

Workflows in the Age of AI

How Design & Development Workflows
Changed in 2025 - and What Comes Next



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Introduction

AI didn't arrive in 2025—it became normal.

By the end of the year, most teams had stopped debating whether to use AI and started dealing with the real questions: where it actually helps, where it creates cleanup work and how to maintain quality, standards and trust as speed increases.

This report looks back at 2025, the year AI entered everyday design-to-development workflows and looks ahead to 2026, when teams will be expected to turn experimentation into reliable, governed and measurable outcomes.

It builds directly on our 2024 findings when we exposed a collaboration gap—designers and developers often experienced the same workflow very differently. In 2025, AI stepped into that gap. Sometimes it helped. Sometimes it amplified existing friction. The question for 2026 is no longer whether teams will use AI but whether they can operationalize it responsibly—without trading quality, consistency or team health for speed.

This is more than a design-developer collaboration report.

It's a story about productivity, velocity, cost and execution at scale.

2024

Collaboration Gap

2025

AI Shockwave

2026

Operationalization

Executive Summary

The 2025 data shows a clear shift from AI novelty to AI accountability.

AI adoption is now widespread and most teams report positive productivity impact. At the same time, trust remains cautious and the biggest challenges are no longer technical—they're operational: reliability, alignment to standards and governance.

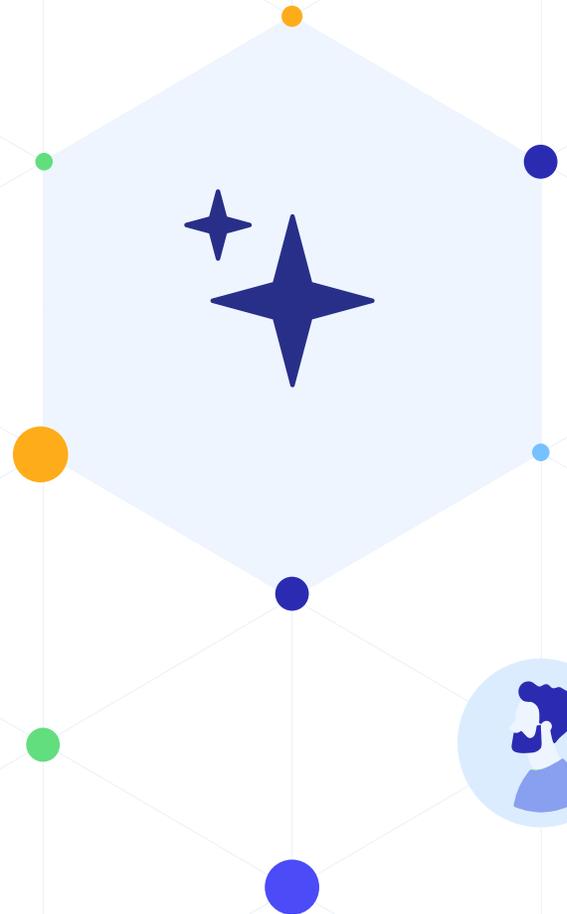
By the end of 2025, 84% of teams were using or experimenting with AI in their workflows. 66% report a positive impact on design-to-development productivity. But speed comes with tradeoffs: 40% report inconsistent or low-quality AI output that requires fixes and 37% say AI output doesn't align with their standards.

AI also didn't magically fix collaboration. Only 21% of respondents describe their design implementation process as "very efficient," while many report mixed results or ongoing inefficiencies. When collaboration breaks down, teams pay a measurable price—in delayed launches, rework, wasted effort and morale.

Looking ahead, teams are optimistic but realistic. Most expect AI to help incrementally, rather than dramatically. Crucially, the top stated priority for 2026 is implementing AI tools effectively—ahead of communication, systems or tooling alone.

The takeaway is clear: AI amplifies whatever foundation already exists—not just how teams work, but the systems and tools they rely on.

In 2026, competitive advantage will come from operational maturity, not AI access.



Highlights

ADOPTION

AI Is the Default. Maturity Is Not

- ✘ **84%** use or experiment with AI; **16%** still avoid it
- ✘ Adoption spans from individual experimentation to fully integrated, AI-first workflows

IMPACT

Speed Is Real. Trust Is Conditional

- ✘ **66%** report positive productivity impact
- ✘ **40%** fix low-quality output; **37%** see standards misalignment

FRICION

Collaboration Friction Still Matters

- ✘ Only **21%** report very efficient design-to-dev execution
- ✘ When collaboration breaks: delays and slower time-to-market (**42%**), rework (**33%**), wasted time (**36%**)

WHAT'S NEXT?

2026 Is About Operational Execution—Not Experimentation

- ✘ Top priority: implementing AI tools effectively (**39%**)
- ✘ Expectations skew toward incremental, provable gains

Methodology

The State of Designer–Developer Collaboration 2025 survey was conducted via an online self-completion questionnaire between September 29 and December 05, 2025.

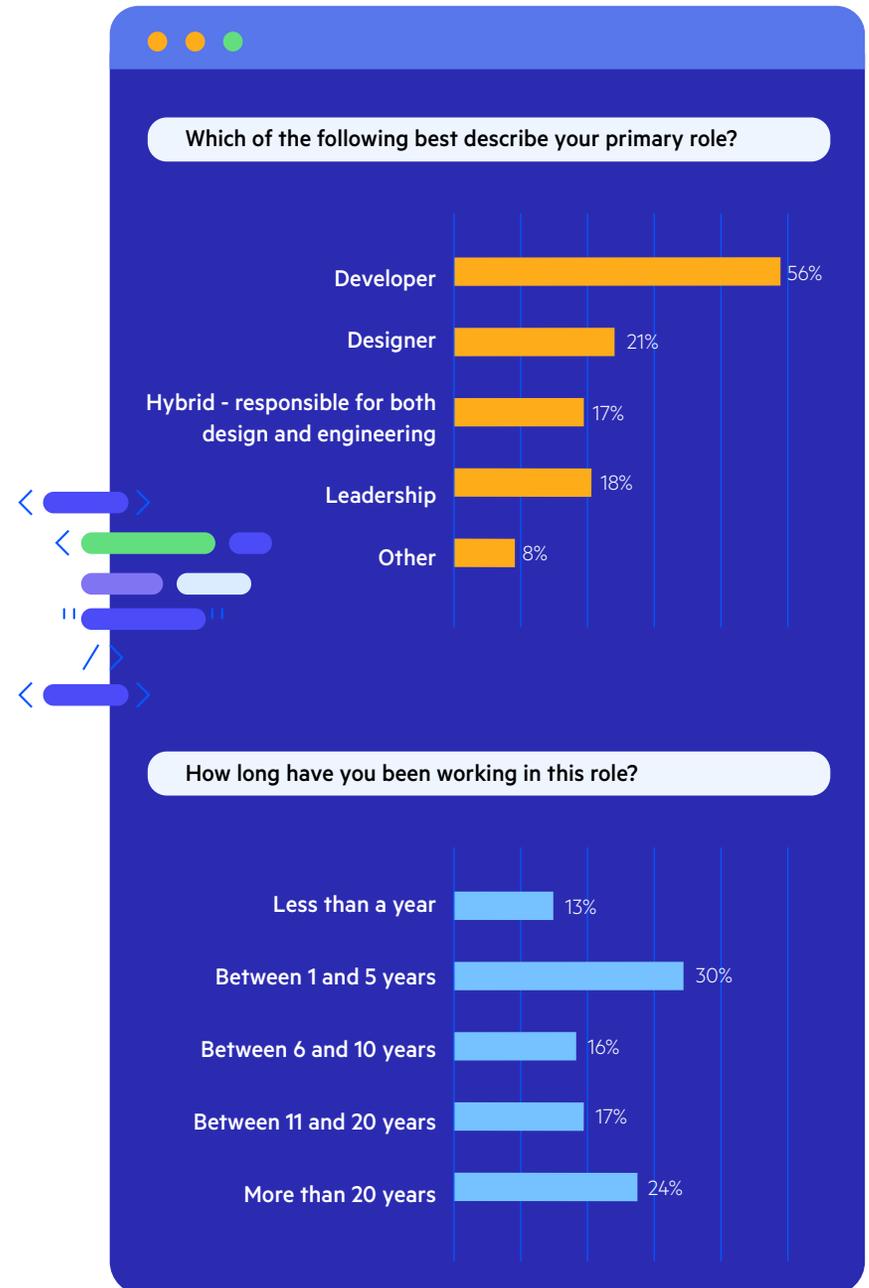
Respondents were recruited through multiple channels, including telerik.com prompts, blog and social promotion and paid newsletter and social campaigns. The target audience included professionals directly involved in building digital products—developers, designers, hybrid practitioners and leaders responsible for design-to-development workflows. Before jumping to the data analysis, we cleaned and validated the input data for accuracy and relevance using both screening questions and logical checks to filter out irrelevant respondents and bots.

