September 2026

How do you use digital data from farmers and growers?

Survey results

SCARLATTI

Thank you for your participation!

About the survey

The survey explored how rural professionals working with farmers and growers use digital farm data and GenAI in their role.

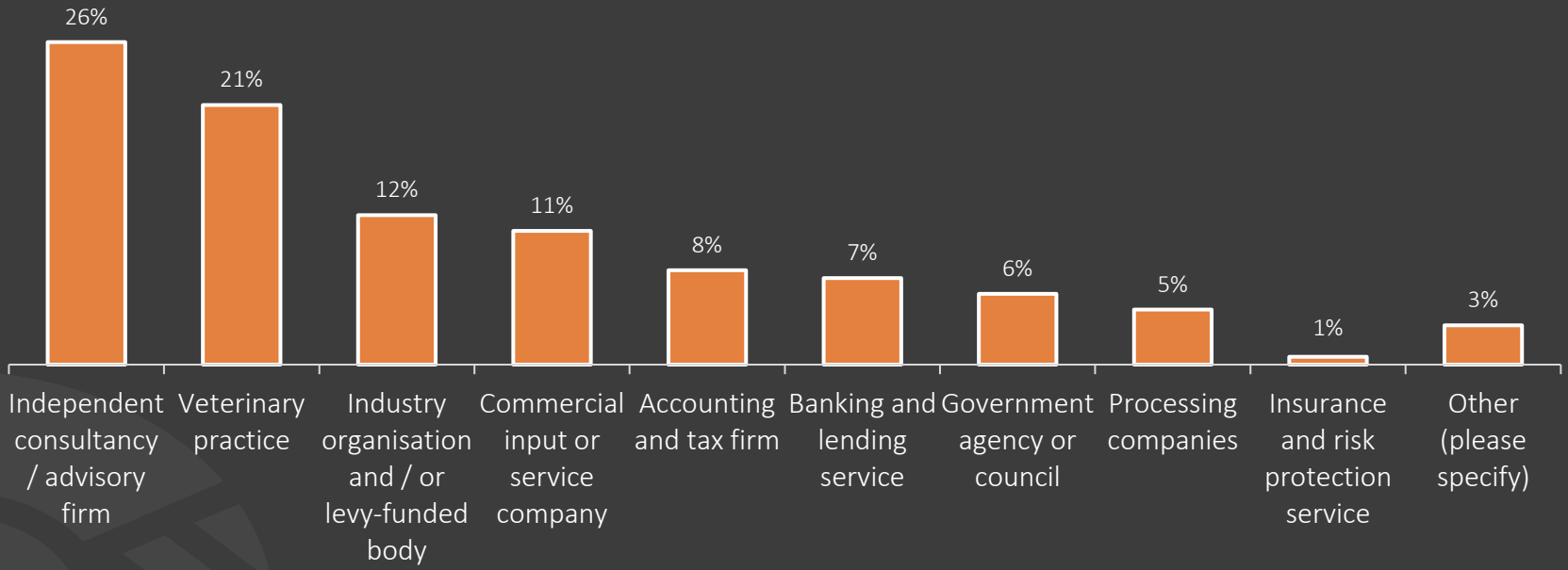
This work is funded by DairyNZ and supported by the Institute of Rural Professionals, Beef + Lamb NZ, Veterinary Council, Deer Industry NZ, and New Zealand Veterinary Association .

About this document

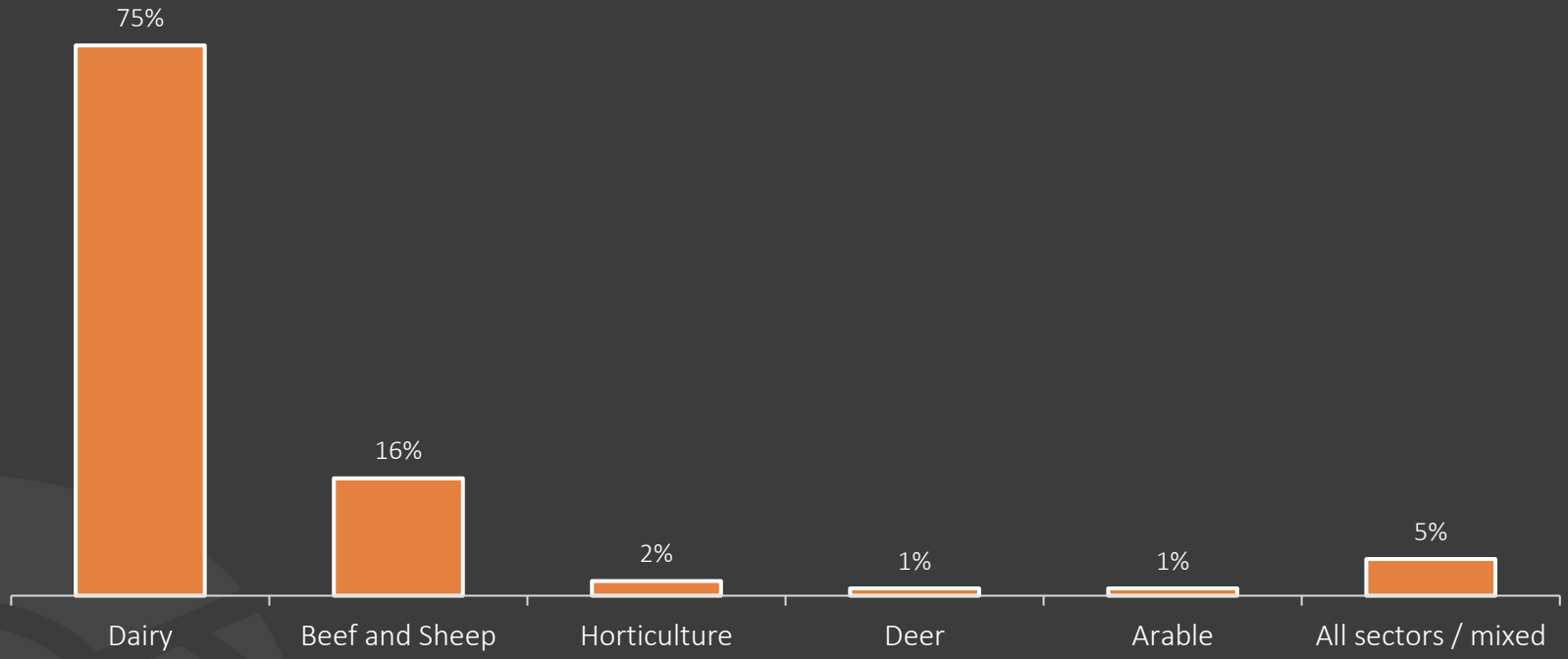
This document presents the survey results collected by Scarlatti's in-house survey platform which has an integrated AI option.

The survey has had a 91% completion rate.

