

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE USAGE AMONG SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS

Bipartisan Policy Center

DECEMBER 2023

Key Findings

- 1. SBOs and executives are using AI and have a positive perception of the technology.** Overall, 82% of SBOs and executives report their company uses a technology that includes AI features, predominately for customer management (48%) and accounting (48%). Additionally, three-quarters (75%) have a positive view of AI, and around two-thirds of SBOs and executives (64%) believe that the perceived positives of greater AI adoption in everyday life outweigh the perceived negatives.
- 2. AI has had and will have a positive impact on business.** A majority of SBOs and executives say AI has had a positive impact (57%), and even more say it will have a positive impact in the future (66%) on their business and growing their business (54% has had a positive impact, 61% will have).
- 3. AI is helpful to those who are using it at their business.** More than four-in-five (83%) SBOs and executives whose businesses use AI say the technology has been *very* or *somewhat helpful* to their company. In follow-up open-end questions, SBOs and executives say the technology has been helpful in improving systems, increasing efficiency, focus time on more valuable tasks, and helping produce content. Among those who are not using AI, they say they do not have a need for the technology, don't understand it, value human work, or that it doesn't apply to their business.
- 4. When thinking about increasing the usage of AI, the largest barriers are cost and privacy.** Of the tested options, SBOs and executives are most likely to view the cost of AI tools as a barrier overall (55%), although they're most likely to see data privacy as a *large barrier* (23%) to adoption at their company. From a legislative perspective, the plurality of SBOs and executives would rather receive financial assistance (47%) than technical assistance (34%) to help their companies further adopt AI.
- 5. SBOs and executives are interested in further learning and investment in AI.** Nearly three-in-five (58%) SBOs and executives say their business plans to make *at least some* investments in AI over the next year, and a large majority (78%) of SBOs and executives would be likely to engage with an event designed to help them understand how to use AI in their business. On this measure and others, SBOs and executives of younger companies are *very likely* to engage with an event to help understand AI use in business compared to those at older companies.



METHODOLOGY

This poll was conducted between November 21-December 11, 2023 among a national sample of 498 small business owners and executives. The interviews were conducted online and quotas were included to collect a representative sample of small business owners and executives.

Respondents were screened on being currently employed at a business with 5-249 employees and being an owner, president, managing director, or principle at the business. For simplicity throughout, this audience is referred to as **SBO and executives**.

Results from the full survey have a margin of error of plus or minus 4 percentage points.

AGENDA

BROAD SENTIMENT OF AI

AI ADOPTION

AI IN BUSINESS

LEGISLATION

EXPERIENCE & BARRIERS
USING AI

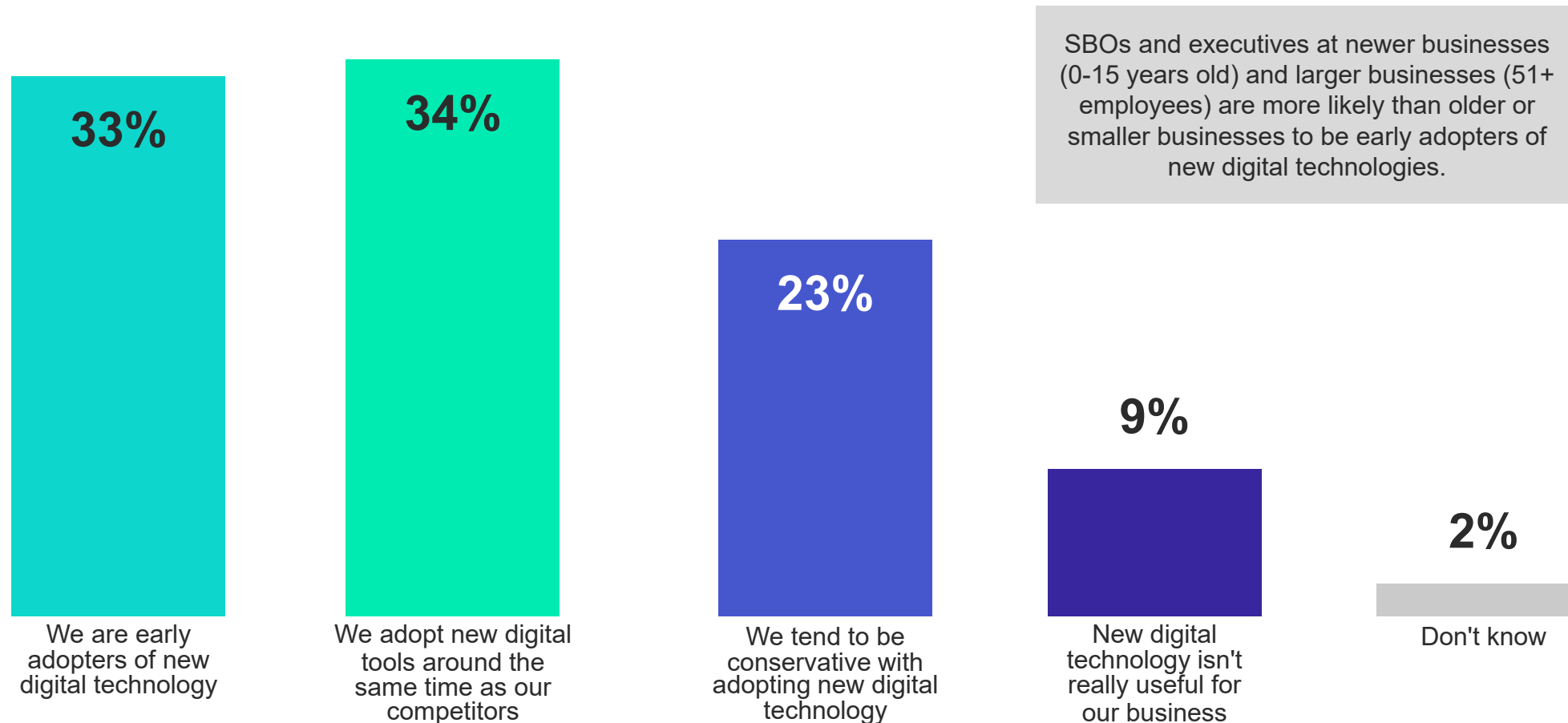
APPENDIX



BROAD SENTIMENT OF AI

Around one-third of SBOs and executives are either early adopters (33%) of new digital technology, or adopt new tools around the same time as their competitors (34%).

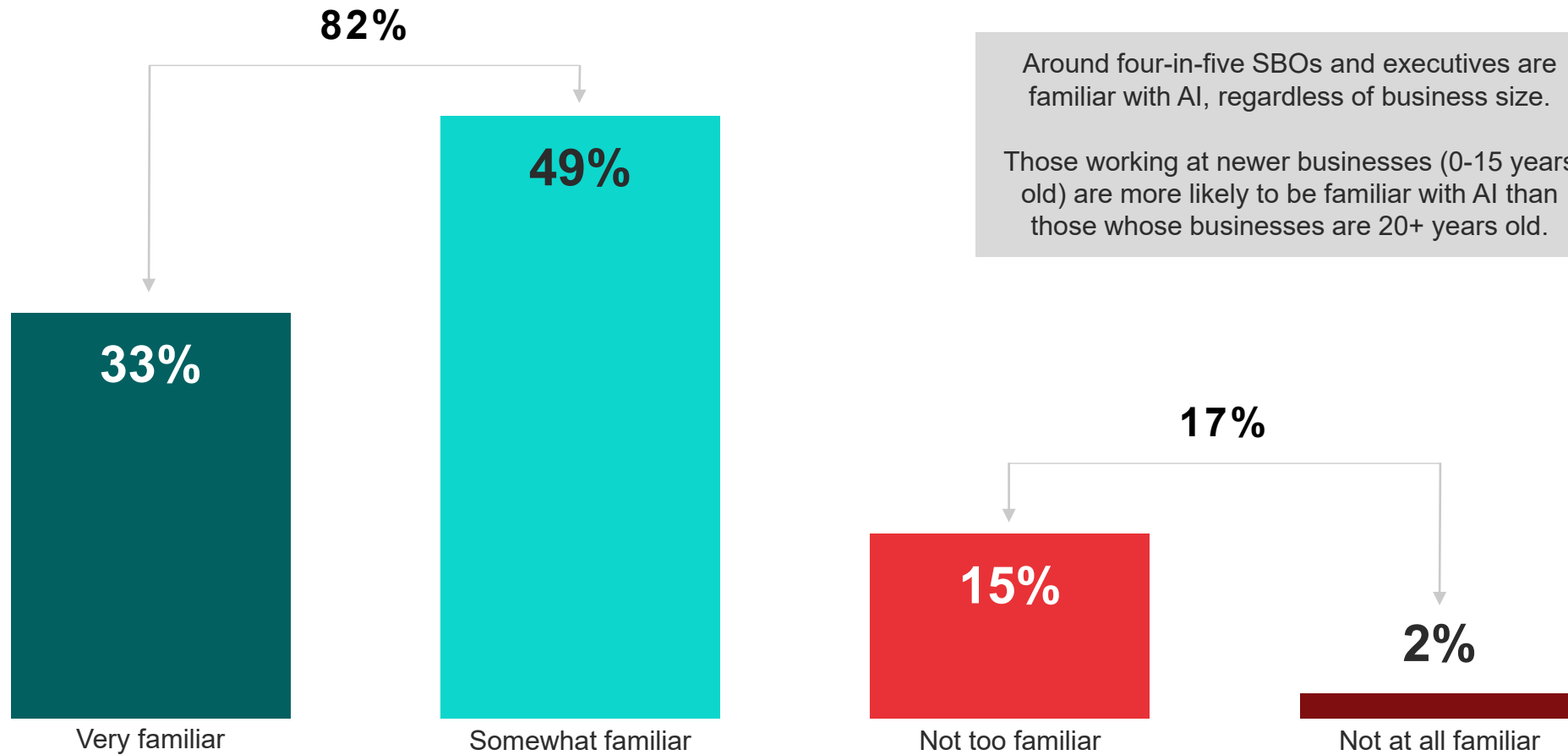
Which one of the following statements best describes your company's attitude toward digital technology (including AI, software, electronic devices, media, etc.)?



BROAD SENTIMENT OF AI

A large majority (82%) of small business owners and executives are familiar with AI, and only two percent say they are *not at all familiar* with it.

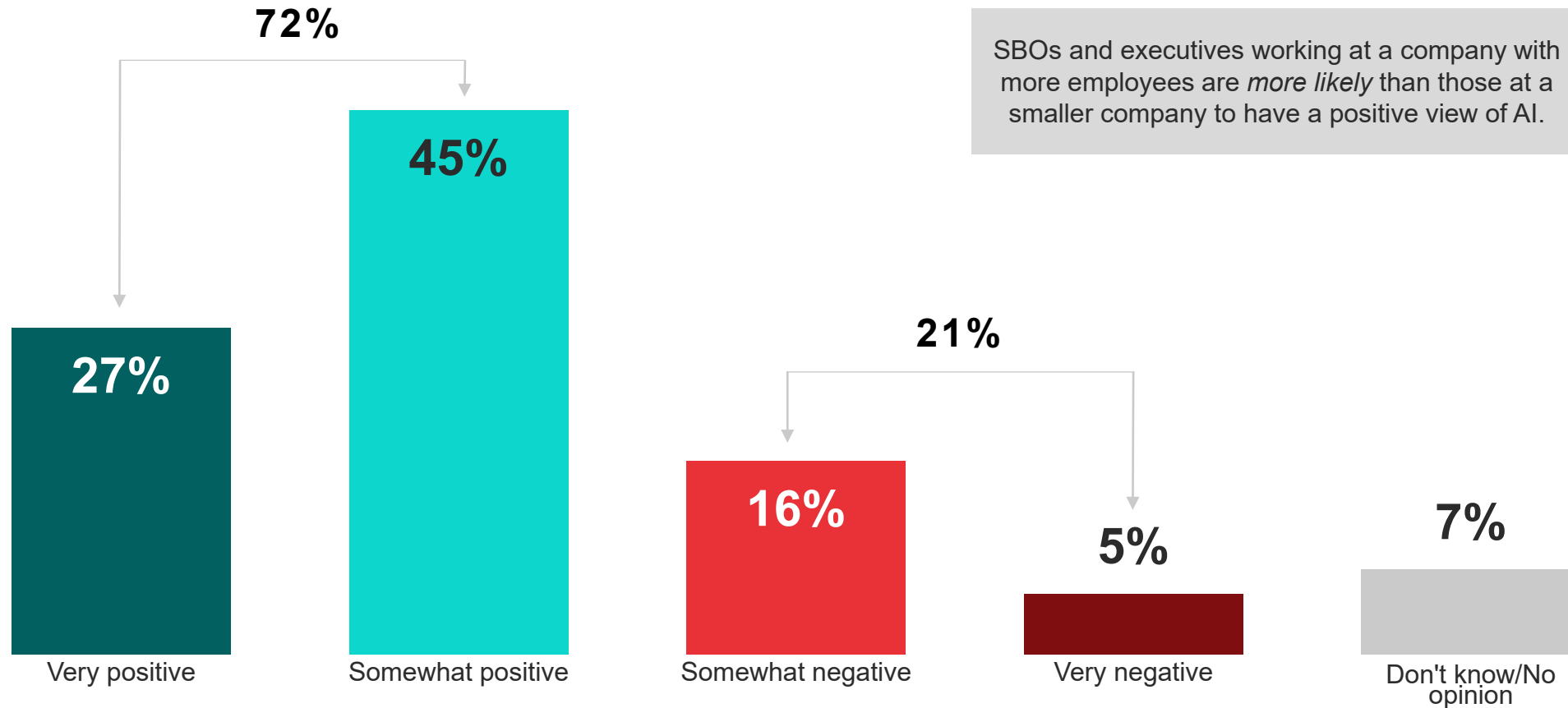
How familiar are you, if at all, with AI, or artificial intelligence?



BROAD SENTIMENT OF AI

Perceptions of AI are positive among SBOs and executives: three-quarters (75%) have a positive view of AI while two-in-five (21%) have a negative view.

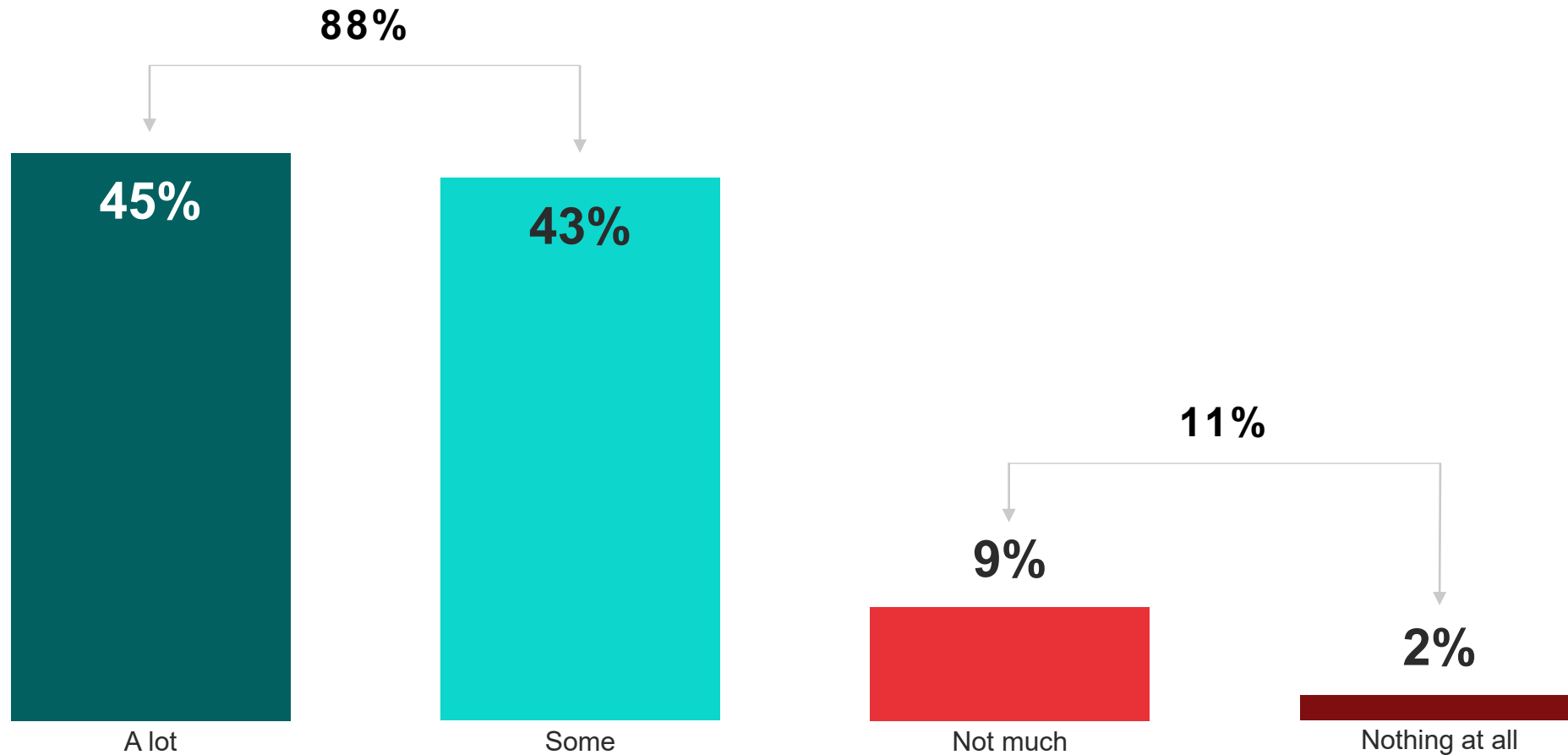
Overall, do you have a positive or negative view of AI?



BROAD SENTIMENT OF AI

Nearly nine-in-ten (88%) SBOs and executives have seen, read, or heard at least *some* about AI in the last six months.

