2025 State of Design & Make

Digital Transformation Pulse

The latest insights from Design and Make industry leaders on digital transformation, AI, sustainability, and the future of work.

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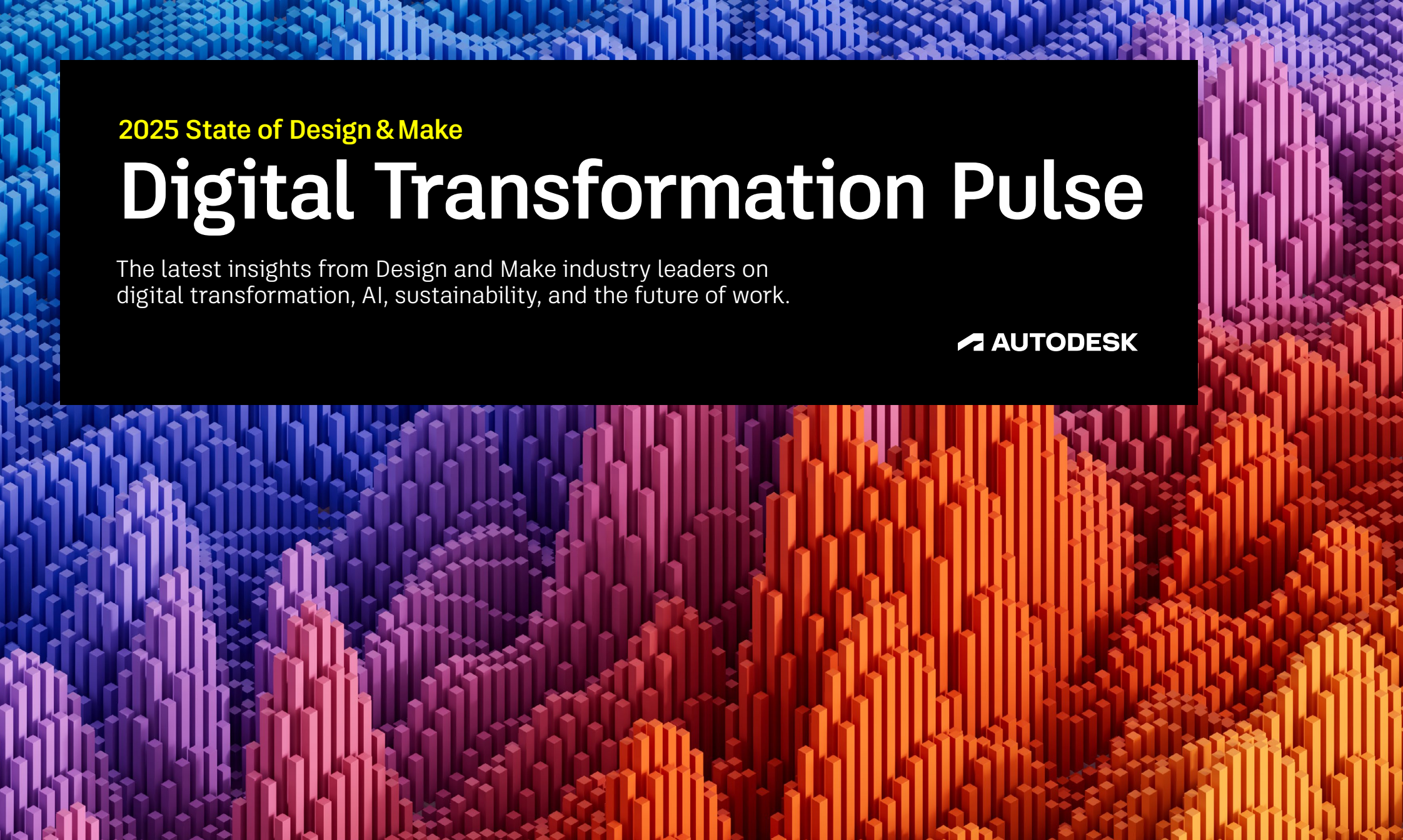

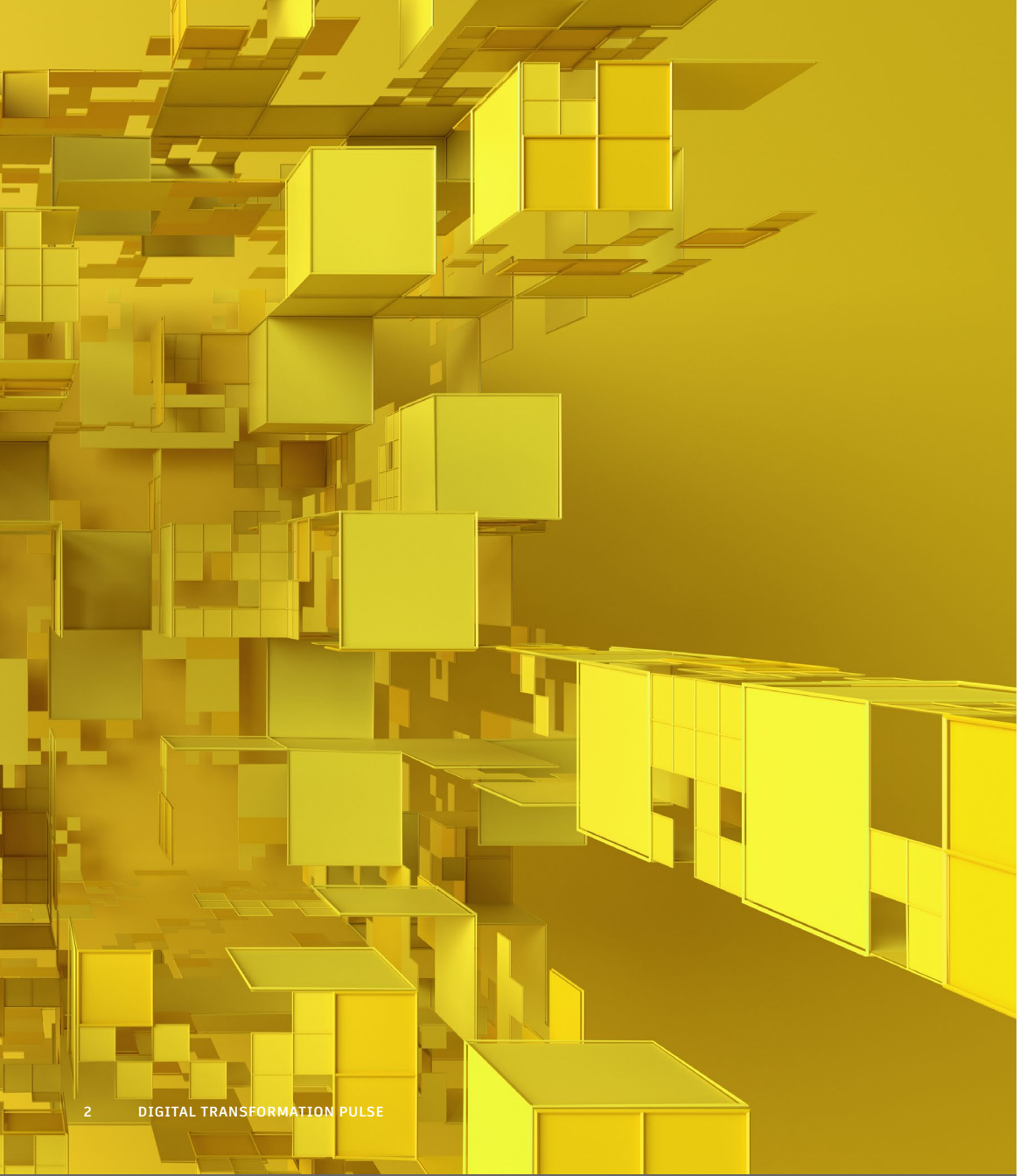

About the *State of Design & Make: Digital Transformation Pulse* survey

For the *Digital Transformation Pulse*, Autodesk surveyed 2,500 leaders and experts from 20 countries across Design and Make industries, including architecture, engineering, construction, and operations (AECO); product design and manufacturing (D&M); and media and entertainment (M&E).

