



Professionalism In The Workplace

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Introduction

Project Purpose...

York College of Pennsylvania has embarked on a branding initiative that focuses on transforming students into professionals. As a part of this effort, the College has created a *Center for Professional Excellence*. The Center will offer co-curricular programs to assist students' professional development.

To inform the content of the co-curricular offerings, input was obtained from human resource professionals and community and business leaders on what attributes they desire in a professional employee. The findings from this research are presented in this report.

Research Objectives...

The topics investigated in this study included:

- Traits associated with being a professional
- Experiences with recent college graduates relative to professional behavior
- Influence of professionalism in the hiring process
- Role colleges should play in developing professionalism.

Report Format...

The first four sections of the report constitute an executive summary. These sections are Introduction, Research Design, Major Findings, and Observations.

The sections following the executive summary present the detailed findings. These findings are reported in both graphic and narrative forms.

Research Design

Sample...

The sample for the study was obtained from different sampling frames. It is composed of:

- A nationwide random sample of human resources professionals
- Samples of regional and state human resources professionals
- Samples of regional and state business leaders.

Early analysis found no significant differences in the answers of the human resources professionals from the different samples. The same was discovered for the business leaders. Hence, the samples were combined to yield a final sample size of 520.

Detailed information on the composition of the sample is presented in the Profile of Respondents section.

Data Collection...

With the exception of the regional business leaders sample, the data was collected using an online survey. Respondents were sent an e-mail from Dr. George Waldner, President of the College. The e-mail introduced the study and contained a link to the online survey.

Since their e-mail addresses were not available, the regional business leaders received a printed survey sent under the auspices of the College. Accompanying the survey was a cover letter from Dr. Waldner and a Polk-Lepson Research Group business reply envelope.

Research Instrument...

The survey was developed using input from a review of the literature on professionalism and the Center for Professional Excellence's Advisory Board. It was reviewed and approved by the College prior to its administration.

Data Analysis....

The data was analyzed by the total sample and a classification of respondents into human resource professionals and business leaders. If a respondent's position was in human resources, they were classified as human resources even if they were from the business leaders sample.

To facilitate comparisons between the two job classifications, the findings in the graphs and charts show the total sample, HR professionals, and business leaders.

The maximum margin of error for the total sample of 520 respondents is + or – 4.3% at the 95% level of confidence. This means the answers that would be obtained from the population of possible respondents would be within this range of the sample's answers 95% of the time.

A total of 418 respondents were classified as human resources. The maximum margin of error with this size sample is + or – 4.9%. The business leaders sample has 102 respondents. This has a maximum margin of error of + or -9.2%.

The findings were statistically examined by respondents' demographics. The demographics included job classification (human resources versus business leader), education level, number of employees at all locations and in the human resources department, and industry type.

Any statistically significant differences related to respondents' demographics are reported in the text.

Open-ended responses were coded into descriptive categories for presentation purposes. The report shows the predominant categories. The data tables can be consulted for a complete review of all the coded responses.

Major Findings

Expanded Definition Of Professionalism...

When York College first adopted the brand of transforming students into professionals, a question was whether all positions should be considered capable of exhibiting professionalism. Much of the research on professionalism focuses on specific professions such as healthcare and attorneys.

This research finds support for expanding the definition of professional and professional behavior. The vast majority of respondents (88.1%) think of professionalism as being related to the person rather than the position. Anyone in any position has the potential to exhibit professional traits and behavior.

Traits Or Behaviors Associated With Professionalism...

A major objective of the research was to discover how professionalism is viewed in the workplace. This was investigated directly using two series of questions. The first set of questions asked in an open-ended format what three traits and behaviors characterize professional and unprofessional employees.

Mentioned most often as characteristics of the professional employee were:

- Personal interaction skills, including courtesy and respect (48.0%)
- The ability to communicate which includes listening skills (46.9%)
- A work ethic which includes being motivated and working on a task until it is complete (35.4%)
- Appearance (34.2%)
- Self-confidence and self-awareness (20.1%).

Traits Or Behaviors Associated With Unprofessionalism...

It is not surprising that the traits or behaviors associated with an unprofessional employee are the mirror image of those defining the professional employee.

The most frequently cited unprofessional traits or behaviors were:

- Appearance, which includes attire, tattoos, and piercings (39.1%)
- Poor communication skills including poor grammar (38.9%)
- Poor work ethic (37.0%)
- Poor attitude (28.3%)
- Being disrespectful and inconsiderate (27.4%)
- Having a sense of entitlement (16.6%).

Importance Of Qualities For A Position Requiring Professionalism...

A more structured approach to defining professionalism had respondents rate traits according to both their importance when considering a person for a position requiring professionalism and the extent to which they are present in first year college educated employees.

The scale used for the rating of importance went from 1, not important, to 5, very important.

The qualities considered most important and their mean ratings were:

- Accepts personal responsibility for decisions and actions (4.73)
- Is competent in both verbal and written communication (4.61)
- Projects a professional image (4.44)
- Is able to think independently (4.42).

Employers do not necessarily expect recent college graduates to be experts in their field (3.31). Other research has discovered that many employers prefer to train new employees on the job. The other trait that is considered of limited importance is the new employee being concerned about opportunities for advancement (3.42).

Prevalence Of Traits In New Employees...

The ratings for the extent to which the qualities are present in first year college educated employees were obtained using a rating scale going from 1, very rare, to 5, very common.

Most striking are the relatively low ratings given to all the qualities. The only attribute with a mean rating higher than 4 was being concerned about opportunities for advancement (4.01).

Only two qualities received a rating of 5, very common, from at least 10 percent of the respondents. These were: concerned about opportunities for advancement (35.3%) and tries to maintain a balance between work life and personal life (13.2%).

Importance Analysis - Importance And Prevalence Combined...

Plotting the importance and prevalence ratings against each other reveals what is both important to employees and how prevalent the qualities are in new graduates. These are referred to as Critical Improvement Issues.

To differentiate York College graduates from others, improving performance on the Critical Improvement Issues warrants the most attention. These are:

- Accepts personal responsibility for decisions and actions
- Is able to act independently
- Has a clear sense of direction and purpose.

The one quality most prevalent in new college educated employees – concern about opportunities for advancement – is of little importance to employers.

Further Evidence Of Lack Of Professionalism In New College Graduates...

There is a widely held sentiment that not all college graduates are displaying professionalism upon entering the workforce. More than a third of the respondents (37.3%) indicated that less than half of the new graduates they hire exhibit professionalism in their first year on the job.

About the same percentage (33.2%) feel the prevalence of professionalism has eroded over the past five years. Reasons most often given for this decline are an increased sense of entitlement (25.3%), new cultural values (13.3%), and a changed work ethic (10.0%).

Unfortunately, the survey did not ask for the age of the respondent. It would be interesting to see if those perceiving a decline in professionalism are an older generation reacting to younger generations. Future research will explore the presence of a generational divide.

Not everyone believed the percentage of graduates exhibiting professionalism has declined. Over half of the respondents (53.4%) felt the percentage has remained the same over the past five years. Another 13.4% feel the percentage has increased. Some of these respondents attribute the increase to schools doing a better job preparing graduates for work (25.5%). However, 40.0% of these respondents point out that there are less jobs available and, as a result, the pool from which to hire has improved.

Sense Of Entitlement...

Insight was obtained into the perceived shift in cultural values. When asked if a sense of entitlement among first year college educated employees has increased, stayed the same, or decreased over the past five years, 60.6% reported it has increased. About a third (32.4%) feel it is the same and 6.7% described it as decreasing.

Broad Education Versus Skill Sets...

Having a specific skill set is not enough to be considered for a position requiring professionalism. A total of 71.7% of the respondents indicated that a broad educational background and a specific skill set are equally important. As will be seen, broad educational background goes beyond the traditional academic definition of liberal arts.

Probably reflecting their different perspectives relative to new hires, HR professionals (18.9%) were more likely than business leaders (13.3%) to refer to a specific skill set only. While business leaders (18.1%) more often than HR professionals (8.7%) selected a broad educational background as being more important than skill sets.

Role Of Higher Education...

There is a widespread belief that college can play a role in preparing students to be professionals. The expanded definition of what is a professional is evidenced by the finding that almost all of the respondents (97.6%) feel college should prepare students to be a professional regardless of the students' field of study.

The benefits of being a college graduate are recognized by employers. Over three-fourths of the respondents (77.3%) stated that college graduates are more likely to exhibit professional behavior than newly hired high school graduates. However, part of the reason for this could simply be that college graduates are older than high school graduates and have matured more. In fact, 51.9% of the respondents who described how college graduates differ from high school graduates referred to them being more serious and mature. Another 17.1% commented on college graduates having more real life experiences.

The most frequently offered recommendations for what colleges should do to develop professionalism in students referred to: attitude/demeanor (19.7%), internships/hands-on experience (19.0%), develop an understanding of professionalism (17.7%), and communication/interpersonal skills (15.6%). As seen, not all these recommendations are purely academic.

Importance Of Professionalism...

York College embracing professionalism as its brand will clearly benefit its graduates. Nearly all of the respondents (97.7%) stated that their assessment of how professional an applicant will be on the job has an effect on their hiring decision. Of these respondents, almost three-fourths (71.8%) indicated that 50% or more of the hiring decision is based on an assessment of the applicant's professionalism.

Employers' assessments of an applicant's potential for professionalism focus most often on the person's communication skills (48.0%), demeanor/attitude (29.8%), and appearance (24.1%). These, of course, are traits that are not necessarily specific to the job. These findings are consistent with previously reported findings on the definition of a professional employee.

Job related factors, such as the person's ability to answer questions (19.1%) and their job knowledge (9.5%), were mentioned less often as tools of assessment of professionalism.

To document that a student has had exposure to the meaning of professionalism, York College could award a certificate to those students who have completed a series of workshops, programs, or courses. Almost a third of the respondents (29.4%) stated that such a certificate would have an impact on their hiring decision. Only 9.4% responded it would not have an impact. The uniqueness of this concept is seen in the 61.1% who either thought it might have an impact or did not know if it would. If these uncertain employers are favorably exposed to students with this certification, the experience could show them the advantages of the certificate.

However, certification will not necessarily mean greater compensation than would be offered someone without it. Only 3.4% felt certification would result in higher compensation. Another 42.7% believed it might. Over half (54.0%) indicated it would not.

IT Etiquette...

While companies have their own policies on the appropriate use of the Internet and e-mail at work, communicating with others on a nearly constant basis using these electronic forms of communication has become a norm for some. The need to have an electronic communications statement in course syllabi reflects this.

Recent research comparing reasons for dismissal now versus 10 years ago has found that the abuse of a company's technology has surfaced as a new reason for common dismissals. In the more serious cases, employees have attempted to electronically gain access to company information which they were not authorized to see.

In this study, 39.1% of the respondents reported increased problems with IT etiquette among new employees. Encouraging news is 44.8% indicated a decrease in these types of problems. The remaining 16.1% saw no change in the prevalence of problems with IT etiquette.

A topic for inclusion in professionalism programs is the appropriate use of electronic communications in the workplace. It cannot be assumed that the transition from college to work will be accompanied by an understanding of when it is appropriate to communicate with social contacts or surf the web.

HR Professionals Compared To Business Leaders...

Differences that exist in the answers from the HR professionals and the business leaders largely reflect the ways these respondents interact with new college educated employees. HR professionals' exposure to college graduates is primarily during the hiring process. Once the graduate is employed, the HR professional may not interact further with that person unless there are serious problems.

The business leader interacts with the new hire on the job. They are in a position to see if the person can function in a manner expected of a professional employee.

Observations

The New Professional...

The tradition view of a professional limits that job description to specific occupations, such as physicians, attorneys, and accountants. This study clearly shows that it is time to expand this definition. Most of the respondents to the survey associate professionalism with the person, not the position. Everyone in every job has the potential to act as a professional.

Professional Qualities...

The research has identified those qualities that exemplify the professional employee. These qualities go beyond what traits are typically used to describe a professional. Attitude, demeanor, courtesy, respect, interpersonal skills, and appearance are not mentioned often when professionalism is being discussed.

This expansion of the qualities associated with professionalism will pose a challenge. It is one thing to expect students to be able to research topics or write competently. It is another thing to expect students to exhibit proper attitudes and demeanor.

As this study is repeated in the future, these additional traits will be incorporated into the rating questions.

The Relevance Of Professionalism As A Brand...

For the brand to be effective, it must differentiate the College from the competition. Next, the differentiation must have meaning to the consumer of the product or service. Professionalism, as York College's brand, has the potential to accomplish both of these things.

The most striking finding in this study is the extent to which newly employed college graduates are lacking in the qualities of a professional. These are qualities that are important to employers. Plus, employers expect colleges to help develop students into professionals.

By successfully implementing a branding strategy focusing on professionalism, York College can position itself as an affordable, quality institution that understands what it takes for its graduates to effectively compete as professionals in the workplace.

Implementing Professionalism...

The brand can be undermined if the College makes the claim to transform students into professionals and the claim is found to be lacking in credibility.

While much professional development can be accomplished in the classroom, the qualities that define a professional go beyond things like critical thinking and communication skills. Co-curricular opportunities will be essential to truly transform students into professionals. The sense of professionalism must be an integral part of the institution.

The entire college community will need to understand the brand and embrace it. The brand must become part of the institution's culture.

Professors must accept the responsibility of being role models to their students. Exemplary performance in the classroom must be seen as being more than learning subject matter. It is anticipated that some interactions with students will be sensitive and uncomfortable as conversations touch upon topics such as being responsible for one's decisions or exhibiting attitudes of entitlement.

The administration will need to be willing to support faculty when students and faculty have differing opinions on what it means to act like professionals.

Students, as part of their orientation to the college, must become aware of the brand and the expectations associated with it. Incorporating a statement reflecting the brand in all syllabi could be appropriate.

Professionalism In the Workplace

Professionalism Is Most Associated With The Person Or Position...

