

# 2026 CIO Agenda Preview

Succeeding when plans change – again

# Executive summary

Pivots and reprioritization, not annual planning cycles, will dominate 2026.

## How we forecast these pivots will impact planning for 2026



### Advancing from GenAI pilots to agentic AI ROI

---

- 64% of technology executives plan to deploy agentic AI across the next 12-24 months.
- Agentic AI offers a more direct path to business value than previous GenAI initiatives, but success requires a business-aligned AI roadmap with clear, measurable value targets; workforce upskilling initiatives; and robust data management and governance.
- Failure to execute on these elements risks missing critical ROI targets.



### Rethinking vendor strategies for regional alignment

---

- Most technology executives will reassess their global mix of strategic technology vendors, with 50% of non-U.S. CIOs and technology executives anticipating changes to vendor engagement based on regional factors.
- U.S.-based enterprises are expected to make minimal changes to their core vendor relationships.
- Vendor strategy decisions will be shaped by evolving business needs and market dynamics.



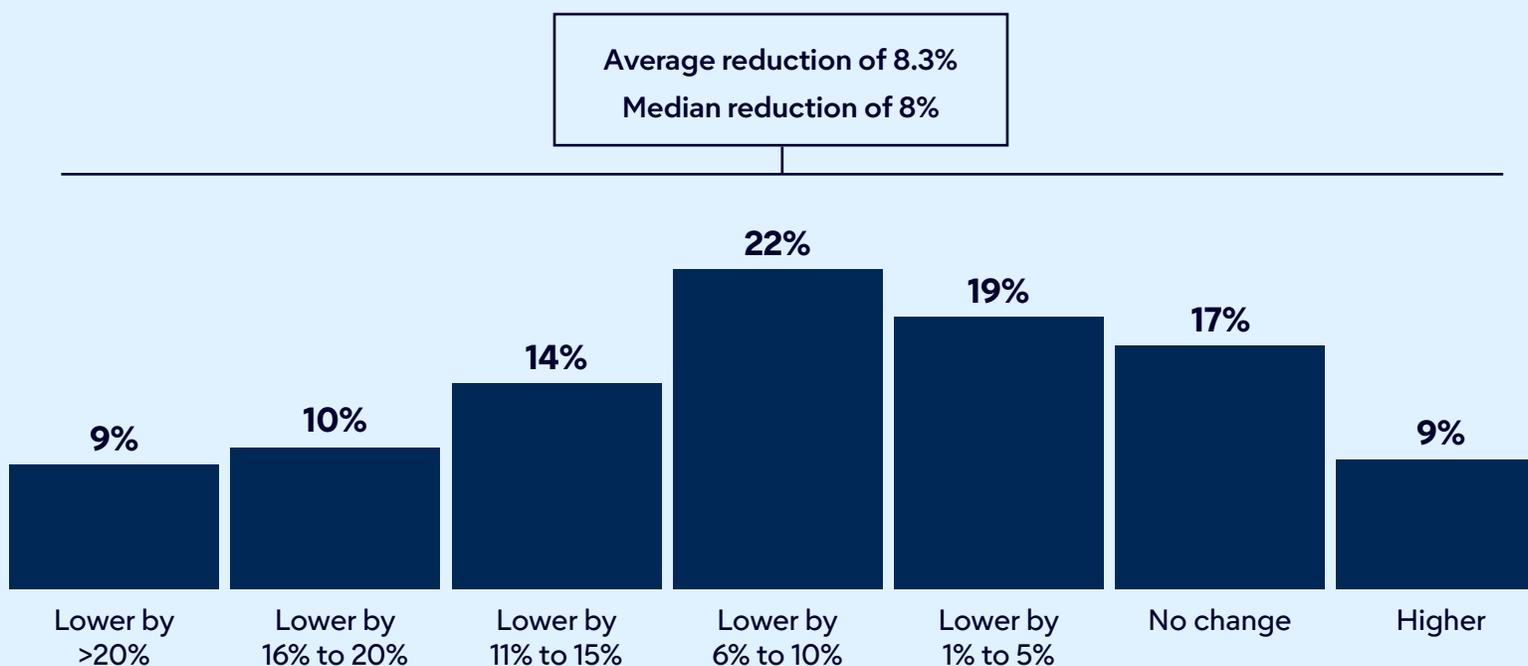
### Strengthening decision-making adaptability

---

- Technology executives must increase their effectiveness at off-cycle reprioritization, risk management and scenario planning to increase the likelihood of meeting their value targets.
- 64% of CIOs expect moderate or significant change to their planned outcomes within the next 24 months.
- The drive for better productivity, lower costs and profitable growth remains a constant, yet these pressures, already heightened in 2025, will intensify further in 2026.