In this survey, "digitally mature" companies are defined as those that are approaching or have achieved the goal of their digital transformation journey. "Less digitally mature" companies are defined as those that are in the early stages or right in the middle of their digital transformation journey. An "Autodesk user" is a respondent whose company has used an Autodesk product within the past 12 months. AI "early adopters" are respondents who report AI awareness, training accessibility, and adoption encouragement from leaders and peers.

What is Design and Make?

A convergence of technologies and methodologies in industries that produce digital and built assets over the past 40-plus years has resulted in a distinct category of work: Design and Make. Design and Make shapes the surrounding world, translating complex ideas into powerful experiences, whether it's transforming a sketch into a school, turning a concept into a car, or making a myth into a movie. Globally, Design and Make employs, conservatively, 295.7 million people.[1]

For the professionals immersed in it every day, Design and Make is more than a way of working—it's a philosophy and a mindset. It represents a deep belief that every challenge and complexity can be overcome with the right tools and the right skill set. Designers and makers are optimists united by a shared drive to make a better world for all.

[1] World Economic Forum, 2023

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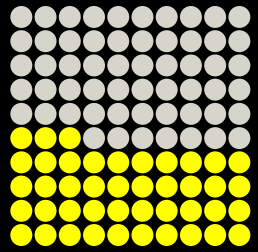
Introduction

Leaders in Design and Make industries are feeling generally positive about the future of their organizations, despite facing significant headwinds in the form of skills shortages, tech implementation struggles, and ongoing geo- and macro-economic headwinds. Results from the recent Autodesk *Digital Transformation Pulse* survey illustrate how digital transformation is not only helping organizations tackle these persistent challenges but is also opening doors to new opportunities.

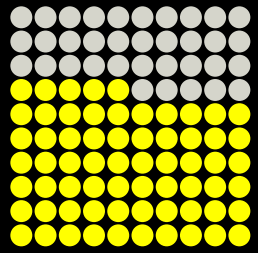
One challenge faced by many organizations is the digital maturity gap—a disparity between companies that are well advanced in their digital transformation journeys and those that are just beginning. This gap highlights the urgency for companies to accelerate their digitization efforts. The data suggest that organizations well along their digital transformation journey realize greater benefits from both AI and digitization. For instance, digitally mature companies report more significant positive impacts on cost reduction and decision-making processes due to AI integration.

A significant theme across industries is that AI has moved beyond a buzzword; it's a catalyst with tangible effects. Leaders in Design and Make industries are not just witnessing change in their industries—they are active participants, leveraging technology to increase collaboration, streamline processes, and drive innovation. This rapid progress highlights how industries are evolving, underscoring the impact of digital transformation on building a better, more interconnected, world.

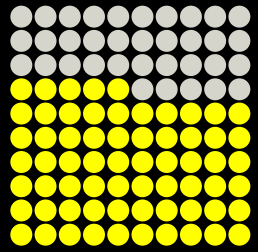
Key findings:



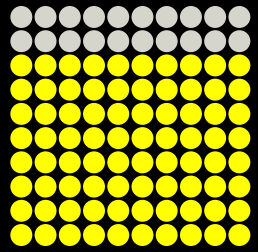
43% of early adopters are experiencing significant operational improvements from AI, showcasing AI's capabilities in streamlining processes and enhancing productivity. These improvements are vital as industries strive for efficiency amidst growing project complexities and tighter deadlines.



Addressing environmental concerns, **65% of organizations are incorporating AI to fortify their sustainability efforts.** AI-driven solutions such as energy optimization and smart resource management are providing actionable insights, enabling companies to reduce their ecological footprint and comply with evolving regulations.



The demand for seamless collaboration between diverse teams and stakeholders has led to the rise of common data environments (CDEs), with **two-thirds (65%) of professionals reporting that CDEs enhance trust and collaboration.** This is critical in mitigating rework and ensuring project consistency across different phases.



80% of digitally mature companies are seeking inspiration for innovation from other industries, demonstrating an innovative cross-sector approach. This adoption encourages a culture of continuous learning and adaptability, essential in an era where technological advancements are rapid and often disruptive.

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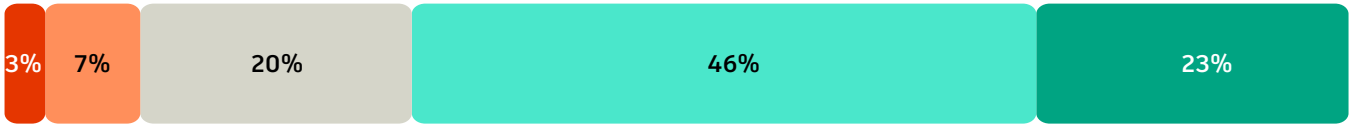
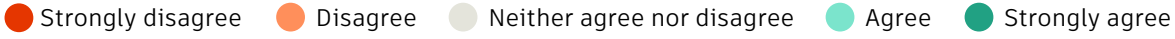
Design and Make organizations see the power of cross-industry innovation and CDEs to fuel collaboration

My company seeks inspiration for innovation outside of our industry



My company adopts digital techniques and tools from other industries

Common data environments (CDEs) improve trust between collaborators



Survey question: How much do you agree or disagree with the following? [statement] 5-point scale.

Leaders are focused on driving opportunity at their organizations, and most are happy to look outside their industry for inspiration. Most companies adopt both ideas and tools from other sectors, demonstrating that innovation isn't confined to a single sector, and that Design and Make industries often overlap in terms of processes and techniques.

When it's time to bring these new ideas to life, interoperability of data is essential—and so is the reliability of that data. CDEs are gaining traction across industries to mitigate rework and increase collaboration, and it's working—two-thirds (65%) of *Digital Transformation Pulse* survey respondents say that CDEs improve trust between collaborators—highlighting the increasing role of data in day-to-day operations.

