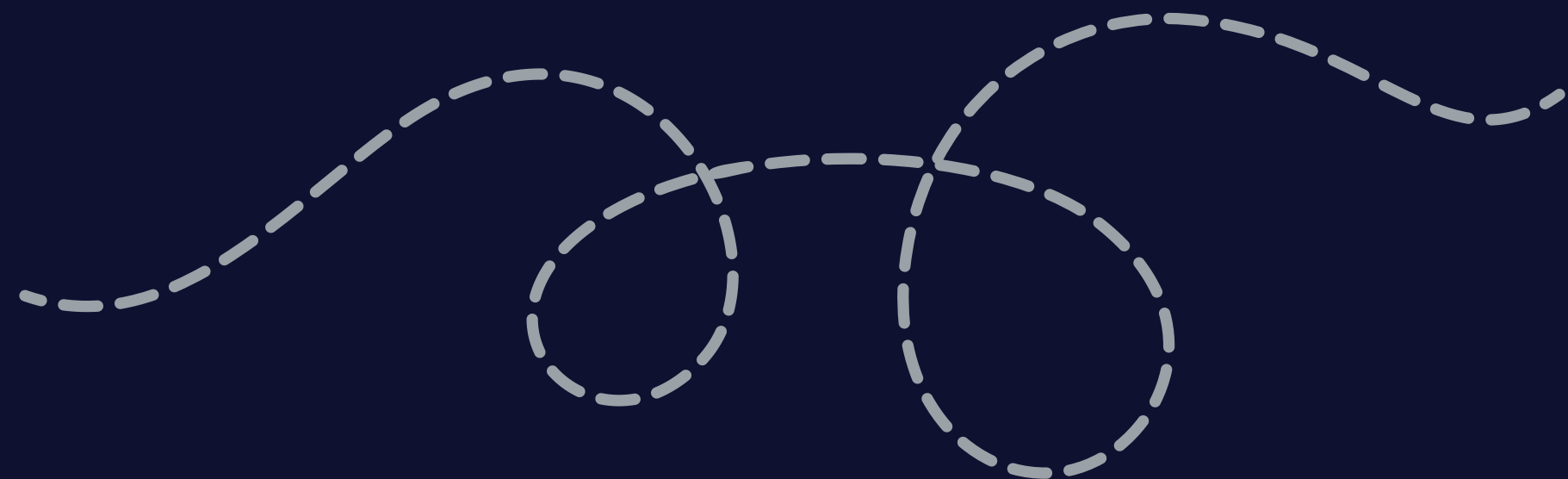




State of Sales Development Report 2025



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Introduction

Prospecting is harder and more important than ever.

Inboxes are flooded. Calls go unanswered and generic outreach gets ignored. The old spray-and-pray playbook is broken, and reps are drowning in busywork instead of selling.

The State of Sales Prospecting 2025 Report explores how high-performing teams are adapting by rethinking workflows, embracing AI, and generating more pipeline with less effort.

Based on survey data from sales leaders, this report uncovers:

- Where reps are spending their time
- How AI is reshaping outbound
- What's working now, and what's not
- The shift toward unified, intelligent workflows

Eighty percent (80%) of teams are already using AI in their outbound motion, and nearly two-thirds say it's driving real results.

So, if you're rethinking your prospecting strategy, consider this report your roadmap.



THE SALES TECH STACK

The kinds of tools sales teams are using, and how they choose new tech to add.

Prospecting tech stacks are still bloated

According to the data, almost half (~46%) of sales teams use 4–6 tools in their outbound motion, while 33% rely on 1–3.

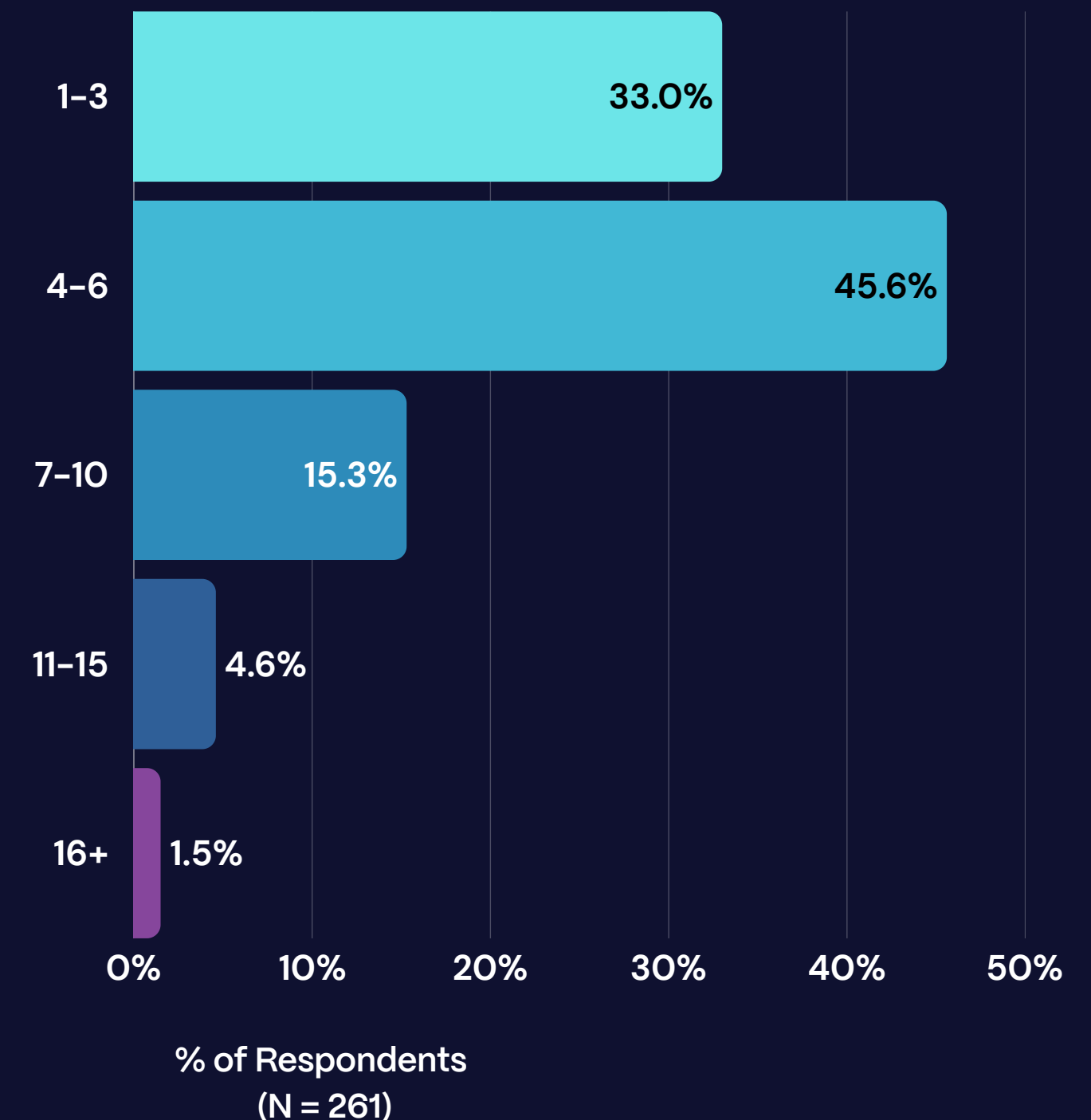
On the higher end, ~21% report using 7 or more.

This reflects a common pattern: as teams grow, they often layer on point solutions to solve specific problems but end up with a fragmented stack that slows them down. Juggling multiple tools creates friction, adds administrative burden, and makes performance tracking harder.

The takeaway

While specialized tools may offer short-term benefits, they often come at the cost of efficiency and clarity. That's why more sales orgs are rethinking their approach: specifically, they're focusing on ways to consolidate outreach, enrichment, dialing, and reporting into a single, unified platform built to scale.

"How many sales tools does your team use?"



Tool selection is still a top-down decision

The vast majority (~91%) of respondents acknowledged that department heads are usually the ones to select the tools their sales teams use — whether that's a sales leader (~41%), a revOps / salesOps leader (31%), or a marketing leader (~20%).

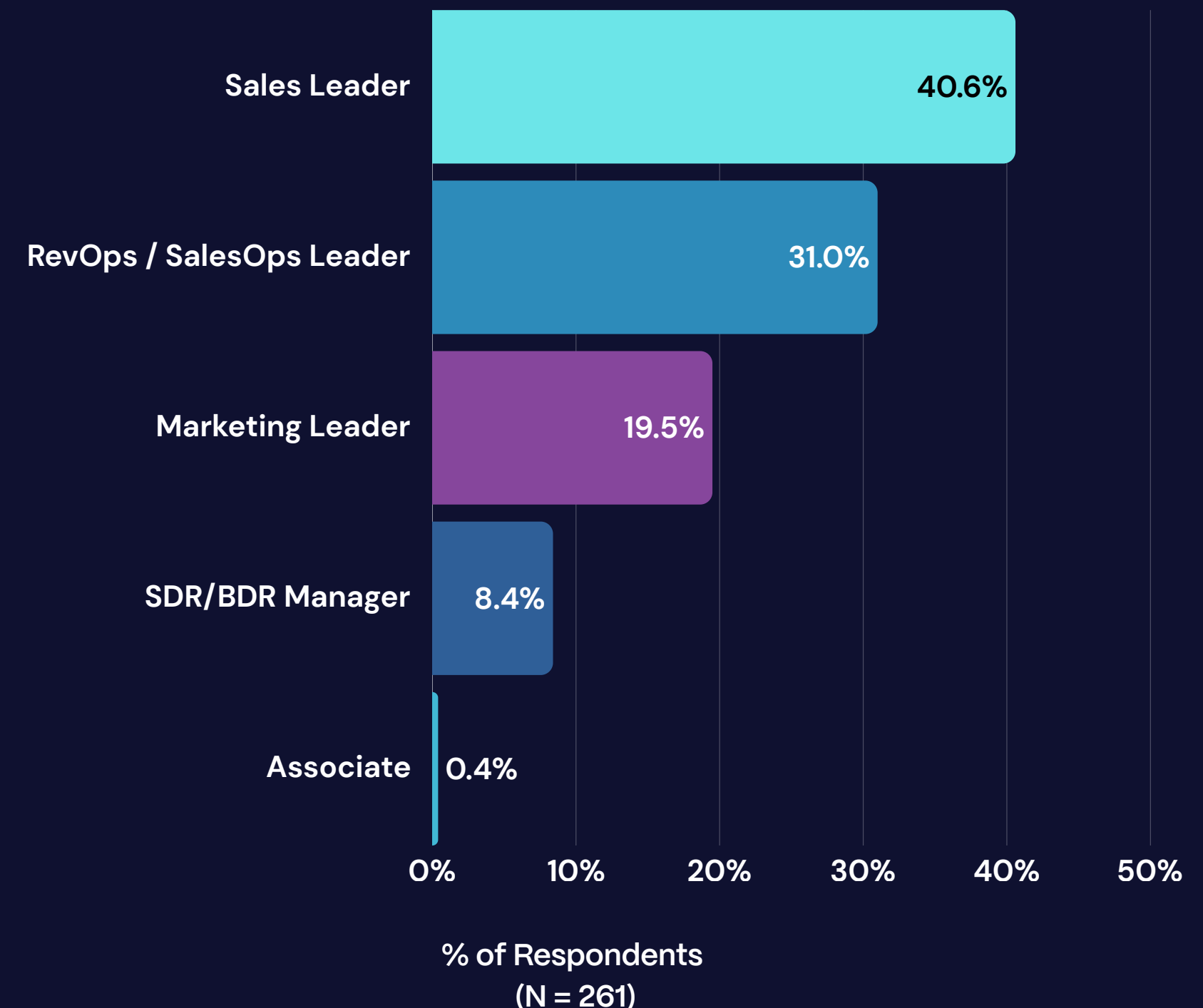
Conversely, only ~9% said that associates or BDR / SDR managers — those *closest* to the day-to-day workflow — get to choose their own teams' tech.

