

Benchmark Report

# **Innovation & Sustainability** **Benchmark Report 2025**

Cross-Industry Insights from Senior Leaders  
Across Key Sectors





# Executive Summary

As 2025 approaches, organizations across industries are accelerating efforts to align sustainability and innovation with long-term business strategies. This benchmark report captures insights from 117 senior professionals across industries to uncover trends, challenges, and opportunities in sustainable innovation.

Key findings reveal a growing emphasis on data and AI adoption, collaboration across value chains, and measuring ROI beyond compliance goals. While 70% of respondents report some form of sustainability strategy, only 30% have fully integrated sustainability into their core business operations. Barriers like fragmented data systems, leadership misalignment, and regulatory complexities remain critical hurdles.

## Highlights



Organizations have fully integrated sustainability into their business strategy, demonstrating a maturity gap across industries.



Respondents prioritize carbon footprint reduction as the key metric for sustainability ROI, followed by 40% focusing on cost savings.



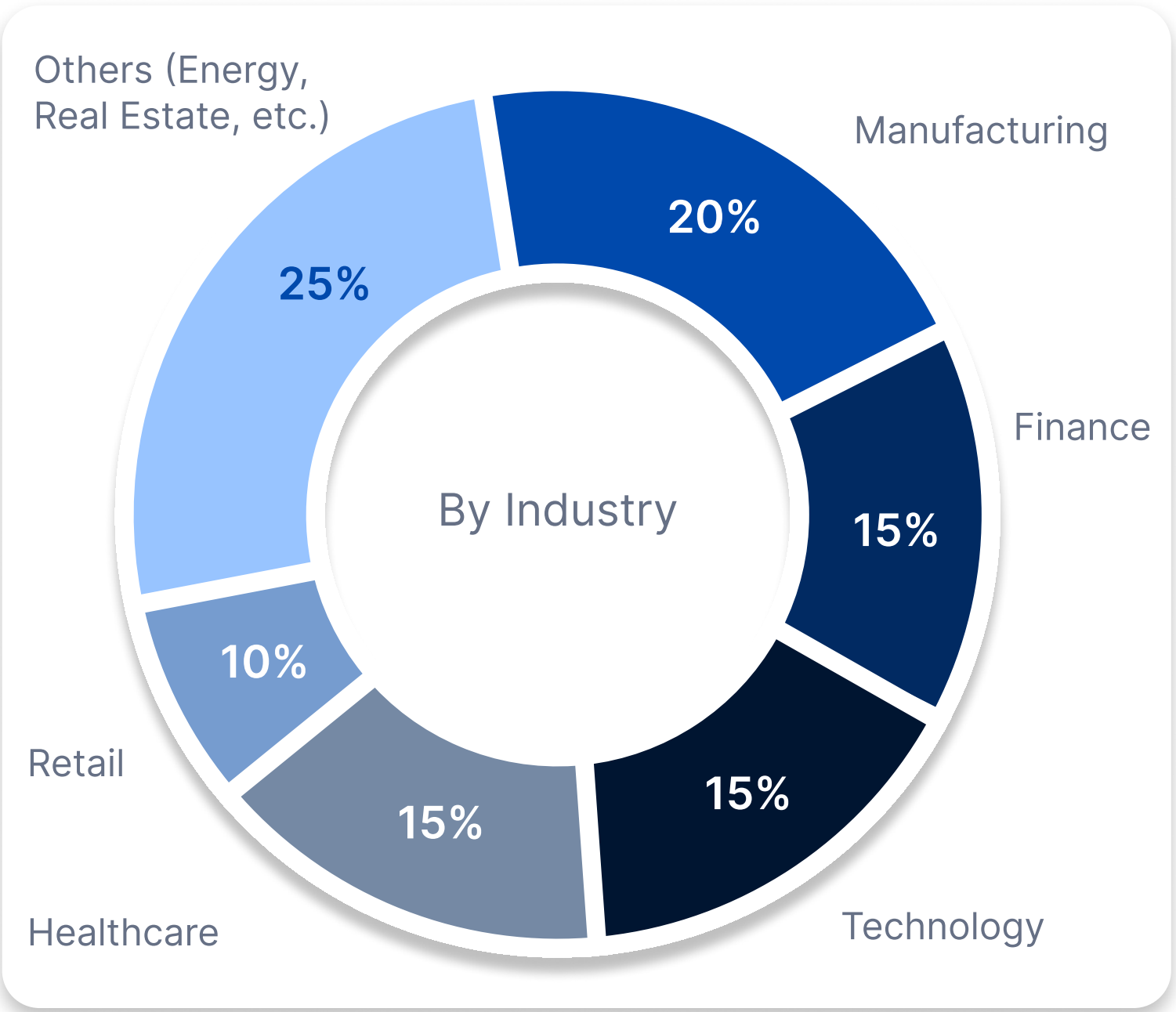
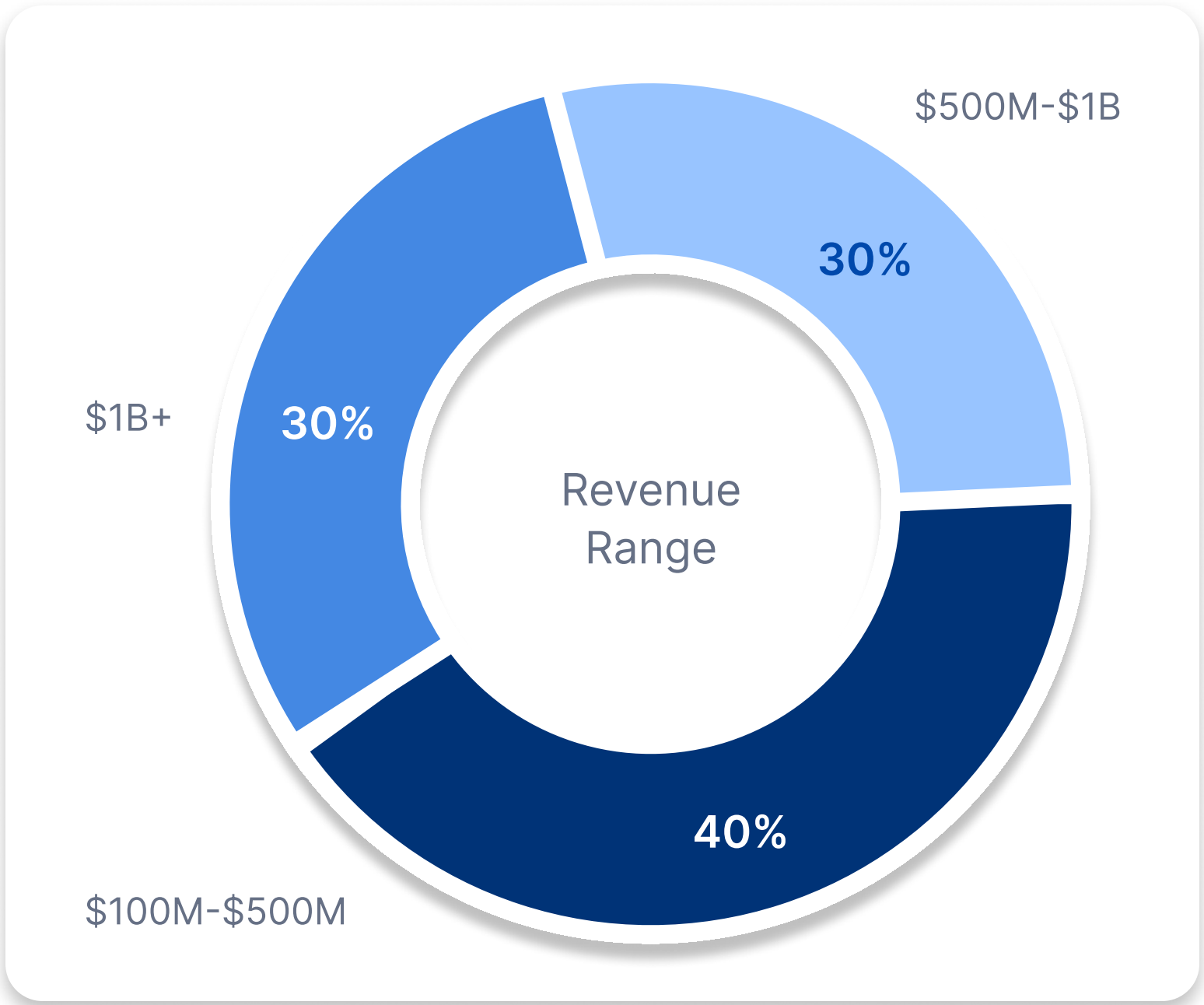
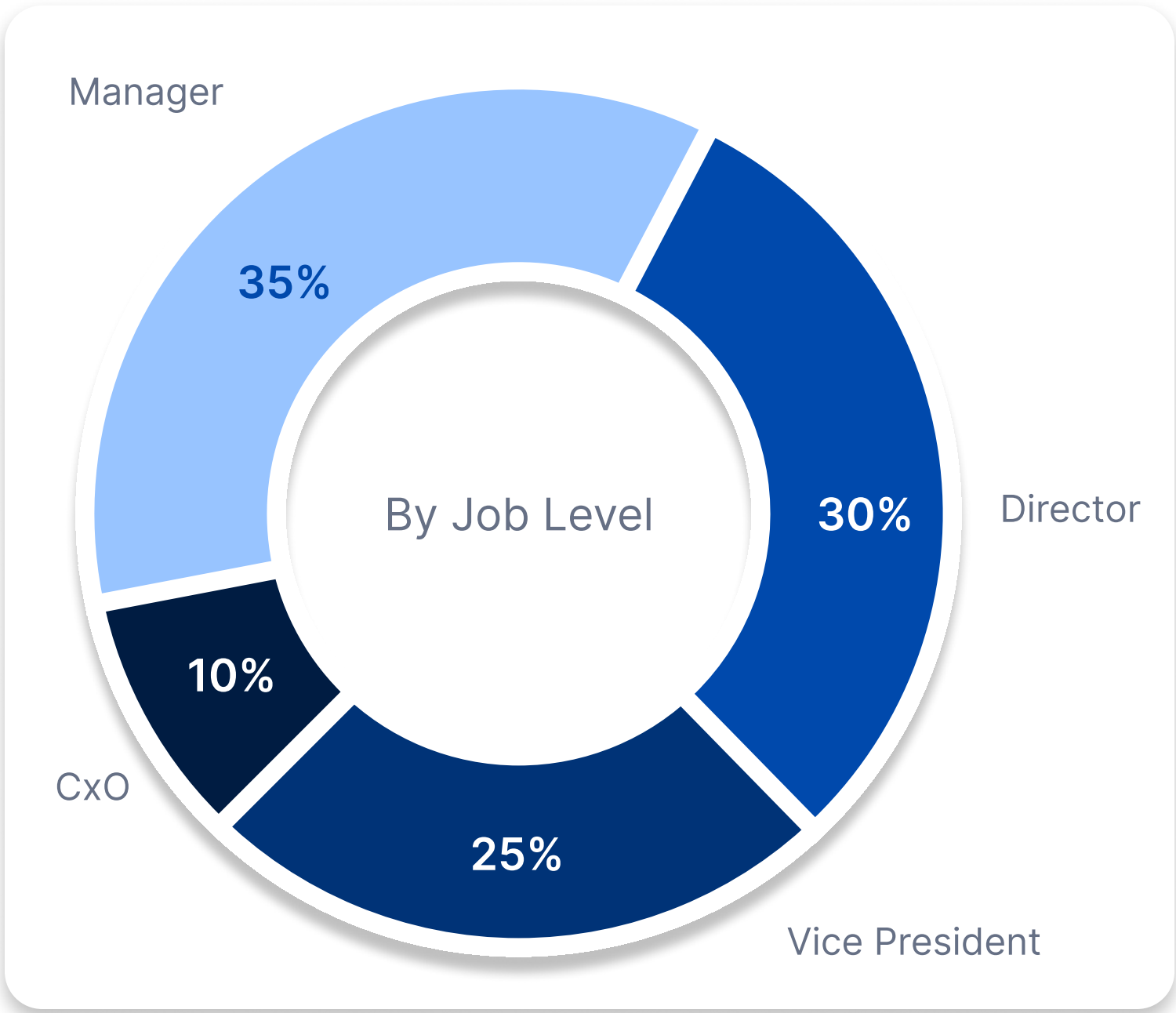
Describe their sustainability efforts as “highly collaborative,” underscoring the need for stronger cross-industry partnerships.

