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2023

Survey Report: The Impact of AI in Finance Departments

We surveyed hundreds of finance leaders to find out how they're using AI in 2023, and how AI will impact the future of finance.

Introduction

You've heard the hype... Generative AI is the next major transformative technology, and it has finance and business leaders bracing for impact. But for many finance professionals, it remains unclear just what AI's impact will be, or how to prepare.

With so many questions floating around, we decided to go straight to the source and survey 400 finance leaders in small-to-midsize businesses. The survey results reveal their current perspectives on AI's role in finance, shedding light on its ongoing influence and the potential it holds for transforming finance teams in the future.

Whether you've considered AI before and decided to forego it, have never considered it at all, or want to give it a serious look, you're in the right place. This report answers your most-burning AI questions using recent industry data. Its insights will arm you with the knowledge you need to make informed decisions about integrating AI into your own finance operations.

Key Highlights

Top AI Concerns | Most Popular AI Use Cases for Finance Teams | AI's Impact On Finance Jobs

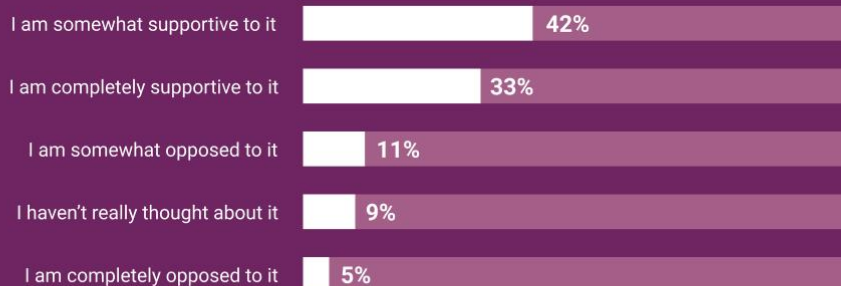centime

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Are Finance Pros Ready for AI?

You can't attend a webinar or conference today without hearing the term "artificial intelligence." It's a hot-button topic for business leaders around the world, but how many teams are actually using the tool today and how many businesses actually plan to adopt the technology in the near future?

We surveyed over 400 finance leaders about their use of artificial intelligence (AI), and surprisingly, the majority of them support it. In fact, 75% of respondents are either 'somewhat' or 'completely' supportive of introducing AI into their own finance processes.

To what degree are you comfortable with the idea of introducing artificial intelligence into your finance processes?

I am somewhat supportive to it	42%
I am completely supportive to it	33%
I am somewhat opposed to it	11%
I haven't really thought about it	9%
I am completely opposed to it	5%

75% of finance leaders support introducing AI to their operations.
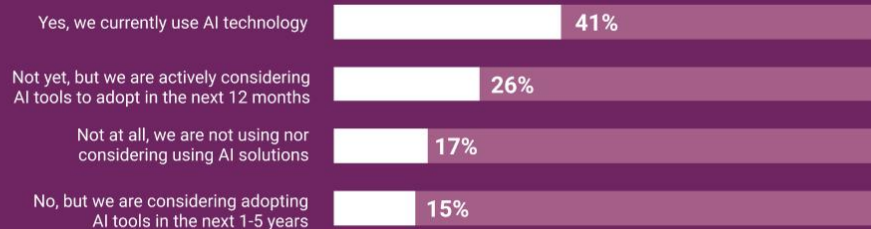
N = 411

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3 out of 4
respondents support
introducing AI into their
own finance processes.

This support has translated to many professionals adding AI to their everyday workflows – so much so that 41% of survey respondents already use AI today, with another 26% considering adopting AI tools within the next 12 months. In other words, up to two thirds (67%) of surveyed finance leaders could use AI in their daily processes by Q3 2024.

Do you use artificial intelligence in your finance processes today?

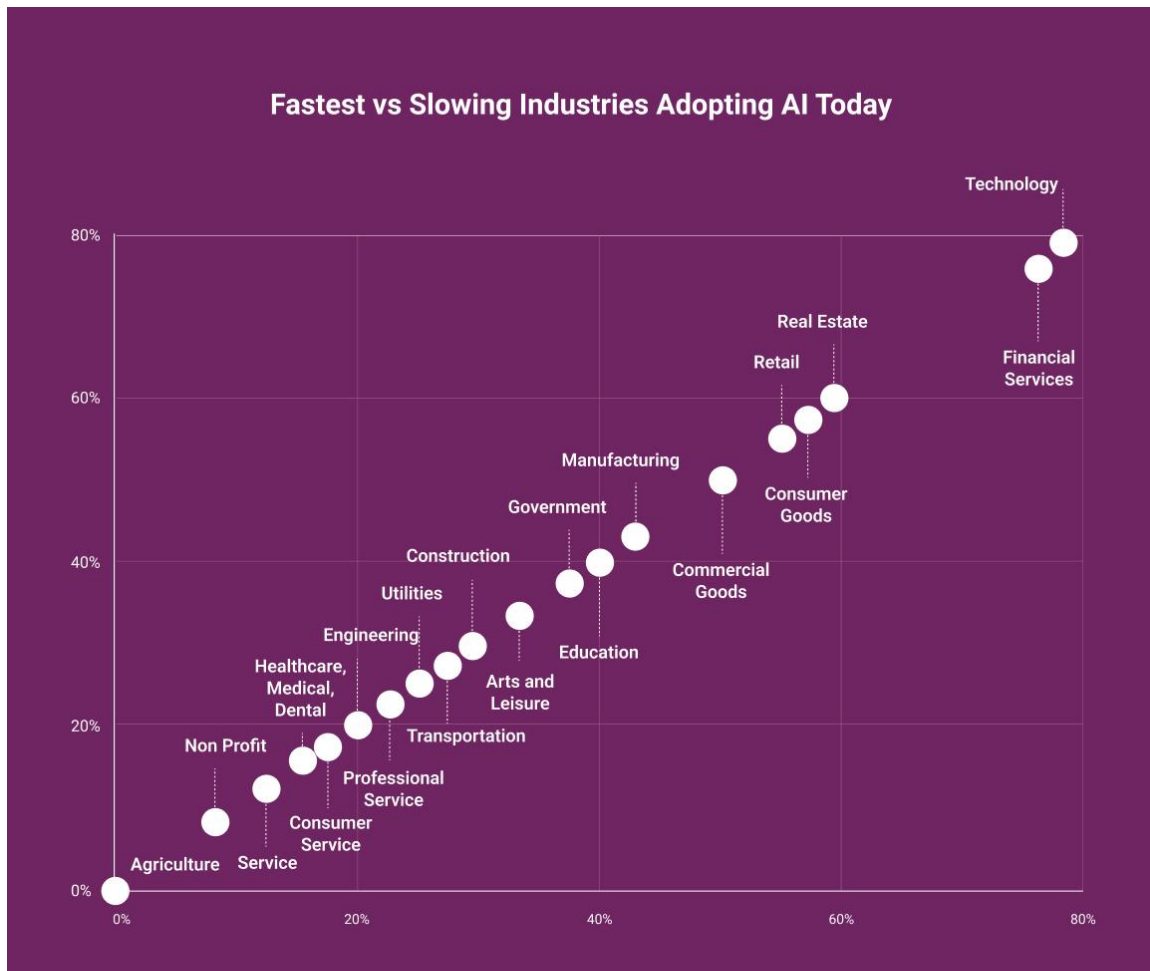|	
Yes, we currently use AI technology	41%
Not yet, but we are actively considering AI tools to adopt in the next 12 months	26%
Not at all, we are not using nor considering using AI solutions	17%
No, but we are considering adopting AI tools in the next 1-5 years	15%

