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GenAI in M&A

2026 Pulse Survey

Deloitte's new *GenAI in M&A Pulse Survey* gauges the attitudes and activities of corporate and private equity (PE) organizations surrounding the use of Generative AI in M&A. The survey looks specifically at opportunities for scaling GenAI's usage across the deal life cycle, ways to drive greater value creation, and barriers to business adoption *now and in the future.*

Methodology

The survey of 500 US-based PE, portfolio company, and corporate M&A leaders was conducted online by an independent research company May 14–27, 2026. Respondents included 253 C-suite and 247 non-C-suite executives representing the consumer; energy, resources, and industrials; financial services; life sciences and health care; and technology, media, and telecommunications industries.

Top takeaways

GenAI in M&A has crossed the adoption threshold. Now leaders need to make it trustworthy, connected, and deal-ready.

Full integration remains limited, and human review is the top requirement for organizations to trust GenAI in high-stakes deployments. Five findings reveal how organizations can move from experimentation to impact:

Adoption continues
GenAI in M&A is now active, not experimental.

90%

The majority of corporate and PE organizations report using GenAI to some degree in their M&A operations.

More than one-third (37%) use it in multiple life cycle stages, and only **6% report no GenAI use or plans.** Adoption is no longer the question. The next frontier is scaled orchestration.

Use cases expand
Momentum is moving from diligence into close and integration.

52%

More than half of organizations use GenAI for post-close integration.

Deloitte's 2025 *GenAI in M&A Study* revealed the use of GenAI was primarily in early-stage parts of the M&A life cycle such as diligence and valuation. **Organizations are also turning to GenAI for deal closing (49%)**—a 20% increase over last year's survey.

Trust remains imperative
Automated does not yet mean autonomous.

24%

Surveyed leaders said the top requirement for relying on GenAI-generated insights at critical moments was human review.

Data security remains a recurring issue, but respondents also cited output validation and accountability for errors as major barriers to placing greater trust in GenAI.

Integration challenges persist
Fragmented tools and data limit value capture.

57%

Buyer diligence across fragmented data sources was the most cited source of friction that technology brings to transactions.

GenAI adoption is broad, but most organizations have not yet embedded GenAI into a fully connected M&A operating model. Overall, M&A leaders said a system's ability to integrate with approved deal data sources was the most important capability of an M&A technology solution.

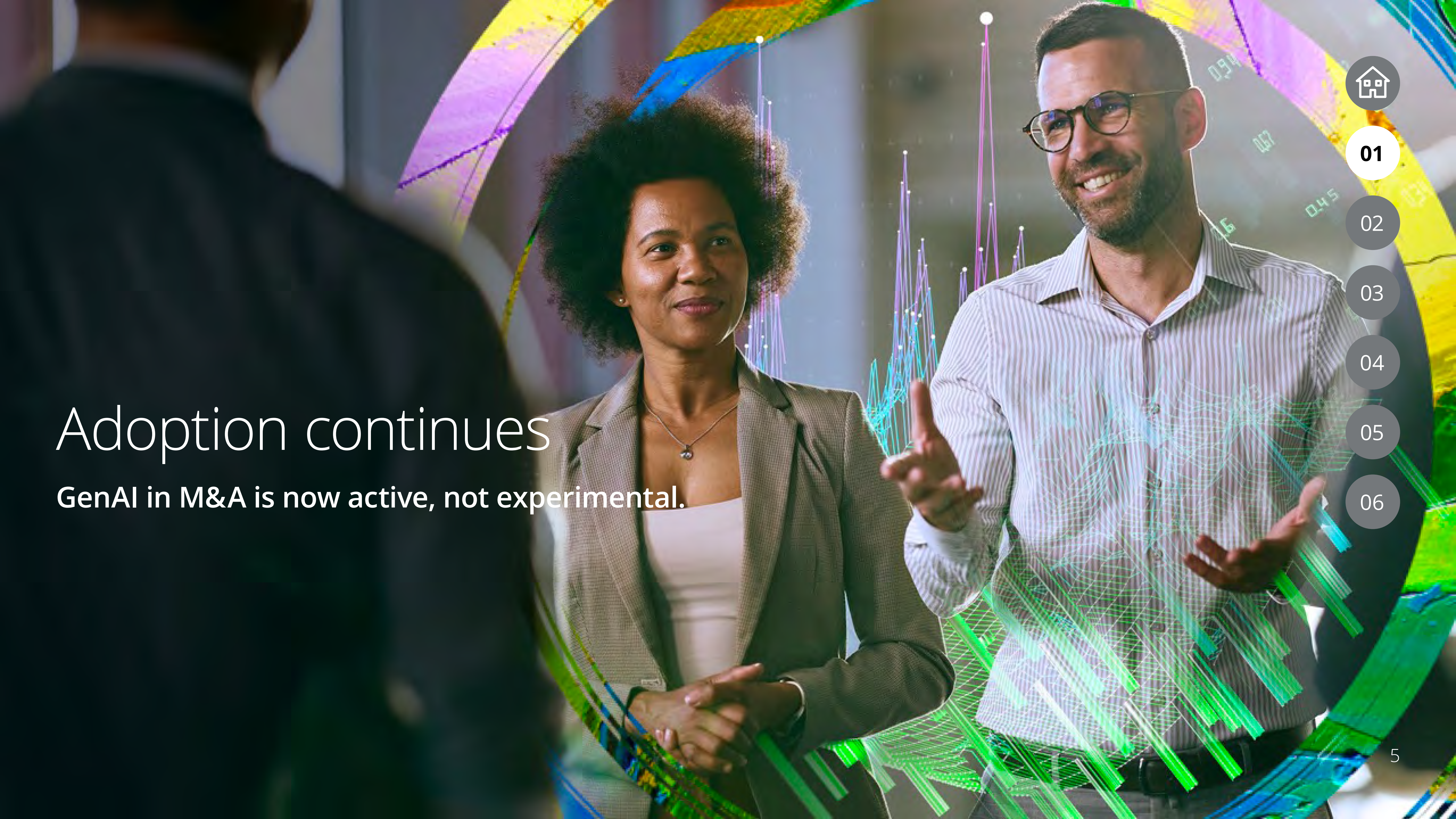
The path forward
Advisory-led operating models and governed data enhance GenAI's attractiveness.

52%

More than half of PE-backed portfolio companies say combining GenAI technology with advisory support is their recipe for most value.

