



**State of AI in Documents:**

# Use Surges 371% as AI Transforms How We Work

# +371%

## Increase in AI Use Within Documents\*

Imagine a dense vendor contract, where key obligations and timelines are extracted in seconds without wading through pages of legalese. Or a multinational financial document, where translation for several markets happens instantly, no AP Language and Culture courses required.

More than ever before, global Adobe Acrobat users are harnessing AI features within a growing number of the more than **320 billion PDFs** that were opened or created in the last 12 months alone and more than **eight billion documents** that were signed—not just to retrieve and interpret information but transform it.

In fact, more than 3 in 4 professionals report increased AI use than just a year ago while nearly half (47%) report using it ‘much more.’ And as AI evolves, it’s redefining how individual roles and entire industries manage document workflows.

Our latest report analyzes anonymized and aggregated Acrobat data with insights from a companion survey of more than **400 professionals** to explore shifting document behavior and reveal how AI use is rapidly accelerating. Here’s what stood out:

## Key Insights:

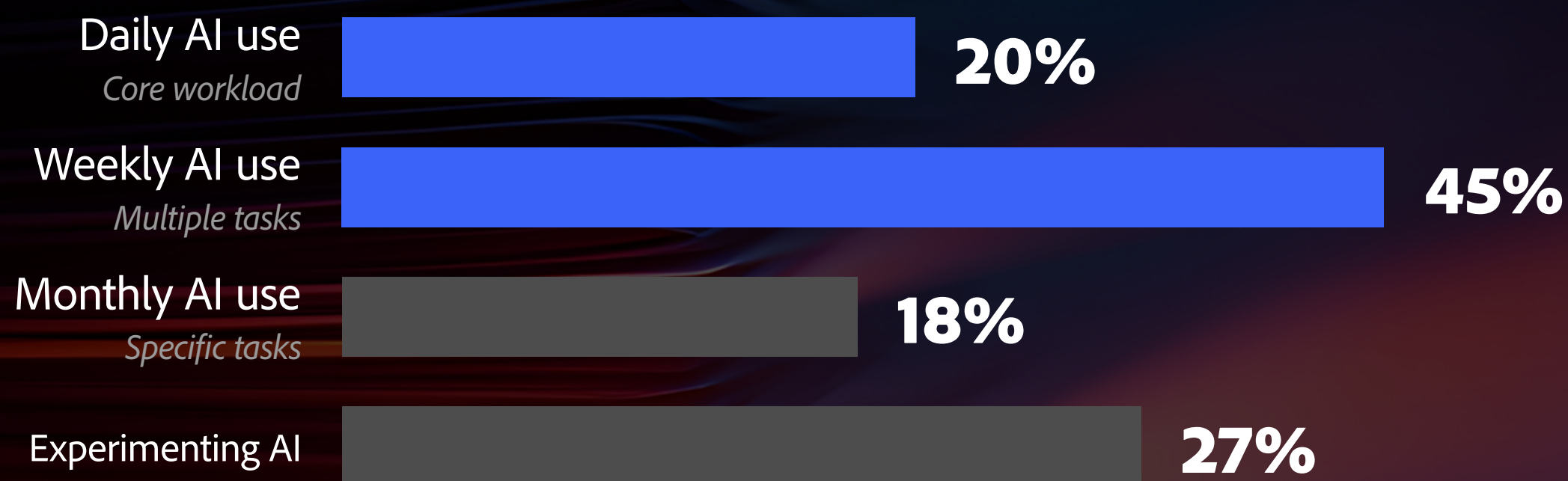
- AI use in Acrobat workflows has surged **371% year-over-year\***, signaling exponential interest and growth.
- **Financial documents (+347%)** are growing faster than any other document type, followed by legal (+281%) and human resources (+261%)\*\*.
- The majority of professionals (55%) use AI weekly while **1 in 5 use it daily**, with Directors and VPs driving adoption growth.
- Nearly half of professionals (48%) save 4+ hours per week and **15% free a full workday (8+ hours)**, pointing to major productivity boosts.
- Primarily leveraged to find or summarize information, AI is increasingly being used to edit documents, **with translation requests soaring +300%\*\***.
- Key adoption barriers like **security, trust, and compatibility** remain, yet use of unapproved tools, or shadow AI, is widespread, led by tech professionals.



# Even as organizations evaluate AI policies, use is more prevalent and widespread

Given AI's rapid growth, it's no surprise that adoption within within Acrobat workflows has skyrocketed 371% YoY. As of November 2025, AI tools were used five times more often than just 12 months earlier. In fact, **more than half (55%) of professionals now use AI weekly** in documents and **1 in 5 use it daily**, driven by the most senior leaders. **Two-thirds of Directors/VPs** and **half of C-level** report a **significant increase in use** from a year ago, more than any other roles.

