

State of AI in IT

NORTH AMERICA 2024 EDITION



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Introduction

As a follow-up to a global 2023 IT service management (ITSM)-focused [survey on artificial intelligence \(AI\) adoption](#) in IT organizations that showed significant growth in AI interest and use, two separate surveys focused on the state of AI adoption in North America were conducted in November 2023.

The first survey posed AI-related questions to IT professionals, and the second to end-users. The demographic breakdown for the 250 IT professionals and 750 end-users that responded is included in Appendices 1 and 2, respectively.



Stephen Mann

Principal Analyst and Content Director,
ITSM.tools

Note from the author

This survey is a great snapshot of where North American IT organizations are with the adoption of AI, with most still assessing the opportunities and understanding what's involved.

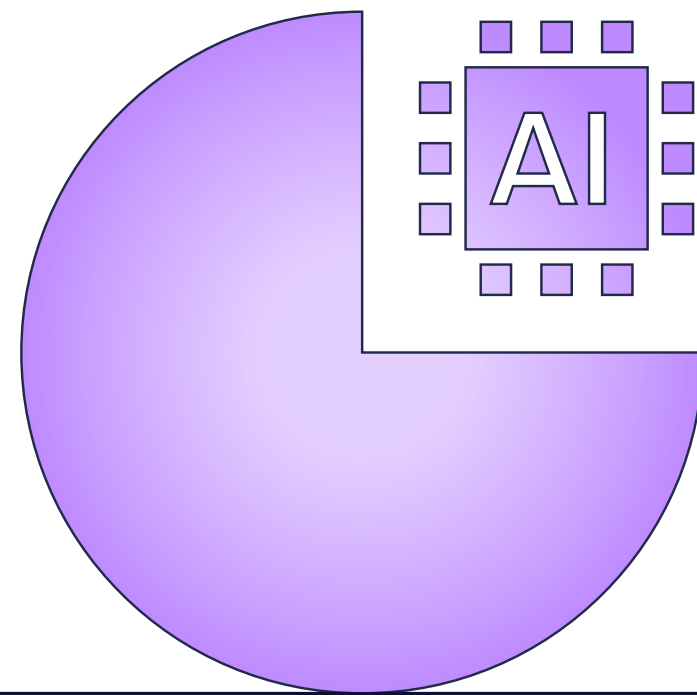
However, the most interesting survey insight is the high level of end-user free AI tool use, with close to three-quarters already using free AI tools such as ChatGPT to help improve their productivity.

It's an unpreventable iteration of the traditional "Shadow IT" issue (and opportunity) that IT organizations need to carefully manage in 2024.

75% of end-user respondents stated that they're already using free AI tools like ChatGPT for their work.

The most common use cases were:

- Creative ideation or problem-solving (34%)
- Email drafting or editing (30%)
- Content creation or editing (26%)

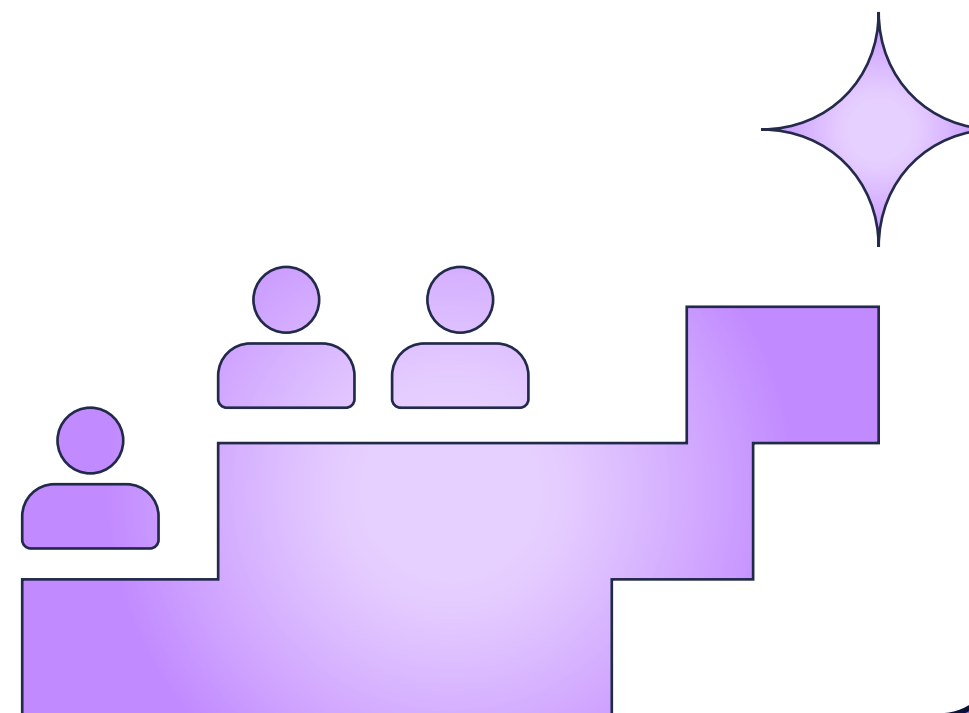


Key insights

The majority of IT respondents (58%) said their organizations were still in the early stages of AI adoption.

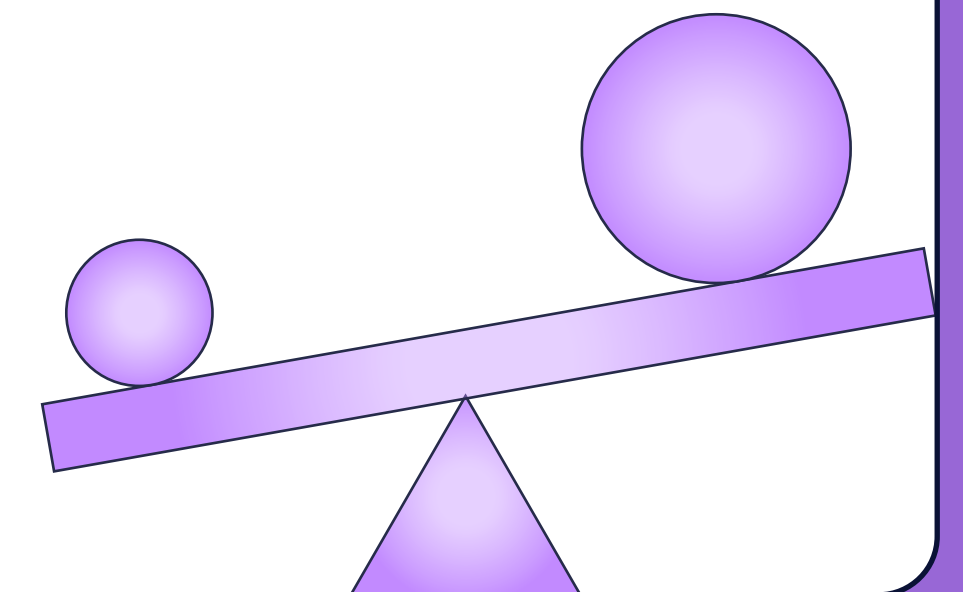
- Planning (20%)
- Early exploration (24%)
- Pilot projects (14%)

Only 11% had no plans for AI adoption in IT.



The IT team was the originator of AI adoption activities in IT in nearly two-thirds of organizations (61%), with the C-suite accounting for one-quarter (24%).

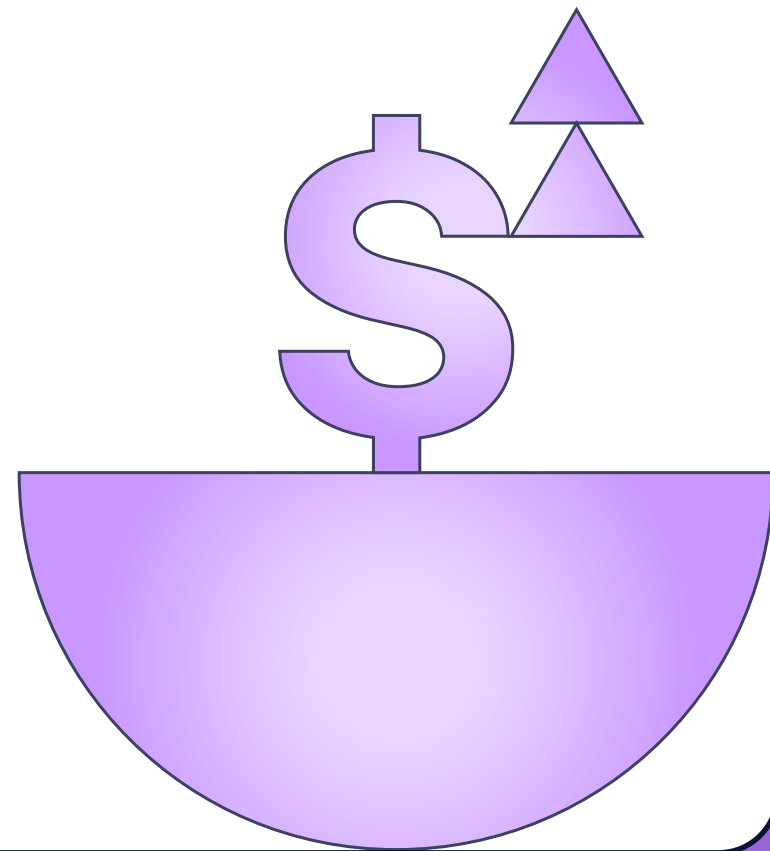
In organizations where the C-suite had originated the need, AI adoption had progressed less than those where the IT team had done this.



Key insights

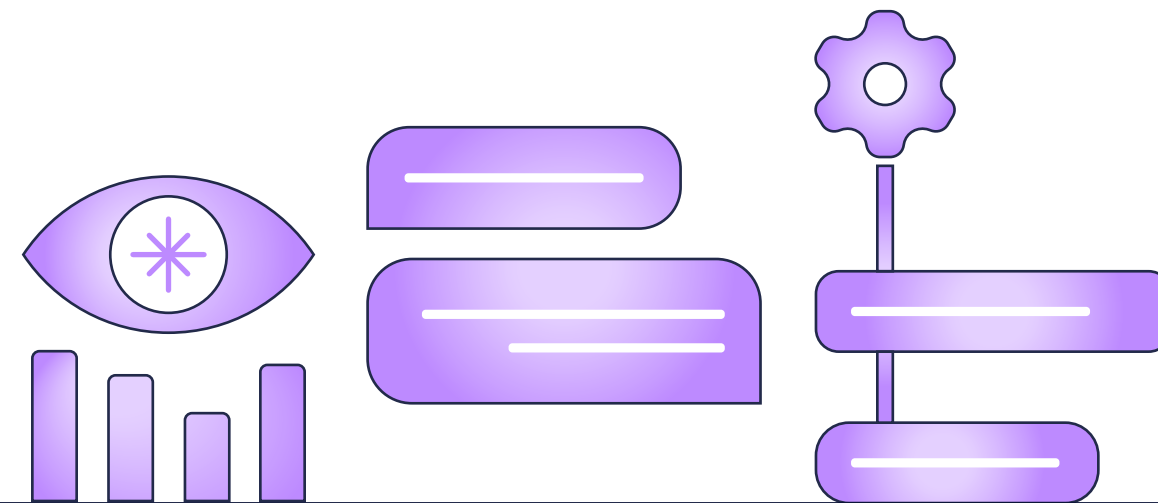
More than half (52%) of IT respondents stated that their organizations are spending at least 5% of their IT budgets on AI.

