

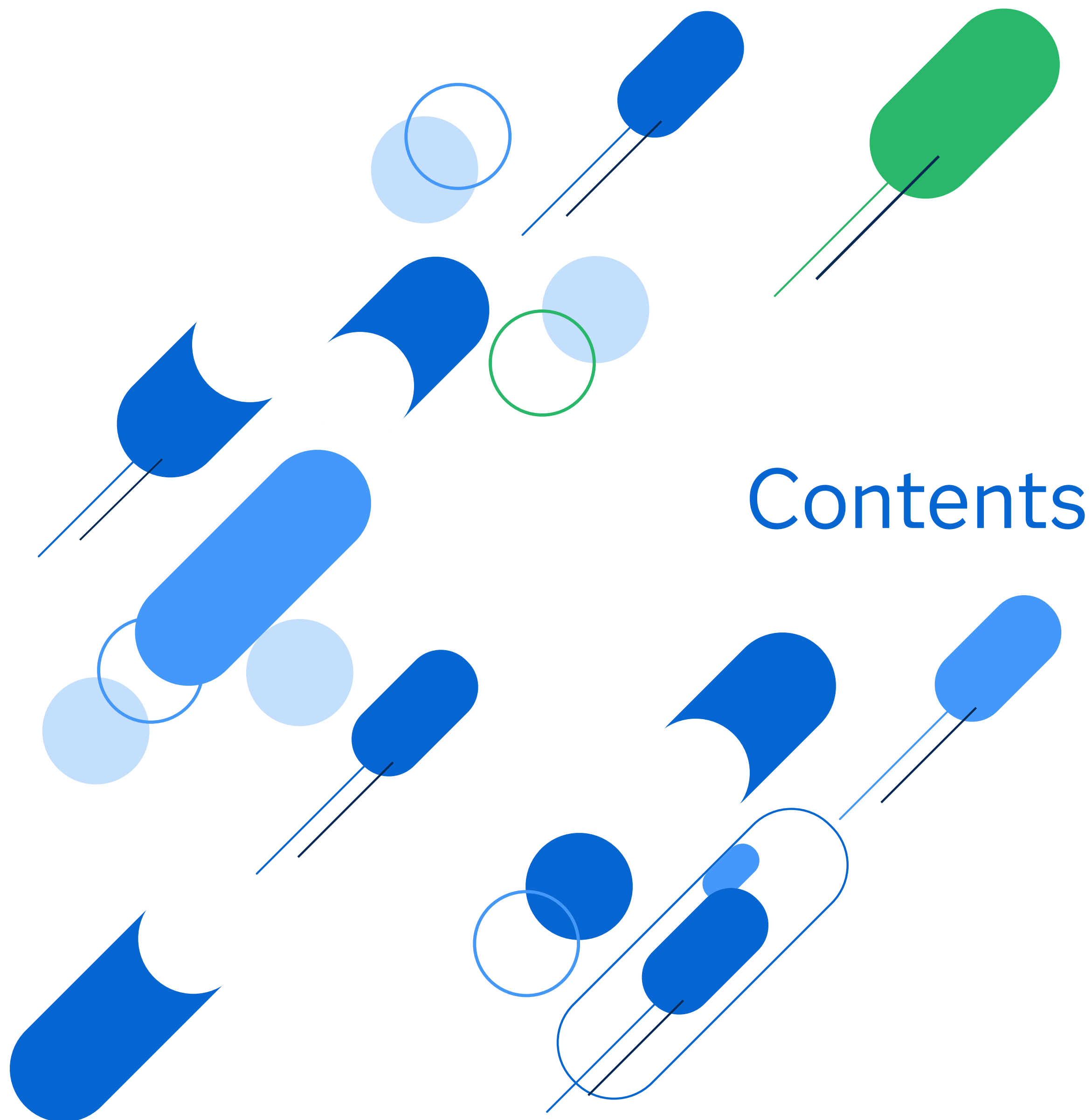


Marketers and GenAI: Diving Into the Shallow End



Marketers are leading in GenAI use, but it's only surface level. What's needed to take the **next step**?



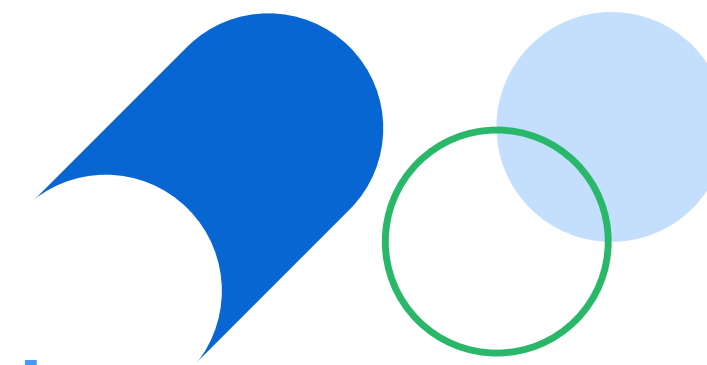


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01

Foreword: How marketers are forging ahead with GenAI



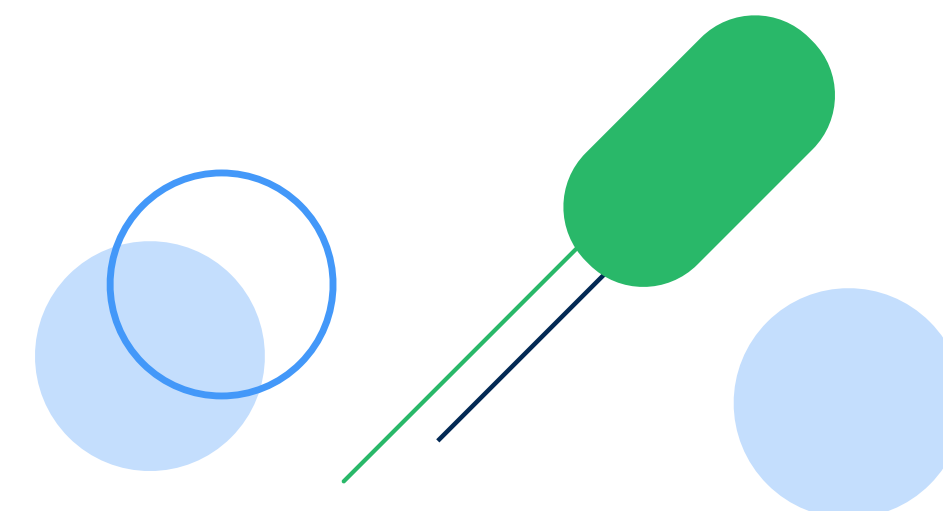
As GenAI reshapes what's possible for businesses around the globe, early adopters of the technology are forging a path for others to follow. And among those early adopters are marketers. [Our study this year](#) found that marketing departments are ahead of other business functions in the adoption of GenAI. In this report, we ask what organizations can learn from marketing about this transformative technology. What benefits are they seeing, and what further opportunities can they exploit? What obstacles are standing in their way?

This report is based on a new survey of 300 organizations worldwide. The respondents are marketers in organizations across a range of sectors that are adopting GenAI. The research reveals the ways they are using GenAI, explores their strategies for the technology, and uncovers several ways in which they could make more of their investment. In a detailed analysis, we examine the specific ways in which marketers are deploying GenAI, finding new insights into their perspectives on this pioneering tool and the common challenges they face during the process of implementation.

This report offers a clear picture of the current state of GenAI in marketing departments, designed to facilitate the successful use of the technology.

We will examine:

- The ways marketers are currently using GenAI – including the risks, challenges and obstacles they're finding along the way.
- What key components are crucial when deploying and maturing GenAI usage.
- The ROI that marketers can expect from GenAI when it comes to operational metrics like time, cost and resources – leading to downstream personalization and engagement improvements.
- Where best-in-class technology vendors are meeting the GenAI needs of organizations worldwide – and where they're falling short.
- What the future holds as organizations plan for GenAI investments.



02

Marketers are ahead of the GenAI curve

In marketing departments worldwide, there is a strong level of interest in GenAI. Marketers use GenAI more frequently than those in IT roles and we are seeing an expansion of the ways in which they are using the technology.

Marketers are optimistic about the opportunities that GenAI can bring, and those who have used it have experienced a range of tangible benefits. In some cases, they appreciate these benefits more than IT professionals. Marketers' optimism about the future of GenAI integration is higher than among IT professionals, too.

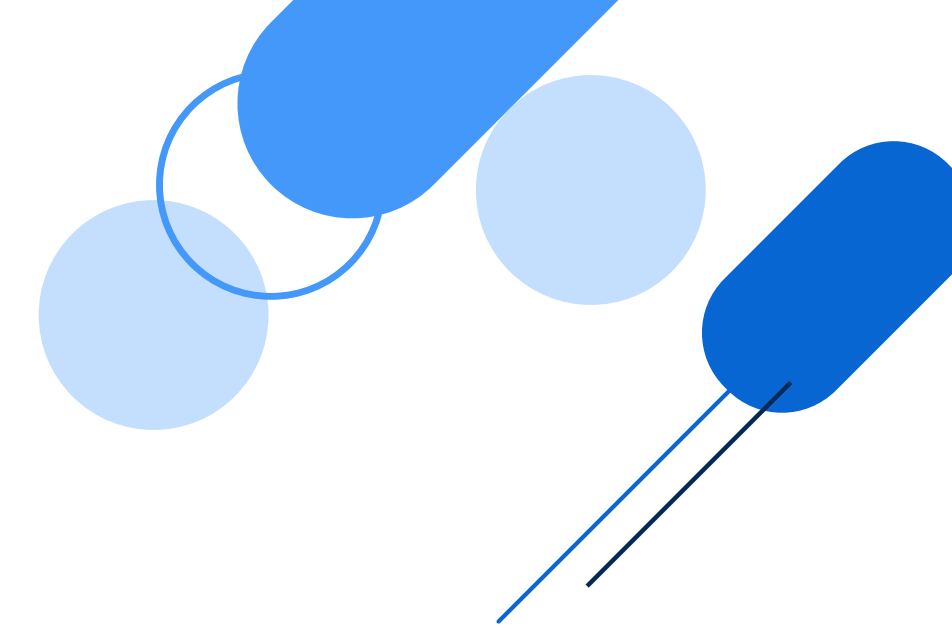
- Three-quarters of marketers **(75%)** are using the technology already, while **25%** plan to do so in the next two years.
- Six in 10 **(63%)** use it daily or more often, compared to three in 10 **(29%)** in IT departments.
- Marketers using GenAI hope to save time and costs **(63%)**, improve risk management and compliance **(62%)**, and enable more efficient processing of large data sets **(60%)**.
- Marketers expect GenAI to enhance personalization **(61%)** and innovation **(58%)**.
- Marketers using GenAI are seeing improved personalization **(92%)**, customer satisfaction and retention **(89%)**, processing large data sets **(88%)**, and accuracy in predictive analytics **(88%)**.
- In contrast, only **68%** of IT professionals report an increase in accuracy in predictive analytics as an outcome of GenAI.

- Marketers are seeking out GenAI solutions through industry conferences **(61%)** or peer recommendations **(55%)**.
- Four in 10 **(44%)** marketing departments are already using synthetic data in their marketing processes and a further third **(34%)** would consider doing so.

However, organizations may not be making the most of their marketing teams' familiarity with GenAI. Marketing roles are generally not seen as key decision makers for technology adoption. Since these teams are ahead of the curve when it comes to GenAI, organizations are missing out on lessons from these early adopters. It's important for marketing and IT teams to communicate their different perspectives.

Furthermore, marketing professionals could achieve more with GenAI. Our research shows that in four areas, marketers are encountering obstacles to success as they implement the technology:

- **Understanding GenAI's capabilities** – Ensuring that the technology's full potential is recognized.
- **Strategically using the technology** – Progressing past simplistic use cases to achieve more.
- **Embedding trust and security** – Ensuring GenAI functions securely for your business.
- **Complying with governance** – Developing responsible AI and avoiding regulatory noncompliance.

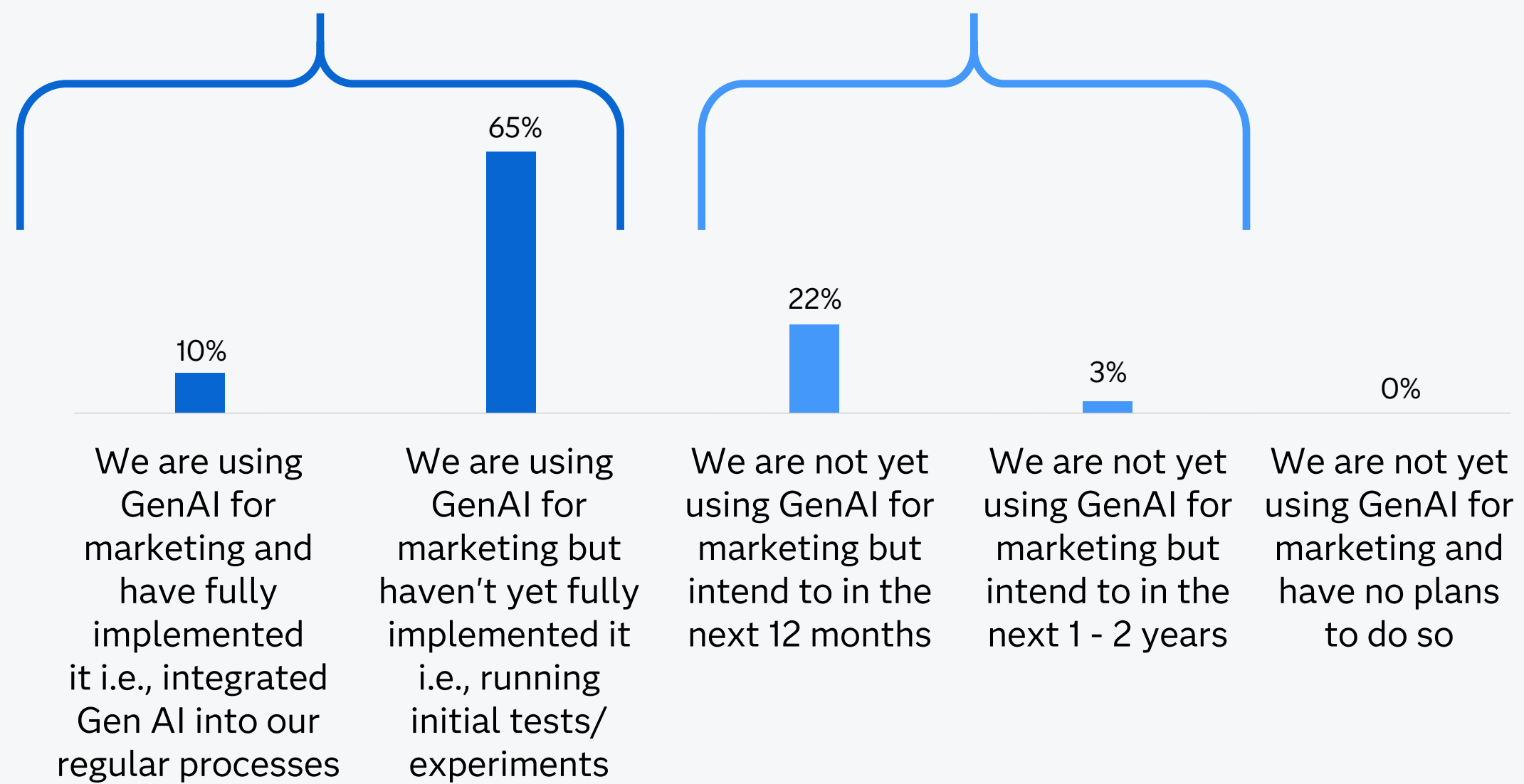


Three-quarters of marketers are already using GenAI

To what extent is your organization using GenAI for marketing activities?

Using GenAI for marketing:
75%

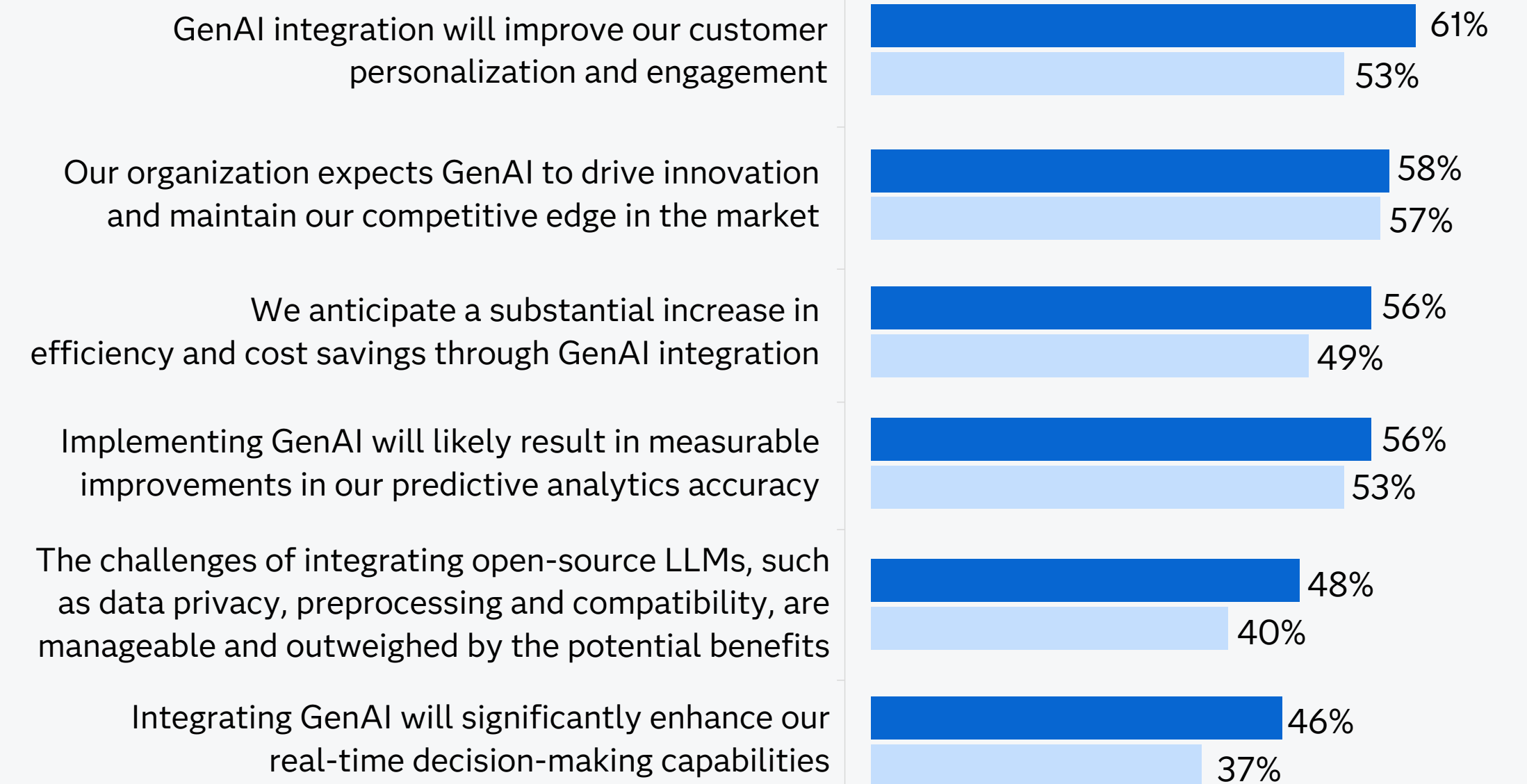
Planning to use in the next
2 years: 25%



Please note that percentages on charts may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Marketers are optimistic about the benefits GenAI can bring

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding the integration of GenAI into your data analysis and operational processes?