76%

of digitally mature companies adopt digital techniques and tools from other industries, compared to 57% of less mature companies

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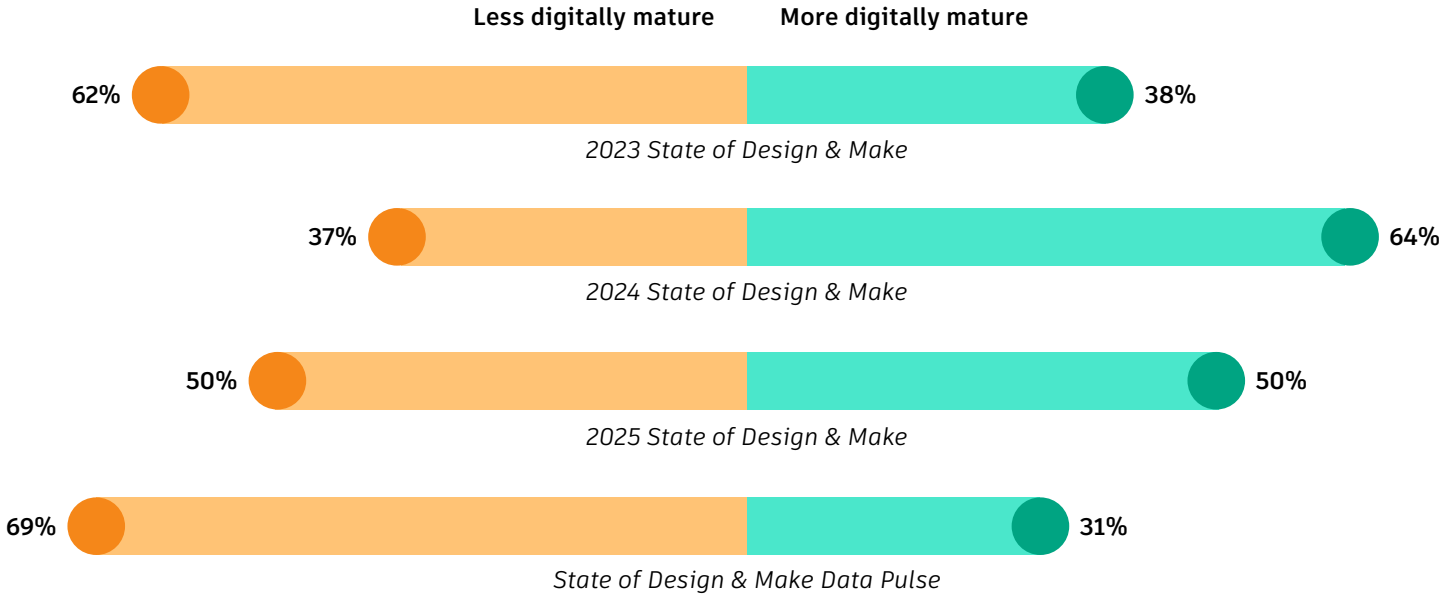
As eager as leaders are to accelerate their digitization efforts, digital transformation is a journey that has no destination, with the finish line moving further down the road as new technologies enter the landscape.

Survey results consistently reflect this theme, with perceptions of digital maturity varying dramatically over time. Results from the *Digital Transformation Pulse* survey indicate the percentage of leaders that say their organization is more digitally mature plummeted 19 points compared to the *2025 State of Design & Make* report, representing a 38% change in sentiment.

This abrupt drop in maturity perception could suggest that new technologies like AI are making companies rethink where they are on their digital transformation roadmap. It also signals opportunity for those organizations that are further along on their digital transformation journey, as digitally mature organizations realize greater benefits from both AI and digitization efforts.

Digital transformation is a journey, not a destination



Survey question: Broadly speaking, where is your company or organization in the digital transformation journey? 4-point scale: "Early stage" and "Right in the middle of the effort" = less digitally mature, "Approaching the goal" and "Achieved the goal" = more digitally mature.

Only 5% of leaders say their organization has achieved its goal for digital transformation

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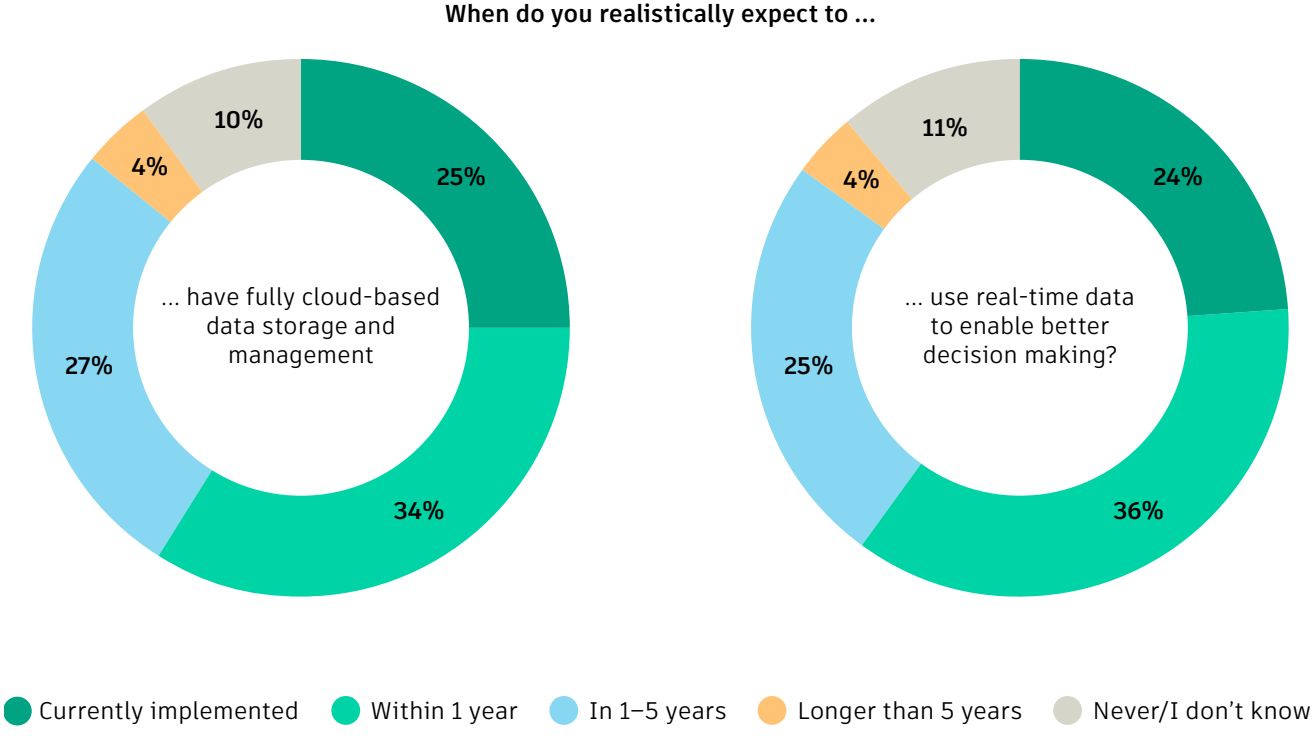
Companies are increasing transition to the cloud and using data to make real-time business decisions

86% expect to fully adopt cloud-based storage and management within 5 years



Survey question: When do you realistically expect to... ? [statement] 8-point scale. Combined for the visualization: "Within 6 months" and "Within 1 year," "In 1-3 years" and "In 3-5 years," "Never" and "I don't know."

