



**2025
Sustainability &
ESG Conference**

**Session 4A:
Deep Dive- How AI is
Advancing Sustainability
& ESG**

Ethan McCue
EFCG Senior Analyst
Consulting

Thursday, December 4, 2025

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**This will be a
conversational breakout!
Please sit in the first
three rows where you
can hear your fellow
attendees.**



**Network: Hotel Clio_Conference
Password: Cl!o2025**

Today's Presenter: Ethan McCue



Ethan McCue
Senior Analyst
Financial & Strategic Consulting &
Technology Practices



Experience

Senior Management Consulting Analyst
Financial & Strategic Consulting & Technology Practices
Environmental Financial Consulting Group (EFCG)

Education

B.A. with Distinction
University of Virginia

Everyone Has an Opinion on ESG + AI

 Nature
<https://www.nature.com/scientific-reports/articles>

The impact of artificial intelligence-driven ESG ...

by Y Xiao · 2025 · Cited by 30 — This study aims to explore the impact of AI-driven ESG practices on the sustainable development performance of central state-owned enterprises in China.

AI and ESG: the dynamic duo revolutionising sustainable reporting

AI has the potential to enhance ESG reporting and drive sustainable practices across various industries.

 Financial Times
<https://www.ft.com/content>

Letter: Artificial intelligence can ride to the rescue of ESG

Jun 17, 2025 — AI makes ESG measurable. Natural language tools can link ESG promises to actual performance. On emissions goals, AI scans your supply chain ...

 HBR
Climate Change

The Uneven Distribution of AI's Environmental Impacts

 VALE Climate Connections
ARTICLES ▾ EN ESPAÑOL ▾ RADIO PROGRAM ▾ ABOUT ▾

What you need to know about AI and climate change

NEWSLETTER

 UNEP - UN Environment Programme
<https://www.unep.org/news-stories>

AI has an environmental problem. Here's what the world ...

Nov 13, 2025 — Globally, AI-related infrastructure may soon consume six times more water than Denmark, a country of 6 million, according to one estimate. That ...

 MIT News
<https://news.mit.edu/explained-generative-ai-environ...>

Explained: Generative AI's environmental impact

Jan 17, 2025 — Rapid development and deployment of powerful generative AI models comes with environmental consequences, including increased electricity demand and water ...

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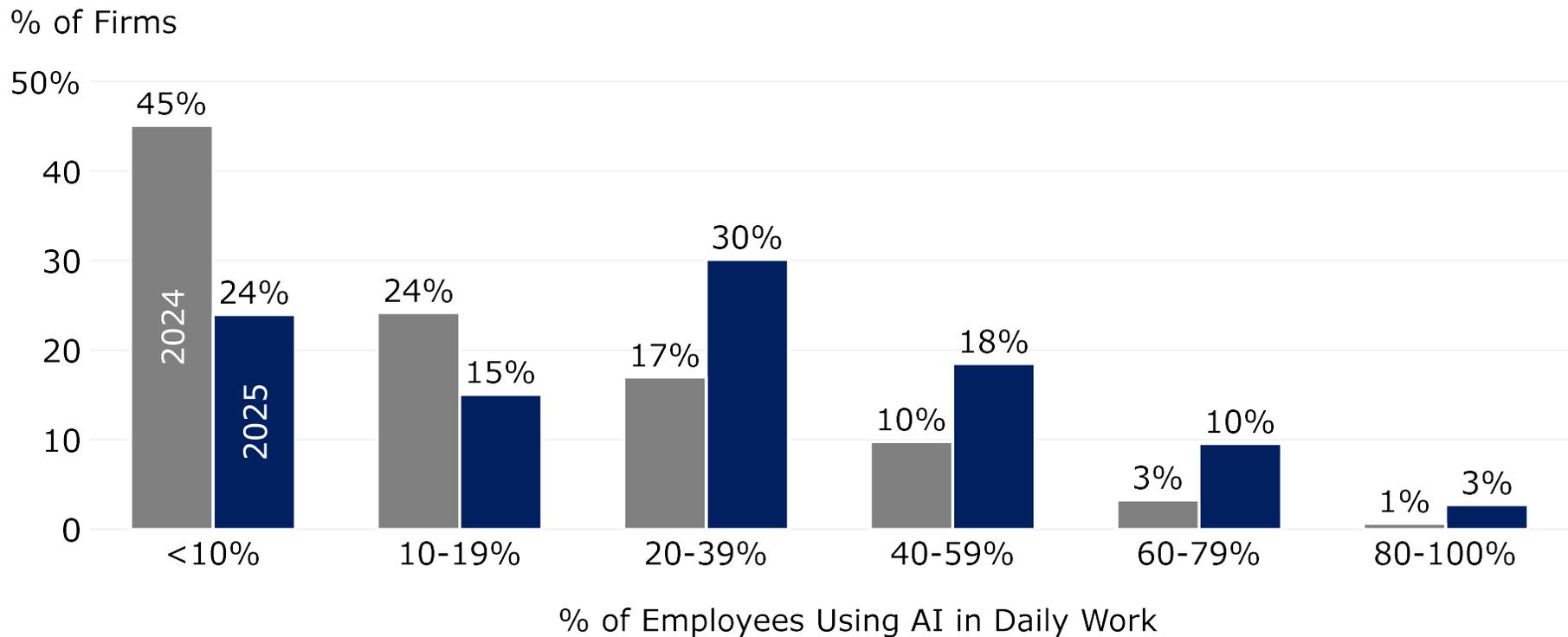
“How AI is Advancing Sustainability & ESG”

