



AI IN EXECUTIVE TALENT

2026 Community Survey Findings

Who Responded

28

Executive Talent
Leaders Total

20

VC/PE Community
Respondents

8

In-house Community
Respondents

Sept
2026

Survey
Period

-
- Recruited through Thrive's VC/PE and In-house Roundtable communities
 - Combined slides use n=28 (all respondents); subgroup slides use n=20 (VC/PE) and n=8 (In-house). With n=8, each In-house respondent represents ~12.5 percentage points — treat subgroup results as directional signals, not benchmarks.
 - Covers AI tool adoption, task frequency, capabilities, safeguards, data maturity, and barriers
 - All individual responses anonymized in this presentation

Roles and Talent Activities

Who responded and what AI-assisted work they do

ROLE BREAKDOWN



WHERE AI IS APPLIED

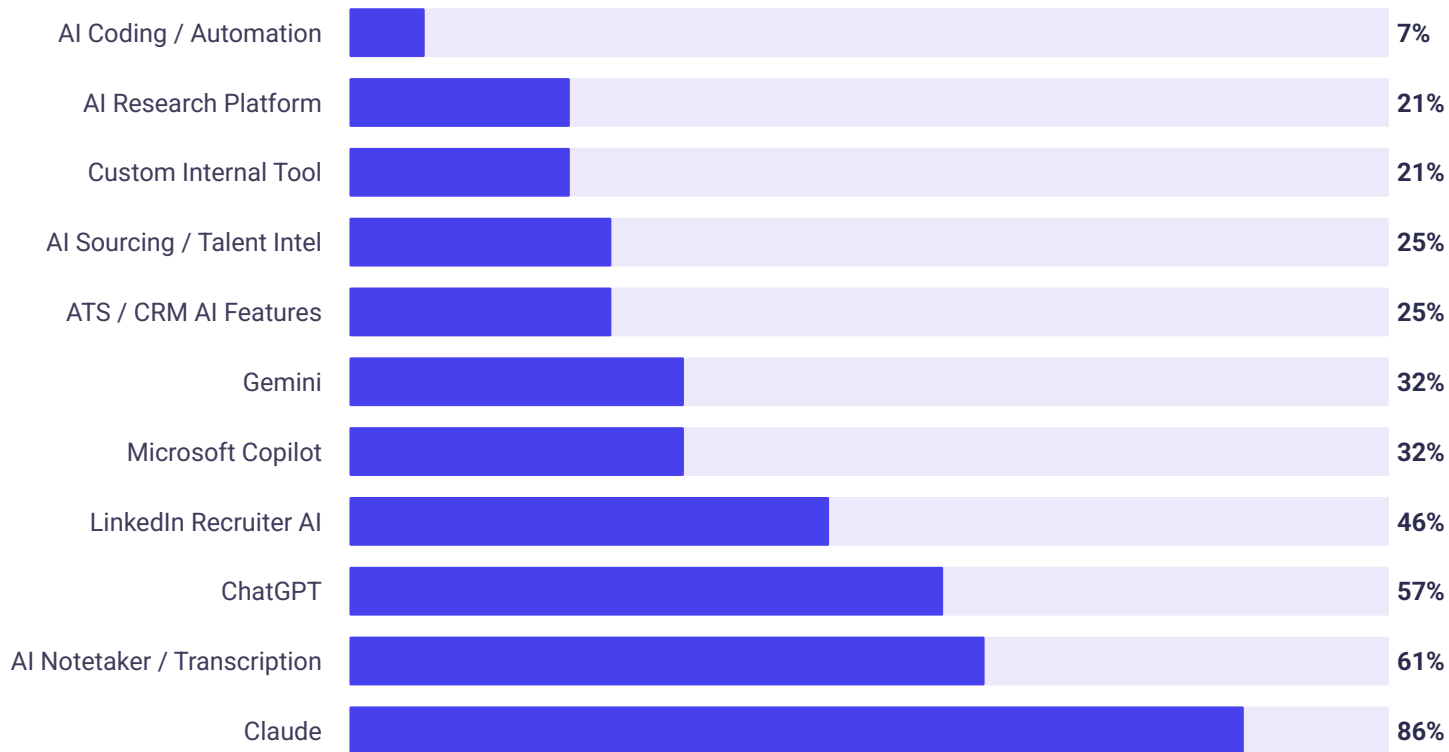
55% Across both firm + portfolio · 40% Within the firm · 5% No response

