September 2025

Survey Report

2025 State of App Growth

branch

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Introduction

Over the past two years, the playbook for app growth has been rewritten. Privacy-driven changes like Apple's App Tracking Transparency, the rise of SKAdNetwork, and the decline of third-party cookies have made attribution murky and user-level insights harder to come by. Marketers now have less visibility into where installs come from, how users engage, and what drives return on investment. At the same time, channels have multiplied, user journeys now span platforms, and customer expectations for seamless omnichannel experiences are higher than ever. Yet the technical reality of delivering those experiences and proving their impact remains a challenge. Even proven tactics like deep linking are often left underleveraged in the race for results. We launched this survey to understand how growth and marketing teams are navigating these changes in practice. What's working, what's broken, and where are teams placing their bets? The findings offer a grounded view of what it takes to grow in an era defined by signal loss, fragmented data, and shifting user expectations. Whether you lead performance marketing, lifecycle strategy, or product growth, this report surfaces the shared challenges teams are grappling with, and the creative, resourceful ways they're responding.

Methodology

We surveyed 750 full-time employees across the United States, United Kingdom, EMEA, APAC, and Australia. All respondents work at companies with over 500 employees and hold director-level roles or higher in growth, marketing, or product departments. To qualify, participants were required to work at companies where the mobile app represents a significant part of the business and to be directly involved in mobile initiatives. The sample was evenly distributed across key industries and geographies, with 50 respondents per industry per region, including the US, UK, EMEA, and APAC. The survey was conducted in May 2025 in collaboration with Global Surveyz, an independent survey company. The results offer a cross-sectional view of how enterprise teams around the world are approaching mobile growth in the current privacy-first landscape.

Key Findings

Only 18% of marketers are very confident in their attribution data.

Attribution remains a work in progress. Just 18% of marketers say they feel very confident in their ability to match installs to the correct source, while 82% report only partial clarity. But recognizing the challenge is the first step toward solving it, and teams are actively exploring new approaches to improve visibility and make more informed decisions.

Cost-effective scale is the toughest acquisition challenge.

As acquisition goals grow, marketers are focused on achieving scale without driving up costs. Thirty-six percent say this is their biggest challenge, followed by converting ad clicks into installs (24%) and reaching the right users (23%). These results reflect a shift toward smarter, more efficient growth strategies grounded in performance.

Deep linking is a proven tool with untapped potential.

Deep linking is widely used for onboarding (63%) and campaign performance (61%), but its role in retention is still emerging. Only 20% use it to re-engage lapsed users, and 5% apply it to referral programs. This gap presents a clear opportunity to extend deep linking's value across the full user journey.

Marketers are still working toward a truly unified view of performance.

Only 8% of marketers report having a fully unified view of app performance across channels, while the majority are working with either mostly unified (54%) or partially unified (39%) data. With continued investment in consolidation and collaboration, more teams are laying the groundwork for a connected, cross-channel view.

Privacy shifts are sparking smarter measurement strategies.

Privacy regulations are accelerating innovation in attribution and data strategy. Forty-one percent of marketers say cross-channel attribution has become more difficult, while 40% report an increased focus on contextual targeting and 39% point to rising costs of data collection and analysis. In response, many are adopting new technical approaches, including server-side tracking (38%) and first-party data strategies (30%). These changes reflect a broader movement toward sustainable, privacy-ready measurement infrastructure.

Survey Report Findings

The Biggest Challenge in Acquiring New App Users

Cost is the biggest hurdle in acquiring new app users.

Acquisition costs are putting marketers under pressure. More than a third of respondents (36%) cite scaling without increasing acquisition costs as their top acquisition challenge. As pressure mounts to do more with less, teams are actively seeking ways to make smarter use of their budgets. Close behind are difficulties converting ad clicks into installs (24%) and targeting the right users through paid campaigns (23%). Seventeen percent of respondents also flagged attribution as a challenge, highlighting a major opportunity. Tools that support privacy-safe attribution and install tracking are widely available; the next step is putting that data to work. Marketers who optimize based on what is already measurable can improve performance and make smarter budget decisions with greater confidence. Together, these findings show that teams are focused on tuning their approach, unlocking more value from their spend, and driving sustainable growth.