41% of respondents already use AI today.

N = 410

41% of finance leaders already use AI technology in their finance processes.

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The survey also revealed that the industries with the highest AI adoption rates for finance teams include: Technology (78%), Financial Services (76%), and Real Estate (58%).

Meanwhile, Agriculture (0%), Non-Profits (8%), and Service verticals (12%) are the industries with the lowest AI adoption rates among finance teams.

Fastest vs Slowing Industries Adopting AI Today

Industries plotted (left to right, low to high adoption): Agriculture, Service, Non Profit, Consumer Service, Professional Service, Healthcare, Medical, Dental, Engineering, Utilities, Transportation, Arts and Leisure, Construction, Education, Government, Commercial Goods, Manufacturing, Retail, Consumer Goods, Real Estate, Financial Services, Technology

Industries with the highest AI adoptions rates amongst finance teams

78% Technology

76% Financial Services

58% Real Estate

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CHAPTER 02

What Attitude Do Finance Leaders Hold Towards AI?

Finance leaders are generally optimistic about AI's future role in their field. An impressive 79%—comprising 54% who agree and 25% who strongly agree—predict that AI will have a positive impact on their finance departments in the coming two years.

AI will have a mostly positive impact on my finance department in the next 2 years

4%
Strongly Disagree

25%
Strongly Agree

16%
Disagree

54%
Agree

79% of finance leaders are optimistic about the future of AI.
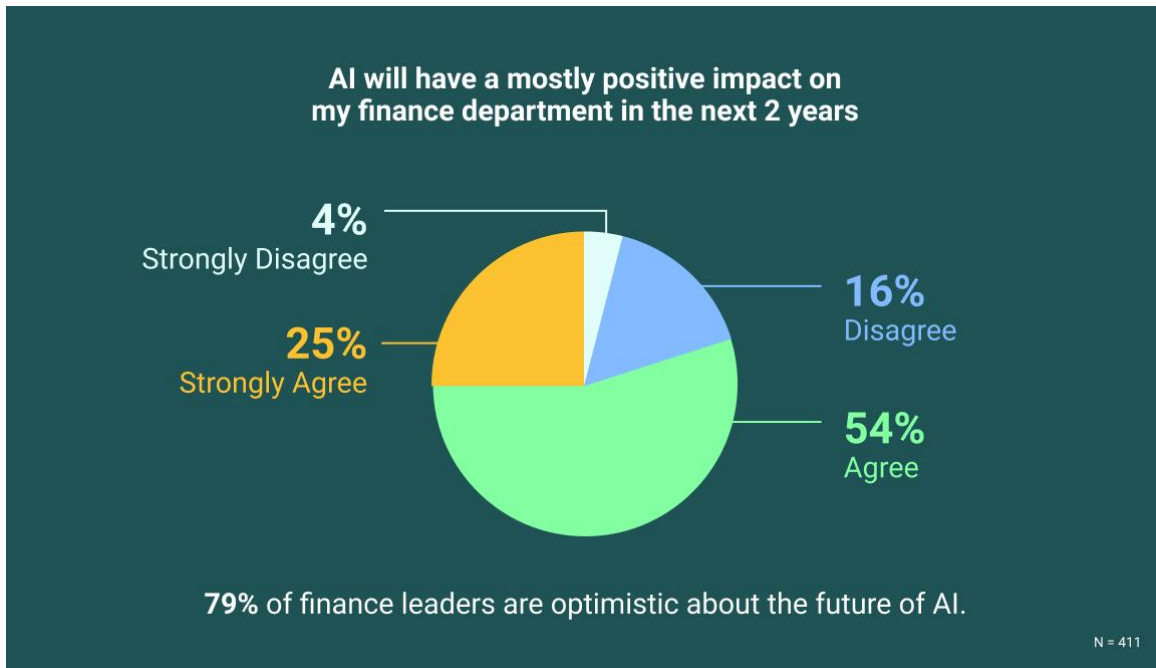
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This optimism, however, is tempered by an acute awareness of the impending changes AI is set to usher in.

