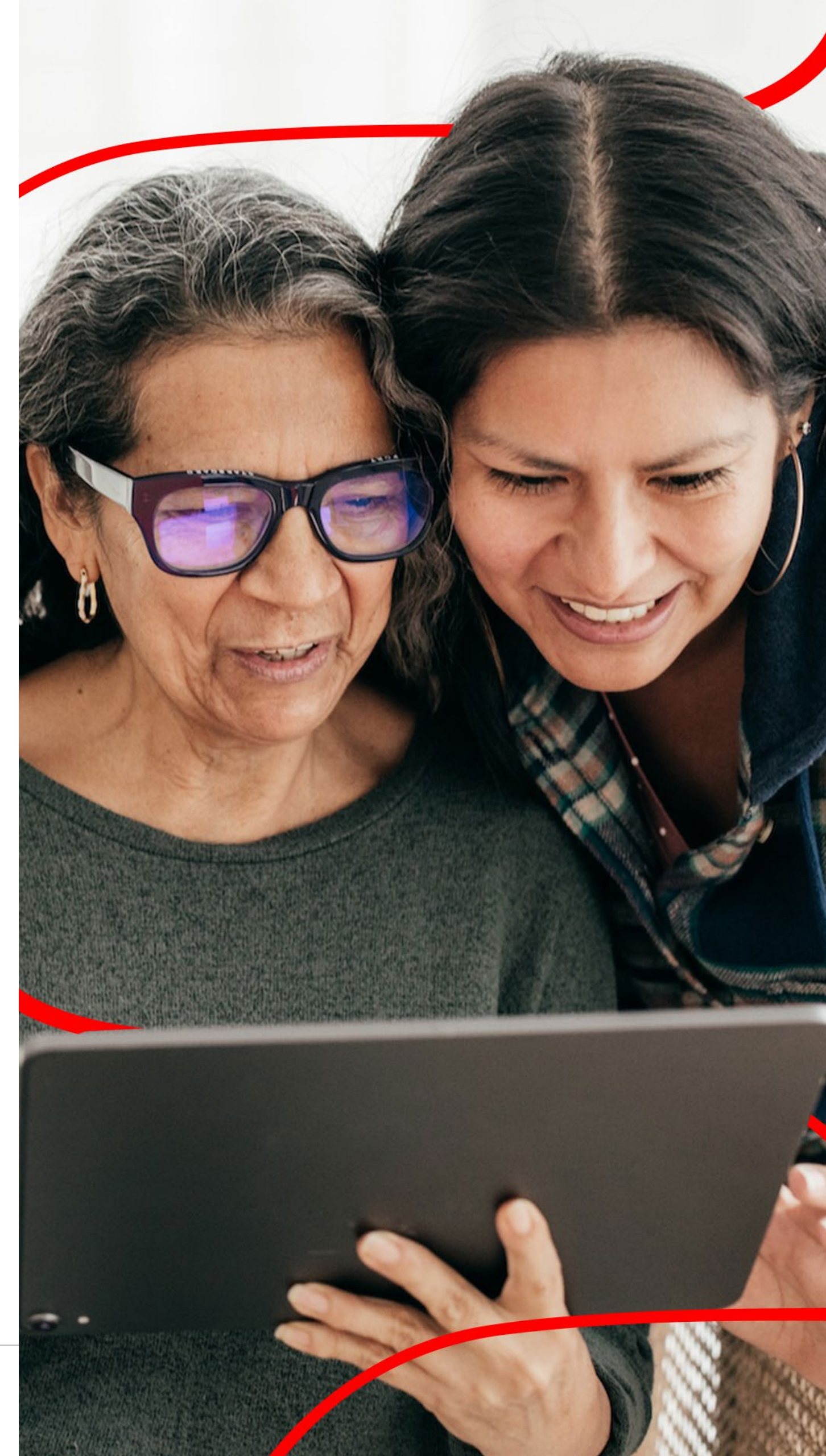2025

State of Digital Quality in Accessibility

A snapshot of current trends, insights from professionals in digital quality and software development, and how to improve accessibility and inclusive design within the SDLC.

