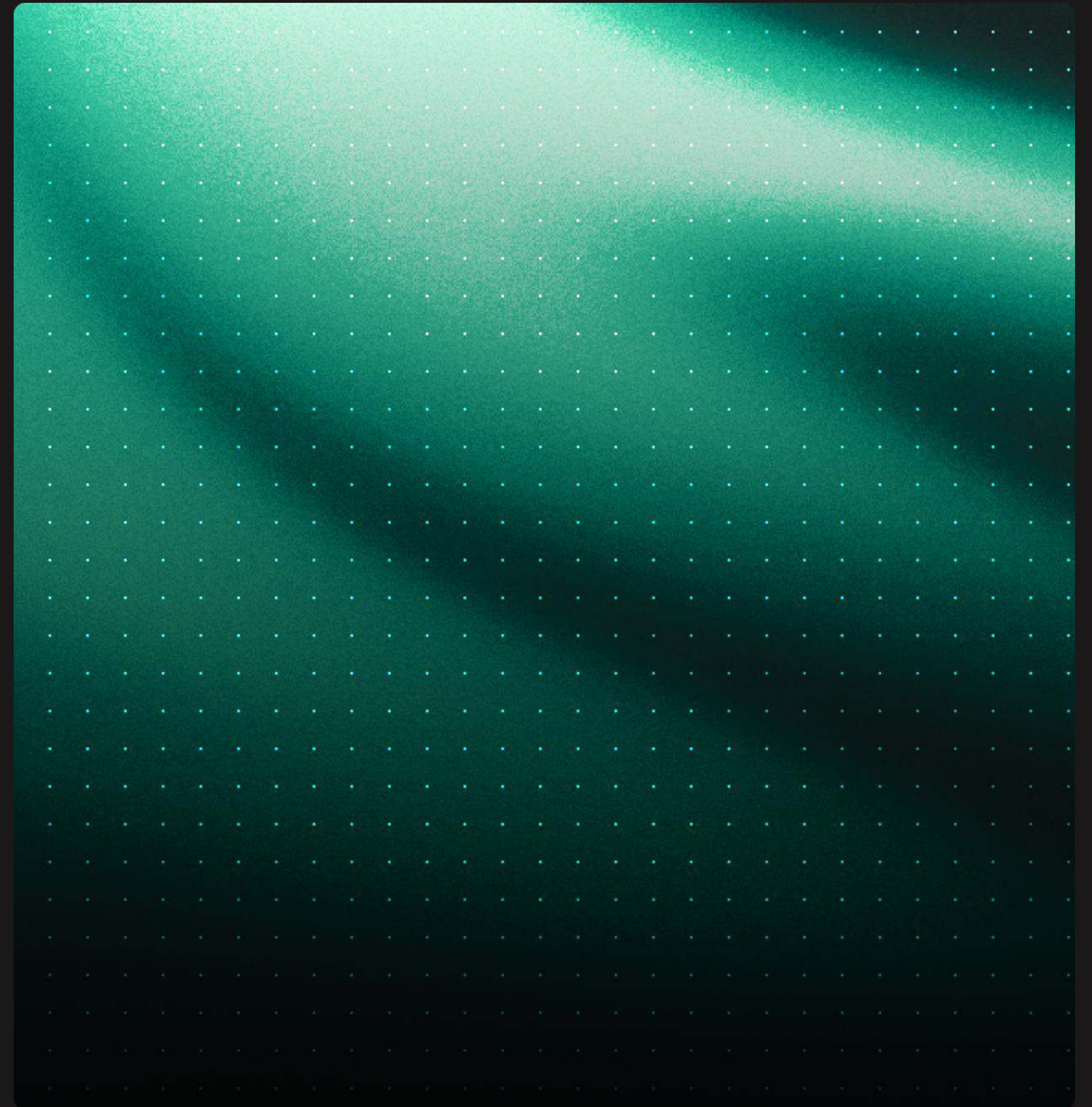
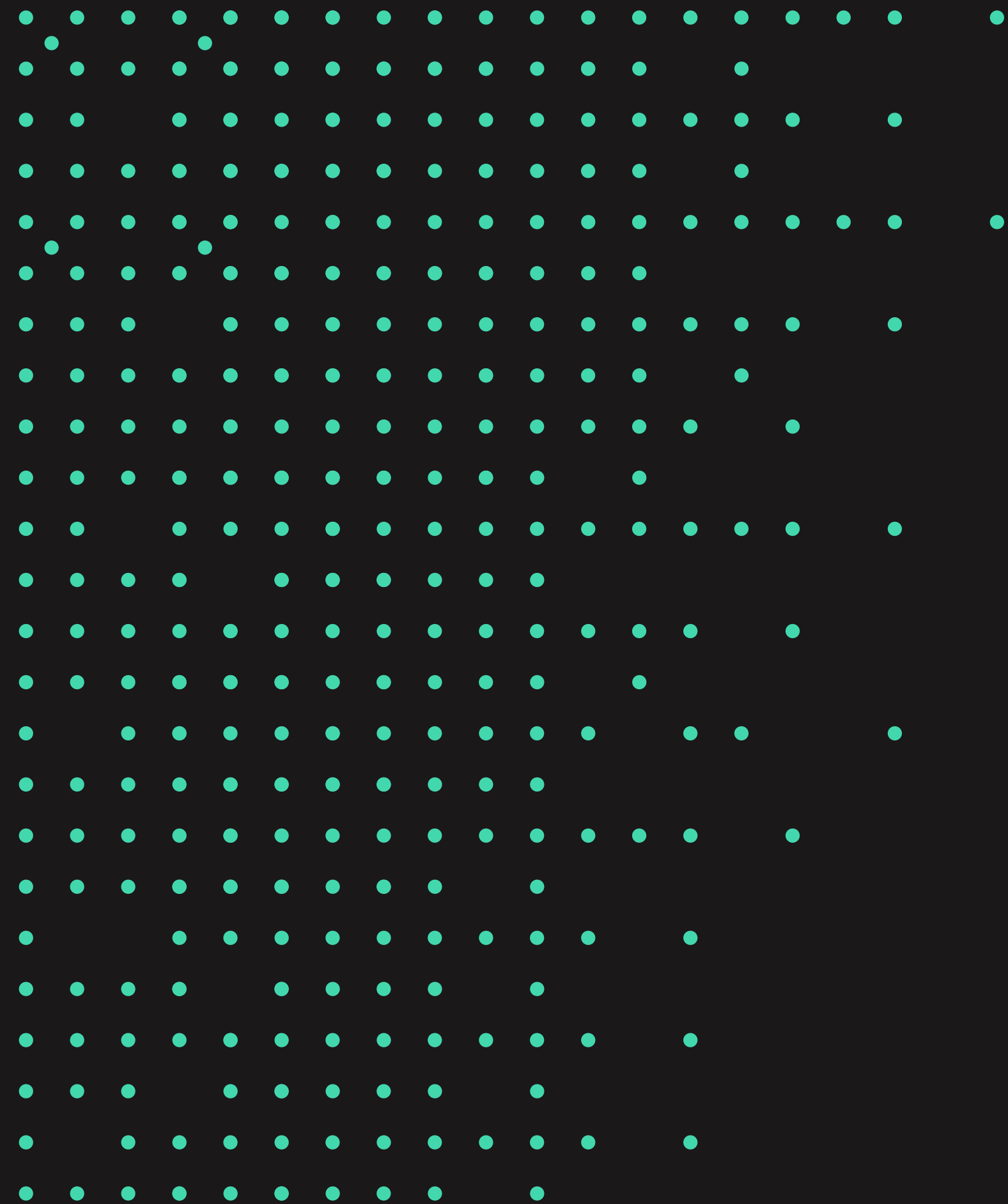