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AI will change the nature of my role in the next 2 years

20% Strongly Agree

45% Agree

11% Strongly Disagree

24% Disagree
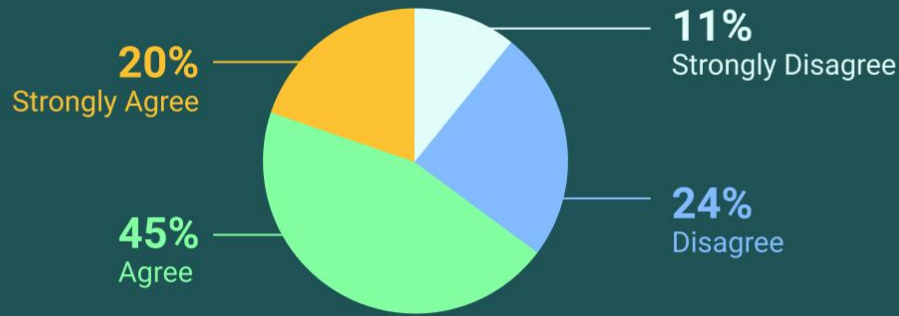
65% of finance leaders foresee AI altering their role.

N = 411

65% of these leaders believe AI will significantly transform their role over the next two years. Moreover, 70% anticipate AI to alter the functions of their direct reports within the same timeframe.

AI will change the nature of my direct reports' role in the next 2 years

8% Strongly Disagree

21% Strongly Agree

21% Disagree

49% Agree
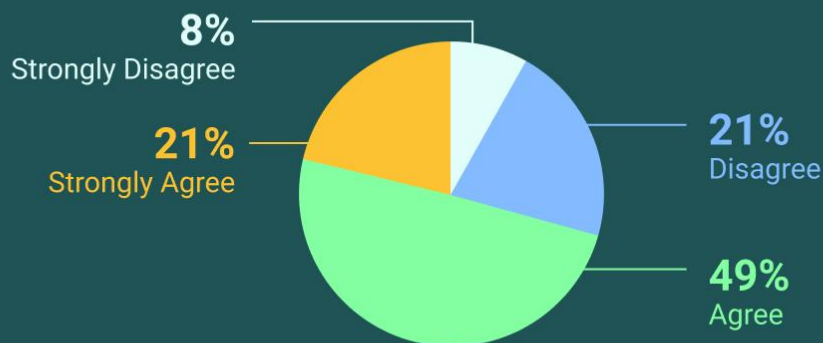
70% of finance leaders predict AI will change their direct reports' jobs.

N = 411

These figures highlight AI's potential to fundamentally change finance roles in the near future. The survey revealed that this shift concerns many finance leaders.

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46% of finance leaders fear AI's impact on jobs in the next two years.

On this note, a notable 46% of respondents said they are fearful of AI's impact on their jobs and/or their direct reports' jobs in the next two years. This suggests that a key tension in AI adoption lies in balancing efficiency gains with job stability.

Here's how finance leaders feel about AI today

79%
believe it will have a positive impact

65%
believe it will change the nature of their role
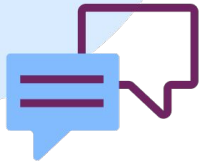
46%
fear how AI will impact finance jobs overall

This blend of optimism and hesitancy underscores a sector actively grappling with the dual nature of AI: its capacity to enhance efficiency and effectiveness, while also challenging traditional job structures.

In the next section, we'll dive deeper into other top AI concerns among finance professionals.

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What Are Finance Leaders' Top AI Concerns?

While finance leaders are mostly optimistic about the future of AI, some aspects of the technology still give them pause. Automating jobs away was at the top of the list, expressed by 20% of the entire survey pool.

This concern was even higher among those who already use AI today (22%), indicating heightened worries about AI's impact on employment among AI-adopters. With 34% of AI-adopters reporting a reduction in their workforce, it's safe to say that job automation is a valid concern.

Top Concerns for AI-Adopters

Concern	Percentage
Automating my own or other people's jobs away	22%
Maintaining data compliance	18%
Limited visibility into how it works	13%
Legal or ethical uncertainity	13%
Upskilling workers to manage the tool	12%
I do not have concerns regarding AI	12%
Transitioning off of current systems and processes	9%

22% of AI-adopters worry about automating jobs away.

N = 169

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Following closely, 18% of AI-adopters worry about maintaining data compliance. Meanwhile 13% are concerned about their limited visibility into how AI works, along with legal or ethical uncertainties. Such concerns are understandable given the novelty and rapid evolution of AI over the last several years.

Similar to their counterpart, non-users tend to worry more about AI's ambiguities than implementation logistics. 20% of non-users expressed concerns over legal and ethical uncertainties, while 19% fear job automation, and 18% are troubled by their limited understanding of how AI works.

Top AI Concerns for Non-Users

Concern	Percentage
Legal or ethical uncertainity	20%
Automating my own or other people's jobs away	19%
Limited visibility into how it works	18%
Upskilling workers to manage the tool	13%
Transitioning off of current systems and processes	13%
Maintaining data compliance	12%
I do not have concerns regarding AI	5%

20% of non-users are concerned about AI's legal and ethical uncertainties.