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Accessibility is good for everyone. It extends – what should be – common human experiences to as many people as possible. In doing this the right way, digital organizations reap rewards and continue best practices to serve all users. Applause surveyed digital professionals — designers, developers, QA personnel and more — to learn about organizational attitudes and culture around accessibility, and dig deeper into specific areas to provide insights into what is working and what can be improved.

In addition to survey findings, this report draws on Applause's experience serving global enterprises and technology leaders for more than 15 years, including many who are leaders in accessibility and inclusive design practices. We regularly provide insights on how digital organizations can adhere to global accessibility standards, identify resource gaps and gain real–world user perspectives to support better digital experiences for all users, including those with disabilities.

Executive summary

The State of Digital Quality Report in Accessibility 2025 summarizes current market trends from our survey, paired with key considerations for an effective strategy to build and test accessible experiences.

→ **Global accessibility awareness is solidly on the rise.**
Fueled by examples of leading-edge digital champions like Microsoft, Cisco, and global influences like the European Accessibility Act, astute digital organizations understand the import of accessibility. For the fourth year in a row, the number one motivator to achieve accessibility compliance is improving accessibility for all end users (avoiding litigation is fifth). This year, 80% of respondents stated that they have a group or person responsible for digital accessibility, and 57.3% say they evaluate or consider accessibility at the planning stage of the SDLC.
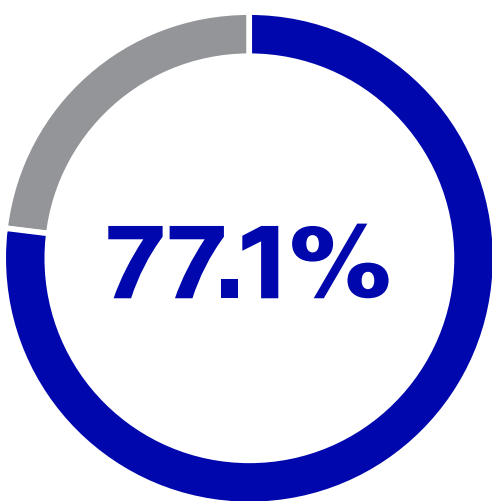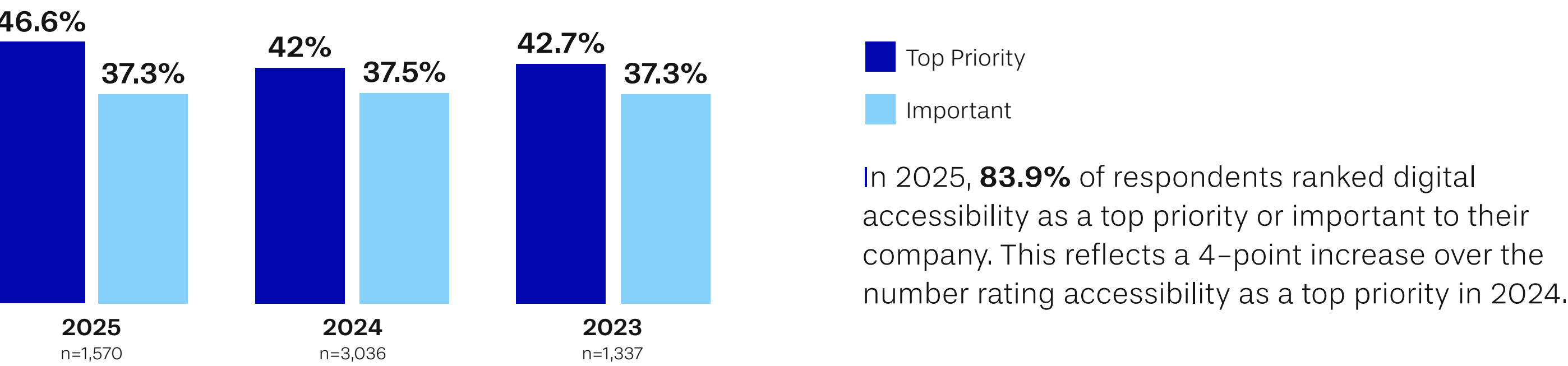
→ **There are gaps in accessibility expertise, resources and QA processes.** Given awareness, it may seem odd that substantial gaps in accessibility delivery exist. For example,

23.4% of respondents do not use metrics to monitor digital accessibility programs, and 67.8% lack enough internal expertise and resources to test for accessibility on an on-going basis. As our survey indicates, this can lead to known inaccessible features escaping to live websites and other digital properties. Training is lacking as well, as 46.8% state that they spend some time (31.4%) or no time (15.4%) on internal digital accessibility training.