When the data is limited to only the organization with AI spend, this is 74%.



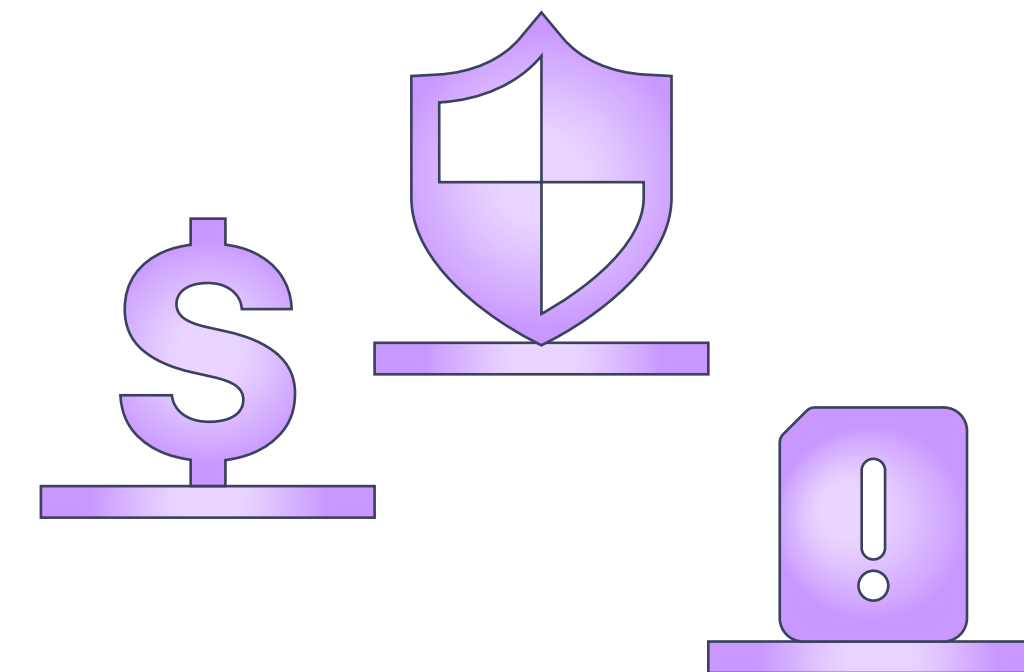
The three most stated benefits of AI adoption in IT are:

- Data analytics and synthesizing insights (45%)
- Chatbots for self-service adoption (38%)
- Improving employee experience (34%)
- Workflow automation and optimization (34%)



The top three barriers to AI adoption for IT professionals are:

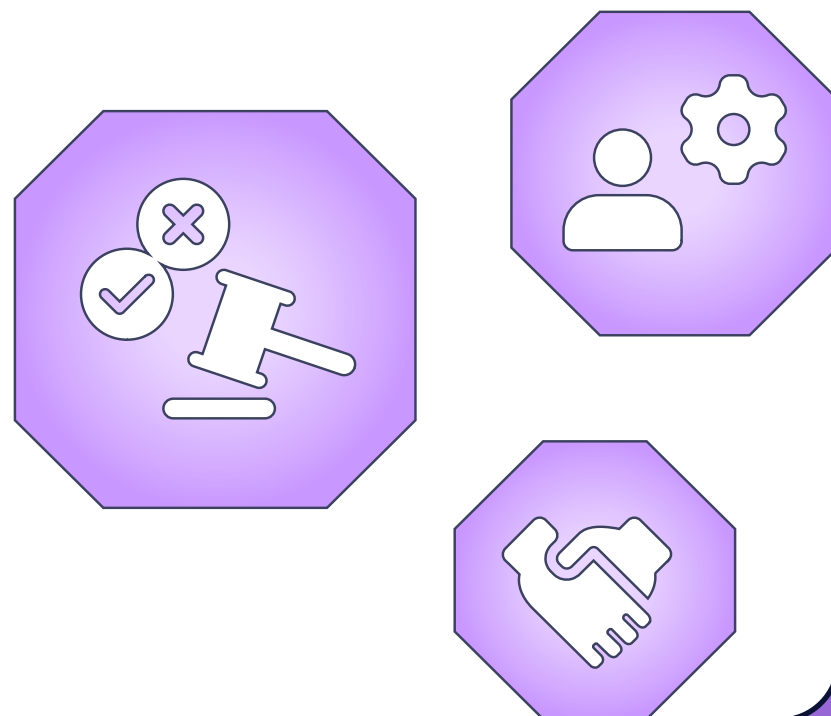
- Customer data security (42%)
- Additional cost (39%)
- Inaccuracy or inconsistency (33%)



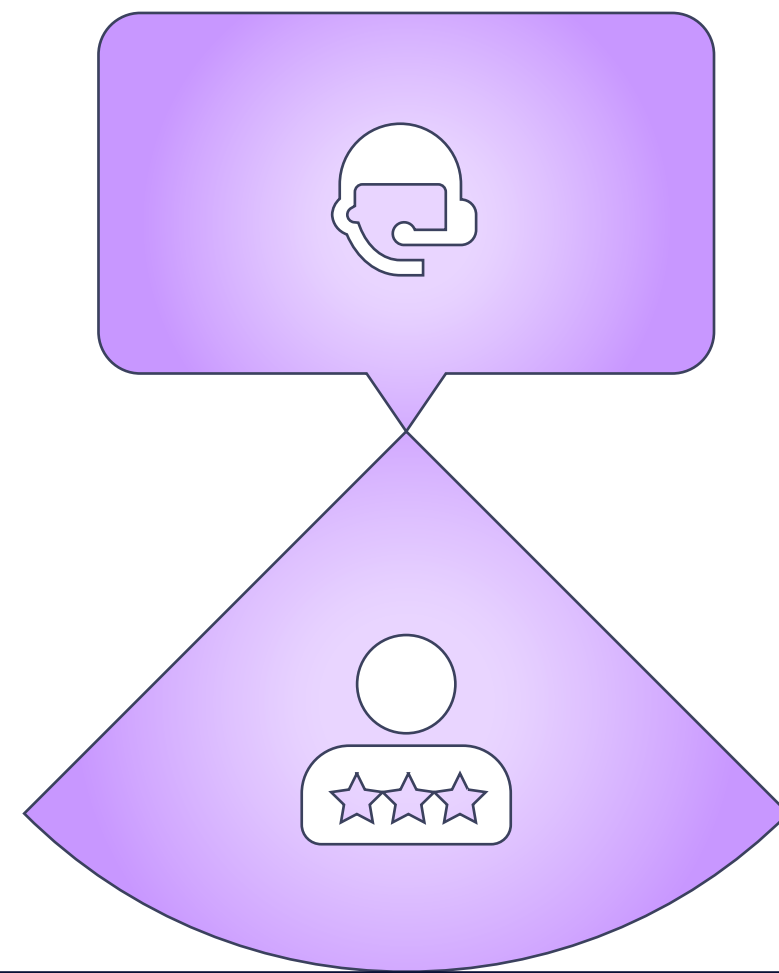
Key insights

We also asked IT professionals to specify the business areas where AI shouldn't be used. The top three responses were:

- Ethical and legal decision-making (41%)
- People management (30%)
- Customer relationship management (29%)

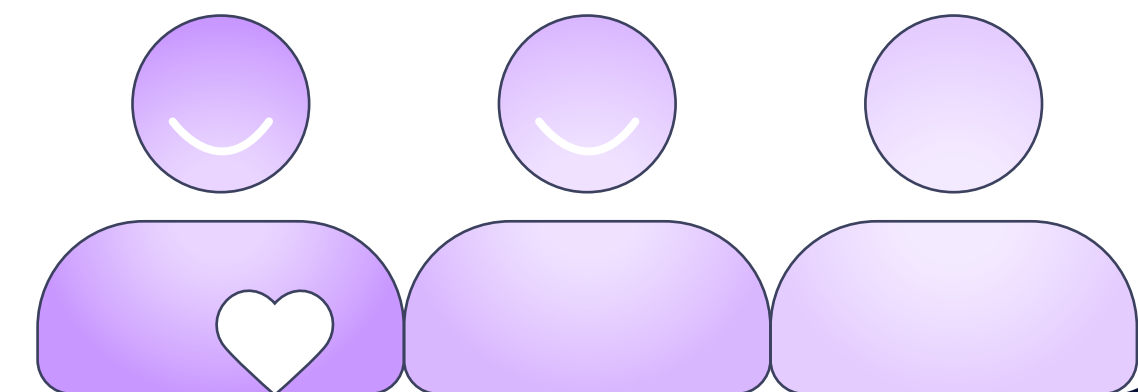


Only a quarter (26%) of end-user respondents were happy with how their IT support team worked.



36% of end-user respondents were happy with their IT teams' use of AI, and another 19% would like them to start using it.

When the "Don't know" responses are removed, this is 46% and 25%, respectively, and 71% in total.



Survey insights IT professionals

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The AI adoption
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AI adoption
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The AI adoption state

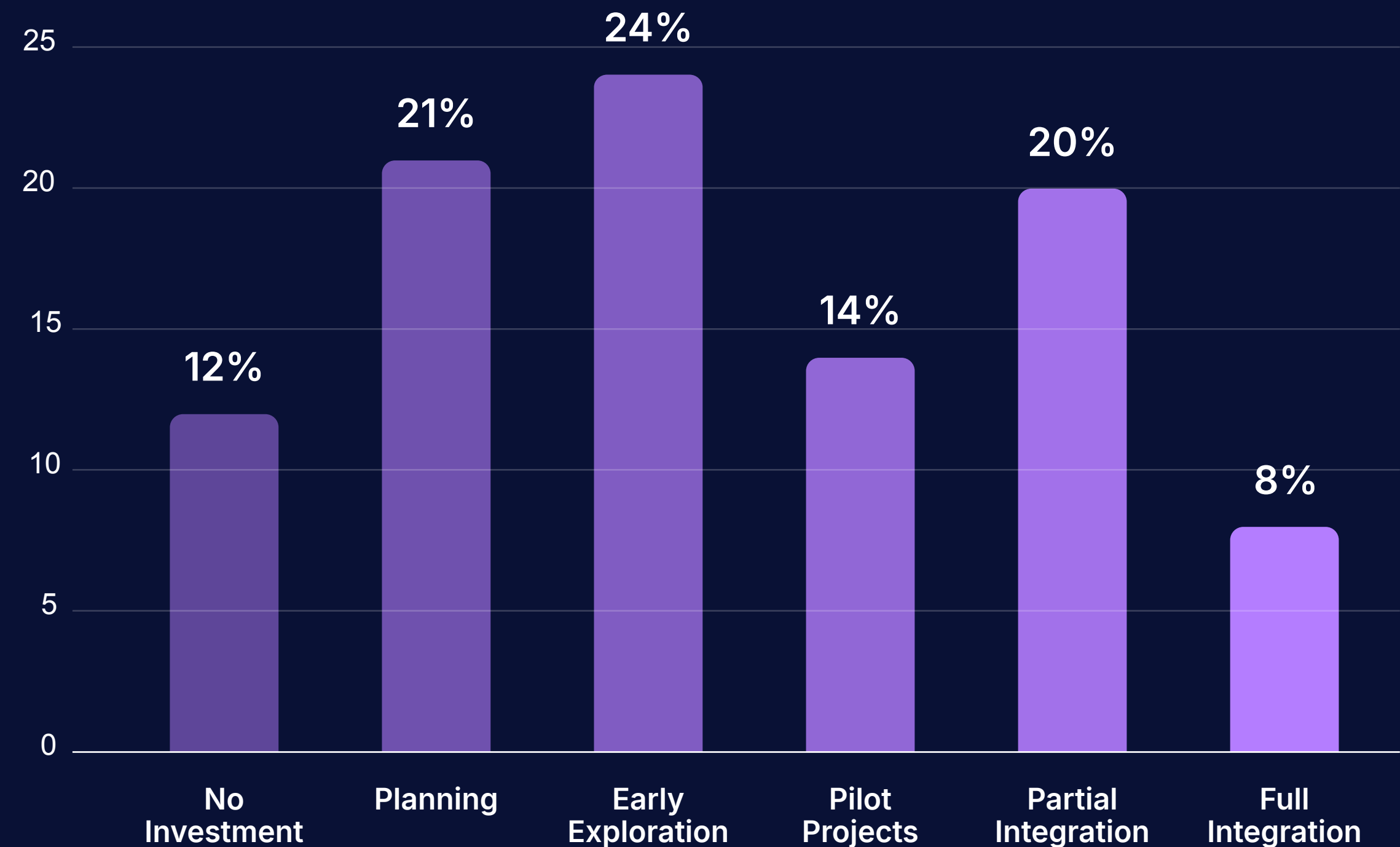
It can be hard for organizations to understand whether they're ahead of or behind the AI adoption curve. To help, the first "core" survey question asked the respondents to describe their organizations' current AI adoption state.

