

# AI Agents: The Game-changing Generative AI Use Case

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## Research Objectives

AI agents and agentic AI are enabling AI applications to work without human intervention, gather and understand environmental data, make decisions, and take actions. This type of automation could trigger exponential productivity gains and unlock new revenue streams. As such, AI agents have begun moving to the forefront of AI initiatives.

However, while organizations acknowledge the transformative potential of AI agents, they also acknowledge the associated implementation complexities. Indeed, organizations can struggle to understand what AI agents can do or where to deploy them due to lack of knowledge and experience with the technology. This includes uncertainty about interoperability, standards, and AI agent saturation, among other concerns.

To gain further insights into these trends, Enterprise Strategy Group surveyed 350 technical and business stakeholders in North America (US and Canada) involved in the strategy, decision-making, selection, deployment, and management of generative AI initiatives and projects for their organization.

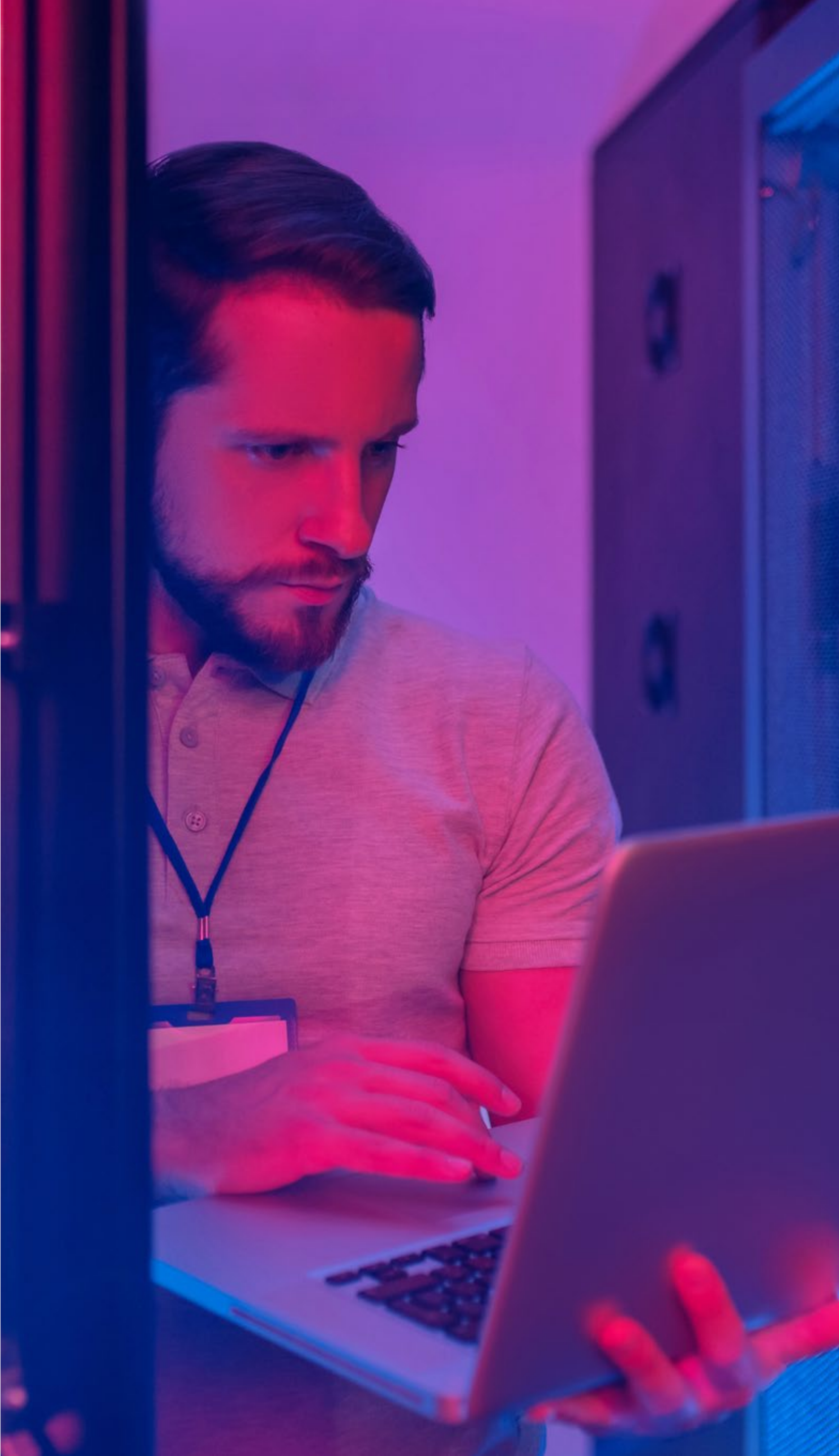
This study sought to:

**Identify** the business and technology drivers that will establish use cases and lead to broader AI agent deployment.

**Determine** how generative AI will support the growth of AI agents and agentic AI strategies.

**Assess** the challenges and risks organizations experience and expect from AI agent deployments.

**Understand** the stakeholder landscape for AI agents and gauge preferences for deployments led by in-house personnel and partners.





# Key Findings



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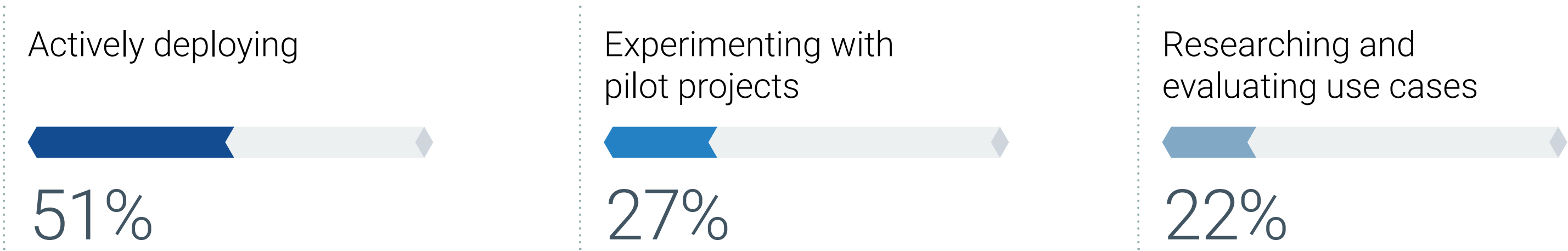
# AI Agents Emerge as a Strategic Priority in the Enterprise AI Evolution