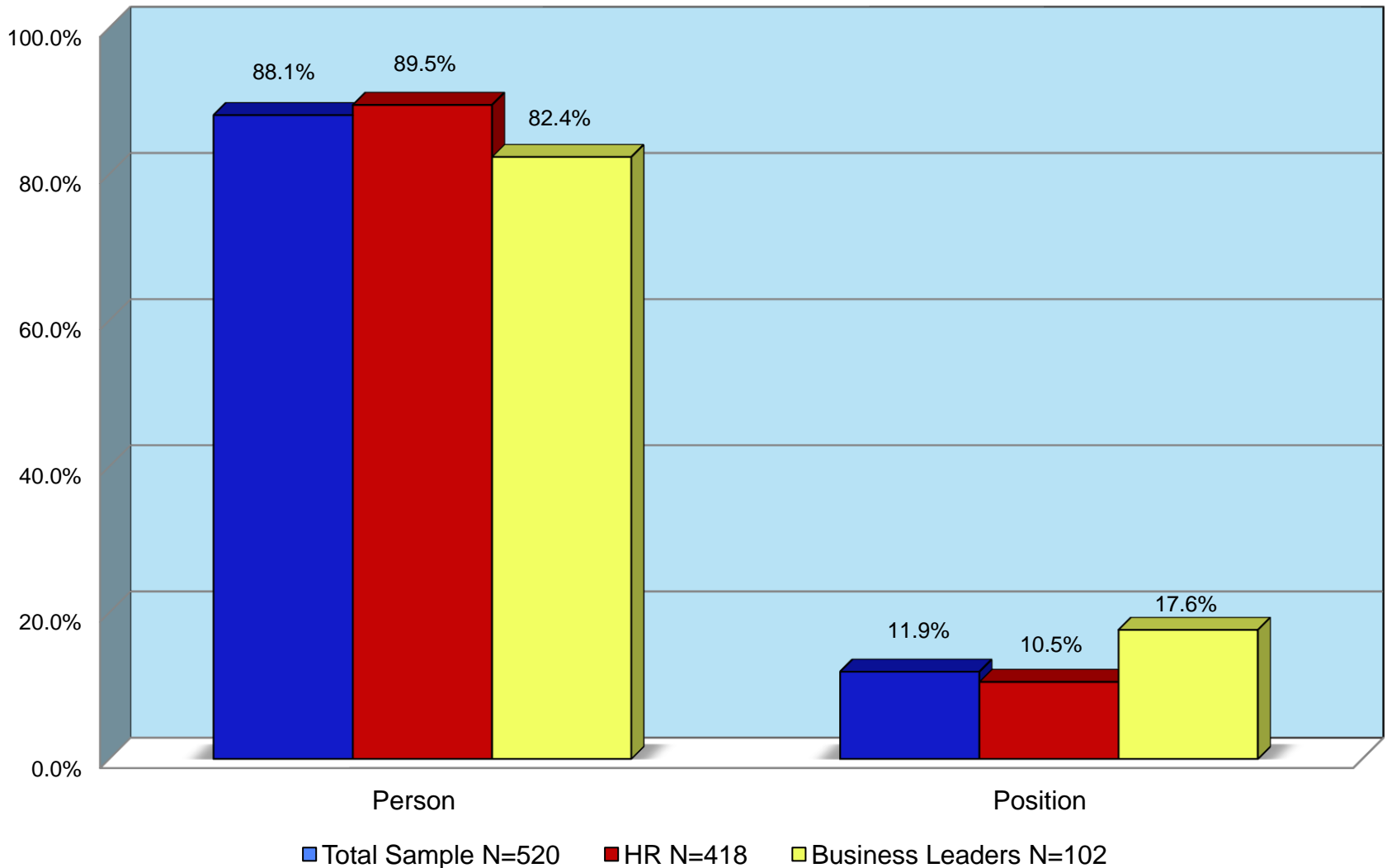
Most of the respondents think of professionalism in their companies as being related to the person (88.1%) rather than the position (11.9%).

The respondents who associate professionalism with the position indicated the positions they consider to be professional. Most often, they referred to upper level management positions (64.5%).

Comparison By Segments...

Business leaders (17.6%) were more likely than HR professionals (10.5%) to associate professionalism with positions rather than the person.

Professionalism Is Most Associated With The Person Or Position



Most Important Factor In Professionalism...

Respondents indicated which is more important in a college graduate being considered for a position that requires professionalism – having a broad educational background or a specific skill set. A third option of both being equally important was also presented.

Having both a broad educational background and a specific skill set (71.7%) are considered important by most of the respondents.

For the other respondents who selected one of the options, having a skill set (17.9%) was chosen more often than having a broad educational background (10.3%).

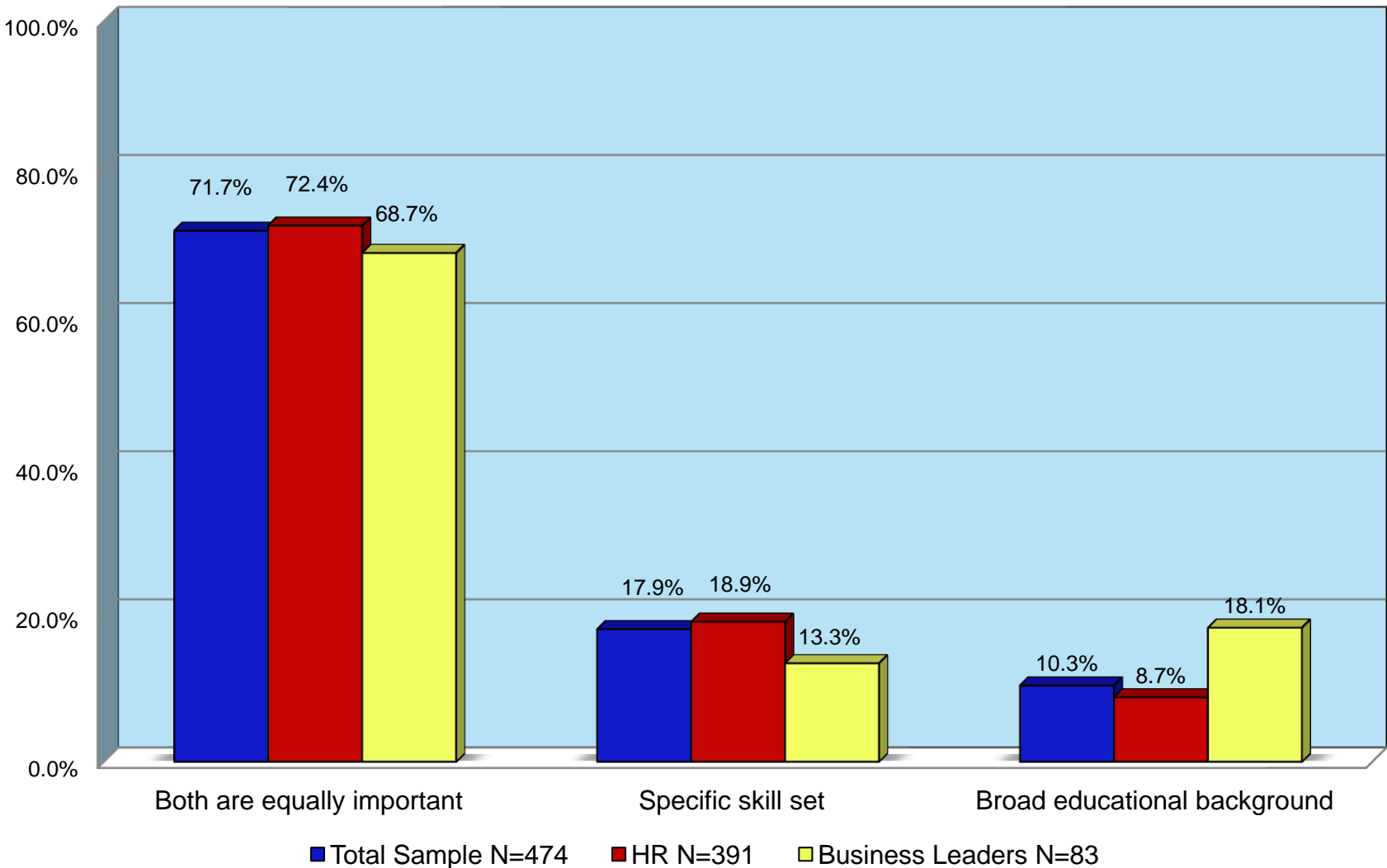
Comparison By Segments...

While not statistically significant, business leaders (18.1%) more often selected only broad educational background than did HR professionals (8.7%). Conversely, HR professionals (18.9%) more often selected only specific skill set than did business leaders (13.3%). This, undoubtedly, reflects somewhat differing concerns and perspectives when it comes to new hires.

Other Factors...

The question permitted respondents to describe what they felt was important in addition to selecting one of the presented options. A total of 43 respondents chose to give their own answers. Cited most often were a professional demeanor (16.3%) and the ability to communicate effectively (14.0%). These two traits will become a familiar theme as the report progresses.

Most Important Factor In Professionalism



Percentage Of New College Graduates Exhibiting Professionalism During First Year...

Respondents vary widely in the professionalism they see exhibited by recent college graduates in their first year of work. Responding to what percentage of new graduates exhibit professionalism, answers ranged from 0.0% (cited by 1.8%) to 100.0% (3.7%).

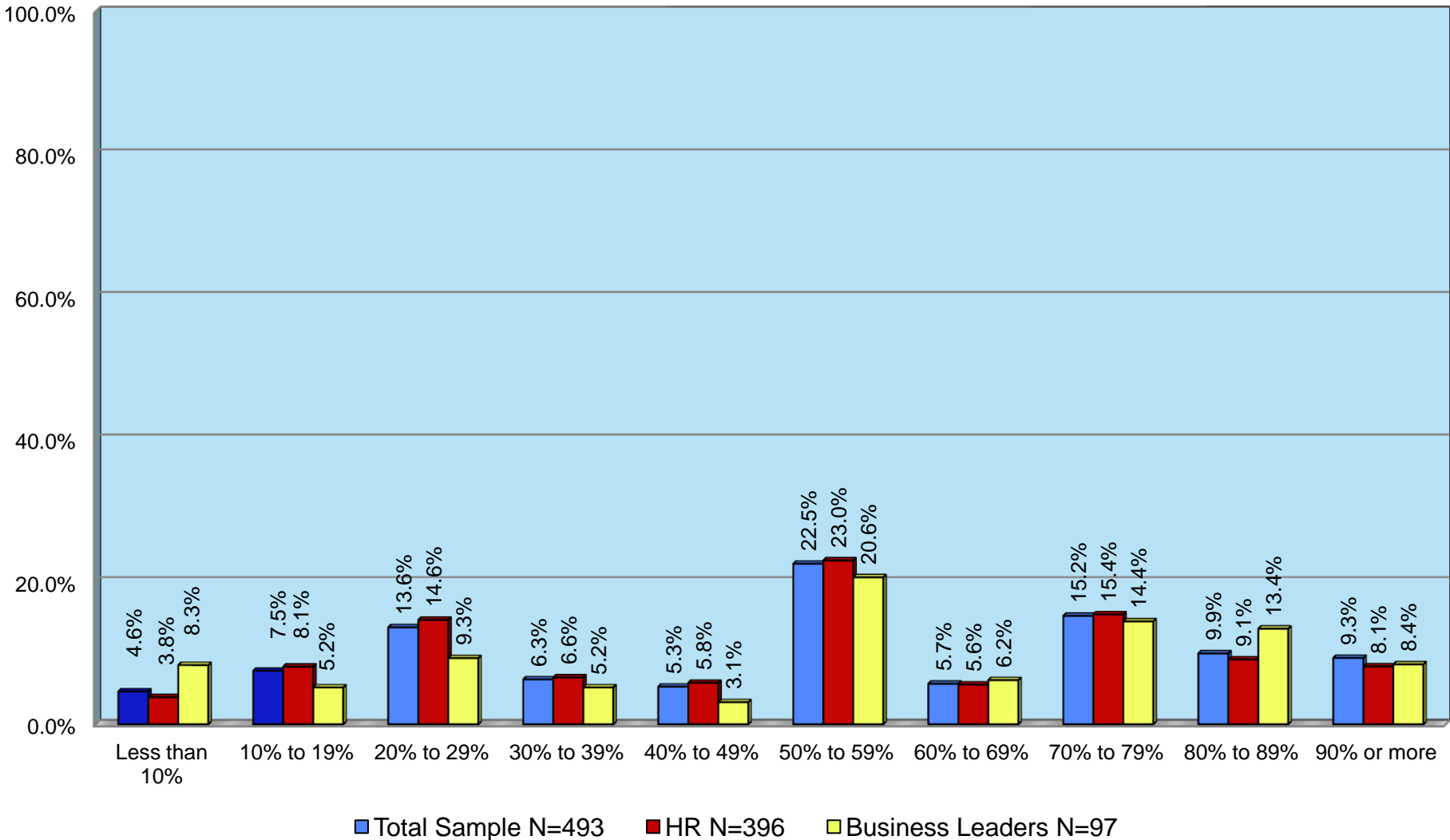
The most frequently given percentage was in the 50% to 59% range (22.5%). Consistent with this, the mean percentage was 51.1%. However, as seen in the graph, the deviation in answers makes the mean misleading in this case.

It is worth noting that 37.3% of the respondents felt less than half of all new graduates exhibit professionalism in their first year.

Comparison By Segments...

The two job segments are essentially the same in their answers.

Percentage Of New College Graduates Exhibiting Professionalism During First Year



Changes In Exhibiting Professionalism...

After reporting the percentage of new graduates who act professionally, respondents answered if this percentage increased, remained the same, or decreased over the past five years.

Slightly more than half of the respondents (53.4%) felt it has remained the same over the past five years. However, a third (33.2%) believed the percentage exhibiting professionalism has decreased. The remaining 13.4% responded that the percentage has increased.

Comparison By Segments...

There were no statistically significant differences involving demographics.

While not statistically significant, it is worth noting that respondents in manufacturing and wholesale were the least likely to indicate a decrease in the prevalence of professionalism.

