

SmartPulse 

# AI Is Rewriting the Grocery Journey

How shoppers are using AI to plan meals, discover products, and make purchase decisions – and what it means for CPG brands.



# AI Has Moved from Experiment to Everyday



AI is now a practical shopping tool, not an emerging behavior.

**68% of shoppers already use AI to guide grocery purchases.** They're turning to tools like ChatGPT and Perplexity for meal planning, recipe discovery, and product research.

**Adoption is accelerating across every generation, income level, and household type.** This isn't speculative – it's happening now.

**AI influences consideration before shoppers ever reach a retailer.** Discovery is faster, consideration is more fluid, and the path from inspiration to cart is collapsing. Brands that don't show up in AI-driven recommendations risk losing shoppers early in the journey.

Key Finding #1:

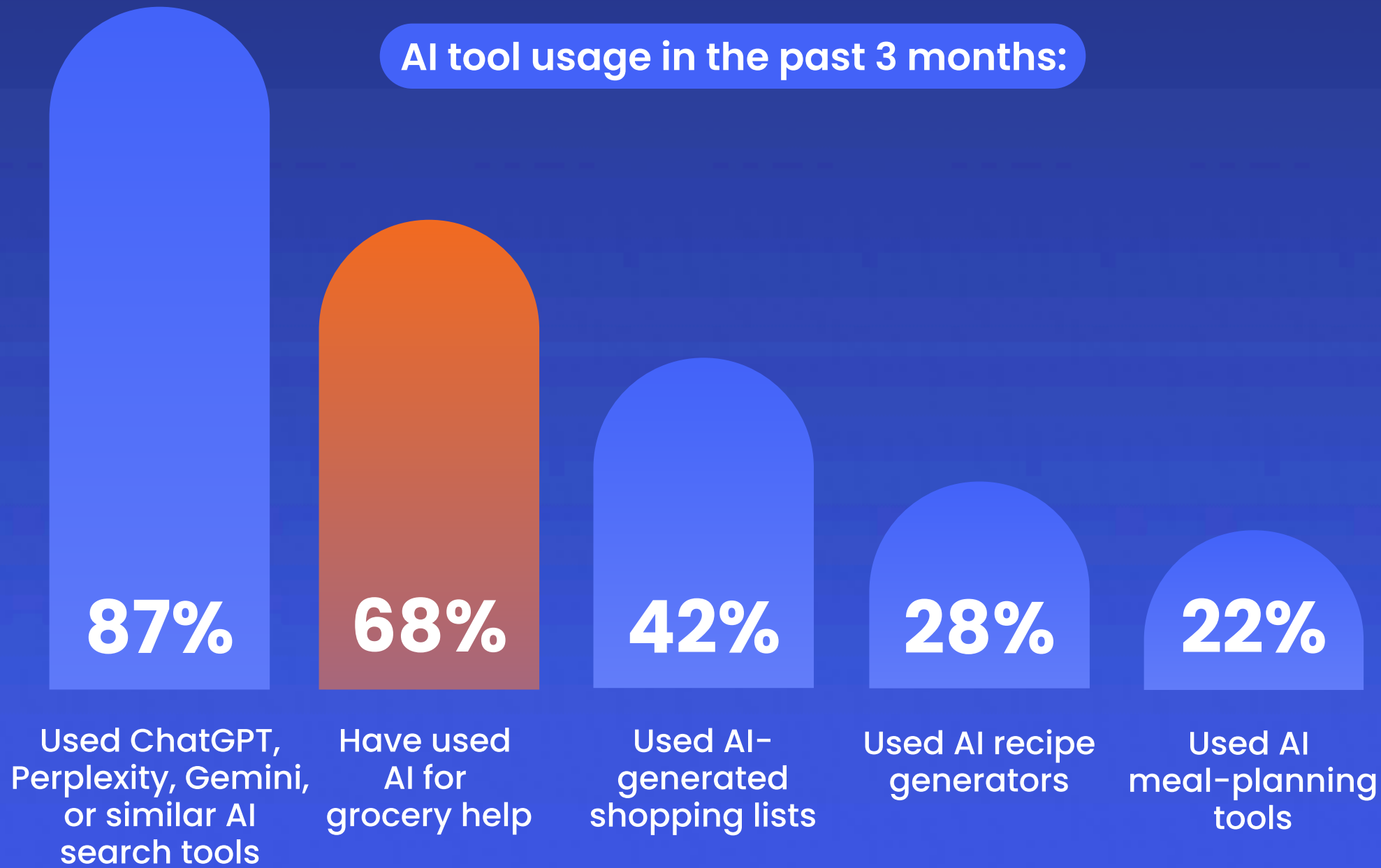
# AI Goes Mainstream for Grocery Shopping