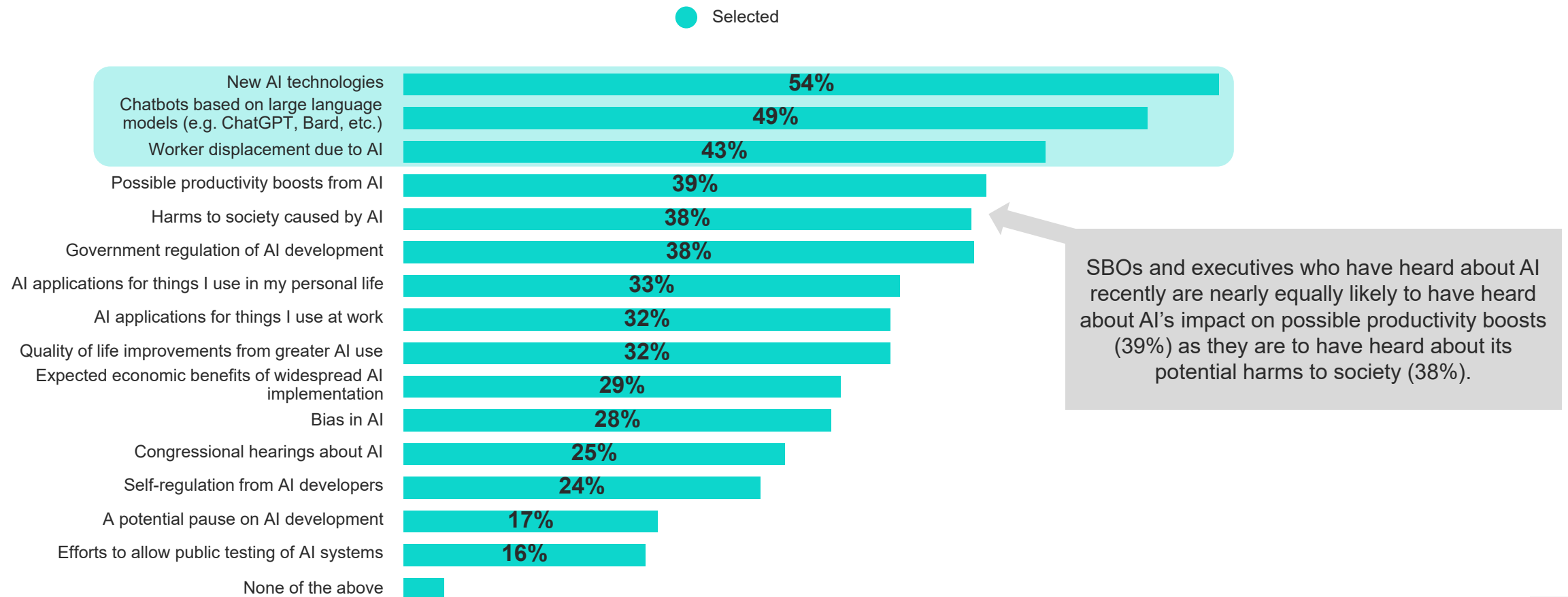
How much have you seen, read, or heard about AI in the last six months?



BROAD SENTIMENT OF AI

Of the tested options, SBOs and executives are most likely to have heard about new AI technologies (54%), LLM chatbots (49%), and worker displacement due to AI (43%).

And which of the following topics have you seen, read, or heard about regarding AI? Please select all that apply.

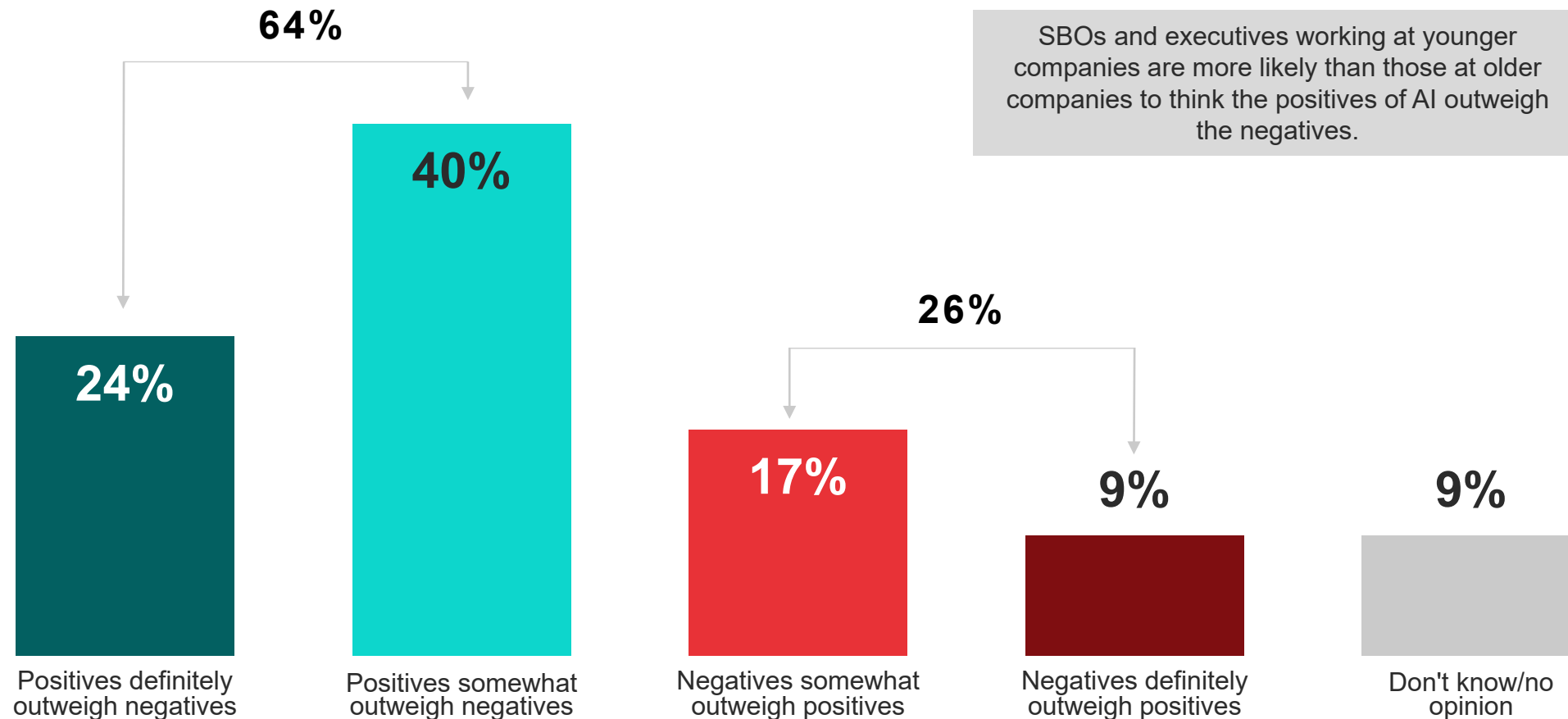


*Among SBOs and executives who have seen, read, or heard something about AI in the past six months: n = 485

BROAD SENTIMENT OF AI

Around two-thirds of SBOs and executives (64%) believe that the perceived positives of greater AI adoption in everyday life outweigh the perceived negatives.

Generally speaking, do you think the perceived positives of greater AI adoption in everyday life outweigh the perceived negatives?



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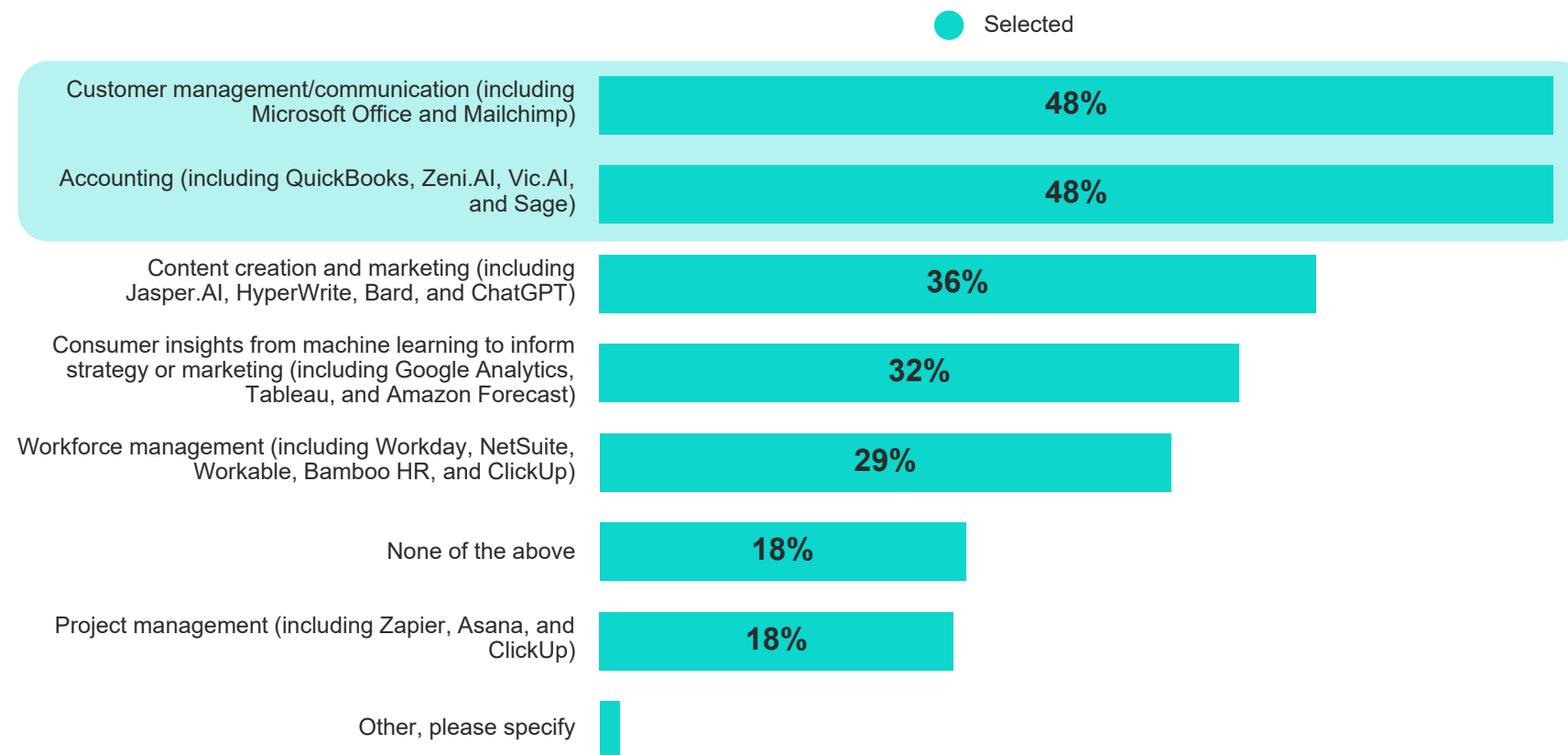
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AI IN BUSINESS

Of the tested options, SBOs and executives are most likely to use AI-based technologies for customer management/communication (48%) and accounting (48%).

Thinking specifically about your company, does your business, including your employees, currently use the following technologies that are AI-based or include AI features? Please select all that apply.



*The following description was shown to respondents: As you may know, artificial intelligence, sometimes abbreviated as AI, is the theory and development of computer systems able to perform tasks that normally require intelligence, such as visual perception, speech recognition, decision-making, and translation between languages. Generative artificial intelligence (AI) describes the technology that can be used to create new content, including audio, computer programming code, images, text, and videos such as recent advancements like ChatGPT or Bard. Artificial intelligence is also being incorporated into existing tools and platforms such as Microsoft Office, QuickBooks, Mailchimp, Google Analytics, and others.

AI IN BUSINESS

SBOs and executives from larger or younger companies are generally more likely to use each of the tested AI-based technologies than older or smaller companies, who are also more likely to be non-users of the tested tools.

Thinking specifically about your company, does your business, including your employees, currently use the following technologies that are AI-based or include AI features? Please select all that apply.

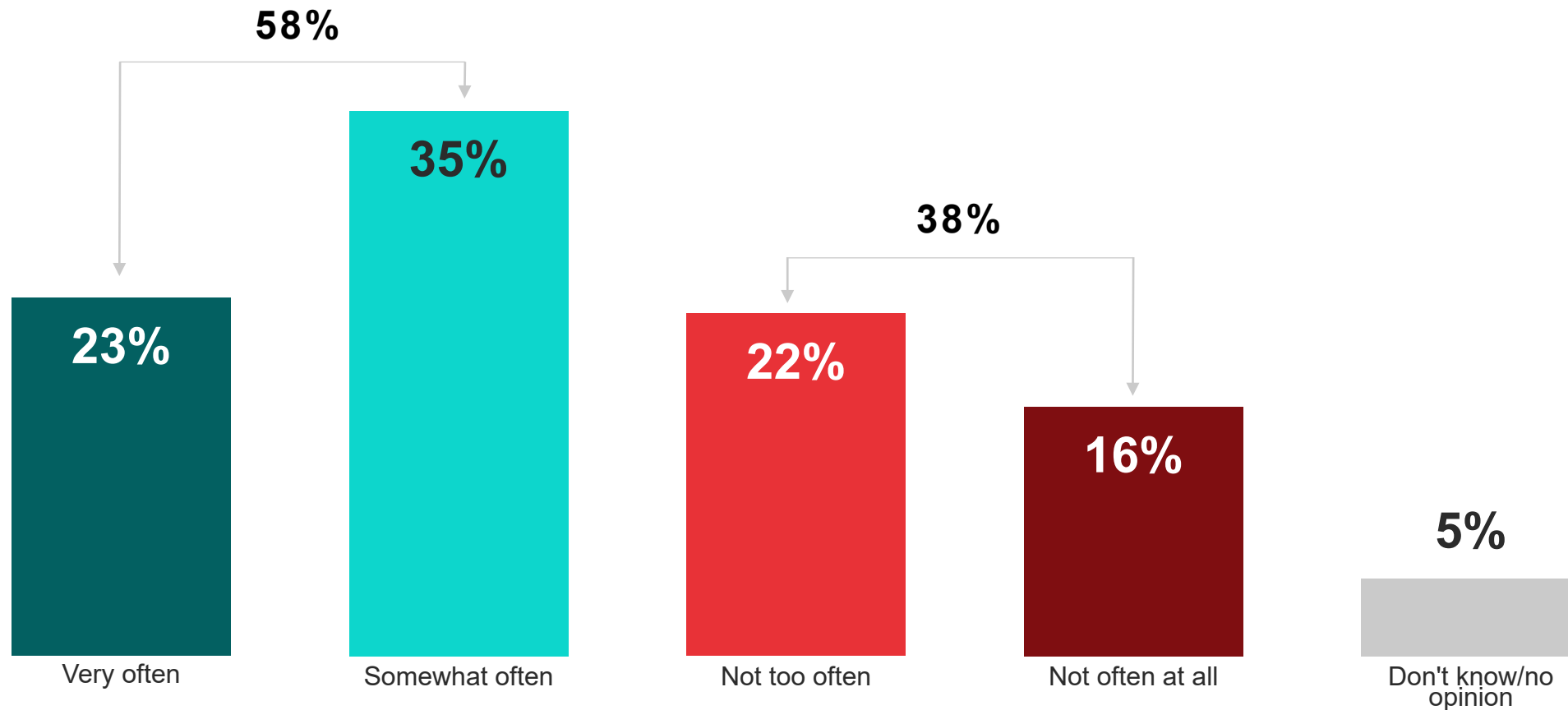
% Selected	Full Sample	SBO/Executive		Business Size				Age of Business				
		Small Biz Owner	Small Biz Executive	5-10	11-50	51-100	100+	0-5 years	6-10 years	10-15 years	20-30 years	30+ years
Accounting (including QuickBooks, Zeni.AI, Vic.AI, and Sage)	48%	50%	40%	47%	52%	41%	32%	44%	46%	55%	45%	38%
Customer management/communication (including Microsoft Office and Mailchimp)	48%	48%	46%	45%	49%	46%	56%	50%	49%	52%	41%	34%
Content creation and marketing (including Jasper.AI, HyperWrite, Bard, and ChatGPT)	36%	35%	37%	33%	38%	30%	38%	42%	43%	42%	24%	22%
Consumer insights from machine learning to inform strategy or marketing (including Google Analytics, Tableau, and Amazon Forecast)	32%	33%	30%	30%	32%	29%	50%	41%	42%	30%	24%	10%
Workforce management (including Workday, NetSuite, Workable, Bamboo HR, and ClickUp)	29%	27%	32%	16%	30%	40%	53%	30%	32%	32%	11%	9%
Project management (including Zapier, Asana, and ClickUp)	18%	14%	30%	10%	16%	27%	50%	17%	19%	21%	11%	7%
None of the above	18%	19%	17%	23%	18%	16%	3%	11%	9%	16%	36%	34%

“Other, please specify” option removed for brevity

AI IN BUSINESS

Nearly three-in-five (58%) SBOs and executives say they interact with AI *somewhat* or *very often* at their company.

Generally speaking, how often would you say you interact with artificial intelligence at your company?



AI IN BUSINESS

The likelihood that SBOs and executives interact *somewhat* or *very often* with AI tends to increase with company size and decrease with company age.

Generally speaking, how often would you say you interact with artificial intelligence at your company?



AI IN BUSINESS

SBOs and executives are more likely to believe that each of the tested items will be positively impacted by *AI in the future* than have already been positively impacted up to this point.

