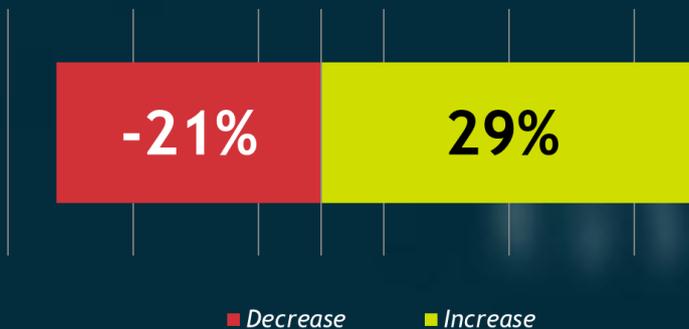


# Digital Learning Realities 2025

## L&D Budgets and Investment Trends

How will your organisation's overall spend on L&D change this year?

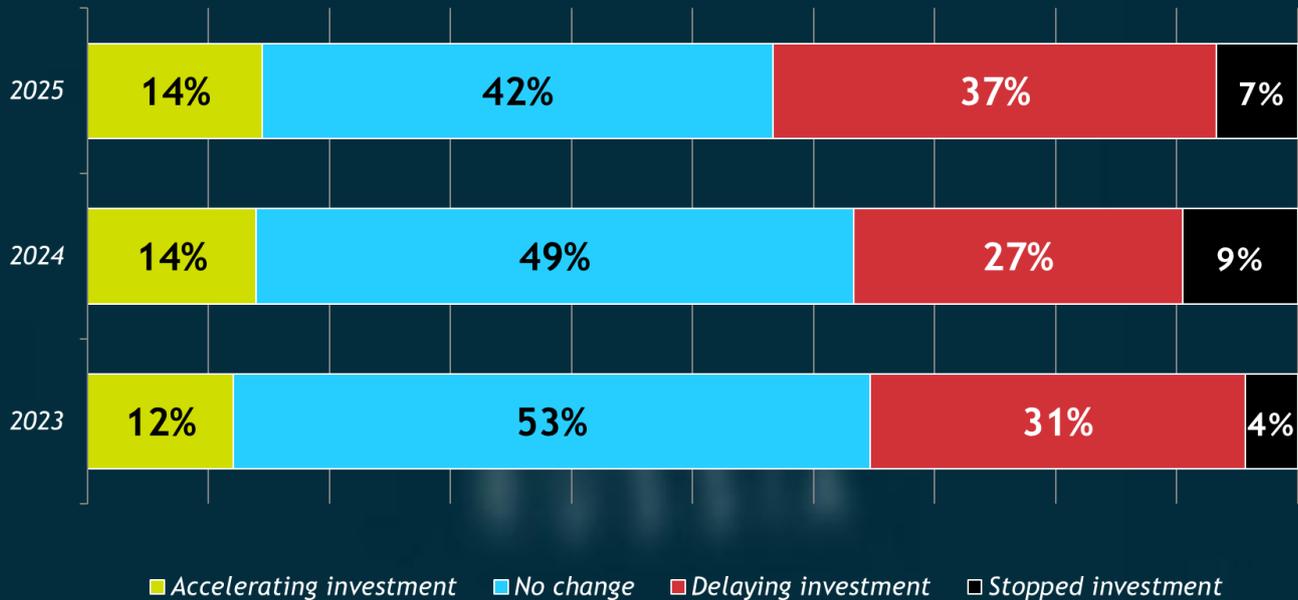


***L&D budgets continue to be squeezed with investment in learning under ongoing scrutiny***

With little movement over the past three years, a significant number of L&D budgets have experienced sustained belt tightening. And again, this year investment in learning has only grown in less than a third of organisations. Exactly in line with our 2024 results, 61% of L&D teams saw their budget decrease or stay the same. Immediately in the wake of the pandemic, those experiencing a L&D budget squeeze numbered only 8%. But since 2022 we have seen a tripling of L&D teams experiencing a budget decrease. Now, we seem to have entered a new normal. The promise of AI has raised a growing expectation of doing more with less which has led to learning budget stagnation, at best. The pressure on learning budgets is showing little signs of abating. There has never been a more important time for L&D teams to evidence and articulate their value add.

