State of Direct Mail

Business Insights 2026

Lob

Letter from the CEO

Direct mail continues to be one of marketing's most trusted and highest-performing channels. But the difference between good and great now comes down to operations – how efficiently teams produce, deliver, and measure every send.

Nearly 90% of marketers say logistics (printing, shipping, and delivery) remains a blind spot, often leading to surprise costs or missed timelines. The challenge isn't USPS itself – it's that many teams lack clear internal ownership of logistics, making it harder to stay ahead of pricing and service changes that directly affect planning and performance.

At Lob, we've seen how connecting data and logistics can turn direct mail into a measurable, efficient growth engine. When marketers have visibility into production and delivery, they move faster, reduce costs, and plan with confidence.

This year's State of Direct Mail: Business Insights explores the state of direct mail logistics, including where the bottlenecks are, and how high-ROI teams are streamlining creation, production, and delivery for better results.

Ryan Ferrier
CEO, Lob

STUDY METHODOLOGY

Lob, in partnership with Kelsey White Research Consulting, surveyed 250 senior marketing and operations leaders in North America who oversee direct mail programs. Respondents represented companies sending 1M+ mail annually across industries including financial services, healthcare, insurance, retail, and automotive.

What's inside

Direct mail continues to be one of marketing's most trusted and highest-performing channels.

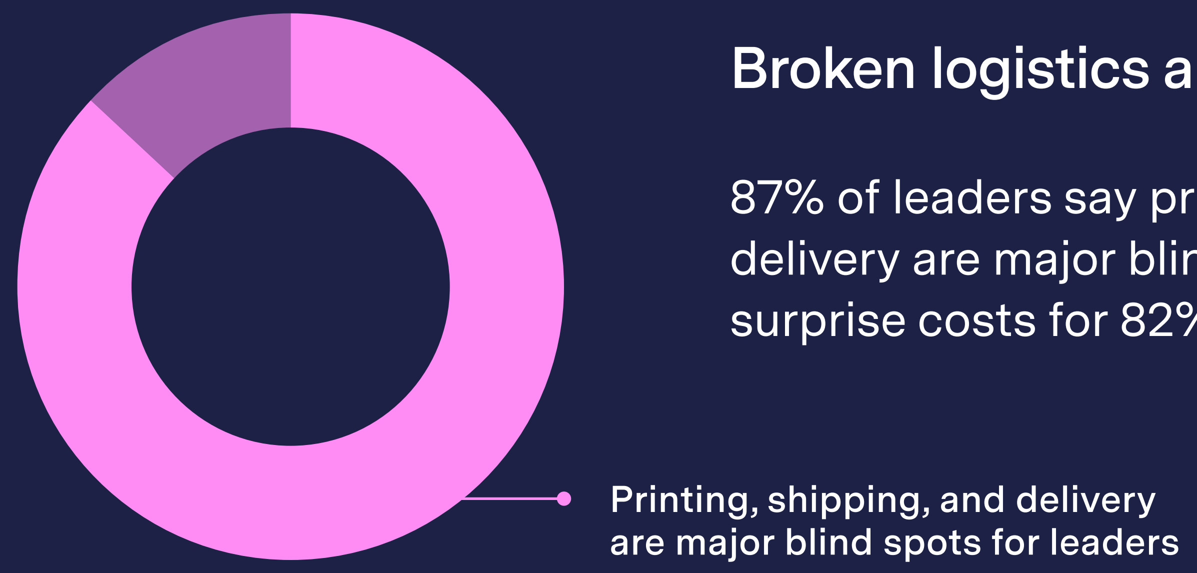
But in 2026, the difference between good and great comes down to operations, including how efficiently teams produce, deliver, and measure every send.

This year's findings show that as direct mail budgets grow, many teams are still operating with major blind spots in logistics and delivery. The strongest programs are closing those gaps with clearer ownership, better visibility, and smarter use of data and automation.

Key findings

Direct mail is earning a bigger slice.