After the clean-up, we ended up with 225 respondents.

Respondents

This report reflects perspectives from experienced practitioners working across a wide range of team sizes and company types.

- **Roles:** Developers represent the largest group (56%), followed by Designers (21%), Hybrid roles (17%) and Leadership (18%).
- **Experience:** The audience skews senior—70% have more than five years in their current role and nearly a quarter have 20+ years of experience.
- **Team composition:** Many respondents work in small teams, including a notable share with no dedicated designers—a key context for AI adoption and hybrid roles.



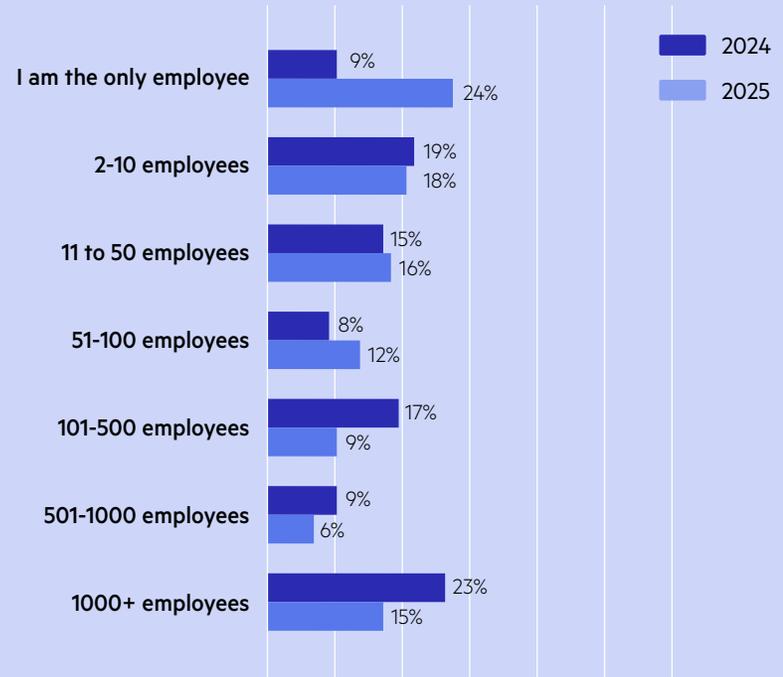
Company Context

Respondents span solo practitioners, small teams and large enterprises—a mix that strongly influences AI adoption and governance.

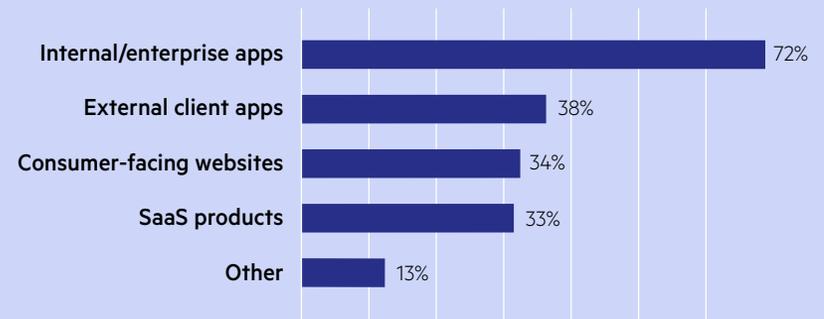
- Company size: 24% are solo, 18% are in 2–10 person companies, while 15% come from 1000+ employee organizations.
- Company type: The sample includes consultancies, agencies, ISVs, internal teams and non-dev-centric organizations.
- Work type: Most respondents work on internal or enterprise applications (72%), where standards, security and consistency are especially critical.

Why this matters: Smaller teams move faster but lack guardrails; larger teams have guardrails but struggle to move fast. AI stress-tests both.

What is the total number of employees in your company?



What type of digital products do you mainly work on?



AI Reality in 2025: From Novelty to Everyday Tooling



By the end of 2025, AI was no longer a side experiment. It became embedded in day-to-day work—but unevenly and with very different levels of maturity.

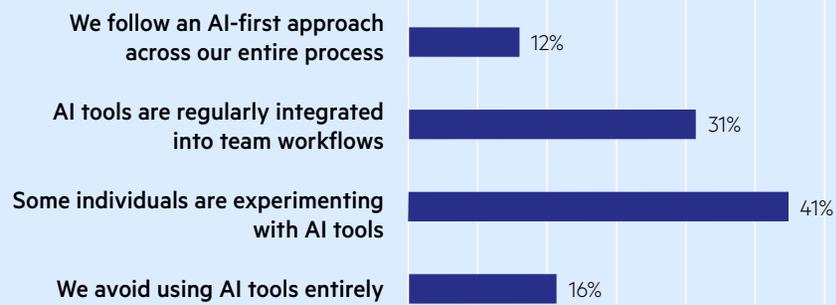
Most teams are now using AI somewhere in their workflow, yet only a small portion describe their approach as truly “AI-first.” This gap between usage and operational maturity defines the AI reality of 2025.

AI Adoption & Maturity

AI adoption is broad but depth varies. Many teams are still operating in a person-by-person adoption model, rather than shared, standardized workflows. This creates speed gains for individuals but also introduces inconsistency, duplicated effort and governance blind spots at the team level.

This matters going into 2026: scaling AI impact will depend less on access to tools and more on how consistently AI is embedded into shared processes.

How would you describe your team's or organization's current level of AI adoption?



