



The State of Market Research Report

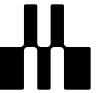


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Market research is entering its next chapter

Demand for market research is rising faster than the people and budgets available to meet it. In Maze's survey of 200+ professionals actively involved in market research, an average of 69% reported rising demand, compared with just 27% who saw budget or headcount growth.

The job itself is expanding, too. Work once divided among market research, UX research, customer insights, strategy, analytics, and competitive intelligence is now overlapping. This role convergence can bring market researchers closer to strategy, but it also expands what they're expected to own while resources struggle to keep up.



AI has arrived in the middle of that tension. Eighty-four percent agreed that AI increases research capacity, but only 17% described it as integrated across the research process with clear ownership. The contrast suggests that many organizations are still working out how AI should be used and who is accountable for it. Clear ownership can help teams turn individual experimentation into a repeatable workflow. But AI alone can't promise that research will reach decision-makers in time, or that each project strengthens what the organization knows. That's where strategic influence comes in.

Drawing on survey findings and perspectives from researchers doing the work, this report shows how these pressures are playing out in practice and what teams can do next.

The future of market research isn't just about conducting more studies or producing findings faster. It's also about helping teams achieve an impact through research by pursuing the right questions and acting on reliable evidence. The longer-term opportunity for researchers is to build a shared foundation of knowledge that can strengthen the decisions that follow.

Meet our industry experts:

Alyssa Domash

Independent Market Researcher

Andrea Esqueda

Marketing Researcher

Angie Liang

Independent Research Leader

Hugh Lagrotteria

Staff Market Researcher

Smriti Sheth

Director of Global Insights

Theresa Manteiga

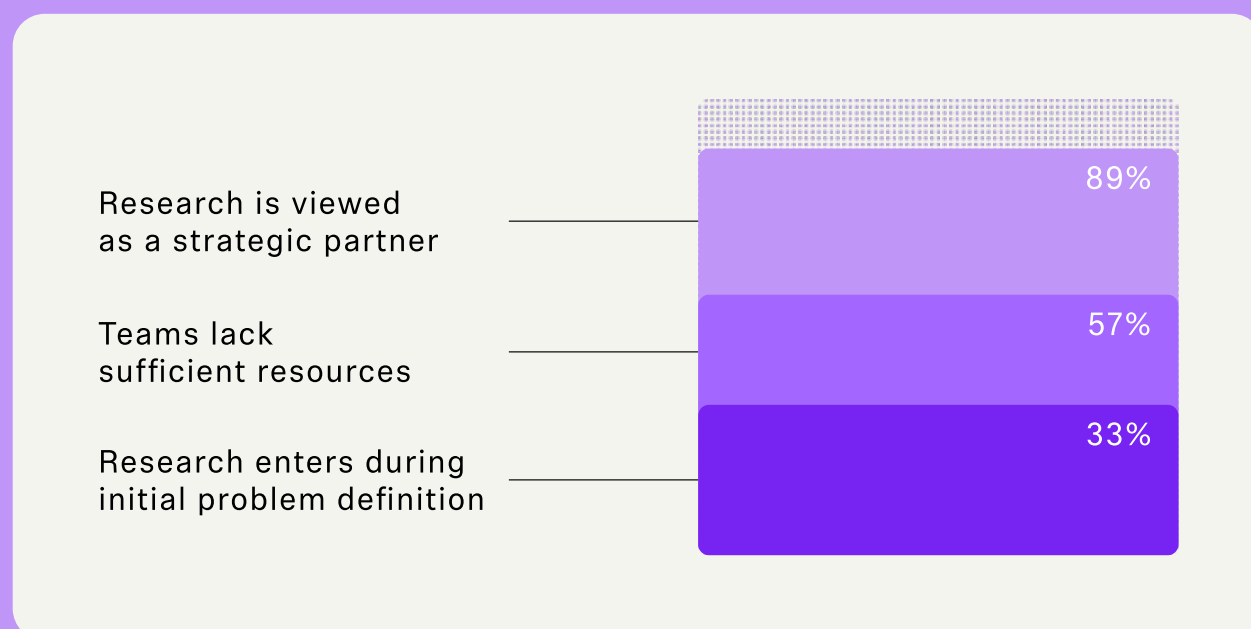
Head of Market Research, Asana



Trend 1

Research demand is stretching resources

Demand can feel flattering. It means more people are recognizing the value of research. But when demand outpaces capacity, time, and budget, that good feeling doesn't last. Today, researchers are supporting more of the business, connecting more forms of evidence, and answering more complex questions. The resources that power the work can't keep up.



Research is trusted by the business, yet teams often lack the bandwidth and early involvement needed to turn that trust into impact. Part of the pressure comes from how much the role itself has changed.



The boundaries of research roles are blurring

Evidence disciplines

Took on market research

61%

Took on customer insights or voice-of-customer programs

59%

Took on competitive intelligence

41%

Strategy and analytics

Took on strategy

57%

Took on analytics

56%

AI and tool oversight

Took on AI adoption or governance

59%

Took on vendor or tool management

39%

Participants reported that an average of 4.5 responsibilities had been added to their roles in the past two years. This role convergence is making the boundaries among market research, UX research, customer insights, strategy, analytics, and competitive intelligence less distinct—and expanding what researchers are expected to own.

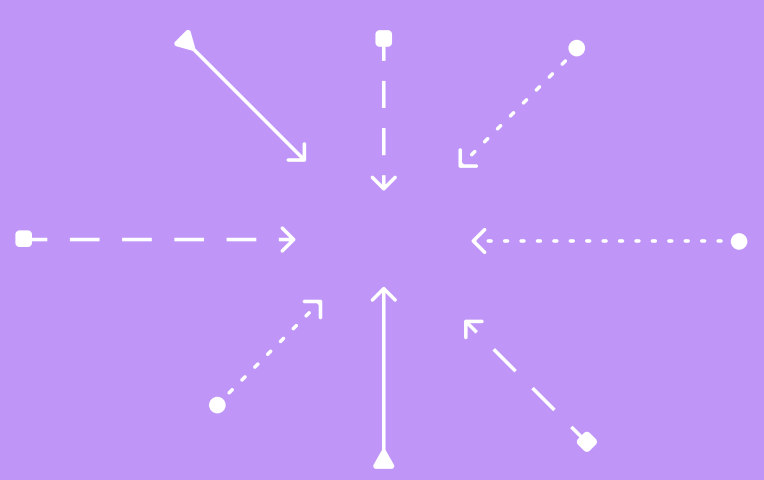


In practice, this broader scope can require both UX and market researchers to:

- Connect what customers say with what they do
- Track where competitors are moving
- Understand how categories are evolving
- Translate those signals into implications for market entry, product-market fit, brand, positioning, and go-to-market decisions

Answering a business question now often means bringing all of these signals together.

This can bring research closer to strategy, creating a real opportunity to build a more connected understanding of customers and markets—and what both mean for the decision at hand. But working across evidence generation, analysis, tools, AI governance, and decision support can also leave researchers spread thin.



“Decisions increasingly require evidence from multiple sources rather than a single study or methodology. A question that might once have been addressed through a survey may now require behavioral data, qualitative research, market trends, and competitive context. As researchers, we must not only synthesize these inputs, but also explain where they align, where they conflict, and what the business should do despite the remaining uncertainty.”