N = 241

Interestingly, 12% of AI-adopters and 5% of non-users expressed no concerns regarding AI, signaling a level of confidence and acceptance among a small but notable minority of finance professionals.
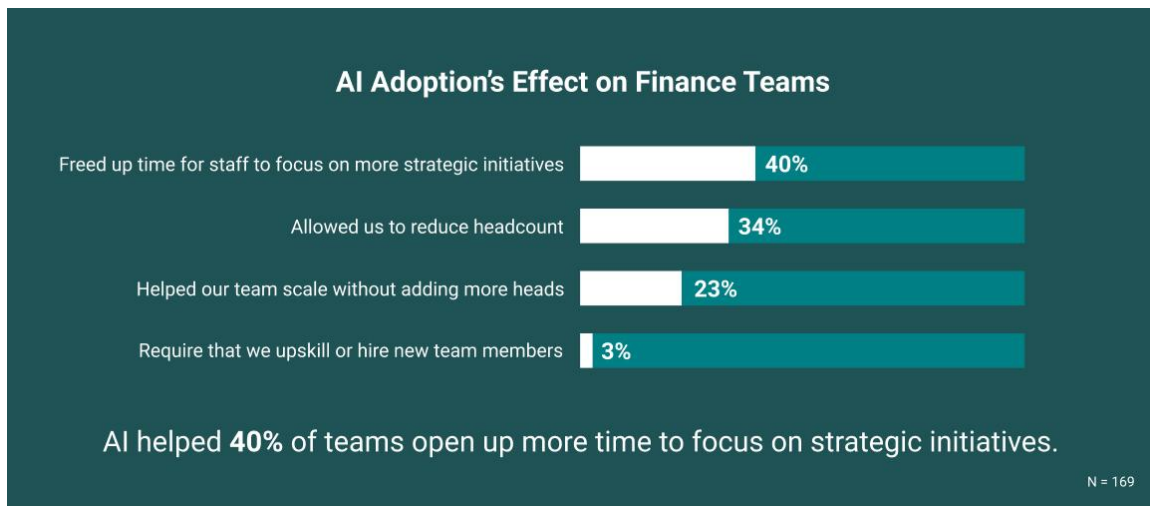
12% of AI-adopters **&** **5%** of non-users have no concerns about using AI.

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How Will AI Change My Team?

As part of our survey, we polled AI-adopters on how using AI has impacted their team. The results are telling, highlighting a range of impacts from operational changes to new workforce dynamics.

AI Adoption's Effect on Finance Teams

Freed up time for staff to focus on more strategic initiatives	40%
Allowed us to reduce headcount	34%
Helped our team scale without adding more heads	23%
Require that we upskill or hire new team members	3%

AI helped **40%** of teams open up more time to focus on strategic initiatives.

N = 169

These responses paint a picture of a finance sector actively adapting to AI, witnessing shifts in operational priorities and work roles.

So what can teams expect from AI, in terms of staffing and operational efficiency? There are four key trends that emerged from our survey, which we'll explore in more detail on the following page.

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Leaner Teams, Smarter Tech

Strikingly, 1 in 3 AI-adopters have cut down their team sizes.

This shows AI's ability to streamline operations and replace manual tasks, leading to slimmer, more efficient teams.

Ability To Scale

About 23% of AI-adopters reported that AI has helped their teams handle more work without bringing in extra hands.

This highlights AI's role in boosting productivity, enabling existing teams to tackle bigger workloads without breaking a sweat.

Strategic Shifts

A significant 40% found that AI freed their staff to dive into more strategic work.

It's clear that AI isn't just about trimming costs or downsizing. It's also empowering finance pros to take on higher-value, strategic projects.

Minor Upskilling

Interestingly, a mere 3% of AI-adopters needed to upskill or bring in new talent to manage their AI.

This suggests that integrating AI into existing processes is relatively straightforward, or that user-friendly AI tools are becoming more common.

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How Do Finance Teams Use AI Today?

In a recent webinar, AI specialists highlighted a key challenge for many Chief Financial Officers: their deep involvement in daily operations often limits their capacity to provide strategic guidance to their Chief Executive Officers.

More and more CEOs are seeking CFOs who can help grow the business, enhance revenue, and contribute to key decision-making. Consequently, some leaders view AI as a key tool to bridge the gap between operational duties and strategic decision-making in the back office.

The current top three AI use cases among AI-adopters reflect these priorities. For example, fraud detection (46%) improves security and safeguards assets.