More than one-third (35%) of M&A leaders are actively combining third-party GenAI tools with advisory support, and **20% prefer to receive GenAI benefits through fully managed solutions.**

A closer look



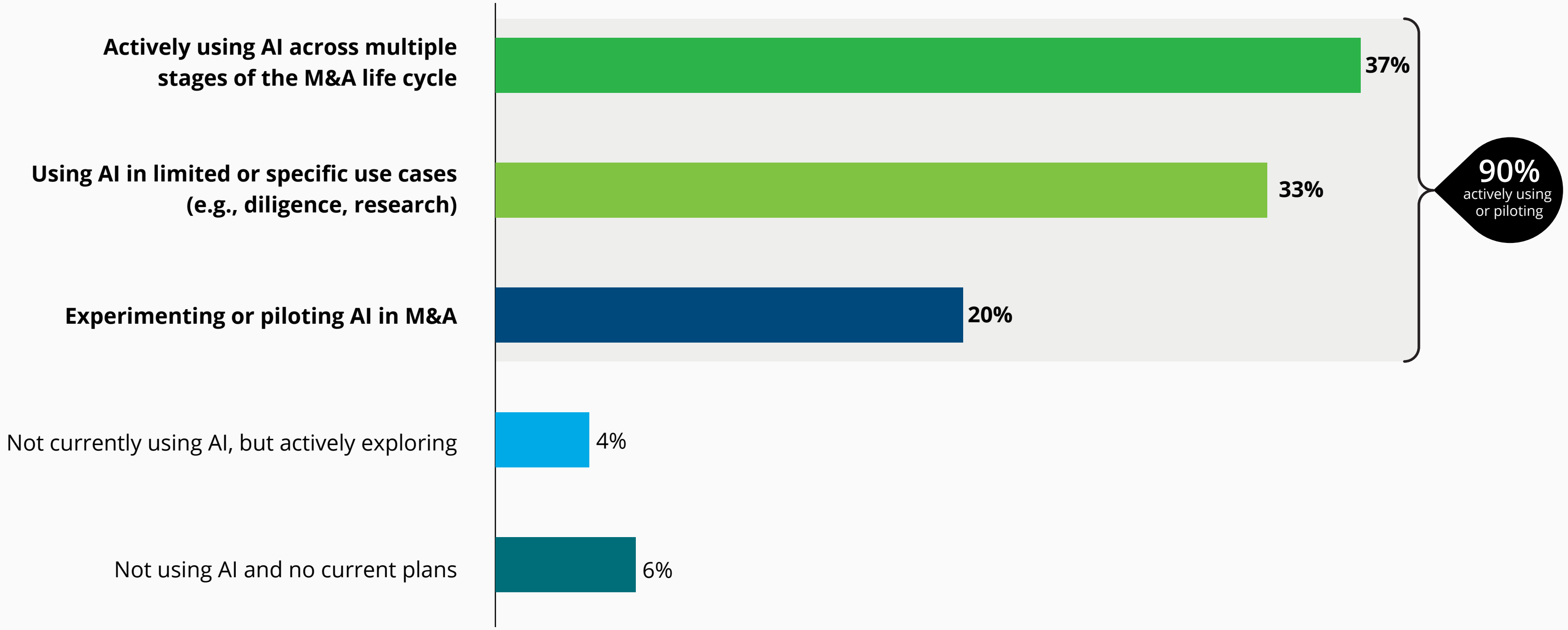
Adoption continues

GenAI in M&A is now active, not experimental.

Current use of AI in the M&A process

Overall, the use of GenAI in M&A processes has crossed a threshold into active deployment. A majority of organizations are applying GenAI to real use cases, and more than one-third are using it across multiple M&A life cycle stages.

Question: *Which of the following best describes your organization's current use of AI (including Generative AI) in M&A processes?*



All respondents (n=500)

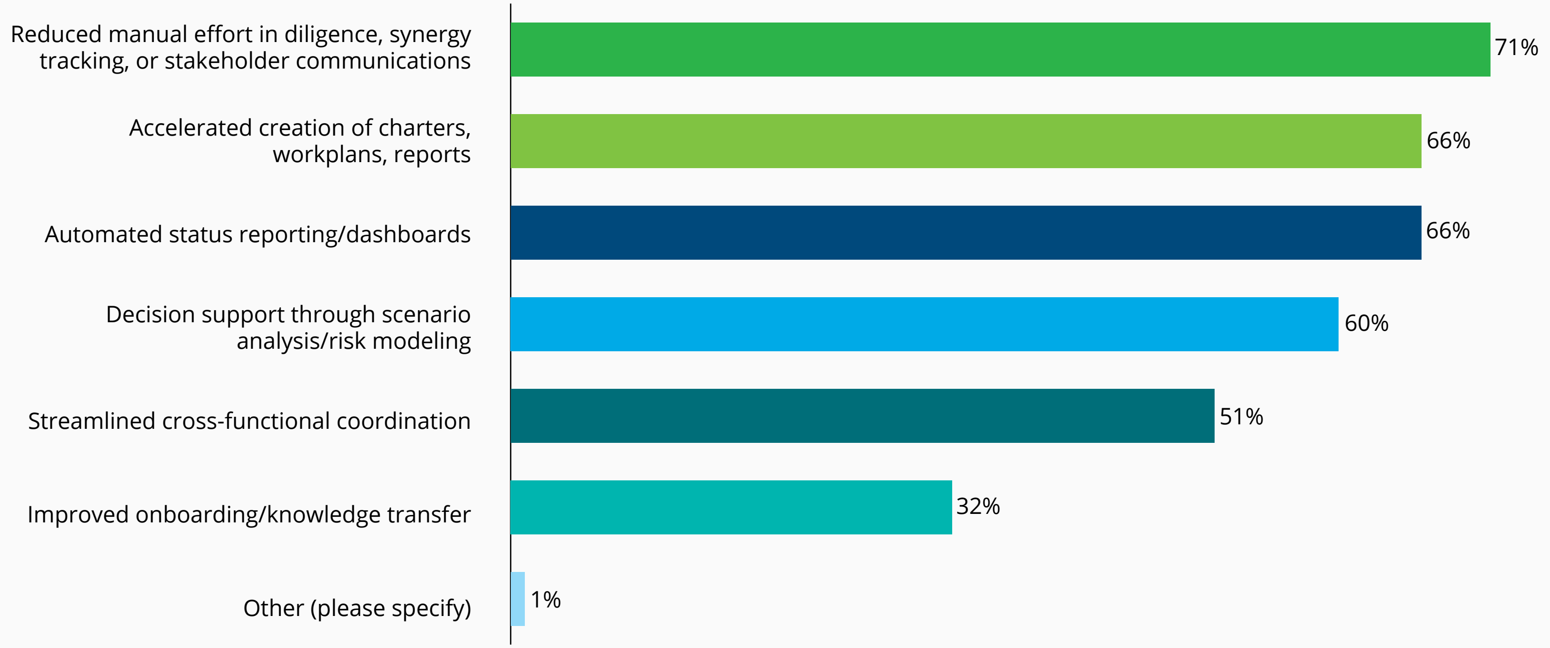
What M&A leaders should consider

Leverage GenAI to accelerate the M&A process across the deal life cycle, and to build a structural advantage, versus those still on the sidelines.

Benefits realized from AI

By reducing manual effort, automating reports, and accelerating documentation tasks, GenAI is already delivering tangible productivity gains for two-thirds or more of M&A organizations, even if more complex deployments remain ahead.