% Mostly positive impact

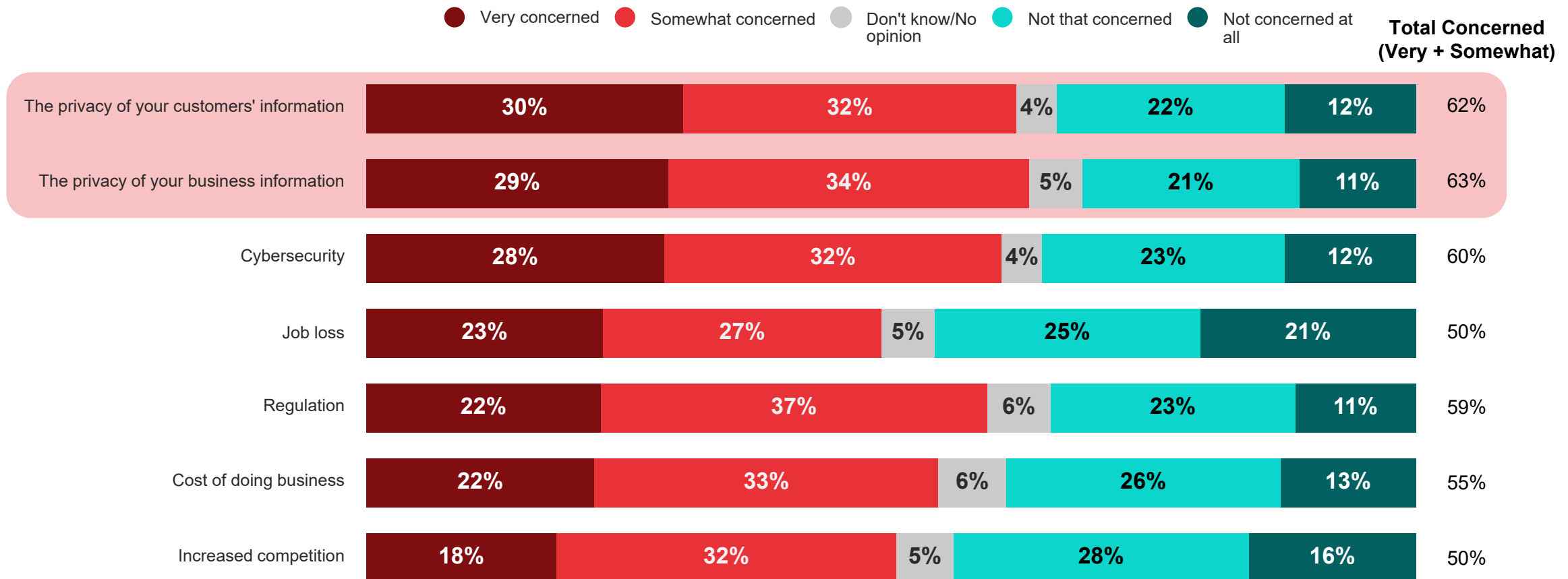
Based on what you know now, do you believe that artificial intelligence HAS had a positive or negative impact on the following?	Answer Options	Thinking about the future, over the next two years, do you believe that artificial intelligence WILL have a positive or negative impact on the following?
57%	Your business	66%
54%	Growing your business	61%
53%	Your industry as a whole	61%
53%	Your customer's experience	61%
48%	Your profits	58%
48%	Cybersecurity for your business	57%
47%	Your expenses	56%
47%	Competing with larger companies for business/sales	56%
47%	Your employees	52%

“Questions asked separately but combined on this slide for comparison

AI IN BUSINESS

Half or more SBOs and executives are concerned about AI's use impacting each of the tested options, although concern is highest overall for the privacy of their business (63%) and customers' (62%) information.

Thinking about your business and artificial intelligence, how concerned are you, if at all, about the following?



AI IN BUSINESS

SBOs and executives at businesses that are more than 30 years old express greater concern about cybersecurity (81%), the privacy of their business' information (81%) and the privacy of their customers' information (76%) than newer businesses.

Thinking about your business and artificial intelligence, how concerned are you, if at all, about the following?

Total Concerned (Very + Somewhat)	Full Sample	SBO/Executive		Business Size				Age of Business				
		Small Biz Owner	Small Biz Executive	5-10	11-50	51-100	100+	0-5	6-10	10-15	20-30	30+
The privacy of your business information	63%	63%	65%	58%	63%	70%	70%	59%	59%	60%	65%	81%
The privacy of your customers' information	62%	61%	66%	56%	63%	66%	76%	58%	59%	59%	60%	76%
Cybersecurity	61%	59%	67%	57%	61%	64%	70%	59%	62%	56%	65%	81%
Regulation	59%	60%	56%	59%	57%	70%	53%	58%	57%	53%	65%	64%
Cost of doing business	55%	54%	58%	49%	53%	68%	64%	55%	54%	47%	60%	62%
Increased competition	51%	50%	55%	45%	51%	60%	53%	57%	60%	42%	44%	57%
Job loss	50%	48%	53%	51%	44%	66%	48%	51%	54%	50%	38%	45%

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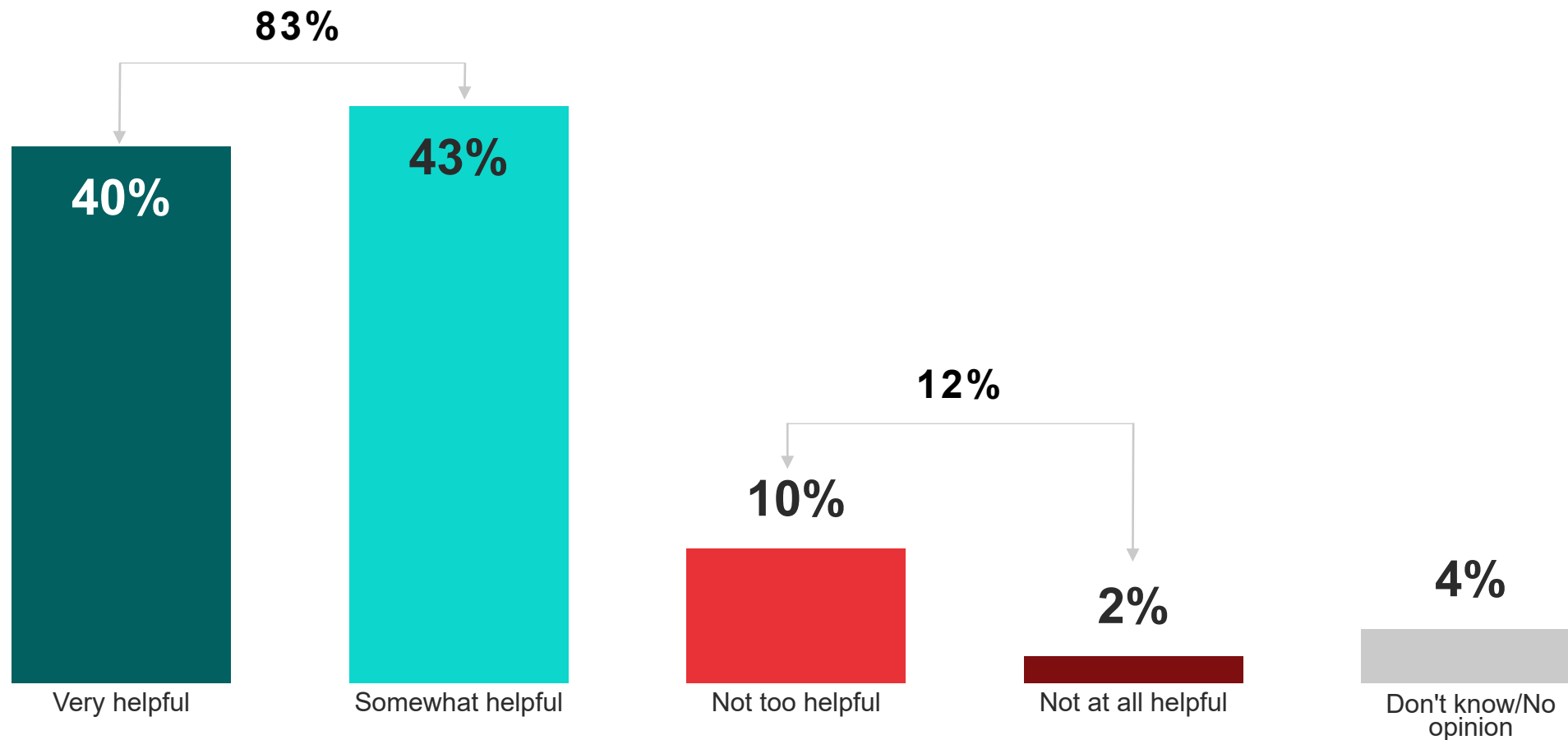
APPENDIX



EXPERIENCE & BARRIERS USING AI

More than four-in-five (83%) SBOs and executives whose businesses use AI say the technology has been *very* or *somewhat helpful* to their company.

You previously mentioned your businesses uses artificial intelligence. Overall, how helpful has artificial intelligence been to your company?



*Among SBOs and executives whose businesses use artificial intelligence: n = 405

EXPERIENCE & BARRIERS USING AI

In a sentence, please explain how has artificial intelligence been helpful to your company.

IMPROVED SYSTEMS

“Ai has been great to my company as it has allowed me to streamline jobs, increase my profit margin, and lower my actual in-house inventory.”

“Artificial intelligence increases efficiency by automating processes.”

“We have more accurate statistics to go by in order to predict the wellness of the company.”

“By helping create, manage, and streamline our internal processes as well as creating funnels for new business.”

EFFICIENCY

“AI has helped employees learn hundreds of pages of information condensed into a concise 1 page report which leads to improved results for clients and better overall efficiency.”

“It’s changed our company. Safety, efficiency, compliance, and customer service support. I am successful because of AI.”

“It allows us to reach out to our customers more efficiently.”

FOCUSED TIME

“Quick books bank feed automation freed me from daily data entry and has allowed me to focus my efforts in more executive areas.”

“Quickly and efficiently solve tasks that require manual processing.”

“Things that used to require attention are now done by application freeing me up and others for the actual work of building homes.”

“The new features in the software has made it more efficient and allowed employees to focus on other tasks quicker.”

CONTENT

“AI, specifically Chat GPT, has helped with workflow efficiency in content generation for Google ads. I can take the output of the chatbot and tweak it to sound more on-brand and human.”

“Ai has been helpful in creating content quickly and effectively.”

“Artificial intelligence has been helpful to our company because we are able to do some unbelievable contact Writing Boat for our website, email, blast, and social media.”

*Among SBOs and executives whose businesses has used AI and said it was helpful: n=339

EXPERIENCE & BARRIERS USING AI

In a sentence, please explain how has artificial intelligence NOT been helpful to your company?

CUSTOMER SERVICE

“Consumers get angry at their inability to have issues solved by a real human because the chats can be repetitive.”

“The content is not as authentic in voice as human-produced content.”

“Our customers want a face-to-face phone contact not a robot that doesn’t know them.”

TIME

“Doesn’t provide anything that saves time.”

“Takes up too much time trying to understand.”

“It’s been a waste of our time as we use it. We find it makes mistakes (big ones), and we often end up rejecting the content it produces.”

IMPACT

“Has not increased sales or reduce expenses.”

“It is too new and still trying to figure out how to personalize things using it.”

“It hasn’t helped increase sales or provide new clients

COST

“Too expensive to use business-wide.”

“The cost to keep up with the developments in ai cost so much that we are not gaining any market share that does anything but pay for the ai.”

“The price of the software.”

*Among SBOs and executives whose businesses has used AI and said it was not helpful: n=49

EXPERIENCE & BARRIERS USING AI

You previously mentioned your business does not use artificial intelligence. In your own words, why does your business not currently use artificial intelligence?

DON'T HAVE NEED

“AI is actually applied statistics, which is convenient much more than it is valuable or informative.”

“I don't feel we have a need for it. My personal experience with AI as a customer when dealing with other companies has been horrific and cold. I don't want to make my customers feel unappreciated or frustrated.”

DON'T UNDERSTAND

“Better customer service, menu upgrade, more promotional offers with discounts.”

“It seems complicated. I am not very technical and my business is very unique. Generally, I don't have competition.”

VALUE HUMAN WORK

“AI has no place in the type of work I do. My work needs human interaction with human clients.”

“Humans are more reliable to functioning and completing task with errors that are less difficult to correct. Also I like being able to help out my fellow people by giving them jobs to take care of their families and bills.”

“There is no substitute for talking to a real person.”

NOT APPLICABLE TO BUSINESS

“AI has not evolved sufficiently for my business to benefit from it.”

“AI is not useful in my line of business.”

“It is a rather small business and I don't think AI would be useful at this time.”

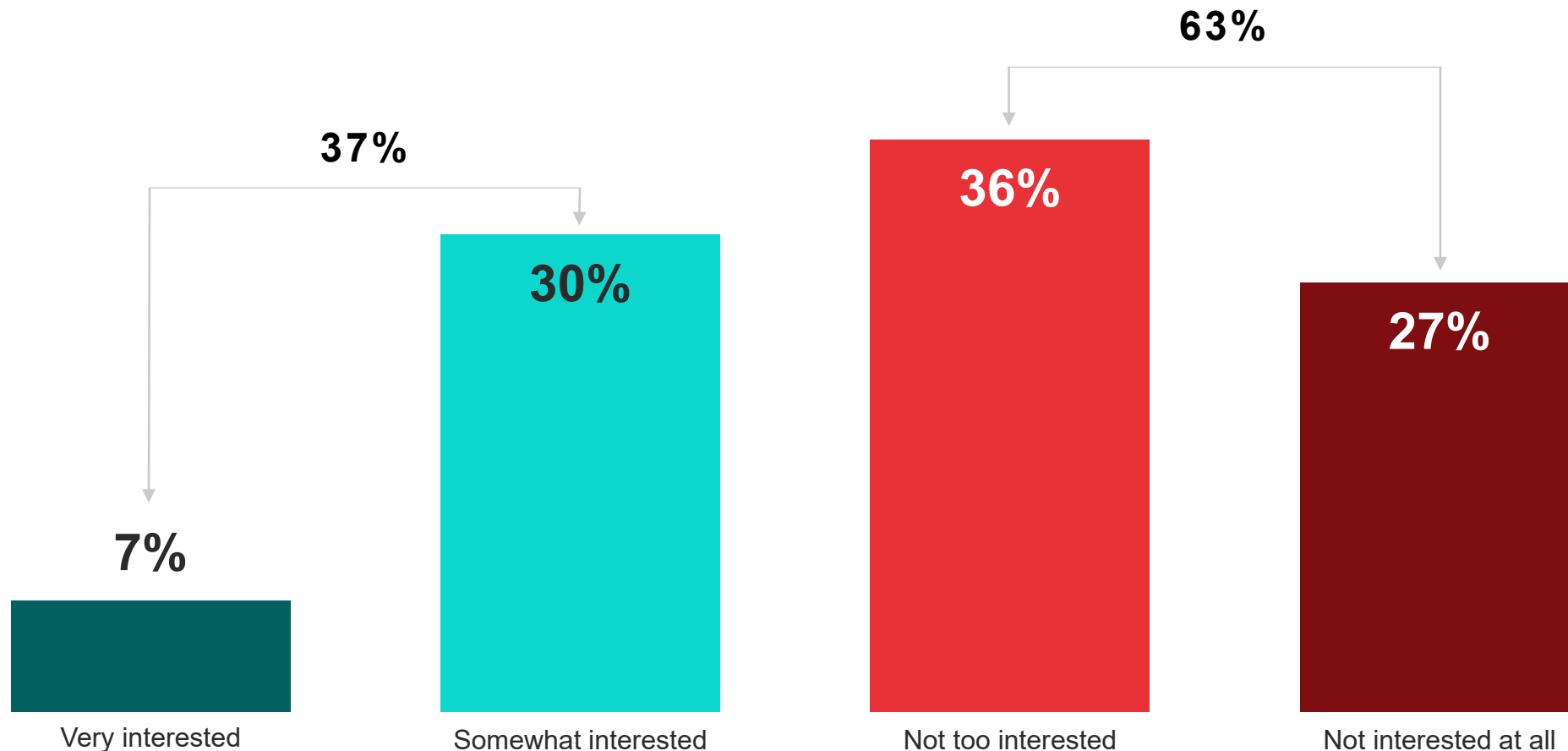
“We have not found an avenue to use AI in our business. There is nothing that we see as a benefit to using AI.”

*Among SBOs and executives whose businesses do not use artificial intelligence: n = 91

EXPERIENCE & BARRIERS USING AI

Nearly two-thirds (63%) of SBOs and executives who don't already use AI at their company say they're *not interested* in learning how to do so.

How interested are you, if at all, in learning about how to use artificial intelligence at your company?

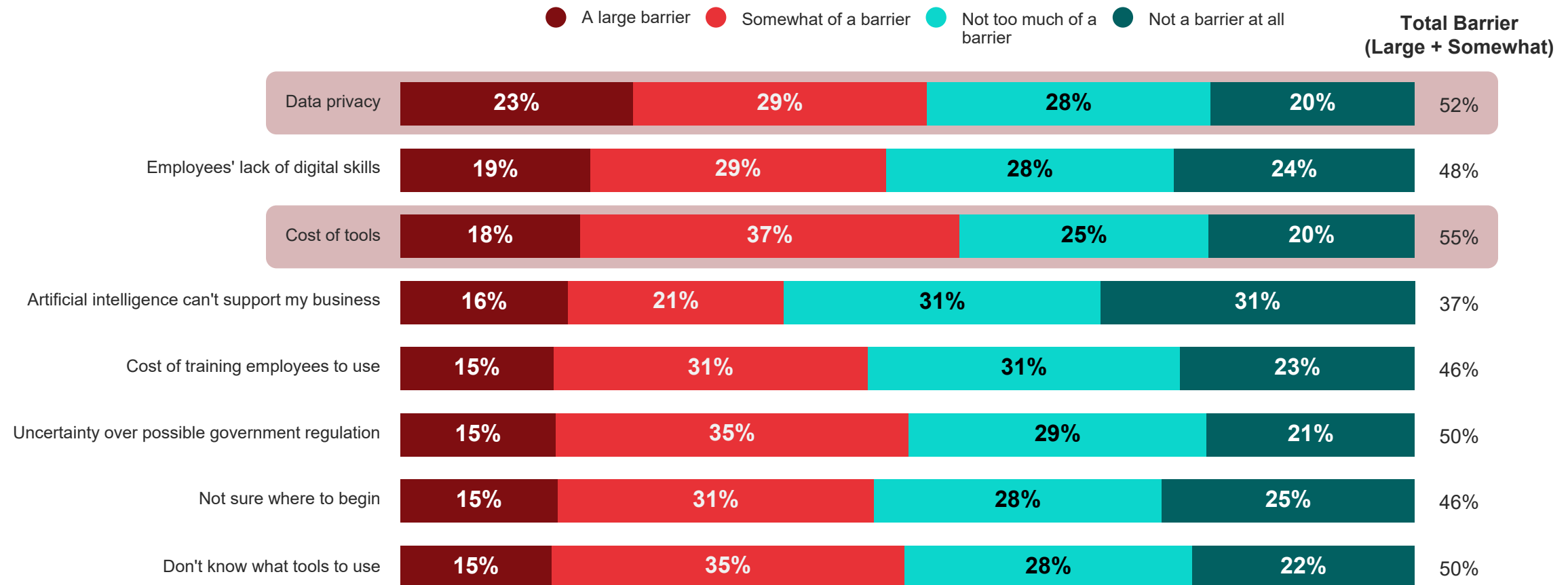


*Among SBOs and executives whose businesses do not use artificial intelligence: n = 91

EXPERIENCE & BARRIERS USING AI

Of the tested options, SBOs and executives are most likely to view the cost of AI tools as a barrier overall (55%), although they're most likely to see data privacy as a *large barrier* (23%) to adoption at their company.

