



2026 State of Nonprofit AI Adoption and Governance Report

Discover how nonprofits in the US and
around the world are adopting, governing,
and preparing their organizations for AI.

An NTEN and Bridgespan Group report
by David Figueroa and Jacob Dwelle

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We hope the report catalyzes more nonprofit professionals in the U.S. and around the world to engage meaningfully in designing the tools and policies that best meet the needs of our teams, our missions, and our communities.

Introduction

Nonprofits and NGOs are adopting (generative) artificial intelligence technologies faster than they’re designing governance and training for their teams. Where were the biggest challenges and opportunities for organizations? And, how did folks really feel about all of this change?

NTEN and Bridgespan partnered on this research project (one we hope will be an annual effort) to explore how nonprofit and social sector organizations are adopting and using AI tools and technologies – from generative AI tools to AI-powered features embedded in everyday software. We wanted to surface answers to some of the questions above and identify priorities for investment, adoption, and development of AI-enabled technology for the sector.

While we anticipated that there would be areas of consensus across mission areas, budget sizes, and geographies, we knew there would be some places where divides or differences showed up. You’ll find this to be true in the report, and we have highlighted in the report narrative where disaggregations make a difference. For the most part, they did not and the answers were similar regardless of those factors. Similarly, we regularly evaluated differences to questions based on the

split between executive leadership and staff, and have highlighted where there are differences.

Over the last few years, quite a few reports about AI have been published. For this research project, we focused on the experiences, sentiment, hopes, and priorities of nonprofit professionals for AI. We did not, importantly, design our survey with the assumption that the social sector is “behind” any other sector, but that deep consideration is needed for the unique perspectives and requirements for any technology – especially emerging tools like AI – that the sector holds.

As has been true of many other waves of technology advancement, we see a broad diversity of approaches, investments, and adaptations across nonprofits and foundations. To keep a broad view in this research, we did not frame AI adoption as an inevitability or a need; instead, we wanted to honestly see where the sector is at with adoption, governance, and forward-looking plans.

We hope that this report serves a few key roles in our collective work and supports opportunities in every organization. Namely, we NTEN and Bridgespan are committed to publishing additional free and accessible resources that directly address concerns, challenges, and needs surfaced by respondents in this report. We also hope that we will continue to hear from you about ways we can support your organization in navigating decision-making and implementation considerations. And, we hope the report catalyzes more nonprofit professionals in the U.S. and around the world to engage meaningfully in designing the tools and policies that best meet the needs of our teams, our missions, and our communities. Our hope is to continue this survey work annually to track longitudinal trends in the sector.

How we made this report

The survey was open from late April to mid-June 2026 and was distributed through NTEN and Bridgespan lists and partners, but all responses were completely independent and anonymous. We received a total of 917 respondents, primarily based in the United States, though with many

from around the world. Most organizations are 25 years old or older, have smaller staff sizes (1-25 total staff), and have at least \$1M in annual budgets. A full breakdown of organizational demographics is included at the end of the report.

The survey was built from the ground up to capture staff and executive experiences separately, based on how respondents self-identified their role, using branching logic to ask each group different questions where relevant and to compare their responses directly where both groups answered the same one.

Some questions were shown only to staff, some only to executives, and some to everyone, then split by role, where we judged the difference meaningful enough to call out. Where a staff/executive split isn't shown for a shared question, either the difference was minor, or the question wasn't asked of both groups. Watch out for the color-coded tags on each page for an easy visual mnemonic.

For supplementary analysis, organizational budget size was collapsed into two bands —

under \$10M and \$10M+ — chosen for clarity rather than granularity. Job role and organization budget size were the two dimensions we found meaningful enough to disaggregate throughout this report.

In the context of this report, “AI” refers to both generative AI tools and AI-powered features embedded in existing software, as respondents may not always distinguish between the two.



We did not design our survey with the assumption that the social sector is “behind” any other sector, but that deep consideration is needed for the unique perspectives and requirements for any technology – especially emerging tools like AI – that the sector holds.

We did not frame AI adoption as an inevitability or a need; instead, we wanted to honestly see where the sector is at with adoption, governance, and forward-looking plans.

Trends to consider

1. Interest in AI has outpaced the infrastructure required to support it.

Executives are confident in AI's potential, but most teams lack the organizational infrastructure required to support it responsibly. Some of that is a resourcing problem — larger budgets do show stronger governance and staff capability — but overall, allocated budgets, formal risk planning, and training all lag behind. Staff training, in particular, resists improvement even in larger, better-resourced organizations.

2. Staff and executives are experiencing AI adoption very differently.

Executives use AI more (including shadow use), feel more comfortable using AI tools, and are more optimistic on the whole about it, whereas staff report less visibility, less voice in decision-making, and more mixed sentiment overall.

3. The sector already agrees on the fix: clearer guidance and real training.

Staff and executives were asked separately, from different vantage points, yet converged on the

same two answers. Staff rank clear guidance slightly above training as what would help them most; executives cite the same two factors as top accelerants for expanding responsible AI use.

These are the trends that emerged for us, but we would love to hear from you. Are there patterns you see? Is there data here that validates an experience in your organization or feels different? Are there resources you would like us to make available to you and your teams as you explore how AI technologies may support your mission? You can write to us anytime at editor@nten.org and find many already available resources on the [NTEN AI Resource Hub](#) and the Bridgespan [Responsible Data, Technology and AI Strategy page](#), which also includes a corresponding AI framework built on these results: [Choosing your AI path: A framework for nonprofit leaders to make strategic choices](#).

Thank you for reading and sharing this research, and for all the work you do to advance our world.

Amy Sample Ward, NTEN
Nate Wong, The Bridgespan Group



Where AI adoption stands today

How are nonprofits adopting and using AI tools?

Key findings

- AI use is nearly universal, but adoption is shallow, not deep; most respondents report official AI use as taking place within small pilots or select teams rather than in fully integrated workflows, and informal use remains common.
- Staff and executives characterize AI adoption differently: staff describe informal, individual use, while executives report formal pilots or organization-wide rollouts.
- Most respondents access AI tools via features already embedded in existing software far more often than through dedicated subscriptions, and many use AI tools without any organizational support.
- Executives report AI reaching most organizational functions in some form, led by communications and marketing.

How is AI used at your organization today?

- Aggregate
- Staff
- Executives

AI use at organizations is widespread, with 98% of respondents reporting that AI is used in some capacity at their organization. 61% of respondents surveyed are using AI in an official capacity — meaning organized pilots (33%), team-wide use (24%), or fully integrated use (4%). Another 37% report that AI is used informally or by individual staff. Only 2% of respondents report that no AI is being used for work at their organization.

Executives and staff report meaningfully different perceptions when it comes to organizational AI adoption. **Staff are more likely to characterize AI use at their organization as informal and individually driven at 44%, compared to executives’ 32%.** Instead, executives are more likely to report that AI use has progressed to formal pilots, broader team adoption, or full integration. Given this, leadership may be experiencing the same adoption process differently than staff; staff are closer to day-to-day, informal use, while executives have more visibility into, and report on, formal pilots and rollouts. Both groups appear to agree that informal AI use has become a widespread norm.

FIGURE 1.1

Aggregate

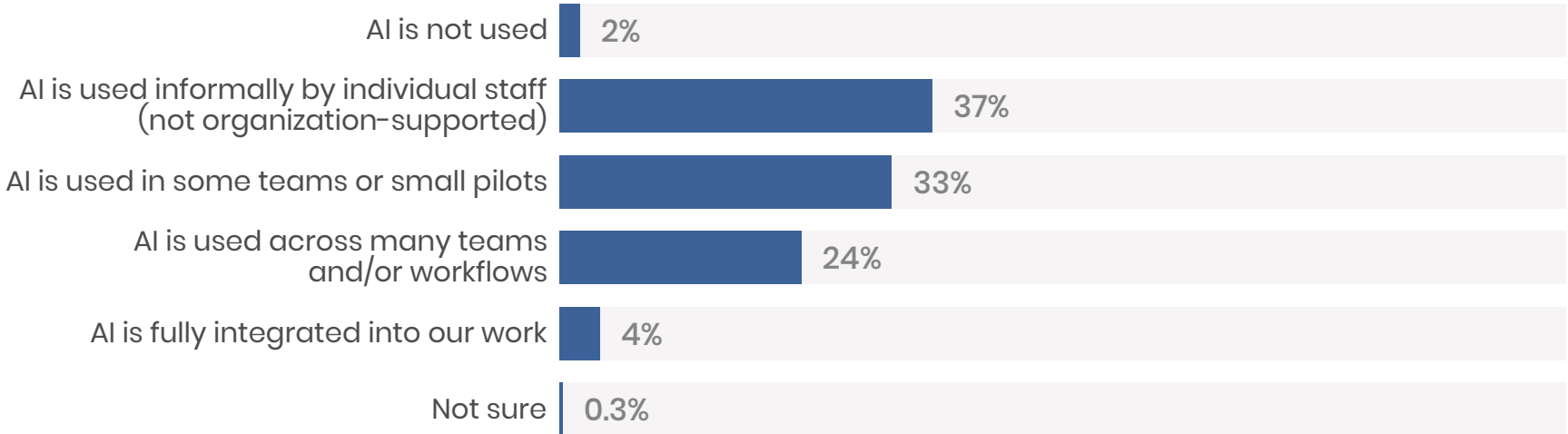


FIGURE 1.2

Staff

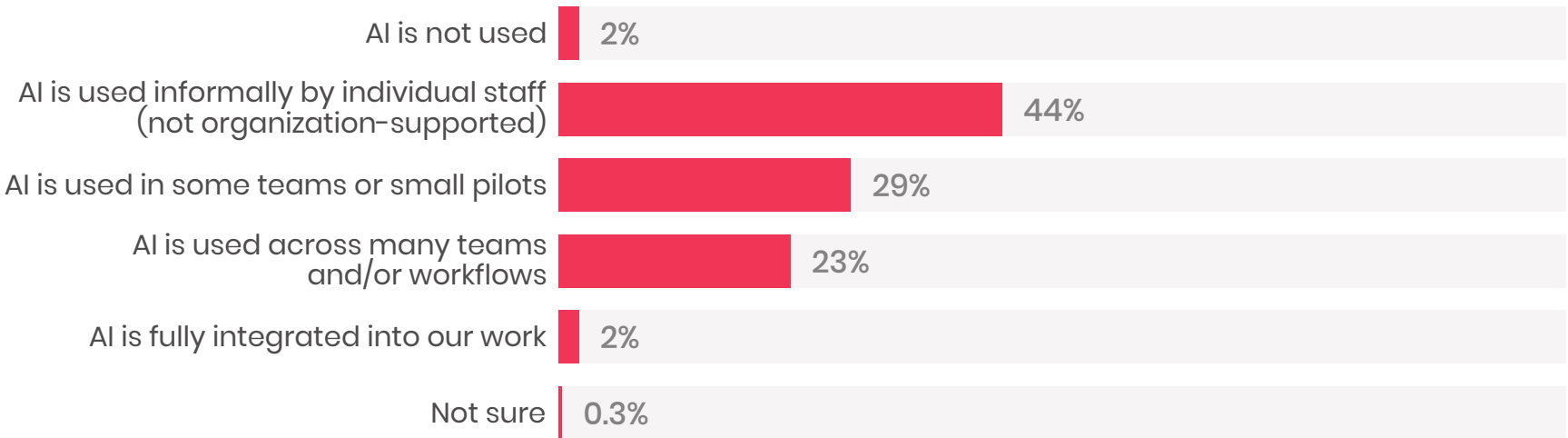
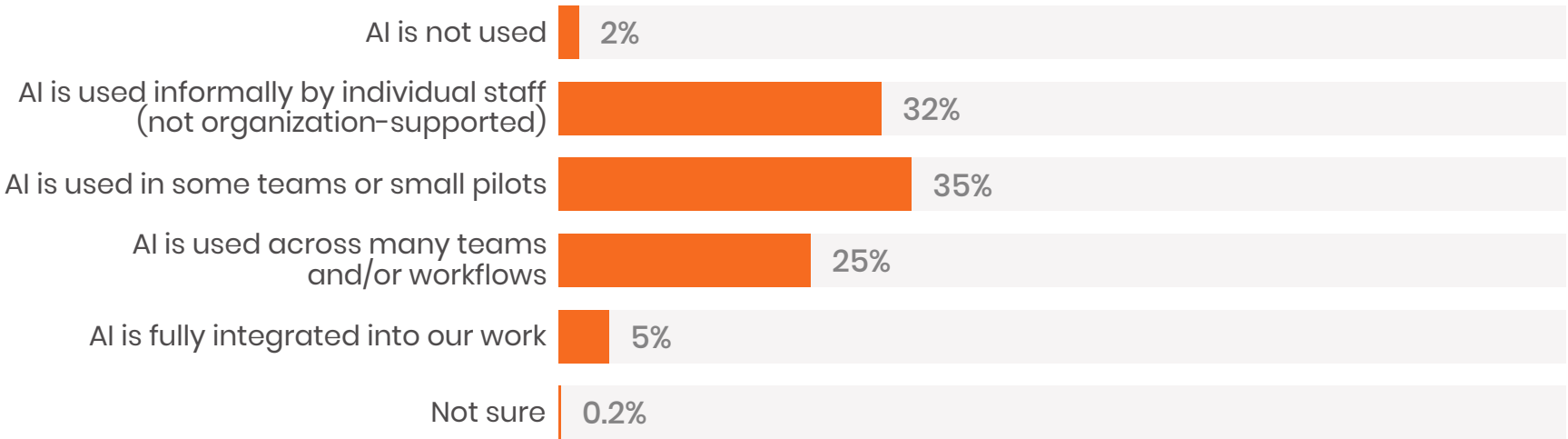


FIGURE 1.3

Executives



By organizational budget size

Disaggregating this same question by organizational budget size — under \$10 million versus \$10 million and above — reveals a related but distinct pattern. Organizations with budgets under \$10M were far more likely to report individual, informal AI use, with 43% of responses, compared to 27% among organizations with budgets of \$10M+. Larger organizations, in turn, are more likely to report AI use in small teams or pilots (39% vs. 29% for smaller organizations) and across many teams or workflows (31% vs. 20%). **Notably, no respondents from \$10M+ organizations report zero AI use, whereas a small percentage of smaller organizations do.**

FIGURE 1.4

Budget under \$10 million

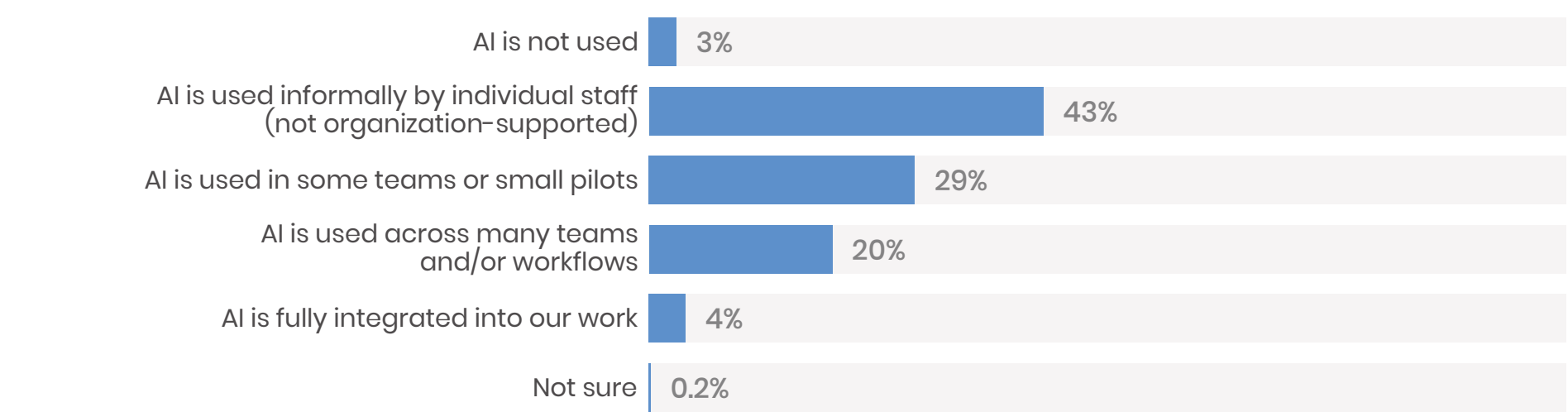
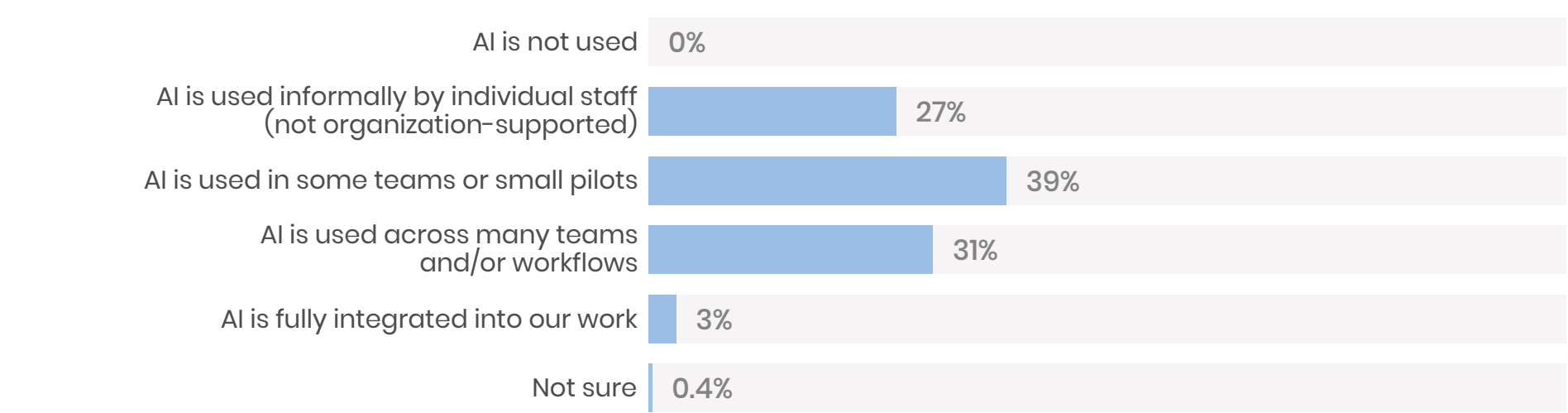


FIGURE 1.5

Budget of \$10 million+



What kinds of AI tools are available at your organization today?

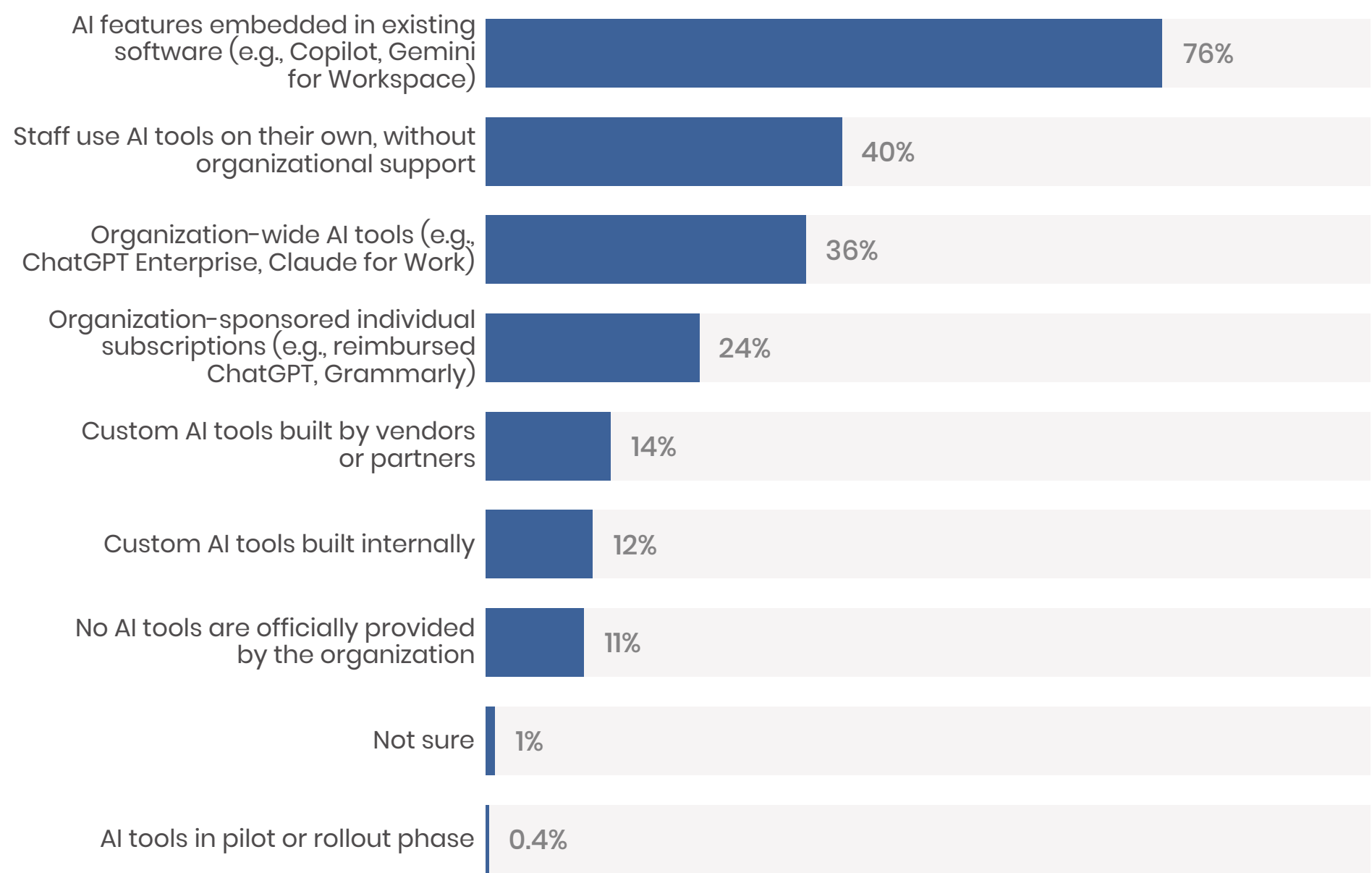
(Select all that apply)

Aggregate

This same split between informal and formal adoption shows up in which tools are actually available at organizations today. **76% of respondents report that AI features are already embedded in the software their organization uses, such as Copilot or Gemini.** Alongside these embedded features, 36% of respondents report organization-wide AI tools and 24% report organization-sponsored individual subscriptions. 40% of respondents say staff use AI tools on their own, without organizational support, and another 11% report that no tools are officially provided by their organization at all. Again, respondents seem aligned that informal AI tool use persists, whether or not it’s officially sanctioned. These figures stay largely consistent across organizations of different budget sizes, suggesting this pattern isn’t just a function of resourcing.

FIGURE 2.1

Aggregate



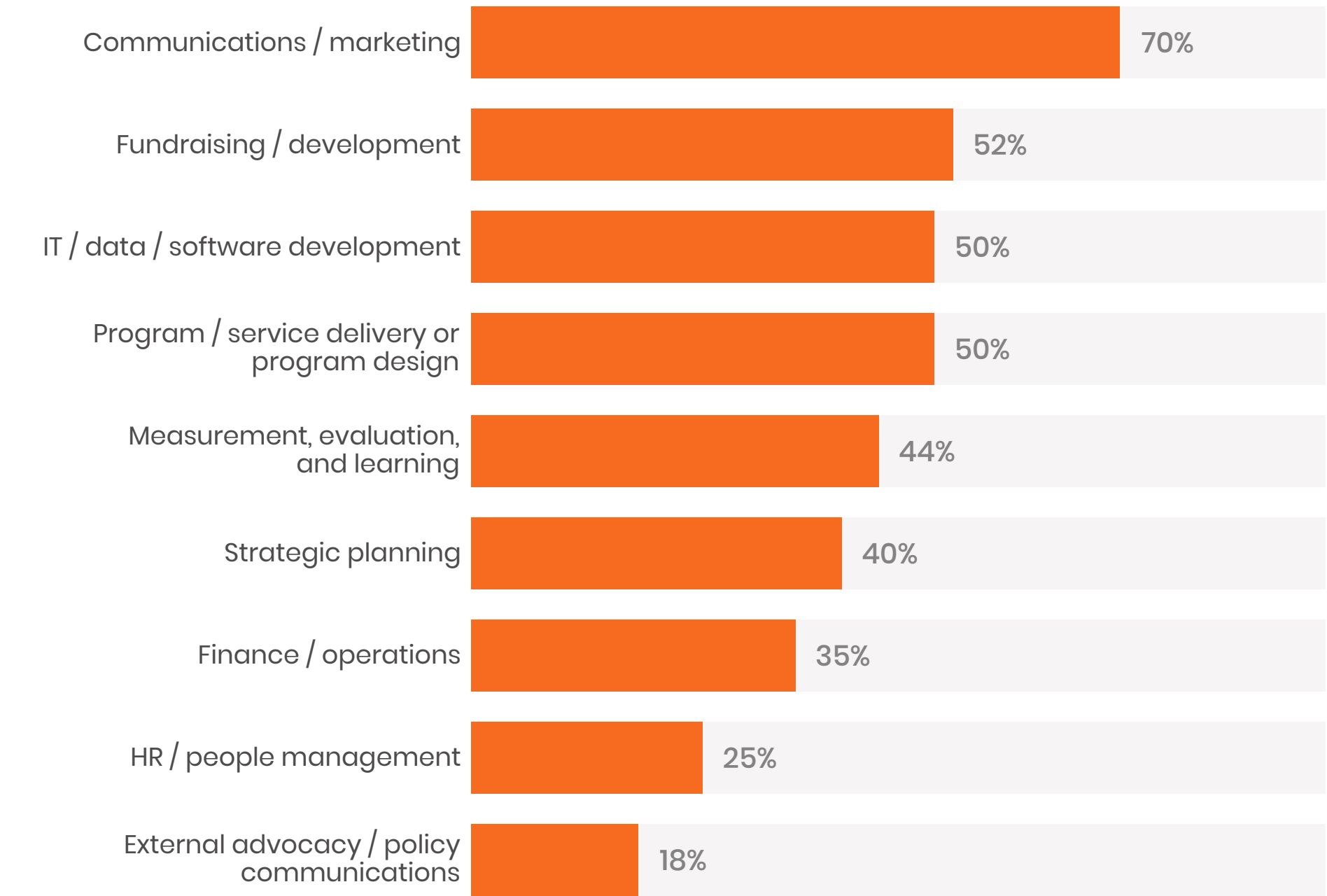
Of the functions below, which are meaningfully using AI today at your organization? (Select all that apply)

Executives

Beyond available tools, leadership was asked about how their organizations are actually using AI. **According to executives, AI is being used for a wide range of functions at nonprofits, with communications and marketing as the most common (70%).** Widespread use is also reported for fundraising and development (52%), IT and software development (50%), program or service delivery (50%), and measurement and evaluation (44%). Strategic planning (40%) and finance/operations (35%) follow at more moderate rates. The least common use cases are external advocacy and policy communications (18%) and Human Resources work (25%).

FIGURE 3.1

Executives



Which of the following do you personally use AI for in your work?

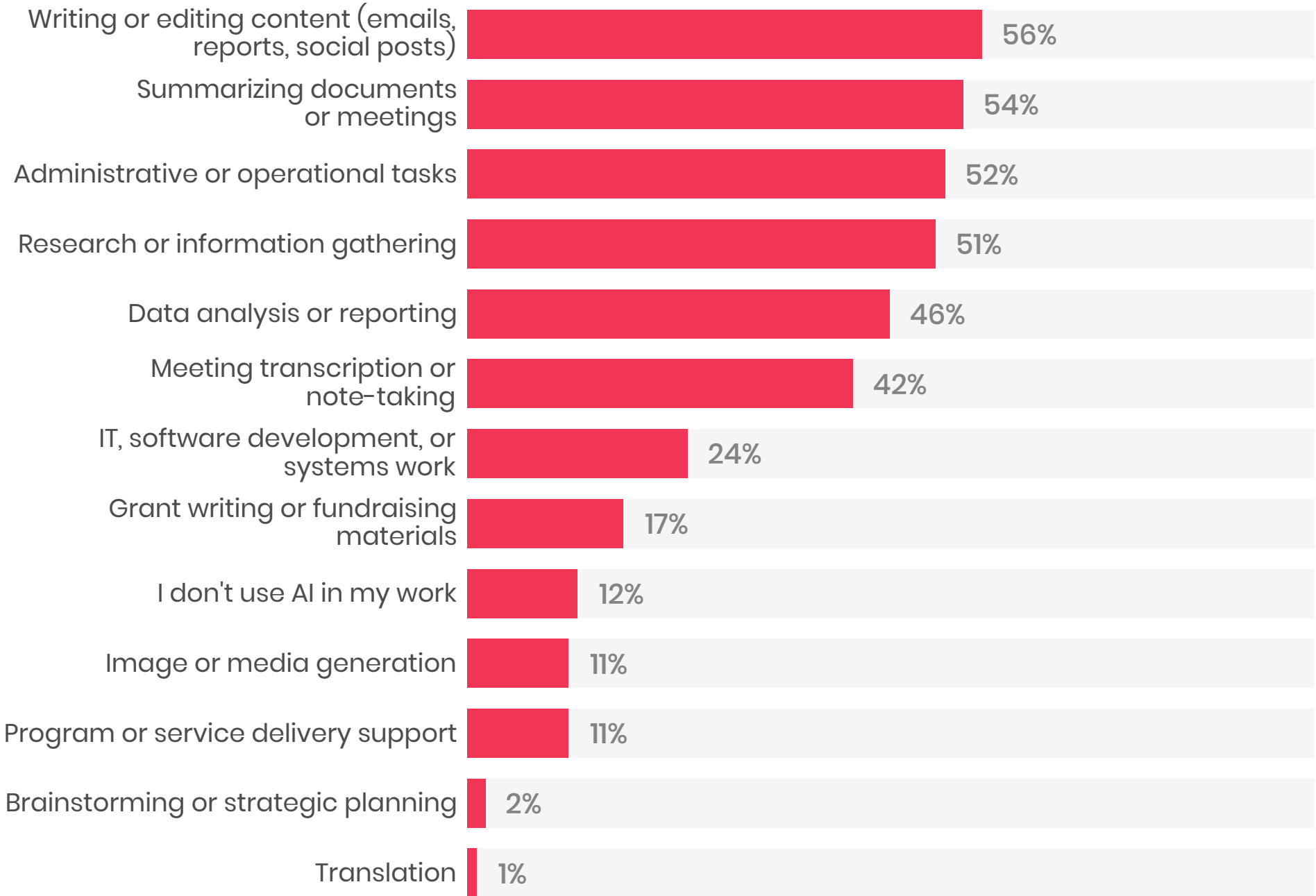
(Select all that apply)

Staff

Staff report using AI primarily for individual, task-level work. The most common use cases cluster around everyday productivity tasks, such as writing or editing content (56%), summarizing documents or meetings (54%), administrative or operational tasks (52%), and research or information gathering (51%). Fewer staff report using AI for data analysis or reporting (45%) and meeting transcription (42%), and only 11% of staff report using AI for program or service delivery support. Only 12% of staff report that they don't use AI in their work at all.

FIGURE 4.1

Staff





Power, decisions, and voice

Who controls AI adoption, and why?

Key findings

- Decision-making power around AI adoption is concentrated among executives, while staff agency is more limited to shaping or informing decisions.
- Staff most often identify executive leadership and IT as responsible for approving AI tool use, reinforcing that decision-making processes remain primarily top-down.
- Executives describe AI adoption as strategic and intentional, whereas staff more often describe it as something that happened to them, driven by outside pressure or tools they didn't choose (or were already using).

Which best describes your involvement in decisions about AI implementation at your organization?

Staff

Executives

Though most respondents report some degree of agency regarding AI implementation at their organization, decision-making authority varies notably along role lines. Executives make final decisions themselves at six times the rate of staff (30% versus 5%), and are far less likely to be excluded from decision-making altogether (2% versus 8%). The pattern also appears in the ‘I help shape decisions’ category: 58% of executives report this role, while staff are nearly split between shaping decisions (44%) and simply providing input (43%). **Altogether, staff responses cluster towards the more passive end of decision-making, while executives exercise real decision-making power.** AI implementation may be collaborative in theory, but ultimate decision-making authority remains primarily top-down.

FIGURE 5.1

Staff

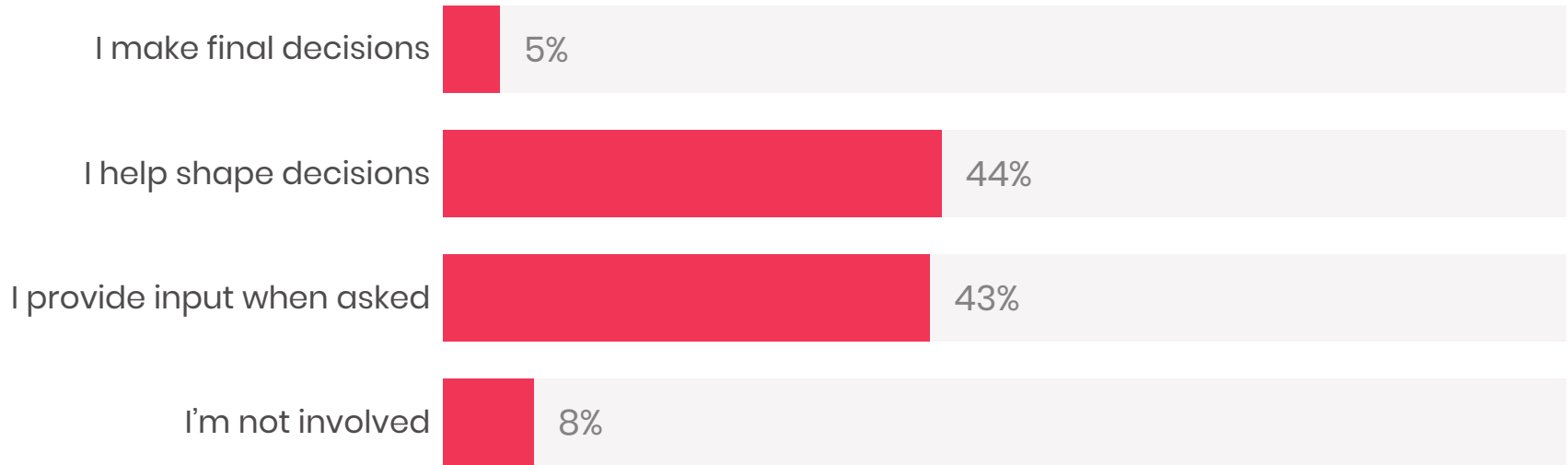
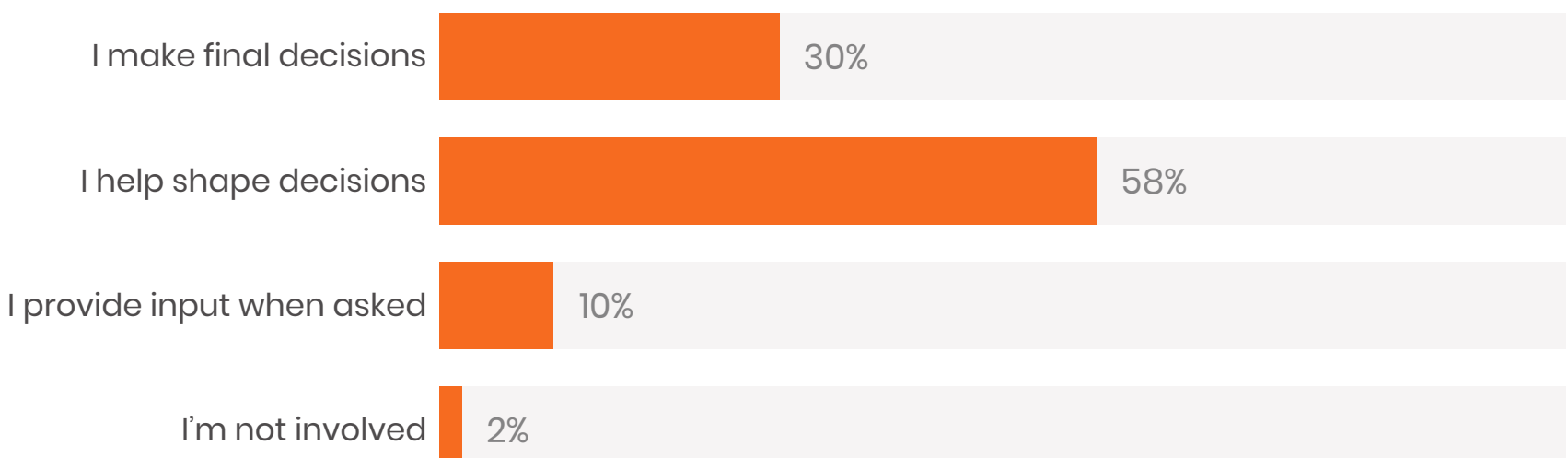


FIGURE 5.2

Executives



Who is responsible for decisions about approving the use of AI tools at your organization?

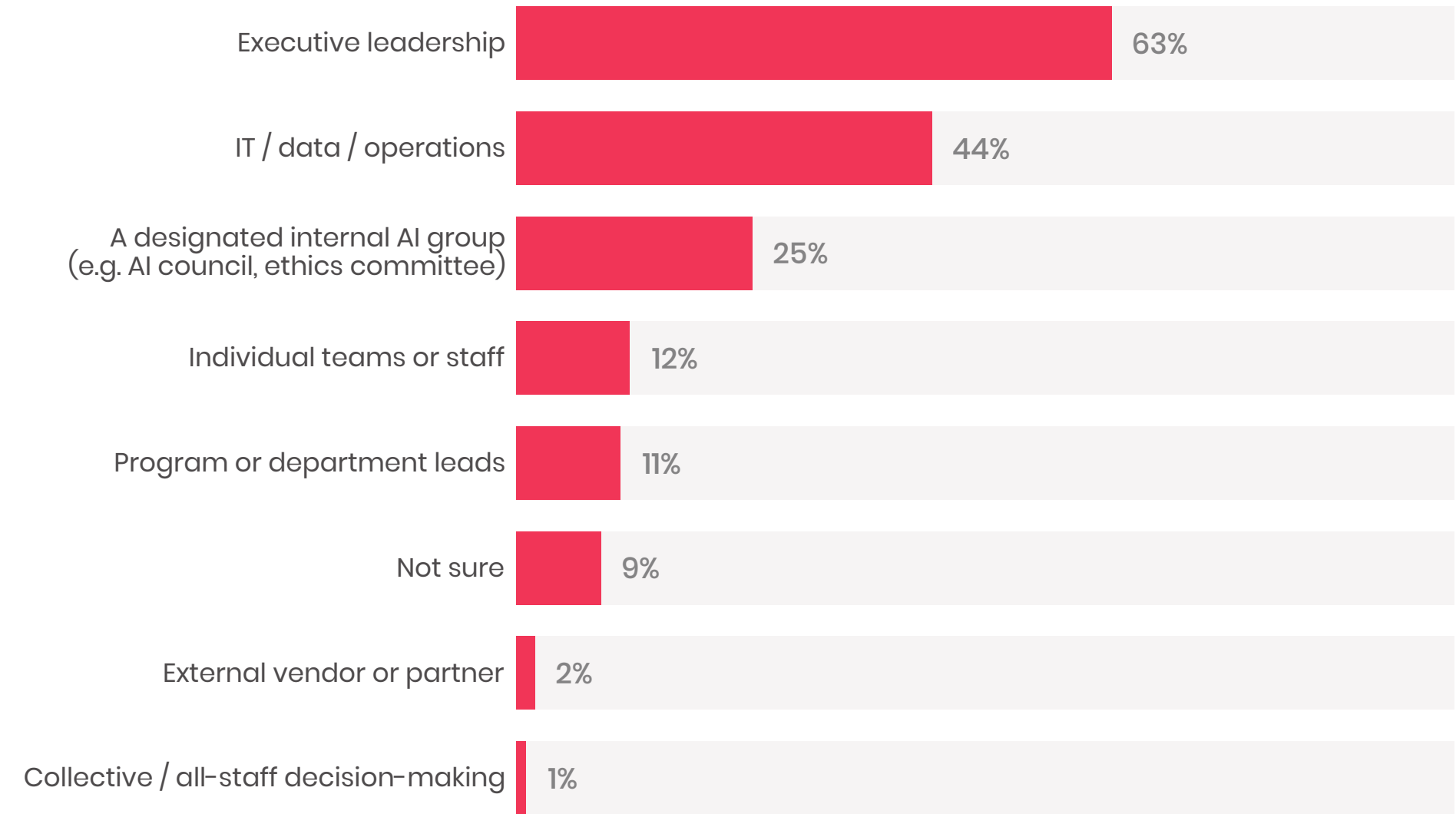
(Select all that apply)

Staff

Staff most commonly identify executive leadership as responsible for approving the use of AI tools at their organization (63%), reinforcing the broader pattern of executive-led decision-making around AI implementation. IT, data, or operations roles follow closely behind in decision-making power (44%). A quarter of staff (25%) also point towards a designated internal AI group, such as an AI council or ethics committee. Far fewer attribute approval authority to individual teams or staff (12%) or program and department leads (11%), and almost none identify it as a collective or all-staff decision (1%). 9% report that they are unsure who holds this responsibility at all. It’s worth noting that “collective or all-staff decision-making” was added as a post-analysis category from open-ended write-in responses, rather than as an original answer choice, and may have received more selections had it been available to participants intentionally.