Question: *What benefits has your organization realized from using AI in M&A?*



Respondents excluding AI non-users (n=465)

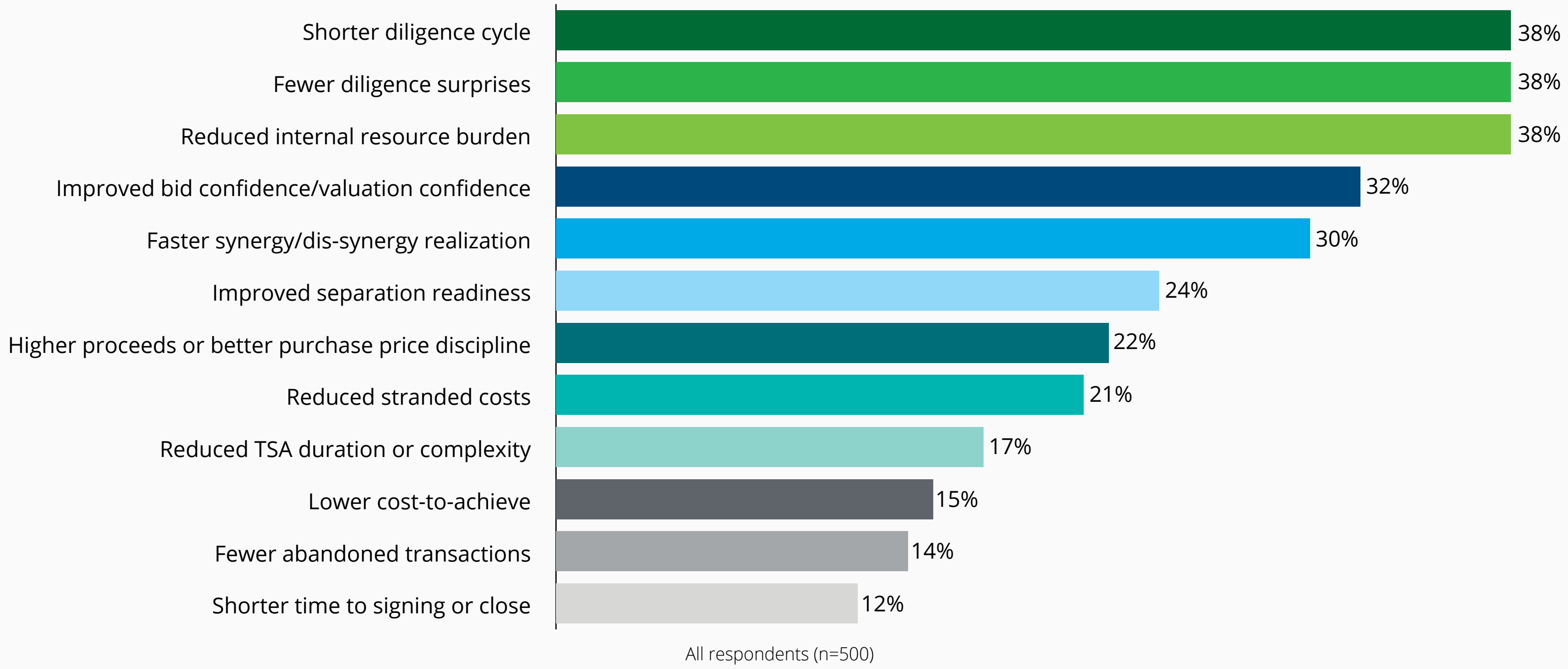
What M&A leaders should consider

Tangible productivity gains from AI pose a new choice for leaders: where to reinvest the time they've saved to dive deeper and build key sources of deal value with more certainty.

Outcomes used to evaluate AI impact

In evaluating GenAI's contributions to M&A, organizations are focused less on raw speed and more on functions that have the potential to rein in overall costs.

Question: *Which outcomes would you use to evaluate whether AI improved M&A execution?*



What M&A leaders should consider

First-order benefits such as processing speed get the headlines, but GenAI investments should follow the value in business process improvement.

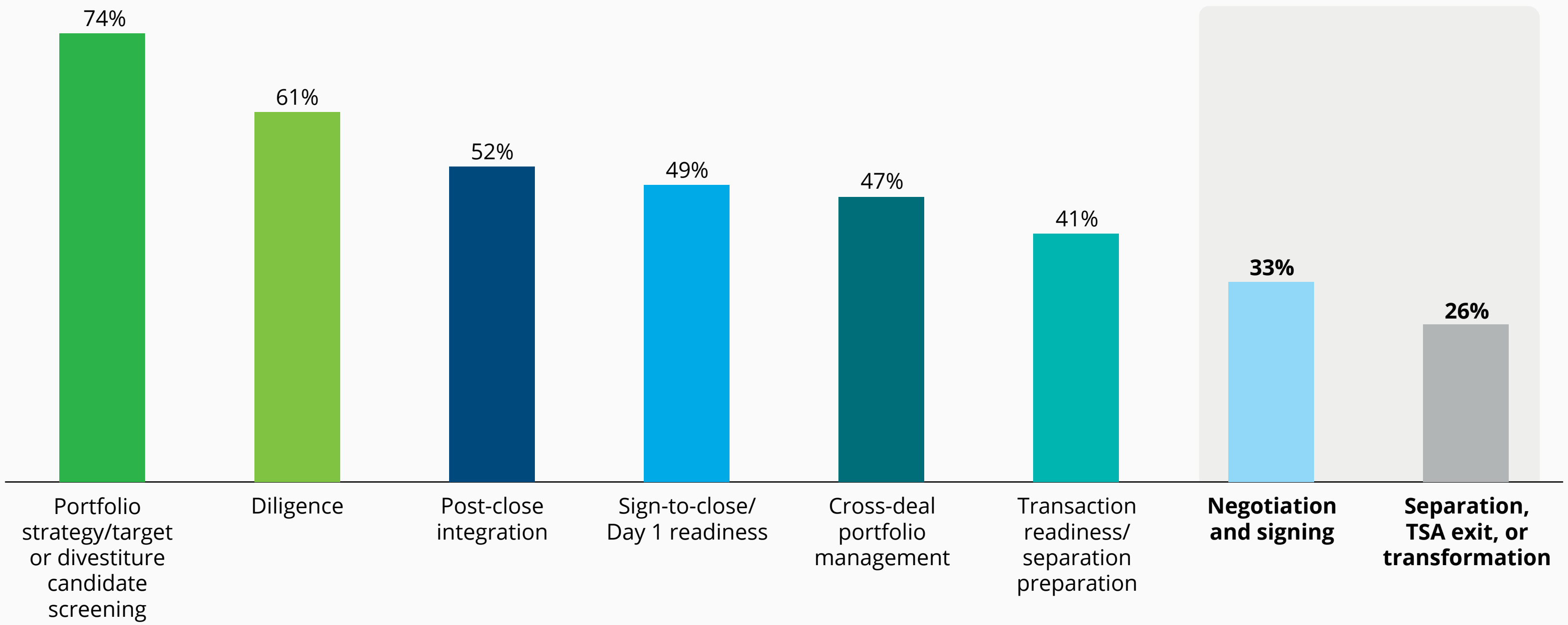
Use cases expand

Momentum is moving from diligence into close and integration.

Life cycle stages where AI is used

Earlier surveys found GenAI use focused mostly on early exploratory stages of the life cycle, but now about half of M&A organizations also report using or piloting GenAI for deal closure and integration. Only one-third use it for judgment-intensive negotiating steps, however.