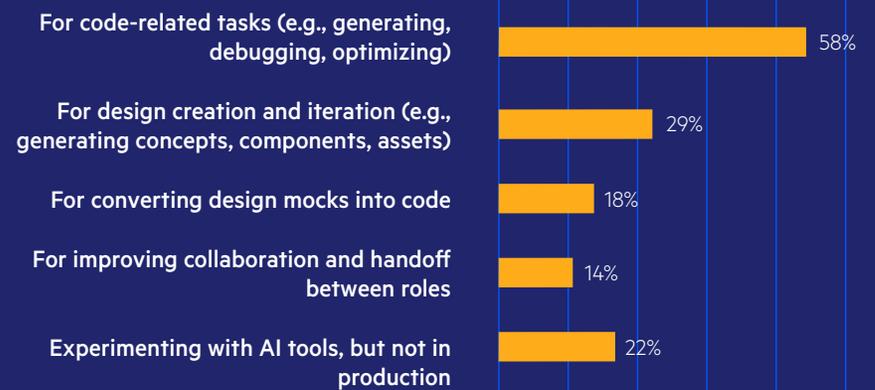
How Teams Use AI Today

The most common AI use cases in 2025 focus on task acceleration, not workflow transformation.

Teams overwhelmingly apply AI to code-related tasks and early-stage ideation. Far fewer rely on it for cross-role collaboration, handoff or consistency—the areas where coordination costs are highest.

This suggests that AI is currently helping teams move faster within roles but has not yet meaningfully reduced friction between roles.

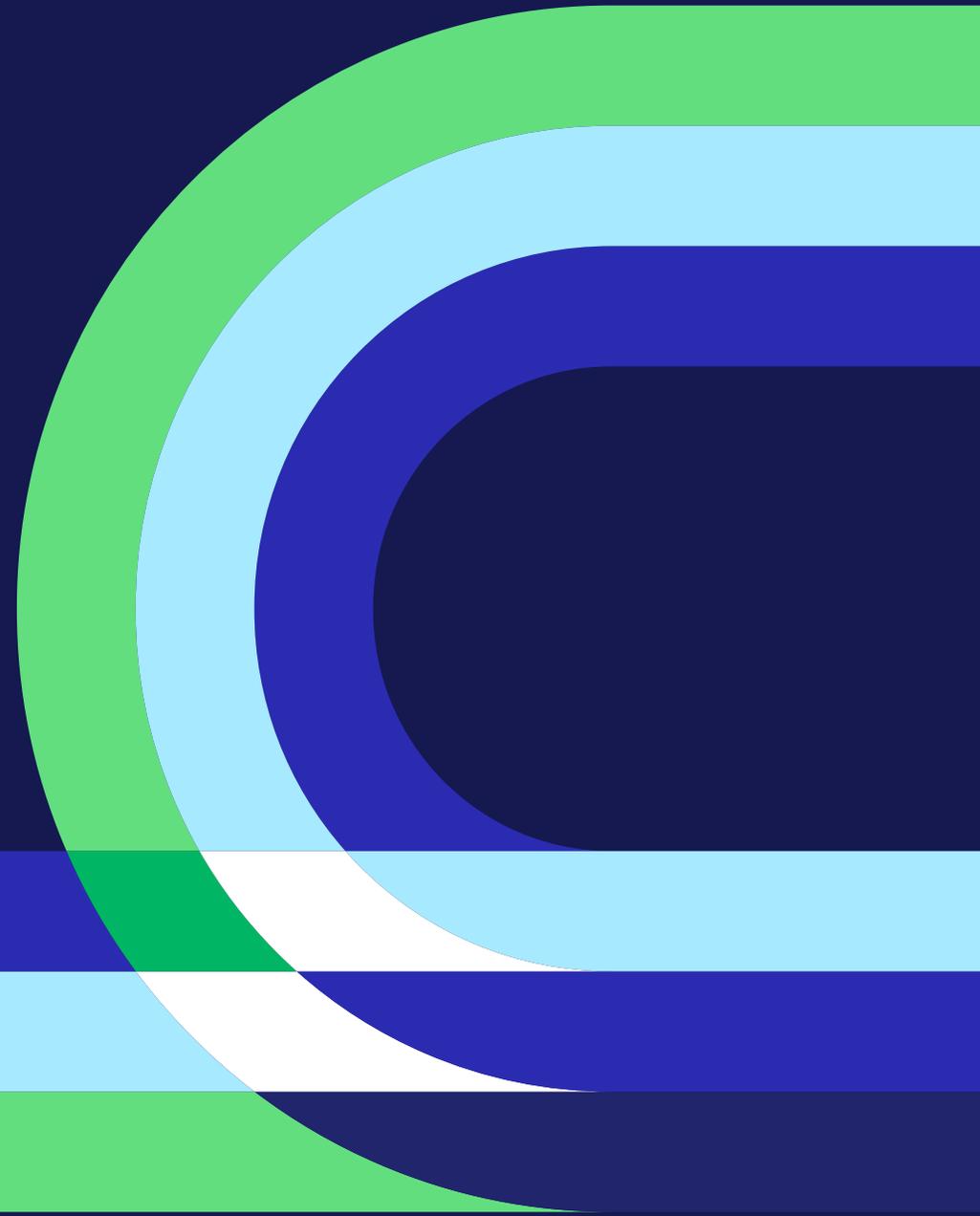
How is your team currently using AI tools?



Value Delivered—and the Limits of Speed

Most teams feel faster with AI. Fewer feel more confident.

The 2025 results show that AI is delivering real productivity gains—but speed alone isn't enough. Quality, trust and integration determine whether those gains translate into better outcomes or additional cleanup work.

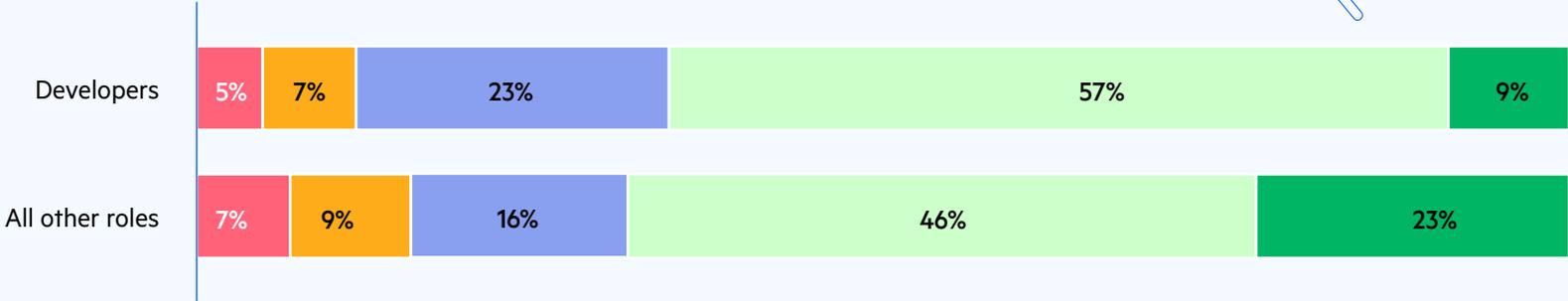
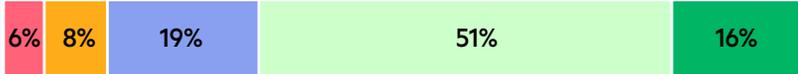


Productivity Impact

A clear majority of respondents report positive impact from AI on their design-to-development workflow. However, neutral and negative responses remain meaningful—a reminder that AI does not improve productivity automatically.