The State of AI in Operations

2025 Research Report





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→ Summary

We surveyed hundreds of operations professionals to understand where AI adoption stands today and what's driving decision-making around these tools. The results reveal a clear picture: AI in operations isn't a question of "if" anymore, but "how fast."

Key findings:

- 98% of teams are already using or experimenting with AI
- 68% expect it to be industry standard within 1–3 years
- Trust and training, not budget, are the top barriers
- Data entry and cleaning is the clearest ROI opportunity
- 71% plan to grow AI budgets in the next year

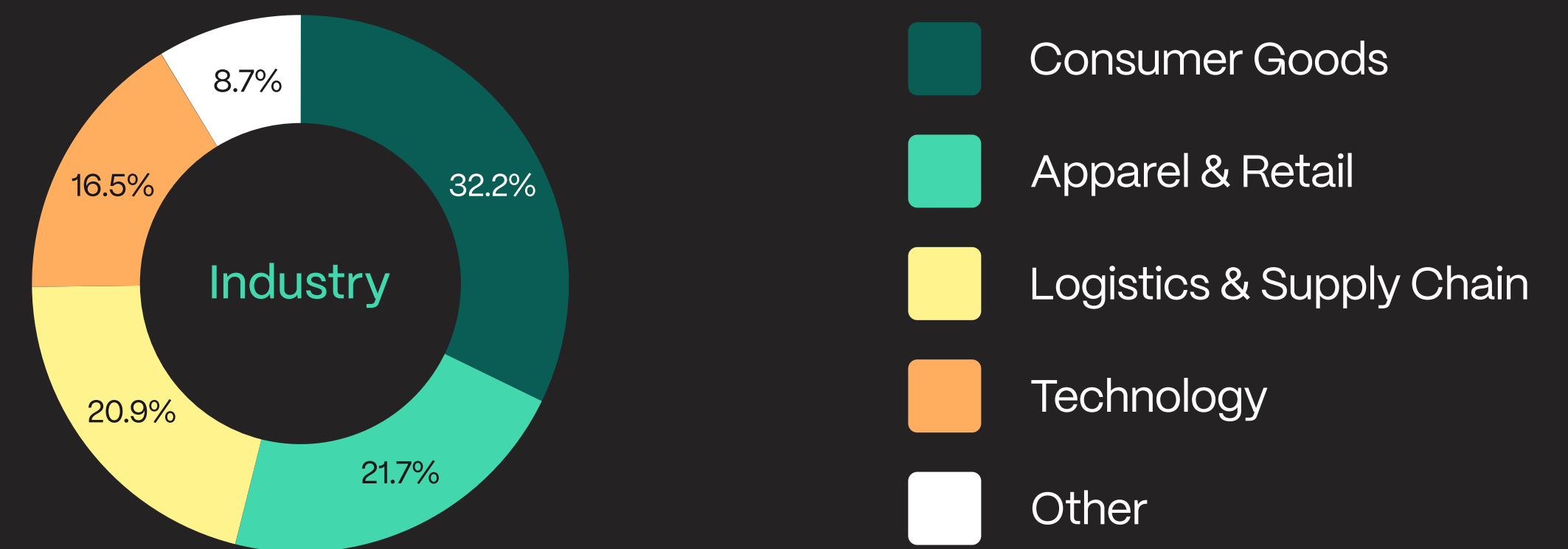
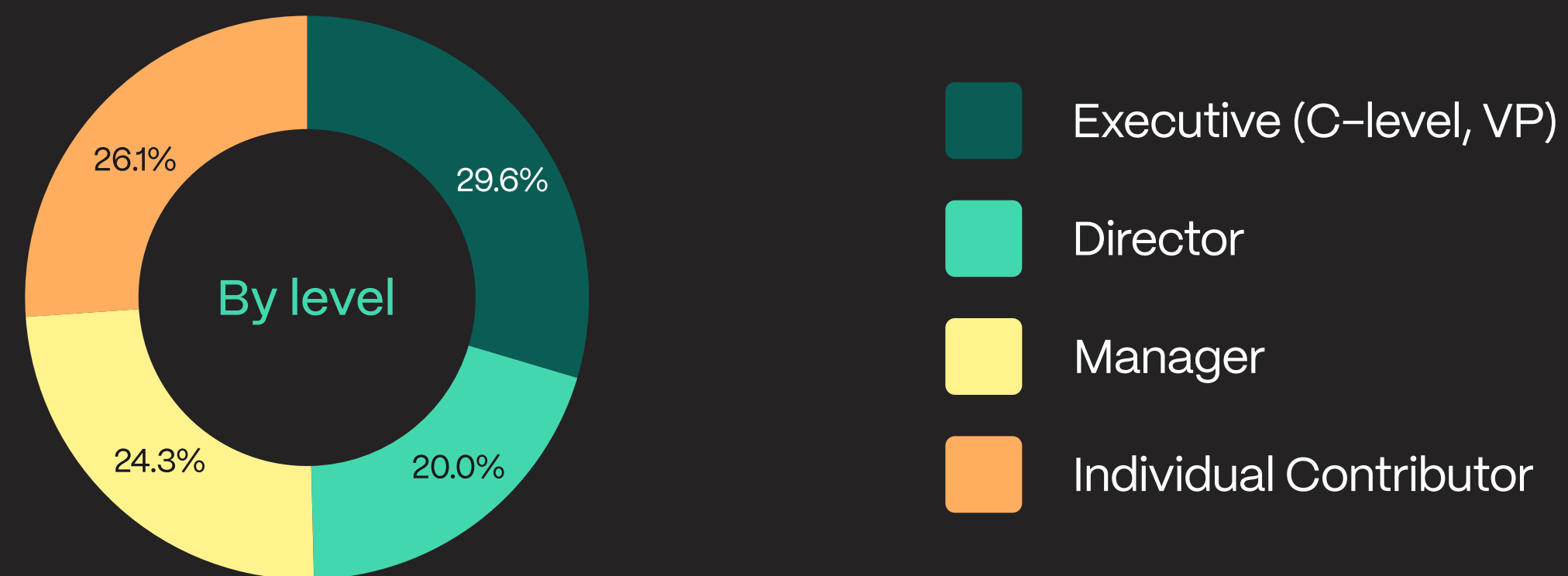
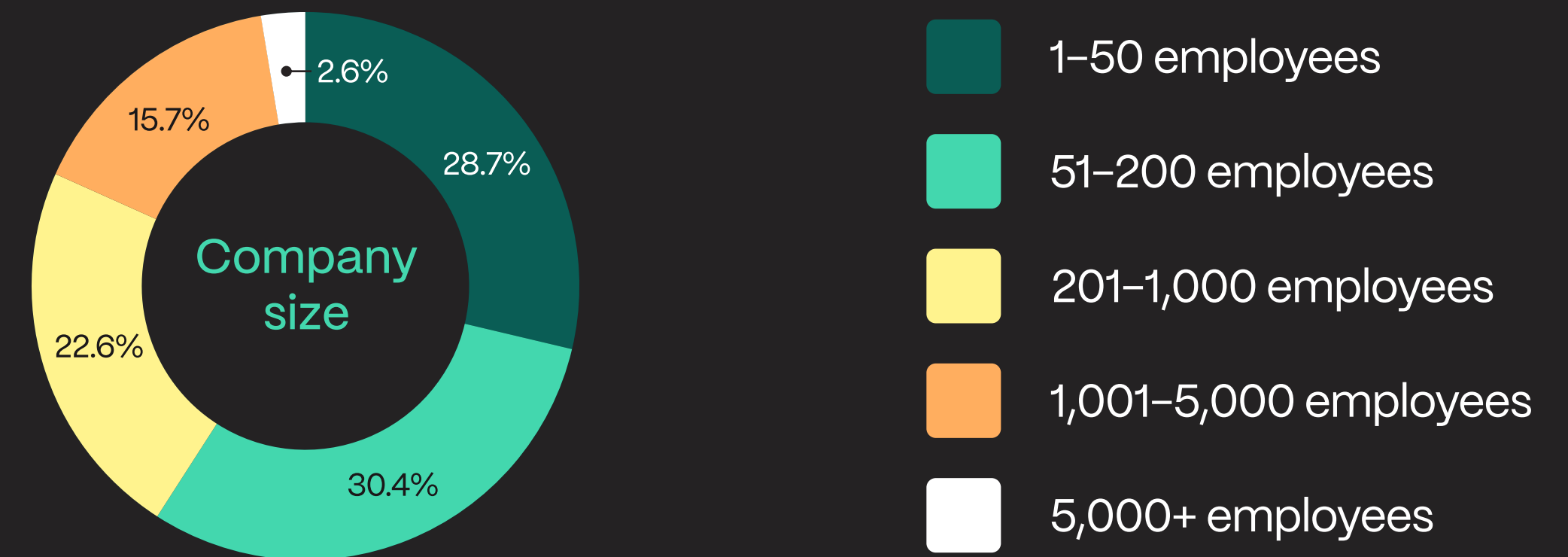
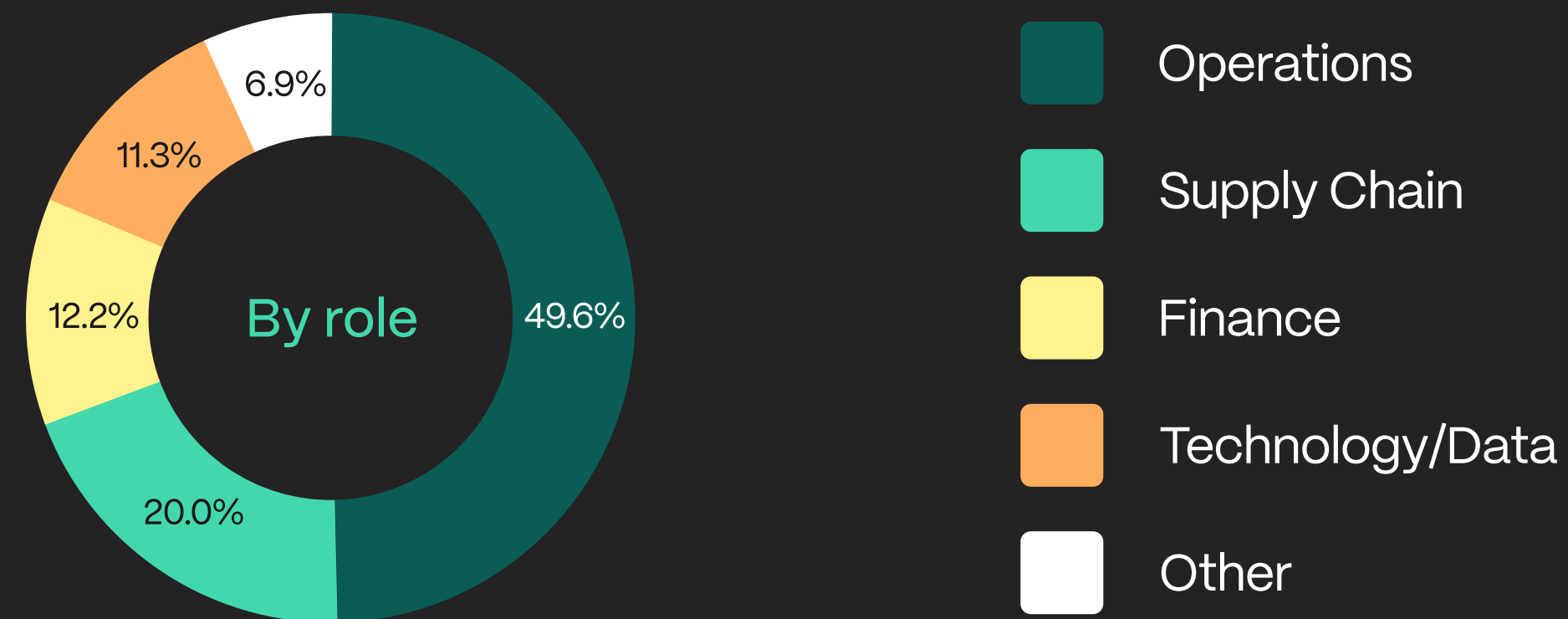
This research shows that operations teams are moving beyond the experimental phase and into practical implementation, with clear priorities and realistic timelines.

