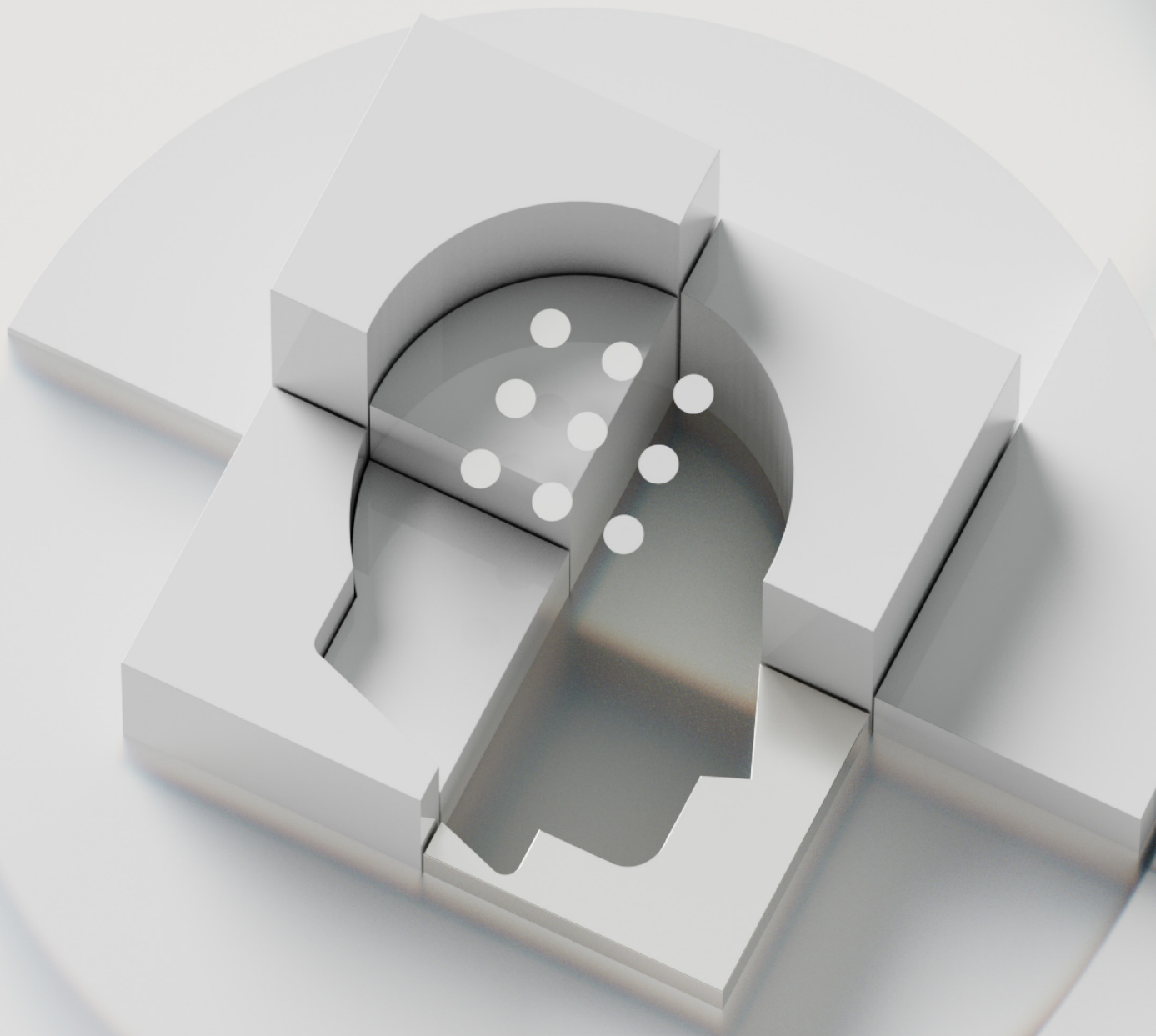


# The state of audience data and analytics

Improving interoperability in 2022



piano | **DIGIDAY**

## What's in this report

Specific approaches for ensuring the appropriate use of data

The importance of integrated technology for data cleanliness, coherence and consistency

Roles and processes within organizations for improving analytics

Tips for identifying technology vendors that work with audience data

For publishers and the advertisers that work with them, a key business objective is to gather audience and customer insights — the kind that create impact, powering revenue and loyalty both now and in the future. Independently and in partnership, both are working with analytics to create and act on a comprehensive picture of the customer journey.

It is an objective, however, hindered by data that has been siloed and scattered within their organizations. These companies are all too often using the vital information they've gathered — from data on ad revenue, subscriptions, content engagement, customer profiles and more — in a fragmented way. Fragmentation stands in the way of interoperability, and [interoperability](#) is the pathway to the goals these publishers and marketers have in play.

To create relevant experiences for consumers in the future — a task bound to become more difficult due to expanding privacy laws and impending third-party cookie deprecation — today's businesses are seeking audience analytics solutions integrated with comprehensive, end-to-end technology tools to ensure data flow, cleanliness and consistency. And they're activating these tools by putting the right people in place to manage them across the various needs of different business units.

To highlight how organizations are navigating analytics challenges and opportunities — and how they're building the infrastructure to do so — Piano and Digiday surveyed more than 100 publisher and brand executives from the manager to C-suite level. This report spotlights what they told us and, with expert insights, explores the data, technological and organizational setup needed to make analytics a competitive advantage.