## Most Professionals Use AI Weekly



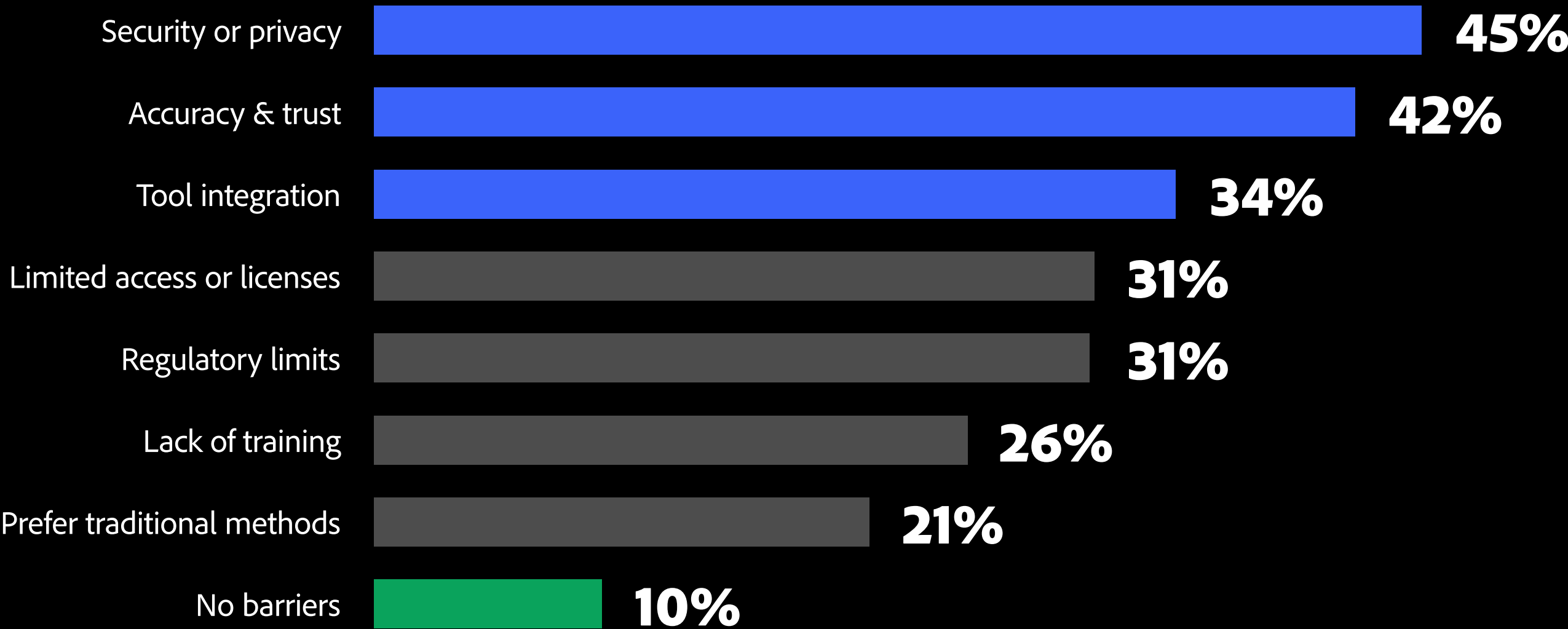
## Managers and Leaders are Driving AI Adoption Growth



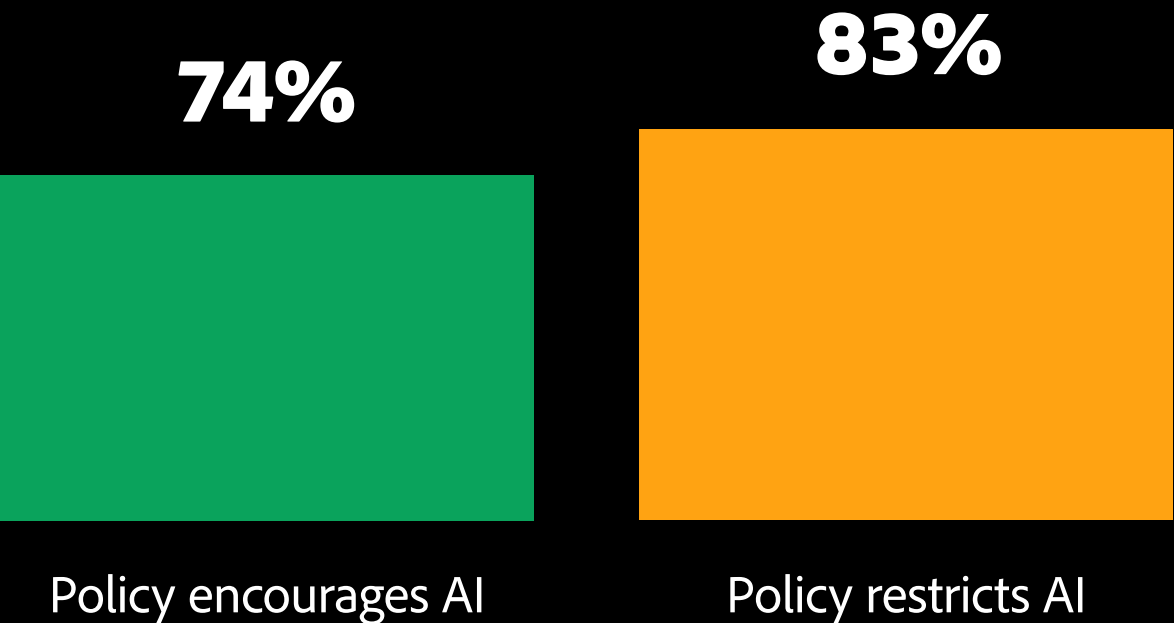
*\*Based on a survey of 400+ professionals / \*\*Based on document type data*