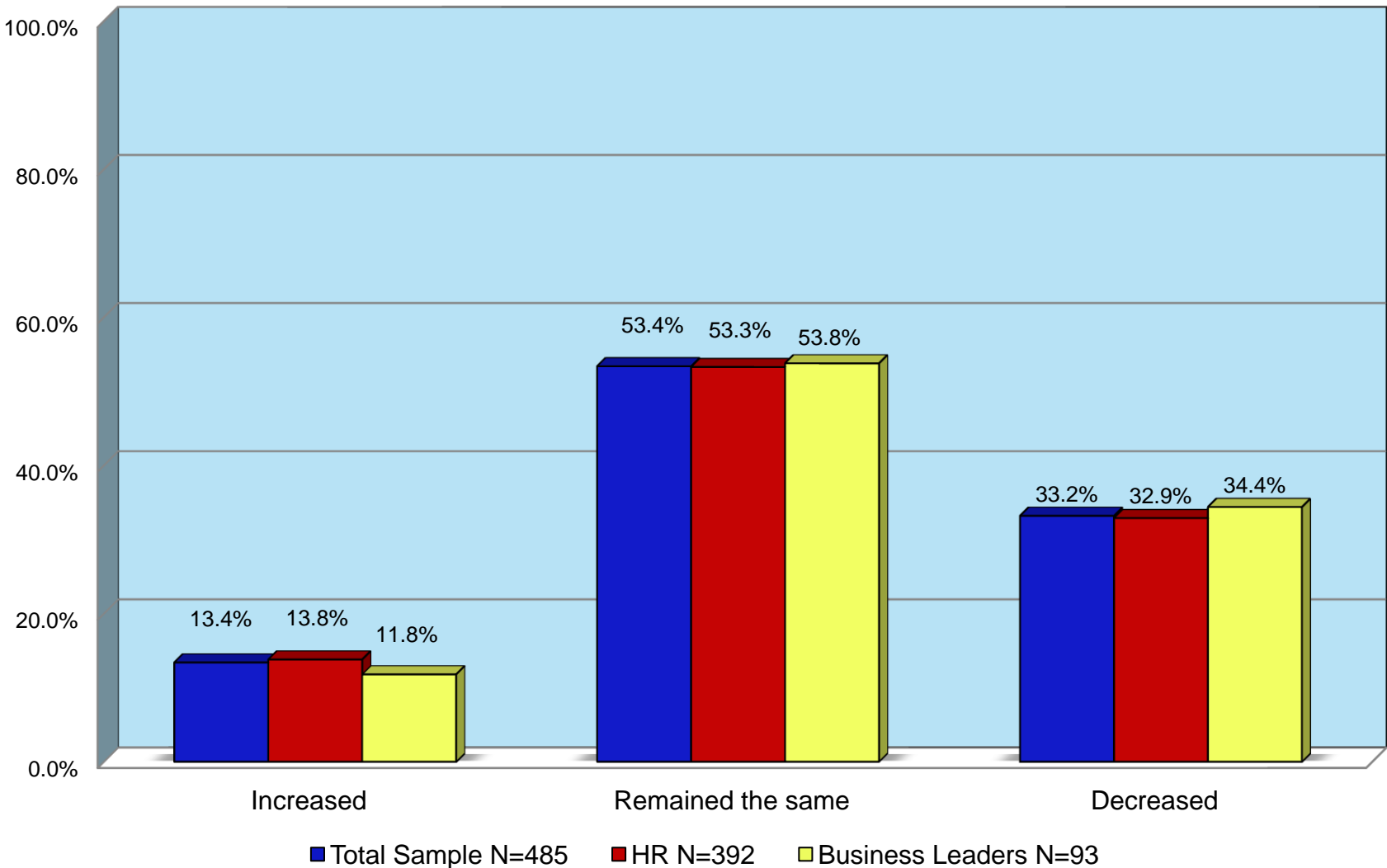
Reasons For Changes...

The reasons given by 10 or more respondents for believing the prevalence of professionalism has decreased are presented below. All answers are presented in the data tables. These reasons begin to provide insight into what content should be included in programs designed to develop professionalism.

Reasons For Decreases	
Sense of entitlement	25.3%
Change in culture/values	13.3%
Work ethic	10.0%
Lack of motivation/focus	10.0%
Lack of respect/social skills	8.7%
Less personal interaction due to technology	8.0%
Attitude	6.7%
N=	150

Reasons offered by the 55 respondents who feel there has been an increase in professionalism most often refer to a more experienced base from which to recruit due to less jobs openings (40.0%) and schools doing a better job preparing students (25.5%).

Changes In Exhibiting Professionalism



College Graduates More Professional Than High School Graduates...

Over three-fourths of the respondents (77.3%) indicated that new hires that are college graduates are more likely to exhibit professional behavior than those who are high school graduates.

Comparison By Segments...

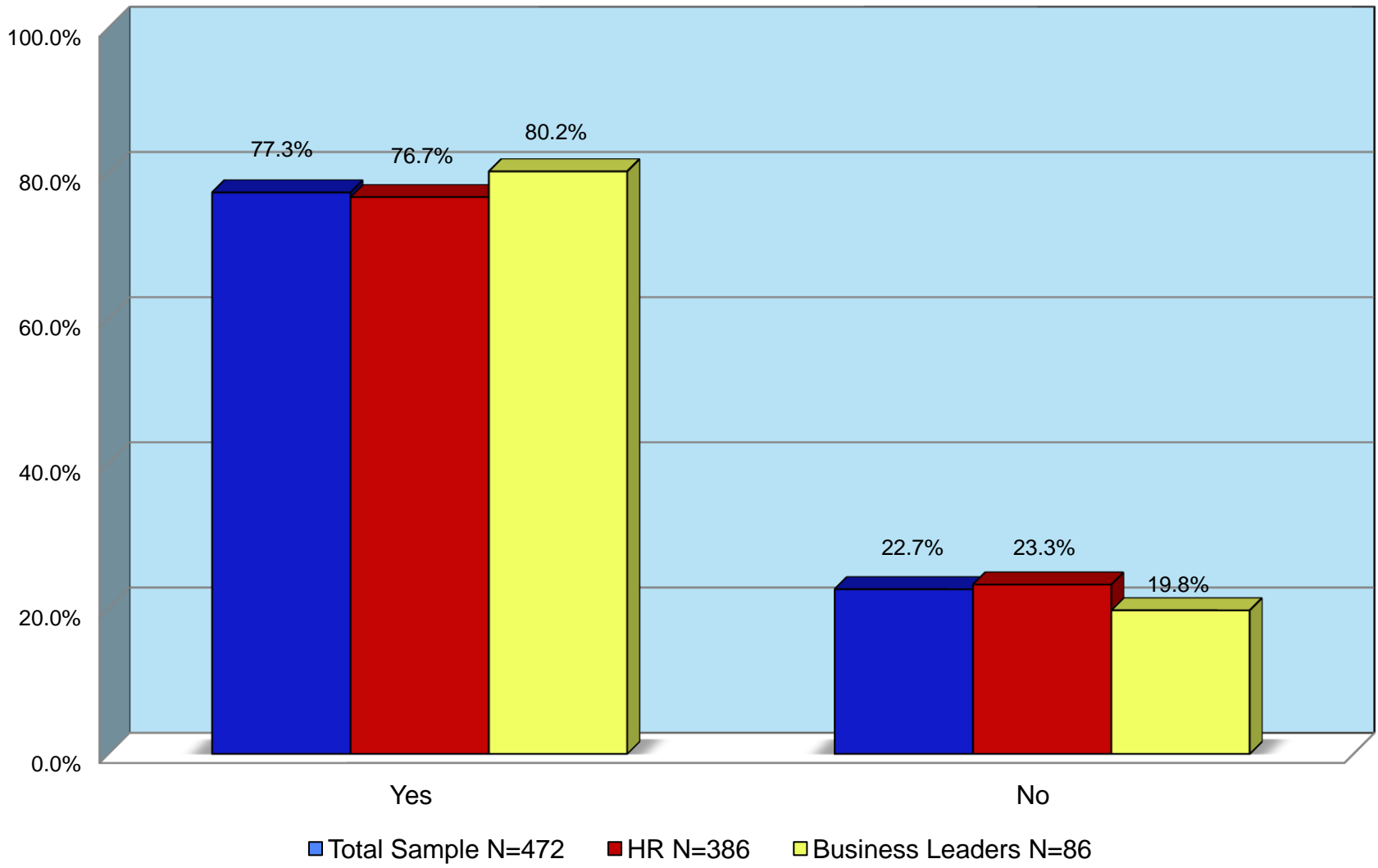
Respondents in wholesale (61.9%) were the least likely to feel they are more professional than high school graduates. This difference was not large enough to be statistically significant.

Reasons ...

Most often, the reason given for feeling this way is college graduates are more serious and mature. It is not known if this is due to their educational experience or simple aging and maturation.

Reasons For Being More Professional	
More serious, mature	51.9%
More confident with real world experience	17.1%
Have skill set/knowledge	11.3%
Better communication skills/social skills	10.2%
More polished/disciplined	6.9%
More motivated	7.2%
Better able to manage tasks	7.2%
Make a better personal presentation/dress	4.4%
Better work ethic	4.1%
N=	362

College Graduates More Professional Than High School Graduates



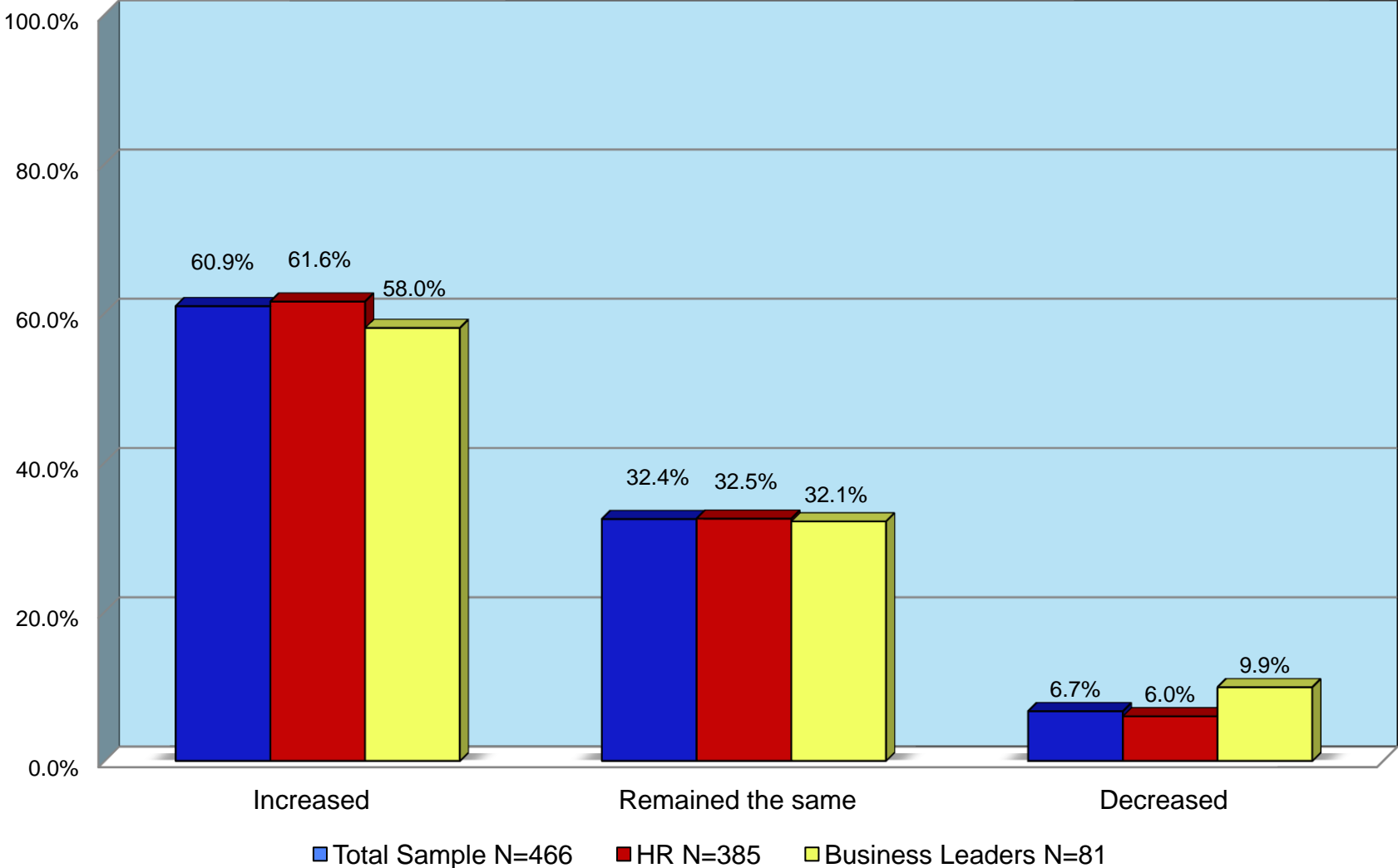
Change In Sense Of Entitlement...

A total of 60.9% of the respondents reported that the sense of entitlement has increased over the past five years among first year college graduates they have employed. Entitlement was defined in the survey as “expecting rewards without putting in the work or effort to merit the rewards.”

About a third (32.4%) believed the sense of entitlement has not changed. The remaining 6.7% stated it has decreased.

Comparison By Segments...

There are no noteworthy differences between demographics.



Changes In IT Etiquette...

The misuse of a company's IT capabilities has emerged as a problem with some employees. Respondents in this study indicated if problems with IT etiquette among new employees has increased, remained the same, or decreased over the past five years.

The sample was divided in its experiences. For 39.1%, problems with IT etiquette have increased. In the opposite direction, 44.8% reported a decrease in such problems. The remaining 16.1% felt the problems with IT etiquette have remained the same over the past five years.

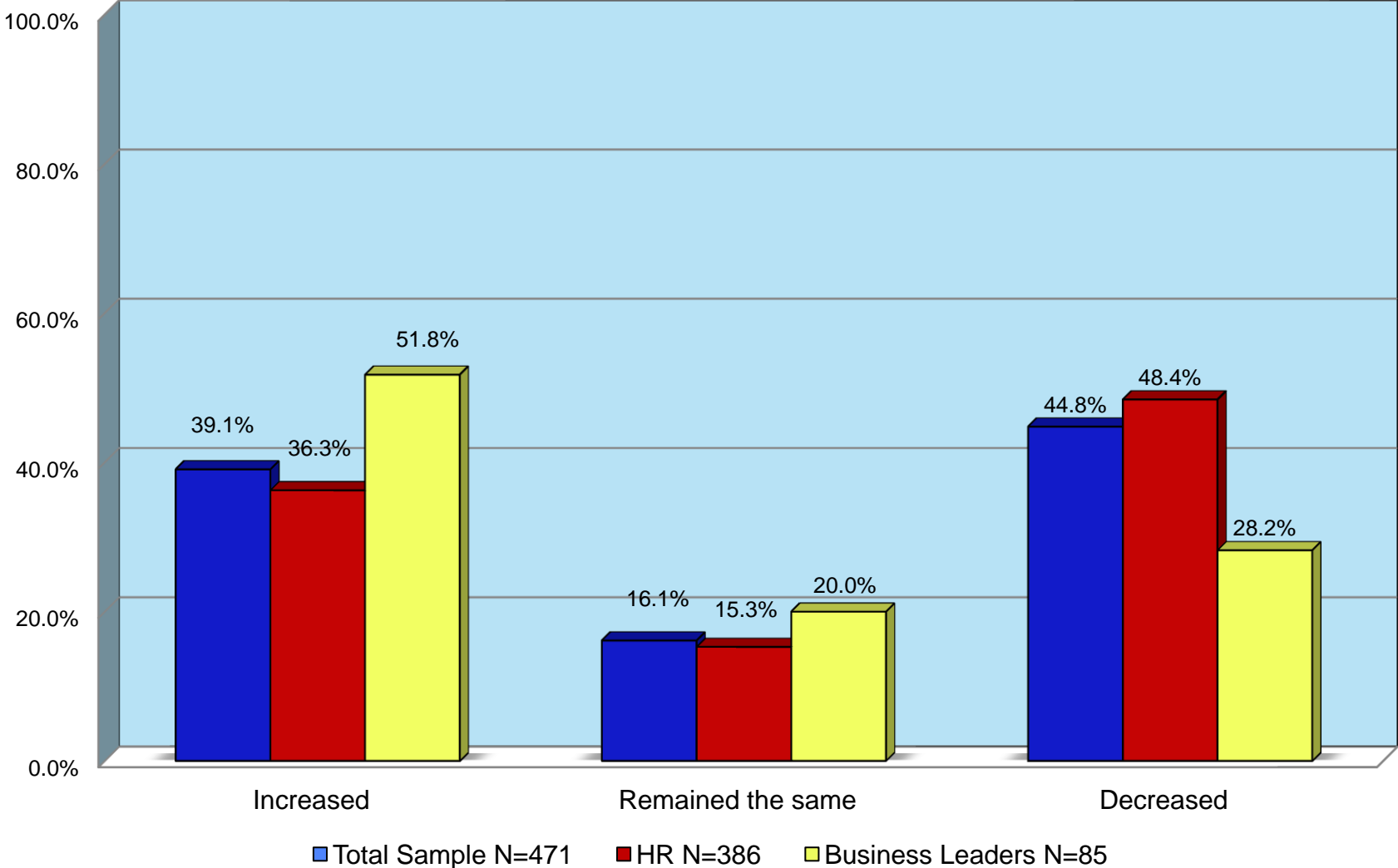
Comparison By Segments...

