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The State of AI Translation & Captions

Event professionals now rate AI translation as higher quality, more accessible, and better equipped than human interpretation to meet the growing demand for multilingual communication.

Wordly



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FOREWORD

Wordly's fourth annual research project

This is our fourth annual survey into the trends for multilingual meetings and events, and the impact of the resulting language barriers along with the use of translation and caption solutions to bridge the gaps. We started the research series in 2022 to provide objective, quantifiable insight into what was happening in the market.

2022

Six months before ChatGPT launched, our first project focused on the **live translation needs of event planners**, when AI was not yet mainstream and live AI translation was new to everyone.

2024

We expanded the scope to include **live captioning**, a high-priority solution for accessibility and the preferences of a "Netflix generation" that likes to read while it listens.

2025

We shifted focus to the **public sector**, spotlighting the growing need for live translation and captions across cities, counties, and special districts in the US.

2026

We turn to **the needs within businesses**, covering both larger external conferences and the smaller everyday meetings across marketing, sales, HR, and L&D.

The quality debate is over. The adoption race is on.

For years, organizations treated AI interpretation and captioning as a promising but uncertain bet. As a result, multilingual audiences were often underserved and left to rely on a bilingual colleague, a last-minute interpreter, or the assumption that “English is probably fine.”

Across the US and UK, that assumption is now collapsing. Leaders running enterprise conferences, webinars, and internal meetings tell us their audiences are more multilingual every year. And this year’s data confirms a clear turning point: quality concerns, long the primary objection, have largely been addressed. Adoption is now the norm. The way buyers even *discover* these tools has been rebuilt around AI itself.

This report is your map to what changed, what buyers want next, and where the opportunity sits.

THREE THINGS TO KNOW

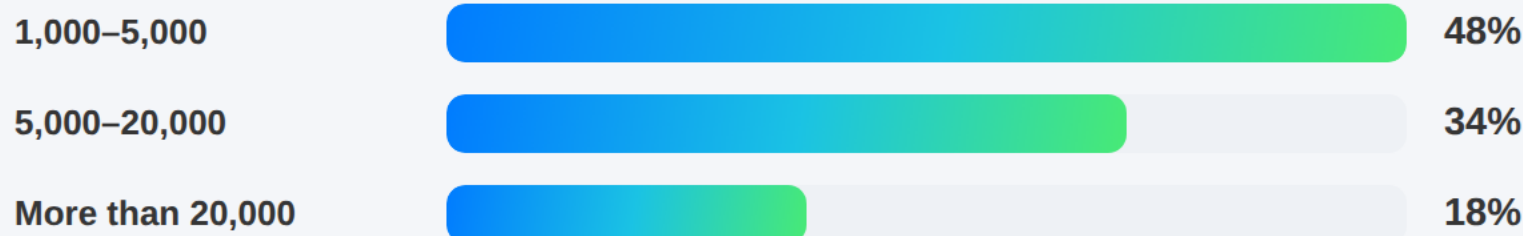
- 01 Quality stopped being the blocker.** 66% say AI now beats human interpreters on quality; only 25% still prefer humans.
- 02 Adoption is near-universal.** 91% already use AI captioning and 88% use AI interpretation at their events.
- 03 The buying journey moved.** AI chatbots and LLMs are now the #1 way leaders research these solutions.

Who we surveyed

The sample

Wordly commissioned **Dimensional Research** to conduct this study, inviting independent event stakeholders to complete a survey on trends in interpretation, captioning, and AI-powered solutions. 205 qualified participants across the US (50%) and UK (50%) responded between **May 11–21, 2026**. Every respondent owns external events (100+ attendees) and/or internal meetings (10+ attendees) where more than 10% of attendees don't speak English as a first language, at companies of 1,000+ employees that operate in English at their headquarters.

Company size (employees)



Department represented



80%

External conferences

73%

Training & onboarding

71%

Town halls / all-hands

67%

Internal staff meetings

65%

Exec briefings / board meetings

56%

Sales kick-offs

Top industries: **Software (22%)**, Manufacturing (18%), Financial Services & Insurance (17%).

“Translation” in this report refers to live translation, often called interpretation. Figures may not total 100% due to rounding.

The numbers that define the market trends

79%

say non-native English speakers are **increasing** at their events

49%

see **6+ non-English languages** at a typical event

88%

have **increased** interpretation or captioning use this year

66%

say **AI quality is better** than human interpretation

99%

say interpretation & captioning **increases event ROI**

95%

agree AI is **easier & more affordable** than human interpreters

97%

want **more AI capabilities** (transcripts, summaries, dubbing)

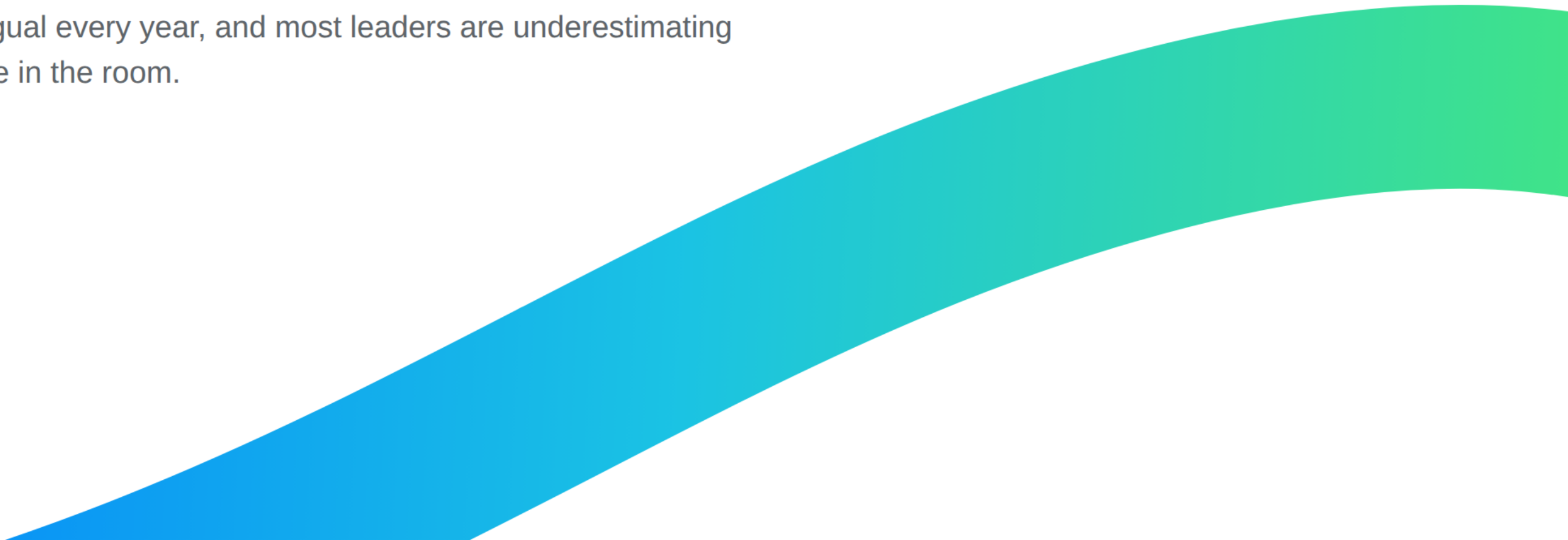
67%

research these tools via **AI chatbots**, the #1 channel

SECTION 01

Language diversity is growing at events

Audiences are more multilingual every year, and most leaders are underestimating just how many languages are in the room.



