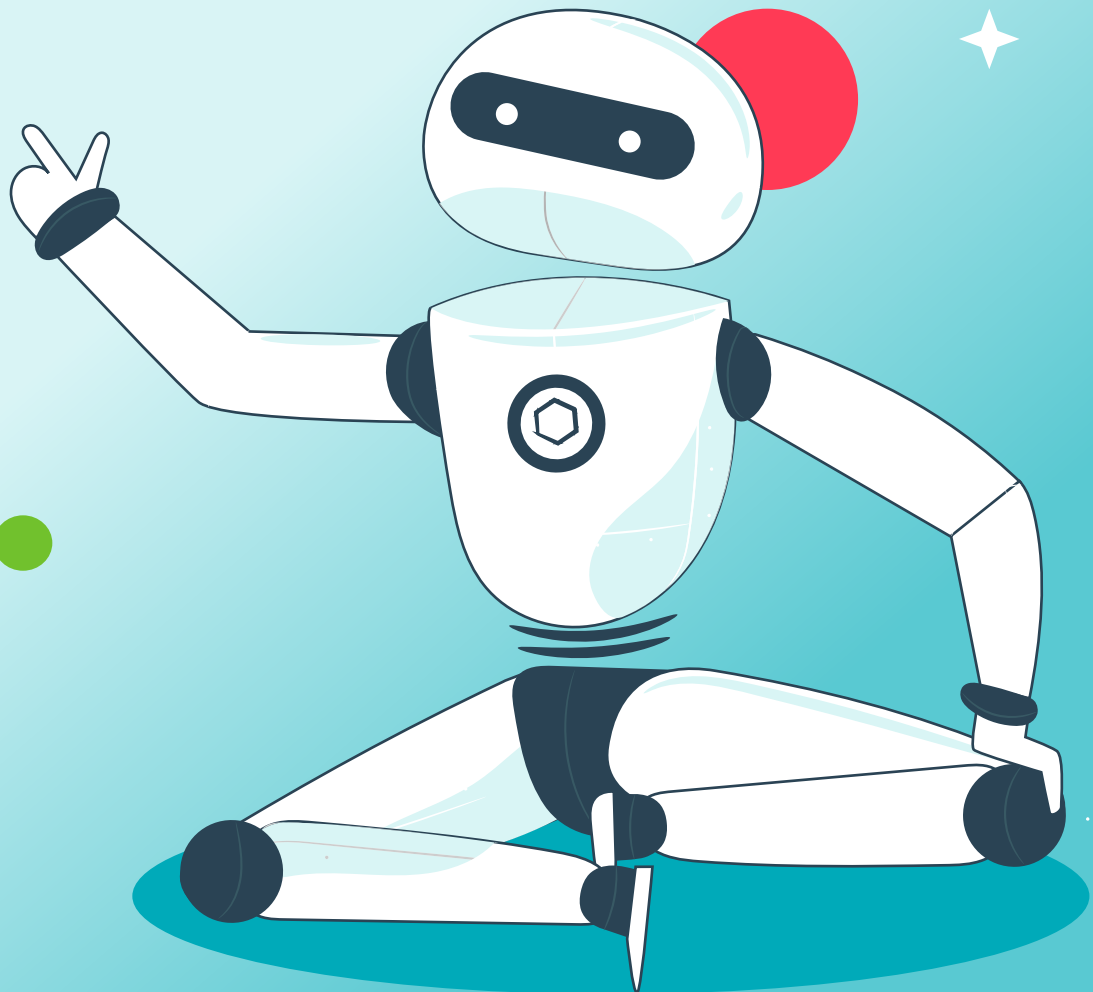


The State of AI Adoption in *Marketing Teams* YEAR 2

THE REALITY OF AI IN MARKETING:
ADOPTION, IMPACT & WHAT'S NEXT



Welcome to our second annual State of AI Adoption in Marketing Teams report! ✨ ✨

This year, we were privileged to ask even more global marketers about how they used AI for marketing in 2025 — and what their plans are for 2026 and beyond.

Key Takeaways

AI adoption is now the norm.

More than 4-in-5 marketers use AI in some capacity.

Usage is expanding, not novel.

Most teams are increasing how much they use AI.

Marketers are largely self-taught.

Formal AI training is still uncommon.

AI's biggest impact is on productivity.

Speed and scale outweigh quality improvements or cost savings.

Content creation is the main use case.

Research, ideation and copywriting lead adoption.

Human oversight remains standard.

Most AI output is edited, fact-checked or rewritten.

Governance is still catching up.

Many organizations lack formal AI policies.

The future is human + AI.

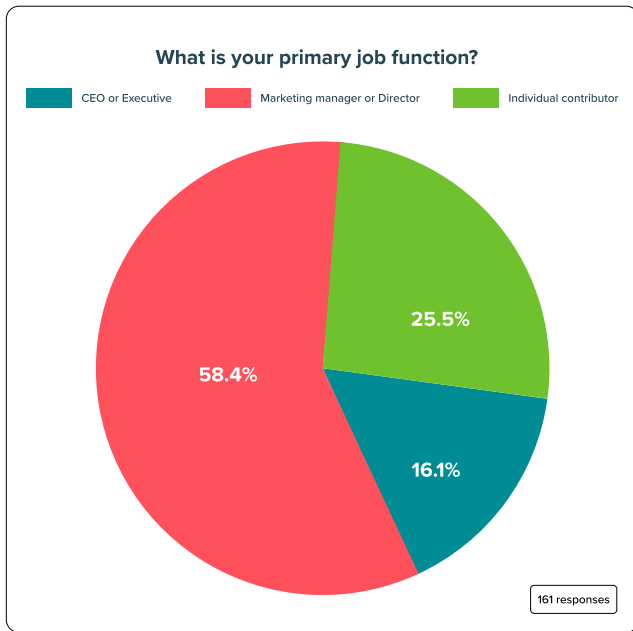
Most marketers see AI as an assistant, not a replacement.

Methodology + Who We Surveyed

We conducted this survey between *November 2025 and January 2026*. 163 total respondents shared their top AI in marketing adoption challenges, use cases, tool preferences, policy plans, personal opinions and so much more for 2025.

Thanks to our participants, we developed a solid understanding of how real-life marketers are (or aren't) actively interacting with AI tools in their daily work, and what their thoughts are about the future of the industry.

Here's who we heard from, in terms of role, seniority, company size, industry and more:



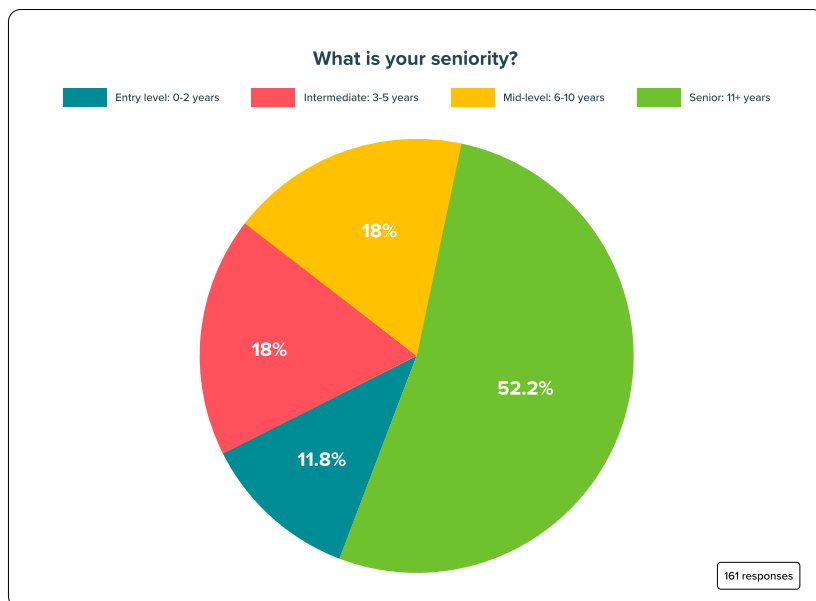
ROLE

Most of our respondents were marketing managers or directors.