A statistically significant difference exists between the responses by HR professionals and business leaders. A greater percentage of business leaders (51.8%) than HR professionals (36.3%) see increased problems with IT etiquette. This is probably due to their interacting more with employees after they are hired.

While not statistically significant, differences between industry segments are noteworthy. The industry segments most likely to have increased problems with IT etiquette are service (43.6%) and medical (42.9%).

Why Increased Problems...

When describing what problems have increased, respondents experiencing an increase in problems usually referred to the abuse of e-mail and the Internet (62.7%). Mentioned next most often was casual e-mails and voice mails (20.3%).



Assessment Of Professionalism

Assessment Of Professionalism With Effect On Hiring Decision...

There is no doubt that employers take into account an applicant’s professionalism when making a hiring decision. Nearly all of the respondents (97.7%) stated that their assessment of how professional an applicant will be on the job affects their hiring decision.

Comparison By Segments...

This applies to all demographic segments.

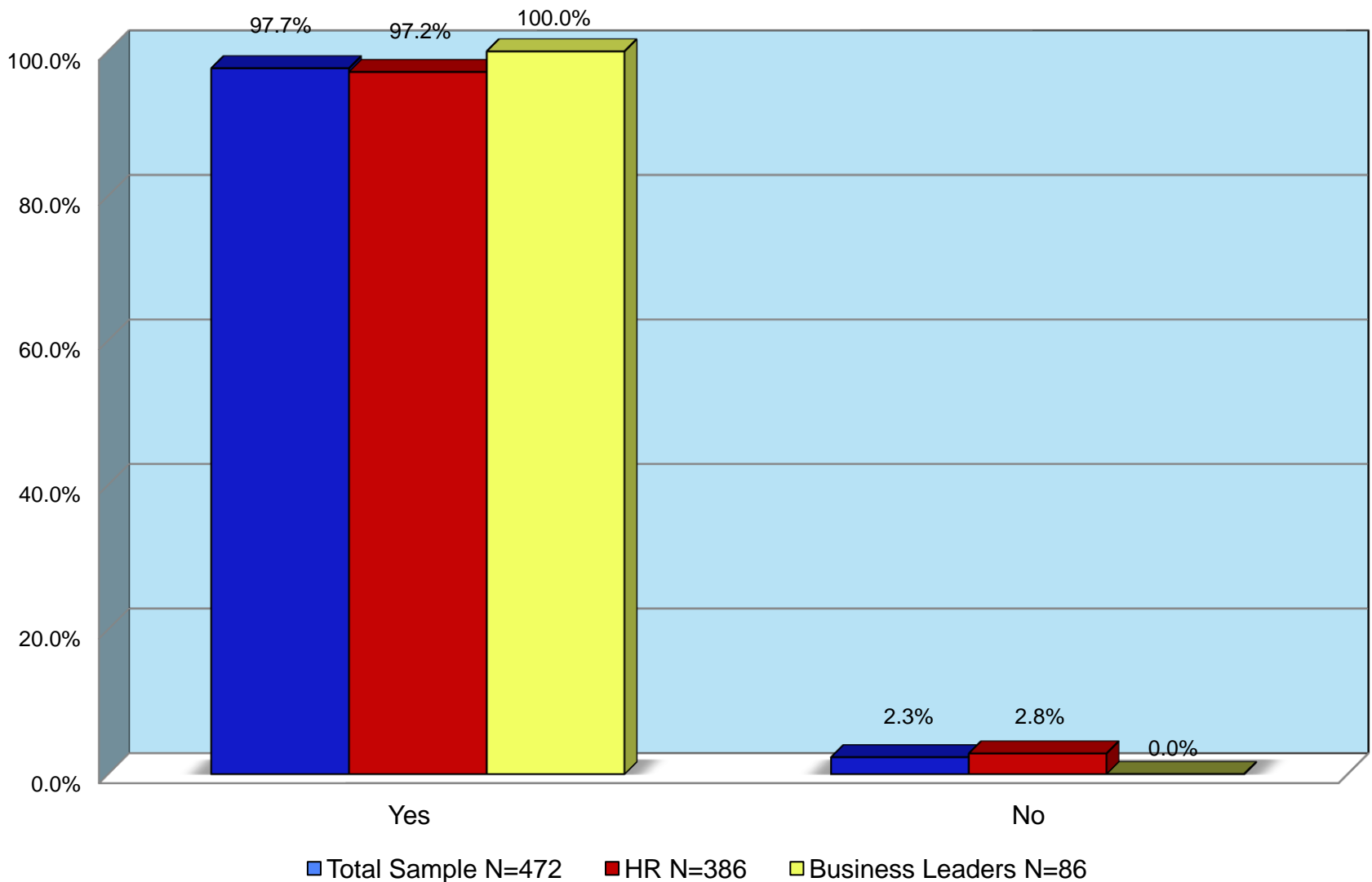
Percentage Of Decision Influenced By Perceived Professionalism...

When asked what percentage of the hiring decision is influenced by an assessment of professionalism, the largest number of respondents (21.2%) stated 50% to 59%. The mean percentage was 59.0%. Individual answers ranged from none (.4%) to 100% (6.5%).

Again, these findings are consistent across the different demographic segments.

% Of Hiring Decision Affected By Perceived Professionalism	
Under 20%	2.4%
20-39%	20.3%
40-59%	26.8%
60-79%	24.0%
80-100%	26.6%

Assessment Of Professionalism With Effect On Hiring Decision



Means Of Assessing Professionalism Potential...

Nearly half of the respondents (48.0%) use the applicant's ability to communicate to assess their potential to be a professional. Communication skills have an effect on the first impression given by the applicant.

The means of assessment cited next most often also have more to do with the applicant's personal character than specific job skills. These are: demeanor and attitude (29.8%) and appearance (24.1%).

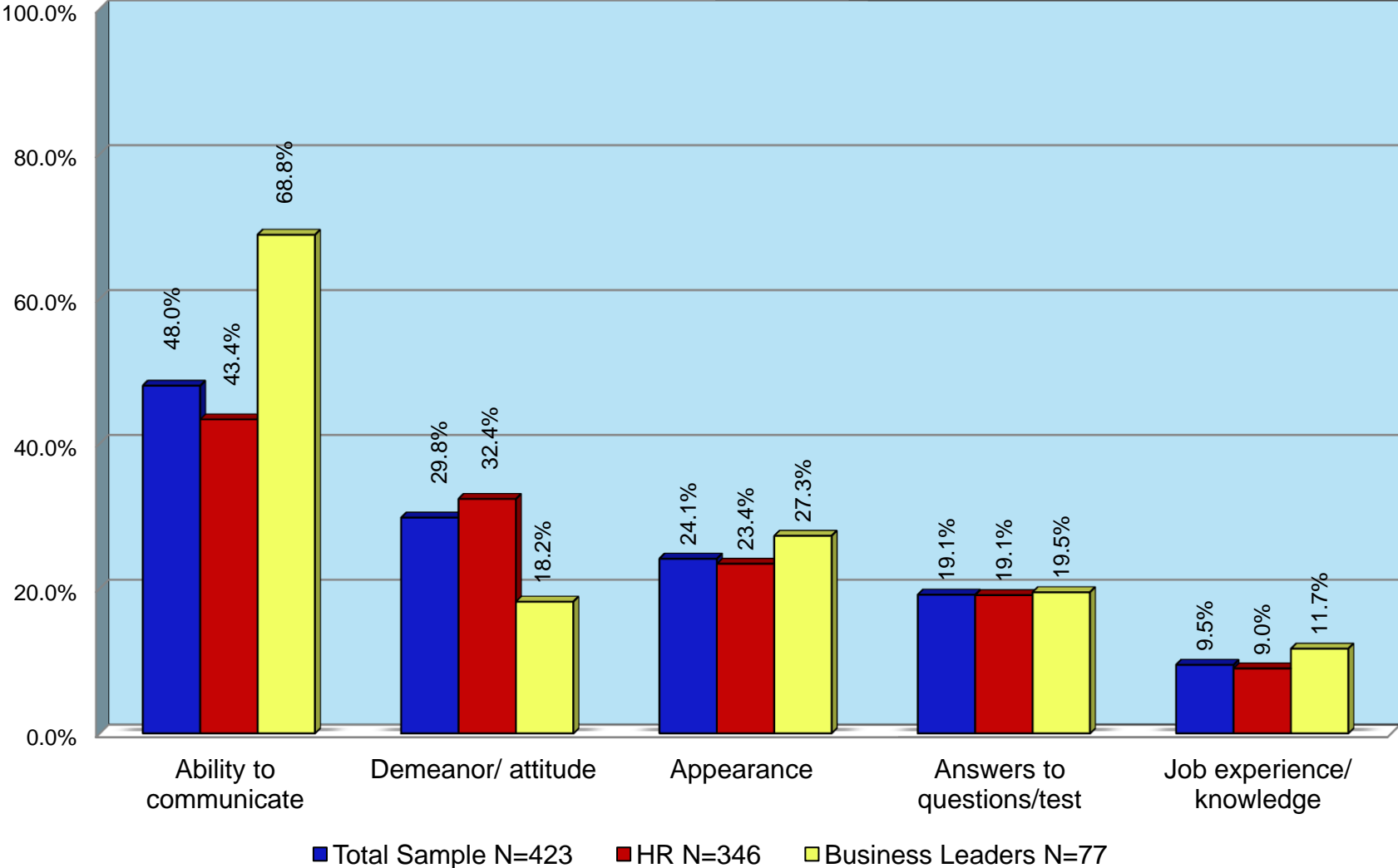
After these three means of assessment, respondents began to mention more job and skill related factors. These are: answers to questions/tests (19.1%) and job experience and knowledge (9.5%).

Answers given by 10 or more respondents not shown on the graph are: reference checks (5.7%), appearance of resume (5.4%), preparedness for interview (3.1%), and background information (2.6%).

Comparison By Segments...

Business leaders (68.8%) are more likely than HR professionals (43.4%) to use their conversation with the applicant to judge professionalism potential. HR professionals (32.4%) are more likely than business leaders (18.2%) to assess one's professionalism potential by the applicant's demeanor and attitude.

Means Of Assessing Professionalism Potential



Development Of Professionalism

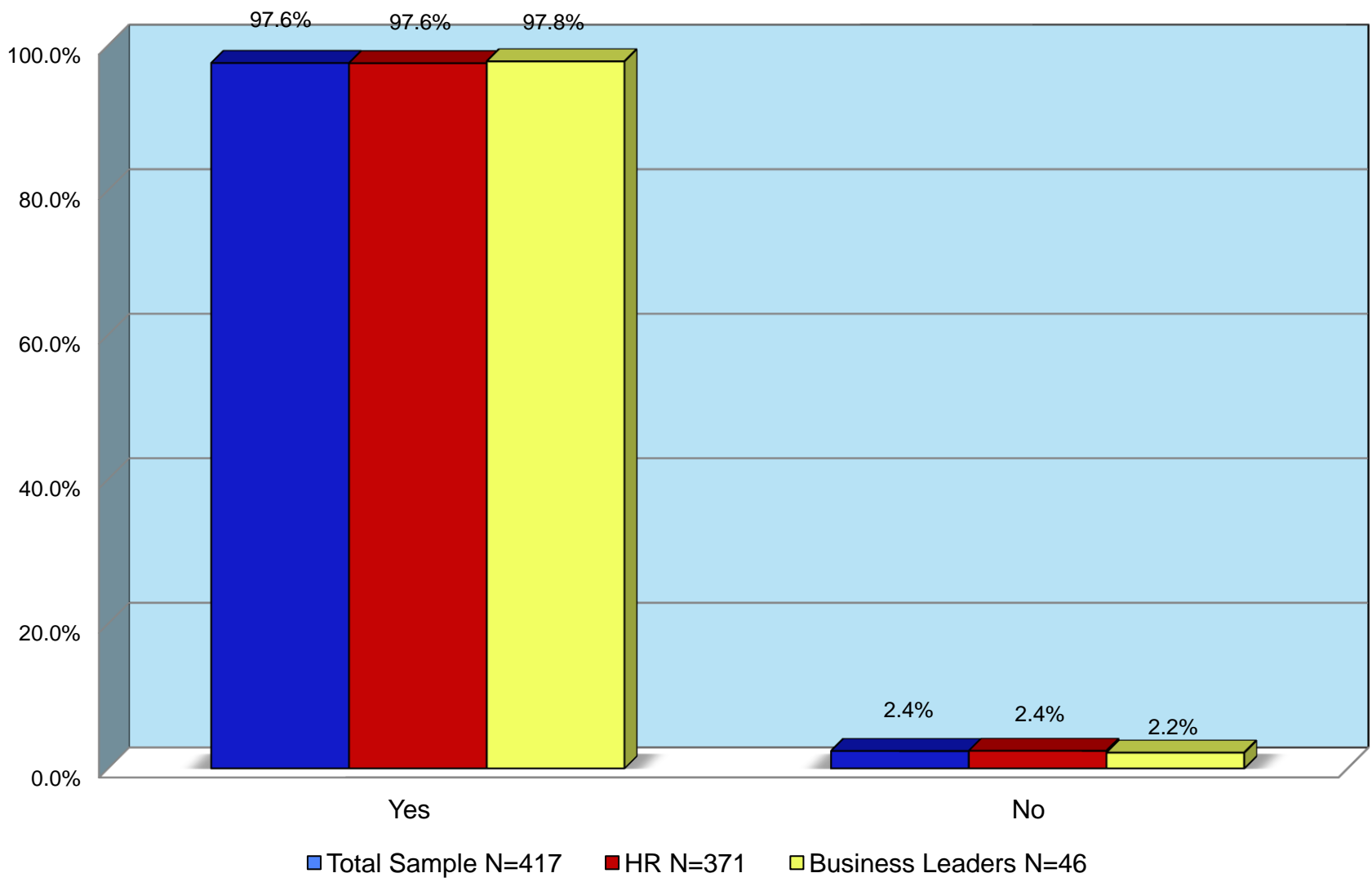
**Should Colleges
Prepare Students To
Be Professional...**

Respondents (97.6%) are nearly unanimous in feeling colleges should prepare students to be professional regardless of their field of study.