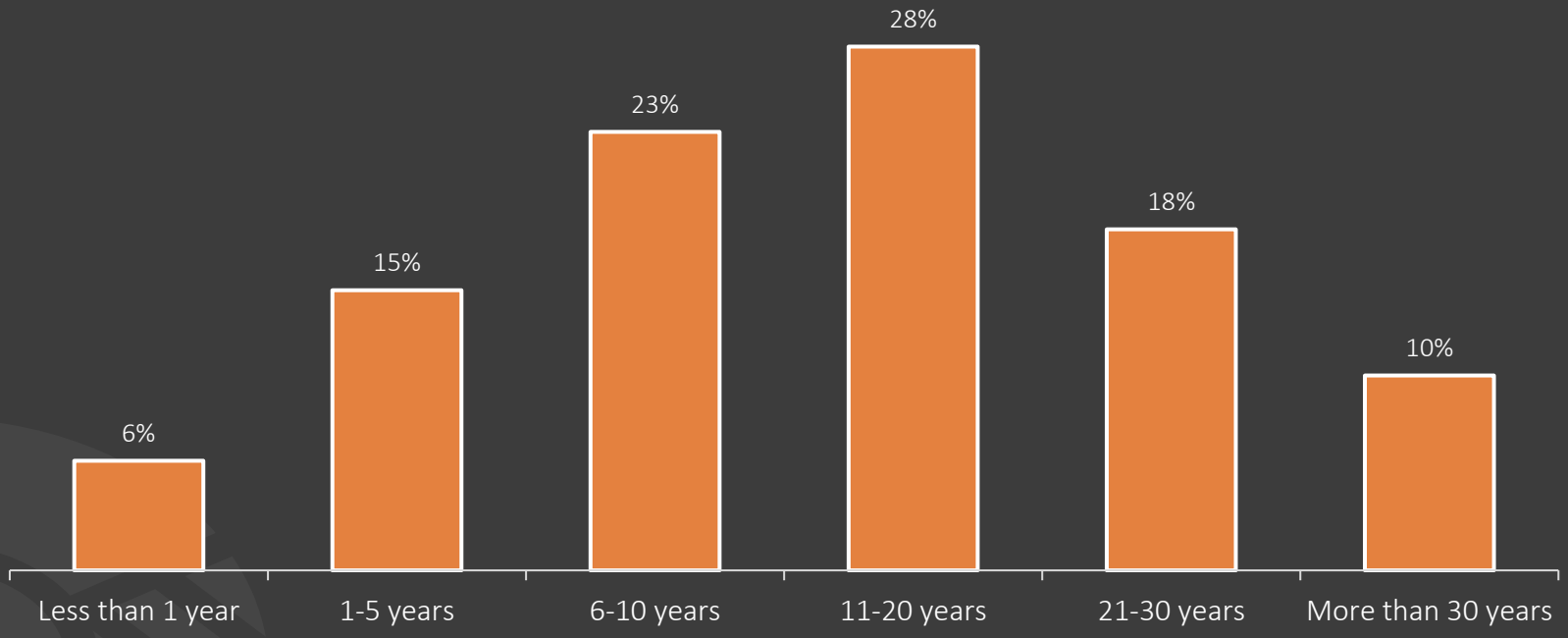
Which of the following best describes your main employer or business? (n=155)



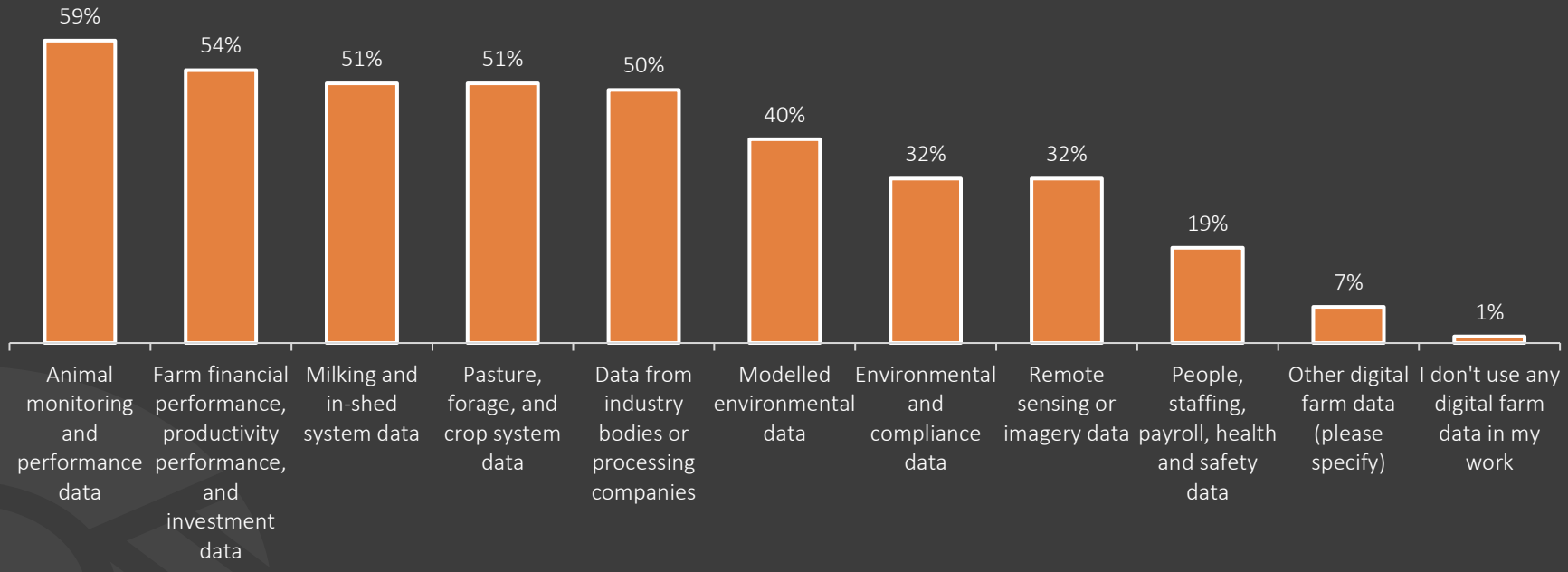
What sector do you mainly work in? (n=155)



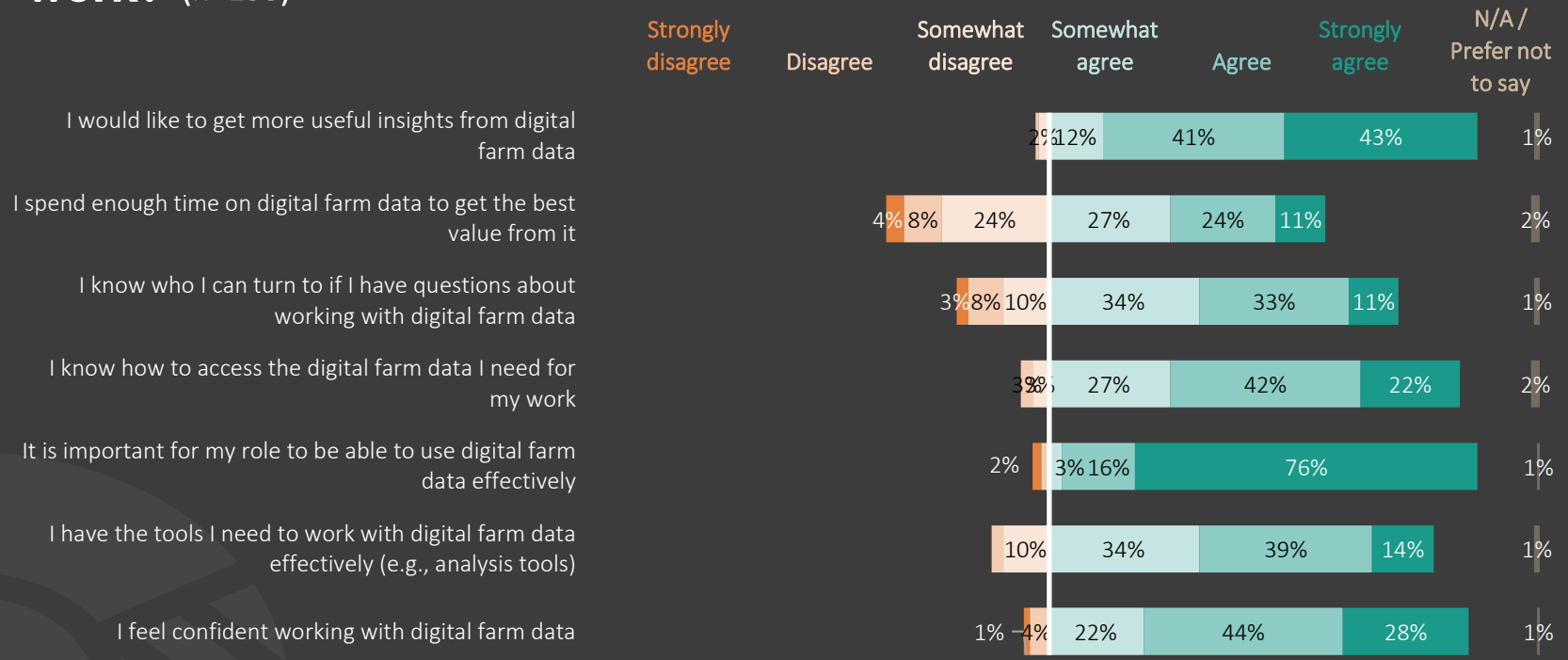
How many years in total have you been working in a rural professional role? (n=155)