Here's how AI-adopters are using AI today
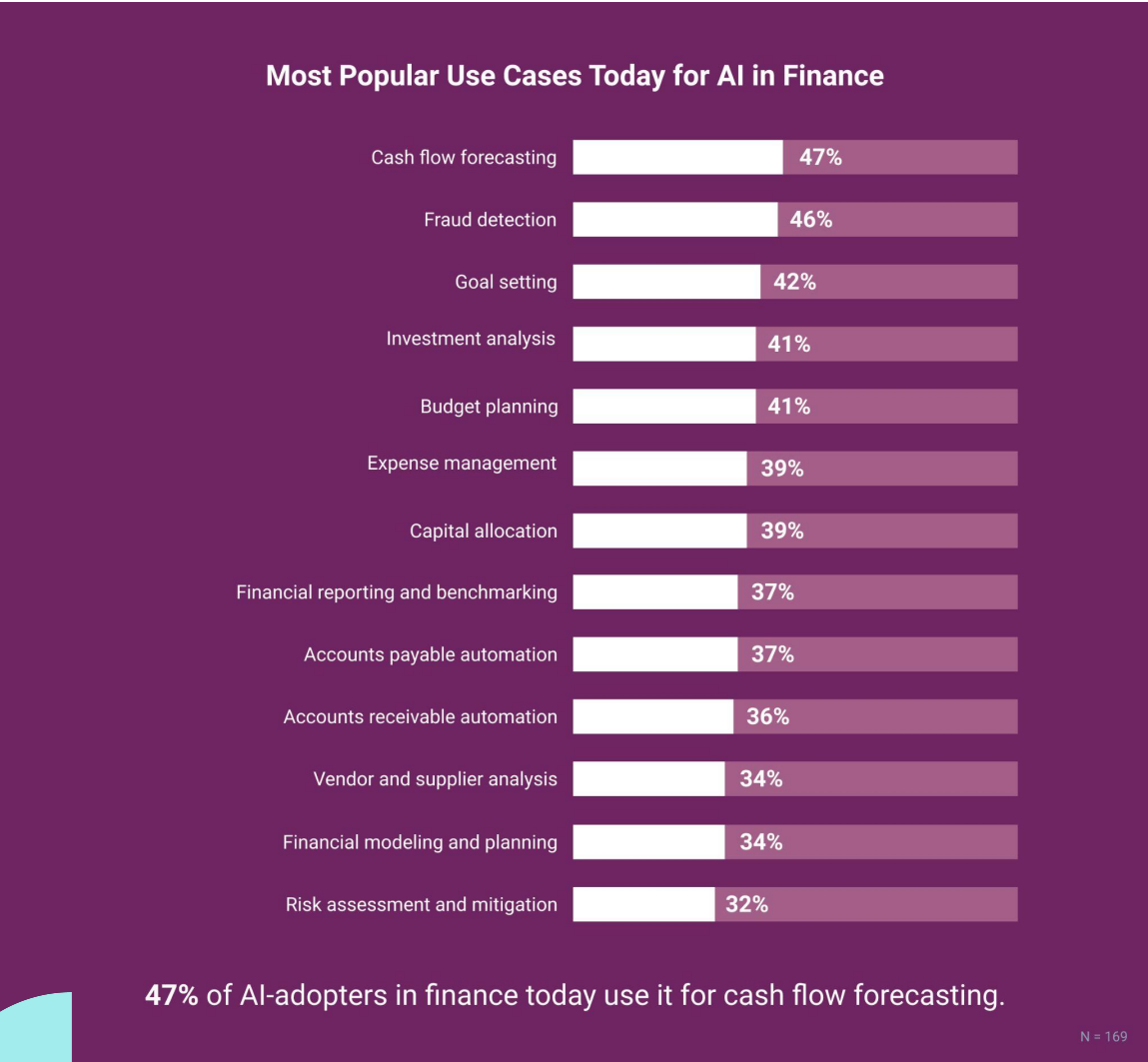
47%
Cash flow forecasting

46%
Fraud detection

42%
Goal setting

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Meanwhile, cash flow forecasting and budget planning, used by 47% and 41% of AI-adopters respectively, enable more dynamic and precise financial planning.
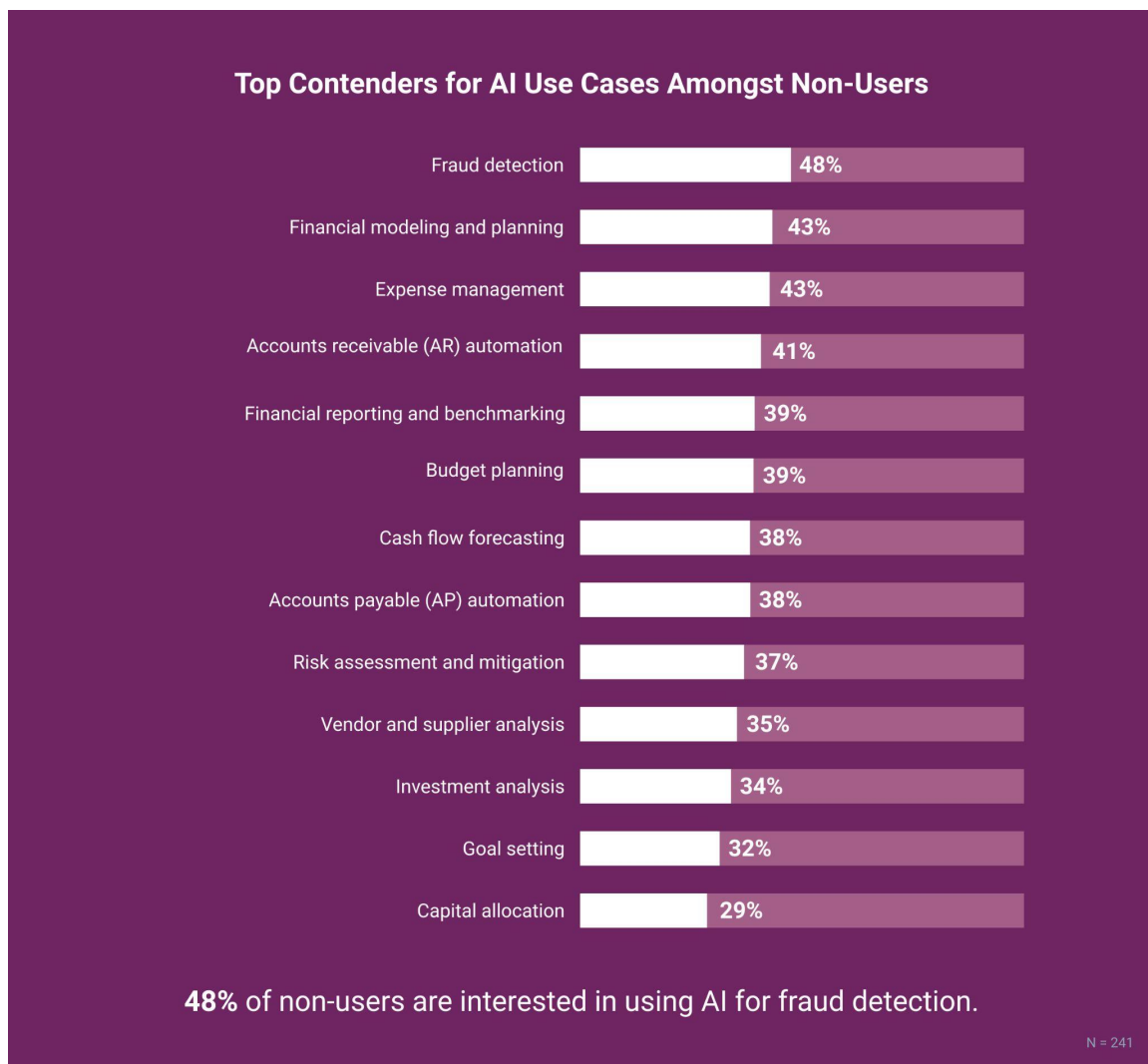
Then goal setting, adopted by 42% of finance leaders using AI today, helps establish more accurate and ambitious targets. These applications showcase AI's potential to streamline and enhance the efficiency of strategic financial processes.

