Issue 04 | 2026

Grassroots Research® Market Monitor

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Consumer Adoption of AI Agents—US

Grassroots® surveyed U.S. adults who use AI assistants or agents at least weekly, to assess adoption, usage, trust, shopping behavior, and willingness to give AI agents greater autonomy. Among sources, AI usage is already frequent, with 89% using assistants several times per week or more, but usage remains largely information-focused, as 69% primarily use these tools to ask questions, research information, or generate content. Sources reported Google Gemini and ChatGPT as the most widely used platforms within the past 30 days at 69% and 64%, respectively, while Meta Muse reached 42%. Among Meta Muse sources, engagement is also high, with 77% using it several times per week or more.

Sources indicated that shopping is emerging as an important use case, with 50% of Meta Muse sources using it for product research or comparison shopping and 38% for price tracking. Sources showed that retailer access matters to the experience, as 50% said they would reduce or stop Meta Muse usage if a regularly used retailer or brand became unavailable. Despite relatively high trust in Meta Muse among sources, consumers remain cautious about greater autonomy, with 63% of sources preferring recommendations only or requiring approval before every action and 73% either requiring final approval for purchases or limiting autonomous purchases to less than $100. Sources also reported that comfort falls as information becomes more sensitive, with 64% uncomfortable providing bank-account access and 58% uncomfortable providing investment-account access.

Sources identified privacy and data breaches as the leading concerns about AI agents generally, each cited by 41%, followed by identity theft at 38%. According to sources, Google leads as the company most trusted to securely manage passwords and online-account access through an AI assistant or agent at 30%. Meta ranks second at 17%, followed by Apple at 13% and OpenAI at 12%. Another 13% trust none of the listed companies, while Microsoft accounts for 7% and Amazon 5%. At the same time, sources showed openness to commercialization, with 59% comfortable seeing sponsored content and only 11% saying clearly labeled sponsorship would reduce trust. Sources also indicated that future usage remains fragmented rather than concentrated around a single provider, while 64% of Meta Muse sources expect to either use Meta Muse alongside a comparable Google agent or try both before choosing a primary service.



When it comes to comfort with autonomous AI agent actions, according to sources, comfort with independent action is highest for canceling subscriptions at 73%, reordering groceries at 64%, and purchasing household items at 55%. Moderate comfort extends to negotiating bills at 54%, booking hotels at 48%, and booking flights at 43%. Financial activity faces substantially greater resistance, with 62% uncomfortable with bank transfers and 57% uncomfortable with independent investment management. When it comes to the future and competition, according to sources, if Google introduced an AI agent with capabilities similar to Meta Muse, 34% expect to use both for different tasks, while 30% plan to try both before favoring the better performer.

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AI Shopping & Advertising—US

Grassroots® interviewed U.S. brand-advertising experts familiar with agentic shopping to assess how AI shopping is affecting the advertising funnel, spending, traffic and brand strategies. Sources said agentic shopping gained traction over the past 6 months, moving beyond product discovery toward consideration and early conversion. Meanwhile, 60% of sources have seen advertising spending reallocated because of agentic shopping, while 67% of sources are seeing measurable traffic, orders or conversions from AI conversational platforms.

According to sources, budgets are beginning to move from traditional search toward AI optimization, product data and richer content, although measurement remains early. One source said, "Budget is moving away from traditional search and more toward GEO and product data and content clarity." Brands are also adapting how products are presented: 80% of sources have changed content to improve visibility with AI shopping agents, while 50% have changed product data. As another source explained, "Managing product data has gone from being basically a clerical data hygiene function to being a core element of a brand's marketing."

Furthermore, sources said ChatGPT and Google Gemini are currently generating the most activity, followed by Claude and Copilot. Still, ROI and trust remain important constraints: 70% of sources said evidence that clear brand content produces results will meaningfully influence future advertising-budget allocation. One source summarized the challenge: "Agentic shopping has a long road ahead and there needs to be ways to prove it's trustworthy and that reporting measurements are accurate."