## Research Methodology

For this study, we conducted a quantitative survey to uncover key insights and emerging trends in sustainability and innovation across industries. The survey engaged 117 senior professionals (Managers and above) from carefully selected industries, capturing their perspectives through a concise and targeted online survey.

By distributing the survey to a curated list of industry leaders, we ensured diverse representation across sectors such as Manufacturing, Finance, Technology, Healthcare, Retail, and others, as well as organizations of varying revenue sizes. The study aims to provide a well-rounded view of how organizations are integrating sustainability into their business strategies, leveraging technology, and measuring ROI.

# Respondent Profile





## Key Findings

### 1. Strategic Alignment Gaps

- Only 30% of respondents report fully integrated sustainability strategies, while 40% have partially aligned strategies. Smaller firms (\$100M–\$500M) often operate informally.

### 2. Data Adoption is Inconsistent

- While 40% of respondents leverage moderate data capabilities, only 10% use advanced AI-driven solutions for sustainability efforts.

### 3. Focus on Energy Efficiency

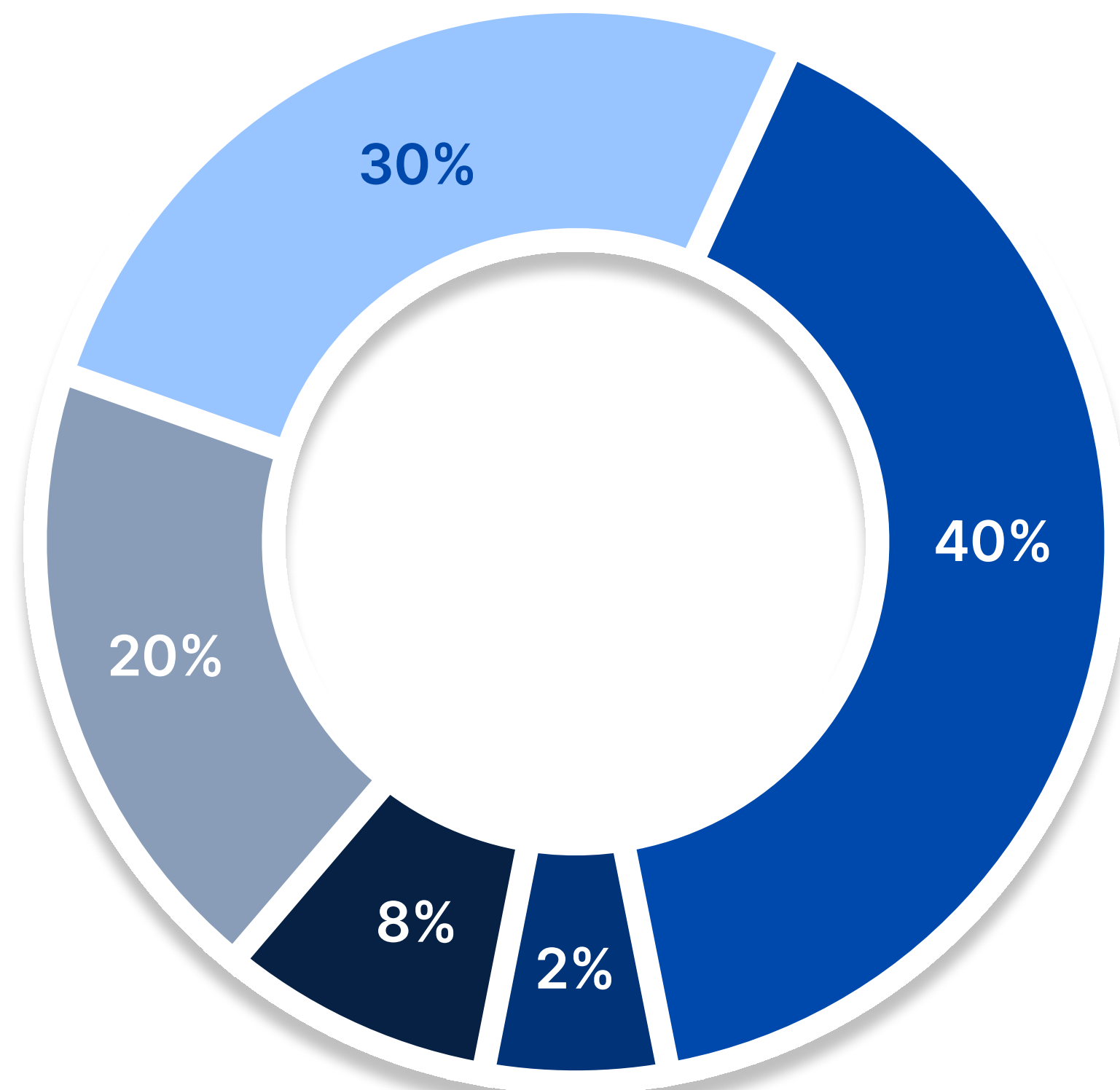
- 60% of respondents prioritize energy efficiency and renewable energy, followed by 50% focusing on sustainable supply chains

