

The State of Safety

How brand safety and suitability have become
the foundation for scalable creator marketing



Effective creator marketing at scale requires brand safety

Marketing teams have traditionally invested in reputation management to safeguard how their brand was represented in the market.

Today, 98% of brands leverage creator content across multiple areas of the business, but unlike owned or paid media, creator content can't be tightly managed. This reality requires a rethink of how brands approach risk mitigation, suitability, and fit. On the one hand, as more dollars pour into the creator economy, the need to safeguard that investment has intensified. On the other hand, creator content offers immense upside when you build for it. **This delicate balance of risk and reward is where brand safety comes in.**

METHODOLOGY

This research was conducted by Sapio Research in July 2025, with additional research done by CreatorIQ in August–September 2025.

1,723
Respondents

17+
Industries

9+
Regions

Respondent Breakdown: 747 Brands

676 Agencies

300 Creators

What brand safety means today

Brand safety is the framework that protects an organization's reputation through risk mitigation, suitability, and fit.

Brand safety is more than avoiding controversy—after all, some brands even embrace controversy strategically to boost visibility. Safety encompasses traditional elements like security, privacy, legal compliance, and governance, but it also encompasses suitability.

Brand safety is often confused with brand suitability, but the terms aren't interchangeable, nor are they mutually exclusive. Brand suitability is the nuanced alignment between a creator's content and a brand's customers at the right moment in time.

Suitability encompasses a brand's identity and how it fits with a creator's, but it also requires context—attentiveness to the cultural zeitgeist, especially in an environment where consumers are value-forward.

Partnering with the right creators unlocks cultural relevance, promotes widespread engagement, and maximizes performance while minimizing overhead.



BRAND SAFETY

The framework that protects an organization's reputation through risk mitigation, suitability, and fit.