## Where publishers and brands stand on audience data and analytics

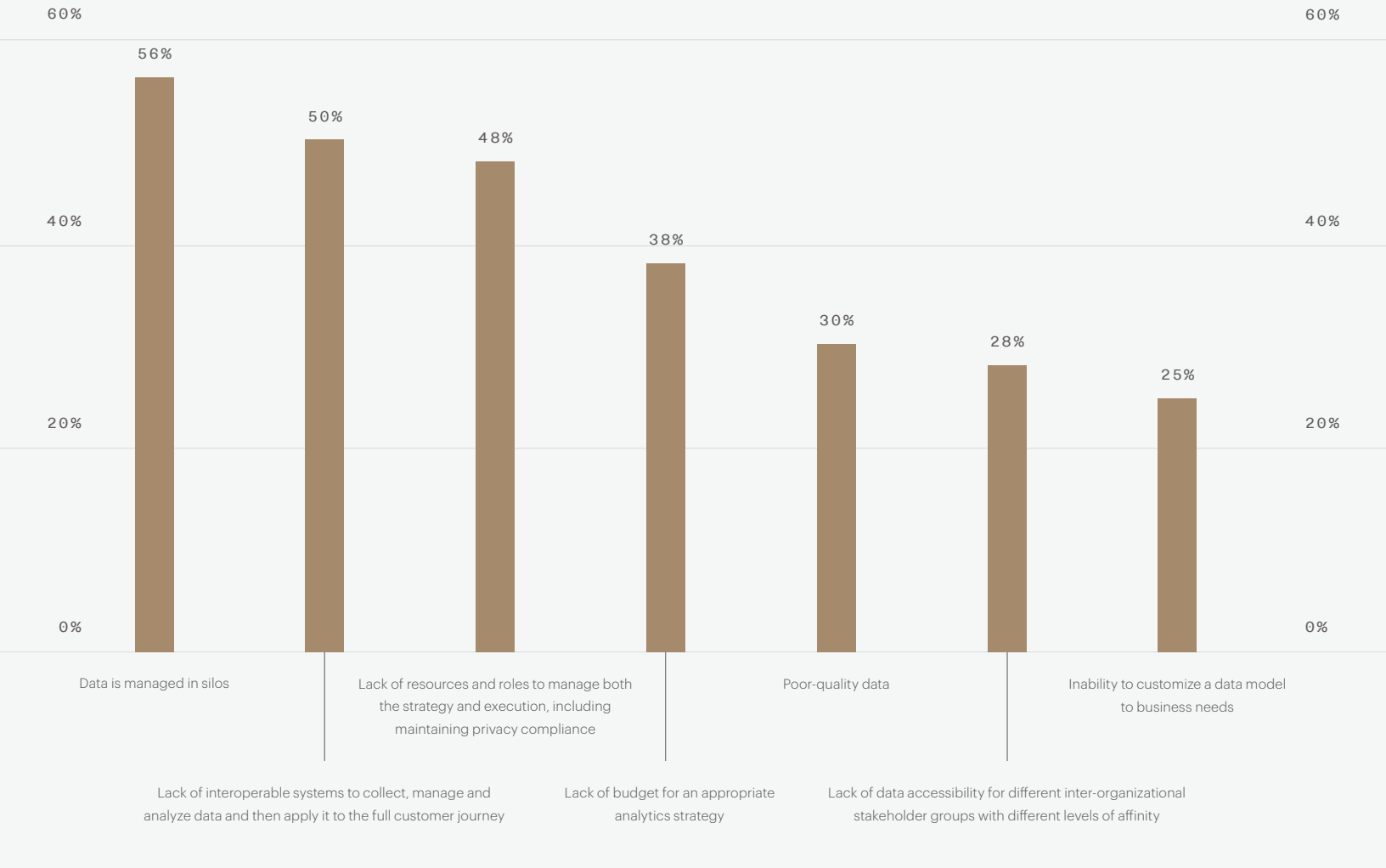
Audience data and analytics are the lifeblood of the advertising and publishing ecosystem, as they help teams deliver relevant content to the right audiences. Publishers and brands are working to extend their insights beyond the most commonly leveraged digital touchpoints; they are after an even more complete picture of the customer journey. Projections reflect this trend: the size of the [global product analytics](#) market alone is expected to grow from \$9.6 billion in 2021 to \$25.3 billion in 2026.

When working with high-quality data, a central challenge for analytics teams is dealing with large quantities and wide varieties, consistency factors in tracking user journeys and navigating seemingly infinite data pools. Ongoing [privacy legislation](#) and [third-party cookie deprecation](#) are also challenging the ways organizations can identify users, pushing teams to find new standards for capturing data that prioritizes privacy and user consent.

Organizations are also facing many challenges to successfully managing and using data internally. Our survey respondents said that data silos (56%), a lack of interoperable systems (50%) and a lack of resources to manage execution (48%) are some of the top barriers to effectively using data at their companies.

**Q. What are the key obstacles to successfully managing and using data at your organization?** Select all that apply.

TOP DATA CHALLENGES



Restrictive structures and policies, data that isn't vetted and technology that limits data sharing are key reasons why respondents are seeing data silos at their organizations.

## Solutions for various analytics teams

Across the advertising landscape, there are different analytics solutions for different needs. It's important for publishers and brands to distinguish between the following solutions and determine how they can be combined:

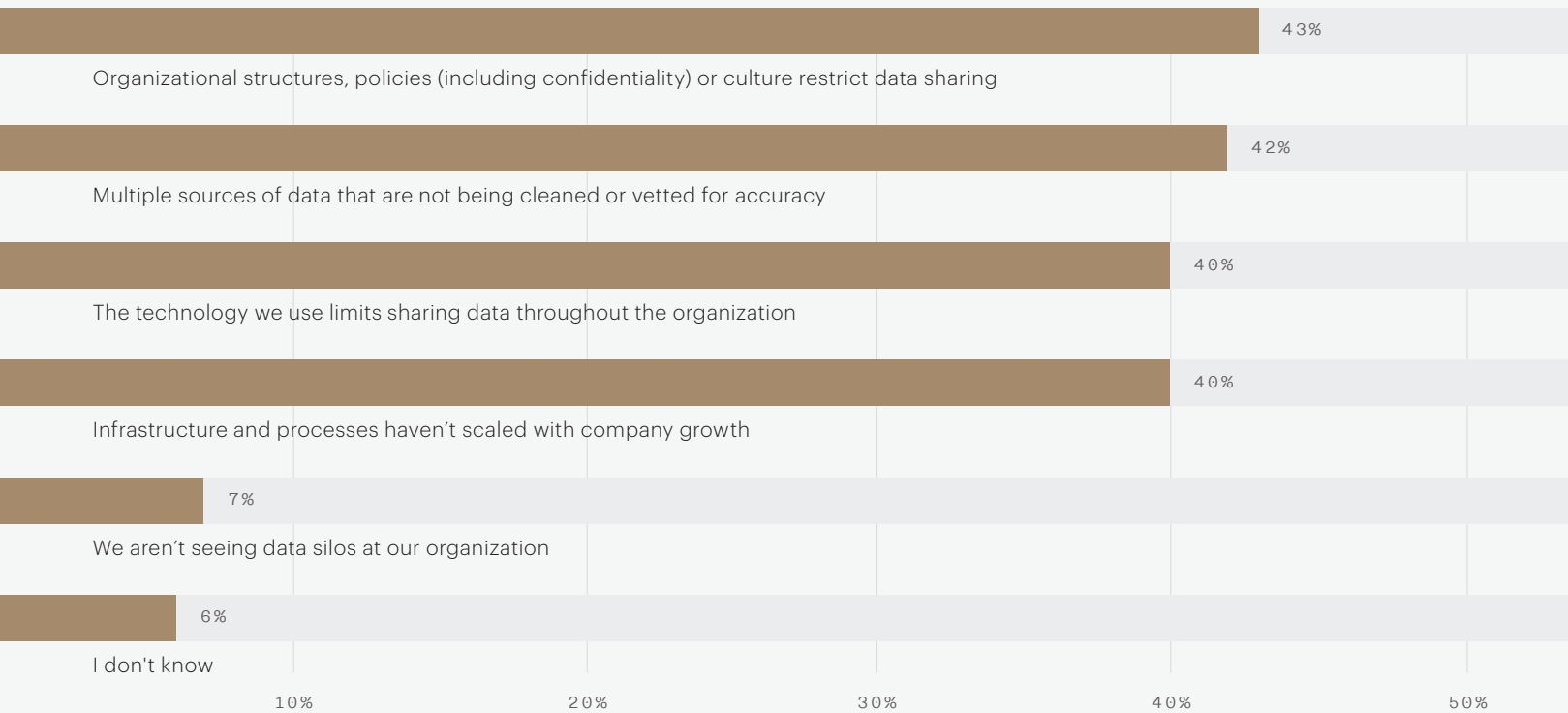
**Marketing analytics.** These analytics tools are meant to address specific marketing needs and issues, from monetization to metrics to traffic acquisition.