Question: *At which stages of the M&A life cycle is AI currently used or being piloted?*



Respondents excluding AI non-users (n=465)

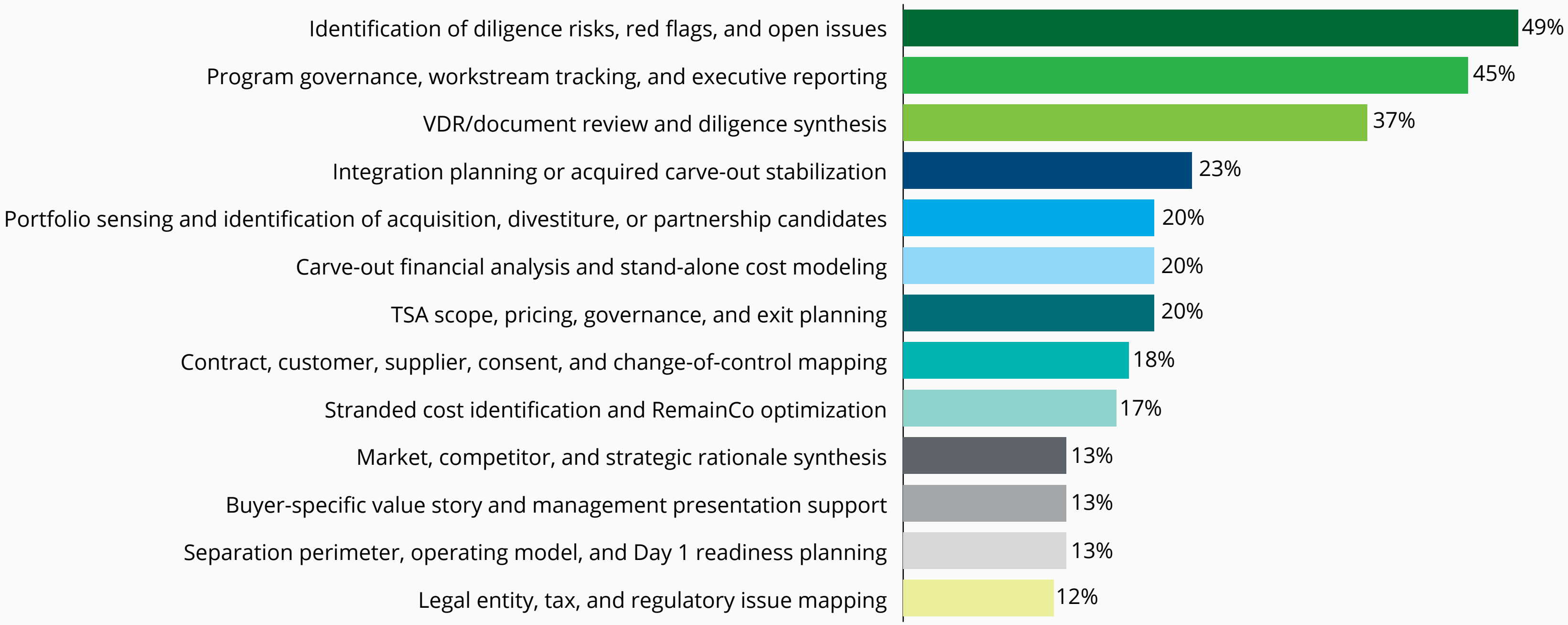
What M&A leaders should consider

Don't feel confined to early life cycle stages for GenAI, but be mindful of the places where automation can't fully replace judgment.

Highest-value AI use cases

M&A organizations see the most potential value from GenAI in areas like diligence risk identification, program governance, workstream tracking, and document review—areas where applications are establishing strong track records.

Question: *Which of the following AI use cases would deliver the most immediate value in your next transaction?*



All respondents (n=500)

What M&A leaders should consider

The areas where GenAI delivers value are likely to keep growing. As new, high-value use cases emerge, keep a focus on returns you can understand and measure.

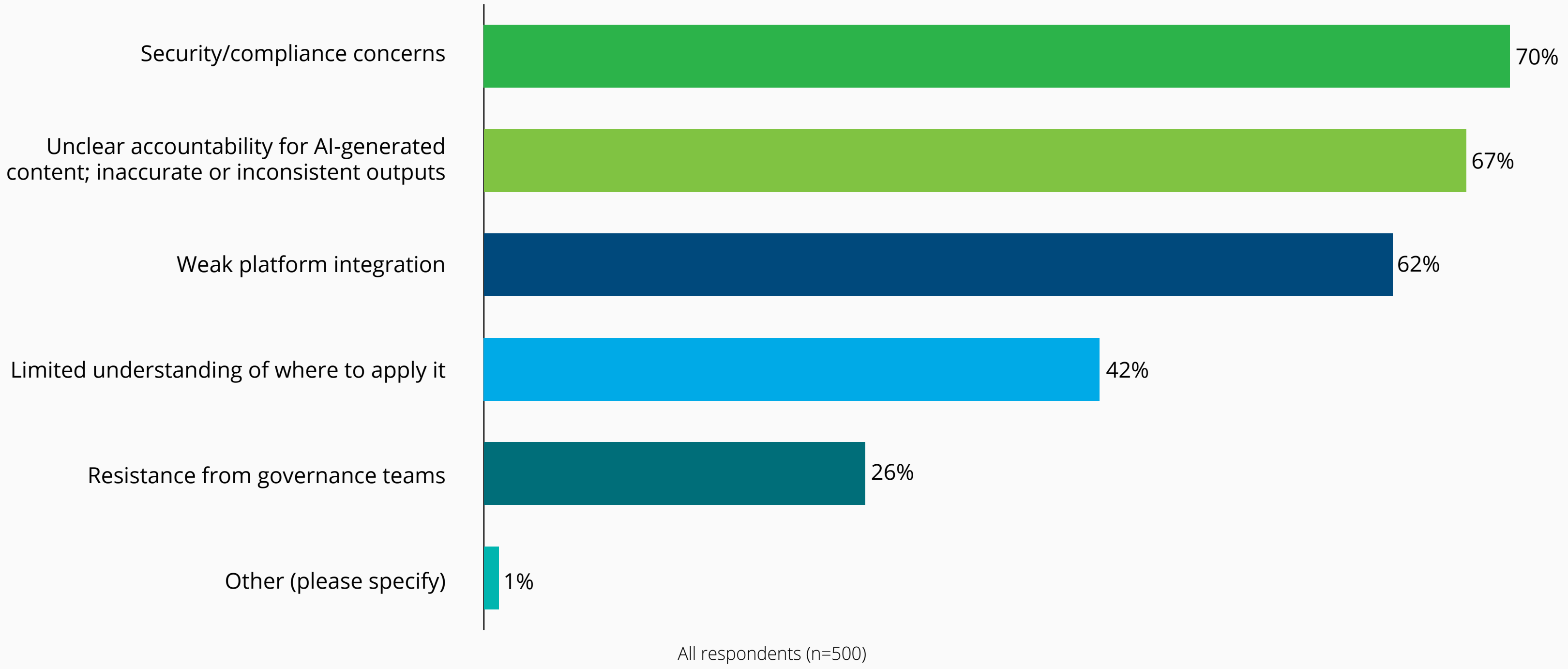
Trust remains imperative

Automated doesn’t yet mean autonomous.

Risks and limitations in GenAI governance

Teams now better understand how and where to apply AI, but technology integration and security remain top concerns.

