Decidr

The Decidr US AI Readiness Index Report 2026

US businesses are getting value from AI, but not transformation.

The AI moment for American business is here, and most leaders can feel it.

Investment's flowing, confidence is high, and expectations for what AI can deliver over the next twelve months are higher than they've ever been. The question keeping executives up at night isn't whether AI matters anymore. It's how to actually make it work.

The businesses we surveyed are well past the 'should we' conversation. They're trying to figure out how to get from intent to impact.

What this report shows is that path is harder than the headlines suggest.

Beneath all the confidence, the numbers are showing us that most businesses are still in the tool phase, getting real but limited value from assistants and copilots, rather than the transformation phase, where AI is running inside the business itself.

The strategic argument's been won. The operational work is just getting started.

The blockers at this stage aren't doubt or disengagement. They're the unglamorous realities of doing this properly: data quality, security and compliance, integration, and the pressure to show clear returns.

None of these is insurmountable. But none of them will yield to another productivity app either.

Most respondents told us their businesses regularly grind to a halt because critical workflows live inside the heads of just a handful of people. That's not an AI problem.

But AI is one of the most powerful solutions to it, not just as a productivity tool, but as a way to make businesses less brittle and more resilient. That distinction matters for how leaders think about what they're actually signing up for.

We built Decidr because we believe the real prize is AI that runs inside a business, not just on top of it. Get the structure right, and the rest will follow. The findings here sharpen our conviction that this is where the next wave of value will be won.

American businesses have crossed the hardest threshold. They've committed. The work now is making that commitment count.

That's a challenge worth rising to, and I hope this report helps.

David Brudenell
Co-CEO, Decidr

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Executive summary

US businesses are sold on AI. Execution is the challenge

The market has moved past awareness. Now it's dealing with the harder part: turning AI momentum into operational value.

88% expect AI to have greater impact over the next 12 months

46% say implementation would be difficult

The US market doesn't need to be convinced that AI matters

Businesses already see its potential, are investing accordingly and expect its impact to grow.

The challenge now is execution. Momentum is strong, but implementation remains uneven, and many businesses still see adoption as difficult. The next phase of the market won't be defined by awareness. It'll be defined by operationalization.

80%

Are already investing in people or projects committed to driving AI use in the business. Momentum isn't just attitudinal. Most businesses are already putting real resources behind AI.

81%

Say AI has significantly enhanced operations and growth over the past year. The case for AI is no longer theoretical. Many are already seeing value.

65%

Have internal resources dedicated to AI, with 22% actively recruiting. Commitment is becoming more concrete, with teams and capability being built in-house.

46%

Say implementation into their current business processes would be difficult. Confidence in the opportunity hasn't removed the operational friction of adoption.

1. Source: C2. To what extent do you agree with the following statement: Our organization is already investing in people or projects committed to driving AI use in our business.
2. Source: D3a. In the next 12 months, how much do you expect the impact of AI on your business to change?
3. Source: D2. Does your organization currently have internal resources dedicated to AI (e.g. data analysts, tech leads)?
4. Source: C3. On a scale of 1 to 10, how difficult would it be to implement AI-powered tools into your current business processes?

Five things that define the market now

The strategic case is already made

Most businesses understand AI's potential, many say it's already enhanced operations and growth, and nearly nine in ten expect its impact to grow over the next year.

Leadership has moved faster than operations

AI is firmly on the agenda at leadership level, but rollout is still uneven and often tool-led. In many businesses, AI remains in standalone tools or isolated workflows instead of core operations.

Businesses want outcomes, not novelty

The strongest motivations are practical: efficiency, better decisions, faster reporting, and better customer experience.

Most value still comes from accessible tools

Assistants and copilots are doing most of the work today. More advanced and integrated AI is still earlier in the maturity curve.

The barriers are practical, not conceptual

Security, compliance, data quality, budget, integration, and ROI are what's slowing adoption, not lack of awareness.

02

Snapshot

The market is moving, but implementation is uneven

US businesses already believe in AI. They're investing, expecting more impact, and moving past the awareness stage. But implementation is still uneven, and much of the value today is still coming from tools that are easy to adopt.

88% expect AI to have greater impact over the next 12 months

46% say implementation would be difficult

Numbers at a glance.

81%

Say their organization understands what AI can do for the business.

AI is now well understood across much of the market, suggesting the conversation is shifting from awareness to action.

46%

Say implementation would be difficult.

At the same time, nearly half still expect rollout to be hard, showing that confidence doesn't always mean capability is fully in place.

88%

Expect AI to have greater impact over the next 12 months.

AI isn't being treated as a passing trend. Its influence is expected to grow, and quickly.

68%

Of current value comes from assistants and copilots combined.

The value is mostly coming from simple, practical tools, with adoption strongest where the use case is clear and easy to apply.

67%

Say investment in AI is an urgent priority.

AI investment now feels time-sensitive for many, pointing to a sense that waiting could mean falling behind.

31%

Say security and compliance concerns are the main barrier.

Risk remains a major obstacle, showing that trust and governance still need to be addressed before AI can scale further.

65%

Are confident in their ability to implement AI across the business.

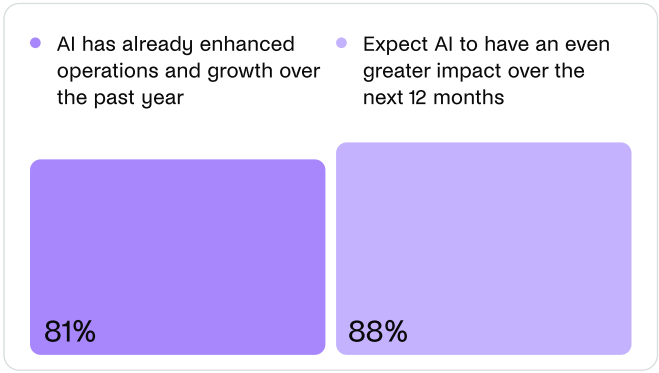
There's a solid level of confidence in adoption, suggesting many feel ready to move beyond interest and into execution.

73%

Say workflow bottlenecks happen at least sometimes.

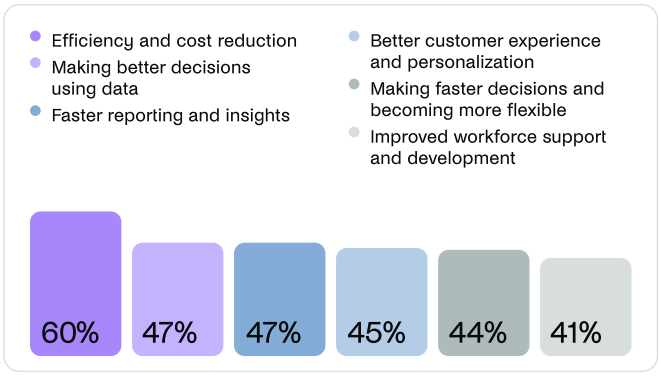
Critical knowledge is still concentrated in a few people, creating delays and limiting access.

1 AI impact is already being felt — and expected to grow



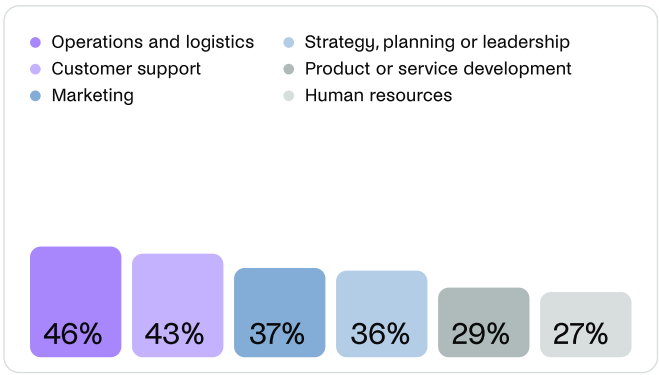
Source: D3a. To what extent has AI enhanced your organization's operations and growth over the last 12 months? D3b. In the next 12 months, how much do you expect the impact of AI on your business to change?

2 Businesses are pursuing AI for practical gains



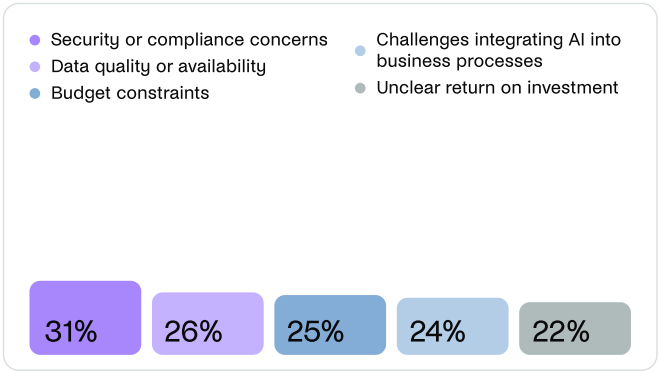
Source: B5a. What are the main reasons for your organization's interest in exploring AI? B5b. And what is the primary reason for your organization's interest in exploring AI?

3 AI is expected to land first in high-pressure functions



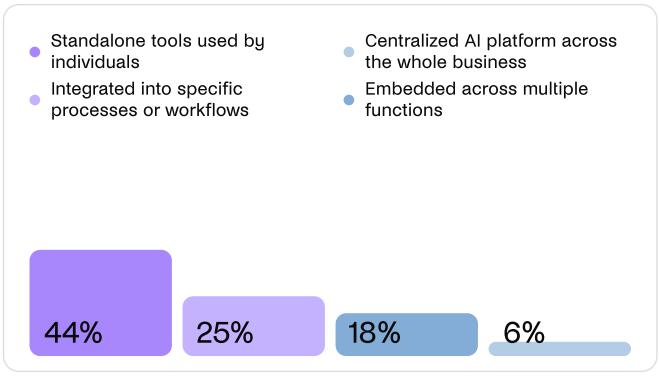
Source: B4. Which areas of your organization do you think would benefit the most from the use of AI? Please select up to 3 options.

4 The biggest barriers are practical, not conceptual



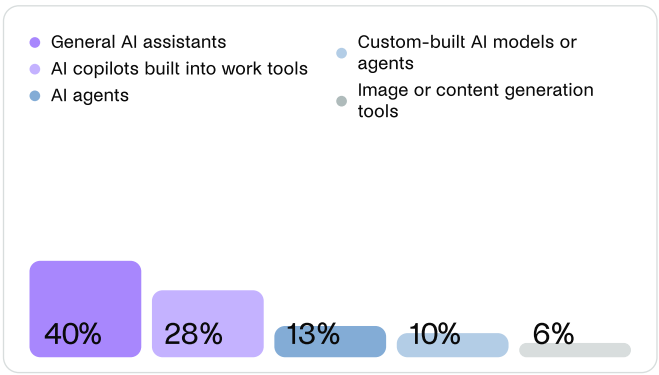
Source: B6a. Which, if any, of the following are the main reasons preventing or delaying you from using AI in your business? B6b. And what is the main reason preventing or delaying you from using AI in your business?

5 Most businesses are still using AI in shallow ways



Source: C4. How is AI currently deployed into your business operations?

6 Most current value still comes from assistants and copilots



Source: Z3. And how would you allocate that value across the following AI capabilities?

