The Path to AI Fluency: AI Works for America

February 2026

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Methodology

Google's AI Works for America poll was conducted by Ipsos using the probability-based KnowledgePanel®. This poll is based on two nationally representative probability samples of employed/working adults aged 18 to 75

The Employee sample is based on a nationally representative probability sample of 4,464 employed adults, which was fielded December 5–21, 2025.

The Manager sample is based on a nationally representative probability sample of 1,511 hiring managers, which was fielded December 10–25, 2025.

Both samples were weighted to adjust for gender by age, race and ethnicity, census region by metropolitan status, education, household income, and language dominance.

Quotes featured in this report were sourced from the study's qualitative phases: online ideation sessions with AI Users and Non-Users, and 1:1 in-depth interviews with managers and company leaders. The quotes have been edited for length and clarity.

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Executive summary

40%
of Employees are using AI
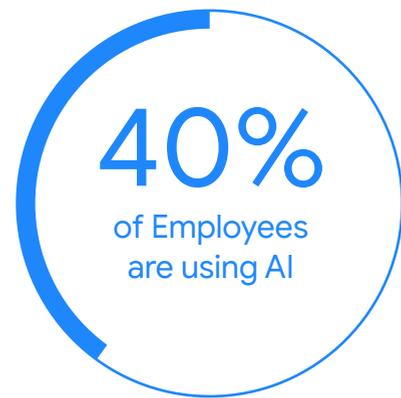
Employees need support seeing the direct application of AI to their job tasks. Usage plays a key role in making AI's benefits clear to employees and mitigating concerns. Encouraging every employee to integrate AI into their daily work is the essential first step toward achieving AI fluency.

5%
of Employees are AI Fluent
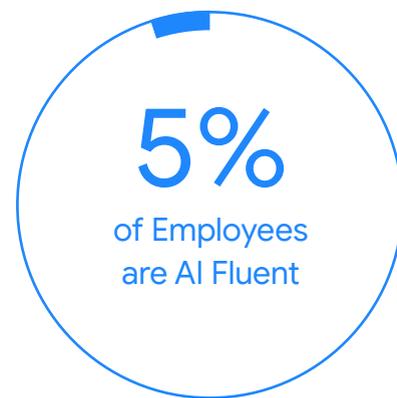
The path from usage to fluency is what unlocks transformational benefits for organizations and individuals. AI Fluent Employees see much higher productivity gains, tangible career benefits—such as greater job security and career advancement—and save eight hours a week (median).

70%
of Managers believe AI is important for success

Managers widely recognize the importance of AI for organizational success and place a premium on AI skills in the job market. Managers who are already using AI are especially likely to see the urgency around AI adoption at work.

14%
of Employees have been offered AI training

Only 37% of Employees say they have received organizational guidance around AI use and even fewer (14%) have been offered training. It's no wonder that few workers feel confident they are getting the most out of AI at work.

**Fostering a learning culture is a multiplier for AI adoption and fluency**

To advance AI adoption, organizations need to provide clear guidance, AI tools and training, and foster a culture of exploration powered by peer networks and support. These strategies prepare organizations to thrive in an AI-enabled economy.

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01

The reality of AI at work

4 in 10 American Employees now use AI at work
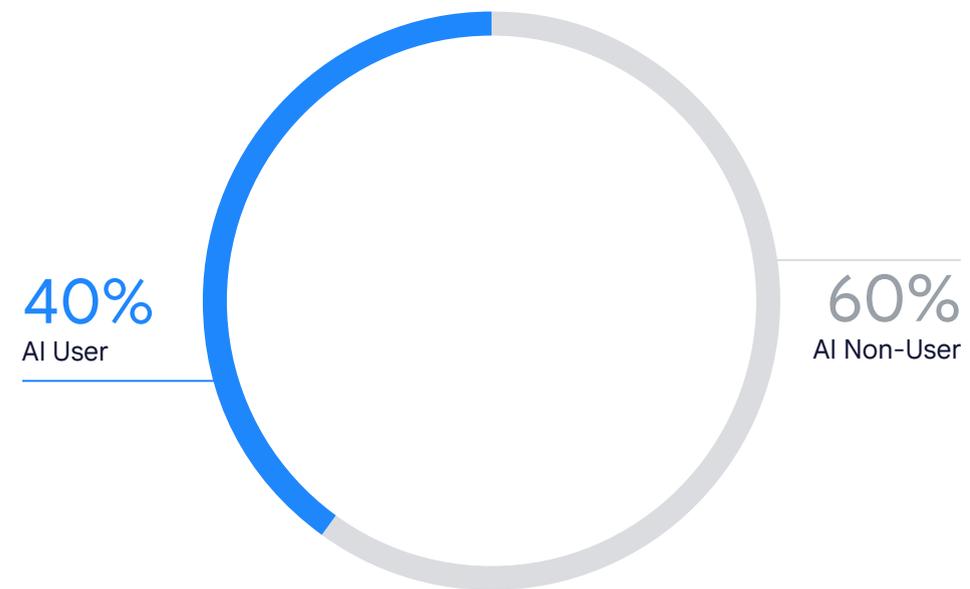
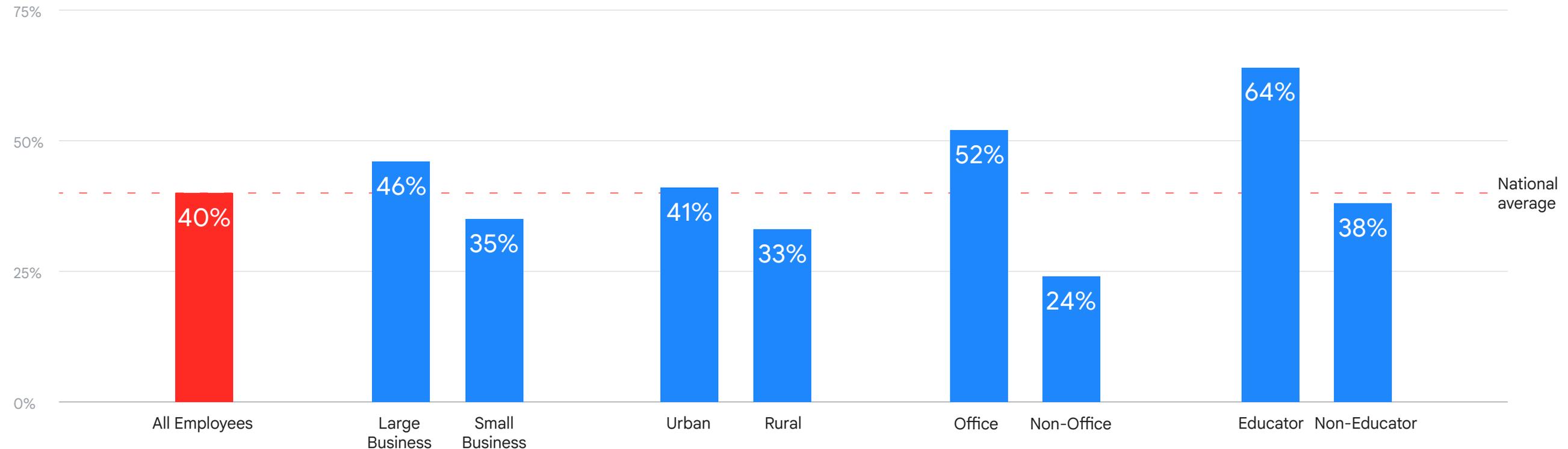**40%**
AI User

60%
AI Non-User

EAIADOPT2. Thinking of the tasks you do in your job, how much of your work is done with AI?; Base = Employees (n = 4,464).

