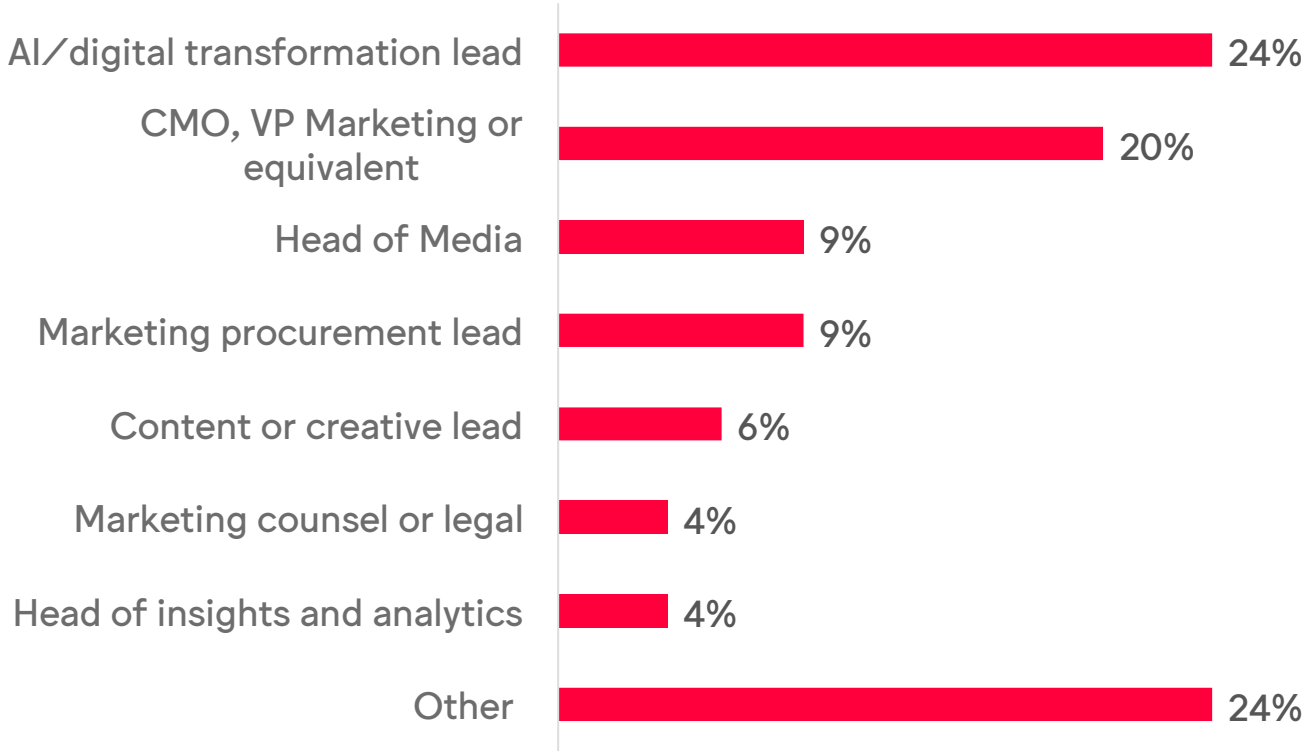
# WFA State of AI in Marketing

Survey results
September 2026

*Please note this report is issued subject to WFA's Competition Law Compliance Policy (see final page for more information).*

# Member survey: the state of AI adoption in marketing

## 46 global brands. Profiles of respondents:

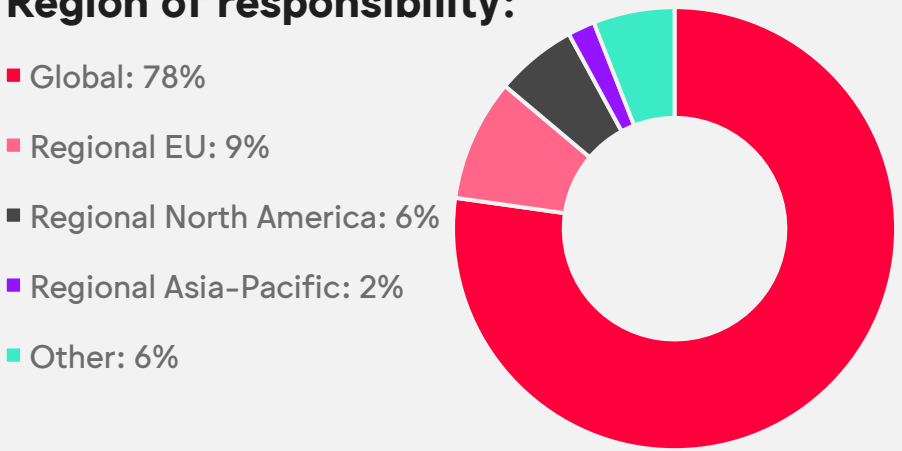



**Source: WFA research: AI survey;** Base = 54 respondents, 46 Brands; Date = August 2026. 'Other' responses include marketing capability, global brand manager, marketing excellence, marketing transformation and consumer experiences leads.

## Objectives of the survey:

This survey sought to explore how leading brands are adopting generative and agentic AI, looking at where they are seeing the greatest opportunities, how they are scaling use cases and what priorities are shaping future investment. It also examines the governance, capabilities and operating models brands are putting in place to enable responsible AI adoption, providing a benchmark of where the industry stands.

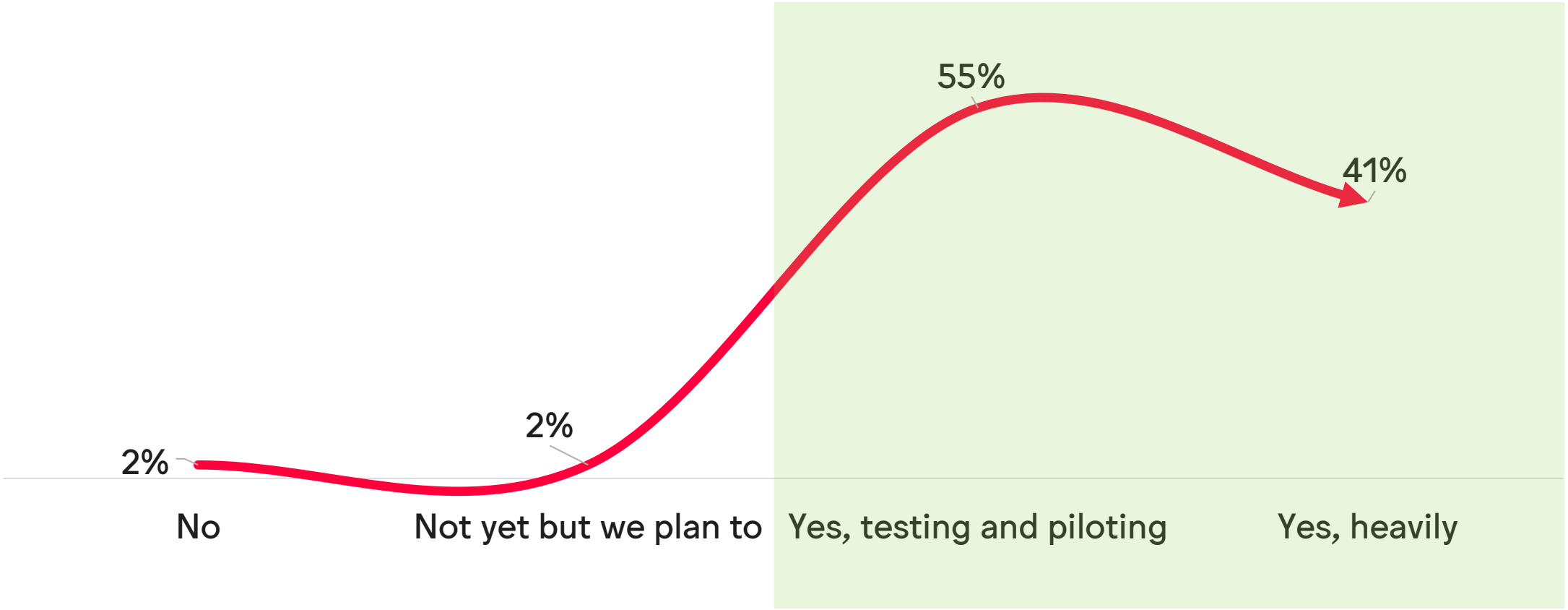
## Region of responsibility:




*Survey data collected and aggregated independently by WFA; no company-level responses shared with members. Regional sub-splits are indicative only given small sample sizes and should not be used to infer any individual company's response.*