03

Key drivers

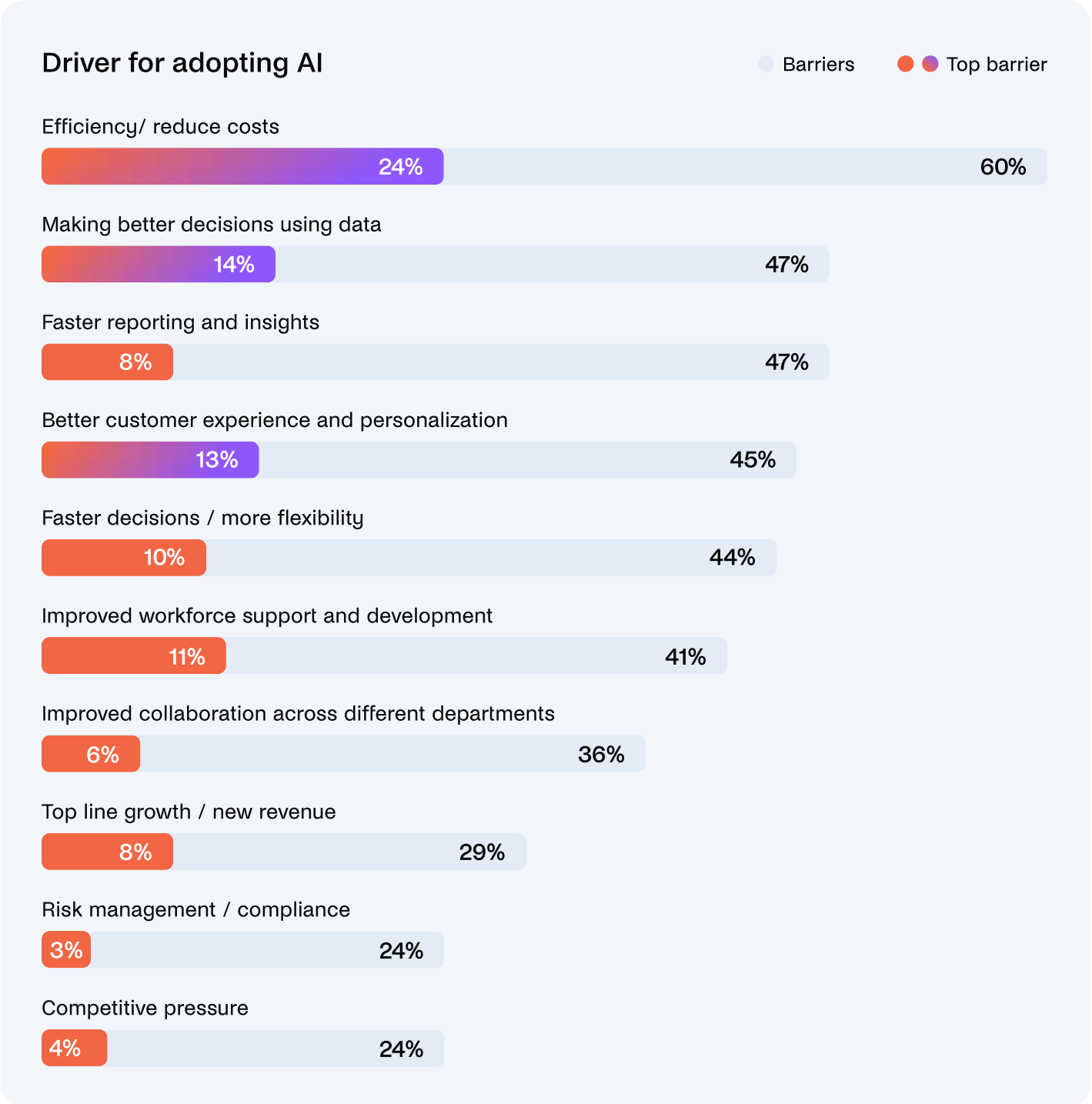
Businesses want AI to solve real problems

Adoption is being driven by practical business needs, not novelty. Efficiency, better decisions, and faster insights are leading the way.

60% cite efficiency and cost reduction

The business case starts with practical gains

US businesses aren't pursuing AI for novelty. They're pursuing it for practical outcomes that support performance, efficiency and better decision-making. The strongest motivations are grounded in day to day business needs, not abstract interest in the technology itself.



Source: B5a. What are the main reasons for your organization's interest in exploring AI? B5b. And what is the primary reason for your organization's interest in exploring AI?

Businesses already know where they want AI to help

The comments behind the data are strikingly consistent. Businesses expect AI to automate routine work, reduce costs, improve forecasting, speed up reporting, and help teams make better decisions. The appetite isn't theoretical. Leaders already have a fairly clear picture of the bottlenecks they want AI to solve.

At the same time, the focus is still largely on efficiency, automation, and decision support, suggesting a market that's targeting immediate operational gains and only starting to move toward deeper workflow redesign and more integrated adoption.

The opportunity? To move from using AI to speed up existing work to using it to rethink how work gets done.

Efficiency / reducing costs

"AI will automate routine tasks, reduce operational costs, improve productivity, minimize errors and optimize decision-making across business processes."

"Automating tasks, improving insights, reducing errors, enabling teams to focus on value."

"By providing phone agents to service customers 24/7/365 which we don't have the resources to do right now."

Making better decisions using data

"AI can pull from many more sources than our company on its own."

"Better forecasting, faster insights, reduced bias."

"AI can help my organization make smarter decisions like optimizing ops, predicting trends, or personalizing customers experiences. This means boosted efficiency, happier customers, and a competitive edge."

Faster reporting and insights

"I think that it will save us time on research and summarizing information."

"We have a very data heavy approach that could be significantly automated."

"I'm expecting AI to improve things by automating data collection, processing, and visualization, transforming raw data into real-time, actionable intelligence."

Source: V1b. You mentioned that your main reason for exploring AI is (MAIN DRIVER). How do you expect AI to improve things for your business in this area? Please provide examples of the benefits you expect, or the problems it will help to solve.

04

Impact areas

The first gains are expected where pressure is highest

Businesses expect AI to deliver first in the parts of the organization already under pressure to move faster, respond better, and do more with existing resources.

46% say operations and logistics

AI is expected to prove itself where pressure is highest

When businesses think about where AI will deliver value first, they point to the parts of the organization already under pressure to move faster, respond better and do more with existing resources.

Operations, customer support, and marketing rise to the top because they combine clear workflows, repeatable tasks and immediate performance pressure. They're the most natural starting point.

The next opportunity is to move beyond the easiest wins and into higher-value areas like planning, sales, finance, and product development, where AI can support better decisions, not just faster execution.

Areas of business expected to benefit from AI:

Operations / logistics (Top 1)	46%	Product or service development	29%
Customer support (Top 2)	43%	Human resources (HR)	27%
Marketing (Top 3)	37%	Sales	25%
Strategy & planning / leadership	36%	Finance	24%

Source: B4. Which areas of your organization do you think would benefit the most from the use of AI? Please select up to 3 options.

To map these areas well, businesses need to make the work legible. They need clear workflows, usable data and a better view of where decisions, delays and handoffs happen. The ones that win won't just automate the obvious tasks. They'll use AI to strengthen the way the business runs.

05

Readiness

Readiness is rising, but deployment still lags

Leadership understanding is strong, internal capability is growing and strategy is maturing. But most adoption is still shallow and tool-led.

85% say leadership understands key AI and automation concepts

44% still rely mainly on standalone tools

Leadership is no longer the limiting factor

AI has moved firmly into the leadership conversation. Most businesses say their leaders understand the core concepts, know where AI could create advantage, and have already started identifying use cases across the organization. Training is also becoming more common, suggesting readiness is moving beyond awareness and into capability-building.

85% Say their organization knows which AI capabilities will help develop or keep a competitive advantage.

85% Say leadership has a good understanding of key AI and automation concepts.

82% Say they've mapped potential AI use cases across multiple departments.

80% Say they understand the difference between generative AI, AI agents and agentic AI.

77% Say they've upskilled or trained teams in AI or data literacy.

Source: B2. Below are some statements different companies might make about AI. To what extent do you agree or disagree each statement describes your organization?

Businesses are building capability, not just experimenting

This market isn't just trialing tools at the edges. Many businesses are now putting real structure around AI, whether through dedicated internal teams, broader generalist capability, or active recruitment. AI is increasingly being treated as an internal capability to build, not just a technology to test.

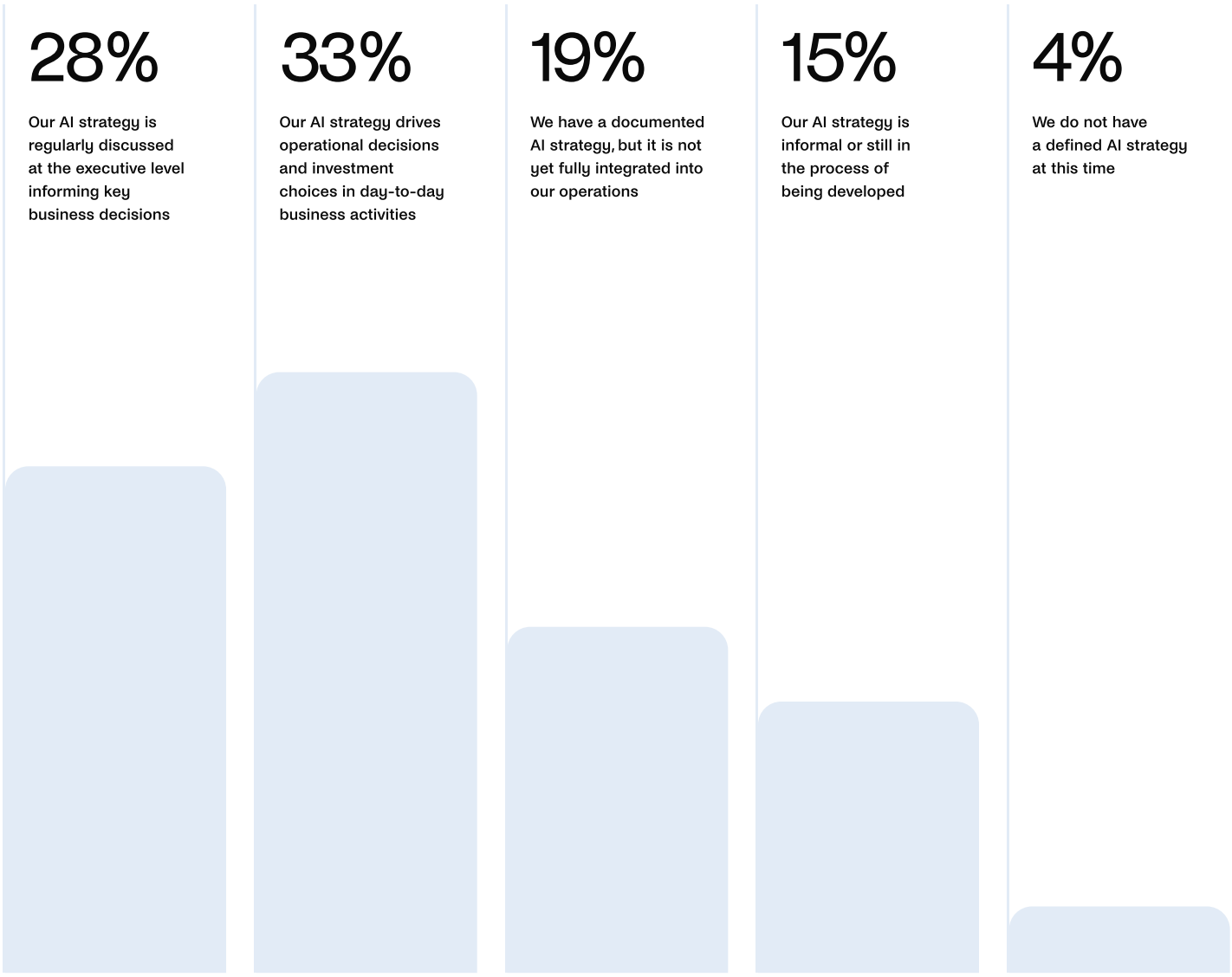
Two thirds of US decision-makers say their organization has invested in an internal team dedicated to AI, with 22% actively recruiting.