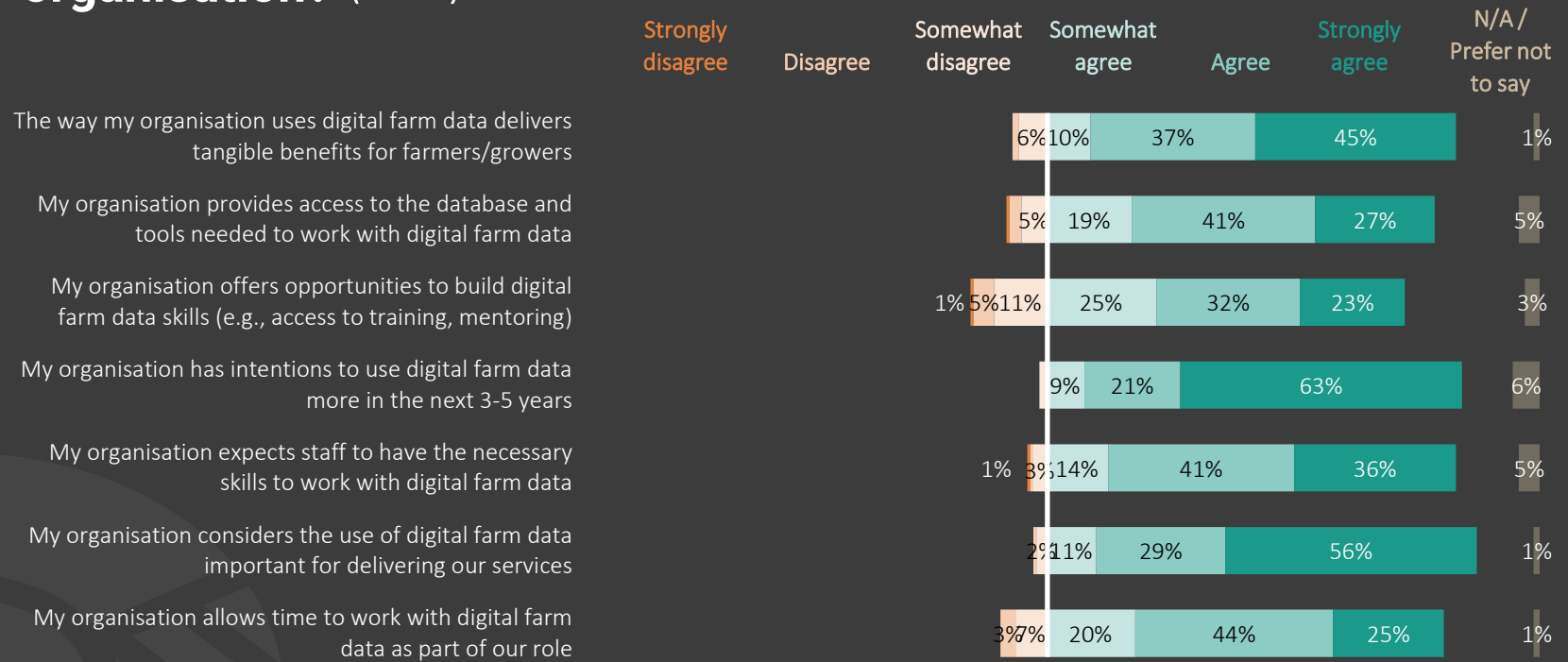
What types of digital farm data do you interact with in your work with farmers / growers? (n=155)



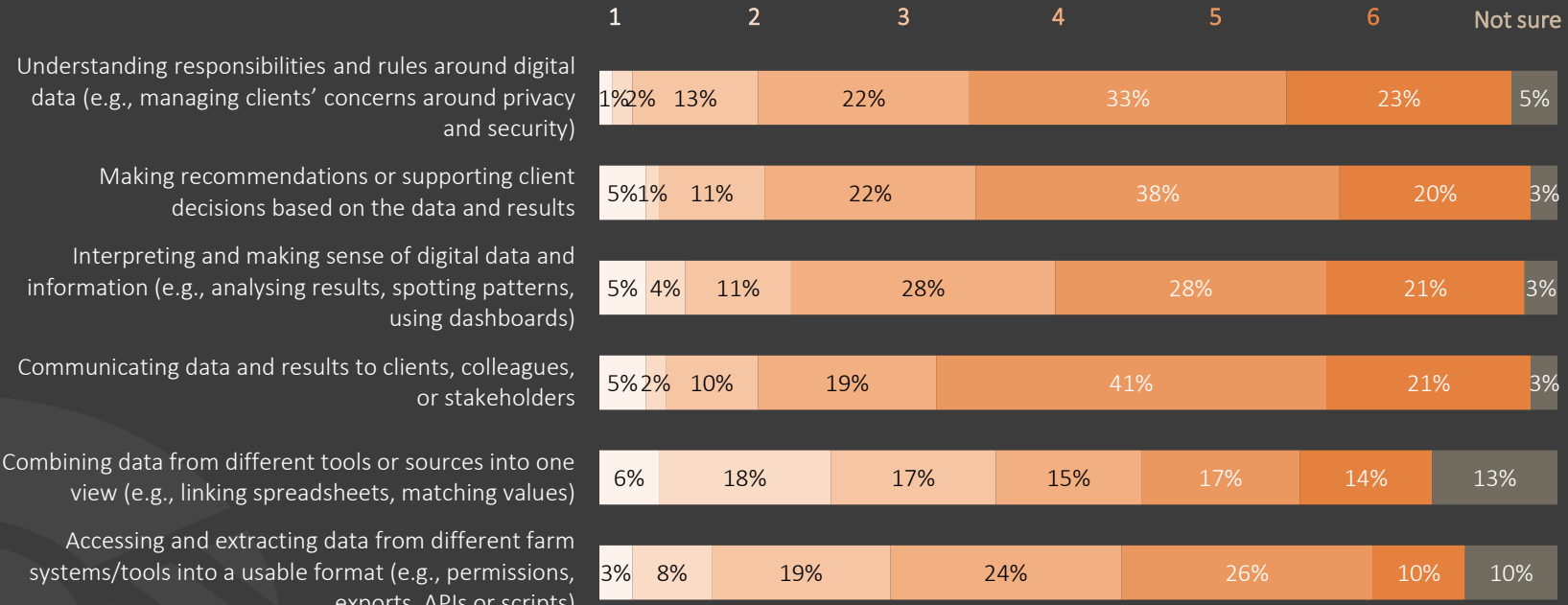
How much do you agree with the following statements about your work? (n=153)