AI-ASSISTED TALENT ACTIVITIES



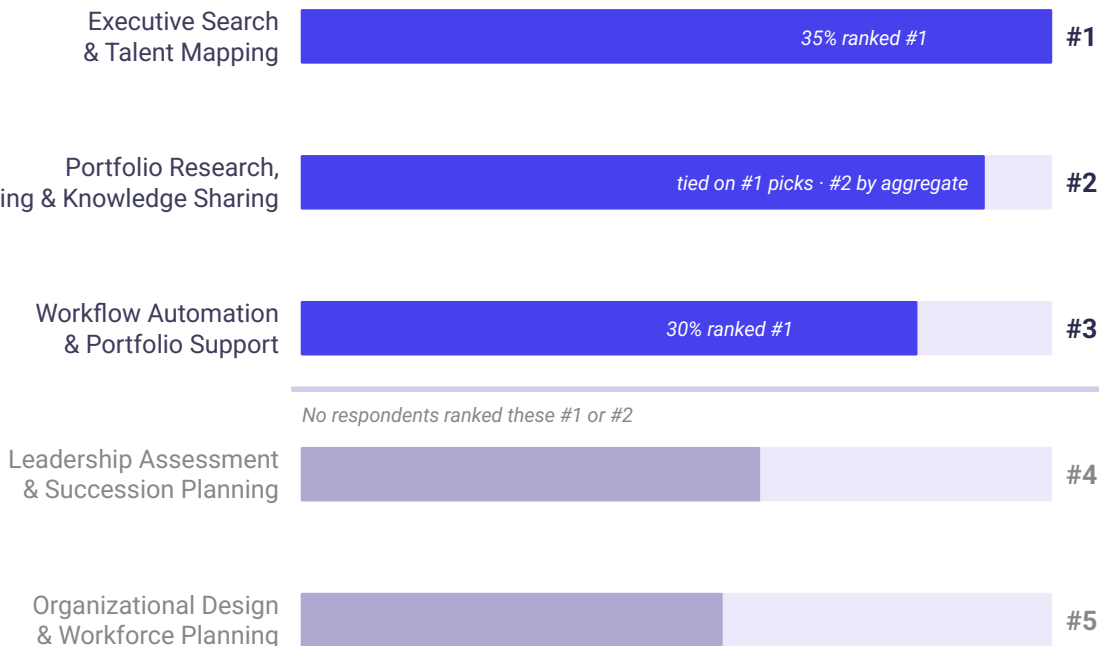
Which AI Tools Are Being Used

% of respondents who report using each tool



Where AI Delivers the Most Value

Rank where your AI tools deliver the most value today, weighted by position (n=20 VC/PE respondents)