How much of a barrier, if at all, are each of the following to using artificial intelligence at your company?



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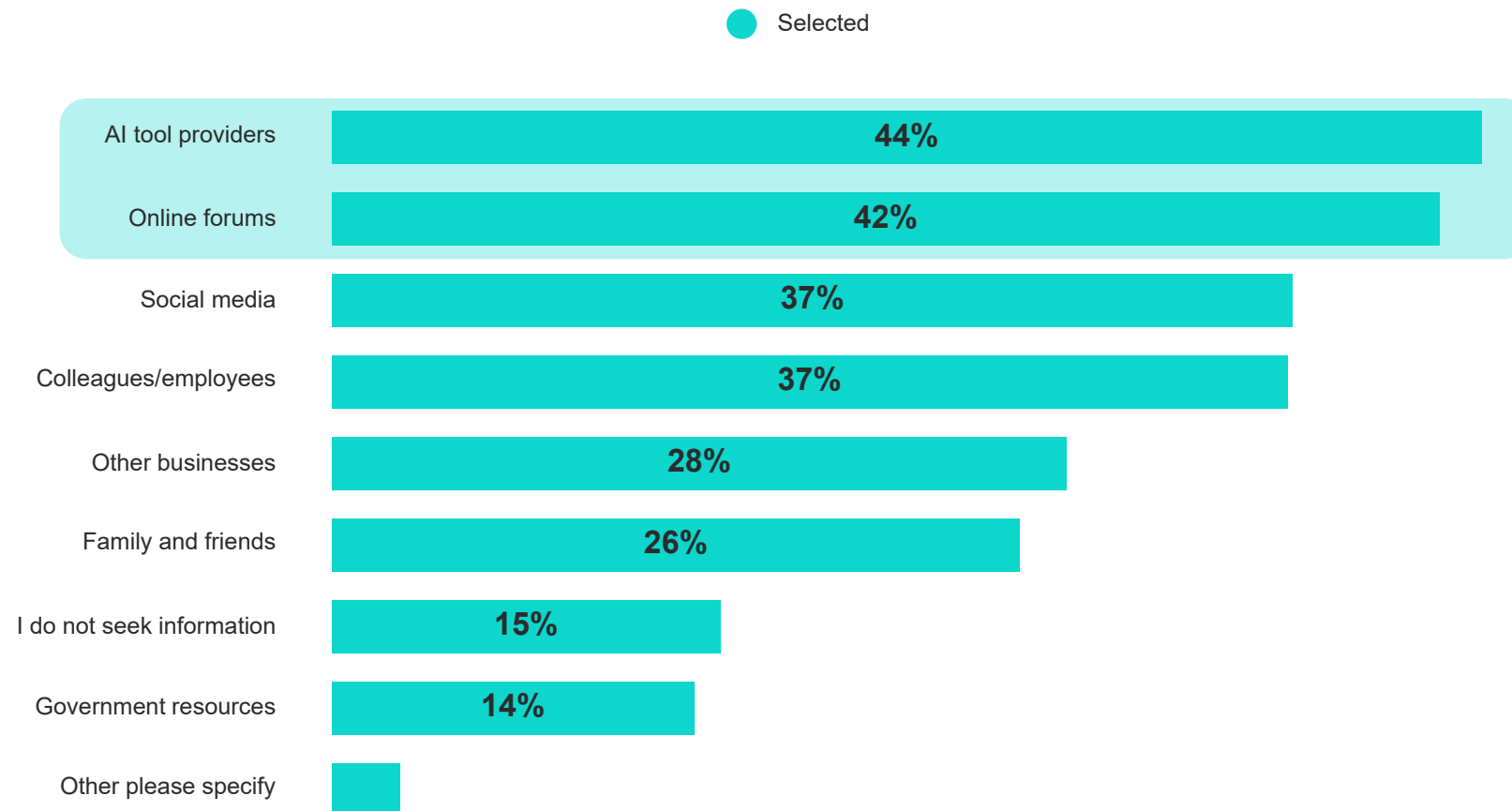
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AI ADOPTION

Close to two-in-five SBOs and executives seek out information and advice about suitable AI tools for their business from online forums (42%) and AI tool providers (44%).

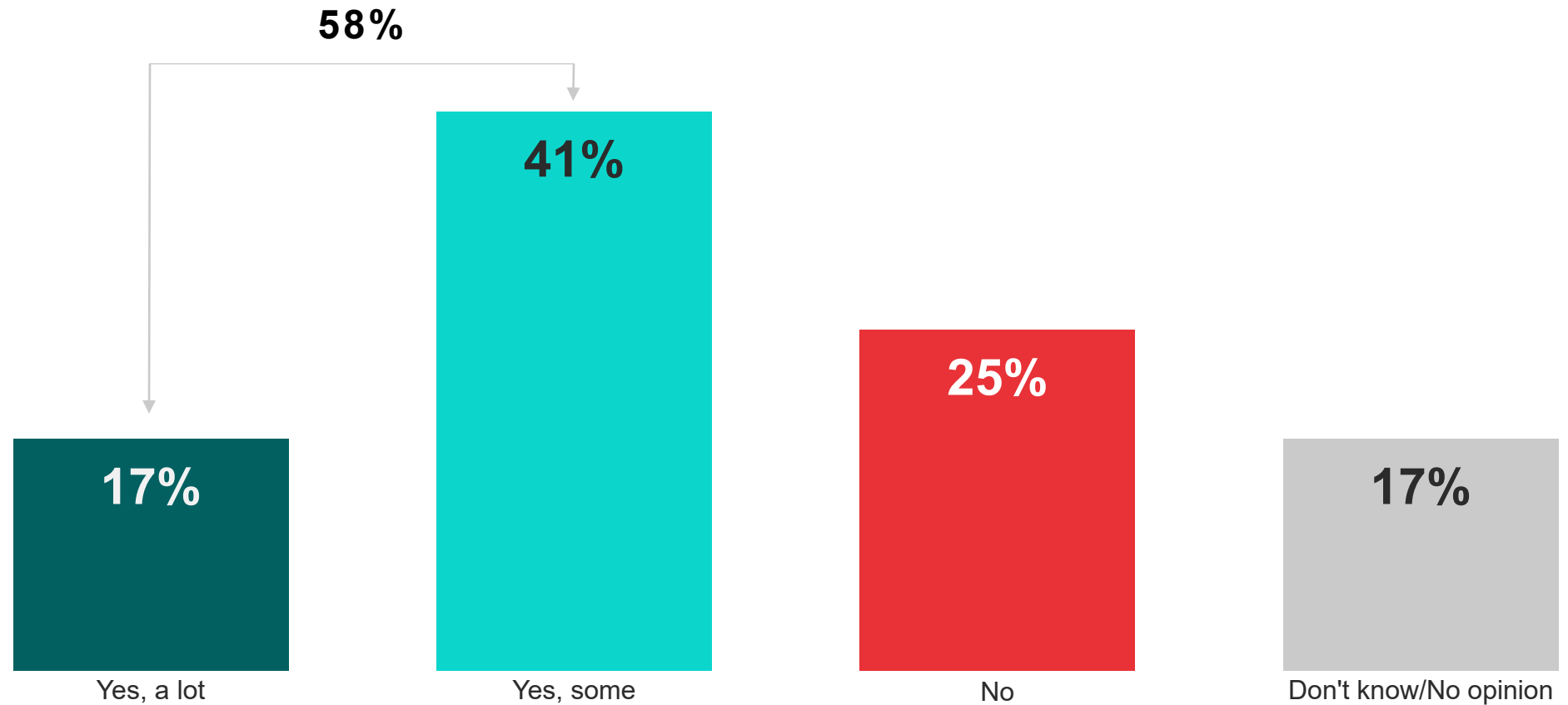
Where, if anywhere, do you currently seek information and advice about AI tools that might be suitable for your business? Please select all that apply.



AI ADOPTION

Nearly three-in-five (58%) SBOs and executives say their business plans to make *at least some* investments in AI over the next year.

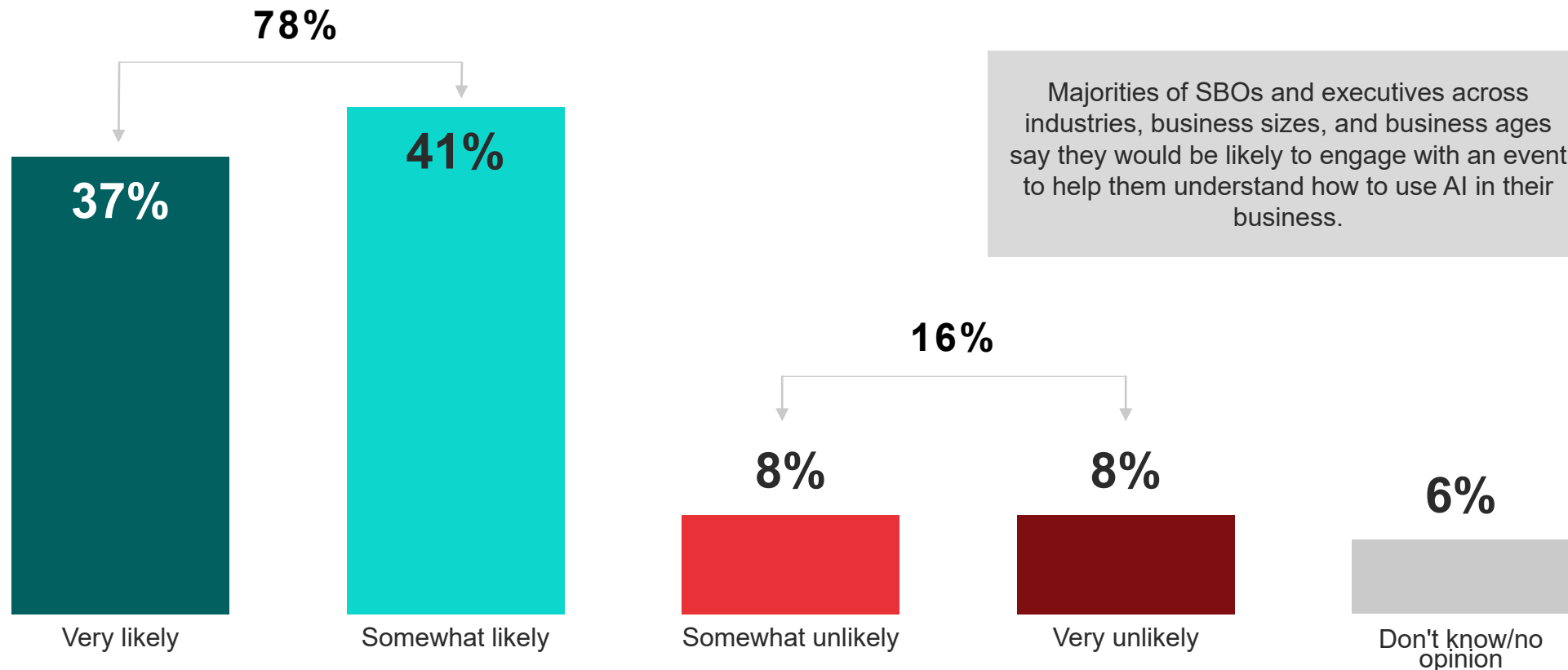
Does your business plan to make investments in AI over the next year?



AI ADOPTION

A large majority (78%) of SBOs and executives would be likely to engage with an event designed to help them understand how to use AI in their business.

If an organization hosted an event to help you understand how to use artificial intelligence in your business, how likely, if at all, are you to engage with an event like that?

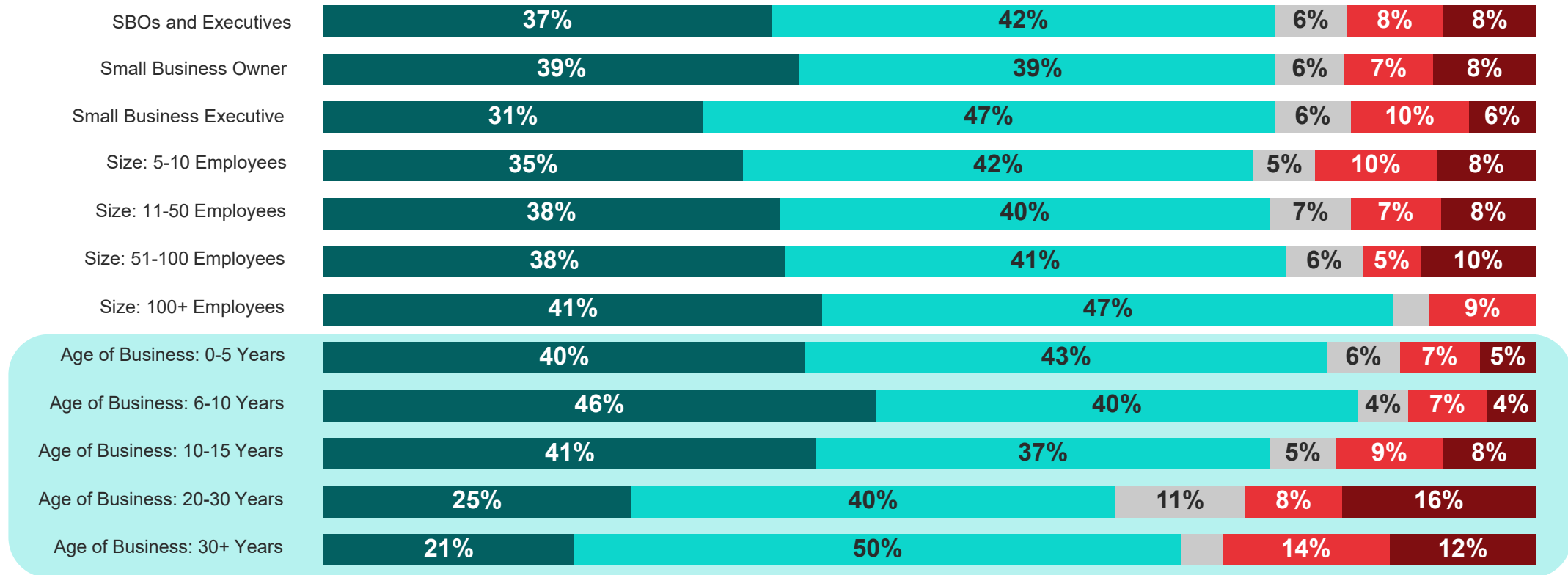


AI ADOPTION

A greater share of SBOs and executives of younger companies are *very likely* to engage with an event to help understand AI use in business compared to those at older companies.

If an organization hosted an event to help you understand how to use artificial intelligence in your business, how likely, if at all, are you to engage with an event like that?

