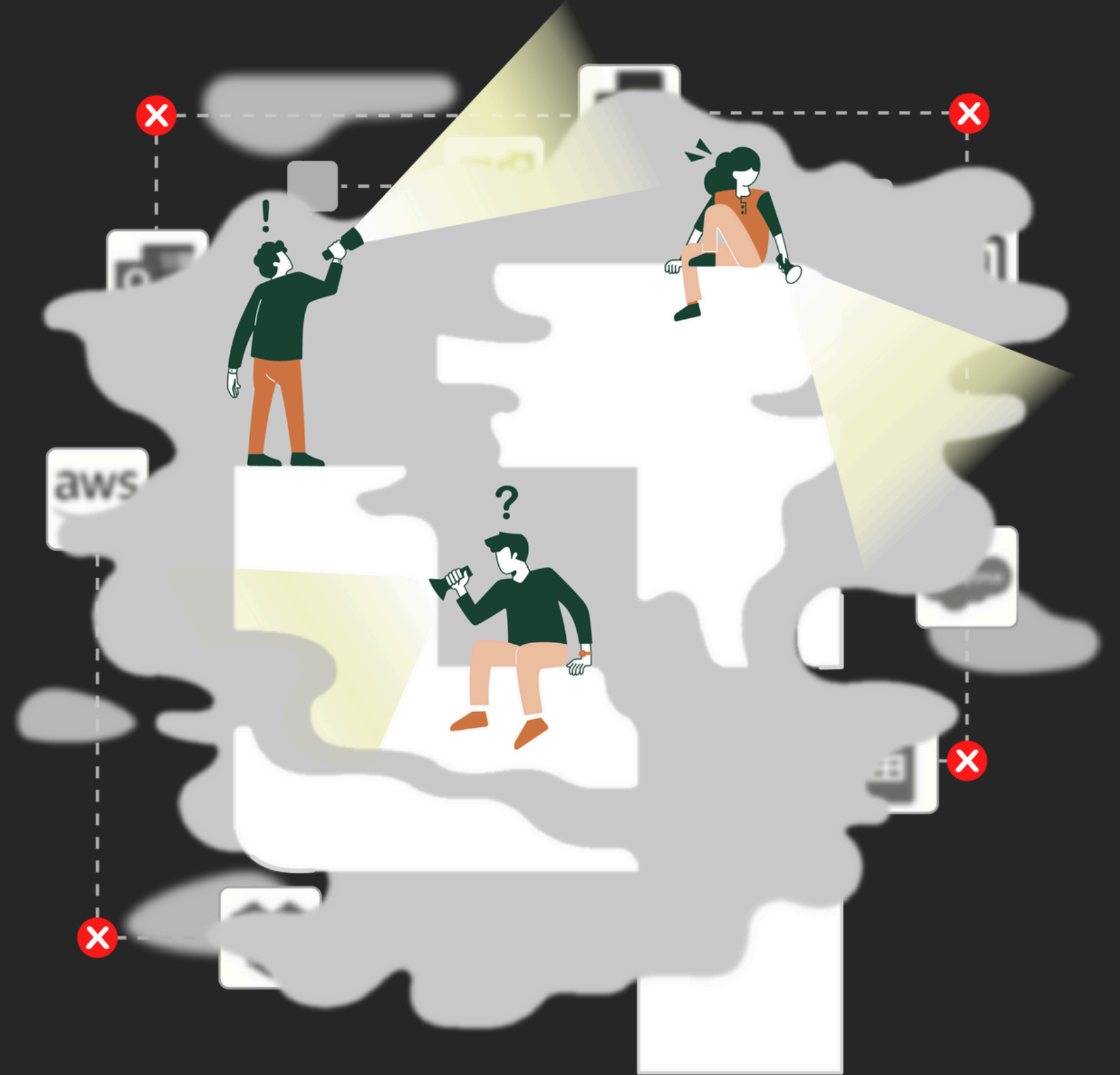




# 2025 Gray Work Report

Understanding the **Productivity Gap**





# Welcome to the 2025 Gray Work Report

Many organizations struggle to unlock real efficiency, despite continued or growing investment in productivity tools. What is behind this productivity gap?

Now in its third year, our annual survey aims to uncover the hidden costs of disconnected data and manual workarounds—what we call **Gray Work**—and its impact on productivity.

This year's responses reveal how widespread and persistent Gray Work and related productivity challenges remain across industries, and why solving them is more urgent than ever.





# What is **Gray Work**?

Gray Work is **the hidden cost of inefficiency**—the manual tasks employees do to compensate for disconnected systems and rigid tools.





# About our survey respondents

**2,187**

full-time working professionals, including C-level, Director and Manager-level respondents across IT, Operations and Line of Business departments.

**10**

**operationally complex industries,** including construction, manufacturing, professional services, healthcare, and state and local government.

