

The Digital Labor Economy: Powered by Agentic AI

Exploring the Impact of Digital Labor Software and Services Across the Enterprise



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In This InfoBrief

This study analyzes the impact of digital labor (DLR) on the enterprise and the economy.

Digital labor consists of a group of technologies that can augment or mimic human decision-making capabilities. Even as a subset of AI, digital labor focused on knowledge work is significantly impacting the current and future state of work. Enterprises are eager to leverage this technology to drive productivity and efficiency, while CEOs seek capabilities that boost revenue. More broadly, economic questions related to spending and impact are key to understanding the magnitude of change businesses and society should prepare for.

In this InfoBrief, we explore:



Digital labor tech spending and investment:
A look at budgets and spending forecasts



Digital labor economic impact:
A dive into expected outcomes and impact



Digital labor impact on work:
A look at the reshaping of jobs and organizational structures

Additional sources for forecasting include IDC's *AI and Generative AI Spending Guide 2025*, the *IDC Global Economic Impact of AI 2025*, demographic analysis by job group, as well as surveys and analysis from the ILO, OECD, and IDC's *Future of Work*. Please refer to the Appendix for additional information on taxonomy/methodology.

In July/August 2025, IDC ran a worldwide study of 823 full-time workers. Respondents include representation from all levels of the organization across the lines of business (LOBs) and IT. The study included three regions: North America, Europe, and the Asia/Pacific.

In addition to this quantitative study, IDC's data and analytics team used modeling to forecast the spending and impact of digital labor on the enterprise and the economy.

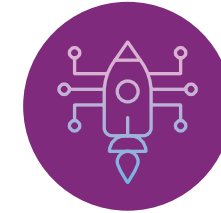


Defining Digital Labor



Digital labor is defined as:

The use of AI-based technologies such as AI automation, generative AI, and agentic AI that both supplement and mimic human decision-making capabilities within a defined context in the completion of a task and then use that experience to gather data to learn and adapt for the next task.

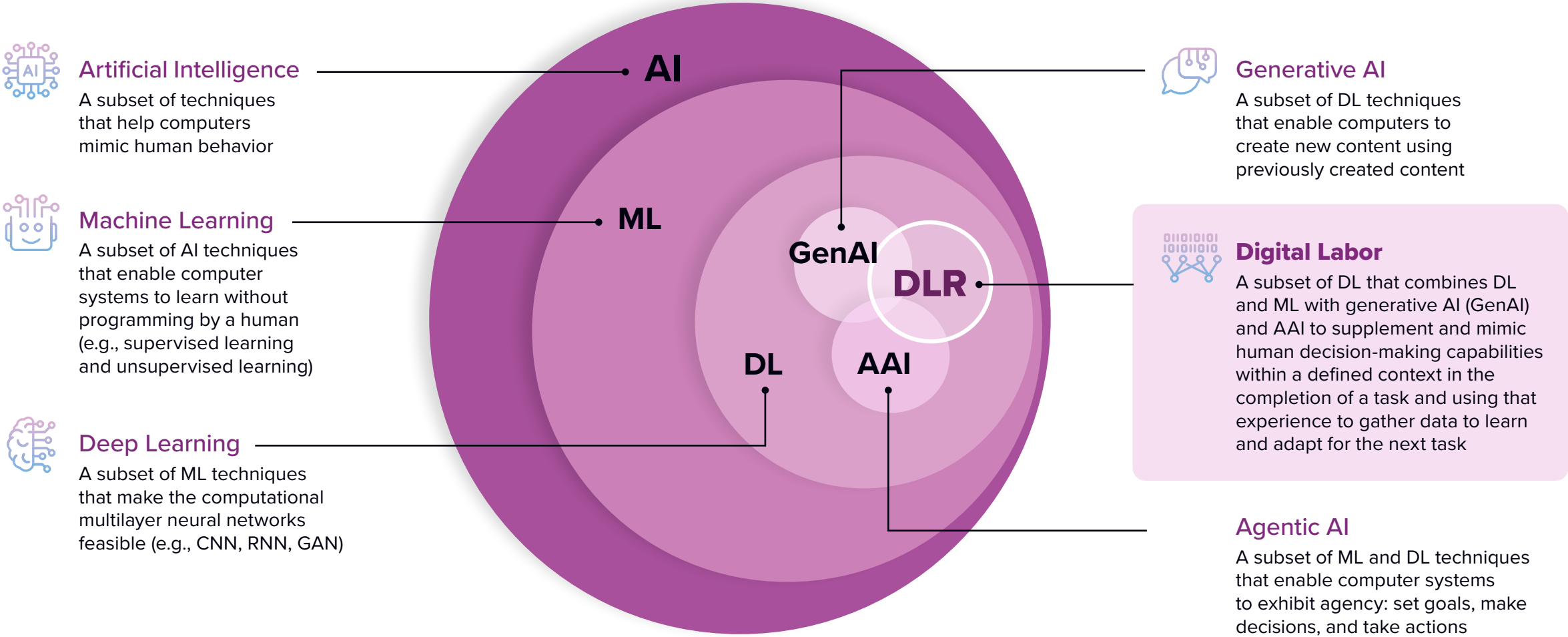


Agentic AI (AAI) technology, capable of making human-like decisions, can supplement employees in completing certain tasks at rates and speeds they are not capable of, allowing them to achieve better outcomes.

For this study, IDC is only including **software and services** that support digital labor and focus on augmenting **knowledge work**.

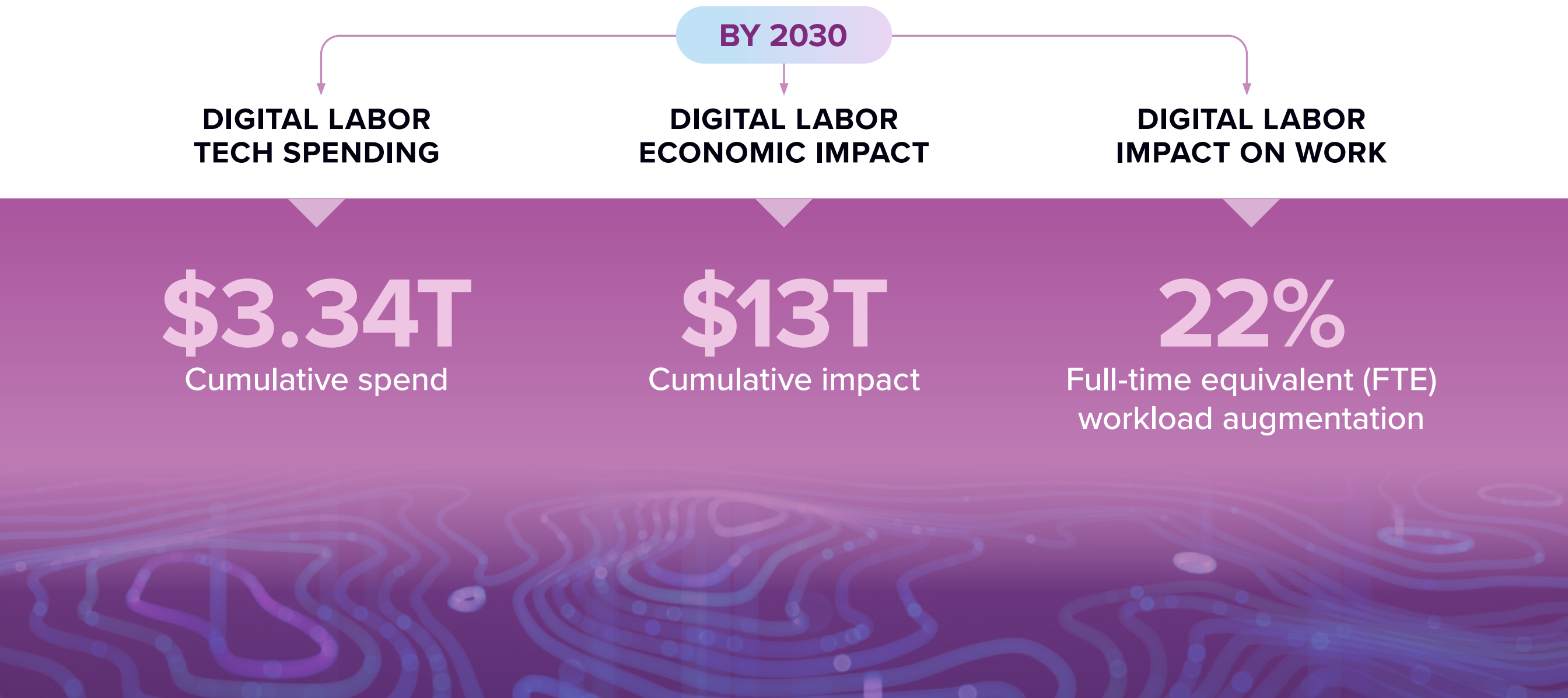


Understanding Digital Labor Software and Services Within AI



Notes: The size of the Venn circles are not representative the size of the markets, | For more information about this page, see [Appendix 2: Understanding the Role of Agentic AI in Digital Labor](#).