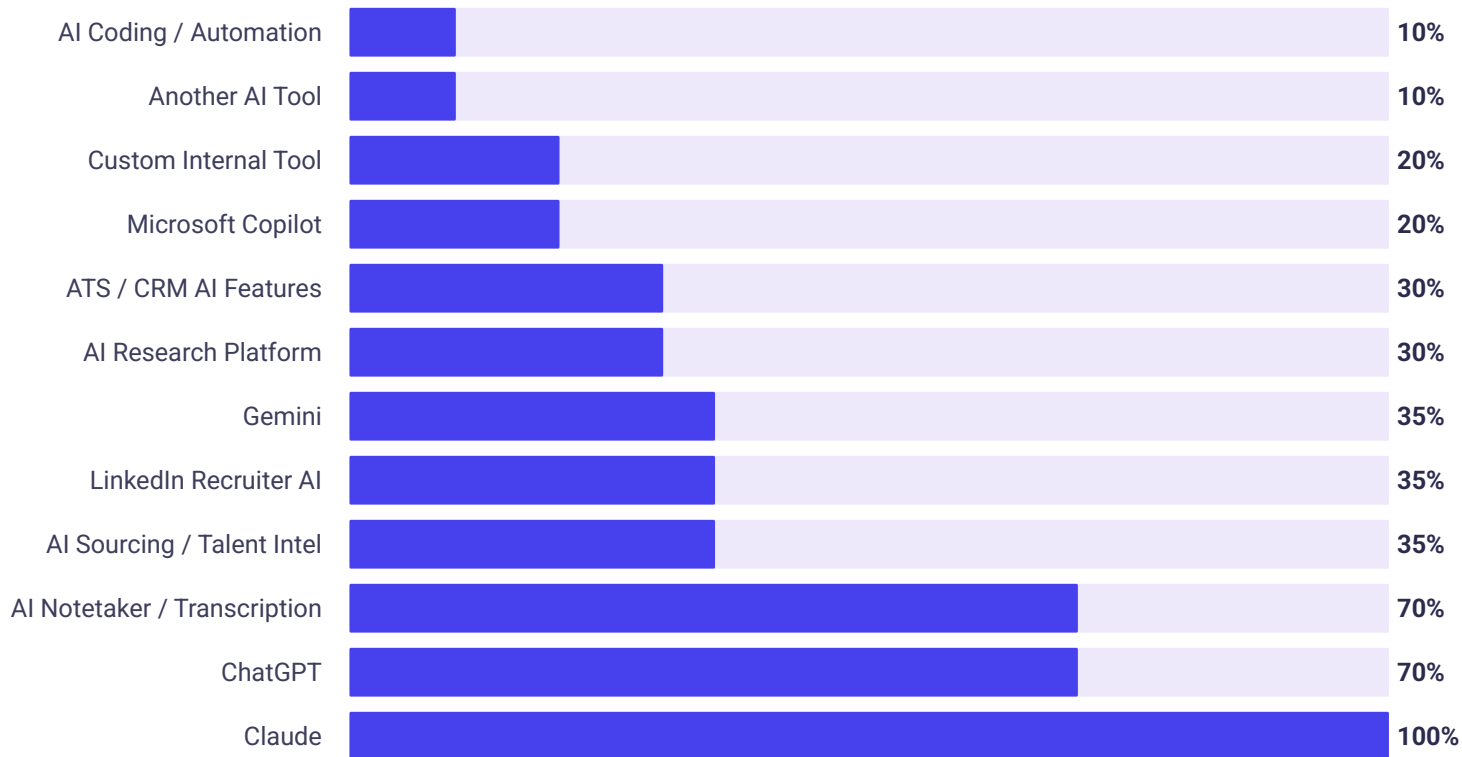
**3 of 5
categories**

capture 85%
of ranked value

Exec search
· Portfolio research
· Automation

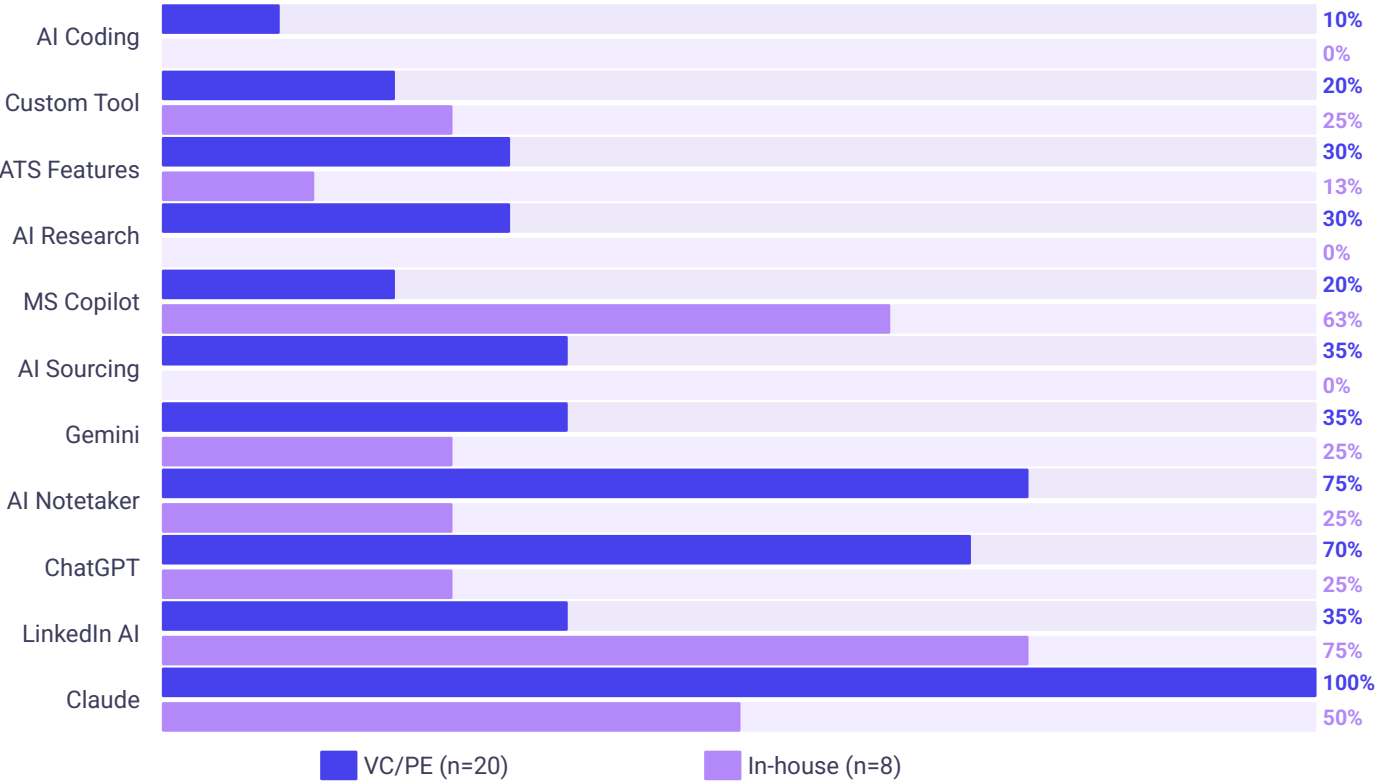
AI Tools VC/PE Respondents Rely On

% of VC/PE respondents using each tool



Tool Usage: VC/PE vs. In-house

% of respondents using each tool within each community



Which Tool Currently Delivers the Most Value in Your Work?

14

of 17 who
responded
named Claude

CLAUDE

"We've integrated a bunch of data across the firm."

CLAUDE COWORK

"Connected with our talent management platform and also using AI sourcing tools like Pin, Juicebox."

CLAUDE

