

The conversation performance gap

Independent Research
Commissioned by ReflexAI 2026

85%

of contact centers have
deployed AI

29%

say it's working

Contact centers are investing in training and QA. **Performance still isn't improving.** The reason isn't the investment. It's that training and QA don't talk to each other.

Executive Summary

Contact centers have invested heavily in training, QA, and AI tools. Performance hasn't kept pace.

Ask a contact center leader how their team is performing and you will almost always hear the same answer: we're working on it.

The tools are in place. AI has been deployed. Training programs are running. QA analysts are reviewing calls. The dashboards exist. And yet something between all of that activity and actual performance improvement keeps breaking down — quietly, consistently, and in ways that are hard to point to in a single metric.

This report is the result of a survey of 109 Directors, VPs, and Executives running contact center operations across healthcare, financial services, insurance, software, and hospitality. They were asked about their training programs, their QA infrastructure, their AI tools, and their biggest operational challenges. The findings do not describe an industry that is unaware of its problems. They describe an industry that has learned to live with them.

Most of the leaders surveyed can articulate exactly what is broken. They know their call coverage is under 10%. They know QA data is not translating into coaching. They know training completion is not the same as training impact. What the satisfaction scores don't capture — but the open-ended responses do — is that many of these leaders have stopped expecting a solution to exist.

Problems are described matter-of-factly, as structural realities rather than solvable gaps. That is not contentment. That is resignation. The headline findings tell one consistent story:

58%

say their training tools are NOT fully meeting their needs

61%

say their QA tools are NOT fully meeting their needs

85%

say management would benefit from additional performance

77%

do NOT have enough time for value-add work like coaching

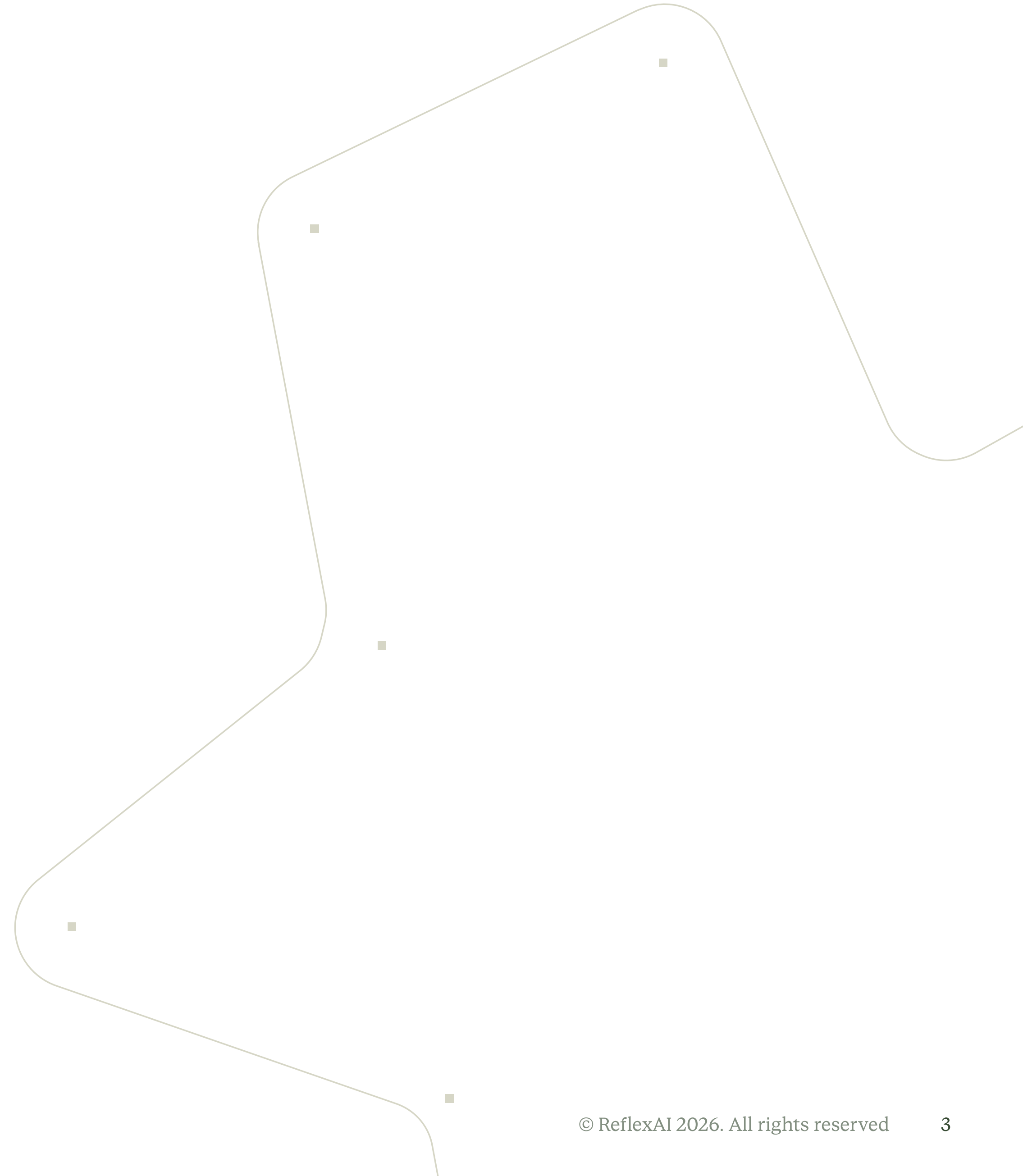
71%

are NOT effectively using AI in operations — despite 53–75% tool adoption

The core finding: contact centers don't have a training problem or a QA problem. They have a system problem. And the gap between those two functions is where performance improvement disappears.

