

WorkLife 2026

The *new shape* of work

What 6,000 knowledge workers across six markets reveal about **how AI is reshaping work, and who's adapting best.**

Jabra Research Institute

Jabra GN

Executive Summary

Every year, we ask thousands of knowledge workers a simple question: what does it take to work at your best?

Sometimes we're interested in a very specific question. How do people collaborate? What makes meetings productive? How does technology help, or hinder, the working day? Other times we step back and look at the bigger picture: what motivates people, what gets in their way, and what makes for a better WorkLife.

We do it because, fundamentally, we care about the experience of work. How it feels to show up each day. What drives us. What drains us. What leaves us feeling energized, anxious, stressed or excited about what's next.

Naturally, our most recent research has homed in on the impact of AI on knowledge work. We are (painfully) aware that there is a lot of noise in this space, but the reality is that it has become impossible to understand modern work without understanding how AI is changing it.

The strange thing is that, for all the noise, AI didn't change work with a bang. Rather, AI has reshaped the way we think, collaborate, make decisions and spend our time, one small habit at a time.

The result is that not everyone's work has changed in the same way, or at the same pace.

Which is why this year's report asks a slightly different question: As work changes shape, who is adapting best… and why?

Our research

This year’s WorkLife report is based on responses from more than 6,000 knowledge workers across the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Poland and India.

Across almost 200 variables, we explored how AI is changing the way people work, how organizations are responding, and what separates the workers who are thriving from those who feel left behind.

We've done the asking. Now it's over to you.

Whether you read every page or simply dip into the bits that catch your eye, we hope this report gives you a fresh perspective on the changing shape of work, and a few ideas you'll want to build on.

Happy reading!

The WorkLife Framework

What consistently predicts a good WorkLife when work is changing this fast? Our research surfaced three factors that are closely correlated with the happiest, most resilient segment of the workforce:

1. **Integration**. Whether AI has become part of someone's everyday work.
2. **Organizational Enablement**. Whether their organization has evolved alongside them.
3. **Transformation**. Whether they've adopted new ways of working as a result of AI.

We call these three things – Integration, Organizational Enablement and Transformation – **WorkLife Signals.**

Together, they help explain not only who is adapting best today, but where work appears to be heading next. You'll see them woven throughout every chapter. At the end of the report, we’ll make them actionable for you.

What's inside?

1 **A Workforce in Flux** 6

How the working day is changing, one task at a time.

2 **The New Divide** 15

Two workforces are emerging. What separates them?

3 **The New Shape of WorkLife** 20

Meet the workers already living the future of work.

4 **From Signals to Strategy** 28

Turning the WorkLife Signals into practical action.

Introduction

This is a report about AI, yes. But before we lose you (we saw that eye roll, and we don't blame you), this is really a report about people. About what it feels like to work at a moment when technology is changing faster than most of us can keep up with.

Because, let's face it: blink and you might have missed it. Ask someone whether their job has changed this year and they will probably hesitate. Same title. Same colleagues. Same meetings, emails and deadlines. From the outside, work looks reassuringly familiar.

Until you look a little closer.

That presentation now starts with a prompt instead of a blank page. Meeting notes arrive before you've made it back to your desk. Research that once took days now takes minutes. Individually, they're just new habits. Collectively, they're an entirely new way of working.

Our research shows that work has fundamentally changed shape. The activities that fill our days are changing. The skills that matter most are changing. The way we interact with technology is changing. Many of the assumptions organizations were built around are suddenly no longer fit for purpose.

But that change isn’t happening equally.

Around one in three workers say their work has barely changed at all. You might expect them to be the people who feel most comfortable. They aren't. Across almost every measure in this study, they're the workers struggling most.

That's the story in our inaugural annual WorkLife report: what today's highest-performing workers can tell us about tomorrow's workplace.

We've packed these pages with data, stories and practical frameworks. Read them cover to cover if that's your thing. Or don't. Dip in and out. Fold over pages. Screenshot the charts. Argue with the conclusions. Share them with your team.

Work is changing whether we're paying attention or not. We hope this report helps you make a little more sense of where it's heading.



The WorkLife Framework

If the shape of work is changing, how do we measure it?

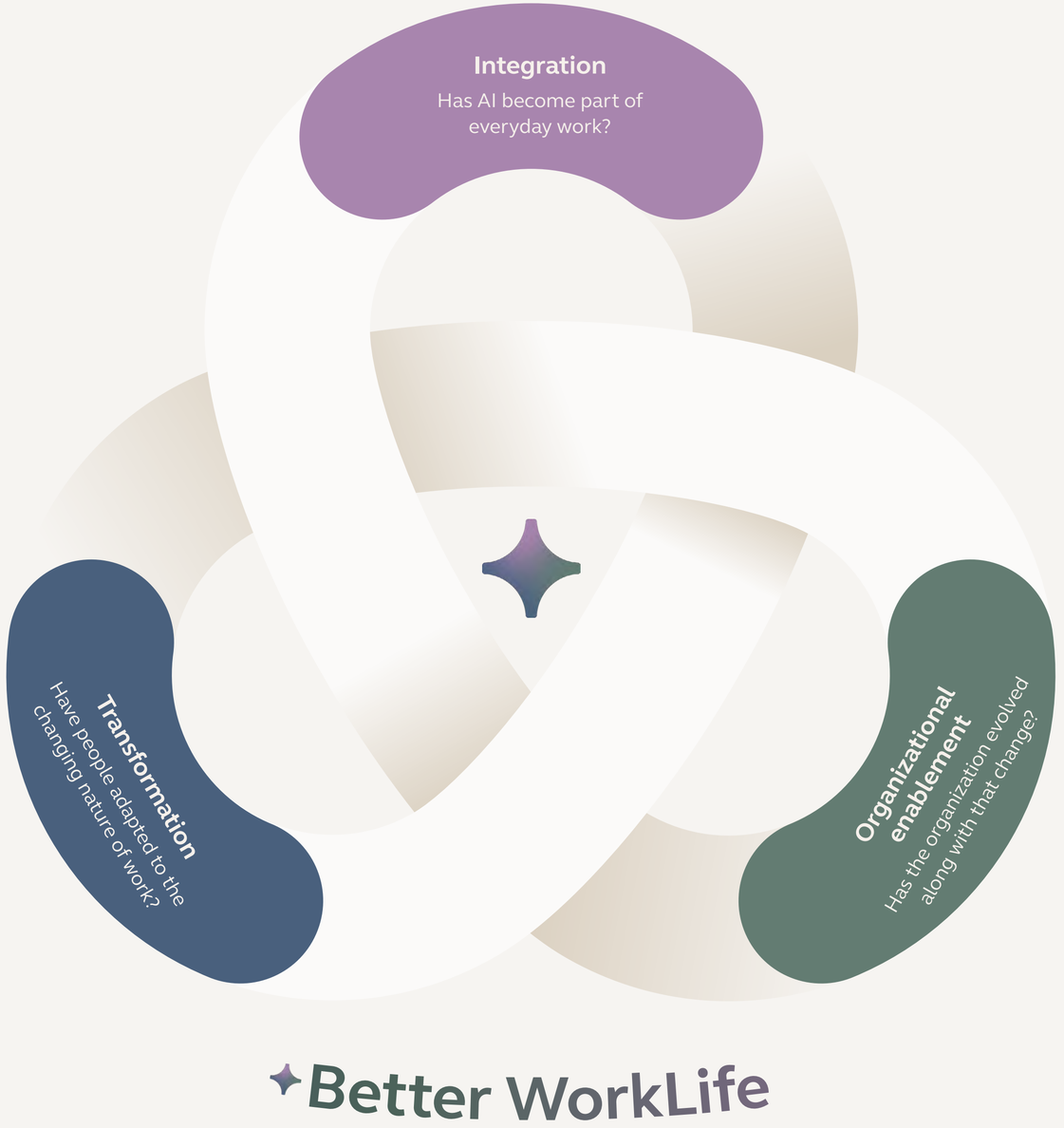
Over the past 6 years, we've been researching the things that help people thrive at work. From collaboration and communication to comfort, connection and concentration, we've built a picture of the conditions that help knowledge workers do their best work and feel their best while doing it.

AI hasn't replaced those needs. But it has accelerated the pace at which they're changing.

As work becomes more collaborative, more conversational and more dependent on judgement, the question that matters most is whether organizations are evolving alongside the people already using AI.

Across almost 200 variables, three factors consistently predicted how people were experiencing their WorkLife better than anything else we measured.

These are the WorkLife Signals. Together, they form the framework that underpins this report and the measures we'll continue tracking in the years ahead.



Chapter 1:

A Workforce *in flux*

The nature of work is changing. This chapter explores how AI is reshaping the work people do, the skills they rely on, and the way the working day unfolds.

WorkLife Signals: Transformation

How has work *actually changed?*



First, the context: AI adoption is completely mainstream.

Almost half of workers (47%) use AI every day, including nearly one in five (18%) who use it multiple times a day. A further 27% use it every week. Only 7% never use it at all.

There is no obvious dividing line between the workplace before AI and the workplace after it. There are only hundreds of small moments that, taken together, have altered the rhythm of the working day.

That is what makes this moment different from previous waves of technological change. It has arrived as a gradual shift in habit rather than a dramatic event that organizations can point to. Hardly anyone woke up one morning to a different job. The same job simply stopped being the same.

Our research suggests that workers feel this instinctively. More than two-thirds say the way they work has changed over the past year, while almost one in three describe that change as considerable or fundamental.

Much of the conversation around AI has focused on replacement. Which jobs will disappear? Which skills will become obsolete? Which professions will survive? Those questions make headlines, but they tell us surprisingly little about what is happening inside organizations today.

The first chapter of AI at work hasn't been one of replacement. It's been one of redesign.

Not through sweeping organizational change programs, but through thousands of small decisions made by workers themselves. A faster way to prepare for a meeting. A better way to analyze information. A workflow adopted because it saves ten minutes here and twenty there. Individually, these decisions seem insignificant. Together, they've changed the shape of work.

That is where this report begins.

The *myth* of reclaimed time

One of the biggest promises of AI has always been that it would give us our time back. It would handle repetitive work. Administrative work. The tasks people tolerate rather than enjoy. By taking care of the routine, AI would give people back something increasingly scarce: time.

It's an appealing idea. But it's not what our data shows.

When we looked across eight different categories of knowledge worker tasks, we expected AI to rebalance the working day. More time spent on strategy and problem solving. Less on administration and routine execution. Instead, we found the exact opposite.