Key Takeaways



SECTION 1:

Digital Labor Tech Spending and Investment

Leaders Expect Growing Investment in Digital Labor

To the best of your knowledge, how much of your budget will be spent on AI initiatives in the next 2–5 years?

(Mean)

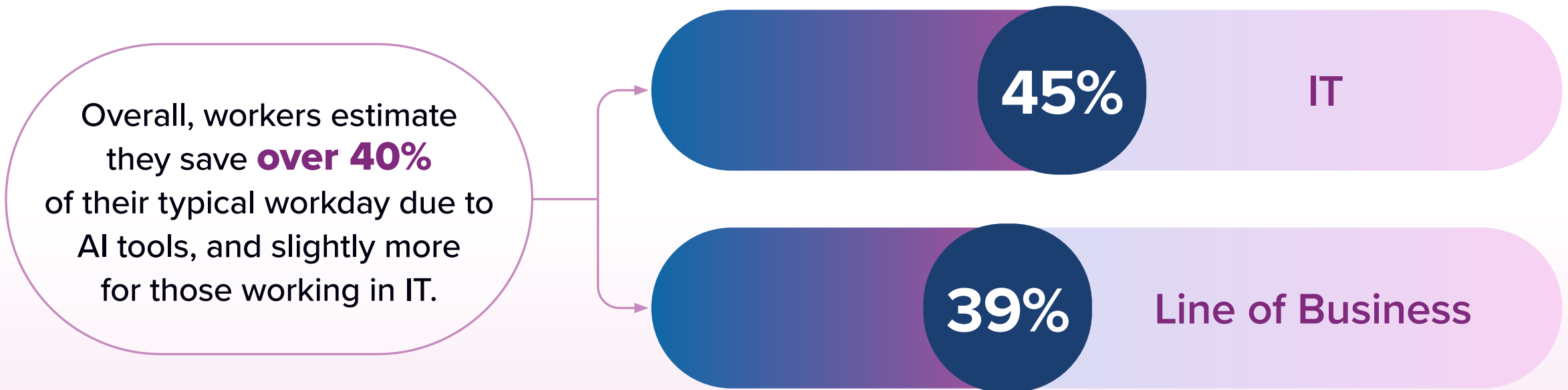


n = 486 (respondents qualified as leaders/senior leaders); Source: IDC's *Labor Forecast Agentic AI Study*, Sponsored by Salesforce, August 2025

Digital Labor Drives Efficiency Gains

Generally, how much time do you estimate you save in a typical eight-hour workday by using AI tools for your tasks?

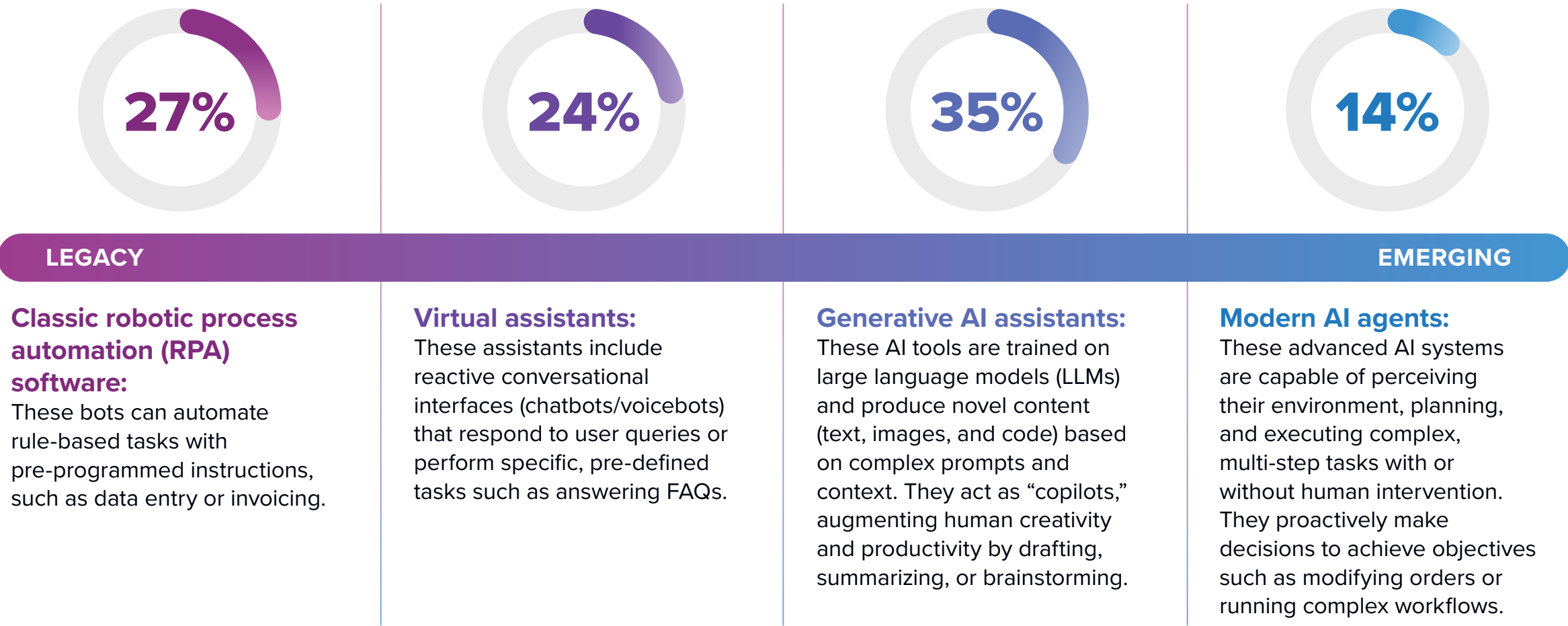
(Mean response)



Note: IT includes IT, data management or administrator, cybersecurity, telecommunications, or networking role. n = 818; Source: IDC's *Labor Forecast Agentic AI Study*, Sponsored by Salesforce, August 2025

Digital Labor Tools Continue to Grow

What percentage of AI tools you use in your role fall into the following categories?
(Mean response)

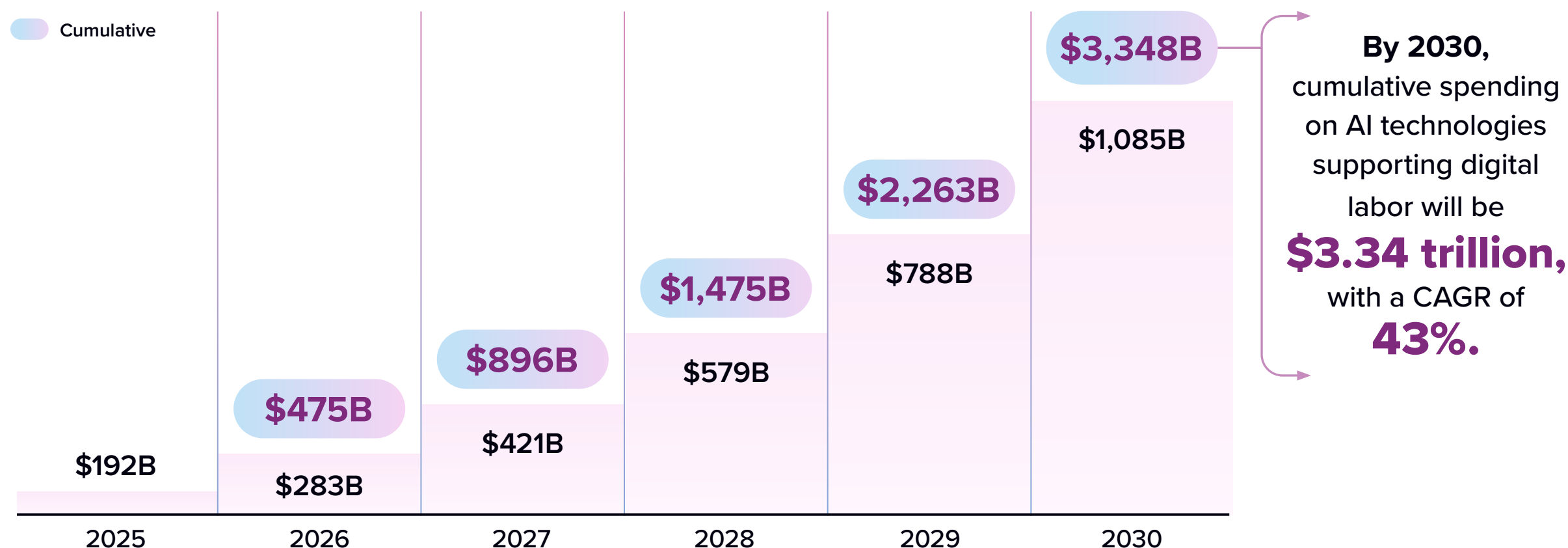


n = 823; Source: IDC's *Labor Forecast Agentic AI Study*, Sponsored by Salesforce, August 2025