79% report the number of non-native English speakers is increasing

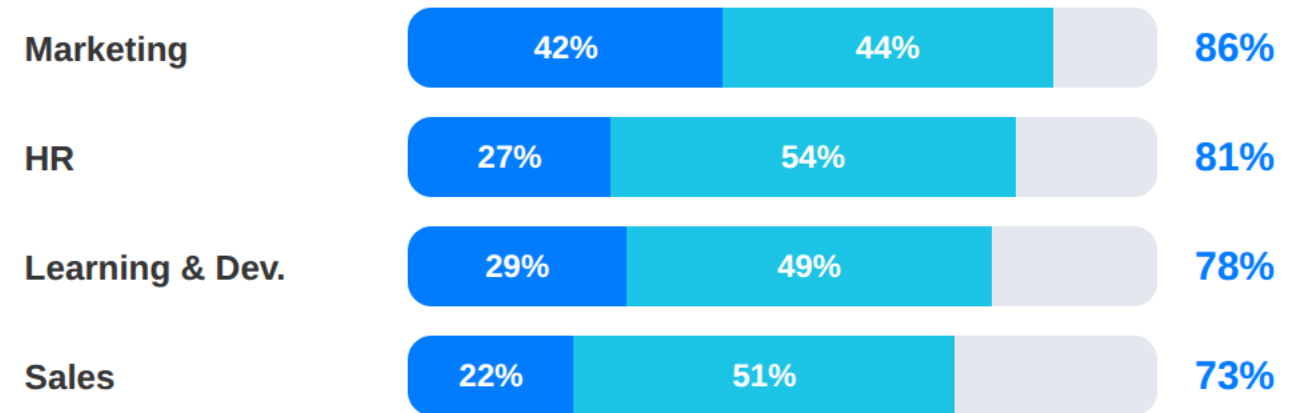
Change in non-native English attendees over the past year



■ Increased notably ■ Increased a bit ■ No change ■ Decreased

2% report a **decrease**.

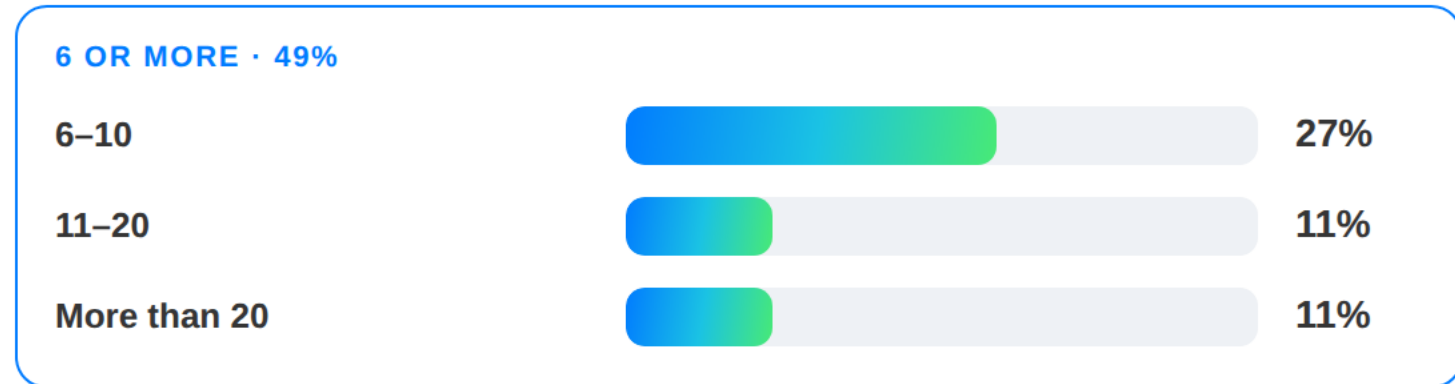
Increase by department



Marketing teams feel the shift most acutely (86%), reflecting their ownership of customer-facing, international conferences.

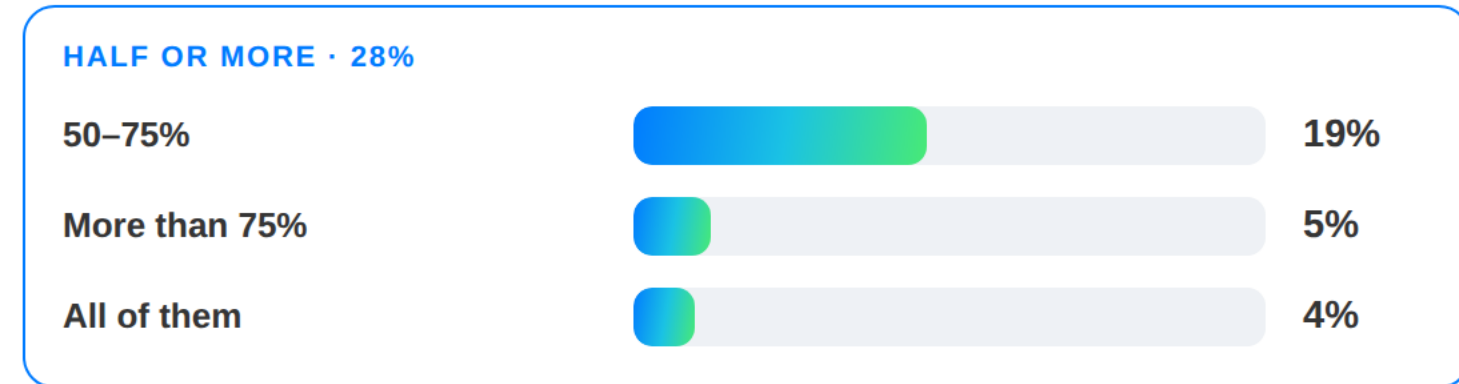
Nearly half of events host six or more languages

Number of non-English languages spoken at a typical event



49% see **6 or more** non-English languages, far beyond what a single bilingual helper can cover.

Share of attendees who don't speak English as a first language




28% say **half or more** of their audience are non-native English speakers.

