



Artificial Intelligence in Political Consulting

AAPC Member Survey: March 2026

March 18, 2026

Special thanks to



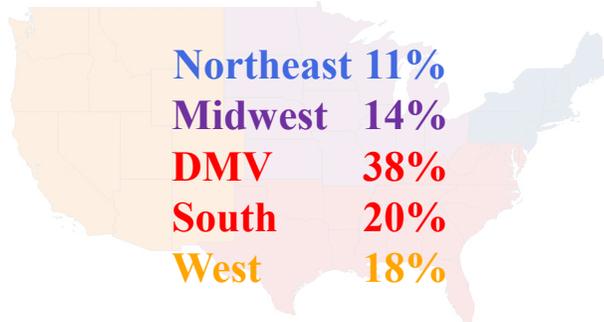
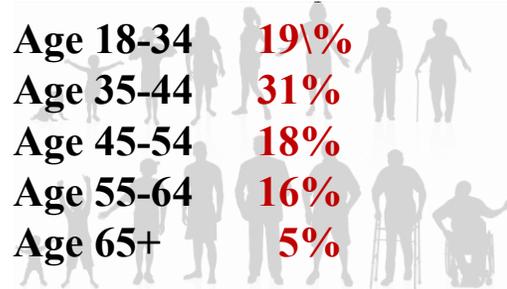
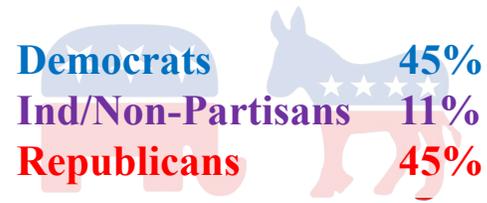
Research Methodology

- The AAPC commissioned 3D Strategic Research and Promark Research to conduct a survey of AAPC members.
- The survey was fielded online from March 7 to 15, 2026 with emails and text messages inviting members to take the survey via a unique, secure web link. A total of n=213 interviews were completed with AAPC members based in the United States. The margin of error for the survey is $\pm 6.7\%$.
- This is a follow up to the previous AAPC survey of its members on A.I., which was conducted in April 22 to May 4, 2025 with n=200 interviews with its members. The margin of error for the 2025 survey was $\pm 6.9\%$

Overview

- A.I. adoption is growing rapidly among political consultants, as nearly 6-in-10 now use it daily and more than 8-in-10 use it weekly. Adoption is growing in both parties, though Dem consultants continue to trail GOP consultants.
- As A.I. has become more commonplace, there is an emerging gap between power users, who use agentic A.I. tools, enterprise tools, or go beyond standalone tasks, and those who are using it as a chatbot. Firm size plays a role as larger firms are early adopters of more advanced uses of A.I.
- Increased usage is driving more positive perceptions of A.I.'s impact. Consultants who use A.I. more frequently are significantly more likely to view its impact as positive, while non-users remain more skeptical.
- But growing adoption has not changed views on views on regulation or what is considered ethical or not. Consultants remain divided on whether A.I. guidelines should be set by government or the industry, even as a majority support additional regulation. Concerns around deepfakes and misinformation remain consistent and continue to shape views on appropriate guardrails.

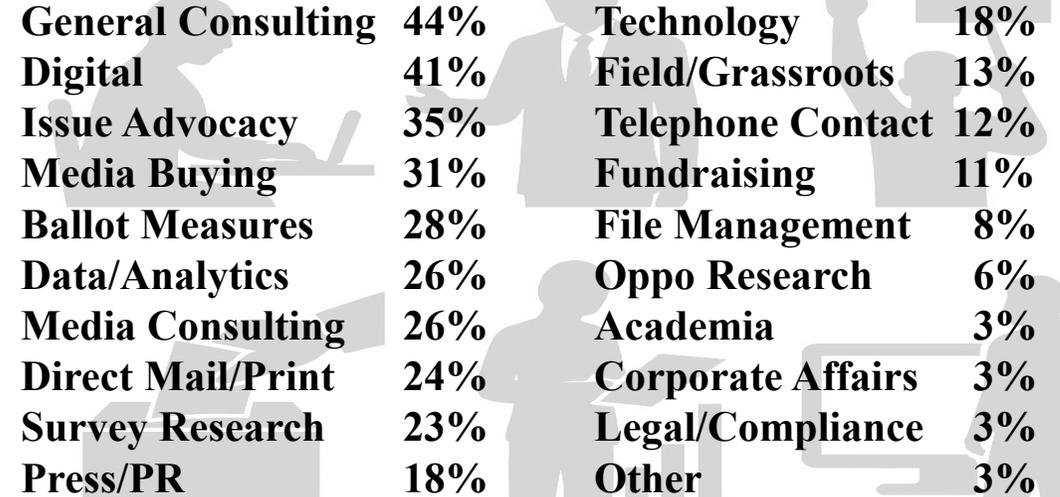
AAPC Member Profile



Years of Experience



Type of Work



Seniority



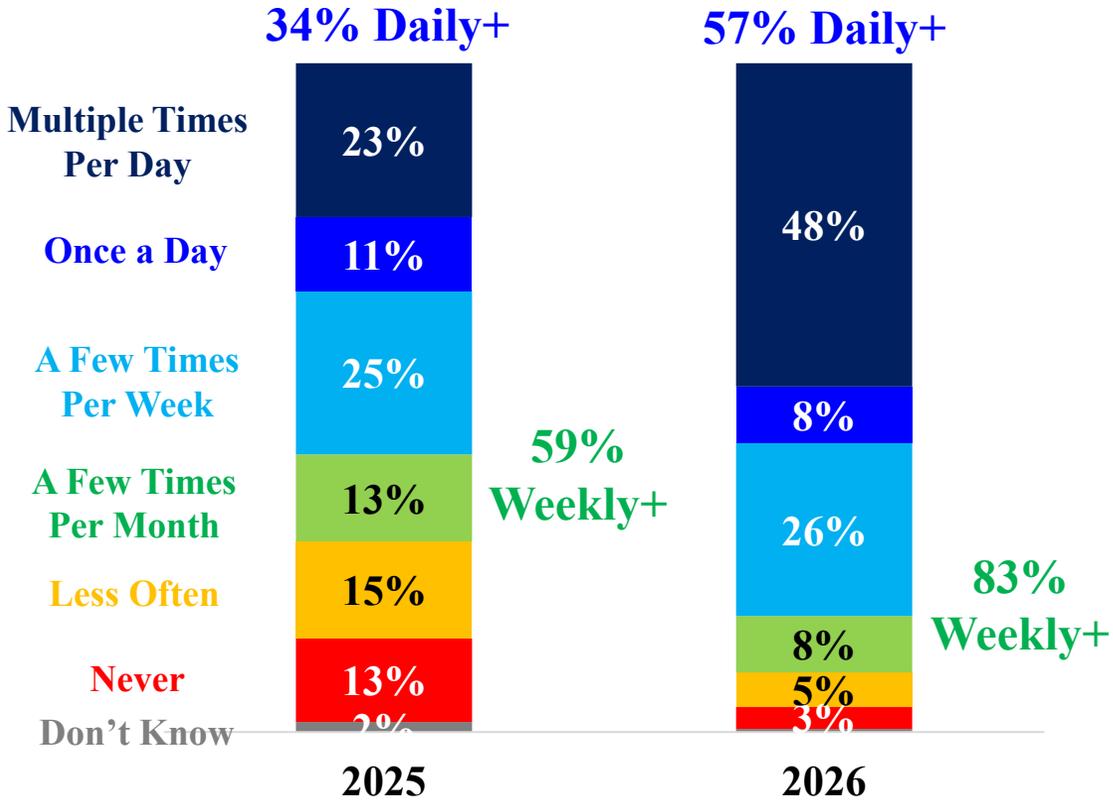
Organization Size



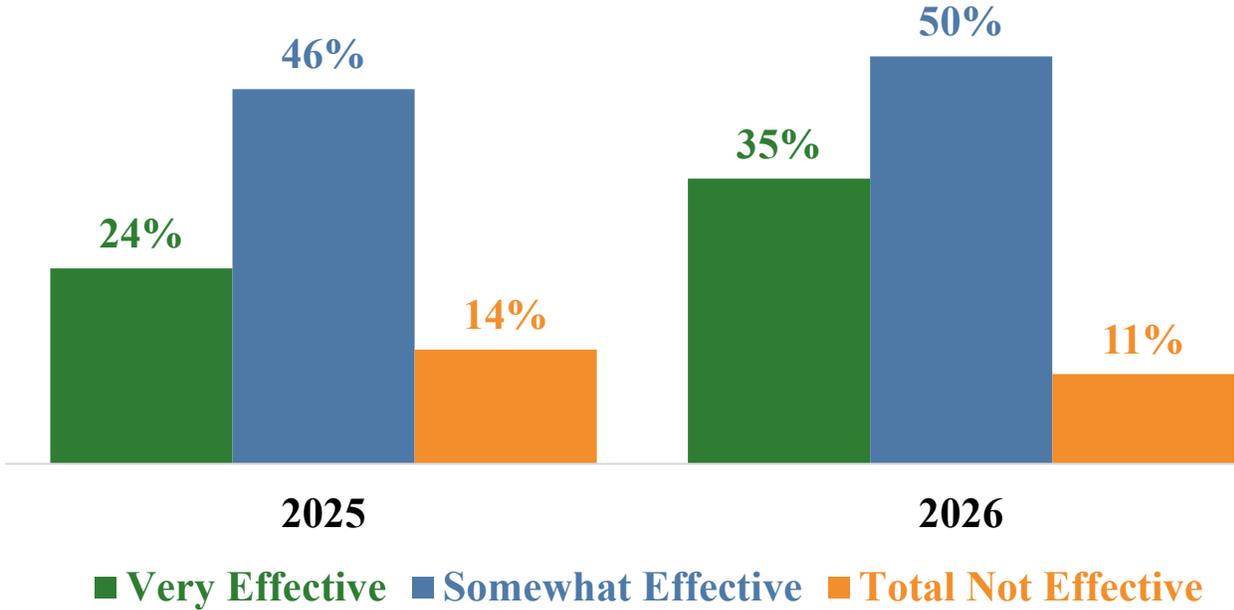
A.I. Usage

Majority now use A.I. daily for work, growing view that A.I. is effective

“How frequently do you personally use artificial intelligence tools for work?”



