A 2027 State of **DESIGN&MAKE** breakout report

Investment

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The next wave of investment is about building connected capabilities

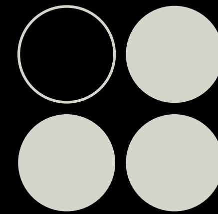
For Design and Make organizations, the question is no longer whether to invest in digital transformation. It's how to invest when AI, data, people, platforms, and new technologies are all evolving at once. Whether designing buildings, manufacturing products, or creating content, organizations increasingly recognize that isolated technology investments deliver less value than connected capabilities that bring together the right technologies with trusted data, skilled people, and governance to improve how work gets done.

Research from the *2027 State of Design & Make* study reflects that shift in today's investment priorities. Seventy-five percent of leaders plan to increase investment in AI over the next three years, making it the most consistent investment priority across Design and Make industries. Yet only 40% say they are approaching or have achieved their AI goals, suggesting many organizations remain focused on operationalizing AI across everyday workflows.

Those investments are increasingly directed toward practical applications. Organizations are applying AI to automate repetitive work (39%), improve predictive analysis (36%), support design intelligence and concept generation (34%), and enhance collaboration and knowledge sharing (32%). Together, these findings suggest organizations are investing in the capabilities needed to scale AI across the business rather than limiting it to isolated use cases.

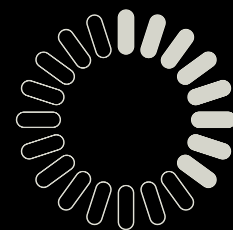
What are connected capabilities?

Connected capabilities combine technology, trusted data, skilled people, governance, and integrated workflows so that investments reinforce one another instead of operating independently.



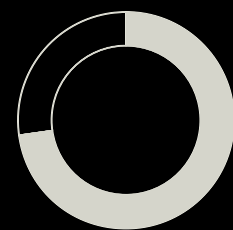
75%

plan to increase AI investment over the next three years



40%

say they are approaching or have achieved their AI goals



73%

believe AI will enhance their industry

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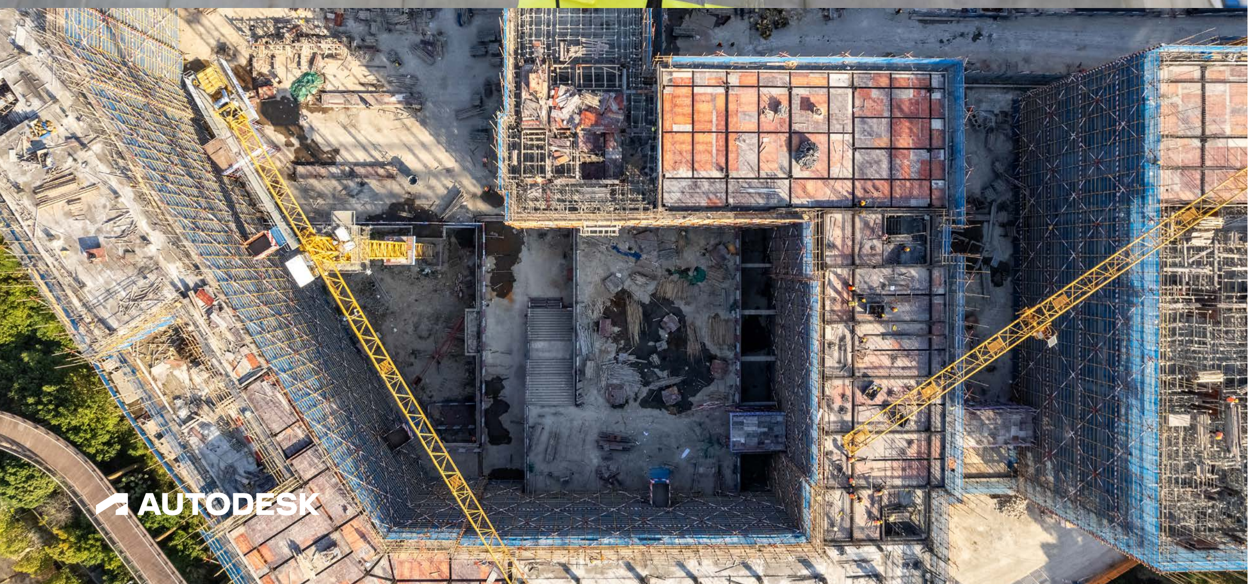