The key data points are:

- The majority of respondents (**58%**) said their organizations were still in the early stages of AI adoption – either planning (**20%**), early exploitation (**24%**), or pilot projects (**14%**).
- **27%** of respondents have progressed past the AI pilot projects stage to have functioning AI capabilities in IT.
- Only **11%** of respondents stated that their organizations have no plans for AI adoption in IT.

Although, the selection of some of these options might have been dependent on respondent interpretation. Eg. whether the addition and use of AI-enabled capabilities within existing SaaS software was considered AI adoption.

What stage best describes your organization's current adoption of AI for IT?



Getting started in a familiar environment with AI applications built into ITSM tool capabilities makes it easier for administrators to gain experience working with AI and can help IT make a business case for other, more costly options.

Consider this an easy call to action: start where you are. Learn what your current ITSM tool can support using AI and leverage those capabilities, then grow into other areas.



Phyllis Drucker

Author, Keynote Speaker,
Service Management Thought Leader

The origin of IT's AI adoption needs

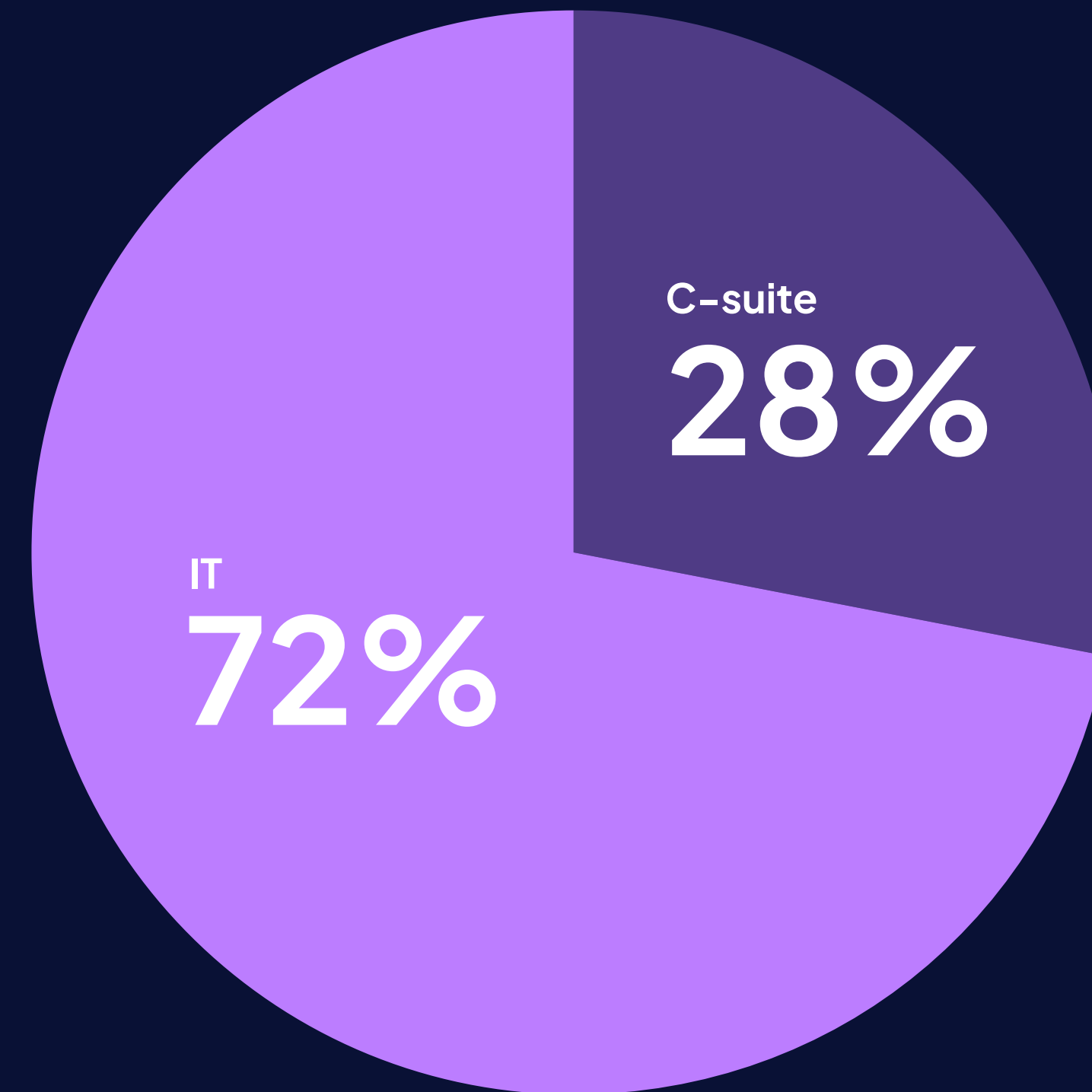
While IT's adoption of AI-enabled capabilities might seem inevitable, it's interesting to understand the origins of organizations' investments.

The IT team was the originator of AI adoption activities in nearly two-thirds of organizations (**61%**), with the C-suite accounting for one-quarter (**24%**).

When the "Not applicable" and "Other" responses are removed, the "inflated" percentages are **72%** and **28%**, respectively – which better shows the difference between these two drivers of AI adoption in IT.

Looking beyond these full sample figures, organizations where the C-suite had originated the need for AI had progressed less than those where the IT team had done this.

If your organization is investing or planning to invest in AI initiatives and tools, where did the requirement originate?



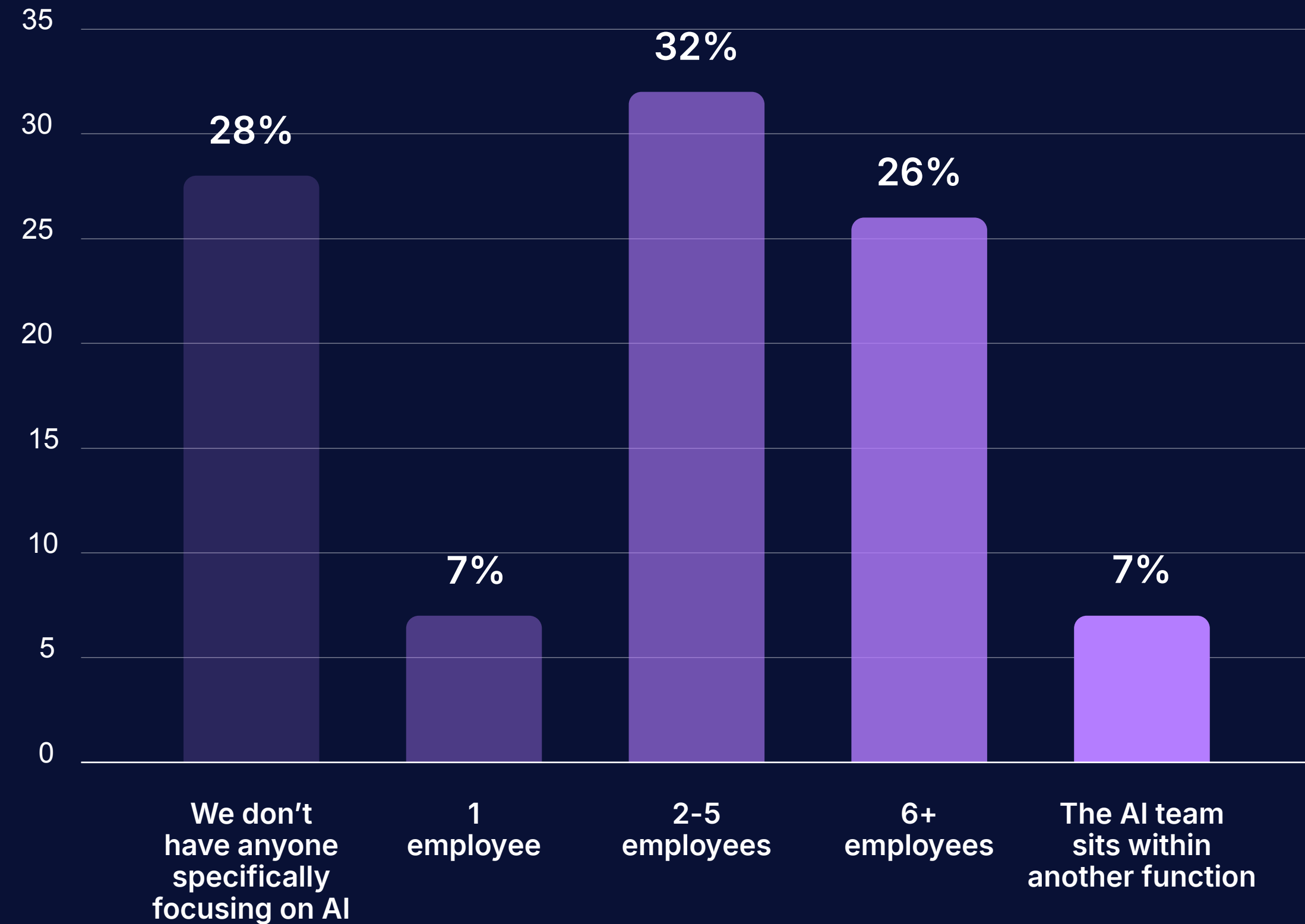
AI resource allocation

The lack of appropriate AI skills and resources is often cited as a barrier to AI Adoption. A surprising **28%** of respondents stated that their organizations don't have anyone specifically focusing on AI.

However, the majority of these organizations (**94%**) hadn't progressed with AI in production. At the other end of the spectrum, **65%** of organizations have two or more people focused on AI, and another **7%** have AI-focused resources within a separate function.

Looking beyond these full sample figures, where the AI team sits within another function, close to two-thirds (**61%**) of the organizations were at the **Partial Integration** stage, with the remainder in **Pilot Projects** and **Early Exploration**. None were at **Full Integration**.

How big is your (dedicated) AI team within IT?



IT budget spend

The extra costs associated with AI adoption are inevitably a barrier to its adoption. However, more than half (**60%**) of respondents stated that their organizations are spending at least **5%** of their IT budgets on AI.

When the data is limited to only the organization with AI spend, this is **74%**.