**Comparison
By Segments...**

This sentiment is found in all demographic segments.

Should Colleges Prepare Students To Be Professional



Recommended Ways For Colleges To Teach Professionalism...

Respondents were given the opportunity to recommend ways for colleges to develop professionalism in their students.

From the respondents who provided an answer, many of their recommendations were not related to the development of job related skill sets. This reinforces the previous finding on how professionalism potential is assessed.

The most frequently offered recommendations were: attitude and etiquette (19.7%), internships/hands-on experience (19.0%), understanding what professionalism is (17.7%), and communication/interpersonal skills (15.6%).

All the recommendations listed in the data table should be reviewed since they provide insights into the types of programs that can be offered in a college.

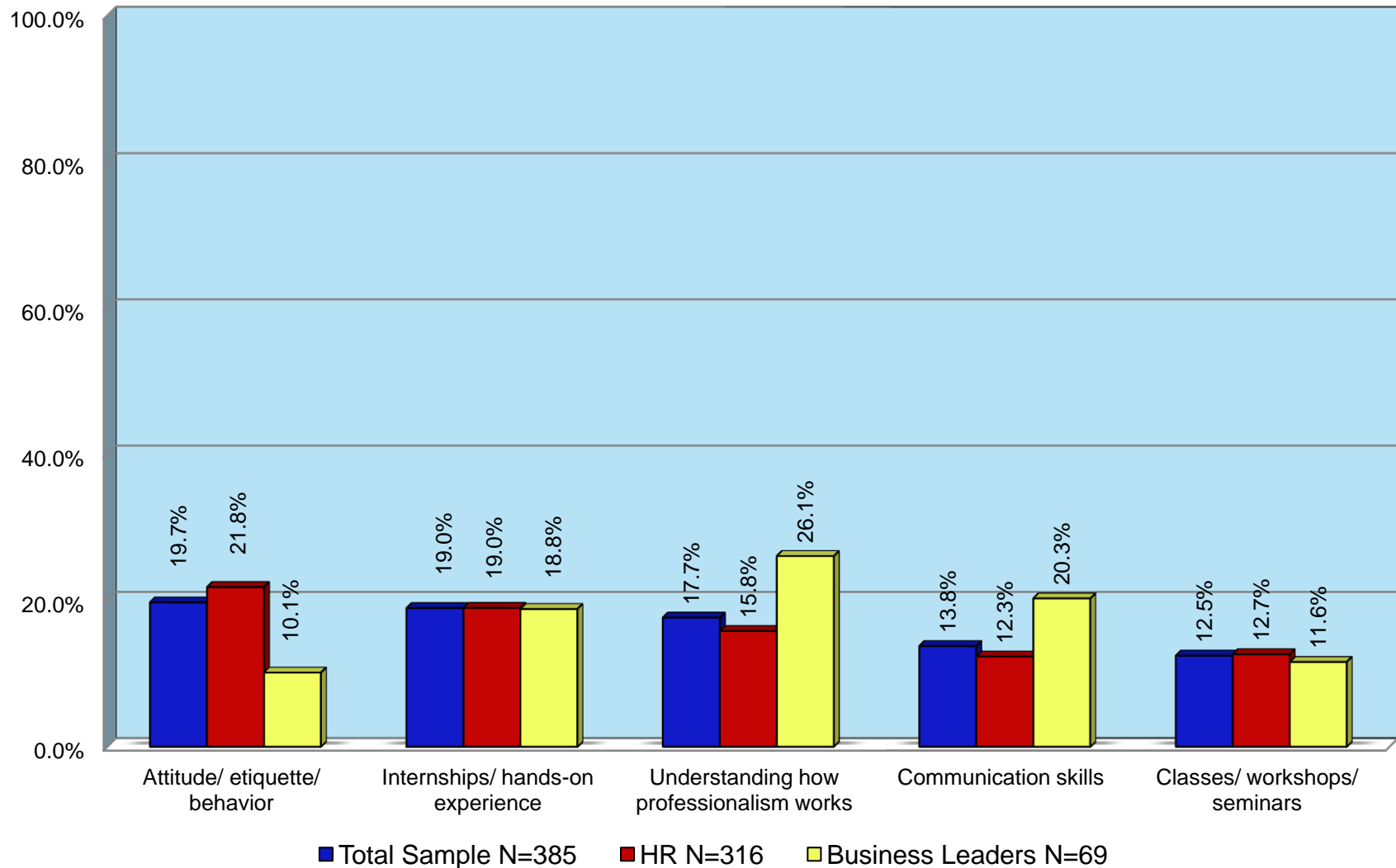
Comparison By Segments...

Consistent with means of assessing professionalism, HR professionals and business leaders differed somewhat in their recommendations.

HR professionals (21.8%) were more likely than business leaders (10.1%) to refer to the need to work on attitude and etiquette.

Business leaders (26.1%) more often than HR professionals (15.8%) recommended that students be better informed on the meaning of professionalism. They (20.3%) also more often than HR professionals (12.3%) want colleges to develop students' communication and interpersonal skills.

Recommended Ways For Colleges To Teach Professionalism



Certification In Professionalism And Hiring Decision...

While there is near consensus that colleges should be involved in the development of professionalism, respondents are less certain if certification that an applicant has had courses or workshops in professionalism would impact their hiring decision. A total of 29.4% of the respondents stated it would have an impact. It should be noted that 54.9% indicated it might have an effect on the hiring decision and only 9.4% responded it would have no effect.

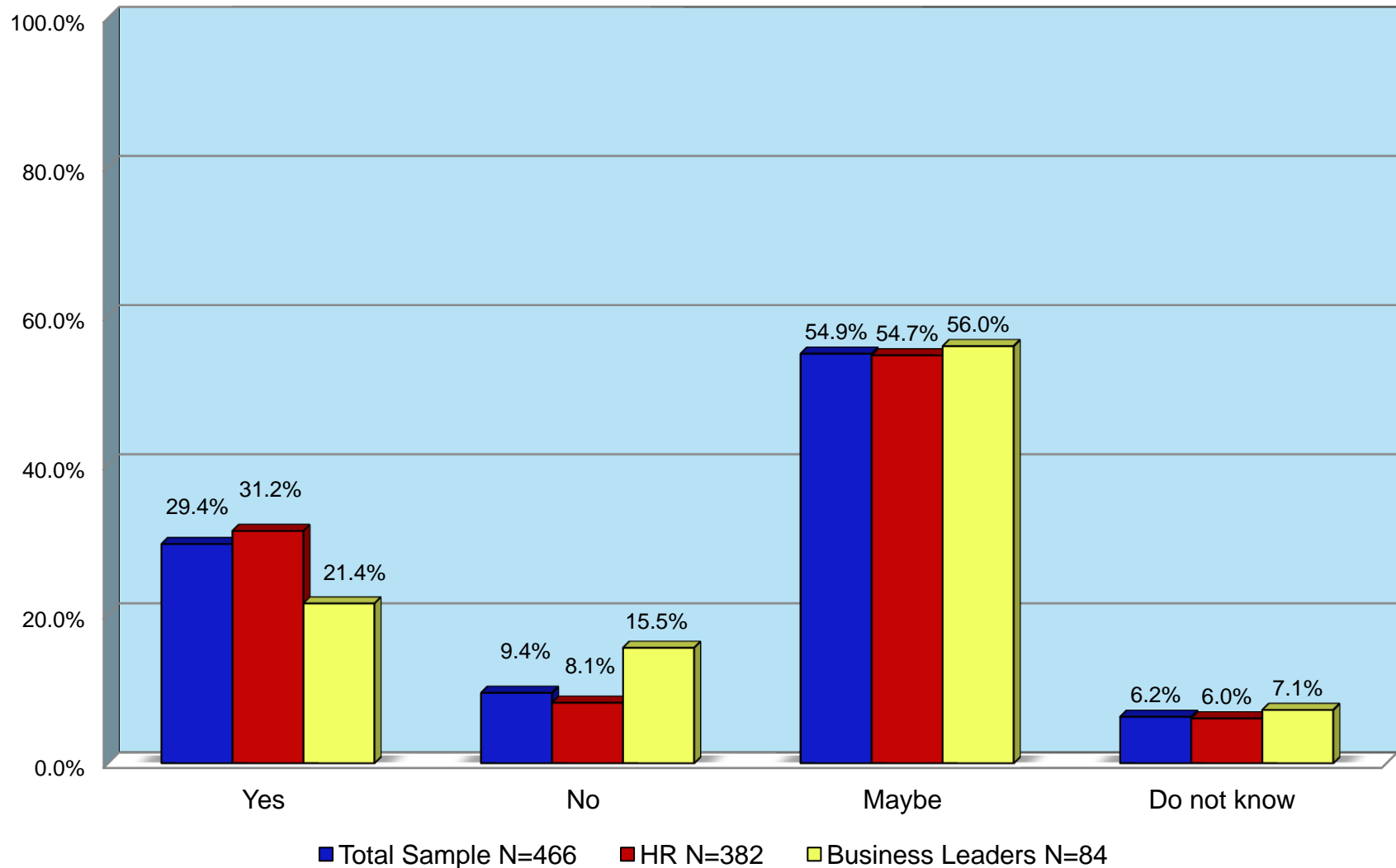
Those feeling certification would have an impact most often believed such certification would suggest the applicant understands basic business behavior (39.8%) and has been exposed to the concept of professionalism (17.8%).

Respondents stating it would not affect their hiring decisions usually commented that courses do not improve professionalism (41.5%) and real life situations are what matters (39.0%).

Comparison By Segments...

HR professionals (31.2%) are more likely than business leaders (21.4%) to indicate that certification would impact the hiring decision. This may be due to their having more orientation towards an applicants' credentials at the time of hiring than a business leader does.

Certification In Professionalism And Hiring Decision



**Certification With
Effect On
Compensation...**

While certification will affect some respondents' hiring decision, it will not necessarily have an impact on the compensation offered to an applicant.

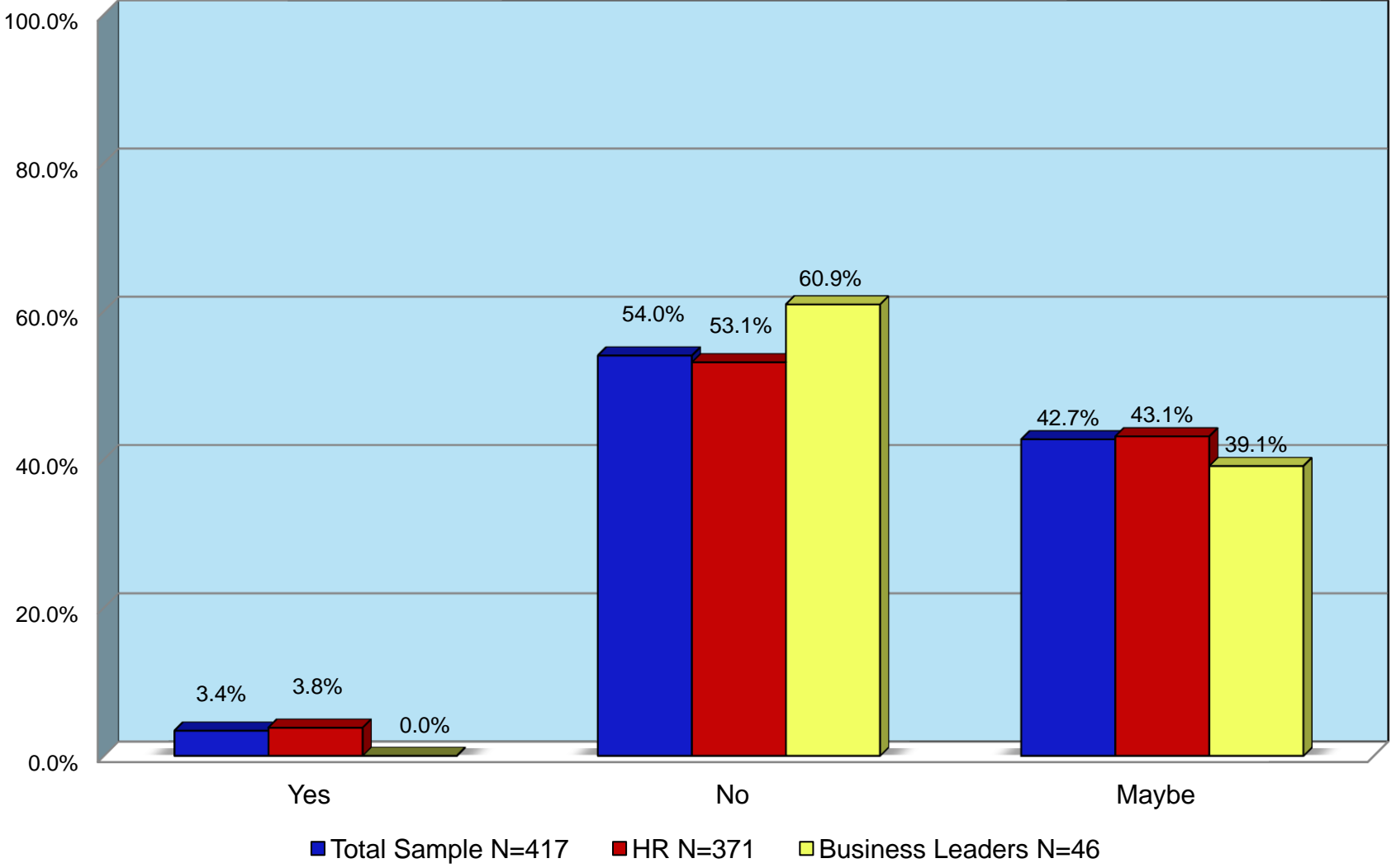
Only 3.4% of the respondents agreed that an applicant with this certification would be offered higher compensation than someone without it. However, 42.7% indicated it might have an effect on the compensation offered.

The remaining 54.0% reported that certification would not affect compensation.

**Comparison
By Segments...**

Business leaders (60.9%) more often than HR professionals (53.1%) stated certification would not affect compensation.

Certification With Effect On Compensation



Traits That Best Describe An Employee Who Is Professional...

In an open-ended question, respondents described the three traits or behaviors that characterize an employee who is a professional.

Almost half of the respondents referred to interpersonal skills (48.0%) and the ability to communicate and listen (46.9%). Included in interpersonal skills was the presence of courtesy and respect.

These traits were followed by work ethic (35.4%), personal appearance (34.2%), and a sense of self combined with confidence (20.1%).

Descriptions of work ethic included: working on a task until it is completed, being motivated, being dependable, being willing to work the hours necessary to get the job done, and hard work.