# 96% of brands are now using agentic or generative AI for marketing

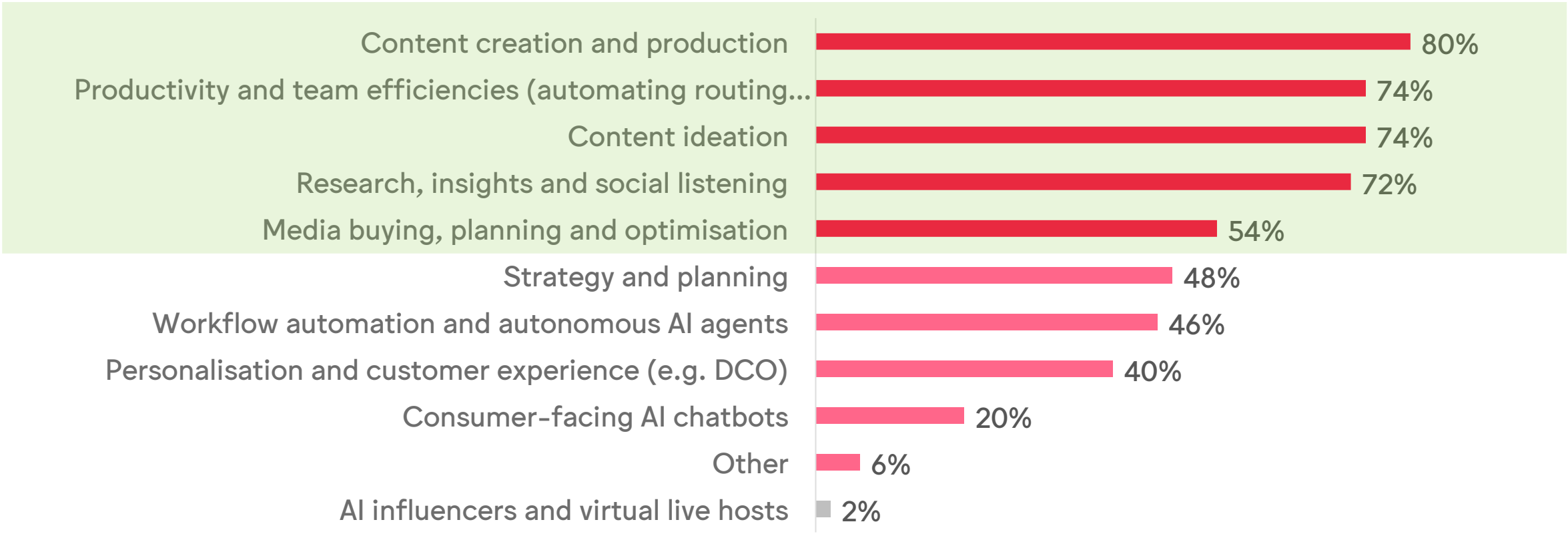
Question: Are you using generative or agentic AI for marketing purposes?




**Source: WFA research: AI survey;** Base = 54 respondents, 46 Brands; Date = August 2026

# AI adoption is still largely led by content creation and productivity

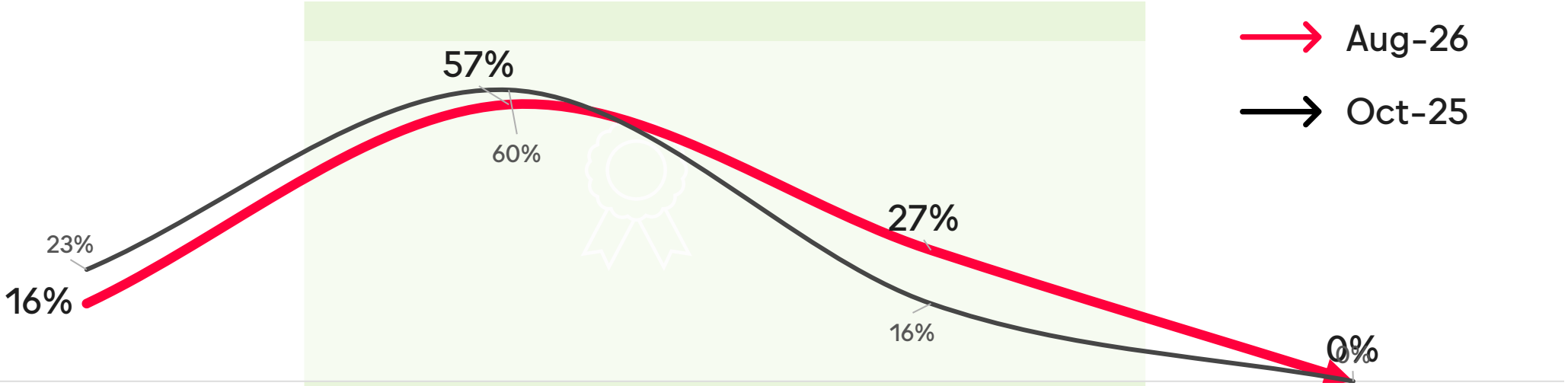
Question: For which use cases are you using Generative and Agentic AI?




**Source: WFA research: AI survey;** Base = 54 respondents, 46 Brands; Date = August 2026

# Adoption is shifting from experimentation to broader integration

Question: Which of the following would you say best describes your organisation's maturity when it comes to AI adoption?

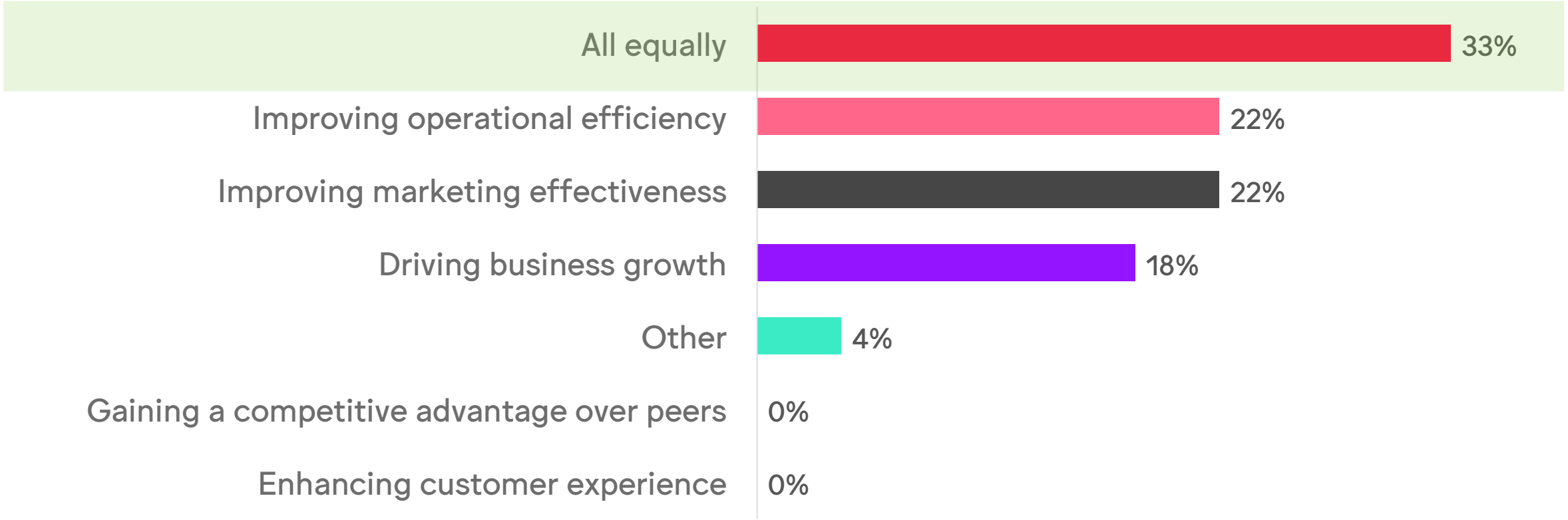



**Source: WFA research: AI survey;** Base = 54 respondents, 46 Brands; Date = August 2026. Findings reflect general, aggregated industry sentiment on future adoption trends and are not indicative of any individual organisation's specific plans or strategy.

# Priorities

# Ambitions are moving beyond pure efficiencies

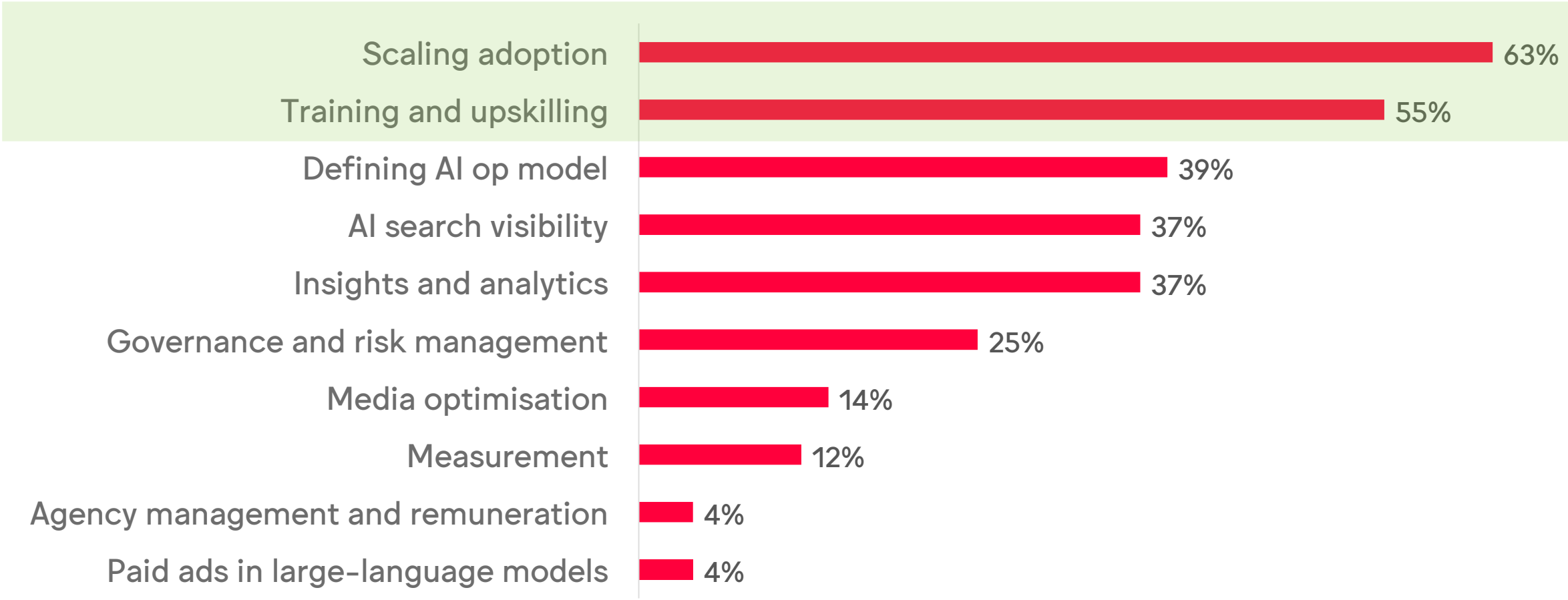
Question: What is your organisation's primary objective for AI adoption in marketing today?