# Executives have hit the brakes on 2025 growth forecasts

## Revised top-line growth expectations for 2025



**74%** of executive leadership teams have **lowered 2025 top-line growth expectations** for their organizations.

Organizations are, on average, recalibrating top-line growth expectations downward by **8.3%** relative to expectations at the start of the year.

n = 253; C-Level executives/heads of functions and their direct reports, excluding don't know

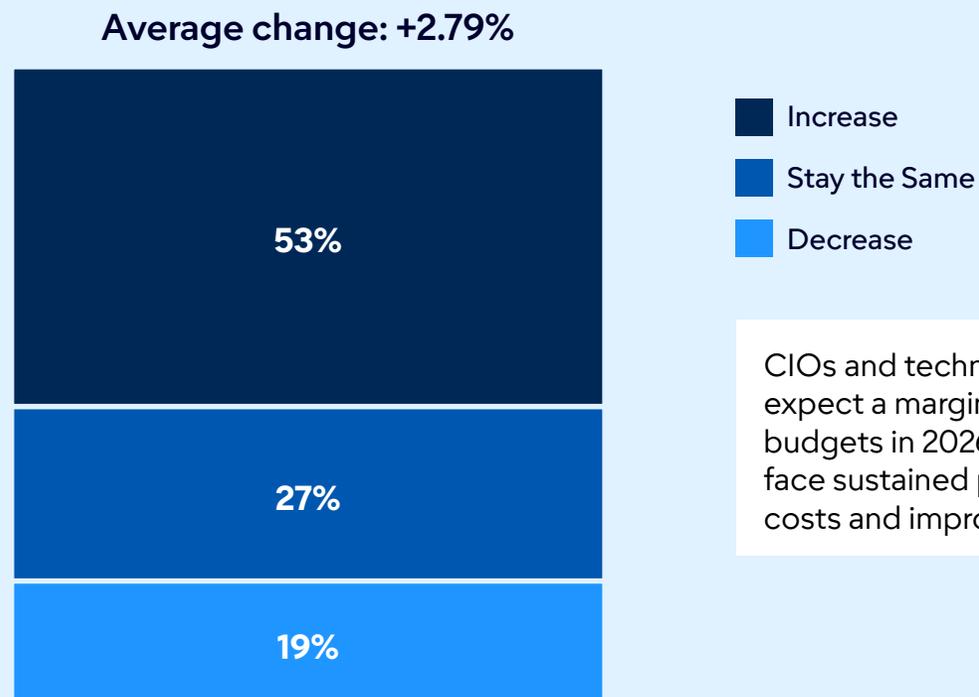
Q: By approximately how much has your executive leadership team revised their expectation for your company's 2025 top-line growth, if at all?

Source: 2025 Gartner Quarterly C-Level Economic Pressures and Forward Planning Survey

# IT budgets are only marginally increasing

## Expected change in IT budget in 2026

Percentage of respondents



CIOs and technology executives expect a marginal increase in IT budgets in 2026, yet will continue to face sustained pressure to reduce costs and improve productivity.

n = 2,321; CIOs and technology executives answering, excluding "don't know"

