

THE *Pulse*

The State of Governed Growth in Asset Management in 2026

BROUGHT TO YOU BY:

A high-angle, nighttime photograph of a city street intersection. The scene is illuminated by warm yellow streetlights and the lights of tall buildings. A prominent building in the center has a dark, modern facade with a grid of windows. To the right, a curved road leads towards a brightly lit, modern building. The overall atmosphere is urban and dynamic.

IIFP

About Seismic

Seismic is a global leader in AI-powered enablement, empowering go-to-market leaders to drive strategic growth and deliver exceptional customer experiences at scale.

The Seismic Enablement Cloud™ is the only unified AI-powered platform that prepares customer-facing teams with the skills, content, tools, and insights needed to maximise every buyer interaction and strengthen client relationships.

Trusted by approximately 2,000 organisations worldwide, Seismic helps businesses achieve measurable outcomes and accelerate revenue growth.

Seismic is headquartered in San Diego with offices across North America, Europe, Asia and Australia. Learn more at seismic.com.



Learn More



Executive Summary

Institutional client expectations continue to rise, and regulatory scrutiny is increasing across every channel. At the same time, AI is reshaping how asset management firms across EMEA create and deliver expertise to brokers and advisers.

Asset managers know they need to grow and deepen client relationships, with digital engagement and AI becoming increasingly central to that ambition. Yet fragmented systems, disconnected workflows, manual governance and administrative burdens are slowing down client-facing teams and making execution harder.

The result is a growing gap between transformation ambition and operational reality, putting pressure on firms to modernise while maintaining control.

In 2026, the central challenge for asset managers is no longer whether to pursue growth or transformation – it's how to pursue both at once. Governed growth – combining technology and AI with the governance, consistency and control needed to grow effectively – has emerged as the defining operational challenge of the moment.

This report explores how asset managers are responding: where the biggest operational and governance barriers remain, how firms are preparing for AI-enabled client engagement, and where they see the greatest opportunities for growth.

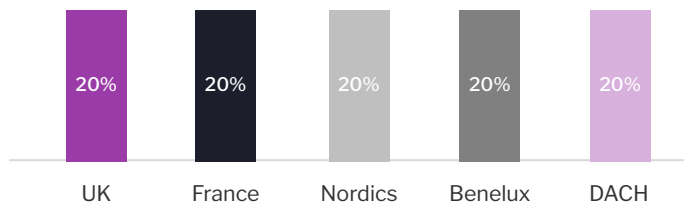


Survey Demographics

Insights for Professionals surveyed 250 senior leaders and decision-makers from firms across five key European regions: France, the UK, DACH (Germany, Austria, and Switzerland), Benelux (Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg), and the Nordics (Norway, Finland, Sweden, and Denmark).

The sample was evenly distributed, with 20% of respondents representing each region.

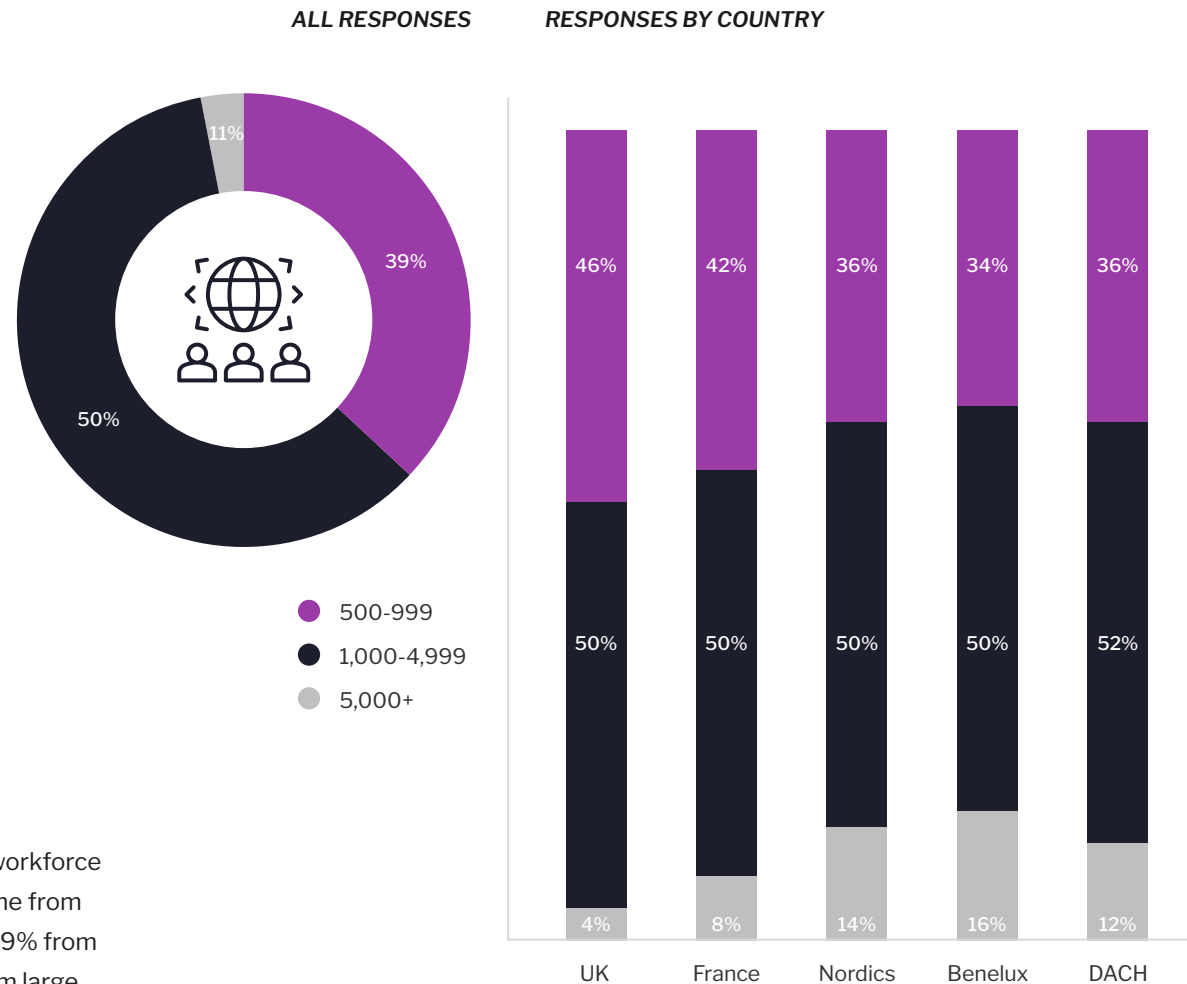
Which region is your firm primarily based in?



Company size

The majority of respondents (89%) worked in mid-size firms with a workforce of between 500 and 5,000 employees. The largest group (50%) came from companies with between 1,000 and 4,999 employees, followed by 39% from firms with 500 to 999 employees. Just over one in 10 (11%) were from large firms of 5,000+ employees.

How many employees does your firm have?

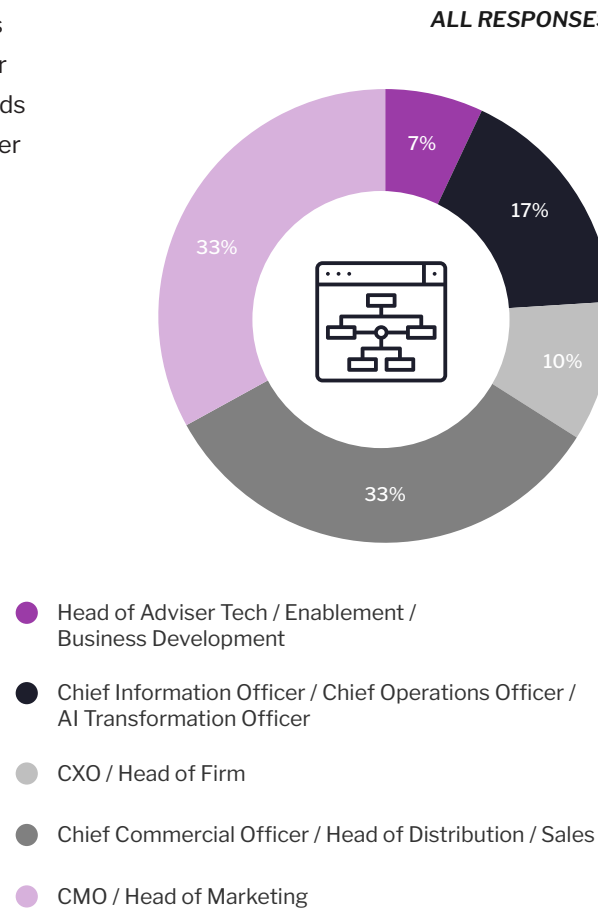


Seniority level

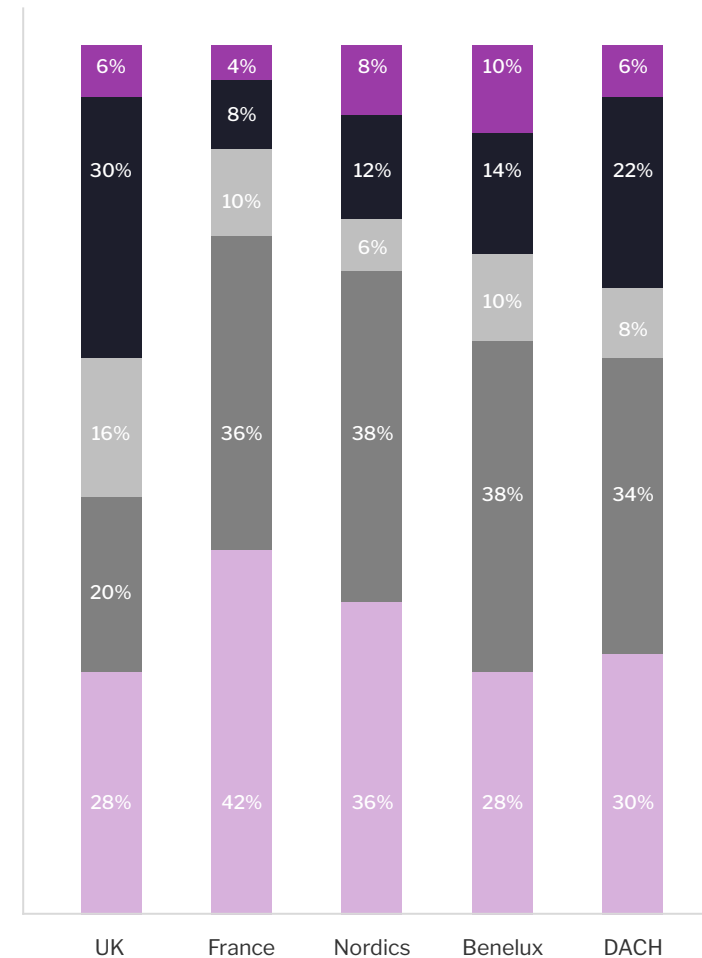
Respondents held senior roles across a diverse range of functions. The largest groups (33% each) were Chief Commercial Officers/Heads of Distribution and Sales, and CMOs/Heads of Marketing. A further 17% held the roles of Chief Information Officer, Chief Operations Officer, or AI Transformation Officer, while 10% were CXOs or Heads of Firm. The remaining 7% led functions including adviser technology, enablement, and business development.



What best describes your role in the organisation?



RESPONSES BY COUNTRY



Business function

Respondents represented a range of asset management and investment functions. The largest group (44%) were from Institutional Asset Management, followed by 26% from Retail/Intermediary Asset Management. 16% worked in Alternatives – including Private Equity, Real Estate, Hedge Funds, and Infrastructure – while 14% were focused on Portfolio Management.

