AI Adoption Trends and Strategic Insights: Survey of Small Businesses

Survey Findings
May 2025

REIMAGINE MAIN STREET

PUBLIC PRIVATE STRATEGIES INSTITUTE

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Reimagine Main Street, a project of the Public Private Strategies Institute, is a multi-stakeholder, cross-sector initiative that brings small business leaders, investors, experts, and policymakers together with business owners and the people they employ. We engage diverse stakeholders and develop data-driven insights to shape and inform market opportunities and policy.

Together, we are working to ensure businesses prosper, and that the benefits ripple across communities and throughout the economy.

Thank You to Our Partners

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Context for Survey

- **The rise of artificial intelligence (AI)** is reshaping industries, economies, and everyday life — automating tasks, enhancing decision-making, and redefining how businesses innovate and compete. But what does this transformation mean for small businesses?

- **To explore this question,** Reimagine Main Street and 14 partners, with support from PayPal, fielded a national survey of nearly 1,000 small businesses (annual revenue: $25K–$5M) to better understand business owners' beliefs, perceptions of AI, and experiences.

- **Our objective:** Uncover opportunities, challenges, and barriers to AI adoption among small businesses so that we can ensure that they have the tools needed to compete in an AI-powered economy.

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)

We Focus on 3 Segments* of Businesses

Current AI Users

AI Explorers

Non-Users

	Current AI Users	AI Explorers	Non-Users
Definition	• Businesses that are currently using AI tools in daily operations, marketing, and/or planning	• Businesses that are exploring AI options or that have experimented with AI but don't use it regularly	• Businesses with no current plans to use AI
# of Businesses	• 239	• 487	• 221
% of Sample	• 25%	• 51%	• 24%

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
*See appendix for details on each segment

Overall Takeaways

- **AI adoption by small businesses is not a future trend — it's happening now**
  - 76% of small businesses are either actively using or exploring AI, indicating that adoption is already widespread and could accelerate
  - For 25% of businesses that are "Current AI Users," AI is already embedded in daily operations—primarily in marketing, worker productivity, and product / service innovation
  - Another 51% are "AI Explorers" -- testing AI but not yet using it regularly
  - Only about 5% of small businesses are opposed to AI
  - This momentum reflects an underlying sentiment: small businesses increasingly see AI as essential to stay competitive and resilient
- **AI Is already delivering value for Current AI Users — and raising expectations for what's next**
  - For today's Current AI Users, the value from AI is clear: saving time is the strongest value proposition
  - 91% of Current AI Users rely on AI for marketing, 76% for worker productivity, and 69% for product and service innovation
  - Most Current AI Users are willing to automate many business functions and want agentic tools that help drive profitable growth by forecasting cash flow, identifying customer trends, and providing analysis to guide resource allocation decisions

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)

Overall Takeaways

- **AI Explorers are at the cusp of adoption — but they haven't seen enough value to make AI worth the time — yet.**
  - The majority of business owners are not hostile to AI — but they are stuck. The barriers they cite are solvable issues:
    - Privacy and data security concerns
    - Limited bandwidth to explore and learn how to use AI
    - Unclear benefits to the business (e.g., ROI)
  - But they're also watching their peers and competitors adopt — and feeling the pressure to catch up
  - To drive adoption, AI Explorers need:
    - Tools that are easy to use, clearly beneficial, and low-risk to test
    - Training, demos, and real-world examples that show how AI solves problems for businesses like theirs
    - Pricing that signals affordability and value

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)

Overall Takeaways

- **Ensuring more small businesses benefit from AI will require turning AI Explorers into Current AI Users. To make that leap possible, the market must step up:**
    - **Build tools and solutions that meet needs of business owners** — focus on saving time, understanding customers, unlocking growth opportunities, and making day-to-day decisions easier
    - **Design for usability and relevance** — tools should be easy to try, clearly connected to business outcomes, and tailored to the realities of specific industries
    - **Back it with support that builds trust** — through training, real-world examples, and evidence of value so that business owners can adopt AI on their terms, as tools they control from which they derive value

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)

Content Modules

- Perceptions of AI
- Expected Value
- Drivers and Barriers to Adoption
- Current State of AI Use
- What Business Owners Want / Expect From AI
- Technology Discovery & Attitudes
- Industry Cluster Profiles
- User Profiles – Owners
- Appendix

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)

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Perceptions of AI

- Business owners see AI as a way to extend what they do
- Current AI Users and AI Explorers express excitement about the possibilities AI presents
- Most business owners expect more upside than downside from AI
- AI seen as essential to compete
- Current AI Users and AI Explorers generally feel pressure to adopt AI
- Non-Users don't appear motivated by competitive pressure
- Competitive pressures outweigh concerns about AI for Current AI Users and AI Explorers
- Current AI Users don't expect AI to replace workers but Non-Users express concern
- Business owners fear AI could undermine customer relationships
- Current AI Users see AI as a way to enhance customer relationships in spite of concerns

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Expected Value

- **Current AI Users & AI Explorers: Clear value expectations**
  - Saving time is a strong value proposition among Current AI Users & AI Explorers
  - Saving time is the strongest value proposition among Current AI Users
  - Current AI Users and AI Explorers expect efficiencies from AI in their businesses
  - Current AI Users and AI Explorers expect that AI will drive profitability
  - Current AI Users and AI Explorers expect AI to contribute to resilience
- **Explorers: Cautious optimism**
  - AI Explorers mostly expect value from AI for their businesses
  - AI Explorers worry about data privacy/security and lack bandwidth to figure out use cases
- **Non-users: Don't know or don't believe; value proposition unclear**
  - Non-Users are a mix of unaware or skeptical about the value from AI
  - Non-Users don't see value from AI

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)

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Drivers and Barriers to Adoption

- **Drivers of Adoption**
  - Both AI Explorers and Non-Users respond most to ease of use and clear proof of value
  - Ease of use, proof of business value, and trusted advice are primary adoption drivers for AI Explorers
  - Proven business value is the top driver for AI adoption among AI Explorers
  - Ease of use and proof of business value could nudge Non-Users
- **Profiles of Adopters**
  - Current AI Users do not necessarily require deep AI knowledge — most report a general understanding and some familiarity with business applications
  - Most AI Explorers have basic AI awareness, but depth is limited
  - Non-Users are mostly unaware with some skeptics
- **Barriers to Adoption**
  - Some barriers span segments, suggesting priorities to unlock adoption
    - Clear use cases and value propositions
    - Low-risk entry points and ease of use
    - Data privacy and security assurances
  - Privacy, bandwidth, and uncertain value proposition top barriers to adoption for AI Explorers
  - Lack of awareness or understanding of potential AI benefits is the primary barrier to adoption for Non-Users
  - Business owners may fear changes to operations from AI
  - Current AI Users and AI Explorers both generally prefer AI behind the scenes vs. on the frontlines

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)

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Drivers and Barriers to Adoption
(cont'd)

- **Support Needed to Overcome Adoption Barriers and Enhance Current Use**
  - All business owners want practical training; financial considerations especially important for Current AI Users
  - Training and affordability are top support needs for Current AI Users
  - Training, affordable, tailored tools, and technical support could unlock adoption for AI Explorers
  - Training and technical support are important to unlock AI adoption among Non-Users
- **Segment-specific**
  - Solopreneur Non-Users need practical training support to get started with AI tools
  - Microbusiness (2-10 employees) Non-Users need technical support and practical training on integration to adopt AI
  - Small and mid-sized firm Non-Users (21-50 employees) need financial incentives, peer exemplars, and practical training for AI adoption
  - Women Current AI Users report higher AI support needs
  - Women AI Explorers express greater demand for AI support, training, and resources

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)

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Current State of AI Use

- Current AI Users rely on AI mostly for marketing and customer engagement, and to enhance productivity
- Momentum among Current AI Users for a range of AI use cases/functions
- Current AI Users cited a wide variety of AI tools and platforms they currently leverage in their businesses
- Microbusinesses (2-10 employees)
  - Rely on AI mostly for marketing and customer engagement, productivity, and innovation
  - Have usage patterns consistent with the overall sample
  - Cited a range of AI tools and platforms they leverage in their businesses
- Marketing, productivity, and innovation uses vary by firm size

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What are Business Owners Willing to Automate?

- Business owners most willing (84%) to automate marketing content creation
- High comfort among Current AI Users to automate marketing, customer service and employee training
- AI Explorers prioritize AI automation in marketing and internal operations
- Marketing content creation could be ripe for first step to AI adoption
- Current AI Users split between skepticism and enthusiasm to adopt a single, seamlessly integrated solution
- AI Explorers skeptical that a single, seamlessly integrated solution could meet their business needs

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)

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Where are Expectations for Business Impact from AI Highest?

- Highest expectations for business impact from innovative marketing analytics solutions
- Current AI Users see marketing and back-office systems as most ripe for AI solutions, followed by product/service innovation and productivity tools
- 6 in 10 firms with 21-50 employees say back-office/operations solutions would have greatest impact
- Solopreneur Current AI Users value new AI solutions for marketing/customer engagement

Where is There Demand for Agentic AI Tools?

- New agentic AI tools could be natural next step for Current AI Users
- High demand for business growth support tools
  - More than half of Current AI Users say cash flow forecasting tool would solve a critical pain point
  - 40% of Current AI Users extremely likely to adopt a tool that enables dynamic pricing and promotions
  - 4 in 10 Current AI Users extremely likely to adopt tool that predicts revenue trends to help with staffing, inventory, and marketing decisions
  - Current AI Users prioritize each solution at rough parity, with small preference for dynamic pricing and revenue trend predictors
  - AI Explorers prioritize each solution at rough parity; small preference for tool that forecasts income and expenses
  - Non-Users most interested in a tool that forecasts income and expenses

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)

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What do Business Owners Expect from AI Providers and Tools?

- **How do business owners want to use AI?**
  - Business owners generally welcome AI integrated with current tools, and they want to know when a technology provider is using AI
  - Incumbent providers may have a slight "trust advantage", but even well-known brands must earn trust from business owners on AI
  - Business owners want AI tools tailored to their industry contexts
  - Business owners want to test AI first on small, low-stakes tasks

Attitudes Toward Technology and Technology Uses

- **How Tech Experience Shapes Perceptions**
  - Positive technology experiences boost AI confidence for Current AI Users
  - Technology experience shapes caution and confidence in AI adoption for AI Explorers
  - Most Non-Users say their current tech does not influence their views on AI
  - Most Current AI Users are early technology adopters
  - AI Explorers are likely to "wait and watch" before adopting new technology
- **Technology Uses**
  - Accounting software is used by most business owners in the sample
  - AI Explorers use software solutions for financial management and payments
  - Majority of Current AI Users and AI Explorers experience challenges with tech tools that don't work well together

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)

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Technology Discovery

- Most business owners proactively research new technology options
- Technology discovery patterns vary sharply by business revenue for Current AI Users
- Higher-revenue firms are more likely to use professional networks for tech discovery
- Independent research drives technology discovery for Current AI Users
- Direct marketing is rarely the path to technology discovery for AI Explorers
- A significant gap exists between business technology marketing targeting men vs. women

Industry Clusters

- AI exploration outpaces adoption across industry clusters
- Professional & knowledge services dominate Current AI Users, while Non-Users are more distributed across industry clusters
- Current AI Users skew heavily toward knowledge-driven industries
- Professional services and technology development dominate AI usage across industries
- AI Explorers are mostly concentrated in professional services, with strong representation from construction and food industries as well
- Non-Users are spread across a variety of sectors
- Professional services, construction, and food industries lead in no AI adoption plans

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User Profiles

- **Age**
  - AI interest peaks among owners aged 50–64, while younger owners more likely to be using AI already
  - Young business owners lead in AI adoption
  - Majority of 40–49 year olds are engaging with AI in some capacity
  - Majority of 50–64 age group are AI Explorers
  - One-third of seniors (65+) have no plans to use AI
- **Race and Ethnicity**
  - AI curiosity and adoption highest among small business owners of color
  - AAPI-owned businesses show high openness to AI
  - Black-owned businesses are broadly embracing AI use and exploration
  - Majority of Latino/a-owned businesses are open to AI
  - More White-owned businesses are hesitant than Current AI Users
- **Gender**
  - While men and women use AI at similar rates, men are more likely to reject AI
  - Women-led businesses are actively exploring AI solutions
  - Male-led businesses mirror women in AI use, but exceed women in AI skepticism
- **Disability status**
  - Business owners with disabilities are more likely to be Current AI Users — highlighting potential for accessible innovation
  - Business owners with disabilities are early adopters, leaning heavily into AI use and exploration
  - Business owners with disabilities over-index as Current AI Users

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)

Perceptions of AI

Business Owners See AI as a Way to Extend What They Do

(1 of 2)

Theme	How These Business Owners Define AI	Representative Quotes
1 **AI as a Tool for Productivity & Efficiency** *304 responses*	• Respondents defined AI by its **function or use case** • They see AI as a **practical tool to streamline work**, save time, and boost output—often by automating repetitive or manual tasks • Many view AI as **a partner rather than a replacement**, enhancing their capabilities and allowing them to focus on higher-level strategy	💬"A tool to save me time and money. It multiplies my skill set, accelerates my speed to market, and reduces my overhead costs." 💬"We use AI more and more each day. It has helped to save time and be far more strategic in pinpointing exact information." 💬"AI helps us take back our time by picking up some of the activities we do on a daily basis." 💬 "It's a tool that helps me work smarter and more efficiently."
2 **AI as a Simulation of Human Intelligence** *165 responses*	• A significant number of respondents defined AI more technically—as **systems designed to mimic or replicate human cognition** • These business owners referenced abilities such as **learning, reasoning, pattern recognition, and natural language understanding**	💬 "AI refers to the ability of machines or software to perform tasks that typically require human intelligence—like learning, reasoning, problem-solving, and decision-making." 💬 "Artificial intelligence (AI) is the simulation of human intelligence in machines." 💬 "AI is a computer system that simulates human intelligence faster and more efficiently."

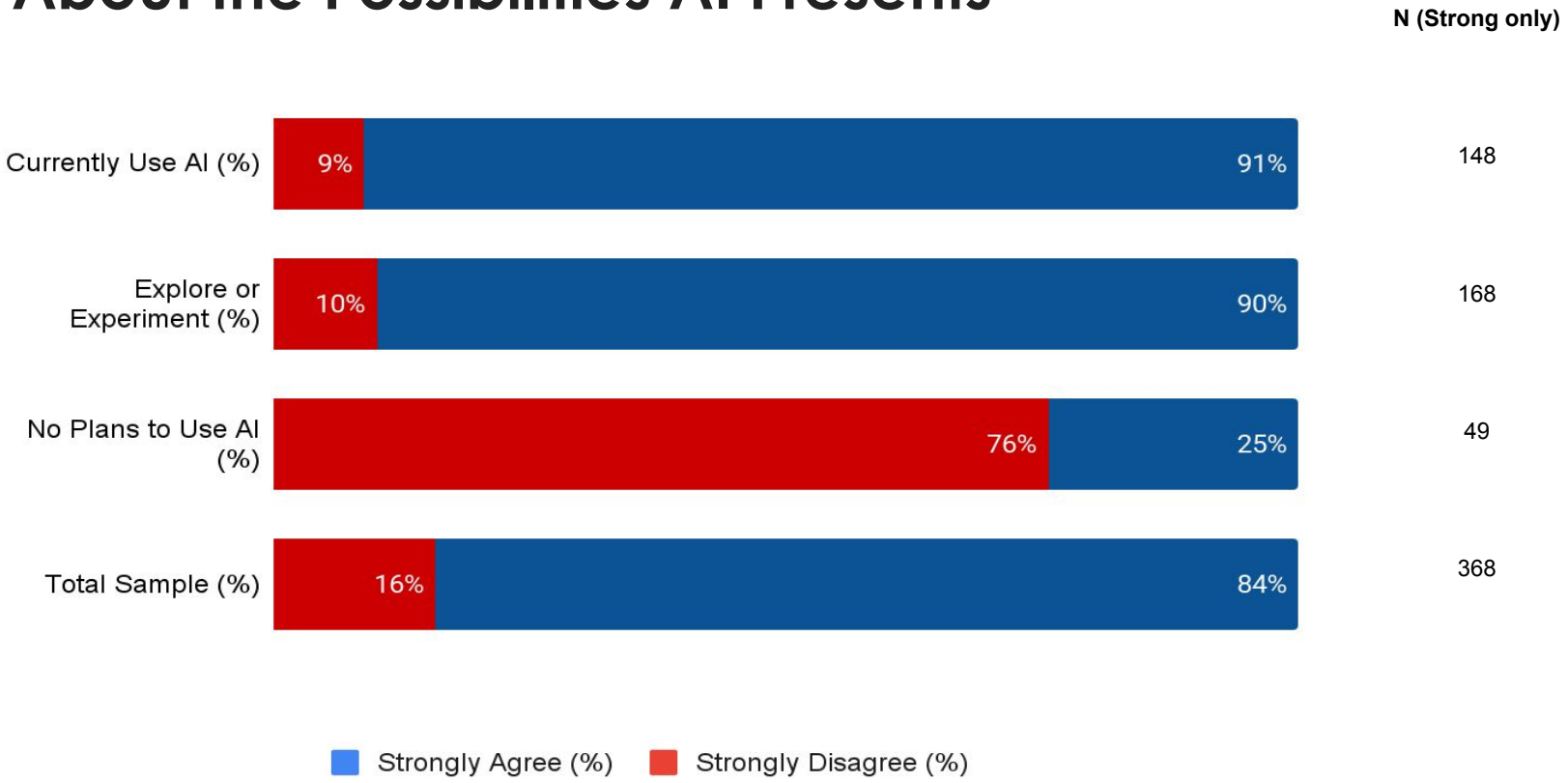
Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q: Tell us in your own words how you define artificial intelligence (AI). (Free response)

Business Owners See AI as a Way to Extend What They Do

	Theme	How These Business Owners Define AI	Representative quotes
3	**AI as a Source of Competitive Advantage** *115 responses*	• These business owners defined AI by its **function or use case** • AI is seen as a tool to **inform strategy and improve operations, financial planning, and customer engagement**	💬"AI is a helper and a tool to assist me in optimizing workflows and creating content." 💬 "AI helps business streamline operations by advancing communication, prioritizing projects and analyzing data." 💬"AI is like strapping on the Iron Man suit for your operations."
4	**AI as a Data-Driven Insight Engine** *85 responses*	• This group views AI as a powerful analytical tool—able to **consume, process, and synthesize massive data sets** to generate insights, predictions, and recommendations • Respondents **often emphasizes data analysis**, **forecasting, and strategic support**	💬 "AI is the use of machine learning to analyze both structured and unstructured data." 💬 "It's a predictive tool that can support daily tasks." 💬 "AI reveals insights from our data and, when combined with public data sets, unlocks insights never before available."
5	**AI for Communication, Content Creation, and Marketing** *72 responses*	• A notable subset of respondents use AI tools specifically for **content creation, email writing, social media, marketing copy, and other communication support** • These business owners frame AI as a **creative assistant**	💬 "It helps me write letters, generate ideas and posts for my marketing needs." 💬 "We use AI to help write sales copy and provide inspiration for packaging." 💬 "I use it to write blogs, posts, and marketing ideas… I wrote and published three books in two months!"

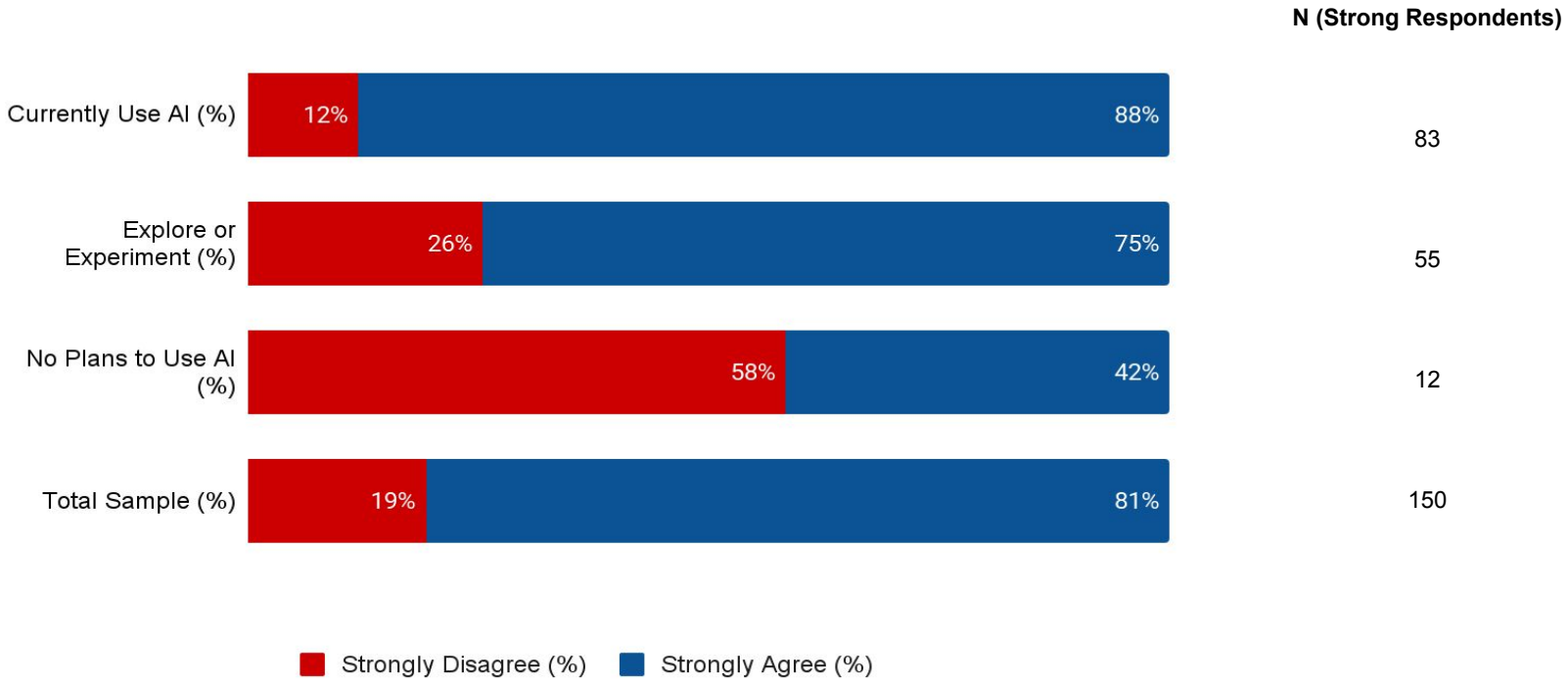
Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q: Tell us in your own words how you define artificial intelligence (AI). (Free response)

Current AI Users and AI Explorers Express Excitement About the Possibilities AI Presents



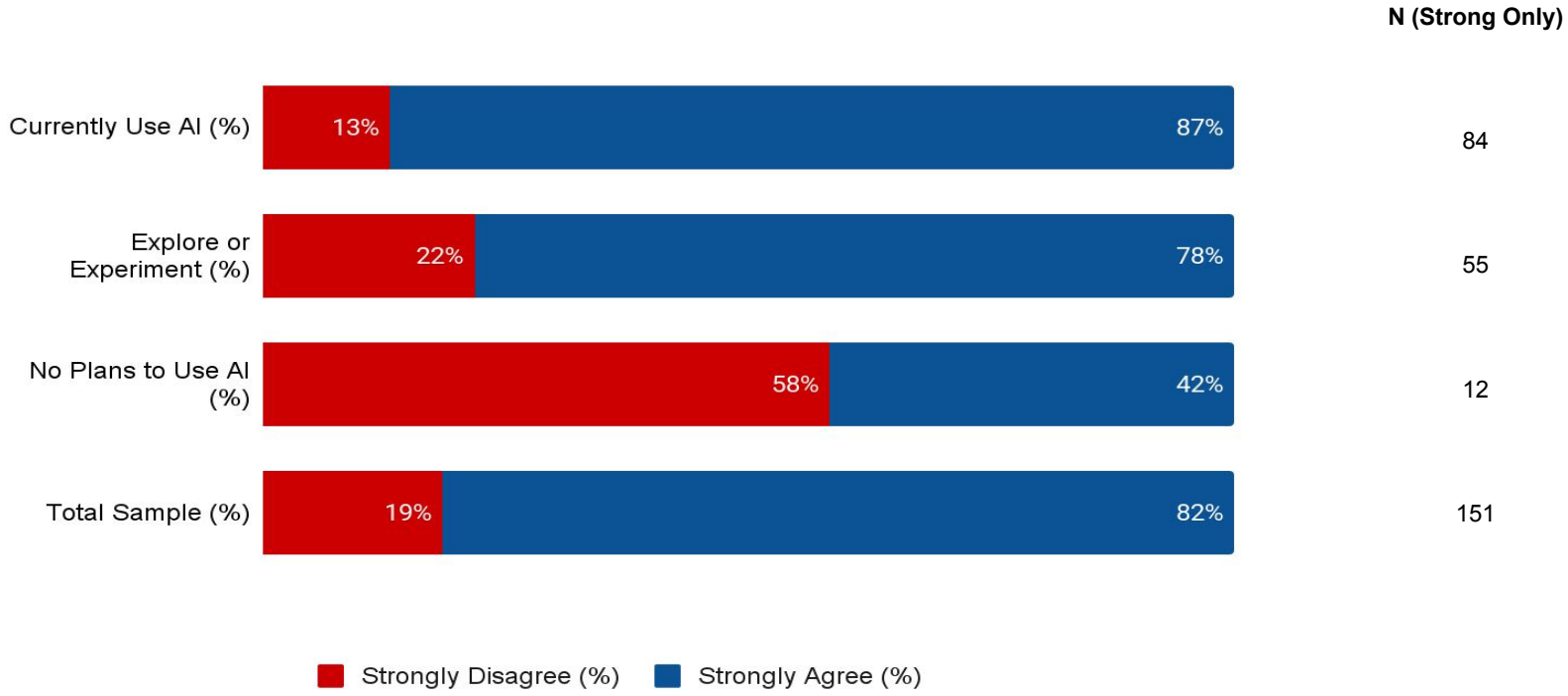
Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q16 - For each of the following statements, tell us the extent to which you agree or disagree: I am excited about the possibilities AI offers.

Most Business Owners Expect More Upside than Downside from AI



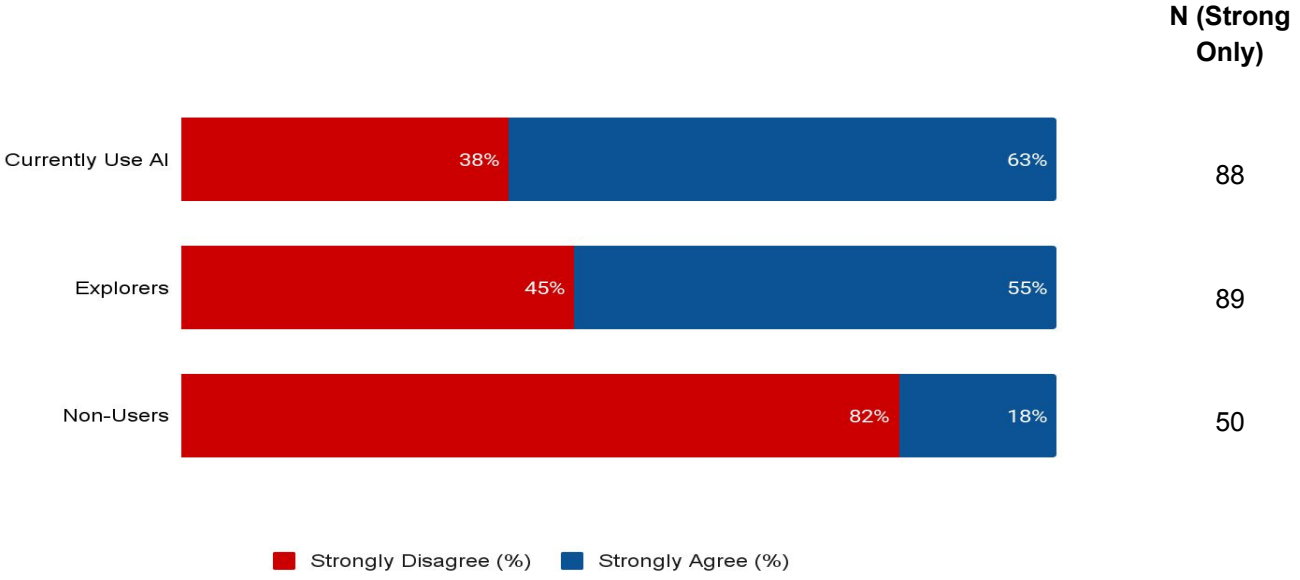
Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q37 -Now we want to understand how you feel about AI in the context of your business. For each of the following statements, tell us the extent to which you agree or disagree: Overall, the positive impact AI may have on small businesses outweighs the negative impact it may have.

AI Seen as Essential to Compete



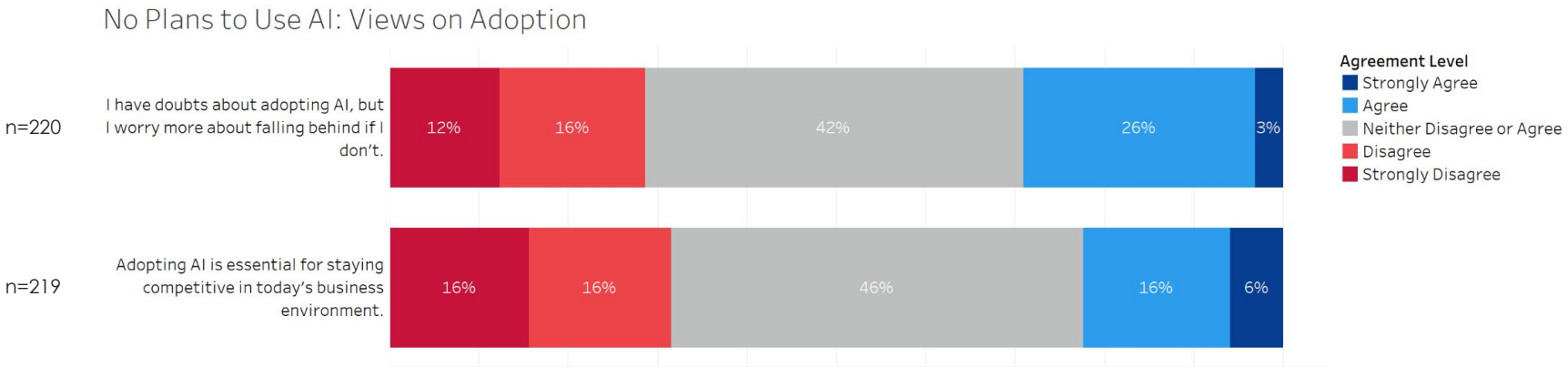
Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q37- For each of the following statements, tell us the extent to which you agree or disagree: Adopting AI is essential for staying competitive in today's business environment.

Current AI Users and AI Explorers Generally Feel Pressure to Adopt AI



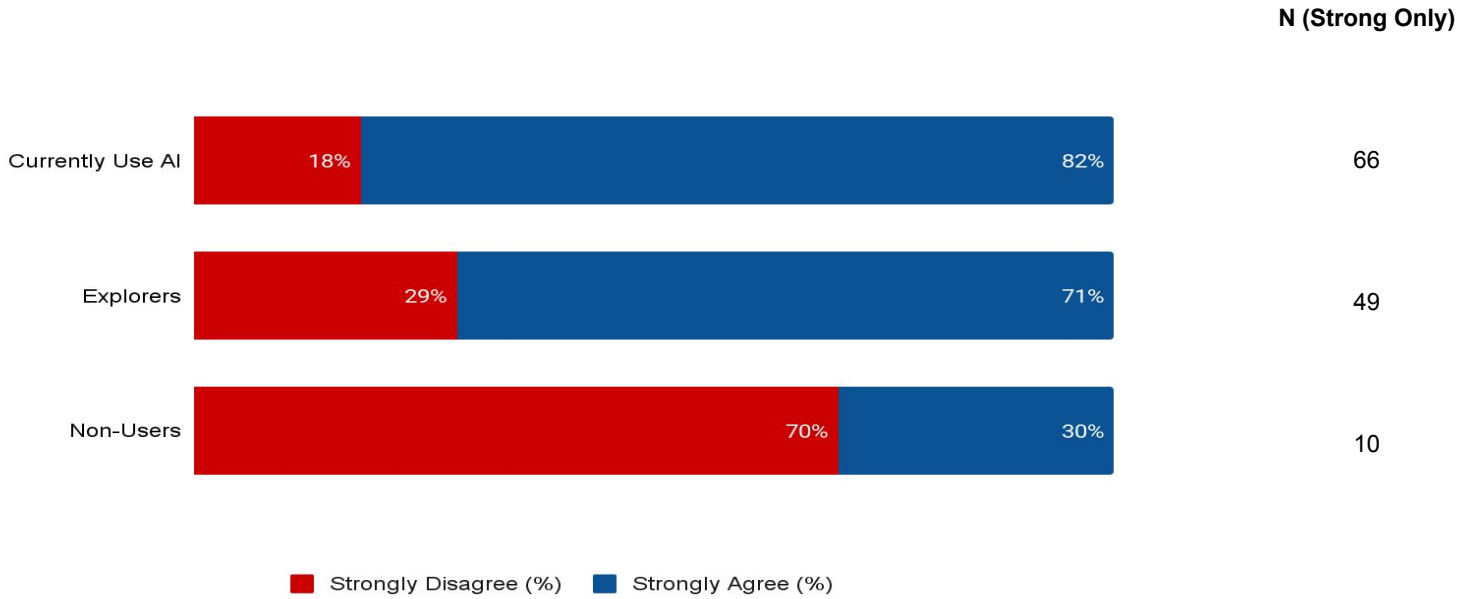
Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q37- For each of the following statements, tell us the extent to which you agree or disagree: I feel pressure to adopt AI to keep up with competitors

Non-Users Don’t Appear Motivated by Competitive Pressure



Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q37: Tell us the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements.

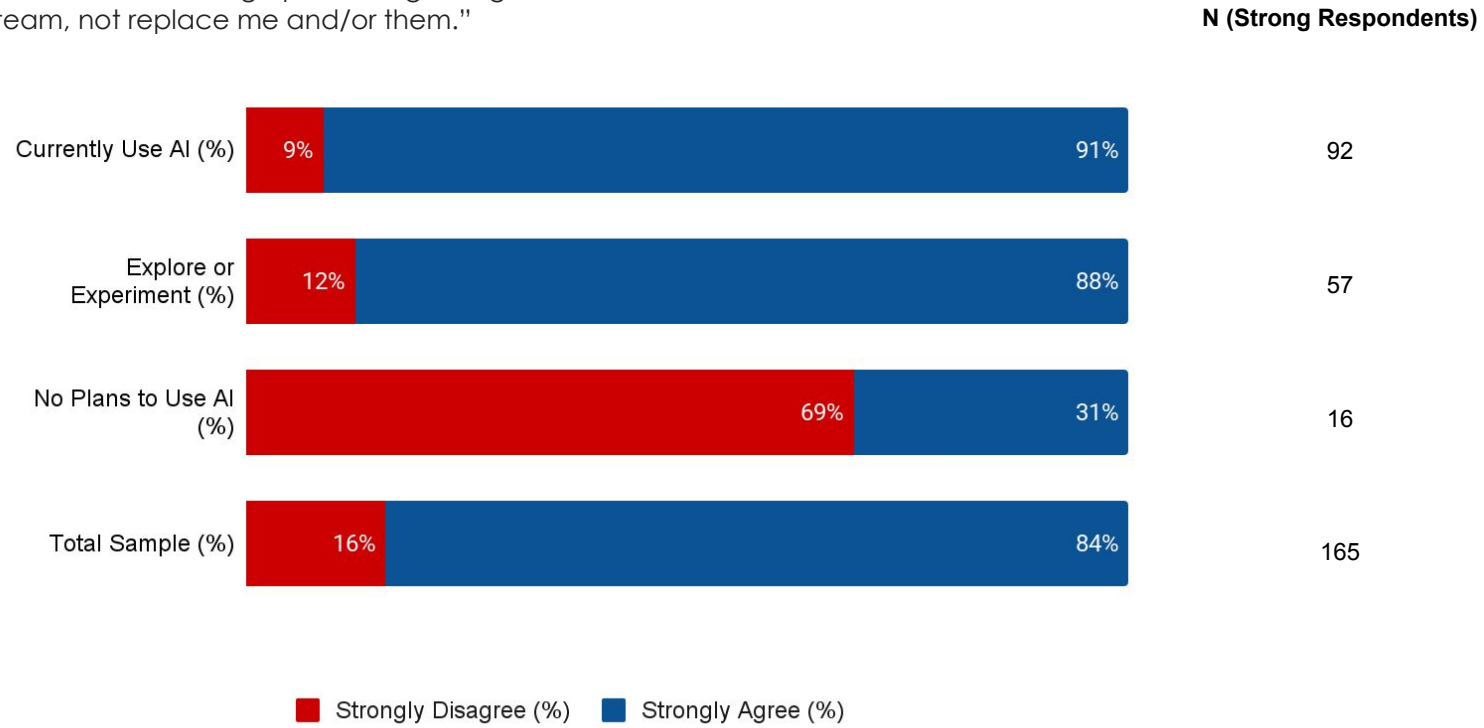
Competitive Pressures Outweigh Concerns About AI for Current AI Users and AI Explorers



Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q37- For each of the following statements, tell us the extent to which you agree or disagree: I have doubts about adopting AI, but I worry more about falling behind if I don't.

Current AI Users Don't Expect AI to Replace Workers But Non-Users Express Concern

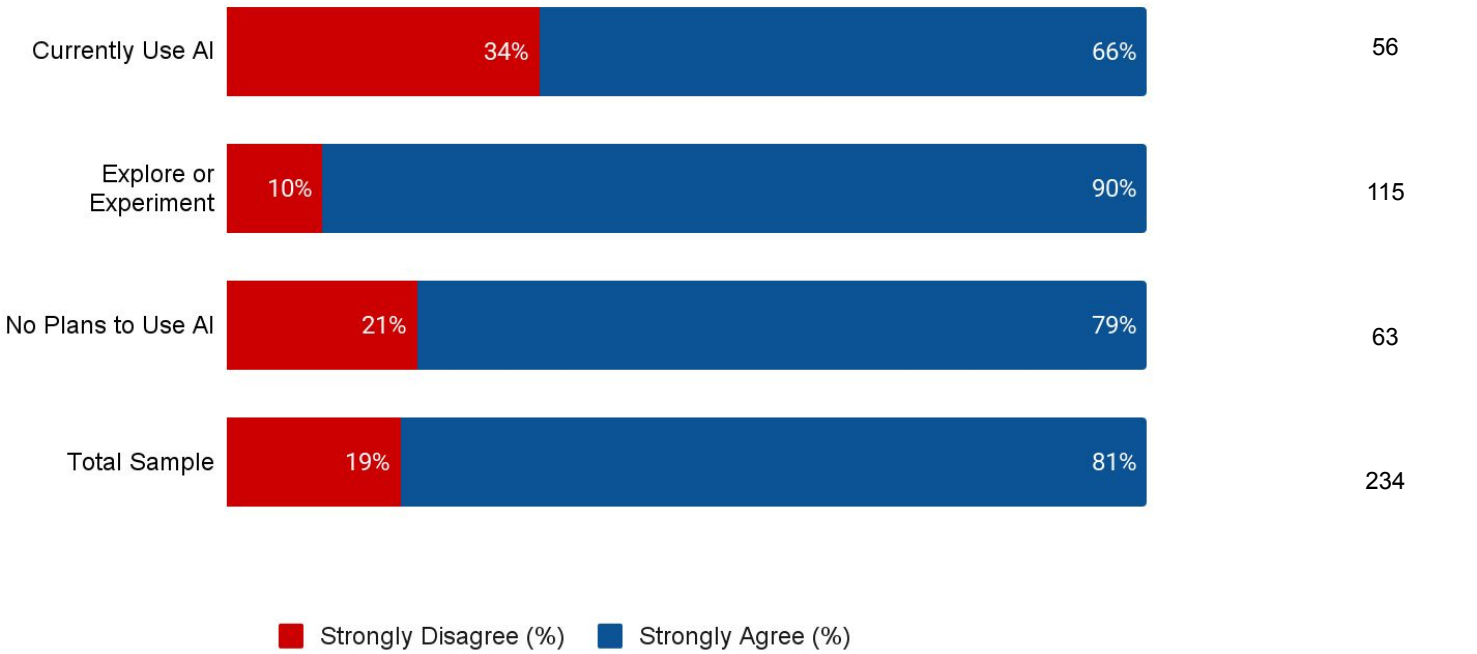
% of Business owners with strong opinions regarding the statement, "I see AI as a tool to assist me and/or my team, not replace me and/or them."



Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q36 -Now we want to understand how you feel about AI in the context of your business. For each of the following statements, tell us the extent to which you agree or disagree: I see AI as a tool to assist me and/or my team, not replace me and/or them.

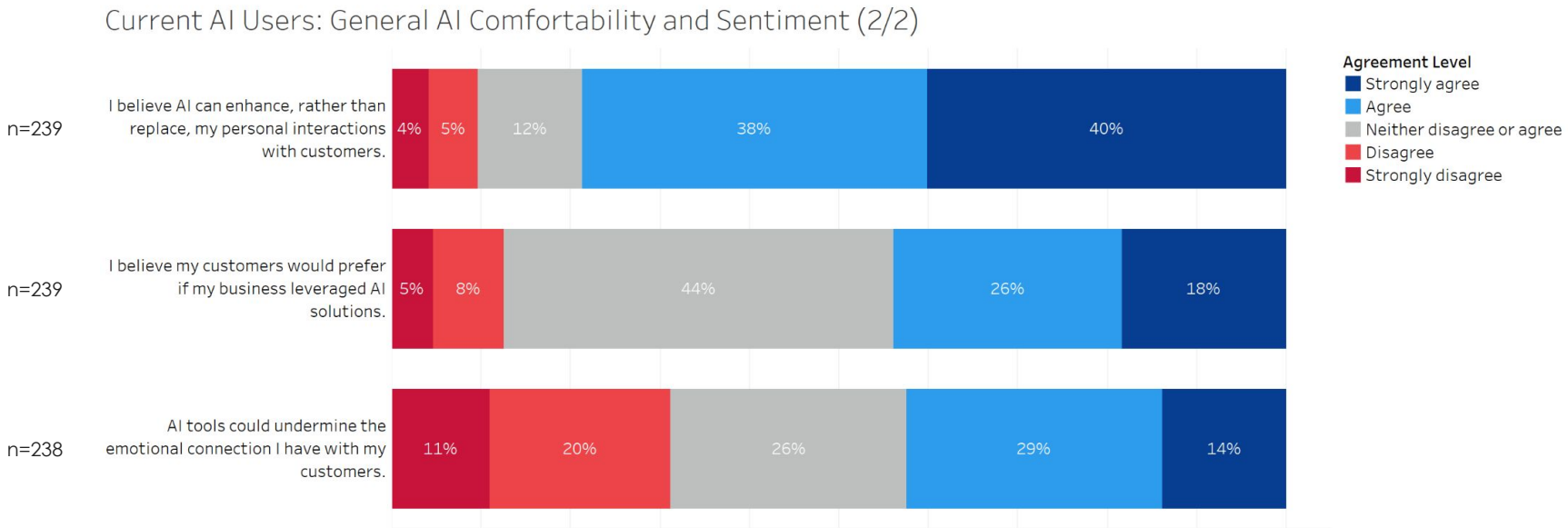
Business Owners Fear AI Could Undermine Customer Relationships

% of business owners with strong opinions regarding the statement, "I worry that using AI for customer-facing tasks could undermine the personal, high-touch service for which my business is known."



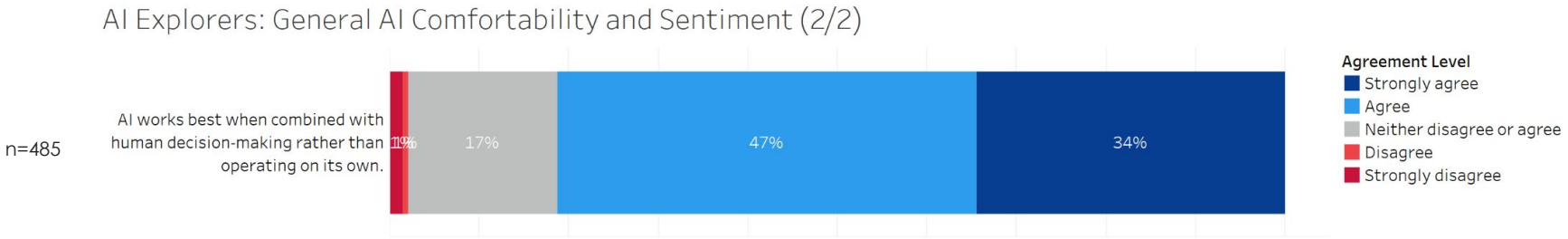
Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q39 -Tell us the he extent to which you agree with the following statements: I worry that using AI for customer-facing tasks could undermine the personal, high-touch service for which my business is known

Current AI Users See AI as a Way to Enhance Customer Relationships in Spite of Concerns



Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q40: Tell us the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements.