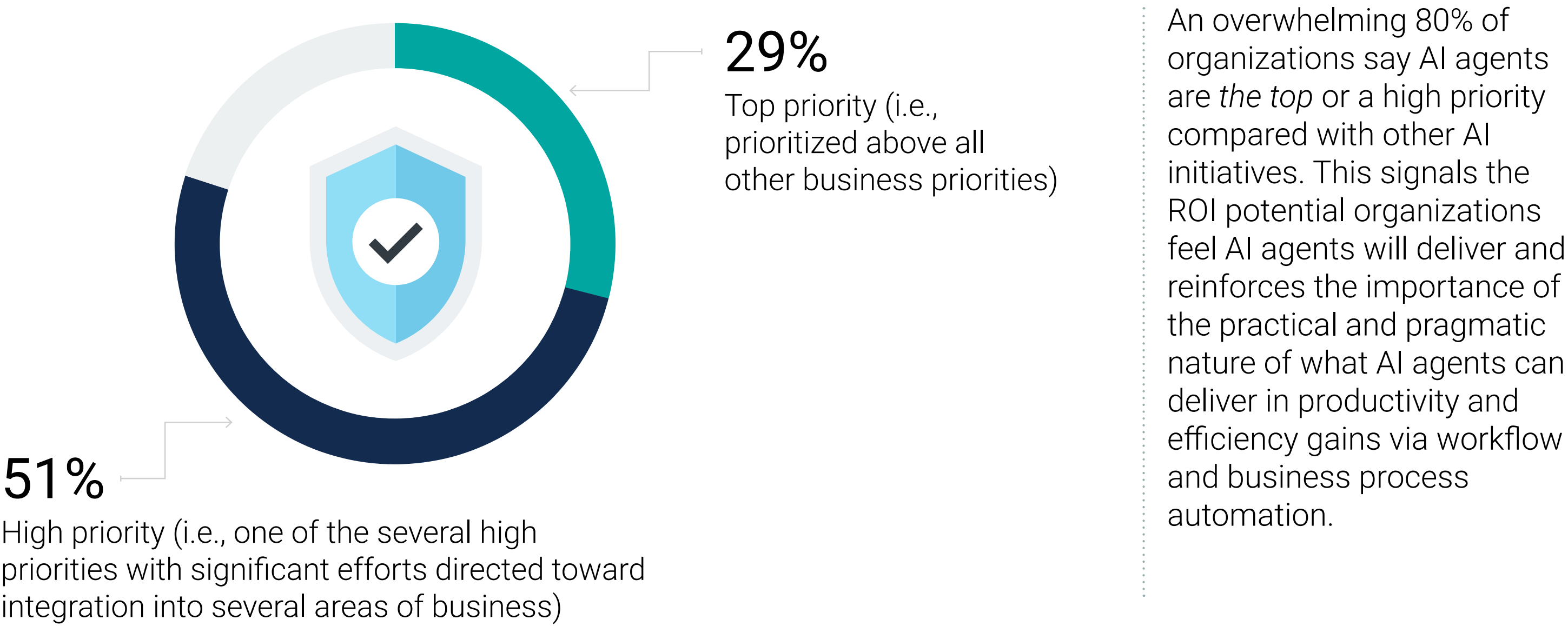
# The Market Is Rapidly Operationalizing and Prioritizing AI Agents

The concept of AI agents is relatively new—it’s been less than a year since the first vendors launched commercial products and tools to build them. With more than half of organizations reporting active deployments, the market is quickly gaining traction, likely due to simpler agent deployments and the uncertainty in which the market defines an AI agent. Regardless, this bodes well for market momentum and points to growing spending.

AI agent adoption status.



Prioritization of AI agents relative to other AI initiatives.



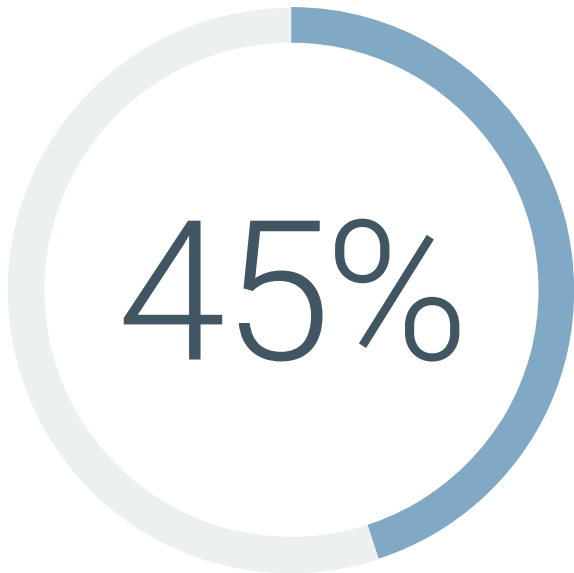




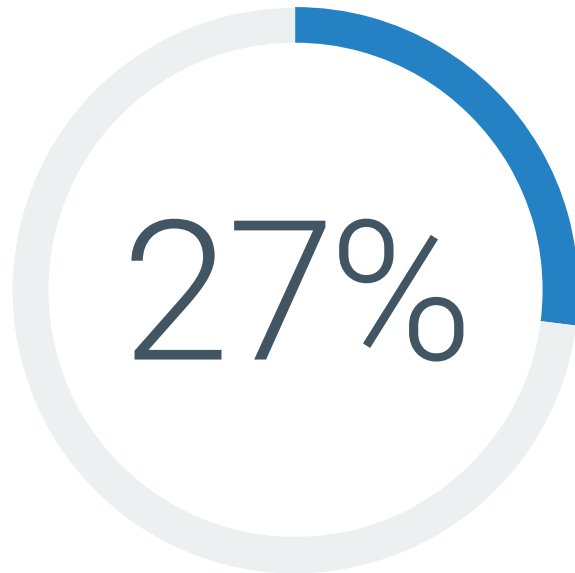
## AI Agent Momentum Shuffles Technology Investments

Funding distribution here points to two trends. First, AI agent initiatives are important enough to organizations that 89% of AI agent budgets are either new standalone investments or being siphoned from other *non-AI* related initiatives (note that only 10% of AI agent budget is coming at the expense of other AI projects). Secondly, AI agents and other AI projects are priority investments over other technology investments.

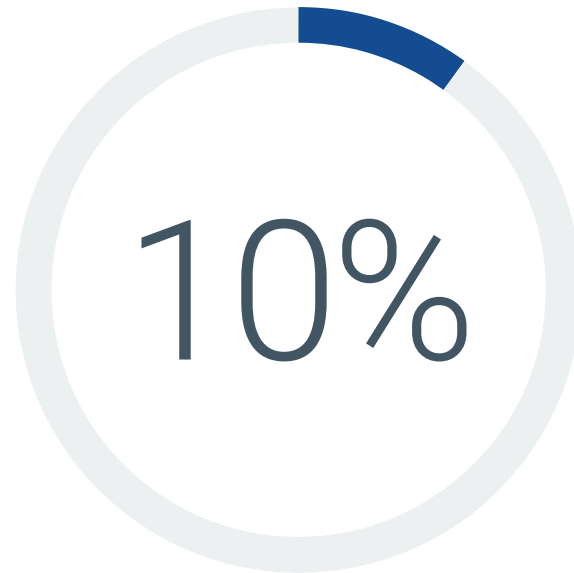
### Budget structure for AI agent initiatives.