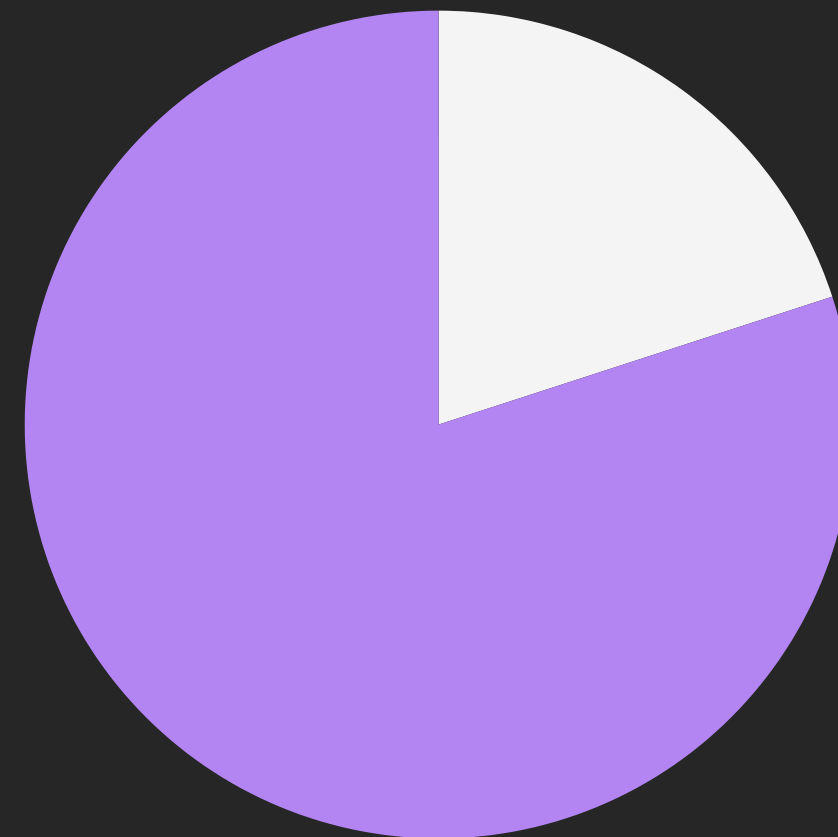


# 1. **Key Findings**



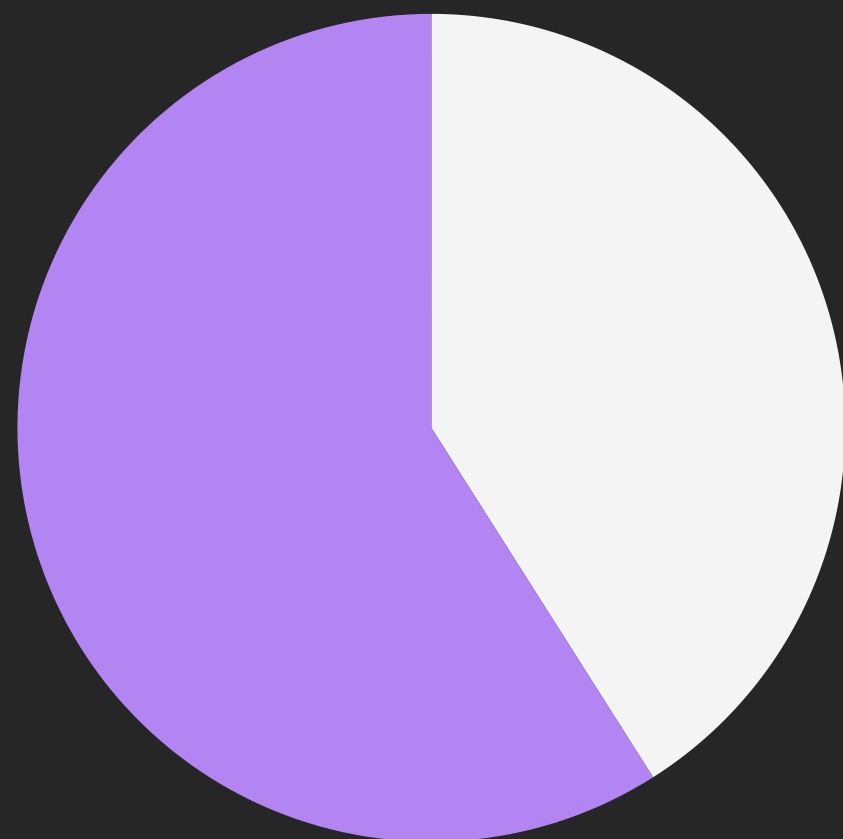
# Businesses are investing in **more tech** for productivity.

**80%** of respondents report increased investment in productivity, work management and collaboration tools and software (up from 66% in 2024).



# Yet being productive feels **harder** than ever.

Despite increased investment in tools and tech, **59%** agree it feels harder than ever to be productive (an increase of 6 points).





# Bets on productivity software **haven't** paid off...

**73%**

**+4%**

of respondents say using multiple project management software solutions **prohibits easy sharing** of project-related information (up 4 points since 2024).

**75%**

say those same tools **prohibit** them from **easily seeing all their data** in one place.

# Gray Work **costs** businesses more than they realize.

Getting by on spreadsheets and workarounds leads to disruption, delays, and wasted time.

CAUSING DELAYS

**50%**

experienced project delays, miscommunication, duplication of work, and budget overages in the last 12 months.

WASTING TIME

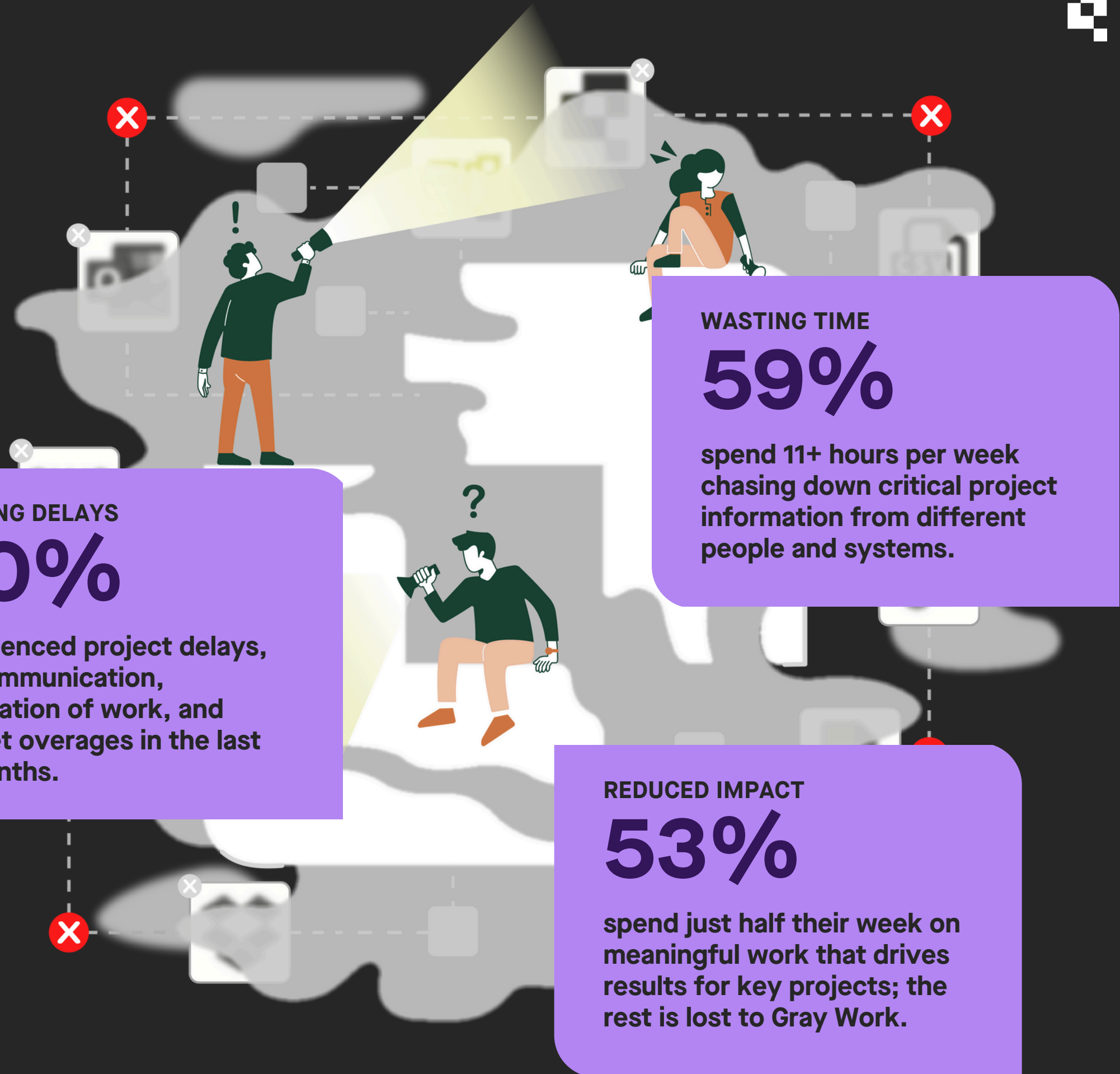
**59%**

spend 11+ hours per week chasing down critical project information from different people and systems.

REDUCED IMPACT

**53%**

spend just half their week on meaningful work that drives results for key projects; the rest is lost to Gray Work.





“

*Organizations continue to invest in productivity technology, even as the limits of those investments become more apparent. ... **The average worker is drowning in a sea of applications,** manual processes, and disconnected information.*

**Ed Jennings**  
CEO, Quickbase





# How can business leaders identify Gray Work?

Look for processes and workflows where workers spend their time:

- Searching for information
- Chasing people
- Doing manual work
- Connecting the dots

... instead of doing work that drives meaningful results.





# 2. Trends by Seniority





# Gray Work **doesn't** affect everyone equally.

When we looked deeper into responses by level of seniority, we revealed some interesting differences in Gray Work's impact on C-level leaders.