“How effective have artificial intelligence tools been in improving your work as a political consultant?”



Adoption growing in both parties, but Dems still behind GOP

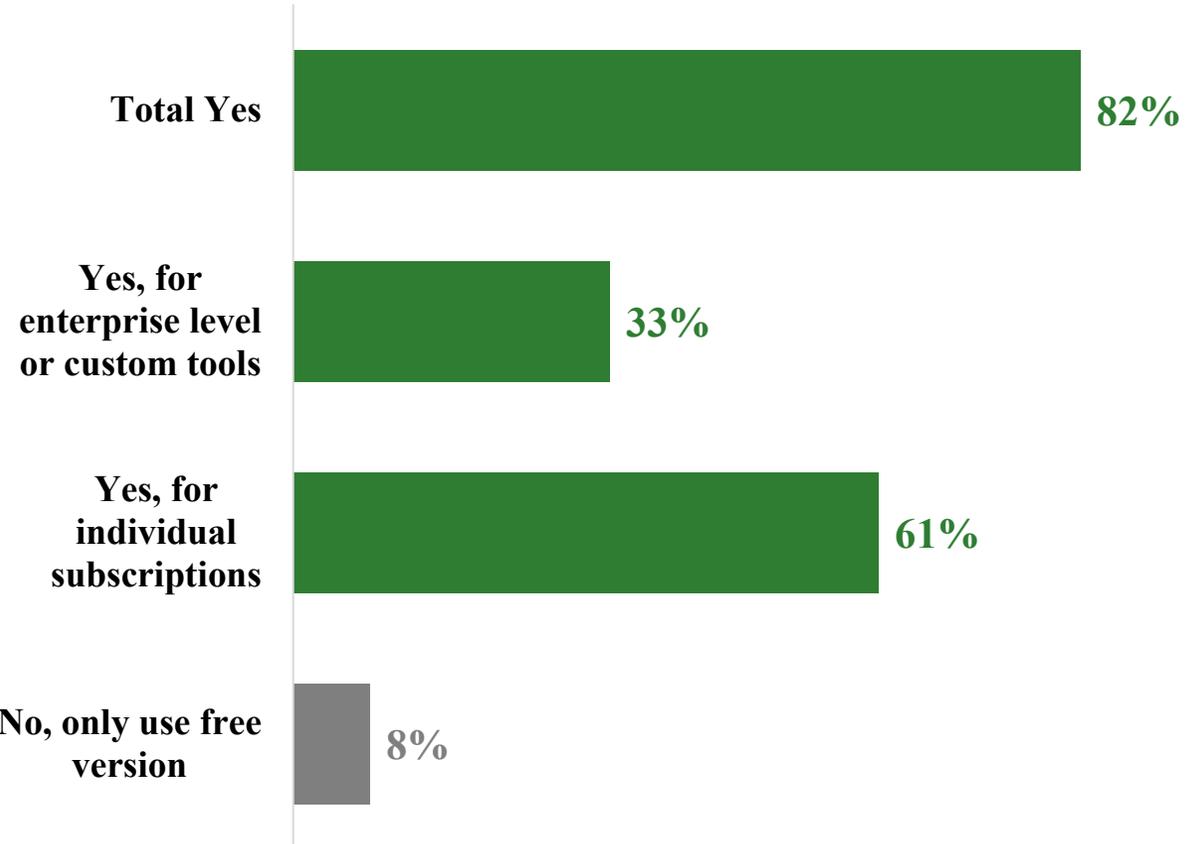
	% Daily+ Usage			% A.I. Very Effective in their Work		
	2025	2026	Change	2025	2026	Change
Dem	28%	49%	+21%	19%	31%	+12%
GOP	44%	64%	+20%	31%	40%	+9%
Dem – GOP Net	-16%	-15%		-12%	-9%	

ChatGPT still dominant, but growing usage of Google and Anthropic A.I. tools

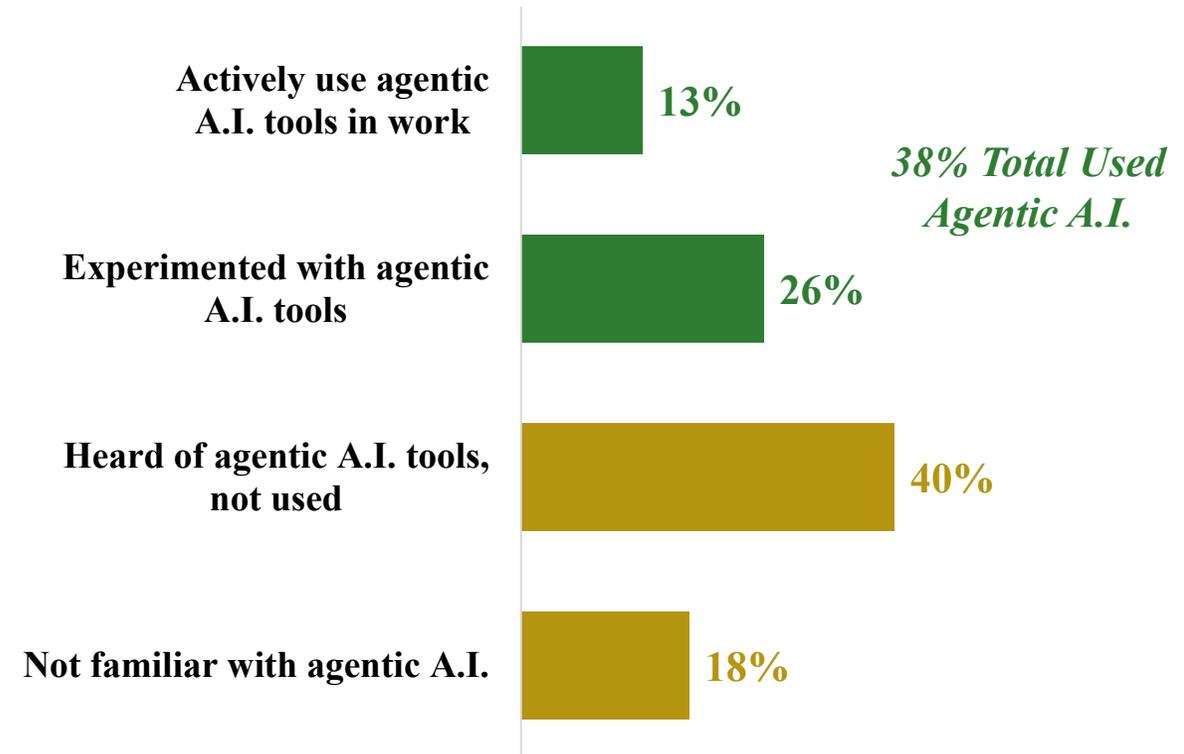
	2025	2026	Change	Dem '26	GOP '26	Dem - GOP
OpenAI's ChatGPT	76%	74%	-2%	77%	67%	+10%
Google Gemini	28%	51%	+23%	48%	56%	-8%
Anthropic's Claude	10%	42%	+32%	45%	34%	+11%
Microsoft Copilot	19%	25%	+6%	16%	33%	-17%
Anthropic's Claude Code		21%		19%	22%	-3%
xAI's Grok	5%	17%	+12%	5%	25%	-20%
Canva's Magic Tools	21%	16%	-5%	16%	17%	-1%
Google NotebookLM		11%		16%	6%	+10%
OpenAI's Codex		10%		9%	11%	-2%
A custom built A.I. for political/campaign use	12%	9%	-3%	3%	14%	-11%

Most are paying for A.I. tools, but not using agentic A.I. yet

“Does your firm currently pay for any A.I. tools or subscriptions for work purposes?”



“Some newer A.I. tools can act as “agents” – performing multi-step tasks on their own, such as browsing the web, managing files, or completing workflows with minimal human direction. How familiar are you with these type of agentic A.I. tools?”