How much do you agree with the following statements about your organisation? (n=150)



Thinking about your current use of digital farm data in your work, where would you place yourself on the following skills on a scale of 1-6? (n=145)



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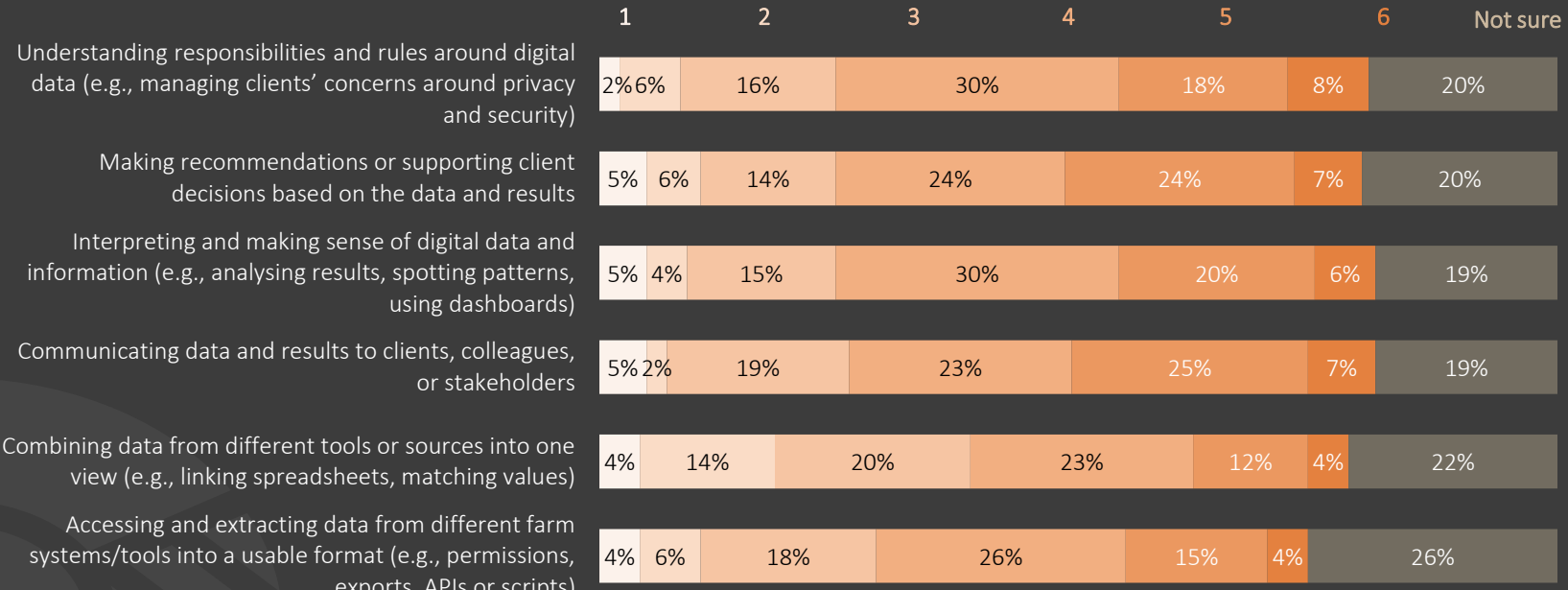
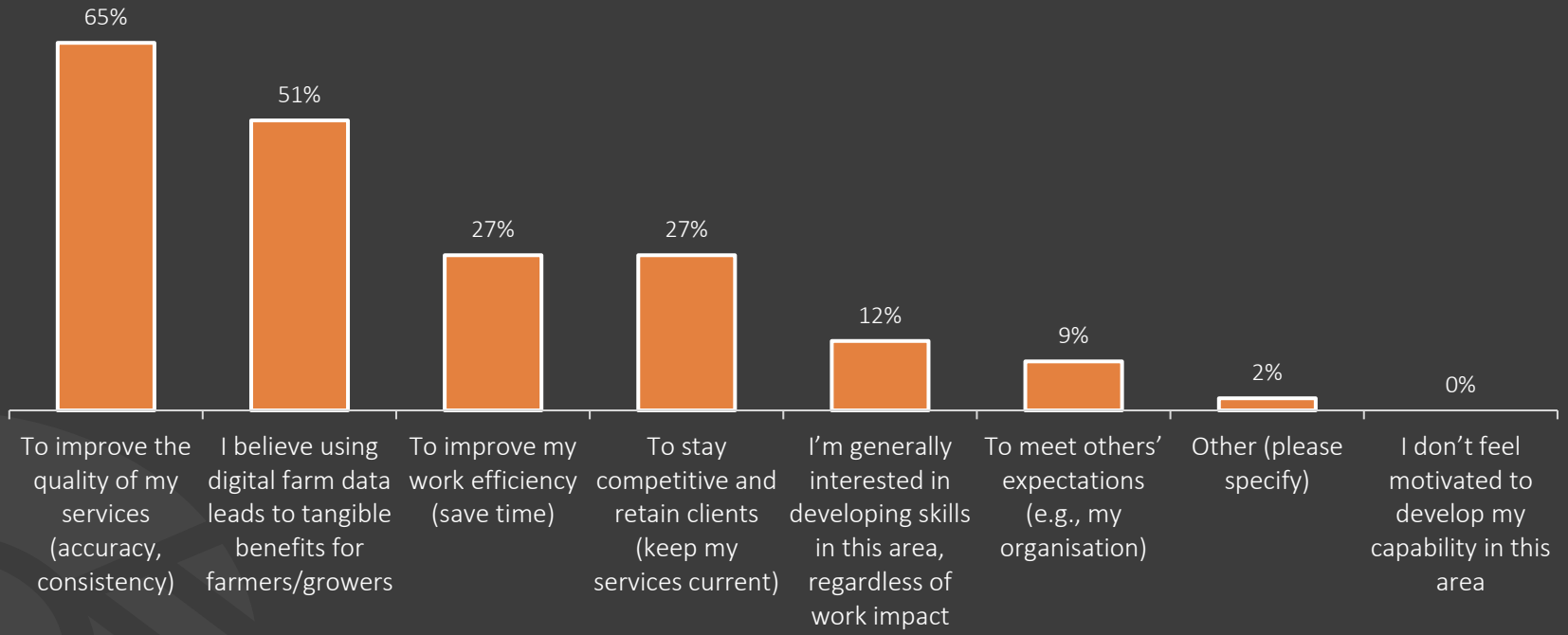
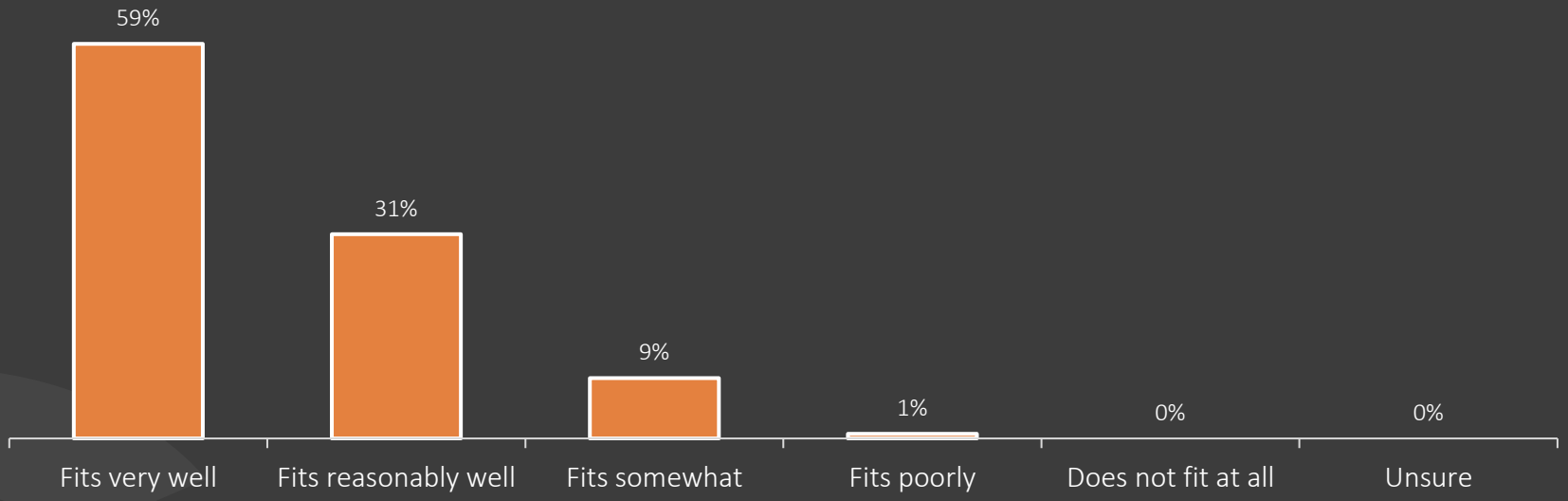
Thinking about rural professionals who provide similar types of services, support, or advice to you, how would you rate them in terms of data capability skills on the same 1-6 scale? (n=142)



