

The State of Creative Process in Marketing



JUNE 2024





We are on the cusp of a creative revolution.

Welcome to MMA Global's first benchmark study on the state of the creative process in marketing.

This study was conducted in partnership with Canva and is based on the input of close to 100 senior creative decision makers, and provides a guide for marketers looking to refine their approaches and drive increased value with their creative efforts.

 **MMA** *Canva*



Executive Summary

Marketing creativity is at a pivotal moment. The process has grown increasingly complex, yet its importance has surged, with 77% of marketers declaring it more vital than ever. This heightened focus on creative is not just a trend; it's a necessity driven by the rapid advancements in marketing technologies and deep changes in the media ecosystem. In fact, 80% of marketers see the rise of data and analytics as a significant boon, enhancing their ability to craft compelling and effective creative strategies and revolutionize creative processes.

However, there are significant challenges. Less than 40% of marketers believe they are making the right investment in creative talent and tools, highlighting a critical gap between perceived importance and actual resource allocation. Additionally, measuring the ROI of creative efforts remains elusive, with fewer than 40% confident in their ability to accurately assess its impact.

In light of these challenges, there is a notable shift towards in-housing creative functions. On average, a net one-third of marketers is expected to increase its in-house creative operations, seeking greater transparency, strategic alignment, and cost efficiency.

As we look ahead, these key data points emphasize the need for strategic investment in creativity, the integration of advanced technologies, and a robust approach to measuring effectiveness. The future of marketing will increasingly hinge on our ability to navigate these complexities and harness the full potential of creative innovation.

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Creative is now more crucial than ever

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We are focused on outcomes—but hindered by increased complexity

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We are torn between existing processes and future disruption

 04

We believe creative is critical for marketing success—but we underinvest in it

 05

We believe creative works, but we can't prove its ROI

 06

The rise of creative in-housing

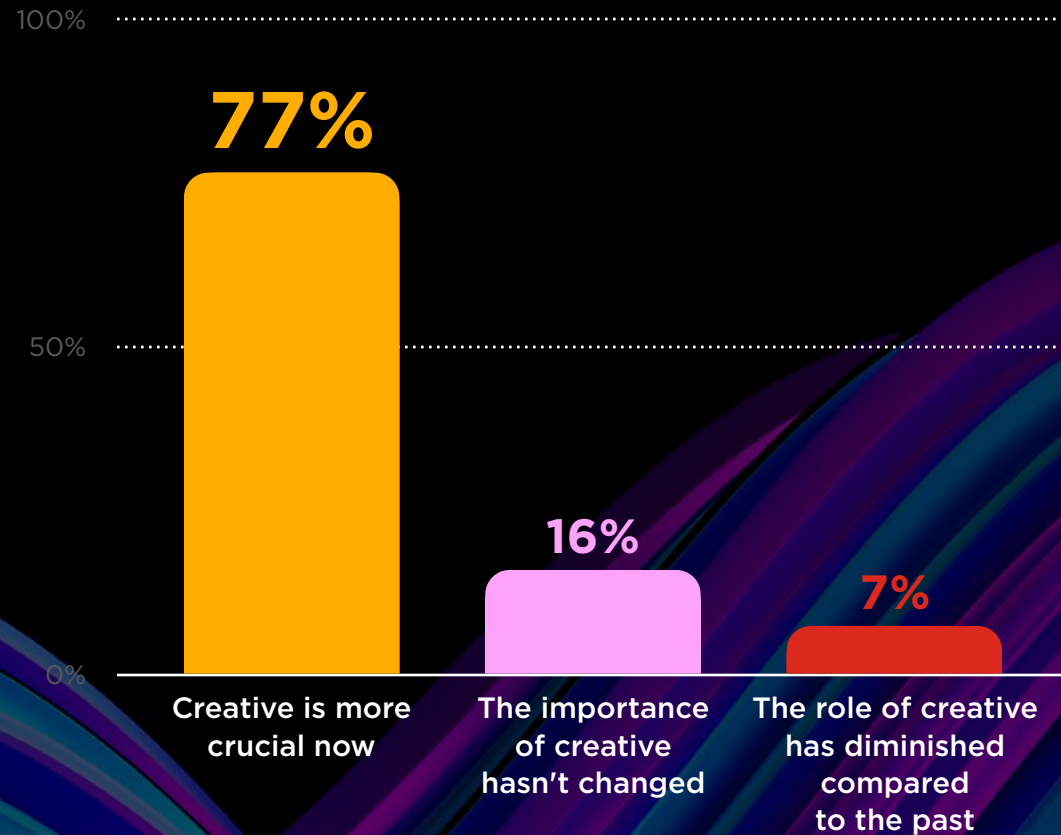
01

**Creative is now more
crucial than ever**

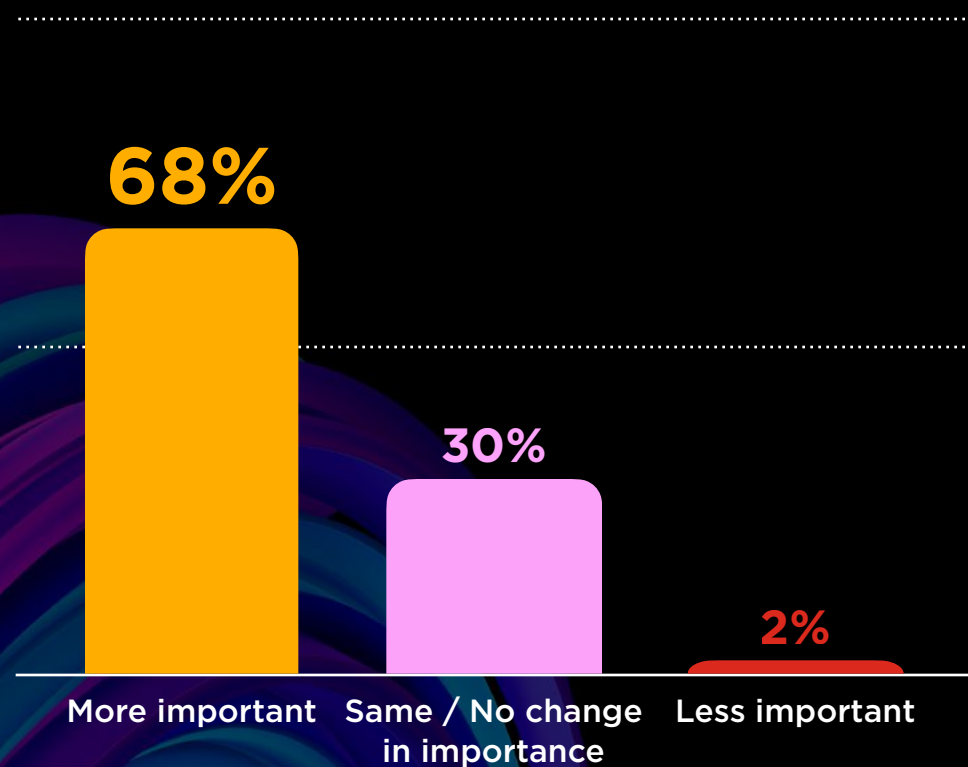


Creative is more crucial than ever.

Importance of creative compared to the past

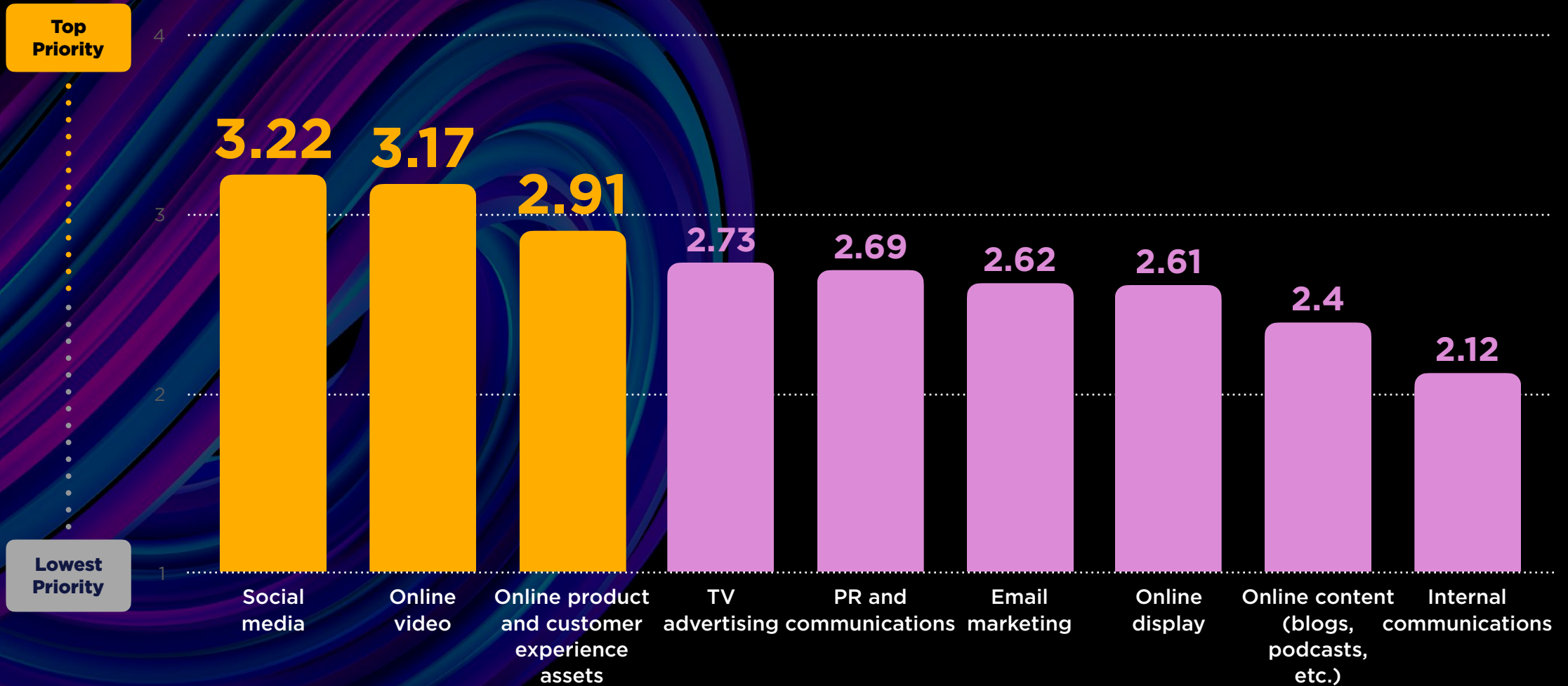


Expected Importance of creative in the next 12 months



Q. Considering the evolution of the marketing industry, do you believe the importance of creative has changed compared to the past? (Select one)
Q. In the next 12 months, do you expect that creative will become more or less important in your organization? (Select one)
N=94 Senior Marketers

Social is seen as the #1 creative priority, followed by online video and products/customer experience assets.



Q. How do you rank the following creative assets in order of priority to your company? (Rate each statement using the priority scale provided)
N=94 Senior Marketers



Creative is now more crucial than ever

The creative process has become increasingly complex over the past five years, with marketers facing challenges in maintaining consistency across touchpoints, managing resources, systems and tools, and talent.