58% Marketing managers & directors

26% Individual contributors

16% CEOs & executives



SENIORITY

Just over half of our respondents reported having more than a decade of experience:

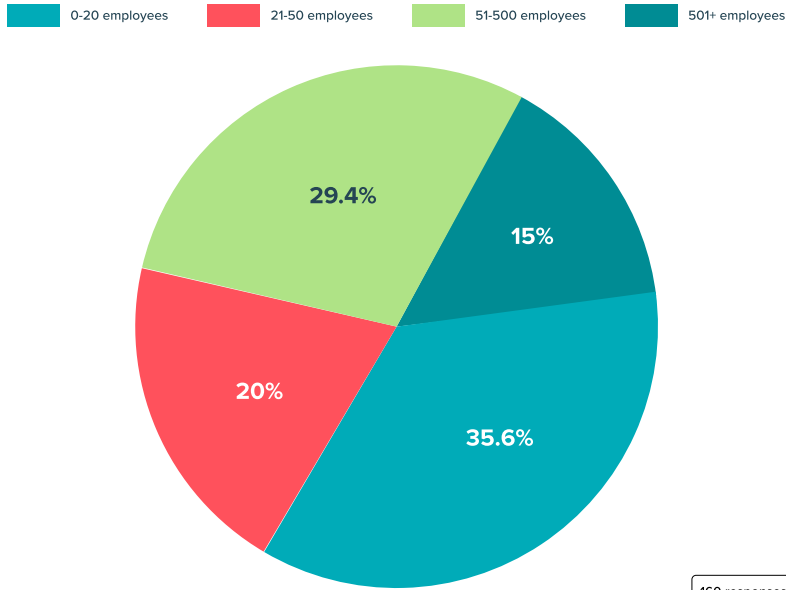
52% Senior (11+ years)

18% Mid-level (6–10 years)

18% Intermediate (3–5 years)

12% Entry-level (0–2 years)

How big is your company?



ORGANIZATION SIZE

Small and large companies were most widely represented, though we heard from marketers from organizations of all sizes.

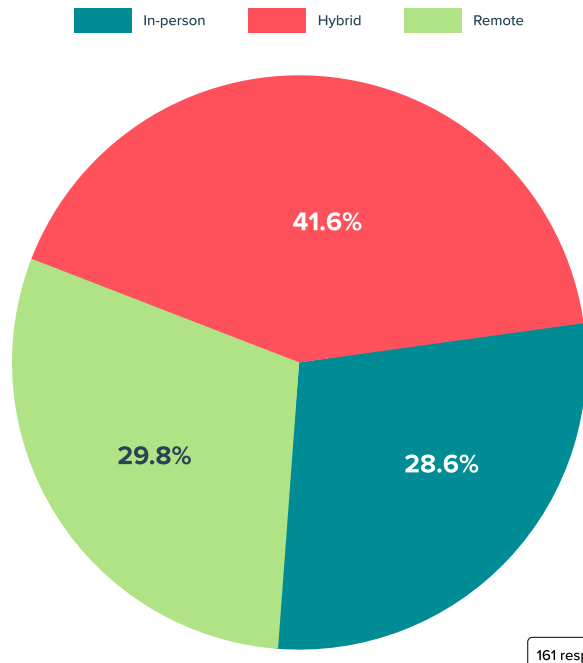
36% Small (1-20 employees)

20% Medium (21-50 employees)

29% Large (51-500 employees)

15% Enterprise (501+ employees)

Do you work in-person, remotely or hybrid?



WORK FORMAT

Most of our responses came from marketers who split their working hours between home and the office. Fully remote and fully in-person employees were fairly evenly represented.

