2026

Quarterly Insights Report – Quarter 3

ASCENT
ADMINISTRATOR SUPPORT COMMUNITY for ENT
Otolaryngology Resource Network

ksm
CPAs & Advisors

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Overview

Purpose

The purpose of the ASCENT Quarterly Insights Survey Report is to provide general benchmarking data to practices. Our goal is to provide relevant strategic insights and data regarding total practice statistics such as provider production, compensation, operating costs, and support staff specific to ENT practices and the related specialties often present in ENT practices.

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Methodology

Questionnaire Development: The ASCENT Quarterly Insights Survey questionnaire was developed by the healthcare consulting and accounting firm of Katz, Sapper & Miller (KSM) along with members of the ASCENT survey committee. Planning meetings are held by the committee quarterly to determine the scope and level of detail desired by the ultimate end-users of the survey results.

Questionnaire Distribution: The questionnaire was prepared through the web-based survey platform Qualtrics and was distributed via the ASCENT website and e-mail to the entire ASCENT membership.

Compilation of Results: Completed questionnaires for Q3 2026 were received from 22 practices during the time frame of July 24th – August 14th, 2026. Results were tabulated and compiled by KSM. Data is presented on a per full-time equivalent (FTE) provider basis where applicable. Results are presented in standard statistical formats and general demographic categories. Results were tabulated and compiled based on the data provided by the participants only. Data was not edited or revised, other than as described below (Data Editing). If data was unclear or incomplete, it was not included in the calculations.

Data Editing: We used a standard editing process to identify reporting errors and potential outliers in the data.

About ASCENT

ASCENT (Administrator Support Community for ENT) was founded in 1982 as the Association of Otolaryngology Administrators (AOA) and was later rebranded to ASCENT in 2019. The organization currently has approximately 1,000 members and continues to be the leader in otolaryngology practice management. ASCENT strives to serve its membership through successful resources and services offered while striving to keep pace with future opportunities. For more information, please visit askascent.com.

About KSM

KSM is a nationally recognized advisory, tax, and audit firm. Through our deep experience across multiple disciplines and industries, we leverage emerging technologies, combined with our people's differing perspectives, ingenuity, and creativity, to help our clients solve their most difficult challenges. With the healthcare industry in a constant state of flux, you can't afford to stand still. KSM helps healthcare organizations move confidently in the right direction – forward and ahead of the competition. Unmatched experience, customized client service, and a detailed knowledge of the dynamic healthcare business model have made KSM's Healthcare Consulting team a preferred provider for the complete spectrum of hospitals, physician groups, surgery centers, and healthcare management teams. more information, please visit ksmcpa.com/industries/healthcare.

Executive Summary: 2026 – Quarter 3 Survey

The Q3 2026 ASCENT Quarterly Insights Survey reflects responses from 22 ENT practices representing a range of practice sizes, metropolitan markets, and geographic regions. This quarter's presentation focused on AI and telehealth in response to providers' expressed interest in better understanding these rapidly evolving technologies and their implications for practice operations and patient care.

AI adoption is progressing, although most practices remain in the early or intermediate stages of implementation. Nearly half of respondents use AI selectively, with provider documentation representing the most common application. Practices primarily report operational benefits, including reduced administrative burden and faster documentation, while measurable financial gains remain limited. Cost and return-on-investment uncertainty and EHR integration are the leading barriers to broader adoption, particularly for smaller practices with limited implementation resources. Looking ahead, AI documentation tools and EHR optimization are the highest technology investment priorities.

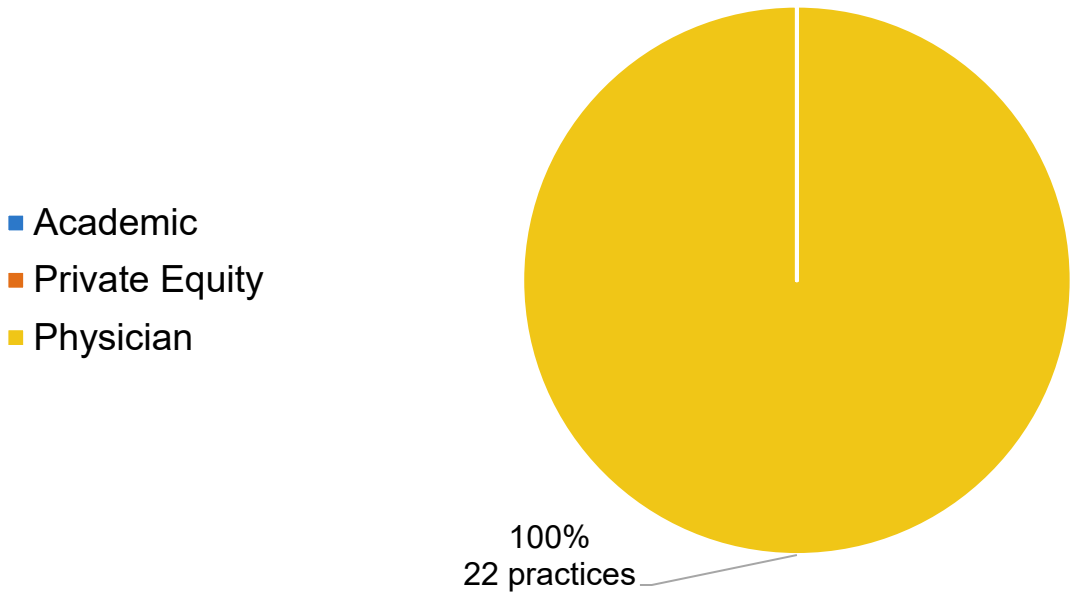
Telehealth is established across many responding practices but remains unevenly adopted. Physician telehealth appointments are offered by 59% of practices, while APP appointments and remote audiology services are less prevalent; 27% of respondents offer no telehealth services. Utilization also varies by region and practice size, indicating that market conditions and organizational capacity continue to influence adoption.

Overall, the findings demonstrate a measured approach to technology investment, with practices prioritizing solutions that improve workflow efficiency, integrate effectively with existing systems, and deliver clear operational value.

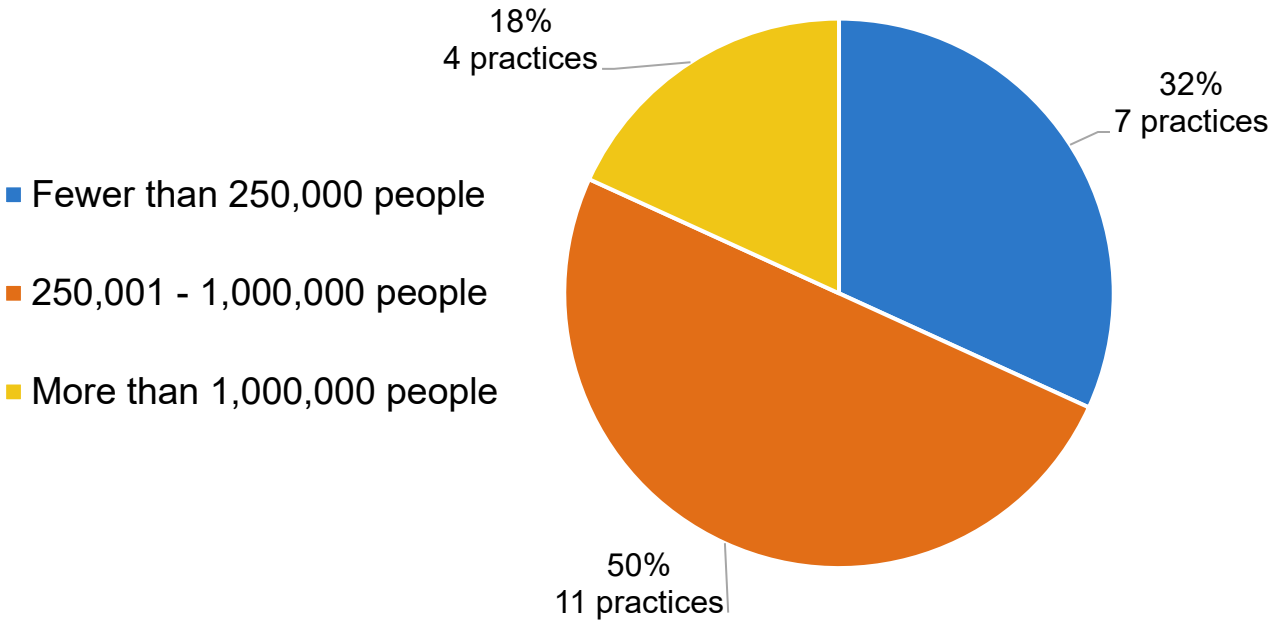
Practice Demographics

The following represents the respondent pool of 22 practices for the Q3 2026 Survey.