AI adoption is led by Office-Based Employees, Educators, and Employees in Large Organizations
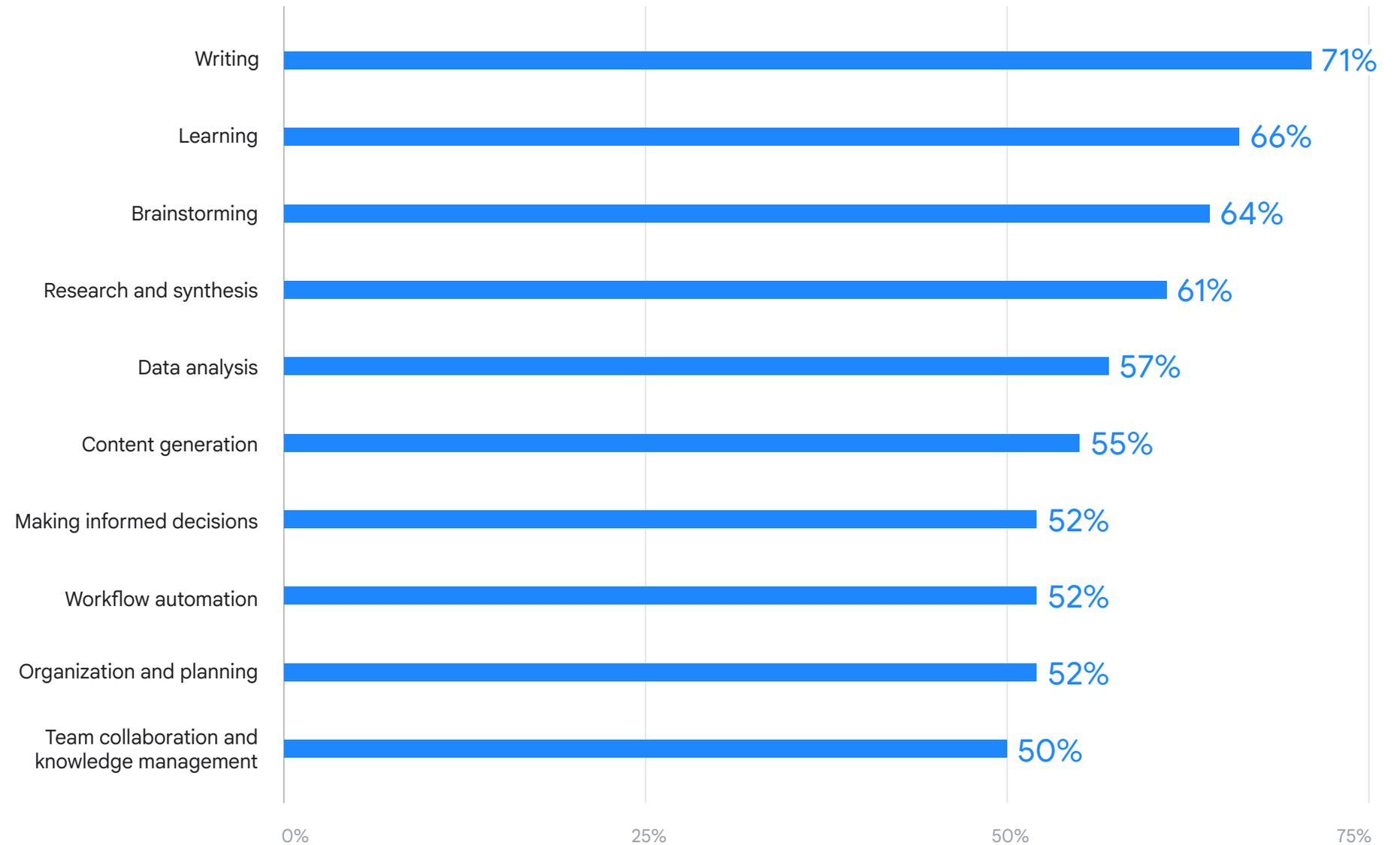
AI use by segment

EAIADOPT2. Thinking of the tasks you do in your job, how much of your work is done with AI?; Base = Employees (n = 4,464); Educator (n = 355); Non-Educator (n = 4,102); Small Business (n = 2,392); Large Business (n = 2,056); Urban (n=3,705); Rural (n = 747); Office setting (n = 2,589); Non-Office setting (n = 1,856). Note: 'Small Business' = under 500 employees. An 'Educator' is an employee who works as a primary school educator, a secondary school educator or a university or vocational school educator.

Employees primarily use AI to augment core skills but few are confident they are getting the most out of it

18%

of Employees are **extremely or very confident they are getting the most from AI** (an additional 26% are somewhat confident)
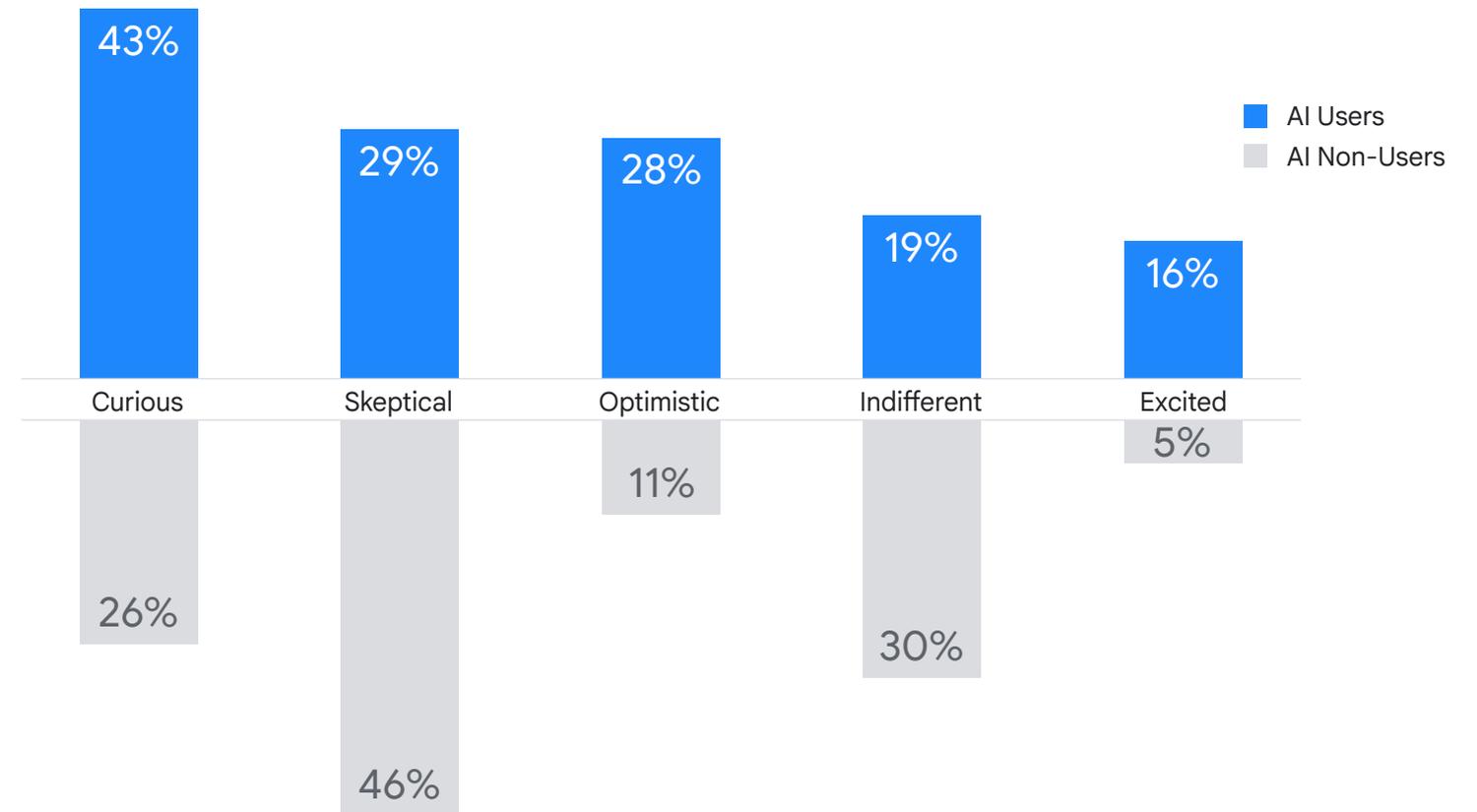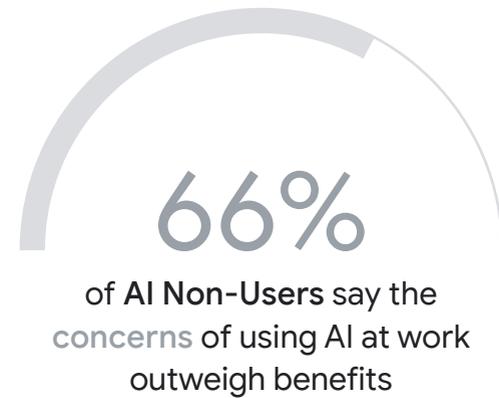
AI applications used in a typical week