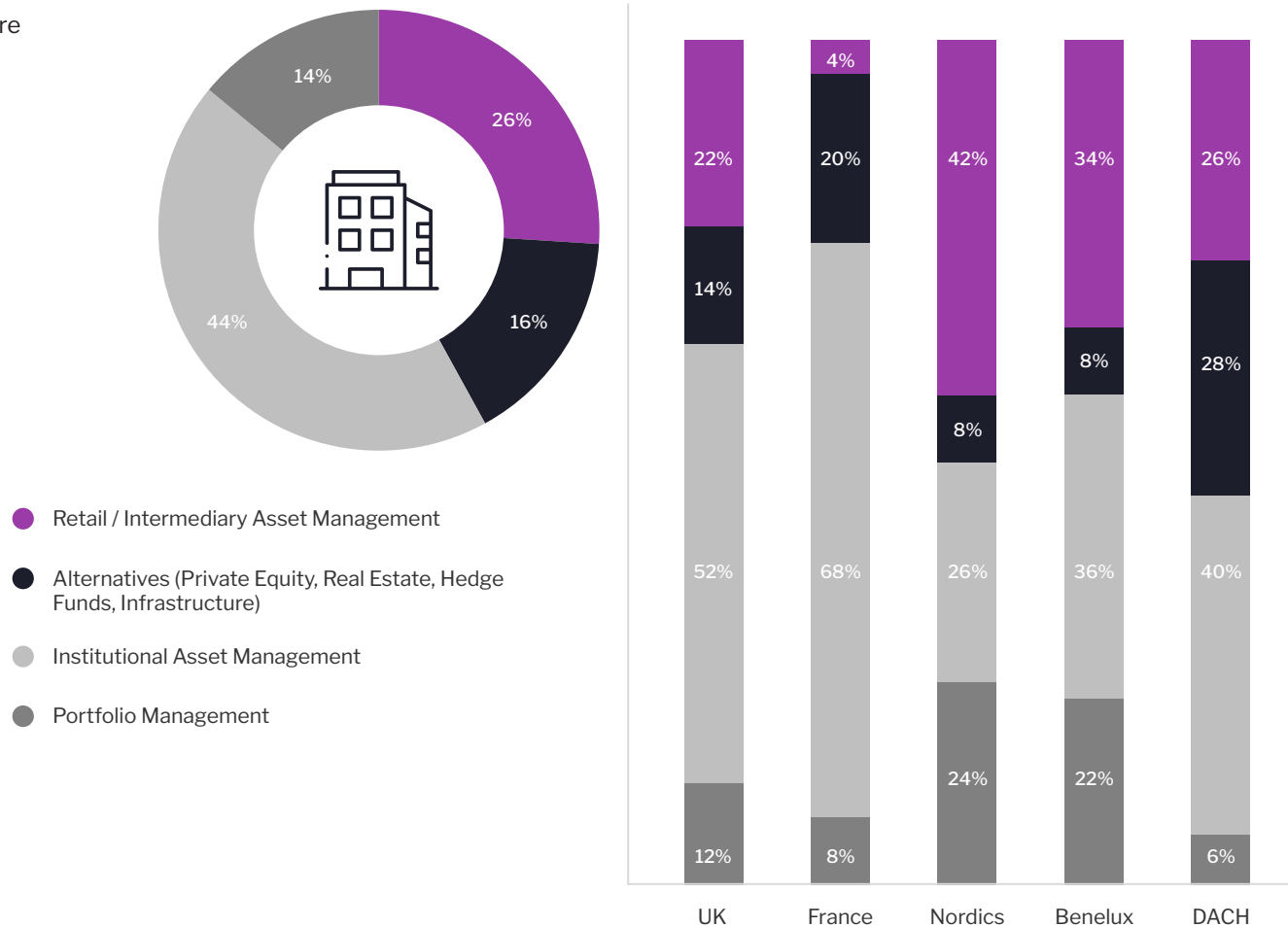
44%

of respondents were
from Institutional
Asset Management.

What best describes your firm's primary business?

ALL RESPONSES

RESPONSES BY COUNTRY



Growth needs governance

Asset managers are being asked to achieve two things at once: accelerate growth and operate with greater control.

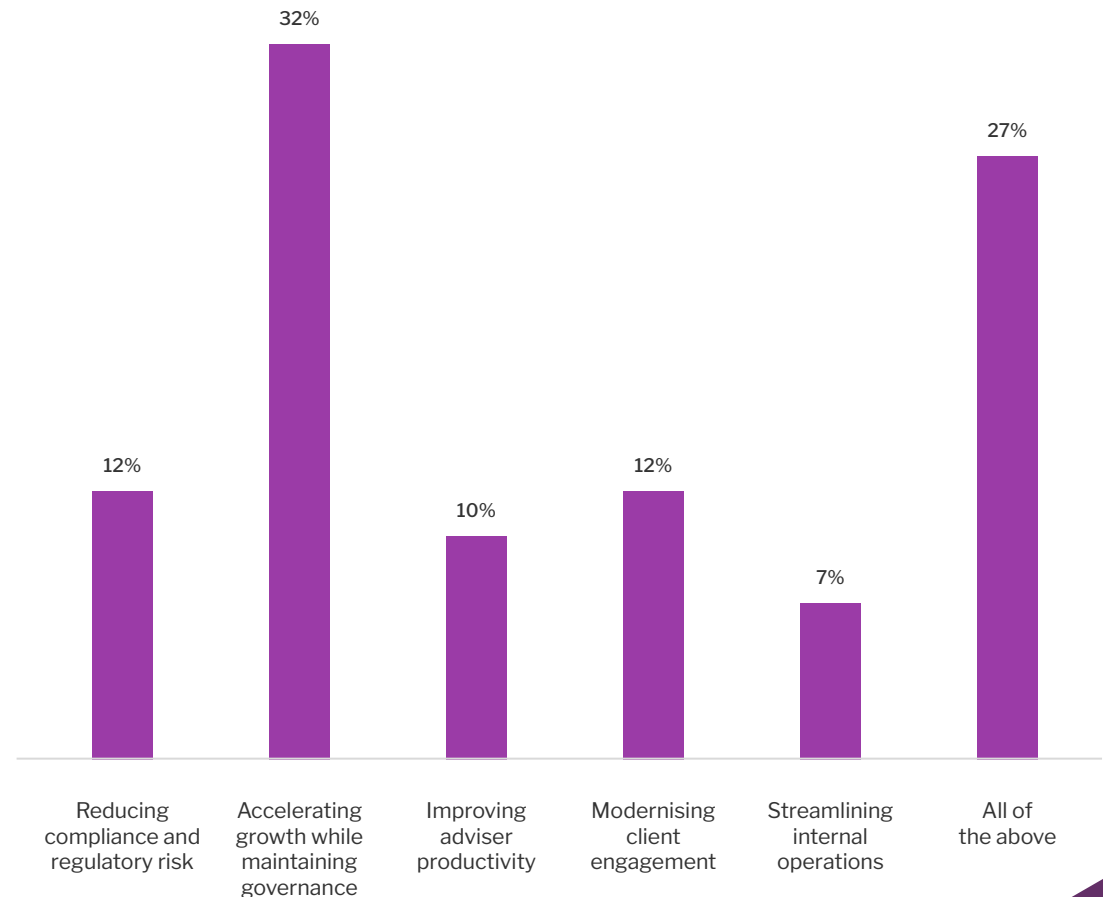
To understand where firms are currently focusing their efforts, respondents were asked to share their top strategic priorities.

Accelerating growth while maintaining governance is the top single priority for almost a third of organisations (32%), followed by reducing compliance and regulatory risk and modernising client engagement (both at 12%), improving adviser productivity (10%), and streamlining internal operations (7%).

For over a quarter of respondents (27%), these priorities are inseparable. Growth, governance, client engagement, productivity and operational efficiency are increasingly connected – and this is the foundation of governed growth. Asset management firms need to create momentum without creating additional risk or operational complexity.

Which of the following best describes your firm's current strategic priority?

ALL RESPONSES

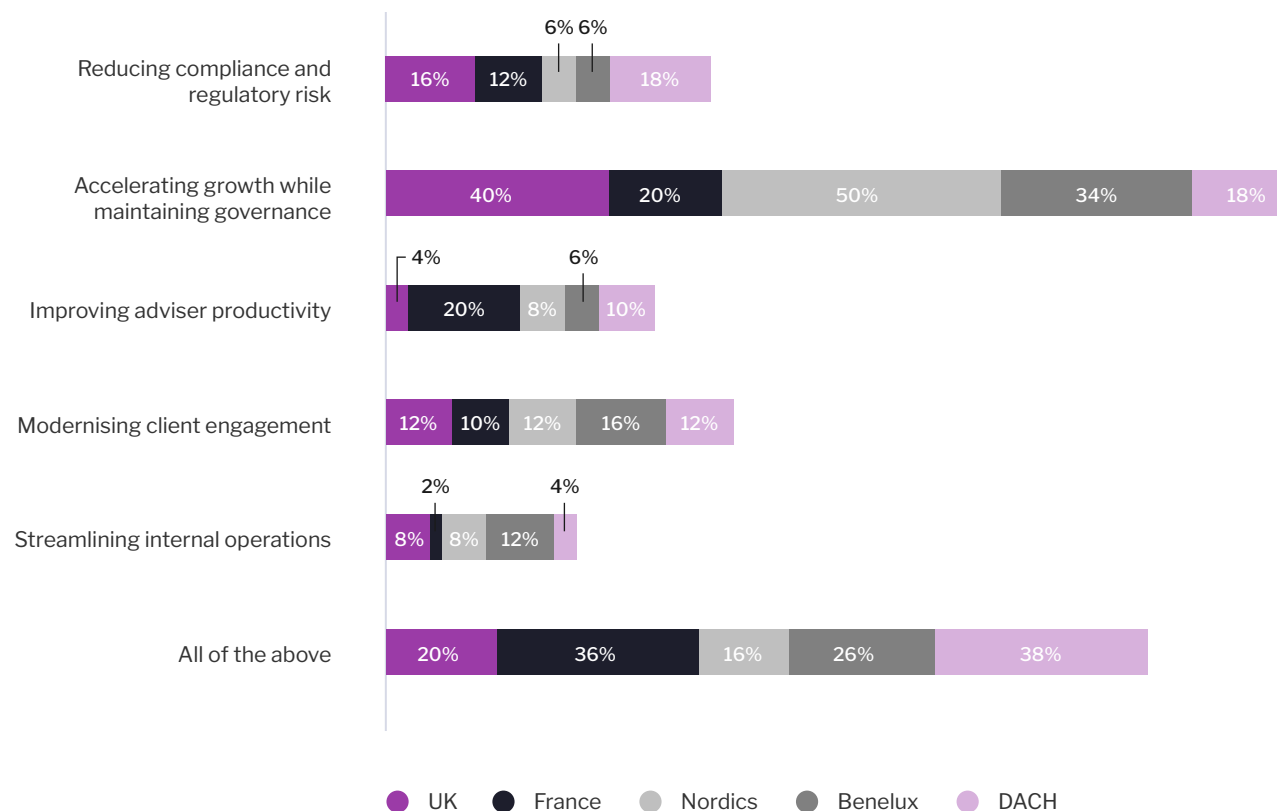


There are also some regional differences worth noting. Growth with governance dominates as the top priority across all markets but peaks at 50% in the Nordics, where just 16% of firms prioritised “all of the above”.

