CRM trends report

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Foreword

Customer relationship management sits at the center of nearly every sales and marketing operation, yet most teams are getting far less from it than they should. The promise of a CRM is a single source of truth, less administrative burden, and more time for the work that drives consistent revenue. For most professionals, that promise hasn't been fully realized.

The cost isn't always visible in a single missed deal or lost customer. It accumulates quietly, in the follow-up that didn't happen, the handoff that lost context, or the pipeline that looked healthy until it wasn't. When teams are bogged down by fragmented tools and manual processes, the work that builds relationships, advances deals, and retains customers gets squeezed out. Smaller businesses, with less capacity to absorb inefficiency, feel it most.

At Pipedrive, we sit close to these challenges by design. Our platform touches over 100,000 sales and marketing teams across all industries and growth stages, and what we see consistently is the growing distance between how teams describe their tools and how those tools are being used daily. AI is reshaping what's possible, revenue expectations are rising, and yet many of the fundamental friction points remain.

The findings in this report come from a survey of 1,000 national sales and marketing professionals across varying company sizes and sectors. We asked about where time goes, how tools are being used, and what separates teams that are pulling ahead from those that aren't. We hope the findings offer you an honest picture of where the CRM industry stands, and a useful starting point for thinking about what comes next.

Paulo Cunha
CEO, Pipedrive

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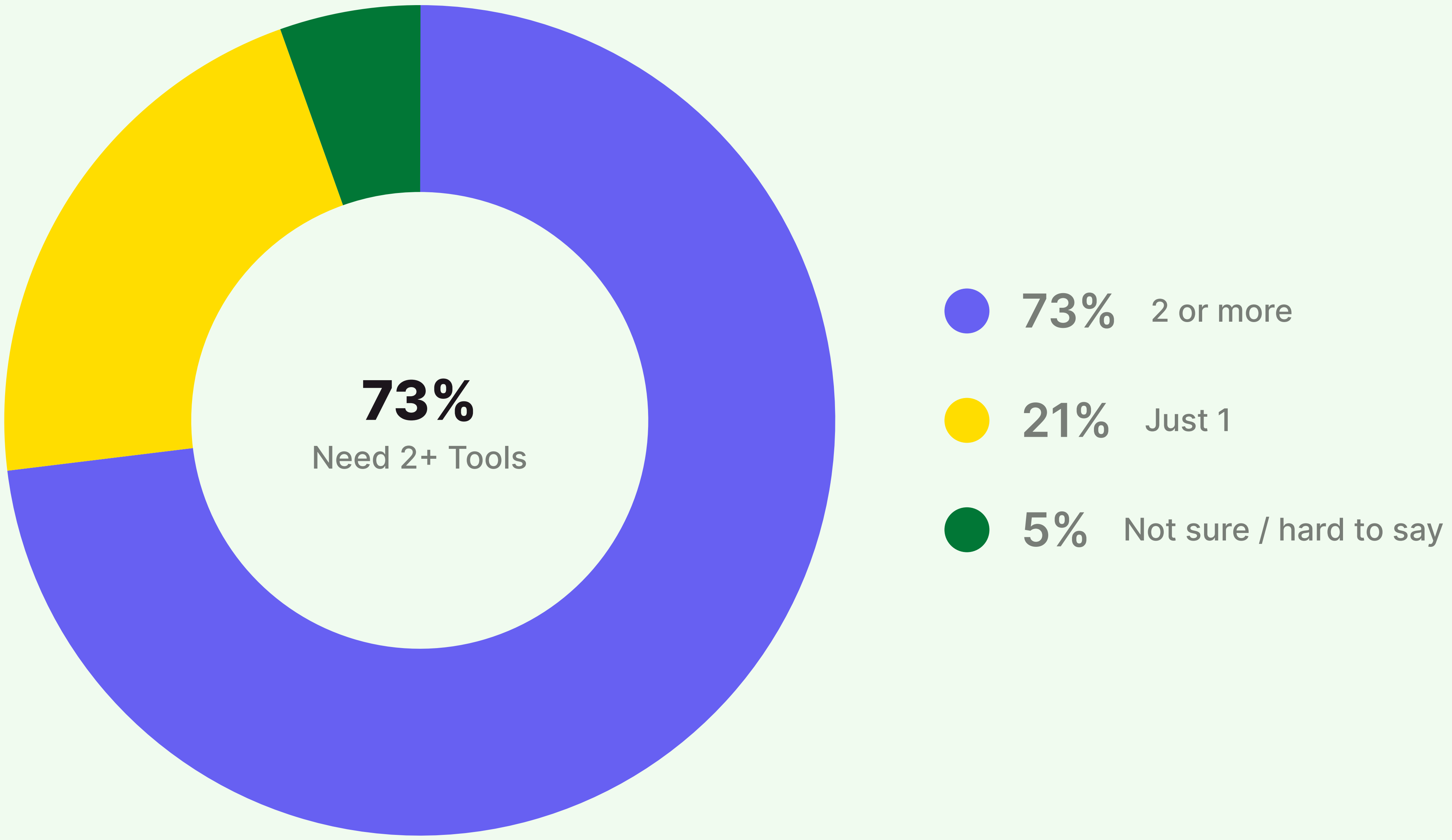
01 Fragmented tools are costing sales and marketing teams more than they realize

Disconnected systems have become the default, and it's creating daily chaos [1]

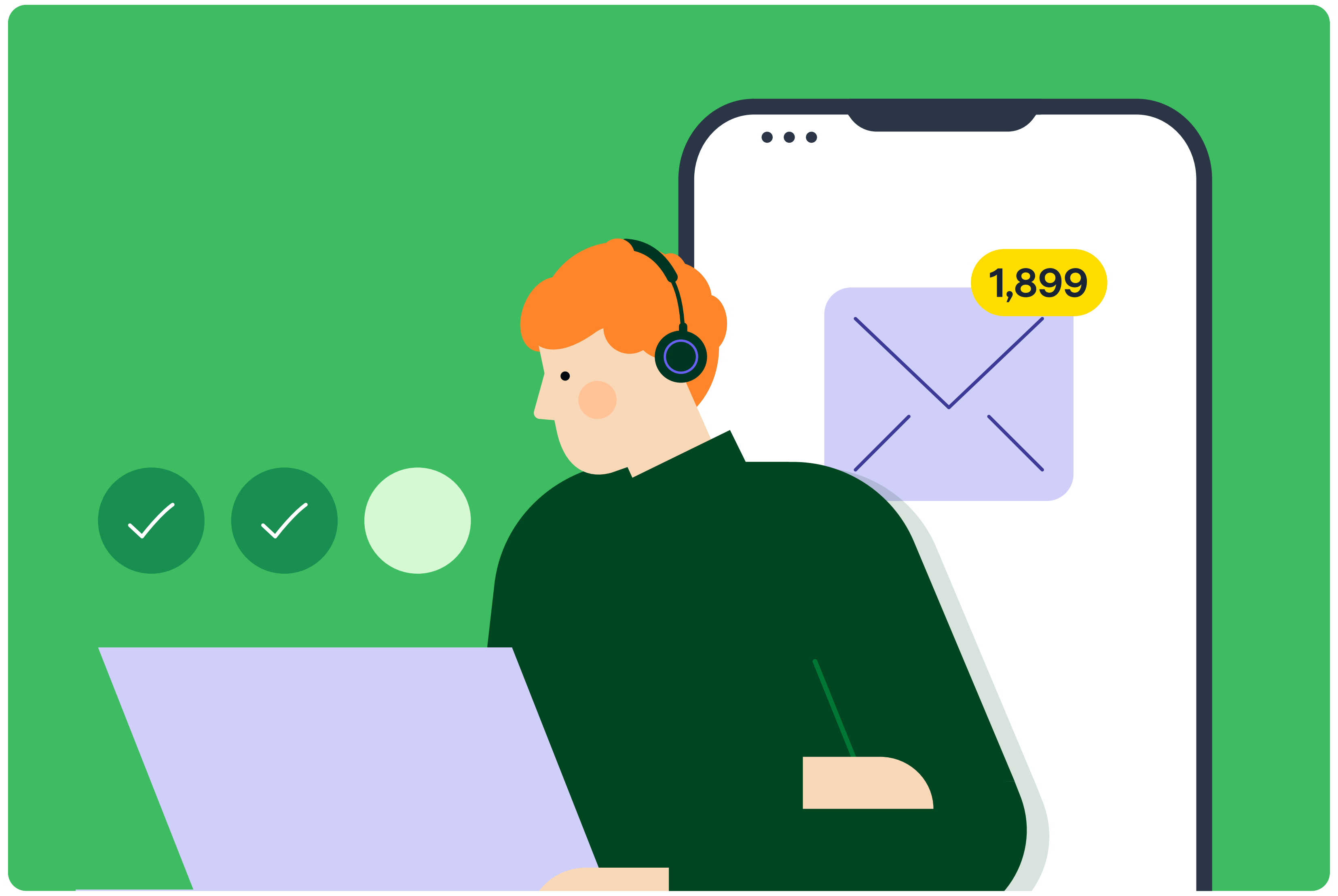
For most sales and marketing professionals, getting a complete picture of a customer relationship often requires jumping between multiple tools. In fact, only **21%** of them reported effectively doing so in one place. The rest are piecing together information across two, three, or even four or more systems, representing a fragmented reality that slows teams down and creates gaps that lead to missed opportunities.

Those gaps add up fast. Nearly two-thirds of respondents (**62%**) say disconnected tools cause their teams to miss important actions, opportunities, or updates at least once a week. For **42%**, that's a daily problem with **18%** experiencing it multiple times a day and **25%** at least once every day.

Tools or systems needed to get a complete picture of a customer account [1]



The industries feeling this most acutely are IT and tech (**17%** reporting daily or multiple daily disruptions), health and social (**16%**), and wholesale and retail trade (**15%**). Construction (**13%**) and financial services (**11%**) also report high rates of daily missed actions. These same industries lead on tool fragmentation too, with IT/tech (**17%**), health and social (**16%**), and wholesale and retail trade (**13%**) accounting for the largest share of professionals who need two or more systems just to see a full customer view.



Disconnected tools mean missed opportunities 2

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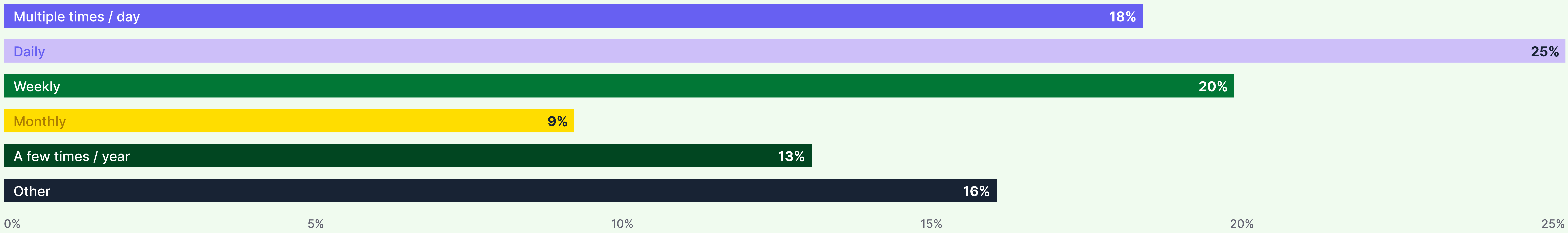
How often disconnected tools cause missed actions 2



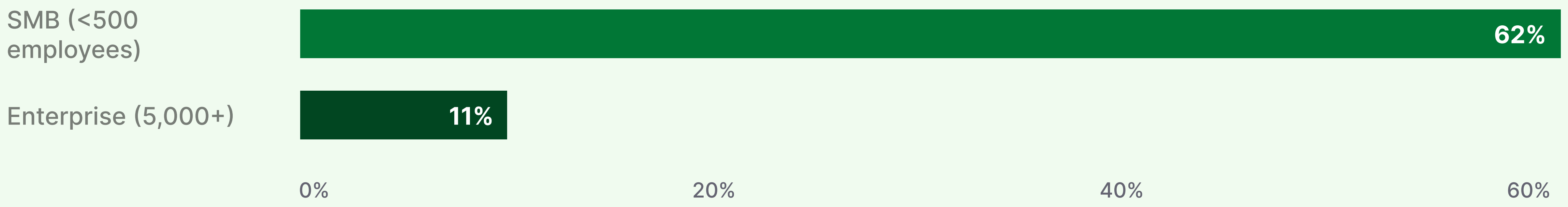
The industries feeling it most 3

IT and tech (**17%** reporting daily or multiple daily disruptions), health and social (**16%**), and wholesale and retail trade (**15%**) feel it most acutely. Construction (**13%**) and financial services (**11%**) also report high rates of daily missed actions. These same industries lead on tool fragmentation too, with IT/tech (**17%**), health and social (**16%**), and wholesale and retail trade (**13%**) accounting for the largest share of professionals who need two or more systems for a full customer view.

