

10 IMPACT STATEMENTS

December 2024 eBook

The 2024
Certainty Project



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UNCERTAINTY — AN ONGOING REALITY

01

28%

Share of middle-market companies operating at high level of uncertainty over past 10 months

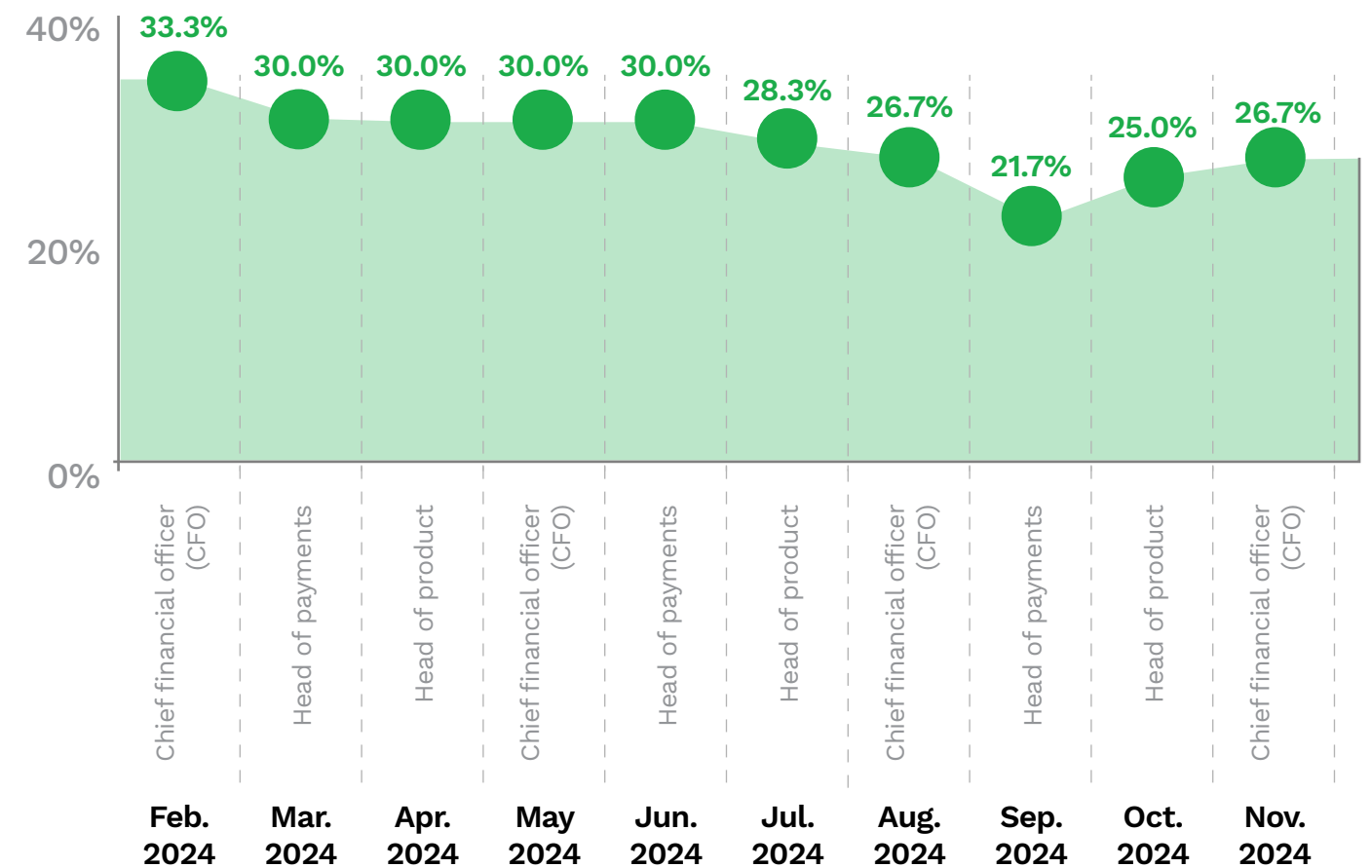
So what:

"High uncertainty," in this research, means an environment with fluctuating market conditions, changing consumer behavior, or unpredictable regulatory shifts. More than one-quarter of middle-market firms operate amid high uncertainty, which can make it challenging to anticipate trends and optimize decision making.

FIGURE 1:

Uncertainty rate

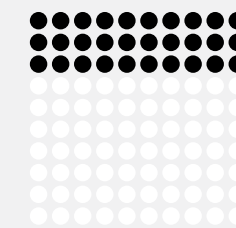
Share of executives who report their firm operates in high uncertainty environment, over time and by type of executive



Source: PYMNTS Intelligence
Certainty Project eBook, December 2024
 N = 540: Complete responses aggregated from surveys fielded between February 2024 and November 2024

Q2

30%



Share of middle-market executives who say that uncertainty has impacted their firm's business performance in the last 30 days