What comes to mind?

Employee Usage of AI Has Increased Meaningfully



In fall 2024, on average 15% of employees used AI in daily work; today, that figure has jumped to 30%.



Source: 2024 EFCG CEO Survey; 2025 EFCG CEO Survey

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Where are Firms Actively Using Generative AI Today?

	 Proposals, Marketing & Business Development	 Project Management & Resource Planning	 Technical Analysis & Deliverable Production	 Coding & Workflow Optimization
Creating Value	Summarizing and reviewing RFPs and proposals	Expediting reviews of project performance to improve delivered value	Structuring large amounts of unstructured or qualitative information	Rapid development of new technical analysis, products, and features
Driving Efficiency	Creating and reformatting marketing materials and proposals	Transcribing and summarizing meeting notes	Automating repetitive data processing tasks	Reducing manual coding and error correction

Many firms are finding value by upskilling staff to use generalist models and existing data rather than building custom solutions. Many are also finding value in COTS AI solutions in the near-term.

Market Leaders are Reaping Benefits on AI Adoption



Aspirations may diverge from reality for firms who are not actively investing and driving employee adoption.

Where Do Firms Aspire to Be?



What Does It Look Like?

**Market Leader:
AI as Core Operating Capability**

- >50% of staff are frequent / daily active users
- 5-7 firmwide AI products
- >80% of proposals and >50% design reviews include AI step with traceable sources / citations
- >50% of R&D investment in AI

**Fast Follower:
AI as Aggressive Area of Growth**

- >30% of staff are frequent / daily active users
- 3 live products are in use by >30% of staff
- >50% of proposals and >25% design reviews touch an AI step