- 35% Have a specialized AI team
- 30% Have a generalized AI team
- 22% Are actively recruiting
- 5% Use external partners
- 8% Have no dedicated AI resources

Source: D2. Does your organization currently have internal resources dedicated to AI (e.g. data analysts, tech leads)?

AI strategy is getting more serious

Many businesses now sound relatively advanced on paper. AI is increasingly shaping executive discussion and, in a meaningful share of businesses, informing operational decisions and investment choices. Formal strategy isn't limited to a small leading edge anymore.



Source: C5. Which of the following best describes your organization's current strategy in AI?

Urgency is rising, but implementation still feels hard

Businesses are in AI's messy middle

The appetite is there, the urgency is real and confidence is reasonably strong. But friction still sits inside the rollout. Nearly half of US business leaders expect some degree of difficulty integrating with current processes.

That's why progress feels uneven: many businesses are stuck in the work of making AI fit the way the business actually runs.

67%

Rate investment in AI as an urgent priority.

65%

Are very confident in their company's ability to implement AI across the business.

46%

Believe it would be difficult to implement AI-powered tools into current business processes.

1. Source: C1. On a scale of 1 to 10, how urgent is investment in AI for your business?
2. Source: D1. On a scale of 1 to 10, how confident are you in your company's ability to implement AI across your business within your desired timeframe?
3. Source: C3. On a scale of 1 to 10, how difficult would it be to implement AI-powered tools into your current business processes?

Deployment still lags behind the ambition

Strategy may be maturing, but deployment remains uneven. Most businesses are still relying on standalone tools or limited workflow integrations, rather than AI embedded across functions or managed through a centralized platform. The market is moving, but it's still largely tool-led rather than system-led.

What the numbers show is that **adoption has spread faster than coordination.** Businesses have gotten AI into people's hands, but far fewer have turned it into shared infrastructure.

Current deployment of AI within organizations

Standalone tools used by individuals (e.g. ChatGPT, Microsoft Copilot, Google Gemini etc.)	44%
Integrated only in specific processes or workflows	25%
Embedded across multiple functions of the business	18%
Centralised AI platform across the whole business	6%

AI is showing up faster in the workflow than in the operating model.

Source: C4. How is AI currently deployed into your business operations?

06

Barriers

The market isn't resisting AI. It's managing risk

What's slowing adoption isn't lack of belief. It's the practical difficulty of implementing AI in a way that feels secure, integrated and worth the effort.

31% cite security or compliance concerns

Confidence drops the moment execution gets real

Most businesses aren't stuck at the level of belief. They can see the opportunity, and many feel confident in their ability to move. But that confidence weakens once AI has to be implemented inside real systems, real workflows, and real operating constraints. This is where ambition meets friction and where the market starts to slow.

65%

are **very confident** in their company's ability to implement AI across their business

78%▲
among C-level Executives

76%▲
among decision makers in Tech & Professional Services

59%▼
among businesses with 20-49 employe

46%

believe it would be **difficult** to implement AI-powered tools into their current business processes

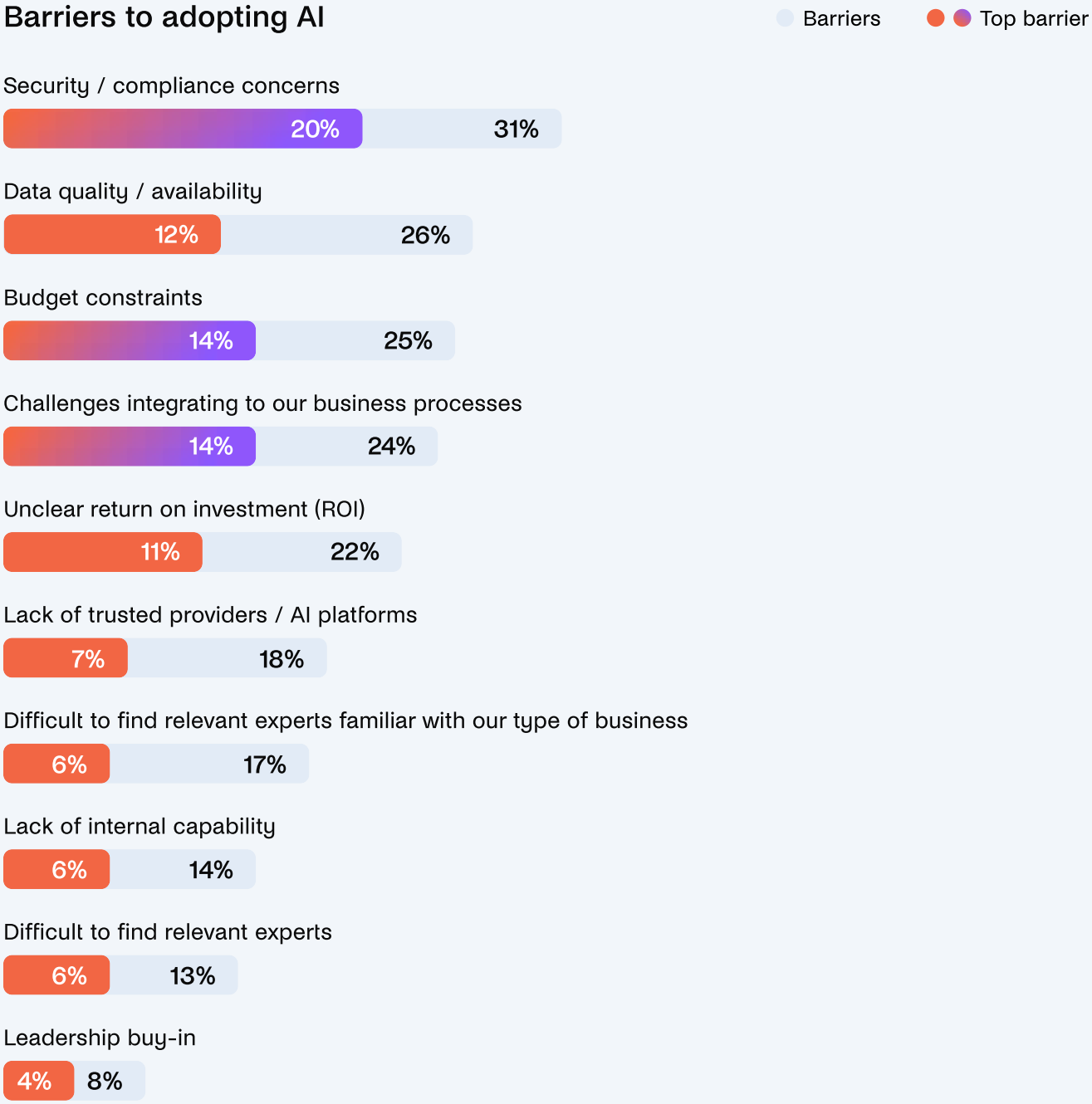
50%▲
among decision makers in Tech & Professional Services

Source: D1. On a scale of 1 to 10, how confident are you in your company's ability to implement AI across your business within your desired timeframe? C3. On a scale of 1 to 10, how difficult would it be to implement AI-powered tools into your current business processes?

The biggest barriers are practical, not ideological

Businesses aren't holding back because they doubt AI matters. They're holding back because the path to implementation still feels risky, expensive or hard to control. Security and compliance concerns lead the list, but cost, integration, data quality and ROI all remain meaningful obstacles.

Barriers to adopting AI



Source: B6a. Which, if any, of the following are the main reasons preventing or delaying you from using AI in your business? B6b. And what is the main reason preventing or delaying you from using AI in your business?

AI readiness is also workflow readiness

The survey points to a deeper operating issue beneath the AI conversation.

64% of businesses say their workflows and processes are clearly captured and kept up to date.

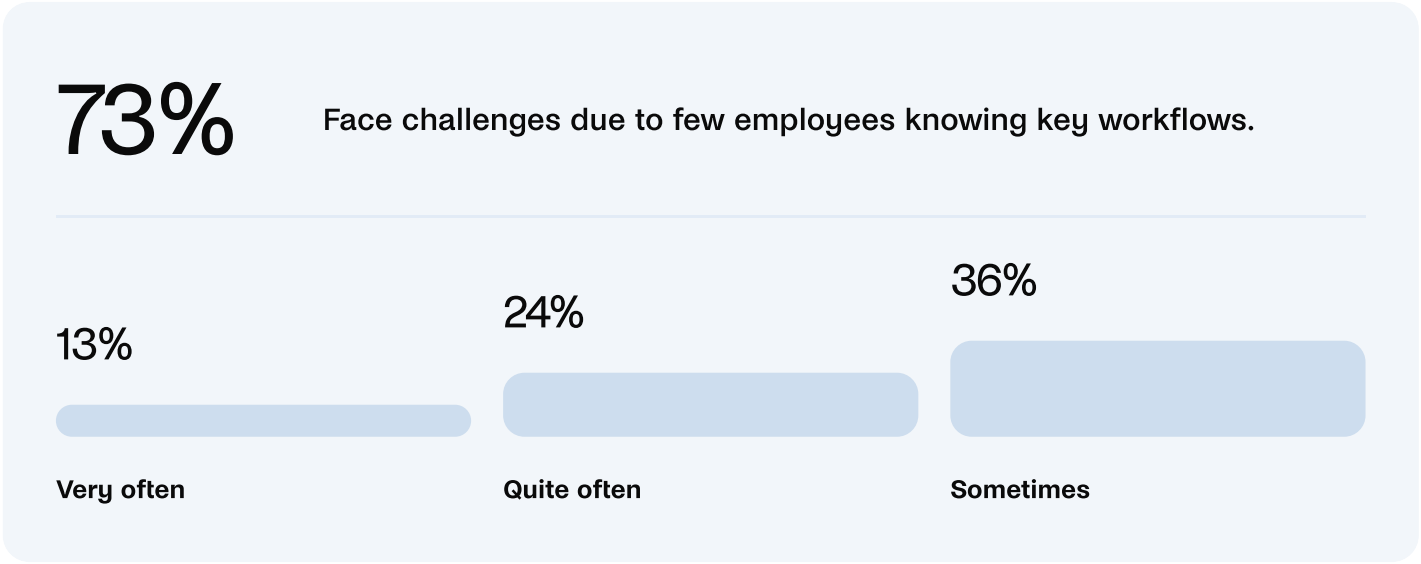
But **73%** also say they experience difficulties or delays at least sometimes because only a small number of employees know how to complete key workflows and processes.

That includes **13%** who say this happens very often, **24%** quite often, and **36%** sometimes.

That's a big clue. It suggests many businesses don't just have an AI challenge. They have a workflow visibility challenge. Knowledge still sits in pockets. Process know-how still lives with individuals. Handoffs and decision points still aren't fully visible.

So when AI moves beyond a standalone tool and into real operations, the business runs straight into the quality of its own workflow infrastructure.

That helps explain why confidence can stay relatively high while rollout still feels uneven. The front-end case for AI is clear. The back-end conditions for using it at scale are much less consistent.



Source: E2. Which of the following best describes your organization's point of view on AI? How often does your organization experience difficulties or delays because only a small number of employees know how to complete key workflows and processes?

What the barriers are really saying

Trust & governance

Teams are working to establish safe, reliable ways to deploy AI.

Integration & capability

Efforts are shifting toward embedding AI into real workflows and systems.

Implementation complexity

Interest is translating into action, but implementation is proving more complex in practice.

The barriers that businesses cite are telling a bigger story about maturity.

This isn't a market stalled at awareness. It's a market moving from interest into implementation, and discovering that implementation is where the real complexity begins.