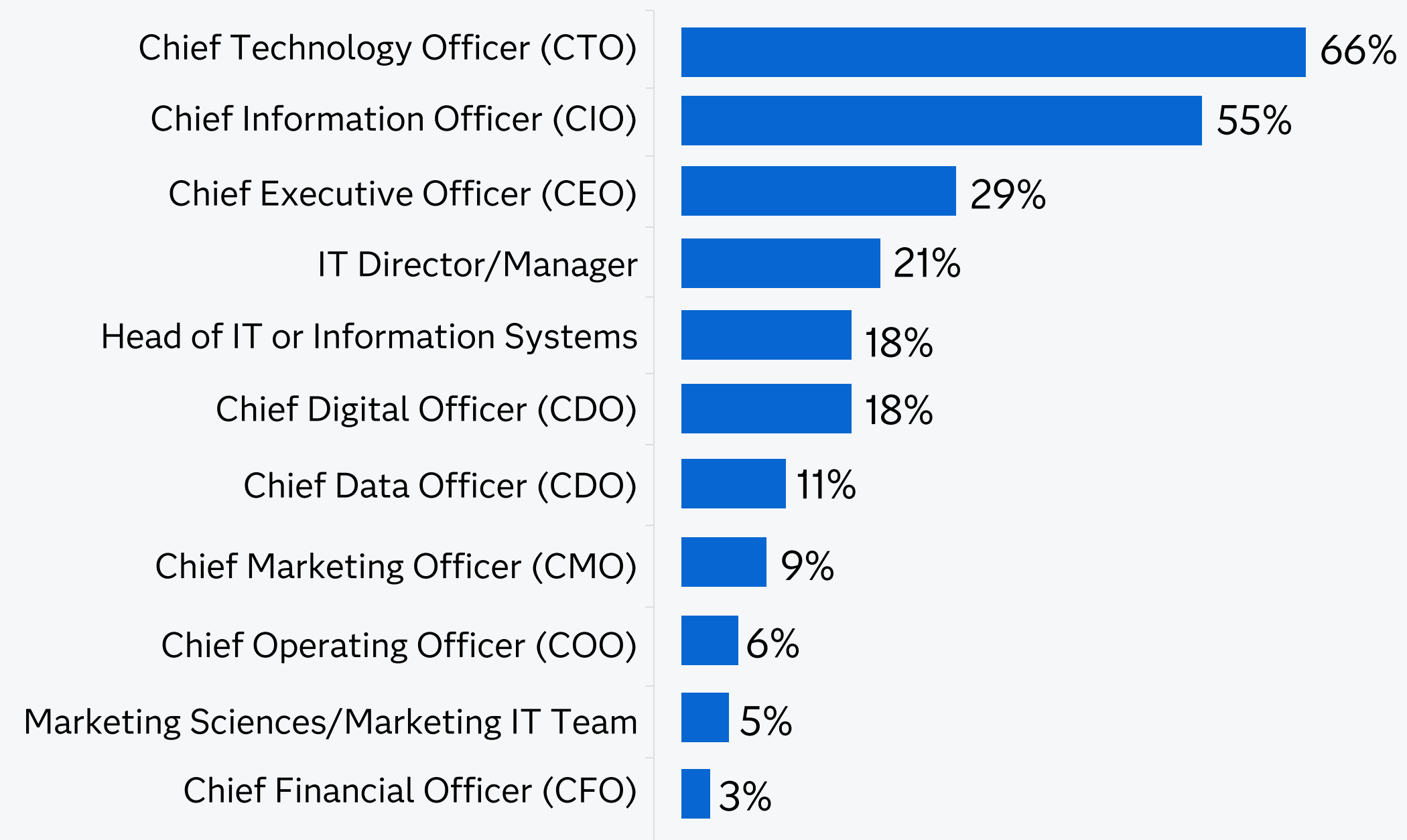
■ Marketers ■ IT Professionals

% Agree



Marketing roles are generally not seen as key decision makers for technology adoption

Who are the primary decision makers for technology adoption in your organization?



Insight 1:

GenAI literacy is essential in marketing

In today's industry, marketers must have a grasp of GenAI. Those who aren't able to fully exploit the technology's potential are in danger of being left behind.



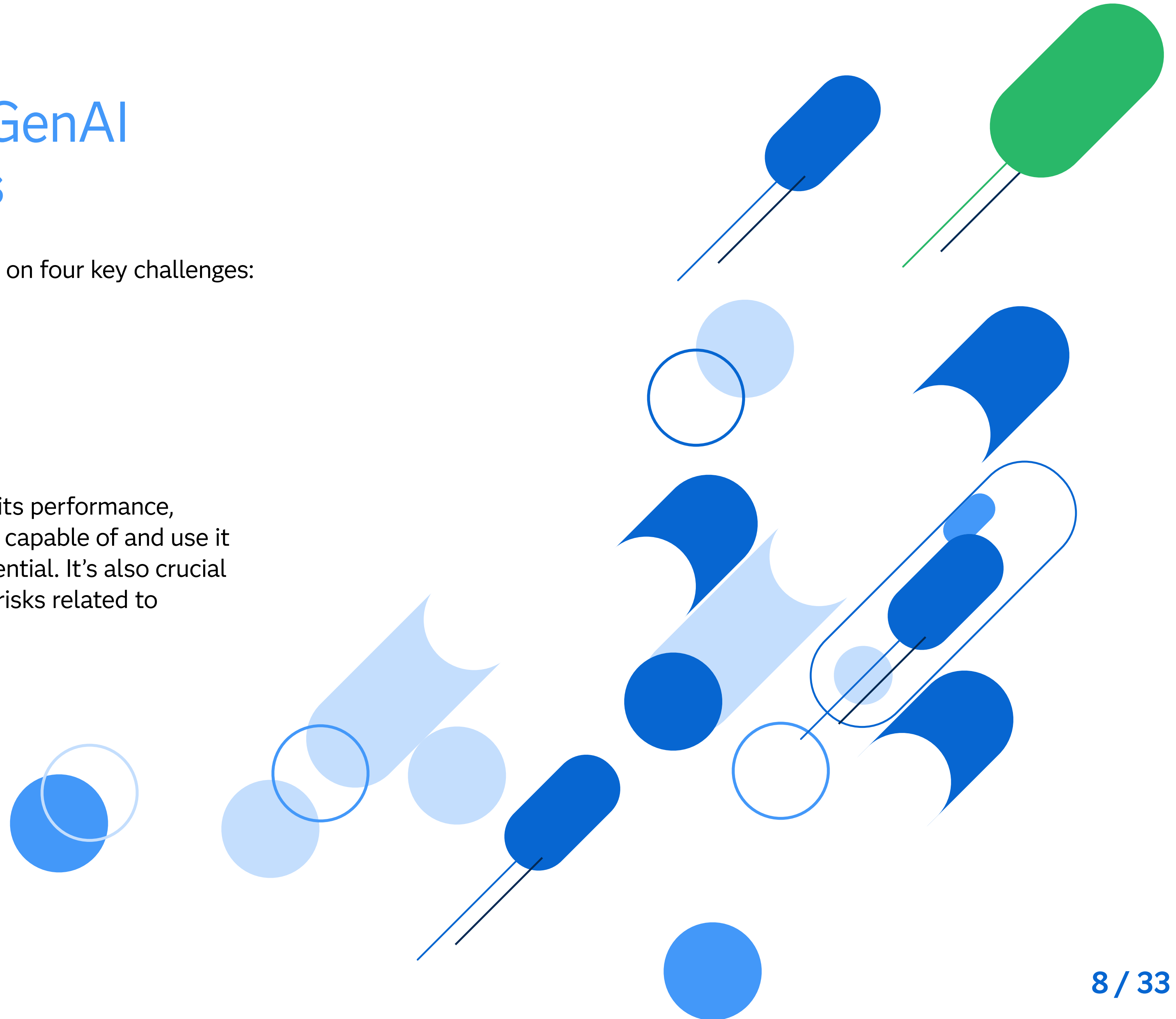
03

Strategies for leveraging GenAI in marketing departments

Marketers can achieve success with GenAI by focusing on four key challenges:

1. Understanding GenAI's capabilities.
2. Strategically using the technology.
3. Embedding trust and security.
4. Complying with governance.

GenAI can be a powerful investment, but to maximize its performance, marketers must ensure that they understand what it is capable of and use it strategically. Many can do more to fully exploit its potential. It's also crucial to build stakeholder trust in the technology and avoid risks related to inadequate governance.



a. Understanding GenAI's capabilities

Ensuring that the technology's full potential is recognized

When marketers have a detailed understanding of GenAI's potential, they can apply the technology strategically. However, in contrast to IT departments, many lack full oversight. Furthermore, marketing departments are often unaware of how GenAI is being used across their organization, resulting in incoherent, disorganized deployment.

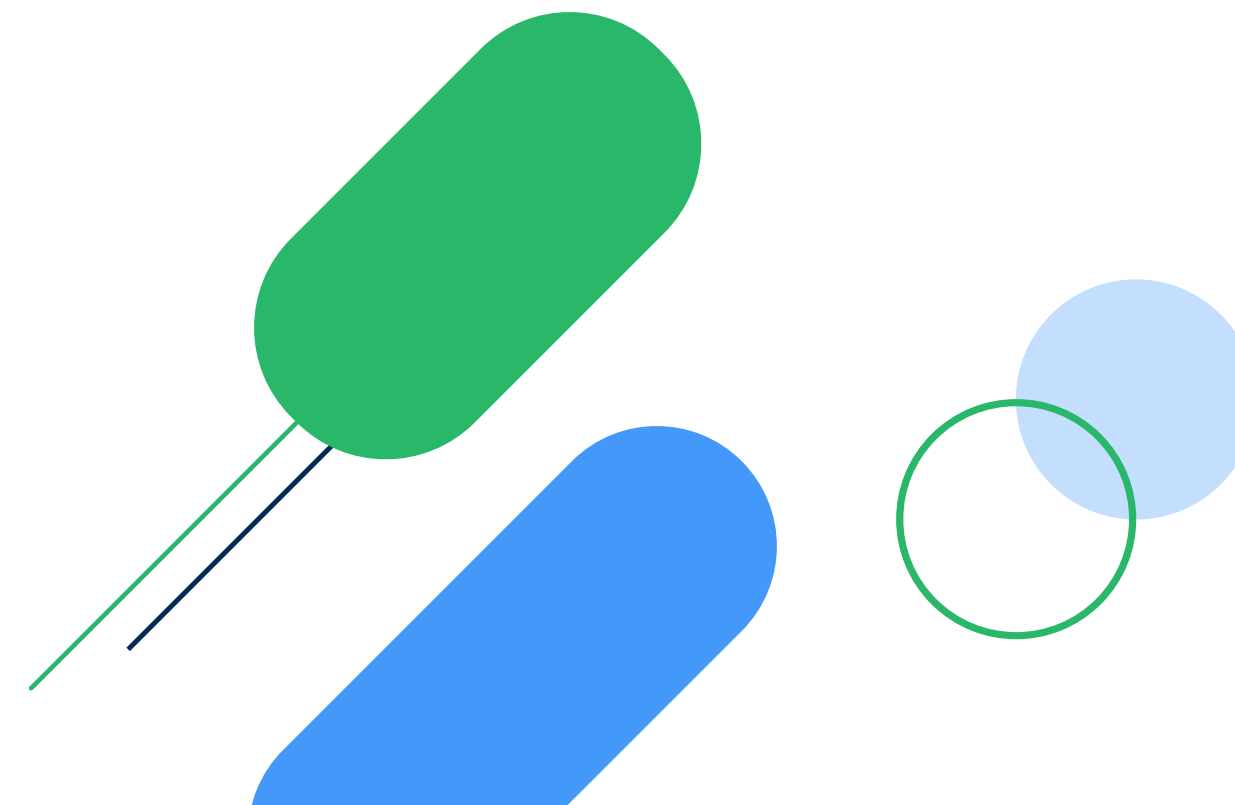
Our research finds that:

- **95%** of senior marketing decision makers admit that they do not fully understand GenAI or its potential impact on business processes. This figure is **90%** among CMOs.
- Almost half (**46%**) of respondents report that the biggest obstacle to the implementation of GenAI is difficulty proving ROI, while **40%** say this relates to challenges encountered while trying to transition from the conceptual phase of the technology to practical use.
- Only six in 10 (**62%**) chief marketing officers (CMOs) and less than half of all marketers (**47%**) are very familiar with their organization's GenAI adoption. In contrast, **87%** of chief information officers (CIOs) and **81%** of chief technology officers (CTOs) report that they are very familiar with their organization's GenAI strategy.

- There is a 20-point gap in the reported accuracy of GenAI's predictive analytics between marketing (**88%**) and IT (**68%**). Since CIOs have more oversight of the technology than CMOs, this may indicate that either marketers are unrealistic or overconfident about GenAI's capabilities or that IT departments are not seeing the full picture of the outcomes of GenAI's deployment. Among those marketers using GenAI more than once a day, this rises to **93%**.