Application	%
Writing	71%
Learning	66%
Brainstorming	64%
Research and synthesis	61%
Data analysis	57%
Content generation	55%
Making informed decisions	52%
Workflow automation	52%
Organization and planning	52%
Team collaboration and knowledge management	50%

EUSECASE1_Sum1. During a typical work week, how frequently are you using AI to assist you in these areas? Your best guess is fine.; Base = Employee AI Users (n = 1,803).
EMOST. How confident are you that you are getting the most from AI to assist you in completing your job tasks?; Base = Employee AI Users (n = 1,803).

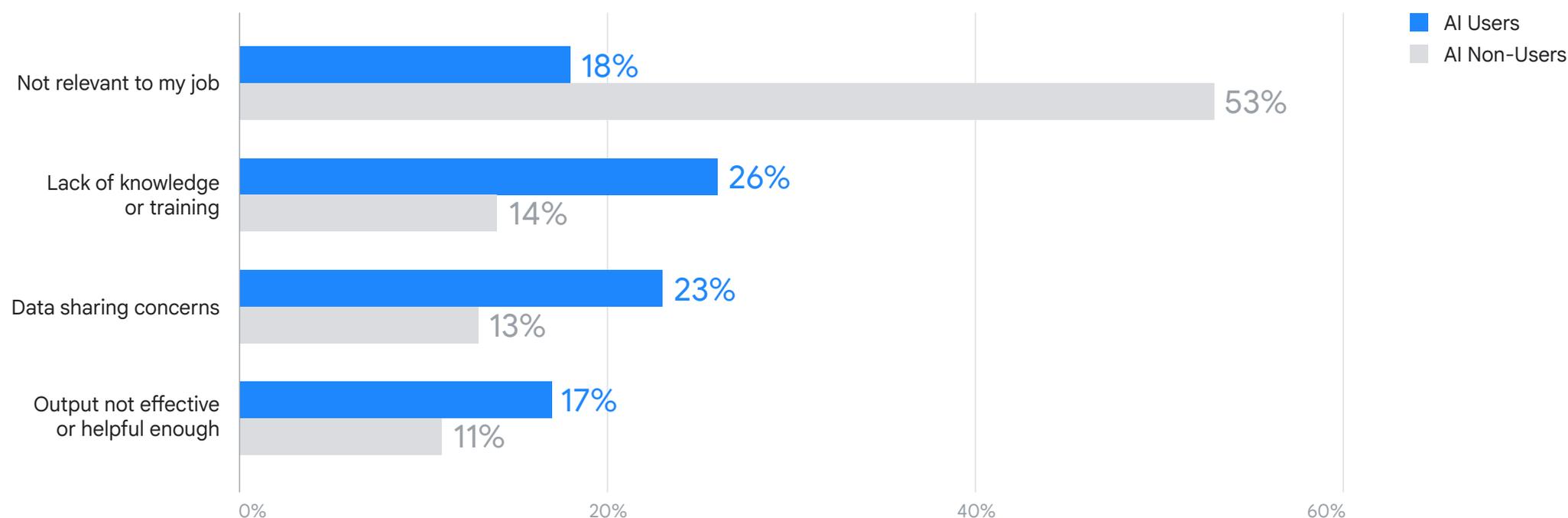# The AI adoption divide: Employee Users focus on the benefits of AI while Non-Users focus on the risks

Employees' feelings about AI in the workplace

63%
of **AI Users** say the **benefits** of using AI at work outweigh concerns

66%
of **AI Non-Users** say the **concerns** of using AI at work outweigh benefits

■ AI Users
■ AI Non-Users

	Curious	Skeptical	Optimistic	Indifferent	Excited
AI Users	43%	29%	28%	19%	16%
AI Non-Users	26%	46%	11%	30%	5%
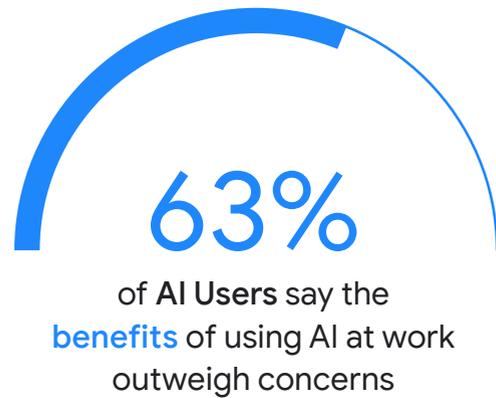
ECOSTBENEFIT. Which of the following comes closest to your view?; Base = Employees (n = 4,464). Note: 2% of AI Users (n = 1,803) and 4% of AI Non-Users (n = 2,661) skipped this question.
EPERCEPTION. Which of the following best describe how you feel about AI usage in the workplace? Please select up to 3.; Base = Employees (n = 4,464); AI Users (n = 1,803); AI Non-Users (n = 2,661).