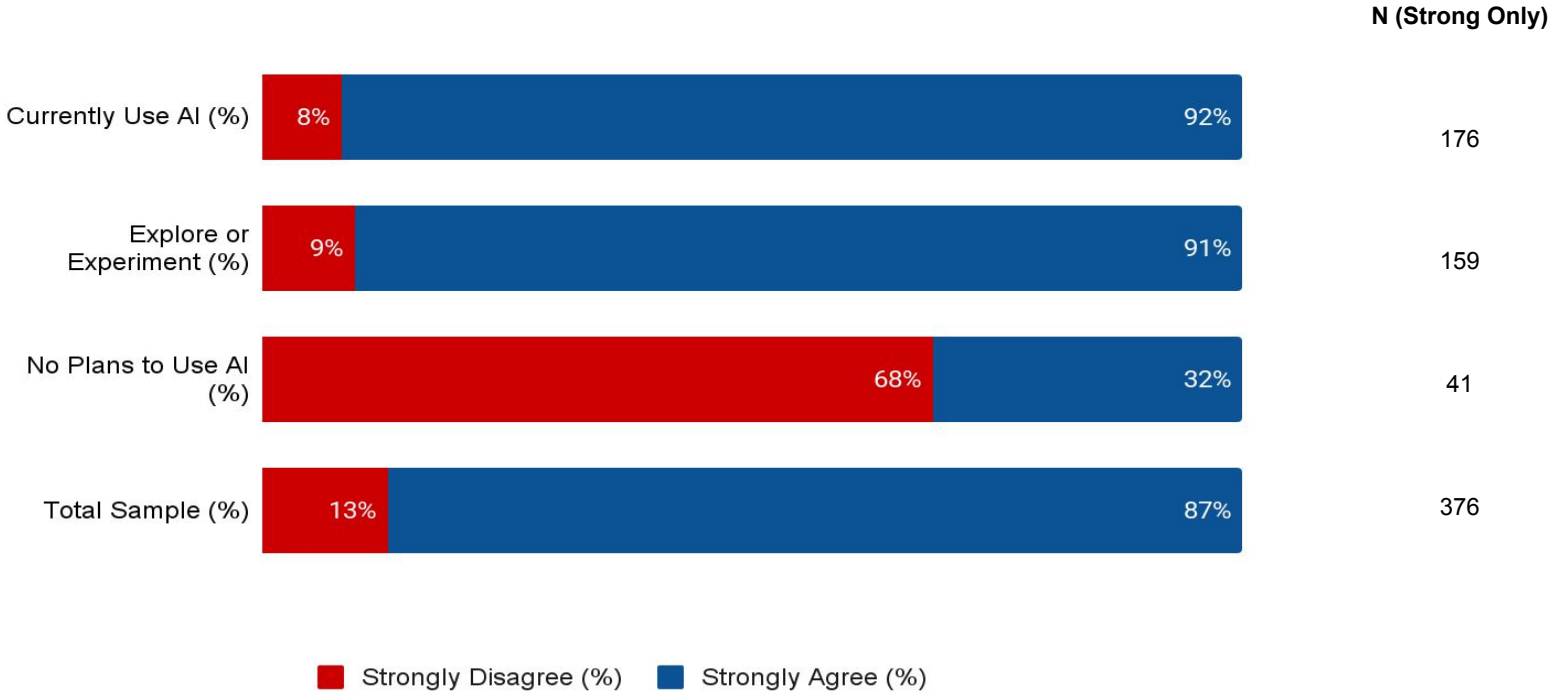
AI Explorers Prefer Human-Centric AI



Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q40: Tell us the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements.

Expected Value

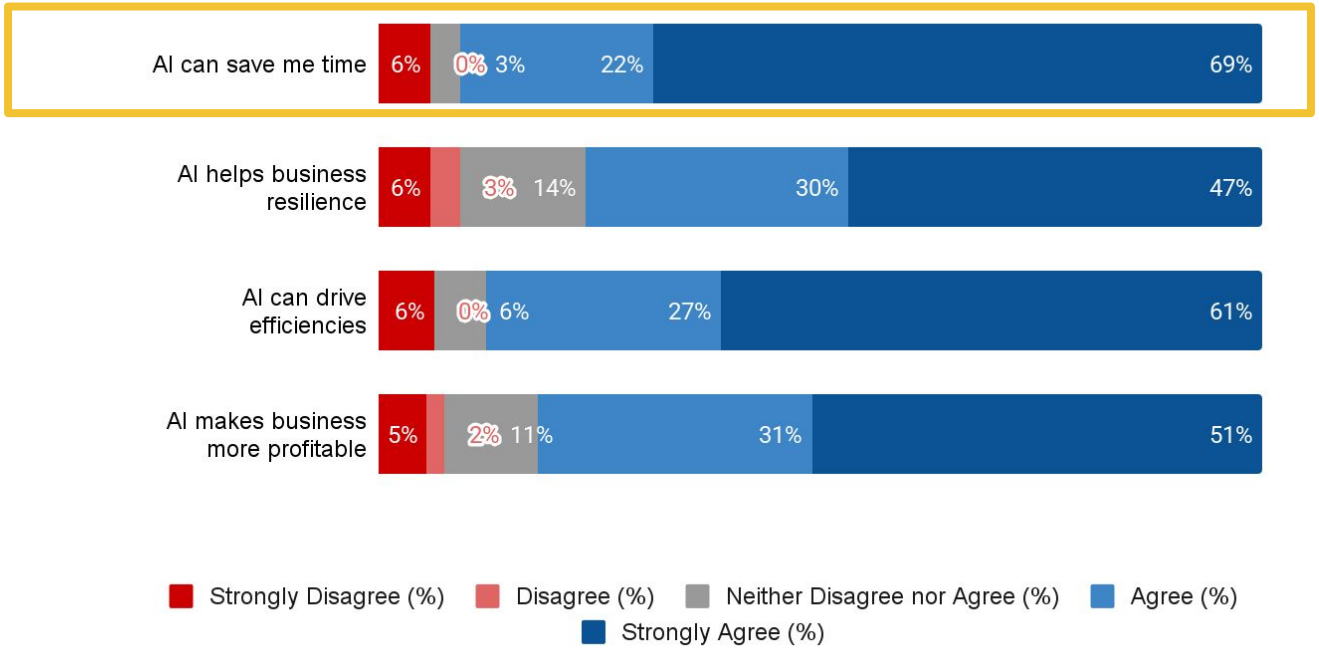
Saving Time is a Strong Value Proposition Among Current AI Users and AI Explorers



Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q16 - For each of the following statements, tell us the extent to which you agree or disagree: AI can save me time as a business owner.

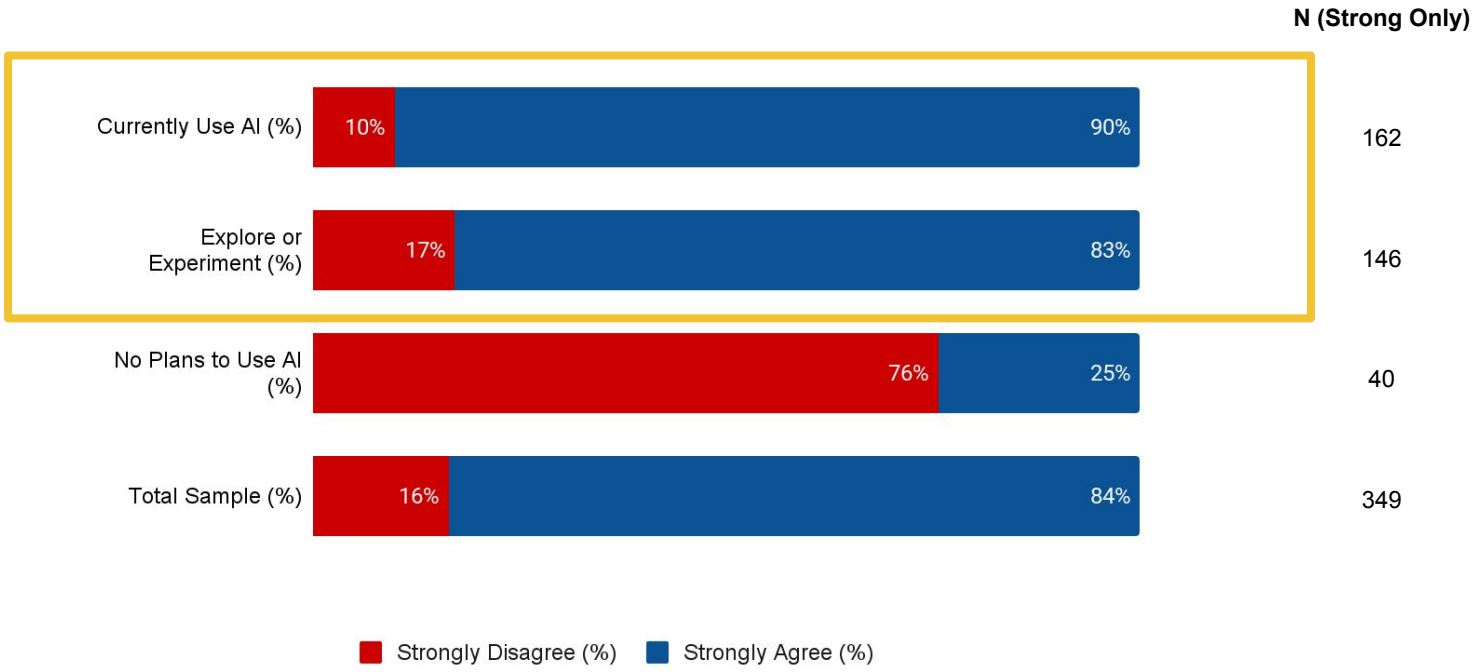
Saving Time is the Strongest Value Proposition Among Current AI Users

Current AI Users



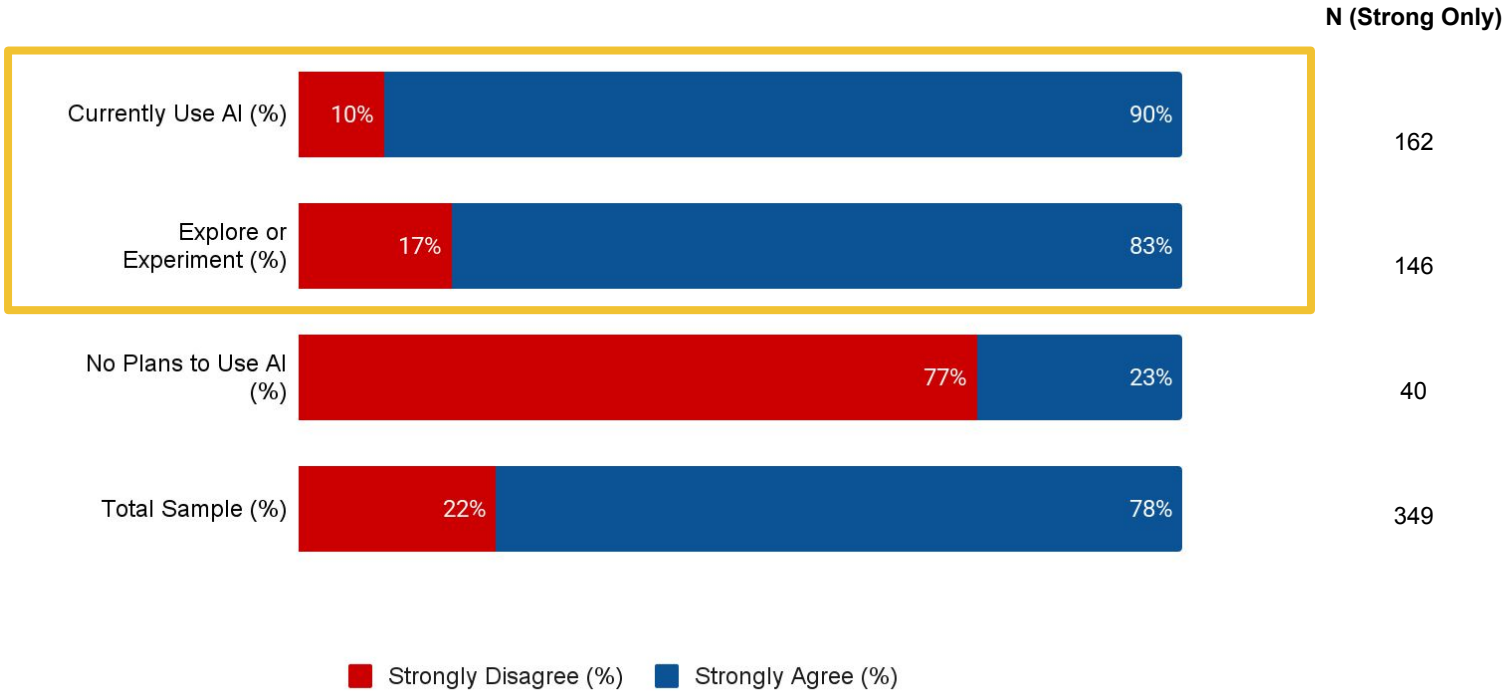
Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q16 - For each of the following statements, tell us the extent to which you agree or disagree: 1) I am excited about the possibilities AI offers. 2)AI can save me time as a business owner. 3)AI could help my business become more resilient during economic or operational challenges. 4) I believe AI can drive efficiencies in my business. 5) I believe AI can make my business more profitable, by either reducing expenses or increasing sales.

Current AI Users and AI Explorers Expect Efficiencies From AI in Their Businesses



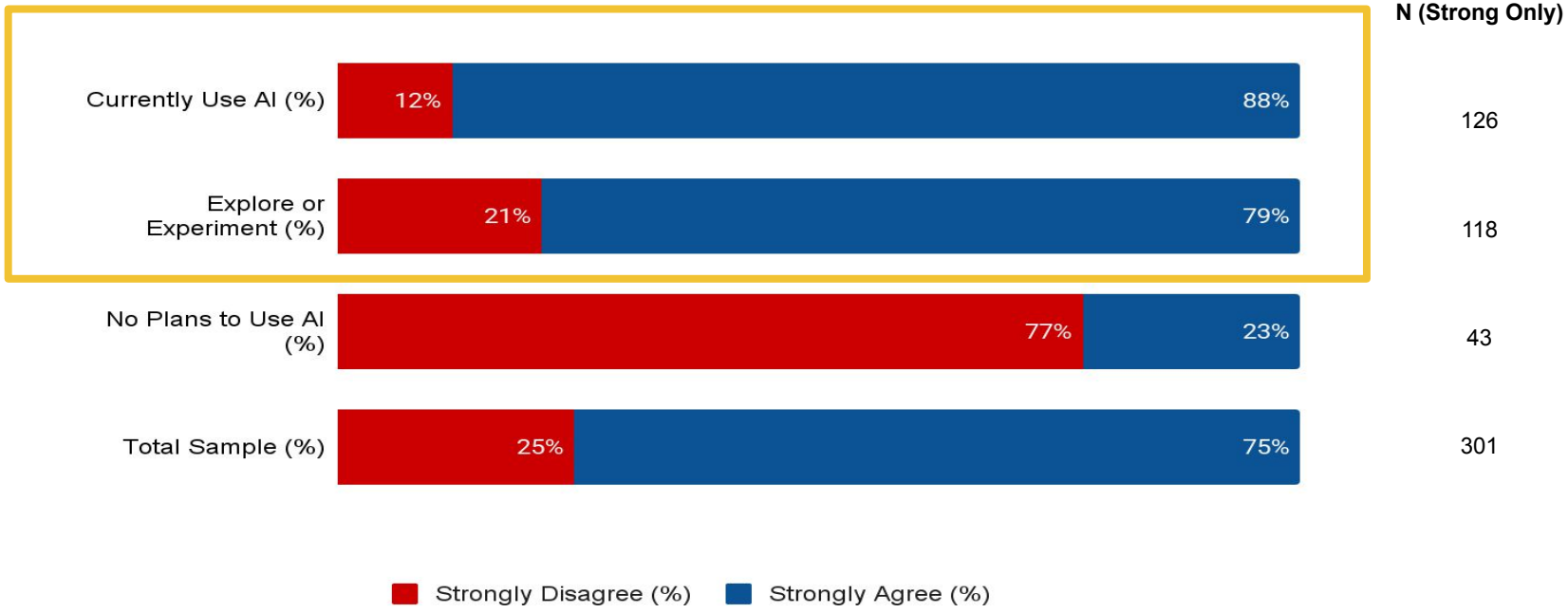
Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q16 - For each of the following statements, tell us the extent to which you agree or disagree: I believe AI can drive efficiencies in my business.

Current AI Users and AI Explorers Expect That AI Will Drive Profitability



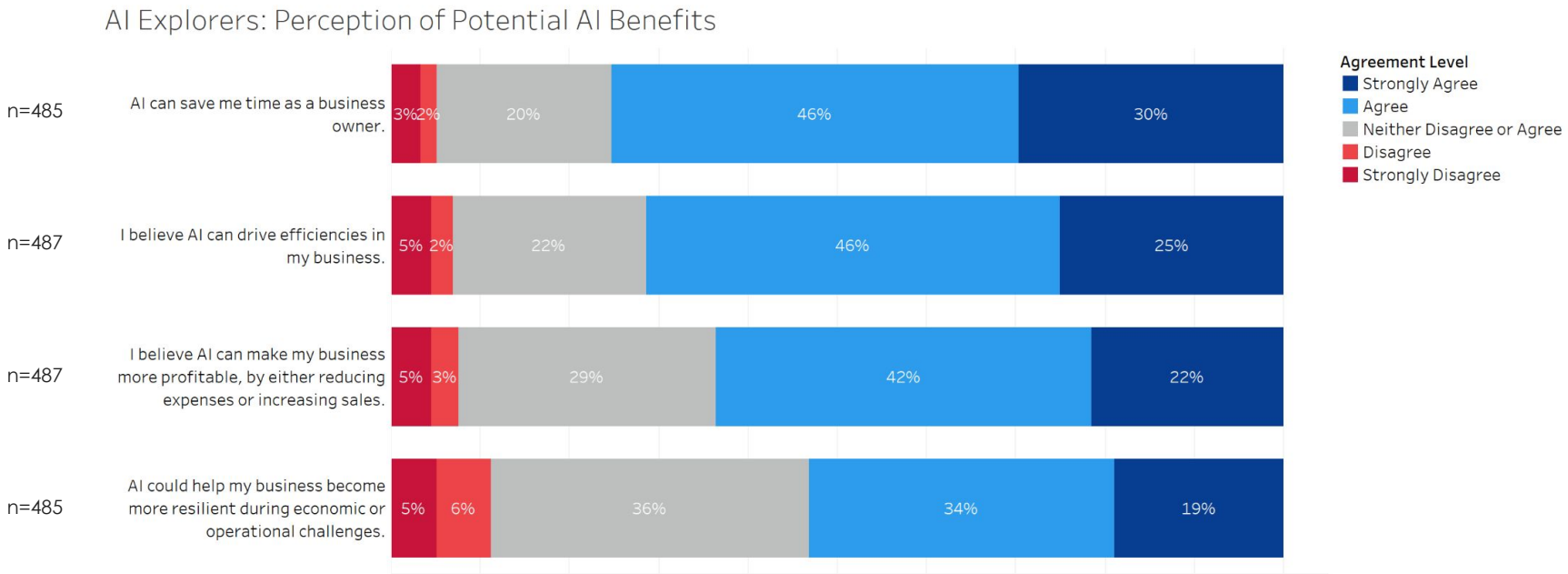
Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q16 - For each of the following statements, tell us the extent to which you agree or disagree:I believe AI can make my business more profitable, by either reducing expenses or increasing sales.

Current AI Users and AI Explorers Expect AI to Contribute to Resilience in the Face of Economic or Operational Challenges



Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q16 - For each of the following statements, tell us the extent to which you agree or disagree: AI could help my business become more resilient during economic or operational challenges.

AI Explorers Mostly Expect Value from AI for Their Businesses

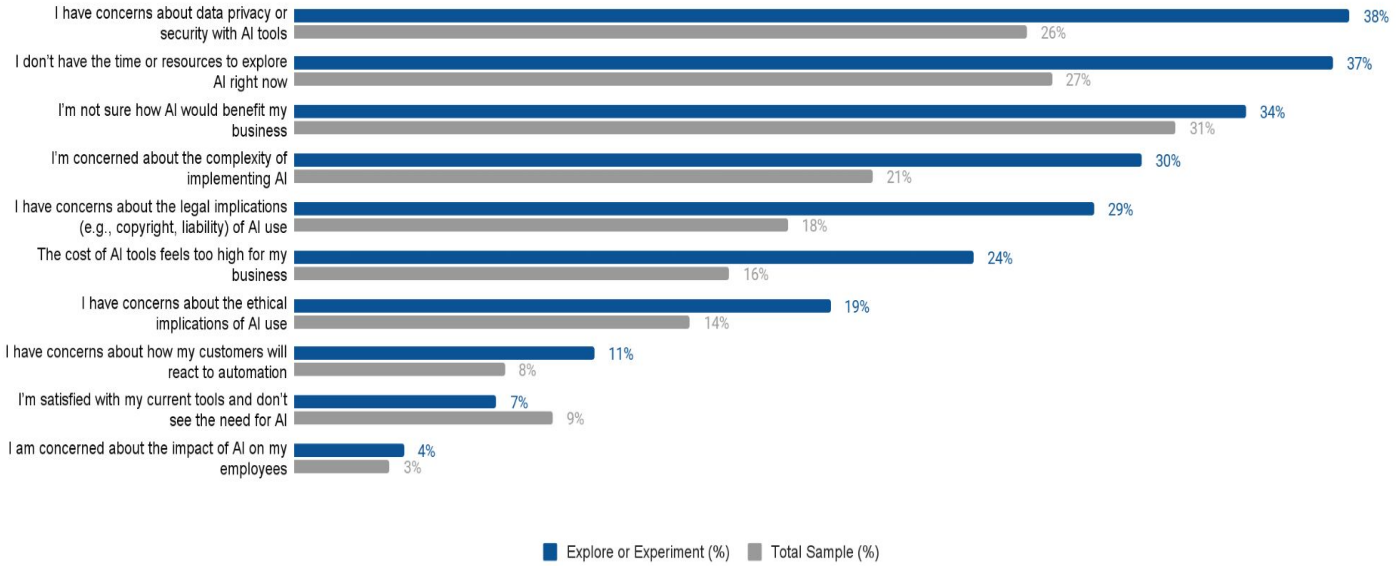


Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q16: For each of the following statements, tell us the extent to which you agree or disagree.

AI Explorers Worry About Data Privacy/Security and Lack Bandwidth to Figure Out Use Cases

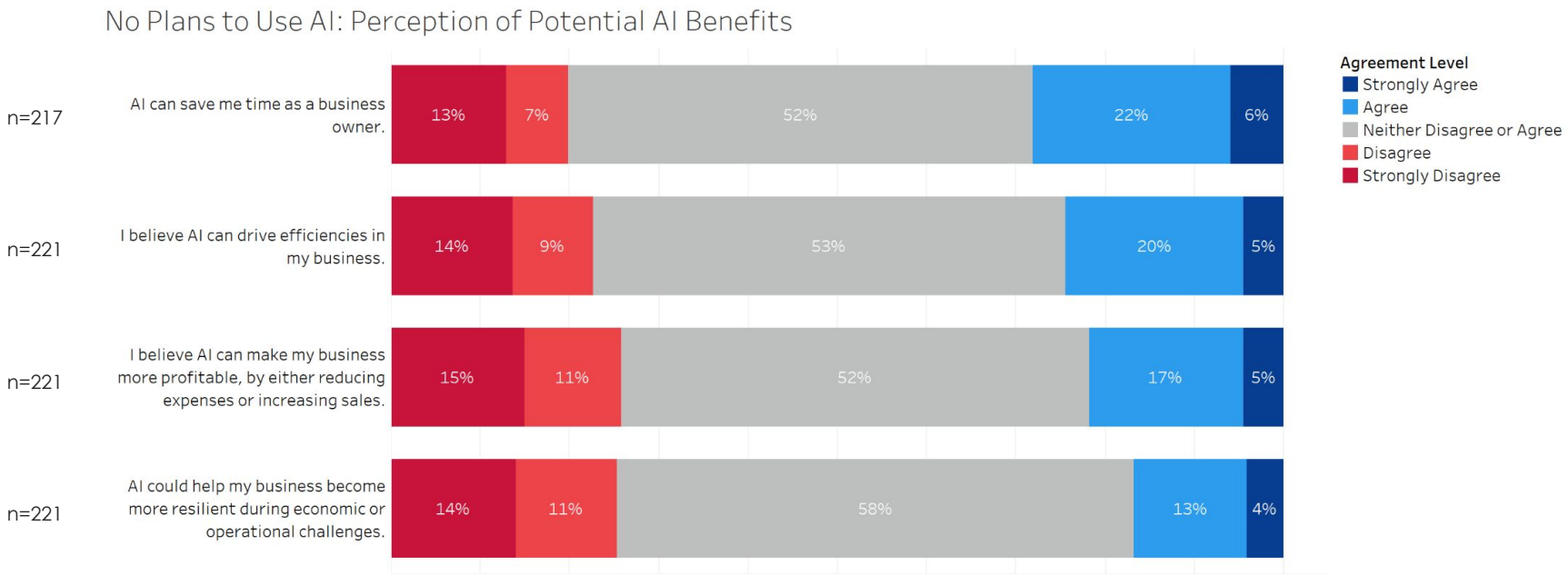
% of Business Owners who Selected as Top 3 Reasons Not to Use AI

Exploring or Experimenting



Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q18 - What are the three main reasons your business is not currently using AI tools? (Select top 3)

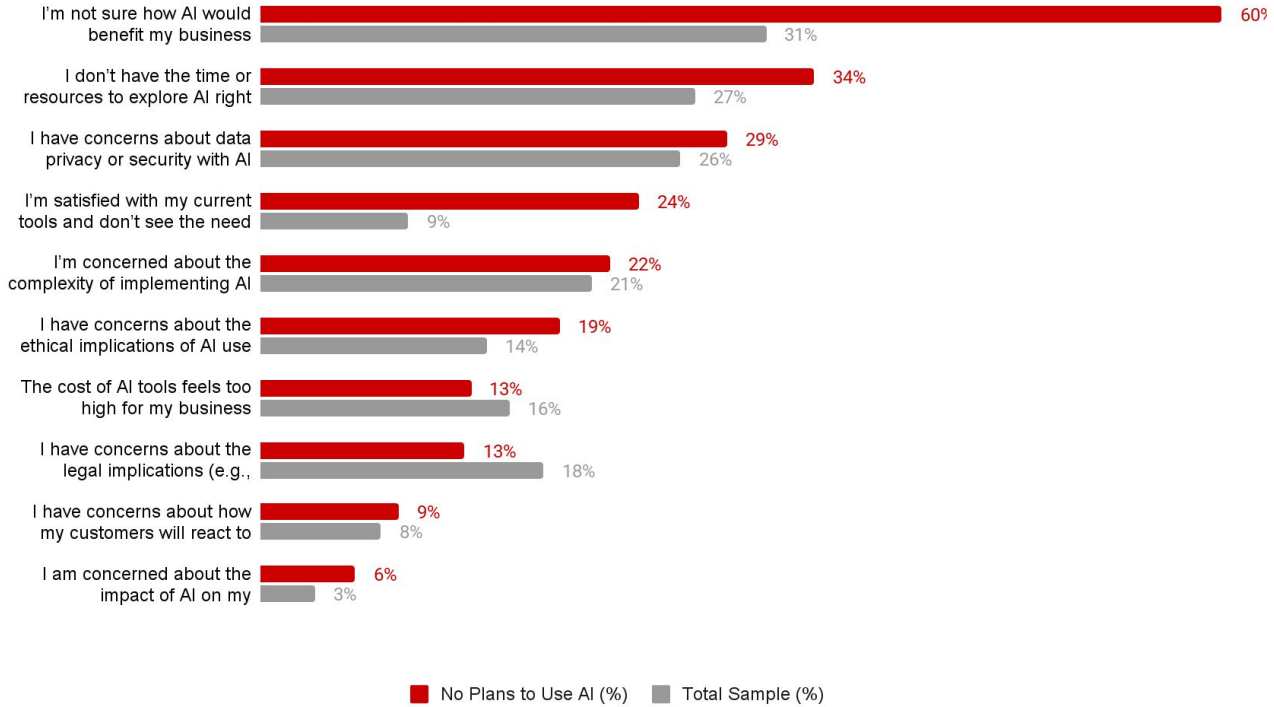
Non-Users Are a Mix of Unaware or Skeptical About the Value From AI



Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q16: For each of the following statements, tell us the extent to which you agree or disagree.

Non-Users Don’t See Value From AI

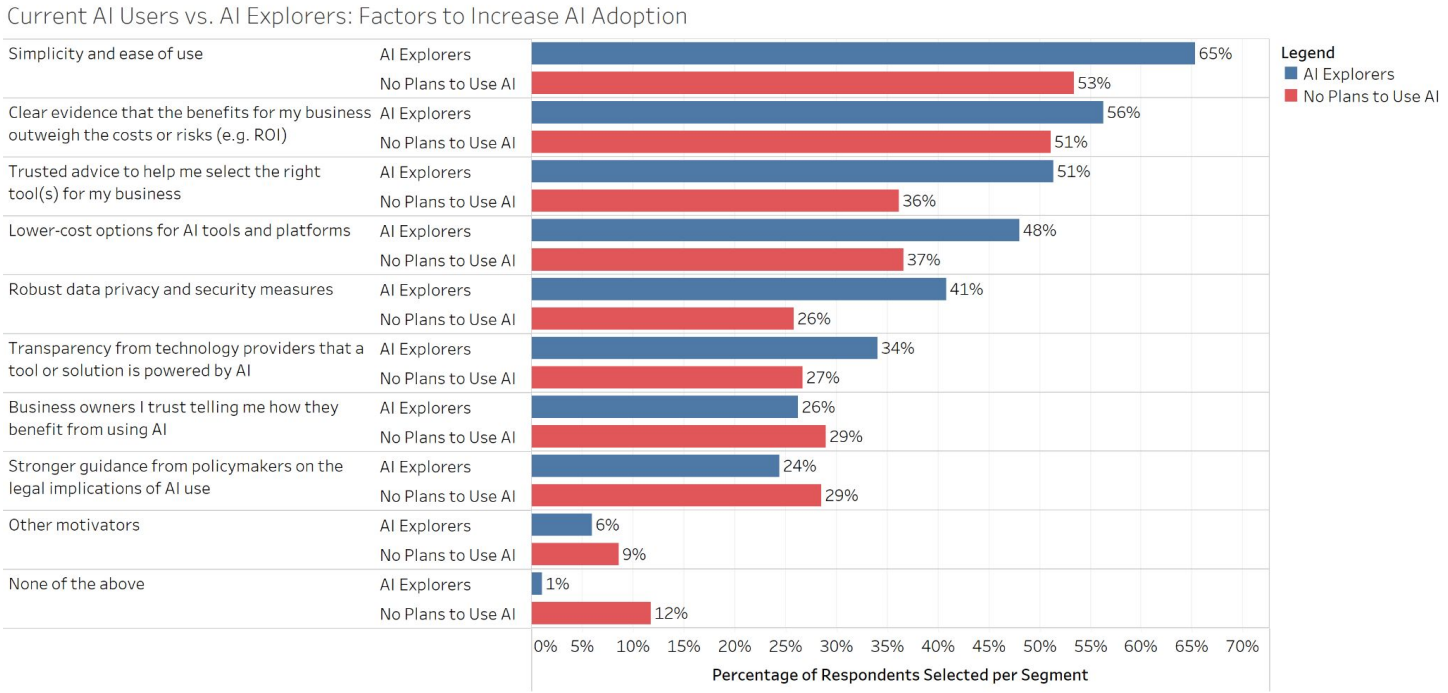
% who Selected as a Top 3 Reason Not to Use AI



Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q18 - What are the three main reasons your business is not currently using AI tools? (Select top 3)

Drivers and Barriers to Adoption

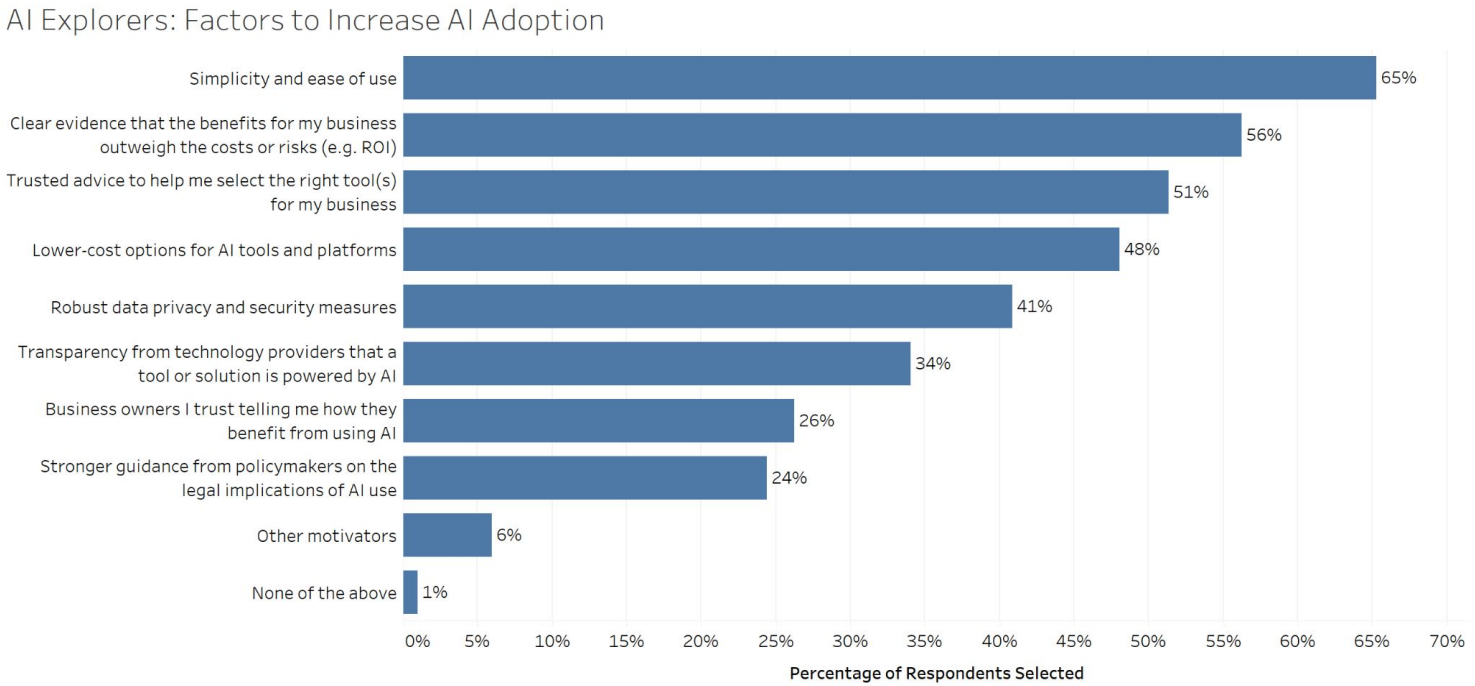
Both AI Explorers and Non-Users Respond Most to Ease of Use and Clear Proof of Value



n=708

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q19: What might make you more likely to adopt AI solutions? (Select all that apply)

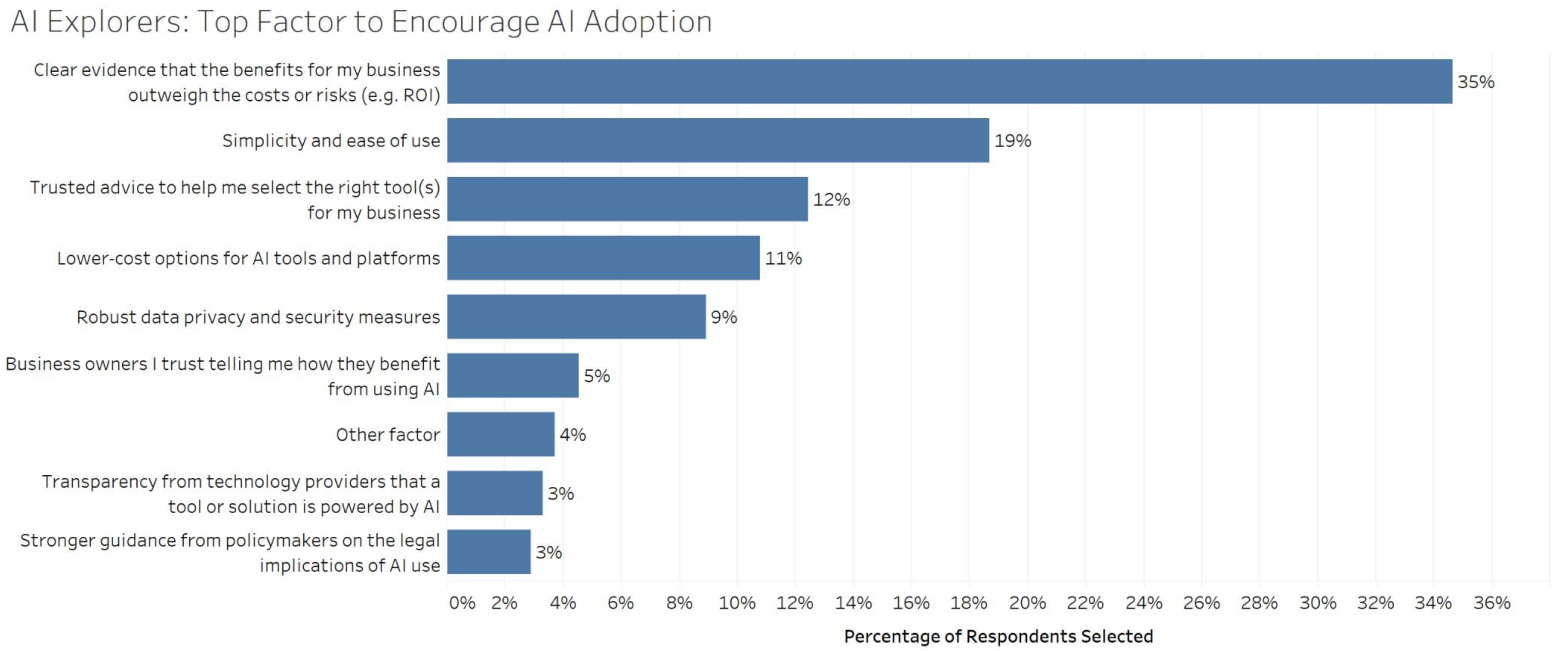
Ease of Use, Proof of Business Value, and Trusted Advice are Primary Adoption Drivers for AI Explorers



n=487

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q19: What might make you more likely to adopt AI solutions? (Select all that apply)

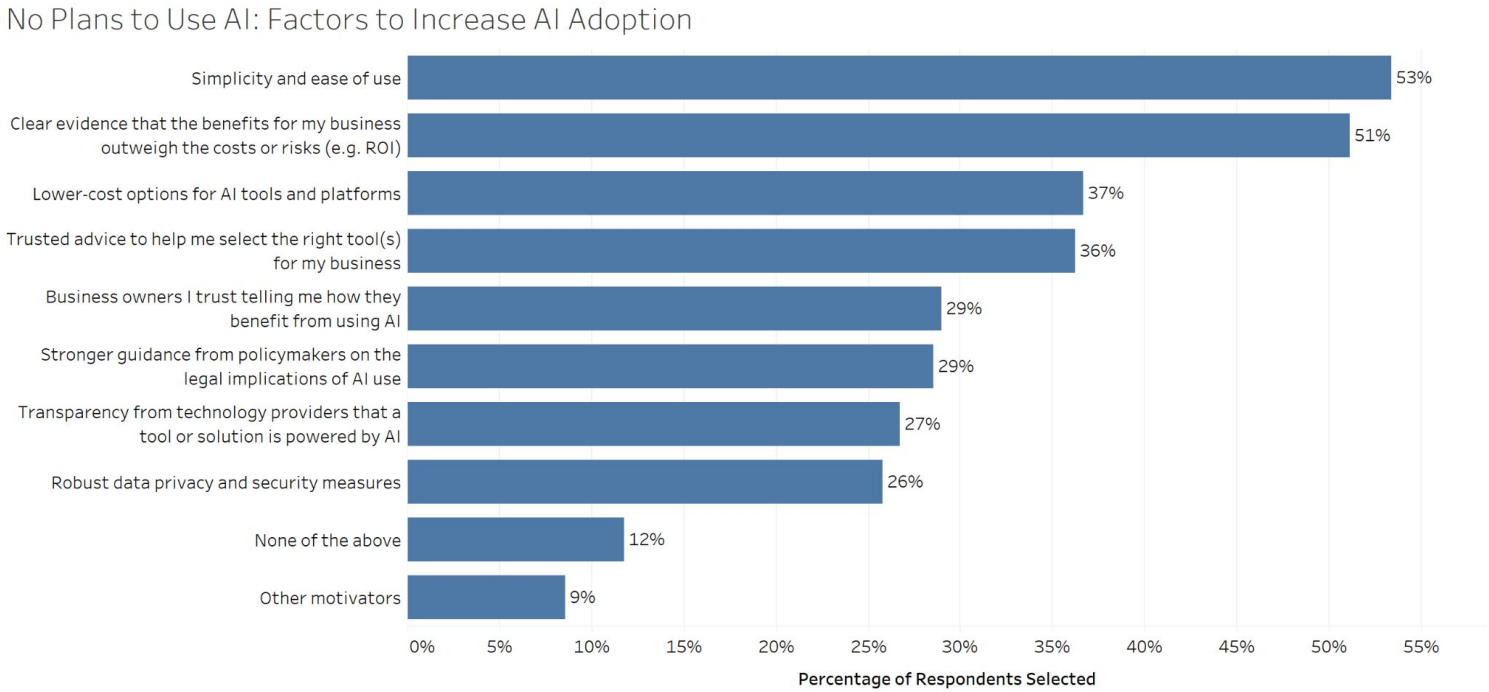
Proven Business Value Is the Top Driver for AI Adoption Among AI Explorers



n=482

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q20: What is the **one** factor that would encourage you to adopt AI solutions?

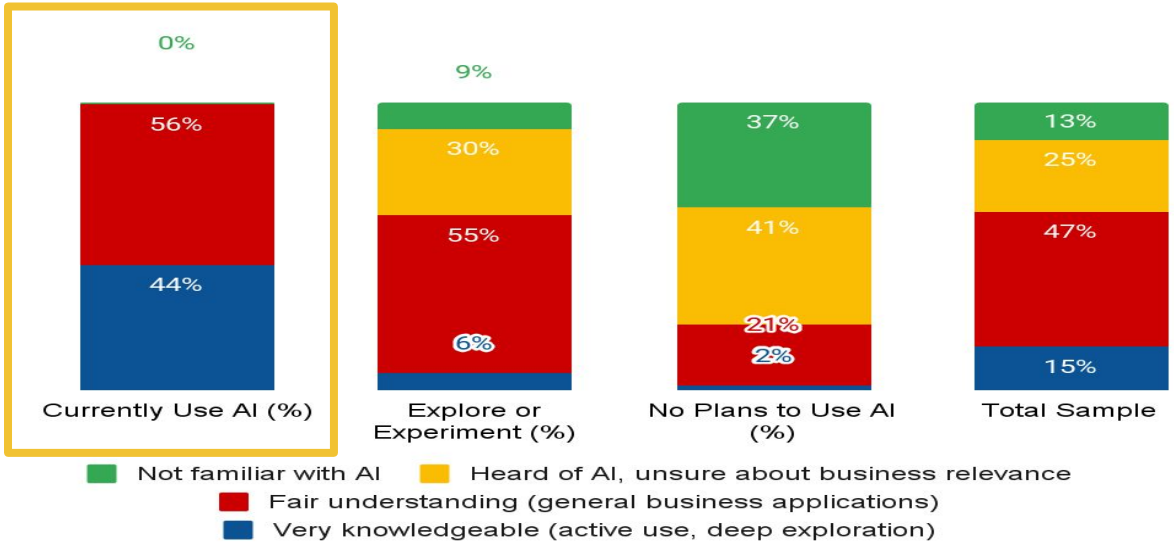
Ease of Use and Proof of Business Value Could Nudge Non-Users



n=221

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q19: What might make you more likely to adopt AI solutions? (Select all that apply)

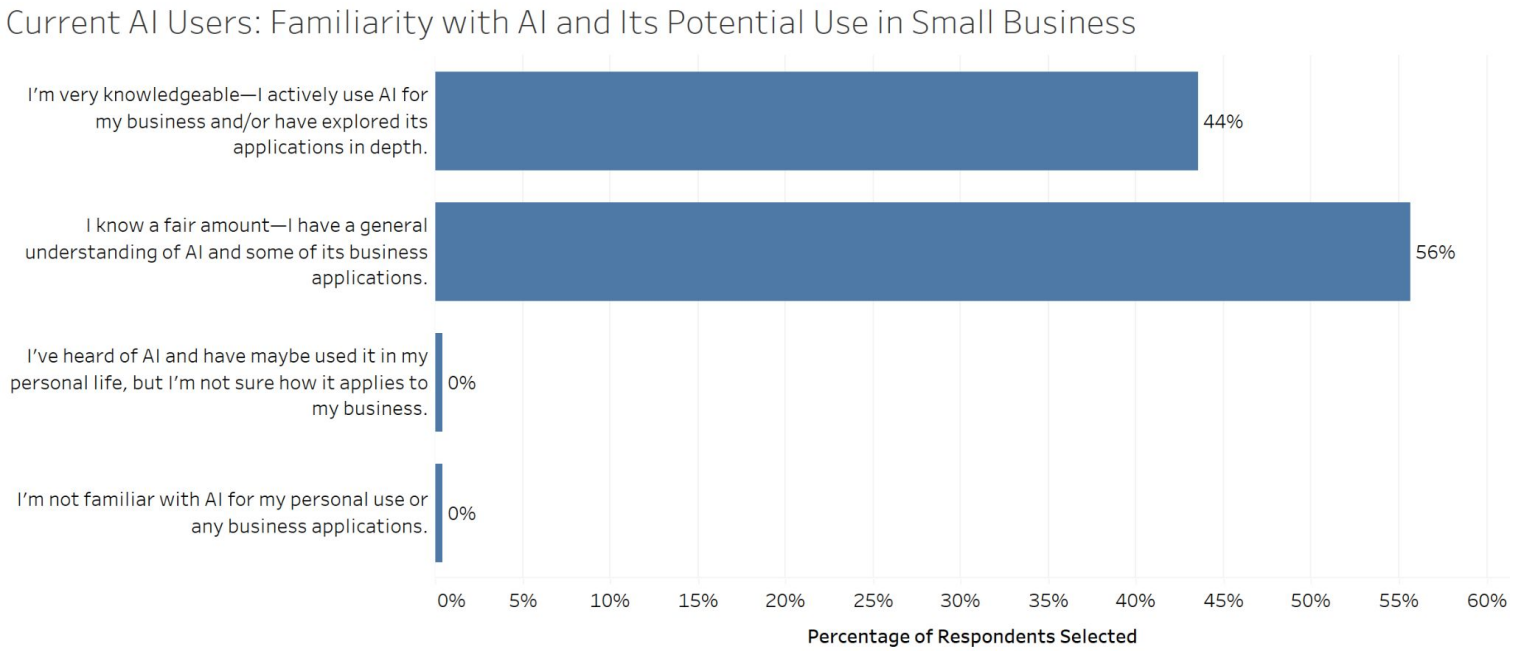
Current AI Users Do Not Necessarily Require Deep AI Knowledge



N	239	487	221	947

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q15: How would you describe your familiarity with artificial intelligence (AI) and its potential use in businesses like yours?

