

The Procurement Imperative

A view from chief procurement officers in the United States

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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 the United States, 107 chief procurement officers (CPOs) were surveyed.**

Artificial intelligence now shapes procurement's agenda

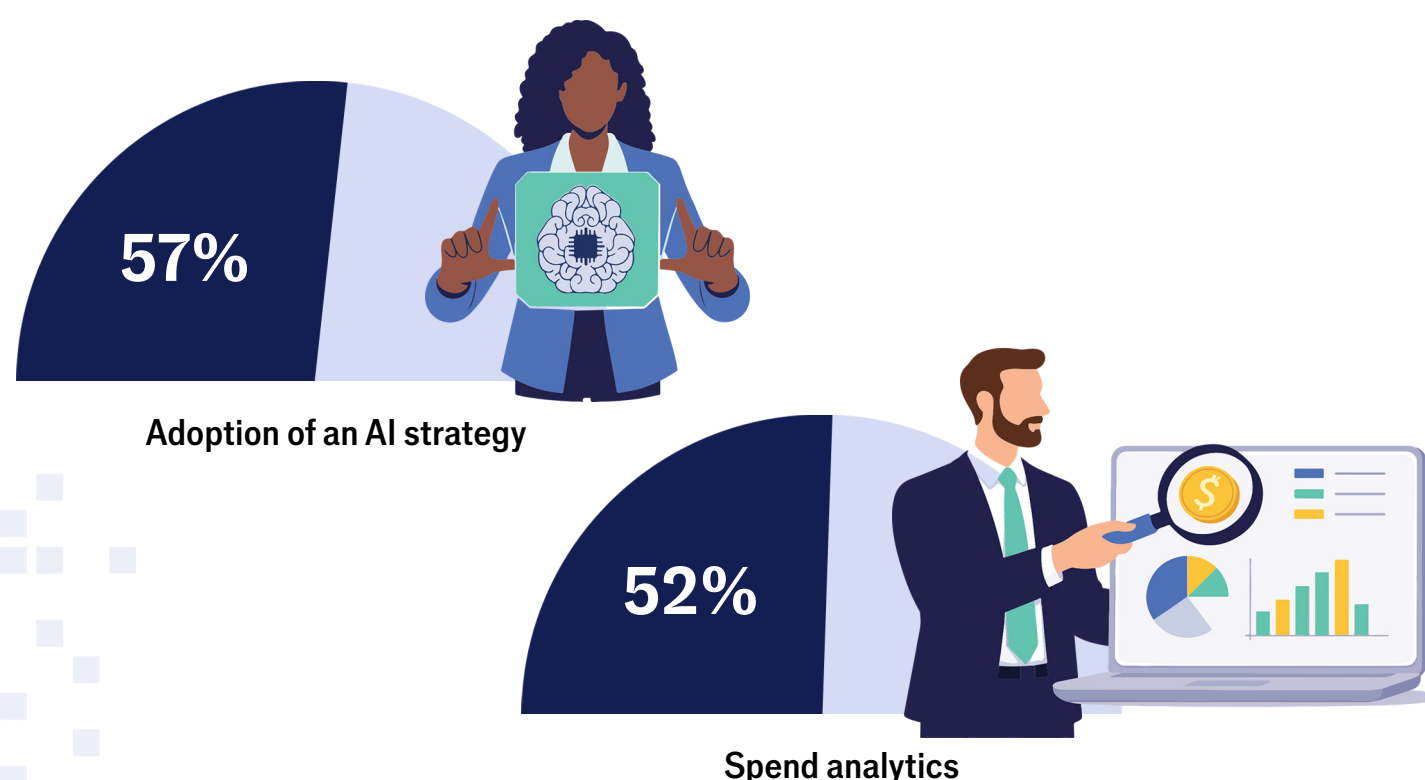
CPOs in the United States increasingly see procurement as a data-led function, with digital transformation topping procurement's short-term priorities.

Top short-term strategic priorities for procurement among CPOs in the United States