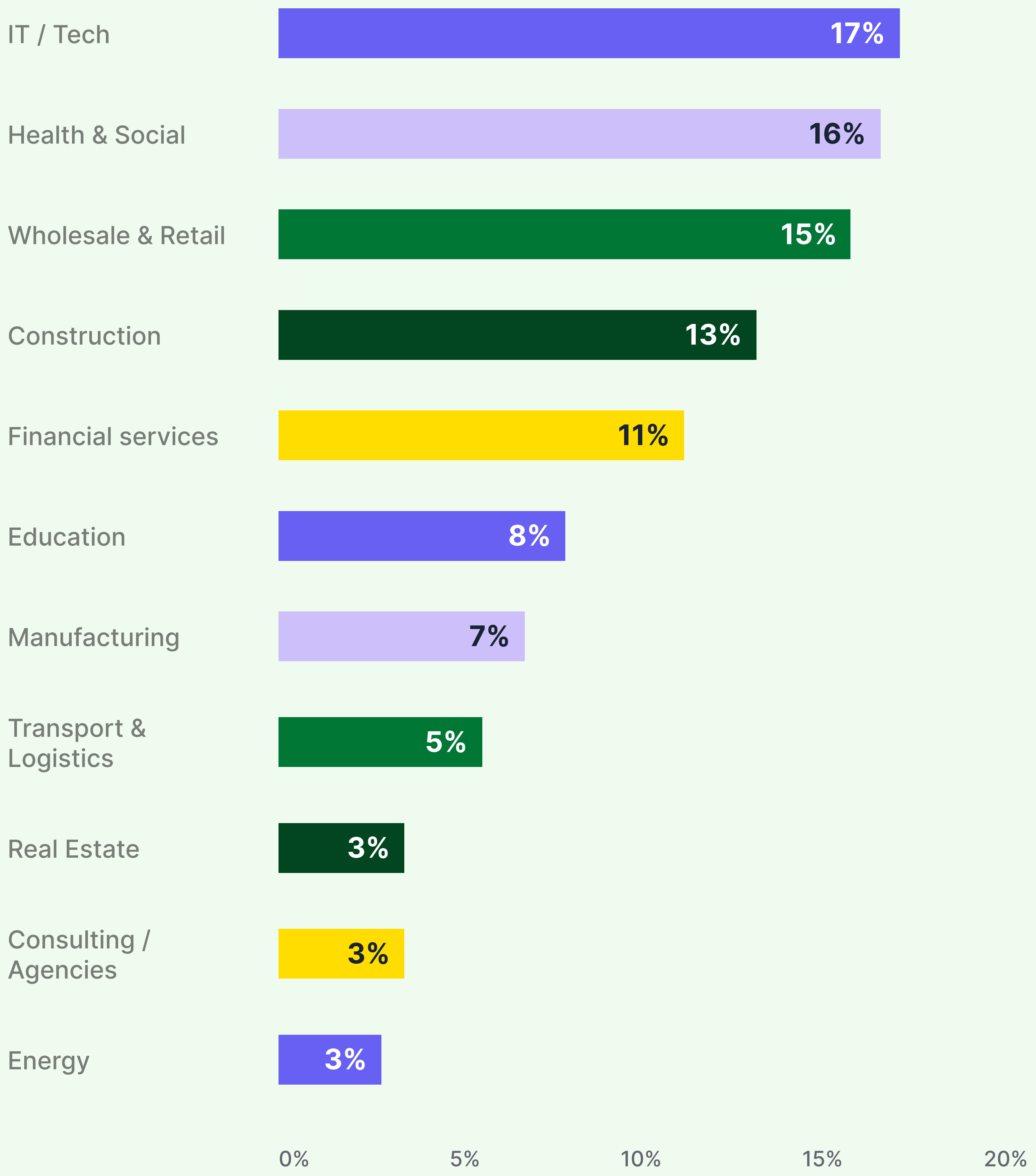
The problem hits SMBs the hardest 4

Tool fragmentation isn't evenly distributed. Of all the professionals who need two or more systems to get a complete customer picture, **62%** work at companies with fewer than 500 employees. Larger organizations (those with more than 5,000 employees) account for just **11%**. This makes sense given the realities of SMBs. With lean teams and limited budgets, they have less capacity to manage disconnected systems, making a centralized view of customer relationships even more critical to their success.

Companies using 2+ systems for customer data 4



Industries hit hardest by daily workflow disruptions 3



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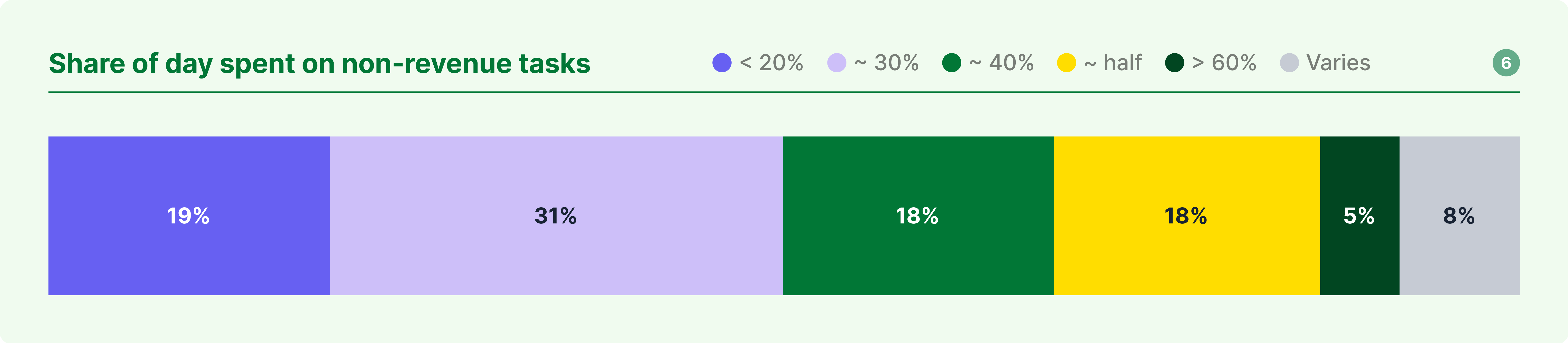
02 Administrative tasks are overpowering the work that actually matters

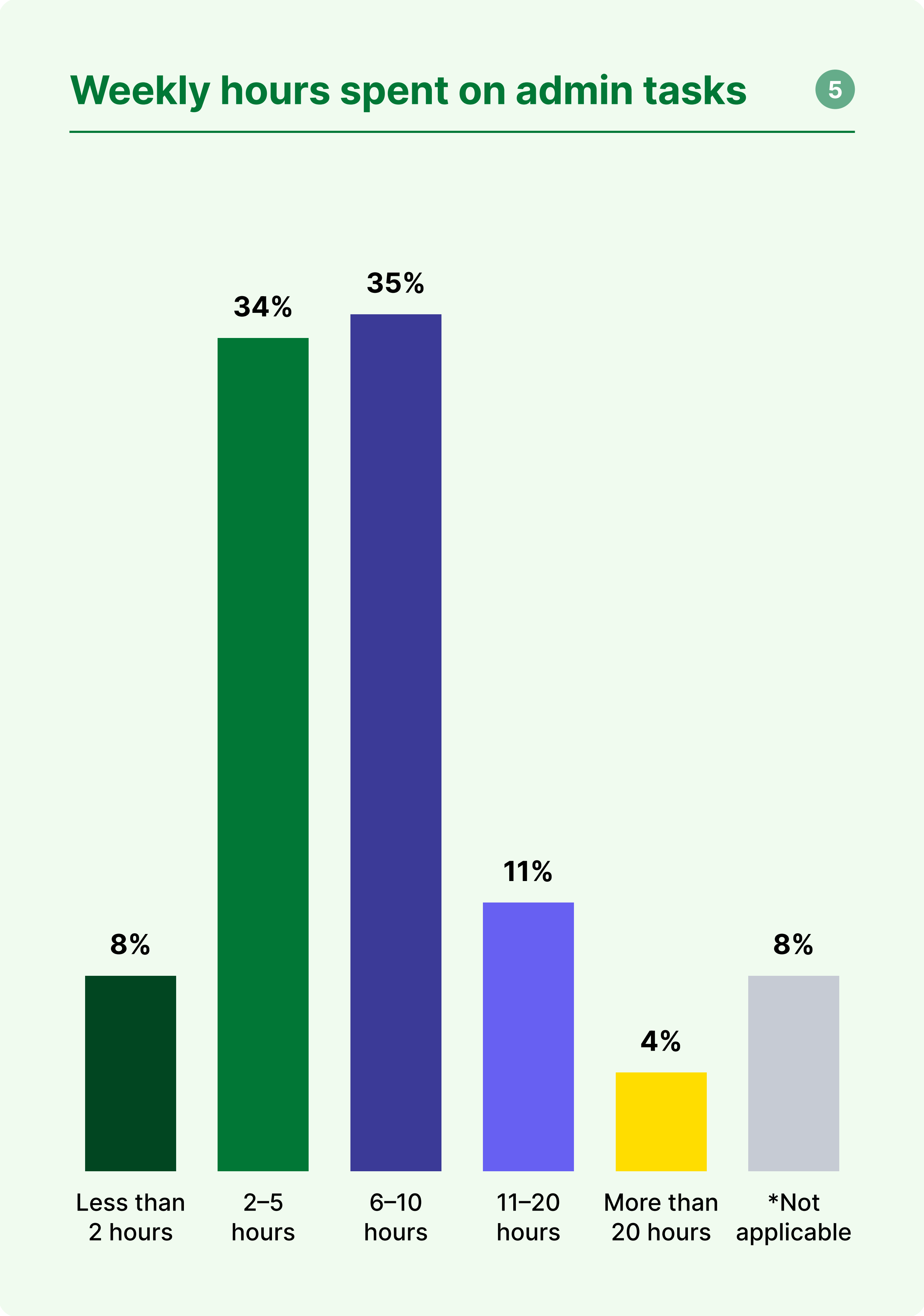
Most of the workweek is going to tasks that don't drive revenue

Ask any sales or marketing professional what's eating their time, and the answer is rarely pipeline strategy or customer conversations. It's admin. Over **50%** of respondents spend at least six hours every week on manual data entry, system updates, and administrative tasks. Of those, a third (**35%**) spend six to ten hours, another **11%** spend eleven to twenty hours, and **4%** spend more than twenty.

Nearly half the day goes to non-revenue work 6

The daily picture is just as stark. Nearly half of respondents (**42%**) reported spending at least **40%** of their working day on tasks that don't directly generate revenue. That includes **18%** who are at a 50/50 split and **5%** who spend over **60%** of their day on work that does not directly contribute to business growth.





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Logging work outpaces closing deals [7]

Perhaps the clearest way to see what's being lost: only **11%** of professionals list advancing prospect conversations and closing deals among their most frequent weekly activities. Meanwhile, **38%** list logging calls, emails, or meetings. That's nearly four times as many people logging work as doing the work that actually moves deals forward.