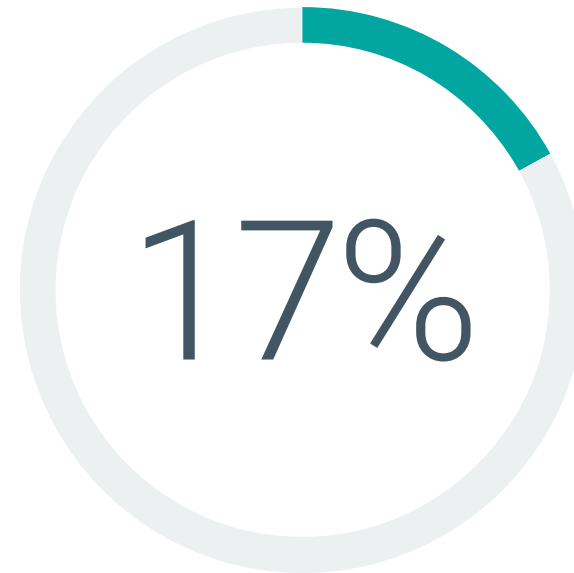
Using a completely new, standalone budget



Reallocating funds from other technology or innovation budgets



Reducing existing budgets in other AI areas (e.g., taking from GenAI and traditional AI budgets to fund AI agents)



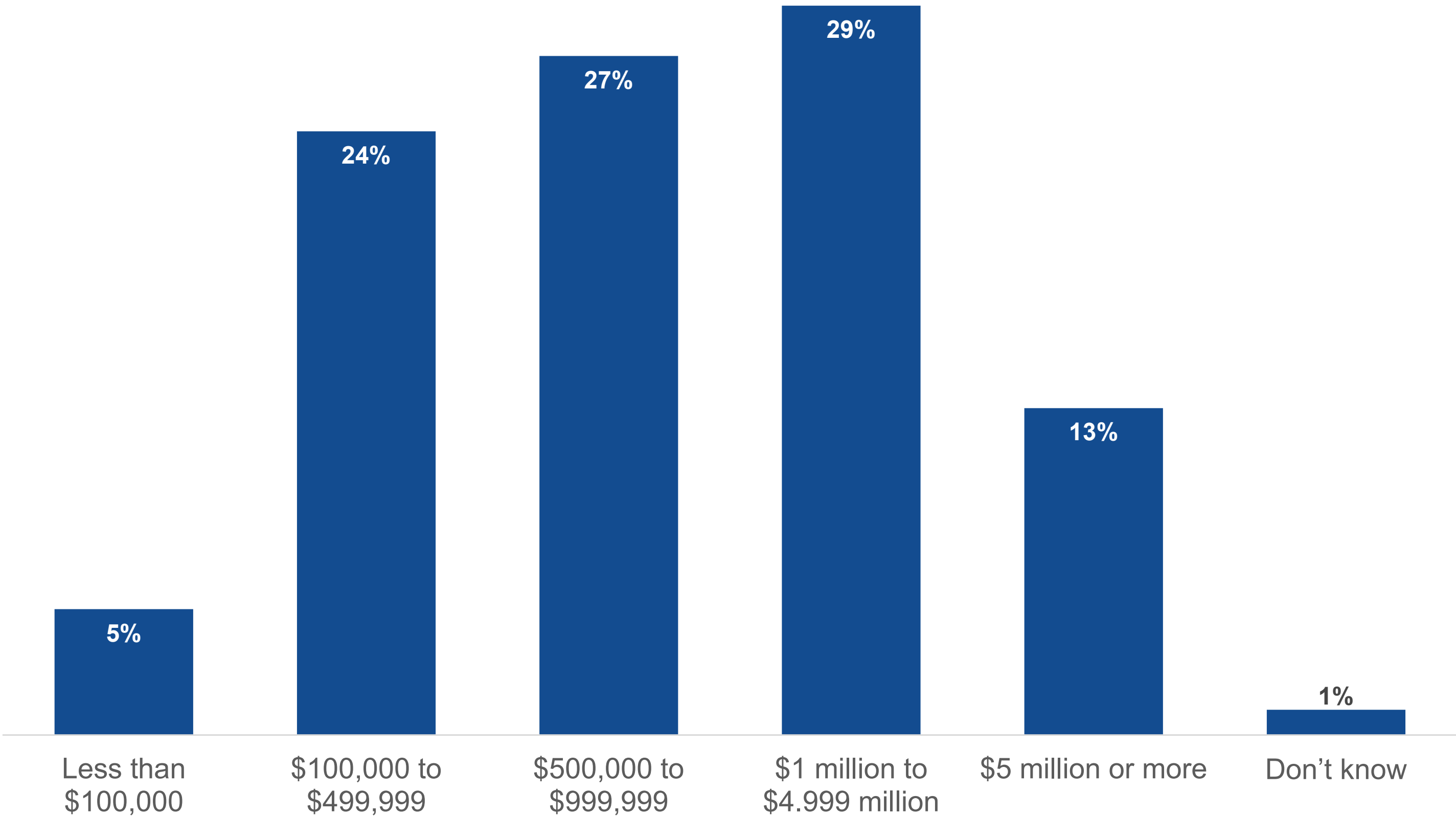
Using budget from part of a larger AI or digital transformation initiative



### AI Agent Budgets Are Outpacing Generative AI Budgets at the Same Stage

AI agent budgets are ramping up more quickly than generative AI budgets did in comparable stages of the market. For example, 42% of respondent organizations are allocating \$1 million or more to AI agents over the next 12 months, whereas generative AI, at a similar stage (one year after first commercial vendor offerings were launched), saw only 12% of respondent organizations with budgets of \$1 million or more.<sup>1</sup>

Estimated budget allocated for AI agent initiatives in the next 12 months.