Some businesses are working through trust and governance. Some are working through integration and internal capability. Some are still trying to find the right entry point. But across all of them, the challenge is becoming more operational and more specific.

That's why the next opportunity isn't just better AI. It's better fit: AI that feels safer, clearer, easier to integrate, and more tightly connected to how work actually gets done.

"US businesses are well past the 'should we' conversation. They're trying to figure out how to get from intent to impact.

Most are still in the tool phase, getting real but limited value from assistants and copilots, rather than the transformation phase, where AI is running inside the business itself "

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Co-CEO, Decidr

07

Profiles

One market. Four profiles

US businesses aren't moving through AI adoption in a single curve. Urgency and difficulty combine to create four very different readiness profiles.

33%	Tinkerers	21%	White Knucklers
26%	Trailblazers	20%	Sleepwalkers

The market isn't moving as one

The market isn't progressing through AI adoption in a single neat curve. Some businesses are already moving with confidence and low friction. Others feel urgency but struggle to execute. Others are experimenting in pockets without a strong operating model, while some remain unsure where to start.

Decidr's segmentation model is built on two signals: urgency and difficulty. That shifts the question from "Do businesses know about AI?" to "What's actually getting in their way?"

26%

Trailblazers

High urgency, low difficulty

The front runners for AI adoption. Confident and aligned on strategy, particularly with their leadership teams. AI processes currently in place to improve collaboration and top line growth, all with minimal difficulty.

21%

White Knucklers

High urgency, high difficulty

Tend to be larger sized businesses in the professional services/ tech space. They have a clear AI strategy and use AI to drive operational decisions but are experiencing challenges in internal capabilities

33%

Tinkerers

Low urgency, high difficulty

Exist across all business sizes, experimenting with AI's use cases across specific workflows. That said, they do not have a clear AI strategy yet and are held back due to a lack of specialized personnel

20%

Sleepwalkers

Low urgency, low difficulty

Tend to be smaller sized businesses, Retail & Logistics or Education & Public services. Currently they are exploring their AI options, but they don't know where to start.

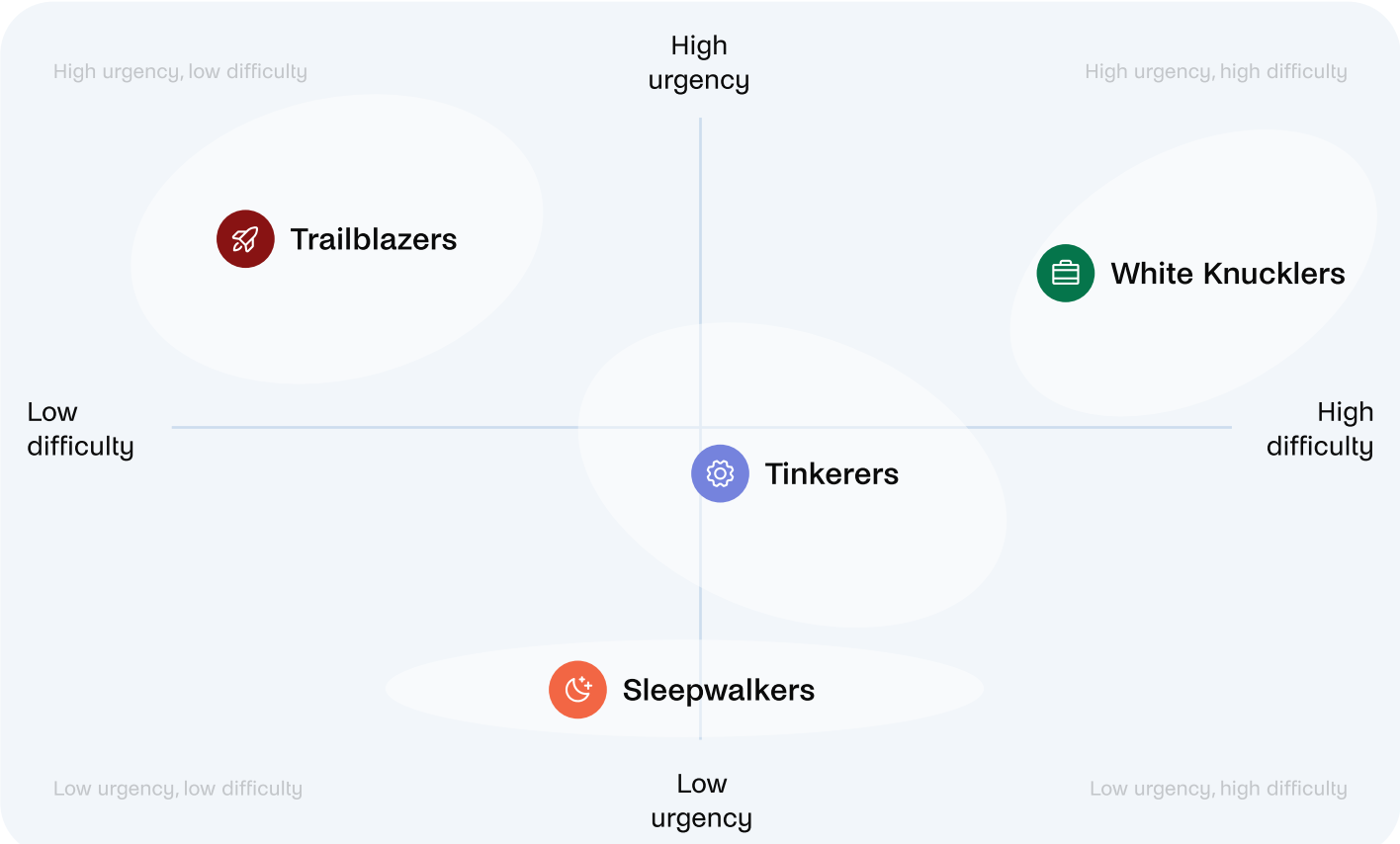
Source: C1. On a scale of 1 to 10, how urgent is investment in AI for your business? C3. On a scale of 1 to 10, how difficult would it be to implement AI-powered tools into your current business processes?

The market isn't split by belief. It's split by readiness posture

All four groups sit in the same AI market, but they're moving through it in very different ways.

The segmentation model is built on urgency and difficulty, which means it gets closer to the real commercial question: not who's heard of AI, but who's ready to act, who's stuck in execution, and who still needs a reason to start.

The biggest signal is that **54% of the market sits in the middle** — **33% Tinkerers** and **21% White Knucklers** — which means the defining challenge in the US isn't awareness. It's helping businesses move from scattered intent to operational value.



Trailblazers

Trailblazers are the proof case

These are the businesses that have already made AI feel normal. They're the front runners: confident, aligned and relatively low-friction. They score highest on urgency, knowledge, confidence, and perceived impact, and lowest on difficulty.

77% Say they have a clear AI strategy and roadmap

48% Say AI is regularly discussed at the executive level

24% Say it's already embedded across multiple functions

These are businesses where AI is starting to move from a useful tool to part of how the business runs.

What tends to hold them back: not much. Their top indexed barrier is actually that nothing is preventing them from using AI. After that, the friction is more practical than strategic: data quality and budget constraints.

Trailblazers

High urgency, low difficulty

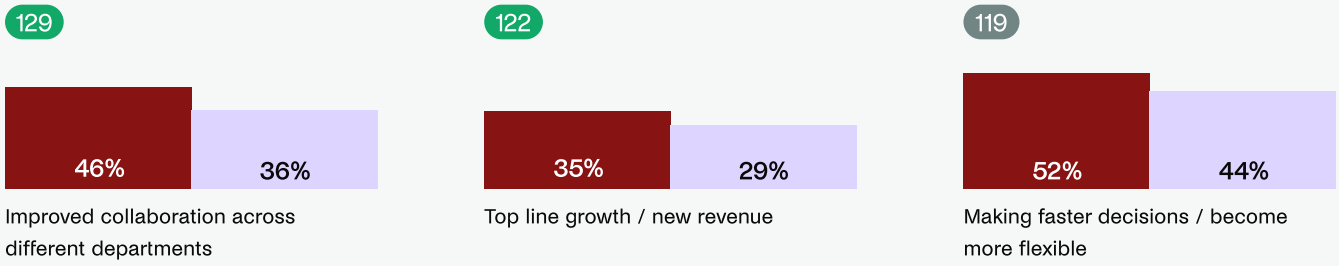
Trailblazers are the front runners for AI adoption. Confident and aligned on strategy, particularly with their leadership teams. AI processes currently in place to improve collaboration and top line growth, all with perceived minimal difficulty.

Readiness metrics (avg)

Urgency	8.5	7.1
Difficulty	2.1	5.2
Knowledge	8.9	7.7
Confidence	9.2	7.9
Impact	8.6	7.3

Has a clear **AI strategy and roadmap**	77%	159
AI strategy regularly discussed at executive level	48%	171
AI embedded across **multiple functions** of the business	24%	131

Drivers (Top 3 index)

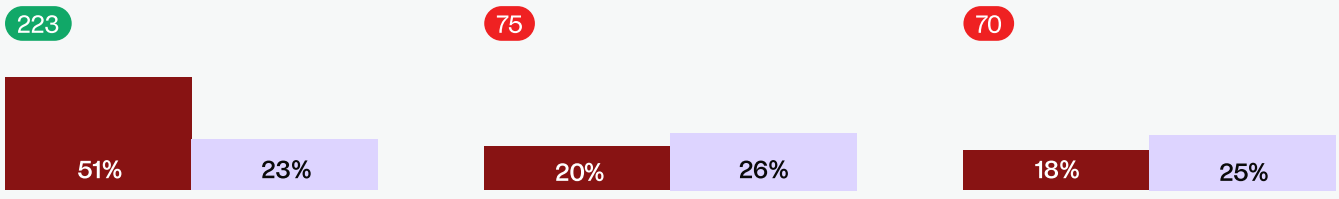


Improved collaboration across different departments

Top line growth / new revenue

Making faster decisions / become more flexible

Barriers (Top 3 index)



There is nothing preventing my organization from using AI

Data quality / availability

Budget constraints

>120 over-index

<80 under-index

Trailblazers

Total SME (weighted)

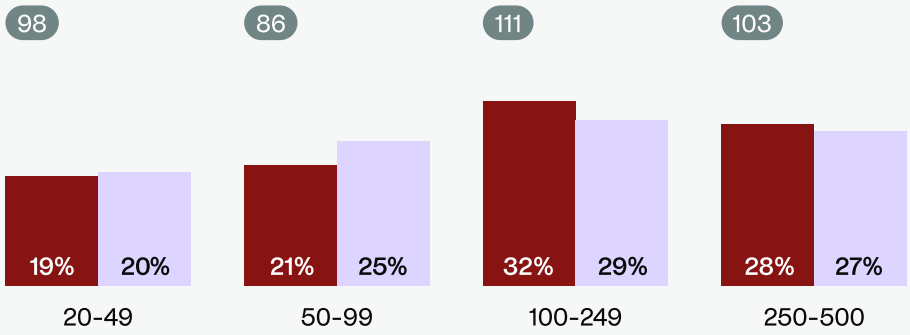
Base: Trailblazers (n=195)