This often creates a gap between strategy and execution. Tools may satisfy leadership but fall short in terms of usability or fit for how reps *actually* prospect.

The takeaway

In order to drive adoption and impact, frontline managers must be part of the evaluation and selection process. The best tools align with strategy and help reps work faster, smarter, and more effectively.

*“Which role is **PRIMARILY** responsible for selecting prospecting tools for your team?”*



SALES TEAM PERFORMANCE

How sales teams are performing, and what's working in pipeline generation today.

Many teams are falling short of pipeline goals

The good news: more than half of respondents reported that their sales teams are either meeting (~44%) or hitting/exceeding pipeline targets (~18%).

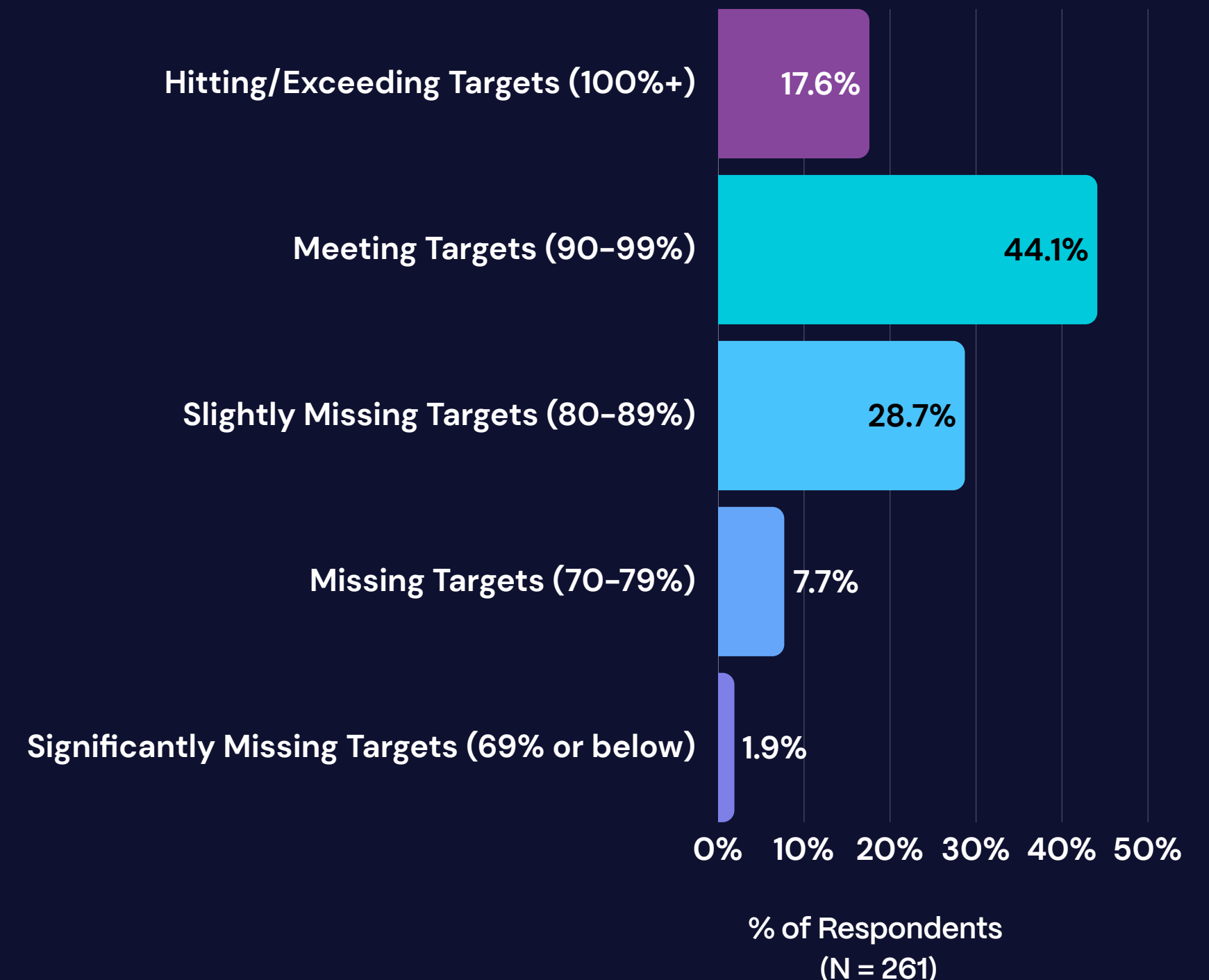
The bad news: there's still a good amount of teams (~38%) that are missing their targets and leaving money on the table.

The takeaway

Even solid sales teams may be struggling to bridge the gap between effort and outcomes. The most common culprits tend to be manual workflows, disconnected tools, and poor visibility into what works (and what doesn't).

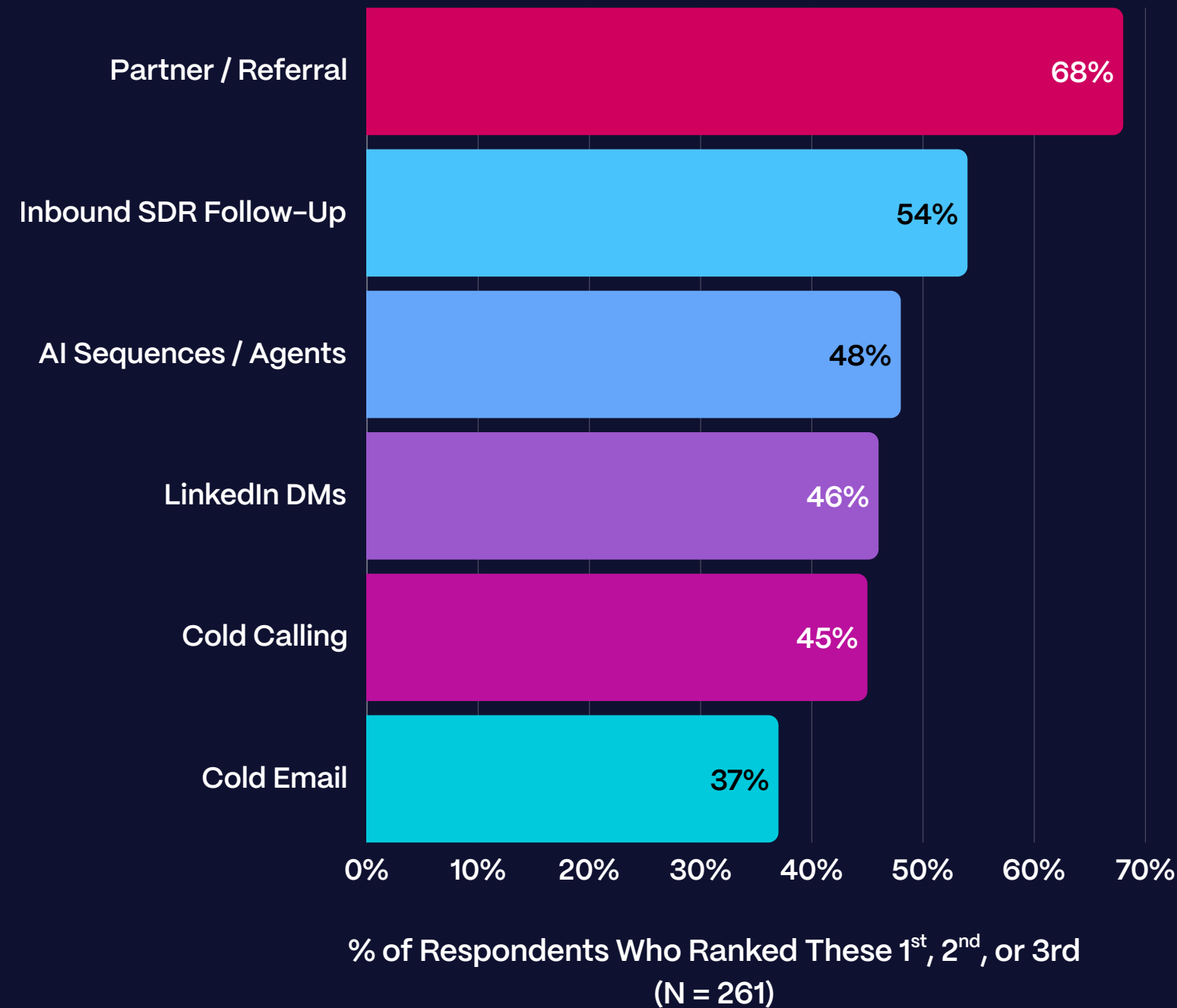
To improve pipeline performance, teams need to prioritize efficiency — focusing on tools and strategies that help reps spend more time on what actually moves the needle.

"How is your team performing against pipeline targets this year?"



AI sequences lead cold outbound efforts

"How effective are the following channels at generating pipeline for your team? Rank your top 3 channels."



When it comes to generating pipeline, not all channels deliver equally.

Partner and referral programs (68%), along with inbound SDR follow-up (54%), remain the most effective pipe gen channels — powered by relationships, trust, and existing intent.

But the real headline in this year's data is what's happening with cold outbound. AI-powered sequences or agents (48%) now lead the category, outperforming LinkedIn DMs (46%), cold calls (45%), and email (37%) by creating more touchpoints, stronger personalization, and higher engagement.

At the opposite end, cold email ranks last, confirming just how difficult it is to generate results without precise targeting.

The takeaway

Overall, trust-based channels continue to win, but in the cold outbound arena, AI has emerged as the clear differentiator.

To stay competitive, sales teams need to maximize warm, high-signal channels while making AI-powered sequences the backbone of their cold outreach in order to boost reach, relevance, and response.

Targeted outreach trumps volume

Sales leaders pointed to better data (~28%), intent signals (~22%), and personalization (~21%) as the factors that would most improve pipeline generation — *not* just more activity.

