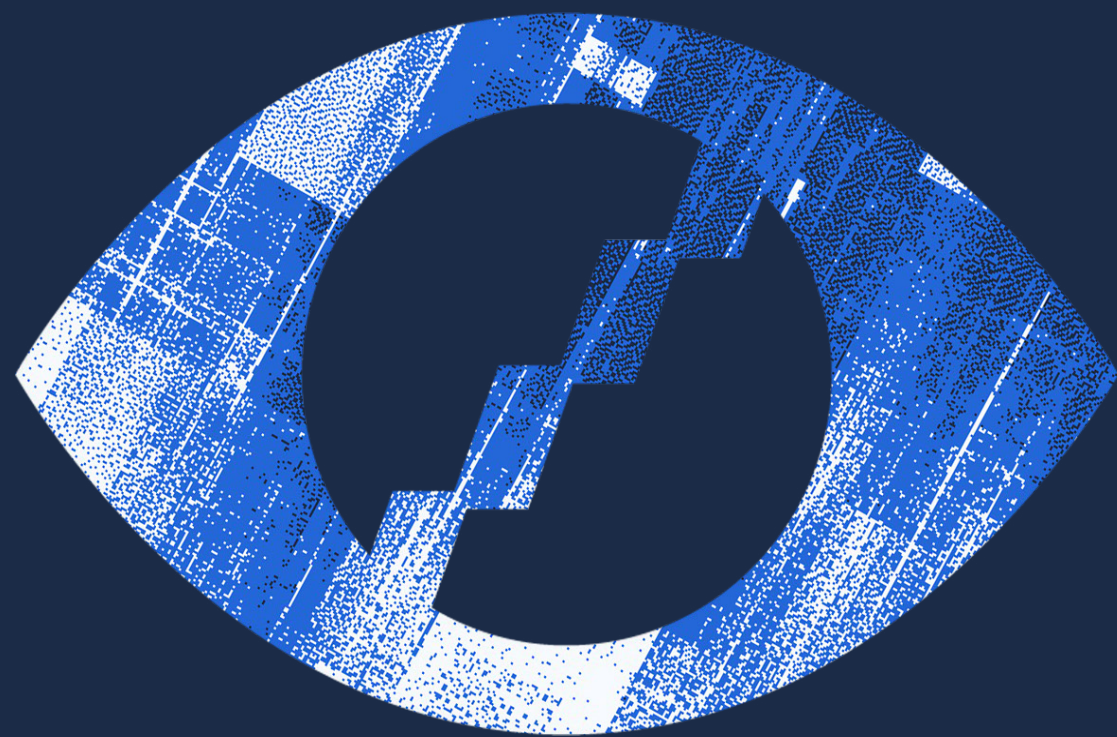
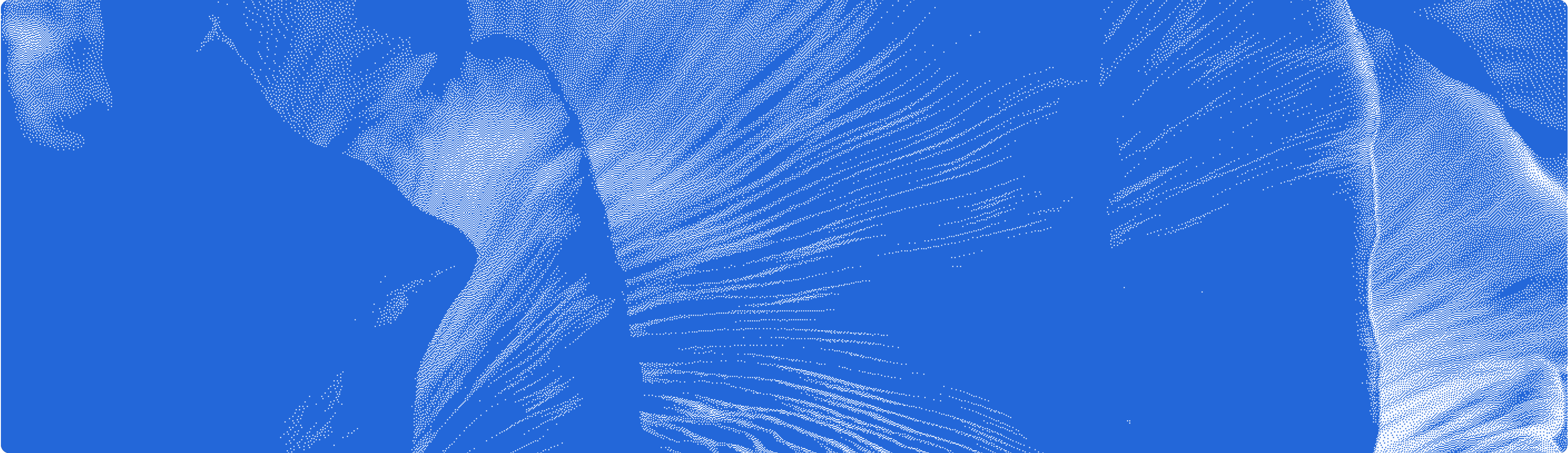