9 in 10 shoppers use AI tools regularly – and **68% have already turned to AI** for grocery help.

Life stage, not age, is what drives AI adoption for grocery shopping.

Even among Baby Boomers, more than one-third are using AI for grocery decisions – a sign of how quickly adoption is spreading beyond early users.

Parents are the true power users. Among households with children under 18, **82% have used AI for grocery decisions**, compared to **56% of households without children**. Convenience needs, not novelty, are driving usage.



Key Finding #2:

# Recipes Are the Entry Point to AI Grocery Shopping

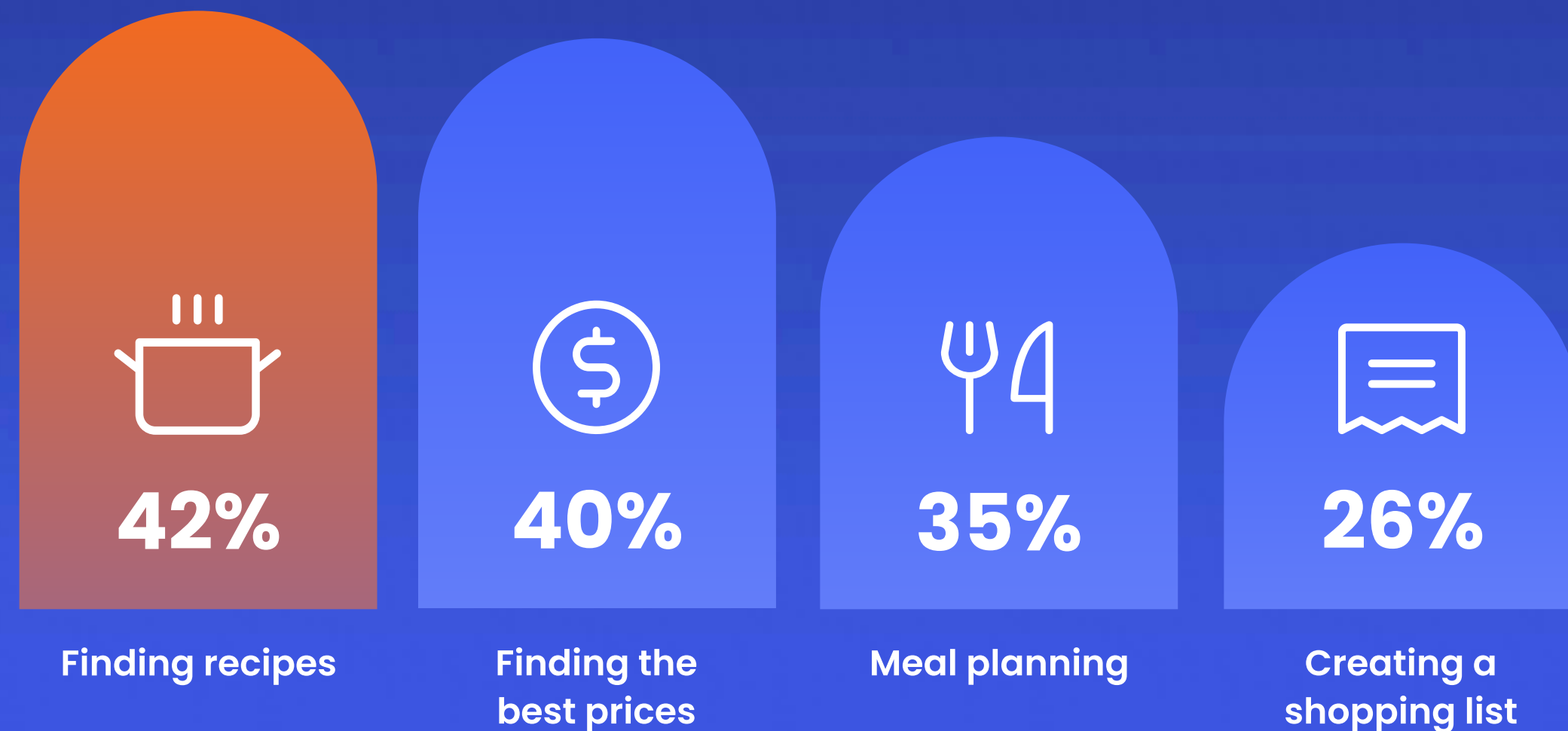
Finding recipes is the #1 desire, closely followed by price comparison and automated meal planning.

