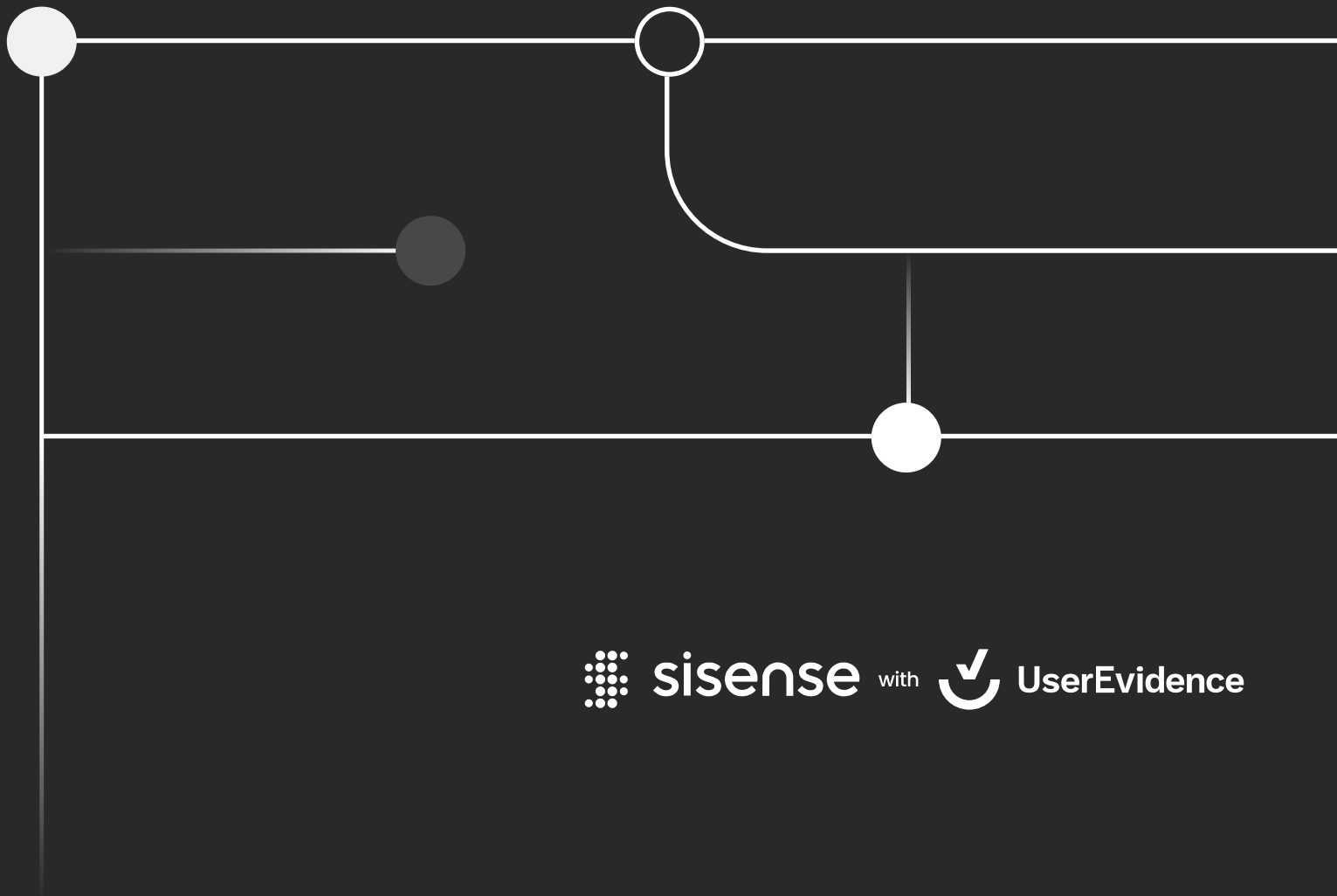
REPORT

What analytics teams build, what end users need, and how AI is reshaping both



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Executive summary

The demand for analytics doesn't stop with technical teams anymore. Every role is becoming data-driven, and the entire organization depends on accurate, accessible intelligence to make decisions and guide strategy. And in the AI era, the need for real-time insights with context and personalization has reached an all-time high.

Product teams are responding to these demands by designing new analytics experiences. Yet their deployments don't always align with user priorities. While about half (45%) of practitioners who build analytics experiences use a mix of embedded platforms and traditional business intelligence (BI) tools, end users have a clear preference. Over half (51%) prefer embedded analytics, while fewer than a third (31%) lean toward separate BI tools.

The traditional BI tools that many organizations still rely on require end users to leave the products they typically work in and switch to dedicated dashboards and reports. As a result, end users often become frustrated with data that's difficult to access and generic dashboards that aren't tailored to their roles.

Closing the gap between what product teams prioritize and what end users want requires a greater focus on user needs and the right technology to meet them. As analytics development and delivery methods evolve — from composable architectures to emerging protocols like Model Context Protocol (MCP) and Agent2Agent (A2A) — the teams that move quickly and innovate confidently stand to gain the most: stronger user engagement, greater product stickiness, and a meaningful competitive edge.

Key takeaways

AI capabilities lag, with time and governance holding builders back

Only 41% of builders have AI-powered analytics features live in production, while about half (49%) say these features are still in development. The biggest barriers to shipping AI-powered analytics experiences are **the time required to build (39%) and concerns with governance and data privacy (36%).**

Analytics users want embedded insights, not separate reporting tools

End users express a clear preference for accessing data within the products and applications they use every day. **Over half (51%) prefer analytics embedded into their existing tools, while fewer than a third (31%) of end users would rather access analytics in a dedicated BI tool or reporting dashboard.**

Builders' priorities often don't align with end users' needs

Although only four in 10 (41%) builders have shipped AI-powered analytics features, seven in 10 (69%) consider their analytics capabilities advanced or best in class. The top AI capability builders are focusing on is AI-generated summaries (64%), which ranks last on end-user wish lists (39%). **The AI capability end users want most is natural language querying (55%), which fewer than half (46%) of builders prioritize.**

Purpose-built embedded analytics meet end-user preferences

Purpose-built embedded analytics platforms give builders a faster, more governed path to deploying the solutions end users want most, clearing roadblocks that in-house approaches can't easily solve. **They also enable emerging protocols like MCP and A2A, which 43% of builders expect to shift toward in the next 12 months.**

The analytics front line: how builders view deployment and maturity

Builders report confidence in the maturity of their embedded analytics

Overall, builders have a positive view of their embedded analytics capabilities, with nearly seven in 10 (69%) respondents describing their analytics maturity as best-in-class or advanced — meaning analytics are well-integrated or fully embedded, and leverage AI or personalization features.

In comparison, 30% characterize their analytics maturity as developing or early stage. While these builders may have embedded basic charts or dashboards in their products, the components are limited in customization, difficult to maintain, or not fully integrated into the user experience.

Embedded analytics maturity

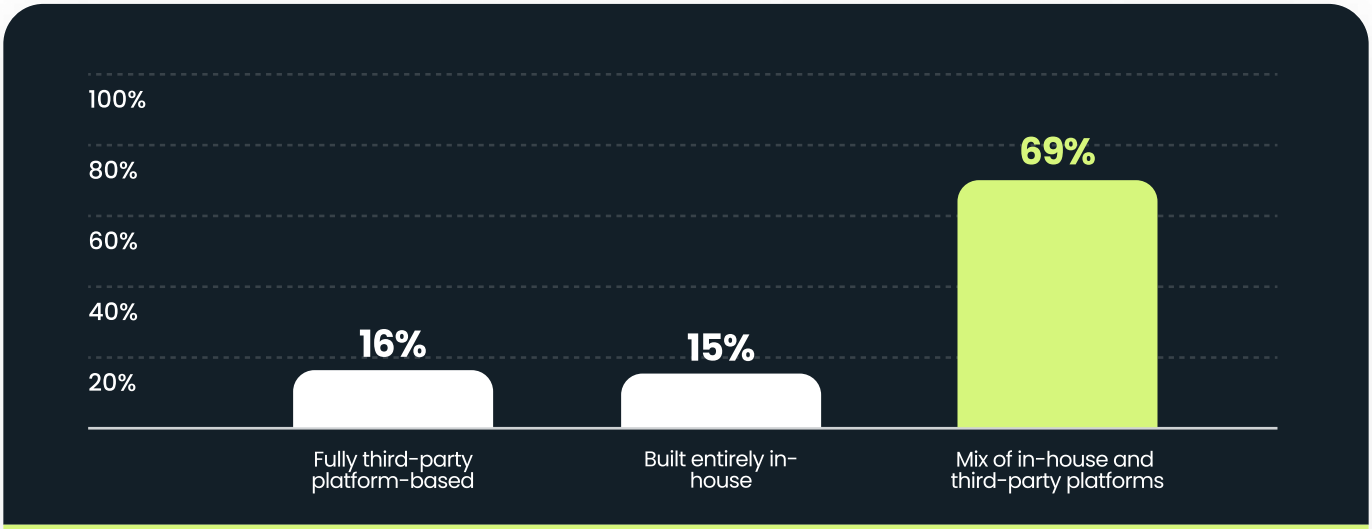
If builders are generally positive about their analytics maturity, they're even more confident in how well capabilities meet end users' expectations: Only 21% say their current capabilities are merely adequate or below expectations.

The majority (56%) say they deliver well on end-user expectations, with nearly a quarter (24%) saying they meet expectations exceptionally.

How well analytics capabilities meet end users' expectations

Teams are divided on in-house versus third-party analytics deployment

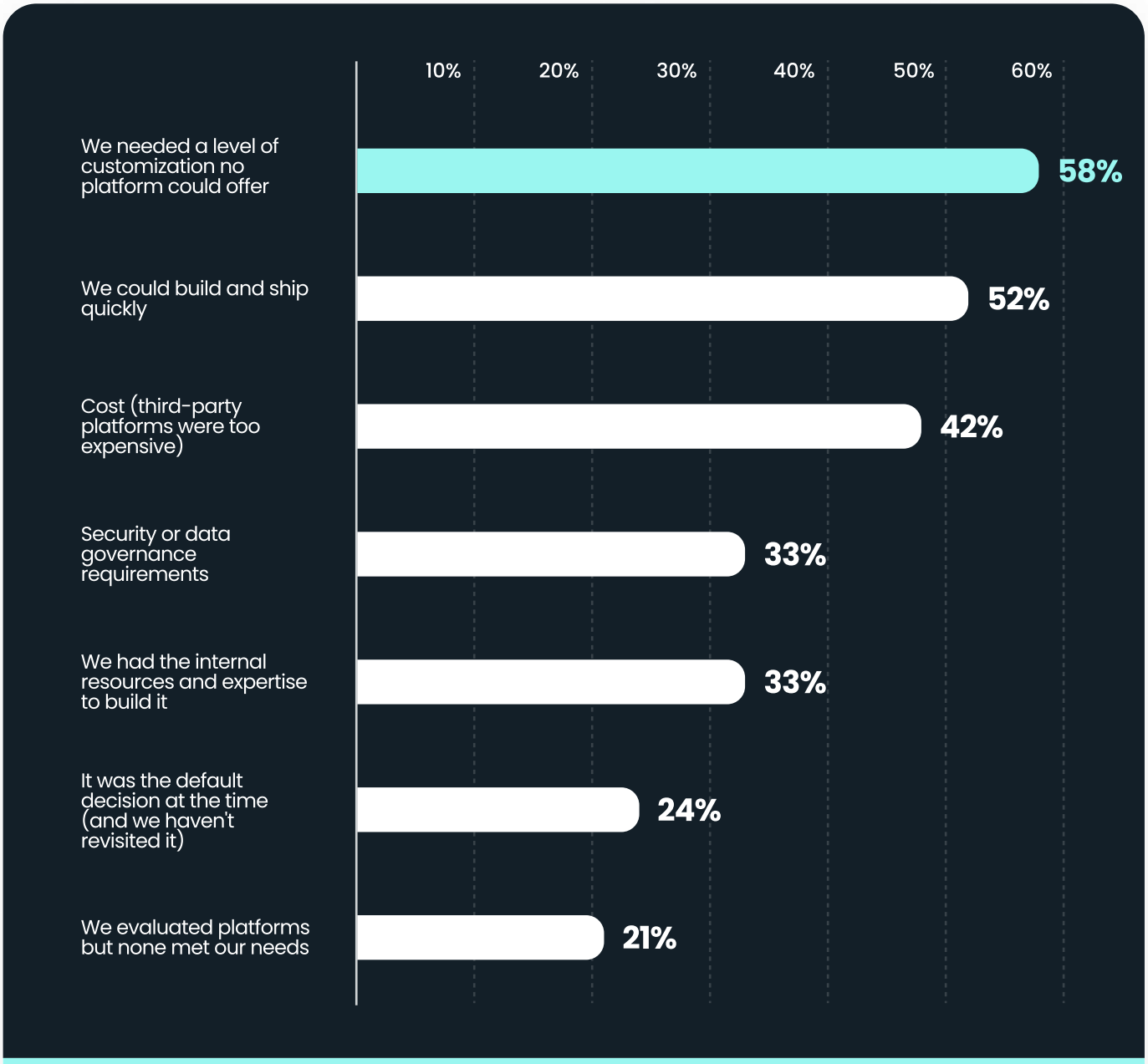
Builders are evenly divided on how they deploy product analytics. While 16% of respondents rely on a third-party analytics platform and 15% build entirely in-house, the majority (69%) use a mix of both.



