



2026 State of Skills Intelligence Report

Adopted, not transformed: what 1,000 U.S. enterprise employees reveal about AI at work

Introduction

AI adoption is accelerating. How do we know whether people are becoming more capable as a result?

As an educator and the founder of Workera, I spend a lot of time thinking about this question. Giving people access to AI is an important step. The bigger opportunity is helping them develop the skills and judgment to use it well, and recognizing what they can achieve with it.

For our 2026 State of Skills Intelligence Report, we surveyed 1,000 employees at large U.S. enterprises. The progress is encouraging: 67.8% report using AI tools multiple times per week, compared with 39.9% in our previous survey. More employees also report access to AI-specific training.

But access is only part of the equation. More than half of respondents say no time is allocated during work hours to develop AI skills. And 42.5% say they have been passed over for an opportunity or promotion because someone misjudged their skills.

These findings point to an opportunity for leaders. We need to make skill development part of how work gets done, build a more accurate understanding of what people can do, and use that understanding to guide coaching, assignments, and career opportunities.

I believe people can achieve far more than their organizations currently recognize. AI makes that potential even greater, but realizing it requires deliberate investment in people and credible ways to measure their progress.

My hope is that this report helps you ask better questions about your workforce: Where are people developing new capabilities? What is holding them back? And how can you help them turn those capabilities into better outcomes for themselves and your organization?



Kian Katanforoosh

Founder & CEO, Workera

Key findings

1 AI maturity is progressing, but transformation is still rare.

Across a range of questions, companies are further ahead with AI than they were in 2025. They're more likely to be on track for an AI-enabled future (66.9% → 80.1%), to say they are leading their industry on AI skills readiness (19.4% → 29.5%), to offer AI-specific skills training to employees (24.8% → 58.3%), and to have employees using AI tools multiple times per week (39.9% → 67.8%).

However, not every number is positive. Employees still don't have everything they need to develop exceptional AI skills, and that's preventing their organizations from achieving real transformation.

2 Employees aren't empowered to become AI experts, or rewarded for it.

When asked what challenges they've faced when trying to develop AI skills, 56.4% mentioned no time allocated during work hours, and 42.5% cited a lack of relevant training materials. Strikingly, more than eight in 10 employees (84.3%) say they spend five hours or less per week on skill development/training. Nearly 60% of respondents say AI skills are weighted equally or not prioritized at their organization when choosing job assignments or promotions.

3 Employees are convinced they can do their job better than AI.

More than three-quarters (76.6%) of respondents said that AI couldn't do their job better than they can. When asked what portion of their job AI could do today, a similar percentage (78.1%) said 30% or less. Employees view AI as a tool to help them develop skills and increase productivity, not to replace them.

4 Career paths are suffering due to lack of skills intelligence.

Four out of 10 respondents (42.5%) say they've been passed over for an opportunity or promotion because someone misjudged their skills. However, employees still believe human managers are better at evaluating their skills than AI.

5 Employees still believe in human coaching, but few benefit from it.

Exactly half of respondents say they receive enough coaching to advance in their career. However, just 26.6% say they receive regular coaching from a manager or executive (a couple days per week or more). One in five (21.5%) say they never receive individual coaching.

6 Workers will opt into continuous skill measurement... if they control the data.

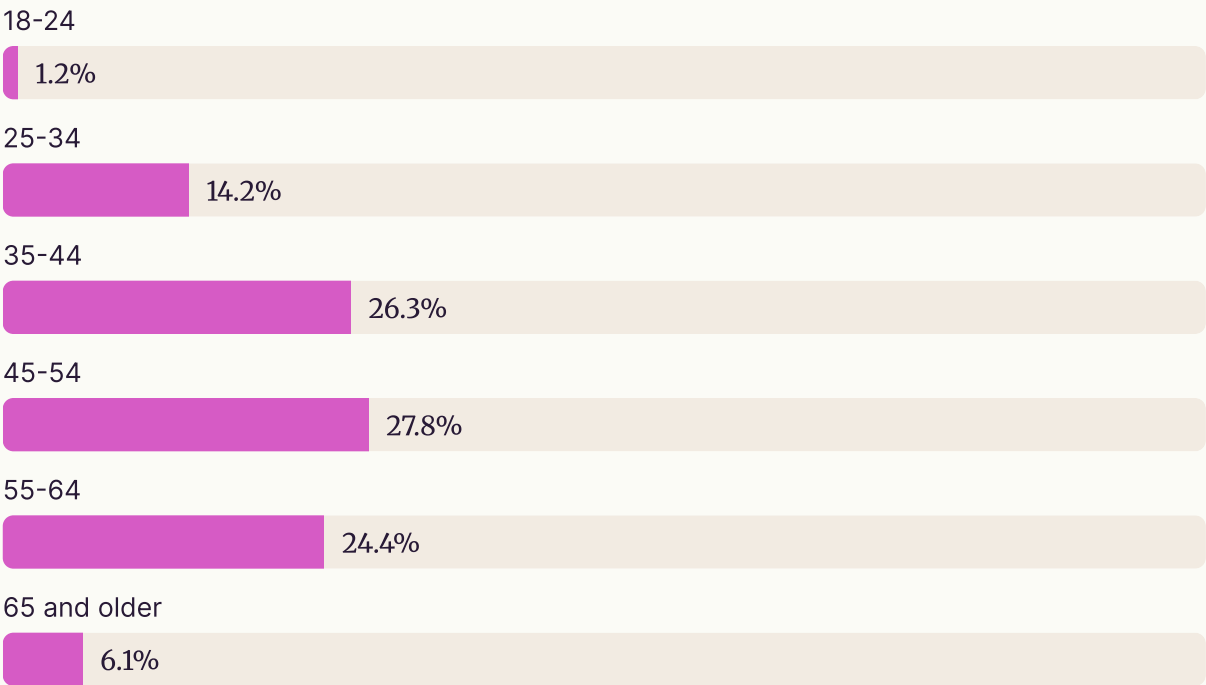
Real-time skills measurement could help prevent employees from being overlooked, and some employees are curious about the technology's potential. Four in 10 (41.1%) said they would opt into continuous measurement if they control the data, while 31.2% said they weren't sure. Just 27.7% said they wouldn't opt in.

