than others. These leaders understand that diversity of thought and experience can be the key to innovation.



**“Beware
of tunnel vision.
Fresh perspectives
from outside the
industry might
be just what you
need to crack an
innovative idea.”**

PEGGY RENDERS
CHIEF CUSTOMER OFFICER, INDUSTRY
& GOVERNMENT, TELSTRA



Some sectors are connecting up a storm. Leaders in some sectors, like manufacturing, are much more likely to have an external network to lean on. The percentage of leaders that say they have an external network varies dramatically by sector.

The connection league table:

Manufacturing	87%
Construction	67%
Financial Services	66%
Logistics	55%
Retail	49%
Public Sector	40%
Mining	28%

What’s holding us back? While competition is a common barrier to building stronger networks, it wasn’t the only one. The top barriers change for leaders, depending on their industry.

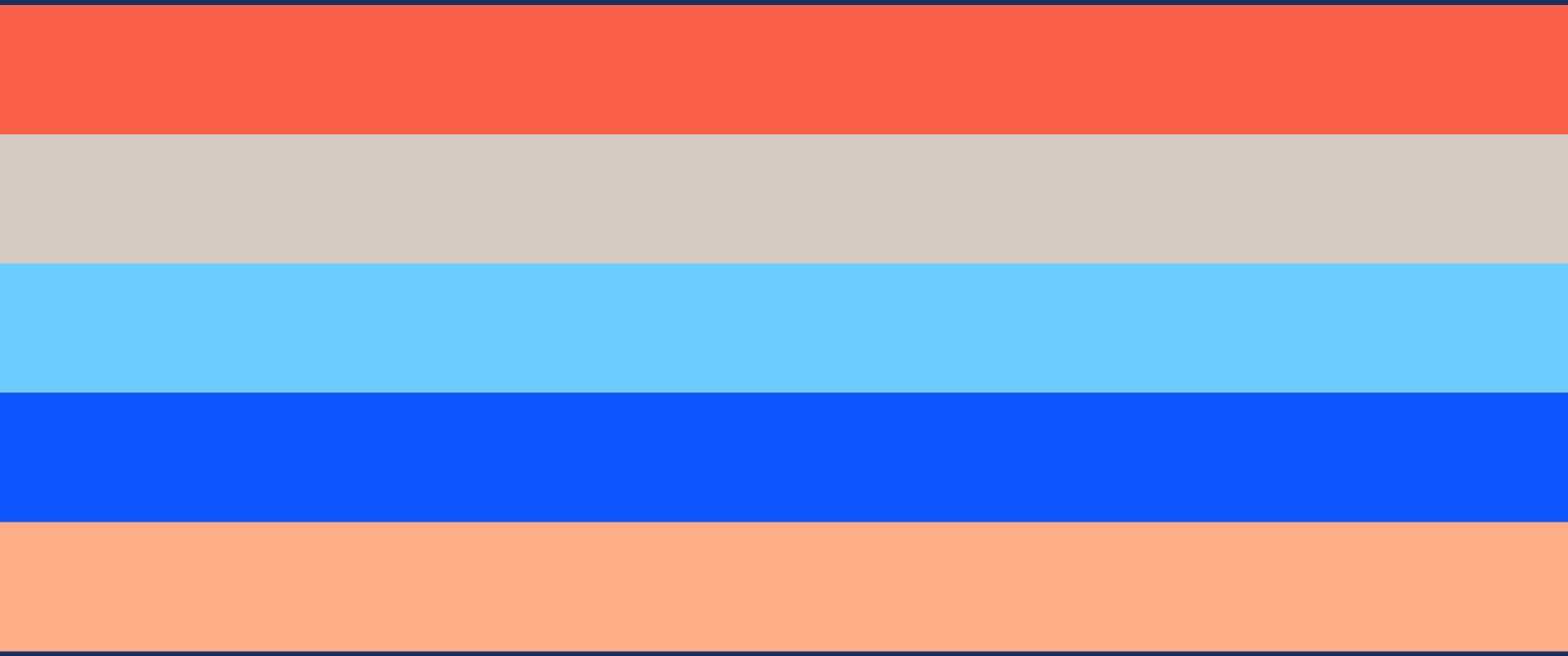
The top three barriers for leaders:

#1

#2

#3

Competition	Lack of time	Lack of confidence
Competition	Personal differences	Differing priorities
Competition	Lack of time	Communication
Competition	Communication	Differing priorities
Competition	Lack of time	Geographical distance
Lack of time	Competition	Differing priorities
Geographical distance	Communication	Lack of trust





Section 05

Better together

There's always room to build stronger connection. So how can organisations tap into the full potential of leader connection and collaboration?

We have a few thoughts:

1

Be intentional and adopt a growth mindset:

Prioritise your connections to maximise collaboration impact. Make every connection count. Keep an open mind and embrace opportunities to engage.

2

Mutual value in every interaction: Reciprocity builds strong connections. Share insights, make introductions, or swap notes for mutual benefit. Be comfortable sharing learnings. Failures are often when we learn the most.

3

Connect with purpose: Build your network through your passions, from sporting clubs to supporting charities and causes. Some of the strongest connections are built through a shared purpose. Focus on how connections can enhance your personal, team, and business development.

Discover more at telstra.com/returnonconnection

**“This isn’t
about one ship
rising above
others, this is
about all boats
rising on the
same tide.”**

OLIVER CAMPLIN-WARNER
GROUP EXECUTIVE, TELSTRA ENTERPRISE



Methodology

Telstra Enterprise commissioned market research firm YouGov to conduct this study online between 31 July and 12 August 2024.

The sample comprised a nationally representative sample of 1,001 Australian business leaders (senior managers and above) in Australia working in organisations with 200+ employees aged 18 years and older. Following the completion of interviewing, the data was weighted to reflect the latest ABS location estimates of large organisations with 200+ employees in Australia.

The economic impact of connection (\$15.5 million) calculation is based on the difference in average net increase in annual turnover of those that do not have all/most of their senior business leaders connected to external networks from those that do have all/most of their senior business leaders connected to external networks multiplied by the average turnover of large Australian businesses during the past 12 months as provided by the Australian Bureau of Statistics to estimate the financial impact for business and the broader economy.

The extrapolated \$53 billion figure is calculated by multiplying the economic impact of connection figure (\$15.5 million) by the equivalent number of large Australian businesses who don't have all/most of their senior business leaders connected to external networks.

Discover more at
telstra.com/returnonconnection