29% In-person

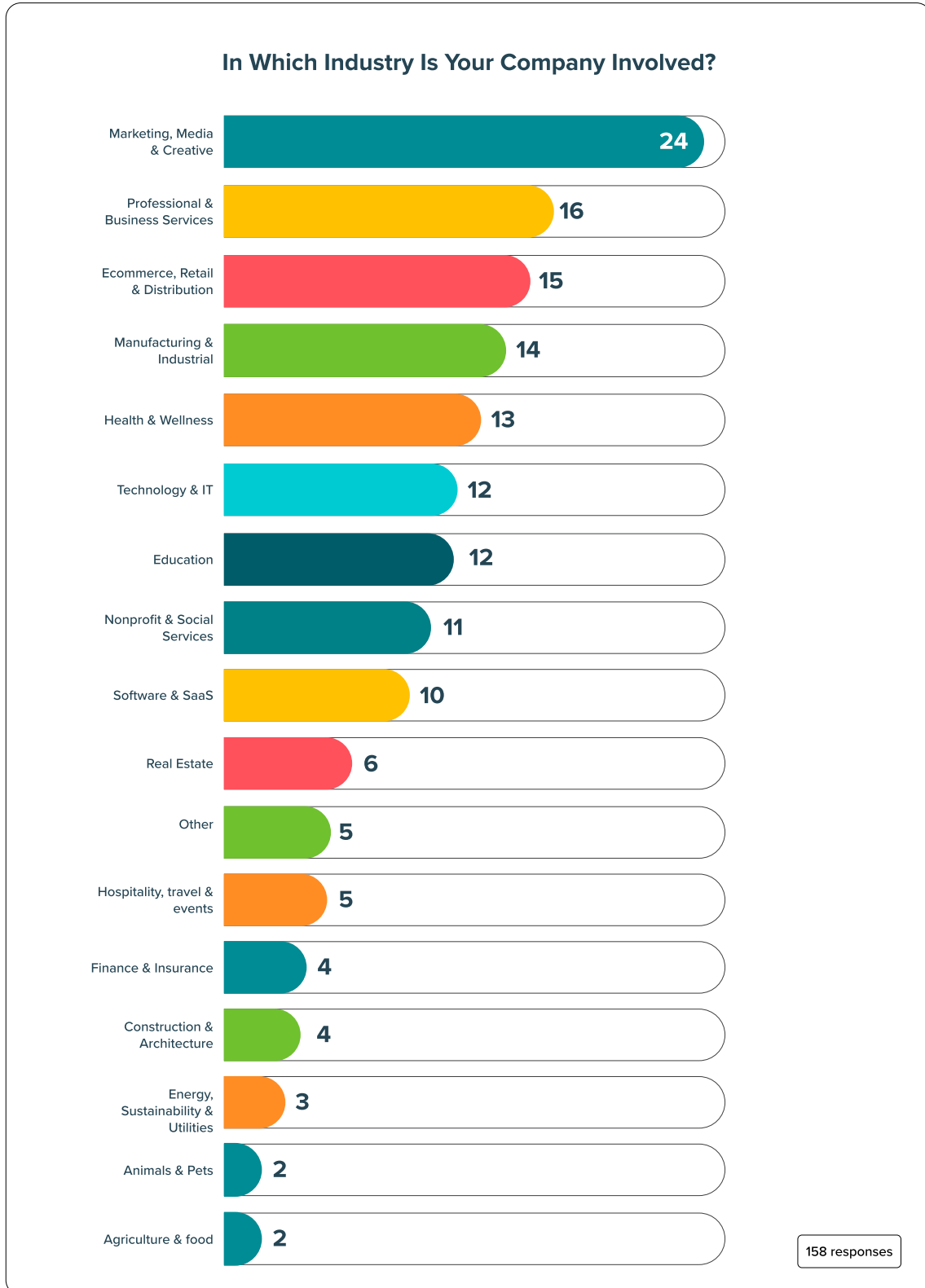
42% Hybrid

29% Remote

The majority of our responses came from the Marketing, Media & Creative fields. Other well-represented industries included:

- Professional & Business Services.
- Ecommerce, Retail & Distribution.
- Manufacturing & Industrial.

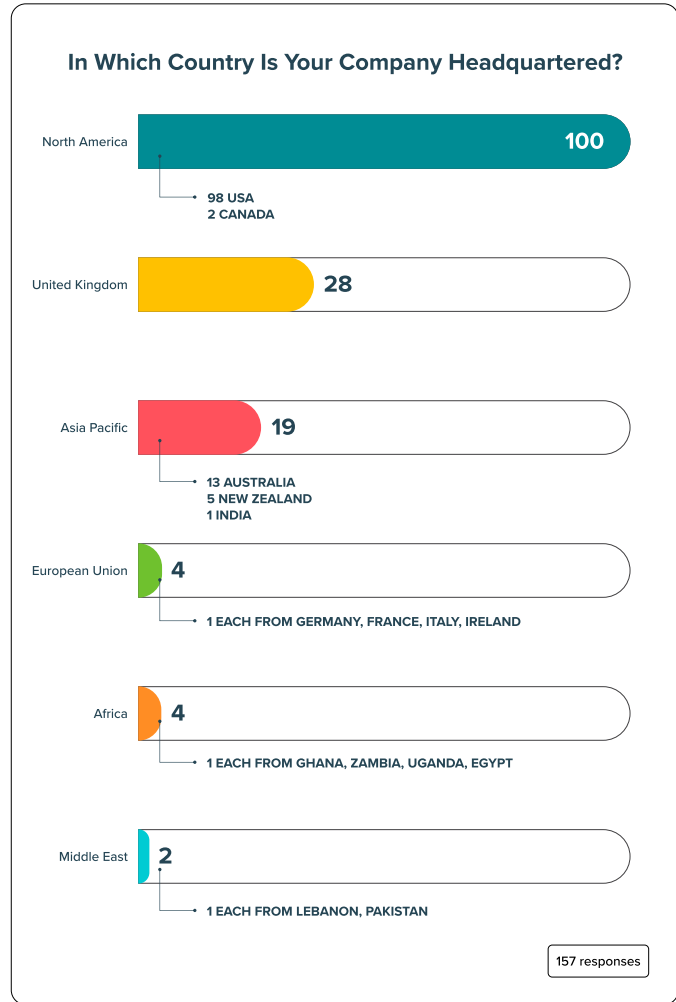
- Health & Wellness.
- Technology & IT.
- Education.



REGION

Our survey went ‘round the world, and we heard from marketers from all regions. The majority of our respondents reported being based in the USA, but we also heard from marketers from Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom.

Here’s what we learned about how marketers’ AI use unfolded in 2025, where the industry’s biggest challenges and concerns were and what we foresee for the future of AI in marketing.

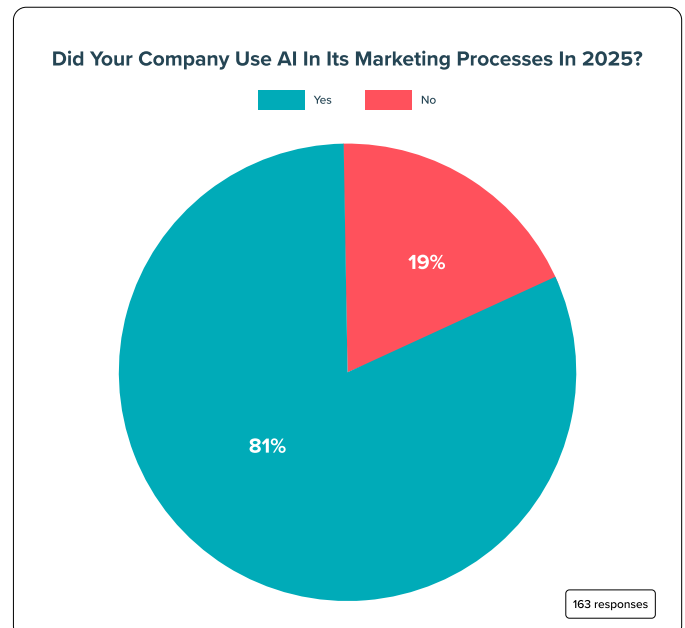


THE BIG PICTURE

Who’s Using AI for Marketing?

81% of respondents reported using AI in their marketing processes in 2025. This compares to our first edition of this report, when 79.5% (of 127 respondents) said the same.

AI usage is widespread and continues to grow, but our data also revealed company-level nuance, with adoption and usage variations based on company size, industry and more.



AI Usage & Company Size

While AI adoption is relatively even across organization sizes, enterprise businesses are leading the charge, with small companies a close second.

AI Adoption by Company Size

84% Small (1–20 employees)

81% Medium (21–50 employees)

74% Large (51–500 employees)

87% Enterprise (501+ employees)

AI Usage & Industry

Adoption rates varied by industry. While our survey found that 81% of marketers overall were using AI at work, isolating by industry revealed a different picture.