Andrea Esqueda
Marketing Researcher



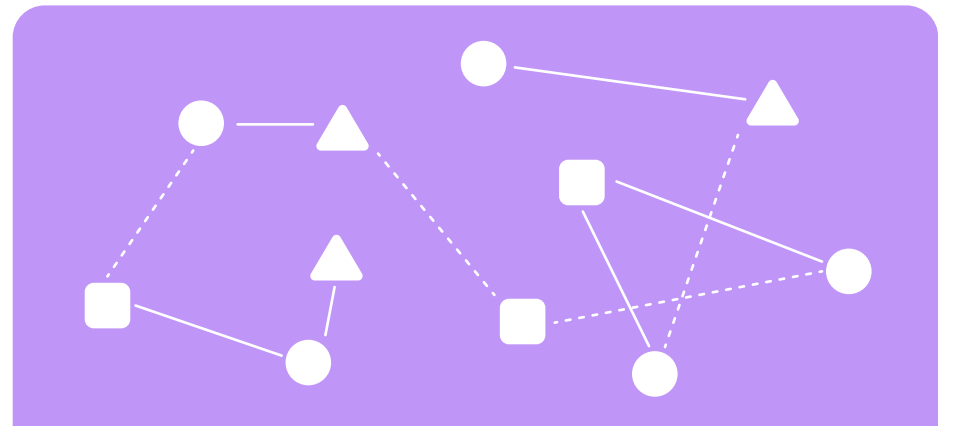
The research squeeze spans speed, volume, and complexity

Over the past two years, pressure on research teams has grown without matching increases in headcount, time, or budget. That pressure is showing up in three ways:

- **Speed:** 78% said expected delivery speed increased
- **Volume:** 70% said the number of research requests increased, while 64% said the number of business functions they support increased
- **Complexity:** 64% said project complexity increased

In practice, these pressures compound. A market-entry question may arrive with a tight deadline and require customer, market, product, and competitive evidence that lives across different teams and tools. Researchers have to bring those signals together for multiple decision-makers while the rest of the queue keeps piling up.

To relieve the research squeeze, teams can respond in two ways. First, they can build on what the organization has already learned, giving every new question a stronger starting point. Second, they can match the depth of research to the decision. A one-way-door decision—with greater cost, risk, or strategic impact—deserves deeper evidence and more. This helps teams focus new research on the assumptions that matter, instead of rebuilding context for every request.



“A typical study that would have taken a month or two, I now need to turn around in a week. We self-serve data analysis, mine user research interviews, and synthesize existing research much more efficiently. In the past, I might have outsourced a project entirely or kept it in-house. Now, most projects are a hybrid hand-off between internal and external people and tools, each contributing to the process before handing off to the next. The result is that researchers are more project managers now than ever before.”

Theresa Manteiga

Head of Market Research, Asana



What participants say contributes to demand

Several possibilities surfaced in participants' open-ended responses:

Competition

One participant from a smaller business described it as increasingly difficult to “match competitors that have more resources to conduct valuable market research faster.”

Data overload

More dashboards, customer conversations, behavioral signals, survey results, and business metrics don't necessarily create greater clarity. As one participant put it, companies are already “drowning in data” and need structure in order to go deeper.

Leadership's appetite for data

One response described “an extremely high volume of data coming from different sides of the organization.” The participant added that leaders want data on everything, while questioning whether it's being used in the right way.

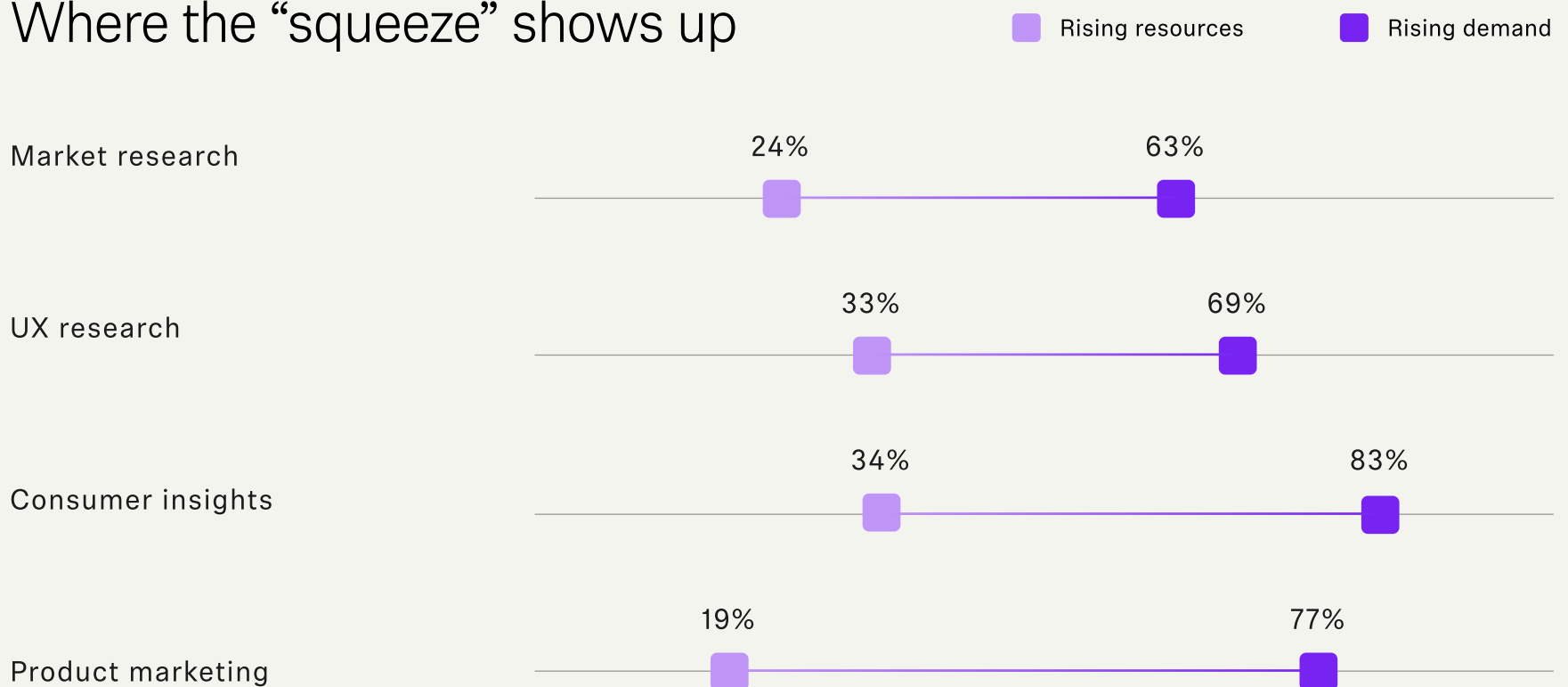
Pressure to keep up with change

One participant described keeping up with emerging trends as “already overwhelming.” For market researchers, shifts in customer attitudes, competitor behavior, or category dynamics can make a previously sound assumption less useful.



Resources aren't keeping pace with demand

Where the “squeeze” shows up



The rise in research demand was not matched by comparable growth in the resources available to meet it. Across the two resource measures we tracked—budget and headcount—an average of 27% of participants reported increases over the past two years. Thirty percent said their research budget increased, while 24% reported increased headcount.

These gaps show that the squeeze isn't limited to one role or research discipline. The work may differ, but the pattern is the same: more kinds of work, for more parts of the business, on more complex questions, with less time to answer them.



Fifty-seven percent said their team doesn't have enough resources to meet current demand. Asked separately about their biggest challenges:

- 57% cited limited budget
- 51% cited time and delivery pressure
- 41% cited balancing speed with research quality
- 41% cited limited headcount

This pattern appears across every company-size band, seniority level, primary role, and AI-adoption stage we analyzed.

The squeeze crosses company sizes. Companies with 250–999 employees show a 53-point gap between rising demand and rising resources. Among organizations with 5,000 or more employees, the gap is nearly identical at 52 points.

It also crosses seniority levels. Managers without direct reports show a 57-point gap, while managers with direct reports show a 52-point gap. Even C-suite participants show a 30-point gap among the reliable samples.

The pattern appeared across every company-size band and seniority group we analyzed. More headcount and budget would help, but teams also have to decide where their time will matter most: which decisions most need evidence, and how can researchers answer those questions faster without sacrificing quality?

That's where AI enters the chat. Most participants already believe it can help expand research capacity. But additional capacity isn't the same as adequate resourcing, and using AI isn't the same as knowing where an organization can confidently rely on it.