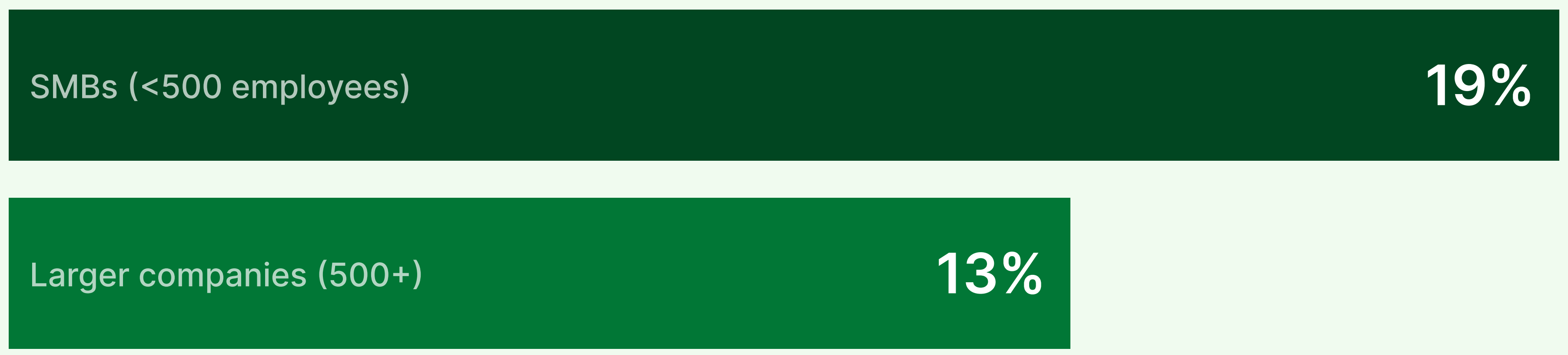
Smaller companies are forced to do it the hard way [8]

At companies with fewer than 500 employees, the weekly task list skews heavily manual, and generating quotes and proposals manually is significantly more common (**19%**) than at larger ones (**13%**). Larger organizations tell a different story: reviewing dashboards and reports (**39%**) is as common as managing contacts, suggesting workflows where data surfaces automatically. The burden is heaviest for SMBs, with **40%** of those spending over **60%** of their day on admin at companies under 500 employees.

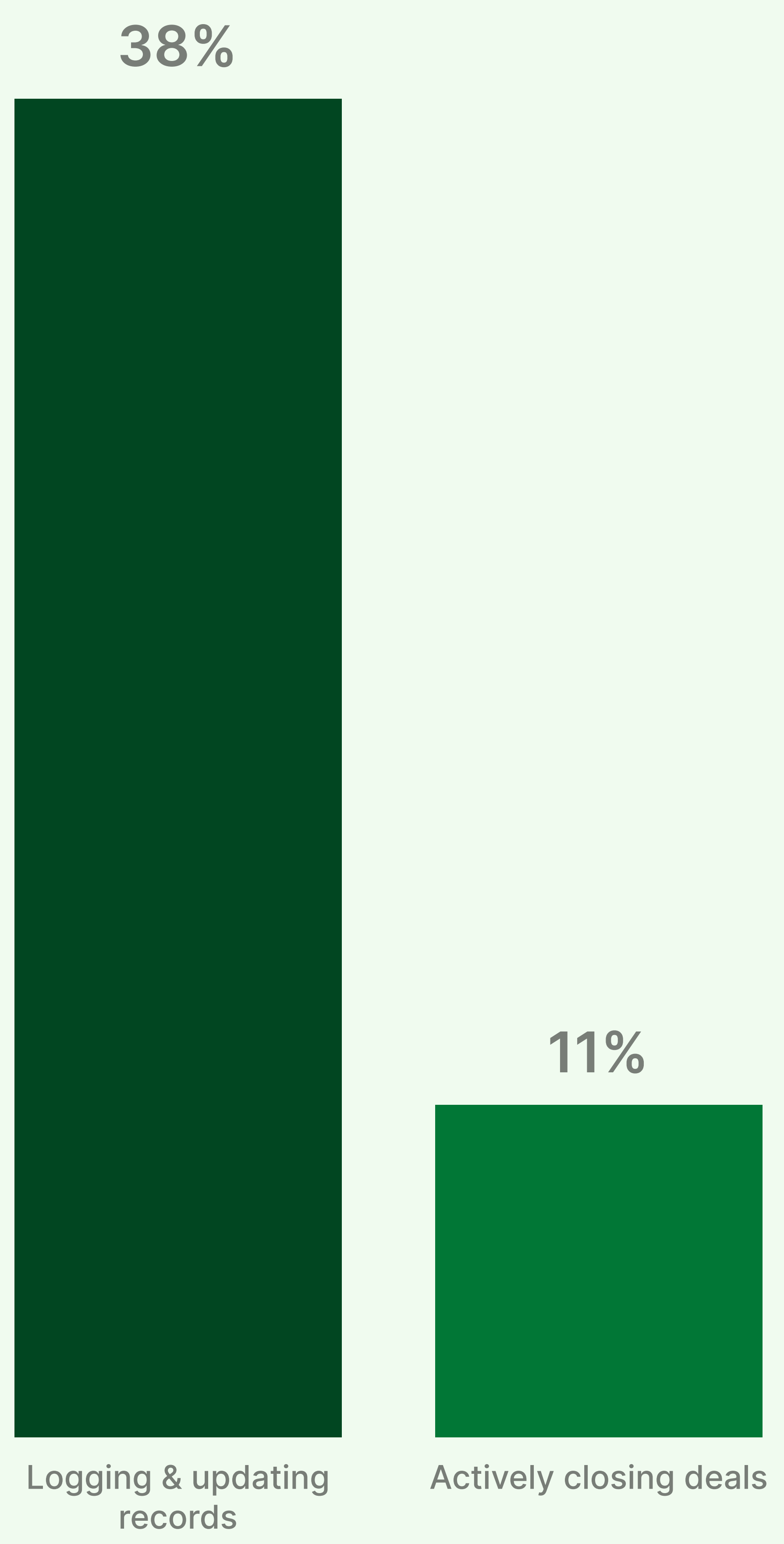
4x

more professionals log work than close deals each week

Generate quotes & proposals manually [8]



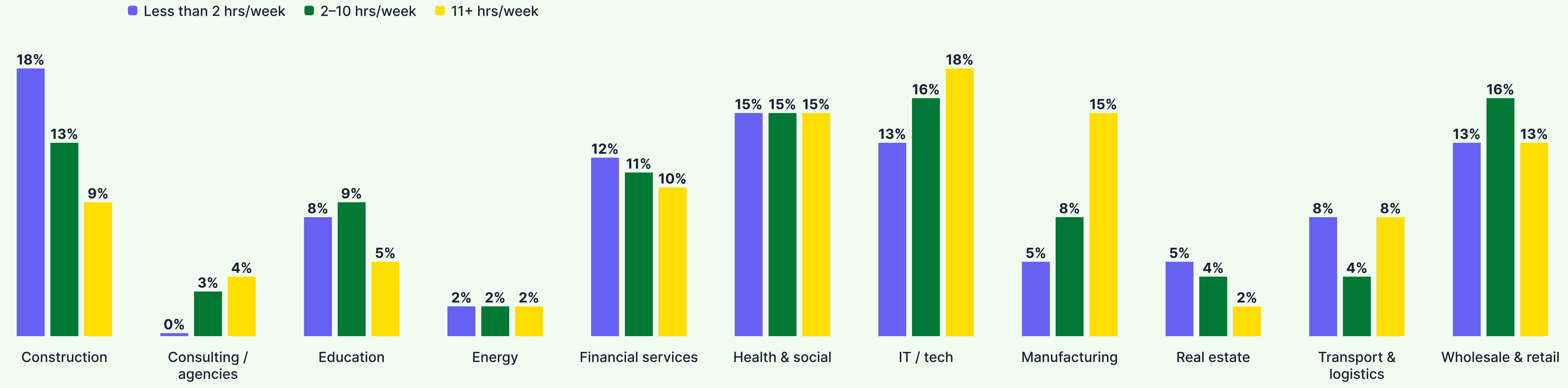
Time logging activities vs closing deals [7]



The industries with the heaviest admin workload 9

Among respondents spending eleven or more hours per week on admin, IT/tech leads the field (**18%**), followed by health and social (**15%**) and manufacturing (**15%**). Manufacturing's presence is worth noting: it matches health and social despite a smaller share of the survey population, suggesting the admin burden in that sector is disproportionately high.

Admin burden by industry across workload levels 9

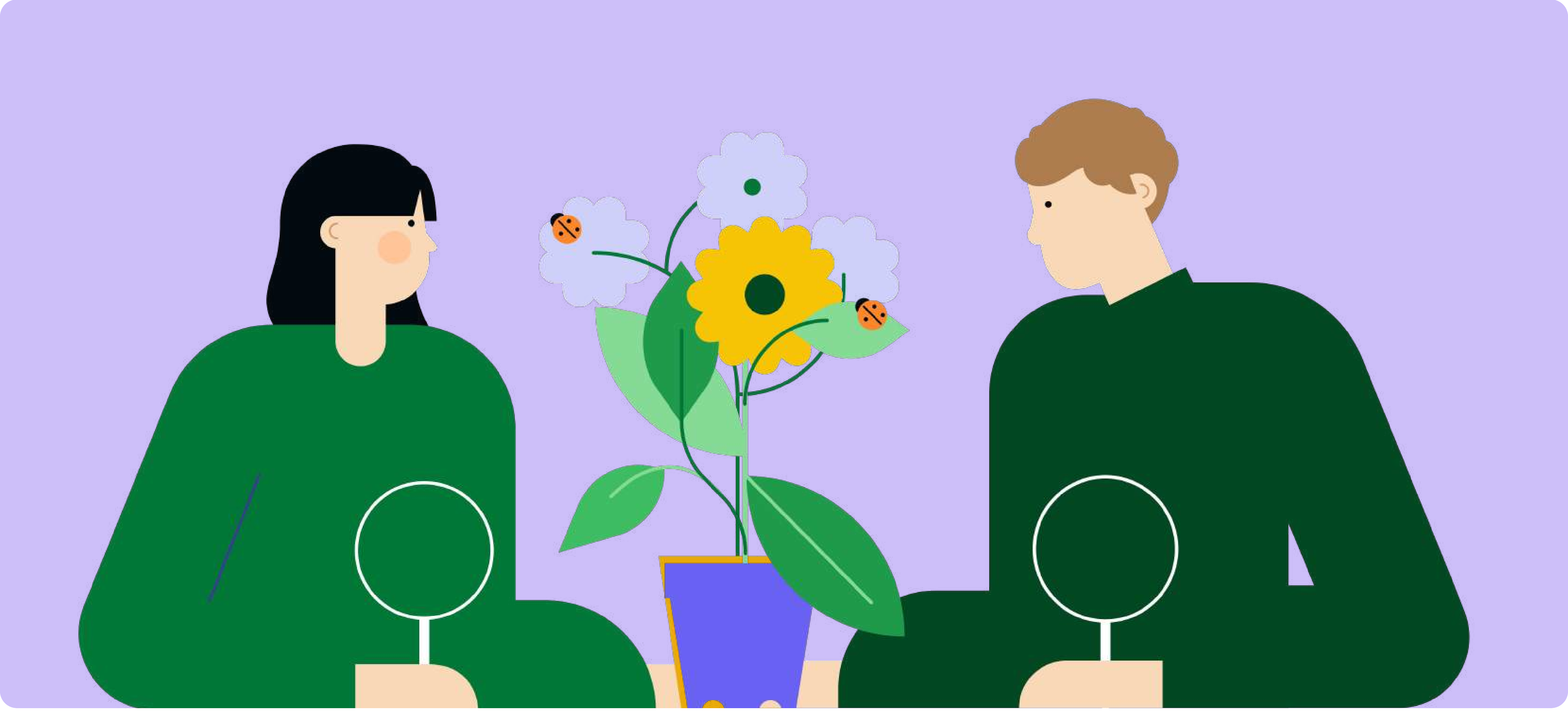


Share of respondents in each admin-hours bucket, by industry.