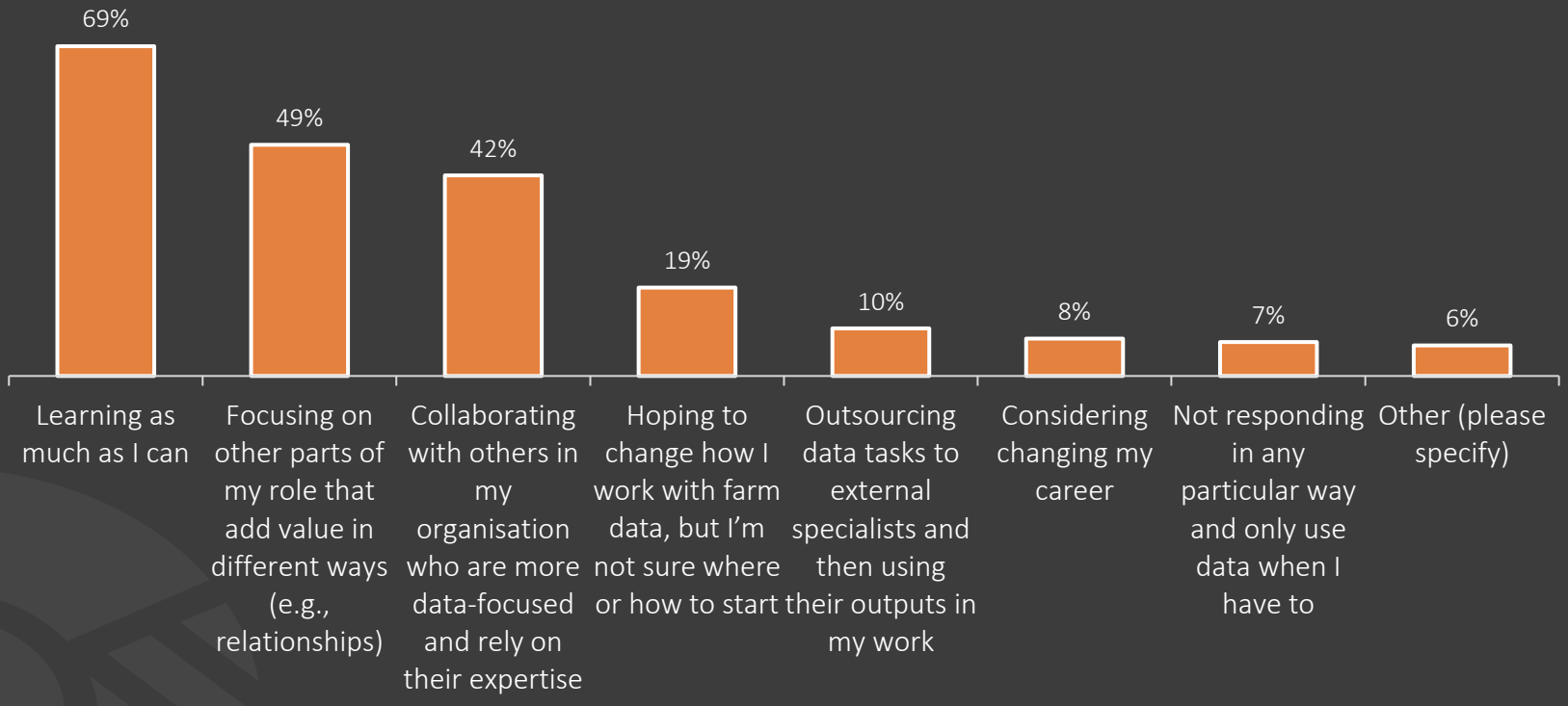
Which of the following describes your main motivation for developing your capability to use data? (n=139)



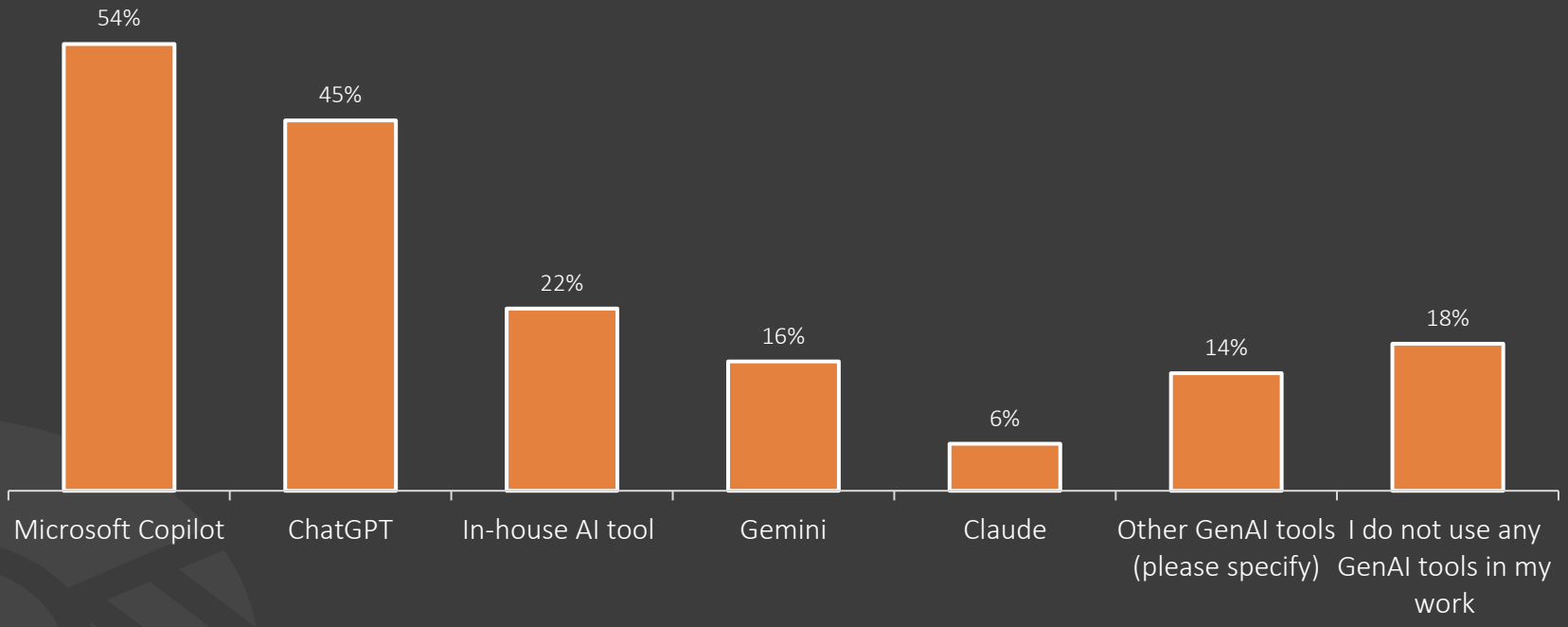
How well does a data-driven way of working fit with how you see your role as a rural professional? (n=143)