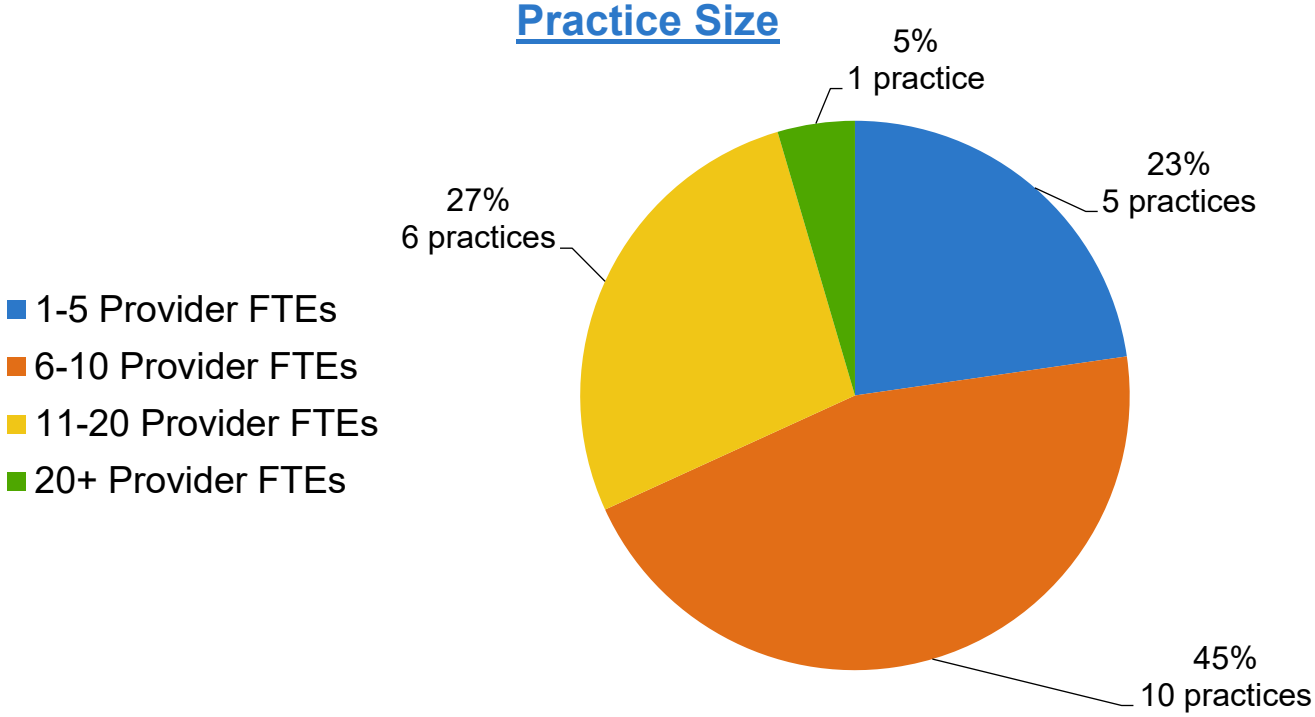
Practice Ownership



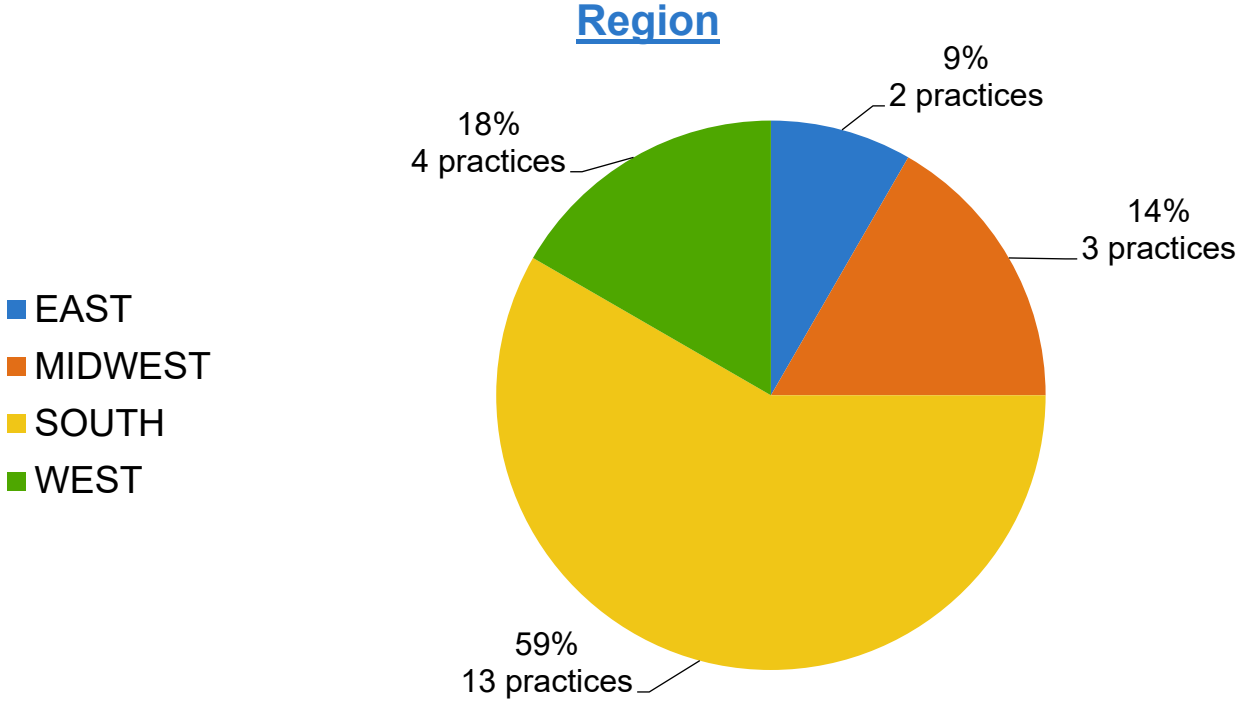
Metropolitan Area



Practice Size



Region



Geographic Classifications

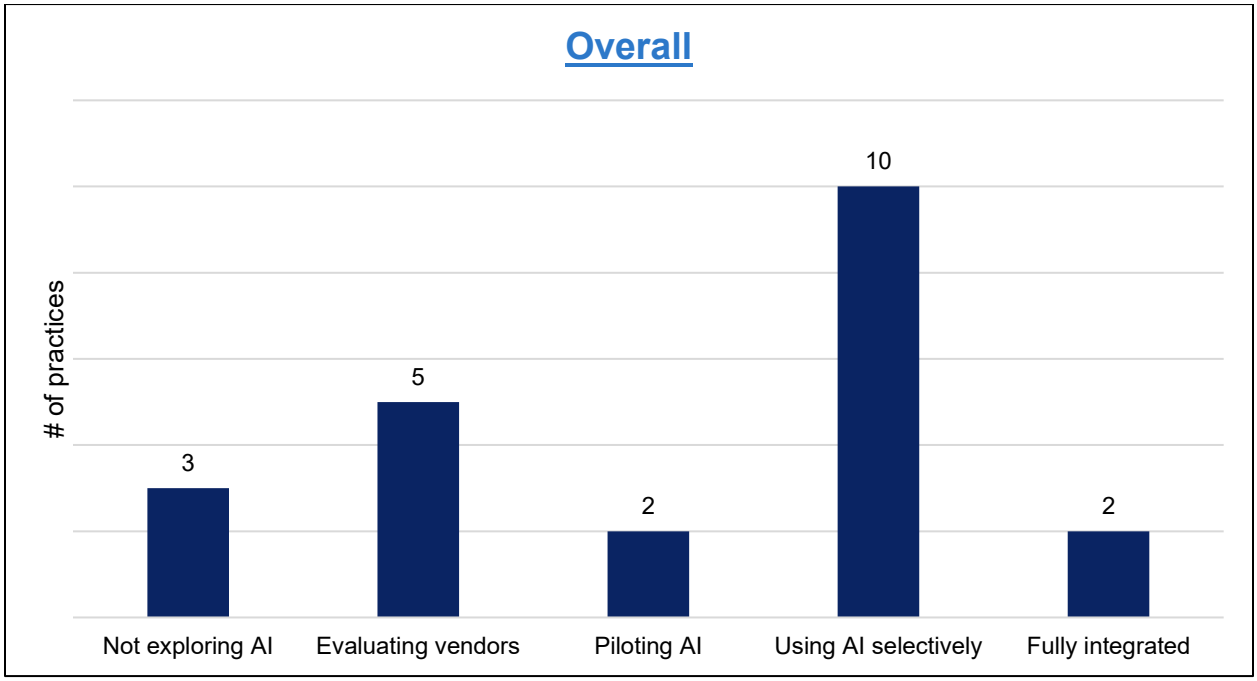
Geographic classifications are consistent with those of the U.S. Census Bureau and were assigned based on the primary zip code provided for the practice.

EAST	MIDWEST	SOUTH	WEST
Connecticut	Illinois	Alabama	Alaska
Maine	Indiana	Arkansas	Arizona
Massachusetts	Iowa	Delaware	California
New Hampshire	Kansas	Washington, DC	Colorado
New Jersey	Michigan	Florida	Hawaii
New York	Minnesota	Georgia	Idaho
Pennsylvania	Missouri	Kentucky	Montana
Rhode Island	Nebraska	Louisiana	Nevada
Vermont	North Dakota	Maryland	New Mexico
	Ohio	Mississippi	Oregon
	South Dakota	North Carolina	Utah
	Wisconsin	Oklahoma	Washington
		South Carolina	Wyoming
		Tennessee	
		Texas	
		Virginia	
		West Virginia	

AI Approach

Which best describes your practices current approach to AI?

Overall

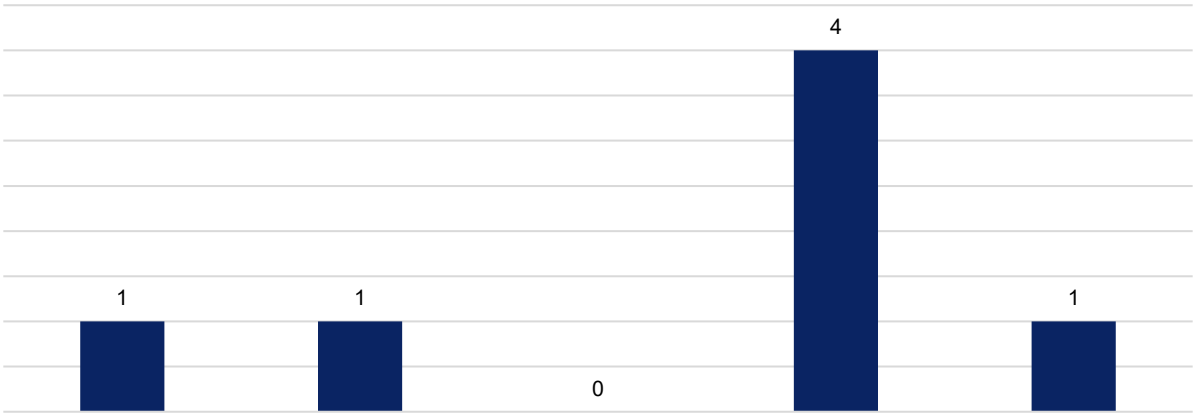


Most ASCENT practices have moved past initial exploration but stop short of full integration: 45% of practices describe themselves as "using AI in select workflows." Another 23% are still evaluating vendors and solutions, while just 9% report AI fully integrated into multiple operational or clinical workflows and 9% are piloting in one or more areas. The remaining 14% are not currently exploring AI at all.

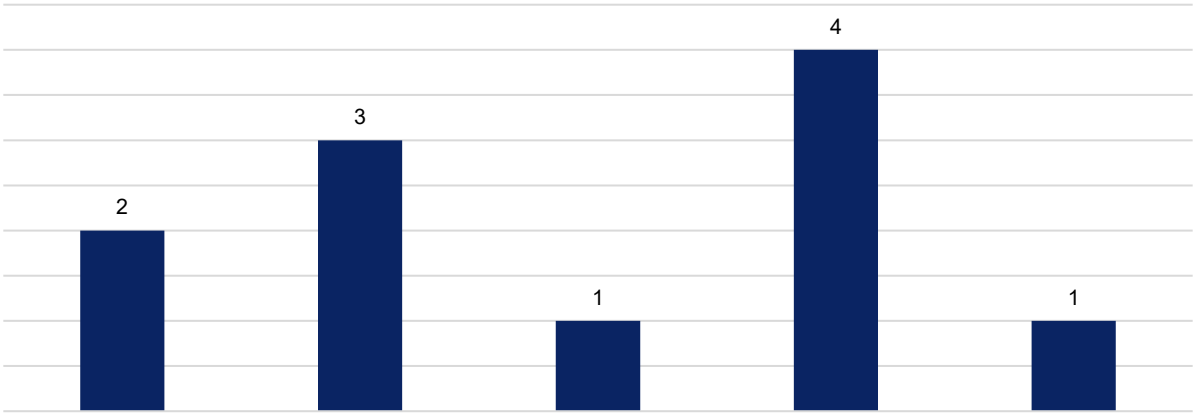
Practice size shows a notable split: the smallest practices (1-5 FTE providers) cluster almost entirely at the two extremes — evenly split between "not exploring" and "evaluating," with one practice reporting full integration — while none fall into the middle "piloting" or "using selectively" stages. Larger practices, by contrast, concentrate heavily in "using AI in select workflows," suggesting that once a practice has the scale to move past evaluation, adoption tends to settle into that middle stage rather than progressing further.