## *The economic climate is disrupting investment in new digital learning projects, more than any point since the pandemic*

Overall, is the economic climate causing you to delay your investment in NEW digital learning projects or solutions in 2024?

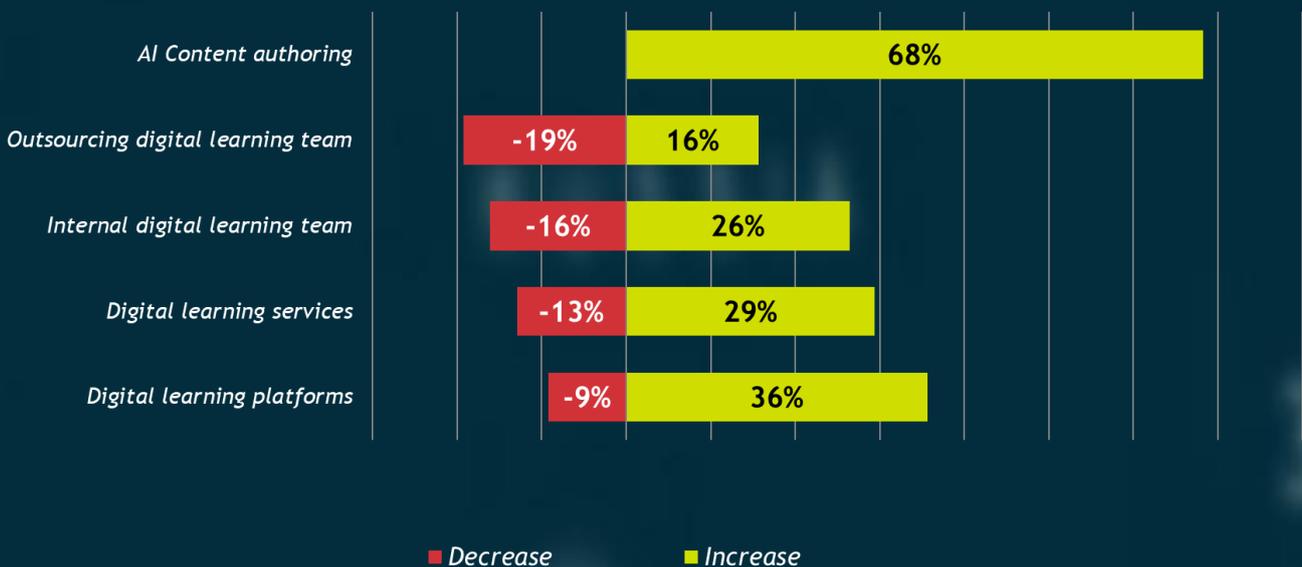


Similar to previous years, this year only 14% have accelerated their investment in digital learning - a distinct change from the e-learning boom that accompanied the pandemic. The backlash against hasty e-learning decisions during COVID further compounded by the current economic climate has negatively impacted the growth of digital learning projects in recent years. As a result, many are experiencing growing inertia in committing new digital learning projects. This is likely to lead to some stagnation in the e-learning solutions market overall, as well as a reduction in the disruption provided through new and emerging L&D solutions and innovators. Nearly half of buyers are waiting for existing suppliers to deliver innovation - rather than exploring and embracing new supplier options. More so than ever before, corporates wishing to embrace new innovations with new providers will inevitably require a compelling business case if they want to proceed.