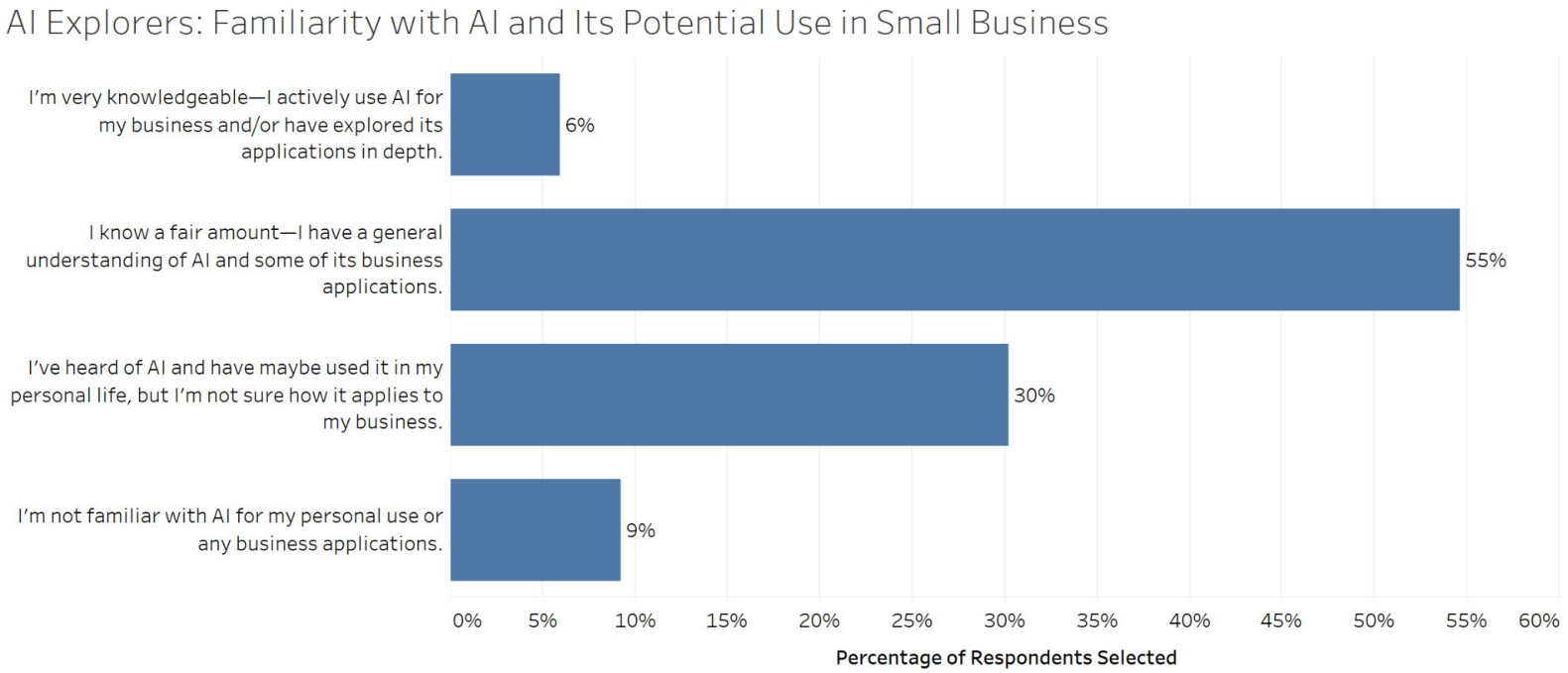
Current AI Users Report at Least a General Understanding of AI and Some Business Applications



n=239

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q15: How would you describe your familiarity with artificial intelligence (AI) and its potential use in businesses like yours?

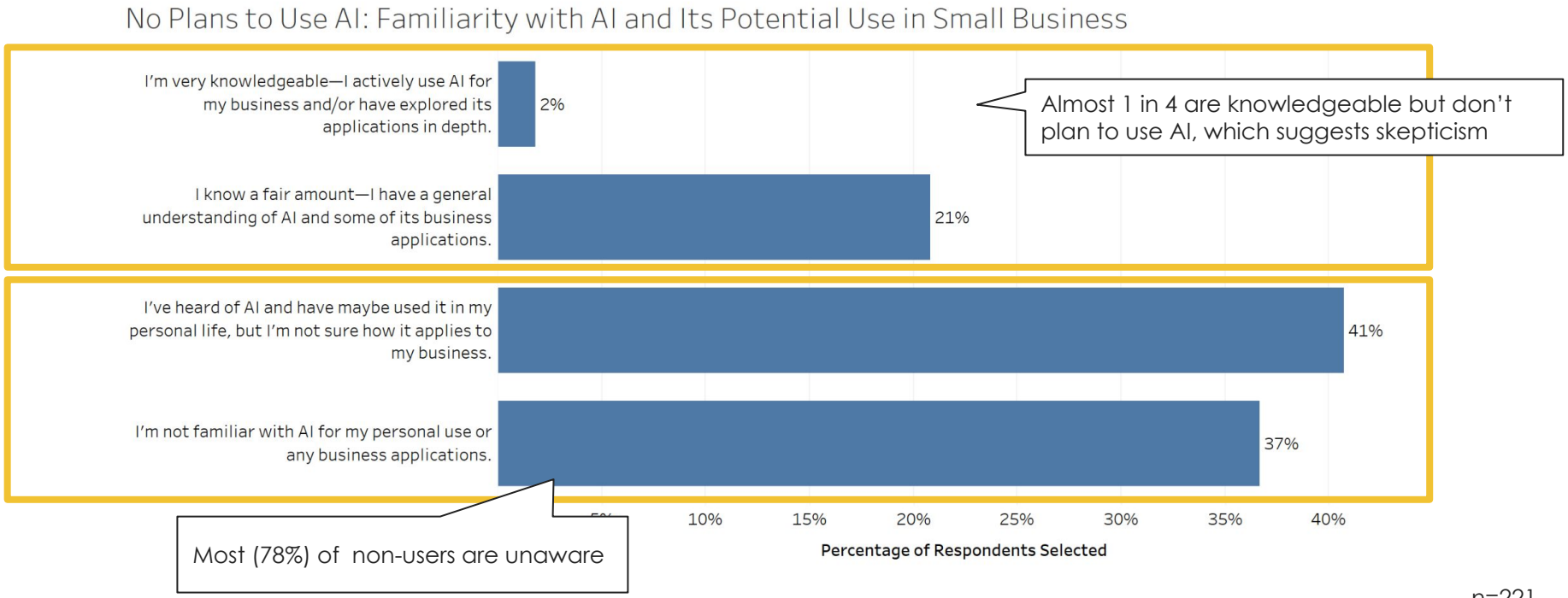
Most AI Explorers Have Basic AI Awareness, but Depth Is Limited



n=487

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q15: How would you describe your familiarity with artificial intelligence (AI) and its potential use in businesses like yours?

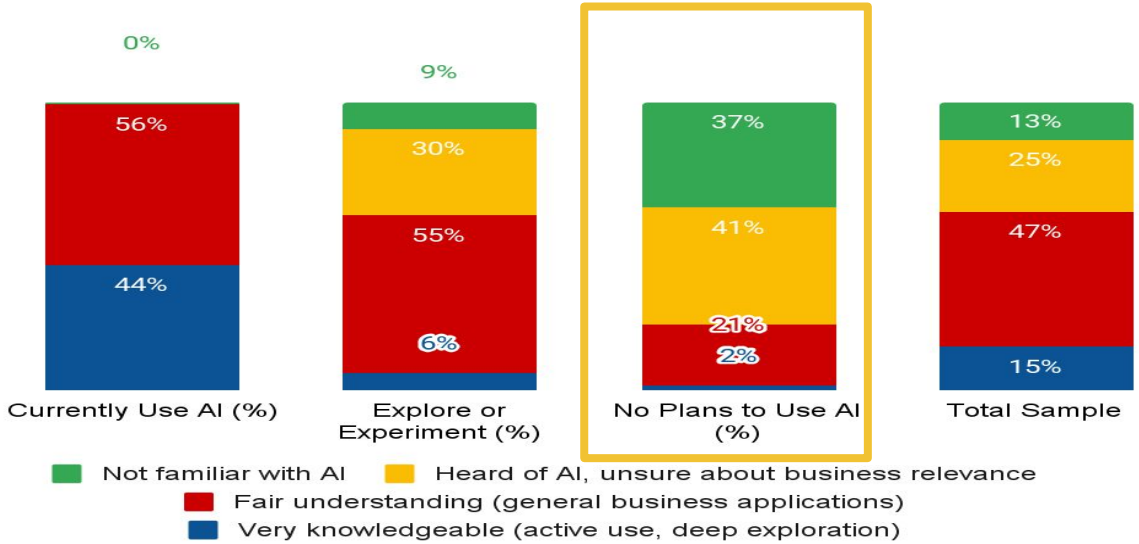
Non-Users are Mostly Unaware with Some Skeptics



n=221

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q15: How would you describe your familiarity with artificial intelligence (AI) and its potential use in businesses like yours?

Almost 1 in 4 Non-Users Has at Least a Solid Understanding of AI, Suggesting Reservations vs. Lack of Understanding



N	239	487	221	947

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q15: How would you describe your familiarity with artificial intelligence (AI) and its potential use in businesses like yours?

Some Barriers Span Segments Suggesting Priorities to Unlock Adoption

	Explore or Experiment (%)	No Plans to Use AI (%)	Total Sample (%)
I'm not sure how AI would benefit my business	34%	60%	31%
The cost of AI tools feels too high for my business	24%	13%	16%
I don't have the time or resources to explore AI right now	37%	34%	27%
I'm concerned about the complexity of implementing AI	30%	22%	21%
I am concerned about the impact of AI on my employees	4%	6%	3%
I'm satisfied with my current tools and don't see the need for AI	7%	24%	9%
I have concerns about how my customers will react to automation	11%	9%	8%
I have concerns about data privacy or security with AI tools	38%	29%	26%
I have concerns about the ethical implications of AI use	19%	19%	14%
I have concerns about the legal implications (e.g., copyright, liability) of AI use	29%	13%	18%

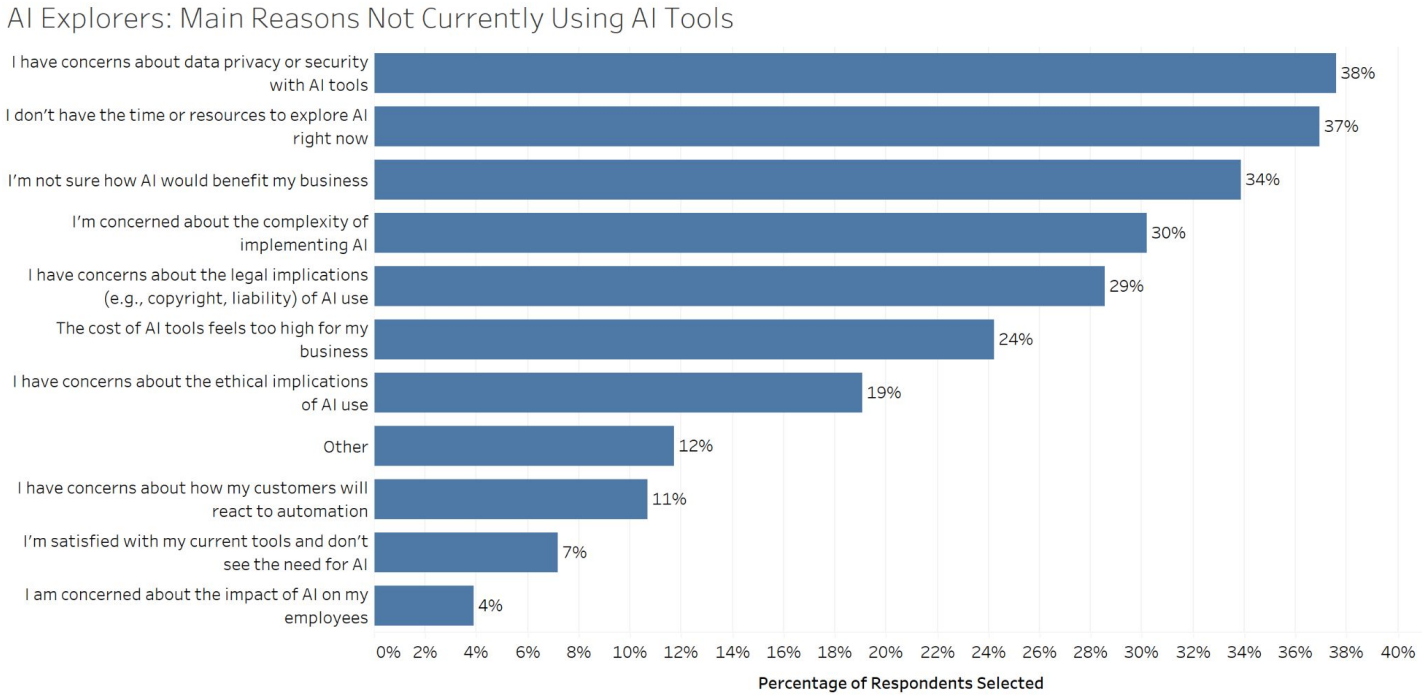
Clear use cases and value propositions would drive adoption

Low risk entry points and ease of use would drive adoption

Solving for data privacy and security concerns would drive adoption

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q18 - What are the three main reasons your business is not currently using AI tools? (Select top 3)

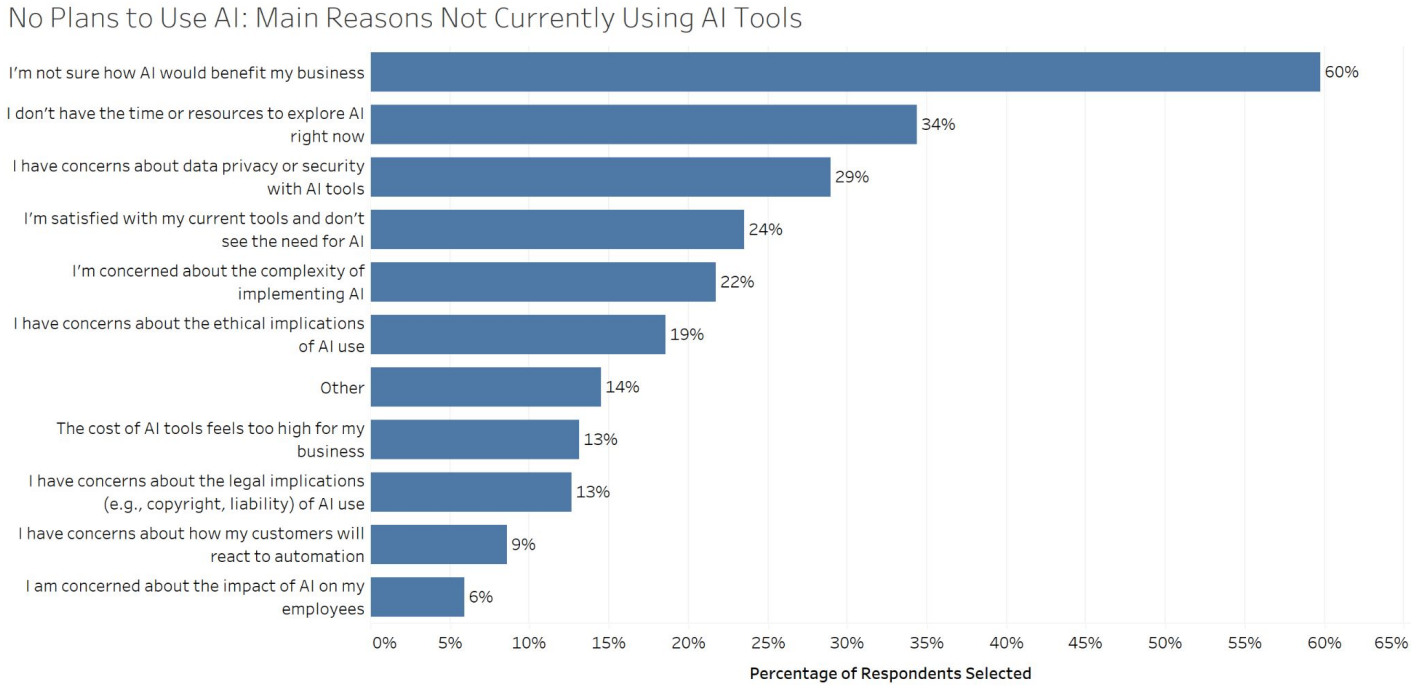
Privacy, Bandwidth, and Uncertain Value Proposition Top Barriers to Adoption for AI Explorers



n=487

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q18: What are the three main reasons your business is not currently using AI tools? (Select top 3)

Lack of Awareness or Understanding of Potential AI Benefits Is the Primary Barrier to Adoption for Non-Users

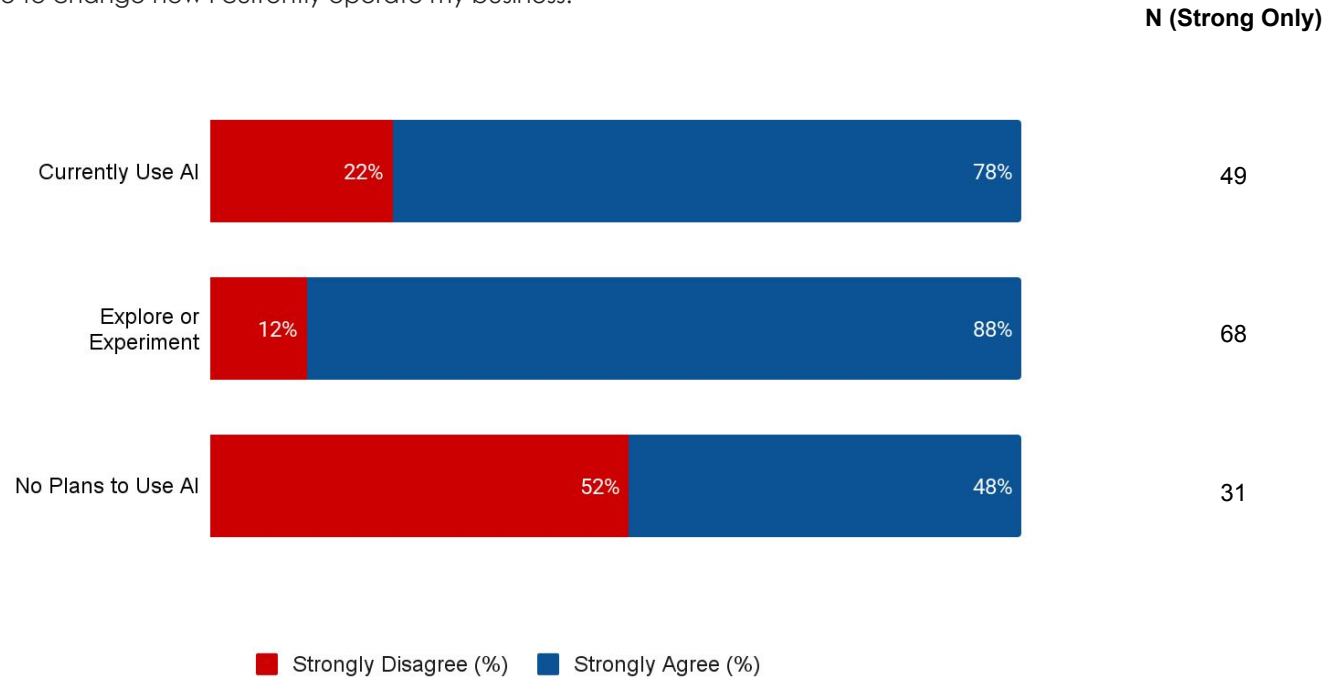


n=221

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q18: What are the three main reasons your business is not currently using AI tools? (Select top 3)

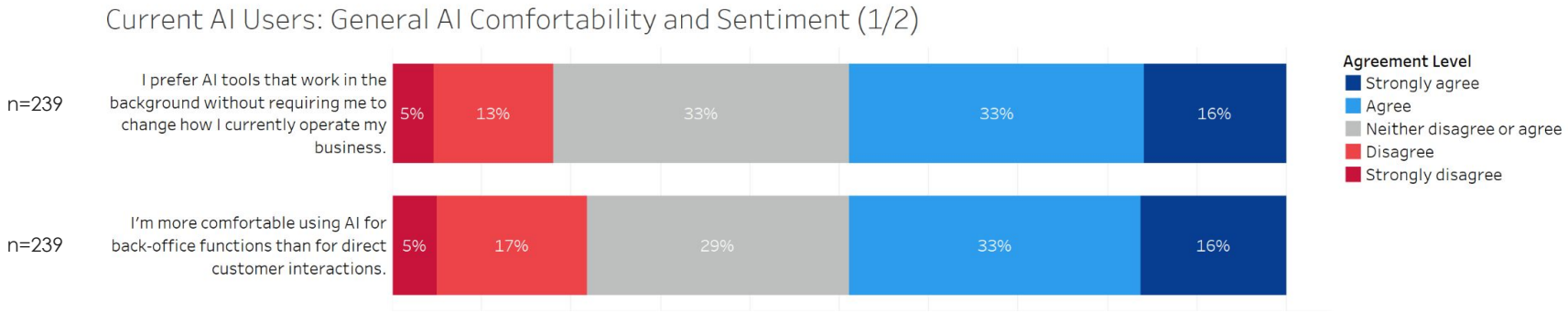
Business Owners May Fear Changes to Operations from AI

% of business owners with strong opinions regarding the statement, "I prefer AI tools that work in the background without requiring me to change how I currently operate my business."



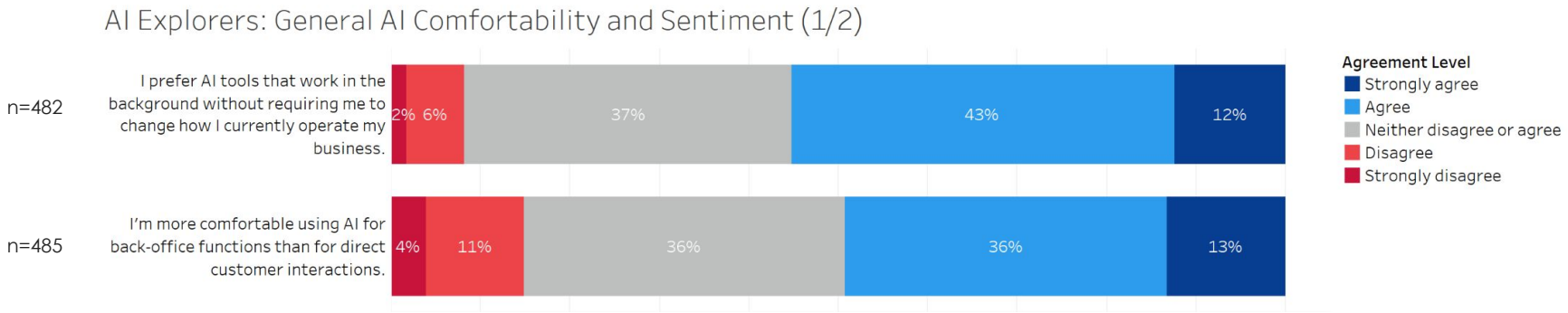
Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q39 -Tell us the he extent to which you agree with the following statements: I prefer AI tools that work in the background without requiring me to change how I currently operate my business.

Users Generally Prefer AI Behind the Scenes, Not at the Front Lines of Their Businesses



Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q39: Tell us the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements.

AI Explorers Prefer AI Behind the Scenes, Not at the Frontlines of Their Businesses



Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q39: Tell us the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements.

All Business Owners Want Practical Training; Financial Considerations Especially Important for Current AI Users

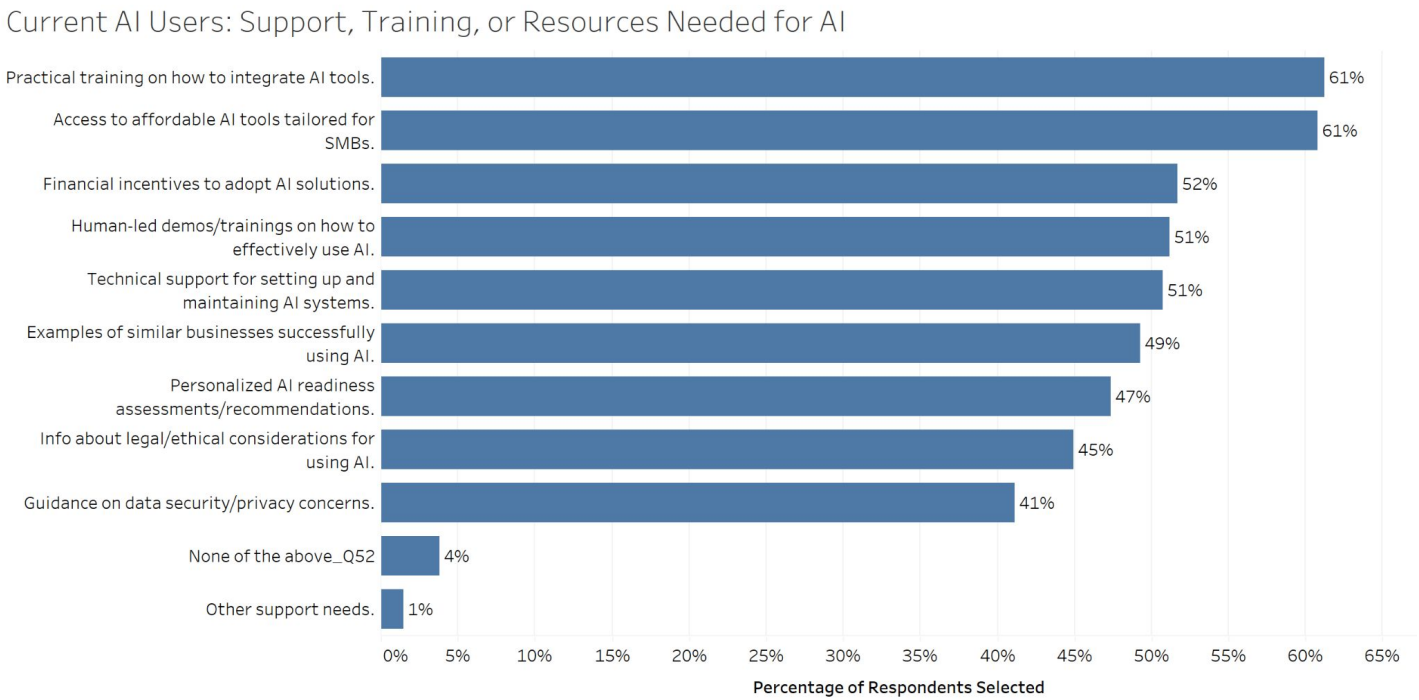
Top choices for support, training or resources

Priority	Current AI Users	AI Explorers	No Plans to Use AI
1	Practical training on how to integrate AI tools	Practical training on how to integrate AI tools	Practical training on how to integrate AI tools
2	Access to affordable AI tools tailored for SMBs	Access to affordable AI tools tailored for SMBs	Technical support for setting up and maintaining AI systems
3	Financial incentives to adopt AI solutions	Technical support for setting up and maintaining AI systems	Human-led demos/trainings on how to effectively use AI
4	Human-led demos/trainings on how to effectively use AI	Financial incentives to adopt AI solutions	Financial incentives to adopt AI solutions
5	Technical support for setting up and maintaining AI systems	Human-led demos/trainings on how to effectively use AI	Access to affordable AI tools tailored for SMBs

n=819

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q52: What kinds of support, training, or resources, if any, would you want to have available for AI? (Select all that apply)

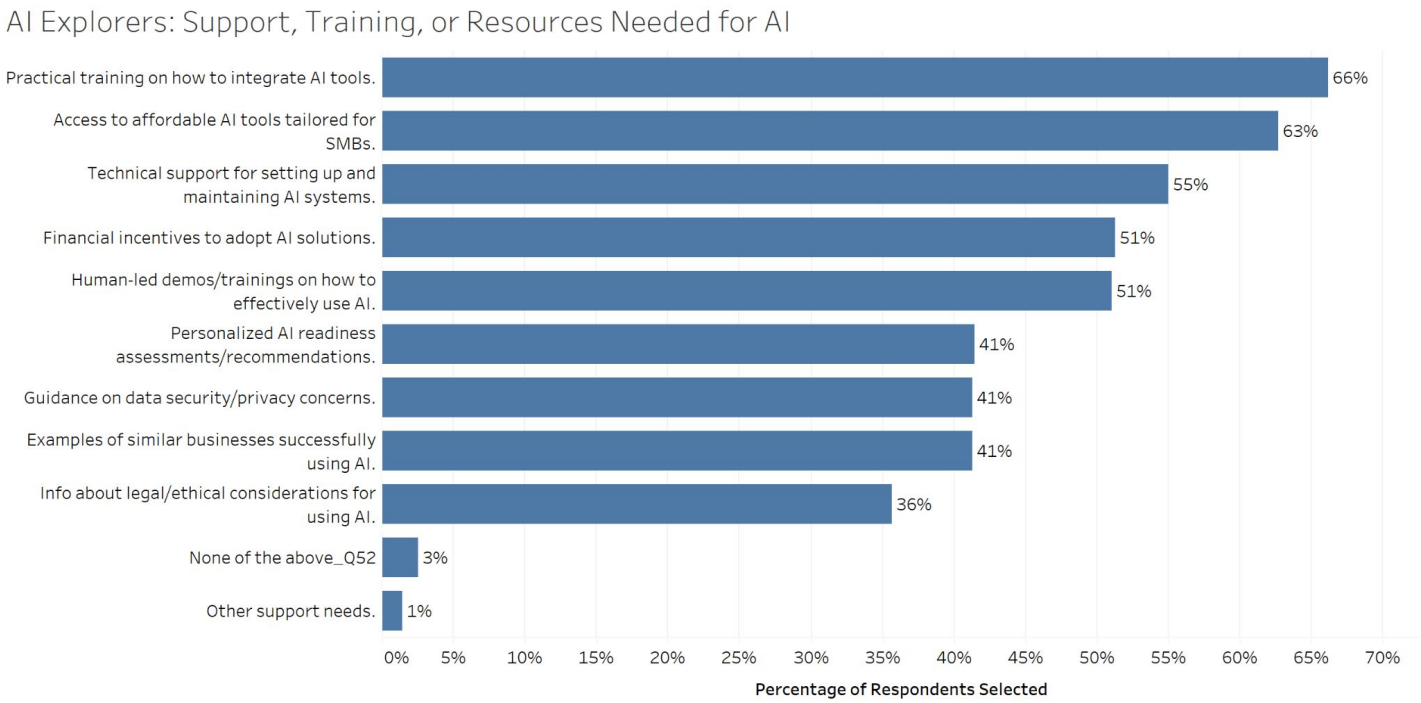
Training and Affordability Are Top Support Needs for Current AI Users



n=209

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q52: What kinds of support, training, or resources, if any, would you want to have available for AI? (Select all that apply)

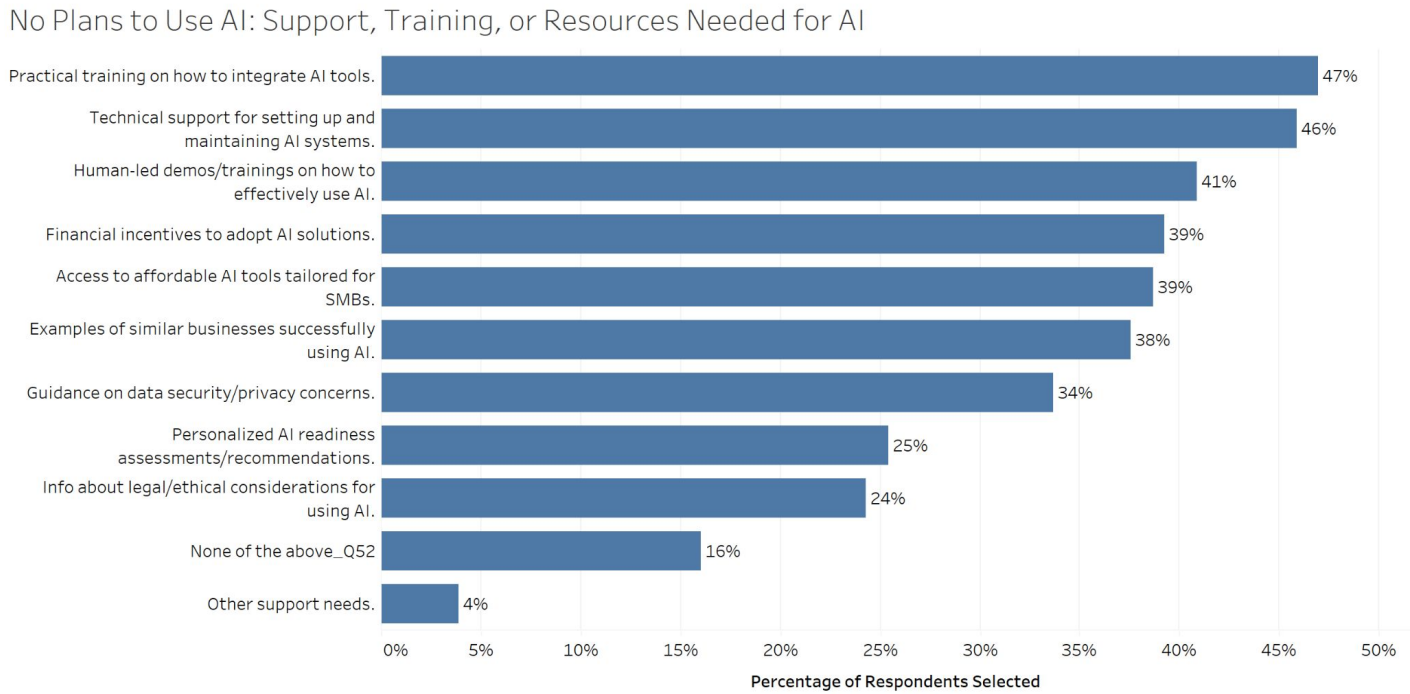
Training, Affordable, Tailored Tools, and Technical Support Could Unlock AI Adoption for AI Explorers



n=429

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q52: What kinds of support, training, or resources, if any, would you want to have available for AI? (Select all that apply)

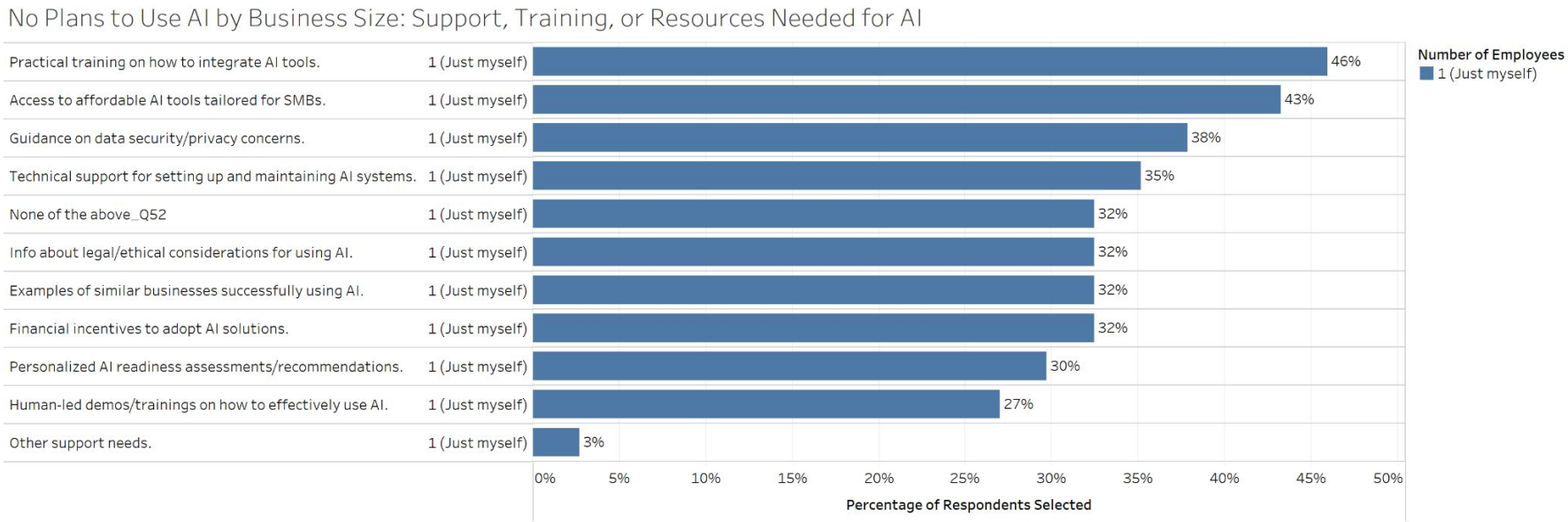
Training and Technical Support are Important to Unlock AI Adoption Among Non-Users



n=181

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q52: What kinds of support, training, or resources, if any, would you want to have available for AI? (Select all that apply)

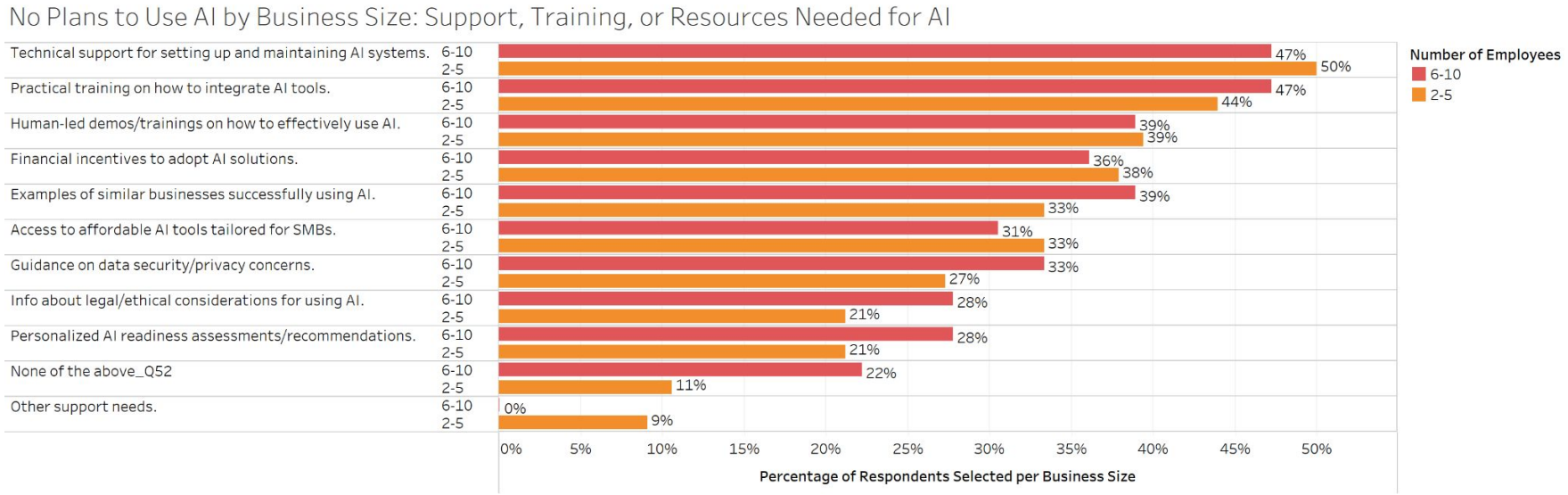
Solopreneur Non-Users Need Practical Training Support to Get Started With AI Tools



n=37

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q52: What kinds of support, training, or resources, if any, would you want to have available for AI? (Select all that apply)

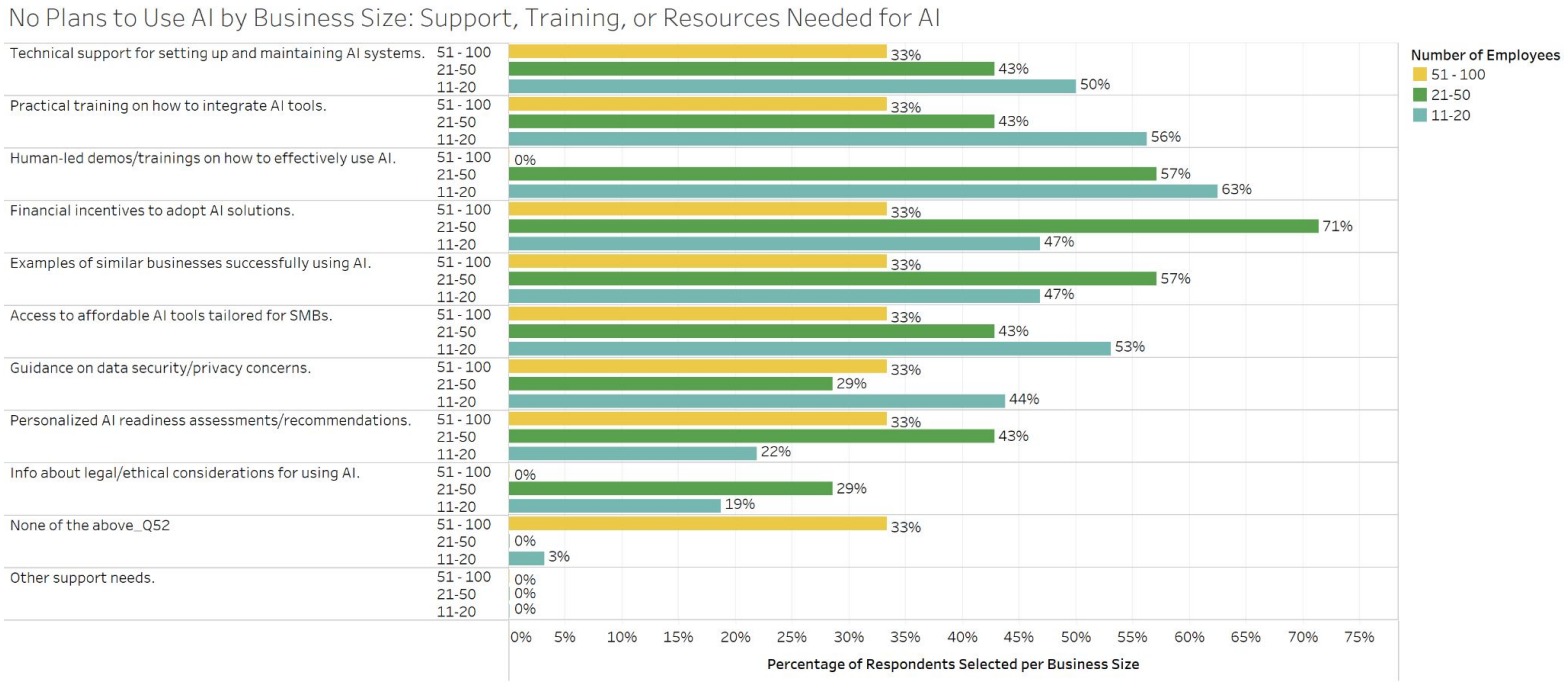
Microbusiness (2-10) Non-Users Need Technical Support and Practical Training on Integration to Adopt AI



n=102

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q52: What kinds of support, training, or resources, if any, would you want to have available for AI? (Select all that apply)