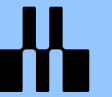


“When capacity is limited, longer-term and exploratory work is often deprioritized in favor of immediate business needs. Follow-up analyses, knowledge management, and deeper investigation into unexpected findings may also be delayed. As a result, teams can become more reactive—answering urgent questions without always building the cumulative understanding needed to anticipate future needs or identify emerging opportunities.”

Andrea Esqueda

Marketing Researcher

Trend 2



AI capacity is outpacing confidence

AI is giving researchers more room in already stretched workflows. Teams are putting it to work today, while their organizations are still figuring out who owns the practice, what standards should guide it, and where human judgment remains essential.

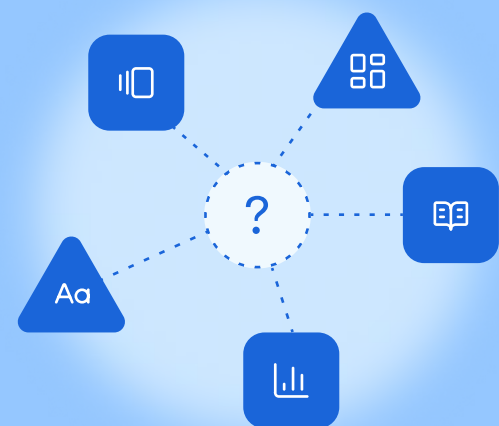


AI is expanding what researchers can do

AI can give stretched research teams access to methods and forms of evidence that were previously out of reach.

Individual experimentation is often where AI adoption begins. With shared tools and standards, teams can build on what works and apply AI consistently across projects to:

- Reduce the time and manual work required to design and launch a study
- Support qualitative conversations across more participants than a team could moderate manually
- Give more people structured ways to gather evidence within standards set by research teams
- Make accumulated findings easier for stakeholders to find and use when decisions are being made



“AI makes it easier for researchers to remove certain dependencies. Someone testing a concept might now mock up the design, draft the positioning, or pull data that used to be gated by data science—all on their own. The goal isn’t to bypass partners, but to take on more of what researchers can do themselves so colleagues can focus on their priorities.”

Angie Liang

Independent Research Leader



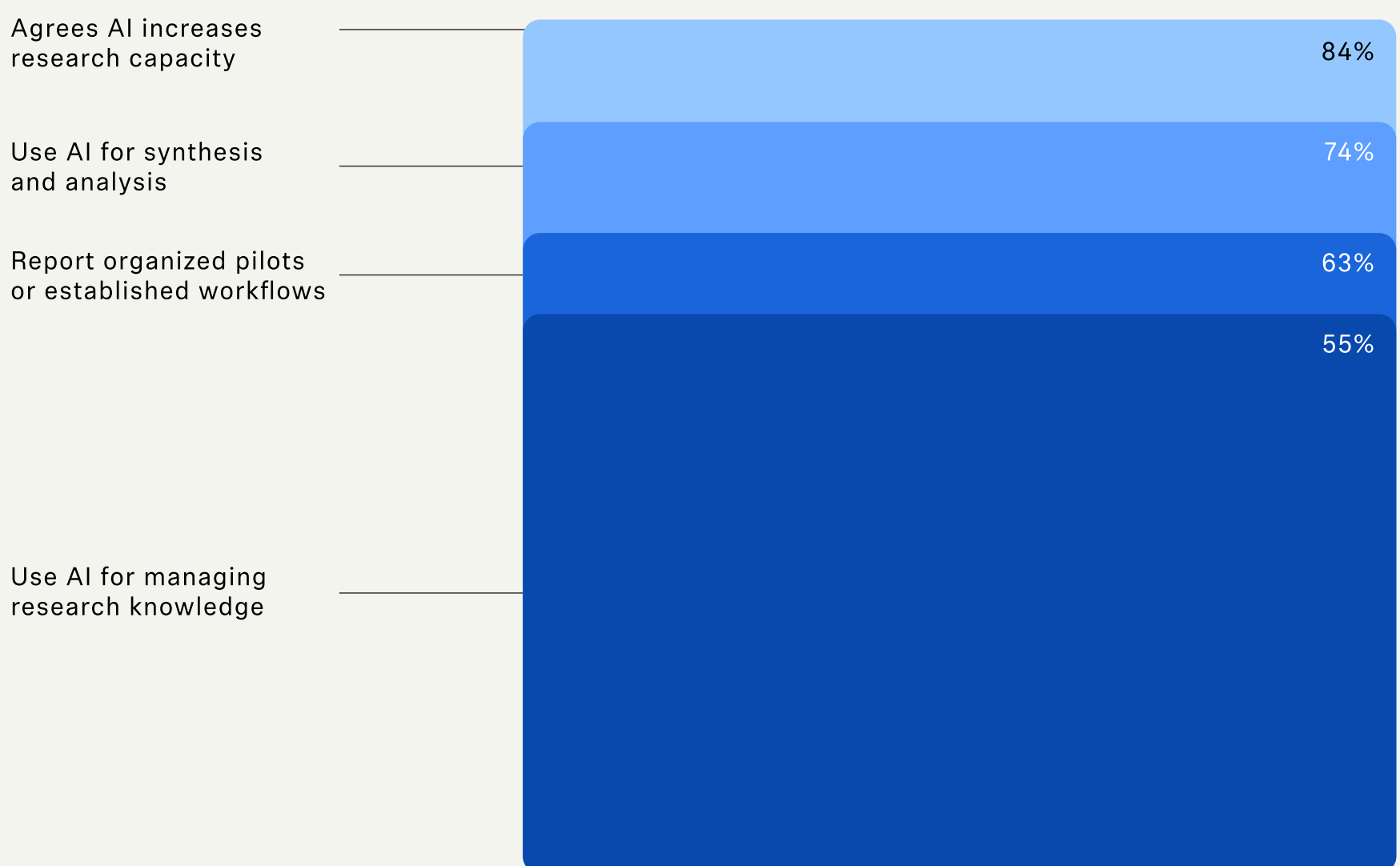
“LLMs have enabled me to expand my scope beyond ad hoc primary research. I can now run SQL queries, merge old datasets, run simulation experiments, and conduct correlation analyses across sources—work that would previously have been too difficult, error-prone, or time-consuming to explore. The default was the tried-and-true 10- to 15-minute survey.”

Hugh Lagrotteria

Staff Market Researcher



84% agree AI increases research capacity



But the survey also shows the limits of adoption alone: greater AI use showed little relationship with whether participants felt sufficiently resourced.

At the organizational level, using AI well isn't simply a matter of adding it to more tasks. Teams need repeatable ways to apply it, along with clear standards and ownership. That can make existing knowledge easier to access while keeping researchers responsible for the judgment the work requires.



The AI rulebook is still being written

Market researchers are already taking advantage of the capacity AI creates, but many organizations have yet to establish clear rules for its use or assign responsibility for overseeing it. Only 55% said their organization has clear standards for when AI can and can't be used, and just 17% reported integration across the research process with clear ownership.

Together, these findings show that AI use is expanding faster than the shared rules and governance needed to guide it. That doesn't necessarily mean researchers distrust AI. Using it responsibly and with confidence requires more than trusting a particular output. Teams need to know where human review is required and who remains accountable when AI-supported work informs an important decision.

Participants raised these concerns even without being asked directly. In their responses about AI's future impact, 21% said trust, accuracy, or governance would need to be addressed.

Some participants also saw AI making past market research more accessible: for example, through data libraries that colleagues could query through chat. But that access raised concerns when "non-researchers feel empowered to use these tools without the right knowledge and background."



"AI can give us a false sense of conviction. We can scour past research, behavioral data, and competitive intelligence to build a hypothesis or gut-check an idea in minutes. But speed can make new research feel like a delay. The researcher's judgment lies in knowing when an existing signal is strong enough to act on and when new research is needed to surface the context or nuance a decision requires."

Angie Liang

Independent Research Leader



What helps teams move from AI experiments to mature workflows:

Inside the organization:

- **Clear ownership:** Who sets the standards and remains accountable?
- **Decision-based safeguards:** Which uses require human review, and where do higher-stakes decisions require stronger control?
- **Approved workflows:** Can teams use templates that reflect the organization's research standards and established ways of working?