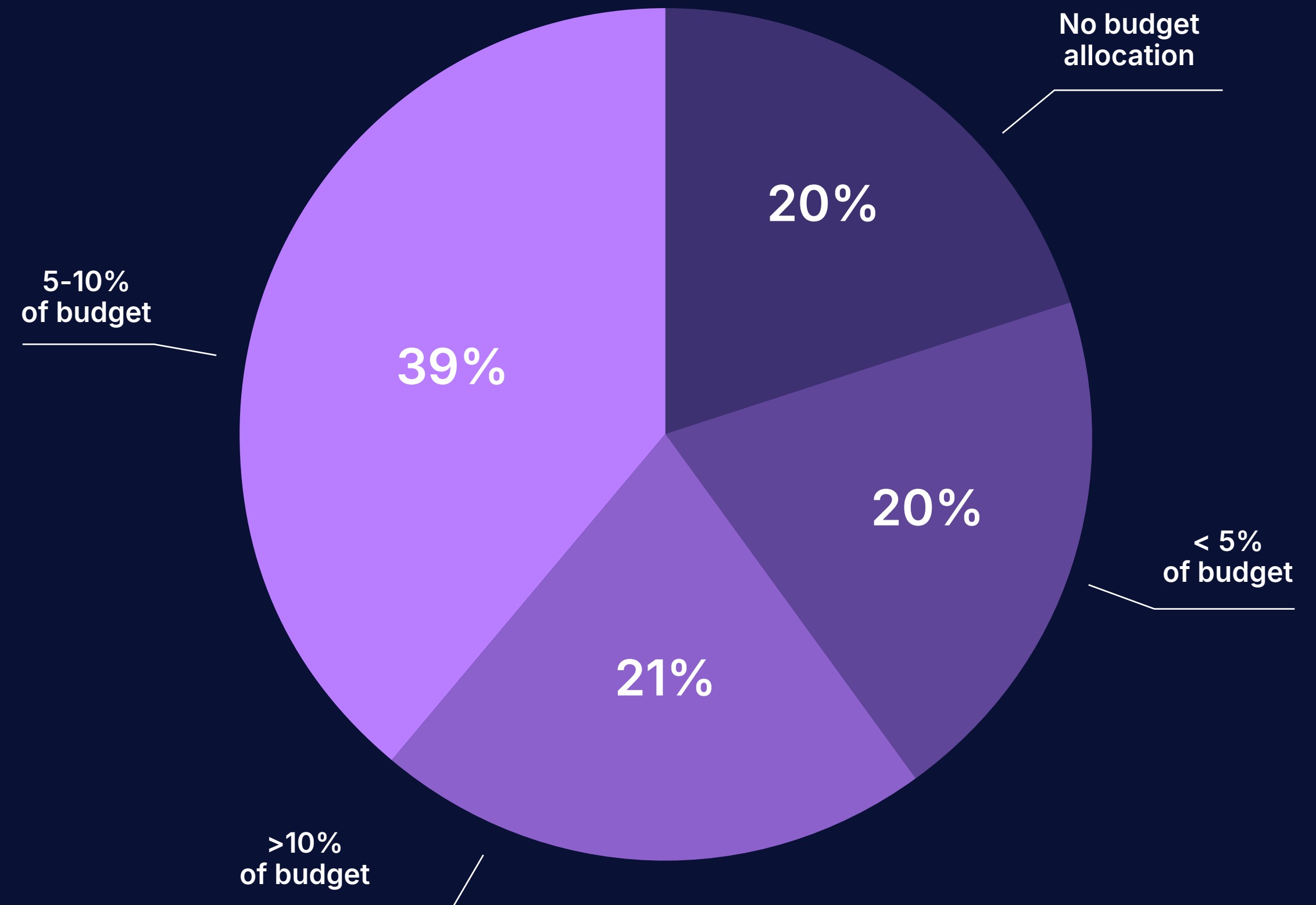
Looking beyond these full sample figures, **87%** of the organizations with no IT budget allocation don't have anyone specifically focused on AI. None have either a **Partial Integration** or a **Full Integration**.

This spend likely doesn't include tools with AI components, and is only for standalone AI tools.



Roy Atkinson,
CEO | Principal Advisor,
Clifton Butterfield

What percentage of the IT budget is allocated to AI initiatives?



The perceived benefits of AI

As with any new technology, it's important to understand its benefits to business operations and outcomes. The three most stated benefits of AI adoption in IT are:

- Data analytics and synthesizing insights **(45%)**
- Chatbots for self-service adoption **(38%)**
- Improving employee experience **(34%)**
- Workflow automation and optimization **(34%)**

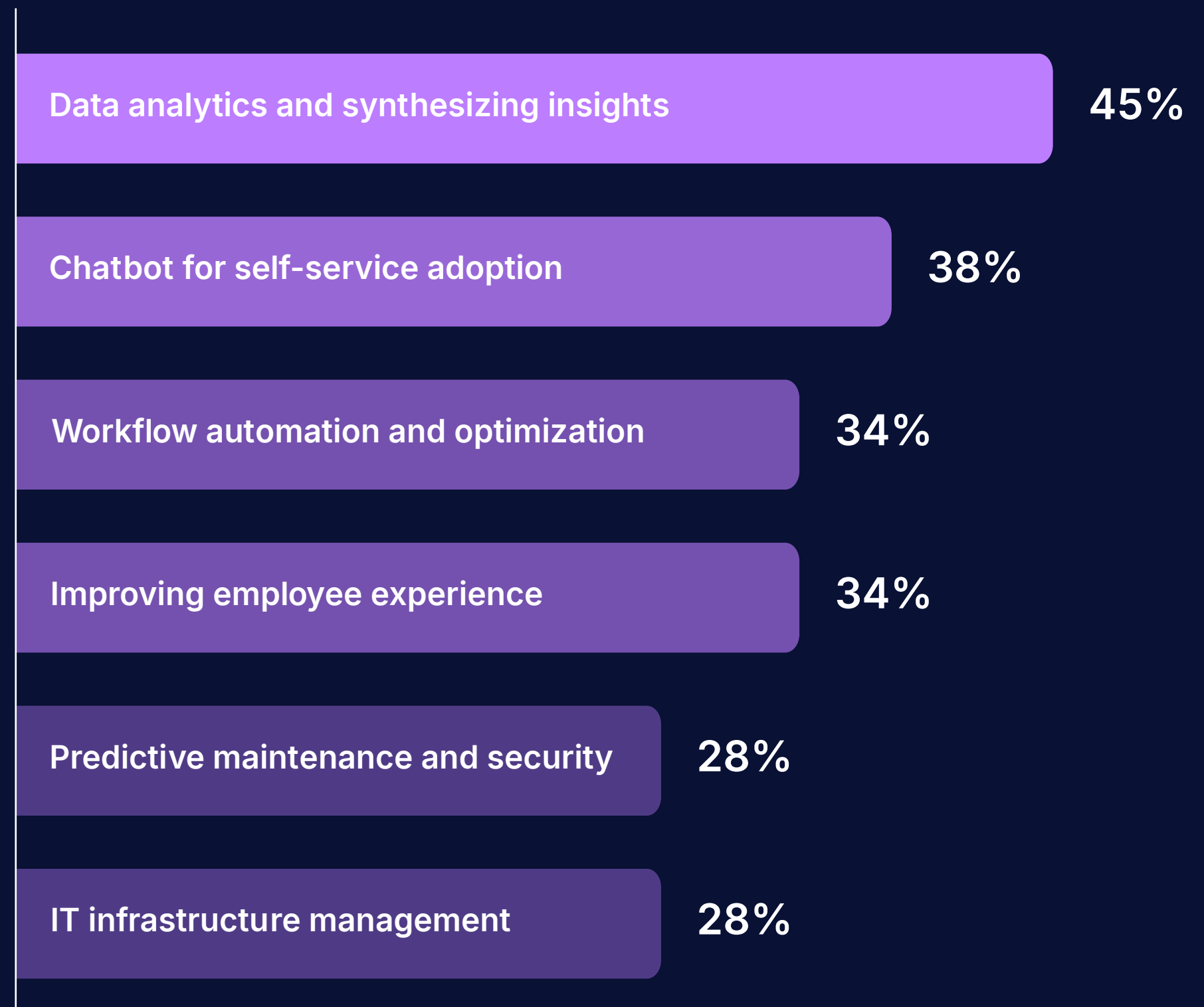
These top benefits were as expected, and only **7%** of them didn't think that AI would benefit their organizations much.

Remember that these are only benefits if they add value. Bad AI-driven analytics can and will kill companies.



James Finister,
AI Ethicist

What benefits do you anticipate or have realized through AI?



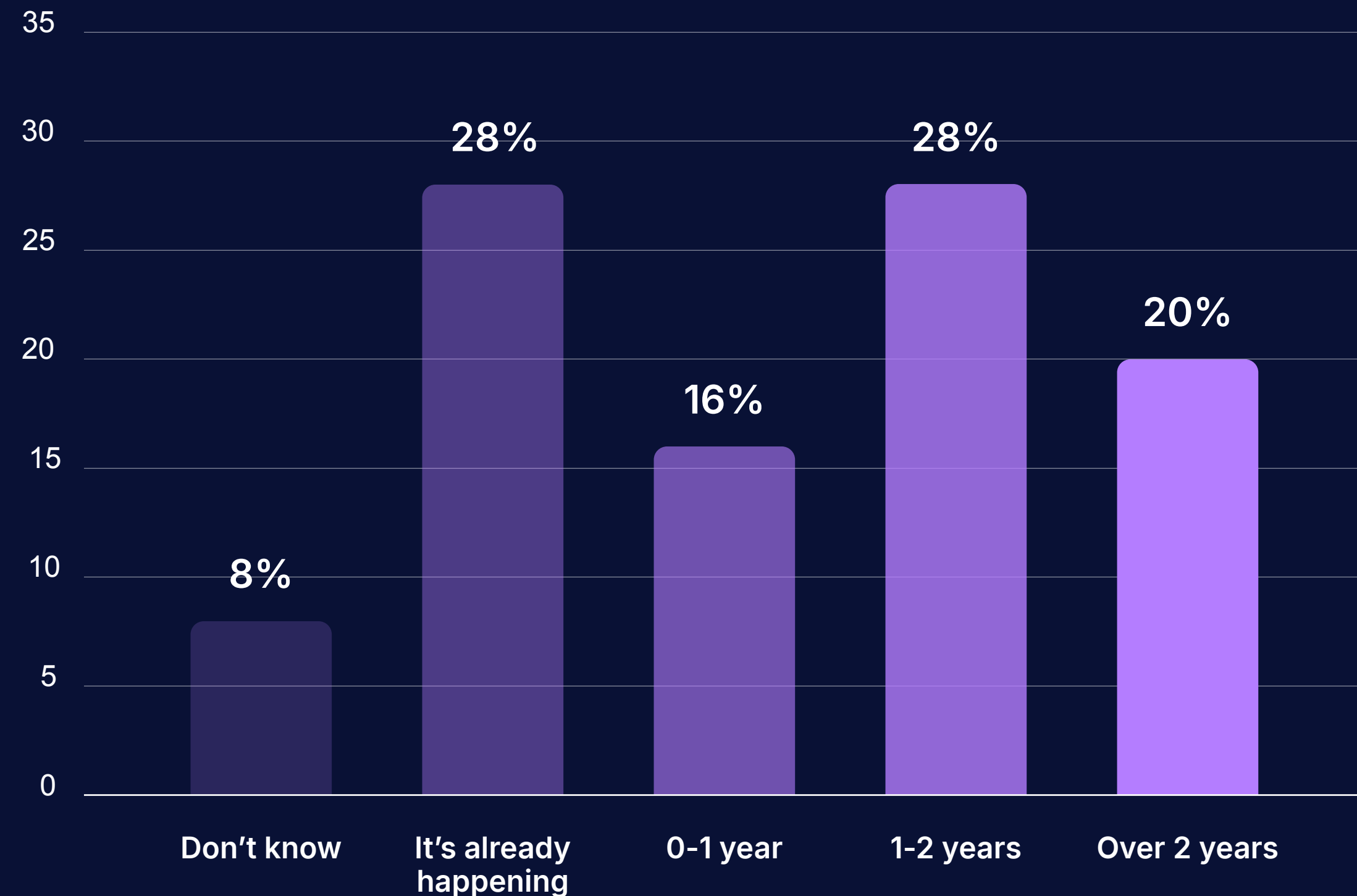
The AI adoption timeframe

For the survey question related to the speed with which IT organizations would adopt AI, it's important to appreciate that it could be interpreted and responded to in two distinct ways – the respondent could answer for their organization (and potentially others they know), or they could answer for the IT industry as a whole.