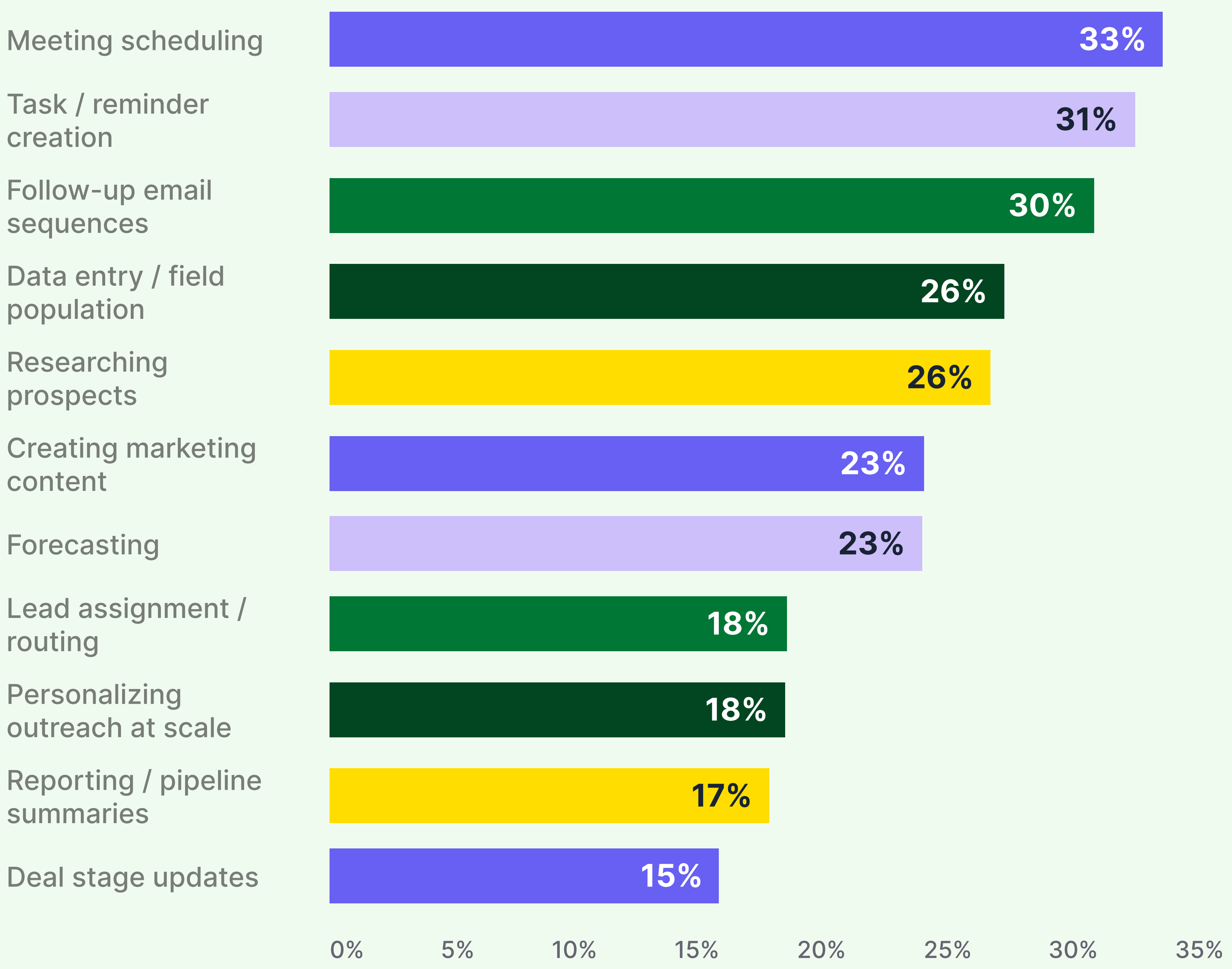
03 AI is helping, but most teams are only scratching the surface

AI adoption is growing but still shallow 10

AI has made it into most sales and marketing workflows, but only at the edges. The most common uses are meeting scheduling, task or reminder creation, and follow-up email sequences. Data entry (**26%**) and prospect research (**26%**) see meaningful use too, but professionals aren't satisfied: asked what they most want automated next, data entry jumps to the top of the list (**15%**). The tools exist, but they're not yet delivering on the work that matters most.



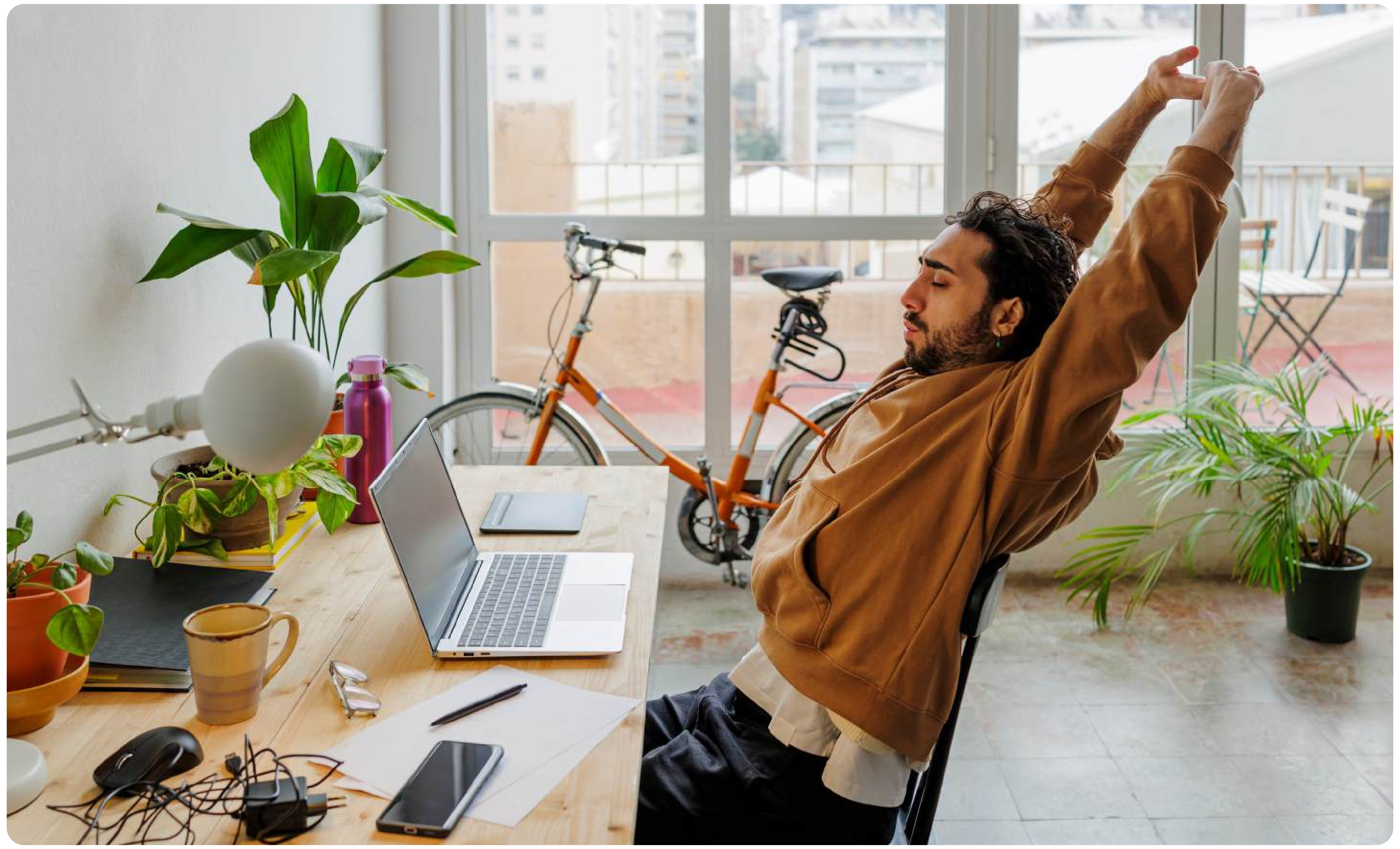
Most common AI use cases 10

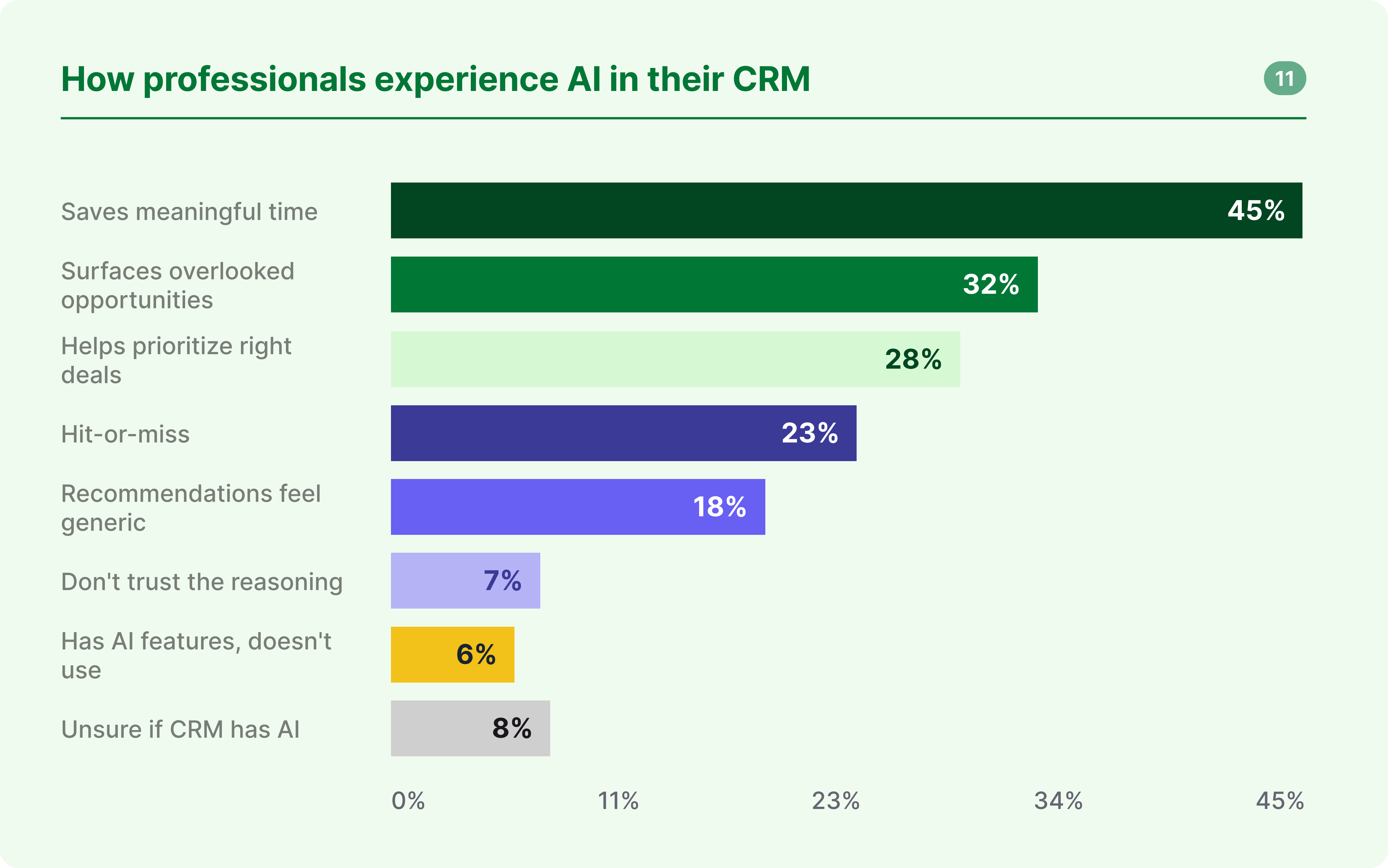


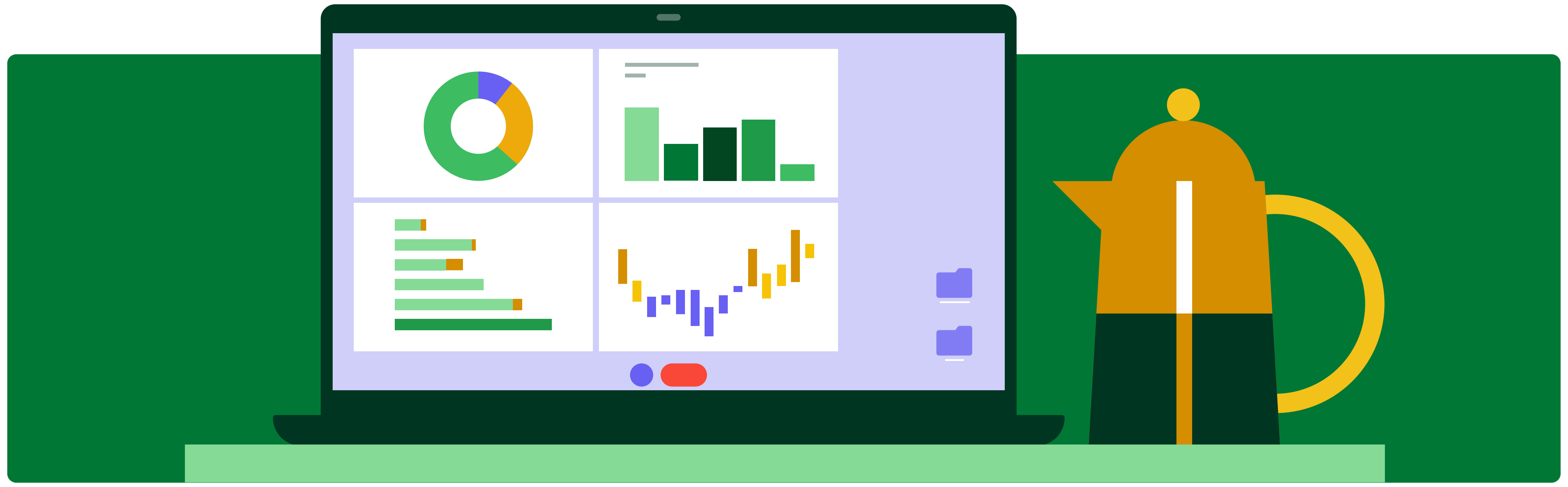
6% use AI, but not for these tasks. 10% don't use AI in their work.