From AI tools and vendors

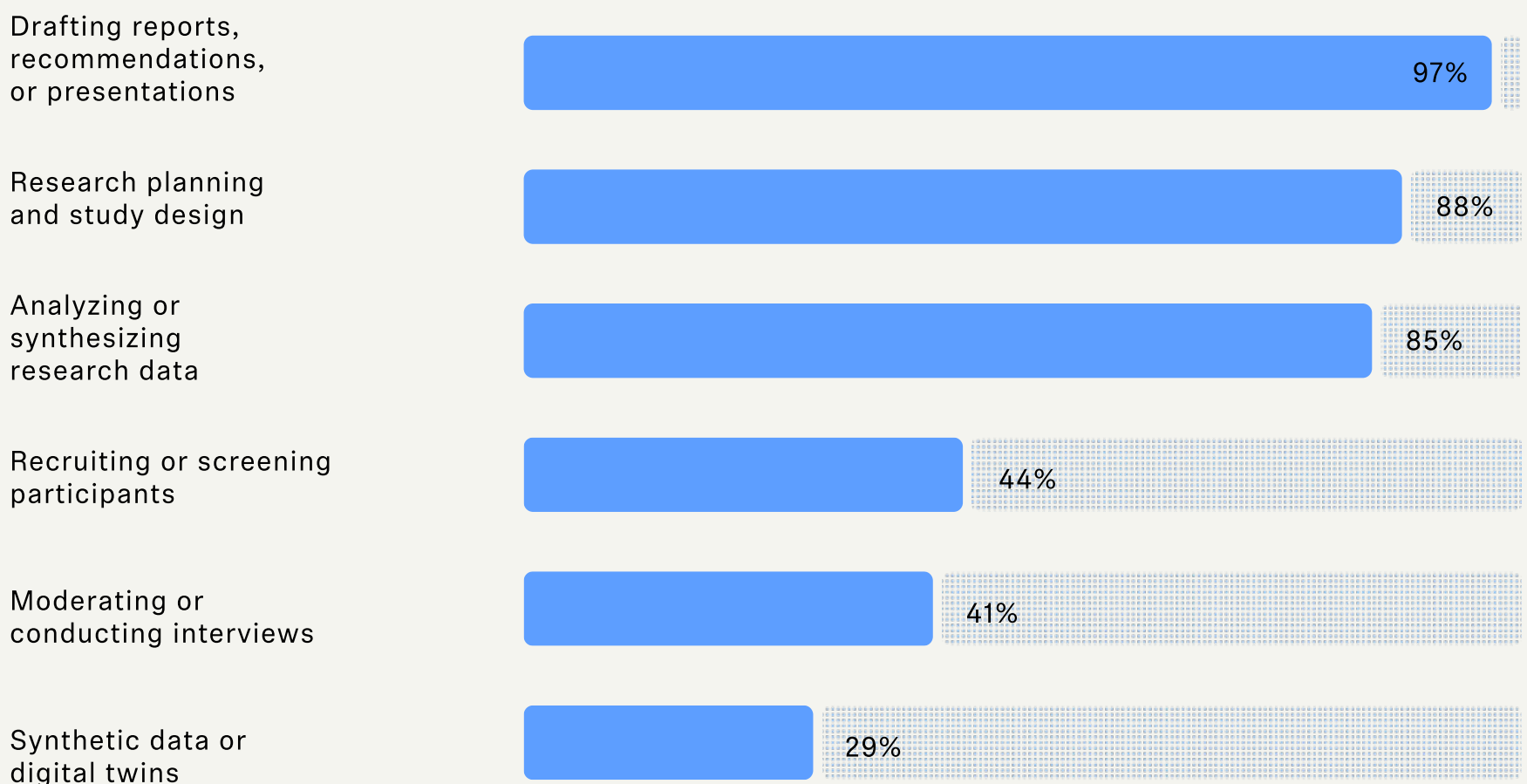
- **Research expertise built in:** Does the tool guide teams toward good research practice and flag where human judgment is needed?
- **Transparent outputs:** Can teams understand how an output was produced, what its limitations are, and whether it's suitable for the decision?
- **Connected learning:** Can teams easily bring evidence and context from one project into the workflows and decisions that follow?

Together, these conditions help teams make AI a reliable part of the research workflow—from planning and analysis to knowledge management and decision support. They give people a clearer basis for deciding when to move quickly, when to bring in a researcher, and when a decision needs new evidence.



What stays human as AI takes on more

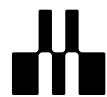
Research use cases that involve using AI



Even as AI becomes more established in market research workflows, human review remains close to universal: 96% of participants agreed that reviewing AI-generated outputs is essential. Among the participants whose organizations have integrated AI across the research process with clear ownership, use by task shows where AI has become routine and where teams remain more selective.

AI use is most established when it helps researchers plan, analyze, synthesize, and communicate their work. It is lower in recruiting, moderation, and synthetic data, where AI comes closer to shaping who participates, how evidence is gathered, or what counts as evidence. This suggests teams are more mature in terms of using AI as a research tool and less likely to give AI greater responsibility for the evidence itself.

Lower AI usage doesn't necessarily indicate distrust. Separate trust measures show that 62% trust AI-moderated research, while 46% trust synthetic data for important decisions. These figures can't be compared directly with adoption rates, because some teams may not manage these tasks, some tools are newer, and not every use case will be relevant, but they show that confidence varies by task.



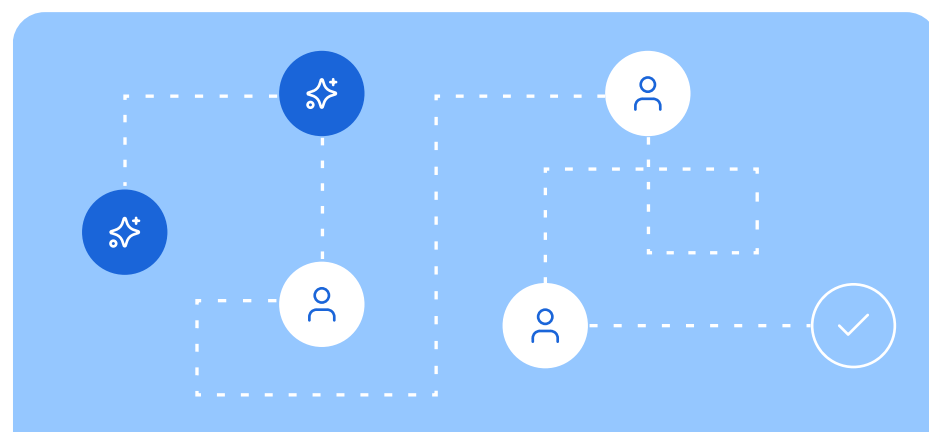
Moderation and synthetic data also require different judgments:

	AI-moderated research	Synthetic data and digital twins
Source of evidence	Real participants	Simulated participant evidence
AI's role	Asks questions and generates follow-ups	Creates responses or data that may stand in for participant evidence
Key decisions for people	When does the conversation require a researcher who can respond to nuance?	When is simulated evidence appropriate, and when are human participants necessary?



Not every interview requires the same level of human involvement. A tightly structured conversation may be easier to automate than one in which a participant's pause, tone, expression, or unexpected answer should shape the next question. In those situations, having a researcher present may change what the study uncovers.

For some researchers, moderation remains on the human side of that line:



“I’m comfortable using AI to create a starting point for discussion guides or survey questions, which I then revise based on my experience and my understanding of the objectives and outcomes we’re trying to drive. I’m not yet comfortable using AI for moderation because it can’t replace the human touch needed to respond to the emotions that emerge in deeper conversations.”

Smriti Sheth

Director of Global Insights

What humans still own:

- Defining the research objective
- Deciding what role AI should play and where human review is required
- Reviewing outputs before they affect the next step, including checking for fabricated details, unsupported conclusions, or missing context
- Interpreting the evidence and determining what it means for the decision

AI may perform more of the work, but researchers and decision-makers remain responsible for the evidence they rely on and what happens next.