FIGURE 6.1

Staff



What do you understand to be the main reasons your organization decided to adopt or invest in AI tools?

(Select all that apply)

- Aggregate
- Staff
- Executives

Respondents report a wide variety of reasons for adopting AI, with most being practical. Reducing staff burden (56%) and reducing costs or increasing efficiency (54%) rank highest, followed by improving the quality or consistency of work (48%). On the surface, it would appear as though adoption is driven more by operational necessity than by strategic aspiration.

However, disaggregating by role reveals a divergence in understood motivation. Executives are consistently more likely than staff to cite intentional, strategic motivations for AI adoption — improving quality (58% versus 35%), reducing costs or increasing efficiency (63% versus 42%), upskilling staff (43% versus 22%), and enabling new program approaches (40% versus 21%), among others — with differentials of 13 to 23 percentage points across nearly every shared reason.

Executives were also asked about additional institutional factors driving adoption that staff were not — including direction from leadership (27%), reimagining organizational strategy (22%), and direction from their boards (11%).

The trend reverses only in two places: Staff are more likely than executives to say adoption was driven by keeping up with peers or sector trends (44% versus 36%) and by AI simply being built into products the organization already uses, with no real choice (34% versus 30%). **Where executives describe deliberate strategy, staff more often describe adoption as something that continues to happen to and around them, driven by external pressures or day-to-day work needs rather than being intentional, collaborative, and planned.**

Demonstrated in the following section, that asymmetry — strategic upstream, imposed downstream — shows up again in how staff and executives describe their day-to-day experiences with AI.

FIGURE 7.1

Aggregate

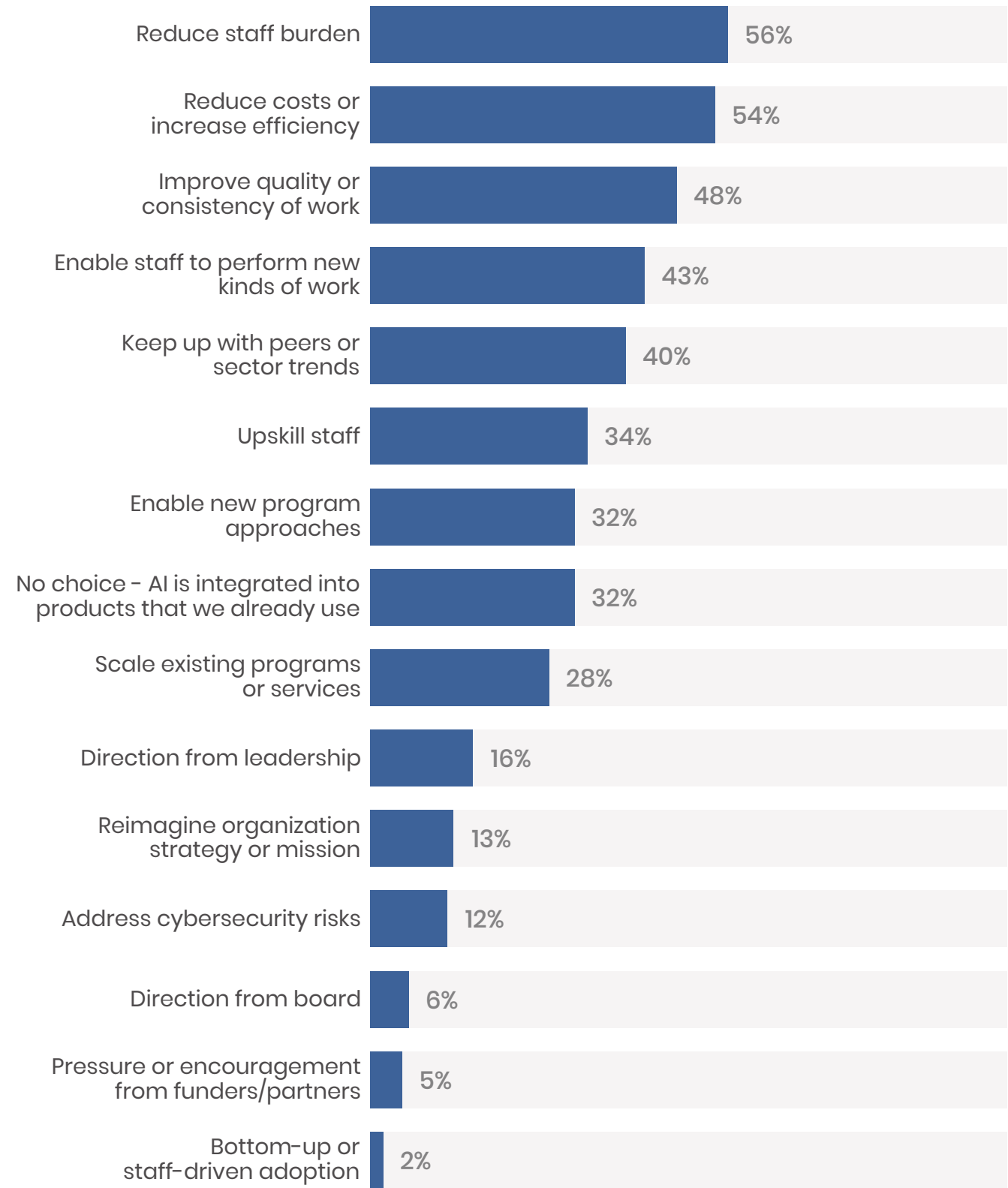


FIGURE 7.2

Staff

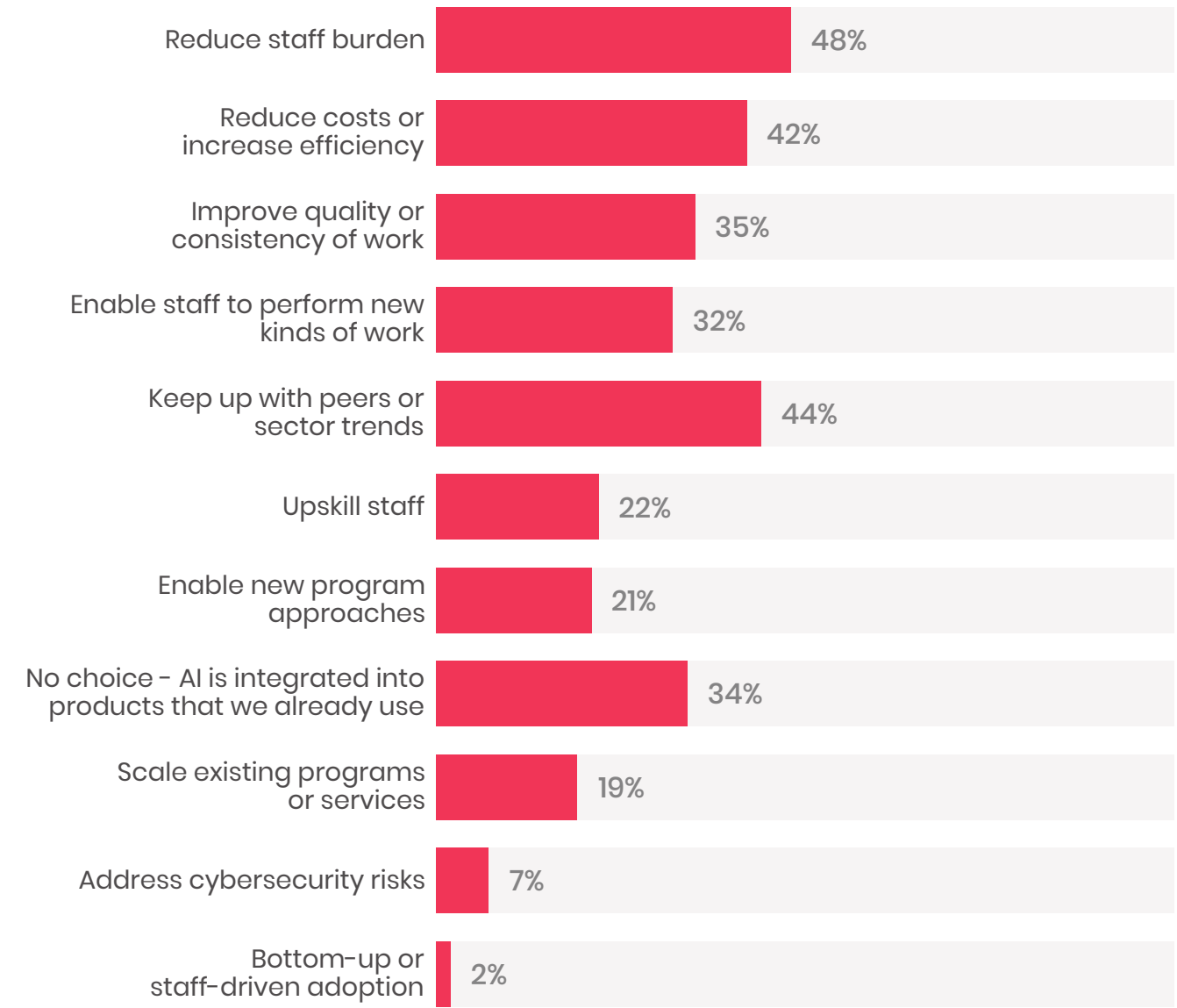
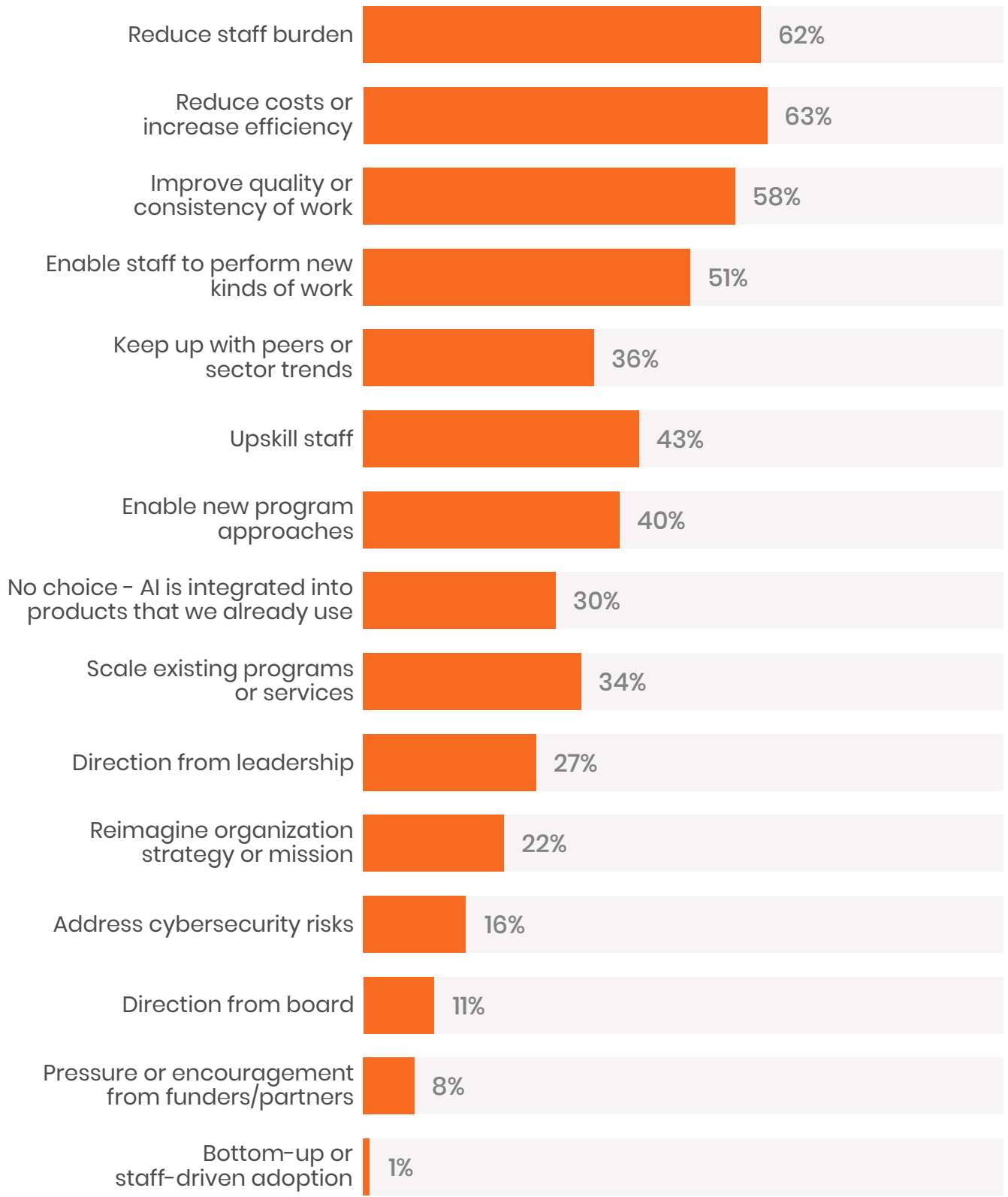
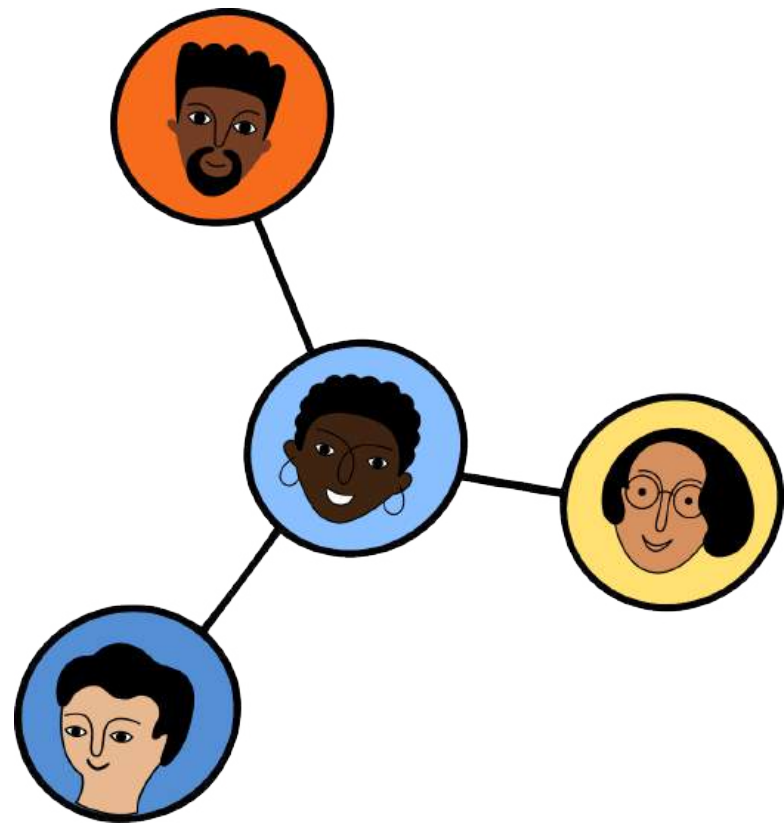


FIGURE 7.3

Executives





The staff/executive gap

How differently do staff and executives experience AI at work?

Key findings

- Executives use AI more often and feel more comfortable using it than staff.
- Both groups sense untapped opportunity, but staff feel less strongly and are more likely to disagree or stay neutral.
- Executives feel mostly positive about AI, while staff sentiment is far more mixed or outright negative.
- Staff are also far less aware of whether leadership is discussing AI risk and responsible use at all.
- Honesty around AI use is largely intact, and confidence navigating AI use is one of the few places the two groups actually align.

How often do you use AI in your day-to-day work?

- Aggregate
- Staff
- Executives

AI use has already become a routine part of the workday for most of the nonprofit sector. 45% of respondents report using AI for work at least daily, and another 29% use it regularly, about once a week. Occasional and rare use are a minority, as 11% report using AI about once a month, and 8% report using it less than once a month. Only 7% of respondents report never using AI in their day-to-day work. That said, usage frequency differs meaningfully by role.

Executives report heavier day-to-day AI use than staff: 50% use AI daily or more, compared to 38% of staff. Executives are also far less likely to report never using AI (3%) than staff (13%). This mirrors a trend from earlier in the report: executives, who hold more decision-making power over AI adoption, are also among its heaviest users.

FIGURE 8.1

Aggregate

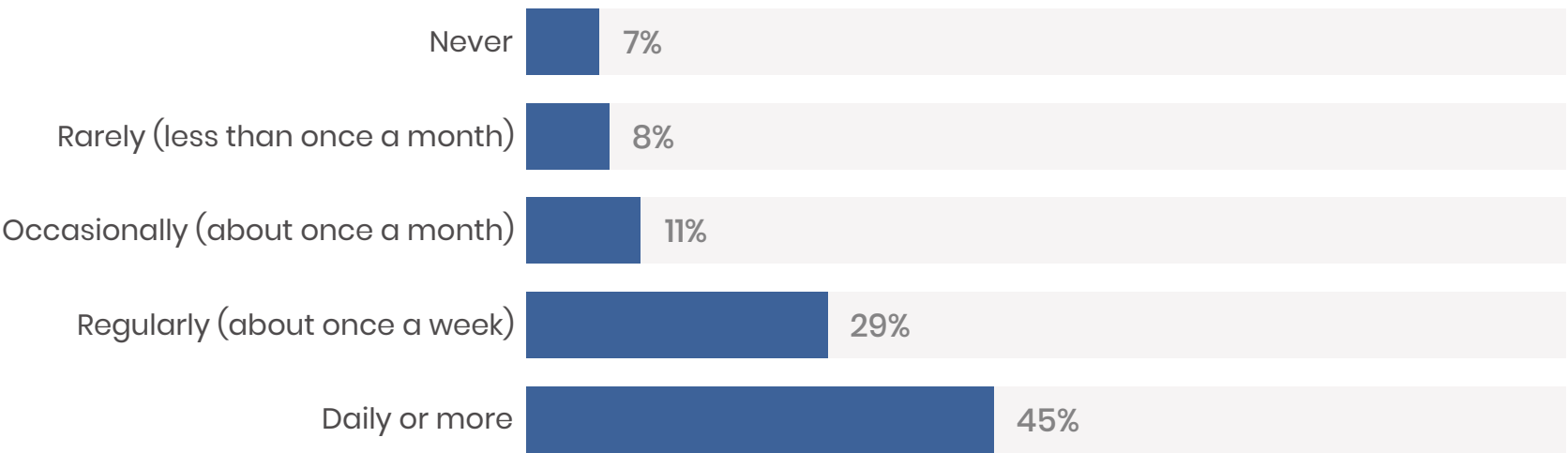


FIGURE 8.2

Staff

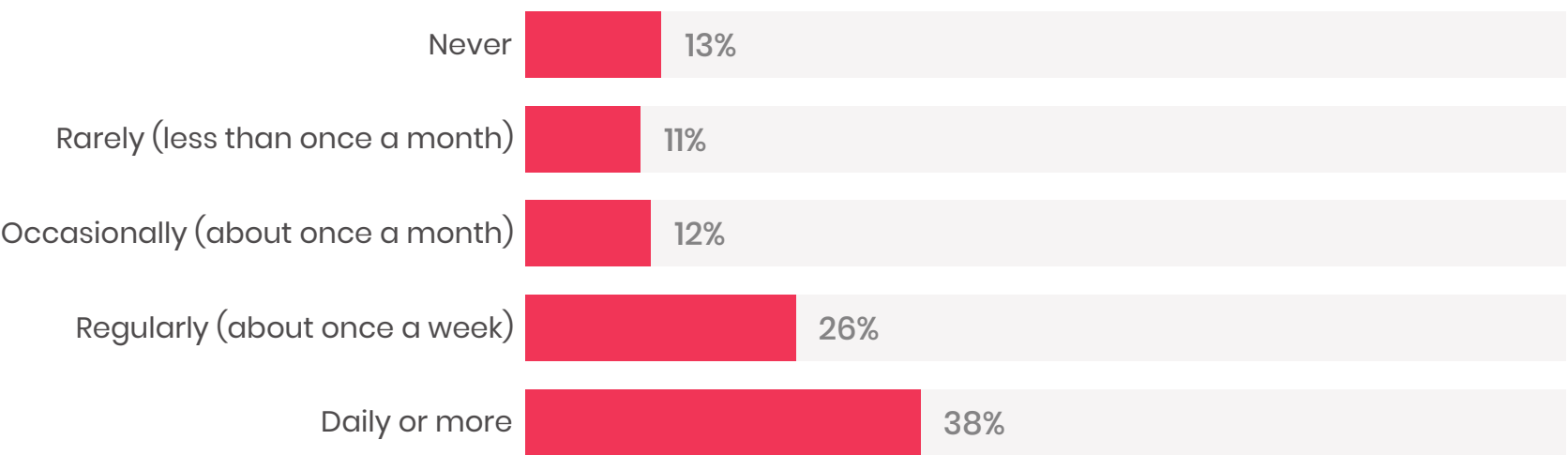
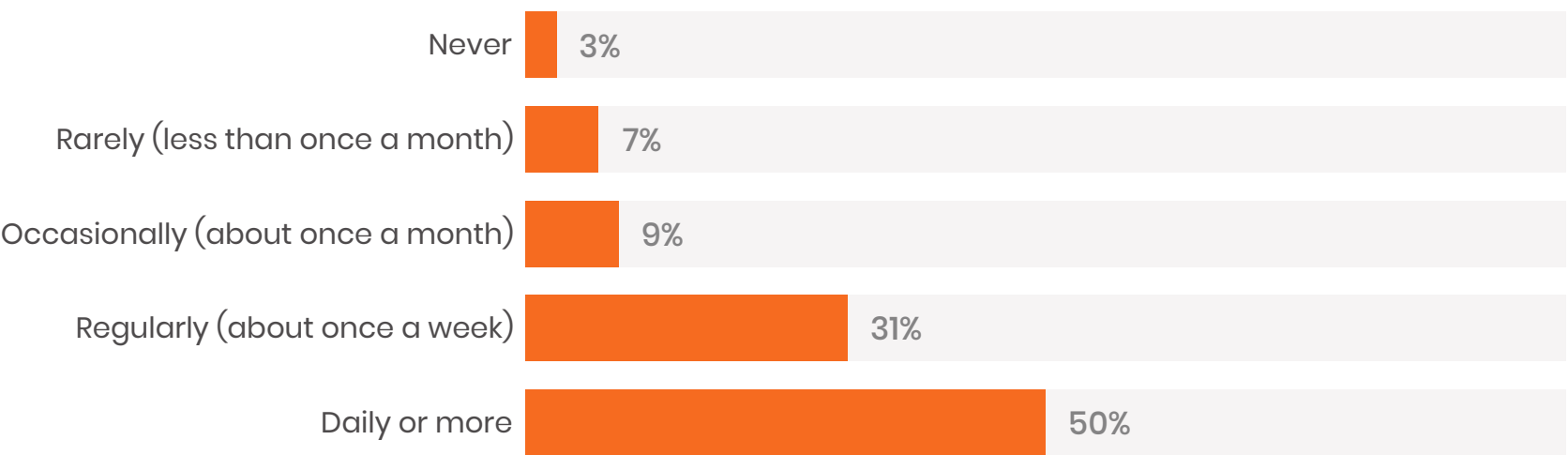


FIGURE 8.3

Executives



How comfortable do you personally feel using AI tools as part of your work?

- Aggregate
- Staff
- Executives

Staff and executives are both relatively comfortable using AI tools at work. **A combined 62% of respondents report being somewhat or very comfortable, split nearly evenly between the two categories (31% each), while 23% report being somewhat or very uncomfortable.**

However, executives are more comfortable using AI tools than staff, as 67% report being somewhat or very comfortable, compared to 55% of staff. The gap is most pronounced at the extremes, where staff are nearly twice as likely as executives to report being very uncomfortable (19% versus 10%). This discrepancy alone highlights that discomfort with AI isn't evenly distributed. Rather, it's concentrated among staff, who are altogether less likely to have a say in how these tools are being adopted.

FIGURE 9.1

Aggregate

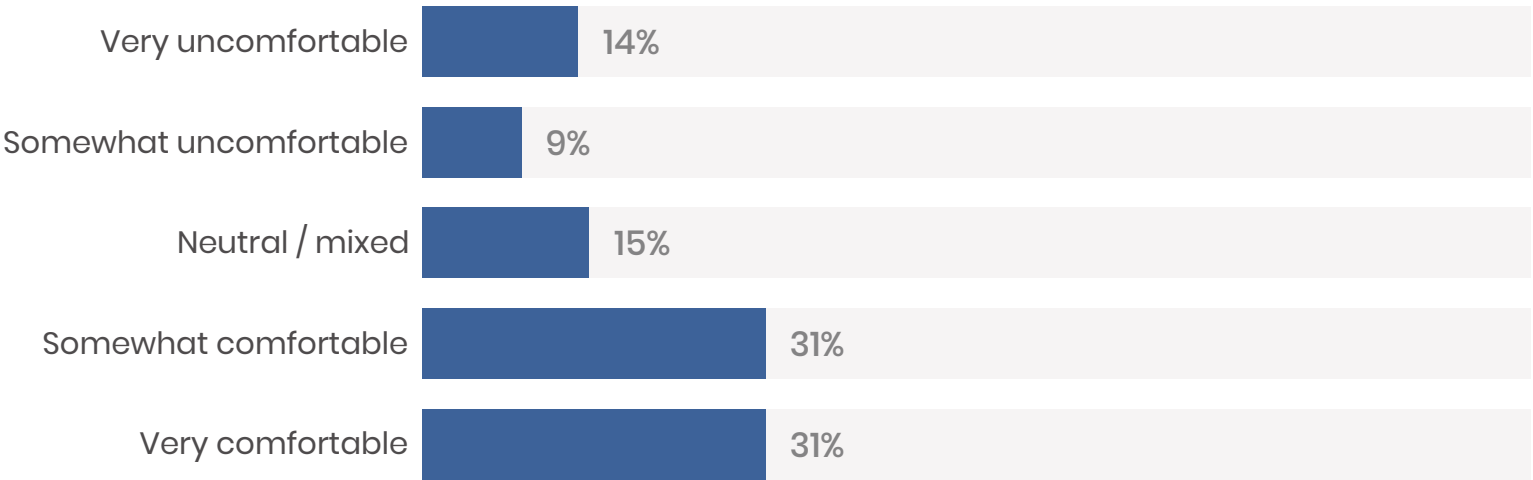


FIGURE 9.2

Staff

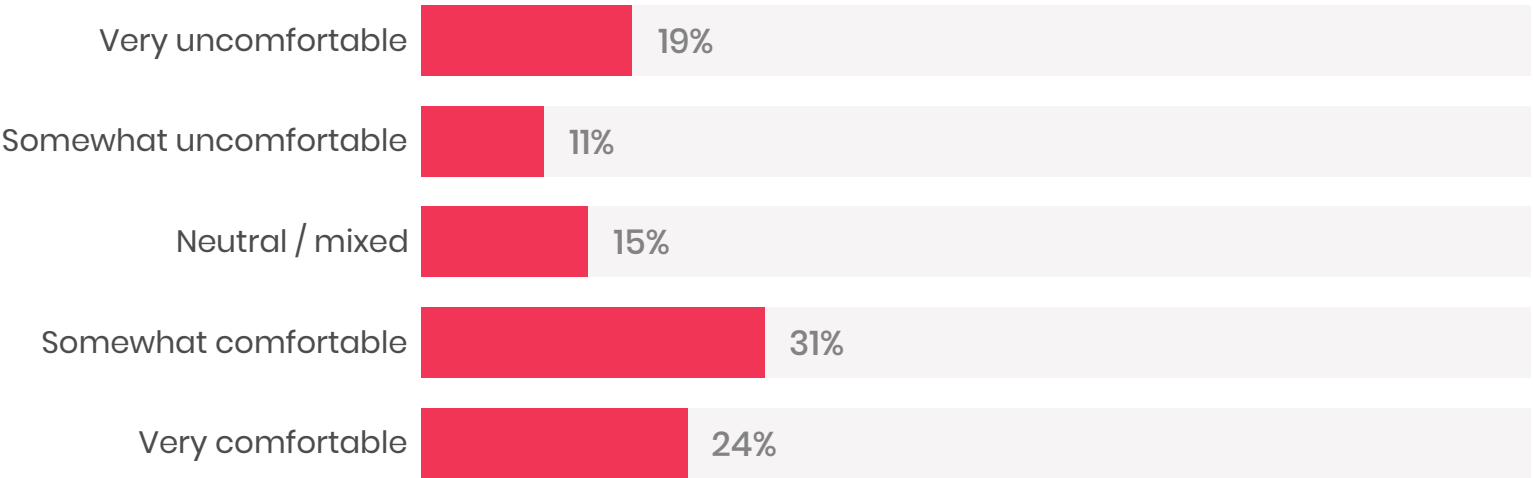
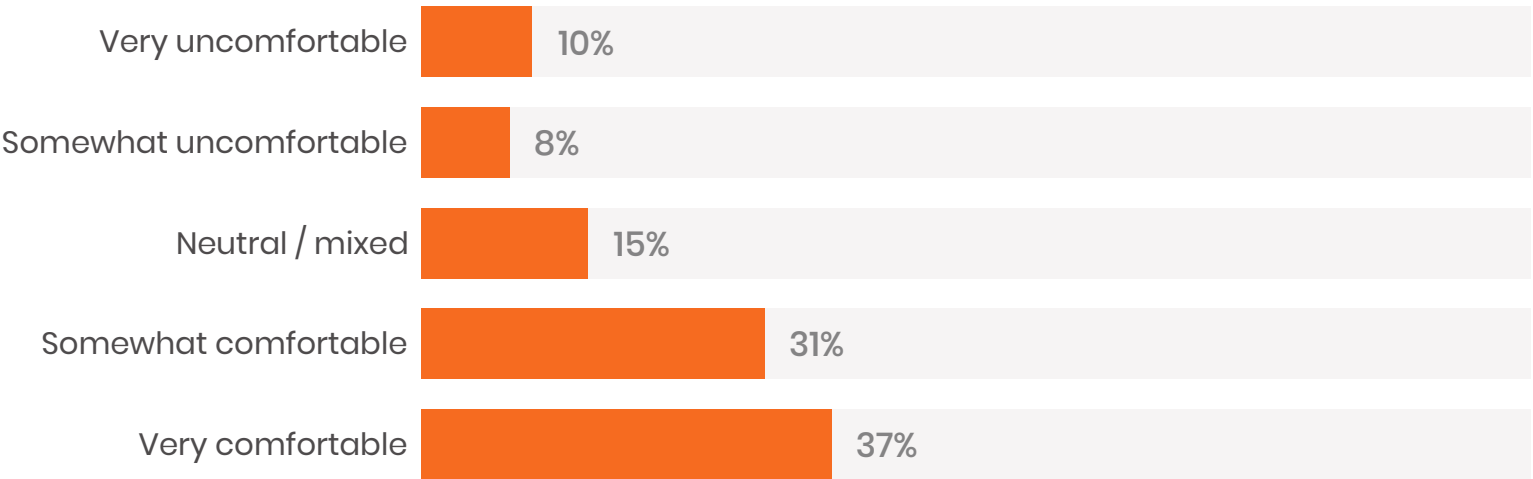


FIGURE 9.3

Executives



Rate the following statement: There are meaningful opportunities to use AI at my organization that we are not currently taking advantage of.

- Aggregate
- Staff
- Executives

Most respondents believe that their organization has untapped potential to use AI more fully, though executives are far more convinced of it than staff. **44% of executives strongly agree that there are meaningful opportunities not yet taken advantage of, compared to 23% of staff.** Even so, a majority of staff (56%) agree with the statement to some degree, indicating that this isn’t an outright rejection of AI’s potential, but rather a more nuanced disposition shaped by a variety of factors. Staff are more likely to disagree outright, however, with 15% strongly disagreeing with the question premise, roughly double the executive rate of 8%. Finally, staff are almost three times as likely to remain neutral, at 19%, compared to executives, at 7%.

FIGURE 10.1

Aggregate

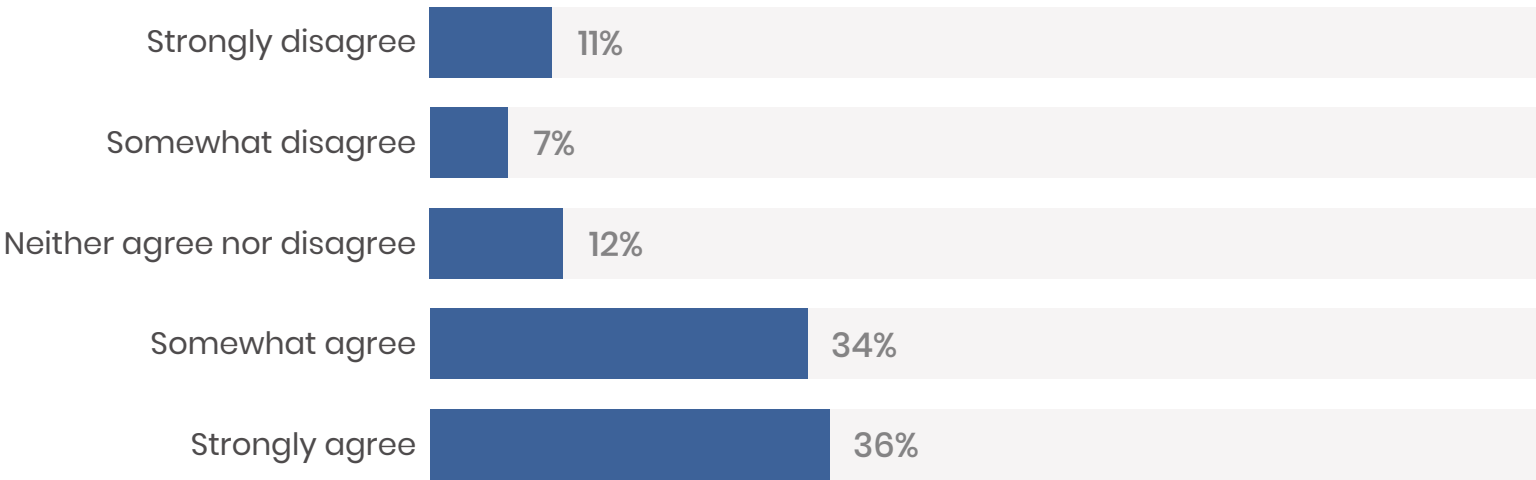


FIGURE 10.2

Staff

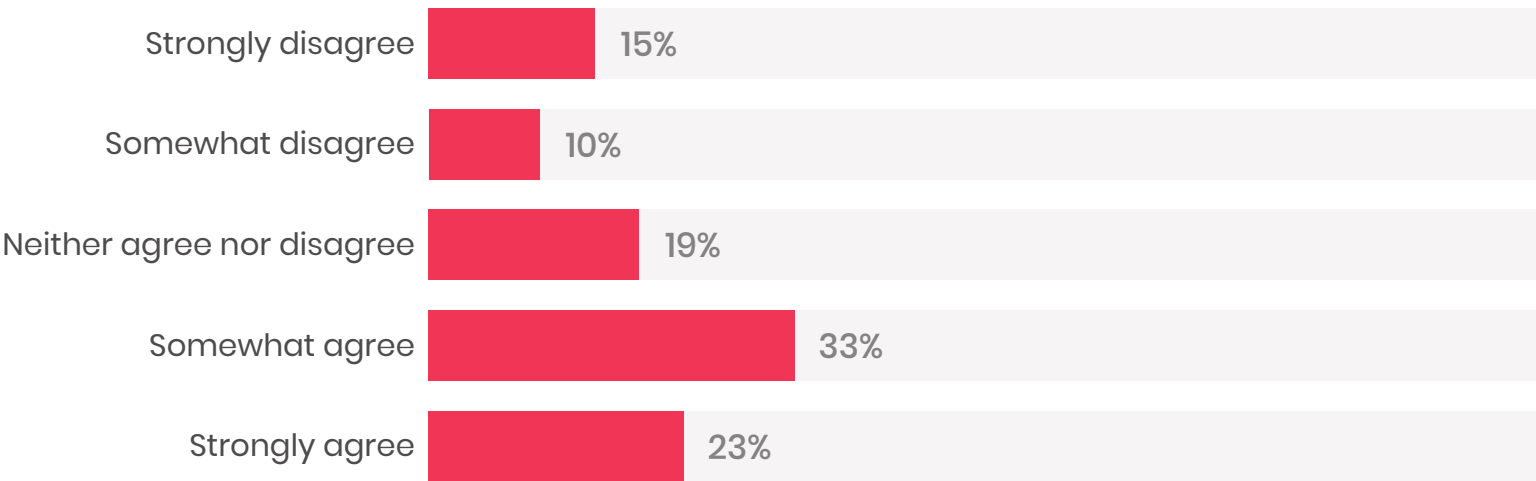
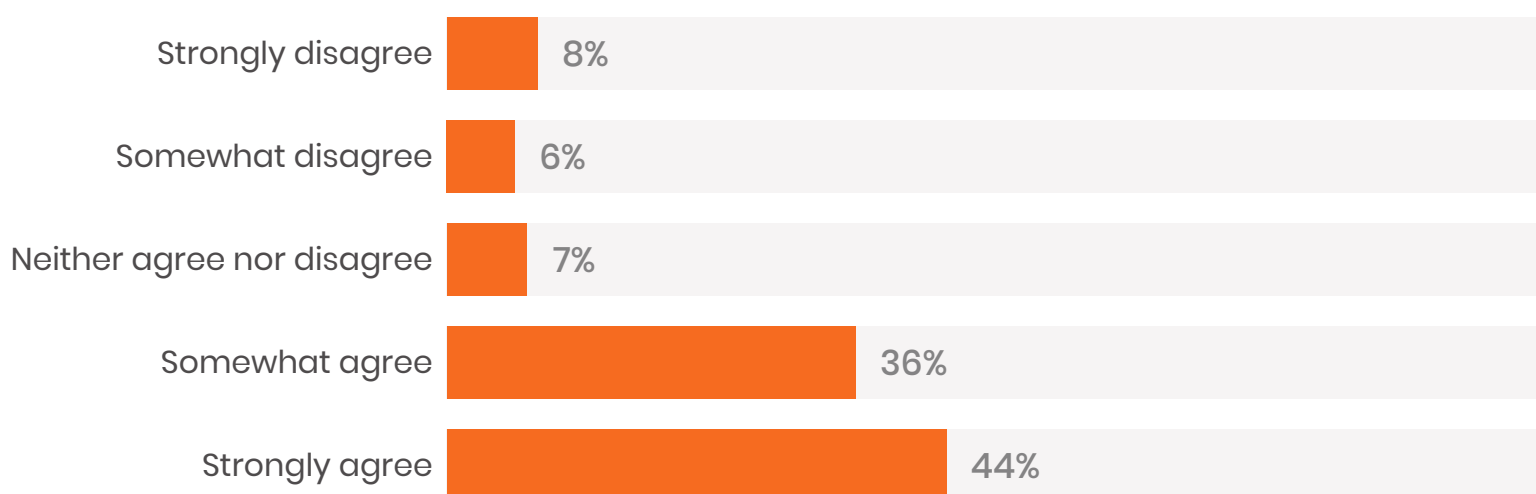


FIGURE 10.3

Executives



How would you describe your sentiment toward AI being used in your work environment over the last 12 months?