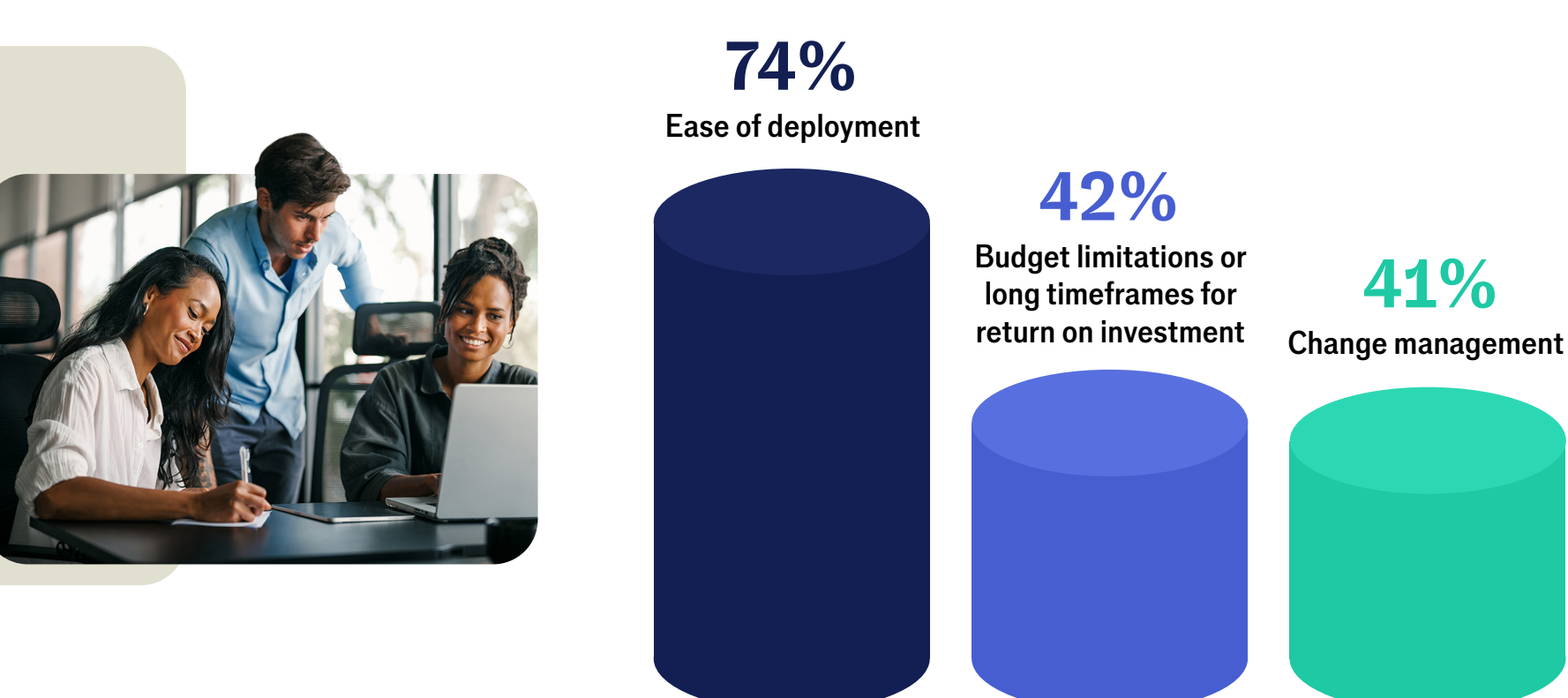
AI sits at the centre of this shift. The adoption of AI strategies and spend analytics are driving digital transformation, and agentic AI is emerging as the technology most likely to shape procurement's future in the United States.

Top drivers of digital transformation in procurement according to CPOs in the United States



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

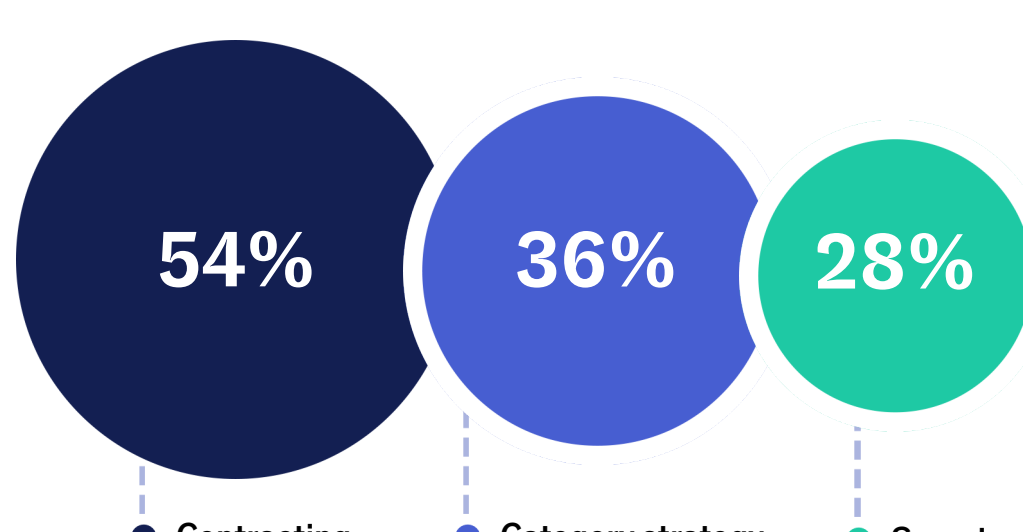
Top barriers to adopting or scaling AI according to CPOs in the United States