**Product analytics.** Teams use these tools to measure interactions that are specific to a particular product or service.

**In-house analytics.** In-house tools can be customized for company needs, meaning teams can control the types of data collected and processed for cleaning and internal distribution.

### Q. If data is siloed, why is this the case? Select all that apply.

#### CAUSES OF DATA SILOS



## Data and analytics in a privacy-focused world

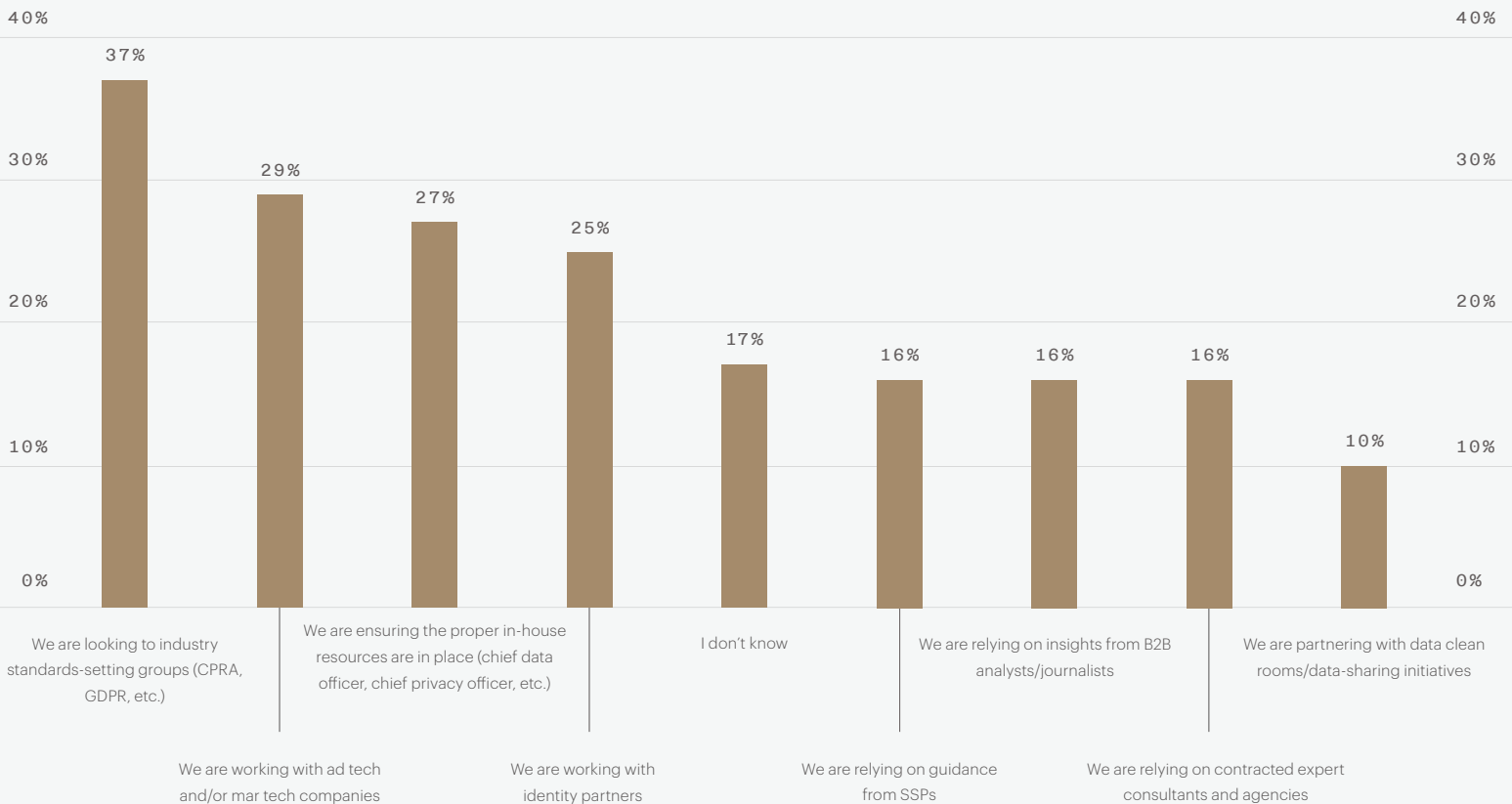
Publishers are operating in an ecosystem impacted by shifting [global privacy regulations](#) and data deprecation. Safari and Firefox have already blocked third-party cookies on their browsers, with Google Chrome scheduled to follow suit by the end of 2023. These changes highlight the importance of first-party and zero-party data strategies, in which users give explicit permission for organizations to collect their information.

To prepare for third-party cookie deprecation in 2023, our respondents are relying on guidance from industry standards-setting groups behind such regulations as the California Privacy Rights Act (CPRA) and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (37%), as well as working with ad tech and mar tech companies (29%) and ensuring appropriate in-house resources and roles are in place (27%).

### Q. Ahead of third-party cookie deprecation, what steps are your company taking to cultivate a privacy-forward culture?

Select all that apply.

#### CREATING A PRIVACY-CENTRIC CULTURE



## Data coherence and consistency: challenges and solutions

A challenge for many organizations is keeping data accurate, clean and consistent, especially in light of the sheer amount of incoming audience information, which is a feat to manually track. Andy Isaacs, head of data and analytics at multichannel broadcaster UKTV, said the company uses AI tools to spot deviations or potential errors, but it's difficult to completely avoid incorrect data.

"There are a multitude of reasons for incorrect data. No matter how much you test and monitor changes, there will inevitably be incorrect data sets that slip through and get into production," said Isaacs. "The challenge is you can't legislate for all the different errors that might happen."

For companies such as RTÉ, Ireland's public service broadcaster, getting reliable data from numerous apps and websites relies on third-party developers implementing a consistent code.