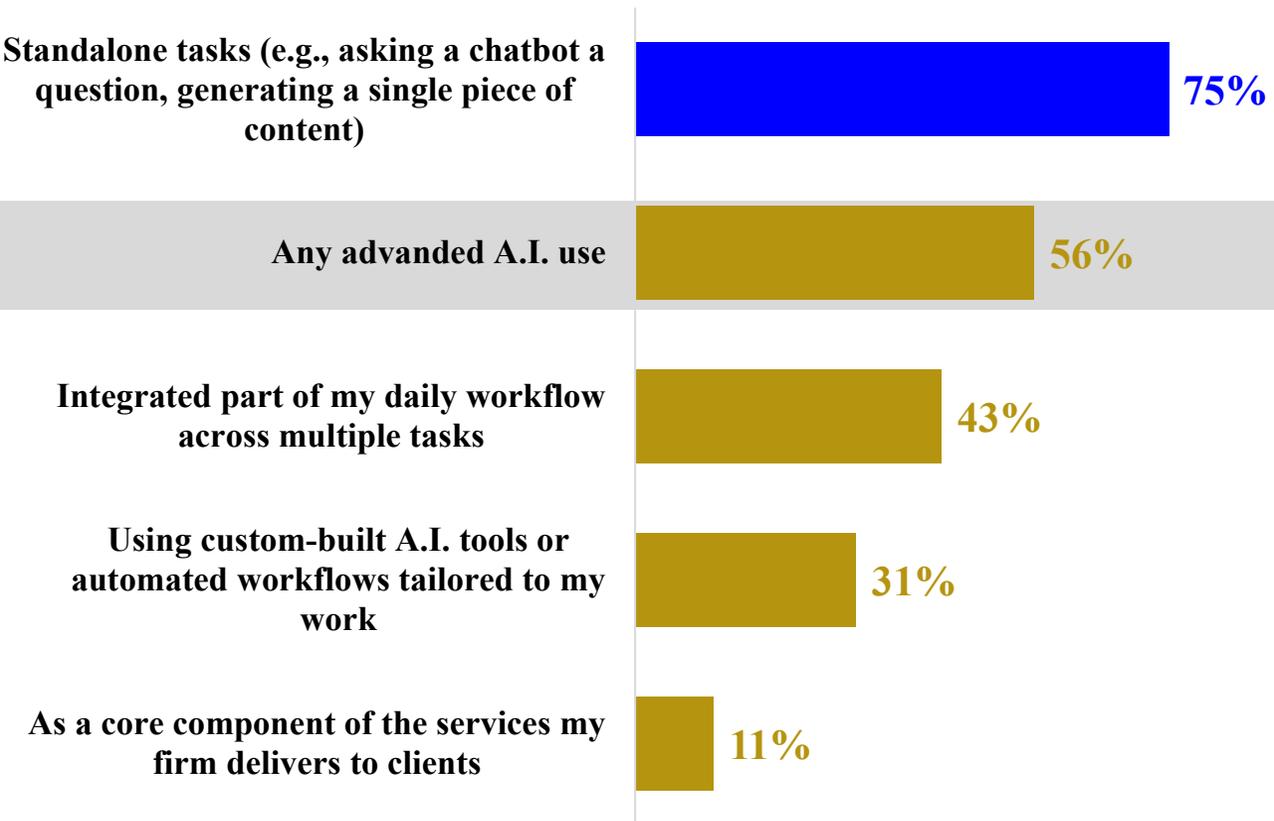


Larger firms, daily users more likely to have A.I. enterprise tools and used agentic A.I.

		Pay for A.I. Tools			Agentic A.I. Usage		
		Enterprise Tools	Individual Subscriptions	Free Only	Total Used	Total Not Used	Net
By A.I. Usage	Daily Users (57%)	40%	67%	4%	53%	43%	10%
	Non-Daily Users (43%)	24%	53%	14%	20%	77%	-57%
By Company Size	1-5 Employees (37%)	14%	76%	18%	33%	66%	-33%
	6-25 Employees (34%)	33%	60%	4%	37%	55%	-18%
	26+ Employees (27%)	61%	42%	2%	49%	49%	0%

A.I. isn't just chatbots. Majority use it in more integrated, advanced ways.

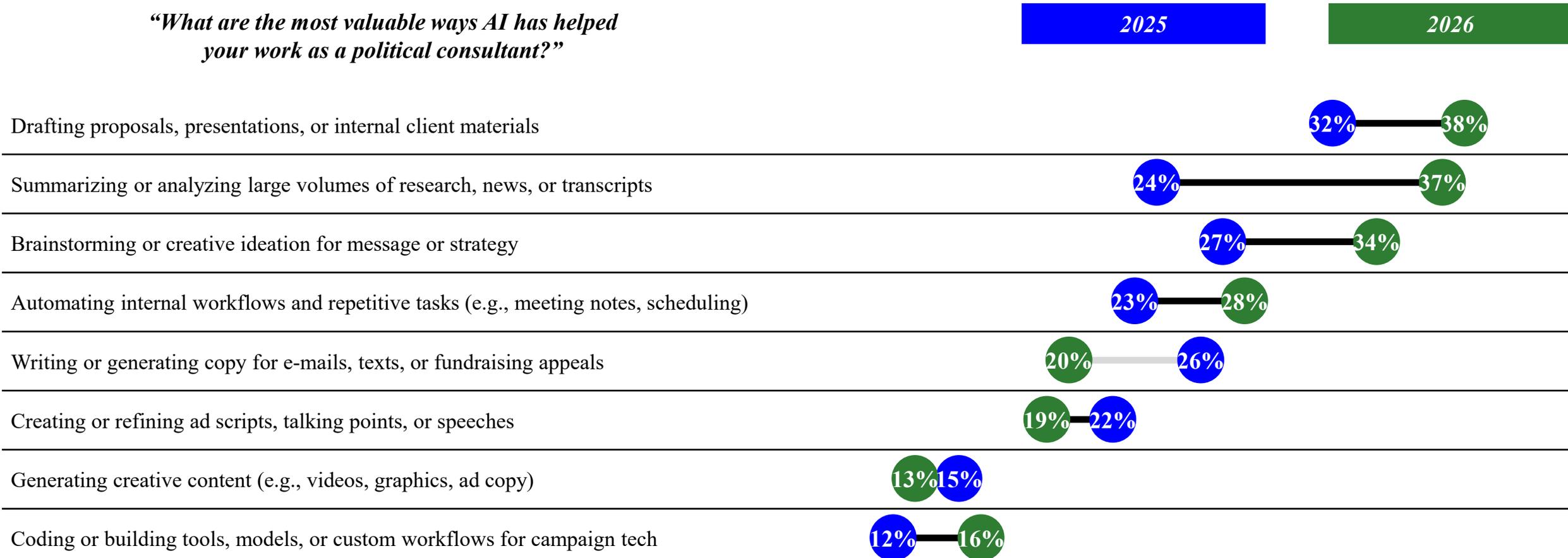
“Which of the following best describes how you currently use A.I. in your work?”



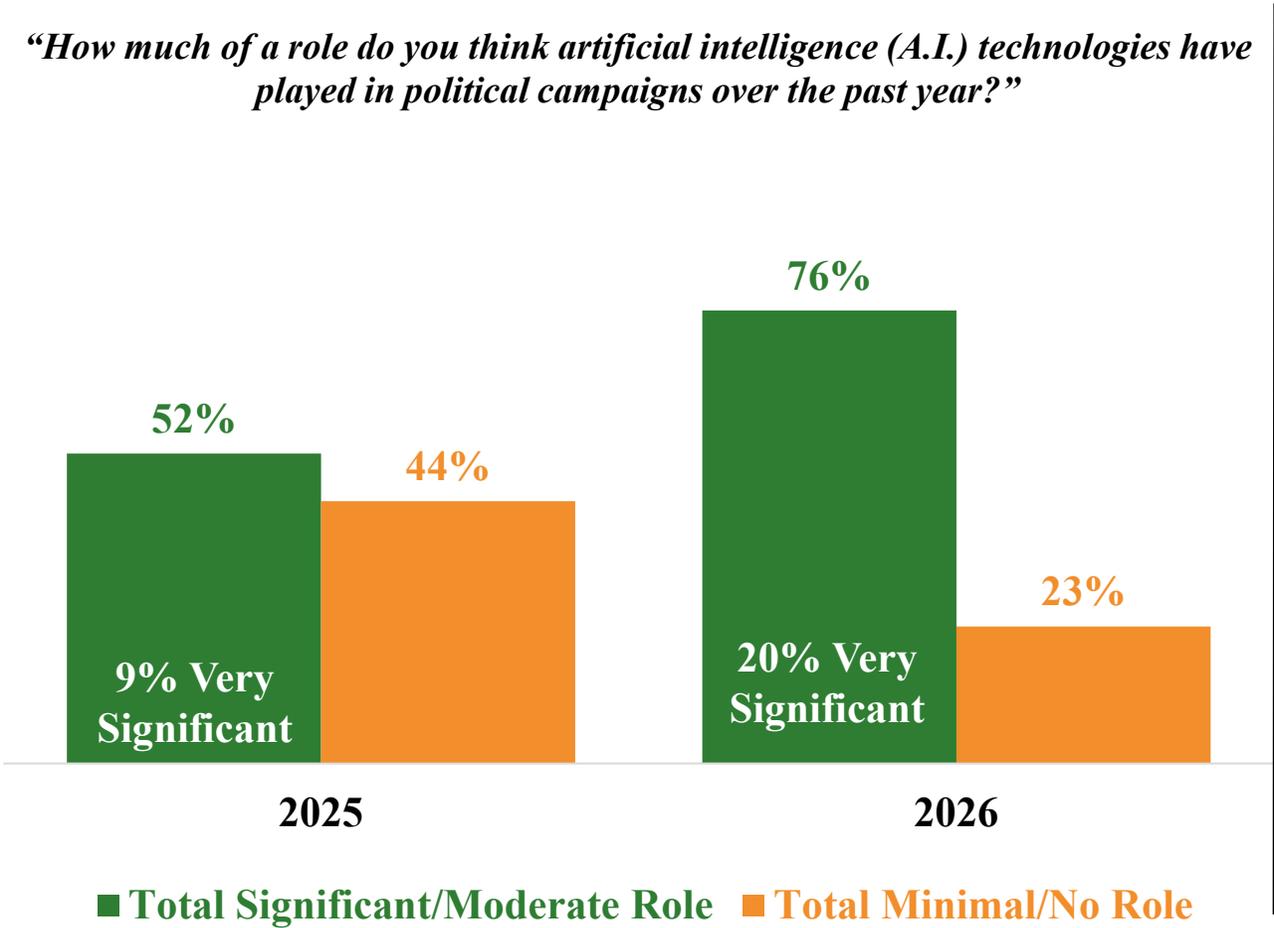
		Standalone Tasks	Any Advanced Use
By A.I. Usage	Daily Users (57%)	73%	79%
	Non-Daily Users (43%)	77%	26%
By Company Size	1-5 Employees (37%)	71%	53%
	6-25 Employees (34%)	71%	55%
	26+ Employees (27%)	82%	60%
By Party	Dem (45%)	69%	52%
	GOP (45%)	78%	60%

Most still use AI for internal tasks; growing use in summarizing large amounts of text