Trend 3



Strategic influence has a decision window

Researchers have already earned trust in their organizations. That credibility turns into influence when research arrives while decisions can still change and when new insights help the business become more research-driven beyond the project.

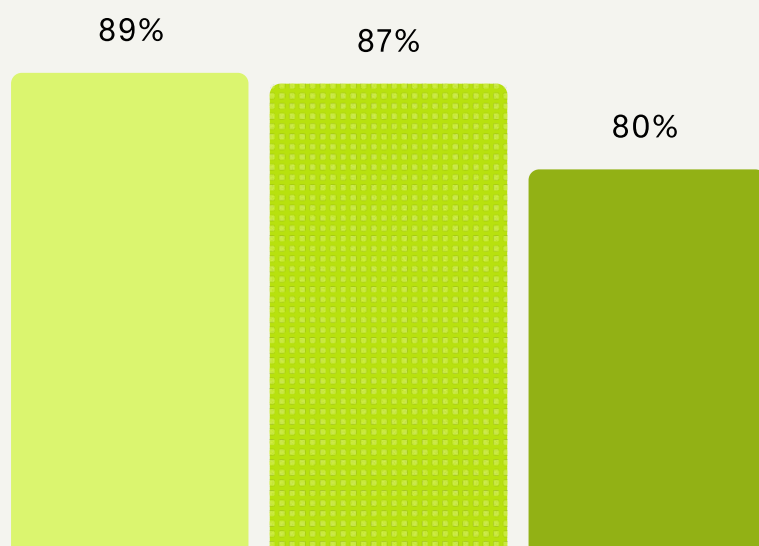


Trust is only the starting point

Market researchers and their work have a strong foundation to build on. Across the survey, that credibility shows up in three ways:

Yet credibility doesn't automatically make market research a consistent part of how an organization learns and makes decisions.

Making research part of ongoing decision-making requires a shared view of customers, competitors, the category, and the broader market. Teams also need ways to recognize when that picture changes and surface the questions that matter before a direction takes hold.

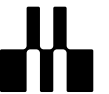


- Agree research is viewed as a strategic partner
- Agree senior leaders trust research findings
- Agree their team can demonstrate research's business impact

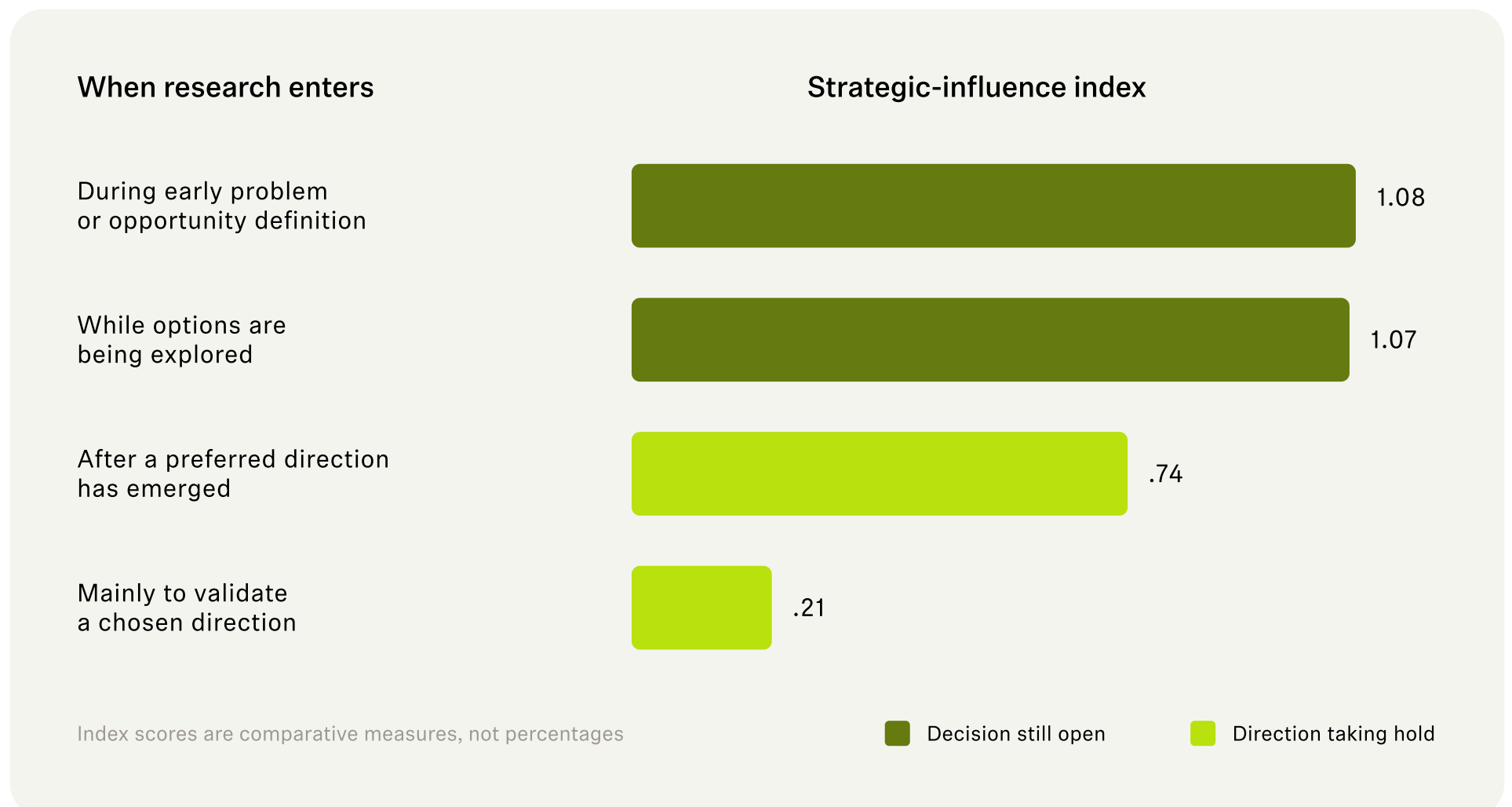
“What helps is being seen as valuable and a trusted partner. While the data helps, stakeholders trust my product/marketing/business expertise. Knowing that they have me as a thought partner allows me to be consistently included in the decision-making process. But still, research is often seen as reactive as opposed to proactive.”

Alyssa Domash

Independent Market Researcher



Research has more room to influence open decisions



Research doesn't have to be in the very first meeting to have influence, but it does need to arrive before the answer is set. Getting research into that window doesn't always require new research. When existing evidence is easy to find and use, teams can bring what they already know into open decisions and focus new research on the remaining gaps.

Only 33% of participants said research is usually involved during the initial definition of a problem or opportunity. Another 27% said it enters while options are being explored, and 24% said the timing varies significantly by project or decision.

To examine how timing relates to influence, we used a strategic-influence index. Higher scores indicate greater reported influence.

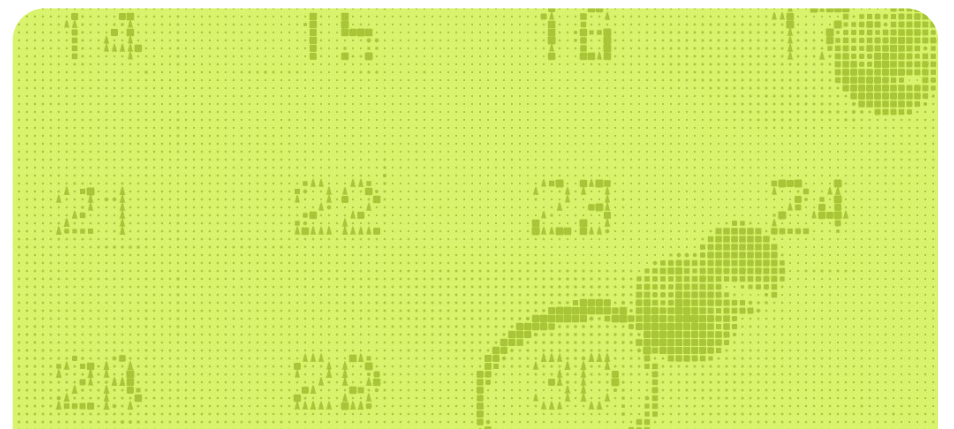
This chart points to a clear divide: reported influence is similar while the problem and possible directions are still being explored, and then declines once a preferred direction has emerged.