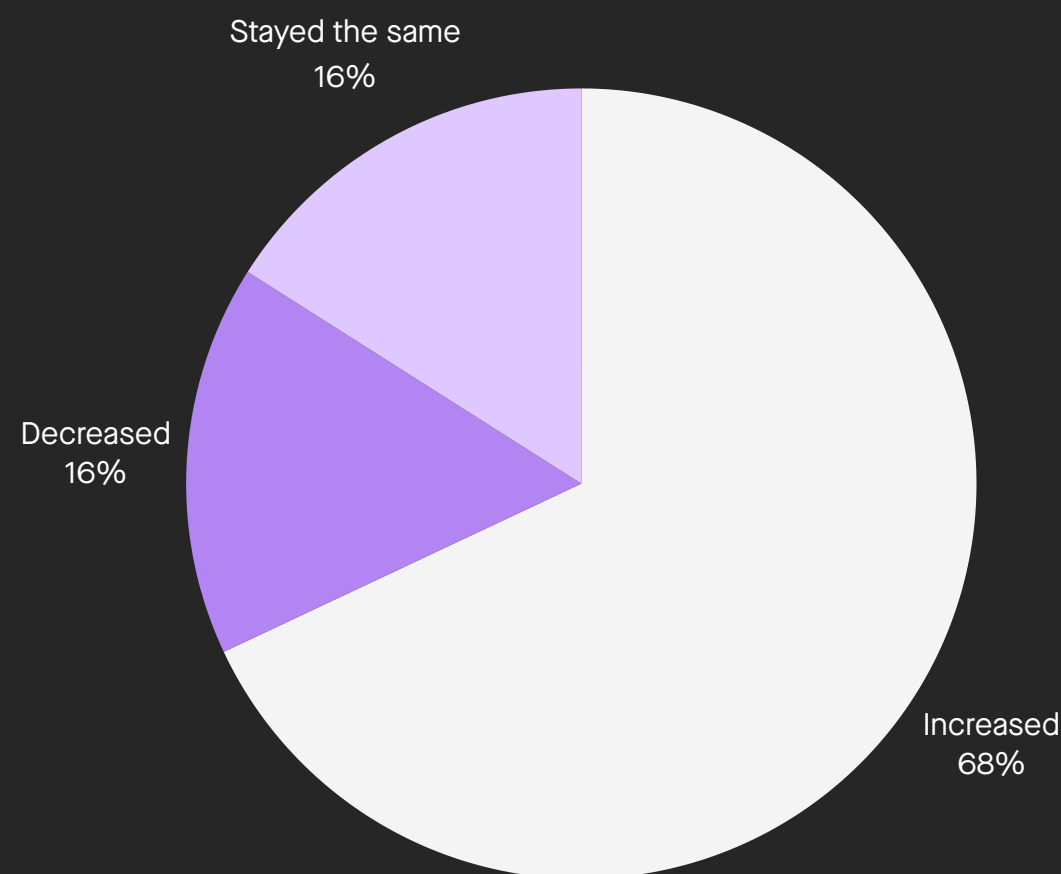




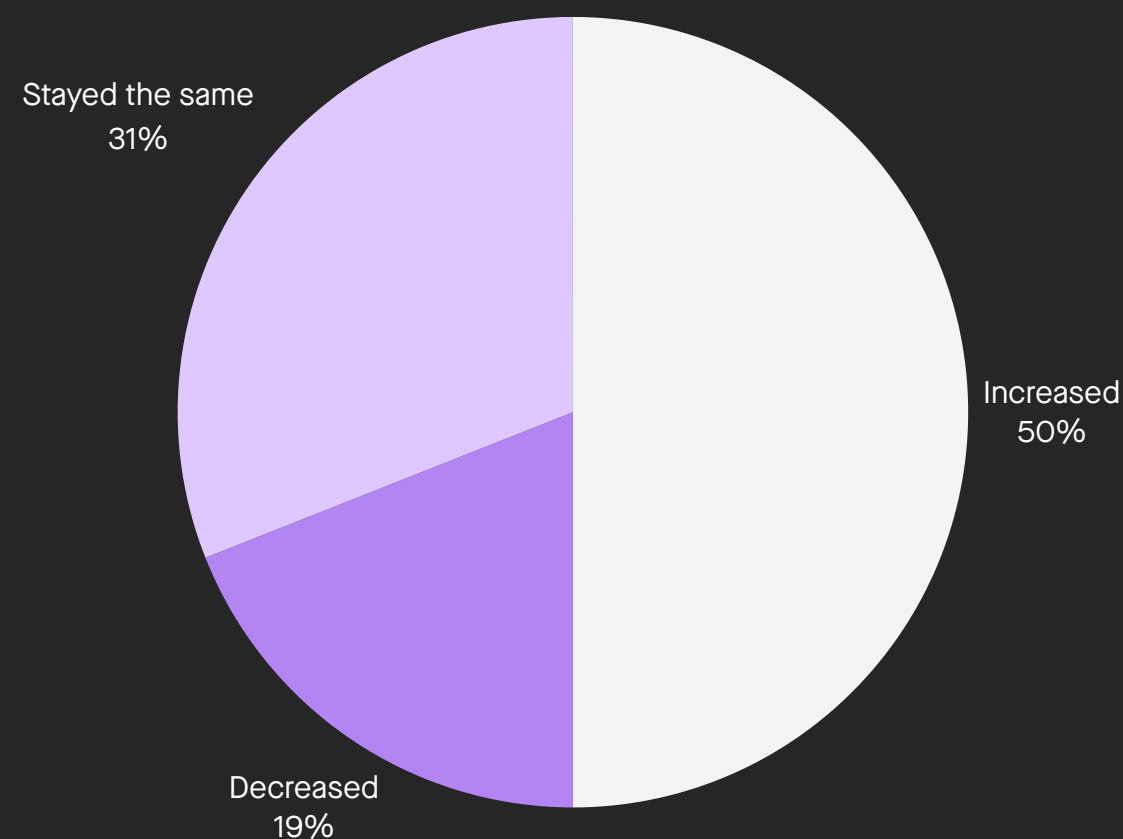
# C-level respondents report seeing a greater **increase in manual work** than respondents at other job levels.

Compared to one year ago, has the amount of manual work involved in your job increased, decreased, or remained the same?