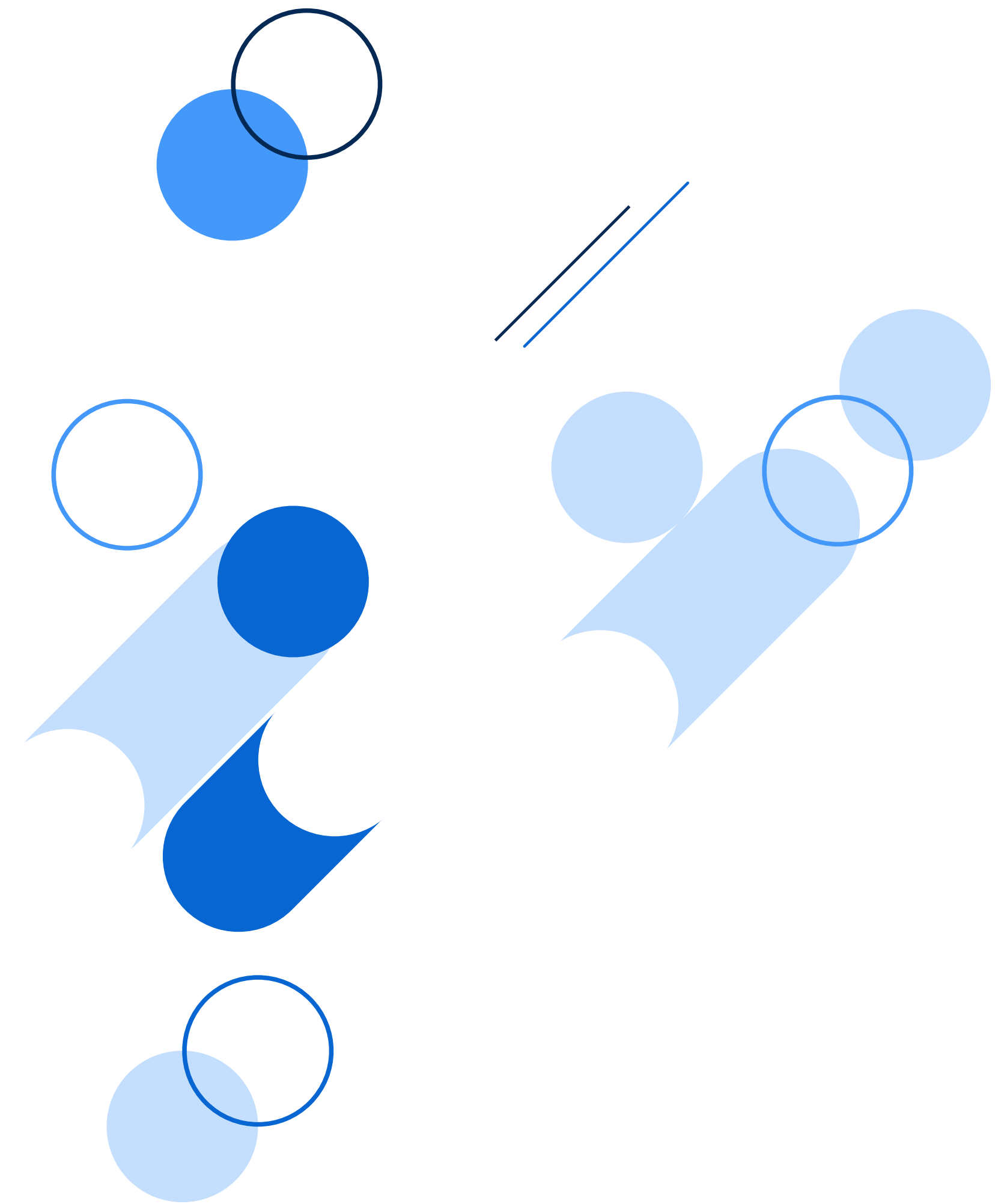
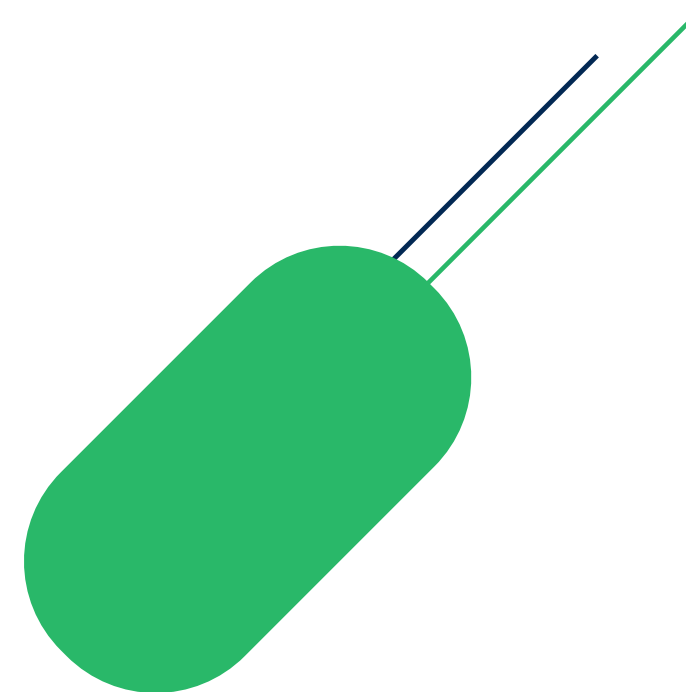
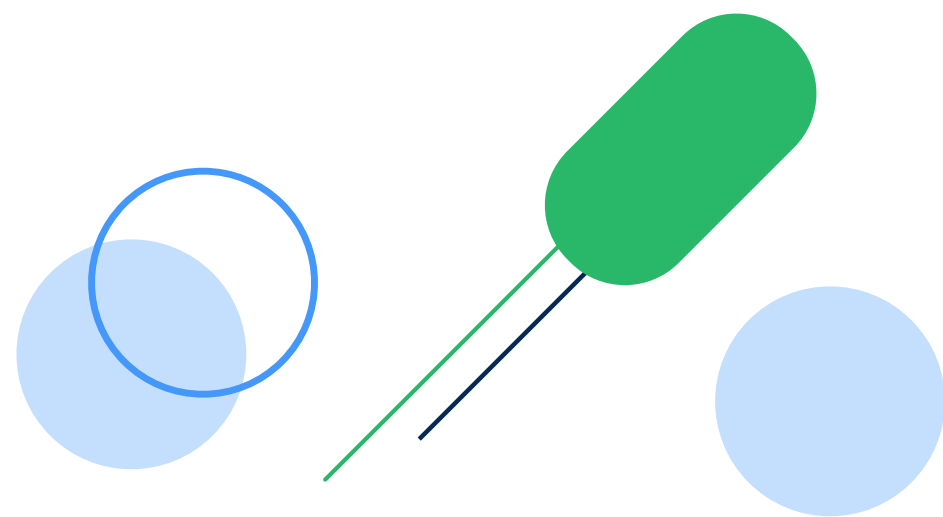
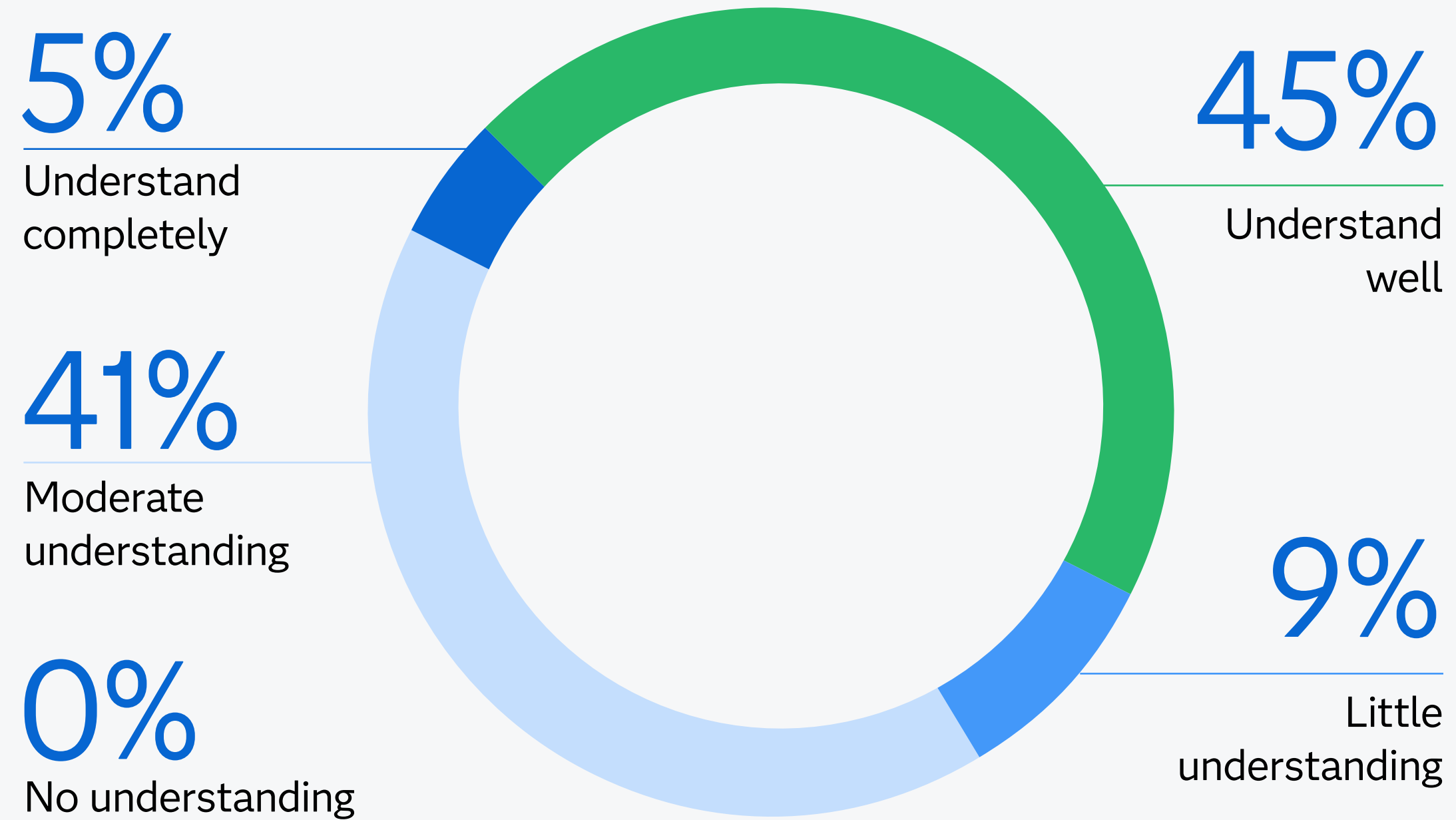
Respondents in the Americas are more likely to feel they understand GenAI well or completely (**57%** for the Americas as a whole and **67%** for the US, against a **50%** global average). Those in Northern Europe are least likely to feel that they fully comprehend the technology, with four in 10 (**41%**) saying they completely understand GenAI.

By sector, marketers in health are most confident in their understanding of GenAI (**67%** say they understand it well or completely) and those in banking and insurance are least confident (**33%** in both sectors).



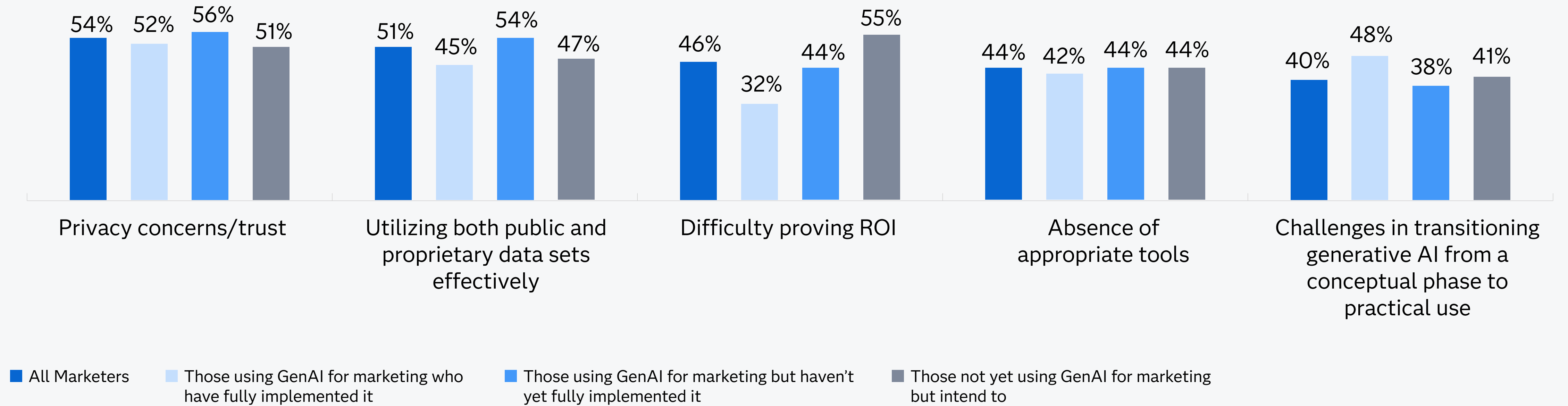
95% of senior marketing decision makers admit that they do not fully understand GenAI

How would you rate your personal understanding of GenAI and its potential impacts on business processes?

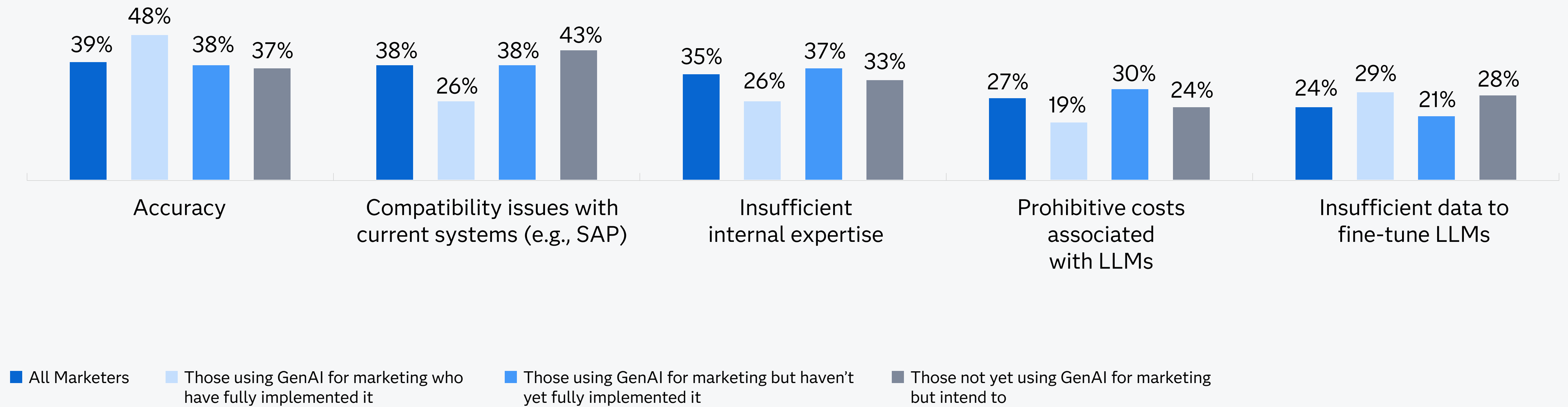


Almost half of marketers report that the biggest obstacle to the implementation of GenAI is difficulty proving ROI

What obstacles do you foresee, or have you encountered, in the implementation of GenAI?



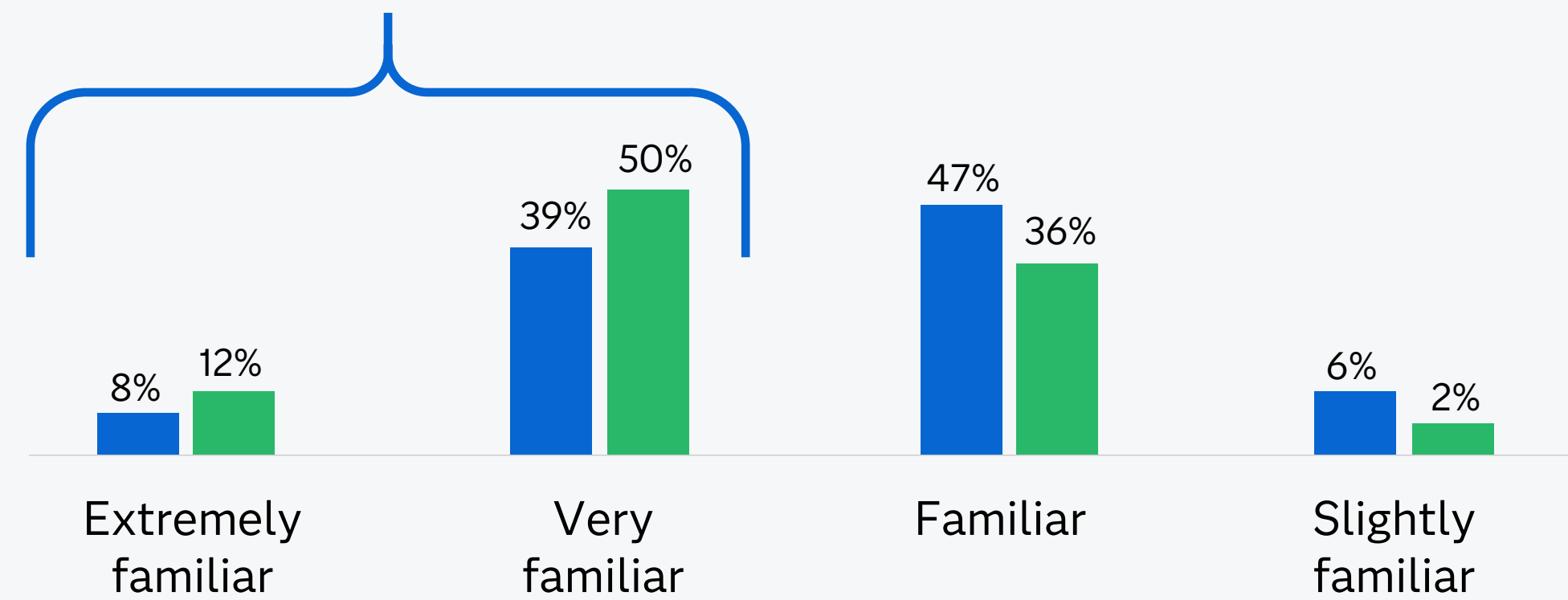
What obstacles do you foresee, or have you encountered, in the implementation of GenAI?



Less than half of marketers are very familiar with their organization's GenAI adoption

How familiar are you with your organization's adoption of GenAI?

Very/extremely familiar:

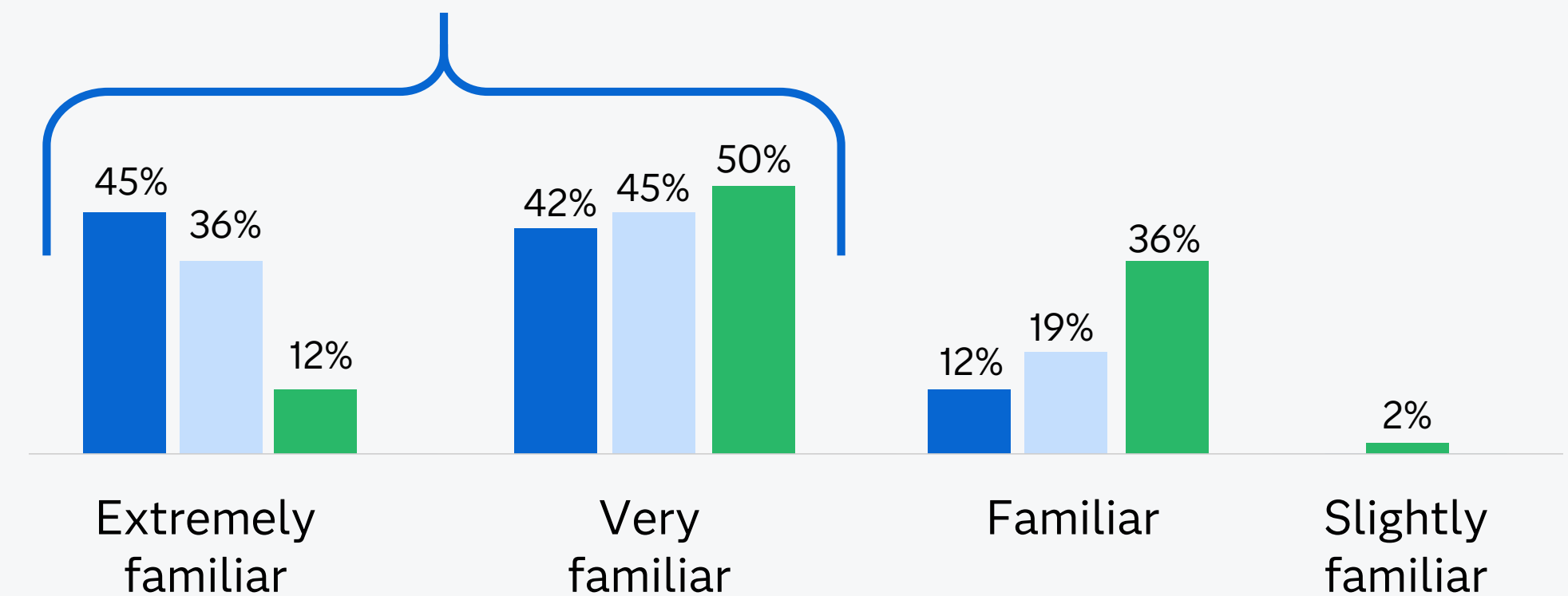


■ All Marketers ■ CMOs

CMOs are less likely to be familiar with their organization's GenAI adoption than CIOs or CTOs

How familiar are you with your organization's adoption of GenAI?