Question: *What risks or limitations have you observed in using GenAI for deal governance?*



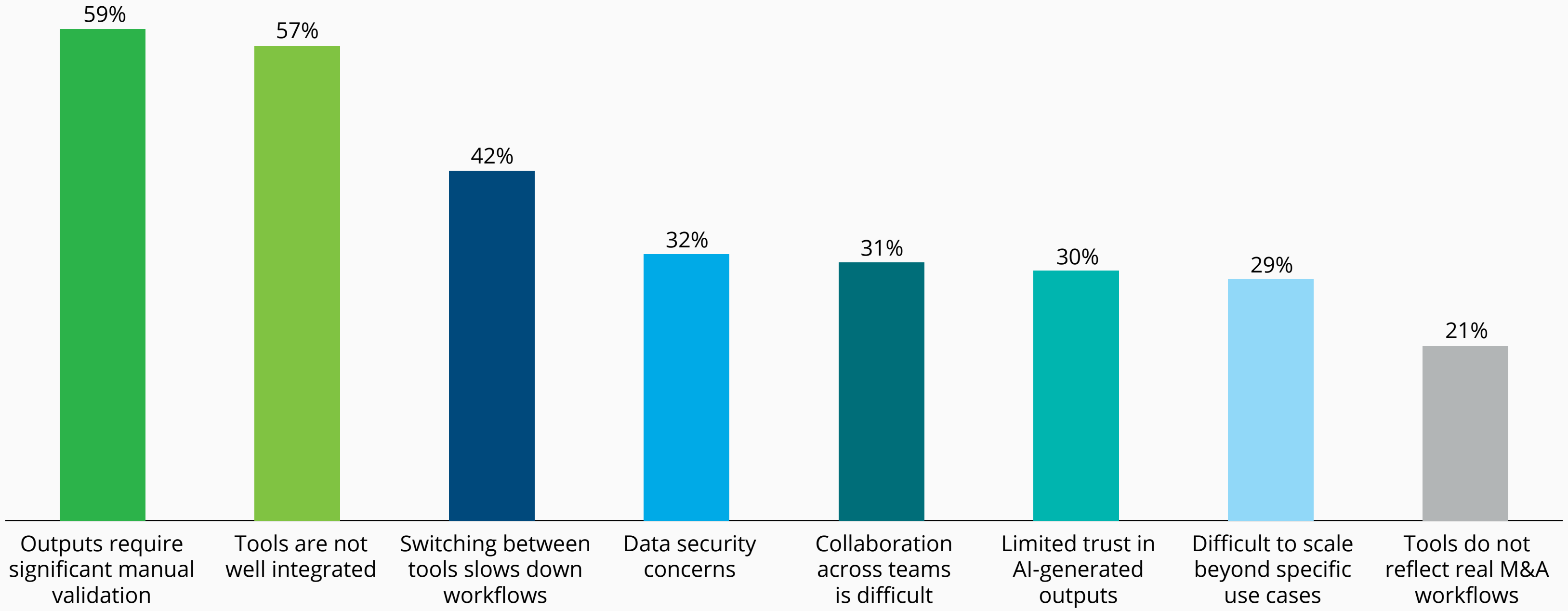
What M&A leaders should consider

Remember that because GenAI processes are not highly visible, practices and mechanisms to verify its outputs are essential.

Challenges with current tools

When asked about challenges involving solutions in current use, M&A leaders were more likely to cite tool integration and the persistent need for manual output validation.

Question: *What are the top 3 biggest challenges you face with current tools used in M&A?*



All respondents (n=500)

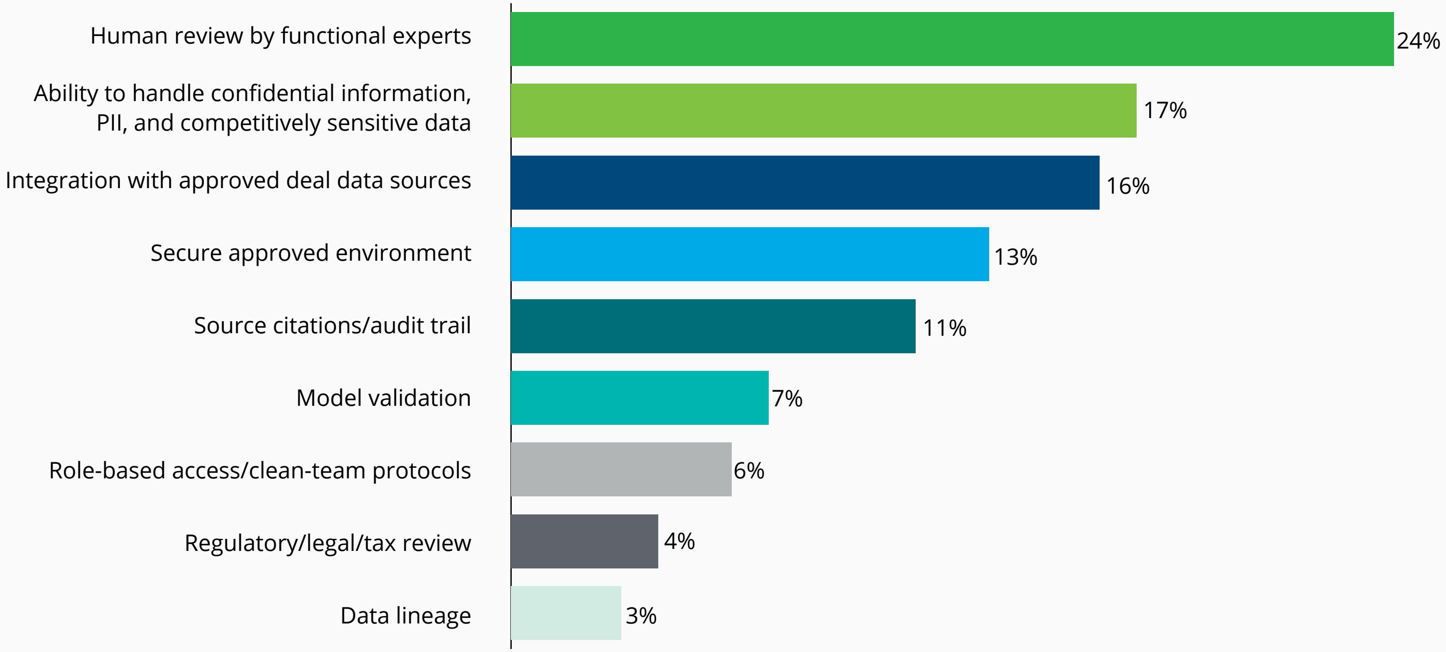
What M&A leaders should consider

In addition to validating GenAI outputs, plan deployments and choose tools in ways that promote interoperability.

Requirements to rely on AI in high-stakes decisions

Before M&A teams will rely fully on GenAI, they say human oversight and review is a top requirement. Data security is also a significant requirement.

Question: *What would be required for your organization to rely on AI-generated insights in high-stakes transactions decisions?*