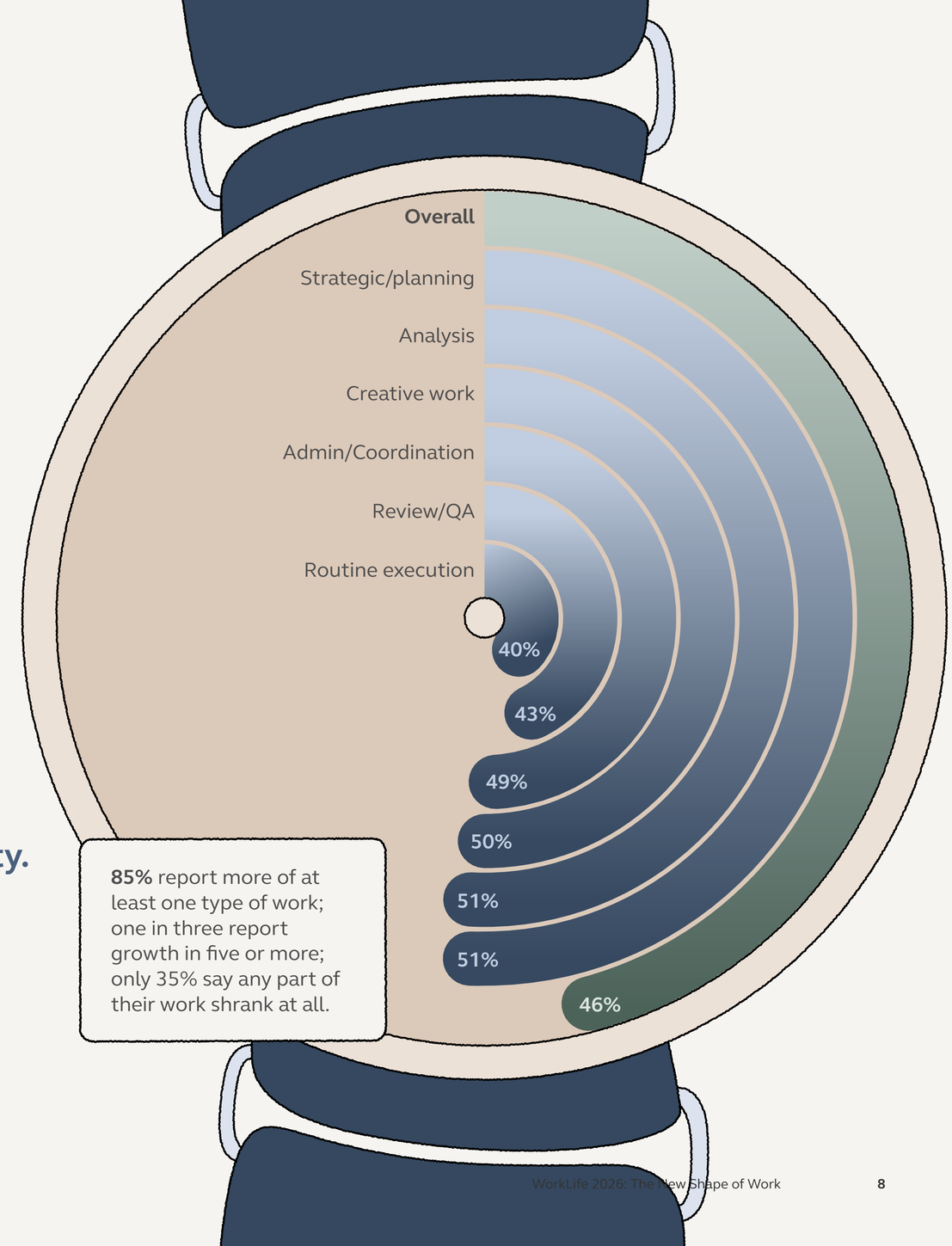
Every category of work grew.

Strategic planning and analysis saw the largest increases, with around half of workers reporting they spend more time on both than they did a year ago (51%). Perhaps more surprisingly, creative work was close behind at 50%, challenging the idea that AI is replacing creativity rather than expanding it.

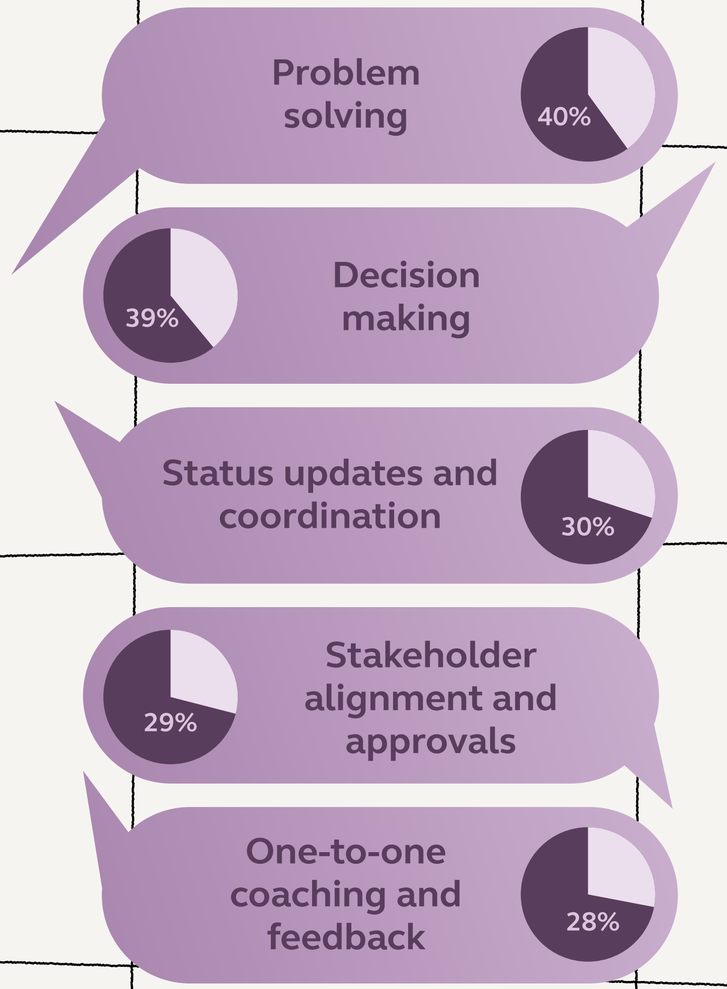
At the other end of the scale sat routine execution. It was the slowest-growing category we measured, but it still grew. Even administrative work, often predicted to be one of automation's first casualties, increased for almost half of workers (49%). In other words, we're doing more work, not less.

Economists have long observed this pattern. Improvements in efficiency rarely result in proportionately less activity. They tend to create demand for more of it. The wider the road, the more traffic it carries. The faster communication becomes, the more messages we send. Knowledge work looks to be following the same logic.

Rather than reducing work, AI is broadening it. The time it creates isn't being banked as spare capacity. It's being reinvested into more decisions, more responsibilities, more collaboration and more opportunities to contribute.



What meetings are now for:



Work has become *more* collaborative

So, if AI isn't reducing work, what is filling the space it creates?

Our data points to a clear answer, and it defies the stereotype of knowledge workers sitting solo behind laptops, churning out work in isolation.

The work that's growing fastest is the work people do together.

As AI takes on more of the execution, people aren't stepping away from work. They're spending more of their time on the kinds of activities that require judgement: making decisions, solving problems, aligning stakeholders and working through complexity with other people.

As a result, our findings suggest the typical meeting has changed. When we asked workers what their meeting time is actually spent doing, decision making and problem solving came out on top. Four in ten workers spend most of their meetings solving problems (40%), while almost as many say decision making dominates their calendars (39%).

Meetings are increasingly not where we talk about work, but *where work gets done.*

That helps explain another pattern running through the data. More than four in ten workers (42%) say they collaborate with colleagues more than they did a year ago, while only 13% say they collaborate less: a 29-point gap. Even more surprising, 39% say AI has strengthened their sense of connection with colleagues, against 14% who say it has weakened it. Feelings of loneliness and disconnection, both at around 6%, remain among the least frequently reported emotions in our study.

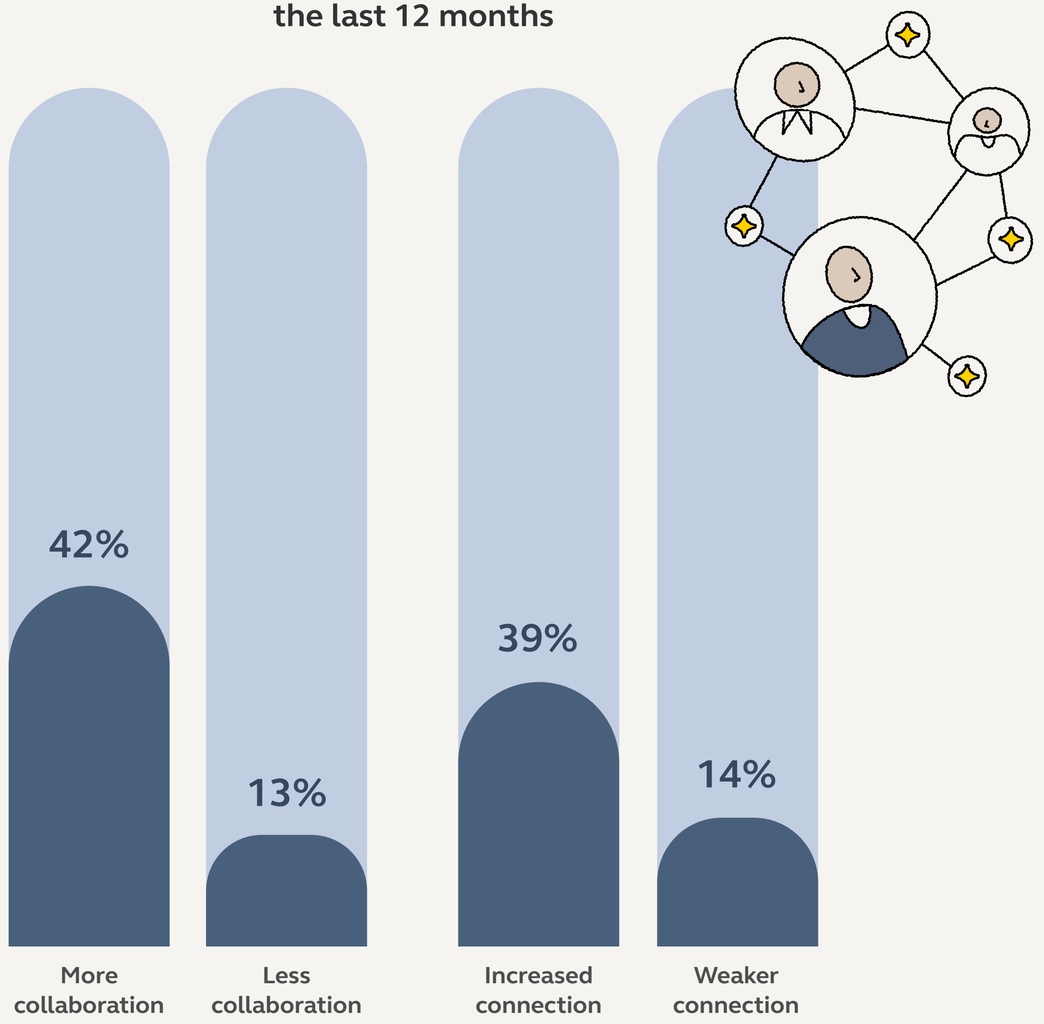
Perhaps that shouldn't be surprising. As AI becomes better at producing work, the value of human work appears to be shifting elsewhere. Towards discussing rather than documenting. Towards deciding rather than drafting. Towards the conversations where ideas are tested, priorities are negotiated and judgement is exercised.

The modern workday hasn't become isolated. If anything, it has become more collaborative.

That picture is consistent with broader trends in knowledge work. Microsoft's Work Trend Index has documented a steady rise in the volume and intensity of collaboration, with workers navigating an increasingly meeting-heavy working day. Earlier this year, our own research put that shift into perspective. For the average knowledge worker, meetings now consume the equivalent of a full working day every week.

Far from being a distraction from "real work", increasingly, meeting-based collaboration is the work.