**Source: WFA research: AI survey;** Base = 54 respondents, 46 Brands; Date = August 2026

# Scaling AI adoption and upskilling top the agenda

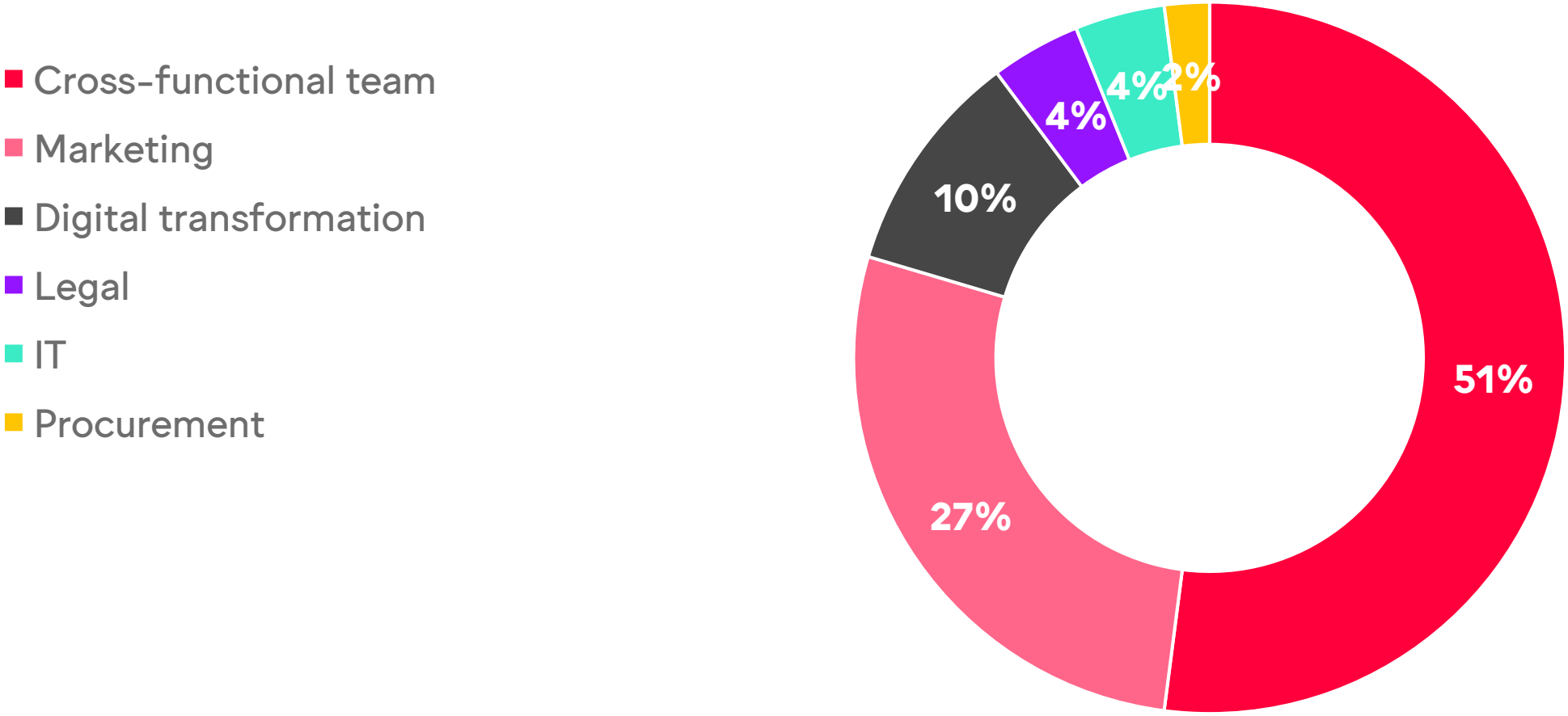
Question: What are your top three AI priorities for the next 6-12 months?




**Source: WFA research: AI survey;** Base = 54 respondents, 46 Brands; Date = August 2026. Findings reflect general, aggregated industry sentiment on future priorities and are not indicative of any individual organisation's specific plans or strategy.

# Half of organisations now use a cross-functional team leading AI adoption

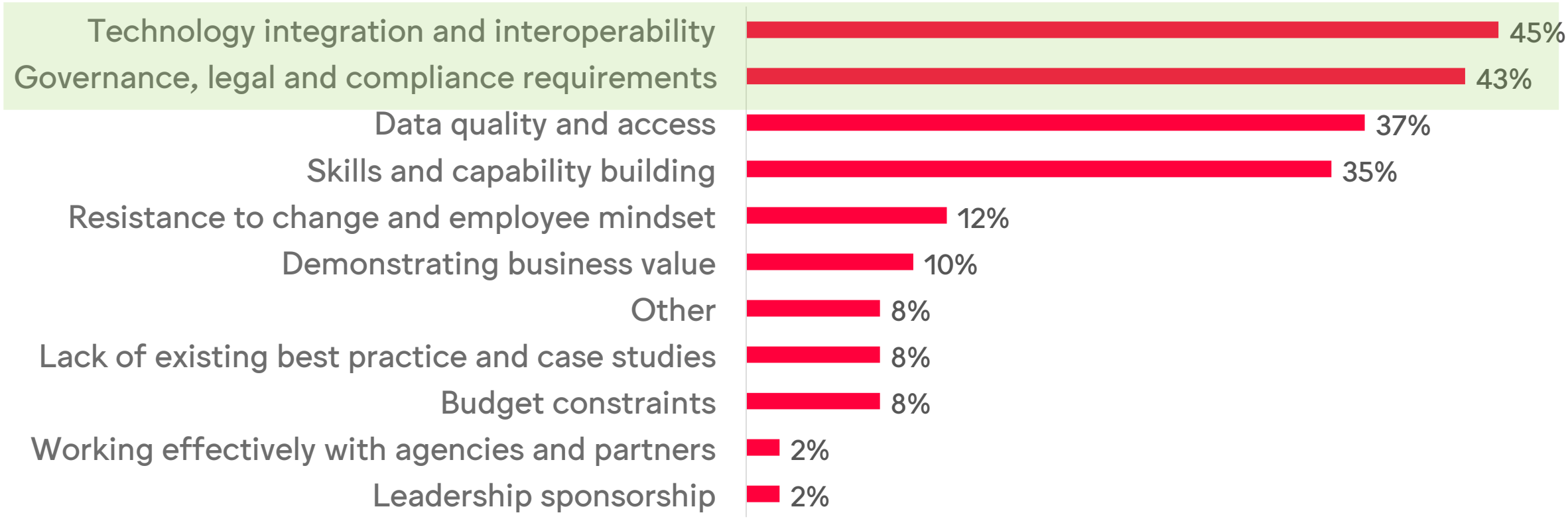
Question: Which functions are leading AI adoption and governance for marketing?




**Source: WFA research: AI survey;** Base = 54 respondents, 46 Brands; Date = August 2026

# Technology integration and governance are slowing progress

Question: What are the top two biggest challenges to accelerating AI adoption across your marketing organisation?

