

The impact of Gen AI on media practices

WFA Research – July 2025



45 respondents from 37 multinational brands

\$84 billion cumulative annual marketing spend

The objective of this survey was to better understand how generative and agentic AI is reshaping media practices.

The results of the survey will feed into the work of WFA's AI Community and Media Forum to help **brands leverage AI in an effective, efficient and responsible way.**

This survey was targeted at global and regional media leads within client-side brands.

There were 45 respondents from 37 multinational brands, representing \$84 billion in cumulative annual marketing spend.



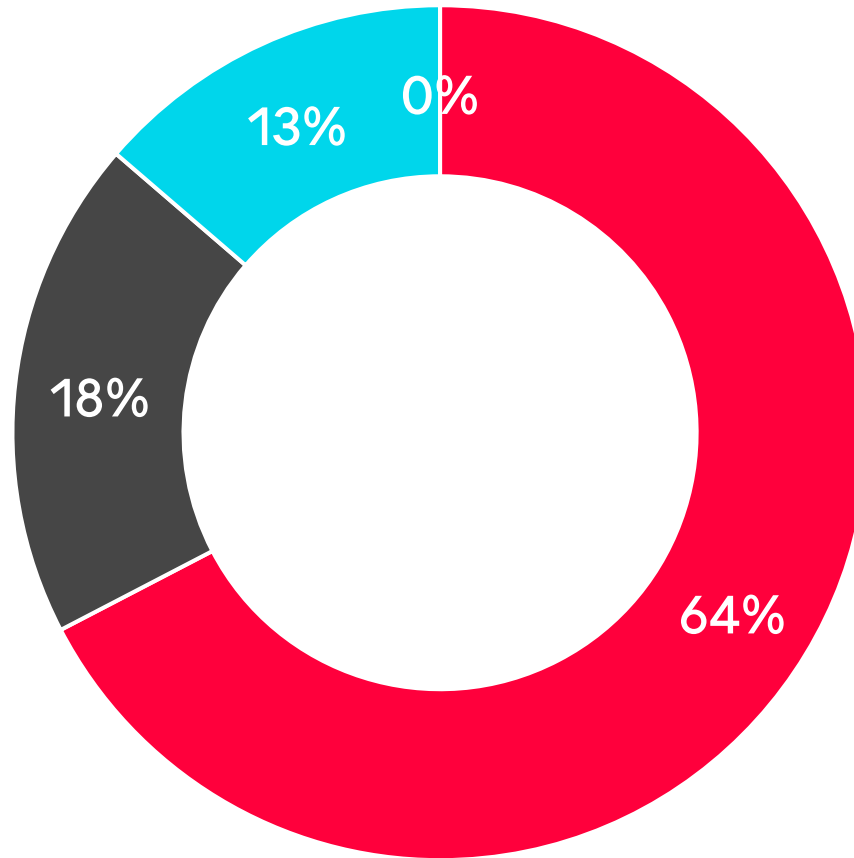
Note: All WFA benchmarks, survey results, agendas and minutes are reviewed by King & Spalding LLP, our competition lawyers



64% say their organisation is already using Gen AI for marketing purposes

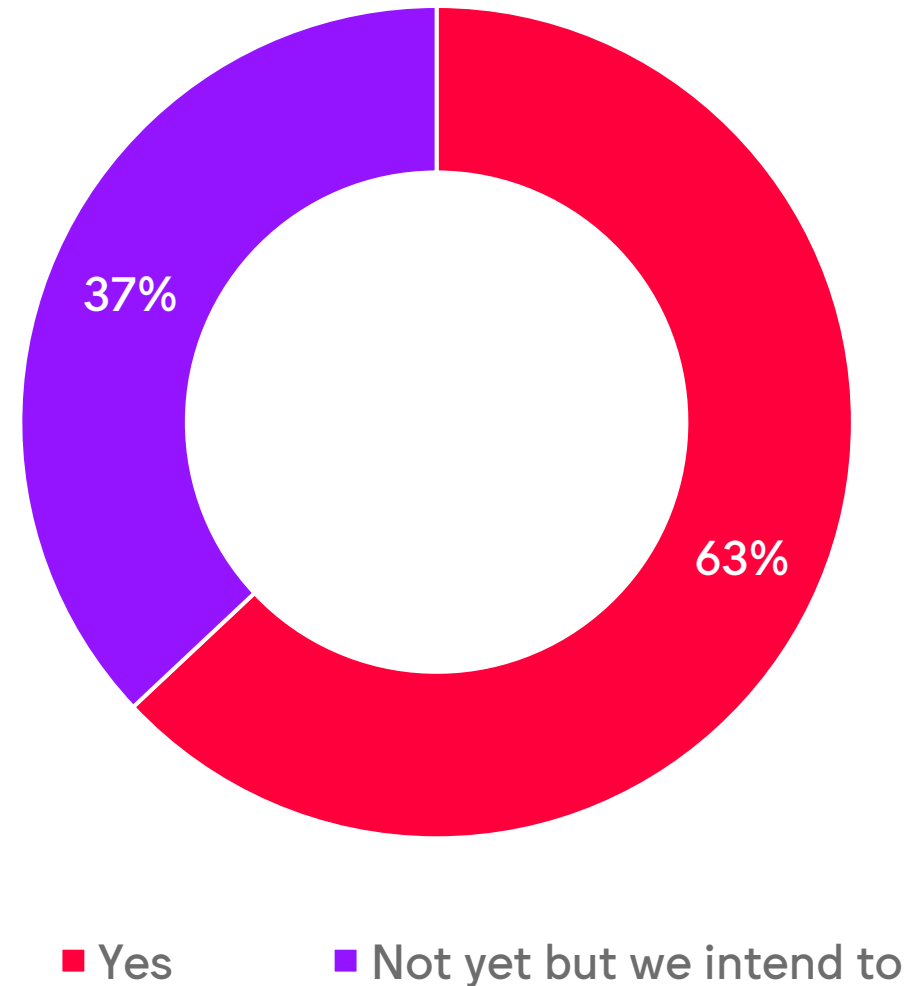
Q: Is your organisation using Gen AI for marketing purposes?