Despite these difficulties, three quarters of marketers think that creative is more important than ever, driven by the increased importance of social media, online video, and online customer experiences.

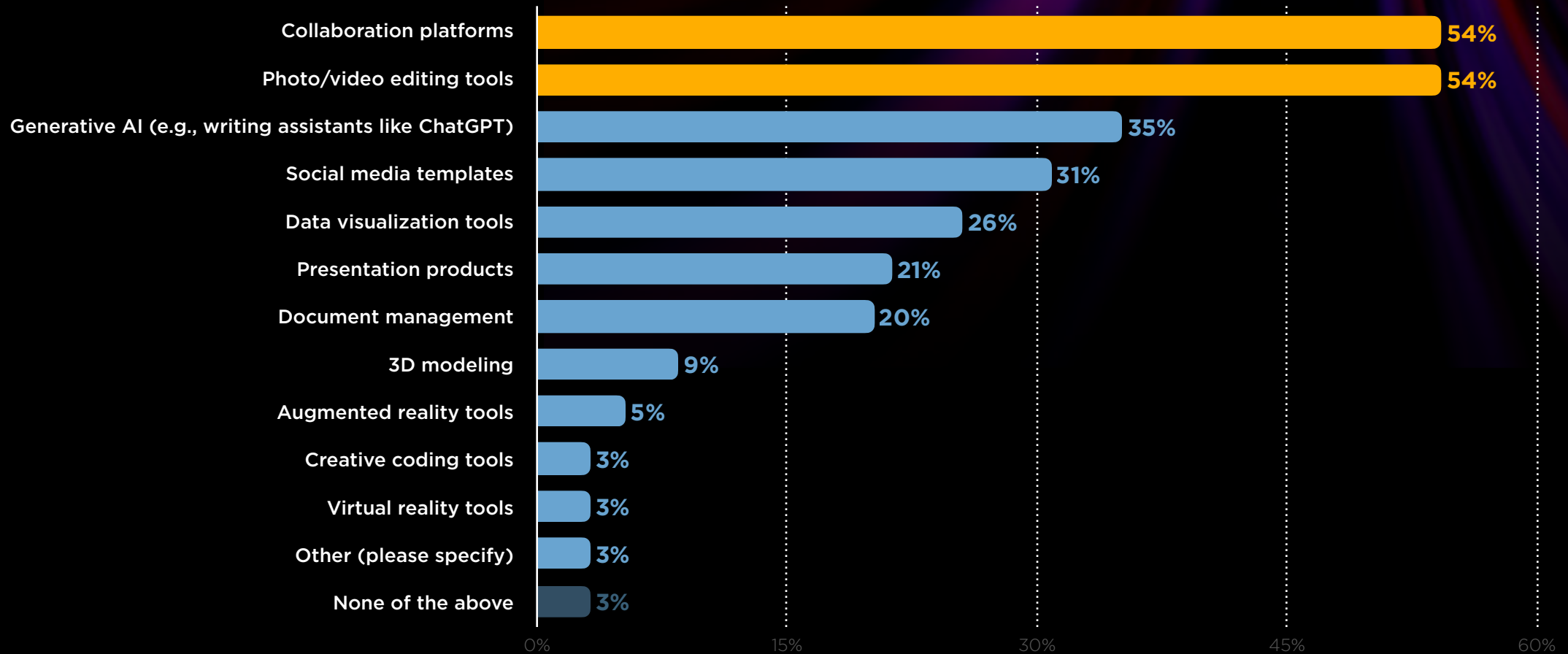
Looking ahead, a significant majority expect creative efforts to become a higher priority, particularly in social media, online video, and online customer experiences.



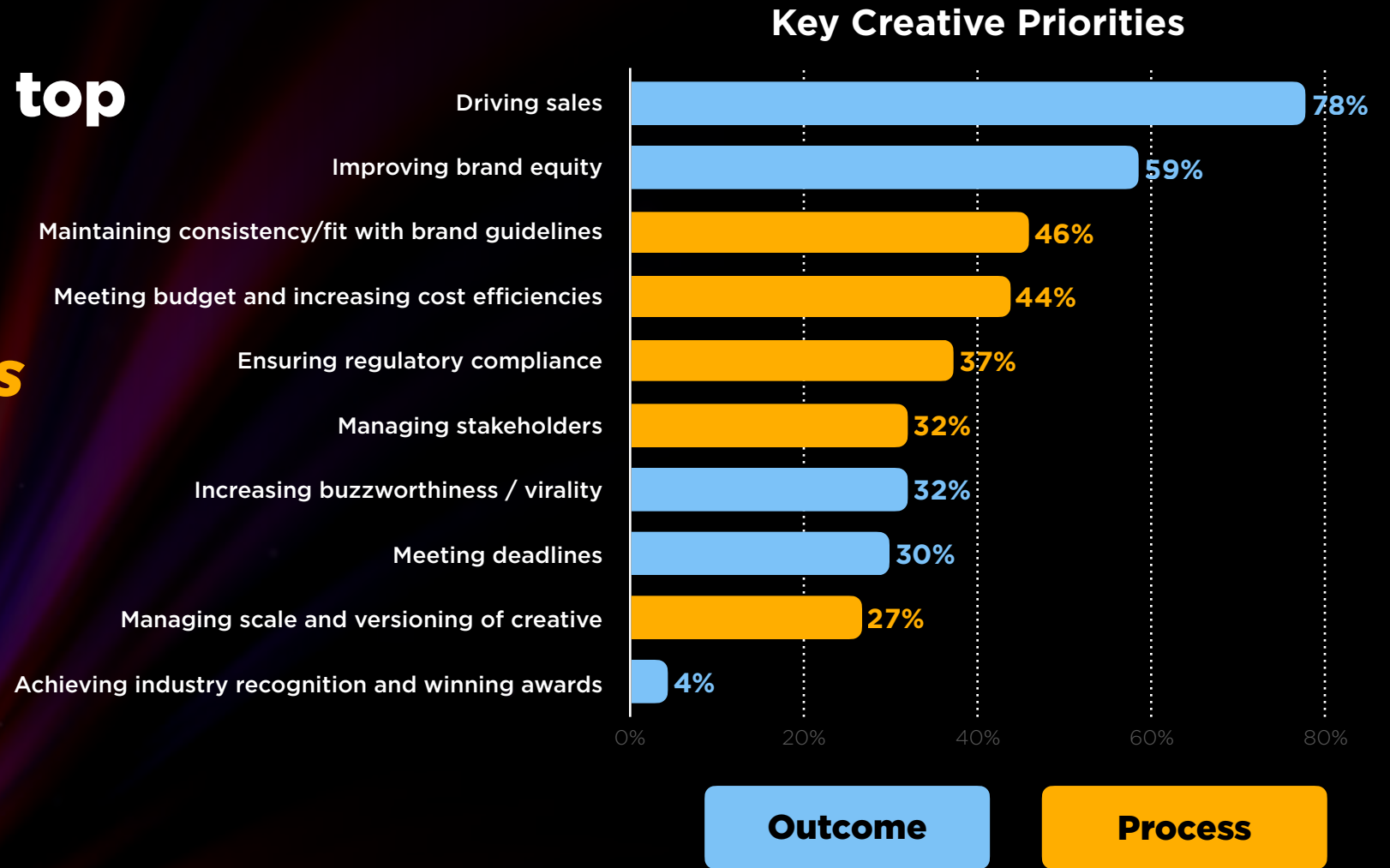
02

**We are focused
on outcomes—
but hindered by
increased complexity**

Marketers see potential from new tech applications and tools.



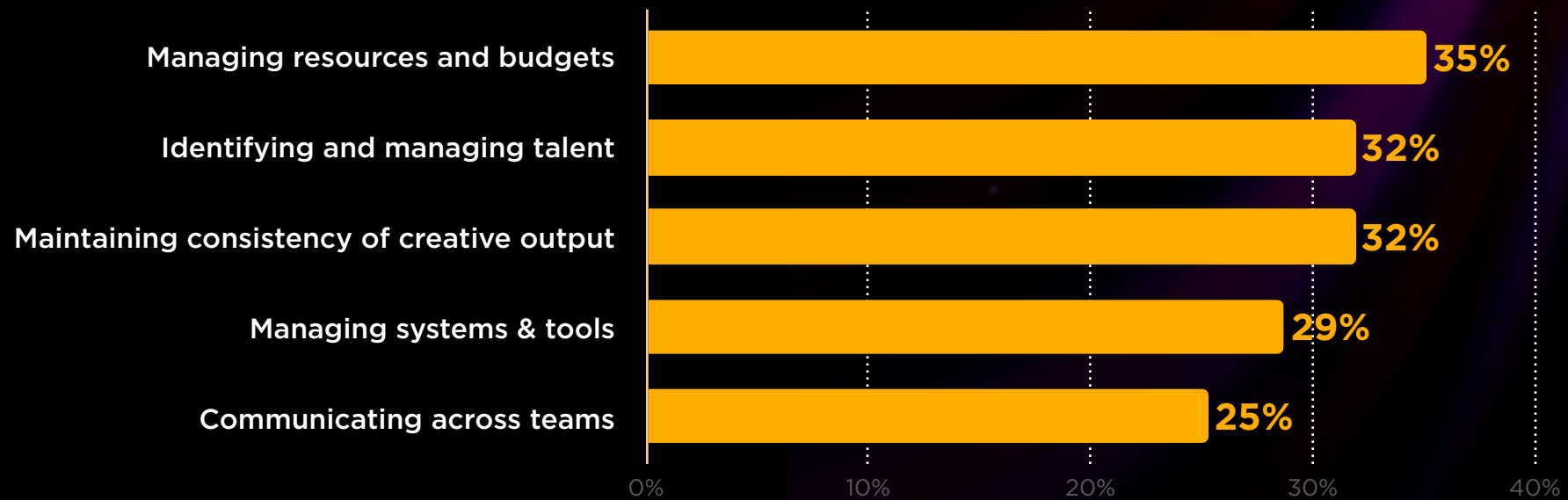
Sales and brand outcomes are the top priorities of the creative process. But sometimes the *actual process* gets in the way.



Q. Thinking about the trade-offs and decisions you need to make when it comes to creative: Which of those priorities comes first (i.e. this is what you are mostly solving for)? Which of them come second (i.e. other priorities that you are actively managing)? Which of them come third (i.e. other factors that you are just monitoring)? (Rate each statement using the priority scale provided)
N=94 Senior Marketers

The creative process has increased in complexity vs. 5 years ago.