SECTION 02

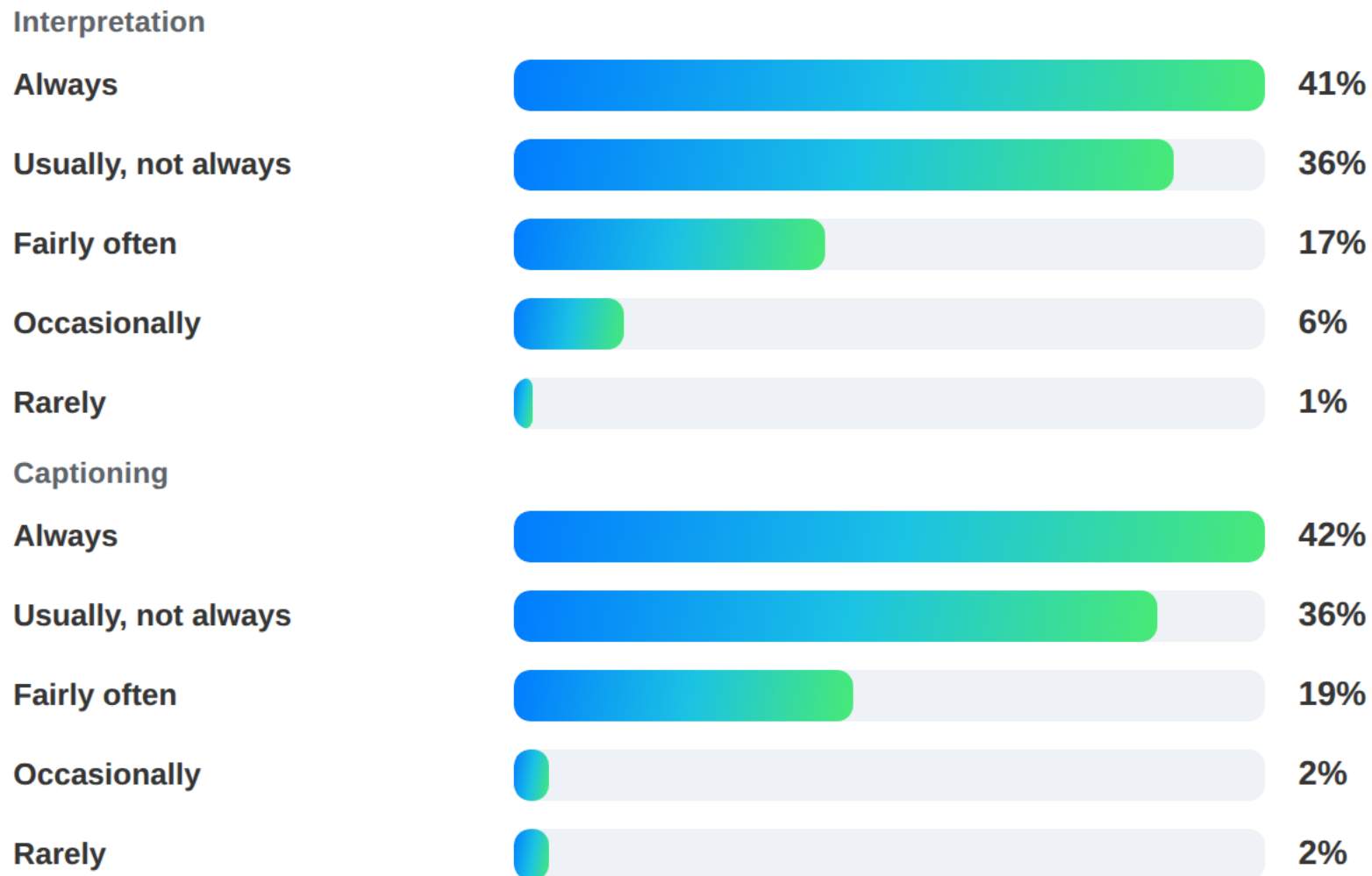
Interpretation & captions are now standard

No longer optional. Usage is climbing. High ROI reported by most respondents, and the barriers that remain are logistical, not philosophical.

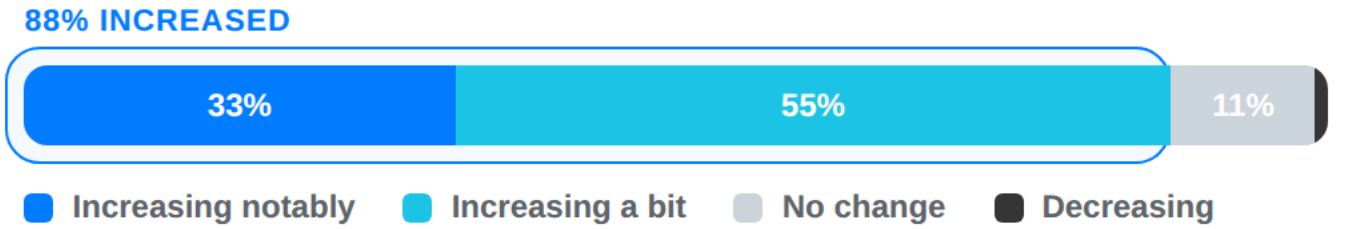
A decorative graphic consisting of a thick, wavy line that starts as a dark blue line at the bottom left and transitions into a teal line as it curves towards the right side of the page.

88% have increased their use of interpretation & captioning this year

How frequently services are offered



Change in use over the past year



41% offer interpretation at every event; 42% caption every event.
The baseline has shifted from "sometimes" to **"by default."**

FINDING · BUSINESS VALUE

99% say interpretation & captioning increases event ROI

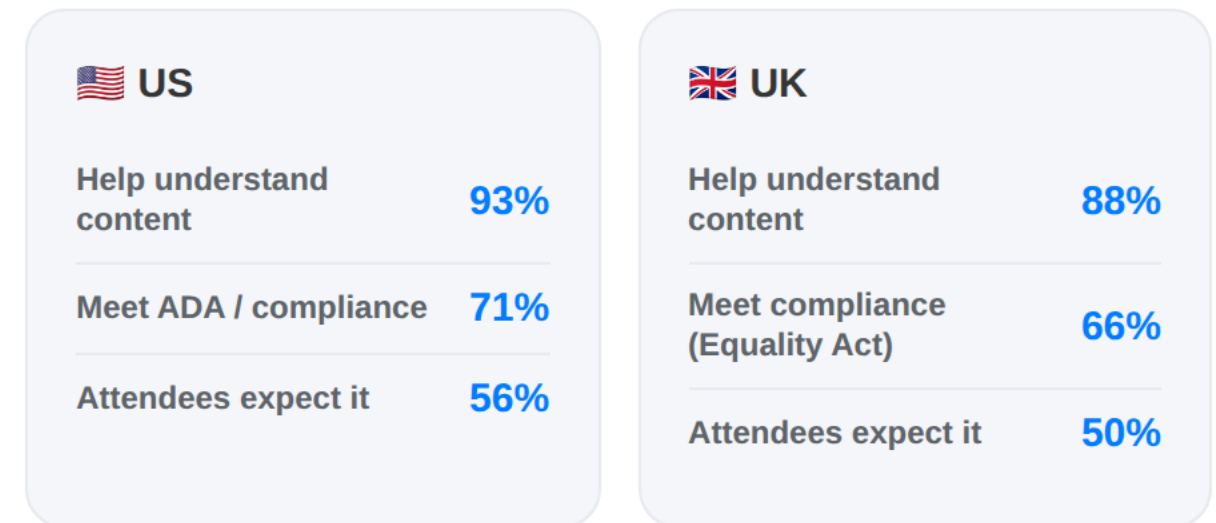
How it increases ROI or effectiveness



Only 1% said they did not see an ROI increase.