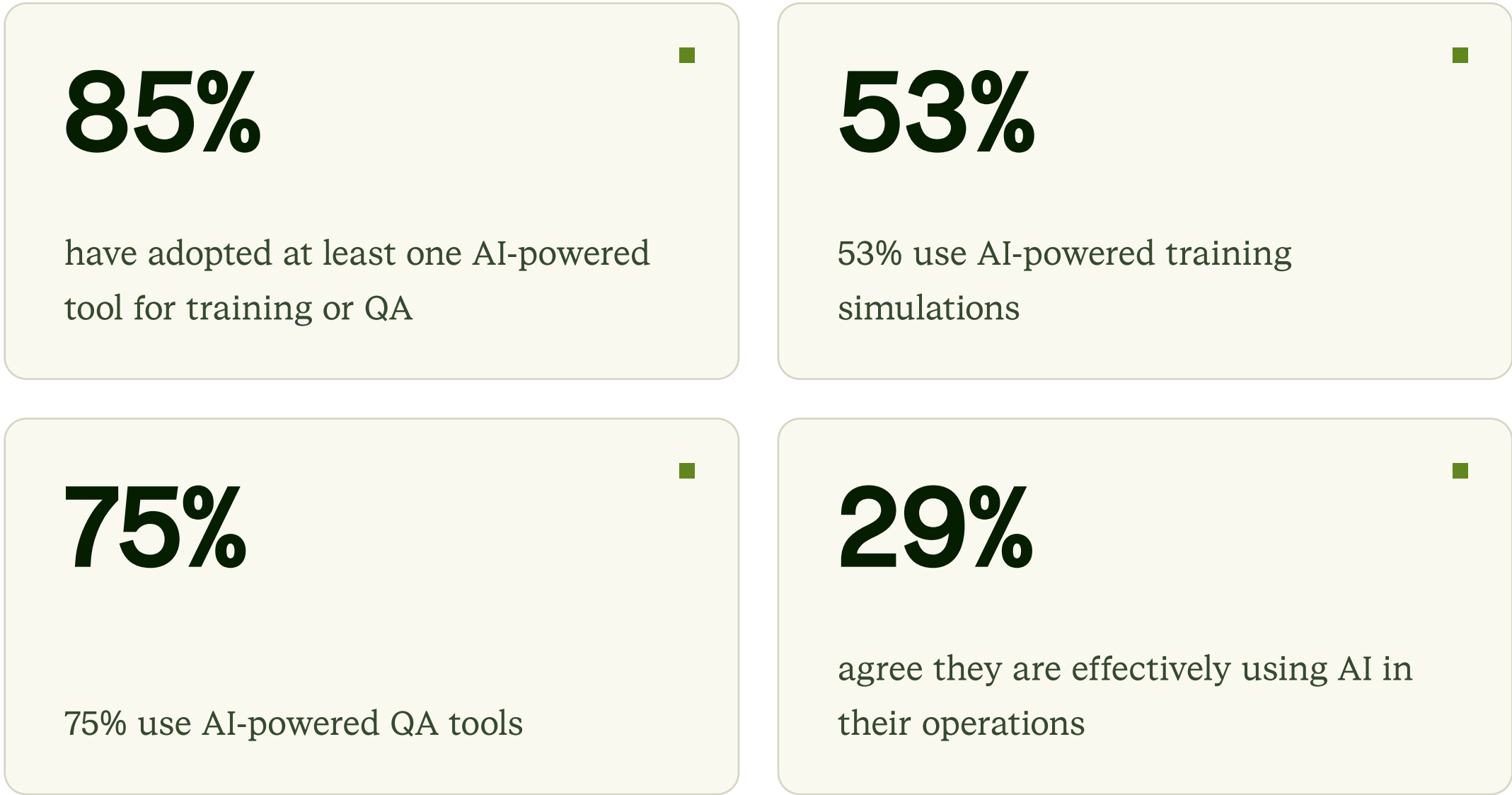
The core problem this research surfaces is not a missing feature. It is a missing system. Training and QA operate as separate functions, with separate tools, separate metrics, and no shared mechanism for closing the loop. QA identifies what agents are doing wrong on Monday. Training builds something about what was wrong six months ago. Neither team can prove their work changed anything on the floor.

The leaders in this survey who describe their situation as unsolvable are, in most cases, wrong. The technology to fix this exists. The question is whether the market recognizes it — and whether organizations are ready to demand a connected system rather than another point tool.



The Adoption-Value Gap

The contact center technology market is not immature. It is saturated — and increasingly frustrated. 85% of respondents have adopted at least one AI-powered tool for training or QA. More than half use AI-powered training simulations. Three-quarters use AI QA tools. By any standard measure, the sector has embraced AI at scale. The value has not followed.



That means for every three organizations that deployed an AI tool, only one believes it is actually working. The gap between adoption and effectiveness — roughly 40 to 46 percentage points, depending on the tool category — is one of the most telling findings in this research.

This is not primarily a technology problem. It is a deployment and integration problem. Tools are being acquired and implemented. They are not being connected to the workflows, performance standards, and coaching cycles where their value would actually be felt.

AI is still untested and we are not fully realizing the value of it

Director, Software/Technology, 51-150 agents

We just implemented auto QA but it doesn't meet my needs. It just answers questions on a form but doesn't really understand the context of the call.

Director, Hospitality/Travel, 51-150 agents

The pattern these quotes describe — tools deployed, value unrealized — is not a feature gap. It is a context gap. The tools are not embedded in a system that connects what they surface to what teams do next. Until that connection exists, adoption will continue to outpace impact.

