The State of Scientific Purchasing 2026

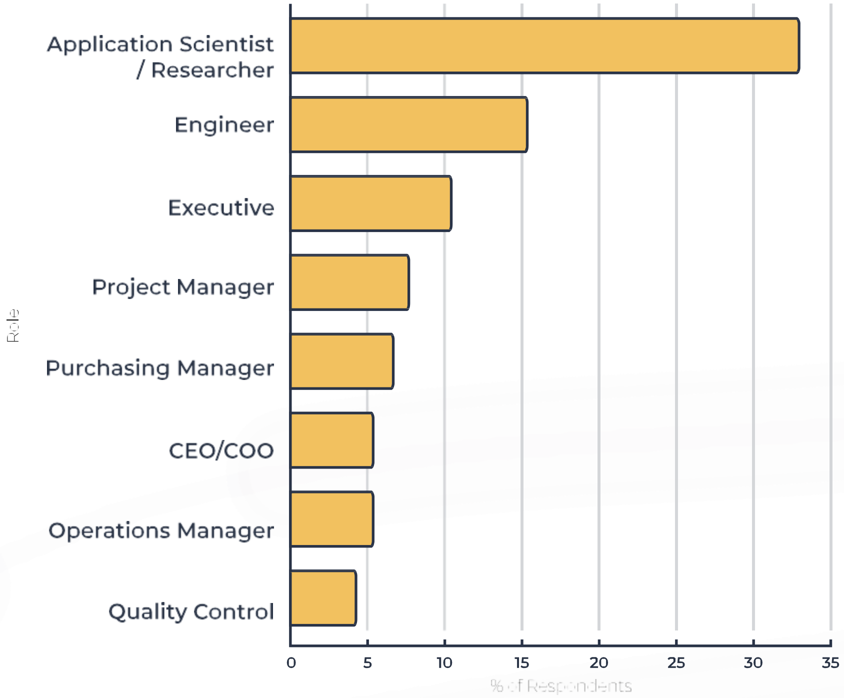
Gain insights into your prospects' buying behaviors and enhance your marketing strategies.
Reach New Audiences, Generate Better Leads

About the Survey

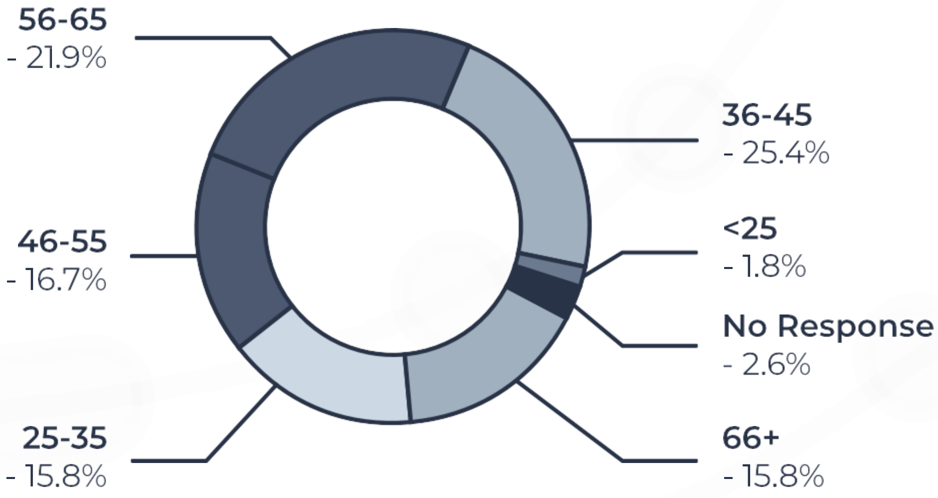
The State of Scientific Purchasing 2026 explores how buying decisions are evolving across the Science, Technology, and Healthcare sectors. This year's report provides insights into preferred content types, the rising role of AI, and how purchasing behavior and budgets have shifted.

Participants in this survey had recently submitted an RFQ (Request for Quotation) through one of AZoNetwork's platforms and were asked to reflect on their most recent scientific purchasing experience.

