



STATE OF CRM DATA REPORT 2026

The *Readiness Gap* Behind AI-Driven Marketing



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Accurate AI output *relies* on clean CRM data.

As more teams rush to adopt agentic AI, the quality of CRM data that often fuels these tools stops being an IT or Marketing Ops problem and becomes a boardroom-level risk.

In the past year, two out of three organizations increased the number of marketing decisions delegated to autonomous AI agents—but only one out of five organizations believes their CRM data is well prepared to fuel these initiatives. That gap is where poor decisions are made, false conclusions are drawn, and inaccurate data is used to fuel company-wide strategies.

If you sit in a leadership seat, there's a good chance you've never read one of Validity's State of CRM Data reports. Historically, it was a technical report written for the people inside the CRM every day. But this edition is the reverse—it was collated for marketing leaders who rely on clean CRM data to guide plans, oversee competitive campaigns, and accurately report marketing performance to their C-Suite and boards.

We surveyed 500 marketers across the world to learn how they're managing the gap between CRM data accuracy and the AI it feeds. Read on to see what we found and how to approach your strategy for customer data in an AI-driven world.



Cynthia Price

SVP of Marketing, Validity

Executive Takeaways

62% of organizations

Have suffered direct revenue loss
due to poor CRM data quality.

63% of marketers

Say poor CRM data has contributed
to compliance gaps or privacy
risk exposure.

58% of C-Suite

Feel pressure to implement AI tools
despite flawed underlying data.

45% of marketers

Use agentic AI, even as only 21% say their
data is "very well prepared" to fuel it.

2 out of 3 organizations

Increased marketing decisions
delegated to autonomous AI agents in the
past year.

67% of C-Suite

Admit that campaign data is
manipulated, at times, to make
results look better.

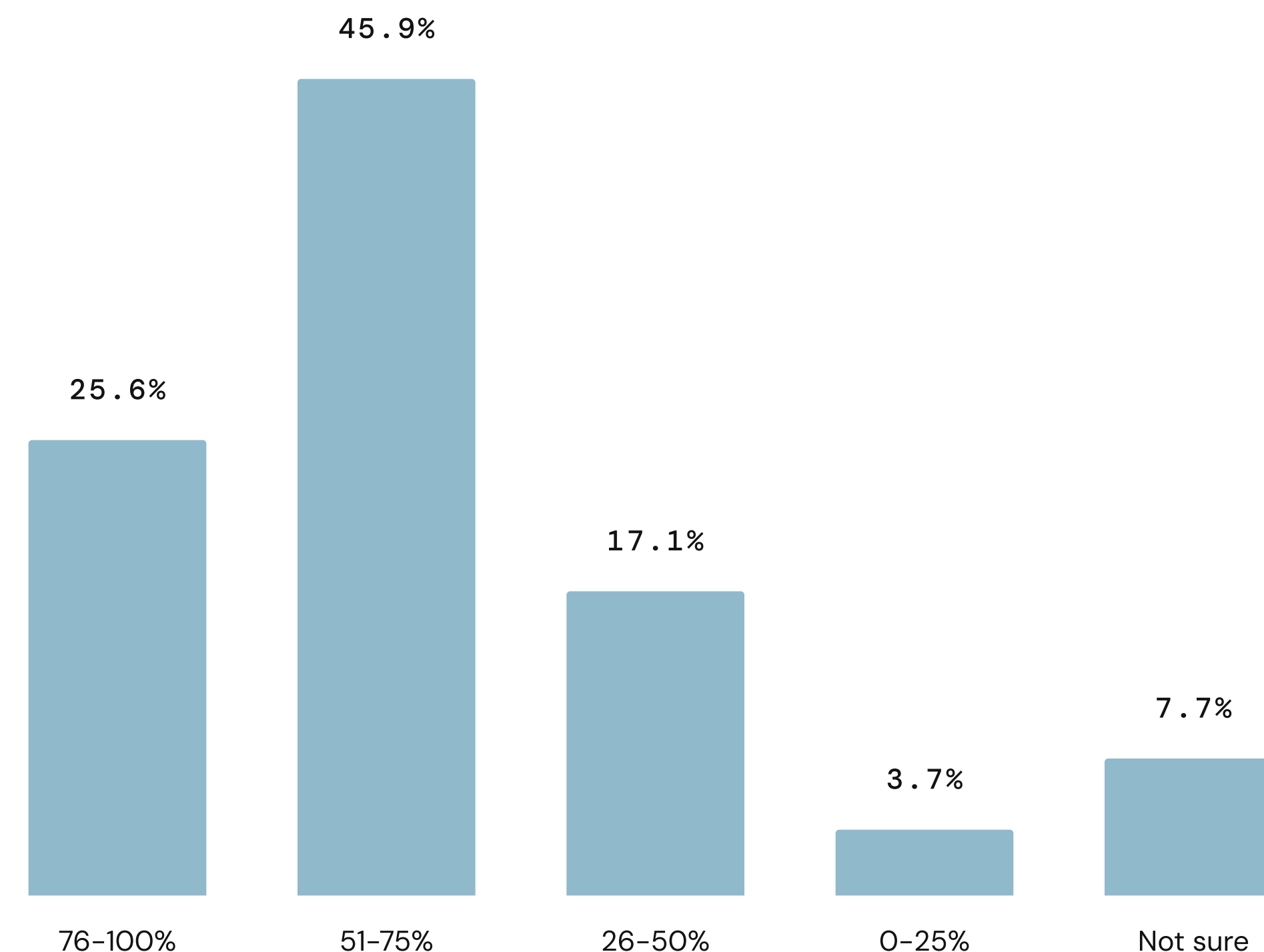
Is your CRM data as *solid* as you think?

CRM data is the cornerstone of marketing operations, and over 92 percent of leaders (C-Suite, SVP/VPs, Heads of Department, and Directors) agree. It's the foundation of every campaign, forecast, and customer relationship—and it fuels the most effective email marketing techniques. Yet few call their CRM data campaign-ready: Only 26 percent of marketers believe more than three-quarters of that data is actually accurate and complete.

That means the data organizations depend on most is the same data they trust least. The uncertainty caused by that split doesn't stay contained to one team or channel, either. CRM data links customer identity to engagement history and revenue numbers used across the entire organization. And when AI enters the mix, it doesn't fix a weak data foundation, it amplifies it—and acts on the data across every channel it touches.

Approximately what percentage of your organization's CRM data would you consider both accurate and complete?

FIGURE 1



Nearly half of marketers (49.8 percent) admit their company struggles with CRM data quality issues—and that struggle is landing at the worst possible time. Marketing teams are racing to plug agentic AI into their CRMs, but agents don't fix bad data—they operate on it. Every duplicate contact, stale field, and unreconciled record isn't just a hygiene problem anymore—it's an instruction set for an AI agent that's about to act on it.

The cost of that struggle shows up in lost time: One in three marketing teams (32.7 percent) lose six or more hours every week fixing, reconciling, or double-checking CRM data. That's six hours per week not spent on campaign strategy, optimization, and growth initiatives—time spent manually doing what an AI agent could handle in minutes using clean underlying data. Teams still stuck in manual reconciliation aren't ready for the agentic layer the rest of the market is already building on.