Aggregate Staff Executives

Sentiment towards AI use over the past year skews positive overall, but again, the underlying frame differs by role. **In aggregate, 53% of respondents feel somewhat or very positive about AI’s role in their work environment, compared to 19% who feel somewhat or very negative.**

Executives are considerably warmer on AI use than staff — 63% of executives feel somewhat or very positive (25% very positive, 38% somewhat positive), compared to 39% of staff (12% very positive, 27% somewhat positive). This pattern reverses for negative sentiment — 33% of staff feel somewhat or very negative about AI use (16% very negative, 17% somewhat negative), compared to just 10% of executives (3% very negative, 7% somewhat negative).

FIGURE 11.1

Aggregate

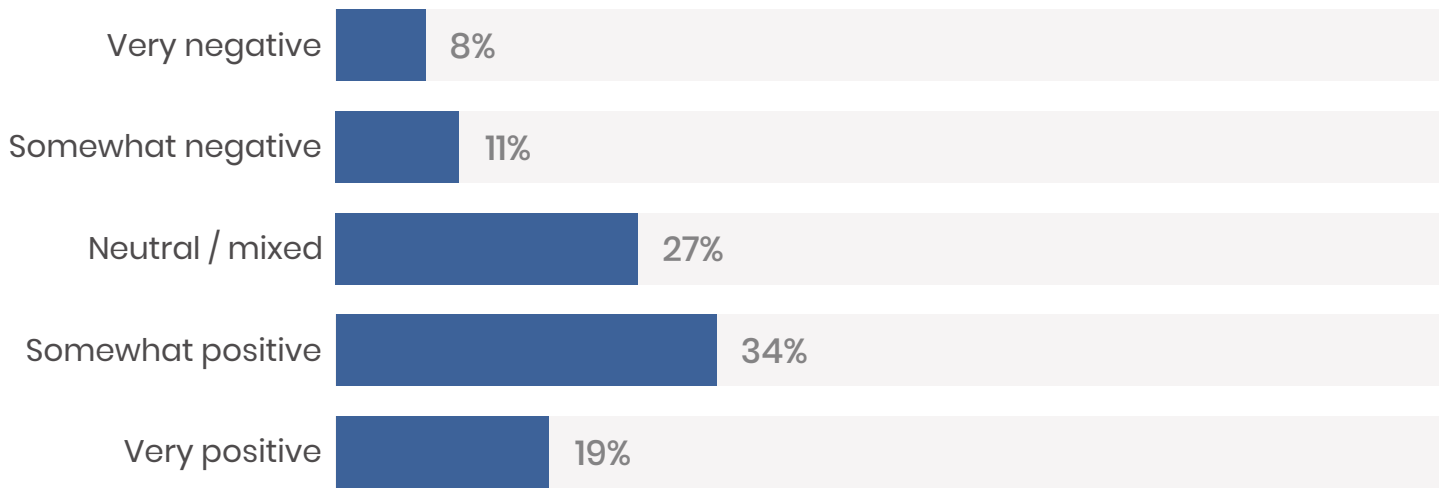


FIGURE 11.2

Staff

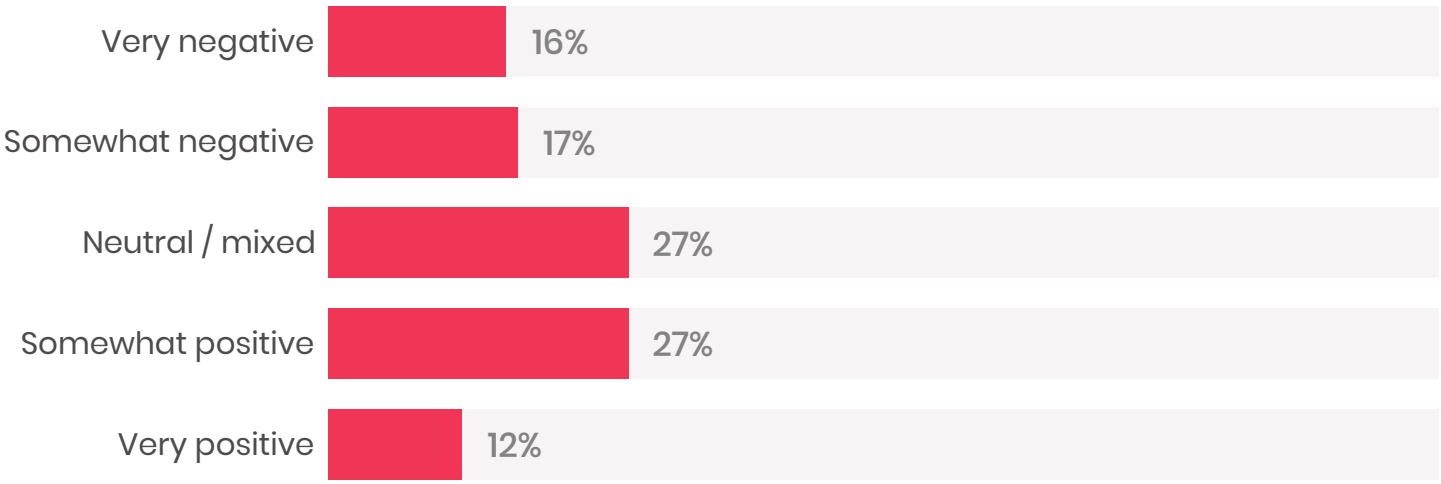
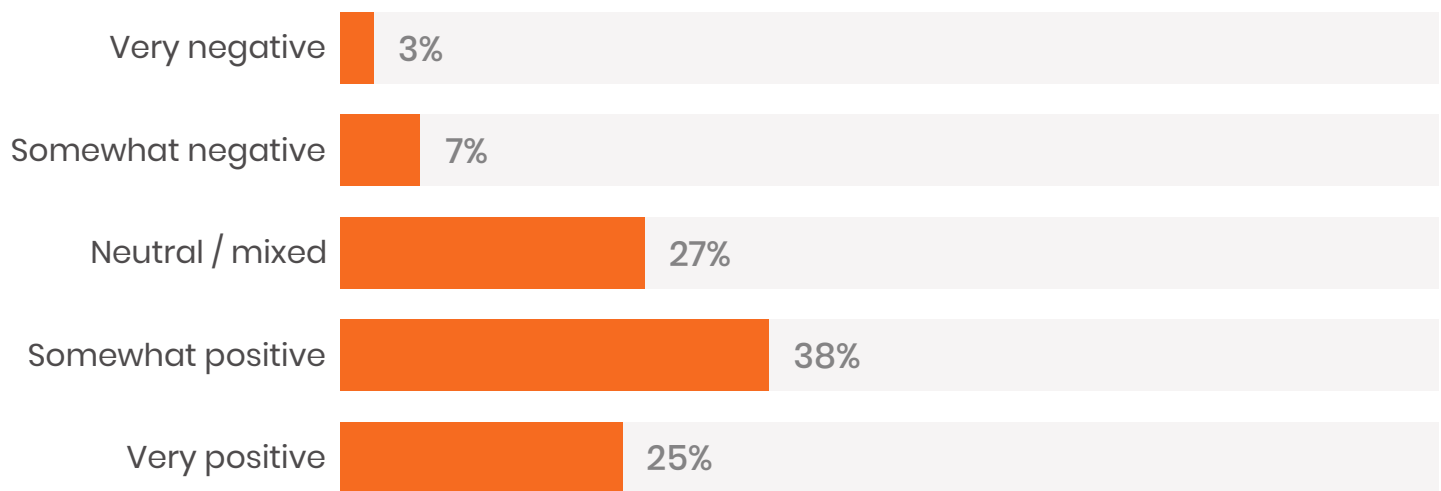


FIGURE 11.3

Executives



How often does your organization’s leadership discuss AI risks and responsible use?

- Aggregate
- Staff
- Executives

Open discussions around AI risks and responsible use are relatively uncommon across the board. 37% of respondents say their leadership discusses AI risk a few times a year, and 34% say it happens monthly or more. But a substantial share reports little to no visibility into these conversations, with 15% saying they never happen and 14% aren’t sure.

Uncertainty around AI risk discussions is far more pronounced among staff than among executives. Nearly a quarter of staff (25%) say they’re not sure how often leadership discusses AI risks, compared to just 7% of executives, and executives report over double the rate of monthly-or-more discussions (44% vs. 20% for staff). This suggests that even when leadership is talking about AI risk and responsible adoption, the discussion remains somewhat opaque or inaccessible, and staff often aren’t aware it’s happening.

FIGURE 12.1

Aggregate

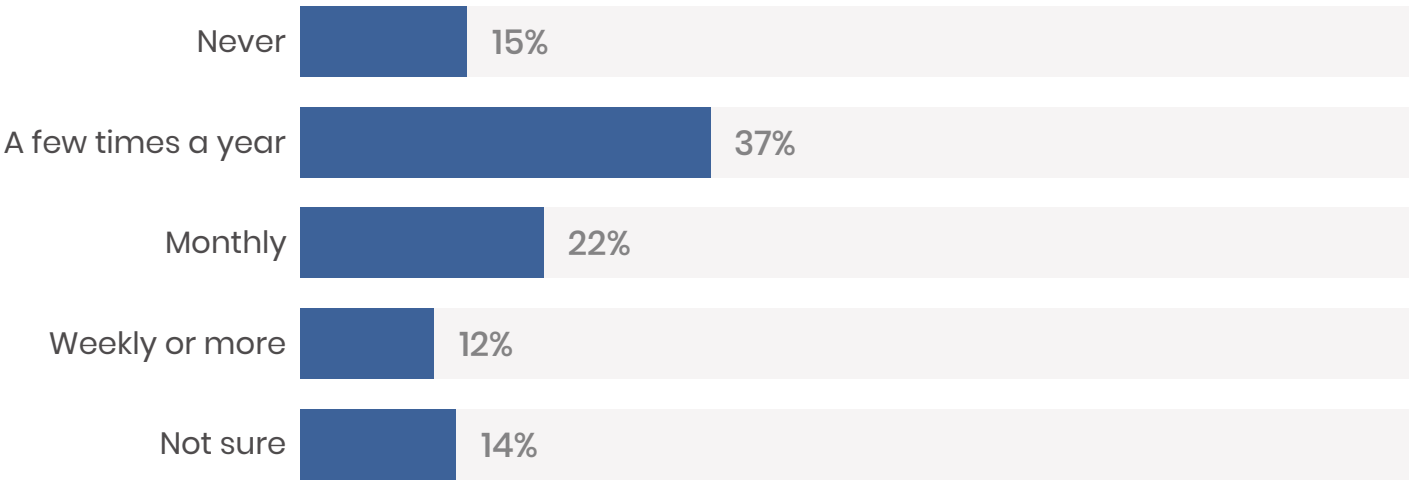


FIGURE 12.2

Staff

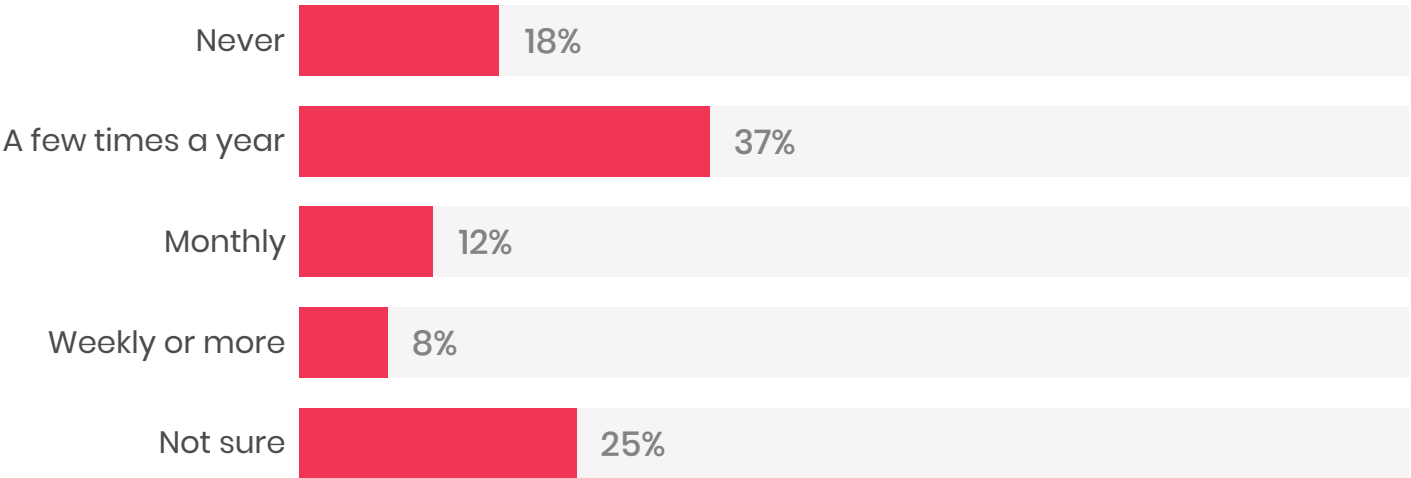
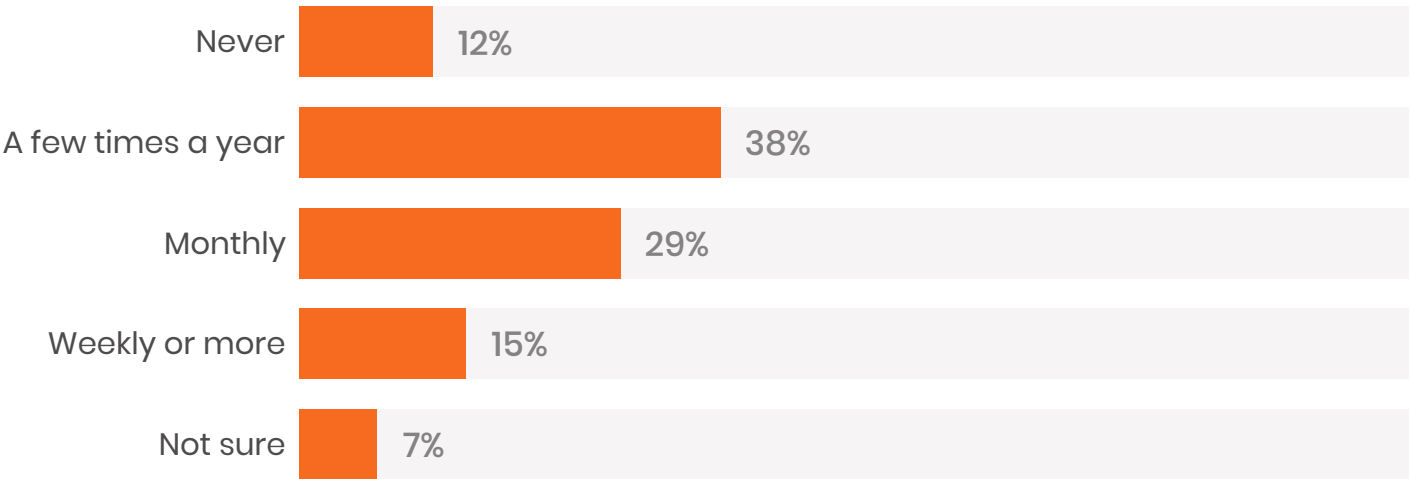


FIGURE 12.3

Executives



How comfortable do you feel being honest about your AI use with your manager or organizational leadership/board/key funders?

Staff

Executives

The report surveyed staff comfort disclosing AI use to leadership, and executives to their board and funders. Across all three relationships, most respondents feel comfortable being honest about their AI use, though this trend thins in certain contexts. **57% of staff feel completely comfortable discussing AI use with their managers or leadership, and another 27% feel comfortable but are careful about how they frame it.** Only 14% of staff report some discomfort — 11% are somewhat uncomfortable, 3% are not comfortable at all.

Executives describe a similar experience with their boards: 56% report being completely comfortable disclosing organizational AI use, 27% are comfortable but cautious, and very few, under 7%, report being fully uncomfortable. This parity somewhat softens between executives and funders, where only 37% of executives feel completely comfortable discussing their organization’s AI use, while another 32% are comfortable but careful in their framing. Executive discomfort is also modestly more common with funders than with boards, as about 10% of executives report feeling somewhat or completely uncomfortable discussing AI use with funders, compared to under 7% who say the same about their board.

FIGURE 13.1

Staff with leadership

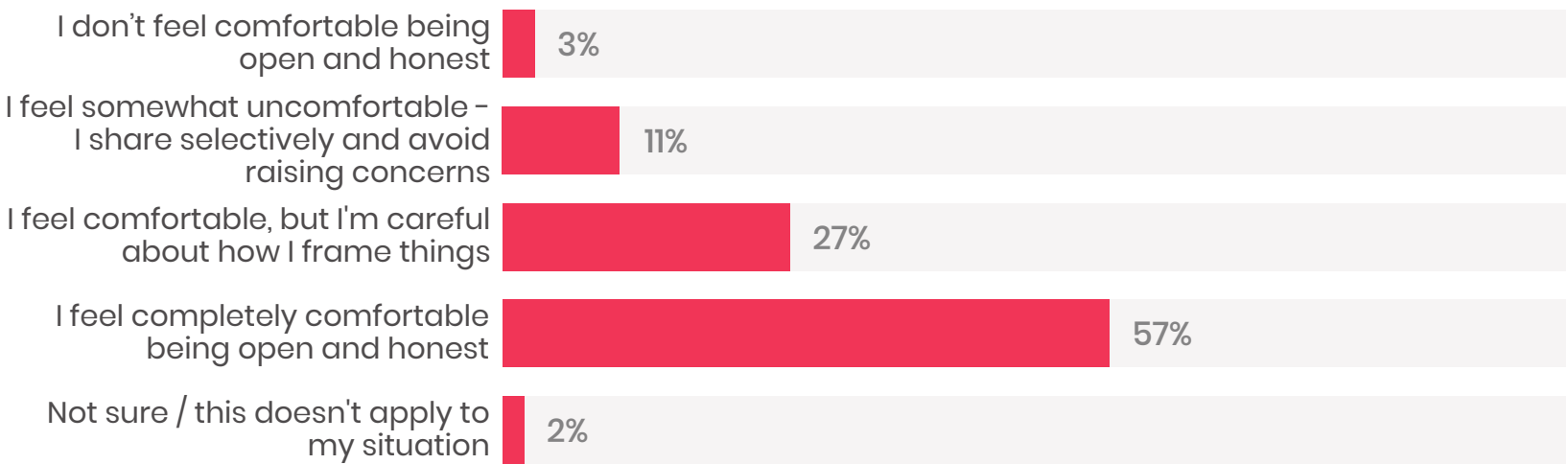


FIGURE 13.2

Executives with board

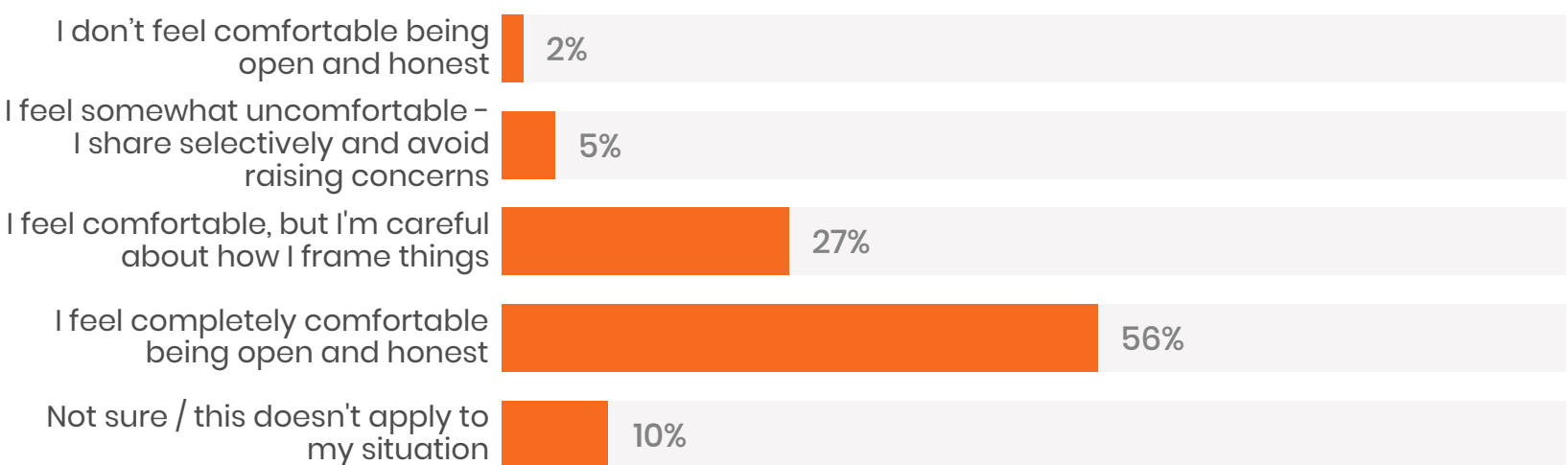
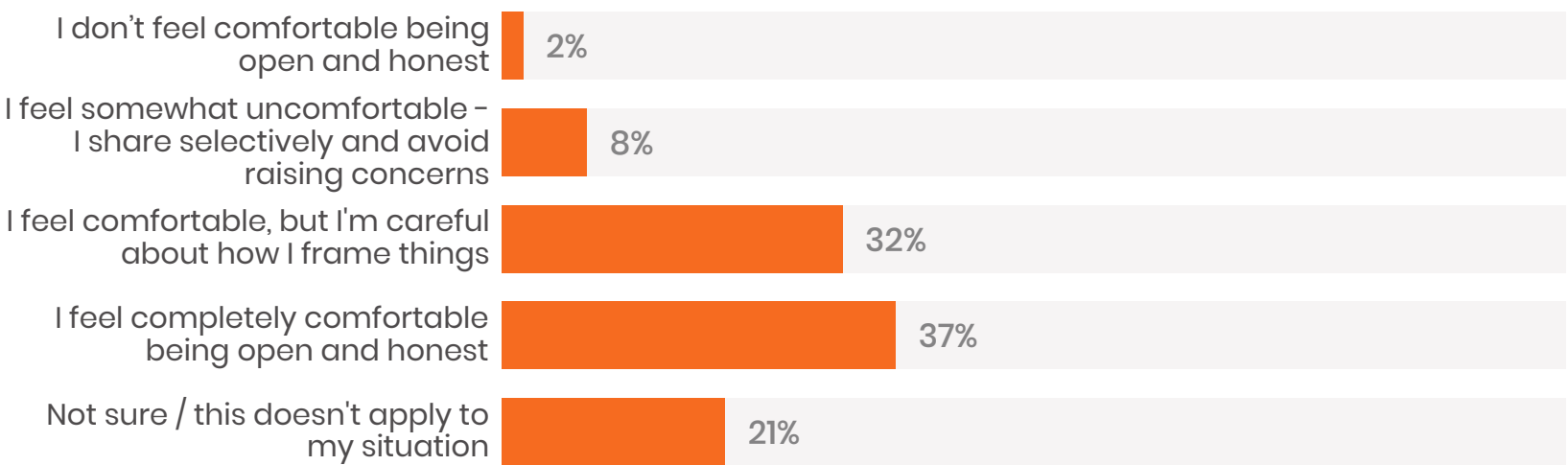


FIGURE 13.3

Executives with key funders



How confident do you feel navigating decisions about how and when to use AI at work?

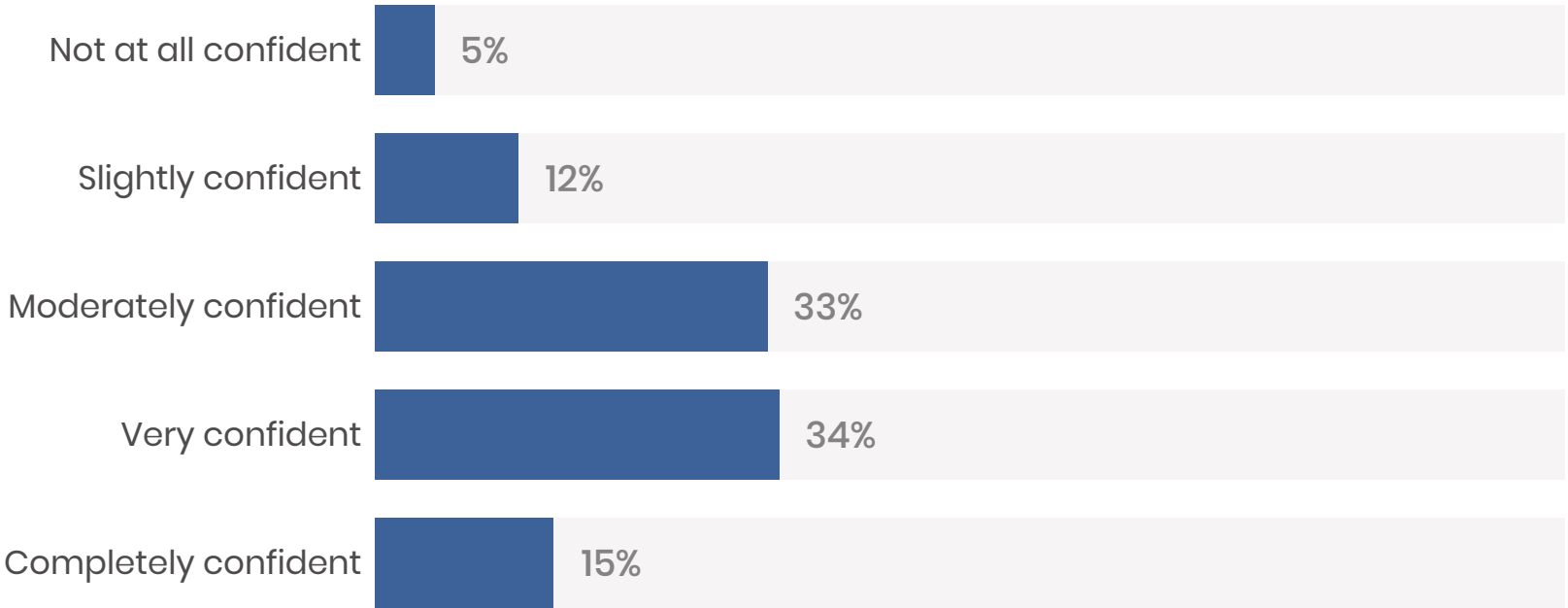
Aggregate

Confidence in navigating AI-related decisions at work is one of the few places where staff and executives largely align. Most respondents lean toward confidence: 33% report moderate confidence, 34% report being very confident, and 15% report being completely confident. Only 5% of participants report feeling not confident at all.

This shared confidence in individual decision-making, however, says little about the surrounding infrastructure where those decisions are being made. The following section examines the formal environment — policy, budget, and guidance — that shapes the nonprofit AI adoption landscape.

FIGURE 14.1

Aggregate





Governance, infrastructure, and budget

Has organizational infrastructure kept up with ambition?

Key findings

- The organizational infrastructure and governance needed to support responsible AI adoption are still mostly unbuilt or in development.
- Budget is the clearest gap — most executives report having none dedicated to AI, and what exists is lean.
- Responsibility has been named faster than it's been operationalized; written guidance, rules, and ownership exist, but risk planning and training lag regardless of organizational budget size.
- Staff capacity and training, not leadership resistance, are the real barriers executives report — a trend that recurs throughout this section.
- Despite this, executives most often expect spending to grow — interest in AI hasn't wavered, even where readiness hasn't caught up.

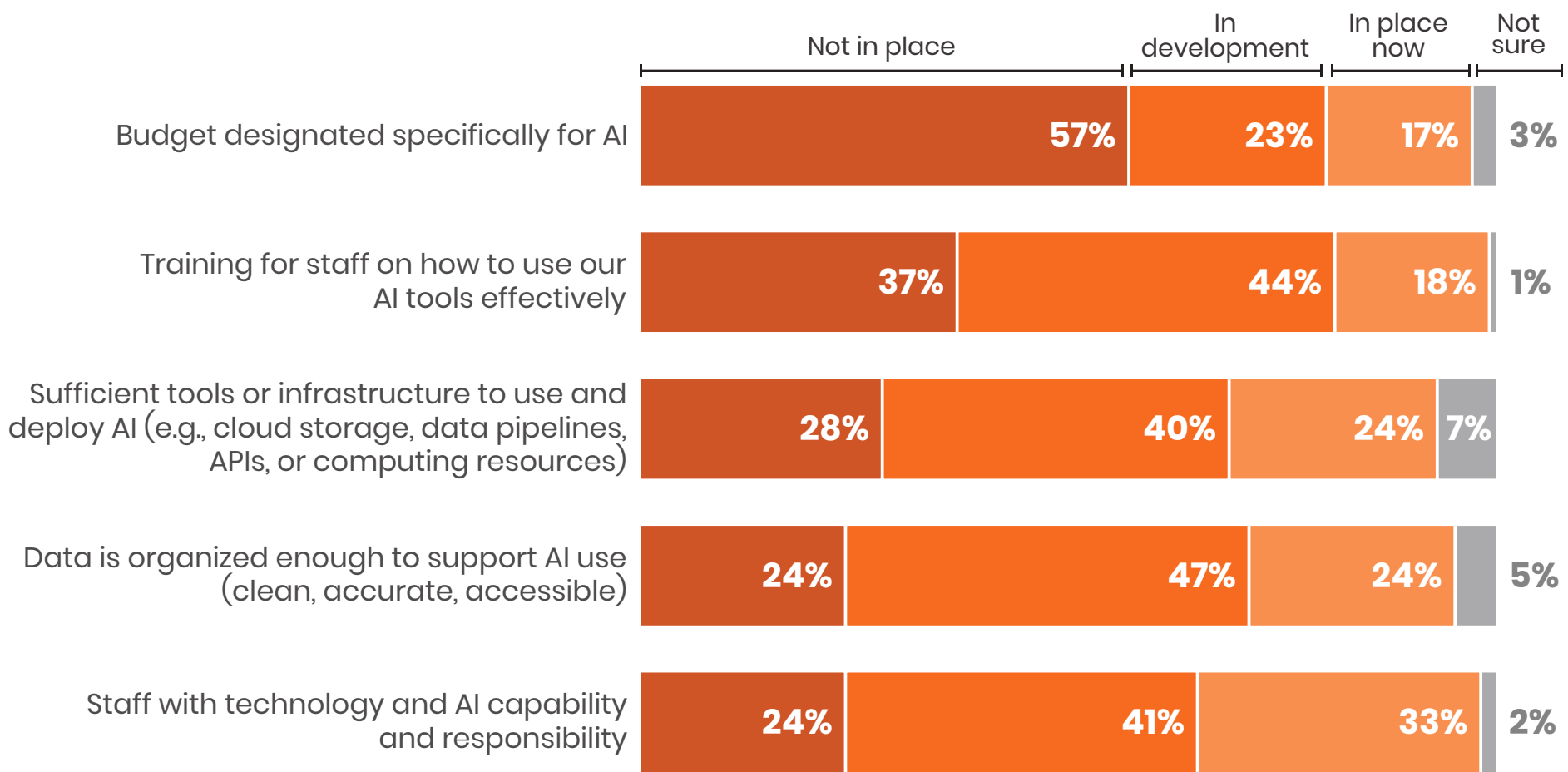
Regarding foundational AI capacity and infrastructure, what is the current status at your organization?

Executives

For most organizations, implementation is outpacing governance — while AI becomes more widely used, the infrastructure that supports safe and responsible AI adoption lags behind. This is most pronounced around funding: **57% of executives report that their organizations have no AI budget in place, well above the next-largest lacuna, training for staff on how to use AI tools, at 37%.** By contrast, executives report stronger footing elsewhere — staff capability is the furthest along, with 32% already in place, while data organization (47%), tooling (40%), and staff training (43%) remain mostly in development rather than fully absent or resolved.

FIGURE 15.1

Executives



For most organizations, implementation is outpacing governance — while AI becomes more widely used, the infrastructure that supports safe and responsible AI adoption lags behind.

By organizational budget size

Breaking this down further by organizational budget size reveals a more uneven landscape. Staff capability is the clearest case where resources matter. **Only 27% of organizations under \$10 million report having strong staff technology and AI capabilities in place, compared to 41% of those with \$10 million or more. Tooling and infrastructure improve at larger organizations too, though less dramatically than staff capability.**

The data around allocated AI budgets complicates this further. Even among organizations with budgets of \$10 million or more, nearly half (48%)

report having no dedicated AI budget, which suggests this gap isn’t simply a matter of resource scarcity. Training is the clearest case where money doesn’t meaningfully move the needle, as only 17% to 19% of organizations report staff training is fully in place, regardless of budget size. If anything, smaller organizations report slightly better training readiness than larger ones. Whereas other sections of this report find training underdeveloped, this disaggregation suggests that affordability isn’t the whole story: even well-resourced organizations report training as largely undeveloped — a prioritization gap in the sector.

FIGURE 15.2

Budgets under \$10 million

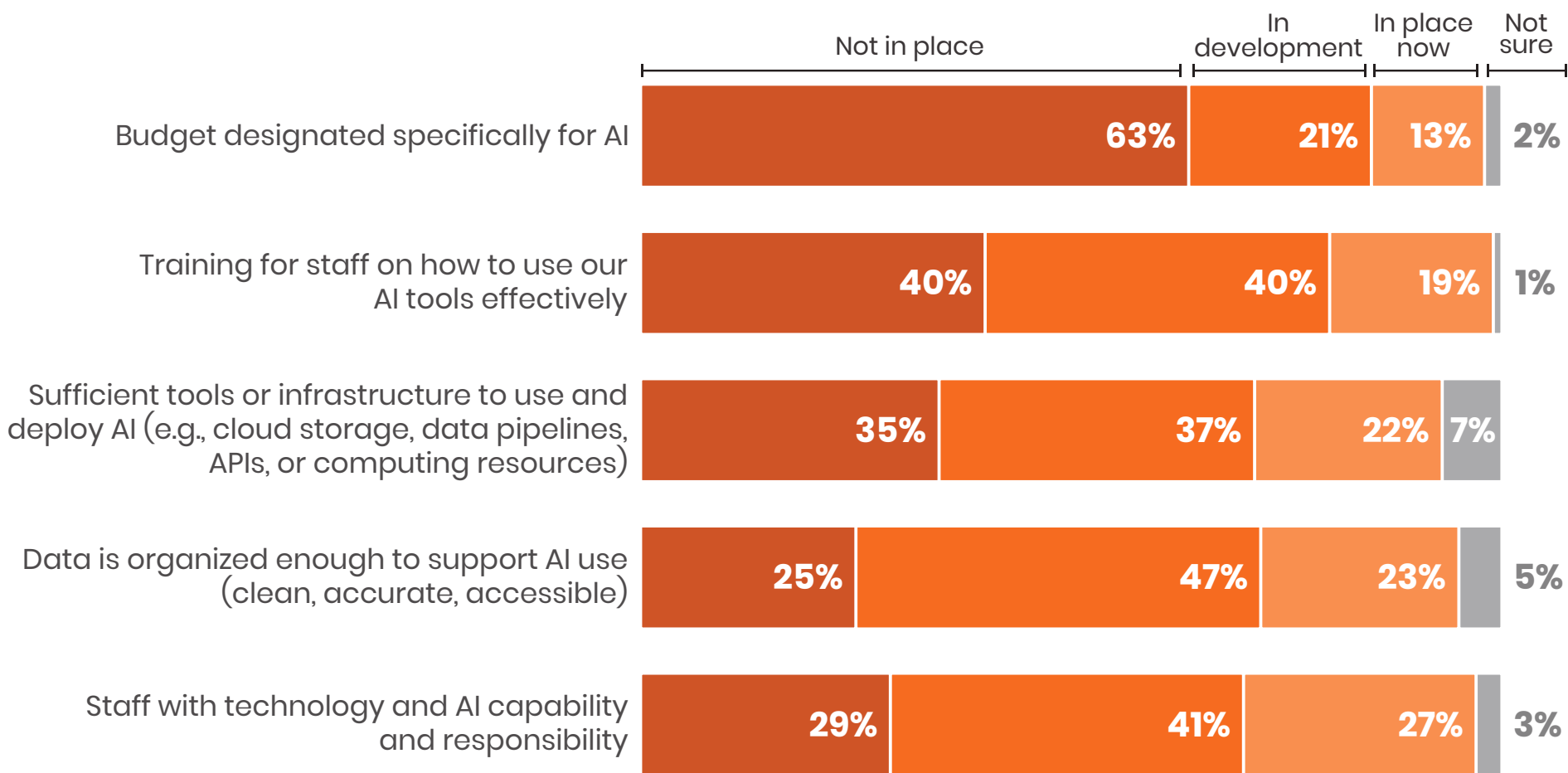
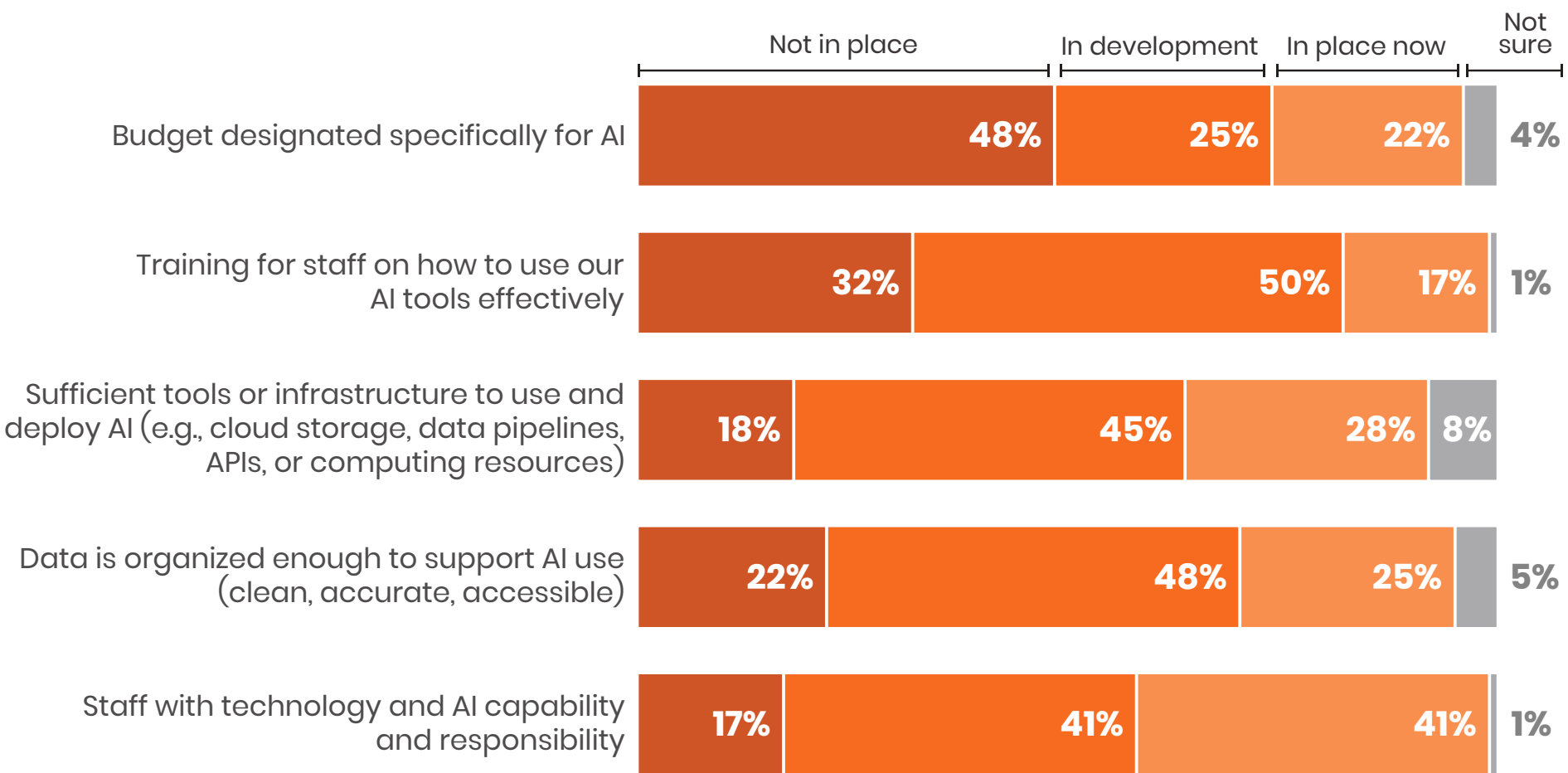


FIGURE 15.3

Budgets of \$10 million+



Regarding AI governance and risk management, what is the current status at your organization?