As with other findings in this study, the answers to this question can inform the content of professionalism programs. The data table presents all the descriptions given of the professional employee.

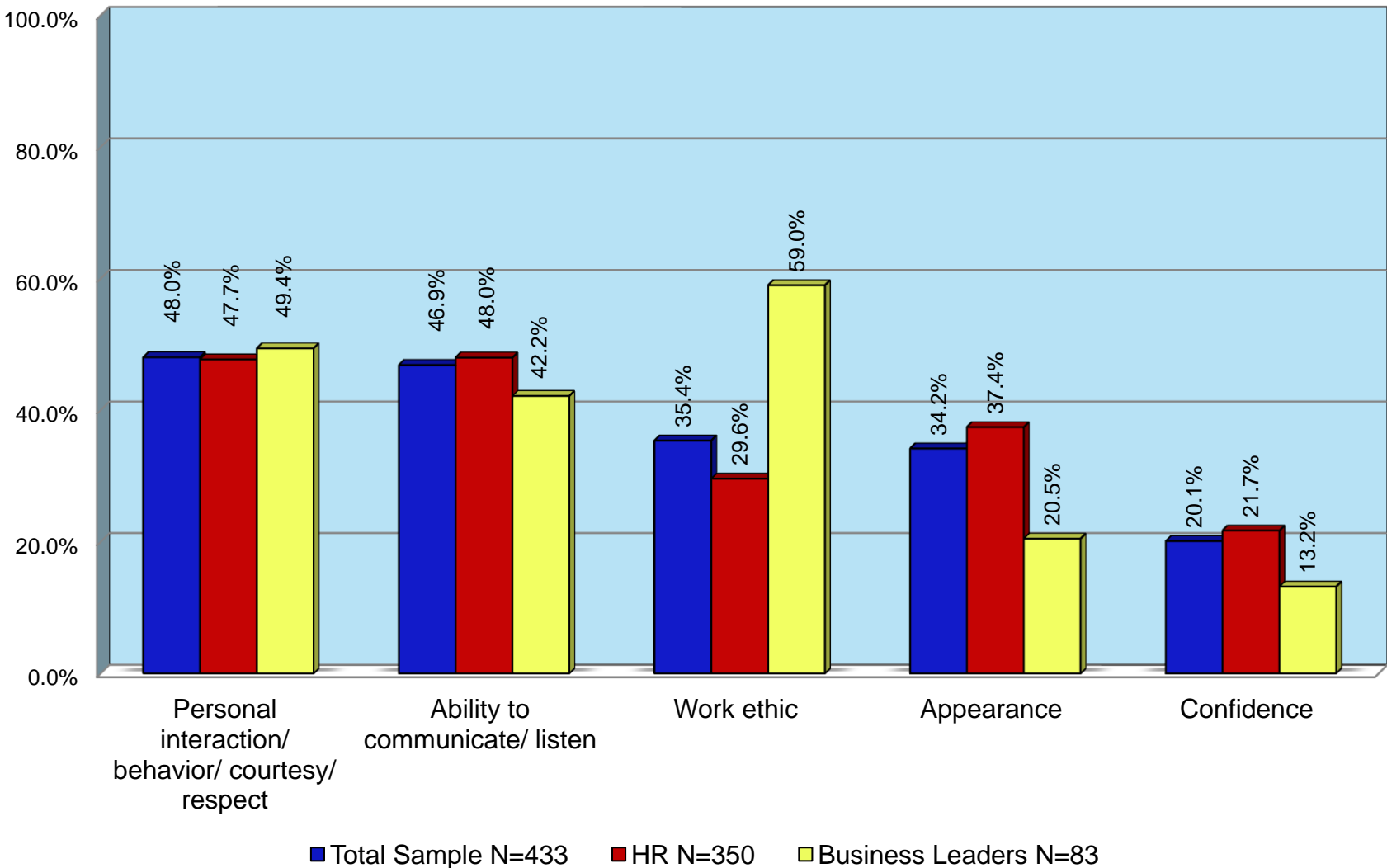
Comparison By Segments...

Probably reflecting their different exposures to employees, business leaders and HR professionals differed in the frequency of mentioning different traits.

Business leaders (59.7%) more often than HR professionals (29.6%) referred to a good work ethic.

HR professionals (37.4%) were more likely than business leaders (20.5%) to mention appearance. They (21.7%) were also more likely than business leaders (13.2%) to cite confidence and self awareness.

Traits That Best Describe An Employee Who Is Professional



Traits That Best Describe An Employee Who Is Unprofessional...

Finding out what is considered to be unprofessional can be as productive to the development of programs as knowing what is considered to be professional. Knowing this will provide insight on what to avoid. Similar to the question on professional traits and behaviors, respondents described the three traits or behaviors they consider to be unprofessional.

Six traits were mentioned most often. Of these, the top three were: appearance (39.1%), poor communication skills including grammar (38.9%), and a poor work ethic (37.0%). Respondents elaborated on what was meant by appearance. This trait included inappropriate attire, tattoos, and body piercings.

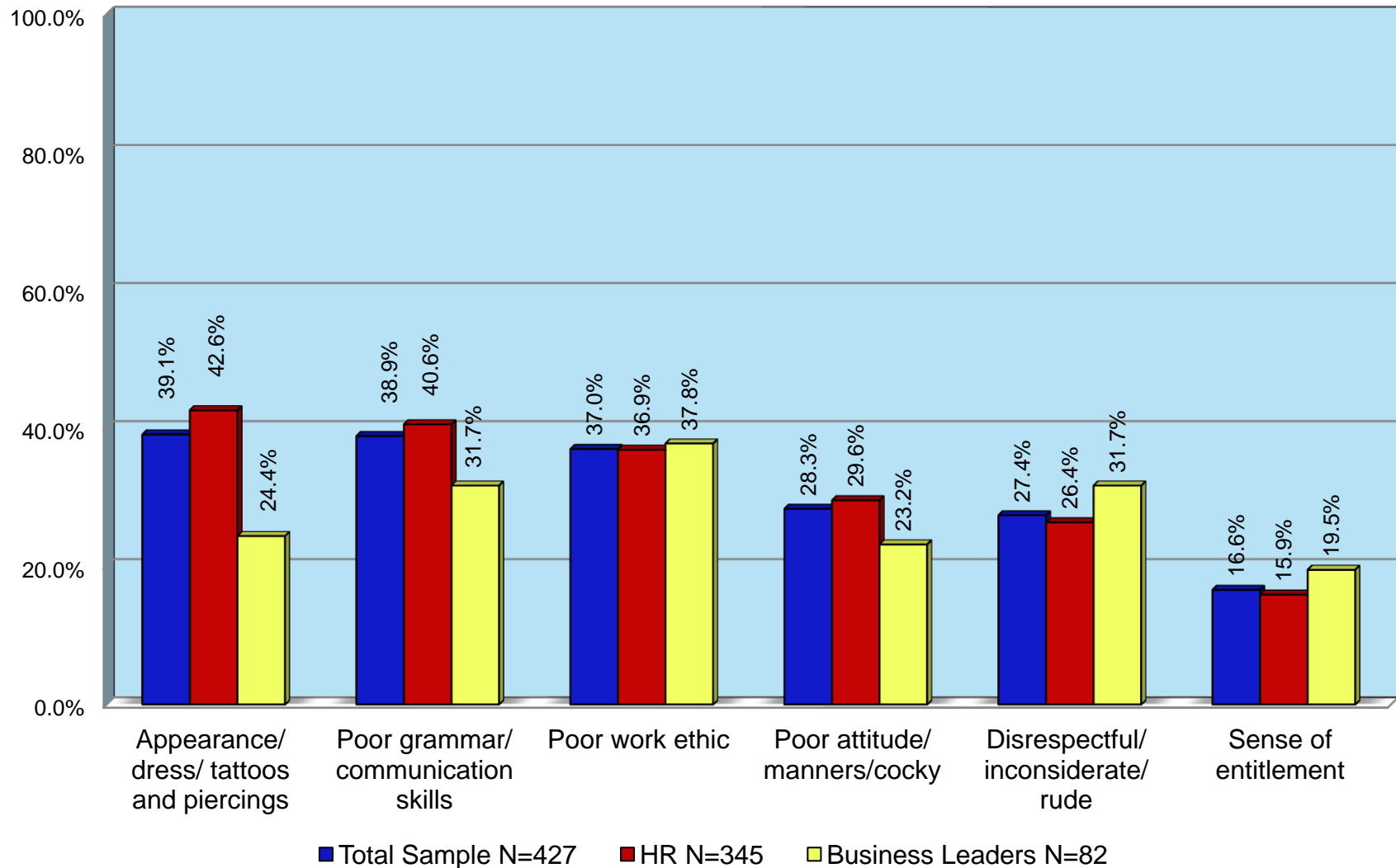
The next most frequently cited traits were: poor attitude (28.3%), being disrespectful and inconsiderate (27.4%), and demonstrating a sense of entitlement (16.6%).

Comparison By Segments...

HR professionals more often than business leaders referred to appearance, poor communication skills, and poor attitudes.

Looking at industry segments, respondents in retail also mentioned these more often than other industry segments.

Traits That Best Describe An Employee Who Is Unprofessional



Qualities Important In Professionalism

Important Qualities In Professionalism...

To provide a more structured assessment of professionalism, respondents rated a list of qualities according to how important each is when considering a recent college graduate for a position requiring professionalism. The qualities were compiled from a review of the research literature on professionalism as well as from independent thinking on other traits that deemed to be relevant to professionalism. Respondents rated importance using a scale that ranged from 1, not important, to 5, very important.

The mean ratings went from 3.31 for being an expert in one's field to 4.73 for accepting personal responsibility for decisions and actions.

Statistical analysis revealed which attributes can be considered similar in importance. The grouping of qualities based upon statistical similarity is:

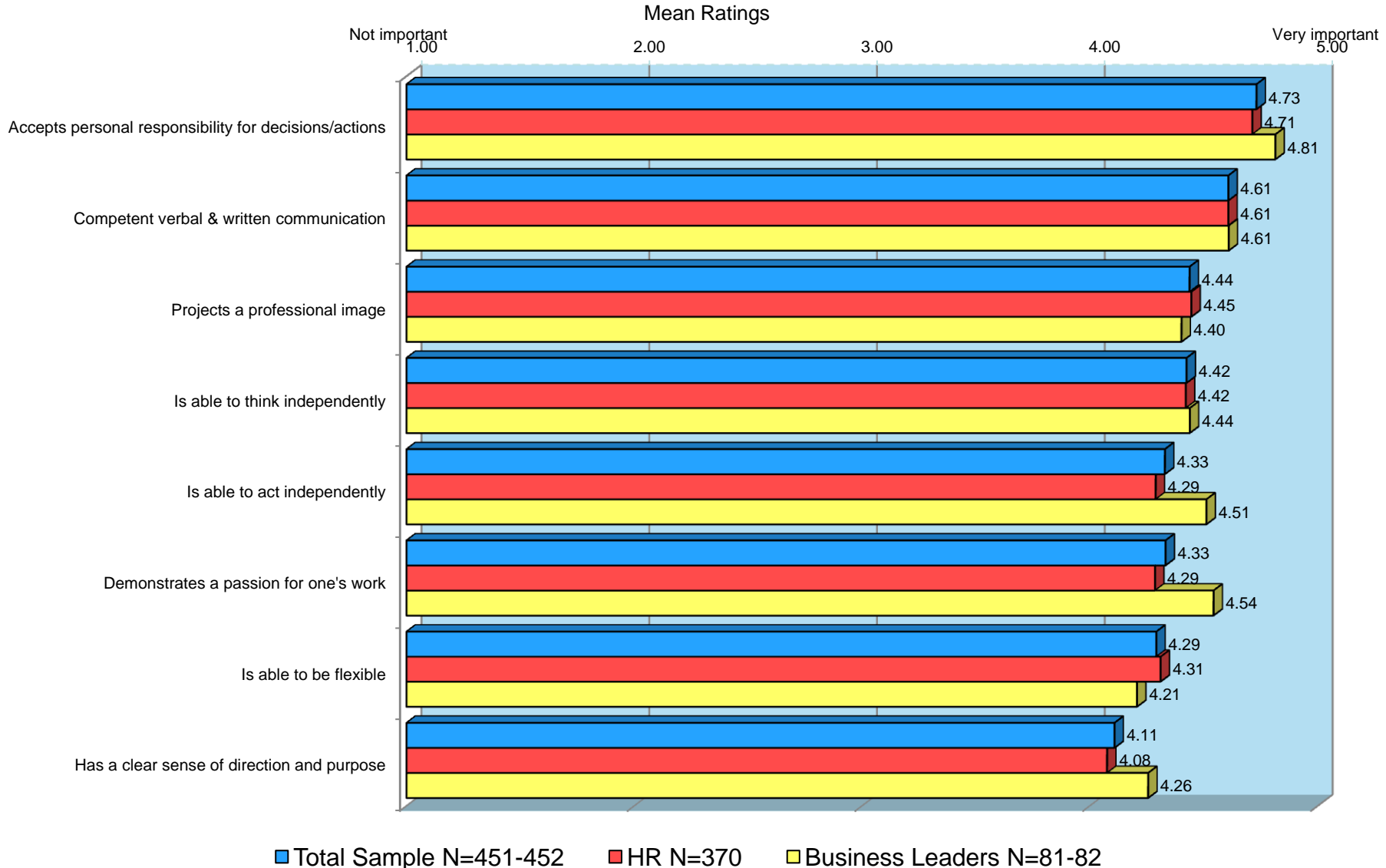
- Accepts personal responsibility for decisions and actions
- Is competent in both verbal and written communication
- Projects a professional image; Is able to think independently
- Demonstrates a passion for one's work; Is able to act independently; Is able to be flexible
- Has a clear sense of direction and purpose; Exhibits loyalty to the company; Is able to critically evaluate data
- Does the job without regard for the hours it takes
- Has a sense of responsibility to the greater community; Tries to maintain a balance between work life and personal life
- Is able to do work that is creative
- Is concerned about opportunities for advancement
- Is an expert in one's field

Comparison By Segments...

HR professionals and business leaders agreed on the two most important and the two least important attributes. For both job classifications, the most important qualities are: accepts personal responsibility and is competent in verbal and written communication. The least important qualities are: is an expert in one's field and is concerned about opportunities for advancement.