## The momentum behind AI content authoring reaches new heights whilst the pressures for reducing investment in digital learning teams grow

Whilst the big theme for investing in AI-enabled content authoring is repeated this year, there are interesting nuances in the 2025 results that make it different from last year. We have seen an almost 20% increase in those expecting their investment in AI content authoring to grow, and the impact of that investment appears to be coming at a cost. Namely the investment on the internal digital learning team. This year has seen a marginal - but still significant - swing away from investing in internal digital learning resources. Whether this is a momentary glitch or the sign of a shift is difficult to tell, but our suspicion is that AI automation is starting to nibble more aggressively at the core digital learning team than it has done before.

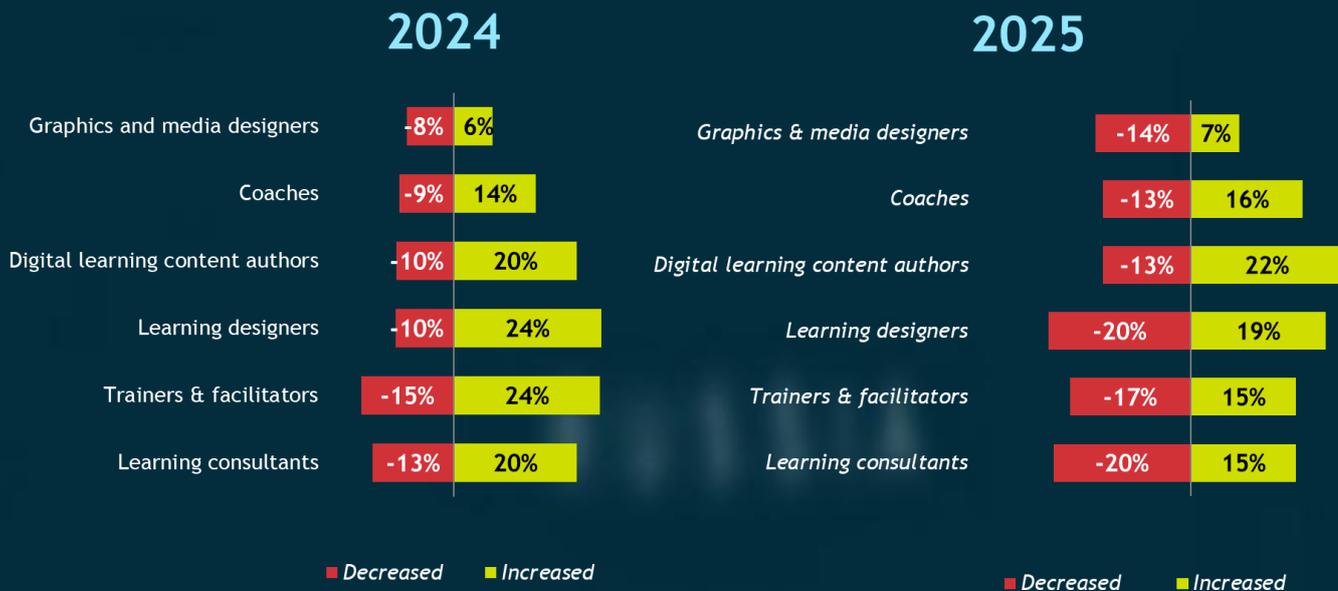
### How do you expect your investment in digital learning to change over the year ahead?



## All L&D roles are experiencing higher headcount contraction over the past year, with generic L&D roles feeling the greatest impact as we see major changes to how L&D projects are resourced