Executives

Executives report a genuine split in AI governance maturity, with top-down intervention leading the way. Written guidance on safe and responsible use is comparatively strong (38% already in place), alongside clear rules on what data can and cannot be entered into AI tools (40% in place) and a named owner or group responsible for oversight (42% in place). But the more challenging, operational pieces of governance lag behind: a plan for managing AI-related risk and staff training on safe use are both reported as fully in place by only 22% of executives, the weakest categories in this matrix. A formal process for approving AI tools and vendors sits in between, with 37% reporting that no such process exists at all.

Altogether, **organizations have been quicker to name responsibility and set expectations around AI use rather than build out the operational muscles needed to act on them, such as planning for risk or training staff.**

FIGURE 16.1

Executives



By organizational budget size

Unlike the previous matrix, disaggregating by organizational budget size confirms what one might intuitively expect: **larger organizations are further along on formal AI governance, across nearly every measure.** Written guidance shows the widest gap: only 27% of organizations under \$10 million report having it fully in place, compared with 56% of those with \$10 million or more. Named ownership and clear data rules follow a similar pattern, each roughly 18 to 20 points higher at larger

organizations. The one noteworthy exception is, again, staff training, which shows the smallest gap of any category so far — just 19% in place for smaller organizations versus 25% for larger organizations — echoing what this report has already found elsewhere. While better-resourced organizations might have a head start in formalized governance, training seems to resist improvement even where budget clearly moves almost everything else.

FIGURE 16.2

Budgets under \$10 million

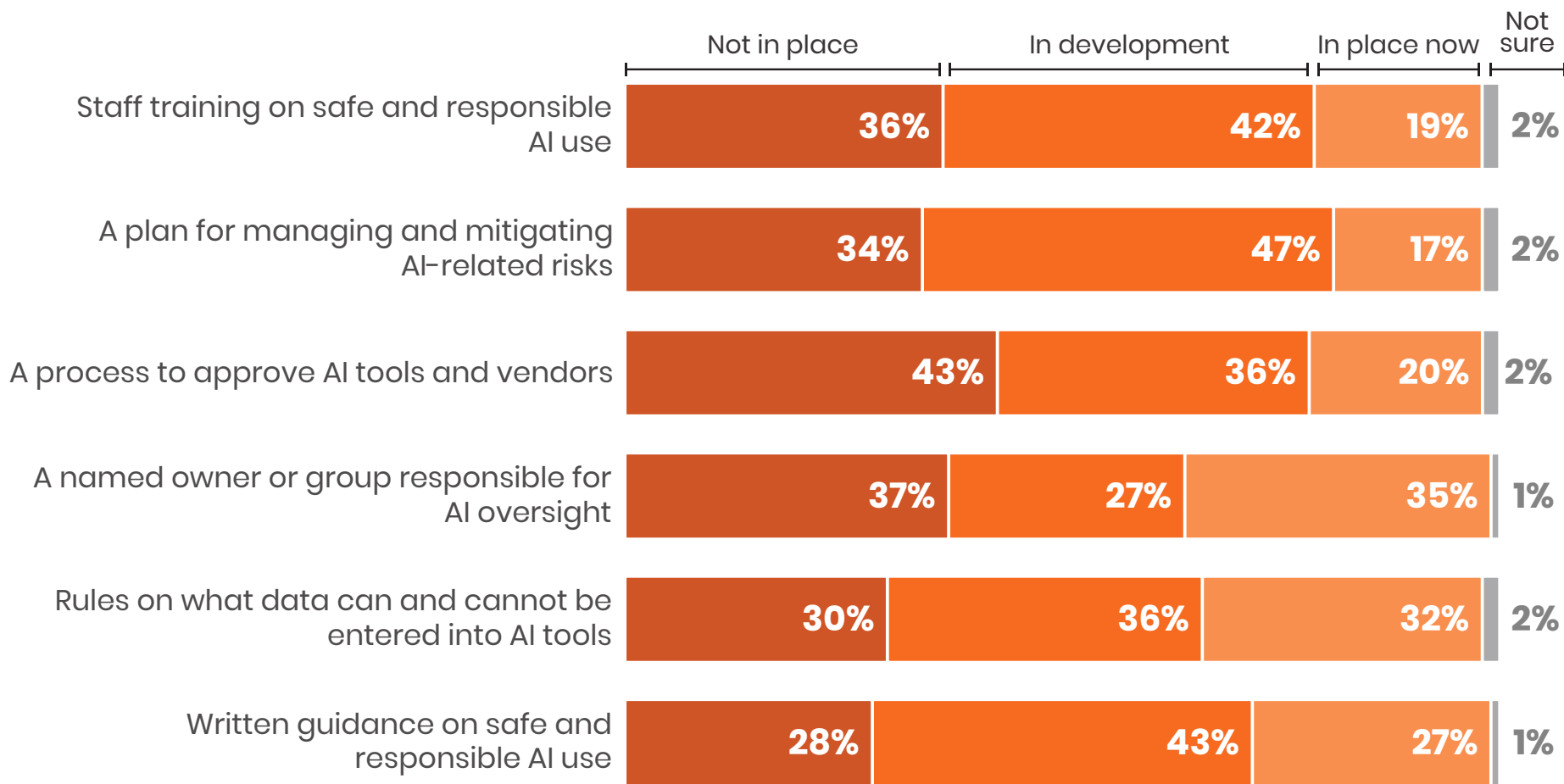


FIGURE 16.3

Budgets of \$10 million+



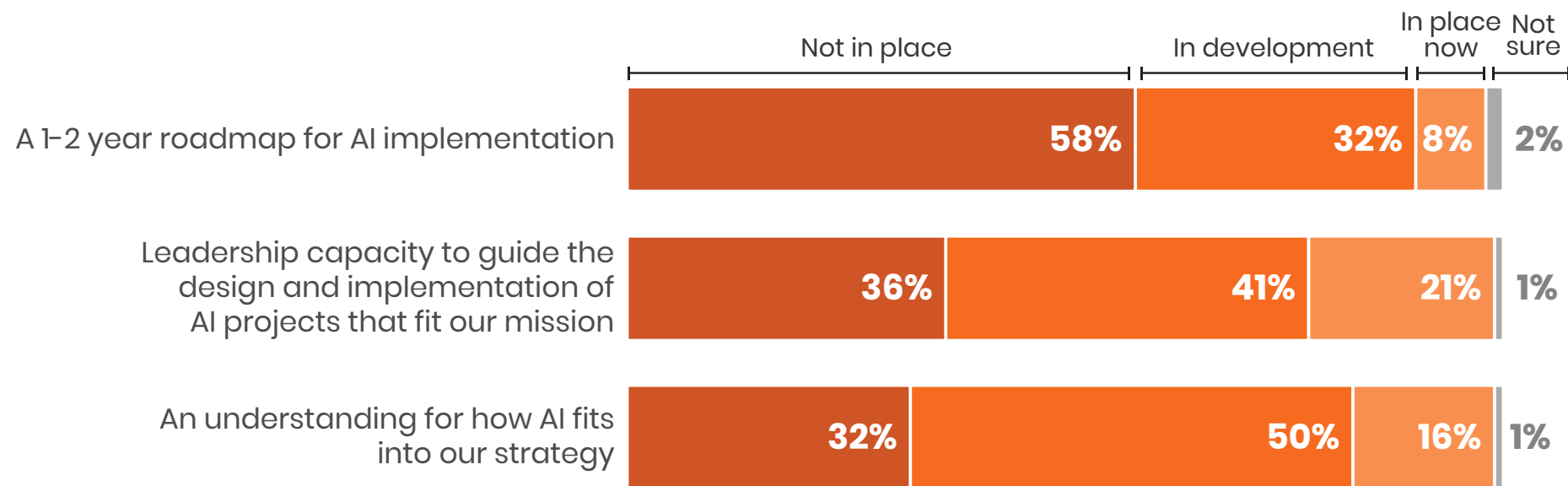
Regarding AI strategy and operations, what is the current status at your organization?

Executives

While governance infrastructure is still fledgling, most executives report having no AI roadmap in place, with 58% saying one doesn't exist, compared with only 8% reporting one already in place. Executives are similarly early in developing an understanding of how AI fits into their organization's strategy. 32% of respondents say this understanding isn't in place at all, and another 50% say it's still in development—meaning many nonprofits still lack clarity on how AI fits in with their overall mission. Leadership capacity to guide AI design and implementation specific to their organization's mission is somewhat further along, but still not the norm: 21% of executives report appropriately in-place leadership capacity of AI strategy and outcomes, yet 41% say this is still in development.

FIGURE 17.1

Executives



While better-resourced organizations might have a head start in formalized governance, training seems to resist improvement even where budget clearly moves almost everything else.

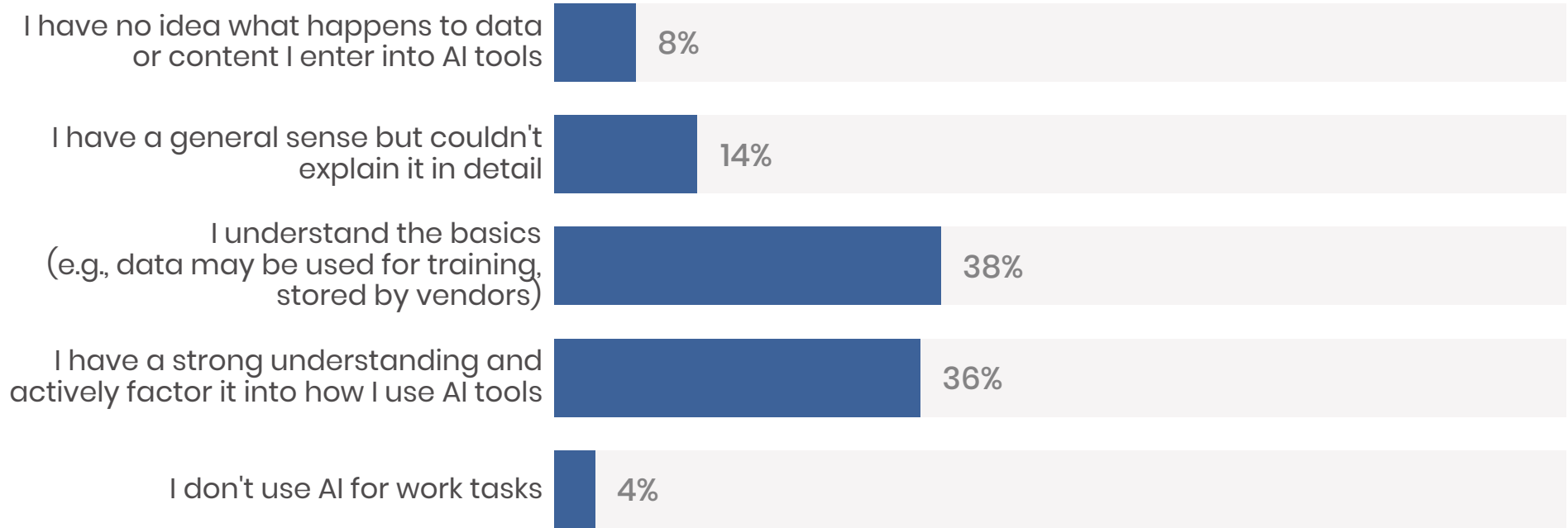
How aware are you of what happens to the data or content you enter into AI tools?

Aggregate

Despite in-development training and overall governance, **staff and executives alike report high awareness of what happens to the data and content they enter into AI tools, with virtual parity between the two groups.** 36% of respondents selected the highest level of awareness, reporting a strong understanding that actively factors into how they use AI tools, and another 38% report that they understand the basics (for example, that data may be used for training AI models or stored by vendors). Only 22% of respondents either have no understanding of what happened to the data they entered, or have a general sense but cannot explain it in detail. It’s worth noting that this reflects self-reported confidence rather than verified understanding.

FIGURE 18.1

Aggregate



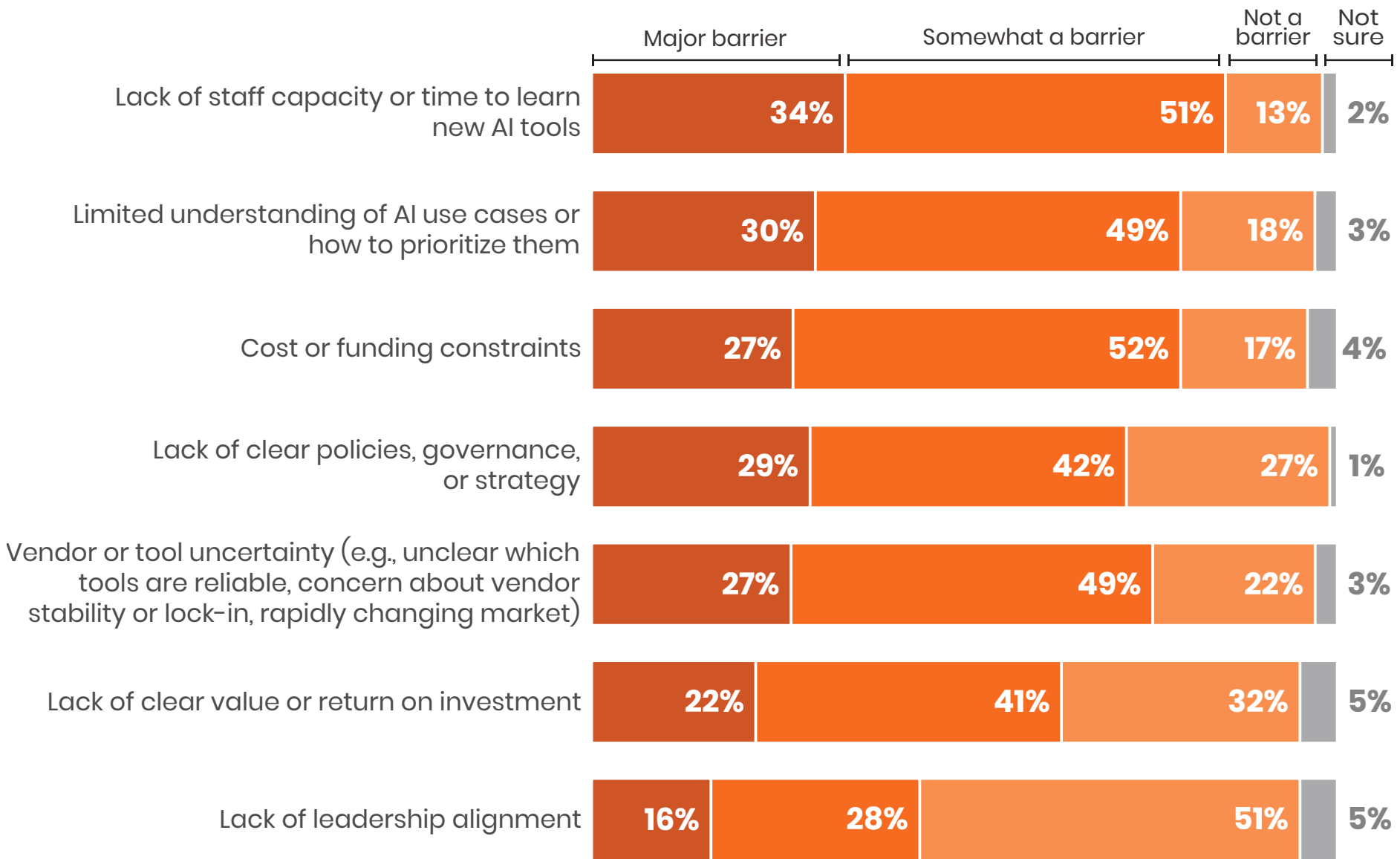
Regarding your organizational capacity and readiness, to what degree are the following barriers to deploying and implementing AI in your organization?

Executives

Shifting back towards organizational readiness, executives point to specific, concrete obstacles standing between their organizations and safe AI implementation. Every category except leadership alignment is cited as at least somewhat of a barrier by 41% to 52% of executives, with cost or funding constraints the most widely cited of all (52%). Leadership alignment stands out as the only area where the majority of executives (51%) say it isn't a barrier at all, evidence that organizational leadership is largely aligned on AI adoption, even as other barriers persist. As for major barriers, executives identify staff capacity (34%) and a limited understanding of valid use cases (30%) as the clearest obstacles to deploying and implementing AI, with a lack of clear policies, governance, or strategy close behind (29%). **Given that earlier data shows that staff training is one of the weakest areas of AI governance, the barrier to adoption may be less about staff bandwidth itself, and more about the limited training and support currently available to them.**

FIGURE 19.1

Executives



To the best of your knowledge, what was your organization’s total technology budget for 2025 (including hardware and equipment, software and licenses, services and consulting, in-kind IT services or products, and training)?

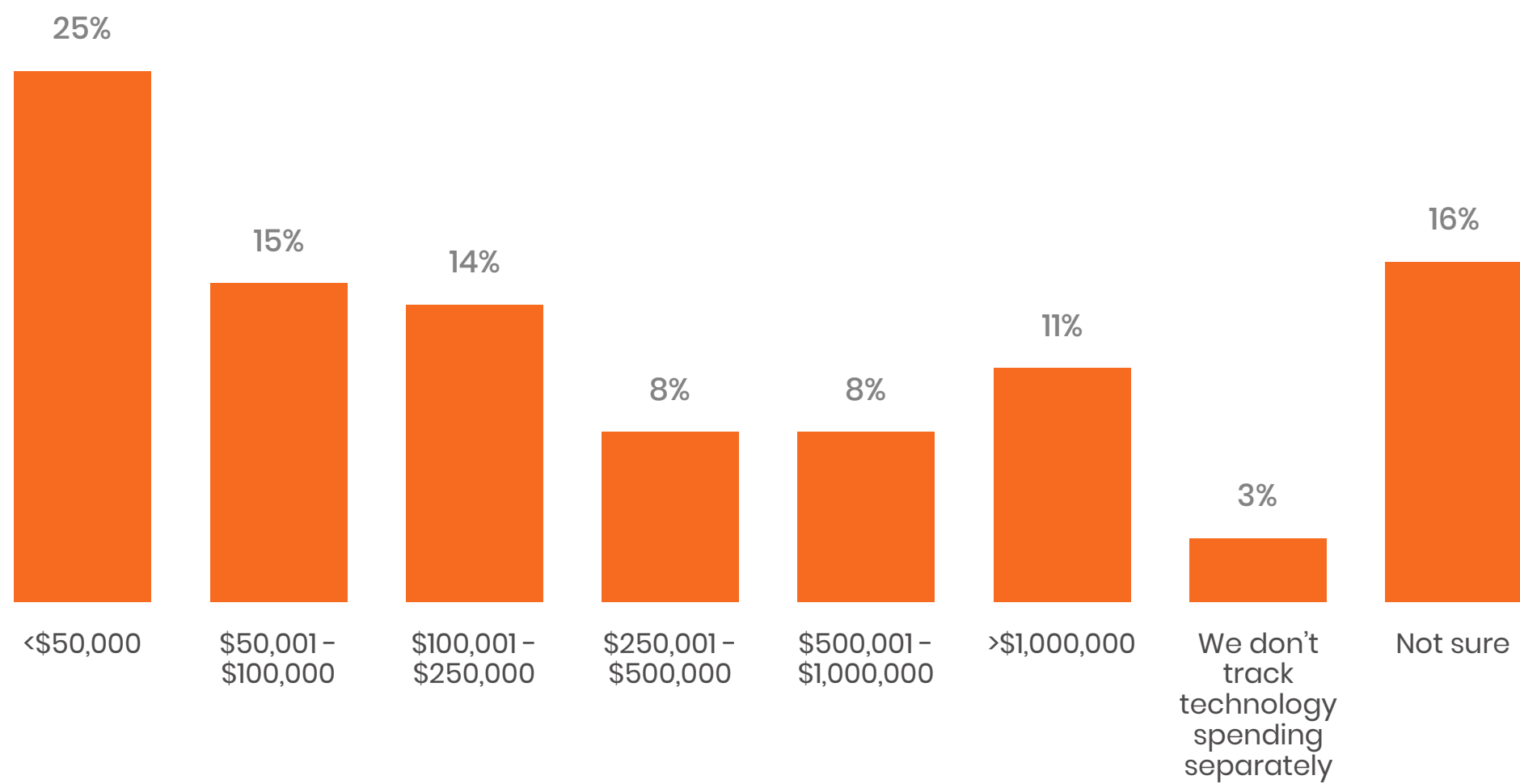
Executives

The absence of a dedicated AI budget, established earlier in this section, sits against a wider backdrop of modest overall technology budgets. One quarter (25%) of executives report their organization’s overall technology spending — covering hardware, software, services, and training — to be under \$50,000 in 2025, and just over half (54%) report a total tech budget of under \$250,000. Nearly one in five executives (19%) were not sure what their organization’s technology budget actually was, or say they don’t track it separately.

Because technology budgets and organizational budgets were both reported as ranges rather than exact figures, the midpoint of each range was used to estimate roughly what share of overall budget this spending represents. On that basis, **technology spending accounts for an estimated 3.82% of overall budget among organizations under \$10M, compared to an estimated 1.75% among organizations at \$10M or more.** By this estimate, technology represents a meaningfully larger proportion of budget for smaller organizations than for larger ones.

FIGURE 20.1

Executives



To the best of your knowledge, what was your organization’s total AI budget for 2025 (including hardware and equipment, software and licenses, services and consulting, and training)?

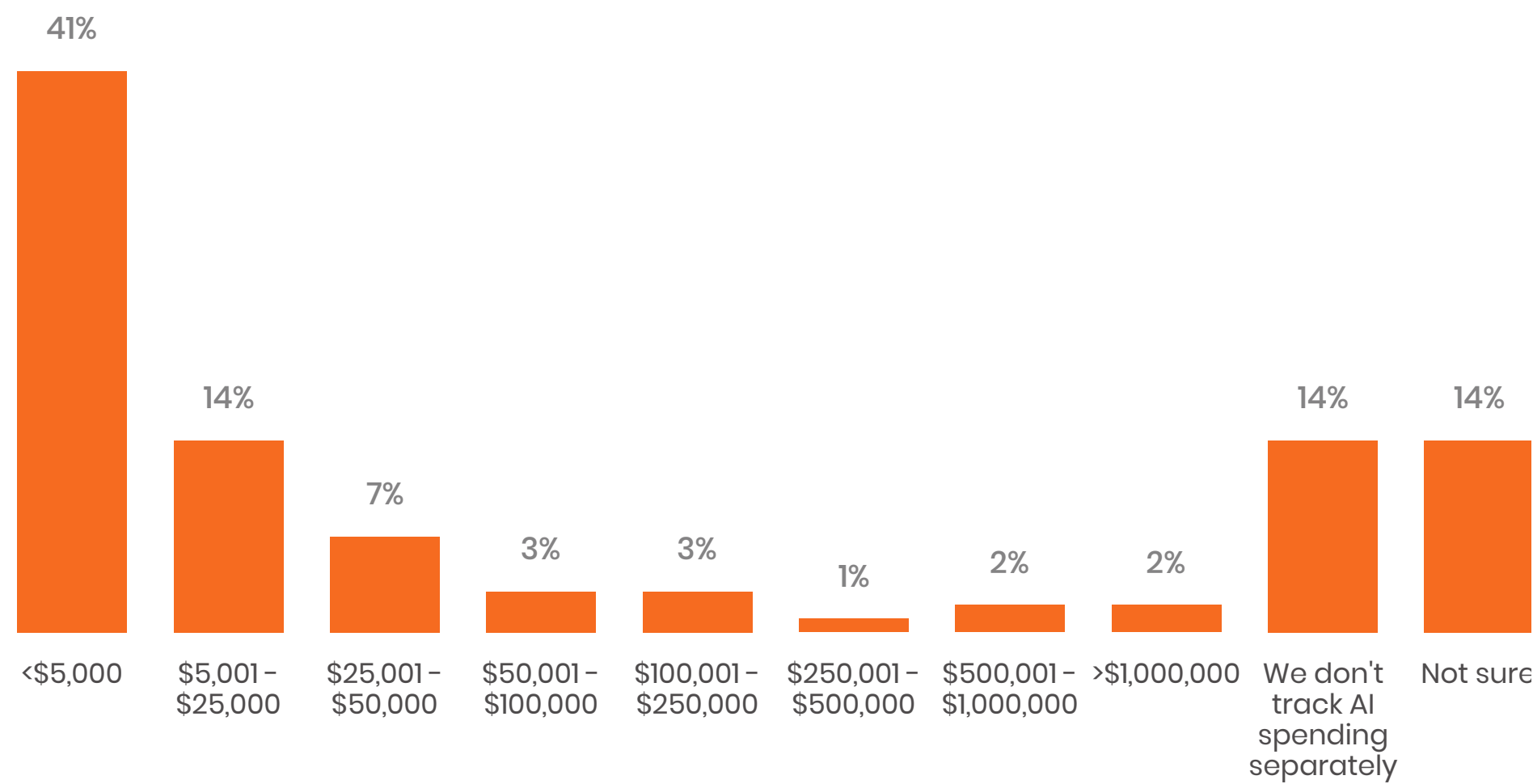
Executives

Zooming in on AI-specific budgets, most executives report lean or minimal dedicated AI spending. 41% say their organization’s AI budget for 2025 was under \$5,000, and 55% report under \$25,000. Very few report substantial AI investment, with only about 4% reporting an AI budget above \$250,000. A meaningful percentage of executives also could not answer this question directly at all: **14% reported that their organization doesn’t track AI spending separately, and another 14% are simply not sure, indicating that over a quarter of surveyed executives don’t know or could not estimate what their organization actually spent on AI in 2025.**

AI spending represents an estimated 0.92% of overall budget among organizations under \$10M, compared to an estimated 0.36% among organizations at \$10M or more. As with technology budget, smaller organizations appear to dedicate a larger proportion of their limited budgets to AI, despite larger organizations spending more overall.

FIGURE 21.1

Executives



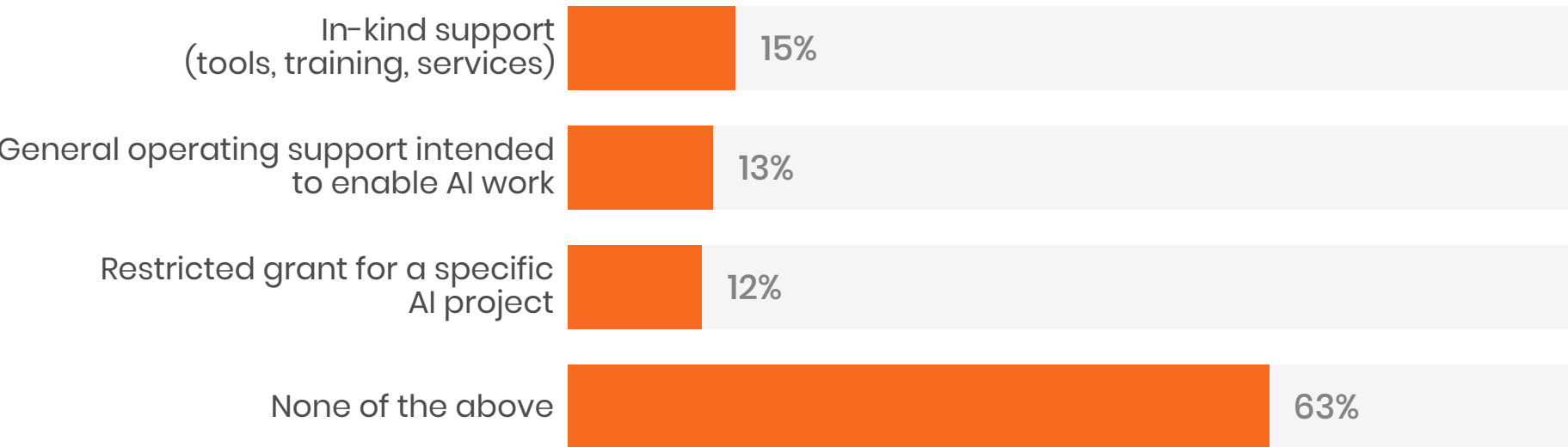
Has your organization received funding for AI in any of these forms? (Select all that apply)

Executives

Most organizations have not received AI-specific funding in any form. 63% of executives report that their organization has not received funding in any of the forms surveyed, and among the roughly one-third of organizations that have, no single funding type dominates — in-kind support (15%), general operating support (13%), and restricted grants (12%) are all cited at similar rates. Taken together with earlier findings in this section — that most organizations lack a dedicated AI budget at all, and that where they exist they tend to be modest — this suggests that organizations investing in AI are primarily doing so with their own limited resources rather than through dedicated external funding.

FIGURE 22.1

Executives



Organizations investing in AI are primarily doing so with their own limited resources rather than through dedicated external funding.

What was the funding primarily tied to?

(Select all that apply)

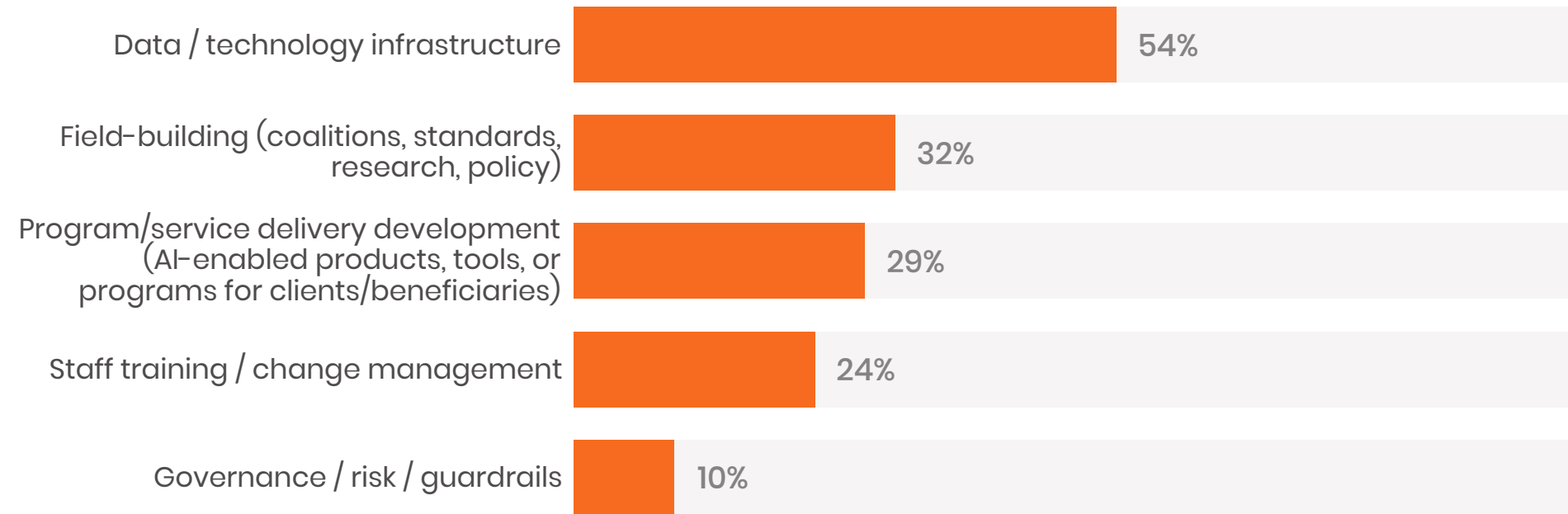
Executives

Among the small number of executives whose organizations received restricted AI grants, that funding went overwhelmingly toward data and technology infrastructure (54%), well ahead of field-building work (32%) and program or service delivery development (29%). **Staff training and change management (24%) and governance or risk guardrails (10%) – both critical components of responsible AI adoption – are the least-funded uses of restricted AI grants.** This is especially noteworthy because, elsewhere in the data, respondents identify staff training and capacity as major barriers to adoption, yet external funding doesn’t seem to address them directly.

This is now the third time staff training surfaces as a weak point in this section. It ranks among the most significant infrastructure gaps, is the least developed in governance maturity, and is now among the least externally funded types of support.

FIGURE 23.1

Executives



Respondents identify staff training and capacity as major barriers to adoption, yet external funding doesn’t seem to address them directly.

How do you expect AI-specific spending in 2026 to compare to 2025?

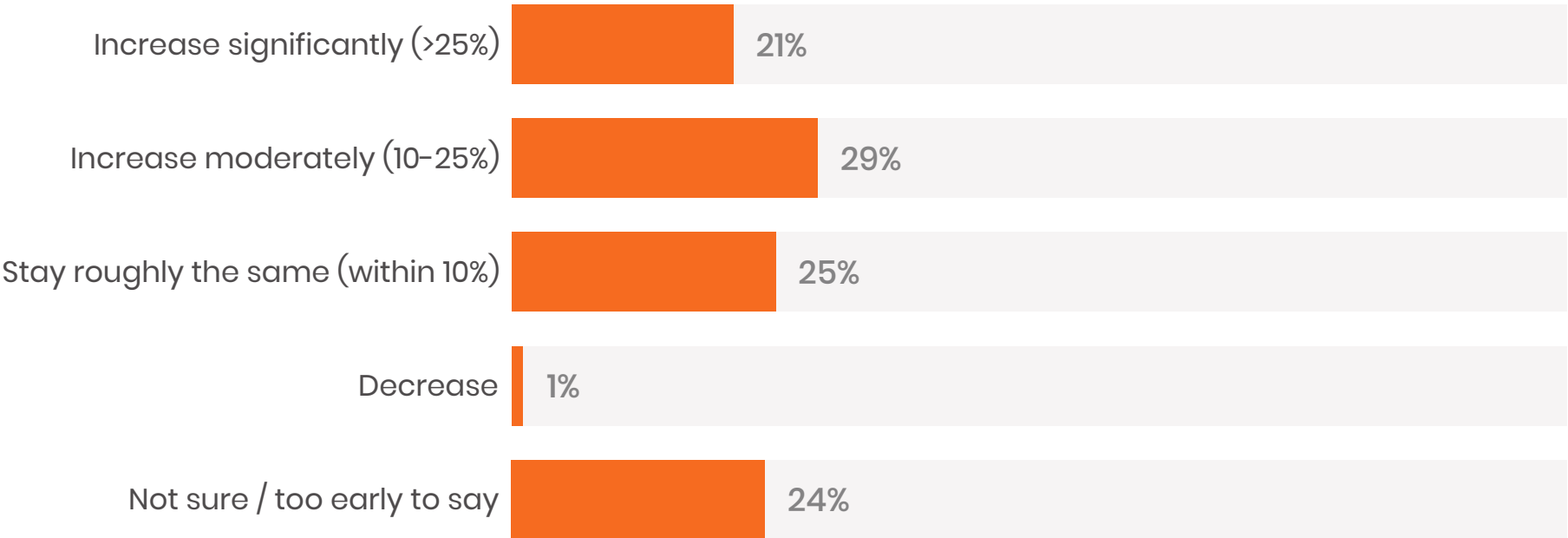
Executives

Executives most often expect AI-specific spending to grow in 2026, with 49% anticipating a moderate or significant increase, and only 1% expecting a decrease. 25% believe AI-specific spending will stay roughly the same, and another quarter (24%) are either not sure or say it’s too early to tell. When checked against earlier findings on untapped AI potential, this optimism tracks; a strong majority of executives believe there’s still room to expand AI’s role in their organization. Confidence in AI’s potential value seems to extend towards future organizational investment plans.

However, even where spending is expected to grow, governance hasn’t kept pace. Most executives report their organizations still lack a plan for managing AI-related risk, and staff remain undertrained. The following section examines what that risk actually looks like, and how it is perceived differently by executives and staff.

FIGURE 24.1

Executives





Concerns, risks, and barriers

What does the sector worry about, and has it actually happened?

Key findings

- Data privacy is the clearest, most universal concern for staff and executives alike.
- Job displacement is consistently the least worried-about risk for both groups.
- Staff surface concern across nearly every dimension measured, but most acutely around environmental impact.
- Reported harm so far is rare — but that reflects what’s been disclosed, not the sector’s actual risk exposure, especially as governance lags behind growing AI investment.

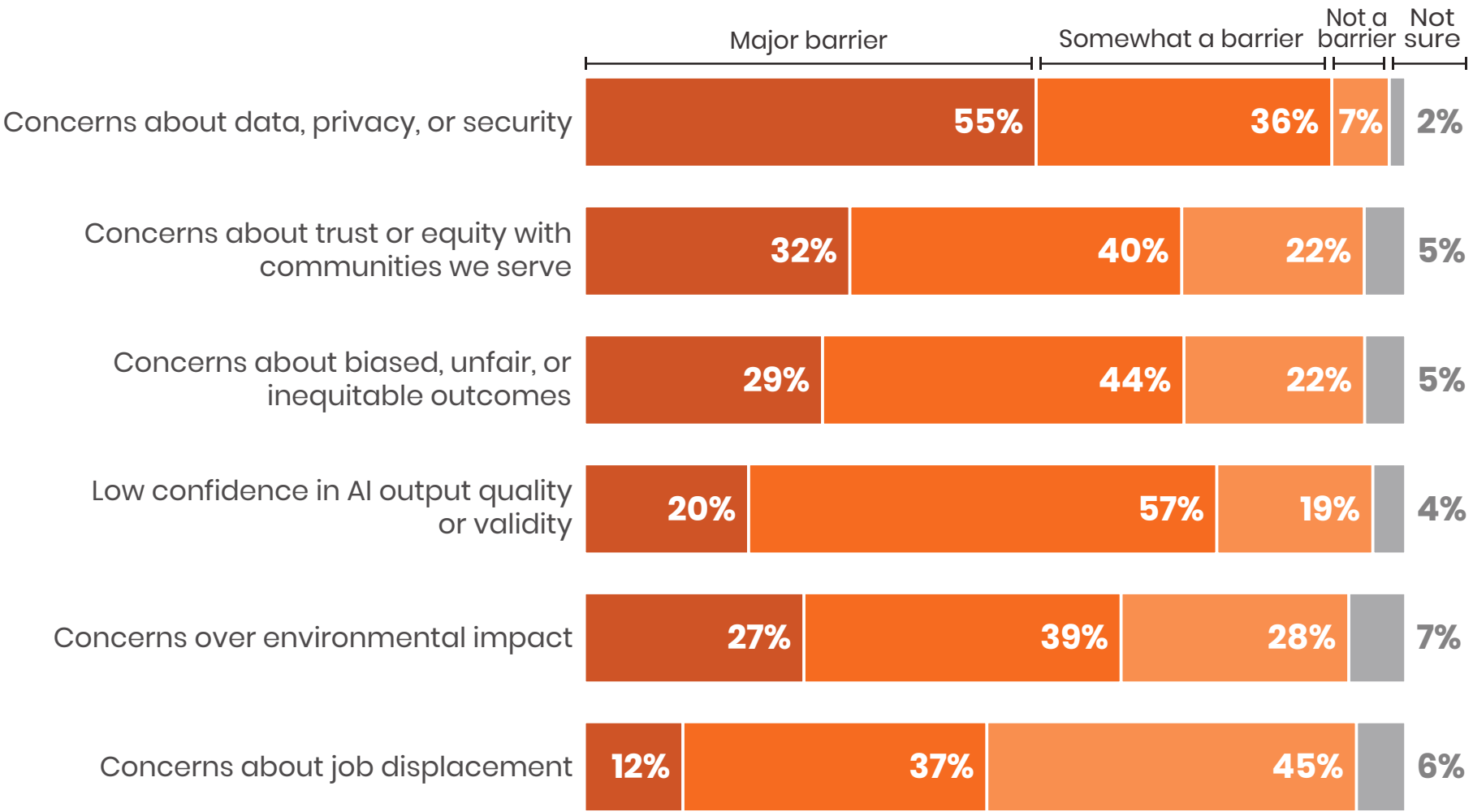
Regarding perceived risks and concerns, to what degree are the following barriers to deploying and implementing AI in your organization?