Metropolitan Area

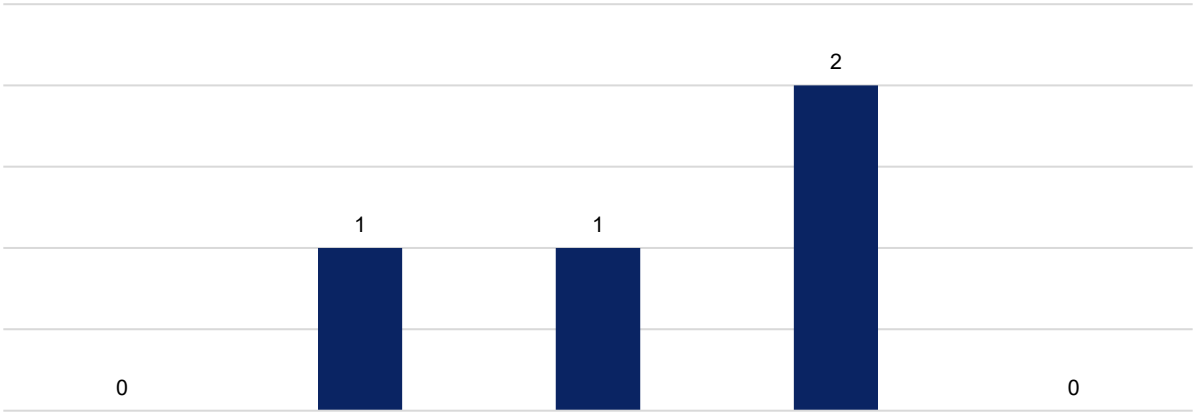
Fewer than 250,000 people



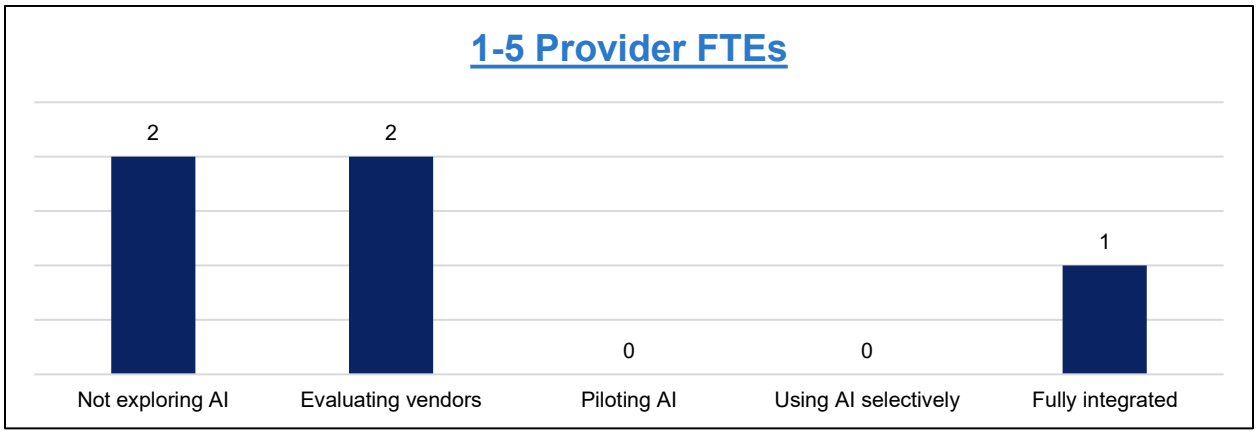
250,001 – 1,000,000 people

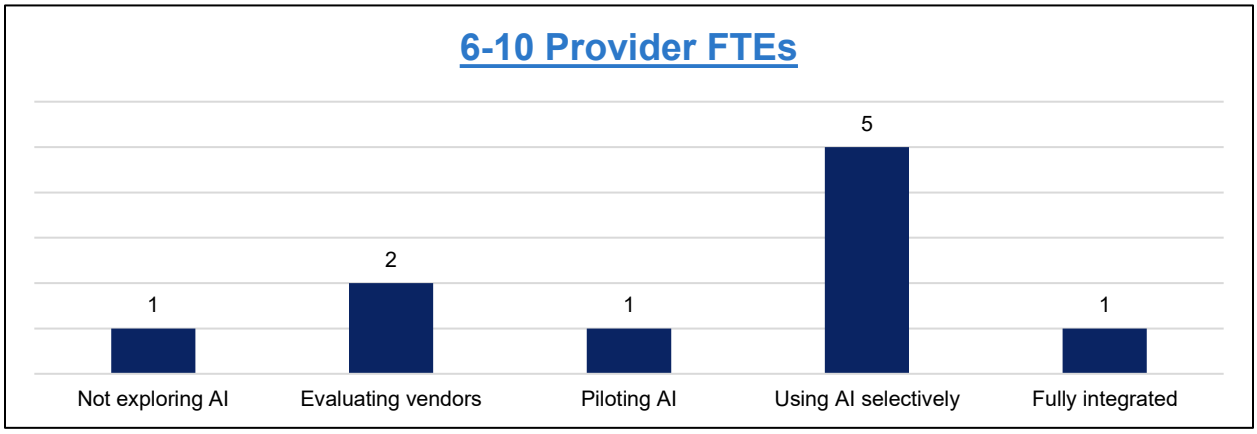


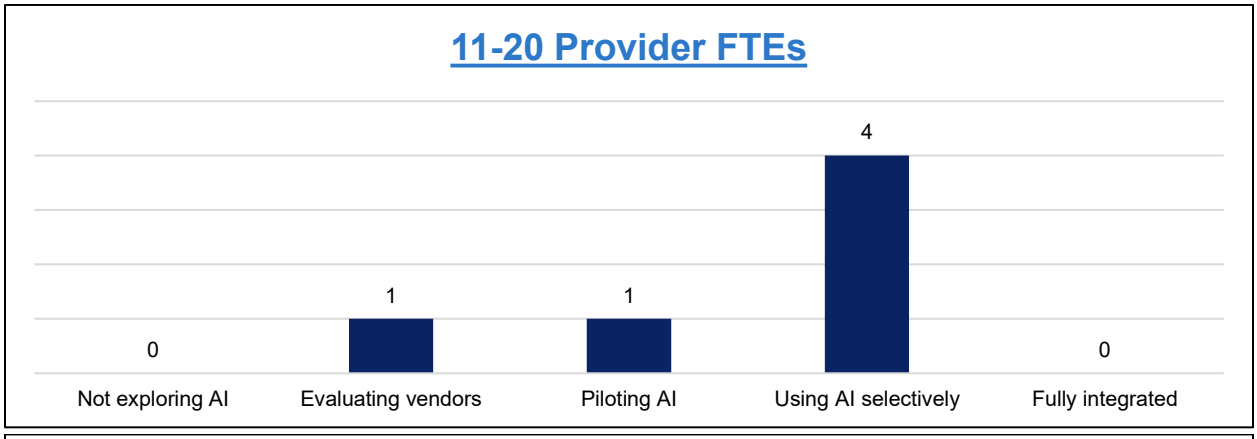
More than 1,000,000 people

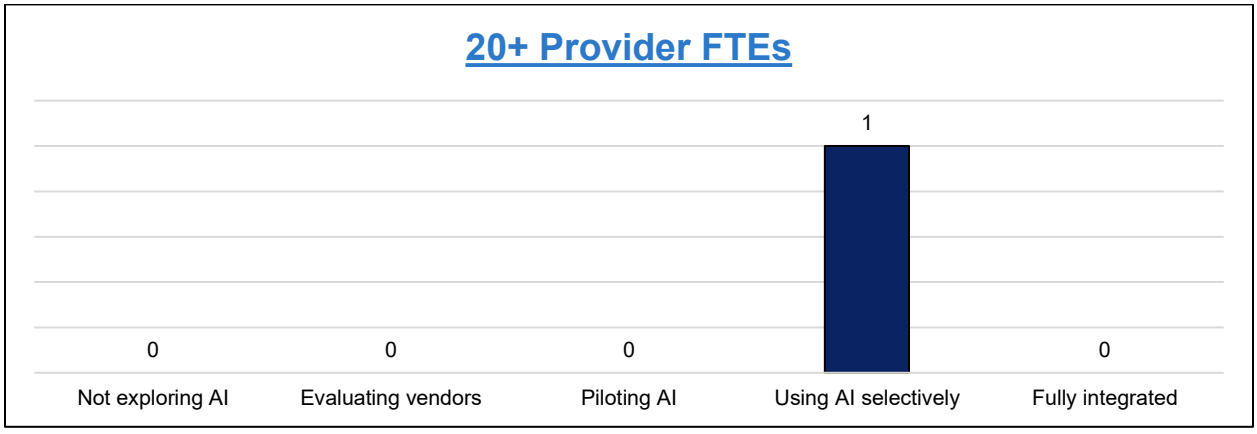


Practice Size

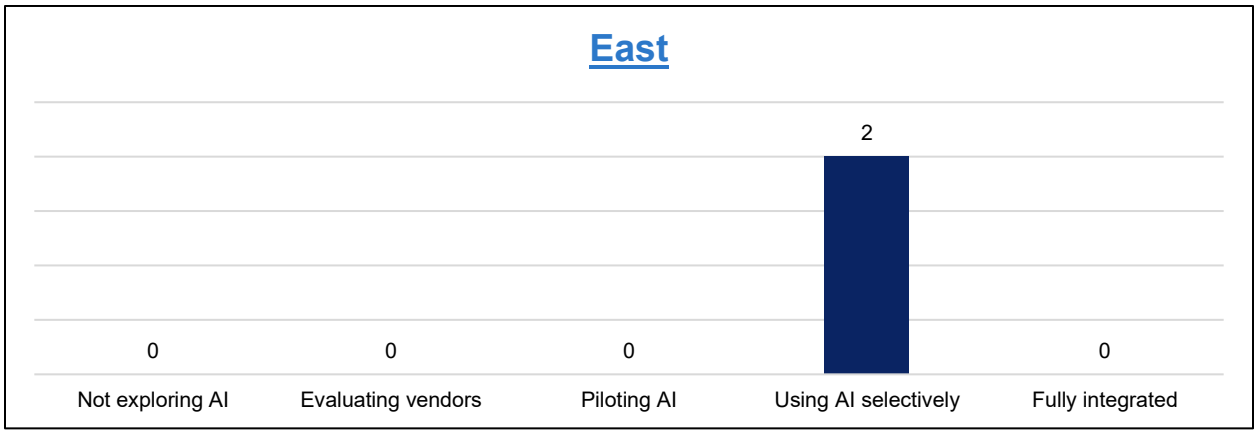


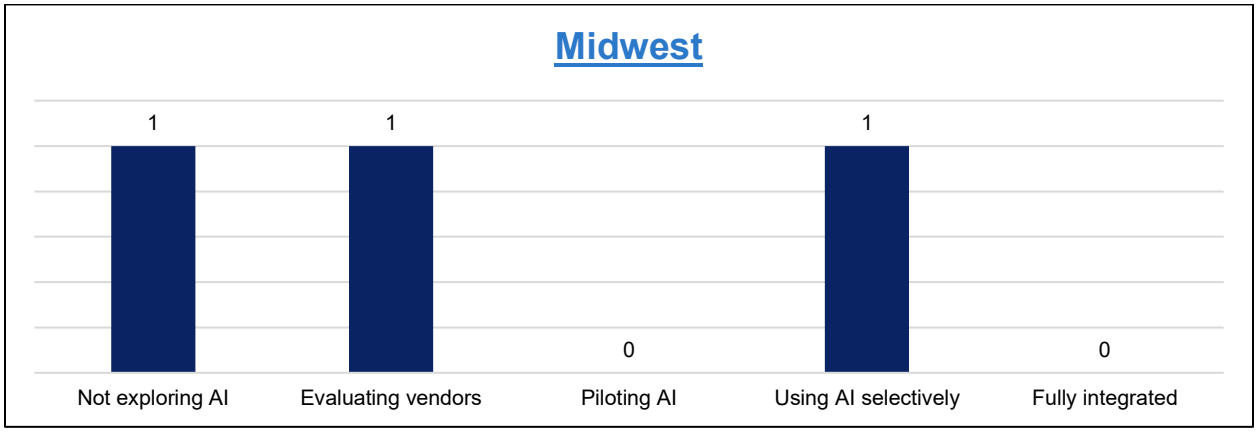


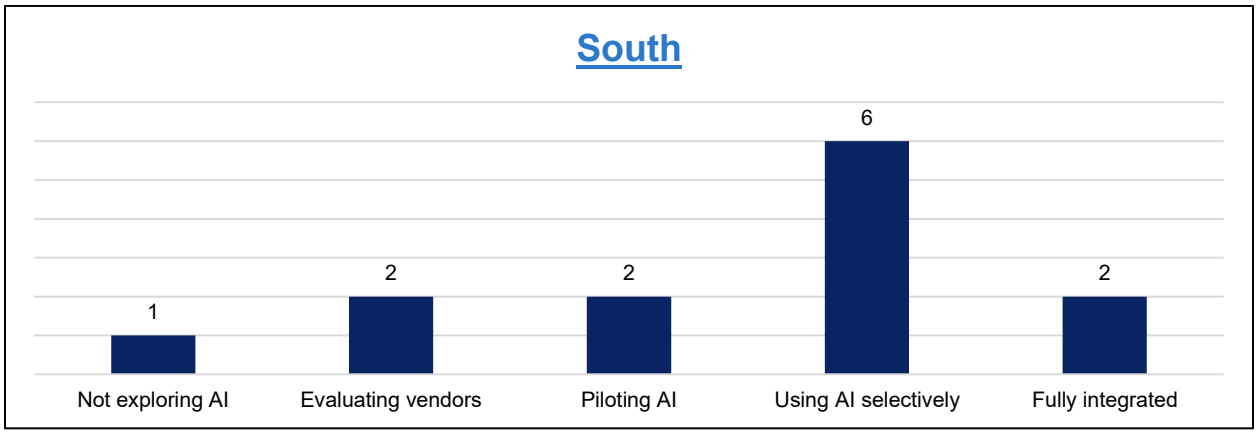


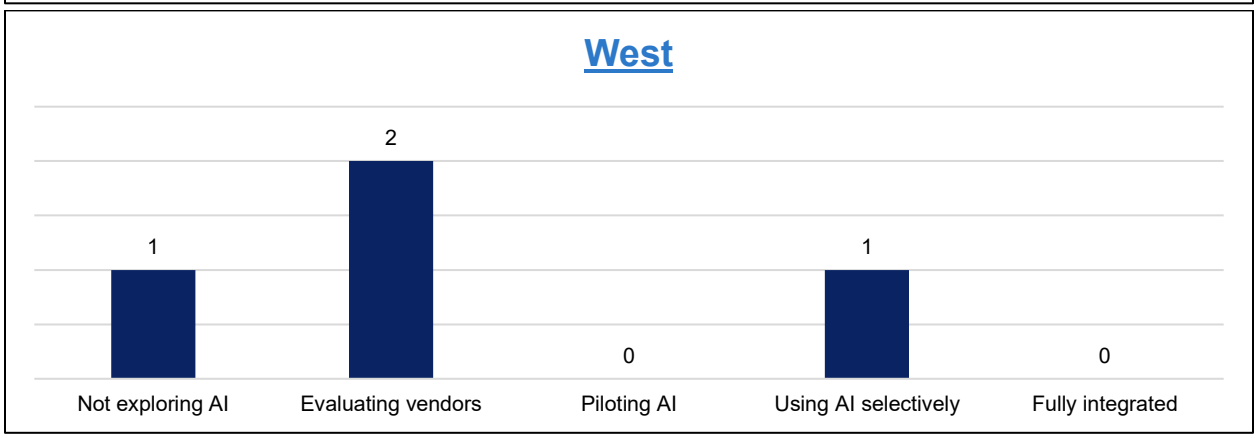


Region


East
0
0
0
2
0
Not exploring AI
Evaluating vendors
Piloting AI
Using AI selectively
Fully integrated


Midwest
1
1
0
1
0
Not exploring AI
Evaluating vendors
Piloting AI
Using AI selectively
Fully integrated


South
1
2
2
6
2
Not exploring AI
Evaluating vendors
Piloting AI
Using AI selectively
Fully integrated


West
1
2
0
1
0
Not exploring AI
Evaluating vendors
Piloting AI
Using AI selectively
Fully integrated

AI Usage

Overall

AI Usage - Overall	Has your practice adopted AI for any of the following areas?	
	Practice Count	% Yes
Scheduling	22	32%
Provider Documentation	22	59%
Coding	22	9%
Appeals	22	5%
Prior Authorization	22	5%
Financial Operations	22	9%
Clinical Operations	22	23%
None of the above	22	32%

AI adoption among ASCENT practices remains concentrated around a single high-value use case: **Provider Documentation**, adopted by 59% of respondents and far ahead of the next most common area, **Scheduling**, at 32%. Adoption of AI in more specialized administrative functions — **Coding**, **Appeals**, **Prior Authorization**, and **Financial Operations** — remains limited, with each reported by fewer than 10% of practices, while Clinical Operations sits at 23%. Nearly a third of practices (32%) report no AI adoption in any of the areas surveyed, indicating that the market is still in an early and uneven stage of adoption.

Respondents named a wide range of AI scribe tools for **Provider Documentation** — including Doximity, ModMed AI Scribe, Suki, ScribeBrain, Neurality AI, Forus, Commure Scribe, FreedAI, Sunoh, and Prosper. Several practices are also using AI for **Scheduling** and **Patient Engagement**, most notably through Hello Patient and ModMed. For **Coding**, practices cited Athena and Phreesia. A few practices are extending AI into **Clinical and Financial Operations** through tools such as Medsender and Claude.

Metropolitan Area

AI Usage – Fewer than 250,000 people	Has your practice adopted AI for any of the following areas?	
	Practice Count	% Yes
Scheduling	7	43%
Provider Documentation	7	57%
Coding	7	0%
Appeals	7	0%
Prior Authorization	7	14%
Financial Operations	7	14%
Clinical Operations	7	57%
None of the above	7	29%

AI Usage – 250,001 – 1,00,000 people	Has your practice adopted AI for any of the following areas?	
	Practice Count	% Yes
Scheduling	11	27%
Provider Documentation	11	55%
Coding	11	18%
Appeals	11	9%