Methodology and demographics

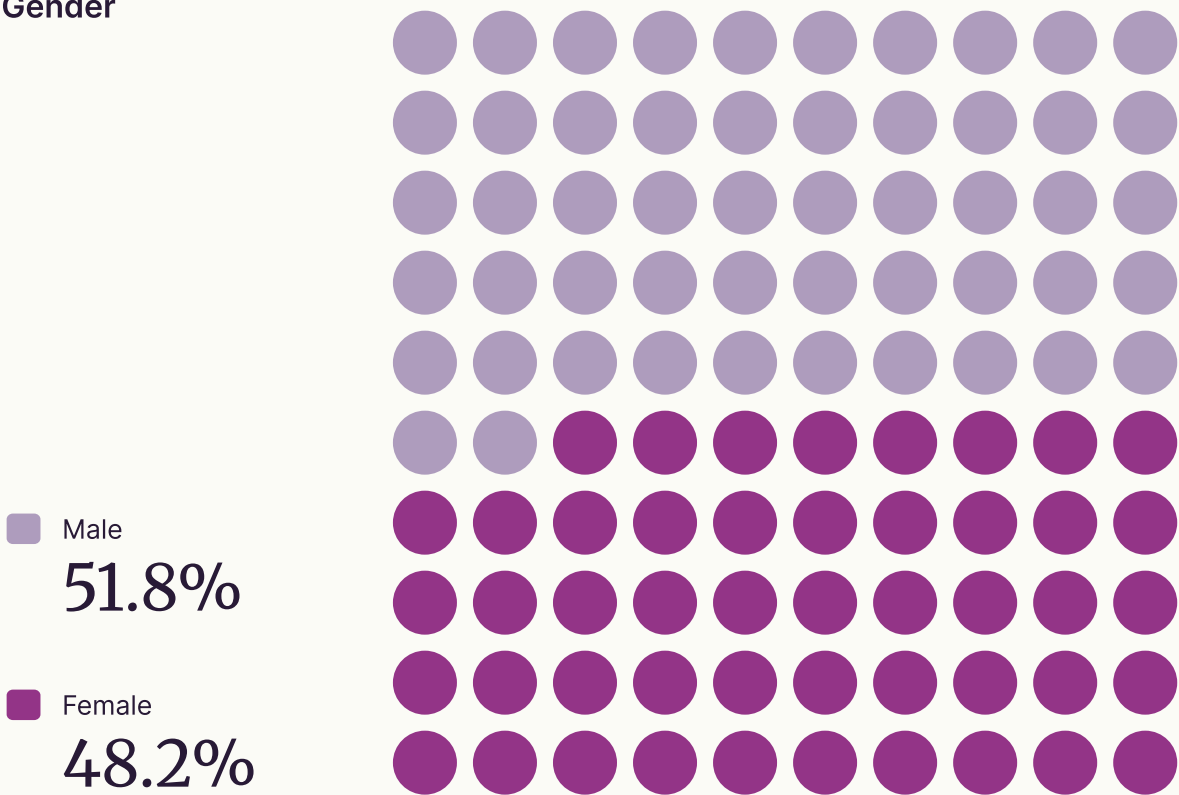
Workera surveyed 1,000 full-time, salaried professionals who work for an organization with 5,000 or more employees in the United States. The survey was conducted in July 2026 using Pollfish.

Year-over-year measurements were obtained by comparing July 2026 results with a similar survey conducted using Pollfish in March 2025. Workera surveyed 800 full-time, salaried professionals who work for an organization with 5,000 or more employees in the United States.

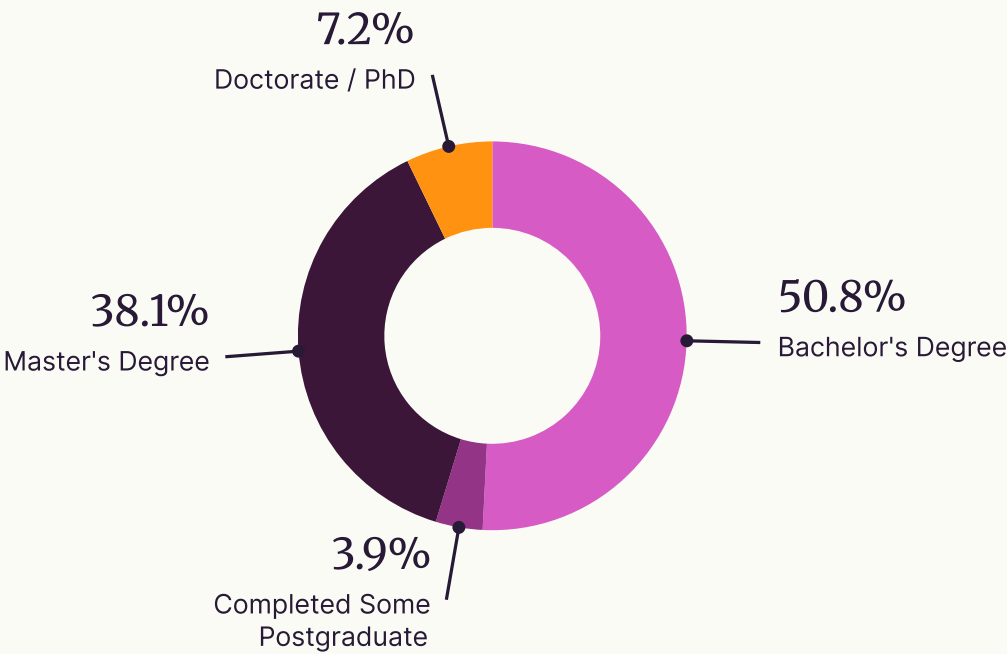
Age



Gender



Education Level



SECTION 1

The year of AI maturity

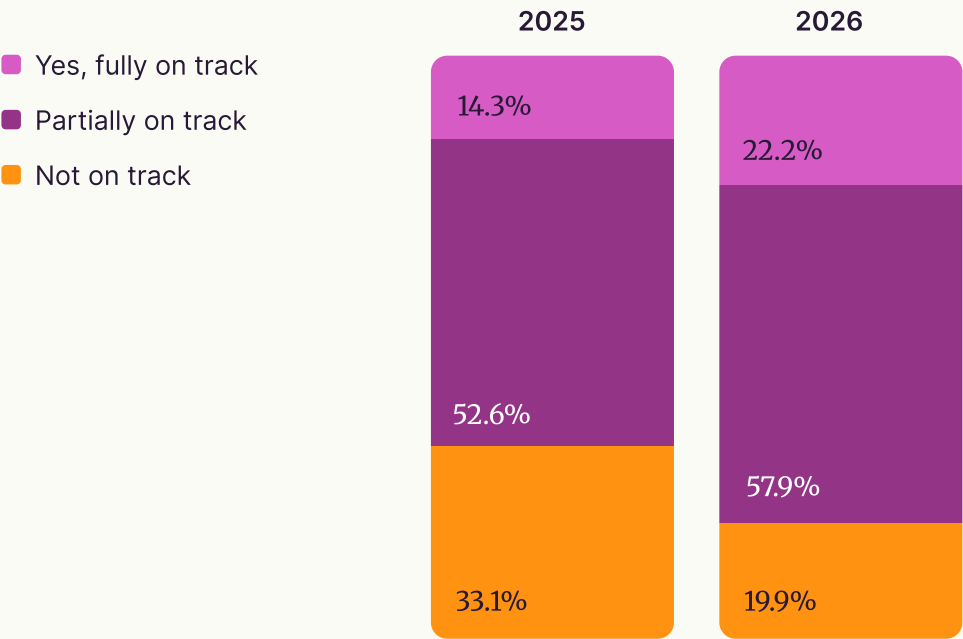
One year ago, fewer than one in five employees said their organization was leading its industry on AI skills readiness. Companies were still working to drive adoption of AI, and employees hadn’t yet made AI tools a part of their day-to-day workflows. Two years after the launch of ChatGPT, it was still early innings.

Today? We can safely say that AI has been widely adopted by American enterprises.