Role

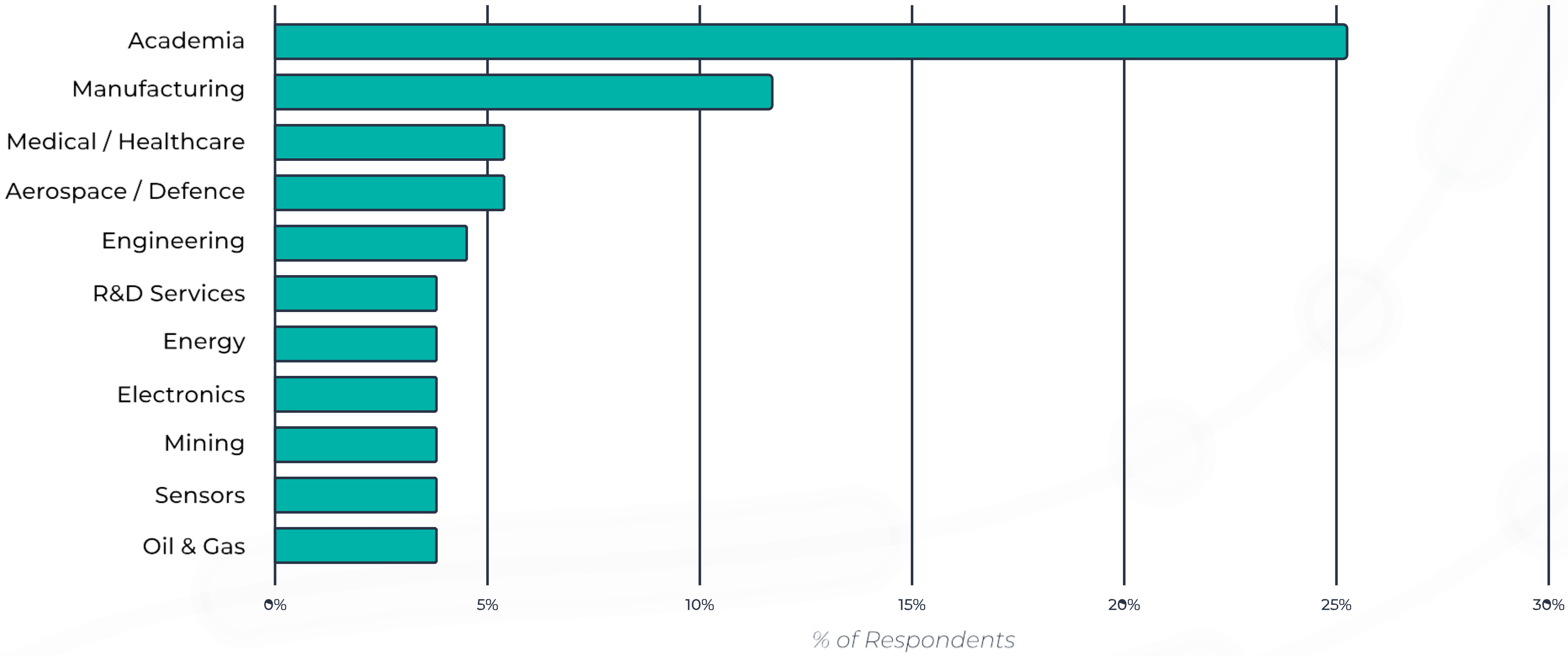


Age



About the Survey

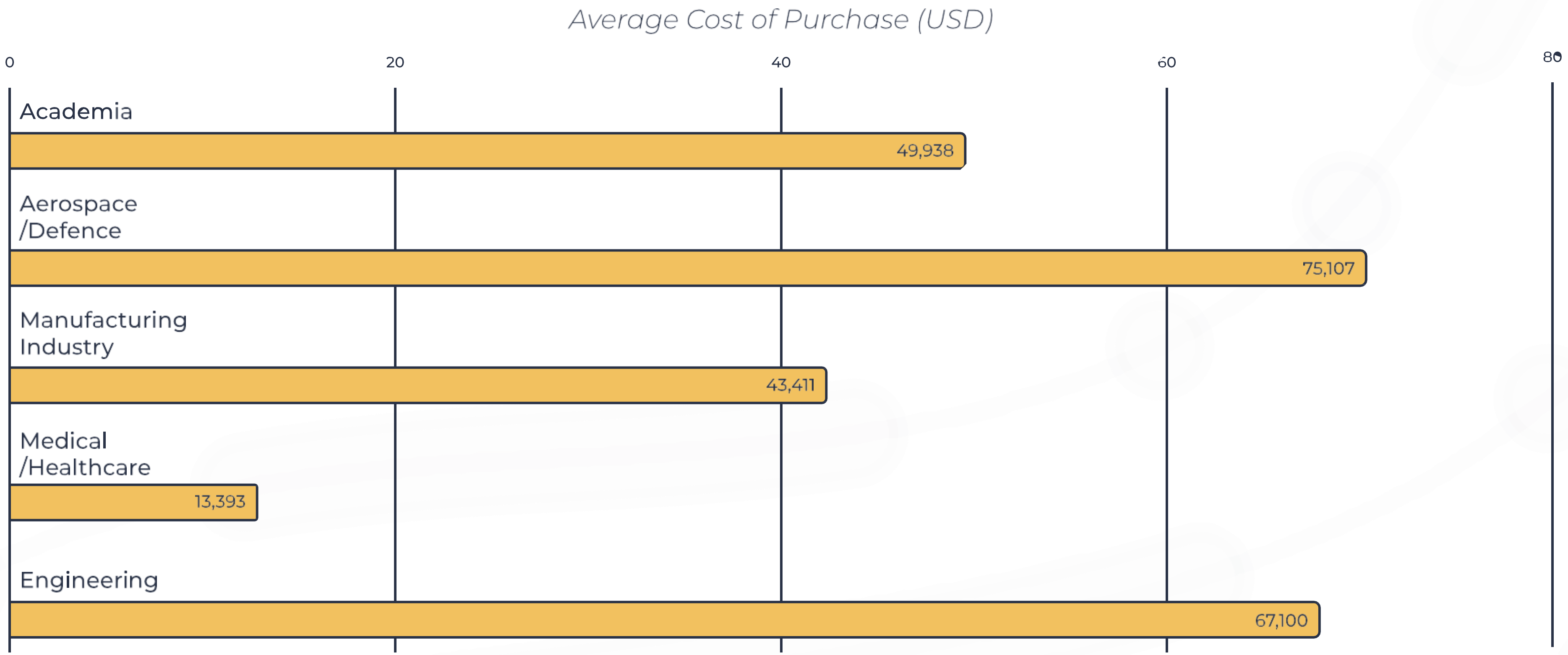
Participants by Industry



About the Purchase

To understand how buying behavior varies across fields, we segmented responses by industry. The data includes average spend, decision timelines, and team dynamics for the top five most common sectors among our respondents.

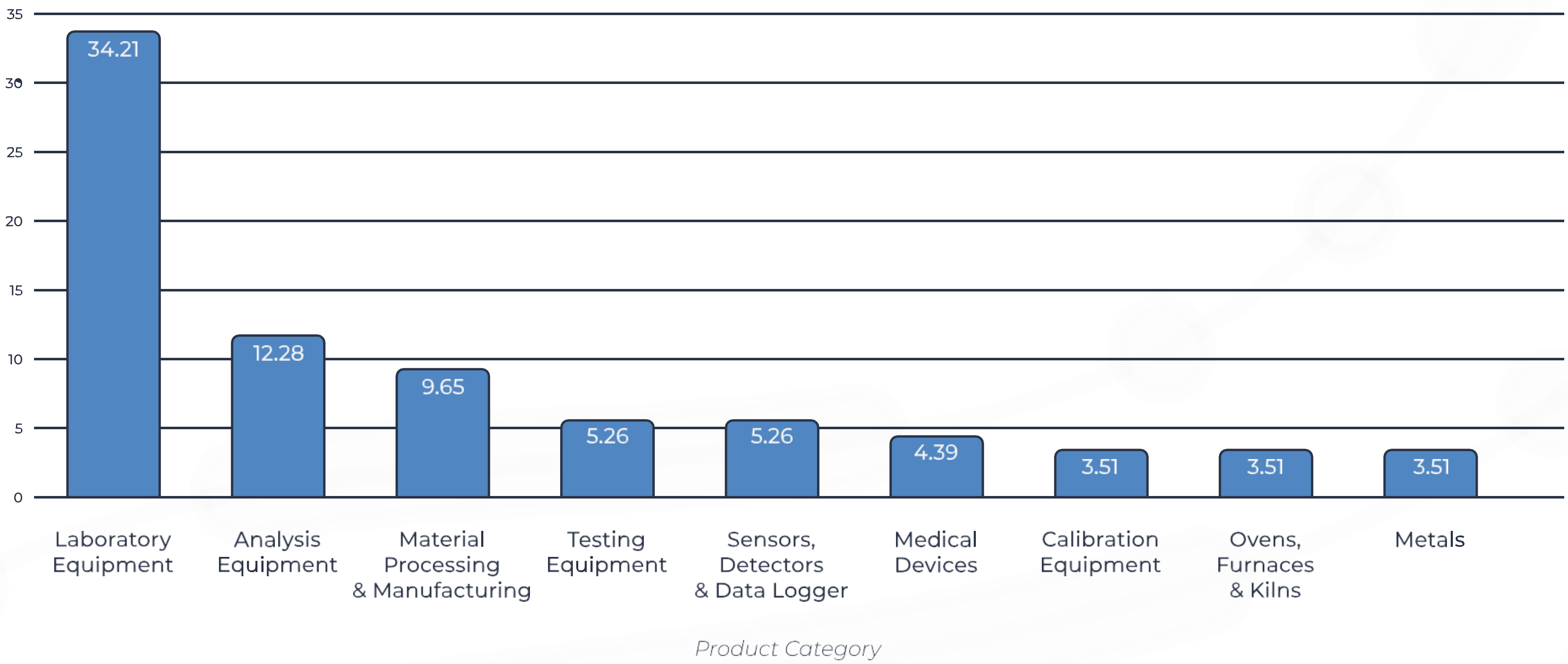
Average Spend per Industry:



About the Purchase

In 2025, generalized “Scientific Equipment” (laboratory, analysis, and testing instruments) accounted for 52% of all purchases, making it the dominant product category

Product Categories:



About the Purchase

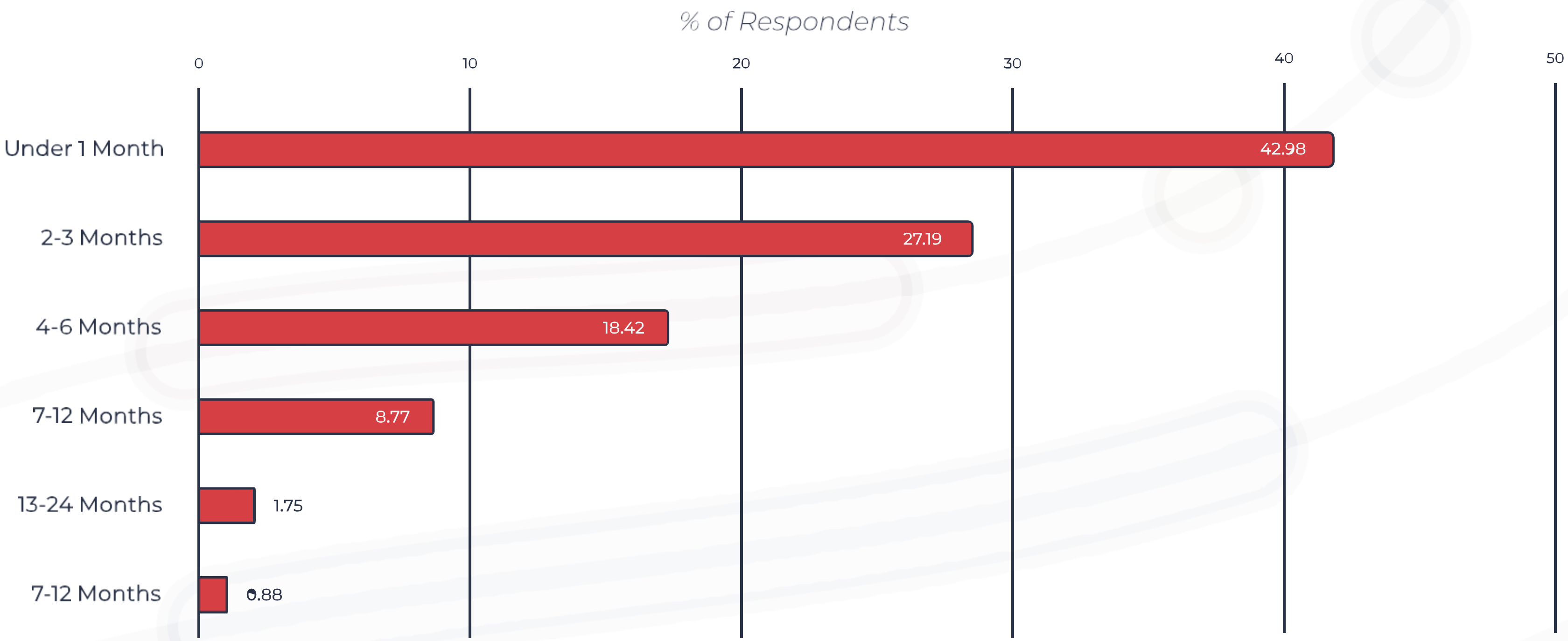
Length of Purchase:

The buying process is accelerating:

42% of purchases were completed in under one month, up from 33% last year .

89% of purchases were finalized within six months (compared to 84% in 2024).

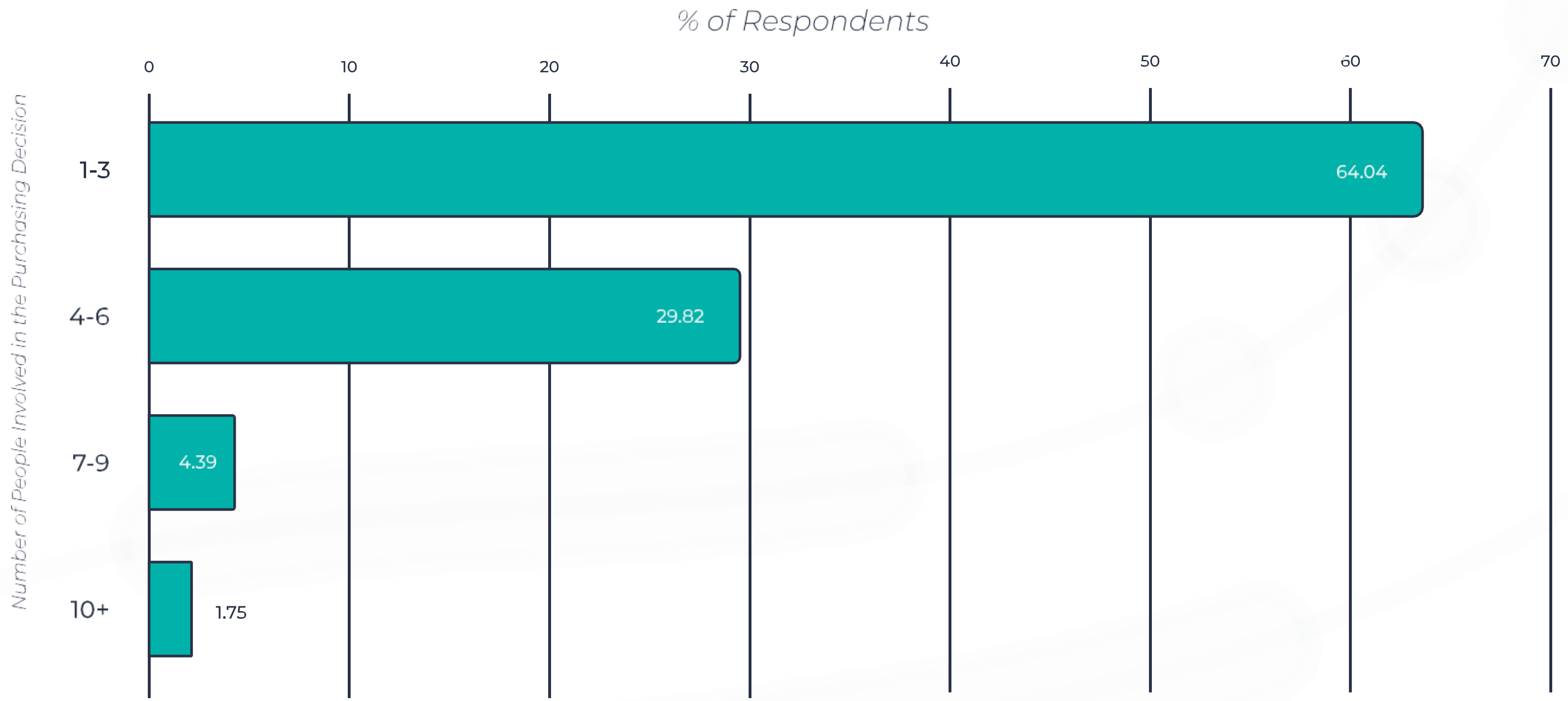
This shrinking timeline means marketers must grab attention quickly and deliver essential information early; otherwise, potential customers may look elsewhere.



About the Purchase

Number of People Involved & Decision Makers:

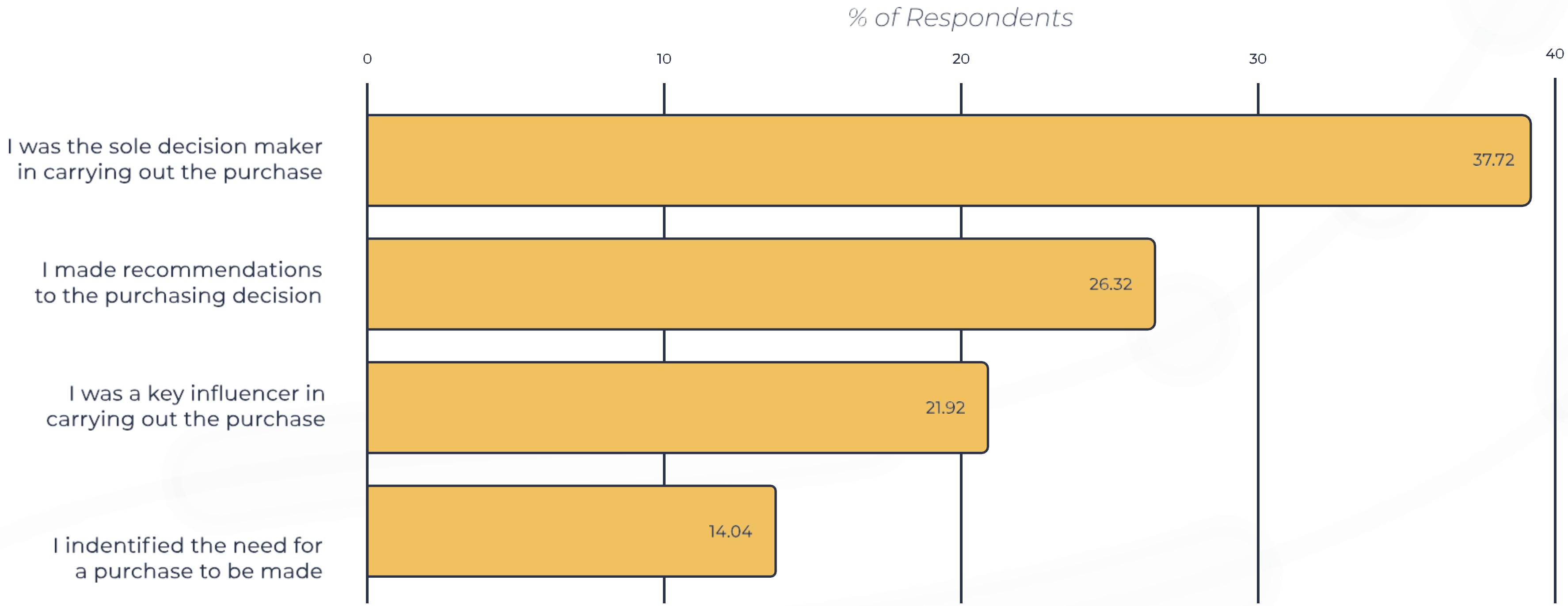
The size of buying teams has remained stable:
64% of purchases involved 1–3 people, highlighting the importance of creating strong advocates within small decision-making groups.