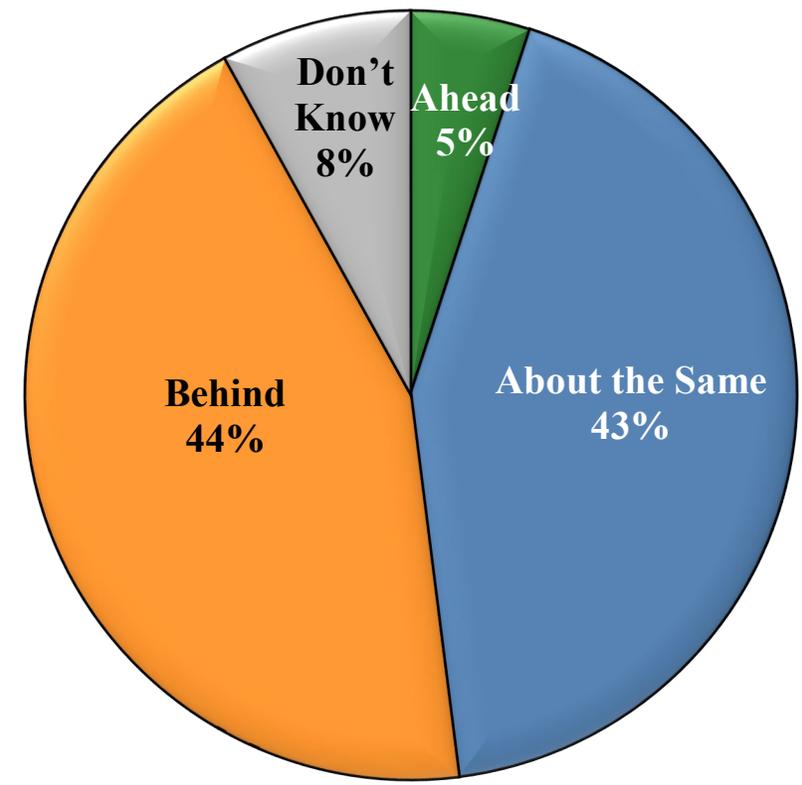
“What are the most valuable ways AI has helped your work as a political consultant?”



GOPers more likely to say AI had impact in 2024

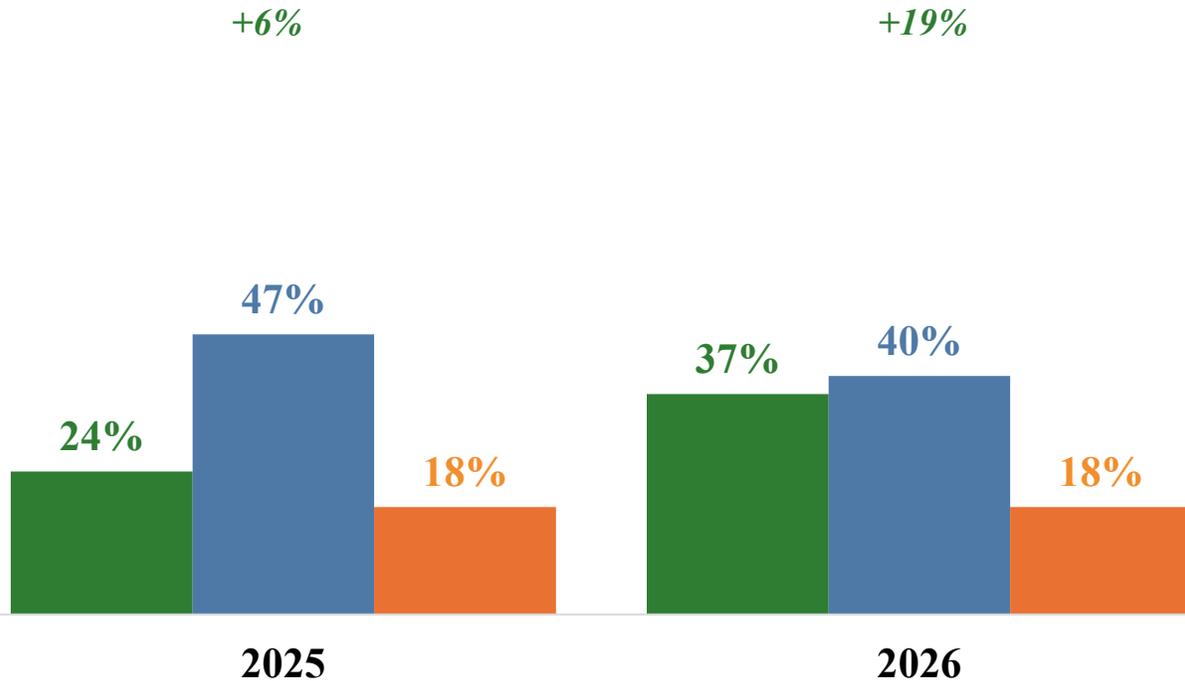


“How do you think A.I. adoption in political consulting compares to other industries?”

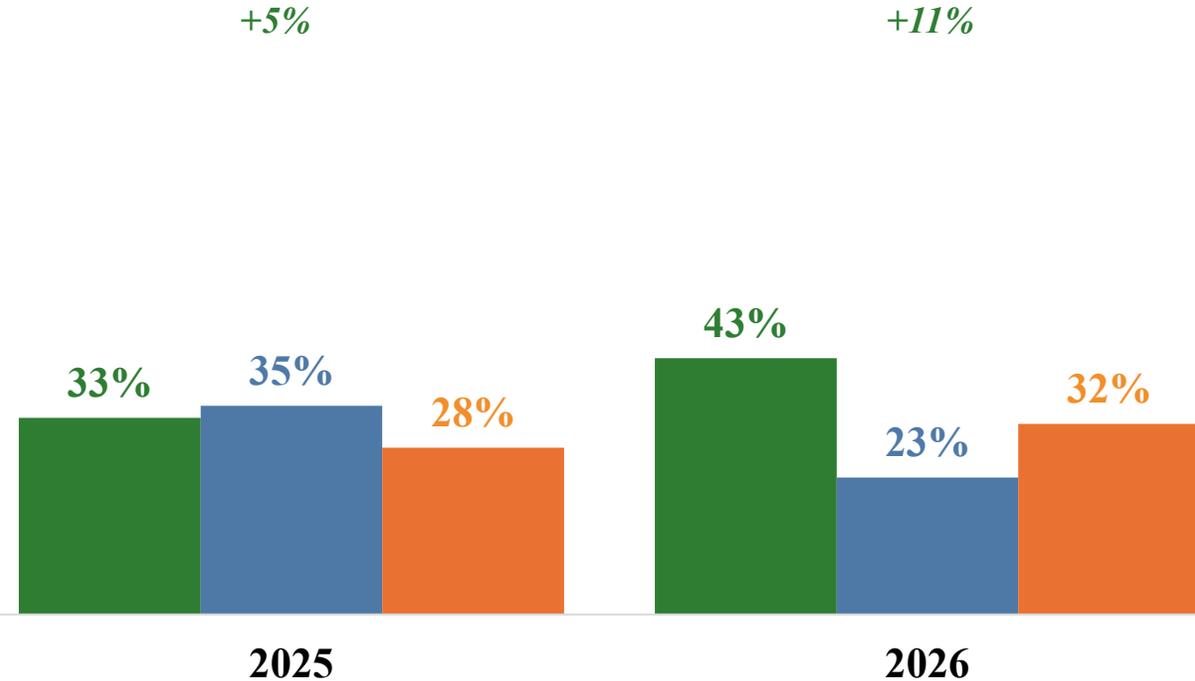


Consultants growing more optimistic to A.I.'s impact

“Was A.I.’s role in political campaigns over the past year mostly:”



“Do you expect A.I.’s FUTURE impact on political campaigns and consulting to be:”



