

FORESIGHT 2026

Still Human

Flourishing in the Age of AI

Gaynor Ireland · Consilience

We built systems that can count everything. **They never taught us to flourish.**

200,000+

people · 20+ countries
including South Africa · *the largest flourishing study ever run*

WHAT FLOURISHING IS

flourish

- : to grow luxuriantly, thrive
- : to achieve success, prosper
- : to be in a state of activity or production
- : to reach a height of development or influence

flourishing

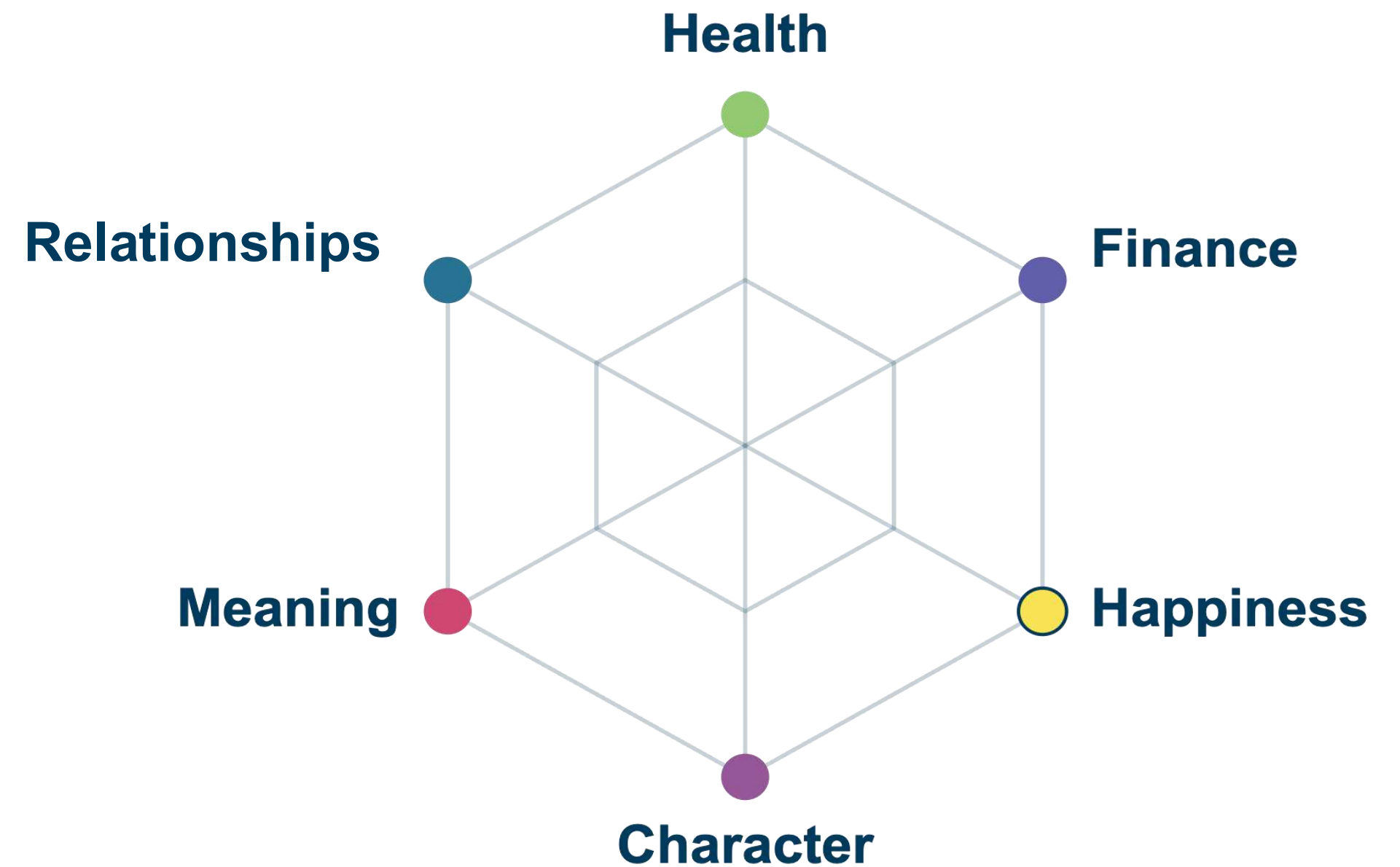
- : marked by vigorous and healthy growth
 - : very active and successful
- (Merriam Webster)

health

- : state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing, not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.”
- (WHO Constitution, 1948)

Six measurable domains. Measurable means designable.