While more than one in four firms overall selected “all of the above”, this rose to 38% in DACH and 36% in France. Compliance and regulatory risk is the weakest priority everywhere, never exceeding 18% in any region – suggesting that regulation is increasingly being treated as part of the broader growth and operating model rather than a separate strategic agenda.

Which of the following best describes your firm’s current strategic priority?

RESPONSES BY COUNTRY



The client relationship is going digital

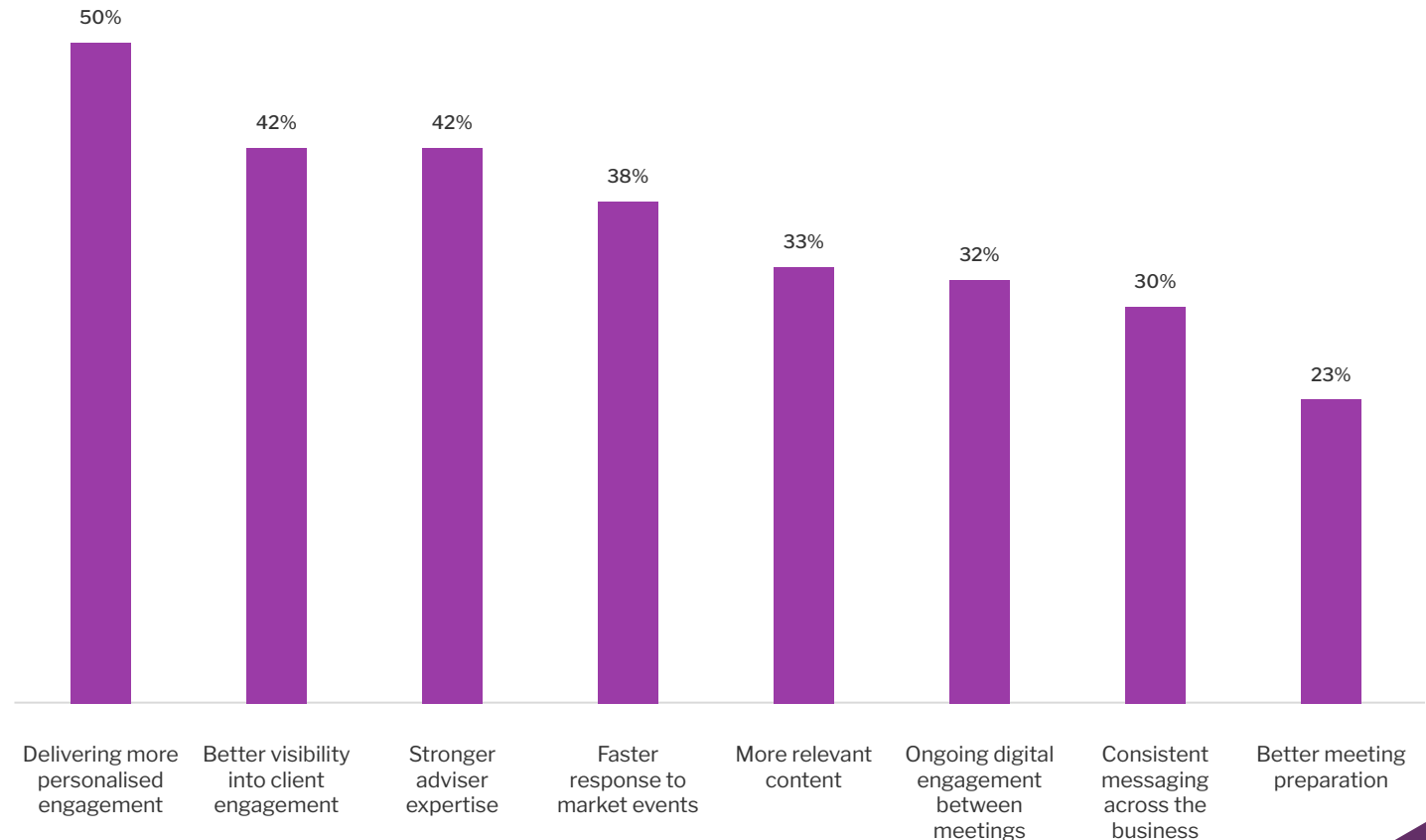
The pressure to grow is closely linked to the need to strengthen client relationships, but how do firms plan to achieve this?

Half of firms (50%) say they will focus on delivering more personalised engagement over the next two years. Increasing visibility into client engagement and strengthening adviser expertise both follow at 42%, while 38% want to respond more quickly to market events.

Content remains important too. A third of firms (33%) want to provide more relevant content, 32% plan to increase digital engagement, and 30% want to ensure more consistent messaging across the business.

Which areas have become most important for strengthening client relationships over the next two years?

ALL RESPONSES



These findings point to a shift in what clients expect from their asset managers. Engagement is no longer confined to in-person meetings. Firms want to understand interactions more effectively, deliver relevant content at the right moment, and equip advisers to respond quickly and personally.

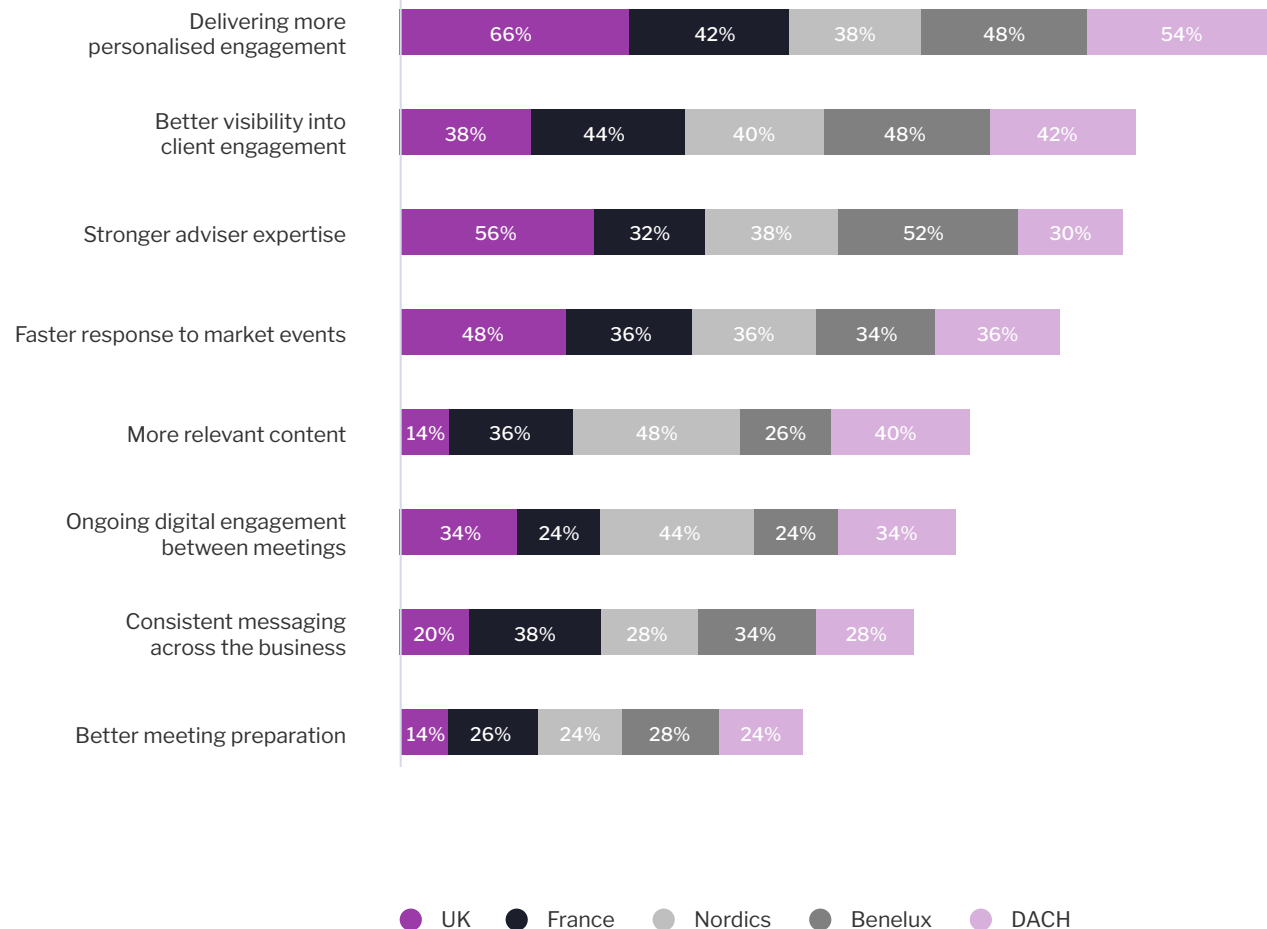
Personalised engagement is a particular priority for UK firms, with an above-average 66% naming it as their top focus for the coming years – though these firms ranked lowest for providing more relevant content (14%).

The Nordic regions invert this pattern: lowest on personalised engagement (38%), but highest on relevant content (48%) and digital engagement between meetings (44%).



Which areas have become most important for strengthening client relationships over the next two years?

RESPONSES BY COUNTRY



Improving relationship strategies

Digital engagement is consequently becoming a core part of the relationship strategy.

Almost every firm (98%) said they expect digital engagement to become a key part of their relationship strategy within the next two years – 55% say it will be “very important” and a further 43% say “important”.

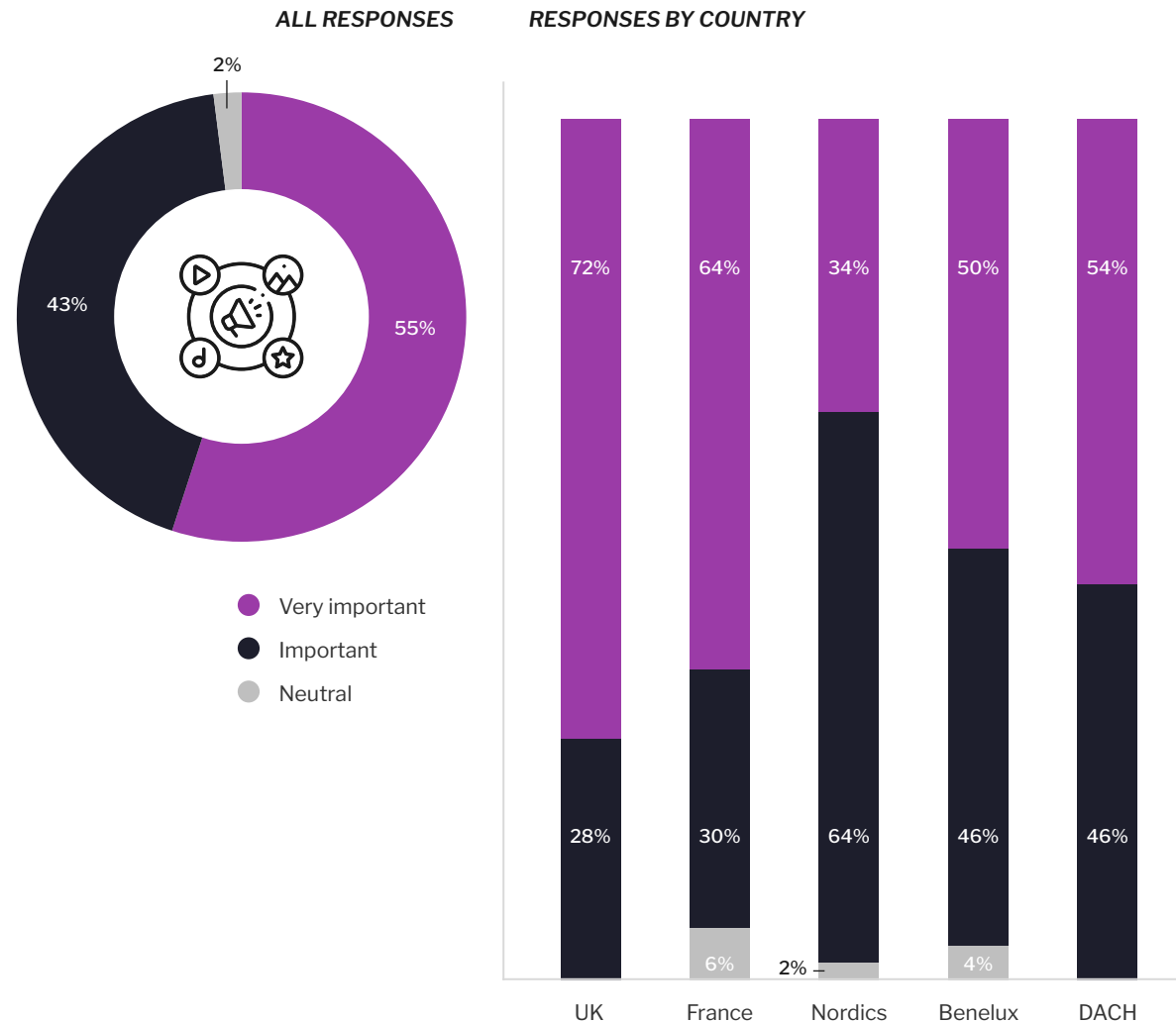
Only 2% of firms were neutral, suggesting this is no longer a question of whether digital engagement will become central to client relationships, but how firms will deliver it.