Current product analytics deployment

Overall, fewer than a third (31%) of teams exclusively use one deployment method. The rest (69%) treat the two options as complementary.

Teams that opt to build entirely in-house say they do so because no third-party platform could offer the level of customization they need (58%), and building internally allows them to ship more quickly. Cost is another top concern that prompts teams to build internally, with two in five (42%) saying third-party platforms are too expensive.



Primary reasons for building analytics capabilities in-house

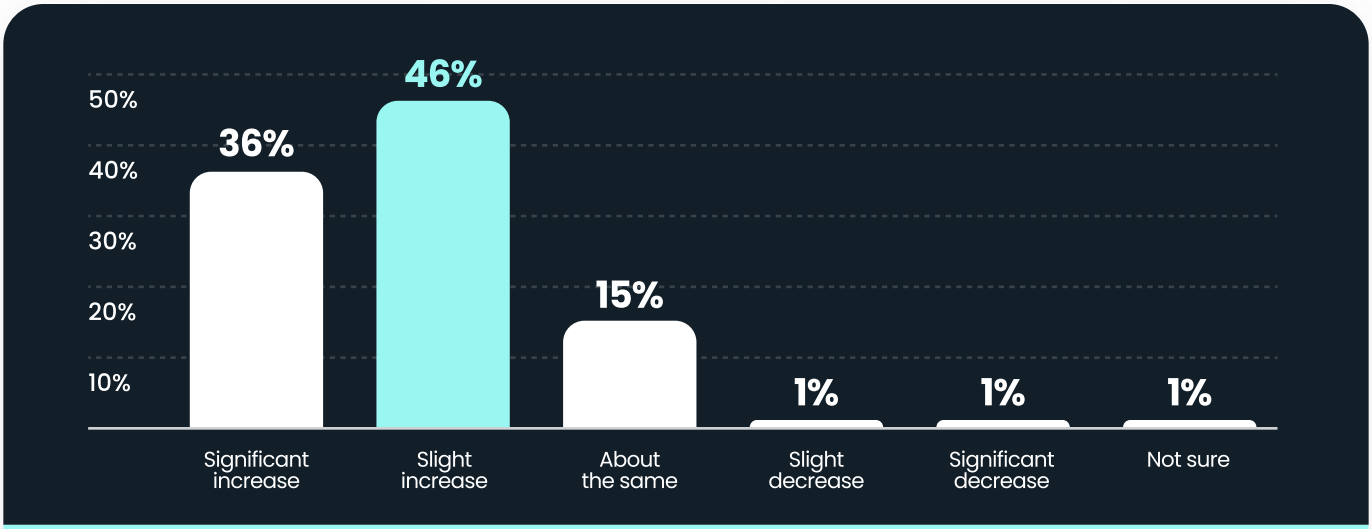
Teams that use third-party analytics tooling are more apt to turn to purpose-built embedded analytics platforms (34%) than traditional BI tools (21%). Yet the largest group (45%) uses both purpose-built platforms and traditional BI tools, leveraging different tools depending on the use case.

How well analytics capabilities meet end users' expectations

The embedded analytics imperative: the rise of purpose-built platforms

Embedded analytics becomes a major focus

Embedded analytics represent a key priority for most organizations. Over eight in 10 builders (82%) anticipate increasing their investment in embedded analytics over the next 12 months, with over a third (36%) expecting a significant increase.

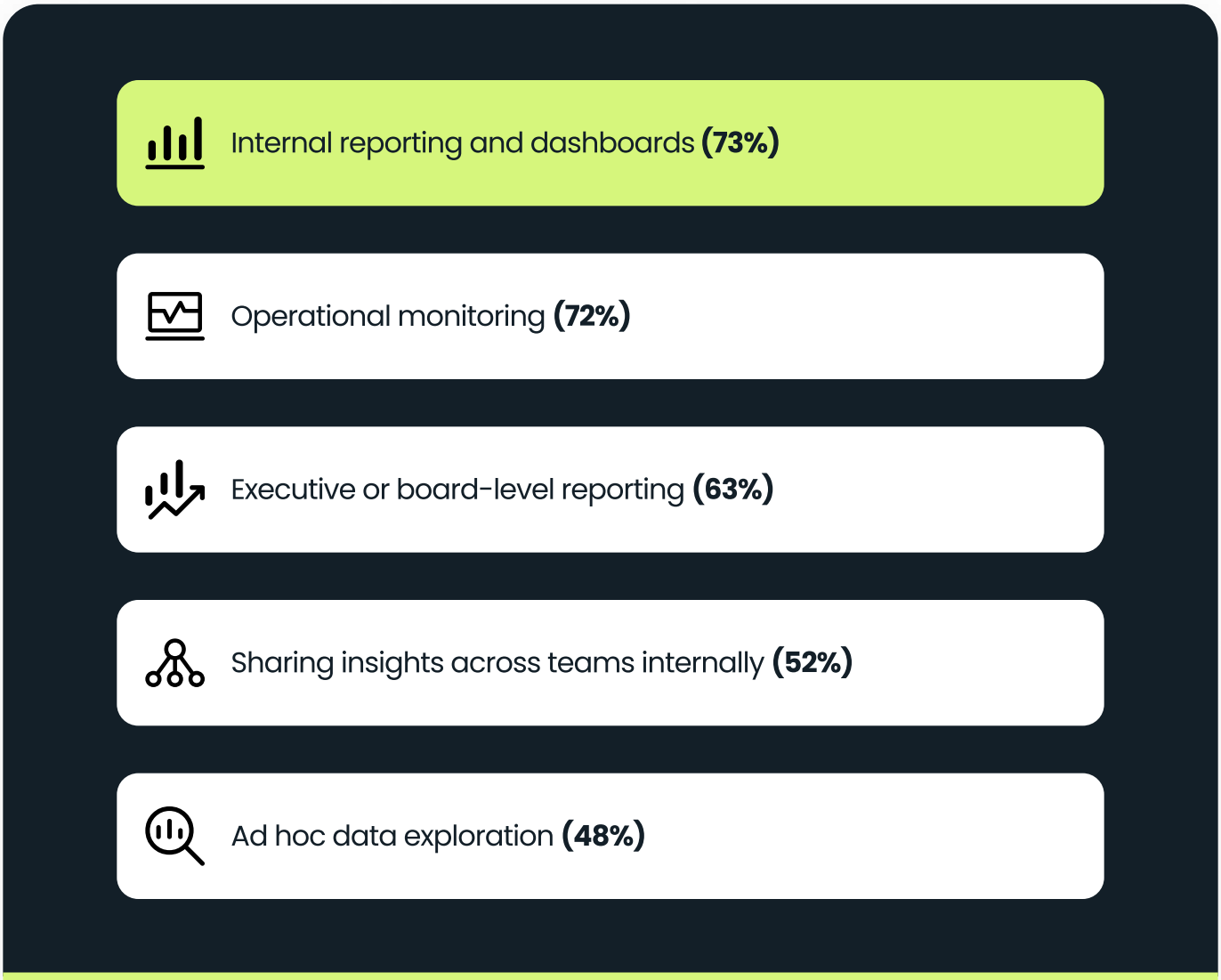


Expected changes to investments in embedded analytics over the next 12 months

Only 2% plan to reduce their investment in embedded analytics, suggesting that it has become a budget priority rather than an optional line item.

Yet each type of analytics platform fits distinct use cases. While teams primarily rely on BI tools for standard operational tasks, they use embedded analytics to provide personalized insights in real time.

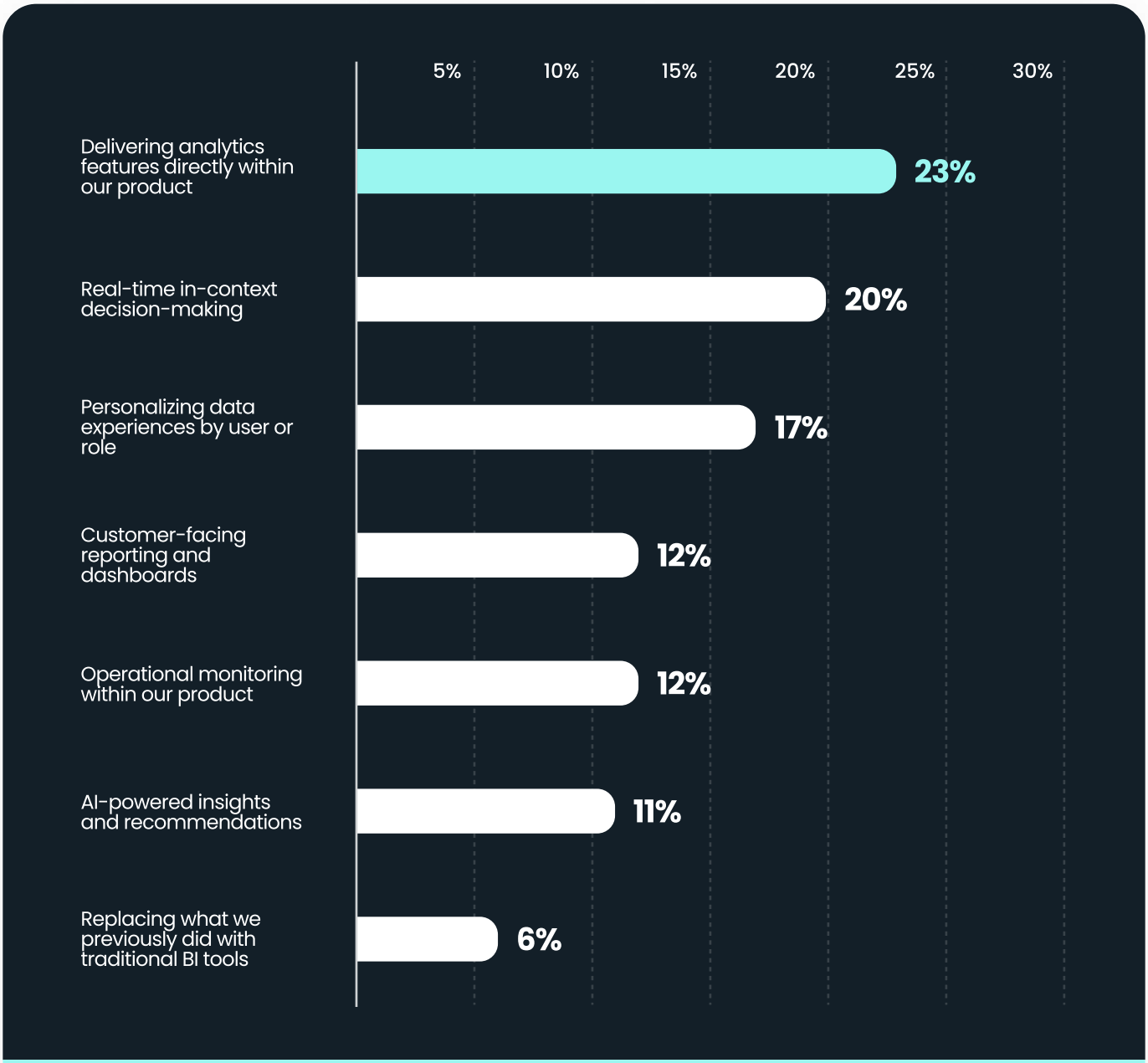
Respondents who use BI tools primarily depend on them for internal reporting and dashboards (73%) and operational monitoring (72%). About two-thirds (63%) also rely on these traditional tools for executive or board-level reporting.