Cumulative Global Spend on AI Supporting Digital Labor Will Reach the Trillions by 2030

Cumulative Worldwide AI Technology Spending Supporting Digital Labor

(USD billions)



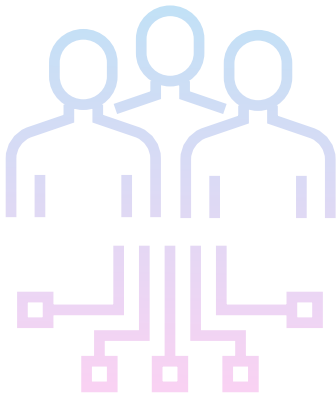
Source: IDC custom derivative of IDC's *AI and Generative AI Spending Guide*, 2025

SECTION 2:

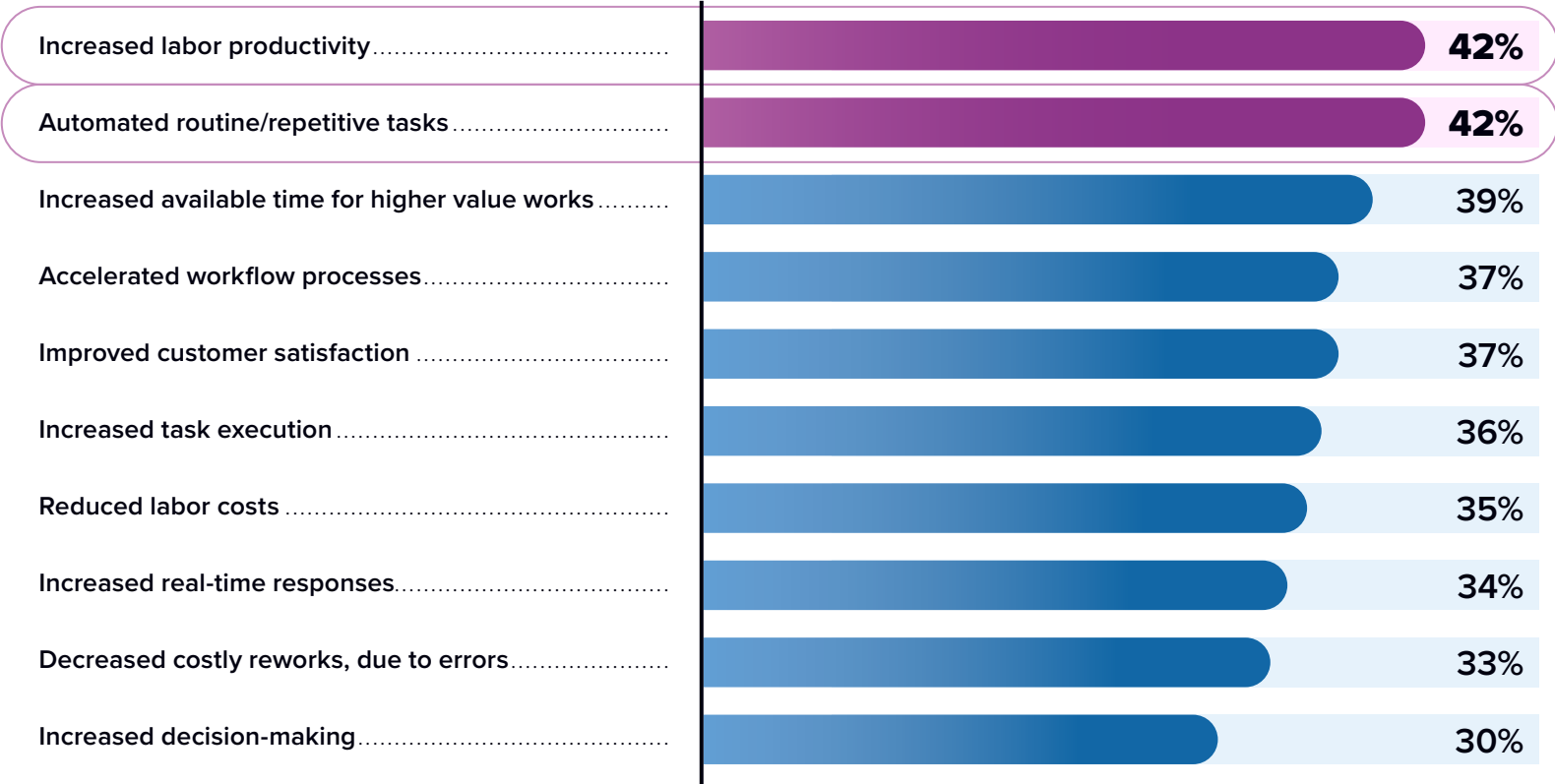
Digital Labor Economic Impact

The Workforce Expects Productivity and Efficiency from AI

Companies must strategize on how **humans and digital labor can work together** to navigate this transition and become more efficient and productive enterprises.



Which business benefits do you expect from the use of AI tools?
(Top 10 responses)

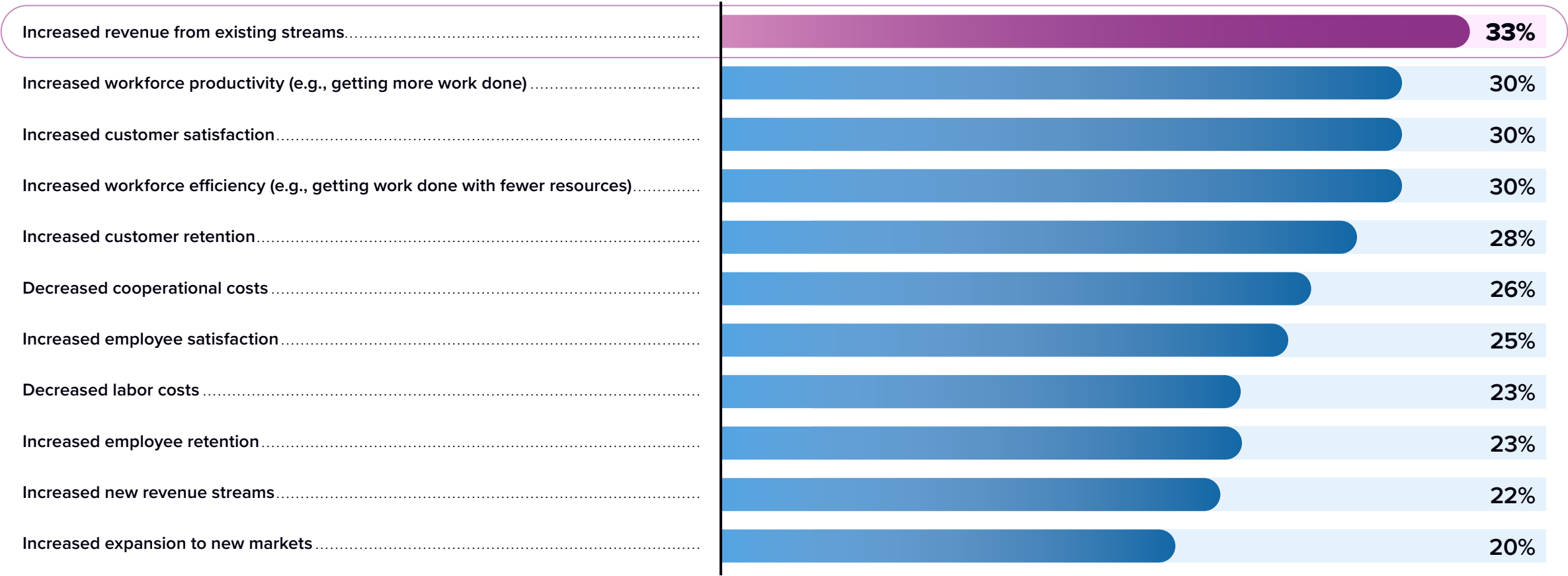


n = 823; Source: IDC's *Labor Forecast Agentic AI Study*, Sponsored by Salesforce, August 2025

CEOs Expect Revenue Boosts from Digital Labor

Which of the following business outcomes is your organization expecting the most from digital labor?