Where teams lack clear standards, review practices or shared ownership, AI tends to amplify existing inefficiencies rather than eliminate them.

What impact has AI had on your team's design-to-development workflow and overall productivity?



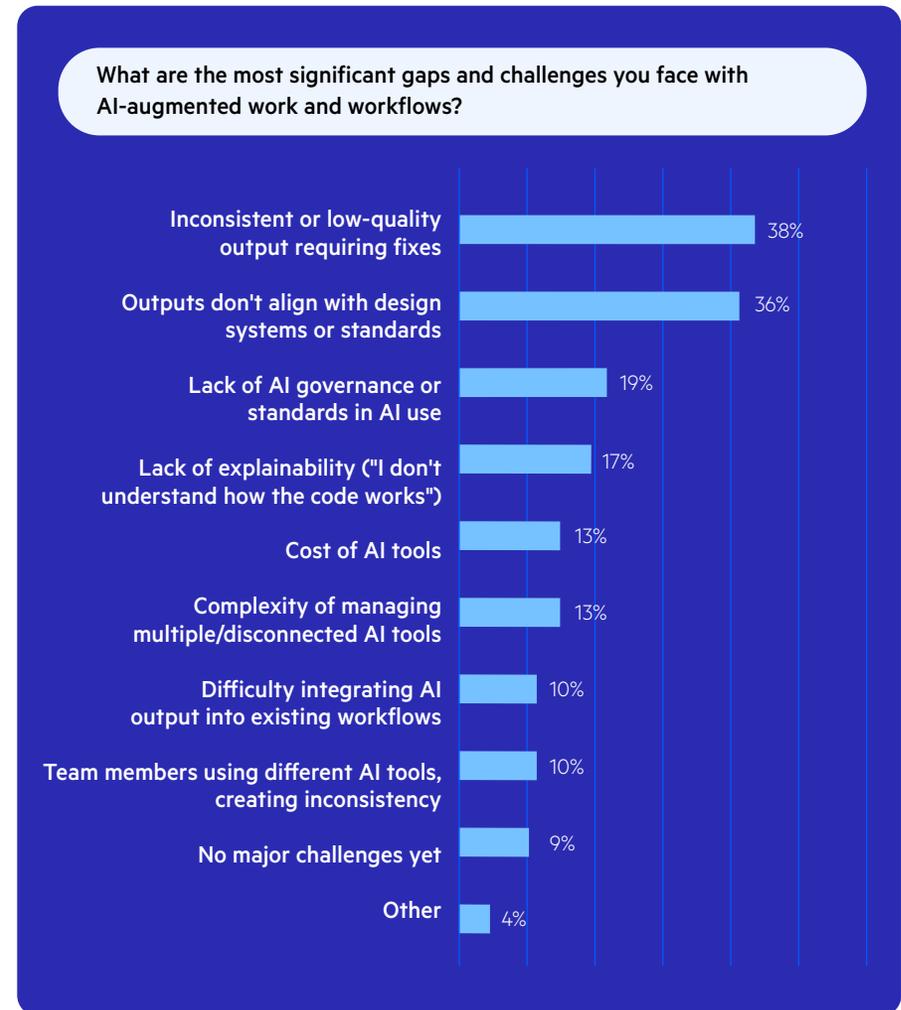
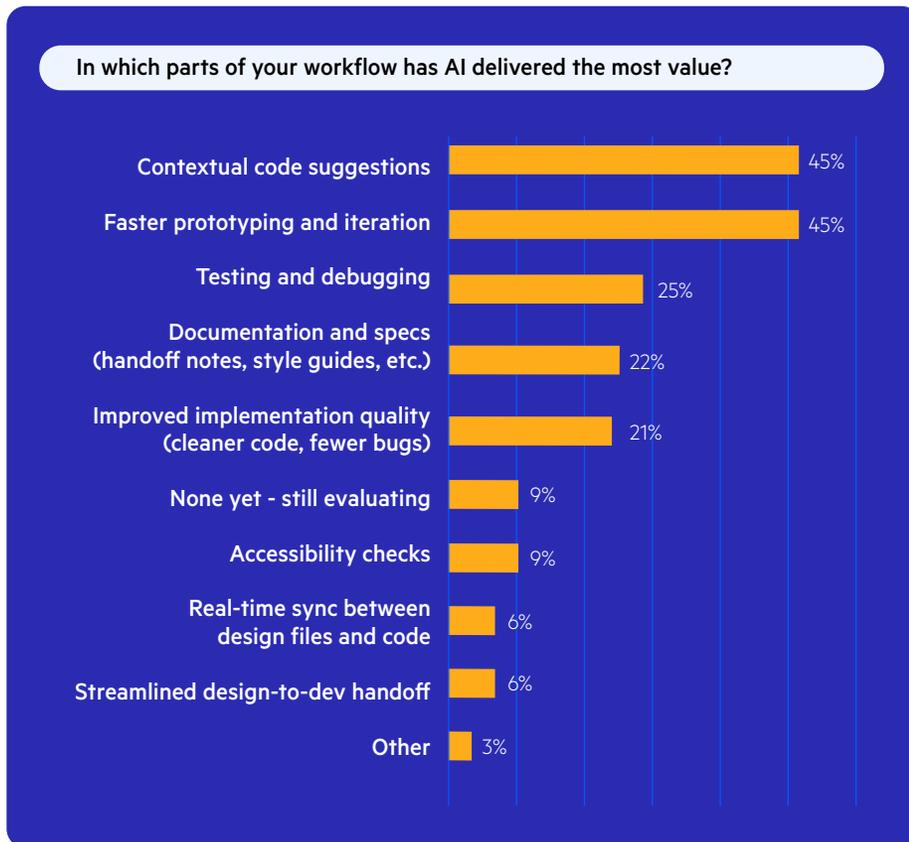
■ Significantly negative - Disrupted our workflow considerably
■ Moderately negative - Added more work than it saved
■ Neutral - No noticeable change
■ Moderately positive - Helpful, though with some limitations
■ Significantly positive - Major time savings and noticeable quality improvements

Where AI Helps—and Where It Creates Work

AI delivers its strongest value in speed-oriented activities: prototyping, code suggestions and documentation support. These gains are immediate and visible.

At the same time, many teams report friction caused by inconsistent output, misalignment with standards and the need for rework. This highlights a growing gap between AI-generated output and production-ready expectations.

The implication for 2026 is clear: AI needs to be embedded into systems that enforce quality and consistency—not layered on top as a shortcut.



Trust, Review and Governance

Trust in AI output remains cautious. Most respondents describe a “human-in-the-loop” approach, where AI accelerates work but does not replace review, testing or judgment.

This is not resistance—it’s realism. Teams are willing to use AI but they expect guardrails. Security, privacy, explainability and accountability are now prerequisites for scaling AI use.

How much do you trust the accuracy of AI-generated code or designs?