● Very likely
 ● Somewhat likely
 ● Don't know/no opinion
 ● Somewhat unlikely
 ● Very unlikely



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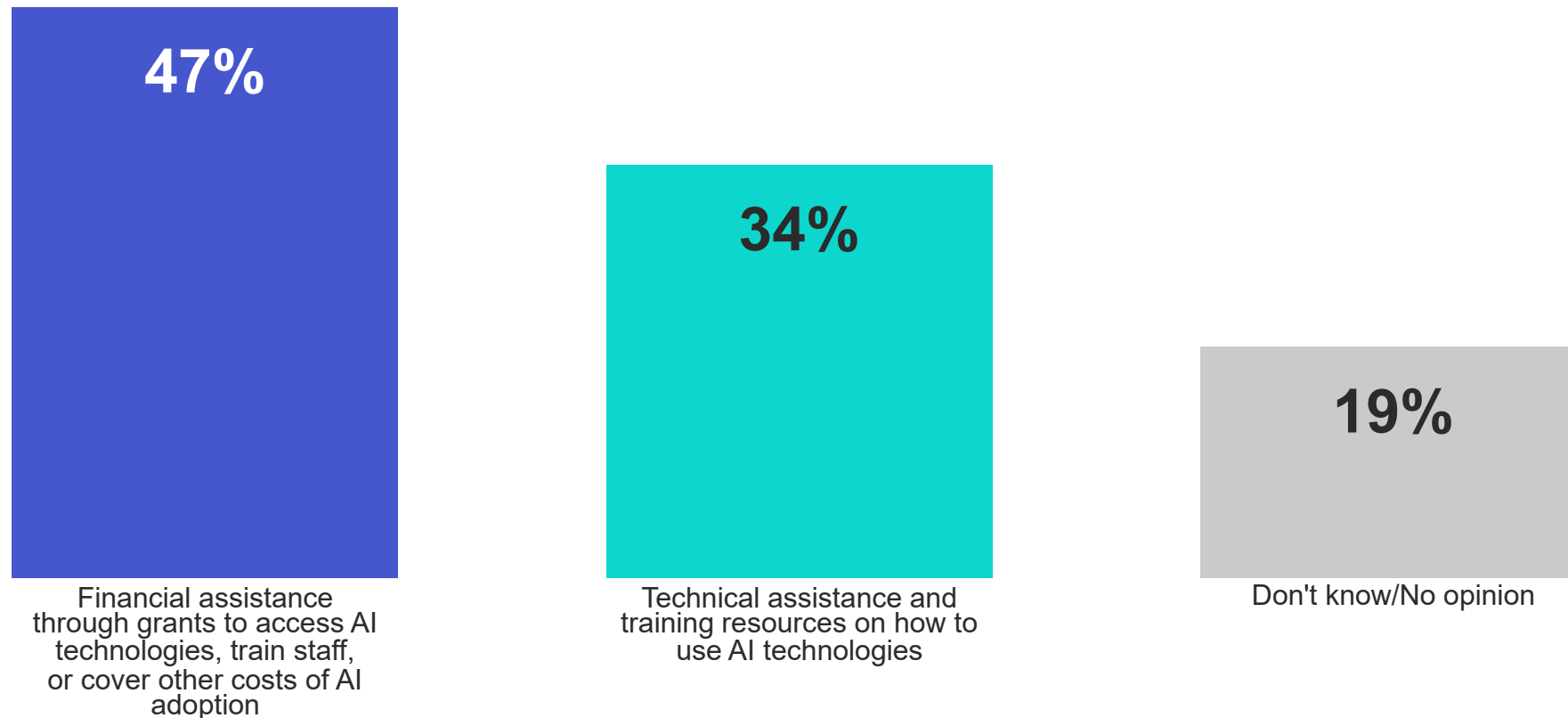
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LEGISLATION

The plurality of SBOs and executives would rather receive financial assistance (47%) than technical assistance (34%) to help their companies further adopt AI.

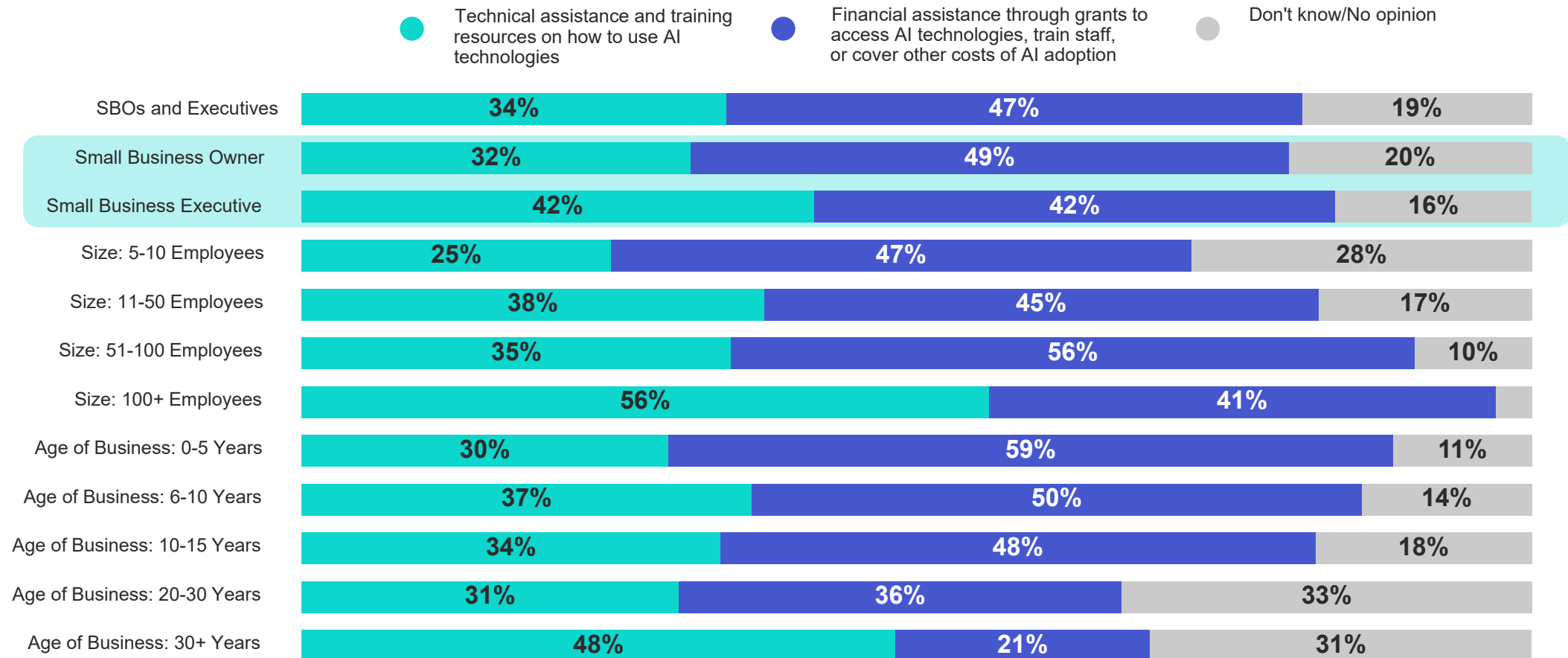
As you may know, President Biden recently signed an executive order on artificial intelligence. The order will provide small business owners access to technical assistance and resources to use AI technologies. In light of President Biden's executive order on artificial intelligence, what would be MOST helpful in your company using AI?



LEGISLATION

Small business executives are evenly split in their preference between technical (42%) and financial (42%) assistance, while SBOs are more likely to prefer financial assistance (49%).

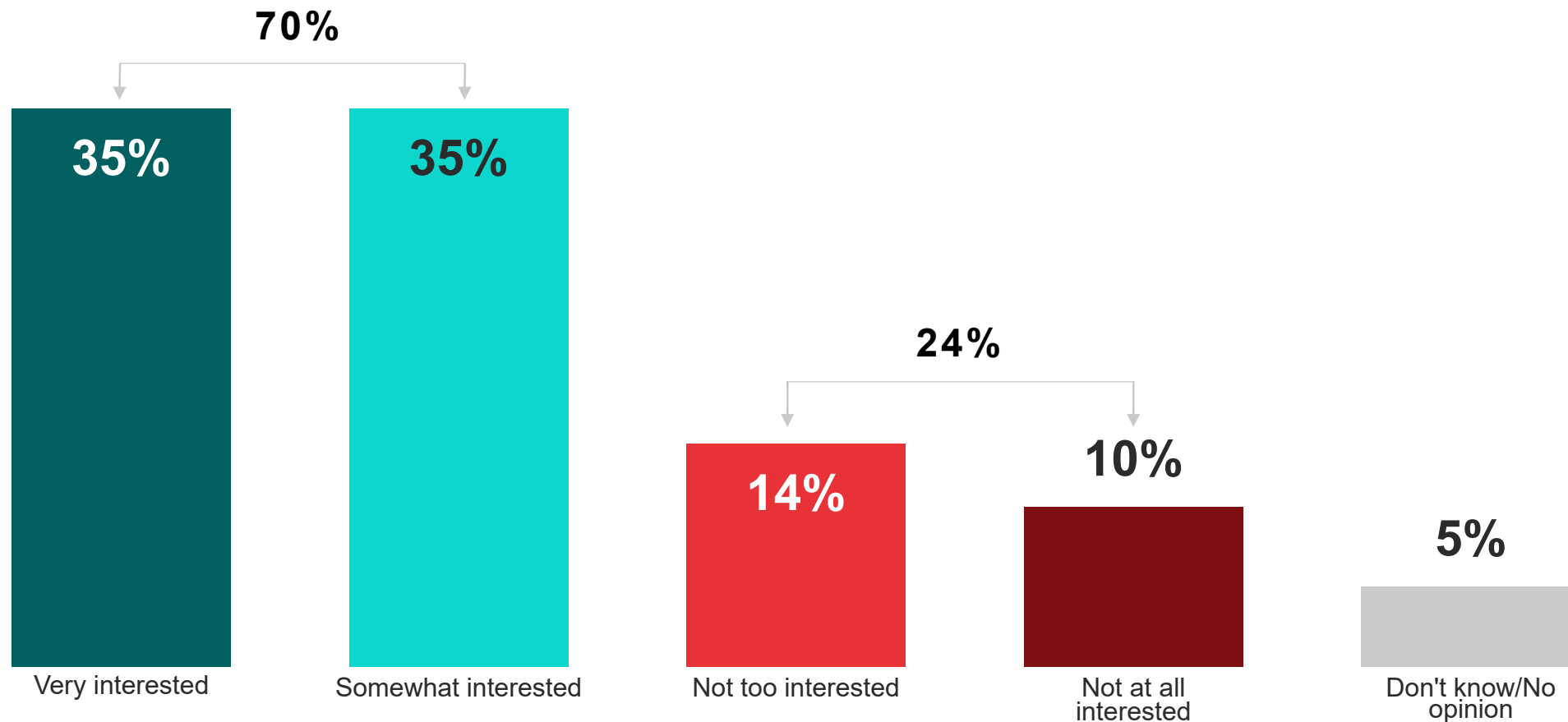
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LEGISLATION

More than two-thirds (70%) of SBOs and executives are interested in utilizing the SBA's loan program to finance AI technology use for their business.

How interested would you be, if at all, in utilizing the Small Business Administration's loan program to finance AI technology that supports your business' daily operations?



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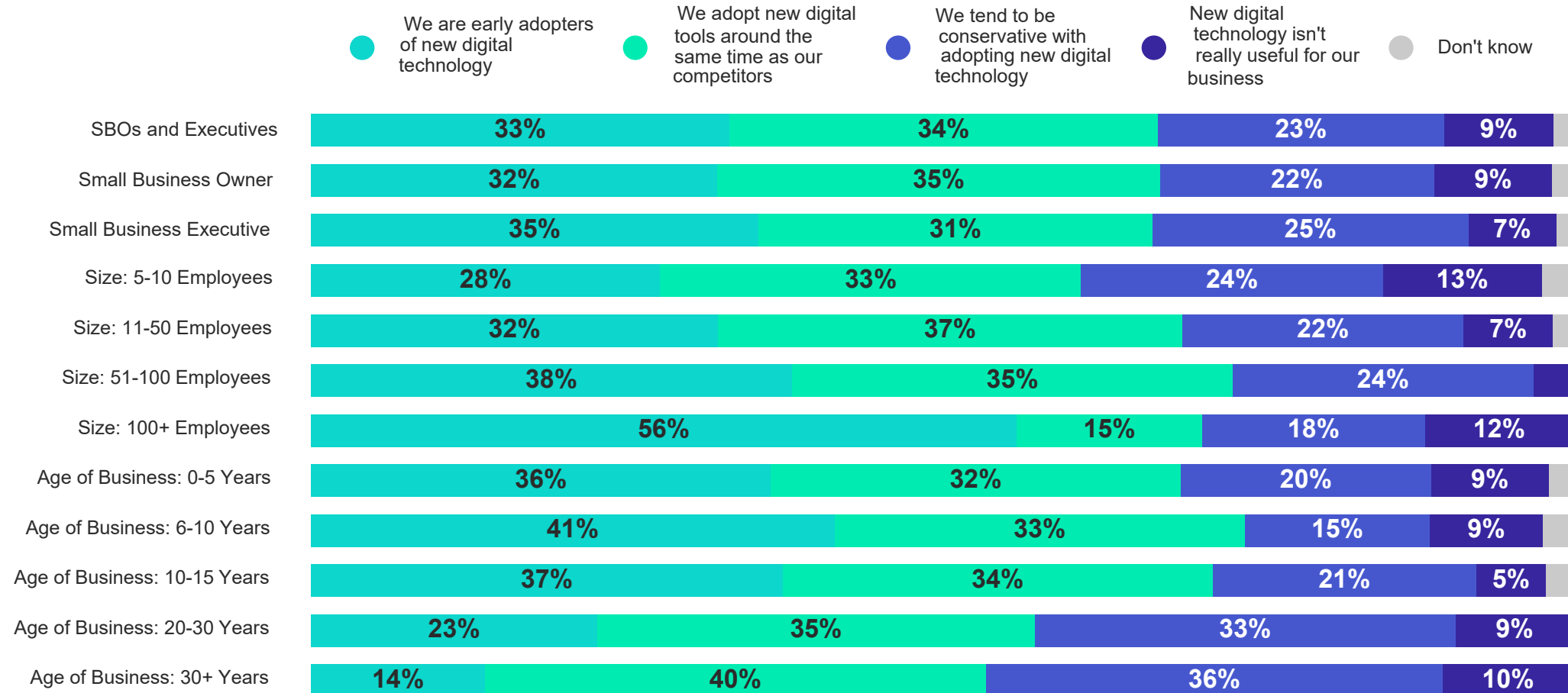
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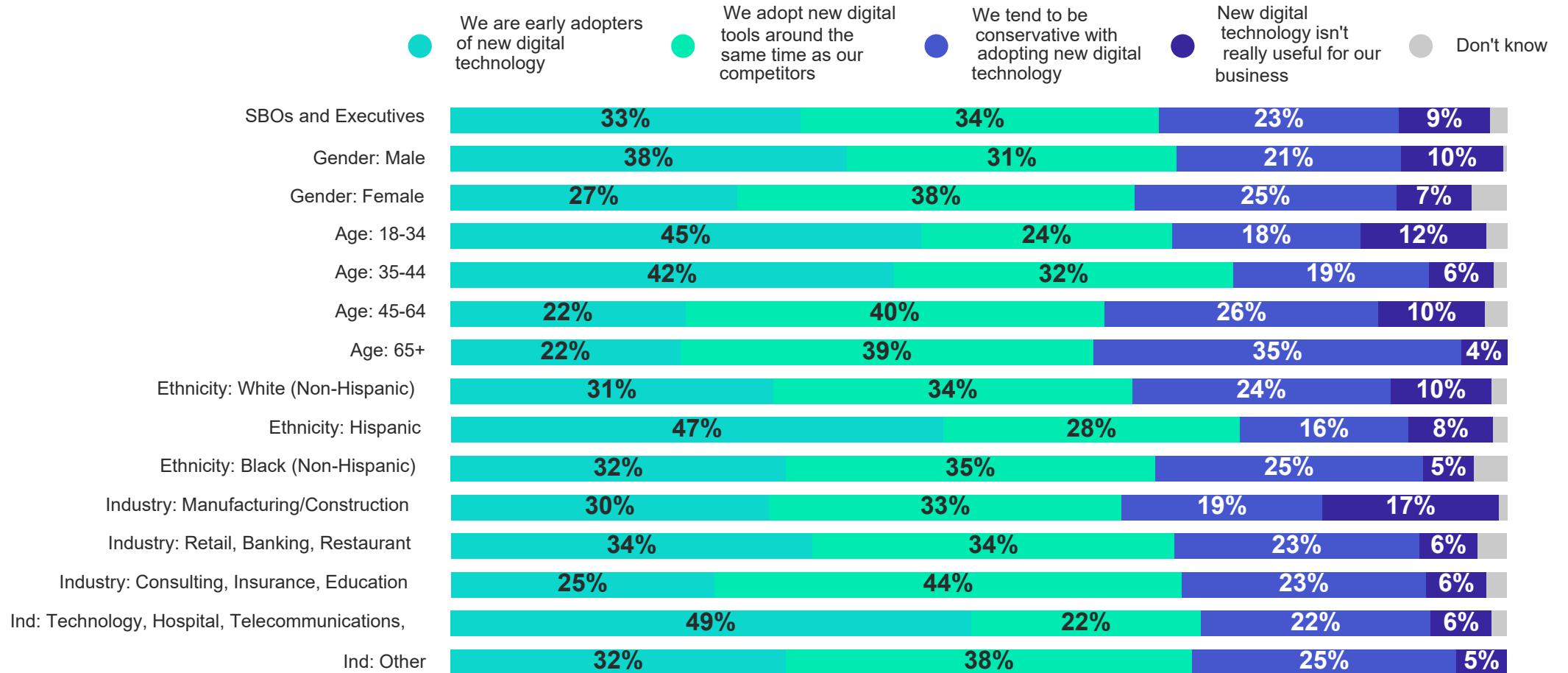
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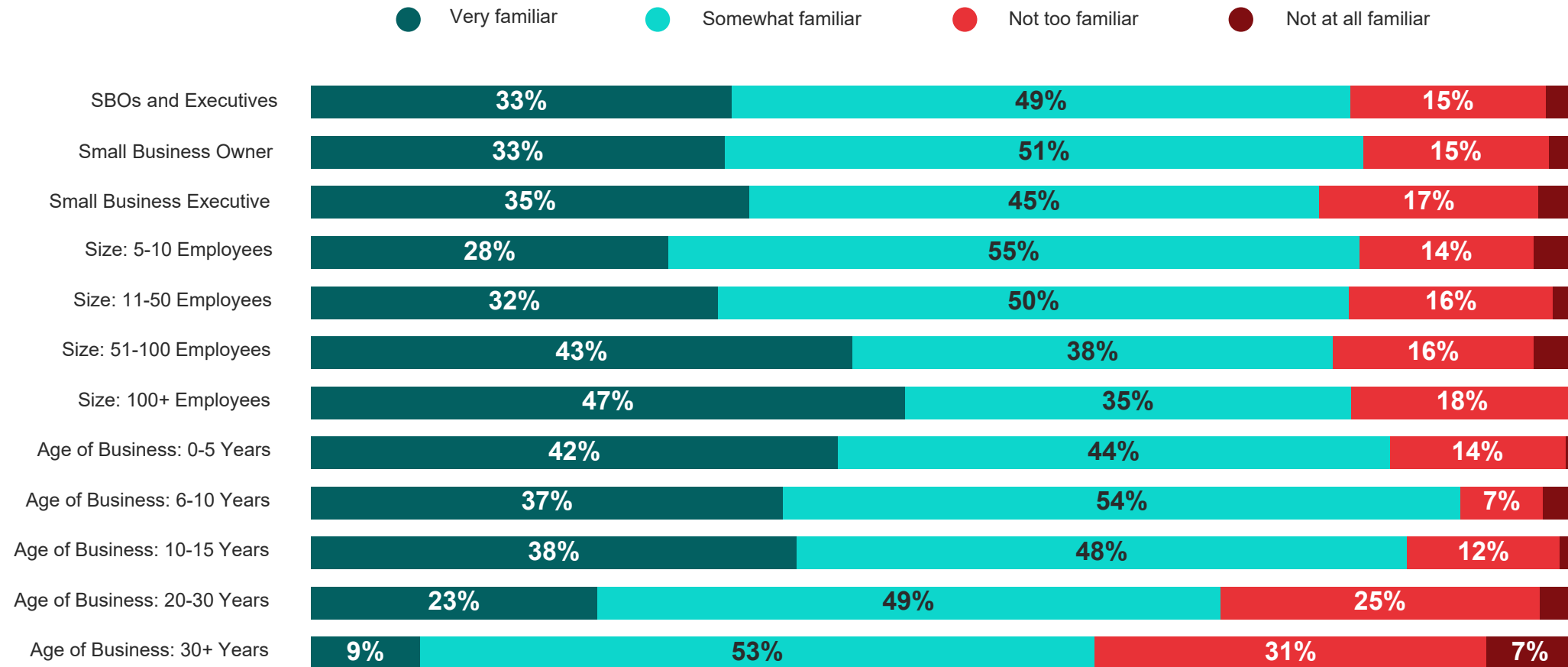
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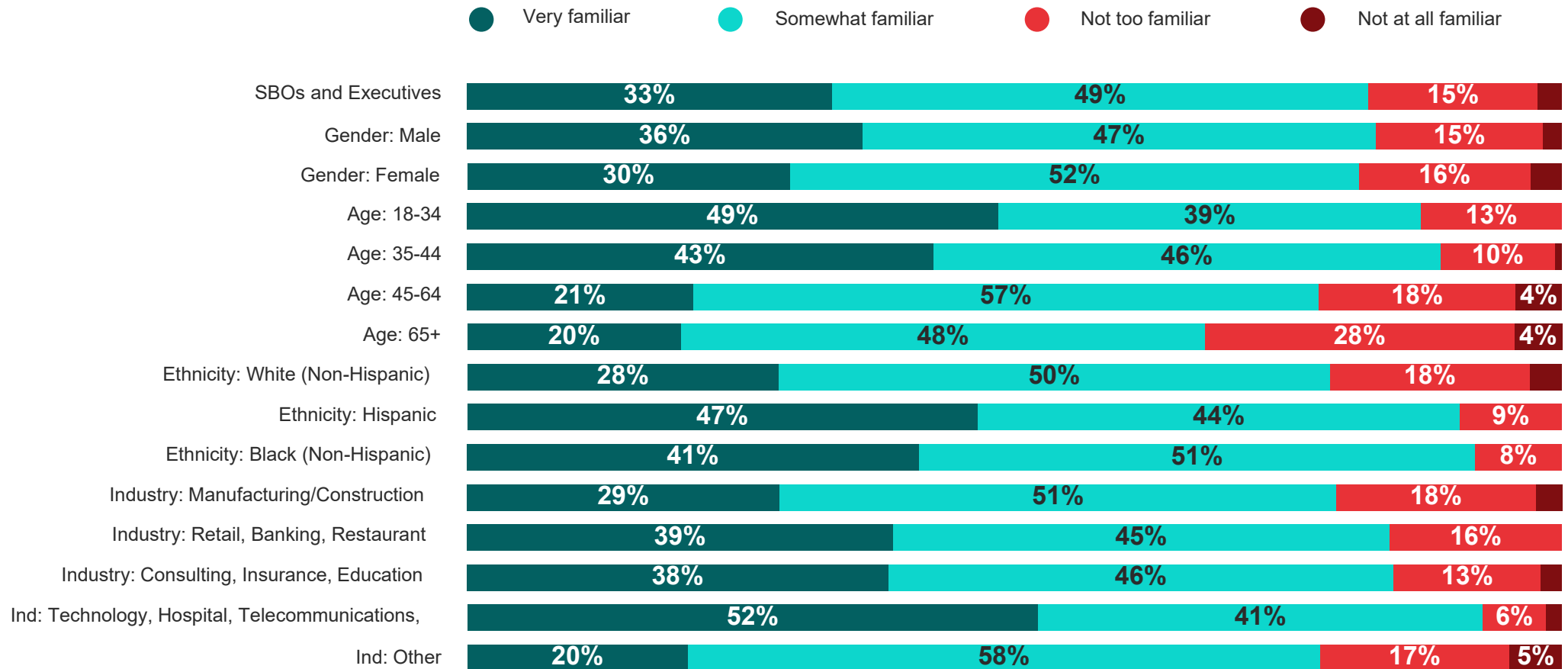
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How familiar are you, if at all, with AI, or artificial intelligence?