A major part of digital transformation is transitioning workflows to the cloud. While most organizations have at least part of their workflows in the cloud—only 9% say none of their workflows are cloud-based—many are still firmly in the middle of the process.

Notably, 58% of organizations plan on being fully transitioned to the cloud within a year, with that number rising to 86% over the next five years. These expectations represent a significant jump in progress, as just one-third of organizations currently have 40%+ of their workflows in the cloud.

A critical component of successful cloud transitions is the availability and interoperability of data. Design and Make organizations are generally positive about how their organizations handle data, with 69% saying their data is well structured, and 73% saying their data is secure. Further, nearly two-thirds (60%) of leaders say they expect to use data to enable better decision-making within a year, underscoring the need for—and advantages of—well-structured organizational data.

Only 3%

of organizations report having more than 80% of their workflows in the cloud

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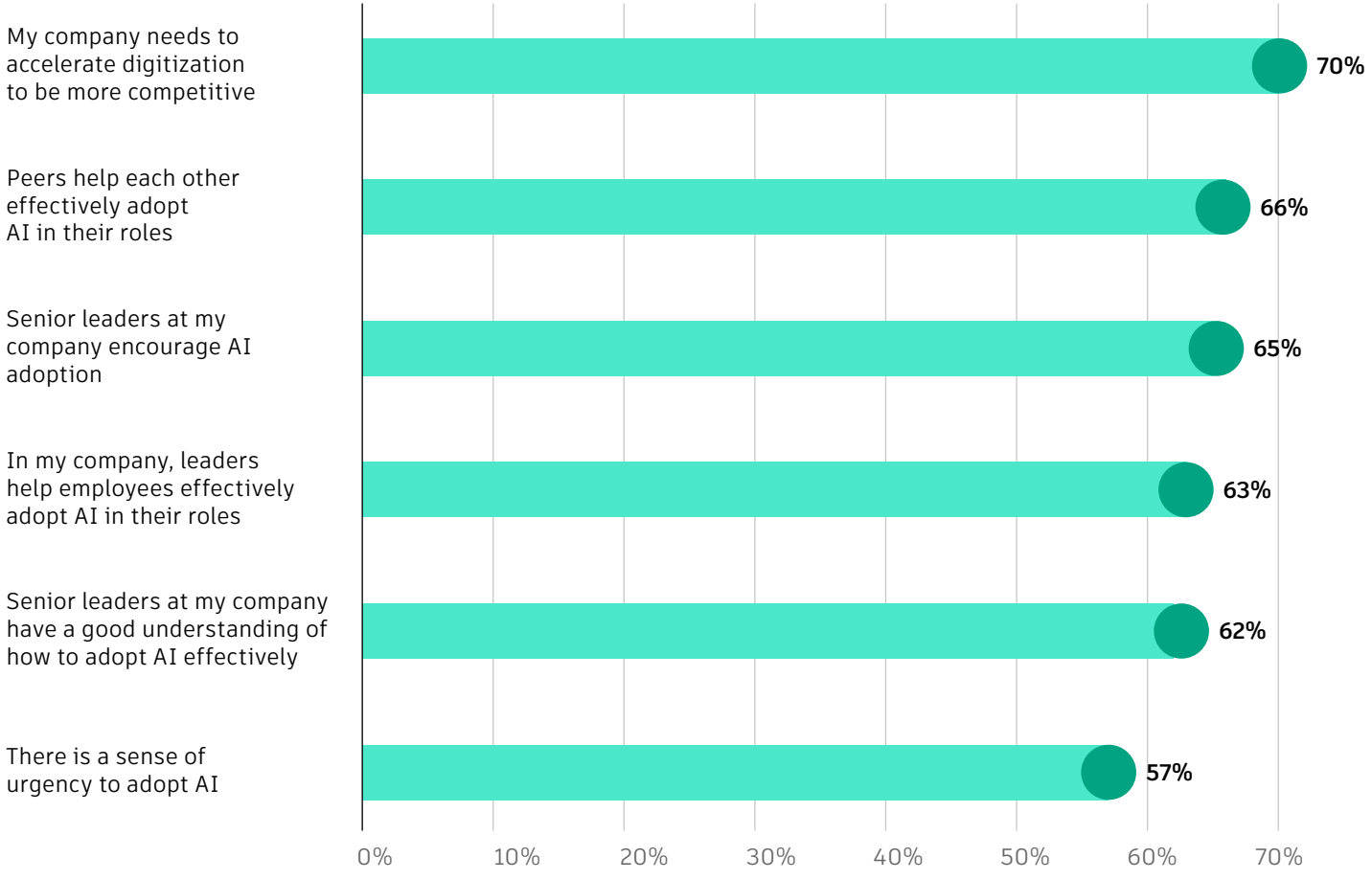
Having recognized a digital maturity gap, organizations are rushing to fill it by ramping up their digitization efforts. A third of leaders say their organization relies on outdated tools, underscoring the deficit leaders perceive in their organization's level of digital maturity. It makes sense then that 70% of *Digital Transformation Pulse* survey respondents say their company needs to accelerate digitization. Increased digitization provides benefits internally but could also provide a competitive advantage.

Fewer respondents feel the need to speed up AI adoption—while 65% of leaders encourage their workforce to adopt AI tools only 57% feel a sense of urgency around AI. This makes sense when considering that AI implementation is easier once digitization is further along and organizational data is better organized and managed.

34%

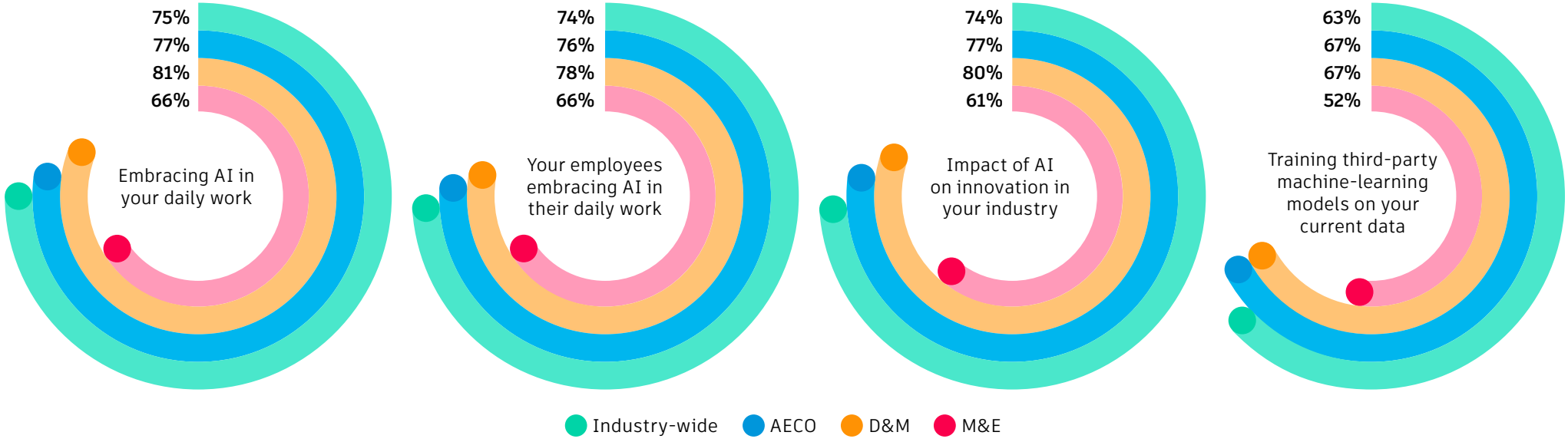
of leaders think their company and their industry are relying on outdated tools that slow progress

Design and Make leaders eager to speed up digitization and AI adoption



Survey question: How much do you agree or disagree with the following? [statement] 5-point scale. Top two: agree.