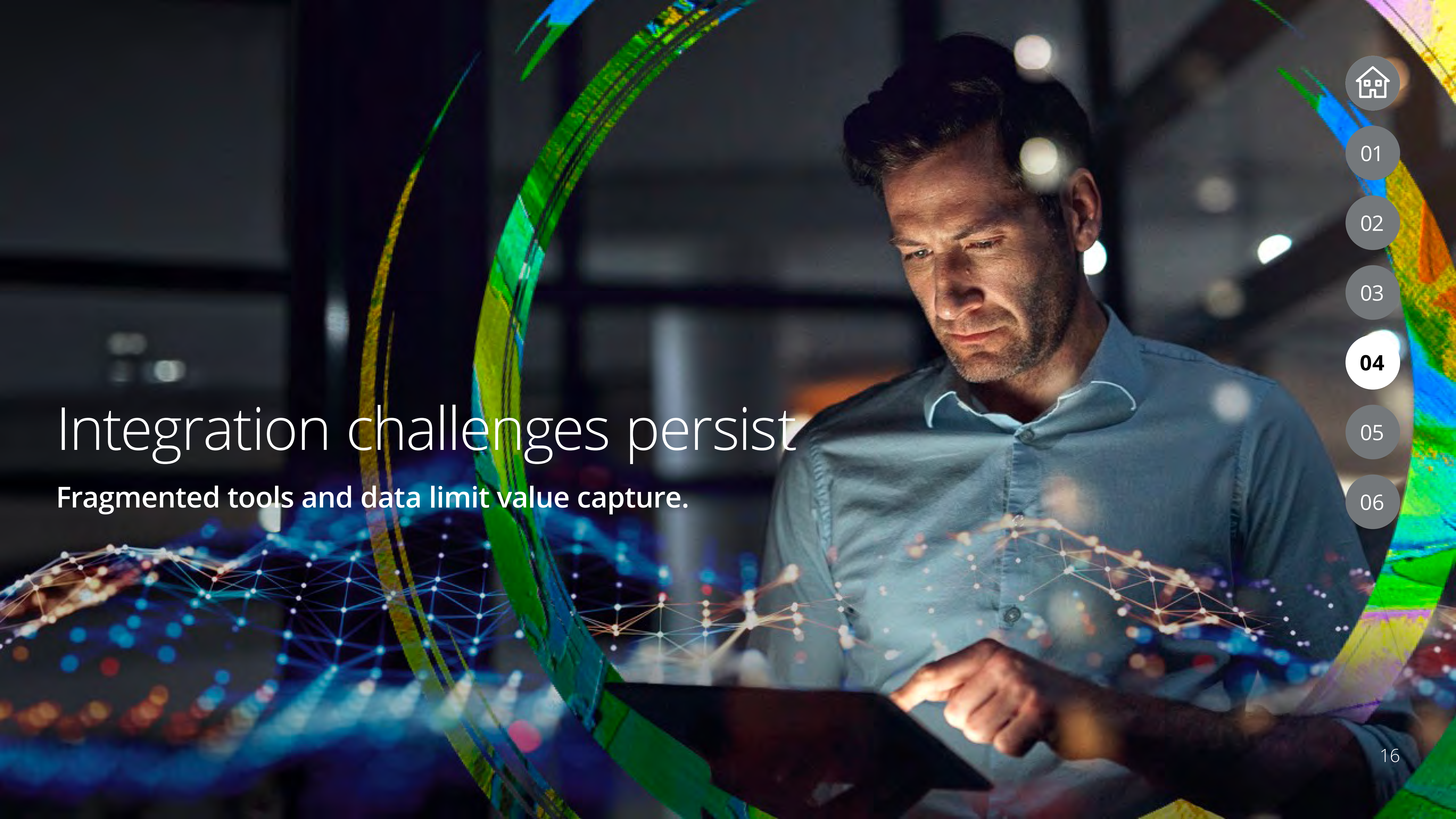
All respondents (n=500)

What M&A leaders should consider

Don't allow reliance on GenAI to grow faster than its actual reliability, and define the steps necessary to reach the desired level of trust.

Integration challenges persist

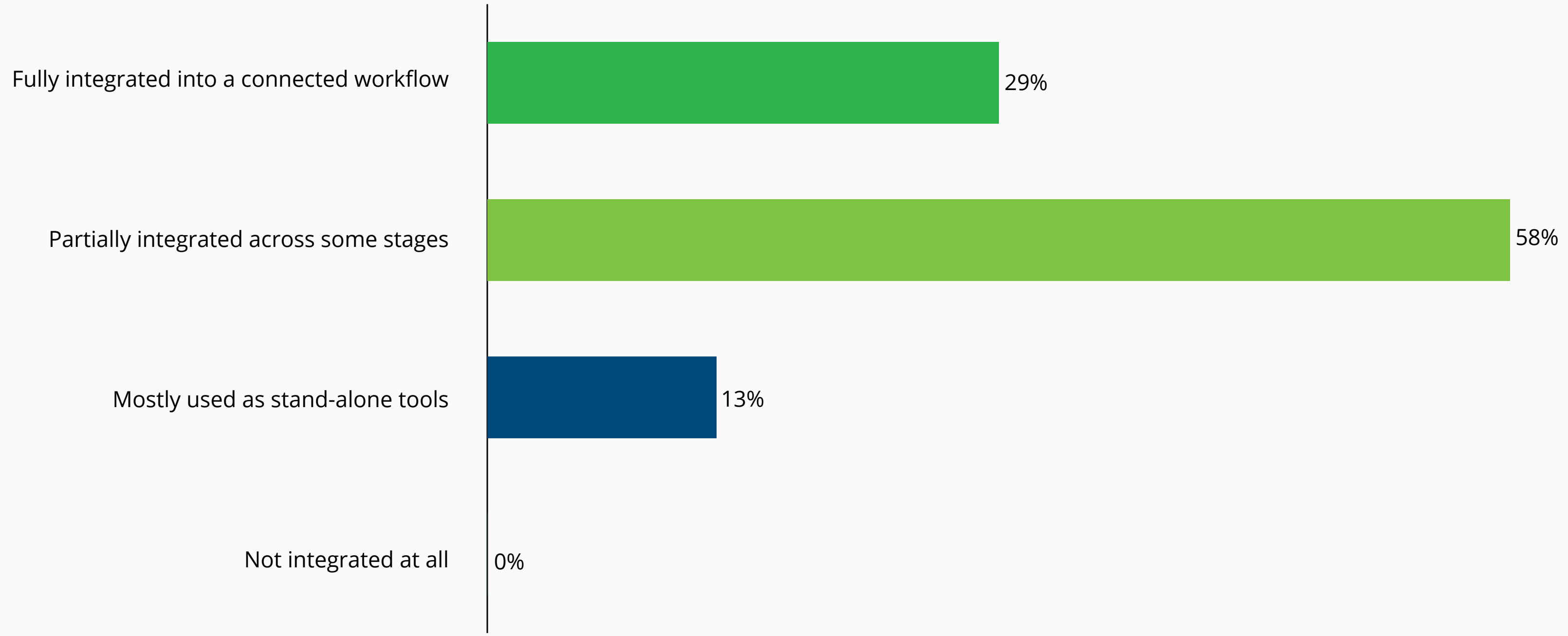
Fragmented tools and data limit value capture.



Tools integration

Fewer than one-third of M&A organizations have achieved full integration of GenAI tools across the life cycle. As teams move toward GenAI-enabled deal orchestration, though, more than half say they have achieved partial integration.

Question: *How would you best describe how these tools work together in your M&A process?*



Respondents excluding AI non-users (n=465)

What M&A leaders should consider

Prioritize AI architecture and approved-data connectivity before adding more point solutions.