Turnover

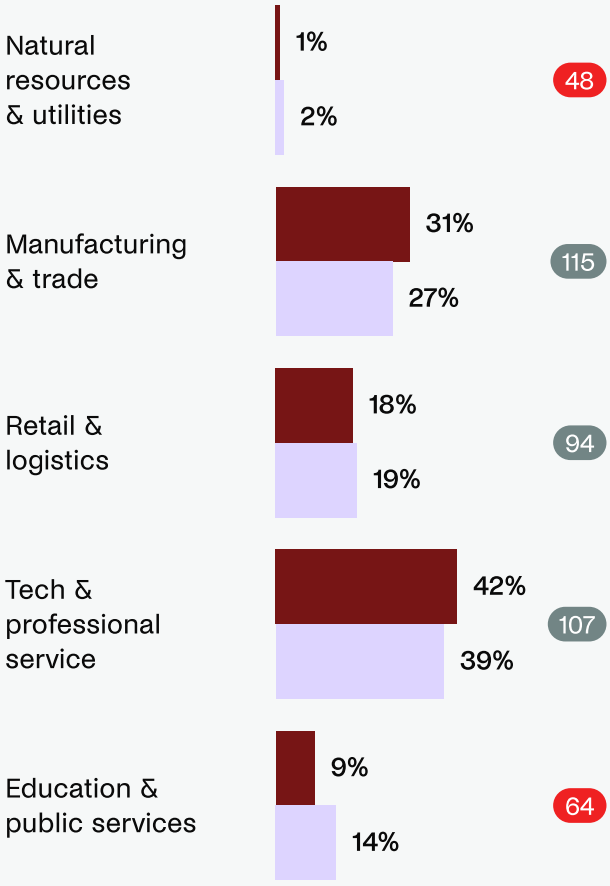
<$10m 59% 94

>$10m 41% 110

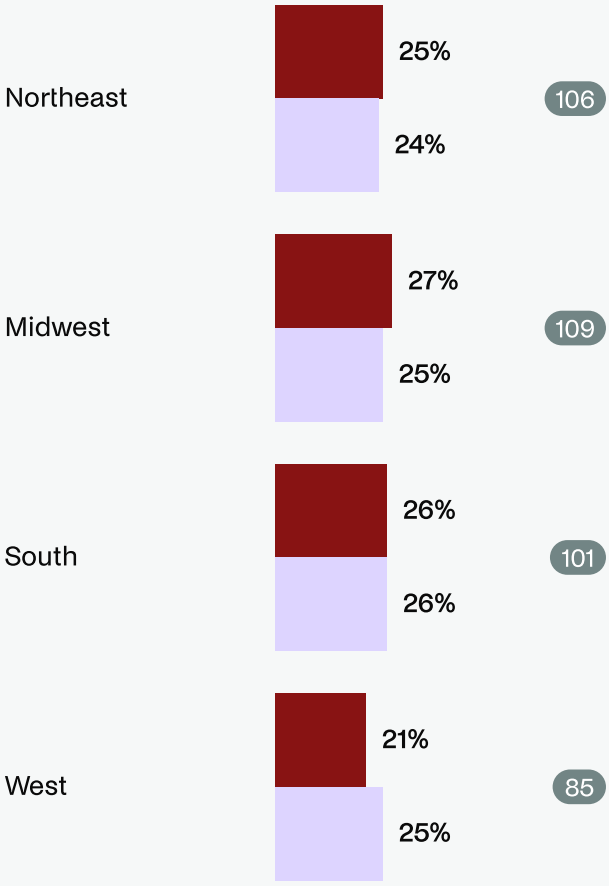
Business size (employees)



Industry



Region



>120 over-index
<80 under-index

Trailblazers
Total SME (weighted)

Base: Trailblazers (n=195)

White Knucklers

High momentum, low execution muscle

White Knucklers are easy to picture: larger businesses, often in tech and professional services, that know AI matters and are pushing to move, but still feel a lot of friction. They look mature on paper.

61% Have a clear AI strategy.

40% Say AI already drives operational decisions.

51% Still rely mainly on standalone tools

These are businesses trying to move fast while still wrestling with the mechanics of delivery.

What tends to hold them back: leadership buy-in, data quality, and lack of internal capability. In other words, they've got momentum, but not yet enough internal alignment and execution muscle.

White Knucklers

High urgency, high difficulty

White Knucklers are larger sized businesses in the Tech and Professional services space. They have a clear strategy and use AI to drive operational decisions but experience challenges with their internal capabilities.

Readiness metrics (avg)

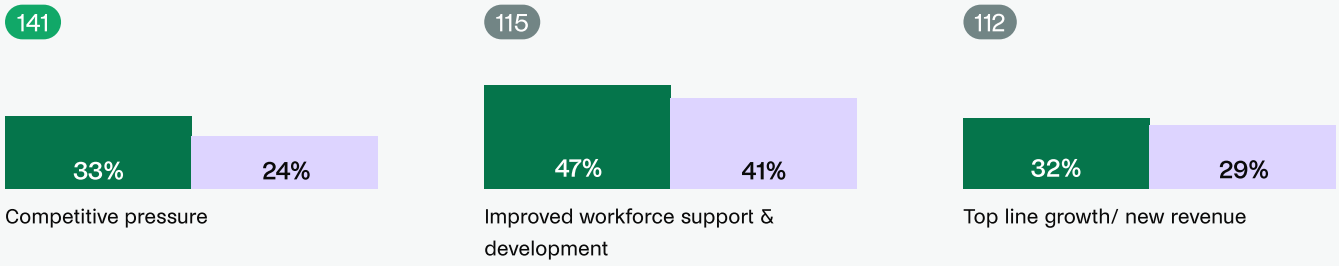
Urgency	8.3	7.1
Difficulty	8.4	5.2
Knowledge	8.2	7.7
Confidence	8.5	7.9
Impact	8.3	7.3

Has a clear **AI strategy and roadmap** 61% 126

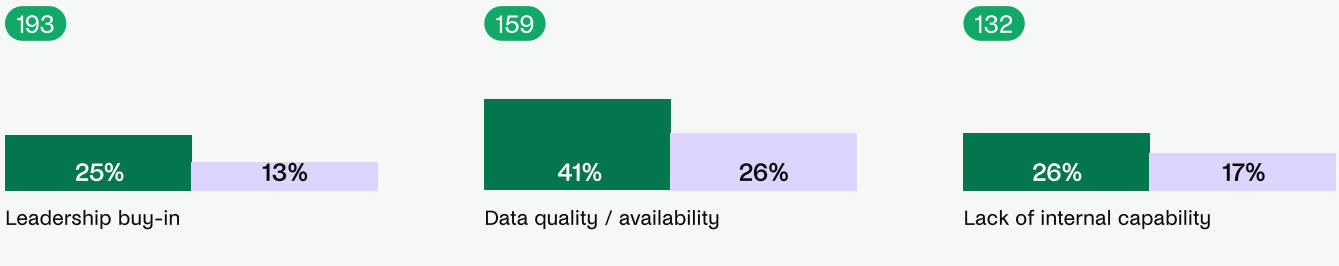
Use of AI is predominantly **standalone tools** 51% 116

AI strategy drives operational **decisions** 40% 120

Drivers (Top 3 index)



Barriers (Top 3 index)



Base: White Knucklers (n=284)

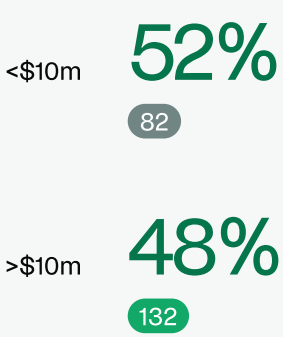
>120 over-index

<80 under-index

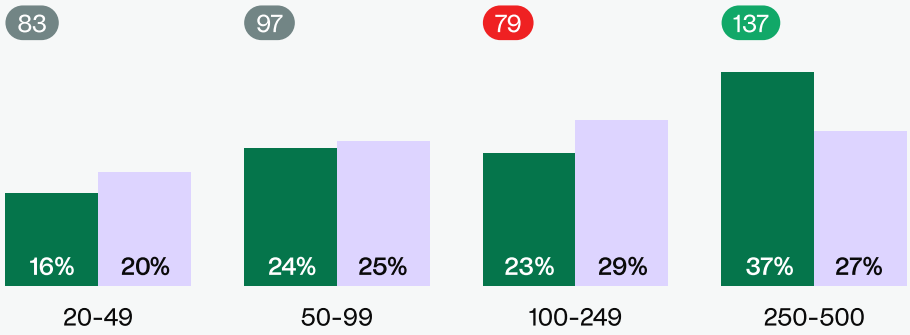
White Knucklers

Total SME (weighted)

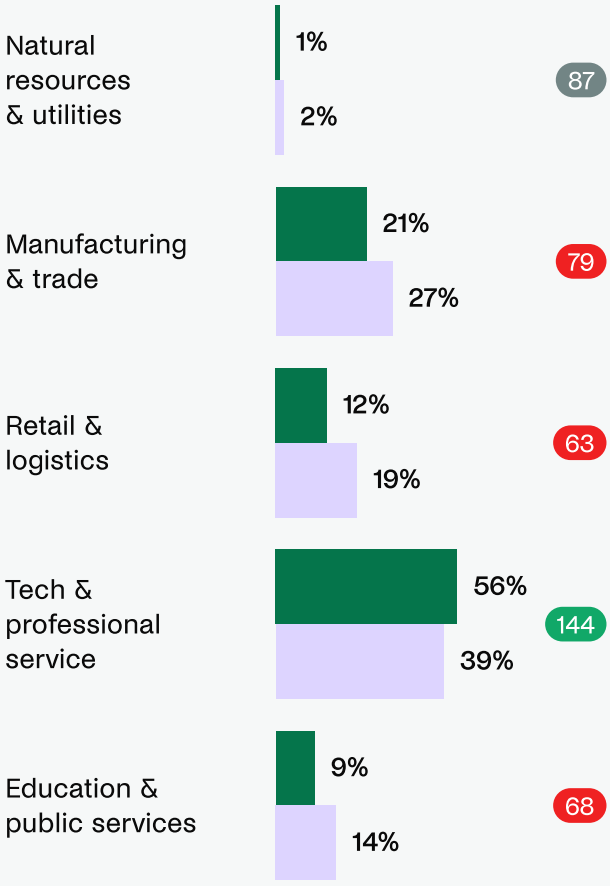
Turnover



Business size (employees)



Industry



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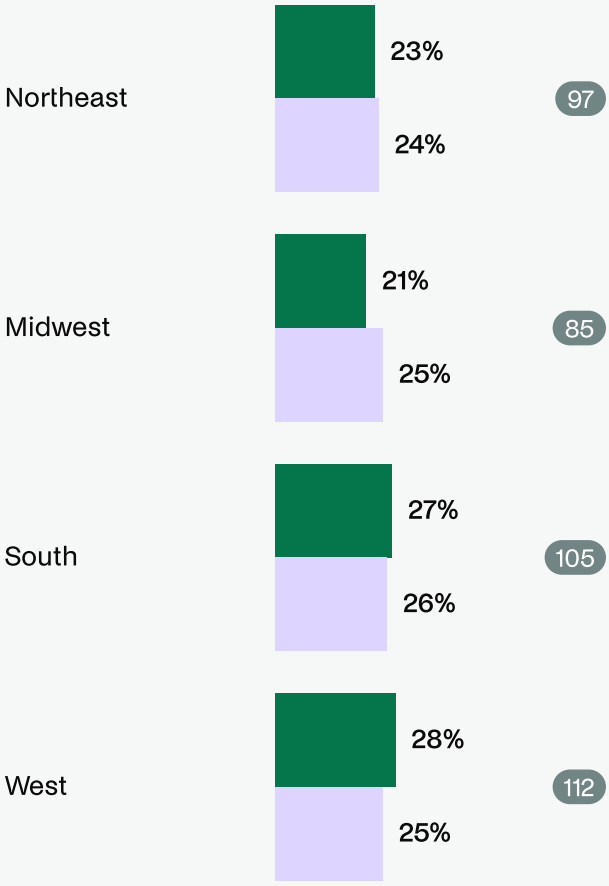


Base: White Knucklers (n=284)

>120 over-index
<80 under-index

White Knucklers
Total SME (weighted)

Tinkerers

The market profile

Tinkerers are the biggest group in the market, which makes them the most important one to understand. They show up across business sizes, but skew smaller. These are businesses that are already experimenting, often inside specific workflows, but haven't yet built a strong operating model around AI.