Very/extremely familiar:

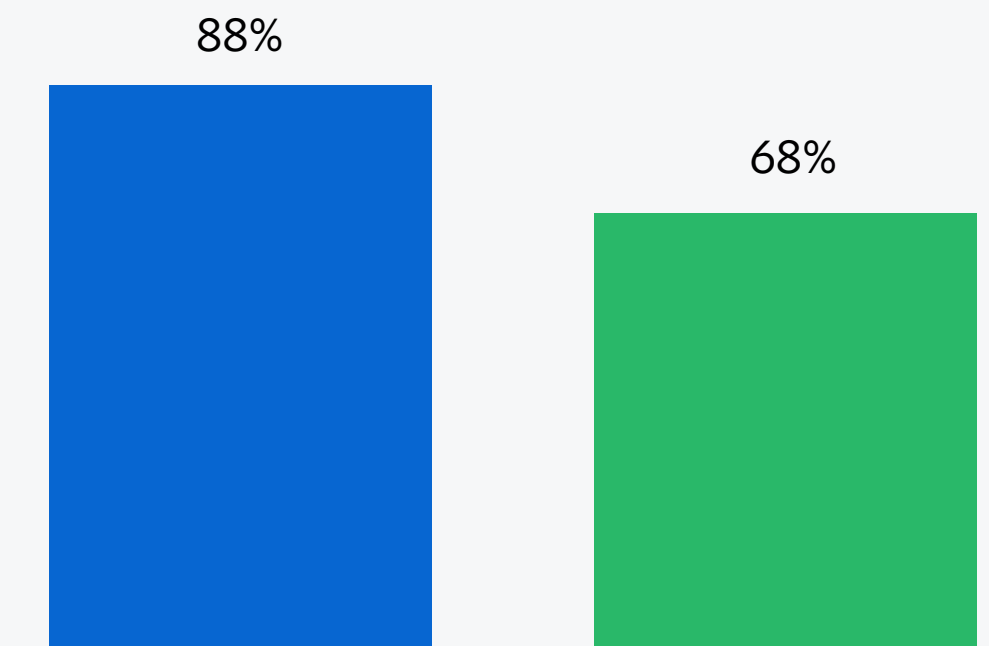


■ CIOs ■ CTOs ■ CMOs



CMOs report a 20-point gap in GenAI's accuracy in predictive analytics

What measurable outcomes are you realizing from the integration of GenAI into your analytics processes?

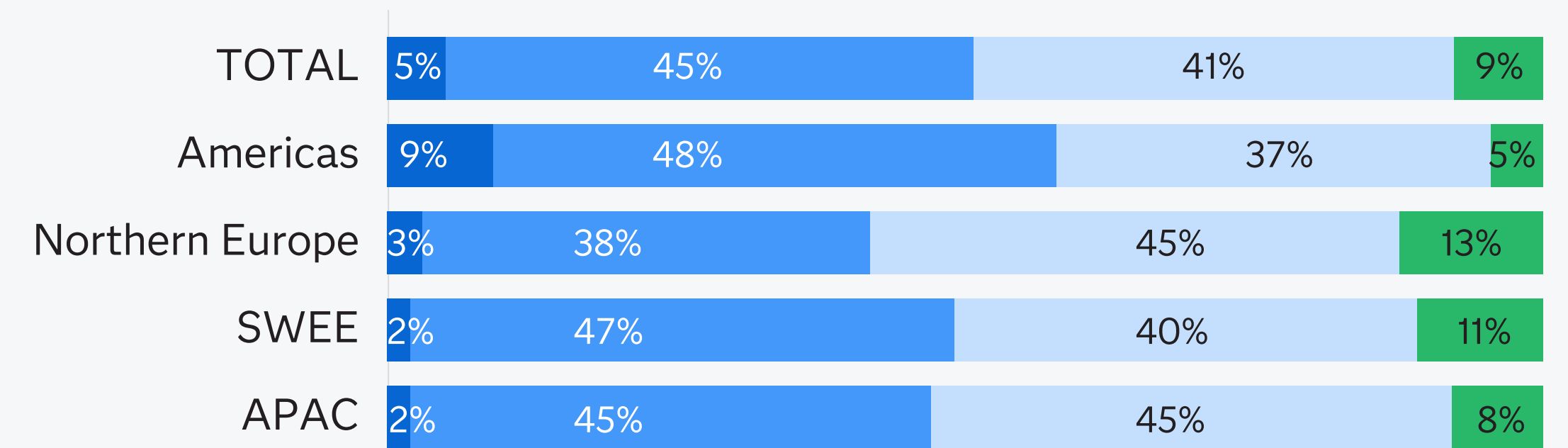


Accuracy in predictive analytics

■ Marketers ■ IT professionals

Respondents in the Americas are most likely and those in Northern Europe least likely to feel they understand GenAI well

How would you rate your personal understanding of GenAI and its potential impacts on business processes?

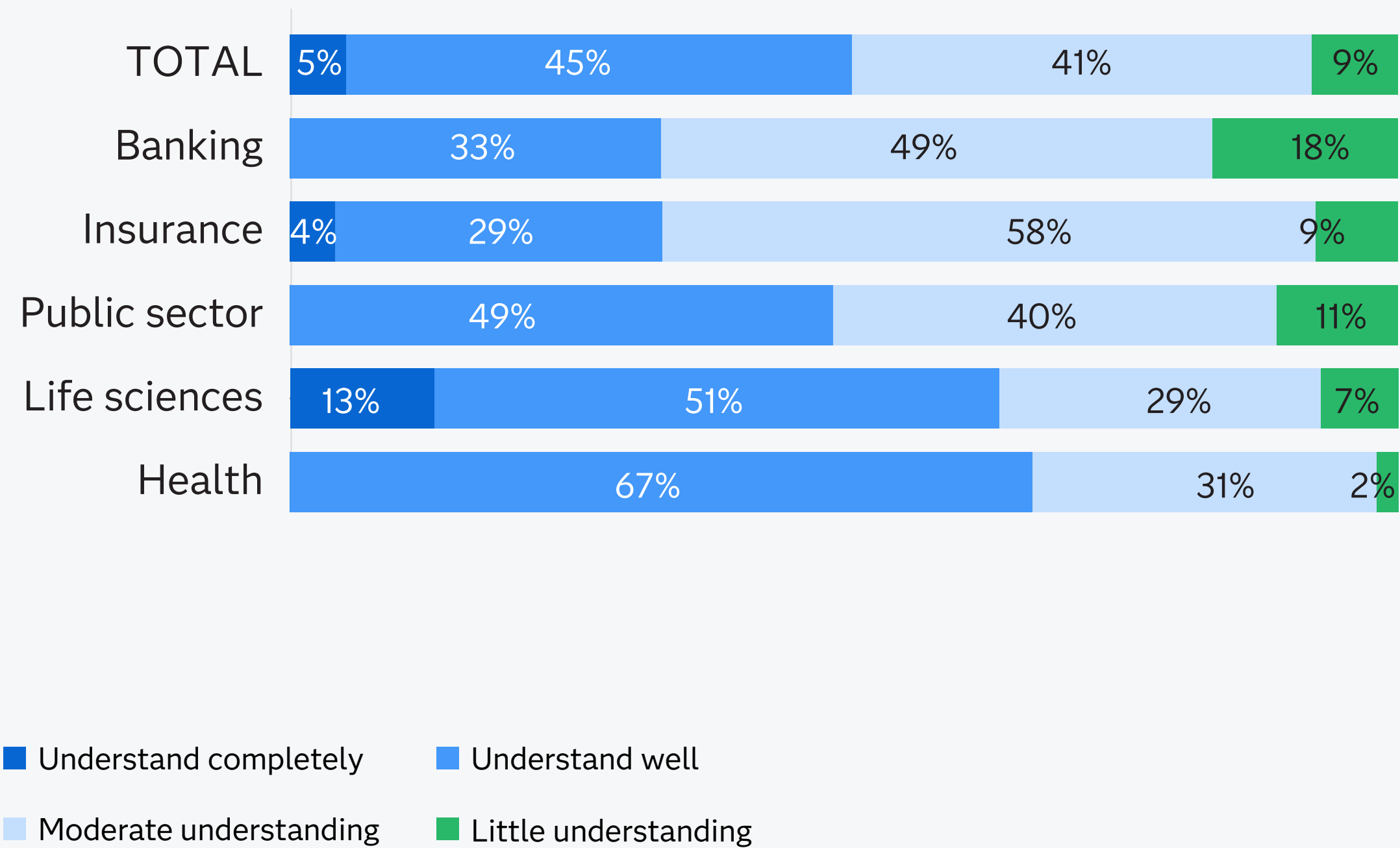


■ Understand completely ■ Understand well
 ■ Moderate understanding ■ Little understanding



Marketers in health are most confident in their understanding of GenAI

How would you rate your personal understanding of GenAI and its potential impacts on business processes?



Insight 2:

As with any new technology, grasping the mechanics and outcomes of GenAI can be challenging.

Using a machine-learning platform and adaptable foundation models to build tailored GenAI applications enables organizations to take their use of GenAI further.



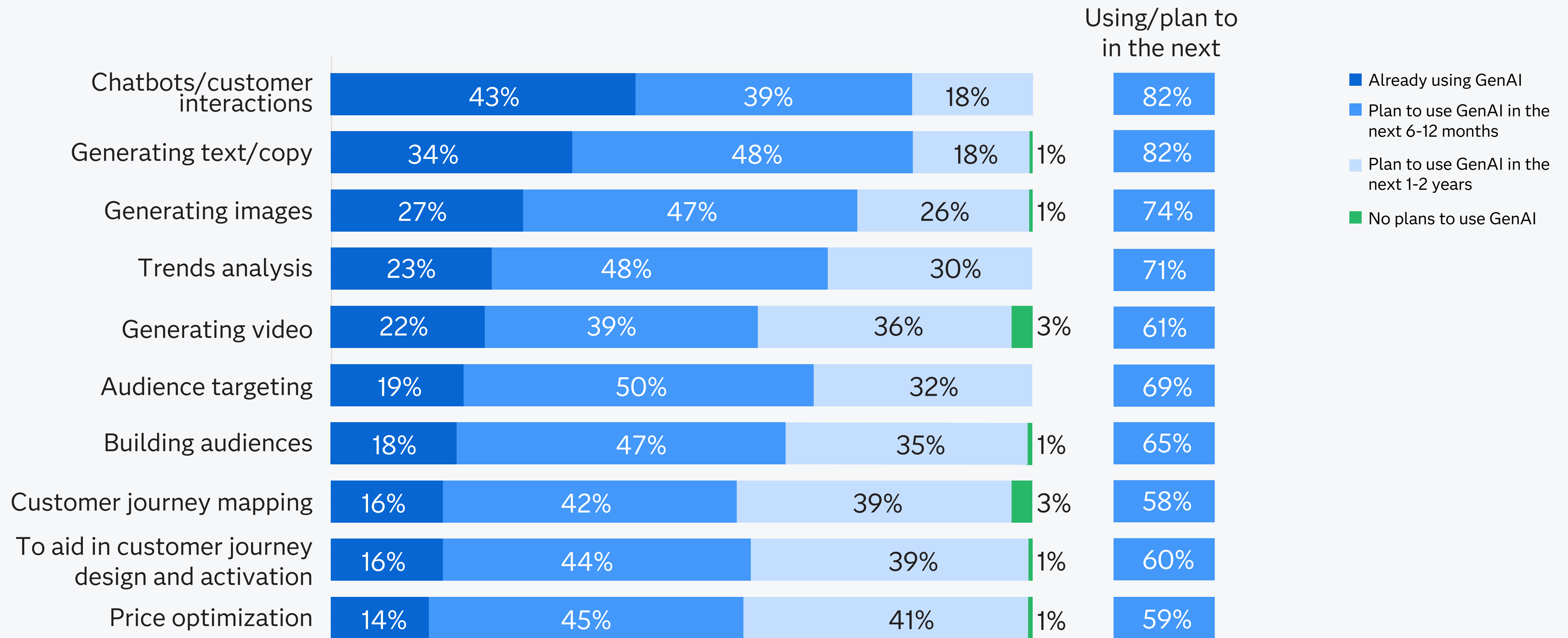
b. Strategically using the technology

Progressing past simplistic use cases to achieve more

GenAI usage not only increases efficiency, it also expands what a business is capable of. However, many marketers are currently focusing on low-hanging fruit instead of deploying more sophisticated uses of the technology. This does look set to change, as marketers predict that they will expand their use of GenAI within the next two years, and often within the next 12 months.

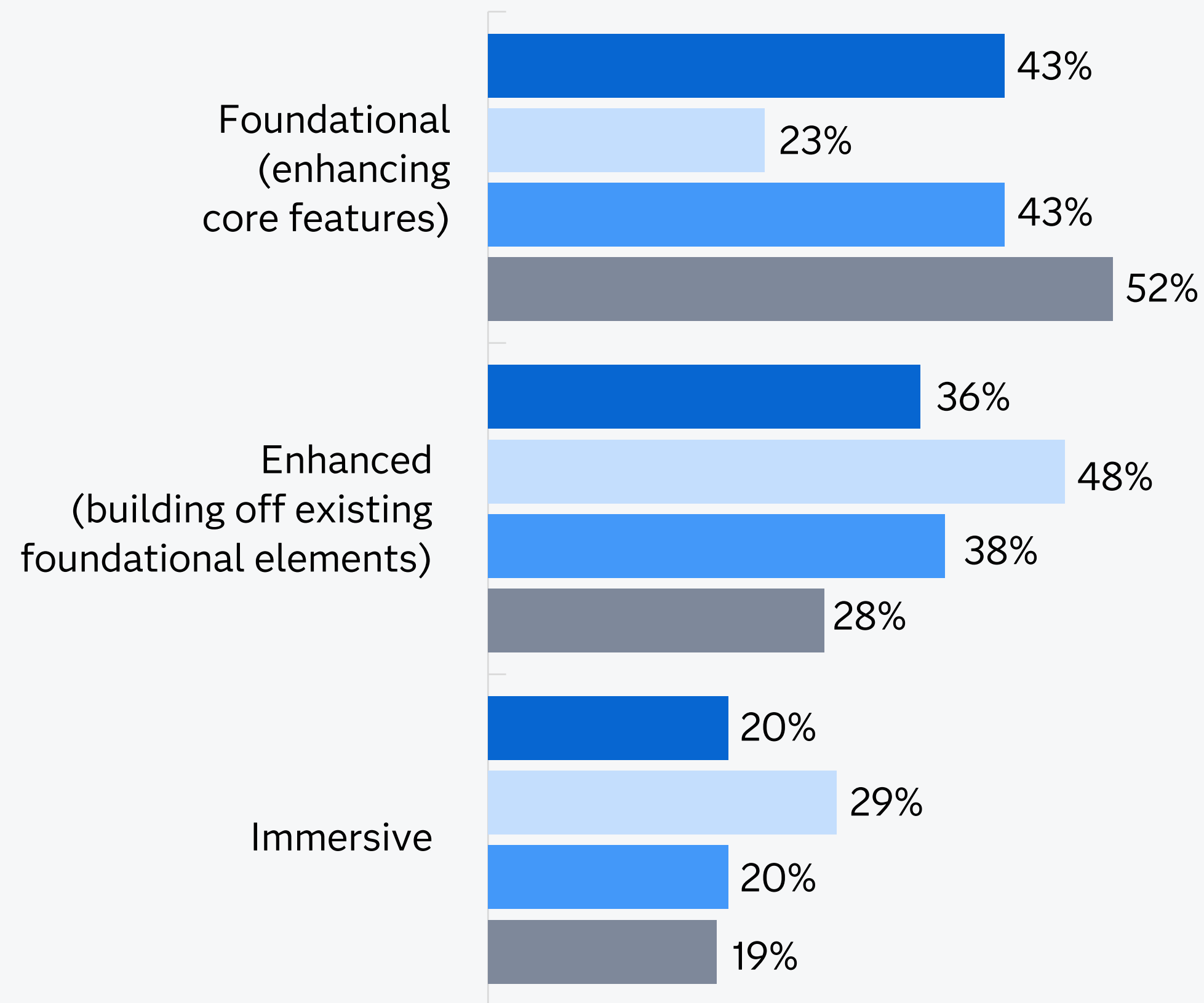
- **43%** of marketing departments are using GenAI to handle customer interactions, while **34%** are using it to generate copy. Within the next 12 months, this is set to expand to **82%** for customer interactions and copy.
- However, currently, only **18%** are using the technology to build audiences, **16%** for customer journey mapping, **19%** for audience targeting and **14%** for price optimization.
- Four in 10 marketers (**43%**) believe that their organization will eventually use GenAI to enhance core features of their marketing activities (for example, to do what they're already doing more efficiently). And **36%** expect it will be used to build from existing elements (such as by increasing personalization of their marketing communications). One in five anticipate immersive applications such as adaptive virtual reality, rising to three in 10 among those who have already fully adopted GenAI.





Four in 10 anticipate foundational uses for GenAI

How do you foresee your organization's eventual use of GenAI for marketing?



- All marketers
- Those using GenAI for marketing who have fully implemented it
- Those using GenAI for marketing but haven't yet fully implemented it
- Those not yet using GenAI for marketing but intend to

Only around a quarter (**27%**) of marketers in Northern Europe are currently using chatbots or GenAI for customer interactions, compared with **43%** globally, **47%** in the Americas and **52%** in the US. However, this usage is expected to increase threefold in the next year to **82%**, in line with the figure for all markets (**82%**) and the US (**80%**). A similar trend can be seen for generating copy.

The banking sector is especially keen to use GenAI for sophisticated use cases such as enhanced risk management and compliance measures, and for efficiency gains in processing large data sets (**82%** compared with **62%** and **60%** across all industries). However, their lack of confidence in the technology suggests that they may be in need of more support to achieve these ambitions.