About the Purchase

To influence these decisions effectively, marketers need to understand the specific roles within the purchasing team. Tailored messaging, aligned to each role's concerns, is more likely to resonate.

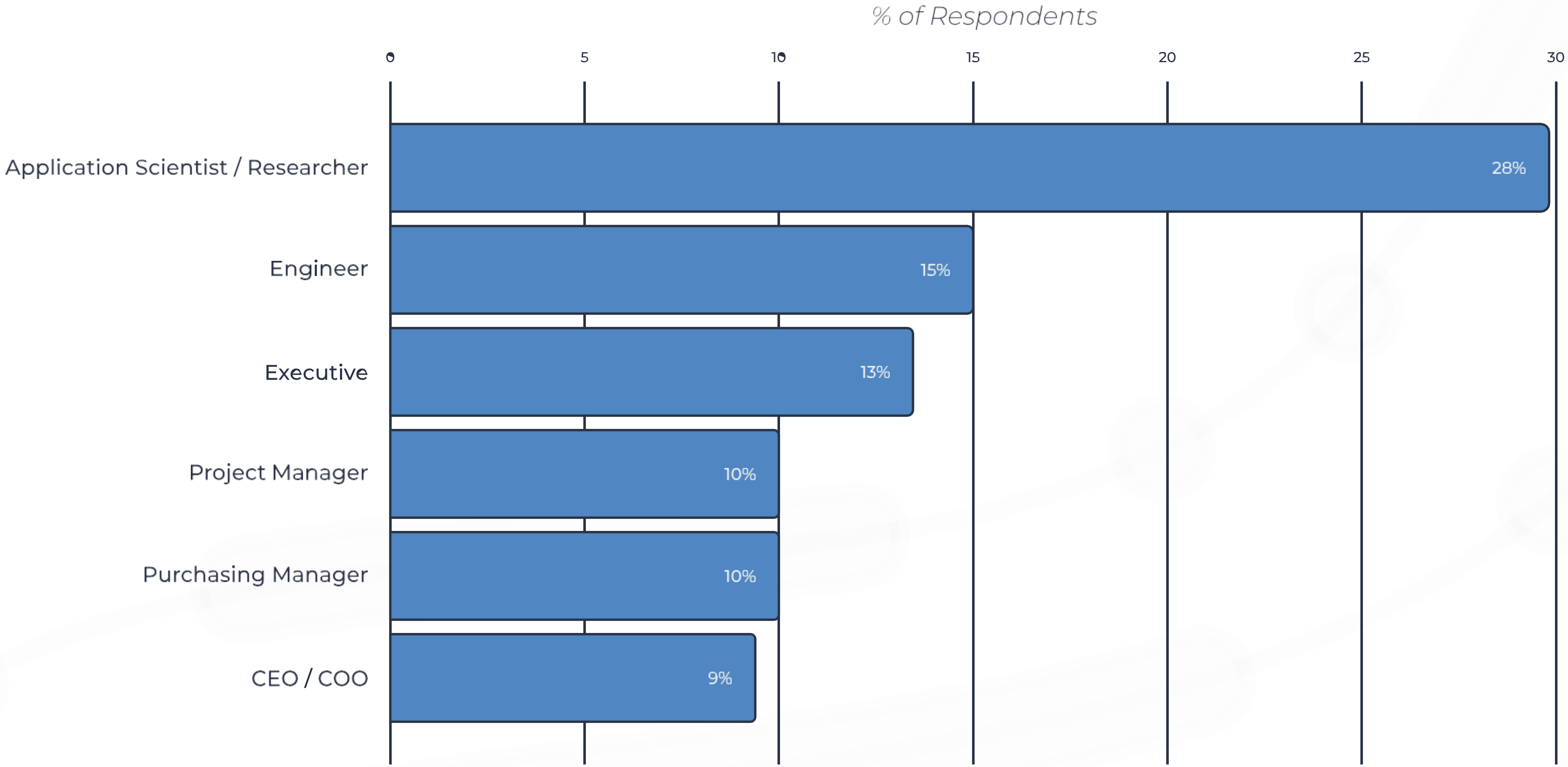
Here is a breakdown of the job roles of respondents who said that they were the key influencer or sole decision makers:



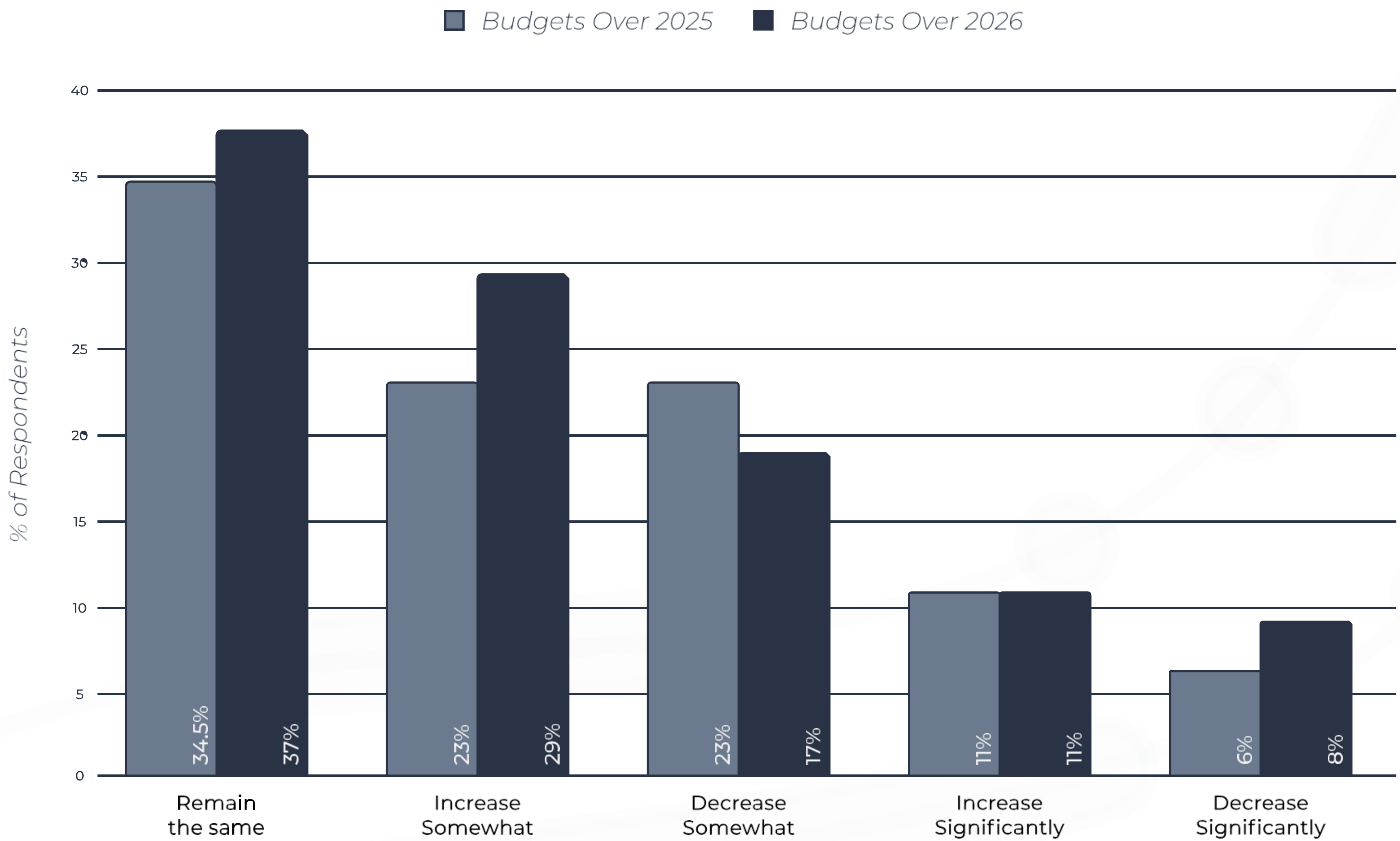
About the Purchase

AZO NETWORK

43% of key decision-makers are the individuals who work directly with the equipment. These are the people who know exactly what they need, so technical accuracy and product clarity are essential.



Budgetary Changes



What's Driving the Changes?

Decreasing Budgets were most often attributed to:

- Federal and government funding cuts
- Broader economic instability, such as inflation and post-COVID contractions
- Industry-specific downturns and market pressures
- A sense of uncertainty, from fluctuating tariffs to unpredictable sales pipelines

Sample respondent comments included:

- "Federal funding feasibility is unpredictable."
- "Budgets have reduced and the markets in which we work have slowed."

Budget Increases, meanwhile, were linked to:

- Business growth: More customers, more projects, more resources
- New opportunities, like successful grant applications or team expansion
- Strategic investments in R&D, new technologies, or advanced facilities

Stable Budgets were typically seen in organizations with:

- Mature operations and long-standing programs
- Conservative spending strategies, often shaped by external uncertainties

Looking forward, the outlook remains cautiously optimistic:
These expectations reinforce the idea that while challenges remain, many organizations are still willing to invest, especially in tools, services, and partnerships that help them grow or stay competitive.

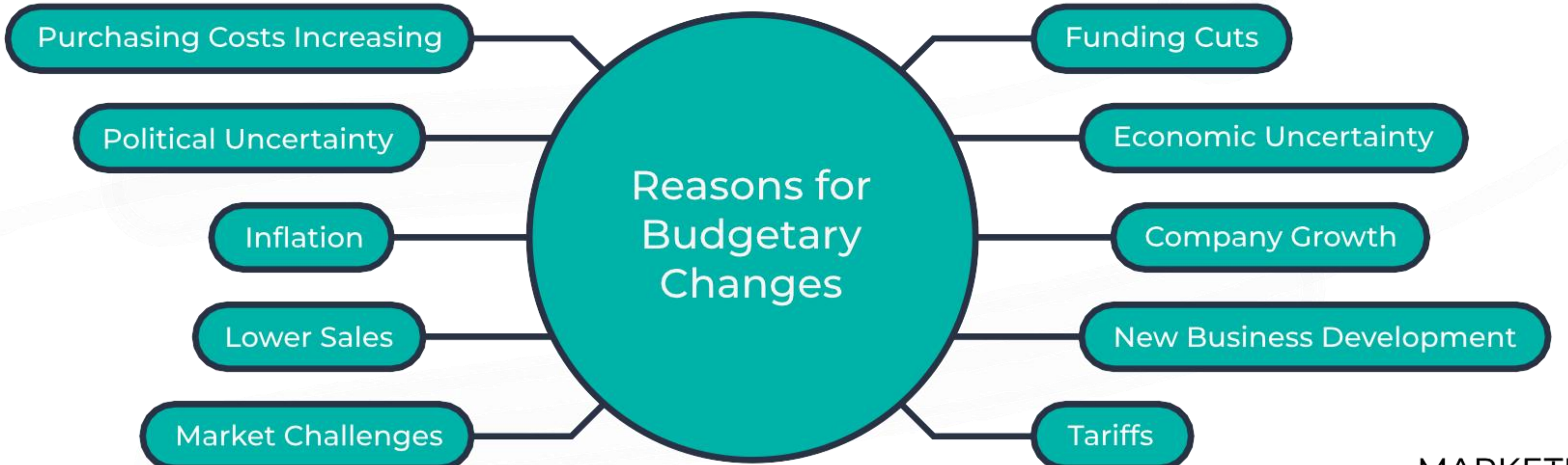
Budgets

In an increasingly competitive landscape, understanding how budgets are shifting across the scientific sectors is essential for marketers. Our latest survey reveals a nuanced picture: while some industries are ramping up investment, others remain cautious or face external pressures that restrict spending. Here's what we learned.

These shifts reflect broader economic forces as well as sector-specific conditions. For marketers, this signals the importance of understanding not only whether budgets are changing but why.

Looking at trends by industry, some clear patterns emerged:

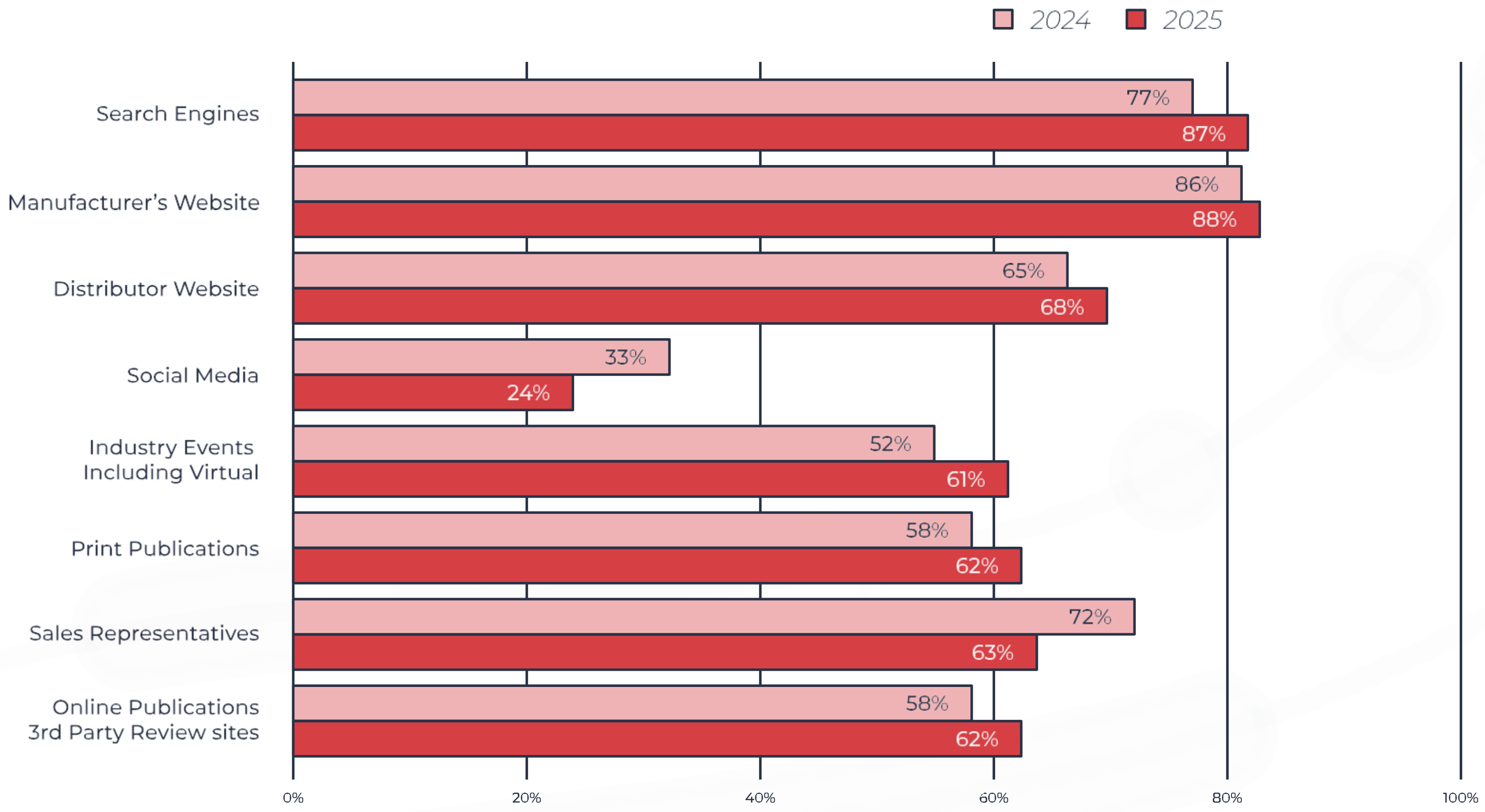
- Engineering, Manufacturing, and Aerospace sectors largely reported stable or growing budgets.
- Academia saw more widespread decreases, often tied to funding cuts and policy shifts.
- Medical and Healthcare was more divided, with some organizations investing more and others pulling back depending on context.