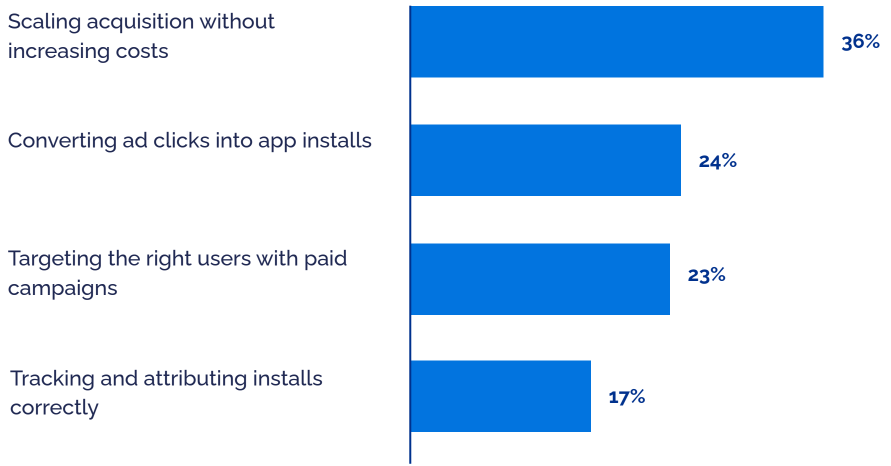

Figure 1: The Biggest Challenge in Acquiring New App Users

Confidence in Attributing Installs to Correct Marketing Source

82% of marketers lack full confidence in their data.

Only 18% of marketers say they are very confident in their ability to accurately attribute app installs to the correct marketing source. The remaining 82% report feeling somewhat confident or not so confident, pointing to a widespread gap in visibility. A key reason for this low confidence is the limited use of attributable links across all marketing channels. When links are only used in ads and not in channels like email, SMS, or QR codes, installs often appear as organic. Without a clear record of the user journey, the actual source of the install is lost. This has real consequences. If marketers cannot see where installs are coming from, they cannot reliably evaluate what is working. Campaigns may be misattributed, budgets may be misallocated, and growth becomes harder to optimize. Improving attribution confidence starts with better link coverage. The more consistently teams use attributable links across channels, the more accurate their data becomes, and the more informed their decisions can be.

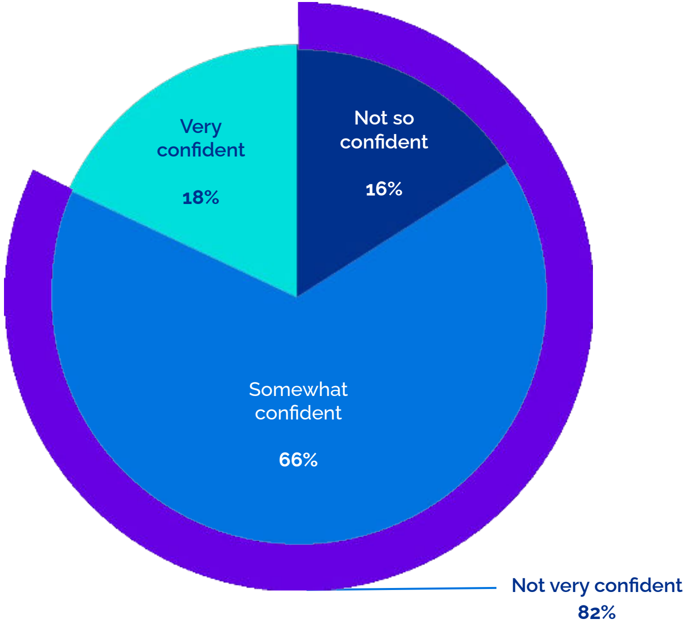

Figure 2: Confidence in Attributing Installs to Correct Marketing Source

Use of Deep Linking for User Acquisition

Deep linking is core to modern acquisition.

Deep linking has become a core part of the mobile acquisition toolkit. Among marketers surveyed, 63% use deep links to create seamless onboarding experiences, while 61% rely on them to improve ad campaign performance by directing users to specific in-app content. These use cases highlight how deep linking reduces friction, increases conversion, and sets the stage for longterm engagement. The emphasis on onboarding is especially strategic. According to Localytics, a strong onboarding experience can boost user retention by up to 50%. By guiding users to the right content from the moment they open the app, deep links help teams make that first impression count, improving both acquisition outcomes and retention over time. Another 43% use deep linking to ensure users land in the right part of the app, and 32% apply it to referral programs that reward users and drive organic growth. Notably, every respondent reported using deep linking in some form, reinforcing its status as a foundational growth tool.