Primary use cases for traditional BI tools

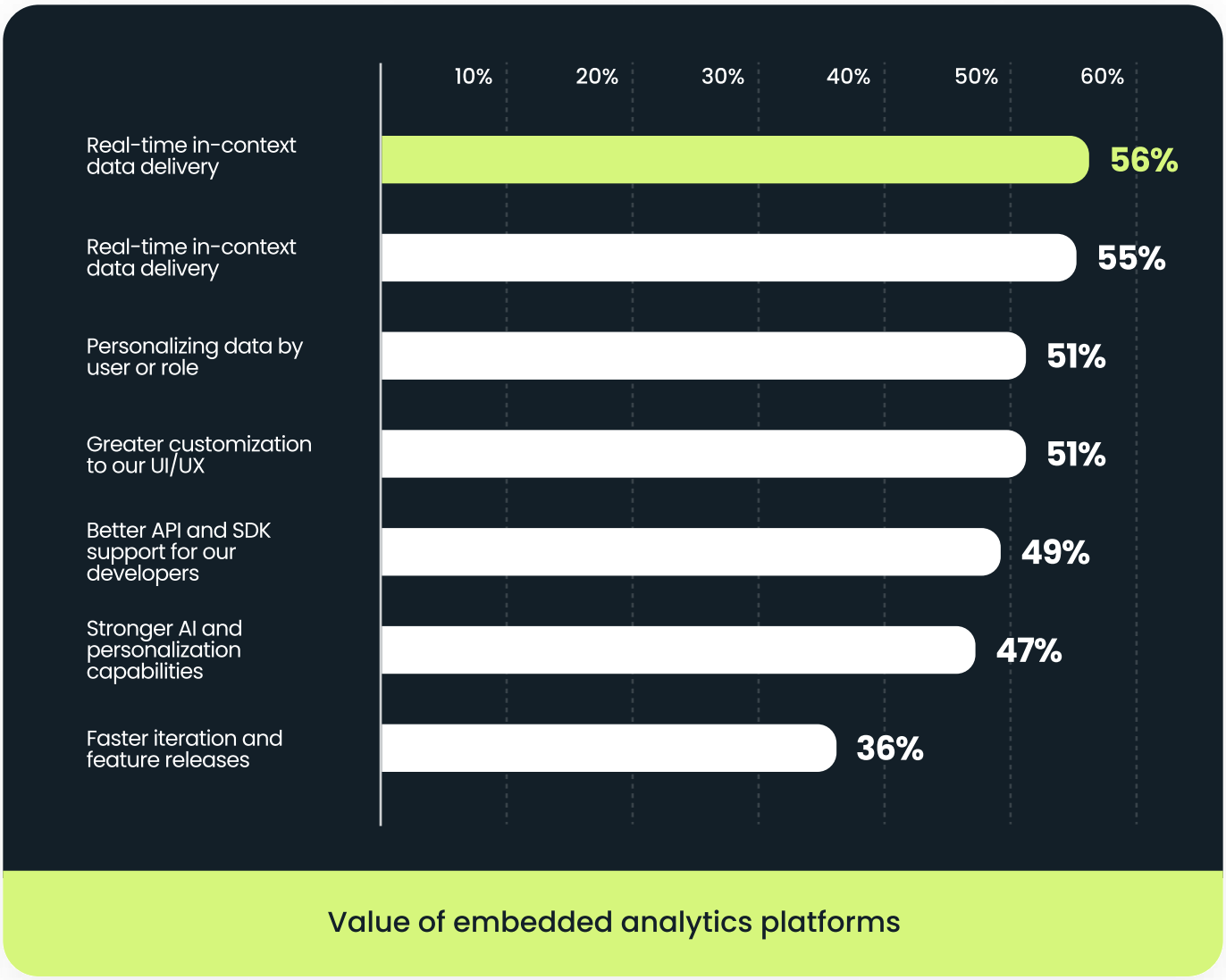
Embedded analytics platforms, on the other hand, see more external use, with respondents saying they mainly use embedded analytics to deliver insights directly within their product (23%). Other key reasons builders opt for embedded analytics include the ability to guide real-time, in-context decision-making (20%) and personalize data experiences by user or role (17%).

Notably, just 6% use their embedded analytics platform to replace what they previously accomplished with BI tools — underscoring that embedded analytics isn't a BI replacement, but a capability in its own right with distinct and complementary value.



Primary use cases for embedded analytics platforms

Respondents say that adding a purpose-built embedded analytics platform — rather than relying solely on traditional BI tools alone — enables them to provide real-time, in-context data (56%) and deliver analytics directly within their product experience (55%).



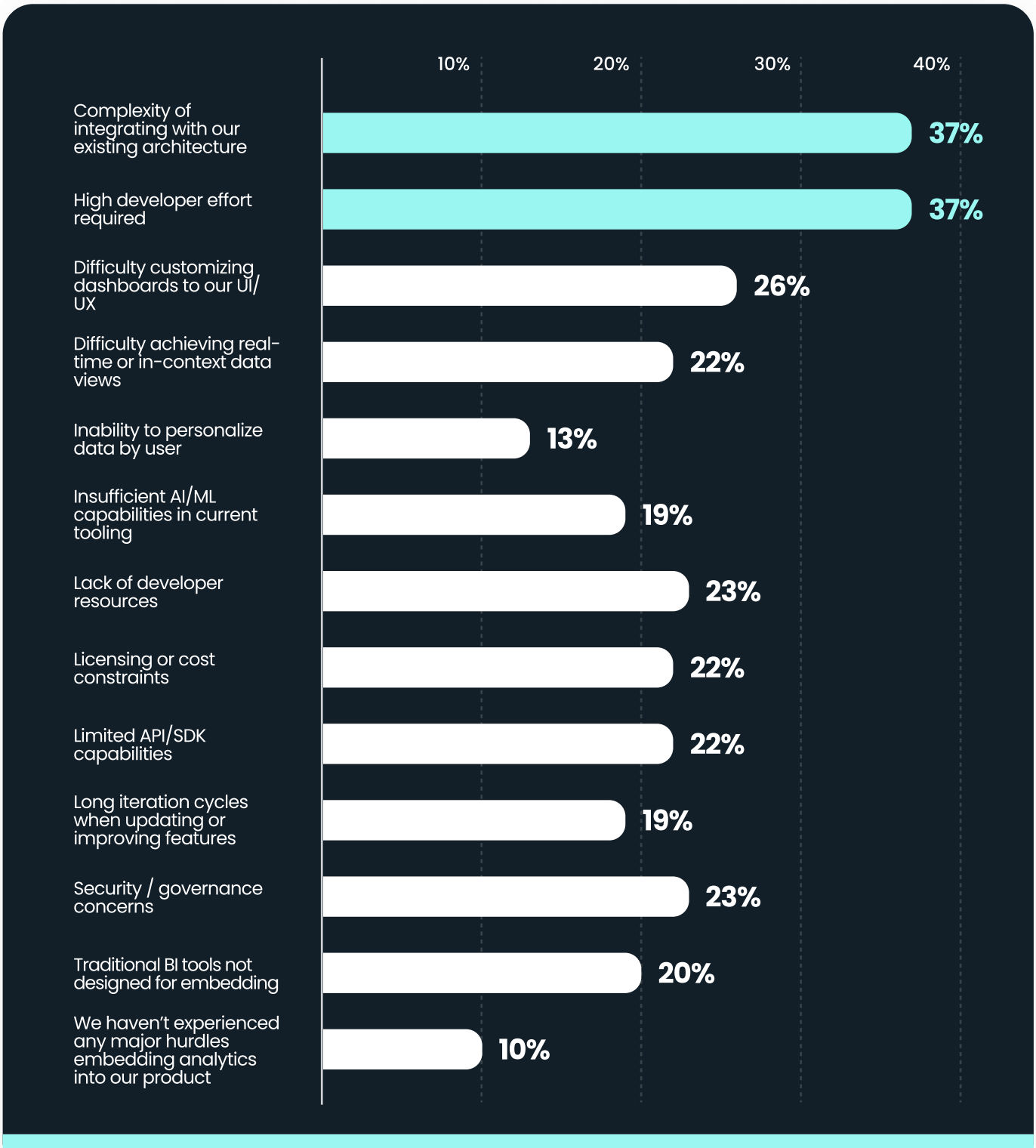
Value of embedded analytics platforms

About half of respondents also say embedded analytics lets them personalize data by user or role and customize insights to fit their user interface (UI) or user experience (UX) (51% each).

Embedded analytics challenges focus on integration and customization

While embedded analytics offer uniquely personalized experiences, delivering them isn't without challenges — nine in ten respondents say they've encountered at least one hurdle in the process.

Top challenges included the complexity of integrating embedded analytics with their existing architecture and the need for significant developer support on implementation (37% each). Additionally, just over a quarter (26%) report issues with customizing embedded dashboards to fit their products' UI or UX.



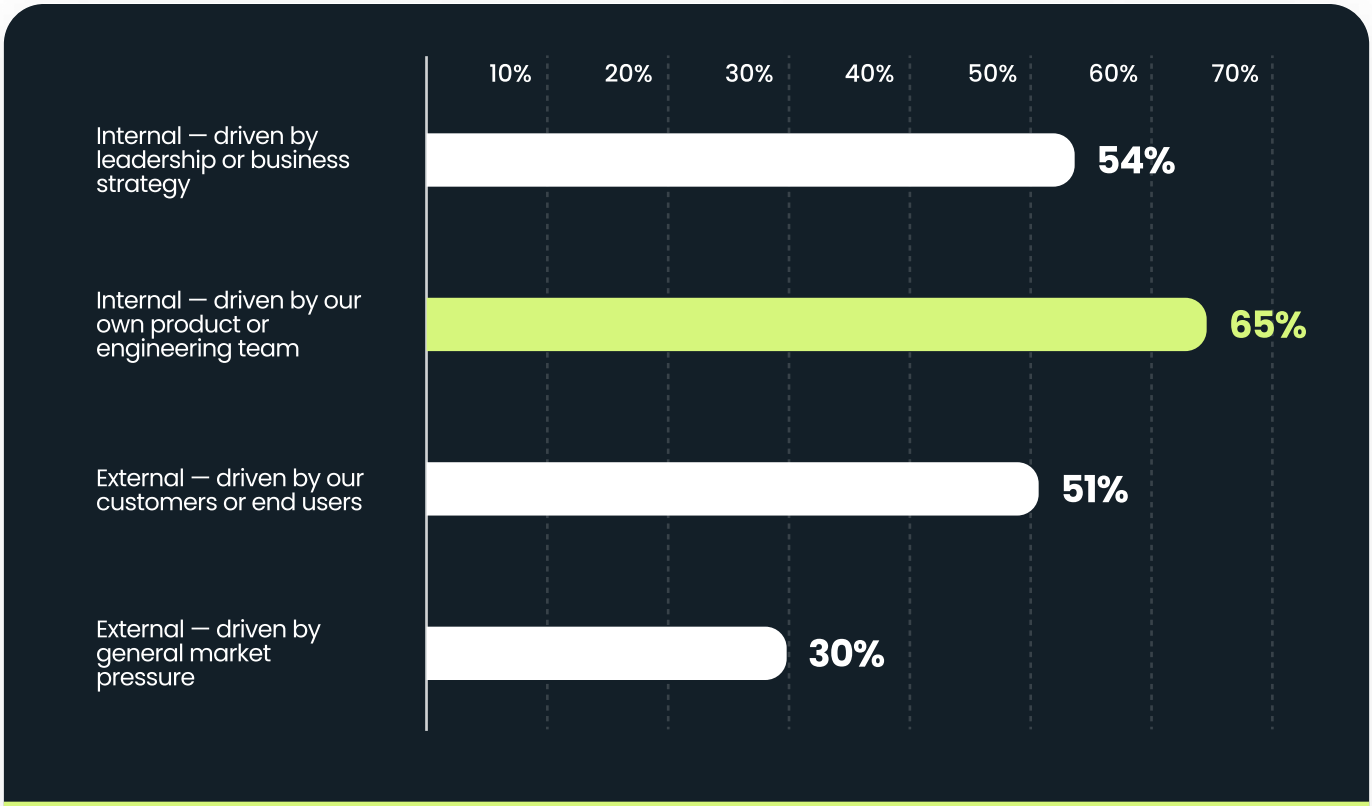
Challenges with embedding analytics into products

Difficulties like these speak to the need for purpose-built solutions designed to make implementation and integration easier.

Building analytics in the AI era: Demands, protocols, and challenges

Builders are working to meet demand for AI analytics features

The push for AI-powered analytics goes beyond vague market pressure or general AI hype. A significant amount of this pressure is internal, coming from leadership or product / engineering teams. But over half (51%) of respondents say the demand for AI features in their product analytics is external, coming from customers or end users.



Where demand for AI products comes from

Although customers and end users clearly want access to AI features, builders don't always deliver.