Insight 3:

Currently, GenAI is being used to complete foundational tasks or enhance core features of MarTech applications. In the next few years, this usage will advance to immersive applications. In preparation for these developments, marketing departments must ensure their data is high-quality, well-governed and legally compliant.



c. Embedding trust and security

Ensuring GenAI functions securely for your business

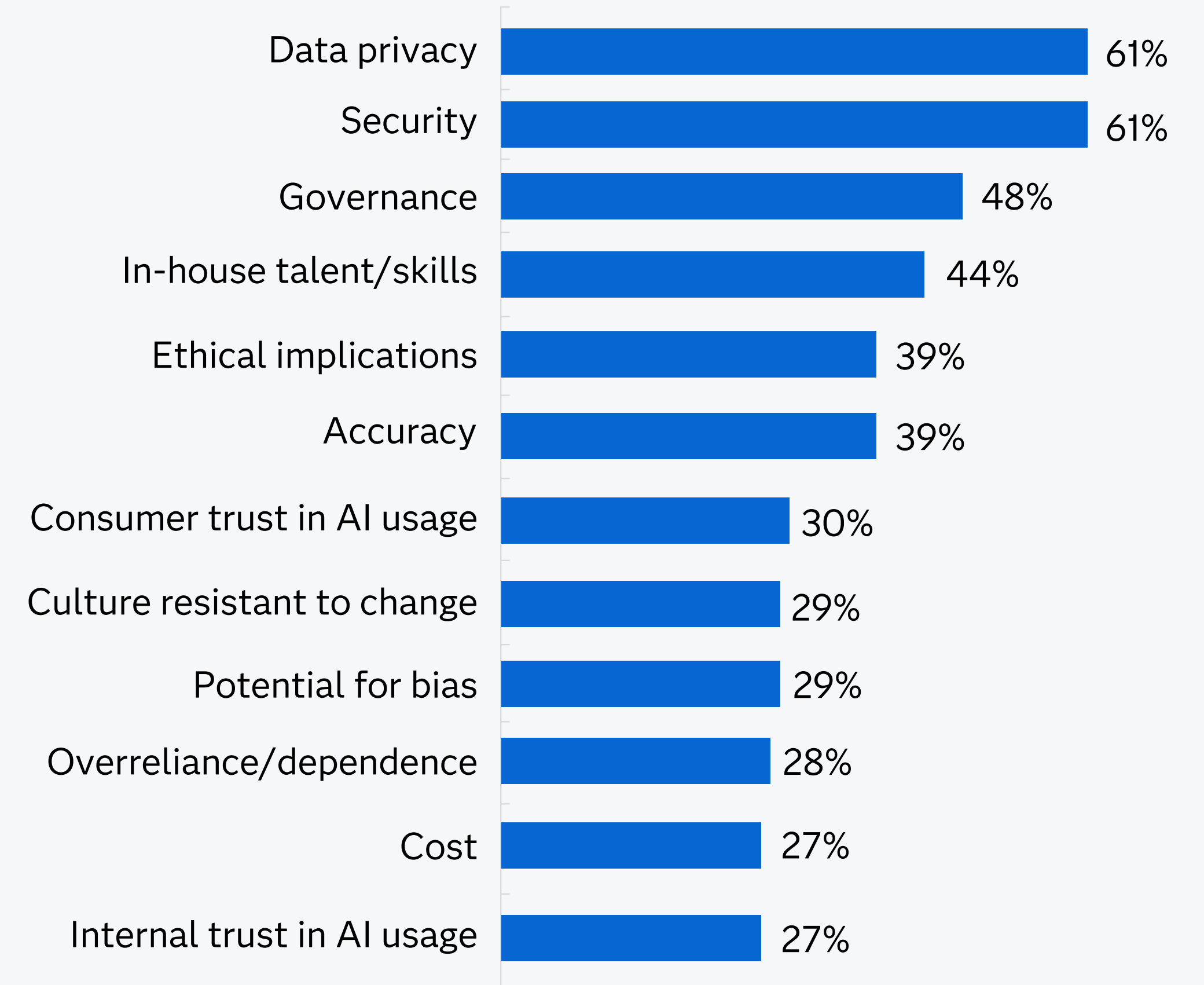
GenAI is an asset to businesses when marketers can count on the technology to perform reliably, ethically and transparently. However, many have concerns about GenAI's privacy and trustworthiness.

- Over half of respondents (**54%**) name privacy and trust concerns as the main obstacle they foresee or have encountered when implementing GenAI. Four in 10 (**39%**) cite concerns about accuracy (especially among those who have fully adopted the technology).
- Six in 10 (**61%**) marketers state that their main concern about GenAI usage in their organization is data security, and **61%** cite data privacy. These are the top two concerns across all respondents.
- Intriguingly, concerns about consumer trust in GenAI usage and internal trust in GenAI usage (for example, among employees) are much lower, at **30%** and **27%**.

Eight in 10 respondents in banking have concerns around data privacy and security (**82%** compared with **61%** across all industries).

For marketers, data privacy and security are the top two concerns related to GenAI

What are your concerns regarding the usage of GenAI in your organization?

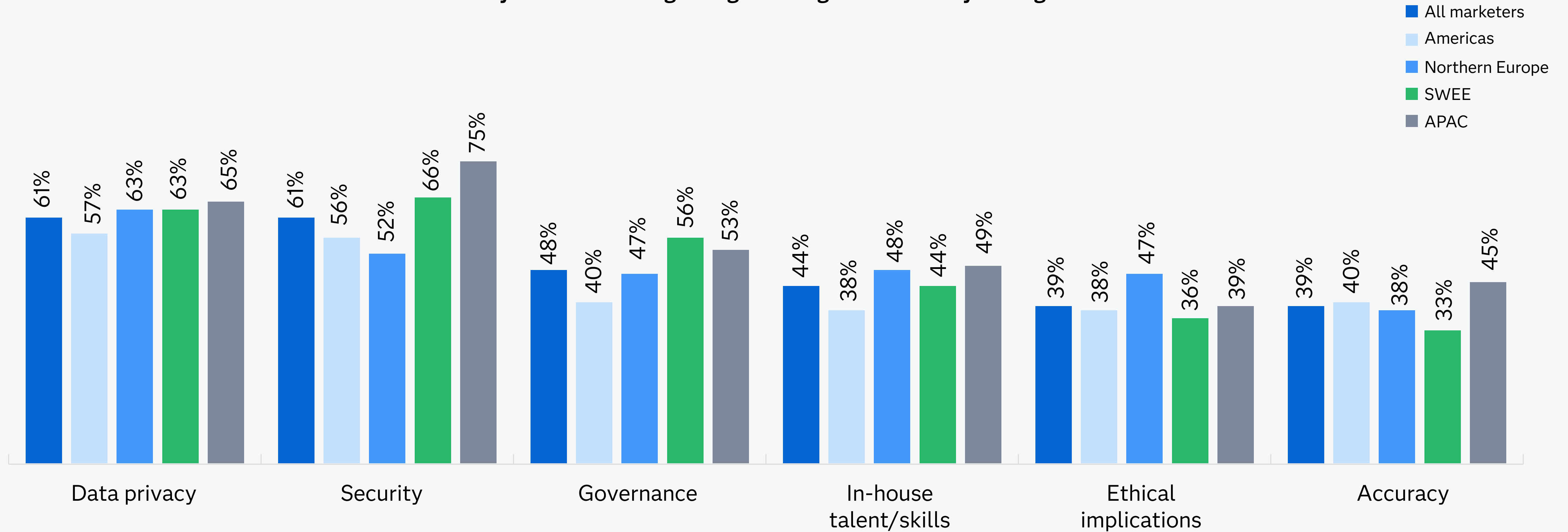


Based on % ranking as one of their top 5 concerns



Concerns about data security are especially high in APAC

What are your concerns regarding the usage of GenAI in your organization?

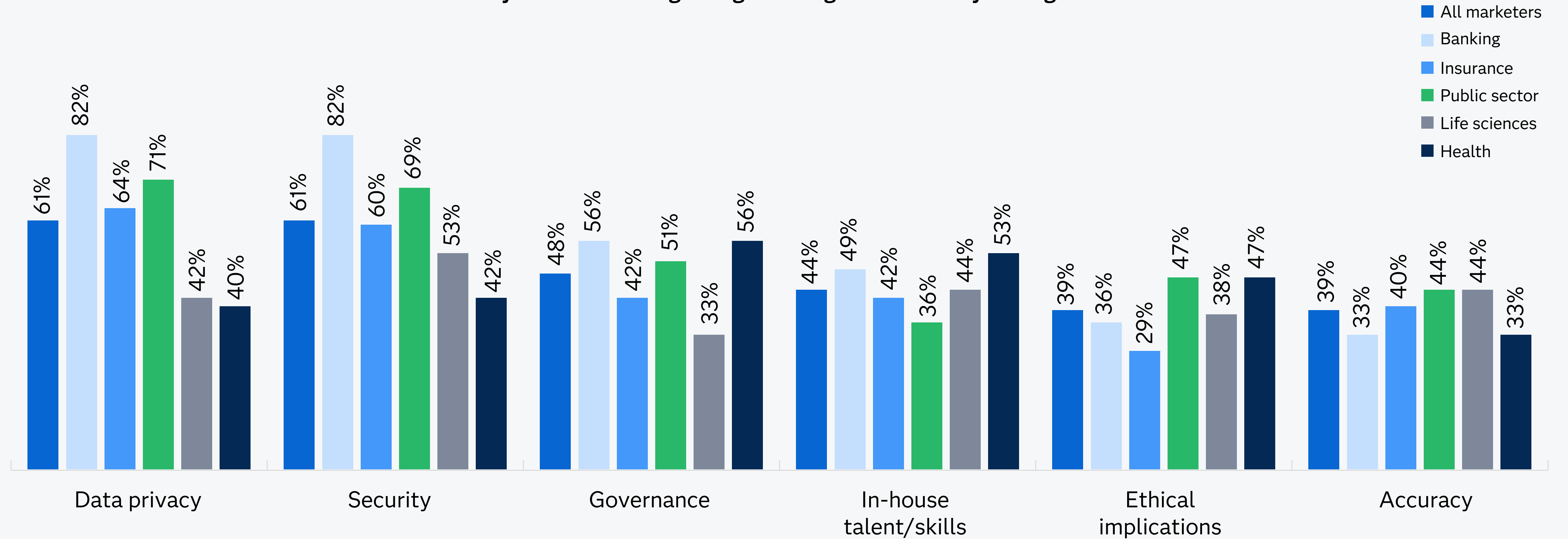


Based on % ranking as one of their top 5 concerns



Eight in 10 respondents in banking have concerns around data privacy and security

What are your concerns regarding the usage of GenAI in your organization?



Based on % ranking as one of their top 5 concerns



d. Complying with governance

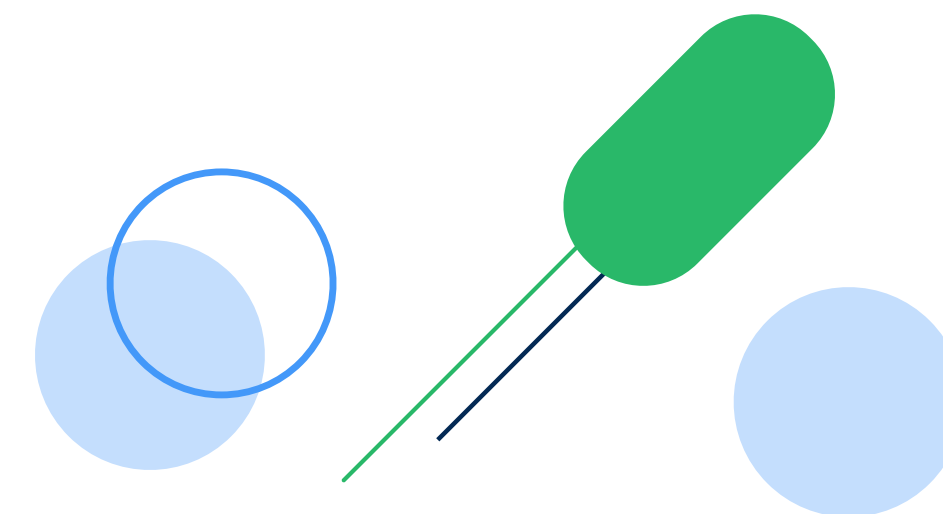
Developing responsible AI and avoiding regulatory noncompliance

One source of mistrust in GenAI is a pervasive lack of governance of the technology across organizations. Regulatory noncompliance is a serious potential problem that organizations must address.

- There is a lack of expertise around GenAI governance. Less than one in 10 organizations have a well-established and comprehensive governance framework (**7%**), and only one in 20 provides a high level of training around GenAI governance and monitoring (**5%**).
- Half of marketers (**48%**) state that their main concern about GenAI usage in their organization is governance. This is the third-most prevalent concern after data security and privacy.
- One in 10 organizations (**8%**) have no GenAI governance framework at all.
- Only one in 10 organizations (**9%**) are fully prepared to comply with regulations concerning GenAI, and this is true for only a third of those who have fully implemented the technology.
- Marketers are most likely to identify technological limitations (**30%**) or a lack of transparency and accountability (**26%**) as key barriers to the effective governance and monitoring of GenAI. A lack of expertise is also seen as an issue – and is particularly likely to be highlighted by those in marketing roles.
- However, six in 10 (**63%**) companies do have a GenAI policy that dictates how employees can and cannot use it for the business.

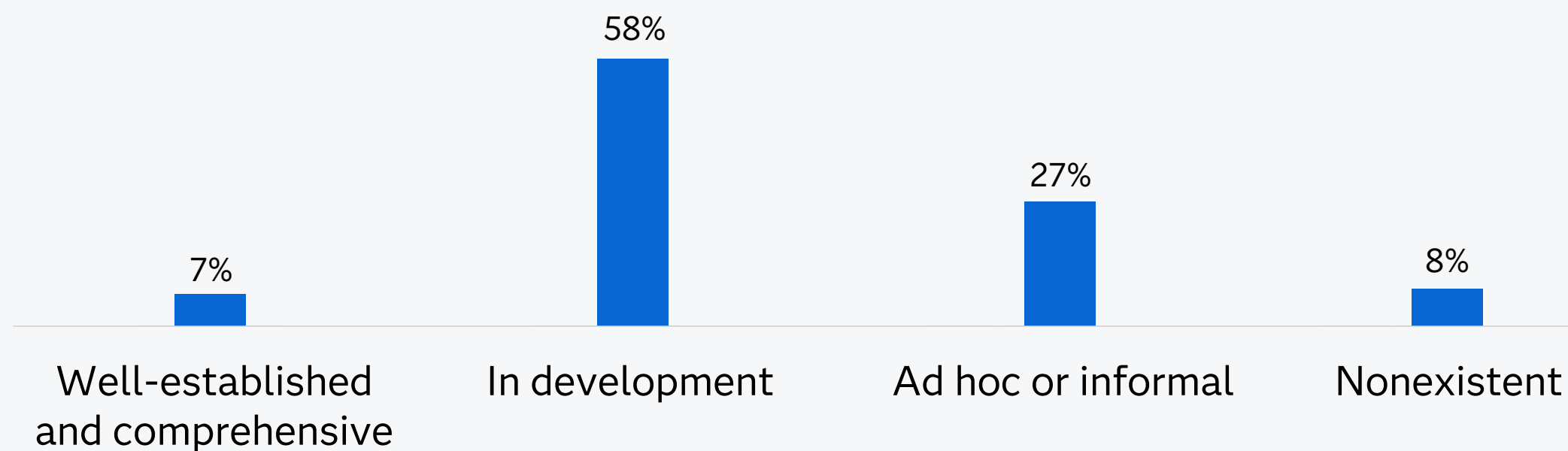
Those in Northern Europe are less likely to have a well-established GenAI framework in place (**2%** have a well-established comprehensive framework compared with **7%** globally, **11%** in the Americas and **13%** in the US). Northern European respondents also feel least prepared to comply with GenAI regulations. Only one in 20 (**5%**) feels fully prepared, compared with **9%** globally and **17%** in the US.

Marketers in banks feel especially unprepared for GenAI regulations (**49%** compared with **64%** across all sectors and **76%** in the public sector). Notably, the public sector has an extreme range of maturity when it comes to governance. Public sector organizations are more likely than average to have a “well-established and comprehensive” governance framework for GenAI (**13%** compared with **7%** across sectors) but also more likely to have no framework (**16%** compared with **8%**). There is an opportunity for learning across this sector to help those who are just starting to use GenAI in the marketing function of their organization.



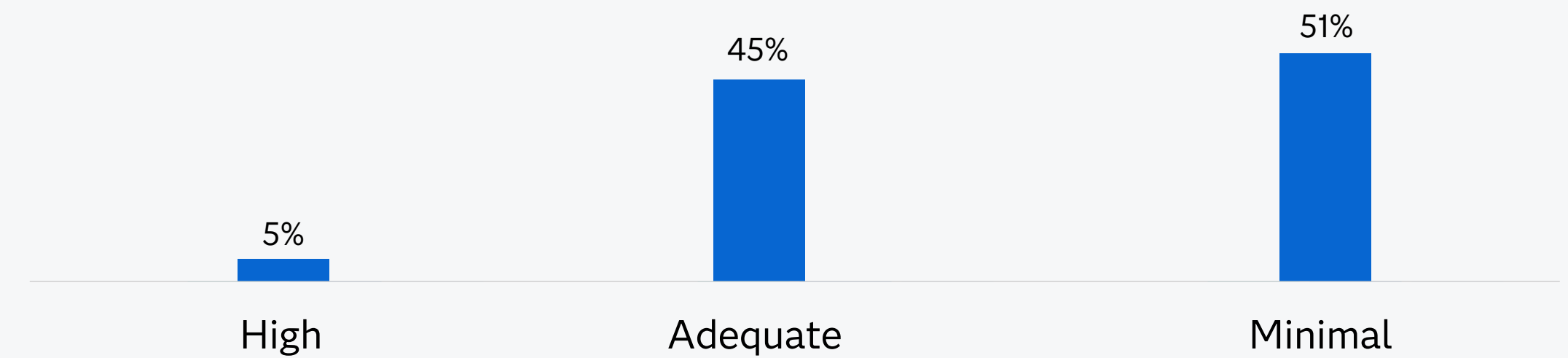
Less than one in 10 organizations have a well-established and comprehensive GenAI governance framework. One in 10 has no governance framework at all.

How would you describe your current GenAI/AI/current data management governance framework?