Tool adoption has outpaced value

AI tool adoption vs. effective use in operations | n=109 contact center leaders

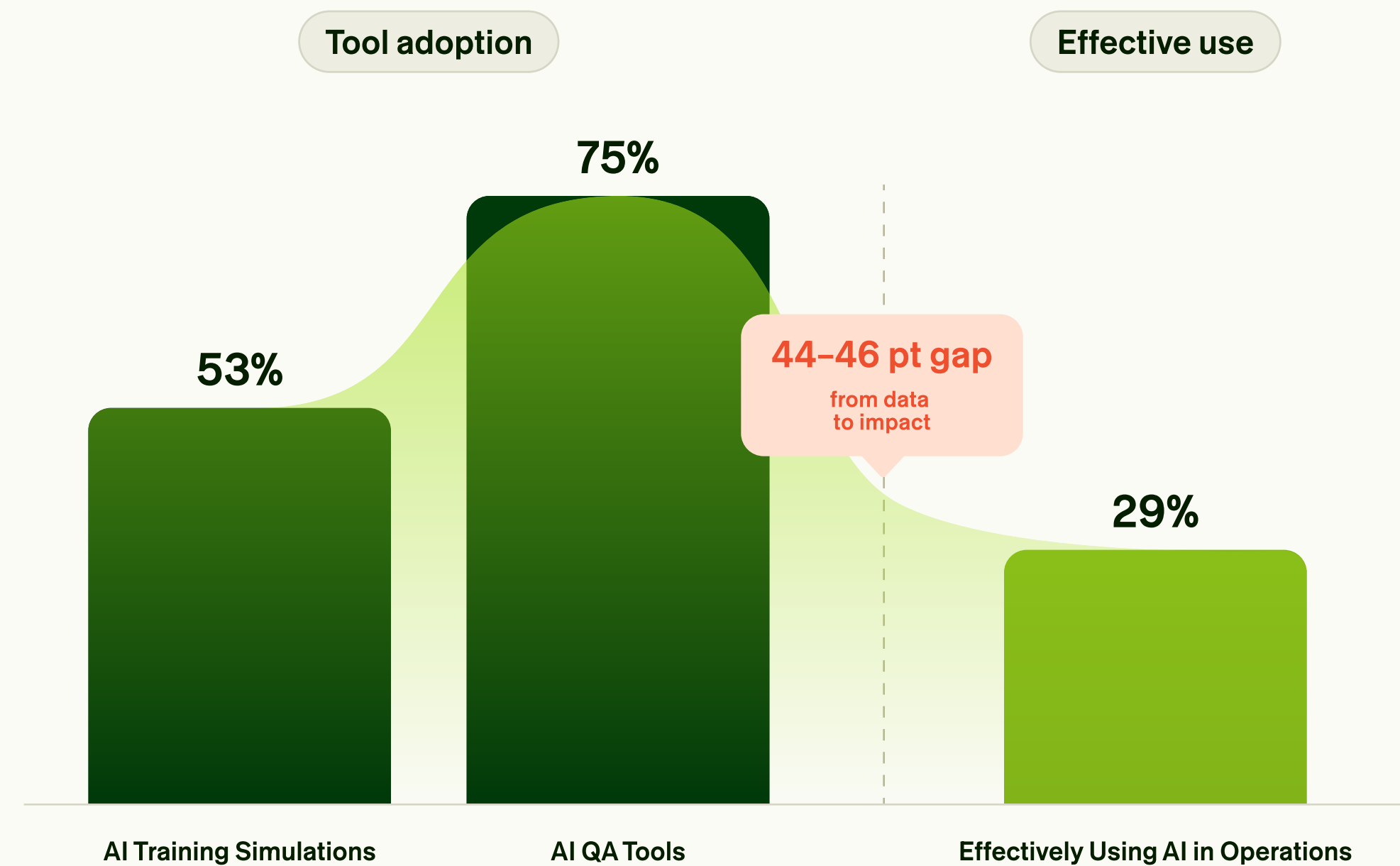


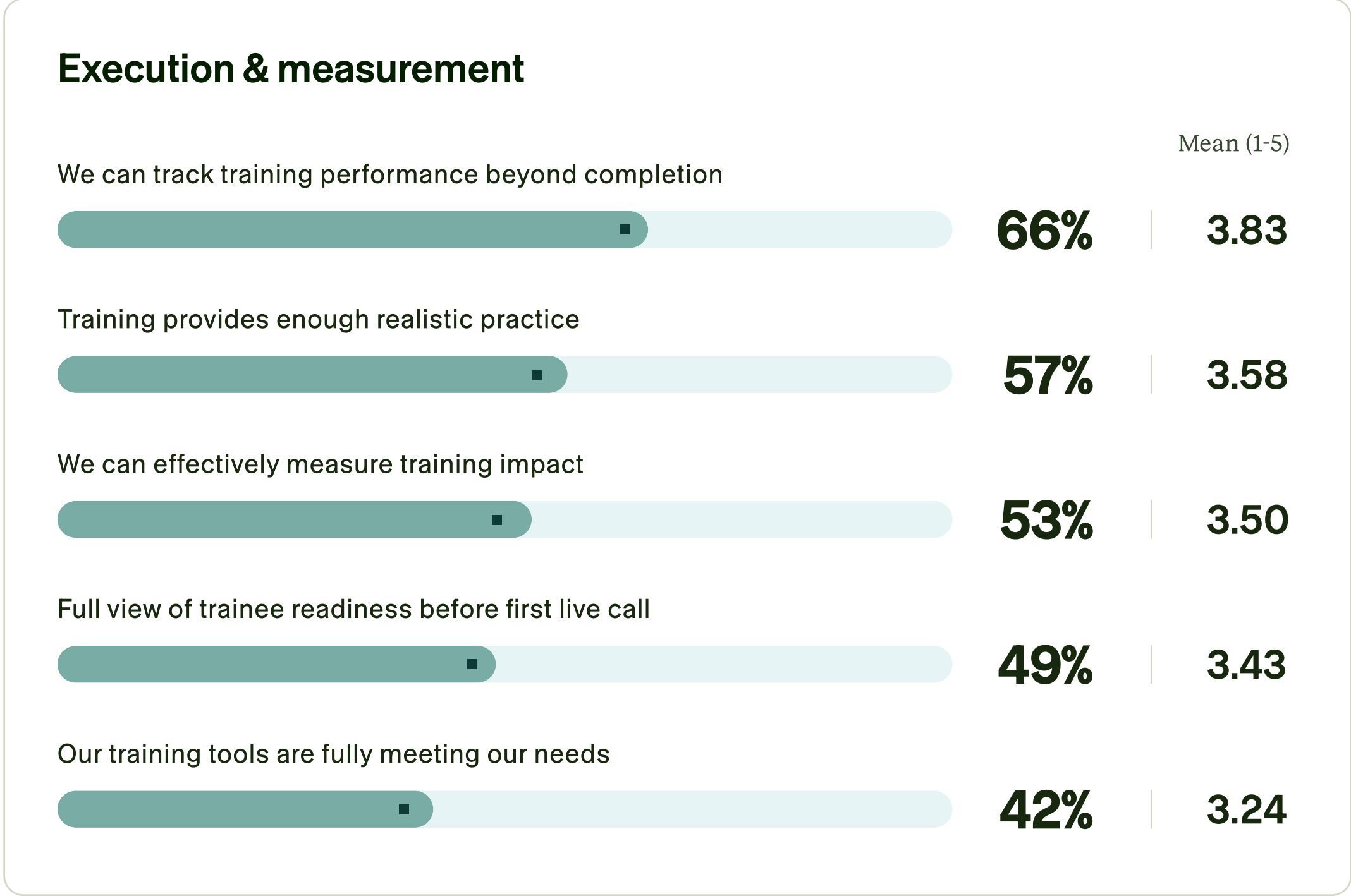
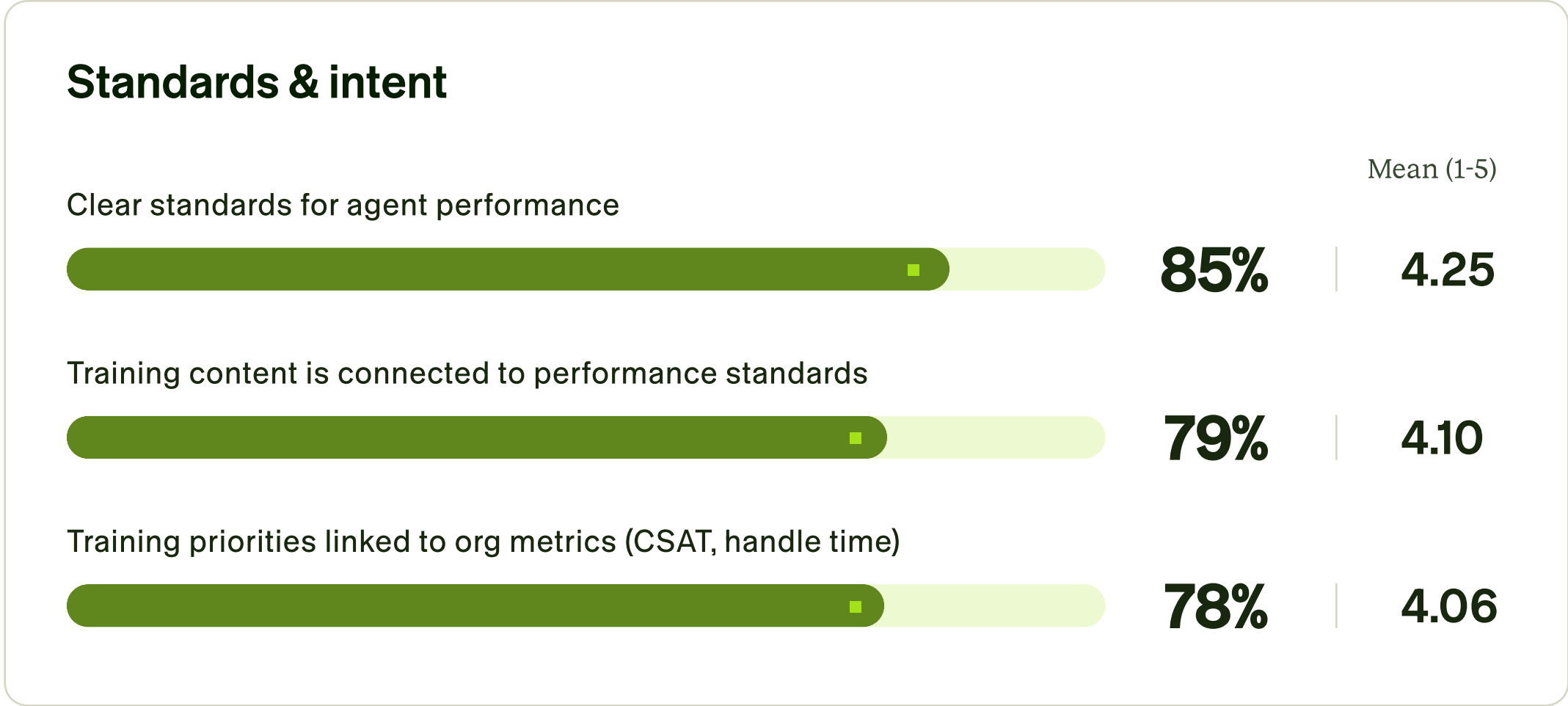
Figure 1. Deployment is not the problem. Three-quarters of contact centers are using AI QA tools. Only 29% say AI is working in their operations – a gap of more than 40 points.

The Training and QA Effectiveness Gap

The survey asked respondents to rate eight training statements and seven QA statements on a five-point scale. The pattern that emerges from both is the same: organizations are confident in their standards and data collection. They are not confident in what they do with either.

Training: Strong on paper, weak in practice

The highest-rated training statements are about alignment. 85% agree they have clear performance standards. 79% say training content is directly connected to those standards. These scores reflect genuine organizational maturity. The lowest-rated statements are about execution:



The gap between the highest-rated item (clear standards, 4.25) and the lowest (tools meeting needs, 3.24) is more than a full point on a five-point scale. Organizations know what good performance looks like. They cannot consistently deliver the practice conditions or measurement infrastructure to get there.