Prior Authorization	11	0%
Financial Operations	11	9%
Clinical Operations	11	9%
None of the above	11	36%

AI Usage – More than 1,000,000 people	Has your practice adopted AI for any of the following areas?	
	Practice Count	% Yes
Scheduling	4	25%
Provider Documentation	4	75%
Coding	4	0%
Appeals	4	0%
Prior Authorization	4	0%
Financial Operations	4	0%
Clinical Operations	4	0%
None of the above	4	25%

Practice Size

AI Usage – 1-5 FTE Providers	Has your practice adopted AI for any of the following areas?	
	Practice Count	% Yes
Scheduling	5	20%
Provider Documentation	5	0%
Coding	5	20%
Appeals	5	0%
Prior Authorization	5	0%
Financial Operations	5	0%
Clinical Operations	5	0%
None of the above	5	80%

AI Usage – 6-10 FTE Providers	Has your practice adopted AI for any of the following areas?	
	Practice Count	% Yes
Scheduling	10	20%
Provider Documentation	10	70%
Coding	10	0%
Appeals	10	10%
Prior Authorization	10	10%
Financial Operations	10	10%
Clinical Operations	10	40%
None of the above	10	20%

AI Usage – 11-20 FTE Providers	Has your practice adopted AI for any of the following areas?	
	Practice Count	% Yes
Scheduling	6	50%
Provider Documentation	6	83%
Coding	6	17%
Appeals	6	0%
Prior Authorization	6	0%
Financial Operations	6	0%
Clinical Operations	6	17%
None of the above	6	17%

AI Usage – 20+ FTE Providers	Has your practice adopted AI for any of the following areas?	
	Practice Count	% Yes
Scheduling	1	100%
Provider Documentation	1	100%
Coding	1	0%
Appeals	1	0%
Prior Authorization	1	0%
Financial Operations	1	100%
Clinical Operations	1	0%
None of the above	1	0%

Region

AI Usage – EAST	Has your practice adopted AI for any of the following areas?	
	Practice Count	% Yes
Scheduling	2	50%
Provider Documentation	2	100%
Coding	2	0%
Appeals	2	0%
Prior Authorization	2	0%
Financial Operations	2	0%
Clinical Operations	2	0%
None of the above	2	0%

AI Usage – MIDWEST	Has your practice adopted AI for any of the following areas?	
	Practice Count	% Yes
Scheduling	3	0%
Provider Documentation	3	67%
Coding	3	33%
Appeals	3	0%
Prior Authorization	3	0%
Financial Operations	3	0%
Clinical Operations	3	0%
None of the above	3	33%

AI Usage – SOUTH	Has your practice adopted AI for any of the following areas?	
	Practice Count	% Yes
Scheduling	13	46%
Provider Documentation	13	62%
Coding	13	8%
Appeals	13	8%
Prior Authorization	13	8%
Financial Operations	13	8%
Clinical Operations	13	31%
None of the above	13	23%

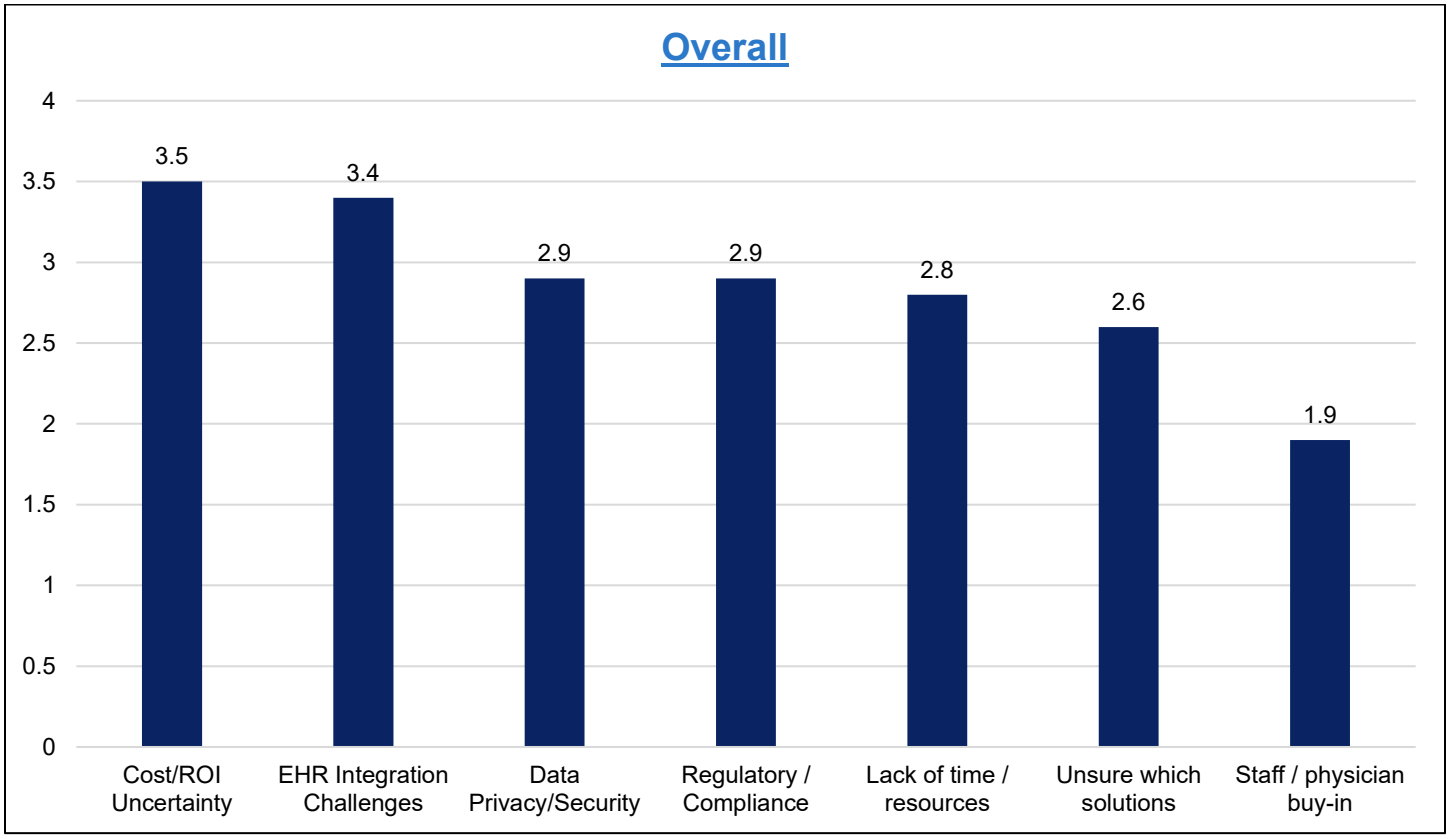
AI Usage – WEST	Has your practice adopted AI for any of the following areas?	
	Practice Count	% Yes
Scheduling	4	0%
Provider Documentation	4	25%
Coding	4	0%
Appeals	4	0%
Prior Authorization	4	0%
Financial Operations	4	25%
Clinical Operations	4	25%
None of the above	4	75%

AI Adoption Barriers

For each of the following barriers, please indicate the extent to which it prevents broader AI adoption within your practice.