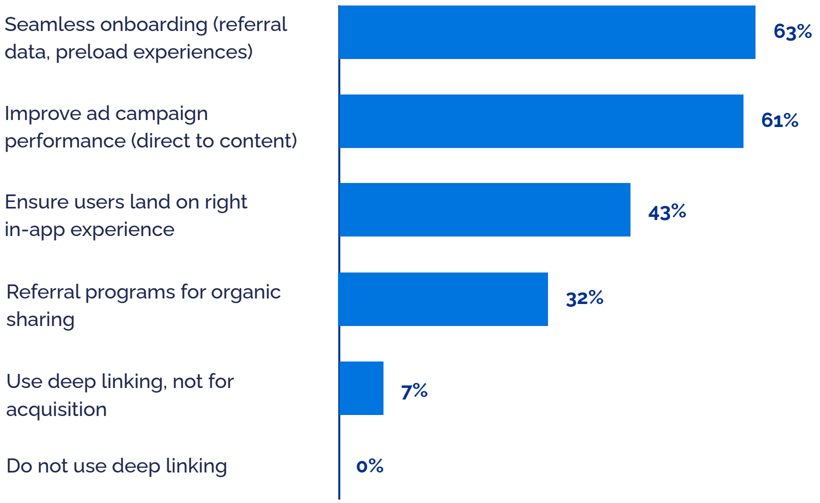

Figure 3: Use of Deep Linking for User Acquisition

Channels Used for App Growth

Marketers are expanding their channel mix to meet rising growth demands.

Marketers are casting a wide net to drive app growth, combining both paid and owned strategies across the funnel. App store optimization leads the pack, used by 56% of respondents, followed closely by Google Ads at 50%. These tactics remain essential in capturing high-intent users. Paid social campaigns (44%), email marketing (40%), and organic social (39%) make up the next tier, highlighting the continued importance of cross-channel engagement. These channels support both acquisition and re-engagement, offering marketers multiple touchpoints to reach potential users. Beyond the core mix, marketers are also testing less conventional options. Web-to-app banners are used by 37%, affiliate marketing by 35%, and referral programs by 32%. QR codes, offline promotions, and influencer marketing also make an appearance, each used by roughly a quarter of respondents. The diversity of this mix points to growing experimentation. As pressure to meet growth targets increases, teams are expanding their playbooks and searching for new ways to connect users to the app experience.

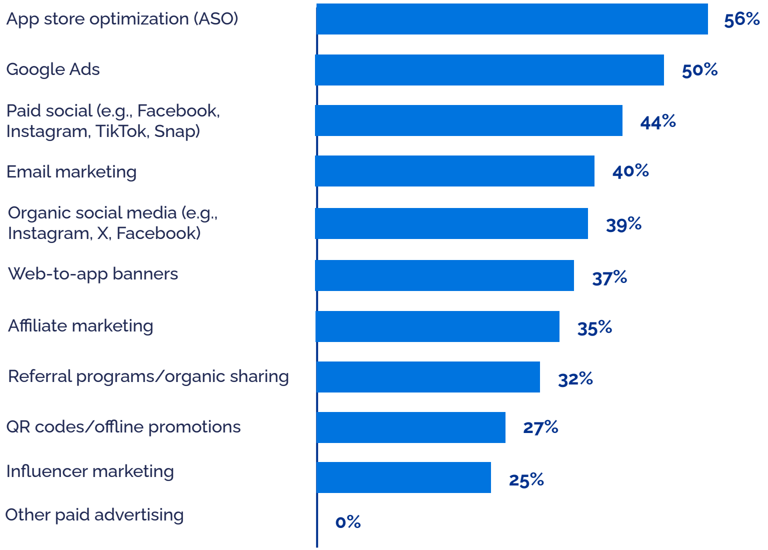

Figure 4: Channels Used for App Growth

**Question allowed more than one answer and as a result, percentages will add up to more than 100%.*

Number of Channels Used for App Growth

Multichannel growth is now standard practice.

The average app marketer now uses 3.8 distinct channel categories to drive growth. Most commonly, respondents report using four channels (39%), while another 27% use five. Multichannel strategies are no longer experimental; they are the norm. Industry plays a role in how many channels teams are managing. Retail leads with an average of 4.0 channels, which aligns with the complexity of the retail app journey. From ads and influencer campaigns to in-store QR codes and post-purchase emails, every touchpoint is designed to support product discovery, conversion, and repeat purchases. With one to two incremental purchases often tied to each new app user, it makes sense that retail marketers cast a wide net. % of respondents 10% 39% 24% 27% 1 or 2 3 4 Figure 5: Number of Channels Used for App Growth In contrast, healthcare teams average 3.4 channels. The focus here is often on engagement and utility rather than acquisition. Apps are more likely to support appointment scheduling, results access, or check-in processes, meaning fewer high-intent entry points and a different approach to lifecycle marketing. More channels bring opportunity, but also complexity. Without strong infrastructure for linking and attribution, understanding what's working becomes harder as the mix expands.