Vast majority of professionals are embracing AI for their work and industry



Survey question: How do you feel about the following? [statement] 5-point scale. Top two: "I feel somewhat positive" and "I feel very positive."

Design and Make organizations are overwhelmingly positive about the future of AI in their industry, with 74% saying it will have a positive impact on innovation and 92% currently using at least one AI tool. Not surprisingly, digitally mature companies use an average of 3.7 AI tools compared to 2.6 at other companies.

But just as many organizations are confronting a digitization gap, the AI gap is just starting and the results are already staggering—43% of AI early adopters are already seeing meaningful improvement in their work compared to just 14% of other leaders. These results put the spotlight on a new, but significant, performance gap that can only be expected to grow as AI technology progresses, giving a clear advantage to organizations that prioritize integration of AI and other emerging technologies.

59%

of leaders say AI will meaningfully improve their work within a year

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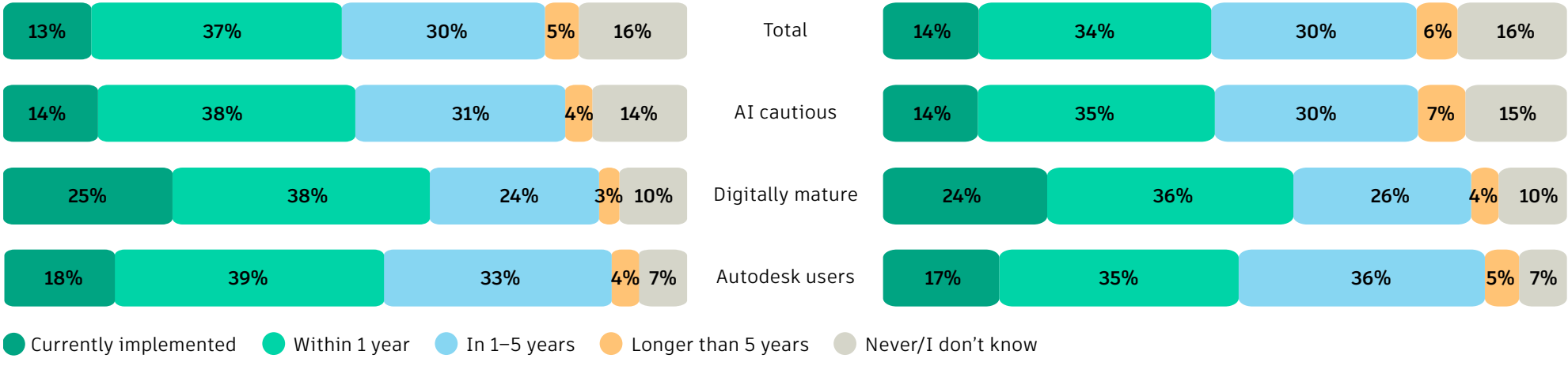
Use of machine learning and agentic AI will rise sharply in the next year

When do you realistically expect to actively incorporate LLMs and other machine-learning models into your systems?

When do you realistically expect to use agentic AI?



Survey question: When do you realistically expect to... ? [statement] 8-point scale. Combined for the visualization: "Within 6 months" and "Within 1 year," "In 1-3 years" and "In 3-5 years," "Never" and "I don't know". Respondents who selected more than three concerns for AI in their industry were classified as AI cautious. Values do not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Leaders across Design and Make industries are starting to see the advantages of AI, and many organizations are anticipating huge leaps in progress over the next few years.

Beyond just integrating one-off AI tools, organizations are keen to see AI's impact on workflows across the organization. While only 13% of organizations have currently incorporated machine-learning models, including Large Language Models, into their systems, 67% say they will within the next five years. Use of agentic AI—autonomous systems that can make decisions and perform tasks—sees similar increases, with 64% of leaders saying they'll be using the technology within five years.

This represents a seismic shift in the way organizations approach operations, everywhere from project concept to completion. But with the rapid pace of change across industries, a five-year timeline may be too long to gain and keep a competitive edge. And leaders betting big on AI in the near-term are setting themselves up to realize the largest short- and long-terms benefits.

Digitally mature organizations are

more than 3x

as likely to be currently using LLMs in their systems

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AI is already commonplace at most organizations, in some form or another, as teams explore ways to integrate new tech into their everyday workflows.

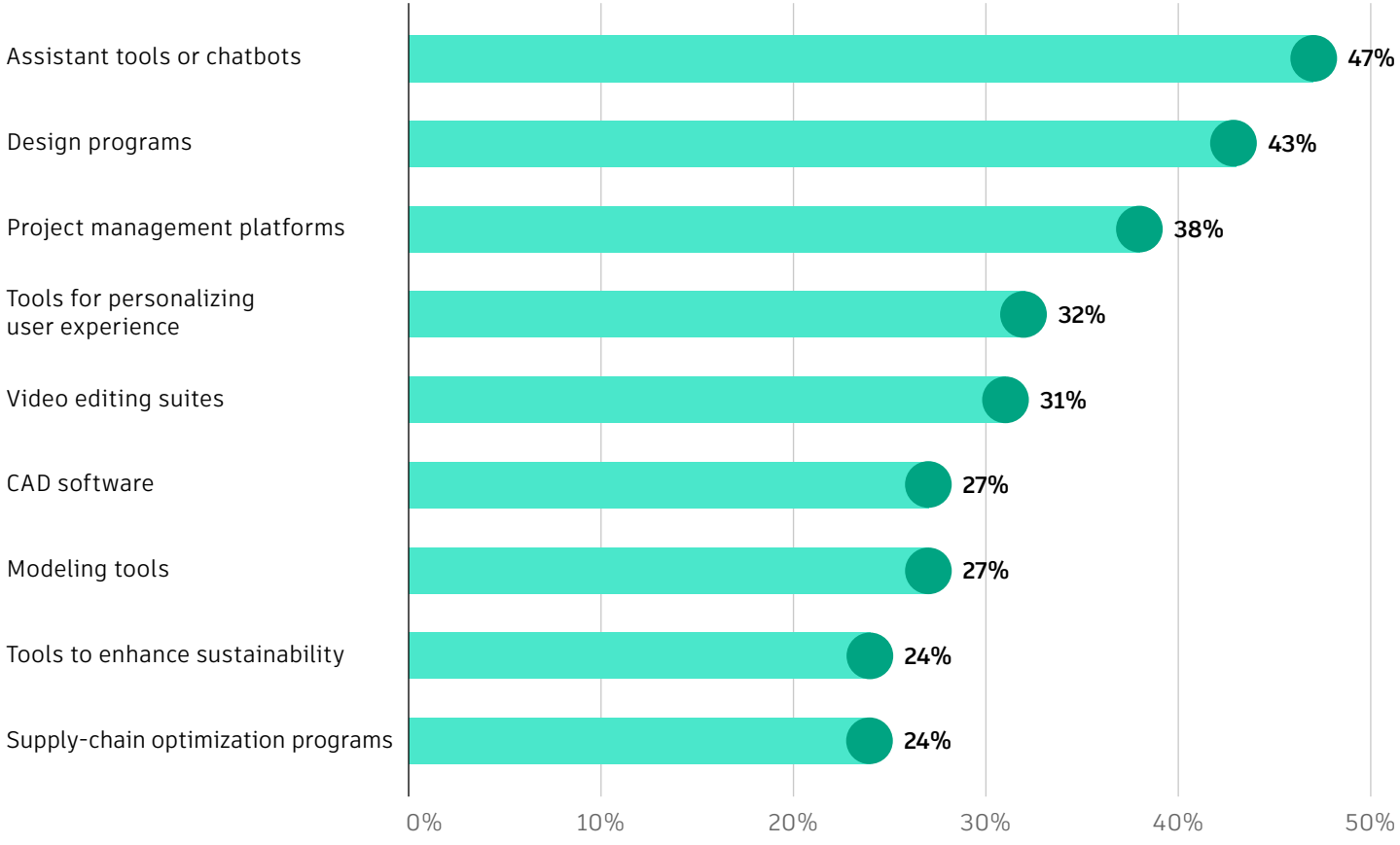
Nearly half of Design and Make organizations are currently using AI assistant tools or chatbots, which is understandable when considering the widespread applications of such tools, from customer service to marketing to content creation. Also unsurprising is the high level of use of design and project management tools.