Although they see little relevance to their work today, nearly half of Employee Non-Users expect to adopt AI eventually

Employees' top barriers to starting or expanding AI use at work

- **AI Users**
- **AI Non-Users**

Barrier	AI Users	AI Non-Users
Not relevant to my job	18%	53%
Lack of knowledge or training	26%	14%
Data sharing concerns	23%	13%
Output not effective or helpful enough	17%	11%

42%

of AI Non-Users agree that **AI usage is inevitable**, and workers must adapt to stay relevant

"Using AI is like using a computer used to be. It's inevitable. It's unavoidable, so you have to figure it out."
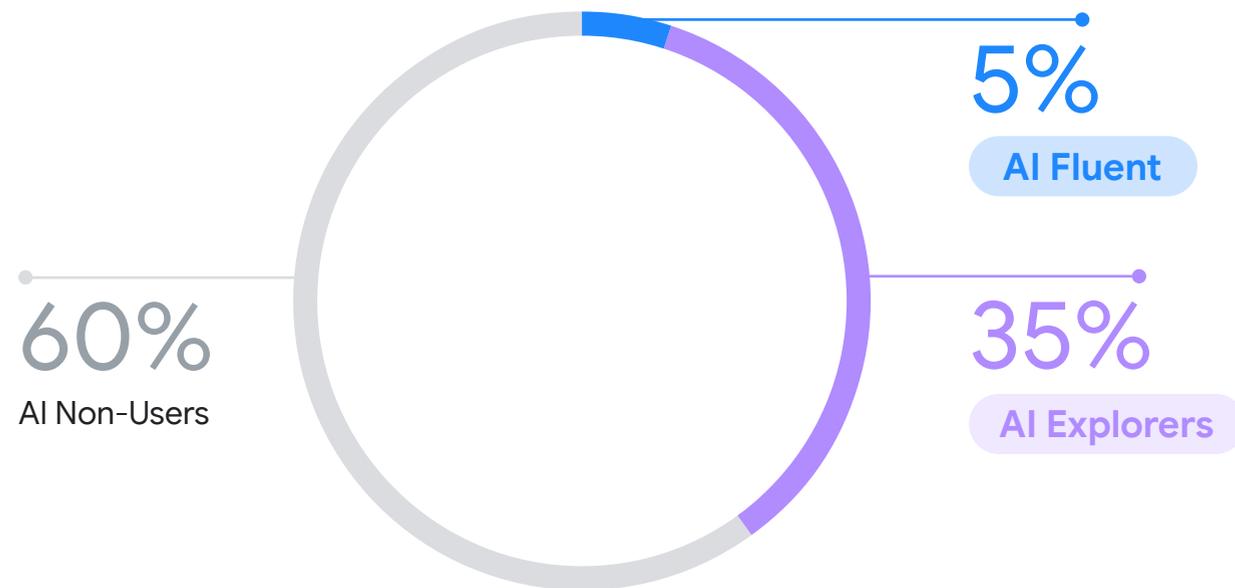
Small Business Owner

EETHICS_2. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements on AI usage in the workplace? AI usage is inevitable, and workers must adapt to stay relevant.; Base = AI Non-Users (n = 2,495).
EDIMPACT2A/B. What has prevented you from [expanding your use of AI applications/using AI applications] in completing your job tasks? Select all that apply.; Base = AI Users (n = 1,803); AI Non-Users (n = 2,661).

AI fluency vs.
AI exploration

While 40% of Employees use AI, only 5% are leveraging the technology to transform their ways of working

5%
AI Fluent

60%
AI Non-Users

35%
AI Explorers

EAIADOPT2. Thinking of the tasks you do in your job, how much of your work is done with AI?; Base = Employees (n = 4,464).

Who are the AI Fluent and AI Explorers?

AI Fluent

5%
of U.S. Employees

AI Fluent are at the forefront of adoption, poised to catalyze transformation across their organizations.

Many AI Fluents have redesigned or reorganized significant portions of their work processes using AI.

Others have made more minor, incremental adjustments using AI but use AI at least weekly across eight or more use cases (e.g., writing, learning, data analysis, etc.).

AI Explorers

35%
of U.S. Employees

AI Explorers are currently testing AI's potential in pockets of their work, with room to deepen adoption.

AI Explorers leverage AI typically on an ad-hoc basis or for standalone tasks.

AI Explorers are applying AI across fewer than eight use cases.

EAIADOPT2. Thinking of the tasks you do in your job, how much of your work is done with AI?; Base = Employees (n = 4,464).
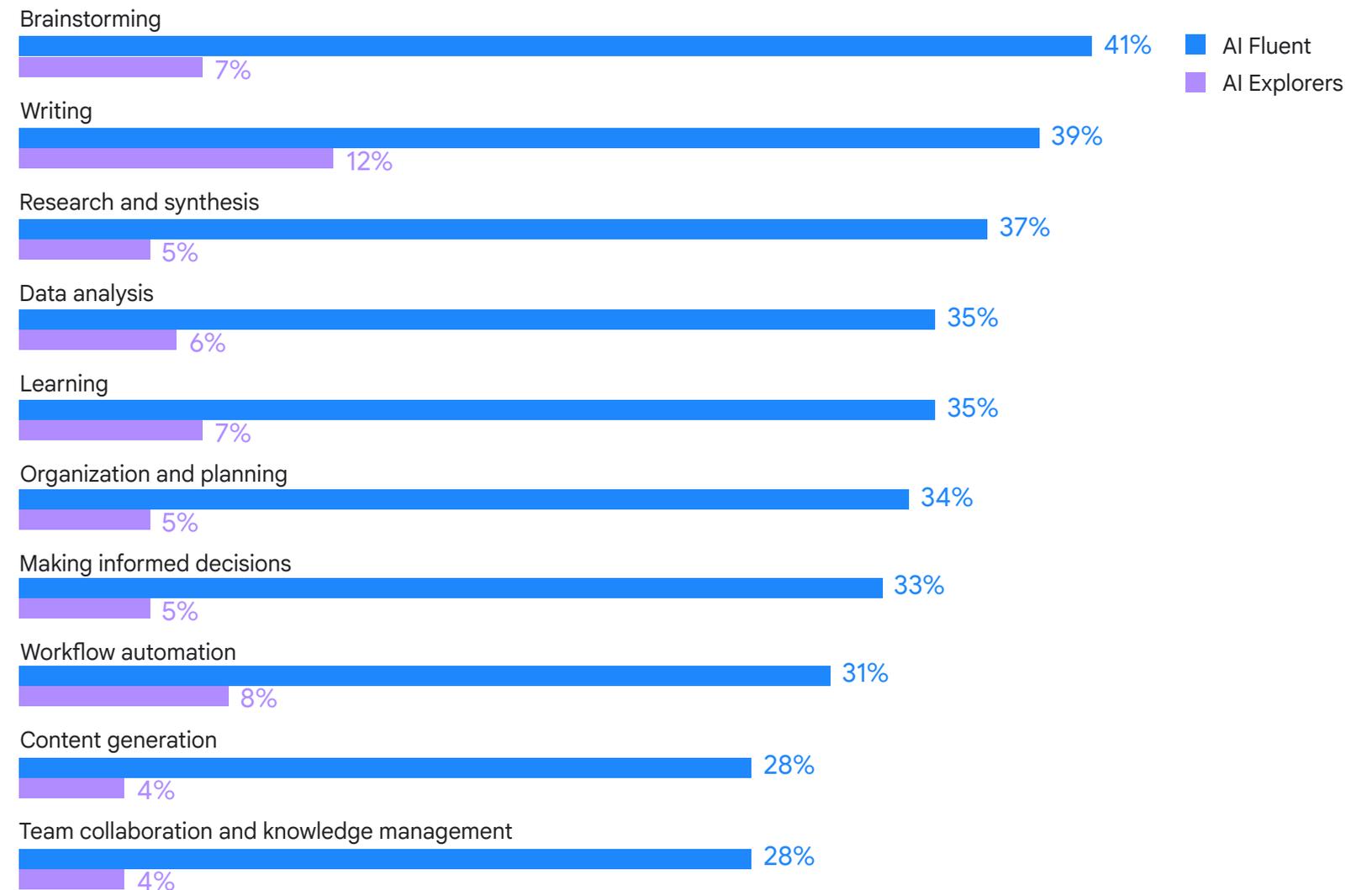
AI Fluent Users have successfully transitioned from AI as a tool they pick up occasionally to AI as a constant collaborator

5x

On average, AI Fluent are more than 5x more likely than AI Explorers **to use AI daily across most use cases.**

While both groups use AI for writing and brainstorming, Fluent users are far more likely to apply AI to complex, cognitive tasks, like workflow automation.