The UK shows the strongest conviction, with 72% rating digital engagement as “very important”, followed by France at 64%. DACH and Benelux are more evenly split between the two ratings.

The Nordic regions again stand apart: just 34% describe digital engagement as “very important”, indicating a lower sense of urgency even as the overall direction remains consistent.

The question for the industry has therefore shifted from whether digital engagement matters to whether firms have the infrastructure and processes to deliver this effectively.

How important will digital engagement (content shared or tracked with clients outside live meetings) become to your relationship strategy over the next two years?



The transformation gap

The research reveals a significant gap between the ambition to modernise and the operating environment in which that transformation must happen. Respondents were asked to identify the biggest challenges they are currently facing.

Legacy system integration was the top barrier (42%), followed by regulatory and compliance concerns (39%). Lack of in-house digital/AI expertise ranked third (34%), with budget limitations close behind (32%).

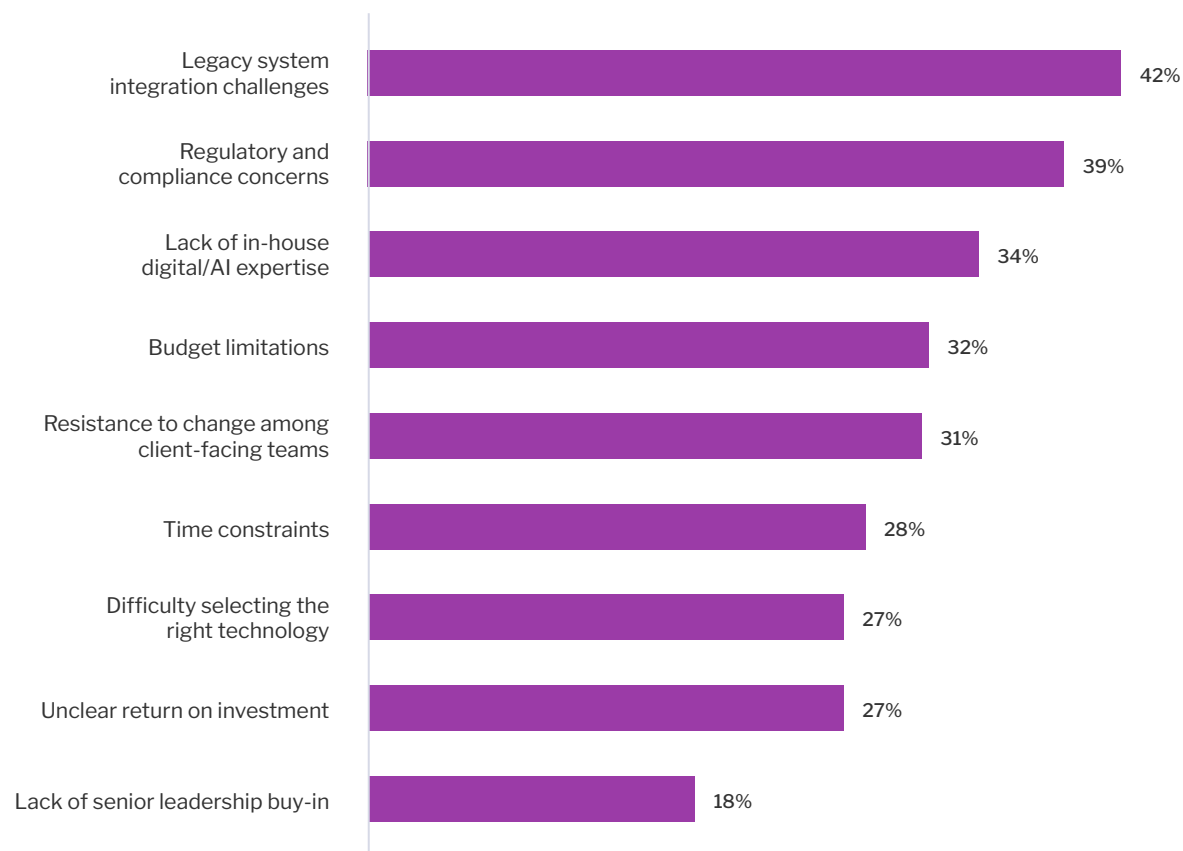
Other key internal barriers include:

- Resistance to change among client-facing teams – 31%
- Time constraints – 28%
- Difficulty selecting the right technology – 27%
- Unclear return on investment – 27%
- Lack of senior leadership buy-in – 18%

The fact that senior leadership buy-in ranks last suggests that there is willingness to change at the top, but execution remains a key hurdle – specifically, integrating new technology into established systems, processes and working practices.

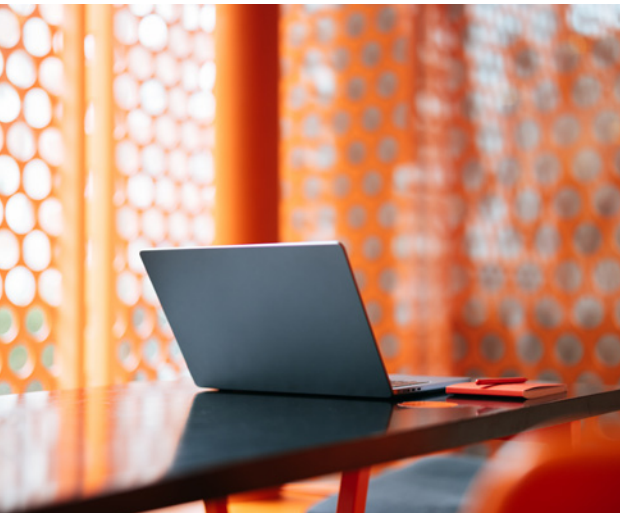
What are the main internal barriers preventing your firm from modernising client engagement and enablement?

ALL RESPONSES



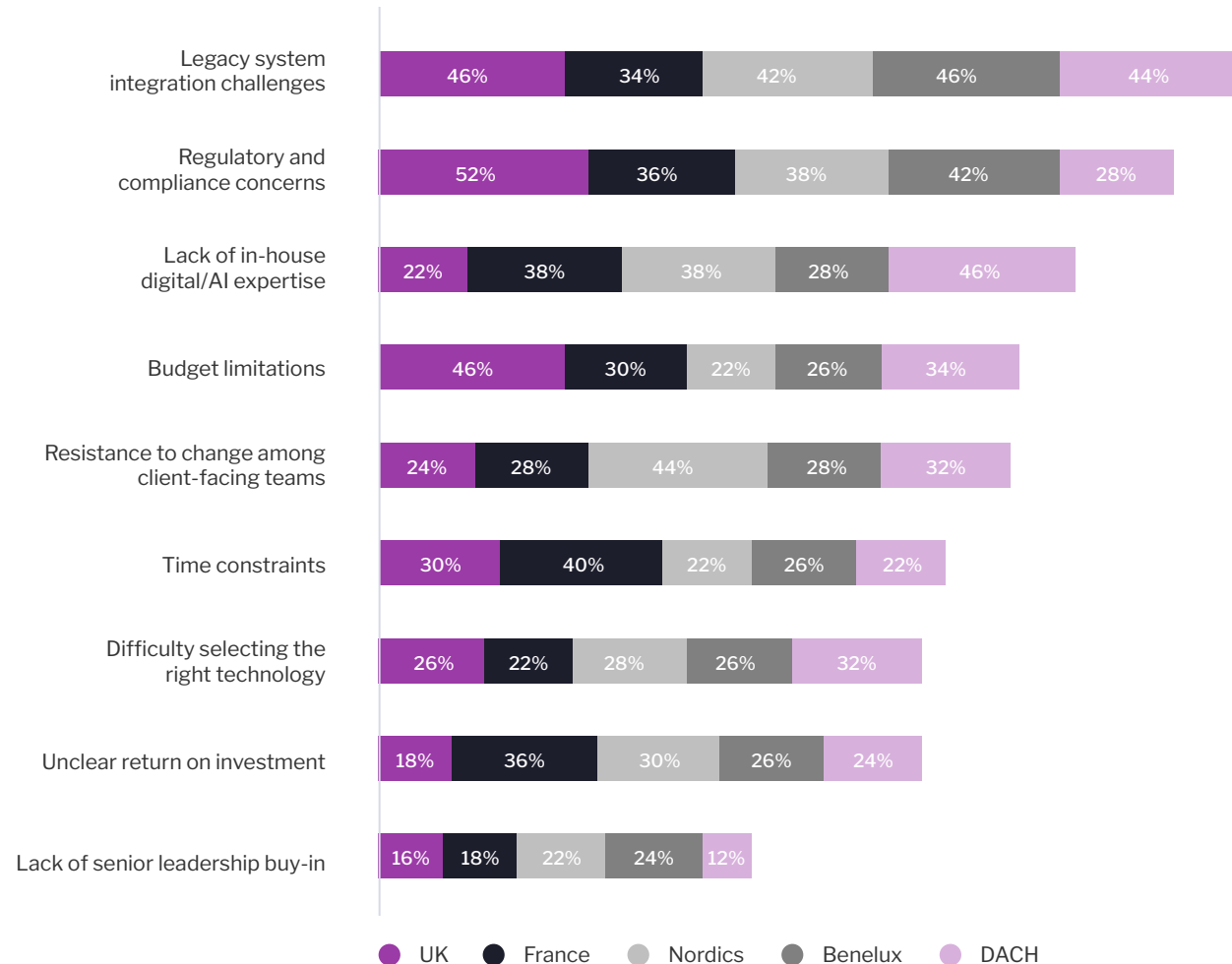
Legacy technology is the one barrier that carries broadly consistent weight across all five regions. Regulatory and compliance concerns, however, are felt most acutely in the UK, with over half (52%) citing this compared to 28-42% elsewhere in EMEA.

Lack of in-house digital/AI expertise is the defining barrier in DACH (46%) and France and the Nordics (both at 38%), but ranks much lower in the UK at just 22%. Resistance to change among client-facing teams is highest in the Nordic regions (44%), consistent with their lower urgency around digital engagement overall.