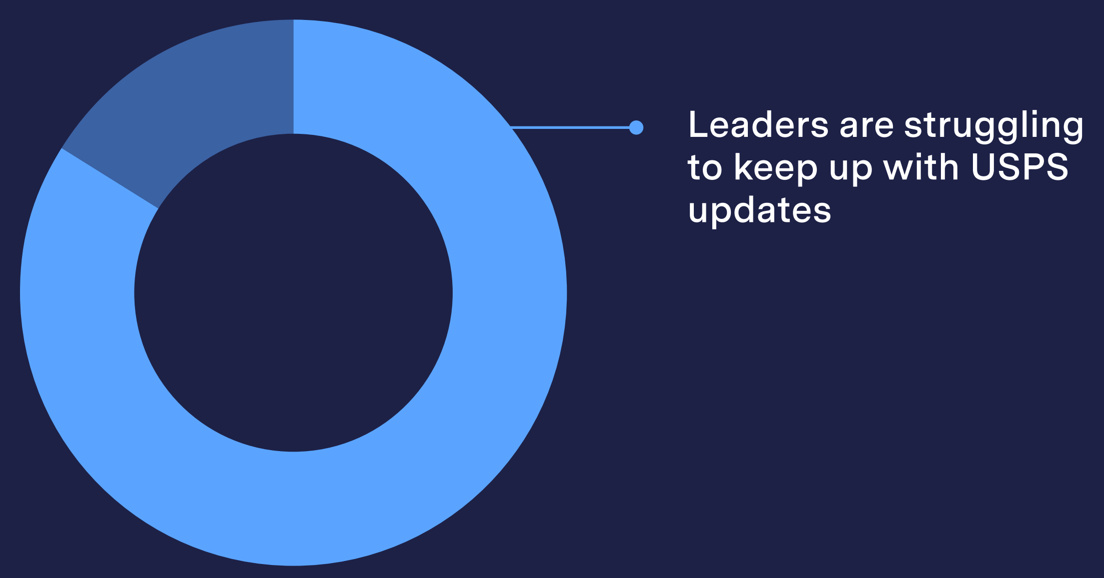
Companies now dedicate 25% of marketing budgets to direct mail, and 9 in 10 increased investment this year.



Broken logistics are breaking budgets.

87% of leaders say printing, shipping, and delivery are major blind spots – creating surprise costs for 82% of teams.

Key findings, continued...



USPS changes keep teams reactive.

Eighty-four percent of leaders struggle to track updates, and 51% say shifting rates and models have disrupted planning.

Clear ownership drives efficiency.

Teams without defined logistics owners are more likely to face delays, rising costs, and planning disruptions.

High-ROI teams use AI with intent.

While nearly everyone automates, top performers apply AI where it matters most, with personalization, attribution, and delivery accuracy.

Relevance drives strong personalization.

Ninety-six percent of leaders say personalization lifts results, but the strongest campaigns use behavior, preferences, and milestones to deliver perfectly timed mail.