### 4. Collaboration Remains Limited

- Only 10% describe their efforts as “highly collaborative,” with 35% facing challenges in forming meaningful partnerships.

## Sustainability Strategies Across Industries

Organizations today are navigating the integration of sustainability into their overarching business strategies. While 70% report having some form of sustainability strategy, only 30% have successfully embedded it into core operations. This suggests that many companies still treat sustainability as a separate initiative rather than a strategic imperative. Larger organizations (\$1B+ revenue) show greater maturity, while smaller firms tend to rely on informal or ad-hoc approaches.



30%

Fully Integrated Strategy

40%

Formal Strategy but Partial Integration

2%

No Efforts or Plans

8%

No Strategy but Planning One

20%

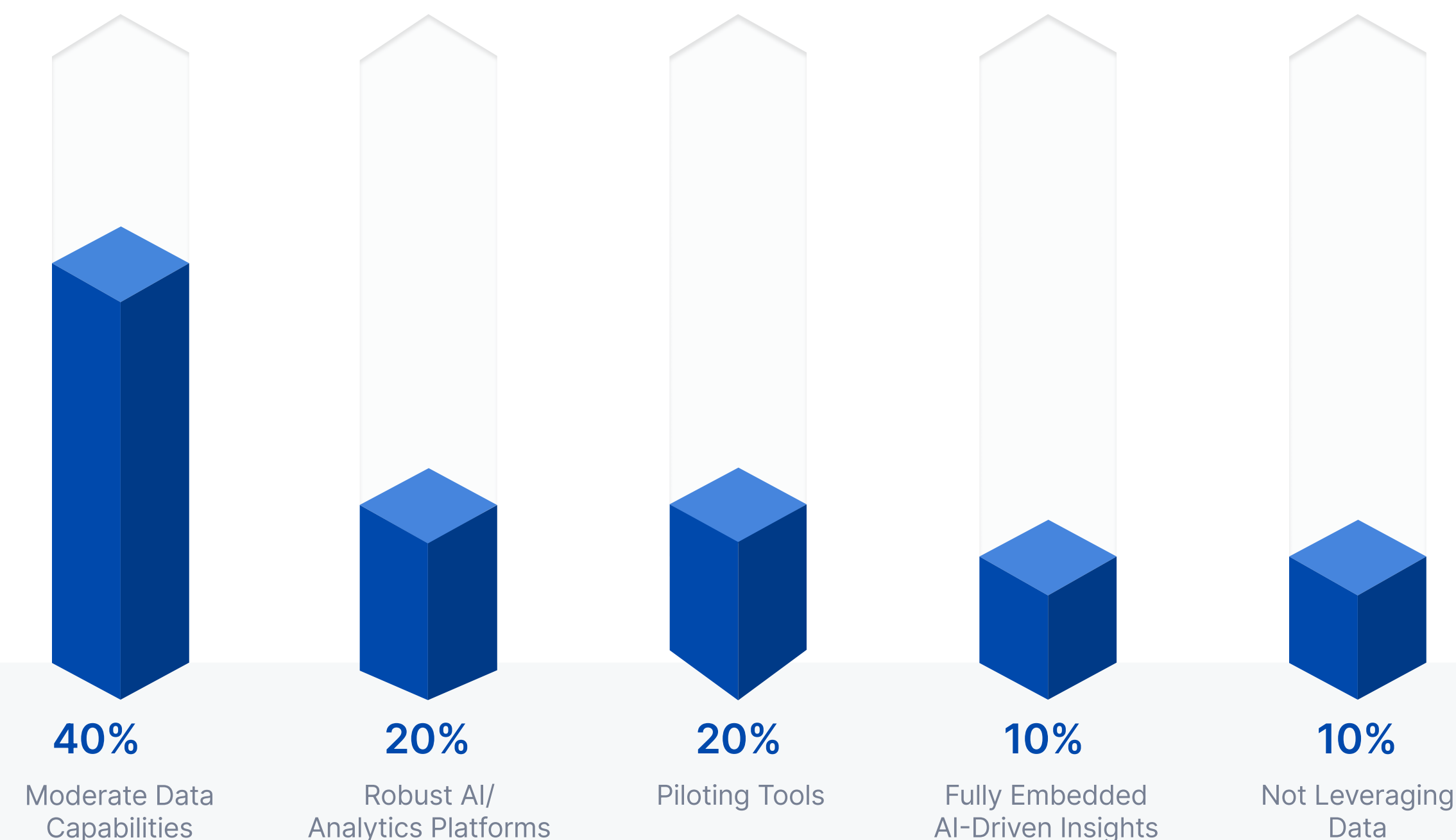
Informal/Ad-hoc Initiatives



## Adoption of Data & Technology for Sustainability

Data and technology are vital to achieving sustainability goals, yet many organizations are in the early stages of adoption. Only 10% of respondents leverage advanced AI-driven insights to guide their sustainability efforts, while 40% report moderate capabilities.