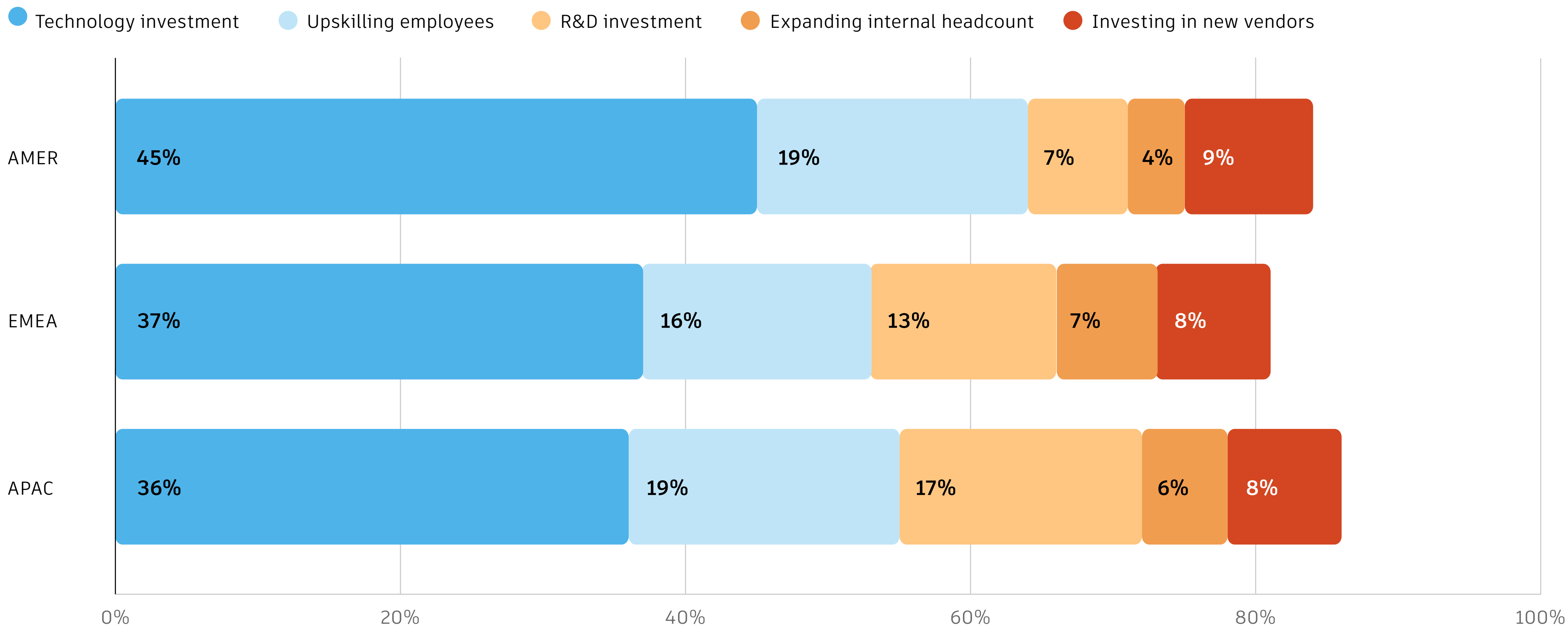
Design and Make organizations share investment priorities—but not investment strategies

Across Design and Make industries, organizations broadly agree on where future investment should go. Technology is the leading investment approach across every major area—from AI and data management to sustainability, new products, and platform technologies. The bigger difference is how organizations choose to build those capabilities.

Regional strategies reveal a clear split in how organizations build capability. Organizations in the Americas (AMER) are the most technology-forward, with 45% identifying direct technology investment as their primary approach. Organizations in Europe, the Middle East, and Africa (EMEA) and Asia-Pacific (APAC) still prioritize technology, but they place far more emphasis on R&D—13% and 17%, respectively, compared with just 7% in AMER. In other words, organizations are pursuing a similar destination through different investment models: more direct technology investment in AMER, and a broader mix of technology and R&D in EMEA and APAC.