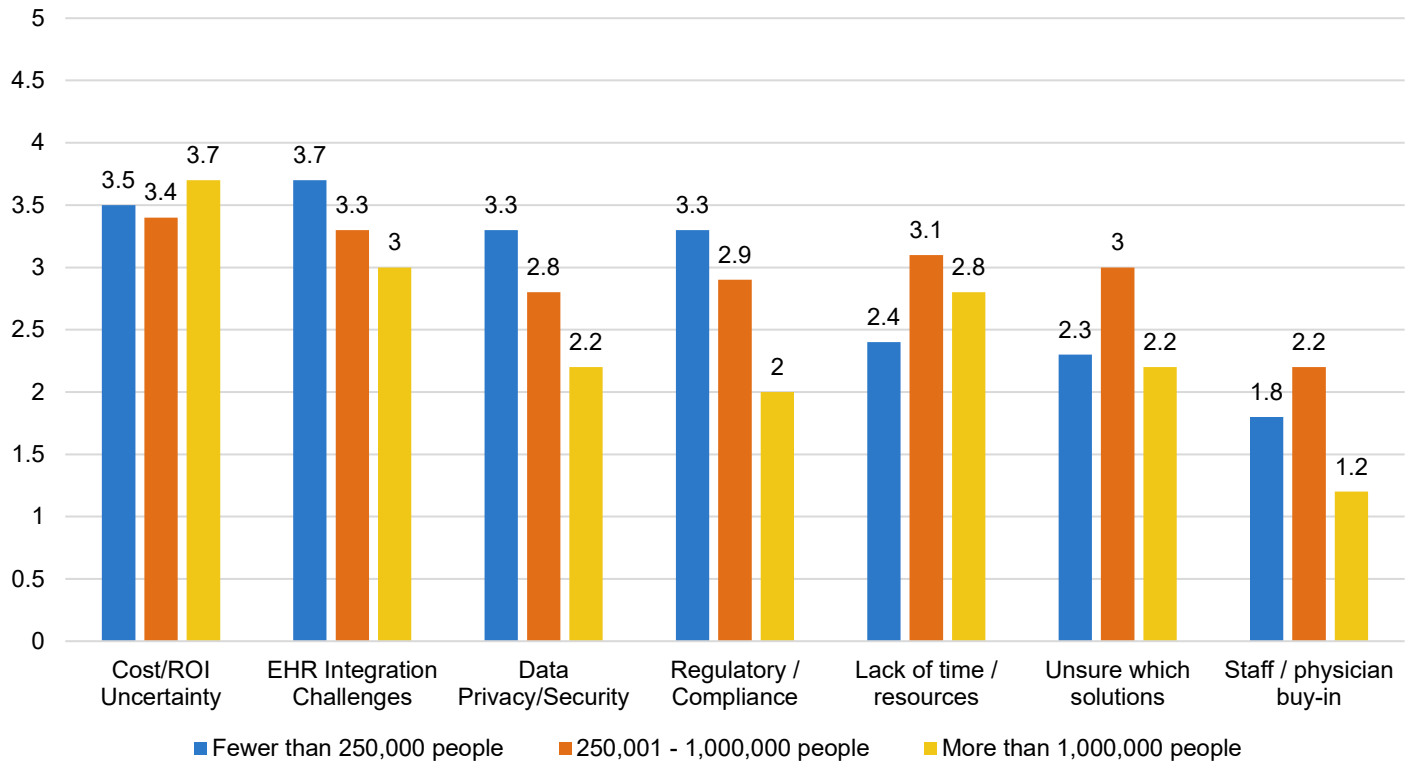
0 = Not a barrier | 5 = Major barrier

Overall

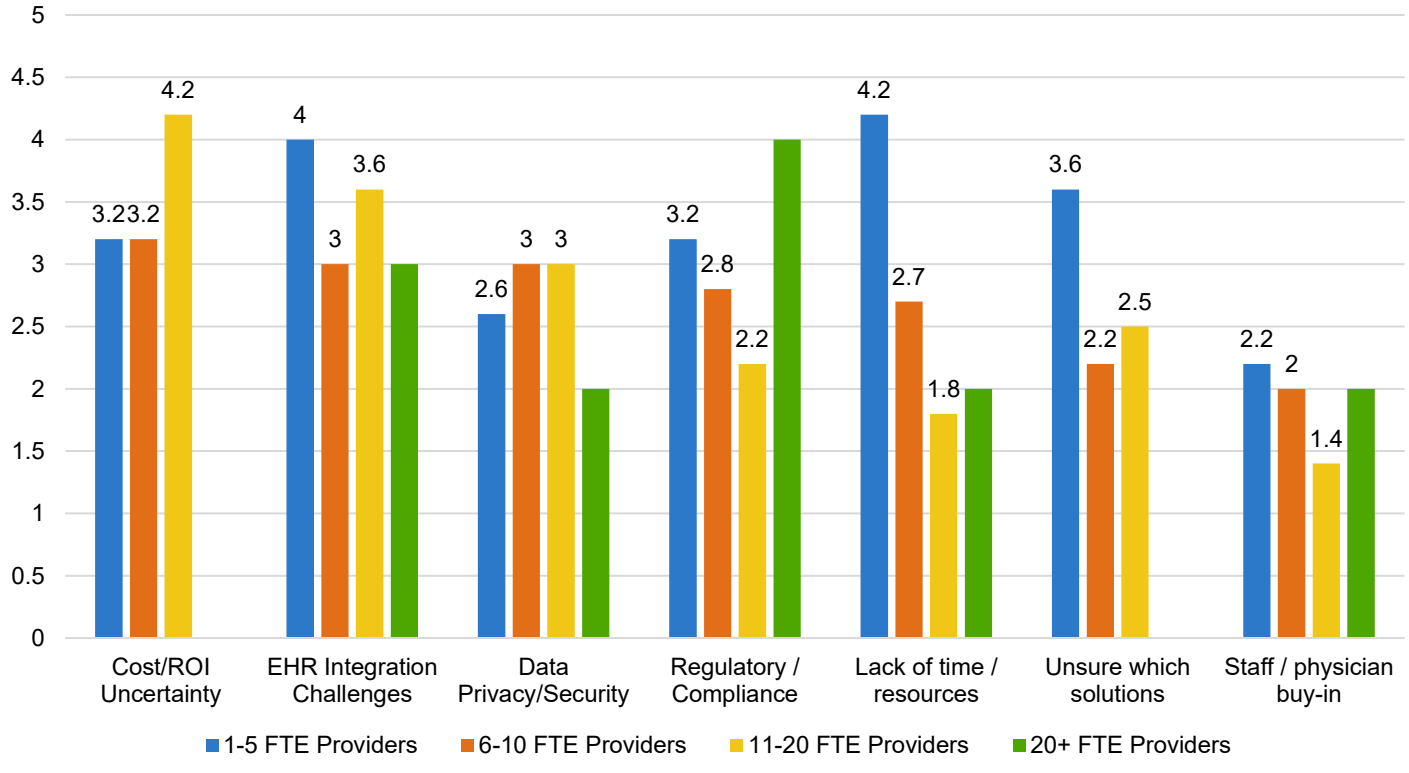


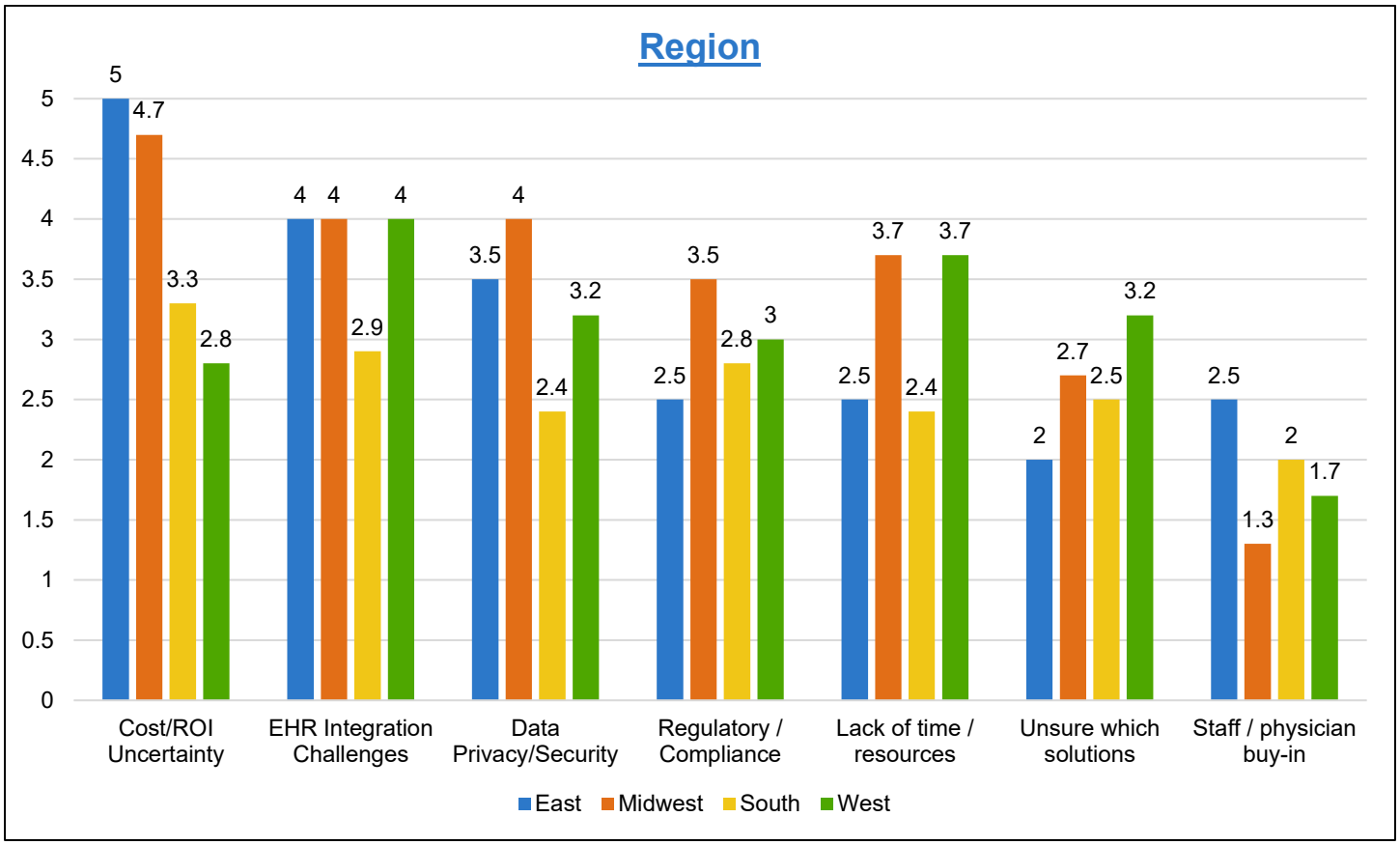
Cost/ROI uncertainty (Average 3.5 of 5) and EHR integration challenges (3.4) stand out as the two dominant barriers to AI adoption across ASCENT practices, while limited staff or physician buy-in (1.9) is comparatively a non-issue — practices are far more worried about whether AI pencils out financially and whether it will actually work with their existing systems than about internal resistance to the idea. This pattern holds consistently across most breakouts, with EHR integration challenges landing in the top two for nearly every cut regardless of size, region, or market. The clearest outlier is the smallest practices (1-5 FTE providers), which rate barriers higher across the board and uniquely place lack of time/resources to implement (4.2) as their single biggest obstacle — suggesting that for the smallest practices, the barrier isn't just cost or technical fit but simply bandwidth to take AI on at all.