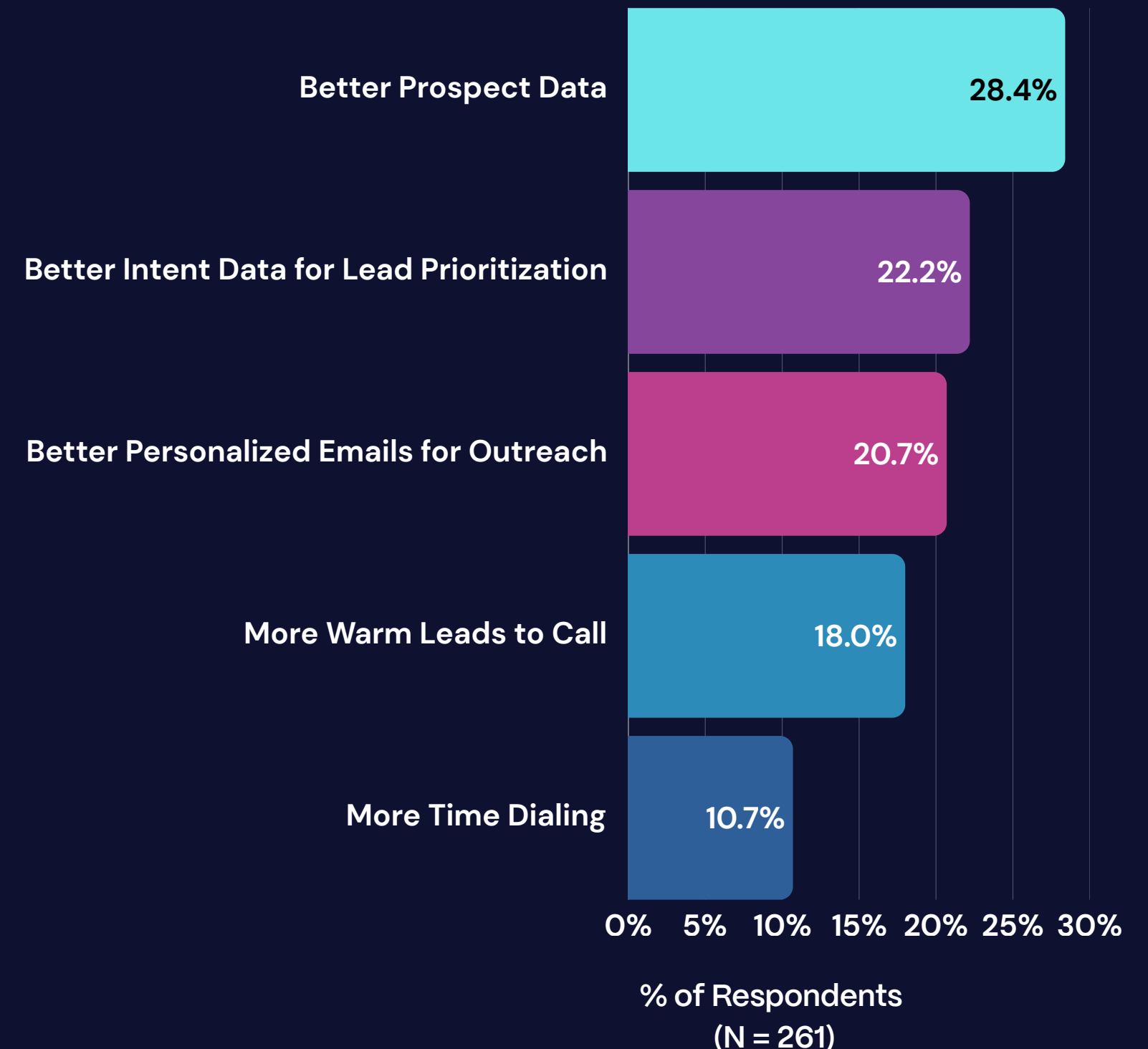
Lower scores for “more warm leads” (18%) or “more dialing” (~11%) suggest that sales leaders don’t view volume as the primary barrier to pipeline growth. Instead, they see the bigger challenge as making outreach relevant and well-timed.

In other words, success depends less on how many tasks are performed and more on the quality of each touchpoint — reaching the right person, with the right message, at the right moment.

The takeaway

Pipeline growth isn’t about doing more: it’s about doing it *smarter*. Prioritize data quality, intent signals, and personalized messaging over brute-force volume.

“What would have the greatest positive impact on your team’s ability to generate pipeline? Select one.”



Sales teams face a tangle of concerns

When asked to rank their top 3 concerns, leaders appear to be most concerned with the foundations of growth — data quality (55%) and pipeline health (53%). Both are critical inputs: if the data feeding sales efforts is unreliable, or if pipeline coverage is weak, no amount of activity can make up for it.

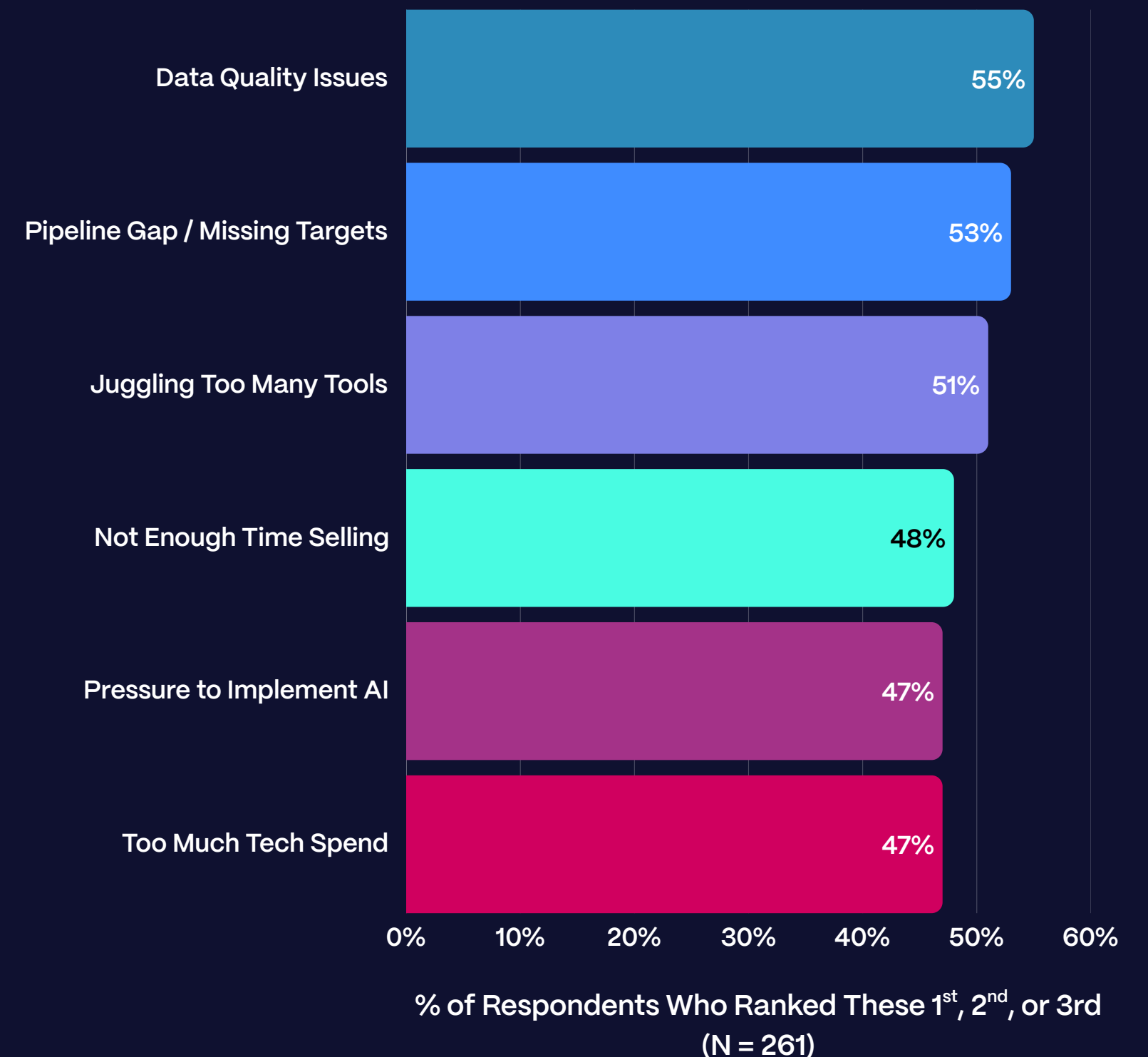
Productivity drains like limited selling time (48%) and tool sprawl (51%) follow, underscoring that even strong inputs can't deliver results if reps are bogged down by inefficiency. Pressures to adopt AI (47%) and tech spend (47%) come next, remaining firmly on the radar but ranking behind the more immediate concerns.

The story isn't about a single dominant issue. Instead, the data shows leaders balancing challenges at multiple levels: fixing the basics of data and pipeline, removing productivity roadblocks, and planning for broader pressures like AI and cost efficiency.

The takeaway

Improving sales outcomes means tackling the hierarchy of challenges in order: fix data, close pipeline gaps, free up reps to sell, and then build on that foundation to manage AI adoption and cost efficiency.

*"What are your team's biggest concerns right now?
Rank your top 3 concerns."*

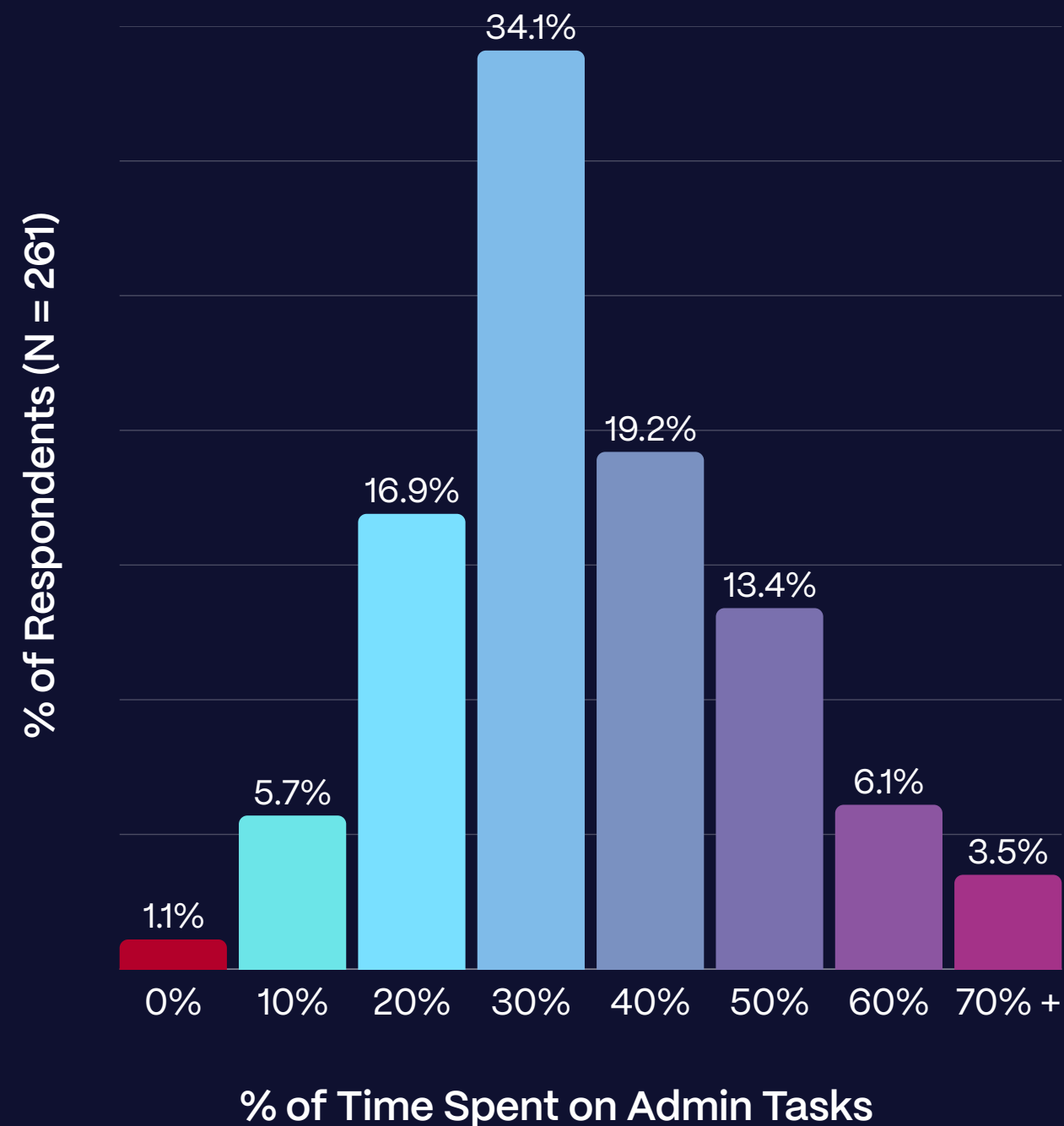


SALES WORKFLOWS

Identifying workflow friction points and their impact on sales teams.