Regional approaches to investment are varied

AMER prioritizes tech while EMEA and APAC are investing more heavily in research and development



Survey questions: You identified [data management and analytics / developing new products and/or services / environmental sustainability / artificial intelligence / platform and APIs] as an area you will increase investment. What is the number one way in which your company will invest here? Single response, percent of respondents. Not all response choices shown.

Technology has become the common foundation for future investment

Investment priorities remain remarkably consistent regardless of the business capability being strengthened. Technology is the leading investment approach across every major investment area, followed by workforce upskilling and research and development. Rather than treating these priorities as competing alternatives, many organizations appear to be combining them into broader investment portfolios that strengthen technology, people, and innovation together (see chart, page 6).

Looking more closely at individual countries reveals another layer of the story. While organizations around the world are increasing AI investment, the share of revenue devoted to technology varies significantly by market. These differences suggest that investment intensity reflects local economic conditions and business priorities more than disagreement about technology's strategic importance (see chart, page 7).

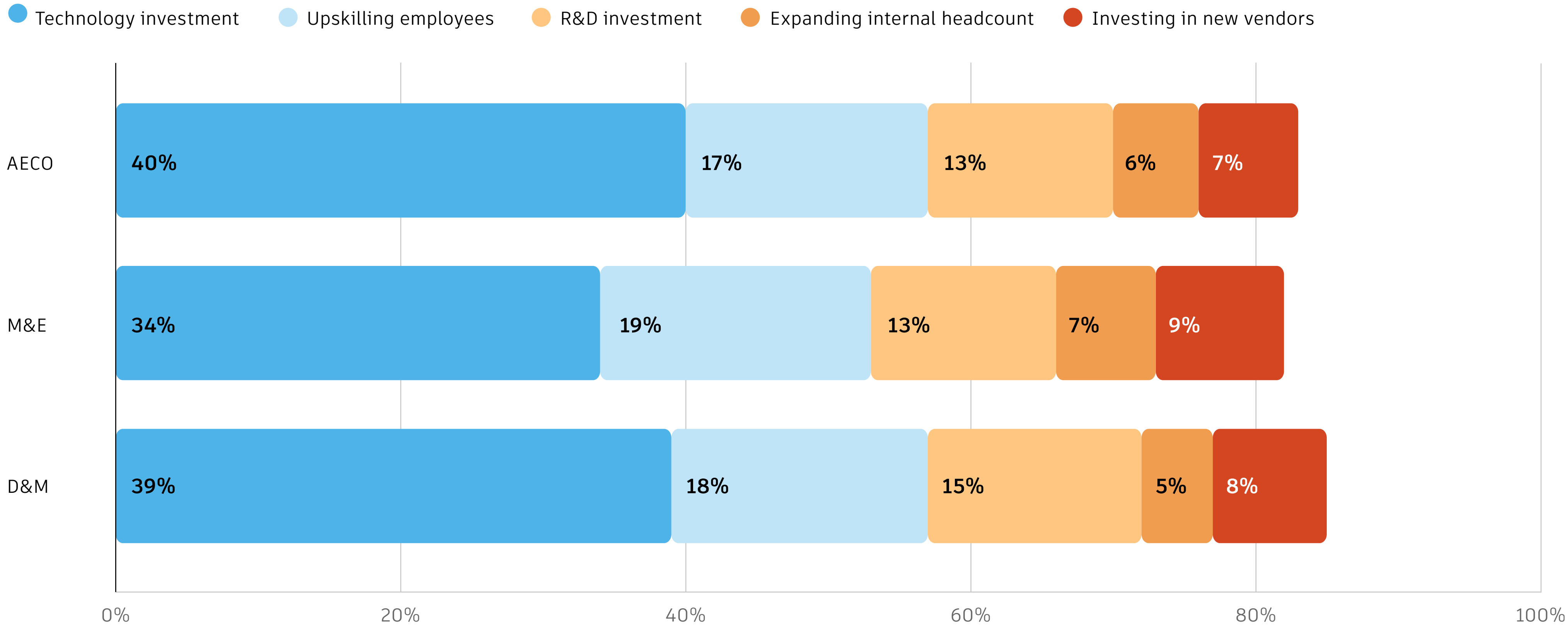
75%

of Design and Make organizations seek inspiration from outside their industry*

*Source: Autodesk's *2026 AI Pulse* study

Investment strategies converge on technology, skills, and innovation

Technology is, by far, the greatest area of investment across Design and Make industries