Metropolitan Area



Practice Size




Region
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3.5
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3.2
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1.3
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1.7
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0.5
1
1.5
2
2.5
3
3.5
4
4.5
5
Cost/ROI Uncertainty
EHR Integration Challenges
Data Privacy/Security
Regulatory / Compliance
Lack of time / resources
Unsure which solutions
Staff / physician buy-in
East
Midwest
South
West

AI Benefits

If your practice is currently using AI, what benefits have you experienced?

Overall

AI Benefit - Overall	If your practice is currently using AI, what benefits have you experienced?	
	Practice Count	Benefit % Reported
Improved provider productivity	22	32%
Faster documentation	22	41%
Improved coding accuracy	22	32%
Improved patient experience	22	27%
Reduced administrative burden	22	45%
Reduced denials or faster reimbursement	22	5%
Cost savings	22	14%
No measurable benefit yet	22	36%

The benefits realized from AI adoption are concentrated around **operational efficiency** rather than **financial impact**. **Reduced *administrative*** burden is the most commonly reported benefit, cited by 45% of respondents, followed closely by ***Faster Documentation*** at 41%. More than a third of practices (36%) report ***no measurable benefit yet***, suggesting that many organizations are still early in their AI implementation journey or have not yet achieved meaningful returns. ***Improved Provider Productivity and Improved Coding Accuracy*** were each reported by 32% of respondents, while ***Improved Patient Experience*** was cited by 27%. Financial outcomes remain limited, with only 14% reporting ***Cost Savings*** and just 5% experiencing ***Reduced Denials or Faster Reimbursement***.

Overall, the findings indicate that AI's greatest value today is in streamlining workflows and reducing administrative effort, particularly around documentation and productivity. However, evidence of downstream financial benefits remains relatively limited, and a significant share of practices have yet to realize measurable gains from their AI investments.

Metropolitan Area

AI Benefit – Fewer than 250,000 people	If your practice is currently using AI, what benefits have you experienced?	
	Practice Count	% Reported as Benefit
Improved provider productivity	7	43%
Faster documentation	7	57%
Improved coding accuracy	7	14%
Improved patient experience	7	29%
Reduced administrative burden	7	29%
Reduced denials or faster reimbursement	7	0%
Cost savings	7	14%
No measurable benefit yet	7	29%

AI Benefit – 250,001 - 1,000,000 people	If your practice is currently using AI, what benefits have you experienced?	
	Practice Count	% Reported as Benefit
Improved provider productivity	11	27%
Faster documentation	11	36%
Improved coding accuracy	11	36%
Improved patient experience	11	36%
Reduced administrative burden	11	64%
Reduced denials or faster reimbursement	11	9%
Cost savings	11	27%
No measurable benefit yet	11	36%

AI Benefit – More than 1,000,000 people	If your practice is currently using AI, what benefits have you experienced?	
	Practice Count	% Reported as Benefit
Improved provider productivity	4	50%
Faster documentation	4	25%
Improved coding accuracy	4	25%
Improved patient experience	4	25%
Reduced administrative burden	4	25%
Reduced denials or faster reimbursement	4	0%
Cost savings	4	0%
No measurable benefit yet	4	50%

Practice Size

AI Benefit – 1-5 FTE Providers	If your practice is currently using AI, what benefits have you experienced?	
	Practice Count	% Reported as Benefit
Improved provider productivity	5	0%
Faster documentation	5	0%
Improved coding accuracy	5	20%
Improved patient experience	5	20%
Reduced administrative burden	5	20%
Reduced denials or faster reimbursement	5	20%
Cost savings	5	0%
No measurable benefit yet	5	80%

AI Benefit – 6-10 FTE Providers	If your practice is currently using AI, what benefits have you experienced?	
	Practice Count	% Reported as Benefit
Improved provider productivity	10	50%
Faster documentation	10	40%
Improved coding accuracy	10	20%
Improved patient experience	10	50%
Reduced administrative burden	10	60%
Reduced denials or faster reimbursement	10	0%
Cost savings	10	20%
No measurable benefit yet	10	20%

AI Benefit – 11-20 FTE Providers	If your practice is currently using AI, what benefits have you experienced?	
	Practice Count	% Reported as Benefit
Improved provider productivity	6	50%
Faster documentation	6	67%
Improved coding accuracy	6	50%
Improved patient experience	6	17%
Reduced administrative burden	6	33%
Reduced denials or faster reimbursement	6	0%
Cost savings	6	33%
No measurable benefit yet	6	33%

AI Benefit – 20+ FTE Providers	If your practice is currently using AI, what benefits have you experienced?	
	Practice Count	% Reported as Benefit
Improved provider productivity	1	0%
Faster documentation	1	100%
Improved coding accuracy	1	0%
Improved patient experience	1	0%
Reduced administrative burden	1	100%
Reduced denials or faster reimbursement	1	0%
Cost savings	1	0%
No measurable benefit yet	1	0%

Region

AI Benefit – East	If your practice is currently using AI, what benefits have you experienced?	
	Practice Count	% Reported as Benefit
Improved provider productivity	2	100%
Faster documentation	2	50%
Improved coding accuracy	2	0%
Improved patient experience	2	0%
Reduced administrative burden	2	0%
Reduced denials or faster reimbursement	2	0%
Cost savings	2	0%
No measurable benefit yet	2	0%

AI Benefit – Midwest	If your practice is currently using AI, what benefits have you experienced?	
	Practice Count	% Reported as Benefit
Improved provider productivity	3	0%
Faster documentation	3	33%
Improved coding accuracy	3	33%
Improved patient experience	3	67%
Reduced administrative burden	3	67%
Reduced denials or faster reimbursement	3	0%
Cost savings	3	33%
No measurable benefit yet	3	33%

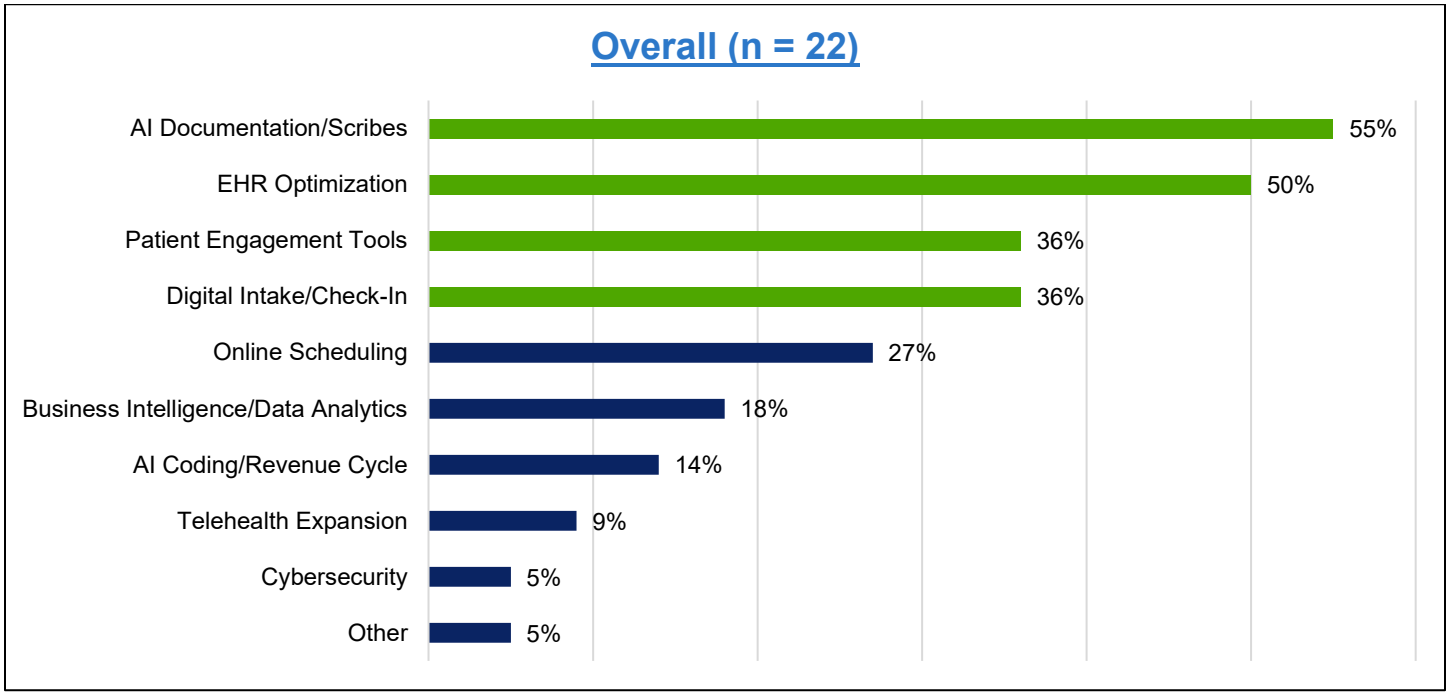
AI Benefit – South	If your practice is currently using AI, what benefits have you experienced?	
	Practice Count	% Reported as Benefit
Improved provider productivity	13	38%
Faster documentation	13	54%
Improved coding accuracy	13	38%
Improved patient experience	13	46%
Reduced administrative burden	13	54%
Reduced denials or faster reimbursement	13	8%
Cost savings	13	23%
No measurable benefit yet	13	31%

AI Benefit – West	If your practice is currently using AI, what benefits have you experienced?	
	Practice Count	% Reported as Benefit
Improved provider productivity	4	0%
Faster documentation	4	0%
Improved coding accuracy	4	0%
Improved patient experience	4	0%
Reduced administrative burden	4	25%
Reduced denials or faster reimbursement	4	0%
Cost savings	4	0%
No measurable benefit yet	4	75%

Technology Investments

Which technology investments are your practice's highest priority over the next 12 months?