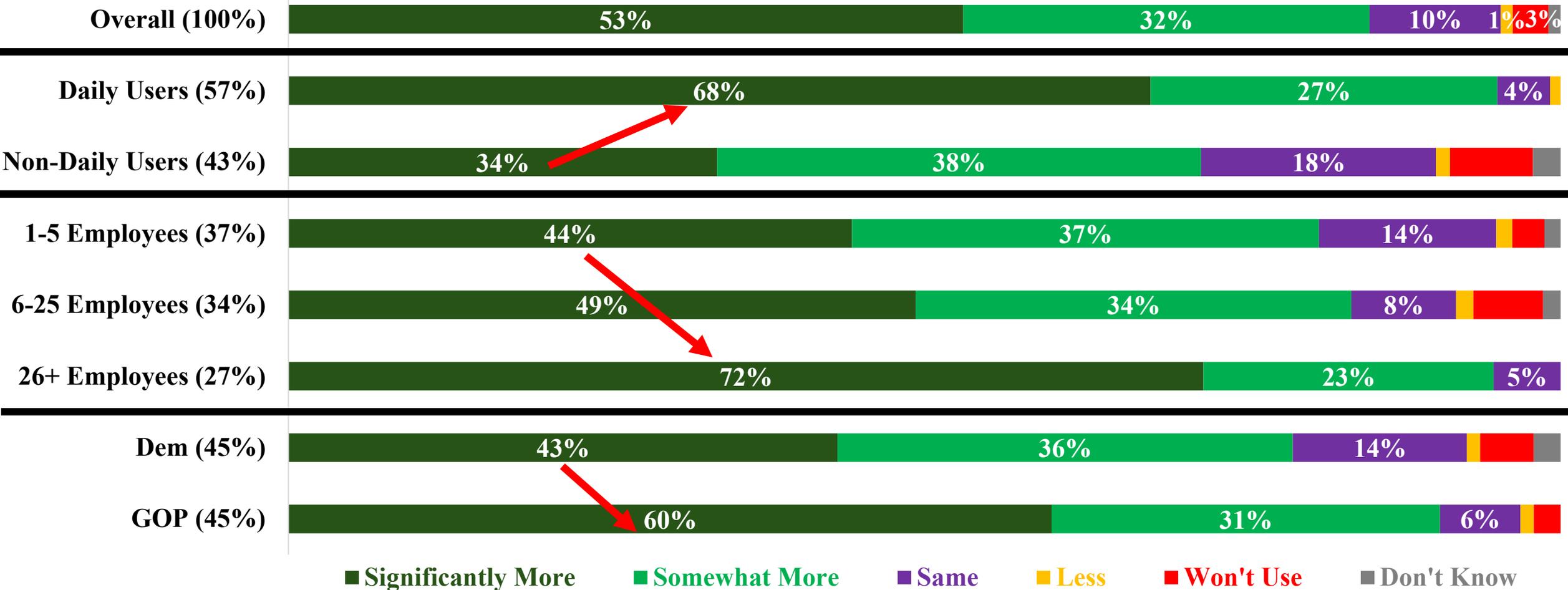
■ Positive ■ Neutral/Mixed ■ Negative

GOPers, daily users growing more optimistic

	A.I.'s <u>Current</u> Impact								A.I.'s <u>Future</u> Impact							
	2025				2026				2025				2026			
	<i>Pos</i>	<i>Neutral/ Mixed</i>	<i>Neg</i>	<i>Net</i>	<i>Pos</i>	<i>Neutral/ Mixed</i>	<i>Neg</i>	<i>Net</i>	<i>Pos</i>	<i>Neutral/ Mixed</i>	<i>Neg</i>	<i>Net</i>	<i>Pos</i>	<i>Neutral/ Mixed</i>	<i>Neg</i>	<i>Net</i>
Dem	13%	48%	25%	-12%	21%	44%	31%	-10%	17%	41%	35%	-18%	27%	27%	43%	-16%
GOP	43%	44%	10%	+33%	56%	34%	7%	+49%	51%	30%	16%	+35%	59%	19%	21%	+38%
Daily	35%	47%	12%	+23%	48%	37%	12%	+36%	43%	38%	16%	+27%	55%	17%	24%	+31%
Non-Daily	17%	28%	20%	-3%	22%	43%	27%	-5%	27%	33%	34%	-7%	27%	29%	42%	-15%

A.I. use expected to significantly increase, especially among daily users and at larger firms.

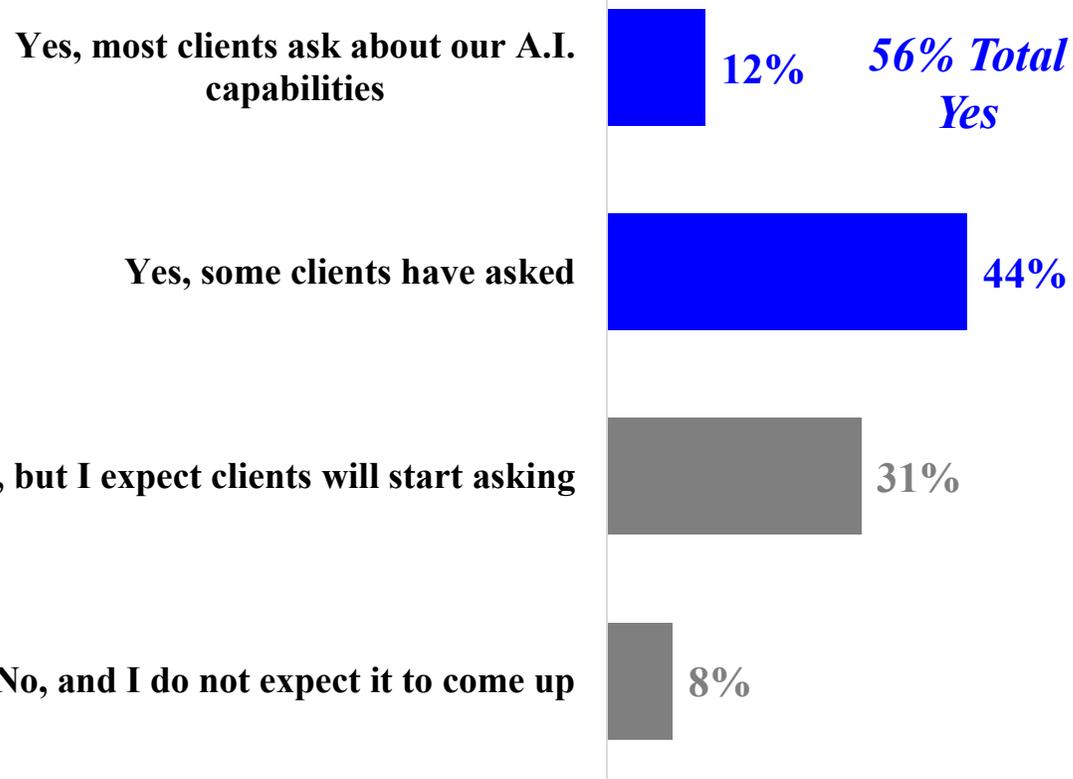
“Looking ahead to the 2026 midterm elections, how do you expect your use of A.I. to change compared to the 2024 cycle?”



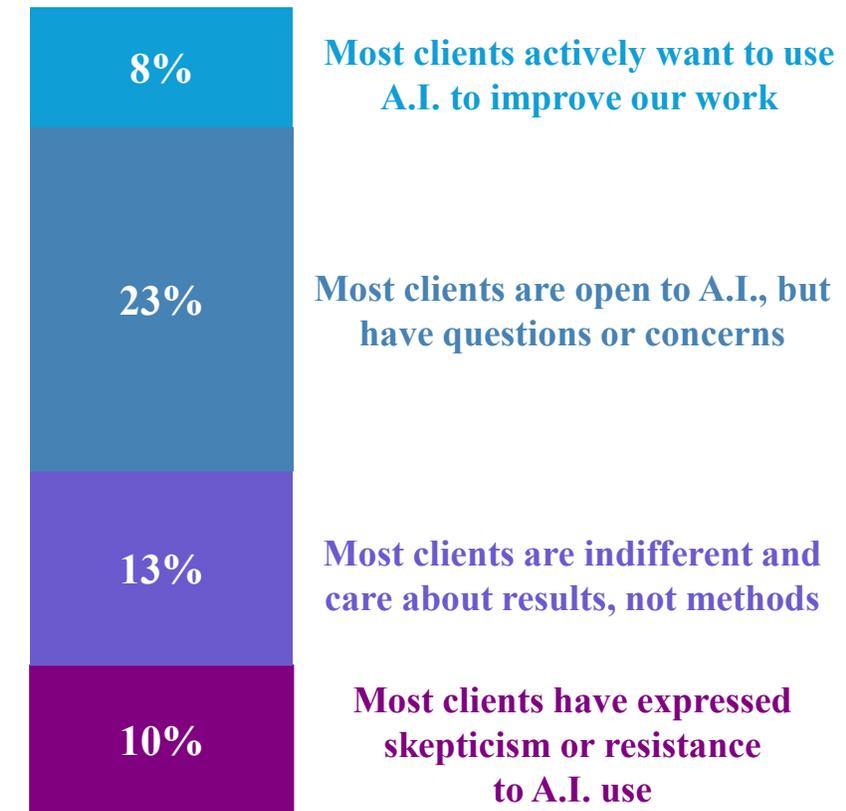
■ Significantly More ■ Somewhat More ■ Same ■ Less ■ Won't Use ■ Don't Know

Most firms have clients asking about A.I., but clients not wedded whether to use A.I. or not

“In the past year, have any of your clients or prospective clients asked about your use of A.I.?”

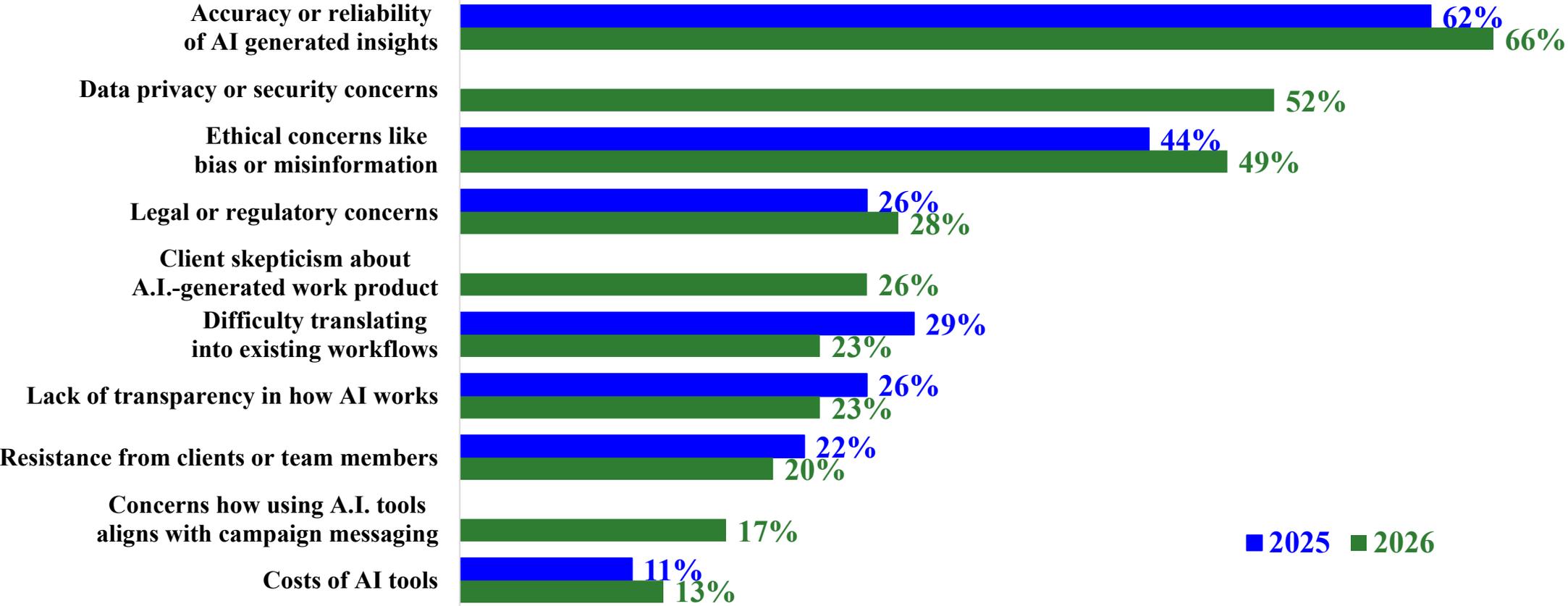


“Which level of government do you think should take the lead?”