**Organizations See Security and Human Oversight as the Most Critical Challenges and Risks With AI Agent Adoption**

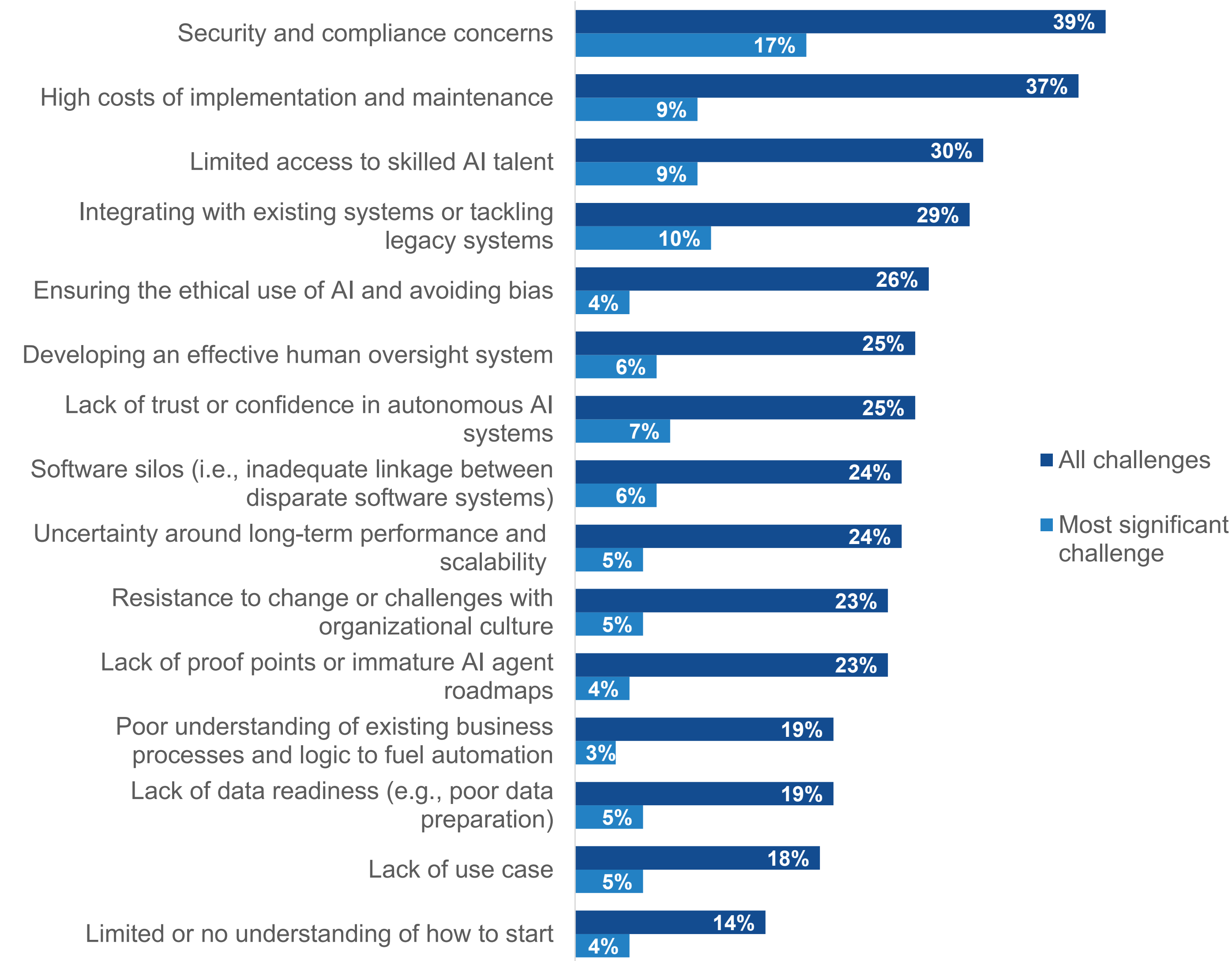


# Security and Compliance Combine to Form the Biggest Challenge

The formidable duo of security and compliance outpaced any other challenge by nearly double as the most significant challenge to implementing AI agents, which is interesting given the nascent market. With such an unproven market, it would be natural to assume a higher percentage of organizations would see uncertainty-related challenges as most significant. The slant toward security suggests early adopters are encountering issues in this realm.



AI agent implementation challenges.

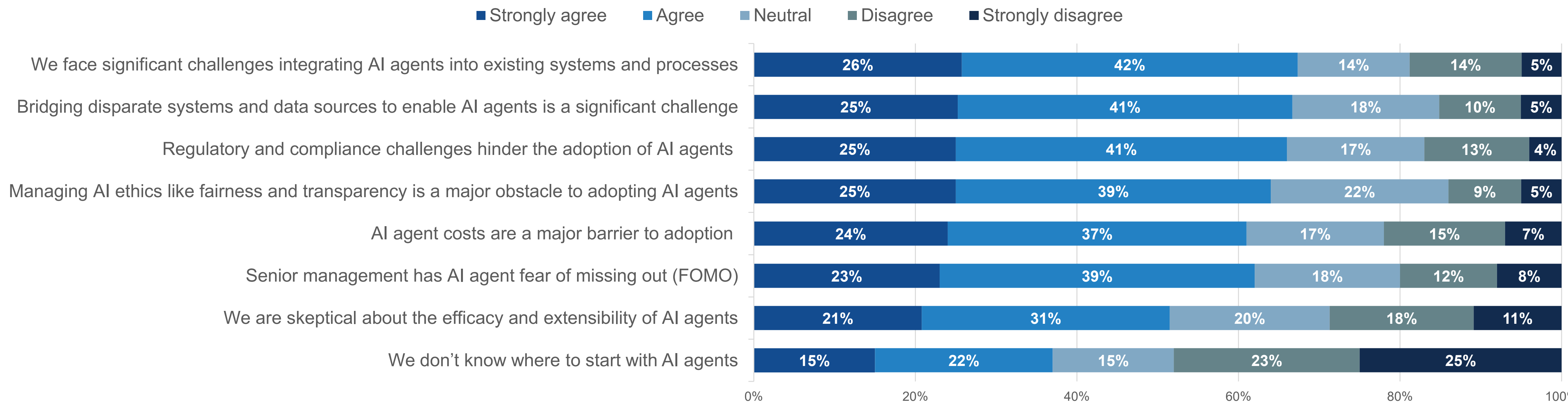




# Despite Forward Momentum, AI Agent Worries Loom Large

When presented with eight potential barriers to adopting AI agents, more than 60% of respondents agreed that six of these challenges presented issues. AI agents will test organizations’ software systems due to security and permissions requirements as well as interoperability between disparate software and systems. These challenges will become more prominent as organizations seek to leverage AI agents that access and communicate with AI agents outside of the organization’s direct control.

Sentiment regarding issues with AI agent adoption.