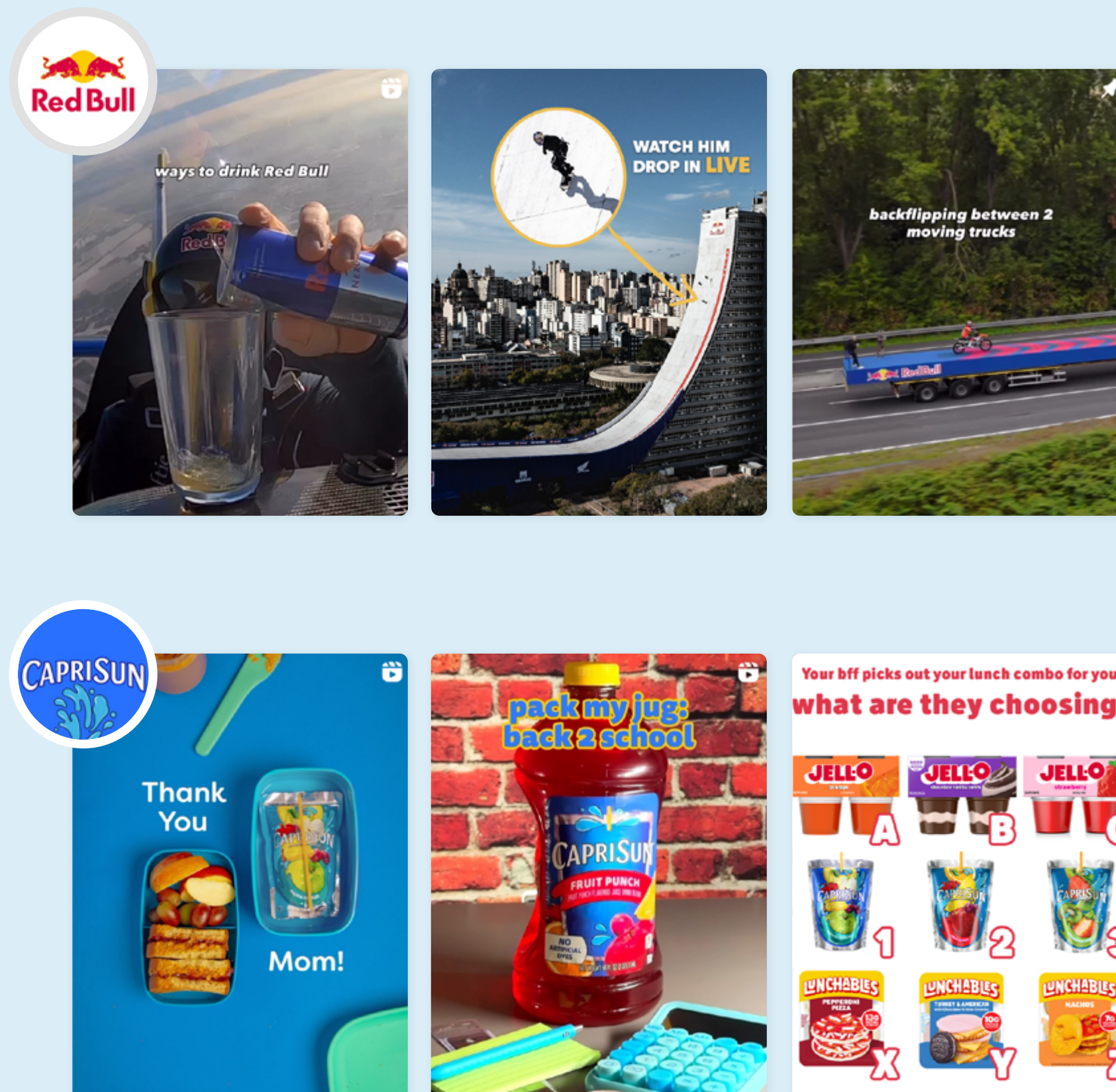
BRAND SUITABILITY

The nuanced alignment between a creator's content and a brand's customers at the right moment in time.

Context is everything.

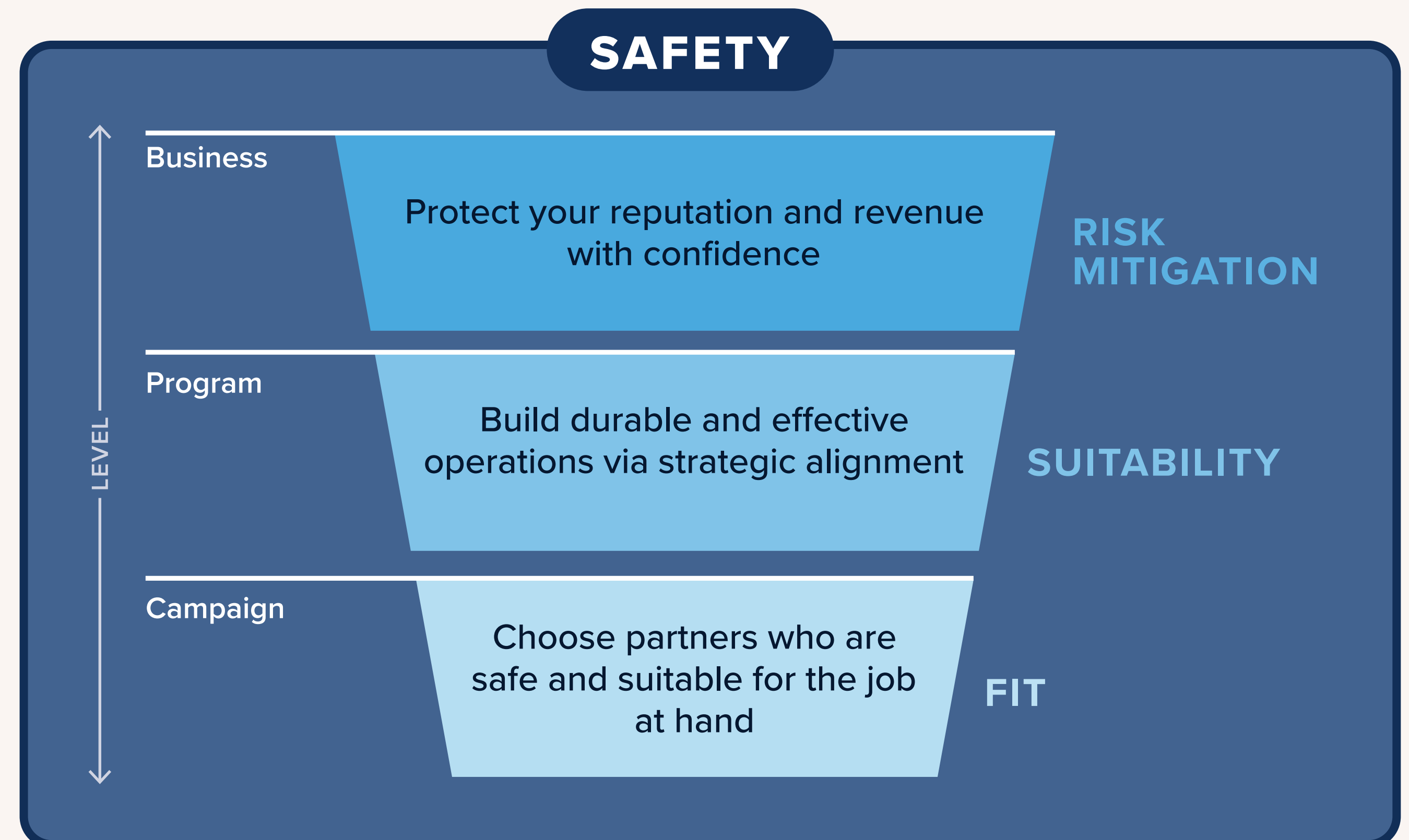
What's suitable for Red Bull, for example, may be unacceptable for Capri Sun. A brand-safe partner is not necessarily risk-free.

What makes a creator partner brand safe is a **brand reviewing creator data** and deciding that the calculated risk is worth it.



The point of brand safety is not avoidance, but **oversight and governance**: awareness of how your brand is represented, and governance over which risks you're willing to accept in order to drive more impact via creators.