A hidden adoption gap — and real gains where it's used 11

For those using AI effectively, the benefits are worthwhile: **45%** say it saves meaningful time, **32%** say it surfaces opportunities they might have missed, and **28%** say it helps prioritize the right deals. But skepticism persists, and nearly **14%** have AI available and aren't using it — **8%** aren't sure their CRM has AI features, and **6%** know it does and choose not to. Rather than a trust issue, the data suggests a gap in awareness and adoption.







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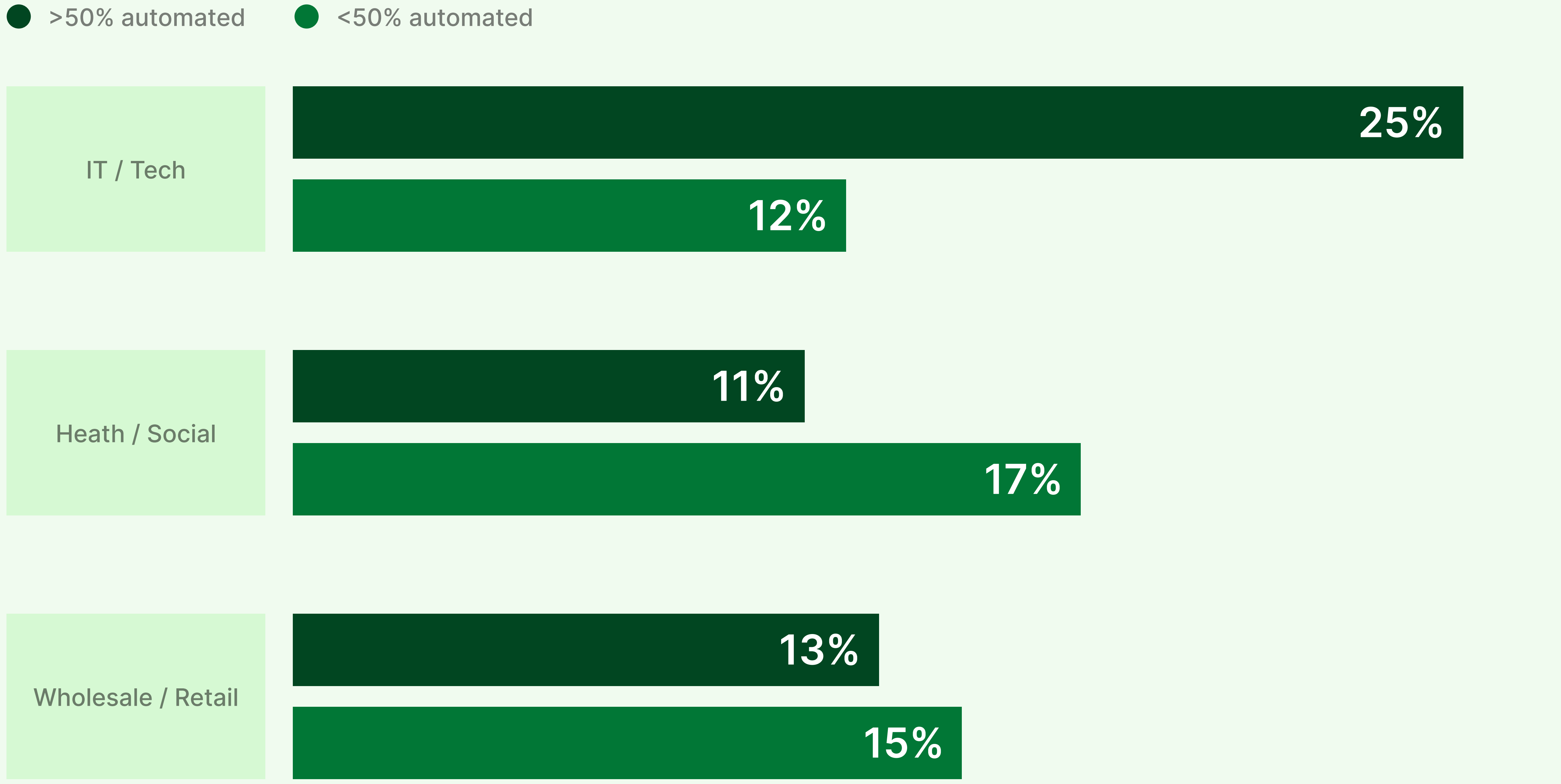
Industry adoption is uneven 12

IT and tech workers are furthest ahead, making up **25%** of those who have automated more than half their tasks — but they also appear at **12%** among those below that line, suggesting adoption is polarized within the industry itself. Health and social workers concentrate at the lower end (**17%** below vs. **11%** above), and wholesale and retail trade shows a similar pattern (**15%** vs. **13%**).

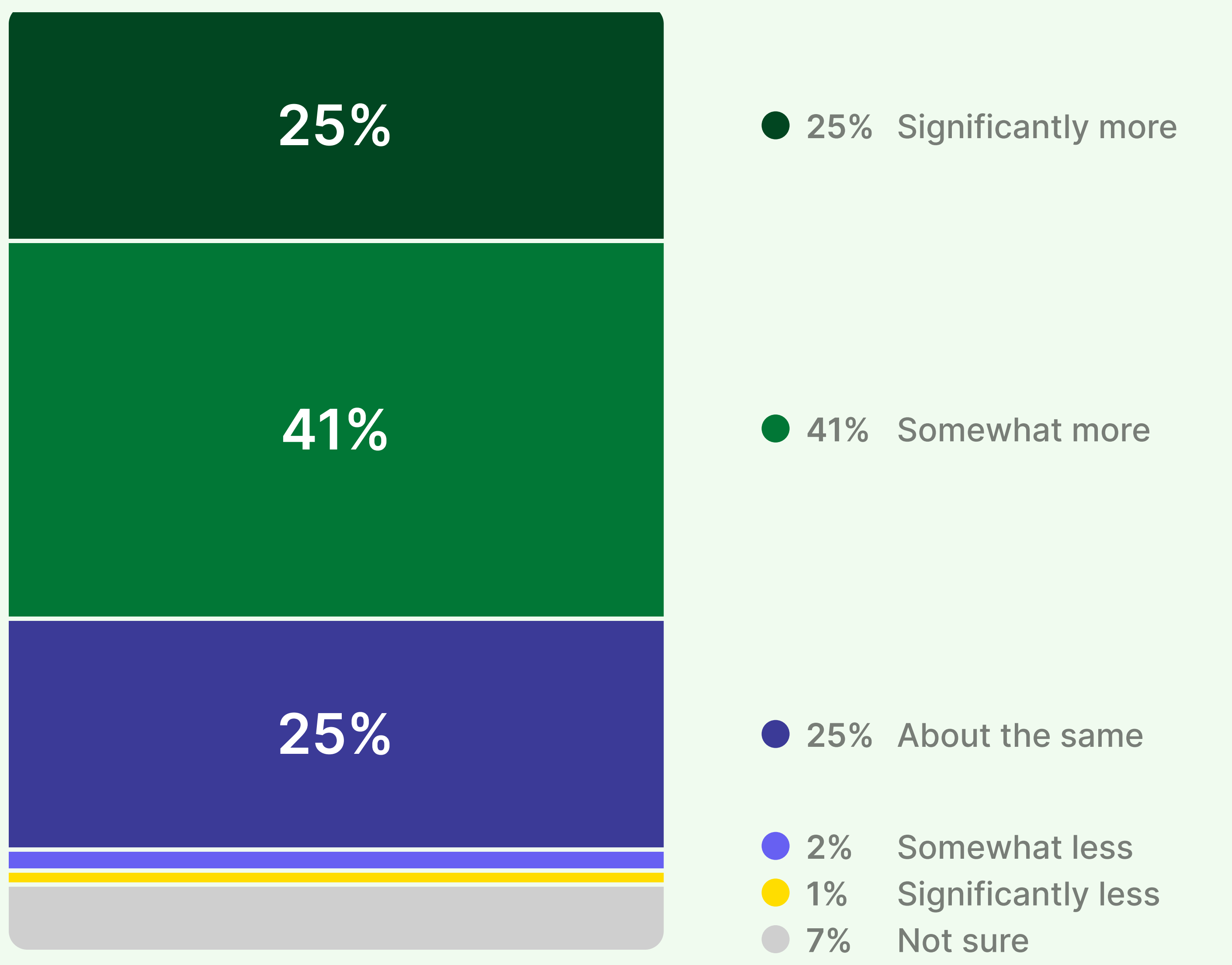
The direction of travel is clear 13

Despite current limitations, expectations point one way: **65%** of respondents expect their AI use to increase over the next twelve months, with **25%** anticipating a significant increase. Only around 3% expect any decrease at all.

CRM tasks automated: over vs under 50%, by industry 12



Expected AI use in sales over the next 12 months 13



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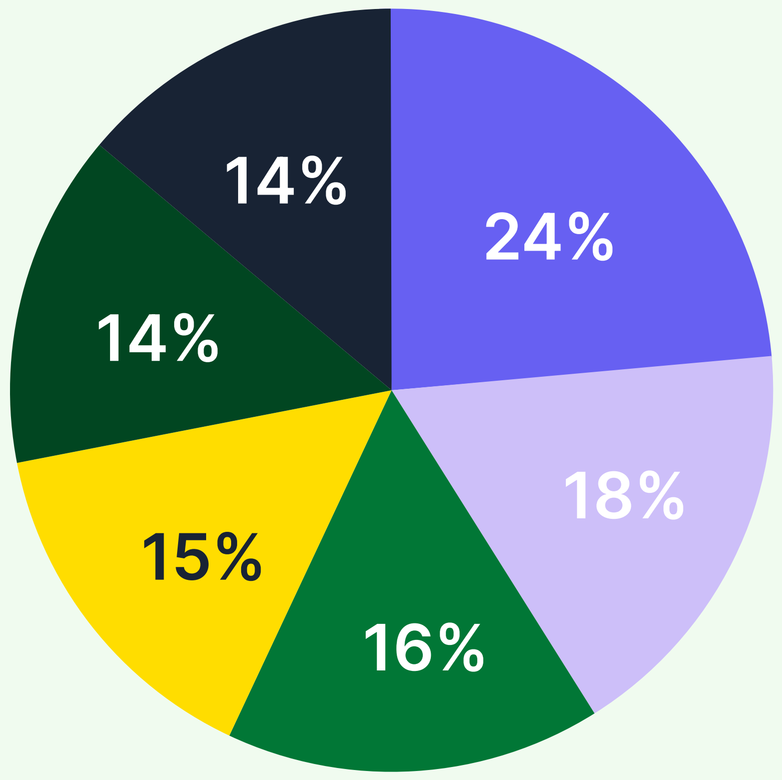
04 What professionals actually value in their CRM

Collaboration and visibility are top priorities [14]

When professionals are asked what adds the most value to their day-to-day work, the answers center on connection and clarity rather than automation. Collaboration with teammates on shared accounts comes first (**24%**), followed by reporting and performance insights (**18%**) and tracking deal progress and pipeline visibility (**16%**). Automated follow-ups (**15%**), AI-assisted recommendations (**14%**), and reviewing past interactions before a call (**14%**) round out the list; precisely the activities that get squeezed out by admin work.