(Top 10 responses)

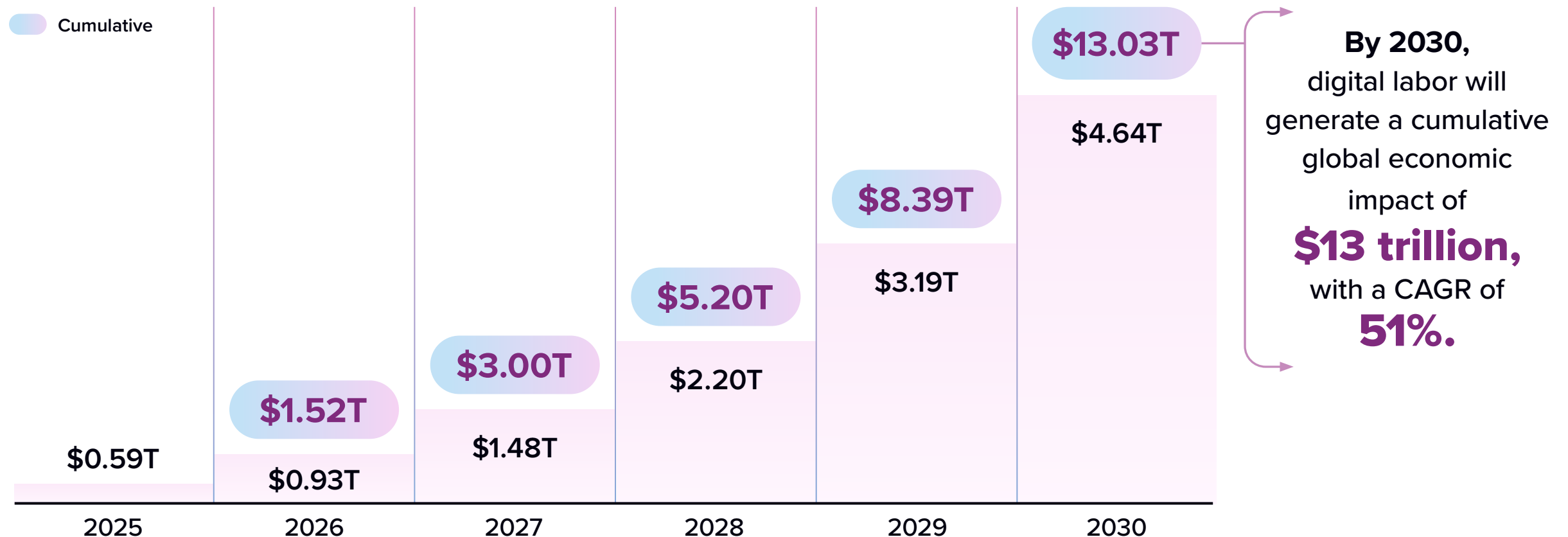


n = 155; Source: IDC's CEO Quick Survey — Digital Labor Research, Sponsored by Salesforce, July 2025

Digital Labor Will Generate a Cumulative Global Economic Impact of \$13 Trillion by 2030

Cumulative Worldwide Economic Impact of Digital Labor

(USD trillions)



Source: IDC custom derivative of IDC's *Global Economic Impact of AI*, 2025

IDC's Global Digital Labor Economic Impact Assessment

By 2030,
digital labor will generate a
cumulative global economic
impact of

**\$13
trillion**

The impact in 2030 will represent **4.2%**
of global GDP, due to the following factors:

Direct

Increased **spending on digital labor solutions and services** driven by end users' accelerated AI adoption (consumer spending is excluded).

Indirect (Supply Chain)

Impact on **digital labor supply chains and industries** that provide essential inputs to digital labor solutions vendors. These are the revenues generated by providers of essential supplies to providers of digital labor solutions and services.

Indirect (End Users)

Economic stimulus among AI adopters — excluding consumers — that benefit from the adoption of digital labor technologies, in terms of productivity, revenue growth, and other business parameters.

Induced

This is the impact due to economic stimulus coming from **increased households' income**, including existing and new employees linked to digital labor value chain across direct and indirect effects layers. People will spend part of their wages in the economy, thus generating additional economic impact.

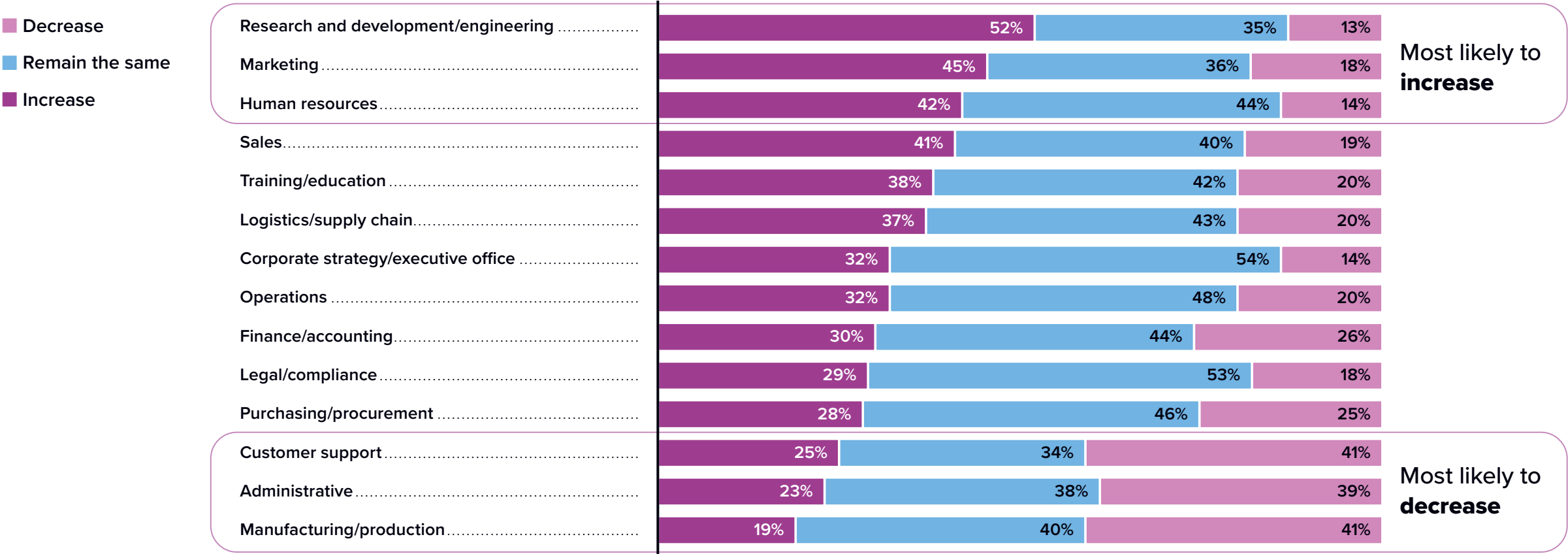
In 2030, every **new \$1** spent on digital labor solutions and services will generate **\$4.3** into the worldwide economy.