- Yes
- Not yet
- We're not but our agencies are
- No and no plans to



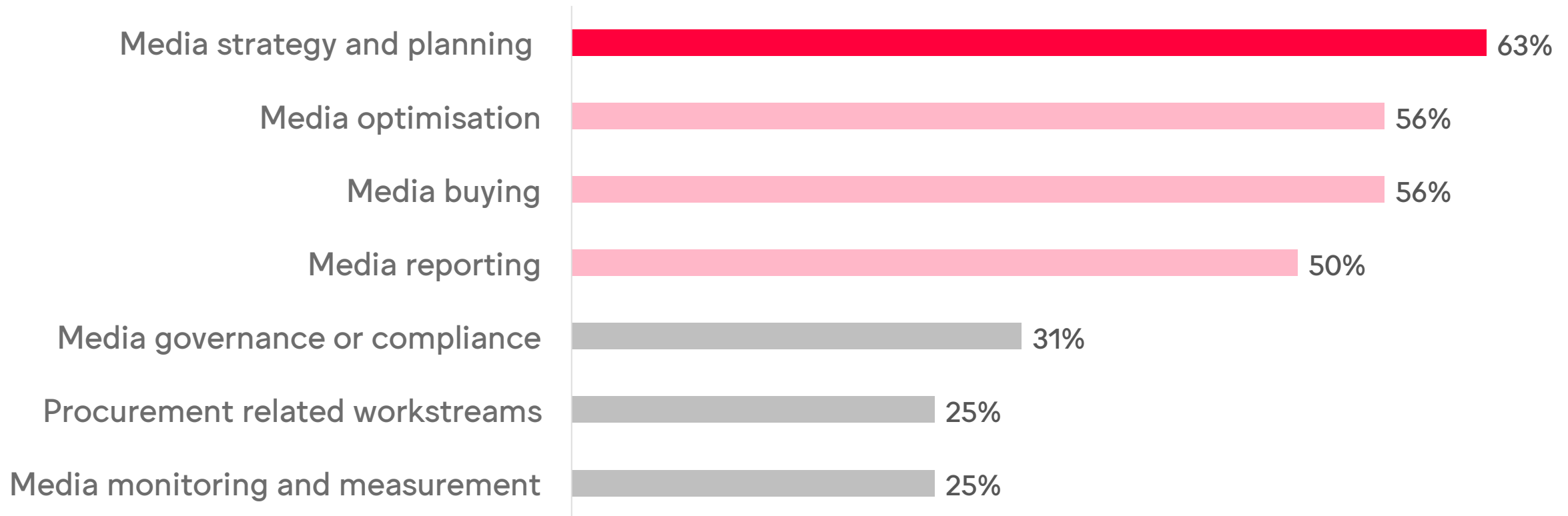
100% are using or plan to use Gen AI to support media practices

Q: Is your organisation currently using Gen AI (either directly or via partners) to support any aspect of media buying, planning or optimisation?



Media strategy, optimisation and buying are priority

Q: For which of the following purposes are you using Gen AI [select all those that apply]



Some more practical examples...

“Booking optimisation, contract comparison”

“Mid and post campaign analysis and recommendations, budget shifts and campaign planning”

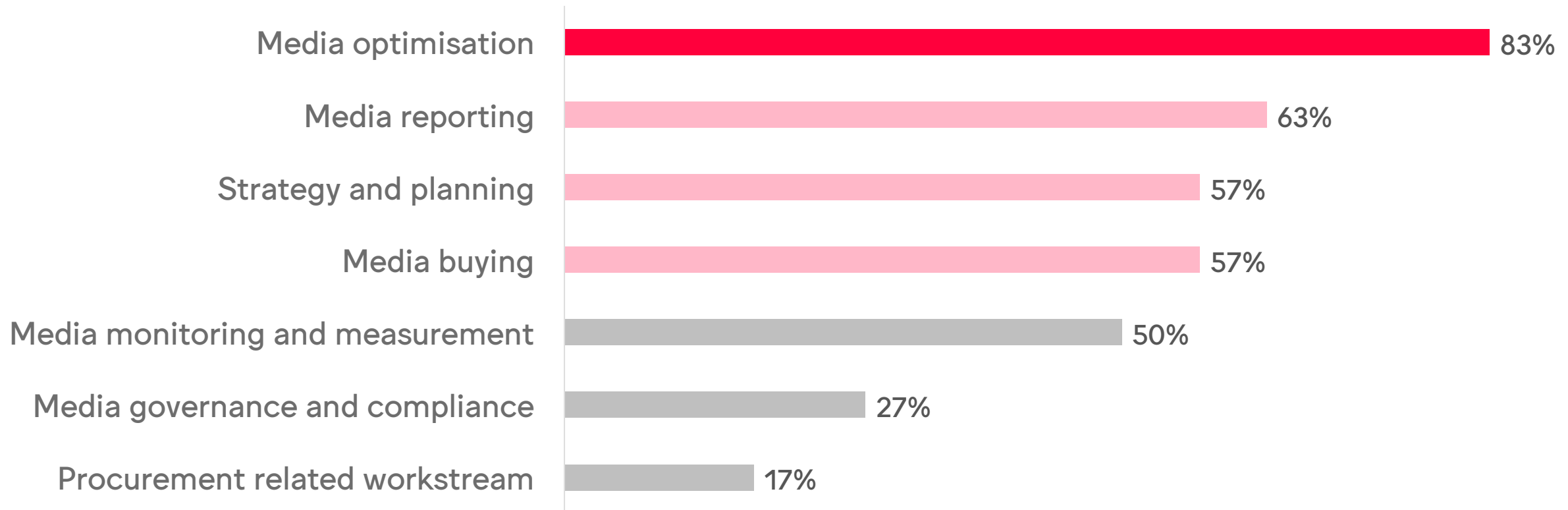
“Programmatic bidding optimisation across multiple KPIs and non-traditional KPIs (e.g. reach). Media performance data evaluation/aggregation and insight development”

“Gen AI agents for data analysis and insights gathering”

“Basic in-platform optimisations for paid media campaigns. Early investigation of some of the audience segmentation tools. For reporting we are looking to RFP a business-wide analytics dashboard partner”

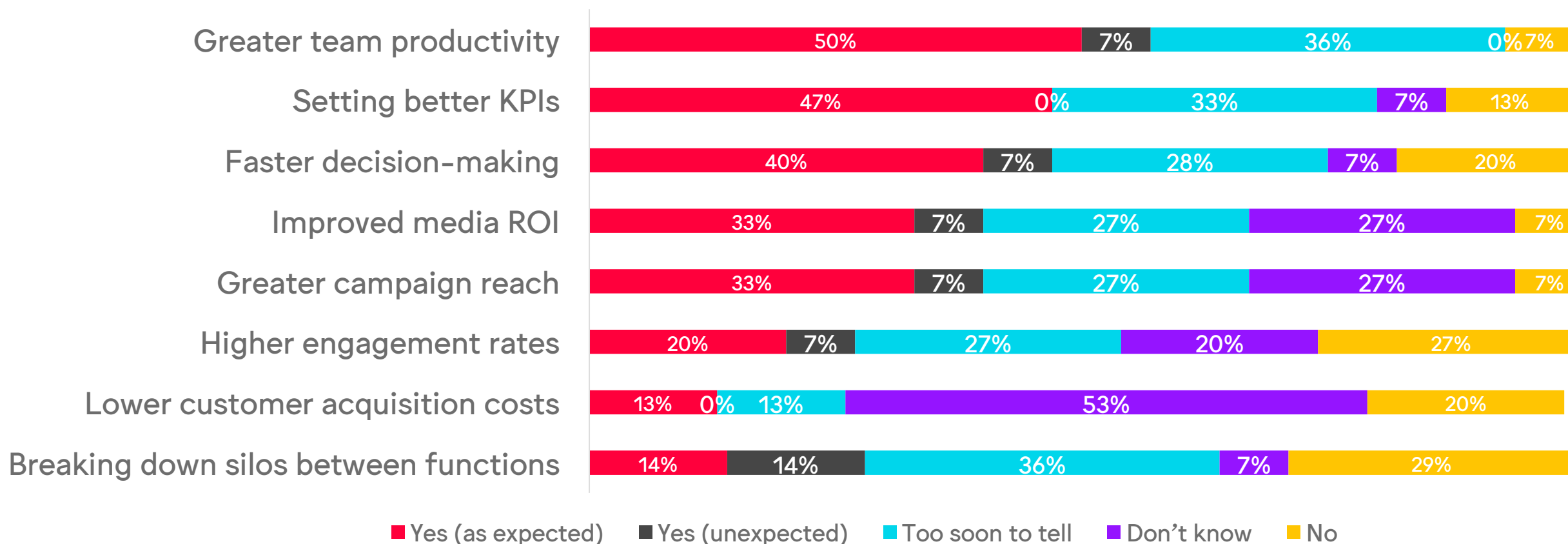
Most believe Gen AI will have the biggest impact on optimisation, reporting, strategy and buying