How the workforce feels their collaboration and connection with colleagues has changed in the last 12 months



Work is being *redesigned from the bottom up*

One of the clearest patterns in our research is that the changing shape of work has been driven less by organizations than by the people inside them.

That may seem counterintuitive. AI is often discussed as an enterprise technology, rolled out through managed transformation programs with formal training, governance and clear policies. In reality, the first wave of adoption appears to have been far more grassroots.

Workers didn't wait for new job descriptions or company-wide playbooks. They experimented. While organizations watched and waited, people found small ways to make their work easier, faster or better.

In fact, among workers whose organizations took no meaningful action, almost two-thirds changed the way they worked anyway.

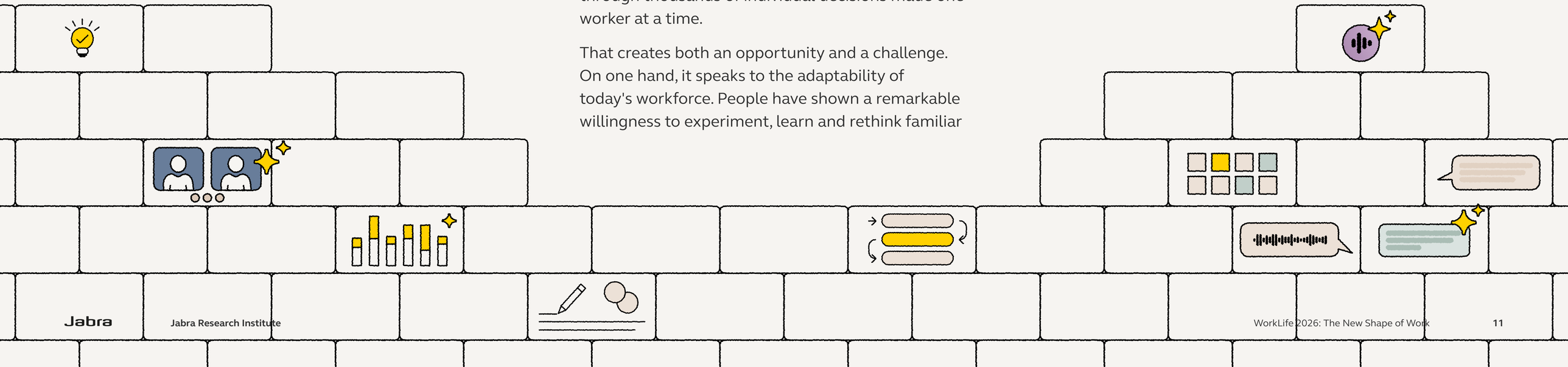
Curiosity, as it turns out, has often moved faster than policy. And perhaps the most revealing finding is what happened where organizations did nothing: the redesign happened regardless.

This isn’t a criticism of organizations. The pace of change has been extraordinary, and few leaders could reasonably have anticipated how quickly AI tools would become part of everyday work. But it does reveal something important about this moment. The first chapter of AI adoption has not been written through formal transformation programs. It has been written through thousands of individual decisions made one worker at a time.

That creates both an opportunity and a challenge. On one hand, it speaks to the adaptability of today's workforce. People have shown a remarkable willingness to experiment, learn and rethink familiar ways of working. But it also exposes a widening gap. Workers have been redesigning the way they work far faster than organizations have been redesigning the conditions around them.

Technology changes one person's workflow. Leadership determines whether those individual improvements become a better way of working for everyone.

Left alone, people retrofit AI into existing ways of working. The organizations making the biggest leaps are redesigning work itself.



Workers evolved. Organizations *didn't.*

Workers

89%

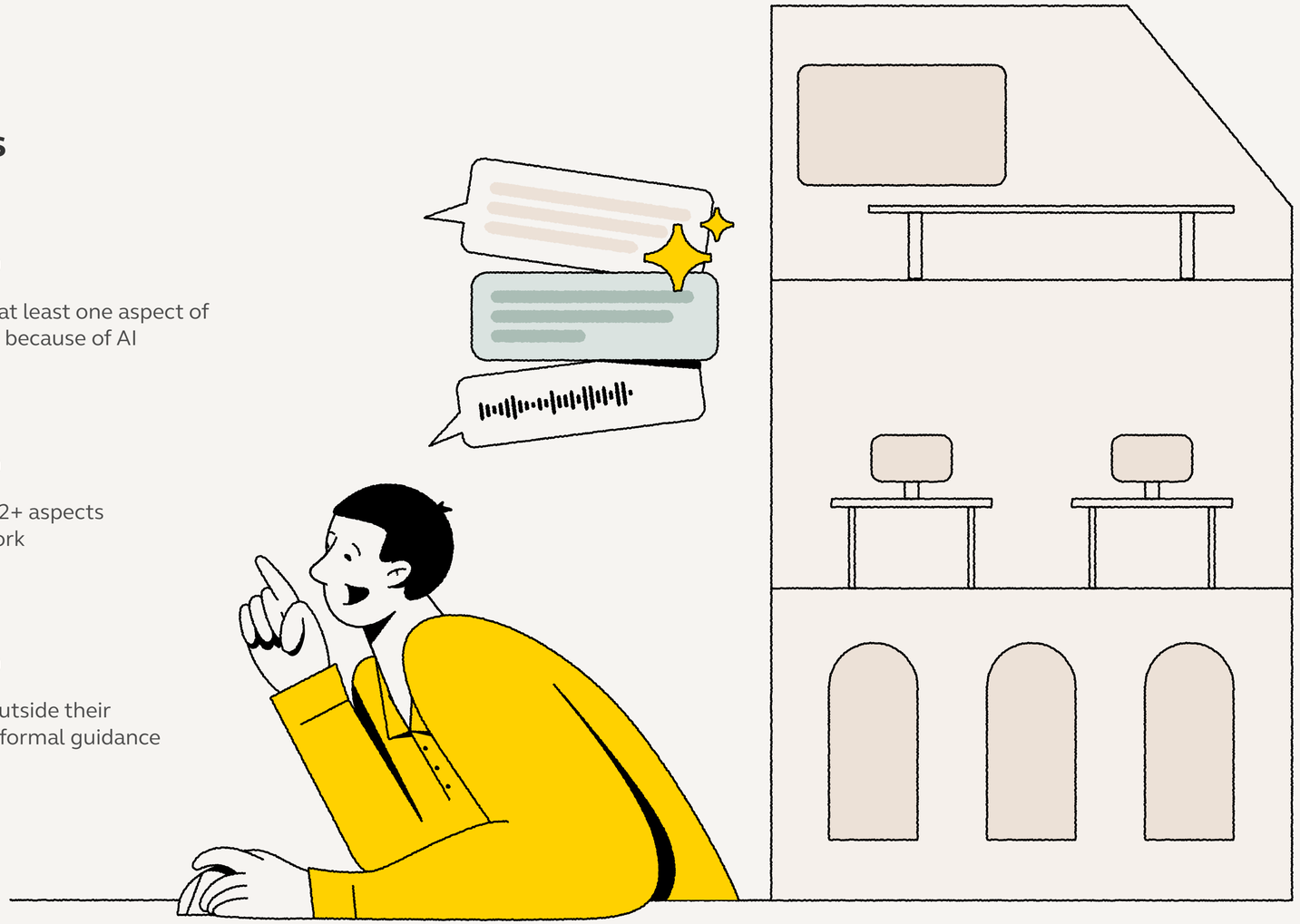
have changed at least one aspect of how they work because of AI

50%

have changed 2+ aspects of how they work

25%

have used AI outside their organization's formal guidance



Organizations

47%

of workers say their employer has taken no more than one meaningful step to support adoption

20%

of workers say their organization has done nothing at all to prepare for AI

The *paradox* of today’s workforce

So how does the workforce feel about all this change? Taken at face value, remarkably good.

For all the headlines about burnout, uncertainty and the disruptive impact of AI, most knowledge workers report feeling broadly positive about their working lives, **almost three-quarters (73%) say AI has had a positive impact on their work**, and workers most commonly associate work with motivation, purpose and, perhaps most surprisingly, calm, suggesting that many workers feel a sense of stability despite the pace of transformation.

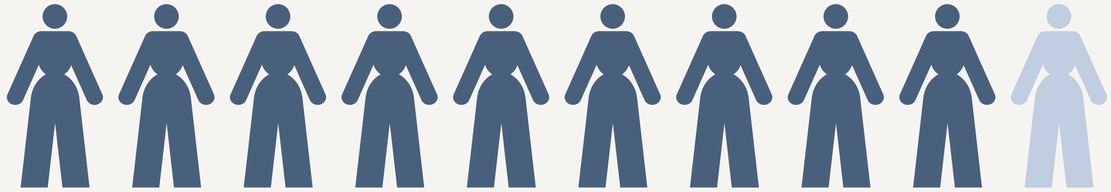
The workforce isn't unhappy. But nor is it entirely at ease.

Although overall satisfaction is high, almost nine in ten workers identified at least one structural barrier making their work harder than it needs to be. And perhaps more revealing still, those barriers persisted even among workers who described themselves as satisfied. After all, people can enjoy their work while still feeling unsupported. They can feel optimistic about their future while lacking the training to prepare for it. It may also explain why, despite the generally positive outlook, a quarter of workers associate work with stress.

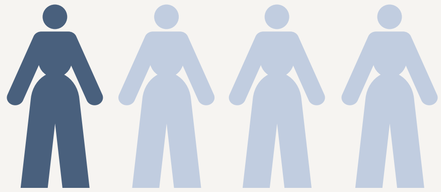
Most interestingly, none of the most common barriers workers identified are caused by AI itself. They are organizational: Workload and pace. Training gaps. Pressure to be productive. Inadequate tools. Unclear expectations.

Hold on to that detail. We’ll come back to it in Chapter 4.

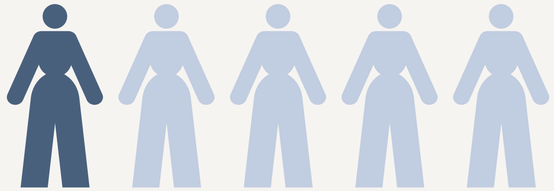
The paradox of today's happy workforce



Almost nine in ten workers report at least one structural barrier making work harder than it needs to be.



1 in 4 associate work with stress

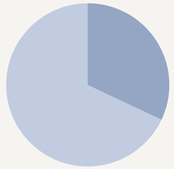


nearly 1 in 5 associate work with exhaustion

The real risk is *standing still*

By now, a clear picture has started to emerge. Work has changed. People are doing more of it, it has become more collaborative, and it depends more than ever on judgement. **Many workers have adapted, often long before their organizations did.**

You might expect the people experiencing the biggest changes to be the ones finding work hardest. Instead, the workers reporting the lowest levels of satisfaction, preparedness and career optimism are those whose work has barely changed at all.



32% of workers say the way they work has changed a little or not at all

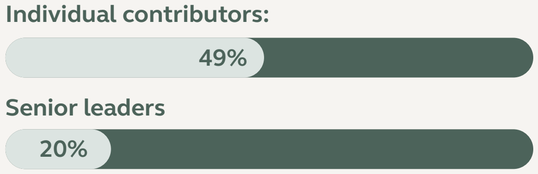
Around one in three workers (32%) say the way they work has changed only a little, or not at all, over the past year. On the surface, that might sound reassuring. Stability is usually easier to navigate than change. Our data tells a different story.