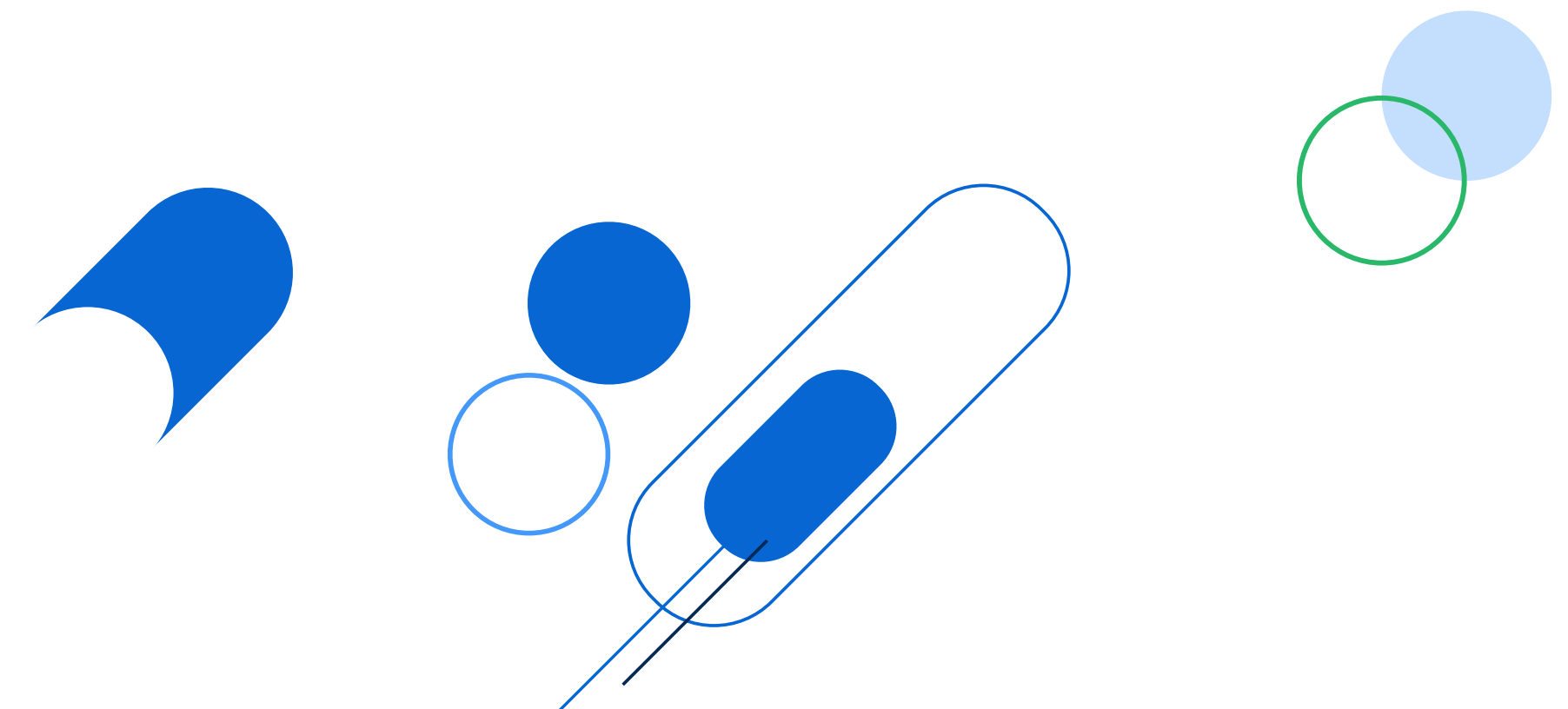
Only one in 20 organizations offer a high level of training on GenAI governance

What level of training does your organization currently have regarding GenAI governance and monitoring?



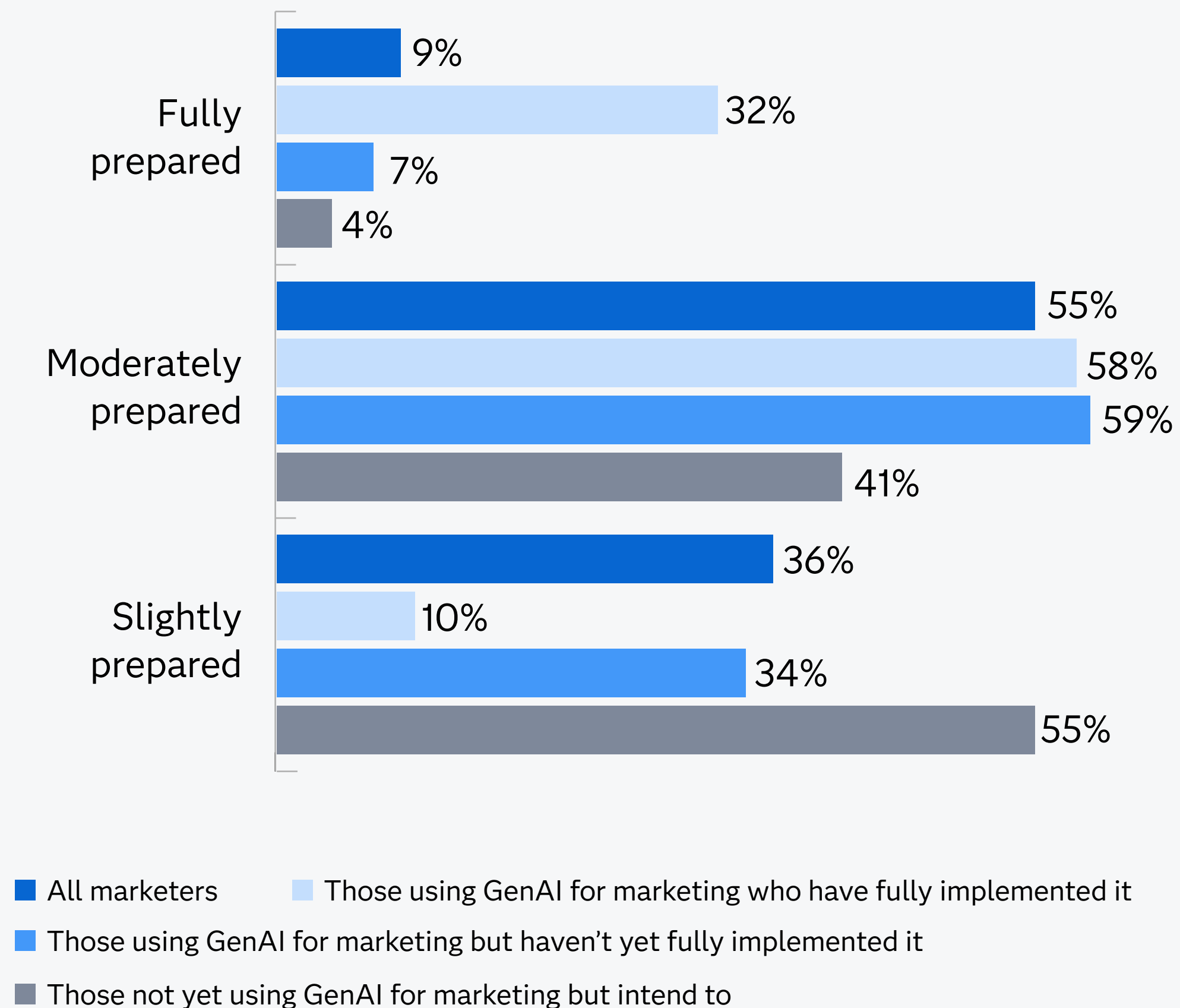
Insight 4:

Brands that choose to deploy GenAI results into production MarTech environments must choose a reliable, trustworthy vendor. This is essential for marketing organizations to have confidence that their outputs meet stringent privacy and compliance requirements. Working with an expert third-party provider ensures that MarTech solutions are trustworthy and reliable.



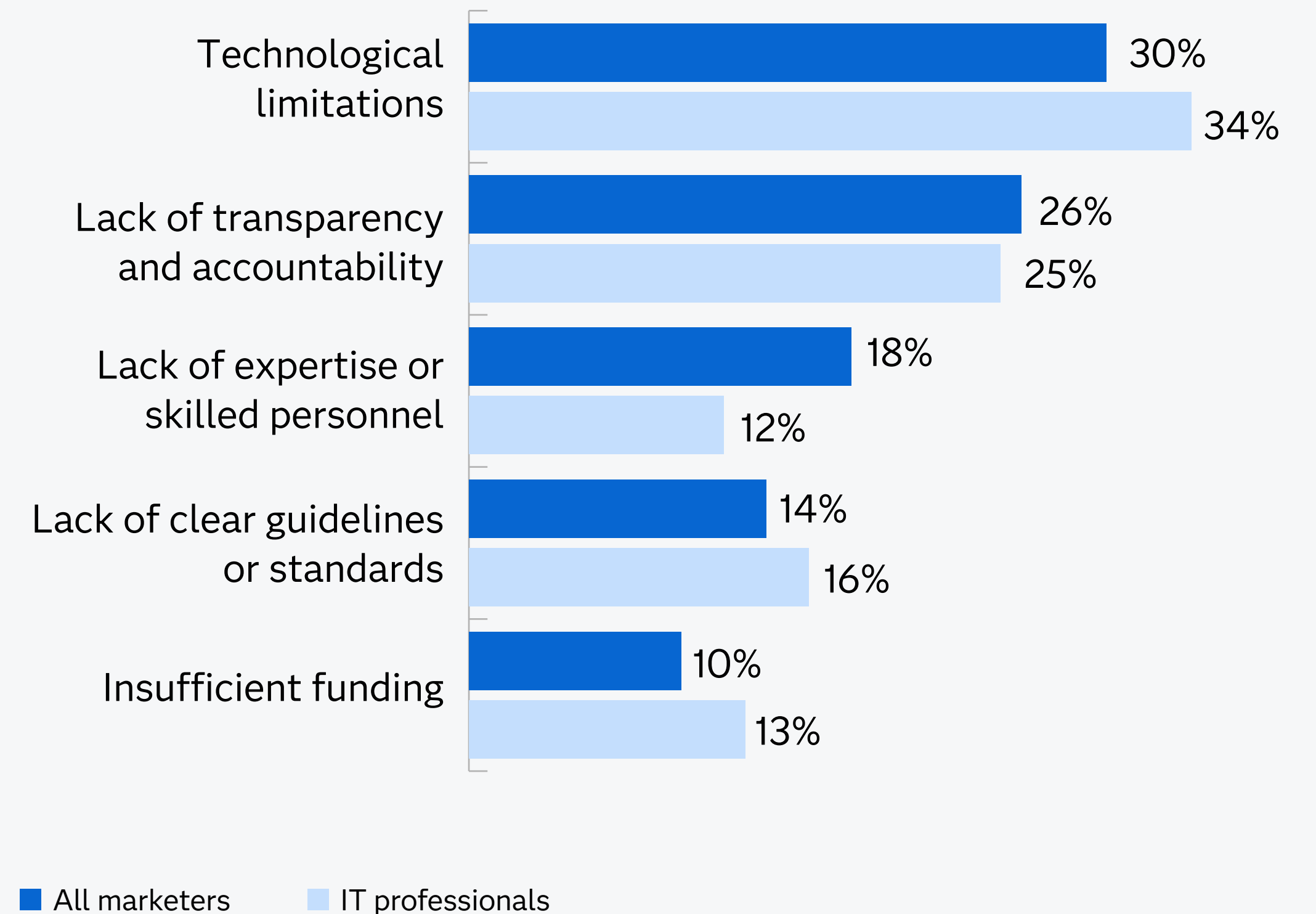
Less than one in 10 organizations feel fully prepared for GenAI regulations

How prepared is your organization to comply with current and upcoming regulations concerning GenAI?



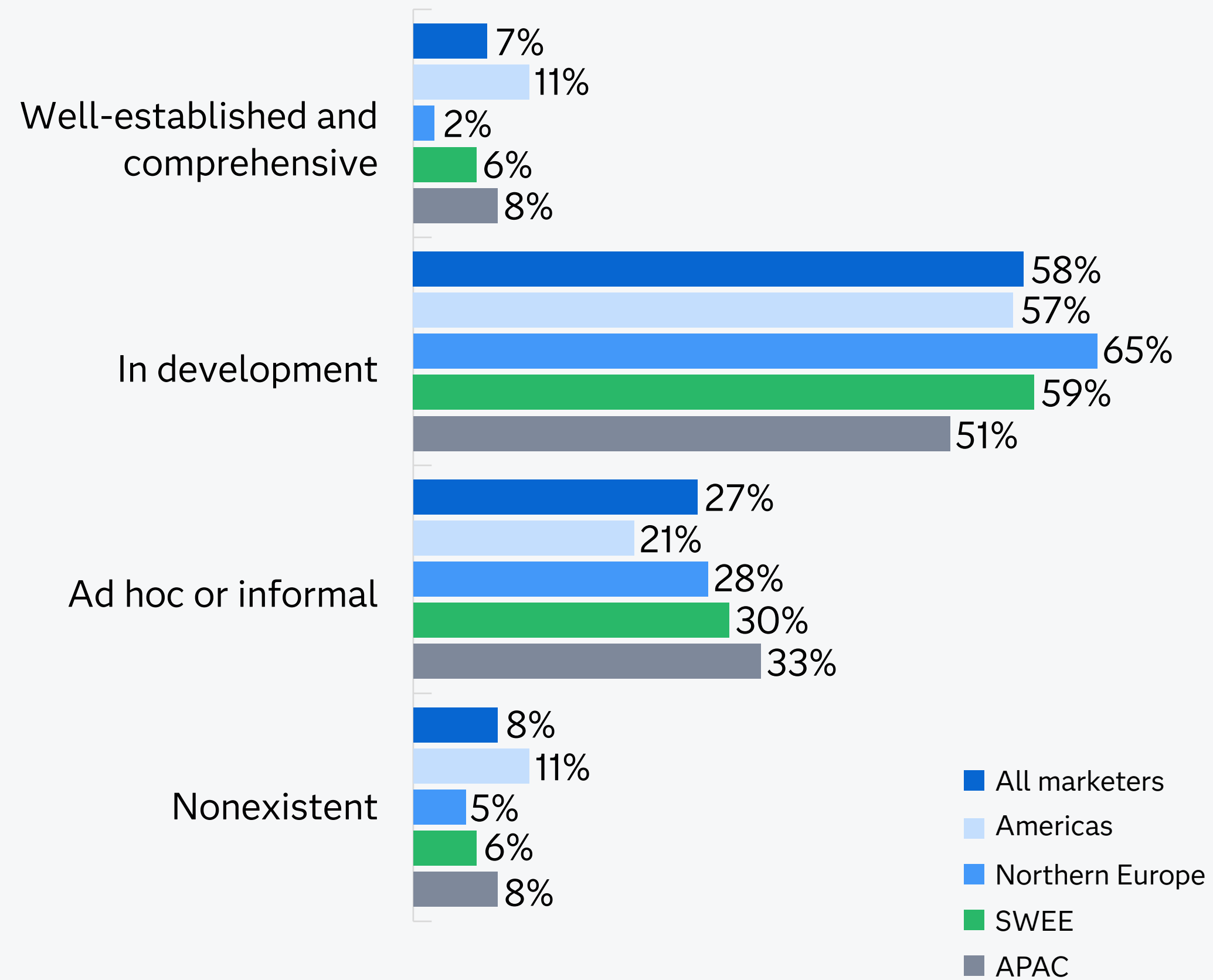
Marketers are most likely to identify technological limitations or a lack of transparency and accountability as key barriers to the effective governance and monitoring of GenAI

What would you say is your biggest challenge in implementing effective governance and monitoring for GenAI?



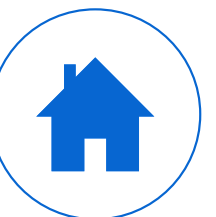
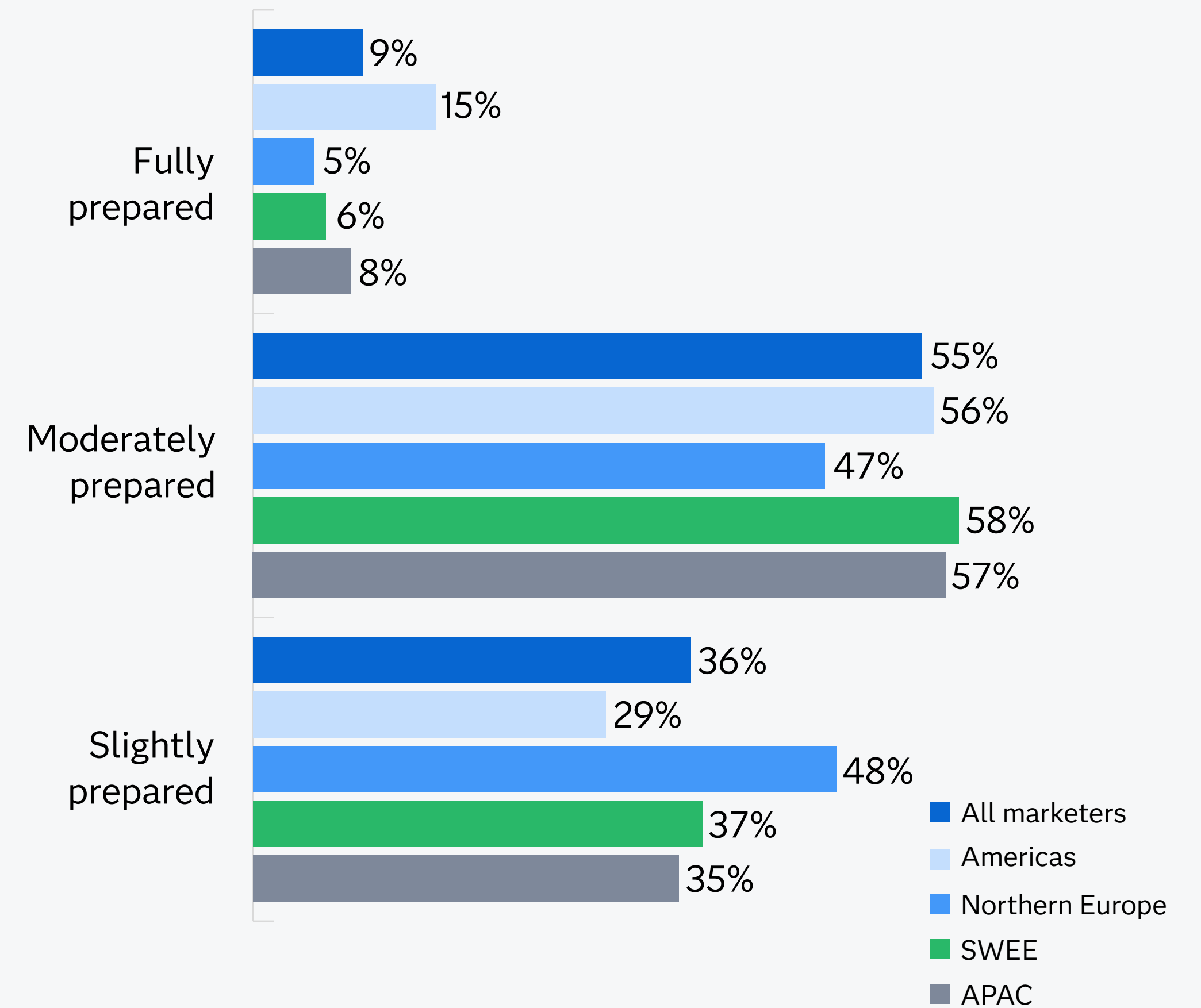
Northern Europeans are less likely to have a well-established GenAI framework in place

How would you describe your current GenAI/AI/current data management governance framework?