Executives

Data, privacy, and security concerns are executives’ clearest barrier to AI adoption, with 55% citing this as a major obstacle to deployment, well above every other concern measured. Low confidence in AI output quality is the next most commonly cited issue, though mostly as a moderate concern rather than a major barrier (57% somewhat, 20% major). Consistently, the remaining concerns — bias, community trust, and environmental impact — also land primarily in the somewhat-a-barrier range rather than major, typically cited by a third to over 40% of executives. Job displacement stands apart as the least pressing concern, with 45% of executives saying it isn’t a barrier at all — the highest not-a-barrier response of any category in this matrix.

FIGURE 25.1

Executives



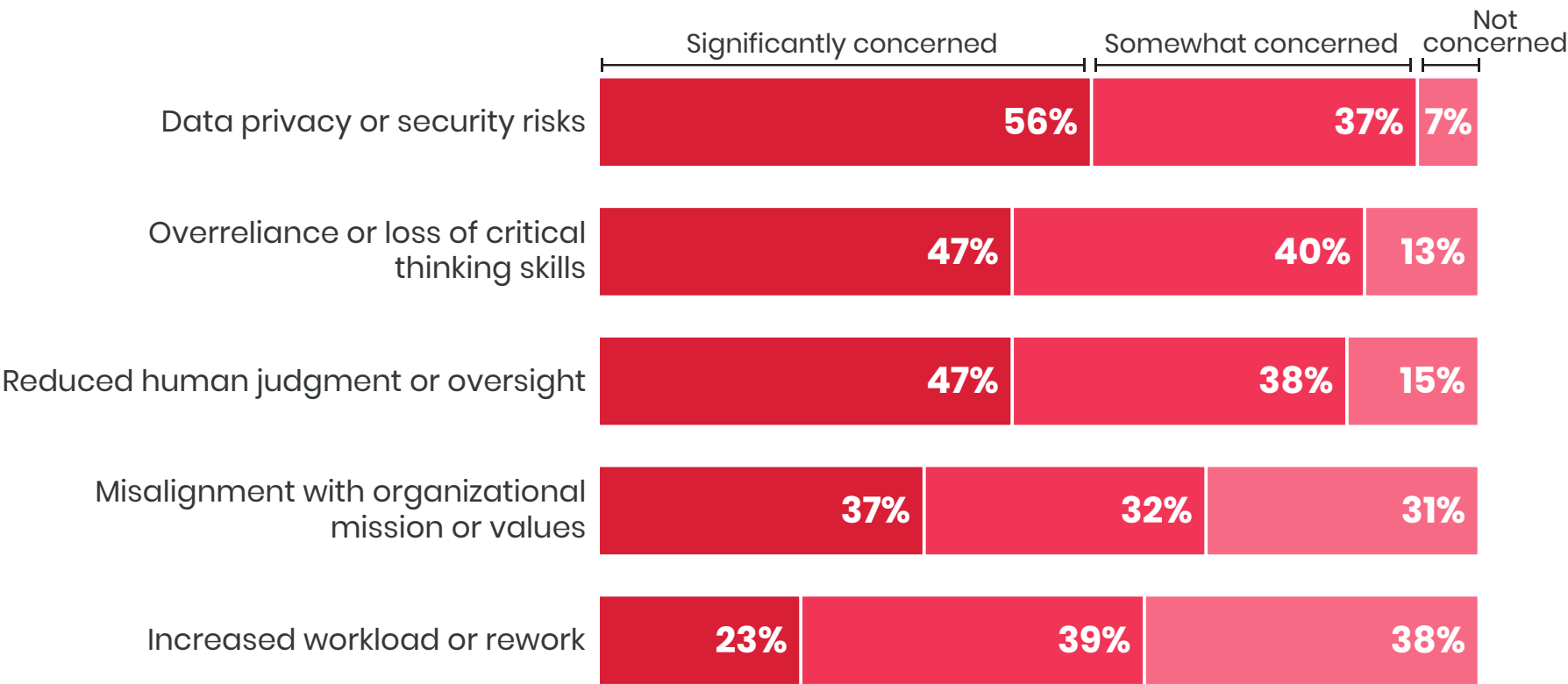
Regarding your own experience and day-to-day work, to what degree are you concerned about the following issues related to AI use in your organization?

Staff

Staff were asked a related but differently framed question — centered on personal concern rather than organizational barriers — and report similarly broad, serious concern about AI’s role in their day-to-day work. **Similar to executives, data privacy and security is the clearest AI-related concern among staff, with 56% citing it as significant, the highest of any category. Overreliance and loss of critical thinking skills (47%), and reduced human judgment or oversight (47%), follow closely behind, both cited as significant concerns by nearly half of staff.** Misalignment with organizational mission or values is more evenly split, with roughly a third of staff landing in each response tier. Increased workload stands apart as the clear exception, with 38% of staff reporting that they aren’t concerned about it at all.

FIGURE 26.1

Staff



Regarding broader impacts and risks, to what degree are you concerned about the following issues related to AI use in your organization?

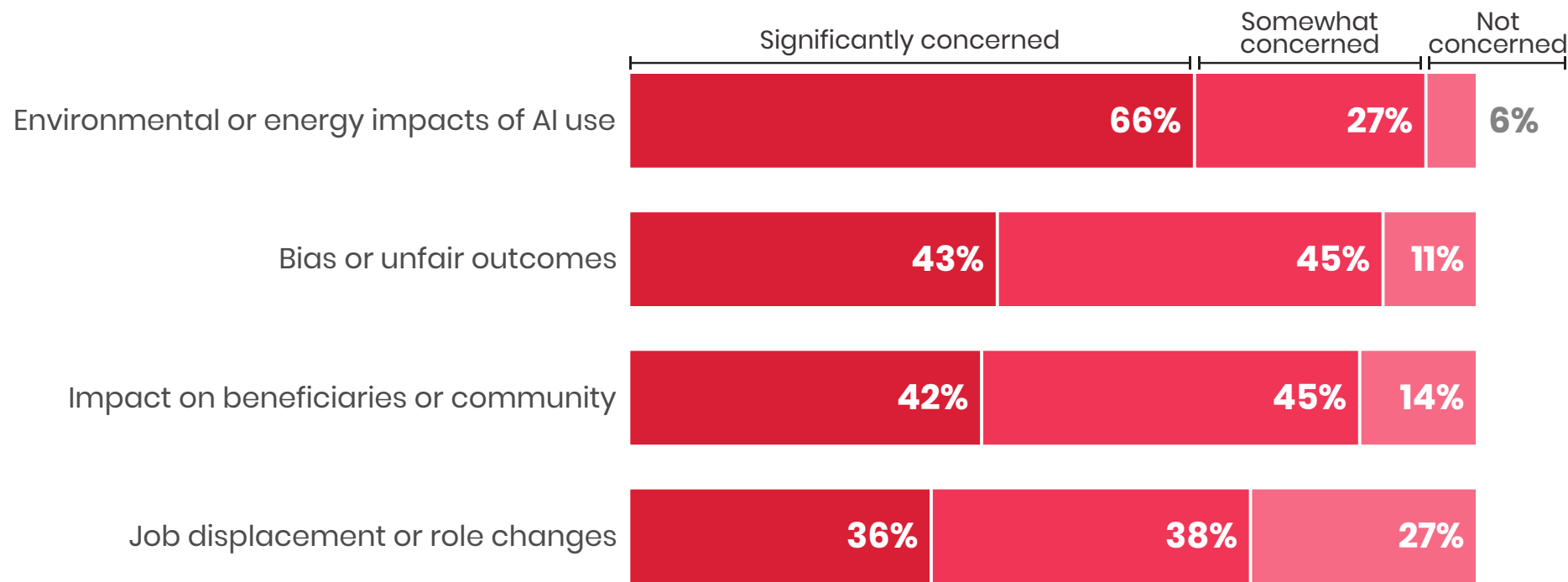
Staff

Far above all other options, staff are most concerned about the environmental impact of AI use, with 66% citing it as a major concern. Staff also report meaningful concern across the remaining areas, each landing between 38 and 46% who say they’re somewhat concerned. This suggests staff have concerns about AI use across several dimensions, though the degree varies — job displacement, for instance, was the area staff were least worried about overall. Even so, nearly three-quarters of staff (73%) report at least some concern about job displacement, whether somewhat or significant. Job displacement’s position here as the lowest-ranked concern echoes what executives reported earlier in this section; across both audiences and framings, it’s consistently the risk people worry about the least.

Across both of these staff-focused matrices — day-to-day work and broader impacts — no single concern received a majority “not concerned” response, and most categories saw significant concern as the leading or near-leading answer. Staff worry about AI’s risks broadly and consistently, whether the concern is personal and immediate or further-reaching.

FIGURE 27.1

Staff



In the last 12 months, are you aware of any AI-related incident that caused harm or created a serious risk for your organization?

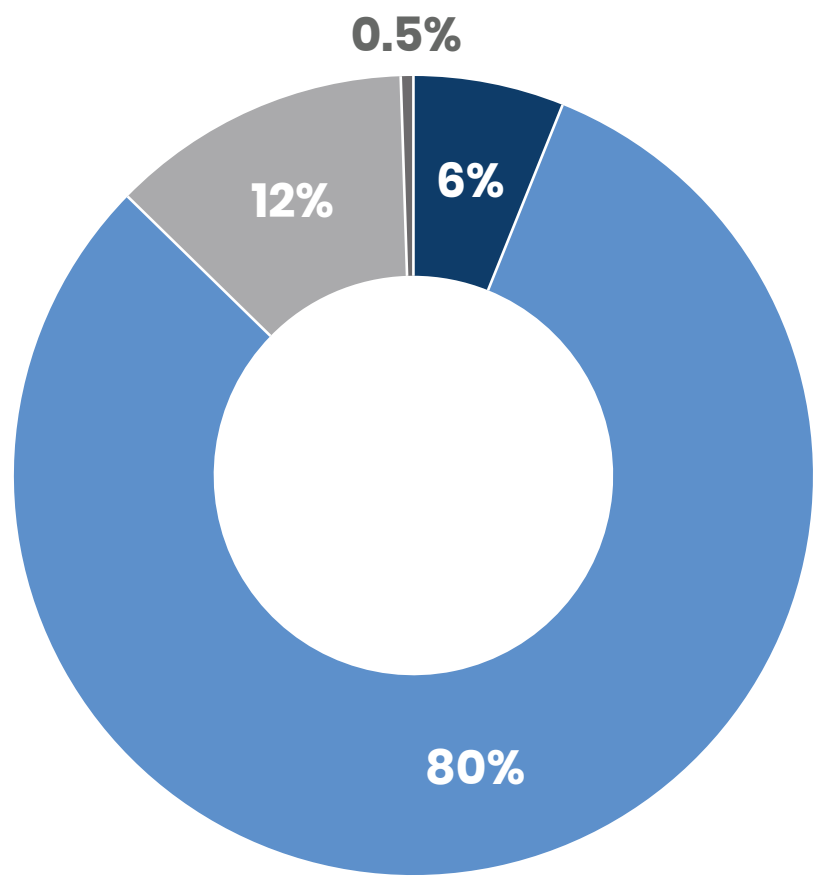
Aggregate

Set against these concerns, specific reported harms are rare. **Most respondents are unaware of any AI-related incident that caused harm within their organization.** 80% say no such incident occurred, while 6% identify that at least one took place.

It’s worth being precise about what this question measures, however. It captures realized harm over the last 12 months, *not* the sector’s current exposure to risk. That distinction matters, given what the rest of the report has covered. For one, most organizations still lack a formal plan for managing AI-related risk — without a defined process for identifying, logging, or escalating incidents, harm may be going undetected or undisclosed rather than genuinely not occurring. And separately, staff training and risk conversations continue to lag even as executives expect AI spending to continue to grow. Low reported harm today describes what’s happened so far, not what the sector and organizations are positioned to withstand as AI use expands.

FIGURE 28.1

Aggregate



Responses	%
Yes	6%
No	80%
Not sure	12%
Prefer not to say	0.5%

What type of incident was it?

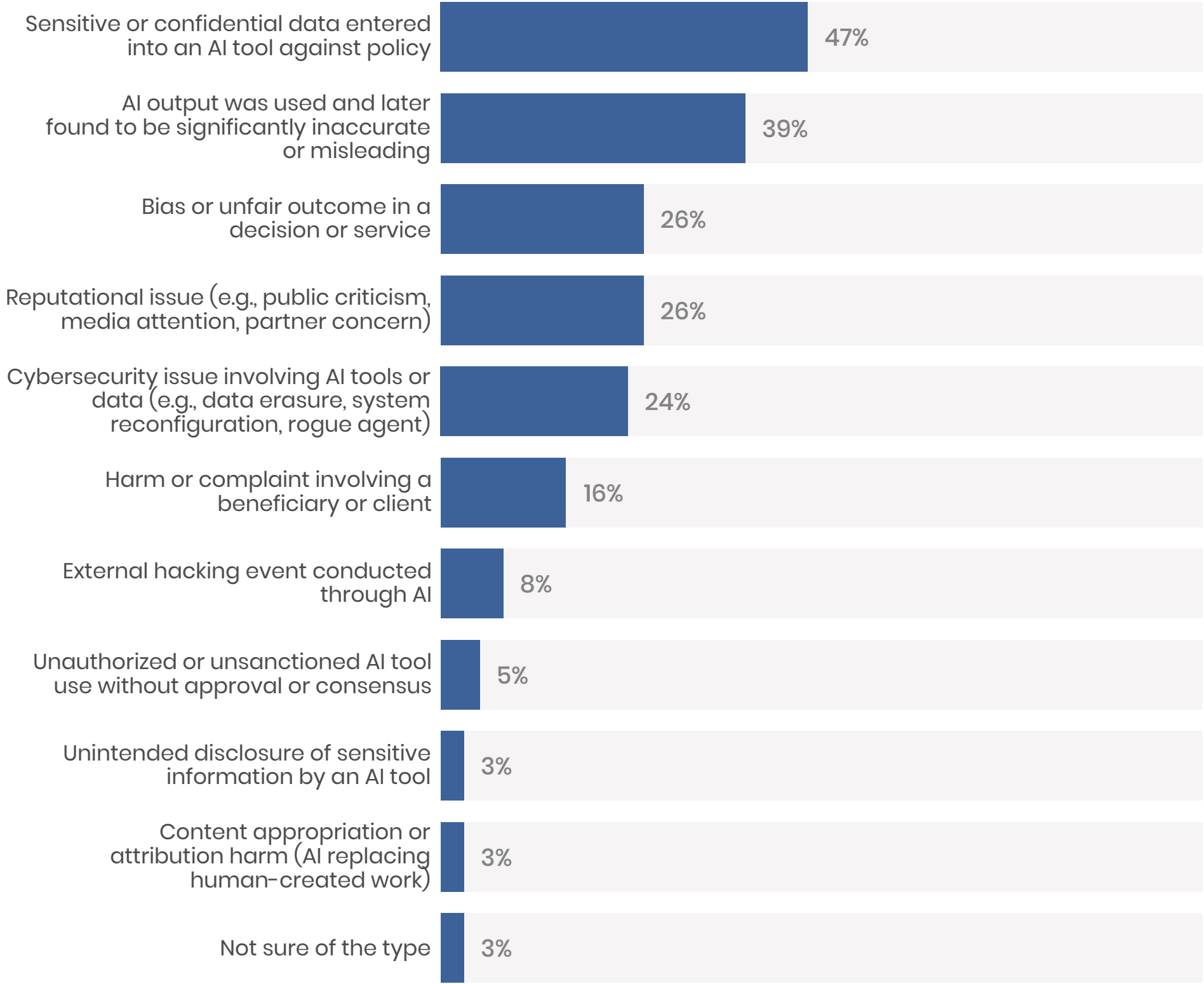
(Select all that apply)

Aggregate

Of the 38 respondents who reported an AI-related incident, most involved either sensitive or confidential data being entered into a tool against policy (47%) or an AI output later found to be significantly inaccurate or misleading (39%). Reputational issues (26%) and biased or unfair outcomes (26%) were each cited by about a quarter of respondents, though the small sample size here means these figures should be read directionally rather than as precise sector-wide estimates. It’s also worth noting that the response options here were input-focused; risks like unauthorized tool use or downstream data disclosure may be underrepresented as a result.

FIGURE 29.1

Aggregate





Shadow use

Who's going around the rules, and why?

Key findings

- Shadow use is widespread — over half of all respondents do it in some form.
- However, executives shadow-use at a higher rate than staff.
- Both groups cite curiosity as a primary driving factor, but staff more often point to gaps in guidance and tools, while executives point to time pressure and deadlines.
- Shadow use occurs, in part, because staff and executives alike fill organizational governance vacuums.

In the last 12 months, have you used AI tools for work-related tasks in ways that were informal, unofficial, on personal devices, or not clearly covered by organizational guidance?

- Aggregate
- Staff
- Executives

A majority of respondents are engaging in shadow AI use — informal, unofficial use that falls outside of organizational guidance or tracking. 53% of respondents report using AI tools in ways that were informal, unofficial, on personal devices, or not covered by organizational guidance.

Perhaps counterintuitively, executives engage in shadow use at a higher rate than staff: 57% of executives report shadow use, compared to 49% of staff. Shadow use, in other words, isn’t a staff phenomenon that leadership is simply failing to catch; it’s happening as much among the people setting rules as it is among those expected to follow them. This is worth reading against the governance gaps outlined earlier in this report, wherein less than half of executives report having clear rules on what data can be entered into AI tools (40%) or written guidance on responsible use (38%) fully in place. **With formal policy this underdeveloped, a meaningful amount of AI use across the sector — including among executives — falls outside clearly defined guidance by default.**

FIGURE 30.1

Aggregate

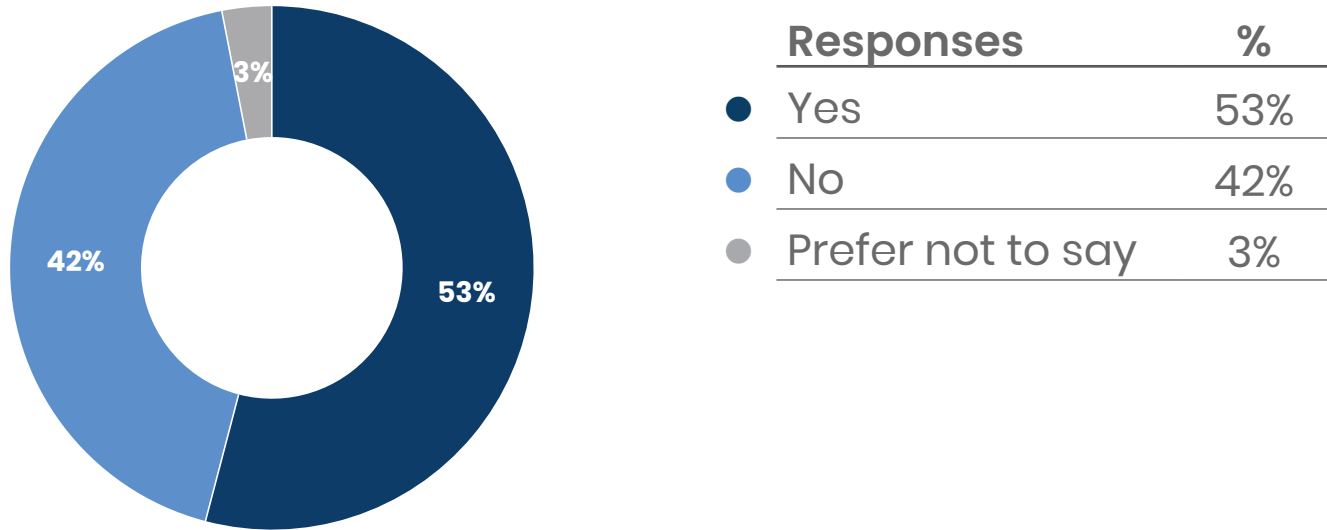


FIGURE 30.2

Staff

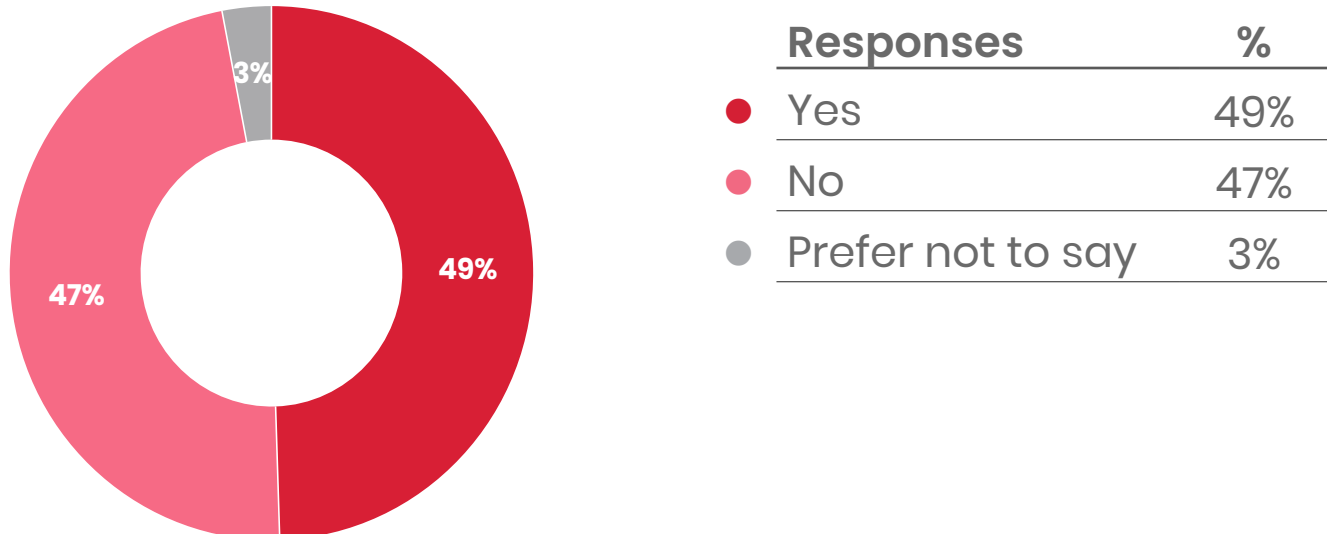
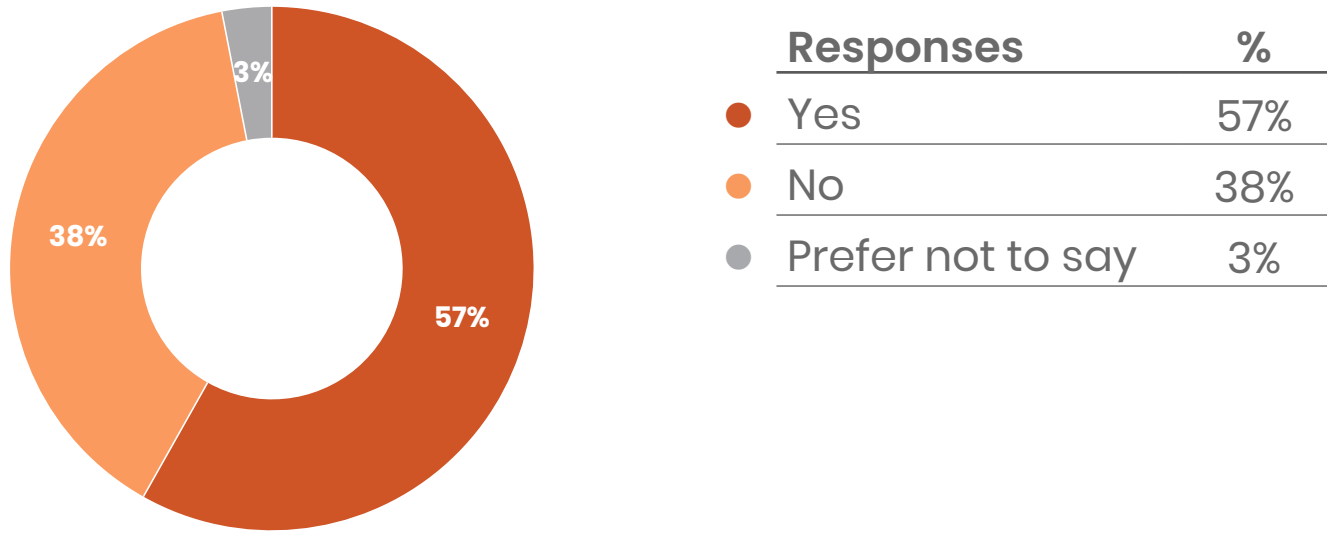


FIGURE 30.3

Executives



What are the main reasons you’ve used AI informally or unofficially?

(Select all that apply)

- Aggregate
- Staff
- Executives

Curiosity is the most commonly reported reason for shadow use across all respondents. **Nearly 70% of respondents say they experimented with AI tools out of curiosity, the top reason for both staff and executives.** It’s one of three reasons the two groups share at the top of their list, alongside a lack of clear guidance or policies and the pressure to save time or meet deadlines. And yet, despite this overlap, the two groups frame their shadow use differently.

Staff more often point to organizational shortfalls as drivers of shadow use behavior. 46% cite a lack of clear guidance or policy, and 31% say the tools their organization provided didn’t meet their needs — both demonstrably higher than executive rates (34% and 23%, respectively). Executives, meanwhile, more often frame their shadow use around personal efficiency, with 54% reporting time pressure or deadlines as motivating reasons, compared to 43% of staff. In any case, **shadow use is less about “breaking the rules” and more about people across all levels of an organization operating independently in the absence of proper governance and guidance.**

FIGURE 31.1

Aggregate

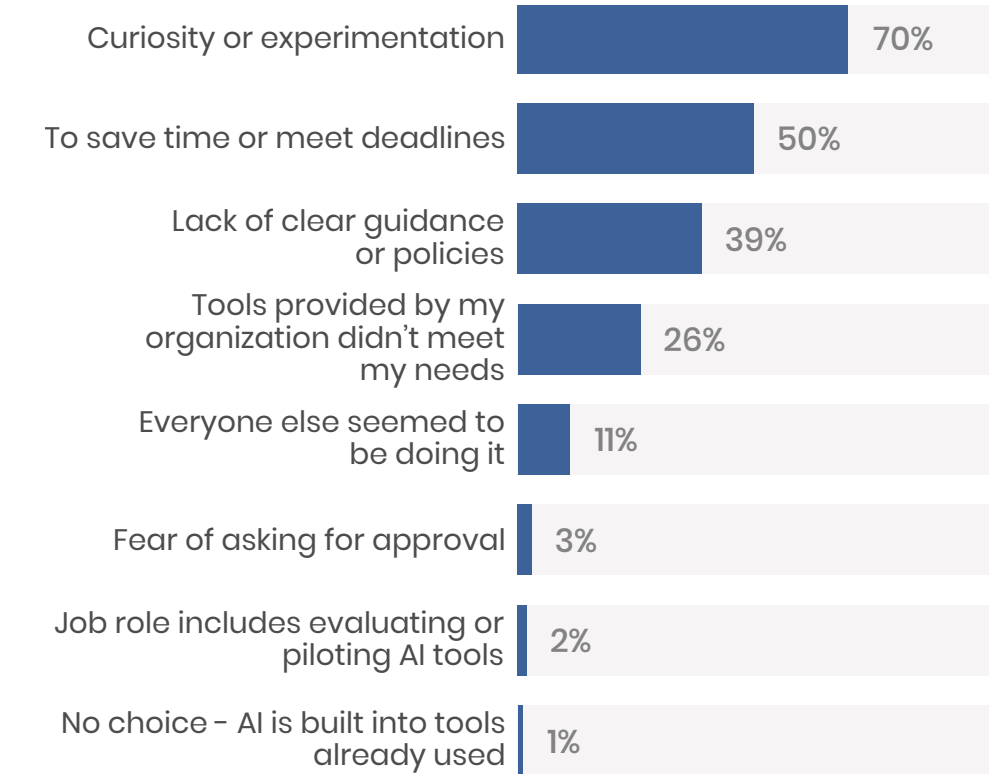


FIGURE 31.2

Staff

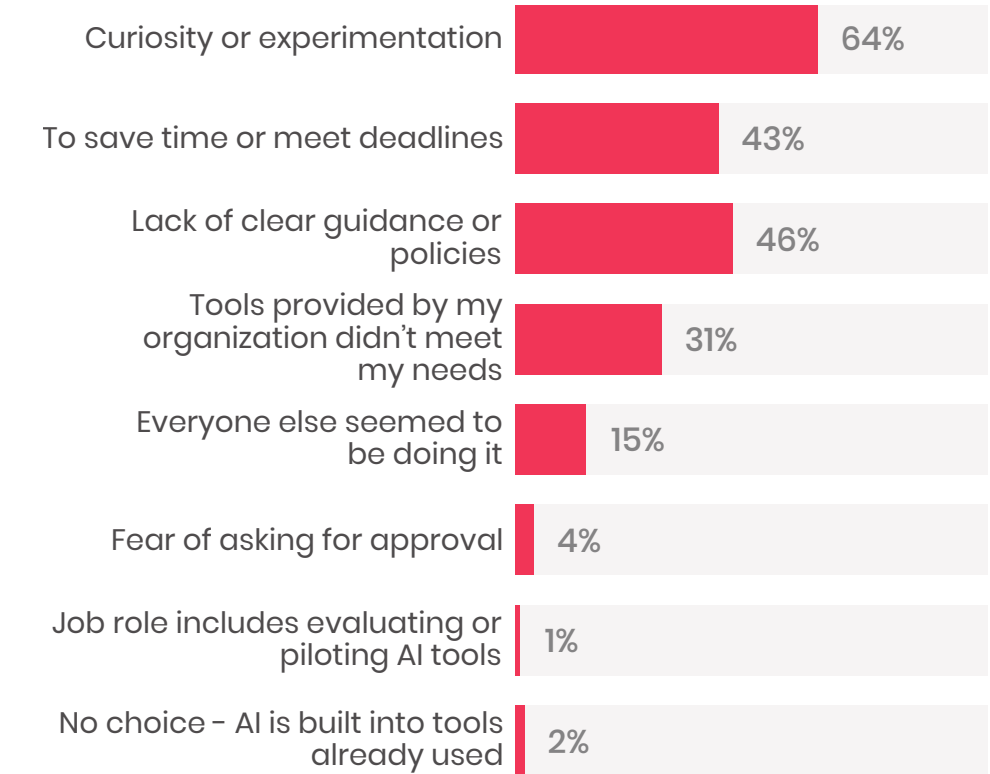
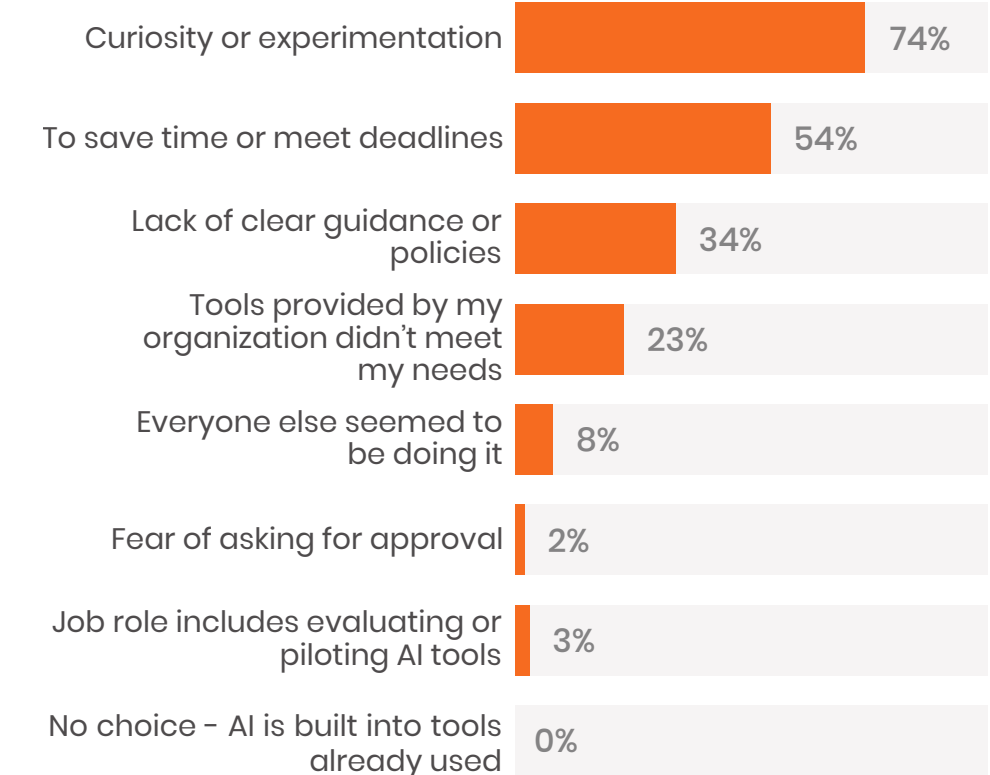
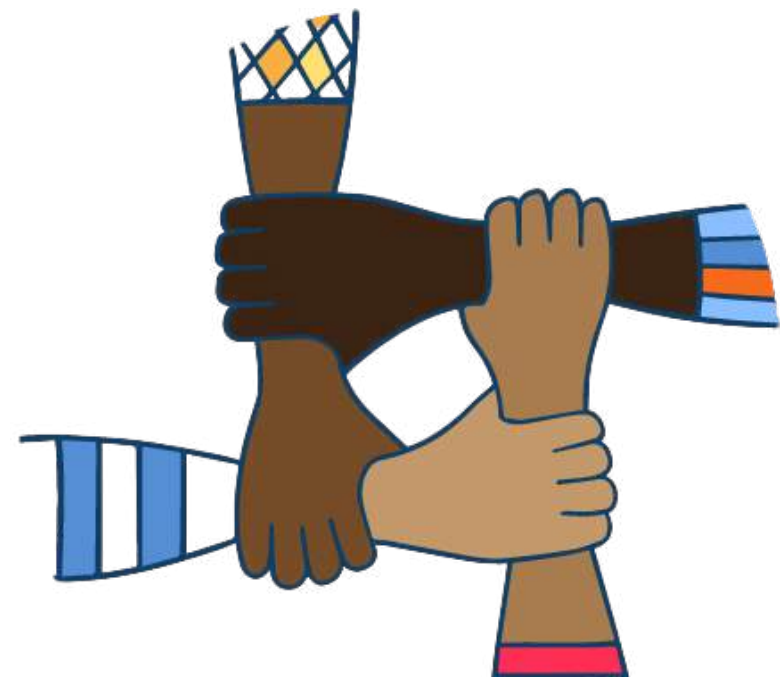


FIGURE 31.3

Executives





Training and support

What would actually help, and does everyone agree?

Key findings

- Staff capacity has already been cited as a barrier to adoption, and training gaps have surfaced repeatedly throughout the report.
- Just under a third of staff have received formal AI training; even at well-resourced organizations, that gap narrows only marginally.
- Staff are teaching themselves, mostly through hands-on use rather than structured or formal learning.
- Asked separately, staff and executives arrive at the same conclusion: training and clear guidance are essential to expanding responsible AI use.

In the last 12 months, have you participated in any training or received any guidance about how to use AI at your organization?

Staff

The majority of nonprofit staff are not receiving formal training on AI use. 36% of staff report receiving no formal training or guidance at all, and another 31% report receiving training only through informal communication. This could be as brief as an email asking staff not to use a specific tool, or a passing comment in a meeting. Only 32% of staff have received formal training and communication related to AI use at work.