Workers whose roles have changed substantially are consistently more optimistic, more prepared and more satisfied with their working lives than those whose work has remained largely the same.

The emotional picture shifts too. Workers whose jobs have changed little are more likely to associate work with stress, exhaustion and boredom. Those whose work has evolved are far more likely to describe it as motivating.

However, that pattern isn't evenly distributed across the workforce.

Workers who say their role has barely changed in the last 12 months



Individual contributors are almost 2.5x more likely than senior leaders to say the way they work has barely changed (49% versus 20%).

The difference remains across every age group. What we see emerge from the data is that the changing shape of work is reaching the top of organizations faster than the front line.

That matters because senior leaders have the freedom to redesign how they work. Individual contributors often don't. They can adapt their own habits, but they can't redesign workflows, redefine roles or change the systems around them.

Change comes with its own costs, and AI leaves plenty of uncertainty in working life. But our findings suggest that participating in change is very different from watching it happen around you. The organizations pulling ahead won't simply encourage individuals to adapt. They'll redesign work so that everyone can.



Chapter 2:

The New Divide

Not everyone is experiencing this transformation equally. This chapter explores why.

WorkLife Signals:

Integration

Organizational enablement

The emergence of a *two-tier workforce*

Our findings point to two workforces emerging inside the same organizations, doing increasingly different jobs and experiencing work in increasingly different ways.

When we compared workers by how often they used AI, a remarkably consistent pattern emerged:

The more AI became a part of someone's working day, the more positively they tended to feel about work itself.

Workers who use AI multiple times a day feel more than twice as prepared for the future of work as those who never use it (8.06 vs 3.76 on a 10-point scale). Career optimism follows the same curve, two-thirds higher among the heaviest users (7.94 vs 4.79).

Compared with non-users, the heaviest AI users are:

3x
more likely to be more secure in their role than they were 12 months ago

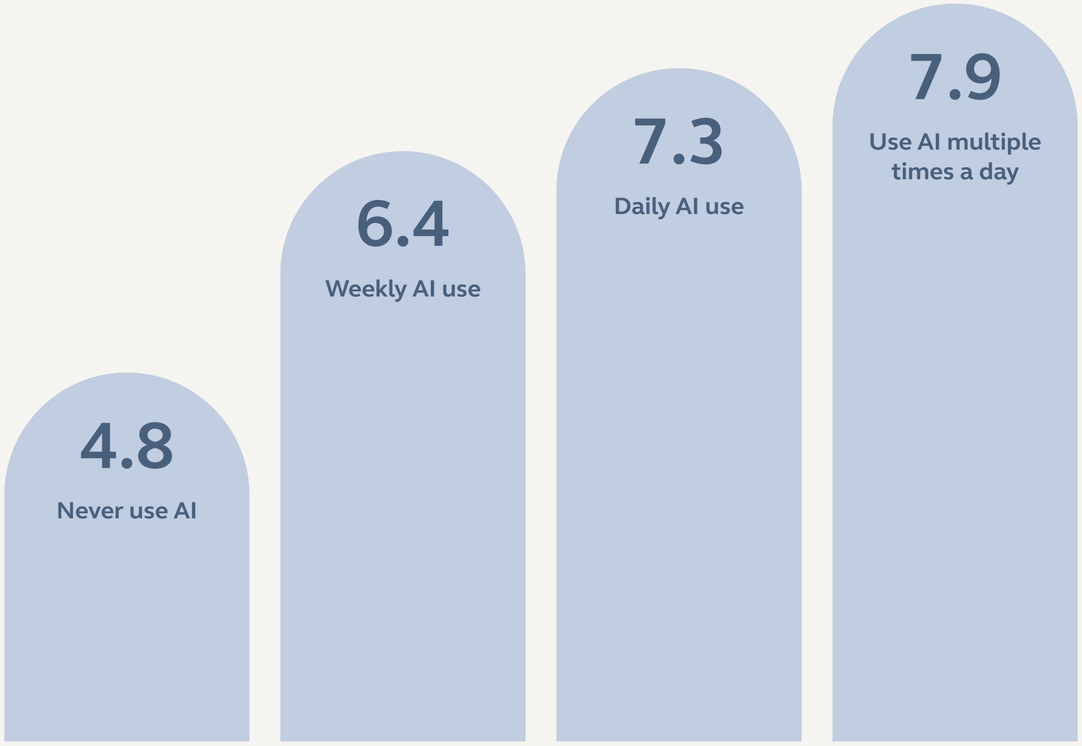
2.5x
more likely to be more satisfied now than 12 months ago

1.6x
more likely to describe themselves as motivated

The emotional data tells the same story. **The heaviest users are 1.6x more likely than non-users to describe themselves as motivated** (51% vs 31%), and non-users are 1.6x more likely to associate work with stress (29% vs 17%).

AI adoption is linked to better WorkLife outcomes

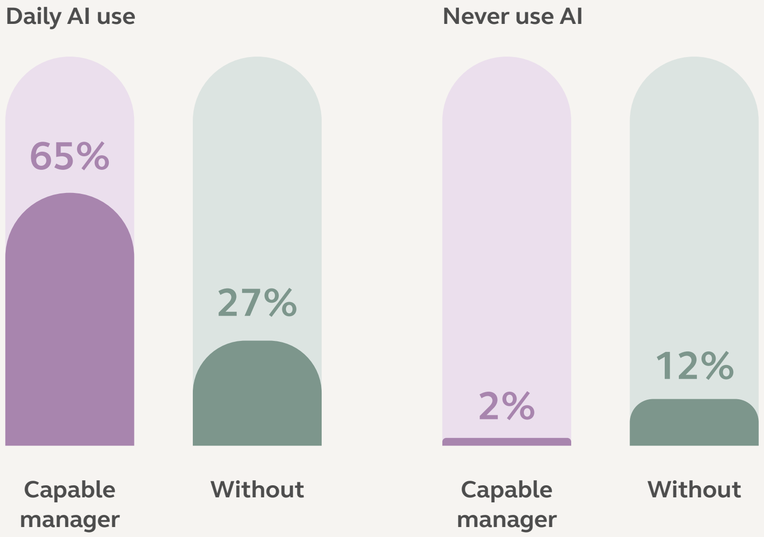
Career optimism rated from 1 to 10



How career optimism of daily users is influenced by manager capability

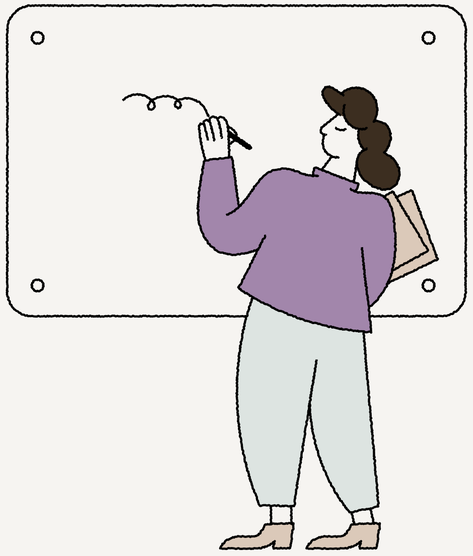


Manager capability drives adoption too



2.4x as likely to use AI daily

6x less likely to never use AI



The manager *multiplier*

It would be easy to conclude that the answer is simply more AI. Use it more, feel better. Our data says the reality is more interesting than that.

If usage alone explained the divide, workers who use AI equally often would report broadly similar experiences of work. They don't.

When we introduced one additional variable – how capable someone believes their manager to be in relation to AI – we saw two entirely different segments emerge from the data set.

Daily AI users with a capable manager are **1.5x more optimistic** about their careers than daily users without one (8.30 vs 5.52).

Similarly, workers who use AI only occasionally, but have capable managers, consistently report a **better WorkLife than heavy AI users who lack that support**. In other words, how people are supported matters just as much as how often they use AI.

It is tempting to view AI use as a matter of individual curiosity or technical confidence. Our findings suggest it is primarily a reflection of the environment people work in.

The workers who feel most supported are also the ones most likely to push beyond their organization's official guidance. Employees with highly capable managers are almost **3x as likely to use AI in ways that fall outside formal policies** (43% versus 15%). The same pattern appears among workers who are most positive about AI's impact on their work.

Empowerment and boundary-pushing travel together. As people become more capable, they also become more willing to experiment. In many organizations, workers are now adapting faster than the policies designed to guide them.

The great *geographical divide*

The two-tier workforce isn't confined to individual organizations. It's visible across countries too, with some markets advancing ahead of others in terms of adoption and its associated benefits.

India and the United States lead on almost every measure of AI integration and organizational enablement. Europe consistently sits at the other end of the spectrum.

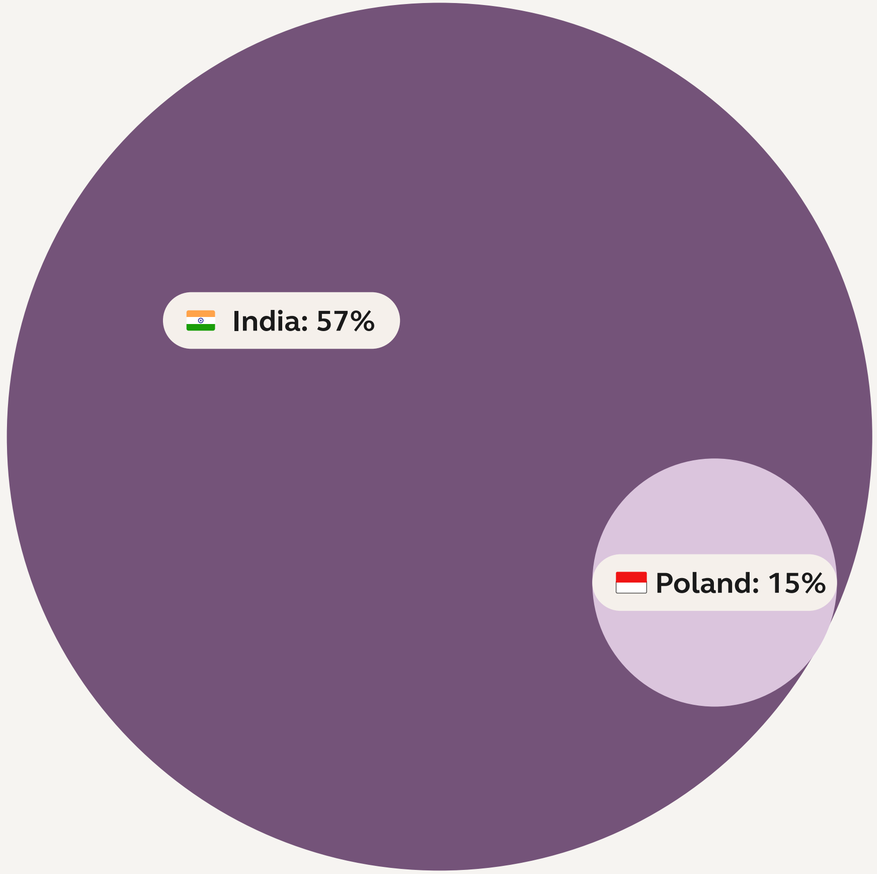
The starkest gap is workflow redesign: 57% of Indian workers say their organization has redesigned the way they work around AI. In Poland, it's just 15%: **nearly a four-fold difference.**

That gap isn't really about cultural attitudes towards adoption. It's about enablement.