Channel Influence

The influence of Industry events has increased from 52% to 61%, so it's important to make an impact.

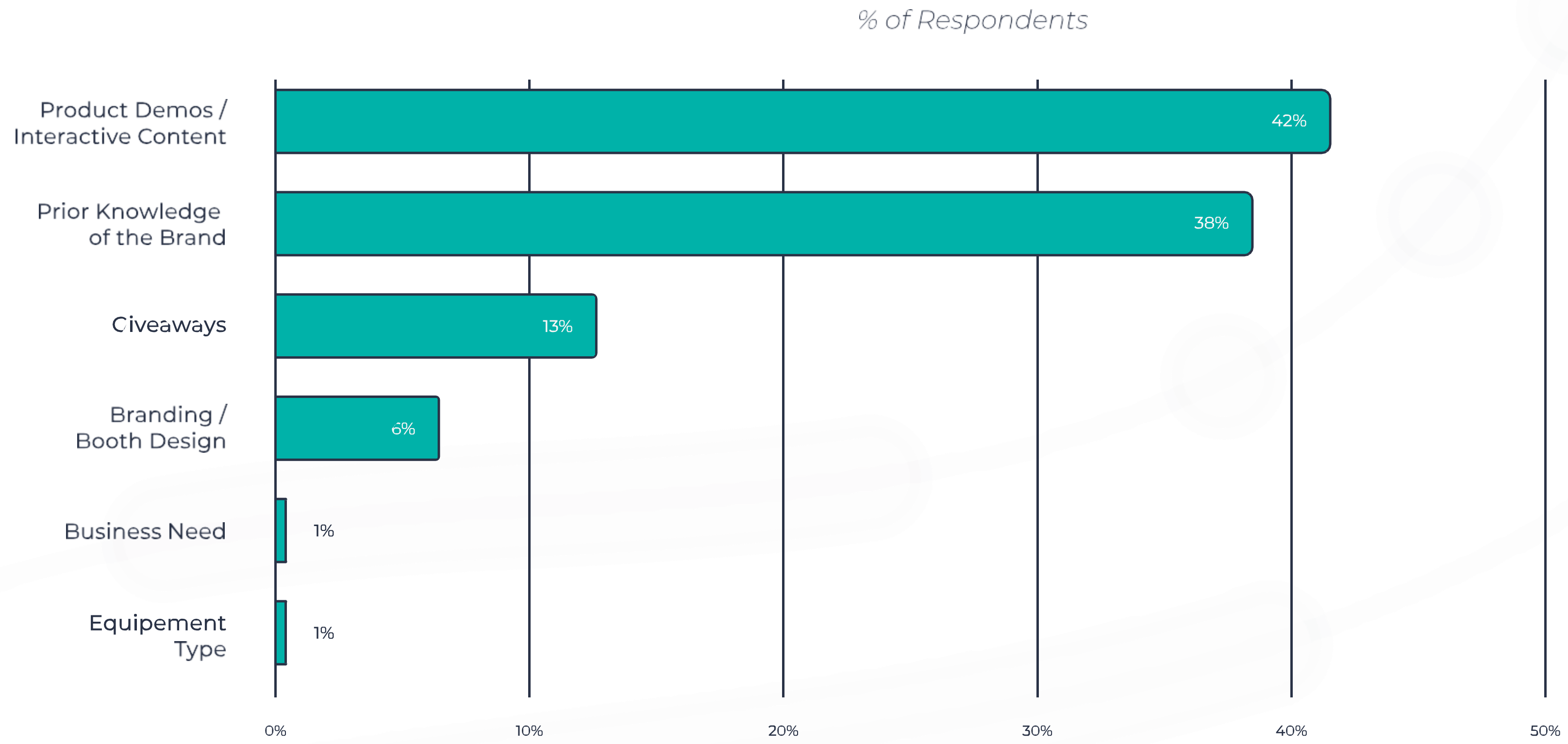
Channel Influence on Purchase:



Channel Influence

What draws attention on the show floor? The top attractions were product demos and interactive content. Seeing a solution in action builds trust, allows for hands-on evaluation, and creates lasting impressions. If bringing full products to events isn't feasible, think creatively: how can you recreate that experience virtually or through immersive content?

Attracts to Booth:

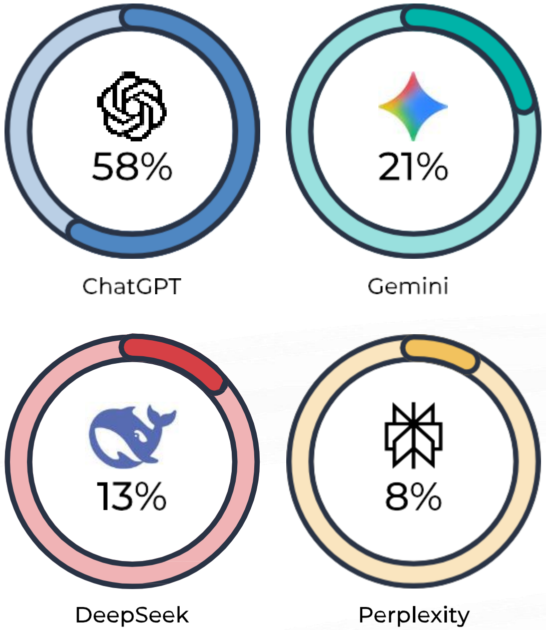


AI Use

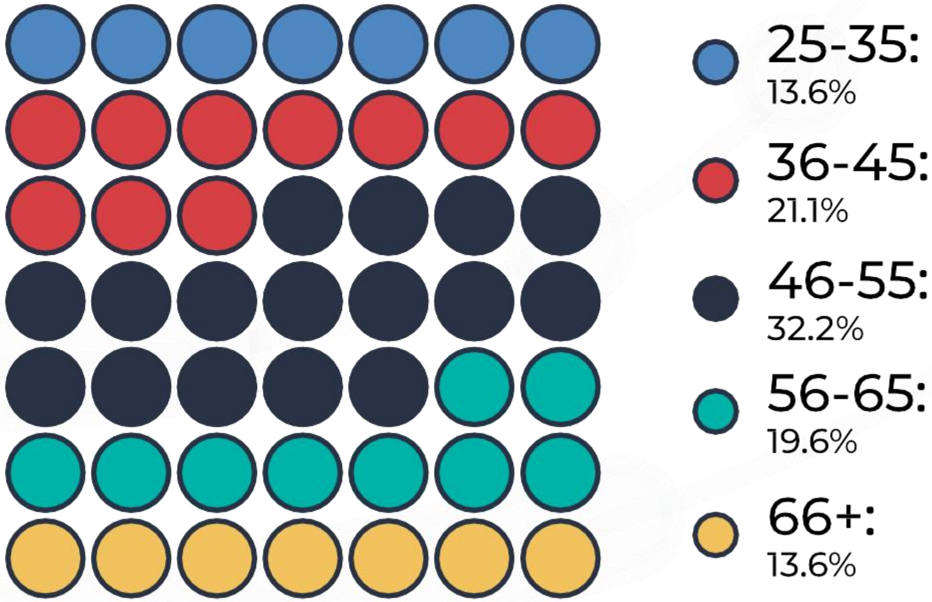
With Global use of AI continually increasing (as of Oct 2025 OpenAI receives 865 million monthly visits), its not surprising that the number of respondents who answered Yes to using AI has increased by 78%.