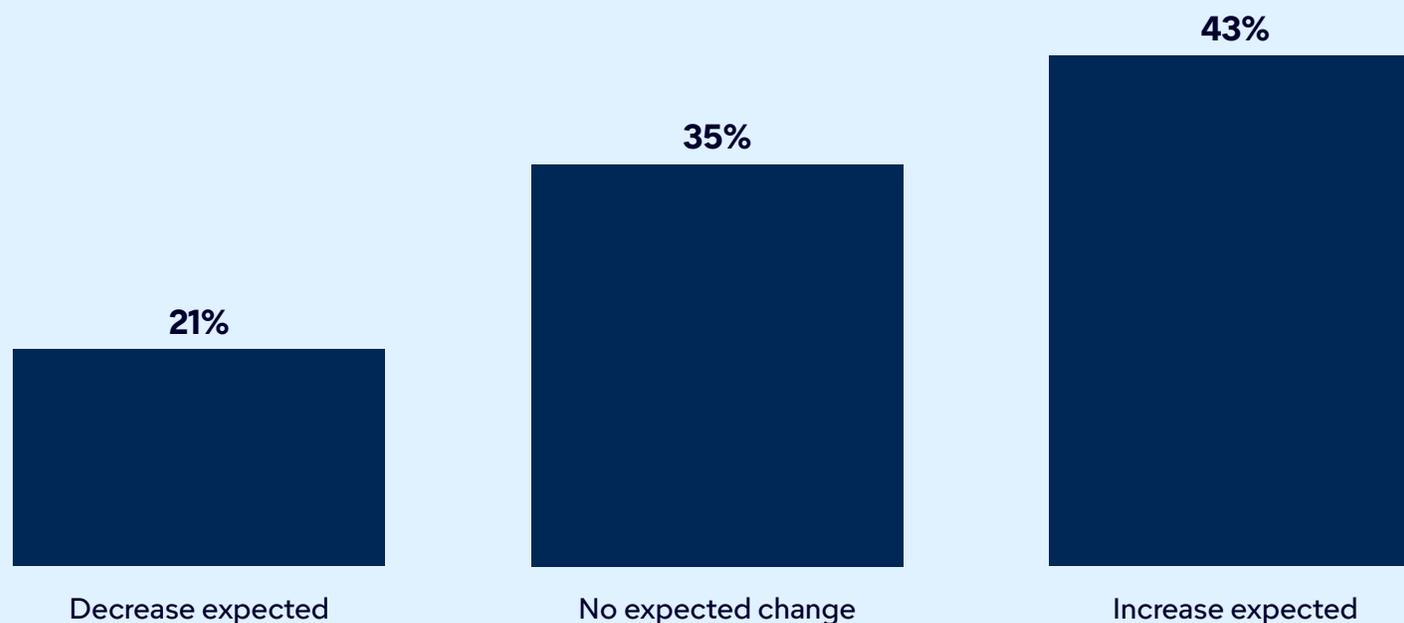
Q: By what percentage do you expect your enterprise's IT budget to increase or decrease from 2025 to 2026?

Source: 2026 Gartner CIO and Technology Executive Survey

# Limited technologist headcount growth emphasizes internal productivity imperative

## Expected changes in number of technology workers within 12 months

Percentage of respondents



**Average change:** +1.33%

**Median:** No change (0%)

**Mode:** No change (0%)

Most technology executives will have to meet rising expectations with the same size or smaller staff. While some are expecting growth, forecast changes are modest.

n = 2,315; CIOs and technology executives answering

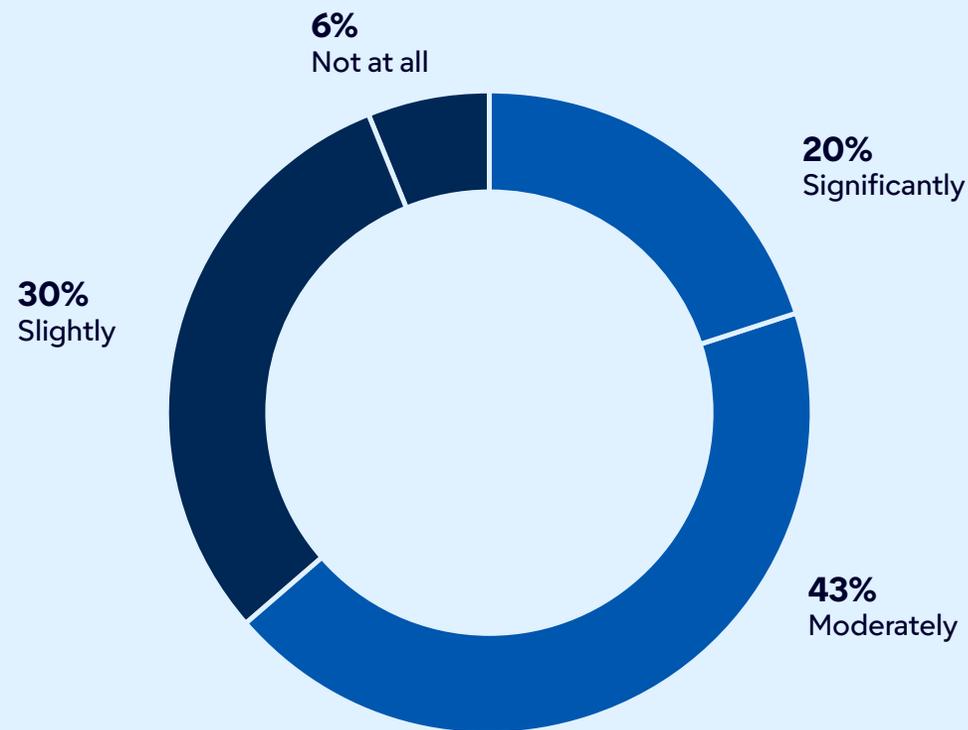
Q: Do you expect any changes in the next 12 months in the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) employees and contractors that do technology work for your enterprise worldwide?