"Analyzing data and documents submitted during diligence."

CHATGPT

"Talent mapping based on specific profile examples and target companies. I ask it to look at publicly available LinkedIn data and put it into a spreadsheet."

The Connection is the Advantage

Which tools are driving real efficiency gains?

Claude leads adoption at 86%, but the highest-value use cases aren't about the model itself. They're about what the model can read.

What separates useful AI from another tab to close?

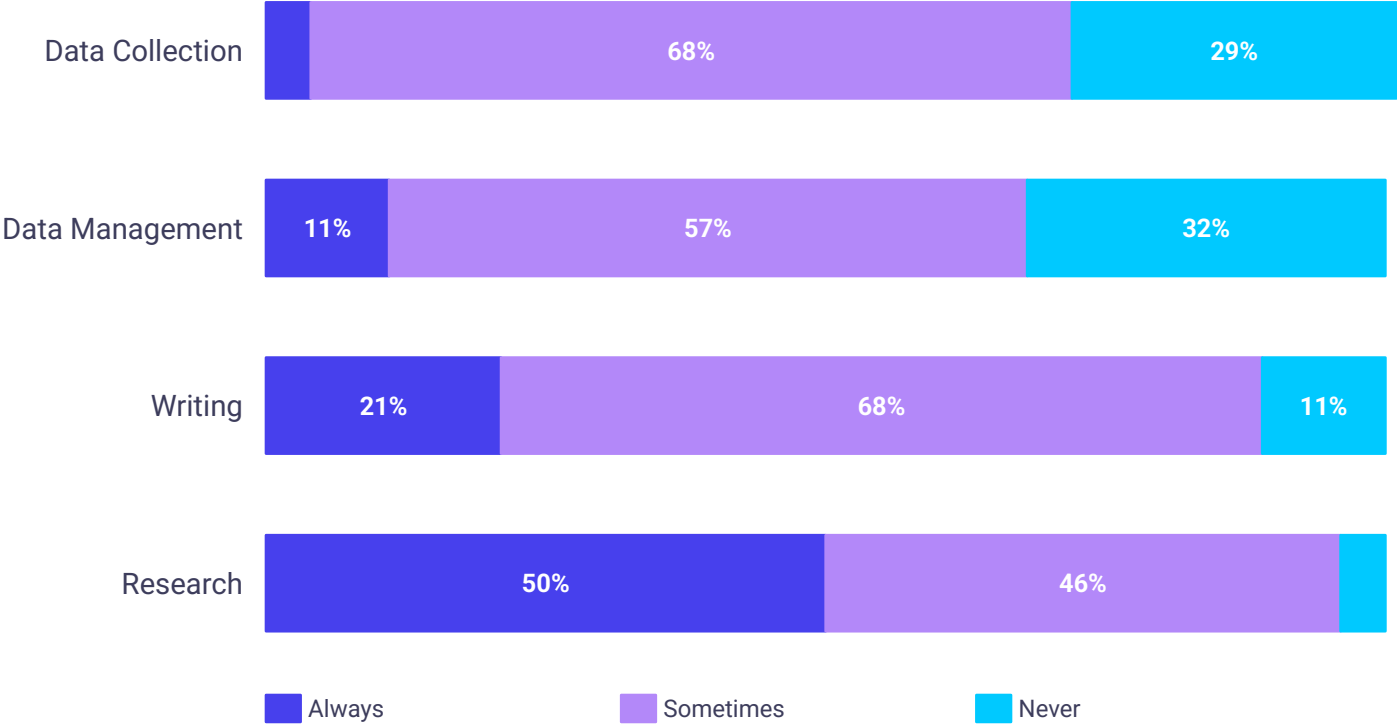
Three separate respondents named Claude, all citing connections to internal data: portfolio records, sourcing platforms, diligence documents.