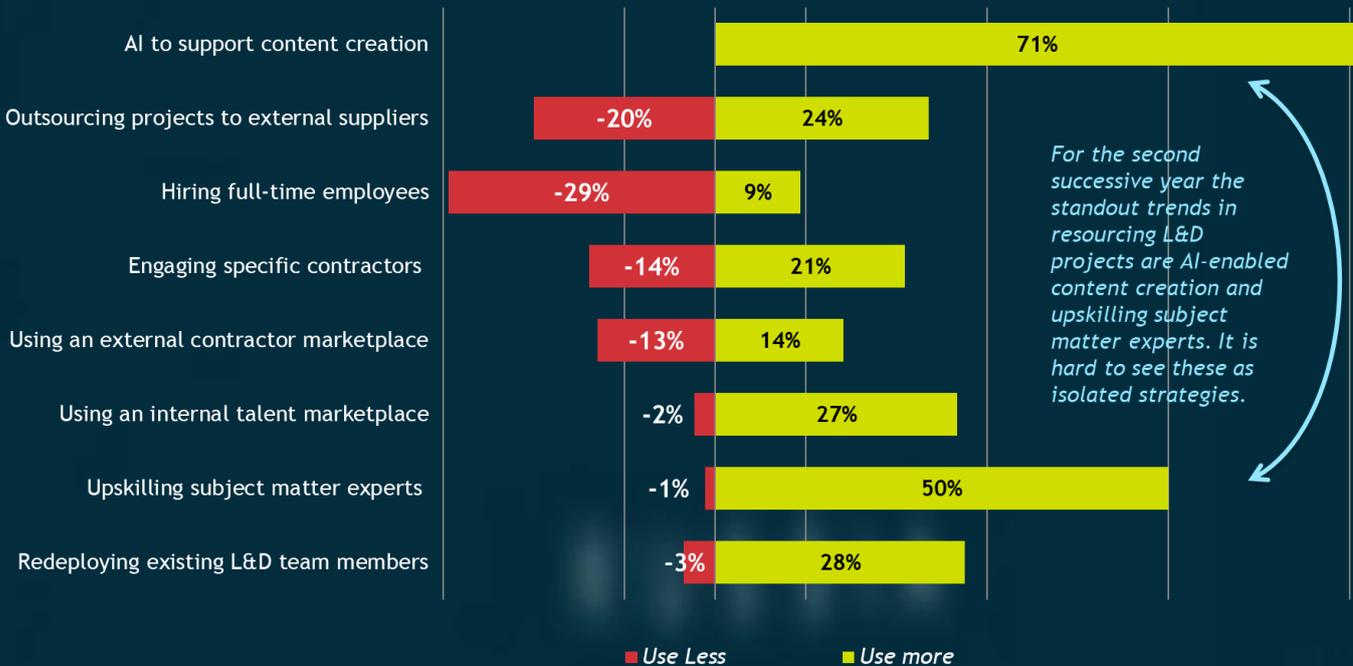
Sustained economic uncertainty has affected the L&D headcount. Organisations who have reduced the number of L&D roles noticeably grew over the year from 2024 until today. And no specific L&D roles appear to have been exempt from that reduction. Albeit those with a digital learning focus seem to have fared marginally better, with generic learning roles becoming more vulnerable.

### How has your learning headcount changed over the past year?



This combination of innovation and costs is having a systemic impact on how L&D think about resourcing their projects. There continues to be a major shift to Subject Matter Experts (SMEs), a key digital learning authoring resource, and the intent to expand the use of SMEs in L&D projects. Existing L&D team members are increasingly being redeployed into new roles, and there has been a significant swing away from new full-time L&D hires. Tough times lie ahead unless L&D teams can start to articulate their value beyond learning delivery models, and content. The future for L&D is as much about how to scale business and people transformation as it is about innovations in learning design.

### How are you planning to resource L&D projects in the year ahead?



**Sources of Information & Background**  
As Europe's #1 HR industry analyst, Fosway is uniquely positioned to help the industry with independent research on these issues. More information and insight on our research will be made available on [www.fosway.com](http://www.fosway.com)

Fosway Group conducted the survey of its corporate research network and Learning Technologies Show conference attendees in partnership with Closer Still between April 2025 to August 2025. Responses were gathered from CHROs, Talent & L&D Directors, Managers and Learning, Talent & HR Technology professionals.

Results are drawn primarily from enterprise organisations in Europe and the survey includes responses from 333 individuals. Over 75% of respondents are based in European organisations, and over 50% have a global role.

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