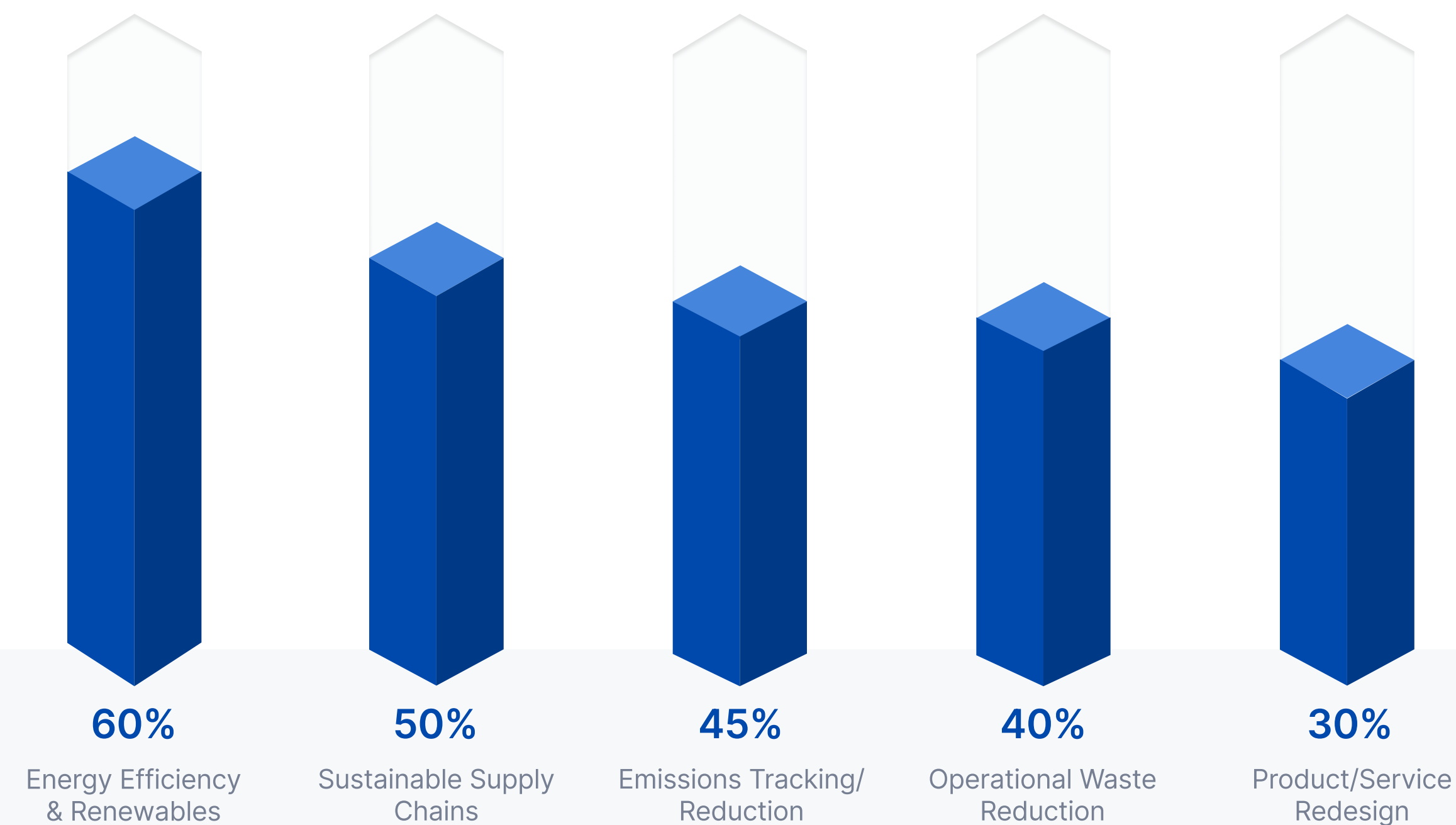
Fragmented systems and outdated infrastructure remain barriers, particularly for mid-sized companies. Investment in analytics and unified platforms is critical for scaling sustainability initiatives.



## Focus Areas for Sustainable Innovation

Organizations across industries are prioritizing initiatives that drive measurable environmental impact. Energy efficiency and renewable energy emerged as the top focus area, with 60% of respondents ranking it as a key priority. Similarly, 50% are working to create sustainable supply chains.