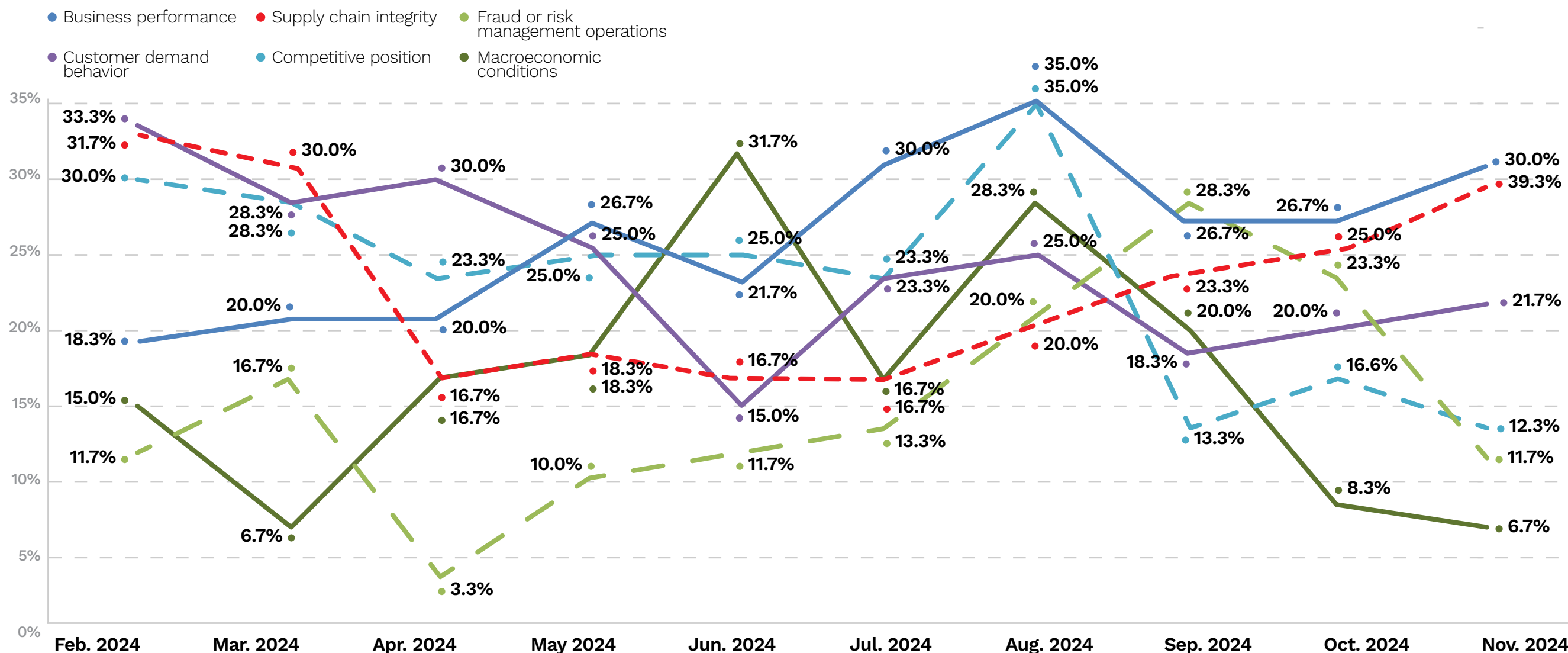
FIGURE 2:

How uncertainty specifically impacts operations

Share of executives reporting uncertainty impacted select areas of operation in the past 30 days

So what:

Prolonged uncertainty can erode a middle market business's competitive edge, stalling its long-term success.



Source: PYMNTS Intelligence
 Certainty Project eBook, December 2024
 N = 540: Complete responses aggregated from surveys fielded between February 2024 and November 2024