**Recipe discovery is the entry point.** Low-commitment, high-value, immediately useful. Once shoppers see AI deliver a great recipe, they ask for more: build a list, compare prices, automate meal plans.

**Baby Boomers lean hardest into recipes and price.** Among 61–79 year olds, 56% want recipe help and 54% want price help – utility over experimentation.

**Millennials want both inspiration and optimization.** Among 29–44 year olds, recipes (41%) and best prices (41%) tie as top priorities.

When asked what they want AI to help with most:



**What this means:**

Recipe discovery isn't content marketing – it's the front door to AI shopping behavior.

Key Finding #3:

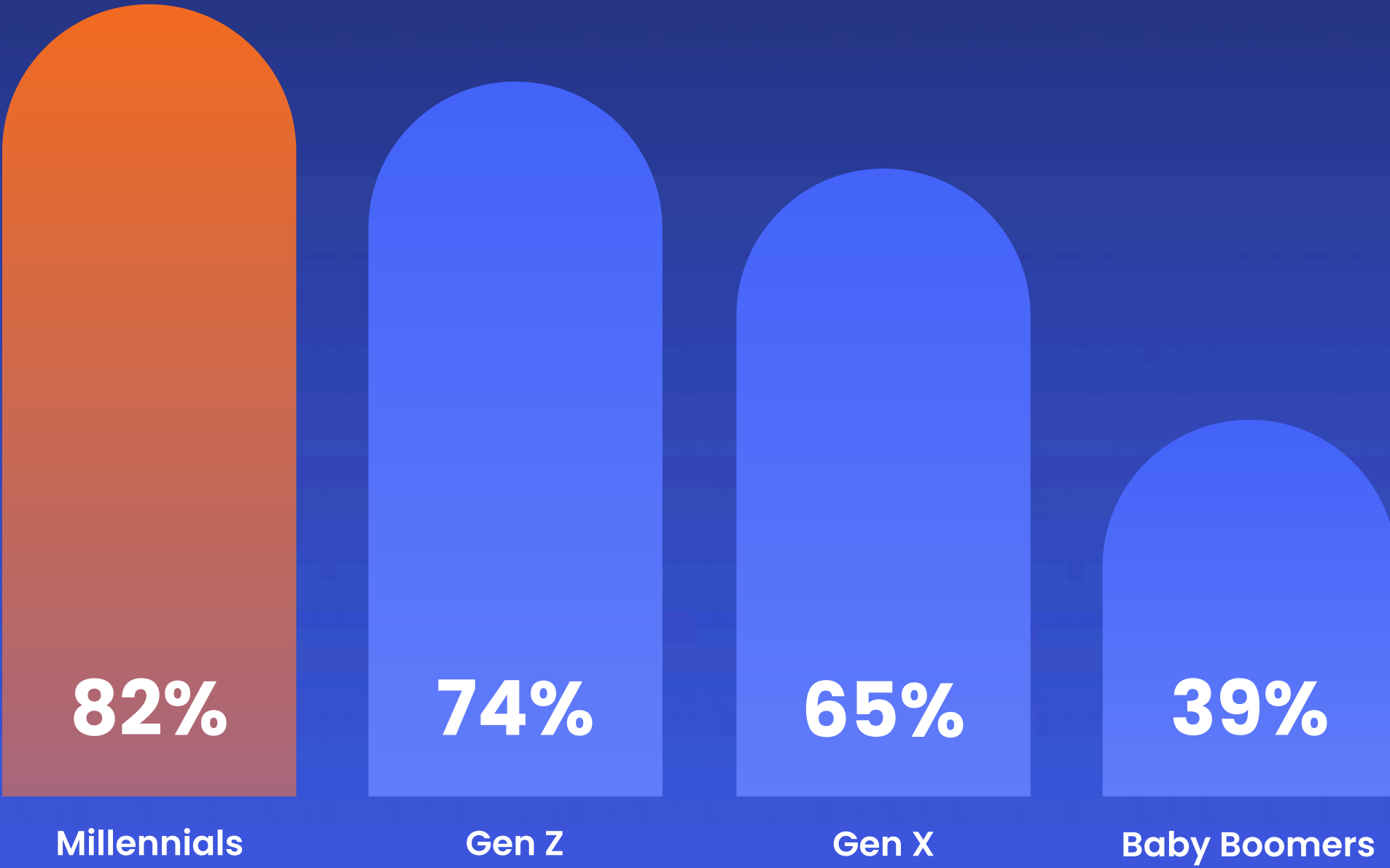
# Trust Is High — 71% Will Let AI Plan Their Meals