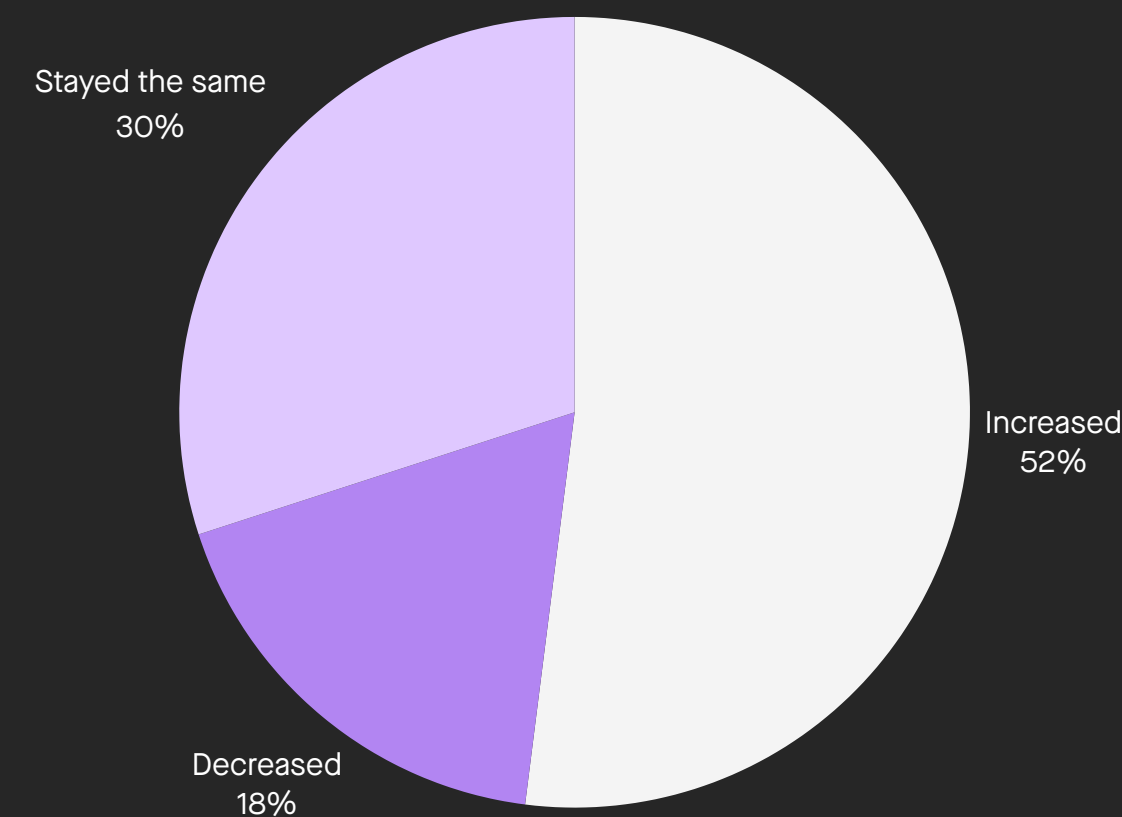
## C-level



## Director



## Manager





# Despite these challenges, C-level respondents show higher levels of satisfaction than managers.

Q: Overall, how satisfied are you with the current software solutions your organization uses for work management?

**65%**

of **C-level respondents** say they are “**very satisfied**” with their current work management software.

**41%**

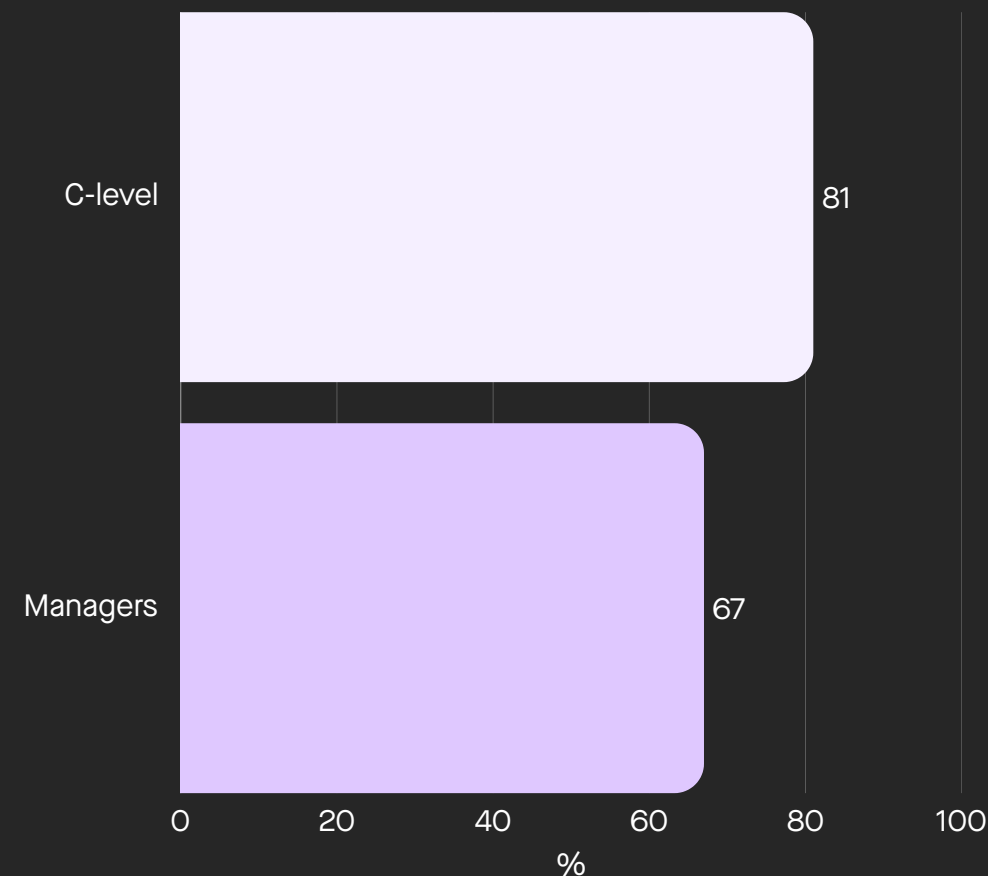
of **Manager-level respondents** say they are “**very satisfied**” with their current work management software.



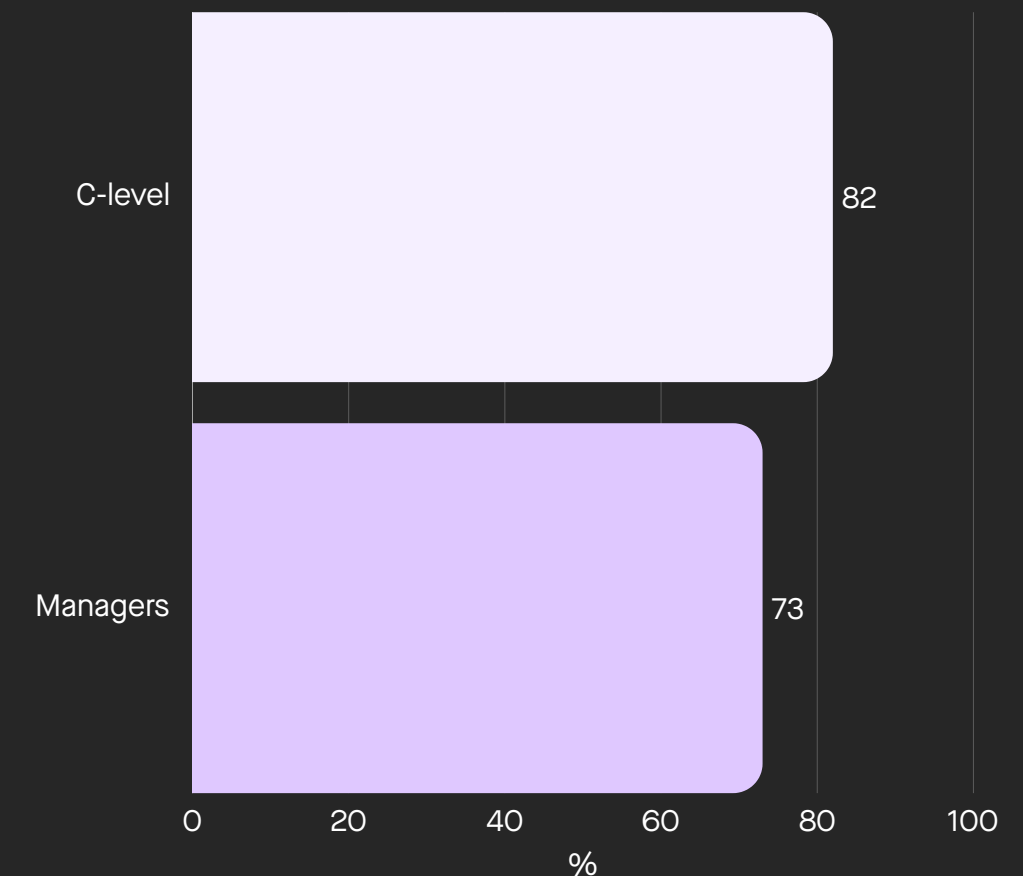
# C-level respondents report greater difficulty in sharing project information and seeing data in one place

Respondents who say using multiple project management software solutions prohibit easily...