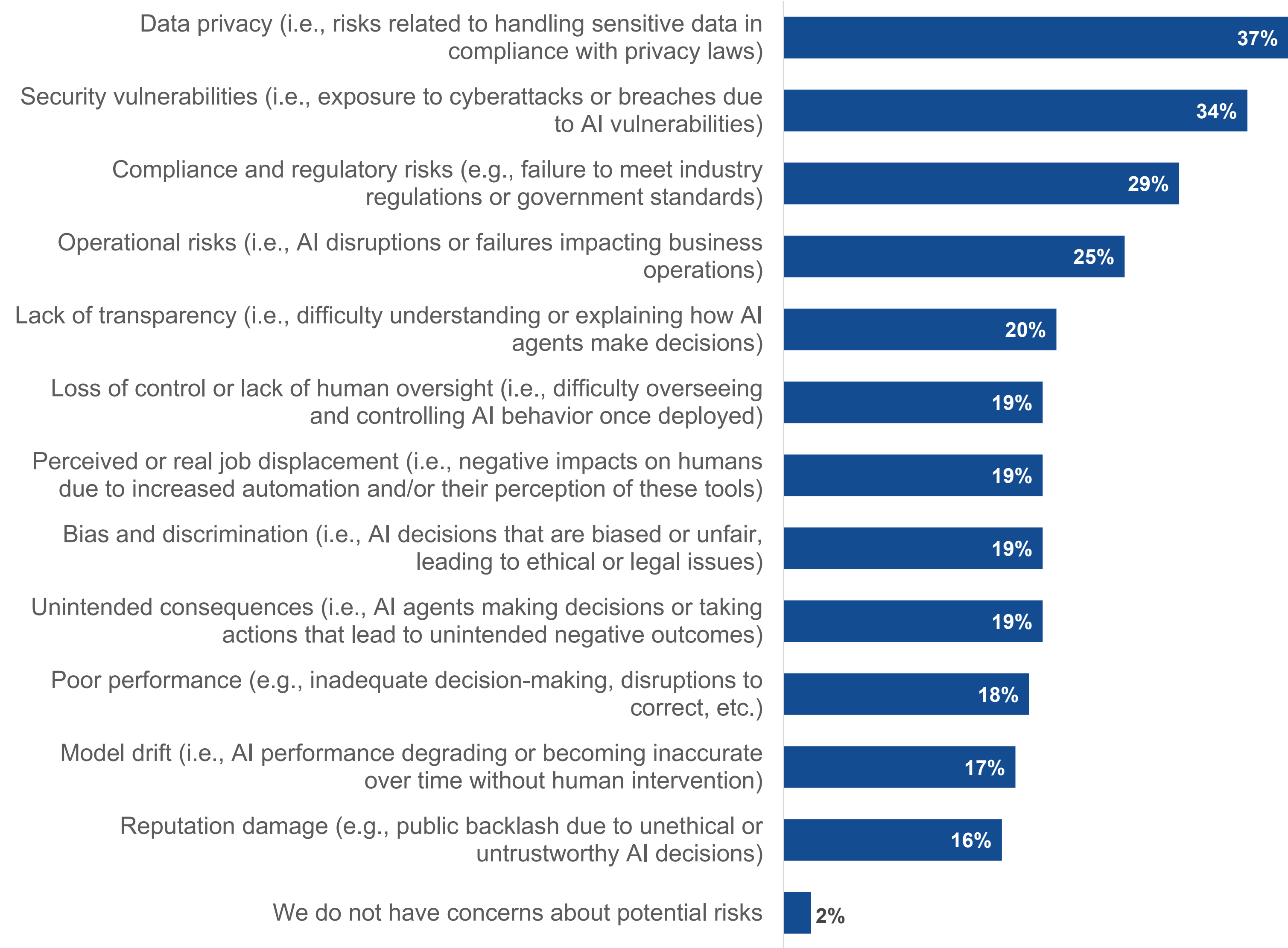




## Privacy and Security Risks Mean Cybersecurity Teams Must Be Involved From the Beginning

Organizations see privacy, security, and compliance as the biggest AI agent risks. For generative AI and AI agent initiatives to succeed, organizations need to include their cybersecurity teams in these projects from day one. Vendors that emphasize and back up their security benefits can help most.

### Most concerning AI agent risks.







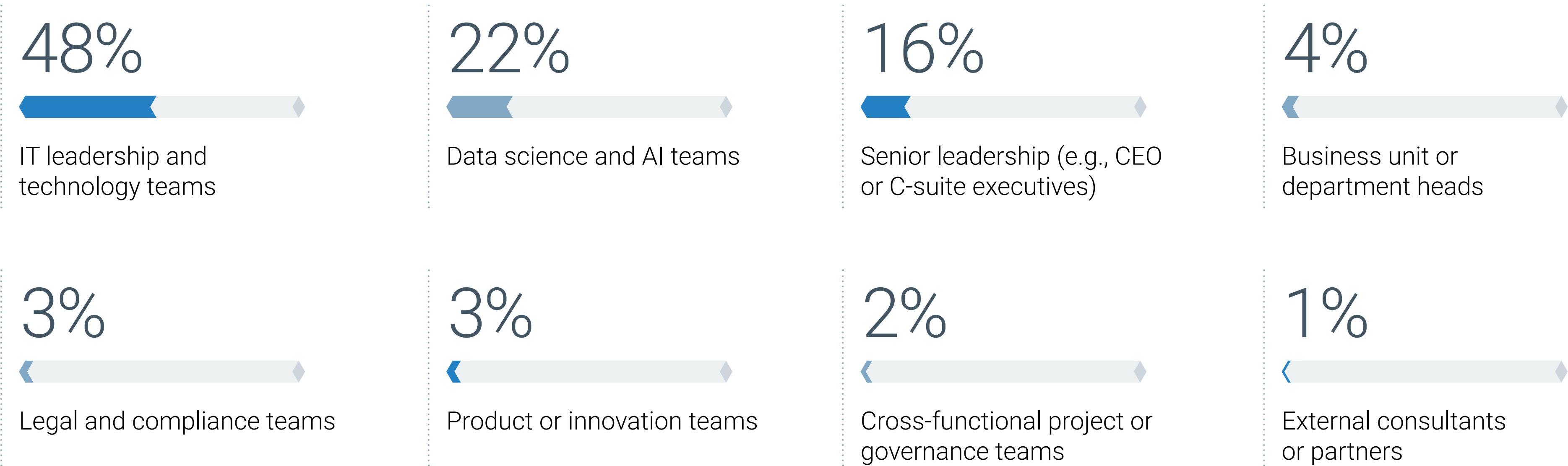
# **IT Departments Emerge as Primary Drivers of AI Agent Strategy**




## IT Teams Drive AI Agent Use Cases

Interestingly, IT teams emerged as the dominant stakeholder for AI agent use cases. Technology use cases typically bubble up from business units and product teams because they are focused on leveraging technology to address specific problems, which IT teams wouldn't be thinking about. This reliance on IT teams for identifying use cases might be occurring because respondents have indicated they are most interested in increasing productivity and process automation, which are more centralized initiatives.

Most significant stakeholder responsible for identifying use cases for AI agents.



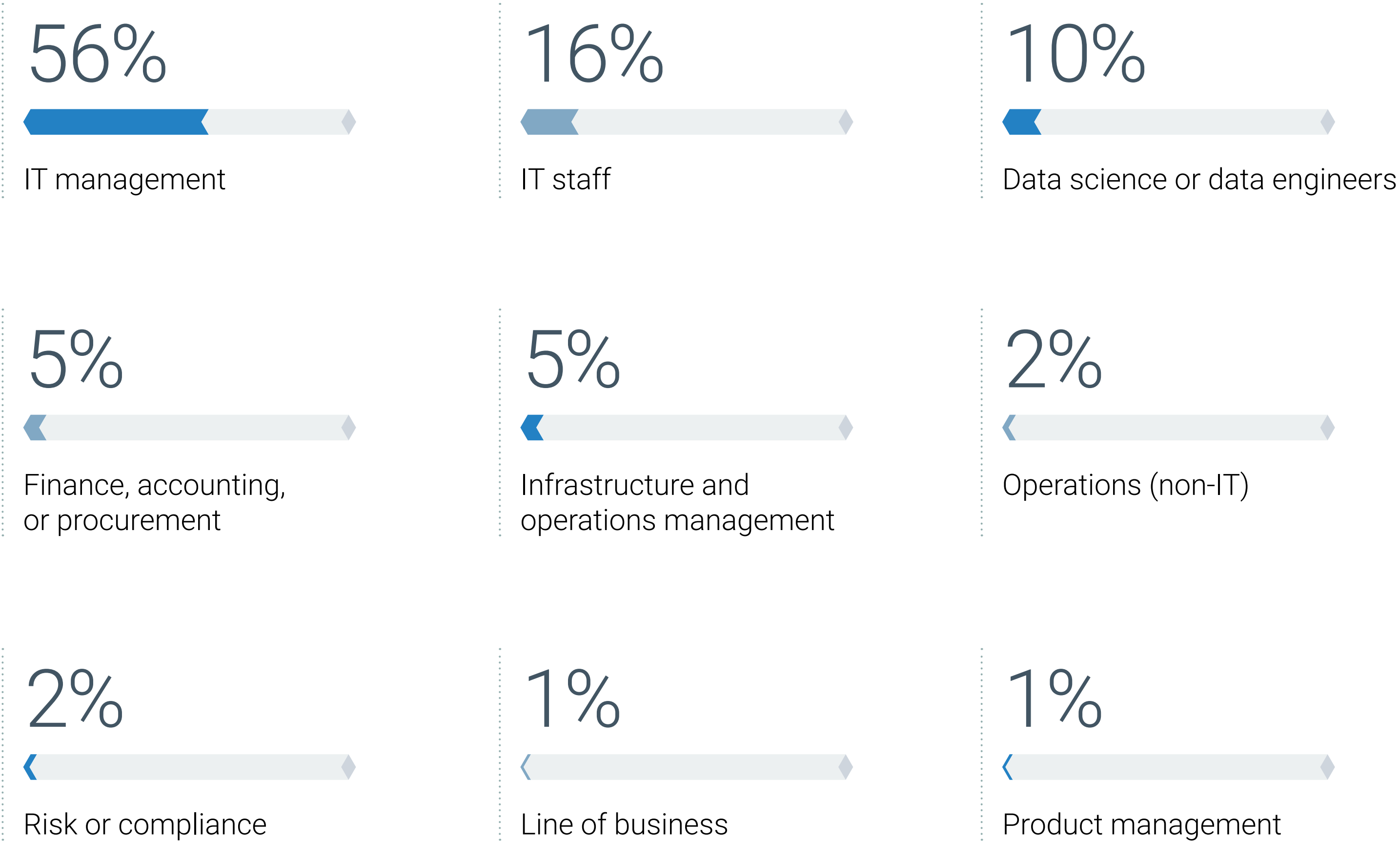




### Top Buying Persona for AI Agents Is Overwhelmingly IT Management

It's clear at this stage that the buyer for AI agent solutions is overwhelmingly IT management. AI agent vendors that focus and streamline selling strategies for these roles will most quickly provide value.