Shoppers are comfortable letting AI shape food decisions before they ever choose a brand.



That's 71% who are already doing it or definitely would – remarkably high trust for a technology that's still relatively new in this context.

Adoption varies by generation, with Millennials leading the charge:



Percentage that already do or say "yes, definitely"

# The New Expectation: Full Automation

**Shoppers expect ideas to convert directly into carts.** When asked if they'd use AI to instantly convert a recipe or meal plan into a ready-to-buy shopping cart at their preferred retailer:



**AI-generated shopping lists are in demand.** When asked how appealing AI-generated shopping lists built from their habits, previous orders, dietary needs, or budget would be:

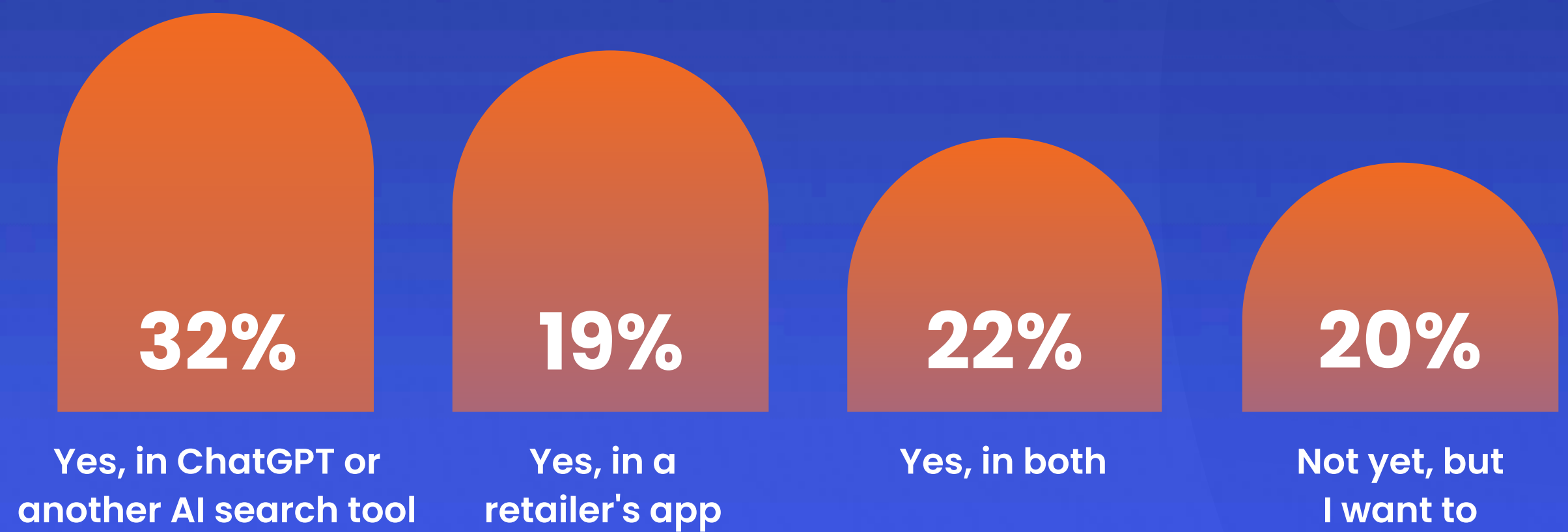


**Key Finding #4:**

# Retailer AI Is Live — And 86% Are Ready to Buy From It

Retailer AI is becoming a new decision surface for brands. 93% have used or want to use these tools, and purchase intent is exceptionally high.

When asked if they're already engaging with it:



And they're ready to convert. When asked how likely they'd be to purchase if they could use Walmart, Target, or Amazon's AI inside ChatGPT to build their cart:



That's 86% likely to buy directly from an AI-built cart.

Price comparison is the top value driver. When asked which feature would be most valuable:



Key Finding #5:

# The Future Is Autonomous — And More Than Half Are Ready

Many shoppers are open to AI handling parts of their shopping – and brands will increasingly be evaluated by systems, not just people.

**59%**

are comfortable letting AI choose, order, and deliver products autonomously.

That comfort level varies by generation:



**AI shopping is already frequent.**

When asked how often they currently use AI to shop for groceries or household items:

**74%**

are using AI to shop frequently or occasionally.

# What Shoppers Are Saying

Beyond the numbers, survey participants expressed a range of perspectives — from enthusiastic early adopters to opinionated skeptics:



## Time-saving:

"I feel like AI helping me with my grocery/daily shopping needs would take a massive load off of me."



## Approval:

"It would be very helpful to automatically make carts and find the best prices, but I wouldn't want it to make the purchase without my approval."



## Concerns:

"I don't mind it as of right now, but as AI starts to get more powerful, it will ruin the world."

# What Marketers Should Do Now



## Be discoverable in AI-assisted search

68% of shoppers already use AI tools for grocery decisions. Brands that don't appear in AI-generated recommendations lose consideration before shoppers even reach a retailer.



## Make pricing legible and comparable

40% want AI to find the best prices, and 32% say price comparison is the most valuable retailer AI feature. Competitive pricing visibility matters at the moment of decision.



## Treat recipes as a conversion layer

60% want instant conversion from meal inspiration to shoppable cart. The gap between inspiration and cart needs to be zero.



## Test and learn with retailer-led AI experiences

86% are likely to purchase when they can build a cart inside ChatGPT, Amazon, or Walmart AI. Visibility in these environments is no longer optional.



## Design for both humans and AI systems

59% are comfortable letting AI shop for them autonomously. Optimize for AI agents, not just human shoppers.

# Respond to AI or Lose Visibility

- **Make every digital touchpoint shoppable now.** Turn brand recipes and content into instant action. The gap between inspiration and cart must be zero.
- **Use AI/ML to surface the right products at the right time.** Personalize journeys to move shoppers from discovery to cart seamlessly.
- **Get ready for AI-driven discovery on brand-owned channels in 2026.** Optimize for both human shoppers and AI agents evaluating your products.

Brands that act today shape consumer decisions tomorrow.

#### Methodology

Data was collected through an online/mobile survey of 600 U.S. adults. Fieldwork was conducted in December 2025 via a national mobile panel. Results are self-reported and reflect consumer perceptions and behaviors at the time of the survey.