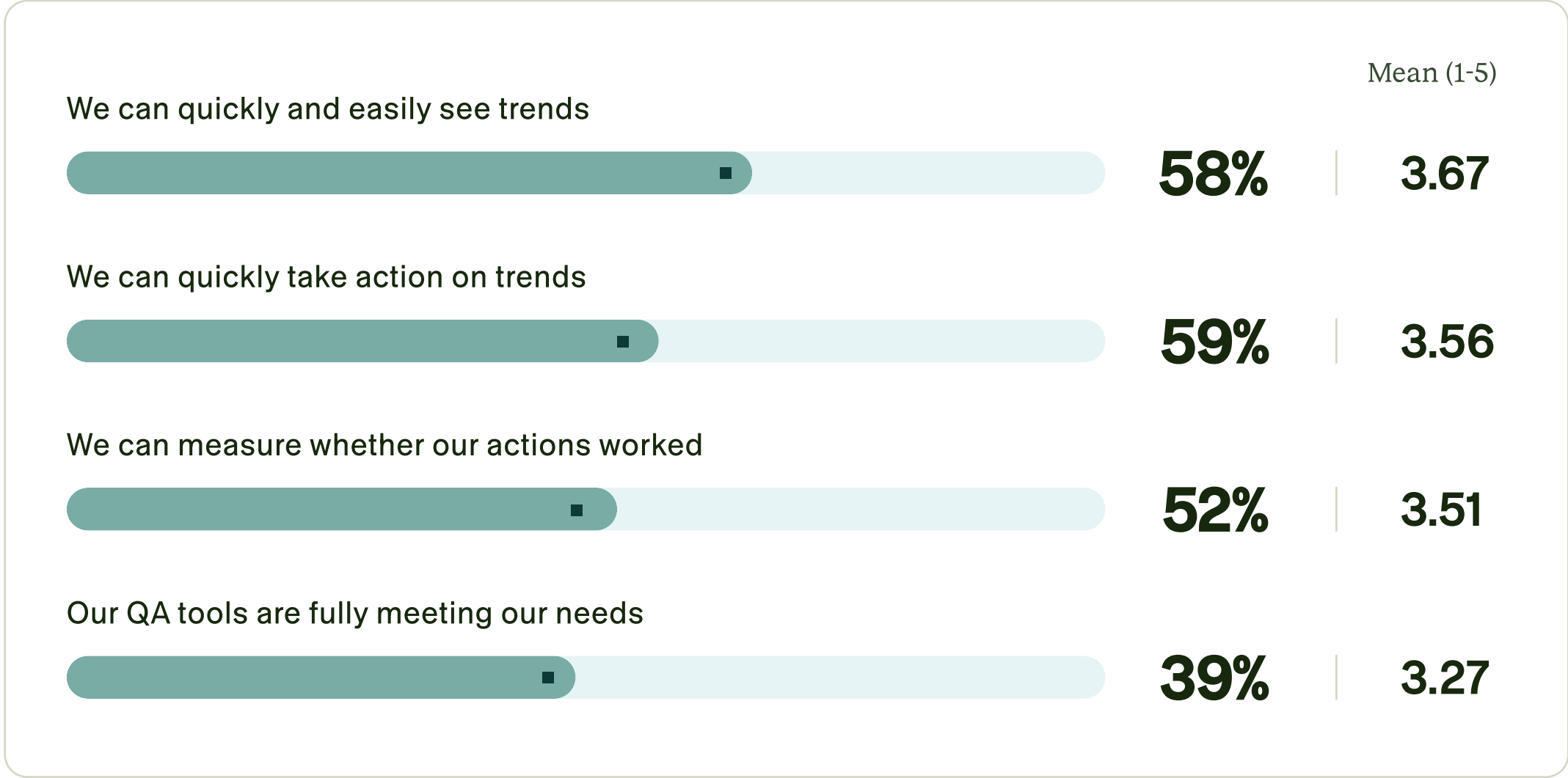
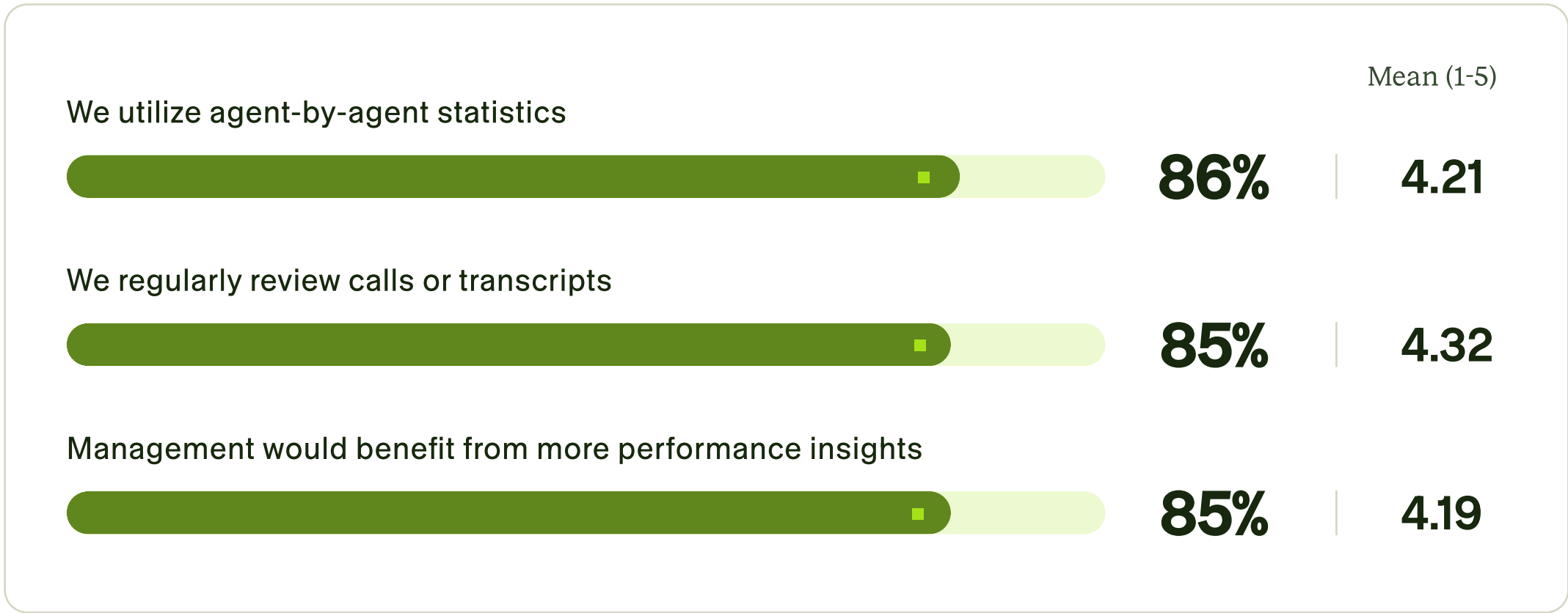
The realistic practice gap (57%) and the readiness visibility gap (49%) point to the same underlying problem: agents arrive at their first live call having completed training, but without having practiced the full range of conversations they

will actually face. The gap between classroom and floor is the gap between training completion and performance improvement.

The #1 unmet need: proof that any of it works. Organizations know what good performance looks like. They have standards, aligned content, and linked metrics. Whatthey cannot do is prove that training changes anything on the floor. Only 53% can measure training's impact on agent performance. Only 49% have visibility into trainee readiness before the first live call. Leaders are not flying blind on standards — they are flying blind on outcomes.

QA: Data rich, insight poor

QA scores show the same structural weakness, at a different stage of the workflow. Data collection is strong. Everything that comes after leaks.



86% track agent statistics. 85% review calls. The data collection infrastructure is largely in place. But the funnel leaks at every step after collection. Only 58% can easily see trends. Only 59% can act on them quickly. Only 52% can measure whether those actions had any effect. And even those numbers overstate the reality, because most organizations are working from a sample of fewer than 10% of total interactions.

Our current coverage is under 10% audit rate while the goal should be in the upper 90%... It is a manual process so all managers do not follow the same process.