→ **AI use in accessibility is also on the rise.** This year's survey confirms AI's ubiquity in tech, as over one-third of respondents (40.3%) plan to use AI to solve accessibility issues, and a whopping 84.2% see both current and future significant value of AI in accessibility testing. Currently, automated accessibility tools find between 20-40% of issues, and while the technology will continue to improve, it will likely not find all issues for years to come. Wading into the AI realm carries added responsibilities and check points that may not be readily apparent to organizations.
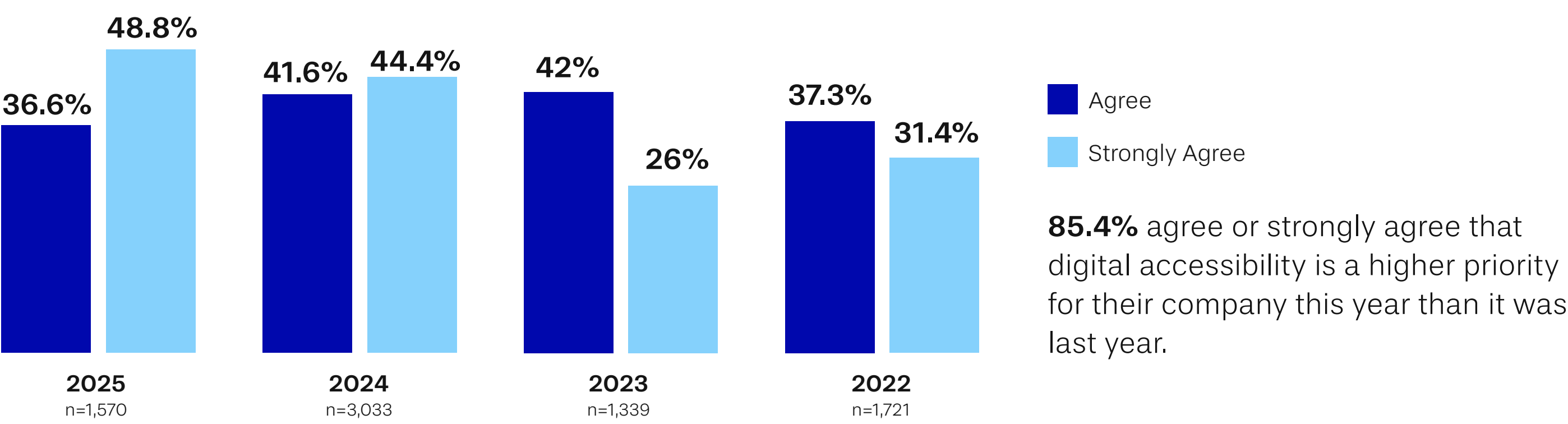
Organizations continue to prioritize accessibility