Reps are spending too much time on admin tasks

“How much time do your reps spend on administrative tasks (versus time spent on selling)?”



Admin work isn't just a nuisance: it's eating into precious selling time.

The data reveals that most reps are far from full-time sellers. Just over half of respondents (~58%) said that admin tasks take up to 30% of their reps' time. One-third (~33%) reported the burden eating up 40–50% of their reps' bandwidth in any given week.

At the extremes, only ~1% said their reps spend no time on admin at all — proving it's possible to nearly eliminate the drag — while ~10% said their reps spend the majority (60%+) of their week on it.

This spread highlights a striking imbalance: a small minority of teams have solved for this problem, while many others are still stuck with reps functioning as part-time administrators. For the majority in the middle, admin has become a persistent tax on productivity, quietly eroding selling time and pipeline.

The takeaway

Pipeline suffers when selling time becomes fragmented.

To close the gap, teams need to reduce or automate administrative work — through better processes, integrations, and AI — so reps can devote the bulk of their time to conversations that generate revenue.

Workflow bottlenecks start with lead prioritization

One in four leaders (~25%) cited lead prioritization as their biggest workflow issue — underscoring how hard it is for reps to know who to contact, when, and with what message.

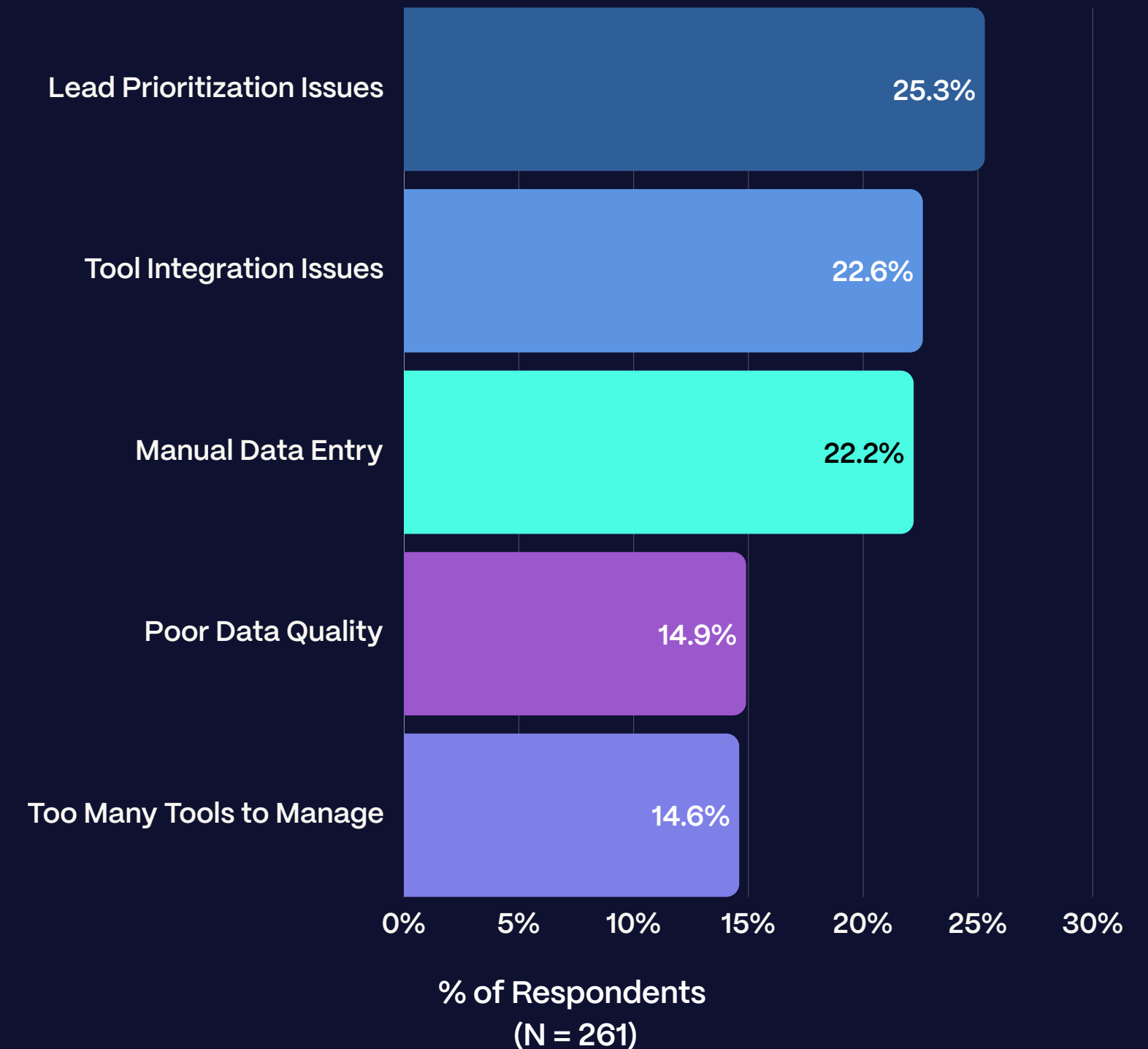
But just behind, nearly as many flagged tool integration (~23%) and manual data entry (~22%), revealing that broken systems and repetitive tasks eat away at selling time.

Add in poor data quality and too many tools (~15% each), and the picture is clear: pipeline performance isn't blocked by a single issue, but by the cumulative drag of multiple frictions.

The takeaway

Sales teams need connected, intelligent workflows that combine accurate data, automated admin, and integrated tools so reps can spend more time selling and less time stuck in process.

“What is your team’s biggest workflow friction point?”



Teams are coping with complexity — but at a cost

Rather than reducing complexity, most teams are working around it.

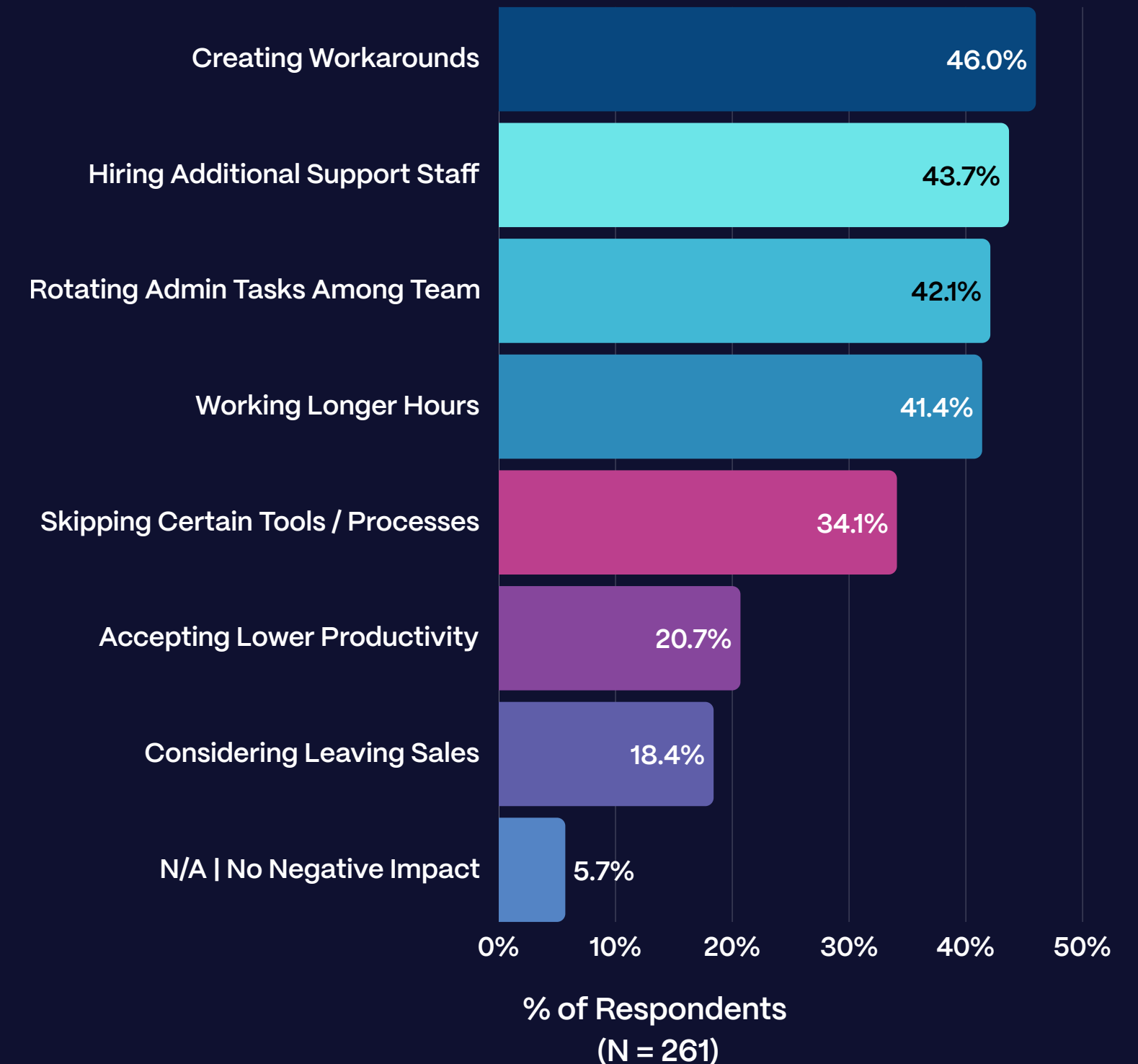
Nearly half (46%) reported needing to build manual workarounds to patch disconnected tools. Others shift the burden by hiring extra staff (~44%) or rotating admin duties (~42%), spreading inefficiency instead of fixing it. A similar share (4~1%) admitted reps are working longer hours — a short-term fix that sustains activity but fuels burnout.