Net % of marketers who say "more challenging today vs. 5 years ago"



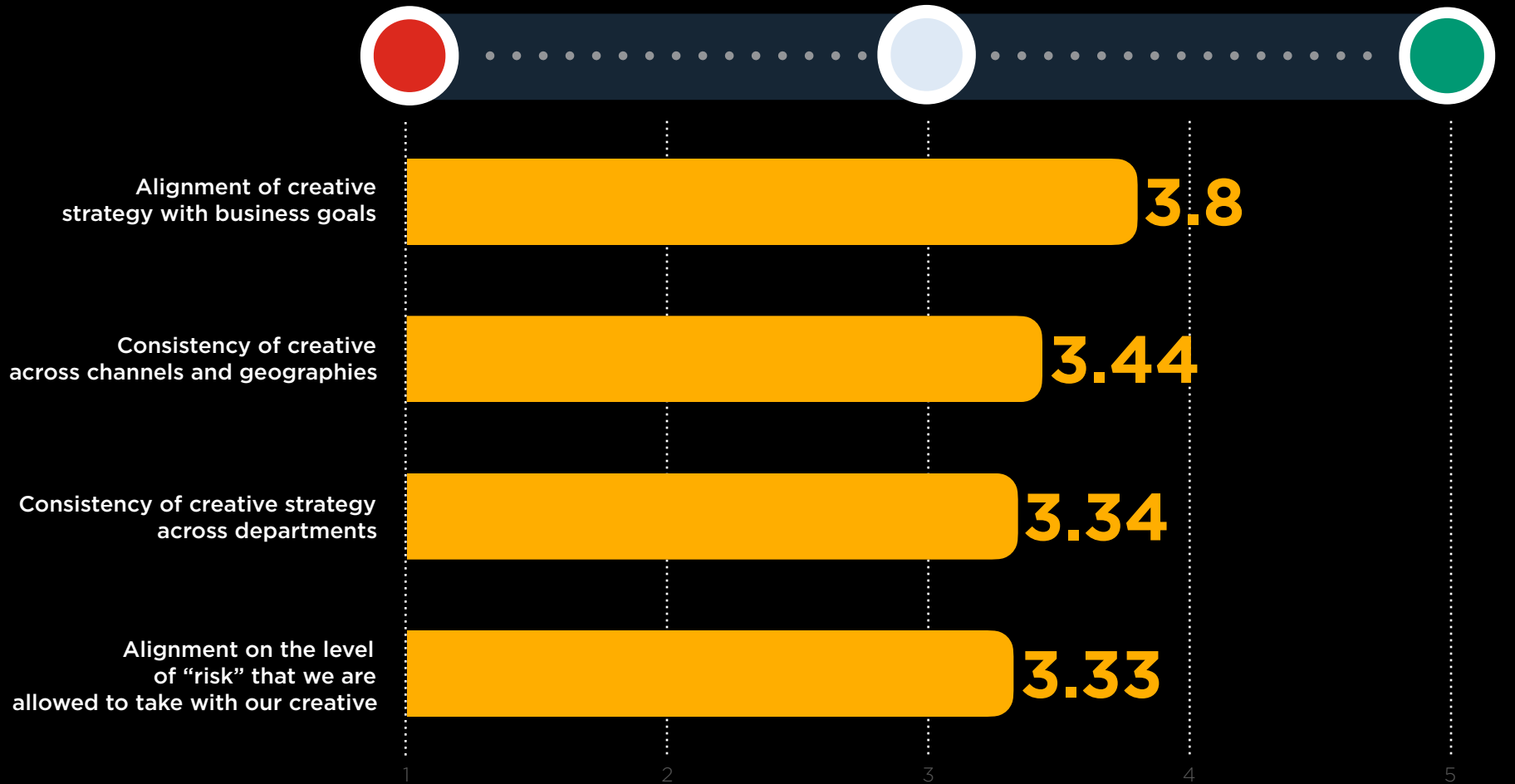
Alignment and consistency remain key challenges.



DISSATISFIED

UNDECIDED / MIXED

SATISFIED



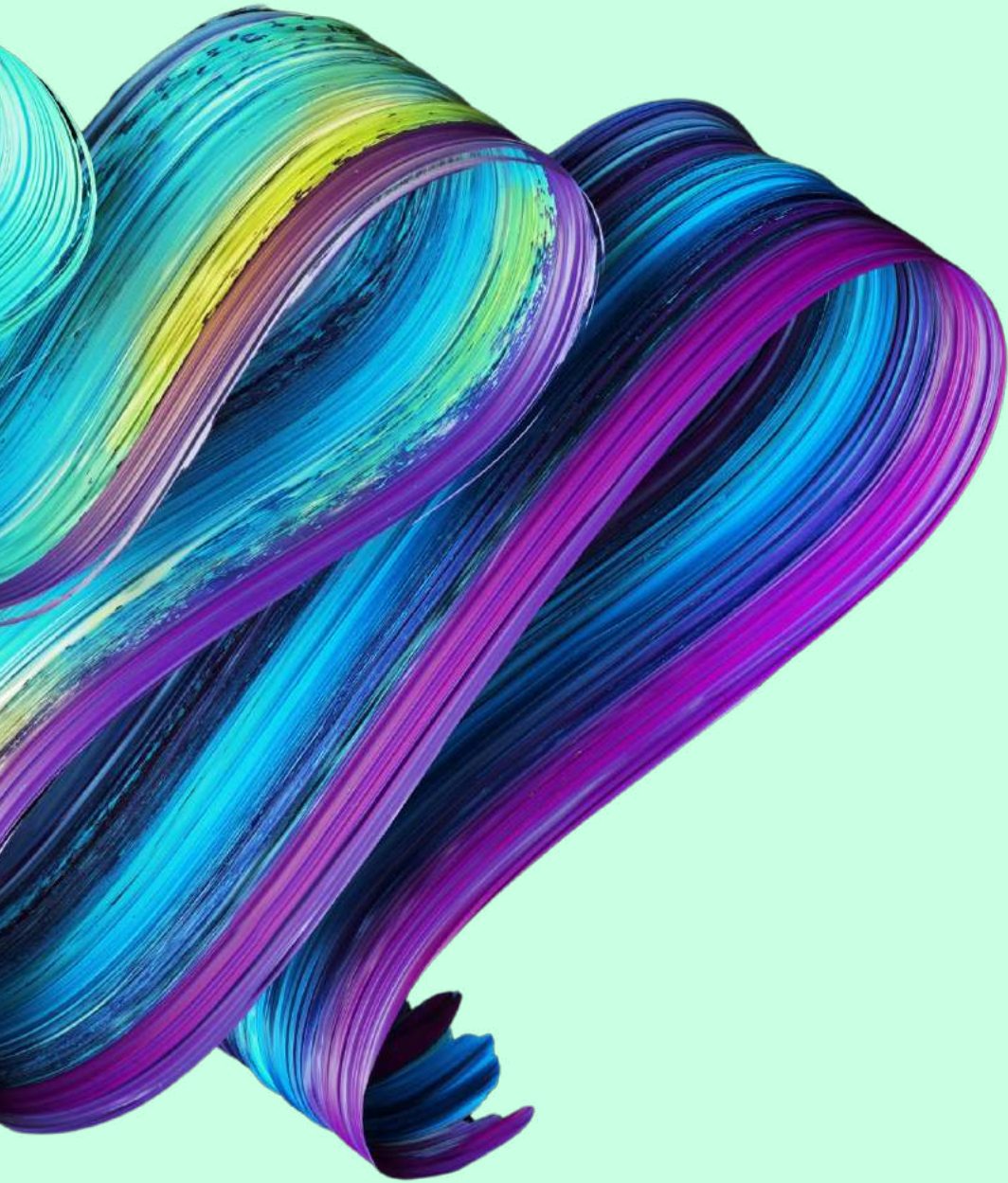
Q. How satisfied are you with your company's alignment in each of the following areas? (Rate each statement using the satisfaction scale provided) N=94 Senior Marketers



We are focused on outcomes— but hindered by increased complexity

Marketers optimize their strategies, goals, budgets, and creative efforts to achieve strong sales and brand outcomes.

However, they must also navigate several constraints, such as managing stakeholders (53%), meeting deadlines (53%), and handling the scale and versioning of creative assets (48%). As a result, a lot of marketers are frustrated by the degree to which the actual process gets in the way, and the increased difficulty to align, across departments, regions, risk levels and priorities.