Most Popular Use Cases Today for AI in Finance

Use Case	Percentage
Cash flow forecasting	47%
Fraud detection	46%
Goal setting	42%
Investment analysis	41%
Budget planning	41%
Expense management	39%
Capital allocation	39%
Financial reporting and benchmarking	37%
Accounts payable automation	37%
Accounts receivable automation	36%
Vendor and supplier analysis	34%
Financial modeling and planning	34%
Risk assessment and mitigation	32%

47% of AI-adopters in finance today use it for cash flow forecasting.

N = 169

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Even those yet to adopt AI show a keen interest in streamlining their finance operations.

The most sought-after AI use cases among non-users are fraud detection (48%), financial modeling and planning (43%), and expense management (43%).

This trend shows that more finance leaders recognize AI's potential to enhance both the operational and strategic sides of their workload.

Top Contenders for AI Use Cases Amongst Non-Users

Use Case	Percentage
Fraud detection	48%
Financial modeling and planning	43%
Expense management	43%
Accounts receivable (AR) automation	41%
Financial reporting and benchmarking	39%
Budget planning	39%
Cash flow forecasting	38%
Accounts payable (AP) automation	38%
Risk assessment and mitigation	37%
Vendor and supplier analysis	35%
Investment analysis	34%
Goal setting	32%
Capital allocation	29%

48% of non-users are interested in using AI for fraud detection.

N = 241

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Where Do Finance Teams Plan to Use AI in the Future?

Now that we've covered where AI-adopters use AI in finance today, it's time to look towards future expansion areas.

Here's where AI-adopters want to use AI next

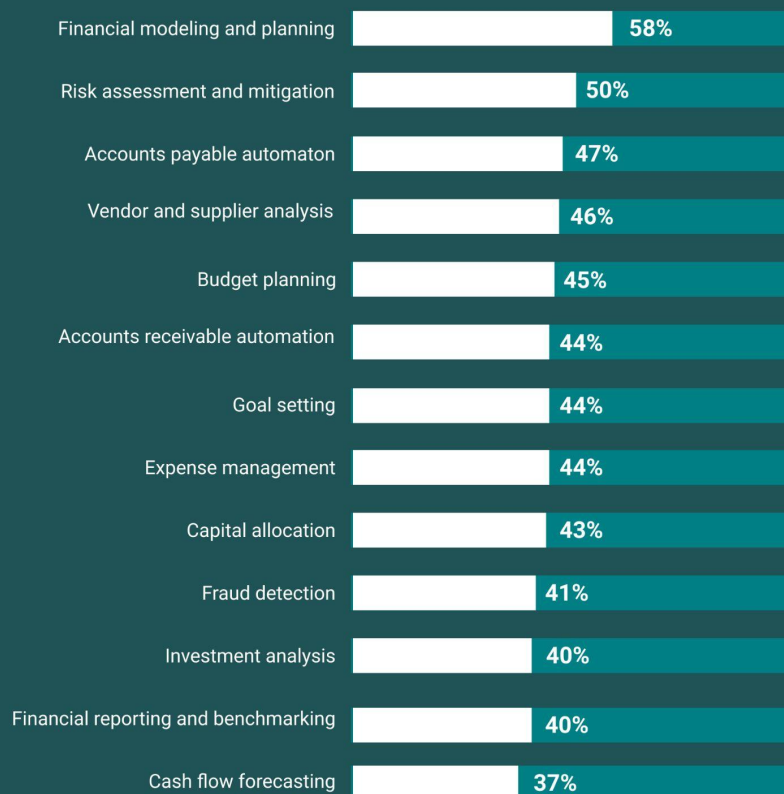|		
58%	**50%**	**47%**
Financial modeling and planning	Risk assessment and mitigation	AP automation

AI-adopters show a keen interest in applying AI to financial modeling and planning (58%) and risk assessment and mitigation (50%), signaling a continued trend toward using AI for enhancing efficiency and streamlining operations.

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Accounts payable and accounts receivable are two other key opportunities for finance leaders to streamline operations with AI.

Currently, only 37% of AI-adopters use AI in their AP processes, while 36% use AI in their AR processes. That said, 48% of AI-adopters expressed a definite interest in employing AI in their AP and 44% expressed interest in using AI within AR, demonstrating that both functions are ripe for AI exploration among AI-adopters.

Top Future Use Cases for AI-Adopters

Use Case	Percentage
Financial modeling and planning	58%
Risk assessment and mitigation	50%
Accounts payable automaton	47%
Vendor and supplier analysis	46%
Budget planning	45%
Accounts receivable automation	44%
Goal setting	44%
Expense management	44%
Capital allocation	43%
Fraud detection	41%
Investment analysis	40%
Financial reporting and benchmarking	40%
Cash flow forecasting	37%

49% of AI-adopters would consider using it for financial modeling and planning.