That window may be getting shorter. Seventy-eight percent of participants said delivery-speed expectations have increased over the past two years, so market research needs to move quickly while protecting the quality that makes its evidence worth acting on. One participant in our survey described the opportunity this way: “Research needs to be brought in early as a consultant, and kept in the loop throughout the whole process.”

In practice, that means staying close to planning, surfacing untested assumptions, and identifying the questions that need evidence before a direction takes hold.

AI may help research meet faster timelines, but it is unlikely to create strategic influence on its own. Only four of 184 open-ended responses anticipated AI automatically giving research a more strategic role. Others who discussed that possibility described the role as something researchers would need to position deliberately.



“To influence decisions, research has to move at the pace of working teams and show up when answers are needed—not two or three weeks later. Researchers also need to stay close to the relevant business workstreams. Otherwise, insights may be obvious, redundant with past work, or irrelevant to the most pressing decisions.”

Hugh Lagrotteria

Staff Market Researcher



Does seniority matter for influence?

C-suite participants reported the highest strategic-influence score: 1.32, compared with 1.00 for individual contributors. This suggests seniority may play a role, but influence isn’t determined by title alone. Earlier involvement also had a moderate association with influence ($r = 0.36$). That doesn’t show that timing causes influence, but it suggests that process matters alongside position: research has more opportunity to shape a decision when it enters before the direction hardens.



“Research teams are still seen as ‘executional’ and are often brought in only when research is needed. But the true value we bring starts with being involved in business meetings early on, so we can identify needs and come back with insights that help guide the business and its decisions.”

Smriti Sheth

Director of Global Insights



The report isn't the finish line

Getting research into the decision window is only part of the job. Influence also depends on what happens after findings are shared.

Forty-five percent of participants said all three of their most recent research projects informed a decision or led to action. Another 35% said two of their last three did. Together, four in five participants reported that a majority of their recent projects made it beyond the readout.

How consistently projects reached that point also has a modest positive association with strategic influence ($r = 0.27$). This doesn't establish causation, but it shows that follow-through deserves attention alongside timing.

Consider what that follow-through might look like after a positioning study. Instead of ending with a presentation, the researcher may work with marketing to turn the findings into a creative brief—clarifying which customer need should lead and what still needs to be tested. For a product decision, it may mean helping shape concepts before the team commits rather than evaluating a chosen idea afterward.

AI may create more room for this kind of follow-through by accelerating planning, analysis, synthesis, and reporting. Researchers still provide the judgment that connects the evidence to the decision.

That consultative work can also produce:

- Research-informed concepts or mockups ready for testing
- Creative guidelines grounded in the findings
- Point-of-view strategy documents for planning

“Sometimes research produces findings without a clear path to a decision. If the output is just a report or readout, people may say thank you and move on. But when a finding is tied to a specific, actionable recommendation, it’s far easier for stakeholders to act. That can mean building a case for what you believe the evidence supports.”

Angie Liang
Independent Research Leader



Learning should outlive the project

The findings suggest research already has breadth in many organizations:



Influence has depth when research shapes the decision at hand. It has breadth when what the organization learns remains useful beyond the original project.

While 68% said people across their organization can access and use previous research, 28% disagreed. And availability is only one part of the challenge: findings also need enough context for decision-makers to understand when they apply, what has changed, and whether new research is needed.

Research becomes part of everyday decision-making when people can draw on previous learning without depending on a researcher to guide every interaction. That takes infrastructure: a connected body of evidence, the context needed to interpret it, and clear signals for when the organization's understanding needs to be refreshed.

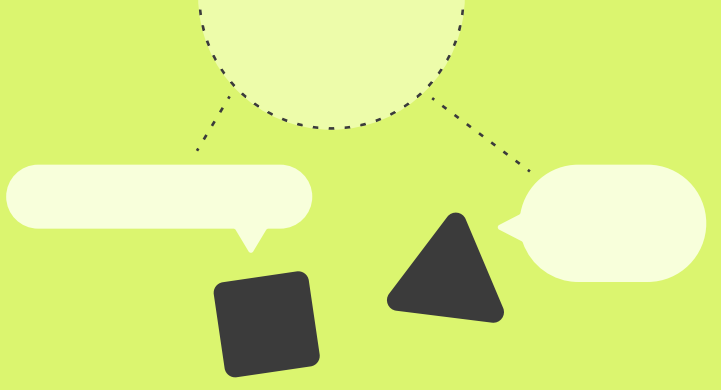
However, that infrastructure remains uneven. Individual contributors were more likely than participants at director level and above to cite limited executive support (32% versus 14%), while managers were the most likely to cite too many disconnected tools (45%). These comparisons don't explain why access and reuse vary across organizations, but they show why individual effort alone isn't enough.



Together, these findings point to a broader need: connecting what the organization has already learned with the decisions it's making now. At Maze, we call this approach a **system of learning**:

- **Baseline:** Establish a shared understanding of customers, competitors, category, brand, and market
- **Monitor:** Stay alert to signals that this understanding may no longer match reality
- **Surface:** Identify the assumptions and open questions that matter to current decisions
- **Research:** Conduct the right research while the relevant choice can still change
- **Decide:** Translate the findings into action and feed the learning into the next baseline and the decisions that follow

That is what makes research part of how the organization operates: it shapes the decision at hand and strengthens the foundation for the next.



“My best research stakeholders for decision-making are the ones I’ve built a personal relationship with—the folks I can grab a coffee with even when I don’t have a formal 1:1 agenda. That’s where I learn about projects that don’t exist yet and decisions that haven’t been formalized. I can then tweak research I’ve got coming up to address the questions I think they’ll need answers to. That gives me more of a seat at the table because I have answers before they’ve asked.”

Theresa Manteiga
Head of Market Research, Asana



Put the learning loop to work

Before the next important decision, ask:

- What assumption is this decision resting on?
- What evidence could change the direction?
- How will what we learn inform the decisions that follow?



The next decision shouldn't start from scratch

The survey shows that research has earned credibility within organizations. The next step is turning that trust into more consistent influence.

AI can create more capacity, but it can't create influence on its own. Research needs to arrive while decisions can still change and shape what happens next. As researchers work across a wider mix of evidence, the question becomes where their time and judgment matter most. Teams can build on what the organization already knows and use AI to move faster where it makes sense. Some decisions will still need deeper evidence and more human judgment.

A system of learning makes that choice easier. When previous research is easy to find and comes with the context to use it well, teams can see what they already know, what may have changed, and where new research is worth the time. What one project teaches the organization becomes part of what it knows going into the next.

For research teams facing more demand with limited resources, that means being deliberate about where their time will have the greatest impact. Knowing what to speed up and what deserves more time gives the next decision a stronger starting point.

Methodology and audience insights



The report survey was created using Maze and distributed between August 3 and August 17, 2026. During that time, Maze collected 205 responses from professionals actively involved in market research—from people conducting and designing studies to those managing research, commissioning work, selecting vendors, or using research to inform business decisions. Participants worked across market research, insights, strategy, marketing, UX research, and related roles.