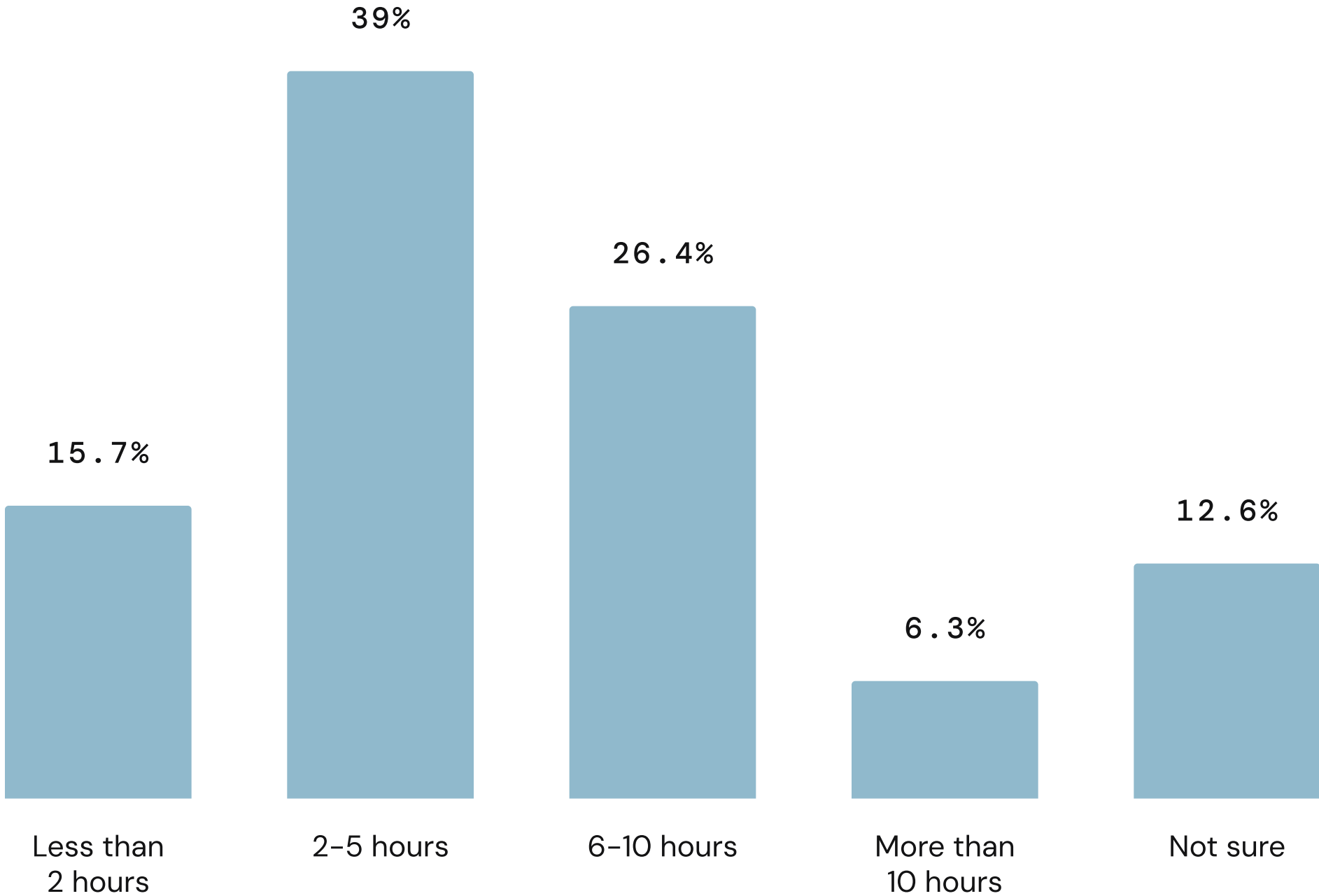
“Most teams are still wrestling with disconnected systems and unreliable data. AI will absolutely amplify performance—but it will just as quickly amplify the consequences of poor data hygiene. If your foundation isn’t solid, AI doesn’t hide the cracks. It exposes them.”



Matt Gore
Chief Technology Officer, Validity

How much time does your team spend each week fixing, reconciling or double-checking CRM data, instead of focusing on campaign strategy, optimization, or growth initiatives?

FIGURE 2



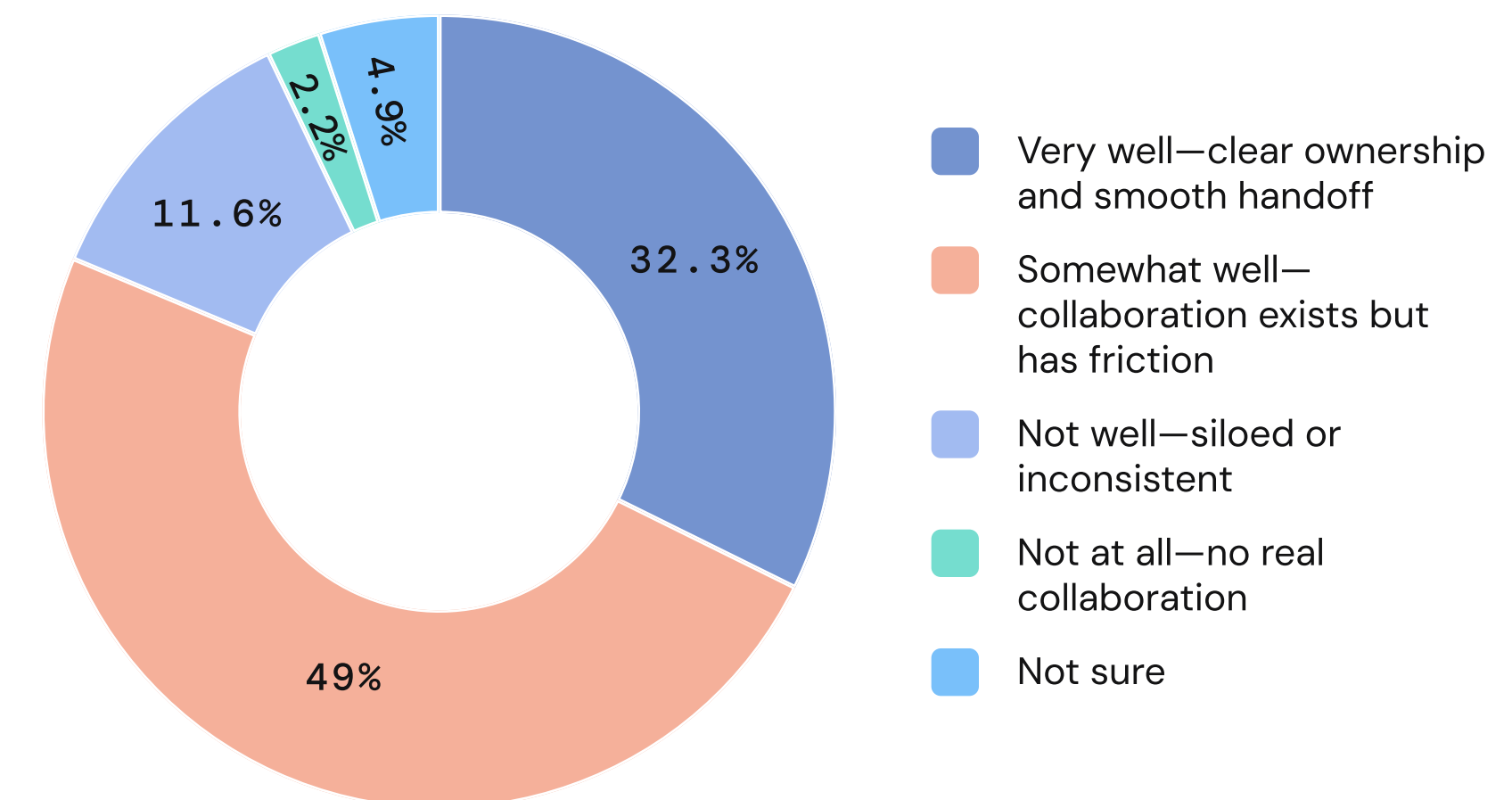
Why are teams forced to spend so *much time* reconciling CRM data quality issues?

One explanation points to data ownership and lack of collaboration. Only 38.6 percent of leaders say marketing and IT/RevOps collaborate "very well" on keeping data usable for campaigns. That number drops to 26.8 percent when asking practitioners—the ones closest to the CRM day-to-day.

This disconnect between teams leaves room for missed updates and incorrect inputs. These issues may seem insignificant at the time, but they often lead to those six-plus hours of reconciling data or correcting AI outputs. At a moment when every org is under pressure to do more with leaner teams, any time spent on tedious tasks that AI can handle is time wasted. In most organizations, that's a budget conversation waiting to happen—and it's exactly the kind of inefficiency a board member scrutinizing marketing spend will ask about first.

How well do marketing and IT/RevOps collaborate today on keeping data usable for campaigns?

FIGURE 3



How much revenue is bad CRM data costing you?

Bad CRM data doesn't just slow marketing teams down—it costs them revenue. When asked if poor CRM data has “likely” or “definitely” cost their organization revenue, 62.4 percent of marketers said yes. But this but that fact isn't universally understood. C-Suite and SVP/VPs—the ones seeing the full revenue picture—report that poor data quality has directly resulted in lost revenue four times as much as individual contributors.

The disparity often comes down to vantage point. Leadership sees data quality issues at the point of impact—missed forecasts, stalled renewals, deals that fall through—while individual contributors typically see only a single record, campaign, or account at a time. The partial view makes it harder to catch a pattern, like a duplicate contact or a stale field, before it compounds into a number leadership must explain to the board.

