

The Procurement Imperative

A view from the C-suite in Australia

Supported by

SAP Ariba

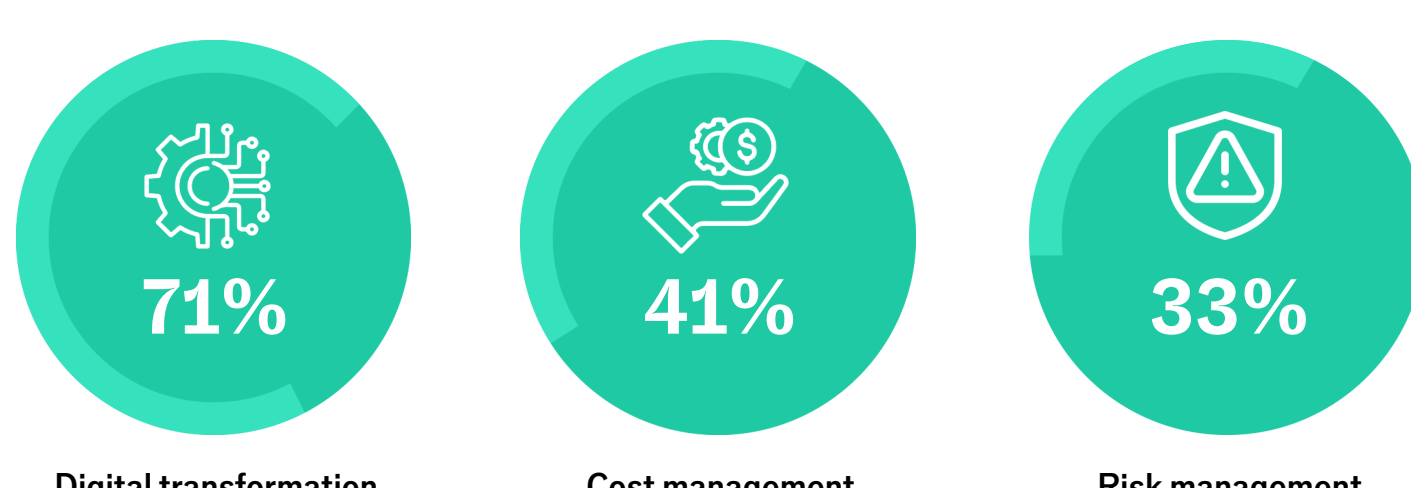
In 2026 procurement remains central to business decision-making. But the function is at a crossroads. Procurement teams are being asked to do more: cut costs, manage disruption and drive digital change. But confidence in their ability to deliver on that broader mandate, and in its alignment with wider corporate strategy, is slipping.

The latest iteration of Economist Enterprise's research takes the pulse of the C-suite on procurement's evolving role, tracking its transformation over the past five years. The findings are anchored in a survey of 2,648 C-suite executives across Asia-Pacific, Europe, Latin America, the Middle East, the Nordics and North America. **Within Australia, 147 executives were surveyed.**

Artificial intelligence now shapes procurement's agenda

Executives in Australia increasingly see procurement as a data-led function, with digital transformation topping procurement's short-term priorities.