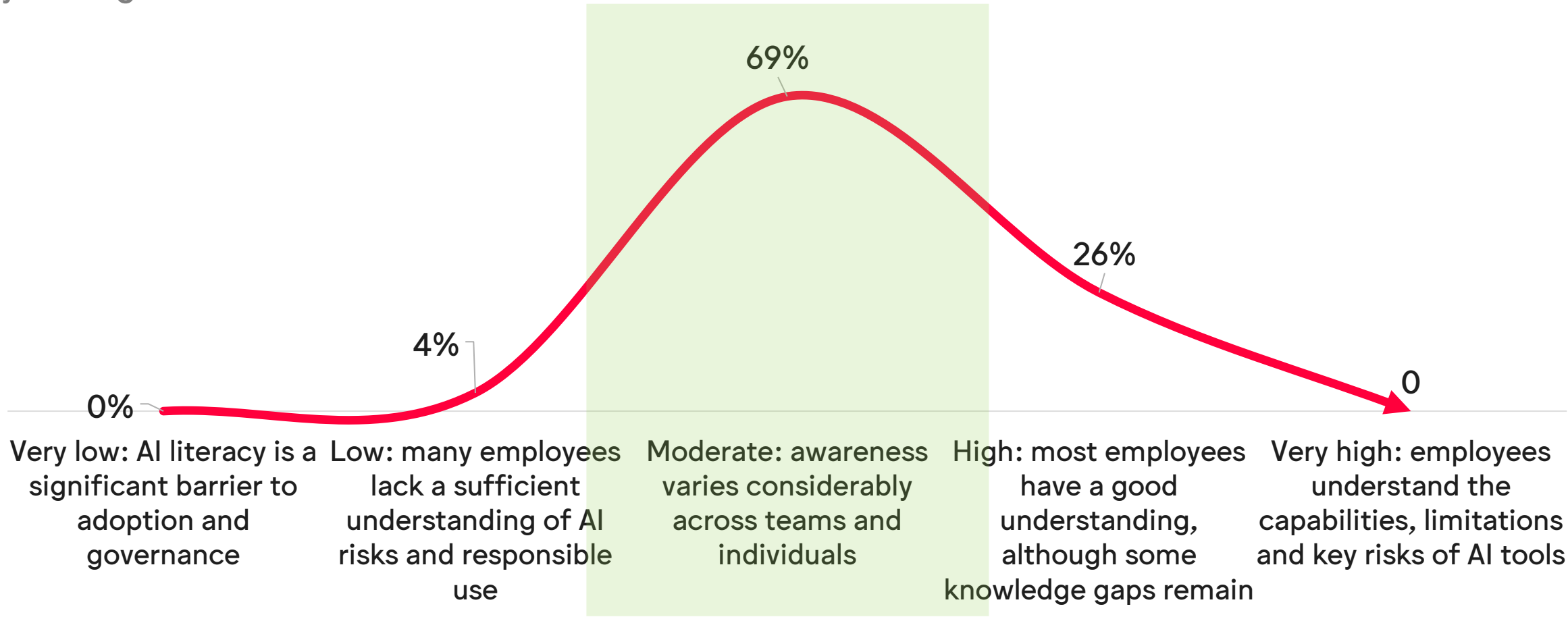



**Source: WFA research: AI survey;** Base = 54 respondents, 46 Brands; Date = August 2026

# Capability building

# AI literacy remains a significant capability gap

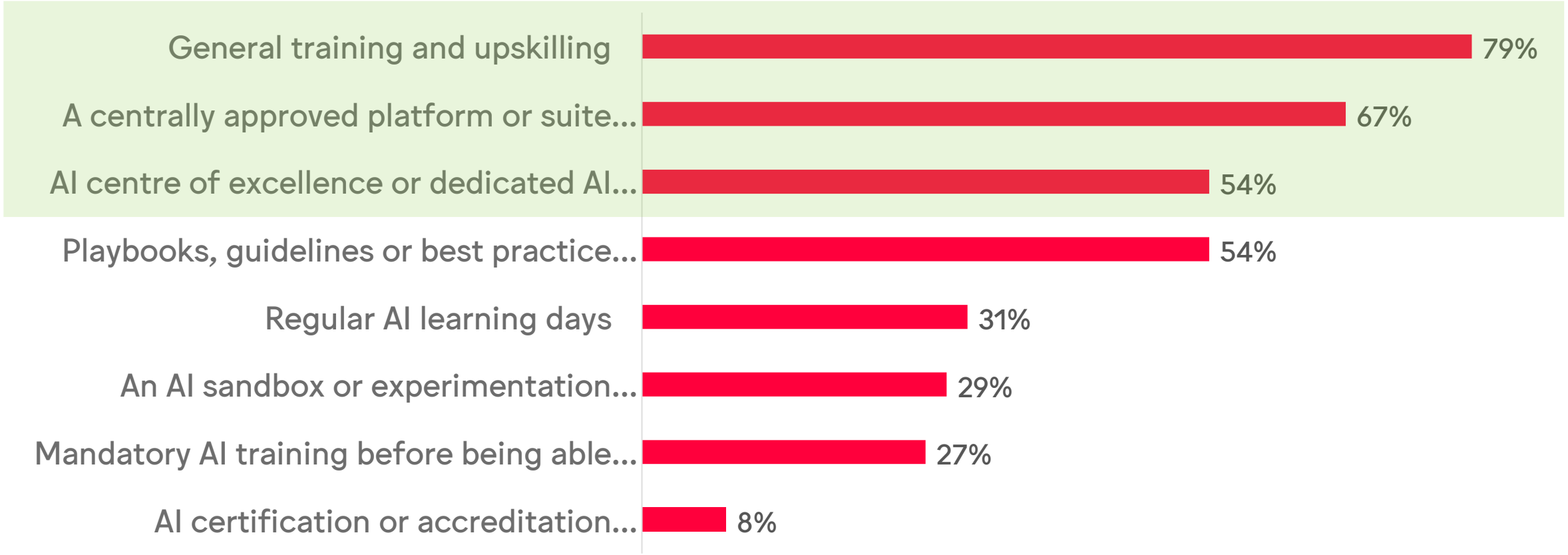
Question: How would you assess the level of literacy when it comes to AI for marketing within your organisation?




**Source: WFA research: AI survey;** Base = 54 respondents, 46 Brands; Date = August 2026

# General capability efforts are widespread, but formal training remains limited

Question: Which of the following have you implemented to build AI capability across marketing?




**Source: WFA research: AI survey;** Base = 54 respondents, 46 Brands; Date = August 2026

# Time, resources and uncertainty are holding back AI upskilling

Question: What are the main obstacles you face to upskilling and capability building?

"Enterprise costs"

"Resourcing and time needed to upskill and do it well"

"Confidence and time to test and make mistakes"

"Internal resource and alignment"

"Available time of people in local markets and willingness to change ways of working in certain areas"

"Requires change management"

"Unclear ROI on productivity gain, varied understanding of skill levels to train, bound by organization's enterprise tool selection, info overload"

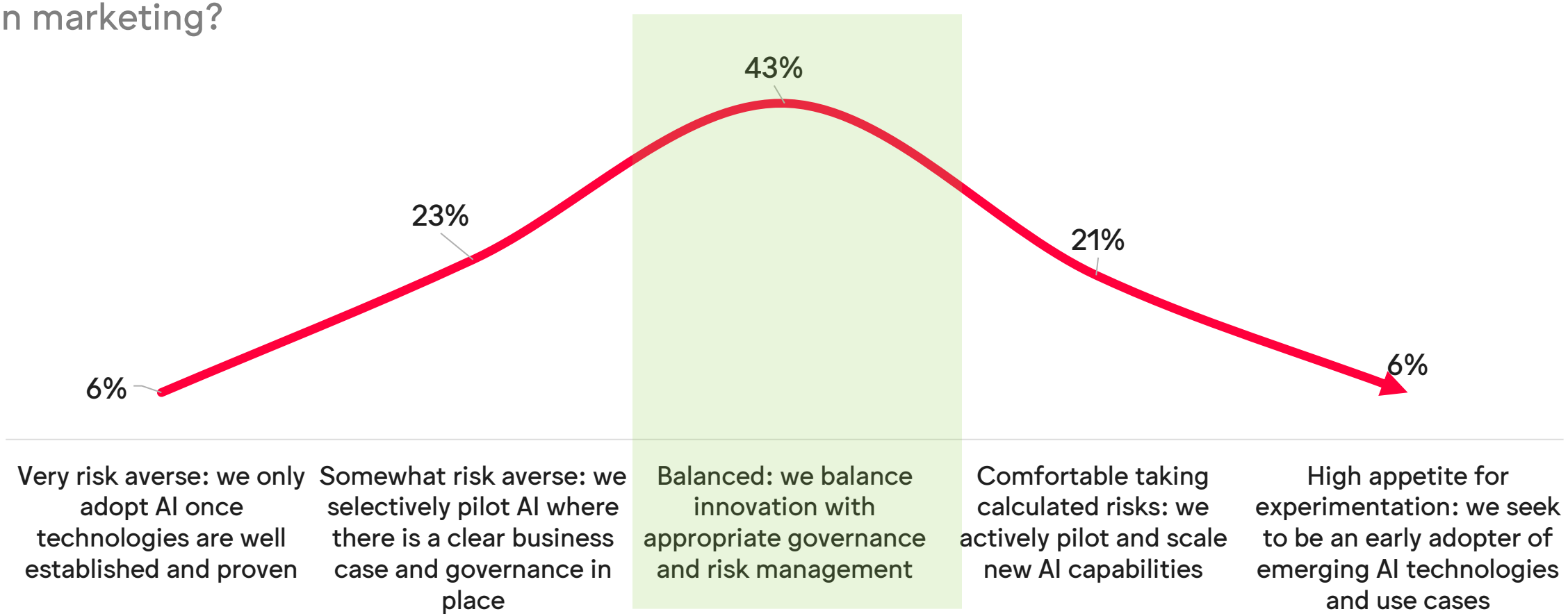
"Lean teams, so limited time to pivot to AI"

**Source: WFA research: AI survey;** Base = 54 respondents, 46 Brands; Date = August 2026. Quotes have been anonymised and lightly edited to remove any identifying detail.

# Risks

# Brands are balancing AI innovation with risk management

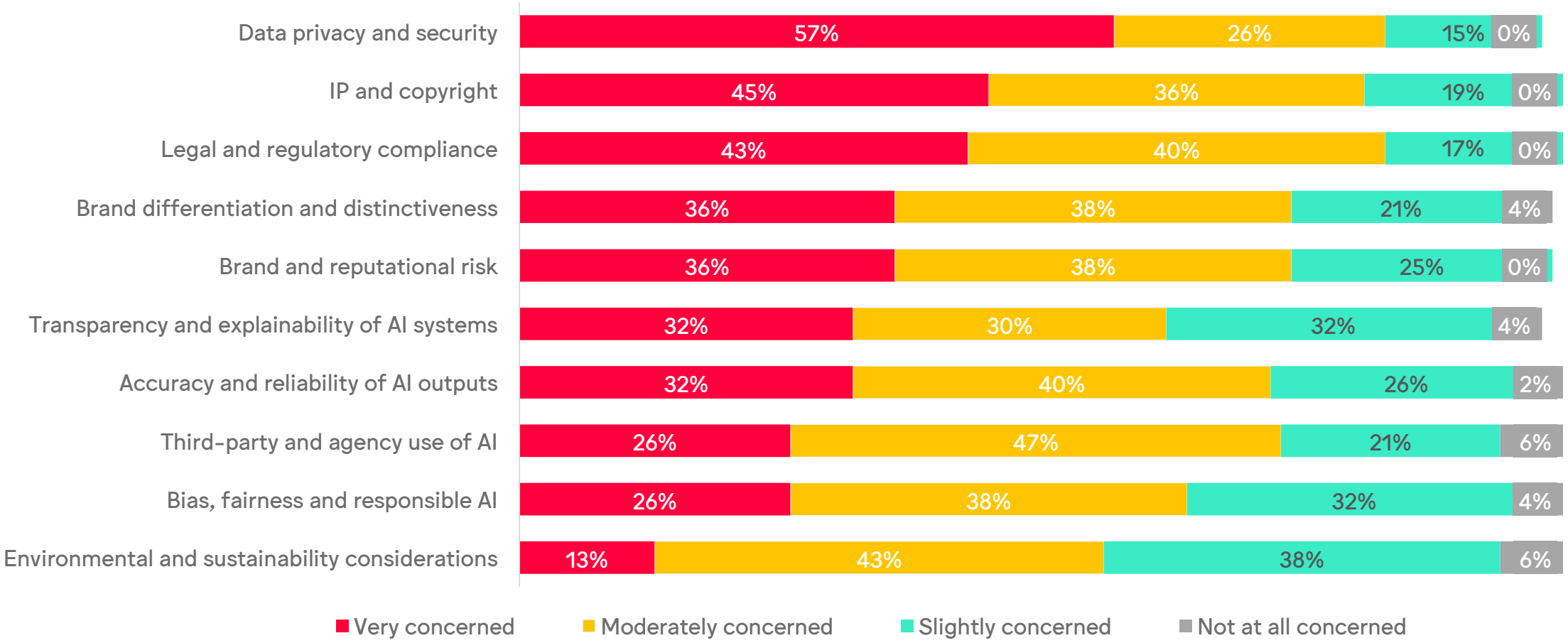
Question: Which statement best describes your organisation's overall approach to AI adoption in marketing?