'Grow event revenue' applies only to external events.

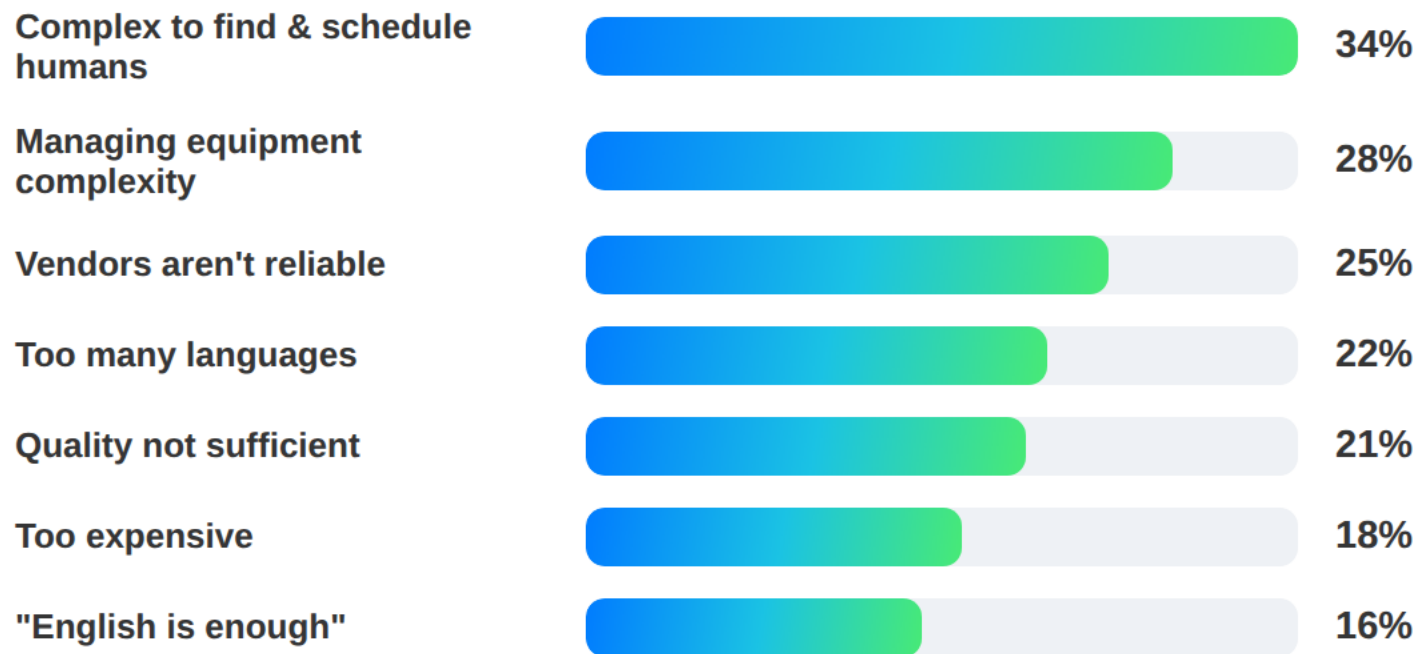
Why companies caption



Comprehension, not compliance, is the leading reason on both sides of the Atlantic.

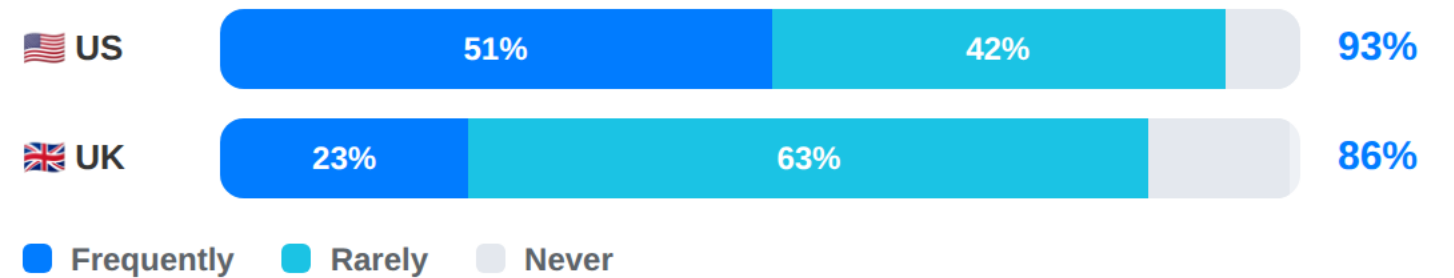
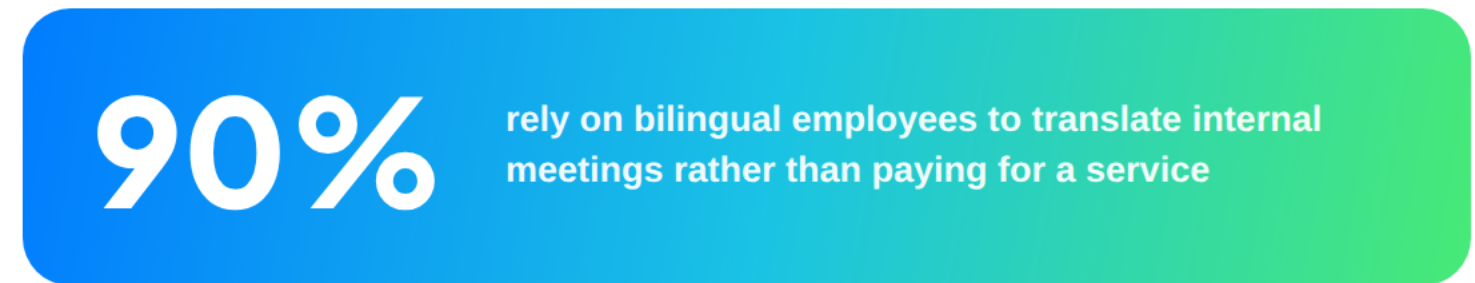
The top barriers are logistical, not about cost or quality

What prevents offering interpretation and captioning services at more events



The two biggest blockers, scheduling humans and managing equipment, are the problems AI removes.