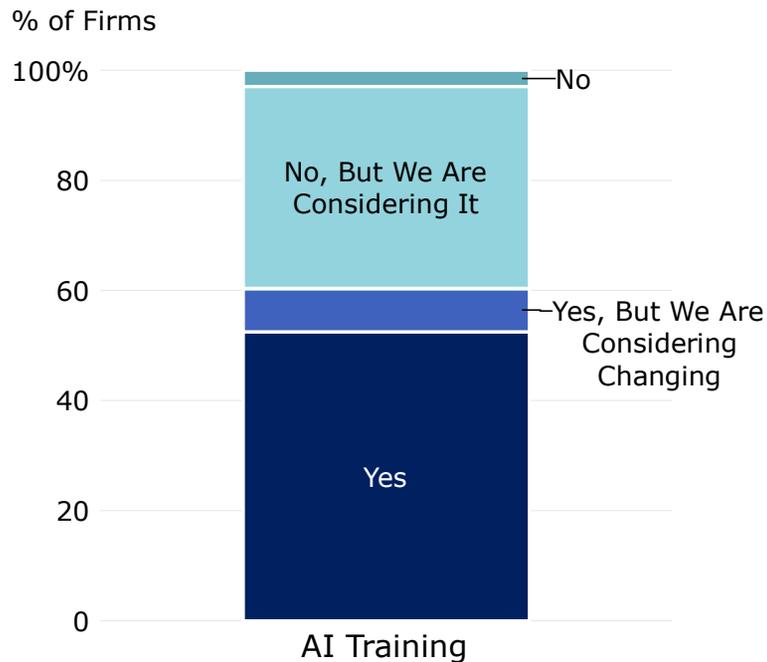
Source: 2025 EFCG CEO Survey Database

AI Training Will Be Critical to Widespread Adoption

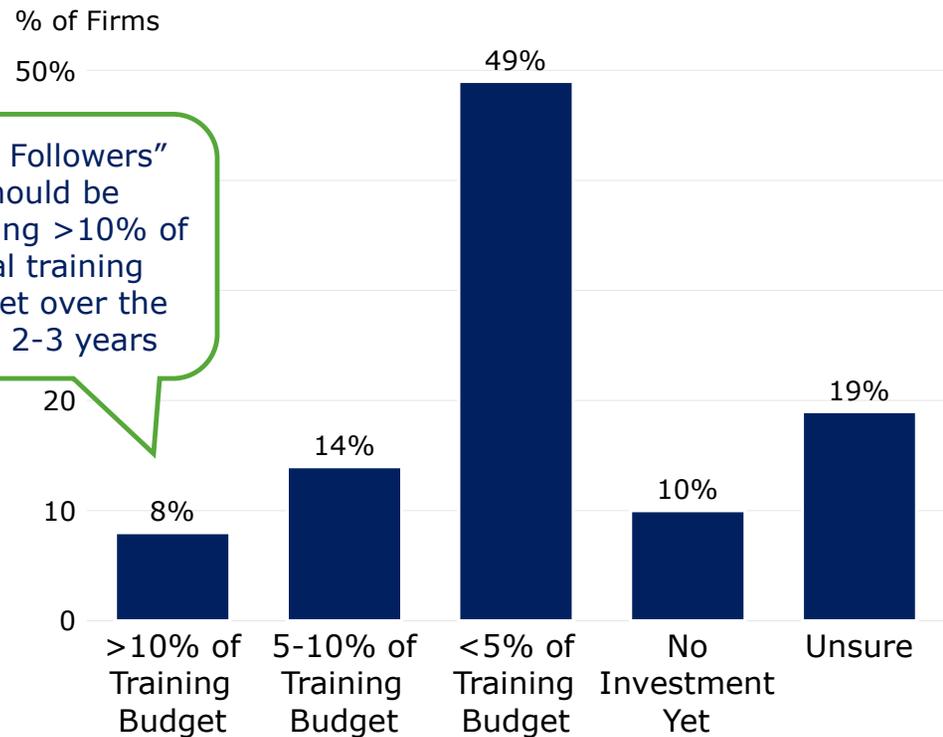


AI training is common among AEC firms; however nearly half dedicate less than 5% of training budgets to it.