### Top Barriers to AI Adoption



### Restrictive AI Policies Drive Higher Shadow AI Use



But adoption isn't without apprehension. **Nearly half of professionals (45%) cite security or privacy concerns as a key barrier** to deeper AI use, followed closely by **mistrust in outputs (42%)** and **integration concerns with existing tools (34%)**. Only 1 in 10 report no barriers at all.

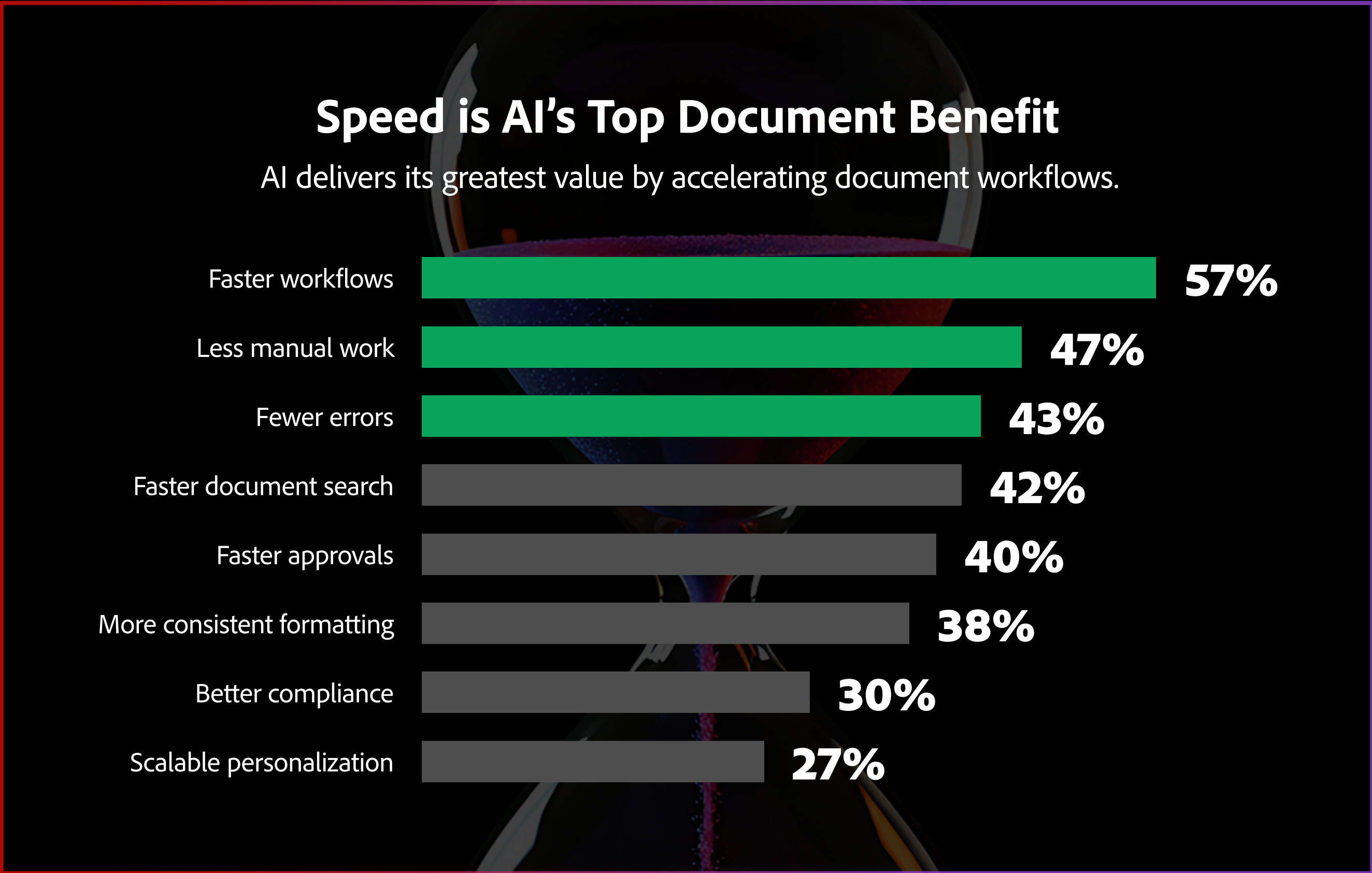
Nearly a third (29%) of companies still enforce restrictive policies on AI use. Unsurprisingly, these restrictions only appear to be encouraging oppositional behavior from workers. **Use of tools unapproved by businesses, or shadow AI, is rampant:** a staggering 83% in companies with such policies—higher than the 74% in companies that encourage more AI collaboration.