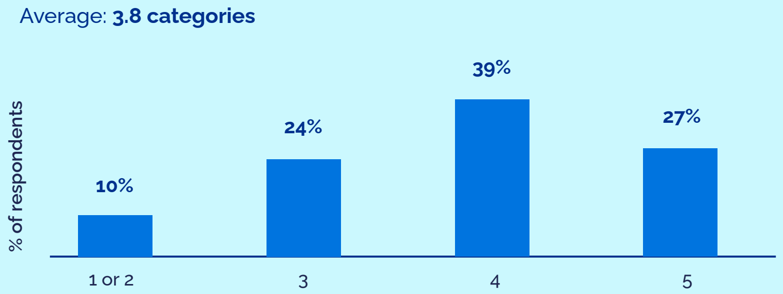

Figure 5: Number of Channels Used for App Growth

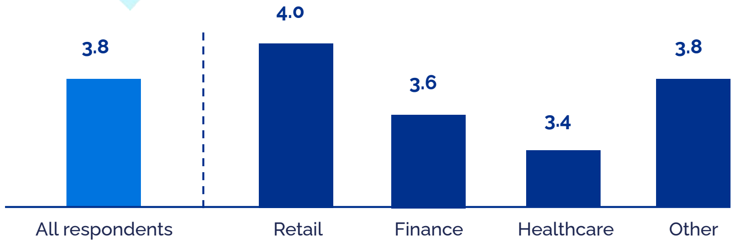

Figure 6: Average Channel Categories Chosen for App Growth, by Industry

Unified View of App Marketing Performance Across Channels

Full visibility remains out of reach for most app marketers.

Most marketers report making progress toward unifying their app performance data, but full integration remains rare. Just 8% say they have a fully unified view across channels, while 54% describe their view as mostly unified, and 38% say it is only partially unified. The challenge is not a lack of effort, but a lack of consolidation. Many teams rely on multiple tools and platforms, each offering a different slice of the picture. On top of that, siloed workflows between marketing, product, and data teams make it harder to connect performance across the entire user journey. Without end-to-end visibility, it can be challenging to optimize spend or uncover what's truly driving growth. But teams don't need to start from scratch. Consolidating data sources and aligning workflows across marketing, product, and analytics functions can make a significant difference. Tools like deep linking and privacysafe attribution can also help connect user actions across platforms, filling in critical gaps. As channel strategies diversify and privacy standards evolve, marketers who invest in unified, crossfunctional insight will be better equipped to move quickly, allocate budgets effectively, and adapt with confidence.

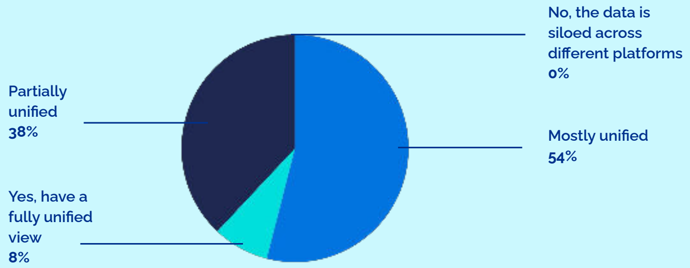

Figure 7: Unified View of App Marketing Performance Across Channels

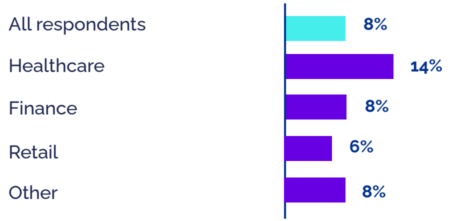

Figure 8: "Yes, have a fully unified view" by Industry

Privacy-Centric Measurement Solutions Adopted

Marketers are underutilizing the power of first-party data.