By this point, the pattern has become established and unmistakable. Staff training comes up short in this report’s governance data, is named among executives’ clearest infrastructure gaps, and is ranked near the bottom of what little AI-specific funding organizations receive. **Now, staff confirm it firsthand: most have received little to no formal training.**

By organizational budget size

This same lack of formal training persists across budget-size disaggregation and tracks with previously established trends: larger organizations report more formal training for staff, but improvement only goes so far. 27% of staff at organizations with a budget under \$10 million report having received some form of formal training, compared to 41% at organizations with a budget of \$10 million or more — a 14-point difference. **Yet, even at the best-resourced organizations, nearly 60% of staff are not being formally trained to work with AI tools.**

FIGURE 32.1

Staff

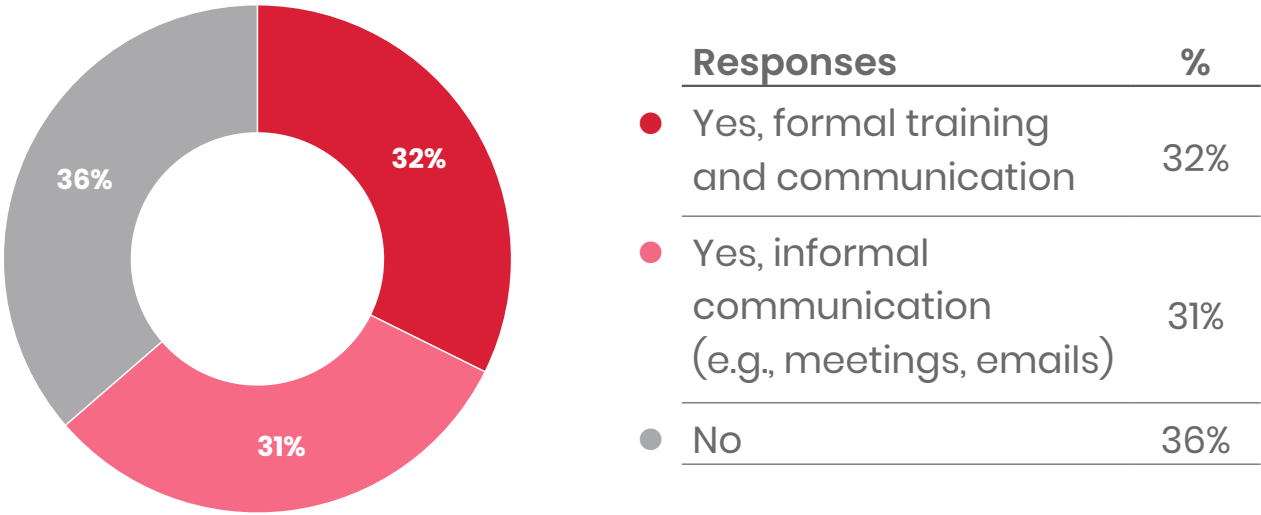


FIGURE 32.2

Budget under \$10 million

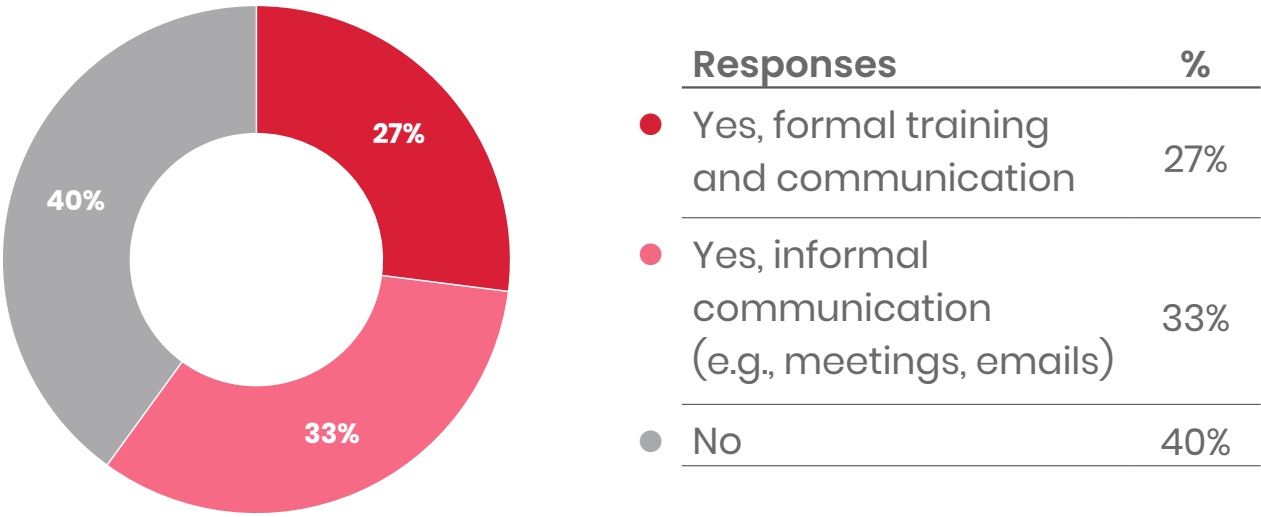
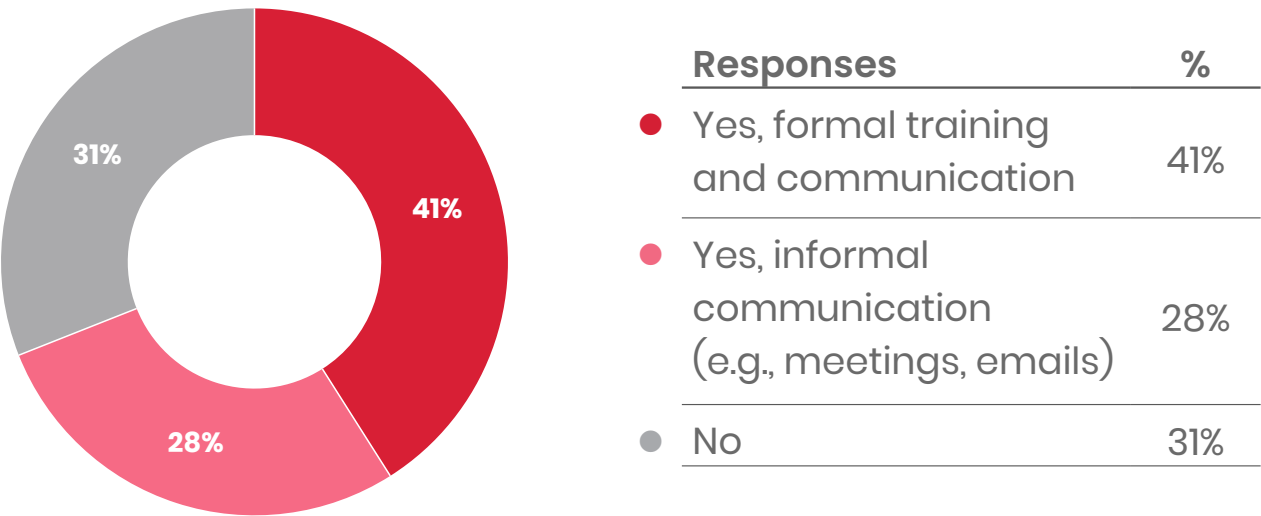


FIGURE 32.3

Budget of \$10 million+



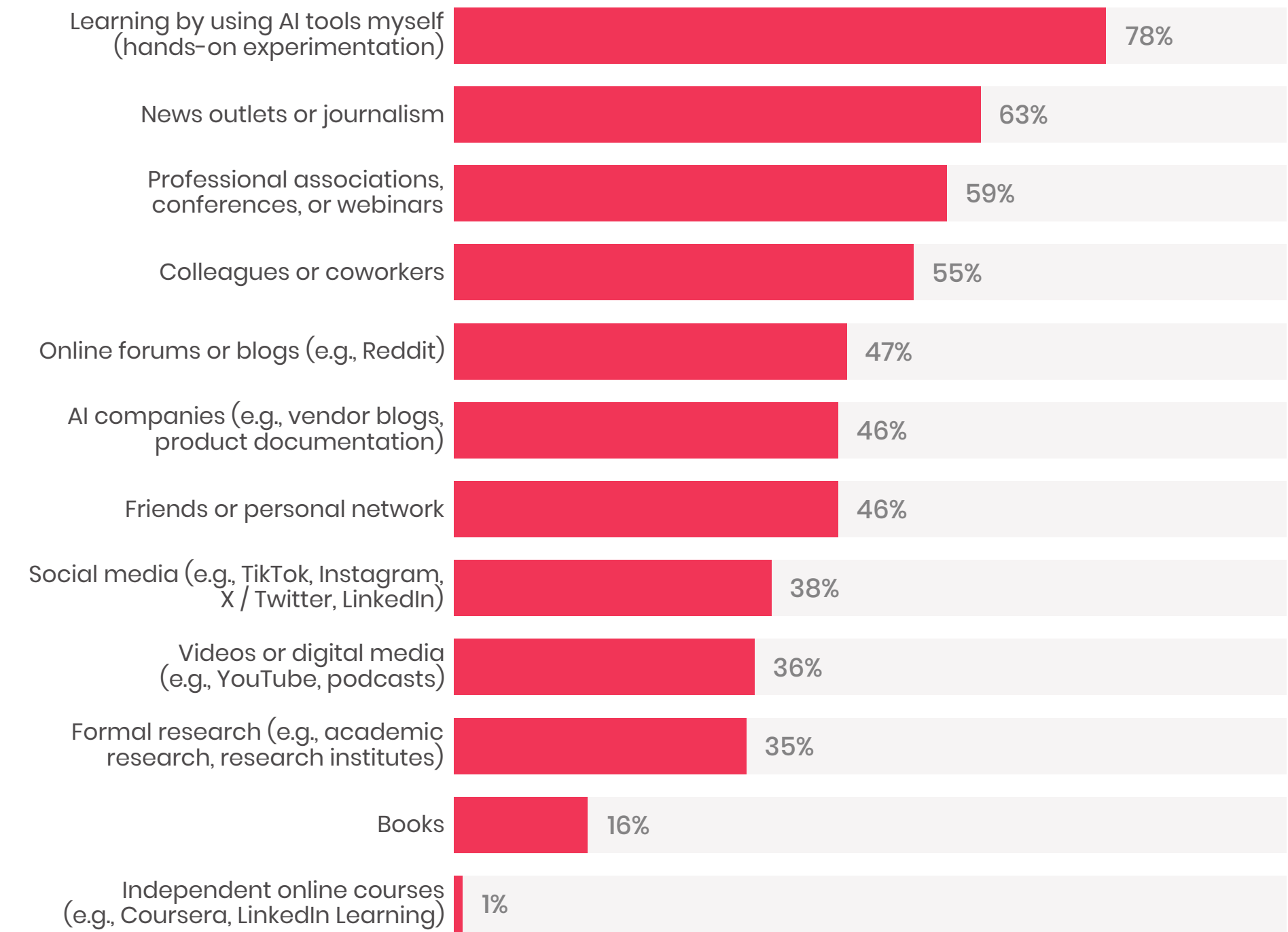
What are your primary sources of information about AI?

Staff

Left to fill the gap themselves, staff primarily learn about AI through hands-on use; **78% report learning by using AI tools themselves, the most common selection by a wide margin.** News outlets or journalism (63%) and professional associations, conferences, or webinars (59%) follow as the next most common sources, both somewhat more structured channels than casual or experimental learning. Colleagues, online forums, personal networks, and information directly from AI companies all cluster within the 46 to 55% range. Structured or formal learning is rare by comparison: only 16% of staff learn via books, and just 1% used independent online courses like Coursera or LinkedIn Learning. Staff appear to be piecing together an understanding of AI through short-form, informal, and self-directed channels, with little use of structured or in-depth study.

FIGURE 33.1

Staff



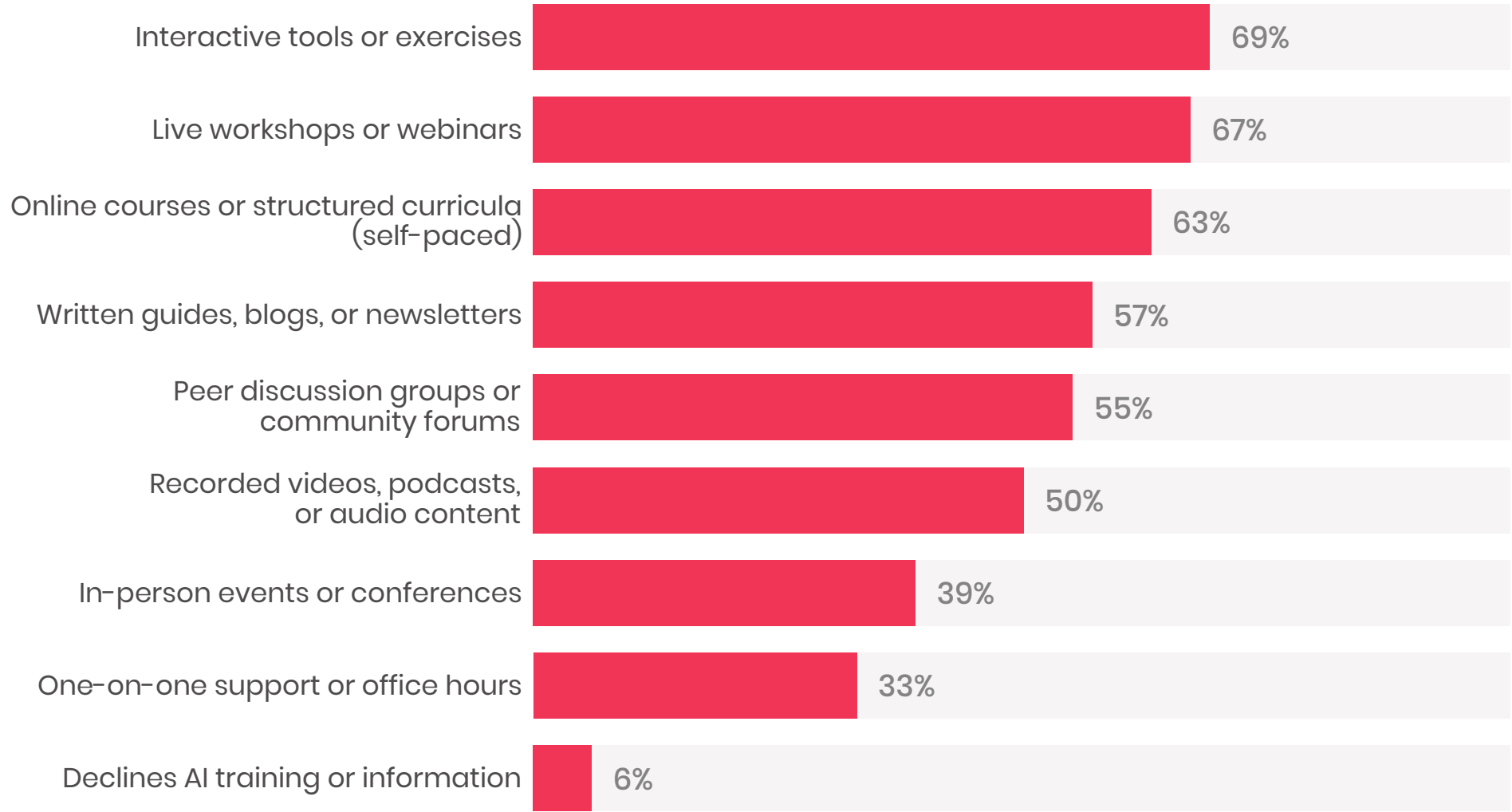
How would you prefer to receive information or training about AI? (Select all that apply)

Staff

Staff show a clear preference for interactive and structured formats when it comes to receiving AI training. The top preferences are interactive tools or exercises (69%), live workshops or webinars (67%), and self-paced online courses or structured curricula (63%). Written guides (57%), peer discussion groups (55%), and recorded content (50%) also score well, while in-person events (39%) and one-on-one support (33%) rank lowest. Just 6% of staff say they would decline training or information about AI altogether — though this was not a response option on the original survey, and instead reflects an aggregation of open-ended write-in responses wherein staff expressed disinterest in AI training or use.

FIGURE 34.1

Staff



To what degree would the following supports help you use AI more confidently and responsibly at work?

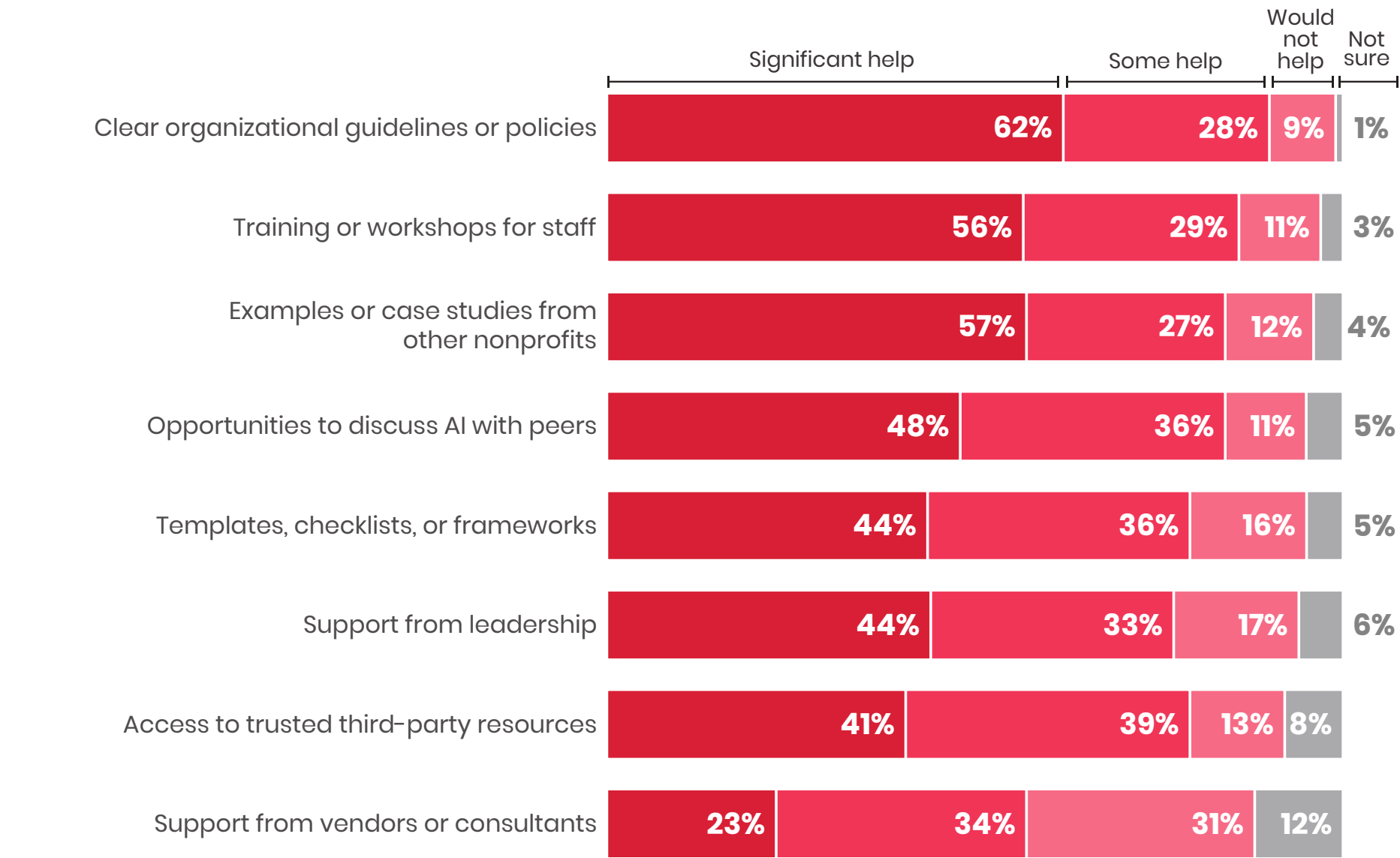
Staff

Format aside, staff are just as clear about what would substantively help them use AI more confidently and responsibly at work. **Clear organizational policies and guidelines top the list, with 62% of staff saying this would be significantly helpful.** This calls back to executive reporting on barriers to AI implementation, where nearly three-quarters say that a lack of clear policies, governance, or strategy are barriers in some form. Staff and executives, asked from different vantage points, arrive at the same underlying issue.

Examples or case studies from other nonprofits (57%) and training or workshops (56%) follow closely behind as the next most helpful supports. The remaining support options cluster more moderately. Peer discussion (48%) leads this middle group, which also includes leadership support, templates or frameworks, and third-party resources, all within the 41 to 44% range. The clear outlier is support from vendors or consultants: 31% say it would not help them use AI tools more confidently at work, and another 12% aren’t sure if it would help.

FIGURE 35.1

Staff



Which of the following would most accelerate your organization’s ability to expand responsible AI use? (Select up to 3)

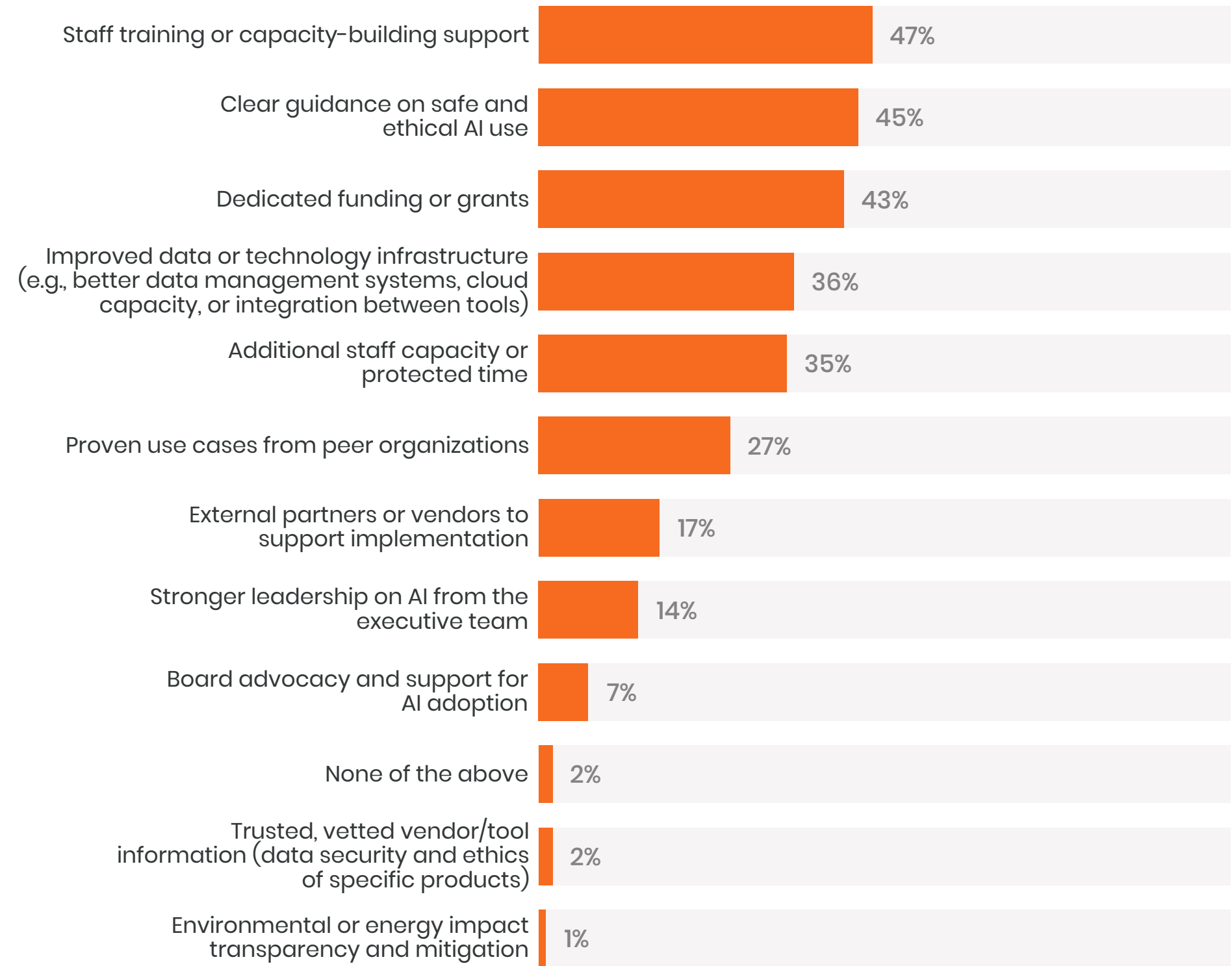
Executives

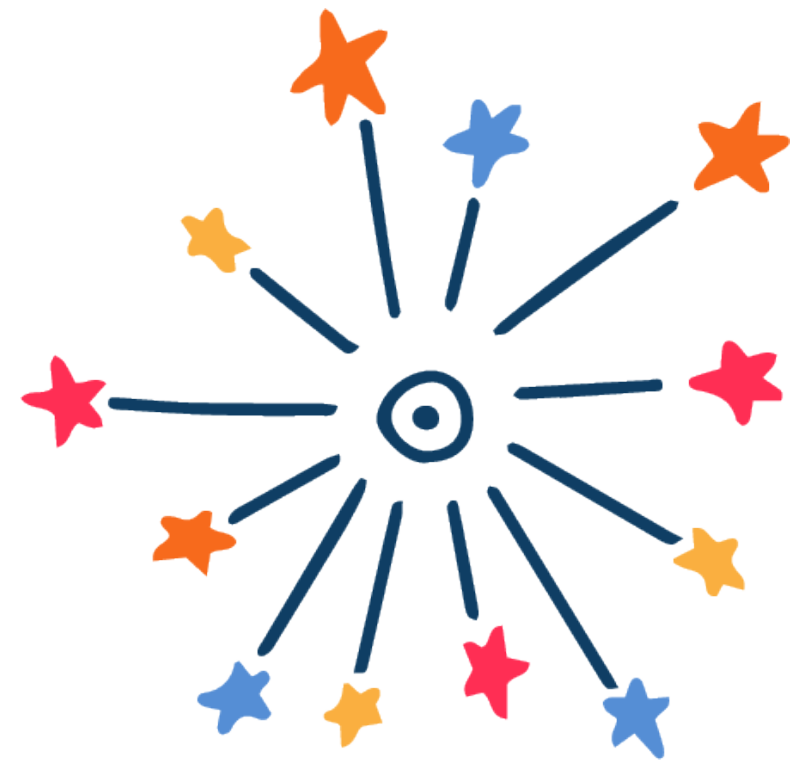
Executives largely converge with staff on what would help further responsible AI use. 47% of executives cite staff training or capacity-building support as a top accelerant for expanding responsible AI use, closely followed by clear guidance on safe and ethical AI use (45%) and dedicated funding or grants (43%). Notably, executives rank stronger leadership involvement (14%) and board advocacy (7%) far lower — even executives don’t see more leadership push as the missing ingredient, preferring concrete investments in training, guidance, and funding.

Again, this mirrors what staff reported earlier in this section. When asked separately what would help them use AI more confidently, staff pointed first to clear guidance (62%) and training (56%). **It seems staff and executives arrive at nearly the same answer independently: training and clear organizational guidance, not stronger leadership, are what the sector says it actually needs.**

FIGURE 36.1

Executives





Impact so far

Where do executives see impact?

Key findings

- Realized impact is narrow so far, and where it does show up, executives report it's concentrated in a handful of areas around organizational effectiveness.
- Staff time/efficiency, quality and consistency of work, and communications and marketing effectiveness stand out as the clearest positively impacted areas, while most others see limited change.
- Mission-facing outcomes fare worst of all, as trust with beneficiaries records the lowest positive-impact rate in the entire section.
- Across every area measured, executives rarely reported negative impacts regarding AI.

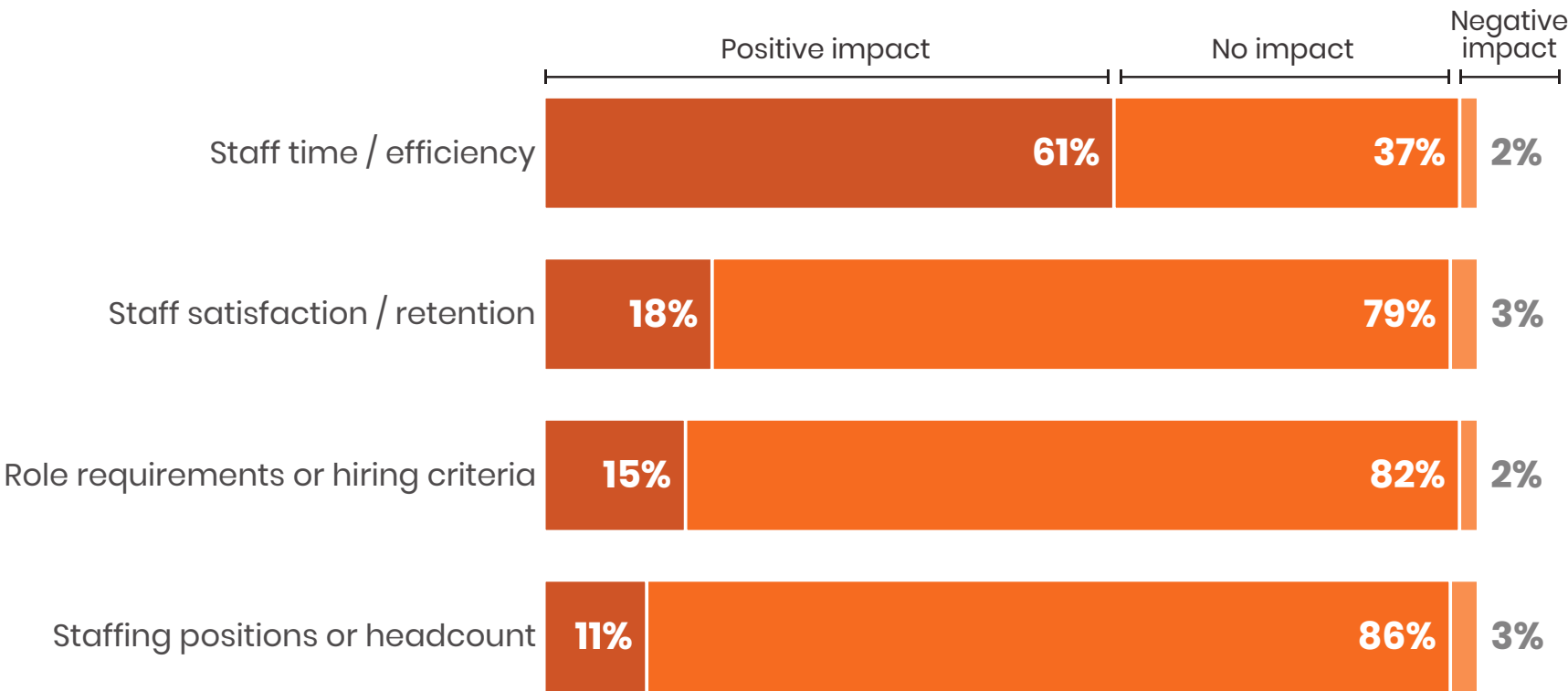
For staffing, how would you categorize the overall impact AI has had in the following areas in the last 12 months?

Executives

Overall, executives report that AI has yet to impact nonprofit staffing, with one clear exception: **61% say it has positively impacted staff time or efficiency. All other areas — staffing levels, role requirements, and staff satisfaction — skew heavily towards “no impact,” with responses ranging from 79% to 86%.** Negative impact is rare across the board, with less than 4% across every category.

FIGURE 37.1

Executives



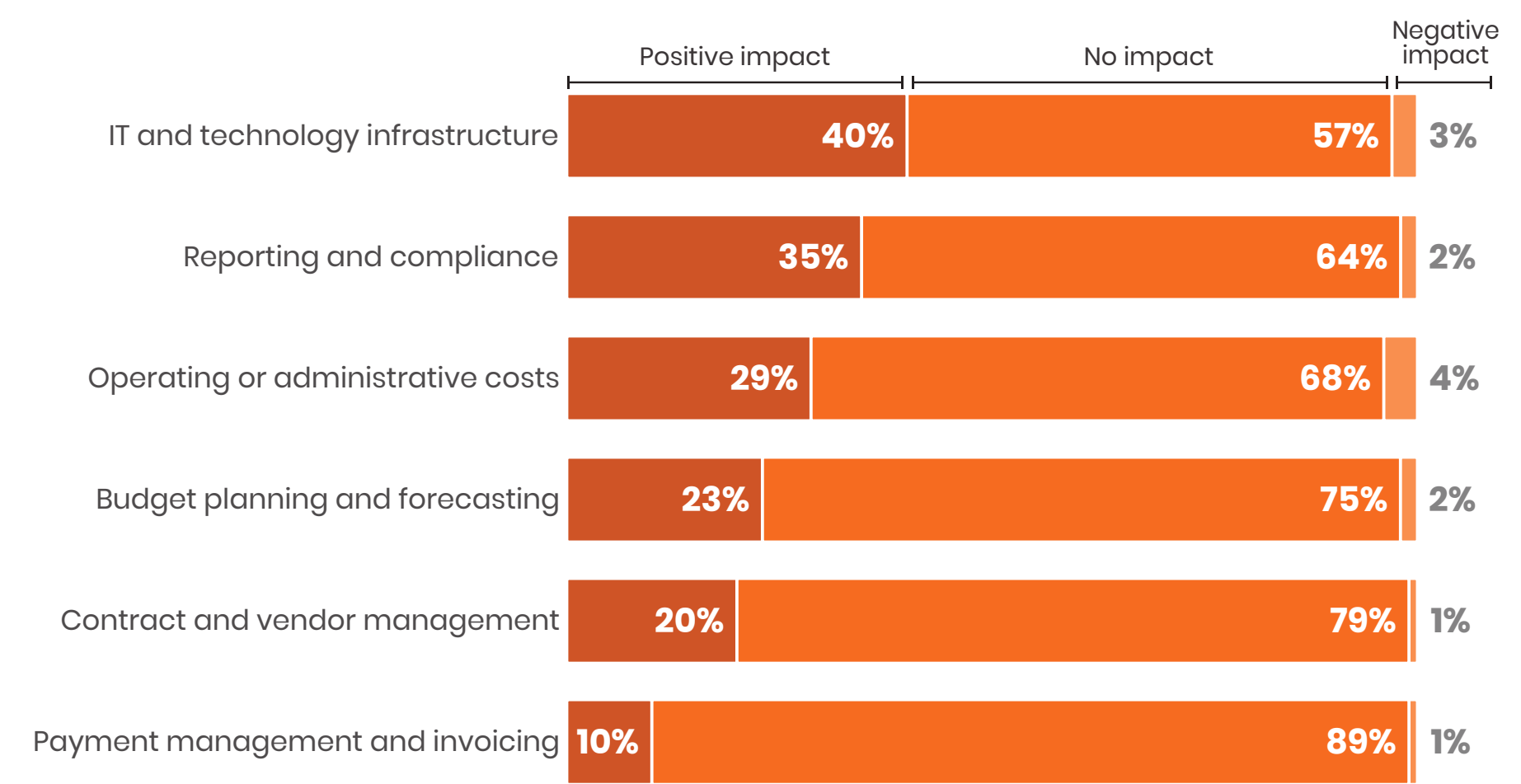
For operations, how would you categorize the overall impact AI has had in the following areas in the last 12 months?

Executives

The same limited-impact trend holds true for operations. Executives report that most operational areas saw no meaningful impact from AI so far, with “no impact” selected between 57% to 89% of the time, depending on the area. **The clearest positive impact is in IT and technology infrastructure, where 40% of executives report a positive effect. 35% report a positive impact on compliance and reporting, and another 29% report a positive impact on operating or administrative costs.** Executives report the least impact of any kind in budget planning, contract and vendor management, and payment or invoicing processes.

FIGURE 38.1

Executives



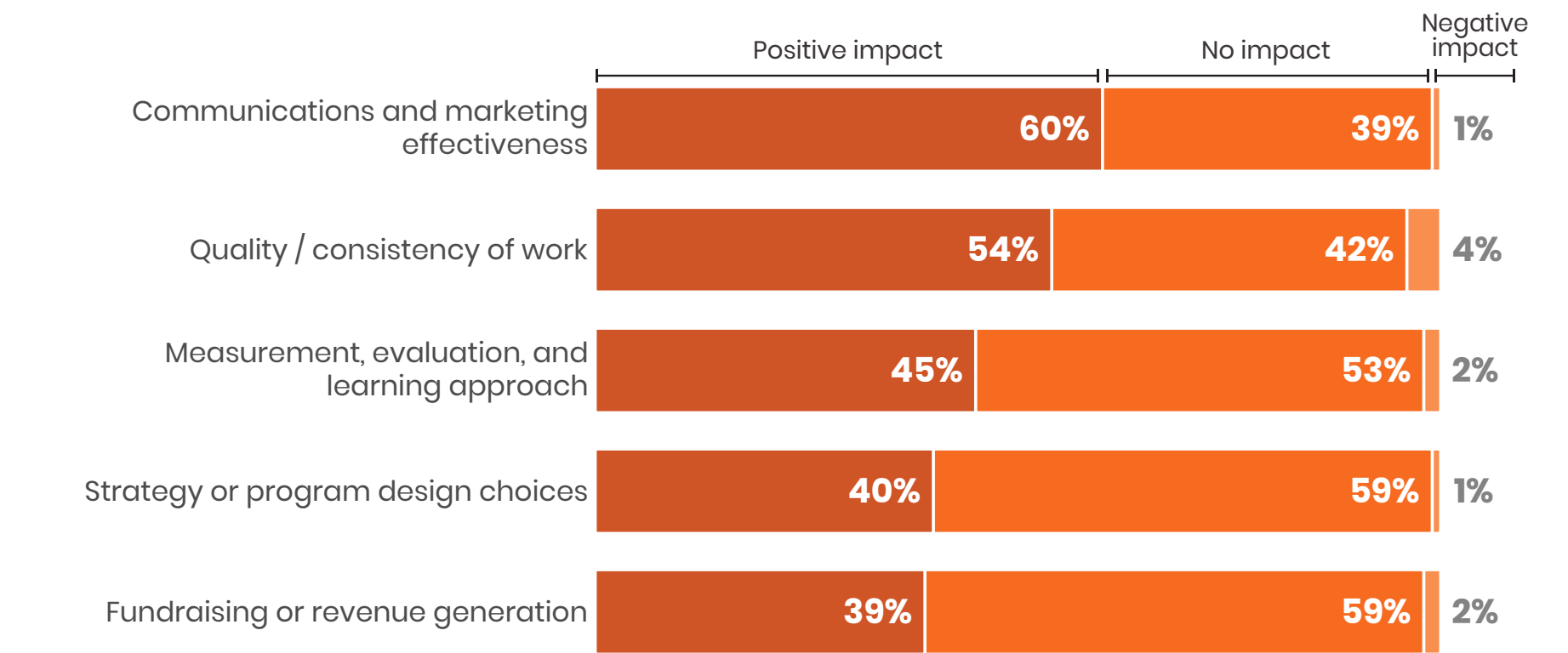
For organizational effectiveness, how would you categorize the overall impact AI has had in the following areas in the last 12 months?

Executives

Impact does vary, however, when executives assess organizational effectiveness rather than day-to-day work. **Communications and marketing show the highest positive impact, cited by 60% of executives. This is consistent with an earlier finding in this report that communications and marketing stands as the sector’s most AI-saturated function.** Quality or consistency of work follows closely (54%), also echoing an earlier finding that improving quality was one of executives’ top stated reasons for adopting AI. The remaining areas — fundraising, measurement and evaluation, and strategy or program design — still see moderate positive impact, ranging from 39% to 45% of responses.

FIGURE 39.1

Executives



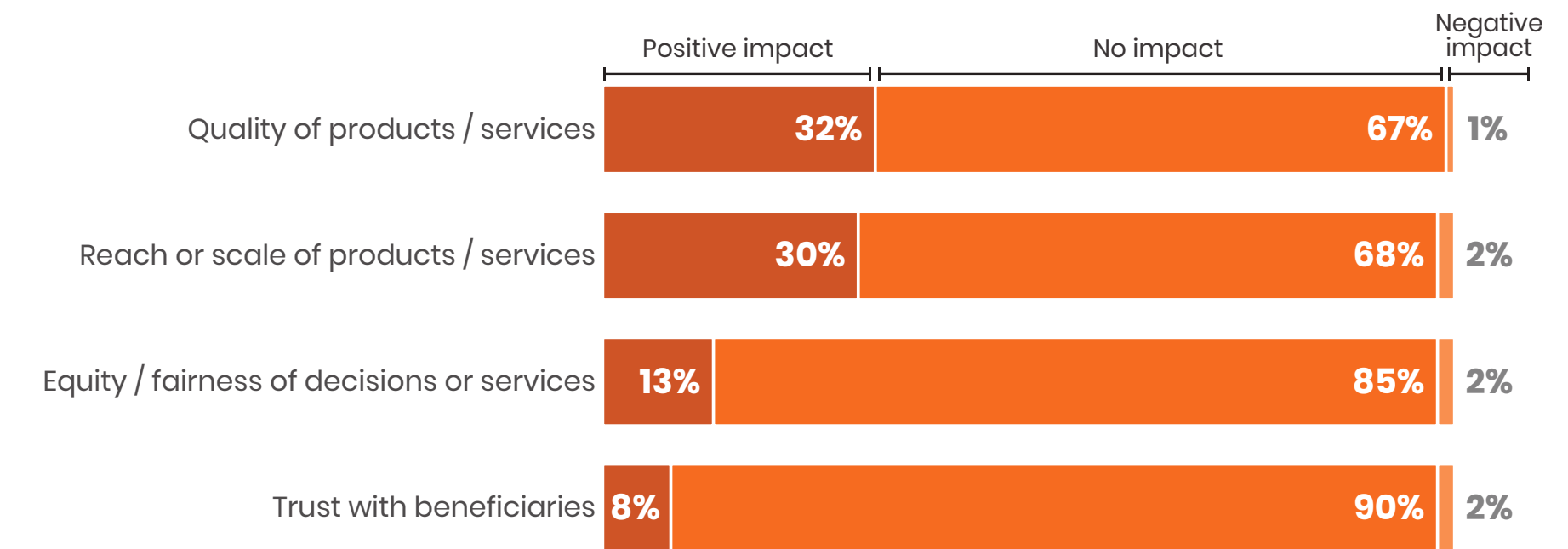
For your mission, how would you categorize the impact AI has had in the following areas in the last 12 months?