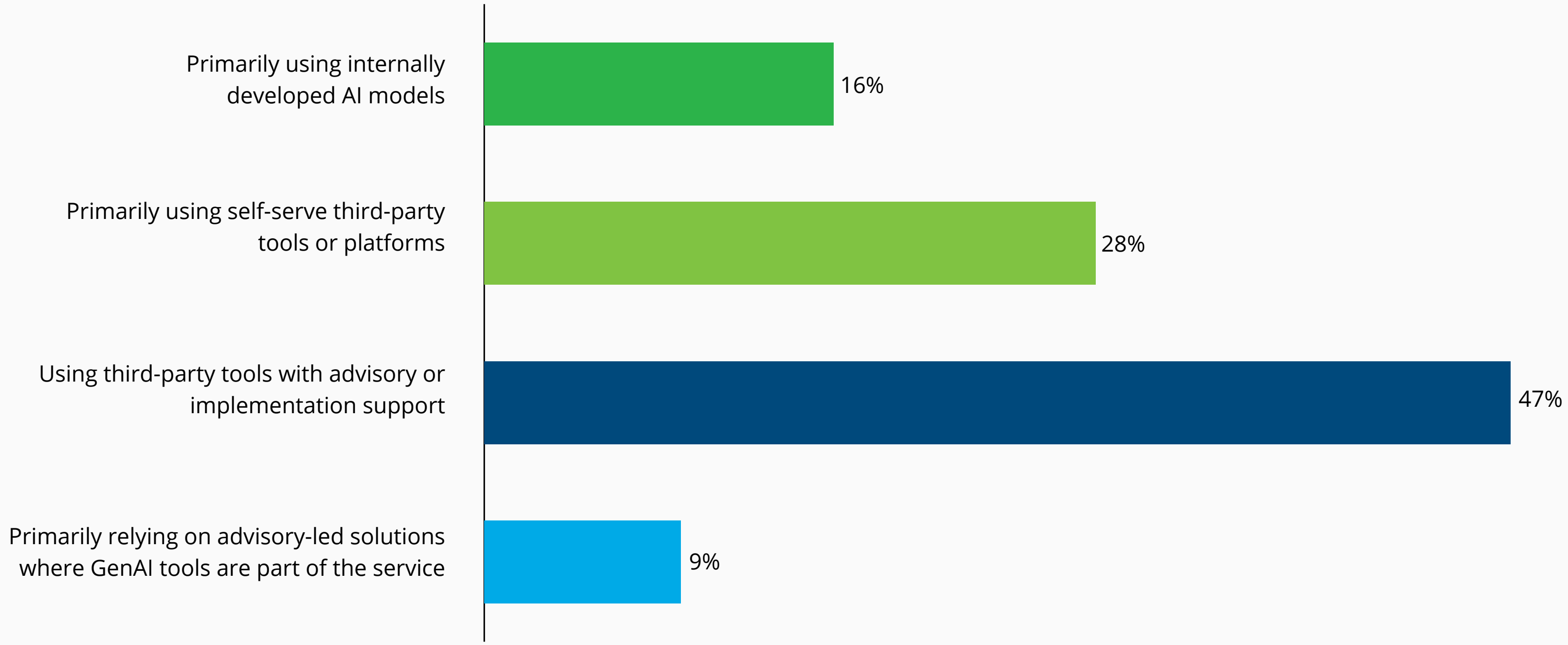
The path forward

Advisory-led operating models and governed data enhance GenAI's attractiveness.

Current GenAI usage model

While GenAI use is growing, most M&A organizations aren't going it alone. More than half seek outside GenAI support, either to help implement third-party tools or to provide advisory solutions that build GenAI in.

Question: *Which of the following best describes how your organization currently uses GenAI in M&A processes?*



All respondents (n=500)

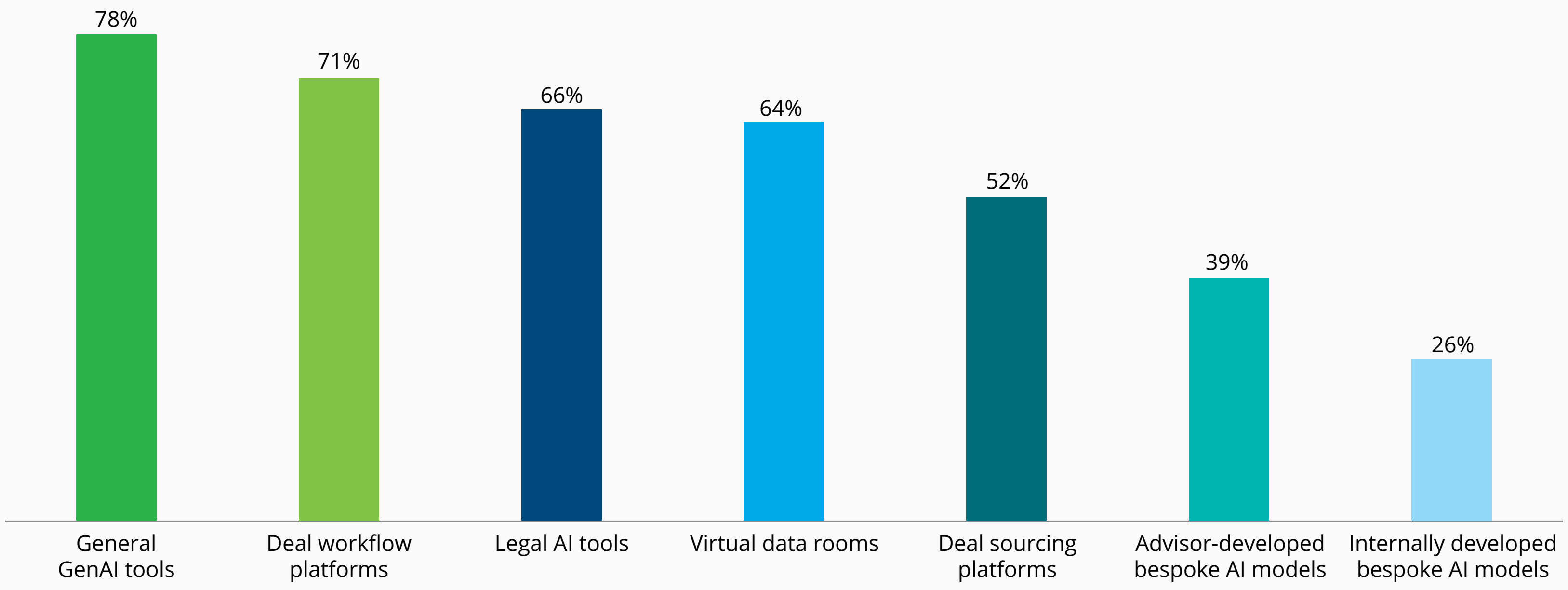
What M&A leaders should consider

Don't conflate GenAI adoption with the need to go it alone. New tools may perform more effectively in specialized hands.

Tools and platforms used

While bespoke GenAI models are less prevalent than general GenAI tools and specialized applications for deal flow, legal, and virtual data rooms, organizations that prefer custom tools are more likely to seek them through advisory relationships.

Question: *Which tools or platforms does your organization currently use in M&A processes?*



Respondents excluding AI non-users (n=465)