Where CRMs deliver the most value [14]

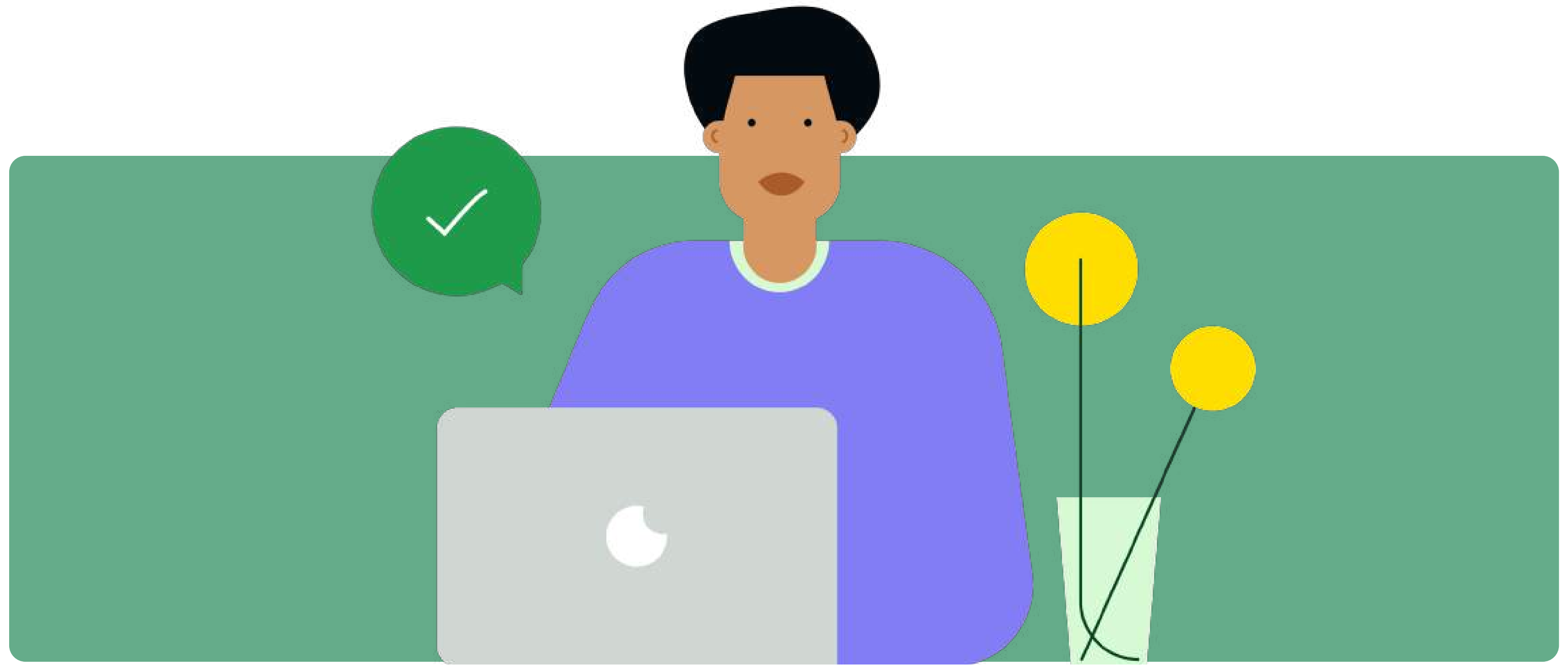


- **24%** Collaboration on shared accounts
- **18%** Reporting & performance insights
- **16%** Deal progress & pipeline visibility
- **15%** Automated follow-ups & reminders
- **14%** AI-assisted recommendations
- **14%** Reviewing past interactions

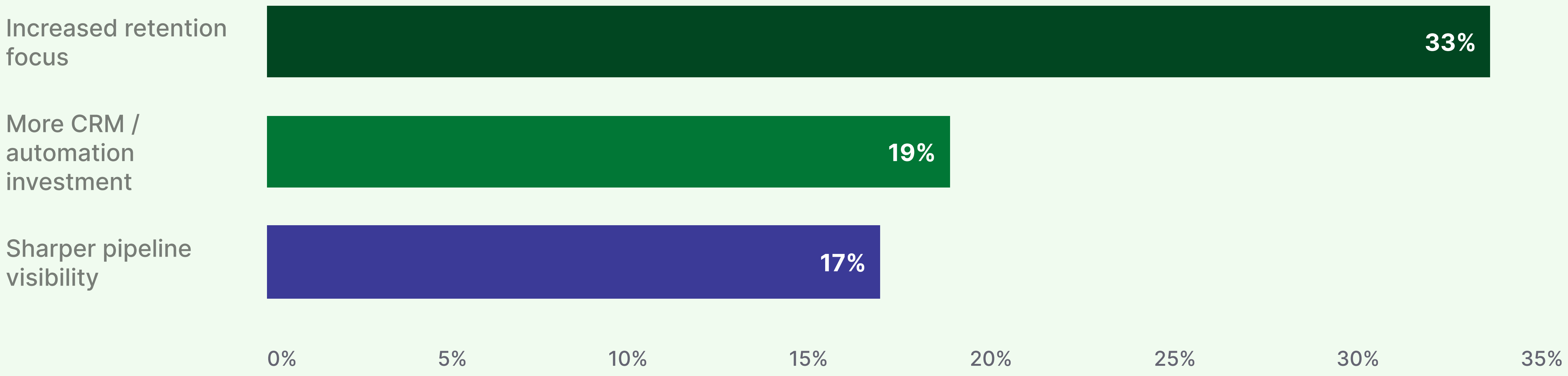
05 Rising revenue expectations are pushing organizations toward CRM investment

Growth ambitions are reshaping how companies approach customer management [15]

Revenue expectations have shifted upward for most organizations: **62%** say expectations have increased versus the previous year, with **19%** reporting a significant increase and **43%** a moderate one. That optimism is driving action — **69%** of organizations have adjusted their CRM strategy in response. Only **2%** of organizations have reduced their CRM investment, making growth-driven pullback the exception rather than the rule.



How organizations are adjusting CRM strategy [15]



Of the 62% who reported adjusting their CRM strategy.

69%

of organizations have adjusted their CRM strategy (in response to changing revenue expectations)

2%

have reduced CRM investment (growth-driven pullback is the exception, not the rule)

06 Timing and personalization make the biggest difference in email outreach

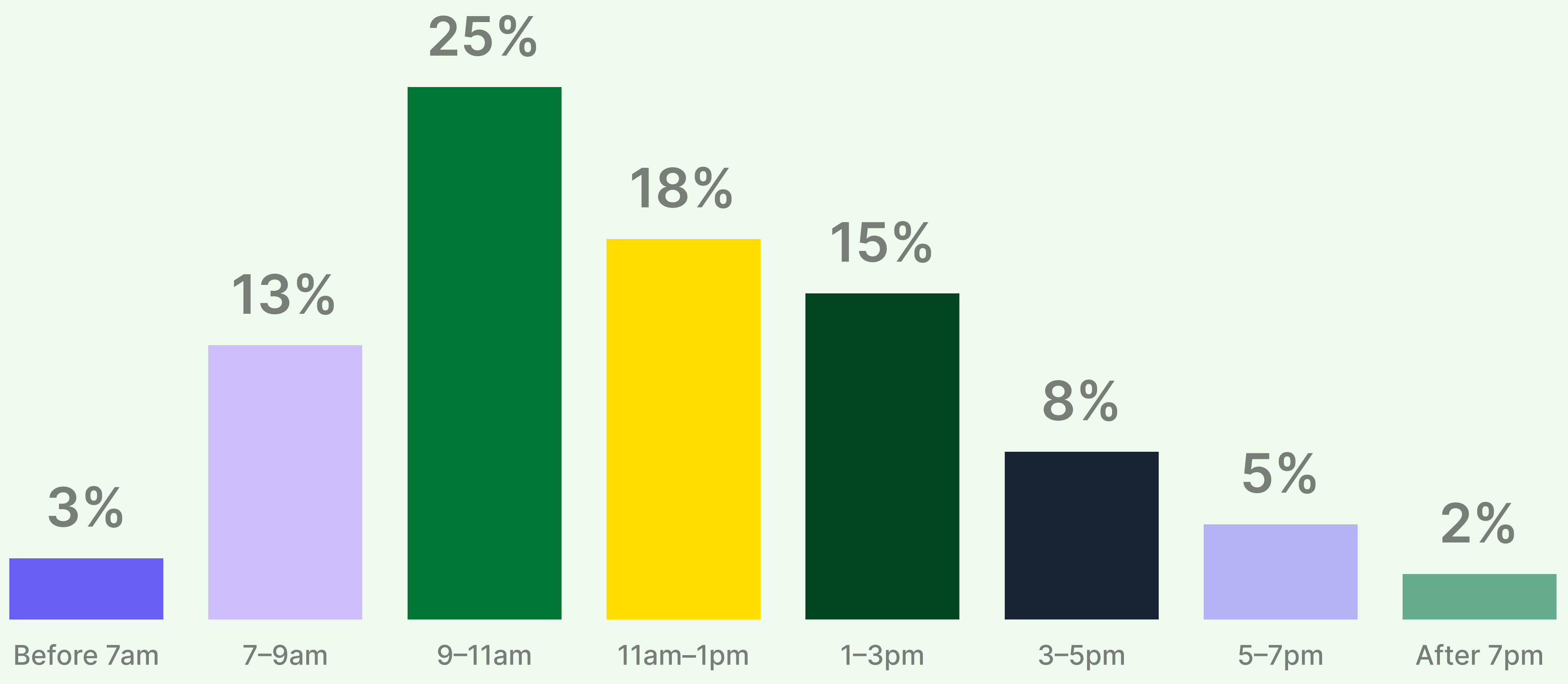
When you send matters almost as much as what you send [16]

The best window for email response rates is 9 am to 11 am, cited by **25%** of respondents. Response rates drop off through the afternoon, with **18%** seeing strong results between 11 am and 1 pm and **15%** favoring the 1 pm to 3 pm slot. Early morning and evening outreach trails significantly.

Monday and Wednesday outperform the rest of the week [17]

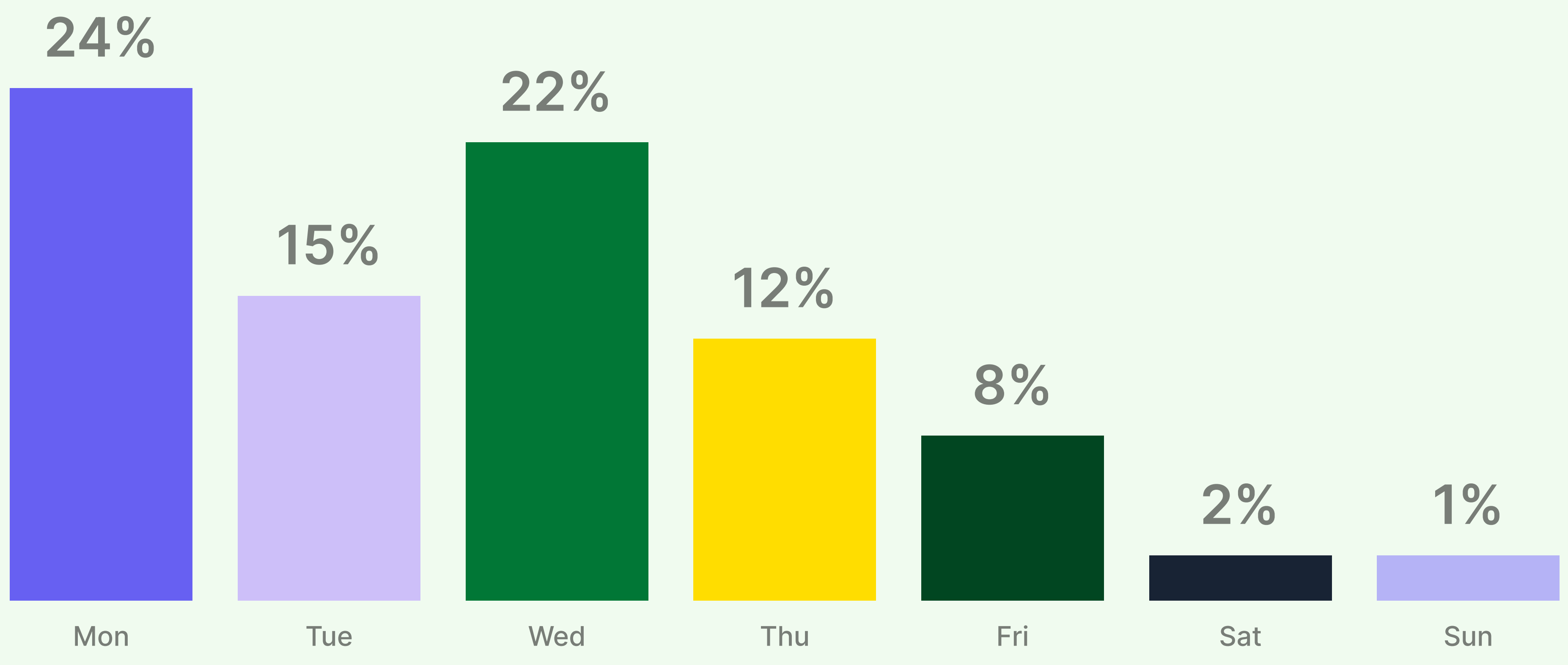
Day of the week matters too. Monday (**24%**) and Wednesday (**22%**) consistently outperform the rest of the week. Weekends are largely ineffective, with Saturday and Sunday cited by just **2%** and **1%** of respondents, respectively.