Offering GenAI Training



Investment in GenAI Training

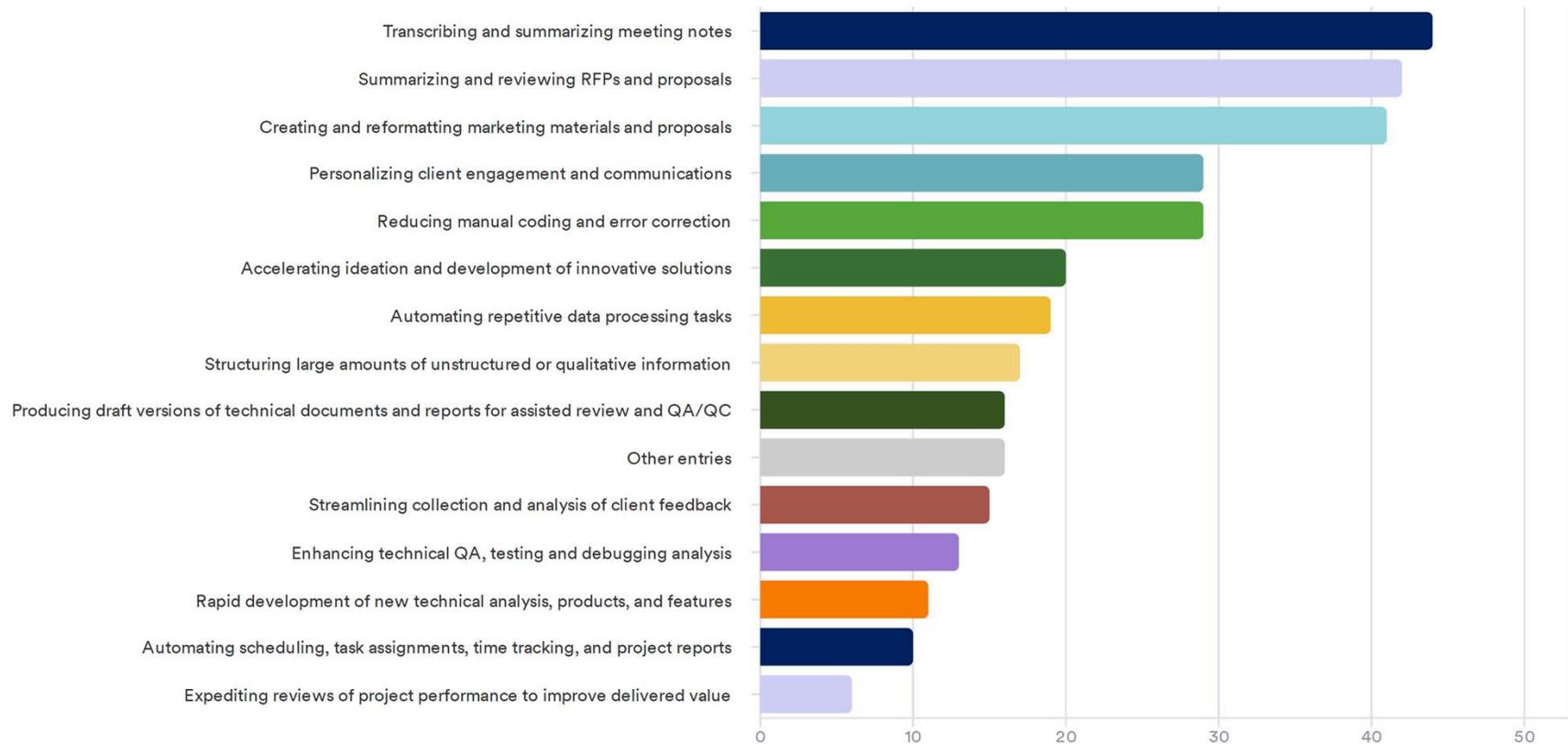


Source: 2025 EFCG CEO Survey Database

A Look at the Current Use Case Data...



What are currently the primary AI use cases for the firm?