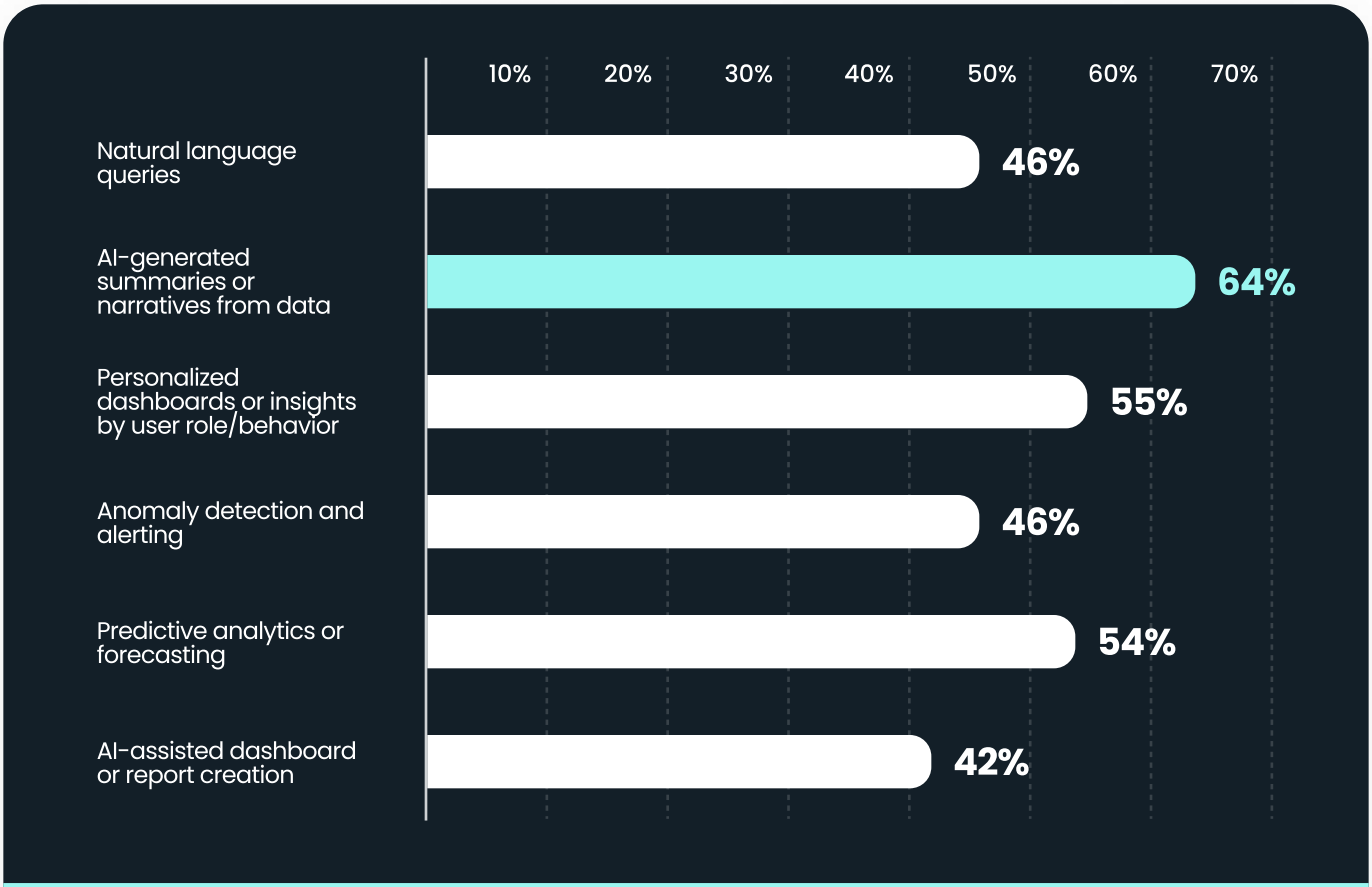
Fewer than half (41%) of builders have AI-powered analytics features live in production.

Another 49% are actively working to build AI-powered features, but have yet to deploy these capabilities.

Current approach to integrating AI into product analytics

With nearly six in 10 builders yet to deploy AI-powered analytics features, it raises an important question: Are respondents really meeting or exceeding end-user expectations at the level they report?

Looking at the specific AI capabilities builders are prioritizing starts to paint a picture. Nearly two-thirds (64%) of respondents are focused on AI-generated summaries or narratives from data. Over half have implemented or are actively exploring personalized dashboards by user role (55%) and predictive analytics or forecasting (54%).



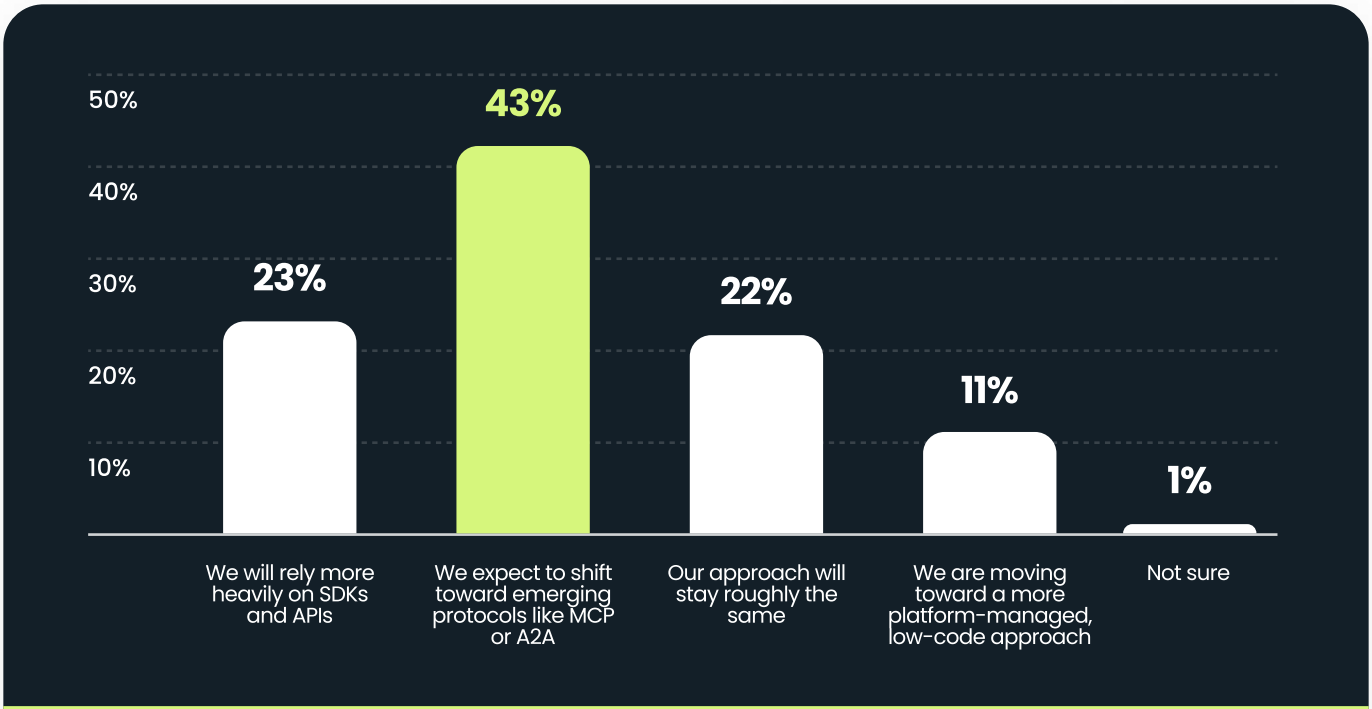
AI-driven analytics capabilities already implemented or actively exploring

Builders are transitioning to AI-enabled emerging integration protocols

Embedding analytics into products requires builders to transition away from traditional integration approaches. Most respondents (53%) primarily use custom application programming interface (API) integrations tailored to their requirements.

Many (42%) also rely on emerging approaches like Model Context Protocol (MCP) or Agent2Agent (A2A), which have overtaken software development kits (SDKs). As key prerequisites for AI agents, these emerging protocols are positioned to accelerate the delivery of AI-powered analytics experiences.

With MCP and A2A, builders can standardize how analytics tools and AI agents communicate. These capabilities may alleviate some of the integration challenges they currently manage, allowing them to implement AI-powered analytics more efficiently.



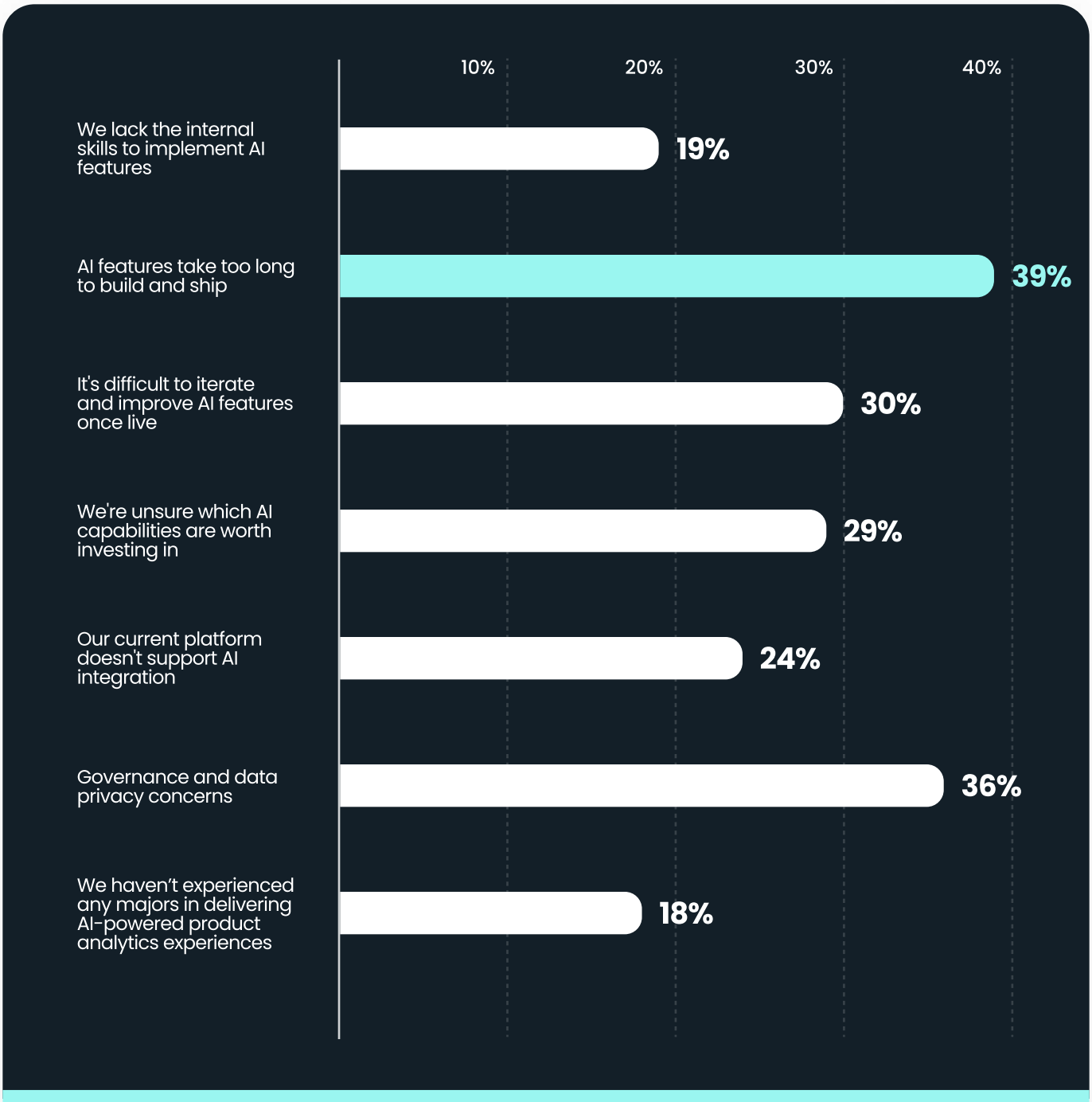
Expected changes to investments in embedded analytics over the next 12 months

Developer resources, governance, and security slow AI deployment

AI-powered analytics experiences offer new opportunities, but also new challenges. The interest is there, but the ability to deliver is another story. Thirty-nine percent of respondents say AI features take too long to build and ship, suggesting that for many teams, the bottleneck is execution rather than ambition.

Another 36% cite governance and data privacy concerns as the biggest barrier to delivering AI-powered analytics — which is understandable, given the degree to which many tools rely on public large language models (LLMs) without stringent security protocols.