Direct mail budgets are *growing*

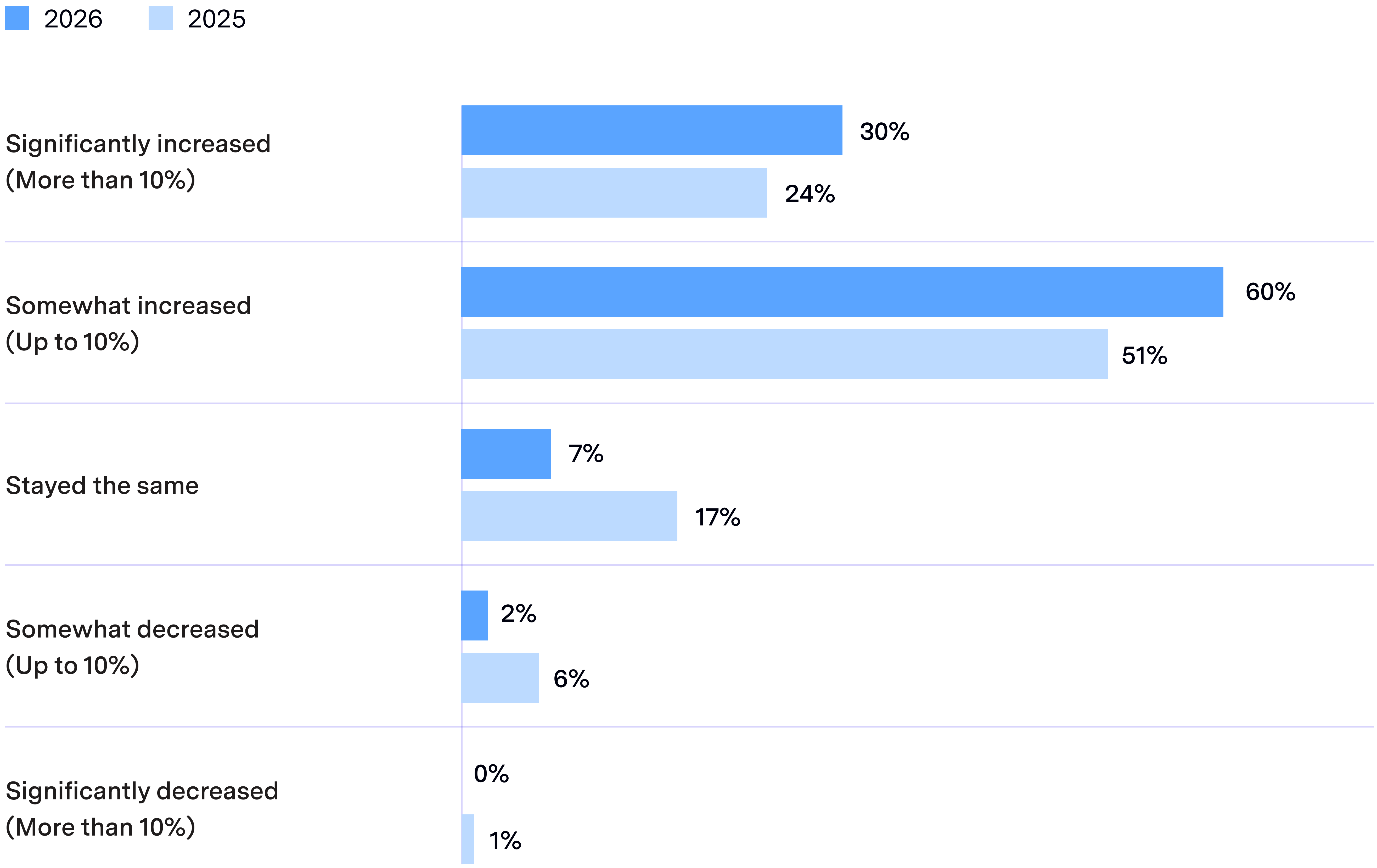
Direct mail continues to command a meaningful share of marketing budgets. On average, companies allocate 25% of marketing spend to the channel, and 9 in 10 leaders increased their direct mail budget allocation year over year.

As investment grows, the opportunity is clear. High-ROI organizations pair increased spend with stronger execution, including logistics visibility, measurement, and stack integration.

Bigger budgets pay off.

High-ROI organizations are more likely to have increased their allocation toward direct mail this year.

How has your company's 2026 allocation of marketing budget to direct mail changed compared to 2025?



(Base: Total respondents, n=250)

Logistics visibility is still a blind spot

Logistics remains one of the biggest operational gaps in direct mail. From printing and production to shipping and delivery, small breakdowns can create big surprises.