Currently, sustainability and supply chain are the workflows that have the least amount of AI integration. Considering that supply chains are a source of uncertainty for 33% of survey respondents, AI could be an underused tool in the struggle for supply-chain resilience.

47%

of Design and Make organizations use AI assistant tools or chatbots

AI tools are already being integrated into workflows and processes across Design and Make organizations



Survey question: Which tools, if any, that you personally currently use incorporate AI? Please select all that apply. “Other.” “I don’t know.” and “None of the above” are not shown.

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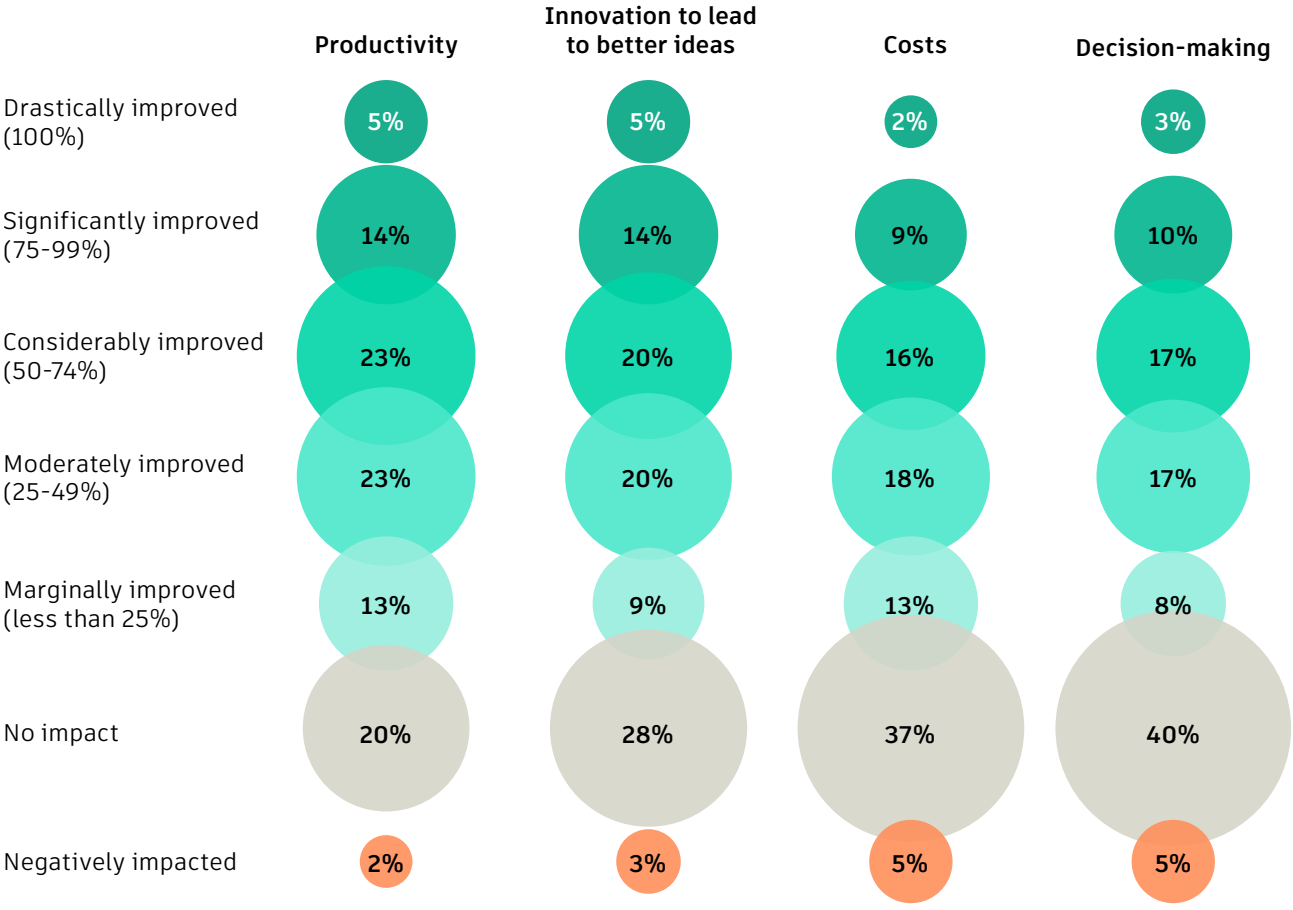
AI delivers the strongest impact on productivity

42% of organizations report digital transformation gains of 50%+



Survey question: How has your company's use of AI impacted the following? Response options: "negative impact," "no impact," and "positive impact." If positive impact, survey question: By what percentage do you think AI has impacted the following? Response scale: "Marginally," "Moderately, by 25%," "Considerably, by 50%," "Significantly, by 75%," and "Drastically, by 100%."

Nearly half of organizations (42%) that benefit from AI are realizing 50%+ ROI in the form of productivity, cost, innovation, and decision-making gains.

Not surprisingly, organizations that are leading the pack on digitization are also realizing the greatest organizational benefits. Digitally mature organizations are significantly more likely to see the positive impact of AI, for instance, 68% of more mature organizations see a positive impact on cost compared to 53% of their less-mature counterparts.

Notably, the largest difference in positive impact is on decision-making. More than two-thirds of digitally mature organizations (69%) see a positive impact on decision-making because of AI, compared to just 49% at less mature organizations. This gap speaks to the struggle to create insights from data when technology lags, and highlights the codependent relationship between data, digitization, and AI.