More than two-thirds of employees (67.8%) now use AI tools beyond ChatGPT at least a couple of days a week, up from 39.9%. Companies are trying to support further growth by offering AI-specific training to their employees. These organizations are headed in the right direction.

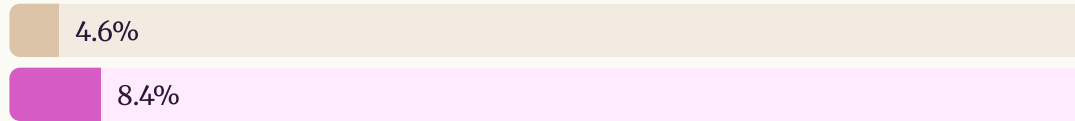
But as we’ll see, adoption doesn’t mean maturity. Now that they have their employees bought in to use AI, organizations need to give them tools and training to succeed with it.

Are employees at your organization currently on track to acquire the necessary skills for an AI-enabled future beyond tools like ChatGPT?

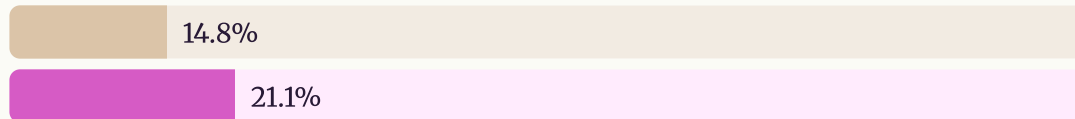


How would you rate your organization's AI skills readiness compared to others in your industry?

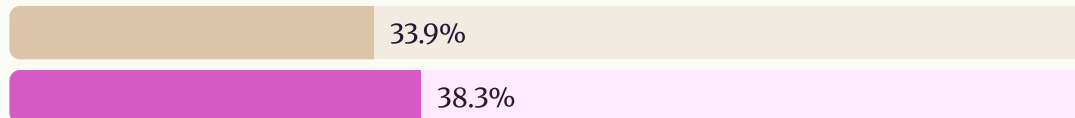
Leading by a lot



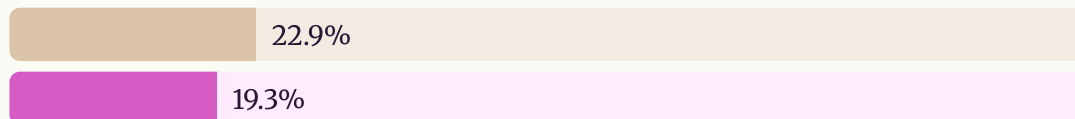
Leading by a little



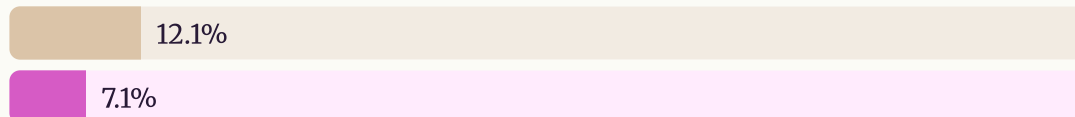
On par



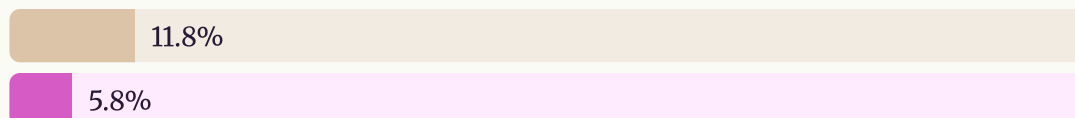
Lagging a little



Lagging a lot



Not sure

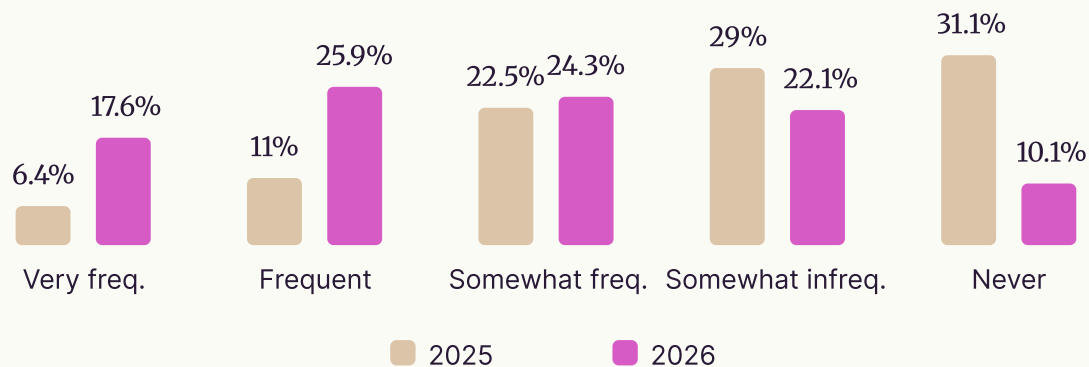


2025 2026

Last year, a clear majority of employees hadn't been offered any AI-specific training opportunities. That number flipped in 2026, as nearly six in 10 employees said they've been offered AI-specific training opportunities in the last 12 months.

Employees are no longer in the experimentation phase with AI; they're operationalizing it. The proportion of employees who say they use AI tools in their day-to-day tasks multiple times per week jumped from 39.9% in 2025 to 67.8% in 2026.

How frequently do you use AI tools (beyond ChatGPT) in your day-to-day tasks?



SECTION 2

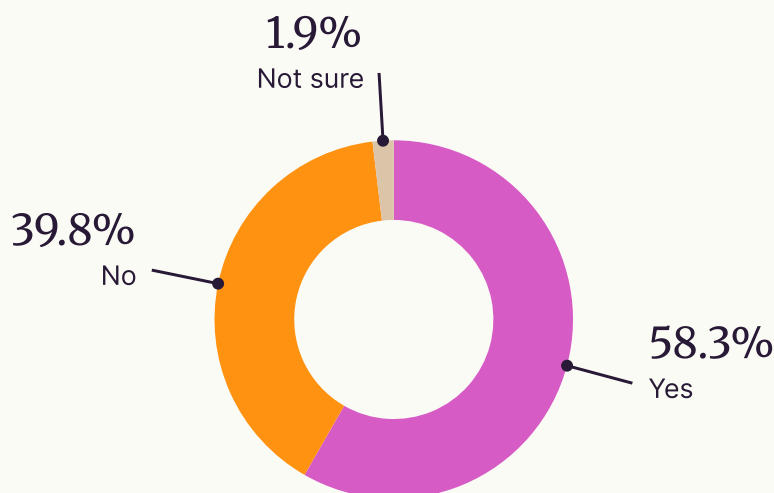
The new AI bottleneck

Companies don't just want employees who use AI, they want AI-native employees. But are they giving them what they need?

The data shows that employees aren't getting the time they need during working hours to develop new AI skills, nor are they getting relevant tools and materials that would help them build those skills. Companies aren't rewarding employees who are able to successfully advance their AI abilities; in most cases, AI skills are weighted equally with other skills, or aren't prioritized at all.

Things need to change for AI investments to pay off. Companies need to recognize that AI transformation won't happen on the margins; it will only be the result of a full overhaul of how people work. That means supporting top employees like elite athletes: providing them with everything they need to perform at the highest level.