ChatGPT is dominant (58%) as a first mover, although Gemini has 21% and Deep Seek (13%) is becoming more popular, particularly in Asia. (only released in January 2025 and already overtaken Perplexity)

What AI Tool is Used:



Age Groups Using AI:

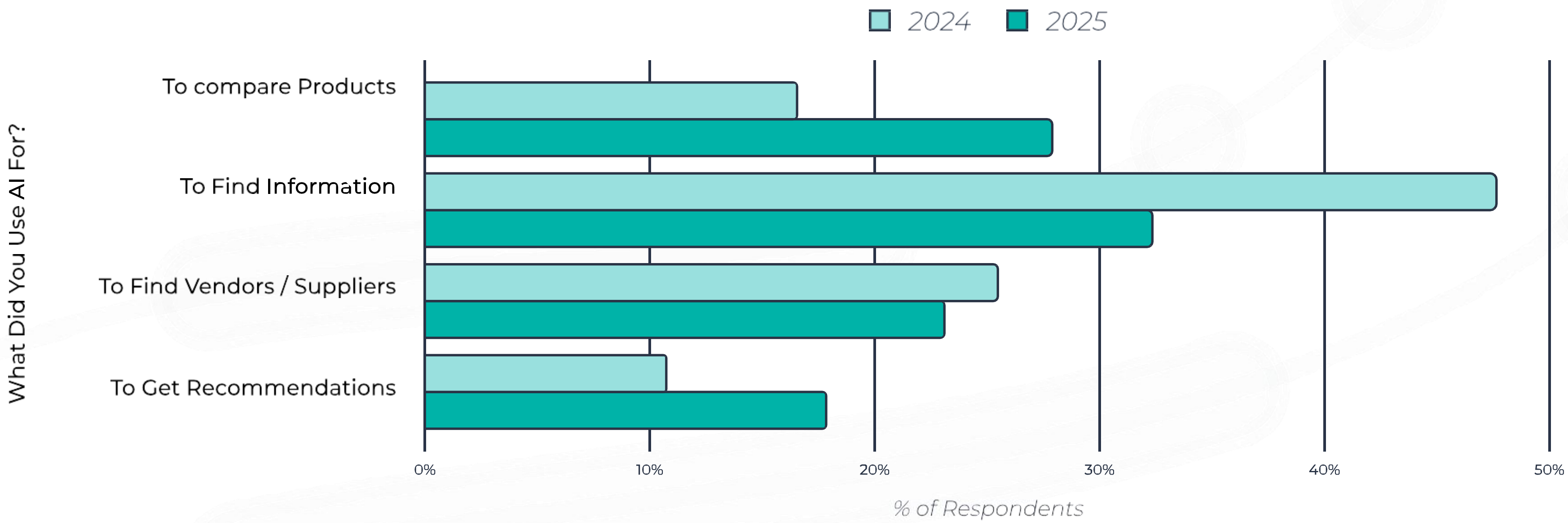


AI Use

While finding information is still the primary use case, 31% fewer people now use AI for that purpose. Instead, 68% more respondents are turning to AI to compare products. That means it's crucial to ensure key product information is accessible, ungated, and easy for AI to crawl. While it's important to optimize your content for LLM-based chatbots, don't lose sight of your human audience. Your content still needs to be clear, helpful, and user-friendly.

"Call it GEO or AI-SEO if you like, but the core approach remains the same as ever. Optimise your brand, your content, and your site. Search engines are key enablers of LLM-based chatbots, especially as deep research features look set to become the norm. But remember: AI search currently drives less than 1% of site traffic. Be prepared to adapt, but don't throw out the playbook because a random LinkedIn connection thinks that "SEO is dead"

Ben Stibbs-Eaton - Senior Creative Officer



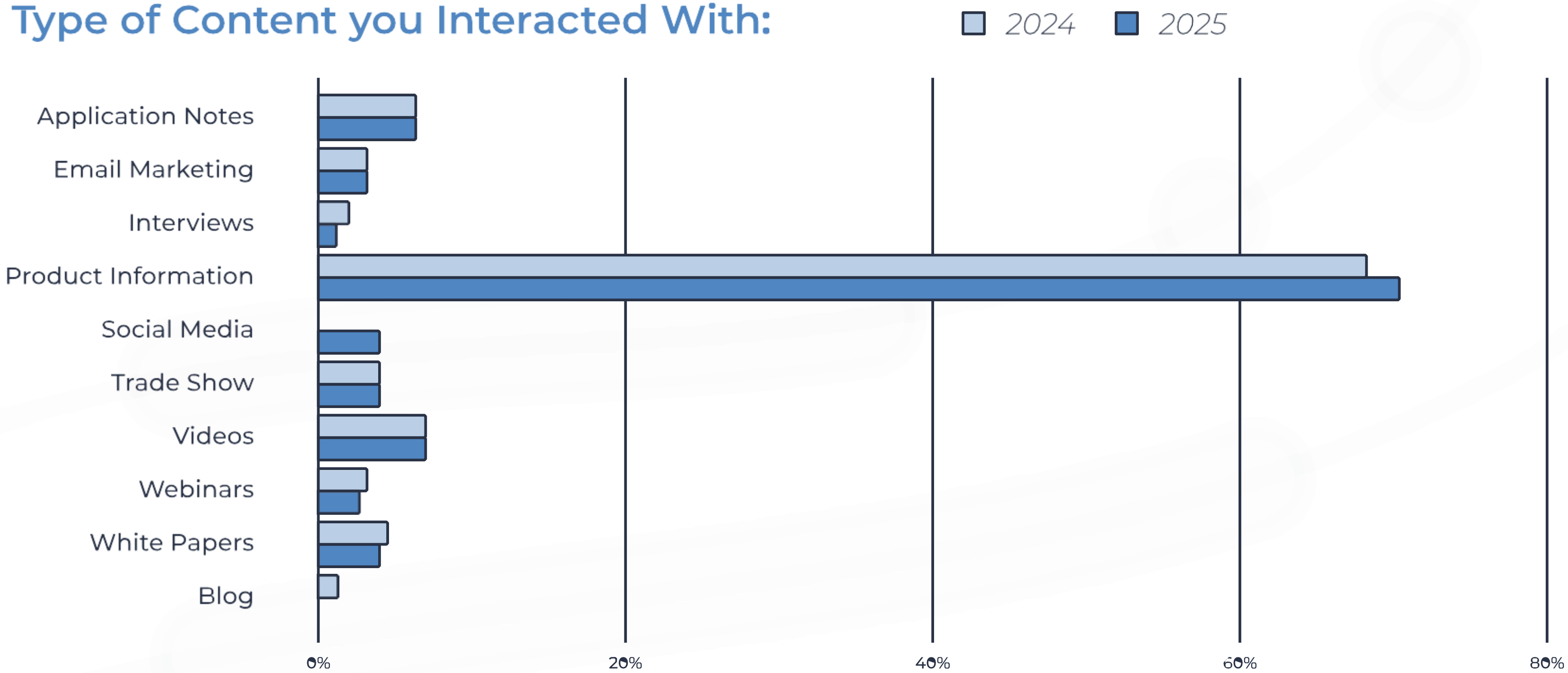
Content Influence on Purchase

The first type of content a potential customer interacts with is key to making sure your brand sticks in their mind, so you want to focus your efforts on where people are more likely to discover you.