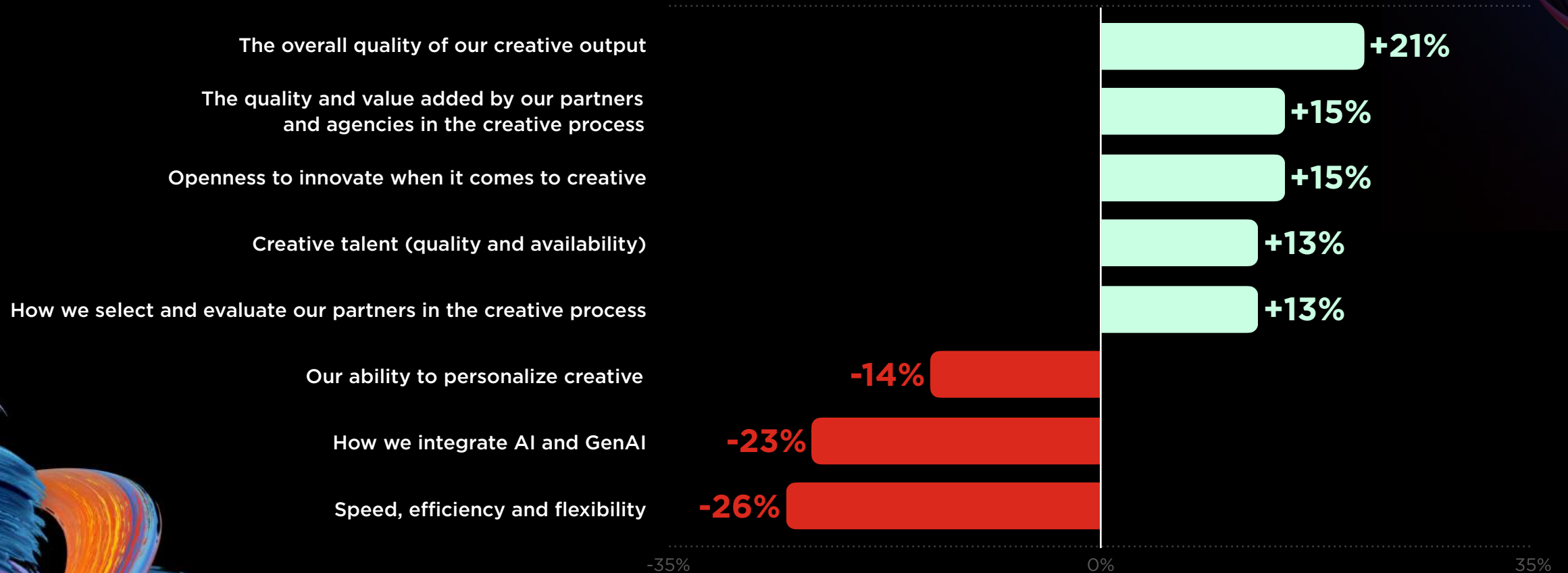


03

**We are torn between
existing processes and
future disruption**

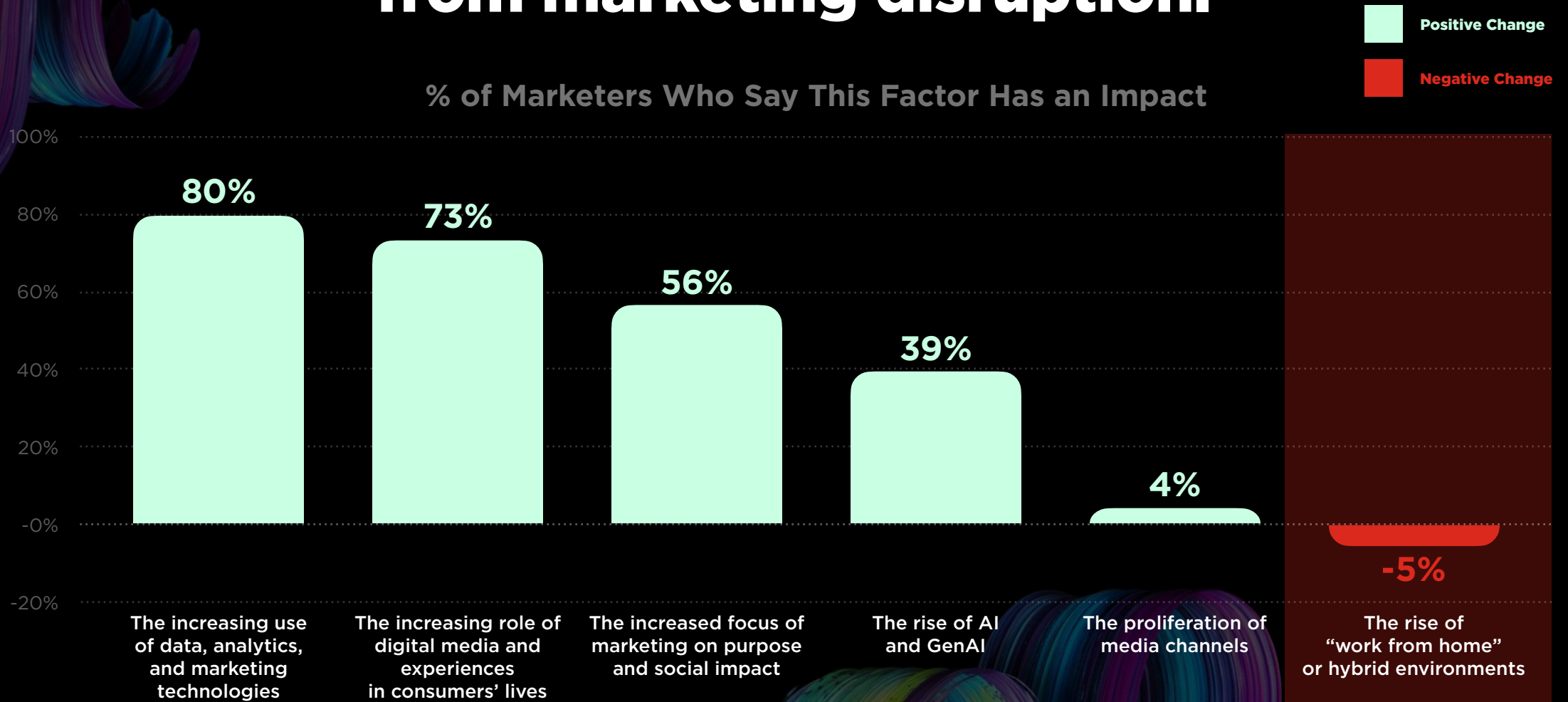
Marketers praise their creative culture, but feel that their competitors are moving faster to apply new tech.

Perceived Competitive Position



There is positive change stemming from marketing disruption.

% of Marketers Who Say This Factor Has an Impact





We are torn between existing processes and future disruption

While marketers praise their current strengths, there is a clear concern about the ability to adapt quickly and integrate advanced technologies seamlessly into the creative process.

Marketers express confidence in their culture of innovation, talent pool, and partner selection processes. They see significant positive impacts from tools for editing, collaboration, and AI.

However, they acknowledge the need for greater agility in their companies and the feel they need to work harder to integrate AI and GenAI technologies and other ways to personalize creative experiences.

04

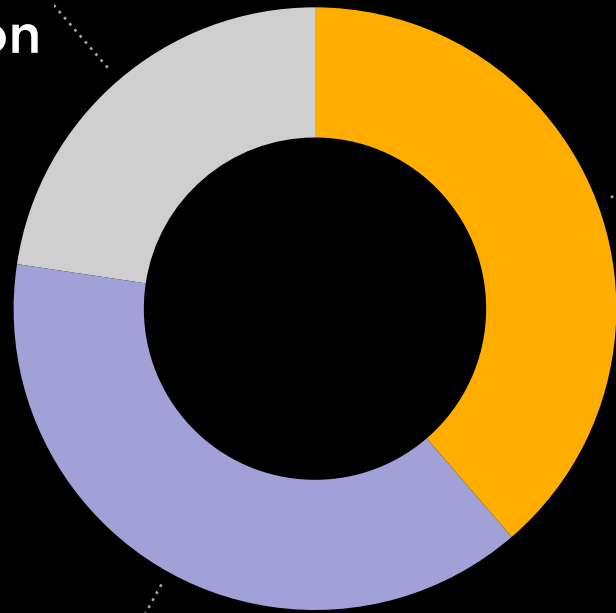
**We believe creative is critical
for marketing success—
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Importance of each factor to marketing success

23%
Media Channel Selection



39%
Quality of Creative

39%
Data & Targeting

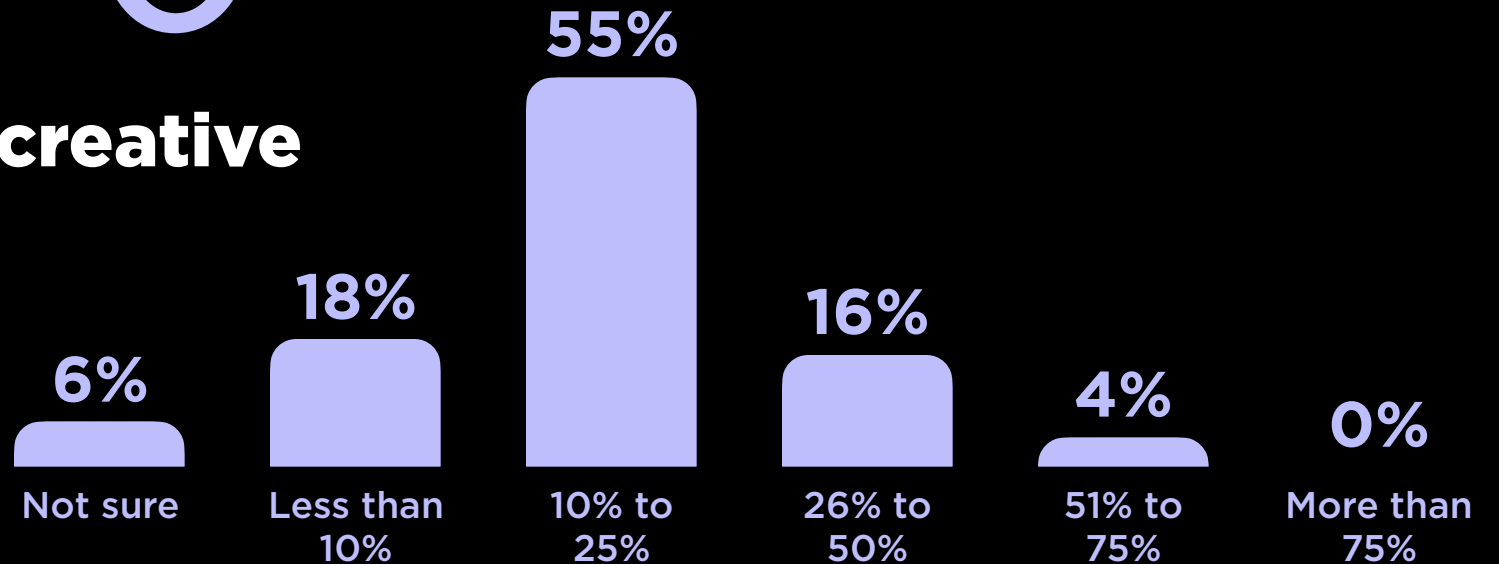
Quality of creative is seen as equally important as data and targeting.

Marketers currently invest

20%

of their budget on creative

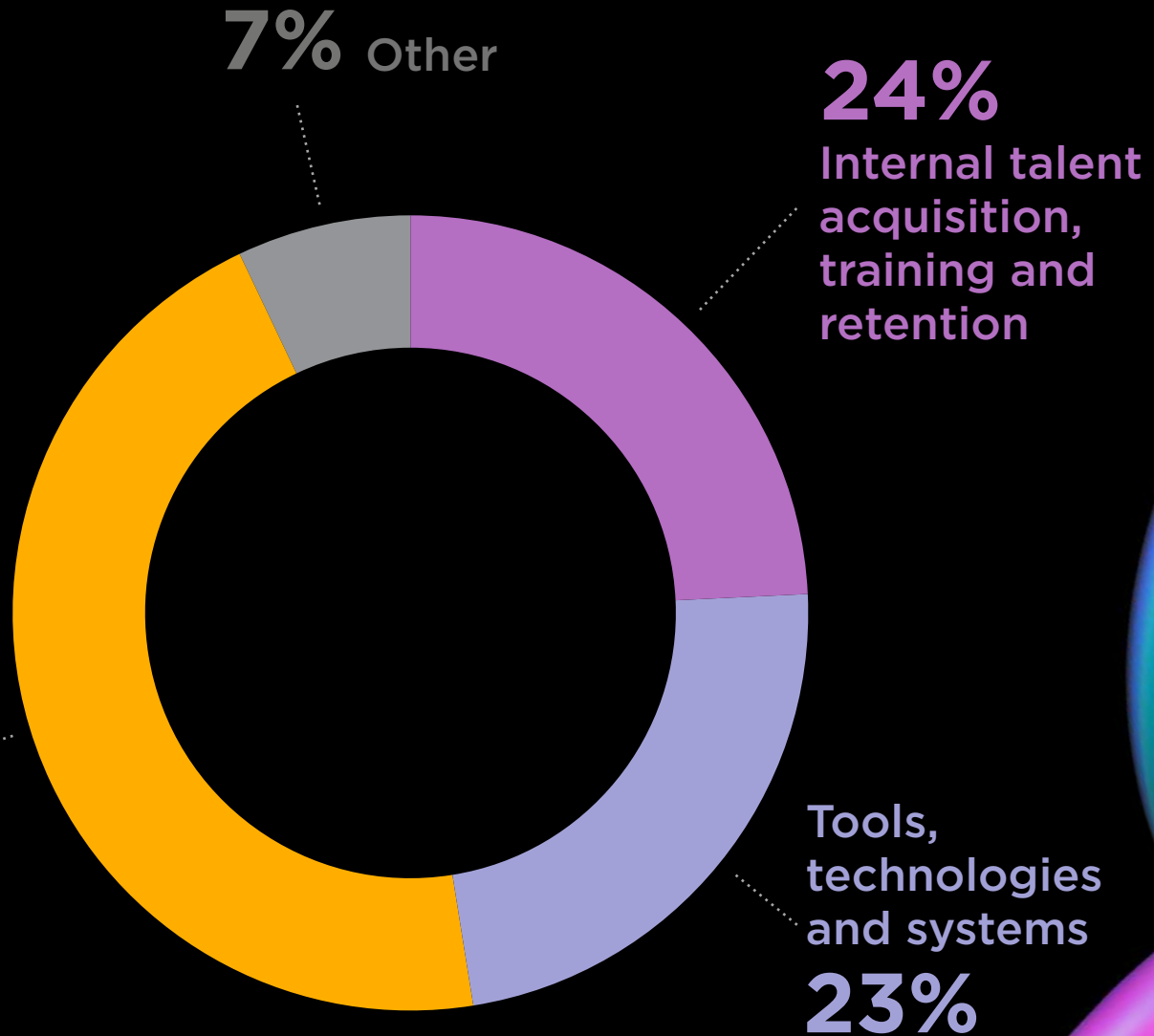
Marketing Budget
allocation that goes
to creative activities