What does that pattern mean?

The model is the interface, but the integration is the moat. Any team can access the same LLM; fewer can feed it proprietary context.

How Frequently Is AI Applied?

Respondents rated frequency of AI use across four task categories



Transcription is Not a Data Strategy

Why aren't teams using AI for data collection?

61% use AI for interview transcription. Only 4% always use it for data collection. Transcription is the input; structured data is the output. Most teams are stopping at the input.

What's the actual gap?

Transcription generates unstructured audio-to-text. Without a system to classify, tag, and govern that output, you are producing more noise, not better signal.

What does the data say about where this leads?

Data quality is the #1 barrier at 43%—up from 31% last year. The tools are ahead of the infrastructure designed to make them useful.

61%

use AI for
interview transcription

4%

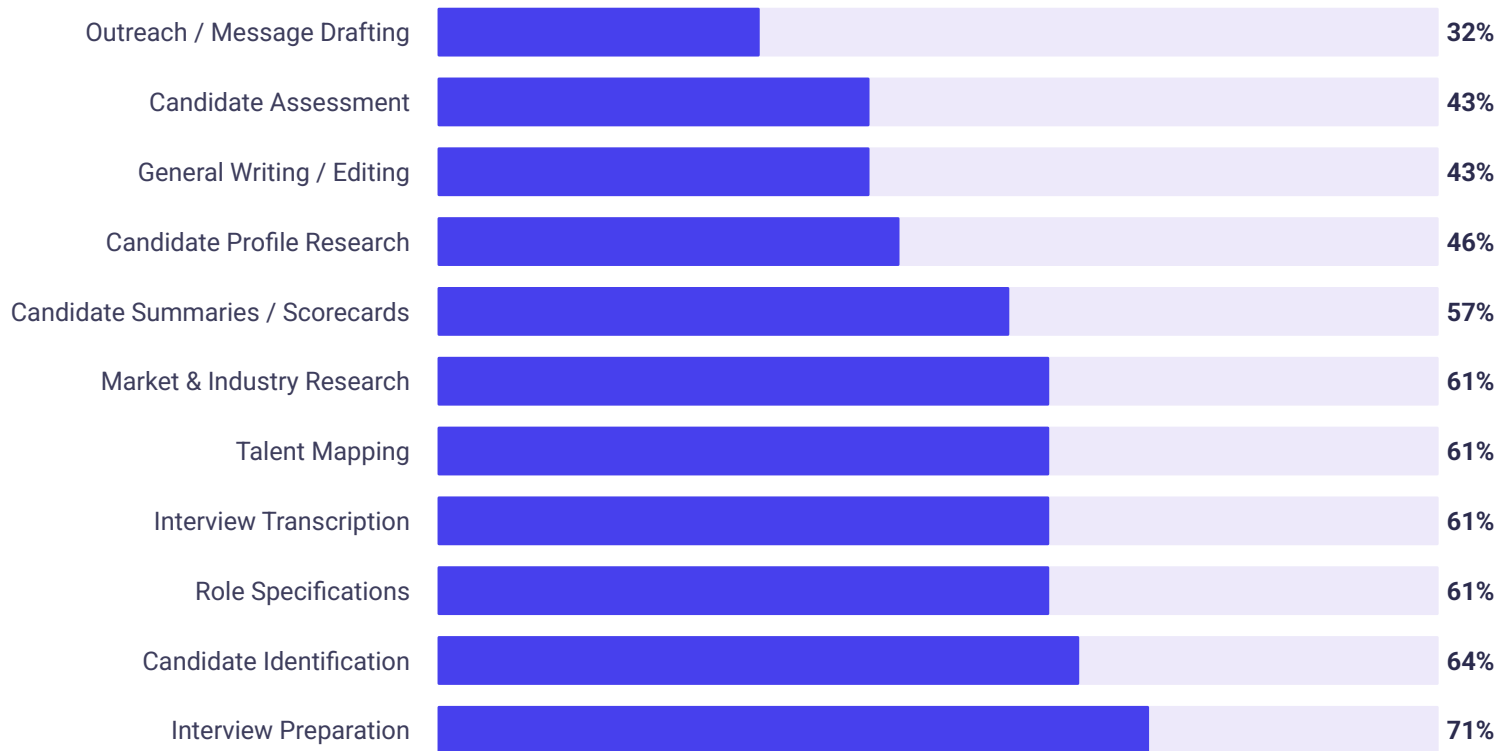
use AI