Director, Software/Technology, 1,000+ agents

”

The QA data leaders are working with represents a small, manually selected fraction of actual interaction volume. The trends they see are trends in a sample — not in the contact center.

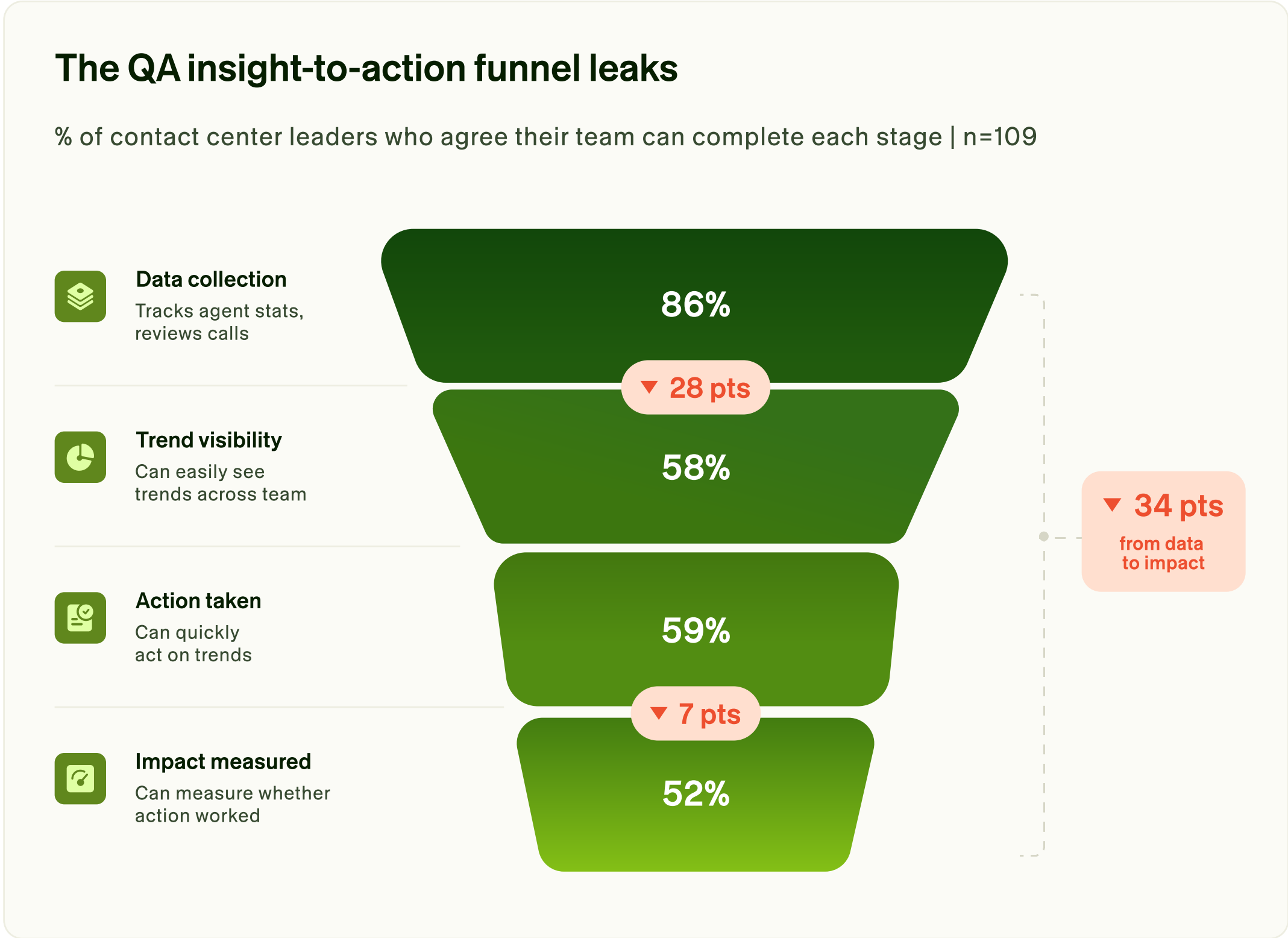


Figure 2. Most contact centers collect QA data. Only half can measure whether acting on it changed anything.

The Disconnect — and Why It's the Real Problem

The previous sections document two separate problems: training that cannot prove its impact, and QA that cannot turn data into coaching.

They are not two problems. They are one.

Training leaders cannot see whether what they build changes on-floor behavior. QA leaders cannot convert performance data into targeted development. Both sides describe the same broken handoff. And in the open-ended responses to this survey, that handoff emerged as the most critical gap respondents identified — without being asked about it directly.

That last point matters. The survey never specifically asked whether training and QA were connected. It never prompted respondents to rate the integration between functions. Yet multiple respondents volunteered the training-QA disconnect as their top priority. The disconnect surfaced on its own, which makes it a more reliable signal than anything a structured question could capture.

The leaders in this survey are not asking for better training tools or better QA tools. They are asking for a connected system: one where performance measurement and agent development operate as a single, continuous workflow rather than parallel tracks that never intersect.

“Nothing I’ve seen ties QA and training together, finding a tool that could would be great.”



Executive, Financial Services, 1,000+ agents

“Need one tool to be a linchpin between training and QA. Focus should be on agent development rather than analytics. Also insight should be real time rather than postmortem.”