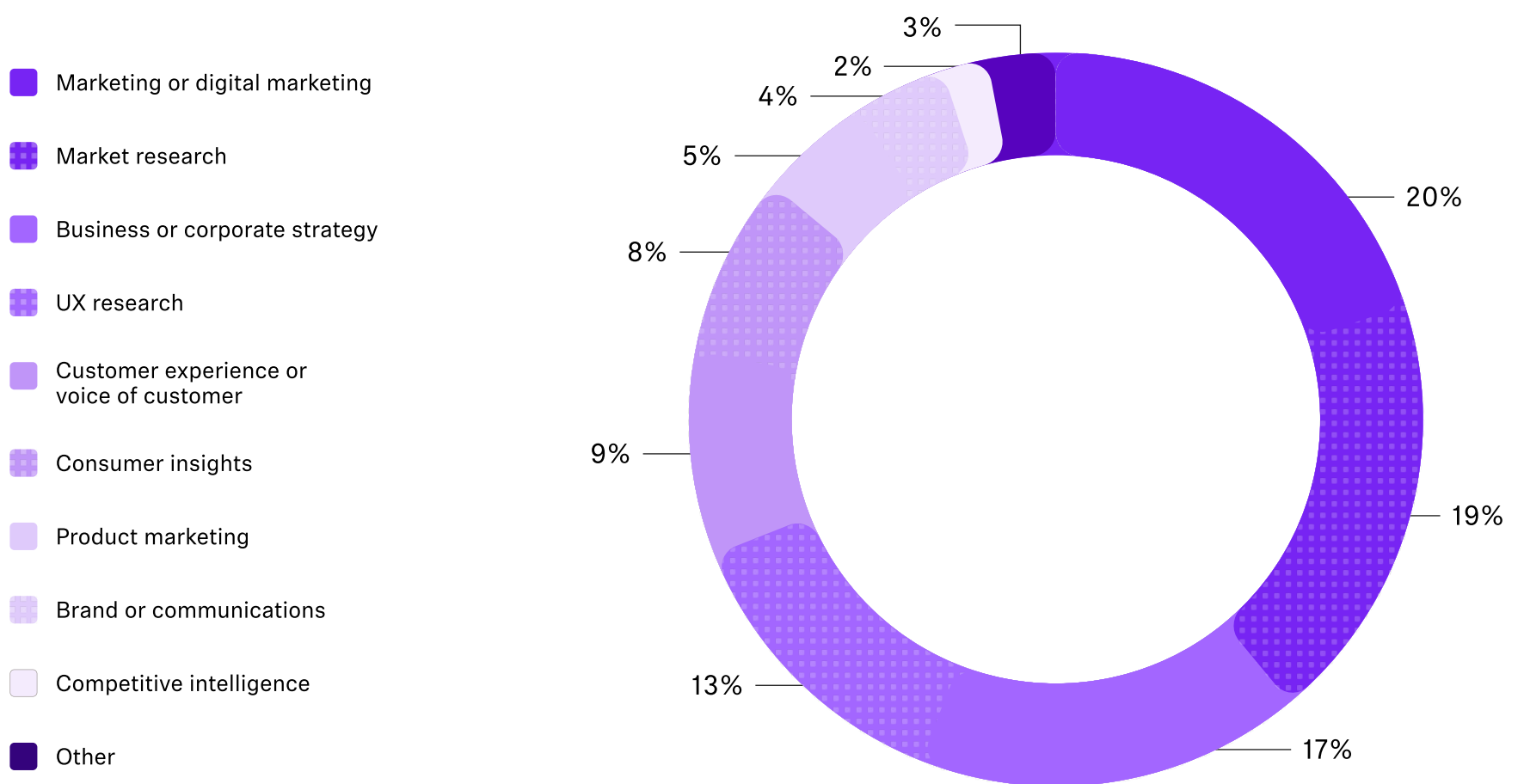


The participant mix reflects how broadly market research now reaches across organizations. While market research professionals made up 19% of participants, the sample also included marketing and digital marketing professionals (20%), business and corporate strategy professionals (17%), UX researchers (13%), customer experience and voice of customer professionals (9%), and consumer insights professionals (8%). Participants represented a range of seniority levels, organization sizes, industries, and regions.

Results are unweighted. Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number and may not total 100%. For questions where participants could select multiple answers, percentages may total more than 100%. Some findings in this report draw on analysis across multiple survey questions. Where we compare demand with resourcing, percentages were calculated using unrounded figures.

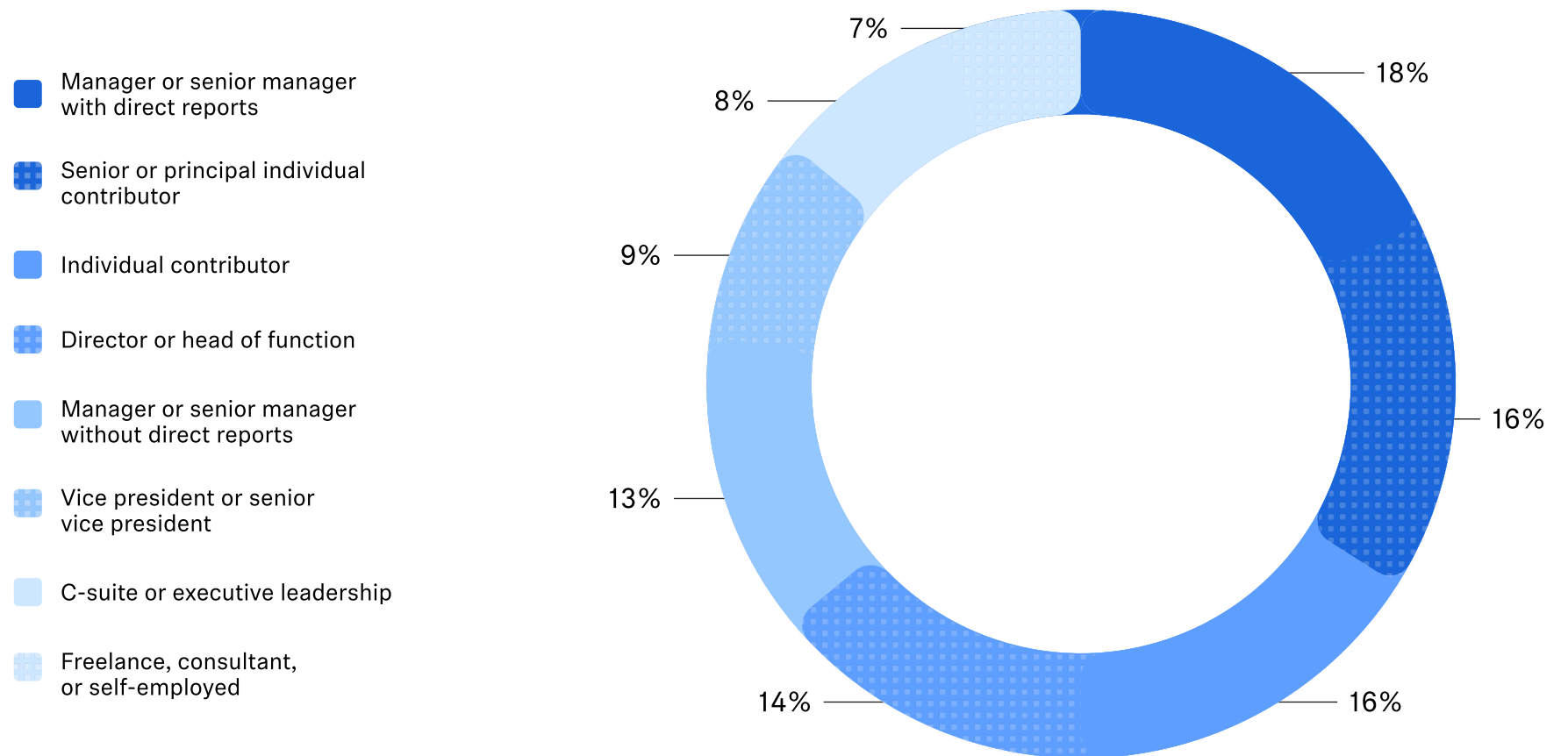
Contributor perspectives featured throughout the report reflect the individuals' own views and responses to the research findings. Their inclusion should not be interpreted as indicating any customer or partner relationship with Maze, or as an endorsement by the individuals or their employers.

Which best describes your primary role?





Which best describes your seniority?