53% Say they're experimenting without a formal strategy

27% Have AI integrated into specific workflows

32% Have AI integrated into specific workflows

This is the heart of the messy middle: real activity, real interest, but not yet enough structure to scale.

What tends to hold them back: security and compliance concerns, difficulty finding experts who understand their business and unclear ROI. They don't need a vision story as much as a clearer path to trusted, practical use.

Tinkerers

Low urgency, high difficulty

Tinkerers exist across all business sizes, but skew towards smaller SMEs, experimenting with AI's use cases across specific workflows. That said, they do not have a clear AI strategy yet and are held back due to a lack of specialised personnel.

Readiness metrics (avg)

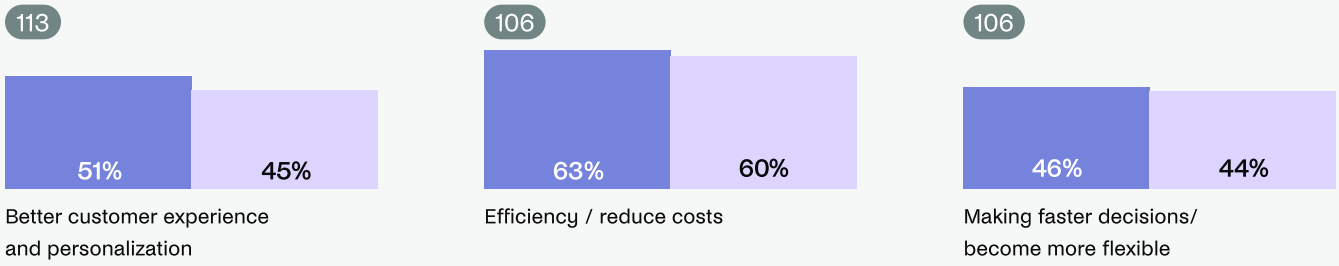
Urgency	7.2	7.1
Difficulty	5.5	5.2
Knowledge	7.7	7.7
Confidence	7.7	7.9
Impact	7.2	7.3

Experimenting but **no formal strategy** 53% 139

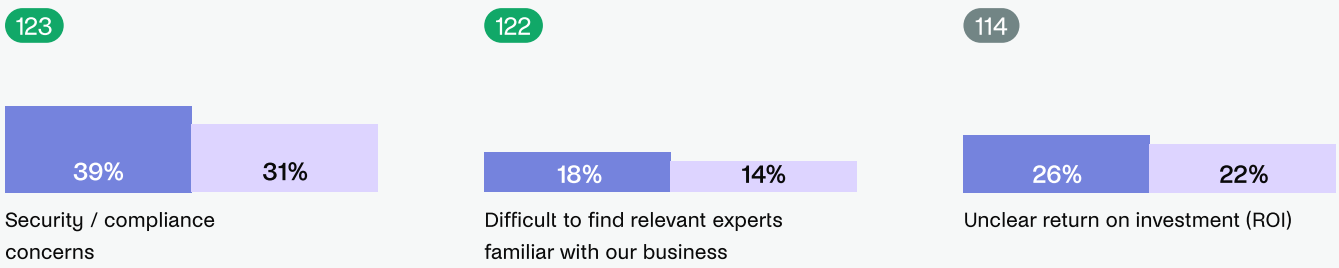
AI integrated in **specific processes** or workflows 32% 127

Documented strategy but **not integrated Into operations** 27% 139

Drivers (Top 3 index)



Barriers (Top 3 index)



Base: Tinkerers (n=359)

>120 over-index

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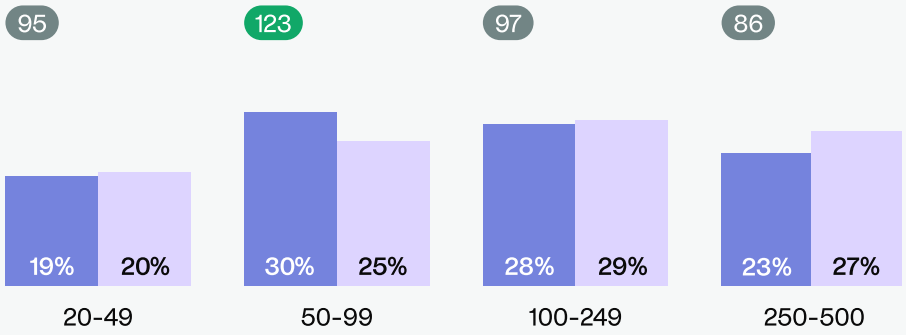
Tinkerers

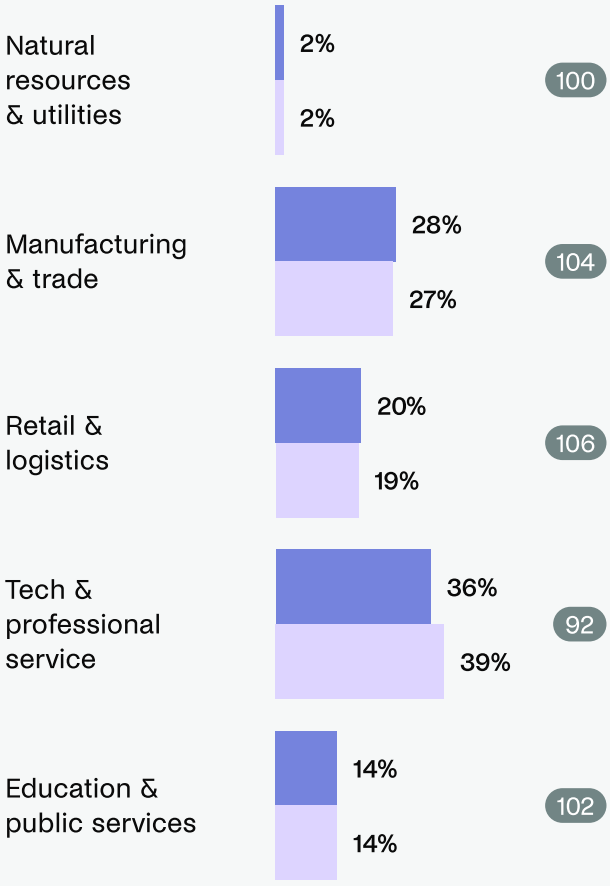
Total SME (weighted)

Turnover

Business size (employees)



Industry



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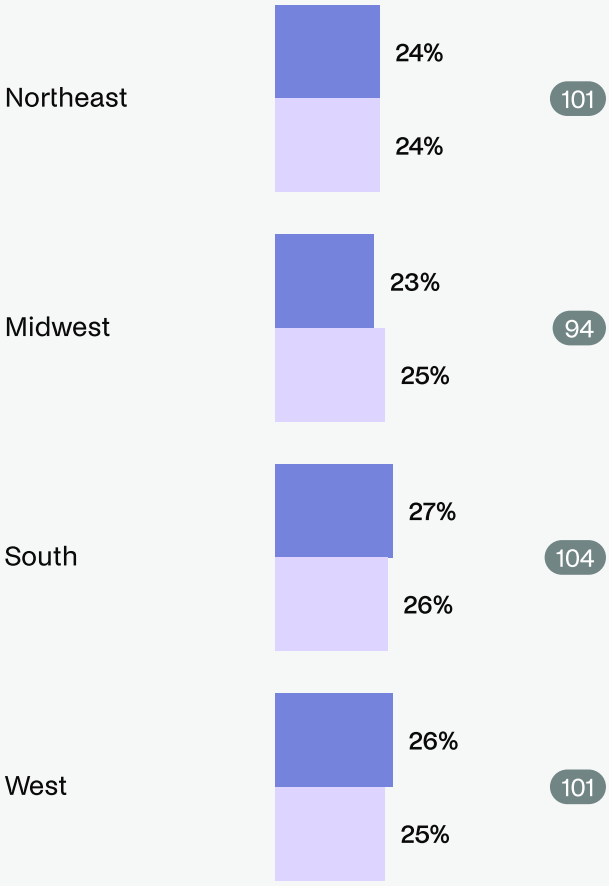

>120 over-index
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Tinkerers
Total SME (weighted)

Base: Tinkerers (n=359)

Sleepwalkers

The least engaged group, but they're not anti-AI

Sleepwalkers tend to be smaller businesses, more common in retail and logistics or education and public services, and they're still early in the journey.

32% Say they're exploring options but haven't started

28% Say strategy is still informal

25% Say they haven't integrated AI into the business yet

The key thing about this group is that they feel underactivated, not resistant. AI still needs to feel more relevant and more reachable.

What tends to hold them back: not knowing where or how to start, lack of trusted providers or platforms and unclear ROI. They need a clearer entry point before they need a transformation story.

Sleepwalkers

Low urgency, low difficulty

Sleepwalkers tend to be smaller sized businesses, Retail & Logistics or Education & Public services. Currently they are exploring their AI options, but they don't know where to start.

Readiness metrics (avg)

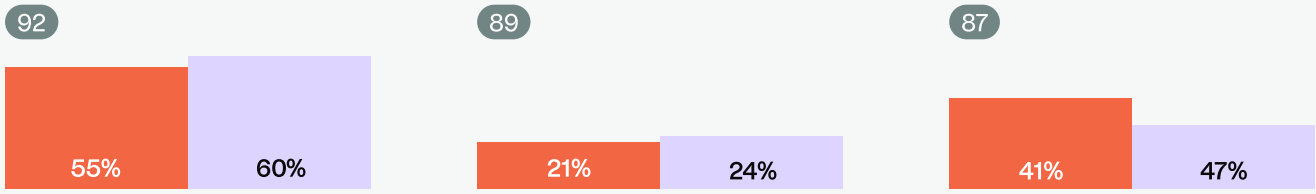
Urgency	3.7	7.1
Difficulty	5.2	5.2
Knowledge	5.8	7.7
Confidence	5.9	7.9
Impact	4.6	7.3

Exploring options but haven't started — 32% — 285

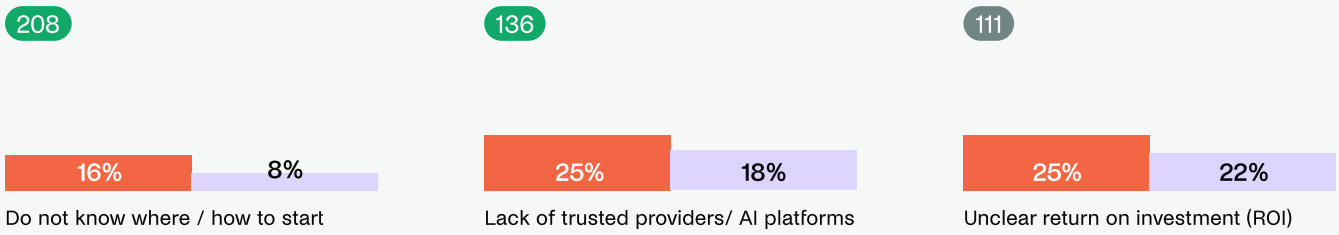
Informal strategy and not integrated yet — 28% — 184

Have not integrated AI into our business yet — 25% — 372

Drivers (Top 3 index)



Barriers (Top 3 index)



>120 over-index

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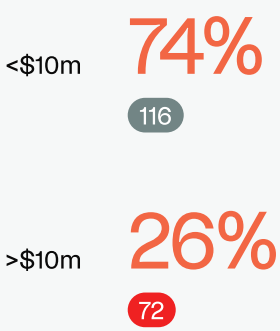
Sleepwalkers