Source: 2026 Gartner CIO and Technology Executive Survey

# Economic volatility is redefining the bar for success in 2026

## Extent to which target outcomes will change in the next 12 to 24 months

Percentage of respondents



**Most CIOs and technology executives expect that the bar for their success will change in 2026.** More than half are expecting notable changes to their target outcomes in the next one to two years.

n = 2,501; CIOs and technology executives answering

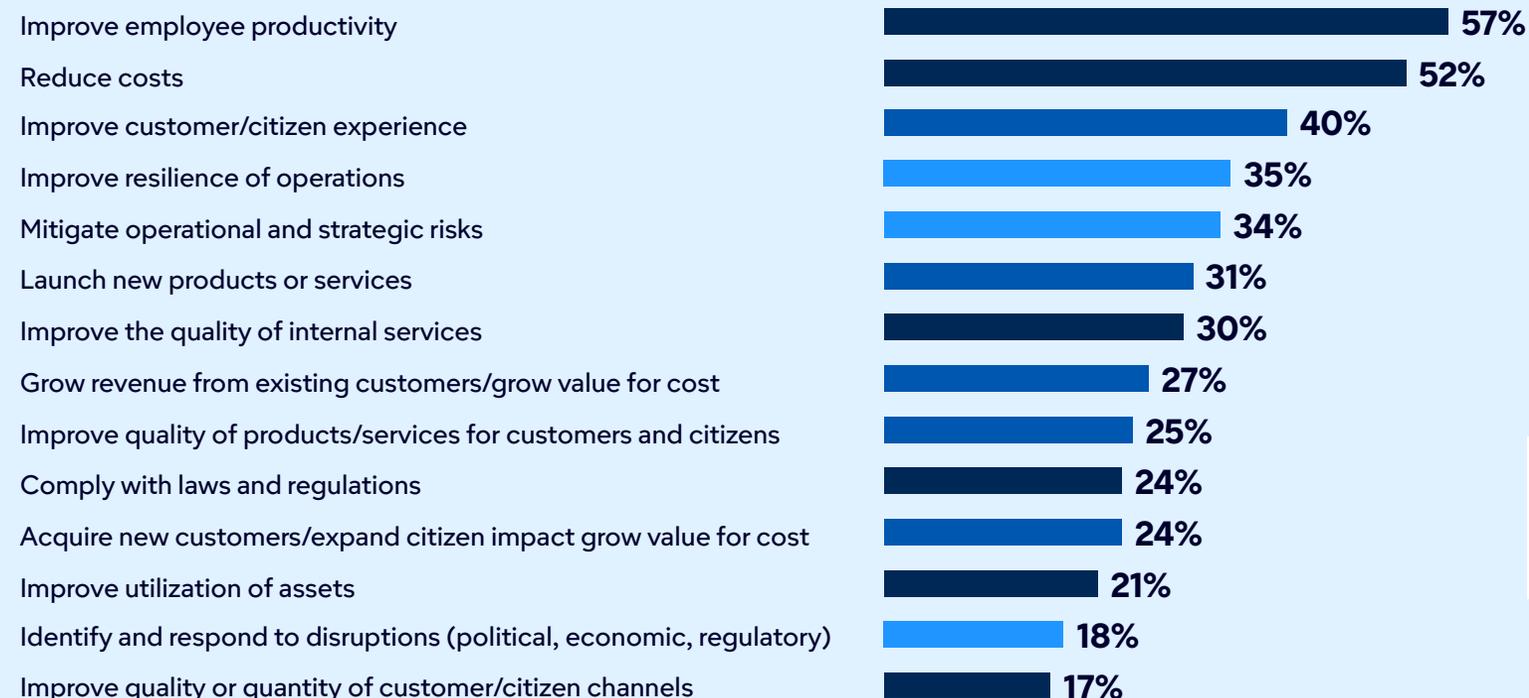
Q: To what extent do you anticipate that the outcomes your function is currently expected to focus on will change in the next 12-24 months, considering market disruptions and volatility?