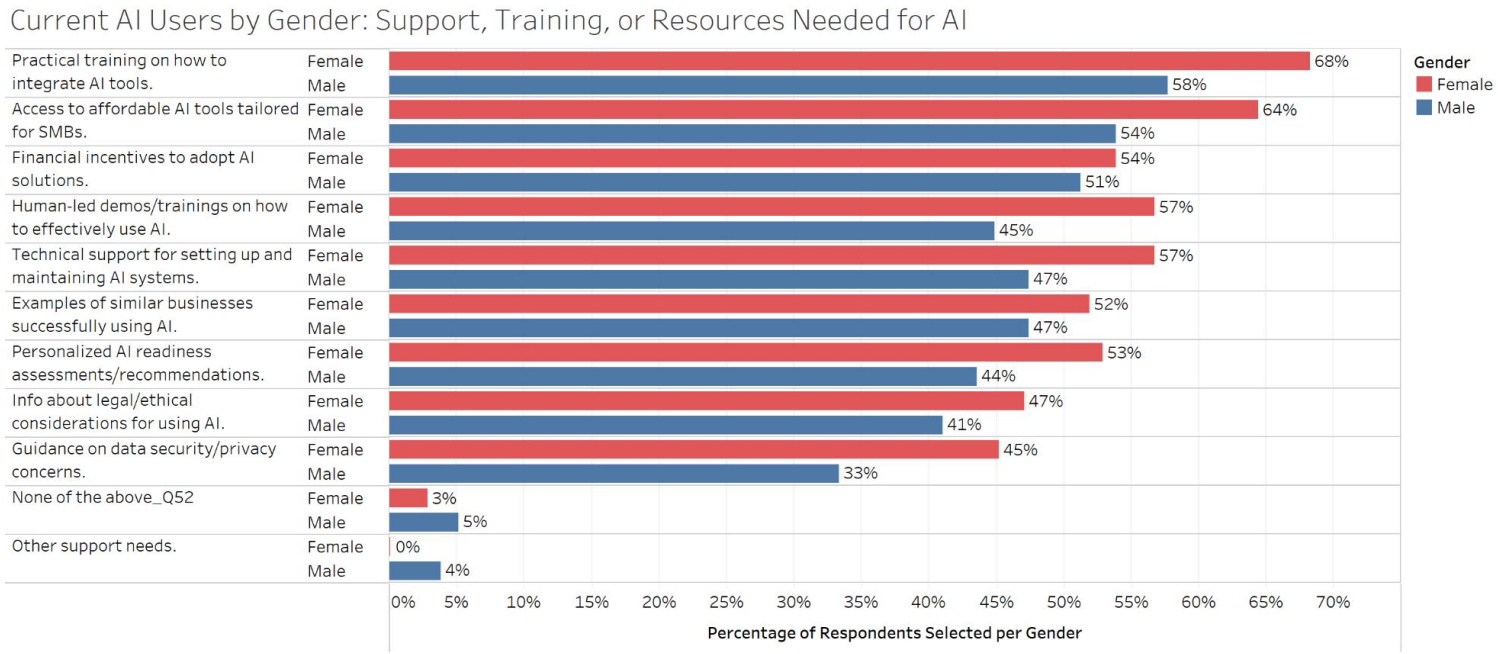
Small and Mid-Sized Firm Non-Users Need Financial Incentives, Peer Exemplars, and Practical Training for AI Adoption



n=42

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q52: What kinds of support, training, or resources, if any, would you want to have available for AI? (Select all that apply)

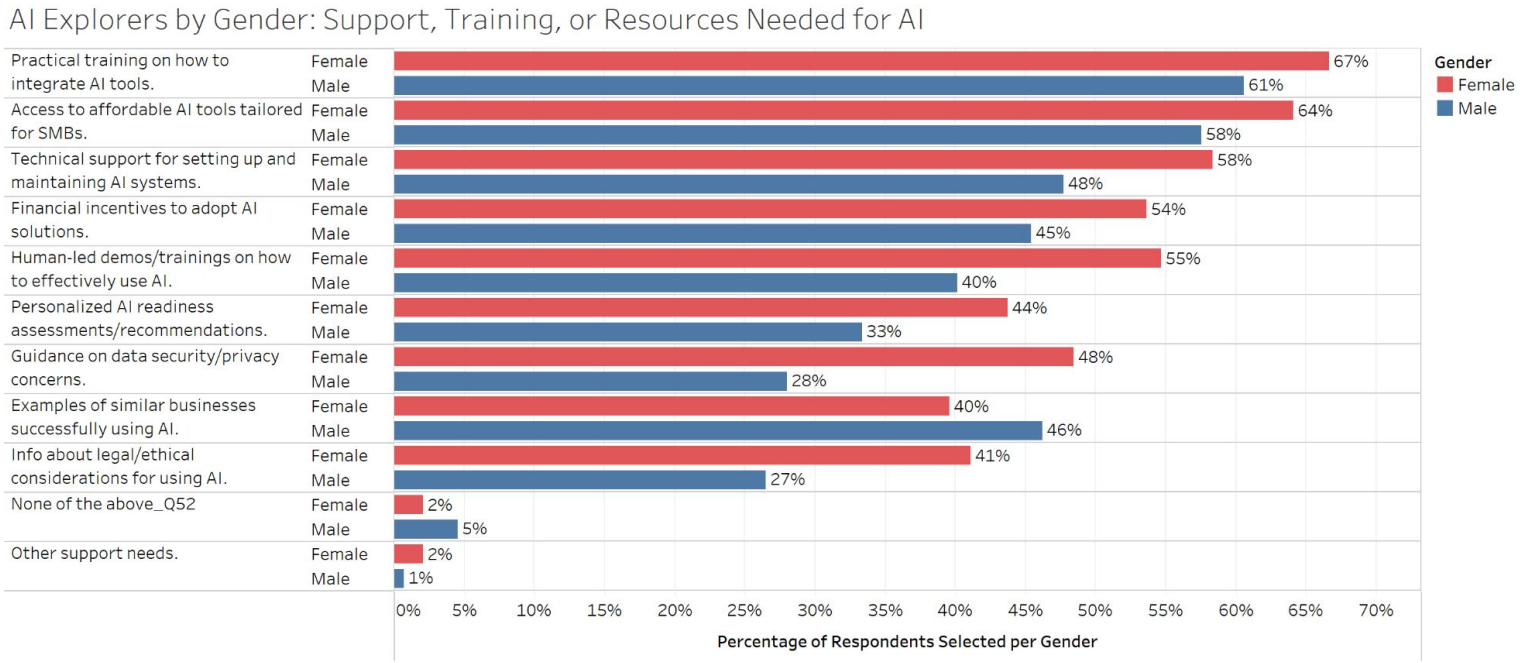
Women Entrepreneurs More Likely to Report AI Support Needs



n=182

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q52: What kinds of support, training, or resources, if any, would you want to have available for AI?

Women AI Explorers Express Greater Demand for AI Support, Training, and Resources

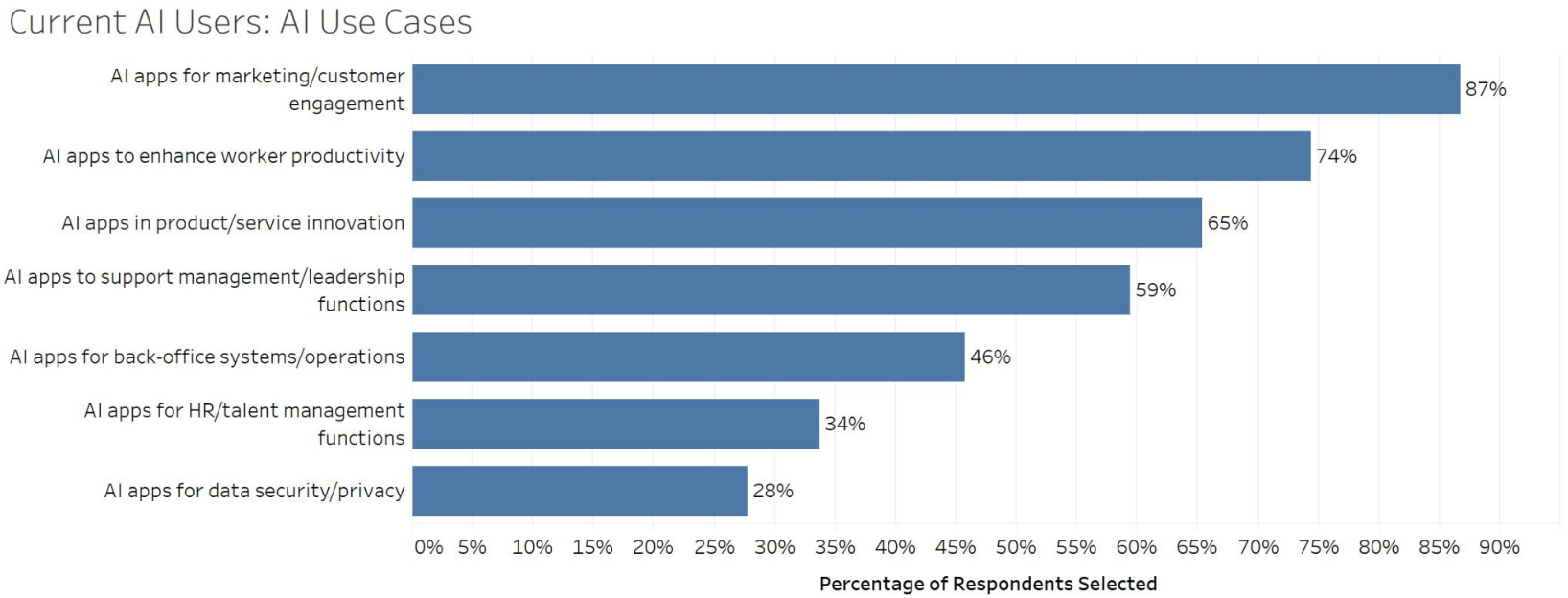


n=324

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q52: What kinds of support, training, or resources, if any, would you want to have available for AI? (Select all that apply)

Current State of AI Use

Current AI Users Rely on AI Mostly for Marketing and to Enhance Productivity



n=234

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q21-34: Does your business use AI applications for [use case]? If so, what [use case] application do you use?

Momentum Among Current AI Users for a Range of AI Use Cases / Functions

	Use Case	AI Function Usage Rates
1	**Marketing & Customer Engagement (87%)**	• 91% – Content generation & personalization • 60% – Customer insights & analytics • 39% – Predictive marketing
2	**Enhance Worker Productivity (74%)**	• 53% – Customer service automation • 48% – Sales support tools
3	**Product & Service Innovation (65%)**	• 58% – Product design & development • 34% – Quality control and process optimization
4	**Support Management & Leadership Functions (59%)**	• 66% – Decision support systems • 60% – Performance management • 57% – Workforce planning & scheduling
5	**Back-Office Systems & Operations (46%)**	• 61% – Finance & accounting automation • 52% – Legal, compliance, & risk management • 29% – Inventory & supply chain
7	**HR & Talent Management Functions (34%)**	• 50% – Learning & development • 23% – Talent acquisition • 22% – Employee engagement & retention
8	**Data Security & Privacy (28%)**	• 60% – Cybersecurity • 32% – Data privacy compliance

REIMAGINE MAIN STREET

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q21-34: Does your business use AI applications for [use case]? If so, what [use case] application do you use?

Current AI Users Cited a Wide Variety of AI Tools and Platforms They Currently Leverage in Their Businesses

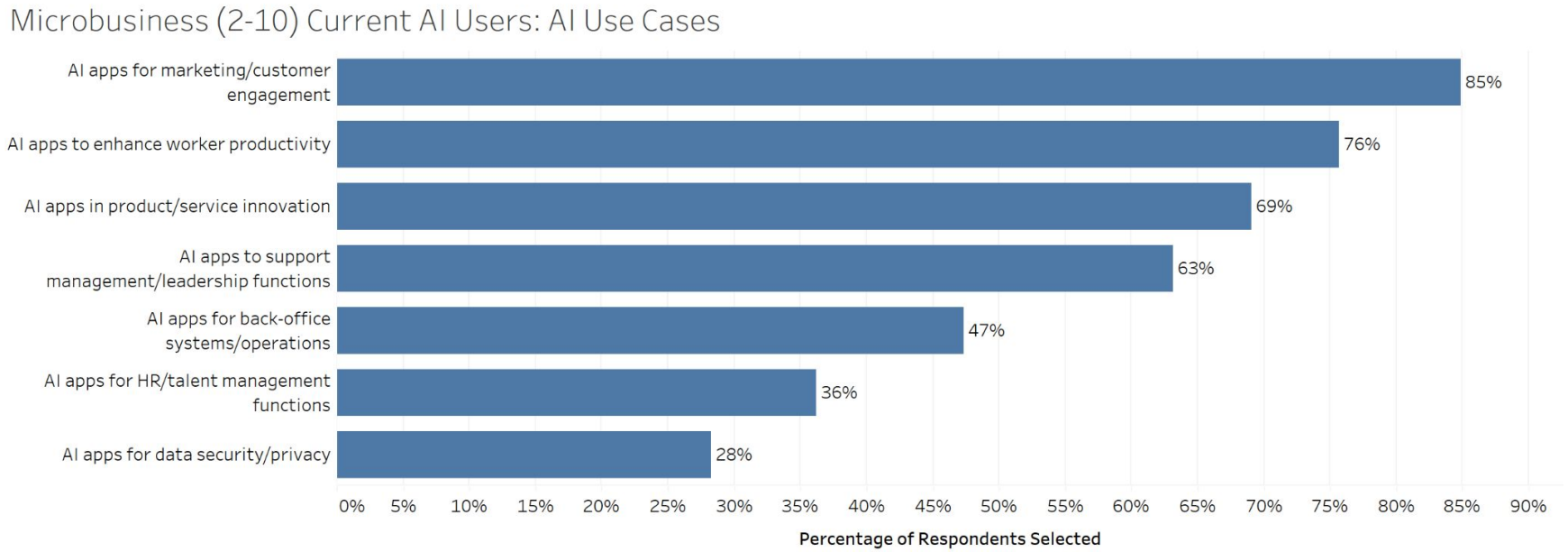
Top 10 AI tools/platforms mentioned by Current AI Users:

1. ChatGPT
2. Google Gemini
3. Canva AI
4. Claude.ai
5. Microsoft Copilot
6. Grammarly
7. Perplexity
8. Zoom AI
9. Otter AI
10. Notion AI

n=205

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q35: Please tell us the AI tools you currently rely on for your business. (Please think about both stand-alone AI tools and tools/platforms that integrate AI features for your benefit.)

Microbusinesses (2-10) Rely on AI Mostly for Marketing, Productivity, and Innovation



n=152

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q21-34: Does your business use AI applications for [use case]? If so, what [use case] application do you use?

Microbusiness (2-10) Current AI Users Have Usage Patterns Consistent With the Overall Sample

	Use Case	AI Function Adoption Rate
1	**Marketing & Customer Engagement (85%)**	• 93% – Content generation & personalization • 57% – Customer insights & analytics • 40% – Predictive marketing
2	**Enhance Worker Productivity (76%)**	• 53% – Customer service automation • 43% – Sales support tools
3	**Product & Service Innovation (69%)**	• 57% – Product design & development • 34% – Quality control and process optimization
4	**Support Management & Leadership Functions (63%)**	• 65% – Decision support systems • 60% – Performance management • 56% – Workforce planning & scheduling
5	**Back-Office Systems & Operations (47%)**	• 58% – Finance & accounting automation • 50% – Legal, compliance, & risk management • 21% – Inventory & supply chain
6	**HR & Talent Management Functions (36%)**	• 60% – Learning & development • 20% – Talent acquisition • 16% – Employee engagement & retention
7	**Data Security & Privacy (28%)**	• 65% – Cybersecurity • 28% – Data privacy compliance

REIMAGINE MAIN STREET

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q21-34: Does your business use AI applications for [use case]? If so, what [use case] application do you use?

Microbusiness (2-10) Current AI Users Cited a Range of AI Tools and Platforms They Leverage in Their Businesses

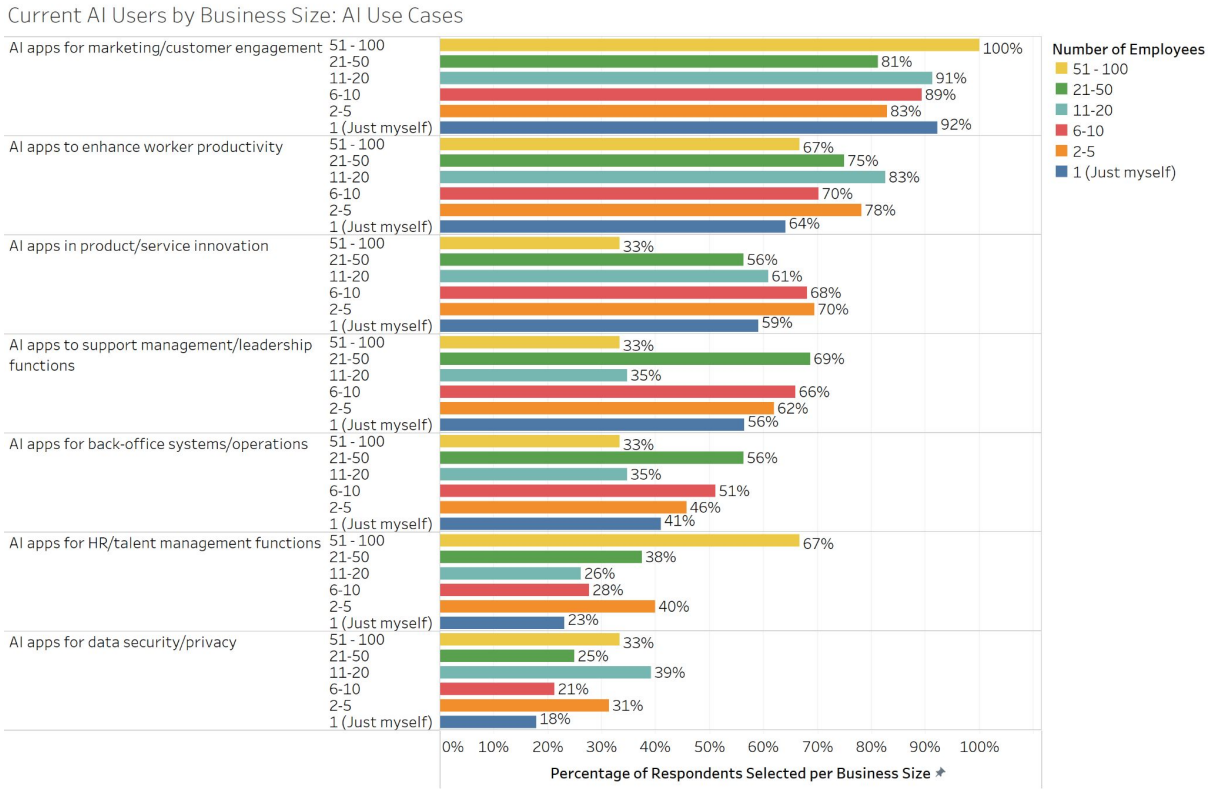
Top 10 AI tools/platforms mentioned by Microbusinesses:

1. ChatGPT
2. Microsoft Copilot
3. Google Gemini
4. Claude.ai
5. Canva AI
6. Perplexity
7. Grammarly
8. Otter
9. Zoom
10. HubSpot

n=134

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q35: Please tell us the AI tools you currently rely on for your business. (Please think about both stand-alone AI tools and tools/platforms that integrate AI features for your benefit.)

Marketing, Productivity, and Innovation Uses Vary by Firm Size



- **Nearly all solopreneurs are using AI for marketing & customer engagement**, and they use it at a greater rate than other business sizes
- Among these AI use cases, **enhancing worker productivity and data security & privacy are positively correlated with business size**
- **Solopreneurs are far less likely to use AI for data security & privacy** than other business sizes

n=233

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q21-34: Does your business use AI applications for [use case]? If so, what [use case] application do you use?

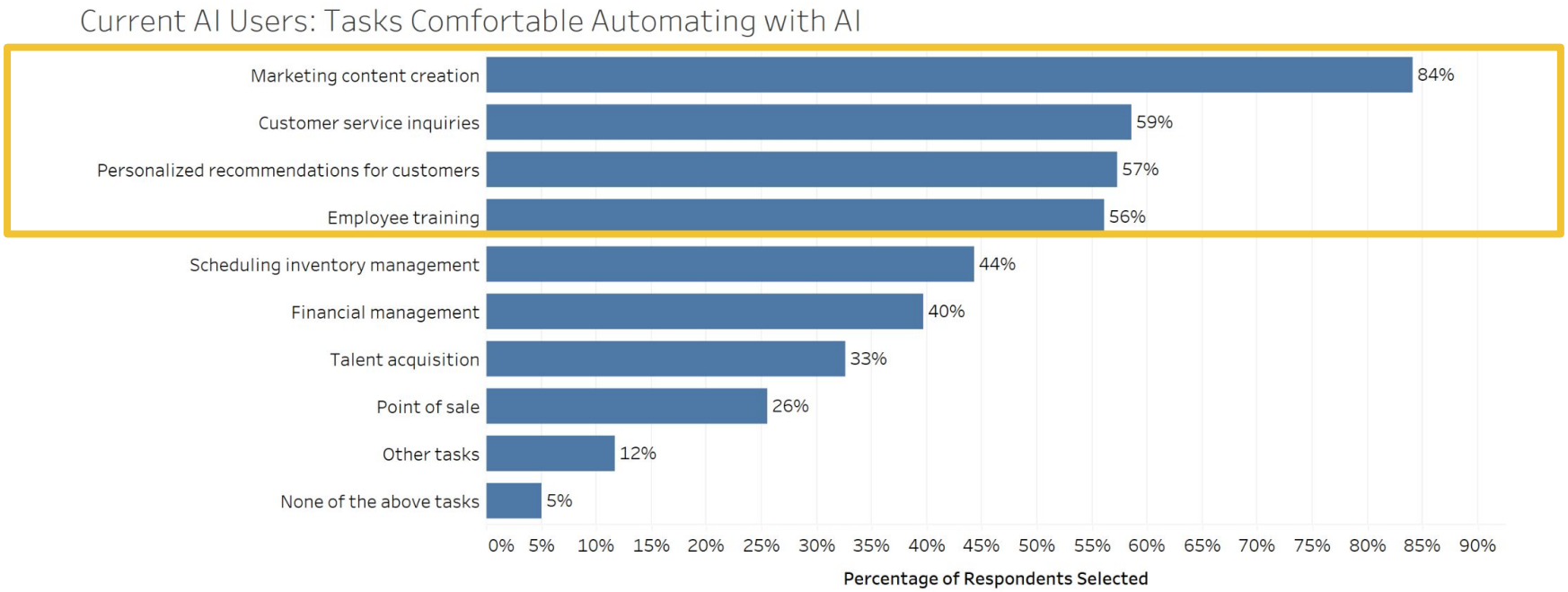
What are Business Owners Willing to Automate?

Business Owners Most Willing (84%) to Automate Marketing Content Creation

	Currently Use AI (%)	Explore or Experiment (%)	No Plans to Use AI (%)	Total Sample (%)
Marketing content creation	84	70	35	65
Customer service inquiries	59	43	23	42
Employee training	56	42	24	42
Scheduling or inventory management	44	44	28	40
Personalized recommendations for customers	57	35	21	38
Financial management	40	36	24	34
Point of sale	26	24	19	23
Talent acquisition	33	21	12	22

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q38: Which, if any, of the following tasks do you feel comfortable automating with AI? Select all that apply. (Select all that apply)

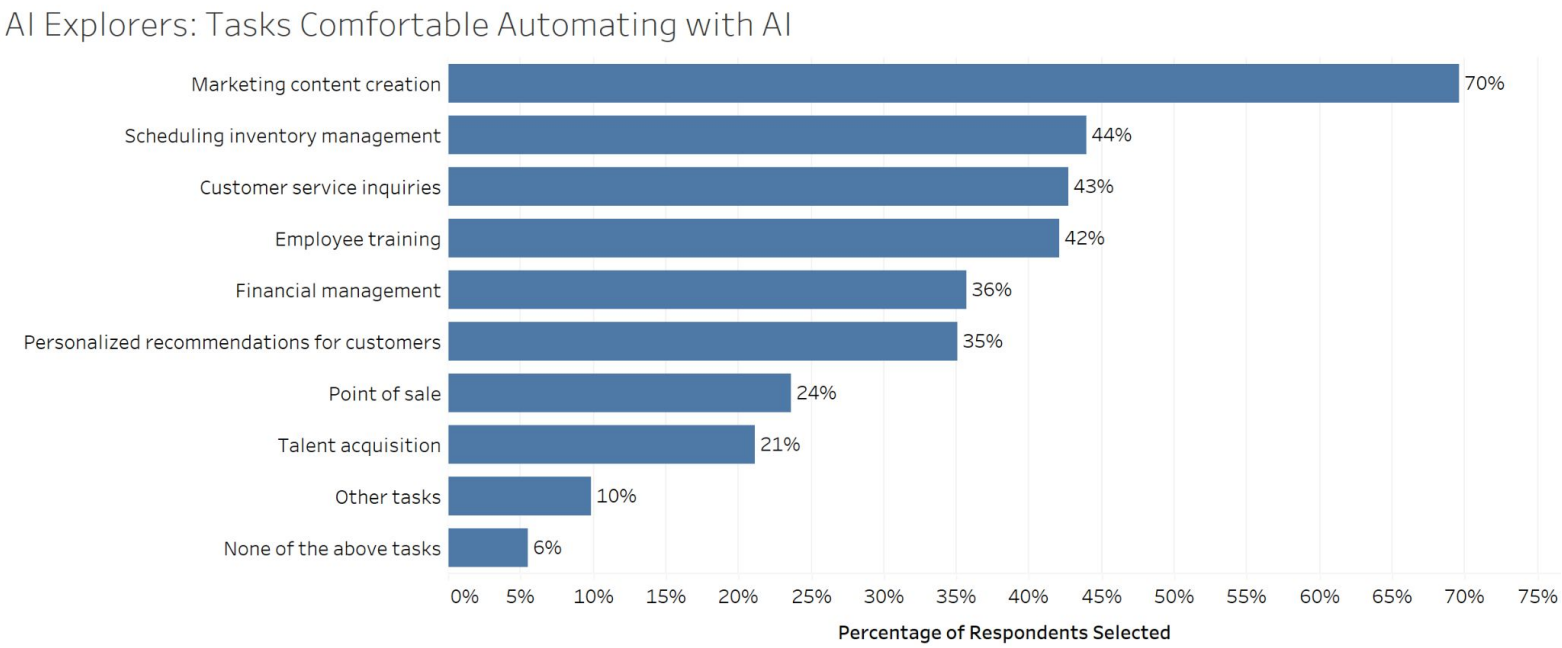
High Comfort Among Current AI Users to Automate Marketing, Customer Service, and Employee Training



n=239

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q38: Which, if any, of the following tasks do you feel comfortable automating with AI? Select all that apply. (Select all that apply)

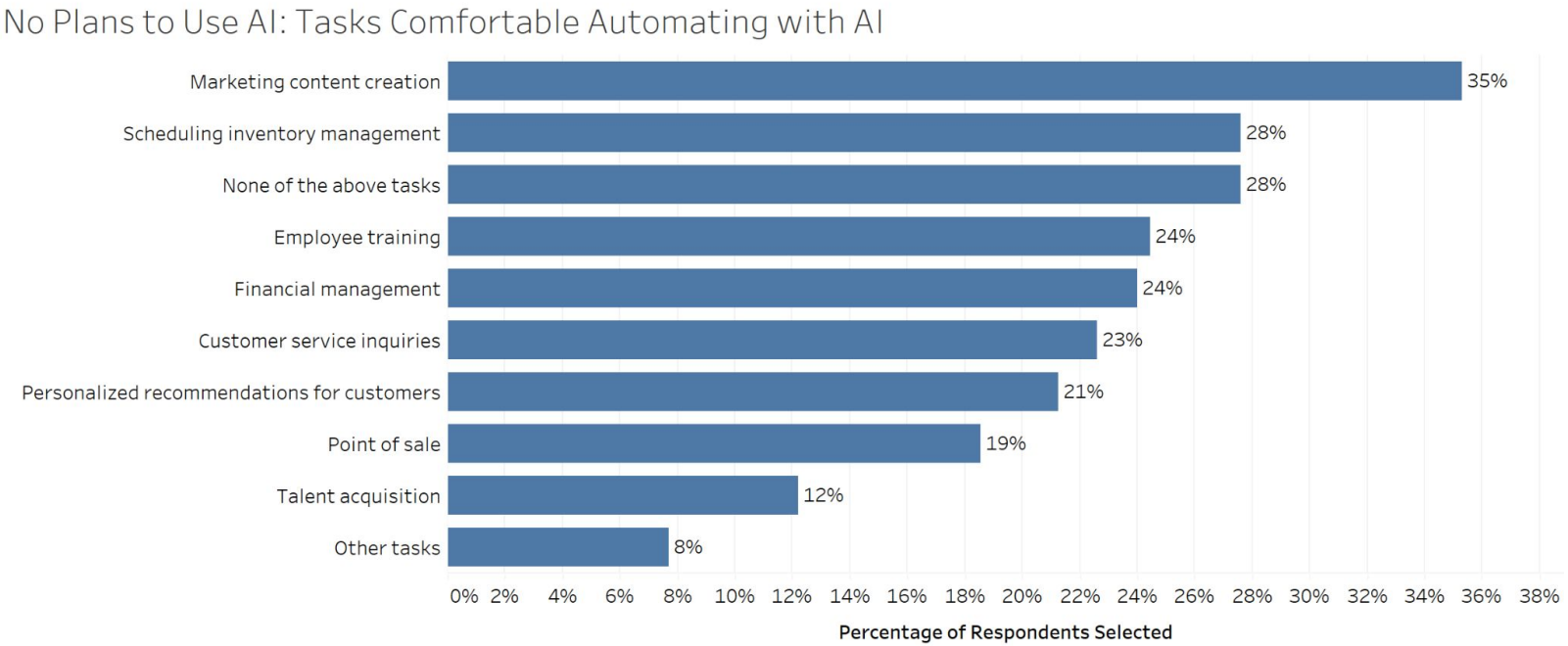
AI Explorers Prioritize AI Automation in Marketing and Internal Operations



n=487

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q38: Which, if any, of the following tasks do you feel comfortable automating with AI? Select all that apply. (Select all that apply)

Marketing Content Creation Could be Ripe for First Step to AI Adoption



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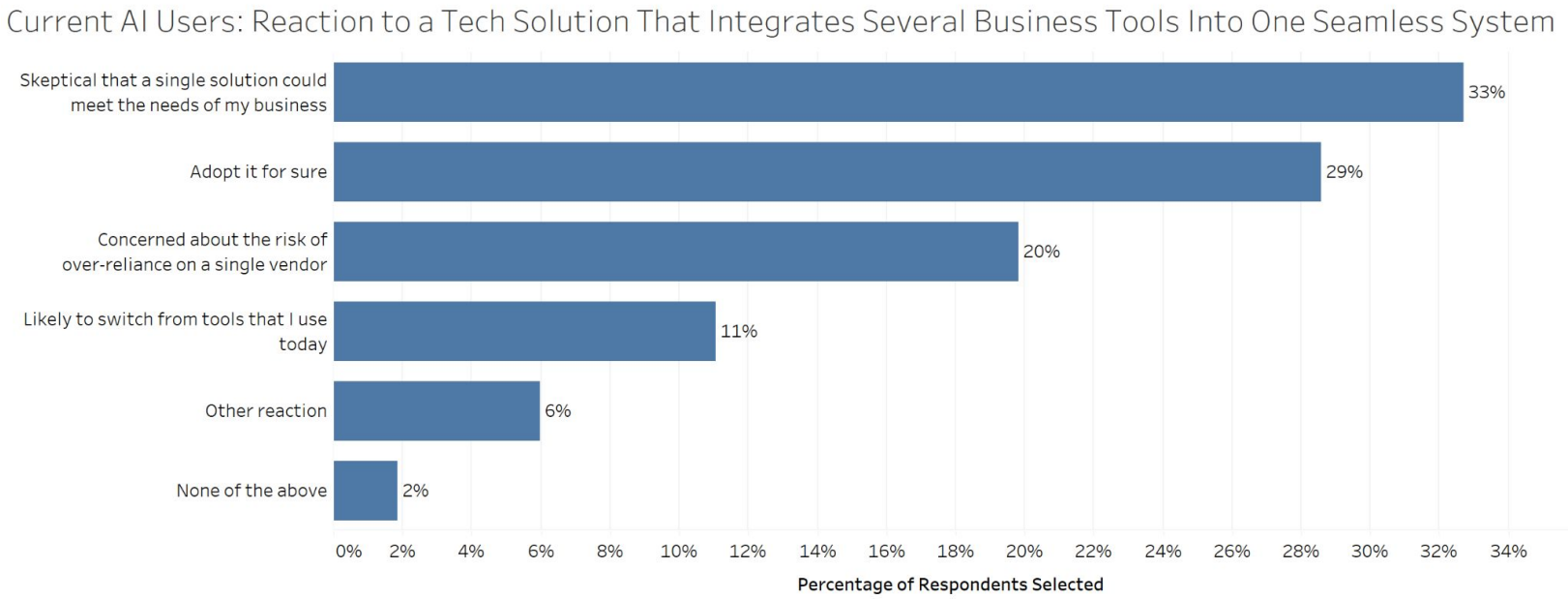
Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q38: Which, if any, of the following tasks do you feel comfortable automating with AI? Select all that apply. (Select all that apply)

Current AI Users Split Between Skepticism and Enthusiasm to Adopt a Single, Seamlessly Integrated Solution



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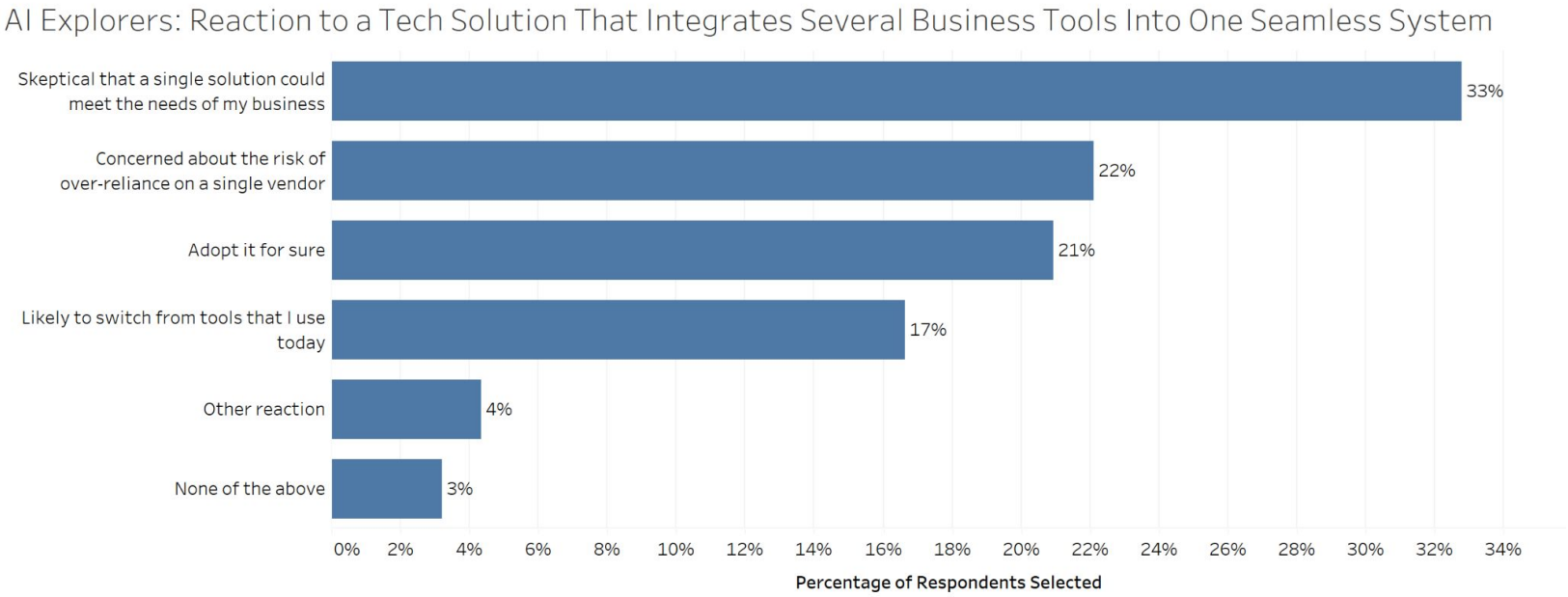
Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q50: Suppose you were presented with a solution that integrated several business tools into one integrated and seamless system. Which, if any, of the following most closely describe how do you think you would react?

AI Explorers Skeptical That a Single, Seamlessly Integrated Solution Could Meet Their Business Needs



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Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q50: Suppose you were presented with a solution that integrated several business tools into one integrated and seamless system. Which, if any, of the following most closely describe how do you think you would react?

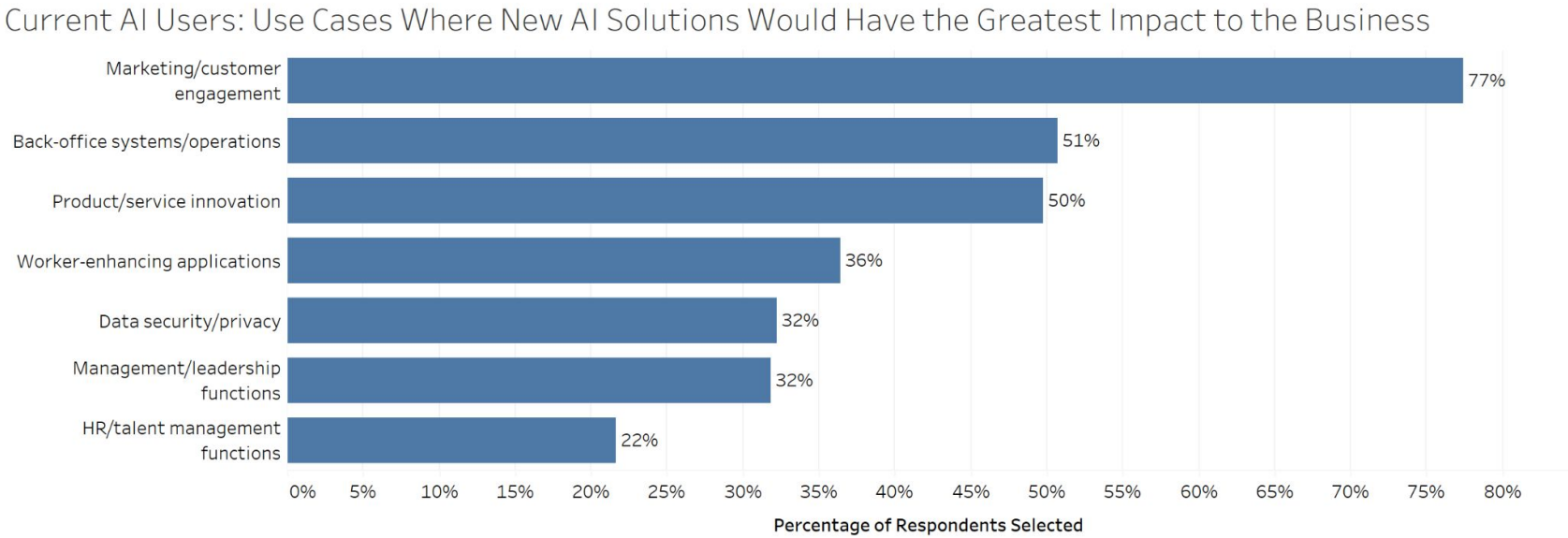
Where are Expectations for Business Impact from AI Highest?

Highest Expectations for Business Impact from Innovative Marketing Analytics Solutions

Business Area	Current AI Users (%)	AI Explorers (%)	No Plans to Use AI (%)	Total Sample (%)
Marketing and customer engagement (e.g., Content generation and personalization; Customer insights and analytics; Predictive marketing)	70	64	53	63
Back-office systems and operations (e.g., Finance and accounting automation; Inventory and supply chain management; Legal, compliance, and risk management)	46	63	61	58
Product and service innovation (e.g., Product design and development; Quality control and process optimization)	45	37	26	37
Worker-enhancing applications (e.g., Customer service automation; Sales support tools)	33	31	27	31
Manager and leadership applications (e.g., Decision support systems; Performance management; Workforce planning and scheduling)	29	29	27	29
Data security and privacy (e.g., Cybersecurity; Data privacy compliance)	29	27	34	29
HR and talent management (e.g., Talent acquisition; Employee engagement and retention; Learning and development)	20	19	31	22

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q51: Which business areas would benefit most from innovative new AI solutions? Please select the three areas where you think AI would have the greatest impact on your business. (Select your top 3)

Current AI Users See Marketing and Back-Office Systems as Most Ripe for AI Solutions, Followed by Product/Service Innovation and Productivity Tools



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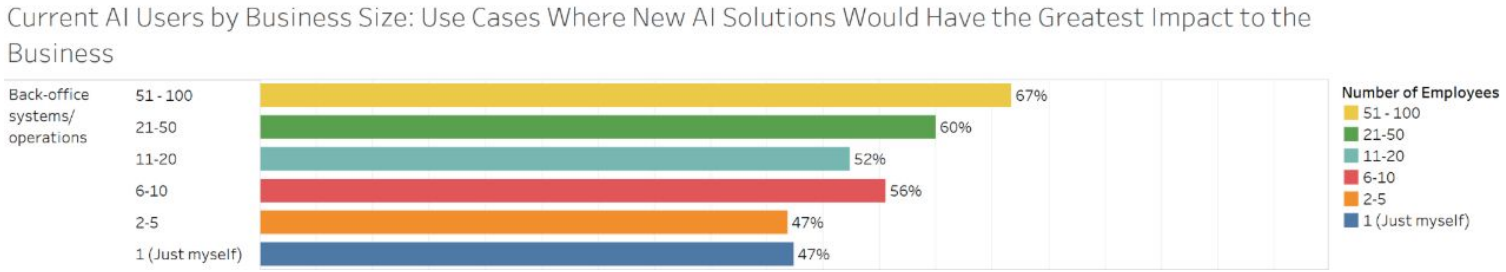
Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q51: Which business areas would benefit most from innovative new AI solutions? Please select the three areas where you think AI would have the greatest impact on your business. (Select your top 3)

6 in 10 Firms with 21-50 Employees Say Back-Office / Operations Solutions Would Have Greatest Impact

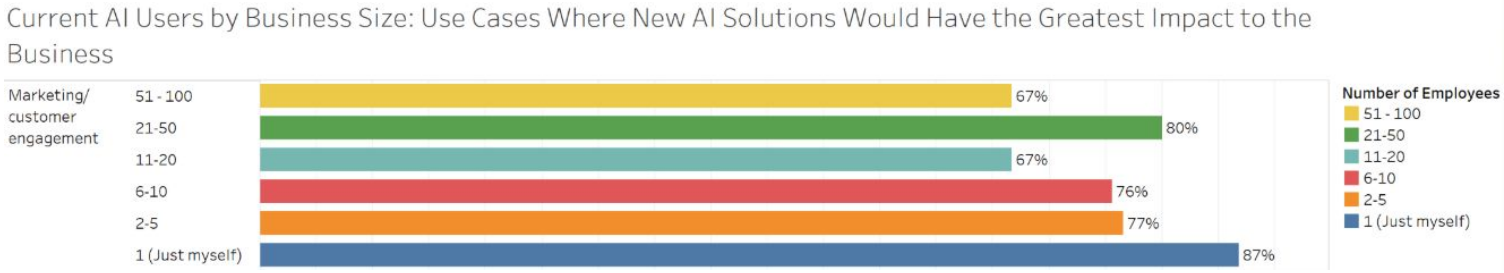


- **60% of Current AI User firms with 21-50 employees** report that AI solutions for **back-office systems and operations** would have the greatest impact to their businesses

n=216

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q51: Which business areas would benefit most from innovative new AI solutions? Please select the three areas where you think AI would have the greatest impact on your business. (Select your top 3)

Solopreneur Users Value New AI Solutions for Marketing/Customer Engagement



- **87% of Solopreneur Current AI Users** report that new AI solutions for **marketing and customer engagement** would have the greatest impact on their businesses

n=216

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q51: Which business areas would benefit most from innovative new AI solutions? Please select the three areas where you think AI would have the greatest impact on your business. (Select your top 3)

Where is There Demand for Agentic Tools?