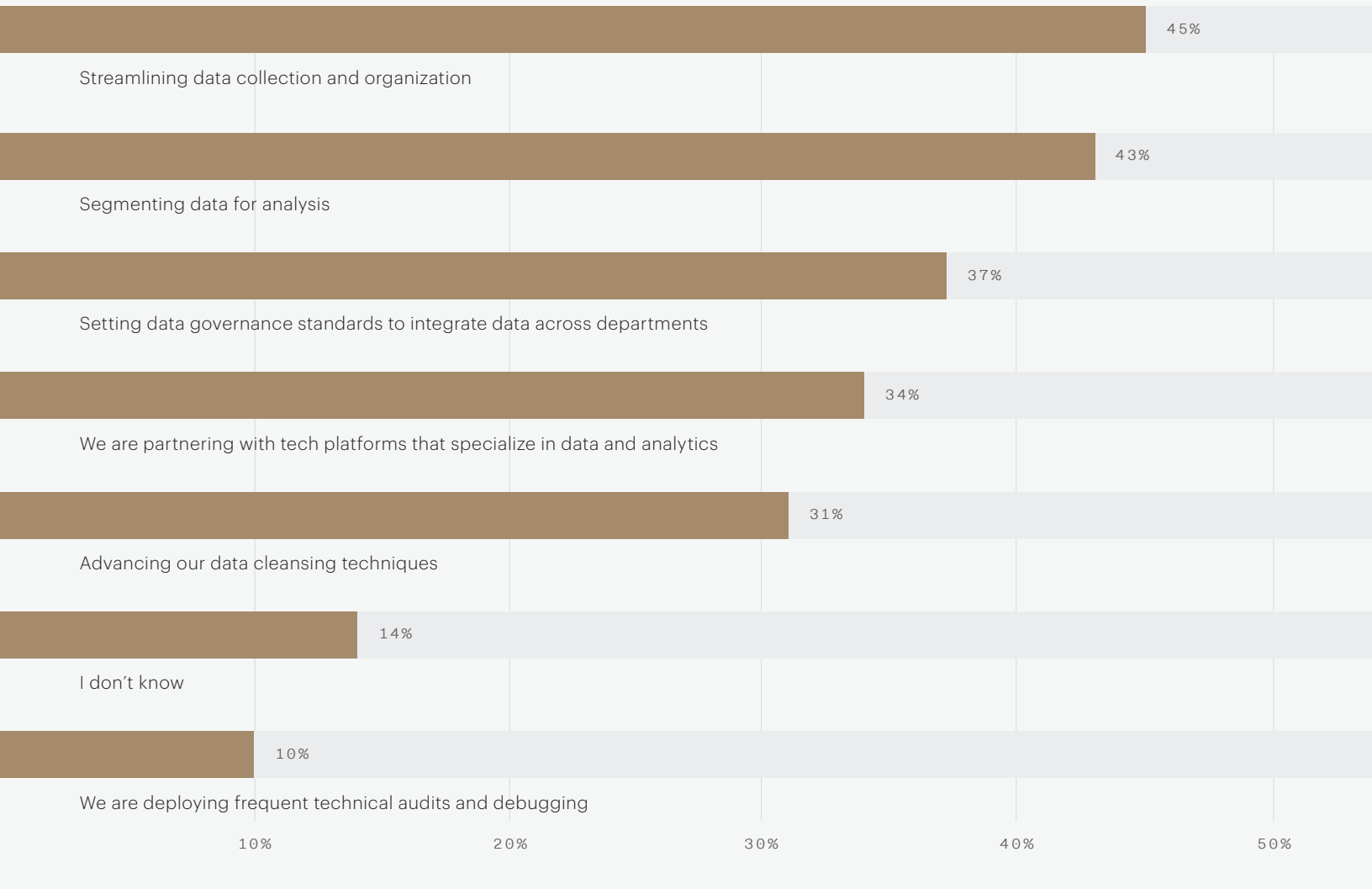
"It all goes back to that data model and knowing exactly what we're looking for. We want to make sure what comes out of the app has the same labeling rules as the website," said Neal Cantle, digital audience research officer at RTÉ. "Getting that labeling right is critical, as well as getting the correct data from our third-party partners and making sure it's in the right format. For example, data coming from a TV platform has to be granular so we can see every single event and match it to our granular analytics."

Cantle also said that keeping data consistent and reliable requires input from all departments at an organization.

"We obviously need our audience insights team's perspective, but we also need the input of our commercial team, which has their own advertising measurement needs. It's important to get the editorial department's input as well," said Cantle. "We additionally need the input of our development technology teams, because they oversee implementation. They need to make sure they can extract the right data from systems."