Source: 2026 Gartner CIO and Technology Executive Survey

# Pressure to reduce costs and drive productivity

## Outcomes predicted to become most important in 2026 to 2027

Percentage of respondents



Percentage of respondents selecting 1+ outcome in each category:



Most tech executives anticipate increasing pressure for cost reduction and improving employee productivity.

n = 2,340; CIOs and technology executives answering who indicated slight to significant change in function objectives

Q: You indicated that slight to significant changes to your function's objectives are anticipated in the next 12-24 months. From the list below, which five will become most important?

Source: 2026 Gartner CIO and Technology Executive Survey

# 3 strategic pivots for 2026 technology planning

1



From defending AI pilots to expanding into agentic AI

2



From geographically agnostic to geo-strategically aligned sourcing

3



From calendar-based to dynamic trigger-based decision making

# 3 strategic pivots for 2026 technology planning

**1**

From defending AI pilots to expanding into agentic AI

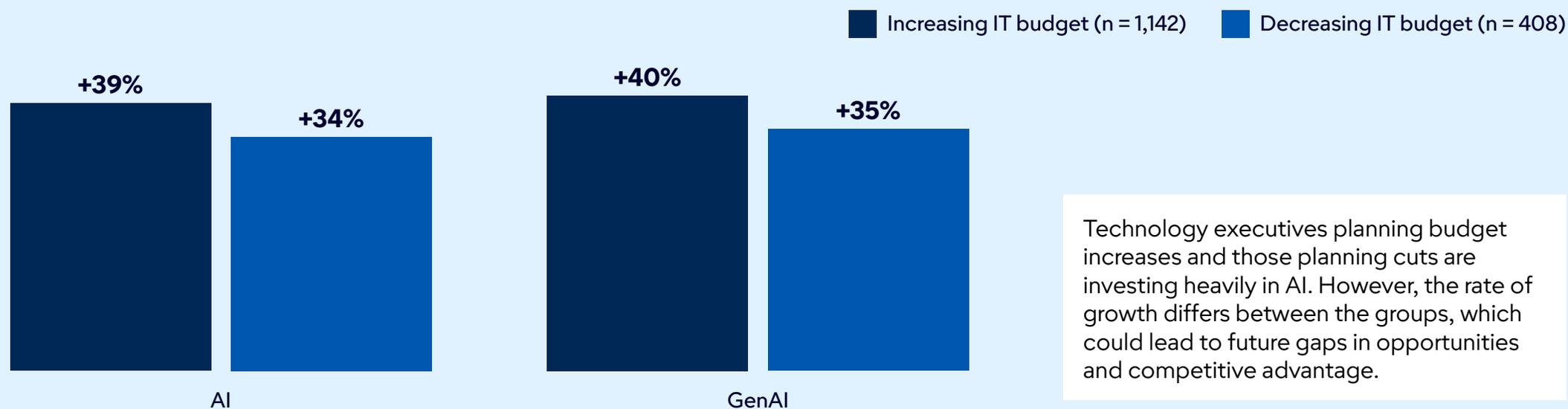
## Recommendation

Change your focus from GenAI to agentic AI — not because it's a new or better technology, but because it has more potential to generate ROI. 2025 was about AI pilots, discovery and experimentation. 2026 will be about delivering agentic AI ROI. GenAI will continue to be important, but agentic AI will soon become the main investment focus.

# Tech executives expanding AI spending even where IT budgets are shrinking

## Mean percent change in AI and GenAI funding from 2025 to 2026

Respondents increasing IT Budget vs. respondents decreasing IT Budget



n varies by cohort; CIOs and technology executives answering

Q: For each of these technology areas, by how much will your enterprise increase or decrease funding in 2026 compared with 2025?

Q: By what percentage do you expect your enterprise's IT budget to increase or decrease from 2025 to 2026?