Few teams report that skill issues or incompatibility concerns hold builders back from deploying AI-powered experiences. Instead, the biggest challenges center on developer resources and platform capabilities.



Biggest barriers to delivering AI-powered analytics experiences in products

The other side of the story: what end users want from analytics

End users explore and act on data-driven insights in a range of tools

With 99% of end users regularly using insights on the job, it's safe to say that nearly every role is becoming a data-driven role.

While 43% of respondents report that working with data is their primary function, 45% say data is one of several core responsibilities in their role. Much more than a supplementary element, data plays a key part in their jobs.

End users' relationships with data

Their data workflows follow a similar pattern. Nearly half (46%) of respondents independently explore raw data and derive their own insights, while another 41% rely on prebuilt dashboards and reports set up by others — a split that points to distinct needs across the end user population and, by extension, a strong case for personalization.

How end users work with data

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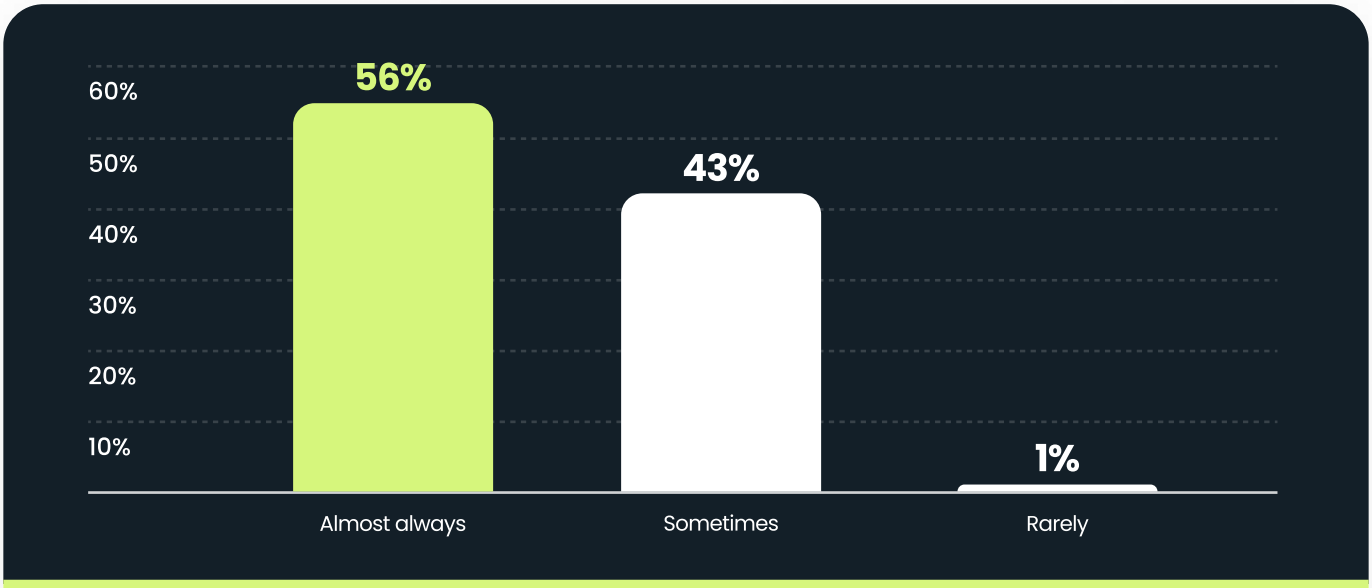


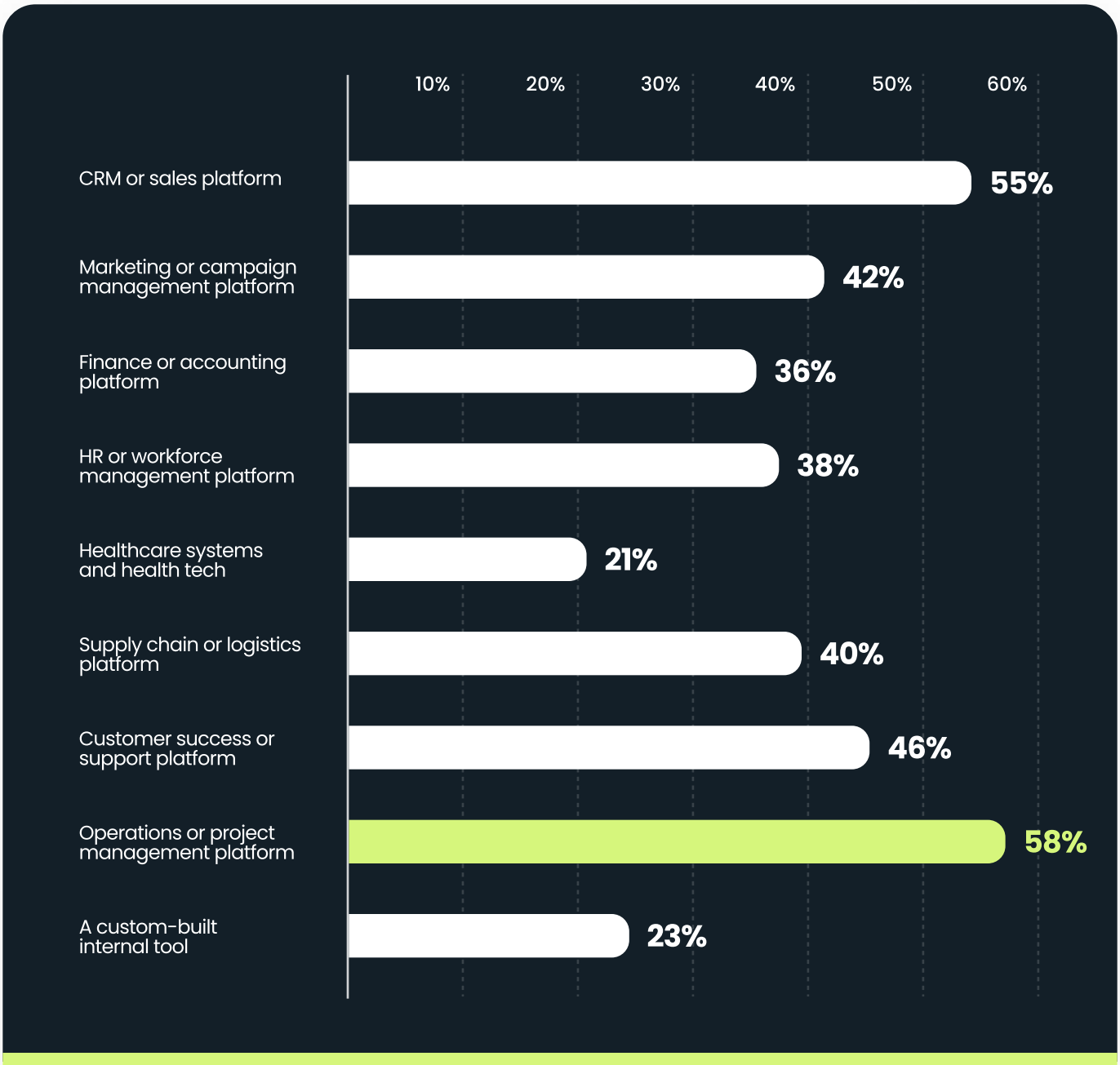
How often end users act on insights presented within a product

Over half (51%) of end users prefer analytics embedded directly within the product or application where they're already working. This preference for embedded analytics outweighs interest in a dedicated BI platform or a separate reporting tool by a 20-percentage-point margin.

End users' relationships with data

End users access embedded analytics and reporting features within a wide range of tools. Over half of respondents rely on insights in operations or project management platforms (58%) and customer relationship management (CRM) or sales platforms (55%).

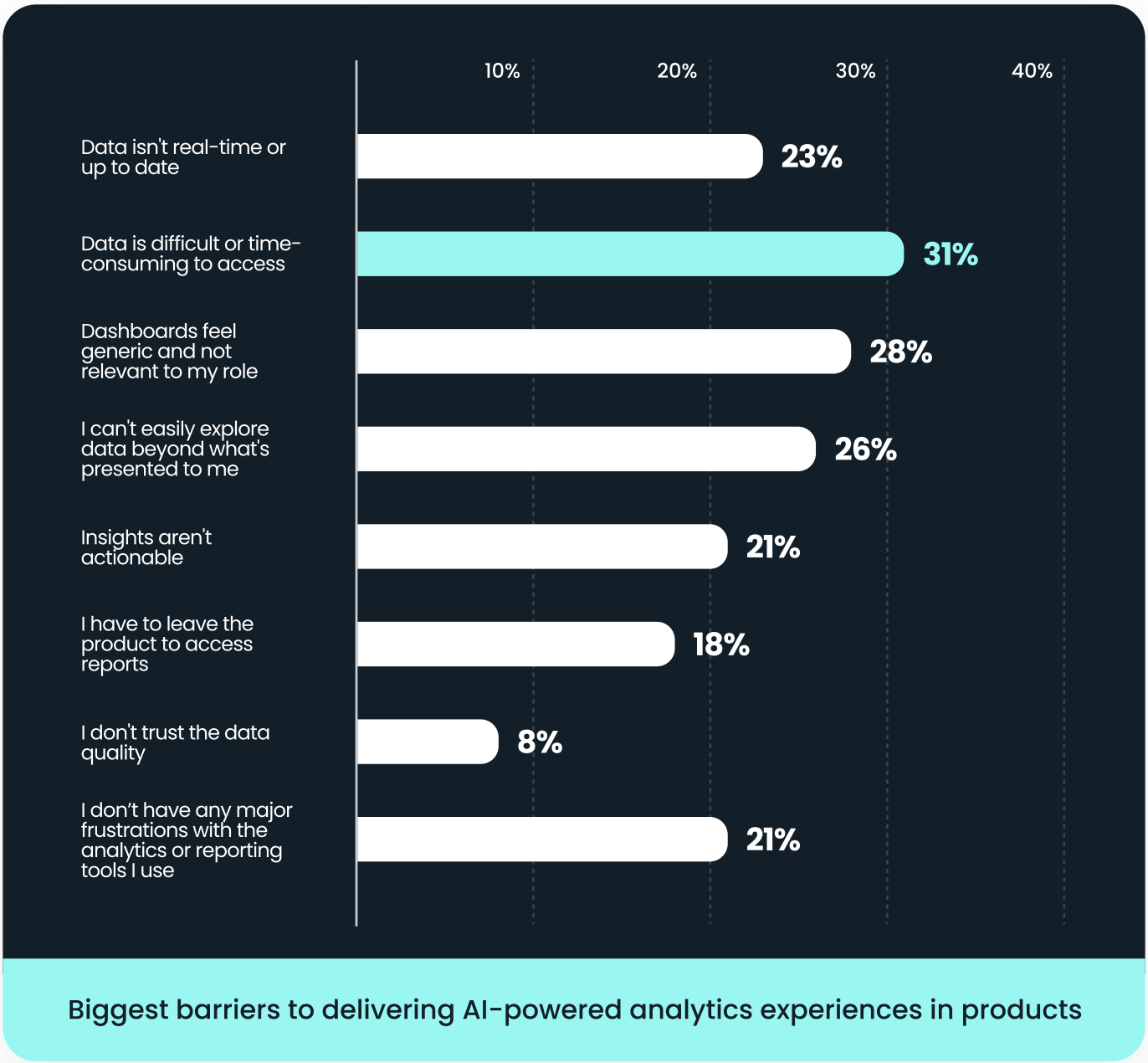
Many also use analytics in customer success or support platforms (46%), marketing or campaign management platforms (42%), and supply chain or logistics platforms (40%), demonstrating that there's demand for embedded analytics across a wide range of functions.