Adoption of privacy-centric measurement solutions is well underway, driven by platform changes like Apple's SKAdNetwork (37%) and Google's Privacy Sandbox (34%). But marketers aren't stopping there. Many are investing in additional tools to close visibility gaps, including first-party data strategies (15%) and privacy-focused attribution vendors (13%). These efforts reflect a broader shift toward building a more flexible, privacy-safe measurement stack. As traditional signals disappear, marketers are looking for ways to regain clarity without compromising compliance. First-party data, in particular, offers a sustainable path forward, enabling teams to understand user behavior, personalize responsibly, and make smarter decisions with consented inputs. This expansion signals maturity in how teams are responding to change: not just reacting to platform limitations, but proactively building infrastructure that can adapt as the rules continue to evolve.

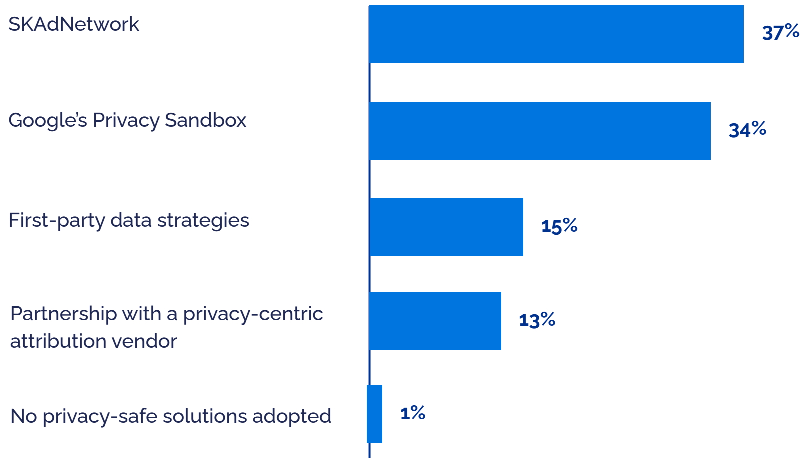

Figure 9: Privacy-Centric Measurement Solutions Adopted

Impact of Privacy Changes on Attribution and Measurement Strategies

Privacy changes have redefined the rules of measurement.

Privacy regulations are reshaping how marketers approach attribution and measurement. The most reported impact is greater difficulty in cross-channel attribution, cited by 41% of respondents. This is closely followed by an increased focus on contextual targeting (40%) and rising costs associated with data collection and analysis (39%). In response, many teams are shifting their technical strategies. Server-side tracking has been adopted by 38%, reflecting a move toward more privacy-compliant data handling. At the same time, 37% report a reduced ability to optimize campaigns in real time, a likely consequence of delayed or limited access to user-level signals. Other effects include reduced data accuracy (36%), increased reliance on mobile measurement partners (34%), and a broader move toward first-party data (30%). Only 1% of respondents reported minimal or no impact, making it clear that privacy-related shifts have affected nearly every team. As regulations continue to evolve, marketers will need infrastructure that can keep attribution accurate, maintain compliance, and provide flexibility across channels.

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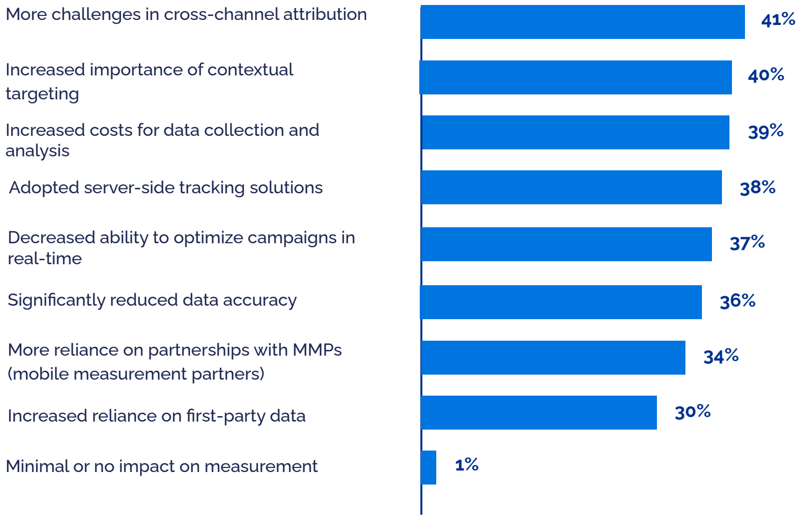

Figure 10: Impact of Privacy Changes on Attribution and Measurement Strategies

Impact of Privacy Regulations on Measurement Accuracy and Revenue

Impact of Privacy Regulations on Measurement Accuracy and Revenue

Privacy regulations are no longer just a compliance concern; they are actively shaping growth outcomes. Seventy-one percent of respondents agree that privacy rules have created blind spots in measurement that are costing their companies money. Of those, 25% strongly agree, signaling the depth of the disruption. These blind spots are more than a technical inconvenience. When marketers cannot track performance accurately, they cannot optimize spend, identify high-value users, or prove ROI. Measurement accuracy and revenue are now tightly linked, and both are being tested in the current environment. To keep pace, marketers are turning to solutions that can preserve visibility without compromising user privacy. Predictive aggregate approaches, which model install behavior using privacy-safe, nonidentifying data, are emerging as one way to bridge the gap. These methods offer a practical path forward for teams that need to make performance-driven decisions while staying compliant.