Brand safety turns scale into sustainable growth:

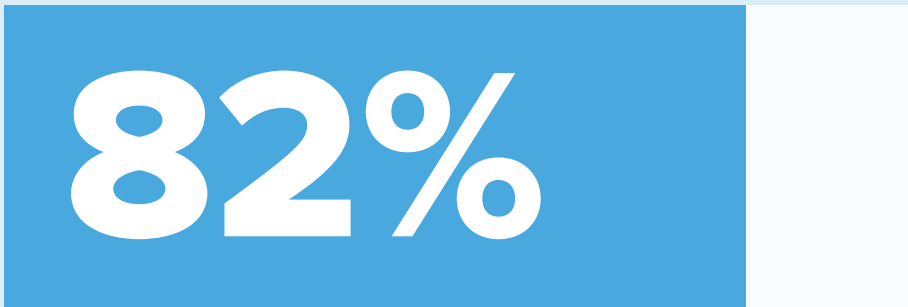
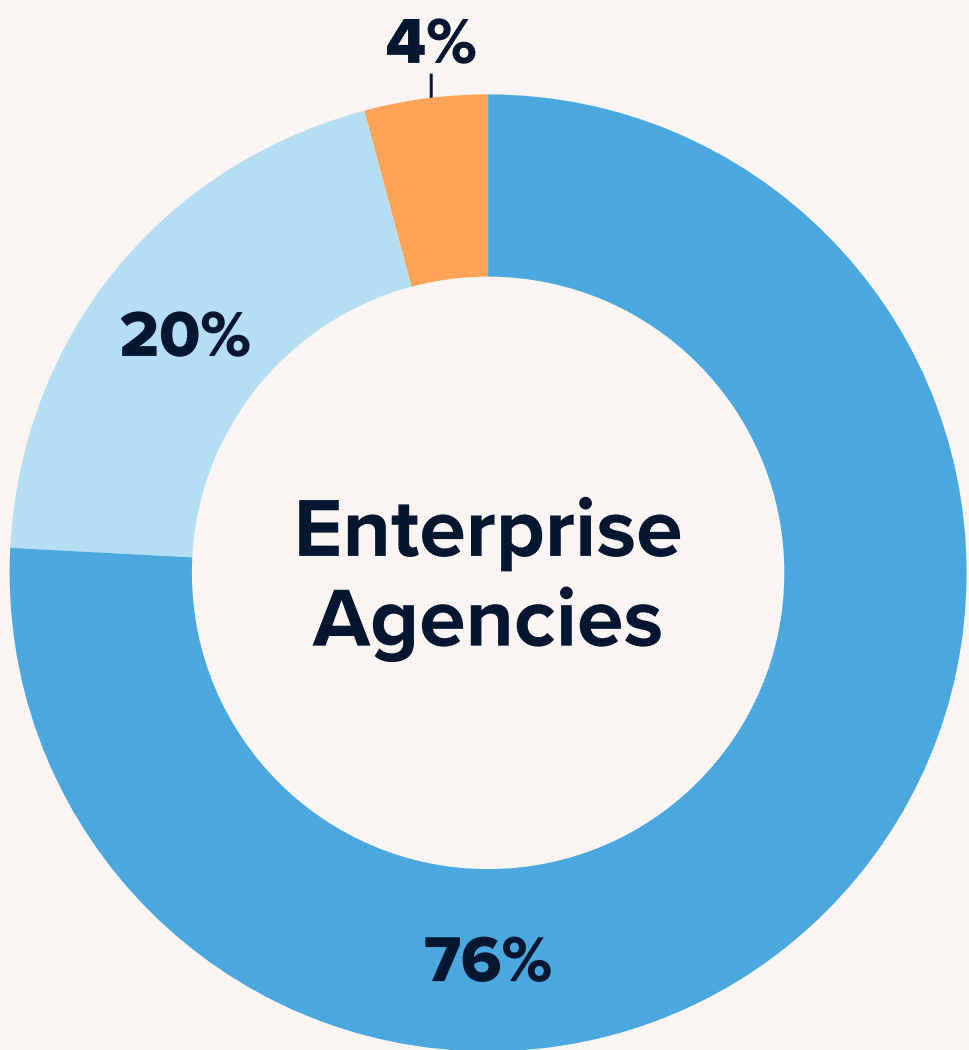
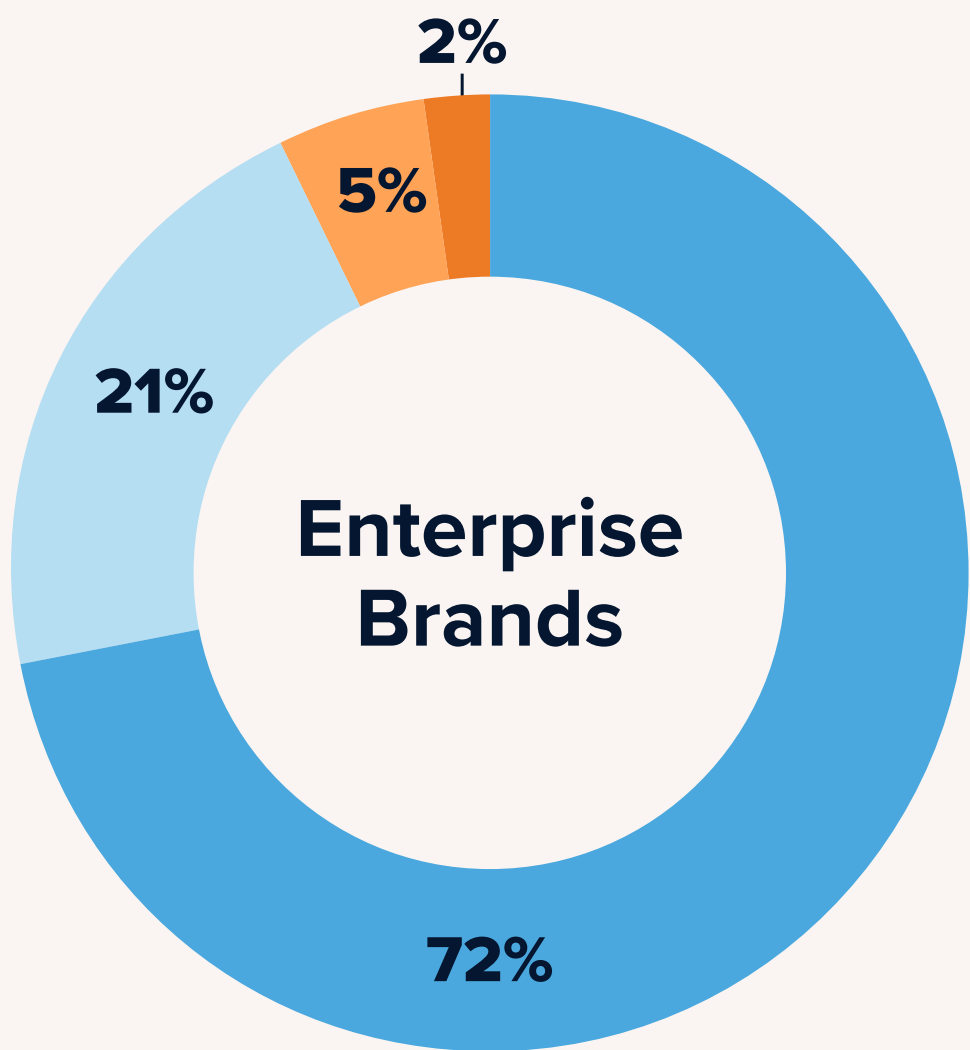
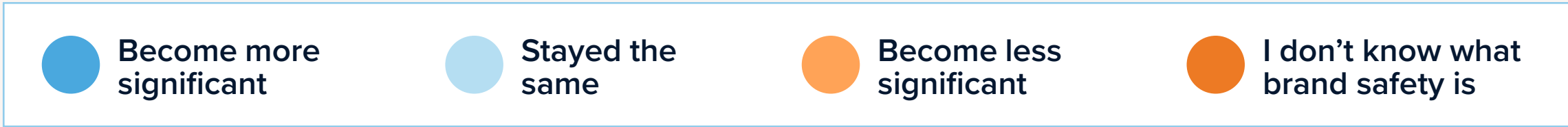