Types of tools end users access analytics or reporting features within

End users explore and act on data-driven insights in a range of tools

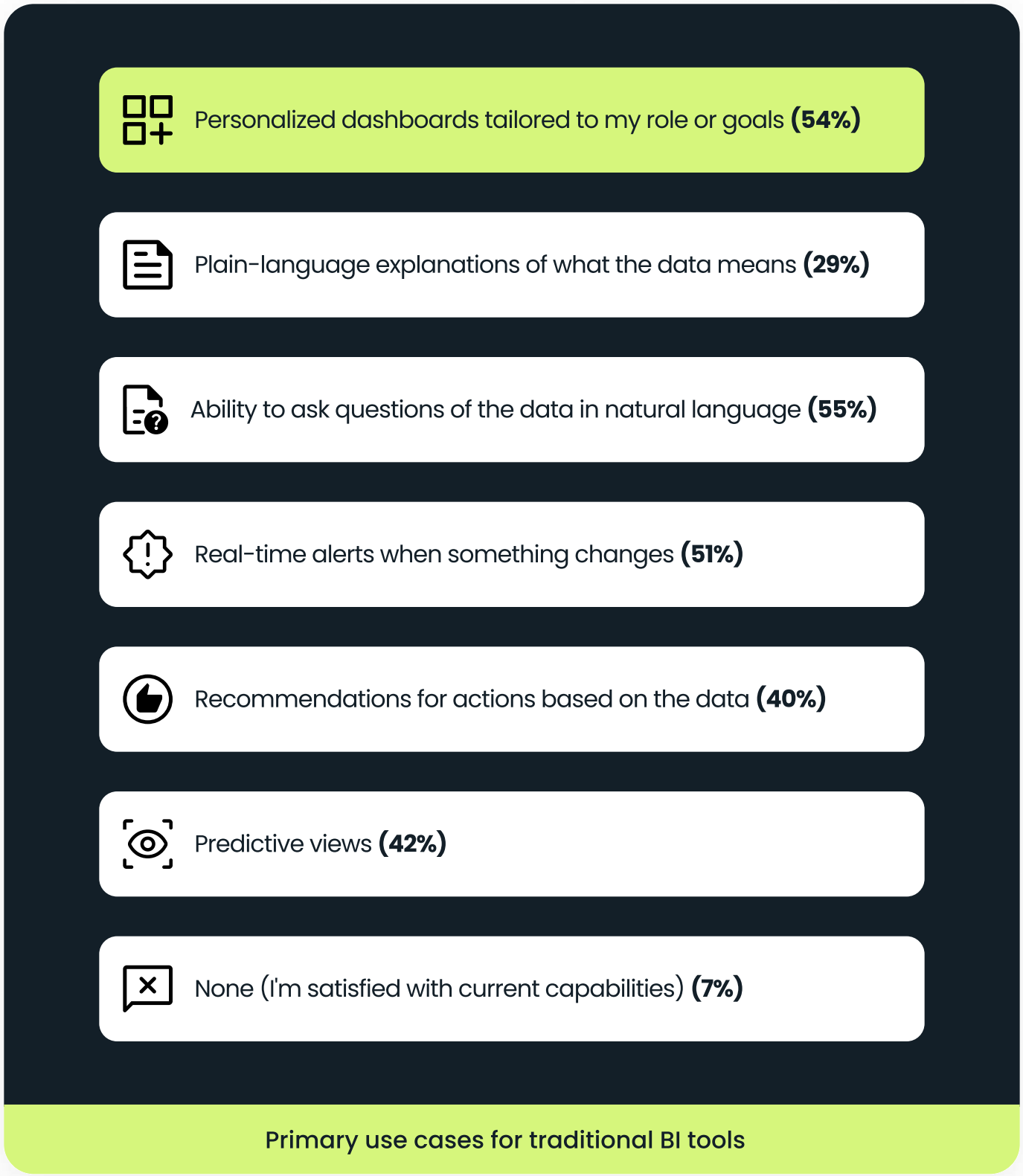
End users report a number of pain points related to the analytics and reporting tools available to them.



Biggest barriers to delivering AI-powered analytics experiences in products

Only about one in five (21%) end users say they don't have any major frustrations with the analytics or reporting tools available to them.

Nearly a third (31%) say data is difficult or time-consuming to access, while over a quarter (28%) report that dashboards feel generic and not relevant to their roles. Another quarter (26%) say they can't easily explore data beyond what's presented to them, preventing them from extracting the insights they need to excel at their jobs.



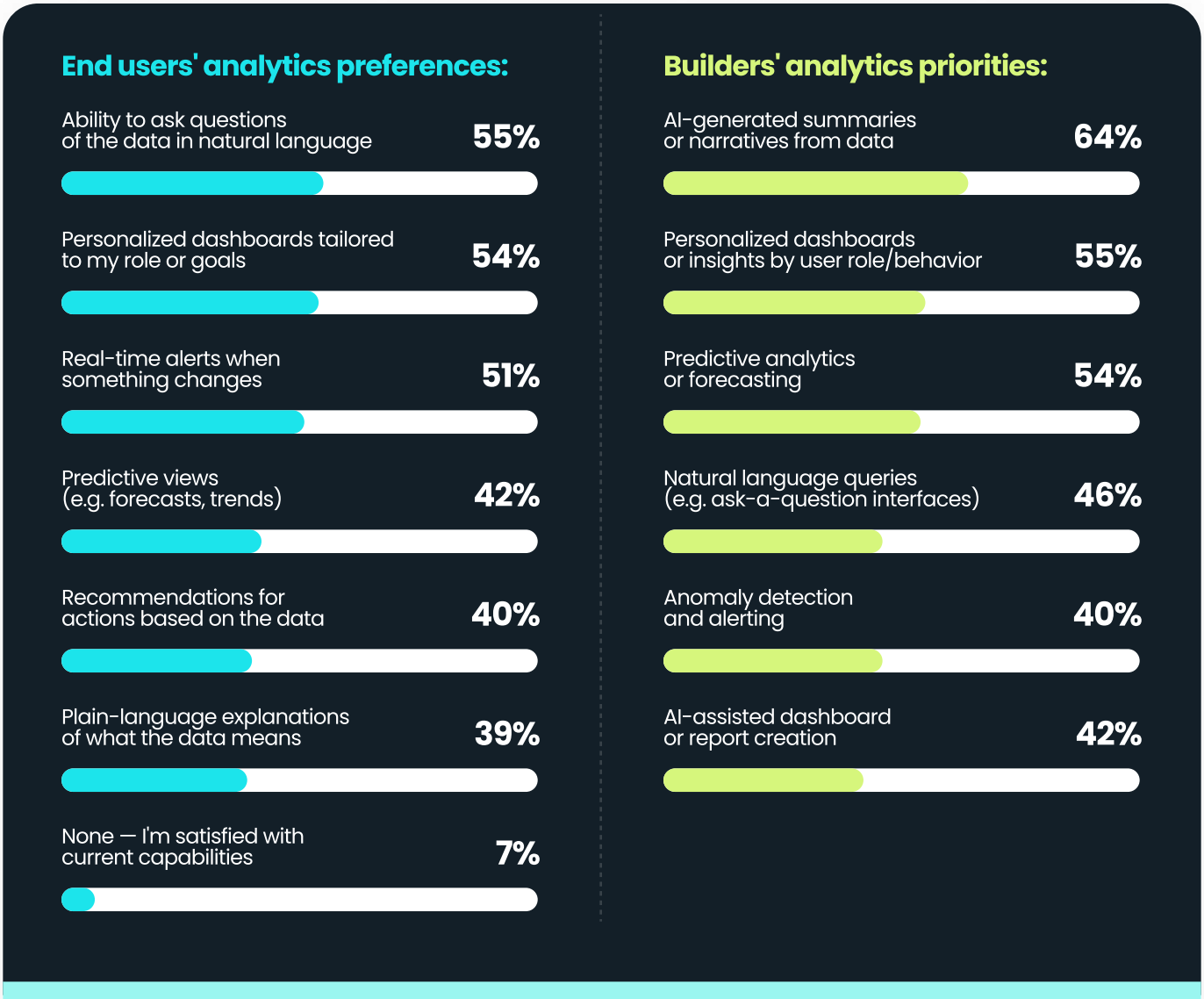
Primary use cases for traditional BI tools

End users demonstrated strong interest in AI-powered analytics features. Over half (55%) think the ability to ask questions of the data in natural language would improve their experience in the products they use, which is particularly helpful for the 41% of users who rely on others to create dashboards and reports for them.

With a significant portion of end users citing a lack of relevancy as a pain point, it's no surprise that over half (54%) say having access to AI-driven personalized dashboards tailored to their role or goals would create a better experience — and as we saw earlier, builders are attuned to this need, with 55% implementing or actively exploring personalized dashboards by user role.

In other areas, however, that alignment breaks down.

At the top of end users' wish list is the ability to ask questions of the data in natural language, which ranks only fourth in builders' list of priorities. Meanwhile, plain-language explanations of what the data means ranks last for end users, while AI-generated summaries or narratives are the number-one priority for builders.



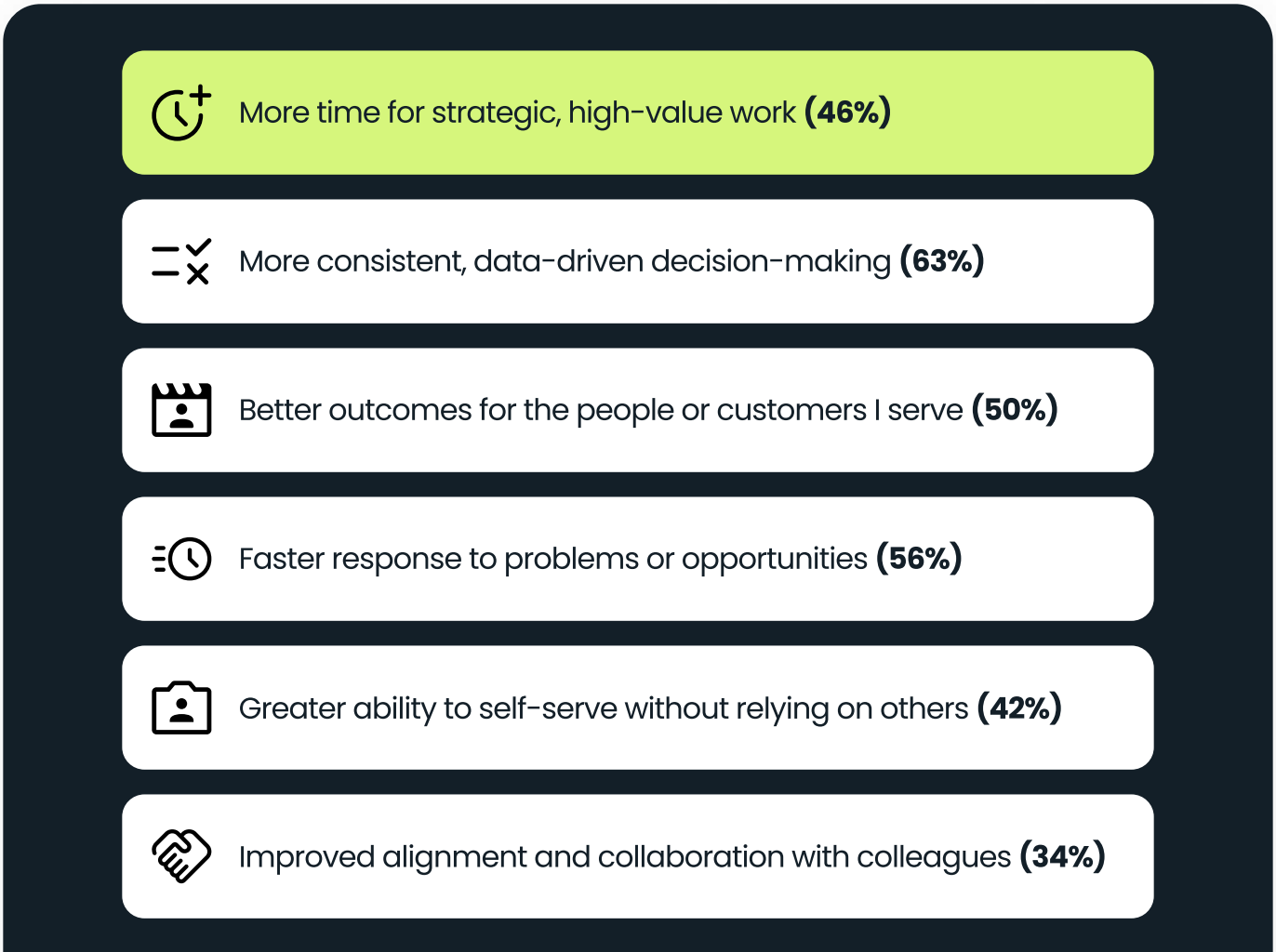
End users' analytics preferences vs. builders' analytics priorities

This difference may reflect two distinct ways of thinking about AI in analytics. Builders appear to be prioritizing capabilities that help users consume insights more efficiently, while end users are looking for AI experiences that help them explore data independently, ask follow-up questions, and uncover answers in context.

Regardless of the reasoning, however, the gap is real, and it's one that product teams can't afford to ignore — especially when end users are clear about what a better analytics experience could enable them to do.