What are the main internal barriers preventing your firm from modernising client engagement and enablement?

RESPONSES BY COUNTRY



The operational consequences

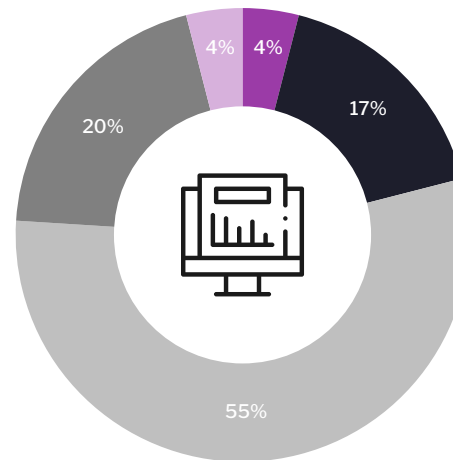
The operational consequences of this are already visible in the daily working lives of client-facing professionals.

Over half of firms (55%) report that a typical client-facing professional spends 11–15 hours per week on administrative or non-client-facing work. A further 20% spend 6–10 hours and 17% spend 16–20 hours. Only 4% spend fewer than 5 hours on these tasks each week, and a further 4% spend more than 20 hours.

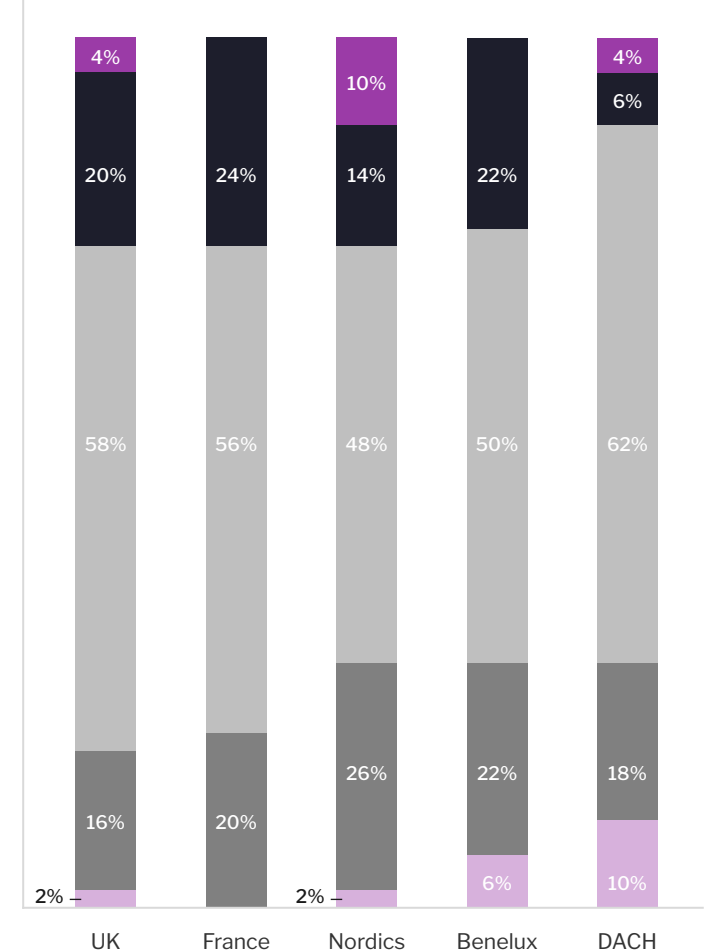
The 11–15 hour band dominates in every region, ranging from 48% in the Nordics to 62% in DACH. DACH responses are the most concentrated, while the Nordics show the most spread: 26% fall in the 6–10 hour band and 10% report over 20 hours, the highest of any region.

Approximately how much time does a typical client-facing professional spend each week on administrative or non-client facing work?

ALL RESPONSES



RESPONSES BY COUNTRY



- 20+ Hours
- 16-20 Hours
- 11-15 Hours
- 6-10 Hours
- 0-5 Hours

11-15 Hours

a week is spent on administrative/non-client facing work by 55% of firms.

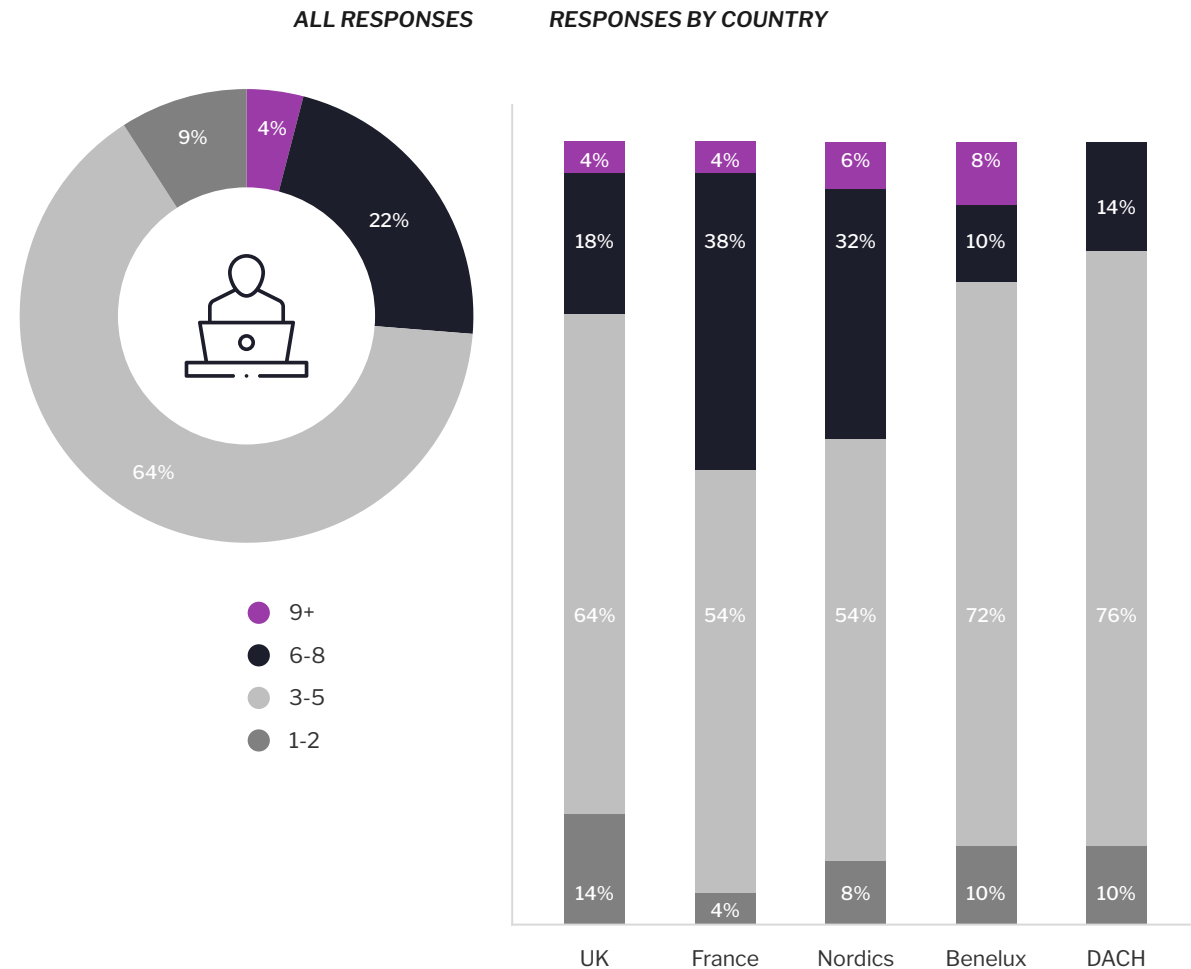
Fragmented technology adds to this problem. Almost two-thirds (64%) of client-facing employees switch between 3–5 systems to prepare for a single client interaction, with a further 22% switching between 6–8 – meaning 86% of firms are navigating a minimum of three systems per interaction.

It's clear that firms want more personalised and responsive client engagement, but the people responsible for delivering it are often operating across fragmented systems and spending a significant proportion of their working week on administrative tasks.

Interestingly, DACH and Benelux firms report the least system fragmentation, with 76% and 72% respectively in the 3–5 system band and relatively few reaching six or more. France stands out at the high end: 38% switch between 6–8 systems – the highest of any region – with a further 4% on 9 or more. The UK has the highest proportion managing with just 1–2 systems (14%), and 22% in the 6–8 or 9+ bands – mid-range compared to other regions.



How many separate systems do your client-facing teams typically switch between to prepare for a single client interaction?



Governance is becoming a growth challenge

As firms increase their digital activity and explore AI, governance becomes even more important, but also more difficult.

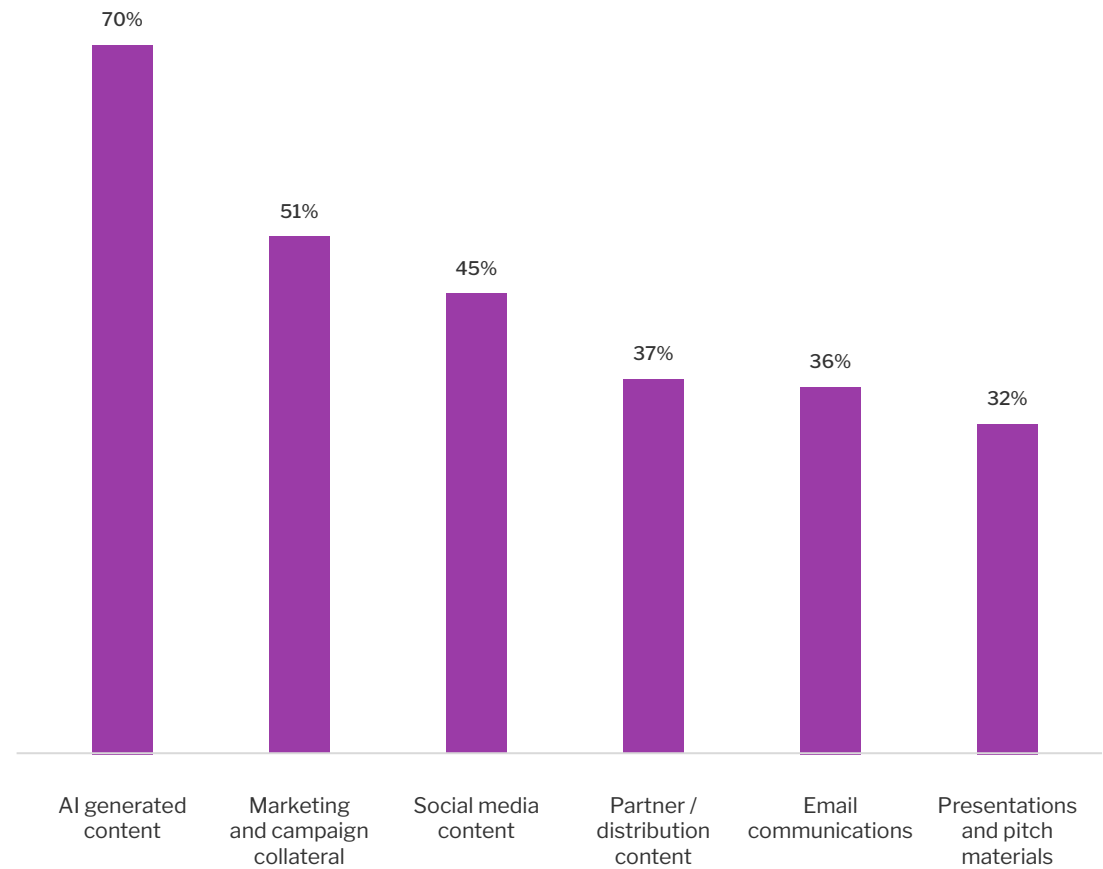
When asked which content types create the greatest governance challenge today, AI-generated content is the dominant concern at 70%, well clear of every other content type. Marketing and campaign collateral (51%) and social media content (45%) rank second and third, followed by partner/distribution content (37%), email communications (36%), and presentations and pitch materials (32%).