Nearly 89% of respondents are directly involved in evaluating or implementing new software and AI tools for their teams, giving us insights from the people actually making these decisions.



→ Who we heard from

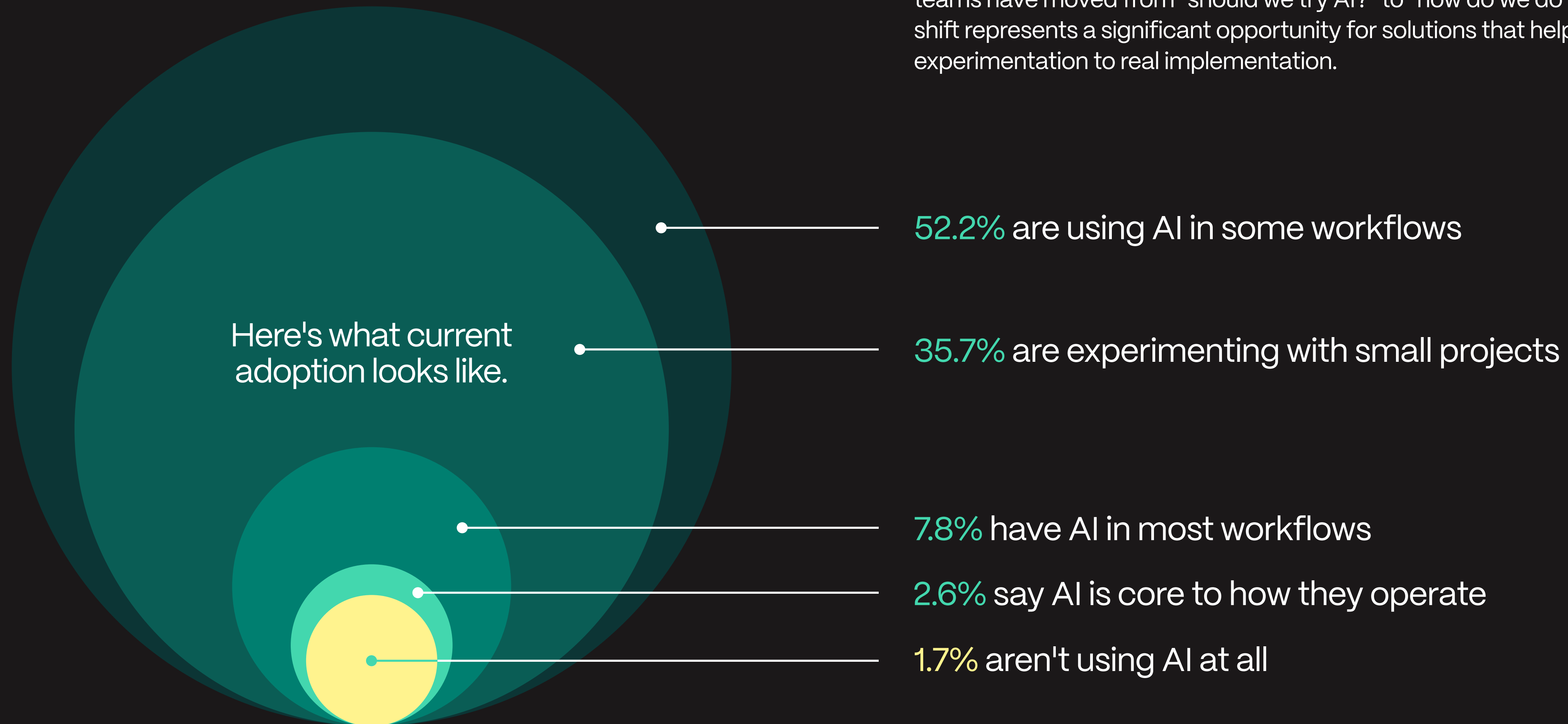
Our research captured perspectives from across the operations ecosystem, giving us a comprehensive view of how different roles and company sizes approach AI adoption.



→ The reality: AI adoption is already here

98% of operations teams are using or experimenting with AI today. The days of operations teams wondering whether to explore AI are over. Only 1.7% of respondents said they're *not* using AI at all.

What this means: We're past the early adopter phase. The majority of operations teams have moved from "should we try AI?" to "how do we do this better?" This shift represents a significant opportunity for solutions that help teams scale from experimentation to real implementation.



→ Here's where teams stand on the AI learning curve.

Nearly half of operations teams are at the intermediate level, while about 21% have reached the advanced stage where AI creates real competitive advantage. Teams are building confidence and competence, but most are still figuring out how to move from small experiments to workflows that save real time.

34%

consider themselves to be beginners (starting to explore)

45%

are intermediate (using AI for a few repeatable workflows)

18%

are advanced (building workflows that save real time)

3%

are experts (AI is a competitive advantage)

→ Timeline: when AI becomes standard

Most operations leaders expect AI to be standard in their industry within the next 3 years.

What this means: There's urgency in the market. Over two-thirds of respondents see AI becoming standard within the next 3 years. This isn't speculation about the distant future—it's active planning for the immediate roadmap. The timeline also reveals competitive pressure. Teams that don't have a clear AI strategy risk being left behind, not in years, but in months.