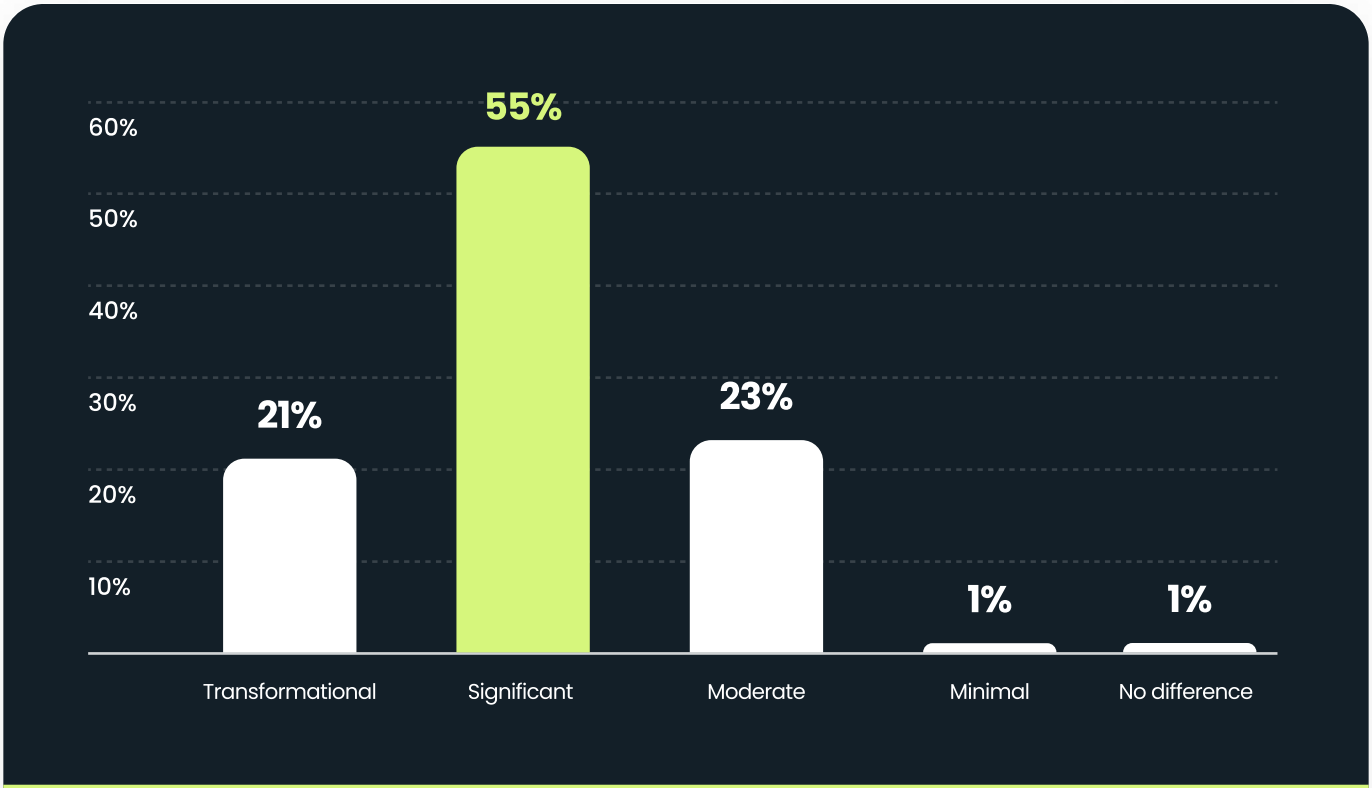
The right analytics experience can make all the difference

Most end users recognize the power of accurate, real-time insights directly within the tools they use every day — demonstrating that the AI features they're asking for and the benefits they anticipate are deeply connected.



What access to embedded real-time insights would enable

Nearly two-thirds (63%) of respondents say that embedded real-time insights would enable more consistent, data-driven decision-making. Over half (56%) say embedded analytics would allow faster responses to problems or opportunities.



Impact of embedded real-time insights on end users' abilities

Over three-quarters (76%) believe that their desired analytics experience would have a meaningful impact on their ability to do their job, including half (55%) who say it would significantly improve their output and decisions and 21% who say it would fundamentally change how they work.

Given the data-driven nature of work today, it stands to reason that analytics matters deeply to end users — after all, the ability to act on insights can translate directly into better performance and even career advancement.

For builders, that's an opportunity. Delivering the experiences end users actually want drives product stickiness, improves engagement, and turns analytics from a standard capability to a selling point.

The path forward for product and engineering practitioners

For analytics leaders, the data points to a few clear imperatives:

Put user needs over internal pressure

With the right strategy and tools, product and engineering teams can efficiently deliver the experiences that end users care about most. For many teams, this starts with listening to users rather than letting leadership determine the analytics roadmap.

Over half (51%) of respondents confirm that customers and end users drive the demand for AI features, demonstrating that users clearly have an interest in embedded analytics with AI capabilities.

Yet builders feel pressure from above, which affects which features and updates they prioritize. Altogether, 70% of respondents cite internal forces — either leadership or their own product / engineering teams — as the primary driver behind AI feature adoption decisions.

Builders can start developing an AI analytics roadmap that aligns with end user interests and pain points through user research interviews, in-app surveys, and feature request channels. For teams with limited bandwidth, lightweight voice-of-the-customer outreach with a handful of power users can help reveal patterns.

Tying your roadmap to the outcomes leaders care most about can help bring them on board, even if they originally had something else in mind. Show evidence of user demand, then connect it to user retention, revenue, and competitive positioning.

Provide builders with the right tools

While traditional BI tools are valuable for internal dashboards and operational monitoring, end users prefer embedded analytics and the customized experience it offers. Using purpose-built, third-party platforms to enable embedded analytics can help speed up deployment without draining developer bandwidth.

According to respondents, the most important factors to keep in mind when evaluating purpose-built tools include:

1. Security and compliance
2. Fast time to value / time to market
3. Data governance and row-level security
4. Flexible API infrastructure
5. Built-in AI capabilities

Practically speaking, that means prioritizing platforms that align with your security and governance requirements out of the box, offer flexible API and emerging protocol infrastructure that connects cleanly to your existing stack, and come with built-in AI capabilities that speed up development rather than adding to it.

Don't let perfect be the enemy of shipped

The biggest barrier to AI delivery isn't developer skills or internal strategy — it's time. But if you delay the delivery of high-value features too long, you risk losing user share to competitors.

Rather than viewing AI-powered analytics features as one-time builds, treat them as an iterative process. Focus on releasing a v1 first, then see how users interact with the capabilities, where they find value, and how it fits into their workflows. As you gather data from real user behavior, you can refine the experience along the way.

The payoff of shipping fast and iterating often goes beyond the feature itself. It allows you to meet demand at the moment while continuously improving the user experience, building trust, and driving the engagement metrics that matter most to your business.

Purpose-built platforms accelerate the future of embedded analytics

Builders are broadly confident in their analytics capabilities, yet AI implementation continues to lag. Operational hurdles around integration complexity, developer effort, and governance and privacy all slow builders' progress. And the features they do ship aren't necessarily end users' top priorities.

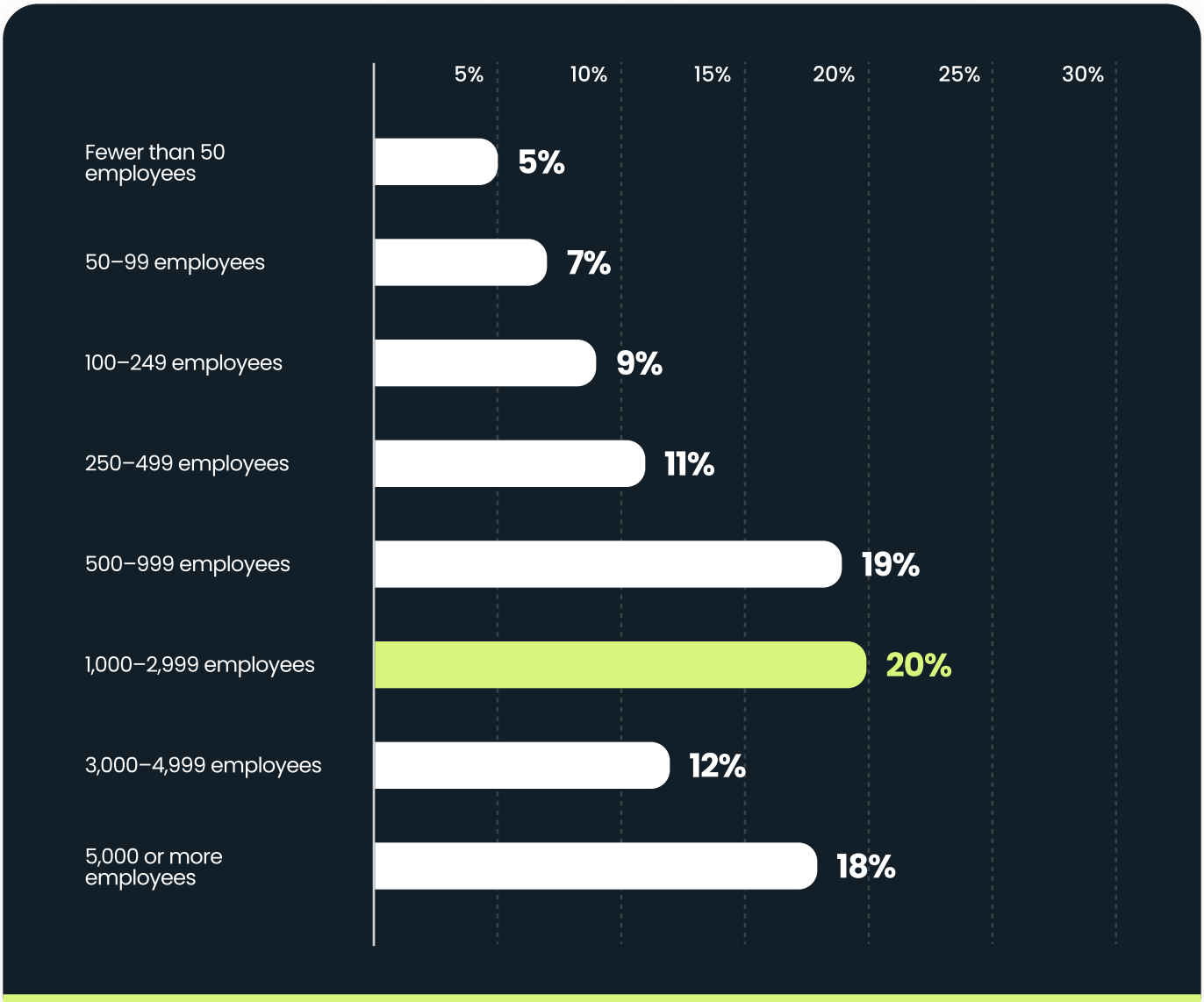
Listening to end users can help you deliver a better experience, but at the end of the day, you still need to ship. That's where purpose-built embedded analytics platforms come in. Third-party platforms give builders a faster, easier path to deployment, with built-in governance that addresses security concerns — so you spend less time navigating roadblocks and more time building.

Connect with Sisense to learn how our platform can help you embed intelligent insights and ship trusted AI features directly into your products faster.