SECTION 3:

Digital Labor Impact on Work

AI Expected to Expand Roles Most in R&D, Marketing, and HR

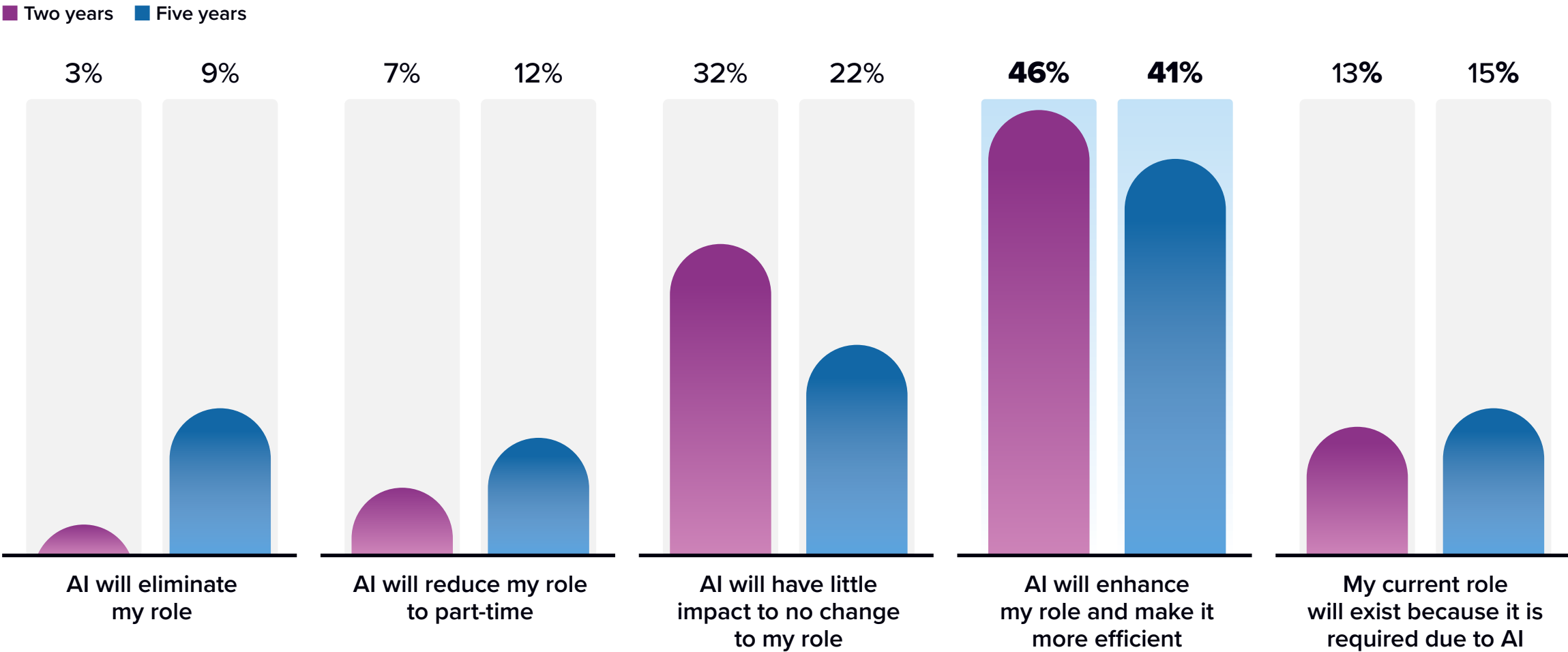
To the best of your knowledge, in five years, which business functions do you expect will change in staff numbers?



n = 271 (respondents qualified as leaders/senior leaders); Source: IDC's Labor Forecast Agentic AI Study, sponsored by Salesforce, August 2025 | For an accessible version of the data on this page, see [Supplemental Data](#) in the Appendix.

Many Workers Expect AI to Enhance Their Roles

What do you anticipate will be the likely impact of AI on your role in two to five years?



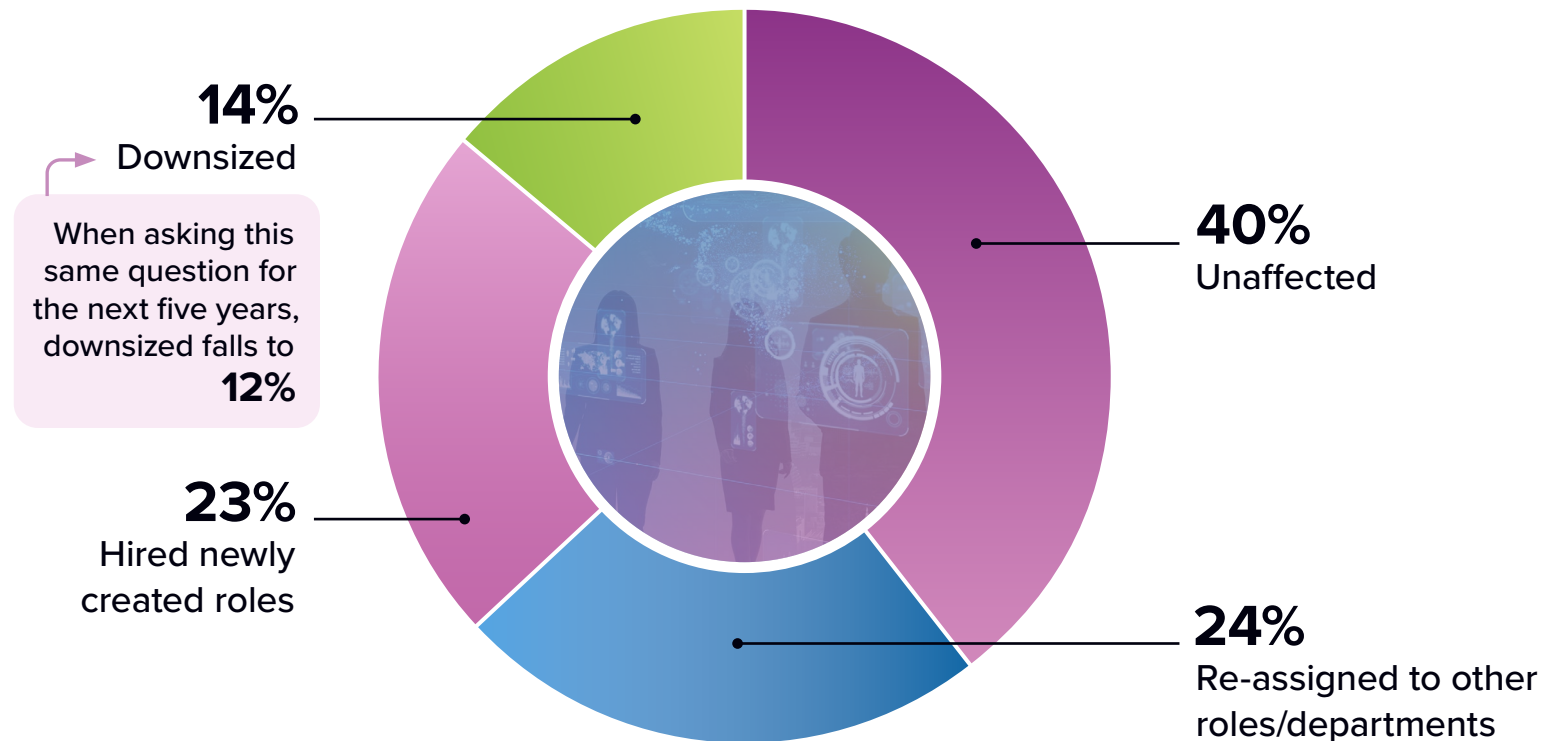
n = 823; Source: IDC's *Labor Forecast Agentic AI Study*, Sponsored by Salesforce, August 2025 | For an accessible version of the data on this page, see [Supplemental Data](#) in the Appendix.

Digital Labor New Job Creation is Outpacing Role Elimination

Reflecting on the last year, companies investing in digital labor estimate that **close to a quarter of the roles** in their function were newly created as a result.



To the best of your knowledge, in the last year, what percentage of roles in your function had the following impacts because of digital labor?



n = 255 (respondents described themselves as leaders and are currently investing in the development of digital labor); Source: IDC's *Labor Forecast Agentic AI Study*, sponsored by Salesforce, August 2025

Digital Labor Will Augment Workflows Across the Business

Which existing roles/tasks will substantially change in five years as a result of your function adopting digital labor?
(Top response per line of business role)



ADMINISTRATIVE:
Inbox management



CORPORATE STRATEGY:
Project tracking



CUSTOMER SUPPORT:
Auto responses



FINANCE/ACCOUNTING:
Financial reporting and treasury forecasting



SALES:
Competitor objection handling



LOGISTICS/SUPPLY CHAIN:
Inventory optimization



MANUFACTURING/PRODUCTION:
Downtime analysis



MARKETING:
Market segmentation



OPERATIONS:
Inventory optimization and quality assurance



PURCHASING/PROCUREMENT:
RFP generation



TRAINING/EDUCATION:
Skills gap analysis



HUMAN RESOURCES:
Job description generation



LEGAL/COMPLIANCE:
Regulatory scanning



R&D/ENGINEERING:
Market fit modeling

Note: use caution when interpreting small sample sizes. n = 233 (total respondents qualified as leaders/senior leaders), n = 16 (administrative), n = 24 (corporate strategy), n = 5 (customer support), n = 14 (finance/accounting), n = 11 (human resources), n = 20 (legal/compliance), n = 15 (logistics/supply chain), n = 17 (manufacturing/production), n = 24 (marketing), n = 16 (operations), n = 29 (purchasing/procurement), n = 14 (R&D/engineering), n = 14 (sales), n = 14 (training/education); Source: IDC's *Labor Forecast Agentic AI Study*, sponsored by Salesforce, August 2025

Digital Labor Will Impact IT Cross-Functionally

Which existing roles/tasks will substantially change in five years as a result of your function adopting digital labor?