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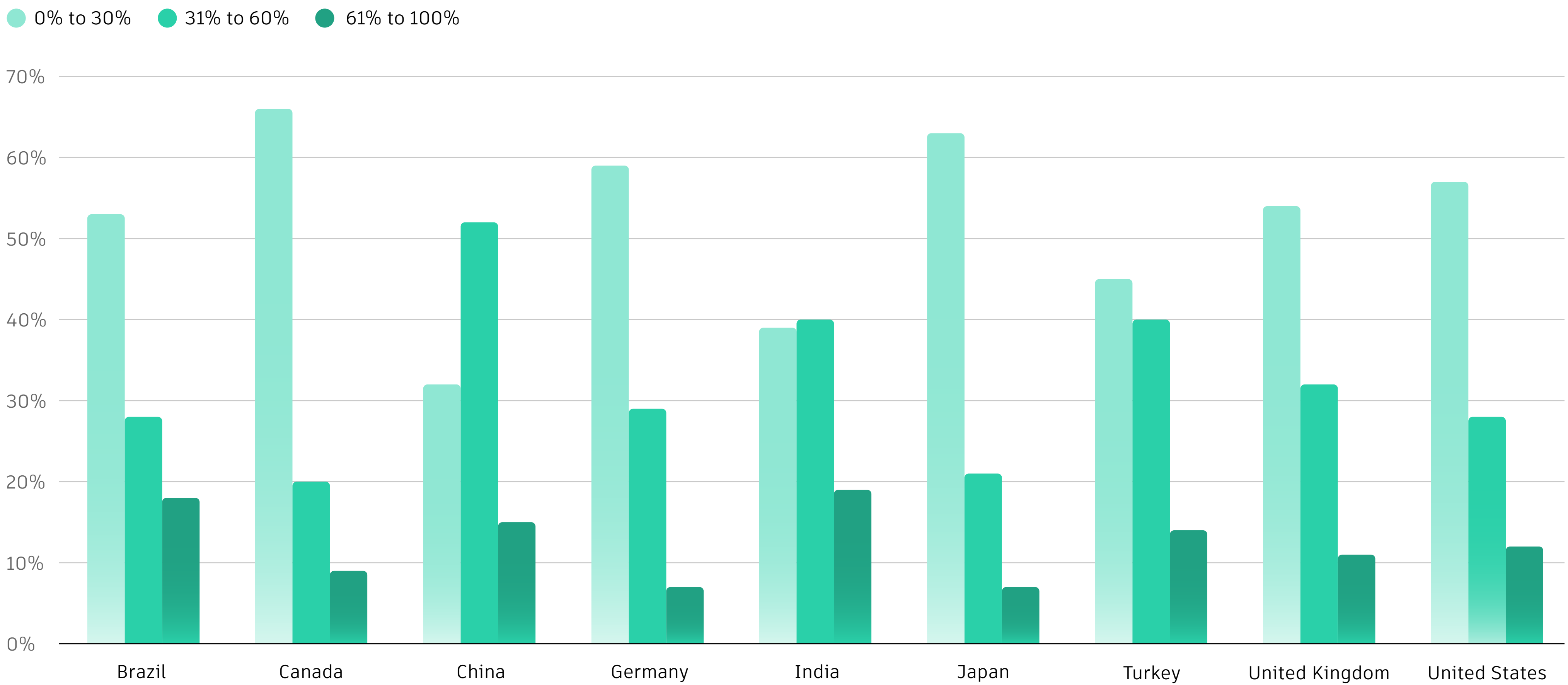