UNCERTAINTY'S IMPACTS



03

6%

Average total cost of uncertainty, as a share of revenue, in the last 12 months

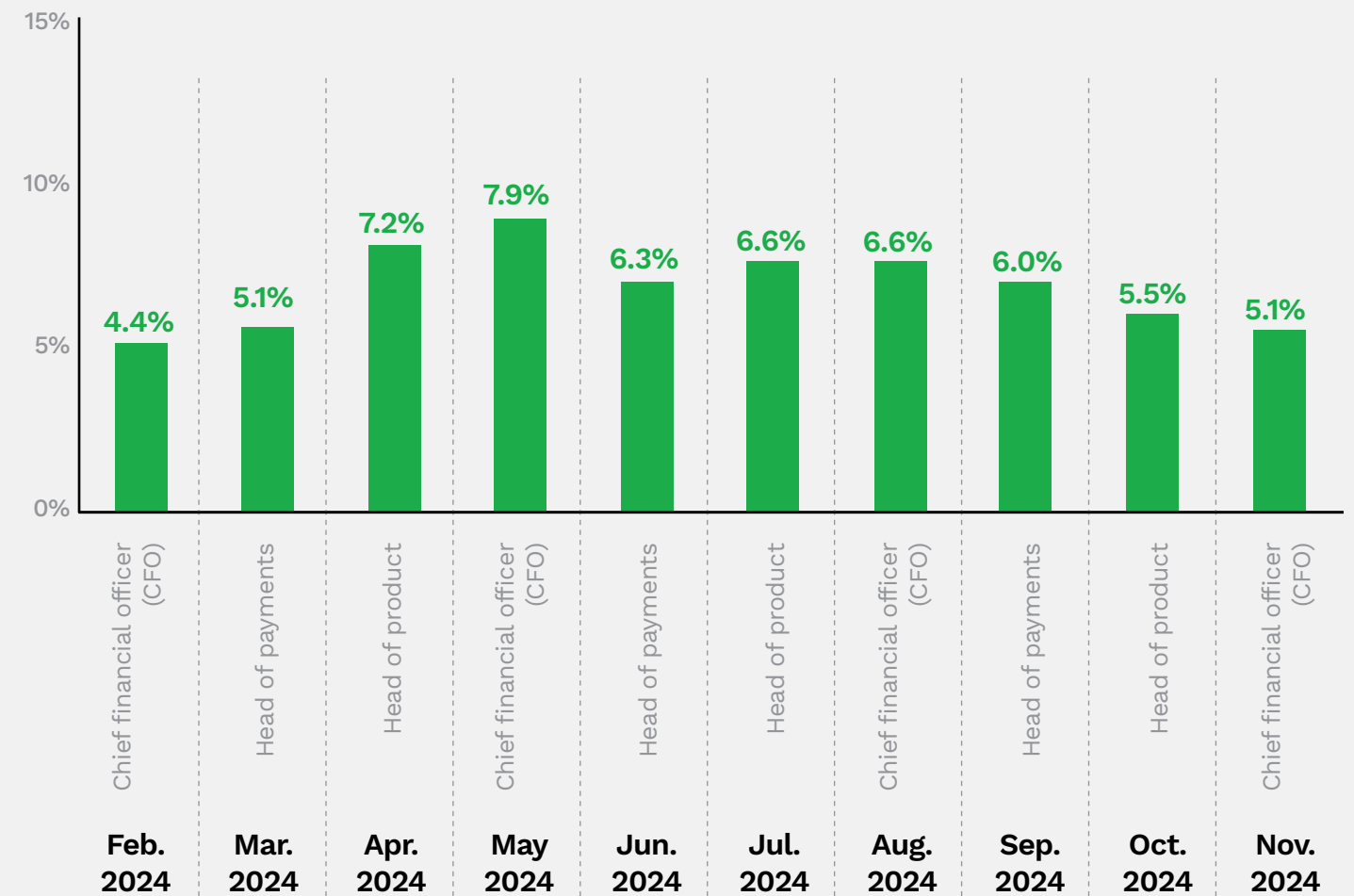
So what:

Uncertainty drives significant losses by reducing efficiency while increasing the costs of supply chain disruptions and complicating labor management and financial operations. These challenges lead to higher borrowing expenses, missed growth opportunities, and greater spending on risk mitigation,

FIGURE 3:

Uncertainty's costs

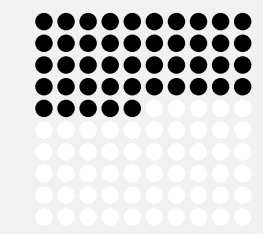
Total cost of uncertainty as share of revenue in the last 12 months



Source: PYMNTS Intelligence
Certainty Project eBook, December 2024
 N = 540: Complete responses aggregated from surveys fielded between February 2024 and November 2024

044

45%



Share who said their company experienced diminished profits as a result of uncertainty

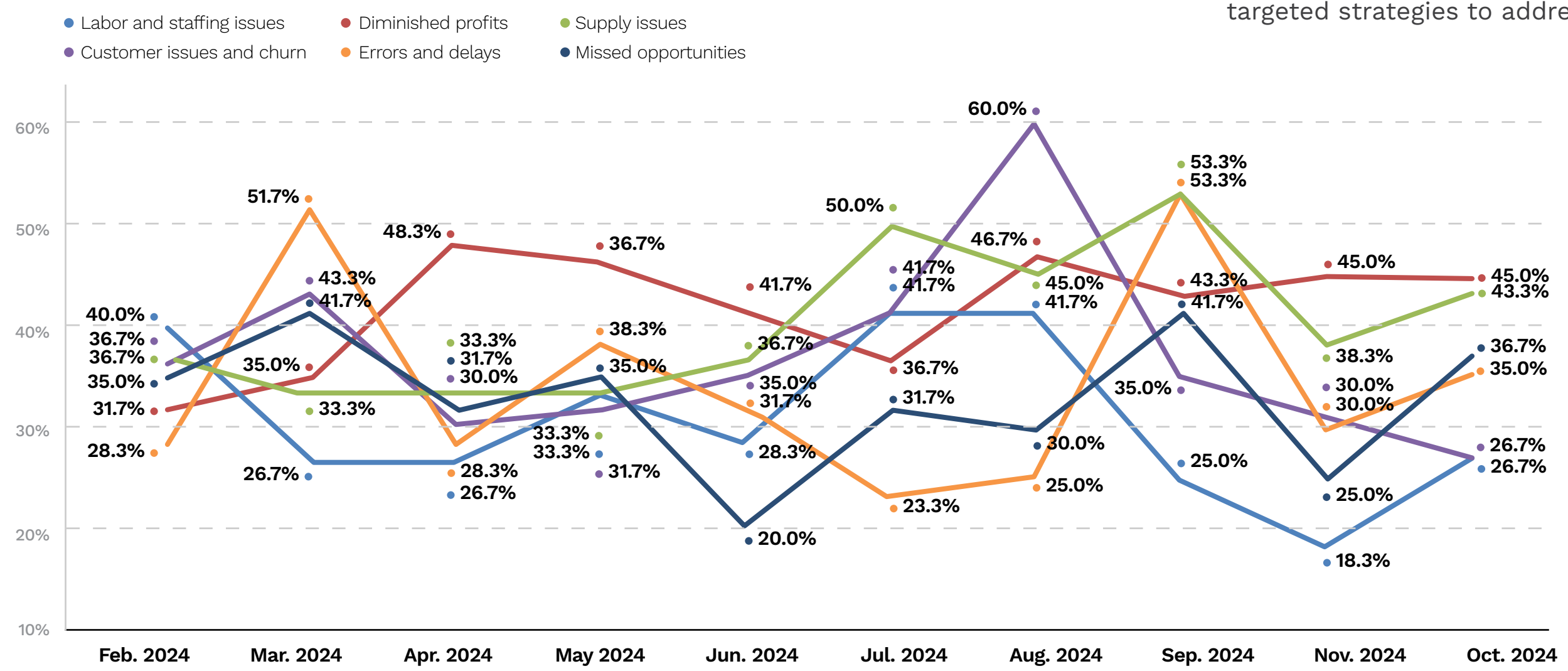
FIGURE 4:

Uncertainty's impacts

Share of middle-market executives who say their firm experienced select impacts from uncertainty in the last 12 months

So what:

Understanding which areas are most impacted by business uncertainty is essential for prioritizing resources and developing targeted strategies to address vulnerabilities.

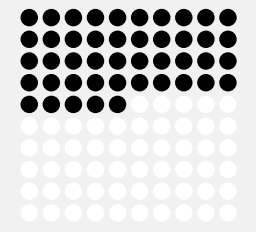


Source: PYMNTS Intelligence
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MITIGATION STRATEGIES



45%



Share of executives who seek informal advice from their business network as a strategy to mitigate uncertainty

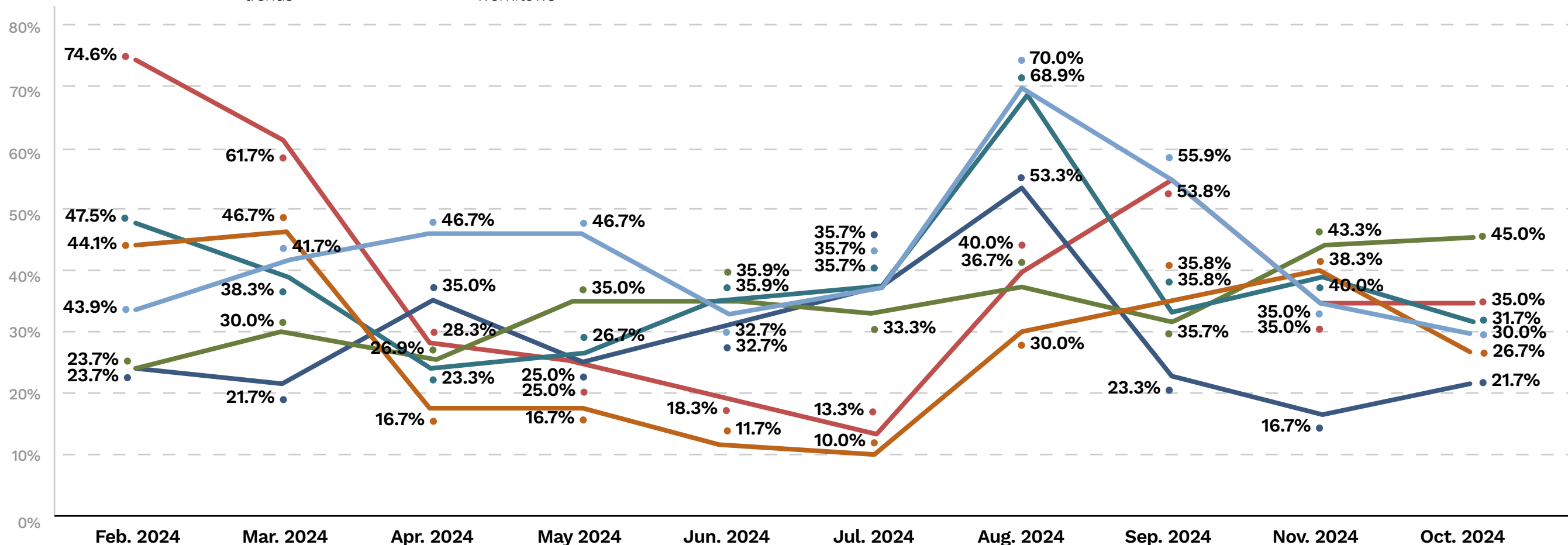
FIGURE 5:
Uncertainty mitigation strategies

Share of executives who took select actions to reduce uncertainty in the last 30 days

- Incorporating process automation
- Partnering with a third-party organization
- Seeking informal advice from our business network
- Hiring people with specific skill sets
- Using analytics to gain insight and forecast trends
- Introducing new processes and workflows

So what:

C-suite executives face time and budget constraints that can limit their ability to implement comprehensive uncertainty mitigation strategies, forcing them to prioritize short-term solutions over long-term resilience. Effective approaches can provide timely insights, reducing risks and improving outcomes. Inefficient strategies may lead to inconsistent results and wasted resources.