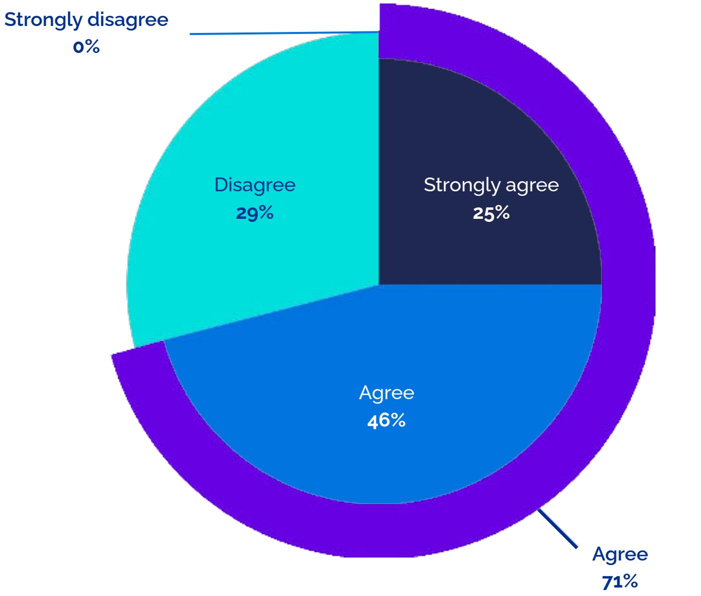

Figure 11: Impact of Privacy Regulations on Measurement Accuracy and Revenue

The Biggest Challenges in Retaining App Users

Marketers struggle to activate data and measure what matters.

Retention is where the cracks in app growth often begin to show. Forty-seven percent of marketers say they struggle to activate user data for personalization, and the same percentage report difficulty tracking and measuring retention success. Another 43% cite a lack of visibility into user behavior after acquisition. Without insight into post-install actions, teams are left guessing where users drop off or how to re-engage them effectively. Internal prioritization issues (42%) and technical limitations (40%) are also common blockers, reflecting the operational and resourcing challenges that slow retention efforts. Fragmented engagement across channels, reported by 38%, further complicates the picture. When users encounter disconnected experiences, even the best content and offers can fall flat. Only 2% of respondents view onboarding drop-off as a primary concern, suggesting the biggest retention challenges emerge well after the first session. Still, these gaps present a clear path forward. By improving data access, unifying engagement strategies, and prioritizing postonboarding moments, marketers have a real opportunity to turn retention into a growth engine.

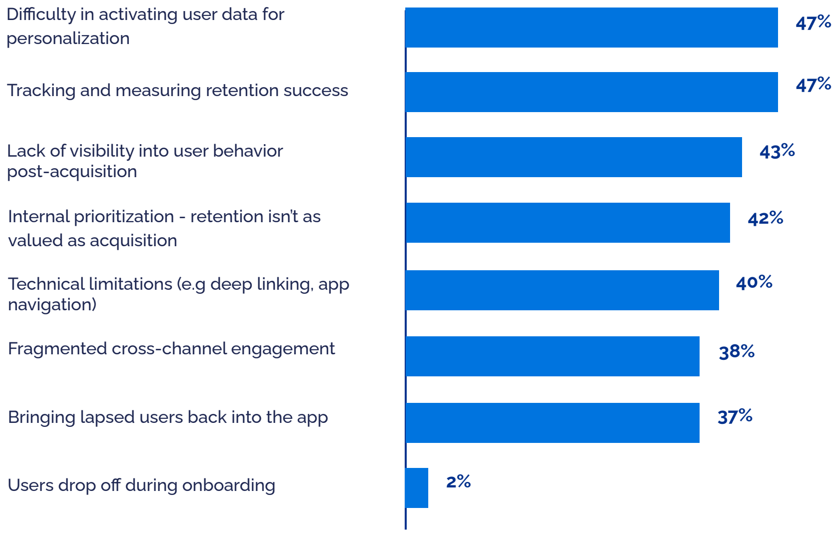

Figure 12: The Biggest Challenges in Retaining App Users

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Use of Deep Linking for User Retention