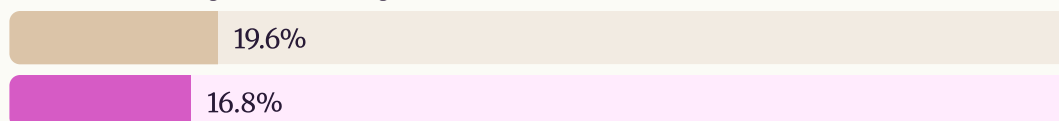
Have you personally been offered any AI-specific training opportunities by your organization in the past 12 months?



While organizations have made progress since our last survey, the barriers have not moved. Employees still cite no time allocated during work hours (56.4%) and a lack of relevant learning materials (42.5%) as the biggest obstacles to improving AI skills, and every barrier we tested sits within a few points of where it was in 2025. Companies have added training. They have not cleared the way for people to use it.

Which challenges have you faced when trying to improve your AI skills? (Select all that apply)

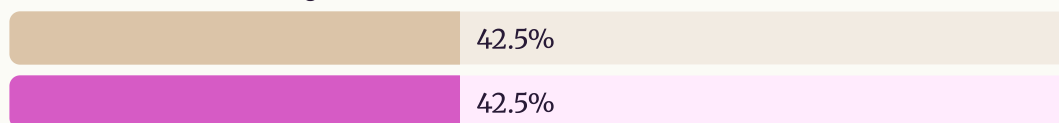
Insufficient budget for training



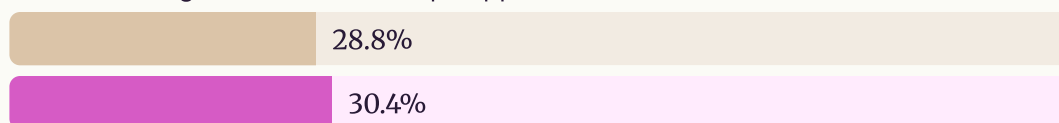
No time allocated during work hours



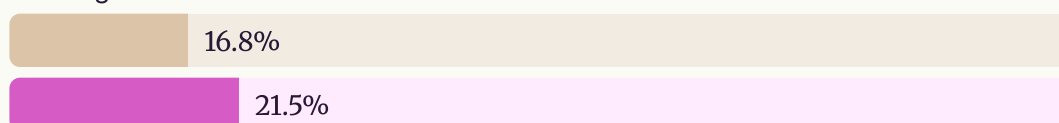
Lack of relevant learning materials



Limited management or leadership support



Trainings are too basic or outdated

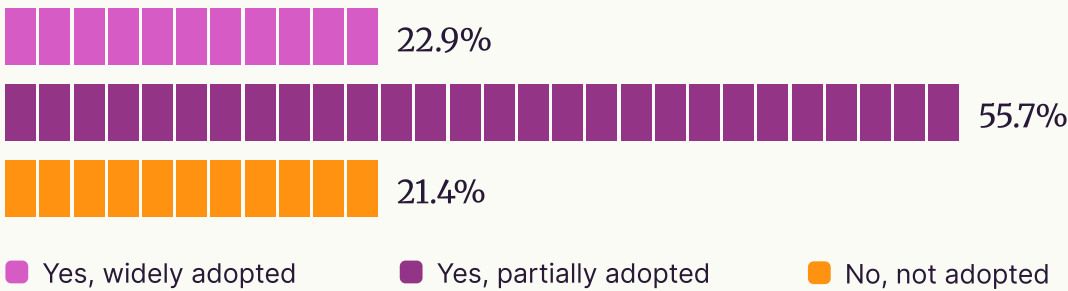


2025 2026

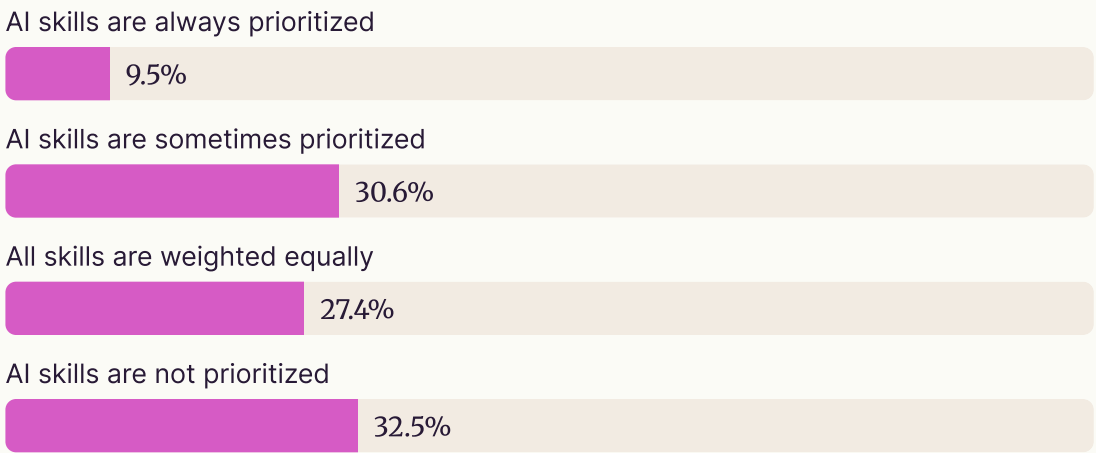
Tools alone don't change behavior. 78.6% of companies already use skills data to inform team and project assignments, but AI skills carry no extra weight in those decisions. Nearly 80% of companies use skills data to some extent to inform team or project assignments. However, AI skills aren't given priority when making those decisions. Employees need to know that the time they spend developing AI skills will pay off with opportunities for career advancement.

It's important to provide employees with the tools they need to be successful. But organizations also need to incentivize growth. Nearly 80% of companies use skills data to some extent to inform team or project assignments. However, AI skills rarely carry extra weight in those decisions. Only 9.5% of employees say AI skills are always prioritized, while nearly 60% say all skills are weighted equally or AI skills aren't prioritized at all. Employees need to know that the time they spend developing AI skills will pay off with opportunities for career advancement.

Does your organization use skills-based hiring or use skills data to inform team or project assignments?



Does your organization weigh AI skills differently from other skills in promotions or job assignments?