"always" for
data collection

43%

cite data
quality as the
#1 barrier

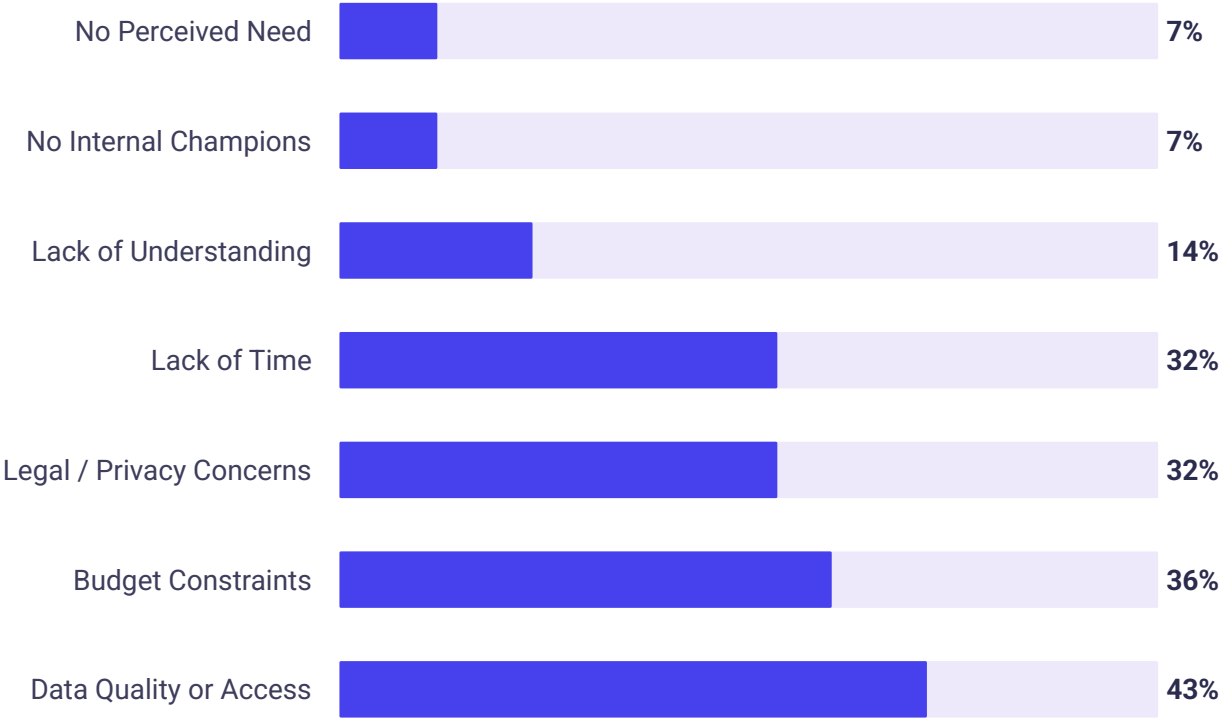
Where AI Is Being Applied

% of respondents using AI for each task (top 11 tasks shown)



What's Holding AI Back

% of respondents citing each barrier (multi-select)



#1
Barrier

43%

cite data quality
or access

Governance Moved From Blocker to Design Constraint

Why did legal/privacy concerns drop from 62% to 32%?

Concerns haven't disappeared, but AI policies arrived. 86% now operate under approved-tool frameworks. Governance is no longer the reason to wait.

What does the governance landscape actually look like?

86% restrict to approved tools. 61% require human review. But only 32% require disclosure and 25% mandate anonymization. The framework controls access, not outcomes.

What comes next?

The next governance layer needs to address what AI is allowed to produce and decide — not just which tools can be opened. Policies are catching up to adoption, not leading it.