Top 4 High-Usage Industries

Industries with high AI usage include:

92% Marketing, Media & Creative

92% Technology & IT

88% Professional & Business Services

86% Manufacturing & Industrial

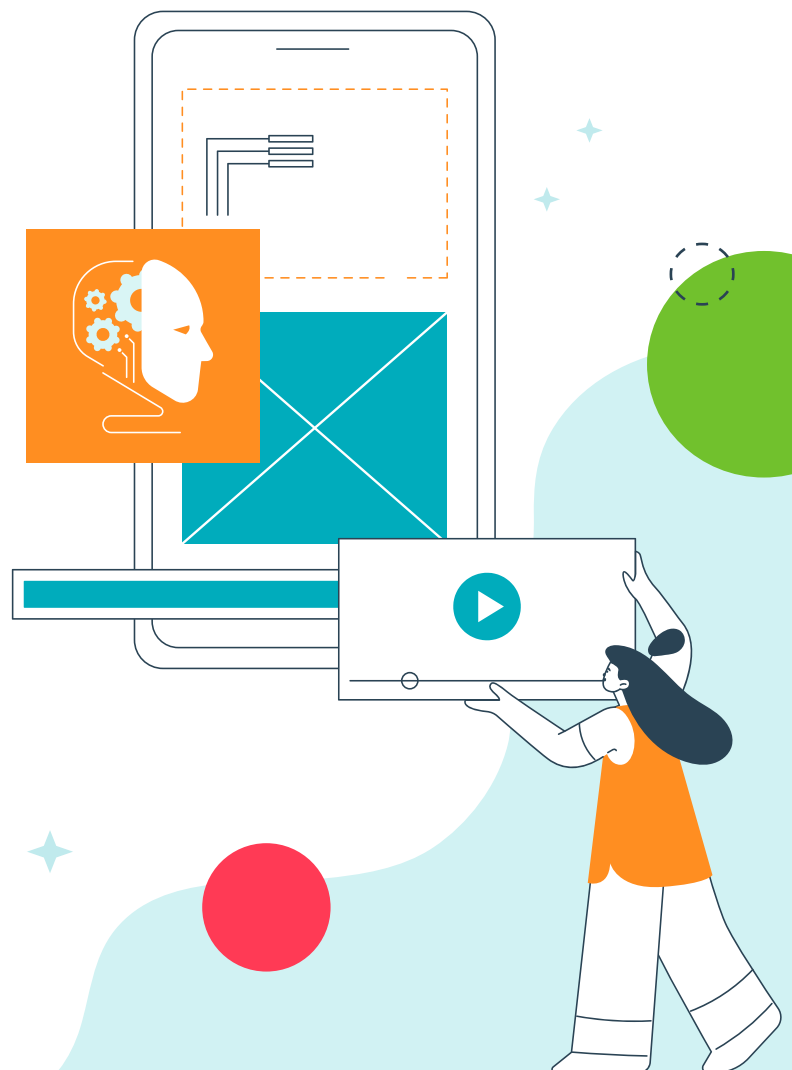
Meanwhile, several industries showed notably lower AI adoption rates. In particular, there were three industries for which we heard from 10 or more people with an adoption rate lower than 80%:

Top 3 Low-Usage Industries

77% Health & Wellness

60% Software & SaaS

55% Nonprofit & Social Services



FIRST-TIMER OR OLD-TIMER?

A Look at AI Adoption Curves

Even though most marketers we surveyed indicated that they used AI tools in 2025, adoption curves varied by organization size, which may tell us something about maturity levels and the organizational impact of AI.

When asked about how their AI use in 2025 compared to the past, most reported a significant increase:

- We used it a lot more in 2025 than previously: **62%**
- This was the first year we used it: **18%**
- We used it a little bit more in 2025 than previously: **14%**
- We used it more or less the same in 2025 as in 2024: **5%**
- We reduced our AI usage in 2025 compared to 2024: **1%**



Diving deeper into the group who said they used AI “a lot more,” we start to see clear trends in terms of who is moving quickly into the AI era:

By organization size:

49% Small (1–20 employees)

69% Medium (21–50 employees)

68% Large (51–500 employees)

76% Enterprise (501+ employees)

Here, we see that our highest use group (enterprise) is also the fastest growing. Meanwhile, small businesses — though taking second place in terms of overall AI use — were the least likely to report significant increases.

By industry:

- Manufacturing & Industrial: **83%**
- Ecommerce, Retail & Distribution: **75%**
- Technology & IT: **73%**
- Health & Wellness: **70%**
- Education: **70%**
- Professional & Business Services: **64%**
- Marketing, Media & Creative: **57%**

In this view, we can see that among high-usage and low-usage industries alike, adoption is growing. Manufacturing & Industrial respondents, our No. 4 industry for AI use overall, were most likely to say their usage was significantly higher in 2025 than previously.

Health & Wellness, one of our low-usage industries, also increased AI usage notably last year. Another 20% from Health & Wellness indicated they used AI “a little bit more” in 2025 than previously.

Comparatively, just 56% of our No. 1 AI usage industry — Marketing, Media & Creative — said the same. Another 26% said they either used it more or less the same, or just a little bit more, in 2025 than previously.

First-Time AI Users

Although most companies ramped up AI usage, we uncovered a not-insignificant share of first-time AI users. 18% of overall respondents indicated that 2025 marked their first year using AI tools.

Of that group, small businesses represent the largest share of first-timers, with large businesses and medium businesses nearly tied for second:

24% Small (1–20 employees)

15% Medium (21–50 employees)

17% Large (51–500 employees)

4% Enterprise (501+ employees)

While a fair share of small- through large-sized companies found their footing with AI last year — especially small businesses, with nearly one-quarter adopting AI for the first time — just 4% of enterprise organizations reported the same.

Enterprises being the least likely to be first-time AI users, and most likely to have ramped up usage significantly last year, is a great example of the classic ‘enterprise adoption curve’: slower start, prove value and scale aggressively.

Looking at first-time adoption by industry, we start to see more nuance to these patterns:

First-time AI users by industry:

- Professional & Business Services: 29%**
- Technology & IT: 27%**
- Marketing, Media & Creative: 17%**

Meanwhile, no one from the Manufacturing & Industry sector reported being a first-time user.

Late Adopters

Among the 19% of respondents who said they didn’t use AI in marketing in 2025, most indicated that their companies have never used AI, while a handful (just 5 respondents) said they used it in the past but decided not to last year.

But that doesn’t necessarily mean they’ve taken a permanent vow against using the technology.

Among those whose companies have held out on AI adoption:

23% say they have plans to adopt AI in 2026.

A majority, 43%, are unsure whether they'll adopt AI in 2026.

33% say they have no concrete plans to adopt AI in 2026; however, that could change.

There are numerous reasons companies may choose not to adopt AI just yet. Our respondents highlighted a few common themes. The top 4 reasons companies didn't adopt AI were:

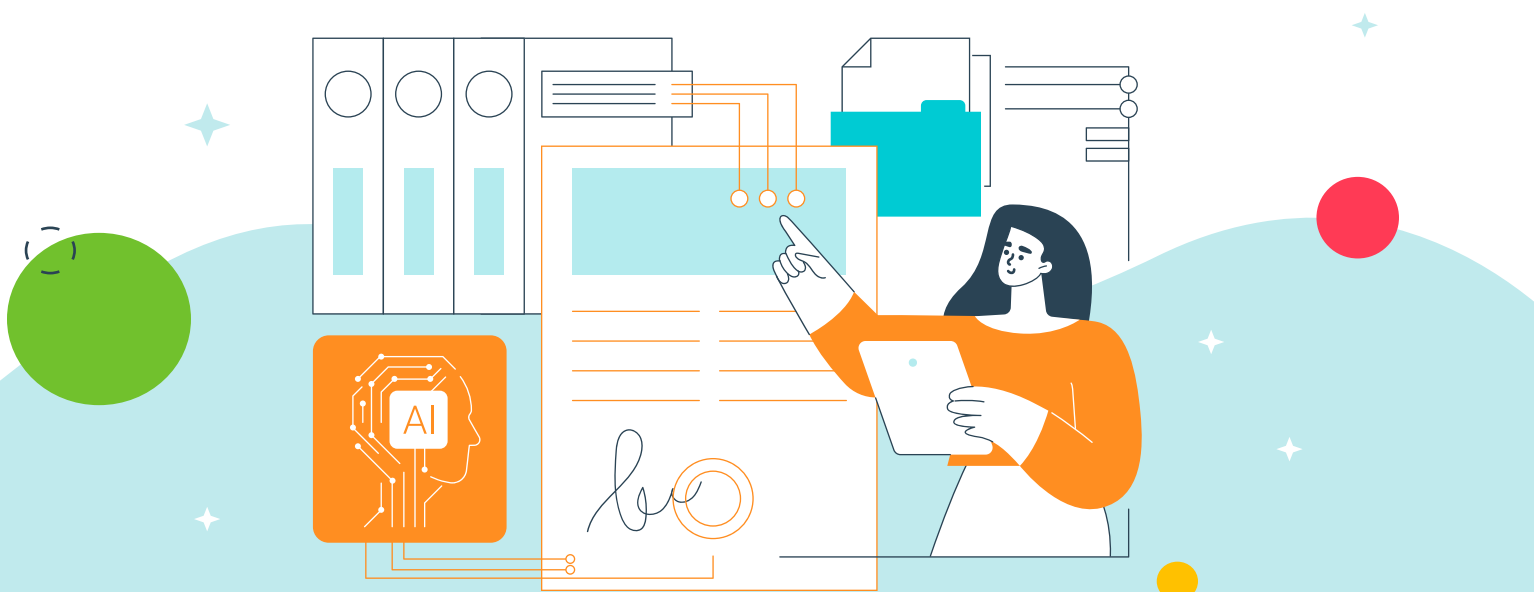
Moral, ethical and environmental concerns top the list, highlighting that hesitation isn't purely technical, but also values-driven.

At the same time, concerns around output quality, data privacy and tool fit suggest many marketers might still be evaluating whether AI is reliable and relevant enough for their needs. As standards evolve and tools improve, both sets of concerns may begin to ease.

Marketers who are concerned about quality, privacy and tool fit — who might otherwise be curious about trying AI — can mitigate those barriers by:

- Keeping humans in the loop to ensure quality.
- Choosing AI vendors with clear data privacy and security standards.
- Investing in tools designed for their specific workflows rather than one-size-fits-all solutions.

- 1** Moral, ethical and/or environmental concerns.
- 2** Lack of confidence in the quality of AI output.
- 3** Data privacy concerns.
- 4** AI tools we've seen don't fit our needs.



AI Budgets

A majority of respondents (58%) indicated that they are allowed a small budget for AI tools, while just 8% noted that AI tools were a “key component” of their martech stacks. About 1-in-3 marketers said they were only using free versions of AI tools.

Interestingly, enterprise marketers were the least likely to affirm they had even a small AI budget, and most likely to use free tools only. At the same time, enterprises were the most likely to say that AI was a core part of their martech stack.

A possible explanation is that enterprise marketers treat AI as core infrastructure conceptually, but operationally, it remains decentralized and likely embedded in existing tools, where it doesn’t necessarily register as dedicated AI spend as a standalone tool might.

Organization Size	Yes, a small budget for AI tools	No; we’re only using free versions of AI tools	Yes, AI tools are a key component of our martech stack this year
Small	61%	35%	4%
Medium	62%	39%	0%
Large	65%	21%	15%
Enterprise	38%	43%	19%

Adoption Is Outpacing Education

While most organizations use AI in some capacity, formal training hasn’t kept pace. Many marketers are learning how to use AI effectively through their own experimentation:

- **61%** of respondents say they aren’t currently, or have never, received formal AI training and are just learning to use tools as they go.
- **21%** indicate that they are currently undergoing, or anticipate undergoing, formal training soon.
- **18%** indicate that only “some people” at their companies are set to receive formal AI training.

With most marketers self-teaching AI tools, adoption appears to be bottom-up rather than organization-led, driven by individual initiative rather than structured programs.

Among the industries represented in our survey data, the Professional & Business Services sector is most likely to provide formal AI training.

The Impact

The most common AI benefits marketers report relate to speed and productivity:

36% of respondents

said that AI has enabled them to complete tasks more quickly.

32% of respondents

said that they're able to "do more things" with AI than without.

The ability to complete tasks faster and take on more work highlights AI's growing role as a productivity multiplier for marketing teams focused on clear, measurable workflow improvements.

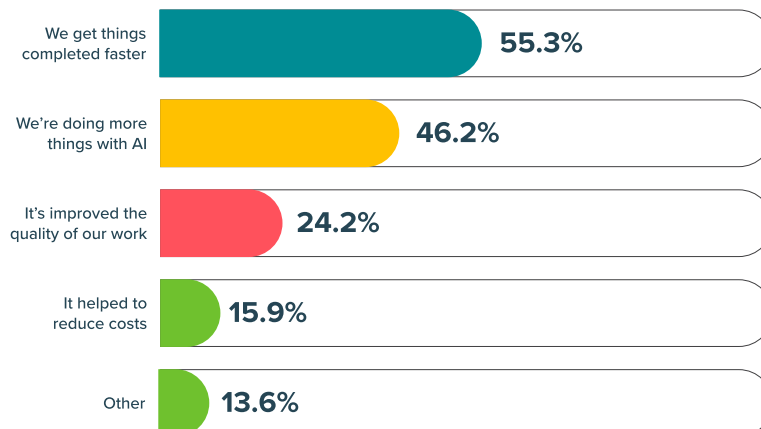
A relatively small share of respondents (15%) said AI has helped them improve the quality of their work, while others stand against such a notion:

"Quality: No. Time: Yes. We use it to summarize documents, which we could do [ourselves], but [AI] does it faster, even though errors are not infrequent. So it's a good rough draft."



Improved outcome quality, reduced costs and "other" impacts were present but small compared to speed and scale. Because improved quality was reported less frequently, it may emerge later as teams become more skilled with AI tools. Cost reduction, too, appears to be a secondary benefit, indicating teams are using AI primarily to increase output rather than reduce budgets.

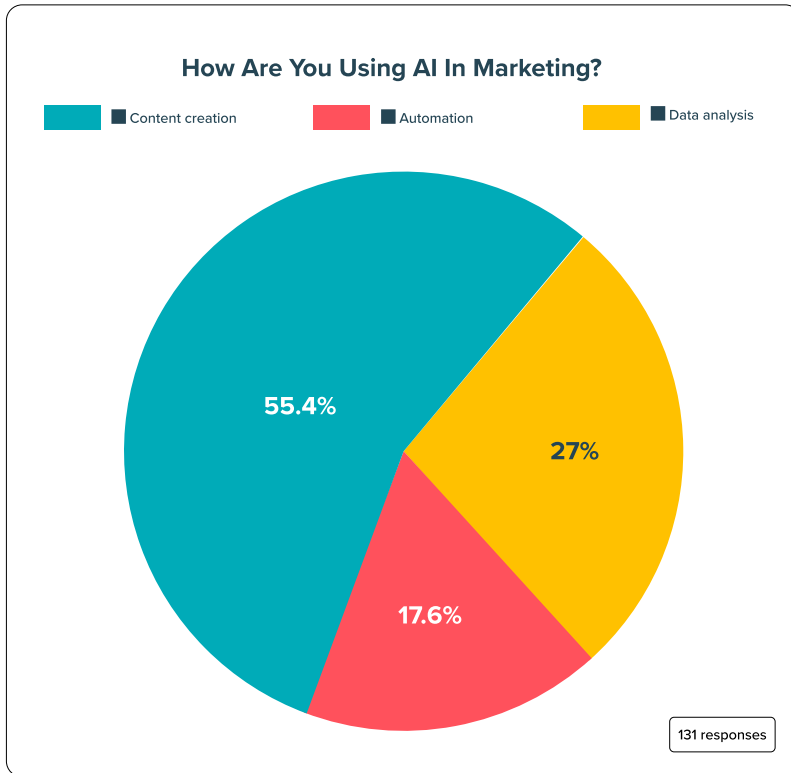
How Has AI Adoption Impacted Your Team?