(Top response per IT role)



Applications/software:
Collaborating with stakeholders to gather user requirements



Data management or analytics:
Building dashboards and reports using Business Intelligence (BI) tools



IT management:
Aligning IT strategy with business objectives



IT infrastructure:
Implementing virtualization and containerization



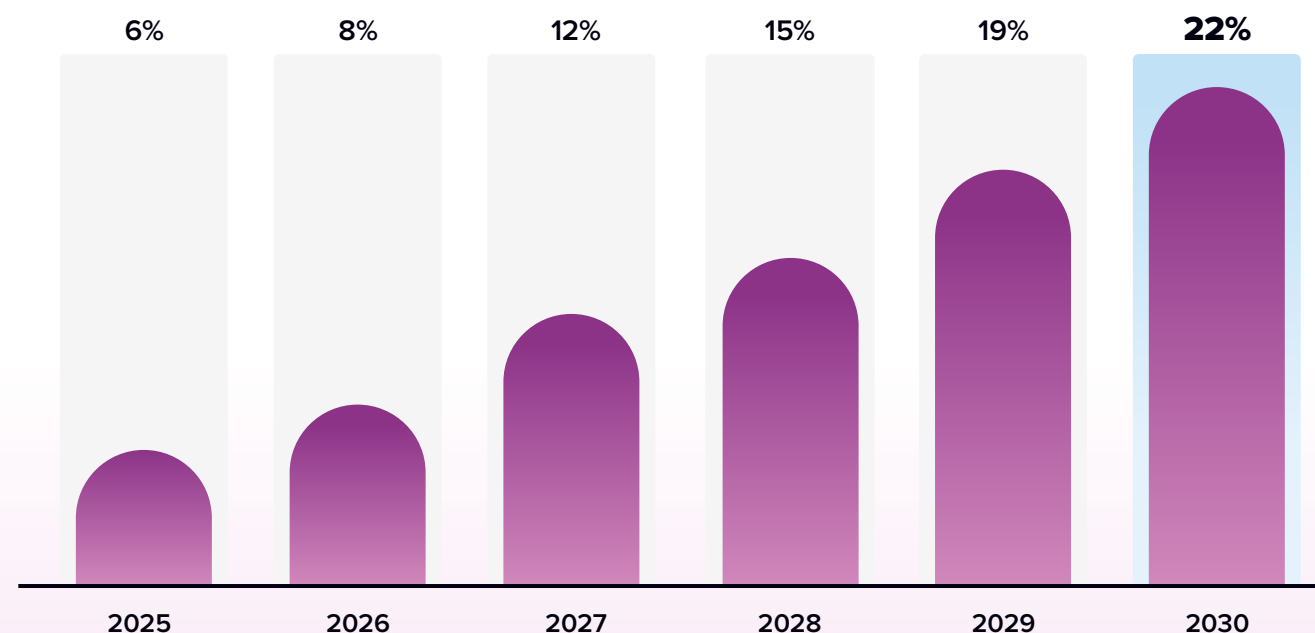
Cybersecurity:
Ensuring compliance with cybersecurity frameworks

Note: use caution when interpreting small sample sizes. n = 249 (total respondents qualified as leaders/senior leaders), n = 22 (applications/software), n = 14 (data management or analytics), n = 100 (IT management), n = 43 (IT infrastructure), n = 56 (cybersecurity), n = 14 (NET facilities); Source: IDC's *Labor Forecast Agentic AI Study*, sponsored by Salesforce, August 2025

Agentic AI Will Increasingly Augment Full-Time Equivalent Workloads

By 2030, agentic AI tools are expected to enhance productivity by taking on 22% of a FTE employee's weekly workload, allowing teams to focus more on higher-value and strategic activities.

Full-Time Equivalent Augmented by Agentic AI



Source: IDC custom model of IDC's *Agentic AI Impact on Labor*, 2025

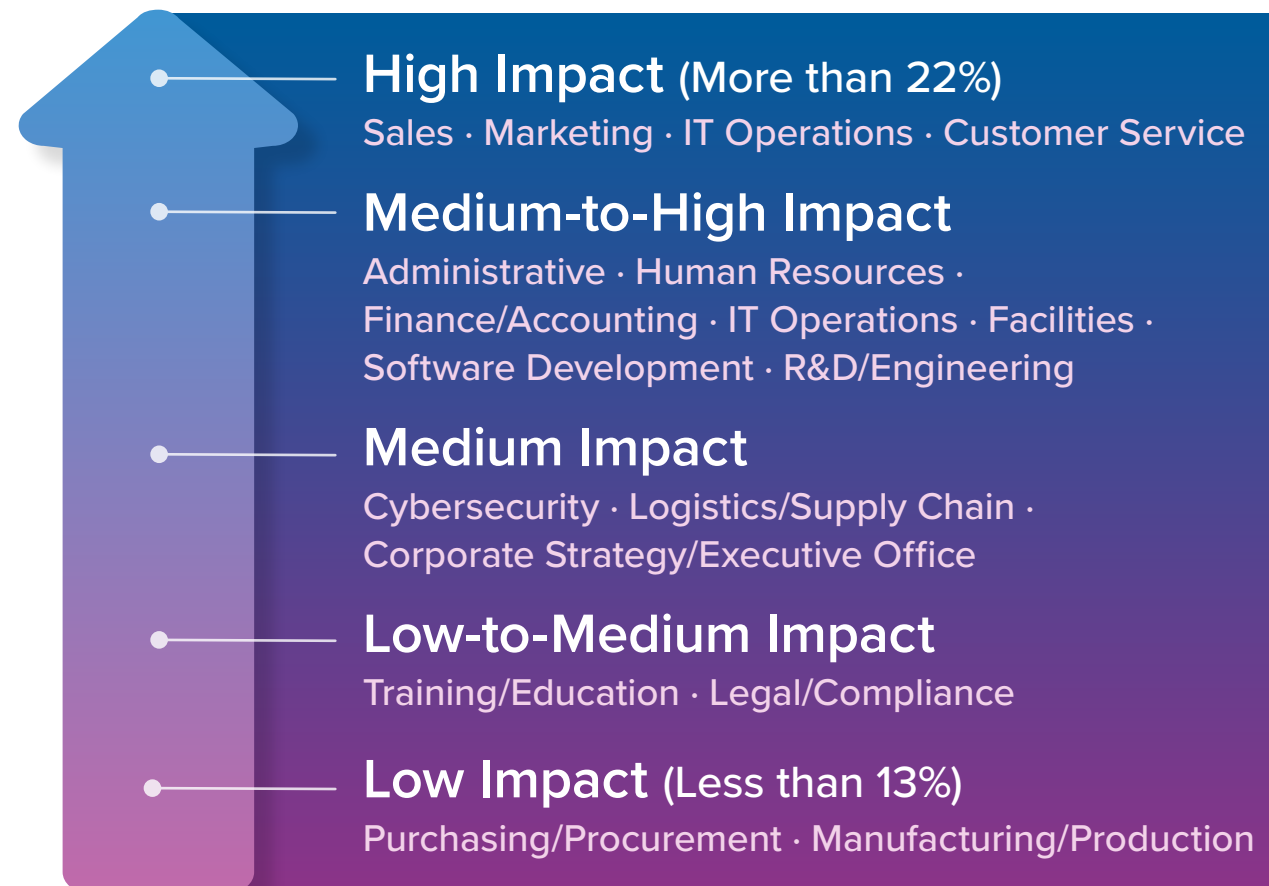
By 2030, Sales, Marketing, and IT Operations Will See the Greatest Impact

Agentic AI is poised to have the **greatest impact on frontline functions**, such as service, sales, and marketing, as well as IT operations, with **more than 22% of work** expected to be affected.

In contrast, areas such as procurement, manufacturing, and production are projected to experience comparatively lower disruption, with less than 13% of work affected.

This transformation is dependent on what individual companies do with the capacity realized by agentic AI augmentation.