**Source: WFA research: AI survey;** Base = 54 respondents, 46 Brands; Date = August 2026

# Data, IP and compliance remain biggest risk concerns

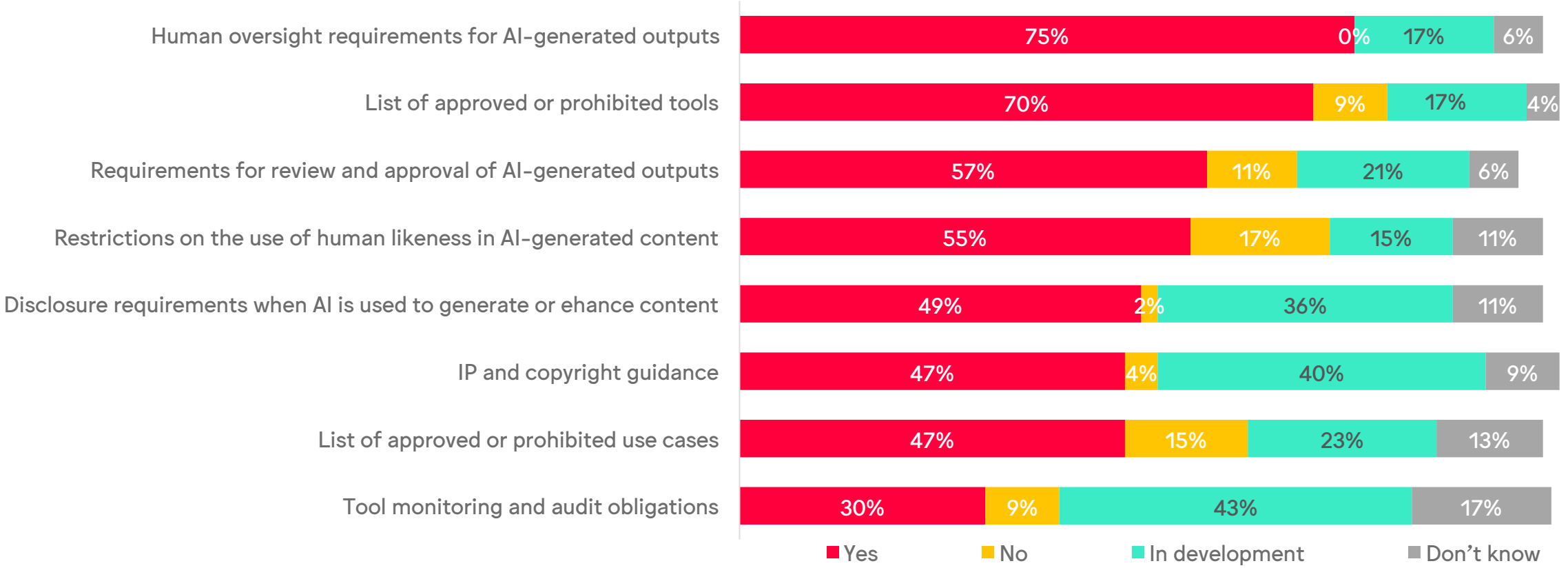
Question: To what extent are you concerned about the following AI risks?




**Source: WFA research: AI survey;** Base = 54 respondents, 46 Brands; Date = August 2026

# Core AI guardrails are widely adopted, but some gaps remain

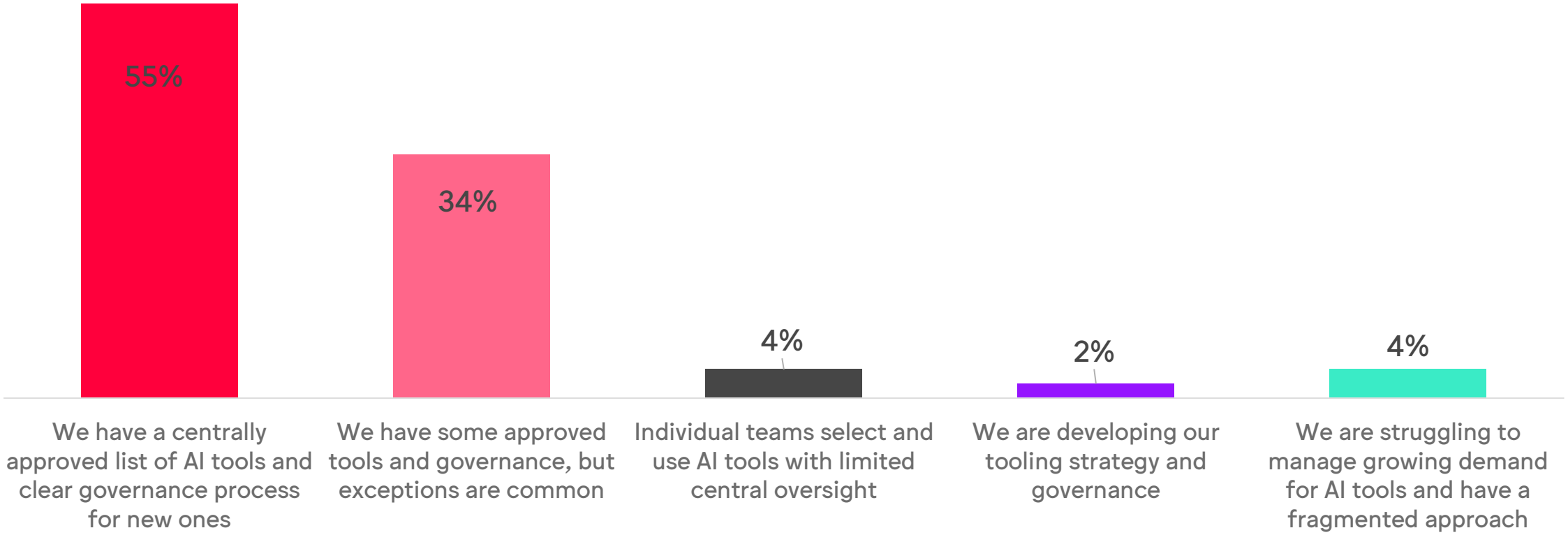
Question: Which of the following policies or guidelines has your organisation adopted to govern the use of AI in marketing?




**Source: WFA research: AI survey;** Base = 54 respondents, 46 Brands; Date = August 2026. Not all responses add up to 100 as some respondents skipped answering certain questions.

# AI tooling governance is centralised for over half of brands

Question: Which of the following best reflects your organisation's current AI tooling governance?




**Source: WFA research: AI survey;** Base = 54 respondents, 46 Brands; Date = August 2026

# AI search

# AI brand visibility is on the agenda, but few have a mature strategy

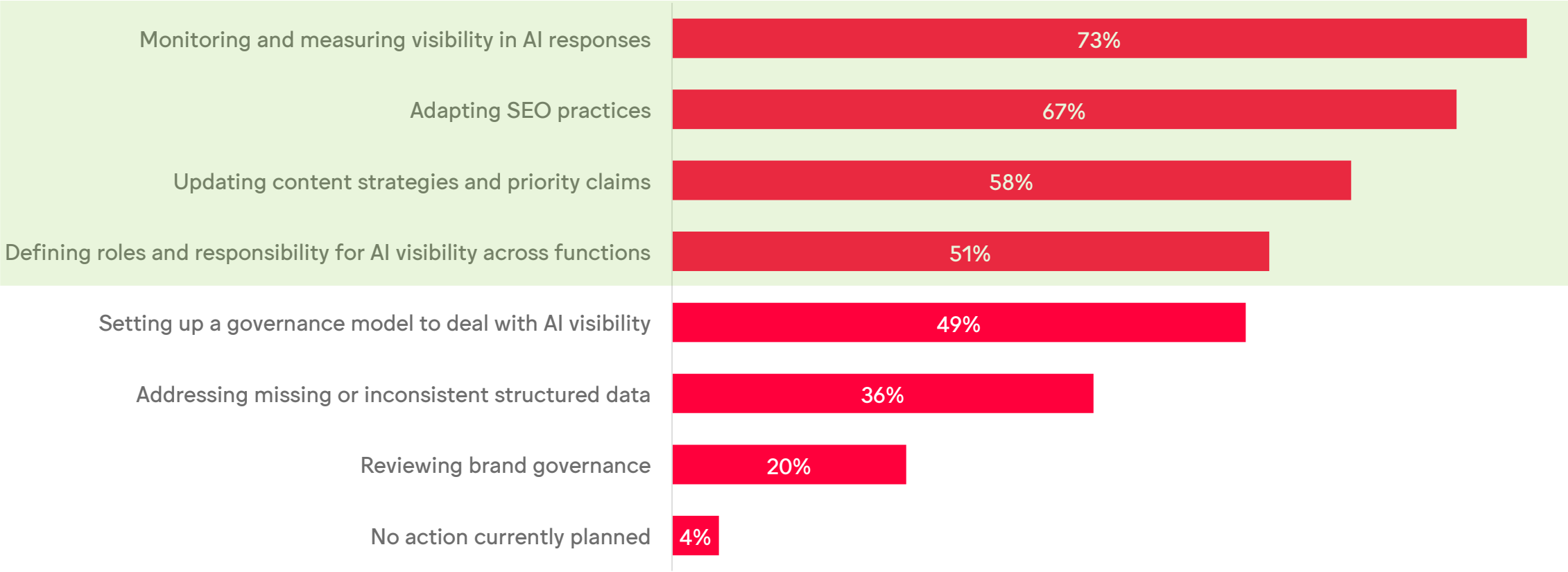
Question: Which statement best describes your organisation's current approach to brand visibility and discoverability in AI search?