When we dug into the data to find out why Europe was trailing so far behind, we saw a clear picture: the lowest levels of training, the weakest-rated managers and the least organizational preparation of any market in the study. It also records the lowest career optimism, at 5.97 out of 10.

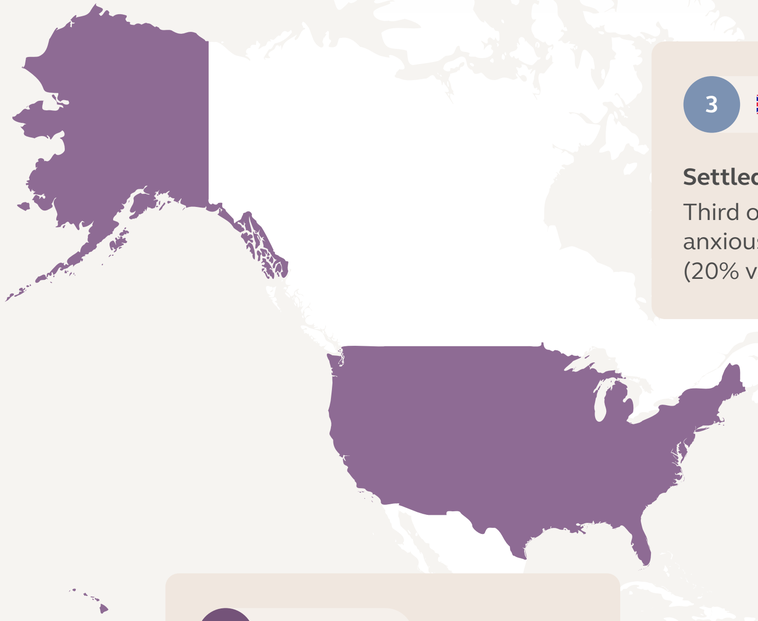
AI is reshaping work very differently across markets

Share of workers who say their organization has redesigned the way they work around AI.



Six markets, six working lives

How are people experiencing the **changing shape of work across the globe?** As our highlights map shows, it depends on where you live.







1 USA

The strongest WorkLife today

Happiest (75%), least stressed (18% vs 24%), most fulfilled (31%), most purposeful (39%), the only market where over three-quarters call their workload manageable.

3 UK

Settled, but skeptical

Third on satisfaction (59%), most anxious (15% vs 11%), least calm (20% vs 26%).

4 Germany

Calm today, unprepared for tomorrow

Least anxious by some distance (5% vs 11%, the biggest single deviation in the wellbeing data), but most disconnected (8%), loneliest (7%), lowest preparedness (5.90).

5 France

Resistant and at risk

Only 50% call their workload manageable, 14 points below every other market. 21% feel more secure vs 40% overall. Lowest career optimism (5.97).

6 Poland

Where work feels hardest

Most stressed (30%), most overwhelmed (19%), most exhausted (22%), lowest satisfaction (39%), least likely to name any positive emotion (63% vs 70%).

2 India

Ready for what's next

Highest preparedness (7.73/10), highest job security (59% feel more secure), strongest connection: 65% say it has grown vs 37% overall.

Chapter 3:

The *New Shape* of WorkLife

Voice users are the workers furthest towards the future of knowledge work. This chapter measures the working life they're already living, and the organizational enablement that got them there.

WorkLife Signals: Transformation

From doing work to *directing work*

For decades, knowledge itself was the scarce resource. Finding information, analyzing it and producing high-quality work were valuable because they were difficult. AI has fundamentally altered that equation. Information is now abundant. Drafts are abundant. Analysis is abundant. The ability to generate knowledge has become remarkably cheap.

What remains scarce is judgement.

Knowing what matters. Recognizing quality. Deciding which ideas deserve attention and which should be discarded. Challenging assumptions rather than accepting the first plausible answer. Building trust when almost every output can be generated in seconds.

Increasingly, the value of the knowledge worker lies less in producing work than in directing it. The question is no longer Can you make something? It's Can you recognize what is worth making (and know what good output – human or machine-generated – looks like)?

As routine execution becomes easier, the center of gravity shifts elsewhere. Workers spend more time making decisions, solving problems, aligning stakeholders and coordinating activity across teams and agents.

Conversation is uniquely suited to this type of orchestration work. It allows people to test ideas, refine thinking, delegate tasks, challenge assumptions and move fluidly between questions without breaking their flow.

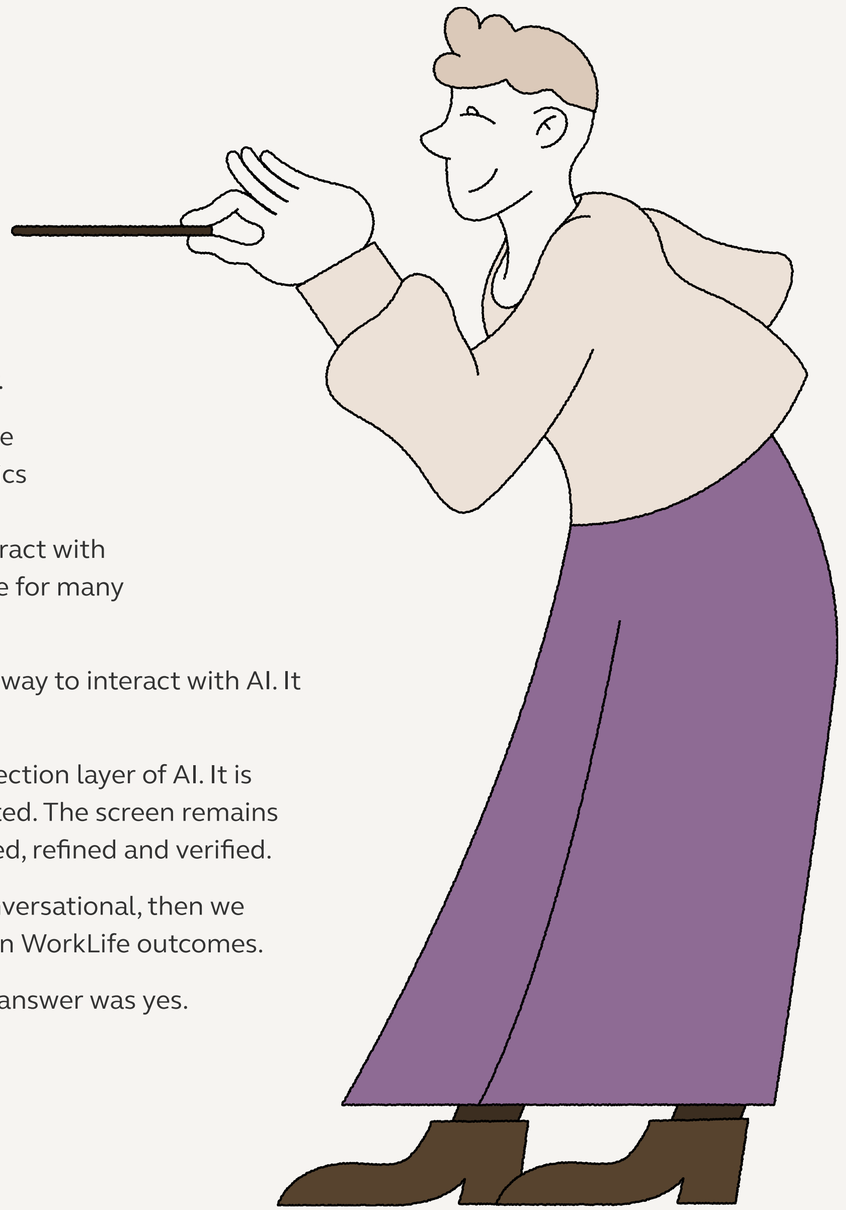
That observation aligns with earlier research we conducted with the London School of Economics Behavioural Lab. That study suggested we are approaching a broader shift in how people interact with AI, with voice set to become a primary interface for many knowledge work tasks over the coming years.

If that's true, conversation isn't simply another way to interact with AI. It becomes a new layer of work itself.

In that sense, conversation is becoming the direction layer of AI. It is where work is framed, delegated and coordinated. The screen remains the inspection layer, where outputs are reviewed, refined and verified.

If knowledge work really is becoming more conversational, then we wanted to test if talking to AI had any impact on WorkLife outcomes.

Across almost every measure in our study, the answer was yes. Resoundingly so.



Conversation as the new operating system of modern knowledge work

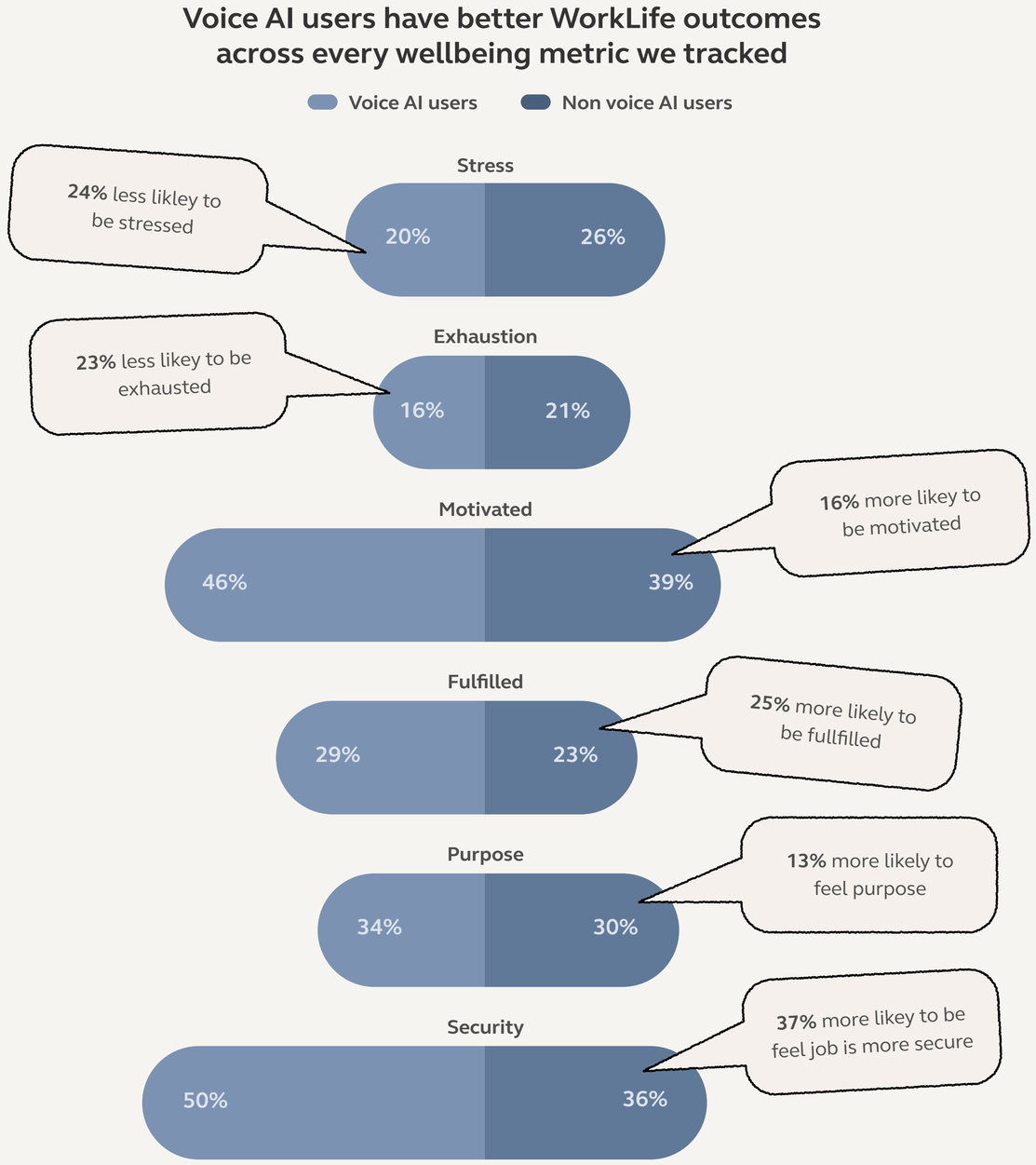
We found that workers who regularly talk to AI report some of the strongest outcomes anywhere in the dataset. But they weren't simply doing the same work more efficiently. **They were doing fundamentally different work.**

Compared with their peers, conversational AI users spend more of their working day making decisions, solving problems, aligning stakeholders and collaborating with colleagues. Their work is more meeting-heavy, more judgement-led and more change-intensive. This is true irrespective of someone's seniority or industry type.