Accuracy, data privacy, and misinformation are the biggest challenges consultants encountered

“What challenges, if any, have you encountered when using artificial intelligence tools?”

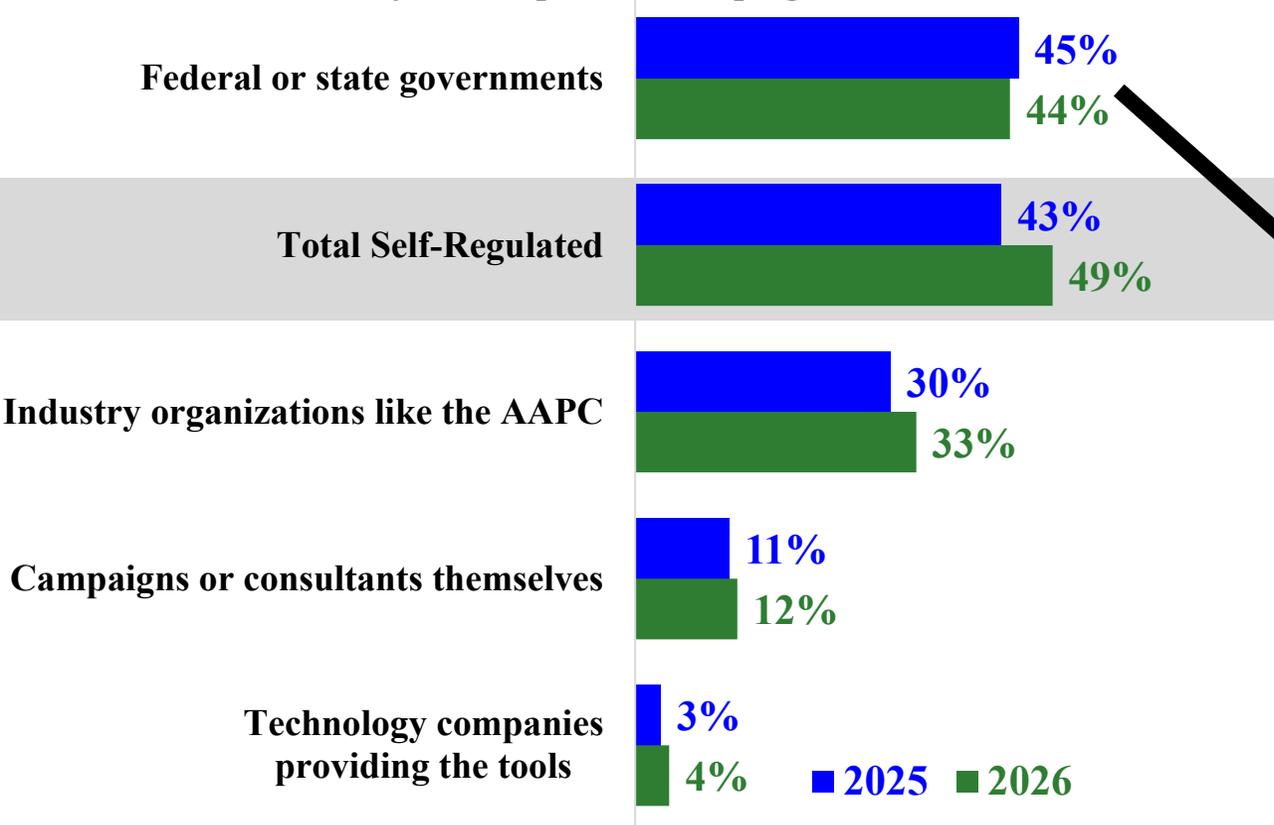


■ 2025 ■ 2026

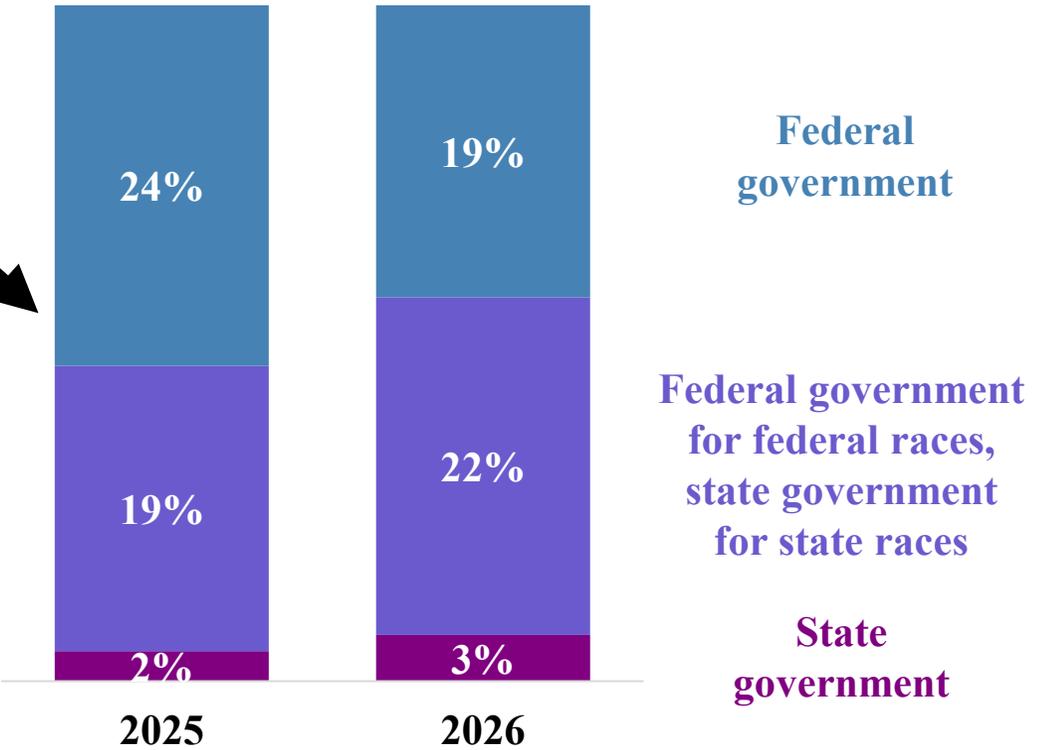
A.I. Regulations and Ethics

Members continue to be split on A.I. standards coming from government or self regulated

“Who should take the lead in regulating or setting standards for AI in political campaigns?”

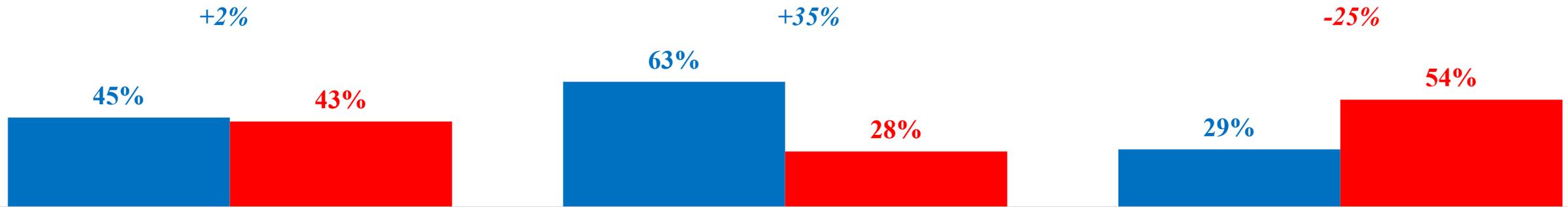


“Which level of government do you think should take the lead?”