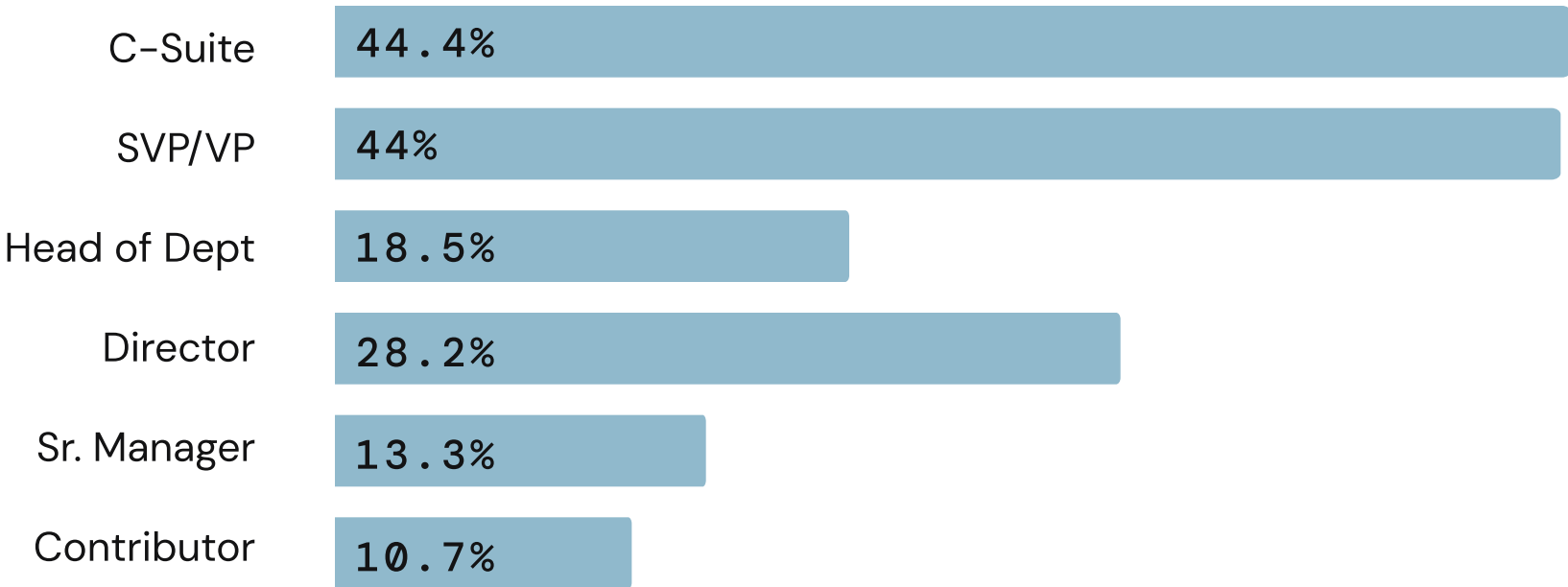
Having a gap in visibility is only getting more expensive. As agentic AI takes on more day-to-day marketing work, the errors individual contributors can't see won't just sit quietly in a report—they'll be acted on automatically, at scale, before leadership gets a chance to catch them.

Has poor CRM data quality directly resulted in lost revenue for your organization (e.g., missed renewals, inaccurate forecasting, lost deals, misdirected campaigns)?

FIGURE 4

A: Yes, definitely

Breakout: Seniority



Flawed CRM data is already cutting into revenue, yet most teams can't see the damage clearly enough to fix it. Only 27.6 percent are “very confident” that their CRM data gives an accurate view of campaign performance and revenue impact. (Q10) This means nearly two in three marketers believe they're losing revenue to bad data, while fewer than one in three trust their CRM data enough to know whether that's actually true.

That gap between "we think we're losing money" and "we can't actually confirm it" is a real revenue risk. You can't fix what you can't measure, and marketing leaders can't defend marketing investments—or expect to increase them—with numbers they don't trust.

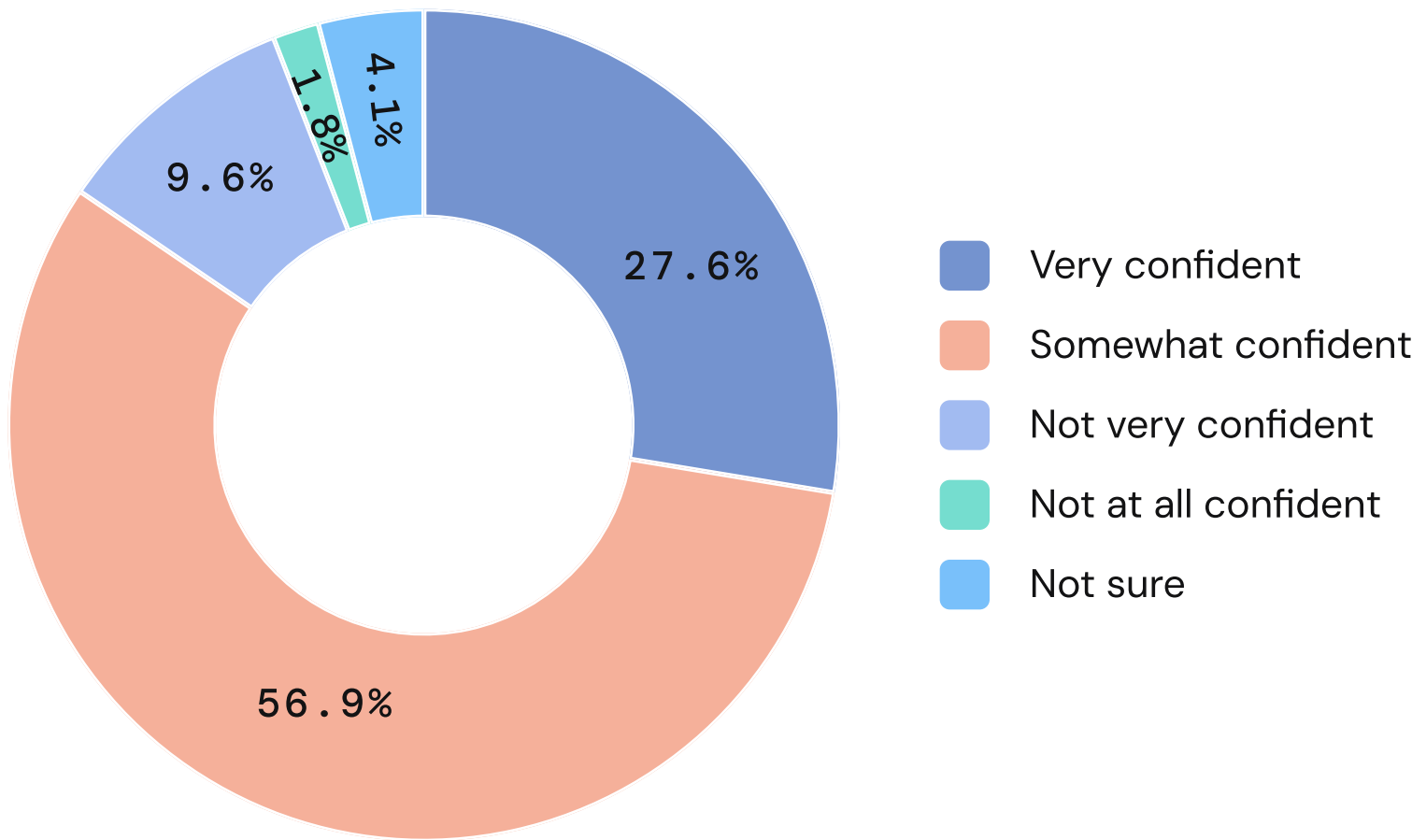
"Revenue loss from bad data rarely shows up as a single dramatic failure—it shows up as a hundred small ones: a forecast that's off by a few points, a segment that should've converted and didn't, a renewal that slipped through because the record was stale. By the time leadership notices, the damage is already baked into the number they're presenting to the board."



Courtney Grab
Sr. Director of Customer & Lifecycle Marketing, Validity

How confident are you that your CRM data provides an accurate view of marketing campaign performance and revenue impact?