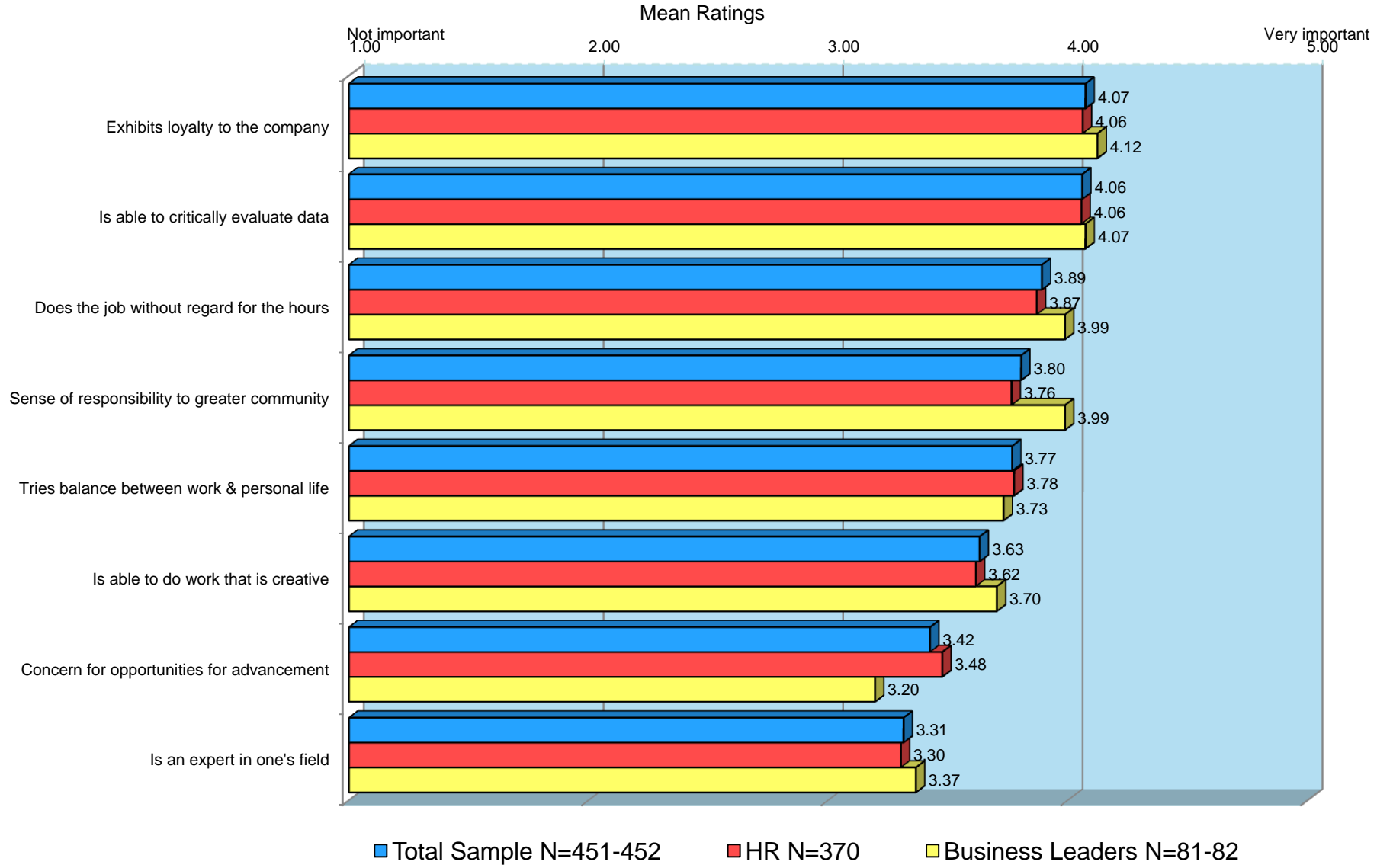
Statistical testing found business leaders assigned more importance than HR professionals to the following attributes: sense of responsibility to the greater community, ability to act independently, and demonstrates passion for one's work.

Important Qualities In Professionalism



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Important Qualities In Professionalism (continued)



Other Important Qualities...

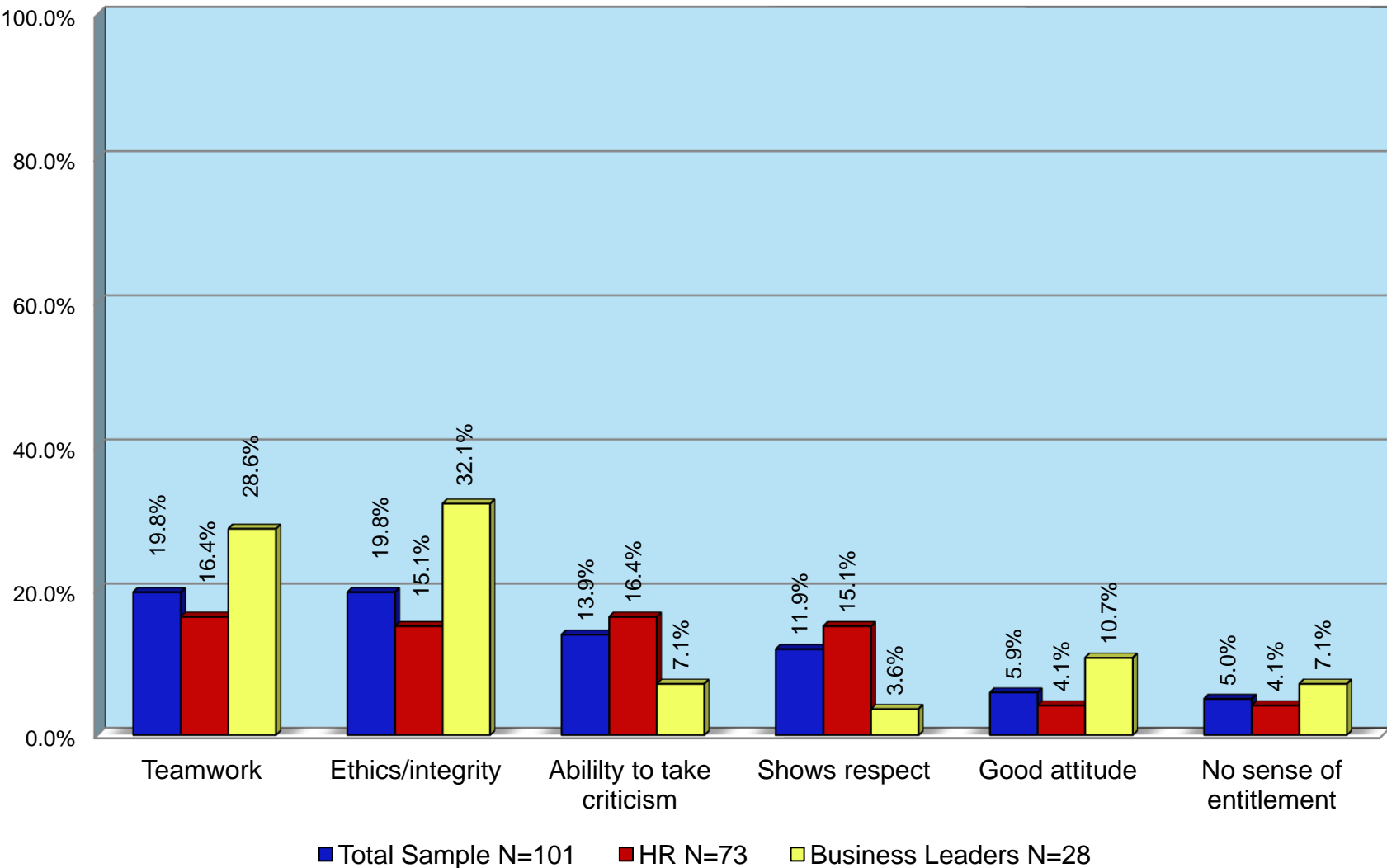
Respondents were given the opportunity to cite anything else that is important in a first year college educated employee with promotion potential.

A total of 101 respondents offered a comment. As seen in the graph, answers supported earlier findings. Teamwork (19.8%) and integrity (19.8%) were mentioned most often.

Comparison By Segments...

There were too few respondents in each job classification providing answers to permit valid comparisons.

Other Important Qualities



Extent To Which Qualities Are Found In First Year College Educated Employees...

After discovering what qualities are important for professionalism, the focus turned to the extent to which the qualities are present in first year college educated employees. To measure this, respondents rated the same attributes using a scale that went from 1, very rare, to 5, very common.

Most striking about these findings is the relatively low ratings given to all qualities with the exception of being concerned about opportunities for advancement (4.01).

To put the mean ratings in perspective, only two qualities were assigned ratings of 5, very common, by at least 10 percent of the respondents. These were: concerned about opportunities for advancement (35.3%) and tries to maintain a balance between work and personal life (13.2%).

The following attributes were assigned a rating of 4 or 5 by 25 percent or more of the respondents: concerned about opportunities for advancement (72.4%), tries to maintain balance between work and personal life (40.7%), is able to be flexible (38.5%), is able to do work that is creative (37.8%), competent in both verbal and written communication (36.5%), demonstrates a passion for one's work (33.3%), projects a professional image (31.8%), able to think independently (29.6%), and able to act independently (25.8%).

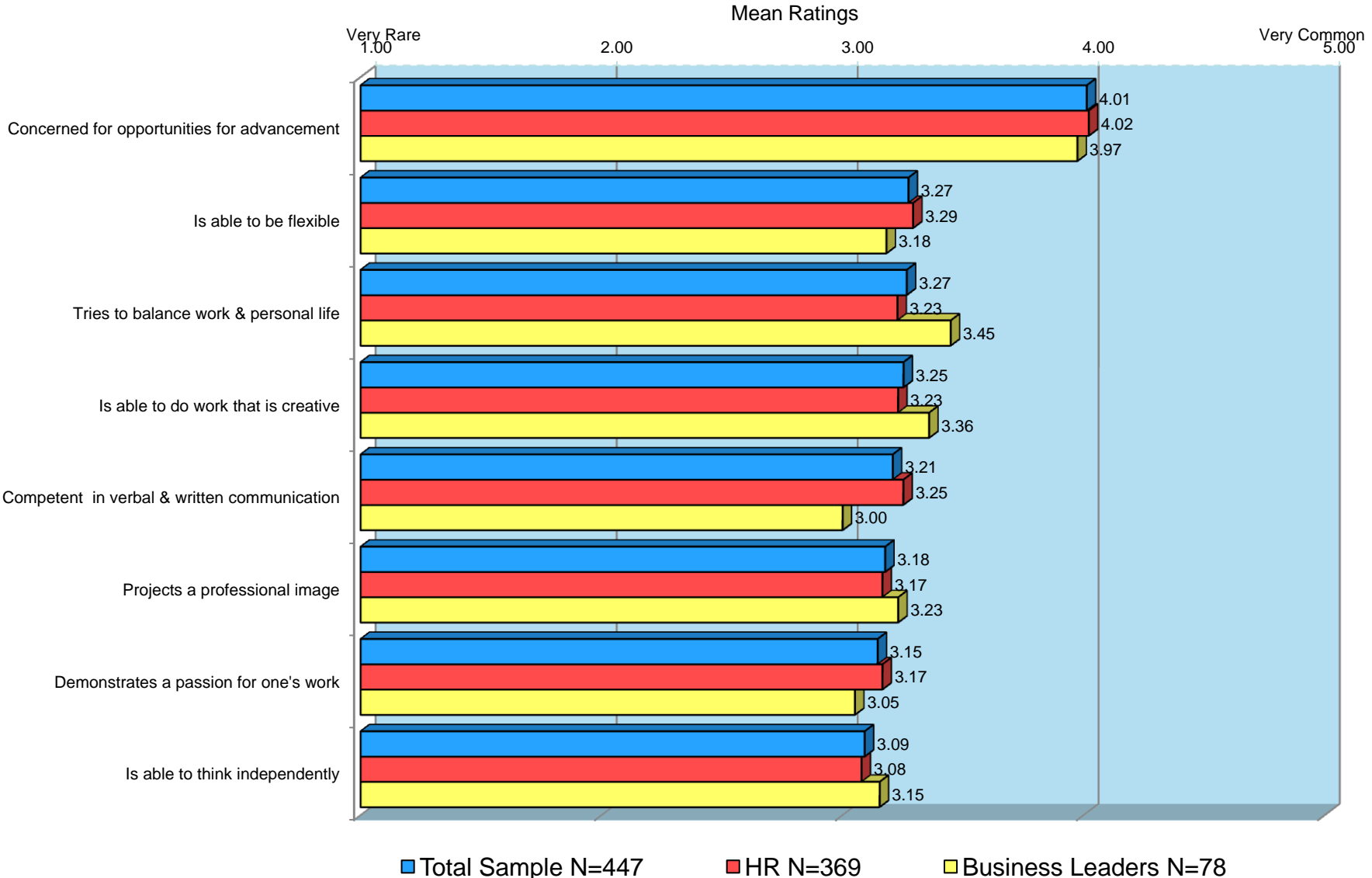
Statistical analysis was also performed with these ratings to identify groupings of similarly rated attributes. This analysis found the attributes can be grouped as follows:

- Is concerned about opportunities for advancement
- Is able to be flexible; Tries to maintain a balance between work life and personal life; Is able to do work that is creative; Is competent in both verbal and written communication
- Projects a professional image; Demonstrates a passion for one's work; Is able to think independently
- Is able to critically evaluate data; Is able to act independently
- Has a sense of responsibility to the greater community; Has a clear sense of direction and purpose; Does the job without regard for the hours it takes; Accepts personal responsibility for decisions and actions
- Exhibits loyalty to the company
- Is an expert in one's field

Comparison By Segments...

The only statistically significant difference between the job classifications is business leaders (3.00) gave lower ratings than HR professionals (3.25) to competence in verbal and written communications.