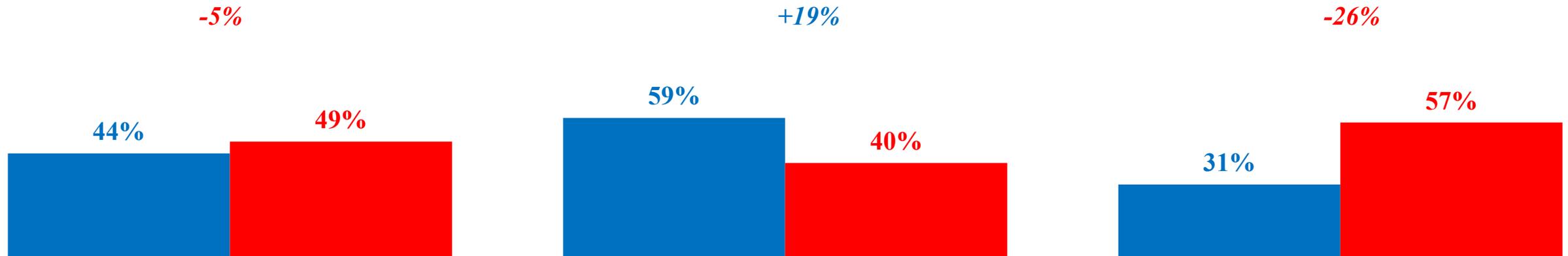


Partisan divide over who should set standards

2025 Who Should Set Standards: Government / Total Self-Regulated



2026 Who Should Set Standards: Government / Total Self-Regulated



All

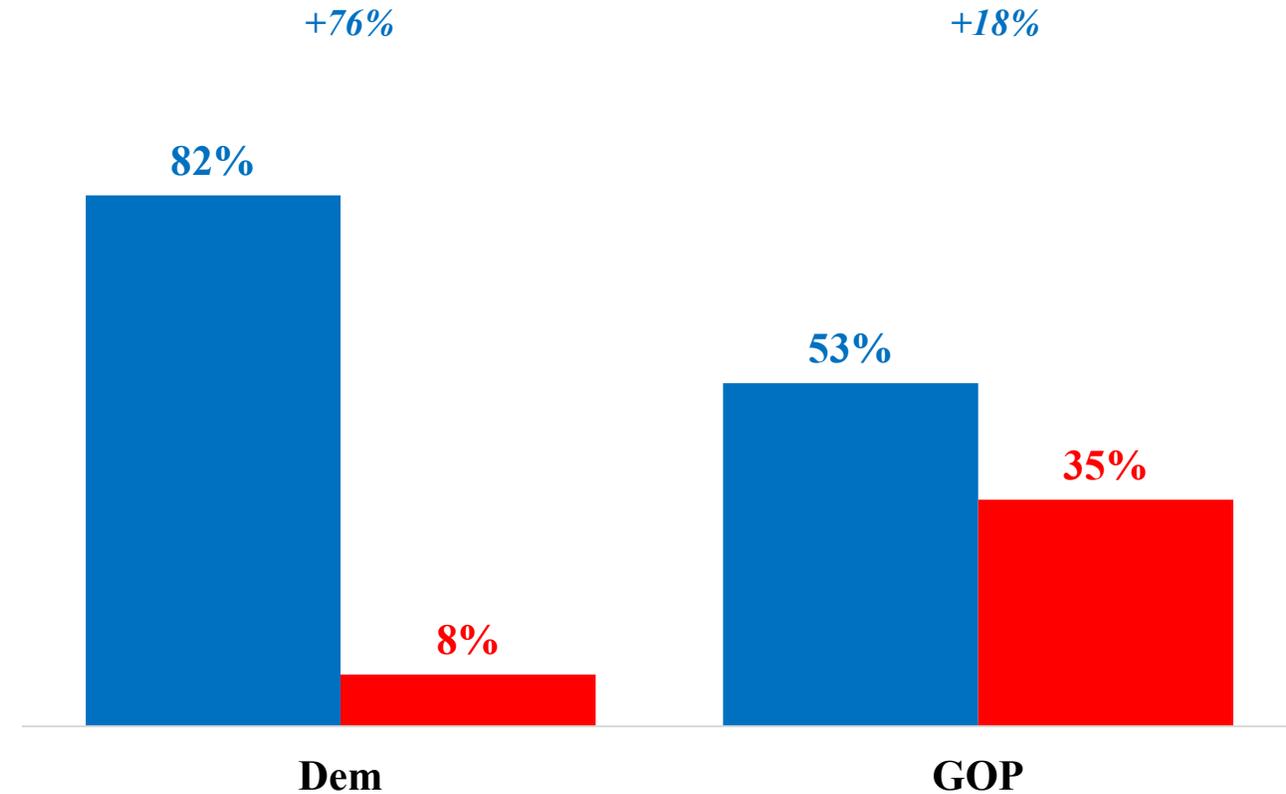
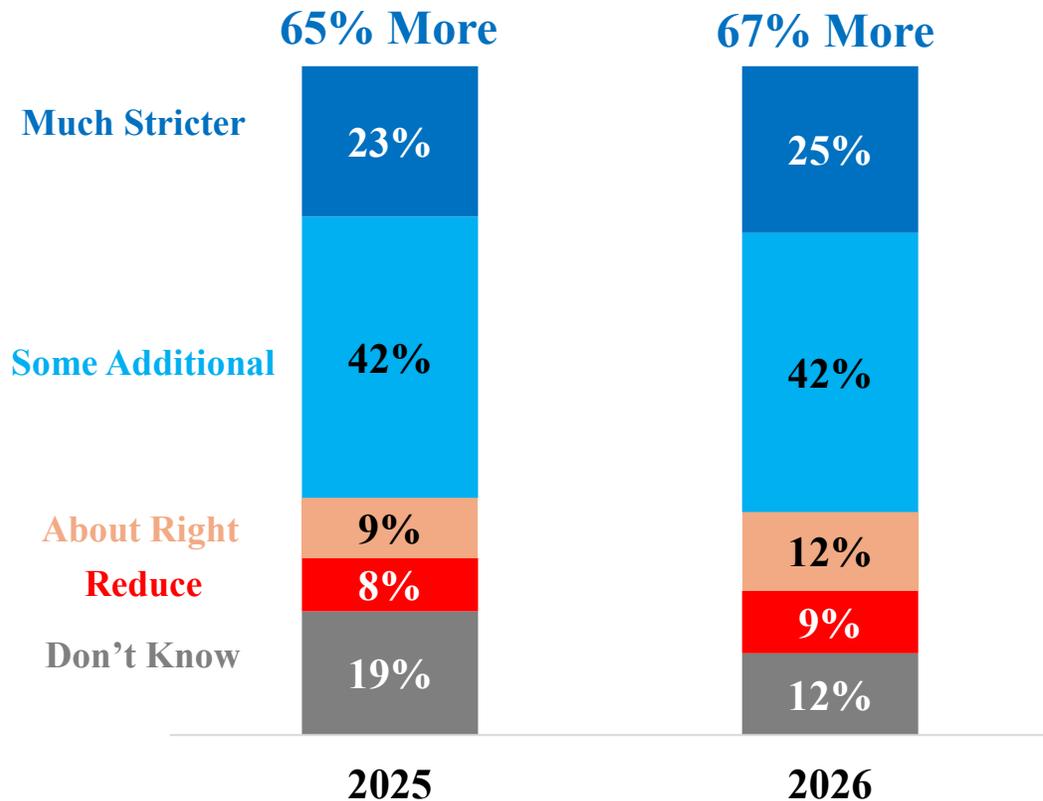
Dem

GOP

Across party lines, members support some additional government regulations

“What do you think the government's role should be in regulating the use of artificial intelligence in political campaigns?”

By Party



■ Total More

■ Total About Right/Less

Members looking for guidelines and regulations around deepfakes and disclosure

“What regulations, rules, or guidelines do you think the government should add regarding A.I. use in political campaigns?”

“What aspects of the current government regulatory approach do you believe are working well?”

“What regulations, rules, or guidelines do you think government should reduce or eliminate regarding A.I. use in political campaigns?”

Beneficial uses okay

Federal standard/Patchwork concerns Existing laws sufficient

Copyright/Ownership
Clarity/Guardrails **Deepfakes**

Disclosure/Labeling

Trust/Credibility
Data Privacy **Misinformation/Deception**

Penalties/Enforcement **Ban/Prohibit use cases**

Overregulation Social Media
Environmental/Moral Concerns Fundraising

Sample Verbatims

“Stricter guidelines on deepfakes or AI generated content with the intent to deceive. I am mostly concerned about the use of AI in creative, not necessarily business operations uses. They are necessary to weed out bad actors and provide enforcement.” – *Much Stricter, Dem, Use Once a Day*

“Disallowing the use of generative AI in campaign materials. Having judged the Pollies this year and seeing submissions that use generative AI to create falsified video content of opposing candidates, I am deeply concerned about future misuse.” – *Much Stricter, Dem, Use A Few Times a Week*

“The doomer scenario is unregulated use destroys the remaining credibility in our industry as voters don't know what to believe.” – *Much Stricter, GOP, Use Less Often*

“There should be real consequences for creating or spreading deepfakes, like fines and/or suspension from platforms. Without that, whichever side is the most ruthless in making stuff up will have an unfair advantage.” – *Some Additional, Dem, Use Multiple Times a Day*

“Regulations regarding true deepfakes designed to fool. Not on clear parody, etc. Not regulations on common use that fits within political speech.” – *Some Additional, GOP, Use Once a Day*

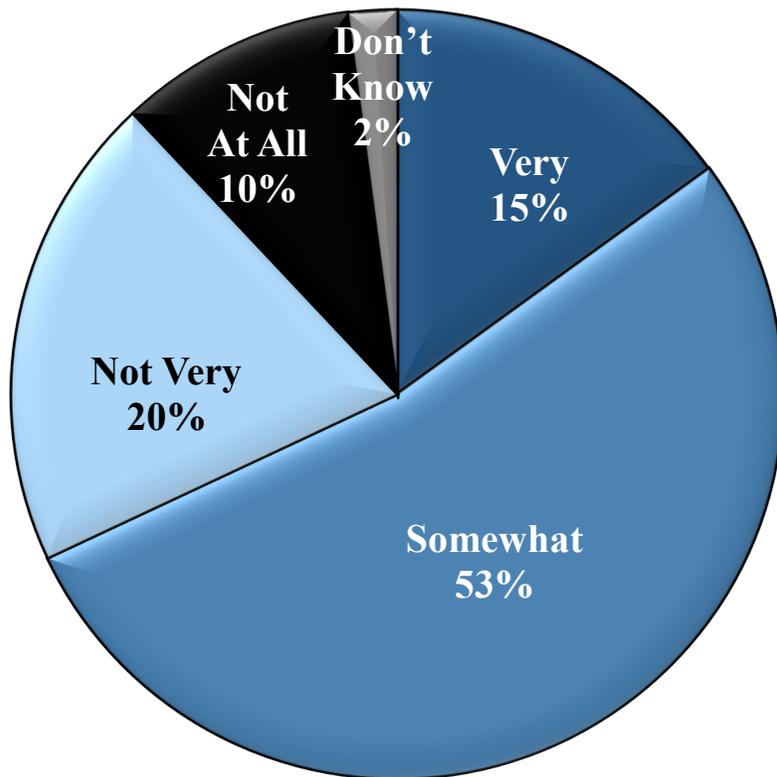
“There shouldn't restrictions on the use of AI technology, but there should be disclosure requirements if AI is used to produce a likeness of another person.” – *Some Additional, GOP, Use a Few Times a Week*

“AI is just a new and yes, powerful tool. Existing laws and regulations are sufficient and just need to be applied to this new tool.” – *About Right, GOP, Use Multiple Times a Day*