Harvard did for flourishing what we once did for blood pressure

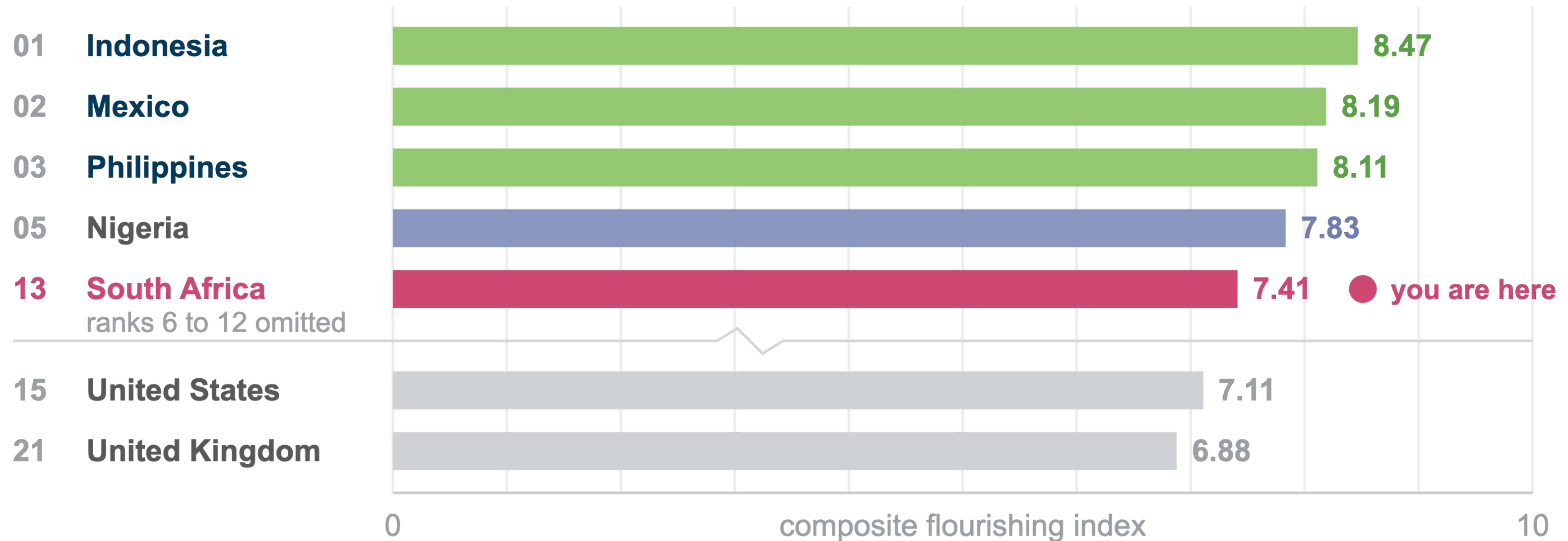


Two validated questions per domain · a 12-point index.

THE FLOURISHING PARADOX



The wealthiest, most measured societies flourish **least**.



Wealth does not buy meaning, and the young flourish **least** where the system has the **most**.

Global Flourishing Study: 200,000+ participants · 20+ countries (Van der Weele et al., 2025, Nature portfolio).

We are here.

Not the mission statement. Not the strategy deck. **The actual map**

YOU ARE HERE

Capability without reach is an incomplete system. AI is the first technology that can close the gap...if we choose it.