132 responses

How Marketers Are Using AI

Speaking of speed and scale: Most respondents (55%) are applying those benefits to the content creation process:



Of course, content creation comprises many different tasks — so we asked marketers about how they’re applying AI across their content workflows. A majority are using AI for:

- 73%** Headlines & Metadata
- 69%** Research & Planning
- 69%** Email & Social Copy
- 65%** Outlining
- 57%** Ideation & Brainstorming
- 57%** Website Copy

AI for data analysis takes 27% of the pie while automation, perhaps surprisingly, was less common at just 18%.

AI for automation wasn’t as popular in 2025 as efficiency and scale, with about 17% of respondents using AI to automate customer support, workflows, content schedules and personalization. Based on this year’s data and low automation usage, AI seems most popular as a task-level tool and isn’t quite operationalized just yet.



Marketers' Biggest Concerns & Post-Generation Processes

Marketers are indeed using AI quite a lot, but that doesn't mean they're without concerns. They're moving forward consciously and carefully to win AI's efficiency gains without sacrificing content quality or brand reputation.

Top Concerns About AI Output

A vast majority of marketers, 70%, indicated that thin or generic-sounding content is their biggest concern related to generative AI output. There's a wide gap between generic content and marketers' next top concern: that generative AI references outdated or incorrect information.

Here's what marketers worry about most when working with AI:

70% Thin or generic content

42% Outdated or incorrect information

36% Time it takes to refine AI copy

34% Doesn't accurately reflect expertise

26% Content is off-brand

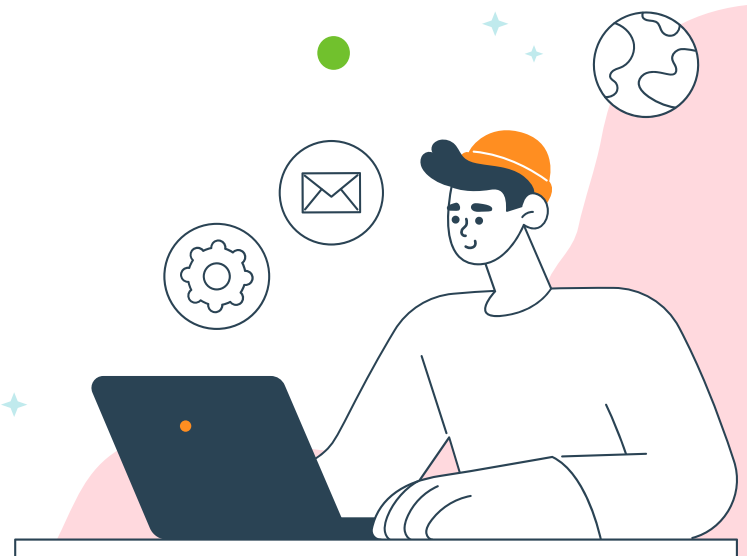
13% Content is irrelevant to their audience

While it's true that many AI tools produce outputs with a bland voice that tends to betray its origins, all of these concerns can be mitigated with the right tools and processes in place. For example, using marketing-specific platforms and having required human checkpoints for all content can reduce each of these obstacles.

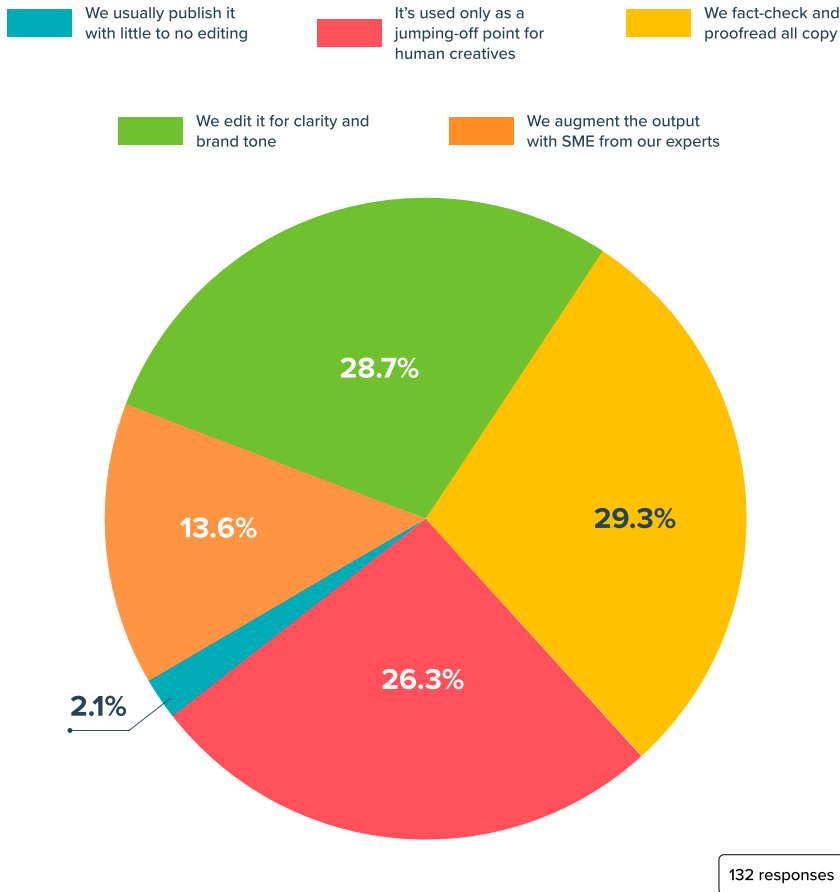
How Marketers Handle AI Output

Those two most pressing AI content pain points — thin, generic content and outdated or incorrect information — explain why most respondents almost always:

- Fact-check and proofread AI output.
- Edit AI output for clarity, tone and brand adherence.
- Use AI output strictly as a blueprint for creative work they intend to write themselves or assign to someone else.



How Do You Typically Handle Generative AI Output?



A smaller portion of marketers (13%) hand off AI output to internal SMEs for review and editing. Although that's a smaller share of marketers for now, it's great to see that some respondents are leaning on in-house expertise for AI content support.

This could be a reflection of marketers trying to imbue more authority and expertise into their content. Internal SME is often overlooked and underutilized, but it can deliver insights that fuel a higher level of content distinction that's hard-matched by anything else. Those are the trust signals that search engines and audiences alike seek out.