FIGURE 5

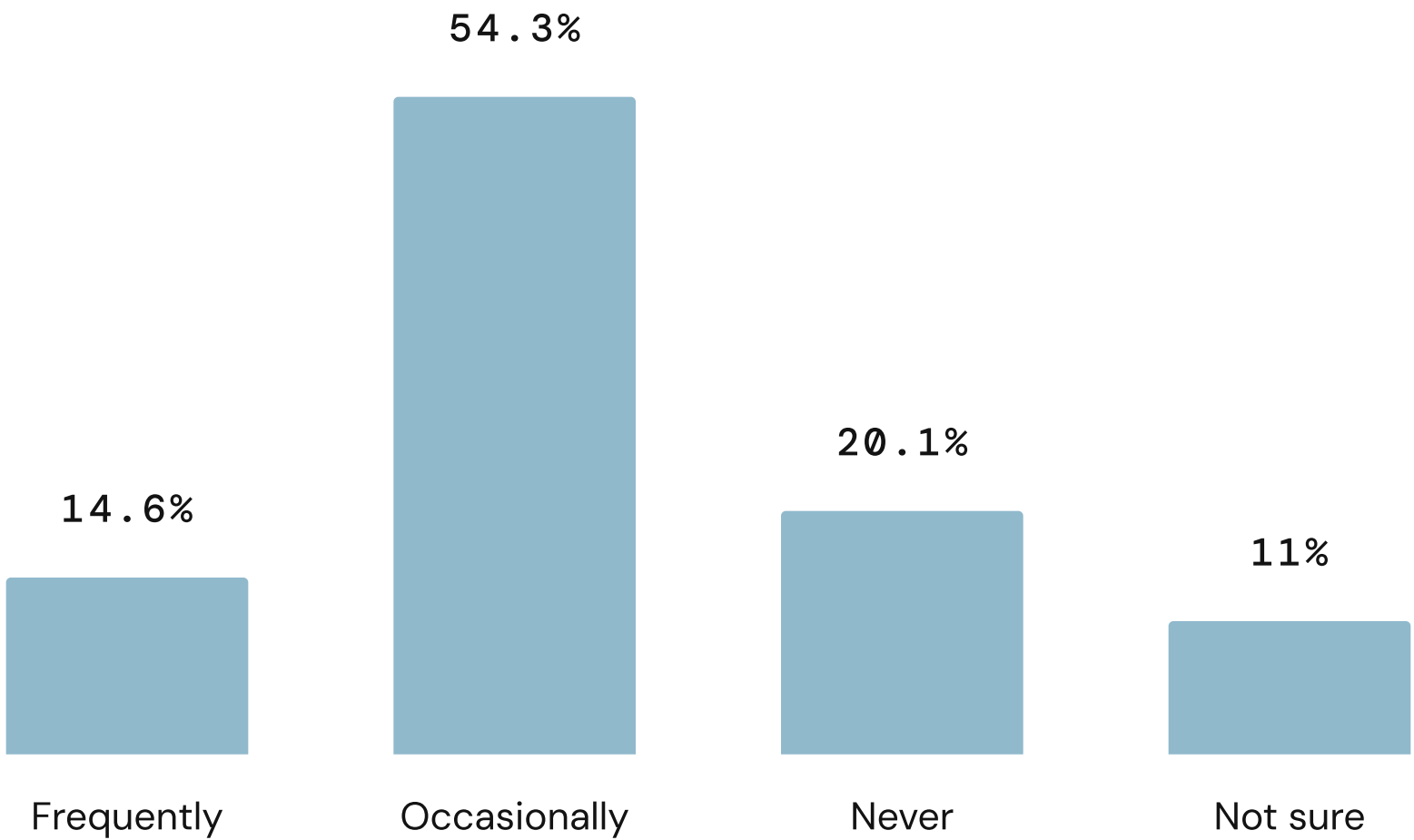


Having a revenue, pipeline, or performance number challenged or walked back because the underlying data was wrong is common—it’s happened to 68.9 percent of respondents overall. For leaders specifically, that number climbs to three out of four (74.5 percent). This isn't necessarily about fabrication—it's more likely that the underlying CRM data was unreliable from the start.

These walk-backs rarely come from a formal audit. They surface when someone in a meeting asks a simple question nobody can answer, like why two teams define the same metric differently, or what the source of a random number is.

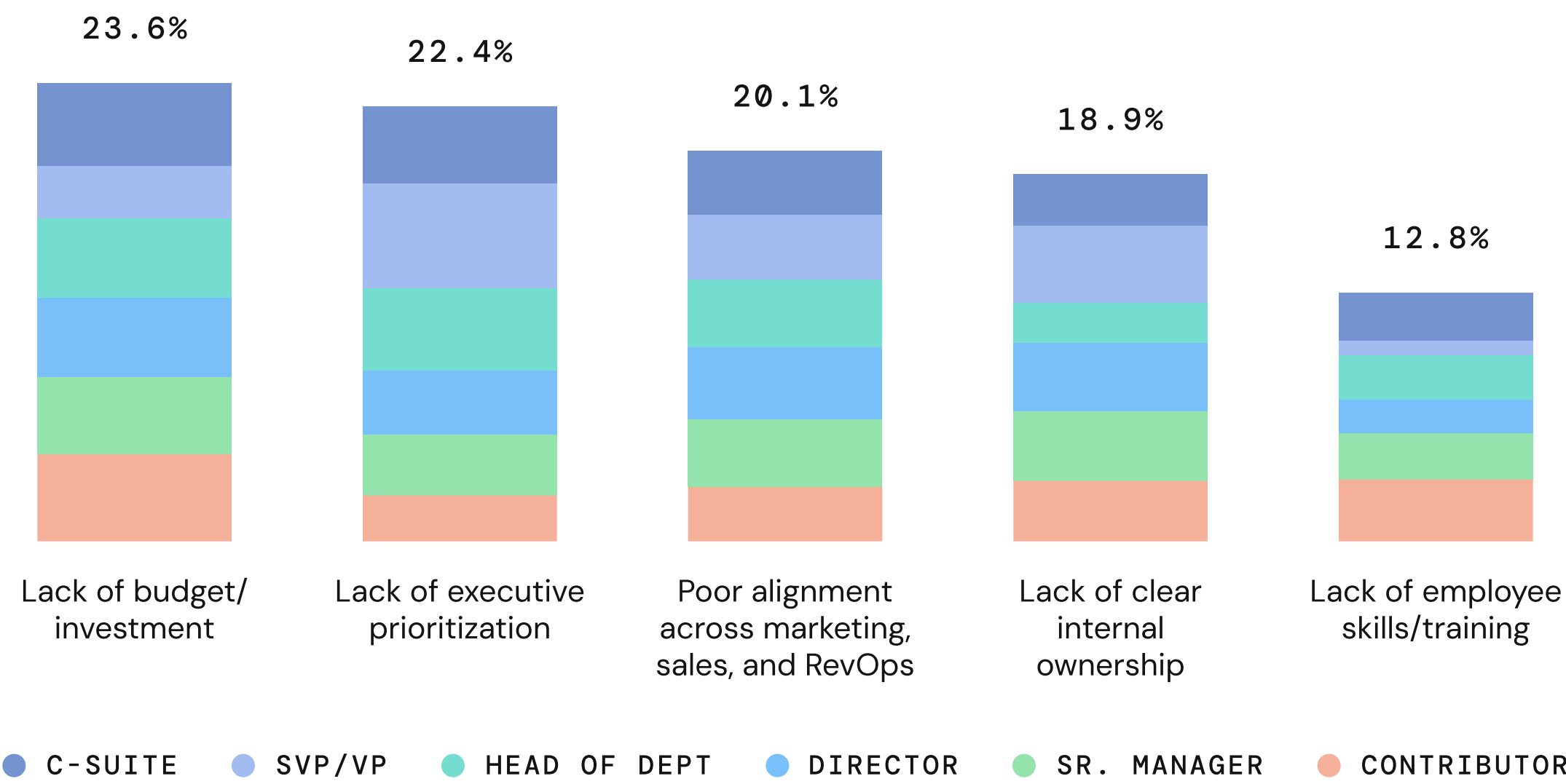
How often has a revenue, pipeline, or performance number you or your team presented been challenged or walked back because the underlying data was wrong?

FIGURE 6



What's the biggest organizational barrier preventing your CRM data from reliably supporting your marketing goals?