37.4% expect AI to be standard in the next 12 months

30.4% say within 2–3 years

13.9% believe it's already standard

11.3% think it will take up to 5 years

7.0% aren't sure

→ The real barriers: trust and training, not budget

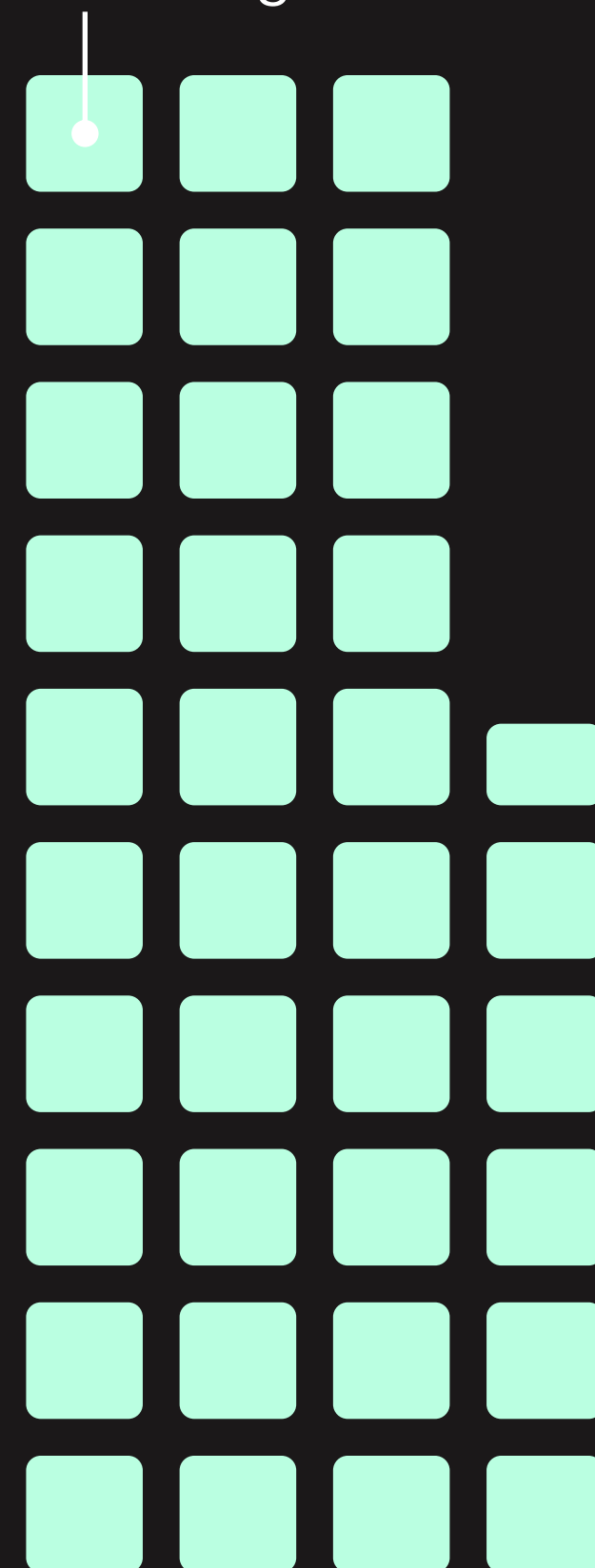
Trust and training concerns outweigh cost by nearly 5 to 1

This creates a clear opportunity for solutions that prioritize reliability, transparency, and user education. Teams are ready to invest—they just need to feel confident about what they're investing in.

Trust and accuracy concerns – 40.9%



Lack of expertise or training – 35.7%