Use of Deep Linking for User Retention

Retention may be challenging, but deep linking gives marketers a powerful way to improve it. Thirty-seven percent of marketers use deep links to drive in-app engagement, while another 37% use them to onboard new users after install. These touchpoints help reduce friction and guide users directly to relevant app experiences, increasing the likelihood that they stay active. Twenty percent of respondents also use deep linking to bring lapsed users back into the app. This strategy is especially prevalent in retail, where 43% report using deep links for reactivation. In contrast, healthcare leads in using deep linking for ongoing engagement, with 40% adopting this approach. Usage remains lower in referral programs, with just 5% of marketers applying deep links to encourage sharing and organic growth. But that too is an opportunity. When used across more touchpoints, deep linking can not only support acquisition but also play a larger role in strengthening long-term user relationships.

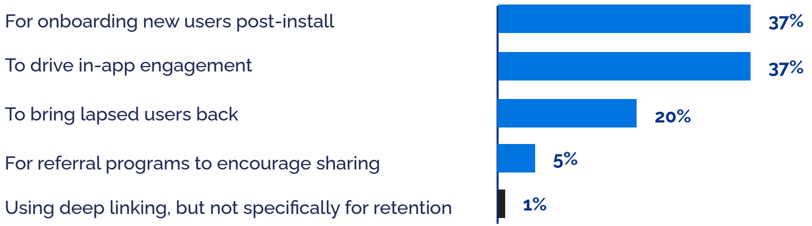


Figure 13: Use of Deep Linking for User Retention

	All respondents	Industry			
		Healthcare	Retail	Finance	Other
For onboarding new users post-install	20%	10%	21%	21%	21%
To drive in-app engagement	37%	40%	34%	35%	41%
To bring lapsed users back	37%	40%	43%	37%	32%
For referral programs to encourage sharing	5%	8%	2%	8%	5%

Figure 14: All respondents by Industry

Use of AI for App Growth

AI is the new growth stack.

Whether it is predicting behavior, optimizing creative, or identifying risks, AI is being woven into multiple layers of the app growth process. Unsurprisingly, every respondent in the survey reports using AI in some capacity to support app growth. The most common applications include predictive analytics (48%), personalization (46%), and creative optimization (46%). These uses reflect AI's growing role in helping marketers make smarter decisions, tailor experiences, and scale campaign development. A significant portion of teams (44%) also rely on AI and large language models (LLMs) for generating copy and brainstorming creative ideas. This points to a shift in how content is produced, with AI becoming a day-to-day collaborator in both strategic planning and execution. While less common, 22% of respondents use AI for fraud detection, showing that its value extends beyond user-facing functions.

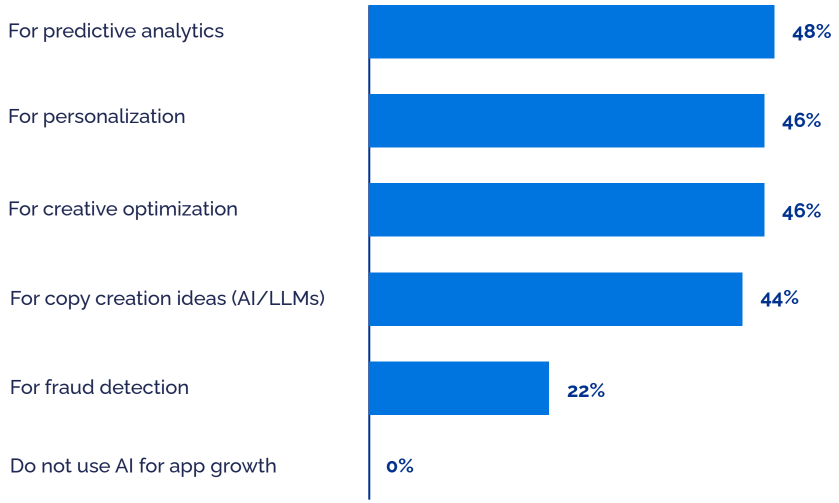


Figure 15: Use of AI for App Growth

**Question allowed more than one answer and as a result, percentages will add up to more than 100%.*

Barriers to AI Integration in User Experiences in the Next Two Years

Trust, safety, and integration are the biggest barriers to AI-powered experiences.