Importance of digital accessibility

- Top Priority
- Important

In 2025, **83.9%** of respondents ranked digital accessibility as a top priority or important to their company. This reflects a 4-point increase over the number rating accessibility as a top priority in 2024.
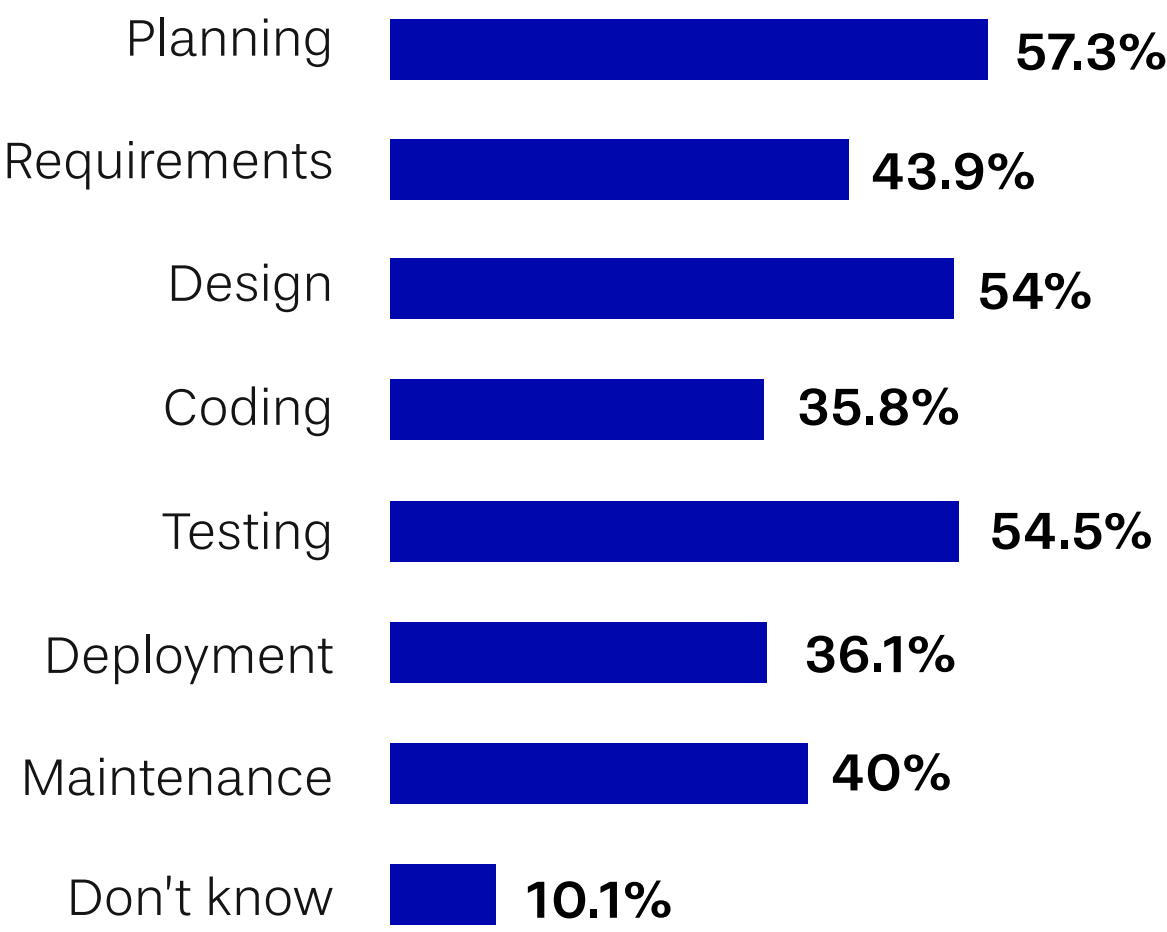
77.1%

77.1% of product developers build accessibility into their design plans at the early stages of the SDLC. (n=148)

**Digital accessibility is a higher priority for the organization than it was last year**

- Agree
- Strongly Agree

85.4% agree or strongly agree that digital accessibility is a higher priority for their company this year than it was last year.

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...yet, there's a disconnect between prioritization and delivery

Where in the SDLC teams consider accessibility
n=1,245

Planning — **57.3%**
Requirements — **43.9%**
Design — **54%**
Coding — **35.8%**
Testing — **54.5%**
Deployment — **36.1%**
Maintenance — **40%**
Don't know — **10.1%**