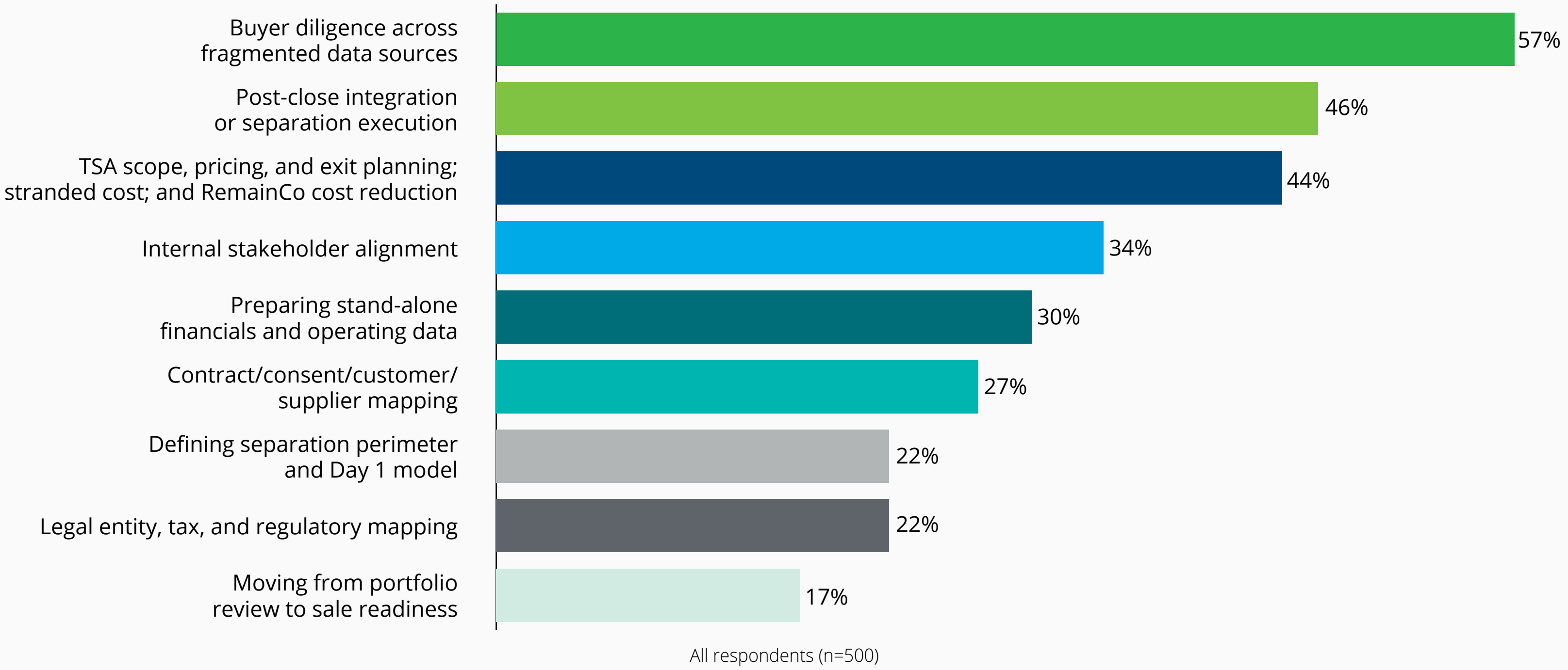
What M&A leaders should consider

The more specialized the GenAI applications you are planning to use, the more you should consider the value of an advisory relationship.

Transaction friction points

As GenAI implementation in M&A picks up speed, organizations are encountering common friction points that require support, including diligence with fragmented data, post-close execution, and follow-through steps such as TSA scope, stranded costs, and RemainCo planning.

Question: *Where does technology create—or fail to reduce—the most friction in transactions?*



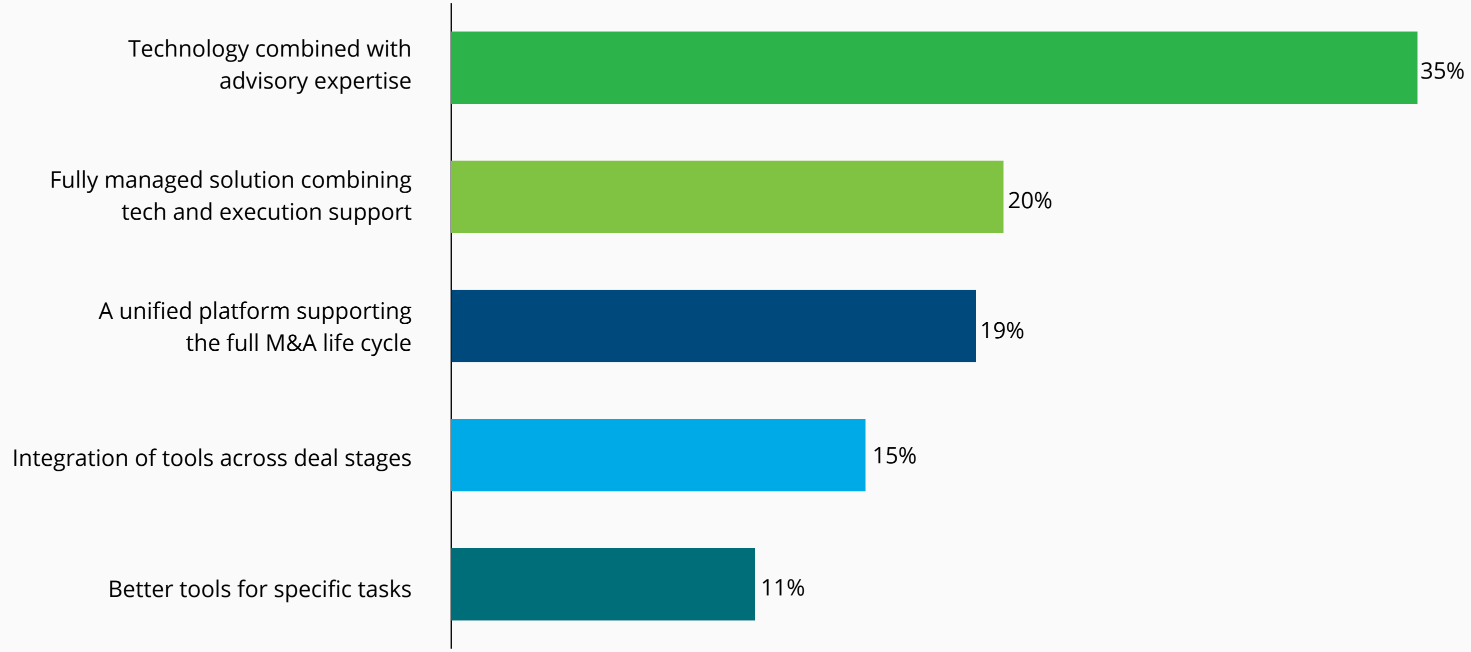
What M&A leaders should consider

Learn from other organizations' experiences to anticipate and get ahead of potential development and deployment challenges.

What creates the most value

M&A organizations find the path to value in GenAI use lies in the combination of technology and advisory support—more than three times as important as the strength of individual tools.

Question: *Which of the following creates the most value for your organization?*



All respondents (n=500)

What M&A leaders should consider

Remember that like any technology, the value of GenAI is partly in what it can do and partly in how well it's put to use. Those skills may be external.

Conclusion

GenAI is maturing. So is the role the technology plays in the work of M&A. That means that organizations are finding and realizing new benefits as they put earlier hurdles behind them, but each step forward also brings them up against new, more complex challenges.

Dealmakers are coming to terms with some common insights as they proceed down their GenAI in M&A journeys. One is that no degree of automation power can replace judgment and validation from human users. Another is that the blend of technology complexity, industry-specific requirements, and sheer workload makes it unwieldy to build, use, and govern GenAI systems in-house. Getting advisory help with GenAI is a solution to this, and getting GenAI-powered advisory help offers a further advantage.

How Deloitte can help

With its experienced, multidisciplinary teams, Deloitte is a recognized leader in M&A. Our teams support many industries with specific technology adoption, integration, and governance solutions—including through the Deloitte M&A Platform, which addresses the connectivity, data governance, and advisory-led delivery gaps this survey's respondents identified as most critical. As M&A organizations turn to managed-service relationships for their use of GenAI, the combination of these strengths makes it possible for Deloitte to play a valuable role in helping you shape what comes next.

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