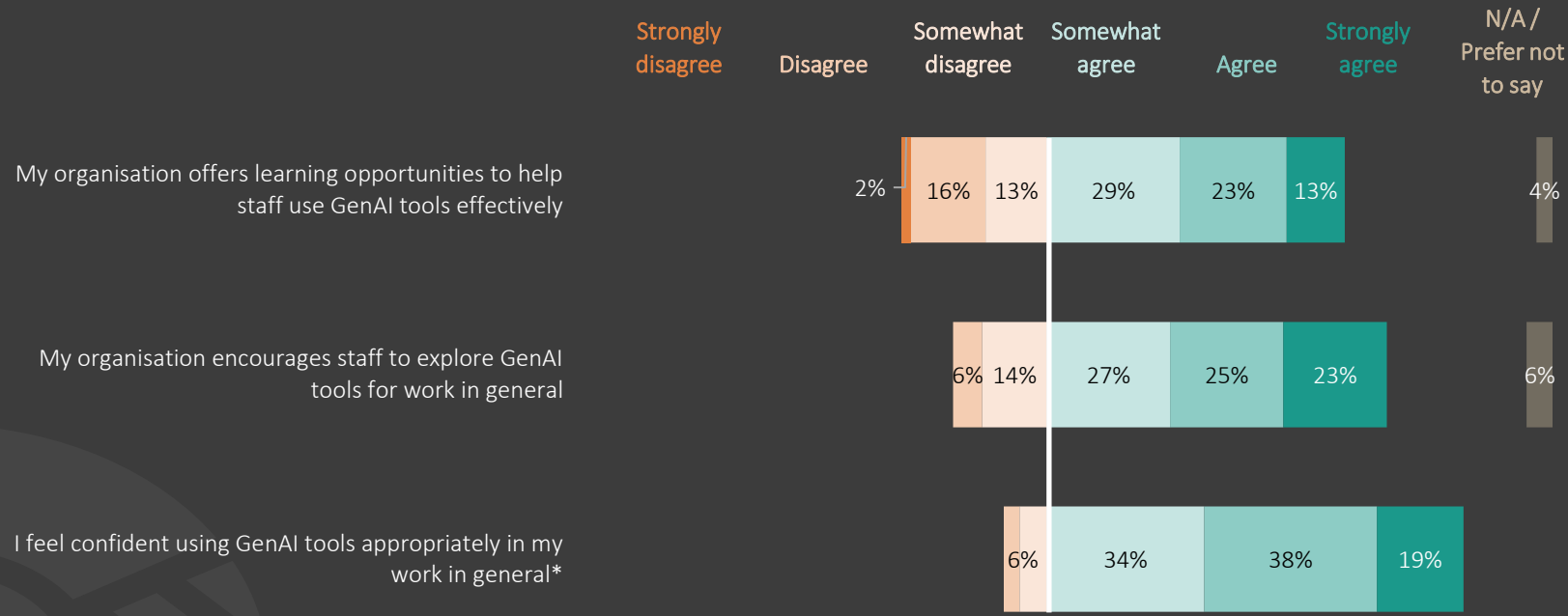
As a result of data-driven work, I am… (n=140)



Which GenAI tools do you use in your work? (n=140)

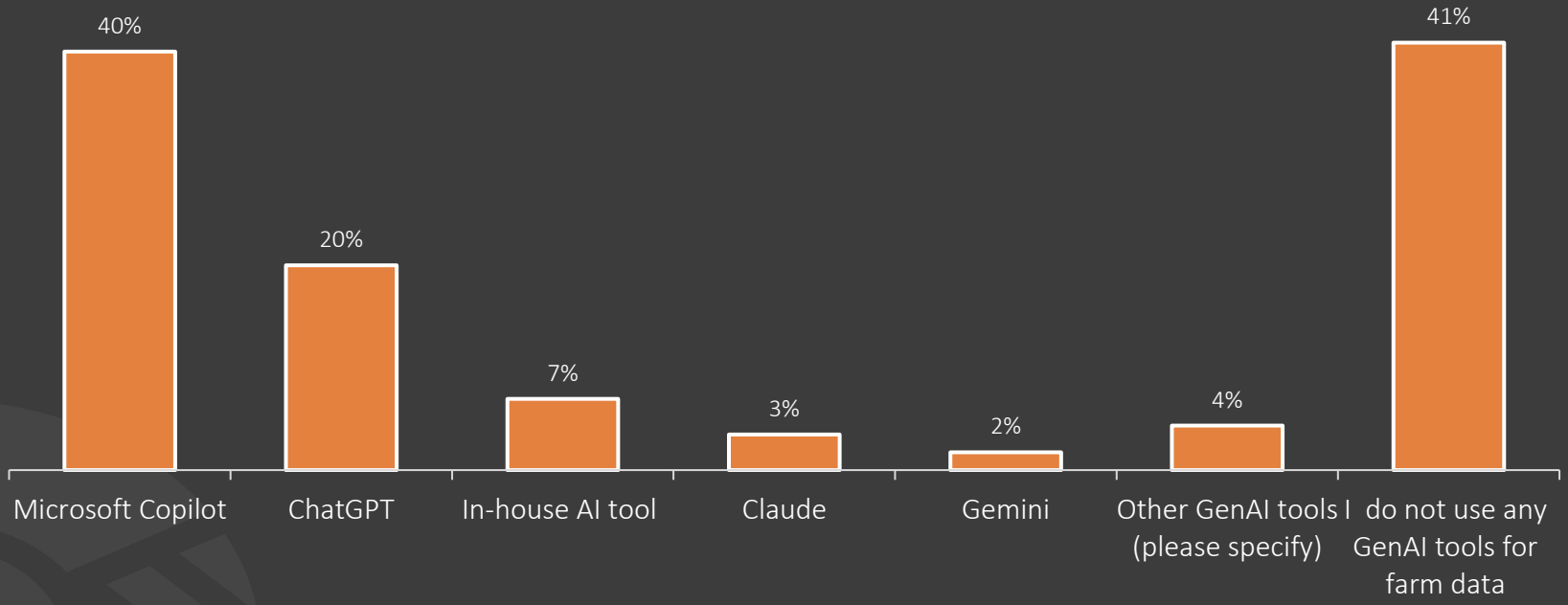


How much do you agree with the following statements about using AI in your work in general? (n=142)