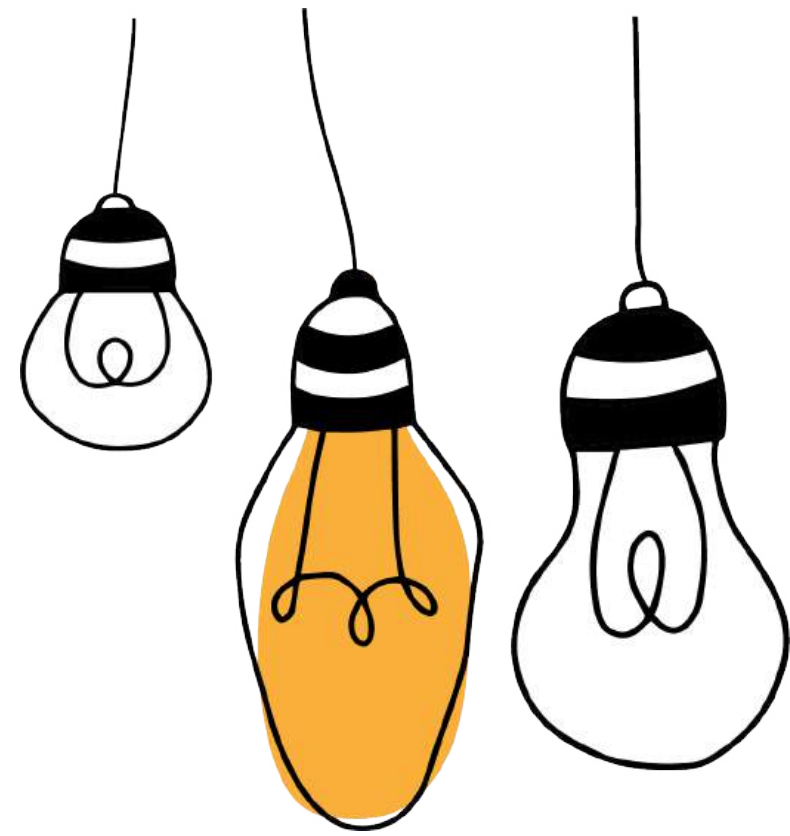
Executives

In spite of positive exceptions regarding AI’s impact on organizational effectiveness, **mission-facing impact is the starkest version of the no-impact baseline seen throughout this section.** Each ‘no impact’ option receives between 67% and 90% of respondents, and where any signal emerges, it’s modest: 32% of executives report AI positively impacted their organization’s quality of products or services, and 30% report a positive impact on reach or scale. By contrast, trust with beneficiaries shows the least reported impact of any category in this section, with only 8% of executives citing a positive effect — the lowest positive-impact rate across all impact areas asked about in this section.

FIGURE 40.1

Executives





Field and sector outlook

Where do executives think AI is headed?

Key findings

- Executives are cautiously optimistic about AI's impact on the field; change has happened but it's been moderate, not transformational.
- The biggest expected risk isn't organizational, it's structural — the widening gap between populations with and without access to AI-enabled tools and services.
- Executives see nearly every societal issue as urgent to address, but most report their organizations engage passively in field-level conversations, rather than actively shaping the field.
- Dedicated funding, coalition partners, and access to technical expertise are what would most enable organizations to support external stewardship.

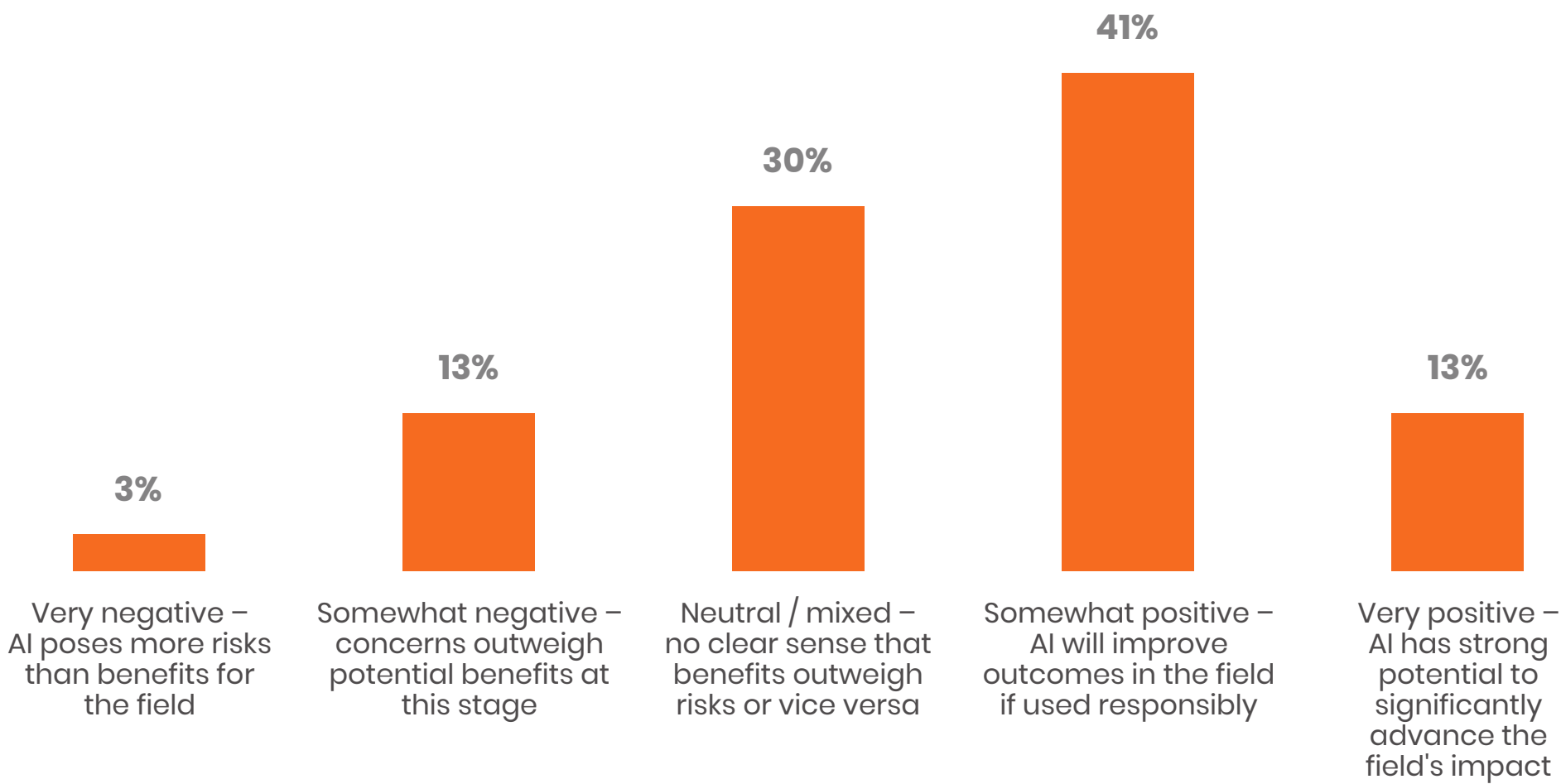
Overall, what is your organization’s sentiment about AI in your field?

Executives

Executives lean cautiously positive on AI’s overall impact for the field. A combined 54% report some degree of positive sentiment, with most landing on the ‘somewhat positive, if used responsibly’ option (41%) rather than the stronger ‘very positive’ choice (13%). Another 30% are neutral or mixed, unable to discern whether AI’s field-level impact will be net positive or negative. **Only a small percentage of executives have a negative perception of AI, with just 13% expressing a somewhat negative view and 3% a very negative one.**

FIGURE 41.1

Executives



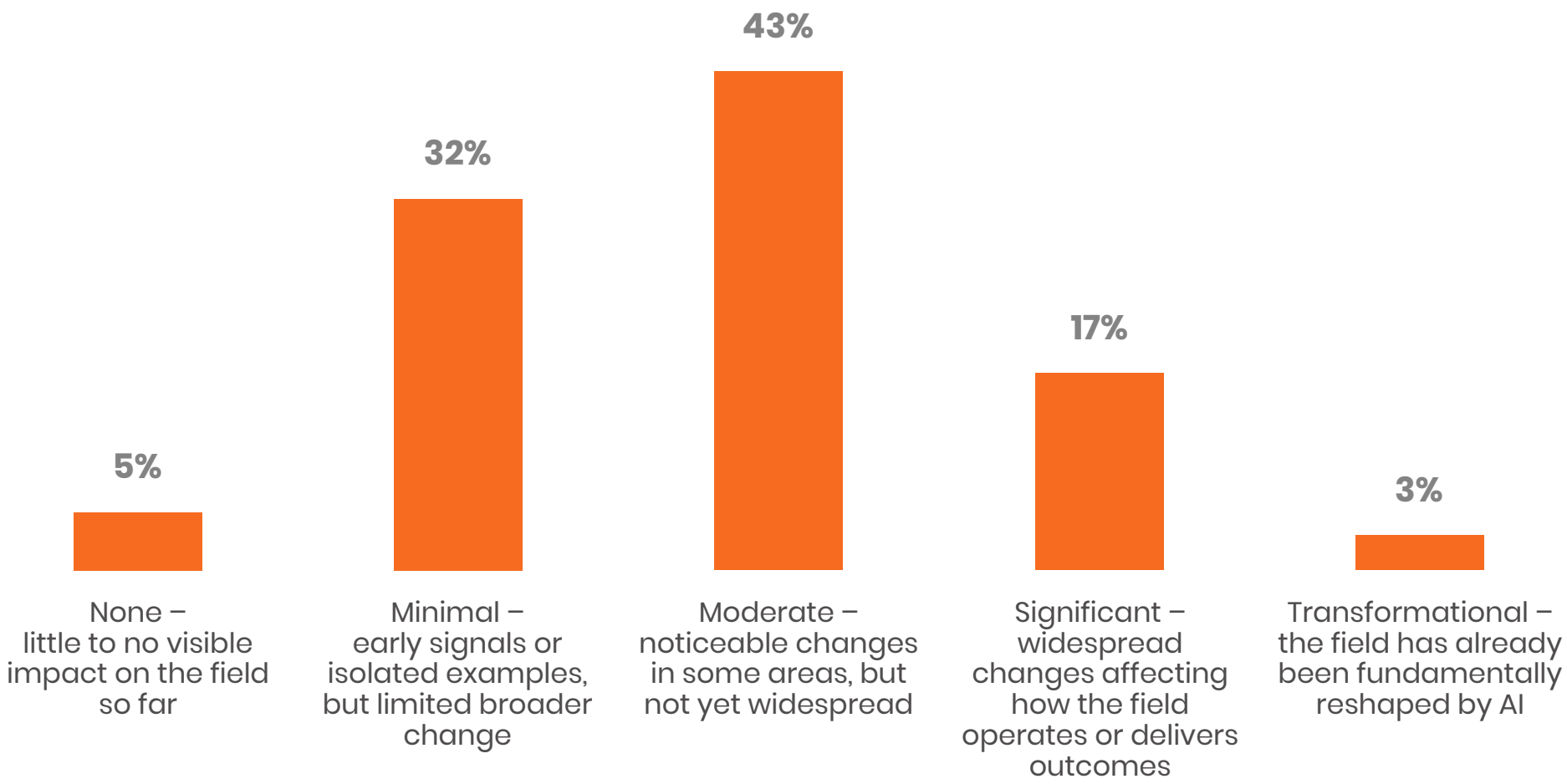
How much change has AI caused in your field?

Executives

Most executives report that AI has had only a minimal to moderate impact on their field so far. 43% say the change has been moderate but not widespread, and another 32% report minimal impact. 17% say AI has already created significant, widespread field changes in their field, while a small share sit at the extremes: 5% see no visible impact at all, and just 3% describe the field as already transformed.

FIGURE 42.1

Executives



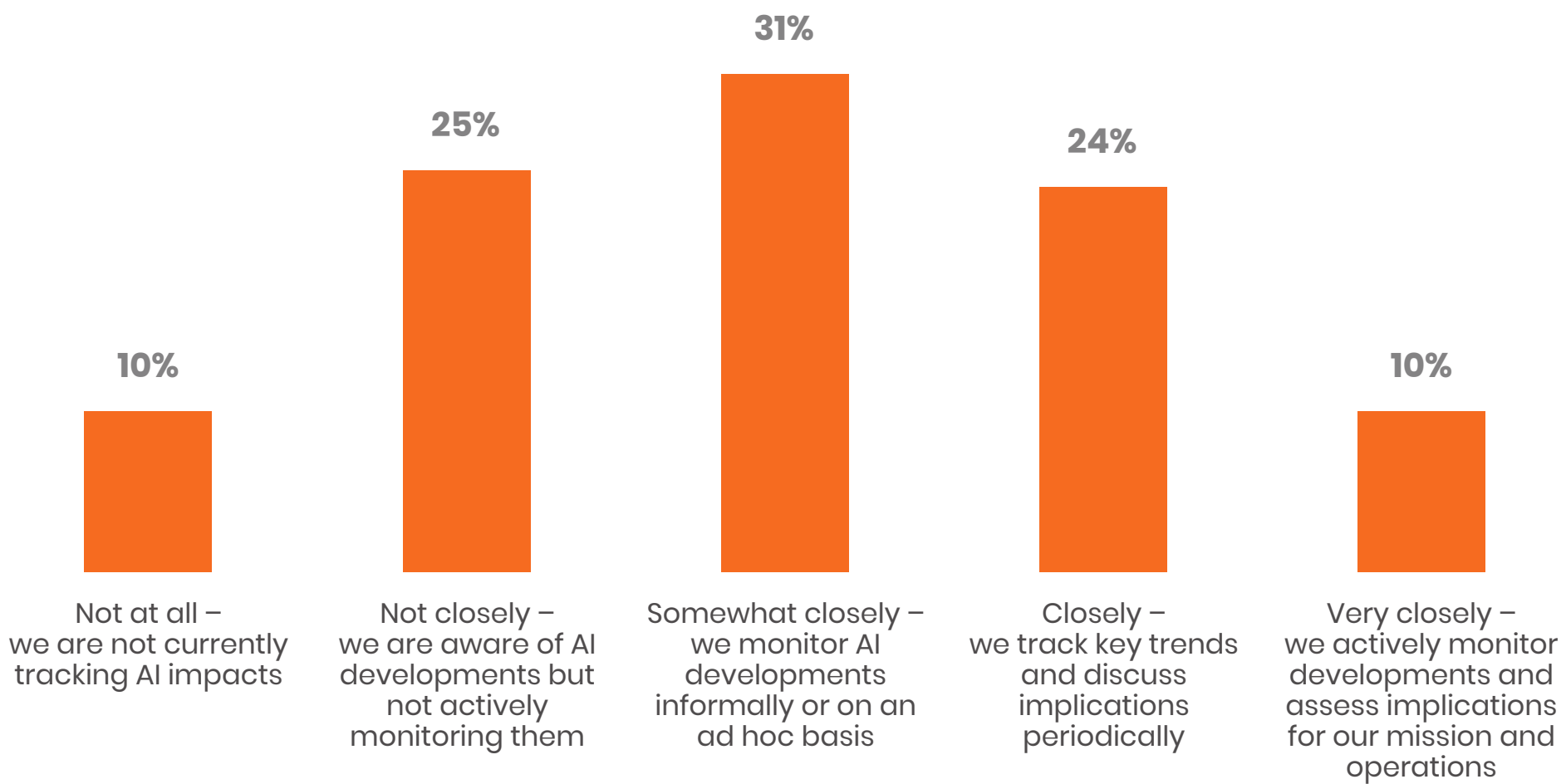
How closely is your organization tracking AI’s impacts on your field?

Executives

How closely executives are actually tracking AI’s impact on their field varies widely, with responses landing in an almost symmetrical distribution. **The largest single group, 31%, monitors AI developments somewhat closely, on an informal or ad hoc basis.** On either side of that middle tier, response rates are nearly mirrored, with 25% reporting that they don’t track AI field impacts closely, compared to 24% who do. This repeats at the extremes, where 10% report no tracking at all, matched almost exactly by another 10% who track very closely. In other words, there’s no dominant posture in terms of engagement or disengagement when it comes to monitoring AI’s field-level impacts.

FIGURE 43.1

Executives



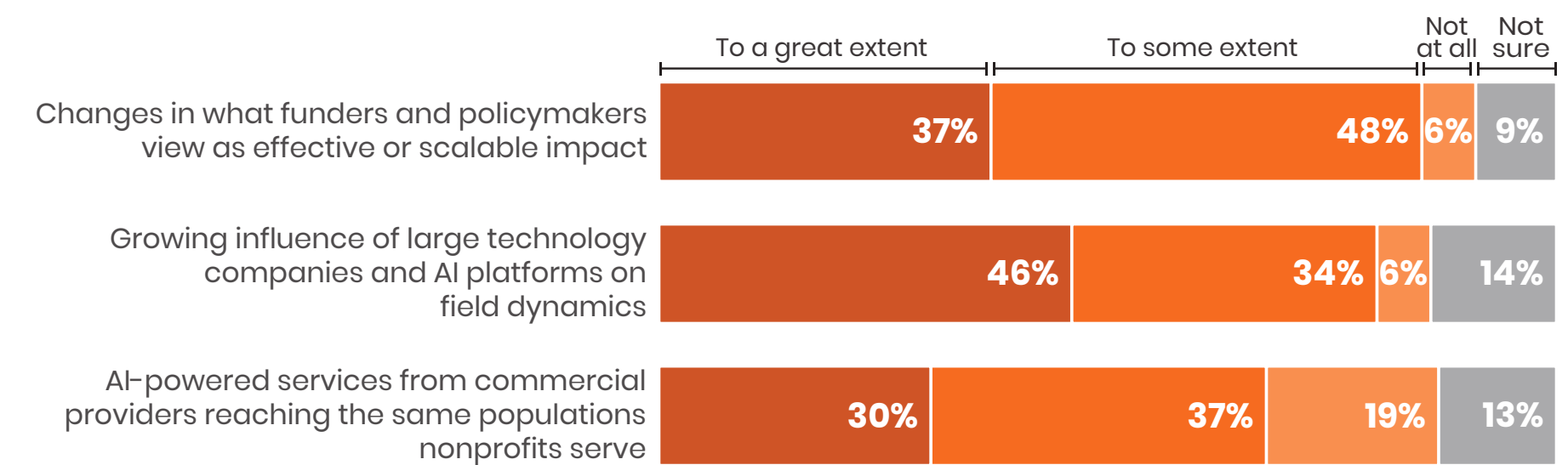
Regarding field and ecosystem shifts, to what extent do you expect AI to change your field over the next 1–2 years?

Executives

Executives expect AI to reshape the field primarily through external forces rather than direct competition. 46% cite the growing influence of large technology companies as the most likely driver of field-level change, and 37% expect funders and policymakers to shift their view on what counts as scalable or effective impact. By comparison, fewer executives (30%) expect commercial AI providers to directly compete with nonprofits for the same populations to a great extent, suggesting that **executives see the ecosystem shifting around them more than they fear being directly replaced by commercial AI products.**

FIGURE 44.1

Executives



Executives expect AI to reshape the field primarily through external forces rather than direct competition.

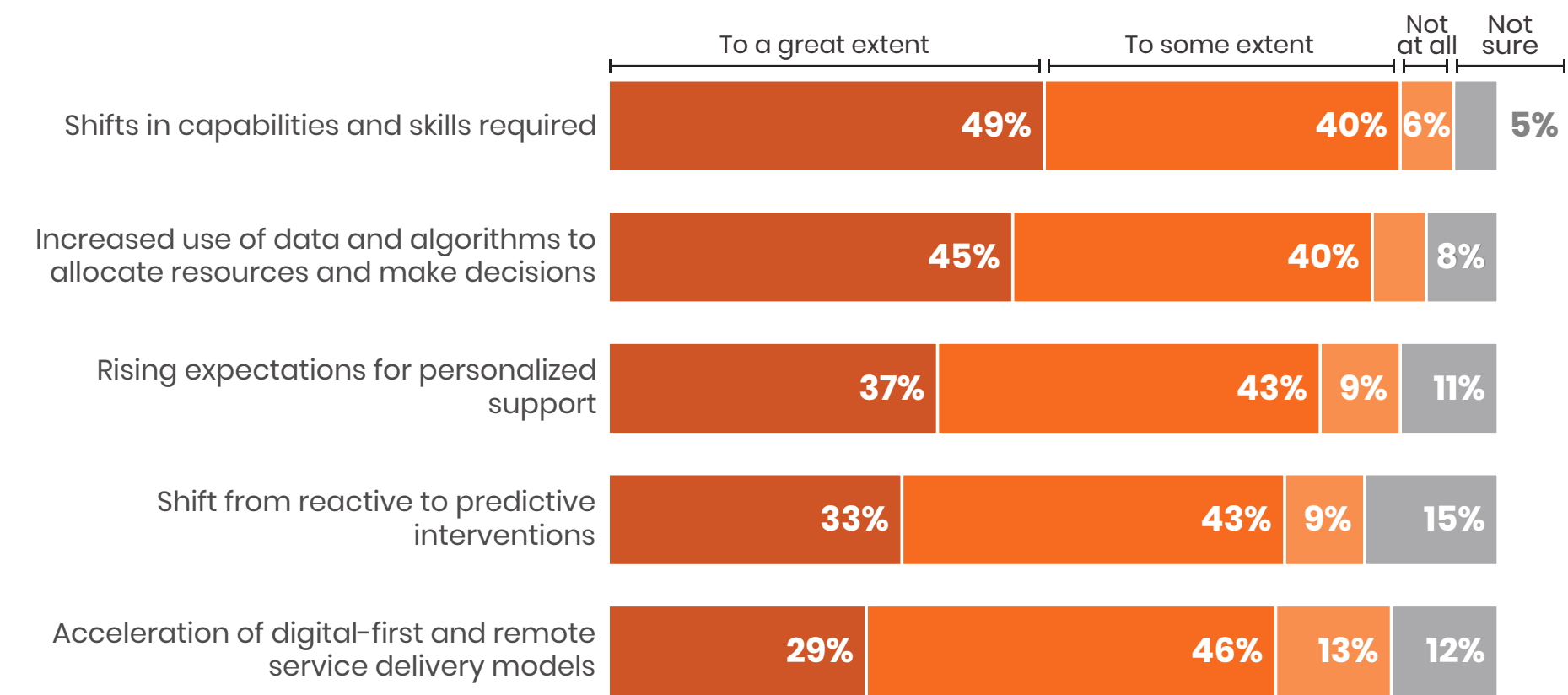
Regarding operational and programmatic shifts, to what extent do you expect AI to change your field over the next 1-2 years?

Executives

Beyond these external, ecosystem-level shifts, executives also expect real change closer to home. **The most anticipated operational change is in the skills and capabilities staff will need to perform their roles, with 49% of executives expecting this to a great extent.** This is followed closely by increased use of data and algorithms to allocate resources and make decisions (45%), rising expectations for personalized support (37%), and a shift from reactive to predictive interventions (33%). The least anticipated shift was in digital-first or remote service delivery models, though even here a majority still expect at least some change.

FIGURE 45.1

Executives



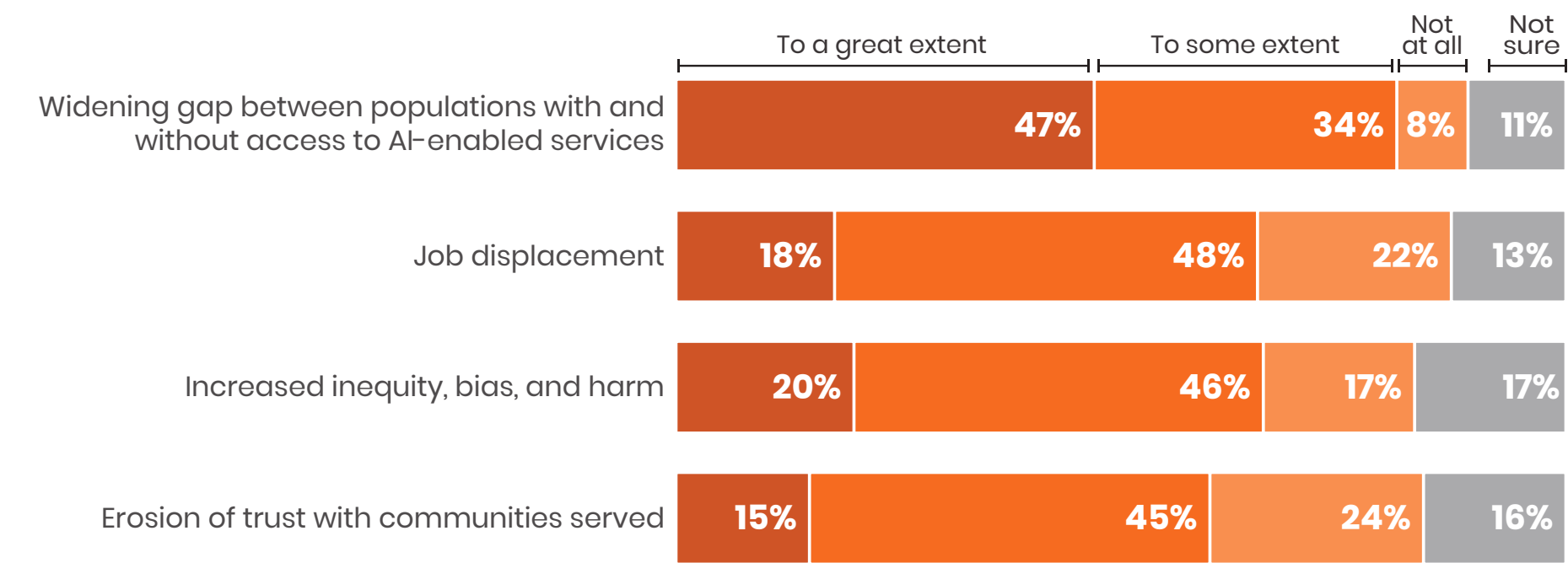
Regarding risks and potential negative impacts, to what extent do you expect AI to change your field over the next 1-2 years?

Executives

Regarding risks and negative impacts of AI, executives are first and foremost concerned about the widening gap between populations with and without access to AI-enabled services. Nearly half (47%) believed this would be a significant risk to their field. This differs from the concerns raised earlier in the report; unlike data privacy or job displacement, which were measured at the organizational level, this risk is specifically about equity of access across the populations nonprofits serve. By comparison, job displacement, increased inequity or harm, and erosion of community trust were seen as more moderate concerns, with most executives selecting ‘to some extent’ rather than ‘to a great extent’ for these categories.

FIGURE 46.1

Executives



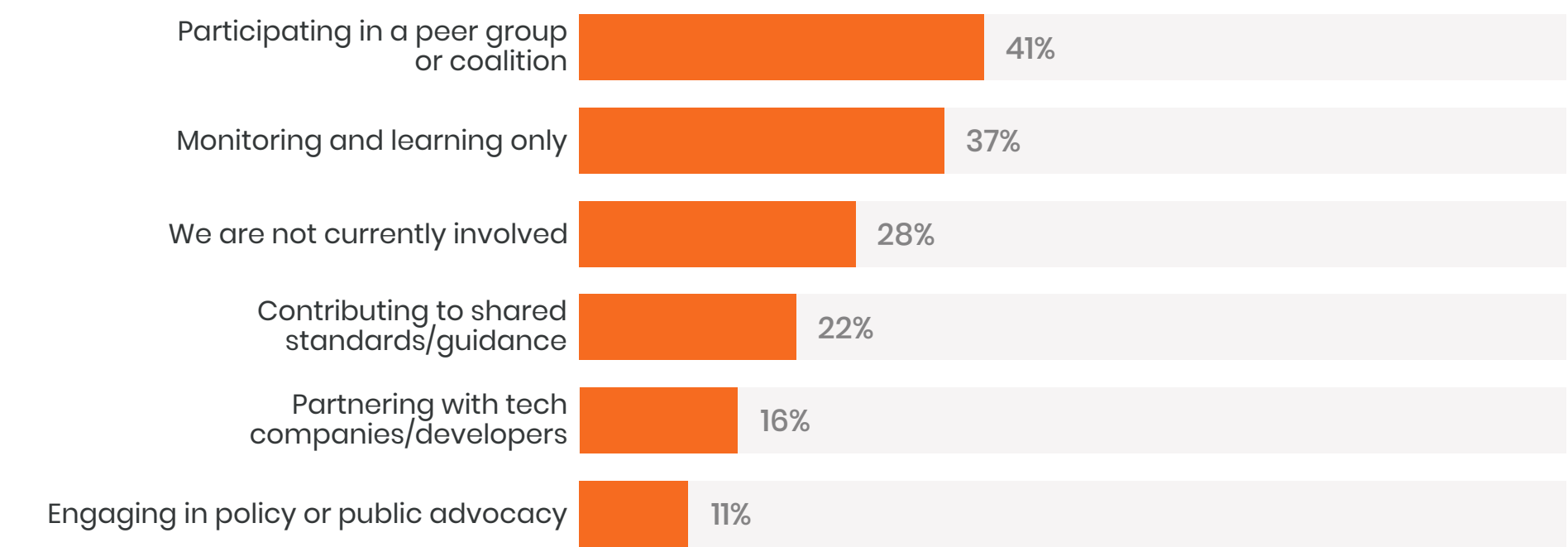
In what ways is your organization involved in field-level conversations about AI beyond your own operations? (Select all that apply)

Executives

According to executives, organizations engage in field-level AI conversations at varying levels of depth. The most common forms of engagement include participating in a peer group or coalition (41%) and monitoring and learning (37%), but more active roles are far less common. 22% contribute to shared standards or guidance, 16% partner with tech companies or developers, 11% engage in policy or public advocacy, and 28% report no field-level involvement at all. **Cumulatively, the data points to a more passive approach towards involvement in AI advocacy, despite executives broadly believing that there are many urgent AI-related issues for society to address.**

FIGURE 47.1

Executives



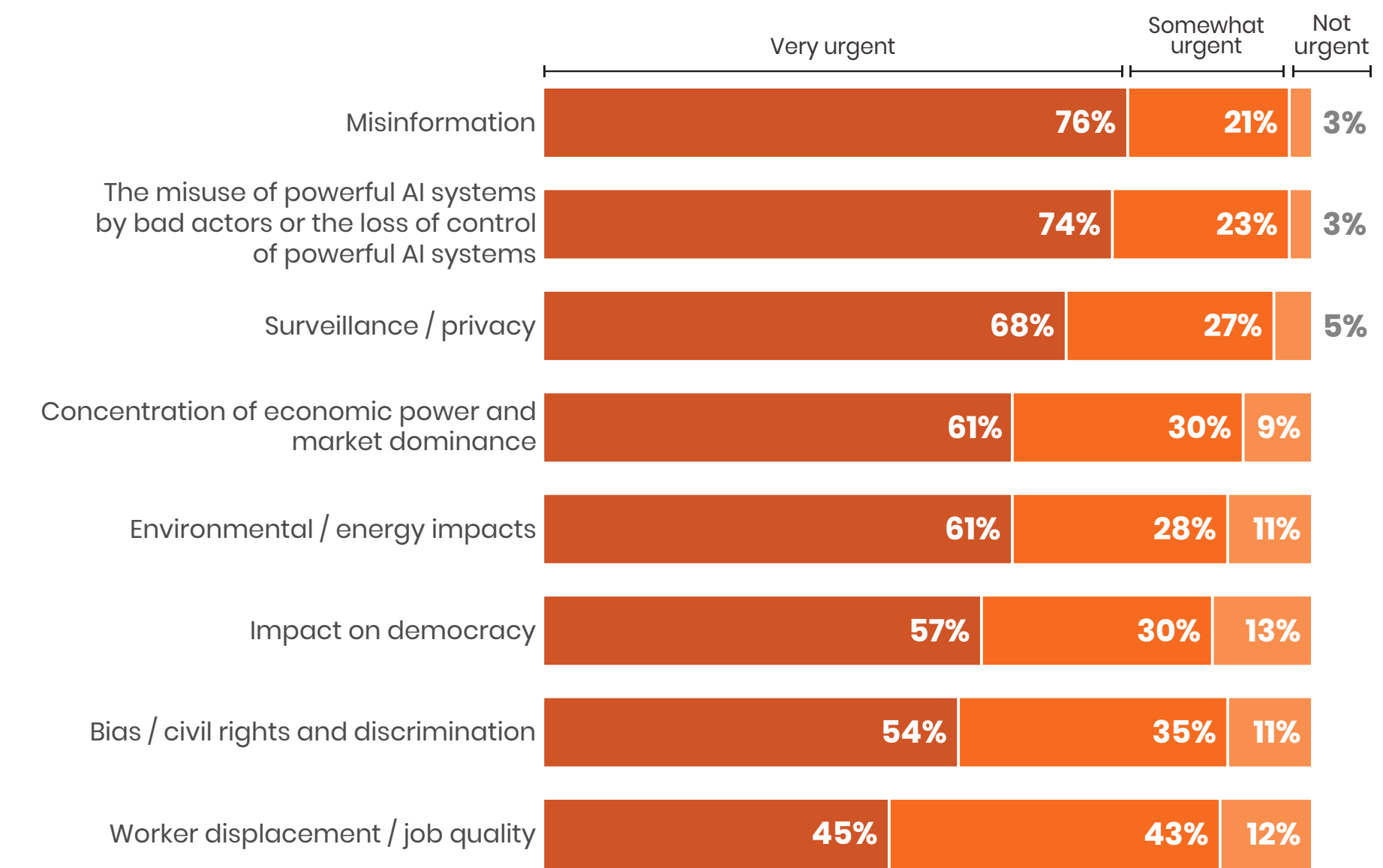
To what degree are the following AI issues urgent for civil society/philanthropy to address?

Executives

Executives see nearly every dimension of AI’s societal impact as urgent for civil society and philanthropy to address. All but one issue — worker displacement and job quality — receive ‘very urgent’ ratings from a majority of executives, ranging from 53% to 76%. **Misinformation ranks highest (76%), closely followed by the misuse of powerful AI systems or loss of control over them (74%) and surveillance or privacy concerns (68%).** But while work displacement and job quality continue to be the outlier, 45% still believe it’s an urgent matter to address.

FIGURE 48.1

Executives



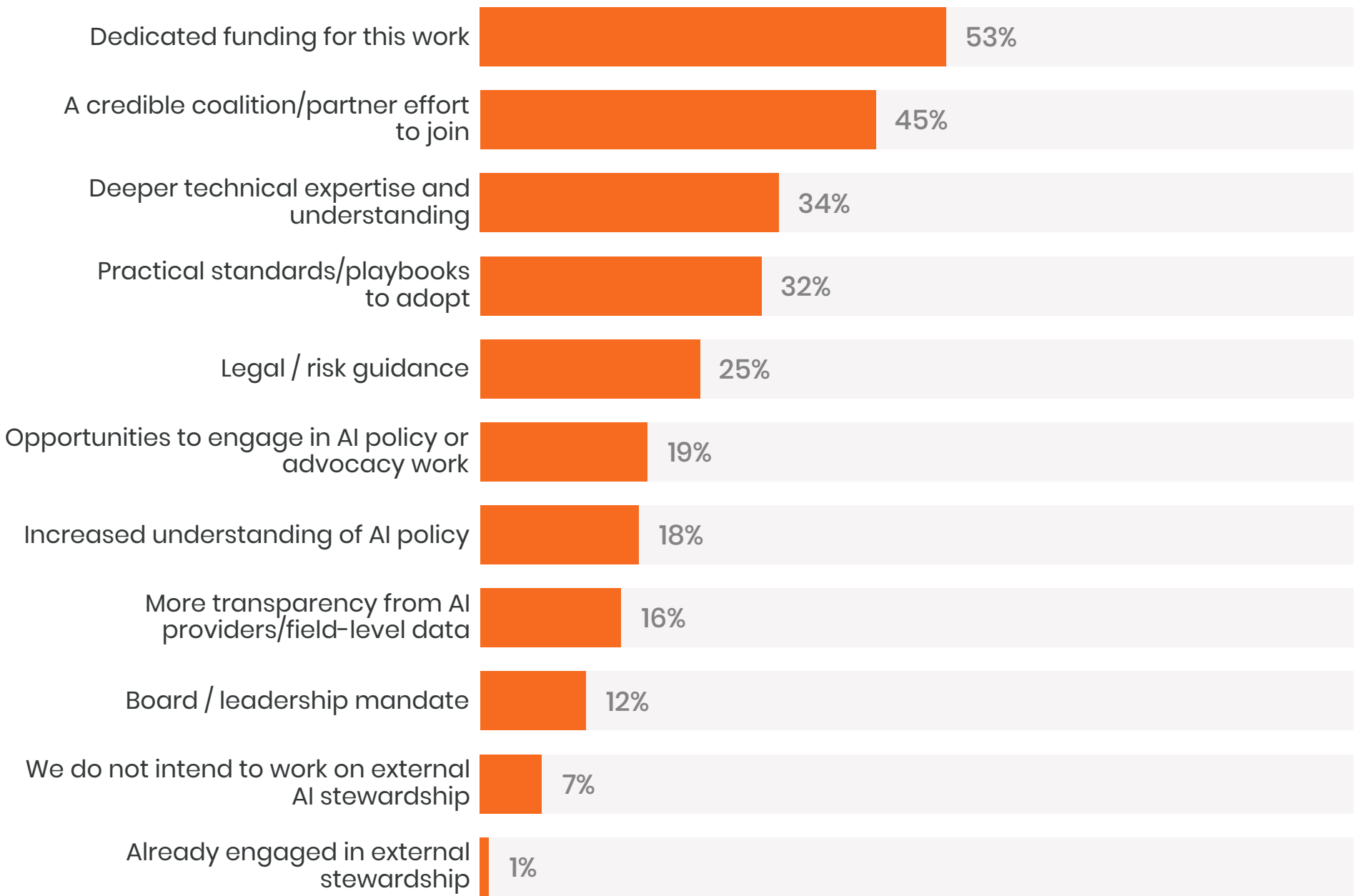
Which of the following supports would most enable your organization to participate in external stewardship (helping to set standards, joining coalitions, providing accountability, setting policy) in the next 12 months? (Select up to 3)

Executives

The gap between urgency and engagement doesn’t appear to stem from a lack of will or strategy. Dedicated funding for AI stewardship is what executives report would most enable organizations to contribute to field-level conversations about AI deployment and impacts, cited by 53% as a top support. A credible coalition or partner effort to join is a close second at 45%, followed by deeper technical expertise (34%), practical standards or playbooks to adopt (32%), and legal or risk guidance (25%). Few executives cite a board or leadership mandate as a key enabler (12%), and only 7% say their organization does not intend to work on external AI stewardship at all. **This suggests that the barrier to external stewardship is primarily one of resources and infrastructure, rather than interest or leadership buy-in.**

FIGURE 49.1

Executives



Survey participants

Who responded to our State of Nonprofit AI survey?

917 people responded to the survey. Most questions were optional, so individual counts reflect some degree of voluntary skip or drop-off. A smaller number of questions were shown only to a subset of respondents — based on role (staff or executive) or in response to a previous answer — so lower response counts on those questions reflect the size of the eligible group rather than lower engagement.

Respondents represent a wide variety of organizations in NTEN's and Bridgespan's networks. The range of responses reflects a broad, growing community engaging with responsible AI adoption and governance — though because the survey was distributed through a nonprofit technology community, respondents may be more tech-engaged than the nonprofit sector as a whole, and findings should be read with that in mind.

58% of respondents come from organizations that have existed for 25 years or more. Education, human and social services, and community and economic development are the most common mission areas represented. 40% of respondents work at organizations with 1-25 staff, and 81% work at organizations with a budget above \$1 million. 60% of respondents identify as executive or senior leadership (e.g., CEO/Executive Director, C-suite, VP/SVP, Director), and 40% identify as staff or program team members (e.g., program delivery, operations, communications, finance, IT). Nearly 25% work in IT or data roles, with the remainder spanning operations, programs and direct service, development and fundraising, administration, communications and marketing, among other roles or areas of work.