Source: 2025 EFCG TLC Survey

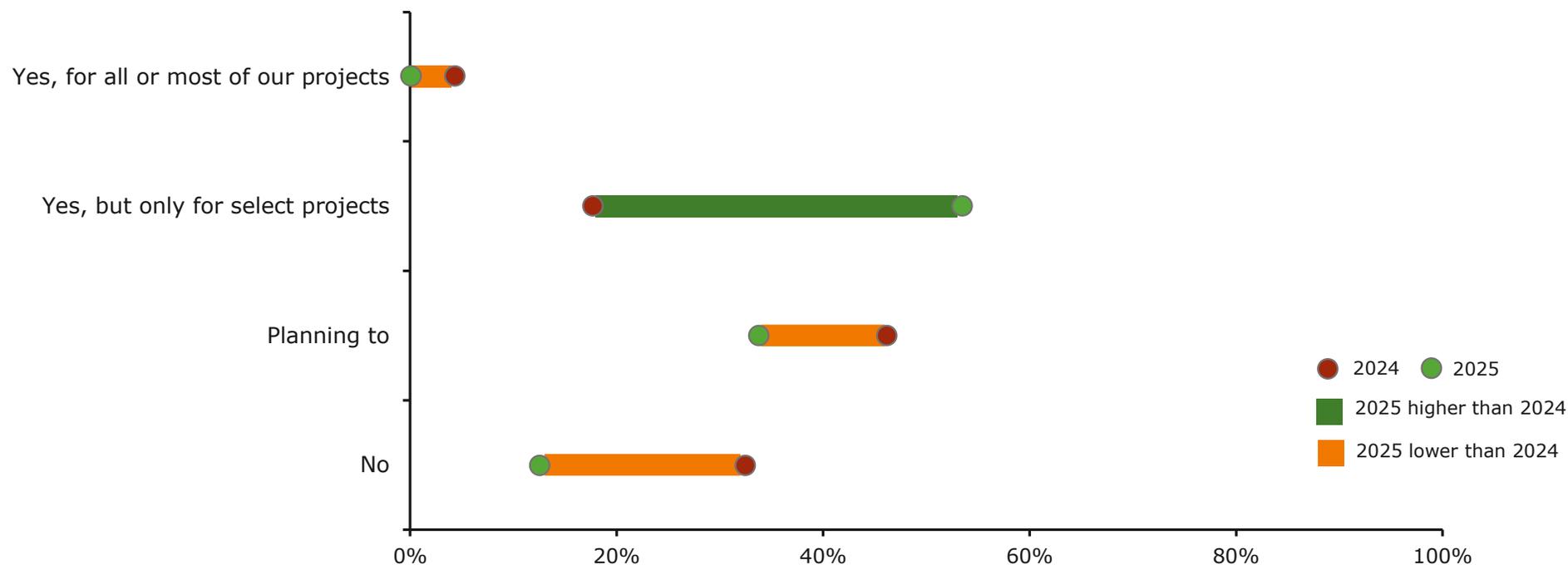
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Use of AI for Sustainability Work



While over half of firms now use AI for sustainability work, usage remains limited to select projects, with no firms yet deploying AI across most of their portfolio.

Do you use AI for your sustainability work?



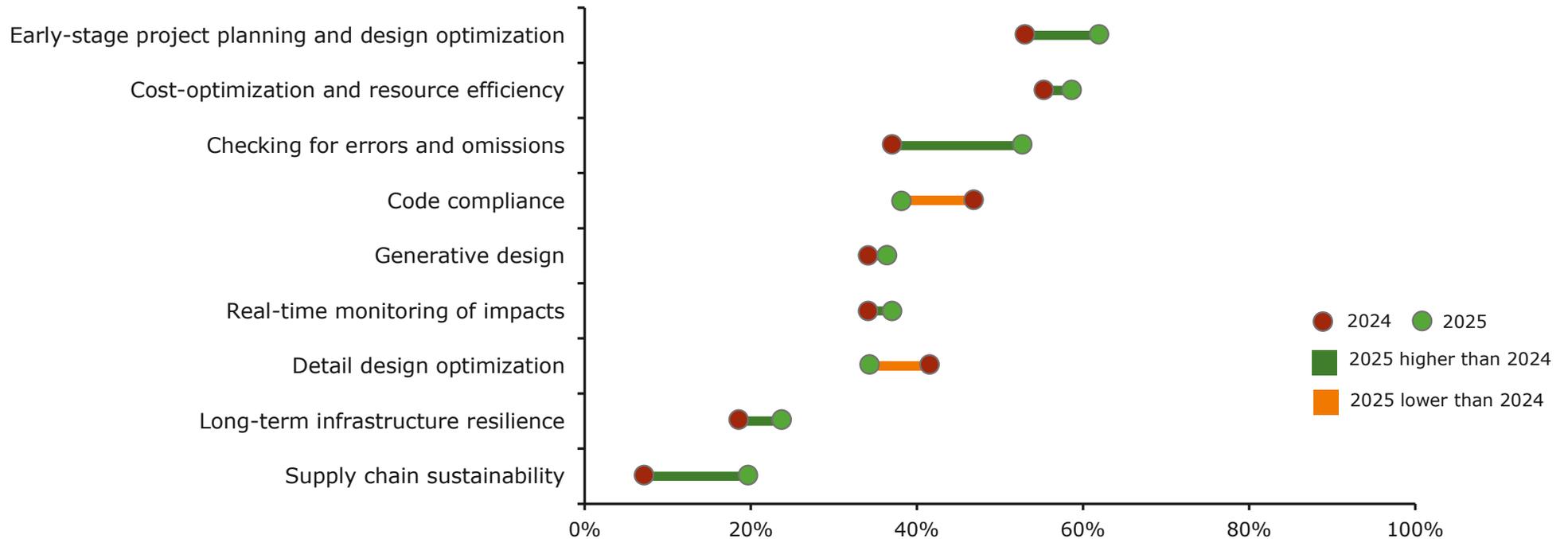
Source: EFCG 2025 Sustainability & ESG Conference Survey