**Source: WFA research: AI survey;** Base = 54 respondents, 46 Brands; Date = August 2026

# Brands are actively adapting to improve AI search discovery

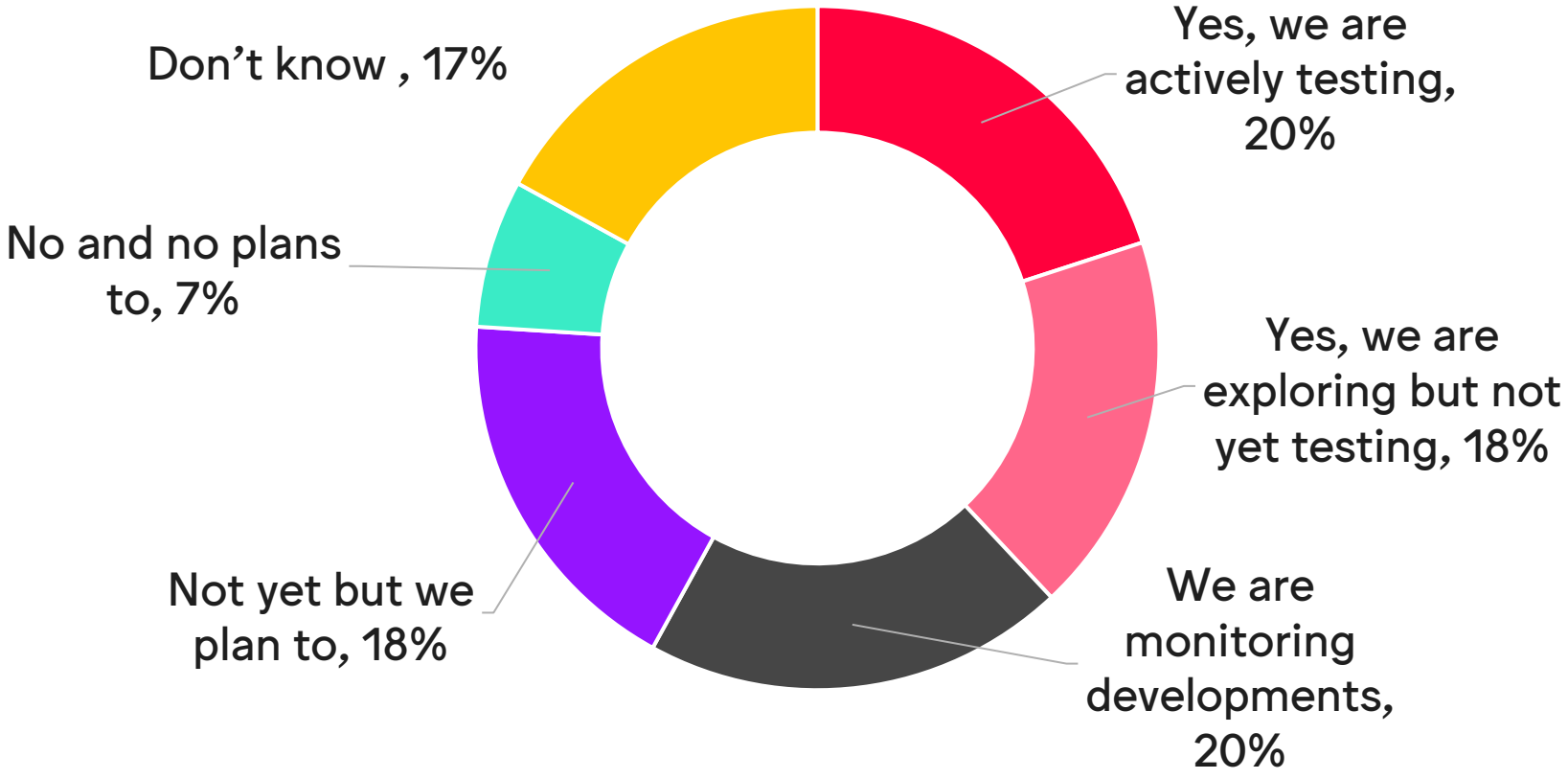
Question: Which of the following activities is your organisation currently undertaking to enhance visibility in AI search?




**Source: WFA research: AI survey;** Base = 54 respondents, 46 Brands; Date = August 2026

# Paid AI search advertising is still in early adoption stages

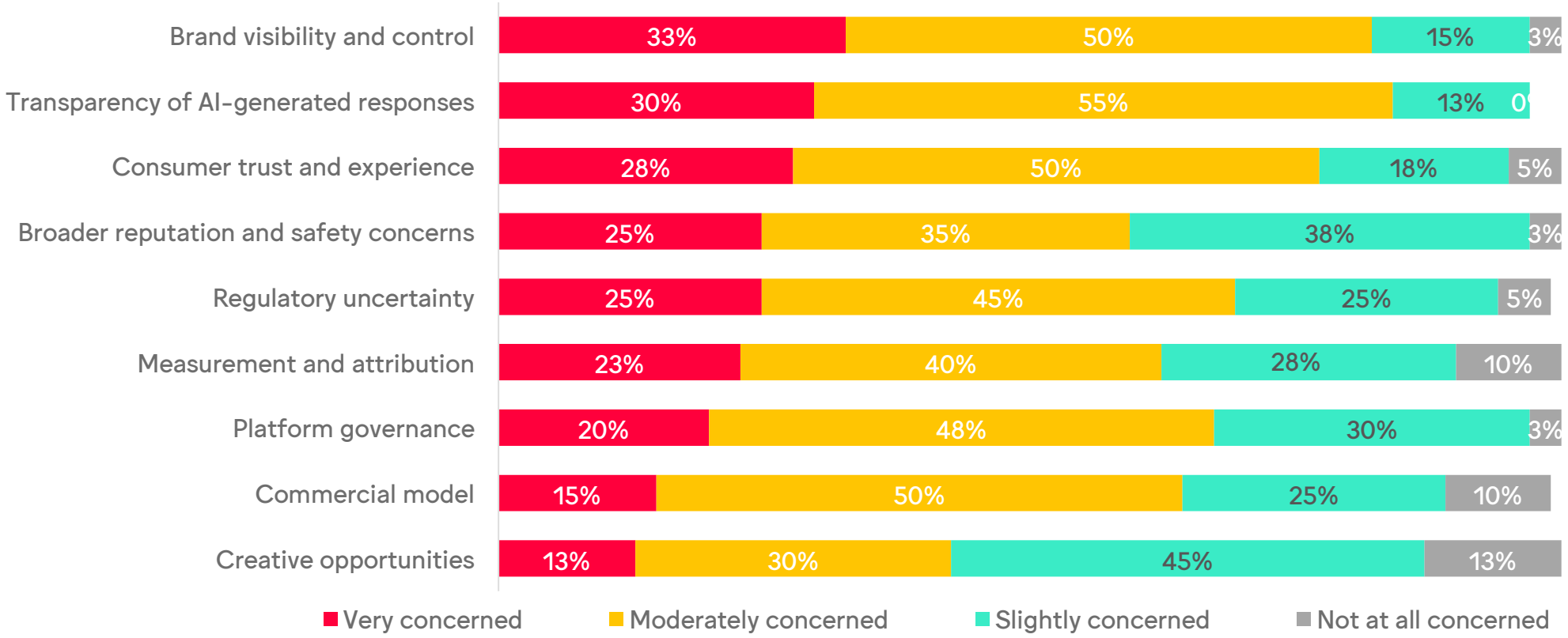
Question: Are you currently exploring paid ads within AI-powered search and conversational AI platforms (e.g. ChatGPT ads)?




**Source: WFA research: AI survey;** Base = 54 respondents, 46 Brands; Date = August 2026

# Brand control, transparency and trust are the biggest concerns around paid AI search

Question: To what extent are you concerned about the following risks when it comes to exploring paid ads in AI-powered search?