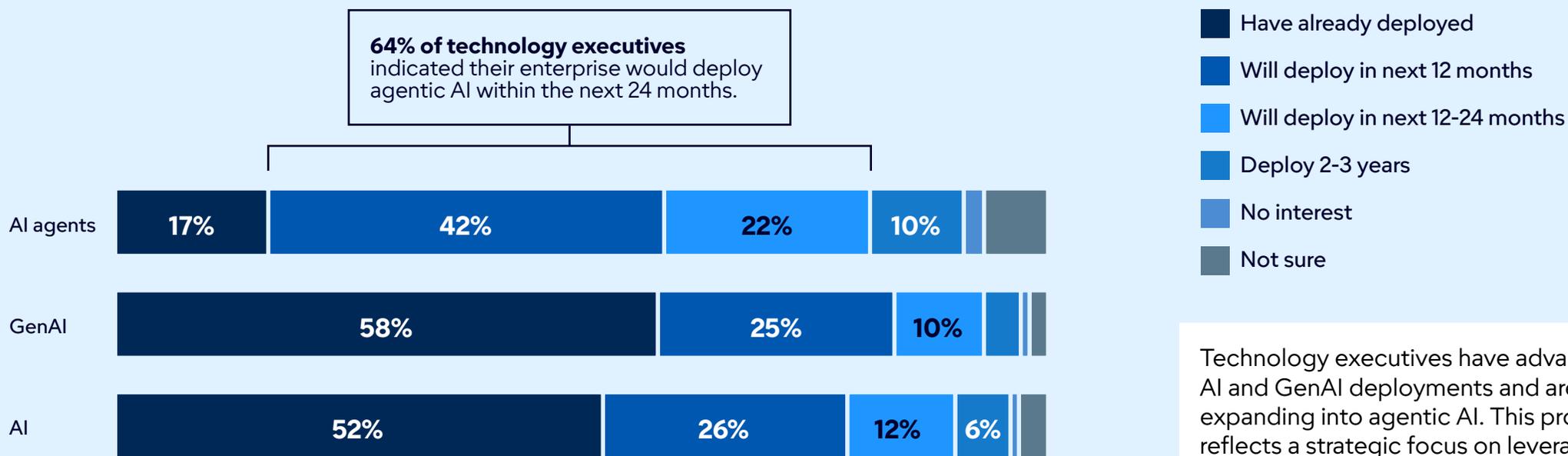
Source: 2026 Gartner CIO and Technology Executive Survey

Note: Chart omits percentage of respondents selecting "no change in funding."

# Tech executives are shifting to deliver agentic AI ROI

## State of deployment for AI, GenAI and agentic AI

Percentage of respondents by expected increase or decrease IT budget



Technology executives have advanced AI and GenAI deployments and are now expanding into agentic AI. This progression reflects a strategic focus on leveraging AI's next frontier for greater operational and experiential impact.