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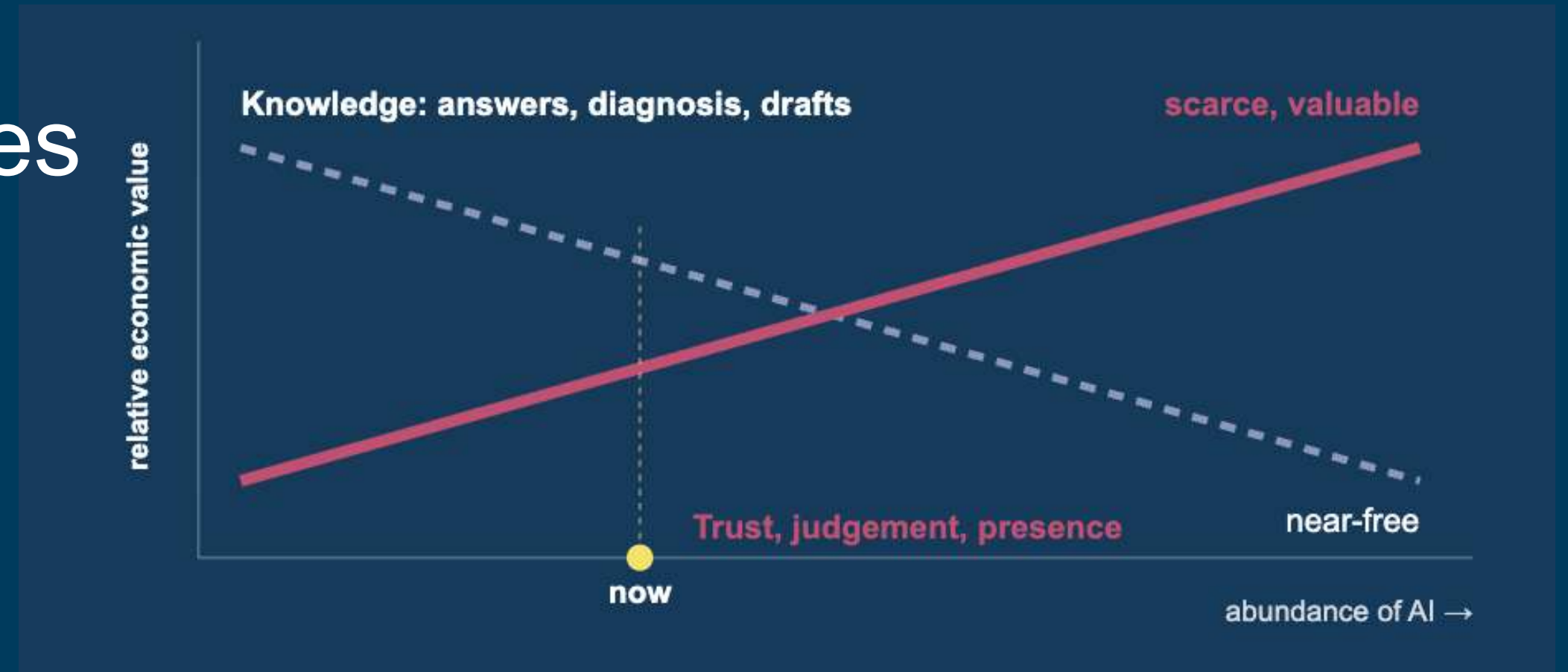
Still Human is not
a reassurance.
It is a question



When AI has done everything it is going to do, what is still human?
And will we still be?

WHEN KNOWLEDGE IS FREE

What's abundant becomes invisible. Value rushes to what stays **scarce**.



Trust

Judgement

Presence

The human part. *Flourishing is the constraint, the design choice, the strategic position.*

Almost everyone is adopting AI.

Almost no one is seeing the value (yet).

78%

of organisations use AI
somewhere

39%

report any measurable
EBIT impact

That is not a technology problem.
It is an organisational one.

