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How America Actually Uses AI

Who's in, who isn't, and what's gating the next step in AI-assisted buying

THE SETTING

You're right: AI shopping is mainstream

73%

have used an AI tool

60%

have used AI to help decide what to buy

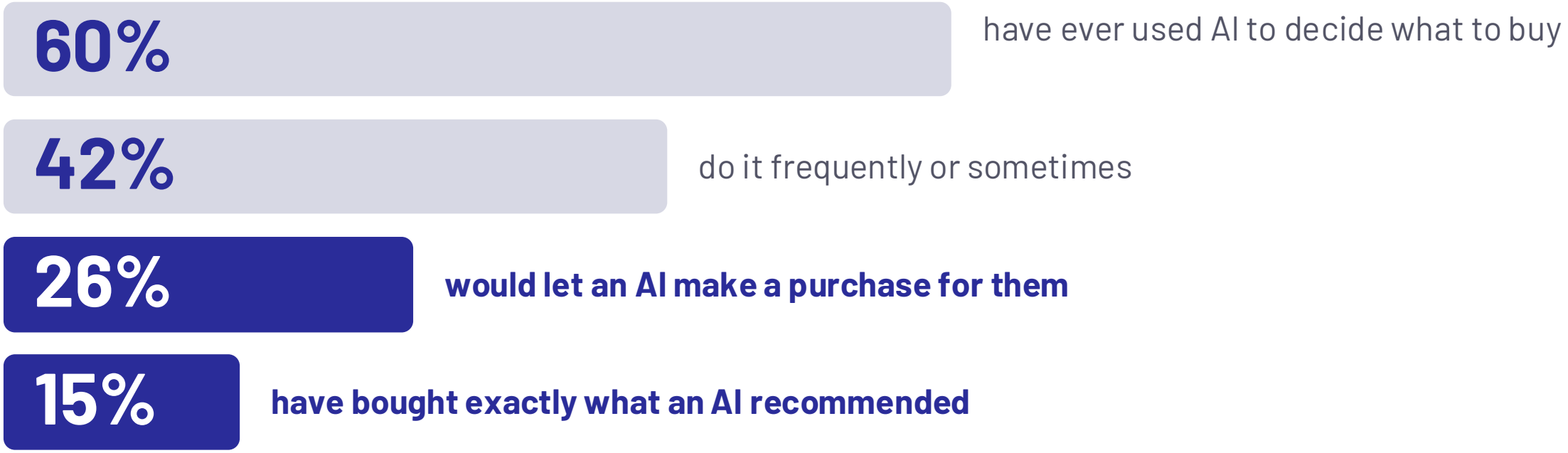
49%

plan to use AI for a purchase in the next year

Product research is the **#2 use of AI** in America, behind only search.

THE HOOK

But it's a mile wide and an inch deep

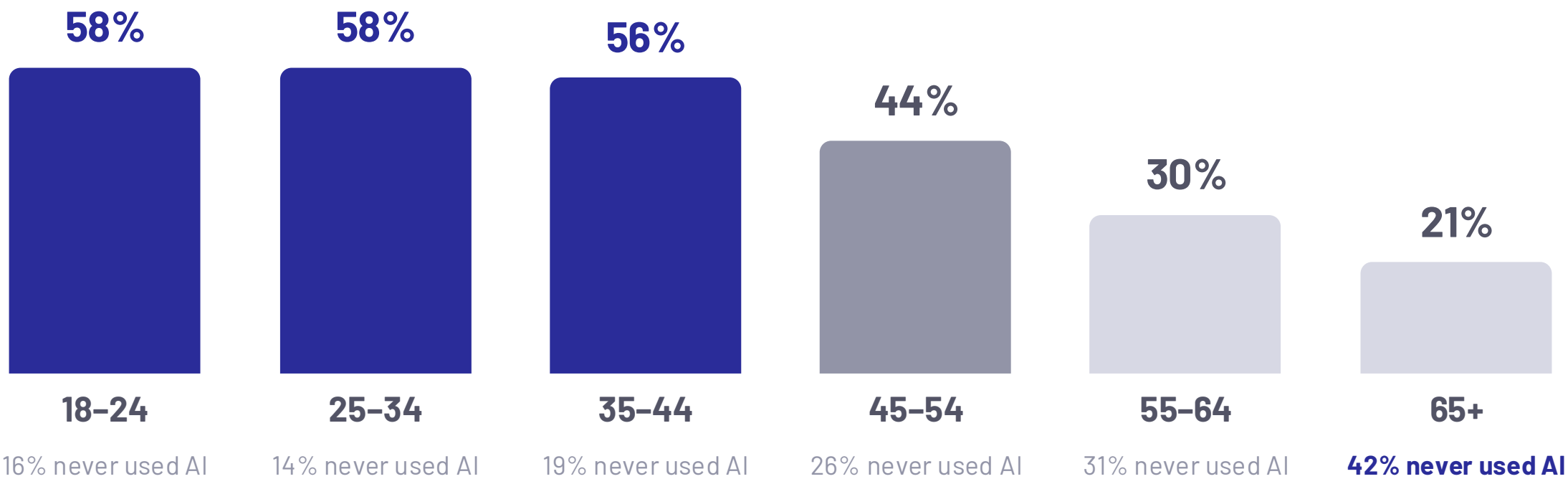


So who is actually in — and what's holding the rest back?