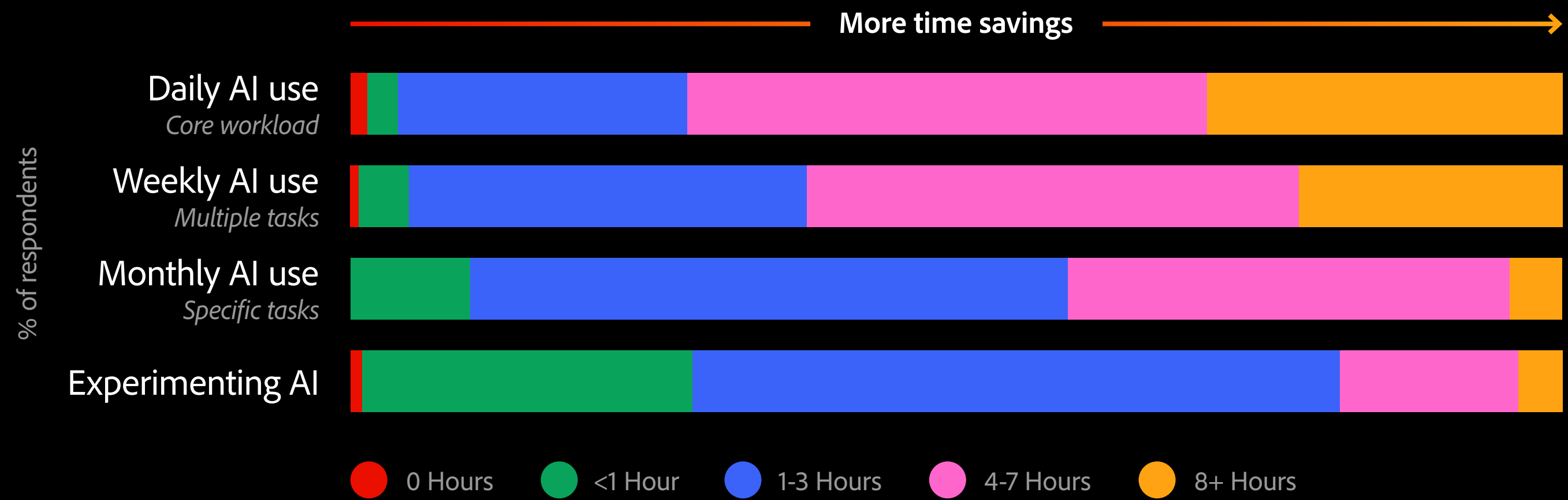
# Speed sells as higher AI adoption linked with major time savings, an entire day each week for some

The majority of workers have a need for speed in documents. **More than half (57%) cite faster workflows** as AI's most significant outcome, followed by reduced manual workload (47%) and, contrary to perception, fewer errors (43%).