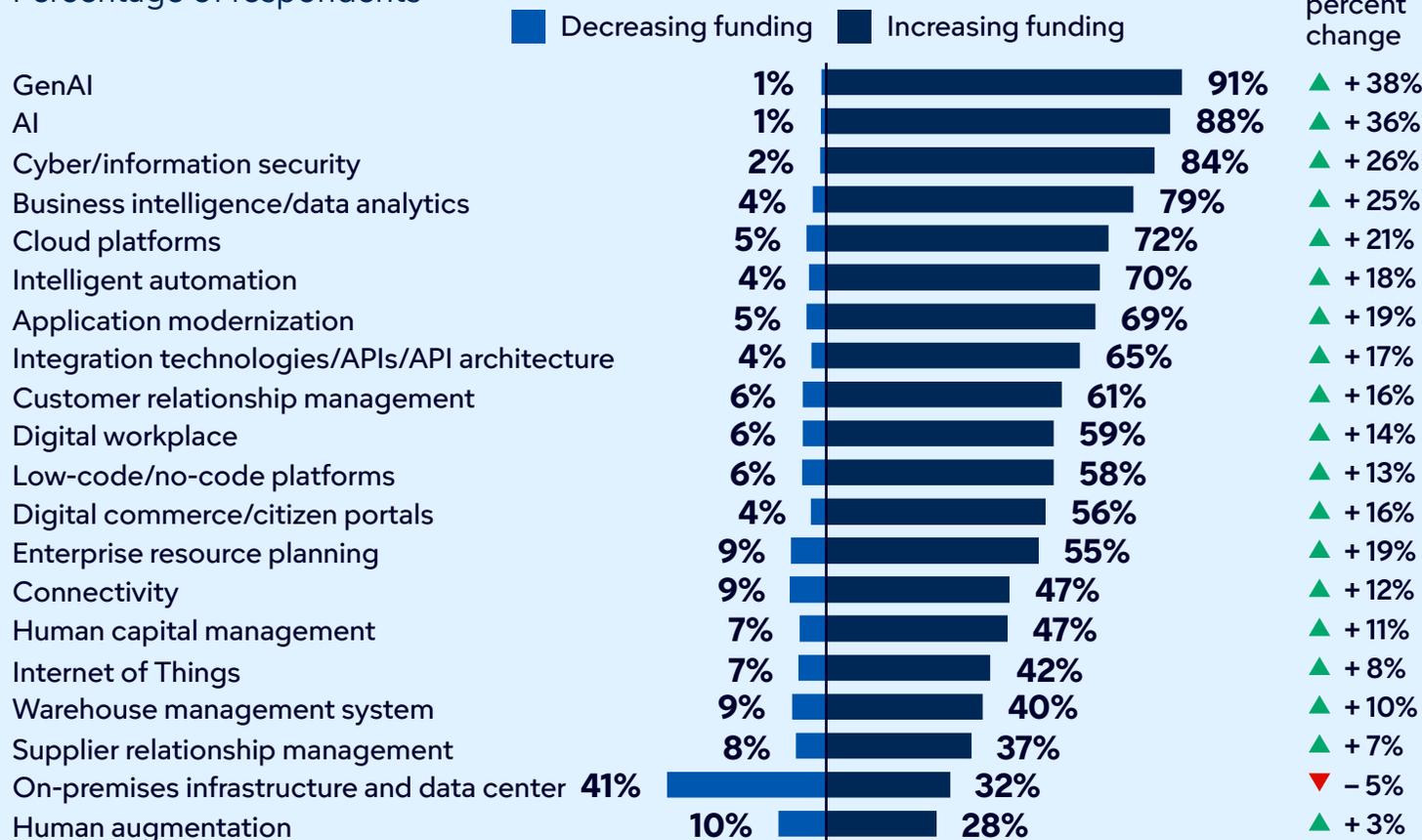
n = 2,501; CIOs and technology executives answering  
 Q: To what extent do you anticipate that the outcomes your function is currently expected to focus on will change in the next 12-24 months, considering market disruptions and volatility?  
 Source: 2026 Gartner CIO and Technology Executive Survey

# Funding for most technologies is growing despite budget pressures

Technology executives are aggressively increasing investment in AI and supporting technologies that will create competitive differentiation.

## Changes in technology funding from 2025 to 2026

Percentage of respondents



n = 1,149-2,425 CIOs and technology executives whose enterprise has deployed each technology

Q: For each of these technology areas, by how much will your enterprise increase or decrease funding in 2026 compared with 2025?

Source: 2026 Gartner CIO and Technology Executive Survey

Note: Chart omits percentage of respondents selecting "no change in funding."