VP, Software/Technology, 1,000+ agents

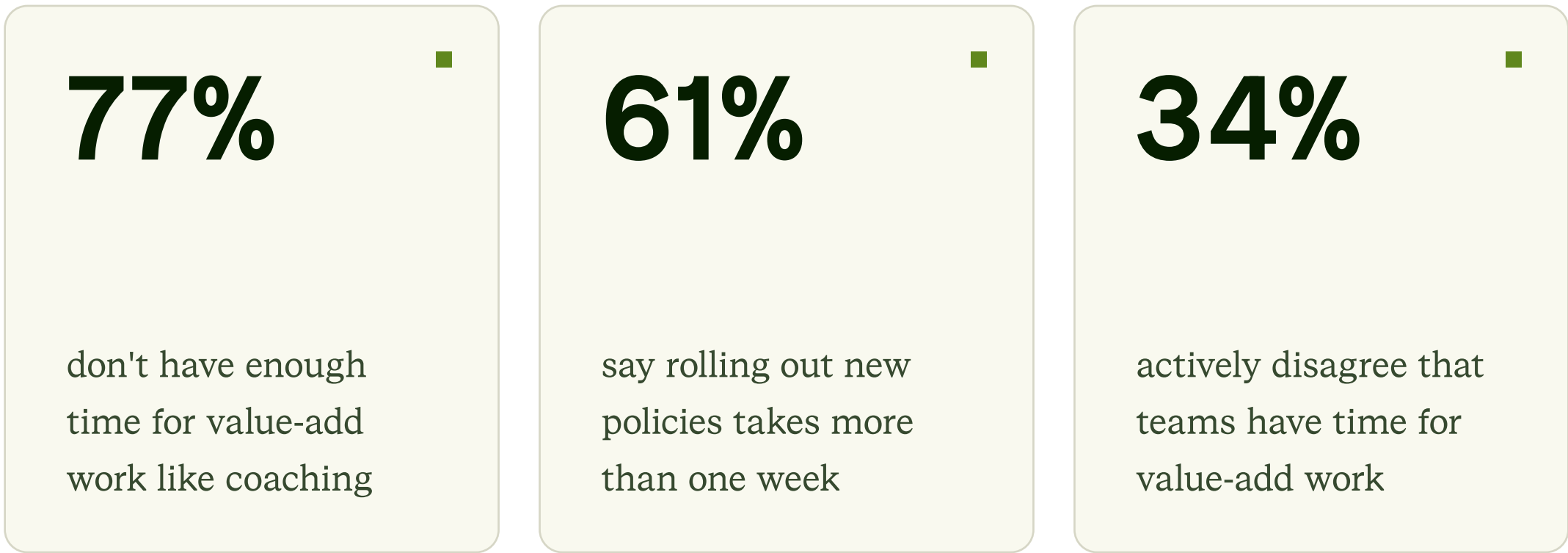
“Tools that capture 100% of interactions, structure them into data and turn that data into actionable insights would be the single biggest help for 2026.”



VP, Insurance, 1,000+ agents

The time constraint makes integration non-negotiable

Disconnected systems require human coordination to bridge. In environments where only 23% of leaders say their teams have enough time for value-add work — and 34% actively disagree that sufficient capacity exists — manual coordination between functions is not a realistic solution.



These are not marginal constraints. They define the baseline condition under which any solution must operate. Any technology that adds coordination overhead — that requires a training manager and a QA manager to manually align on findings and design a response — will fail in this environment. Integration is not a nice-to-have. It is the prerequisite for any solution to deliver value.

The cost pressure context: “Do more with less” and “reduce headcount” appear frequently across the open-end responses. These leaders are under structural cost pressure that does not show up in tool satisfaction scores but absolutely shapes budget conversations. The 23% value-add time statistic is the sharpest indication of how acute this pressure has become.

Who's Hurting Most

The aggregate data tells a clear story. Specific segments tell a sharper one.

Healthcare: a compliance problem, not just a tool problem

Healthcare respondents report the lowest training tool satisfaction of any vertical surveyed (3.00/5). Their AI effectiveness score (2.79) is the second lowest in the sample. But the source of their frustration is distinct from other verticals.

In most segments, dissatisfaction centers on efficiency: tools that are too slow, too manual, or too disconnected from coaching workflows. Healthcare respondents consistently describe a different layer: regulatory constraints, compliance risk, and the tension between standardized scoring and clinical context. For a healthcare contact center, a mishandled call does not result in a CSAT dip. It carries clinical, legal, and reputational consequences that require a fundamentally different standard of training quality and QA accuracy.

**We are behind when it comes to having modern technologies...
but we need an ROI to integrate the right tech.**



VP, Healthcare, 51-150 agents

For healthcare organizations evaluating platforms, the starting question is not whether a tool improves efficiency. It is whether the tool can be trusted with sensitive patient conversations, whether it meets compliance requirements (HIPAA, HITRUST, relevant clinical standards), and whether its evaluation rubrics can be adapted to clinical communication contexts. Tool satisfaction in this vertical will not improve until those questions have clear answers.

Insurance: deployed but not delivering

Insurance respondents report the lowest AI effectiveness of any vertical in the study (2.63) — lower even than healthcare — despite having tools actively deployed. This is the starkest expression of the adoption-value gap in the dataset. The technology is present. The value is not. Like healthcare, insurance operates under significant compliance and regulatory constraints that generic AI tools were not built to address.

The most underserved segment: 151-250 agents

Across every dimension measured — training tool satisfaction, QA tool satisfaction, and AI effectiveness — the 151-250 agent segment scores lower than any other size cohort in the survey.

Agent Count	Training Tool Sat.	QA Tool Sat.	AI Effectiveness
151-250 agents (n=15)	2.87	2.87	2.60
51-150 agents (n=37)	3.35	3.27	2.81
251-500 agents (n=14)	3.29	3.29	3.07
500-1,000 agents (n=22)	3.36	3.73	3.55
500-1,000 agents (n=22)	3.14	3.05	3.05

These organizations sit in an uncomfortable middle ground. They have outgrown the manual processes that work at smaller scale. They have not yet reached the agent volumes that attract enterprise vendors or justify enterprise pricing. Many rely on proprietary tools or less-established platforms that cannot deliver the full value of specialized solutions. They are the segment that needs the most help and is receiving the least vendor attention.

The 151-250 agent segment is not a niche. It represents a meaningful share of mid-market contact center operations — organizations large enough to have real performance complexity and too often overlooked by vendors calibrated for enterprise scale.

What Leaders Want in 2026 – and What's Now Possible

When asked how new tools could positively impact their 2026 priorities, 109 respondents described, in their own words, the same four things.

1. Automation of manual, repetitive work

The most consistent request is not for better analytics or smarter AI. It is for time back. Summarizing calls, scoring interactions, maintaining rubrics, routing feedback — these tasks consume analyst and manager capacity that organizations consistently describe as already insufficient. Any solution that adds to this workload will face adoption resistance regardless of its analytical capability. Any solution that credibly removes it will find a motivated buyer.

2. 100% interaction coverage

Multiple respondents describe moving from single-digit audit rates to full call coverage as the single most transformative change available to them. The technology to score every conversation already exists. The gap is in deploying it in a way that surfaces actionable intelligence — not simply more data that must be manually reviewed and prioritized.