The highest scoring response (before rounding) was that AI will take 1-2 years to become common within IT teams (**28.4%**). However, **27.6%** of respondents believed this was already the case – logically, this is likely to reflect the state of AI adoption in a finite number of organizations rather than the IT industry as a whole.

Only **20%** of respondents thought that AI would take over two years to become mainstream in IT.

How long do you think will it take for AI to become common within IT teams?



AI adoption barriers

A common challenge or barrier to AI adoption has long been the availability of suitable people and expertise. This was joint fourth in this survey, behind customer data security (42%), additional cost (39%), and inaccuracy or inconsistency (33%), and tied with governance and compliance (28%). The lack of fit-for-purpose AI tools was stated by only 10% of respondents.

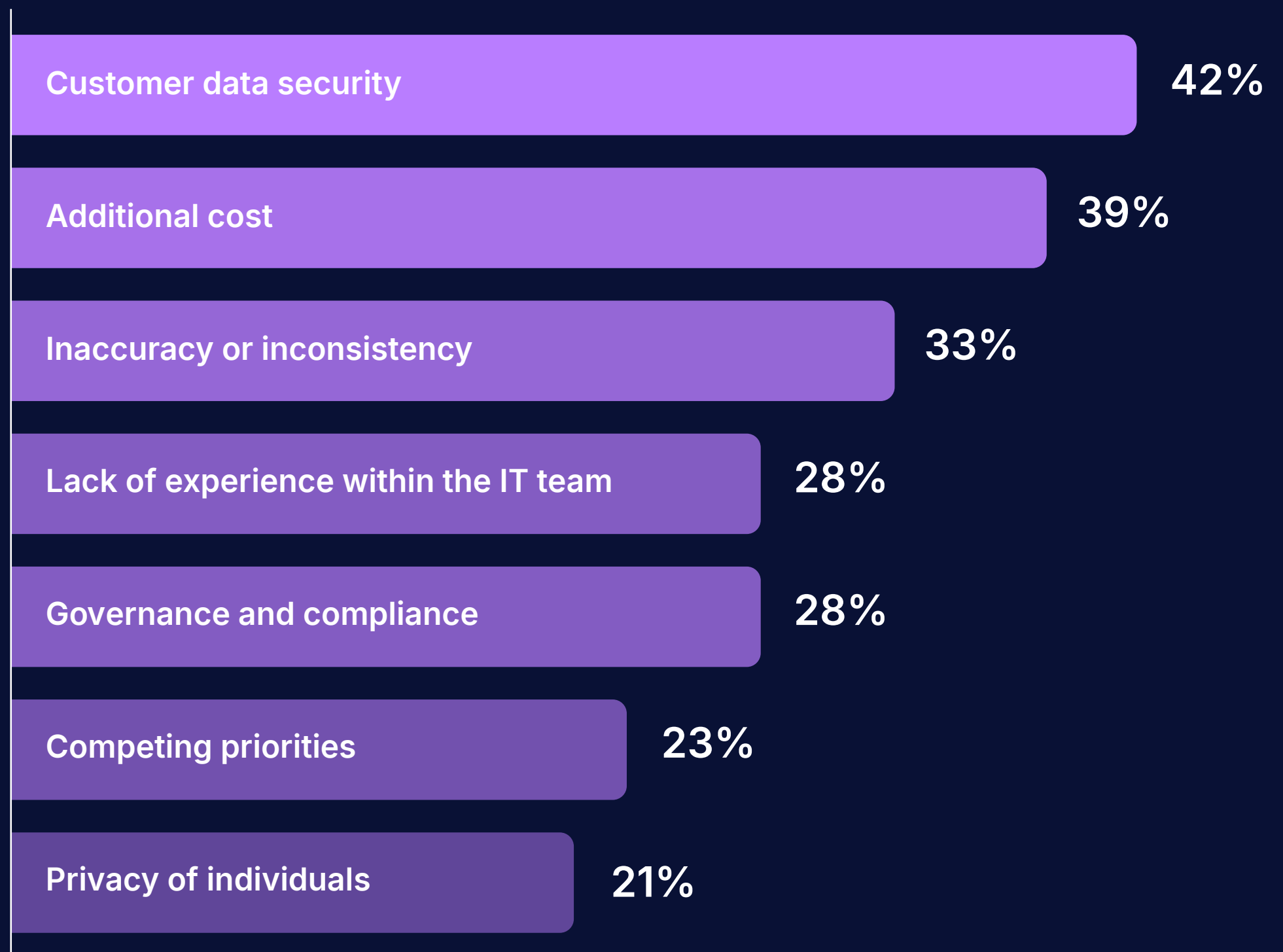
The customer data security challenge was most prevalent in banking and finance, software, manufacturing, and retail and e-commerce. The same was true for the additional cost challenge, too.

I find it difficult to believe resistance to change is low (at 18%); this relates to both IT staff and customers.



John Custy,
ITSM Consultant,
JPC Group

What are the concerns or barriers to AI adoption for you?



AI no-go areas

While AI is seen as beneficial to IT organizations, the final “core” survey question also asked about the areas that respondents would not like AI to penetrate.

The three top most stated areas were:

- Ethical and legal decision-making **(41%)**
- People management **(30%)**
- Customer relationship management **(29%)**

5% of respondents were happy for AI to penetrate all of the area options.

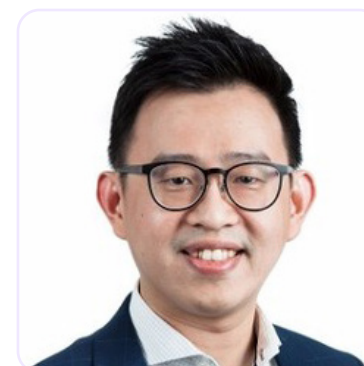
This is another question where the potential for response misalignment needs to be recognized. Particularly whether the respondents considered their answers in the context of AI operating with minimal human intervention or augmenting existing human activities and capabilities.

Which areas of the business would you like AI to not penetrate?



It's interesting to see no-go areas such as 'Handling sensitive business data or intellectual property.' I actually see these as an opportunity for AI in general, particularly in the cybersecurity space.

AI should be leveraged to learn what constitutes sensitive data or IP and perform protection automatically (eg. the encryption of information) to lower business risks in the event of data breaches. We already do it.



Syachfri Tjhia

Head of IT,
Catalyst Education

Survey insights

End users

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IT support
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Preferred channels
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End-user
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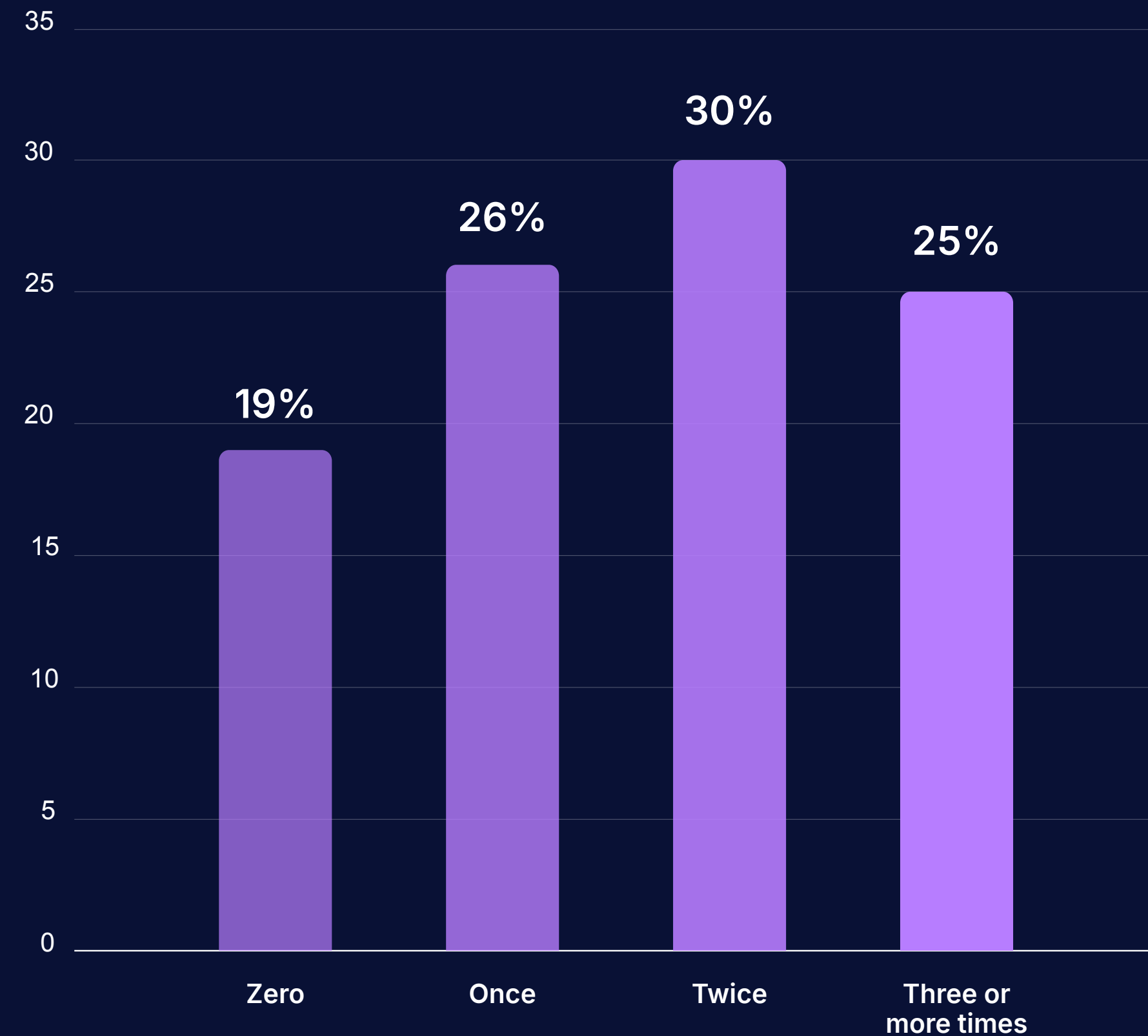
IT support contact frequency

81% of the respondents in the survey sample had contacted their IT support team at least once in the past six months.

25% of the respondents had contacted IT support three or more times and only **19%** of them had never contacted IT.