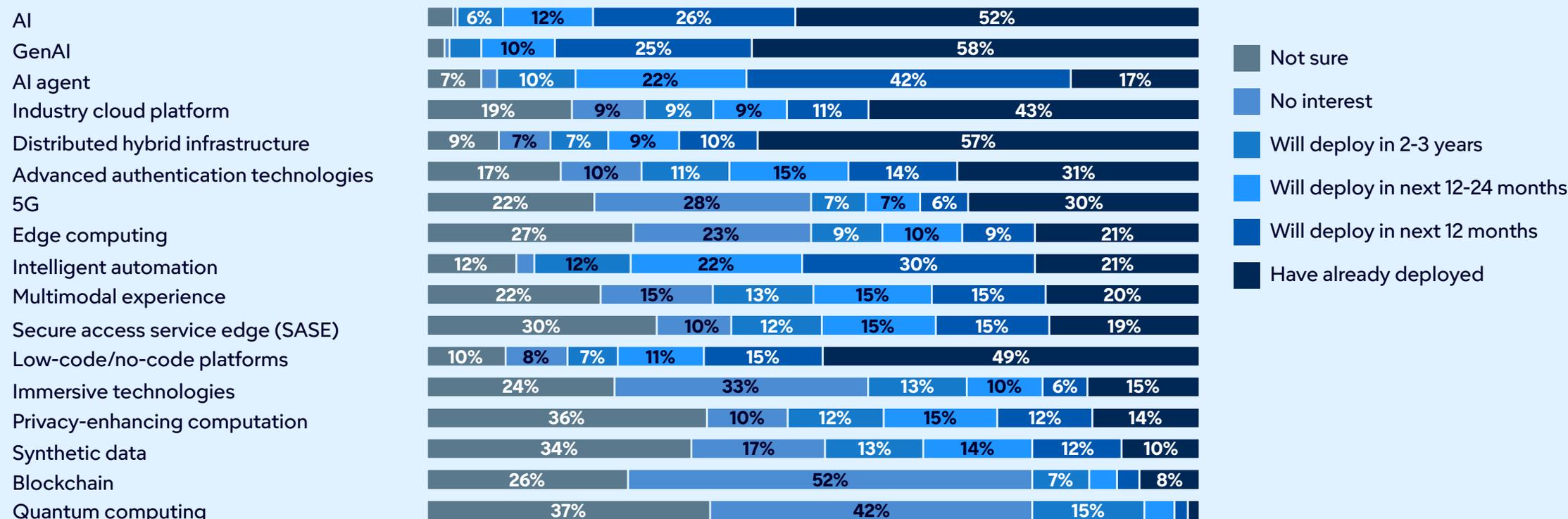
Note: Application modernization not included in other items.

Note: Including APIs and API architecture.

# Stages for piloting and deploying emerging tech

## State of deployment for emerging technologies

Percentage of respondents



n = 2,487 CIOs and technology executives answering  
 Q: What are your enterprise's plans in terms of the following digital technologies and trends?  
 Source: 2026 Gartner CIO and Technology Executive Survey  
 Note: Data labels have been removed for percentages under 5%

# CIO and technology executive action items

## Recommendations



### Extending and accelerating GenAI investment

- **Business outcome alignment:** Focus on AI initiatives that drive measurable bottom- or top-line results, not just internal productivity gains.
- **Balanced investment posture:** Scale AI by balancing investments in AI technology with investments in AI strategy, governance, literacy, engineering, organization, portfolio and value foundations to capture ROI.
- **AI-ready data:** Ensure data is fit for AI use cases, supports ongoing validation and meets governance standards.
- **Technology stack assessment:** Assess and upgrade technology stacks to support AI integration in existing enterprise software.



### Deploying agentic AI capabilities

- **Agentic AI pilot prioritization:** Collaborate with executives to identify and prioritize high-impact areas for agentic AI pilots while evaluating risks and integration capabilities.
- **Agentic AI readiness:** Map key business workflows and assess broader changes to operating and business models to maximize value from agentic AI.
- **Agentic AI governance:** Establish clear legal, ethical and operational guidelines for agentic AI, with strong monitoring to safeguard the organization and customers.

# 3 strategic pivots for 2026 technology planning

2



Recommendation



CIOs and technology executives should recognize that vendor geography and data

**This is an excerpt of the full 24-page  
CIO Agenda Preview. For access to  
the full report, contact us today.**

[Become a Client](#)

# Actionable, objective insights

Explore these additional complimentary resources and tools for CIOs:

**Tool**  
Gartner for CIOs

Leverage the full value of Gartner alongside an Executive Partner.

[Learn More](#)

**Tool**  
Accelerators for CIOs

Save time and money with self-service tools that help you jump-start initiatives and tackle top priorities.

[Learn More](#)

**Tool**  
AskGartner

Get faster answers, tailored outputs and the confidence to take action in minutes.

[Learn More](#)

**Tool**  
IT Score for CIOs

Benchmark key functional processes and activities with Gartner IT Score

[Learn More](#)

Already a client?

Get access to even more resources in your client portal. [Log In](#)

# Connect with us

Get actionable, objective business and technology insights that drive smarter decisions and stronger performance on your mission-critical priorities.

**U.S.:** 1 855 322 5484

**International:** +44 (0) 3300 296 946

[Become a Client](#)

**Learn more about Gartner for CIOs Leaders**

[gartner.com/en/chief-information-officer](https://gartner.com/en/chief-information-officer)

**Stay connected to the latest insights**



**Attend a Gartner conference**

[View Conference](#)