Just 2% of our respondents indicated that publishing with little to no human intervention is a common practice; even so, this is too high a figure. Allowing unchecked AI-generated content to go out is a risky decision, and in time is likely to erode brand voice and cut into consumer trust.

Marketers are compelled by the benefits AI can deliver, but they also understand the importance of upholding their hard-earned reputations and quality standards, and are keeping humans in the loop before pushing content.

Many of the concerns marketers highlighted in our survey were familiar concepts. Our team that attended the 2025 Technology for Marketing Summit in London heard similar challenges from attendees.



“What stood out most was the sheer scale of interest in AI for marketing and how so many businesses, regardless of size, are looking for better solutions,” said Cecelia Thornett, trial manager for contentmarketing.ai.

CHOOSE YOUR TOOL

Top AI Platforms, Training Rates & Integration

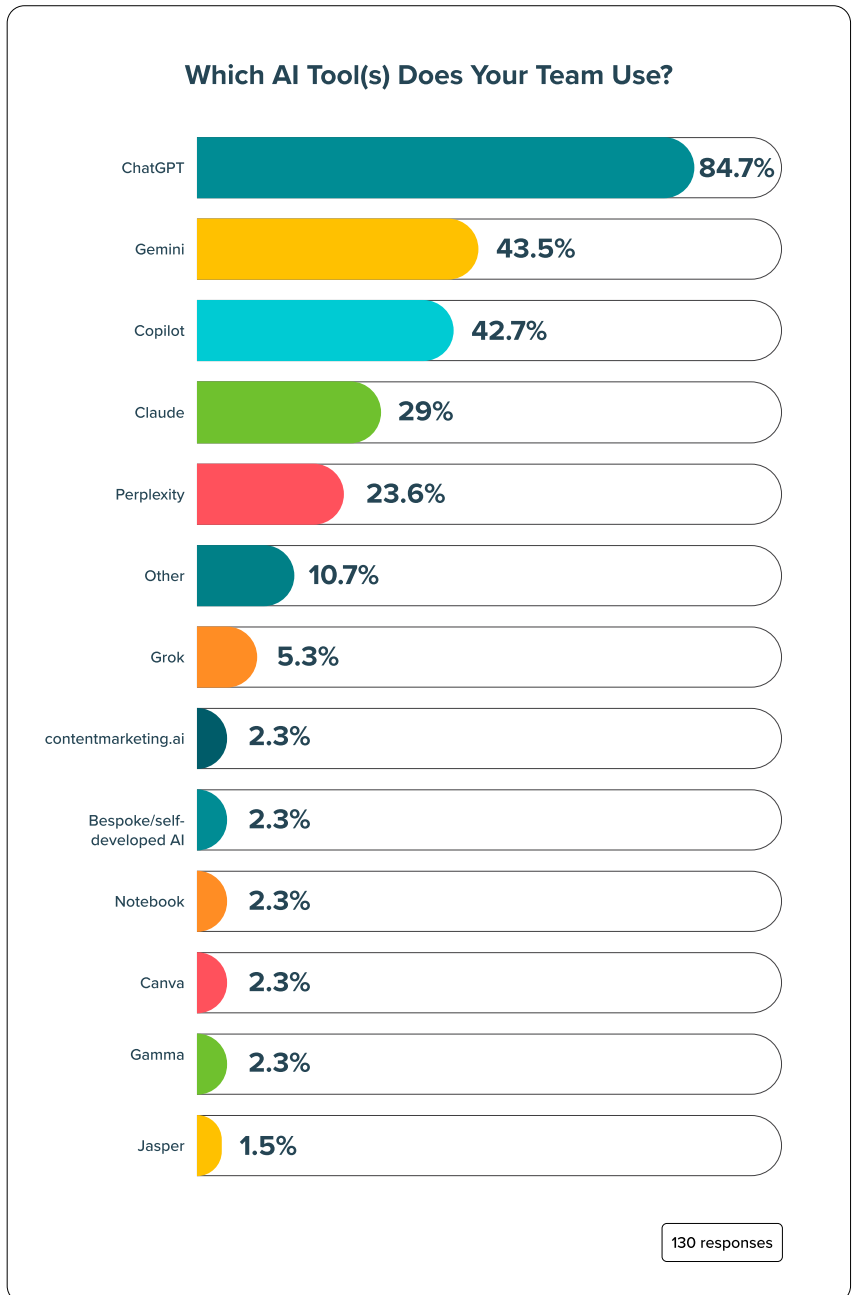
There are a lot of AI tools out there today, but one in particular continues to outperform all others in terms of usership. ChatGPT topped 85% of marketers' lists as their go-to option. That's no surprise, considering more than a quarter of U.S. workers report using the tool, according to OpenAI, including over 700 million weekly active users.

The brand is universally recognizable and widely accessible, offering a range of pricing tiers — from free to enterprise — that make it easy for marketers of all types to try it out and unlock more features as they see fit.

Beyond ChatGPT, other major AI providers and their tools continue to be popular choices. Runners-up, in order among our respondents, include:

- 44%** Gemini
- 43%** Copilot
- 29%** Claude
- 24%** Perplexity

A couple of marketers even indicated that they're using bespoke, self-developed AI tools; however, the vast majority are opting for off-the-shelf options.



AI Training by Tool Choice

Who’s learning as they go, and who has had formal training? When asked about educational programs, we found that answers varied when looking at AI tool choice:

Martech stacks that include...	No: We’re just learning as we go	Partially: Some people have or will go through AI training	Yes: Everyone has or will go through AI training
ChatGPT (85%)	61%	20%	19%
Gemini (44%)	61%	14%	25%
Copilot (43%)	43%	27%	30%
Claude (29%)	68%	11%	22%
Perplexity (24%)	80%	10%	10%

Copilot users stand out as the most likely to have some amount of training. Perhaps this is a product of Microsoft’s long-time standing as a staple office solutions provider; they already have significant resources and training materials online, with a professional following that’s ready to learn more.

AI POLICY

Governance Lags Behind Adoption

While most marketers are already using AI, the majority (58%) still lack formal governance structures. Even so, this represents a reduction from our inaugural survey, when 73% of marketers said the same, highlighting the pace at which AI policies are being adopted.

Organization Size & Policy Likelihood

The size of an organization appears to play a role in how likely it is to have a formal AI policy. Large companies lead the way, while medium-sized organizations seriously lag.

27% Small companies

39% Large companies

11% Medium companies

23% Enterprise organizations

Industry & Policy Likelihood

AI policy adoption also varies by industry, with Professional & Business Services leading the way:

17% Professional & Business Services

13% Marketing, Media & Creative

11% Technology & IT

11% Education

9% Ecommerce, Retail & Distribution

AI Policy Specifications

AI policies are not a one-size-fits-all document. Given the lack of federal-level AI governance in many parts of the world, organizations are largely free to develop internal policies as they see fit for their purposes and security, without worrying about overarching regulatory compliance just yet.

42% of marketers said their organization has a formal AI policy in place, and that they mostly focus on input, task and tool regulation, as well as output review expectations and disclosure.