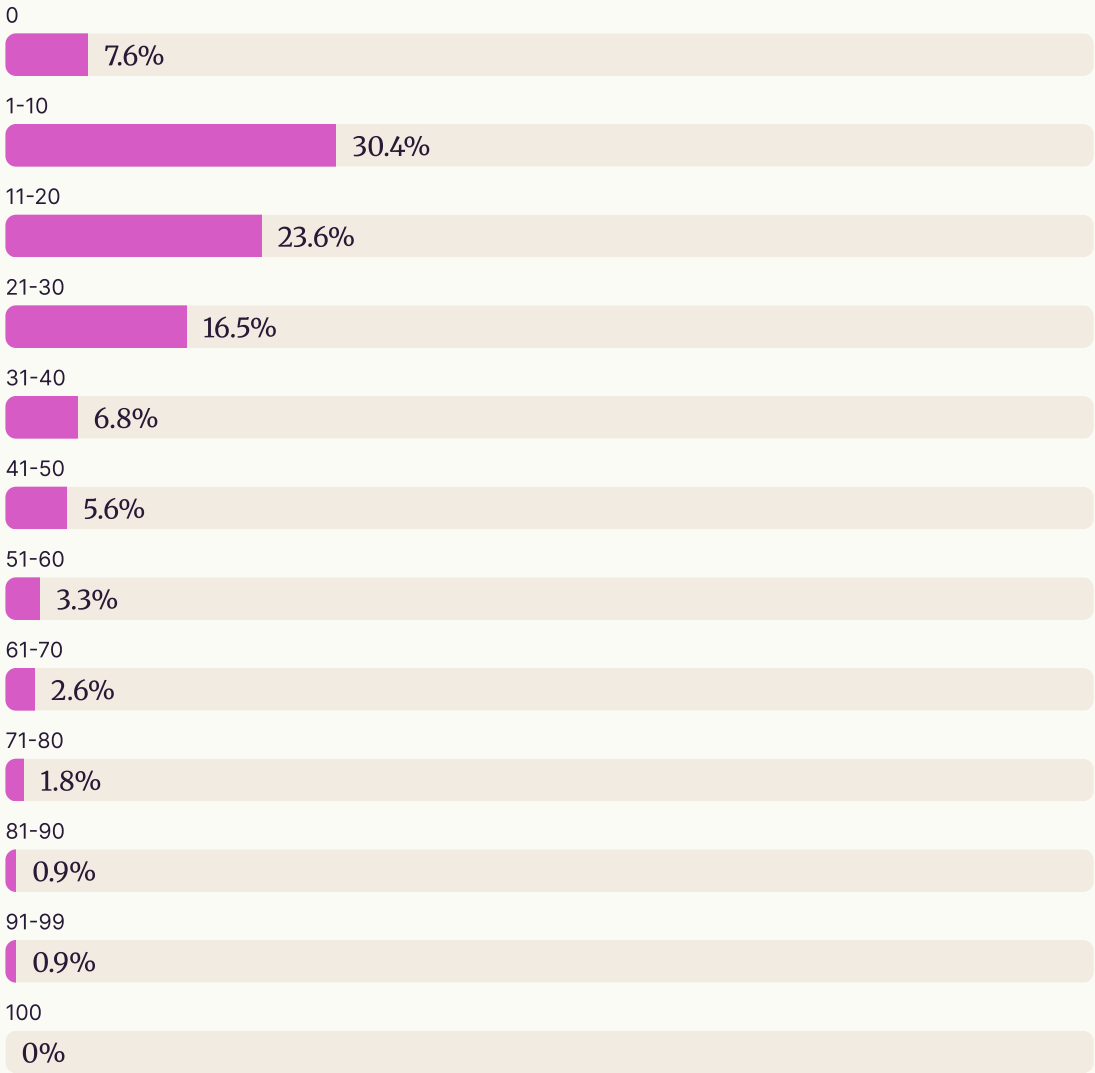


SECTION 3

Enhancing jobs, not replacing them

For years, the predictions have been apocalyptic: AI is coming for our jobs! Yet three years into the GenAI Era, employees are much less worried about job replacement. Most employees think they can do their job better than AI could, and only 9.5% of employees say that an AI agent could do more than half of their job effectively today.

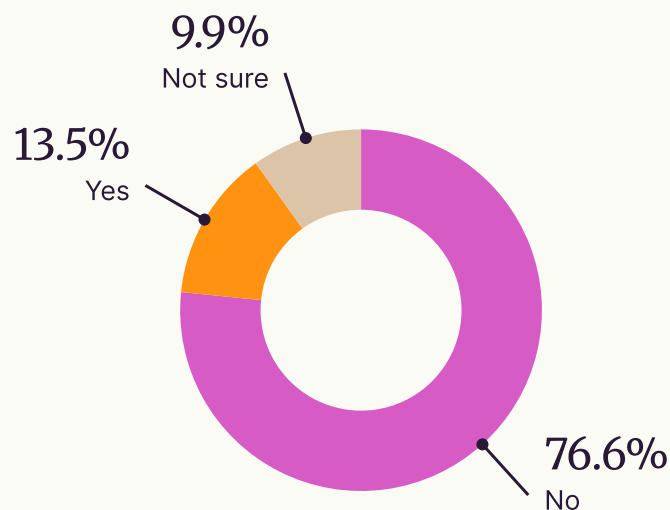
What percentage of your current job could an AI agent effectively do today?



As a result, human employees are relatively confident in their job security. Employees are not convinced AI will grow their organizations, but they are less pessimistic than they were. Nearly 30% think AI will lead their organization to increase headcount, up from 26.3% in 2025, while 42.3% still disagree.

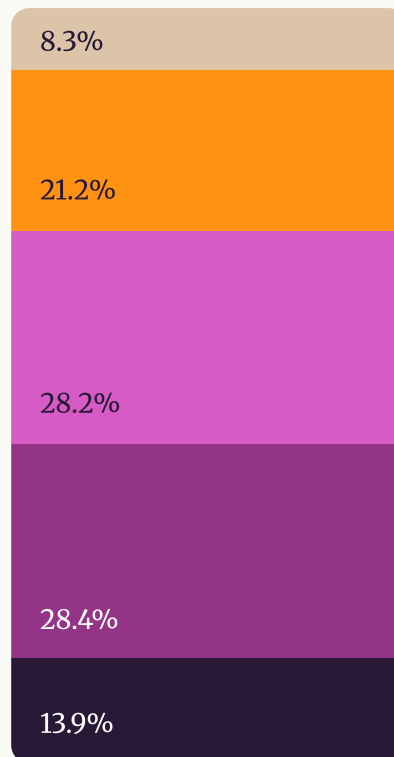
And while AI adoption has undoubtedly increased among enterprise employees, they still want to be evaluated by human managers. Just 7% of respondents say that AI can already evaluate skills better than humans, and 38.5% say AI will never surpass humans when it comes to assessing skills.

Do you believe AI could do your job better than you can?



How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement?**“AI will lead our company to increase, rather than reduce, overall headcount.”**

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

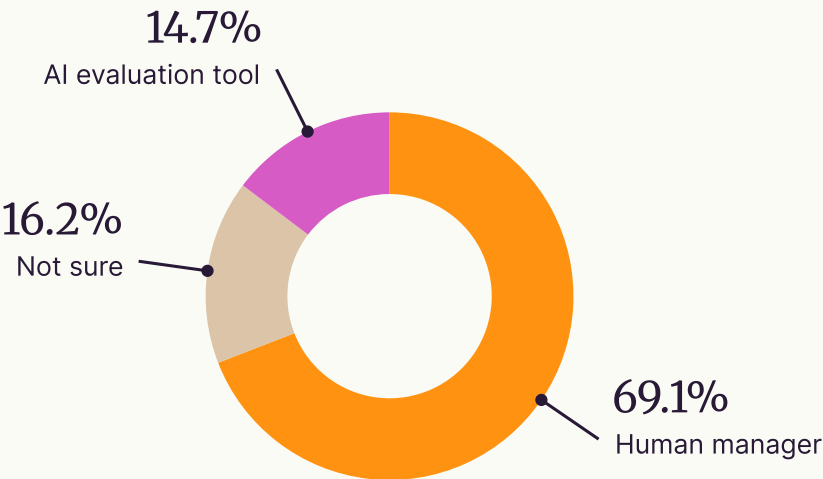


Employees would rather be judged by their managers than by an AI tool. Yet 42.5% of employees say they've been passed over or held back because someone misjudged what they could do. As more companies adopt AI skills assessment, employees may find that the process is more explainable and less biased. We'll continue tracking this question, new to this year's survey, in future editions.