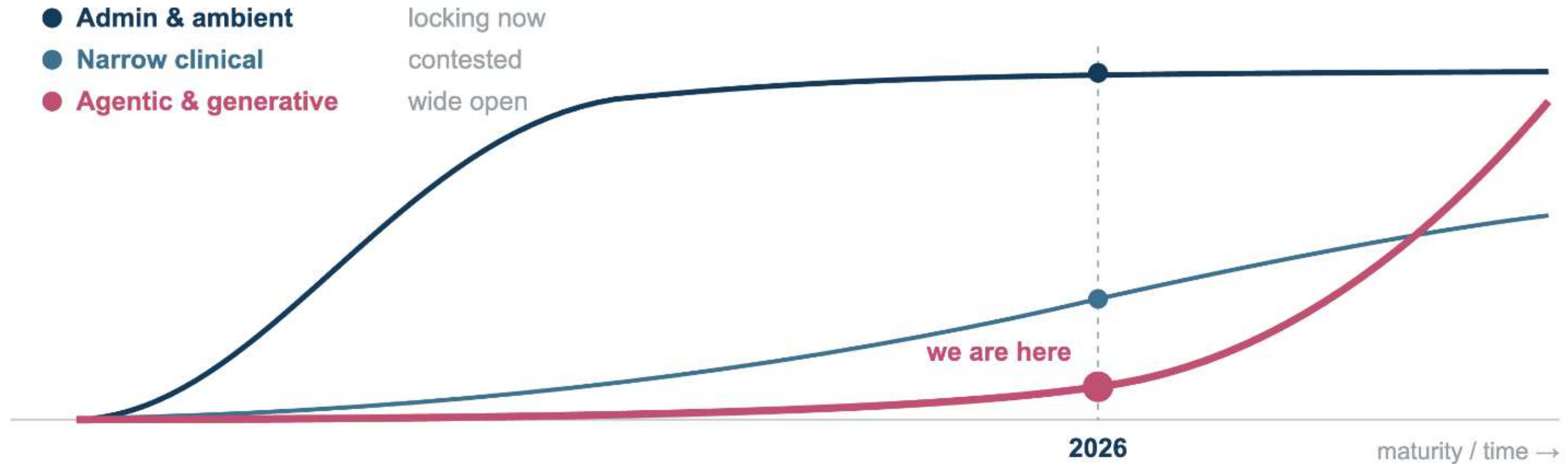
Lucien Engelen

Every wave of technology arrives wrapped in promise. The promise is always real. The promise is never the point. **The point is what you choose to build with it, knowing what you are trading away and what you are fighting to keep.**

THREE CURVES, THREE SPEEDS

The window is open now. It won't reopen.

Admin AI is already hardening into a commodity. The layer that touches human meaning hasn't even set.



Multi-curve read of Abernathy & Utterback (1978); Anderson & Tushman (1990). Ambient documentation passed 20% adoption (2024 to 2026); agentic and generative care remains pre-dominant design.

IF FLOURISHING IS A DESIGN CHOICE, WHERE DO WE BEGIN?

Three levels. One argument.

LEVEL ONE
System

Funders, schemes, regulators

What is this system actually optimised for, and is flourishing on the list?

LEVEL TWO
Organisation

Providers, payers, insurers, advisors

What kind of organisation thrives when AI dissolves captive demand and freed time is the new currency?

LEVEL THREE
Individual

Clinicians, leaders, patients, citizens

What does it take to flourish, not just function, when AI is woven through every part of life?

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YOU
HERE
ARE

LEVEL ONE

System

What do we point it at?

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HERE
ARE



LEVEL ONE · THE PROVOCATION

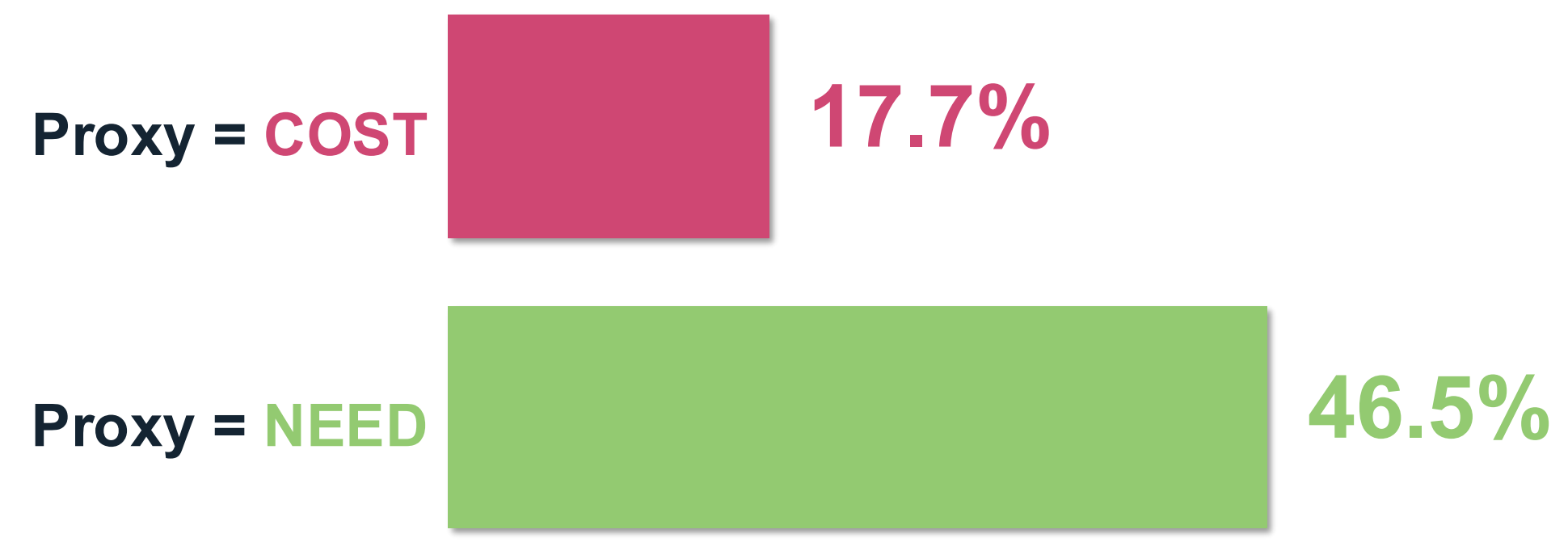
Built for not-dying.