FIGURE 7

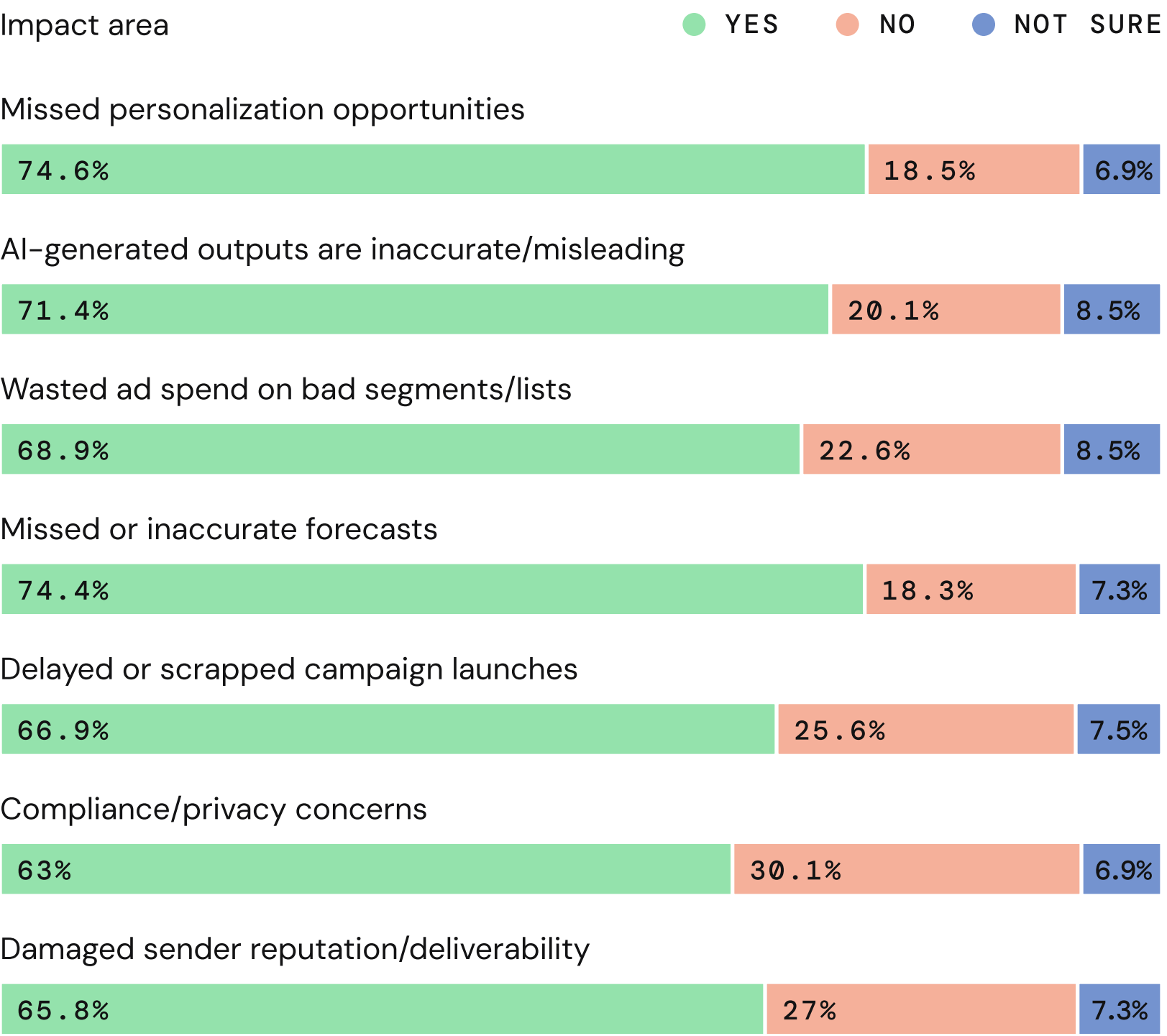


Unreliable data doesn't fix itself—it points back to organizational barriers that keep CRM data from reliably supporting marketing goals. These barriers are split by seniority: Directors, Senior Managers, and individual contributors all point to “lack of budget/investment” as their number one barrier. Meanwhile, the C-Suite, SVP/VPs, and Heads of Department name 'lack of executive prioritization' as the biggest organizational barrier. Leadership, in other words, is naming themselves as the biggest obstacle preventing CRM data from supporting marketing goals.

One group's answers stand out from the rest: SVP/VPs. They report the lowest concern of any seniority level about budget or training and the greatest concern about executive prioritization and unclear internal ownership. SVP/VPs aren't asking for more resources—they're asking their own executives to get personally involved and accountable.

Has poor CRM data quality contributed to each of the following over the past 12 months?

FIGURE 8



Whatever organizational barrier is present, subscribers on the other end of marketing campaigns aren't waiting for it to resolve. They already expect brands to know them and their interests—and they notice when that expectation isn't met.



In Validity's [Summer 2026 Consumer Survey](#), **10% of consumers** named inaccurate personalization or false assumptions about them as a top concern with how brands use AI.

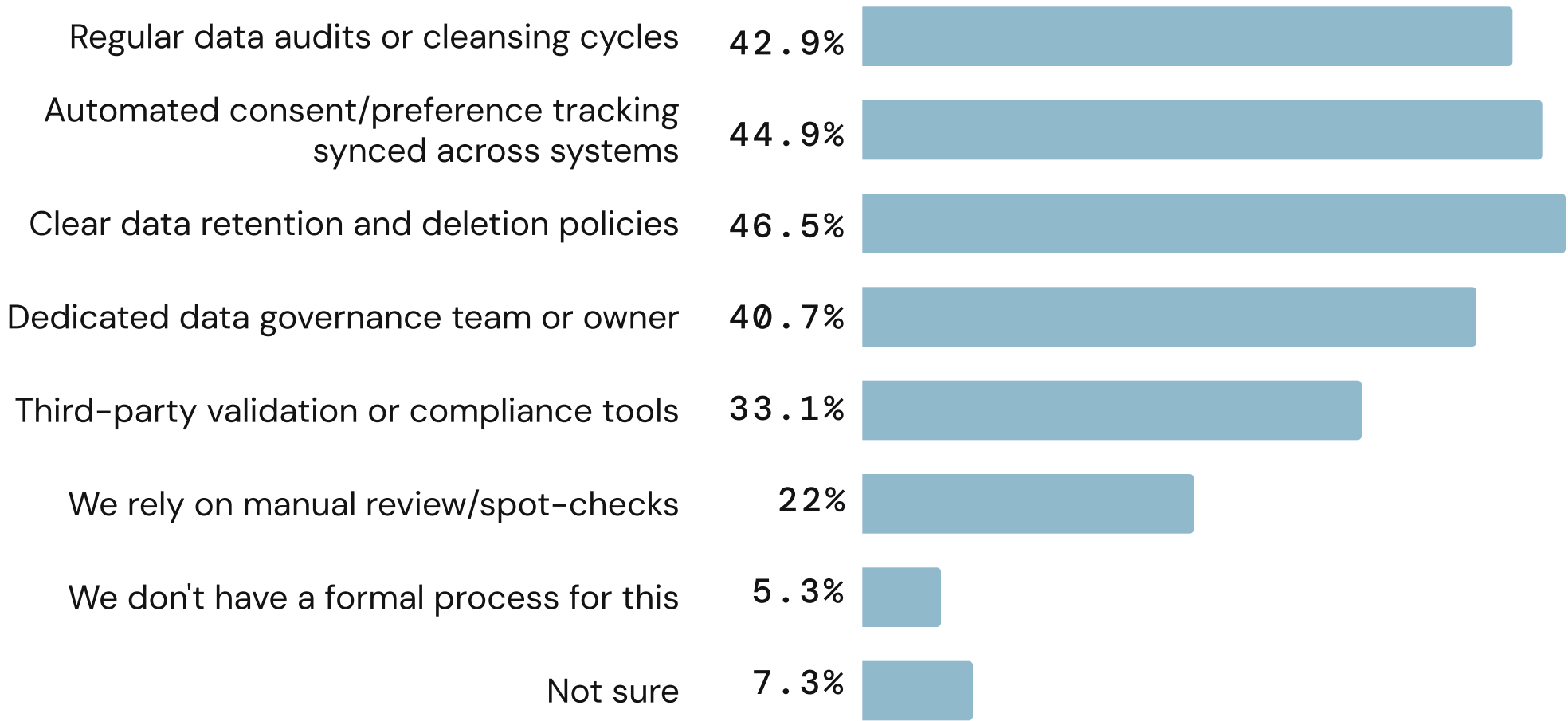
Bad data can make those concerns a reality—through outdated subscriber preferences, mismatched personalization, and messages sent to the wrong segment at the wrong time. Every instance is a small breach of trust with a subscriber who wants to feel seen, not guessed at. Multiply that across thousands of records and the "small" breach becomes a pattern.

A mismanaged CRM can also carry real, expensive regulatory risks. Bad CRM data means stale consent records, missed opt-outs, and duplicate profiles that don't sync suppression statuses across systems. A subscriber who opted out three months ago and still gets emails because their record exists twice in your CRM isn't just a bad look; it's a documented violation of laws such as GDPR, CAN-SPAM, and CASL. As privacy laws keep advancing and enforcement sweeps target consent management, a messy CRM doesn't just jeopardize marketing efficiency—it hands legal and compliance teams a real, fineable liability.

The stakes are rising specifically around AI itself, not just privacy. The EU AI Act's penalties scale up to €35 million or seven percent of a company's global annual turnover, which is nearly double GDPR's maximum fine. The EU isn't alone: Japan has enacted its own AI Promotion Act, China requires explicit and machine-readable labeling on AI-generated content, and Brazil's AI bill has already passed its Senate. For marketers, this changes the math on a bad CRM record: If an AI agent acts on a stale or duplicate record, that single action can trigger exposure under both privacy and AI-specific laws.

That kind of regulatory risk usually happens for one reason: Nobody owns catching it before it happens. Only two out of five (40.7 percent) of respondents report having a dedicated data governance owner in place. Without that ownership and proactive oversight, regulatory risk doesn't get caught before it becomes a violation—it gets discovered by a regulator or an angry subscriber.

What steps does your organization take to ensure CRM data doesn't expose you to regulatory risk (e.g., GDPR, CCPA/CPRA, CASL)? FIGURE 9



"Regulators don't care whether bad data came from a rushed migration or an AI agent acting on stale records—the exposure is identical. Half of that exposure is avoidable before it starts. Data minimization, the practice of not collecting or keeping the data you don't need, is a foundational GDPR principle. Yet, it's rarely treated as a governance priority. Organizations that treat governance as a real function are the ones that will hold up when a regulator, or an AI agent, starts asking questions."



Guy Hanson
VP of Customer Engagement, Validity

Are you rushing to implement AI tools *before* your data can support them?

AI is only as good as the data underneath it. Garbage in, garbage out isn't a cliché in this case; it's a preview of what happens when marketing teams point new AI tools at a CRM full of duplicates, stale fields, and unreconciled records. The output doesn't just fail in isolation; it gets treated as fact, then reported and acted on. Yet knowing the output can't always be trusted hasn't lessened the pressure to implement AI anyway.