The downstream consequences are even more concerning. More than a third (~34%) said reps are skipping tasks, while others reported accepting lower productivity (~21%) or even considering leaving sales (~18%). Together, the data shows teams propping up workflows with stop-gaps that sacrifice efficiency and morale for survival.

The takeaway

Complexity isn't just operational: it's a cultural and retention risk. The more teams lean on workarounds, overtime, or extra headcount, the more fragile and costly their sales engines become. To reverse the trend, orgs must simplify at the source: integrate systems, eliminate redundant tasks, and automate admin so reps can focus on selling.

"How is your team currently coping with tool complexity & administrative burden? Select all that apply."

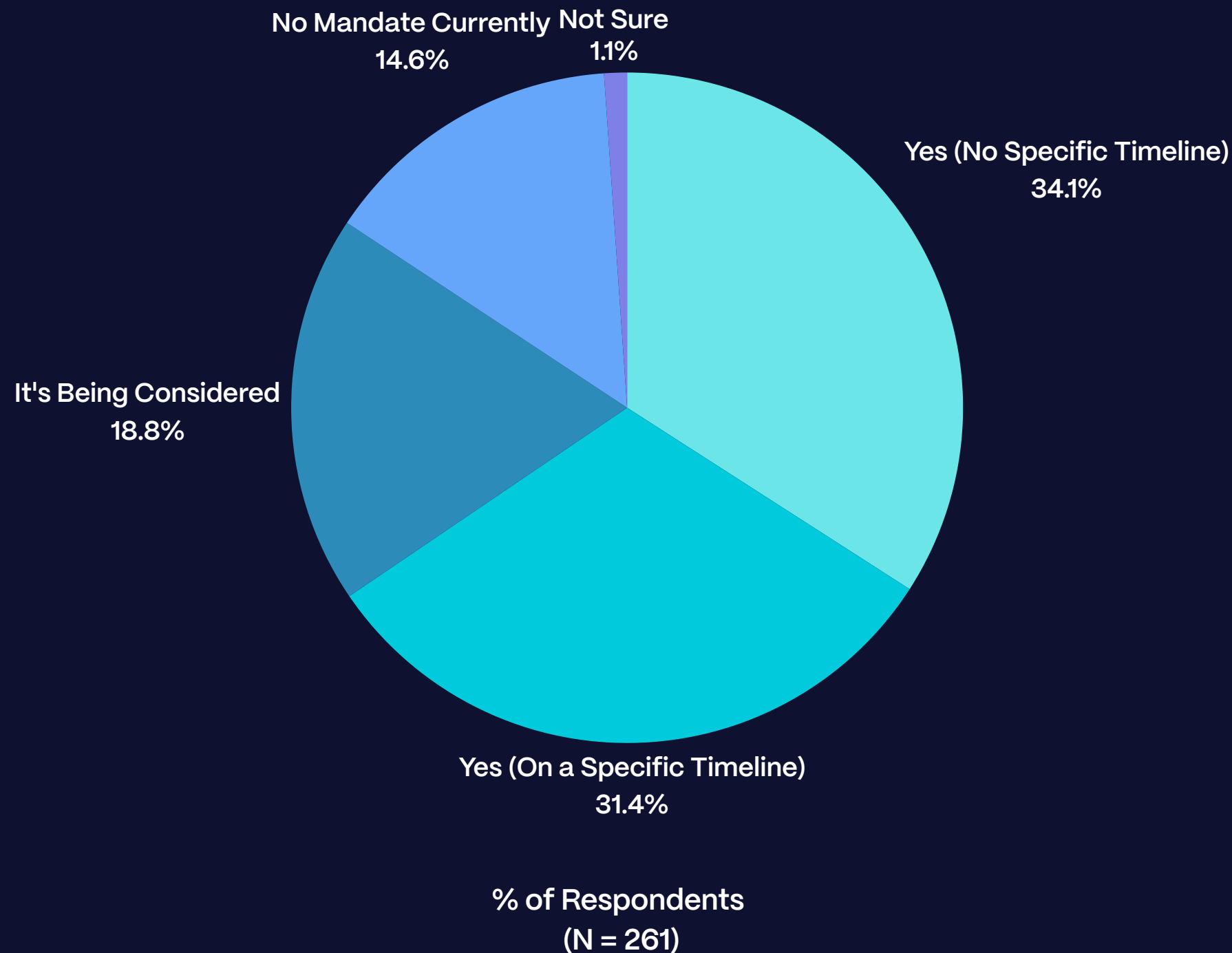


AI IMPACT

How sales teams are evaluating and using AI today, and the results they're seeing.

AI is no longer optional: it's a mandate

"Has company leadership given your team a mandate to implement AI?"



Two-thirds of leaders (~66%) report that their companies already have a formal AI mandate, and nearly half of those (~31%) are working against a specific adoption timeline. That means AI isn't just being encouraged; in many orgs, it's now a deadline-driven requirement.

Another ~19% are still in the "considering" phase, leaving only ~15% with no mandate at all.

The relationship between these numbers is telling: while most mandates are in place, just about a third of companies have established a clear timeline. Momentum is strong, but maturity is uneven — organizations know they need AI, but many are still figuring out when and how to operationalize it.

The takeaway

AI is shifting from tool to table stakes. Companies that move beyond mandates and into execution — integrating AI into workflows, not just setting top-down goals — will build a durable advantage.

Those that hesitate risk being caught flat-footed when leadership expectations collide with day-to-day sales reality.

Pressure to adopt AI is coming from all sides

AI adoption is being fueled by internal demands *and* external pressure.

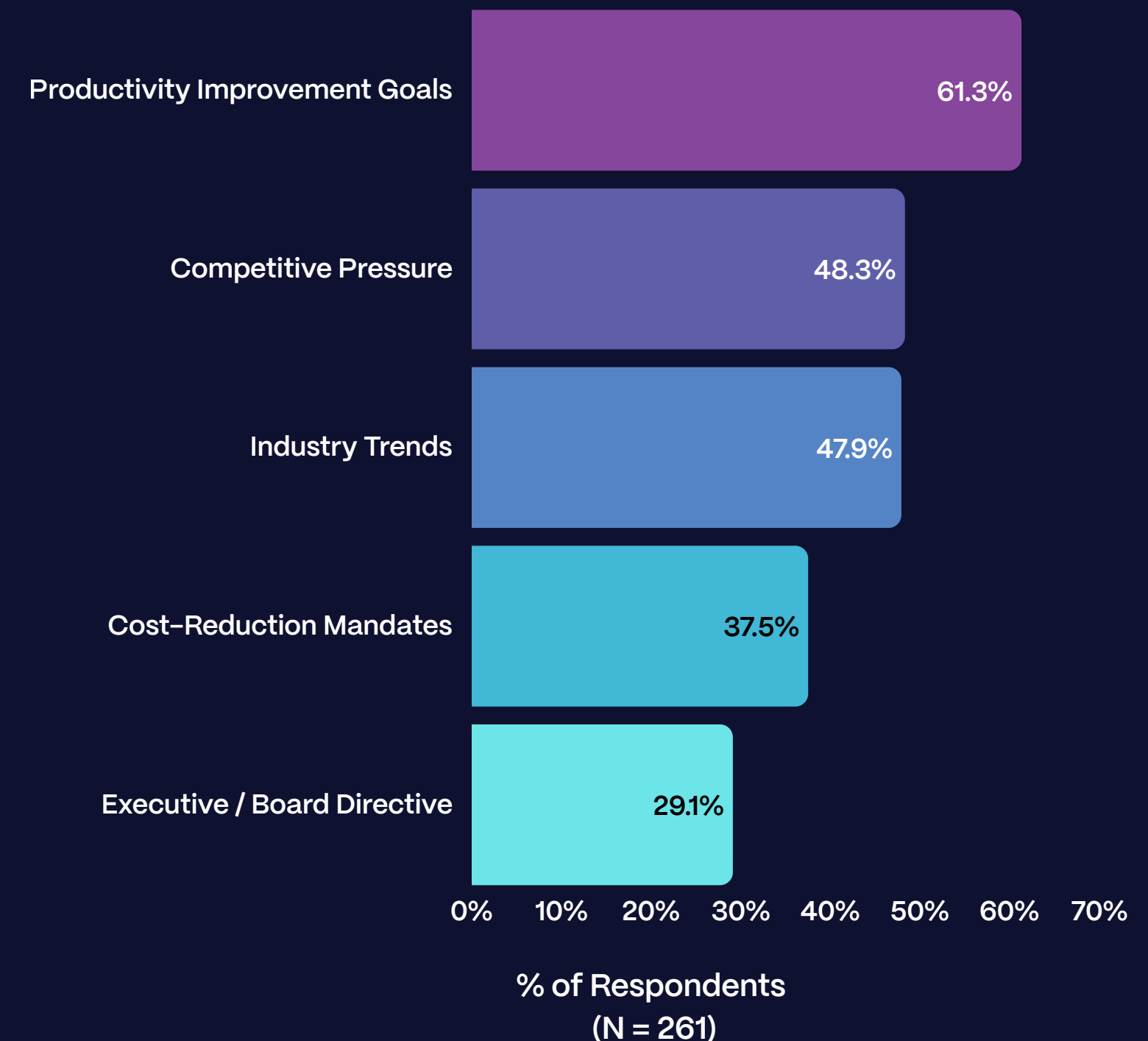
However, the biggest drivers are internal: nearly two-thirds of leaders (~61%) point to productivity goals, reflecting the need to generate more pipeline with leaner teams. Just behind, almost half cite competitive pressure (~48%) and industry trends (~48%), showing that the fear of falling behind peers is just as powerful as efficiency gains. Other forces like cost-reduction mandates (~38%) and executive directives (~29%) round out the picture, signaling that adoption isn't just a grassroots effort but also a top-down expectation.

What stands out is how these pressures reinforce one another: internal efficiency mandates are sparking the push, while external competition is making delay feel risky. That combination explains why AI is moving so quickly from experiment to standard: leaders feel compelled to act from every direction at once.