AI applications used in a day

Brainstorming — AI Fluent 41%, AI Explorers 7%
Writing — AI Fluent 39%, AI Explorers 12%
Research and synthesis — AI Fluent 37%, AI Explorers 5%
Data analysis — AI Fluent 35%, AI Explorers 6%
Learning — AI Fluent 35%, AI Explorers 7%
Organization and planning — AI Fluent 34%, AI Explorers 5%
Making informed decisions — AI Fluent 33%, AI Explorers 5%
Workflow automation — AI Fluent 31%, AI Explorers 8%
Content generation — AI Fluent 28%, AI Explorers 4%
Team collaboration and knowledge management — AI Fluent 28%, AI Explorers 4%

Legend: AI Fluent, AI Explorers

EUSECASE1_Sum3. During a typical work week, how frequently are you using AI to assist you in these areas? Your best guess is fine. (About one per day/Multiple times a day); Base = AI Fluent (n = 215); AI Explorers (n = 1,588).

AI fluency elevates productivity and on-the-job confidence

AI makes them **more productive** in completing tasks

91%
AI Fluent

53%
AI Explorers
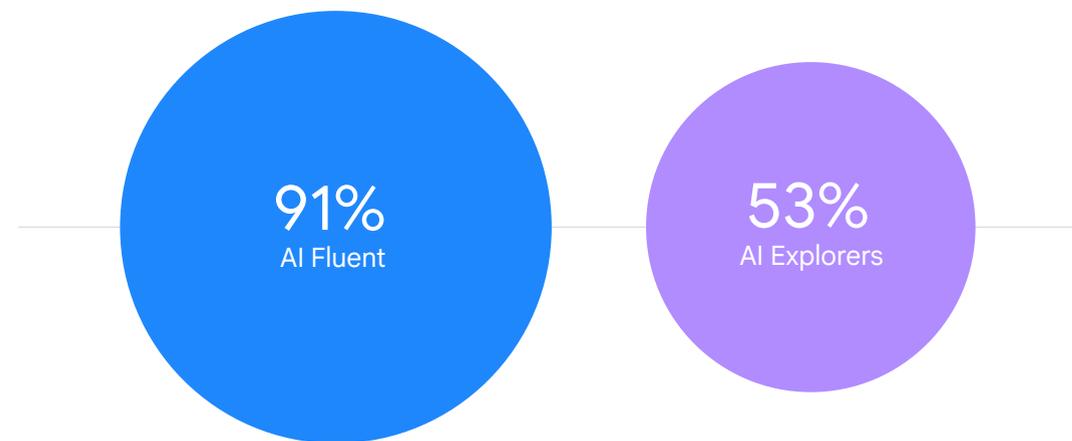
AI **improves confidence** in ability to perform job tasks

81%
AI Fluent

42%
AI Explorers
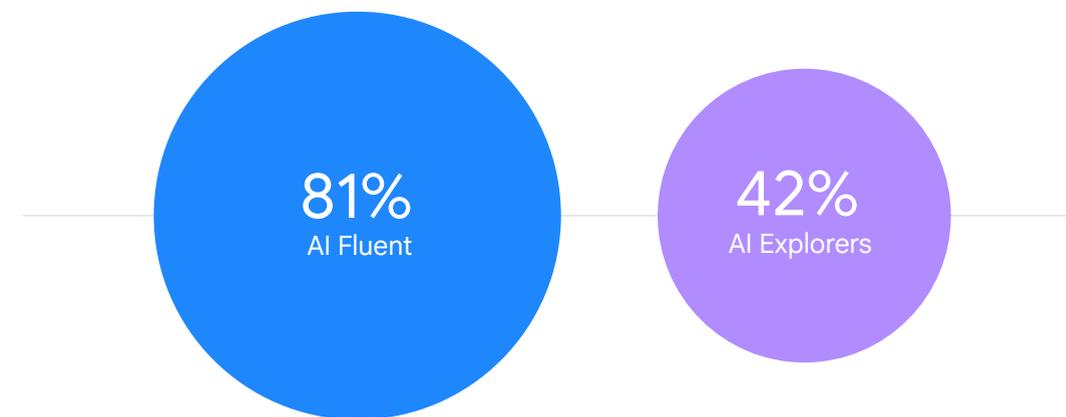
"I use it daily to improve my workflow. Colleagues are surprised when I explain how I use it because they were unaware it could be used with writing emails, creating scripts, summarizing product information, creating custom marketing assets for clients, and for presentation creation/copy."
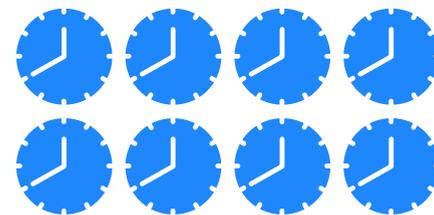
AI User

AI Fluent Employees are unlocking an extra 50+ hours of productivity per year

Approximately half of Employees using AI say it **helps them work faster**:

The key differentiator is the **hours saved per week (median)**:

51%

of **AI Fluent** Employees agree AI helps them work faster

8 hours saved by **AI Fluent** Employees

45%

of **AI Explorer** Employees agree AI helps them work faster
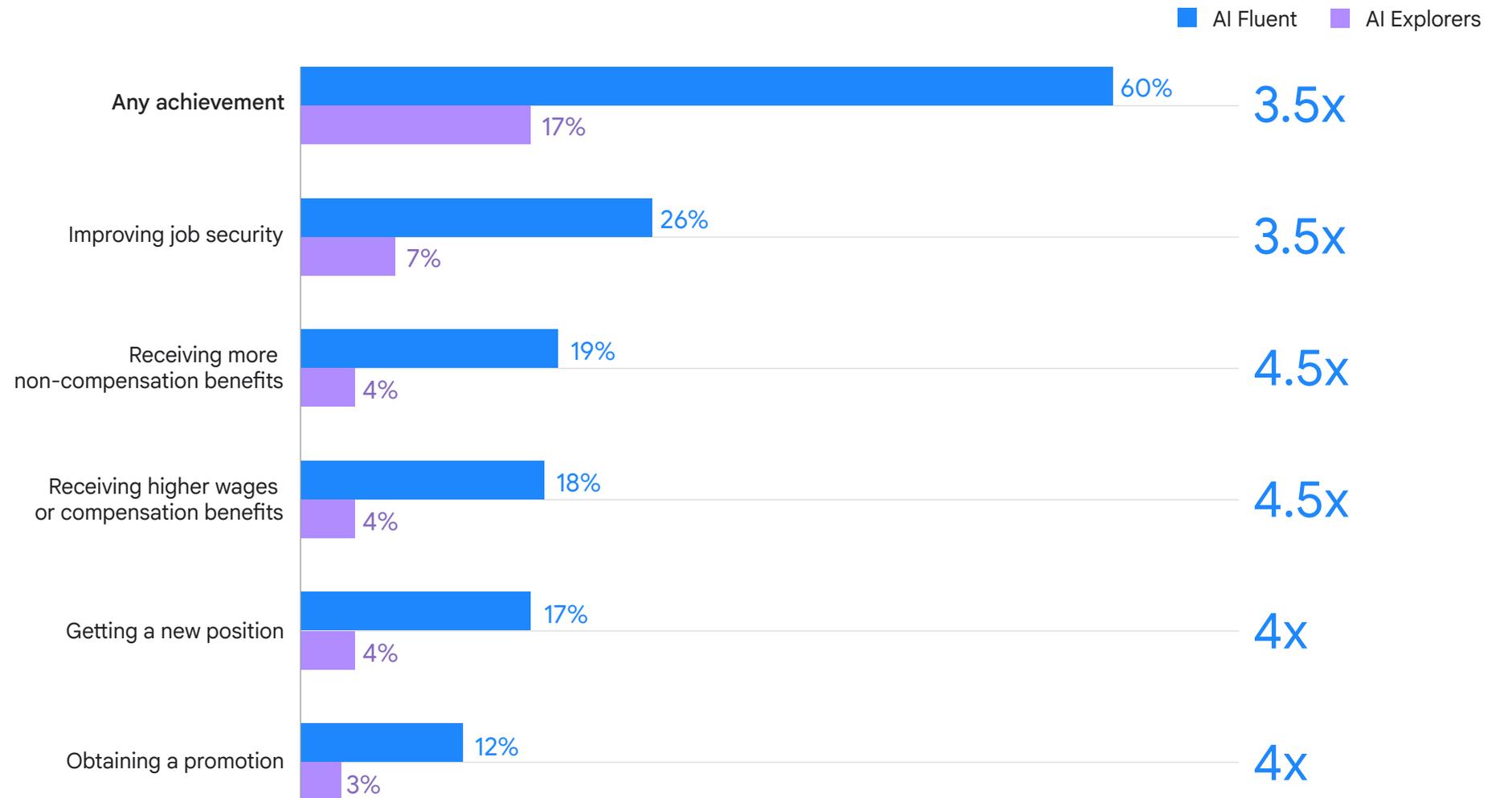
3 hours saved by **AI Explorer** Employees

EDIMPACT1. What do you think the primary benefits of using AI applications in the workplace have been for you? Select all that apply.; Base = AI Fluent (n = 215); AI Explorers (n = 1,588).
ETIMESAVED. If you had to guess, how many hours on average does AI save you each week on tasks you would otherwise have to do?; Base = AI Fluent (n = 215); AI Explorers (n = 1,588).

AI Fluent Employees are turning AI skills into career wins

Results of AI use at work

■ AI Fluent ■ AI Explorers

	AI Fluent	AI Explorers	
Any achievement	60%	17%	3.5x
Improving job security	26%	7%	3.5x
Receiving more non-compensation benefits	19%	4%	4.5x
Receiving higher wages or compensation benefits	18%	4%	4.5x
Getting a new position	17%	4%	4x
Obtaining a promotion	12%	3%	4x

EDIMPACT3. In your opinion, has using AI applications to assist in completing your job tasks resulted in any of the following achievements? Select all that apply.;
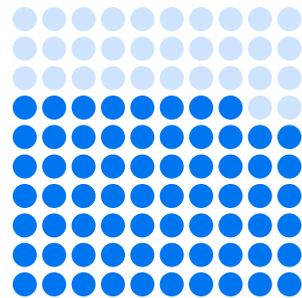Base = AI Fluent (n = 215); AI Explorers (n = 1,588).

03

Hiring mandate and organizational urgency

Managers who use AI are most certain that these skills are critical for success—both for employees today and organizations tomorrow
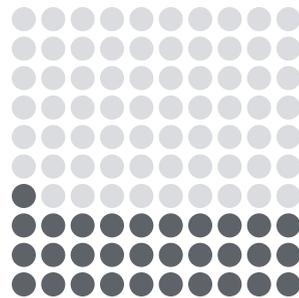
54%

of Managers

agree AI skills are **important in the current job market**

68%
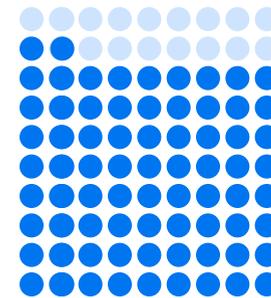of Managers who are **using AI**
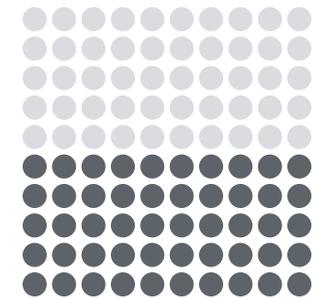
31%
of Managers who are **NOT using AI**

70%

of Managers

agree that AI skills are **important for their organization's success** in the next five years

82%
of Managers who are **using AI**

50%
of Managers who are **NOT using AI**

MDIMPACT5. In your opinion, how important would it be for your team members to know how to apply AI at work in order to succeed in the current job market? (Critically important/Very important/Somewhat important);
Base = Managers (n=1,511); Manager AI Users (n=907); Manager AI Non-Users (n=604).
MDIMPACT8. Thinking about the next five years, how important do you think it will be for your organization's success to have a workforce trained in AI skills? (Critically important/Very important/Somewhat important);
Base = Managers (n=1,511); Manager AI Users (n=907); Manager AI Non-Users (n=604).

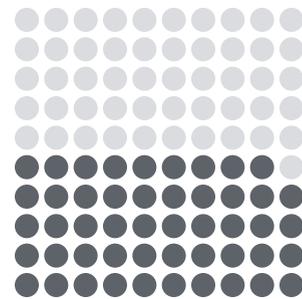# Managers who are using AI are prioritizing job candidates with AI skills

70%

of Managers

view **AI skills as either a requirement or a preference** when hiring
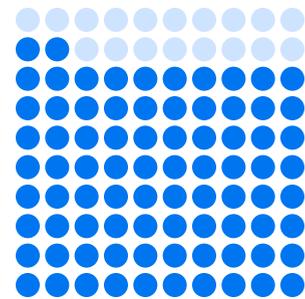
82%
of Managers who are **using AI**