Enterprise AI Spending—US

Grassroots® surveyed U.S.-based IT professionals and technology decision-makers at organizations with 500+ employees to assess enterprise generative AI adoption, spending, model selection and workforce implications, with sources reporting that 84% have active production deployments. Sources indicated spending is rising alongside adoption, with 62% tracking above initial 2026 expectations or having exhausted annual budgets and 90% expecting model, token and API spending to increase over the next 12 months. Sources cited greater use of AI agents and autonomous workflows as the leading cost driver at 50%, followed by customer service/support at 44% and coding assistants/developer tools at 39%.

Sources reported responding to higher costs by increasing AI budgets at 43%, optimizing prompts, workflows or model routing at 34%, and implementing usage caps or governance controls at 28%. Sources showed interest in lower-cost alternatives, with 87% already using or at least somewhat likely to expand self-hosted/internal models and 86% saying the same for open-source/open-weight models. Sources nevertheless cited data security/privacy at 45% and regulatory/compliance concerns at 40% as the leading barriers to adoption of lower-cost models.

Sources described AI more as a productivity and growth tool than a hiring reducer, with 47% saying it enables faster growth and more hiring versus 7% saying it reduces overall hiring needs. Sources reported that 92% believe AI helps employees become more productive and enables organizations to do more with the same headcount, while 77% expect reduced demand for some entry-level or repetitive roles.

Cybersecurity Spending—US



Grassroots® interviewed cybersecurity value-added resellers, distributors and consultants to evaluate the competitive vendor landscape, assess cybersecurity spending trends and budget priorities, and understand emerging demand drivers and market catalysts. Sources expect cybersecurity spending to remain strong, with all expecting client spending to increase over the next 12 months, by an average 12%, driven by concerns over AI-generated cyberattacks and new security risks created by companies' own use of AI. Sources also reported healthy IT budgets, with 73% of those who commented seeing higher 2H26 budgets versus 1H26, largely driven by AI initiatives, while 27% said budgets were flat. Cybersecurity is also becoming less discretionary as insurers increasingly require companies to demonstrate adequate protection to qualify for coverage. One source said, "AI is driving cybersecurity spending in two directions: protecting company data from increasingly sophisticated external attacks and protecting sensitive corporate data from exposure through their own AI adoption."

Sources said AI and AI-agent adoption have increased the need for additional cybersecurity protection, while also changing how security products detect and respond to threats. Key spending priorities include endpoint detection and response, AI governance, cloud, data and identity security. Sources said 67% are seeing customers move toward broader, integrated cybersecurity strategies, with companies increasingly looking to simplify their security environments and make existing products work together. Major cybersecurity vendors

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are incorporating AI into their offerings, with Palo Alto Networks and Barracuda cited for using AI in areas such as threat detection, email security and firewalls, while Arctic Wolf and Sophos are using AI to bring information from multiple security tools together. Sources also expect advanced AI models to improve existing cybersecurity products: all who commented expect newer frontier models to be integrated into or used alongside current security products and processes, while 75% expect new products specifically designed to protect AI agents, models and data. Microsoft was cited as an example of how advanced AI models could strengthen existing vulnerability detection and security-development processes. One source cautioned that AI should not replace experienced security professionals: "It's an accelerator. Human oversight, validation, and accountability remain essential."

Sources also pointed to improving cybersecurity spending discussions among small and midsize businesses, although budget constraints remain. Of those who commented, 50% reported a more positive tone, while 50% described sentiment as mixed, with smaller businesses generally more constrained than midsize companies. Sources said rising attacks and cyber-insurance requirements are increasingly shifting cybersecurity from a discretionary purchase to a necessary cost of doing business. High-profile breaches are also influencing spending, with 89% saying recent incidents have heightened awareness of AI-enabled threats and the need for stronger cybersecurity protection. Sources said customers are responding by reevaluating areas such as threat detection and response, identity security, data protection and recovery, and cloud security. At the same time, customers remain value-conscious, favoring bundled offerings and looking to reduce overlapping products and maximize existing investments. Sources overall expect cybersecurity spending to remain resilient as AI adoption, increasingly sophisticated attacks and greater awareness of business risks continue to drive demand.