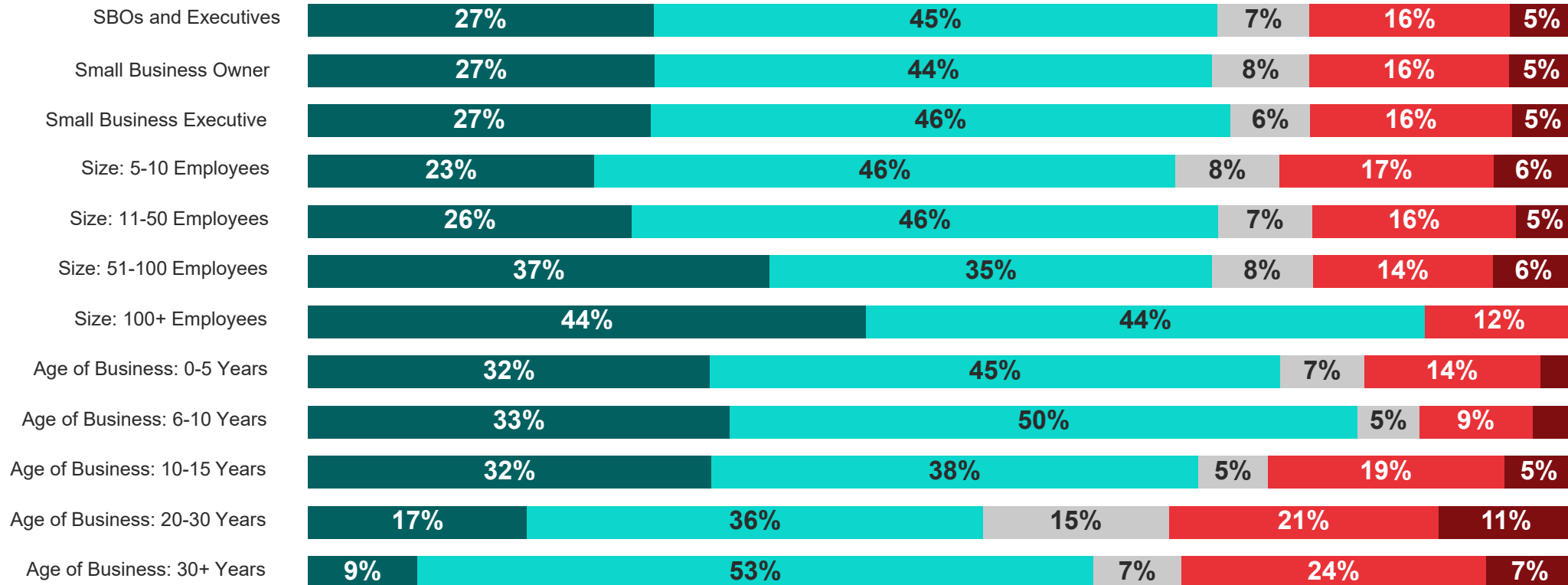


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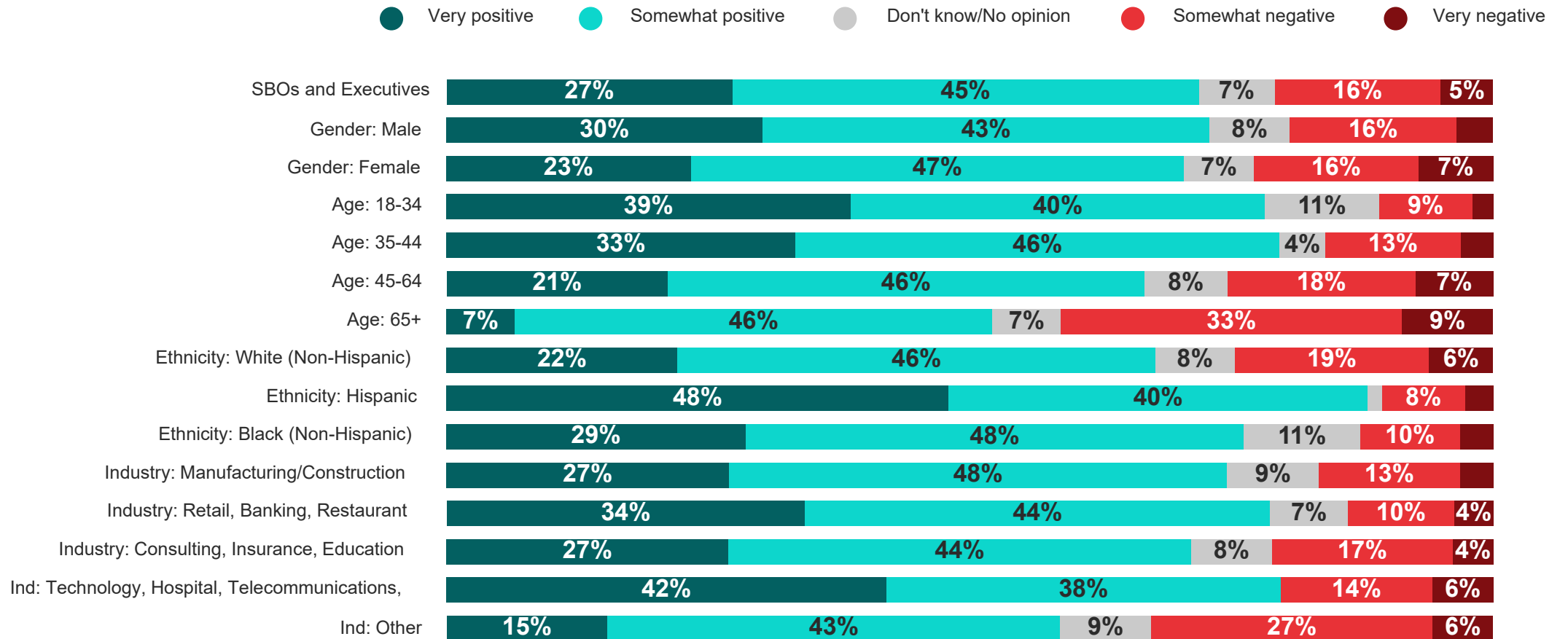


Overall, do you have a positive or negative view of AI?

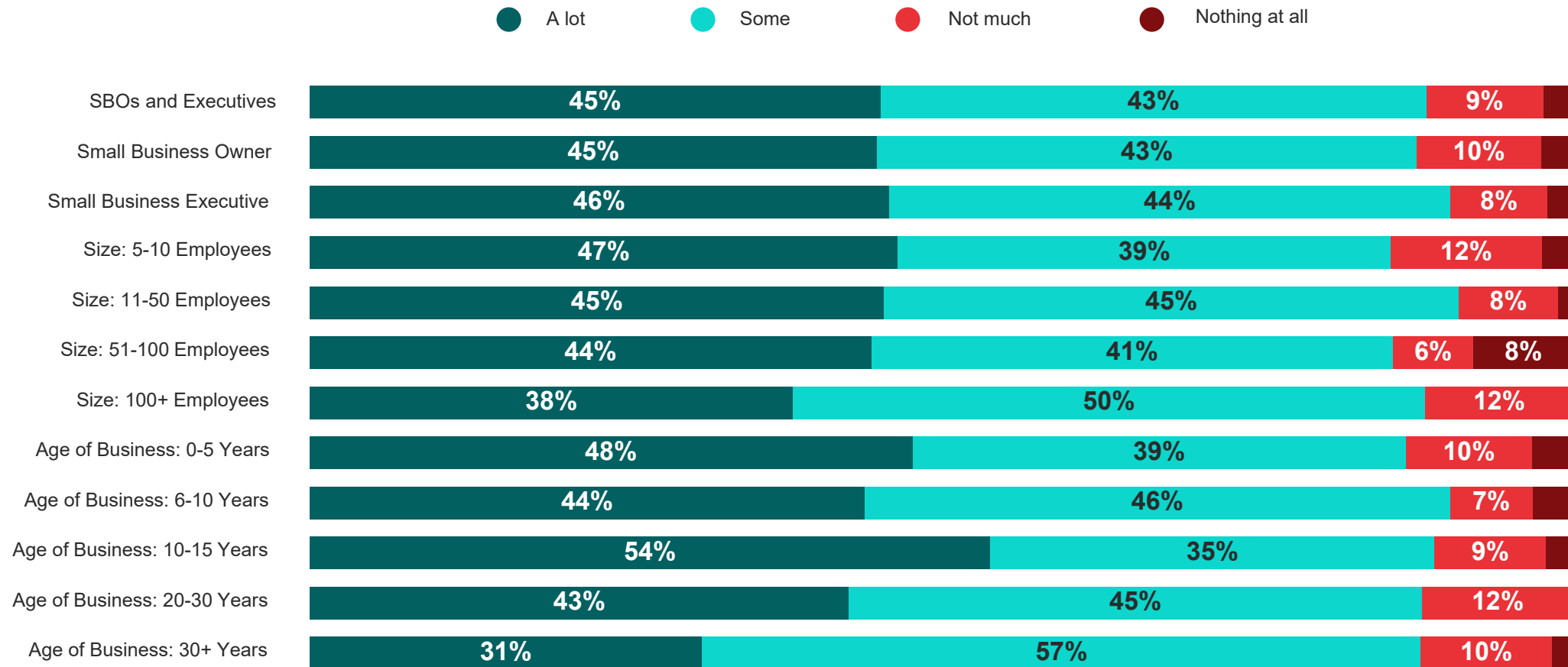
● Very positive
 ● Somewhat positive
 ● Don't know/No opinion
 ● Somewhat negative
 ● Very negative



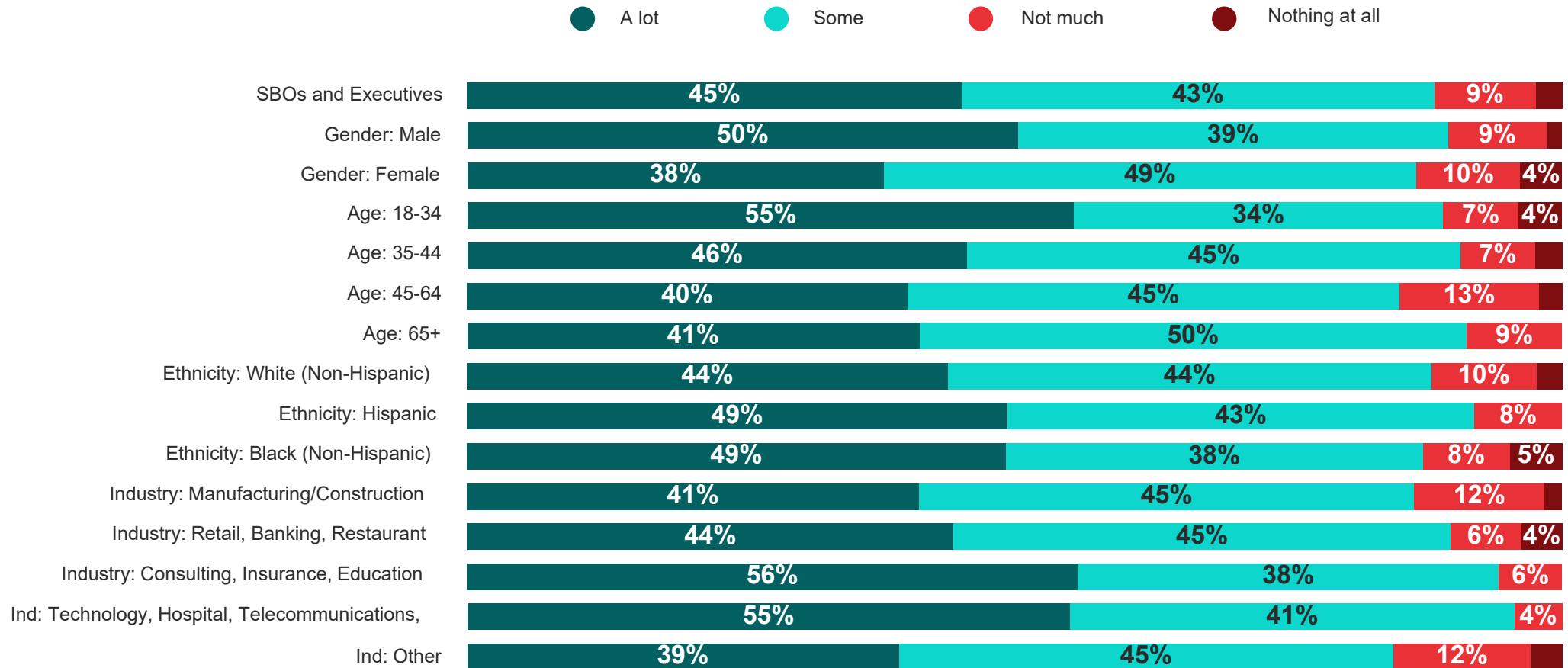
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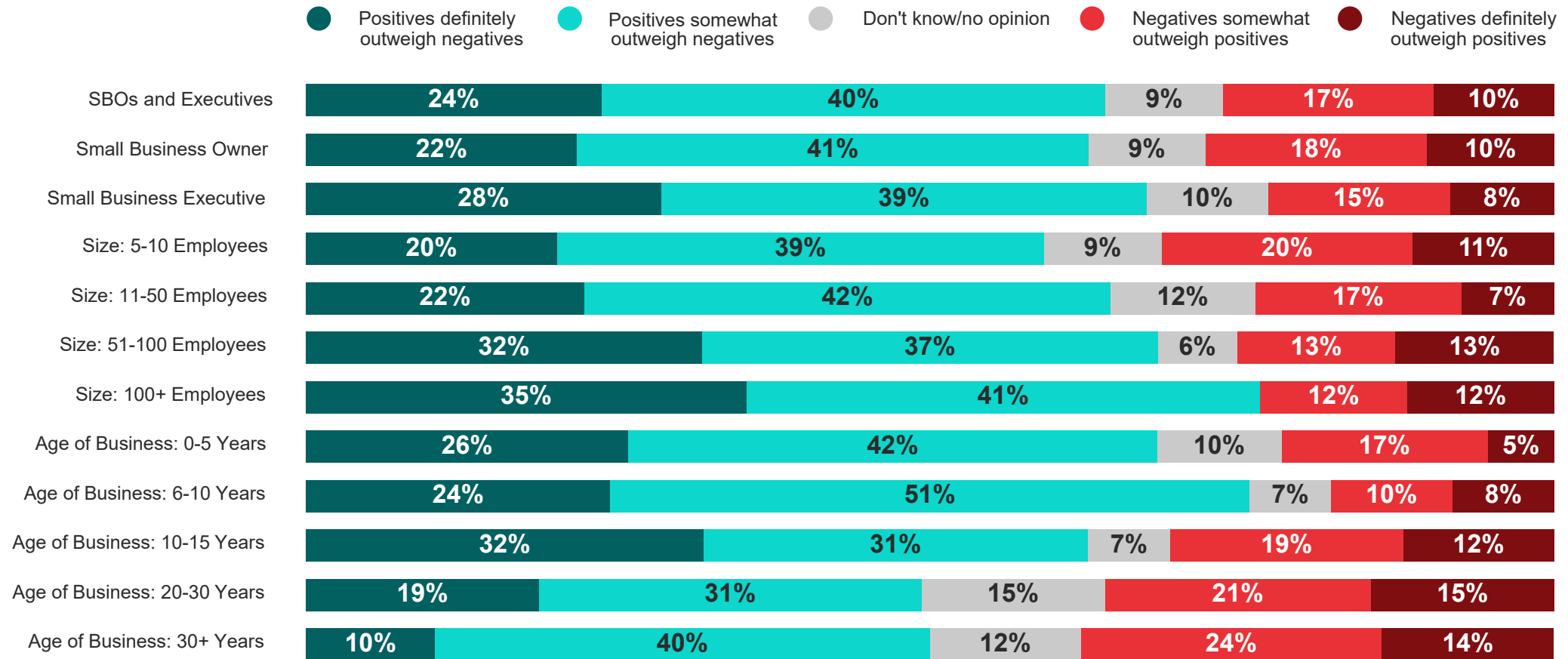
How much have you seen, read, or heard about AI in the last six months?