75%

of Autodesk users report AI has had a positive impact on their innovation, compared to 66% of nonusers

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With nearly all organizations taking steps to be more sustainable, many are turning to AI technology to help enable better outcomes. Nearly two-thirds (65%) of Design and Make organizations use AI tools to enhance their sustainability, and 69% say that demand for tools that help with sustainability outcomes has increased.

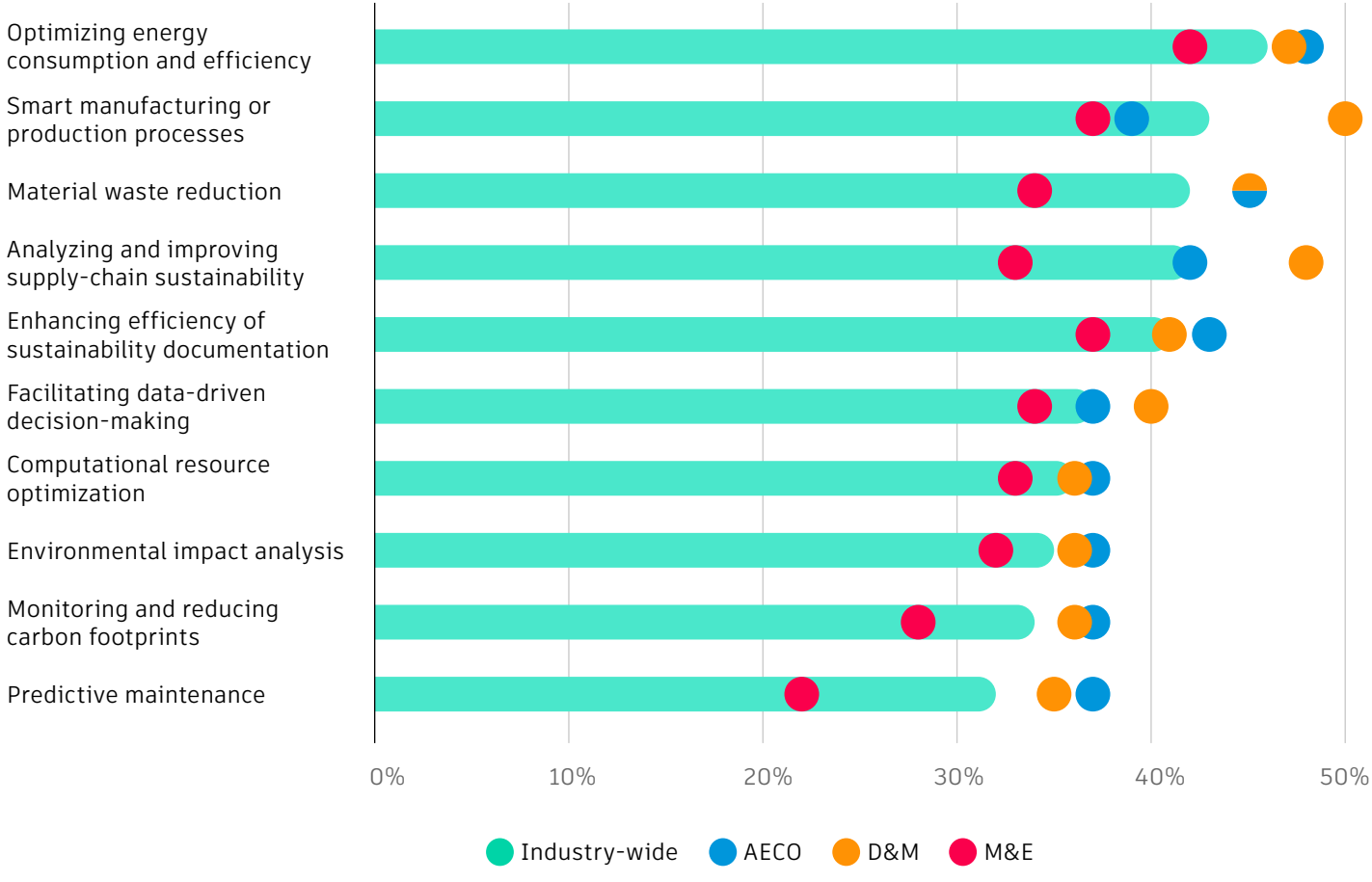
While sustainability tools are being used at various levels between industries, energy optimization and smart manufacturing are the current top use cases. AECO and D&M are the heaviest users of AI for sustainability, which aligns with the increased carbon footprint of those industries.

Not surprisingly, digitally mature companies report using AI for sustainability (79%) more than less digitally mature organizations (58%). These numbers point to an AI implementation gap—one that may widen as technology advances and provide a competitive advantage for data-centric organizations.

73%

of Autodesk users are using AI to enable sustainable solutions, compared to 62% of nonusers

AI is enabling sustainability across Design and Make industries



Survey question: Does your company or organization use AI to be more sustainable? Response options: "Yes," "No," and "I don't know." Percent selects "Yes."
If yes, survey question: How has your company used AI to be more sustainable? Please select all that apply. "Other" is not shown.

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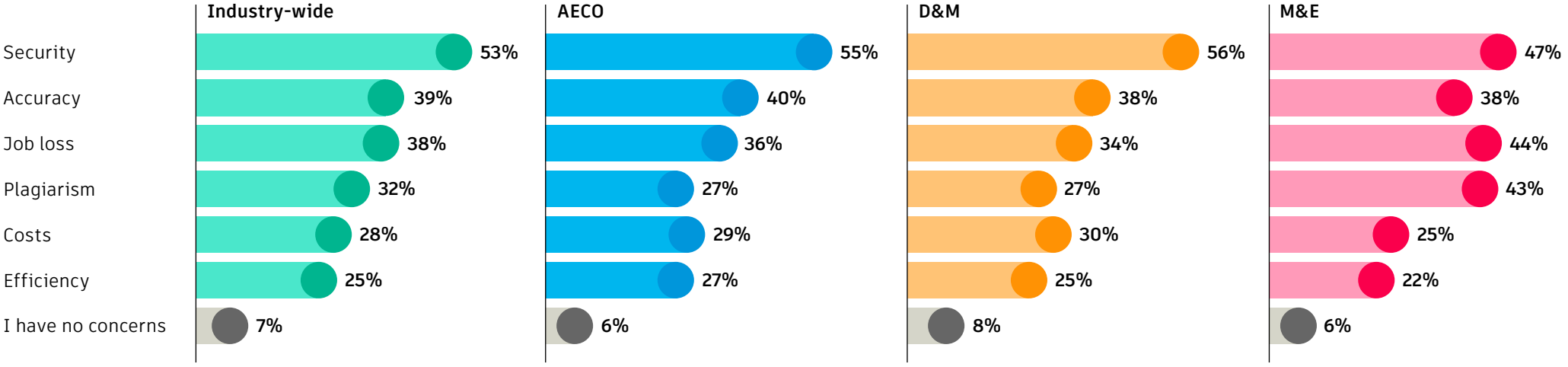
Security is the top AI concern across Design and Make



Survey question: What are your biggest concerns for AI in your industry? Please select all that apply. "Other" is not shown.