Overall - % of practices selecting as a top-3 priority

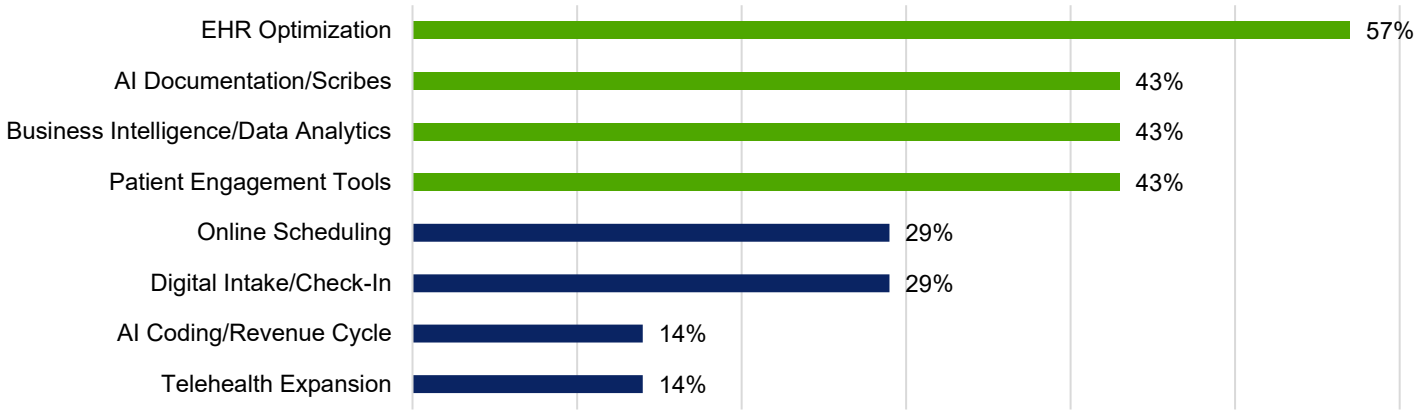


Technology investment priorities converge strongly around two categories: **AI Documentation / Scribes** (55%) and **EHR Optimization** (50%), consistent with the documentation-first pattern seen throughout this report. **Patient Engagement Tools** and **Digital Intake/Check-In** follow at 36% each, while more specialized investments — **Cybersecurity, AI Coding/Revenue Cycle, Telehealth Expansion** — each draw under 20%.

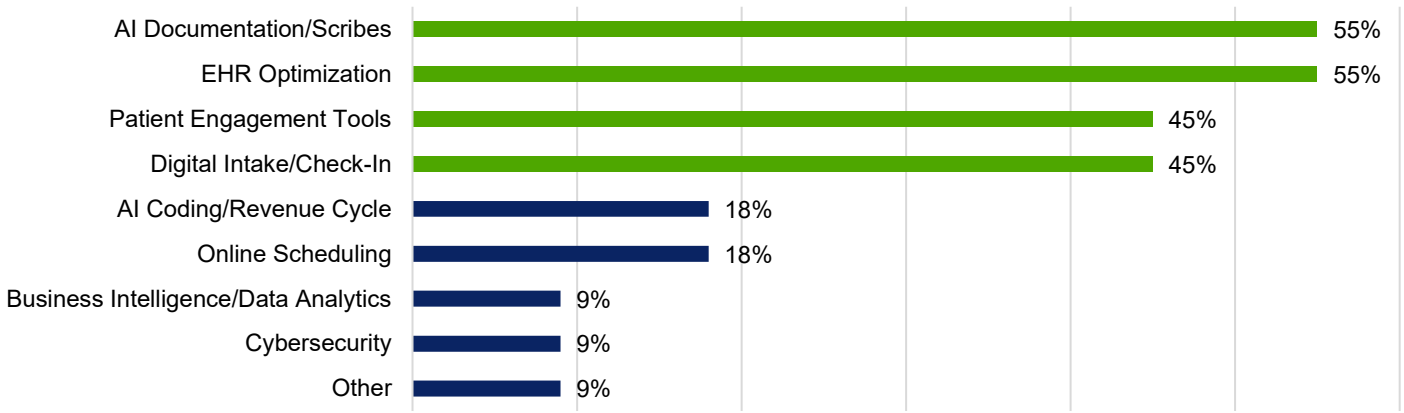
Priorities sharpen with practice size: larger practices lean heavily into the top two categories, while the smallest practices (1-5 FTE) show no clear consensus, split evenly across seven categories. Regionally, the Midwest stands out with EHR Optimization named by 100% of respondents, though South's larger sample most closely reflects the overall pattern.

Metropolitan Area

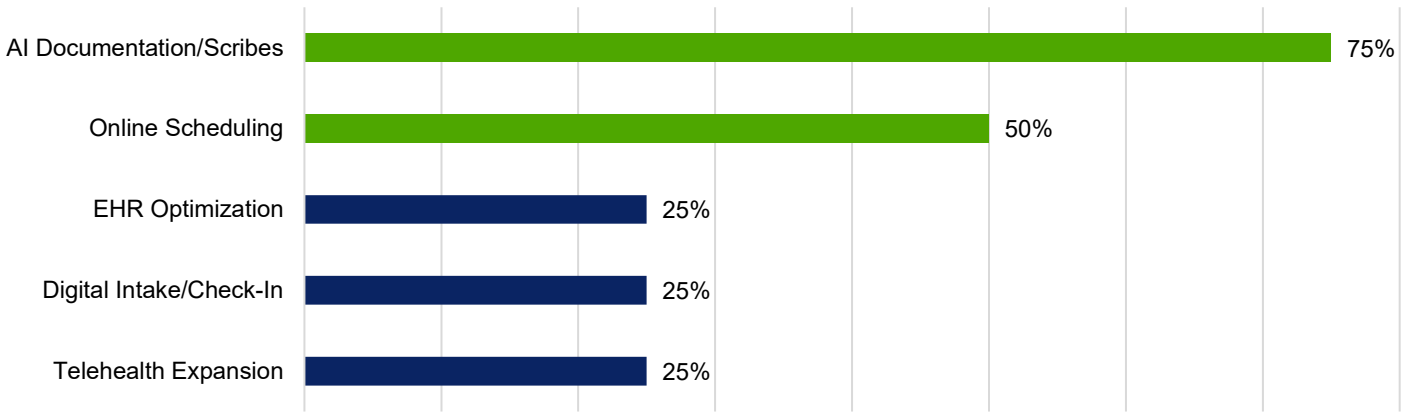
Fewer than 250,000 people (n=7)



250,001 - 1,000,000 people (n=11)

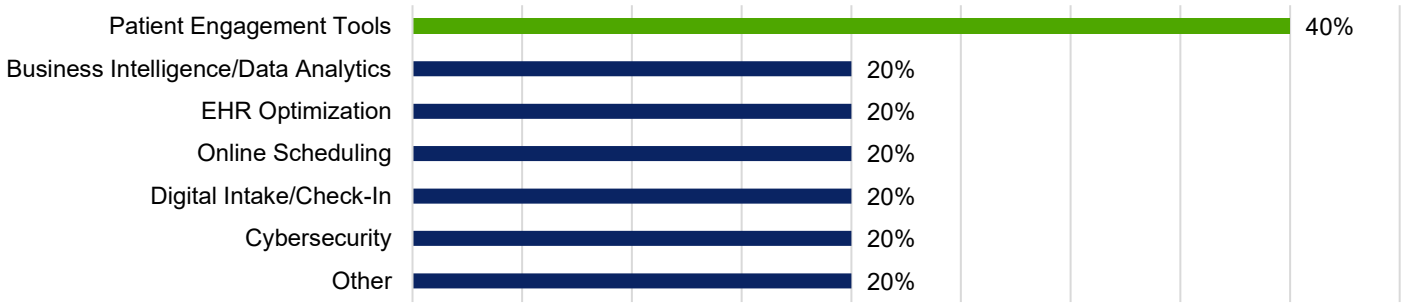


More than 1,000,000 people (n=4)

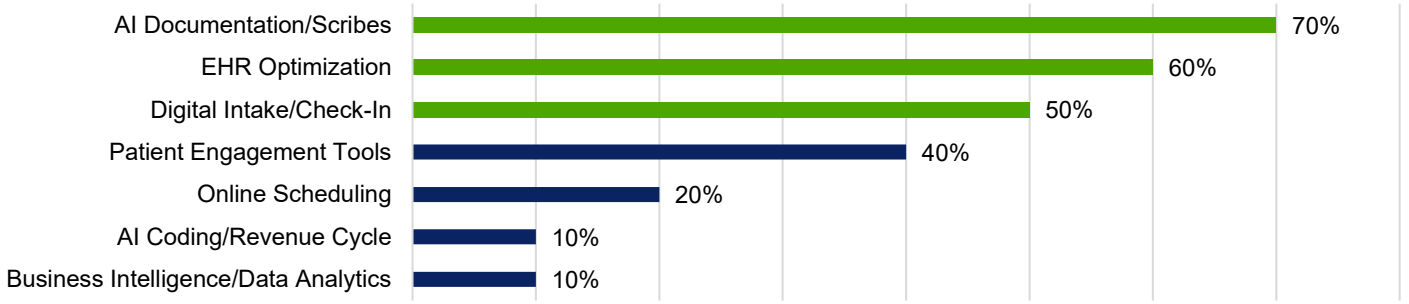


Practice Size

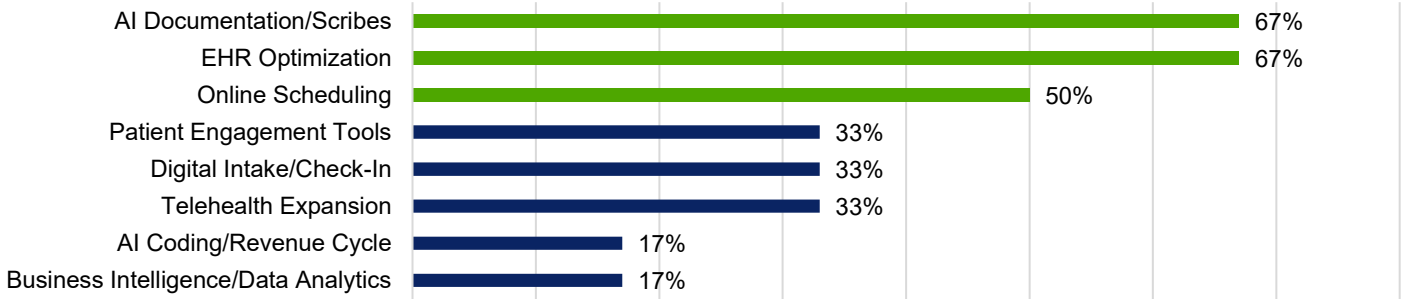
1-5 FTE Providers (n=5)



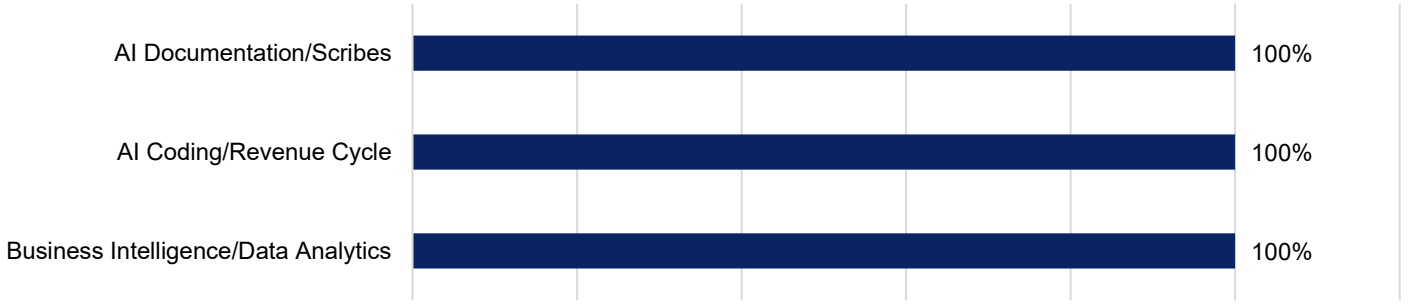
6-10 Providers (n=10)



11-20 Providers (n=6)