AI Driven Drug Discovery—US

Grassroots® interviewed drug discovery and computational biology scientists, including AI and biomedical research center directors and computational drug discovery researchers, to assess how AI is being used in drug discovery and its impact on demand for research services. Sources are currently using AI across applications including early-stage drug discovery, target prioritization, protein structure prediction, and drug and protein screening, and all expect AI's role to expand significantly over the next three to five years.

Sources said AI allows researchers to evaluate far more drug candidates, biological targets and research hypotheses computationally, in some cases screening millions or billions of possibilities before selecting candidates for laboratory validation. Sources said this does not necessarily translate into substantially more laboratory testing. Of those who commented, 75% expect AI primarily to make testing more targeted and efficient, while 25% anticipate increased experimental activity and demand for laboratory services. As one source explained, "AI does not eliminate the laboratory. It changes what we send to the laboratory." Sources noted that physical testing remains necessary to validate AI-generated predictions and determine whether potential treatments work.

Sources also expect AI-driven workflows to affect spending on outsourced research services, with 67% of those who commented anticipating increased spending on DNA synthesis, gene fragments and libraries, antibody discovery, and related services over the next three to five years. Sources reported using multiple suppliers, with most indicating no single preferred provider and citing quality, reliability, turnaround time and cost as important considerations.

Quantum Computing—US

Grassroots® interviewed executives and industry professionals developing or applying quantum technologies across pharmaceutical drug discovery, AI software, hardware and networking to assess enterprise adoption, spending and the transition toward recurring production workloads. Sources reported a range of activity, from early research and proof-of-concept projects to production-ready algorithms and commercial products. Drug discovery was the most common application cited by 67%, while other uses include quantum networking, AI and secure communications. Sources also reported using IBM quantum systems and computing resources for development and testing.

Sources reported mixed spending trends, with 67% indicating spending was flat over the past 12 months and 33% reporting an increase. Looking ahead, 50% expect spending to increase over the next year, while 33% expect it to remain flat and 17% are unsure. Funding continues to come from a mix of internal budgets and external sources, including government support, venture capital, vendor subsidies and cloud-computing credits. Sources cited hardware capabilities and access, funding availability and competition from other technology priorities, including AI, among barriers affecting projects. Among those who commented, 60% have paused select quantum projects.

Sources reported varying timelines for recurring production workloads. Half expect their first recurring workload by 2030, while 33% expect to reach production within 18 months to three years and 17% already have a commercial product in production. External funding also remains part of current programs: 60% of those who commented said their quantum efforts would continue without government funding, vendor subsidies or free cloud credits, while 40% said they would not.

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About Grassroots Research®

The Grassroots Research® division combines a variety of resources and methodologies, including in-house employees; a global network of independent, experienced journalists and consumer researchers; more than 50,000 industry contacts; and online panel surveys. We use this network to apply innovative market research and investigative journalism techniques to identify stock and sector trends before our competitors do.

Advantages:

- Continuous exchange of information between Grassroots® analysts and our investment professionals
- Expertise of independent journalists and consumer surveys to reach sources on the ground
- Technological tools to target consumer and business panels online
- Timely business insights via quick turnaround times
- 30+ years of experience conducting customized investigative market research around the world

Resources:

- Access to thousands of consumers in more than 60 countries via targeted online consumer and business panels
- On-the-ground investigators who conduct quantitative market research among consumers
- 55+ reporters who conduct interviews with industry experts
- In-house team based in the US
- 50,000+ industry contacts worldwide from a wide range of industries, including consumer, technology, healthcare, materials, industrials, energy and financials companies

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Grassroots® Market Monitor is published quarterly by Grassroots Research, a division of Voya Investment Management.

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