Q: Where do you expect Gen AI to have the most impact? [select your top three]



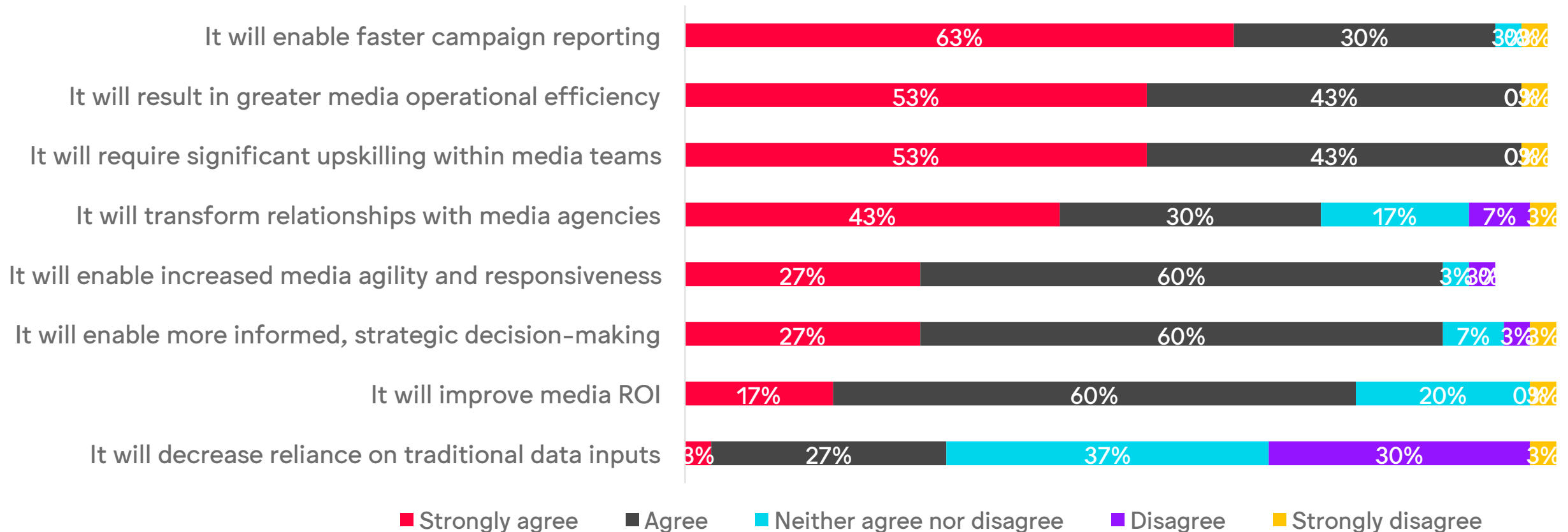
The impact has been positive... although it may still be too soon to tell

Q: What positive impacts have you observed from using Gen AI in your media operations?



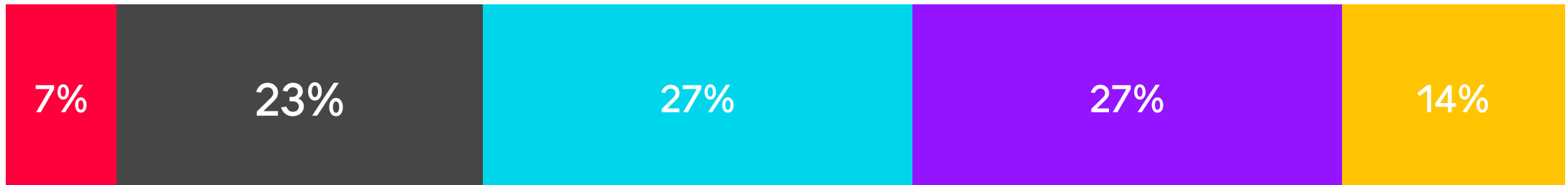
90% believe it will enable faster reporting, greater efficiency and require significant upskilling

Q: To which extent do you agree with the following statements about the impact of Gen AI?



The transformative impact on media operations has so far been minimal

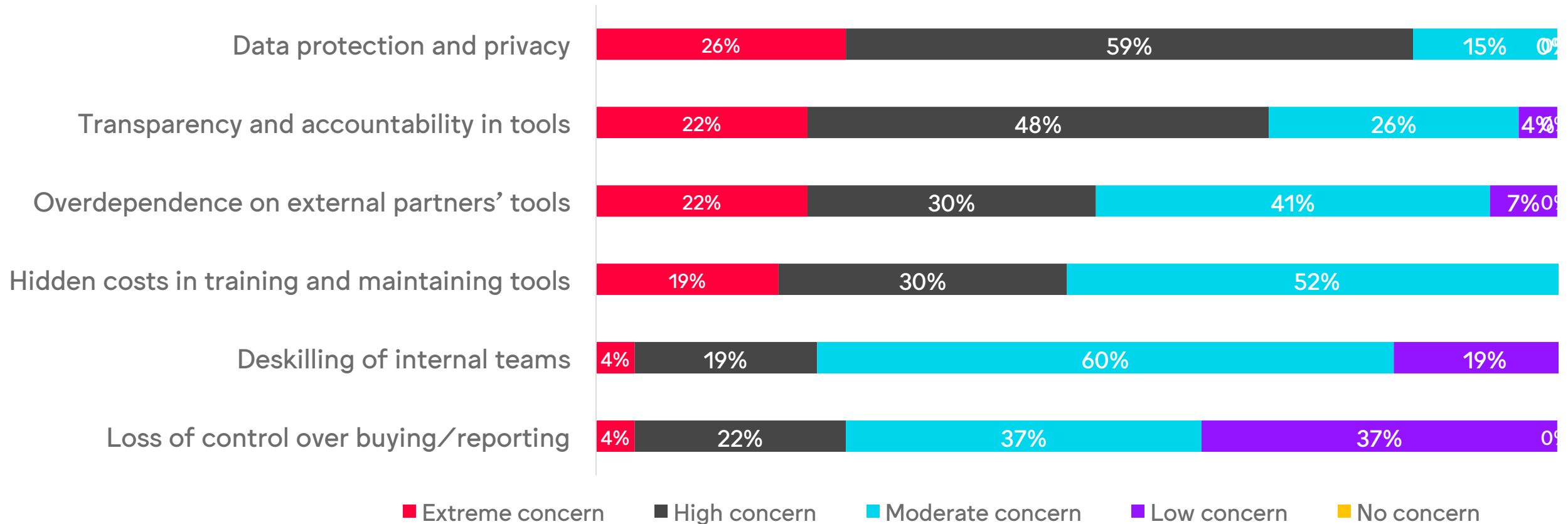
Q: What impact do you think Gen AI has had on your media operations over the last 2-3 years?



