

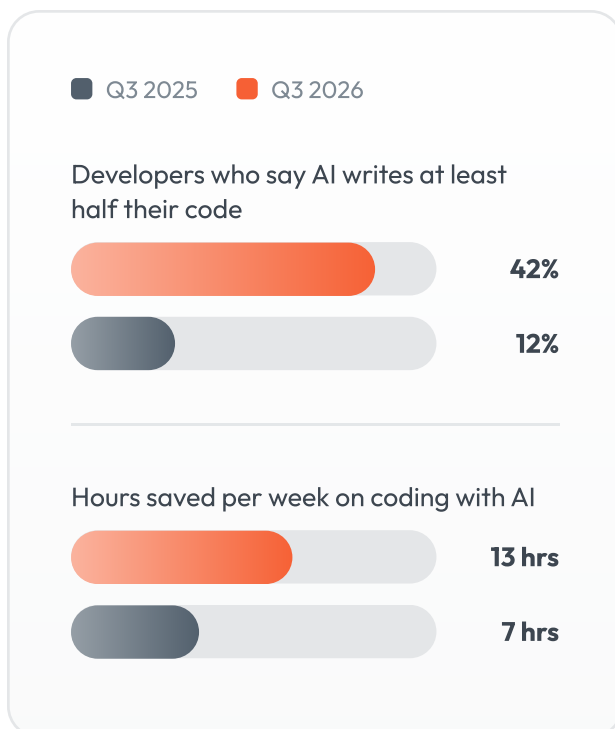
Dev Barometer Q3 2026

Developers Now Spend the Hours AI Freed Up Answering for the Code

The Dev Barometer is BairesDev's quarterly global survey of software developers, with prior editions covered at [World Economic Forum programming in Davos](#). The Q3 2026 edition was fielded in August 2026 among 705 software developers across 60+ countries. For the first time, it also surveyed 41 enterprise CTOs at Fortune 500 and mid-market organizations, allowing developer experience and executive investment to be read side by side.

This edition is the first with a full-year baseline to compare against. Over that year developers went further into AI, and the shape of their work changed with it. Fewer developers now spend most of the week writing new code from scratch, while review and validation take up a growing share, alongside continuous upskilling. Budgets are following the same direction, and compensation is starting to register which skills the shift actually rewards. A year of data shows a role being redefined rather than reduced or eliminated.

Nearly 80% of Developers Now Spend Less Than Half Their Week Writing New Code



That leaves 21% for whom writing software from scratch still occupies most of the week. The share of developers who say AI writes at least half their code rose from 12% to 42% in a year, and the time that used to go into producing code has come down with it. Developers report saving 13 hours a week on coding with AI, up from 7 hours in [Q3 2025](#). That time is moving into work that sits a layer above writing code, overseeing what AI produces and building new skills to keep up with it.

Those saved hours don't come back as free time. The work filling them is oversight. Two thirds (67%) report spending more time reviewing AI-generated code than they did a year ago, and 52% report more time debugging problems AI introduced. Keeping current absorbs another share. Developers now spend an average of 9 hours a week learning AI tools and new technologies, up from 4 in [Q3 2025](#).

CTO Budgets Are Moving Toward Review and Validation

The reallocation of time developers report in their own week is showing up in budgets. 78% of CTOs have increased investment in code review, QA, and validation to support AI-generated work.

As budgets shift toward supporting these tasks, the ownership question becomes sharper. Nearly six in ten developers (58%) report increased accountability for code they didn't fully write. They now own the code AI wrote, the errors it introduced, and the judgment call on whether it is safe to ship.

That accountability is growing while the decisions themselves move closer to AI. 32% of developers say the decision to ship a build to production has been delegated to AI with a developer in the loop, and 7% say it has been delegated without developer involvement.

Investment in Review and Quality Assurance

78%

Over the past 12 months. Base = 41 CTOs.
Combines "significantly increased" and "somewhat increased."

AI Tool Fluency and Prompting Tops What Earns a Raise and What CTOs Fund

Among developers who received a raise in the past 12 months, AI tool fluency and prompting ranked first as the driver (29%), followed by system design and architecture (20%) and human skills such as communication, mentorship, and cross-functional collaboration (15%).

DEVELOPERS

What drove a raise

1. **AI tool fluency & prompting**
2. System design and architecture
3. Human skills
4. **AI security**
5. Deep expertise in a language
6. **AI quality assurance**

CTOS

Where hiring and budget go

1. **AI tool fluency & prompting**
2. Data engineering & infrastructure
3. **AI quality assurance**
4. **AI security**
5. Security & compliance engineering
6. Legacy system modernization

Highlighted skills rank in both top six. Ranked by share of responses. Developer base = the 141 whose AI fluency increased their compensation (single choice); CTO base = 41 (select all that apply).

CTO investment lands on adjacent ground. What they are funding sits close to the work developers describe, with AI quality assurance and AI security alongside AI tool fluency and data engineering. Human skills register as relevant, cited by one in four CTOs, though they come behind those technical areas. The oversight disciplines in that mix need engineers who can exercise judgment as much as operate tooling, and how technical depth and human skills combine in those roles is the open question for the next phase of AI adoption.

"In Q3 2025, 12% of developers said AI wrote half their code. Today it's 42%, and the decision to ship it still sits with one engineer, for far more code than it used to. That's why 78% of CTOs increased spending on review and validation. Every one of those dollars buys the same thing, which is an accountability layer that is currently one person deep."

Darren Shimkus, CEO, BairesDev

86% of Developers Say AI Has Made Their Role More Fulfilling

A year of Dev Barometer data shows AI scaling quickly inside software teams and, by developers' own account, making their work more rewarding. 86% say AI has made their role more fulfilling, up from 76% in Q3 2025.

AI Continues to Make Devs' Work More Fulfilling

Q3 2026



Q3 2025



The job has been rebuilt around a different center of gravity, where judgment, review, and the ability to stand behind what ships carry the weight that raw output used to. A year of data shows that shift is measurable in hours, in budgets, and in what companies are willing to hand over. Staying current is now part of the work rather than an addition to it, with learning time more than doubling in twelve months.

What comes next depends less on how much AI can write than on who is prepared to answer for it.

About the Dev Barometer Survey

The Dev Barometer is BairesDev's quarterly global survey of software developers. Since 2025, the initiative has collected responses from 5,200+ engineers across 75+ countries.

For additional information about the Dev Barometer or to request interviews, contact press@bairesdev.com

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For more information about this edition visit bairesdev.com/research.

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