Source: PYMNTS Intelligence
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76%

Share of times that using analytics to forecast and gain insight successfully mitigated uncertainty

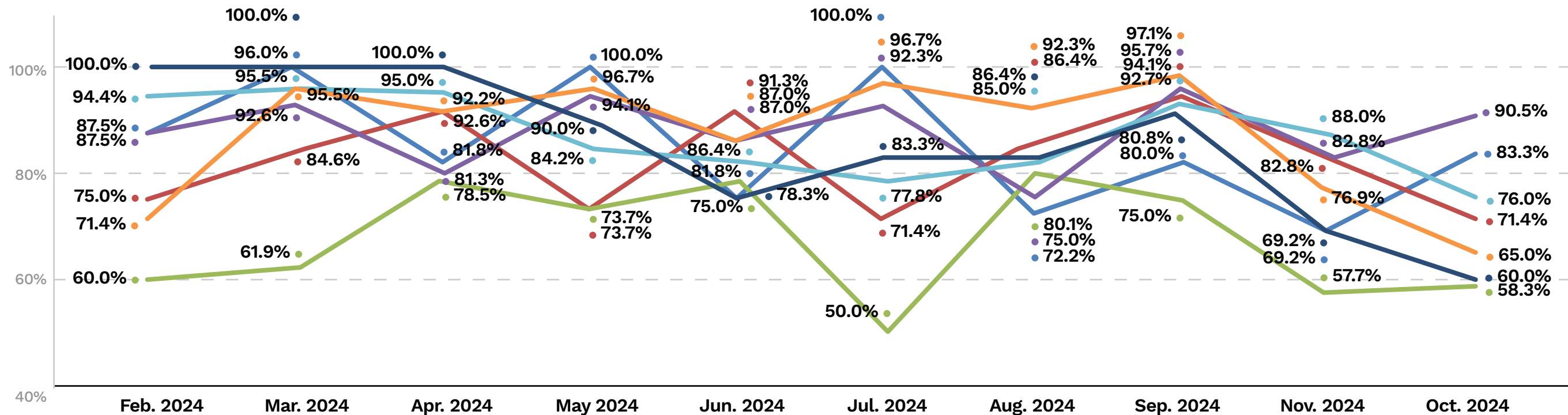
FIGURE 6:

Success of uncertainty mitigation strategies

Share of times that select strategies successfully improved level of certainty relative to number of attempts in the last 30 days

- Incorporating process automation
- Partnering with a third-party organization
- Seeking informal advice from our business network
- Buying or upgrading software or platforms from a third-party provider
- Hiring people with specific skill sets
- Using analytics to gain insight and forecast trends
- Introducing new processes and workflows

So what:
While seeking informal advice from business networks is as common as leveraging analytics for insights, the effectiveness of these strategies varies significantly: analytics successfully mitigated uncertainty 3 out of 4 times, whereas informal advice was successful closer to half the time.



Source: PYMNTS Intelligence
 Certainty Project eBook, December 2024
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THE COMPETITIVE LANDSCAPE



07

63%



Share of executives who said the landscape got significantly or somewhat more competitive in the last 12 months

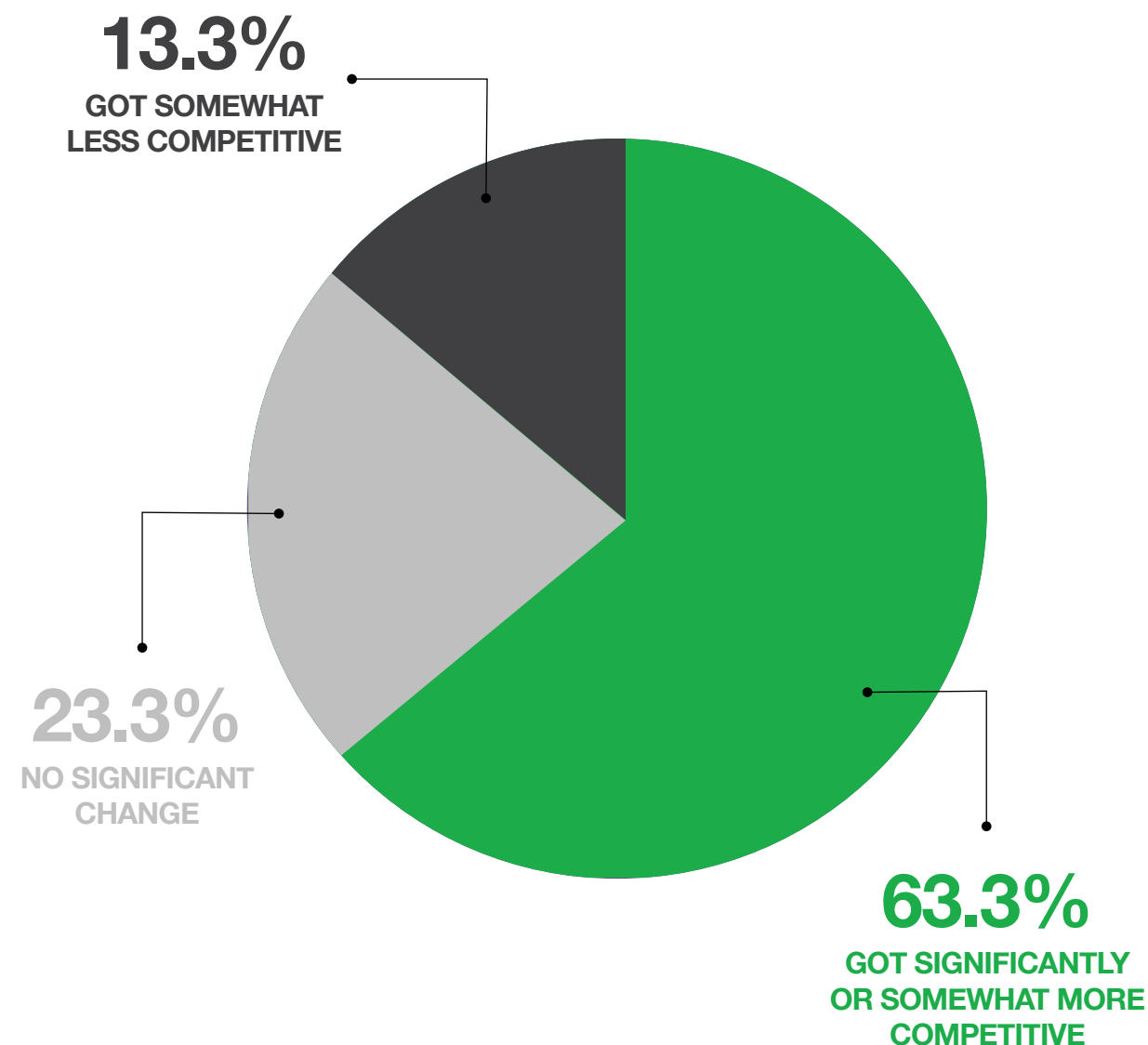
So what:

As the competitive landscape becomes more intense, businesses face increased pressure to innovate, reduce costs, and differentiate themselves. This heightened competition can strain resources, force companies to make faster decisions, and push them to adopt new or not fully tested technologies or strategies.

FIGURE 7:

Competitive landscape evolution

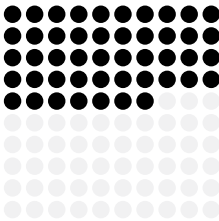
Share of executives who agree with select evaluations of the competitive landscape



Source: PYMNTS Intelligence
Certainty Project eBook, December 2024
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08

47%



Share of executives who cited cost pressures as a factor that leads to challenges in staying competitive

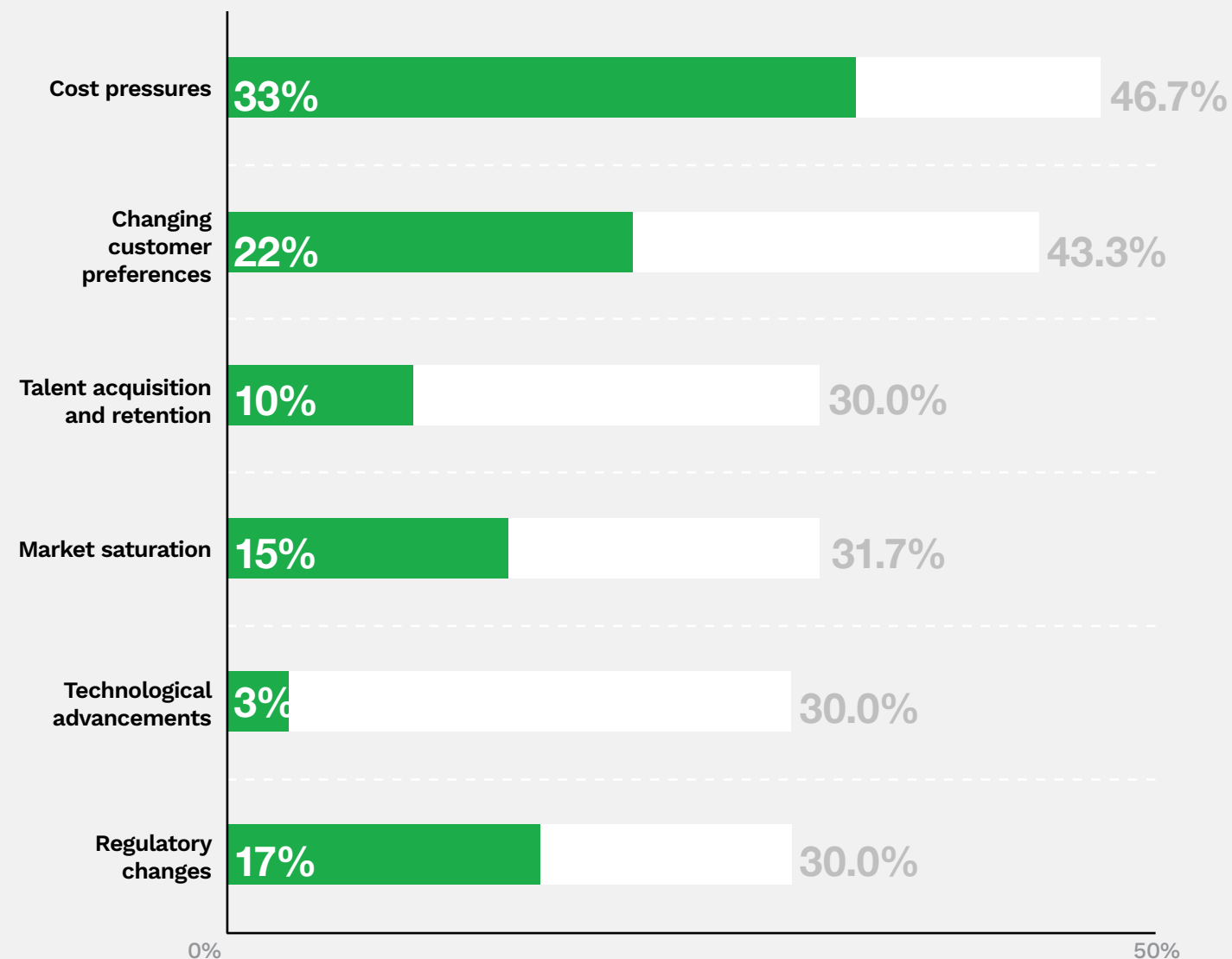
So what:

A business's bottom line directly impacts its ability to be competitive by determining how much capital is available for investment in innovation, talent, and strategic initiatives. A strong bottom line enables a company to absorb market fluctuations, invest in growth opportunities, and maintain flexibility.

FIGURE 8:

Challenges in staying competitive

Share of executives who face select competitiveness-related challenges



● Biggest challenge in staying competitive ● A challenge, but not the biggest

Source: PYMNTS Intelligence
Certainty Project eBook, December 2024
 N = 540: Complete responses aggregated from surveys fielded between February 2024 and November 2024



43% 

Share of executives who said that offering higher-quality products and services is a strategy their middle market firms employ to differentiate themselves from their top competitor

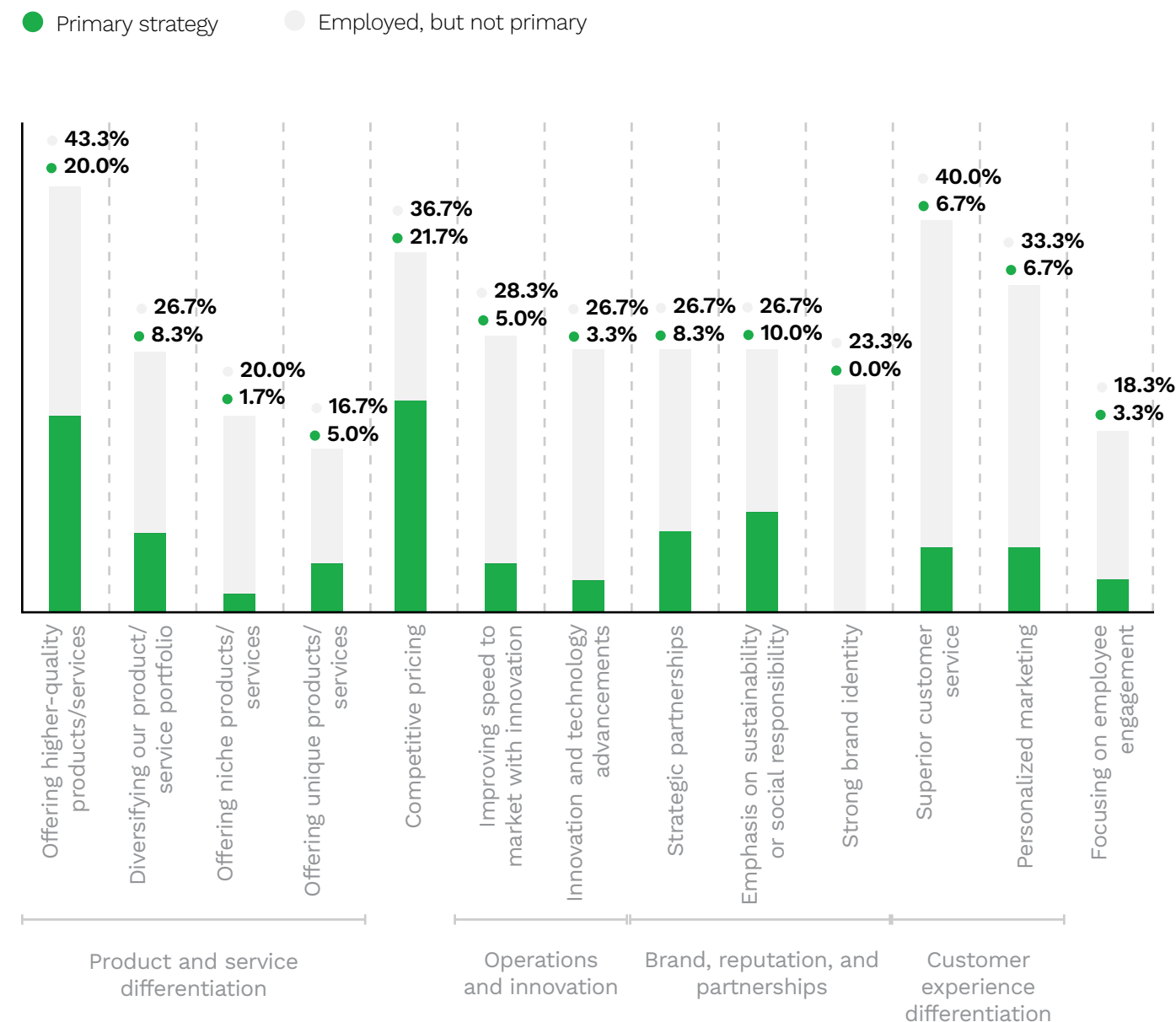
So what:

According to the middle market C-suite, the pillars of a competitive business are high-quality products, competitive pricing and superior customer service.