INSIGHT 1

"Mainstream" is two countries, divided at 55

Use AI to decide what to buy, frequently or sometimes



INSIGHT 2

Inside that half: households with kids and money

CHILDREN AT HOME

27% vs. 10%

of parents frequently use AI to shop, vs. adults with no kids at home

HOUSEHOLD INCOME

28% vs. 9%

of $100K+ households frequently use AI to shop, vs. under $50K

Kids at home is the strongest single differentiator we're seeing.

STANDOUT FINDING

Black and Hispanic adults are ahead on every measure

41%

of Black adults would let AI make a purchase for them, **nearly double** the rate of white adults

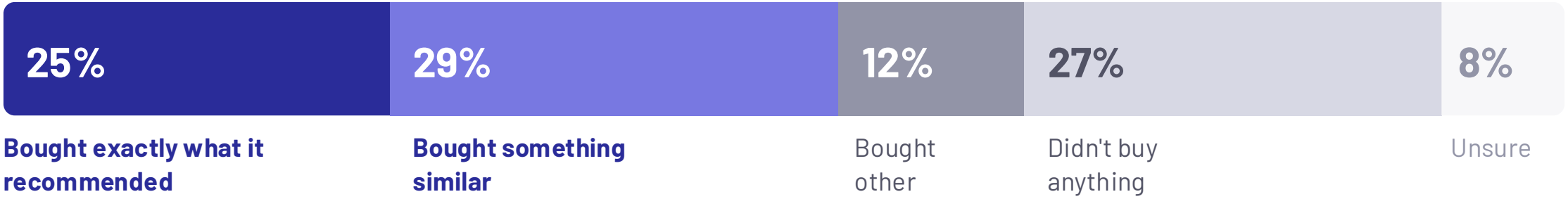
%	Used AI	Trust recs	Let AI buy
Black	81	58	41
Hispanic	82	58	36
White	70	47	21

The early market is more diverse than media buyers and marketers might assume.

INSIGHT 3

Where AI is in the decision, it closes

54% bought exactly what AI recommended, or something close to it



Depth isn't a conversion problem. It's a reach problem.