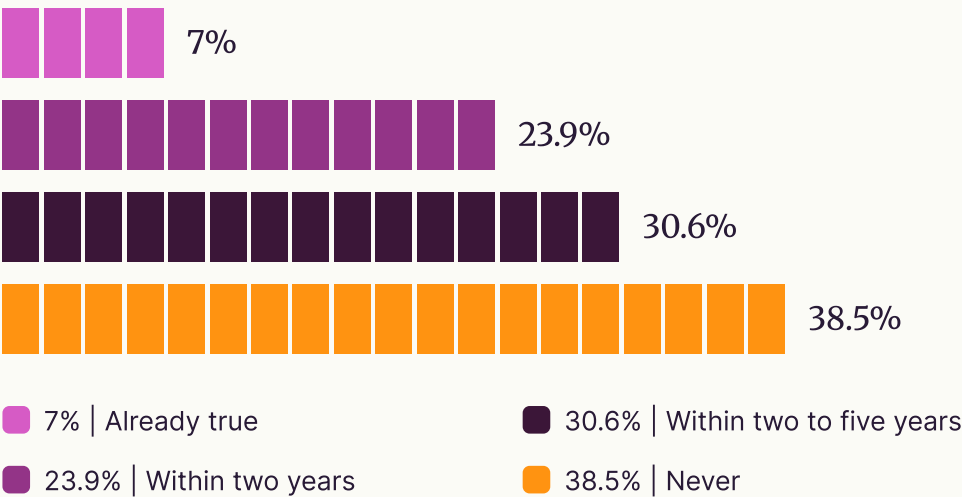
That trust gap is real, and it is the right place to start. But it sits next to a harder finding: 42.5% of employees have already been passed over, held back, or mis-rated because someone misjudged what they could do. Only 26.6% receive regular coaching from a manager or executive, and 21.5% receive none at all. Human judgment is not losing to AI today. It is being asked to operate without evidence. The question for talent leaders is not whether an algorithm should replace a manager's judgment. It is what that judgment is worth when it rests on a resume, an annual review, and no continuous signal at all. Employees would rather be judged by a human. They would also rather be judged accurately.

69.1% of employees say a human manager would judge their skills more fairly than an AI tool. Only 14.7% pick the tool. Any AI-driven assessment has to earn its way past that.

Who do you believe would judge your skills more fairly: a human manager or an AI tool evaluating your work?



How long will it take for AI to evaluate workplace skills more accurately than a human manager?



SECTION 4

Coaching and career development

Career development can be separated into two eras: Before AI and After AI. The survey results show that employees are still adjusting.

On the one hand, exactly half of employees believe they receive enough coaching in their job to help them advance in their career. 41.2% say it's easy to fit learning and development into their day. 42% say it isn't. Those results would indicate that employees generally feel good about their prospects for personal growth and career development.

But the underlying numbers point to a different situation entirely. Just over one-quarter (26.6%) of employees receive coaching from a manager or executive a couple of days a week or more; almost as many employees (21.5%) say they never receive individual coaching. At the same time, employees report spending minimal time each week on skill development: 84.3% of employees spend five hours or less per week on training.

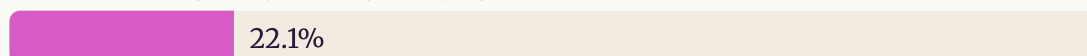
That lack of coaching could be one reason behind a painful statistic: 42.5% of employees say they've been passed over or held back because someone misjudged what they could do. If a manager never coaches you, how would they know what you're capable of?

How often do you receive individual coaching from a manager or executive at your company?

Frequently (most days per week)



Somewhat frequently (a couple days per week)



Somewhat infrequently (a couple days per month)



Never



How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

"I receive enough coaching in my job to help me advance in my career."

Strongly agree



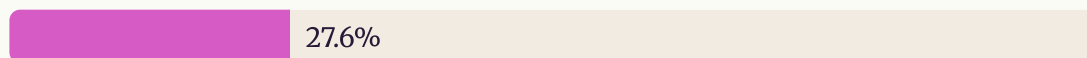
Somewhat agree



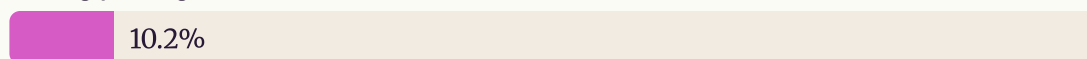
Neither agree nor disagree



Somewhat disagree



Strongly disagree



Employees split almost evenly on whether learning fits into their day: 41.2% say it does, 42% say it doesn't. The hours tell the real story. The vast majority of respondents say they spend five hours or less on skill development/training, and 12.8% say they don't spend any time on it at all. Employees aren't the constraint here. 56.4% say no time is allocated during work hours. Until employers change that, training hours won't move.

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

"It's easy to fit learning and development into my daily work schedule."