*\*Based on a survey of 400+ professionals*



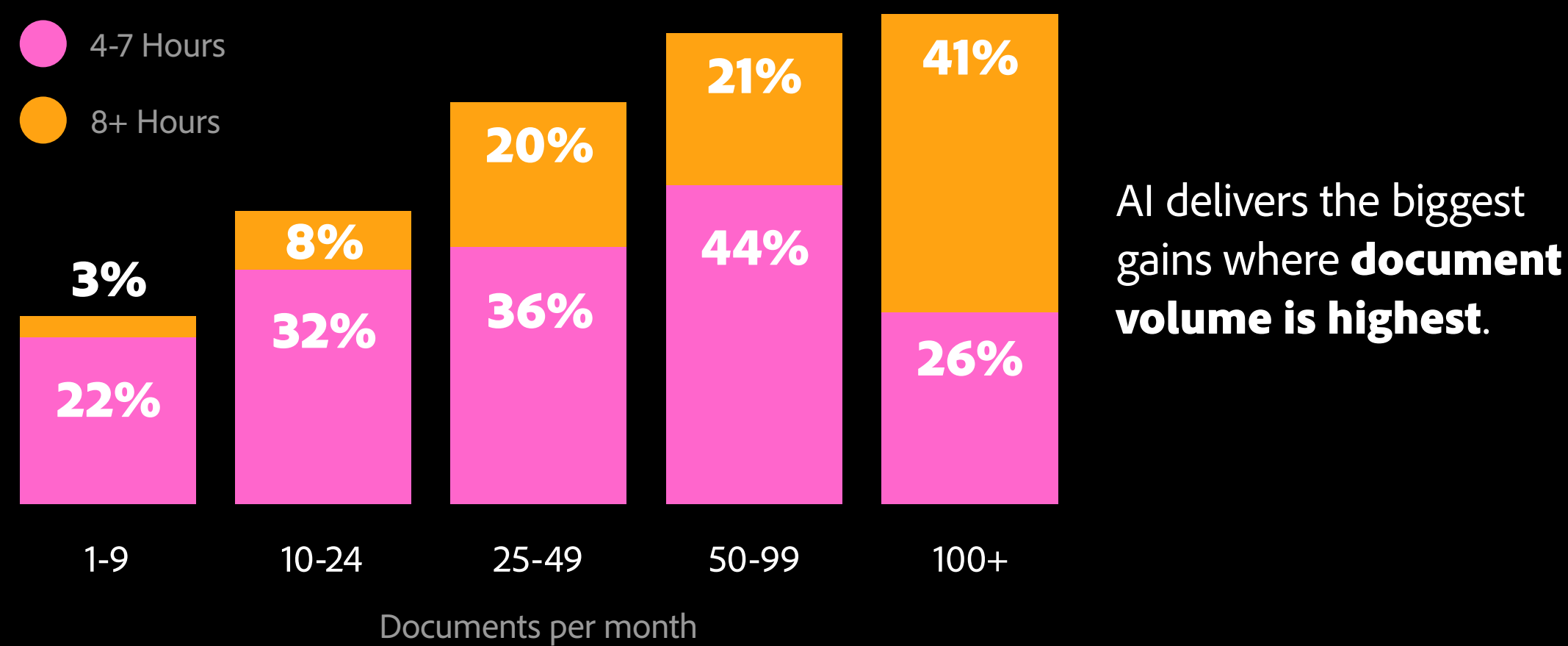
# Higher AI Adoption Correlates with Greater Time Savings



This speed, automation, accuracy, and other gains translate into actual time back into workers' calendars. **Nearly half (48%)** save four-plus hours weekly, while 15% reclaim eight or more—a full day in a typical 40-hour work week.

And the correlation is clear: as AI use increases, so does time saved. **Daily AI users are eight times more likely to save eight-plus hours per week than occasional users.** The same goes for heavy document volumes: those who handle 100-plus documents monthly are **14 times more likely to see major time savings** than those handling fractional loads.

## More Documents, More Time Saved





# No longer just a retrieval engine, AI increasingly used to summarize and transform documents

The majority (80%) of AI prompts in documents fall into three categories: **information retrieval (38%)—locating or explaining; interpretation (22%)—synthesizing or summarizing; and editing (20%)—reformatting or translating**

## Speed is AI's Top Document Benefit

AI delivers its greatest value by accelerating document workflows.