Sharing project-related information with others



Seeing all data in one place





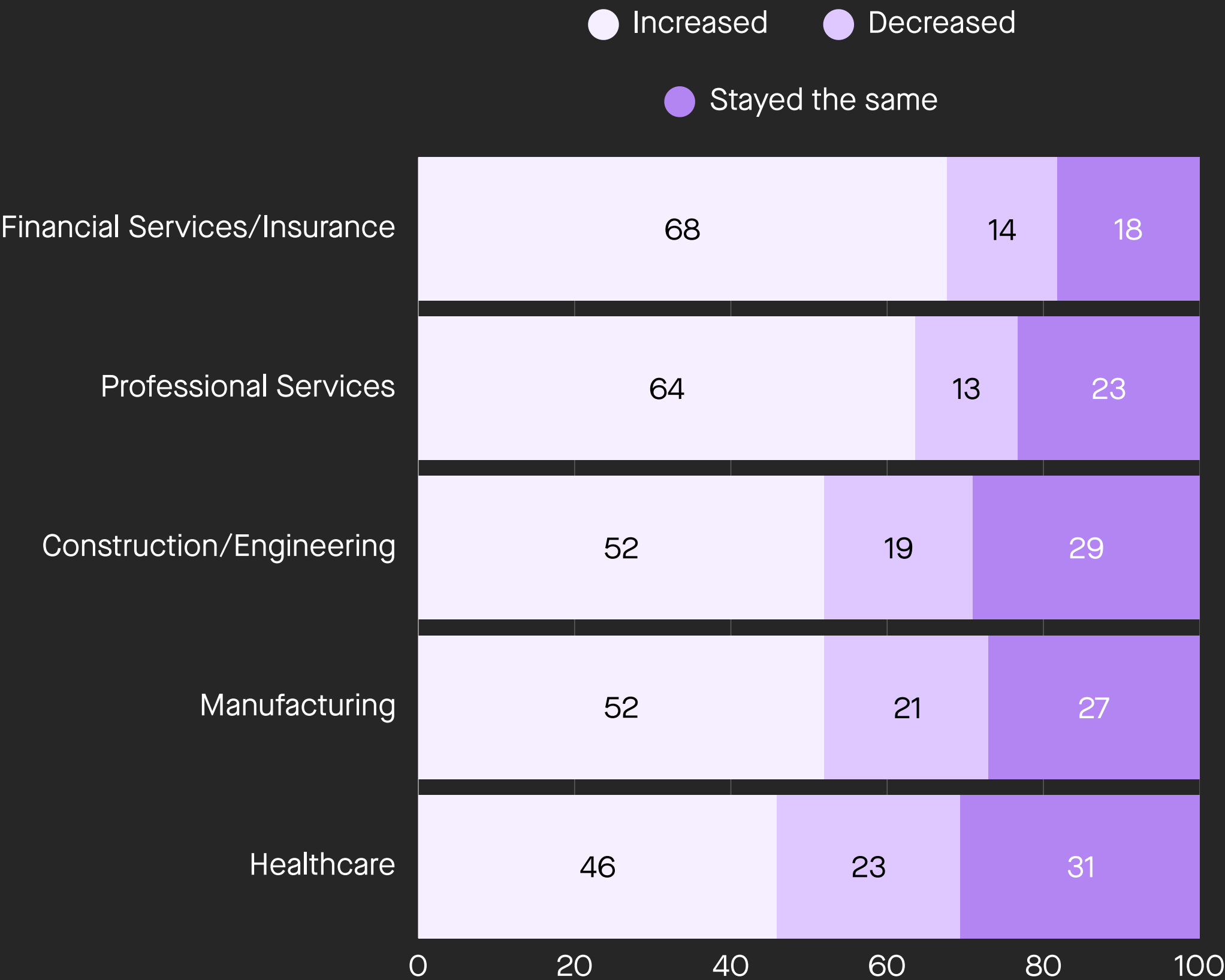
## 3. Trends by Industry



# Different industries. Same productivity challenge.

Despite adding productivity tech, manual work continues to rise in every industry surveyed.

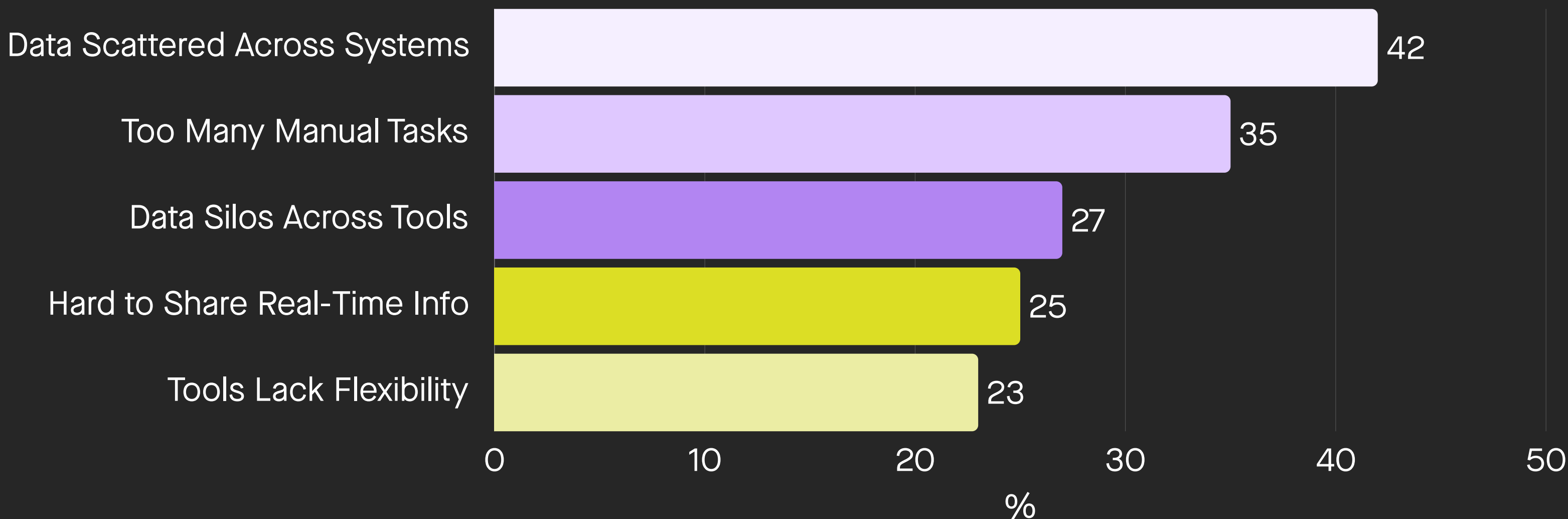
Financial Services/Insurance and Professional Services saw the biggest increases, at **67%** and **63%** respectively, compared to last year.