■ Complete transformation ■ Significant changes ■ Moderate change ■ Minor changes ■ No significant change

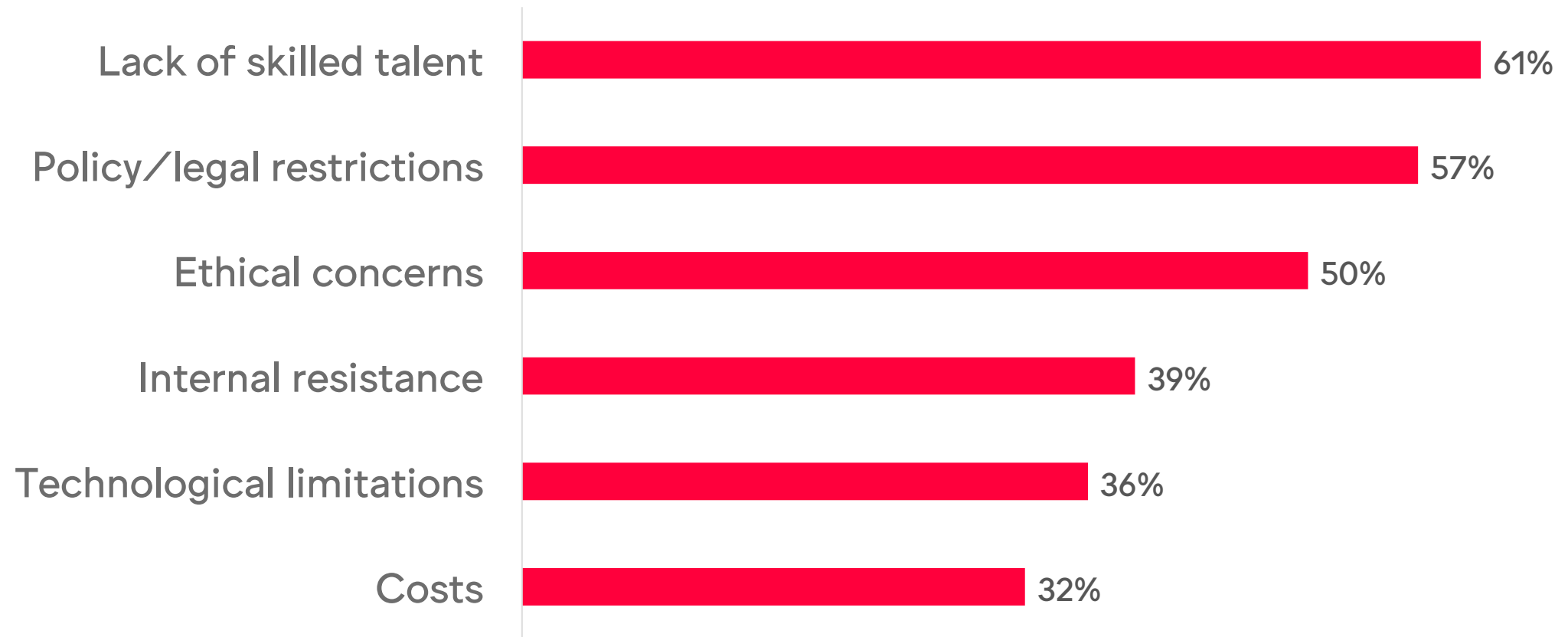
Brands have concerns about privacy and accountability of tools

Q: How concerned are you about the following when using Gen AI for media purposes?



Lack of skilled talent and legal restrictions biggest roadblocks to adoption

Q: What are the biggest challenges you face when using Gen AI for media operations?



Source: WFA survey on Gen AI and media. Base: 45

Upskilling, governance and data consolidation cited as important barriers

Q: What challenges have you faced with regards to adoption, if any?

“AI is not always the best solution vs a manual setup”

“Internal upskilling and process resetting, data consolidation and investment in building own tech”

“Governance on the use of AI (need to involve a variety of internal parties including legal), cost vs benefit of deploying AI optimisation tools vs traditional practices”

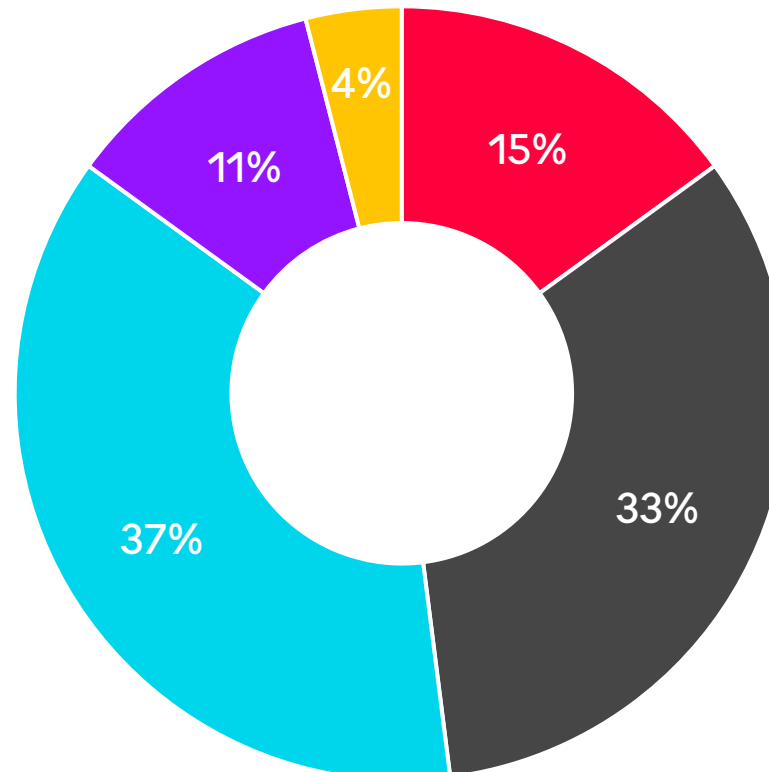
“It’s still a lot of trial and error. Efficiencies will probably come later. For now it’s about learning”

“I think everything is too soon to tell. Even in efficiency & productivity, people need to first learn how the tools work AND where they can & should trust the tools. Any time saved is actually reinvested in learning and/or questioning “why”?