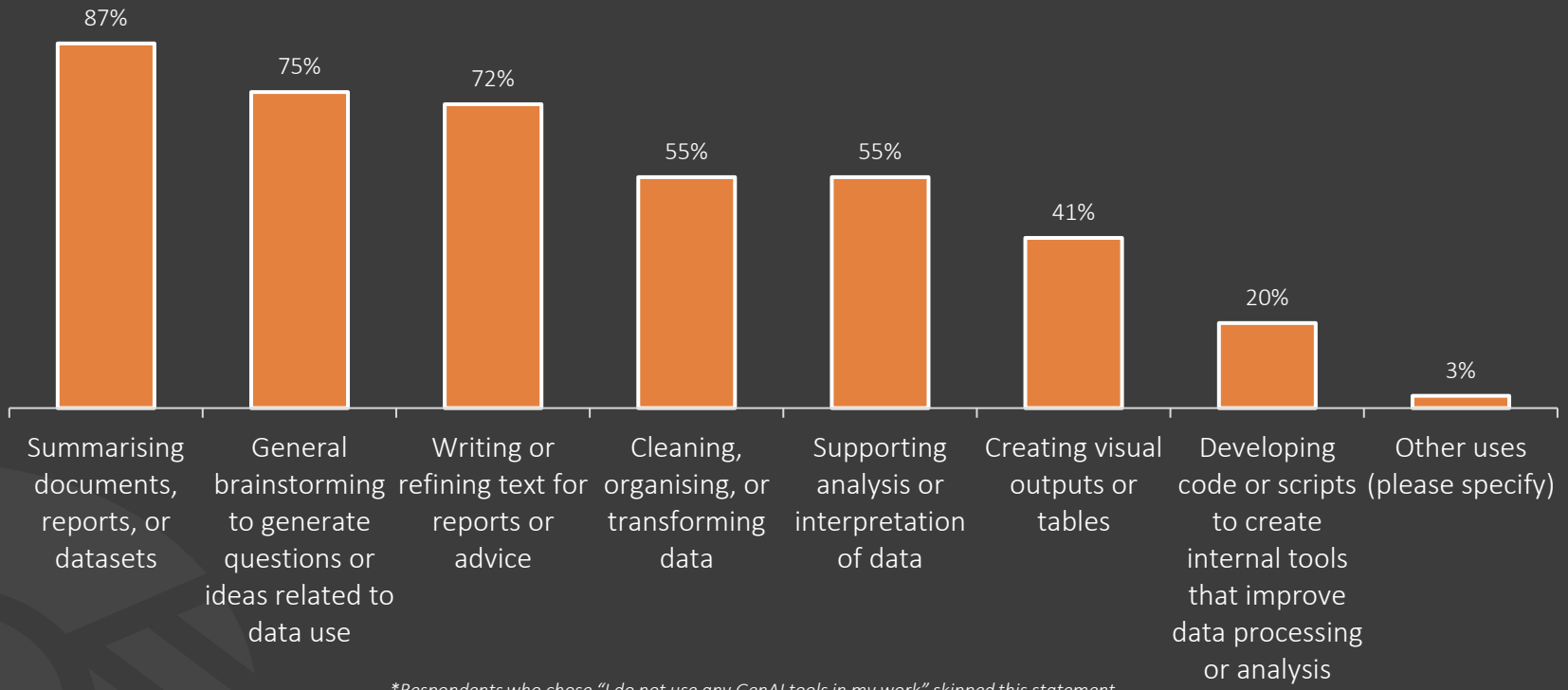
*(n=117) Respondents who chose "I do not use any GenAI tools in my work" skipped this statement

Of GenAI tools you use, which ones are also used when working with digital farm data? (n=117)*



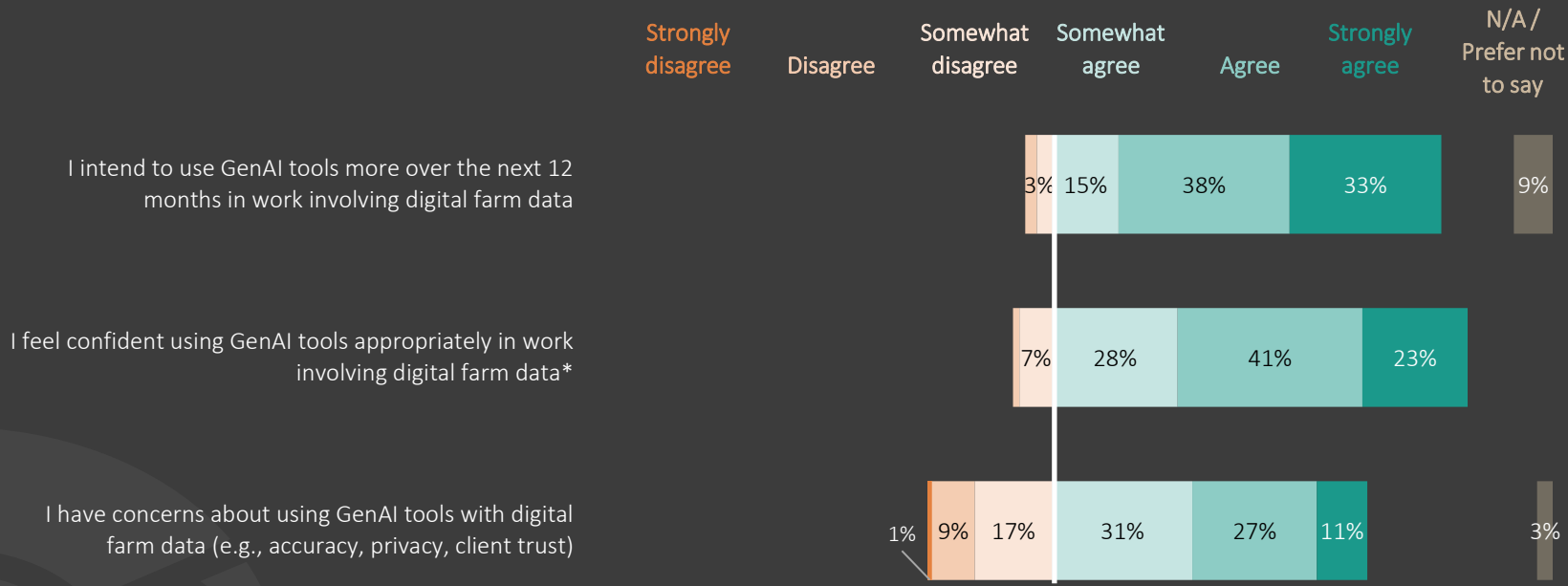
*Respondents who chose "I do not use any GenAI tools in my work" skipped this statement