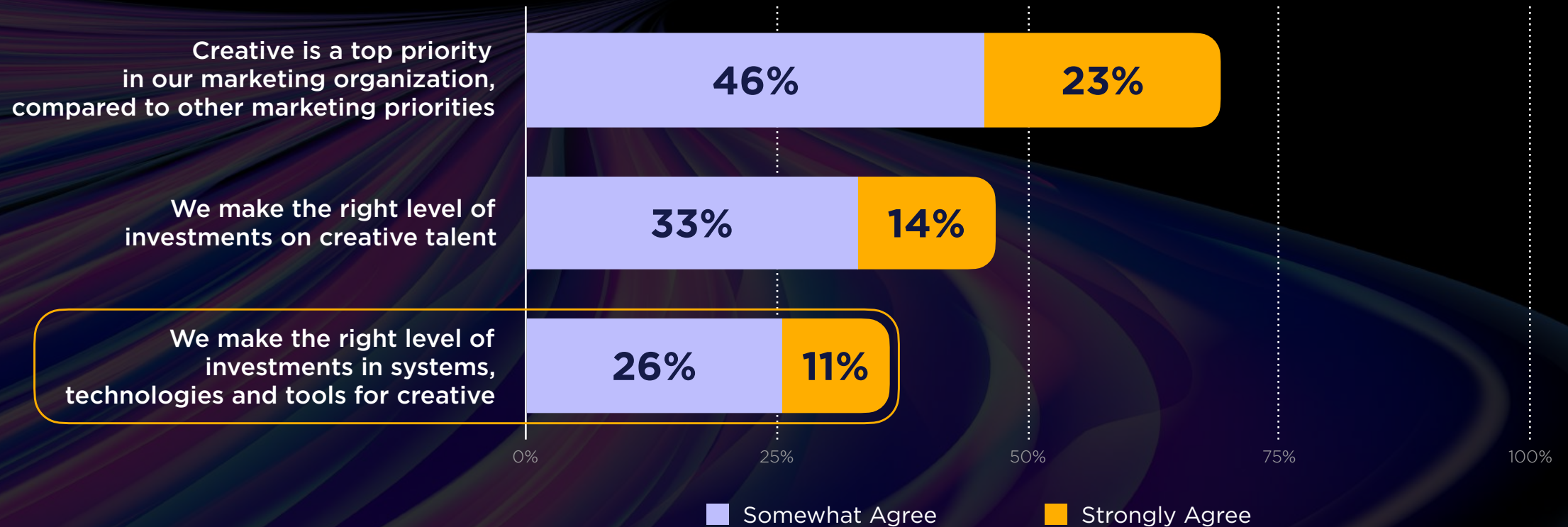
Q. What percentage of your total marketing budget is allocated to creative activities, including hiring creative talent, creative development, and investment in creative tools and technologies? (Select one) N=94 Senior Marketers
(1 = most important, please rate all three aspects): % of 1. N=94 Senior Marketers

Agencies take the lion share of the creative budget, while the remaining is split equally among **talent** and **tools/systems**.

45%
Agencies and other external partners for creative services



Given the importance of creative, most marketers feel that they don't currently invest enough on talent or systems for creative.





We believe creative is critical for marketing success— but we underinvest in it

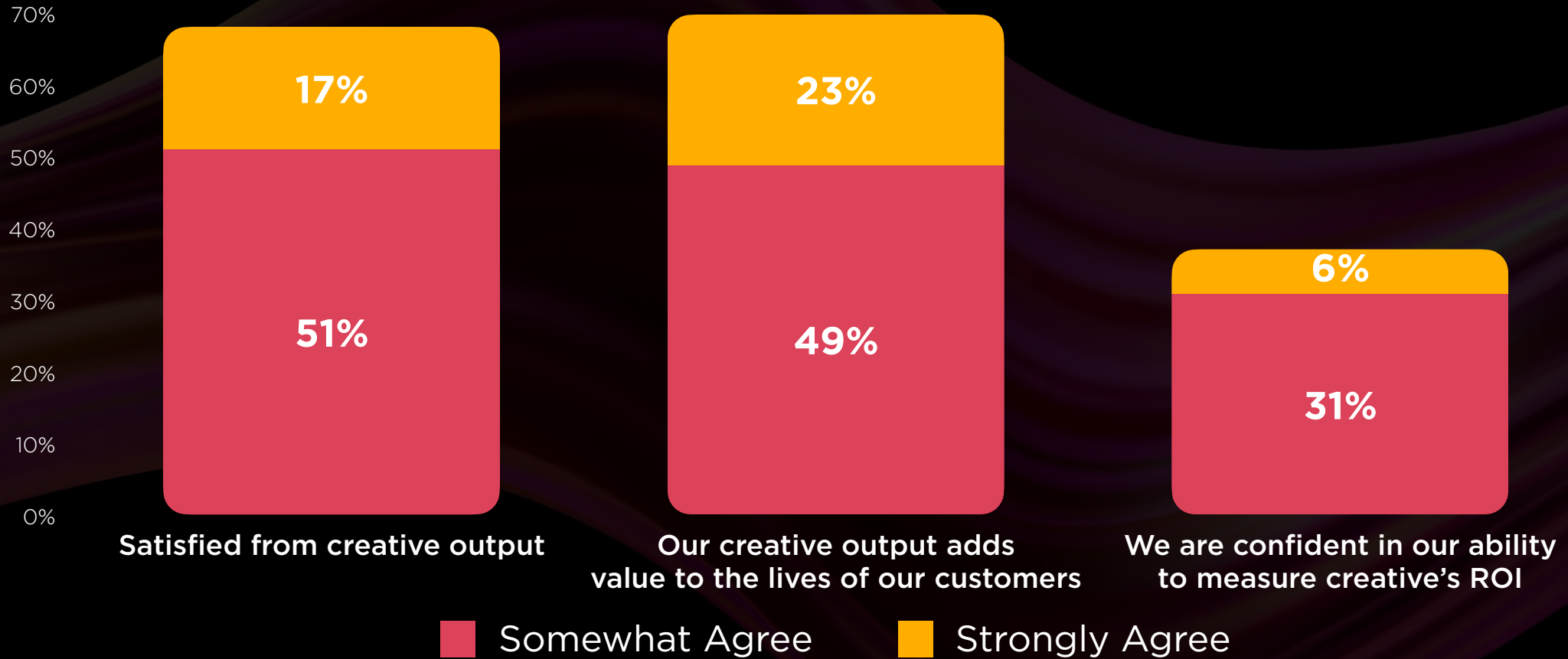
Currently, marketers allocate 20% of their total marketing budget to creative, valuing it almost as much as data and targeting. Agencies receive the largest share of the creative budget (46%), while the remaining funds are split equally between talent and tools/systems.

Despite the importance of creative, most marketers believe they underinvest in relevant talent and systems, with only 12% and 9% respectively strongly agreeing that they allocate sufficient resources.

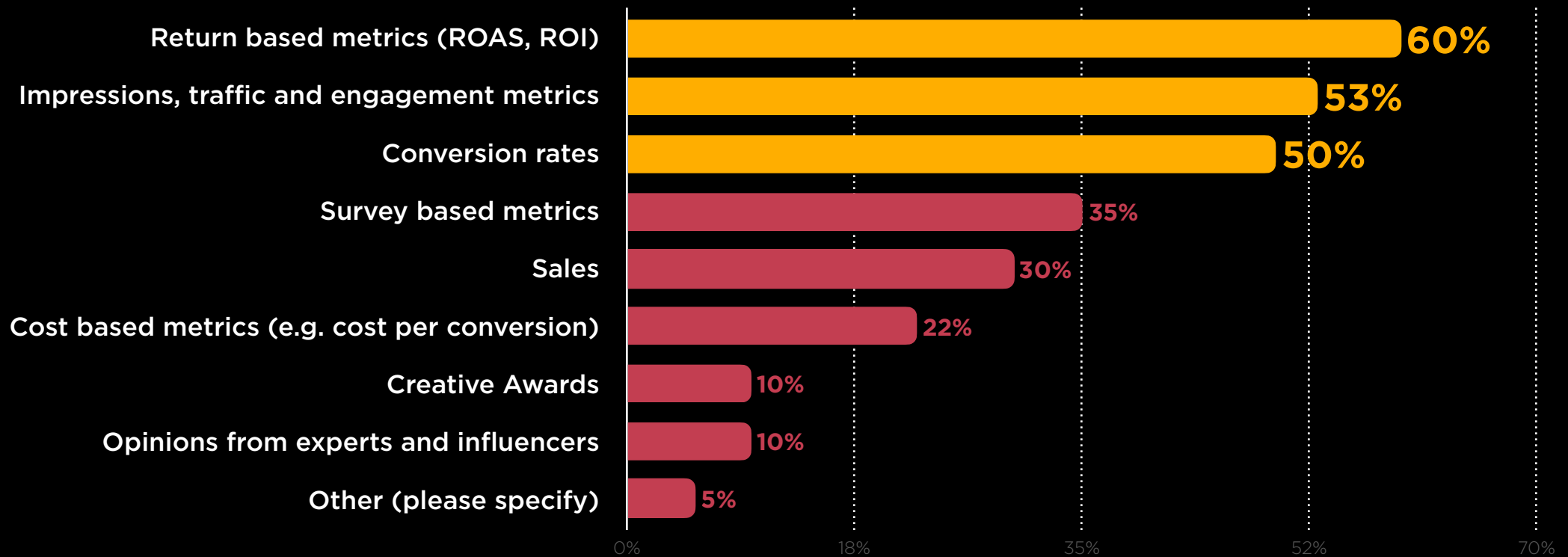
05

**We believe creative works,
but we can't prove its ROI**

Although marketers feel their creative adds value, many are not in a position to REALLY quantify its ROI.