**38%**

### Information retrieval

*Locating, extracting, or answering specific questions from documents*

**22%**

### Interpretation

*Comparing information, drawing insights, or explaining meaning*

**20%**

### Editing

*Rewriting, reformatting, simplifying, or translating content*

**14%**

### Workflow

*Requesting document actions or operational help in Acrobat*

**3%**

### Follow-up

*Asking for clarification or elaboration on a prior response*

**2%**

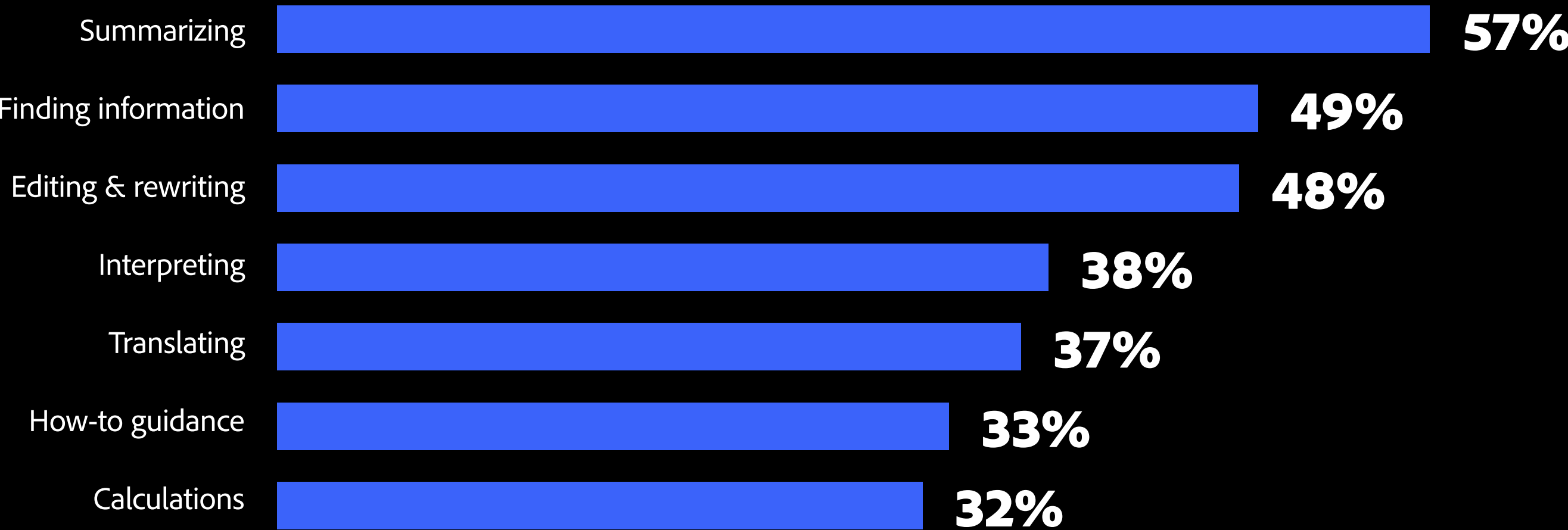
### Computation

*Performing calculations beyond basic counting*



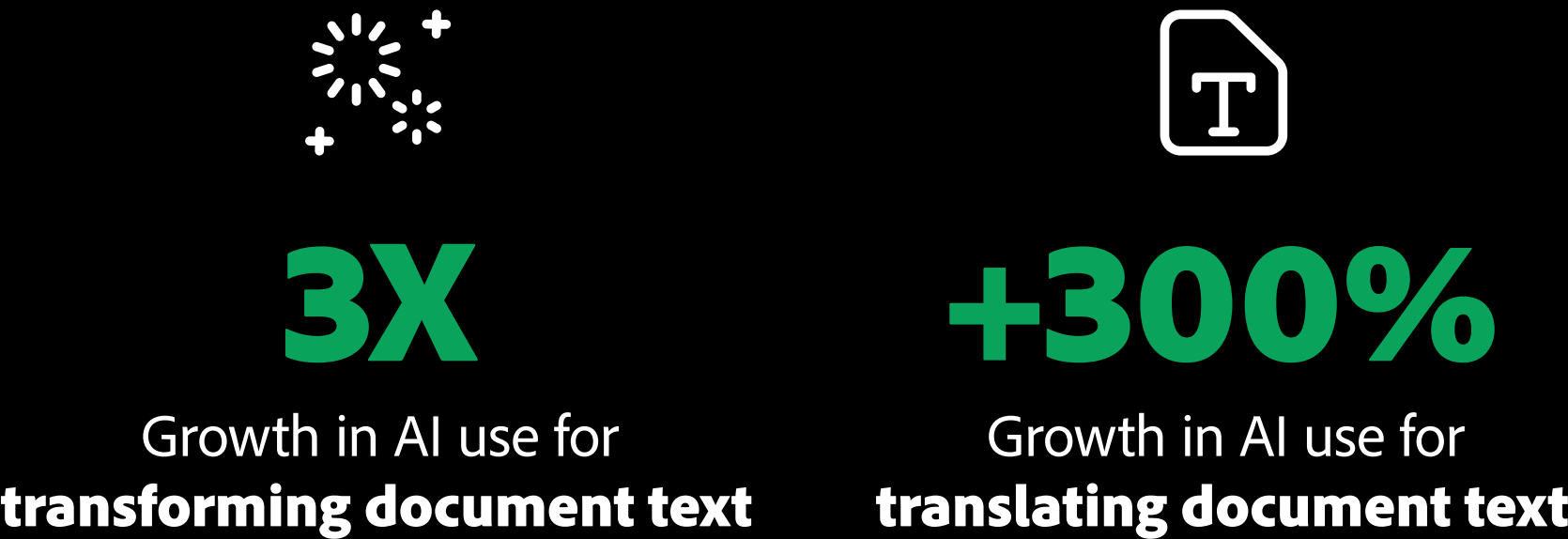
# How Professionals Use AI in Documents

The most common ways professionals apply AI to document work.



## Growth in AI-powered Document Actions

Over the last 8 months.



Coincidentally, this mirrors how workers leverage AI most in their workflows. **A majority (57%) summarize information**, while **nearly half (48%) rely on AI as an editorial assistant** to quickly review or rewrite documents. **Text transformation has nearly tripled** since early 2025, with **translation queries soaring more than 300%**.

But finding information remains a core AI function in documents. In what could potentially signal the slow demise of legacy features like Control/Command+F, nearly half (49%) now use AI as a faster, more efficient search tool. This trend is driven by individual contributors, who outpace Directors/VPs in using AI search—an outlier compared to all other use cases, from editing to interpretation to computation.



# AI use surges in financial, legal, and human resource documents, but prompt patterns vary dramatically

AI use across major document categories has exploded since early 2025 as more Acrobat users tackle dense, technical content, particularly in financial (347%), legal (281%), and human resource (261%) documents. Administrative (233%) and marketing (206%) documents also saw impressive increases.