What makes this finding particularly striking is that, despite spending more time on high order cognitive tasks like problem solving and stakeholder alignment, they report lower levels of stress and exhaustion. They are also significantly less likely to identify workload and pace as barriers to doing their job well. Rather than struggling under the demands of modern knowledge work, they appear to be navigating with greater resilience.

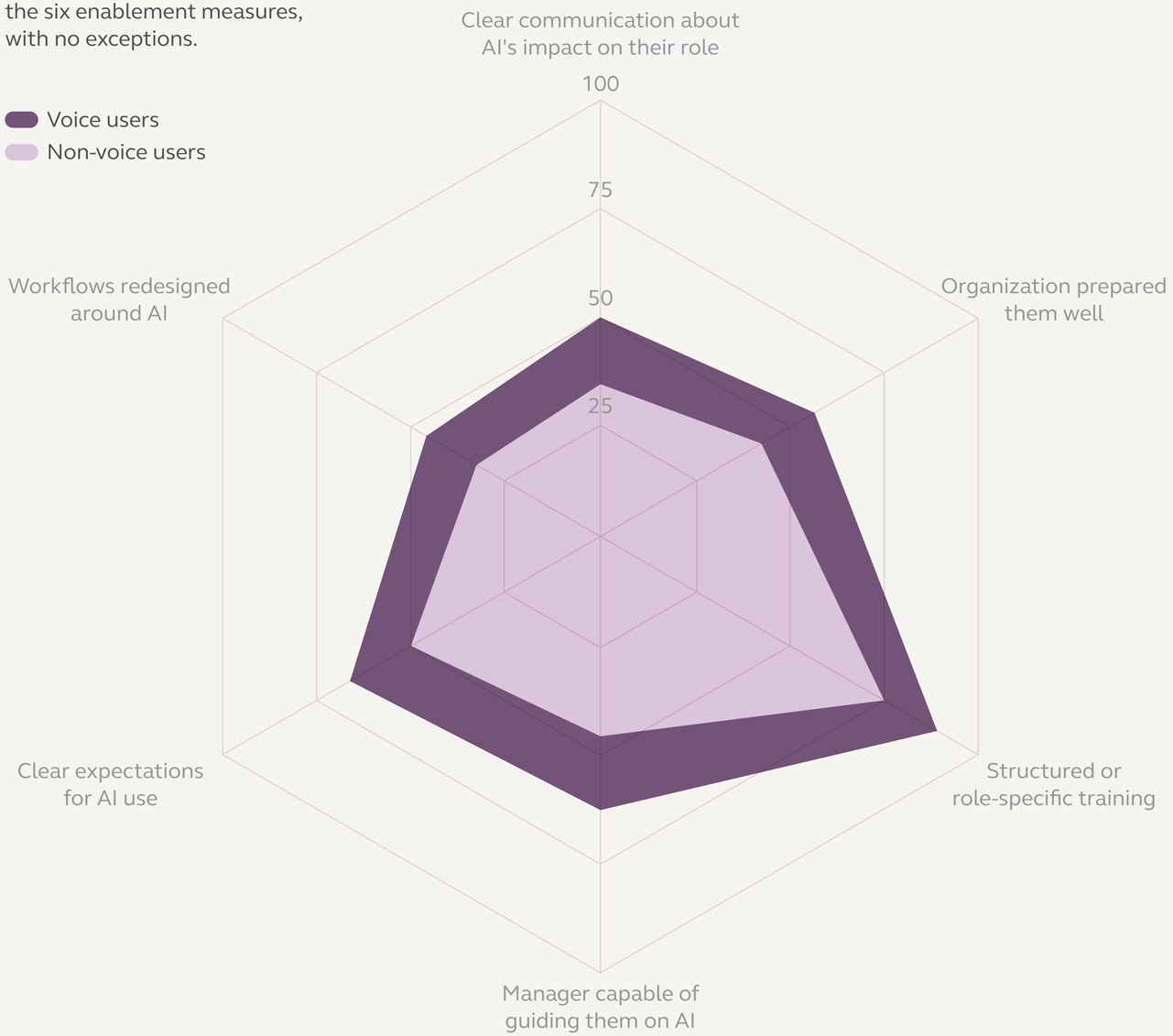
Workers who have moved towards a more conversational relationship with AI appear to represent an early-adopting group: people who are more willing to experiment, rethink familiar ways of working and embrace change.

But what determines how likely someone is to have made this shift?



The enablement chain

Voice users lead on every one of the six enablement measures, with no exceptions.



A conversational future of work is *built*, not born

Across almost every measure of organizational support, **voice users report a fundamentally different experience of work.** They are more likely to have received clear communication about AI, more likely to have meaningful training, more likely to have managers who can guide them, more likely to work in redesigned workflows, and more likely to have the tools that make conversational AI practical.

A conversational future of work doesn't emerge because people decide to speak to AI. It emerges because organizations create the conditions that make new ways of working possible.

More than any other group in this study, they show what happens when communication, enablement, leadership and infrastructure come together. They aren't just a glimpse of where work is heading. They are evidence of what an AI-forward organization looks like when it works.



That pattern extends all the way down to the tools people have available. Workers whose organizations provide audio and video hardware designed for conversational AI are significantly more likely to have evolved their way of working with AI to be more conversational.

Workers with the right equipment are about 40% more likely to talk to their AI.

Taken together, the picture is surprisingly consistent. Organizations that communicate clearly, invest in capability, equip their people well and redesign work around AI don't simply produce more AI users. They produce different kinds of knowledge workers.

The first chapter of this report evidenced that knowledge work is becoming more collaborative, more judgement-led and more conversational. This chapter shows what that transformation looks like in practice.

These workers aren't succeeding because they have discovered a better prompt. They are succeeding because they have adapted to a different shape of work. Their organizations have evolved alongside them, creating the conditions for conversation to become a natural way to think, direct, collaborate and decide.

In that sense, conversational AI isn't the destination. It's one of the clearest signs that an organization has already begun redesigning work for the AI era.

The three signals of the *AI superuser*

Throughout this report we've explored three different signals of a **better WorkLife.**

1: Integration

The first is **Integration**. AI has become part of their everyday work.

2: Organizational Enablement

The second is **Organizational Enablement**. They work in organizations that have invested in helping people succeed through clear communication, capable managers, training and redesigned ways of working.

3: Transformation

The third is **Transformation**. They have adapted to the changing nature of knowledge work itself, moving naturally between typing and talking as AI becomes a partner in thinking, exploring and directing work.

Each signal is associated with a better experience of work. But the strongest outcomes belong to the workers who embody all three. This is where the WorkLife Framework comes together.

Workers who embody Integration, Organizational Enablement and Transformation consistently report the highest levels of satisfaction, preparedness and career optimism anywhere in the study. Together, these three signals describe the people furthest along the transition to the new shape of knowledge work.

We call them AI Superusers, and right now, they represent around 15% of the workforce.

The WorkLife Framework paints an encouraging picture.

None of the three Signals are fixed characteristics. They don't describe talent or personality. They describe how deeply AI has become embedded in the way people work, whether organizations have created the conditions for people to succeed, and whether workers have embraced the new shape of knowledge work.

That means every signal can be strengthened.

Integration can be encouraged. Organizational Enablement can be built. Transformation can be learned.

AI Superusers, in other words, are built, not born.

Non AI users are at the opposite end:

- **2.5x** more likely to associate work with stress
- **2x** more likely to report exhaustion

The AI Superuser



Vs. non-AI users:

- **15%** of today's workforce
- **1.75x** more optimistic about their careers
- **3.4x** more likely to say they are more satisfied with work than a year ago
- **1.75x** more prepared for the future of work
- **3.7x** more likely to feel secure in their role

What's next for the *future of knowledge work?*

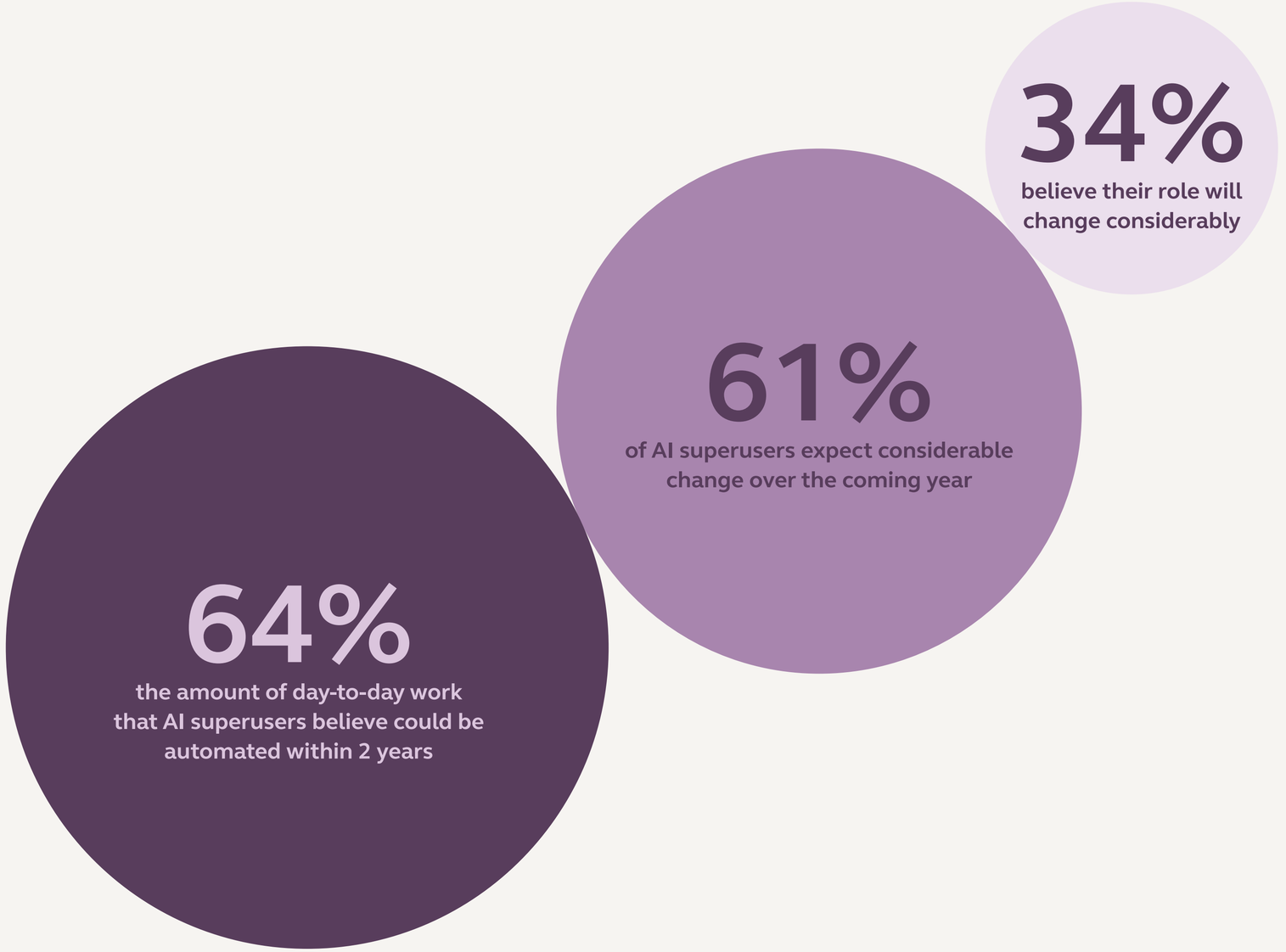
Let's start with one thing that is no longer in question. AI will continue to reshape the nature of knowledge work.