The takeaway

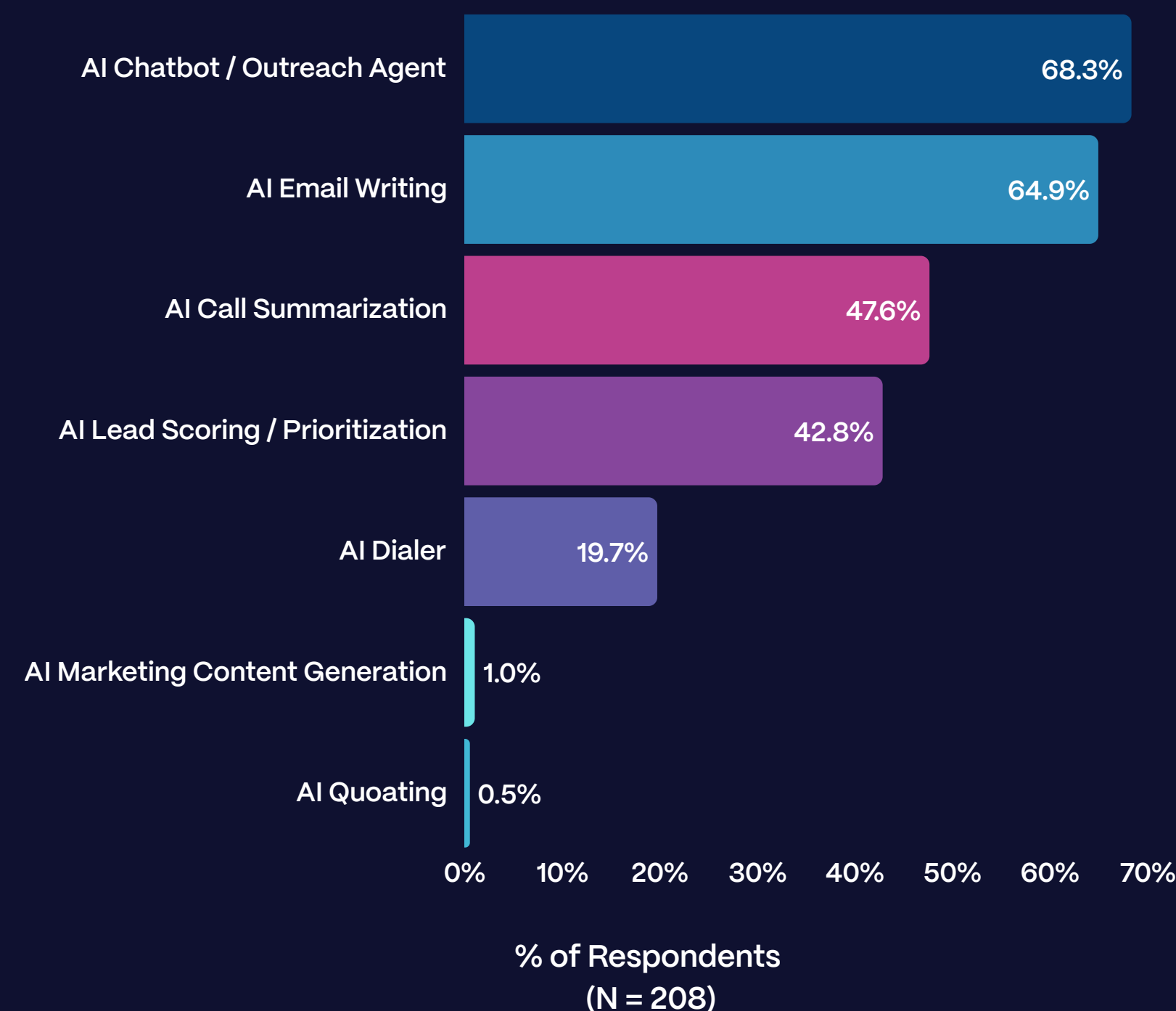
AI adoption is no longer optional or opportunistic. The strongest performers will be those that harness both sides of the pressure, using AI not only to meet internal efficiency mandates but also to stay competitive as the broader market embraces it.

"What's primarily driving AI pressure at your company? Select all that apply."



AI adoption is growing, but maturity is lagging

"If your team currently uses AI, what kinds of AI tools / capabilities are you using? Select all that apply."



Nearly 80% of sales teams now use AI in their prospecting stack, a clear sign it has moved from experiment to expectation.

The first wave of adoption clustered around AI chatbots/agents (~68%) and email writing tools (~65%), where the value is immediate: faster personalization, less manual effort, and quick wins in outbound scale.

Adoption is also strong for call summarization (~48%) and lead scoring (~43%), which push AI deeper into enablement and targeting. These use cases signal progress, but they also require more integration into workflows than content generation alone. At the far end, just 20% report using AI dialers, suggesting that either manual dialing and/or basic power/parallel dialers are still the norm and workflow-level automation remains limited.

Together, the data shows that while AI adoption is broad, it's still fragmented. Most teams are applying AI to individual tasks rather than as part of an orchestrated system. Full workflow integration remains rare, limiting the full impact on pipeline creation.

The takeaway

The next frontier isn't simply adding more AI: it's integrating that tech into end-to-end prospecting workflows that automate execution, reduce manual effort, and deliver consistent, compounding results.

AI delivers real impact for teams who use it (right)

Among the 80% of sales leaders whose teams are already using AI in prospecting, the impact is clear and overwhelmingly positive.

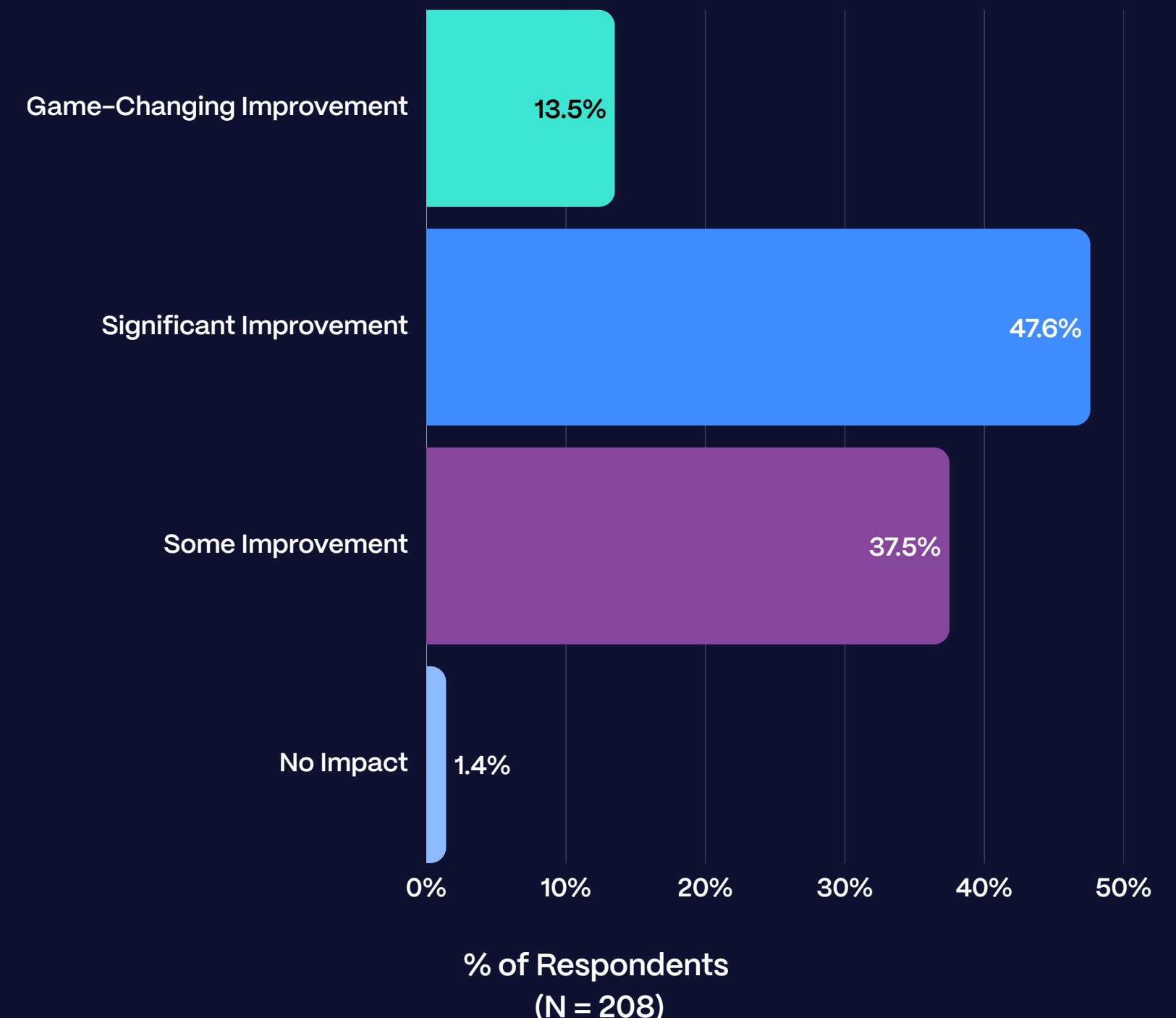
Almost half of sales leaders (~48%) report significant improvements in their prospecting performance, and another 13% call AI's impact "game-changing." A little over one-third (~38%) claim moderate gains, while only ~1% says AI has made no difference at all.

What stands out isn't just the scale of improvement, but the consistency of it. AI is already helping teams move faster, personalize at scale, and free up more time for selling — all factors that compound over time. And because nearly every user reports at least some measurable benefit, it's evident that AI in prospecting has passed the experimental stage.

The takeaway

AI isn't a future promise: it's already becoming a performance multiplier. Teams embedding it effectively are pulling ahead, setting a new bar for what "good" looks like in prospecting. Looking ahead, the performance gap between teams embedding AI deeply and those holding back will only continue to widen.

"If your team is currently using AI tools for prospecting, how would you rate the impact of AI on your prospecting performance?"



Confidence is the main barrier to AI adoption

For the 20% of sales teams that aren't using AI yet, hesitation seems to stem more from a lack of confidence than anything else.