For 74% of enterprises, brand safety has become increasingly critical

AI acceleration, economic uncertainty, and rising pressure to prove impact have converged into the Era of Efficacy, a time when organizations are focused on efficiency, measurement, precision, and ROI. In this environment, brand safety is no longer optional.

60% of brands and 66% of agencies report that its importance has grown in the past year, and for enterprises, brand safety is more critical than ever.

How has the role of brand safety in your company changed over the past year, if at all?



of brands who reported brand safety was more important YoY also reported that the ROI of their creator marketing programs increased YoY, 15% more than the general population.



For organizations who reported brand safety had become more critical, branded sponsored posts featuring creators was the marketing activity with the highest impact, outperforming paid media strategies.

Agencies are often a leading indicator for the challenges and opportunities that brands will face since they service multiple brands at once. It's telling that a greater share of agencies report brand safety has grown in importance. Among them, those who reported brand safety had grown more important were also most likely to say that managing client expectations was the biggest challenge of their program. For agencies, safety protocols are a way to reassure clients and deliver confidence, particularly under pressure to produce content faster.

At the same time, “brand voice” is increasingly democratized, with thousands of approved and unapproved voices representing a brand to millions of consumers. Today, consumers are far more likely to hear about a brand from a creator than from that brand’s owned channels. That democratization invites risk, but when effectively observed and, where possible, managed, it creates unmatched upside.