# Top 5 Technology Challenges with Managing Complex Projects

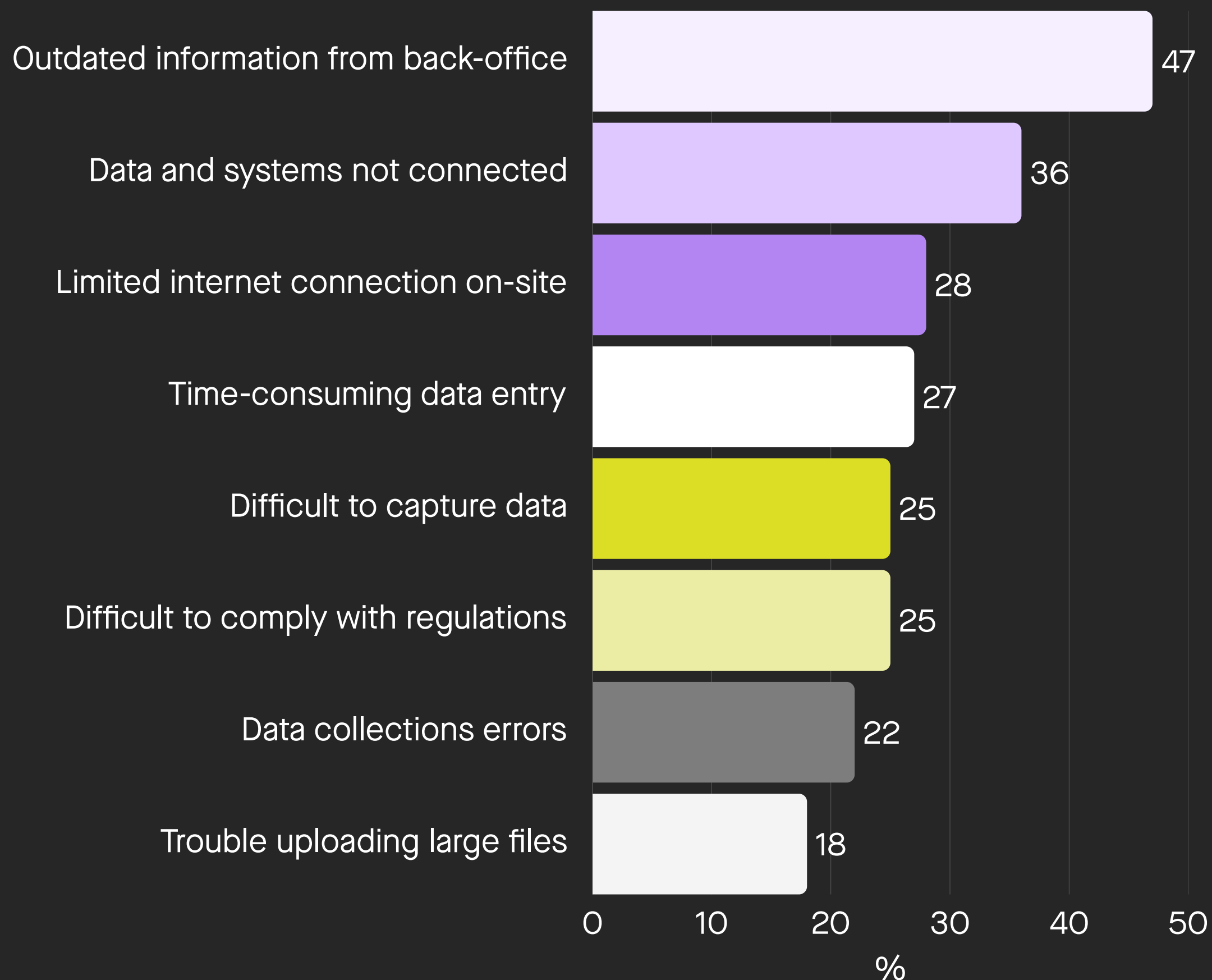
Q: Which of the following are your biggest technology challenges when managing complex projects at your organization? (Select top 3)





# Gray Work impacts **field** **work** differently.

Top challenges in projects concern data access, connection and capture... leading to errors in capture, collection and compliance.