**Q. What are the steps your organization is taking to ensure data is reliable?** Select all that apply.

IMPROVING DATA RELIABILITY

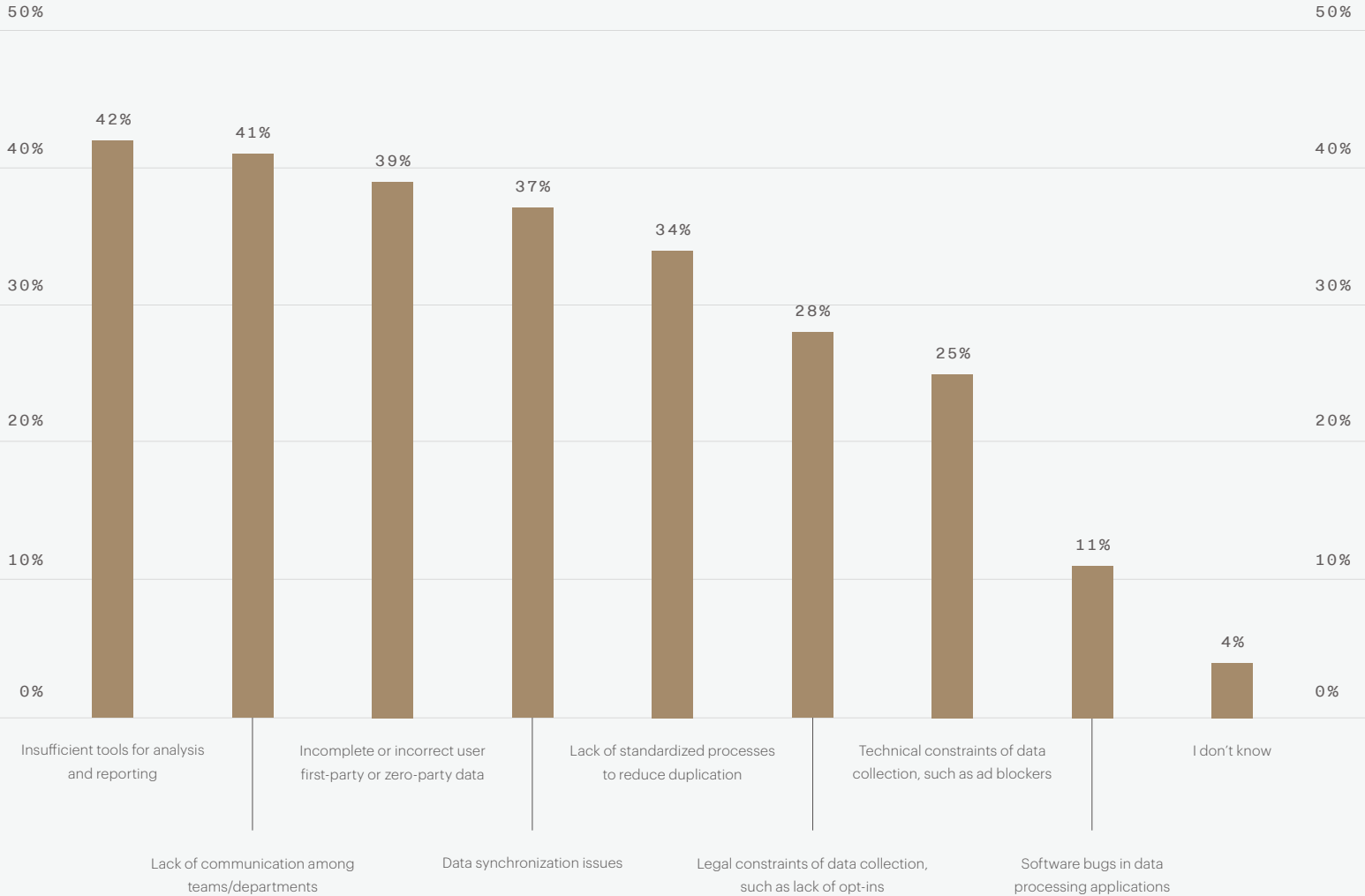


To improve reliability, our respondents are taking steps such as streamlining data collection and organization (45%), segmenting data for analysis (43%) and setting data governance standards across departments (37%).



**Q. What are the challenges around data coming out clean, clear and consistent?** Select all that apply.

OBSTACLES TO CLEAN AND CONSISTENT DATA



When it comes to challenges to these efforts, respondents cited insufficient tools for data analysis and reporting (42%), lack of communication among teams and departments (41%) and incorrect first-party or zero-party user data (39%) as the main challenges to extracting clean and consistent data.

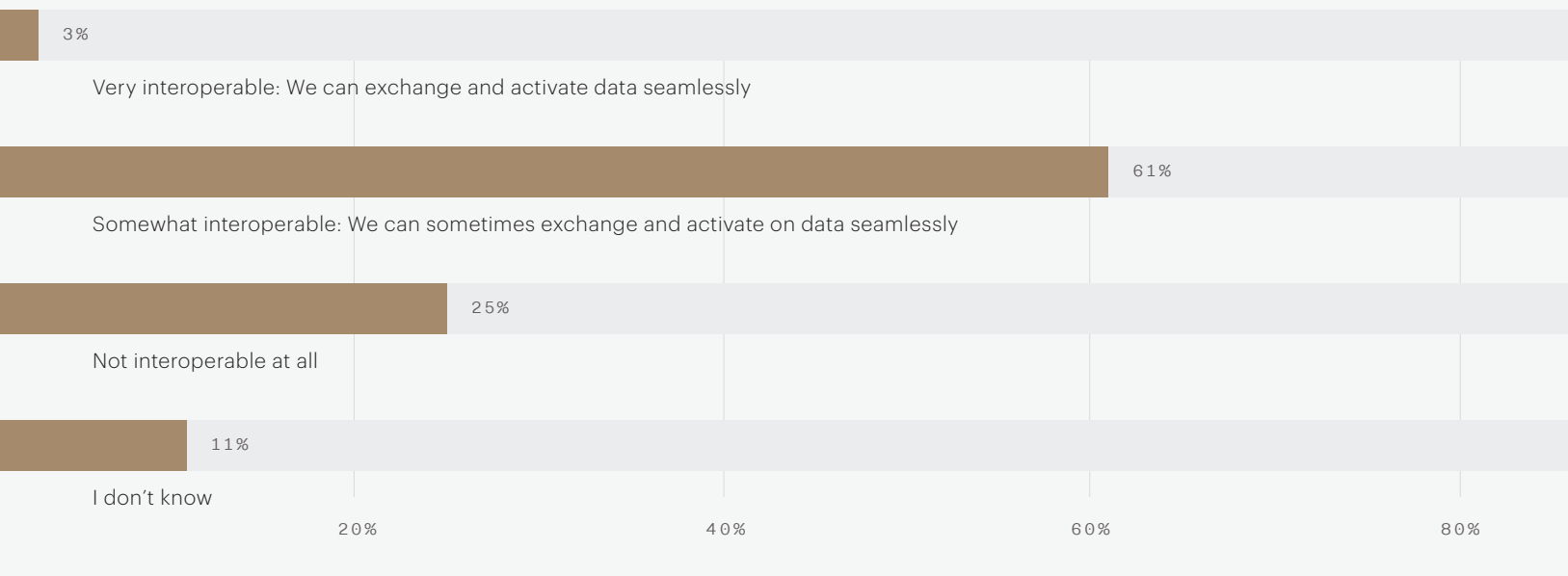
## Approaches to technology solutions

Isaacs at UKTV said achieving tech interoperability relies on working alongside different business units and working with technology suppliers that help improve how data flows across departments.

“We’re looking to build ourselves to the point that we all have similar data models and architecture,” said Isaacs. “This will help us be more interoperable between teams and between different data sources we have.”

### Q. How interoperable are the current systems being used to manage data at your organization?

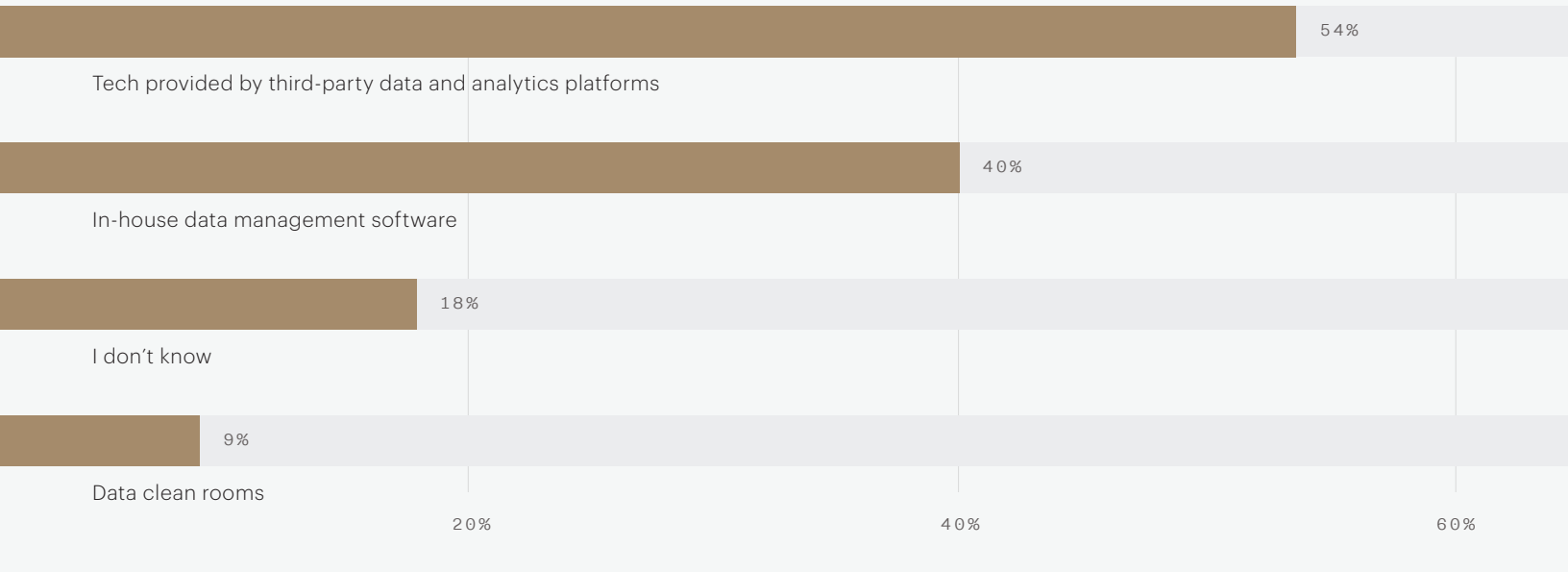
#### DATA SYSTEMS INTEROPERABILITY



More than half of respondents said that their systems used to manage data are somewhat interoperable (61%), while a quarter said their systems aren't interoperable at all.