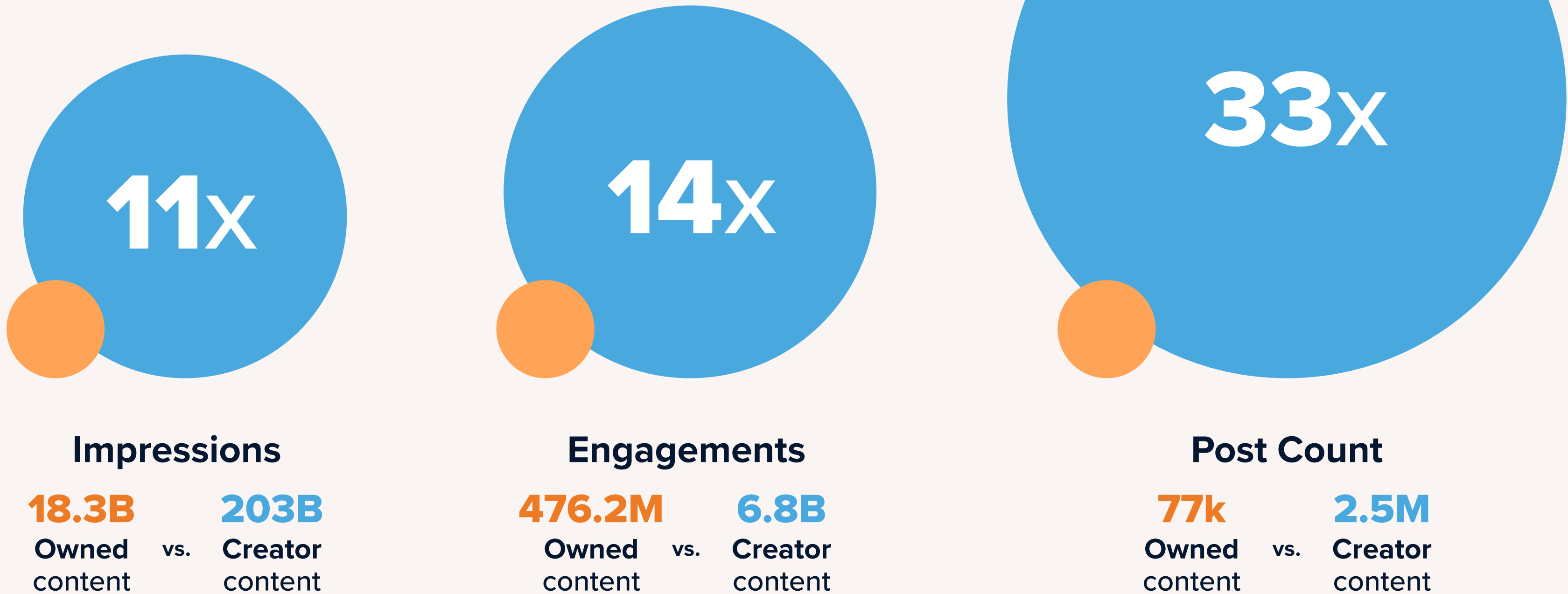
Creators produce the volume, brands inherit the reward

To capture the scale of creator content, we tallied the impact of content shared by the top 100 Fortune 500 brands in CreatorIQ's database from January to August 2025.

We then compared that volume with the content produced by creators about those same brands on Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok.

The result? On average, creators produced **33 times more posts** than the highest-revenue brands generated on their owned channels, expanding brand visibility, and with it, the responsibility to ensure alignment.

Fortune 100 Brands Owned Vs. Creator Content TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube, Jan - Aug 2025, U.S.



Creator content can
take your brand
from...



A single Fortune 100 brand with the most resources at its disposal will have, on average, **7.8k creators talking about them.**

This imbalance matters. Even for the world's most recognizable companies, with massive owned audiences and deep budgets, creator content dominates the conversation. Put simply, creators' conversations about a brand now eclipse those initiated by the brand itself.

That's why brand safety has become so significant.

When thousands of independent voices amplify your brand every day, scale is a superpower. The same dynamics that make creator content essential for reach also create an environment where suitability, governance, and reputation become levers for long-term growth.

When it comes to organic conversation, much of this begins with oversight—simply being aware of how your brand is represented. With the right tools, oversight can evolve into governance, giving brands the ability not just to monitor signals but to actively shape and safeguard their reputation.