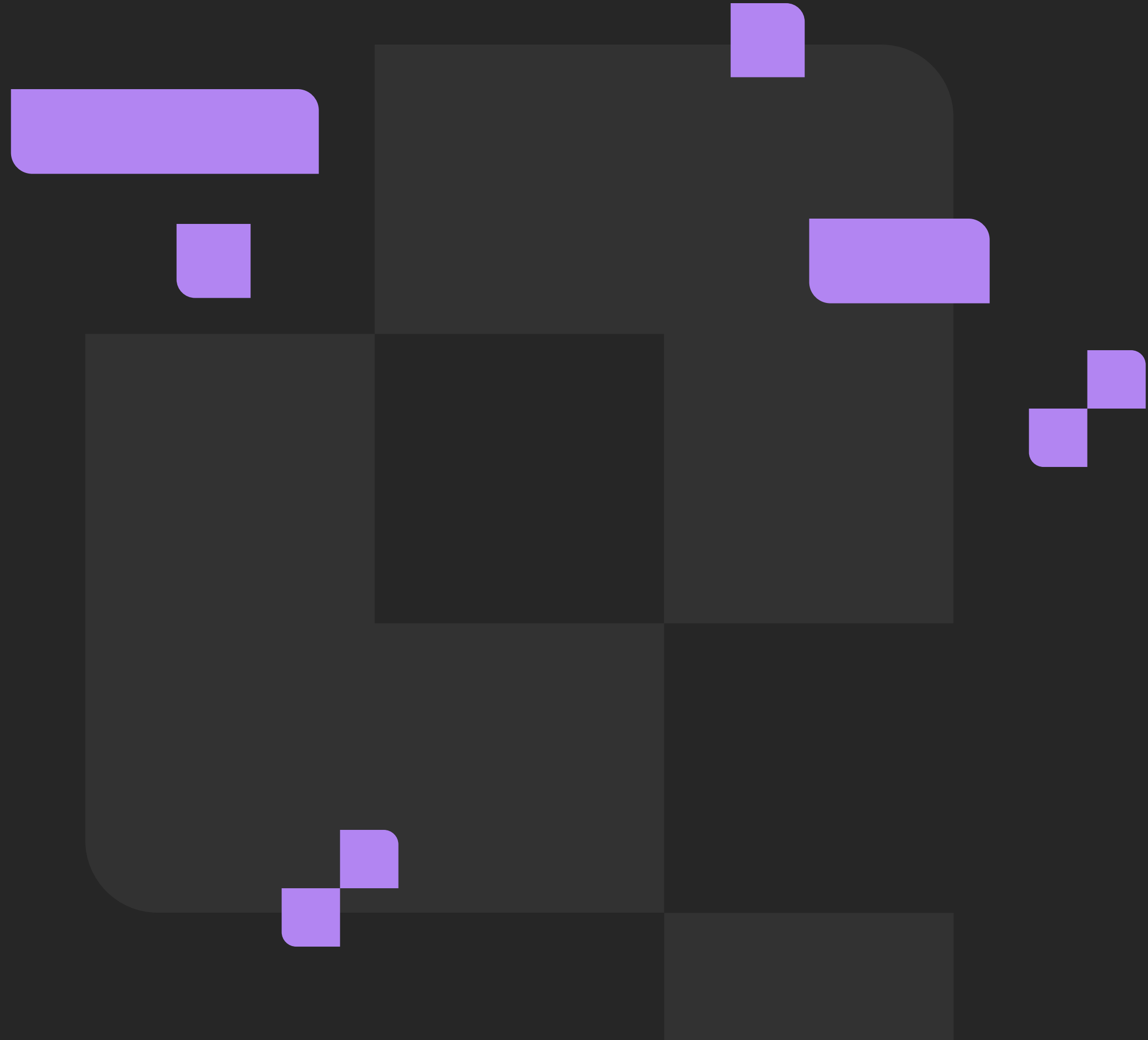


# Field-related productivity challenges **by industry**

Industry	Outdated information from back-office	Data and systems not connected	Limited internet connection on-site	Time-consuming data entry	Difficult to capture data	Difficult to comply with regulations	Data collections errors	Trouble uploading large files
Construction	45%	35%	30%	26%	23%	20%	24%	19%
Manufacturing	46%	33%	24%	26%	21%	22%	21%	17%
Professional Services	47%	38%	29%	29%	28%	28%	21%	17%
Financial Services/ Insurance	54%	36%	31%	30%	32%	32%	20%	16%
Healthcare	40%	35%	21%	20%	22%	19%	23%	17%



# 4. AI and Gray Work





# AI continues to offer promise as a **productivity solution.**

**85%**

**+26%**

say **they trust AI** to improve how work gets done (up from 59% in 2024).

**52%**

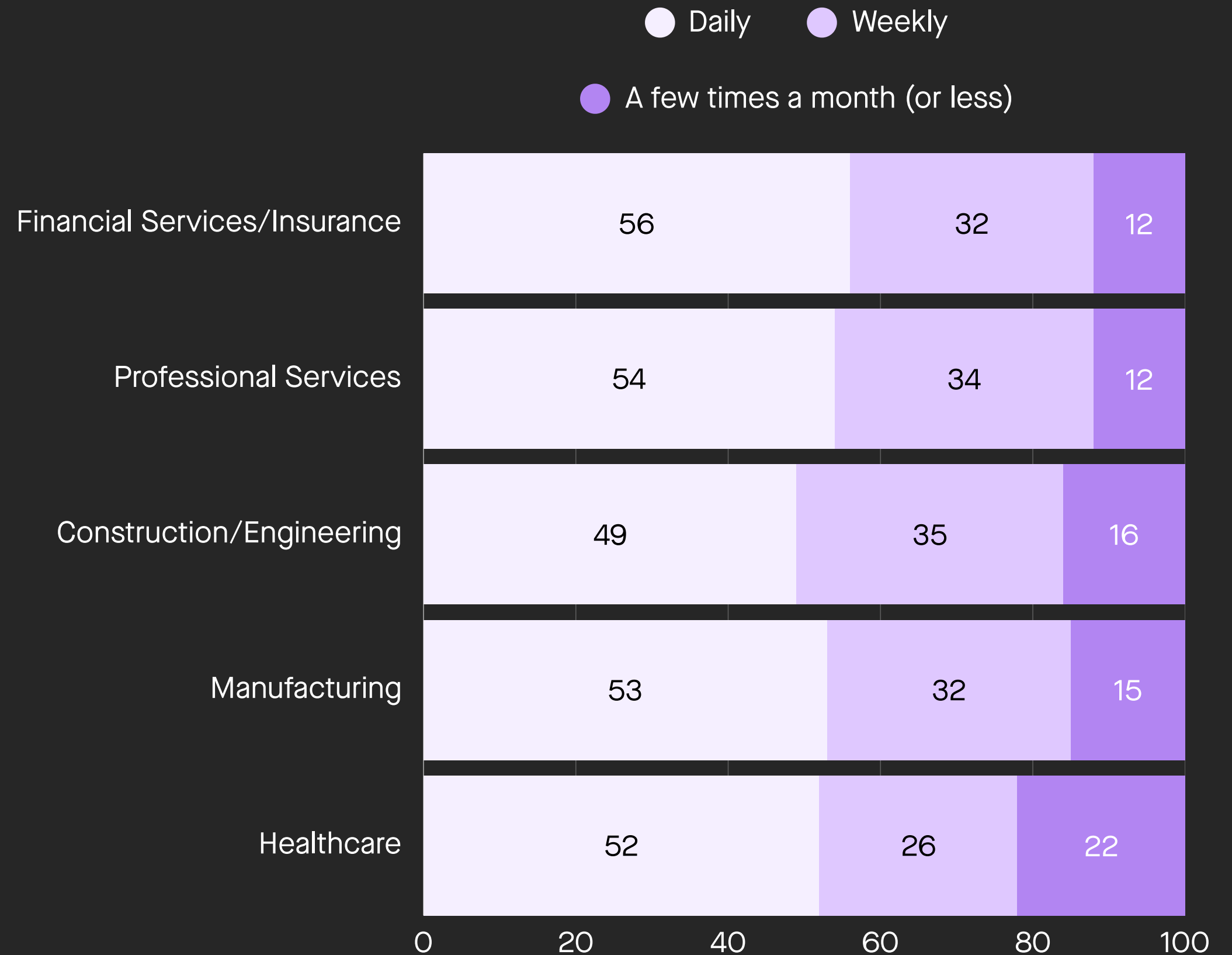
**+31%**

report they're **using AI tools daily** (up from 21% in 2024).



# Use of AI to enhance productivity is consistent across industries.

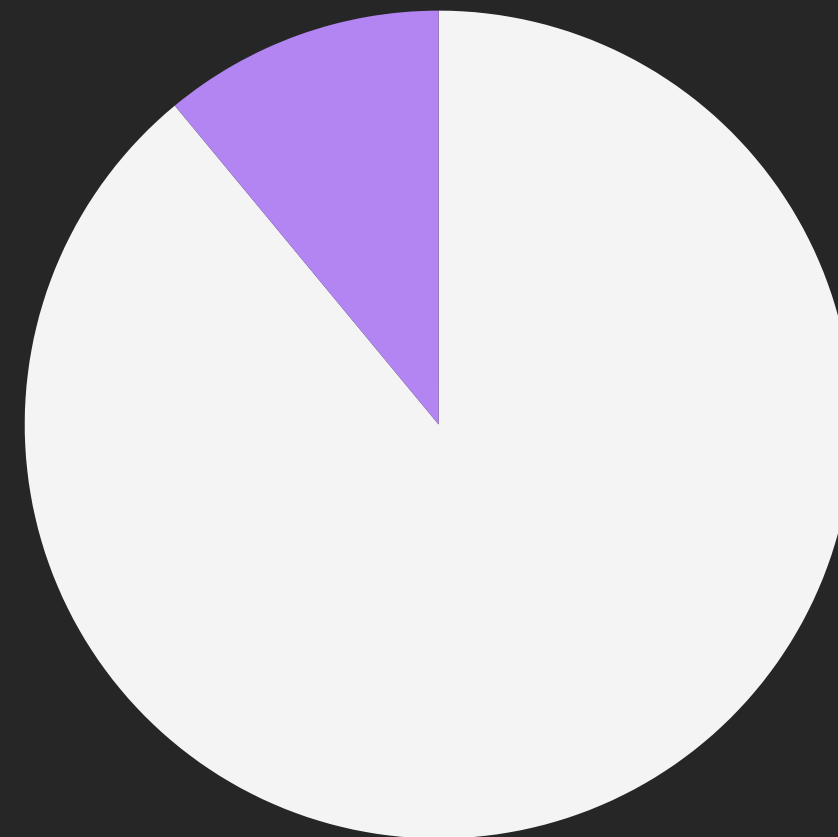
Q: How often are you using AI tools or capabilities to enhance your productivity at work, excluding ChatGPT and related tools?