Reliance on bilingual employees for internal meetings




An invisible tax on bilingual staff, and a single point of failure no enterprise should depend on.

SECTION 03

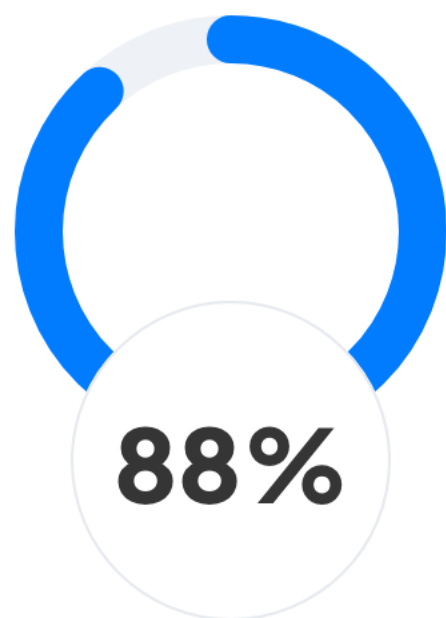
The AI tipping point

Adoption is near-universal, the quality debate has flipped, and affordability seals it. AI is no longer the alternative, it's the default.

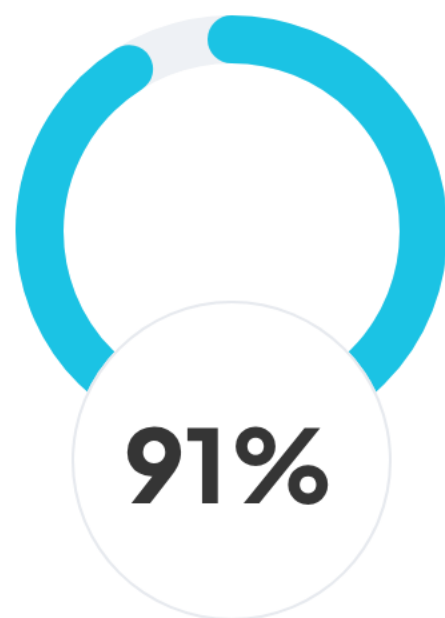


AI interpretation (88%) and captioning (91%) are both widely used

Current use of AI-powered services

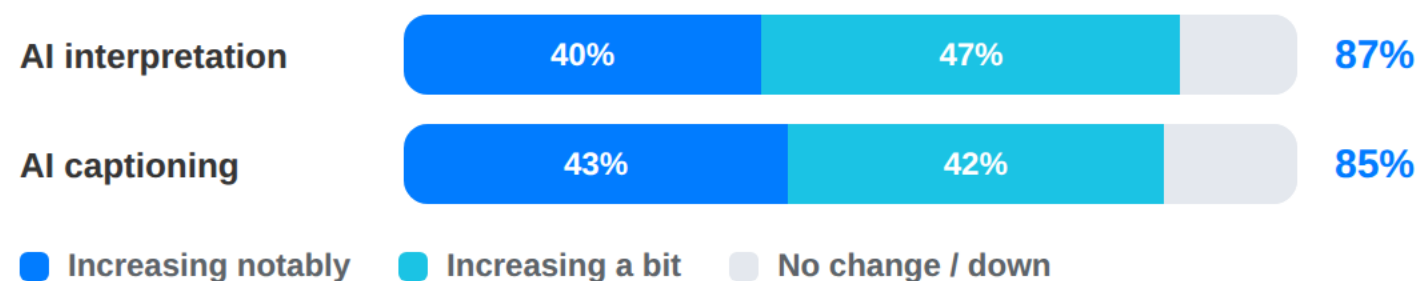


AI Interpretation
48% regularly · 40% occasionally



AI Captioning
55% regularly · 36% occasionally

Change in AI use over the past year



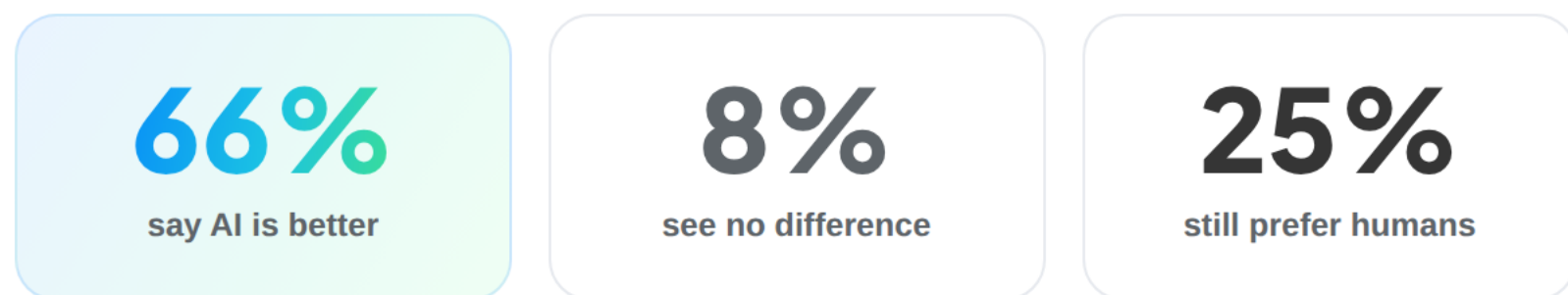
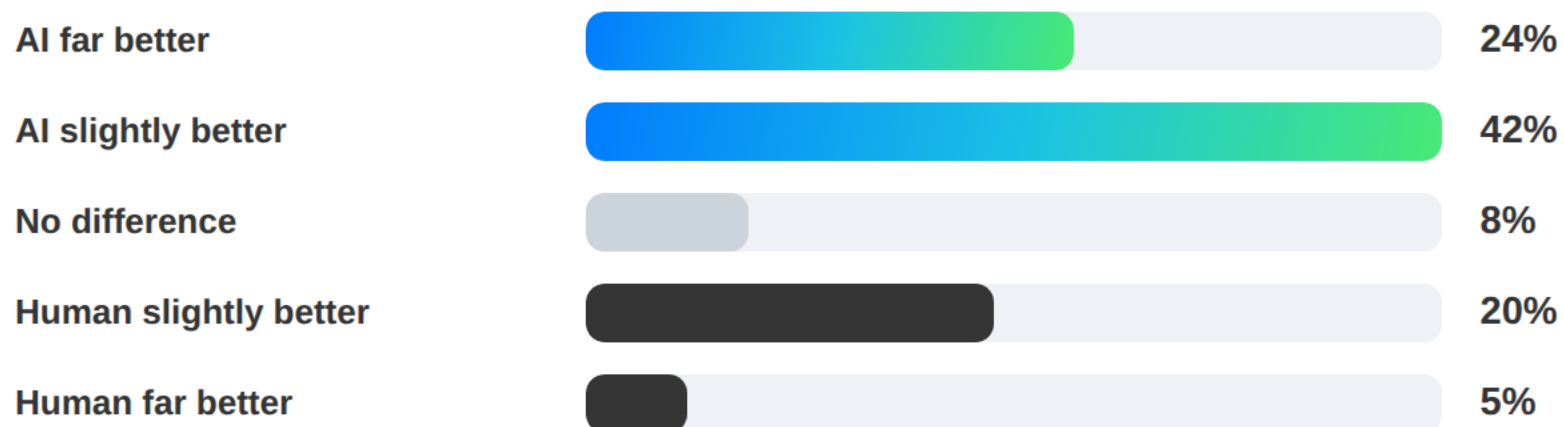
100%

can name an event type where AI interpretation or captioning would add value. There is no "not for us" segment.