FIGURE 9:

Key competitive differentiators

Share of executives who employed select strategies to differentiate firm from biggest competitor



Source: PYMNTS Intelligence
Certainty Project eBook, December 2024
 N = 540: Complete responses aggregated from surveys fielded between February 2024 and November 2024

2025 OUTLOOK



10

53%



Share of middle-market executives who expect the level of uncertainty in workflows and operations will improve in the next year, as of November

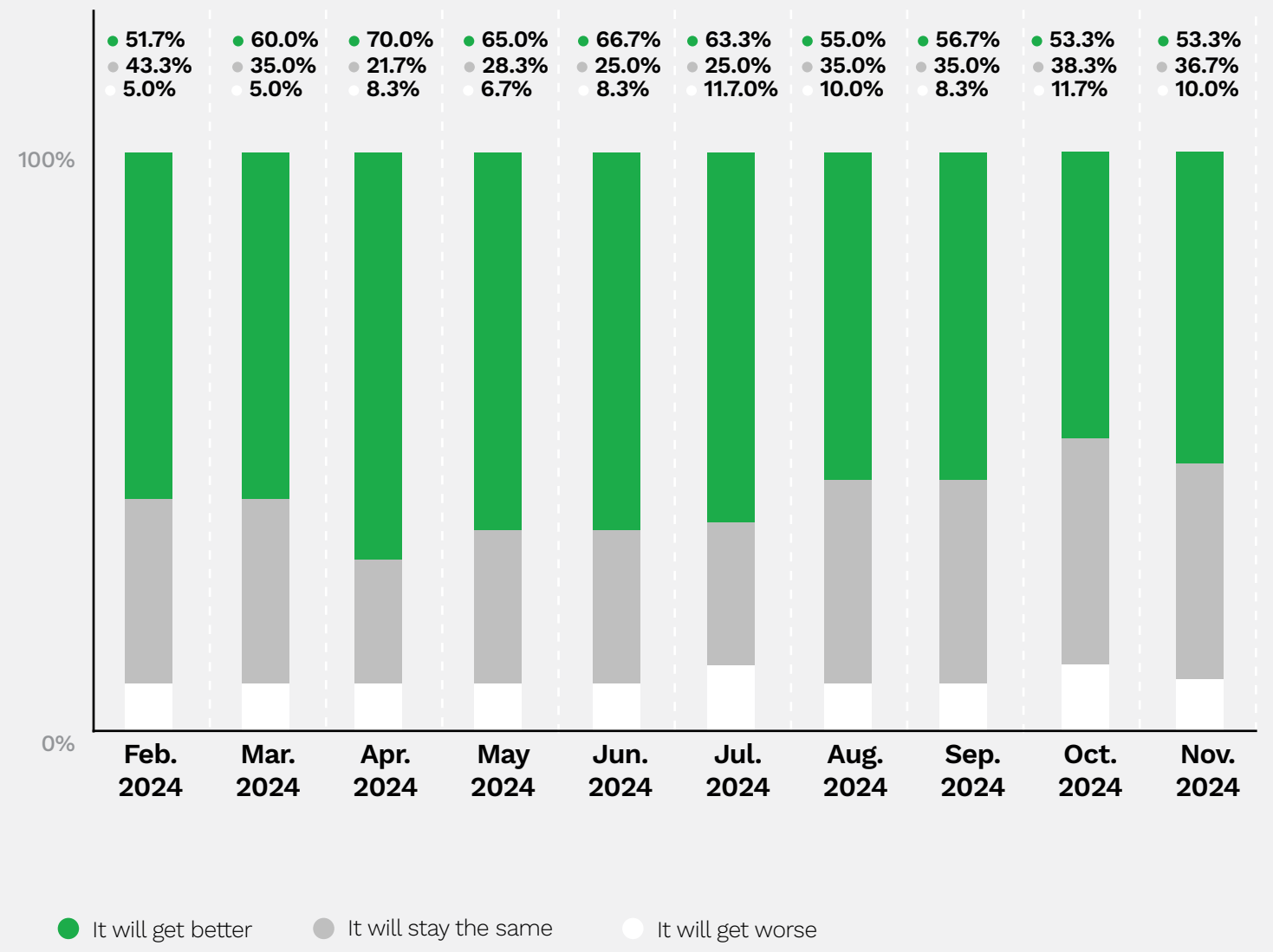
So what:

Despite widespread uncertainty and its significant impact on middle-market businesses' ability to thrive, the C-suite remains optimistic about future improvements. This optimism indicates a level of satisfaction with the effectiveness of their current strategies and a hopeful outlook on leveraging advanced tools to gain momentum and reduce operational uncertainty.

FIGURE 10:

Change forecasts for workflows- and operations-related uncertainty

Share of executives who expect select changes in uncertainty levels related to workflows and operations in the next 12 months



Source: PYMNTS Intelligence
Certainty Project eBook, December 2024
 N = 540: Complete responses aggregated from surveys fielded between February 2024 and November 2024

ABOUT

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PYMNTS INTELLIGENCE

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