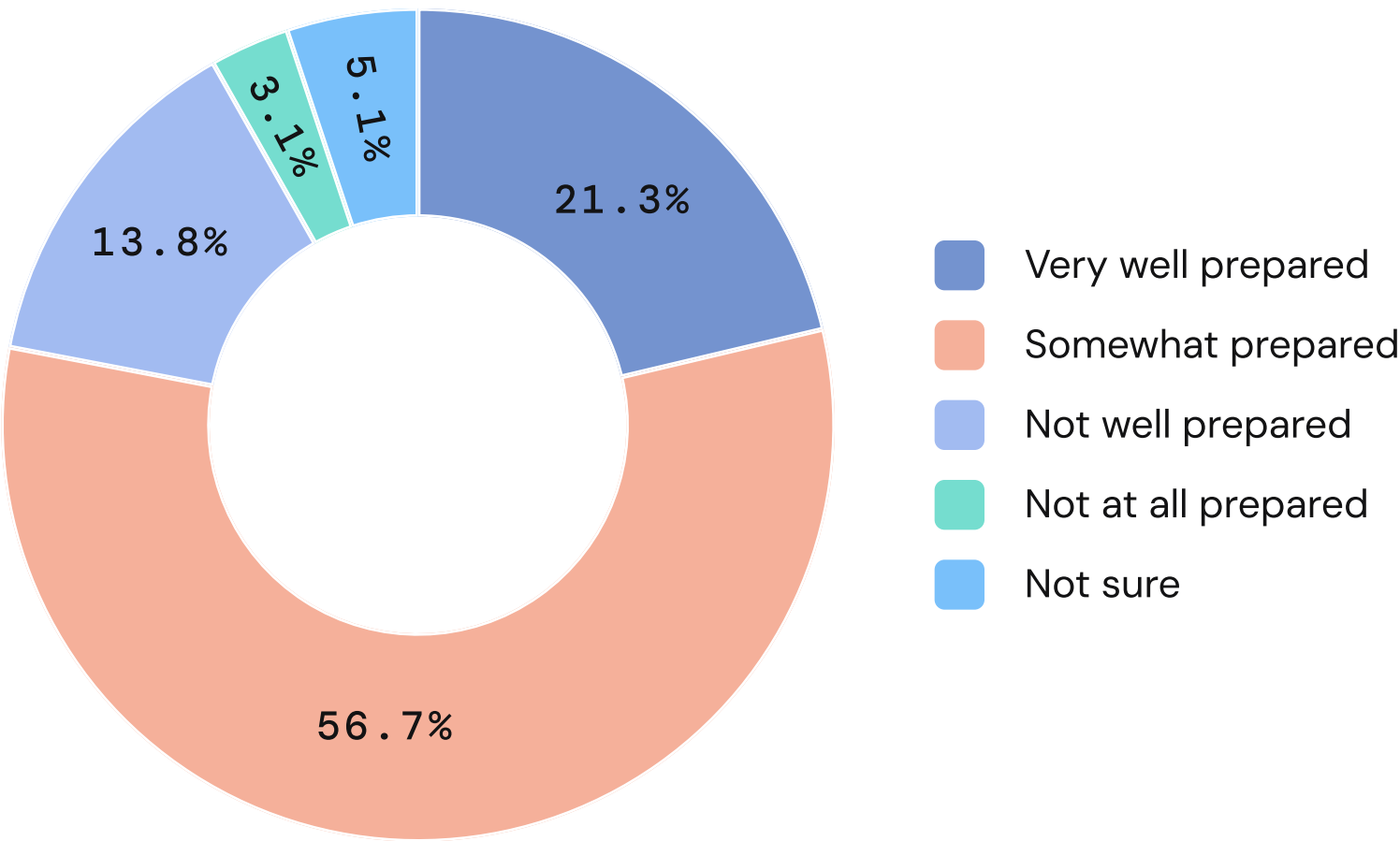
Nearly **60%** of C-Suite and **52%** of SVP/VPs feel pressure from their board and leadership to implement AI tools now, despite knowing their underlying data isn't ready.

The same audience also reports losing revenue to poor CRM data nearly four times more often than individual contributors. Upper leadership, in other words, is racing to build on a foundation that is already showing costly cracks.

Knowing what "data ready" looks like and actually being data ready are two different problems, and most organizations solve the first one long before they solve the second. Nearly 91 percent of marketers agree that data readiness is a critical first step for adopting AI. Yet only one in five say their CRM data is "very well prepared" to fuel the AI tools and initiatives they're already using or planning—a 70-point disparity between agreement and readiness.

How prepared do you believe your CRM data is to fuel the AI tools and initiatives your team currently uses or is planning to use?

FIGURE 10



"Everything that we do right now is in the interest of future AI capabilities. 80 percent of our time so far has been spent making sure data is consistent and correct before we even think about training AI to limit the amount of hallucinations, incorrectness, etc."



Craig Ashton-Chalmers
Global Product Lead, Linklaters

"Leadership often signs off on an AI initiative assuming the data underneath it is solid, when in reality, duplicate records, stale fields, and gaps that nobody's flagged are the norm, not the exception. It's not that leaders are being careless; they're just several steps removed from the data itself. Their confidence is coming from the dashboard, not the database."



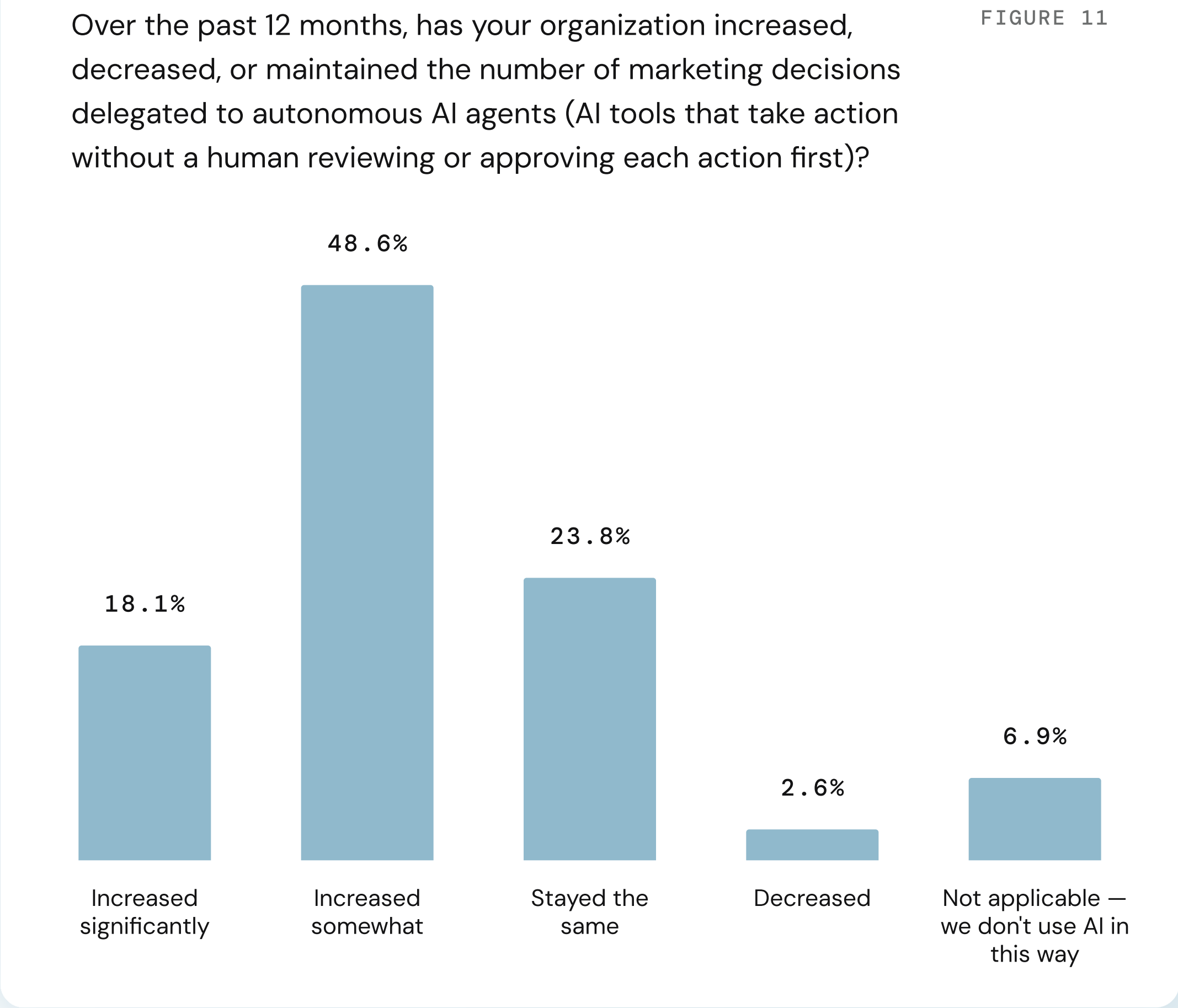
Laura Christensen
Sr. Director of Professional Services & Customer Success, Validity

That gap between believing you're ready for AI and actually being ready shows up again in how much AI is already operating without anyone checking it.