**Q. What pieces of technology are you using to manage data flow, cleanliness and consistency? Select all that apply.**

APPROACHING TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS



To improve data flow, cleanliness and consistency, our respondents are mainly approaching technology solutions provided by third-party analytics platforms and in-house data management software.

The importance of data governance and communication

To achieve interoperability, organizations are working to improve and perfect data governance.

“Data governance means being in control of the data a company has,” said Declan Owens, a digital analytics expert at Piano. “Having data governance is important, not only to get good quality data and democratize it, but also to respond to legal obligations concerning privacy. Given the evolution and acceleration of privacy legislation, data governance should be the number one priority.”

At Piano, Owens said that some organizations have hybrid data governance models where a team can set up a “center of excellence” for testing and determining the extent of which they can extract value from their data.

“The idea of this model is to see what can be done and propose a central data structure and tools to other teams at the organization,” said Owens. “What’s great about this model is being able to align the whole company around the same goals.”

“However, teams should independently be able to choose to work alongside this model and join it whenever it seems fit. With time, the product team may adopt the structure for analyzing websites and apps. The editorial team may also want to manage their user activity based on that structure,” Owens explained.

A lack of interoperability around the systems used to collect, store, manage, analyze and activate data is also hindering analytics outcomes. Several teams at an organization could be using different platforms that have different analytics tools with different data structures. While these tools may be equipped with solutions to power basic communication between each other, they are often not built on the same model — meaning they aren’t using the same vocabulary, calculations or metrics.

“Making sure these platforms can communicate with sophistication is extremely complicated, especially in the publishing space,” Owens said. “If you’re a media group with a large number of teams, it’s really hard to make all that data interoperable and build on that data’s value. But if you have a system where data falls through governance models — which can be independent, centralized or a hybrid of both — it gives publishers the possibility of more data interoperability.”

## Roles and responsibilities for effective analytics

The structure of an appropriate analytics team ultimately depends on the type of organization and its business objectives. In general, however, an analytics team should include a group of people that have a refined understanding of data, audience measurement and performance.

In the hybrid data governance model, for example, a chief data officer (CDO) would be responsible for overseeing data governance across a company and in charge of getting projects approved and prioritized, managing budget and procuring staff for the governance program.

Roles under a CDO would include:

**Data owners** who are responsible for ensuring processes are followed to guarantee data collection, security and quality in a specific area or department.

**Data stewards** who coordinate and own administration of a company’s data lake, a central repository that stores and analyzes structured and unstructured data at any scale.

**A data custodian**, who ensures data control, preservation, transport and storage.

As they build teams and systems to solve the challenges our survey highlights, publishers need to safeguard those systems as well. For example, at RTÉ, any data the company collects is checked and sanitized by the audience insights team before being passed to other teams.

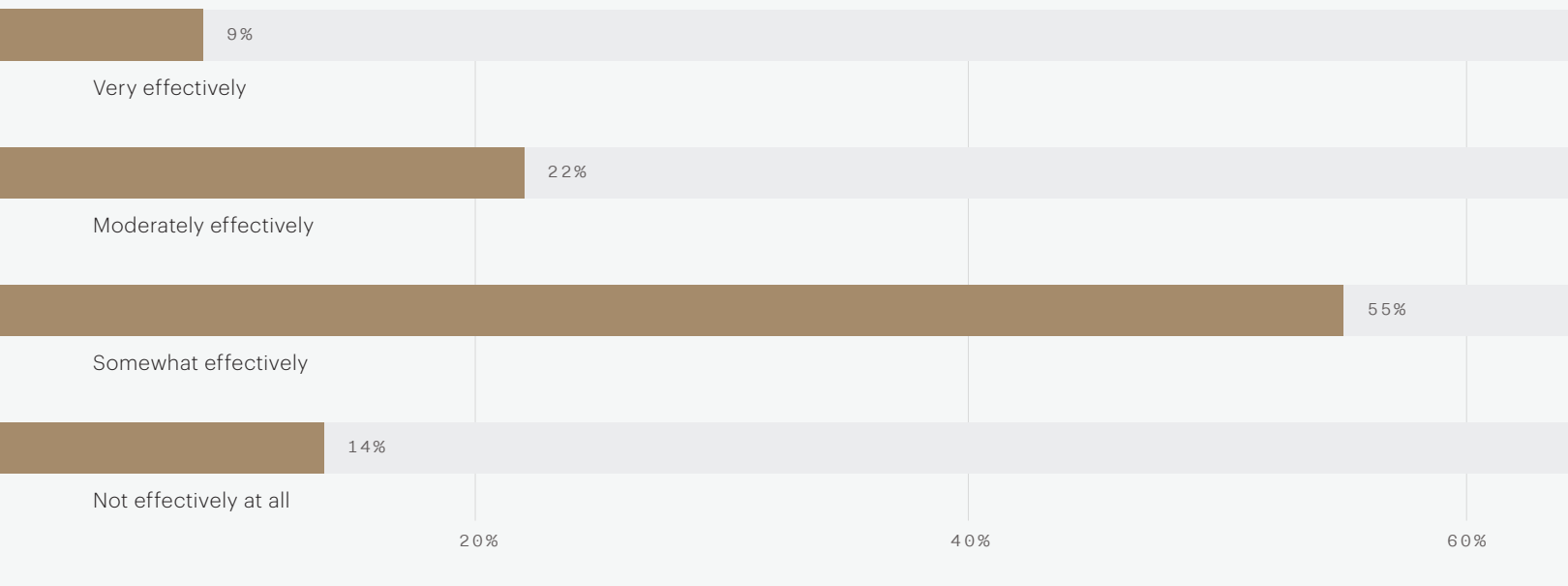
“We’ve set up a cookie management team, which is a cross-functional team that ensures any cookies from our websites and apps go through a vetting and sign-off process,” said Cantele. “We look to make sure this data complies with GDPR and adds value as well. It’s important to have a cross-functional team to prevent a free-for-all, where you could have teams putting up cookies and pixels everywhere.”

Isaacs at UKTV said that his team centralizes first-party data that the television broadcaster collects. The data and analytics team oversees a data governance model to ensure high-quality data is distributed appropriately to other departments.