70%

of firms consider
AI-generated
content the greatest
governance challenge
today.

Which of the following content types creates the greatest governance challenge today?

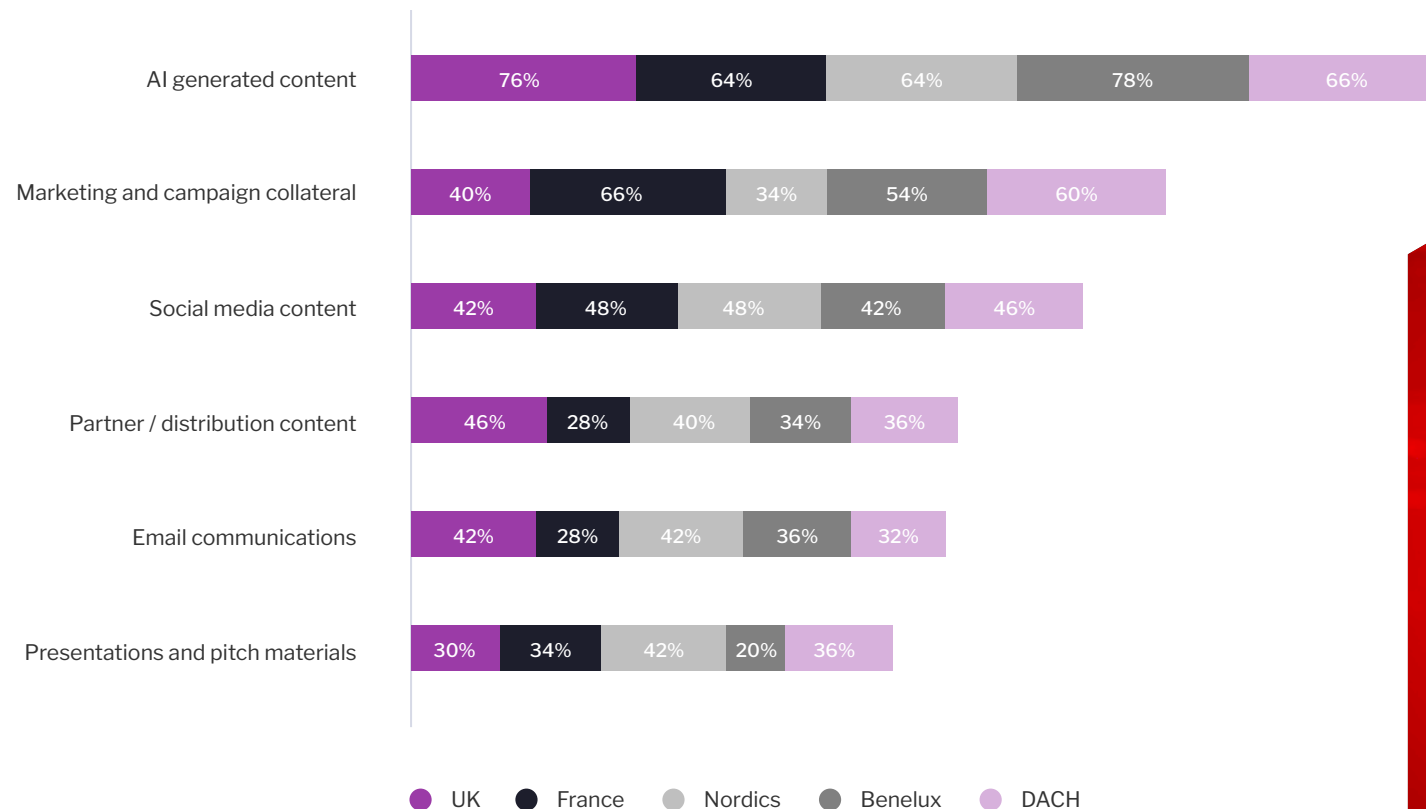
ALL RESPONSES



AI-generated content remains the top concern across every region, ranging from 64% in France and the Nordics to 78% in Benelux. Marketing and campaign collateral shows the most regional variation: France and DACH rate it significantly higher (66% and 60%) than the Nordics and UK (34% and 40%).

Which of the following content types creates the greatest governance challenge today?

RESPONSES BY COUNTRY



Firms were also asked where in the content lifecycle governance creates the most friction, and it's clear that this friction extends throughout.

Cross-border compliance was the biggest challenge (44%), followed by getting content approved at 42%. Distribution to the right teams or channels accounts for 30%, version control and refreshing or retiring outdated content both stand at 29%, while preparing for audits is the least problematic at 22%.

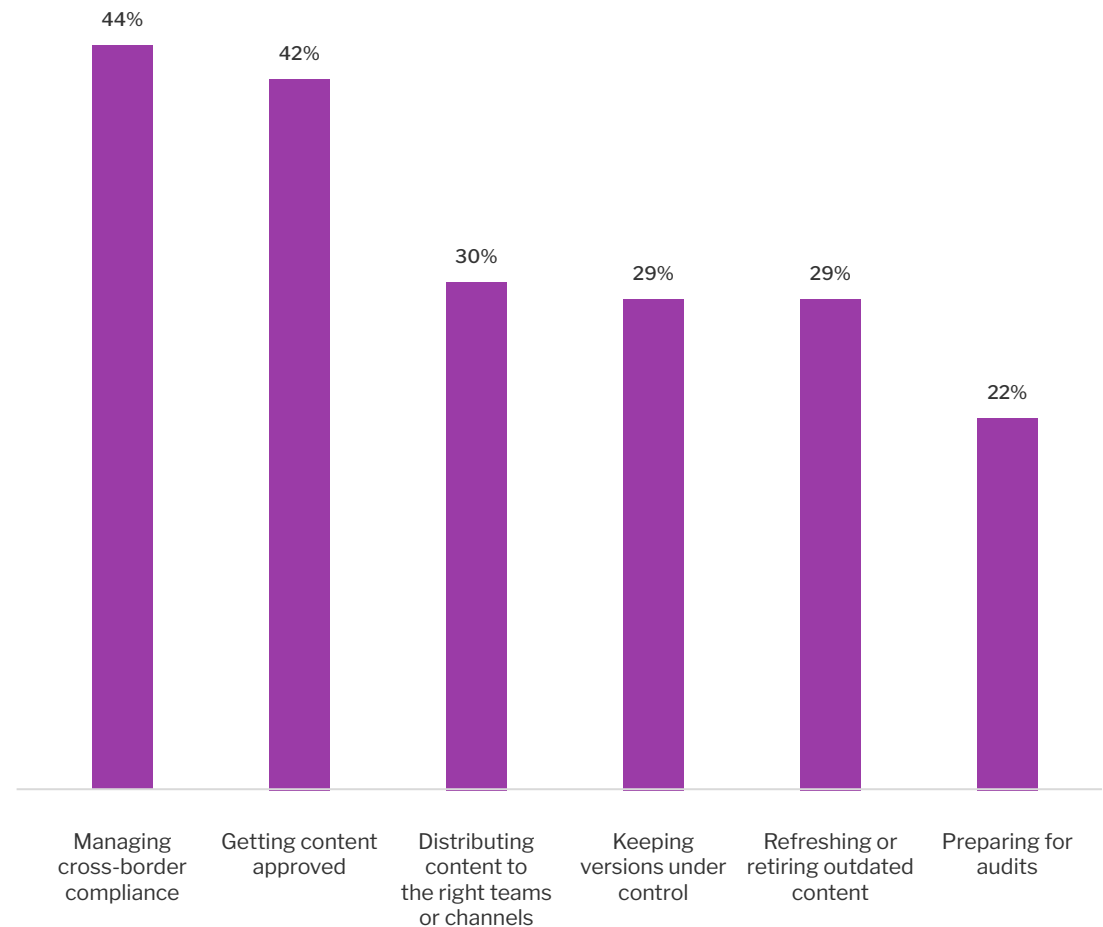
These findings suggest that governance friction occurs early in the process, before content reaches its intended audience.


44%

**of firms answered
that cross-border
compliance was the
biggest challenge.**

Where in your content lifecycle does governance create the most friction?

ALL RESPONSES

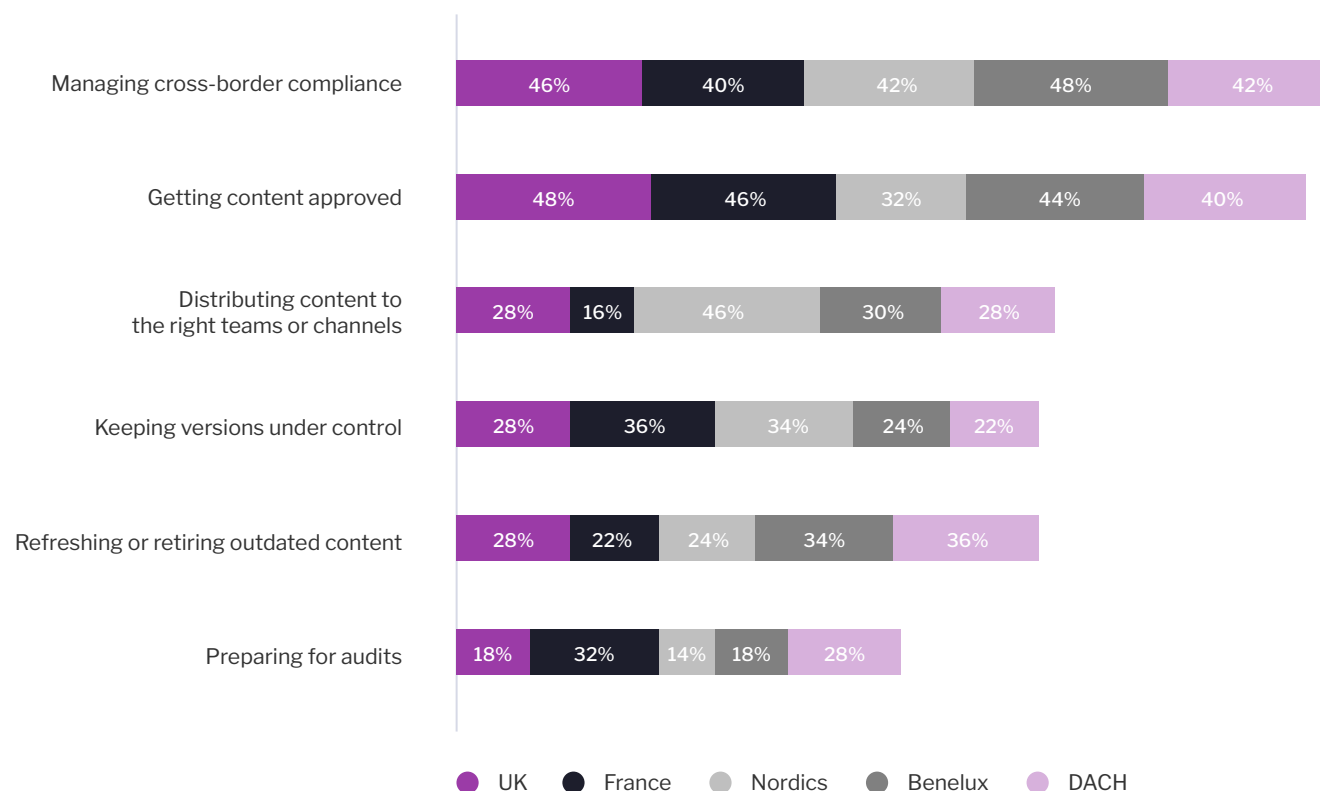


Regional differences reinforce this. Getting content approved is the top friction point in the UK (48%) and France (46%), but notably lower in the Nordic regions (32%), where distribution dominates instead – 46% cite getting content to the right teams or channels as their biggest challenge, the highest of any region by some margin.