How do you use GenAI tools in relation to farm data? (n=69)*



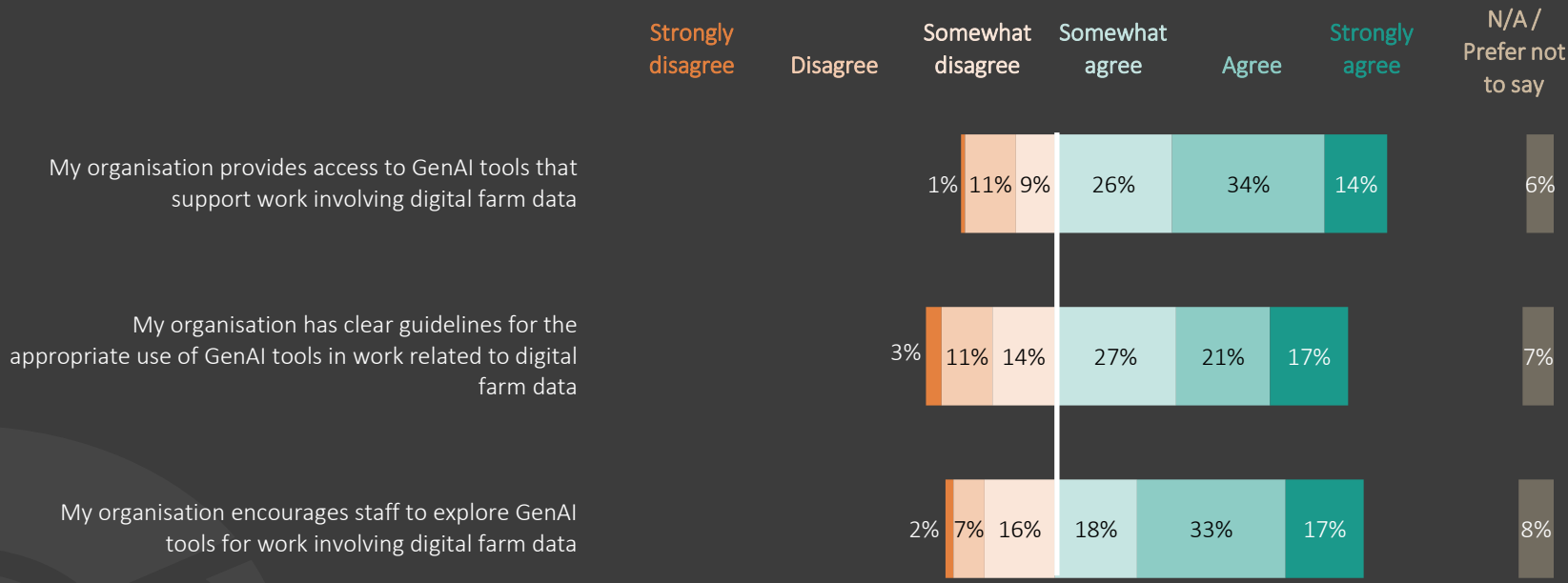
*Respondents who chose "I do not use any GenAI tools in my work" skipped this statement

How much do you agree with the following statements about your work involving digital farm data? (n=117)

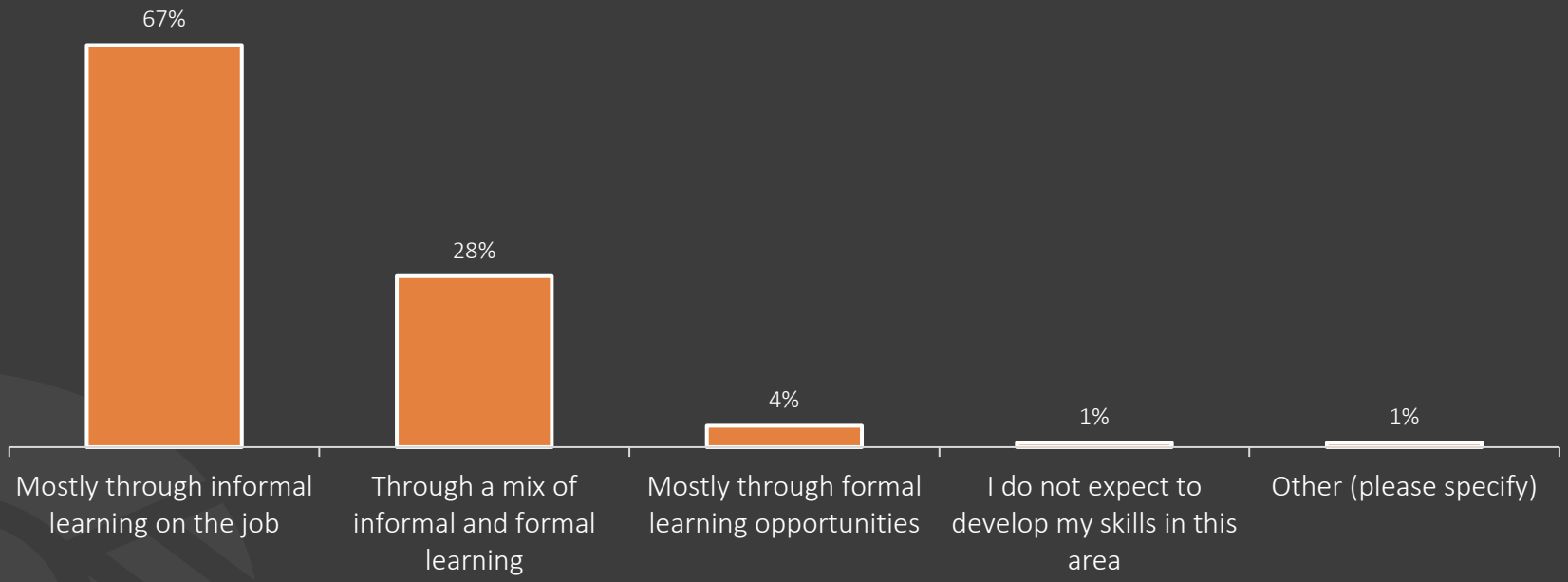


*(n=69) Respondents who chose "I do not use any GenAI tools in my work" skipped this statement

How much do you agree with the following statements about your organisation? (n=116)



Over the next 12 months, how do you think you might develop your skills in working with digital farm data? (n=141)



Thinking about how you use digital farm data in your role, what's one practical tip or approach you use that helps turn data into something useful for farmers or growers? (n=92)

Rural professionals top three tips are to:

- Focus on farmers' goals and the decision they want to make to make sure the data is useful and won't overwhelm them (20%, 18 out of 92)
- Present the data visually to help farmers understand it (15%, 14 out of 92)
- Always review digital data in context (e.g., ground truthing, triangulating, considering the wider farm system) (14%, 13 out of 92)

> *"Thinking about what you want out of it, as opposed to just banging random data together. It's a conversation with the practitioner or with the farmer or with the grower."*

Thinking about the last 10 years, how have your ways of using digital farm data changed? (n=93)

Rural professionals report that over the last 10 years, their ways of using digital farm data have changed:

- Much more data is now available to farmers and rural professionals, and at an incredible speed (27%, 25 out of 93)
- Digital data is being used more in communications with farmers and farm decisions (27%, 25 out of 93)
- Data collection and processing have become more automated because of digital and AI tools (24%, 22 out of 93)

> *"Ten years ago, none of the digital farm data was available. I used to physically survey the farm, but now I can use programs like Google Earth Pro. It doesn't completely eliminate the need to physically survey, but it has probably reduced it by about 80%."*

What specific aspects in working with digital farm data do you hope to develop the most, if any? (n=83)

Rural professionals working with digital farm data hope to develop areas in:

- Interpreting and making sense of digital data and information (31%, 26 out of 83)
- Building capability with AI or specific tools (19%, 16 out of 83)
- Combining data from different tools or sources into one view (14%, 12 out of 83)

"Keeping current with emerging tech and [have] ways to summarise [the] vast amounts and locations of data and sources."

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