Roughly **8%** of the respondents didn't have an IT support team. The data points shared above take into account only the ones who did.

How many times have you contacted IT support in your company in the last six months?



Preferred channels for contacting IT

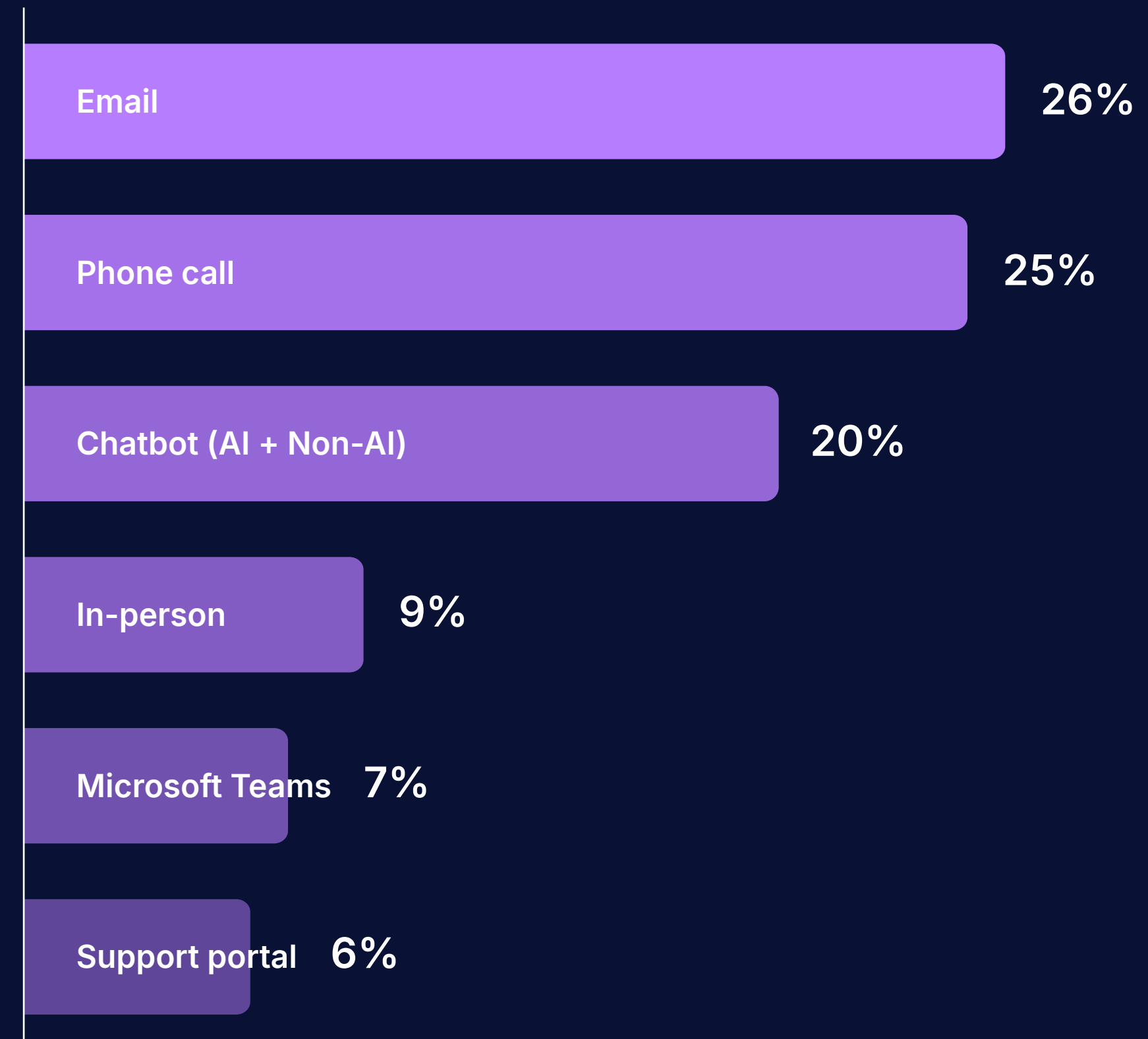
The most common (primary) methods of accessing support are:

- Email (26%)
- Phone call (25%)
- Chatbots (20%), with 80% of these being AI chatbots

Interestingly, the IT support portal only accounted for 6% of primary contact methods – perhaps a sign of question interpretation and its use for service requests but not for issue handling.

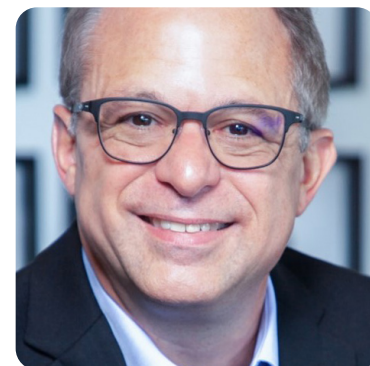
Looking beyond these full sample figures, the respondents who stated they had contacted IT support three or more times in the last six months were less likely to call (only 17% versus 25% for the full sample).

How do you (most frequently) contact IT support in your company?



End-users are embracing interacting with AI-enabled technologies to support their IT issues – and they want more.

The survey findings challenge the opinion that end-users wouldn't find success in interacting with chatbots, and indicate how well chatbot capabilities have evolved over the past few years.



Doug Tedder

Principal,
Tedder Consulting

Companies can focus on chatbots integrated with the corporate IM platform (like Slack and Teams) to increase the ability of employees to self-resolve common issues and to interface with the service portal conversationally.

This approach improves their experience, adds a support channel, and increases portal adoption by making it easier to use.



Phyllis Drucker

Author, Keynote Speaker,
Service Management Thought Leader

Desired IT support changes

Only a quarter (**26%**) of survey respondents were happy with how their IT support team worked. The most common improvement requests were:

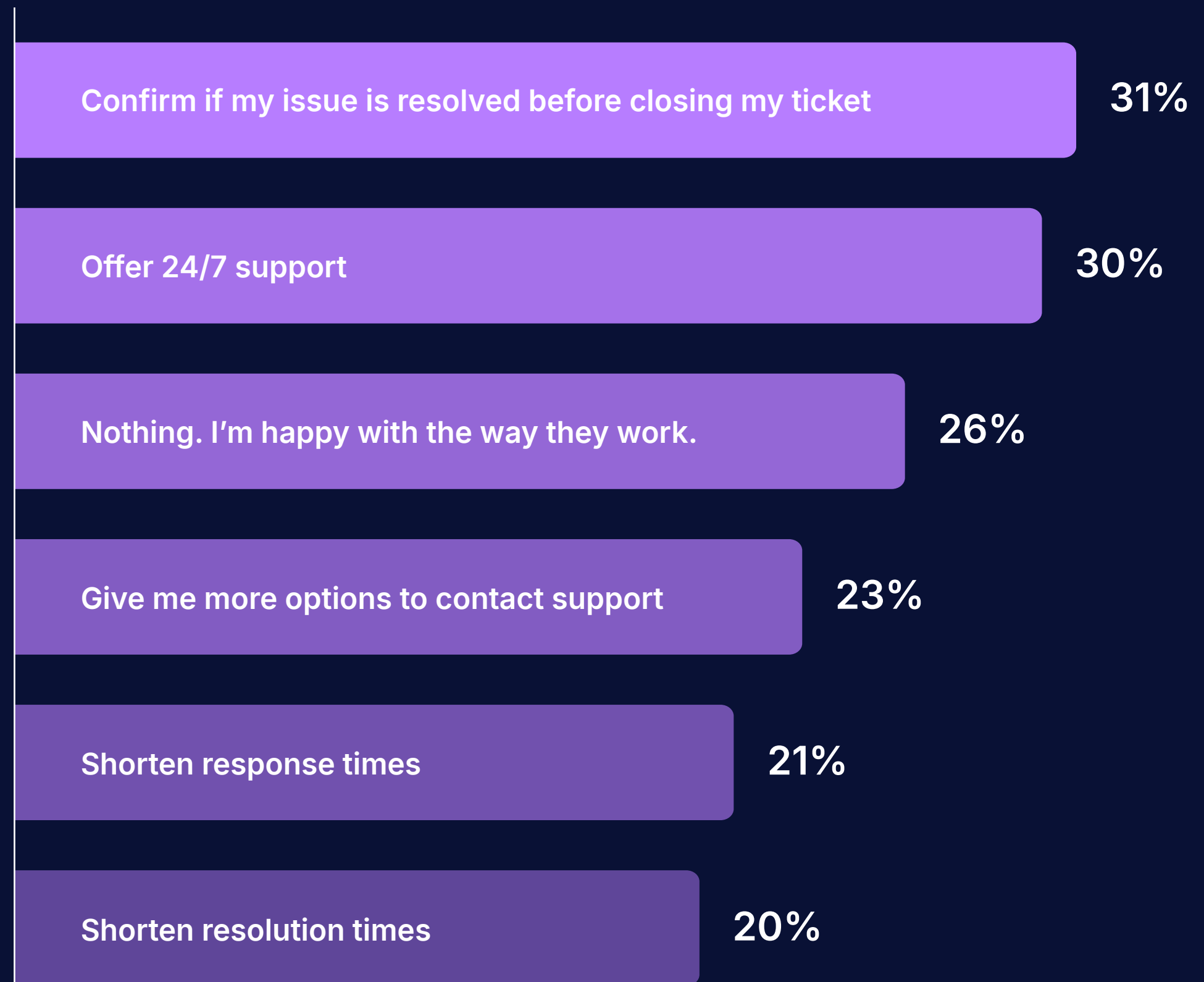
- Confirm if my issue is resolved before closing my ticket (**31%**)
- Offer 24/7 support (**30%**)
- Give me more options to contact support (**23%**)

This shows how IT has not addressed support well, and IT portals are seen more as request portals.



John Custy,
ITSM Consultant,
JPC Group

What would you like your IT team to start, or stop, doing?



Desired IT support changes

When the “happy” respondents are removed from the sample data, these percentages increase to:

- Confirm if my issue is resolved before closing my ticket **(42%)**
- Offer 24/7 support **(41%)**
- Give me more options to contact support **(31%)**

Looking beyond the full sample figures, the respondents who stated they had contacted IT support three or more times in the last six months were far less likely to be happy with IT support (only **13%** versus **26%** for the full sample), with the largest improvement deltas for this group.

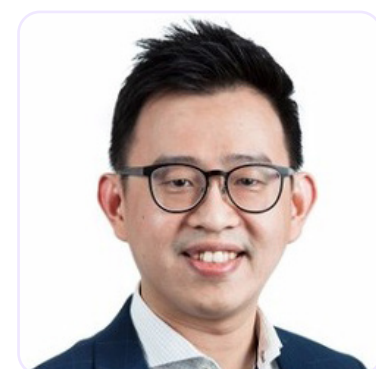
Interestingly, the largest deltas were for the three highest “full sample” improvement areas along with shortening the response and resolution times. At the other end of the delta spectrum, the high-contact users weren’t any more interested in fixing their own issues or knowing where they are in the process/queue than the full sample.

Comparison: What would you like your IT team to start, or stop, doing?