Primary budget holder for AI agent initiatives.





# Skill Gaps Create Vendor Relationship Opportunity


Opportunities for AI agent vendors to boost organizations’ efforts surface here based on a significant percentage of organizations saying they have skill gaps in human-AI collaboration and AI/ML expertise. Organizations should quickly ascertain whether AI agent solutions can help to address those gaps with automated processes or low-code/no-code expertise.



## AI agent skill gaps.





A photograph of two women in a modern office setting. The woman on the left has long blonde hair and is wearing a black blazer over a dark top and dark jeans. She is holding a white sheet of paper. The woman on the right has dark hair styled in a bun, wears glasses, a pink turtleneck, a white blazer, and a dark skirt. She is pointing at the paper held by the first woman and holding a smartphone in her other hand. They are standing in front of a large glass window that reflects the office interior and shows a brick wall outside. The lighting is warm and professional.

# **Strategic Partnerships Drive AI Agent Implementation**



“The majority of respondents (62%) say **the business impact of AI agents won’t be felt for more than a year**, with a quarter indicating it will be felt in more than two years.”

## Organizations Have High Expectations for the Business Impact of AI Agents

Respondents have high—and perhaps unrealistic—expectations for the what AI agents can help them to accomplish. Indeed, given nine potential positive business impact statements, at least 82% of respondents agreed with each one. However, given that the majority (62%) of respondents don’t see business impact hitting for more than a year, the market may be willing to be patient achieving results.

### Sentiment about the potential business impact of AI agents.





A photograph of a modern office building with a glass facade at dusk. The building's interior lights are on, and the glass reflects the surrounding environment. A balcony with a glass railing is visible, where a man and a woman are walking and talking. Another person is walking on a lower level. The text "AI Agent Business Impact Timeline Reveals Extended Adoption Horizon" is overlaid in white at the bottom.

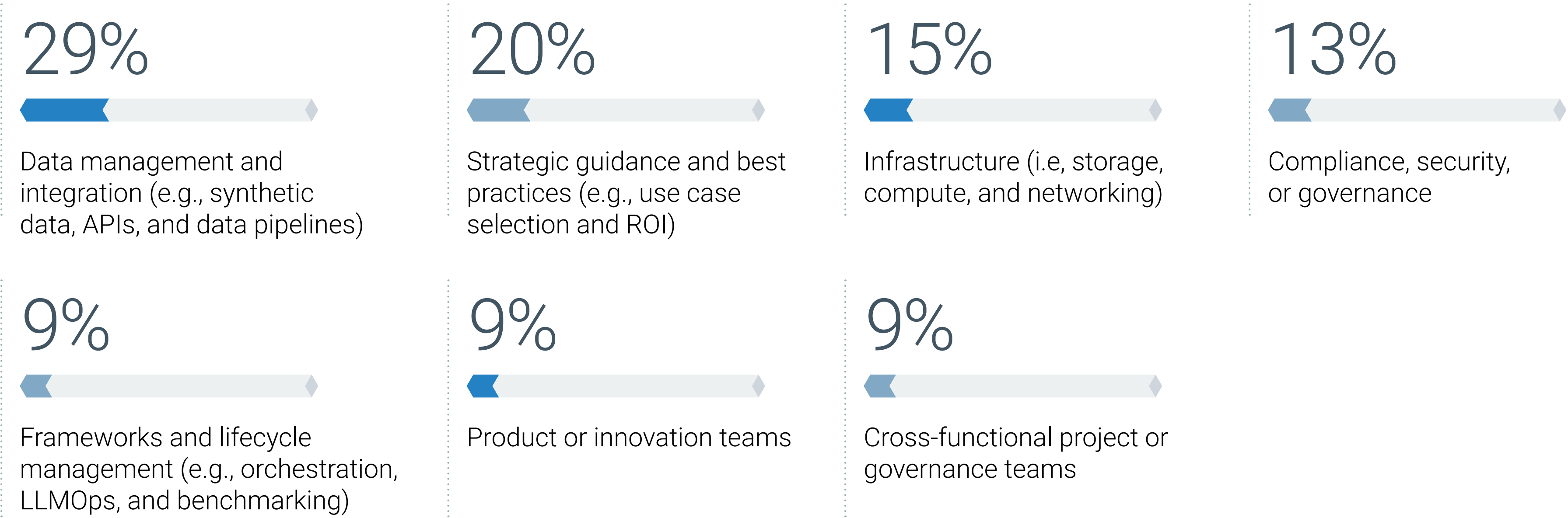
# **AI Agent Business Impact Timeline Reveals Extended Adoption Horizon**



## Data Management Is the Most Commonly Sought Expertise From External Partners

In a nascent market, one would assume organizations would most often seek external help with strategic guidance, infrastructure, and frameworks or tools. Indeed, nearly two-thirds (65%) are partnering with AI vendors or service providers to implement AI agents. Among these organizations, data management and integration for AI agents is the most commonly sought out role for third-party partners. This speaks to the complexity of AI agent use cases, which require them to traverse disparate systems, software, and databases, meaning organizations will likely continue to leverage partners for the foreseeable future.

### Most significant role of external partners in AI agent initiatives.



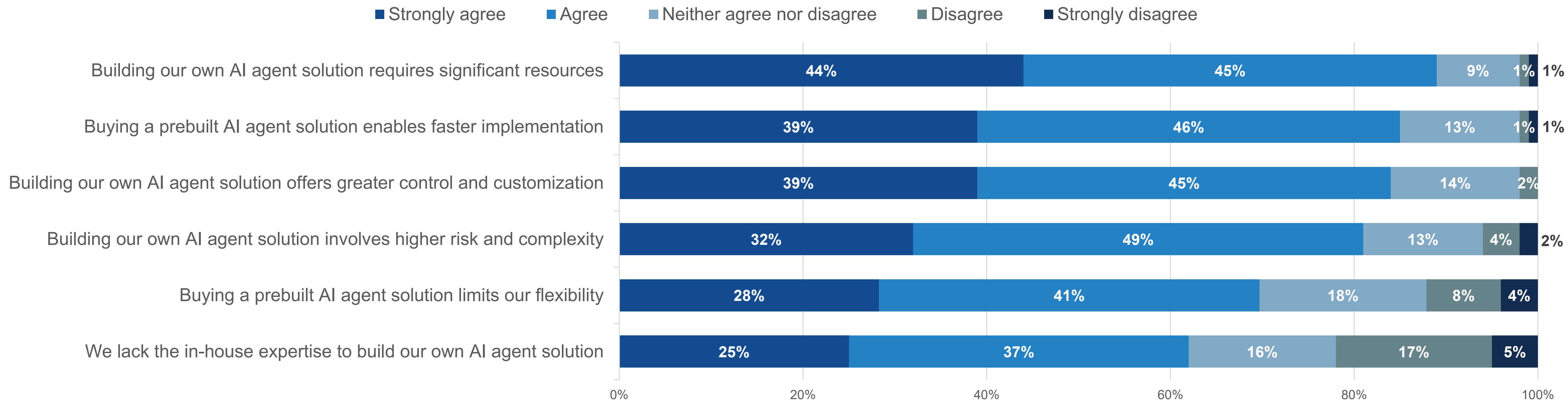
65% of respondents are **partnering with AI vendors or service providers** to implement AI agents.