France experiences the greatest difficulty with version control (36%), while refreshing or retiring outdated content is particularly challenging in DACH and Benelux (36% and 34%).

Where in your content lifecycle does governance create the most friction?

RESPONSES BY COUNTRY



Consistency is crucial

Content governance issues are not simply an absence of policies – only 4% of firms report having no formal governance framework in place.

The bigger issue is consistency. Over half (53%) of asset management firms have policies in place but enforce them inconsistently, meaning only 43% report having clear governance that is well defined and consistently followed.

The Nordics report the highest rate of consistent governance (50%), while the UK and France lag at 38% and 36%.

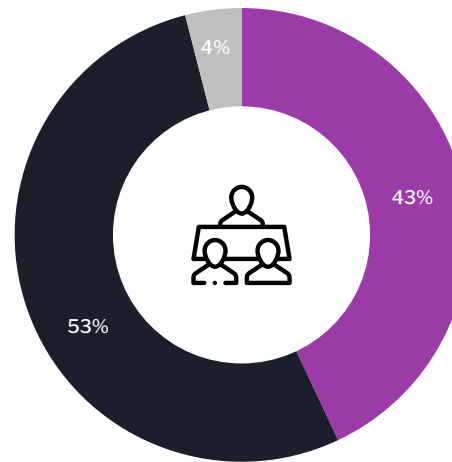
As content becomes more dynamic and AI makes it possible to produce more of it, governance cannot simply mean adding more approval processes. Instead, firms need governance that can operate at the speed of modern client engagement.



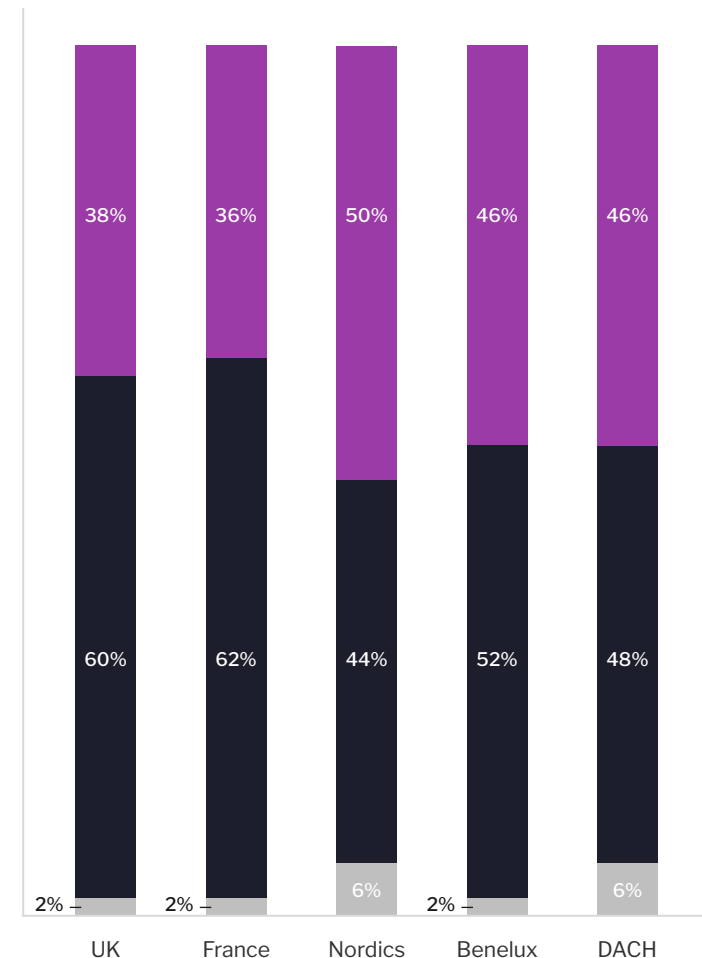
Which best describes how your firm handles content governance today?

ALL RESPONSES

RESPONSES BY COUNTRY



- We have clear governance that's consistently followed
- We have policies in place, but enforcement is inconsistent
- We have informal practices, but no real framework



AI offers a route forward

Despite the challenges around AI expertise and governance, firms increasingly see AI as a major opportunity. Half (52%) believe AI-powered content and enablement will have the greatest impact on competitive differentiation over the next three years – more than five times any other capability.

Knowledge management edges ahead at 10%, followed by:

- Partner and distribution enablement – 8%
- Analytics and measurement – 8%
- Digital client engagement – 8%
- Compliance/governance automation – 7%
- Content automation – 6%

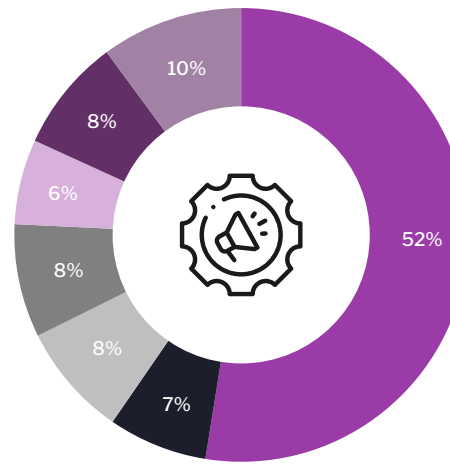
This suggests firms are not converging on a single AI use case. They see potential across the entire client-facing workflow, with content and enablement leading the way.

Regional consensus reflects this: AI-powered content and enablement is the clear top priority across every market, with stronger alignment on this question than almost any other in the survey.

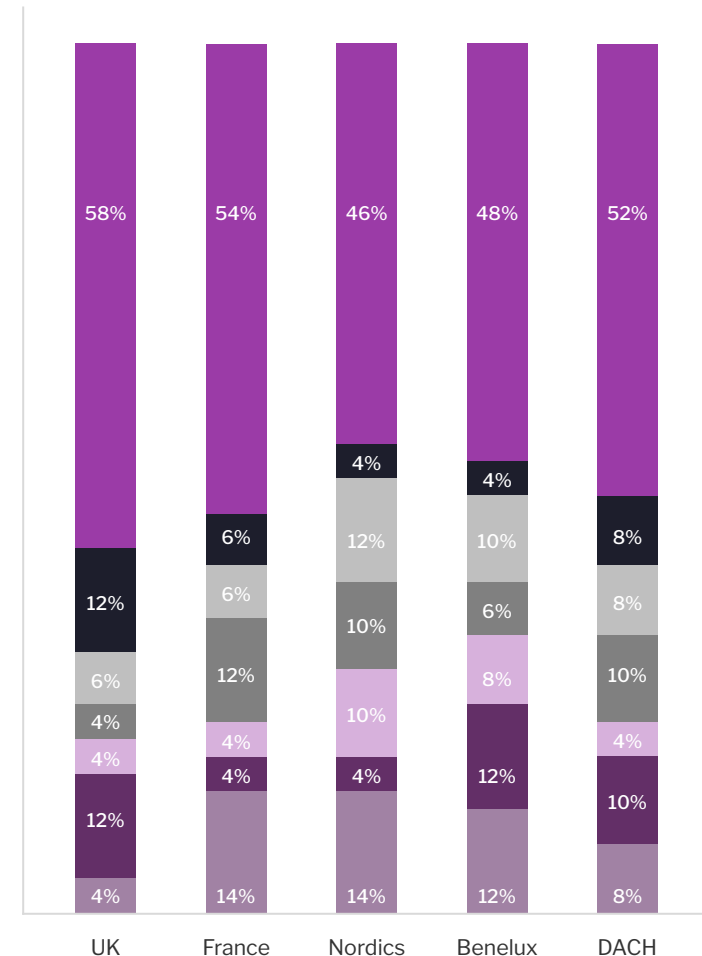
Which capability do you expect to have the greatest impact on competitive differentiation over the next 3 years?

ALL RESPONSES

RESPONSES BY COUNTRY



- AI-powered content and enablement
- Compliance / governance automation
- Partner and distribution enablement
- Analytics and measurement
- Content automation
- Digital client engagement
- Knowledge management



AI delivers value across client-facing workflows

When asked where AI is most likely to deliver value for client-facing teams, content creation and personalisation led at 51%. This was followed by knowledge discovery (49%), client communications (47%), and meeting preparation (46%) – suggesting broad appetite across core day-to-day workflows.

Administrative tasks account for 36%, compliance review 27%, and coaching and training 26%.

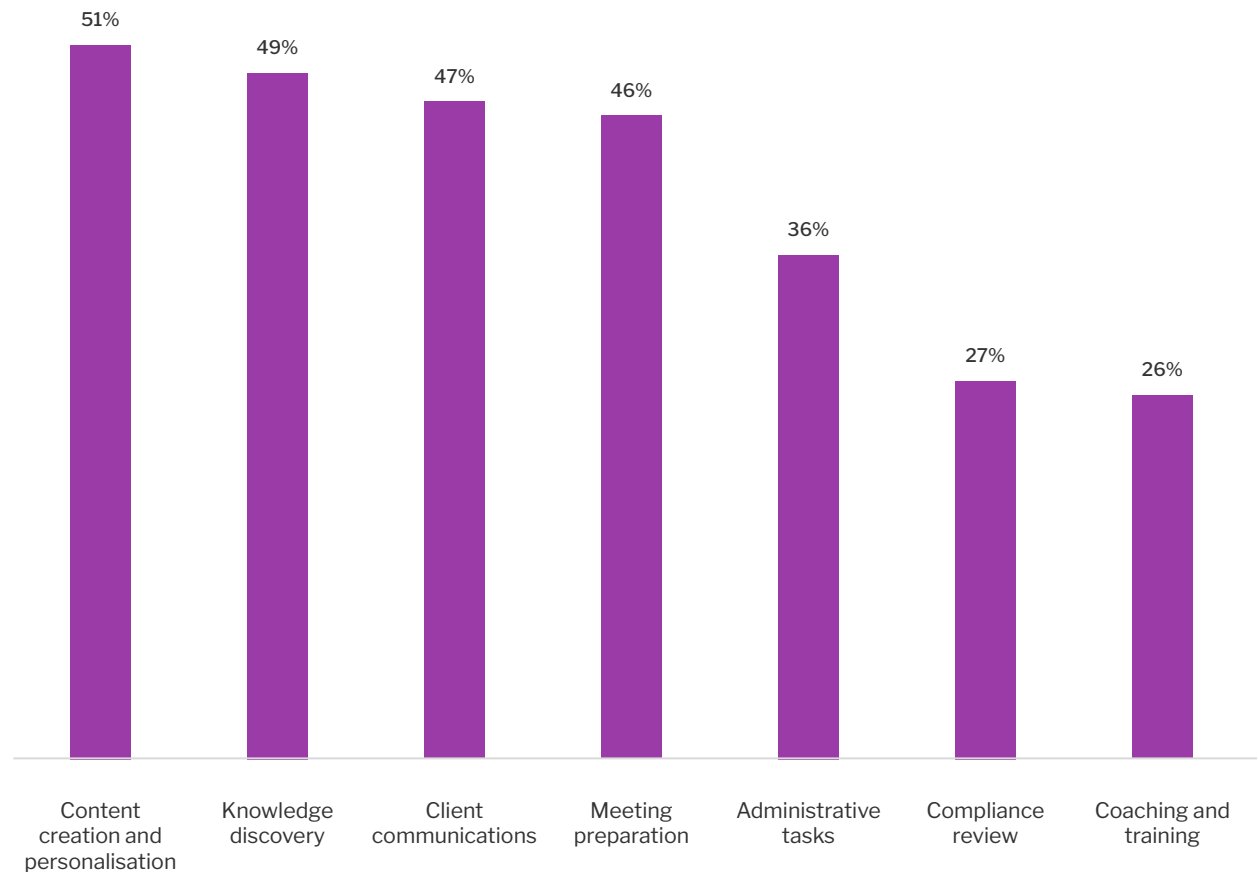
From finding knowledge and preparing for meetings to creating content, communicating with clients and reducing administrative work, AI could help firms address the very areas where client-facing teams are experiencing the most friction.