Only **35.8%** of organizations consider accessibility during the coding phase of the SDLC. (n=1,245)
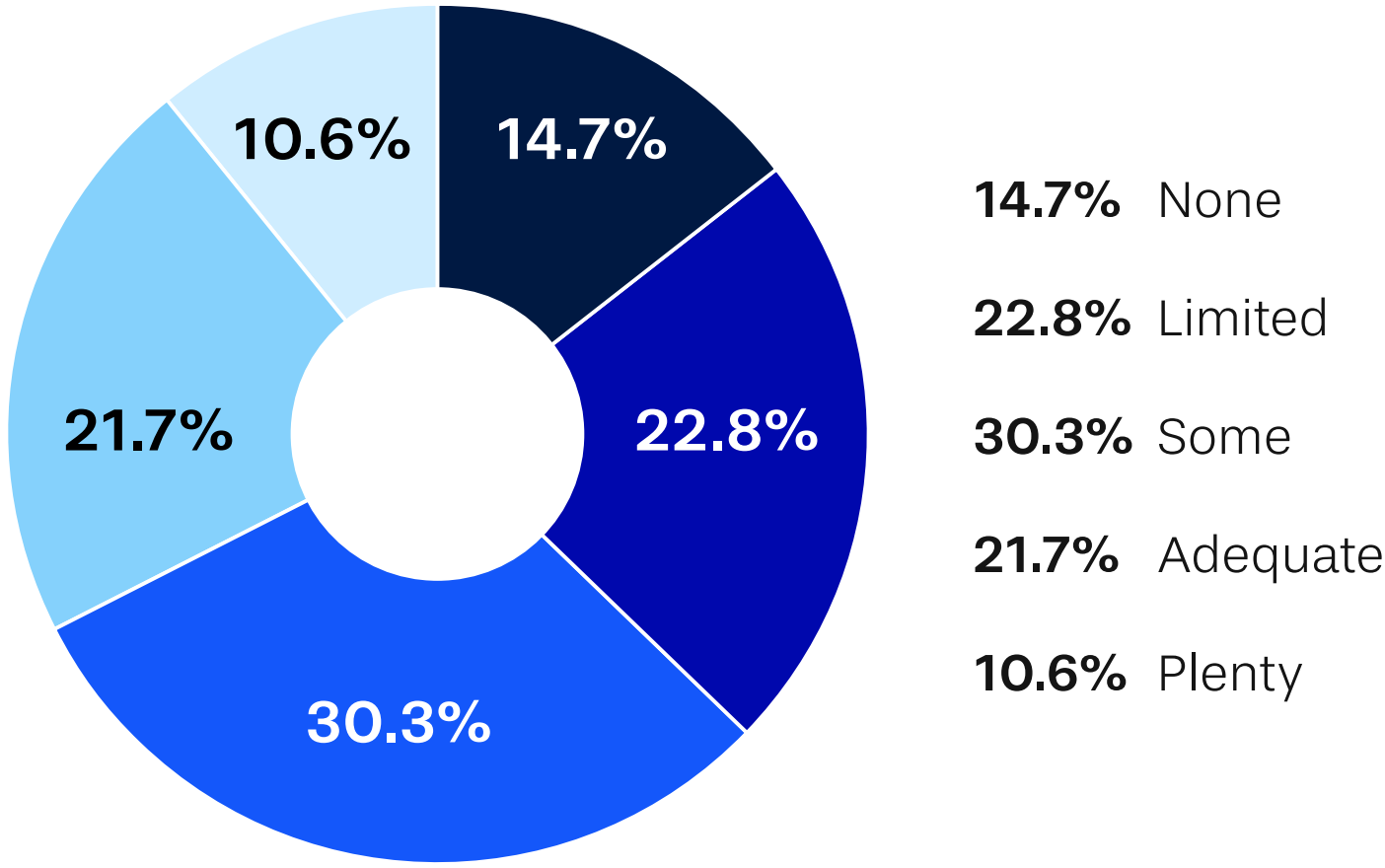
37%
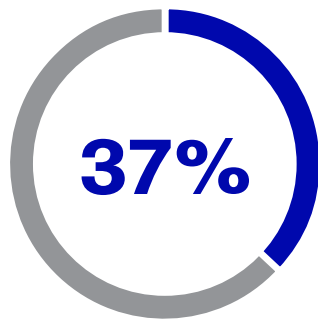
More than **37%** of organizations stated they do not have processes in place to stop the release of inaccessible features into production, up 3.5% from 2024. (n=1,030)

47%
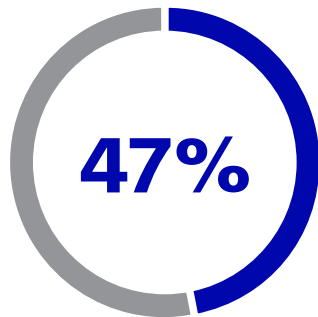
47% are aware of current blockers for assistive technology users on their website or apps. (n=1,010)