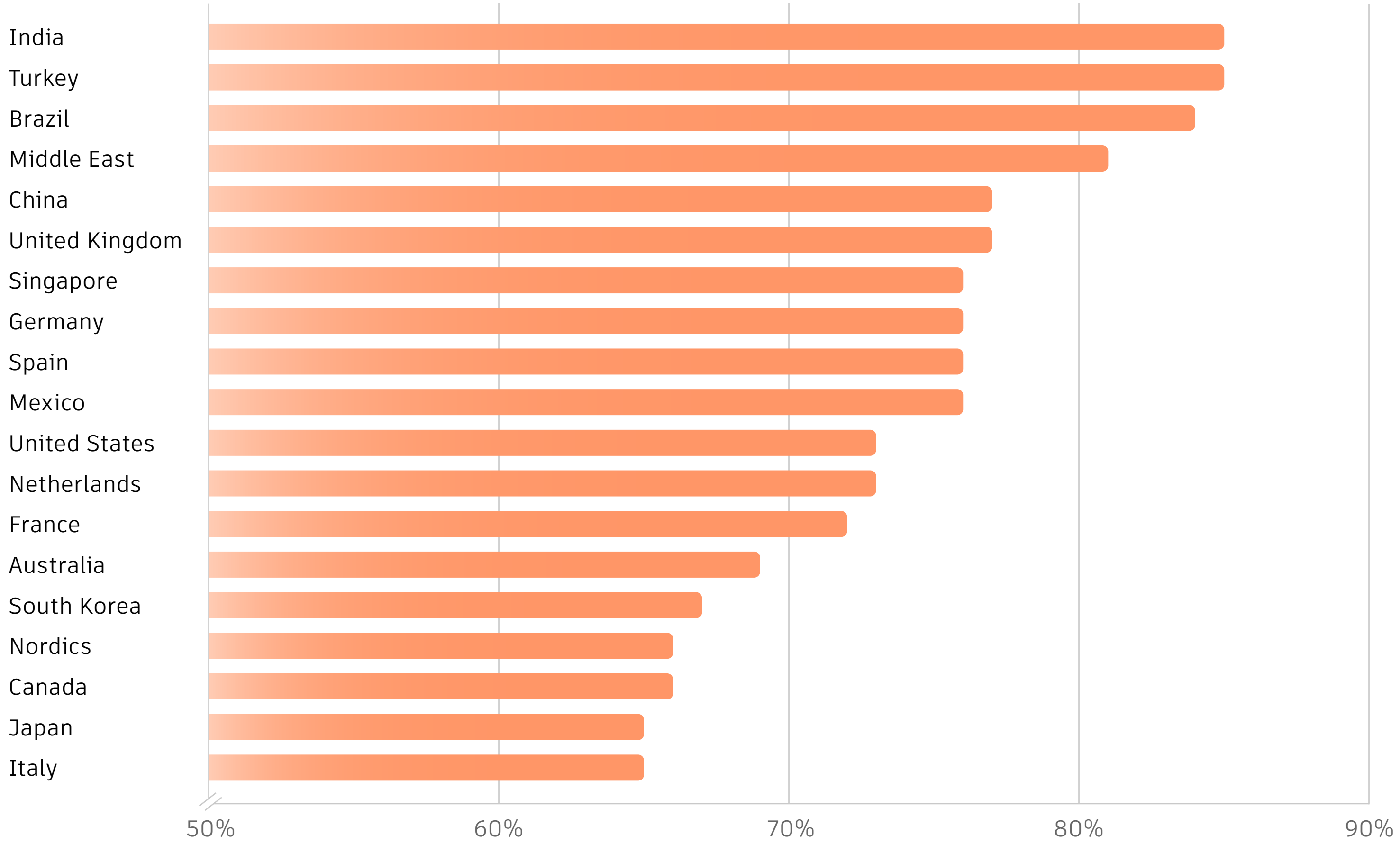
Technology investment intensity varies widely by country