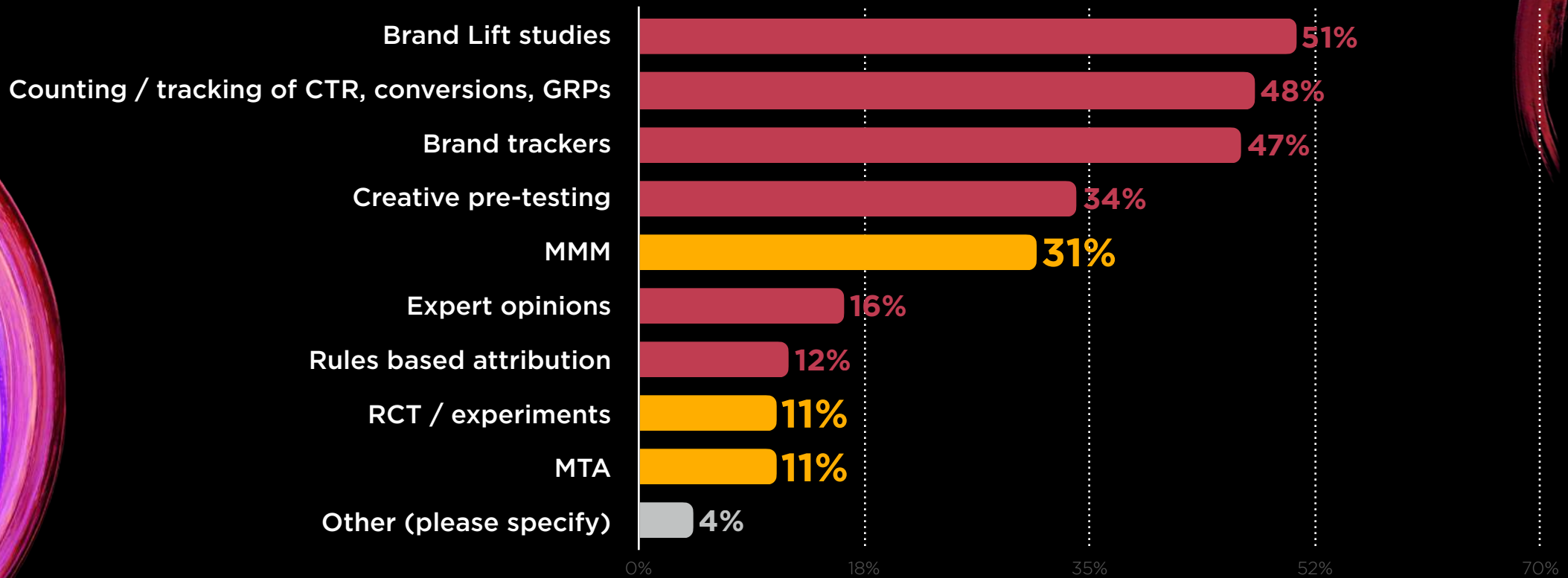


Although ROI is the most desirable metric, marketers rely on “counting metrics,” and run the risk of not really capturing incrementality...



Q. Which of the following types of metrics do you rely on the most when it comes to making decisions about the effectiveness of your creative? (Select up to three)
N=94 Senior Marketers

...because most measurement of creative effectiveness is not ROI focused.



Q. Which of the following measurement tools do you rely on the most to assess the effectiveness of your creative efforts? (Select up to three)
N=94 Senior Marketers

We believe creative works, but we can't prove its ROI

Quantifying the ROI of creative ads is another major challenge that is deemed to become more critical as marketing continues to be disrupted. While marketers feel that their creative work adds value, only 36% are satisfied with their ability to measure its ROI accurately.

Although ROI is the most desirable metric, marketers don't feel confident about their ability to dissect the actual value of creative and its impact on economic results. The measurement of creative effectiveness is often based on brand lift studies (49%), counting metrics (46%), and brand tracking studies (43%), rather than focusing on direct ROI.

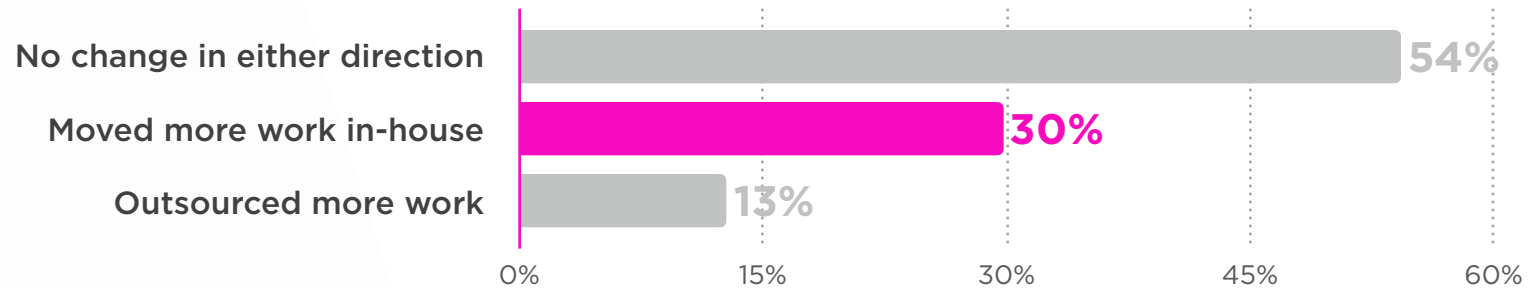
06

The rise of creative in-housing

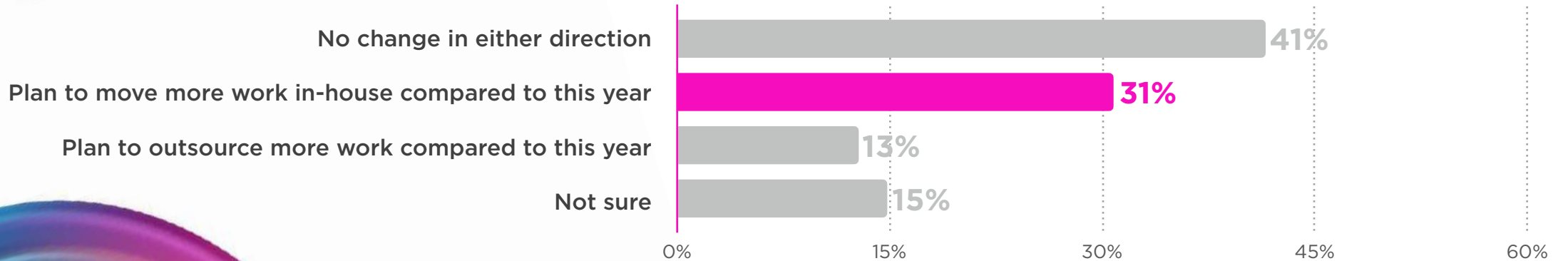


Marketers have begun shifting more work to in-house talent in the last 12 months, and some will continue that trend into 2025.

Creative Team Behavior: Past 12 months

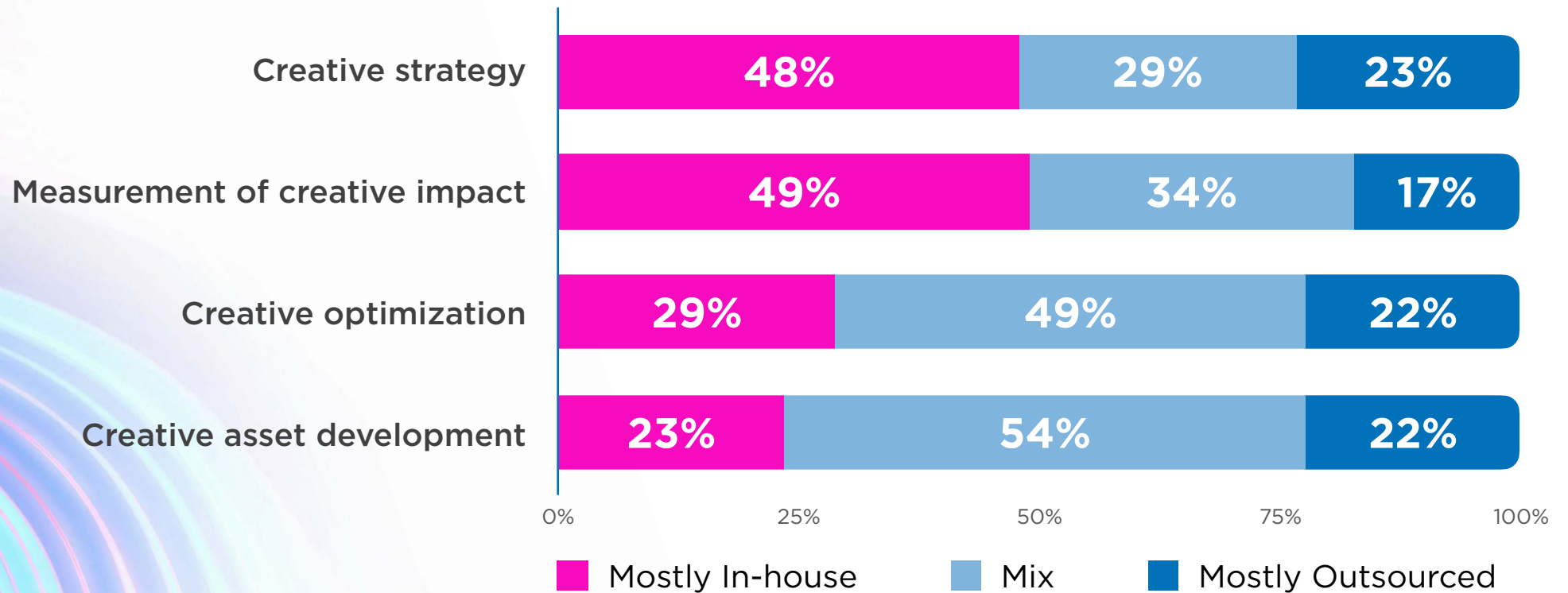


Creative Team Behavior: Next 12 months



Q. Has the makeup of your creative resources changed in the last 12 months? (Select one)
Q. Do you expect the makeup of your creative resources to change in the next 12 months? (Select one)
N=94 Senior Marketers

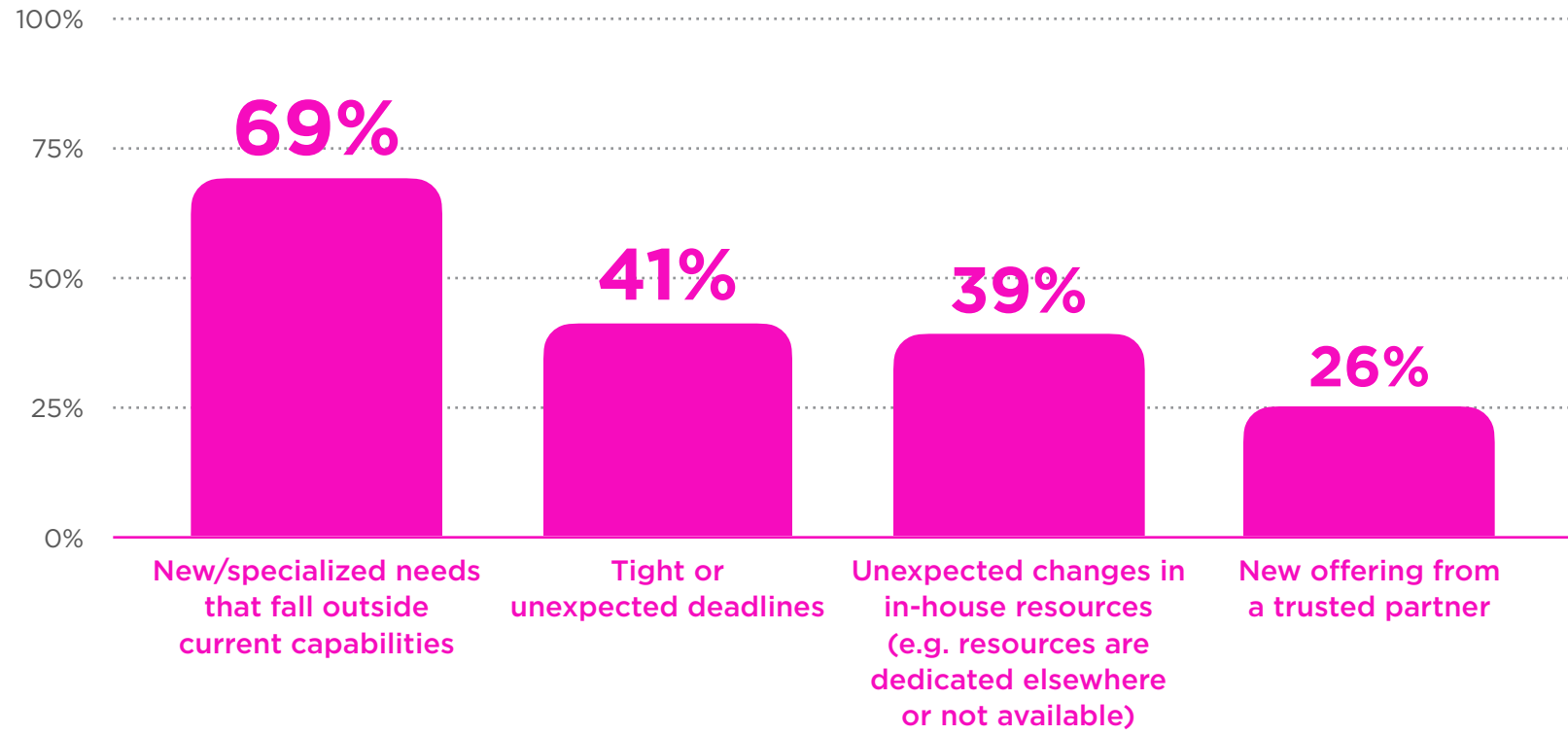
Strategy and measurement are functions that are mostly in-house.