Highly distrust - Major modifications required

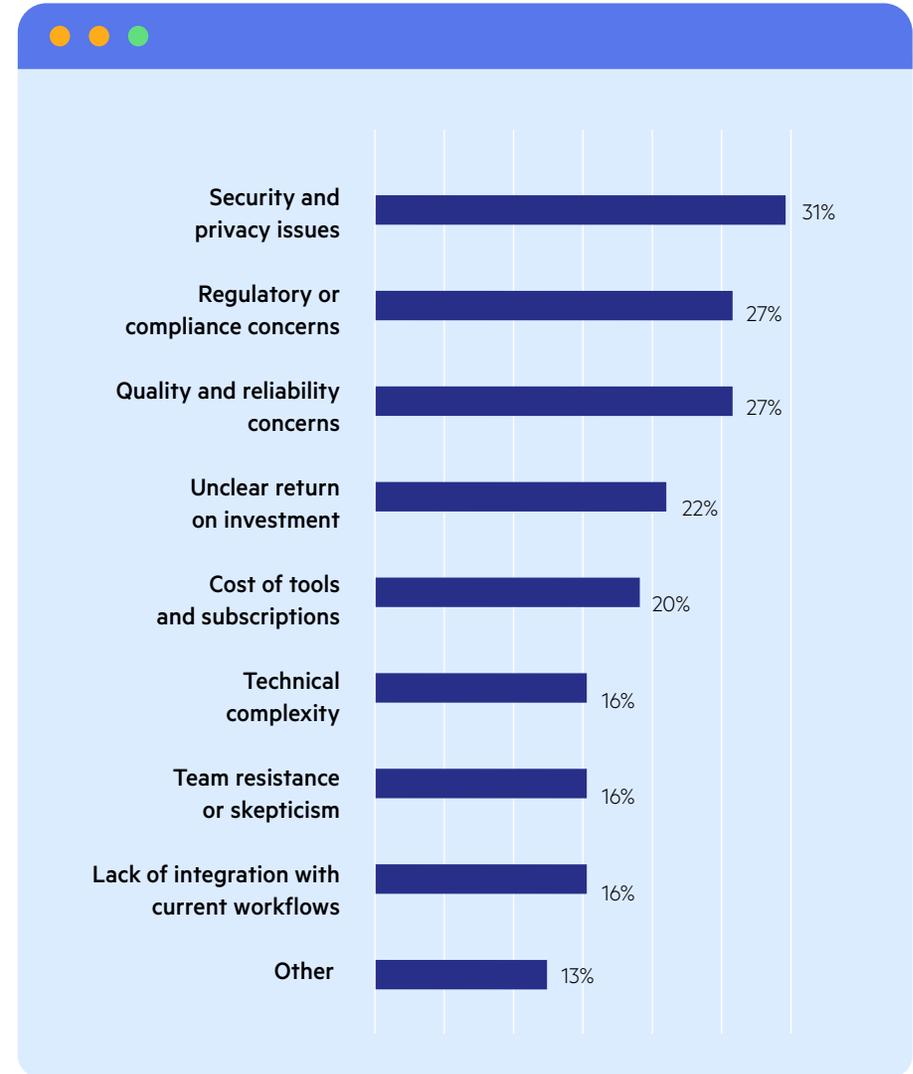
Generally distrust - Extensive verification needed

Somewhat trust - Thorough review and testing

Generally trust - Review for obvious issues

Highly trust - Use with minimal review

What prevents you or your team from adopting AI tools?



Collaboration & Efficiency: What AI Did and Didn't Fix

AI entered existing workflows—it didn't replace them.

While AI changed how work gets done, it did not eliminate long-standing collaboration challenges around handoffs, clarity and alignment.

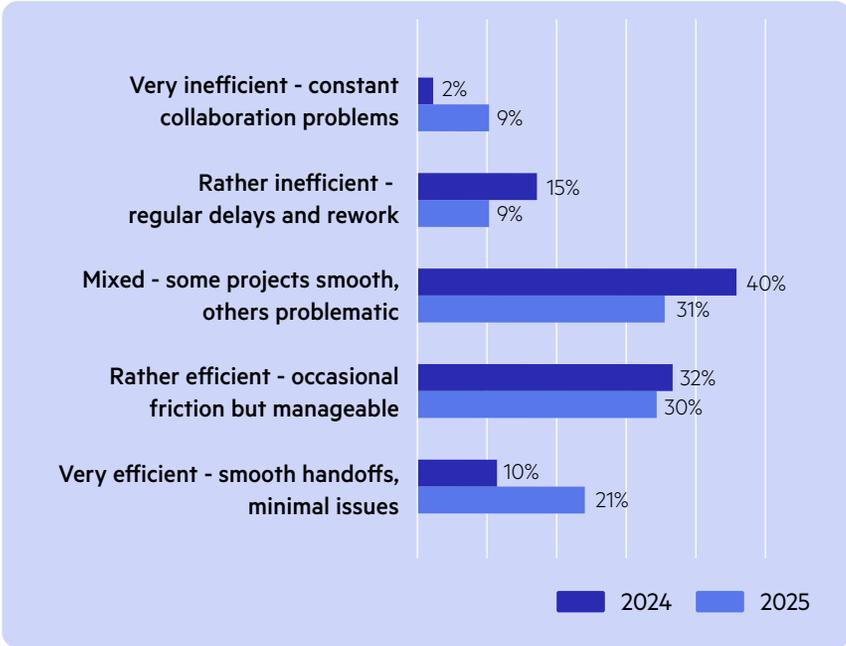


Collaboration in Practice: 2024 vs 2025

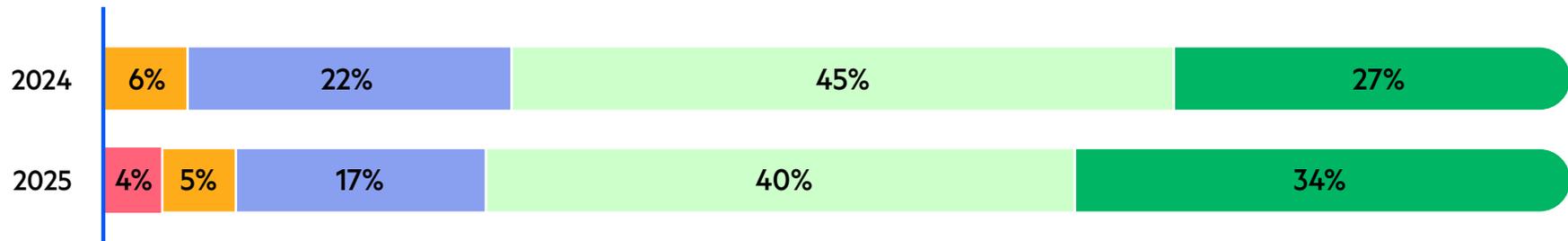
Only a minority of teams describe their design-to-development process as very efficient. Most report mixed results, with AI improving some steps while leaving structural issues unresolved.

Compared to 2024, perceptions of collaboration have improved slightly—but the gap has not disappeared. Instead, friction has shifted: from manual coordination to review cycles, quality checks and reconciliation of AI-generated work.

How would you rate the efficiency of the design implementation process?



If 5 is a perfectly functioning relationship with nothing to add and 1 is a complete breakdown where no one talks to the other, how would you rate the relationship between designers and developers working on the same project?