FINDING · QUALITY

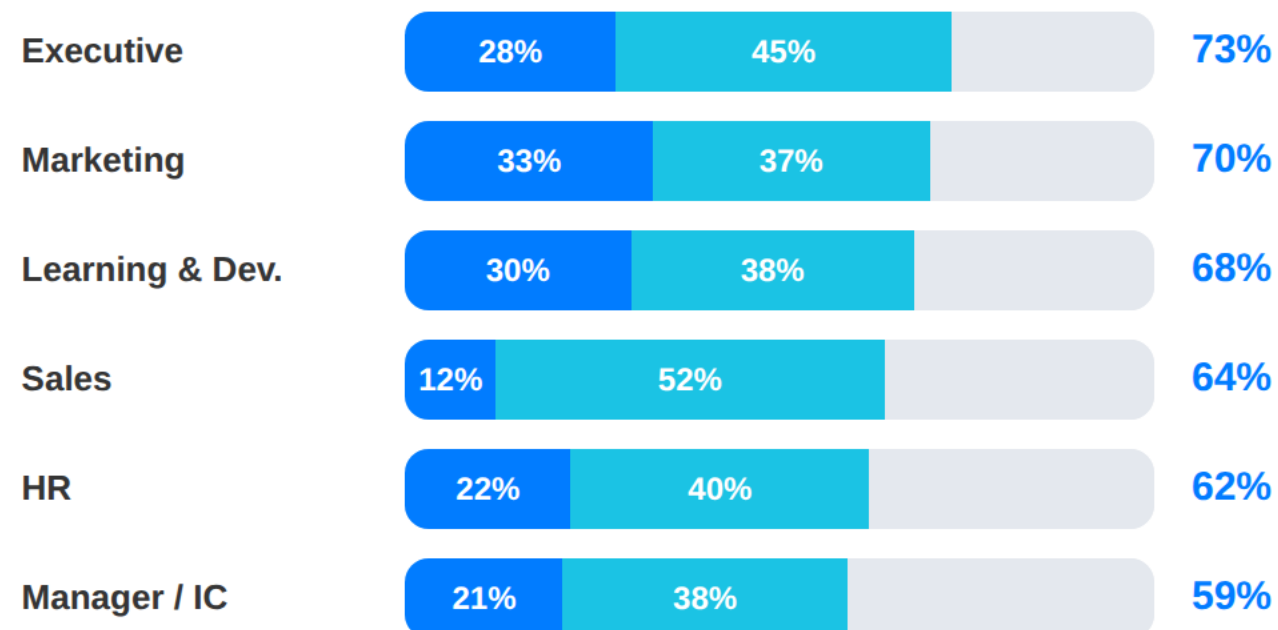
66% say AI quality is better; only 25% still prefer humans

AI vs. human quality, all respondents



Put differently, three-quarters now rate AI **at least the equal** of human interpreters.

"AI is better" by audience (far + slightly)




Executives (73%) and marketing leaders (70%), the budget holders, are the most convinced AI has caught up.

SECTION 04

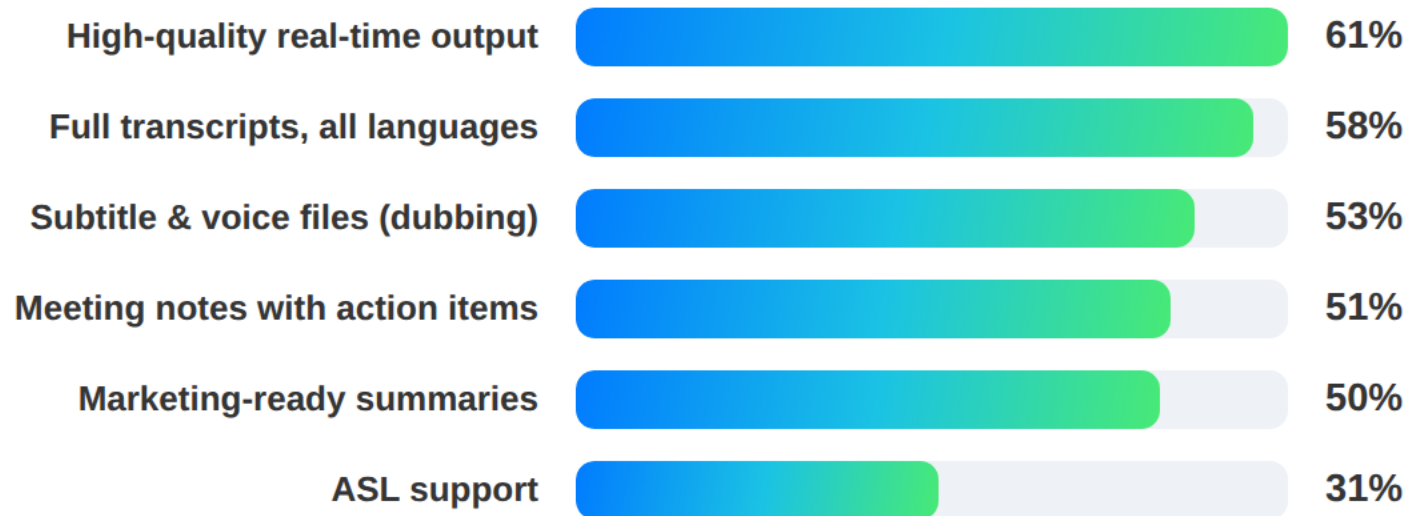
What buyers want next

Real-time accuracy is now table stakes. The frontier is everything that happens around the live event, transcripts, summaries, dubbing and notes.

A decorative graphic consisting of a thick, curved wave shape that starts at the bottom left and curves upwards and to the right, ending at the bottom right. The wave is filled with a gradient of colors, transitioning from a bright blue on the left to a vibrant green on the right.