When asked what their policies specified, marketers highlighted a few common themes:

What information can or cannot be fed into AI **70%**

Which activities can or cannot be done with AI **68%**

Which tools are allowed to be used, or are required to be used **58%**

How marketers are expected to work with or review output **46%**

Disclosing AI usage in published content **42%**

Less-popular specifications include:

Defined roles, responsibilities and accountability checks **30%**

Checkpoints and feedback systems **23%**

Protocols to mitigate bias **19%**

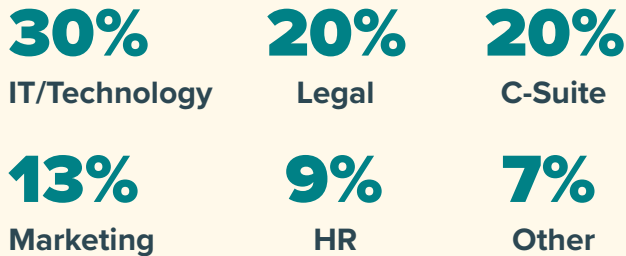
Respondent answers indicate that organizations are primarily concerned with mitigating security and compliance risk by governing what employees are permitted to use AI for — including what information they feed it — and even which tools they're approved to use.

Who Owns AI Policy?

Policy ownership varies widely. The most common department to own AI policy development and implementation is IT and Technology, though Legal, C-suite, Marketing and HR divisions are also responsible for this practice at some organizations.

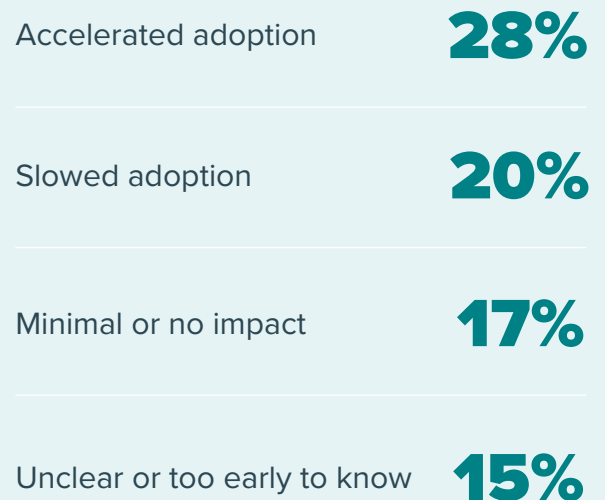
Question

Which department is responsible for the AI policy?



How Has Policy Implementation Impacted Adoption?

Sentiment around how formal AI policies have impacted adoption is divided. While some respondents say it's accelerated adoption and made it easier, others disagree, indicating it's actually slowed things down. Yet another share doesn't believe their policy has had any impact on adoption whatsoever:



Marketers Sound Off About the Future of AI In Marketing

Up until here, we've learned about how marketers are using AI, where their use differs, what challenges they're facing and how their organization supports AI adoption. But how do the marketers themselves actually feel about the growing use of this technology?

We asked all survey participants — whether they're using AI or not — to share their outlook on the future of AI adoption in marketing. Their answers tell an incongruous story, with marketers' takes ranging from highly optimistic to quite pessimistic.

Most marketers (59%) predict incremental growth and AI adoption over time as tools evolve, while others anticipate quick acceleration. This was an open-ended question, so we categorized answers into themes.

Question

What's your outlook on the future of AI adoption in marketing?

59%

Incremental or gradual growth

13%

Cautiously optimistic

11%

AI will continue to support marketers, but not replace them

5%

AI will settle into an efficiency & automation focus

6%

Strongly optimistic — adoption will greatly accelerate

1%

Uncertain

0.7%

Skeptical

0.7%

Governance, risk & trust concerns will mount

This question is a big one in our industry right now and inspired many of our survey participants to submit a thoughtful answer. Let's explore what marketers have to say about the future of AI adoption:

SENTIMENT

AI as Support for Marketers, Not Replacement



"I think that there ALWAYS needs to be a human element. AI is great for helping generate ideas and helping to "tidy up" or "jazz up" content ideas but it always needs that human contribution."

"AI will continue to play a part in our marketing, particularly to generate additional assets from content already created (i.e., social media posts based on human-written articles). It won't ever be the sole point of content creation."

"I think (and hope) AI will be used to simplify the tasks that can be automated and assist humans in the actual creation of content. [...] I fear that AI will be an opportunity for execs and corporations to eliminate marketing professionals, leading to an exponential decline in the product and content's value and effectiveness. In contrast, I do think we are already seeing a resurgence in the customer's appreciation of designer work, which gives me hope that marketing and design will continue to be valued careers."

SENTIMENT

Cautiously Optimistic



“Cautiously optimistic. I want to learn more — I really enjoy the creativity it helps me unlock but am also nervous about losing my voice or style.”

“It’s a supremely useful tool but I do fear that things will start all sounding the same in marketing and advertising if we aren’t careful. It will all become AI slop. Or that there would be a growing amount of people [who] could be upset that AI is being used in a brand’s marketing and boycott it.”

SENTIMENT

Strongly Optimistic

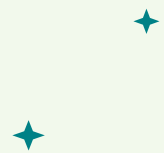


“We are optimistic! We would love to see more AI professional development opportunities, especially regarding school admissions and marketing, that will help us continue to improve efficiency, communications, and ROI. We are a small team, and AI has helped us reach many goals!”

“With the current pace of adoption and advancement in both capabilities and operational efficiencies, AI will continue to become increasingly integrated into all aspects of marketing, sales and operations. This is obviously the most transformative technology, potentially ever, especially for creative work so it will significantly improve the quality and depth of marketing efforts, allowing teams and companies of all sizes, across all industries, at every maturity level, to deliver highly-effective, personalized marketing campaigns with far less resources and budgets.”

SENTIMENT

Incremental Growth



“A train that’s coming fast. It can’t be stopped. Get on board or get run over.”

“People will continue to use AI and rely on it for content outputs, but the landscape will sound increasingly like AI ‘workslop’ until most people develop a distaste for any content that sounds remotely AI-aided.”



SENTIMENT

Skeptical

“AI ‘Slop’ is getting a fairly negative reaction from the voluntary and community sector - especially one that works quite closely with artists, poets and writers. With AI continually plagiarising work, and including vast amounts of information that it has taken without permission, it becomes quite difficult to use AI in a way that is ethical..

In a more practical sense, tests that have been made with AI have shown it to not be fit for purpose. The ‘mistakes’ and ‘hallucinations’ that it is prone to have meant that more time is spent checking the work of AI, than making it ourselves. Much of this is because the mistakes are subtle, and can be difficult to spot in large documents and press releases.”

Conclusion

This year’s results show that most marketers and executives have largely moved well beyond curiosity and are actively embedding AI into daily marketing workflows.

What stands out most, though, isn’t just how widely AI is used, but how unevenly organizations appear to formalize its use. Teams are moving toward AI quickly, and our data suggests it’s often without structures, training or guardrails. Even so, the marketer’s role remains intact, with human judgment acting as the necessary counterbalance to automation.

As adoption deepens, the challenge ahead is less about access to AI and more about intentionality: building the skills, systems and standards that turn widespread use into sustainable advantage.



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