Overall, 44.7 percent of marketers already use agentic AI tools that act without a human reviewing first, sending campaigns, scoring leads, and reallocating budget. SVP/VPs set the tone, with 68 percent using agentic AI tools. They're likely the highest adoption group because they sit at the perfect intersection of authority and proximity. SVP/VPs typically have the power to sign off on new tools without seeking permission, while also being close enough to campaign execution to feel the day-to-day cost of manual work.

That reliance keeps growing. Two out of three organizations (66.7 percent) have increased the number of marketing decisions delegated to AI agents that act without human review over the past 12 months. The shift is led by the C-Suite (77.8 percent) and SVP/VPs (76 percent), who report the same increase at rates well above the organization-wide average.

This use of autonomous AI changes what data mistakes cost. An error in a dashboard sits there until someone notices, but agentic AI acts on it—sends the email, scores the lead, reallocates the budget—before anyone can catch it.



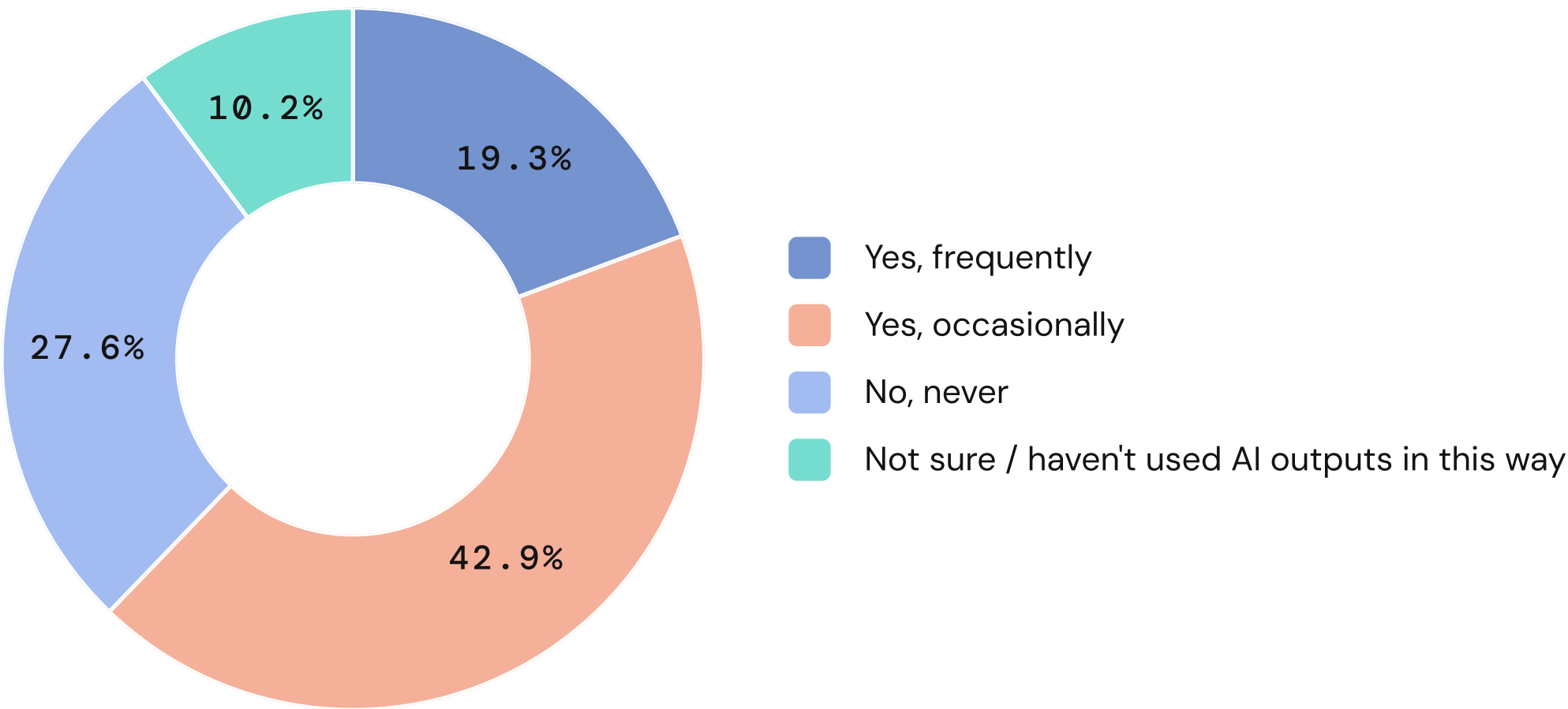
Have you already acted on *poor* AI advice?

Most people already know AI outputs need a second look—and they're not alone. *Validity's Summer 2026 Consumer Survey* found that only 10 percent of consumers say they trust AI-generated email summaries completely, while 39 percent say they mostly trust them but still verify occasionally. That instinct to double-check clearly exists, but the people making the highest-stakes calls aren't following it.

When asked if they've acted on an AI recommendation they later suspected was wrong, 77.8 percent of C-Suite and 92 percent of SVP/VPs said yes—compared to just 40.9 percent of individual contributors. This could be because individual contributors, who work closer to the data, recognize when an output seems off. Leadership, who typically trusts the data they receive, has less reason to question a report or AI-generated recommendation that looks complete.

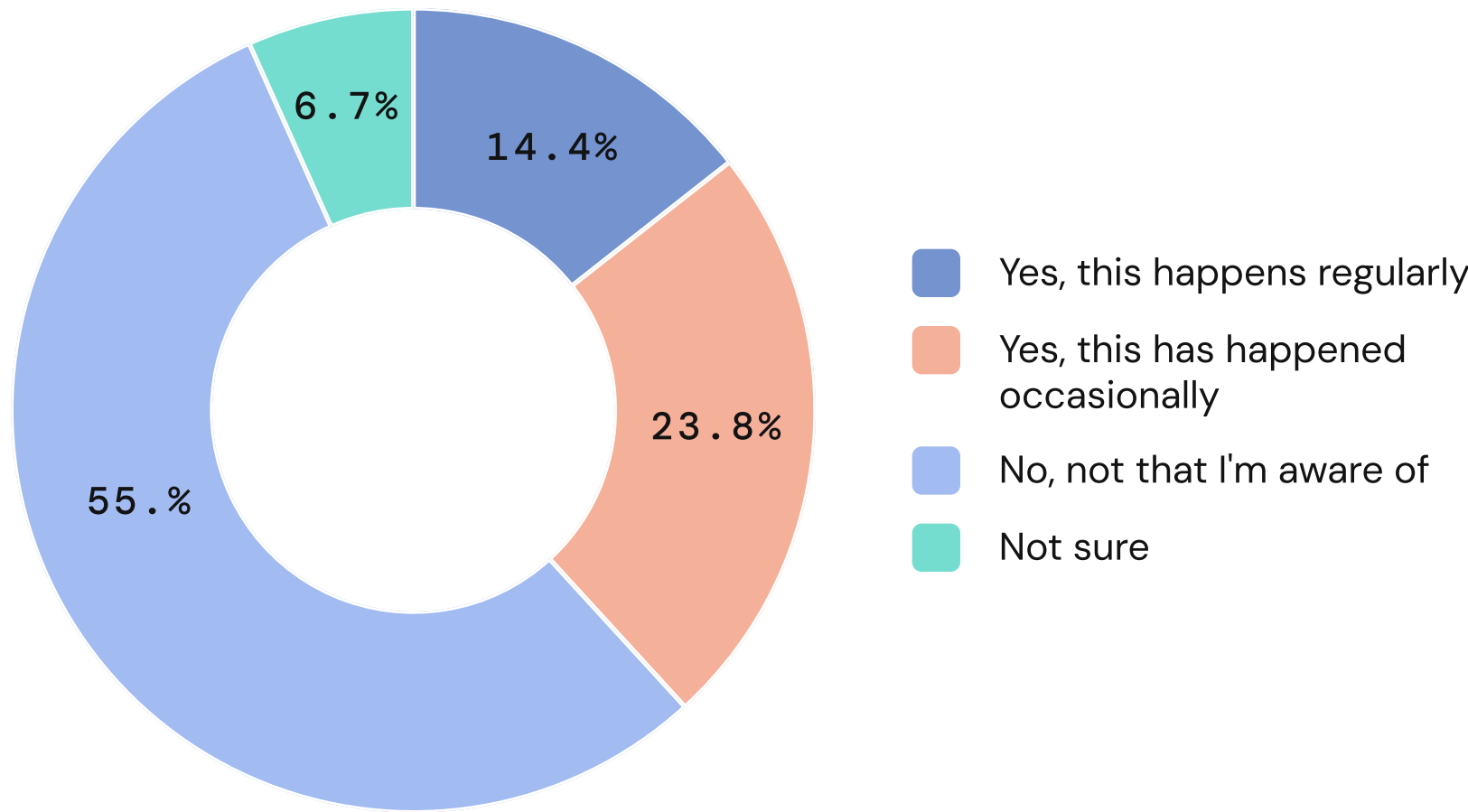
FIGURE 12

Have you personally presented or acted on an AI-generated recommendation (score, forecast, personalization) that you later suspected was wrong because of bad underlying data?