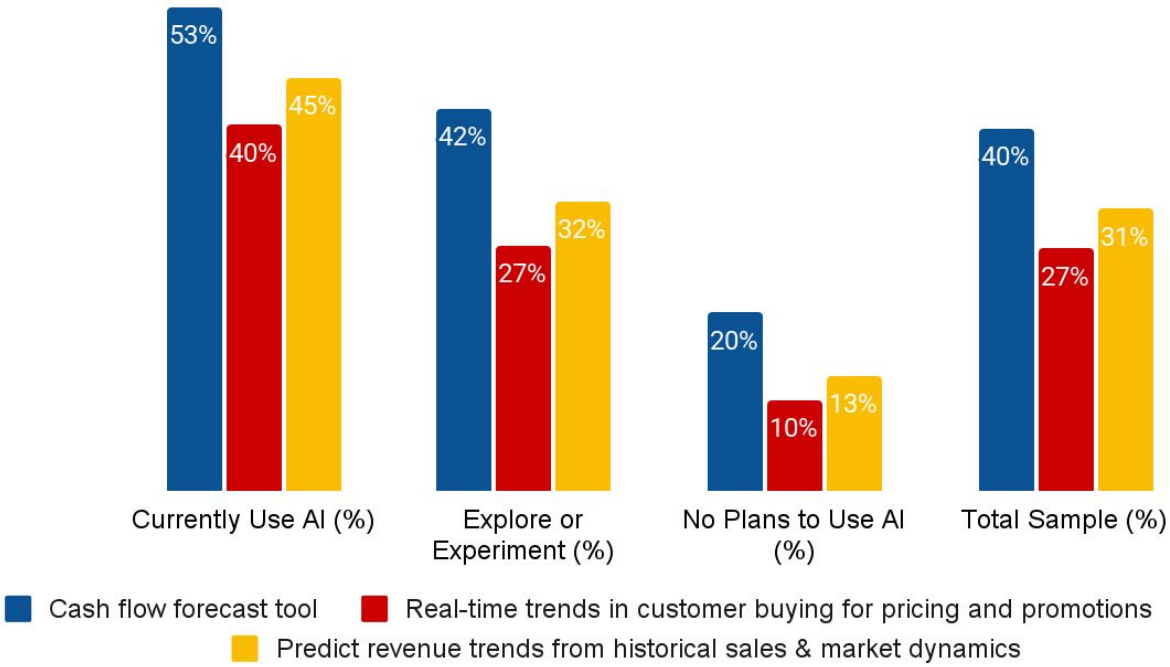
New Agentic AI Tools Could be Natural Next Step for Current AI Users

	Use Cases	AI Function Usage Rates	Potential Agentic AI Applications
1	**Marketing & Customer Engagement (87%)**	• 91% – Content generation & personalization • 60% – Customer insights & analytics • 39% – Predictive marketing	• AI agents that launch and manage multichannel campaigns (e.g., email, social, SMS) based on product updates or customer triggers • Personalized follow-up bots that autonomously re-engage customers who browse but don't buy
2	**Enhance Worker Productivity (74%)**	• 53% – Customer service automation • 48% – Sales support tools	• Customer service agents that resolve routine inquiries, process returns, or provide order updates with full payment integration • Sales agents that qualify leads, schedule meetings, and send follow-up messages autonomously
3	**Product & Service Innovation (65%)**	• 58% – Product design & development • 34% – Quality control and process optimization	• AI agents that gather user feedback, categorize it, and propose product feature improvements • Autonomous prototyping assistants that generate, test, and refine product concepts based on sales data
4	**Support Management & Leadership Functions (59%)**	• 66% – Decision support systems • 60% – Performance management • 57% – Workforce planning & scheduling	• Workforce schedulers that assign shifts, adapt to employee availability, and notify team members • Performance review bots that analyze KPIs and generate draft feedback summaries or review forms

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q21-34: Does your business use AI applications for [use case]? If so, what [use case] application do you use?

High Demand for Business Growth Support Tools

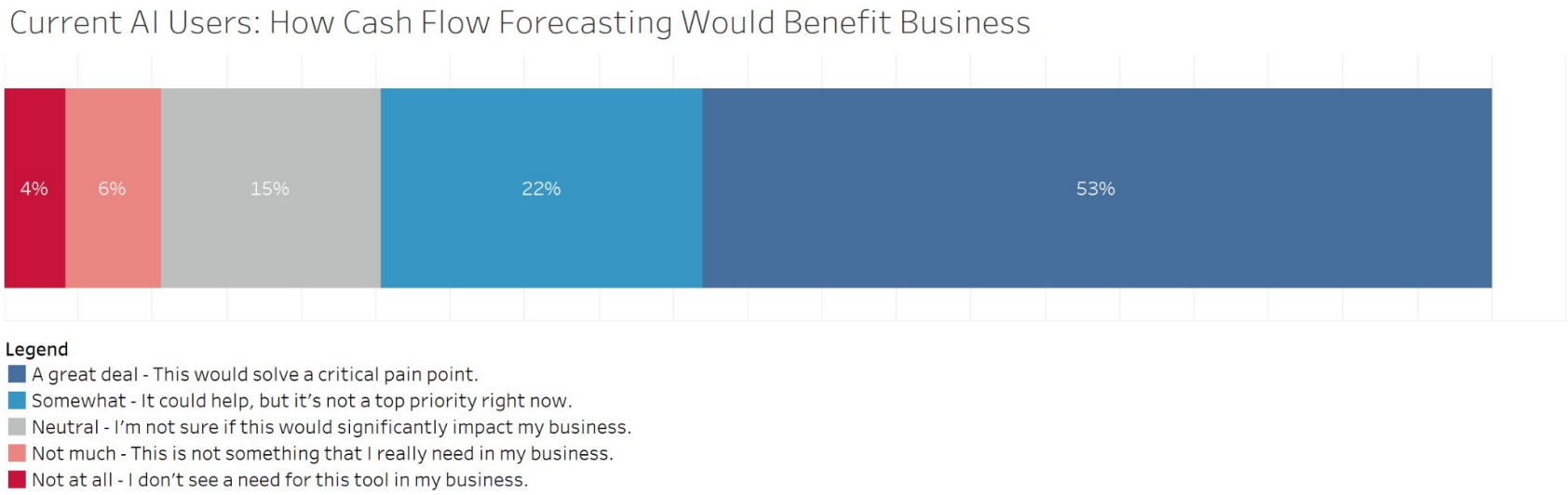
% of respondents who indicated solution address a critical need, solve a critical pain point, and/or they would be extremely likely to adopt



REIMAGINE MAIN STREET

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q46: Imagine knowing your cash flow forecast weeks in advance, helping you plan. How much would this benefit your business?
Q47: Suppose you could see real-time trends in customer buying behavior and adjust your promotions dynamically to boost sales. How likely would you be to use a tool that provides these insights?
Q48: Would you value the ability to predict future revenue trends based on historical sales data and market dynamics?

More than Half of Current AI Users Say Cash Flow Forecasting Tool Would Solve a Critical Pain Point



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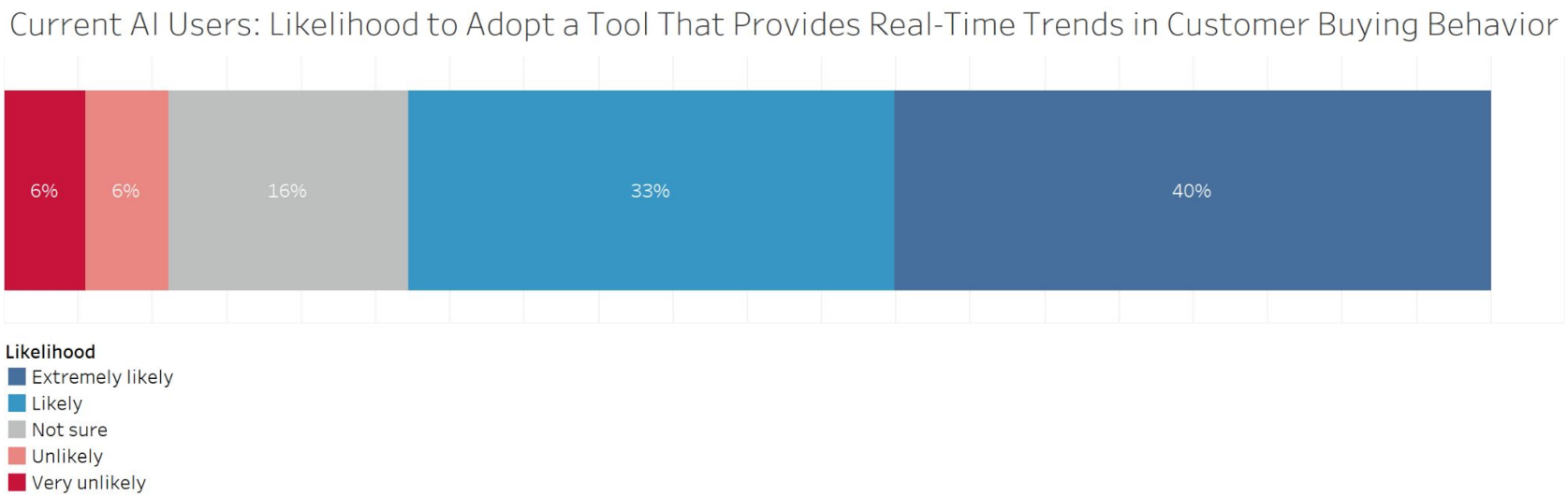
Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q46: Imagine knowing your cash flow forecast weeks in advance, helping you plan. How much would this benefit your business?

40% of Current AI Users Extremely Likely to Adopt Tool That Enables Dynamic Pricing and Promotions



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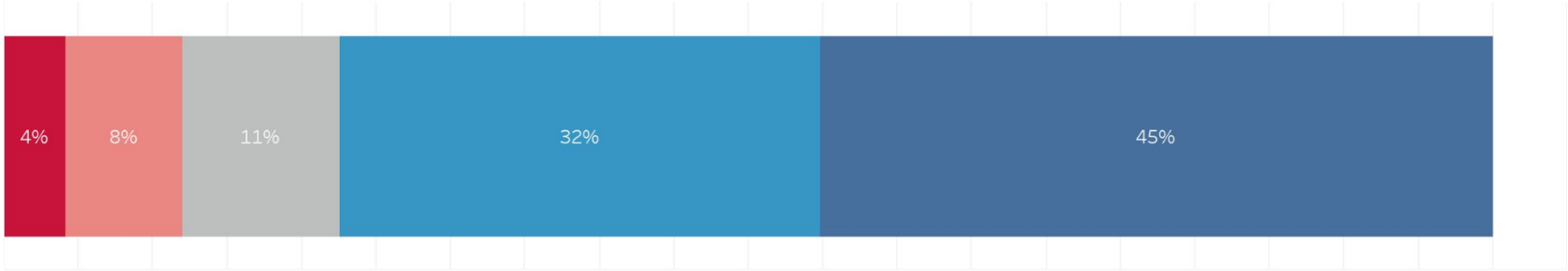
Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q47: Suppose you could see real-time trends in customer buying behavior and adjust your promotions dynamically to boost sales. How likely would you be to use a tool that provides these insights?

4 in 10 Current AI Users Extremely Likely to Adopt Tool That Predicts Revenue Trends to Help with Staffing, Inventory, and Marketing Decisions

Current AI Users: Valuing the Ability to Predict Future Revenue Trends Based on Historical Sales Data and Market Dynamics



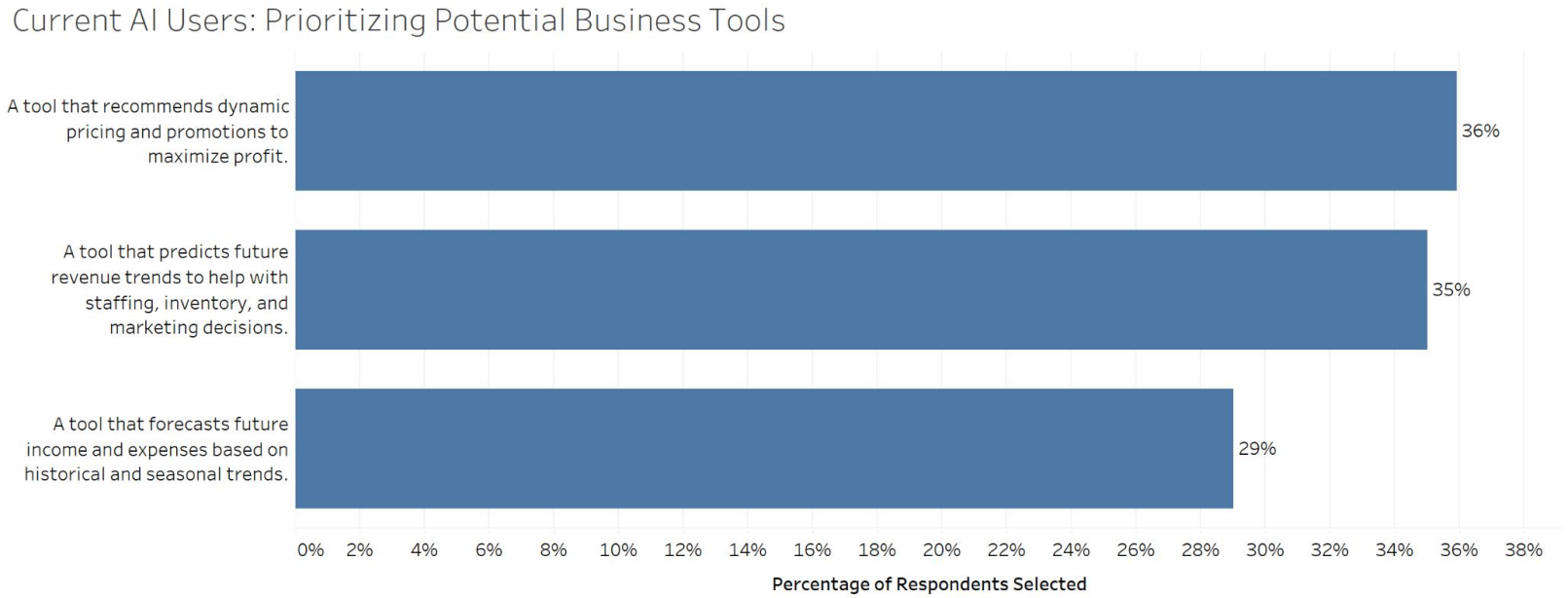
Legend

- Extremely valuable – This would address a critical need for planning and decision-making.
- Somewhat valuable – It could help in certain situations, but it's not a top priority right now.
- Neutral – I'm not sure if this would significantly impact my business.
- Skeptical – I would need to see clear evidence of accuracy and results before considering it.
- Not valuable – I don't see a need for this tool in my business.

n=217

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q48: Would you value the ability to predict future revenue trends based on historical sales data and market dynamics?

Current AI Users Prioritize Each Solution at Rough Parity; Small Preference for Dynamic Pricing and Revenue Trend Predictors



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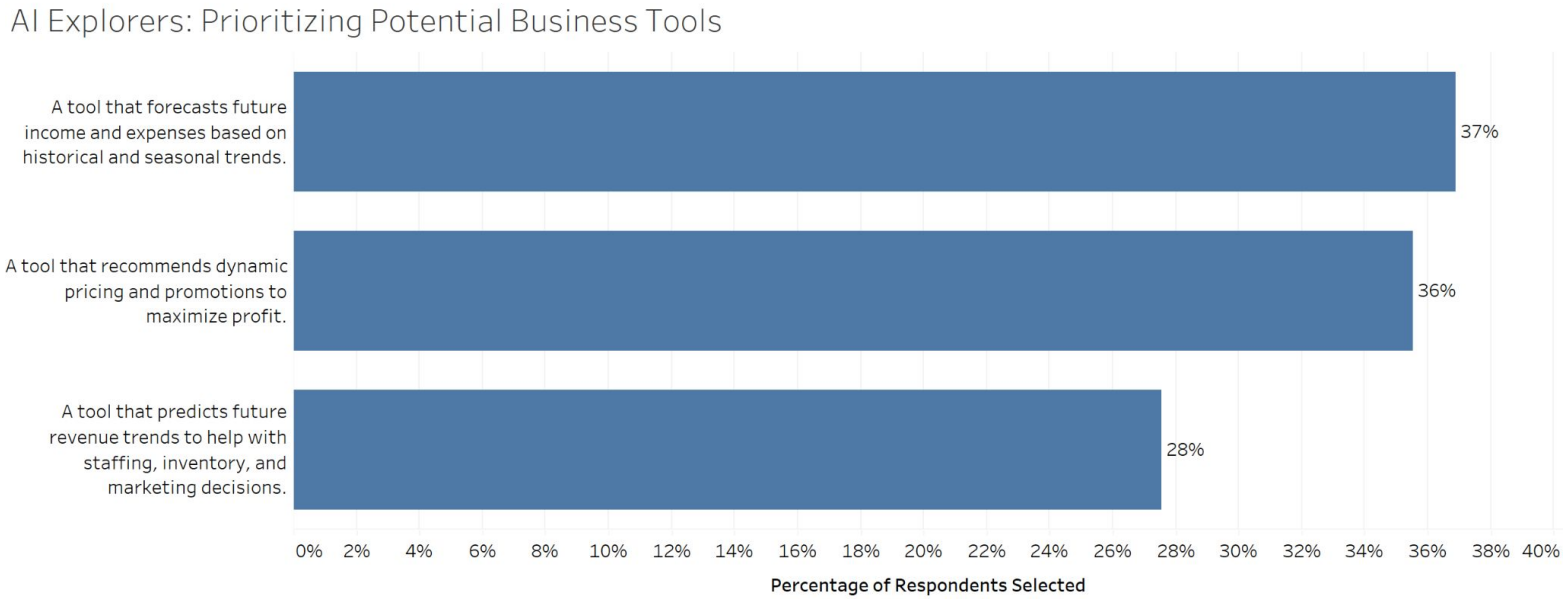
Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q49: If you could only choose one of the following tools for your business, which would you prioritize?

AI Explorers Prioritize Each Solution at Rough Parity; Small Preference for Tool that Forecasts Income and Expenses



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Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
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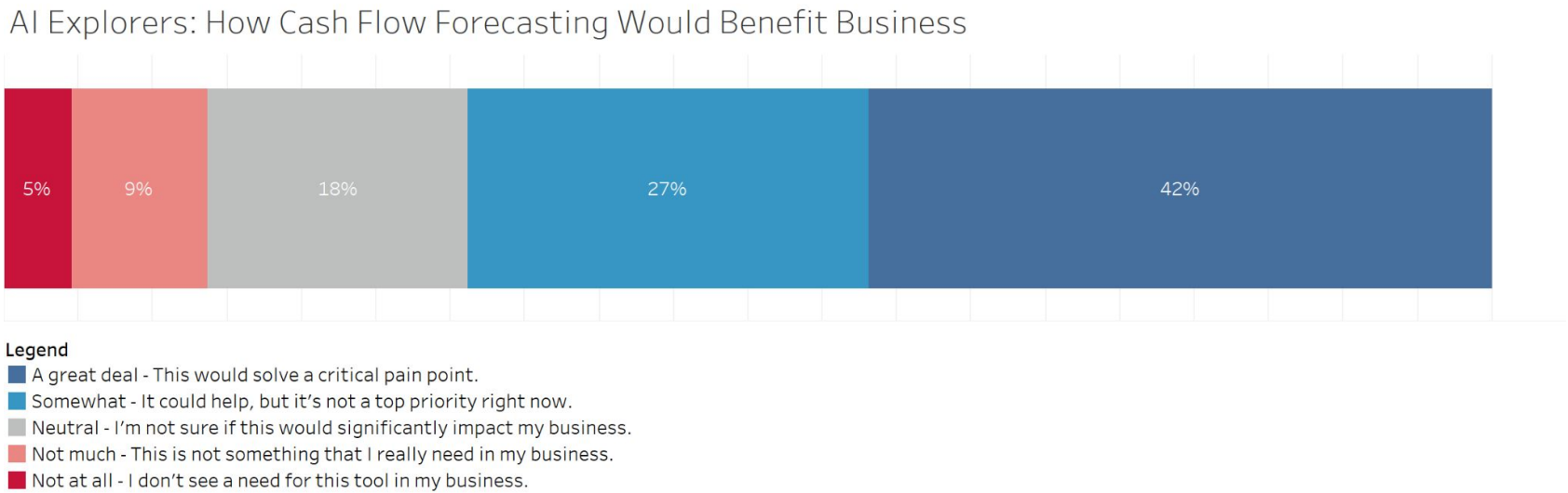
Cash Flow Forecasting Seen as a Critical Solution by Many AI Explorers



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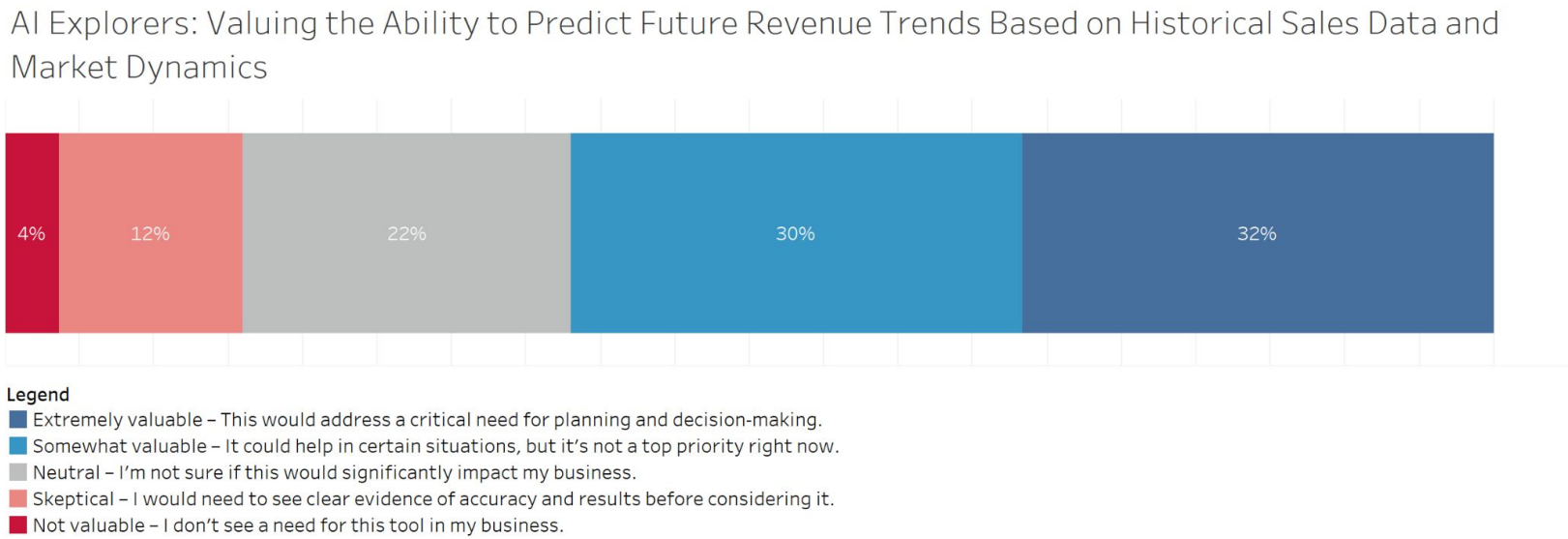
Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q46: Imagine knowing your cash flow forecast weeks in advance, helping you plan. How much would this benefit your business?

AI Explorers See Value in Revenue Forecasting Tools



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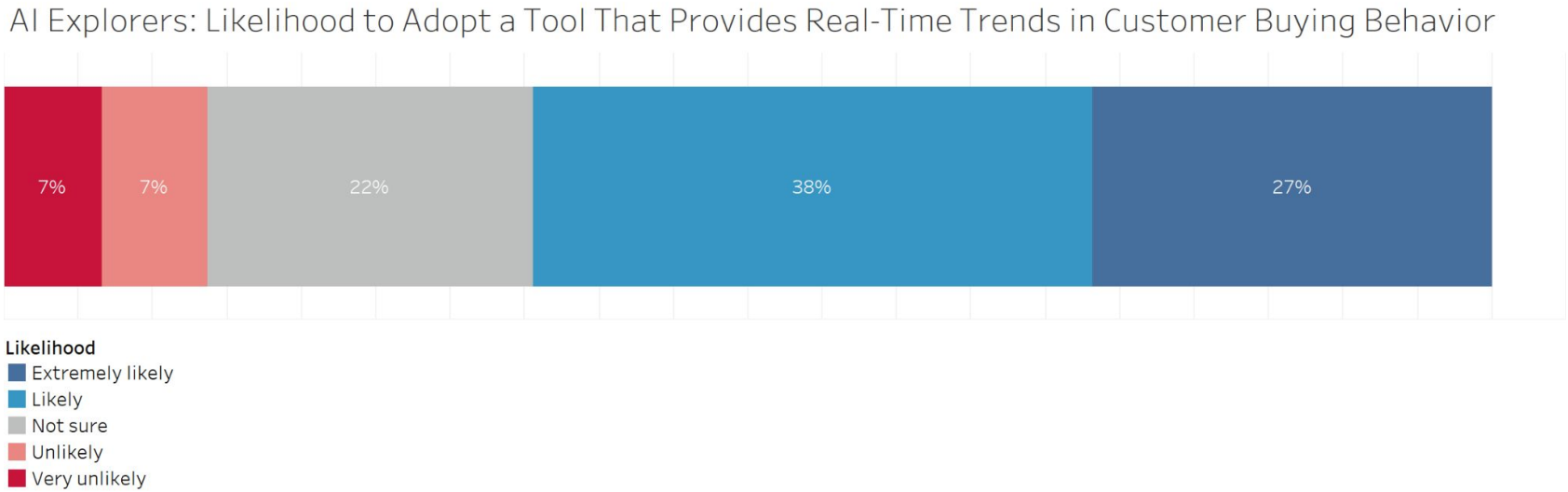
Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q48: Would you value the ability to predict future revenue trends based on historical sales data and market dynamics?

Strong Interest in Real-Time Customer Buying Behavior Insights Among AI Explorers



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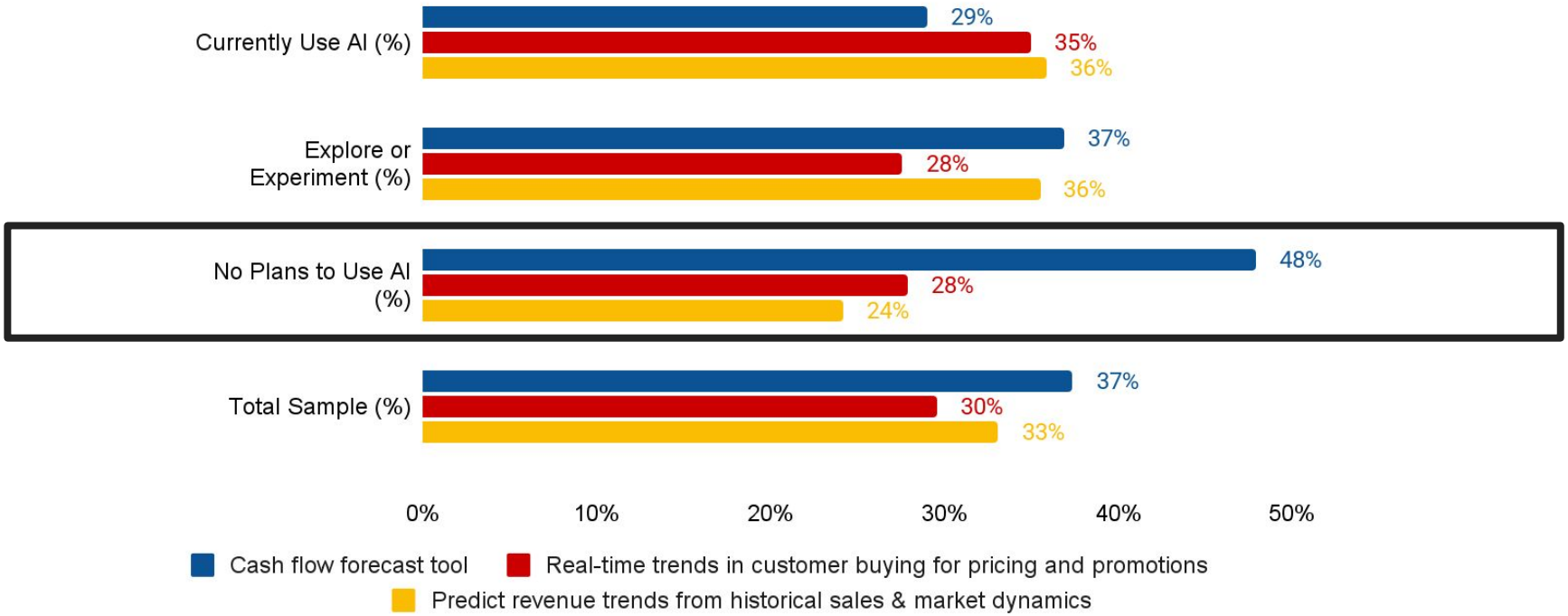
Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q47: Suppose you could see real-time trends in customer buying behavior and adjust your promotions dynamically to boost sales. How likely would you be to use a tool that provides these insights?

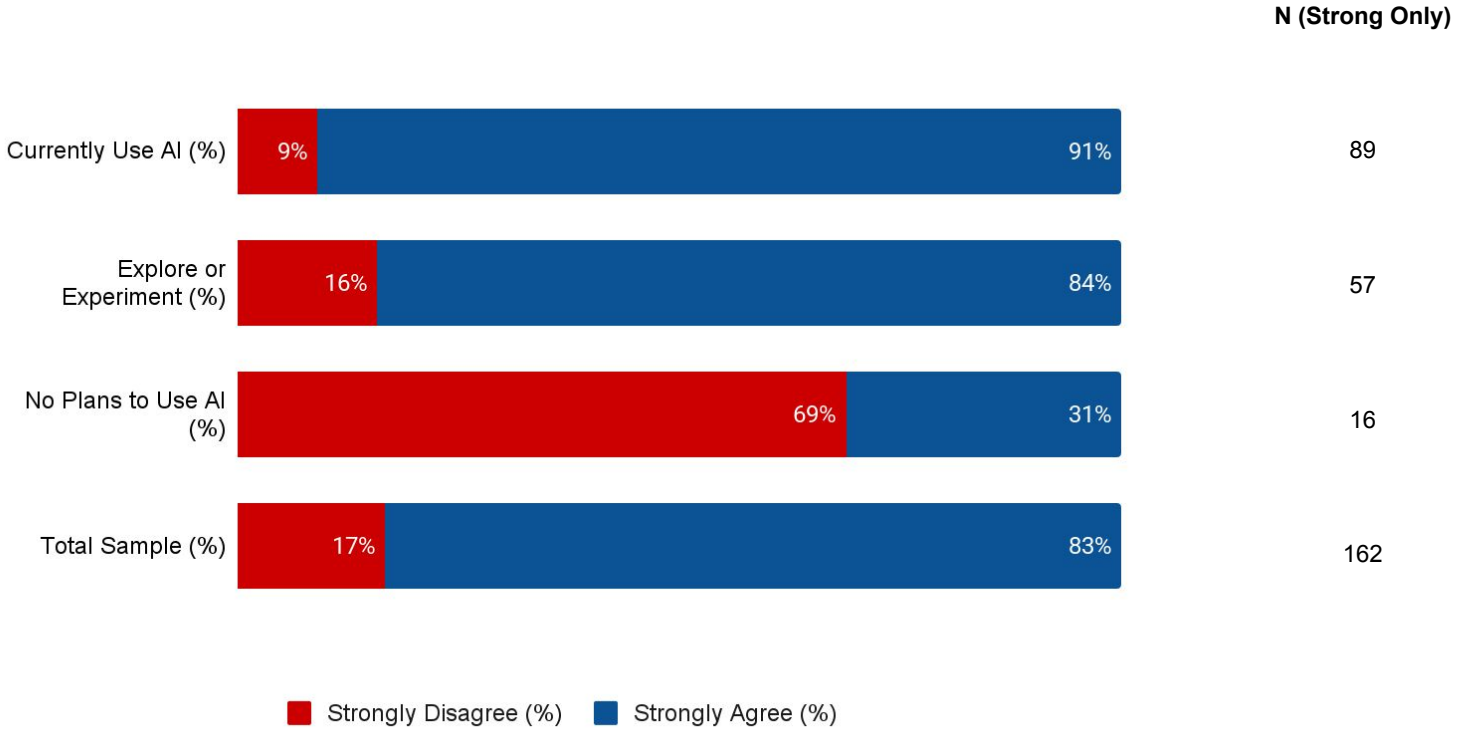
Non-Users Appear Interested in a Tool That Forecasts Cash Flows



Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q49: If you could only choose one of the following tools for your business, which would you prioritize?

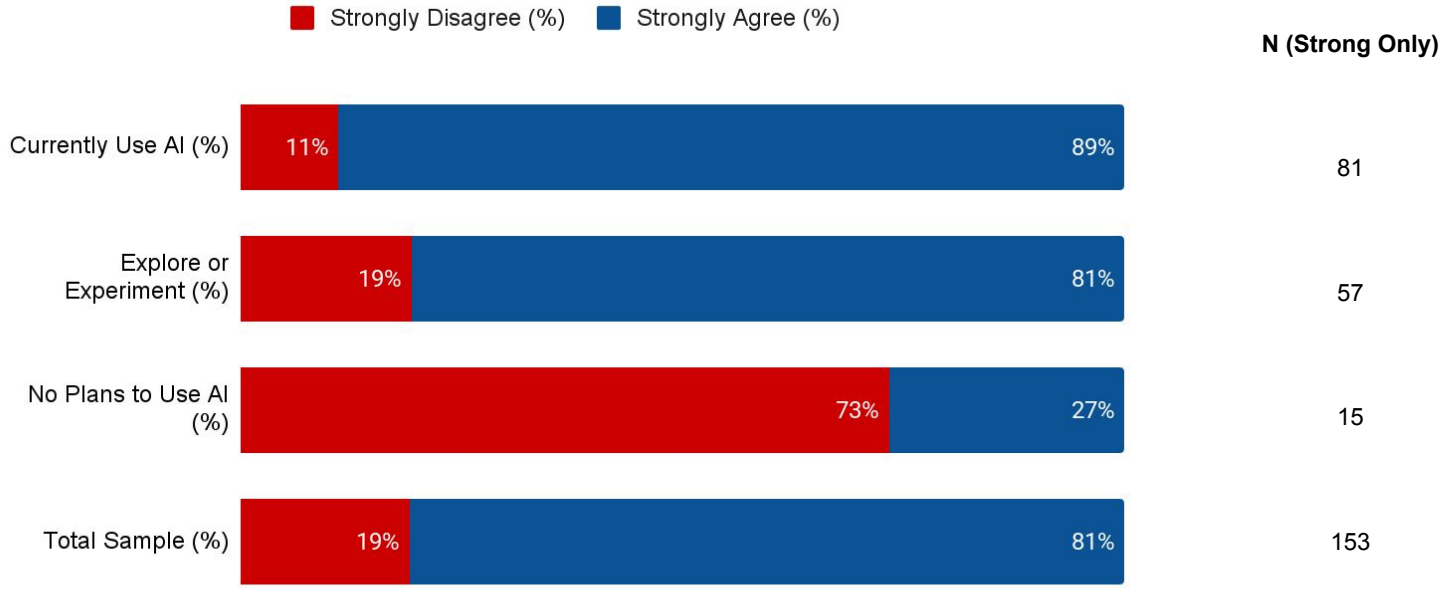
What Do Business Owners Expect from AI Providers and Tools?

Business Owners Generally Welcome AI Integrated with Current Tools



Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q36 -Now we want to understand how you feel about AI in the context of your business. For each of the following statements, tell us the extent to which you agree or disagree: I welcome AI if it is integrated into tools and solutions I already use for my business

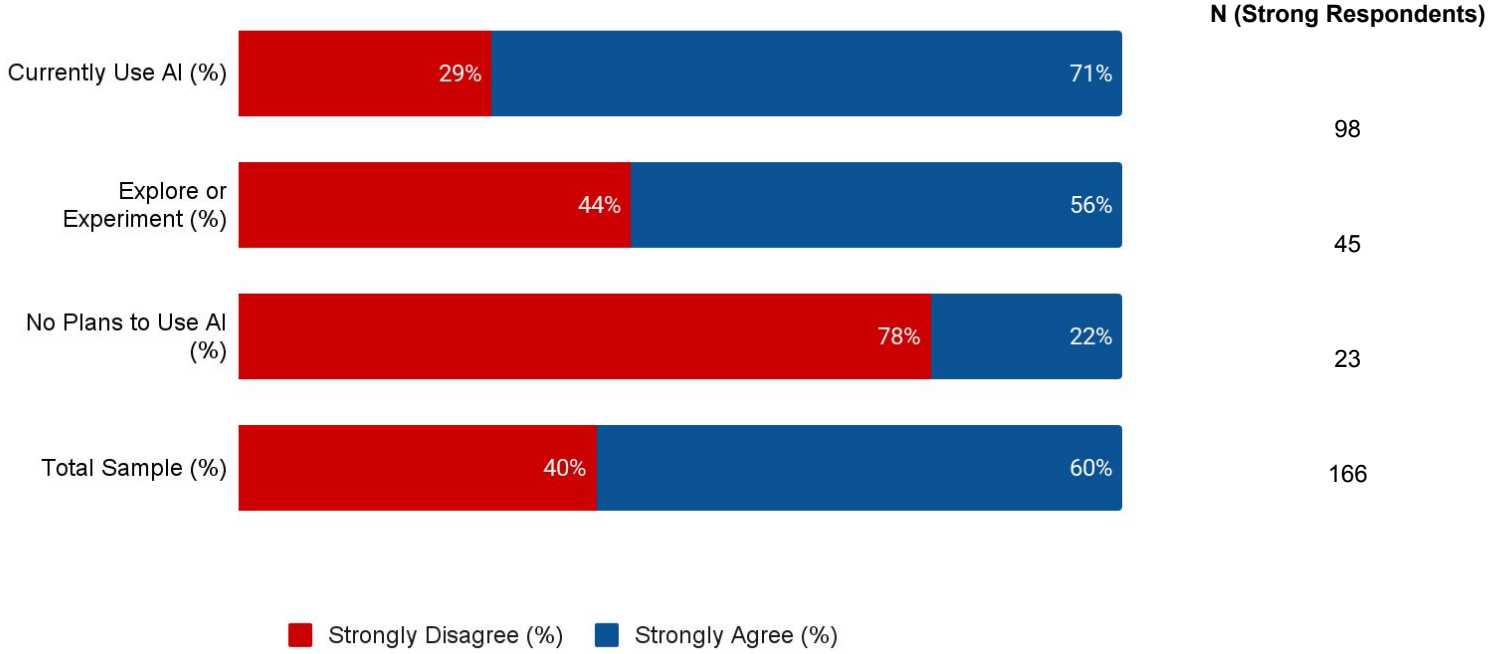
Business Owners Want to Know When a Technology Provider is Using AI



Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q36 Now we want to understand how you feel about AI in the context of your business. For each of the following statements, tell us the extent to which you agree or disagree: I need to be informed by my technology providers when AI features have been incorporated into existing tools and platforms I use for my business.

Incumbent Providers Likely Have AI Slight "Trust Advantage"

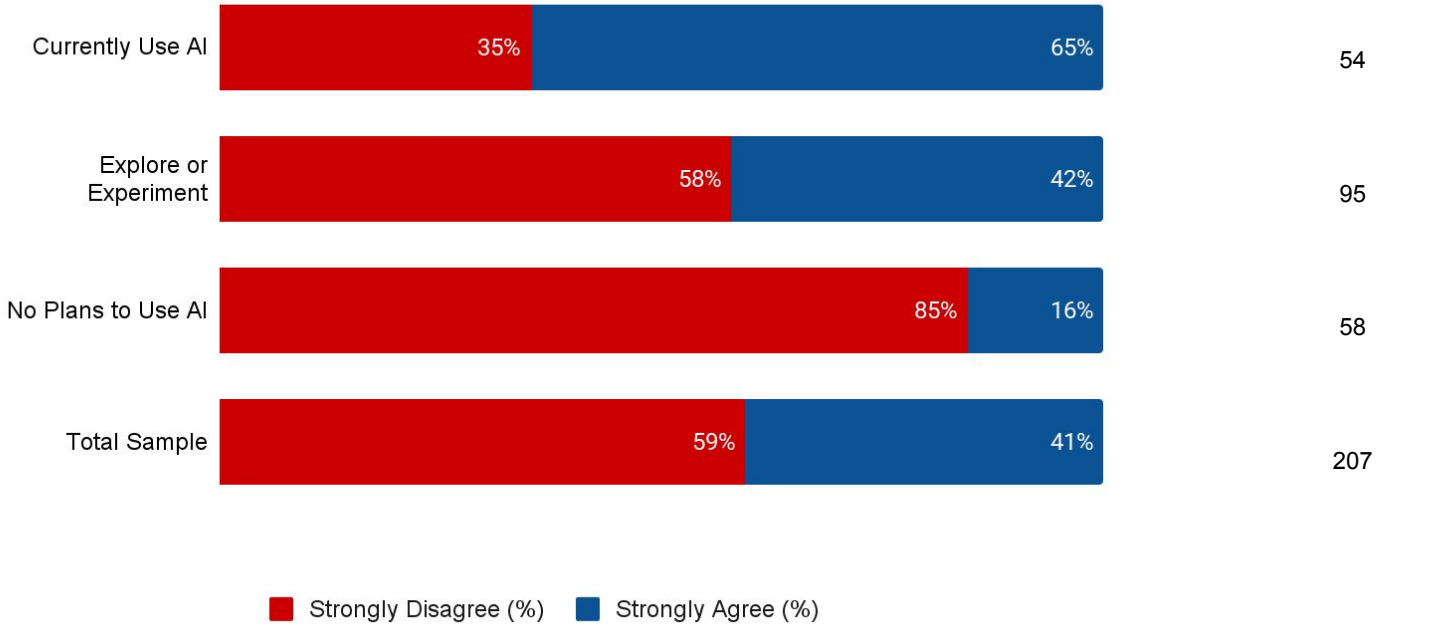
Share of respondents who strongly agree/disagree that, "I trust AI solutions from companies with which I already have a relationship."



Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q36 -Now we want to understand how you feel about AI in the context of your business. For each of the following statements, tell us the extent to which you agree or disagree: I trust AI solutions from companies with which I already have a relationship.

Even Well-Known Brands Must Earn Trust from Business Owners on AI

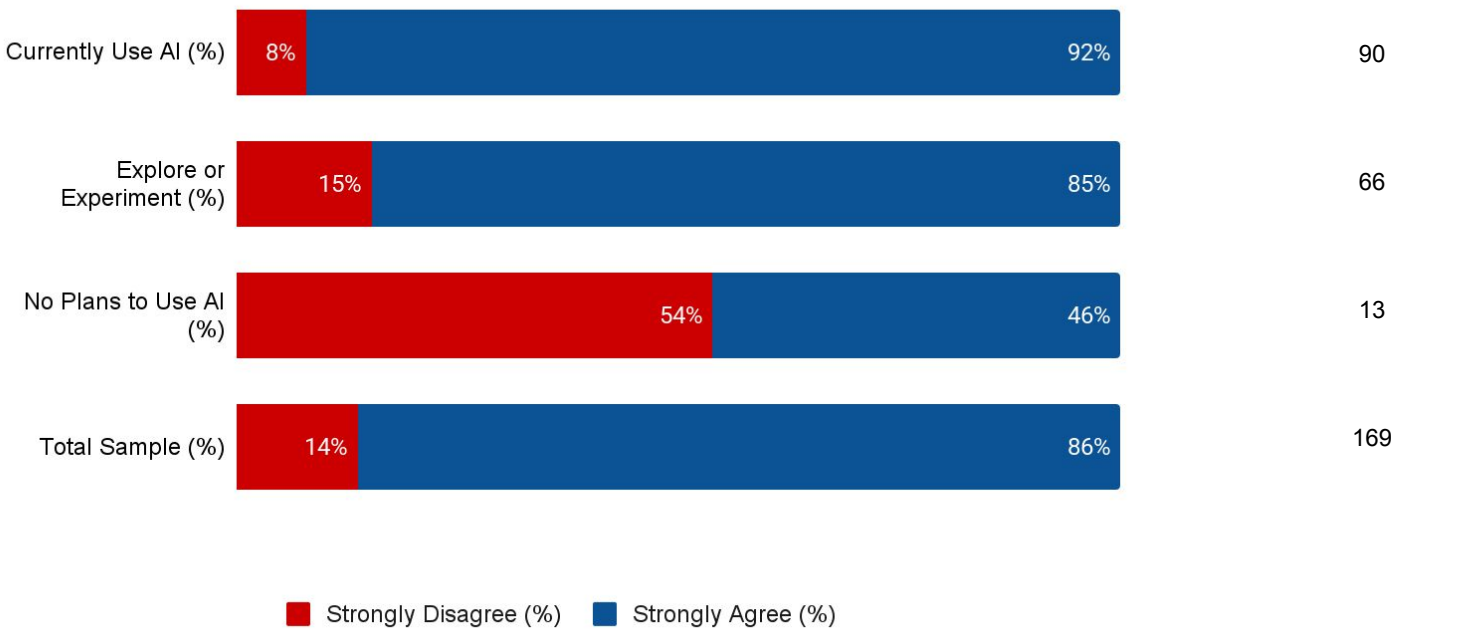
Share of respondents who strongly agree/disagree that, "I feel comfortable giving my business data to an AI provider if it is a well-known, trusted brand."



Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q39: Tell us the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements: I feel comfortable giving my business data to an AI provider if it is a well-known, trusted brand.

Business Owners Want AI Tools Tailored to Their Industry Contexts

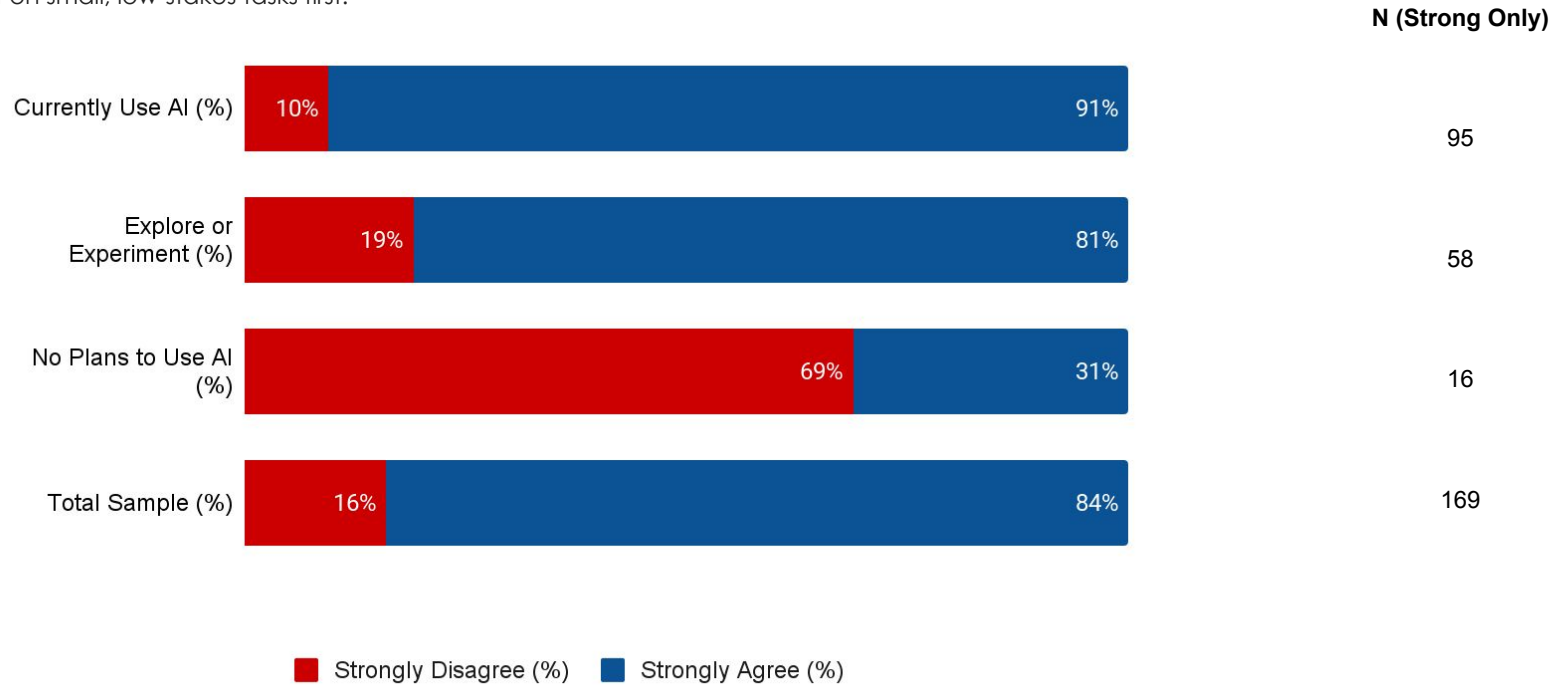
Share of respondents who strongly agree/disagree that, "AI tools must be tailored to my specific industry context, not just for small businesses in general."



Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q37 -Tell us the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements: AI tools must be tailored to my specific industry context, not just for small businesses in general.

Business Owners Want to Test AI First on Small, Low-Stakes Tasks

Share of respondents who strongly agree/disagree that, "I would feel more comfortable adopting AI if I could test it on small, low-stakes tasks first."



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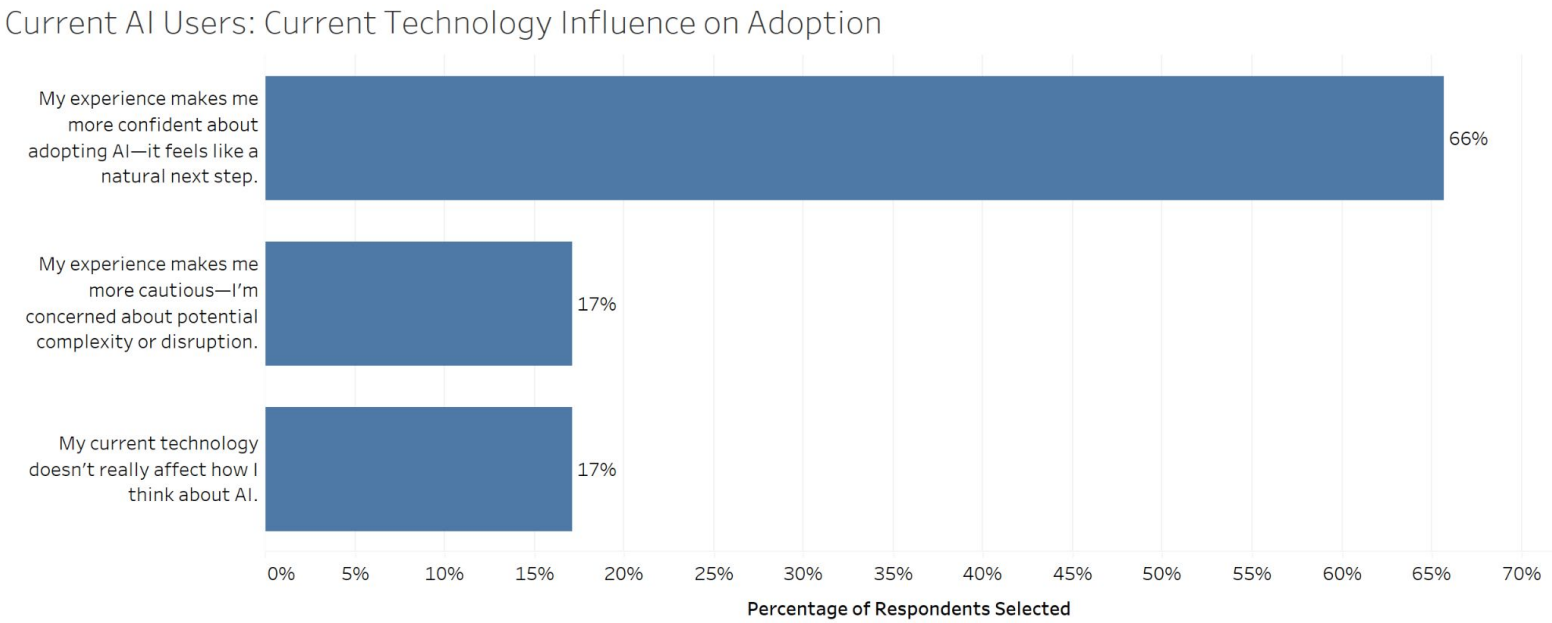
Q37 -Now we want to understand how you feel about AI in the context of your business. For each of the following statements, tell us the extent to which you agree or disagree: I would feel more comfortable adopting AI if I could test it on small, low-stakes tasks first.

Attitudes Toward Technology and Technology Uses

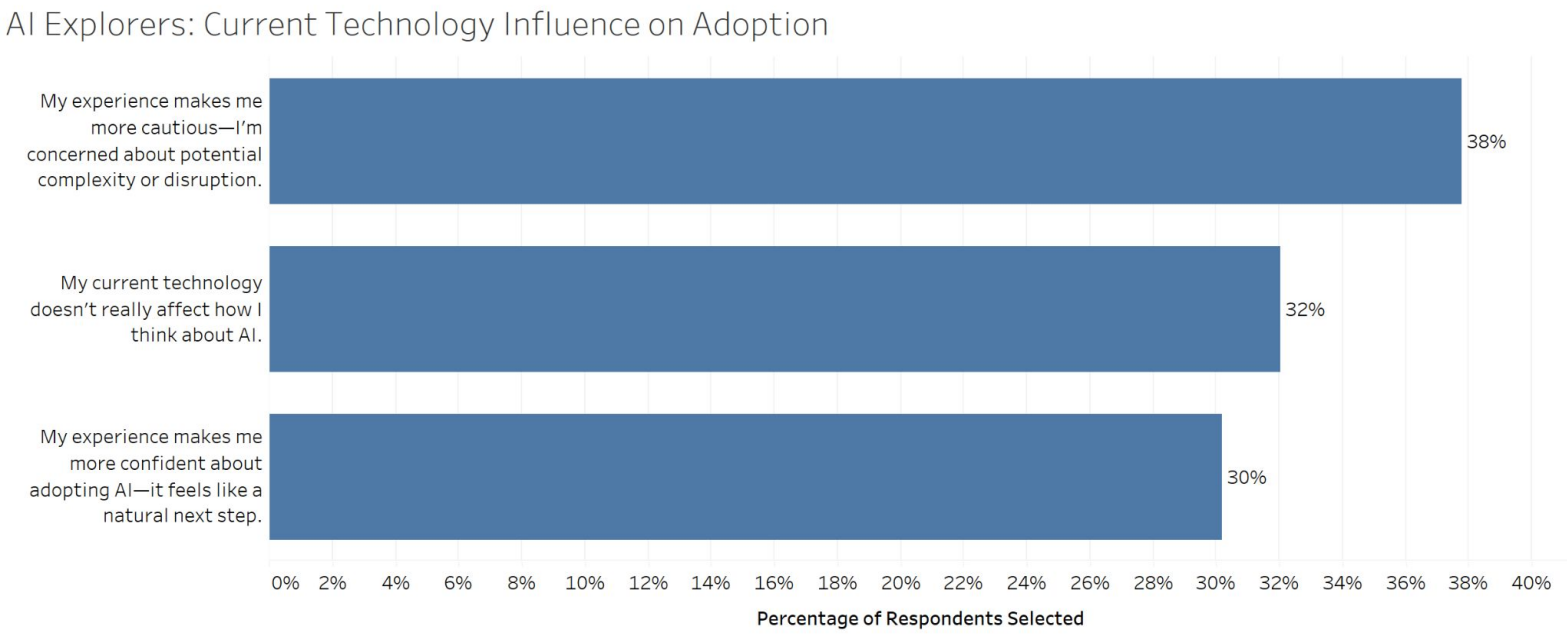
Positive Technology Experiences Boost AI Adoption Confidence for Current AI Users



n=239

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q45: Does the technology you currently use influence how you think about adopting AI?

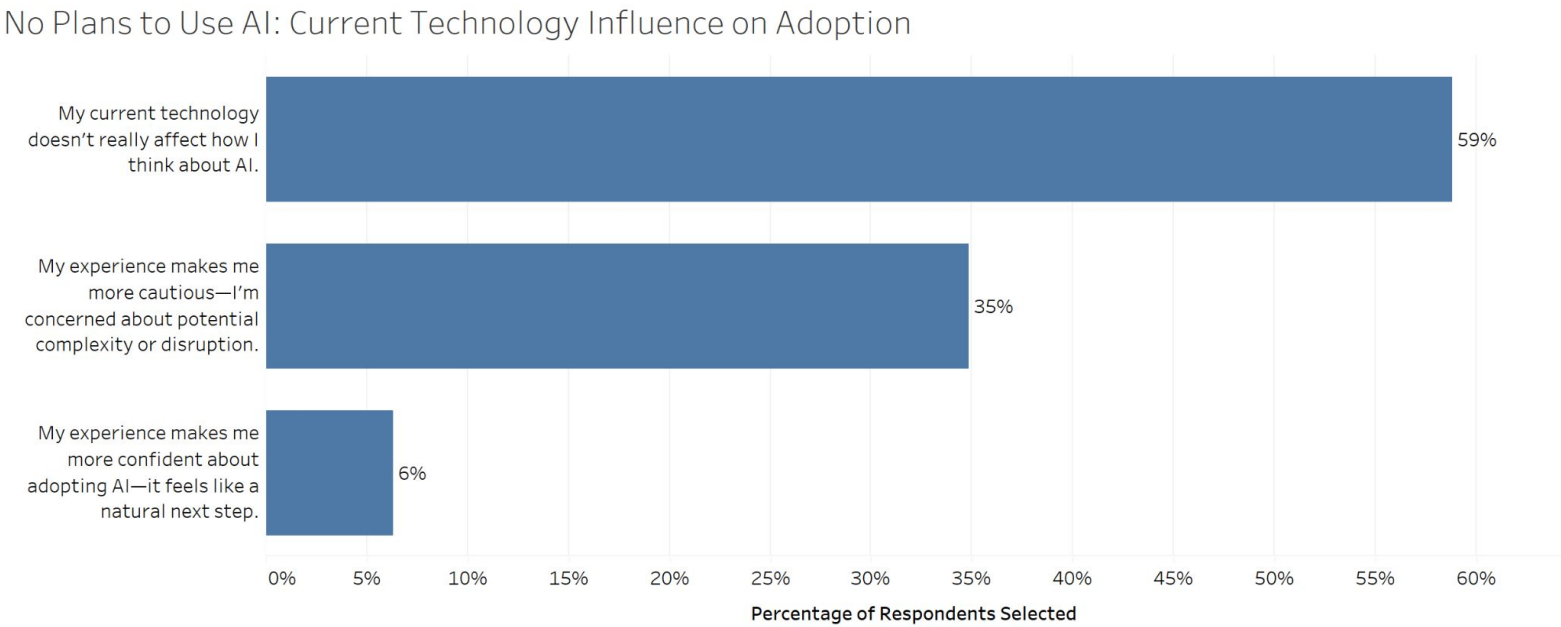
Technology Experience Shapes Caution and Confidence in AI Adoption for AI Explorers



n=487

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q45: Does the technology you currently use influence how you think about adopting AI?

Most Non Users Say Their Current Tech Does Not Influence Their Views on AI



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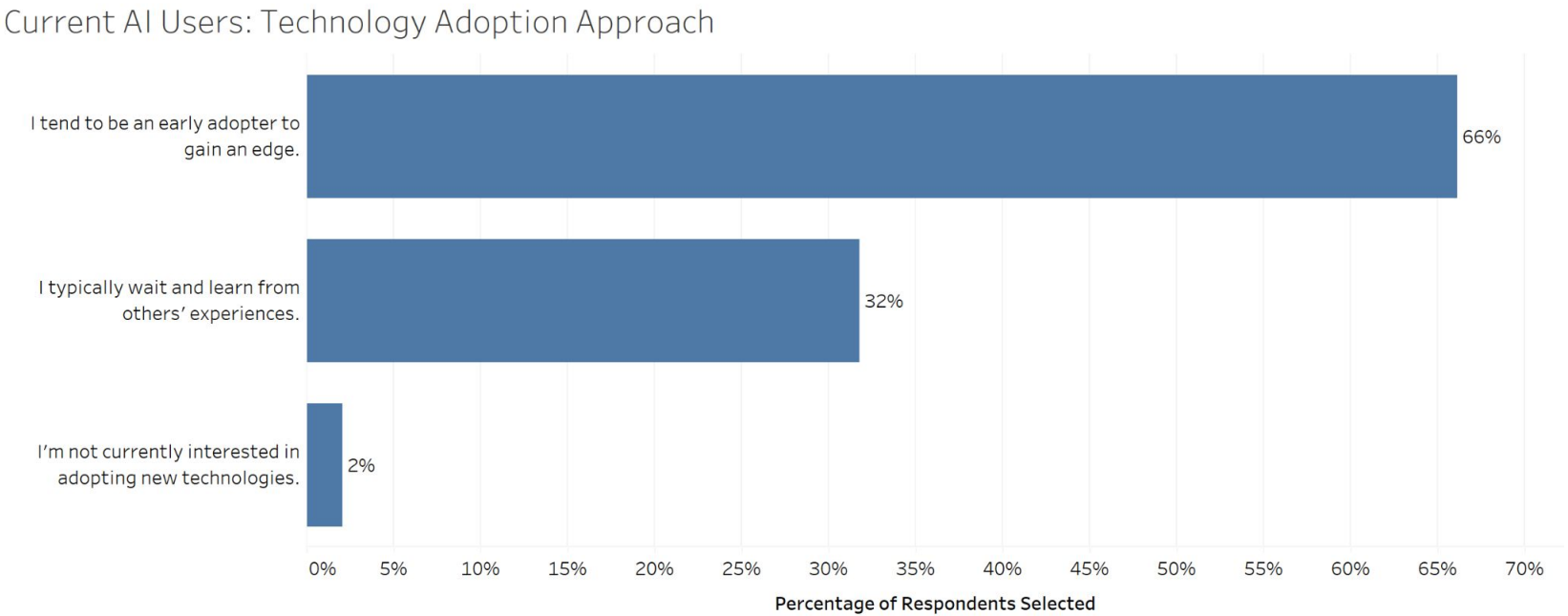
Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q45: Does the technology you currently use influence how you think about adopting AI?

Most Current AI Users Are Early Technology Adopters



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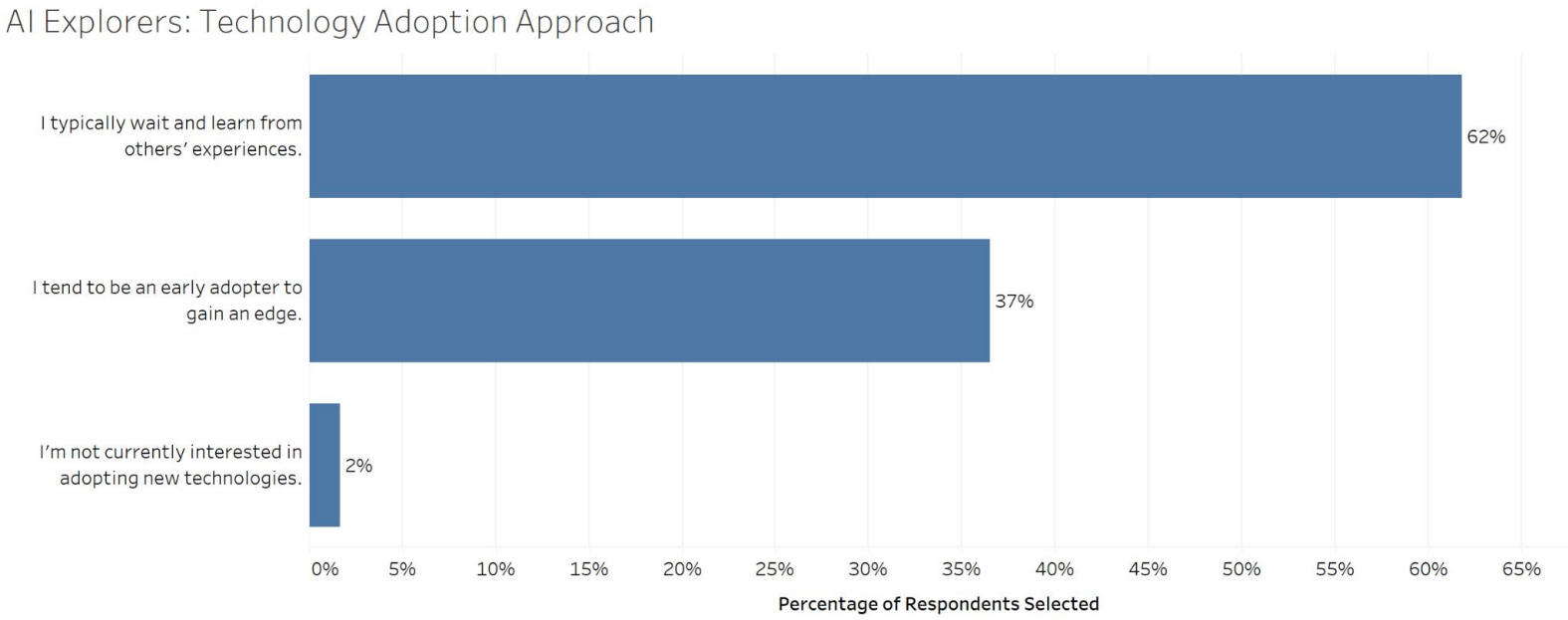
Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q42: Which best describes your current approach to adopting new technologies?

AI Explorers are Likely to “Wait and Watch” Before Adopting New Technology



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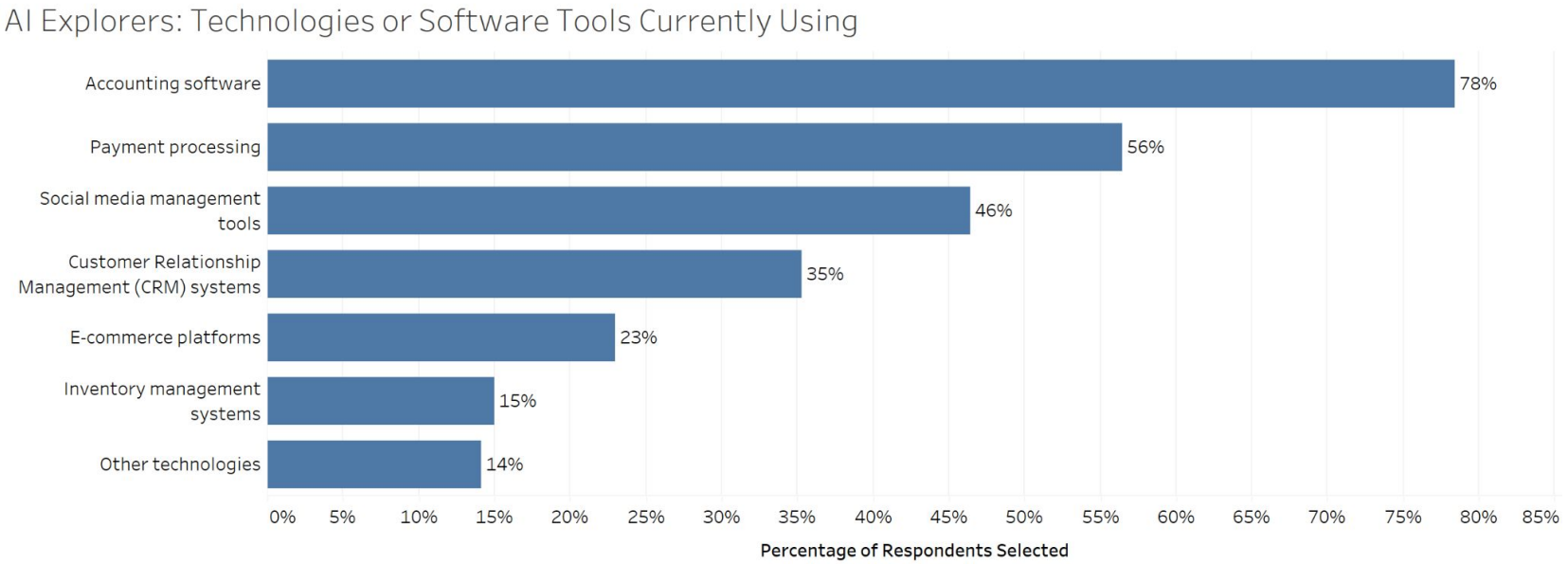
Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q42: Which best describes your current approach to adopting new technologies?

Accounting Software is Used by Most Business Owners in the Sample

	Currently Use AI (%)	Explore or Experiment (%)	No Plans to Use AI (%)	Total Sample (%)
Accounting software (e.g., QuickBooks, Xero)	77	78	67	75
Payment processing (e.g., PayPal, Square, Toast)	62	57	41	54
Social media management tools	69	46	26	47
Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems	64	35	15	38
E-commerce platforms (e.g., Shopify, WooCommerce)	34	23	11	23
Inventory management systems	16	15	9	14

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q43: Which, if any, technologies or software tools do you currently rely on in your business? (Select all that apply)

AI Explorers Use Software Solutions for Financial Management and Payments



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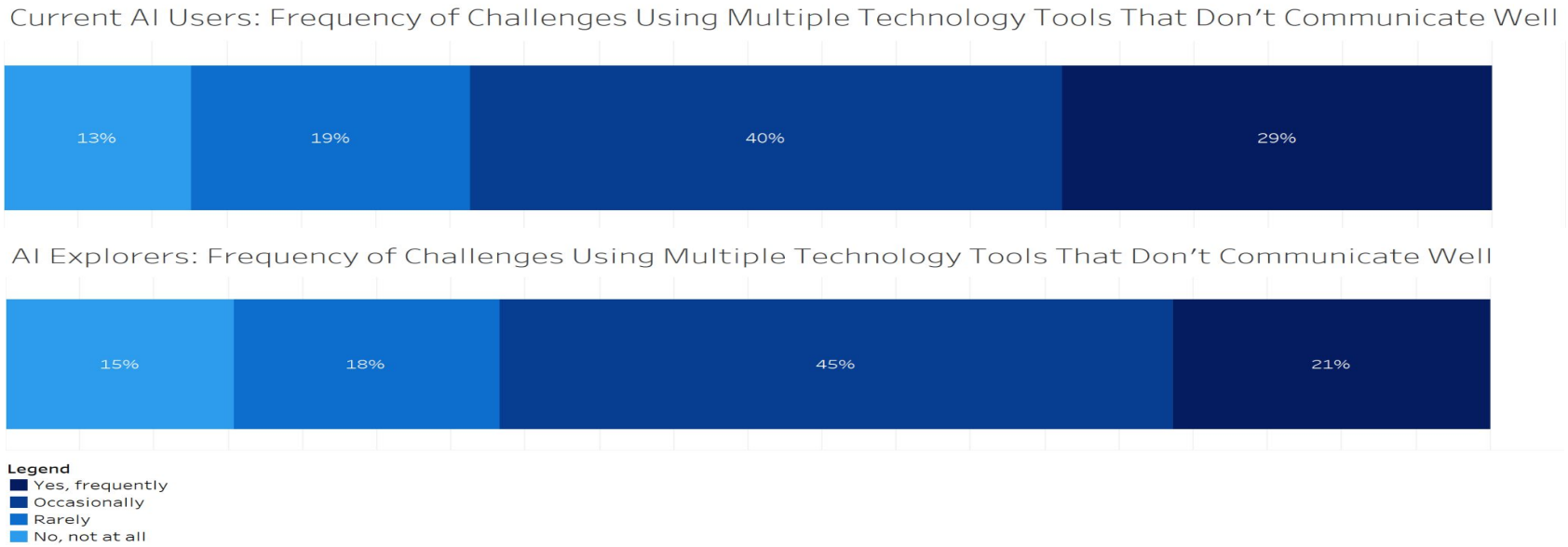
Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q43: Which, if any, technologies or software tools do you currently rely on in your business? (Select all that apply)

Majority of Current AI Users and AI Explorers Experience Challenges with Tech Tools that Don't Work Well Together



n=947

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q44: Currently, do you face challenges using multiple tools that don't communicate well (e.g., accounting software, payments systems, CRM, inventory systems)?

Technology Discovery

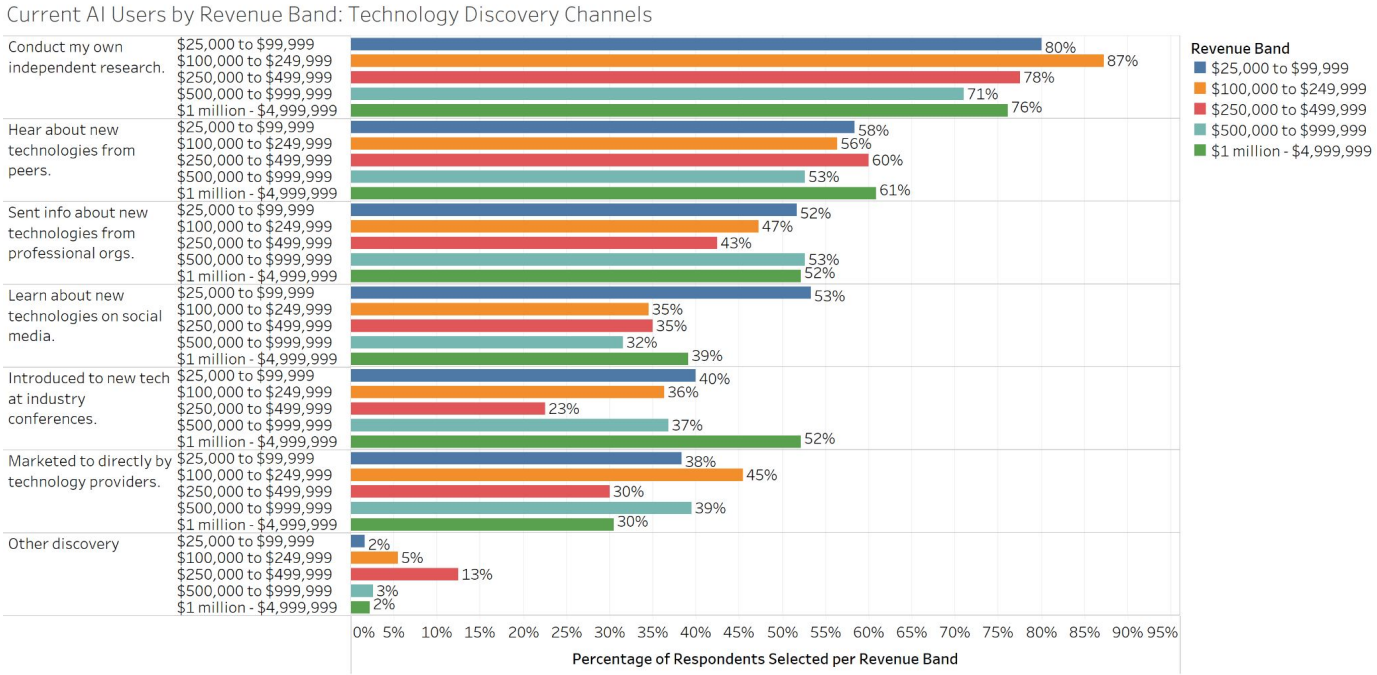
Most Business Owners Proactively Research New Technology Options*

	Currently Use AI (%)	Explore or Experiment (%)	No Plans to Use AI (%)	Total Sample (%)
I conduct my own independent research.*	79	61	54	64
I hear about new technologies from my friends and peers (e.g., other small business owners).	58	51	35	49
I am sent information about new technologies from professional organizations or networks that I am a member of.	49	37	30	39
I learn about new technologies on social media (e.g., Instagram, TikTok)	40	31	26	32
I am introduced to or demo new technologies at industry/business conferences.	38	30	25	31
I am marketed to directly by technology providers.	37	19	20	24

*Comments suggest both the owner and team members

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q41: How do you most commonly learn about new technologies or tools for your business?

Technology Discovery Patterns Vary Sharply by Business Revenue for Current AI Users

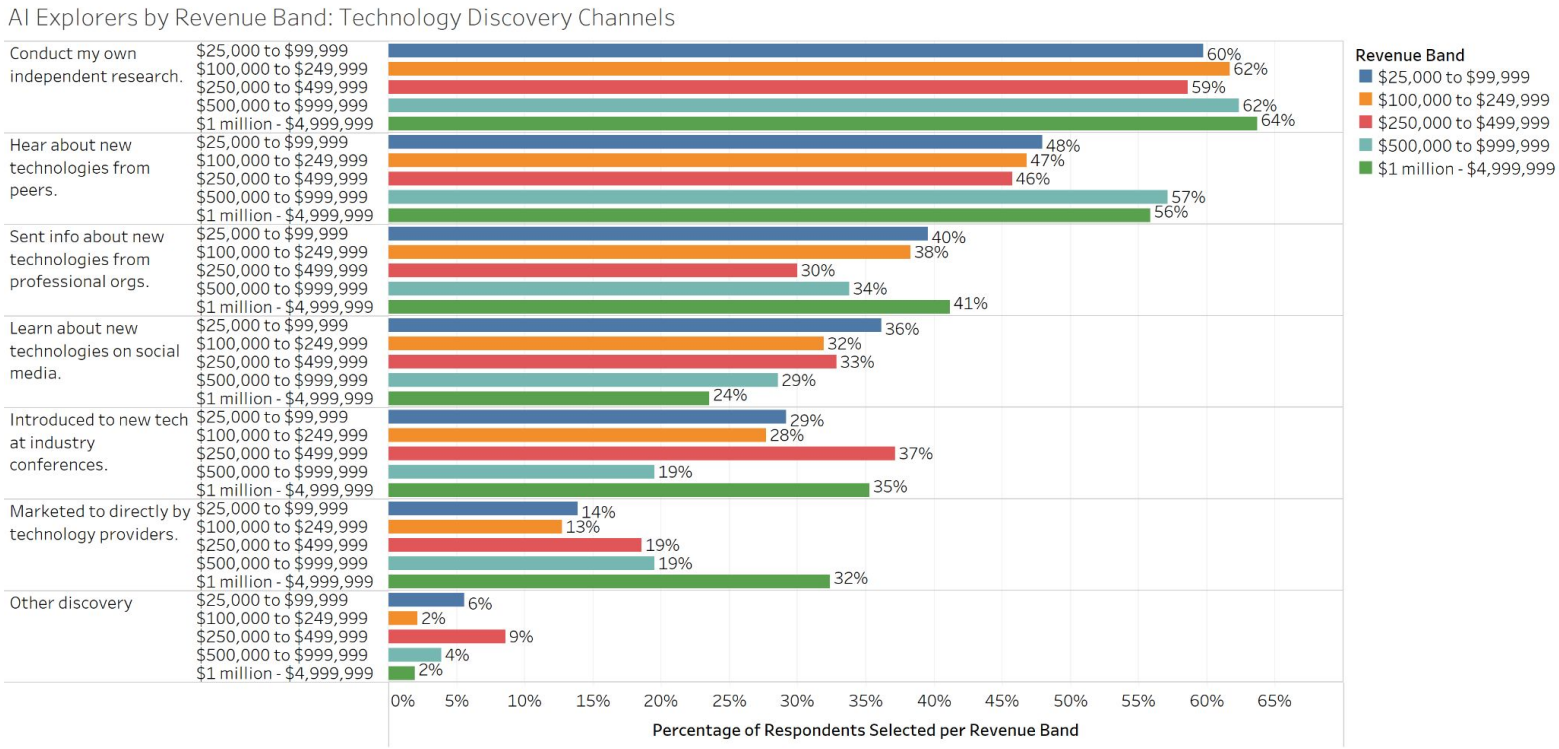


- Business owners **below $250k in annual revenue skew more toward independent research**
- Businesses with **annual revenue below $100k learn about new technologies via social media** at a significantly higher rate than those above $100k in revenue
- Businesses with annual revenue **greater than $1M** are much more likely to be **introduced to new technology at industry conferences**

n=239

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q41: How do you most commonly learn about new technologies or tools for your business? (Select all that apply)

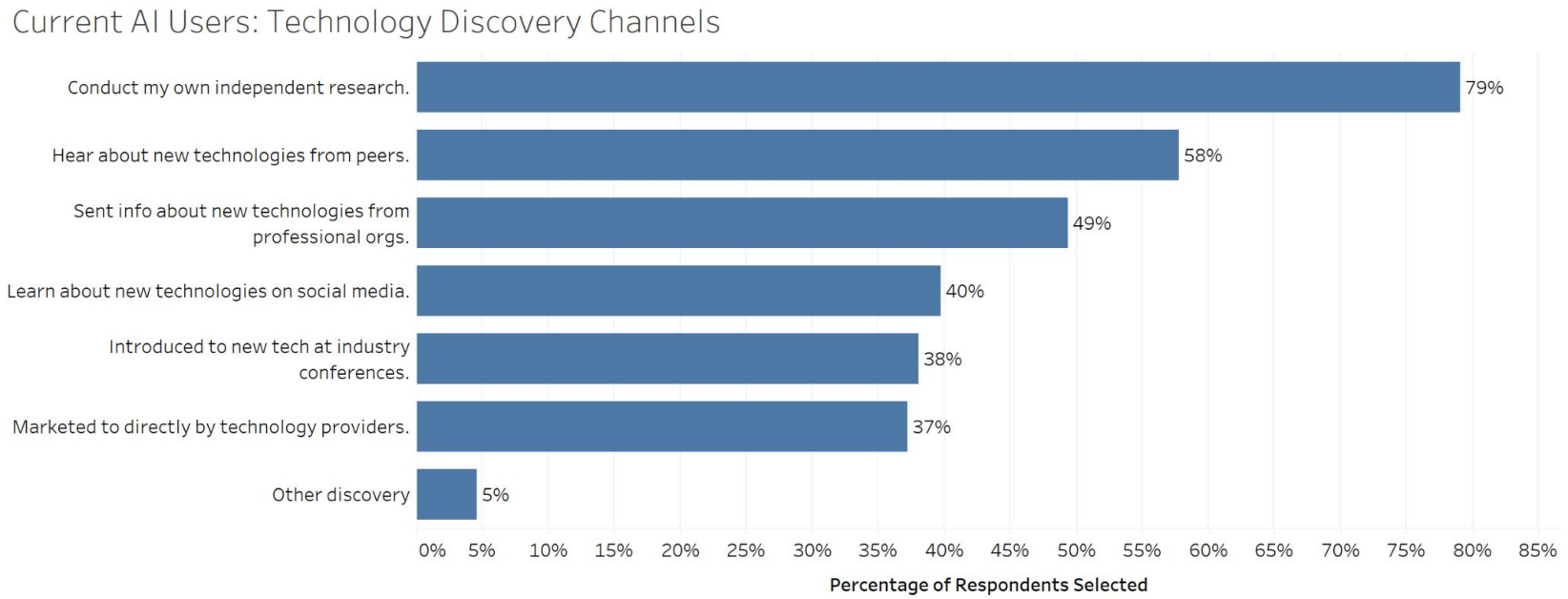
Higher-Revenue AI Explorer Firms Are More Likely to Leverage Professional Networks for Tech Discovery



n=487

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q41: How do you most commonly learn about new technologies or tools for your business? (Select all that apply)

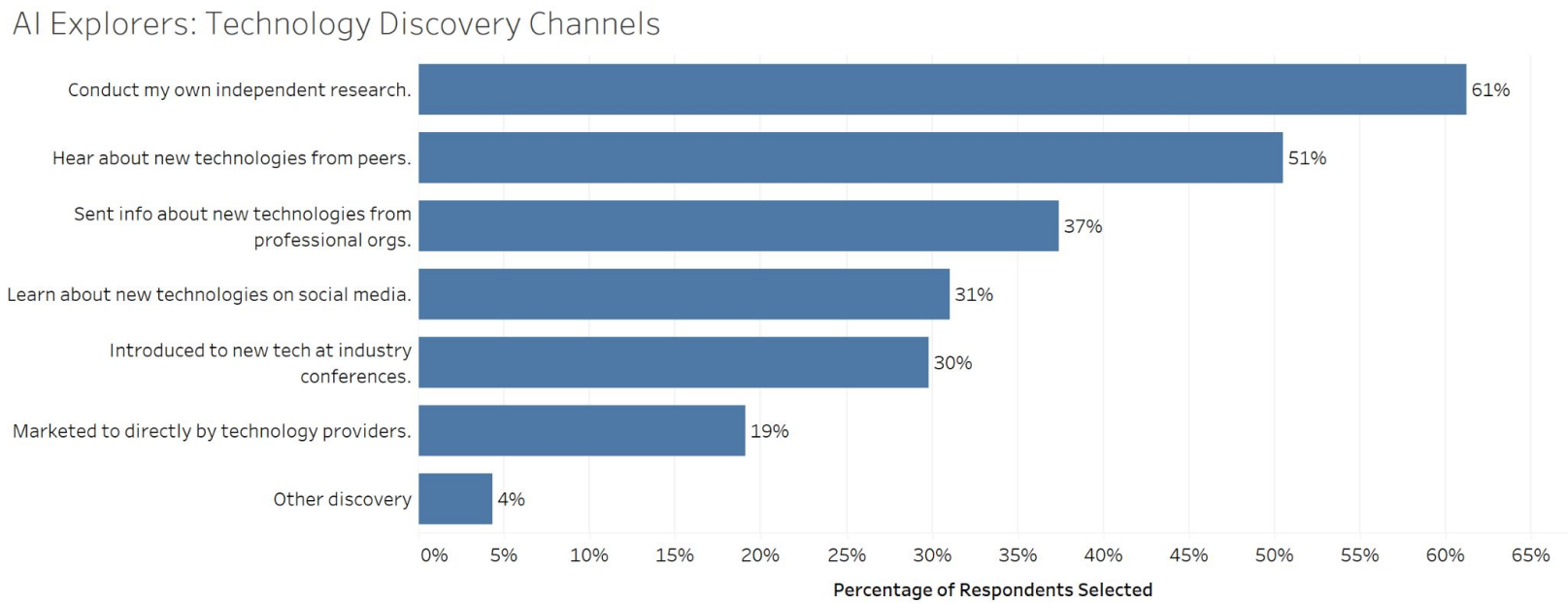
Independent Research Drives Technology Discovery for Current AI Users



n=239

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q41: How do you most commonly learn about new technologies or tools for your business? (Select all that apply)

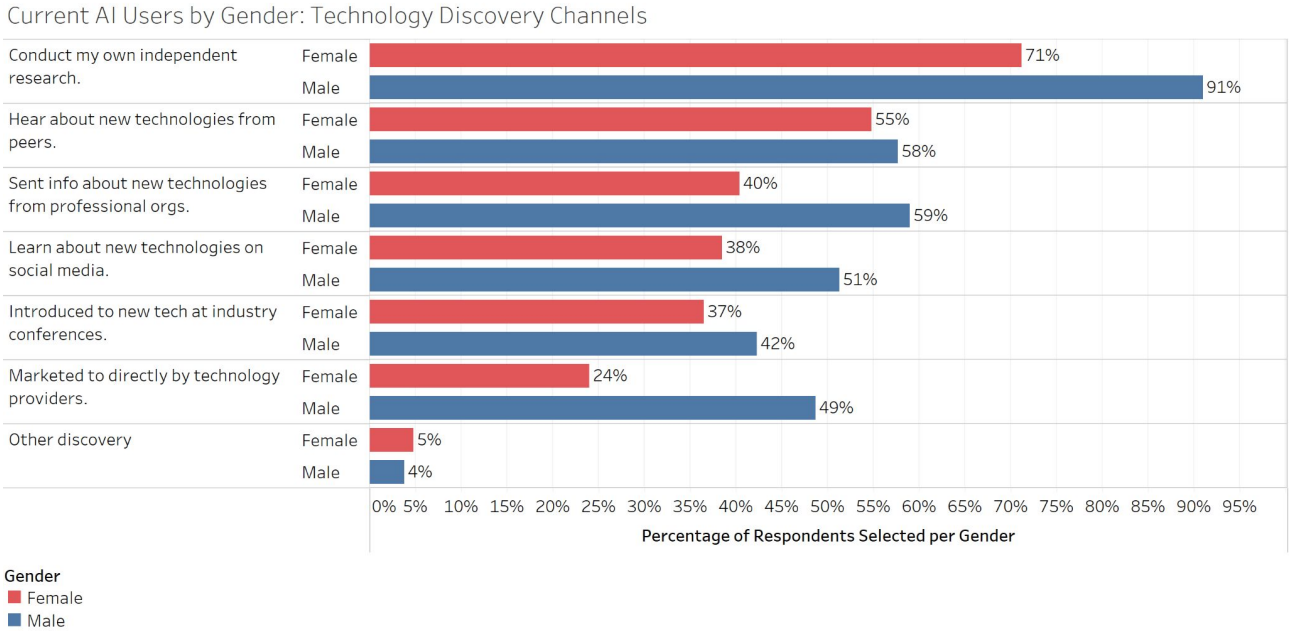
Direct Marketing is Rarely the Path to Technology Discovery for AI Explorers



n=487

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q41: How do you most commonly learn about new technologies or tools for your business? (Select all that apply)

A Significant Gap Exists Between Business Technology Marketing Targeting Men vs. Women



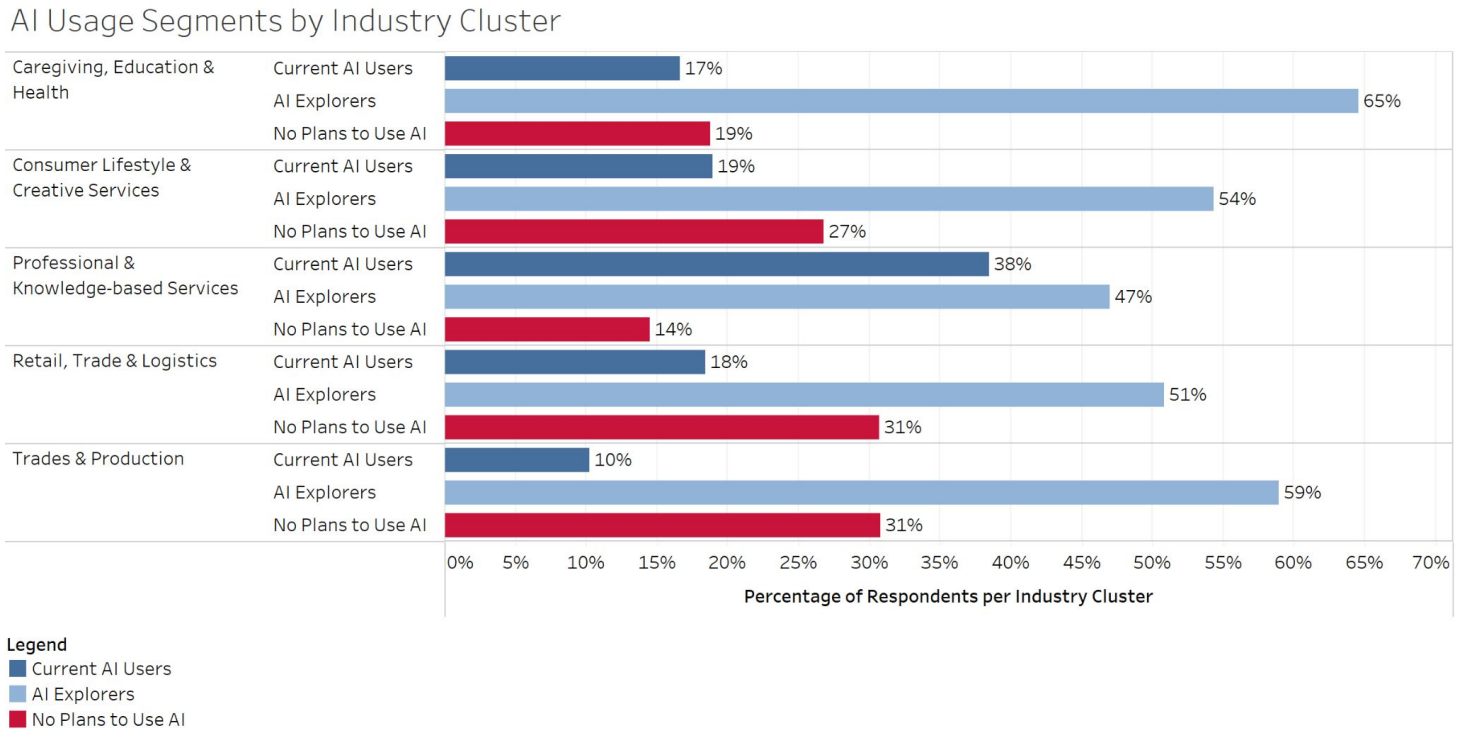
- **A much greater proportion of men report receiving marketing about new technologies** from professional organizations, social media, and technology providers
- **Women business owners are half as likely to be marketed to directly** by technology providers
- **Men business owners** currently using AI are more likely to **conduct their own independent research** to discovery new technologies

n=182

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q41: How do you most commonly learn about new technologies or tools for your business? (Select all that apply)

Business Profiles – Industry

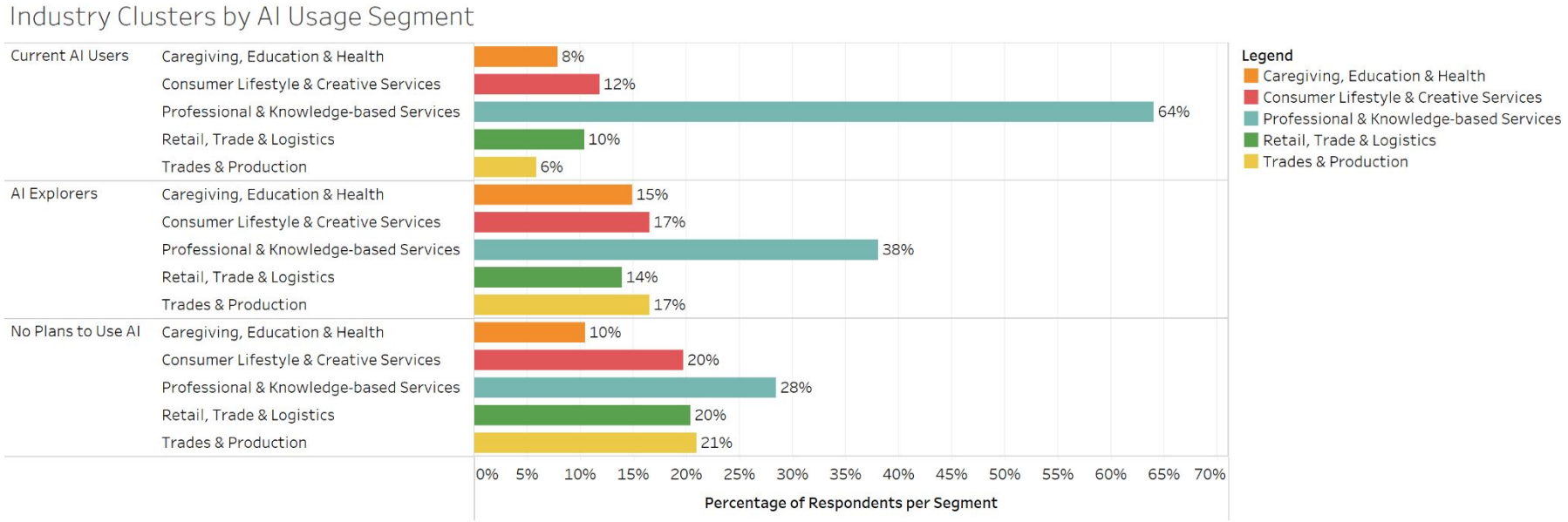
AI Exploration Outpaces Adoption Across Industry Clusters



n=792

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q59: Which of the following best describes your company's industry?