“The foundation is data governance and making sure we are collecting the data that is required for our business needs,” said Isaacs. “By doing that, we have engaged all of our different end users in the data collection process by consulting them and training them on what the use cases are. This allows them to know what to look for and spot any errors since they’ve been involved in the implementation.”

### Q. How effectively do teams at your organization work with data across all departments?

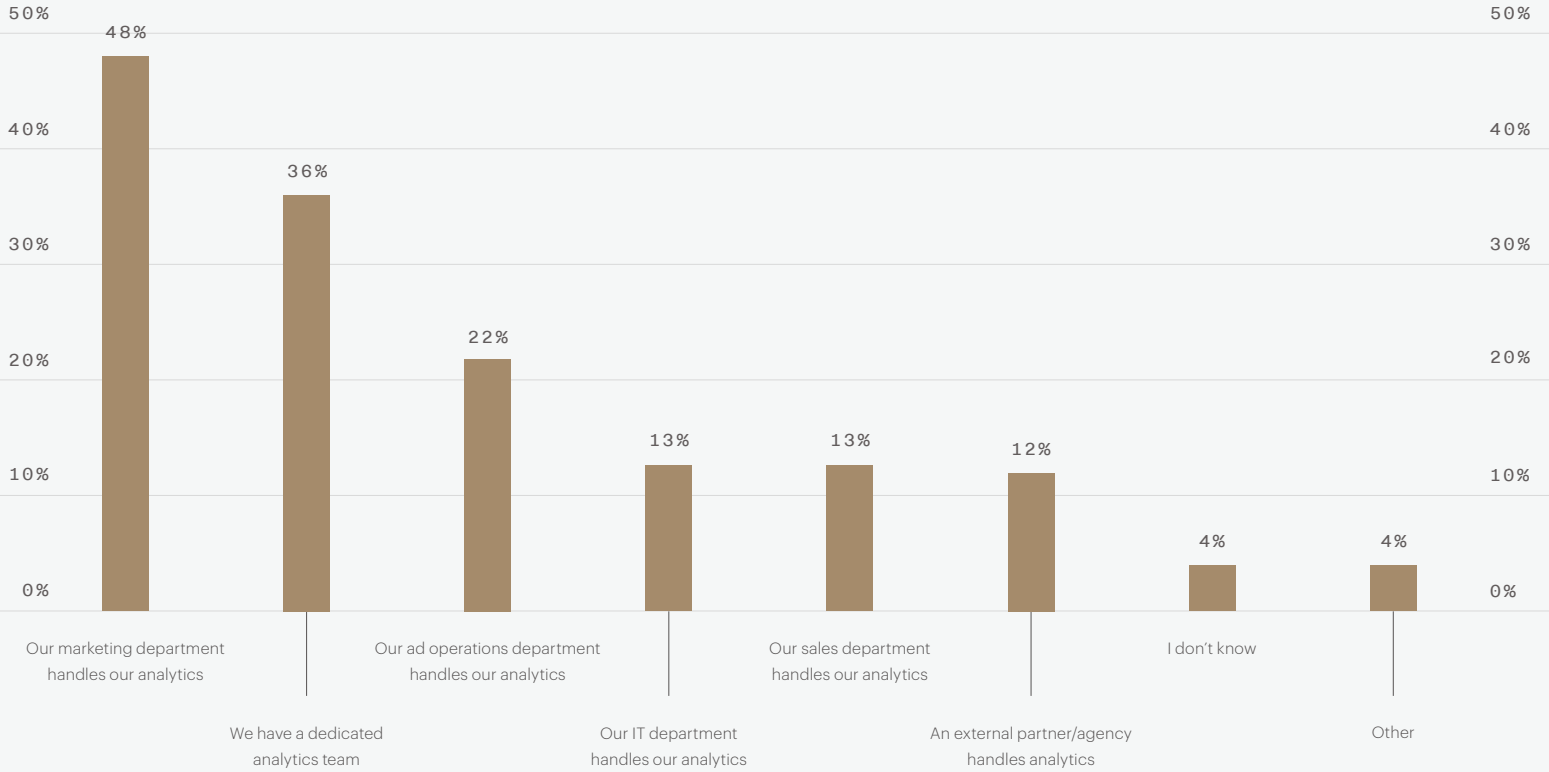
#### DATA SHARING ACROSS ORGANIZATION



More than half of our respondents said that teams at their organizations are somewhat effective at working with data across all departments in a centralized way.

**Q. Which teams in your organization are primarily responsible for the data analytics outcomes you're pursuing?** Select all that apply.

TEAMS RESPONSIBLE FOR ANALYTICS OUTCOMES



Nearly half of our respondents (48%) said that their marketing department is responsible for analytics, with respondents also citing their dedicated analytics team (36%) and ad operations department (22%).

**Deploying an effective data and analytics strategy**

“Once you have the data you need and an understanding of who will be using it, you move on to the democratization aspect: how you’re going to enable the use of this data,” said Owens at Piano. “Organizations need to ensure they have the tools to report on the data, people to set up that reporting and easily accessible data for data science teams to exploit.”

At RTÉ, Cante said that ensuring teams have direct access to the right data is critical. Currently, his team relies heavily on data dashboards to provide direct access. The organization is also expanding the amount of data sets that teams will have access to by increasing the number of sign-in accounts through its websites and apps.

“We don’t want to be in a situation where end users or business decision-makers are reliant on the insight and analytics team to run reports and provide data,” said Cante. “We need to be able to supply the correct data to people that need it. That could be analysts who need to analyze data, or the commercial team when they’re in negotiations with agency partners.”

For Isaacs’ team at UKTV, their data and analytics strategy begins with understanding the business question they need to answer. Instead of relying on a single methodology, Isaacs’ team approaches data in terms of how it will help a certain use case.

“We take a bespoke approach by identifying the problem we need to solve and the most effective way of doing that before focusing on the analysis that’s needed,” said Isaacs.

When it comes to data reporting, the UKTV team follows the same approach by ensuring reports include KPIs and information that stakeholders will be able to use to make business decisions.

“We take continuous feedback to edit and refine what’s being delivered to ensure that we can deliver useful reports and keep stakeholders happy,” said Isaacs. “It’s less about methodology and more about interacting with people. Building data science models is a small part of the job. Most of the time, we are trying to progress forward by asking questions to further our understanding.”