Procurement is aiming AI at its biggest bottlenecks

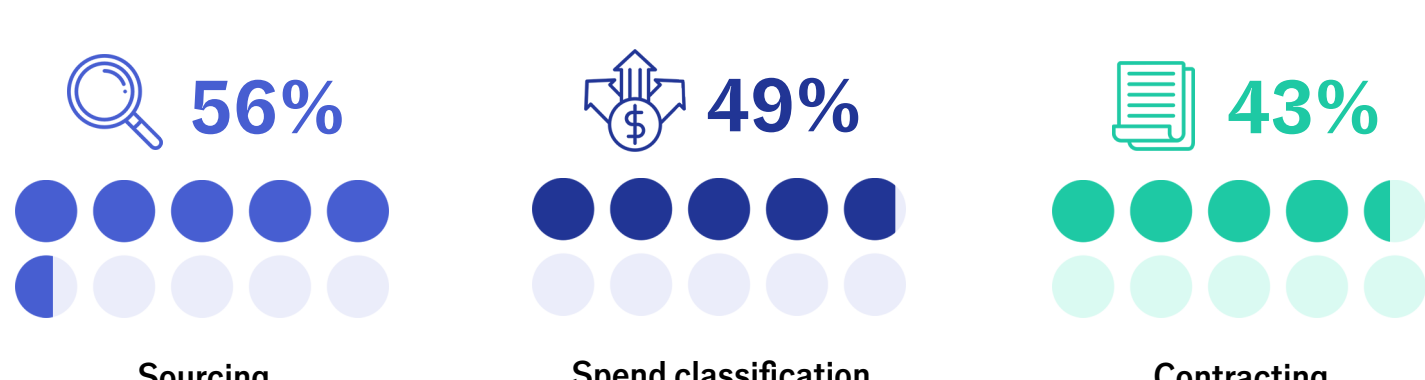
Even as AI climbs the agenda, several core processes remain stubborn sources of delay.

Areas experiencing the biggest delays in procurement processes according to CPOs in the United States



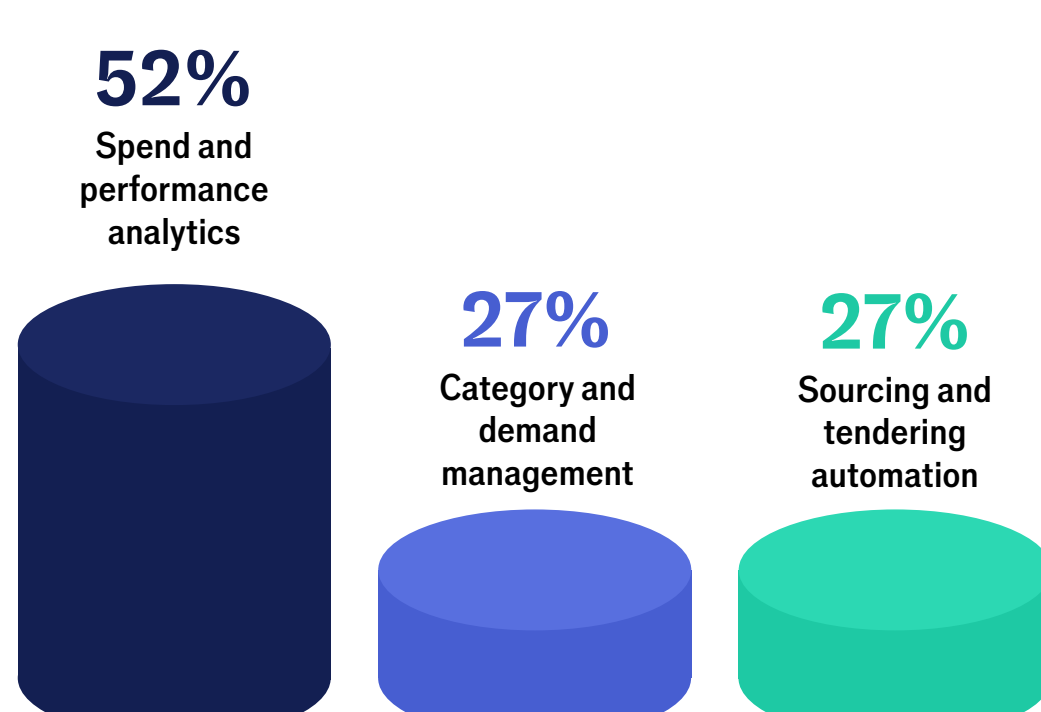
CPOs in the United States are pointing AI at these same pain points. The outlier is spend classification, which owes its prominence less to delay than to the data-led ambition behind digital transformation—echoing the strength of spend analytics as a driver above.

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



Investment plans suggest procurement leaders are putting money behind both better data and faster execution.

Top procurement areas for digital investment over the next three years for CPOs in the United States



The emphasis on sourcing is notable: as one of procurement's biggest bottlenecks and the leading target for AI-driven improvement, it is becoming an important focus for technology investment aimed at reducing manual work, speeding supplier selection and improving decision-making.



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