Over half of brands are using or plan to use agents

Q: Are you exploring or already using semi-autonomous AI agents in media (e.g. for media planning, optimisation or reporting)?

- Yes
- Not yet but we intend to
- Not yet but our agencies are
- No and no plans to
- Don't know



Q: For what purposes?

"Post campaign analysis"

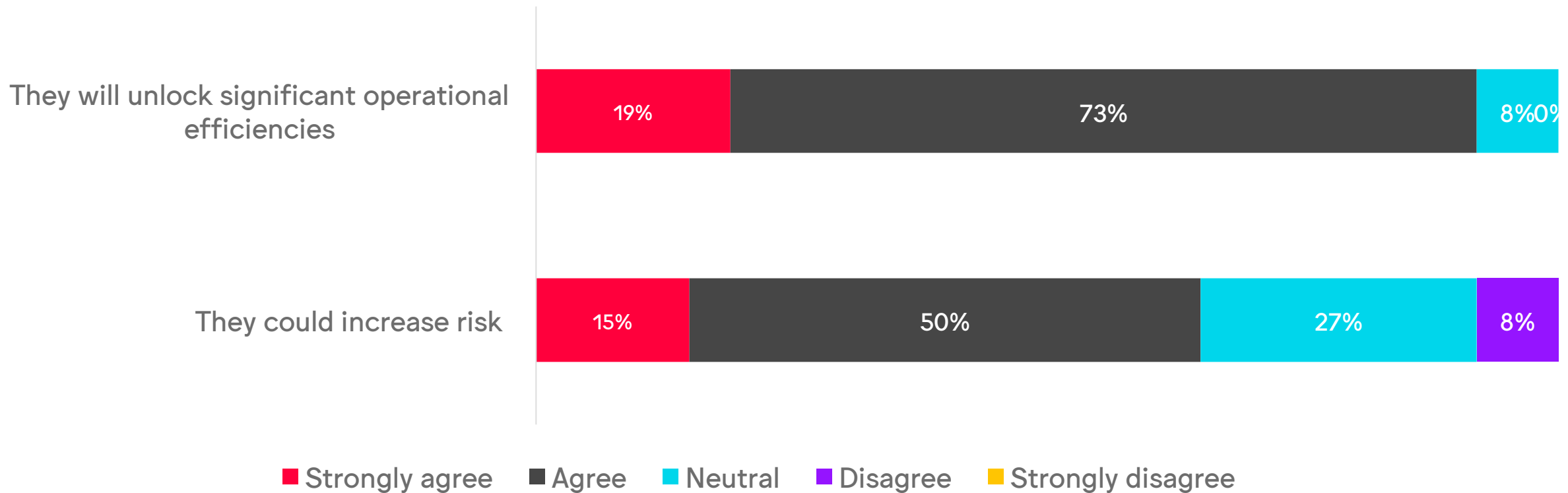
"Media planning, buying"

"Audience segmentation"

"Checking assets meet brand guidelines"

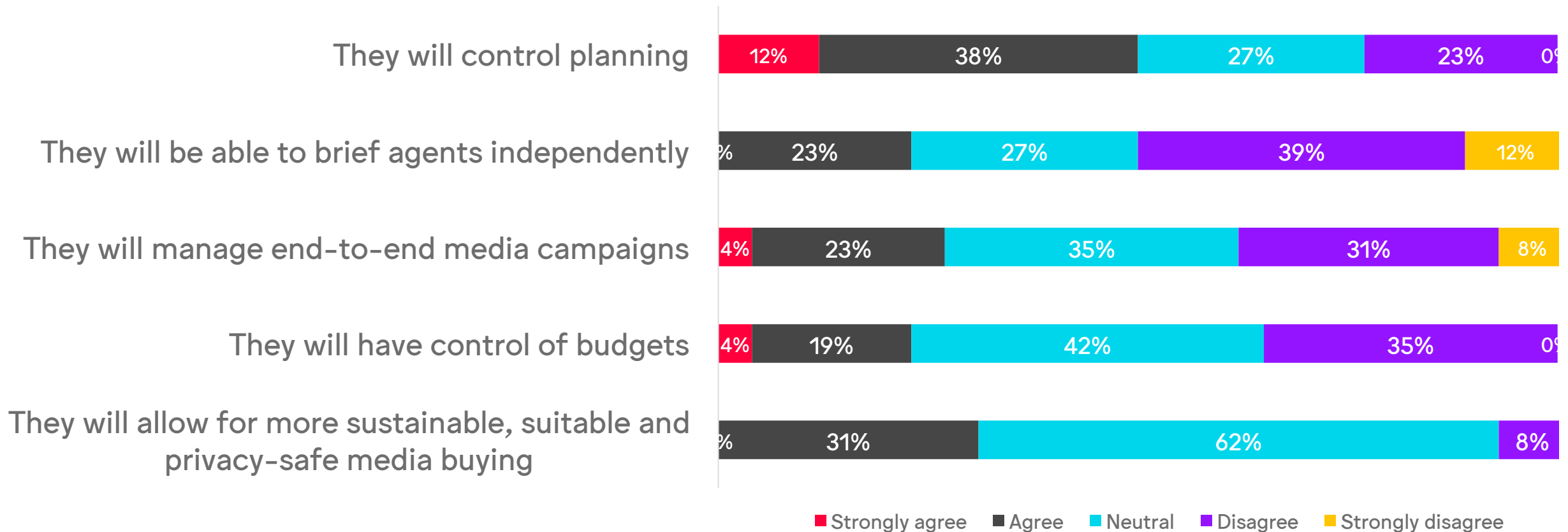
Most agree that agents will unlock efficiencies... and increase risk

Q: To which extent do you agree with the following statements about AI agents?