Organizations globally are dedicating significant portions of their revenue toward technology advancement



Survey question: What percentage of your revenue are you currently investing in technology? 5-point scale. Not all countries surveyed shown.

Artificial intelligence sees significant investment increases globally



Survey question: How do you think your company's investment will shift in the next 3 years? 5-point scale. Top two: "increase" or "strongly increase." Percent selected.

Organizations across every major market expect AI investment to continue growing, although the pace differs from country to country. India, Turkey, and Brazil report the strongest planned increases, while the United States, Germany, the United Kingdom, and China also show broad commitment to continued investment. These findings suggest that AI has become a globally shared strategic priority, even as markets continue to differ in how they approach broader technology investment.

Pacesetters turn investment into capability

The organizations creating the greatest business value do more than increase investment—they build the organizational capabilities needed to realize a return on it. **Pacesetters** plan to increase investment across nearly every major capability, including AI (91%); talent acquisition, training, and retention (85%); and data management and analytics (85%). Rather than pursuing isolated priorities, they invest across a portfolio of connected capabilities that reinforce one another.

Those investments are supported by stronger organizational foundations. Compared with mainstream organizations, Pacesetters are more likely to have dedicated AI teams (94% vs. 61%), dedicated data leadership (93% vs. 66%), trusted digital transformation partners (92% vs. 65%), and connected systems enabled through APIs (91% vs. 60%). Together, these findings suggest that organizations create greater value when investment is matched by the governance, talent, and digital infrastructure needed to put new capabilities into practice.

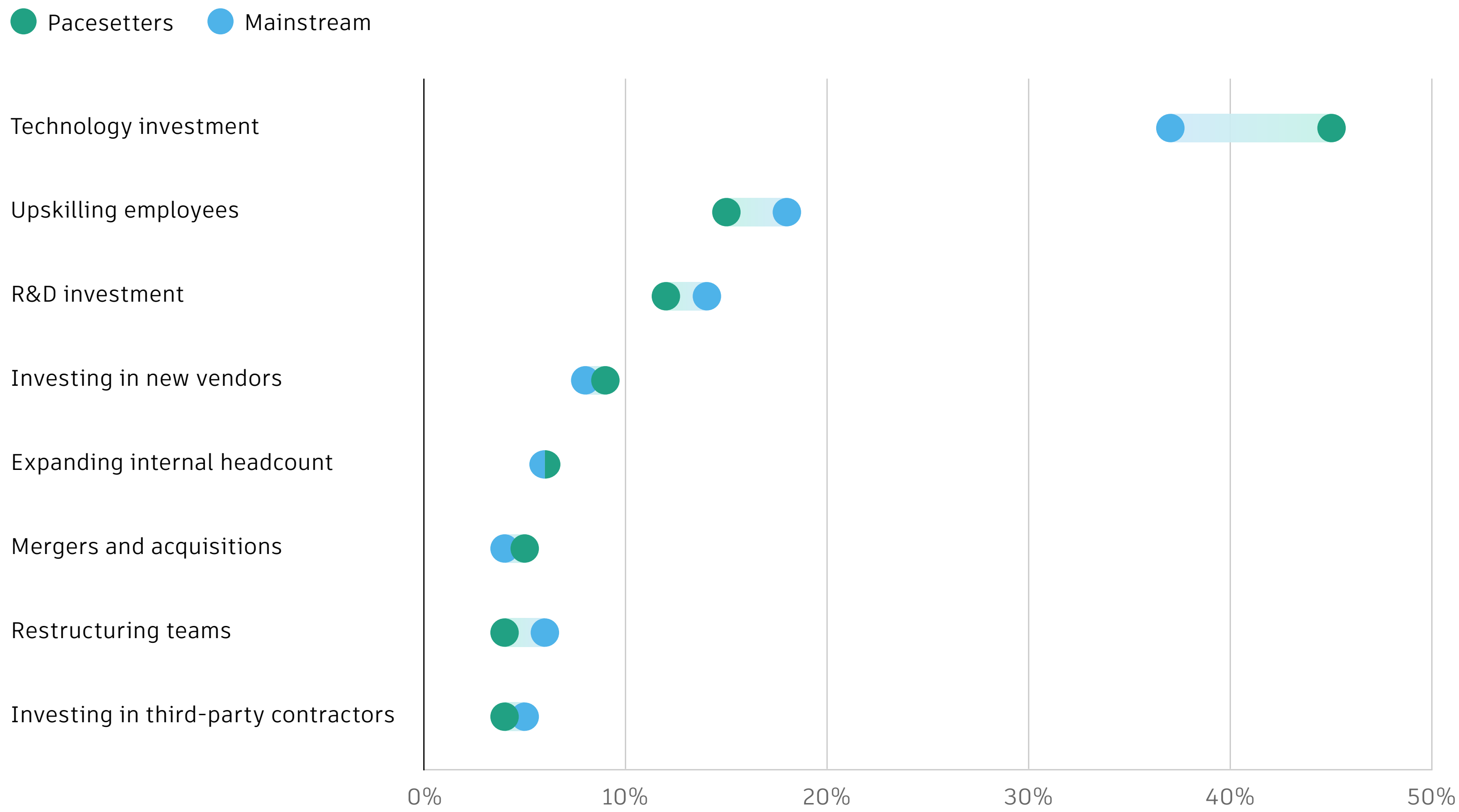
94%
of Pacesetters have dedicated AI teams