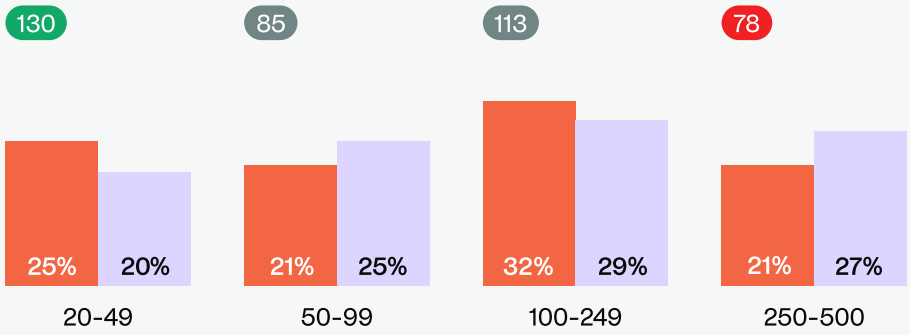
Total SME (weighted)

Base: Sleepwalkers (n=204)

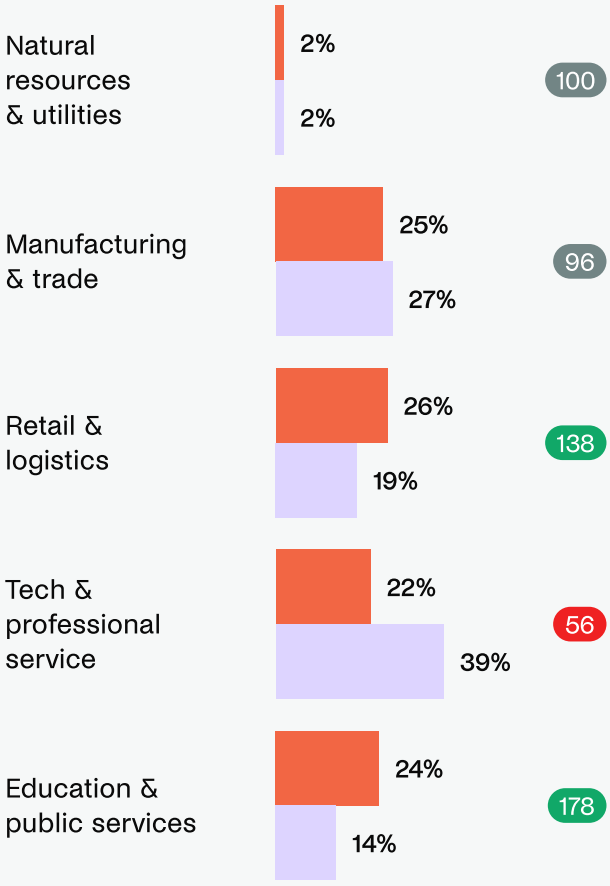
Turnover



Business size (employees)



Industry



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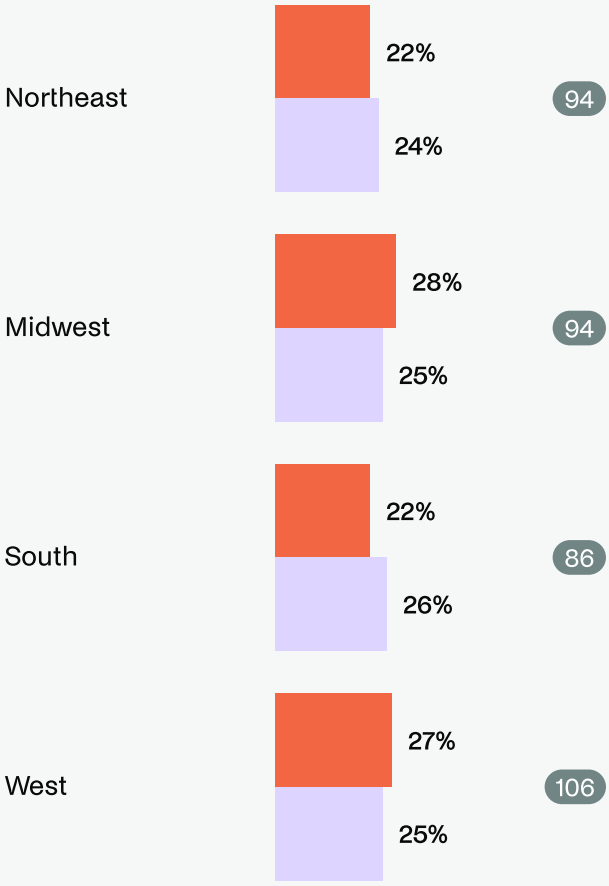


>120 over-index
<80 under-index

Sleepwalkers
Total SME (weighted)

Base: Sleepwalkers (n=204)

Different businesses, different next moves

Foundation builders

Have already built strong AI foundations and are turning it into a real operating advantage.

Implementation drivers

Are pushing forward but still facing friction as they work to scale AI across workflows.

Opportunity seekers

Are still identifying where AI can deliver practical value within their business.

These profiles tell the story of a market that's starting to sort itself into clearer paths.

Some businesses have already built the foundations and are beginning to turn AI into an operating advantage. Some are pushing hard but still getting caught in the friction of implementation. Some are experimenting with real intent, but haven't yet built the structure to scale. Others are still looking for an entry point that feels practical and relevant.

That's what makes the next phase so important. Progress won't come from treating every business the same. It'll come from helping each group take its next meaningful step — from experimentation to structure, from urgency to execution, from interest to confidence.

That's how AI starts to move from scattered activity to lasting business value.

08

Opportunities

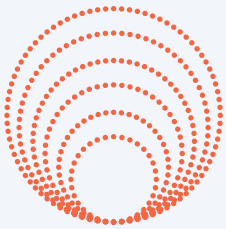
Where the biggest opportunity now sits

The biggest opportunity now is helping businesses close the gap between AI ambition and operational readiness.

73% say workflow bottlenecks happen at least sometimes because only a small number of employees know key processes

The next phase won't be won with more disconnected tools

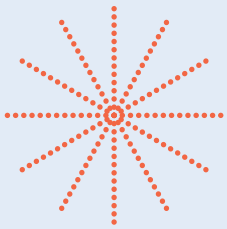
The next phase of AI adoption won't be defined by awareness. That part is already in place. Businesses have interest, urgency and growing confidence. What matters now is whether they can turn that momentum into something more embedded, more coordinated and more useful in the real flow of work. The opportunity isn't to add more AI for its own sake. It's to make AI work harder inside the business.



Moving beyond individual use

The data points to a market that is already extracting value from AI, but primarily in ways that remain close to the individual user:

- Assistants
- Copilots
- Point solutions
- Narrow workflow applications



The path to next-level gains

To achieve the next major gains, businesses must move beyond these isolated tools. The future depends on connecting AI more tightly to:

- Trust
- Workflow
- Coordination
- Institutional Knowledge

Four opportunities that matter most now

The next wave of adoption won't be driven by more awareness. It'll be driven by making AI easier to trust, easier to integrate and easier to operationalize in the real flow of work. That creates four clear opportunity areas.

Reduce trust friction

Help businesses move through security, compliance and governance concerns with confidence.

Fit AI into real workflows

Focus on workflow integration, not disconnected tools.

Move from tools to value

Connect assistants and copilots to real business processes and decisions.

Surface hidden knowledge

Reduce reliance on undocumented knowledge held by a few individuals.

Taken together, these opportunities describe the same shift: from isolated AI use to coordinated business execution. The businesses that pull ahead won't just be the ones using more AI tools.

The real opportunities are operational

Reduce trust friction

The first opportunity is to make AI easier to trust. Businesses are ready to move, but they still want stronger guardrails around security, compliance, data quality and return on investment. The ones that solve trust early will move faster, because they'll remove the hesitation that appears the moment AI moves from idea to implementation.

Fit AI into real workflows

The next opportunity is workflow fit. Businesses don't need more disconnected tools sitting beside the work. They need AI that fits into real processes, supports real decisions and takes friction out of handoffs, reporting and execution. The businesses that do this well won't just automate tasks more quickly. They'll improve how work moves across the organization.

Map tacit knowledge

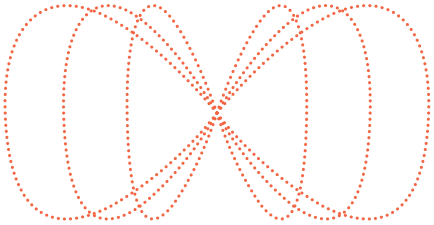
A lot of process knowledge still lives in people's heads rather than in systems the business can use. That matters because AI can only scale effectively when the business knows how its own work gets done. The opportunity now is to map that tacit knowledge — the informal know-how, workarounds, judgment calls and hidden dependencies that sit across teams — and turn it into something visible, usable and repeatable. That's how businesses reduce bottlenecks, strengthen workflow consistency and give AI something real to plug into.

Build the orchestration layer

This is where the opportunity becomes more strategic. Most businesses already have access to AI tools. What they need next is a way to connect those tools to systems, workflows, context and governance, so AI can work in coordination rather than in isolation. That orchestration layer is what turns scattered usage into something the business can rely on. It's the bridge between AI access and business execution.

About DecidrOS

The operating layer for business AI



Most businesses are trying to adopt AI on top of a messy reality: disconnected applications, manual handoffs, inconsistent data and workflows that still live in people's heads. That's why progress so often slows after the first wave of excitement. Standalone tools can deliver quick wins, but scaling AI across the business takes something more fundamental — shared structure, connected systems and guardrails the business can trust.

DecidrOS is built to provide that foundation.

It's an agentic operating system for business: the infrastructure layer that allows organizations to run with AI agents, connected data and coordinated workflows. Rather than helping one person complete one task a little faster, it creates the conditions for AI to support real execution across the business, with visibility and control.

DecidrOS connects the apps and data a business already relies on into one coherent system. It turns workflows into something software can actually follow and applies governance in a consistent way across teams. That means AI can move from isolated productivity gains to coordinated action across systems — safely, repeatedly and at scale.

From fragmented processes to real business results

By structuring operational data and enabling coordinated agents to act across systems, DecidrOS helps businesses improve the way work actually moves.

Organizations using DecidrOS can achieve:

50–70% reduction in time spent finding or reconciling information

10x increase in automation coverage across support, finance and operations

3x faster delivery of projects, campaigns and operational initiatives

Rather than layering automation onto fragmented processes, DecidrOS helps businesses run with more clarity, more coordination and more capacity to improve over time.

What makes DecidrOS different

Most AI software is designed to help individuals work faster. DecidrOS is designed to help the business work better.

It starts with a simple principle: if AI is going to work across the organization, there has to be a shared way to represent how the business works before anything is automated. DecidrOS uses a schema-first foundation, structuring core business entities, workflows and decisions up front so systems can connect reliably and operate with clear guardrails.

That foundation unlocks:

Organizational intelligence	A shared intelligence layer built on business data, documents and workflows, so people and AI can work from the same context.
A common business schema	A shared language for the things the business runs on — customers, products, transactions and workflows — so systems can work together without brittle workarounds.
Live operational records	A consistent, up-to-date view across systems, so decisions don't depend on who has the latest spreadsheet or the missing piece of context.
Context-aware search and reasoning	Answers grounded in the organization's own files, tools and communications, not generic external knowledge.
Live integrations	Direct connections to the systems already in use, including CRM, finance, collaboration and other core tools.
Workflow orchestration	Coordinated workflows that can move work across systems end to end, with approvals, visibility and controls built in.