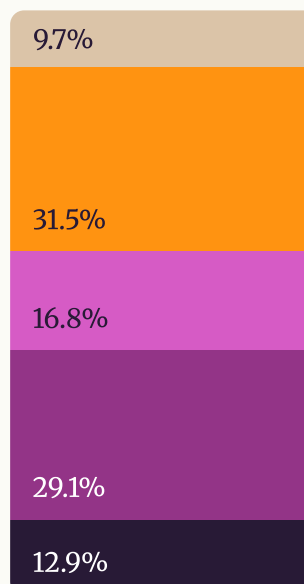
Strongly agree

Somewhat agree

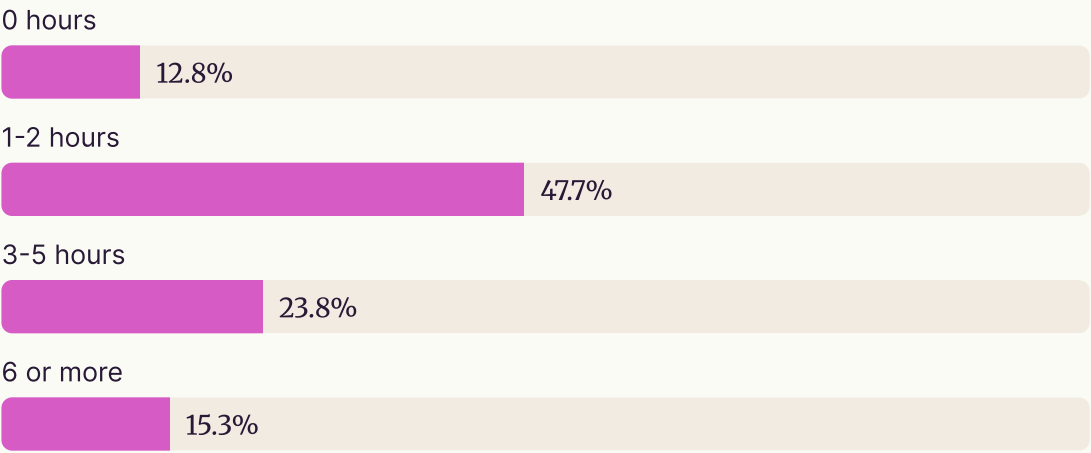
Neither agree nor disagree

Somewhat disagree

Strongly disagree

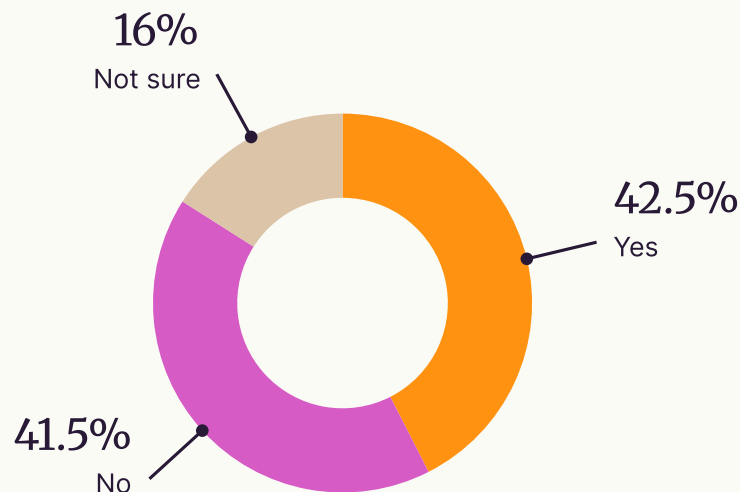


How many hours per week do you spend on skill development/training?



U.S. enterprises are not meritocracies: two out of every five employees say they've been passed over because someone misjudged what they could do.

Have you ever been passed over, held back, or mis-rated because someone misjudged what you could do?



Three respondents described what that looks like:

"I had a group interview scheduled for a promotion, and someone on the panel told me in advance that she did not believe I was qualified for the position or would do well in it. I was crushed."

"Managers sometimes make assumptions about aspirations or what an employee truly enjoys. I've been passed over for promotions because my manager didn't think I'd be interested. They lacked the people skills to have a conversation and build a team from within."

"I have been passed over for a bonus because my skills and value were underrated. My team is continually overlooked by others in our organization, and our contributions are not valued."

SECTION 5

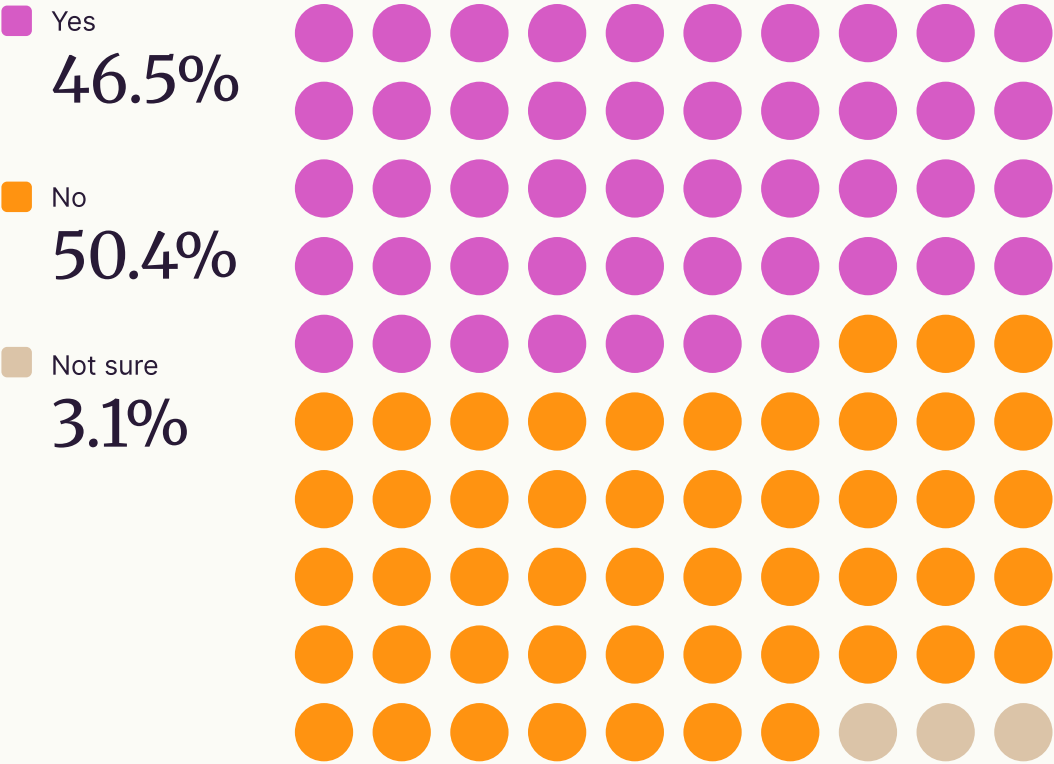
The next phase of AI growth

Companies want their employees to be AI experts. Employees want to sharpen their AI skills.

They are not aligned on how to do it.

Just under half of employees (46.5%) say they've used tools that weren't provided by their employer for skill development. Of those respondents, nearly three-quarters (74.6%) say they used AI tools like ChatGPT, Claude, and Gemini.

In the past six months, have you used tools/apps/websites that weren't provided by your employer for skill development?

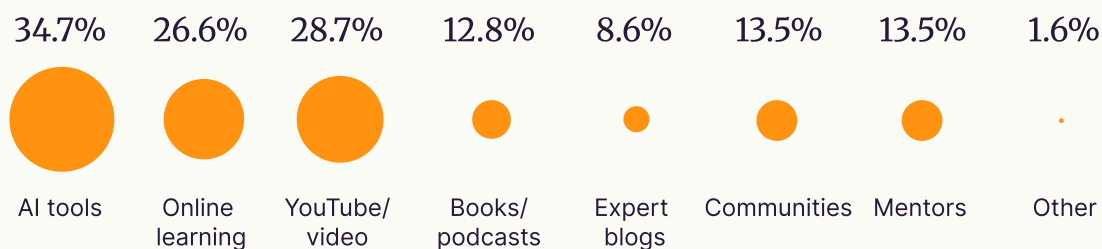


Building skills is one of the cheapest ways to grow. Most companies have no way to tell whether it's working. Nearly half of employees (46.5%) are building skills on tools their employer never provided. Whatever they're learning, their company can't see it.

New tools like Workera's Ambient assess skill development in the flow of work: 41.1% of employees say they'd opt into continuous skills measurement if they owned the data and controlled what's shared, another 31.2% are undecided. Ambient is built to that condition: it reads capability from work employees already do, and they decide what's shared. That could provide enterprises with a window into how employees are developing their skills, leading to better talent decisions as a result.

Which of the following tools/apps/websites did you use for skill development? Select all that apply.