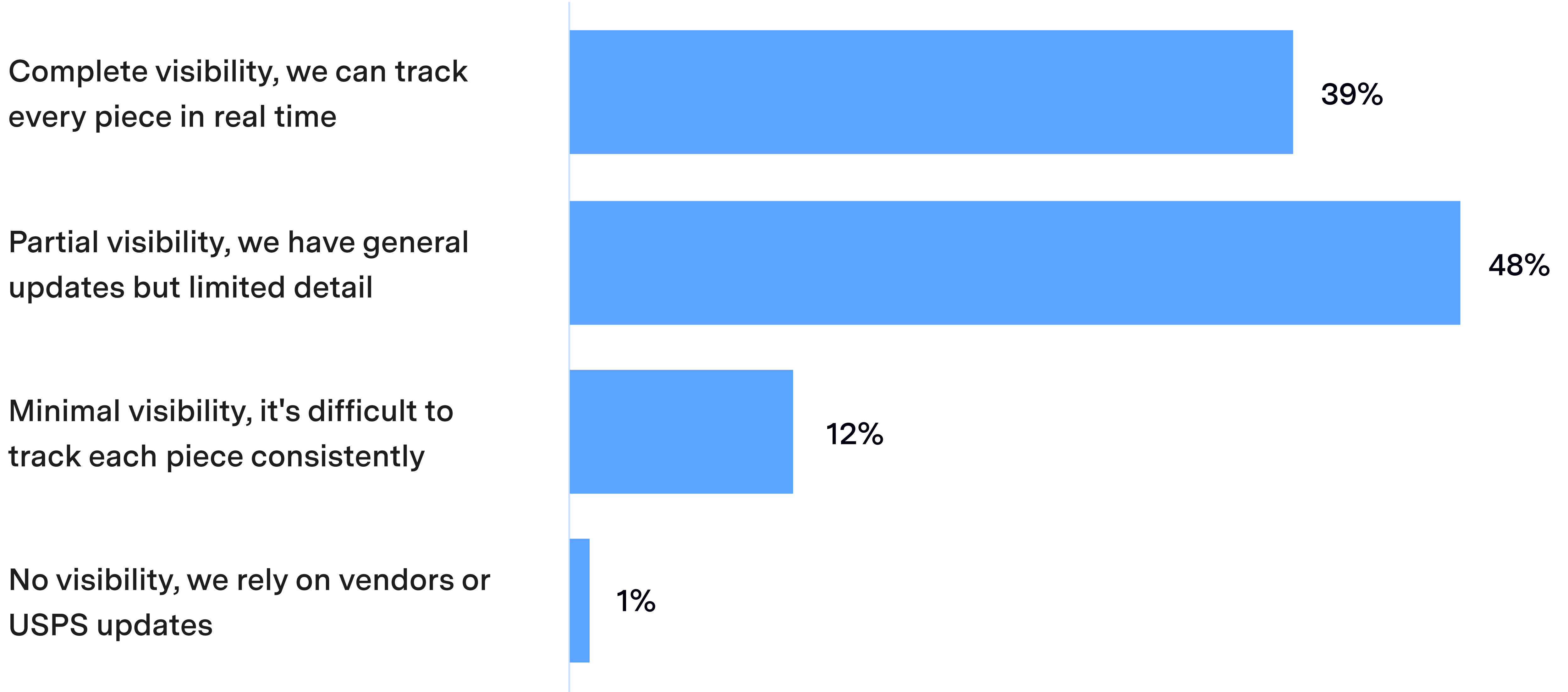
- 87% of leaders say logistics are a blind spot
- 82% have faced unexpected costs or missed delivery windows because of gaps in ownership and oversight
- Only 39% report complete, real-time visibility into delivery status

Visibility drives results.

High-ROI organizations are more likely to have complete visibility into logistics than those with lower ROI.

As creative and targeting become more sophisticated, the production engine behind them has not kept up. Without clear visibility, teams struggle to control spend, manage timing, and plan campaigns with confidence.

Which of the following best describes the level of visibility your organization has into the delivery status of direct mail campaigns?



(Base: Total respondents, n=250)