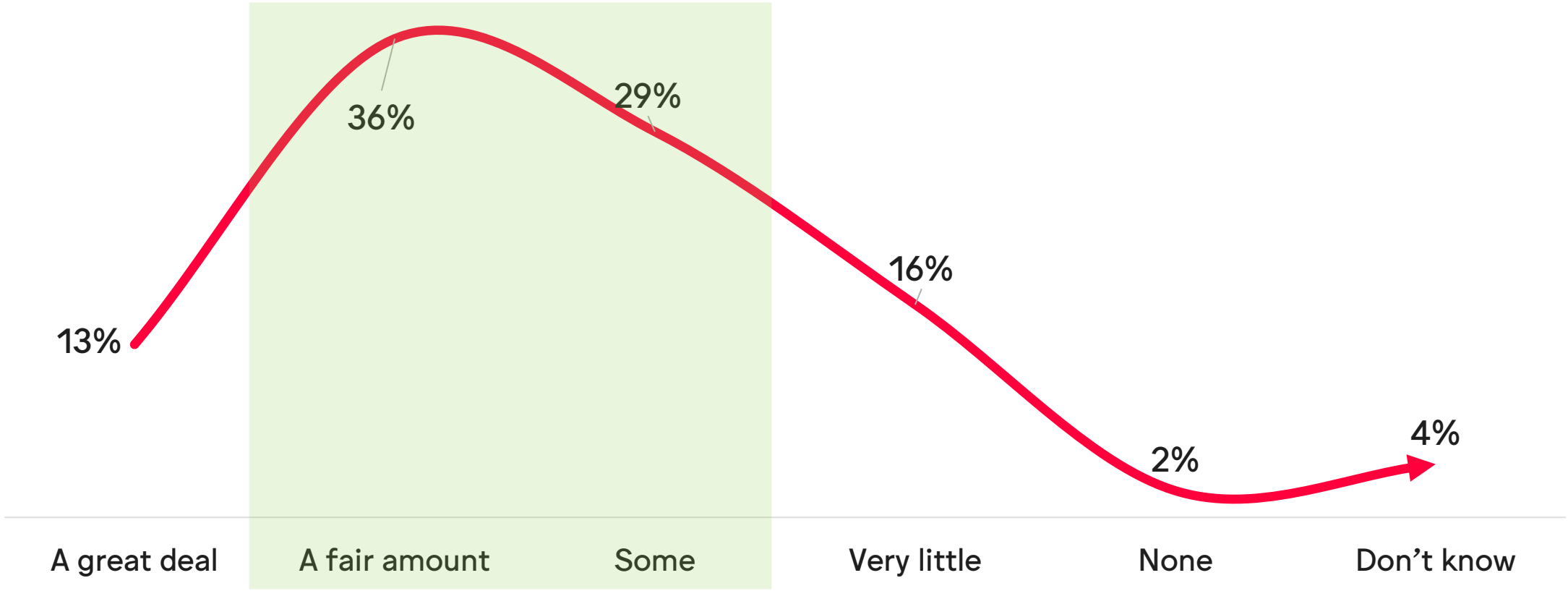



**Source: WFA research: AI survey;** Base = 54 respondents, 46 Brands; Date = August 2026

# Agency management

# Agency use remains largely opaque to brands

Question: How much visibility does your organisation have into how partners (e.g. agencies) are using generative and agentic AI on your behalf?

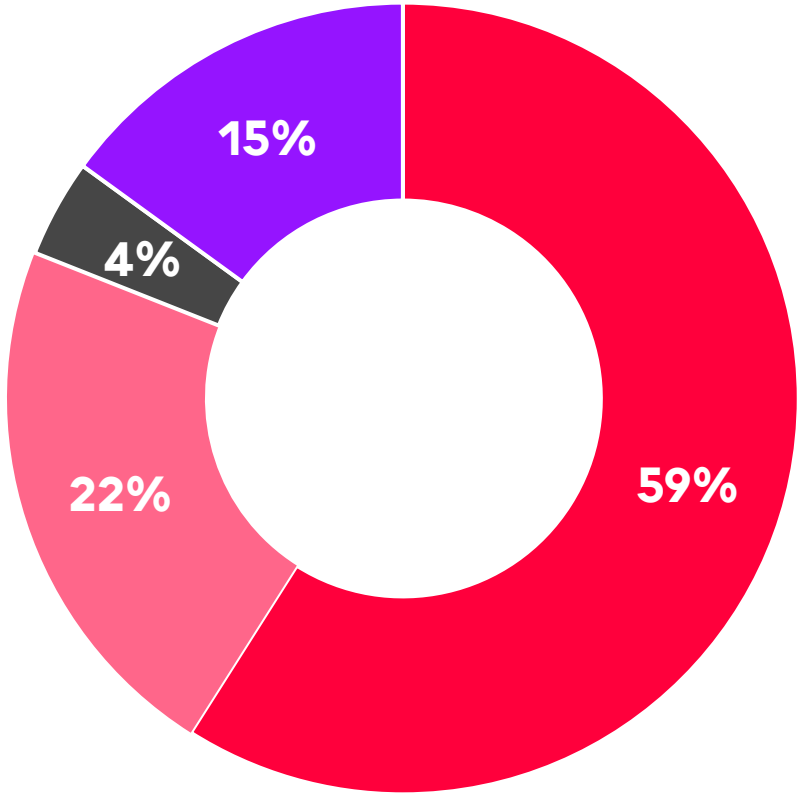



**Source: WFA research: AI survey;** Base = 54 respondents, 46 Brands; Date = August 2026

# Contracts are becoming a key tool for governing AI use by partners

*Question: Have you reviewed your media and creative contracts with partners to introduce AI-related clauses?*

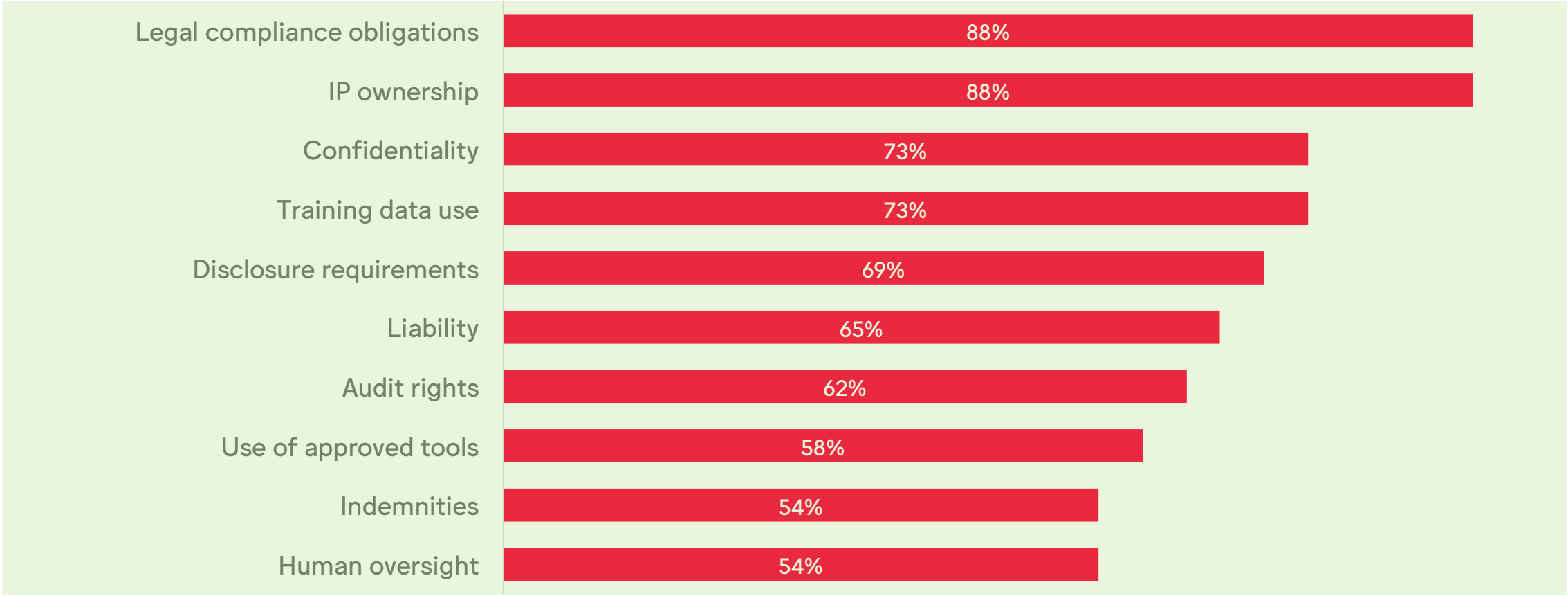
- Yes
- Not yet but we plan to
- No, no plans to
- Don’t know




**Source: WFA research: AI survey;** Base = 54 respondents, 46 Brands; Date = August 2026

# IP and legal compliance remain the top contractual priorities

Question: Which AI-related contractual issues are covered?