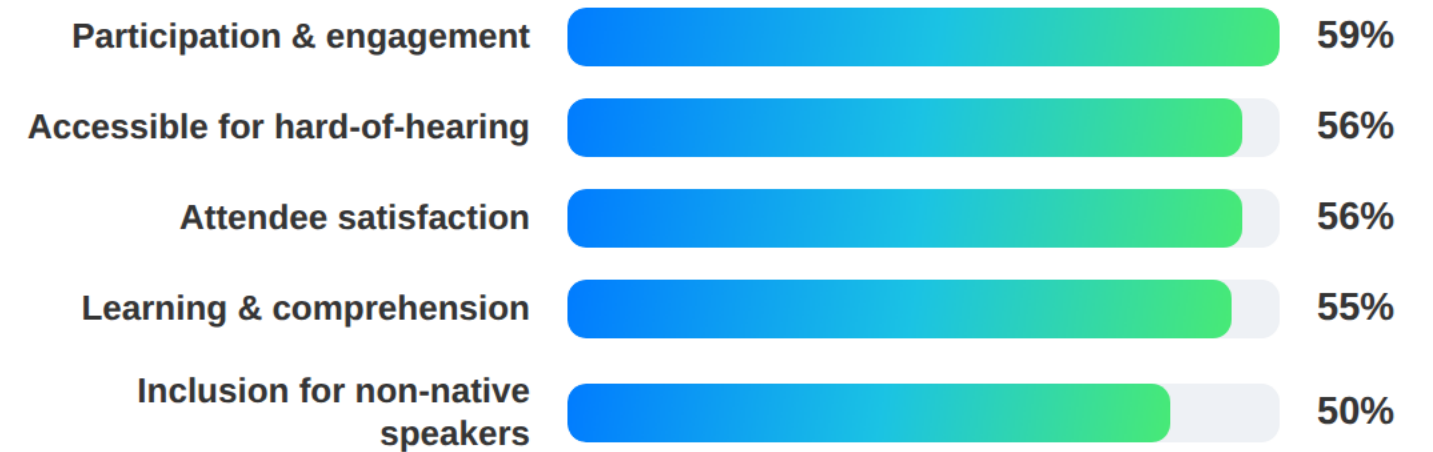
Event professionals want more from AI than live interpretation and captioning

Capabilities that would benefit event outcomes



The ask has expanded from "translate the room" to "extend the event to support ongoing engagement."

Benefits these capabilities would give attendees

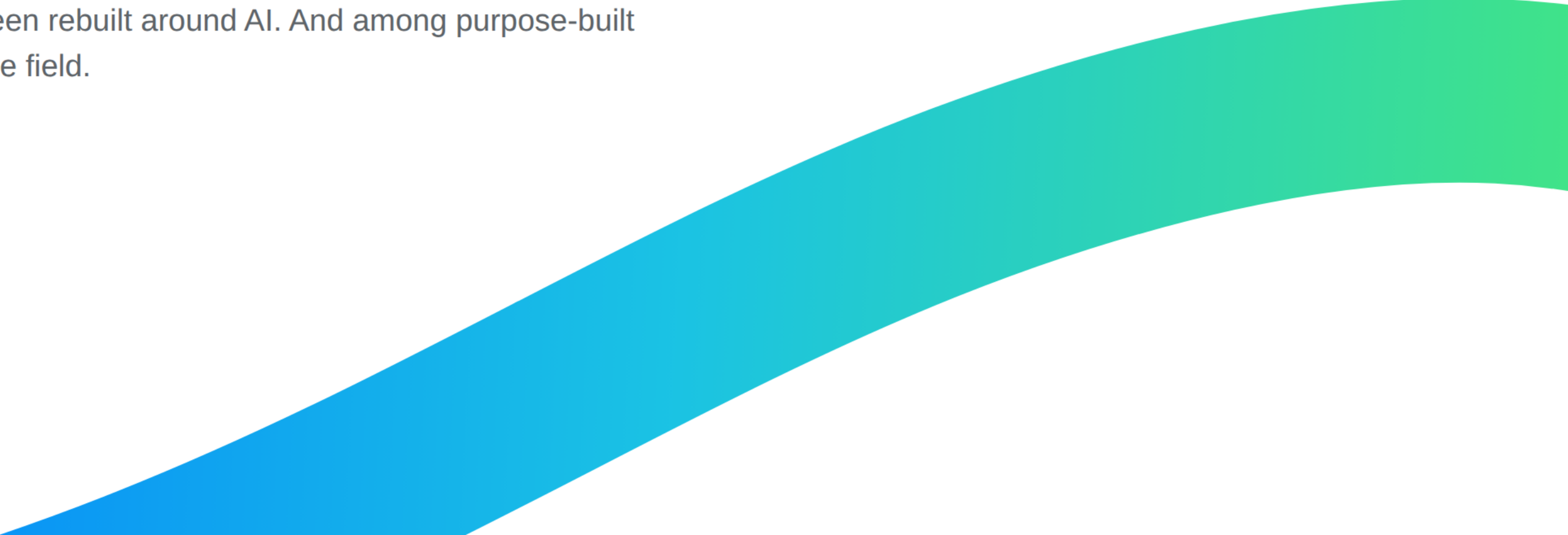


98% believe attendees would **benefit** from AI innovation in interpretation & captioning.

SECTION 05

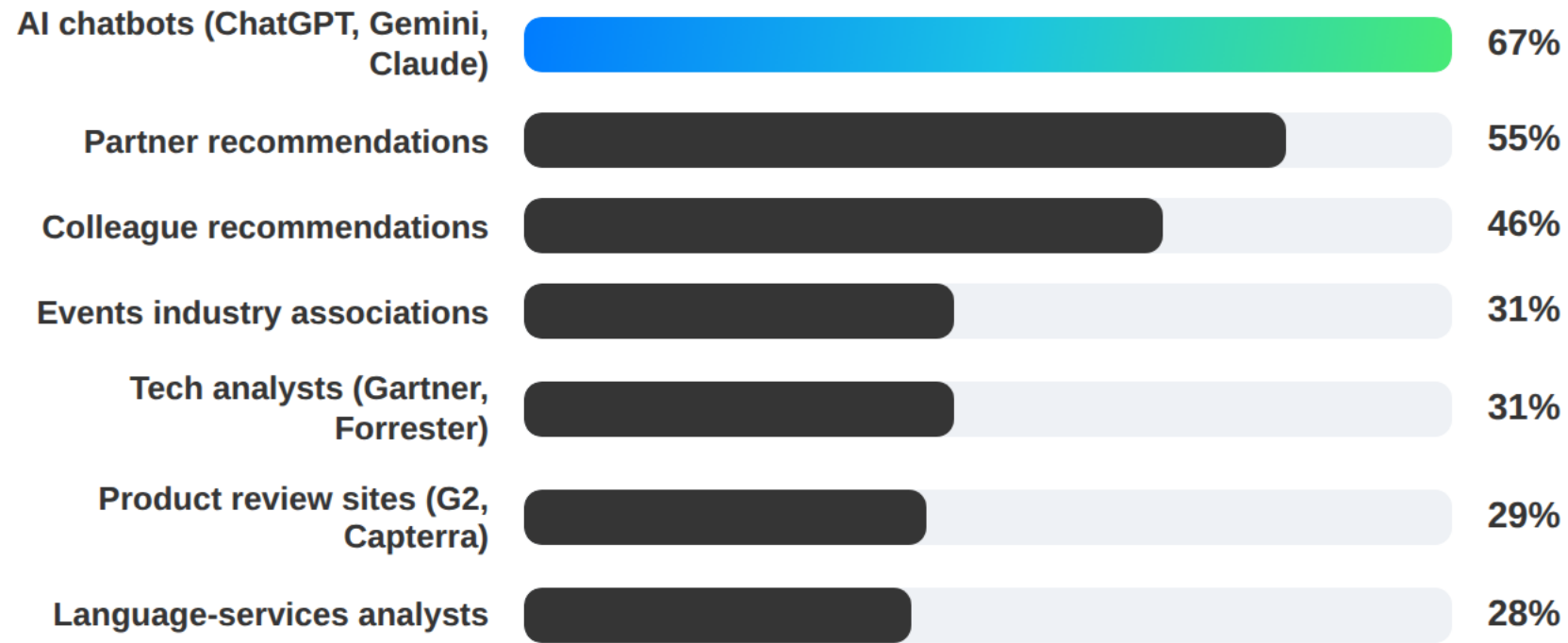
How buyers research, and how they choose