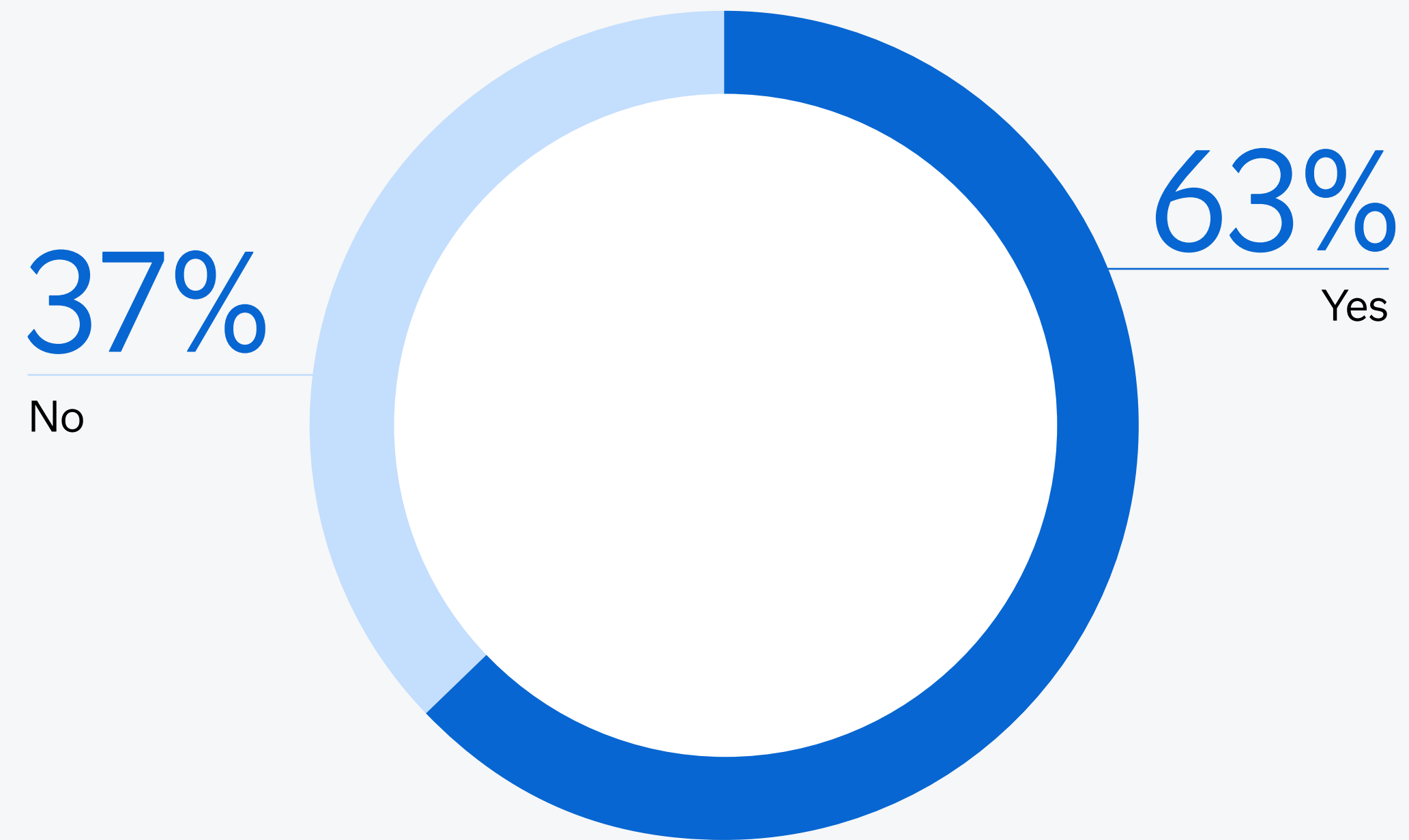
Only one in 20 Northern European respondents feel fully prepared to comply with GenAI regulations

How prepared is your organization to comply with current and upcoming regulations concerning GenAI?



Six in 10 organizations have a policy guiding employees' use of GenAI

Does your organization have a GenAI policy that dictates how your employees can and cannot use it for the business?



Insight 5:

Without governance, education and enablement frameworks in place, generative AI becomes a risky, unproven technology that can have devastating impacts on organizations. It makes sense to deploy all GenAI initiatives with human guidance and approval for the time being.



04

What does the future look like?

The research reveals that use of GenAI for marketing is set to increase over the next 12 months. Nine in 10 organizations (**90%**) plan to invest in GenAI in the next financial year and in almost all cases this is backed up by a dedicated budget. The use of GenAI in key marketing activities is expected to double over this period, with a transition from simple to more sophisticated applications. Three in 10 (**28%**) are planning to enlist third-party support to ensure that they make the most of GenAI's potential.

Marketing professionals should not shy away from the opportunities offered by this new technology, which promises to enhance their performance and career opportunities. Proficiency with GenAI carries no risks, but there may be a risk of job loss for those who do not embrace it, including those at the highest level of marketing departments.

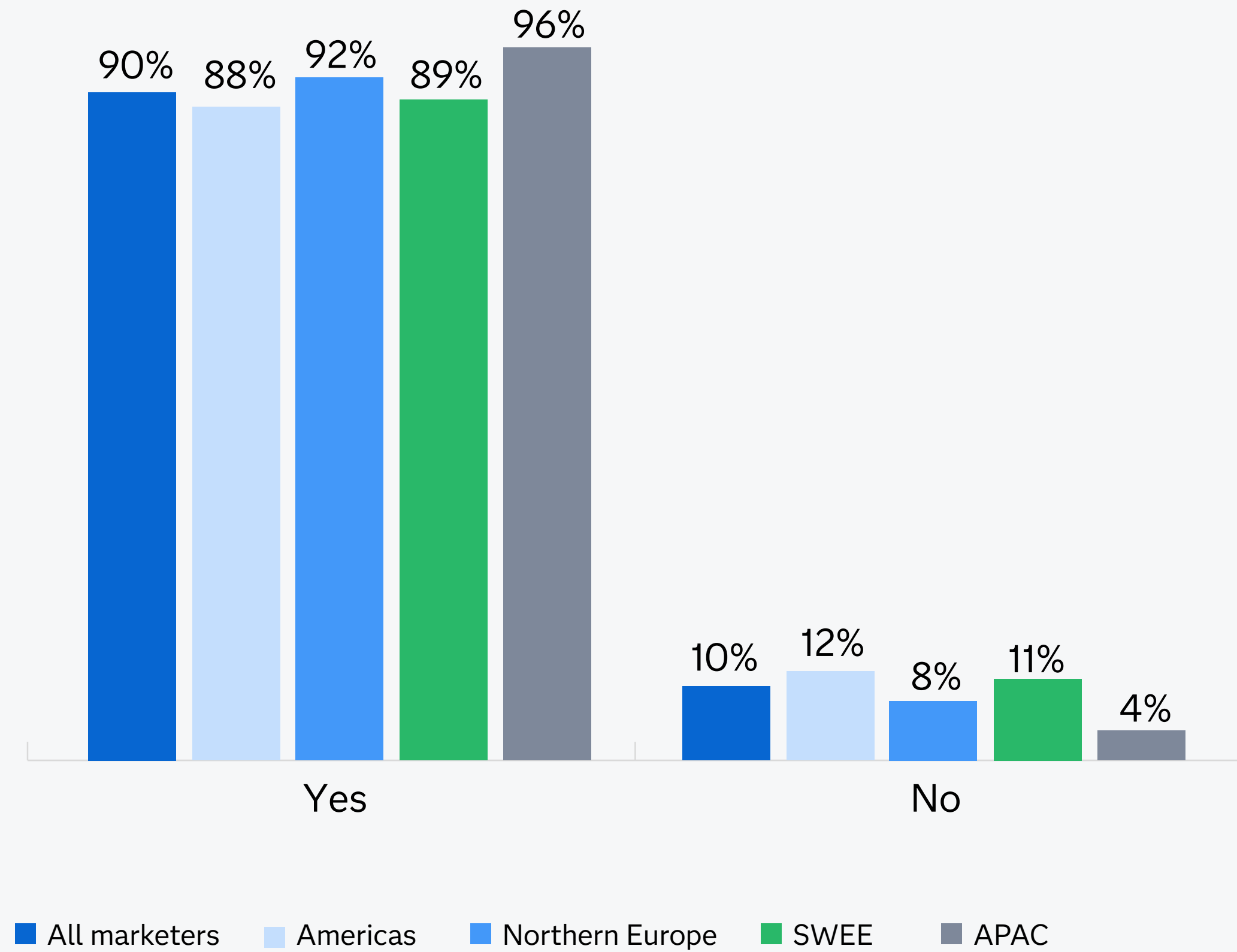
Countries in the APAC region are most enthusiastic about investing in GenAI next year (**96%**), in comparison to Northern Europe (**92%**) and the Americas (**88%**).

Notably, the public and banking sectors are behind in using GenAI for marketing purposes, with half (53%) of banking organizations and three in 10 (31%) in the public sector organizations not yet doing so. However, as part of the general trend toward GenAI adoption, all organizations within the public sector intend to use GenAI in marketing departments within the next two years.

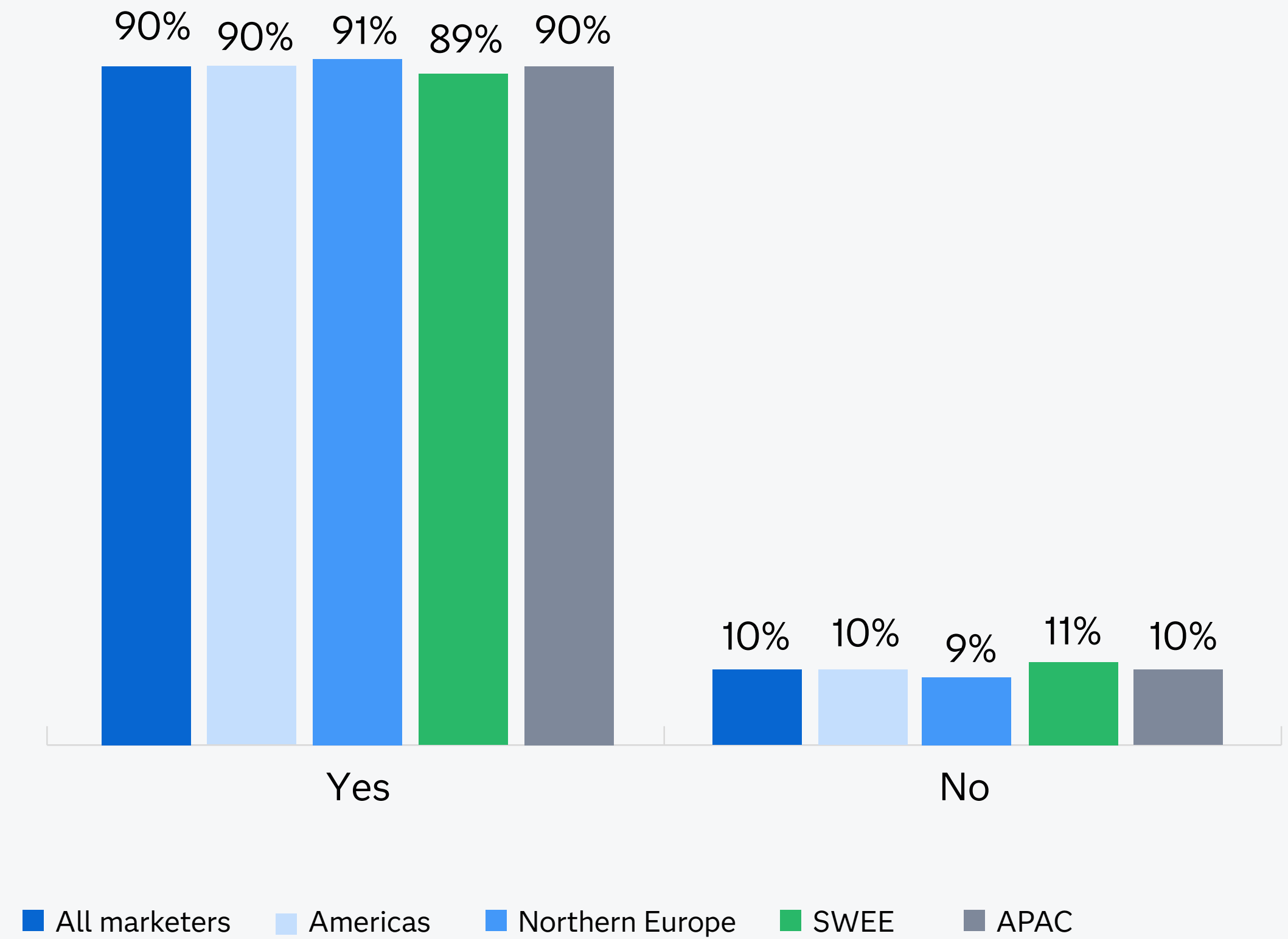


Countries in the APAC region are most enthusiastic about investing in GenAI next year

Is your organization planning to invest in GenAI for marketing in the next financial year?



Does your organization have a dedicated budget for GenAI for marketing for the upcoming financial year?



05

Competitive solutions for GenAI marketing

Marketers must develop strategies for GenAI deployment that not only achieve immediate benefits but also prepare the groundwork for more advanced, long-term implementation.

Three stages of GenAI implementation

Based on the research findings, there are clear indications of how organizations are strategically using GenAI in the present moment. It's important to prepare for a future where advanced GenAI technology becomes an integral part of MarTech applications.

No. 1: User adoption of GenAI

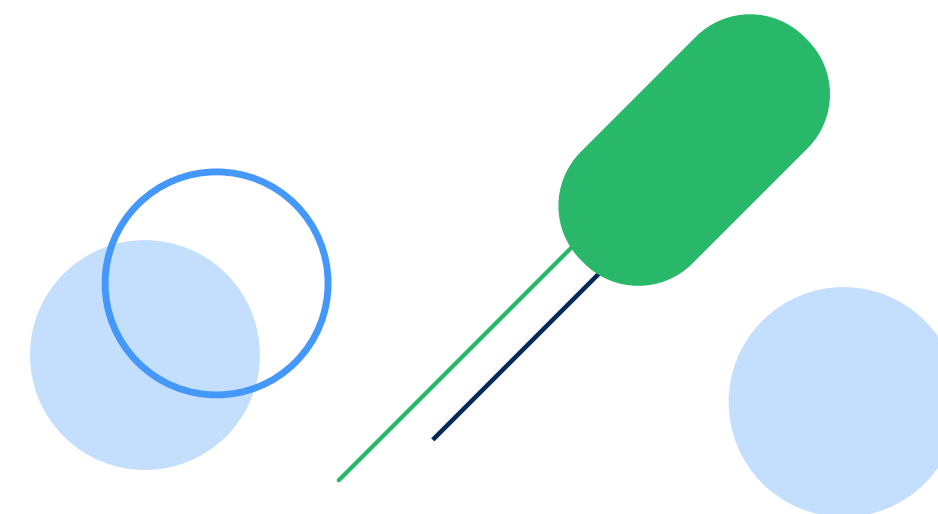
Because of the comfort level most users have with GenAI, combined with the technology's abilities at this stage in its evolution, it makes sense that GenAI is being used to complete foundational tasks or enhance the core features of MarTech applications. This includes content and copy creation, classification, and use as an intelligent assistant. We will see this advance to an enhanced stage in the next several years, where incremental feature development will occur around creating tasks, integrations, and building journey and decision flows.

No. 2: Advancement of GenAI technologies

As GenAI and the underlying large language models (LLMs) improve, we will enter the immersive phase of development, where GenAI is the foundational technology orchestrating the creation of the data to insight to activation process. This will allow users to operate MarTech applications, like SAS® Customer Intelligence 360, completely from a voice or chat-based perspective.

No. 3: Advanced GenAI technology embedded within MarTech applications

Embedding the technologies into MarTech will follow a natural progression that is commensurate with the advancement of the technology in whole. However, this embedding and integration will be halted if organizations do not put the proper AI-based guardrails in place. Organizations will need to ensure they have high-quality, well-governed and legally compliant data and that any derived insights from the data are bias-free and statistically sound. Once those workflows, processes and approvals are in place and rock-solid, only then will we see the widespread rollout of GenAI into production environments.