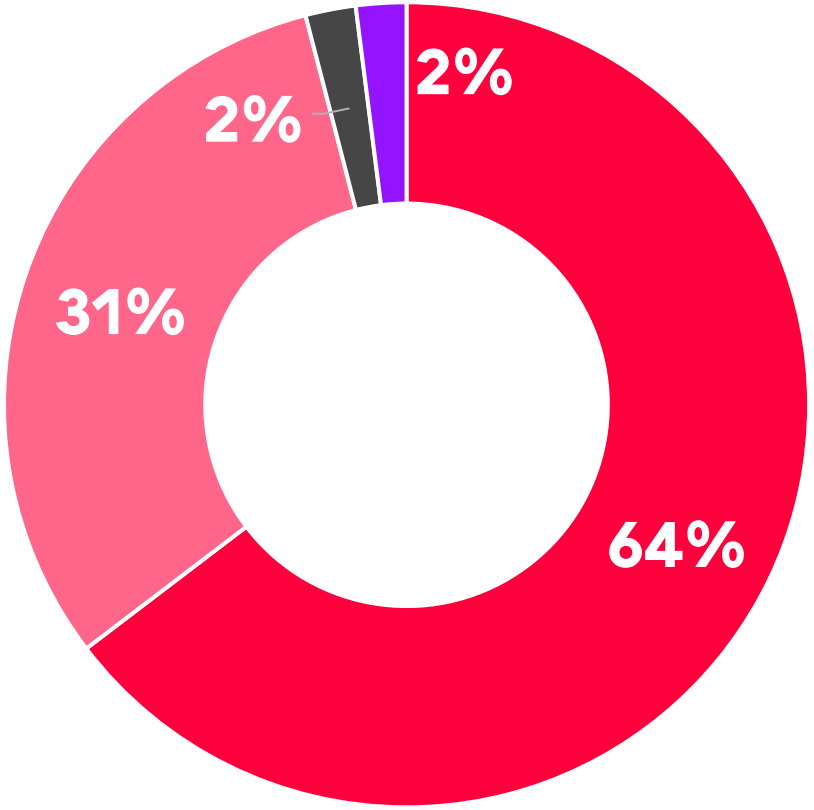



**Source: WFA research: AI survey;** Base = 54 respondents, 46 Brands; Date = August 2026

# Brands are demanding greater transparency from agencies on AI use

Question: Are you requesting disclosure from agencies when AI is used in deliverables?

- Yes
- Under consideration
- No
- Don’t know

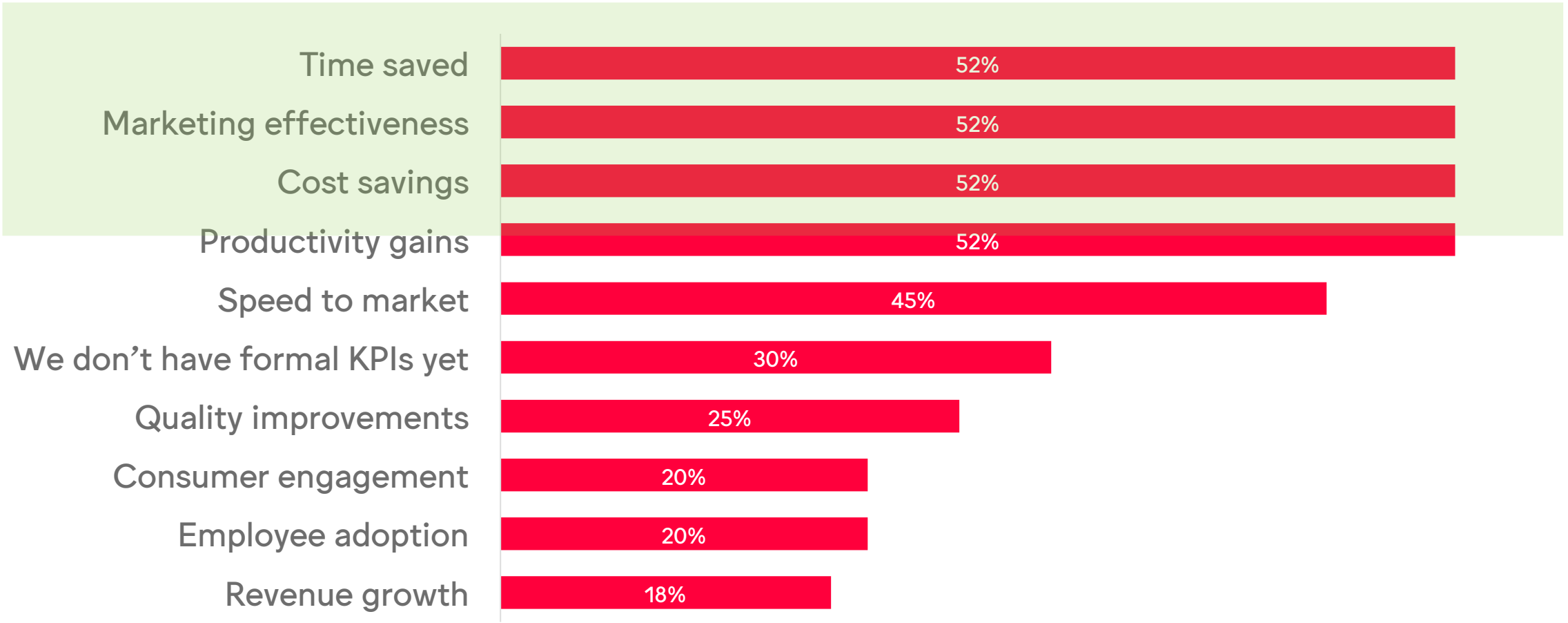



**Source: WFA research: AI survey;** Base = 54 respondents, 46 Brands; Date = August 2026

# Measuring success

# Efficiency gains dominate how brands measure success

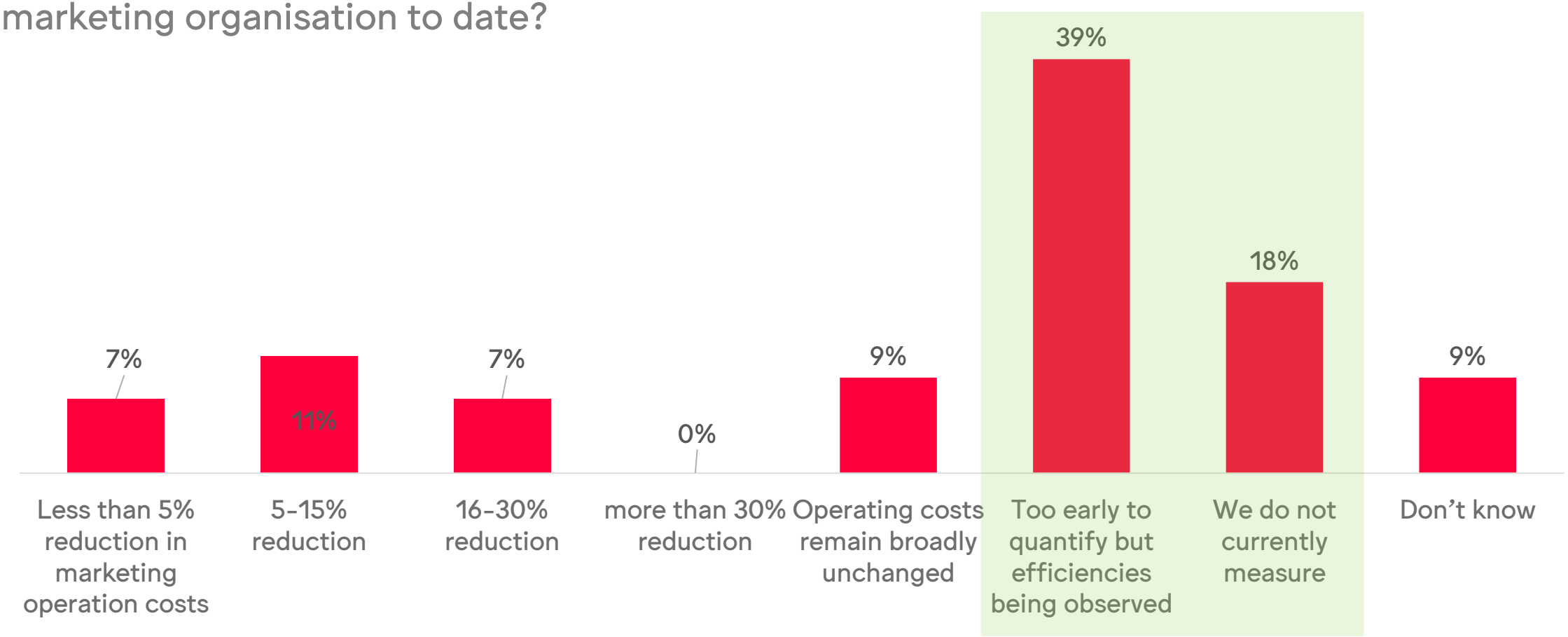
Question: How is your organisation measuring the success of AI adoption in marketing?




**Source: WFA research: AI survey;** Base = 54 respondents, 46 Brands; Date = August 2026

# Many brands are still defining how to measure AI success

Question: To what extent has AI delivered measurable operational efficiencies within your marketing organisation to date?




**Source: WFA research: AI survey;** Base = 54 respondents, 46 Brands; Date = August 2026

# About WFA

## About WFA

WFA champions more effective and sustainable marketing communications which help members drive brand growth. It is the voice of marketers worldwide, representing 90% of global marketing communications spend – roughly US$900 billion per annum.

WFA connects the world's biggest brand owners and national advertiser associations in more than 60 markets, bringing together tens of thousands of brands at local level. Together, they create a global network which offers a unique source of leadership, expertise and inspiration.

If you would like to engage with WFA's AI Community, please contact:



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**WFA Competition law compliance policy**

The purpose of the WFA is to represent the interests of advertisers and to act as a forum for legitimate contacts between members of the advertising industry. It is the policy of the WFA that it will not be used by any company, or individual, to further any anti-competitive or collusive conduct, or to engage in other activities that could violate any antitrust or competition law, regulation, rule or directives of any country or otherwise impair full and fair competition. The WFA carries out regular checks to make sure that this policy is being strictly adhered to.

As a condition of membership, members of the WFA acknowledge that their membership of the WFA is subject to competition law rules and they agree to comply fully with those laws. Members agree that they will not use the WFA directly or indirectly, (a) to reach or attempt to reach agreements or understandings with one or more of their competitors, (b) to obtain or attempt to obtain, or exchange or attempt to exchange, confidential or proprietary information regarding any other company other than in the context of a bona fide business or (c) to further any anti-competitive or collusive conduct, or (d) to engage in other activities that could violate any antitrust or competition law, regulation, rule or directives of any country or otherwise impair full and fair competition.