Among the 46.5% who used tools not provided by their employer (n=465).



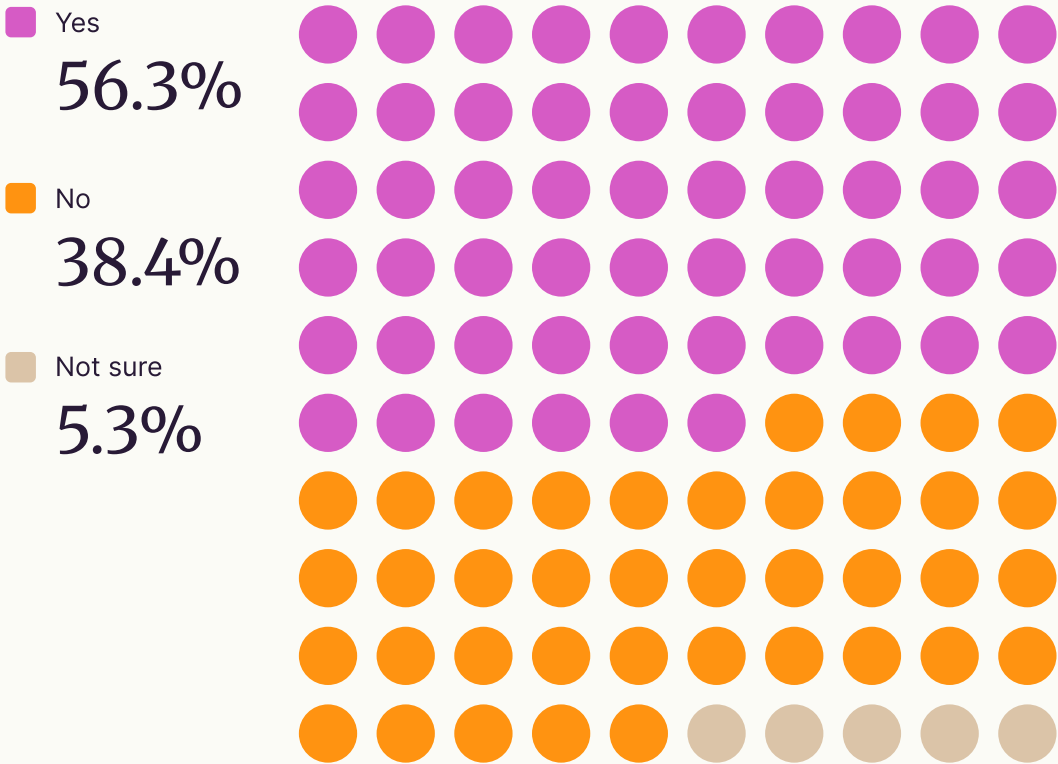
AI is now an essential aspect of how the American workforce learns and grows. A majority of survey respondents say they use AI to help learn new skills. Their answers point to the utility and precision of AI, making it a next-generation resource for learning and development.

"I use AI to research topics, summarize complex information, and get guidance on new tools and concepts. It helps me learn faster and apply new skills to my work."

"If there is a subject that I'm hazy on, I try to find a training document and use AI to help explain what the key elements are that I need to understand. From there, I focus on having knowledge from those areas, using AI where applicable to help translate what else I'm missing."

“I use the common AI platforms and do searches on how to improve and to determine the steps to get where I need to be. Sometimes I ask AI to develop a plan for me with references to materials I can use.”

Do you use AI to help learn new skills?



Employees are confident that they know their ability levels and what they need to work on. However, Workera’s proprietary platform data shows that this confidence might be misguided. According to Workera research, 7 out of 10 employees* misjudge their ability levels, either overestimating or underestimating what they’re capable of. Both mistakes can be costly, as employees either waste time studying skills they already know or fail to work on the skills they need most.

*Workera platform data. Based on 22,000+ domain assessments from several thousand Workera users through early 2024. Users self-estimated their ability level before completing a computerized adaptive test; self-estimates off by more than 30 points on Workera's 300-point scale were counted as inaccurate (47% underestimated, 24% overestimated).

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement?**"I understand my skill levels and where I need to improve."**

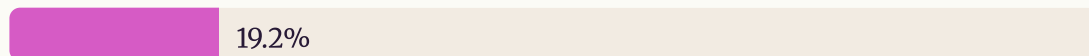
Strongly agree



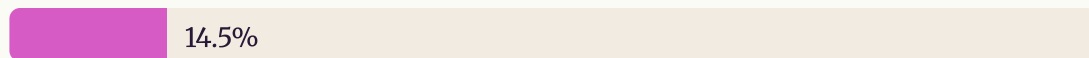
Somewhat agree



Neither agree nor disagree



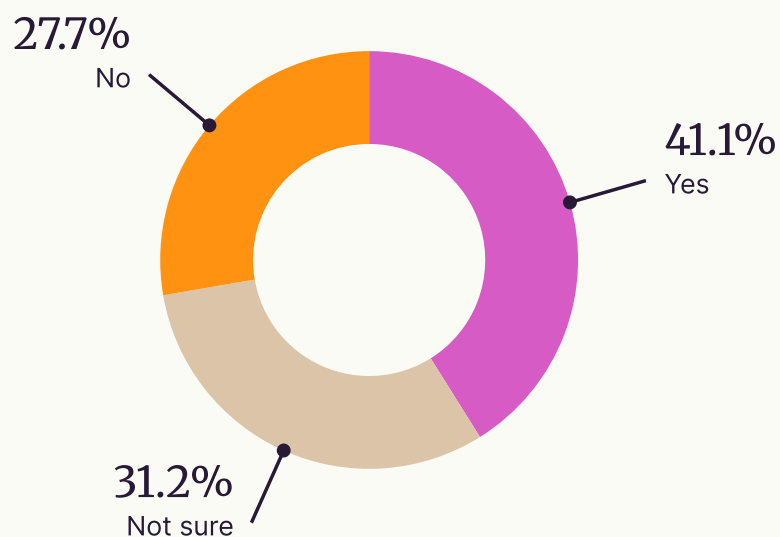
Somewhat disagree



Strongly disagree



41.1% would opt into continuous measurement if they controlled the data. Another 31.2% are undecided. That leaves 72.3% who aren't opposed, and one condition that decides which way they go.

Would you opt into continuous skills measurement if you owned the data?

The future of skills in the AI era

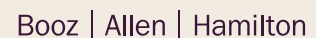
Adoption is nearly universal. Maturity isn't. That gap is the whole story of this year's data.

rEmployees and their leaders know that they need to move forward, but they haven't figured out how to do it.

Real AI transformation can only be achieved by going all in. Employees need real-time information on their capabilities and guidance on how to make progress. Leaders need detailed insights on employee skills, so they can make sharp decisions on everything from hiring to project staffing to compensation.

Ambient, a new AI-native skills assessment tool from Workera, makes it possible for enterprises to go all in on AI talent development. Ambient reads capability from work people already do, and employees control what's shared. It turns everyday work into verified, decision-grade evidence of skill, and gives employees feedback while the work is still in front of them.

Trusted by leaders



Want to learn more? Visit workera.ai to request a demo.