Best time of day to send sales emails [16]



Excludes the 12% who don't track this / see no clear pattern.

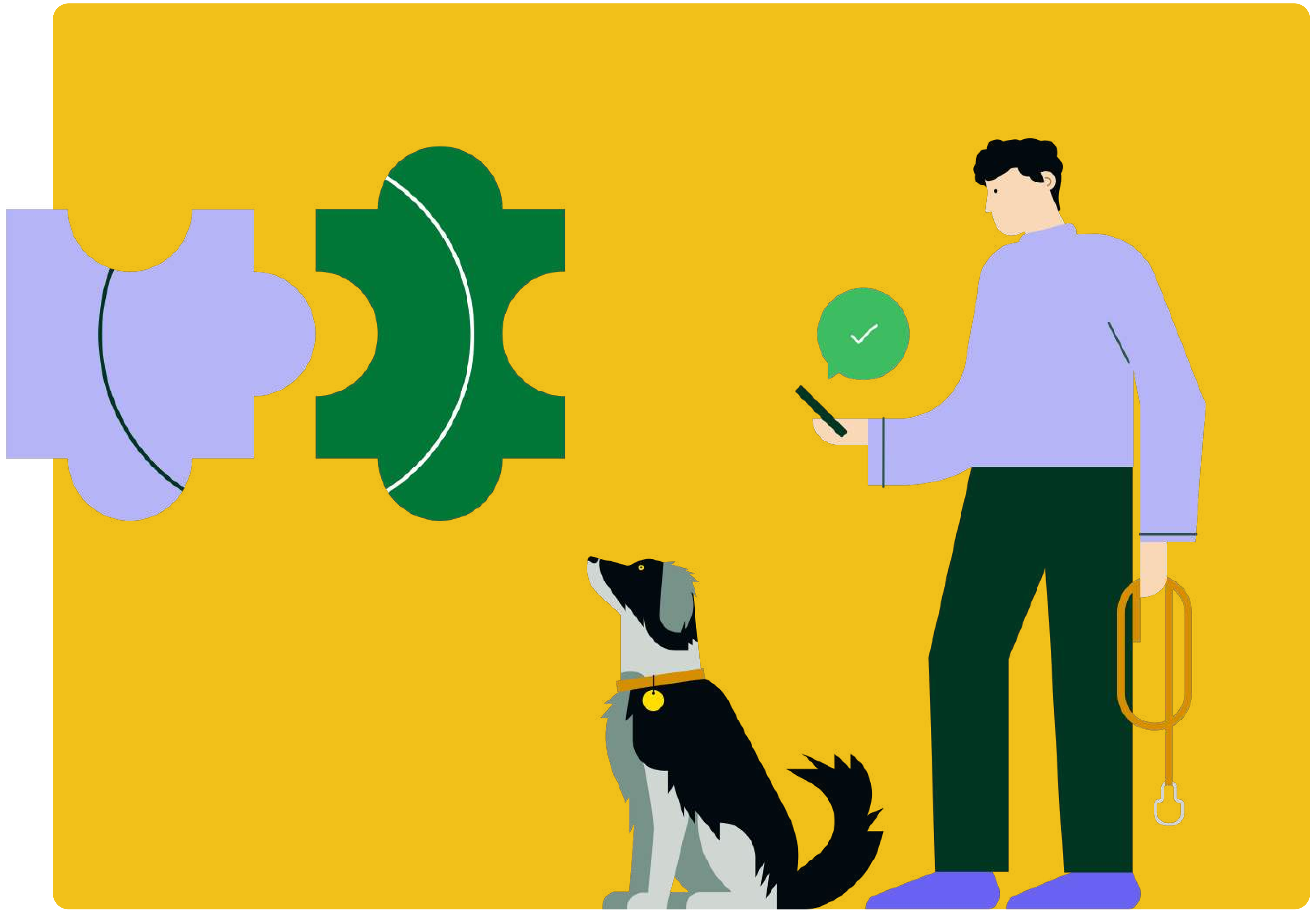
Best day of week to send sales emails [17]



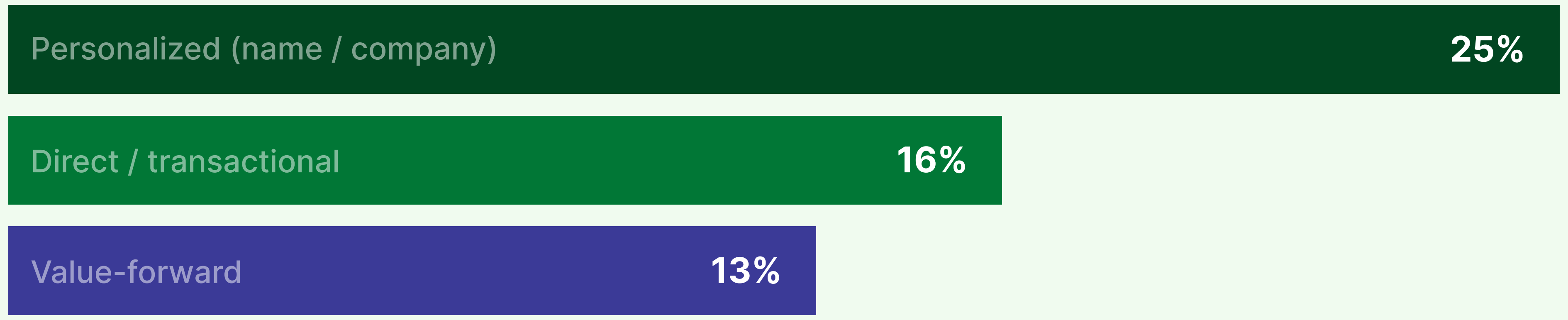
Excludes the 16% who don't track this / see no clear pattern.

Personalization beats every other approach [18][19]

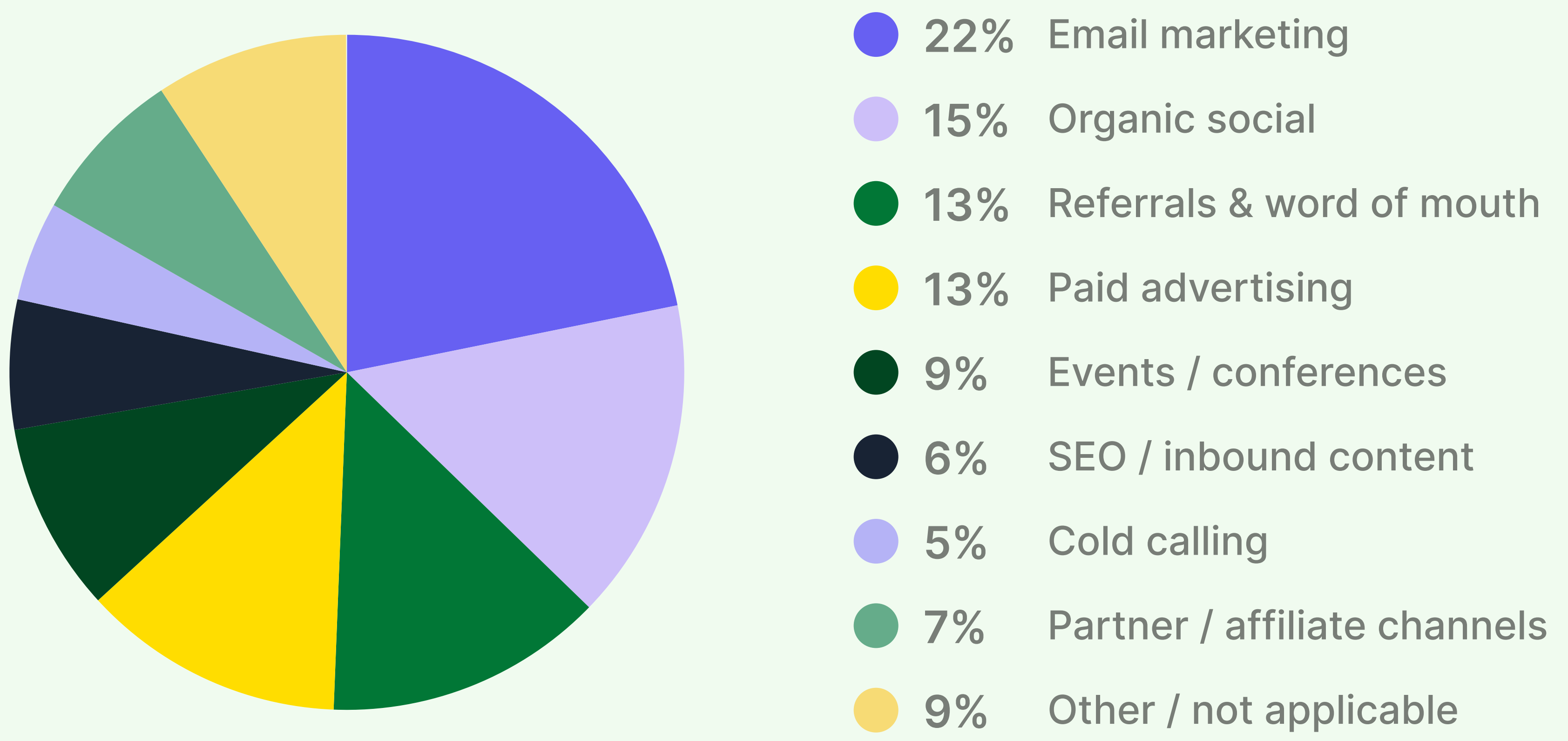
Subject lines with the recipient's name or company perform best, cited by **25%** as their top approach, ahead of direct, transactional lines (**16%**) and value-forward lines (**13%**). Email also remains the dominant channel for generating inbound leads (**22%**), ahead of organic social (**15%**), referrals (**13%**), and paid advertising (**13%**).



Top subject line approaches [18]



Where leads come from [19]



07 Younger workers are carrying a disproportionate overtime burden

Extended hours are the norm, but Gen Z feels it most [20][21]

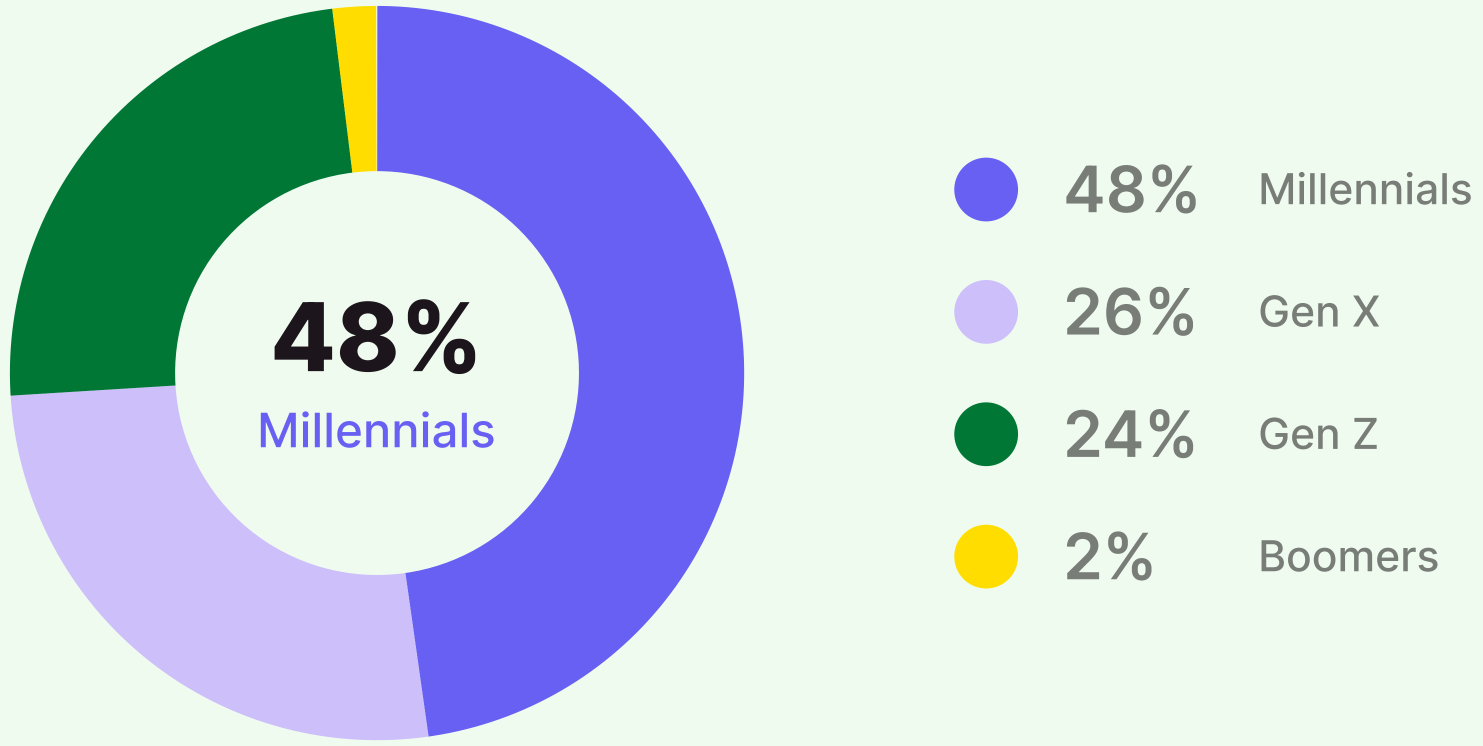
Working outside standard hours has become a baseline expectation — **85%** of professionals do it at least one day per week, but the load isn't evenly shared. Gen Z is the most stretched: **34%** work outside standard hours three to four days per week, versus **24%** of Millennials and Gen X. Millennials make up the largest share of overtime workers (**48%**), reflecting their dominance in the workforce; Baby Boomers account for just **2%**.