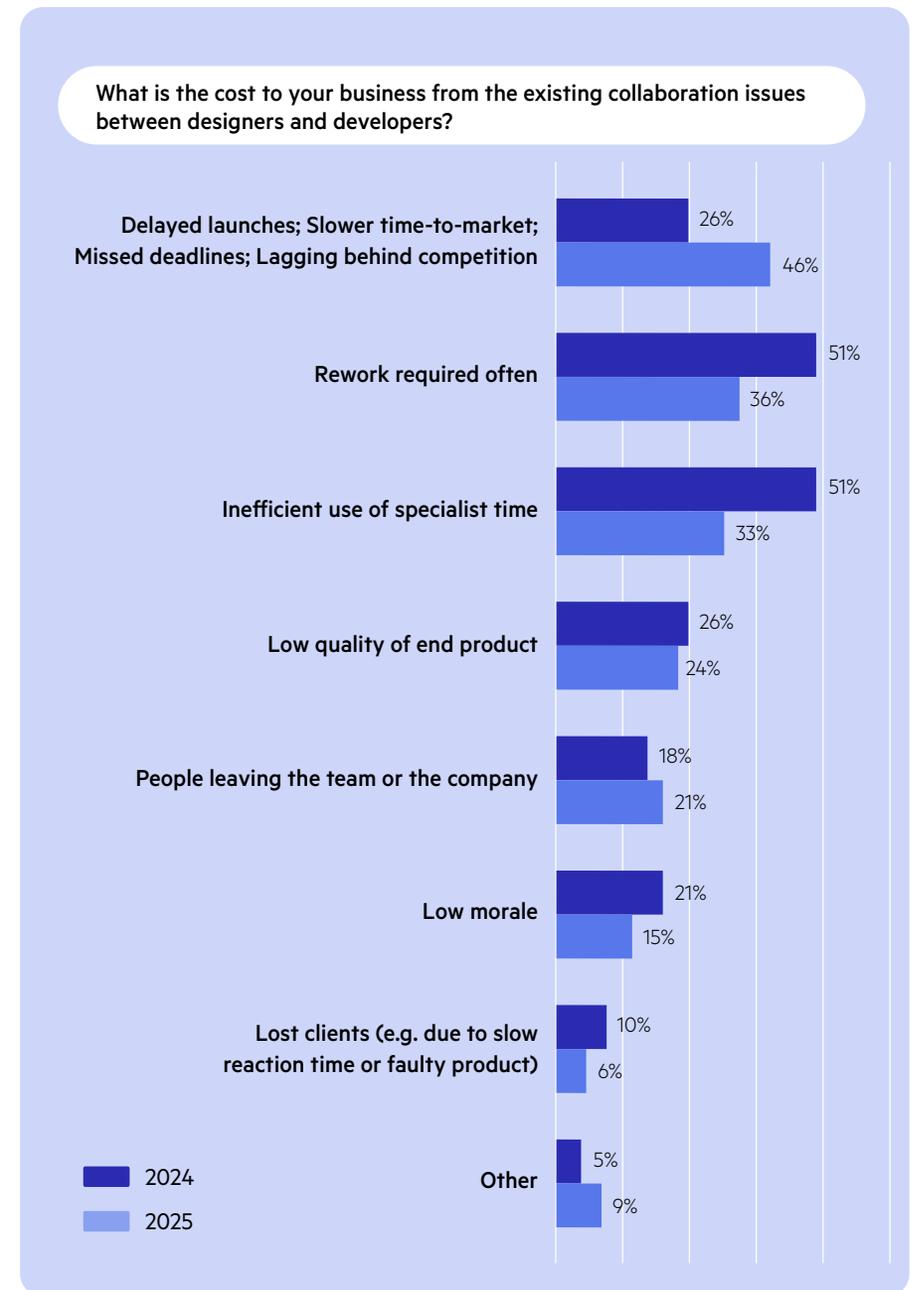
Complete breakdown Slightly negative Neutral Positive Perfect relationship

When Collaboration Breaks, Business Pays

The cost of poor collaboration is not abstract. When alignment breaks down, teams report delays, rework, wasted time, quality issues and burnout.

AI does not eliminate these costs. In fact, without clear processes, it can accelerate teams toward the same problems—faster.

This reinforces a core theme of the report: collaboration quality determines whether AI becomes leverage or liability.



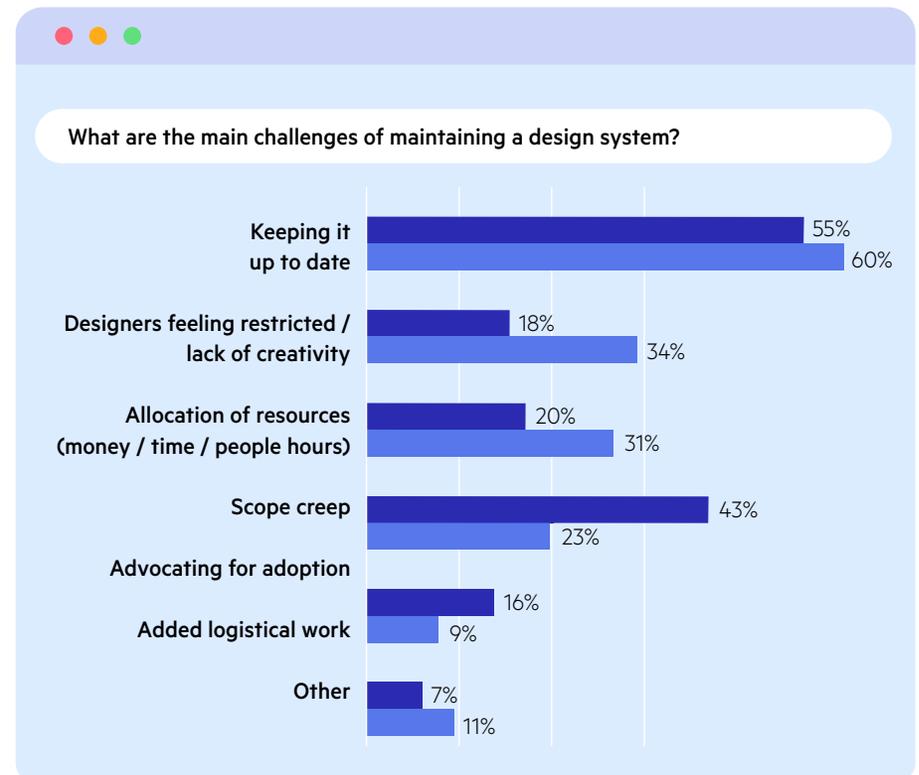
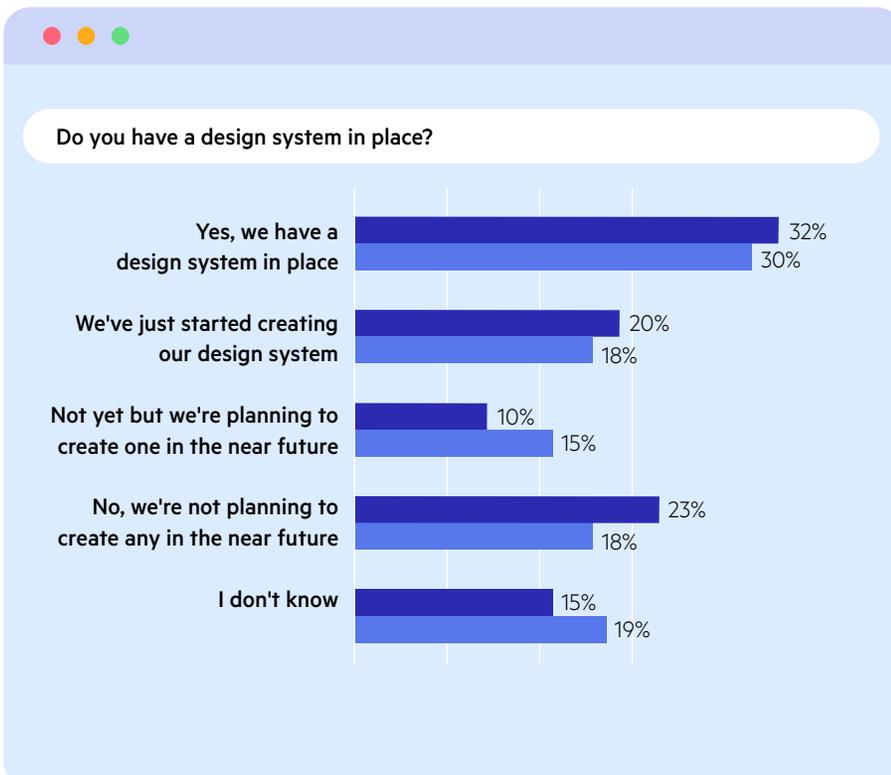
Structure, Systems & Team Evolution