Three in five workers (61%) expect to be working with more AI support this time next year, while one in three (34%) believe their role will change considerably or fundamentally over the next twelve months. Asked how much of their day-to-day work AI could partially or fully perform within the next two years, the average estimate is 48%. Nearly one in three workers believe the figure will exceed 70%.

Perhaps the most interesting finding, however, is who expects the greatest change.

The workers already furthest along in this transition, the AI Superuser group, are 2.1x more likely to believe their role will continue evolving. 61% expect considerable change over the coming year, compared with 29% of everyone else. Far from settling into comfort, the people closest to the technology anticipate the fastest pace of change.

The next chapter outlines how to prepare for that change.



Chapter 4:

From *signals to strategy*

None of the three WorkLife Signals is a fixed trait.
Each one can be built. This chapter is the how.

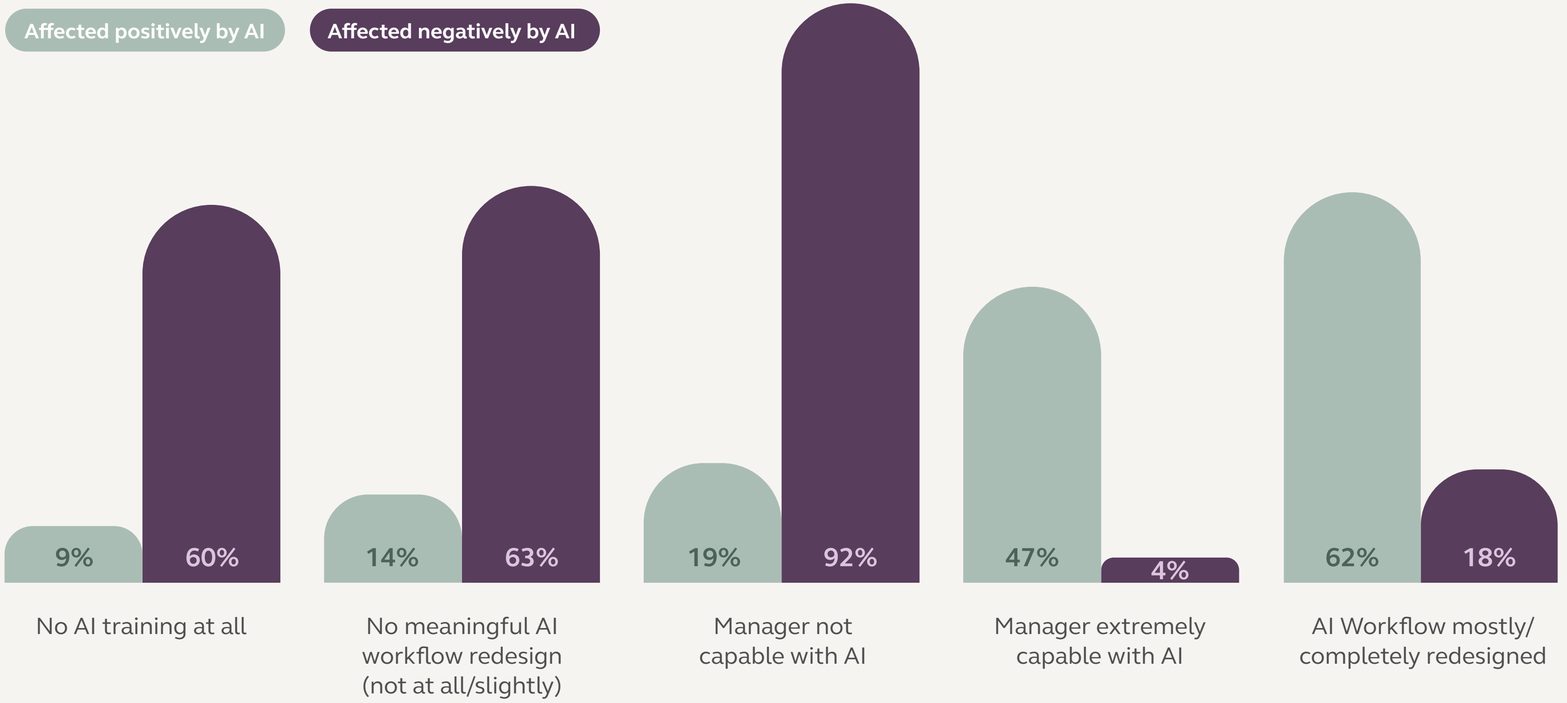
Great AI experiences are a *product of design*

Throughout this report, we've met two very different workforces. Workers thriving through the biggest change in a generation, and workers struggling to stay afloat. It would be easy to read that divide as a story about people. Early adopters and laggards. The curious and the cautious.

But as we've seen multiple times throughout the report, what separates a good AI experience is the decisions organizations do or don't make to build the right scaffolding around an evolving workforce.

Organizational structure, not skill, drives AI outcomes

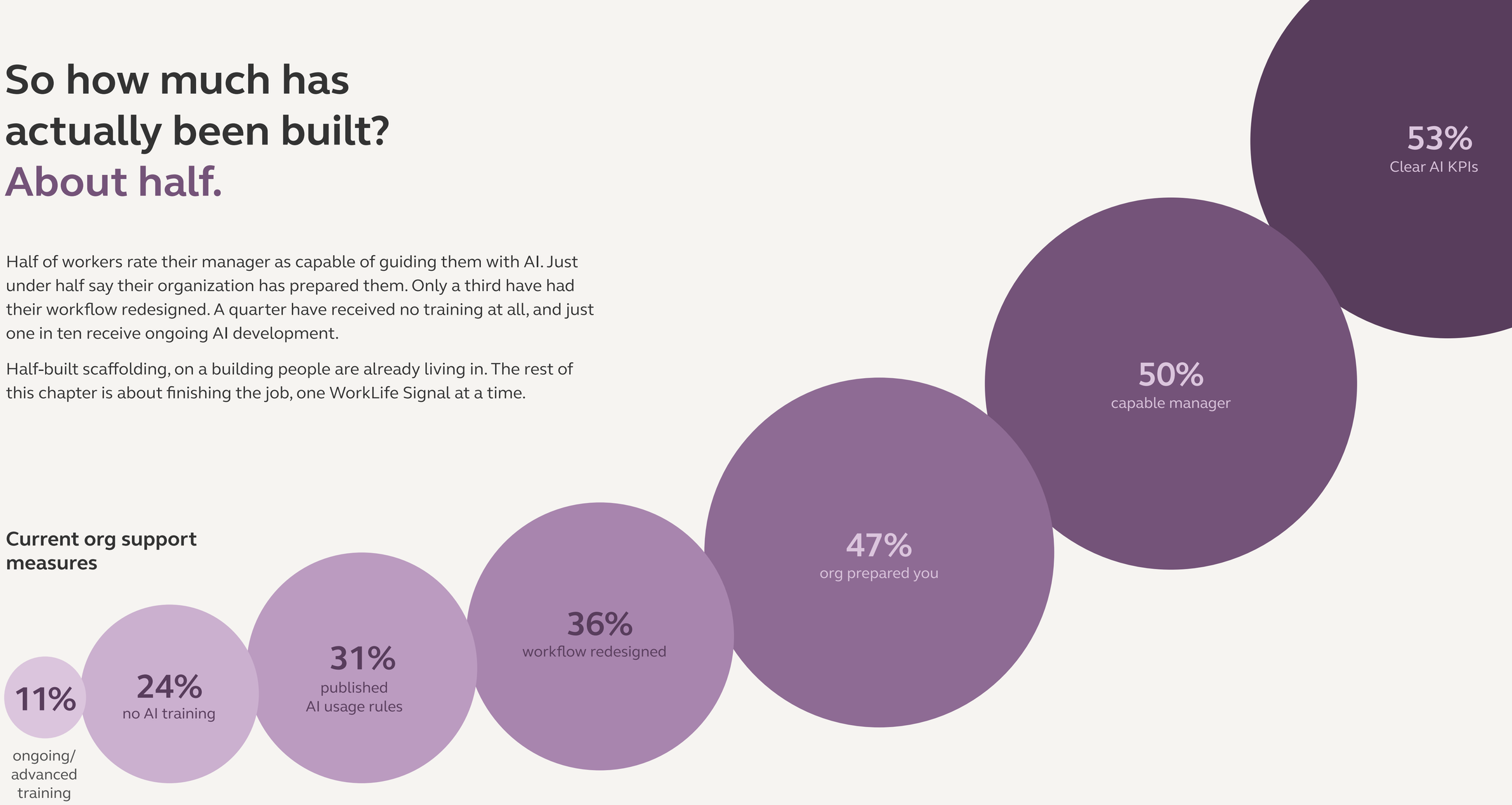
When we compare the workers who say AI has affected them very negatively with those who say it has been very positive, the difference isn't talent, tenure or job type. It's the organizational structures that surround them.



So how much has actually been built? About half.