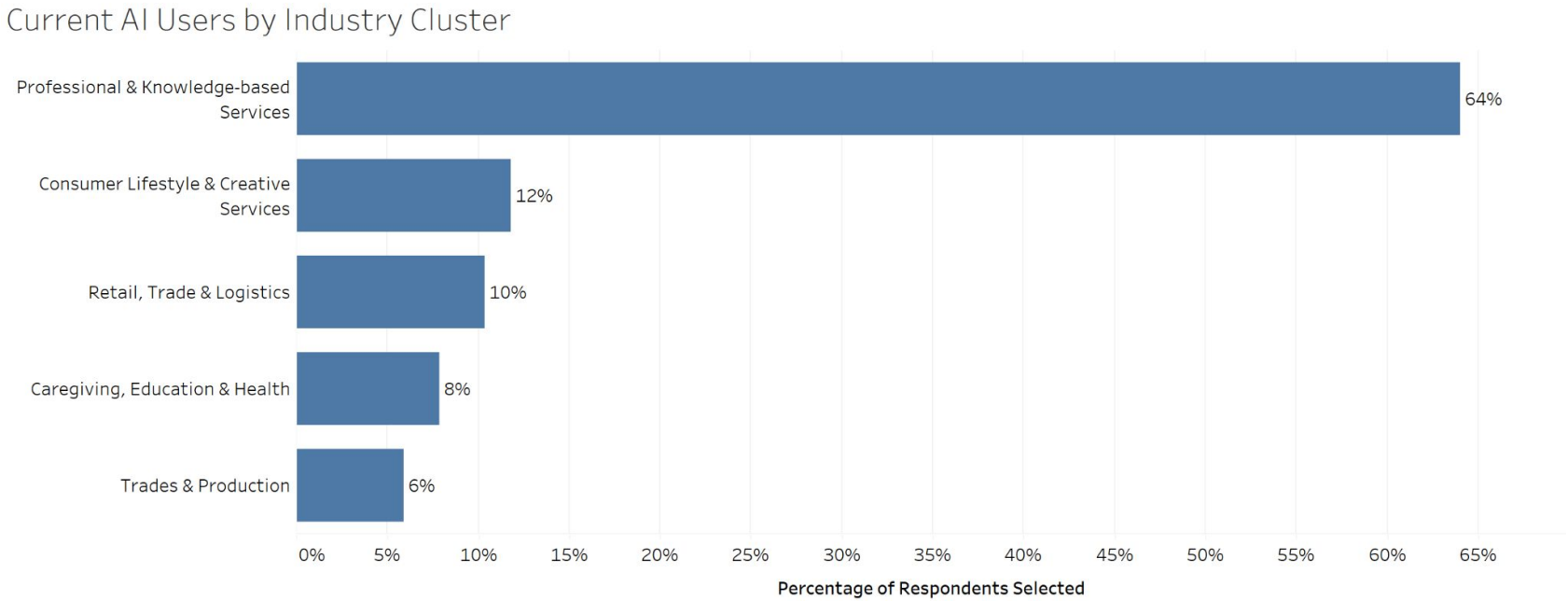
Professional & Knowledge Services Dominate Current AI Users, While Non-Users Are Distributed Across Industry Clusters



n=792

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q59: Which of the following best describes your company's industry?

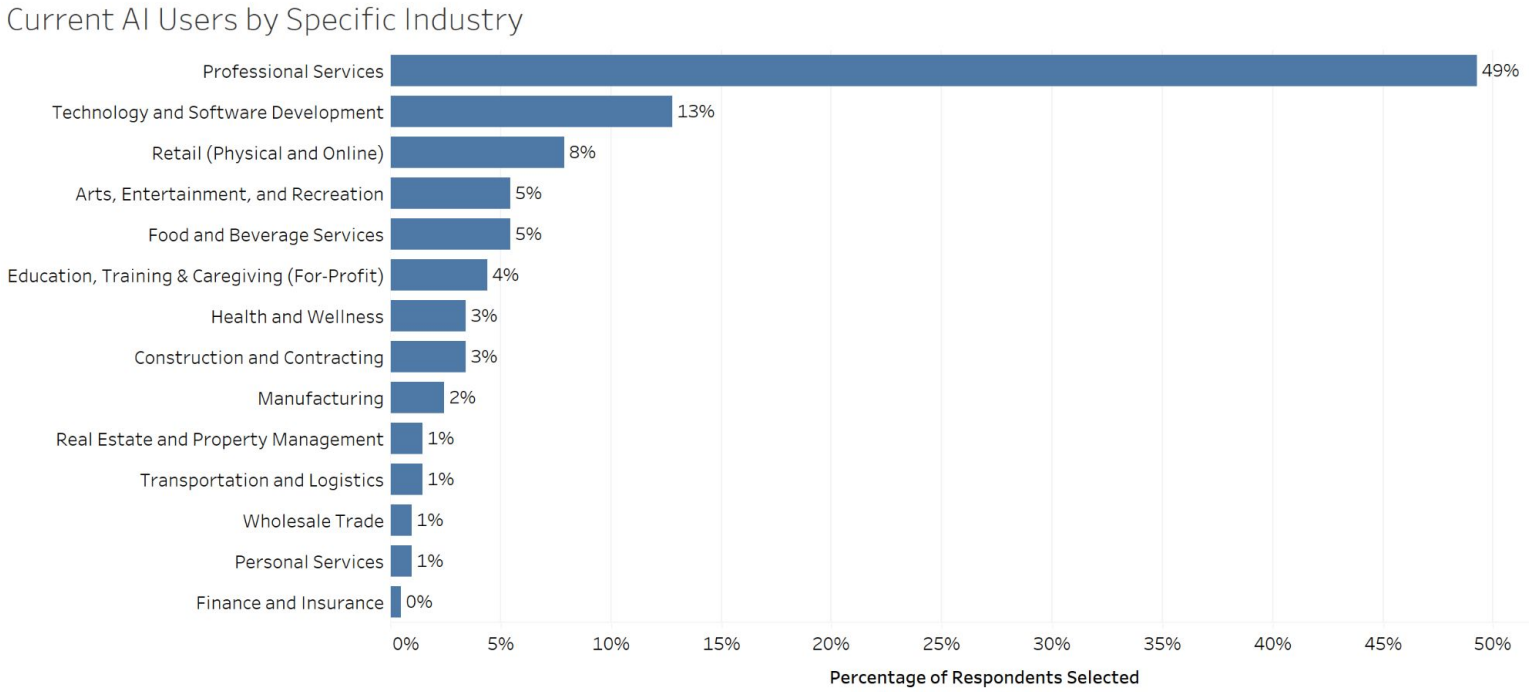
Current AI Users Skew Heavily Toward Knowledge-Driven Industries



n=203

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q59: Which of the following best describes your company's industry?

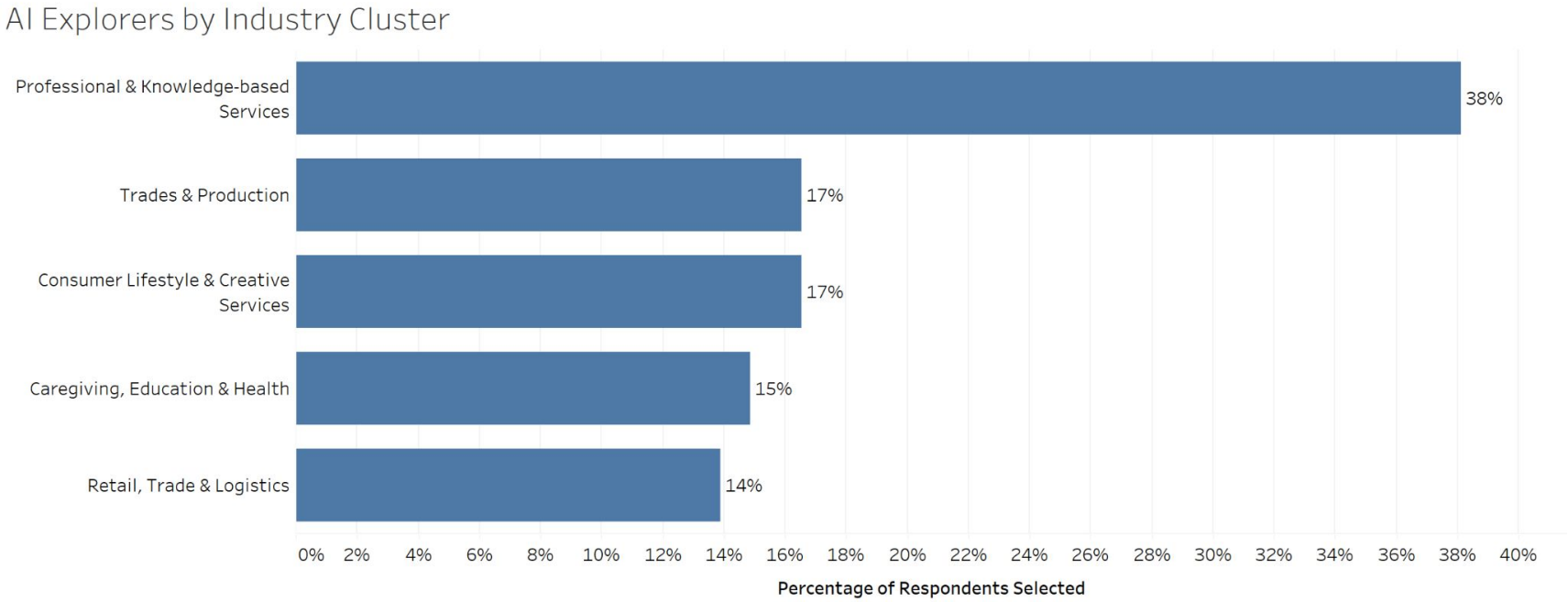
Professional Services and Technology Development Dominate AI Usage Across Industries



n=203

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q59: Which of the following best describes your company's industry?

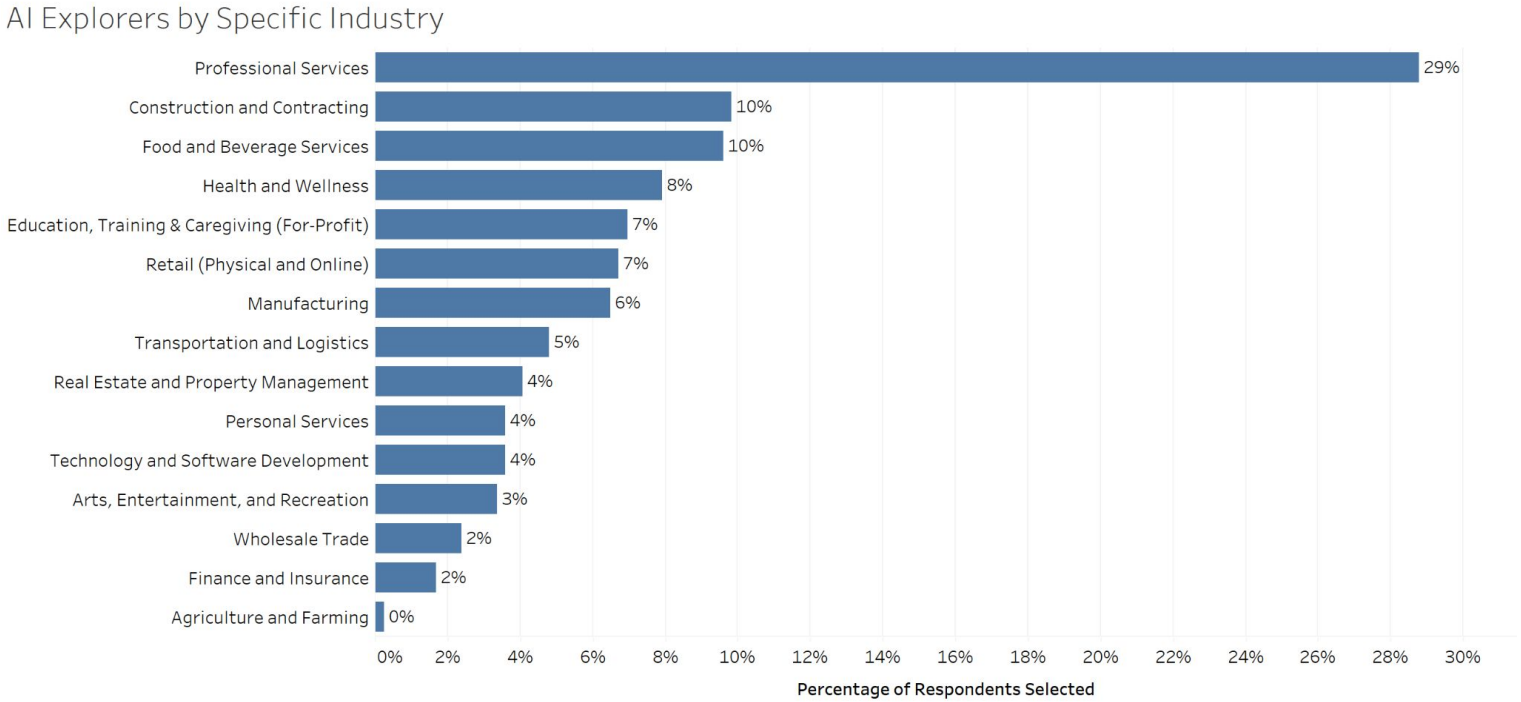
AI Explorers Are Concentrated in the Professional Services Sector



n=417

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q59: Which of the following best describes your company's industry?

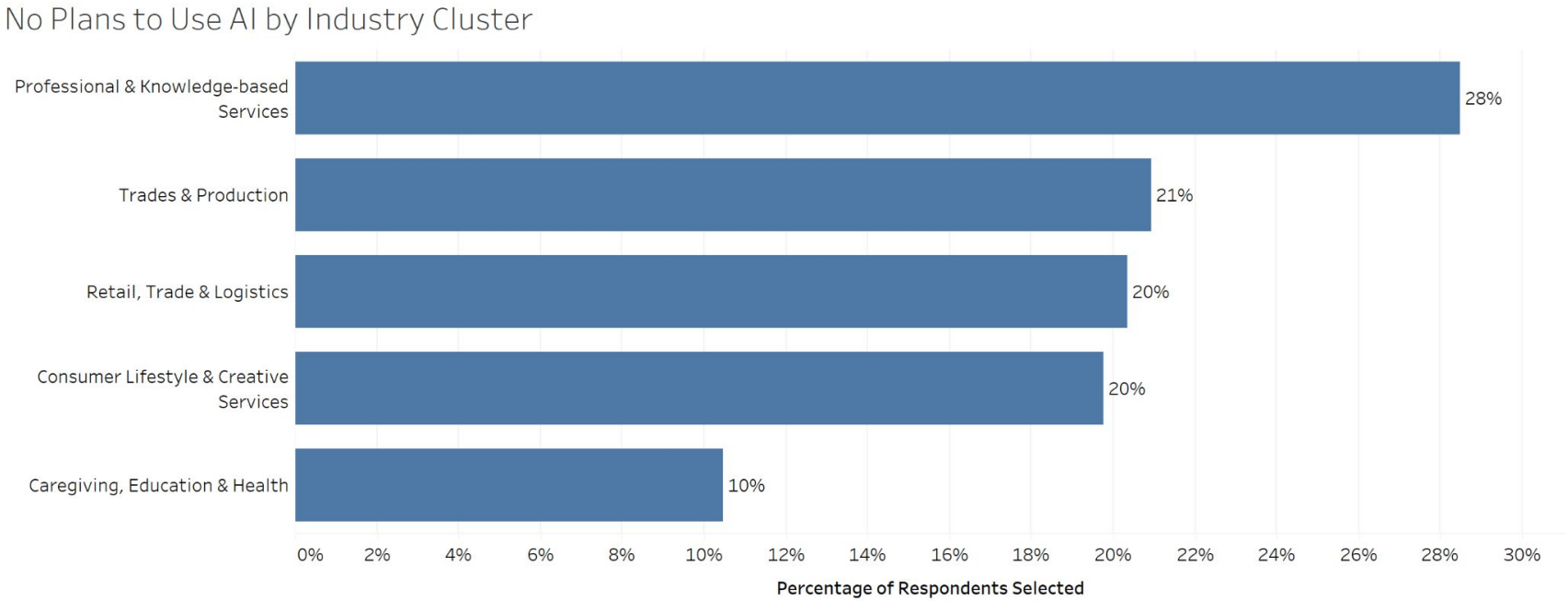
AI Explorers Are Mostly in Professional Services, with Strong Representation from Construction and Food Industries As Well



n=417

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q59: Which of the following best describes your company's industry?

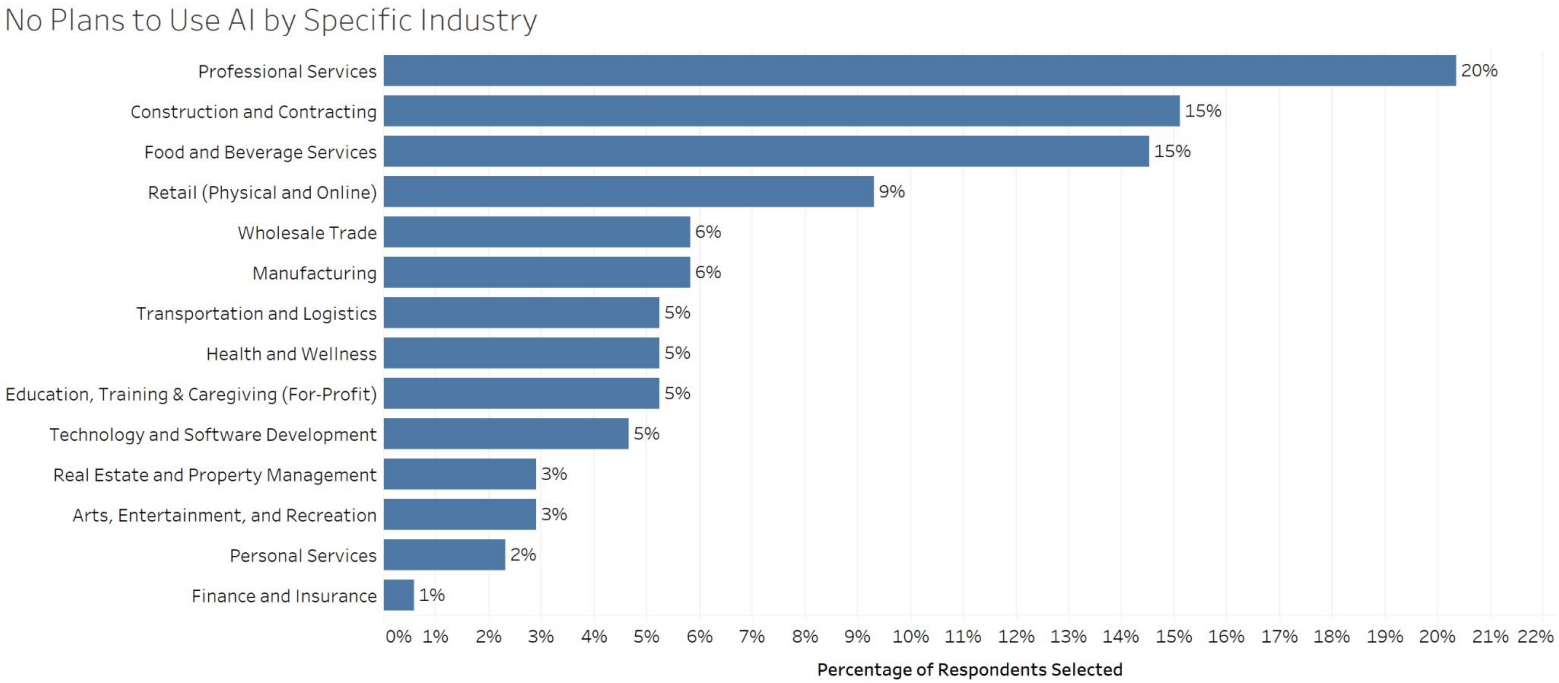
Non-Users Are Spread Across a Variety of Sectors



n=172

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q59: Which of the following best describes your company's industry?

Professional Services, Construction, and Food Industries Lead in No AI Adoption Plans

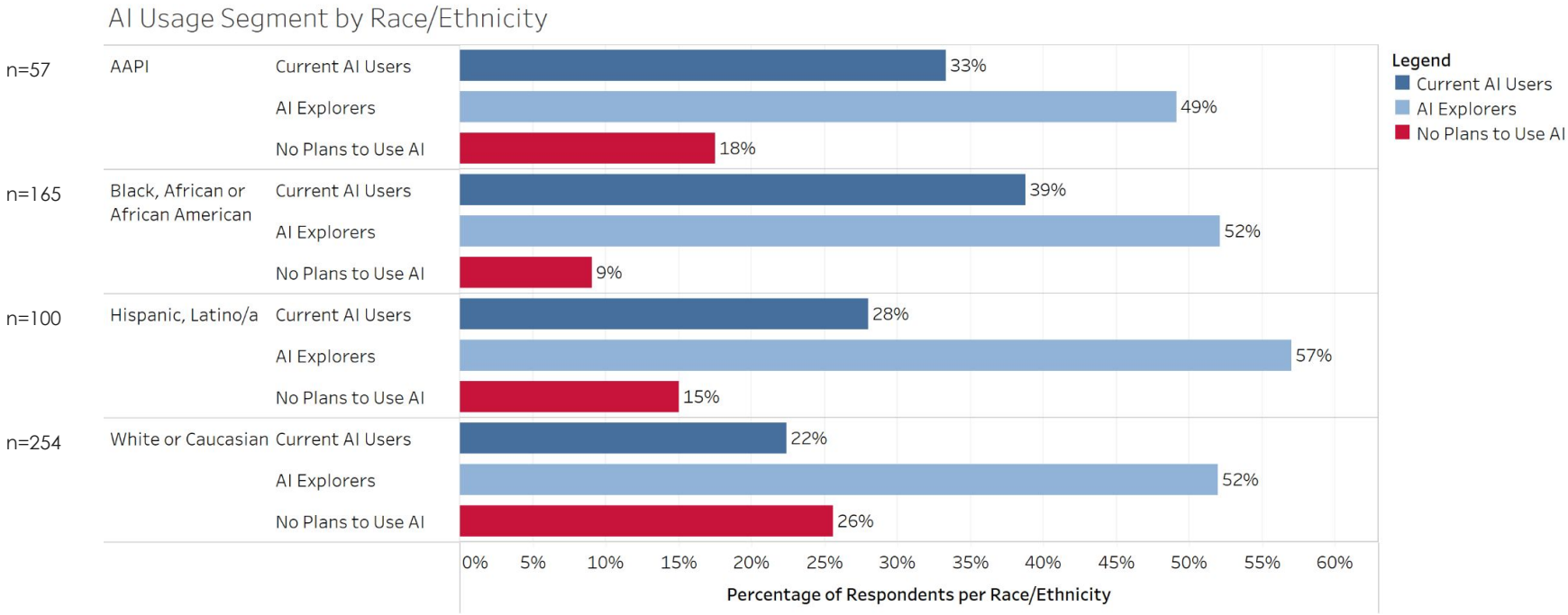


n=172

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q59: Which of the following best describes your company's industry?

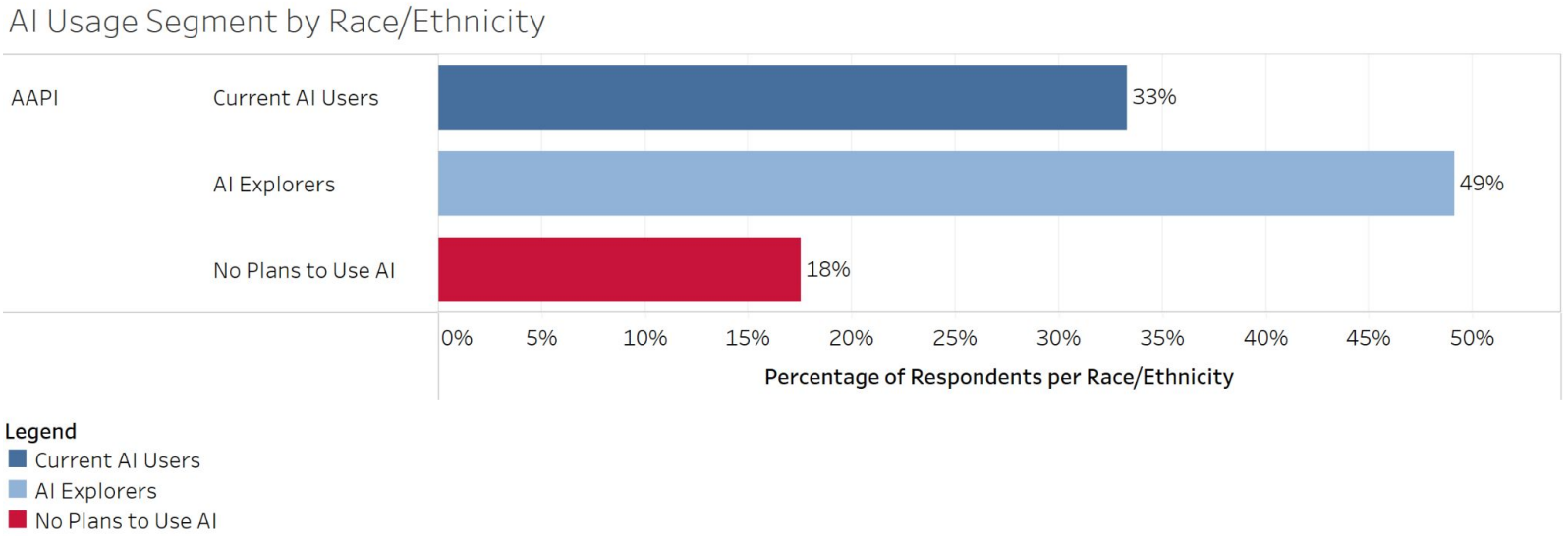
User Profiles - Owners

AI Curiosity and Adoption Highest Among Small Business Owners of Color



Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q17: Which of the following best describes how your business uses AI technologies?

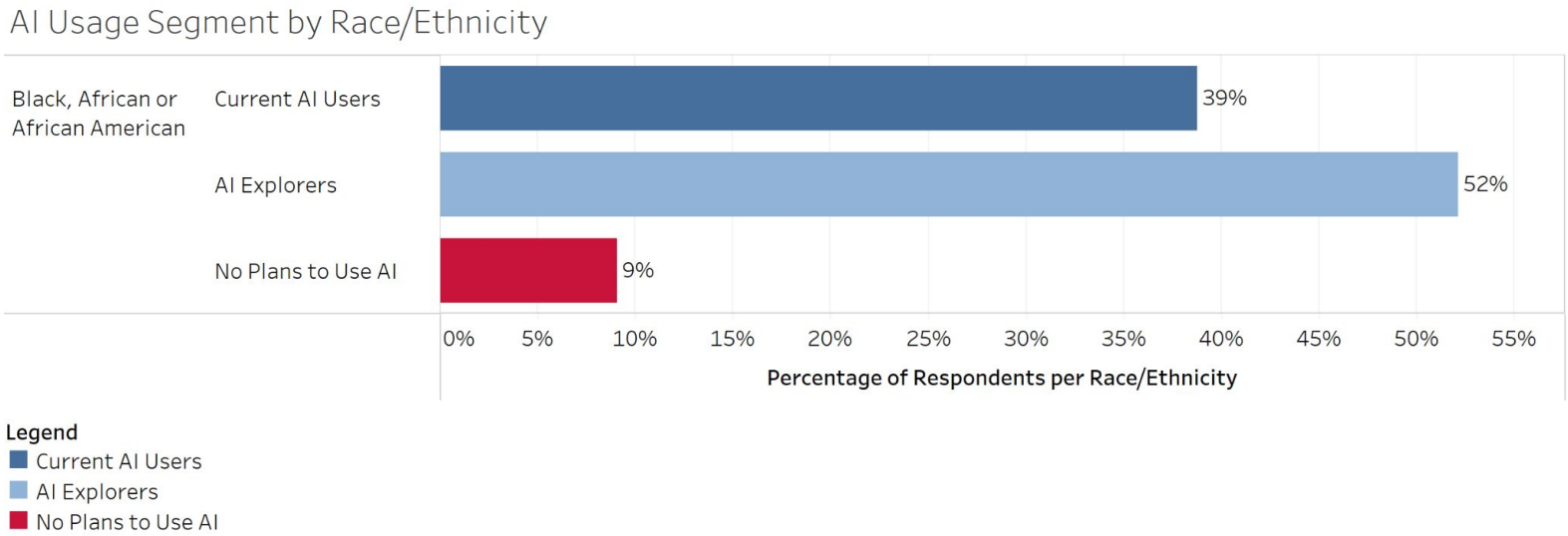
AAPI-Owned Businesses Show High Openness to AI



n=57

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q17: Which of the following best describes how your business uses AI technologies?

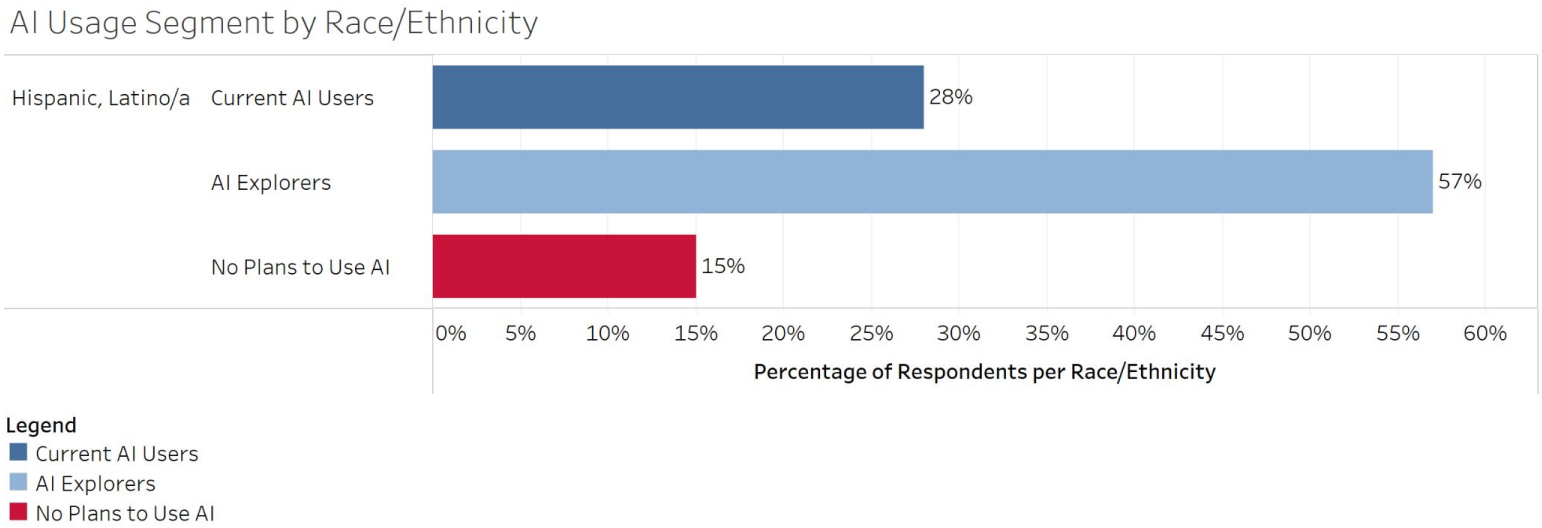
Black-Owned Businesses Are Broadly Embracing AI Use and Exploration



n=165

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q17: Which of the following best describes how your business uses AI technologies?

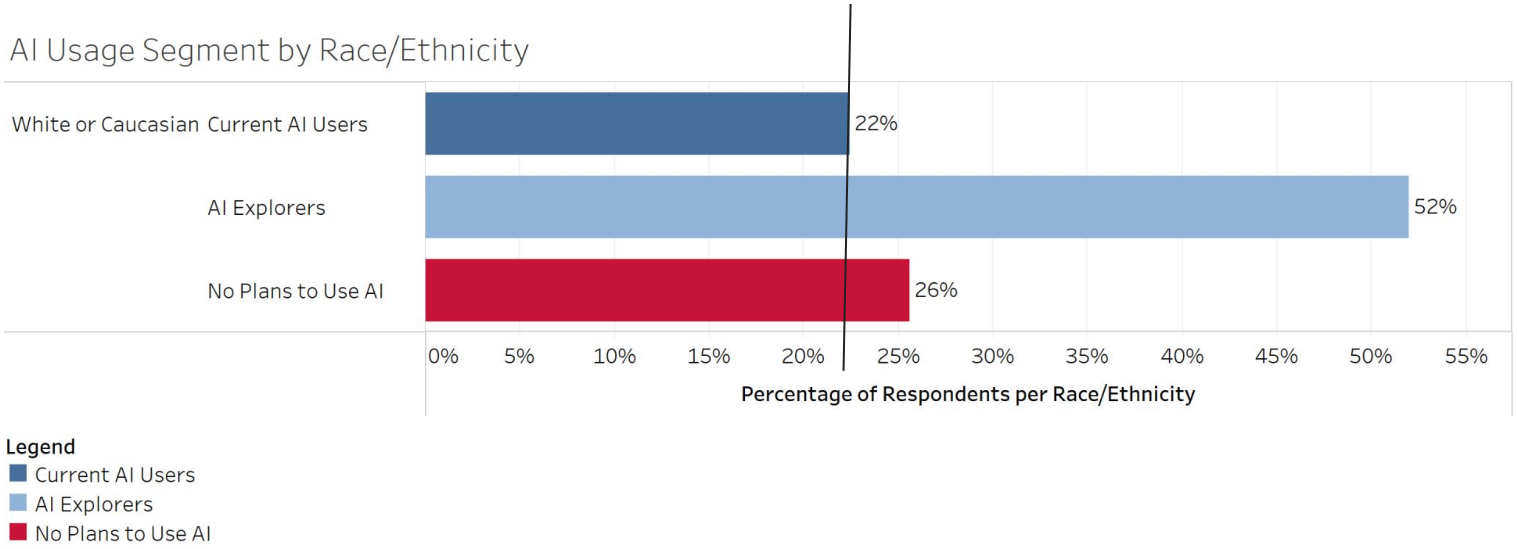
Majority of Latino/a-Owned Businesses are Open to AI



n=100

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q17: Which of the following best describes how your business uses AI technologies?

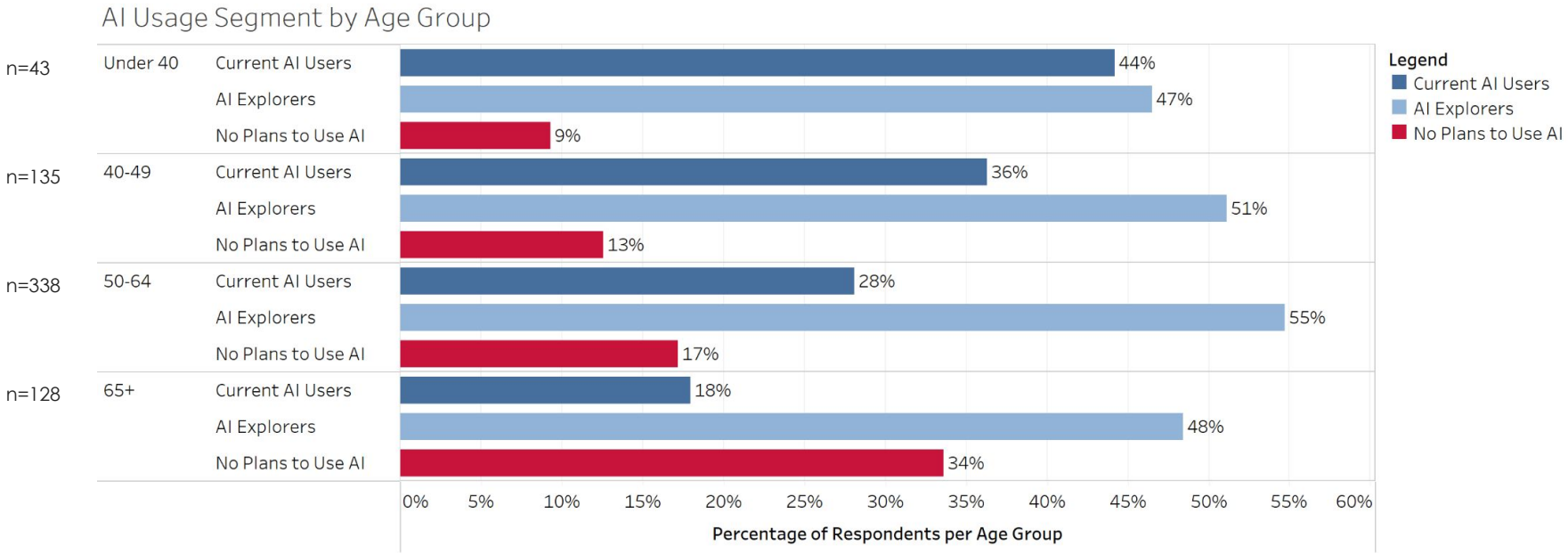
More White-Owned Businesses are Hesitant than Current AI Users



n=254

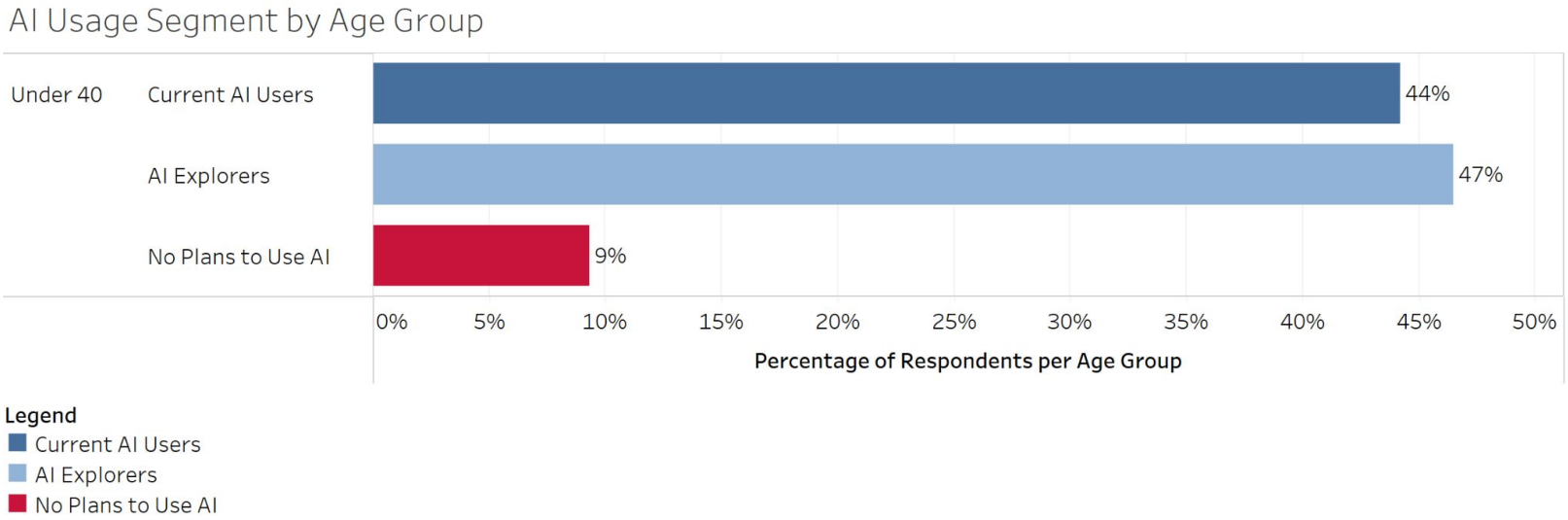
Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q17: Which of the following best describes how your business uses AI technologies?