Has anyone at your organization manipulated or fabricated campaign data to satisfy reporting requirements or make results look better to leadership?

FIGURE 13



Manipulating campaign data to satisfy reporting requirements or make results look better to leadership isn't new—38.2 percent of marketers say it's happened at their organization. Among C-Suite leaders specifically, that number jumps to 67 percent. Five years ago, that was a reporting problem—an inflated number in a slide, caught or not caught by whoever read it next. Now it's a data problem. AI doesn't distinguish a fabricated number from an honest one, it treats both as fact and becomes training data for every recommendation built on top of it.

"I grew up as a scientist and was trained to never just believe, but instead always verify with data and think critically about the results. We take this approach constantly at Validity, from the boardroom to our customers' meeting rooms. In this sea of AI-inspired change, I am amazed at how many other folks don't take the time and steps to trust their data and remain proud of fellow leaders who make sure to get this step right."



Mark Briggs
Chairman & CEO, Validity

What AI capability matters most to other leaders?

When asked which capability would most increase marketers' confidence in CRM data for strategy, reporting, and AI/agentic use cases, the top answers were:

- 01** Continuous, automated monitoring that catches and fixes issues in real time (39.4 percent).
- 02** One unified platform instead of scattered point solutions, especially for SVP/VPs (25.4 percent).
- 03** Third-party data validation or enrichment, especially for SVP/VPs (16.9 percent).

These preferences aren't brand-new wish lists—they map directly to problems we already surfaced in this data:

Real-time monitoring resonates most with the C-Suite because it solves the problem costing teams six-plus hours per week in manual data reconciliation. Time that, at a moment when every marketing org is under pressure to do more with leaner teams, should be spent on campaign strategy, optimization, and growth initiatives. It's also the safeguard that would have caught the bad AI recommendations 77.8 percent of C-Suite admit they've acted on.

A unified platform appeals most to SVP/VPs because it's a structural fix for the collaboration barrier between marketing and IT/RevOps. Right now, 38.6 percent of leaders say the two work well together on data, a number that drops to 26.8 percent for the practitioners closest to the CRM day-to-day.

Third-party validation is a desired capability because only one out of four marketers are "very confident" their CRM data accurately reflects campaign and revenue performance.

"There were thousands of emails that we needed to redact [during our migration]. The validation tool told us, "These are unsafe. Do not put these in." Being able to catch and cleanse that data out before we started the warm-up process gave us that extra layer of confidence that we had the best of the best data before we actually started."



Jon Kirk

CRM Manager, Ice Travel Group

Marketers aren't asking for more dashboards—they're asking for a capability that verifies the data before it's acted on, so the numbers going into a forecast, on a board deck, or feeding autonomous AI are accurate and provable.

Closing THE GAP

Data quality issues are common for marketing teams, and the time spent catching and fixing them is time pulled directly from strategy and growth work. That gap is already showing up in the bottom line, with most marketers reporting that poor CRM data quality has cost their organization real revenue.

Meanwhile, AI adoption isn't waiting for the data to catch up. Autonomous decision-making is expanding fast, often ahead of the confidence leaders actually have in what's feeding it.

None of this means AI adoption should slow down. It means the data underneath it needs to catch up. Marketers already know what that requires: real-time monitoring, one unified platform, and validation they can actually trust.

“As organizations attempt to deploy agents, those agents will rely on data that has to be in very good shape. If the agents are going to do something autonomously on your behalf, then your data has to be pristine. It’s important to have the right tools in place to support the entire workflow, and what’s exciting is that Validity Engage can help with that.”



Matt Gore
Chief Technology Officer, Validity



That's exactly the gap **Validity Engage** was built to close—unifying contact data quality, validation, and monitoring so the AI your team deploys is working from data it can actually trust.

MEET VALIDITY ENGAGE →



Your *entire* email workflow— AI-driven, from start to finish.

Validity Engage unifies email creation, testing, deliverability, and contact data quality on one agentic platform—built to improve your program with every send.

75%

Less time spent
verifying lead accuracy

80%

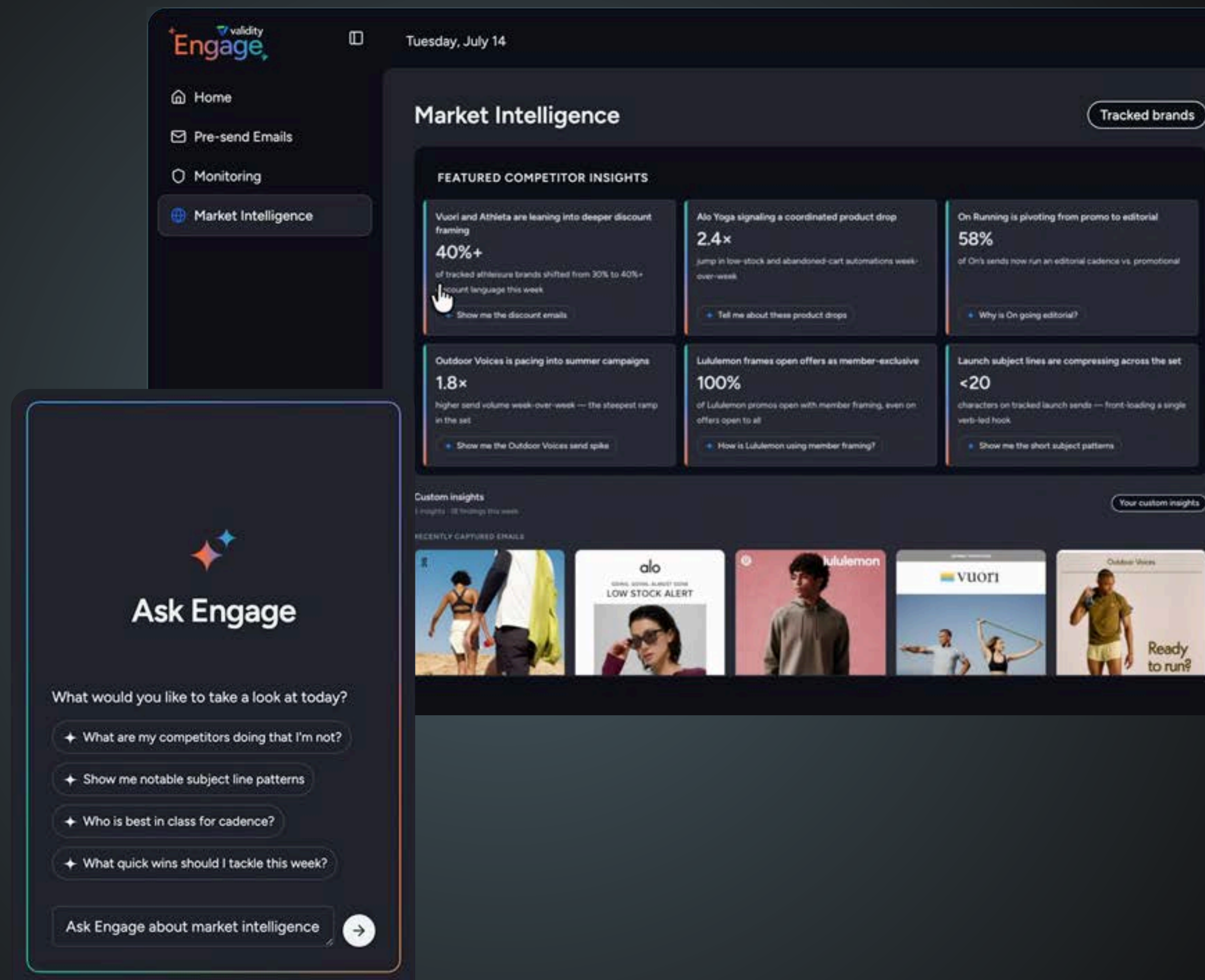
Reduction in time spent
managing data quality

2.5B+

Behavioral data points
processed daily

GET STARTED →

TRUSTED BY THOUSANDS OF THE WORLD'S BIGGEST BRANDS:





REPORT AND METHODOLOGY NOTES:

We gathered the insights for this report from a survey of 500 B2B & B2C marketing professionals in July, 2026. Respondents were from organizations with 100+ employees across four markets (U.S.: 300 responses, U.K.: 100 responses, Brazil: 50 responses, Australia or New Zealand: 50 responses).

“Leaders” is defined as respondents who self-identified as C-Suite, SVP/VP, Head of Department, and Director.

“Practitioners” is defined as respondents who self-identified as Sr. Manager and Contributor.

AI use disclosure: We used AI to sort through survey data, pull insights, help draft the report copy, and edit drafts. Multiple humans checked the work at every stage.