Work 3–4 days/week outside standard hours [21]

85%

work beyond standard hours at least one day per week

Share of overtime workers by generation [20]



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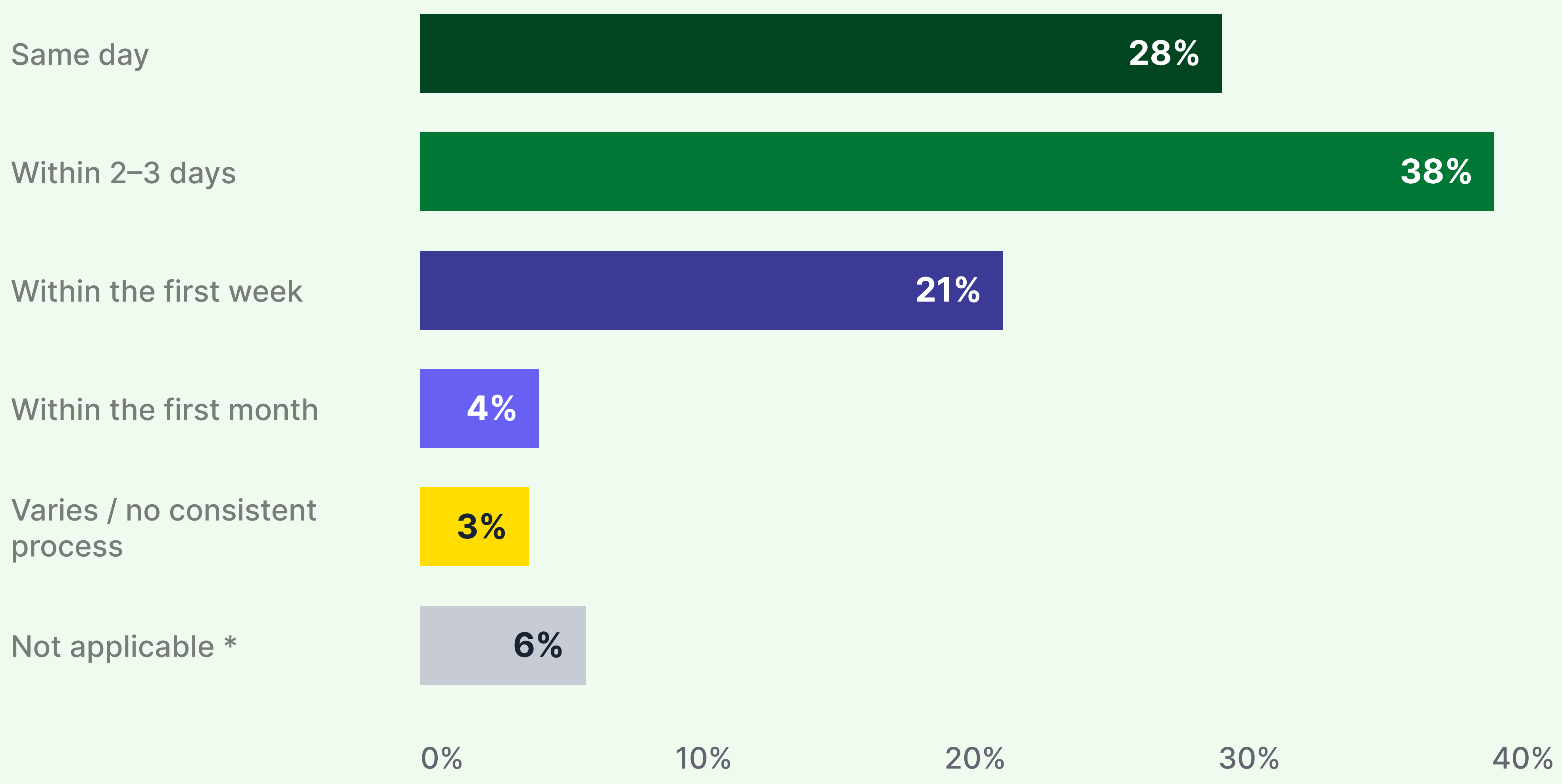
08 Post-sale engagement is where retention is won or lost

Most teams move fast on first contact, but lose structure quickly [22]

Speed matters after a deal closes, and most teams know it: **28%** reach out the same day and **66%** within 72 hours. What happens next is less consistent — the most common approach to the first 30 days is a mix of scheduled and ad hoc check-ins (**34%**), **24%** of teams are largely reactive, and only **14%** use structured onboarding with scheduled touch points.

Speed of first post-sale contact [22]



* Not involved in post-sale contact.

24%

of sales & marketing teams are largely reactive in the first 30 days

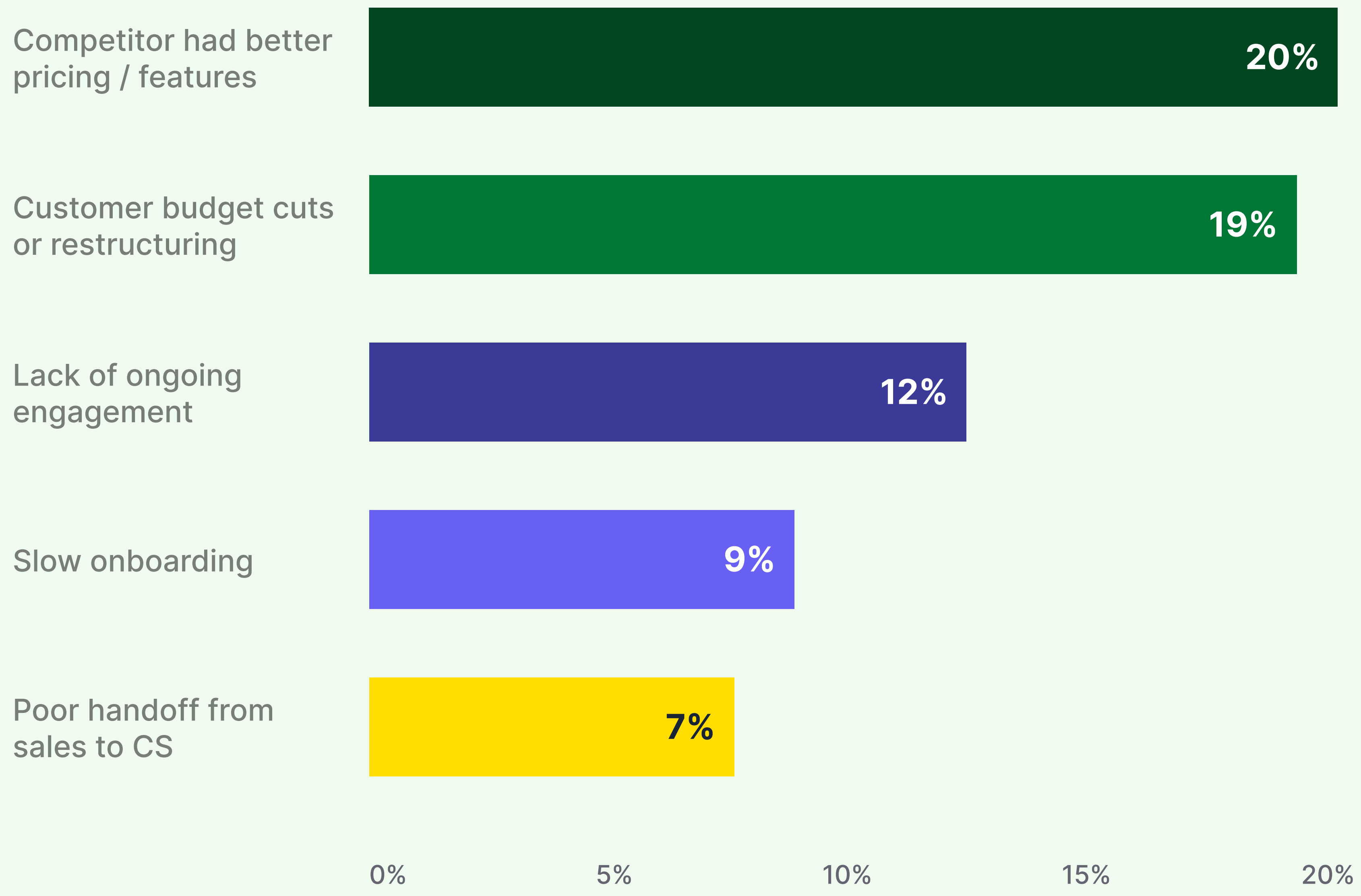
14%

use structured onboarding with scheduled touch points

Where churn actually starts [23]

The leading causes of turnover are external — competitor pricing or features (**20%**) and customer-side changes like budget cuts (**19%**). What teams can control is onboarding and engagement: internal process failures account for a combined **16%** of churn, and a further **12%** is attributed to lack of ongoing engagement after setup — something better follow-up structures could directly address.

Top reasons for customer turnover [23]



1 in 4

instances of customer churn are driven by poor onboarding, weak handoffs, and disengagement after setup

Key takeaways

01/02

01 Fragmentation hits SMBs hardest

Tool fragmentation is nearly universal in sales and marketing, but SMBs bear the brunt. With leaner teams and fewer resources to compensate for disconnected systems, smaller businesses lose opportunities every week — for nearly half of affected professionals, every single day.

02 Logging outweighs closing

Administrative work has become the dominant activity, and smaller companies feel it most. Teams are recording activity at nearly four times the rate they're advancing deals — a significant drag on growth for SMBs without structured workflows.

03 AI's value is real but shallow

AI is delivering real value for teams using it well, but most only apply it to routine tasks. Much of the gap isn't skepticism — users simply don't know what they have access to. Closing the visibility gap matters as much as improving the technology itself.

04 Collaboration and clarity top the list

The CRM activities people value most are collaborative and insight-driven. The gap between what professionals want to spend their time on and how they're actually spending it is where most of the productivity opportunity sits.

Key takeaways

02/02

05 Growth is fueling CRM investment

Higher revenue expectations are fueling CRM investment rather than constraining it. Organizations are betting on retention, smarter pipeline visibility, and better customer management — almost nobody is cutting back.

06 Timing + personalization win email

Email outreach comes down to two things: reach people when they're receptive, and make it clear you're writing to them specifically. Monday and Wednesday mornings with personalized subject lines outperform every other combination.

07 Gen Z carries the overtime load

Longer hours are near-universal in sales and marketing, but younger workers absorb more of it. Gen Z is the most likely generation to work outside standard hours three or more days per week — pointing to how work is structured, not personal habits.

08 Retention is won after first contact

Fast first contact is only the starting point. Nearly a quarter of teams operate reactively, and the data shows the cost: poor onboarding, weak handoffs, and disengagement after setup drive one in four instances of customer churn.

Methodology

This report is based on a national survey of **1,000 professionals** who currently use a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) tool in their work, either as their primary tool or as a secondary tool, or work at an organization where their team uses one.

Respondents answered quantitative questions about CRM usage and tool fragmentation, administrative burden, AI automation adoption, email outreach habits, post-sale engagement, and customer retention. Data was collected in **June 2026** via a structured online questionnaire.