## Building Versus Buying Prebuilt AI Agent Solutions: A Balance Emerges

Respondents reflected on the benefits and drawbacks of building from scratch versus leveraging some form of prebuilt solution when it comes to AI agents. The general consensus is that building solutions takes more resources but offers greater control and customization, while using prefabricated offerings speeds time to market. It is likely that organizations will favor leveraging prebuilt solutions slightly, then as best practices become common and solutions are refined and become cheaper, organizations will look to build more on their own.

Sentiment for building versus buying AI agent solutions.







ABOUT

Dell Technologies and NVIDIA are empowering organizations to harness the full potential of agentic AI to drive innovation and achieve business objectives. The Dell AI Factory with NVIDIA is the industry’s first and only end-to-end enterprise AI solution\*, designed to speed AI adoption by delivering integrated Dell and NVIDIA capabilities to accelerate your AI-powered use cases, merge your data and workflows, and enable you to design your own AI journey for repeatable, scalable outcomes.

Together, Dell and NVIDIA deliver the tools to harness the power of agentic AI, enabling advanced decision-making and autonomous systems. With seamless data integration and optimized workflows, we ensure your business is ready to embrace the next generation of AI. Our secure, scalable infrastructure is built to support agentic AI use cases, empowering your organization to adapt, innovate, and tackle future challenges with confidence.

Take the first step in your AI transformation by exploring the complementary, personalized Dell Accelerator Workshop. With our experts, you can develop a tailored AI strategy that aligns with your vision and unlock the tools to modernize your organization and stay competitive in your industry.

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\* Based on Dell analysis, July 2025. Dell offers solutions with NVIDIA hardware and software engineered to support AI workloads from PCs with AI-powered features and workstations to Servers for High-performance Computing, Data Storage, Cloud Native Software-Defined Infrastructure, Networking Switches, Data Protection, HCI and Services.