Consistency Under Pressure

As AI increases output volume and speed, maintaining consistency becomes harder—not easier.

While many teams rely on design systems to create shared standards, keeping those systems up to date remains a major challenge. AI output that ignores or conflicts with existing standards compounds the problem.

The opportunity ahead lies in AI-assisted consistency—tooling that supports systems instead of bypassing them.



2024 2025

2024 2025

Hybrid Roles: Faster—but Fragile

Hybrid roles are now common, reflecting blurred boundaries between design, development and AI-assisted work.

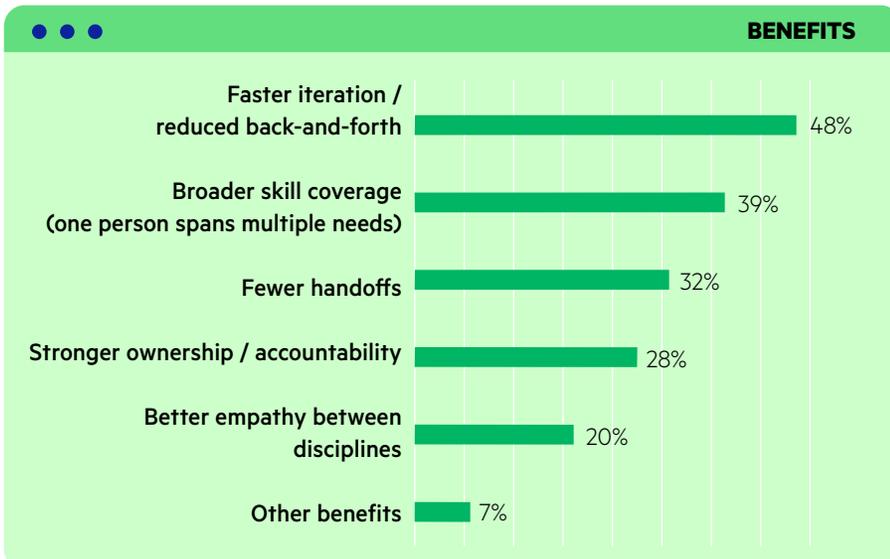
Hybrid roles reduce handoffs and speed up iteration—but without orchestration and clear boundaries, they shift coordination work onto individuals, increasing burnout and role ambiguity instead of eliminating friction.

This is a signal, not a failure. Hybrid roles work best when supported by clear workflows, shared systems and explicit governance—not heroic individuals.

Are there employees with hybrid roles on your team or in your organization?



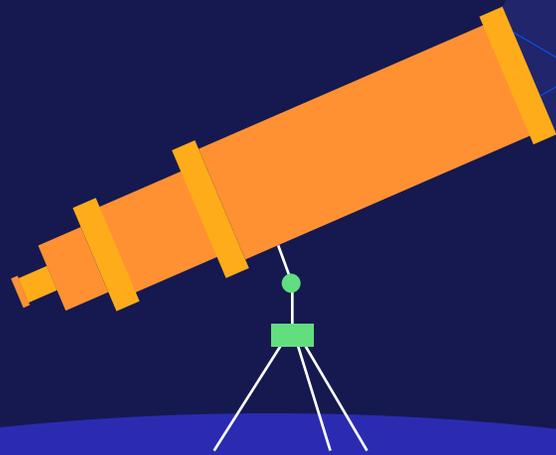
Hybrid roles can bring both benefits and challenges. What has your experience been?
Below is a list of potential benefits and challenges.



2026 Outlook: From Experimentation to Production

By the end of 2025, the question changed.

Teams are no longer asking whether to use AI—they are asking how to make it reliable, scalable and worth the cost.