Top short-term strategic priorities for procurement in Australia



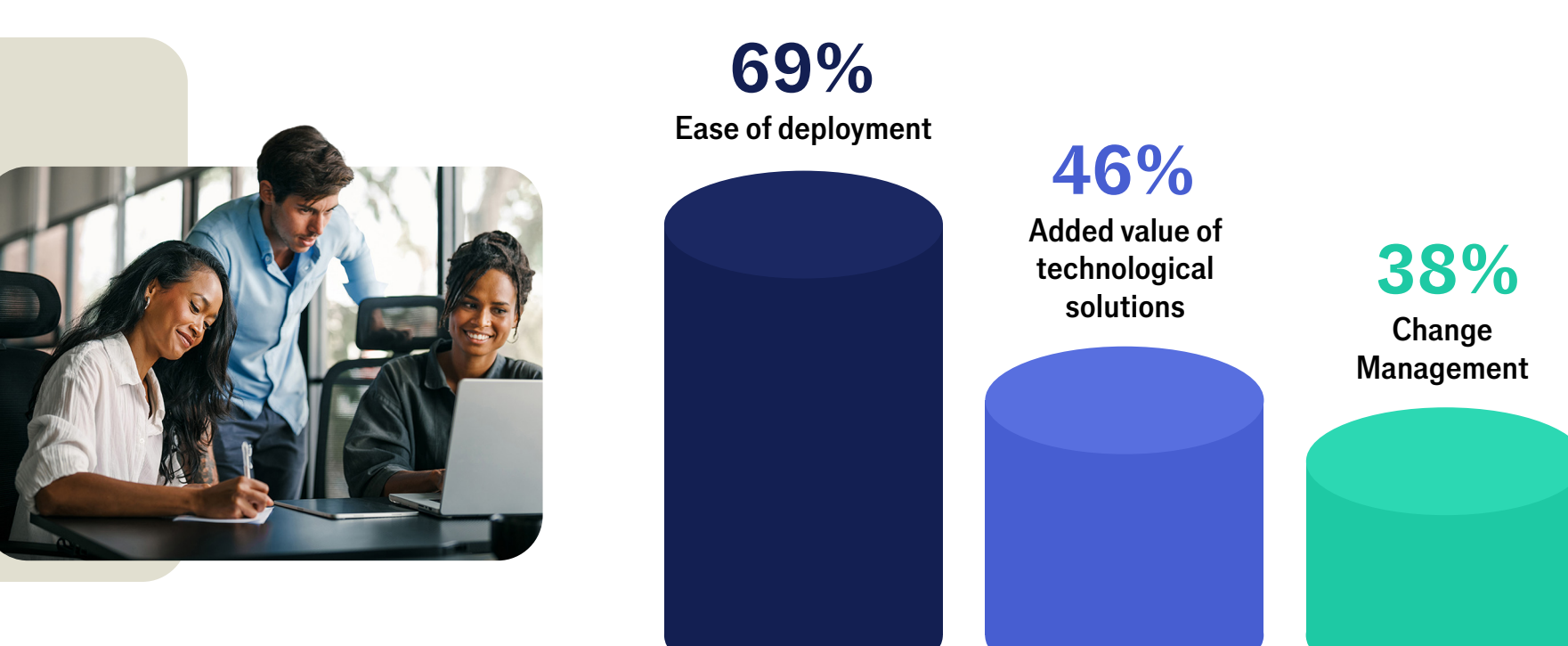
AI sits at the centre of this shift. The adoption of AI strategies and spend analytics are driving digital transformation, and agentic AI is emerging as the technology most likely to shape procurement's future in Australia.

Top drivers of digital transformation in procurement in Australia



But AI adoption has so far yielded mixed results and faces technical obstacles.

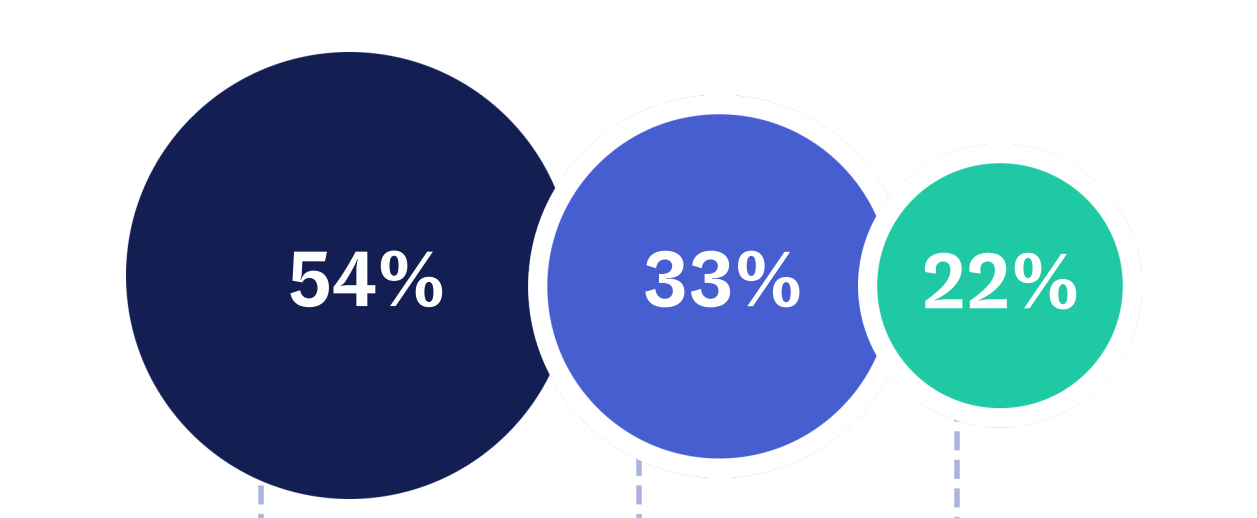
Top barriers to adopting or scaling AI in Australia