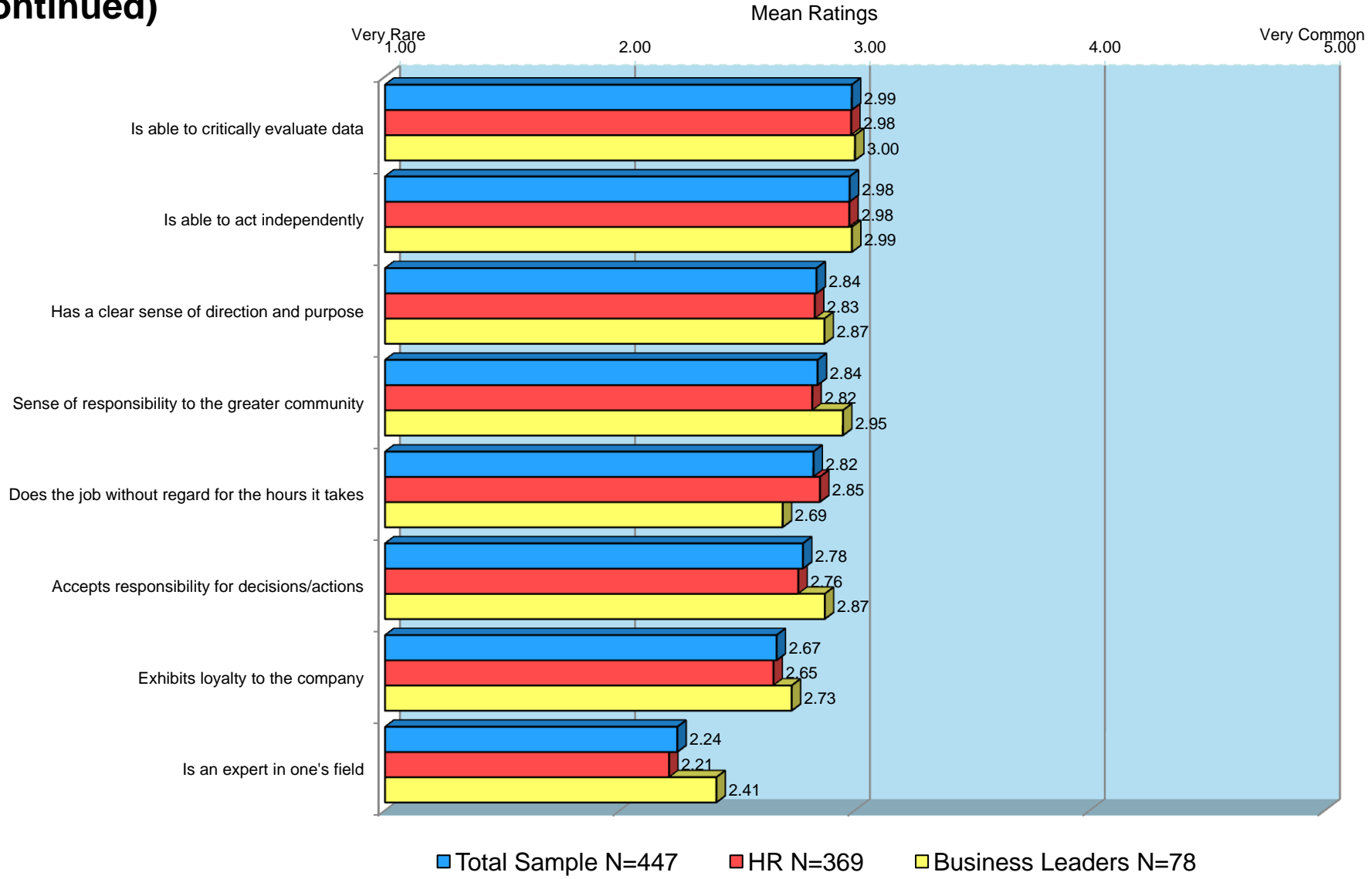
Extent To Which Qualities Are Found In First Year College Educated Employees



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Extent To Which Qualities Are Found In First Year College Educated Employees

(continued)



Improvement Analysis...

Not all attributes lacking in recent college graduates have equal importance in being a professional employee. The following analysis shows the relationship between importance and extent to which qualities exist. Plotted on the vertical axis is how important an attribute is in positions requiring professionalism. The attribute's position on the horizontal axis indicates the extent to which it is present in first year college educated employees. The two axes intersect at the mean of the ratings for measure.

Attention should be given to the quadrant in which each attribute is located. The two most noteworthy quadrants are the Critical Improvement Issues and the High Leverage Issues.

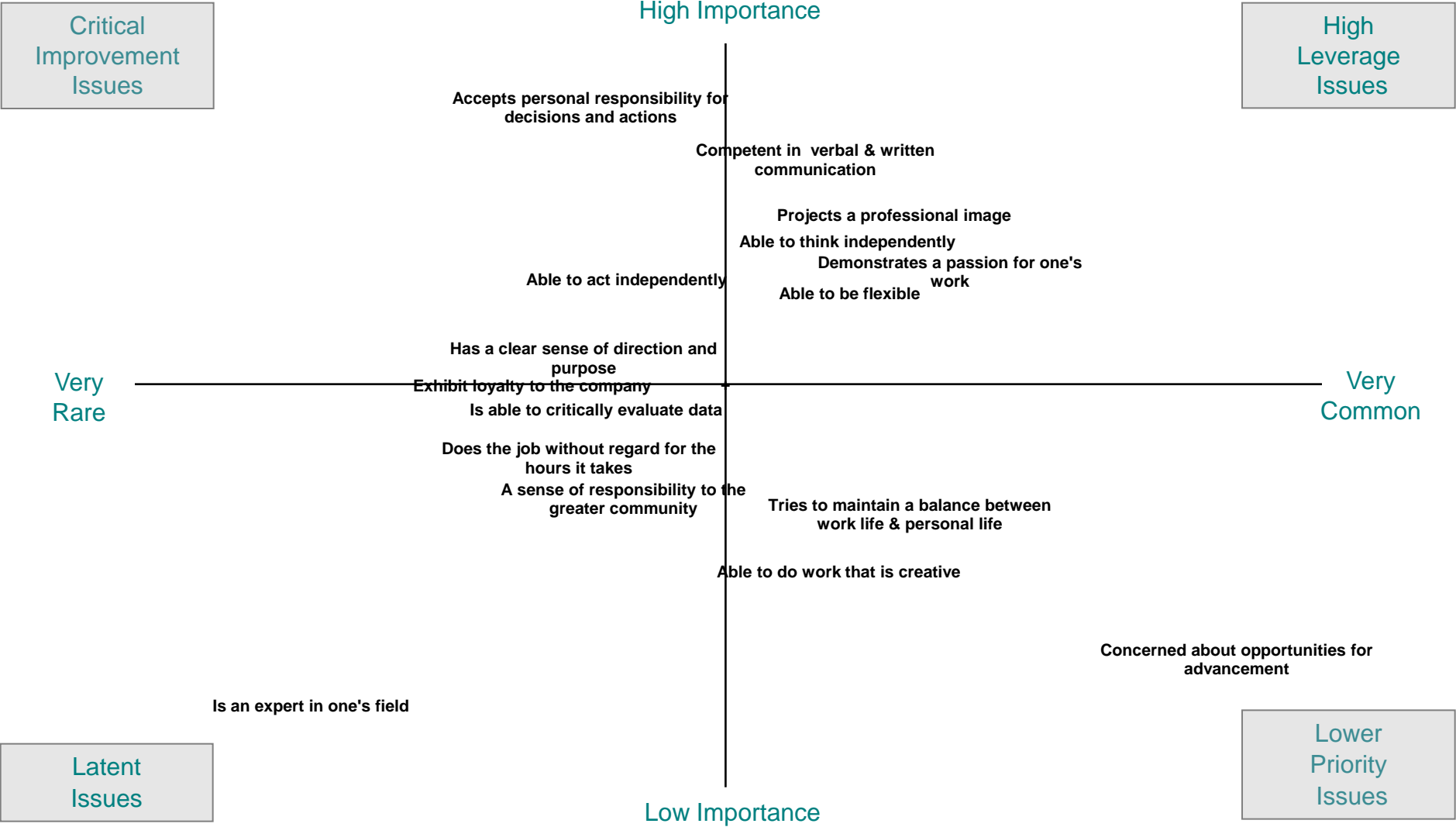
The Critical Improvement Issues are important to the respondents and are not common among new employees. These issues are: accepts personal responsibility for decisions and actions, able to act independently, and has a clear sense of direction and purpose.

To differentiate York College graduates from all other job applicants, these are the attributes which should receive focus.

The High Leverage Issues are the relative strengths which new employees have. These attributes are important to the respondents and new employees exhibit these qualities to a greater extent than they do other attributes. Since the intersection of the axes is the mean of the importance and prevalence attributes' ratings, strengths must be viewed in relative terms. For example, competence in verbal and written communication, a High Leverage Issue, received a mean rating of 3.21. Only 6.3% of the respondents rated this with a 5, very common. Thus, while it appears as a strength in this analysis, strength must be defined relative to the other prevalence ratings.

It should be observed that the most commonly present attribute, concern about opportunities for advancement, is of little importance to employers.

Improvement Analysis



Profile Of Respondents

Means Of Recruiting...

Respondents indicated what they use most often to recruit new college graduates. Referrals from employees (69.0%) was cited most often. This, of course, demonstrates the importance of networking.

This was followed by on-campus recruiting (42.0%) and job fairs (38.2%).

Comparison By Segments...

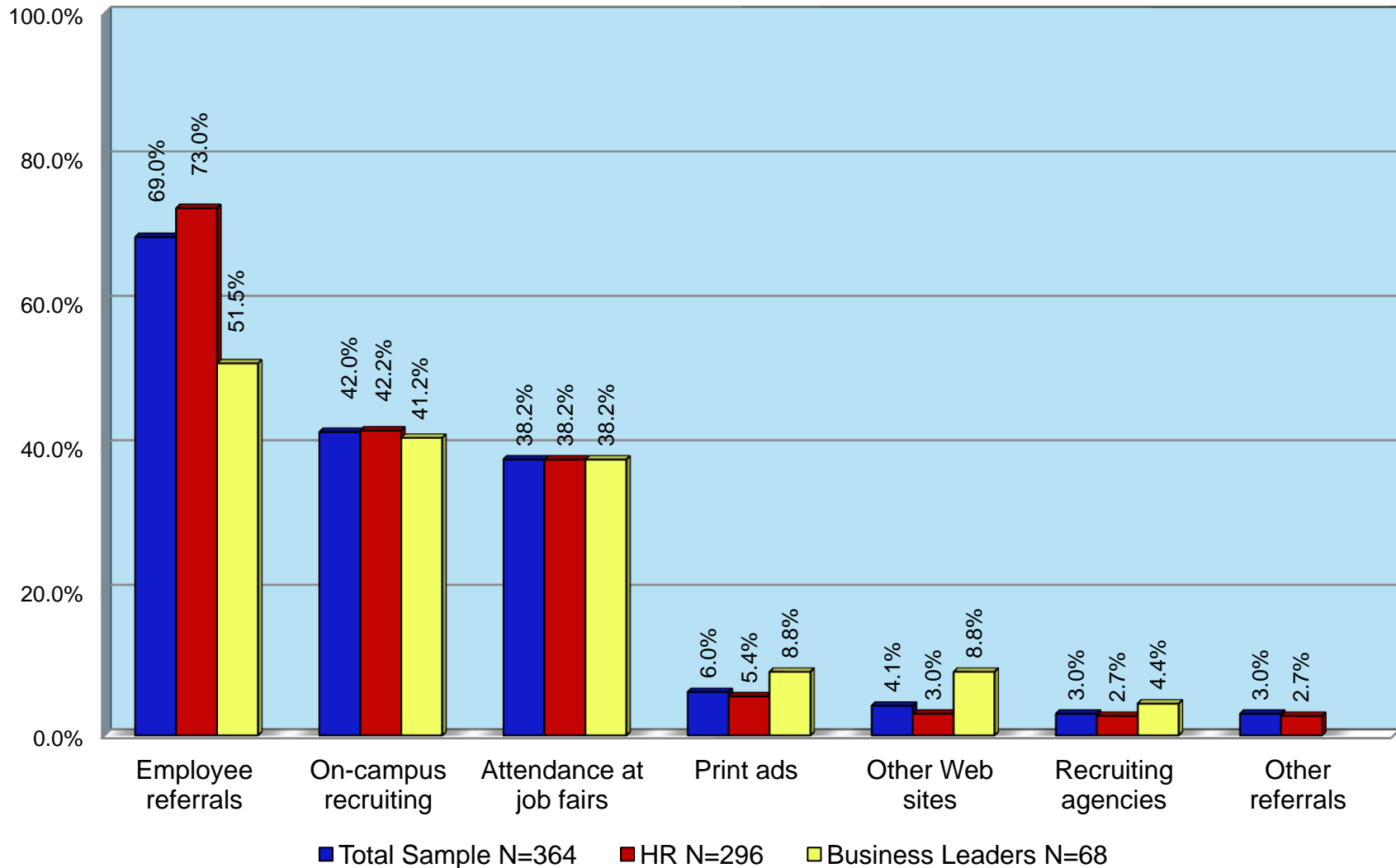
HR professionals (73.0%) were more likely than business leaders (51.5%) to mention employee referrals.

Other Means Used...

About a fifth of the respondents (22.6%) use other means in addition to the most frequently used method of recruiting. A total of 89 respondents described another means of recruiting. Named by five or more respondents were:

- Print ads (27.0%)
- Other Web sites, like Monster, CareerBuilder, Hot jobs (20.2%)
- Other referrals (13.5%)
- Recruiting agencies (12.4%)
- Internships (6.7%).

Means Of Recruiting



**Number Of Employees
At All Locations...**

	Total Sample	HR Professionals	Business Leaders
Under 10	1.3%	.5%	4.9%
10 to 50	5.2%	3.6%	12.2%
51 to 100	14.1%	14.6%	12.2%
101 to 250	17.3%	17.0%	18.3%
251 to 500	16.6%	16.5%	17.1%
Over 500	45.5%	47.8%	35.4%
N=	446	364	82

**Number Of Employees
In HR Department...**

	Total Sample	HR Professionals	Business Leaders
1 to 2	27.6%	24.5%	41.5%
3 to 5	26.7%	26.7%	26.8%
6 to 10	13.5%	13.5%	13.4%
Over 10	32.1%	35.3%	18.3%
N=	445	363	62

Type Of Industry...

	Total Sample	HR Professionals	Business Leaders
Service	44.1%	43.6%	46.3%
Manufacturing	18.5%	18.8%	17.1%
Retail	10.4%	11.0%	7.3%
Medical	7.9%	6.6%	13.4%
Government	5.6%	6.1%	3.7%
Wholesale	4.7%	4.4%	6.1%
Education	4.1%	3.9%	4.9%
Other	4.7%	5.6%	1.2%
N=	444	362	82

Respondent's Level Of Education...

	Total Sample	HR Professionals	Business Leaders
High school graduate	0.9%	.3%	3.7%
Some college/ technical school	13.7%	15.1%	7.4%
Undergraduate degree	45.3%	45.5%	44.4%
Graduate degree	40.1%	39.2%	44.4%
N=	446	365	81

Respondent's Position...

	Total Sample	HR Professionals	Business Leaders
Manager	27.6%	31.7%	9.5%
Human Resources	21.6%	26.5%	0.0%
Director	12.0%	10.5%	18.9%
President/CEO/CFO	7.3%	2.8%	27.0%
Vice President/ Sr Vice President	7.0%	5.8%	12.2%
Other	24.5%	22.7%	32.4
N=	399	325	74

Position Of Person To Whom Report...

	Total Sample	HR Professionals	Business Leaders
President/CEO	29.1%	28.1%	34.8%
VP of Administration/HR	15.6%	16.9%	8.7%
Director	8.3%	9.5%	1.4%
Board of Directors	7.6%	2.5%	34.8%
Manager	6.9%	8.2%	0.0%
COO	6.0%	6.0%	5.8%
Vice President/Senior VP	5.7%	6.5%	1.4%
CFO	5.3%	5.7%	2.9%
Other	15.5%	16.6%	10.2%
N=	436	367	69

Appendix

2009 Professionalism Study Data Tables