71% of respondents said product information was the first content they interacted with. This emphasizes the importance of having well-structured, searchable, and engaging product page

Only 4% cited social media as their first interaction, but this is the first time it's appeared as an initial touchpoint. That signals early momentum. With nearly 64% of the global population using social media, now is the time to build a presence that supports long-term brand awareness.

First Type of Content you Interacted With:

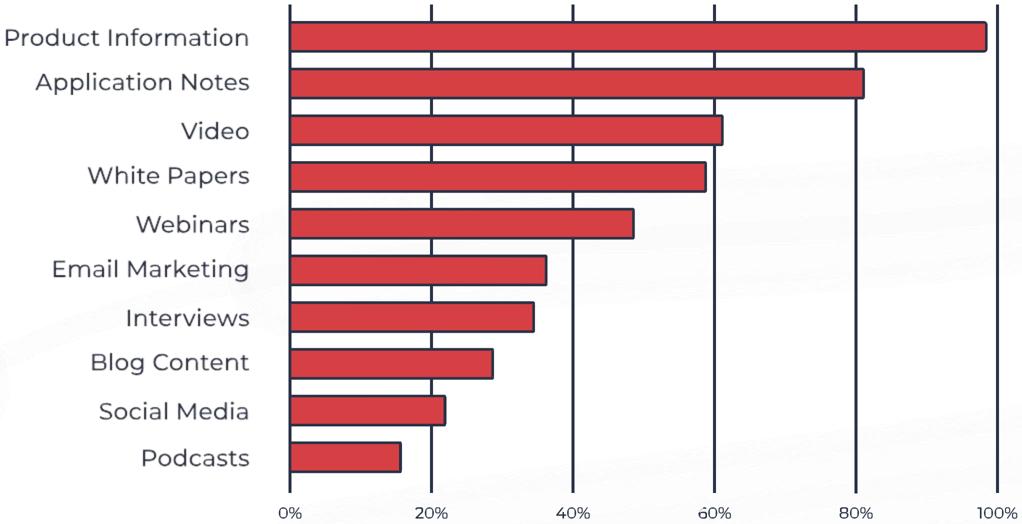


Content Influence on Purchase

Video ranked as the third most influential type of content among the scientific community, outranking even technical formats like white papers. That's no surprise: people remember 95% of a message when they watch it, compared to just 10% when reading. Videos are easy to understand, emotionally engaging, mobile-friendly, and they stick in long-term memory.

"In a complex industry with equally complex products and decision-makers, video stands out by delivering clear, compact messages that accelerate understanding. Everything a buyer needs is in one place. No digging through dense PDFs or scattered specs. Video makes it easier for your customers to grasp your value and move toward a decision faster." - ***Joao Pinto, Audio-Visual Content Creator, AZoNetwork***

Content Influence on Purchase:



Most Influential

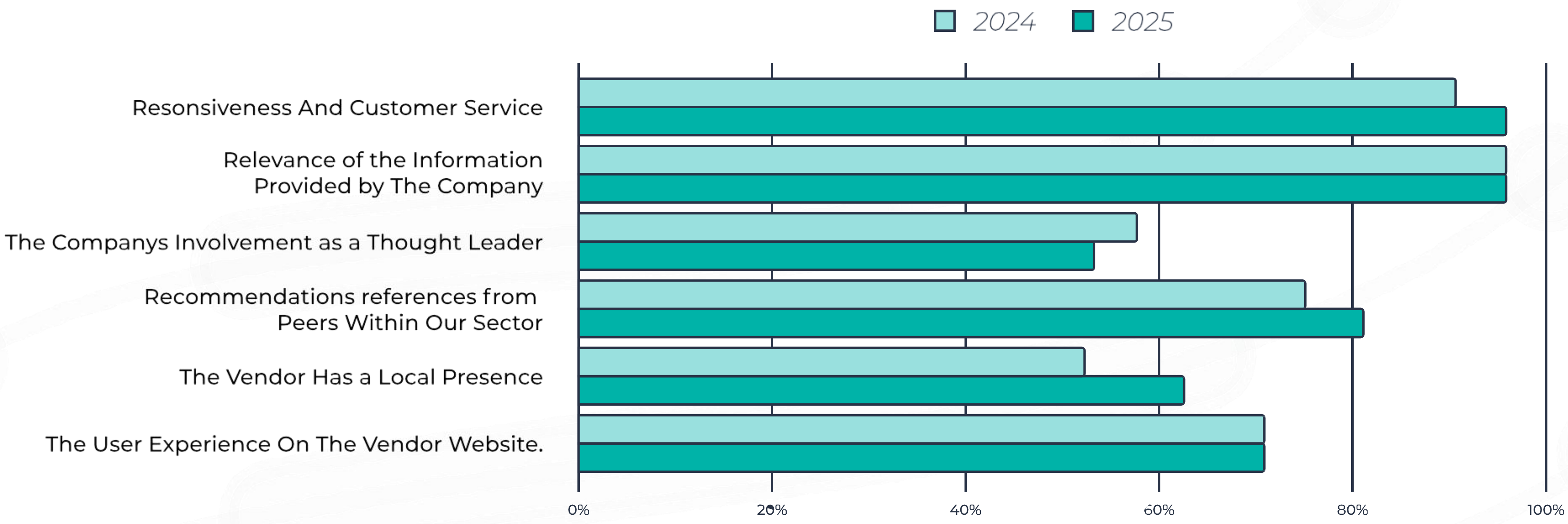
- Product information
- Application Note
- Video (beats technical content like white papers)

About the Vendor

This year, fewer respondents had already identified a vendor before beginning their research. This indicates that buyers are entering the funnel with an open mind. This is your chance to become the first credible voice they hear. Invest in top-of-funnel content that builds trust and positions your brand as a helpful guide.

Buyers aren't reaching out like they used to, the number of buyers who reach out for information has decreased this year. Buyers expect to find everything they need online, quickly, and without having to ask. If key details like specifications, performance data, or comparisons aren't easy to access, you risk losing prospects before you even know they were considering you. A smooth, informative, and friction-free content experience is essential.

Responsiveness and Customer Service jumped from 90% to 95%, showing that buyers place even more value on timely, helpful interactions. This suggests growing expectations for quick, high-quality support, potentially driven by tighter timelines or more vendor options.



Key Takeaways

- **Front-load decision-ready information.**
  Speed wins: buying cycles are shortening, so make specs, fit, proof points, lead times, and pricing context easy to find early.
- **Equip a single internal champion.**
  Champion-first marketing: small buying teams mean one advocate can move the deal—give them forwardable one-pagers, comparisons, and justification assets.
- **Remove friction from self-serve research.**
  Self-serve is the default: buyers rely on search and manufacturer websites and reach out less—so optimize SEO, product pages, and FAQs to answer key questions fast.
- **Segment messaging by budget reality.**
  Budgets vary by sector—lead with ROI/TCO and risk reduction where budgets are pressured, and performance/throughput where budgets are growing.
- **Design content for comparison (including AI).**
  AI is becoming a comparison engine—standardize spec tables, keep essentials ungated, and publish selection guides and "vs" pages that AI and humans can parse.
- **Demonstrate, don't just describe.**
  Make experiences real: prioritize demos, interactive content, and "in-use" video to reduce perceived risk—then extend that hands-on feel into digital journeys.

Find Your Audience

View Digital Marketing Solutions