N = 169

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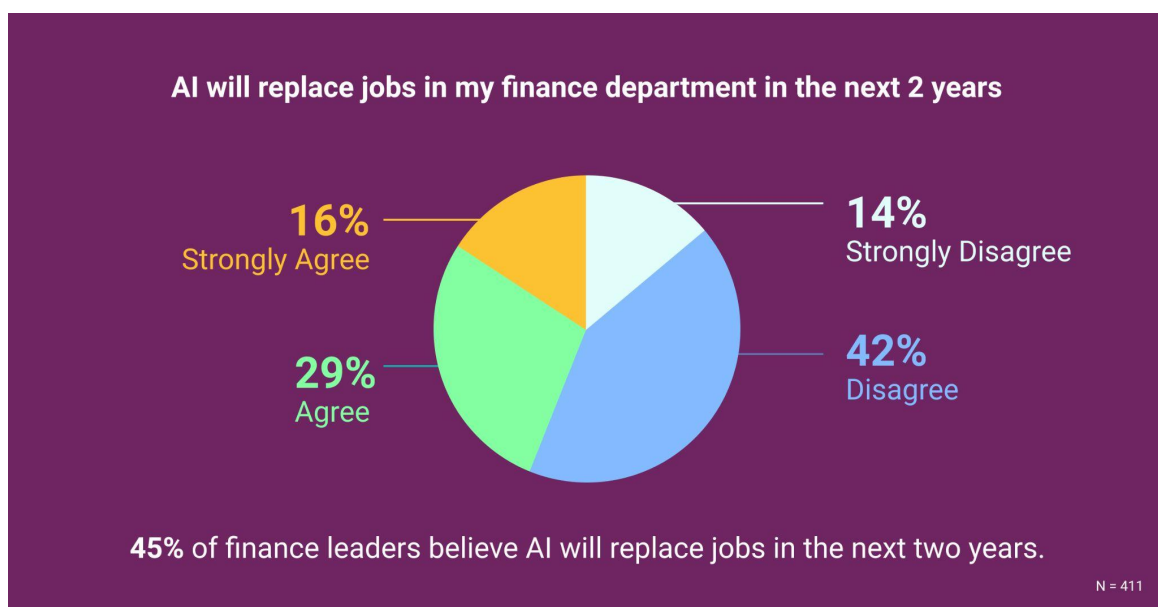
Is AI Going to Steal My Job?

The potential for AI to outperform human roles and replace jobs in finance is a significant worry among staff. This is a valid concern; the United States has automated 260,000 jobs since 2000.

This apprehension towards job automation is reflected in our survey findings: 45% of respondents agree or strongly agree that AI will replace jobs in their finance departments within the next two years.

Similarly, 46% of all respondents fear AI's impact on jobs during the same timeframe. These statistics highlight the growing need to understand and adapt to AI's evolving role within the finance sector.

AI will replace jobs in my finance department in the next 2 years

16% Strongly Agree

14% Strongly Disagree

29% Agree

42% Disagree

45% of finance leaders believe AI will replace jobs in the next two years.

N = 411

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I am fearful of the imapct that AI will have on my job or my direct reports' jobs in the next 2 years

21% Strongly Agree

16% Strongly Disagree

25% Agree

37% Disagree
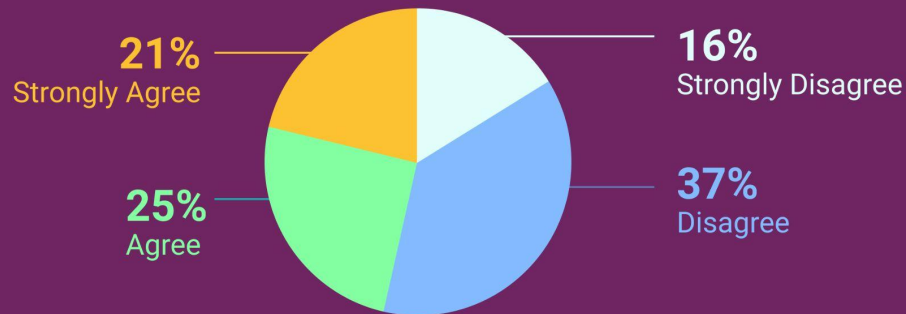
**46%** finance leaders worry about AI's impact on jobs.

N = 411

Yet, staff reductions are not the predominant outcome for finance teams adopting AI. 40% of AI-adopters in our survey reported that AI has liberated their finance teams to engage in more strategic projects. Additionally, 23% have successfully scaled their operations without adding more staff, and 3% have either upskilled their current team or recruited new members with distinct skills.

While the survey results show that AI adoption can result in job losses, it's likely that this disproportionately affects positions focused on repetitive tasks or those requiring less human insight, like data entry or basic analysis.

Conversely, AI empowers finance staff to engage in more nuanced and complex roles within their organizations. With AI's capability to analyze large and rapidly changing datasets, finance professionals can use AI to upskill and develop more strategic insights than ever before. Professionals may find more time for tasks requiring deep data and analytics understanding.

65% of finance leaders believe that AI will change the nature of their direct reports' roles in the next two years.

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Conclusion
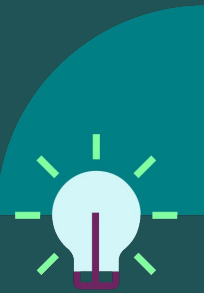
This eBook has outlined the current trends, concerns, and future prospects of AI in the finance industry, reflecting a generally optimistic outlook. The key highlights include:

Adoption Rates and Support
A significant proportion of finance leaders are embracing AI, with about 41% using it today and an additional 26% planning to adopt AI tools within the next year.

Impact on Jobs
While some AI-adopters reported reducing headcount as a result of AI, others found that it freed up time for more strategic projects and enabled their finance teams to scale without adding additional staff.