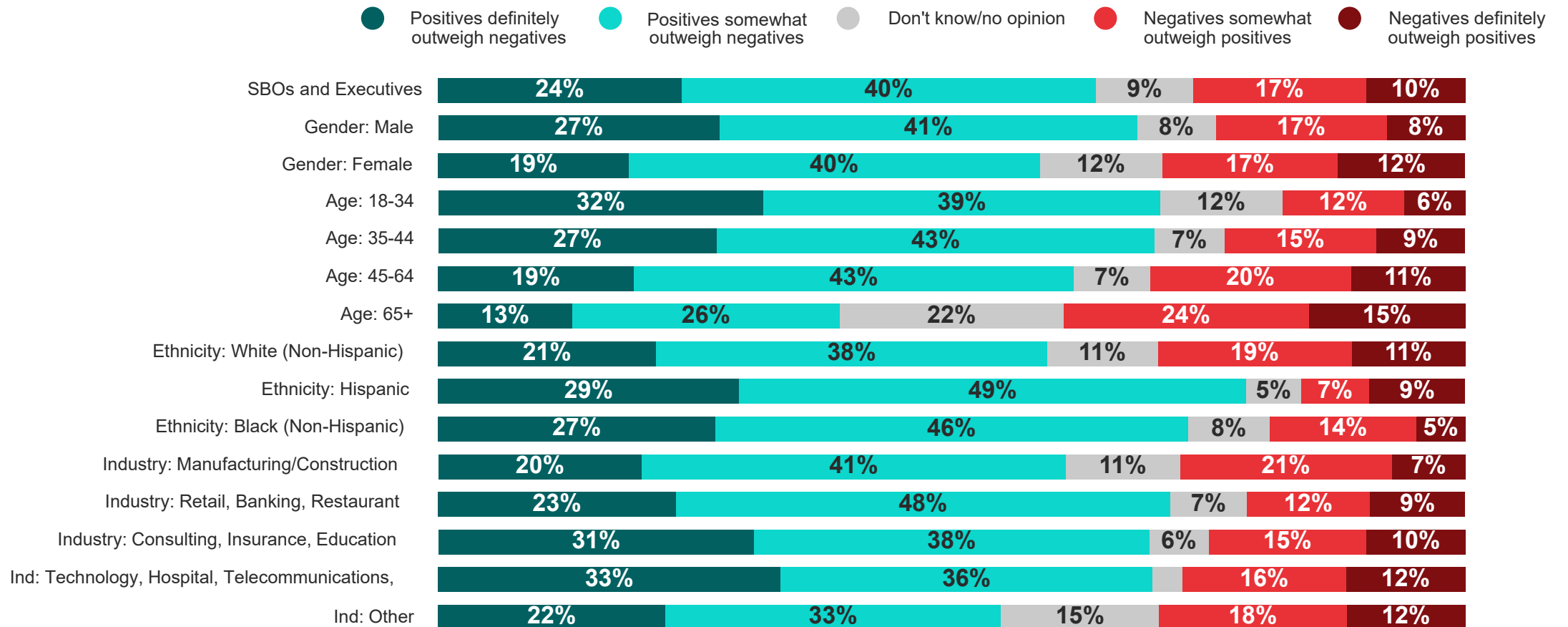
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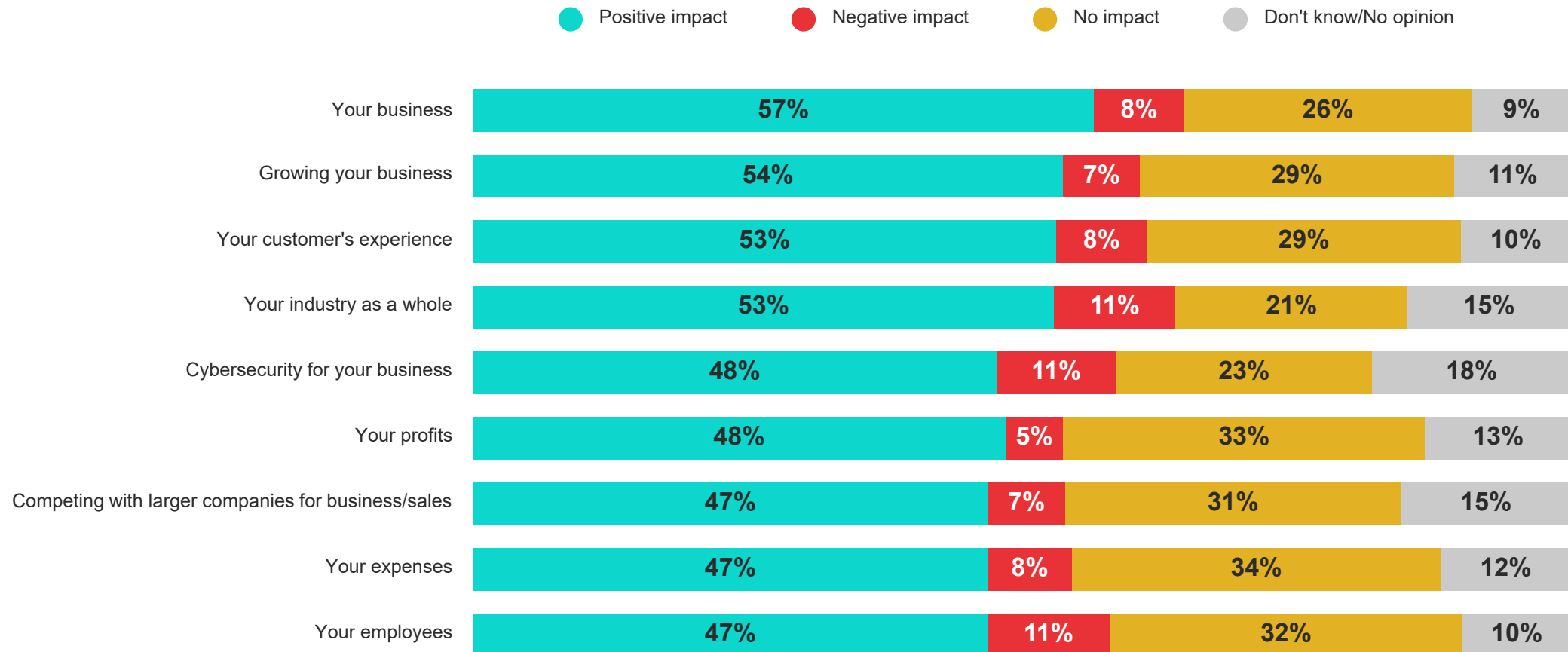
Generally speaking, do you think the perceived positives of greater AI adoption in everyday life outweigh the perceived negatives?



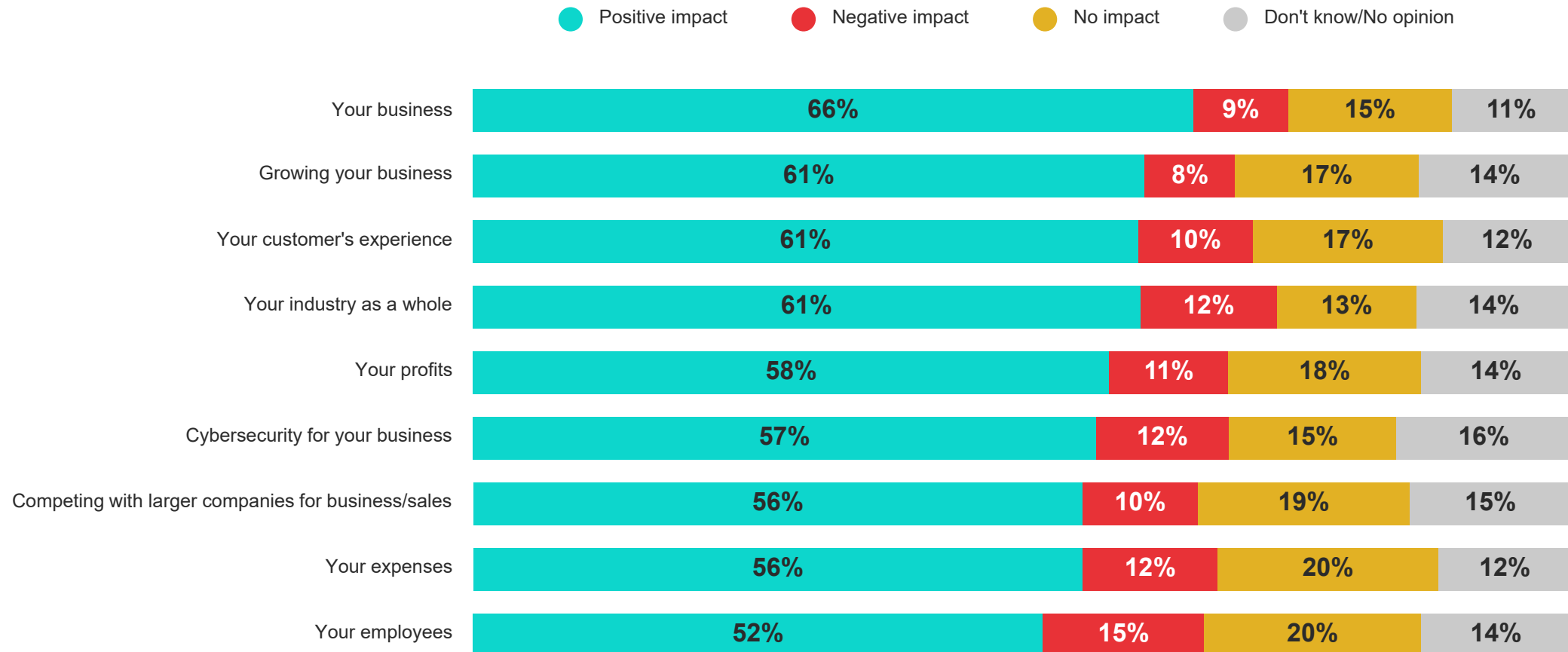
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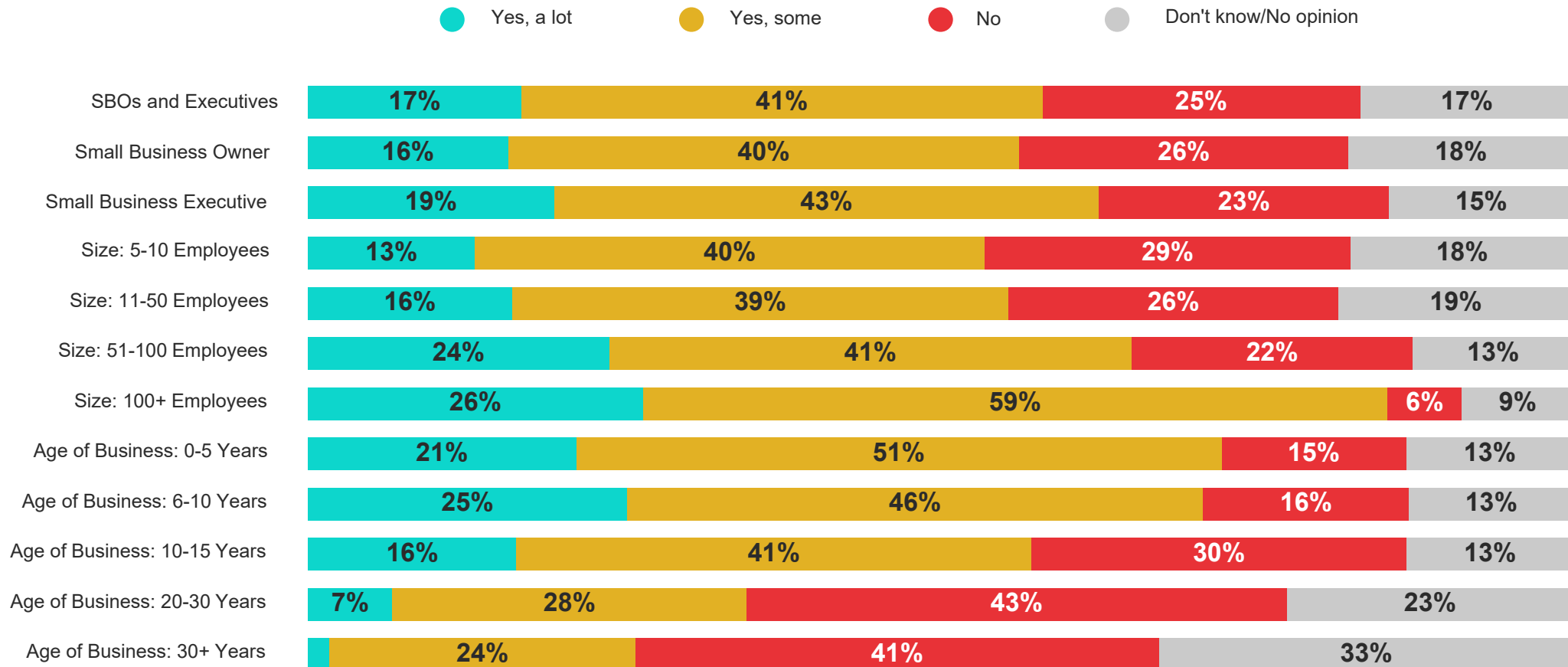
Based on what you know now, do you believe that artificial intelligence HAS had a positive or negative impact on the following?