Methodology and demographics

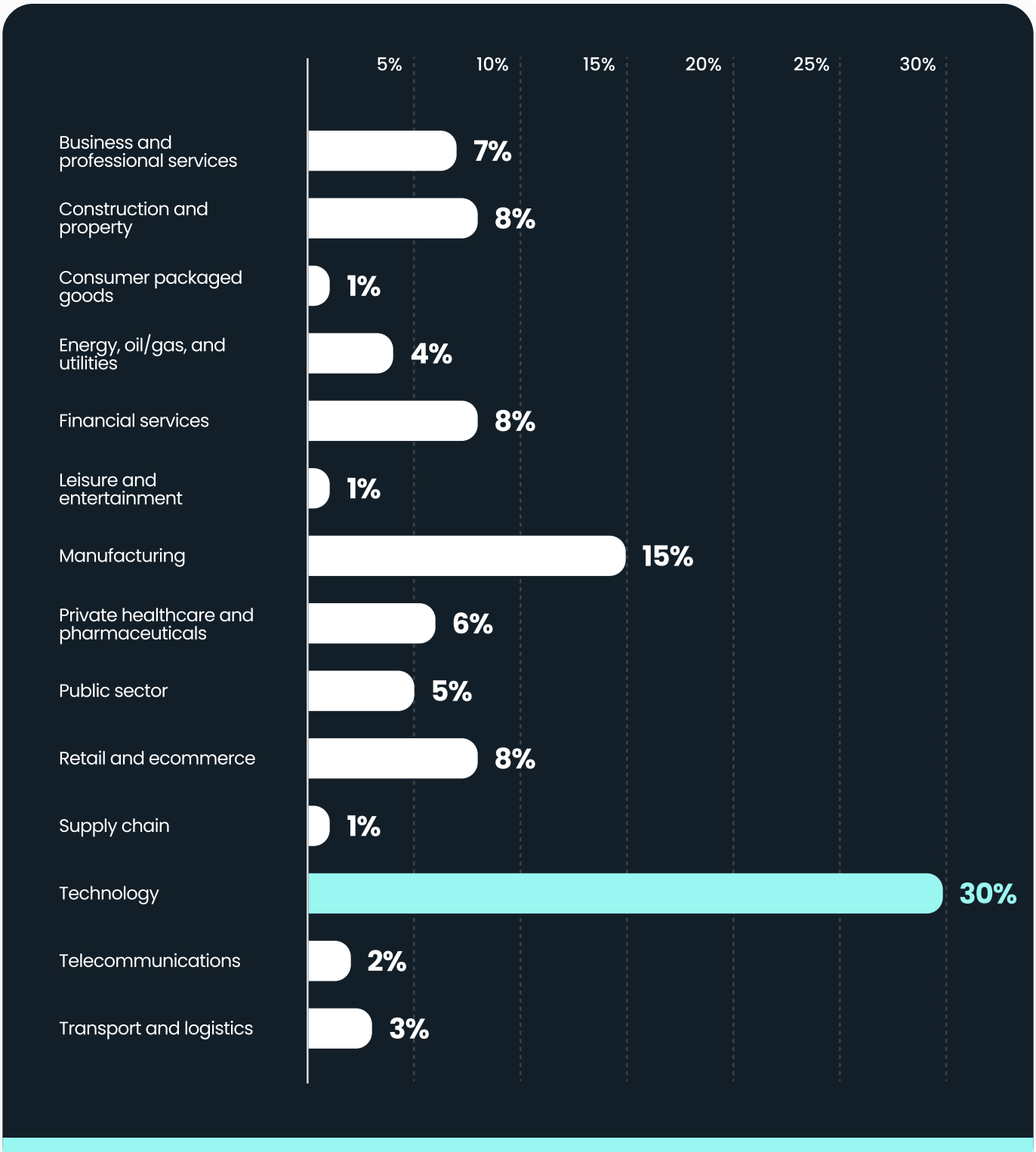
To create this report, Sisense commissioned UserEvidence to conduct an independent online survey of 331 product and engineering practitioners. The survey took place from April to May 2026. The research sample was vendor-neutral and didn't target Sisense or UserEvidence customers, although neither were excluded from participating.

Respondents' organizations skewed large, with half (50%) employing over 1,000 people. The average organization size was 1,985 employees.



Primary use cases for embedded analytics platforms

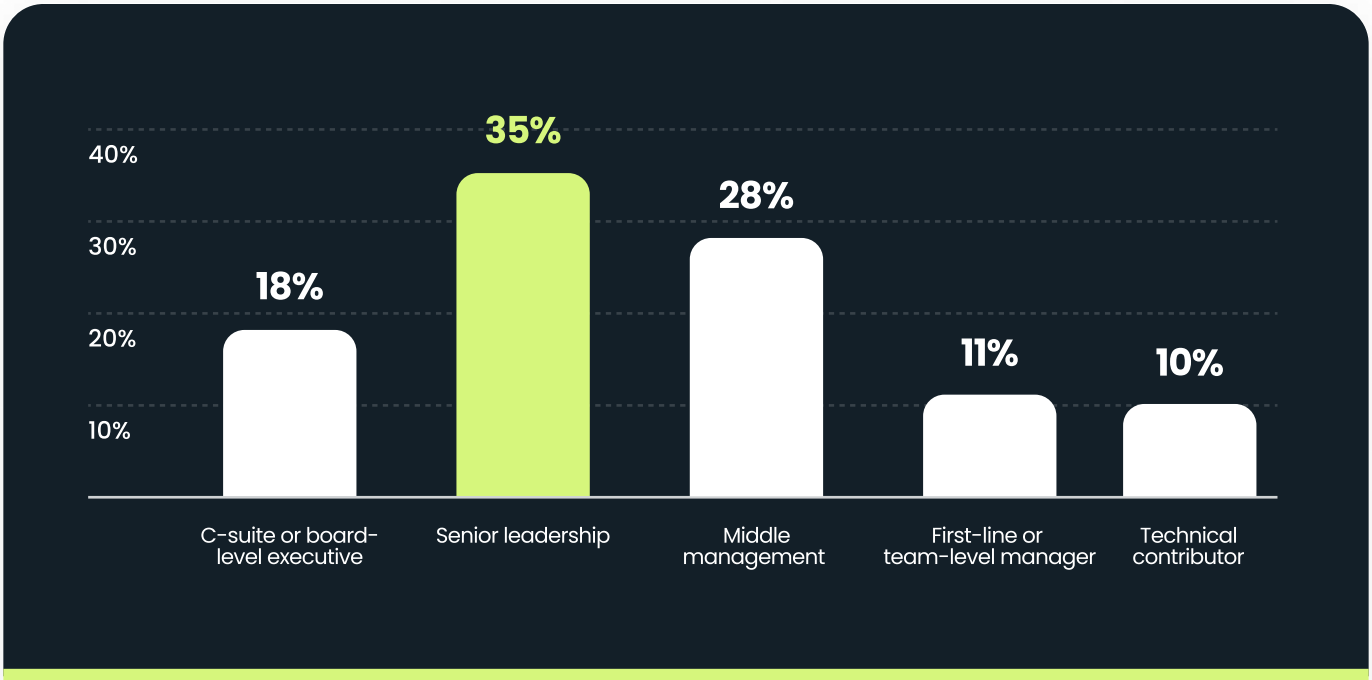
While the largest segment (30%) worked in technology, we heard from respondents in over a dozen industries. These ranged from business and professional services to consumer packaged goods to construction and property.



Respondents' industries

Half (50%) of respondents worked for organizations based in North America. The remaining respondents were relatively evenly divided between Europe, the Middle East, and Africa (26%) and Latin America (24%).

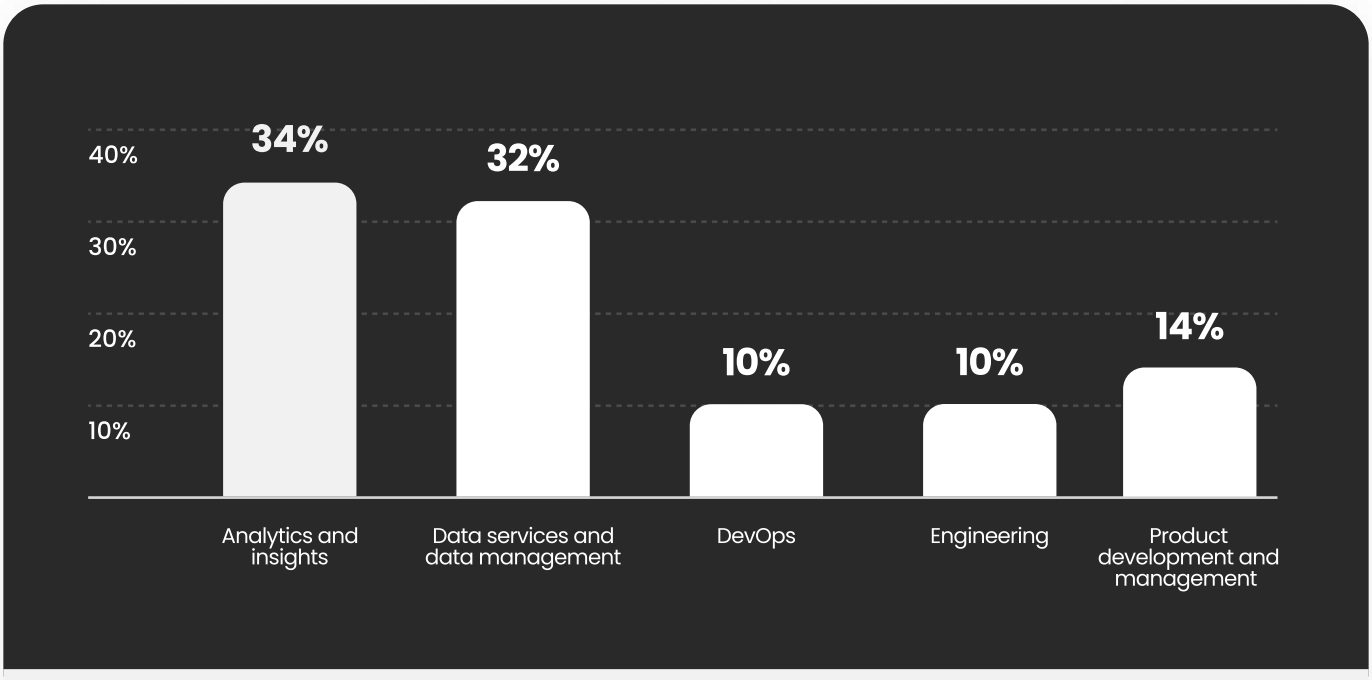
Respondents were fairly evenly balanced between leadership and middle management and below. Just over half (53%) held leadership positions, including roughly a third (35%) who were in senior leadership roles and 18% who were in C-suite or board-level executive roles.



Respondents' professional levels

Respondents were roughly evenly split between builders and end users. Four in 10 were mainly builders integrating analytics into products, and three in 10 were mainly end users relying on analytics to inform the decisions they make on the job. Another three in 10 were both in equal measure.

Most respondents worked in either analytics and insights (34%) or data services and data management (32%). The remaining respondents were divided between product development and management (14%), DevOps (10%), and engineering (10%).



Respondents' functional areas

This diverse pool of respondents provided a well-rounded perspective on how both builders and end users engage with analytics.

About Sisense

Sisense is the leading AI-first embedded analytics platform that democratizes data access, empowering developers, app builders, and business users to embed actionable insights into their products and workflows. Our developer-forward approach enables enterprises of all sizes to transform complex data into accessible, actionable experiences.

With a complete suite of no-, low-, and pro-code tools, Sisense simplifies data preparation, uncovers deep insights, and seamlessly embeds analytics into applications, catering to both technical and non-technical users. Sisense's flexible analytics platform, composed of Fusion Embed, Sisense Cloud, and Compose SDK, enables customers like Seismic, Barrios, and Tessitura to infuse actionable insights into their customer experiences.

Founded in Israel in 2004, Sisense maintains ISO 27701 privacy, ISO/IEC 42001 AI governance, and ISO 27001 information security management certifications. For more information, visit **www.sisense.com.**

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About UserEvidence

UserEvidence is a software company and independent research partner that helps B2B technology companies produce original research content from practitioners in their industry. All research completed by UserEvidence is verified and authentic according to their research principles: Identity verification, significance and representation, quality and independence, and transparency. All UserEvidence research is based on real user feedback without interference, bias, or spin from our clients.

UserEvidence research principles

These principles guide all research efforts at UserEvidence—whether working with a vendor's users for our Customer Evidence offering, or industry practitioners in a specific field for our Research Content offering. The goal of these principles is to give buyers trust and confidence that you are viewing authentic and verified research based on real user feedback, without interference, bias, and spin from the vendor.

1 Identity verification

In every study we conduct, UserEvidence independently verifies that a participant in our research study is a real user of a vendor (in the case of Customer Evidence) or an industry practitioner (in the case of Research Content). We use a variety of human and algorithmic verification mechanisms, including corporate email domain verification (i.e., so a vendor can't just create 17 Gmail addresses that all give positive reviews), and pattern-based bot and AI deflection.

2 Significance and representation

UserEvidence believes trust is built by showing an honest and complete representation of the success (or lack thereof) of users. We pursue statistical significance in our research, and substantiate our findings with a large and representative set of user responses to create more confidence in our analysis. We aim to canvas a diverse swatch of users across industries, seniorities, personas—to provide the whole picture of usage, and allow buyers to find relevant data from other users in their segment, not just a handful of vendor-curated happy customers.

3 Quality and independence

UserEvidence is committed to producing quality and independent research at all times. This starts at the beginning of the research process with survey and questionnaire design to drive accurate and substantive responses. We aim to reduce bias in our study design, and use large sample sizes of respondents where possible. While UserEvidence is compensated by the vendor for conducting the research, trust is our business and our priority, and we do not allow vendors to change, influence, or misrepresent the results (even if they are unfavorable) at any time.

4 Transparency

We believe research should not be done in a black box. For transparency, all UserEvidence research includes the statistical N (number of respondents), and buyers can explore the underlying blinded (de-identified) raw data and responses associated with any statistic, chart, or study. UserEvidence provides clear citation guidelines for clients when leveraging research that includes guidelines on sharing research methodology and sample size.