STANDOUT FINDING

It’s about the weekly shop, not the big-ticket buy

Bought after using AI to decide, past 12 months · % of AI-assisted buyers

39%
Groceries

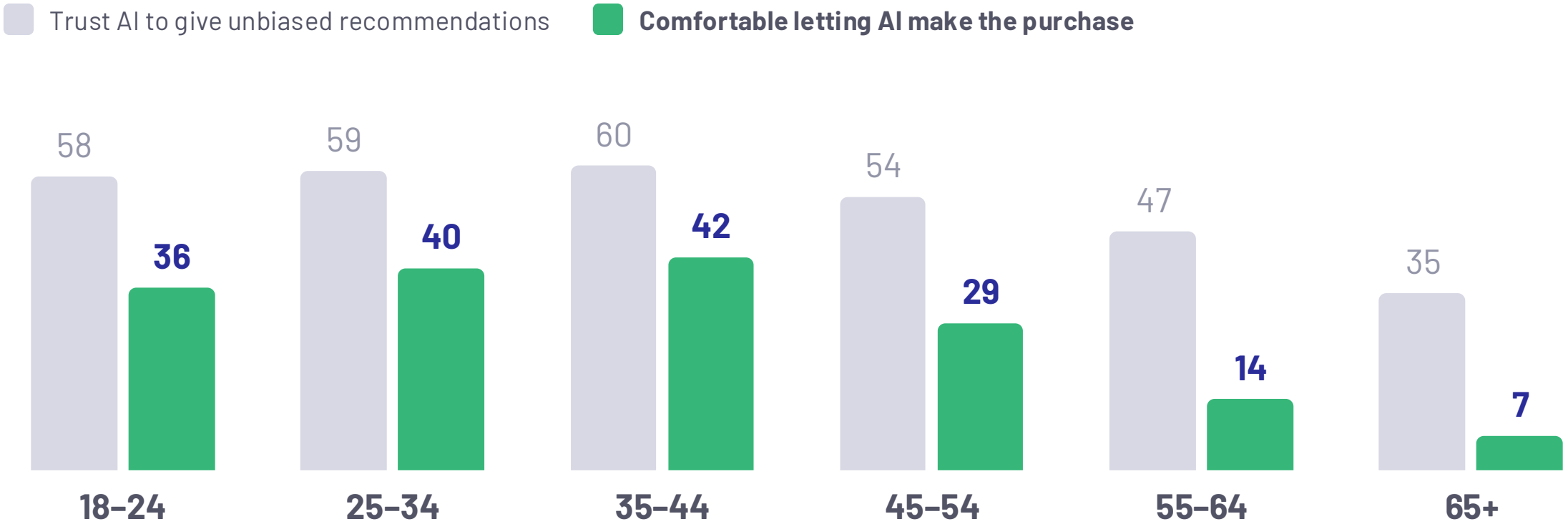
39%
Clothing & Shoes

38%
Electronics

This is a CPG and retail story. Travel trails at 25%.

INSIGHT 4

Depth stops where trust stops



Even where trust is a majority, comfort runs ~20 points behind.

STANDOUT FINDING

People will buy through AI long before they let AI buy for them

AI AS STOREFRONT

42%

comfortable completing a purchase themselves through an AI tool

AI AS PROXY

26%

comfortable letting an AI make the purchase on their behalf

Early adopters: parents 25–44 in $100K+ households.

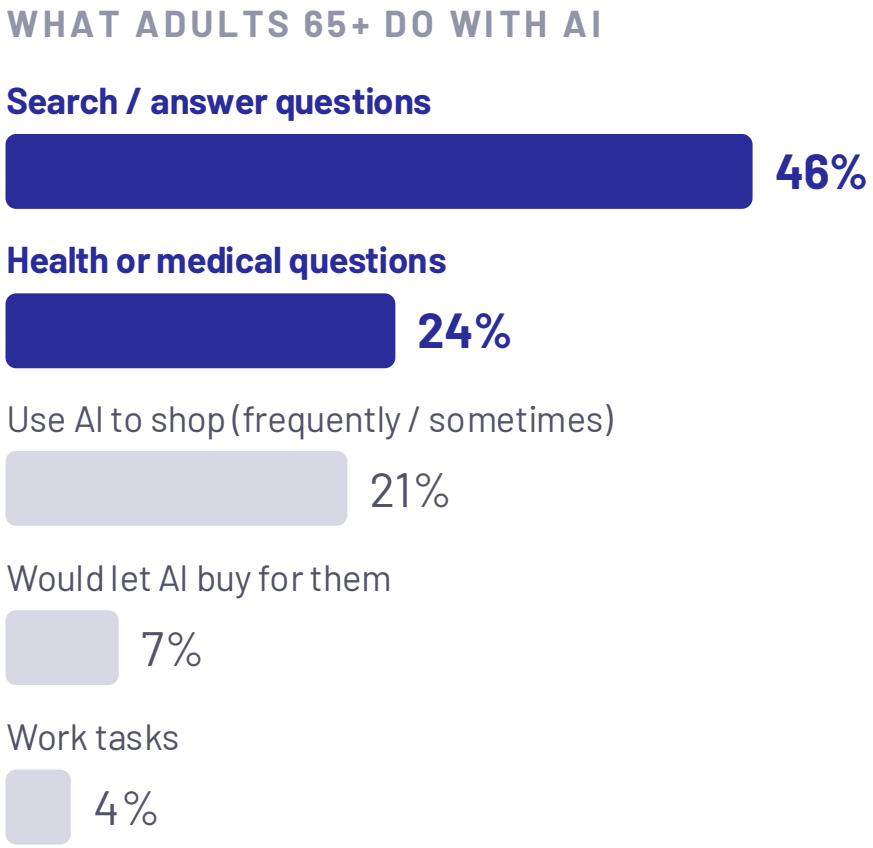
INSIGHT 5

The other half has two doors in

27%

of U.S. adults have never used an AI tool. Highest among:

Age 65+	**42%**
Midwest	**33%**
Income under $50K	**32%**



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THE INSIGHT

AI shopping is mainstream for key demographics. Not yet for America.

The next two years are a reach-and-trust problem, not an agent problem.

FOR MEDIA BUYERS

Plan AI as part of the media mix, not a side test

Shift now

Treat AI answers as the new search shelf

49% use AI to search, **31%** to research products

Where: groceries, apparel, electronics

Test & learn

Aim agentic buys at the early adopters

43% of parents and **41%** of Black adults would let AI buy

Who: parents 25–44, $100K+, urban

Hold the line

Keep social, web & TV for reach

Usage is not the same as share of time spent, consumers still spend real time on TV and social

42% of 65+ have never used AI; only **7%** would let it buy

Seed AI to older groups via search and health content

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Questions?

Book a demo with Tunnl at ***tunnldata.com***