Use of AI for Sustainability Work



Firms see the greatest value from AI in early-stage project planning, design optimization, and improving resource efficiency, with growing use in error detection and code compliance. Emerging applications like generative design and resilience planning continue to gain traction.

In what areas do you see AI and data-driven solutions contributing the most in achieving sustainability outcomes in projects?



Source: EFCG 2025 Sustainability & ESG Conference Survey

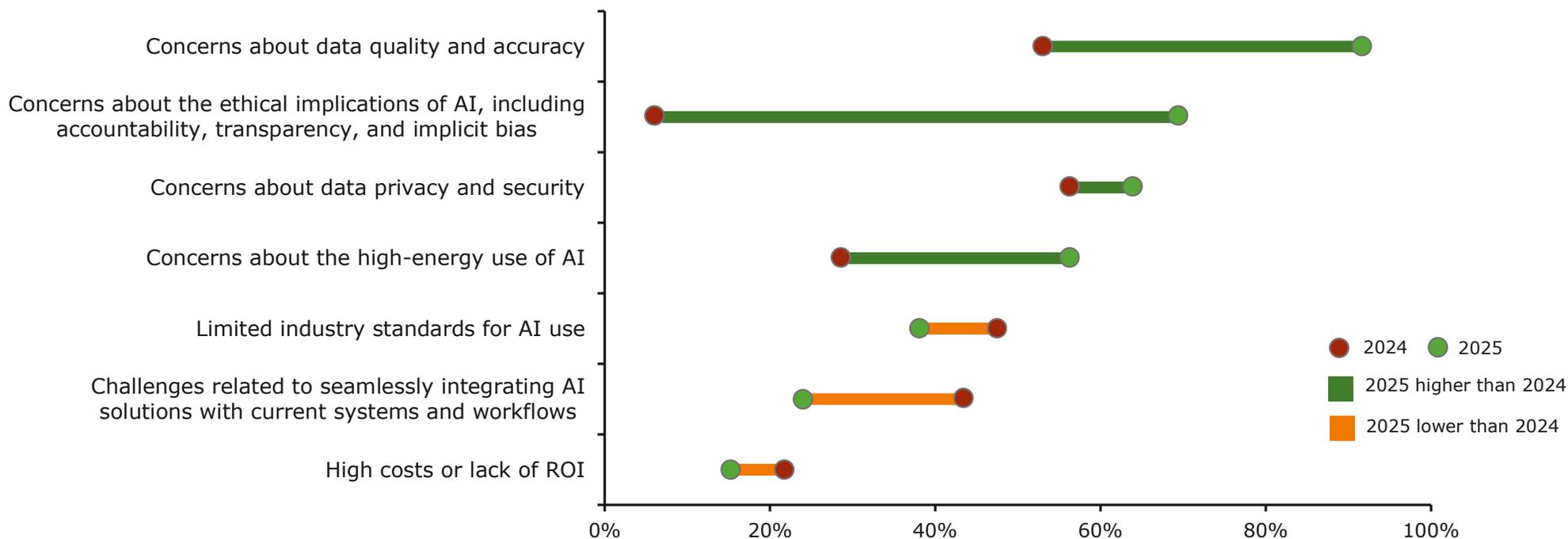
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Concerns on Using AI in Sustainability Initiatives



While AI adoption is rising, firms are increasingly voicing concerns about data quality, security, and ethical implications, particularly around transparency and bias. High-energy use and limited standards for responsible deployment remain additional barriers.

Are you aware of any concerns in your firm about the use of AI in your sustainability efforts?



Source: EFCG 2025 Sustainability & ESG Conference Survey



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