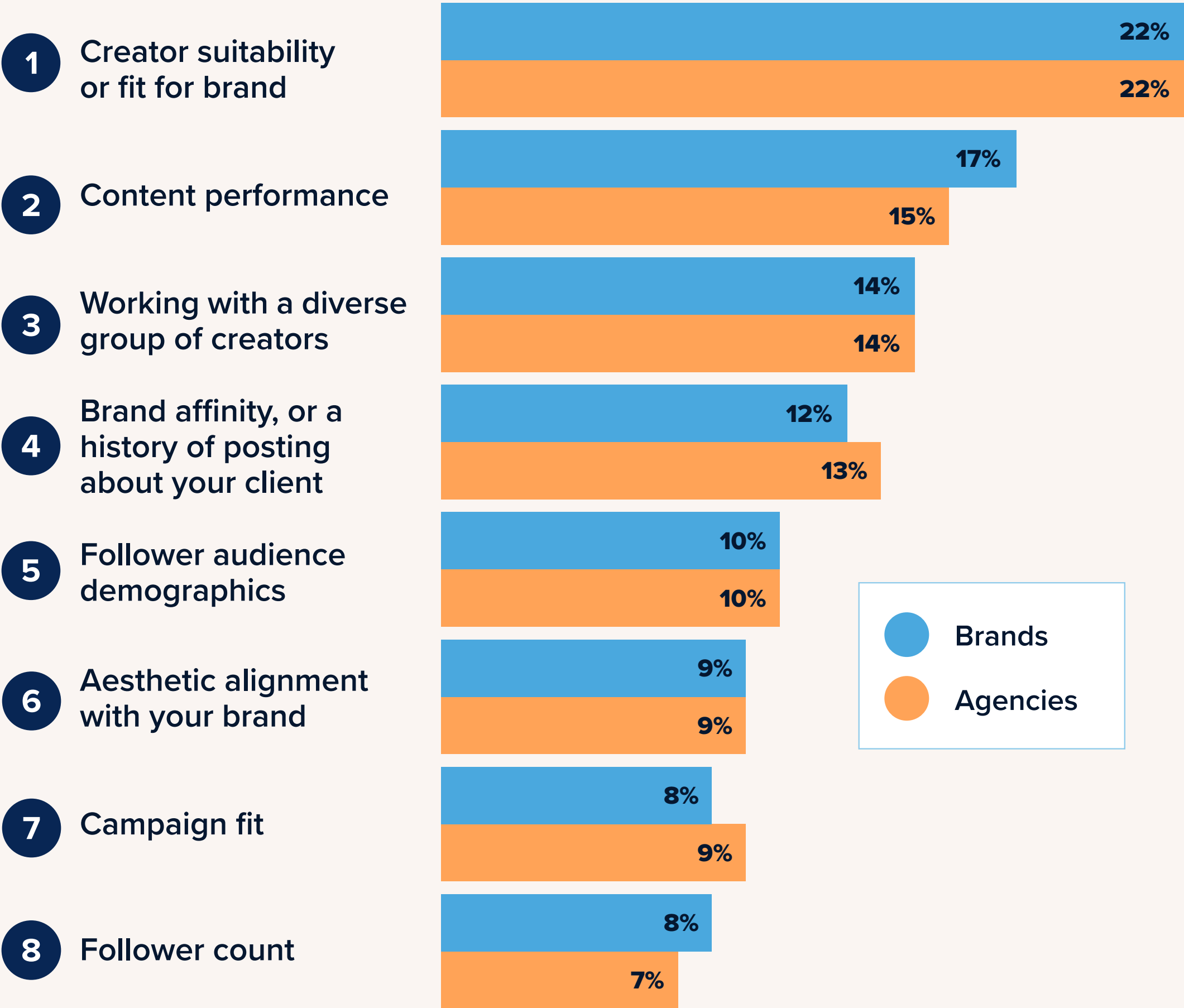
Follower count is out; brand suitability is in

As creator content has scaled, safety and suitability have become strategic imperatives.

That shift is reshaping not just how brands safeguard reputation, but how they choose their partners in the first place.

As a result, brands' most important criteria for creator selection has changed.

When you are selecting new creators to work with, which factor is most important?



This year, for the first time, both brands and agencies in CreatorIQ's State of Creator Marketing report ranked creator suitability, or how well a creator "fits" with a brand, as their top criterion when choosing whom to work with, **outpacing performance, demographics, and, notably, follower count.**

The rise of suitability reflects the growing need for creators who align with a brand's identity, values, and voice.