You cannot flourish in a system that is billing for your illness and writing your cure off as a **cost reduction**.

LEVEL ONE · THE RESPONSE

AI scales whatever you point it at. **Design** deliberately

A risk algorithm decided who got extra care for millions. Designers chose **cost as the stand-in for need.**



The thing you **optimise for** is the value system you **encode**. That is a design parameter you control.

Pointed at **cost**, it scaled inequity. Pointed at **need**, it scaled the remedy.

Obermeyer et al., Science, 2019 · share of Black patients flagged for extra care



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YOU
ARE
HERE

LEVEL TWO

Organisation

What kind of organisation thrives when AI dissolves captive demand and freed time is the new currency?

LEVEL TWO · THE PROVOCATION

AI hands this system a windfall of time.

We can do one of two things with it.

MINE

Strip-mine the clinician's hours, the patient's data, the system for throughput.

Takes value out once. Leaves the ground barren.

FARM

Put the time back into relationship, judgement, continuity of care.

Puts value back. The soil grows richer each season.

LEVEL TWO · THE RESPONSE

The honest number.

Ambient AI scribes

16 min

saved per 8-hour shift
across 1,800 clinicians, five
centres.

LEVEL TWO · THE RESPONSE

Same technology. Same minutes.

Opposite futures.

45%

of organisations used AI savings to cut headcount

55%

did not cut headcount; freed capacity went elsewhere

The productivity gain is not the strategic decision. What you do with it is, and it is decided in rooms like this one.

16 min/shift: Stanford HAI (2026). 45/55 across 51 deployments, 41 organisations (Pereira, Graylin & Brynjolfsson, 2026, Stanford Digital Economy Lab)

FREE THE HUMAN

A nurse, freed about four hours a week from charting, spent it watching her patients, and heard how children describe long-COVID fatigue. It became a recognition pattern, now a protocol.

The AI did the documentation. Only she could see what mattered.

Not automate the human. Free the human.

“My bones feel sleepy.”



BUILD YOUR TRUST ARCHITECTURE

**An AI model is a digital staff member. Credential it.
Audit it. Govern it.**

Model capability is *rented*,
and equalising. Trust
architecture is *built and*
differentiating.

The organisations pulling ahead don't have the best models, they have the strongest trust architecture. State of AI in Insurance (2025); Gillespie et al. (2023).



VALIDATE BEFORE YOU SCALE

Two sepsis systems. Same technology. Opposite outcomes.

VALIDATED BEFORE SCALE

18.7% lower sepsis mortality

1.85 h faster to antibiotics

89% clinician adoption

DEPLOYED WITHOUT VALIDATION

Failed peer review.

Quietly degraded care at scale.

Trust is **built** before capability. Validation isn't friction; it's the design choice.



LEVEL THREE

Individual

What does it take to flourish, not just function, when AI is woven through every part of life?

LEVEL THREE · THE PROVOCATION

Calorie-rich. Nutrient-poor.

Obese with information.

Malnourished for meaning.

An uncomfortable number

79%

of the time, clinicians preferred the **chatbot's** answer to a real physician's: blind-rated.

Written warmth, in text. Not evidence machines feel.

We built a system so starved of time, a tireless tool can out-warm an exhausted human.

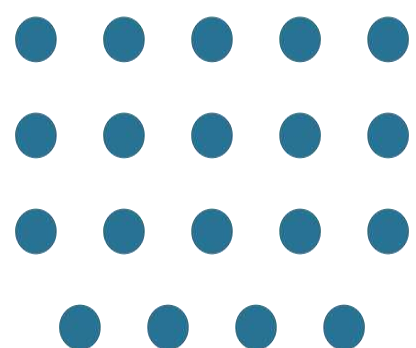
The machine did not
out-love the doctor.

The doctor was too
tired to love. **We did
that.**

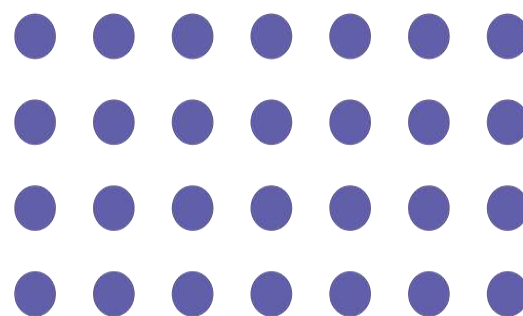
THE BRIGHT LINE – DELPHI CONSENSUS

Both professions, independently, drew the same line.