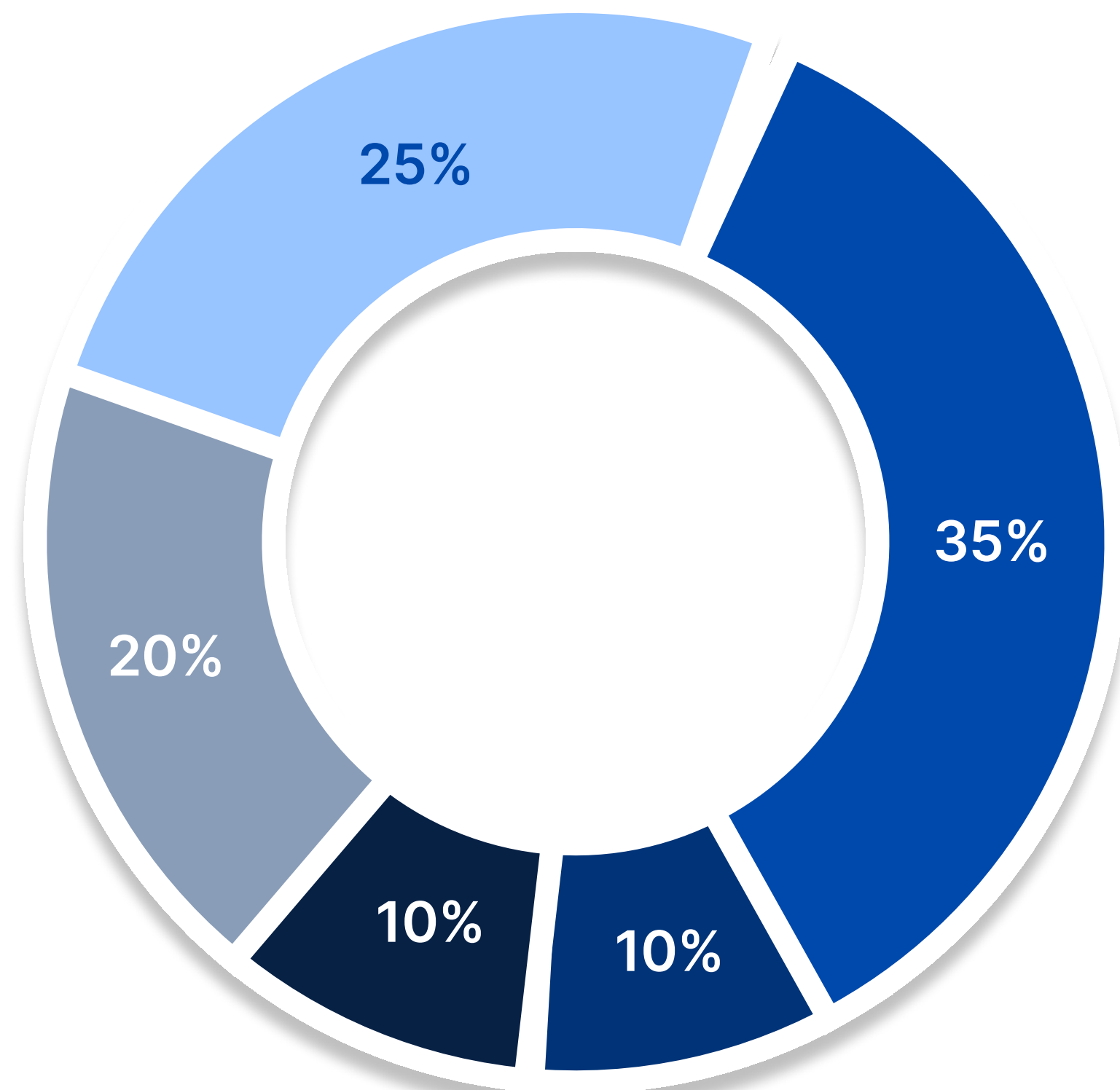
These focus areas reflect growing regulatory pressures and consumer demand for greener practices. However, operational waste reduction and product redesign remain secondary priorities for many.





## The Collaboration Challenge

Achieving sustainability goals often requires partnerships across the value chain. However, only 10% of respondents described their efforts as “highly collaborative.” The majority (35%) actively seek partnerships but face challenges such as misaligned incentives, lack of data-sharing frameworks, and resource constraints. Building strong, cross-sector ecosystems is critical for addressing Scope 3 emissions and achieving ambitious sustainability targets.



25%

Some Partnerships

35%

Actively Seeking but Facing Challenges

10%

Minimal

10%

Highly Collaborative

20%

Formal Partnerships

## Conclusion

Sustainability and innovation are at the heart of organizational growth and resilience. However, challenges like fragmented data systems, limited collaboration, and regulatory complexities must be addressed. Organizations that prioritize data-driven insights, cross-sector partnerships, and ROI-focused metrics will lead the way in achieving their sustainability goals.

### Call to Action:

Senior leaders must act decisively to:

1. Embed sustainability in core strategies.
2. Invest in advanced data and AI tools.
3. Build frameworks for collaboration and measurable outcomes.

This report serves as a roadmap for organizations to align sustainability with innovation, driving success in an evolving global landscape.



## About InsightLab

Insight Lab, an independent research firm based in Cary, NC, is committed to providing cutting-edge insights to business leaders across diverse industries. Through our extensive Survey Program, we engage with key industry executives to uncover and analyze the latest market trends. Our research spans multiple sectors, enabling solution providers to better understand and address their most pressing challenges. Leveraging our deep industry expertise, we offer data-driven strategies that keep businesses competitive. At Insight Lab, we uphold the highest standards of data integrity and confidentiality, ensuring our research is both accurate and secure.