Demographics

The following tables represent the demographics of the survey participants.

Which of the following best describes your organization?

Aggregate responses (<i>n</i> =917)	%
Nonprofit / NGO	83.53%
Foundation / philanthropy (grantmaker)	9.49%
Other	6.98%

Which best describes your role?

Aggregate responses (<i>n</i> =752)	%
Executive or senior leadership (e.g., CEO / Executive Director, C-suite, VP / SVP, Director)	59.71%
Staff or program team member (e.g., program delivery, operations, communications, finance, IT)	40.29%

Which of the following best describes your primary area of work?

Aggregate responses (<i>n</i> =752)	%
IT / data / technology	24.34%
Programs / direct service	13.30%
Operations	13.03%
Development / fundraising	11.97%
Administration	11.44%
Communications / marketing	8.64%
Finance	4.26%
Executive leadership / multi-hat (small org or C-suite)	3.46%
Policy / advocacy	3.06%
Cross-functional (multiple named areas)	2.39%
Strategy / strategic planning	1.33%
HR / people operations	1.06%
MERL (monitoring, evaluation, research, and learning)	0.93%
Compliance / quality / risk	0.53%
Grantmaking / philanthropy	0.13%
Other	0.13%

What is the size of your overall organization staff?

Aggregate responses (<i>n</i> =752)	%
1 - 25 staff	39.63%
26 - 50 staff	15.96%
51 - 100 staff	14.76%
101 - 250 staff	15.03%
251 - 500 staff	6.91%
500+ staff	7.71%

What is the approximate annual budget of your organization?

Aggregate responses (<i>n</i> =752)	%
None - all volunteer	1.73%
Below \$100,000	3.32%
\$100,001 - \$250,000	3.19%
\$250,001 - \$500,000	3.19%
\$500,001 - \$999,999	7.85%
\$1 million - \$9.9 million	42.82%
\$10 million - \$49.9 million	26.20%
\$50 million+	11.70%

About how long has your organization existed?

Aggregate responses (<i>n</i> =752)	%
Less than one year	0.93%
1 - 5 years	6.91%
6 - 10 years	10.64%
11 - 25 years	23.80%
25+ years	57.71%

Which mission area best fits your organization’s primary focus?

Aggregate responses (<i>n</i> =752)	%
Education	15.69%
Human and social services	14.36%
Community and economic development	10.37%
Philanthropy and nonprofit infrastructure	8.38%
Environment	7.31%
Health care	6.52%
Policy and advocacy	4.92%
Civil rights and social justice	4.65%
Youth development	3.99%
Arts, culture, and humanities	3.86%
Housing and homelessness services	3.46%
Technology and media	2.93%
International affairs and human rights	2.39%
Faith-based and religion	2.26%
Criminal justice and legal services	2.13%
Mental health and substance use	2.13%
Research and science	1.60%
Animal welfare	1.33%
Food, agriculture, and nutrition	0.80%
Other	0.53%
Public safety and disaster management	0.40%

Where does your organization primarily operate?

Aggregate responses (n=752)	%
United States	82.31%
Asia	4.79%
Africa	3.86%
Canada	3.19%
Global / multi-region	2.93%
Latin America & the Caribbean	1.20%
Europe	1.20%
Middle East	0.27%
Australia / Pacific	0.13%
Other	0.13%

What is your organization’s geographic scope?

Aggregate responses (n=752)	%
National (operates across one country)	29.12%
Regional (multiple cities, counties, or states within one country)	28.86%
Local or community-based (primarily one city, county, or metro area)	22.21%
Global (operates across multiple regions worldwide)	15.56%
Multinational (operates in multiple countries within one region)	3.72%
Not sure	0.53%

What is your gender identity?

Aggregate responses (n=752)	%
Woman	61.84%
Man	29.12%
Prefer not to say	6.38%
Non-binary / gender non-conforming	2.66%

What race/ethnicity do you identify as?
(Select all that apply)

Aggregate responses (n=752)	%
White	64.63%
Asian	12.10%
Black or African American	11.17%
Hispanic / Latine/o/a	7.98%
Prefer not to say	6.52%
Native American or Alaska Native	1.46%
Middle Eastern or North African	1.33%
Jewish	0.53%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0.27%
Other	0.26%

About

This report was researched and written by David Figueroa and Jacob Dwelle. Together, they designed the survey instrument, led data collection and analysis, and authored the report. Both David and Jacob are alumni of NTEN’s Open Source Fellowship.

About the authors

David Figueroa • [LinkedIn](#) • daviddaf.com

David Figueroa is a sociotechnical researcher and practitioner working at the intersection of AI governance, organizational change, and nonprofit technology. His work focuses on helping organizations build the judgment, infrastructure, and trust needed to adopt AI responsibly, with particular attention to how the costs and benefits of technology adoption fall unevenly across roles and communities. He also organizes and leads the NTEN Portland Nonprofit Tech Club, and has facilitated AI literacy workshops for nonprofit audiences.

Jacob Dwelle • [LinkedIn](#) • jacobdwelle.com

Jacob Dwelle is a philosopher by training, applying his critical lens to current real-world problems. He has worked in psychology clinics, higher education, and in the nonprofit sector. His approach to problem solving is informed by his work with psychologists, educators, technologists, philosophers, and everyday people. He is currently focused on AI ethics, and data and privacy rights. He is most passionate about addressing technology addiction in youth, who will be heavily impacted by AI deployment and algorithms broadly. He will raise awareness about this subject at many levels in his upcoming book, *Modern Rebel: Advice for Young People in the Era of AI*.

About the partners



[NTEN](#) is a community of nonprofit professionals who want to make the world a better place through the skillful and equitable use of technology. By connecting, upskilling, and enabling nonprofit organizations and professionals to use technology for social change, NTEN strengthens the transformative power of missions and movements.

NTEN provides educational opportunities and research on effective nonprofit technology practices and creates spaces for collaboration to thrive. NTEN’s work is guided by three commitments for its community: Connect, Learn, and Change.



[The Bridgespan Group](#) is a global nonprofit that strives to make the world more equitable and just. Since 2000, we have had the privilege of advising and collaborating with many of the world’s most extraordinary social change leaders including philanthropists, nonprofit and NGO leaders, and mission-aligned private capital partners.

We are passionate about helping social change leaders find solutions to economic and social barriers that perpetuate inequities and prevent individuals, families, and communities from having access to opportunities they need to thrive. We use rigorous research to gain insights that help our clients solve problems and achieve their goals.

Appendix

Data Tables

The following tables are provided to increase the accessibility of this report for readers with disabilities. Each table corresponds to the chart with the same number in the narrative of this report.

QUESTION 1: How is AI used at your organization today?	
1.1 Aggregate responses (n=723)	%
AI is not used	1.94%
AI is used informally by individual staff (not organization-supported)	36.93%
AI is used in some teams or small pilots	32.78%
AI is used across many teams and/or workflows	24.34%
AI is fully integrated into our work	3.73%
Not sure	0.28%
1.2 Staff responses (n=291)	%
AI is not used	1.72%
AI is used informally by individual staff (not organization-supported)	43.64%
AI is used in some teams or small pilots	29.21%
AI is used across many teams and/or workflows	22.68%
AI is fully integrated into our work	2.41%
Not sure	0.34%
1.3 Executive responses (n=432)	%
AI is not used	2.08%
AI is used informally by individual staff (not organization-supported)	32.41%
AI is used in some teams or small pilots	35.19%
AI is used across many teams and/or workflows	25.46%
AI is fully integrated into our work	4.63%
Not sure	0.23%
1.4 Budget under \$10 million (n=449)	%
AI is not used	3.12%
AI is used informally by individual staff (not organization-supported)	42.98%
AI is used in some teams or small pilots	29.18%
AI is used across many teams and/or workflows	20.27%
AI is fully integrated into our work	4.23%
Not sure	0.22%

1.5 Budget of \$10 million+ (n=274)	%
AI is not used	0.00%
AI is used informally by individual staff (not organization-supported)	27.01%
AI is used in some teams or small pilots	38.69%
AI is used across many teams and/or workflows	31.02%
AI is fully integrated into our work	2.92%
Not sure	0.36%

QUESTION 2: What kinds of AI tools are available at your organization today? (Select all that apply)

2.1 Aggregate responses (n=717)	%
AI features embedded in existing software (e.g., Copilot, Gemini for Workspace)	75.59%
Staff use AI tools on their own, without organizational support	39.61%
Organization-wide AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT Enterprise, Claude for Work)	36.26%
Organization-sponsored individual subscriptions (e.g., reimbursed ChatGPT, Grammarly)	24.27%
Custom AI tools built by vendors or partners	14.09%
Custom AI tools built internally	11.85%
No AI tools are officially provided by the organization	11.30%
Not sure	1.12%
AI tools in pilot or rollout phase	0.42%

QUESTION 3: Of the functions below, which are meaningfully using AI today at your organization? (Select all that apply)

3.1 Executive responses (n=398)	%
Communications / marketing	69.60%
Fundraising / development	52.01%
IT / data / software development	50.25%
Program / service delivery or program design	50.25%
Measurement, evaluation, and learning	44.22%
Strategic planning	40.20%
Finance / operations	34.92%
HR / people management	24.62%
External advocacy / policy communications	18.09%

QUESTION 4: Which of the following do you personally use AI for in your work? (Select all that apply)

4.1 Staff responses (n=284)	%
Writing or editing content (emails, reports, social posts)	55.63%
Summarizing documents or meetings	53.71%
Administrative or operational tasks	51.94%
Research or information gathering	51.24%
Data analysis or reporting	45.58%
Meeting transcription or note-taking	41.70%
IT, software development, or systems work	23.94%
Grant writing or fundraising materials	16.96%
I don't use AI in my work	12.01%
Program or service delivery support	11.31%
Image or media generation	10.92%
Brainstorming or strategic planning	1.76%
Translation	0.70%

QUESTION 5: Which best describes your involvement in decisions about AI implementation at your organization?

5.1 Staff responses (n=291)	%
I make final decisions	4.81%
I help shape decisions	43.99%
I provide input when asked	42.96%
I'm not involved	8.25%
5.2 Executives responses (n=429)	%
I make final decisions	30.30%
I help shape decisions	58.28%
I provide input when asked	9.79%
I'm not involved	1.63%

QUESTION 6: Who is responsible for decisions about approving the use of AI tools at your organization? (Select all that apply)

6.1 Staff responses (n=282)	%
Executive leadership	63.48%
IT / data / operations	43.97%
A designated internal AI group (e.g. AI council, ethics committee)	25.18%
Individual teams or staff	12.41%
Program or department leads	11.35%
Not sure	8.87%
External vendor or partner	2.13%
Collective / all-staff decision-making	1.06%

QUESTION 7: What do you understand to be the main reasons your organization decided to adopt or invest in AI tools? (Select all that apply)

7.1 Aggregate responses (n=688)	%
Reduce staff burden	56.25%
Reduce costs or increase efficiency	54.36%
Improve quality or consistency of work	48.26%
Enable staff to perform new kinds of work	43.01%
Keep up with peers or sector trends	39.53%
Upskill staff	34.45%
Enable new program approaches	32.12%
No choice – AI is integrated into products that we already use	31.54%
Scale existing programs or services	27.76%
Direction from leadership	15.99%
Reimagine organization strategy or mission	12.94%
Address cybersecurity risks	12.21%
Direction from board	6.40%
Pressure or encouragement from funders/ partners	4.94%
Bottom-up or staff-driven adoption	1.60%
7.2 Staff responses (n=284)	%
Reduce staff burden	48.24%
Reduce costs or increase efficiency	41.90%
Improve quality or consistency of work	34.86%
Enable staff to perform new kinds of work	32.39%
Keep up with peers or sector trends	44.37%
Upskill staff	22.18%
Enable new program approaches	20.77%
No choice – AI is integrated into products that we already use	33.80%
Scale existing programs or services	19.01%
Address cybersecurity risks	6.69%
Bottom-up or staff-driven adoption	2.46%

7.3 Executive responses (n=404)	%
Reduce staff burden	61.88%
Reduce costs or increase efficiency	63.12%
Improve quality or consistency of work	57.67%
Enable staff to perform new kinds of work	50.5%
Keep up with peers or sector trends	36.14%
Upskill staff	43.07%
Enable new program approaches	40.10%
No choice – AI is integrated into products that we already use	29.95%
Scale existing programs or services	33.91%
Direction from leadership	27.23%
Reimagine organization strategy or mission	22.03%
Address cybersecurity risks	16.09%
Direction from board	10.89%
Pressure or encouragement from funders/ partners	8.42%
Bottom-up or staff-driven adoption	0.99%

QUESTION 8: How often do you use AI in your day-to-day work?

8.1 Aggregate responses (n=723)	%
Never	6.78%
Rarely (less than once a month)	8.30%
Occasionally (about once a month)	10.51%
Regularly (about once a week)	29.05%
Daily or more	45.37%
8.2 Staff responses (n=291)	%
Never	13.06%
Rarely (less than once a month)	10.65%
Occasionally (about once a month)	12.37%
Regularly (about once a week)	25.77%
Daily or more	38.14%

8.3 Executive responses (n=432)	%
Never	2.55%
Rarely (less than once a month)	6.71%
Occasionally (about once a month)	9.26%
Regularly (about once a week)	31.25%
Daily or more	50.23%

QUESTION 9: How comfortable do you personally feel using AI tools as part of your work?

9.1 Aggregate responses (n=654)	%
Very uncomfortable	13.91%
Somewhat uncomfortable	9.17%
Neutral / mixed	14.68%
Somewhat comfortable	30.89%
Very comfortable	31.35%
9.2 Staff responses (n=277)	%
Very uncomfortable	19.13%
Somewhat uncomfortable	10.83%
Neutral / mixed	14.80%
Somewhat comfortable	31.41%
Very comfortable	23.83%
9.3 Executive responses (n=377)	%
Very uncomfortable	10.08%
Somewhat uncomfortable	7.96%
Neutral / mixed	14.59%
Somewhat comfortable	30.50%
Very comfortable	36.87%

QUESTION 10: Rate the following statement: There are meaningful opportunities to use AI at my organization that we are not currently taking advantage of.

10.1 Aggregate responses (n=723)	%
Strongly disagree	10.79%
Somewhat disagree	7.19%
Neither agree nor disagree	11.76%
Somewhat agree	34.44%
Strongly agree	35.82%

10.2 Staff responses (n=291)	%
Strongly disagree	15.46%
Somewhat disagree	9.62%
Neither agree nor disagree	18.90%
Somewhat agree	32.65%
Strongly agree	23.37%

10.3 Executive responses (n=432)	%
Strongly disagree	7.64%
Somewhat disagree	5.56%
Neither agree nor disagree	6.94%
Somewhat agree	35.65%
Strongly agree	44.21%

QUESTION 11: How would you describe your sentiment toward AI being used in your work environment over the last 12 months?

11.1 Aggregate responses (n=659)	%
Very negative	8.35%
Somewhat negative	11.08%
Neutral / mixed	27.47%
Somewhat positive	33.84%
Very positive	19.27%

11.2 Staff responses (n=277)	%
Very negative	16.25%
Somewhat negative	16.97%
Neutral / mixed	27.44%
Somewhat positive	27.44%
Very positive	11.91%

11.3 Executive responses (n=382)	%
Very negative	2.62%
Somewhat negative	6.81%
Neutral / mixed	27.49%
Somewhat positive	38.48%
Very positive	24.61%

QUESTION 12: How often does your organization’s leadership discuss AI risks and responsible use?

12.1 Aggregate responses (n=683)	%
Never	14.64%
A few times a year	37.19%
Monthly	21.67%
Weekly or more	12.45%
Not sure	14.06%

12.2 Staff responses (n=283)	%
Never	18.02%
A few times a year	36.75%
Monthly	12.01%
Weekly or more	8.48%
Not sure	24.73%

12.3 Executive responses (n=400)	%
Never	12.25%
A few times a year	37.50%
Monthly	28.50%
Weekly or more	15.25%
Not sure	6.50%

QUESTION 13: How comfortable do you feel being honest about your AI use with your manager or organizational leadership?

13.1 Staff with leadership responses (n=276)	%
I don’t feel comfortable being open and honest	3.26%
I feel somewhat uncomfortable – I share selectively and avoid raising concerns	11.23%
I feel comfortable, but I’m careful about how I frame things	26.81%
I feel completely comfortable being open and honest	56.88%
Not sure / this doesn't apply to my situation	1.81%

13.2 Executive with board responses (n=377)	%
I don’t feel comfortable being open and honest	1.86%
I feel somewhat uncomfortable – I share selectively and avoid raising concerns	4.77%
I feel comfortable, but I’m careful about how I frame things	27.06%
I feel completely comfortable being open and honest	55.97%
Not sure / this doesn't apply to my situation	10.34%

13.3 Executive with key funders responses (n=377)	%
I don’t feel comfortable being open and honest	1.59%
I feel somewhat uncomfortable – I share selectively and avoid raising concerns	7.96%
I feel comfortable, but I’m careful about how I frame things	32.10%
I feel completely comfortable being open and honest	37.40%
Not sure / this doesn't apply to my situation	20.95%

QUESTION 14: How confident do you feel navigating decisions about how and when to use AI at work?

14.1 Aggregate responses (n=654)	%
Not at all confident	4.74%
Slightly confident	12.39%
Moderately confident	33.33%
Very confident	34.40%
Completely confident	15.14%

QUESTION 15: Regarding foundational AI capacity and infrastructure, what is the current status at your organization?

15.1 Executive responses (n=404)	Not in place	In development	In place now	Not sure
Budget designated specifically for AI	57.21%	22.64%	16.92%	3.23%
Training for staff on how to use our AI tools effectively	36.82%	43.53%	18.41%	1.24%
Sufficient tools or infrastructure to use and deploy AI (e.g., cloud storage, data pipelines, APIs, or computing resources)	28.29%	40.20%	24.32%	7.20%
Data is organized enough to support AI use (clean, accurate, accessible)	23.69%	47.13%	23.94%	5.24%
Staff with technology and AI capability and responsibility	24.25%	41.00%	32.50%	2.25%
15.2 Executive responses with budgets under \$10 million (n=246)	Not in place	In development	In place now	Not sure
Budget designated specifically for AI	63.01%	21.14%	13.41%	2.44%
Training for staff on how to use our AI tools effectively	40.00%	39.59%	19.18%	1.22%
Sufficient tools or infrastructure to use and deploy AI (e.g., cloud storage, data pipelines, APIs, or computing resources)	34.69%	37.14%	21.63%	6.53%
Data is organized enough to support AI use (clean, accurate, accessible)	25.00%	46.72%	22.95%	5.33%
Staff with technology and AI capability and responsibility	28.69%	40.98%	27.05%	3.28%
15.3 Executive responses with budgets of \$10 million+ (n=158)	Not in place	In development	In place now	Not sure
Budget designated specifically for AI	48.08%	25.00%	22.44%	4.49%
Training for staff on how to use our AI tools effectively	31.85%	49.68%	17.20%	1.27%
Sufficient tools or infrastructure to use and deploy AI (e.g., cloud storage, data pipelines, APIs, or computing resources)	18.35%	44.94%	28.48%	8.23%
Data is organized enough to support AI use (clean, accurate, accessible)	21.66%	47.77%	25.48%	5.10%
Staff with technology and AI capability and responsibility	17.31%	41.03%	41.03%	0.64%

QUESTION 16: Regarding AI governance and risk management, what is the current status at your organization?

16.1 Executive responses (n=404)	Not in place	In development	In place now	Not sure
Staff training on safe and responsible AI use	33.33%	43.53%	21.64%	1.49%
A plan for managing and mitigating AI-related risks	30.52%	45.41%	21.84%	2.23%
A process to approve AI tools and vendors	36.66%	31.17%	30.42%	1.75%
A named owner or group responsible for AI oversight	30.77%	26.05%	42.18%	0.99%
Rules on what data can and cannot be entered into AI tools	25.81%	33.00%	39.95%	1.24%
Written guidance on safe and responsible AI use	22.64%	37.81%	38.56%	1.00%
16.2 Executive responses with budgets under \$10 million (n=246)	Not in place	In development	In place now	Not sure
Staff training on safe and responsible AI use	36.33%	42.45%	19.18%	2.04%
A plan for managing and mitigating AI-related risks	34.15%	46.75%	16.67%	2.44%
A process to approve AI tools and vendors	42.62%	36.07%	19.67%	1.64%
A named owner or group responsible for AI oversight	37.14%	26.53%	35.10%	1.22%
Rules on what data can and cannot be entered into AI tools	29.80%	36.33%	32.24%	1.63%
Written guidance on safe and responsible AI use	28.16%	43.27%	27.35%	1.22%
16.3 Executive responses with budgets of \$10 million+ (n=158)	Not in place	In development	In place now	Not sure
Staff training on safe and responsible AI use	28.66%	45.22%	25.48%	0.64%
A plan for managing and mitigating AI-related risks	24.84%	43.31%	29.94%	1.91%
A process to approve AI tools and vendors	27.39%	23.57%	47.13%	1.91%
A named owner or group responsible for AI oversight	20.89%	25.32%	53.16%	0.63%
Rules on what data can and cannot be entered into AI tools	19.62%	27.85%	51.90%	0.63%
Written guidance on safe and responsible AI use	14.01%	29.30%	56.05%	0.64%

Question 17: Regarding AI strategy and operations, what is the current status at your organization?

17.1 Executive responses (n=404)	Not in place	In development	In place now	Not sure
A 1-2 year roadmap for AI implementation	58.31%	31.51%	7.69%	2.48%
Leadership capacity to guide the design and implementation of AI projects that fit our mission	36.32%	41.29%	20.90%	1.49%
An understanding for how AI fits into our strategy	32.26%	49.88%	16.38%	1.49%

QUESTION 18: How aware are you of what happens to the data or content you enter into AI tools?

18.1 Aggregate responses (n=655)	%
I have no idea what happens to data or content I enter into AI tools	8.24%
I have a general sense but couldn't explain it in detail	14.05%
I understand the basics (e.g., data may be used for training, stored by vendors)	37.71%
I have a strong understanding and actively factor it into how I use AI tools	35.88%
I don't use AI for work tasks	4.12%

QUESTION 19: Regarding your organizational capacity and readiness, to what degree are the following barriers to deploying and implementing AI in your organization?

19.1 Executive responses (n=391)	Major barrier	Somewhat a barrier	Not a barrier	Not sure
Lack of staff capacity or time to learn new AI tools	34.11%	50.65%	12.92%	2.33%
Limited understanding of AI use cases or how to prioritize them	30.08%	49.10%	17.99%	2.83%
Cost or funding constraints	27.44%	52.31%	16.67%	3.59%
Lack of clear policies, governance, or strategy	29.49%	41.79%	27.44%	1.28%
Vendor or tool uncertainty (e.g., unclear which tools are reliable, concern about vendor stability or lock-in, rapidly changing market)	26.80%	48.71%	21.65%	2.84%
Lack of clear value or return on investment	22.11%	40.62%	32.39%	4.88%
Lack of leadership alignment	16.45%	27.76%	50.90%	4.88%

QUESTION 20: To the best of your knowledge, what was your organization’s total technology budget for 2025 (including hardware and equipment, software and licenses, services and consulting, in-kind IT services or products, and training)?

20.1 Executive responses (n=343)	%
<\$50,000	25.36%
\$50,001-\$100,000	14.58%
\$100,001-\$250,000	13.99%
\$250,001-\$500,000	8.16%
\$500,001-\$1,000,000	8.16%
>\$1,000,000	10.50%
We don't track technology spending separately	2.92%
Not sure	16.33%

QUESTION 21: To the best of your knowledge, what was your organization’s total AI budget for 2025 (including hardware and equipment, software and licenses, services and consulting, and training)?

21.1 Executive responses (n=356)	%
<\$5,000	40.73%
\$5,001 - \$25,000	14.33%
\$25,001 - \$50,000	7.02%
\$50,001 - \$100,000	2.53%
\$100,001 - \$250,000	2.81%
\$250,001 - \$500,000	1.12%
\$500,001 - \$1,000,000	1.69%
>\$1,000,000	1.69%
We don't track AI spending separately	14.33%
Not sure	13.76%

QUESTION 22: Has your organization received funding for AI in any of these forms? (Select all that apply)

22.1 Executive responses (n=356)	%
In-kind support (tools, training, services)	14.89%
General operating support intended to enable AI work	13.48%
Restricted grant for a specific AI project	11.80%
None of the above	63.20%

QUESTION 25: Regarding perceived risks and concerns, to what degree are the following barriers to deploying and implementing AI in your organization?

25.1 Executive responses (n=391)	Major barrier	Somewhat a barrier	Not a barrier	Not sure
Concerns about data, privacy, or security	55.27%	36.25%	6.94%	1.54%
Concerns about trust or equity with communities we serve	32.47%	40.46%	22.42%	4.64%
Concerns about biased, unfair, or inequitable outcomes	29.49%	43.59%	22.31%	4.62%
Low confidence in AI output quality or validity	20.36%	56.70%	19.33%	3.61%
Concerns over environmental impact	26.92%	38.72%	27.69%	6.67%
Concerns about job displacement	12.05%	36.67%	45.38%	5.90%

QUESTION 23: What was the funding primarily tied to? (Select all that apply)

23.1 Executive responses (n=41)	%
Data / technology infrastructure	53.66%
Field-building (coalitions, standards, research, policy)	31.71%
Program/service delivery development (AI-enabled products, tools, or programs for clients/beneficiaries)	29.27%
Staff training / change management	24.39%
Governance / risk / guardrails	9.76%

QUESTION 24: How do you expect AI-specific spending in 2026 to compare to 2025?

24.1 Executive responses (n=343)	%
Increase significantly (>25%)	20.70%
Increase moderately (10-25%)	28.57%
Stay roughly the same (within 10%)	25.07%
Decrease	1.17%
Not sure / too early to say	24.49%

QUESTION 26: Regarding your own experience and day-to-day work, to what degree are you concerned about the following issues related to AI use in your organization?

26.1 Staff responses (n=275)	Significantly concerned	Somewhat concerned	Not concerned
Data privacy or security risks	56.20%	36.50%	7.30%
Overreliance or loss of critical thinking skills	46.91%	39.64%	13.45%
Reduced human judgment or oversight	47.06%	38.24%	14.71%
Misalignment with organizational mission or values	37.23%	31.75%	31.02%
Increased workload or rework	23.16%	38.97%	37.87%

QUESTION 27: Regarding broader impacts and risks, to what degree are you concerned about the following issues related to AI use in your organization?

27.1 Staff responses (n=274)	Significantly concerned	Somewhat concerned	Not concerned
Environmental or energy impacts of AI use	66.30%	27.47%	6.23%
Bias or unfair outcomes	43.22%	45.42%	11.36%
Impact on beneficiaries or community	41.97%	44.53%	13.50%
Job displacement or role changes	35.53%	37.73%	26.74%

QUESTION 28: In the last 12 months, are you aware of any AI-related incident that caused harm or created a serious risk for your organization?

28.1 Aggregate responses (n=662)	%
Yes	5.74%
No	80.06%
Not sure	12.24%
Prefer not to say	0.45%

QUESTION 29: What type of incident was it? (Select all that apply)

29.1 Aggregate responses (n=38)	%
Sensitive or confidential data entered into an AI tool against policy	47.37%
AI output was used and later found to be significantly inaccurate or misleading	39.47%
Bias or unfair outcome in a decision or service	26.32%
Reputational issue (e.g., public criticism, media attention, partner concern)	26.32%
Cybersecurity issue involving AI tools or data (e.g., data erasure, system reconfiguration, rogue agent)	23.68%
Harm or complaint involving a beneficiary or client	15.79%
External hacking event conducted through AI	7.89%
Unauthorized or unsanctioned AI tool use without approval or consensus	5.26%
Unintended disclosure of sensitive information by an AI tool	2.63%
Content appropriation or attribution harm (AI replacing human-created work)	2.63%
Not sure of the type	2.63%

QUESTION 30: In the last 12 months, have you used AI tools for work-related tasks in ways that were informal, unofficial, on personal devices, or not clearly covered by organizational guidance?

30.1 Aggregate responses (n=662)	%
Yes	53.32%
No	41.84%
Prefer not to say	3.02%

30.2 Staff responses (n=280)	%
Yes	48.57%
No	46.79%
Prefer not to say	2.50%

30.3 Executive responses (n=382)	%
Yes	56.81%
No	38.22%
Prefer not to say	3.40%

QUESTION 31: What are the main reasons you’ve used AI informally or unofficially? (Select all that apply)

31.1 Aggregate responses (n=351)	%
Curiosity or experimentation	69.80%
To save time or meet deadlines	49.57%
Lack of clear guidance or policies	38.75%
Tools provided by my organization didn’t meet my needs	25.93%
Everyone else seemed to be doing it	10.83%
Fear of asking for approval	2.56%
Job role includes evaluating or piloting AI tools	1.99%
No choice - AI is built into tools already used	0.85%

31.2 Staff responses (n=135)	%
Curiosity or experimentation	63.70%
To save time or meet deadlines	42.96%
Lack of clear guidance or policies	45.93%
Tools provided by my organization didn’t meet my needs	31.11%
Everyone else seemed to be doing it	14.81%
Fear of asking for approval	3.70%
Job role includes evaluating or piloting AI tools	0.74%
No choice - AI is built into tools already used	2.22%

31.3 Executive responses (n=216)	%
Curiosity or experimentation	73.61%
To save time or meet deadlines	53.70%
Lack of clear guidance or policies	34.26%
Tools provided by my organization didn’t meet my needs	22.69%
Everyone else seemed to be doing it	8.33%
Fear of asking for approval	1.85%
Job role includes evaluating or piloting AI tools	2.78%
No choice – AI is built into tools already used	0.00%

QUESTION 32: In the last 12 months, have you participated in any training or received any guidance about how to use AI at your organization?

32.1 Staff responses (n=283)	%
Yes, formal training and communication	32.16%
Yes, informal communication (e.g., meetings, emails)	31.45%
No	36.40%

32.2 Staff responses with budgets under \$10 million (n=177)	%
Yes, formal training and communication	27.12%
Yes, informal communication (e.g., meetings, emails)	33.33%
No	39.55%

32.3 Staff responses with budgets of \$10 Million+ (n=106)	%
Yes, formal training and communication	40.57%
Yes, informal communication (e.g., meetings, emails)	28.30%
No	31.13%

QUESTION 33: What are your primary sources of information about AI? (Select all that apply)

33.1 Staff responses (n=264)	%
Learning by using AI tools myself (hands-on experimentation)	78.03%
News outlets or journalism	63.26%
Professional associations, conferences, or webinars	58.71%
Colleagues or coworkers	54.55%
Online forums or blogs (e.g., Reddit)	46.59%
Friends or personal network	46.21%
AI companies (e.g., vendor blogs, product documentation)	45.83%
Social media (e.g., TikTok, Instagram, X / Twitter, LinkedIn)	37.50%
Videos or digital media (e.g., YouTube, podcasts)	35.98%
Formal research (e.g., academic research, research institutes)	35.23%
Books	15.53%
Independent online courses (e.g., Coursera, LinkedIn Learning)	1.14%

QUESTION 34: How would you prefer to receive information or training about AI? (Select all that apply)

34.1 Staff responses (n=248)	%
Interactive tools or exercises	69.35%
Live workshops or webinars	66.53%
Online courses or structured curricula (self-paced)	62.90%
Written guides, blogs, or newsletters	57.26%
Peer discussion groups or community forums	54.84%
Recorded videos, podcasts, or audio content	49.60%
In-person events or conferences	38.71%
One-on-one support or office hours	33.47%
Declines AI training or information	6.05%

QUESTION 35: To what degree would the following supports help you use AI more confidently and responsibly at work?

35.1 Staff responses (n=262)	Significant help	Some help	Would not help	Not sure
Clear organizational guidelines or policies	62.07%	27.59%	9.20%	1.15%
Training or workshops for staff	56.49%	29.39%	10.69%	3.44%
Examples or case studies from other nonprofits	56.70%	27.20%	12.26%	3.83%
Opportunities to discuss AI with peers	47.88%	35.52%	11.20%	5.41%
Templates, checklists, or frameworks	43.63%	35.52%	16.22%	4.63%
Support from leadership	43.80%	33.33%	17.05%	5.81%
Access to trusted third-party resources	40.93%	38.61%	12.74%	7.72%
Support from vendors or consultants	23.17%	33.98%	30.89%	11.97%

QUESTION 36: Which of the following would most accelerate your organization’s ability to expand responsible AI use? (Select up to 3)

36.1 Executive responses (n=379)	%
Staff training or capacity-building support	46.97%
Clear guidance on safe and ethical AI use	44.59%
Dedicated funding or grants	42.74%
Improved data or technology infrastructure (e.g., better data management systems, cloud capacity, or integration between tools)	36.41%
Additional staff capacity or protected time	34.83%
Proven use cases from peer organizations	27.44%
External partners or vendors to support implementation	17.15%
Stronger leadership on AI from the executive team	13.98%
Board advocacy and support for AI adoption	7.39%
None of the above	2.11%
Trusted, vetted vendor/tool information (data security and ethics of specific products)	1.85%
Environmental or energy impact transparency and mitigation	0.79%

QUESTION 37: For staffing, how would you categorize the overall impact AI has had in the following areas in the last 12 months?

37.1 Executive responses (n=358)	Positive impact	No impact	Negative impact
Staff time / efficiency	61.25%	36.75%	1.99%
Staff satisfaction / retention	17.70%	78.93%	3.37%
Role requirements or hiring criteria	15.45%	82.30%	2.25%
Staffing positions or headcount	11.20%	85.71%	3.08%

QUESTION 38: For operations, how would you categorize the impact AI has had in the following areas in the last 12 months?

38.1 Executive responses (n=357)	Positive impact	No impact	Negative impact
IT and technology infrastructure	40.46%	56.98%	2.56%
Reporting and compliance	34.57%	63.71%	1.71%
Operating or administrative costs	28.74%	67.53%	3.74%
Budget planning and forecasting	23.16%	75.14%	1.69%
Contract and vendor management	19.83%	79.04%	1.13%
Payment management and invoicing	10.06%	89.37%	0.57%

QUESTION 39: For organizational effectiveness, how would you categorize the impact AI has had in the following areas in the last 12 months?

39.1 Executive responses (n=357)	Positive impact	No impact	Negative impact
Communications and marketing effectiveness	60.29%	38.57%	1.14%
Quality / consistency of work	53.95%	42.09%	3.95%
Measurement, evaluation, and learning approach	45.33%	52.97%	1.70%
Strategy or program design choices	40.00%	58.86%	1.14%
Fundraising or revenue generation	38.81%	59.49%	1.70%

QUESTION 40: For your mission, how would you categorize the impact AI has had in the following areas in the last 12 months?

40.1 Executive responses (n=352)	Positive impact	No impact	Negative impact
Quality of products / services	32.10%	66.76%	1.14%
Reach or scale of products / services	30.11%	68.18%	1.70%
Equity / fairness of decisions or services	12.86%	84.86%	2.29%
Trust with beneficiaries	8.07%	89.63%	2.31%

QUESTION 41: Overall, what is your organization’s sentiment about AI in your field?

41.1 Executive responses (n=351)	%
Very negative – AI poses more risks than benefits for the field	2.56%
Somewhat negative – concerns outweigh potential benefits at this stage	12.82%
Neutral / mixed – no clear sense that benefits outweigh risks or vice versa	30.48%
Somewhat positive – AI will improve outcomes in the field if used responsibly	41.03%
Very positive – AI has strong potential to significantly advance the field's impact	13.11%

QUESTION 42: How much change has AI caused in your field?

41.1 Executive responses (n=349)	%
None – little to no visible impact on the field so far	4.58%
Minimal – early signals or isolated examples, but limited broader change	32.38%
Moderate – noticeable changes in some areas, but not yet widespread	42.98%
Significant – widespread changes affecting how the field operates or delivers outcomes	16.91%
Transformational – the field has already been fundamentally reshaped by AI	3.15%

QUESTION 44: Regarding field and ecosystem shifts, to what extent do you expect AI to change your field over the next 1–2 years?

44.1 Executive responses (n=342)	To a great extent	To some extent	Not at all	Not sure
Changes in what funders and policymakers view as effective or scalable impact	36.95%	48.39%	5.57%	9.09%
Growing influence of large technology companies and AI platforms on field dynamics	46.18%	34.12%	5.88%	13.82%
AI-powered services from commercial providers reaching the same populations nonprofits serve	30.41%	37.13%	19.30%	13.16%

QUESTION 43: How closely is your organization tracking AI’s impacts on your field?

43.1 Executive responses (n=349)	%
Not at all – we are not currently tracking AI impacts	10.32%
Not closely – we are aware of AI developments but not actively monitoring them	24.64%
Somewhat closely – we monitor AI developments informally or on an ad hoc basis	31.23%
Closely – we track key trends and discuss implications periodically	23.78%
Very closely – we actively monitor developments and assess implications for our mission and operations	10.03%

QUESTION 45: Regarding operational and programmatic shifts, to what extent do you expect AI to change your field over the next 1–2 years?

45.1 Executive responses (n=343)	To a great extent	To some extent	Not at all	Not sure
Shifts in capabilities and skills required	48.82%	40.29%	6.18%	4.71%
Increased use of data and algorithms to allocate resources and make decisions	45.32%	40.35%	5.85%	8.48%
Rising expectations for personalized support	37.24%	42.52%	8.80%	11.44%
Shift from reactive to predictive interventions	32.65%	43.24%	9.41%	14.71%
Acceleration of digital-first and remote service delivery models	28.65%	45.91%	13.45%	11.99%

QUESTION 46: Regarding risks and potential negative impacts, to what extent do you expect AI to change your field over the next 1–2 years?

46.1 Executive responses (n=344)	To a great extent	To some extent	Not at all	Not sure
Widening gap between populations with and without access to AI-enabled services	46.94%	34.11%	7.58%	11.37%
Job displacement	17.78%	47.52%	21.57%	13.12%
Increased inequity, bias, and harm	19.83%	45.77%	17.49%	16.91%
Erosion of trust with communities served	14.53%	45.06%	24.13%	16.28%

QUESTION 47: In what ways is your organization involved in field-level conversations about AI beyond your own operations? (Select all that apply)

47.1 Executive responses (n=341)	%
Participating in a peer group or coalition	41.35%
Monitoring and learning only	36.66%
We are not currently involved	27.57%
Contributing to shared standards/guidance	22.29%
Partnering with tech companies/developers	15.84%
Engaging in policy or public advocacy	11.14%

QUESTION 48: To what degree are the following AI issues urgent for civil society/philanthropy to address?

48.1 Executive responses (n=338)	Very urgent	Somewhat urgent	Not urgent
Misinformation	75.82%	20.90%	3.28%
The misuse of powerful AI systems by bad actors or the loss of control of powerful AI systems	74.03%	22.99%	2.99%
Surveillance / privacy	67.86%	27.08%	5.06%
Concentration of economic power and market dominance	61.13%	30.27%	8.61%
Environmental / energy impacts	61.42%	27.89%	10.68%
Impact on democracy	57.19%	30.24%	12.57%
Bias / civil rights and discrimination	53.89%	35.33%	10.78%
Worker displacement / job quality	44.94%	42.86%	12.20%

QUESTION 49: Which of the following supports would most enable your organization to participate in external stewardship (helping to set standards, joining coalitions, providing accountability, setting policy) in the next 12 months? (Select up to 3)

49.1 Executive responses (n=359)	%
Dedicated funding for this work	52.65%
A credible coalition/partner effort to join	44.85%
Deeper technical expertise and understanding	33.98%
Practical standards/playbooks to adopt	31.75%
Legal / risk guidance	25.07%
Opportunities to engage in AI policy or advocacy work	19.22%
Increased understanding of AI policy	18.11%
More transparency from AI providers/field-level data	15.88%
Board / leadership mandate	12.26%
We do not intend to work on external AI stewardship	6.96%
Already engaged in external stewardship	1.11%

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