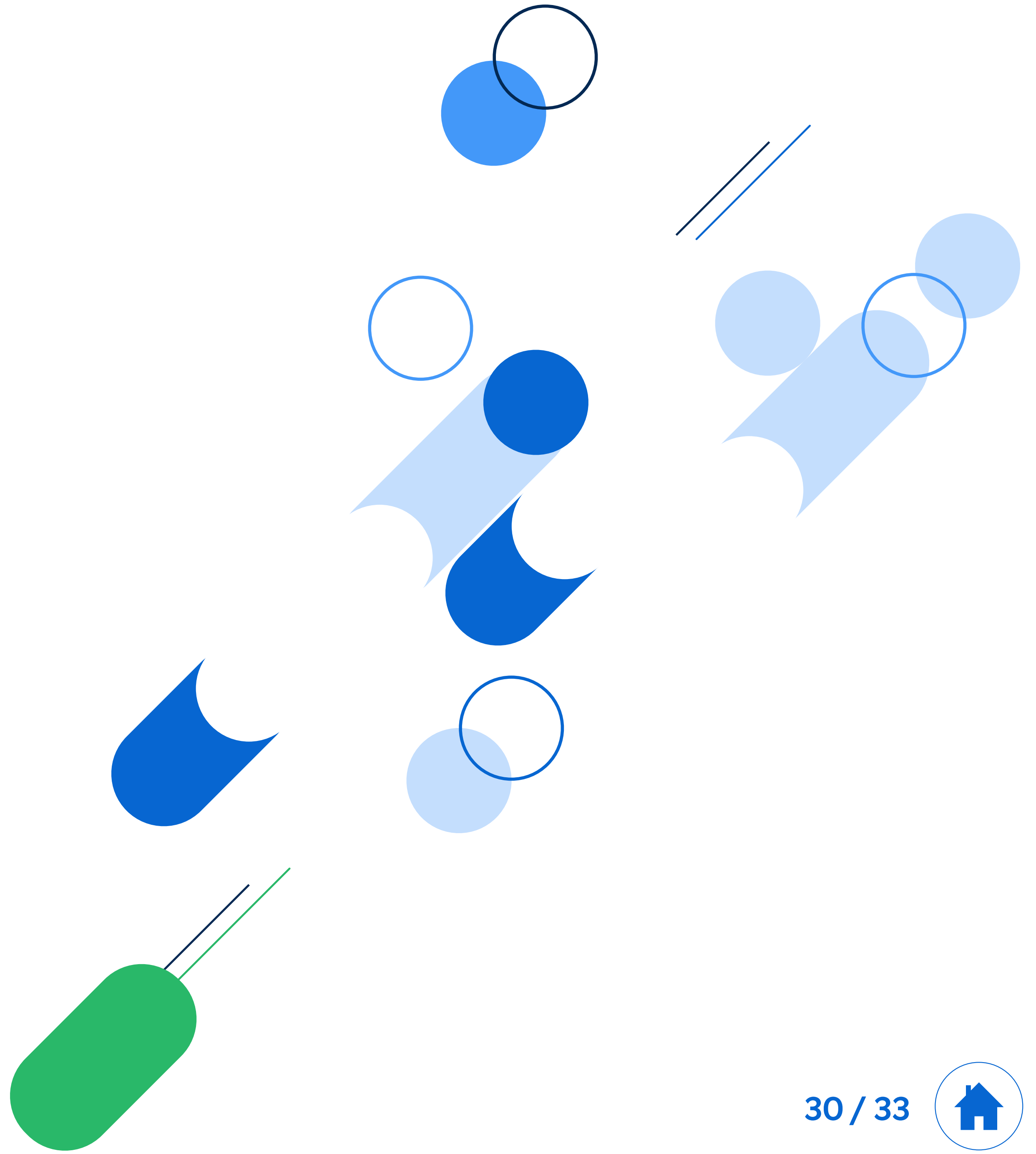
Advanced usage of GenAI

As with any new technology, initially grasping the mechanics and resultant outcomes can be challenging. As a result, education and deployment obstacles can occur. As it's used today, GenAI may be viewed as a black-box technology. Many marketers simply input a query into a prompt box, which then returns a result. While this is great for brainstorming, producing text-based marketing collateral and content creation, this only touches the surface of what's possible. Organizations are eager to take their use of GenAI much further.

SAS is doing just that by embedding GenAI via AWS Bedrock into digital marketing capabilities such as:

- Audience generation and creation.
- Copy and content generation and creation.
- Journey and decision flow generation and creation.
- Support documentation querying and question answering.

As a result, marketing organizations will realize enhanced operational efficiency.



Expert solutions for GenAI in marketing

Trust is foundational in customer engagement that comes from MarTech solutions. Just as consumers must trust brands to conduct business, brands must trust their technology providers and know that the data they manage and the insights they provide are sound.

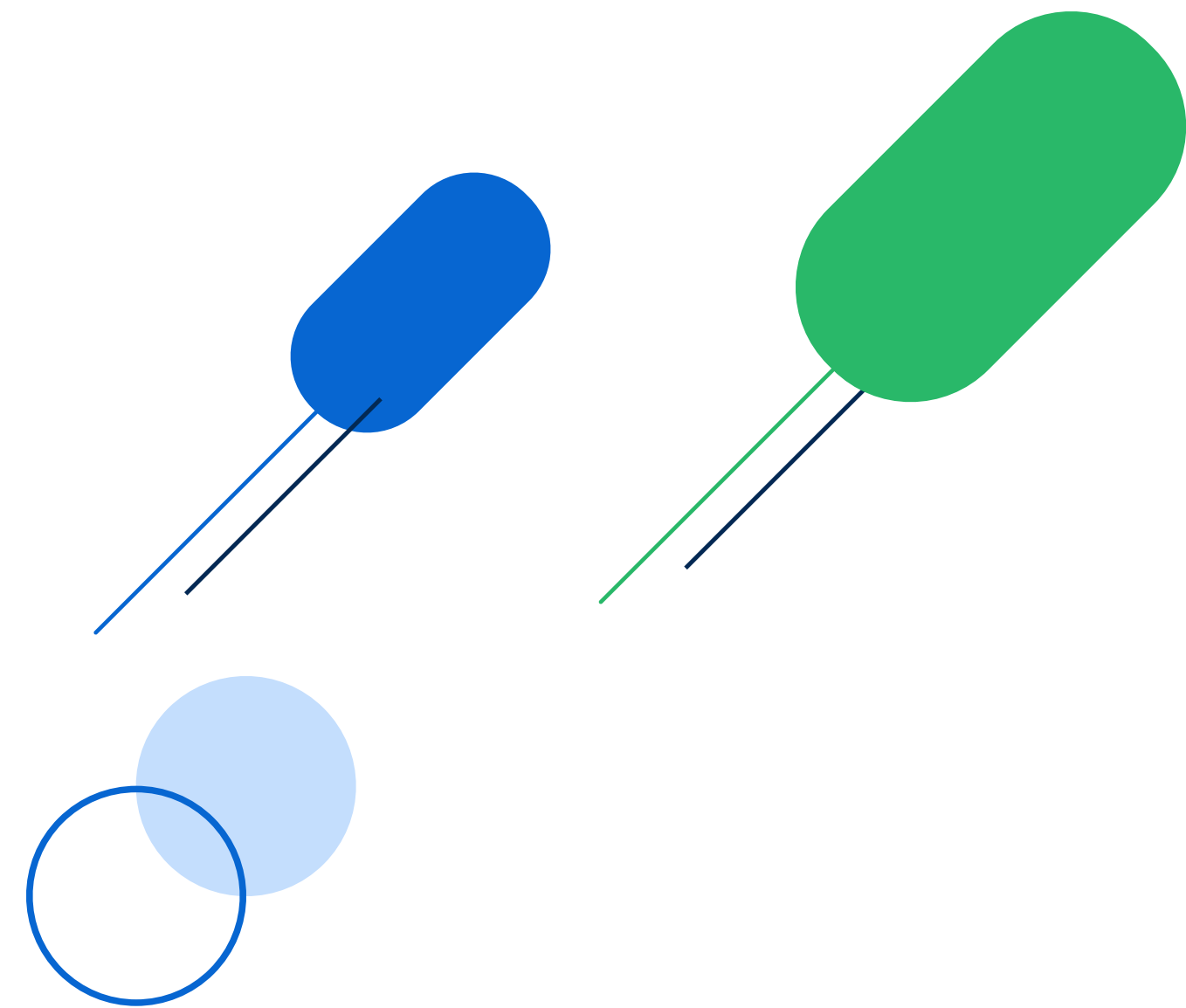
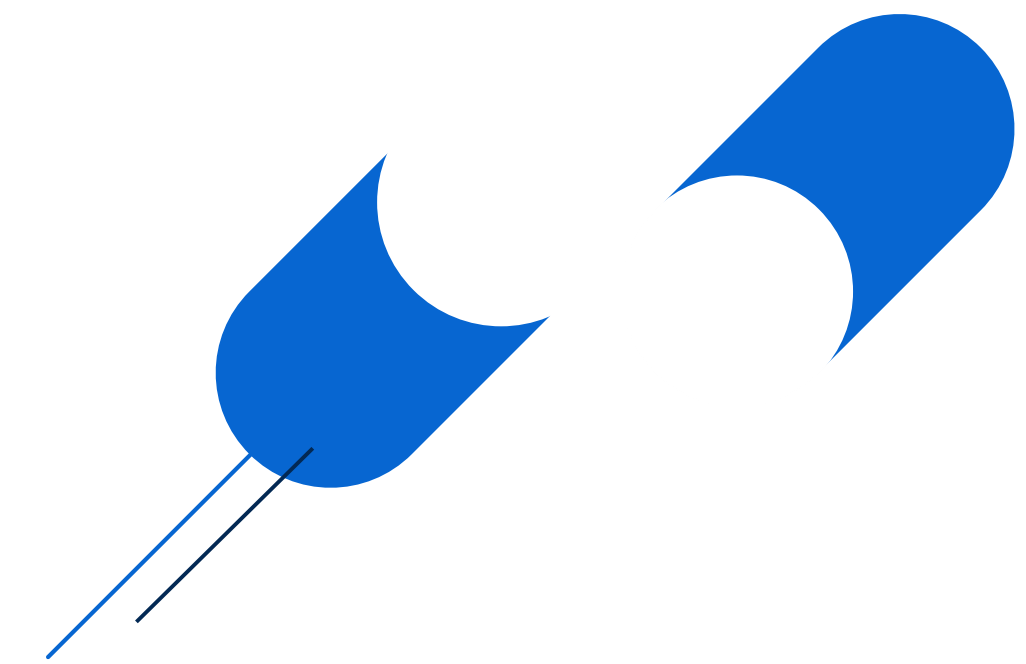
It's no surprise that marketers are currently highly focused on data privacy, security and governance. Legislation such as the GDPR, CCPA and the EU Digital Markets Act – and others – impose financial penalties and could lead to incarceration if companies fail to properly manage and protect the personally identifiable information of customers. Penalties can amount to a substantial portion of a company's annual revenue, costing major tech firms hundreds of millions, if not billions, of dollars.

Brands that choose to deploy GenAI results into production MarTech environments must be 100% sure that the outputs they are deploying are correct from a privacy and compliance perspective. Even then, results must be tested and monitored for bias.

Working with a provider such as SAS, which centers its product vision and development on responsibly engaging through the proper use of data, AI technologies and resources, is critical in today's market.



To learn more about SAS Customer Intelligence 360, visit sas.com/marketing



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About this research

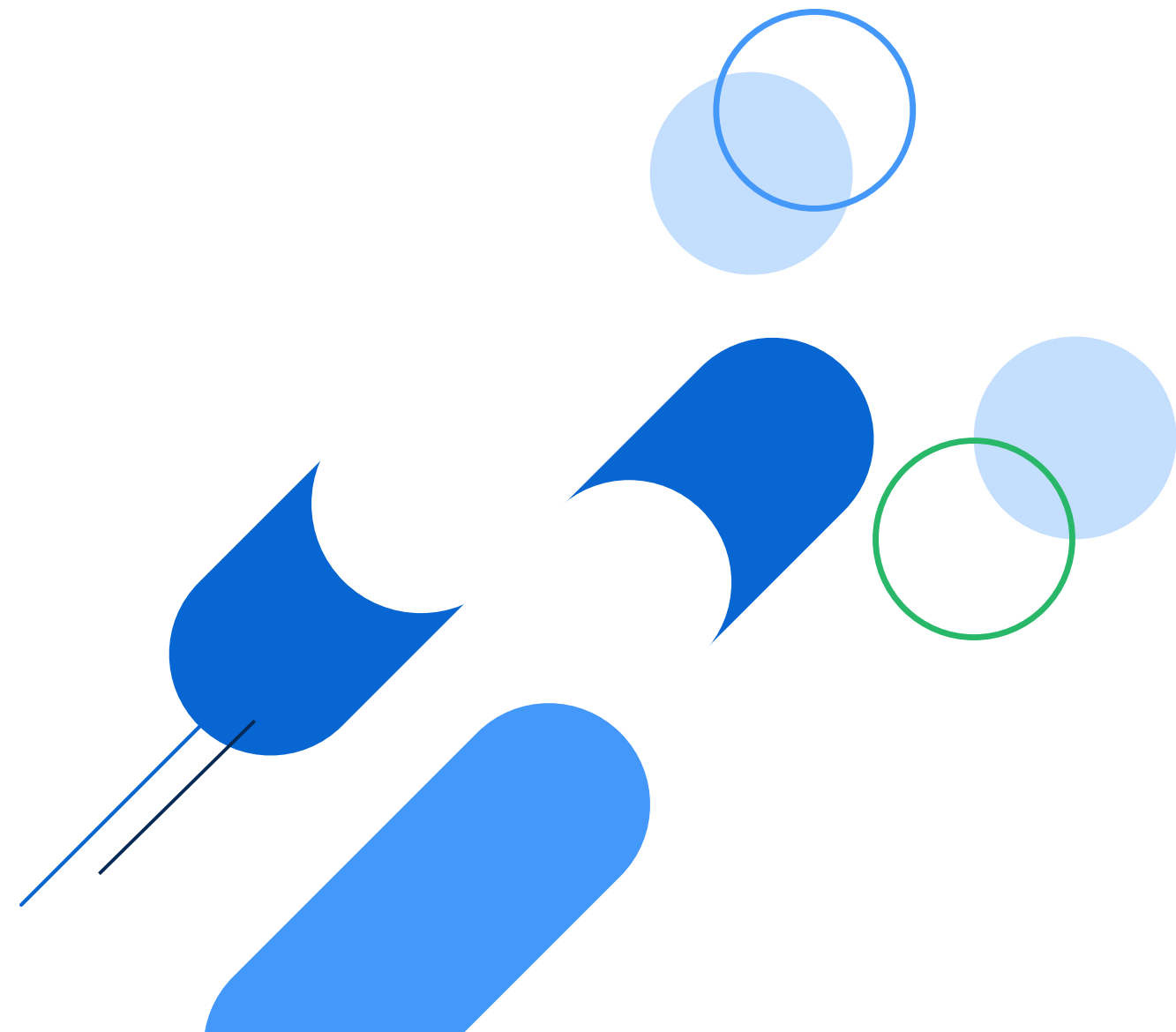
The survey was conducted by Coleman Parkes Research in July 2024 and targeted 300 marketers in organizations across key sectors globally. It followed a survey of 1,600 decision makers in IT roles responsible for GenAI strategy or data analytics. Survey respondents work across a range of sectors: banking, insurance, the public sector, life sciences, health care, telco, manufacturing, retail, energy and utilities, and professional services. Their job titles include head of marketing, director of digital marketing and chief marketing officer. The smallest organizations we surveyed employed a workforce of 500-999 people and the largest had more than 10,000 employees.

About Coleman Parkes

Coleman Parkes is a full-service B2B market research agency specializing in IT/technology studies, targeting senior decision makers in SMB to large enterprises across multiple sectors globally. For more information, contact Stephen@coleman-parkes.co.uk.

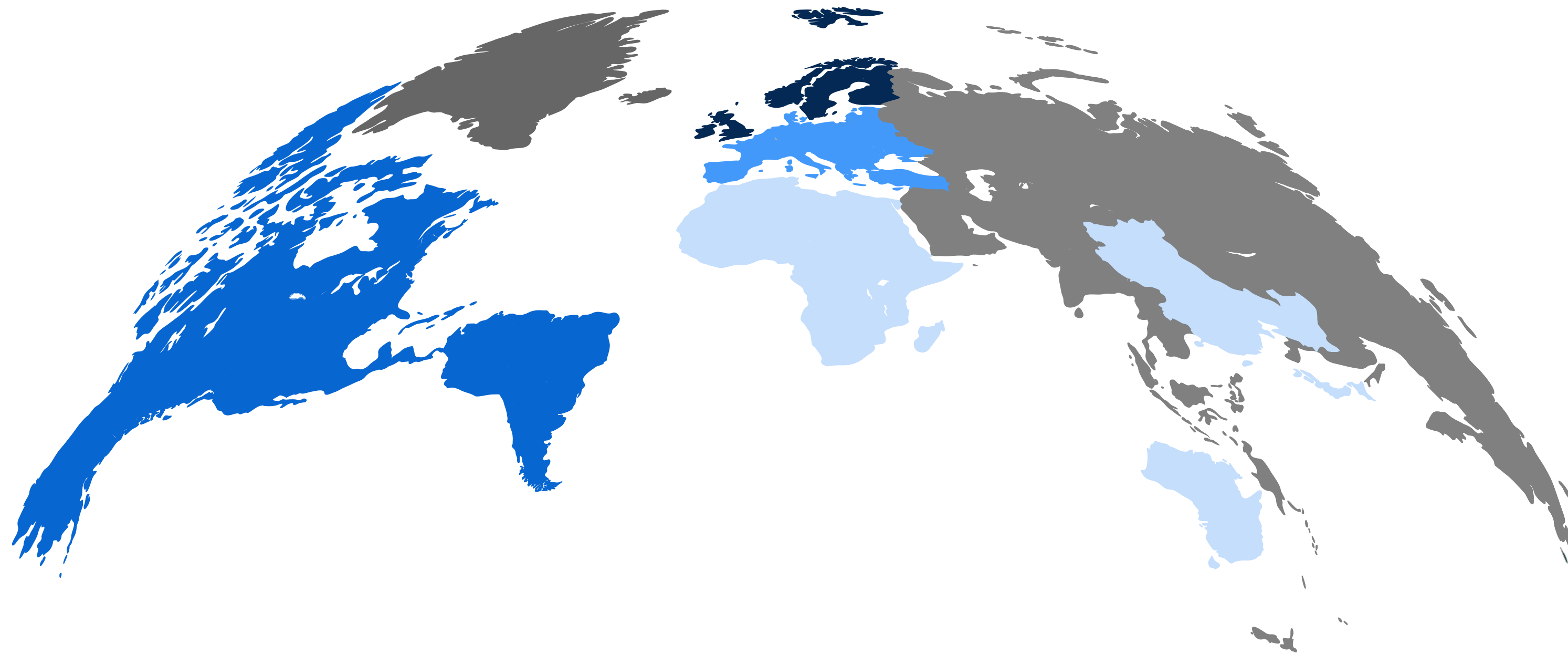
About SAS

SAS Customer Intelligence solutions provide organizations around the world with industry-leading MarTech and AdTech capabilities. Powerful audience targeting and management, comprehensive identity resolution and a unique hybrid data architecture enable marketers to personalize experiences, influence behaviors and deploy messages across the entire customer life cycle.



Geographical coverage

Americas	99	USA, Canada, Brazil, Mexico
Northern Europe	60	UK/Ireland, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Denmark
SWEE	90	France, Germany, Italy, Belgium/Netherlands/Luxemburg, Spain, Poland
APAC	51	Japan, Australia, China, UAE/Saudi Arabia





To learn more, please visit sas.com/marketing



To contact your local SAS office, please visit: sas.com/contact