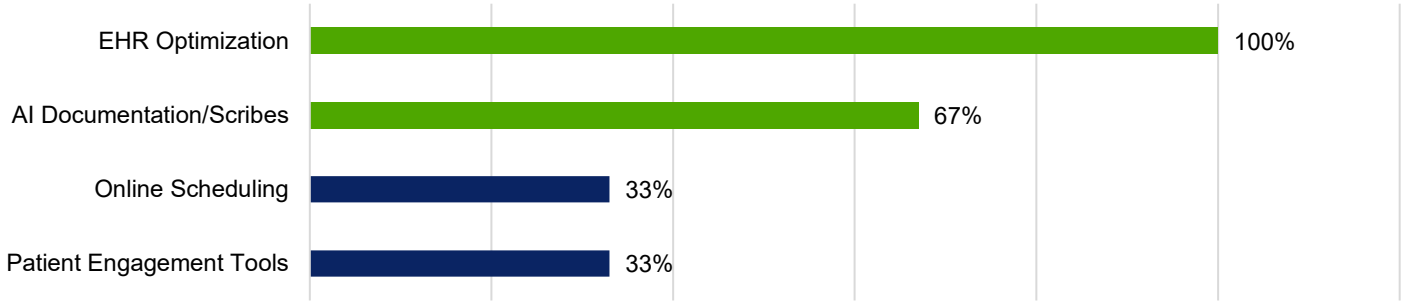
20+ FTE Providers (n=1)



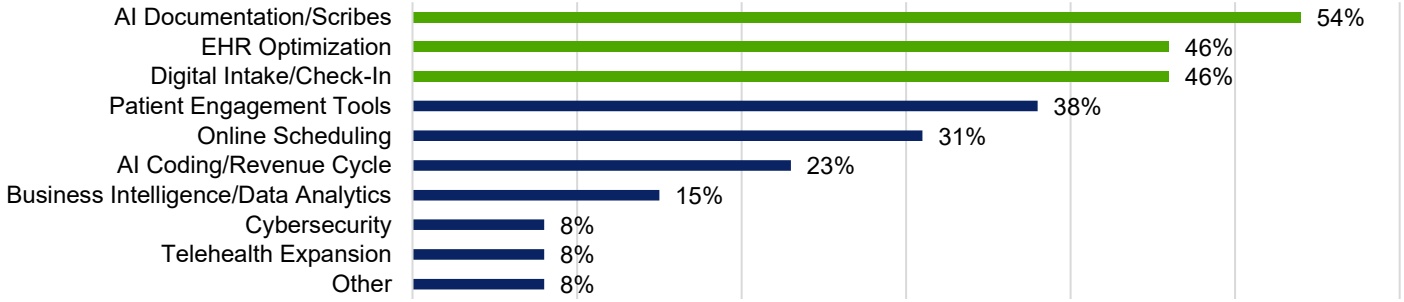
Region

East (n=2)

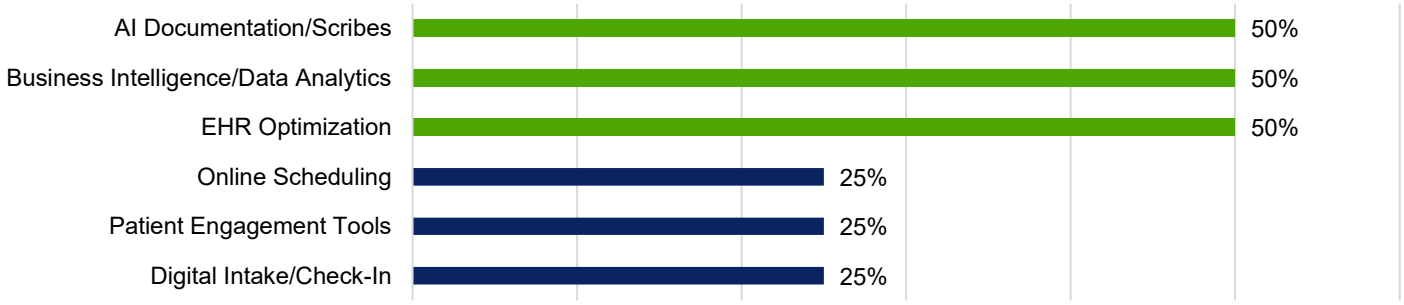
Midwest (n=3)



South (n=13)



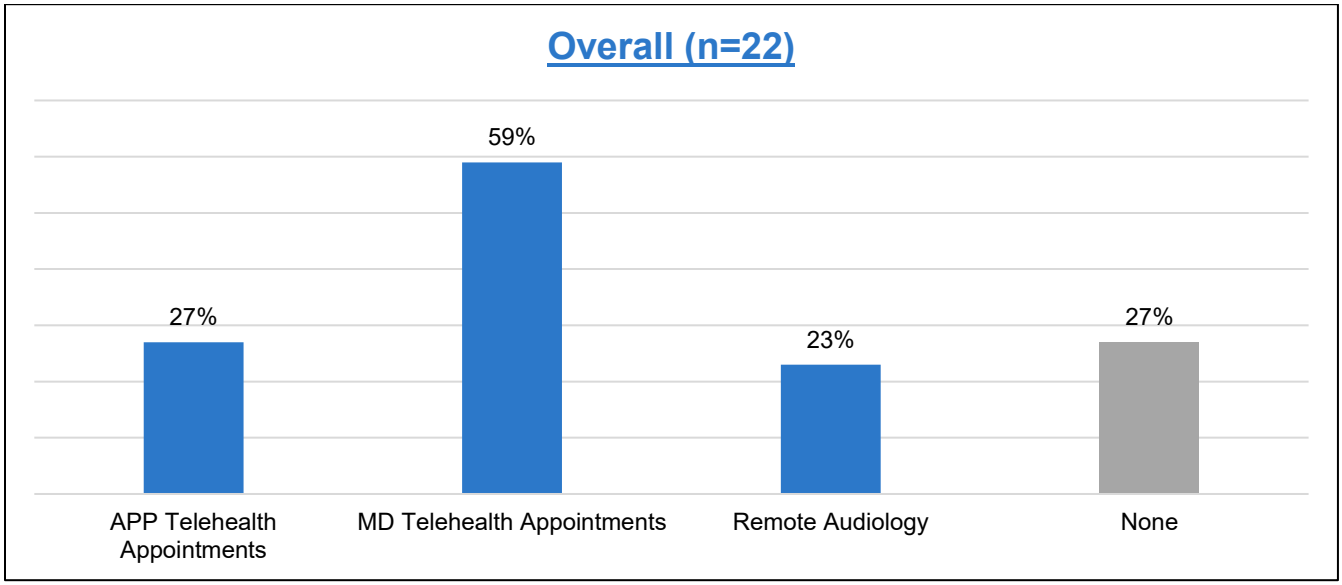
West (n=4)



Telehealth

Which telehealth services does your practice offer?

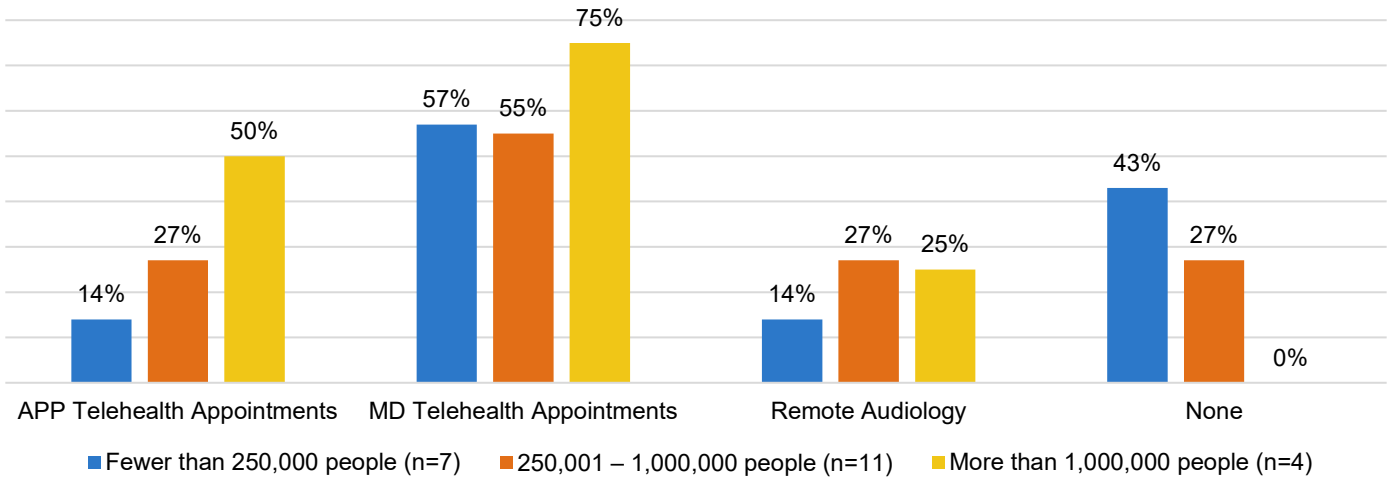
Overall



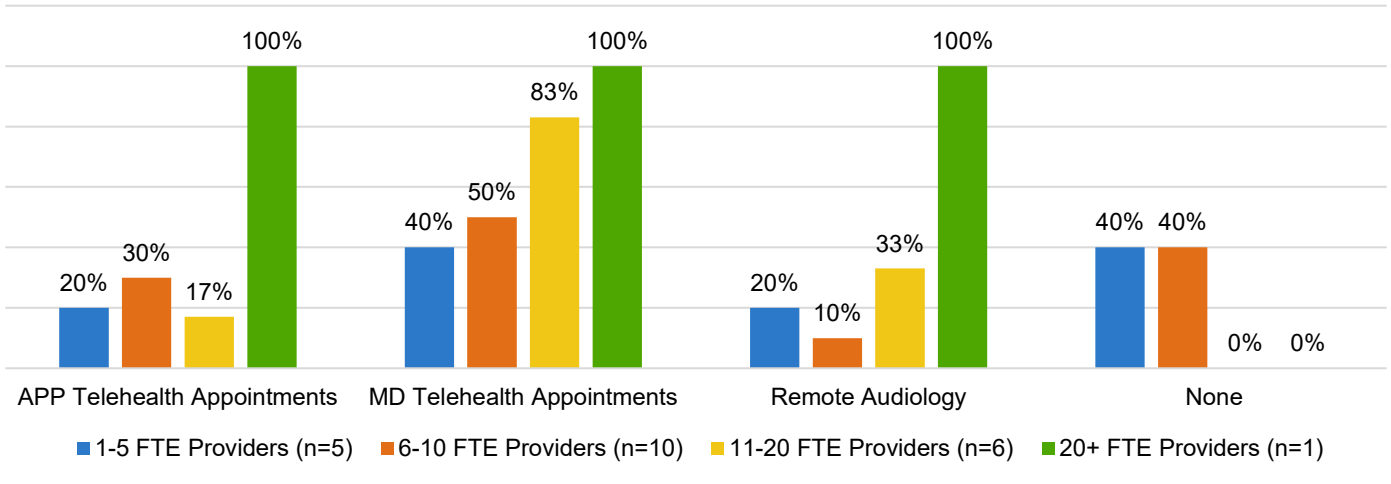
MD Telehealth Appointments are the clear leader in telehealth adoption at 59% of practices, well ahead of **APP Telehealth Appointments** (27%) and **Remote Audiology** (23%). Notably, 27% of practices offer **no telehealth services at all** — a meaningful data insight.

Adoption varies sharply by region: the South (69% MD telehealth, just 8% none) and East show strong uptake, while the Midwest (67% none) and West (75% none) lag well behind. Practice size shows a less consistent pattern, though 11-20 FTE practices stand out with 83% offering MD telehealth appointments and zero reporting none.

Metropolitan Area



Practice Size



Region