vs. **61%**
of mainstream

What are Pacesetters?

Pacesetters are the 11% of organizations in our study that lead simultaneously in digital maturity, AI adoption, and sustainability. They outperform their peers in both business performance and preparedness for future challenges. For details on the methodology, see the *2027 State of Design & Make* report.

Pacesetters invest more heavily in tech, while mainstream organizations outspend on upskilling and R&D



Survey questions: You identified [data management and analytics / developing new products and/or services / environmental sustainability / artificial intelligence / platform and APIs] as an area you will increase investment. What is the number one way in which your company will invest here? Single response, percent of respondents. Pacesetter definition on page 9.

Conclusion

Design and Make organizations are entering a new era of investment. The question is no longer simply where to invest, but how to build an investment strategy that delivers greater value over time. Whether investing in AI, data, talent, or new technologies, organizations increasingly recognize that individual investments create the greatest impact when they reinforce one another.

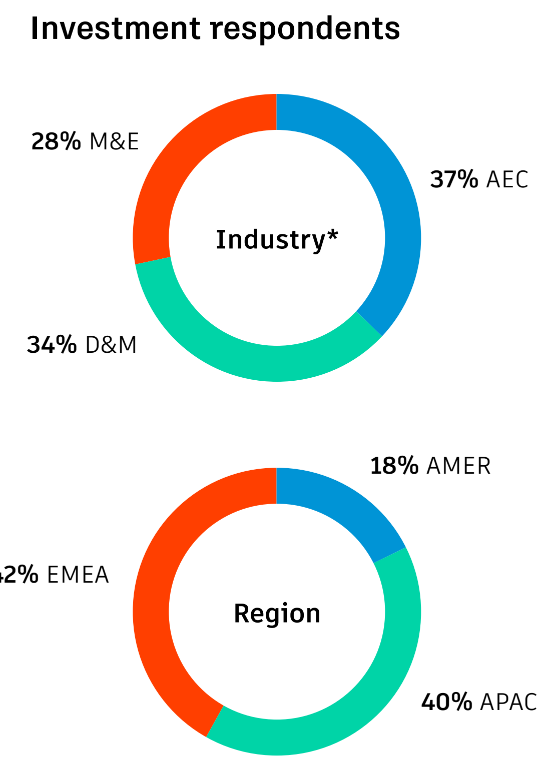
Pacesetters approach investment differently. Rather than concentrating resources in a single area, they invest across technology, talent, data, governance, and digital infrastructure in ways that strengthen the effectiveness of each investment. Their advantage comes not from spending more in one category, but from creating an operating model where technology, people, and processes evolve together.

For leaders across the Design and Make industries, the takeaway is clear: the most effective investment strategies don't simply fund new capabilities—they create the conditions for future investments to deliver even greater value. Over time, those reinforcing investments help organizations innovate faster, adapt more confidently, and build lasting competitive advantage.

About this analysis

This investment briefing draws primarily on Autodesk's *2027 State of Design & Make* study, which surveyed 5,500 leaders and experts across Design and Make industries worldwide. Additional trend comparisons use findings from Autodesk's *2025* and *2026 Design & Make Pulse* studies to provide year-over-year context for changing investment priorities and technology adoption. Pacesetters represent 11% of the 2027 global sample (n=589), with the remaining 89% classified as mainstream organizations.

Definitions for Pacesetters, digital maturity, AI leaders, and sustainability leaders are consistent with those used in the 2027 State of Design & Make *report.* 2026 AI Pulse *comparisons are cited where trend data is referenced throughout this briefing.*



*Numbers do not add up to 100% due to rounding.

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