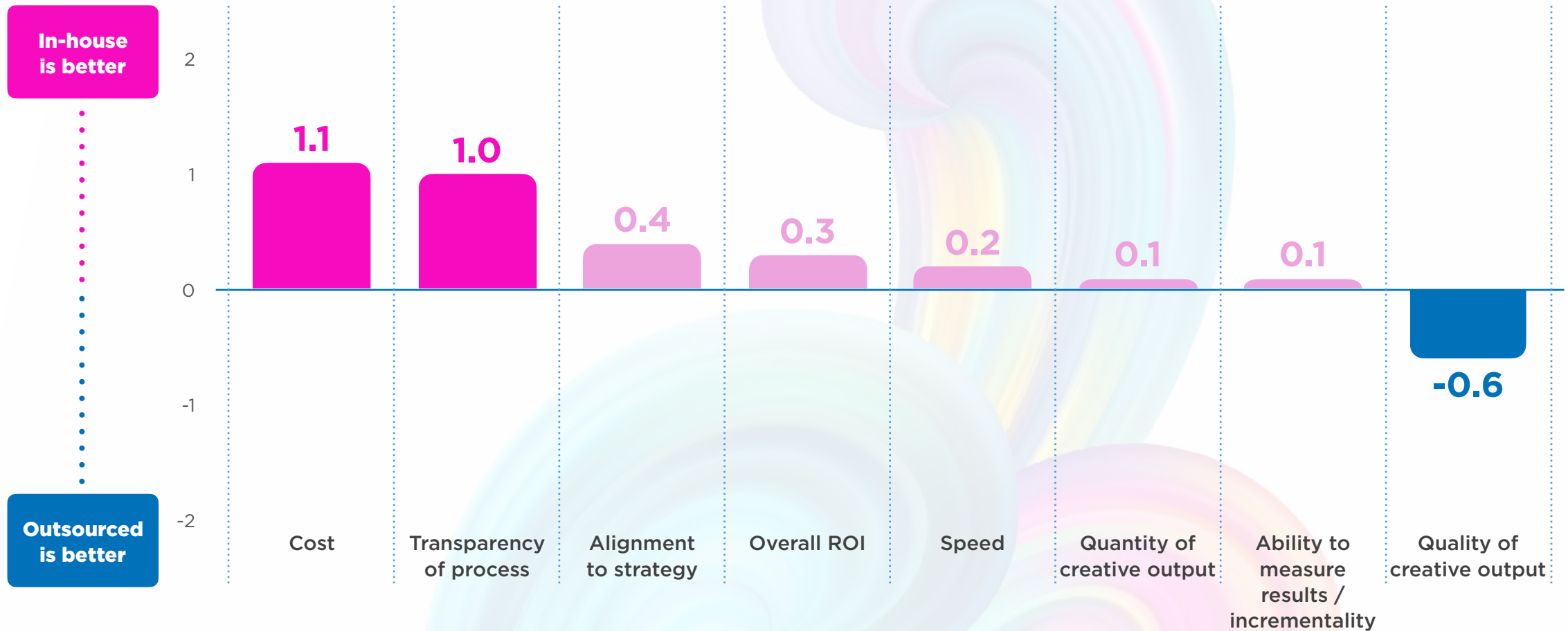
Q. How is your creative work split between in-house teams vs. external agency/production partners when it comes to the following tasks and capabilities? (Each row needs a response)
N=94 Senior Marketers

Constant disruption and unexpected deadlines are factors that tend to drive more outsourcing.

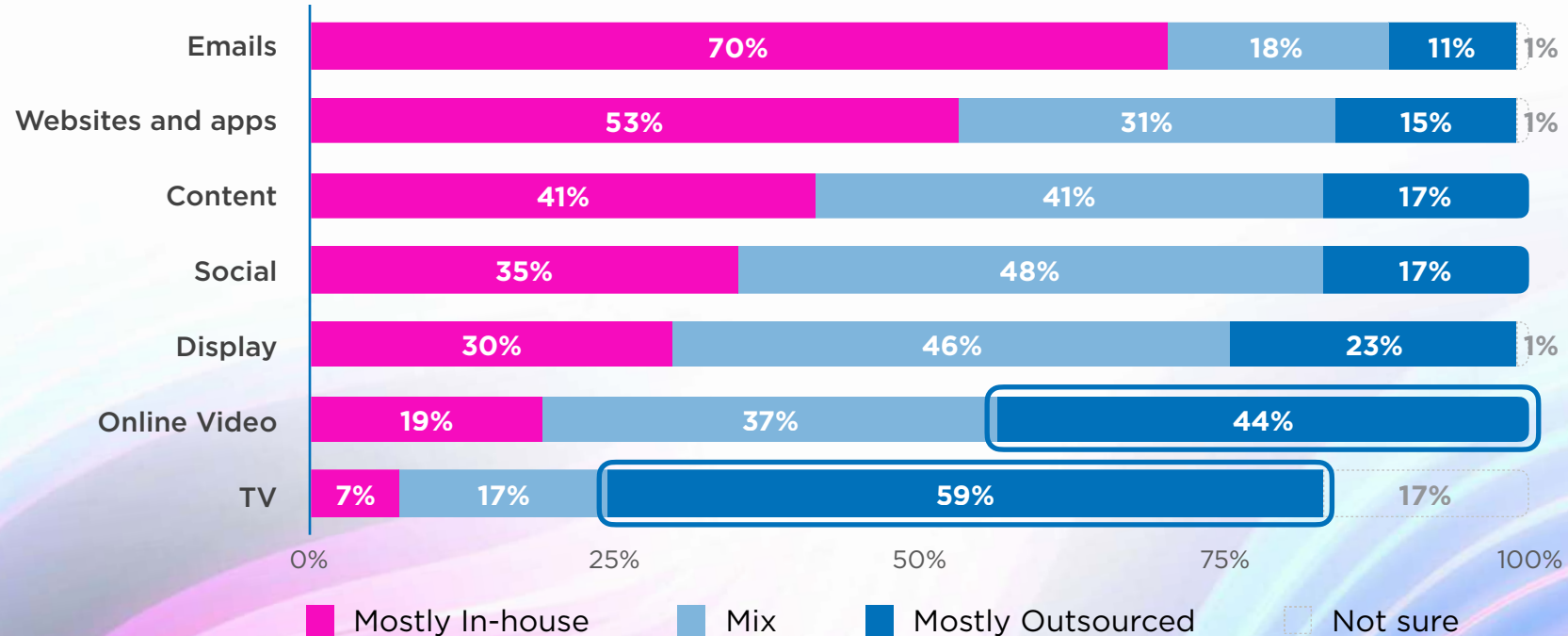
Reasons for Outsourcing Creative Initiatives:



In-sourcing creative is seen as a superior process across most factors, but the resource need to collaborate on high-impact creative output is what drives outsourcing.



Video assets are those more likely to be outsourced.

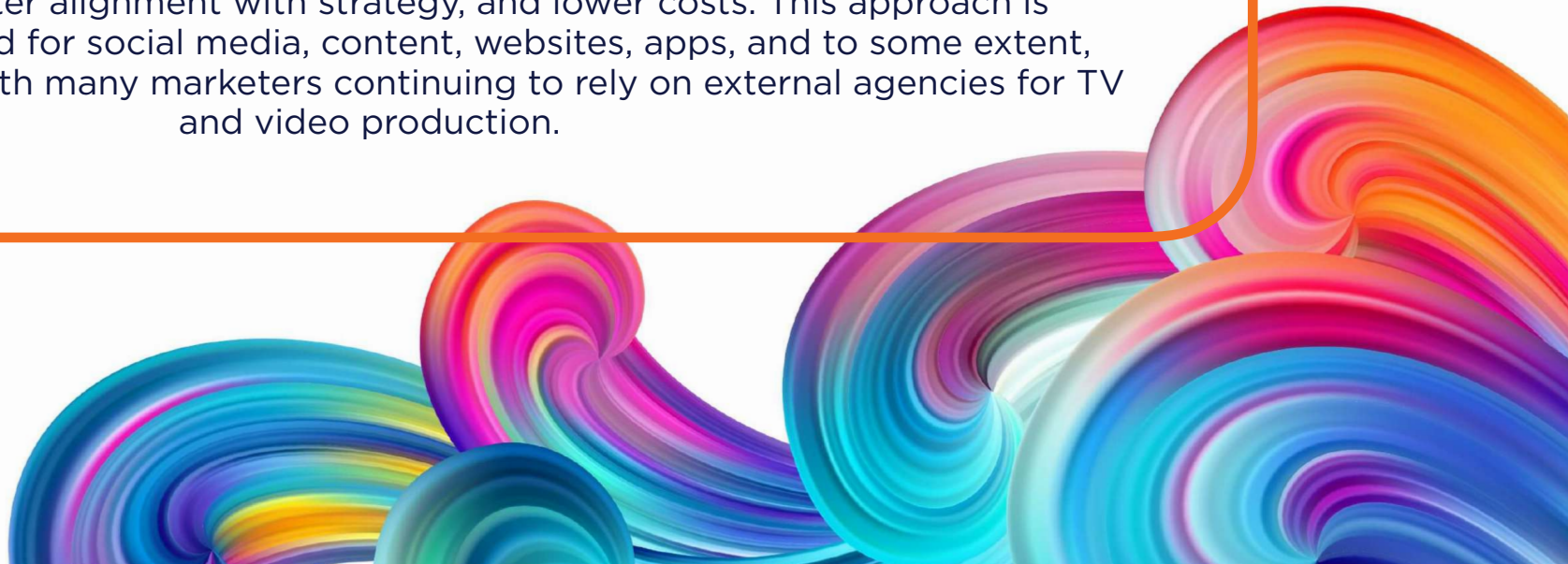


Q. How is your creative work split between in-house teams vs. external agency/production partners when it comes to the following types of assets?
(Each row needs a response)
N=94 Senior Marketers

The rise of creative in-housing

The majority of marketers “in-house” at least a quarter of their creative needs, with strategy and measurement being functions predominantly handled internally. While constant disruptions and unexpected deadlines often lead to more outsourcing, marketers have been shifting more work to in-house talent over the past 12 months, a trend expected to continue into 2025.