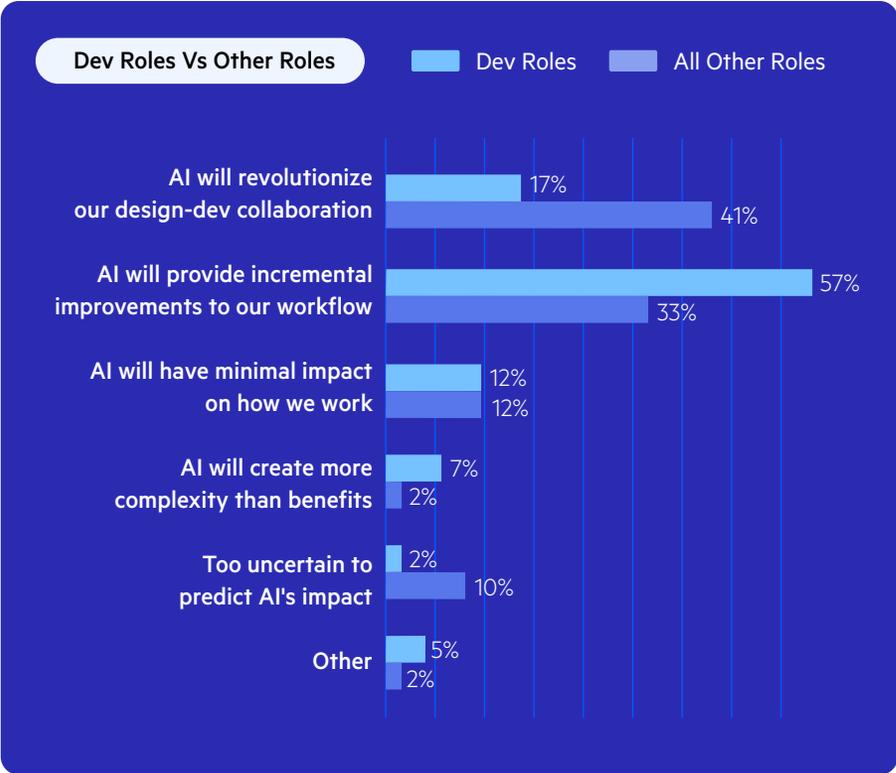
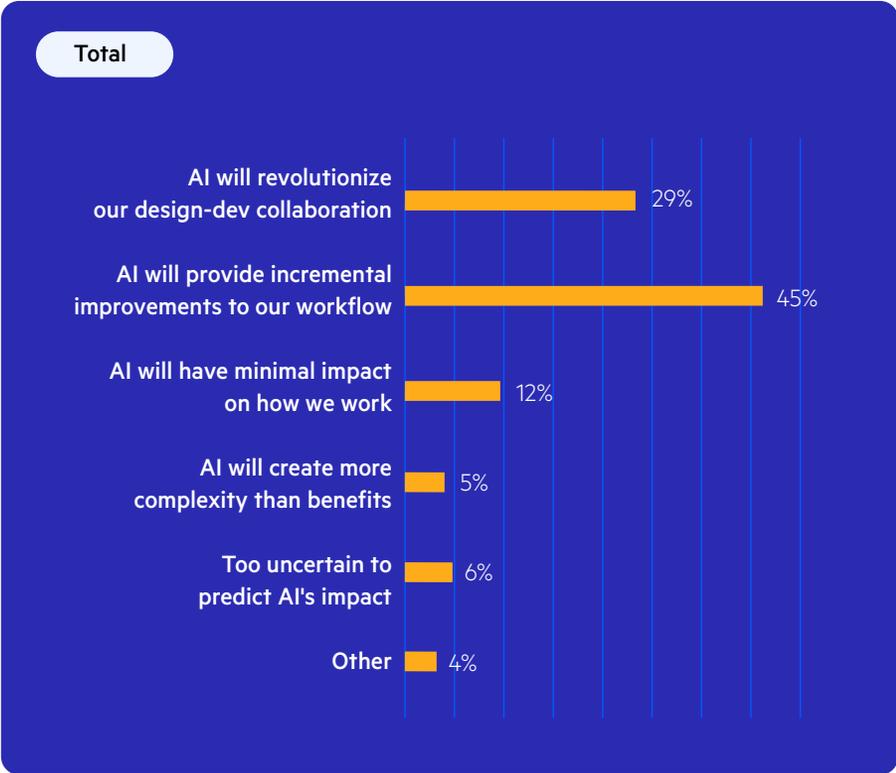


Expectations for 2026

Most respondents expect AI to deliver incremental improvements rather than dramatic disruption. This signals a shift from hype to accountability.

Teams want AI that integrates cleanly, respects standards and produces outcomes they can trust—not just faster output.

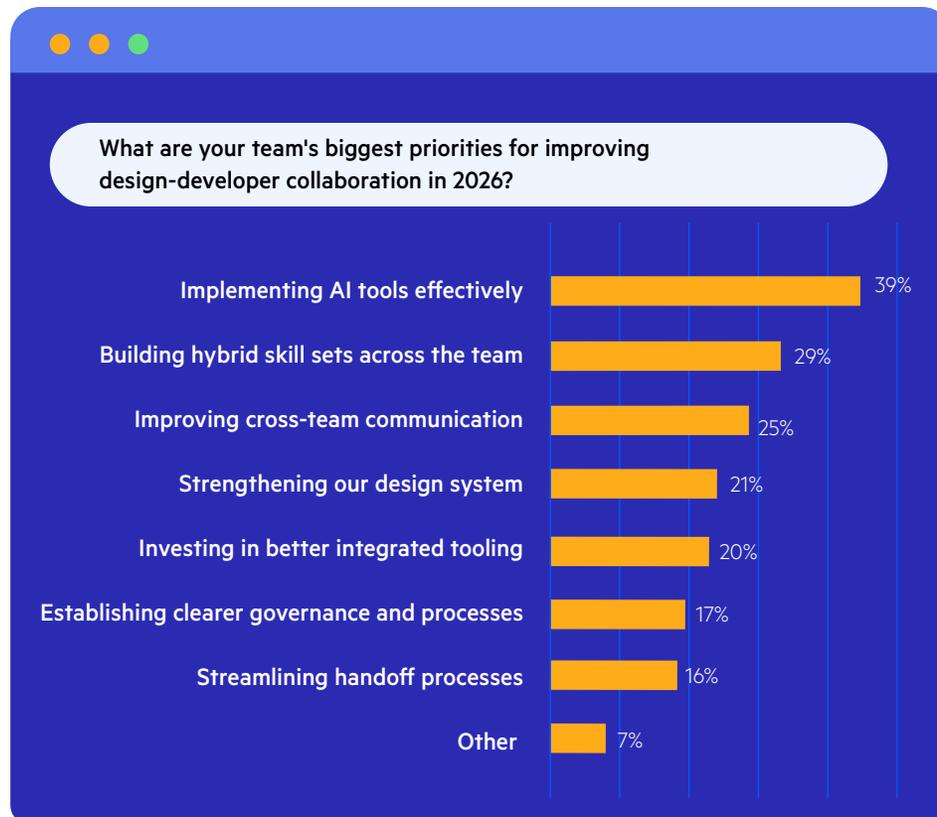
Looking ahead 12 months, which statement below best describes your expectations for AI's impact on your workflow?



2026 Priorities: What Needs to Change

The top priority for improving collaboration in 2026 is implementing AI tools effectively—ahead of communication, systems or tooling alone.

This reflects a broader realization: AI success depends on people, processes and governance moving together.



What to Watch Next



AI-powered knowledge and infrastructure:

Enterprise RAG and autonomous AI agents.

[Learn More](#)



AI observability & governance:

Trust, explainability and operational control.

[Learn More](#)



Prompt-to-code development:

AI-assisted UI generation inside developer tools.

[Learn More](#)



Prompt-to-experience content workflows:

AI-generated digital experiences and content systems.

[Learn More](#)



AI-governed design systems:

Standards, accessibility and branding embedded in workflows.

[Learn More](#)

Conclusion

Collaboration is still at the heartbeat of great products.

AI alone won't replace it or fix broken workflows. But teams that embed AI into structured, standards-driven workflows will deliver faster, with less rework and more confidence.

In 2024, the challenge was misalignment.

In 2025, AI accelerated work and exposed where alignment was missing.

In 2026, the advantage will go to teams that operationalize AI with intention: pairing speed with trust, autonomy with governance and innovation with consistency.



The survey shows a clear pattern: speed without structure creates rework, friction and risk.

Teams that succeed with AI in 2026 will not be those with the most tools—but those with workflows that embed quality, standards and governance by default.

Progress Telerik and Progress Kendo UI help teams move from individual AI usage to production-ready, team-scaled AI workflows—where speed is matched with consistency, trust and measurable outcomes.

Operationalize AI. Don't just experiment with it. Discover how AI fits into your workflow:



Explore MCP Servers



AI-Powered UI Components



AI Theming in ThemeBuilder

About Progress Software

[Progress Software](#) (Nasdaq: PRGS) empowers organizations to achieve transformational success in the face of disruptive change. Our software enables our customers to develop, deploy and manage responsible AI-powered applications and personalized digital experiences with agility and ease. Businesses of all sizes get a trusted provider in Progress, with the products, expertise and vision they need to turn AI disruption into a competitive advantage. Millions of developers and technologists at hundreds of thousands of organizations depend on Progress every day. Learn more at www.progress.com

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