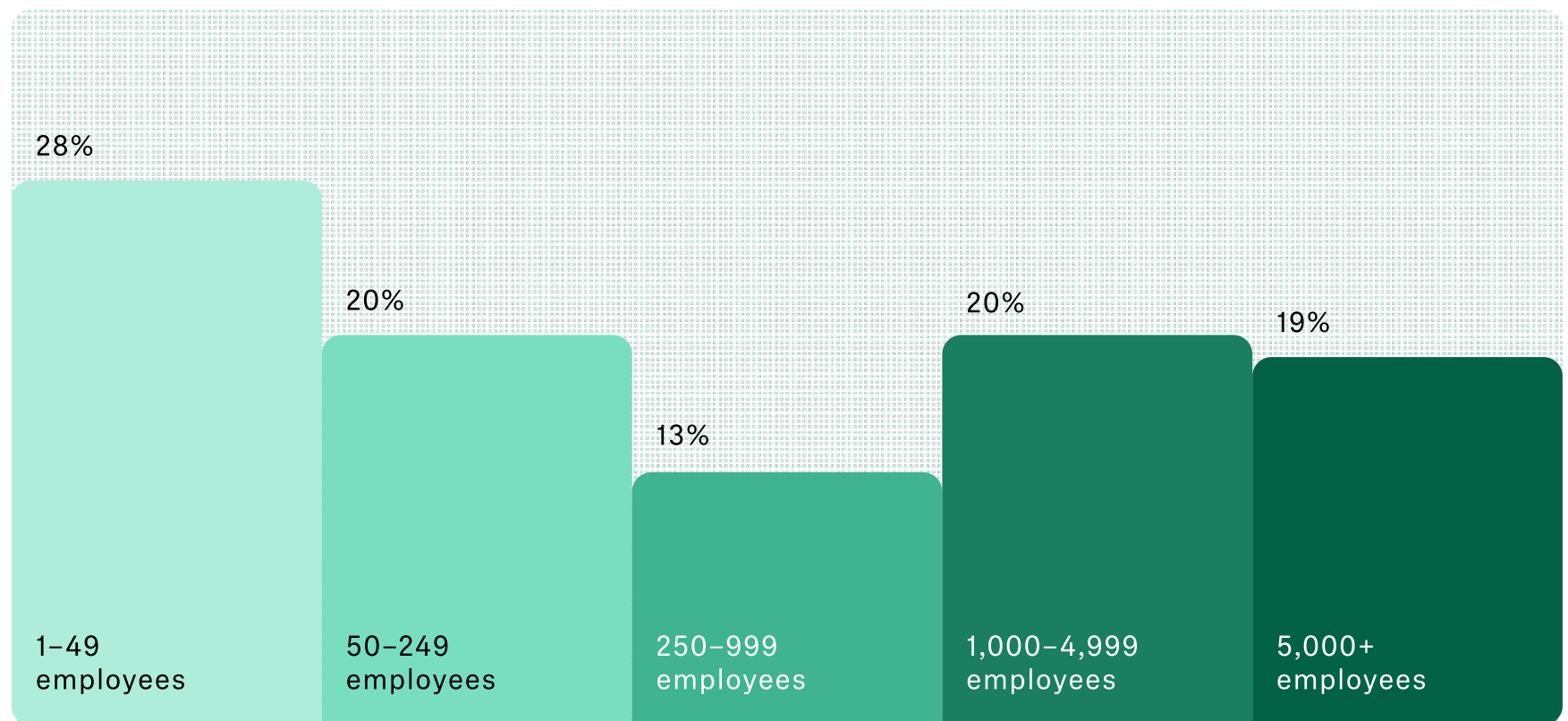


Which region is your organization primarily based in?

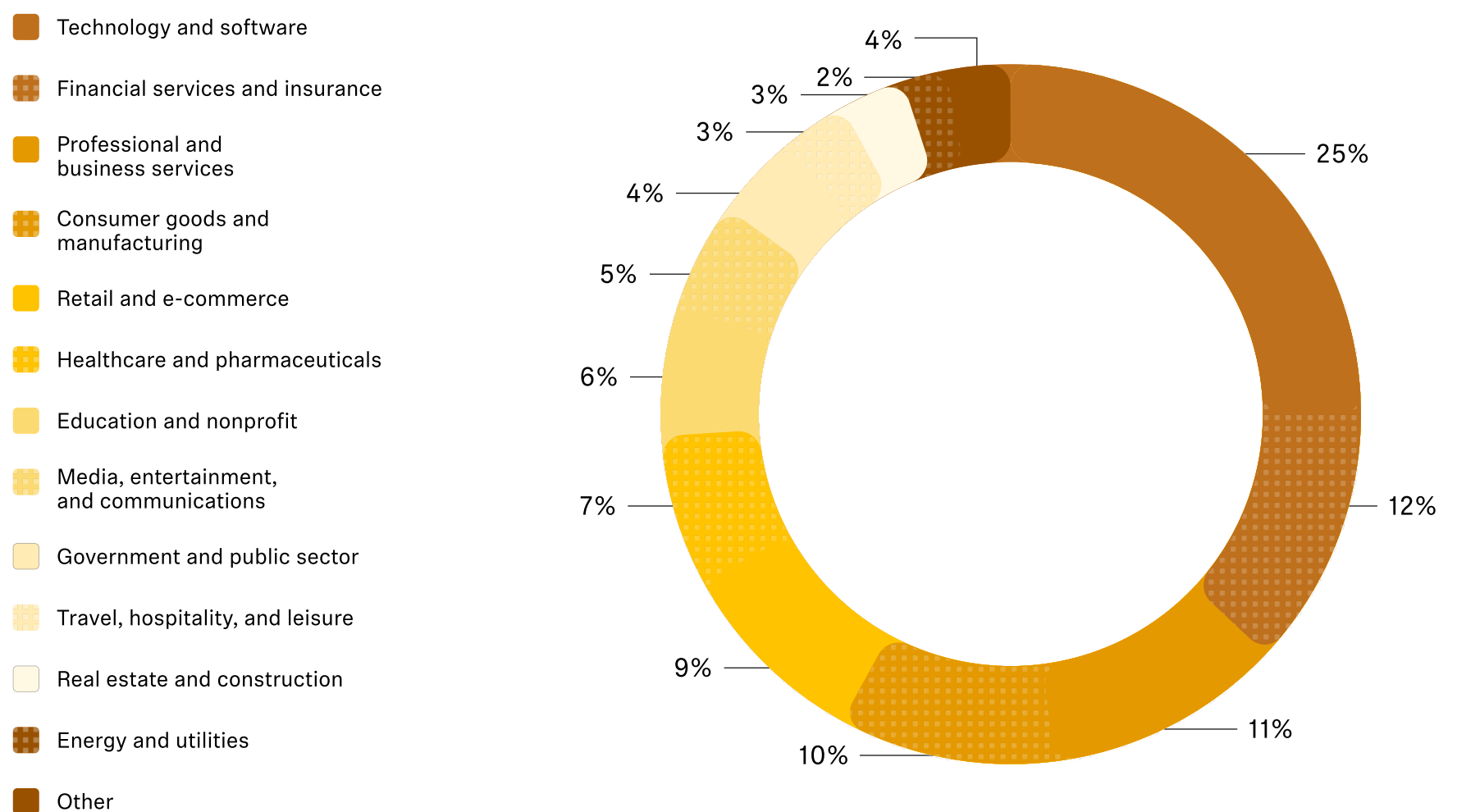




How large is your organization?



Which industry does your organization primarily operate in?





About Maze

Maze empowers researchers to be change makers, turning customer insights into a system of learning that compounds into enduring competitive advantage. By bringing recruiting, testing, and analysis together, Maze helps organizations move beyond one-off studies to a shared, connected foundation of evidence. From researchers to designers and PMs, anyone can run studies that answer any question and drive better strategy. Equipped with Maze's research-grade AI, teams can focus on what matters most: understanding people, connecting what they already know with their biggest decisions, and shaping change with confidence.

Get started with Maze → [Request a demo](#)