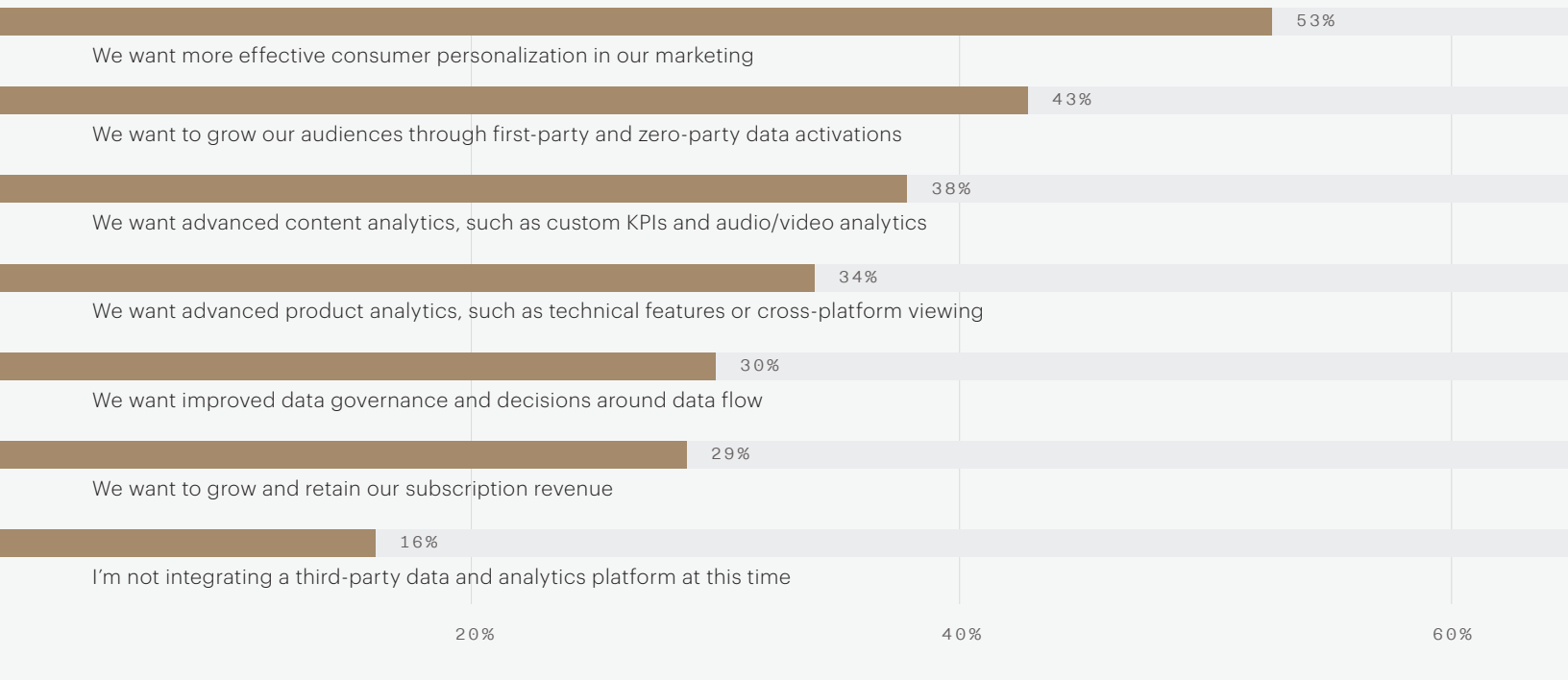
## Preparing analytics strategies for the future

To prepare for a future that includes comprehensive internal data interoperability, governance and reliability, companies are seeking out third-party technology partnerships for guidance and execution.

Respondents who are integrating third-party technology platforms are doing so for reasons that include improving consumer personalization, growing audiences through first- and zero-party data tactics and obtaining advanced content analytics such as custom KPIs. In particular, 53% of respondents said they want more effective consumer personalization in their marketing strategy.

**Q. If you are integrating a third-party data and analytics platform, what are your reasons for doing so?** Select all that apply.

THE BENEFITS OF THIRD-PARTY DATA AND ANALYTICS PLATFORMS



Among the available solutions are third-party analytics platforms that assist in acquiring zero- and first-party data from users, which then merge together to help segment detailed audience profiles that can be targeted with relevant content.

This is especially critical during a time when customers expect highly customized experiences on the websites they visit, with content that appeals to their interests. Having personalized content, derived from zero- and first-party data insights, is a powerful pathway toward turning new and returning visitors into valuable, opted-in customers.

“The big vision is to have all of these datasets flowing together and the ability for them to merge,” said Cantele at RTÉ. “We are working with various tech partners to do that.”

In working with an analytics tech platform, RTÉ is able to make use of real-time API calls and dashboards. This helps the editorial and marketing teams make tactical decisions on stories to promote and pursue.



As organizations pursue tech partners to evolve their analytics strategy, they are seeking out these qualities and taking these action steps to future-proof their approach:

**Meeting privacy standards.** Before entering a partnership, it's essential for organizations to confirm that their prospective partner's analytics practices are in compliance with privacy regulations such as the GDPR.

**High data quality.** Tech providers must ensure that their clients own 100% of the data from all their sites and platforms and that they have a full view of the customer journey by avoiding the use of sampled data.

**A single source of truth.** Whether it's for reporting, segments or targeting, tools that unify, onboard, augment and activate all data points — including marketing analytics, product analytics, content analytics, transaction data and first-party data — will serve the needs of different business units without requiring disparate solutions. With all data needs in one place and served in real time, organizations have a single source of truth for all of their data when they need it.

**Flexibility to modify, delete or transport data.** Data is always changing — it becomes outdated or inaccurate or customers might want it deleted. Vendors should be able to target individual data for modification and deletion when needed to avoid discarding an entire dataset.

**Productive vendor support and dialogue.** Choosing a tech partner isn't just about gaining access to their data and analytics tools. A strong service model should include constant collaboration and flexibility to change tactics regularly to collect and analyze new data sources.

**Improving data literacy throughout an organization.** Internally, data and analytics teams should continue developing educational materials and best practices for other departments to help them better understand and analyze data sets they need through a data governance model their vendor can help them develop and implement.

**Collection to activation in one place.** Perfecting data collection and flow is the first step. The end goal for organizations is to be able to make decisions with their data to improve how they engage with audiences and deliver a better, more personalized experience. Being connected to technology that can help orchestrate that information across the customer journey to drive the desired action in each funnel stage is where companies capture a competitive advantage from their data.

Organizations are taking these steps — for their own data practices and approaches to external partnerships — to improve how data is used internally and, in turn, to create more engaging customer experiences. In a future that prioritizes user preferences around content consumption and offer redemption above all else, these are the organizations that will be set up for success.

## About Piano

Piano helps organizations understand and influence customer behavior by putting the power of insights and logic into the hands of their employees. The Piano Analytics and Activation Platform measures thousands of customer data points and acquires first-party data to more deeply engage users and then serve relevant content and experiences based on their unique behaviors and profiles. Using this powerful end-to-end platform, Piano's clients have achieved more scale, engagement and revenue by expanding the lifecycle and value of every digital interaction. Piano's global customer base includes IBM, CNBC, Nielsen, The Wall Street Journal, NBC Sports, Gannett, The Telegraph, the BBC, Kirin Holdings and more. Piano has been recognized as one of the fastest-growing, most innovative technology companies in the world by Red Herring, World Economic Forum, Deloitte and the Business Intelligence Group.

For more information, visit [piano.io](https://piano.io).