The rapid proliferation of AI across industries and into organizational structures doesn't come without risk, and nearly all *Digital Transformation Pulse* survey respondents have concerns about AI in their industry. While M&E has unique challenges around job loss and plagiarism, security is the universal top concern across all Design and Make industries. For example, some organizations struggle to manage how to use third-party AI tools without exposing their sensitive data or sensitive customer data.

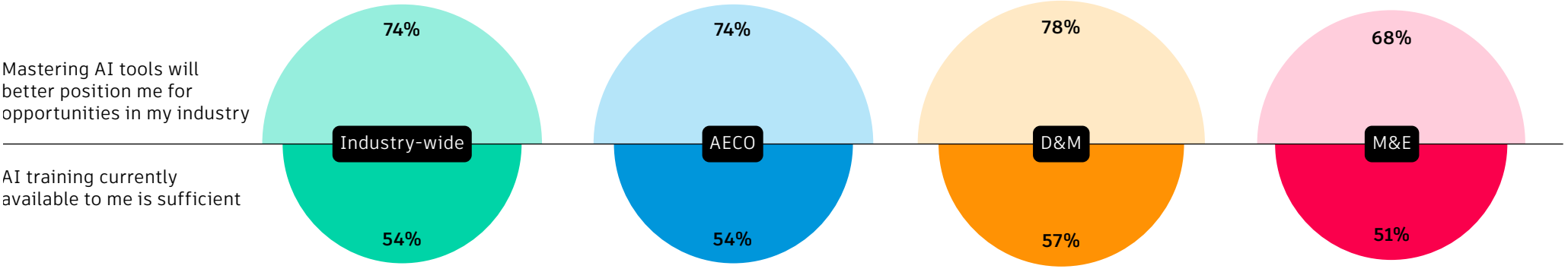
Accuracy is also a major concern across industries, both in terms of input and output. The adage "garbage in, garbage out" is especially true for AI and, without properly organized and structured data, more human intervention is needed, protracting the process and reducing the benefits of using the tools.

To avoid these pitfalls, organizations should focus on building a strong data foundation and incorporating processes that can support their specific AI goals, and choosing technology focused on data interoperability and cross-platform collaboration.

53%

of Design and Make organizations are concerned about AI security

AI skills are critical for the future, but training is lagging



Survey question: How much do you agree or disagree with the following? [statement] 5-point scale. Top two: agree.

68%

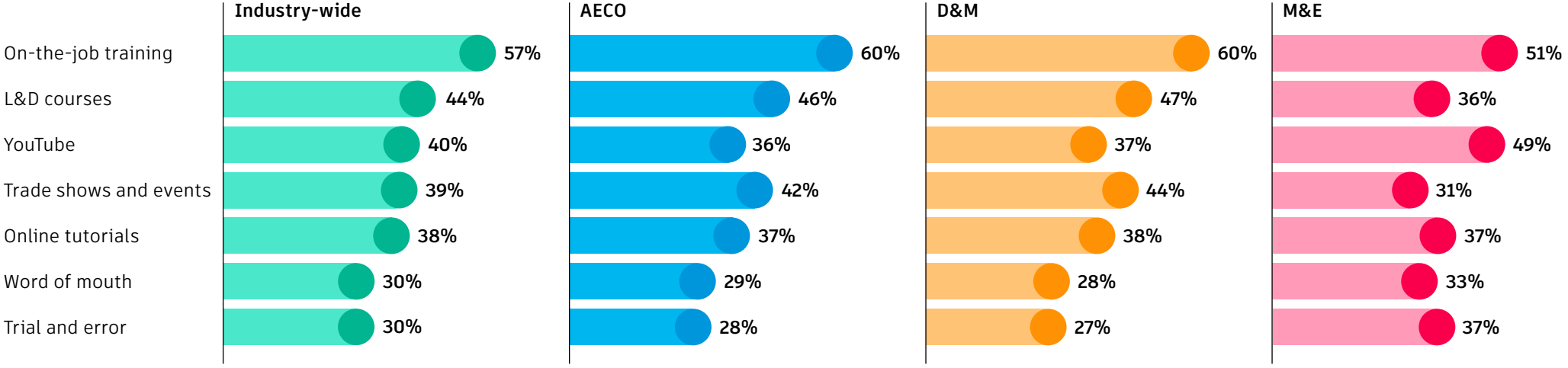
of digitally mature organizations feel their AI training is sufficient, compared to 48% of less mature organizations

Demand for AI-related tools is rising as business leaders seek to make the most of the performance boost AI has to offer.

However, technology alone is not enough without a workforce that understands how to use it. While 74% of leaders across Design and Make industries say that AI tools open business opportunities, only 54% say that their current AI training is sufficient. Without adequate training, organizations could struggle to realize the AI benefits they're looking for and risk falling behind competitors who put a premium on education.

As the demand for AI skillsets grows, leaders should invest in comprehensive training programs that prepare their teams for today's technology while continuously upskilling them for the workplace demands of tomorrow.

On-the-job training is the top way professionals learn new skills



Survey question: How, if at all, do you typically learn about technological advancements relevant to your profession? Please select all that apply. "I don't know" and "None of them" are not shown.

When it comes to education, the majority of professionals say they learn new skills on the job, underscoring the importance of internal training programs. Aside from on the job, means of training vary by industry, with M&E most heavily focused on YouTube learning, while AECO and D&M favor learning and development courses.

Surprisingly, nearly one-third (30%) of respondents say they learn through trial and error, suggesting that, lacking adequate training, Design and Make professionals innovate independently and are keen to learn new skills. To capitalize on an already eager workforce, leaders should lean-in to training that works for the unique needs of their industry and team.

57%

of professionals say they learn about new technology through on-the-job training

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Conclusion

Massive advancements in AI in recent years aside, Design and Make industries are much closer to the starting point of the AI race than the finish line. That said, the key to pushing forward in the race is being able to capitalize on the potential that emerging technologies offer. To do that, business leaders need to develop AI-ready data strategies focused on data structure and interoperability, identify what tasks AI can take on now and which are best saved for the future, and keep their workforce up-to-date and trained on the best way to use AI to enhance their work.

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About the *State of Design & Make: Digital Transformation Pulse*

The data for the *State of Design & Make: Digital Transformation Pulse* was compiled from the *Digital Transformation Pulse* survey conducted between April 28 and May 28, 2025, with Statista Plus Research.

This survey includes responses from 2,500 global industry leaders and experts spanning various regions: Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Mexico, the Middle East (Saudi Arabia & the United Arab Emirates), the Nordics (Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden), Spain, South Korea, the United Kingdom, and the United States. It draws insights from a wide range of industry professionals in architecture, engineering, construction, and operations (AECO); product design and manufacturing (D&M); and media and entertainment (M&E) from across sectors.

About Autodesk

Autodesk is changing how the world is designed and made. Its technology spans architecture, engineering, construction, product design, manufacturing, and media and entertainment, empowering innovators everywhere to solve challenges big and small. From greener buildings to smarter products to more mesmerizing blockbusters, Autodesk software helps customers design and make a better world for all. For more information, visit autodesk.com or follow @autodesk on social media.

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