That said, the regional picture shows that firms are approaching these opportunities differently.



Where is AI most likely to deliver value for your client-facing teams?

ALL RESPONSES



The UK places the greatest emphasis on content creation and personalisation (58%), while the Nordic regions rate this lower (42%) and instead prioritise knowledge discovery and meeting preparation. France sees the strongest opportunity in knowledge discovery (60%), while Benelux places particular emphasis on meeting preparation (60%) and client communications (52%).

The UK also stands out for its focus on administrative tasks (46%), compared with 26% in both France and Benelux.

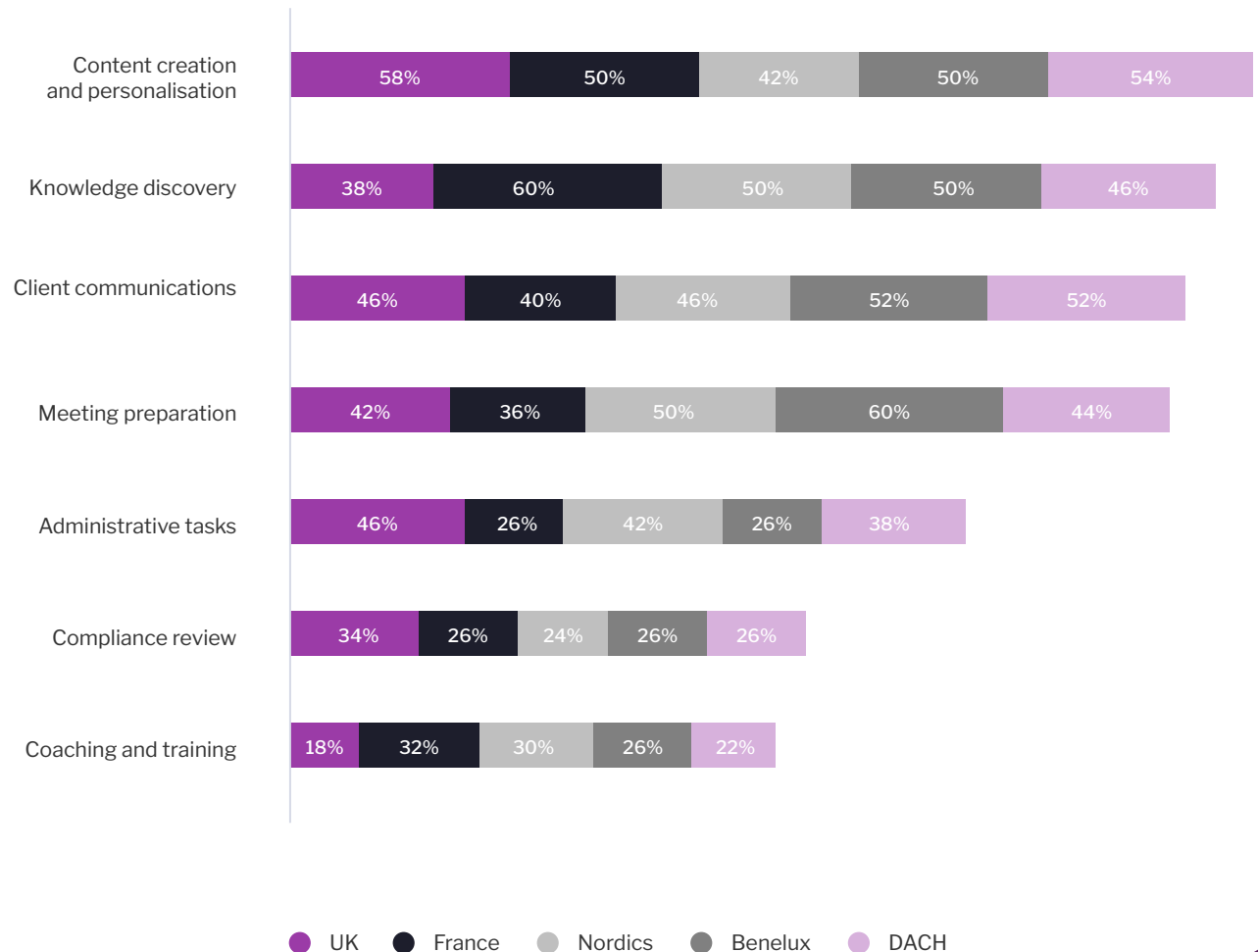
The lesson is that AI adoption will not follow one universal model. Its value will depend on where firms have the greatest operational friction and where technology can most effectively improve the client-facing experience.

The UK placed the greatest emphasis on content creation and personalisation.

58%

Where is AI most likely to deliver value for your client-facing teams?

RESPONSES BY COUNTRY



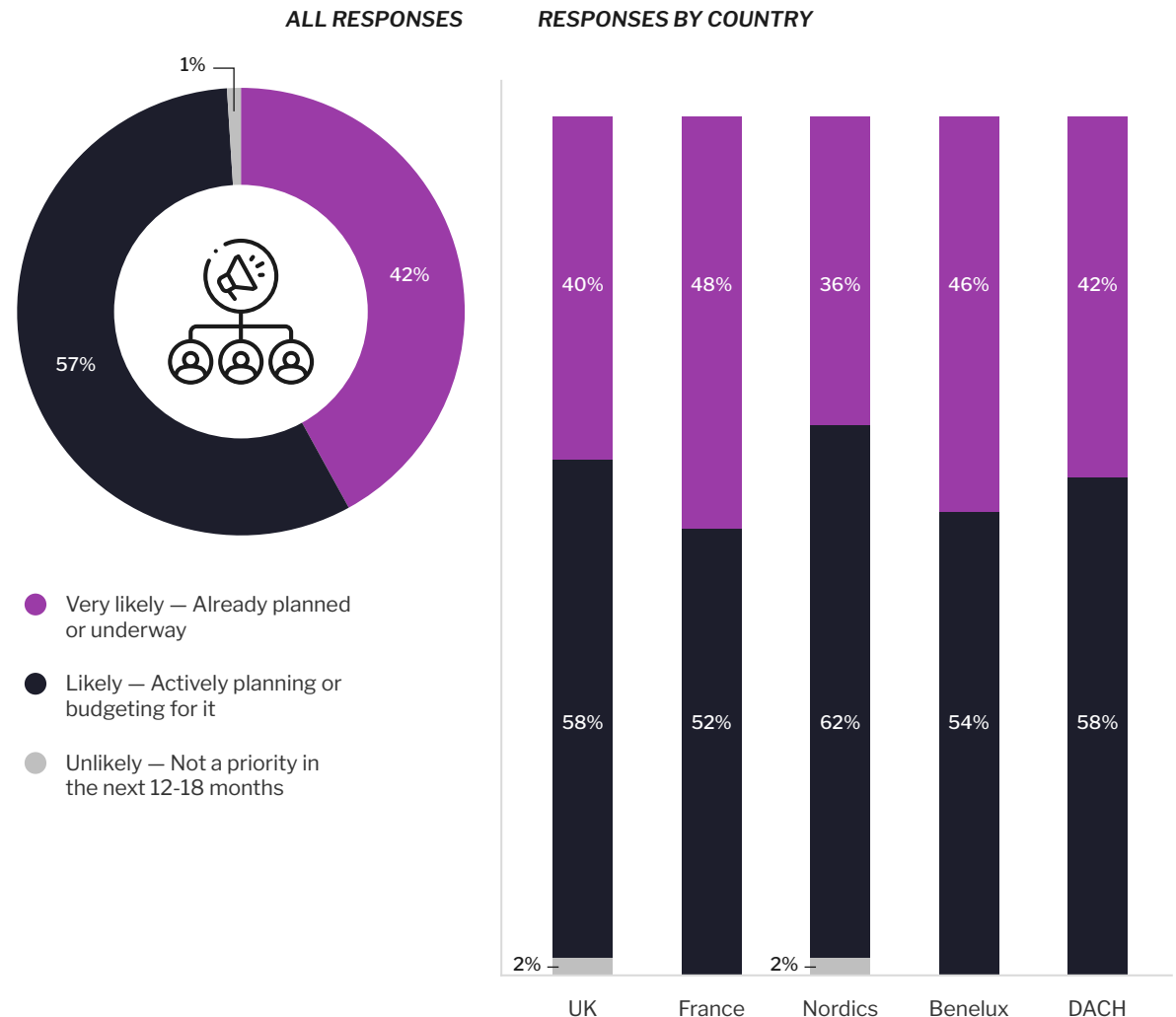
The investment is already happening

It's clear that businesses are already moving from ambition to action: the vast majority of firms (99%) say they are either likely to invest in new client engagement and enablement technology over the next 12-18 months, or that investment is already underway.

Of this, 42% say investment is already in motion and 57% are actively planning or budgeting for it. Just 1% say it is not a priority.



How likely is your firm to invest in new client engagement and enablement technology over the next 12-18 months?



Summary

The state of asset management in 2026 is defined by a simple tension: firms want to grow faster, but within increasingly complex operational and regulatory environments.

The research shows the industry understands the opportunity. Client engagement is becoming more personalised and digital. AI is emerging as the leading source of competitive differentiation, and almost every firm expects to invest in this new technology over the next 12–18 months.

But transformation will not succeed simply because firms invest in new tools. Legacy systems, fragmented workflows, regulatory requirements, a lack of digital expertise and time pressures are all having a deep operational impact on client-facing teams. Governance adds another layer of complexity – particularly as AI increases the volume and speed at which content is being created and distributed.

This is why governed growth matters. Not growth at any cost, nor governance that slows innovation – but a model where technology, content, AI and governance work together. This will enable firms to engage clients more effectively while giving their people the information, tools and controls they need to operate with confidence.

The firms best positioned for the next phase of asset management will be those that can close the gap between ambition and execution.

In 2026, governed growth is no longer simply a strategic goal. It is the operating challenge that will define how successfully asset managers turn digital and AI investment into strong client relationships, improved productivity and sustainable growth.



How Seismic can help

Seismic's AI-driven sales enablement platform is uniquely positioned to provide brokers and advisers with the insights, content, and measurable client data they need to effectively engage today's policyholders and prospects.

By equipping client-facing teams with intelligent automation and predictive insights, Seismic helps firms turn ambition into action and drive sustained growth.

To learn how Seismic can support your advisers and clients alike, [get in touch today](#).



IFP

Insights for
PROFESSIONALS

IFP gives you access to the latest business knowledge that's customised for you. We provide high quality, credible and relevant resources for senior professionals in one place.

An easy to access and personalised library to help you when you are researching specific topics, seeking practical advice, or simply want to stay ahead of what's happening in your industry. To do this we gather the best content from suppliers, brands and industry experts, as well as doing our own research.