Cost/budget limitations – 8.7%



Unclear ROI – 3.5%



Leadership buy-in – 2.6%



Other reasons – 8.6%

The low percentage citing "unclear ROI" (3.5%) suggests teams can see the potential value. They're not questioning whether AI will help; they're questioning whether they can implement it successfully.

What this means: The barrier isn't money, it's confidence. Operations teams want to use AI, but they need to trust it will work correctly and they need to know how to use it effectively.

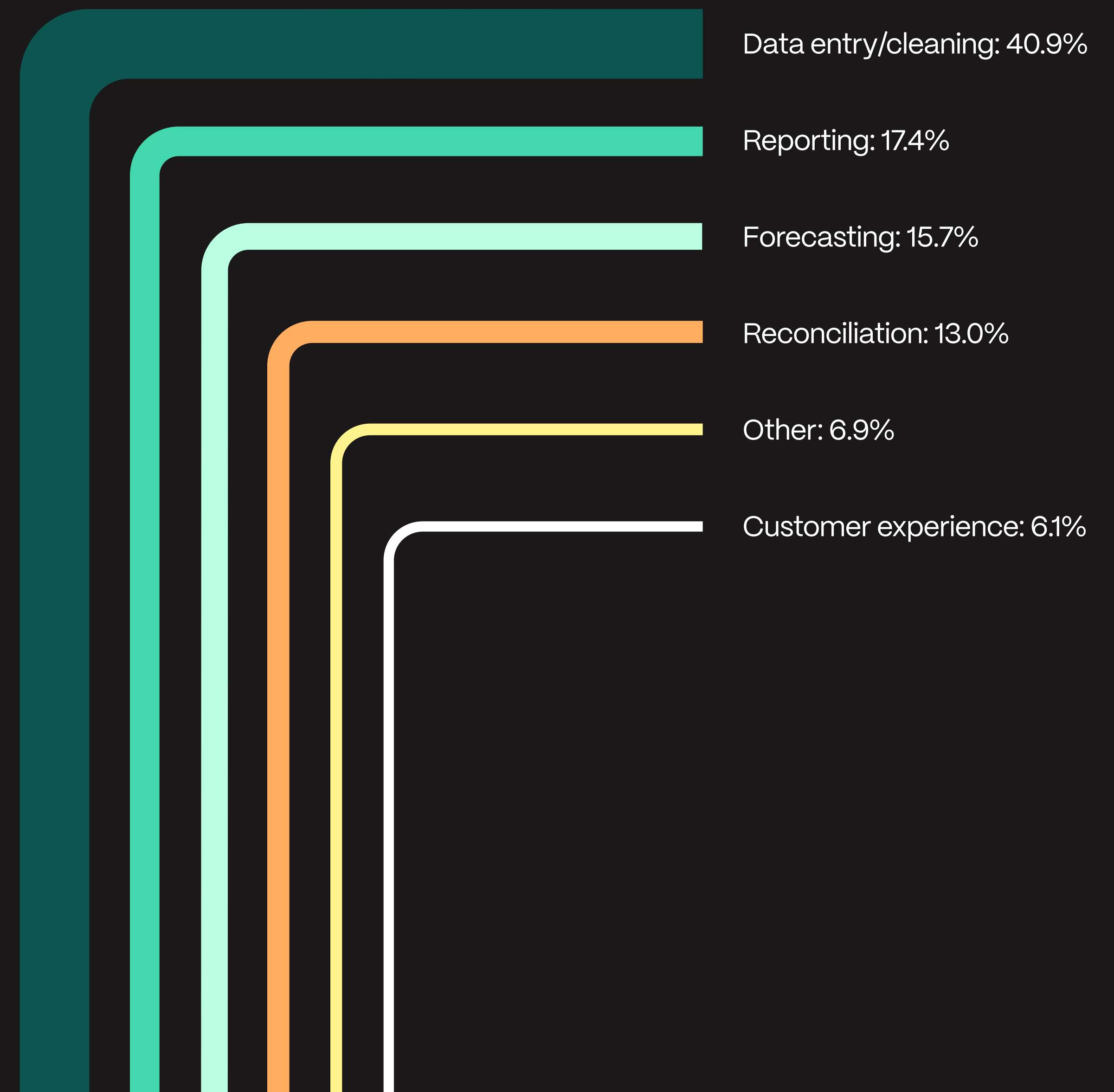
→ ROI priorities: data work tops the list