Procurement is aiming AI at its biggest bottlenecks

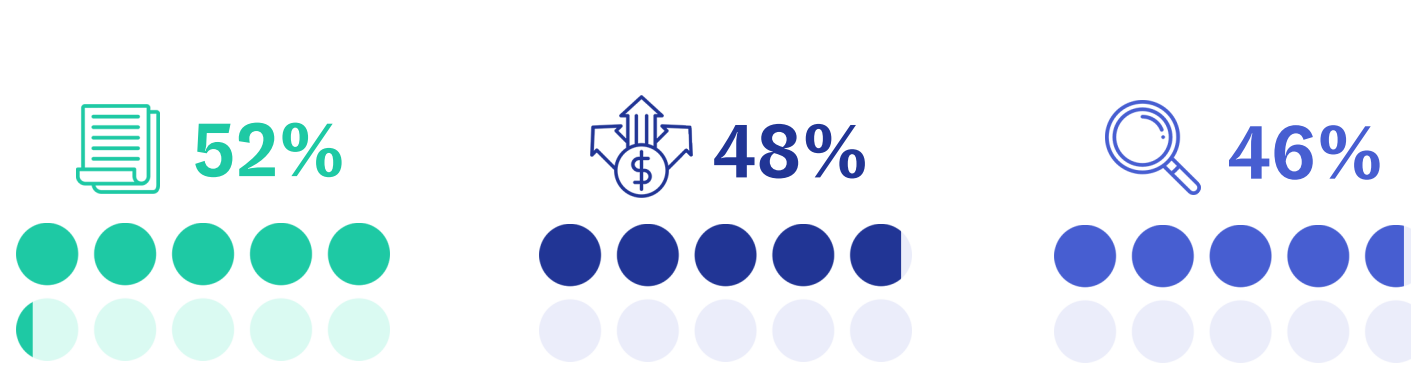
Even as AI climbs the agenda, several core processes remain stubborn sources of delay.

Areas experiencing the biggest delays in procurement processes in Australia



Executives in Australia are pointing AI at these same pain points. The outlier is spend classification, which owes its prominence less to delay than to the data-led ambition behind digital transformation—echoing the strength of spend analytics as a driver above.

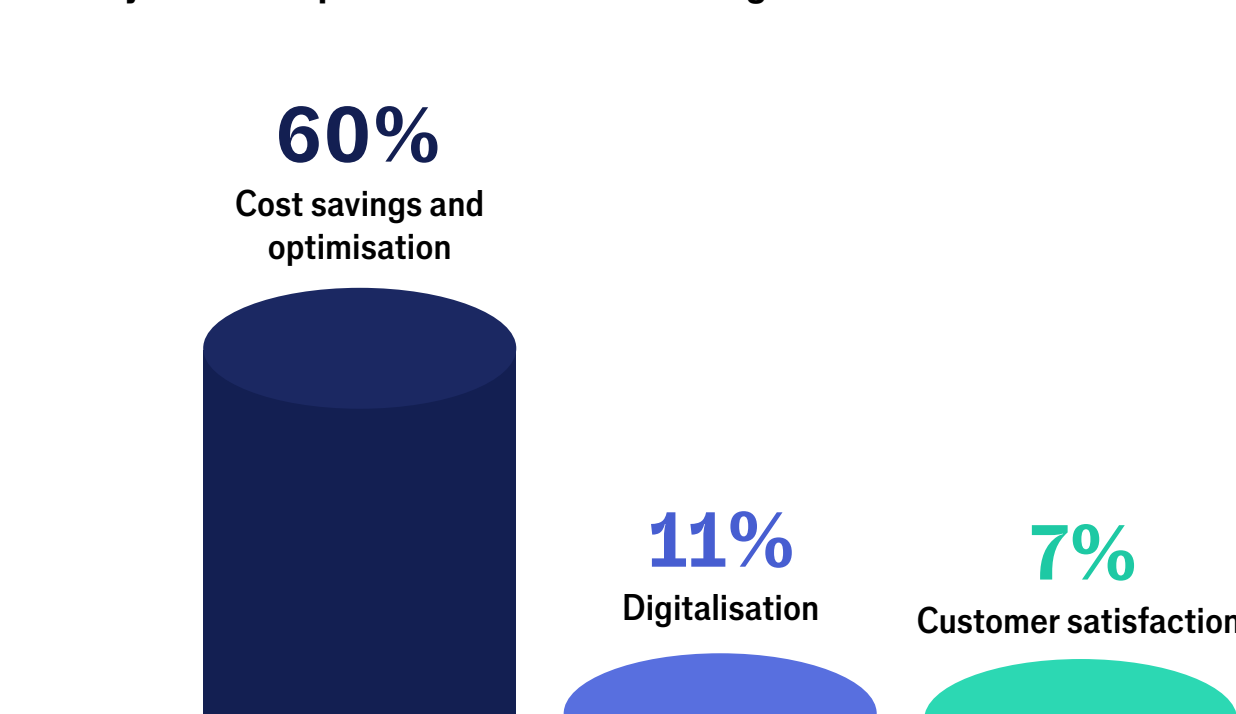
Procurement processes to be improved through the use of AI over the next 12 to 18 months in Australia



Cost remains procurement's defining priority in Australia

Cost control remains central to how Australian executives assess procurement's performance. The emphasis on financial discipline runs through the function's value proposition, strategic priorities and approach to risk management, suggesting that procurement's traditional mandate has retained prominence alongside newer digital ambitions.

Primary value that procurement delivers to organisations in Australia



While AI and geopolitical uncertainty remain important concerns, executives continue to view cost control as a critical objective for the function.

Top short-term organisational risks for procurement in Australia



Find out more about how procurement is changing—and what it means for your organisation—in our [full analysis](#).