86%

have "approved
tools only" policy

61%

require human
review of AI output

11%

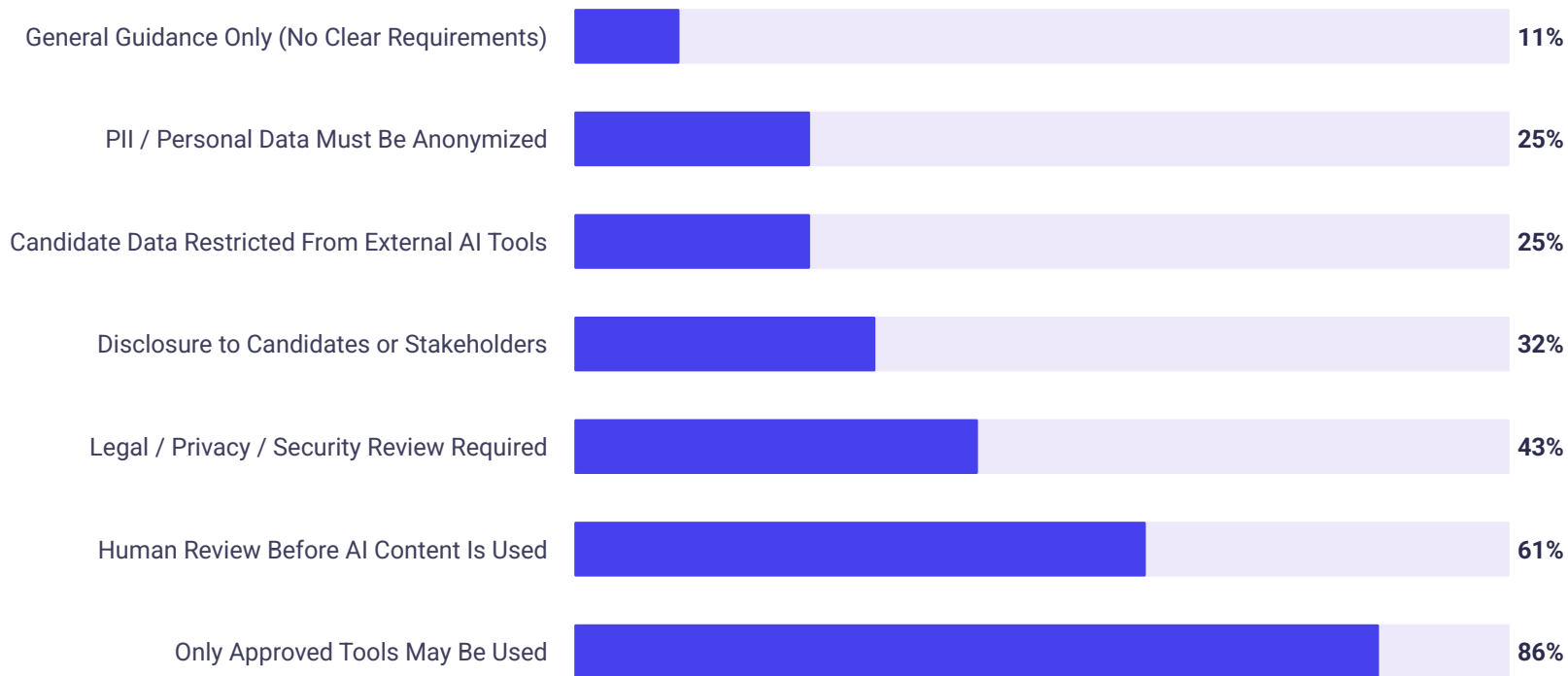
operate under
general guidance only

"We can only use Copilot. It helps with administrative tasks but it's not good with finding candidates, and the data is sometimes off."