In-house testing resources
n=1,010

14.7% None
22.8% Limited
30.3% Some
21.7% Adequate
10.6% Plenty

While respondents acknowledge a culture of accessibility prioritization, 67.8% say they lack enough internal expertise and resources to test for accessibility on an on-going basis without external help.
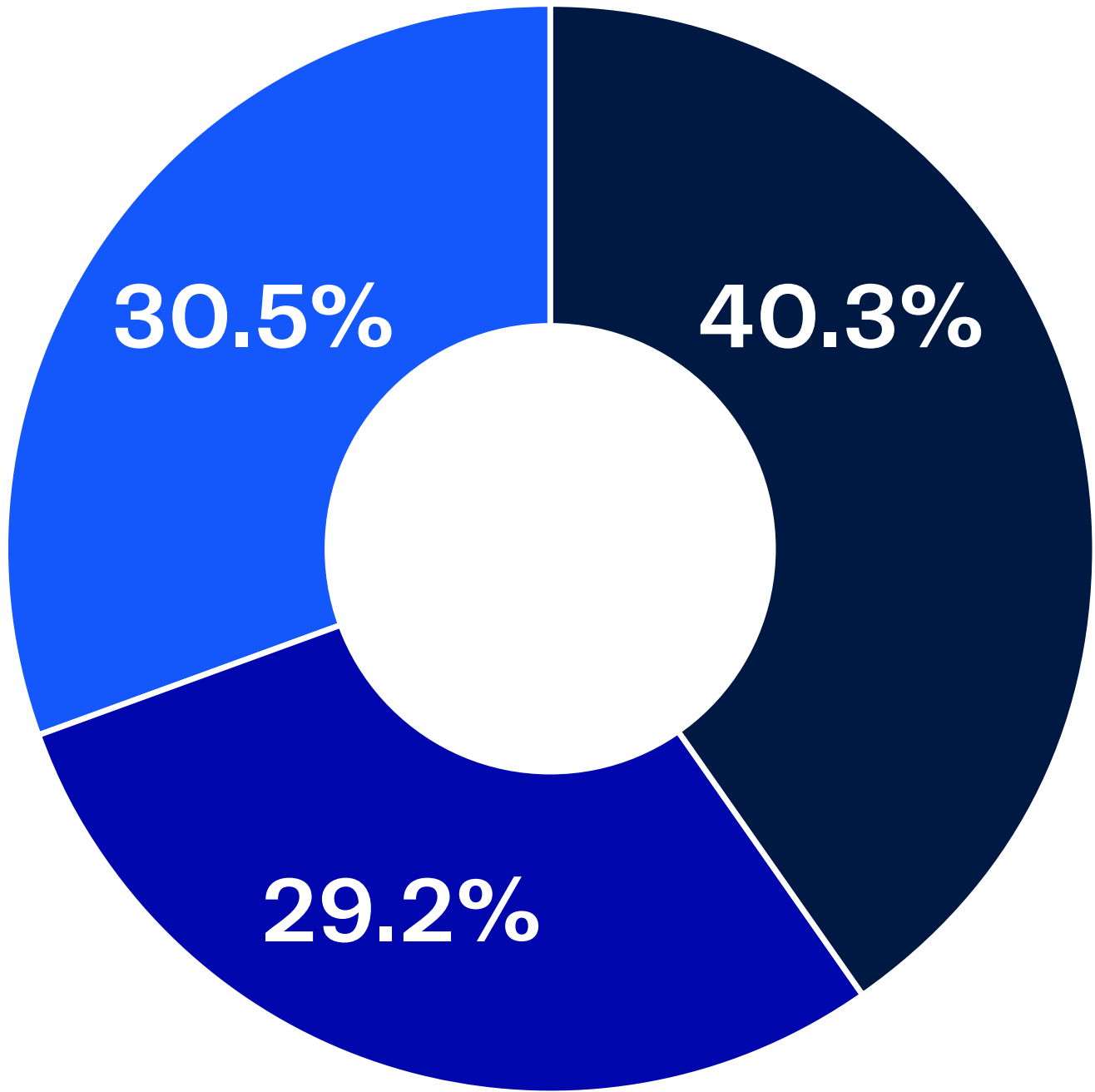
A perspective on AI