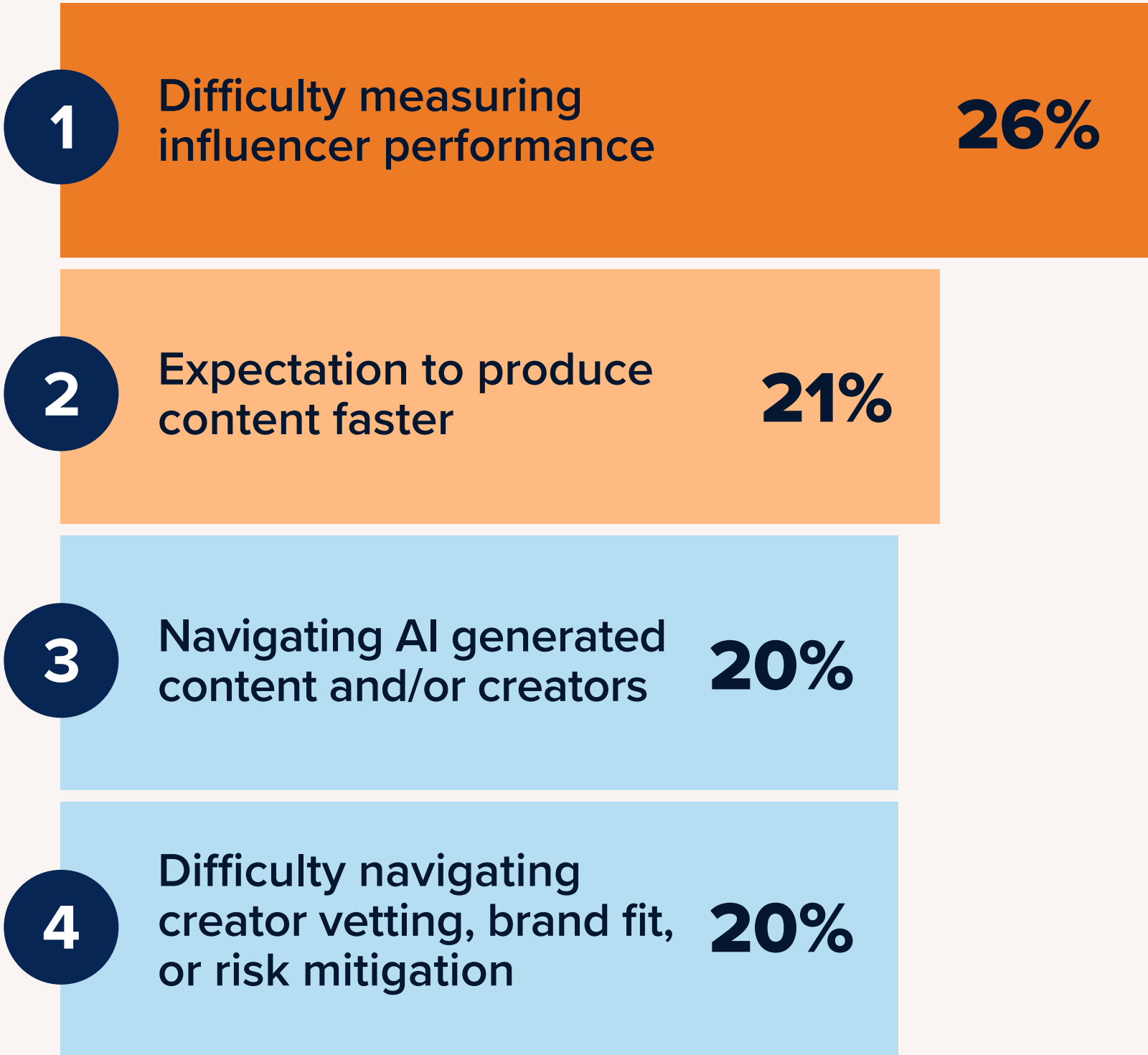
In a content-first era shaped by short-form video and rapid content production powered by AI tools, brand fit is essential.

With more creators entering the market, vetting potential partners has become more challenging.

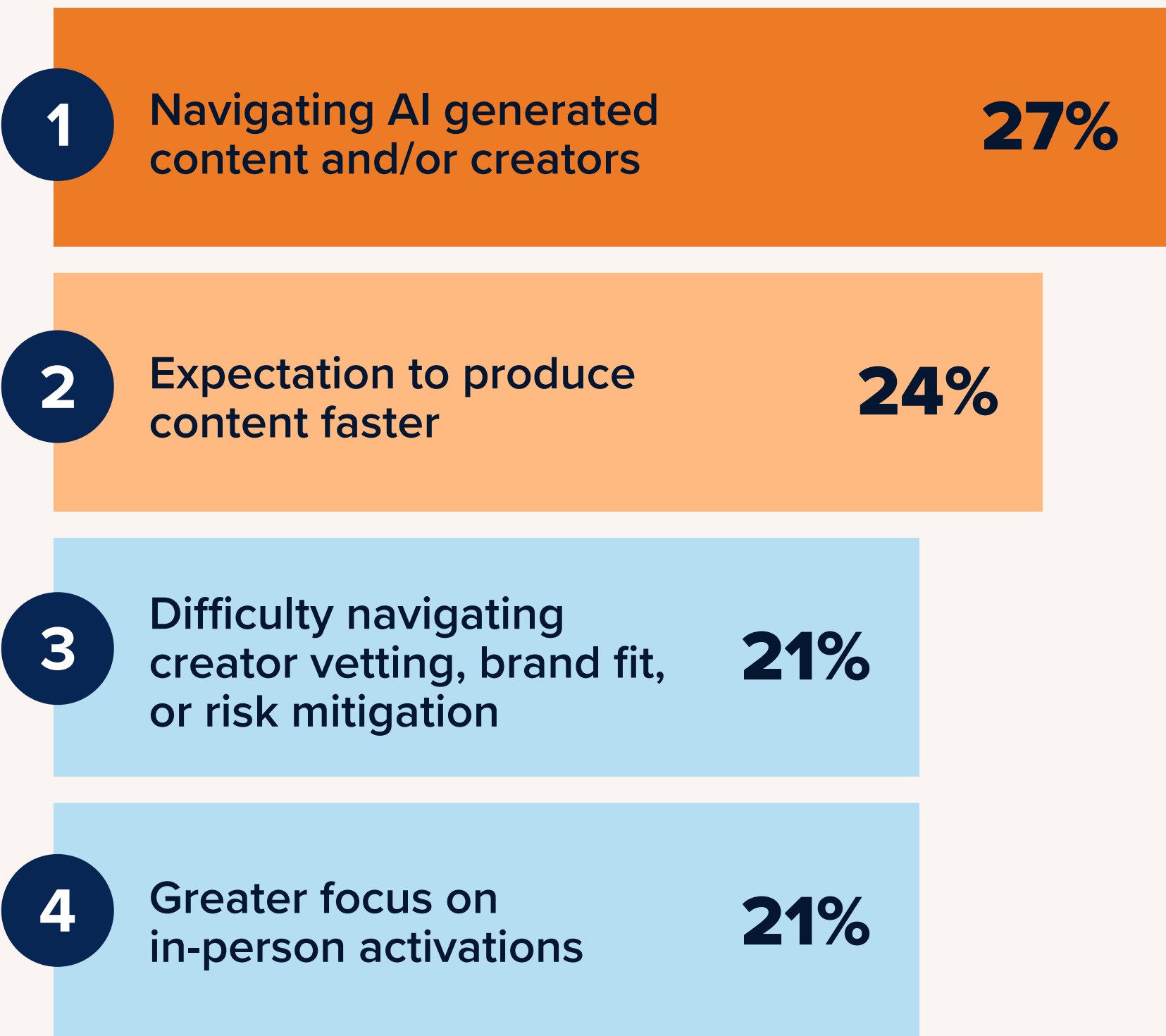
According to our State of Creator Marketing report, one in five brands cite vetting, brand fit, or risk mitigation as a top roadblock. Agencies feel this pressure even more acutely, reporting that brand safety was both the most challenging aspect of their program and the No. 3 roadblock to their program success.