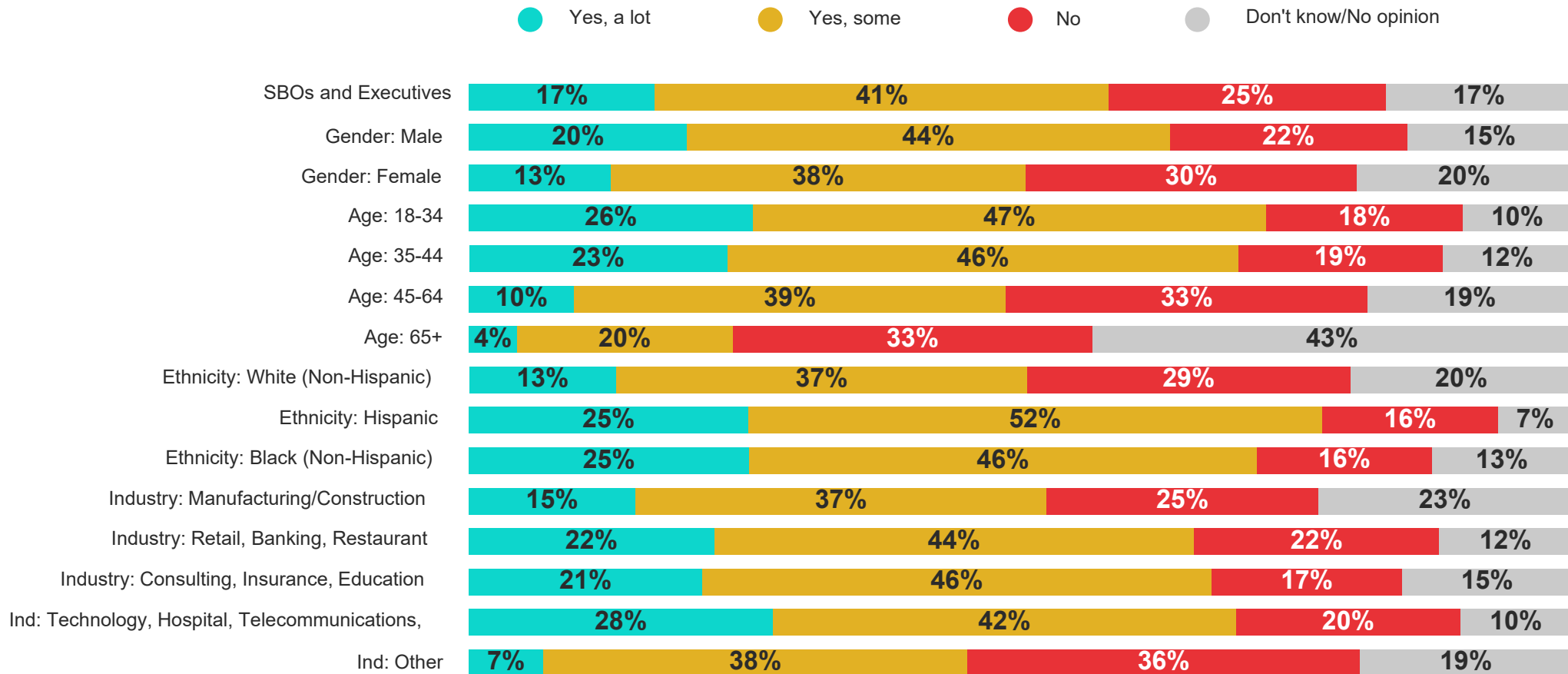
Thinking about the **future**, over the next two years, do you believe that artificial intelligence WILL have a positive or negative impact on the following?



Does your business plan to make investments in AI over the next year?

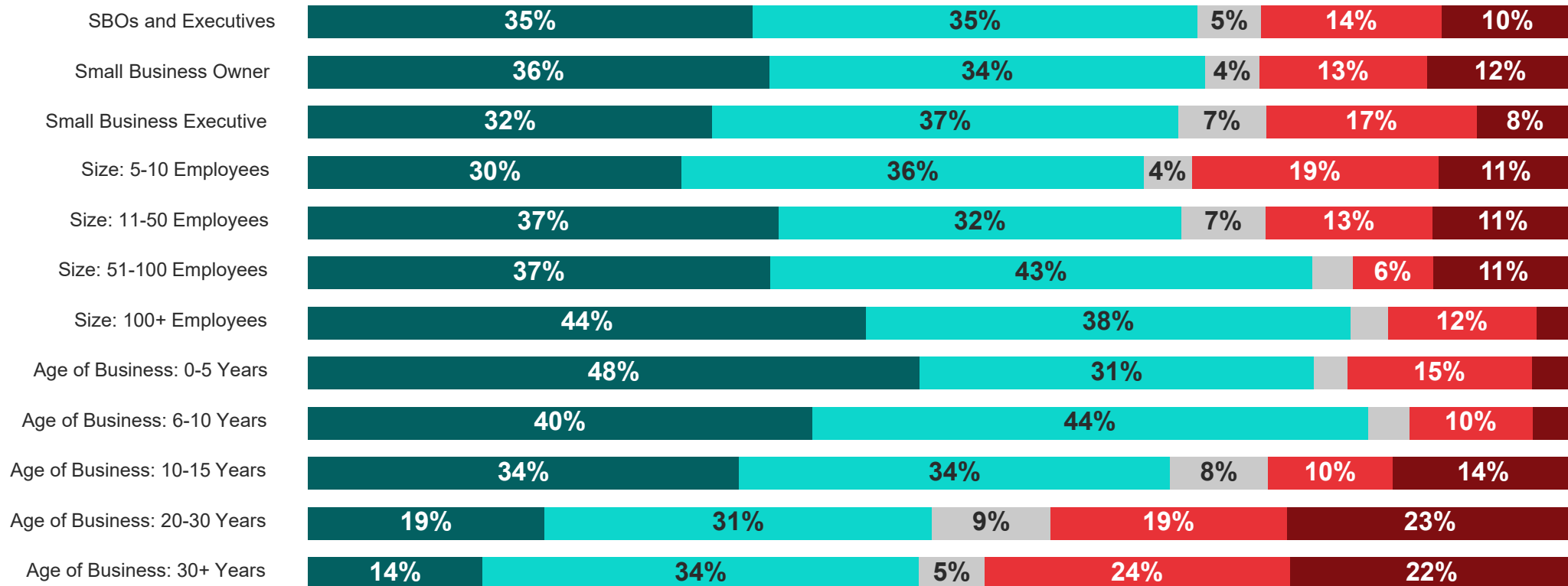


Does your business plan to make investments in AI over the next year?



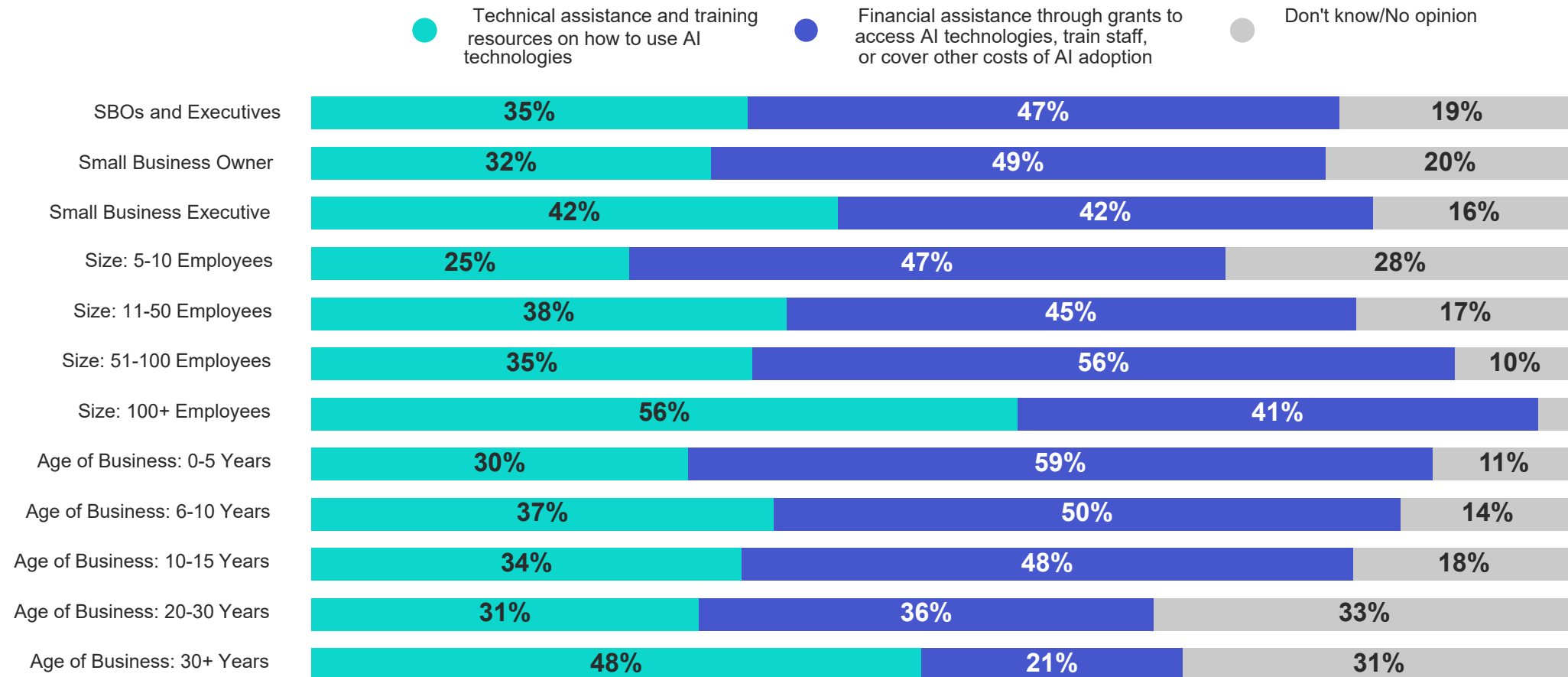
How interested would you be, if at all, in utilizing the Small Business Administration's loan program to finance AI technology that supports your business' daily operations?

● Very interested
 ● Somewhat interested
 ● Don't know/No opinion
 ● Not too interested
 ● Not at all interested



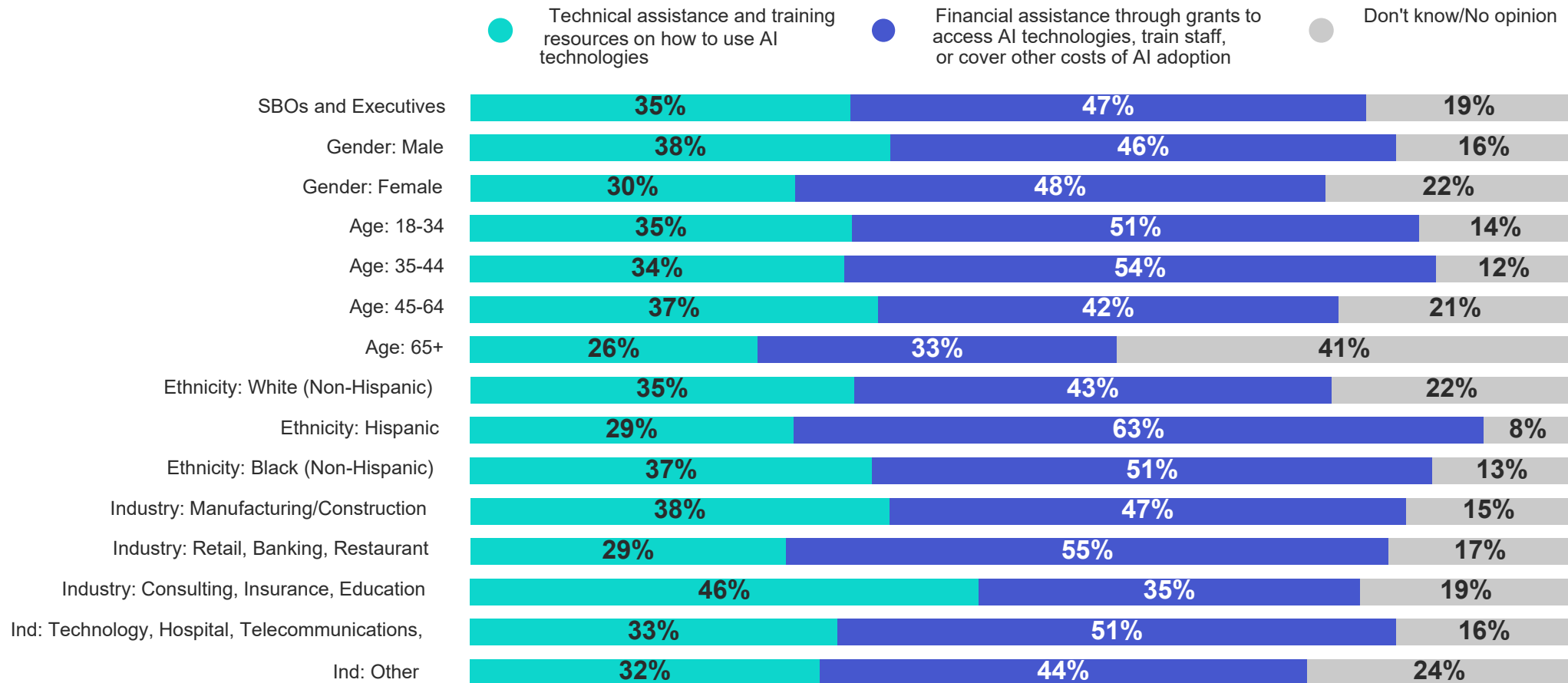
APPENDIX

As you may know, President Biden recently signed an executive order on artificial intelligence. The order will provide small business owners access to technical assistance and resources to use AI technologies. In light of President Biden's executive order on artificial intelligence, what would be MOST helpful in your company using AI?

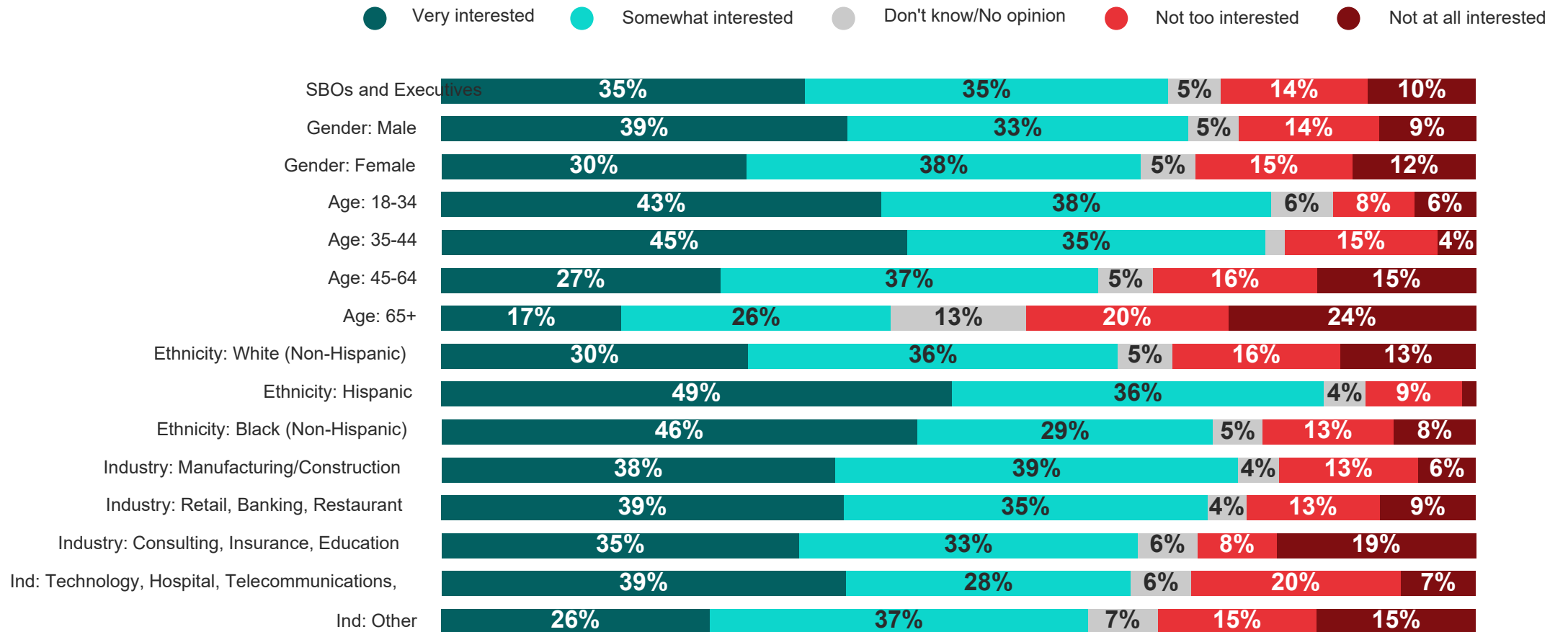


LEGISLATION

As you may know, President Biden recently signed an executive order on artificial intelligence. The order will provide small business owners access to technical assistance and resources to use AI technologies. In light of President Biden's executive order on artificial intelligence, what would be MOST helpful in your company using AI?



How interested would you be, if at all, in utilizing the Small Business Administration's loan program to finance AI technology that supports your business' daily operations?



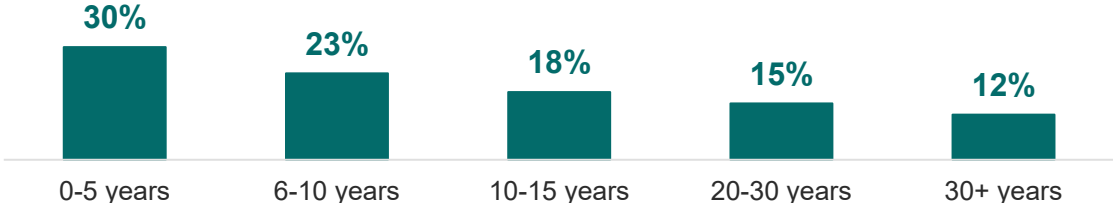
APPENDIX

Respondent Profile

GENDER



AGE OF BUSINESS



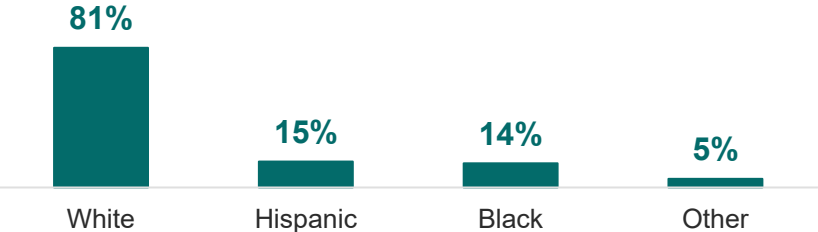
AGE



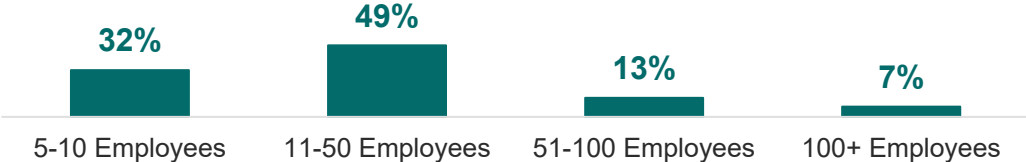
INDUSTRY



RACE/ETHNICITY



SIZE





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