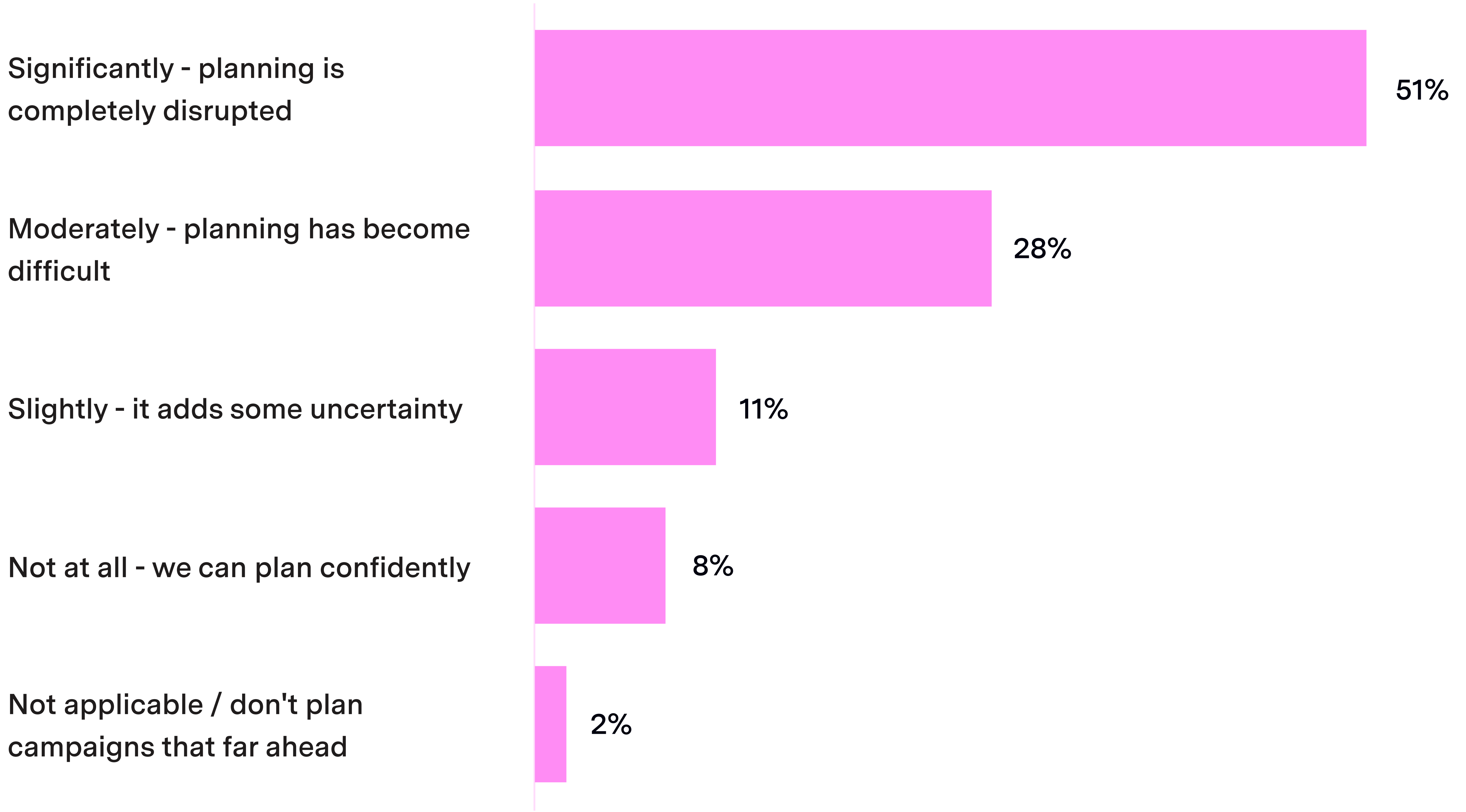
USPS changes are *disrupting* planning

Many teams are still reacting to USPS changes because no one owns monitoring and forecasting. Leaders say they struggle to track updates and anticipate what's coming next, especially when there is no clear internal owner responsible for monitoring logistics and USPS shifts.

- 84% of leaders struggle to track USPS changes or anticipate what's coming next
- 51% say USPS changes significantly disrupt their ability to plan or forecast campaigns
- 82% say they've dealt with surprise costs or missed opportunities because there is no clear ownership over direct mail logistics

This challenge is closely tied to operational maturity. Teams that assign ownership, build internal logistics intelligence, and improve delivery visibility are better positioned to adapt and plan confidently.

How much do USPS changes (such as pricing adjustments or service updates) affect your ability to plan or forecast future direct mail campaigns?