19 data scientists



61 ICU clinicians



THE PATIENT RELATIONSHIP

...time to do all the actual caring again.

an ICU nurse, on what she hoped AI would give back

JUDGMENT IS INFRASTRUCTURE

Three lines. Each one yours to hold.

LINE 01

Consent

The patient knows what the machine handles, and what you hold.

LINE 02

Accountability

A decision blamed on the AI is a decision someone abdicated. The line is whoever signs the note.

LINE 03

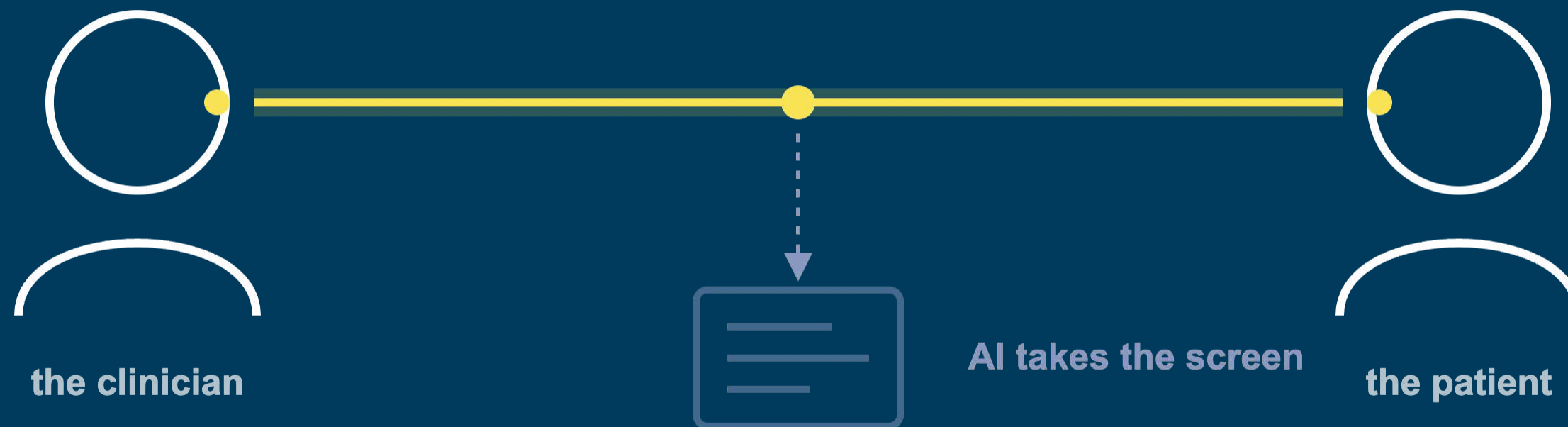
Relationship

That is never delegated. On this, data scientists and clinicians agreed unanimously.

It can't be listed as an author, not because it can't write, but because it can't be accountable. Chen et al., 2026

1816 → THE GAZE BACK

For 200 years, healthcare technology has often widened the gap. **AI could be the first to close it.**



Laennec, 1816: the stethoscope, the first instrument placed between doctor and patient. **Presence** is embodied, not transcribed

(after Israni & Verghese, 2019). "The gift of time": Topol (2019).

AI IS THE COMPUTER NOW. USE THAT.

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YOU ARE
HERE



AI could be the first instrument in two centuries to "give the gaze back"

The model was always the instrument. You were always the **musician.**

What will I do with my humanity, now that AI has freed me to use it?



THE ONE GROUP I REFUSE TO LEAVE OUT

The patient is becoming the **chief medical officer** of their own life.

The person who has spent twenty years navigating a system short of everything is already their own case manager, advocate and triage nurse. **That is not a deficit. That is a capability.**

AI is the first technology that can meet that person where they are, at a cost the system can sustain. **Are you designing for that person, or still assuming care only counts inside one of your buildings?**

WHO (2021); WHO & ITU (2024): supported self-management at roughly 24 US cents per patient per year.



THE LEAVE-BEHIND

Designing for Flourishing

Six rules. Three levels. One idea: point the technology at the human, with purpose.

LEVEL ONE

System

- 1 Design the proxy for need, not cost.
- 2 Treat every domain as a vital sign; no one is healthy “on average.”