Organizations who solve for these roadblocks effectively are positioned to capture the greatest rewards.

Top roadblocks for brands



Top roadblocks for agencies



This is where suitability and safety operate more like a spectrum.

Choosing the right creators isn't just a marketing decision—it's a reputational one. And as the scale of creator content grows, vetting is no longer a box to check: it's the foundation for smarter, impactful partnerships.

Which tools do you use to vet creators for brand partnerships?

Brands



Agencies



Among respondents who vetted creators, **8 out of 10** used more than one tool.

💡 Respondents used 3 tools on average, indicating a need for streamlining vetting.

For agencies, who are often ahead of the curve, influencer marketing software is the No. 1 tool to vet creators

83% of **brands** value collaborating with creators who are low risk to their reputation

85% of **agencies** value collaborating with creators who are low risk to their reputation

89% of **enterprises** value collaborating with creators who are low risk to their reputation

In the Era of Efficacy, where organizations are focused on operational maturity, strategic alignment, precision, and meaningful business outcomes, brand safety is the foundation of reputation management.

At scale, safety and suitability can't rely solely on manual checks or keywords. Brand safety and suitability require always-on, intelligent solutions.

That's where SafelQ comes in.

Introducing **SafelQ**

Delivering proactive, AI brand safety that dynamically adapts to your tolerances over time.

In a world that's noisier than ever, context matters. To stay ahead, organizations need infrastructure that provides visibility, mitigates risk, and maximizes ROI. SafelQ is the industry's first brand-specific adaptive AI solution that powers brand safety and suitability.



AI that understands content in context

Our safety solution is powered by multimodal, always-on content monitoring that analyzes text, audio, and visuals across major languages, capturing unspoken context and cultural nuance.



Lightning speed analysis

SafelQ contextualizes findings with issue summaries and surfaces exact timestamps, taking review time of a 40 minute video down to just one minute.



Review issues based on severity, not scores

Every post comes with a perceived severity level of each issue and context for your review—so you know what most deserves your attention.



Adaptive, brand-specific precision

Our self-learning algorithm dynamically adapts to your priorities and risk tolerance thresholds over time, accelerating efficiency and enhancing performance.



Built for the next era of creator marketing, SafelQ empowers teams to move faster with precision and confidence.

Ready to protect your brand and unlock growth at the speed of culture?



About CreatorIQ

CreatorIQ is the all in one, AI-native operating system for creator-led growth, trusted by 1,300+ of the world's most innovative brands and agencies, including Burson, Delta Air Lines, Google, Movers+Shakers, Nestlé, and Sephora.

CreatorIQ's enterprise platform unifies every aspect of creator marketing—across paid, owned, earned, commerce, community, and content—into one seamless ecosystem. With its industry-leading intelligence infrastructure, highest compliance and security standards, and best-in-class partnerships with Meta, Snapchat, TikTok, and YouTube, CreatorIQ enables marketing teams to move beyond just running influencer campaigns to building holistic and safe creator-led media strategies at scale.

Learn more at www.creatoriq.com and follow us on [LinkedIn](#) and [Instagram](#).