**But engagement varies wildly by document type.** In financial documents (i.e., statements, budgets), for example, workers embrace more translation or technical prompts like calculations, while interpretation prompts, such as finding or summarizing information, are prominent in marketing documents as workers make sense of complex campaign data or reports.

## AI Use Varies by Function and Document Task

Functions gravitate toward AI tasks that match how they work with documents — from writing and interpretation to translation and summarization.

Sales

**+14.9%**

Higher use of AI for  
**writing and editing**

Marketing

**+17.6%**

Higher use of AI for  
**interpreting reports and  
campaign data**

Finance

**+14.9%**

Higher use of AI for  
**translation and  
technical tasks**

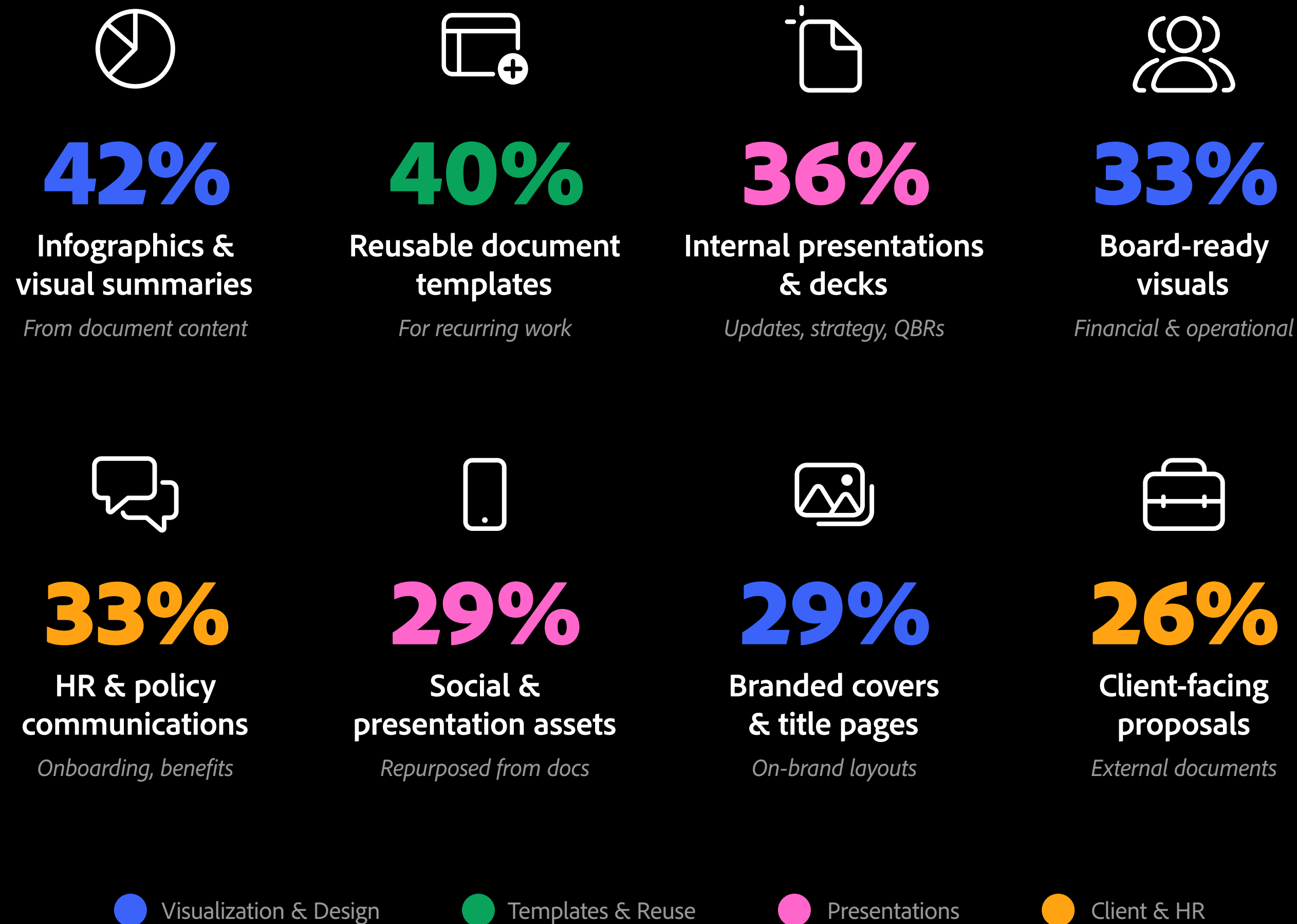
HR

**+10.0%**

Higher use of AI for  
**summarizing information**

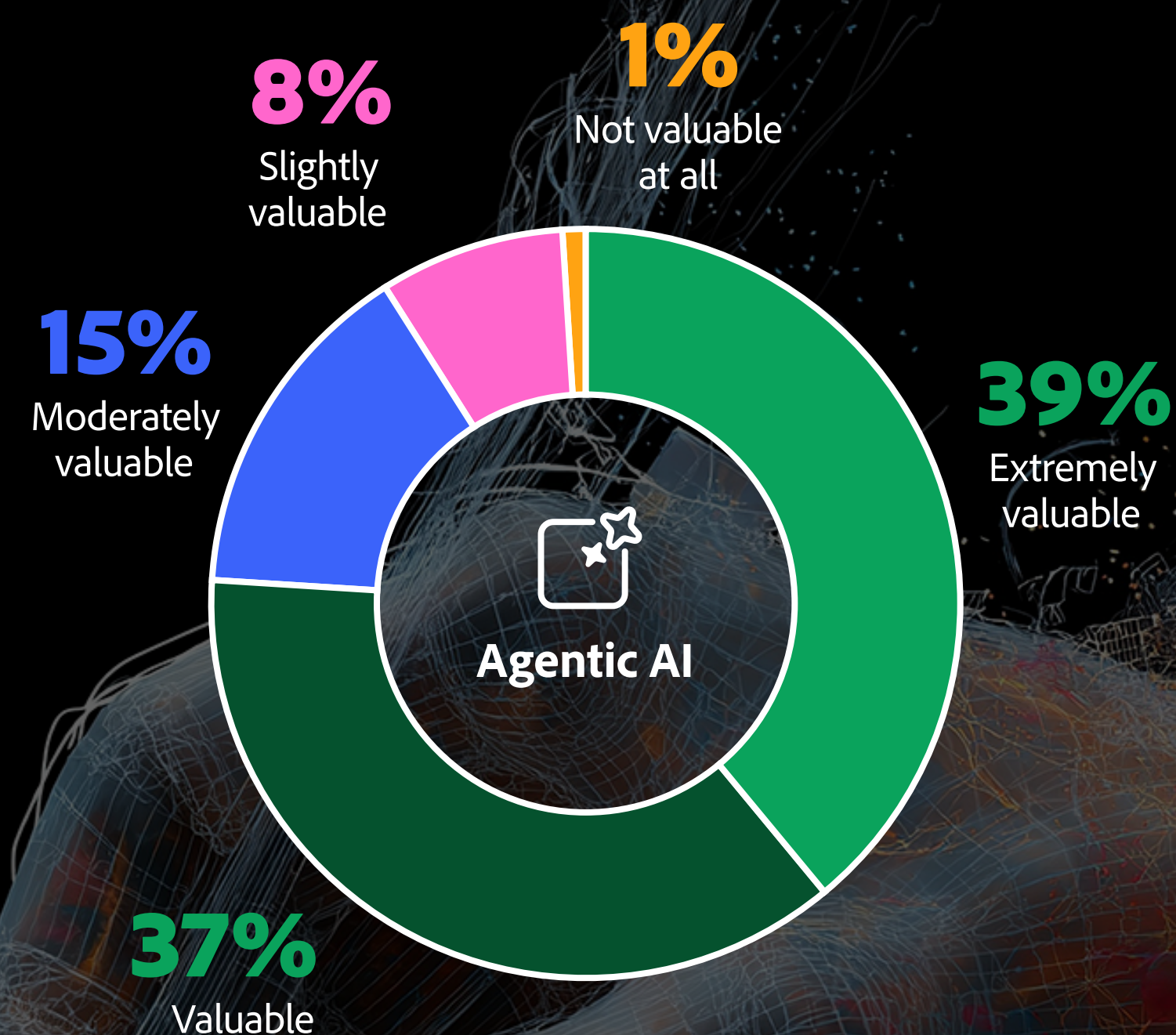


## What People Want to Create From Documents



However, across use cases, the **majority of professionals (57%)** report a need for regular AI support with the 'last mile' of document workflows: design and presentation. Common requests include converting content into infographics or visual summaries and constructing reusable templates for recurring document types.





**3 in 4**

**Of all professionals embrace the value of agentic features**

## Takeaway:

# AI isn't just unlocking document workflows, but unleashing them

The pace of AI adoption in documents isn't a fleeting trend; it's a generational shift in how work gets done—whether you're in high school or high finance. As AI use accelerates exponentially, how Acrobat users across industries engage with documents is changing just as quickly, moving beyond basic retrieval to reshape information altogether: rewriting and designing sales proposals, summarizing global marketing campaigns, and calculating critical financial reports in seconds.

This evolution to a true productivity engine is already saving hours—even days—each week. And with more than **3 in 4 professionals eager to embrace the value of emerging agentic features and capabilities**, demand and impact show no signs of slowing. Yet transformation often brings uncertainty. Security, trust, and compatibility concerns persist, while shadow AI thrives as workers turn to unsanctioned tools to keep pace with increasing demands.

Amidst this disruption, Acrobat power users—those embracing both legacy and embedded AI features—are unlocking unprecedented speed, accuracy, and efficiency, and with it, a future where documents don't just record work but reimagine it.

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