49%
of Managers who are **NOT using AI**
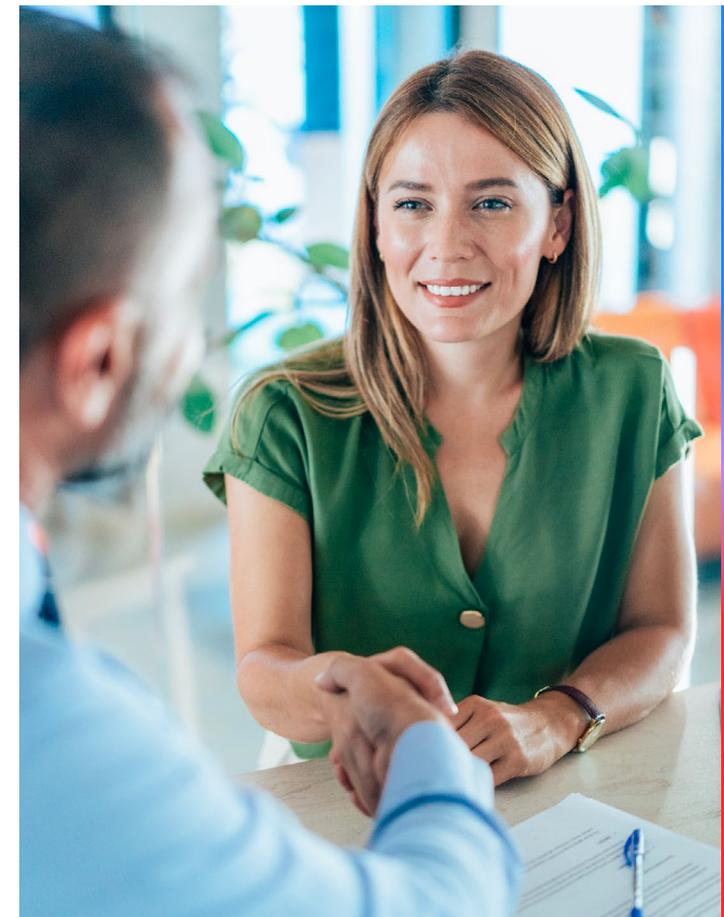
"I'm looking for people who are curious and training themselves and learning as much as they can [about AI], practicing it as much as they can, and **making themselves better, using AI as one of the tools.**"

Business Owner

MHIRING1. In the current job market, would you say AI skills are...? (Mandatory requirement/Strong preference/Slight preference);
Base = Managers (n=1,511); Manager AI Users (n=907); Manager AI Non-Users (n=604).

04

Gap in training and organizational guidance

Organizations lack a clear playbook for AI adoption: Employee access to tools and guidance is inconsistent

1 in 4

say their organization **provides AI tools** (27%)

22%

say their organization **provides AI tools *and* guidance** on AI use

1 in 3

say their organization **provides guidance on AI use** (37%)

"I started using AI more regularly when regulation and guidance from my employer became clearer on how AI can and should be implemented, **making it less of a 'grey area.'**"

AI User

EAIPI3. Does your organization provide any AI tools to assist with your job tasks?; Base = Employees allowed to use AI (n = 3,226).
EAIPI2. How would you describe your organization's guidance and policies on how employees should be using AI in their jobs. Your organization... ; Base = Employees (n = 4,464).

AI Users are learning from each other by leveraging their own networks for advice on usage

46%

of Employees who are permitted to use AI by their organizations say they **seek guidance on AI from individuals in their organization,** such as their peers or direct managers

"When I walked someone through AI and showed them how I was using it, they realized 'this is a very powerful tool.'"

Department Head

AI Fluent Users and Employees in Large Businesses are most likely to seek guidance from their networks
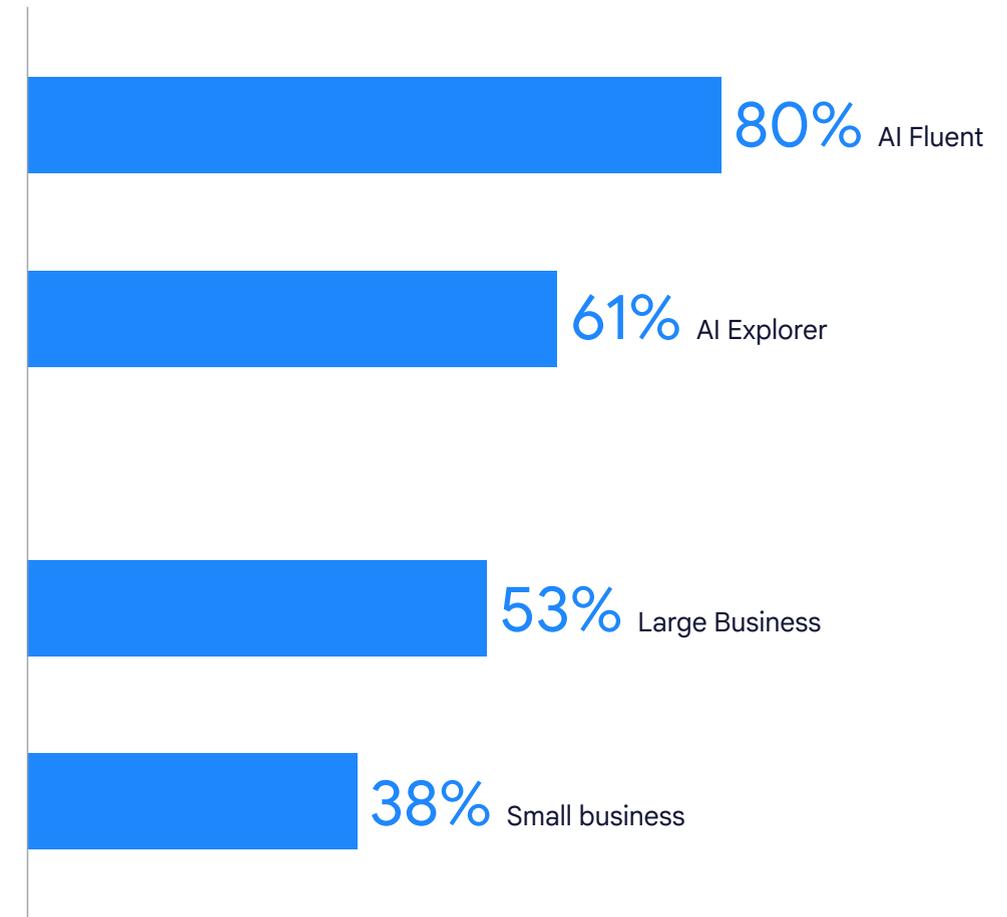
80% AI Fluent

61% AI Explorer

53% Large Business

38% Small business

EAIPI5. Within your organization, who do you turn to for guidance on how to use AI in your current role? Select all that apply.; Base = Employees who are allowed to use AI (n = 3,226); AI Fluent (n = 200); AI Explorers (n = 1,486); Small Business (n = 1,648); Large Business (n = 1,566).
Note: 'Small Business' = under 500 employees.

Only 1 in 10 Employees say their organization has offered AI training in the last year