But media leads don't believe they will become autonomous any time soon

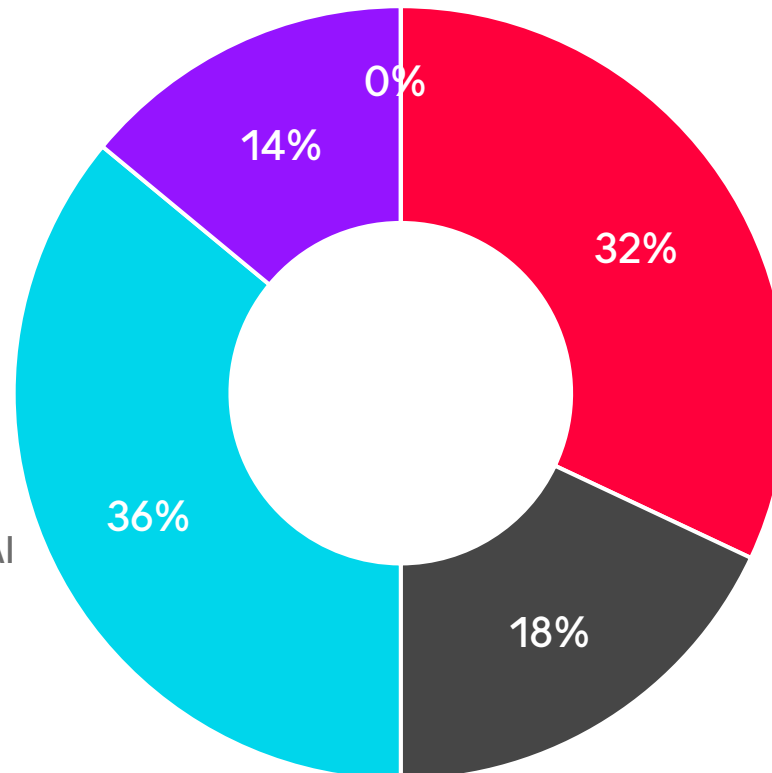
Q: To which extent do you agree with the following statements about AI agents?



Over 1 in 3 don't know whether their media agencies are using Gen AI on their behalf

Q: Are your media agencies using Gen AI on your behalf?

- I am certain they are using Gen AI
- I am fairly sure they are using Gen AI
- Don't know
- I don't think they are using Gen AI
- I am certain they are not using Gen AI



Q: For what purposes?

“Media Mix modelling and planning, buying”

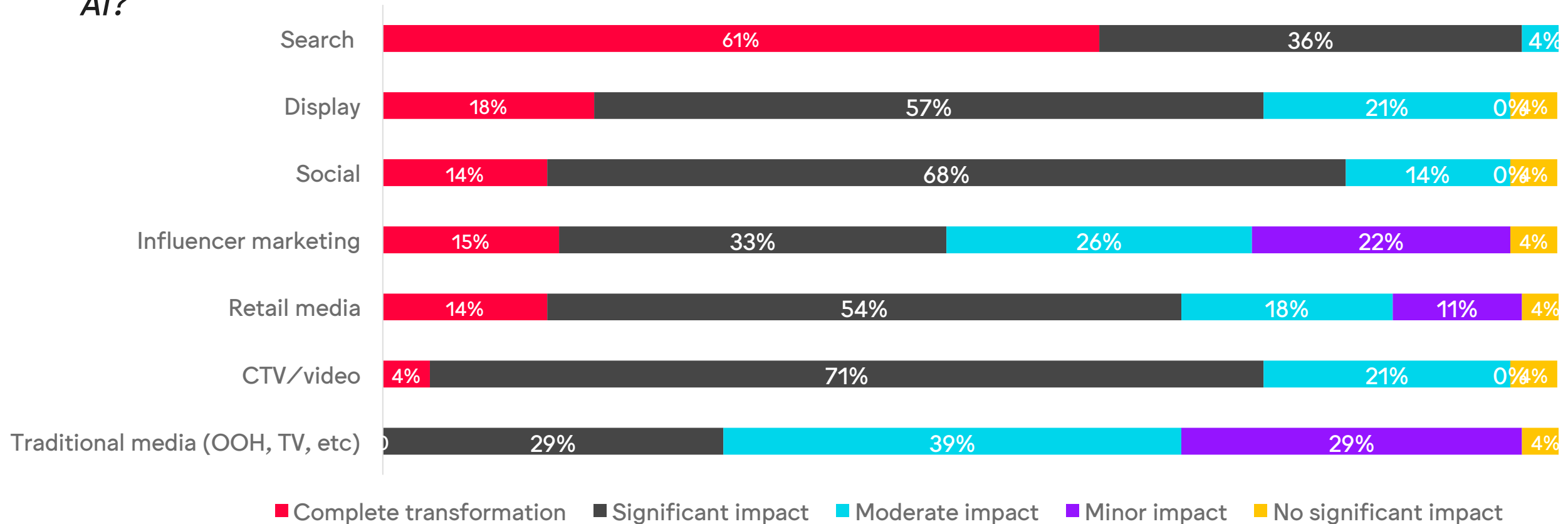
“Addressability”

“Creative asset versioning, media buying optimisation”

“Audience insights and channel mix selection”

Most believe search, display and social will be most impacted

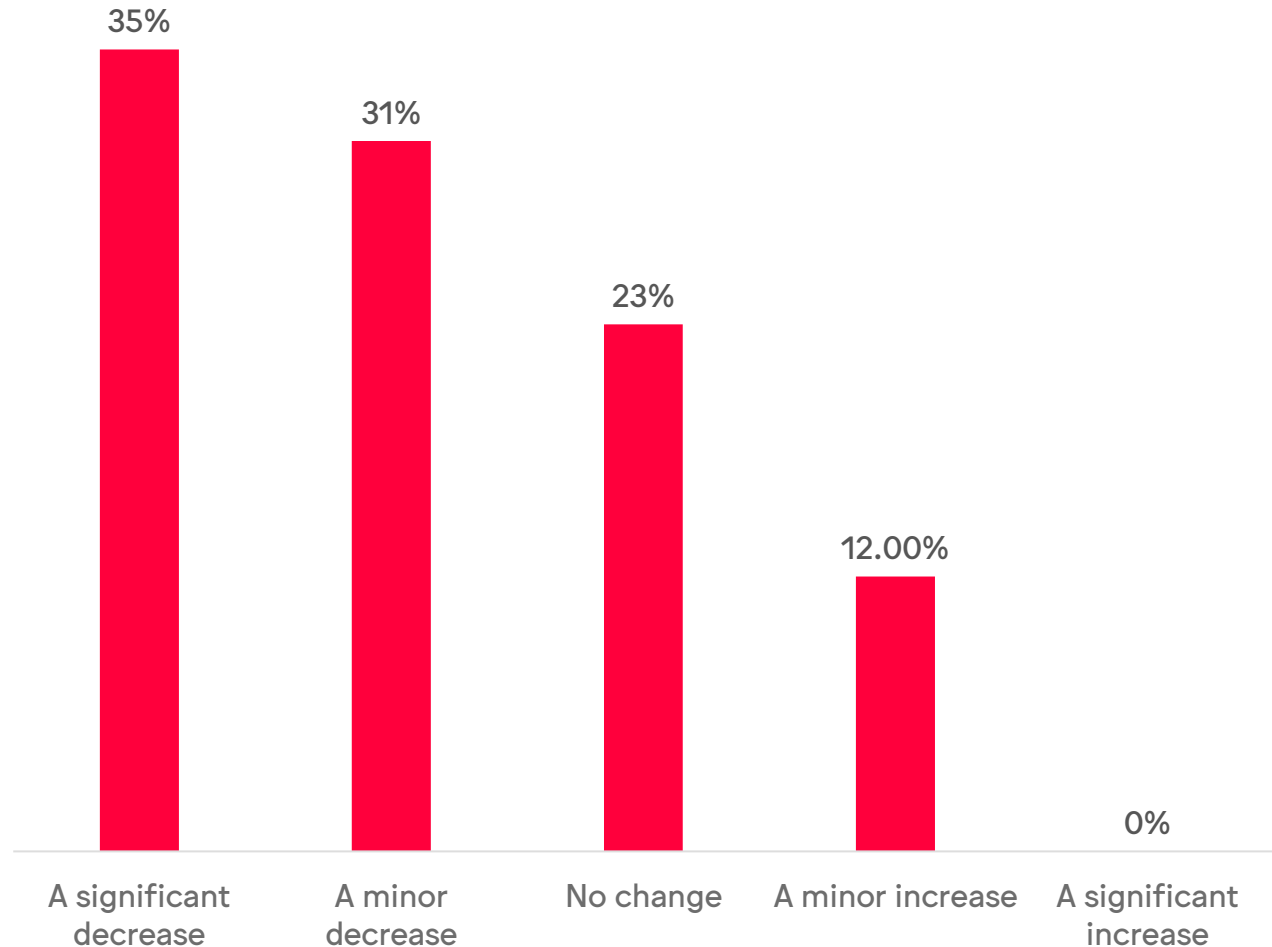
Q: To which extent do you believe the below media channels will be most impacted by Gen AI?