Response	Full Sample	High Use	Delta
Confirm if my issue is resolved before closing my ticket	31%	45%	+14%
Give me more options to contact support	23%	32%	+9%
Give me the option to talk with an AI chatbot	18%	24%	+6%
Let me fix IT issues myself	12%	13%	+1%
Offer 24/7 support	30%	39%	+9%
Show me they care about my perspective	15%	18%	+3%
Shorten resolution times	20%	30%	+10%
Shorten response times	21%	31%	+10%
Stop trying to pass the buck or transfer me around	12%	15%	+3%
Tell me how long I have to wait for a response	17%	21%	+4%
Tell me when my issue will be fixed	19%	24%	+5%
Tell me where I am in the process/queue	13%	13%	-

Generative AI will start a new chapter on how information is served to end-users. People want everything instantly these days, and this applies to having their questions answered or issues resolved.

Having the technology to enable this 24x7 will be a game changer for many support teams, freeing up their time to be more productive in other areas.



Syachfri Tjhia

Head of IT,
Catalyst Education

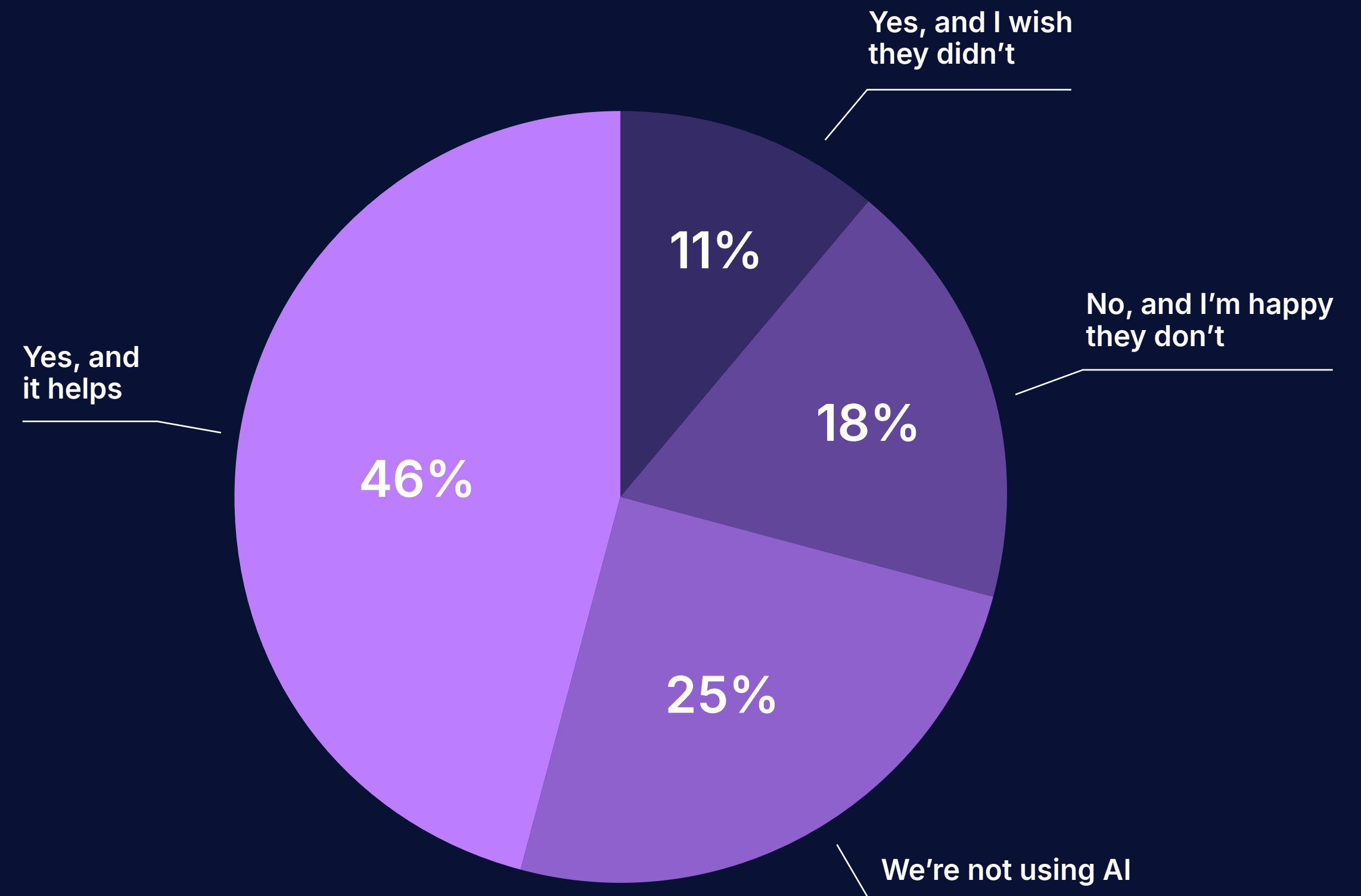
AI usage by IT

While it's appreciated that end-users might not know whether their IT team is using AI for support or not, the results of this survey question were positive in favor of AI use. **36%** were happy with their IT teams' use of AI, and another **19%** would like them to use it. When the "Don't know" responses are removed, this is **46%** and **25%**, respectively, and **71%** in total.

Looking beyond these full sample figures, the respondents who had contacted IT support three or more times in the last six months were far more likely to have access to helpful AI (**43%** versus **36%** for the full sample).

While correlation does not imply causation, this could be indicative of making IT contact easier resulting in greater IT support use.

Is your IT team using AI (chatbots, etc.) for support?

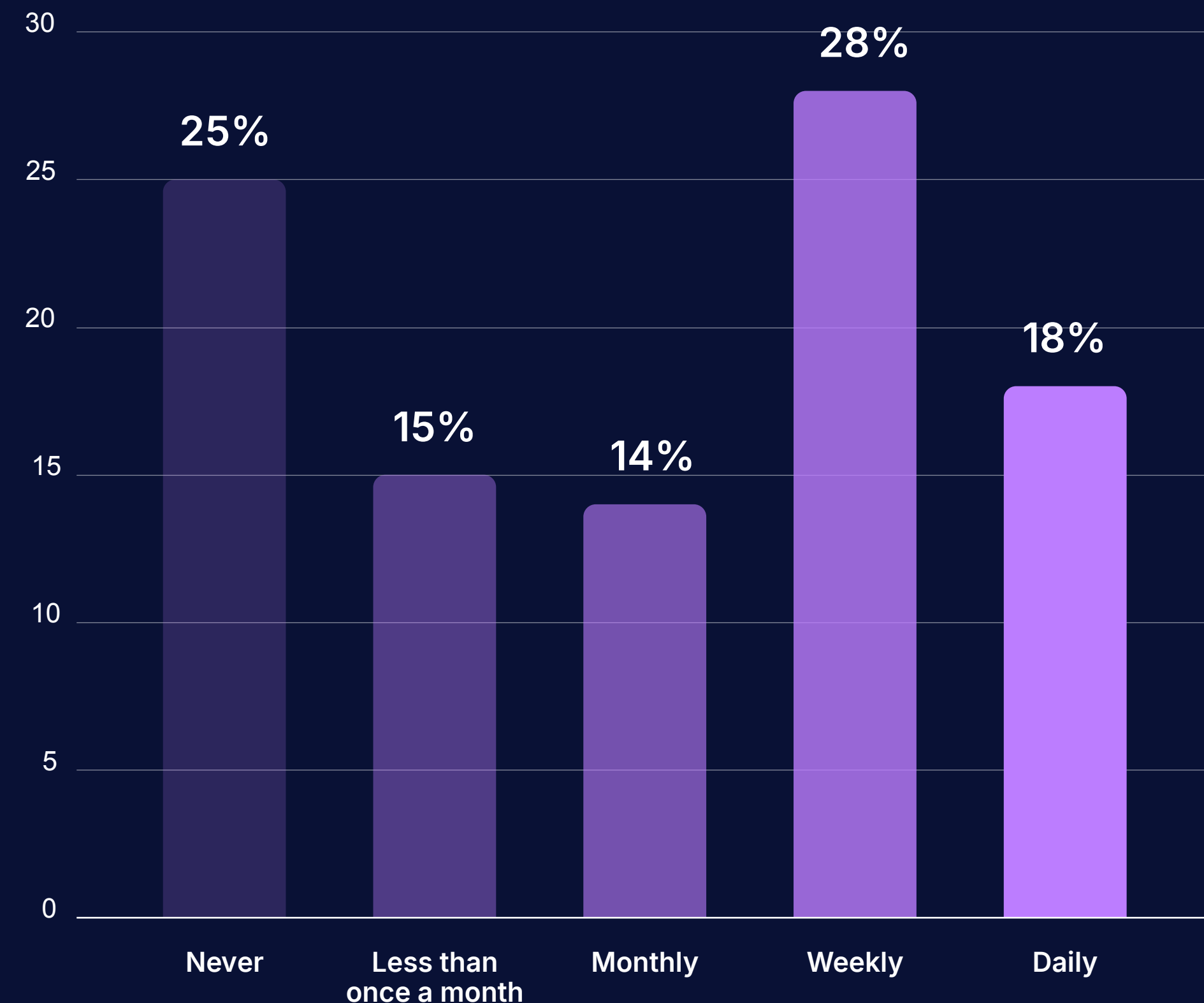


End-user AI usage frequency

75% of survey respondents stated that they're already using free AI tools like ChatGPT for their work. Close to half (46%) of the respondents use these tools at least once a week.

Looking beyond these full sample figures, the respondents who stated they had contacted IT support three or more times in the last six months were far more likely to use AI tools on a daily basis (28% versus 18% for the full sample).

Roughly, how often do you use ChatGPT or similar free AI tools for your work?



End-user AI use cases

We asked end-user respondents what they used free AI tools for.

The most common AI tool use cases for the full sample were:

- Creative ideation or problem-solving **(34%)**
- Email drafting or editing **(30%)**
- Content creation or editing **(26%)**

Interestingly, **72%** of the survey sample had heard of ChatGPT versus the next highest option, Bard, at just **4%**.

What do you use the AI tools for?