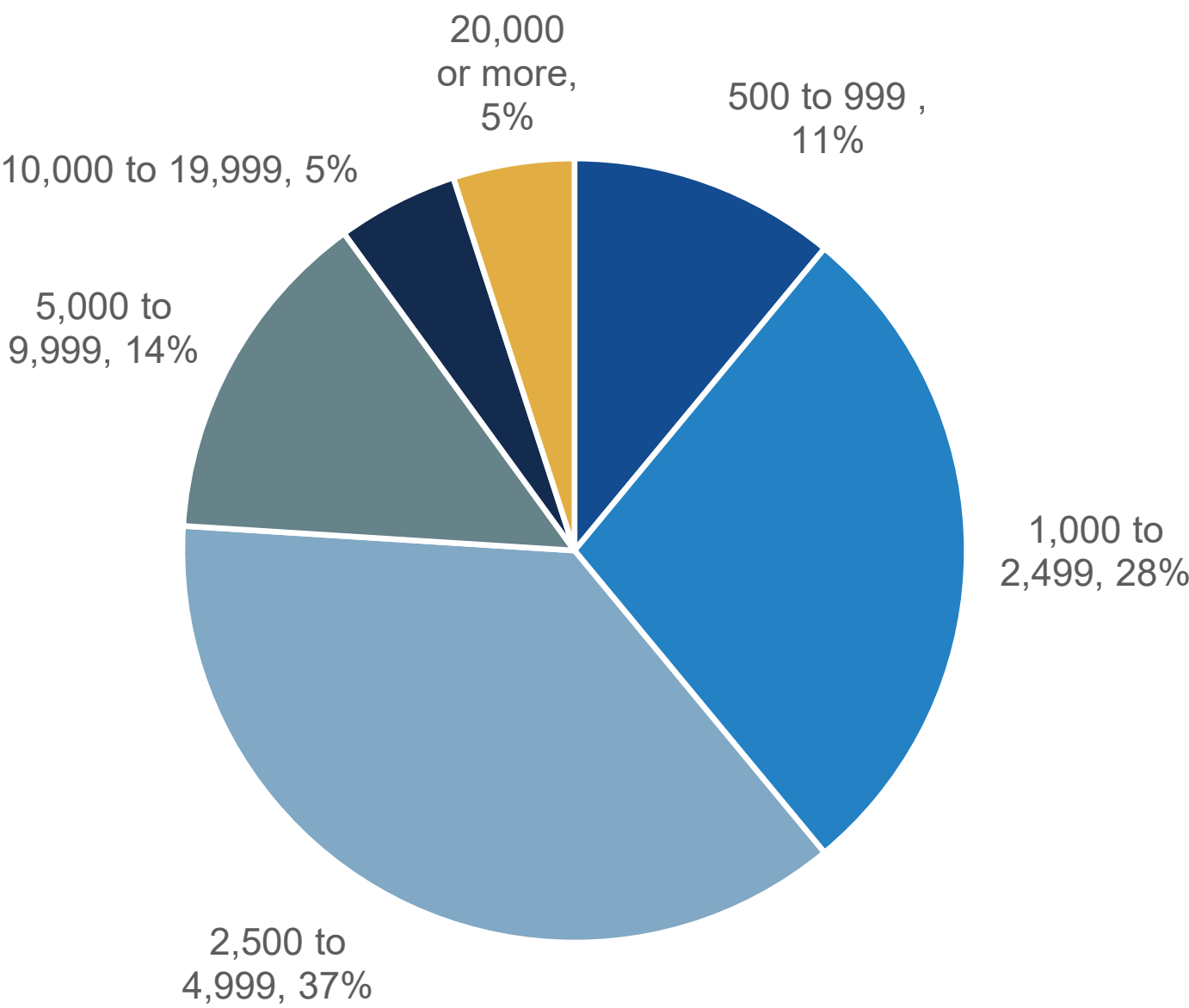


RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DEMOGRAPHICS

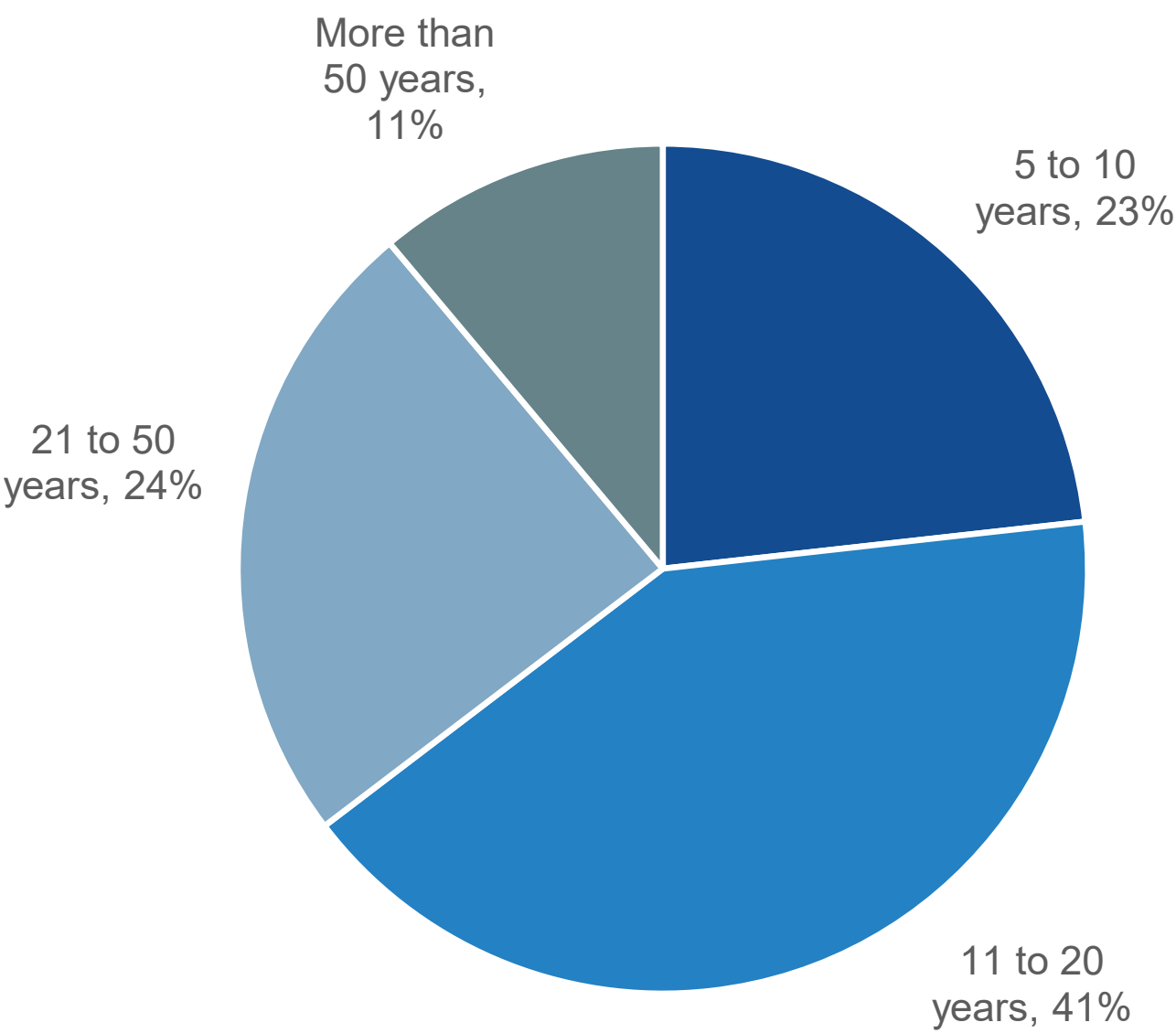
To gather data for this report, Enterprise Strategy Group conducted a comprehensive online survey of technical and business stakeholders from private- and public-sector organizations in North America between March 21, 2025, and April 10, 2025. To qualify for this survey, respondents were required to be involved in the strategy, decision-making, selection, deployment, and management of generative AI initiatives and projects at their organization. All respondents were provided an incentive to complete the survey in the form of cash awards and/or cash equivalents.

After filtering out unqualified respondents, removing duplicate responses, and screening the remaining completed responses (on a number of criteria) for data integrity, we were left with a final total sample of 350 of technical and business stakeholders.

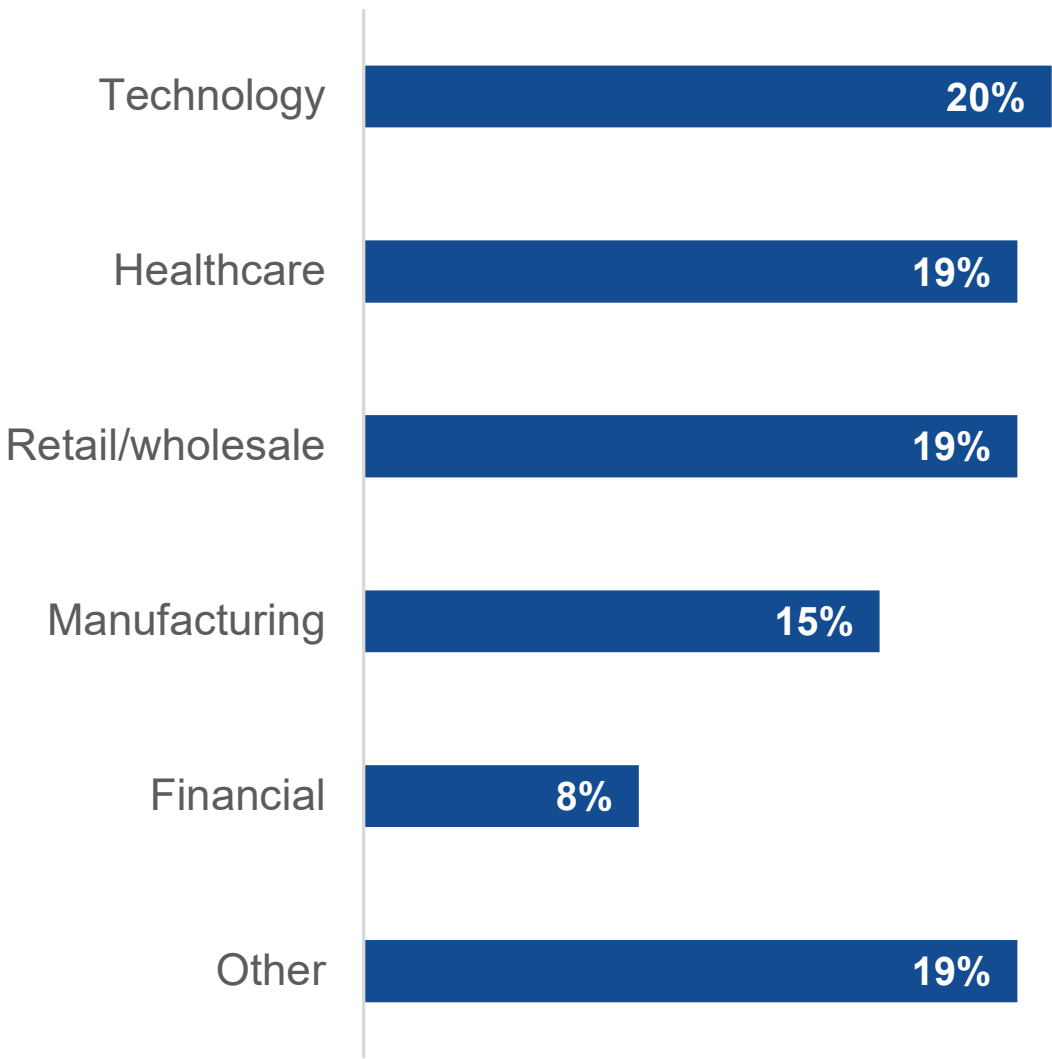
Respondents’ organizations by number of employees.



Respondents’ organizations by years in operation.



Respondents’ organizations by industry.





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