Data entry and cleaning represents the biggest ROI opportunity

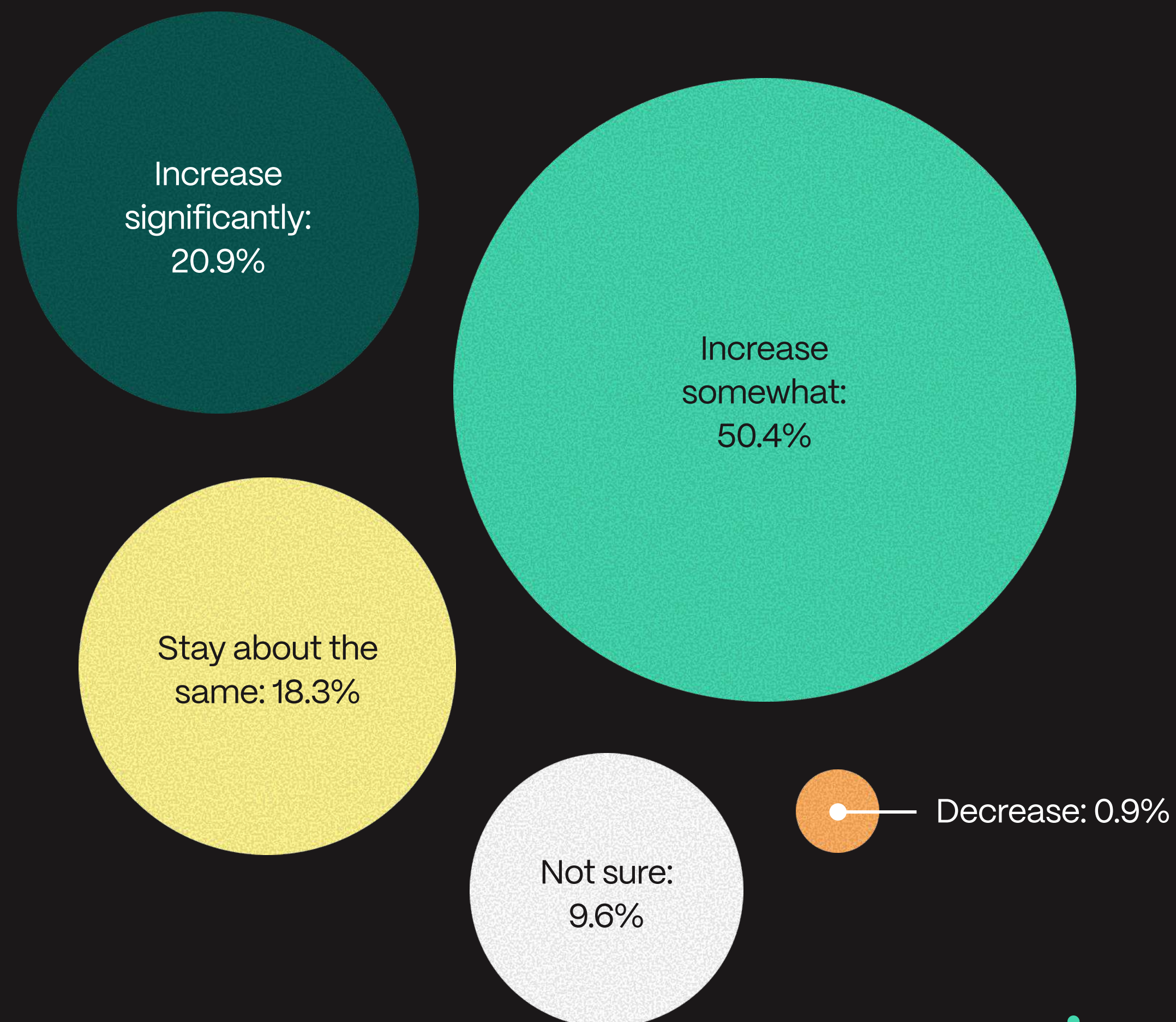
This practical approach makes sense. Teams want quick wins that free up time for higher-value activities. Starting with data work also builds confidence, since the results are easy to measure and verify.

The focus on reporting and forecasting (33.1% combined) shows teams are thinking beyond just automation. They want AI to help them make better decisions, not just work faster.

What this means: Operations teams are focused on solving their most time-consuming, manual tasks first. Data entry and cleaning isn't glamorous work, but it's where teams spend countless hours that could be better used elsewhere.