LEVEL TWO

Organisation

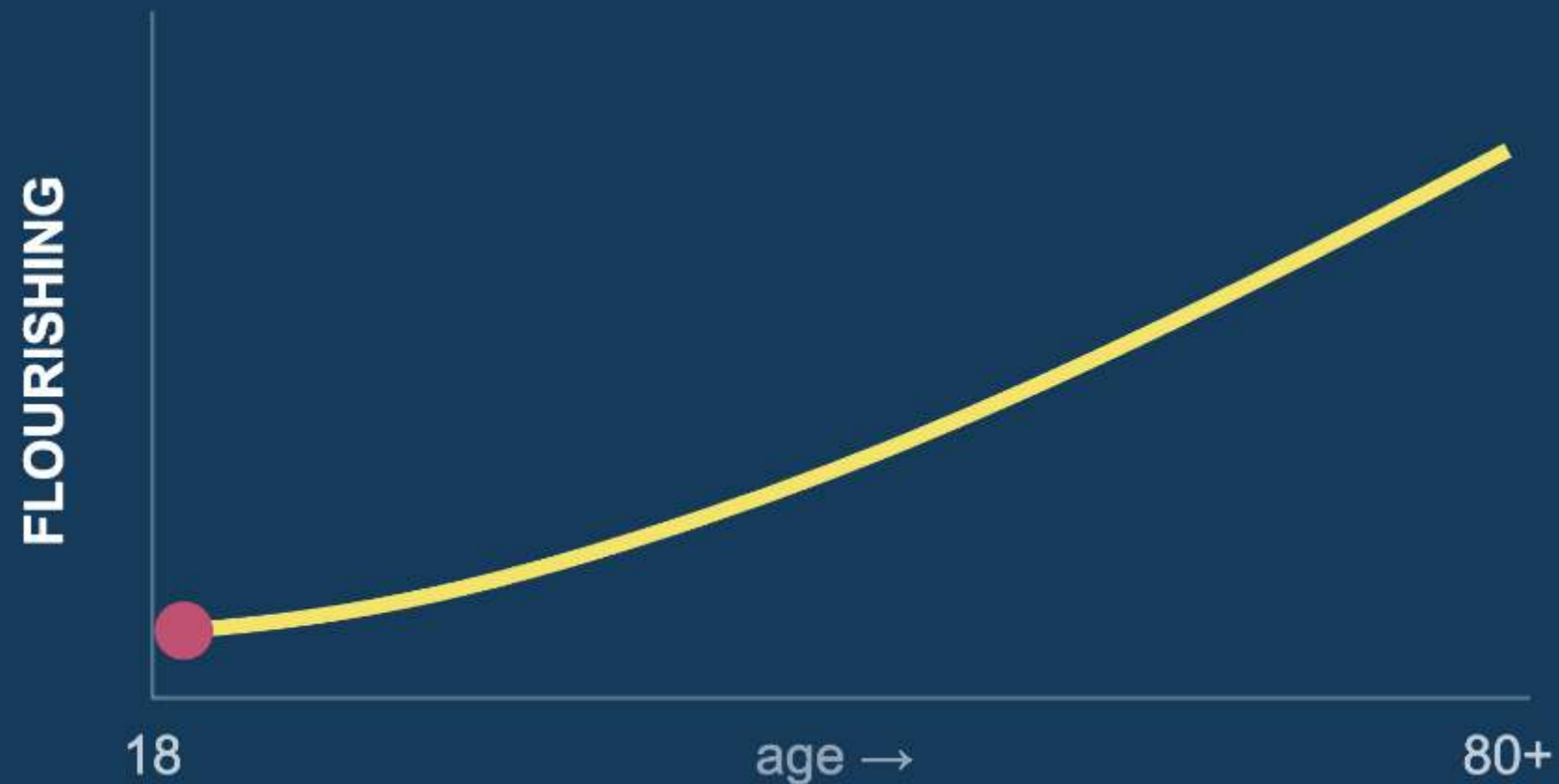
- 3 Ring-fence the time before it’s booked as productivity.
- 4 Validate before you scale; trust before capability.

LEVEL THREE

Individual

- 5 Hold the three lines: consent, accountability, relationship.
- 6 Design the relationship as the unit, not the transaction.

BACK TO WHERE WE BEGAN



Ages 18 to 24, the first smartphone generation, score the lowest.

This time, we can
see it coming.

A technology of enormous power, released undesigned, at population scale. We've run this experiment before.

Van der Weele et al. (2025): in wealthy, saturated nations the old U-shape is gone; flourishing now climbs continuously from a low in the youngest (18 to 24) to a peak at 80+. Smartphone-generation framing editorial.