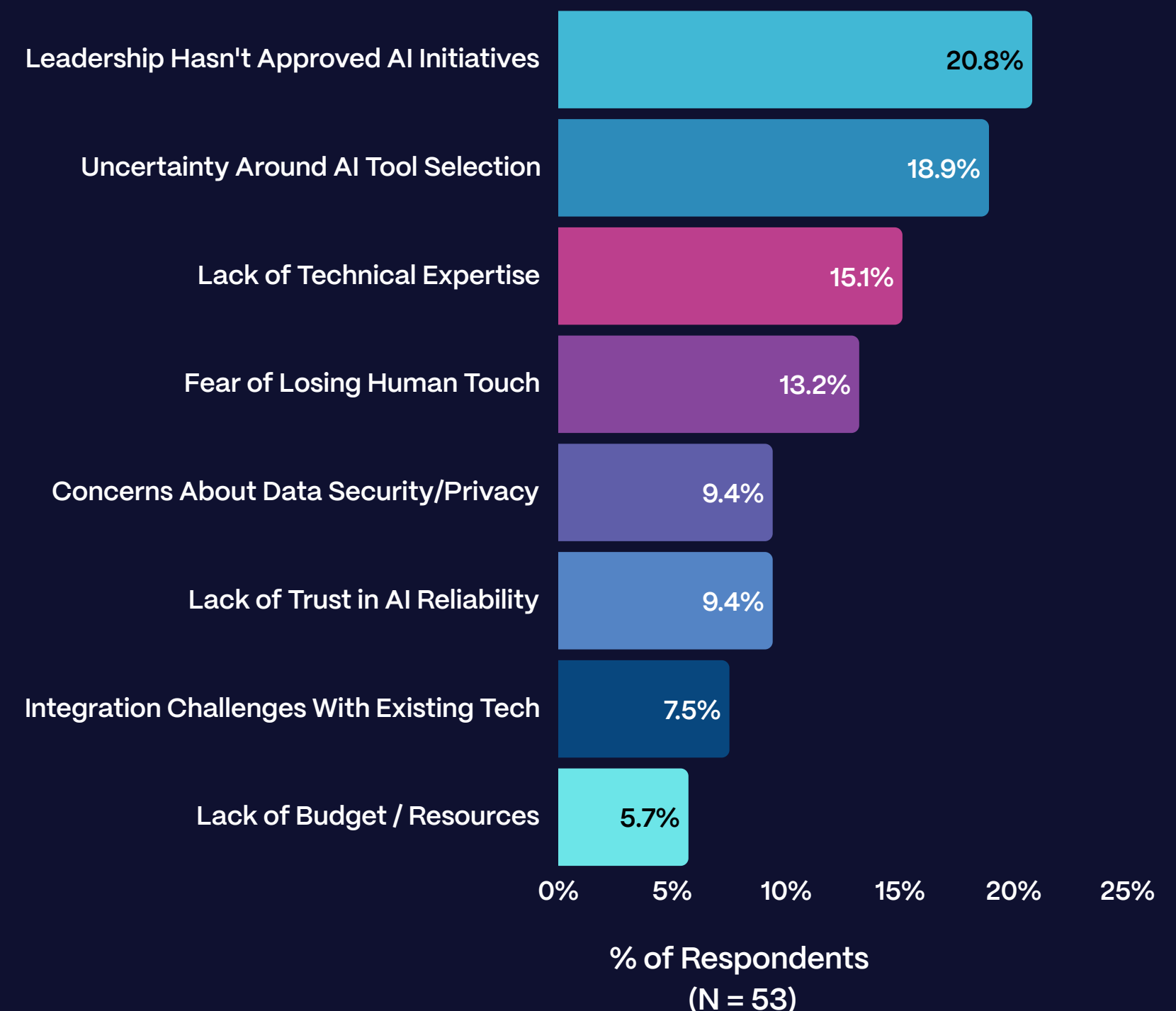
The most common blocker is leadership approval (~21%), showing that many teams are stalled at the executive level rather than by frontline resistance. Close behind is uncertainty about which tools to choose (~19%), reflecting a crowded market where it's hard to separate hype from proven solutions.

Practical hurdles play a role too: ~15% of respondents cited a lack of technical expertise and ~8% called out integration challenges as being blockers, suggesting execution feels daunting once a decision is made. Concerns about losing the human touch (~13%), AI's accuracy and reliability (~9%), and data security concerns (~9%) indicate that adoption is still tied to reassurance as much as capability. Budget barely registers (~6%), underscoring that adoption isn't primarily a financial issue.

The takeaway

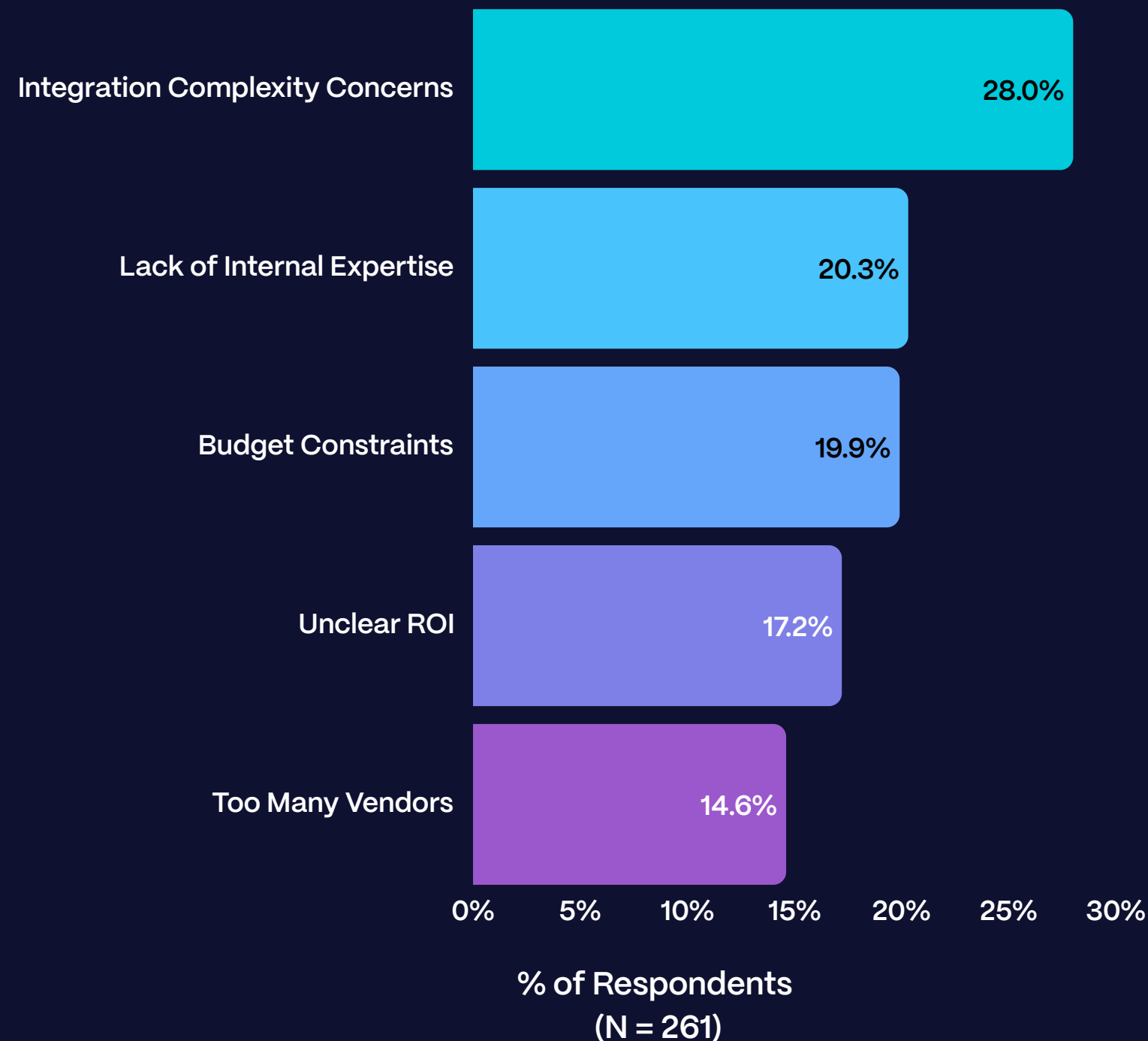
The path to broader adoption is less about lowering costs and more about building trust, clarity, and confidence — especially for leadership. The teams that cross that gap will be the ones who see AI not as a risky experiment, but as a safe, practical extension of how their sellers work.

*"What is the one **BIGGEST** barrier that's keeping your team from using AI prospecting tools?"*



AI evaluations are stalled by integration complexity

“When it comes to evaluating AI sales tools, what is your team's biggest challenge?”



Getting internal buy-in to adopt AI is only half the battle. Once approval is in place, teams face the tougher step: evaluating AI tools in a crowded, complex market.

Sales leaders identify integration complexity (28%) as the single biggest challenge, showing how hard it is to add new technology into stacks that are already fragmented and overloaded. Budget constraints (~20%) and lack of technical expertise (~20%) follow, highlighting that even with leadership support, many teams feel under-resourced to act.

The market itself adds another layer of difficulty: too many vendors (~15%) and unclear ROI (~17%) leave leaders struggling to separate signal from noise. Add in lingering concerns about accuracy, security, or losing the human touch, and evaluation becomes more than a technical step: it's the point where organizational friction, limited resources, and market confusion collide.

The takeaway

For AI to move beyond evaluation, vendors and leaders alike must simplify the path: integration that doesn't add complexity, ROI that's easy to measure, and adoption that feels less like a gamble and more like a safe, strategic step forward.

Teams are ready to offload admin to AI, but not much else

When asked which tasks they'd trust AI to handle independently, sales leaders drew a clear line:

- Admin work → Yes
- Prospect-facing work → Not yet

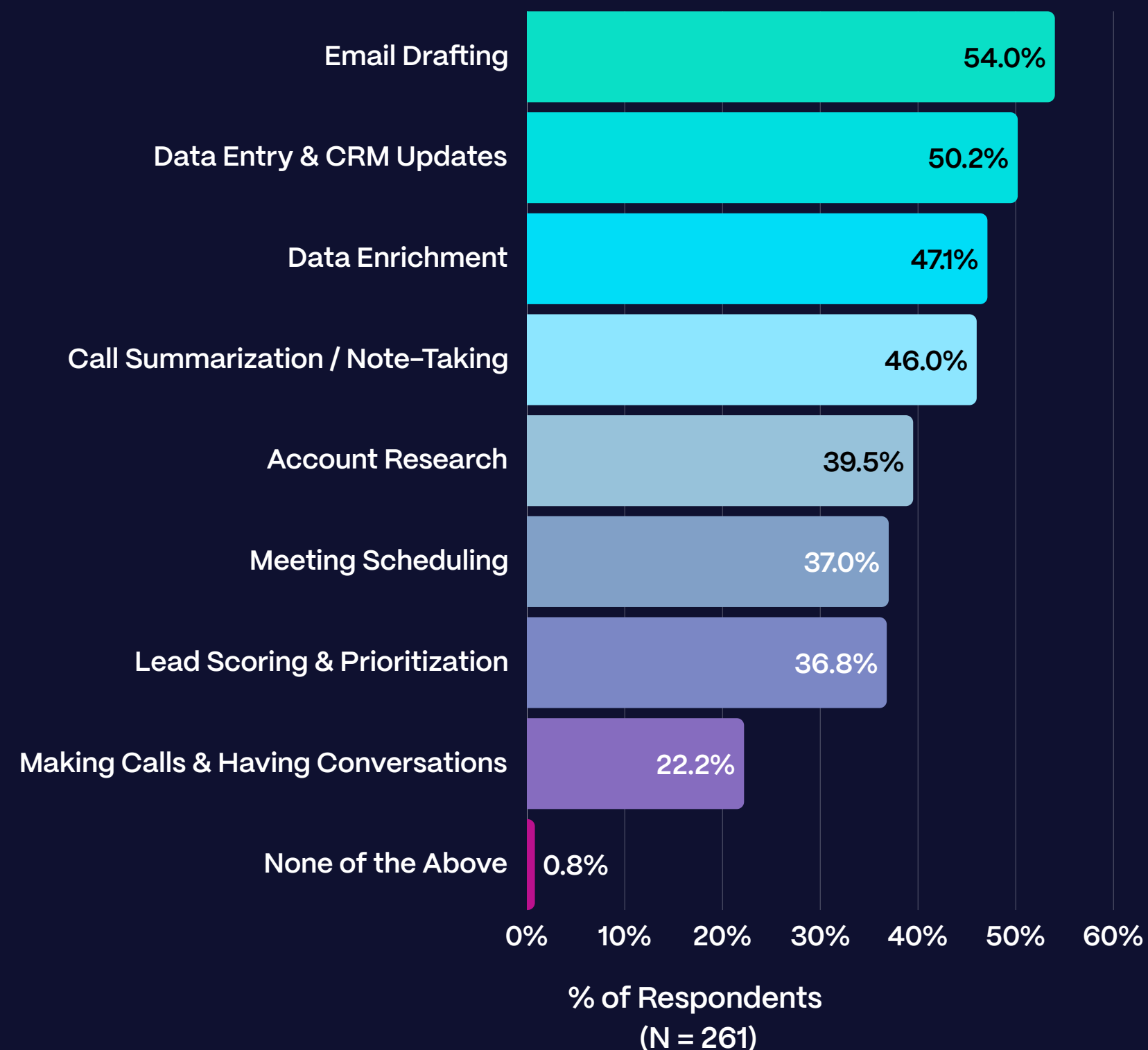
More than half are comfortable with AI drafting emails (~54%), updating CRM records (~50%), or enriching data (~47%) — tasks that eat time but carry low risk. Similar confidence extends to call summarization (~46%) and account research (~40%), where AI supports (but doesn't replace) the seller's voice.