3. Real-time feedback

toward in-the-moment feedback, live sentiment detection, and agent assist capabilities as the next critical frontier. When QA feedback arrives days after a call, the agent has moved on,

4. Closing the training-to-performance loop

The most specific and consistently cited priority is also the most structurally demanding: use QA insights to identify training gaps, generate targeted practice, and measure whether remediation actually changed behavior on the floor. This is precisely the handoff that organizations describe as broken throughout this survey — and precisely what they are asking for.

The path forward: from point tools to connected systems

The pattern across all four priorities is the same. Leaders are not asking for better training software or more comprehensive QA coverage. They are asking for a system that connects them — where every conversation informs what gets practiced next, where coaching is driven by evidence rather than intuition, and where improvement is continuous rather than episodic.

Call centers need a fully integrated system from training to managing to outcomes.

Director, Software/Technology, 1,000+ agents



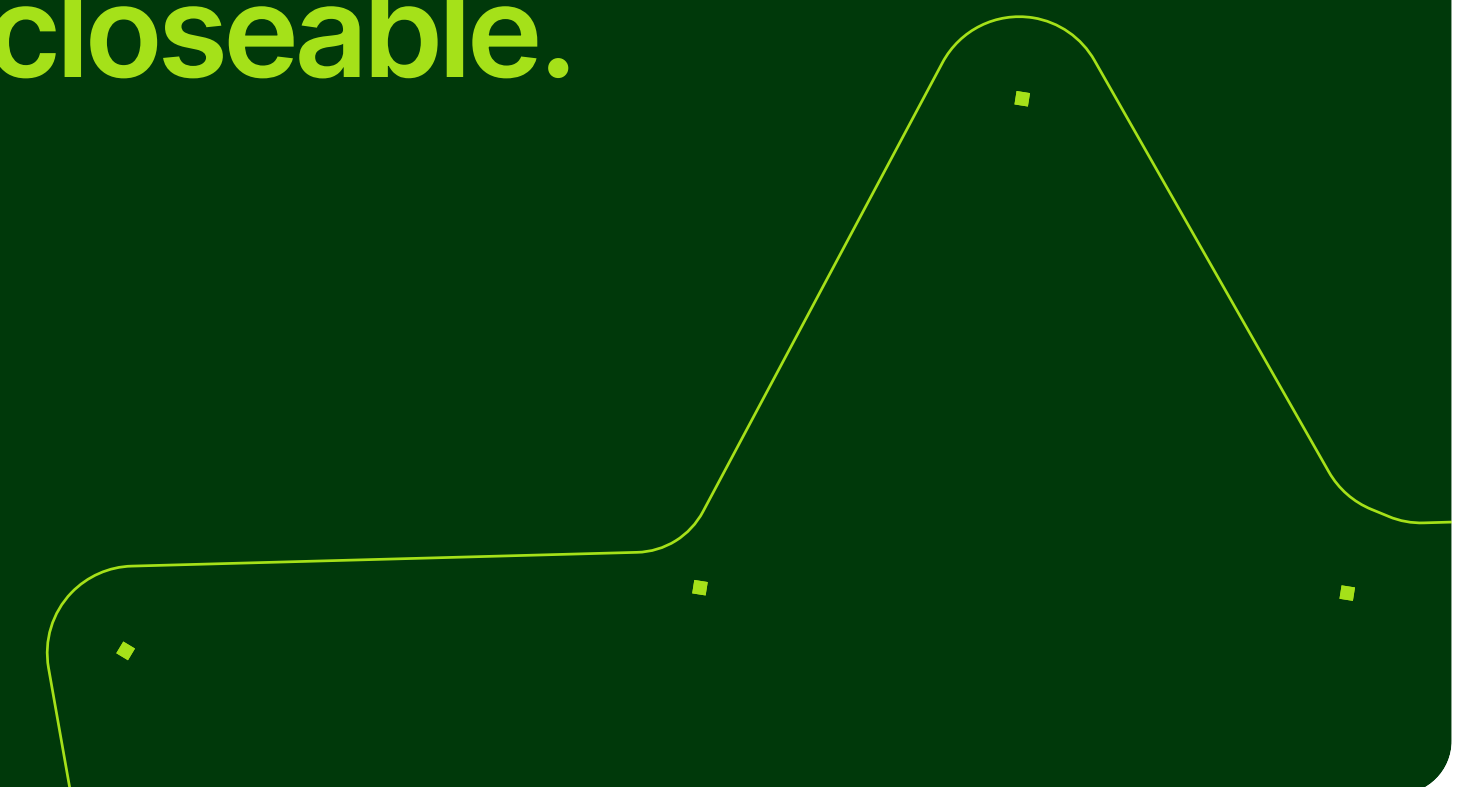
A meaningful portion of respondents in this survey describe their current situation as unsolvable — a structural reality they have learned to work around rather than a problem with a viable answer. The data suggests otherwise. The problems they describe are addressable. The gap between what they believe is possible and what is now technically achievable is larger than they think.

The next generation of contact center technology will not be defined by better training features or more comprehensive QA coverage in isolation. It will be defined by the ability to continuously connect performance data to practice — at scale, without adding coordination overhead to already-stretched teams.

The organizations that build that capability first — or adopt it first — will have a measurable, compounding advantage in agent performance, compliance coverage, and customer experience.

**The conversation
performance gap is real.**

It is also closeable.



Research Methodology

This report is based on a survey fielded by ReflexAI through the GLG research network in February–March 2026. The sample comprises 109 Directors, VPs, and Executives at organizations operating contact centers. Respondents who indicated current use of ReflexAI tools were excluded to ensure independence from any existing vendor relationship.

Sample composition

Industry	n	Share
Healthcare	29	27%
Financial Services	26	24%
Software / Technology	22	20%
Insurance	19	17%
Hospitality / Travel	8	7%
Other	5	5%

Agent Count	n	Share
51–150 agents	37	34%
500–1,000 agents	22	20%
1,000+ agents	21	19%
151–250 agents	15	14%
251–500 agents	14	13%

Industry	n	Share
Director	52	48%
VP	45	41%
Executive	12	11%

62% of respondents hold 11 or more years of contact center experience. 51% operate US-only contact centers; 32% operate both US and international.

Quantitative items used a five-point Likert scale (1=Strongly Disagree, 5=Strongly Agree). Reported “% Agree” figures represent the share selecting 4 or 5. Open-ended responses were thematically coded across 327 training challenge responses and 324 QA challenge responses.

Thank you