Agentic AI Augmentation by Functional Area



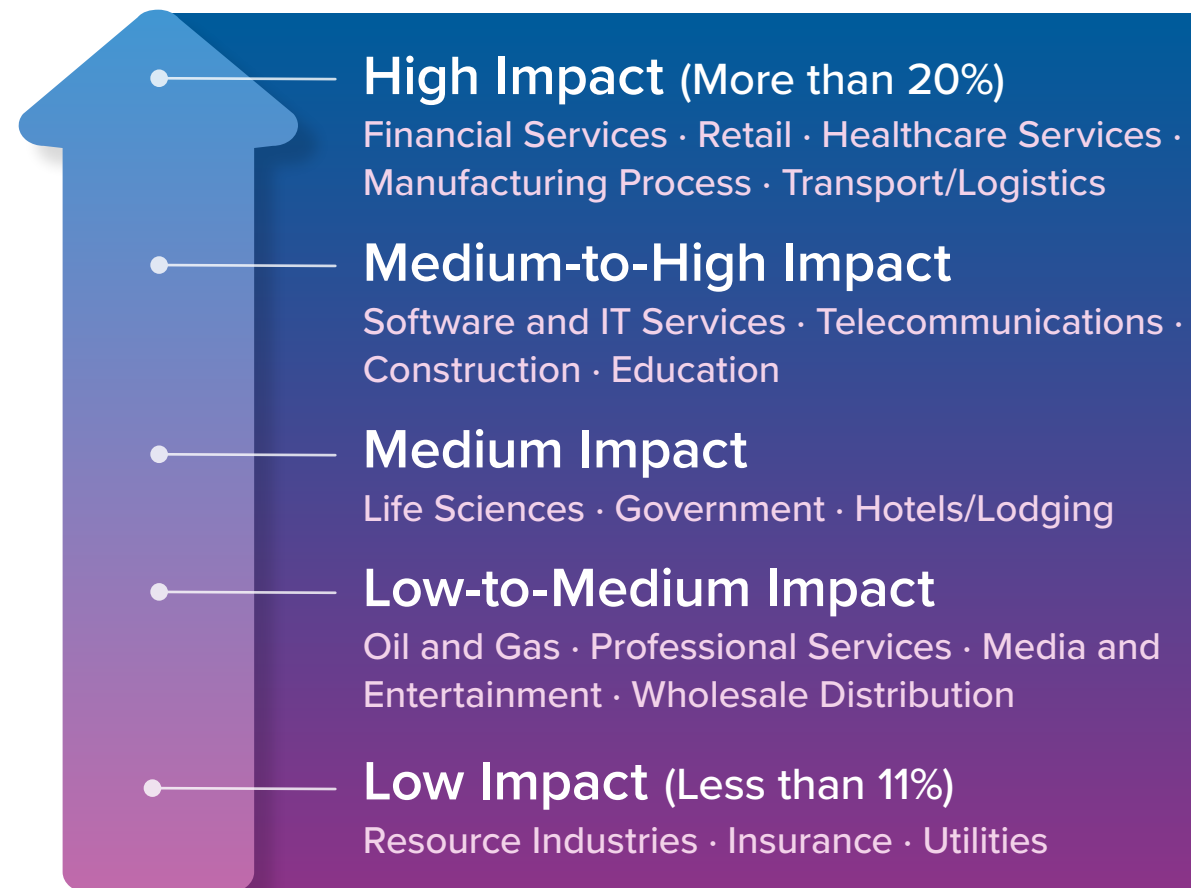
By 2030, Financial Services, Retail, Manufacturing, and Logistics are Poised for Greatest Impact

IDC's analysis indicates that the influence of **agentic AI** will vary significantly across industries.

Sectors such as financial services, retail, healthcare, manufacturing, and logistics are expected to experience substantial transformation, with **over 20% of FTE work projected to be augmented**.

In contrast, industries such as insurance, utilities, and resource extraction are likely to experience a more modest impact, with fewer than 11% of FTE equivalent hours affected. Most other sectors are anticipated to fall between these two extremes, reflecting a diverse landscape of AI-driven change.

Agentic AI Augmentation by Industry



Essential Guidance

As the focus on digital labor shifts from the technology to the business, end-user companies should focus on the following:



Assess where agentic AI and digital labor can have the most impact:

Although many functional areas and workflows would benefit from incorporating agentic AI, focus initially on those with the largest potential impact and ROI.



Build a data foundation to support agentic AI:

Identify and gather the necessary raw data from sources such as sensors, APIs, or existing databases. Scrub and process the raw data to ensure it is clean, accurate, and properly formatted for model consumption relevant to the specific business processes and workflows.



Use transparency to drive governance in the workflow:

Even with the best guardrails and testing, AI agents can go off track. Ensure that key stakeholders have a clear understanding of how AI agents make decisions and how work gets done to minimize surprises.



Prepare for a partnership between humans and digital labor:

Adoption of digital labor will require change. To minimize the impacts of this change, implementations of agentic AI must align with the unique aspects of an organization, provide continuous learning about digital labor, and clearly communicate the value employees and technology bring.

Appendix 1: Relevant AI Technologies Underpinning Digital Labor

AI Platforms Core: Technologies that directly constitute digital labor	AI platforms facilitate the development of AI models and applications, including intelligent assistants that may mimic human cognitive abilities. The technology components of AI platforms include ML, deep learning, generative AI, natural language processing (NLP), text analytics, rich media analytics, tagging, searching, categorization, clustering, hypothesis generation, question answering, visualization, filtering, alerting, and navigation.
AI-Enabled Applications Core: Technologies that directly constitute digital labor	AI-enabled applications are software programs or digital tools that leverage AI technologies to perform tasks, make decisions, or enhance user experiences. These applications use ML, natural language processing, computer vision, and other AI techniques to analyze data, automate processes, and provide intelligent insights or interactions.
AI System Infrastructure Software Enabler: Technologies that support or enable digital labor	These software solutions provide the basic foundational layers of software that enable bare metal infrastructure hardware resources to host applications and higher-level application development and deployment (AD&D) software. They also offer virtualization and management software to configure, control, automate, and share the use of those resources across heterogeneous applications and user groups. AI system infrastructure software involves AI technologies critical to the software’s function, and if you eliminate these, the software’s function will cease to exist. The software needs ML (supervised, unsupervised, reinforcement, etc.), user/data interaction (e.g., NLP/NLG, Q&A processing, image/video analytics, and vision), or a knowledge representation capability.

Appendix 1: Relevant AI Technologies Underpinning Digital Labor (continued)

AI Application Development and Deployment Enabler: Technologies that support or enable digital labor	AD&D software represents the tools and platforms that developers primarily use to build, test, and deploy software, as well as process, integrate, govern, and analyze data. AI-centric AD&D software involves AI technologies central to the software’s function, and if you eliminate these, the software function will cease to exist. The software needs ML (supervised, unsupervised, reinforcement, etc.), user/data interaction (e.g., NLP/NLG, Q&A processing, image/video analytics, and vision), or a knowledge representation capability.
IT Services for AI Core: Technologies that directly constitute digital labor Excludes: HW deploy and support, network and endpoint outsourcing services, and network consulting and integration	IT services include IT consulting, systems and network implementations, IT outsourcing, application development, IT deployment and support, and IT education and training related to cognitive/AI software and infrastructure spending. IT services also involve helping buyers develop their IT strategy as part of their overarching AI journey.
Business Services for AI Enabler: Technologies that support or enable digital labor business consulting only (BPO excluded)	Business services comprise business consulting and horizontal business process outsourcing related to AI software and hardware.

Appendix 2: Understanding the Role of Agentic AI in Digital Labor

Agentic AI is not a standalone category; rather, it is the application of a cross-cutting capability as reflected in the categories below, especially as part of GenAI and AI-enabled application/platform spending.

IDC's *Worldwide AI and Generative AI Spending Guide* captures agentic AI spending within the following categories:

1. AI-Enabled Applications

Agentic AI is experiencing increasing integration into enterprise applications, where autonomous agents (which LLMs and other advanced models power) automate, extend, or enhance features, functions, and user experiences. IDC notes that the surge in agentic AI will drive a significant shift in AI spending toward AI-enabled applications, particularly from 2026 onward, as organizations deploy and manage growing fleets of agents within their core business systems. This includes AI agent start-ups.

2. AI Platform Application Development and Deployment

Agentic AI capabilities are also tracked under the AI platform AD&D, which includes platforms and tools for developing, integrating, enhancing, and governing AI models and applications, including independent agents. This category encompasses the software infrastructure necessary for building, deploying, and managing agentic AI systems, as well as AI agent start-ups.