While AI is widely adopted, bringing it into user-facing experiences presents real challenges. Not a single respondent said they foresee no obstacles to integrating AI into user experiences. The most cited barrier is maintaining end-user trust and data privacy, named by 55% of marketers. As personalization deepens and AI agents become more involved in user journeys, protecting data and earning consent are critical. Equally pressing are concerns about brand safety and workflow integration. Fifty-one percent of respondents say ensuring brandsafe content delivery is a challenge, and the same share report difficulty integrating AI into existing systems and processes. Internal adoption also presents a hurdle. Forty percent cite employee reticence as a barrier, suggesting that even with excitement around AI, change management remains essential. As AI becomes more embedded in how users discover and interact with brands, overcoming these barriers will be key to delivering experiences that are not only intelligent but also trusted.

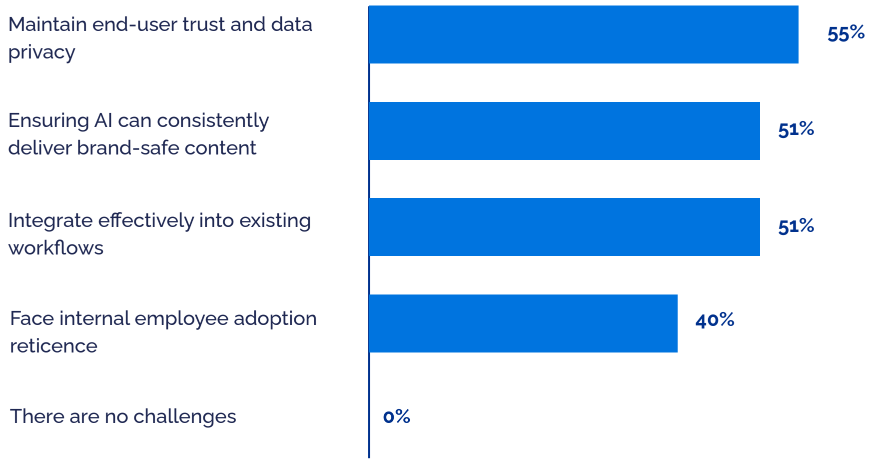


Figure 16: Barriers to AI Integration in User Experiences in the Next Two Years

**Question allowed more than one answer and as a result, percentages will add up to more than 100%.*

Demographics

Figure 17: Region

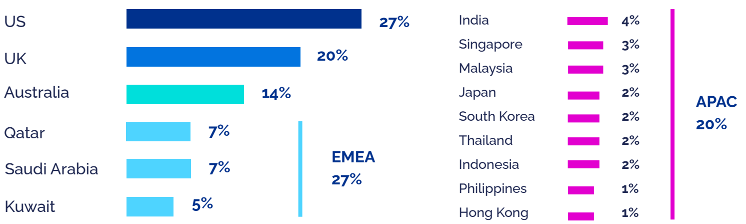


Figure 18: Industry

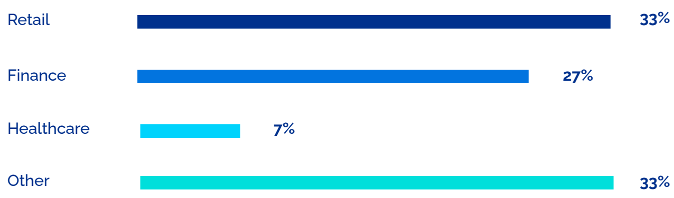


Figure 19: Company size

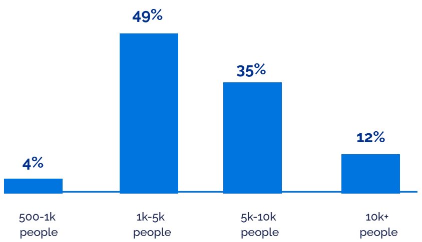


Figure 20: Departments

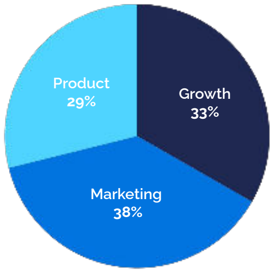
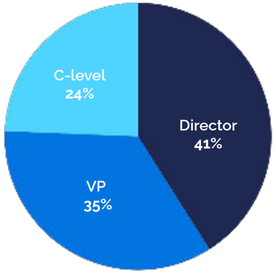


Figure 21: Job seniority



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