FLORERE · TO FLOWER, TO BLOOM

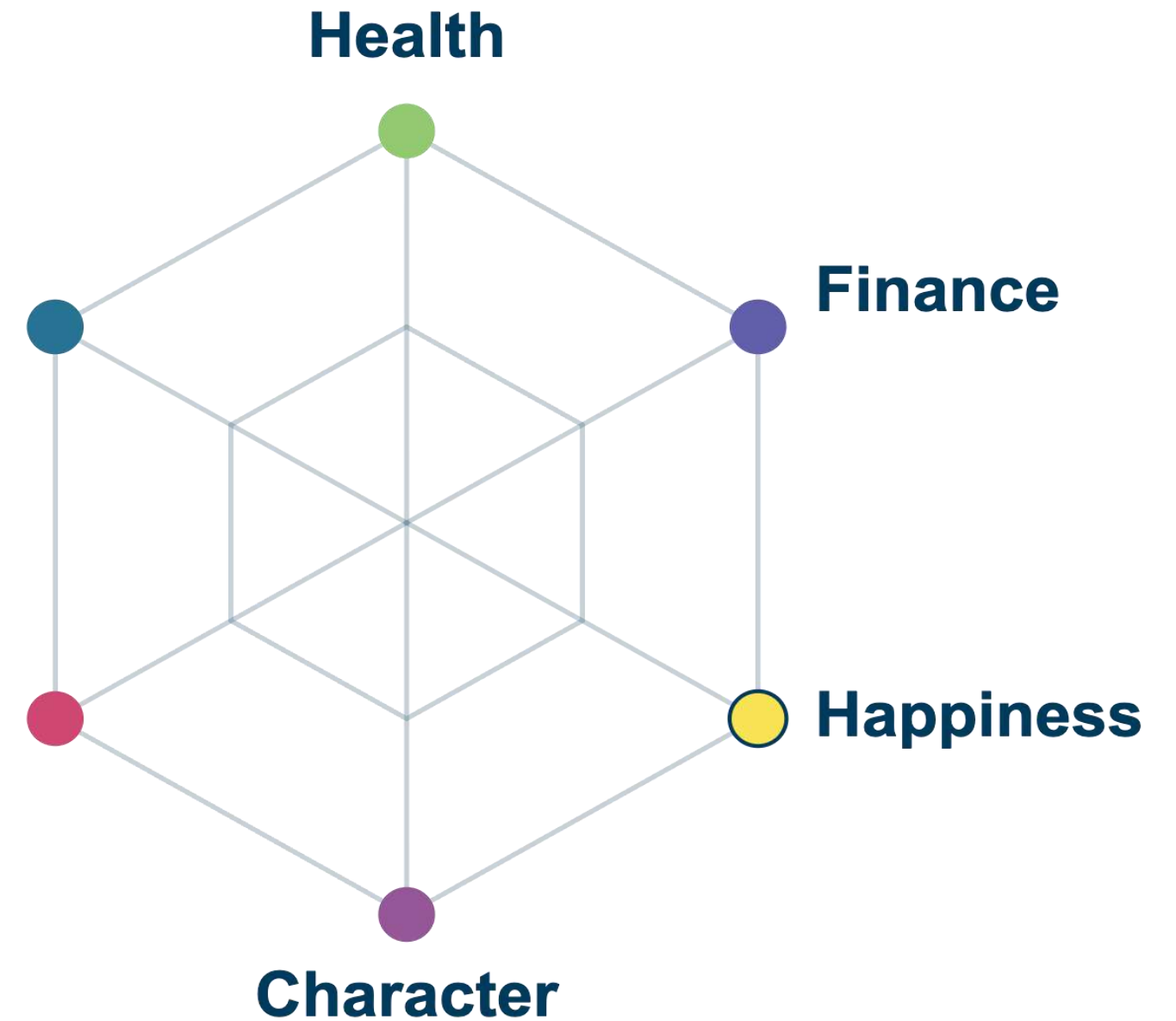
Flourishing is the constraint. It is the scarce thing. It is the bloom.

You cannot manufacture a bloom.

You prepare the soil. You get the conditions right. And then you do the hardest thing of all. You wait, and you let it happen.

Relationships

Meaning



“The choice is ours. And the time is now.” Lucien Engelen, 2026

The question isn't whether AI is good for the system. It's whether the system is good for the **human**, and whether you are designing it that way.

Still Human. ■

It was never a reassurance. It's a decision.

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YOU
ARE
HERE

THANK
YOU

 insight