The discovery journey has been rebuilt around AI. And among purpose-built platforms, one name leads the field.

A decorative graphic consisting of two overlapping, wavy, curved shapes. The top shape is a light teal color, and the bottom shape is a darker teal color. They curve upwards from the bottom left towards the right side of the page.

AI chatbots are now a leading resource for these solutions

Resources used to learn about interpretation & captioning



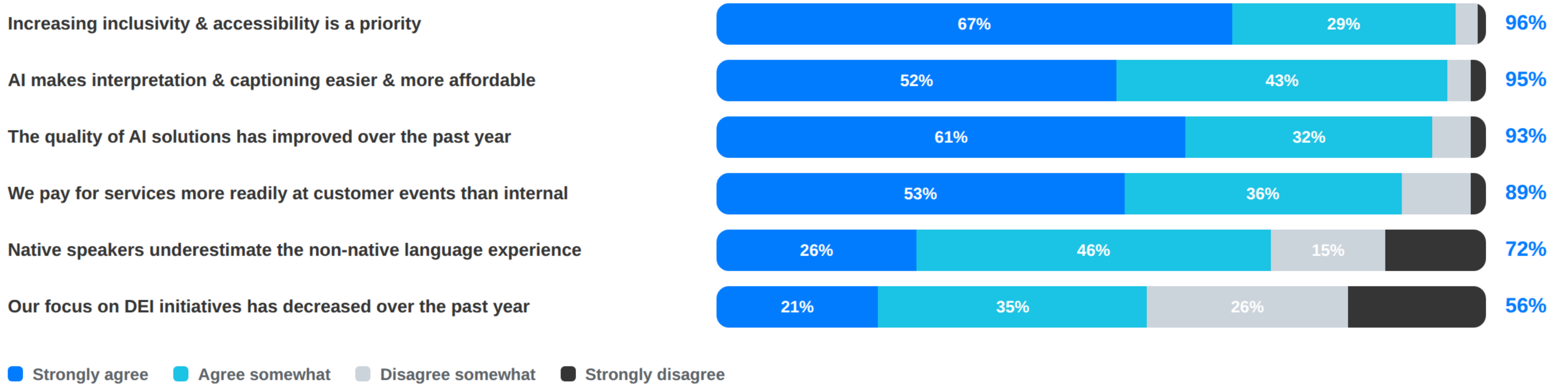
67%

turn to AI chatbots, more than partners, peers, analysts, and review sites.

BIG STATEMENTS

What event professionals agree on

Level of agreement (strongly agree + agree somewhat shown at right)



Even as a majority concede DEI focus has softened, inclusivity at events remains a high priority (96%).

Three moves for the year ahead

01

Make AI translation and captions the default, not the exception

Over 40% already offer it at every event. Set a policy floor: every event over a threshold size offers live AI captions and on-demand language translation.

02

Retire the bilingual-employee workaround

90% lean on staff to translate internal meetings. It doesn't scale, it isn't reliable, and it taxes your most valuable multilingual people. Replace it with always-on AI.

03

Buy for the full lifecycle of capabilities

97% want more than live translation & captions: transcripts, summaries, notes, and dubbing. Evaluate platforms on what they can do before, during, and after the event.

The 2026 numbers at a glance

 **79%**

non-native English speakers are increasing at events

 **49%**

host 6+ non-English languages at a typical event

 **88%**

increased interpretation or captioning use this year

 **66%**

say AI quality is better than human interpretation

 **95%**

agree AI is easier & more affordable than human interpretation

 **99%**

say AI increases event ROI & effectiveness

 **97%**

want more than live translation & captions

 **67%**

research these tools using AI chatbots first

 **93%**

say the quality of AI solutions has improved over the past year

About Wordly

Wordly is the leading AI translation and captioning platform for meetings and events, built to make every attendee, regardless of language, a full participant.

Organizations use Wordly to deliver real-time interpretation and captions across dozens of languages at in-person conferences, virtual webinars, hybrid town halls, training programs, and internal meetings. The platform requires no human interpreters, no specialized equipment, and no complex setup, just high-quality, secure language access that works at the scale enterprise events demand.

Wordly is trusted by thousands of organizations across corporate, government, education, and nonprofit sectors, including some of the world's largest companies. Its customers range from global technology firms running multi-day customer conferences to HR teams delivering onboarding programs to a workforce that speaks twenty languages.

6M+

users worldwide

5,000+

customers

2017

founded

Learn more or request a demo at www.wordly.ai

About Dimensional Research

Dimensional Research is an independent market research firm specializing in actionable insights for innovative technology companies. The firm partners with organizations to design and conduct rigorous research that reduces risk, informs strategy, and produces credible data for external audiences — including thought leadership reports, product launch studies, market opportunity analyses, and customer satisfaction research.

Dimensional Research provides actionable market research to help innovative companies make smarter business decisions and deliver compelling information to key stakeholders, prospects, customers, and external audiences. Its research experts bring deep expertise in enterprise technology markets, with a client roster that includes companies across work management, IT management, enterprise AI, security, manufacturing, data solutions, and beyond.

The Wordly 2026 State of AI Translation & Captions report was designed and fielded by Dimensional Research independently. Survey participants were recruited and screened to meet defined criteria, and data collection was conducted without influence from Wordly on individual responses or findings.

Learn more at www.dimensionalresearch.com



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