Trust declines sharply when the task gets closer to the prospect. Only ~37% would hand over lead scoring, and just ~22% would trust AI to make sales calls directly. The results show that leaders see AI today primarily as a time-saver, not a frontline seller.

The takeaway

The immediate opportunity for AI in sales lies in offloading low-value, time-intensive tasks, freeing reps to focus on building relationships. Moving into higher-stakes, prospect-facing roles will require AI to prove not only efficiency, but reliability and trustworthiness.

"Which of these tasks would you trust AI to handle independently? Select all that apply."



Conclusion

This year's findings confirm that sales development is at a turning point. Legacy prospecting workflows are breaking down, and leaders are rethinking how to generate pipeline in an AI-driven era.

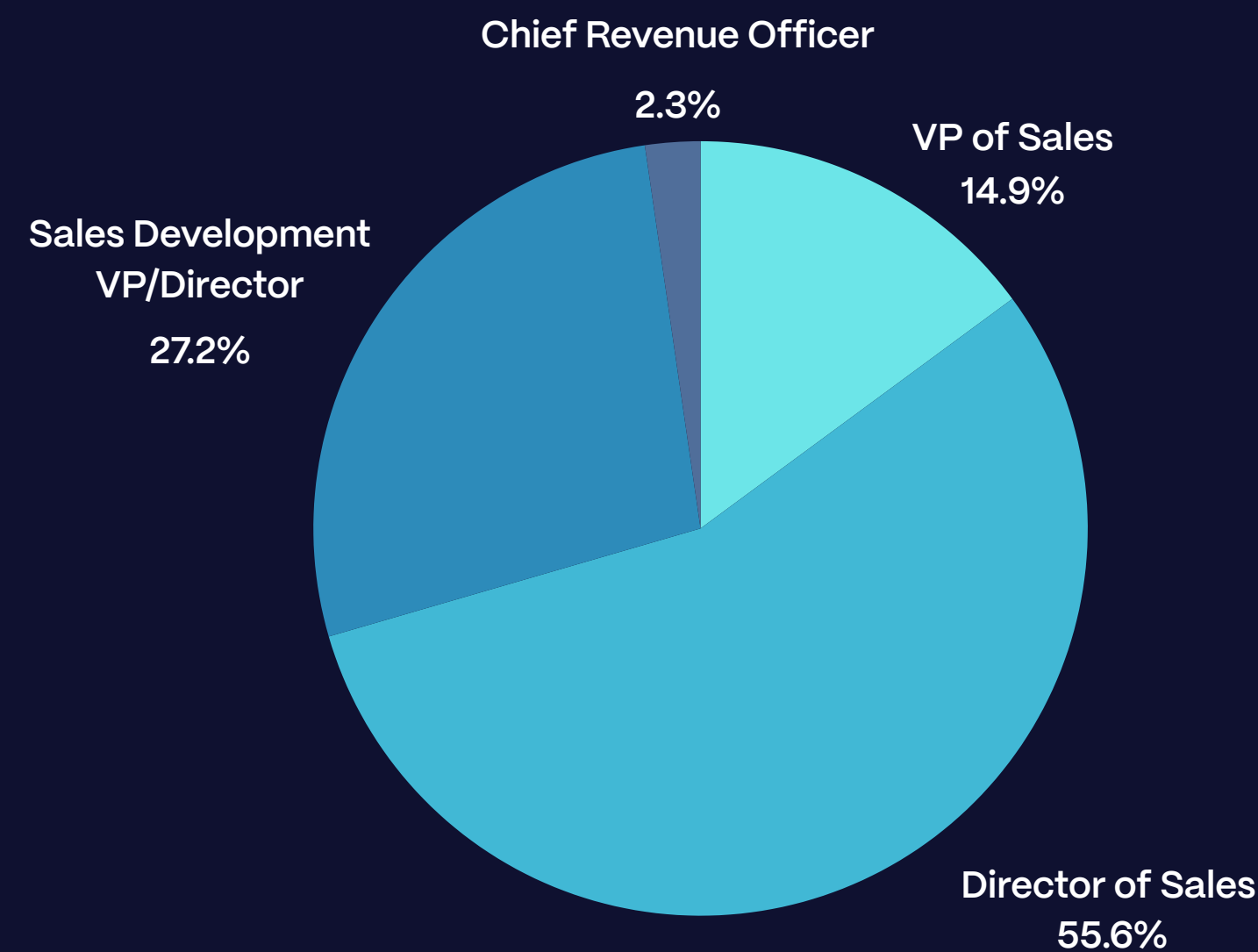
- **Most teams are still missing pipeline targets.** Even with more activity and tools, legacy prospecting workflows aren't keeping up. Leaders told us their top challenges are data quality, pipeline health, and productivity drains — the foundations of growth.
- **The biggest gains come from AI.** Among the 80% of teams already using AI in prospecting, most report significant or game-changing impact. They're prioritizing leads more effectively, personalizing outreach, and cutting down on admin tasks — freeing reps to spend more time selling.
- **Barriers across buy-in, evaluation, and integration.** Across all respondents, the evaluation phase is the shared chokepoint: teams struggle to assess integration fit, prove ROI, and cut through vendor noise. For non-adopters, leadership approval is the top blocker; for adopters, the challenge is deeper integration and expanding use beyond admin into prospect-facing work, shaped by a lack of trust in AI's reliability and accuracy to handle those types of invaluable interactions.
- **AI should enhance, not replace, human touch.** The most effective teams pair human judgment with AI execution to move faster and perform better.

TL;DR: The future is intelligent, integrated, and rep-centric.

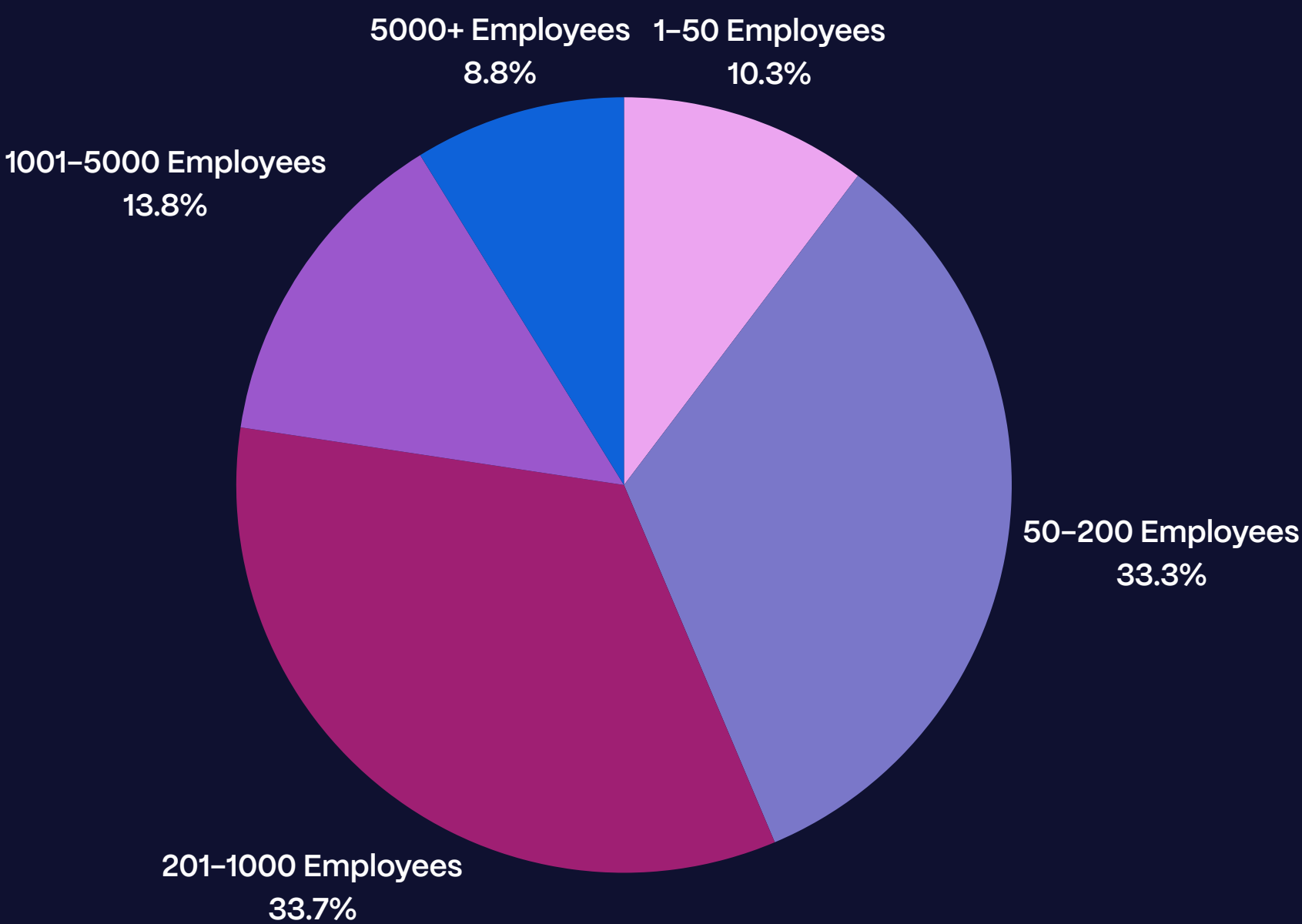
Teams that solve for data, simplify workflows, and embed AI end-to-end won't just generate more pipeline: they'll set the new standard for sales development.

About the survey

This report is based on a survey of 261 U.S.-based sales leaders with direct responsibility for prospecting, all working in the technology sector. Respondents were sourced by Centiment, an independent market research firm, and surveyed in July 2025.



Role / Title



Company Size / Employee Count

About Regie.ai

Legacy sales engagement platforms rely on rigid, email-heavy workflows that ignore buyer intent. They can't adapt in real time, making it hard to run the dynamic, personalized plays modern prospecting requires — forcing teams to either work within outdated systems or cobble together point solutions.

Regie.ai's AI SEP changes the game with agentic GTM execution. Intelligent agents detect signals, personalize outreach, and execute your bespoke workflows across enrichment, sequencing, messaging, and dialing — all in one platform. You set the strategy; Regie.ai runs it at scale.

The result: more coverage, more consistency, and more pipeline *without* more headcount.