AI-related training provided by organization in past 12 months
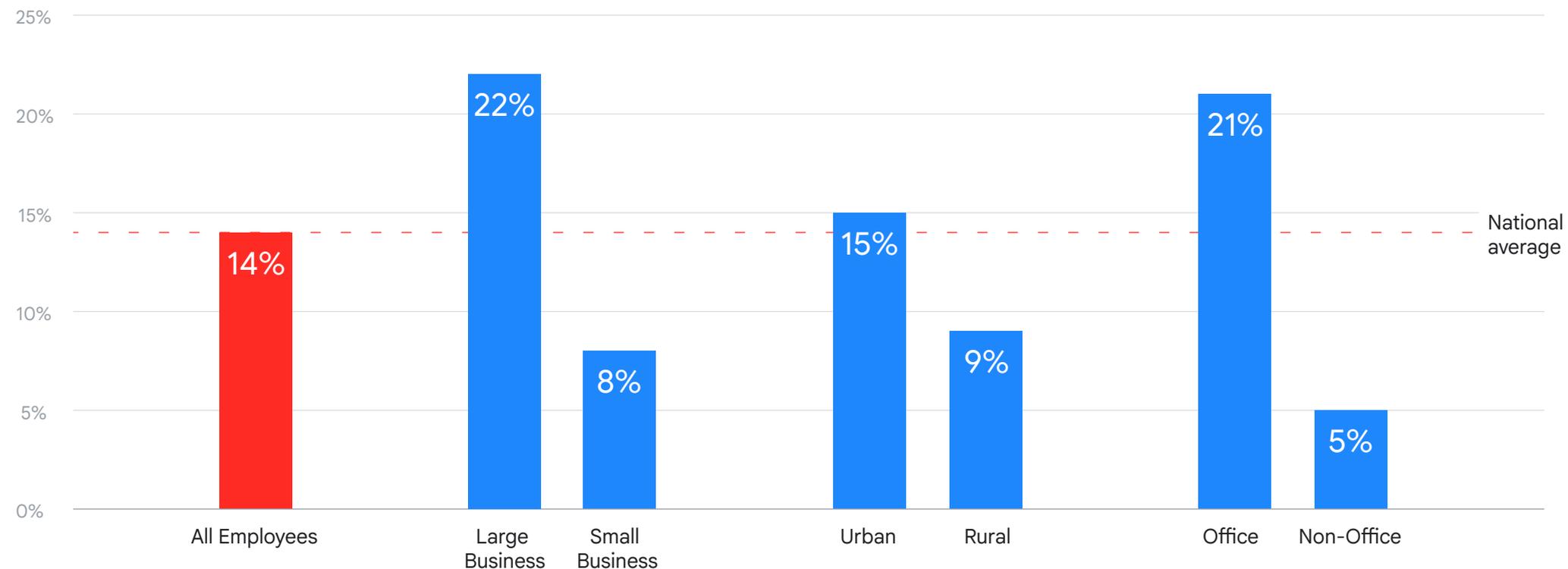
ET2. Has your organization offered AI-related training over the past 12 months?; Base = Employees (n = 4,464); Small Business (n = 2,392); Large Business (n = 2,056); Urban (n=3,705); Rural (n = 747); Office setting (n = 2,589); Non-Office setting (n = 1,856). Note: 'Small Business' = under 500 employees.

05

Creating a culture of AI adoption and fluency

The formula for AI fluency: Organizational guidance, training, and peer networks

"Companies should prioritize comprehensive training programs that not only educate staff on AI tools and applications but also **foster a culture of innovation** where team members feel empowered to experiment with and provide feedback on these technologies."

AI User

	More likely to be **AI Users**	More likely to be **AI Fluent**
Employees with **access to tools and guidance** are…	2.5x	4.5x
Employees who **utilize their network** are about…	2x	5.5x
Employees who **received training through their organization** are…	2.5x	3.5x

EAIPI3. Does your organization provide any AI tools to assist with your job tasks?; Base = Employees who are allowed to use AI (n = 3,226).
EAIPI2. How would you describe your organization's guidance and policies on how employees should be using AI in their jobs. Your organization …; Base = Employees (n = 4,464).
EAIPI5. Within your organization, who do you turn to for guidance on how to use AI in your current role? Select all that apply.; Base = Employees who are allowed to use AI (n = 3,226).
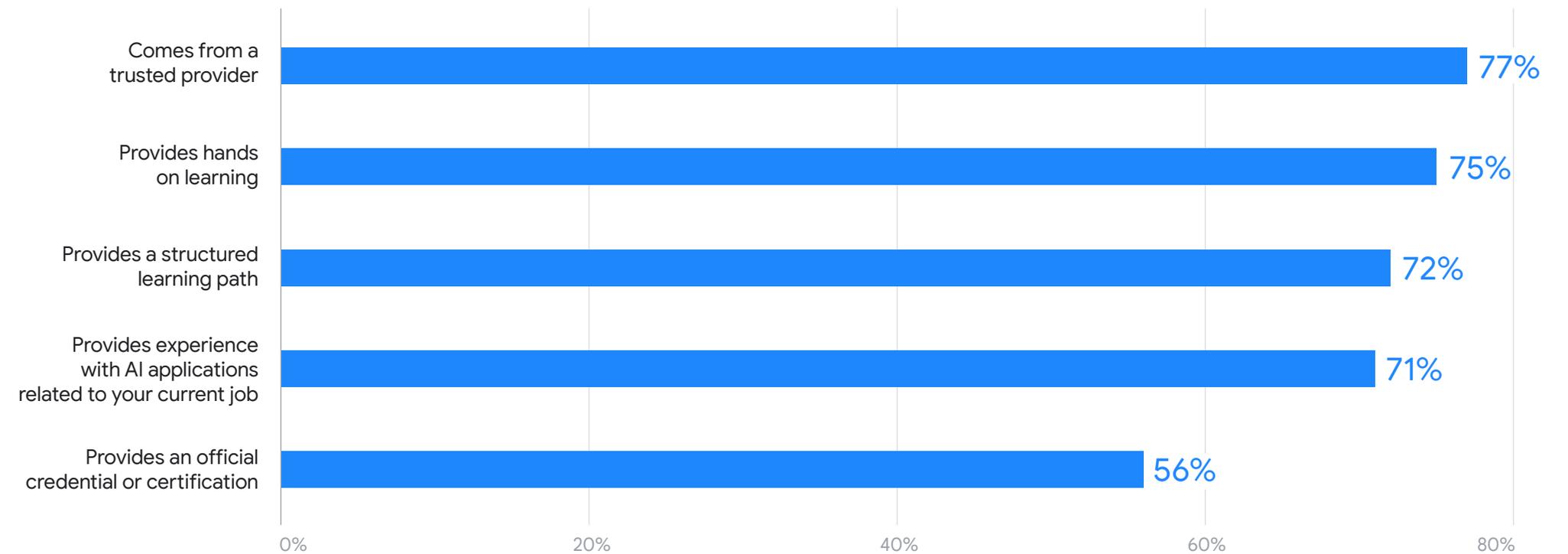ET2. Has your organization offered AI-related training over the past 12 months?; Base = Employees (N=4,464).
EAIADOPT2. Thinking of the tasks you do in your job, how much of your work is done with AI? (All/Most/Some/Not much); Base = Employees (n = 4,464).

There is Employee demand for AI training

65%

of Employees say they have some level of **interest in receiving formal training** on how to use AI in the workplace

AI-related training characteristics that are important to Employees

Characteristic	Value
Comes from a trusted provider	77%
Provides hands on learning	75%
Provides a structured learning path	72%
Provides experience with AI applications related to your current job	71%
Provides an official credential or certification	56%

ET5. Over the next 12 months, how interested are you in receiving formal or organized training on how to use AI in the workplace?; Base = Employees (n = 4,464).
ET7. How important are each of the following in an AI-related training? (Critically important/Very important/Somewhat important); Base = Employees (n = 4,464).

Recommendations

AI guidance:
Provide AI tools with usage guidelines.

Employees who have access to AI tools and guidance are 2.5x more likely to adopt AI at work and almost 4.5x more likely to be AI fluent.

AI training:
Provide practical, applicable, hands-on AI training.

Employees who received training are 2.5x more likely to use AI for work and almost 3.5x more likely to be AI fluent.

Learning culture:
Create an active learning environment and facilitate collaboration and peer study.

Employees who can turn to their work colleagues for guidance on using AI are 2x more likely to adopt AI at work and almost 5.5x more likely to be AI fluent.