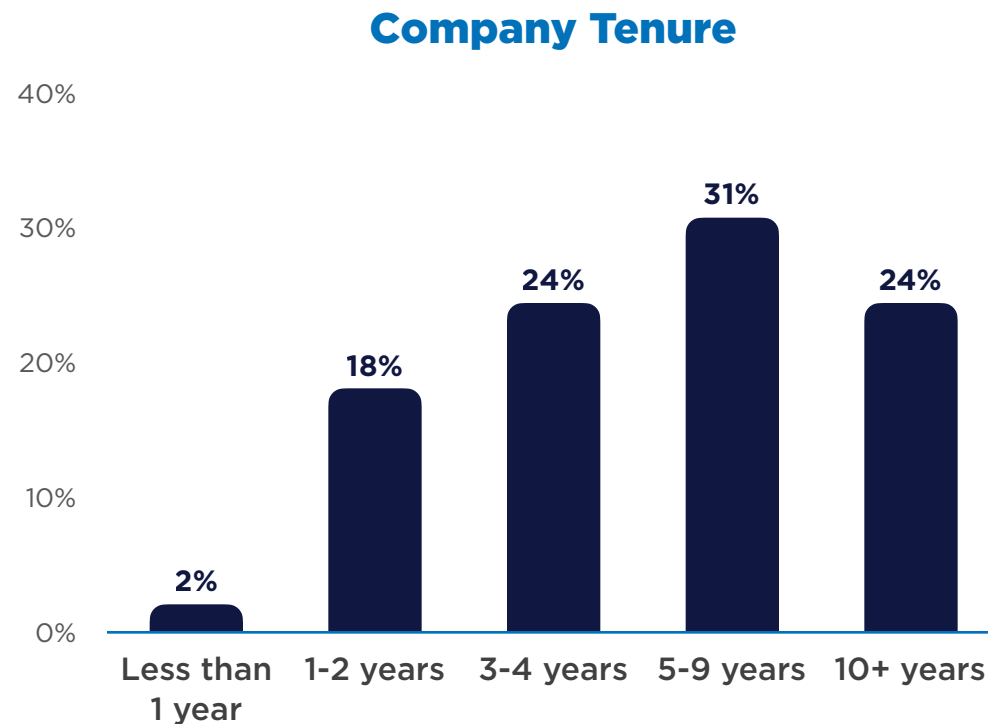
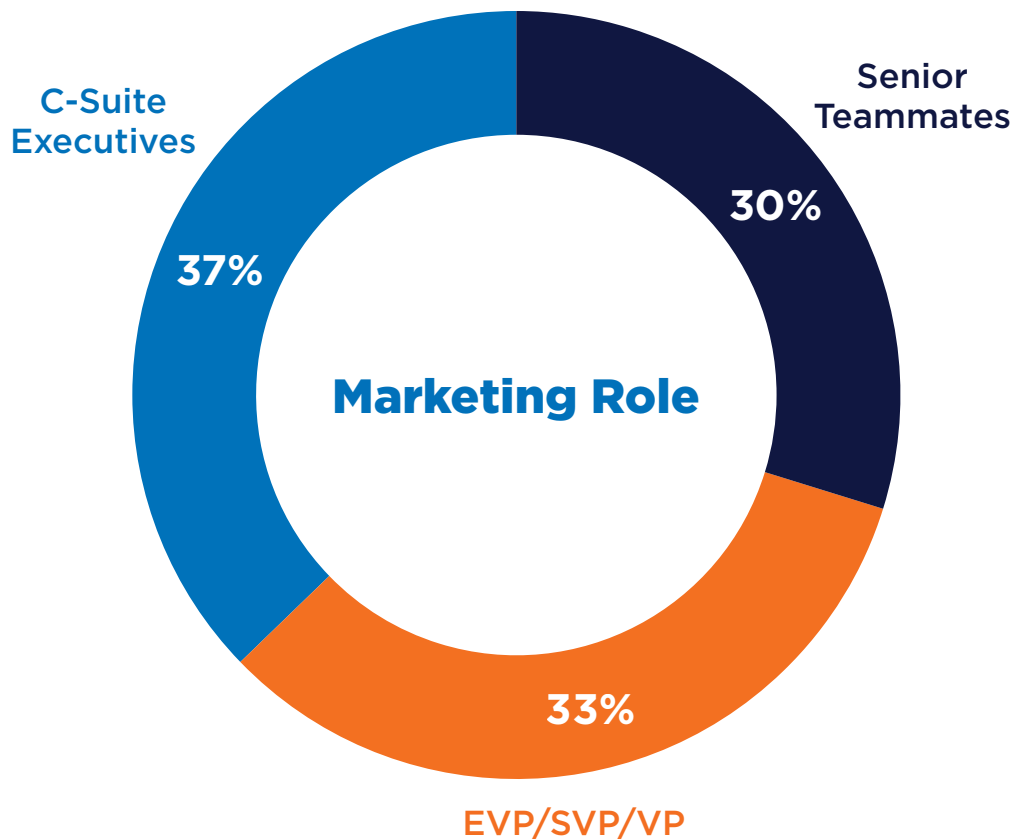
In-sourcing creative work is increasingly seen as a superior process, offering greater transparency, better alignment with strategy, and lower costs. This approach is particularly preferred for social media, content, websites, apps, and to some extent, display advertising, with many marketers continuing to rely on external agencies for TV and video production.



The background features a series of vibrant, flowing lines in shades of blue, purple, and magenta, creating a sense of motion and depth against a dark blue gradient. The lines are layered and curved, resembling liquid or energy waves.

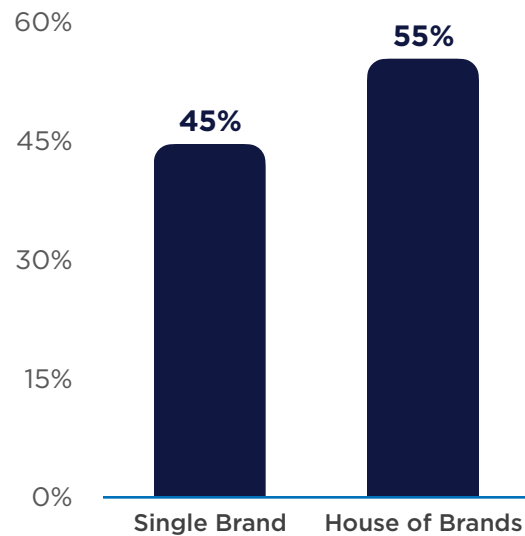
Study Methodology

The 2024 State of Creative includes perspectives from close to 100 Senior Marketers involved in the creative process:

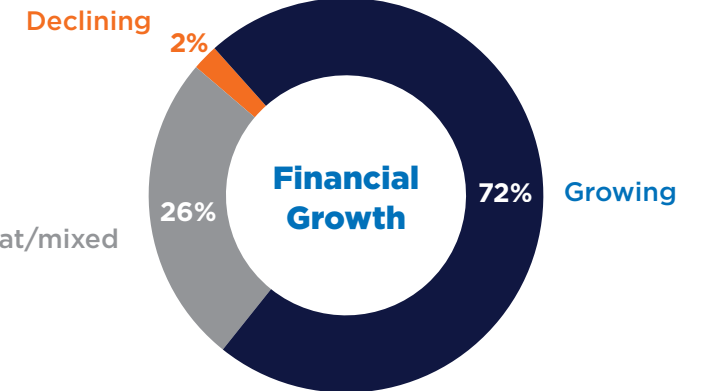
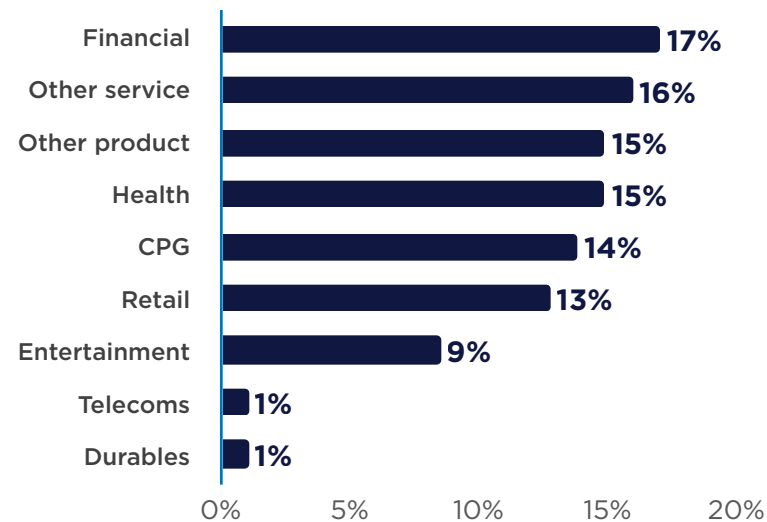


The 2024 State of Creative includes perspectives from close to 100 Senior Marketers from large, established companies:

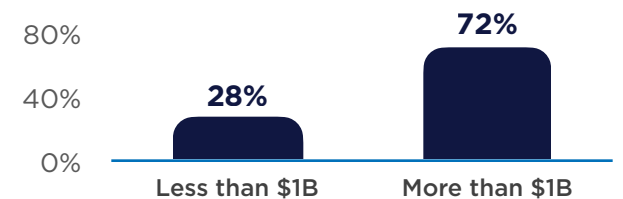
Brand Umbrella



Sectors



Annual Revenue



About MMA Global

MMA Global is a non-profit industry association dedicated to dramatically improving Marketing's ability to deliver on a company's growth agenda. With 800+ member companies and offices in 15 countries around the world, the MMA is organized and run by Marketers and the only trade body to include all aspects of the marketing ecosystem (adtech/martech, platforms, media, agencies), which is crucial in addressing the industry's most pressing challenges.

MMA invests in scientific research leveraging research consortiums and in-market experiments to discover new approaches to improve the return on investments in marketing. These initiative are executed through three Think Tanks each with a mission to drive step-function improvement in marketing-led growth and profitability.



Marketing Attribution Think Tank (MATT):
Empower marketers with a true impact of Marketing through advancing scientific approaches to measurement that will ultimately increase the value of their company.



Marketing Organizational Strategy Think Tank (MOSTT): Empower marketers to build & execute winning data & customer strategies that will ultimately increase the value of their company.



Marketing Data and Customer Experience Think Tank (DATT): Empower marketing executives to understand and implement evidence-based Organizational Structures that will ultimately increase the value of their company.

MMA Member Organizations Include:





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