→ Budget reality: investment is increasing

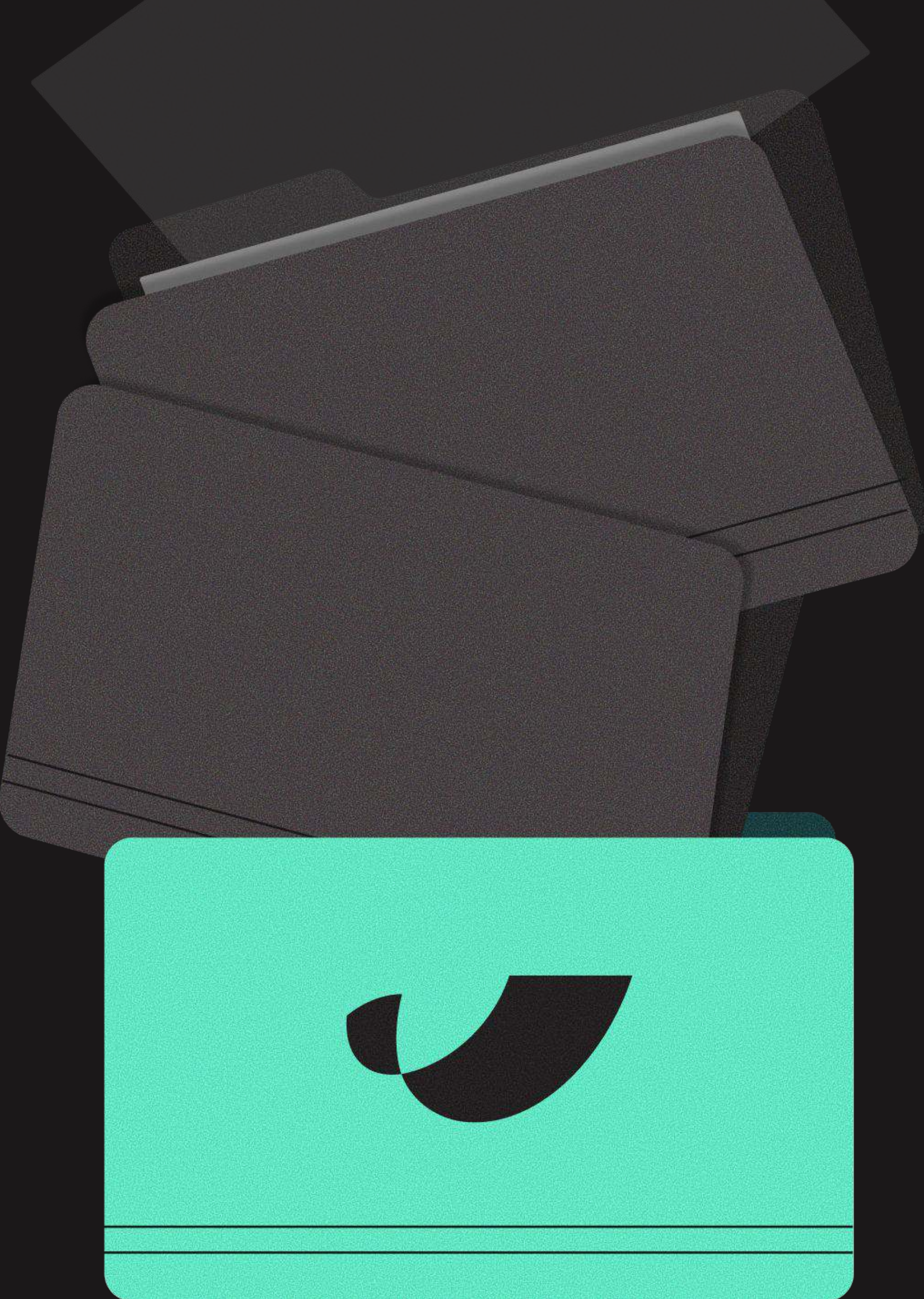


71% of teams expect their AI tool budgets to increase in the next 12 months

This creates a clear opportunity for solutions that prioritize reliability, transparency, and user education. Teams are ready to invest—they just need to feel confident about what they're investing in.

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What this means for operations leaders

AI adoption timing is critical

This research shows that AI adoption in operations isn't a future trend—it's happening right now. With most teams expecting AI to become standard within 12–24 months, timing is critical for building competitive advantages.

Key takeaways:

- Start with data entry and cleaning for quick wins
- Invest in training and change management, not just technology
- Choose solutions that prioritize accuracy and transparency
- Plan for budget increases, not just pilots
- Act quickly—the timeline is months, not years

This research shows that operations teams are moving beyond the experimental phase and into practical implementation, with clear priorities and realistic timelines.

About Parabola

Parabola is a data automation platform that transforms manual processes into intelligent AI workflows. Teams at On Running, Skims, WHOOP, and hundreds more use Parabola to automate work they once thought would always be manual—like auditing invoices, reconciling data across systems, or extracting insights from unstructured PDFs and emails.

This research reflects what we see every day: operations teams are ready to move beyond manual work and just need the right tools to do it confidently.

Methodology: This report is based on survey responses from hundreds of operations professionals across industries and company sizes, conducted in Q1 2025. 89% of respondents are directly involved in evaluating or implementing new software and AI tools for their teams. For more insights on AI in operations, visit parabola.io.