AI Use Cases for Today and Tomorrow
Today, teams use AI for finance tasks like fraud detection, cash flow forecasting, and budget planning. These applications underscore AI's ability to enhance efficiency and decision-making processes. Looking forward, finance teams are interested in using AI in areas like financial modeling, risk assessment, and AP/AR automation.

In summary, AI is not just a fleeting trend but a fundamental component shaping the future of finance. Its role extends from operational enhancements to enabling more informed strategic decisions, signaling a dynamic and promising future for finance professionals.
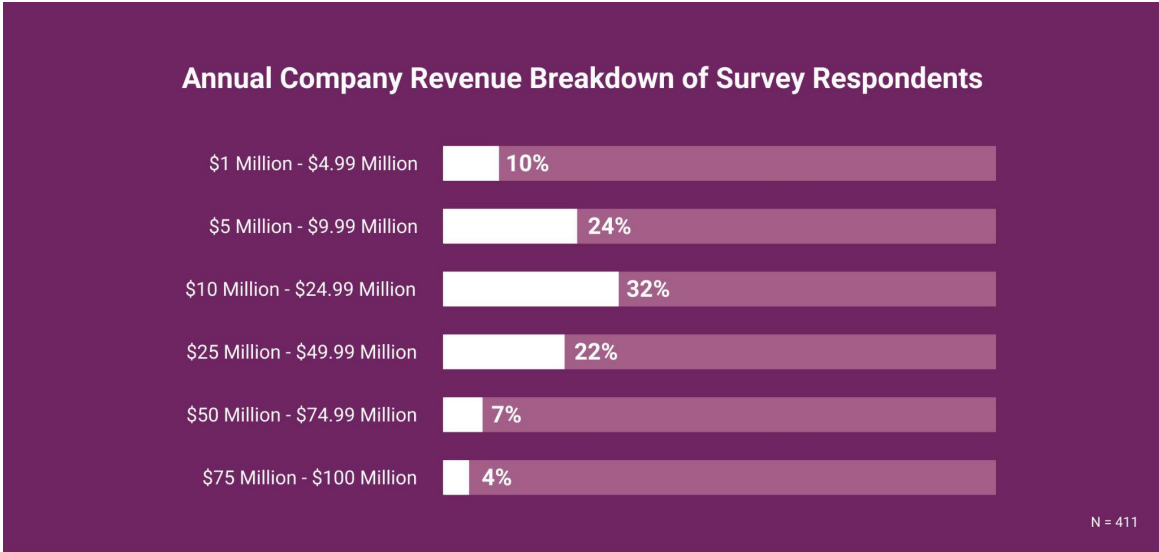
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Survey Demographics

The 2023 State of AI and Finance survey garnered responses from a wide group of 411 professionals, offering valuable insights from finance leaders ranging across various industries, roles, and company revenue brackets.

This diverse representation across various revenue ranges, roles, and industries provides a comprehensive perspective on the current trends and opinions of AI in the finance landscape. Survey responses were collected anonymously online using Centiment.

The annual revenue of respondents' organizations ranged from $1M to $100M, with the majority of respondents falling between the range of $5M-$50M.

Annual Company Revenue Breakdown of Survey Respondents

Revenue Range	Percentage
$1 Million - $4.99 Million	10%
$5 Million - $9.99 Million	24%
$10 Million - $24.99 Million	32%
$25 Million - $49.99 Million	22%
$50 Million - $74.99 Million	7%
$75 Million - $100 Million	4%

N = 411

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The job title of respondents varied, but all were in a leadership role. The largest group was Directors, making up 49% of the participants, followed by Chief Finance Officers (28%) and Vice Presidents (22%).

Job Role Breakdown of Survey Respondents

Director — 49%

Chief Financial Officer — 28%

Vice President — 22%

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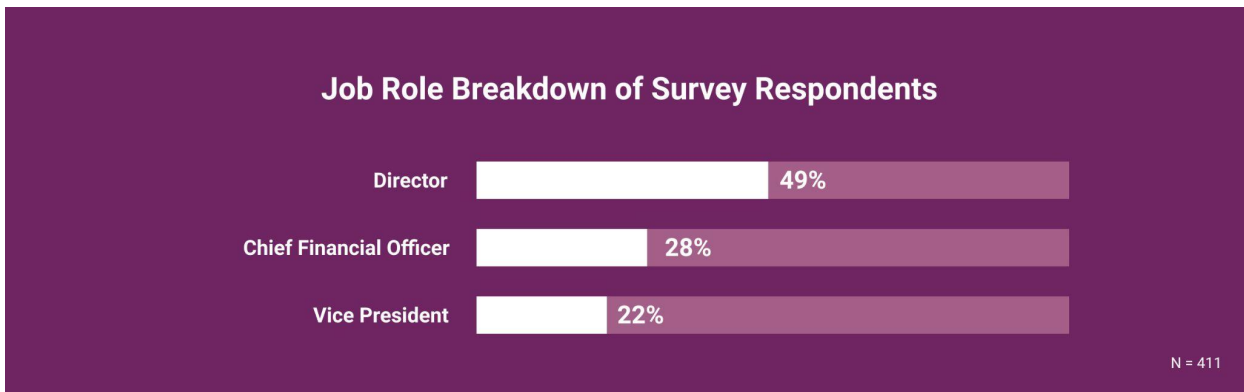
The respondents also represented a broad spectrum of industries. Notably, Financial Services was the most represented sector (21%), followed by Construction (9%) and Manufacturing (9%). For a complete look at industries represented among respondents, please refer to the graph on page 3 of the report.

About Centime

Centime is an all-in-one cash management platform that embraces AI to help you:

Streamline collections and get paid faster

Take the pain out of payables

Forecast and plan your cash inflows and outflows

Automate AR and AP, forecast cash flow and secure the working capital you need to grow your business.

Book a Demo