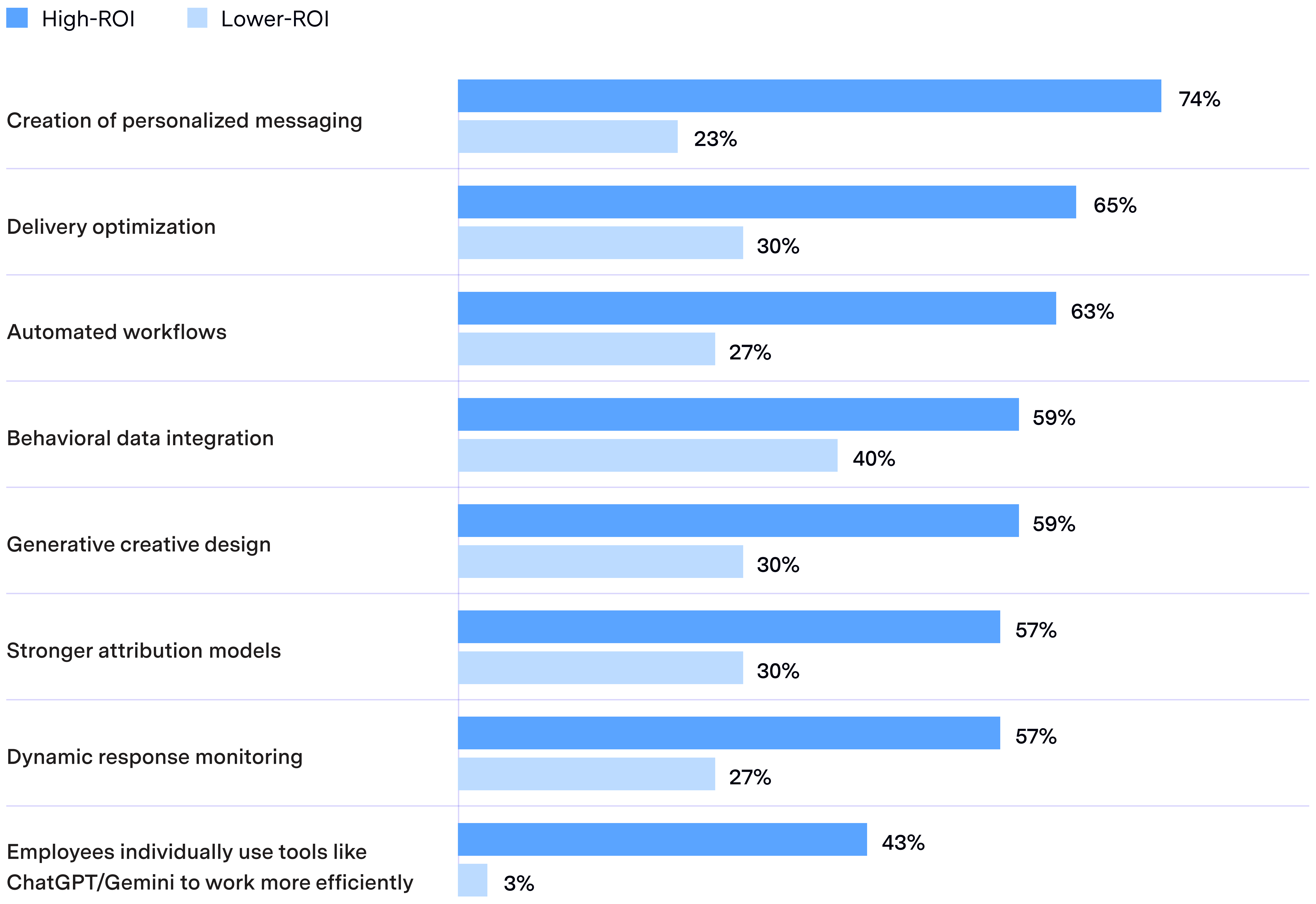
(Base: Total respondents, n=250)

High-ROI teams use *AI with intent*

AI and automation are nearly universal in direct mail programs, but top performers use them differently. High-ROI teams embed AI where it drives the most impact, including personalization, attribution, behavioral data integration, timing, and delivery accuracy.

These teams are not just automating workflows. They are applying AI to improve the quality of execution and measurement, so direct mail performs more like a connected, data-driven channel.

How is your company using AI and/or automation in direct mail campaigns?



(Base: Total respondents, n=250)

Smarter logistics, stronger mail
Four moves to make now

1. Build logistics intelligence. Greater visibility across print quality and delivery timing reduces surprises, controls costs, and turns execution into a competitive advantage.

2. Stay ahead of USPS changes. Assign clear ownership for monitoring pricing and service updates so teams can adapt faster and plan confidently.

3. Connect data and delivery. Link direct mail with CRM, CDP, and automation tools to trigger timely, personalized mail tied to customer behavior.

4. Broaden your measurement mix. Track multiple response signals, including QR scans, PURLs, redemptions, and digital engagement, for a clearer view of what is driving performance.

Lob