Organizations who plan to use AI to solve accessibility issues

51.8%
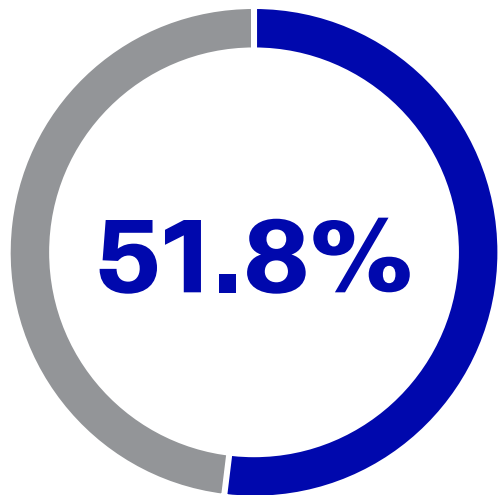
51.8% of those developing AI / Gen AI products do not seek input from minority groups like people with disabilities. (n=626)

47.4%
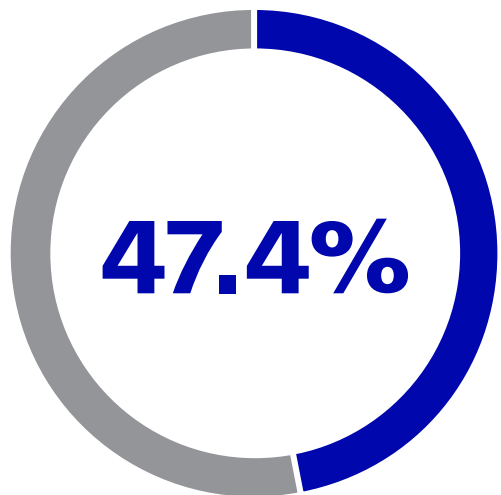
47.4% believe AI already provides a significant additive to accessibility testing. (n=878)

30.5% **40.3%**

29.2%

40.3% Yes

29.2% No

30.5% I don't know

Recommendations for delivering optimal accessible experiences

1. **Fully commit to accessibility.** Even with the increasing commitment to accessibility that we see in a majority of organizations — along with the shared goal of building products for all users — if you lack processes, training, or key staff roles, issues will inevitably reach users. It's critical to build expertise in the full spectrum of accessibility and inclusive design best practices — from engaging with people with disabilities and doing UX studies to education/training, conformance reviews, in-sprint testing and more. Consulting and partnering with a third party can help here. Accessibility is an ongoing journey involving a well-constructed program that touches all areas of product development... and doesn't end after certain compliance targets are reached.

2. **Embrace AI with a full knowledge of limitations, risks and promise.** As AI is becoming a platform tool for building solutions, we must expand accessibility testing into this domain. Red teaming and model evaluation are critical to building a responsible AI product. AI-based accessibility testing products may be helpful in some cases, but these tools often miss key blockers, or create a large number of false reports that require an expert to sift through for relevant issues, among other problems. Testing with a diverse group of people is ideal in order to find issues that automated tools do not.

3. **Accessibility is — first and foremost — about diversity and people.** It's easy to lose this focus when we're deep in the daily details of the SDLC. Remember: If your goal is to build useful, intuitive and pleasing digital experiences for everyone, then you must involve people with disabilities and others that use assistive technologies to give input throughout all stages of product development. This is foundational.

"The positive: a majority of companies continue to prioritize accessibility. Still, many struggle to fully realize maturity in accessibility. This is no surprise. We regularly see this in our work at Applause as we help organizations build inclusive products: that requires a coherent strategy across the product lifecycle, and touches everyone in the organization. It draws on many skills and diverse perspectives that must be woven into an efficient fabric. The work is challenging, but we see it come to fruition every day."

Bob Farrell
Vice President, Solution Delivery & Accessibility

To learn more about the methodology of the report, visit **applause.com/blog/2025-a11y-digital-quality-report/**

To see how Applause can help your accessibility testing and training visit **applause.com/accessibility-testing**

Acknowledgments

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