## While AI usage is on the rise, **barriers to adoption** remain.

**89%** of respondents still have **concerns around data security**, compliance, and privacy (down from 93% in 2024).



## Business leaders **balance** concerns with AI's promise.

Nearly three-quarters of respondents (72%) anticipate their organization will **increase its budget for AI tools** in 2025, up from 51%.



# Attitudes towards AI differ across industries.

Industry	Trust AI to improve productivity	Concerned about data security, compliance or privacy risks	Anticipate a change in budget for AI tools in 2025
Construction	83%	86%	70%
Manufacturing	88%	89%	74%
Professional Services	88%	90%	73%
Financial Services/ Insurance	90%	93%	83%
Healthcare	78%	89%	65%



# Steps to Reduce Gray Work and **Enable AI**

1. **Diagnose the friction.** Survey teams to uncover hidden manual work and inefficiencies.
2. **Map the reality.** Create process maps to identify where tools, processes, or silos are slowing teams down.
3. **Audit your tech stack.** Evaluate your tech usage. Cut redundancy and prioritize interoperability.





# Steps to Reduce Gray Work and **Enable AI**

4. **Establish clear governance.** Define ownership, policies, and standards for tool adoption and data use.
5. **Keep stakeholders engaged.** Seek continuous feedback from employees to ensure practical, people-first solutions.
6. **Scale what works with AI.** Deploy AI where systems are aligned and ready to amplify impact.





# 2025 Gray Work Report **Key Learnings**

**1. Productivity technology isn't productive.** Despite growing investments, workers continue to feel overwhelmed and less productive. There remains a growing gap between the promise of productivity tools and the realities of modern work.

**2. Gray Work is the silent productivity killer.** Disconnected systems, manual workarounds, and siloed data leads to delays, miscommunication, and wasted time across all industries. Broken processes and a dependency on spreadsheets - Gray Work personified - cost the average worker a quarter of the workweek.

**3. AI adoption and investment is growing, but data concerns remain.** AI is used on a daily basis, and a majority of workers trust AI to improve productivity. Yet data security, privacy and compliance concerns persist, endangering its impact.






# Goodbye Gray Work. Hello Workflows That Work.

Thousands of businesses eliminate Gray Work  
and boost productivity with Quickbase.  
Join the club at [quickbase.com](https://quickbase.com).



Project  
Management



Customer  
Engagements



Field Service  
Management



Supply Chain  
& Logistics



Asset  
Management



Quality & Process  
Improvement



Environment, Health &  
Safety Assurance



And more...



“

*The popularity of AI as a productivity unlock ... is a clear indictment of the limits of traditional productivity tools and platforms. ... **Technology should work the way you need to work.***

**Ed Jennings**  
CEO, Quickbase

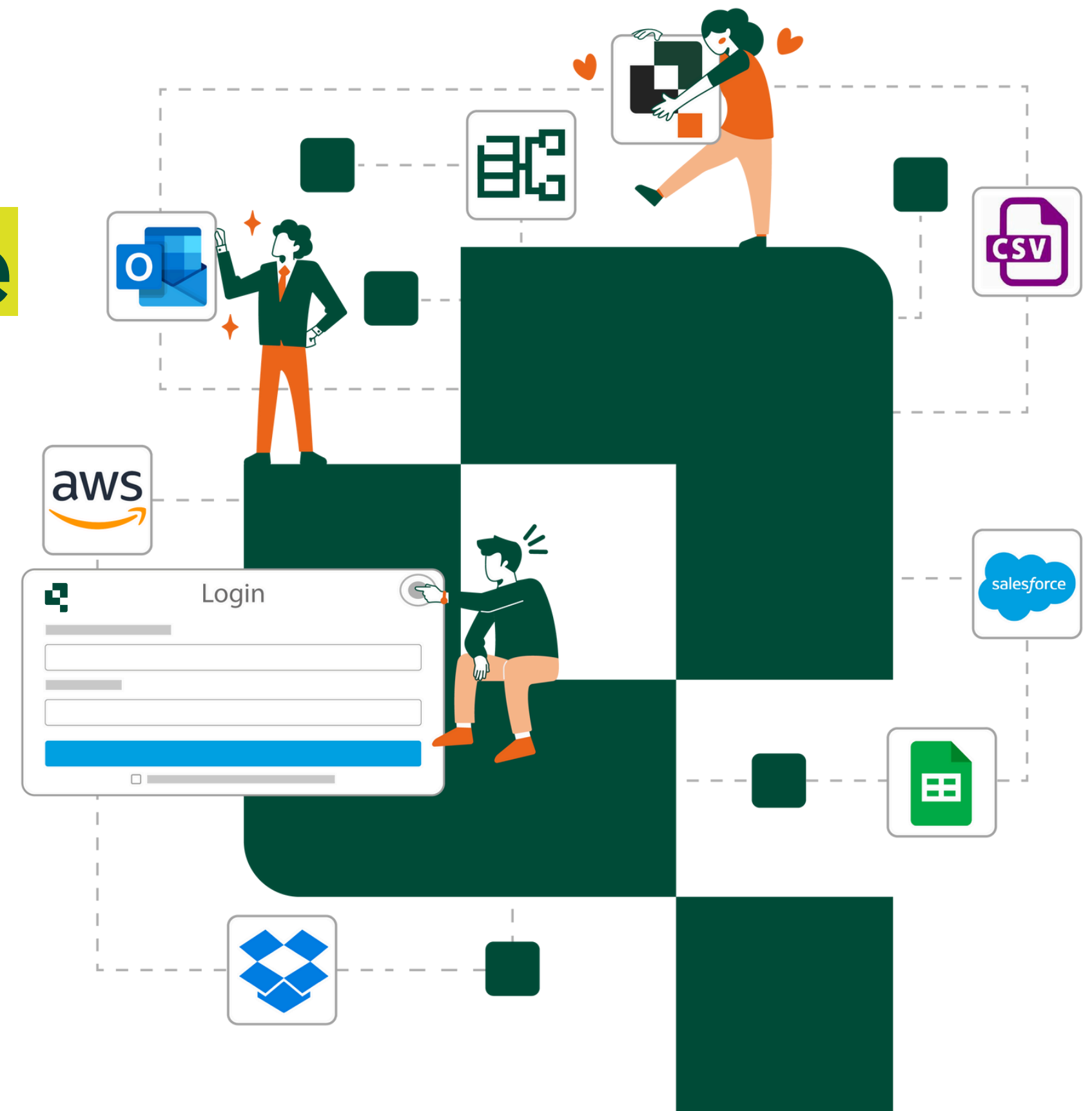


# When your **software adapts** to your operations, you **eliminate Gray Work** at the source.

~~From~~ scattered information  
**To** Complete visibility across projects, teams, and workflows

~~From~~ rigid processes  
**To** Flexible, customizable systems that work the way you work

~~From~~ data you can't trust  
**To** Real-time intelligence you can act on





## About Quickbase

Quickbase is the **AI-powered operations platform** used by more than 12,000 organizations worldwide to transform ordinary work into extraordinary impact.

Combining powerful AI capabilities and the flexibility and ease of low code/no code technology, Quickbase boosts productivity, improves efficiency, and enhances employee safety for organizations managing large-scale projects and operations in industries like **Construction** and **Manufacturing**.

Learn more at [quickbase.com](https://quickbase.com).