AI Interest Peaks Among Owners Aged 50-64, While Younger Owners More Likely to Be Using AI Already



Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q17: Which of the following best describes how your business uses AI technologies?

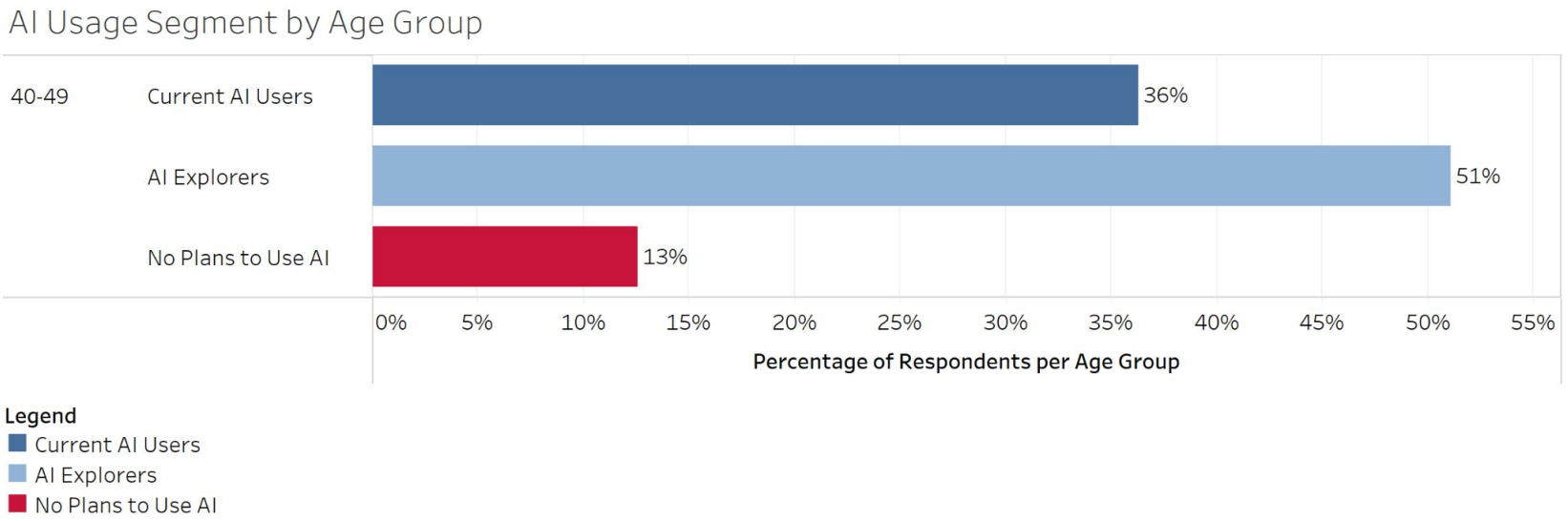
Young Business Owners Lead in AI Adoption



n=43

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q17: Which of the following best describes how your business uses AI technologies?

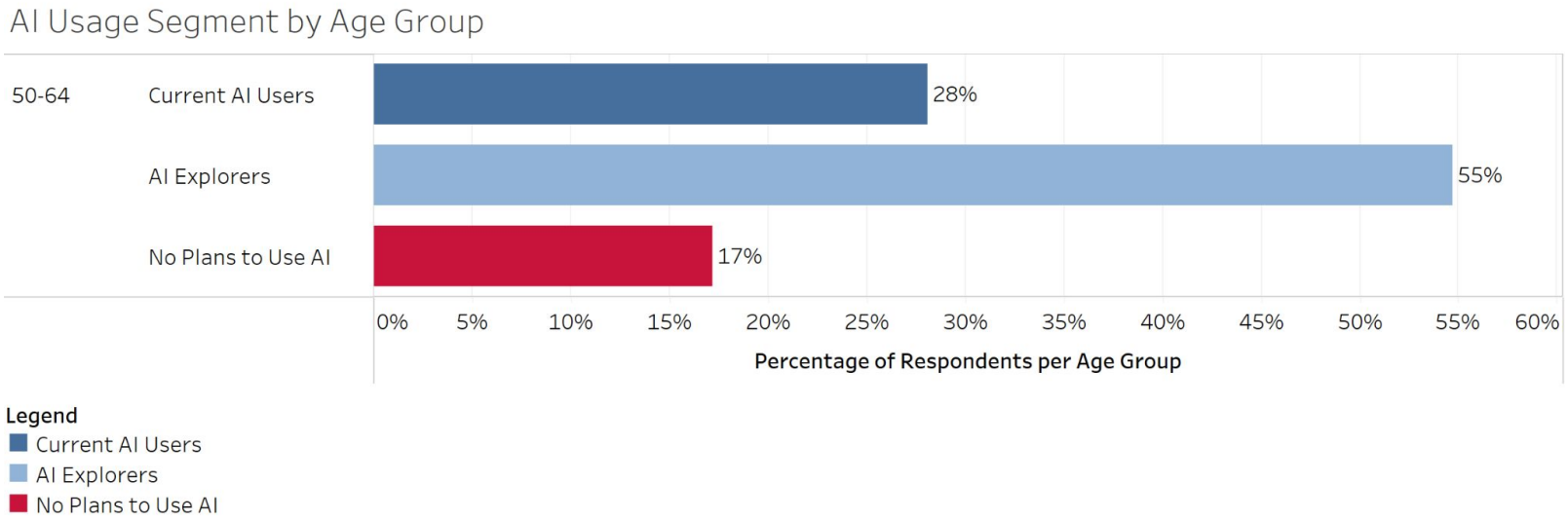
Majority of 40-49 Year Olds Are Engaging with AI in Some Capacity



n=135

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q17: Which of the following best describes how your business uses AI technologies?

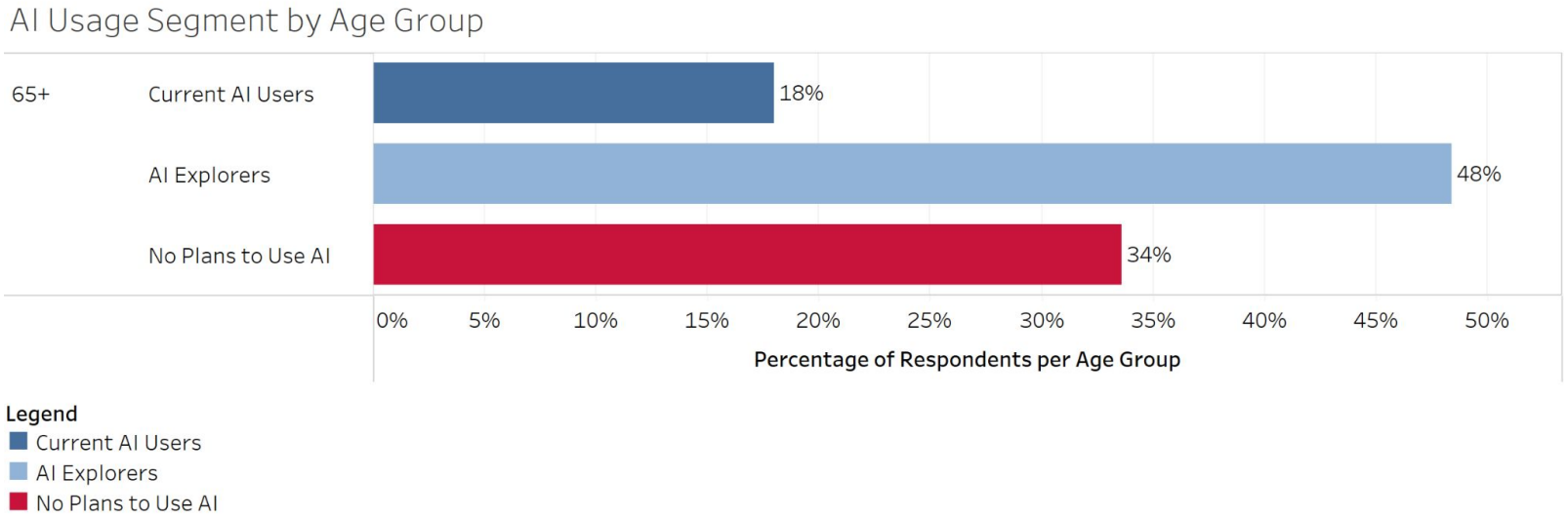
Majority of 50-64 Year Olds are AI Explorers



n=334

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q17: Which of the following best describes how your business uses AI technologies?

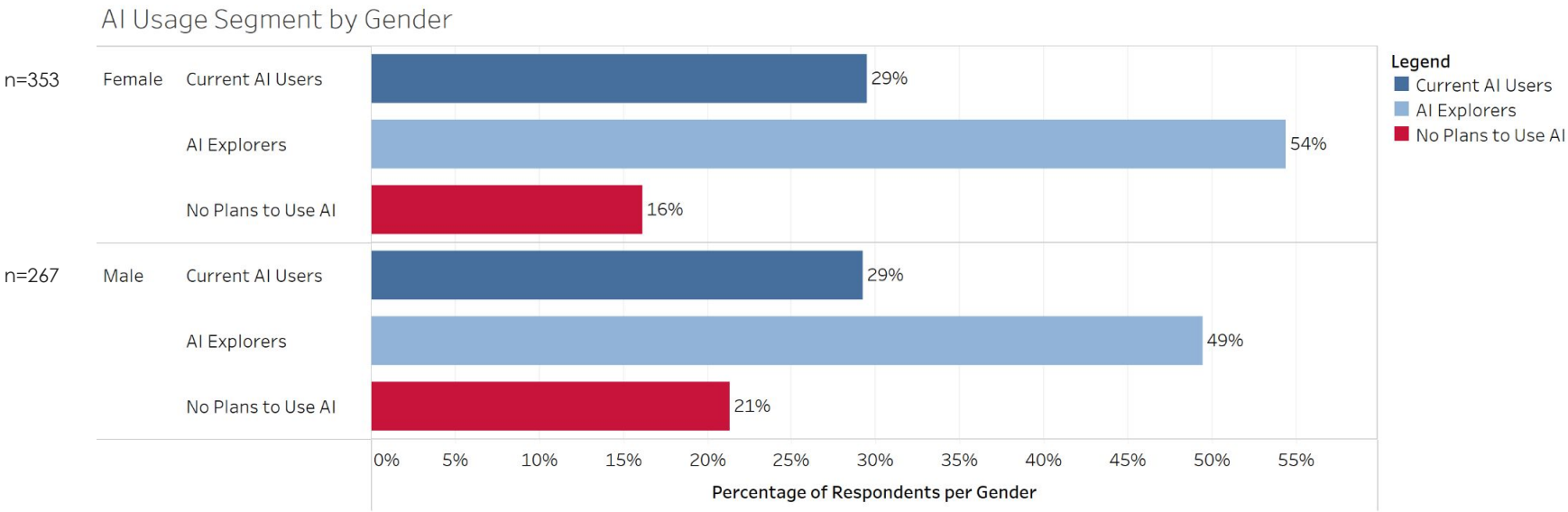
One-Third of Seniors Have No Plans to Use AI



n=128

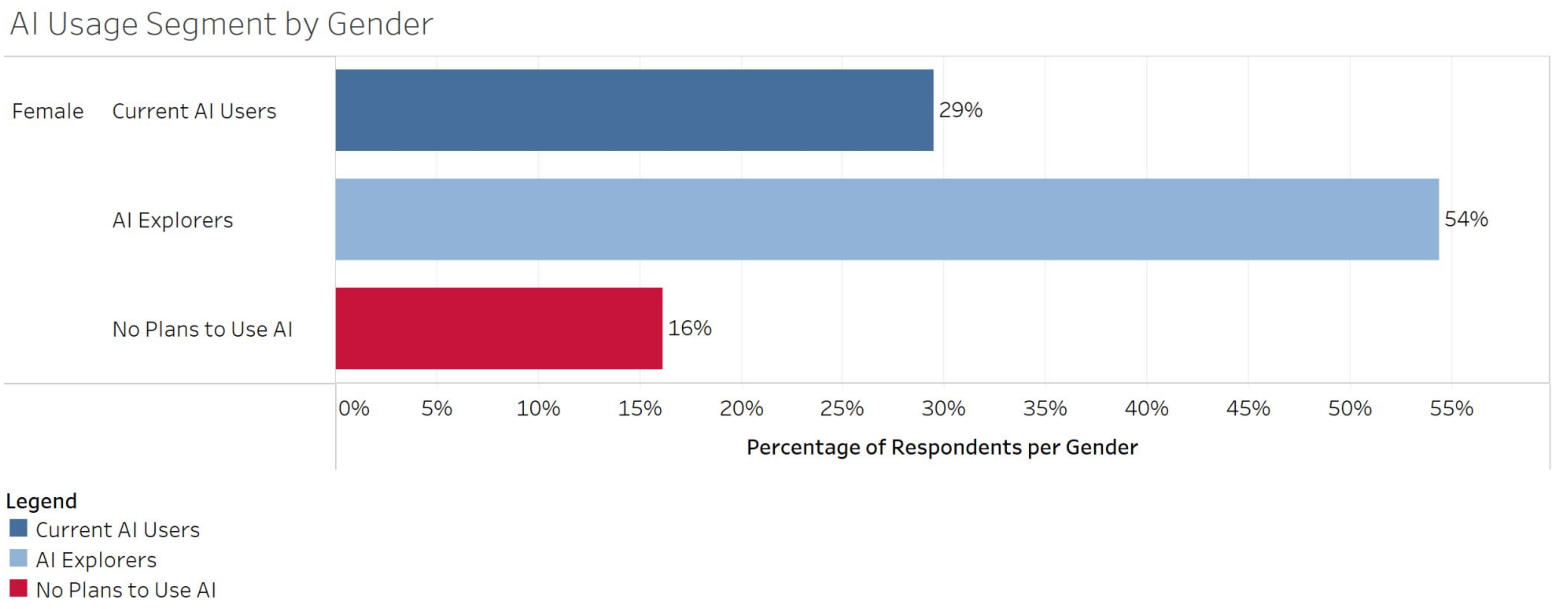
Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q17: Which of the following best describes how your business uses AI technologies?

While Men and Women Use AI at Similar Rates, Men Are More Likely to Reject AI



Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q17: Which of the following best describes how your business uses AI technologies?

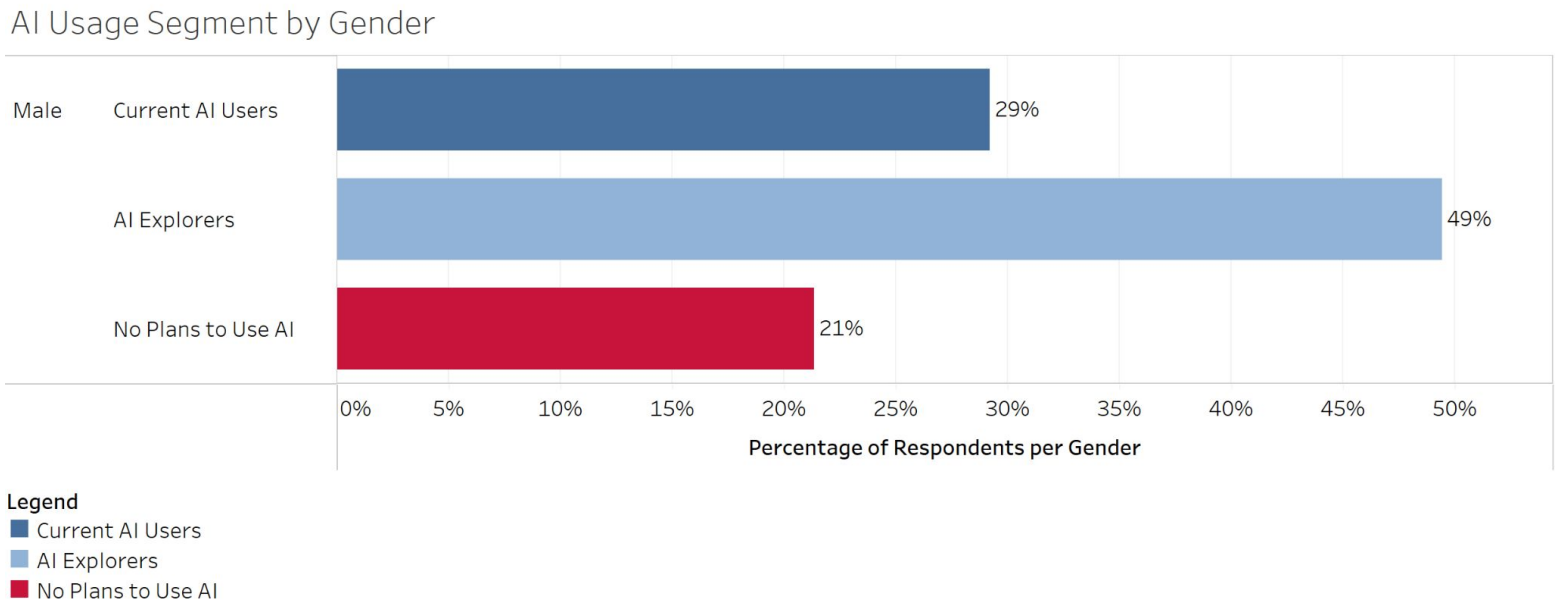
Women-Led Businesses Are Actively Exploring AI Solutions



n=353

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q17: Which of the following best describes how your business uses AI technologies?

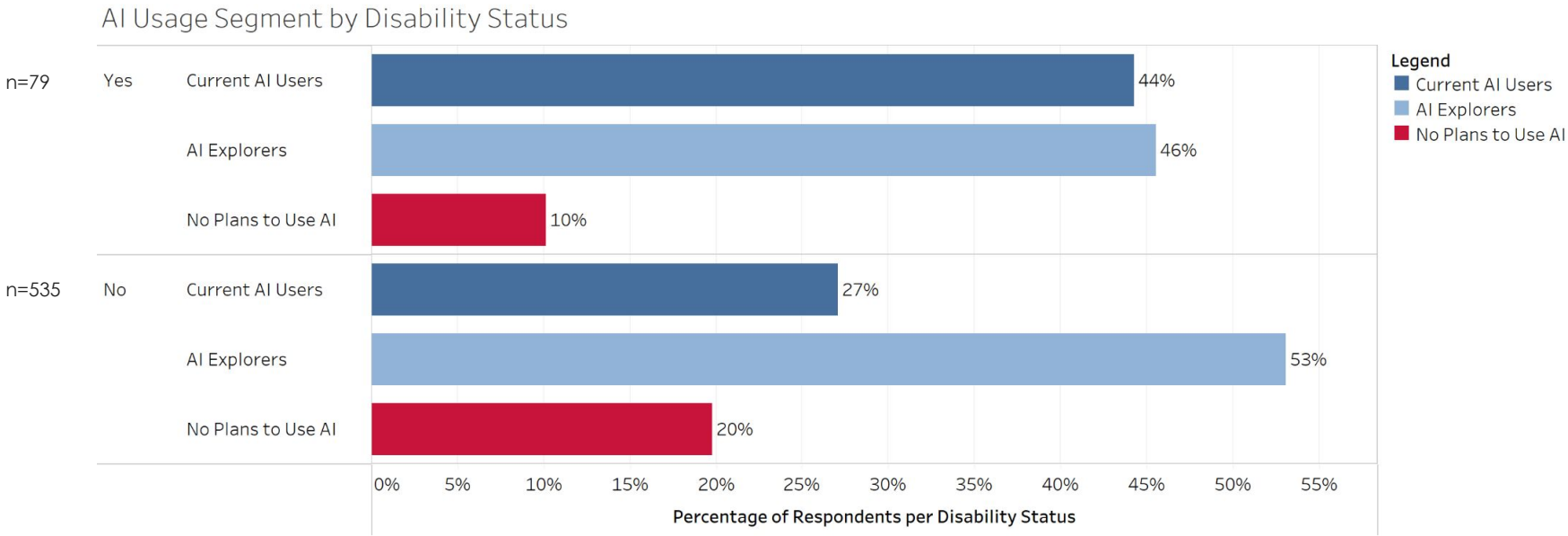
Male-Led Businesses Mirror Women in AI Use, But Exceed Women in AI Skepticism



n=267

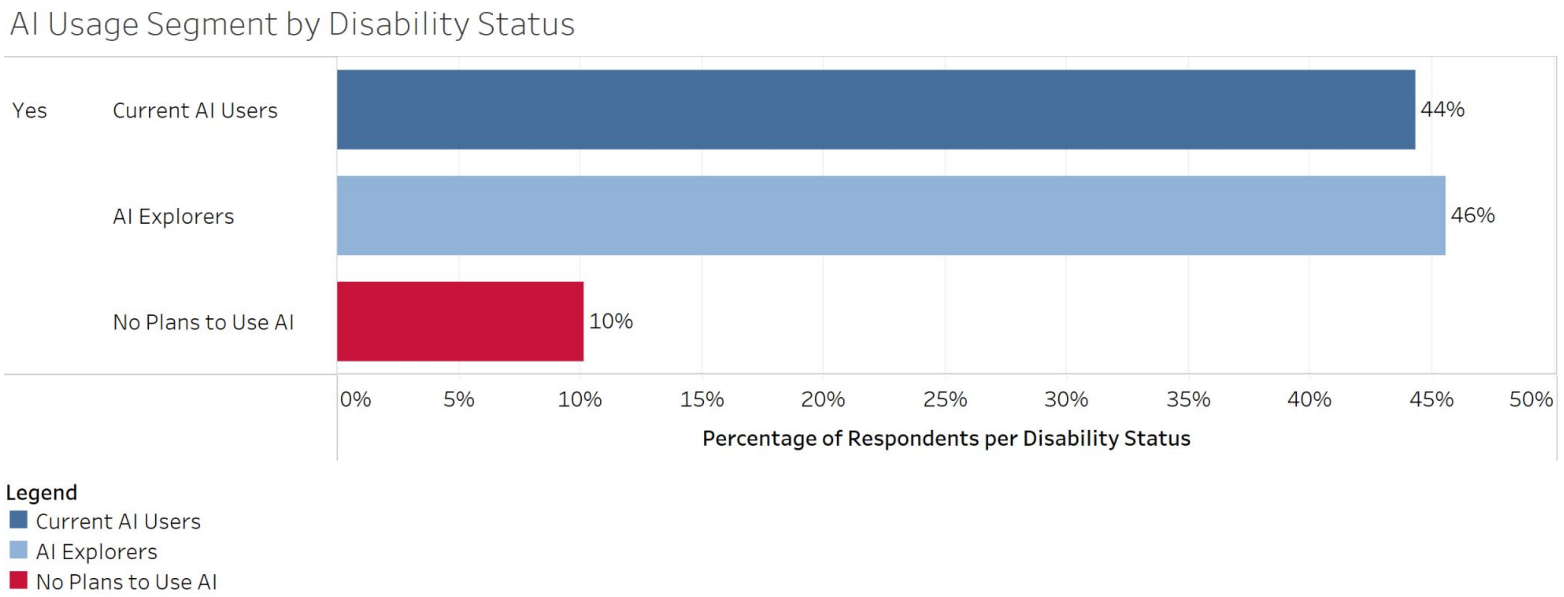
Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q17: Which of the following best describes how your business uses AI technologies?

Business Owners With Disabilities Are More Likely to Be Current AI Users—Highlighting Potential for Accessible Innovation



Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q17: Which of the following best describes how your business uses AI technologies?

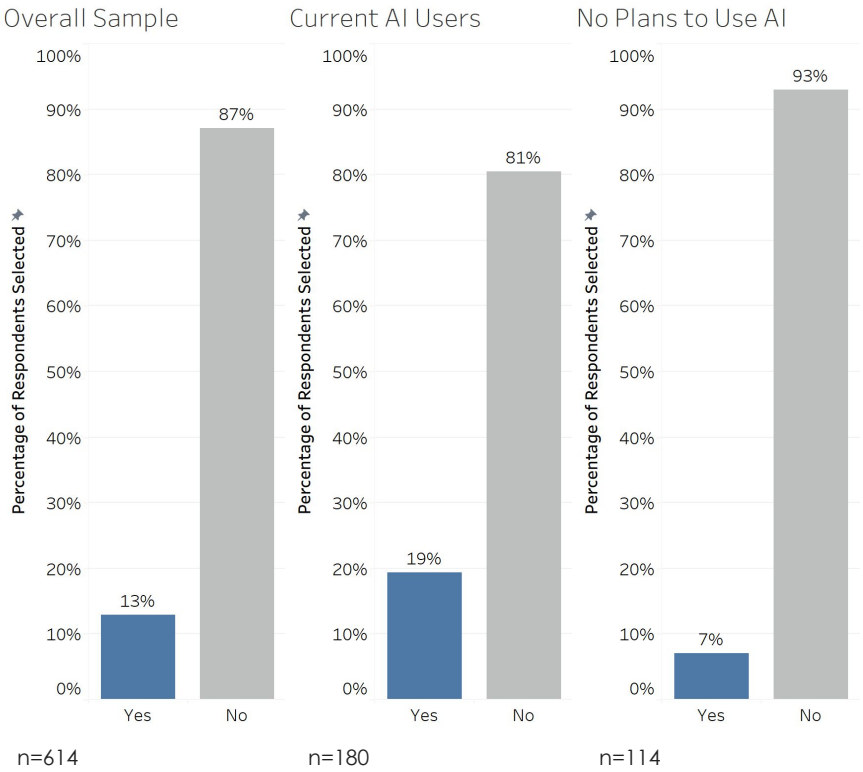
Business Owners With Disabilities Are Early Adopters, Leaning Heavily Into AI Use and Exploration



n=79

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q17: Which of the following best describes how your business uses AI technologies?

Business Owners with Disabilities Over-Index as Current AI Users

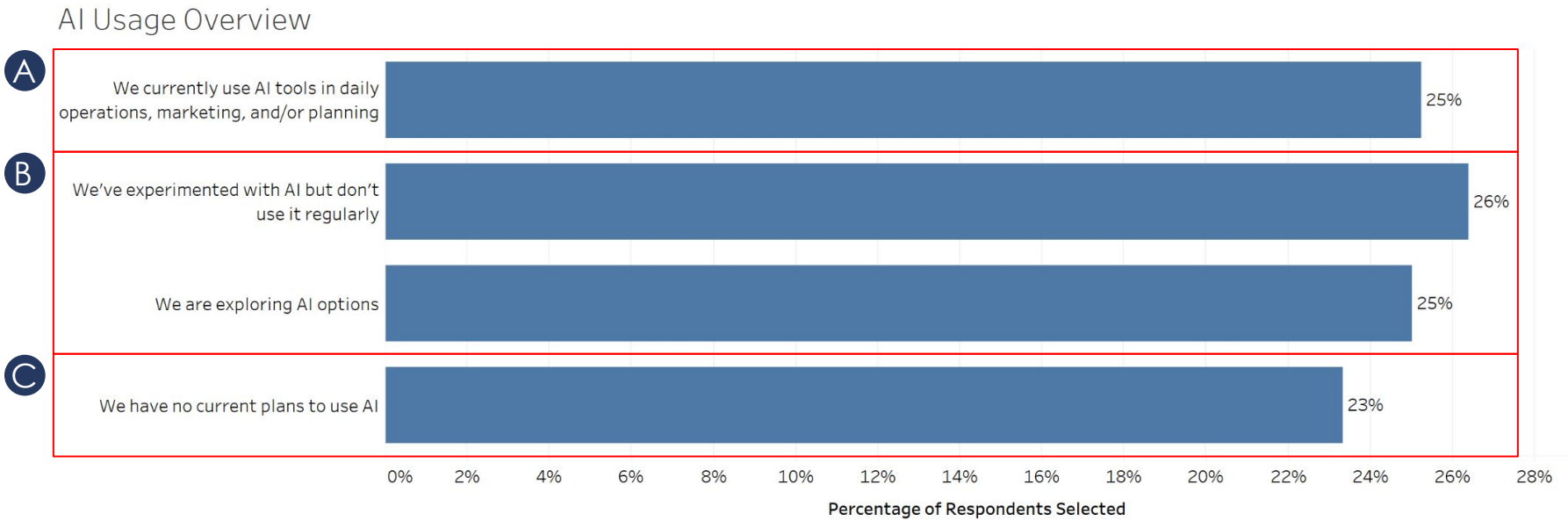


- **19% of Current AI Users identify as having a disability**—higher than their 13% share of the total sample
- **Only 7% of Non-Users** identify as having a disability
- This suggests that **small business owners with disabilities are early adopters, not laggards**
- AI may offer business owners with disabilities **unique value for accessibility, time savings, or workload reduction**

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q65: Do you identify as a person with a disability (e.g., physical, neurological)?

APPENDIX – Approach & Sample Details

Respondents Segmented Into Three Profiles for Analysis Based on AI Usage Levels (1/2)

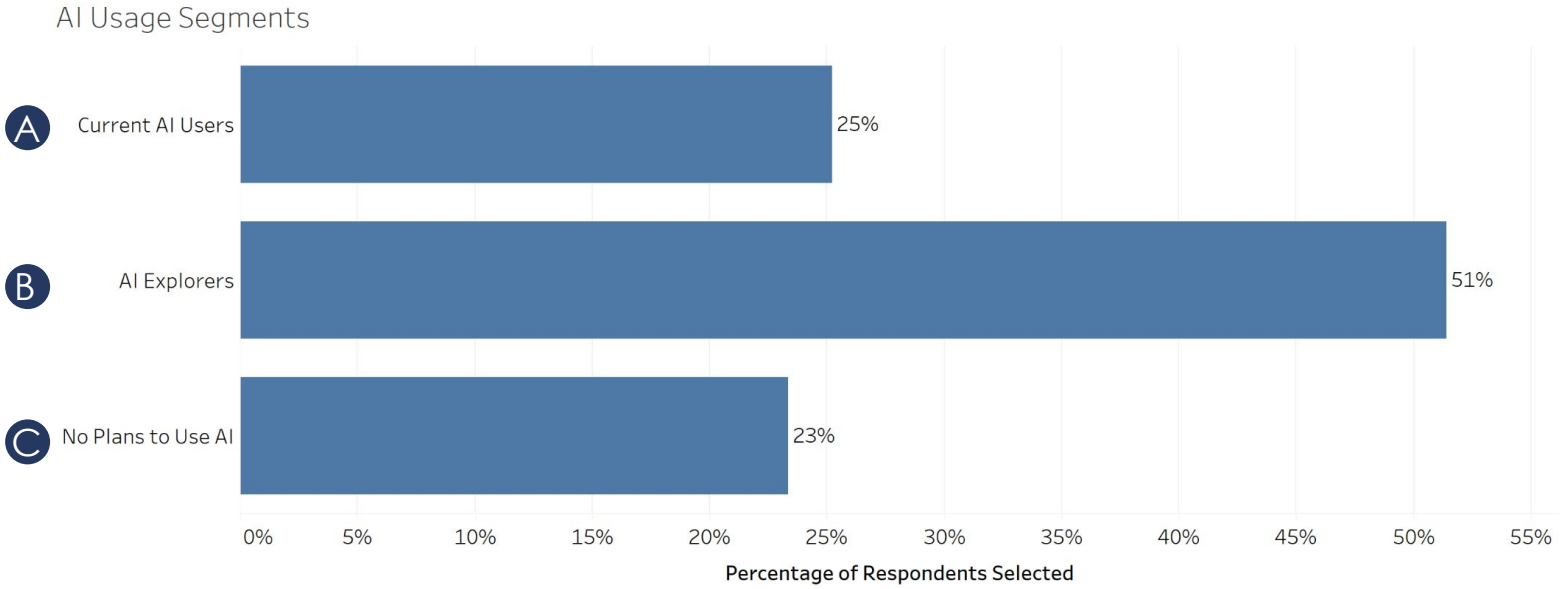


n=947

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q17: Which of the following best describes how your business uses AI technologies?

Respondents Segmented Into Three Profiles for Analysis Based on AI Usage Levels (2/2)

Perceptions of AI, motivations for and barriers to adoption, AI tools of choice, and support needs vary based on small business owners' current level of AI use. Segmenting respondents in this manner enables a deeper understanding of distinct adoption profiles and actionable pathways to support each group.



n=947

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)
Q17: Which of the following best describes how your business uses AI technologies?

Industries Categorized Into Five Industry Clusters

Clusters	Professional & Knowledge-Based Services	Retail, Trade & Logistics	Consumer Lifestyle & Creative Services	Trades & Production	Caregiving, Education & Health
Industries	• Professional Services (consulting, accounting, legal services) • Technology and Software Development (IT services, app dev, SaaS) • Finance and Insurance (advisors, brokers) • Real Estate and Property Management (realtors, leasing, inspectors)	• Retail (Physical and Online) (electronics, clothing, grocery stores) • Wholesale Trade (distribution, reselling) • Transportation and Logistics (delivery, trucking, warehousing)	• Food and Beverage Services (restaurants, catering, bars) • Personal Services (salons, spas, cleaning, pet care) • Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation (photography, events, theaters)	• Construction and Contracting (remodeling, electricians, contractors) • Manufacturing (assembly, small-scale production) • Agriculture and Farming (crop, animal farming)	• Health and Wellness (medical, fitness, mental health) • Education, Training & Caregiving (For-Profit) (tutoring, childcare)

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)

Robust Sample Grouped into 3 Segments by AI Use

100% = 947 businesses

Total Sample

Region	PNW	West	Southwest	Midwest	Northeast	Mid-Atlantic	South
Share (%)	3%	20%	12%	20%	12%	6%	28%

Industry	Professional & Knowledge-Based Services	Consumer Lifestyle & Creative Services	Trades & Production	Retail, Trade & Logistics	Caregiving, Education & Health
Share (%)	43%	16%	15%	14%	12%

Revenue	$25,000 to $99,999	$100,000 to $249,999	$250,000 to $499,999	$500,000 to $999,999	$1 million - $4,999,999
Share (%)	27%	20%	15%	17%	22%

Number of Employees	Self-Employed	2 to 5	6 to 10	11 to 20	21 to 50	51-100
Share (%)	19%	42%	19%	13%	5%	2%

Segments

Current AI Users
239 businesses
25% of sample

Both - Products and Services	36%
Offer Services	59%
Sell Products	5%

AI Explorers
487 businesses
51% of sample

Both - Products and Services	34%
Offer Services	34%
Sell Products	11%

Non-Users
221 businesses
24% of sample

Both - Products and Services	33%
Offer Services	50%
Sell Products	18%

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)

Segment Overview: Current AI Users by Industry & Revenue

100% = 239 businesses

Industry

Industry Clusters	Share (%)
Professional & Knowledge-Based Services	64%
Consumer Lifestyle & Creative Services	12%
Retail, Trade & Logistics	10%
Caregiving, Education & Health	8%
Trades & Production	6%

Current AI Users (n=2023)

	$25,000 to $99,999	$100,000 to $249,999	$250,000 to $499,999	$500,000 to $999,999	$1 million - $4,999,999
Professional & Knowledge-based Services	25%	25%	16%	18%	16%
Consumer Lifestyle & Creative Services	29%	17%	13%	17%	25%
Retail, Trade & Logistics	33%	24%	19%	5%	19%
Caregiving, Education & Health	38%	6%	25%	19%	13%
Trades & Production	33%	0%	8%	25%	33%

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)

Segment Overview: AI Explorers by Industry & Revenue

100% = 487 businesses

Industry

Industry Clusters	Share (%)
Professional & Knowledge-Based Services	29%
Consumer Lifestyle & Creative Services	20%
Retail, Trade & Logistics	20%
Caregiving, Education, & Health	11%
Trades & Production	21%

Current AI Users (n=2023)

	$25,000 to $99,999	$100,000 to $249,999	$250,000 to $499,999	$500,000 to $999,999	$1 million - $4,999,999
Professional & Knowledge-based Services	33%	27%	12%	12%	16%
Consumer Lifestyle & Creative Services	23%	14%	10%	25%	28%
Retail, Trade & Logistics	29%	16%	16%	9%	31%
Caregiving, Education & Health	32%	12%	16%	9%	31%
Trades & Production	35%	18%	24%	11%	11%

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)

Segment Overview: Non-Users by Industry & Revenue

100% = 221 businesses

Industry

Industry Clusters	Share (%)
Professional & Knowledge-Based Services	29%
Consumer Lifestyle & Creative Services	20%
Retail, Trade & Logistics	20%
Caregiving, Education, & Health	11%
Trades & Production	21%

Non Users

	$25,000 to $99,999	$100,000 to $249,999	$250,000 to $499,999	$500,000 to $999,999	$1 million - $4,999,999
Professional & Knowledge-based Services	27%	24%	18%	16%	14%
Consumer Lifestyle & Creative Services	15%	18%	26%	24%	18%
Retail, Trade & Logistics	26%	20%	3%	20%	31%
Caregiving, Education & Health	22%	18%	26%	24%	18%
Trades & Production	3%	17%	11%	22%	47%

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)

Segment Overview: Current AI Users by Business Model & Size

100% = 239 businesses

Size and business model

	$25,000 to $99,999	$100,000 to $249,999	$250,000 to $499,999	$500,000 to $999,999	$1 million - $4,999,999
Both - Products and Services	37%	16%	16%	8%	23%
Offer Services	19%	26%	17%	20%	18%
Sell Products	17%	33%	17%	25%	8%

	Solopreneur	2 to 5 employees	6 to 10 employees	11 to 20 employees	21 to 50 employees	51 to 100 employees
Both - Products and Services	13%	43%	22%	14%	7%	1%
Offer Services	20%	45%	19%	7%	8%	1%
Sell Products	8%	58%	25%	8%	0%	0%

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)

Segment Overview: AI Explorers by Business Model and Size

100% = 487 businesses

Size and business model

	$25,000 to $99,999	$100,000 to $249,999	$250,000 to $499,999	$500,000 to $999,999	$1 million - $4,999,999
Both - Products and Services	26%	16%	16%	18%	24%
Offer Services	31%	25%	14%	13%	18%
Sell Products	34%	4%	13%	23%	27%

	Solopreneur	2 to 5 employees	6 to 10 employees	11 to 20 employees	21 to 50 employees	51 to 100 employees
Both - Products and Services	13%	47%	19%	17%	4%	0%
Offer Services	25%	41%	17%	9%	5%	4%
Sell Products	16%	38%	20%	14%	11%	2%

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)

Segment Overview: Non-Users by Business Model & Size

100% = 221 businesses

Size and business model

	$25,000 to $99,999	$100,000 to $249,999	$250,000 to $499,999	$500,000 to $999,999	$1 million - $4,999,999
Both - Products and Services	18%	17%	10%	21%	35%
Offer Services	25%	24%	15%	16%	19%
Sell Products	15%	8%	21%	23%	33%

	Solopreneur	2 to 5 employees	6 to 10 employees	11 to 20 employees	21 to 50 employees	51 to 100 employees
Both - Products and Services	26%	31%	25%	53%	50%	0%
Offer Services	61%	47%	56%	34%	38%	0%
Sell Products	14%	22%	19%	13%	13%	0%

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)

Sample Overview: Business Owner Profiles

Overall Sample
100% = 947 businesses

Gender	
Female	57%
Male	43%

Age	
Under 40	7%
40-49	21%
50-64	52%
65+	20%

Race	
AAPI	9%
Black	27%
Hispanic	17%
White	42%

Disability	
No	87%
Yes	13%

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)

Segment Overviews: Business Owner Profiles

Current AI Users
100% = 239 businesses

Gender	
Female	57%
Male	43%

Age	
Under 40	10%
40-49	26%
50-64	51%
65+	12%

Race	
AAPI	11%
Black	37%
Hispanic	16%
White	33%

Disability	
No	81%
Yes	19%

AI Explorers
100% = 487 businesses

Gender	
Female	59%
Male	41%

Age	
Under 40	6%
40-49	21%
50-64	55%
65+	18%

Race	
AAPI	9%
Black	27%
Hispanic	18%
White	42%

Disability	
No	89%
Yes	11%

Non-Users
100% = 221 businesses

Gender	
Female	50%
Male	50%

Age	
Under 40	3%
40-49	14%
50-64	48%
65+	35%

Race	
AAPI	9%
Black	14%
Hispanic	14%
White	59%

Disability	
No	93%
Yes	7%

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)

A Current AI Users (1/2)

Section	Takeaways
Industry Distribution	• Current AI adoption among SMBs is concentrated in **knowledge-driven sectors, with professional services and tech development leading usage.** • Industries reliant on **expertise and innovation** are at the forefront of small business AI integration.
AI Sentiment	• Current AI Users view AI as a **strategic and essential business tool,** favoring solutions that seamlessly integrate into operations and enhance—rather than replace—human interactions. • Adoption is driven by a strong foundation of AI knowledge, trust in familiar brands, and a **preference for tailored, testable tools that automate customer-facing and content-driven tasks.**
AI Use Cases	• **Marketing, customer engagement, and productivity enhancement** are the primary AI use cases among Current AI Users. • **Financial management and customer-facing technologies** are also priorities, with AI use patterns varying somewhat by firm size.
AI Ideas & Opportunities	• Current AI Users are eager for **tools that improve cash flow, forecast revenue trends, and deliver real-time customer insights**, with profitability and planning as key motivators. • While confidence grows with positive tech experiences, challenges with non-integrated systems and **mixed reactions to integrated solutions highlight areas for innovation.**

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)

A Current AI Users (2/2)

Section	Takeaways
Technology Discovery	• Current AI Users tend to be **early adopters who rely heavily on independent research and peer networks** to discover new technology solutions. • **Discovery patterns vary widely by business revenue, and a notable gender gap exists** in how business technology marketing reaches men versus women.
Support Needs	• **Training and affordability are the most critical support needs for AI users**, particularly among solopreneurs and microbusinesses. • **Women business owners consistently report higher support needs** for successfully adopting and leveraging AI tools.
Policy & Advocacy	• Current AI Users feel **largely excluded from AI policy discussions** and want stronger representation, especially on issues like data protection. • **Lower-revenue businesses are more optimistic about policymakers' support**, but overall, Current AI Users believe their voices must shape AI policy development.

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)

B AI Explorers (1/2)

Section	Takeaways
Industry Distribution	• AI Explorers are primarily concentrated in the **professional services sector.** • There is also **notable early interest from businesses in construction and food-related industries.**
AI Sentiment	• AI Explorers have basic awareness of AI and are optimistic about its benefits, but **seek low-risk, supportive ways to integrate it into their businesses.** • They **favor AI solutions that enhance existing operations behind the scenes**, with a strong preference for human-AI collaboration.
AI Ideas & Opportunities	• AI Explorers are **eager for AI solutions** that improve financial forecasting and real-time customer insights but **remain cautious about vendor lock-in and fragmented tech ecosystems.** • **Marketing, operations, and financial tools** represent the biggest perceived opportunity areas for initial AI adoption.
AI Motivators & Barriers	• AI Explorers are **motivated by ease of use, proven business value, and trusted guidance**, but remain **wary of privacy risks, complexity, and limited time** or capacity to adopt new tools. • **Clear demonstrations of ROI** and simplified, low-burden solutions are critical to overcoming adoption barriers.

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)

B AI Explorers (2/2)

Section	Takeaways
Technology Discovery	• **Independent research and peer recommendations** are the primary ways AI Explorers discover new technologies, with early adopters making up only a small share of this group. • **Higher-revenue businesses are more likely to tap into professional networks** to explore AI opportunities.
Support Needs	• **Training, affordability, and technical support are critical** to helping AI Explorers move from interest to adoption. • **Women-led businesses show particularly strong demand** for additional AI support and resources.
Policy & Advocacy	• AI Explorers feel **underrepresented in AI policymaking** and stress the need for more inclusive engagement. • Top policy priorities for AI Explorers include **data protection, affordability, and accessible funding support.**

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)

C No Plans to Use AI

Section	Takeaways
Industry Distribution	• Non-Users are **distributed across many sectors.** • **Professional services, construction, and food industries** show the highest concentration of businesses with no plans to adopt AI.
AI Sentiment	• Small businesses without AI plans are generally **unfamiliar with AI and remain neutral about its potential benefits.** • Non-Users are **open to low-risk, industry-specific solutions** but prioritize transparency, background integration, and human-centric applications.
AI Motivators & Barriers	• Non-Users **prioritize clear business value, ease of use, and ROI proof** when considering potential adoption. • A fundamental **lack of awareness or understanding of AI's benefits** remains the primary barrier to adoption.
Support Needs	• **Training and technical support** are critical levers for encouraging AI adoption among Non-Users. • Support needs vary significantly by firm size, indicating **a need for tailored resources and guidance.**

Source: Reimagine Main Street and partners Small Business AI Survey (May 2025)