Source: WFA survey on Gen AI and media. Base: 45

A majority believe AI search will result in a decrease in organic traffic

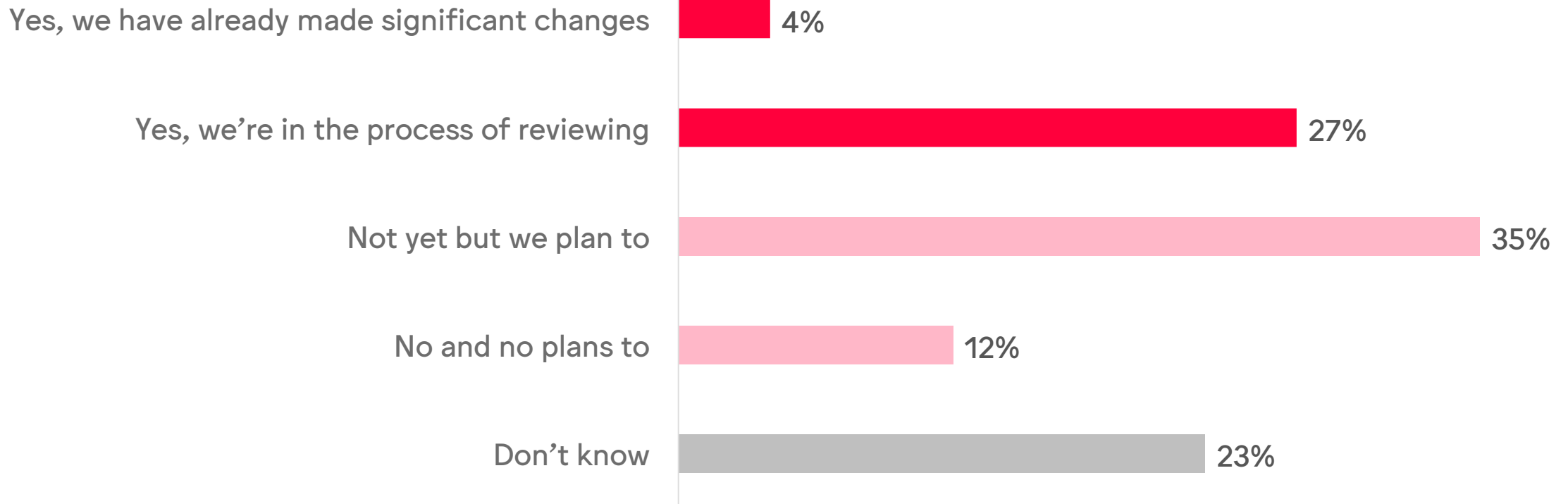
Q: What impact do you think AI-generated search will have on organic traffic to your websites?



Source: WFA survey on Gen AI and media. Base: 45

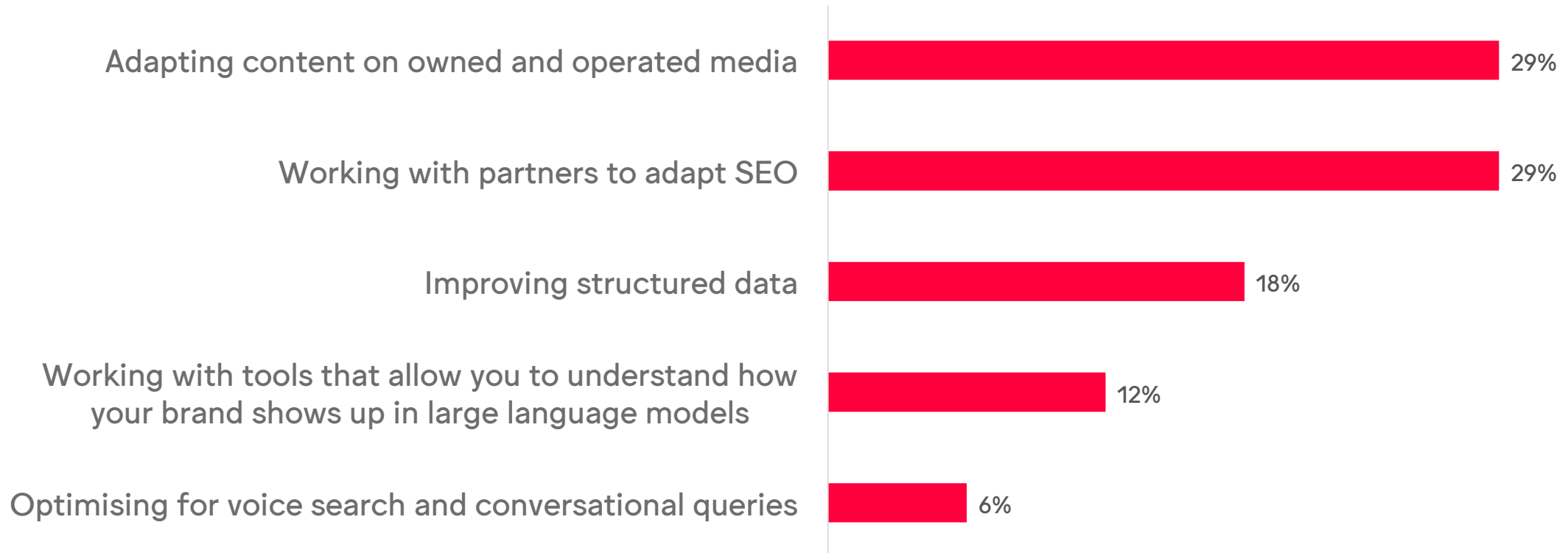
65% of brands are reviewing or plan to review SEO approach

Q: Is your organisation actively updating its SEO approach in response to AI-generated search?