3. Business and IT Services

This category includes spending on services related to the deployment, integration, and management of agentic AI, including consulting, implementation, and managed services. As agentic AI becomes a cross-category investment priority, organizations are allocating defined portions of GenAI and non-GenAI budgets to build, adapt, and support agentic AI-enabled systems and applications.

Appendix 3: The Economic Impact Analysis — Explanation of Effects

Direct Effect

Direct effects include the value of digital labor. For example:

- ▶ **AI customer support agents:**
Banks, telecoms, and retailers deploy AI chatbots and voice assistants to resolve customer queries 24 x 7, reducing reliance on traditional call centers. Revenue flows directly to AI solution providers, such as chatbot platforms and SaaS vendors.
- ▶ **Generative content tools:**
Marketing agencies and enterprises subscribe to AI platforms that generate ad copy, images, or videos at scale. Each subscription or licensing fee represents a direct economic impact of digital labor.

Indirect Effect

Indirect effects refer to the economic impact related to DL input provisions and end-user benefits.

Supply chain indirect effects refer to the economic effects on input providers — in other words, revenues generated in local industries impacted by DL technologies demand. For example:

- ▶ **Cloud infrastructure providers:**
AWS, Azure, and GCP earn revenue by hosting and scaling AI models that power chatbots, copilots, and RPA systems.
- ▶ **Semiconductors and hardware vendors:**
NVIDIA, AMD, and Intel supply GPUs/TPUs run digital labor algorithms, and each deployment of digital labor increases demand for advanced chips.

End users' indirect effects refer to the effects on DL solutions' adopters, excluding consumers, in terms of productivity, revenue growth, and other business parameters. Some examples include:

- ▶ **Retailers and banks:** Deploying AI chatbots can deliver on-time and efficient replies to customers, thus improving customer service with better efficiency for employees.
- ▶ **SMEs:** Smaller firms adopt AI assistants to compete with large enterprises, leading to growth in demand for affordable SaaS platforms, workflow tools, and training services.

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Appendix 3: The Economic Impact Analysis — Explanation of Effects (continued)

Induced Effect

These are the effects the economic stimulus from an increase in household income **induces**, as existing and new employees spend part of their wages in the economy, thereby generating additional economic impact.

The increased or new income — derived from the salaries of DL professionals, wages of DL supply chain employees, and income of individuals whose jobs are enhanced by DL — **stimulates economic growth**.

For example:

- ▶ **Increased income has a multiplier effect on the economy.** Higher disposable incomes lead to increased consumer spending on services and goods, from daily tasks such as grocery shopping to leisure activities, thus boosting demand broadly across many sectors. As employees spend this new income on goods and services, it creates a chain reaction that benefits businesses and individuals beyond the direct DL value chain. This process can lead to job creation across various sectors, wage growth, increased consumer spending, and higher tax revenues for governments.

Note: Induced effects are only calculated when households are considered as part of the productive sector (endogenous households); otherwise, they will be only direct and indirect impacts. Results might be overestimated when households are endogenous.

Appendix 4: Supplemental Data

The tables in this appendix provide accessible versions of the data for the complex figures in this document. Click “Return to original figure” below each table to get back to the original data figure.

SUPPLEMENTAL DATA FROM PAGE 17

To the best of your knowledge, in five years, which business functions do you expect will change in staff numbers?

	Decrease	Remain the same	Increase
Research and development/engineering	13%	35%	52%
Marketing	18%	36%	45%
Human resources	14%	44%	42%
Sales	19%	40%	41%
Training/education	20%	42%	38%
Logistics/supply chain	20%	43%	37%
Corporate strategy/executive office	14%	54%	32%
Operations	20%	48%	32%
Finance/accounting	26%	44%	30%
Legal/compliance	18%	53%	29%
Purchasing/procurement	25%	46%	28%
Customer support	41%	34%	25%
Administrative	39%	38%	23%
Manufacturing/production	41%	40%	19%

n = 271 (respondents qualified as leaders/senior leaders); Source: IDC’s Labor Forecast Agentic AI Study, sponsored by Salesforce, August 2025

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Appendix: Supplemental Data (continued)

SUPPLEMENTAL DATA FROM PAGE 18

What do you anticipate will be the likely impact of AI on your role in two to five years?

	Two years	Five years
AI will reduce my role to part-time	7%	12%
AI will have little impact to no change to my role	32%	22%
AI will enhance my role and make it more efficient	46%	41%
My current role will exist because it is required due to AI	13%	15%
AI will eliminate my role	3%	9%
Digital labor will take on more routine/rote tasks	30%	47%

n = 823; Source: IDC's *Labor Forecast Agentic AI Study*, Sponsored by Salesforce, August 2025

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About the IDC Analysts



Alan Webber
Program Vice President,
National Security, Defense, and Intelligence, IDC

Alan Webber is the program vice president for National Security, Defense, and Intelligence in IDC’s Government Insights practice. In this role, Webber leads IDC’s research efforts around the information and other technologies being employed in national security, defense, and intelligence applications.

Specific current areas of research interest for Webber include leveraging intelligent automation and AI/ML augmentation in defense and intelligence (D&I), GenAI applications and defenses, data as a strategic asset, cognitive security, zero trust architectures, building resilient supply chains, modernizing the D&I workforce, vendor and industry support for the D&I mission, and adopting emerging technologies such as robotics, quantum computing, synthetic data, and the space domain.

[More about Alan Webber](#)



Crawford Del Prete
President, IDC

Crawford Del Prete was appointed President of IDC in February 2019. Prior to his current role, he served as IDC’s Chief Operating Officer. Through his leadership, IDC has established a leading position as the world’s most prominent and trusted technology market intelligence provider.

Crawford joined IDC in 1989 as a research analyst. Throughout his IDC career, he has grown multiple IDC businesses to industry leadership positions. He was instrumental in creating IDC’s high visibility research and data tracking products which are used daily in the IT industry for strategic planning. Crawford is a leading authority on the IT industry and has completed extensive research on the structure and evolution of the information technology industry. He advises technology and business leaders on how to adapt and change in a time when technology is changing the world.

[More about Crawford Del Prete](#)

About the IDC Analysts (continued)



Philip Carter
Group Vice President and General Manager,
AI, Data and Automation Research, IDC

Philip Carter is Group Vice President and General Manager for AI, Data, and Automation research at IDC. In this role, he leads a global team of analysts focused on delivering IDC’s research and insights at the intersection of AI, data platforms, and intelligent automation — three foundational areas shaping the future of technology and business. His work is centered on helping C-Suite executives make sense of the rapid innovation in the AI space, and drive meaningful transformation through data- and intelligence-led strategies.

[More about Philip Carter](#)



Carla La Croce
Senior Research Analyst,
Data and Analytics, Europe, IDC

Carla La Croce is a research manager for IDC’s European Data and Analytics team. She develops qualitative and quantitative research on IT strategies for EMEA vertical markets, with direct involvement in IDC Spending Guides (Big Data and analytics, artificial intelligence, and robotics) and is part of the Intelligent Business Execution practice. She also leads the Macroeconomic Center of Excellence, where she works on economic impact analysis and European recovery plans and manages a database of macroeconomic indicators (such as GDP and inflation). La Croce also supports IDC’s consulting and forecast activities in the region.

[More about Carla La Croce](#)

About the IDC Analysts (continued)



Teodora Snoddy
Research Manager,
C-Suite Tech Agenda, IDC

Teodora Snoddy is a research manager for the Worldwide C-Suite Tech Agenda program. Her responsibilities focus on creating research that assesses technology spending and buyer preferences across the C-Suite. This research covers the emerging trends around C-Suite technology objectives. Snoddy’s analysis helps technology vendors, IT professionals, and business executives make informed and data-driven decisions on technology strategy.

[More about Teodora Snoddy](#)



Kritika Ghildiyal
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Kritika is a research analyst with the Data and Analytics Team at IDC Canada. She is responsible for market models, IDC spending guides, consulting projects, and other worldwide data products.

[More about Kritika Ghildiyal](#)

Message from the Sponsor



Becoming an Agentic Enterprise

Digital labor underpinned by AI agents can empower businesses to unlock exponential growth despite static budgets and overextended teams. Companies that realize this goal are Agentic Enterprises — where humans and AI agents work together to achieve better business outcomes by automating repetitive tasks and allowing teams to focus on higher-value work.

Successful companies will start this journey with a strategic mindset that includes:

- ▶ A vision for their AI-powered future
- ▶ A prepared and empowered workforce
- ▶ The right use cases
- ▶ A trusted data foundation

Begin your journey with Salesforce's step-by-step guide to becoming an Agentic Enterprise.

[Get the playbook](#)

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