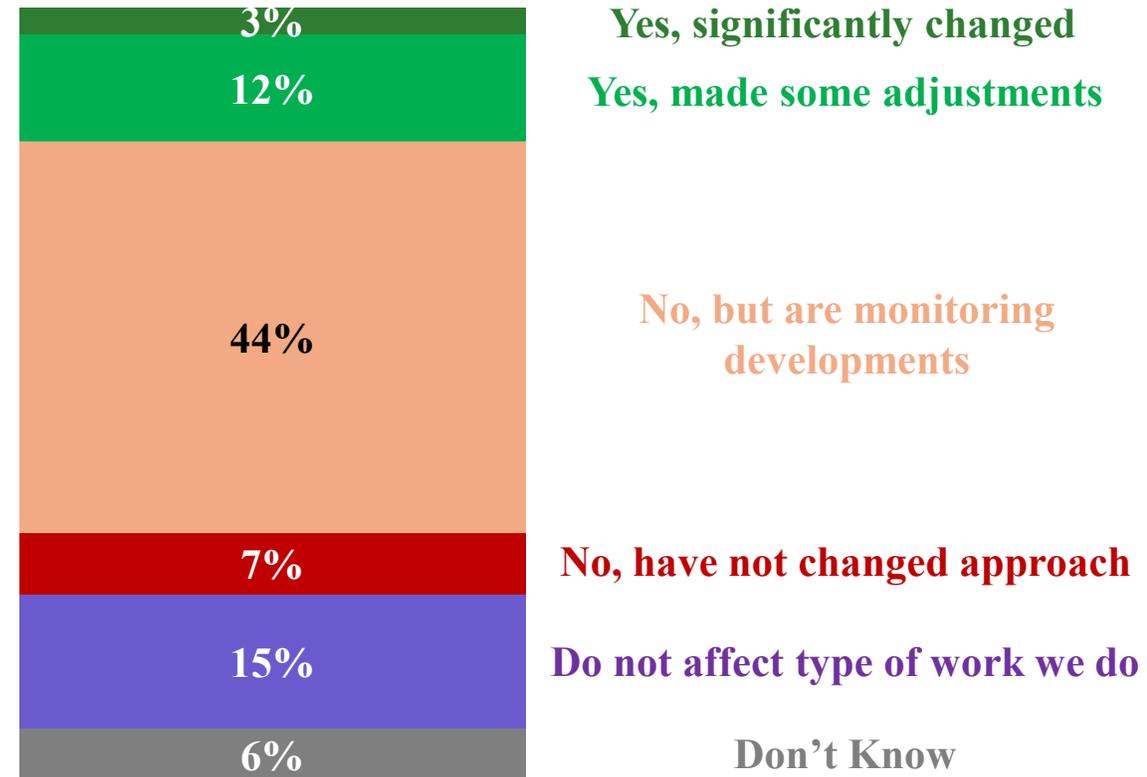
“I think the Deep Fake Laws in 26 states are way too broad and attempt to regulate traditional advertising approaches that have been used in the industry for decades simply because they involve AI. AI dramatizations are ethically no different than actors.” – *Should Reduce, GOP, Use Multiple Times a Day*

Most members familiar with A.I. disclosure proposals, but not yet making changes

“How familiar are you with state laws or proposals that require disclosure when artificial intelligence is used in political advertising?”

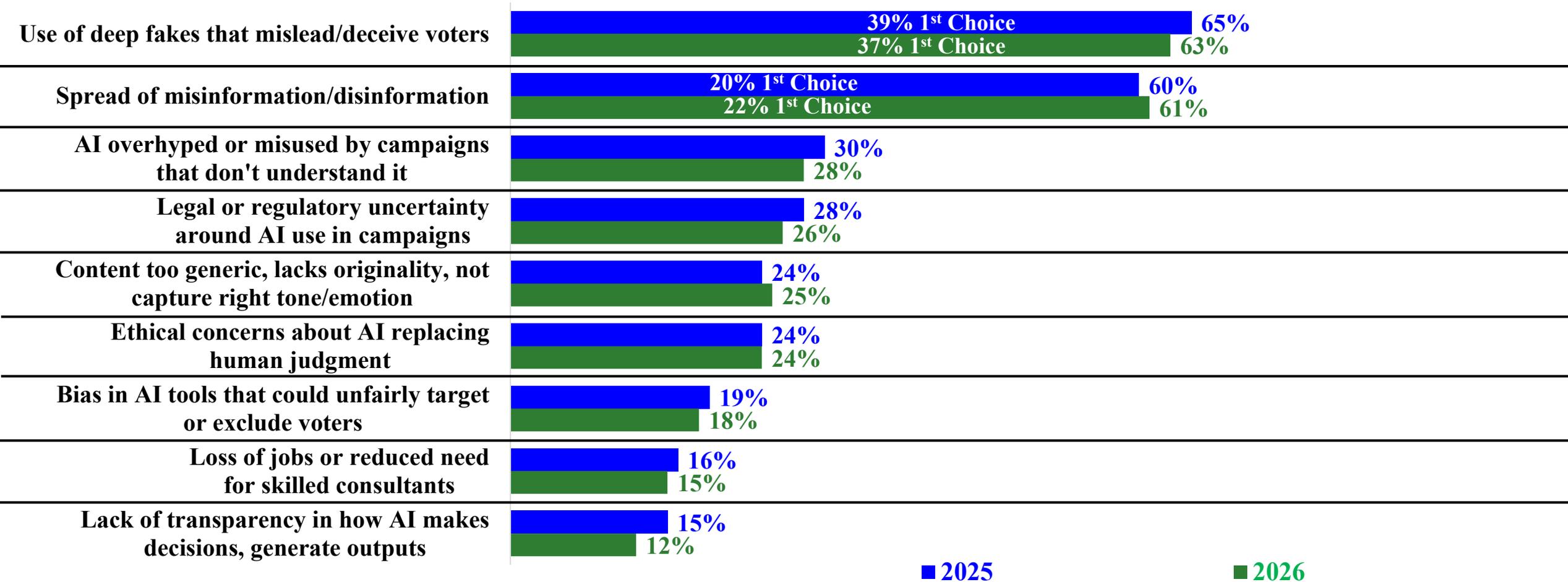


*[If Very, Somewhat, or Not Very Familiar]
“Have these state-level A.I. disclosure laws or proposals affected how you or your firm approach the use of A.I. in campaign work?”*



Deep fakes and misinformation continue to be top concerns around A.I. use

“Please rank your *TOP THREE* concerns about how A.I. might be used in political campaigns?”



■ 2025

■ 2026

Hypothetical Uses of AI Language

*Now you will see a few hypothetical examples of how A.I. might be used in political campaigns. Some examples may be common practices today, others are more speculative. For each one, please indicate whether you think it is a *very ethical*, *somewhat ethical*, *somewhat unethical*, or *very unethical* use of A.I. in political campaigns, or if you think it *depends on how it is used or the specific context*.*

A campaign uses A.I. to **make minimal edits to an ad**, such as adding an American flag in the background.

A campaign uses A.I. to **test and optimize digital ads** based on which messages are most persuasive for voters or most effective at raising money, **using machine learning trained on past campaign data**.

An A.I. tool is used to **generate a realistic audio recording of a candidate reading a quote that they originally said in a printed article**, even though the candidate was never recorded saying it out loud, **and it (is / is NOT) disclosed in the ad.**

A campaign **creates fictional voter testimonials using A.I.-generated text and faces**, presenting them as “typical supporters” **and it (is / is NOT) disclosed in the ad.**

Members divided on disclosed use of A.I. to recreate a candidate's quote

	2025				2026			
	<i>Ethical</i>	<i>Depends/ Don't Know</i>	<i>Unethical</i>	<i>Net</i>	<i>Ethical</i>	<i>Depends/ Don't Know</i>	<i>Unethical</i>	<i>Net</i>
Minimal edits to an ad	85%	11%	5%	+80%	87%	9%	4%	+83%
Test/optimize digital ads using machine learning on past data	77%	17%	7%	+70%	80%	13%	7%	+73%
Realistic audio of candidate's printed quote / Disclosed	42%	13%	46%	-4%	48%	12%	40%	+8%
Realistic audio of candidate's printed quote / NOT Disclosed	10%	7%	84%	-74%	14%	10%	76%	-62%
Fictional voter testimonials as "typical supporters" / Disclosed	21%	7%	73%	-52%	21%	10%	69%	-48%
Fictional voter testimonials as "typical supporters" / Not Disclosed	3%	2%	96%	-93%	5%	5%	91%	-86%

GOPers, daily users more likely to see disclosed recreation of candidate quote as ethical

	Dem (45%)			GOP (45%)			Daily Users (57%)			Non-Daily Users (43%)		
	Ethical	Un-ethical	Net	Ethical	Un-ethical	Net	Ethical	Un-ethical	Net	Ethical	Un-ethical	Net
Minimal edits to an ad	77%	9%	+68%	82%	5%	+77%	84%	3%	+81%	74%	12%	+62%
Test/optimize digital ads using machine learning on past data	84%	5%	+79%	93%	3%	+90%	93%	2%	+91%	79%	7%	+72%
Realistic audio of candidate's printed quote / Disclosed	45%	45%	0%	48%	36%	+12%	55%	31%	+24%	38%	51%	-13%
Realistic audio of candidate's printed quote / NOT Disclosed	13%	81%	-68%	19%	68%	-49%	17%	70%	-53%	10%	84%	-74%
Fictional voter testimonials as "typical supporters" / Disclosed	18%	75%	-57%	26%	63%	-37%	27%	59%	-32%	13%	83%	-70%
Fictional voter testimonials as "typical supporters" / Not Disclosed	3%	94%	-91%	6%	86%	-80%	5%	88%	-83%	4%	93%	-89%

Artificial Intelligence in Political Consulting

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