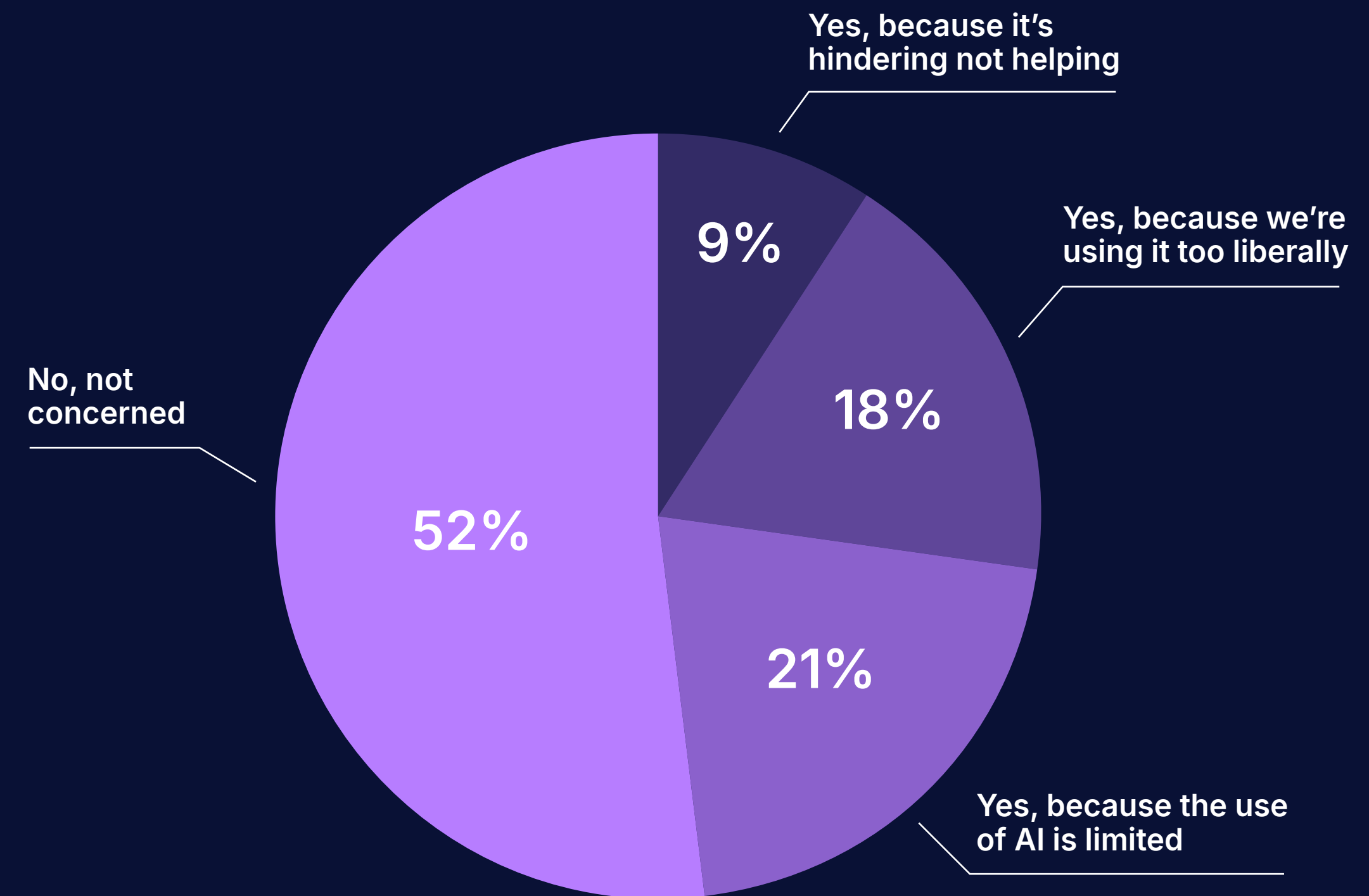
AI usage perspective

39% of survey respondents weren't concerned about their organizations' use of AI. When the "Don't know" and "We're not using AI" responses are removed, this increases to 52%. This puts the "No, I'm not concerned" response marginally ahead of those related to concerns about AI use:

- Yes, because the use of AI is limited (21%)
- Yes, because we're using it too liberally (18%)
- Yes, because it's hindering not helping (9%)

However, the highest of these concern areas is related to the limited use of AI. When this 21% is added to the 52%, close to three-quarters of end-user respondents can be considered to be "pro AI".

Are you concerned about how your organization is using AI?



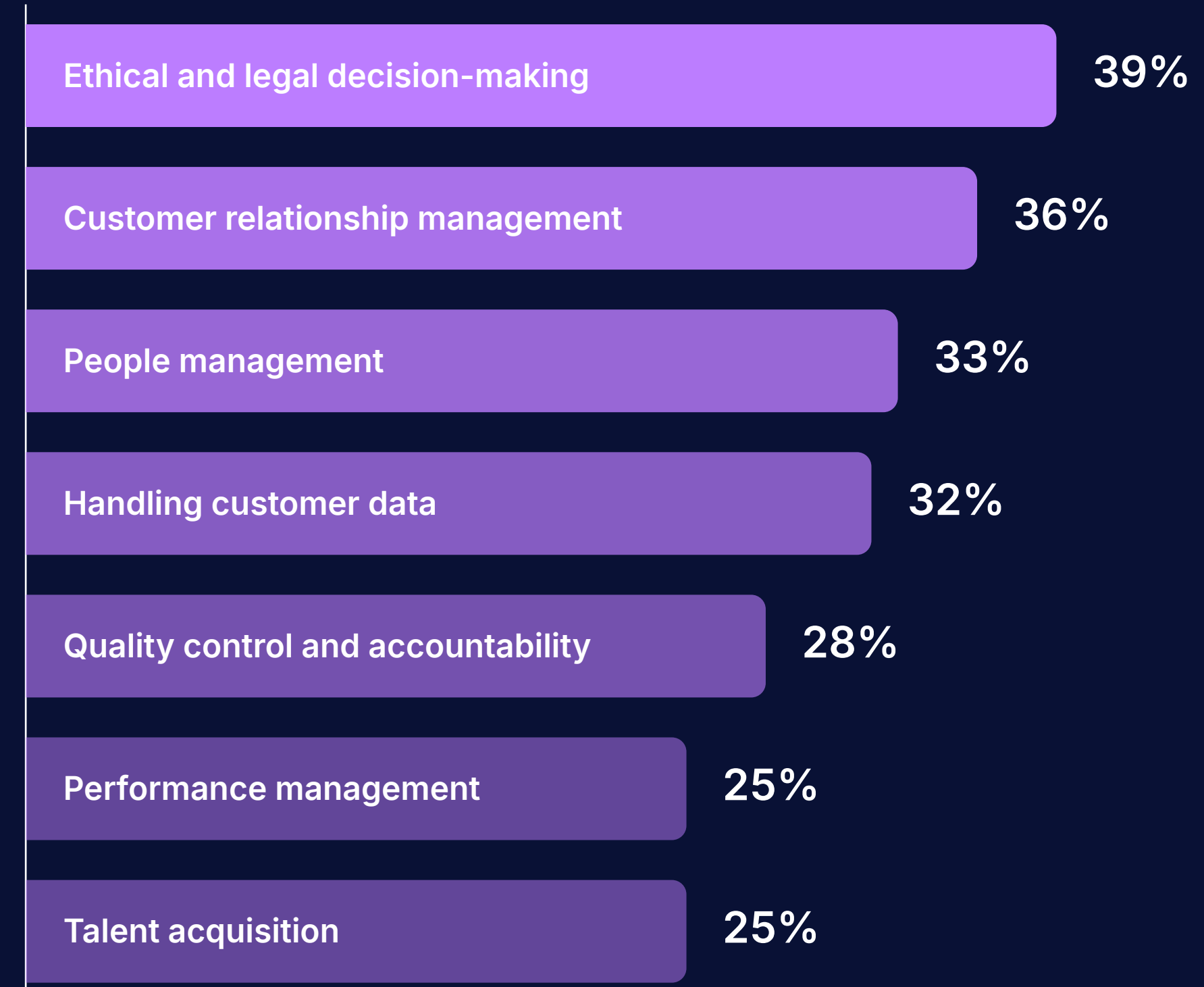
AI no-go areas

This is the only survey question that was asked to both IT professionals and end-users.

The top three most-stated areas were:

- Ethical and legal decision-making **(39%)**
- Customer relationship management **(36%)**
- People management **(33%)**

Which areas of the business would you like AI to not penetrate?



AI no-go areas

The comparison of end-user and IT professional responses found them to be similar as shown in the table. End-users were, on the whole, slightly more against AI use than IT professionals, including in two of the shared top three areas.

End-users were also more concerned about using AI for handling customer data, talent acquisition, performance management, and quality control and accountability.

11% of respondents were happy for AI to penetrate all of the potentially problematic area options. That's more than double the percentage of IT professionals.

Comparison: Which areas of the business would you like AI to not penetrate?

Response	IT Pro %	End user %	Delta
Customer relationship management	29%	36%	+7%
Ethical and legal decision-making	41%	39%	-2%
Handling customer data	26%	32%	+6%
Handling sensitive business data or intellectual property	26%	23%	-3%
High-level strategic planning	26%	23%	-3%
People management	30%	33%	+3%
Performance management	20%	25%	+5%
Quality control and accountability	24%	28%	+4%
Talent acquisition	20%	25%	+5%
None of the above	5%	11%	+6%

The AI no-go areas, where IT users and leaders see some resistance to adoption, actually represent the role of people in an AI assisted world.

Ethics, relationship management, and strategic decision making require empathy, critical thinking, creativity, and problem solving skills. These are distinctly human capabilities.

That's the future of work.



Alan Berkson

Founder,
Intelligist Group

Summary

Given the different survey questions, it's not possible to formally compare the North American IT professional and end-user AI views at a response level (bar the earlier "AI no-go areas," that showed both sets of respondents were most concerned about AI use in the same areas).

However, the two discrete data sets do offer valuable insights into the IT professional and end-user perspectives of AI and its use:

- Most IT organizations are still in the early stages of AI adoption, with only **11%** not expected to adopt AI for IT operations.
- AI is already a significant component of the IT budget, with **52%** of organizations spending over **5%** of their IT budget on AI (which is **74%** of the organizations with an AI budget).
- IT respondents saw the top three benefits of AI adoption in IT as 'Data analytics and synthesizing insights' (**45%**), 'Chatbots for self-service adoption' (**38%**), and 'Improving employee experience' and 'Workflow automation and optimization' (tied at **34%**). Only **7%** of IT respondents didn't see the potential for AI to benefit their organizations.
- IT respondents believed the top three barriers to AI adoption to be customer data security (**42%**), additional cost (**39%**), and inaccuracy or inconsistency (**33%**).
- The three top most stated areas by IT where AI shouldn't be used were 'Ethical and legal decision-making' (**41%**), 'People management' (**30%**), and 'Customer relationship

Summary

management' (**29%**). These were also the same for end-users who were also marginally more wary of AI.

- Two-thirds (**66%**) of the end-user respondents had contacted IT support at least once in the past six months. The most common (primary) methods of accessing support are 'Email' and 'Phone call' at **26%** and **25%**, respectively. 'Chatbots' were the third preferred channel at **20%**, with **80%** of these being AI-driven chatbots. The IT support portal only accounted for **6%** of primary contact methods.
- In companies where IT uses AI (chatbots, etc.) for support, over **80%** of employees were happy they did. **36%** of end-user respondents were happy with their IT teams' use of AI, and another **19%** wanted them to use it. When the 'Don't know' responses were removed, this was **46%** and **25%**, respectively, and **71%** in total. However, only a quarter (**26%**) of end-user respondents were fully happy with how their IT support team worked.
- **75%** of end-users stated that they're already using AI tools like ChatGPT for their work. The most common use cases were 'Creative ideation or problem-solving' (**34%**), 'Email drafting or editing' (**30%**), and 'Content creation or editing' (**26%**). This figure far outweighs the level of corporate progress with AI and, if not managed, brings with it risks related to data leaks and misinformed decision-making and actions.

Please note that respondents of the survey are likely to be from different organizations, and this should be borne in mind when reading the statistics.

Appendix 1: IT professional demographics

Country	Percentage
United States	83%
Canada	17%

Role-level	Percentage
C-level	12%
Technical staff	28%
Business administrator	2%
Senior manager	8%
Director	10%
Middle management	39%

Industry	Percentage
Banking and Finance	14%
Charity and Volunteering	1%
Education	7%
Energy and Utility	4%
Government and Public Administration	3%
Healthcare	8%
Information Technology – Non-software	5%
Information Technology – Software	22%
Logistics and Mobility	4%
Manufacturing	13%
Professional Services	6%
Public Sector	1%
Retail and eCommerce	8%
Other	5%

Appendix 2: End-user demographics

Country	Percentage
United States	83%
Canada	17%

Business function	Percentage
Customer Support or Success	29%
Design	8%
Engineering	9%
Marketing	16%
Product Management	13%
Sales	26%

Ready to explore your team's AI-readiness?

Schedule a briefing with our team of experts to learn how AI can solve problems and inefficiencies in IT service management and automation.

Learn more →