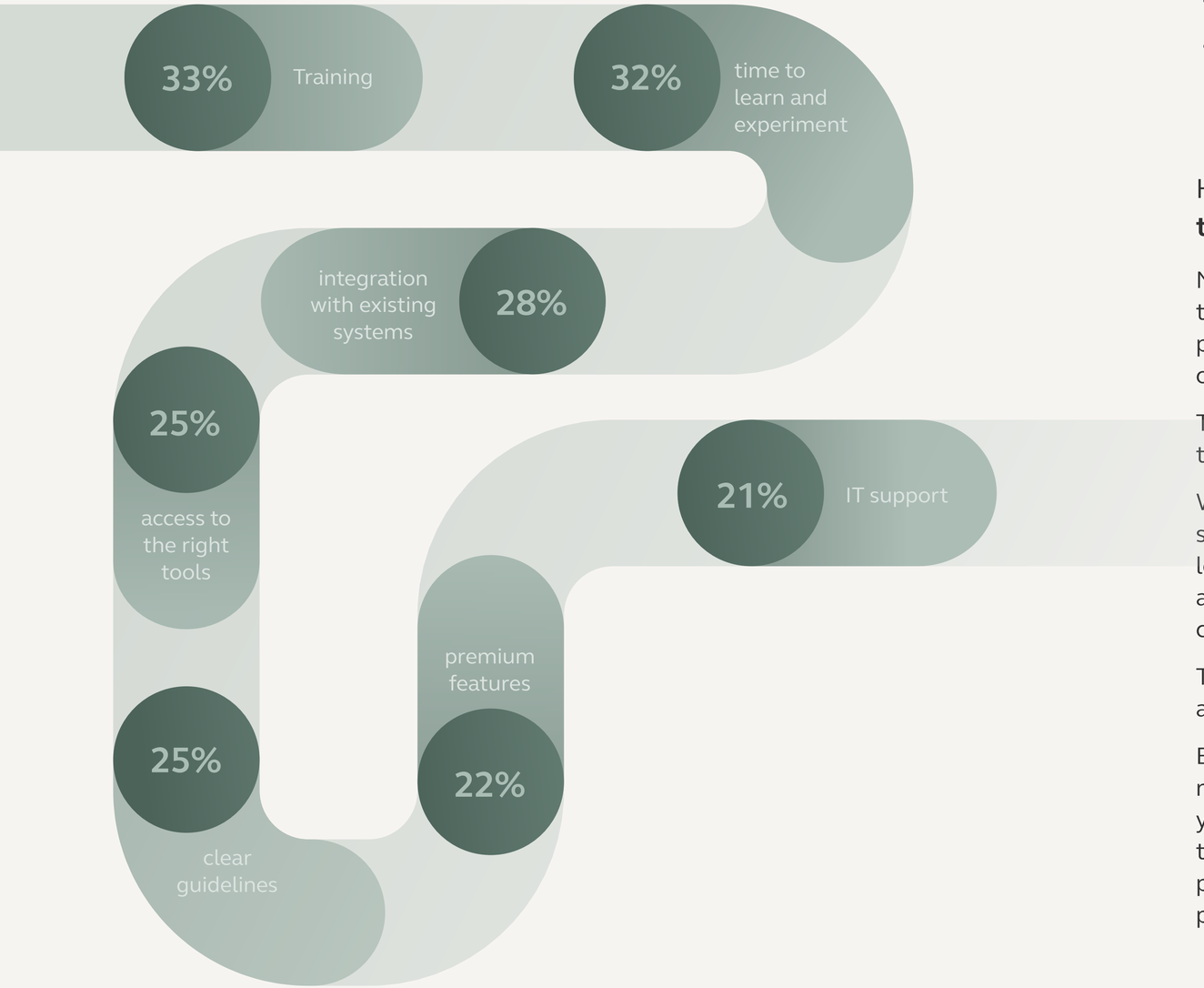
Half of workers rate their manager as capable of guiding them with AI. Just under half say their organization has prepared them. Only a third have had their workflow redesigned. A quarter have received no training at all, and just one in ten receive ongoing AI development.

Half-built scaffolding, on a building people are already living in. The rest of this chapter is about finishing the job, one WorkLife Signal at a time.



Current org support measures

What's missing to use AI effectively



Building Integration: *remove barriers, don't push adoption*

Here's the first piece of good news. When it comes to Integration, **the workforce has already done its part.**

Nine in ten workers have personally changed at least one aspect of the way they work because of AI. They've found their own tools, developed their own prompts, learnt from colleagues and quietly redesigned their own workflows, often without being asked.

The challenge now is less about driving adoption and more about removing the things that make adoption harder.

Workers are remarkably clear about what those barriers are. Around a third say they need more training. Almost as many say they simply need time to learn and experiment. Others point to poor integration with existing systems, access to the right tools and clearer guidance about what they can and cannot use.

The job for leaders is not to drive adoption. It is to audit this list, honestly, and address the areas that are falling short.

Earlier in the report we found that the most enabled workers are also the most likely to work beyond their organization's formal AI guidance. When your most capable people work beyond the official rules, resist the instinct to tighten them. Every instance of shadow AI is a worker testing something your policy hasn't caught up with yet. Treat it as a signal, update the rules to keep pace with practice.

Building Enablement: *start with managers, not workers*

If you can make only one investment this year, the data is unambiguous about where it should go.

Invest in managers.

Across almost every measure in this study, manager capability acts as a multiplier. Workers with highly capable managers are more likely to receive training, understand what's expected of them, work in redesigned workflows and feel prepared for AI-driven change. They also report dramatically higher career optimism.

And right now, half of workers don't describe their manager as capable of supporting them with AI.

That matters because managers don't just influence how people use AI. They shape the environment in which people learn, experiment and adapt. When managers have the confidence to lead through change, the benefits ripple across everything else.

Managers are the biggest multiplier, but they can't do it alone.

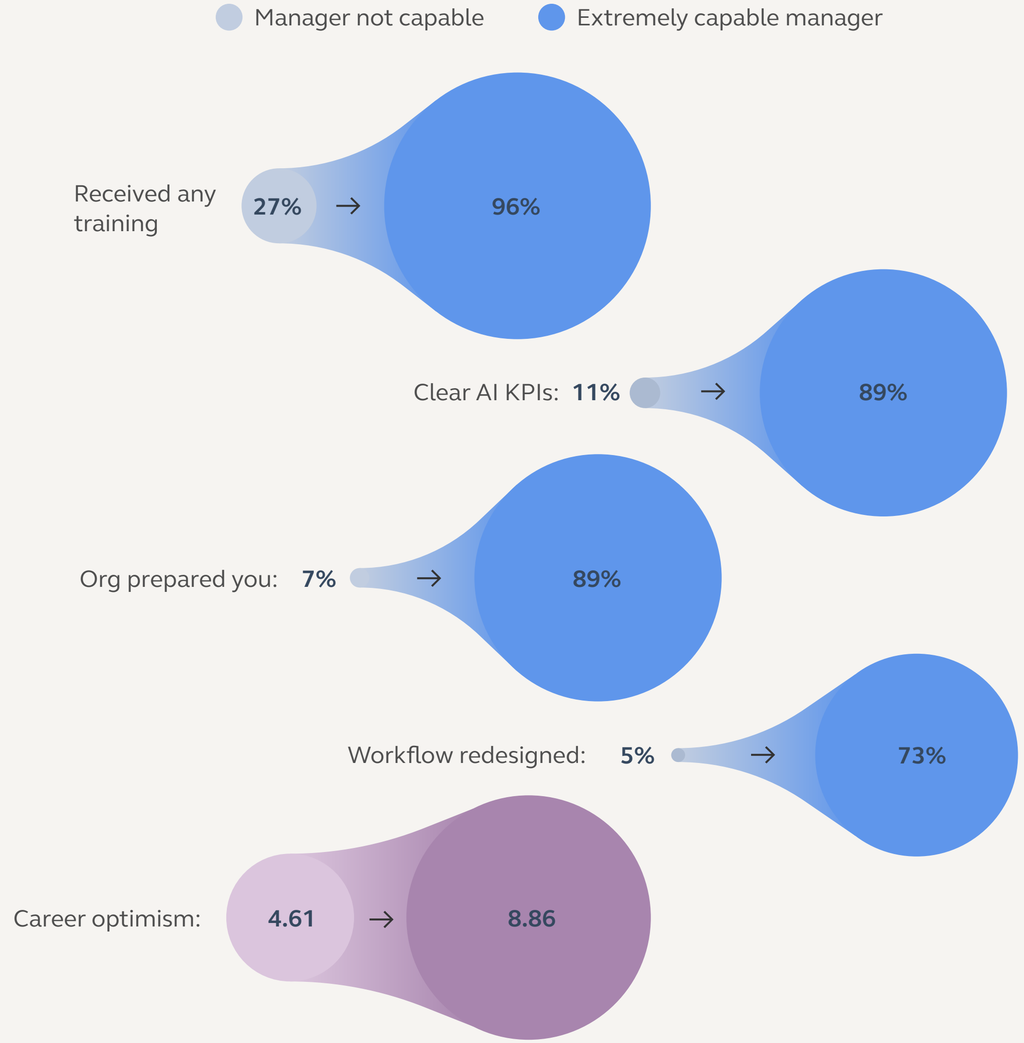
The organizations adapting fastest are also updating the systems around them. Expectations are becoming clearer, and roles are being redefined to reflect the work people actually do.

Today, barely half of workers have clear expectations for how AI should be used in their role. Almost half are still working to job descriptions that no longer reflect their day-to-day reality.

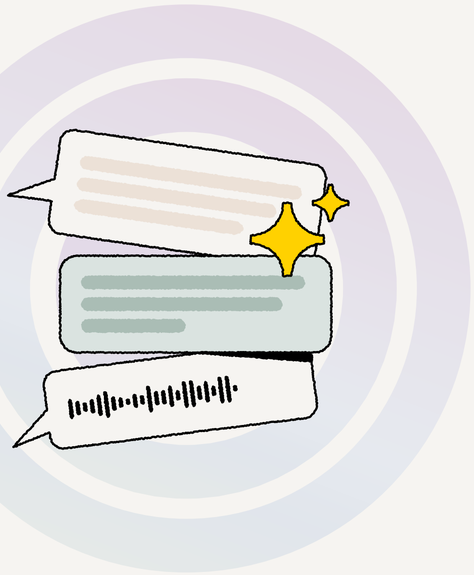
Manager capability starts the transition. Clear expectations and redesigned roles help make it stick.

The multiplier effect of manager capability

The same worker, under a different manager, reports a completely different experience of AI at work.



Building Transformation: *equip for conversational work*



Chapter 3 showed that the workers furthest along in this transition haven't simply increased how often they use AI. They've changed how they work with it. **They move naturally between typing and talking, using conversation to think through ideas, explore possibilities and orchestrate agentic work.**

We believe this is an early signal of where knowledge work is heading. As AI becomes less a tool for generating linear outputs and more a partner in delivering complex workflows, conversation will increasingly become the natural way people direct work.

That shift asks organizations to think differently. The first wave of AI has largely been about retrofitting: inserting AI into yesterday's workflows to make today's work faster. The bigger opportunity is to redesign work from the ground up around the strengths of both people and AI. The goal isn't simply to help people use AI more often. It's to help them work differently.

Our findings suggest that redesign depends on surprisingly practical foundations. Workers with access to hardware designed for conversational AI are about 40% more likely to regularly use voice as those without it. More than a third also identify hardware barriers, from reliable audio and better video to equipment that supports working on the move.

Those findings point to two essential requirements for conversational work. The first is frictionless interaction: the ability to move naturally between people and AI, wherever work happens to take place. The second is accurate pick up. The quality of the conversation increasingly determines the quality of the outcome.

That's why we see conversational AI as more than another interface. It's an emerging operating model for knowledge work. Organizations that continue to retrofit AI into existing processes will undoubtedly become more efficient. But the organizations that pull ahead will be those willing to redesign work itself, creating environments where people and AI can think, coordinate and solve problems together as naturally as colleagues do today.

The next phase of AI is work redesign. The organizations that pull ahead will be the ones rearchitecting tomorrow's workflows around the strengths of people and AI together, rather than simply layering AI onto the ways they do things today.

Who we are

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