1 in 3 are adapting content on owned media and collaborating with partners

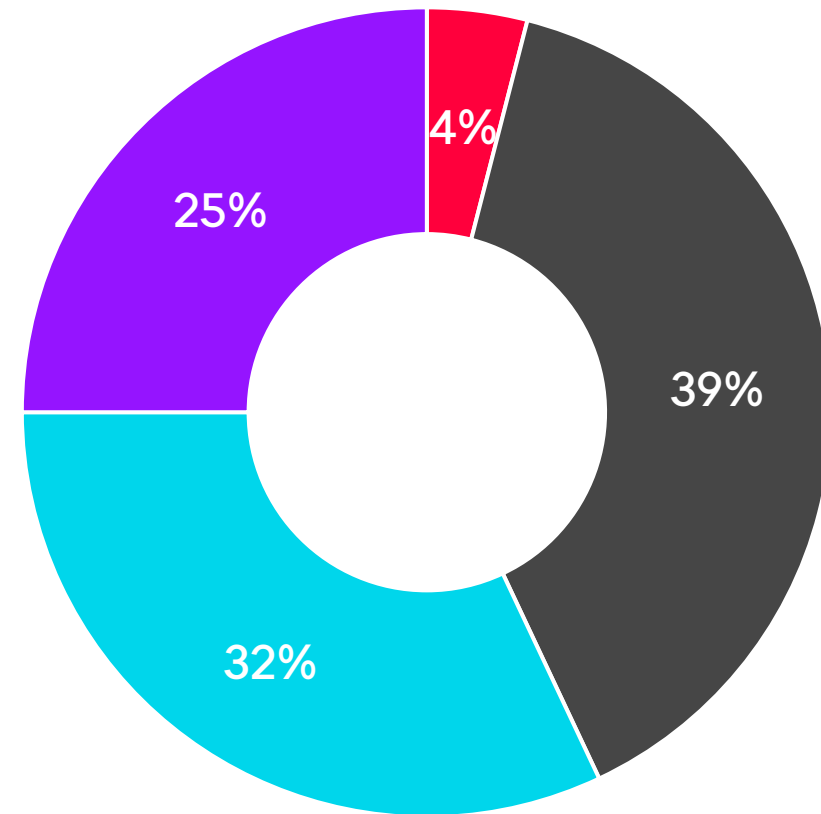
Q: What changes have you made or are you exploring when it comes to your SEO approach?



Only a minority are testing ad placements in AI-powered search engines

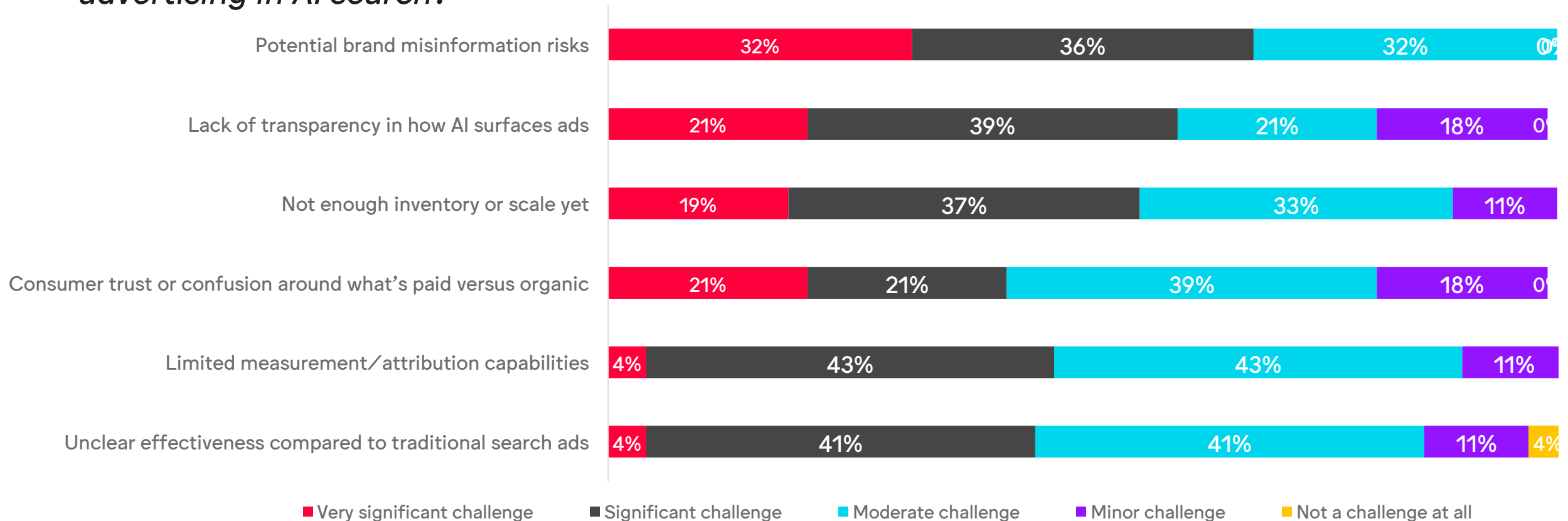
Q: Are you actively exploring or planning to test ad placements in AI-powered search engines (e.g. Perplexity AI)?

- Yes
- Not yet but we plan to
- No and no plans to
- Don't know



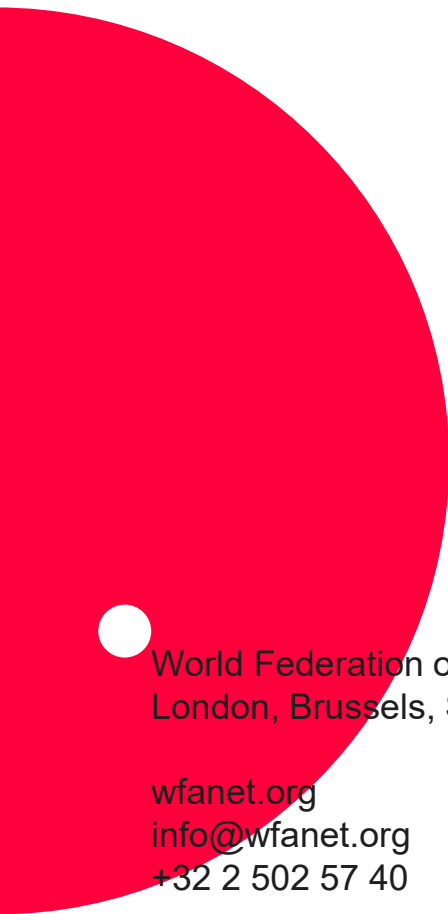
Brand misinformation and lack of transparency greatest challenges to advertising in AI search

Q: How much of a challenge or barrier do you consider the following when it comes to advertising in AI search?



Source: WFA survey on Gen AI and media. Base: 45

WFA



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