Together, those capabilities move businesses away from tool sprawl and disconnected pilots toward a single operating layer where AI can support real execution.

About Sugarwork

Making hidden workflow knowledge usable

One of the clearest findings in this report is that many businesses still depend on knowledge that lives in people, not systems. Work gets delayed because only a small number of employees know how a process really works, where the exceptions sit or what needs to happen next.

The cost of "tacit" knowledge

The 80% Gap: Roughly 80% of critical business knowledge typically sits outside formal systems and documentation. It lives instead in employees' heads as tacit know-how, judgment, and experience.

Economic Impact: That hidden knowledge carries real economic value. Fortune 500 companies are estimated to lose around $31.5 billion each year when it "walks out the door."

The Sugarwork solution

That's the problem Sugarwork is built to solve. It helps businesses surface the tacit knowledge that sits inside day-to-day work:

- Unwritten steps and judgment calls.
- Handoffs and dependencies that rarely appear in formal documents.
- Operational reality vs. theoretical process.

Why this matters for AI:

AI can only scale effectively when workflows are clear enough to follow and reliable enough to support. If the real process lives informally across teams, inboxes, and individuals, AI has very little solid ground to work from. Sugarwork helps create that ground.

From tribal knowledge to workflow intelligence

Sugarwork gives businesses a clearer picture of how work really moves. It helps identify where knowledge is concentrated, where bottlenecks form, where decisions slow down and where teams rely too heavily on informal workarounds to keep things moving.

The benefits of visibility

By making those patterns visible, businesses can:

- Reduce dependence on undocumented process knowledge
- Improve consistency across teams
- Uncover bottlenecks and hidden friction
- Make workflows easier to support with AI
- Build a stronger foundation for automation and orchestration

In that sense, Sugarwork does more than document process. It helps turn tacit knowledge into workflow intelligence — something the business can use to improve execution today and scale AI more effectively tomorrow.

The next wave of AI change will reshape how businesses work

The real opportunity now is bigger than tool adoption. It's about redesigning how work flows through the business — how decisions are made, how knowledge is shared and how AI supports action in the moments that matter. The businesses that get this right won't just move faster. They'll build an advantage that's easier to scale.

From fragmented experimentation to operational readiness

This is where Decidr and Sugarwork come into the picture:

Decidr's focus

Helping businesses move from fragmented experimentation to more practical, scalable execution.

Decidr

Sugarwork's role

Helping surface workflow knowledge that often sits informally across teams, systems and individual employees.

Sugarwork

Together, that speaks directly to one of the central findings in this report: the next phase of AI adoption won't depend on more awareness. It'll depend on making AI:

- Easier to trust
- Easier to integrate
- Easier to operationalize in the real flow of work.

Together, DecidrOS and Sugarwork speak directly to one of the central findings in this report: the next phase of AI adoption will depend less on access to tools and more on how clearly the business understands its own work.

Sugarwork helps make that work visible.

DecidrOS helps connect it to systems, data and execution.

The result is a stronger foundation for AI that can be trusted, coordinated and put to work at scale.

09

Methodology

About the research

This report is based on a February 2026 survey of 1,226 US decision-makers, including a main sample of 1,001 businesses with 20–500 employees.

1,226	total respondents
1,001	main sample
225	enterprise sample

How the research was conducted

This report is based on a five-minute online survey conducted in the United States in February, 2026.

Participant breakdown

The research included 1,226 participants in total, categorized as follows:

- **Main sample:** 1,001 decision-makers within businesses of 20–500 employees.
- **Enterprise sample:** 225 decision-makers within businesses of 500+ employees.

All respondents were key decision-makers involved in choosing IT and AI-related tools in businesses with revenue above **$200,000**.

Research scope

The survey explored several key areas of the current business landscape:

- Current business understanding and engagement with AI.
- Motivations and barriers shaping AI adoption.
- Segmentation of US decision-makers based on AI engagement and readiness.

Note: This specific report focuses on the main sample of US businesses with 20–500 employees.

Compliance and standards

The research was conducted in strict accordance with:

- **ISO 20252:2019** (Market, opinion and social research)
- **ISO 27001:2013** (Information security management)

Appendix

A directional view of enterprise businesses

We also surveyed a number of bigger enterprises (500+ employees) to assess their AI Readiness. This appendix offers a directional view of how larger businesses are approaching AI.

Bigger businesses are ahead on confidence and strategy. They still face implementation friction

Enterprise looks further ahead on belief, confidence and strategy, but is still working through many of the same execution challenges as the broader market. The difference is less about whether AI matters and more about the scale and complexity of making it work across a larger organization.

Enterprise looks further ahead on belief and confidence

Enterprise decision-makers are stronger on the headline measures.

92%	Say their organization understands what AI can do for the business.
77%	Are confident in their ability to implement it.
90%	Say AI has already enhanced operations and growth.
96%	Expect AI's impact to grow further.
83%	Rate AI investment as urgent.

Taken together, that points to a group that is further ahead in conviction and strategic intent.

1. Source: B1. On a scale of 1 to 10, how well does your organization understand what Artificial Intelligence can do for the business?
2. Source: D1. On a scale of 1 to 10, how confident are you in your organization's ability to implement AI across your business within your desired timeframe?
3. Source: D3a. On a scale of 1 to 10, how impactful has AI been in enhancing your business operations and driving growth over the past 12 months?
4. Source: D3b. In the next 12 months, how much do you expect the impact of AI on your business to change?
5. Source: C1. On a scale of 1 to 10, how urgent is investment in AI for your business?

Strategy is stronger than day-to-day deployment

That stronger posture shows up in strategy too

But deployment is more mixed

69% say they have a clear AI strategy and roadmap

1% say they don't know where to start

Source: B3. Which of the following best describes your organization's point of view on AI?

Current deployment of AI within organizations

Standalone tools used by individuals
(e.g. ChatGPT, Microsoft Copilot, Google Gemini etc.) **50%**

Integrated only in specific processes or workflows **22%**

Embedded across multiple functions of the business **18%**

Centralized AI platform across the whole business **8%**

So enterprise looks more mature in strategy than in day-to-day rollout.

Source: C4. How is AI currently deployed into your business operations?

The challenges are scale, integration, and control

The enterprise story becomes sharper when you look at difficulty and barriers.

55%

say implementation would be difficult

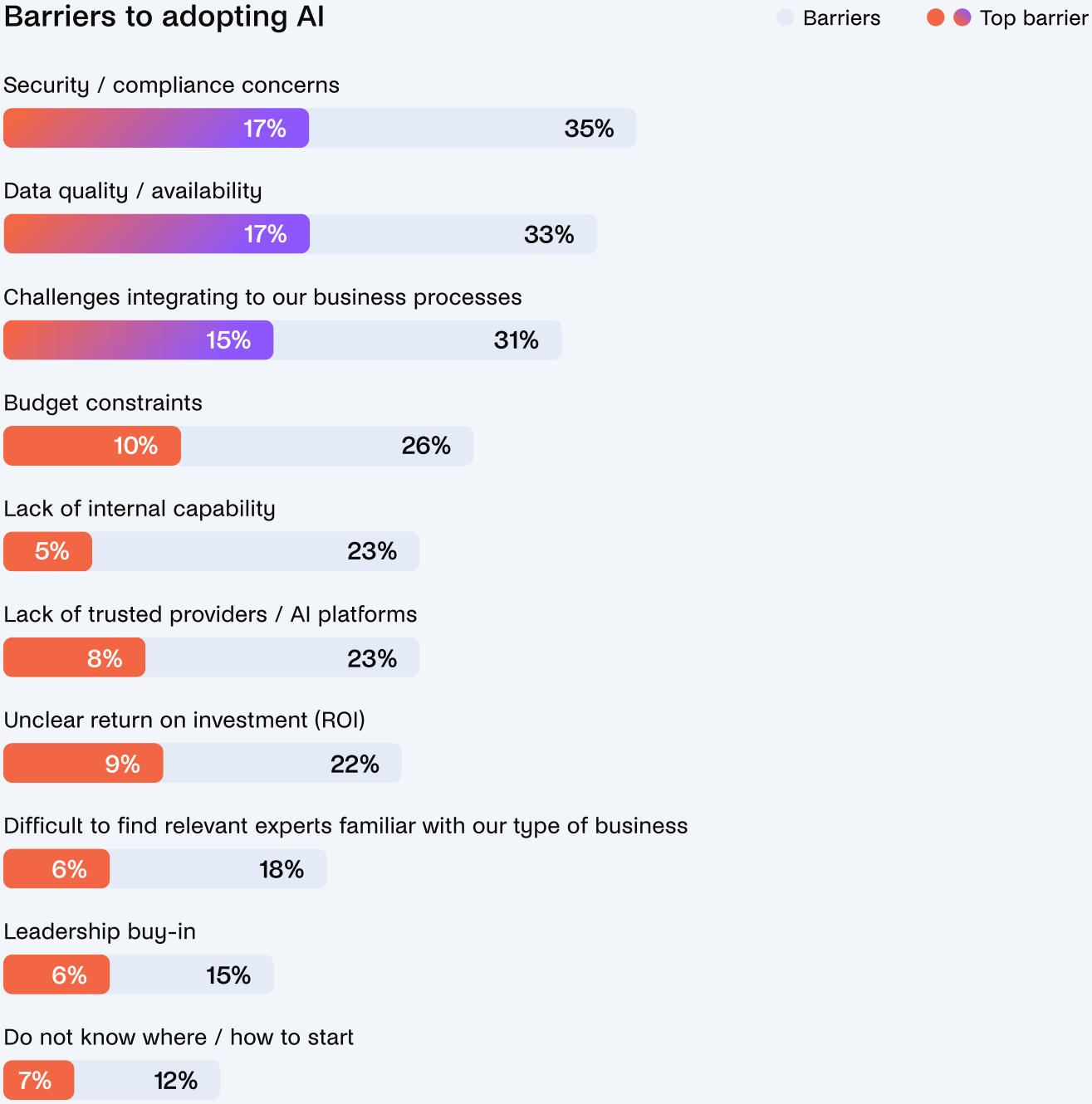
46%

say the same in the main business sample

Source: C3. On a scale of 1 to 10, how difficult would it be to implement AI-powered tools into your current business processes?

The biggest barriers are highlighted below, suggesting that larger businesses aren't facing a completely different AI story, but rather a more complex version of the same one, with greater confidence alongside increased systems, governance, and coordination to manage.

Barriers to adopting AI



Source: B6a. Which, if any, of the following are the main reasons preventing or delaying you from using AI in your business?
B6b. And what is the main reason preventing or delaying you from using AI in your business?

"The next wave of AI won't be won by the businesses with the most tools. It'll be won by the ones that turned those tools into a system. That shift — from scattered to coordinated — is what DecidrOS makes possible."

Paul Chan
Founder and Co-CEO, Decidr

Bottom Line

The US market has moved decisively beyond AI awareness. Leadership teams are engaged, experimentation is underway and the opportunity is widely recognized.

But the findings make clear that belief is no longer the main barrier to progress.

What matters now is whether businesses can move from scattered intent to practical execution by embedding AI in ways that are secure, connected and tied to meaningful operational outcomes. For many, that remains the hard part. Adoption is often uneven, tool-led and difficult to scale across functions.

The next phase of advantage will come from closing that gap. The businesses that pull ahead will be the ones that move beyond isolated use cases and embed AI into how the business actually operates, consistently, confidently and at scale.

Decidr

Discover your AI readiness

AI is moving fast, but readiness varies wildly. The Decidr AI Readiness Assessment helps you pinpoint where your organisation is strong, where it's exposed, and the practical steps to turn scattered experiments into repeatable, measurable results.

Take the AI Readiness Assessment today.