— In-house respondent

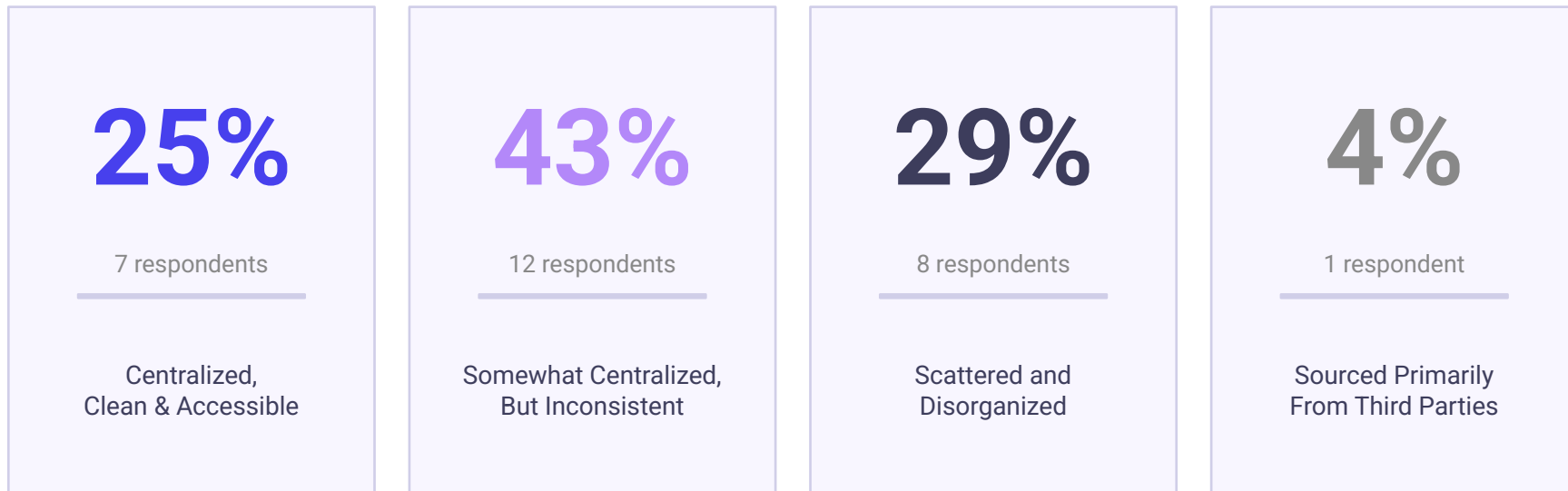
What Guardrails Are In Place

% of respondents with each safeguard or policy in place (multi-select)



The State of Executive Talent Data

How respondents describe access to their talent data today



The data infrastructure gap is the single biggest anchor on AI's potential—tools can only be as good as the data they can access.

VC/PE Spotlight

WHERE AI IS APPLIED

58%

Across both
firm + portfolio

42%

Within the
firm only

WHO OWNS AI STRATEGY*

40% Ownership shared across teams

30% Dedicated ops / tech team

10% Enterprise AI / IT team

10% No one currently owns this

** 10% nonresponse not shown*

INFLUENCE OVER AI DECISIONS*

50% I influence decisions

20% I use tools but don't choose them

20% I'm the primary decision maker

5% I'm not involved

** 5% nonresponse not shown*

TOP AI LIMITATIONS (RANKED)

#1 Integration & automation (tied)

#1 Privacy, security & compliance (tied)

#3 Integration across portfolio systems

#4 Accuracy & reliability

In-House Spotlight

WHO OWNS AI STRATEGY

38%	Centralized HR / HR tech team
25%	Dedicated TA ops / tech team
25%	Enterprise AI / IT team
13%	No one currently owns this

TALENT DATA STATE

50%	Scattered and disorganized
25%	Centralized, clean & accessible
25%	Somewhat centralized, inconsistent

INFLUENCE OVER AI DECISIONS

75%

use tools but
don't choose them

25%

influence
decisions

TOP AI LIMITATIONS (RANKED)

- #1 Talent-specific context (tied)
- #1 Integration & automation (tied)
- #3 Accuracy & reliability
- #4 Data access & privacy

Four Things That Changed

Comparing 2025 survey (n=13 VC/PE + In-house) to 2026 (n=28). Note: 2025 used different tool categories — Claude was not tracked separately.

TOOL ECOSYSTEM

Claude: not tracked in 2025 → #1 at 86% in 2026

The market fragmented from one broad LLM to a multi-model ecosystem

ChatGPT movement (85% → 57%) is directional only — Claude was bundled in the “other LLMs” category in 2025. Brand-level shifts are signals, not direct comparisons.

DATA READINESS

Scattered data: 60% → 29%

Data infrastructure is catching up

Fully centralized went from 0% → 25% · Biggest improvement year-over-year

GOVERNANCE MATURITY

Legal/privacy barrier: 62% → 32%

The decline in legal concerns is consistent with greater governance maturity

86% now have approved-tools-only policy · 61% require human review · Correlation, not confirmed causation

USAGE DEPTH

Research "always": 38% → 50%

AI use is deepening — but friction remains

Data quality is now the #1 barrier (31% → 43%) · Budget constraints also rose: 23% → 36%

Strategic Implications for Talent Leaders

01 AI adoption falls when output becomes visible or consequential

High: Interview prep 71% · Candidate ID 64% · Talent mapping 61% | Lower: Candidate assessment 43% · Outreach drafting 32%

02 The pilot phase is ending, with consolidation happening next

Budget constraints rose: 23% → 36%

03 Strategic leverage requires shaping the architecture, not just the prompts

VC/PE: mostly influence decisions · In-house: mostly use tools they did not choose

1 **Fix the talent-data foundation before scaling more AI tools**

AI is only as reliable as what it reads. Data quality is now the #1 barrier, and it will compound.

2 **Move from tool-level approval to use-case-level governance**

86% control which tools are open. Fewer control what those tools are allowed to decide or produce.

3 **Invest in integrations that turn AI output into institutional memory**

61% transcribe interviews. Almost no one is systematically capturing that signal in a governed, searchable form.

Data Notes

- n=28 total (20 VC/PE, 8 In-house) — survey collected September 2026 via Typeform
- Multi-select questions: percentages reflect share of respondents selecting each option; totals may exceed 100%
- Ranking questions (limitations, value areas): rankings derived from order of selections; weighted by position
- Open-text responses lightly edited for clarity; all attribution anonymized
- All percentages rounded to nearest whole number