REPORT 2026

The AI Breakpoint

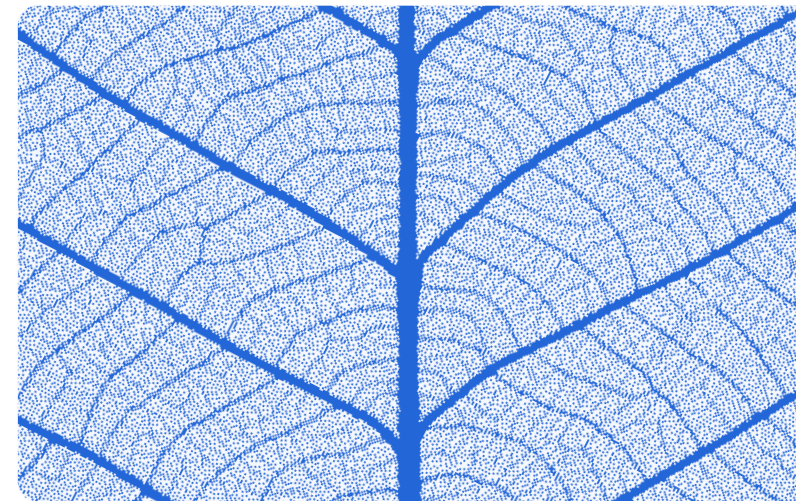
What happens when workers move
ahead of workplaces on AI



Contents

Context		Adoption and productivity		Workplace support	
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What is a breakpoint?



A breakpoint is the point where behaviour stops following the expected path.

It is where people get stuck, shift course, resist, disengage, work around a system or move ahead of the support designed for them.

Finding the behavioural breakpoint helps explain not just what people are doing, but why behaviour is changing – and what can move people forward.

Why this matters

The workplace AI story is often framed around fear, resistance and job loss.

But our research points to a different story. In many Australian workplaces the challenge is no longer convincing workers to use AI. Many are already using it, and using it more often. Instead, the workplace systems meant to guide, train and support workers have not kept pace.

This is the AI Breakpoint for Australian workplaces: worker AI adoption is moving faster than organisational AI support.

In practice, many workers are teaching themselves how to use AI, often without training, guidance or rules about how the technology should be used safely and effectively in their role.

Our research shows why this matters. Workers who receive formal AI training, work in organisations with clear AI rules and policies, and believe their workplace is prepared for AI are a lot more likely to use AI confidently, report productivity gains and trust how AI-related change is being managed.

Organisational support is therefore one of the strongest differentiators of successful AI outcomes.

This transition is not happening at the same pace across industries. Some are embedding AI into everyday work while others remain in much earlier stages of AI maturity. As a result, workers' experiences of AI increasingly depend on where they work, the role they perform and the support their organisation provides.

The opportunity is significant. AI is already becoming part of everyday work for millions of Australians, but only a minority are being transformed through its use. As businesses move from experimenting with AI to expecting measurable productivity gains, organisational capability will increasingly determine who captures those benefits and who falls behind.

The findings suggest Australia's AI challenge is no longer primarily one of adoption. It is one of organisational readiness. **This report explores how Australian workplaces are navigating that transition, why some industries are progressing faster than others, and what employers can do to turn widespread AI use into confident, productive and trusted ways of working.**

Key findings

- 01

AI use is becoming mainstream

Half of Australian workers now use AI at least weekly, and more than half say their use has increased over the past year.
- 02

Organisational support drives AI success

Workers receiving AI training, clear workplace rules and organisational preparedness are substantially more likely to be confident, productive and trust how AI-related change is managed
- 03

Deep productivity gains remain uneven

Two in five workers report productivity gains from AI, but fewer than one in ten say AI has made them much more productive.
- 04

Industries are moving at different speeds

Technology, media and finance are embedding AI into everyday work, while other industries remain in much earlier stages of organisational maturity.
- 05

Workplaces remain underprepared

Only one in four workers believe their workplace is highly prepared for AI. Nearly two in three have received no formal AI training and almost half say their workplace has no clear AI rules.
- 06

AI use at work is often unguided

More than two in five workers use AI at work without clear guidance from their employer.
- 07

Workforce change is already visible

One in three workers have seen AI-related workforce change. The most common shift is a reduction in junior or entry-level tasks.
- 08

Workers fear dependence more than losing jobs

Workers are more concerned about becoming too reliant on AI than about their job or role being displaced.

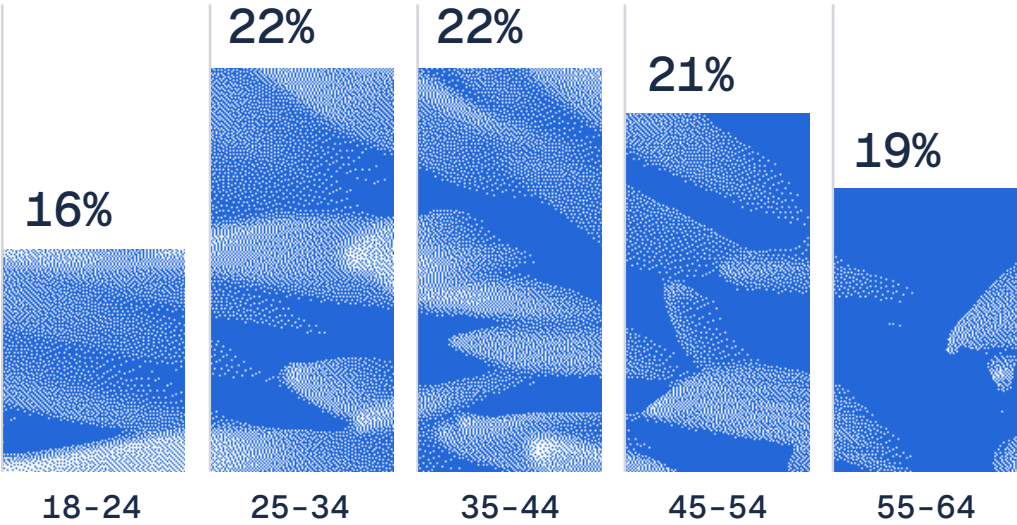
Who we heard from

Australian workers aged 18-64
n=1,006

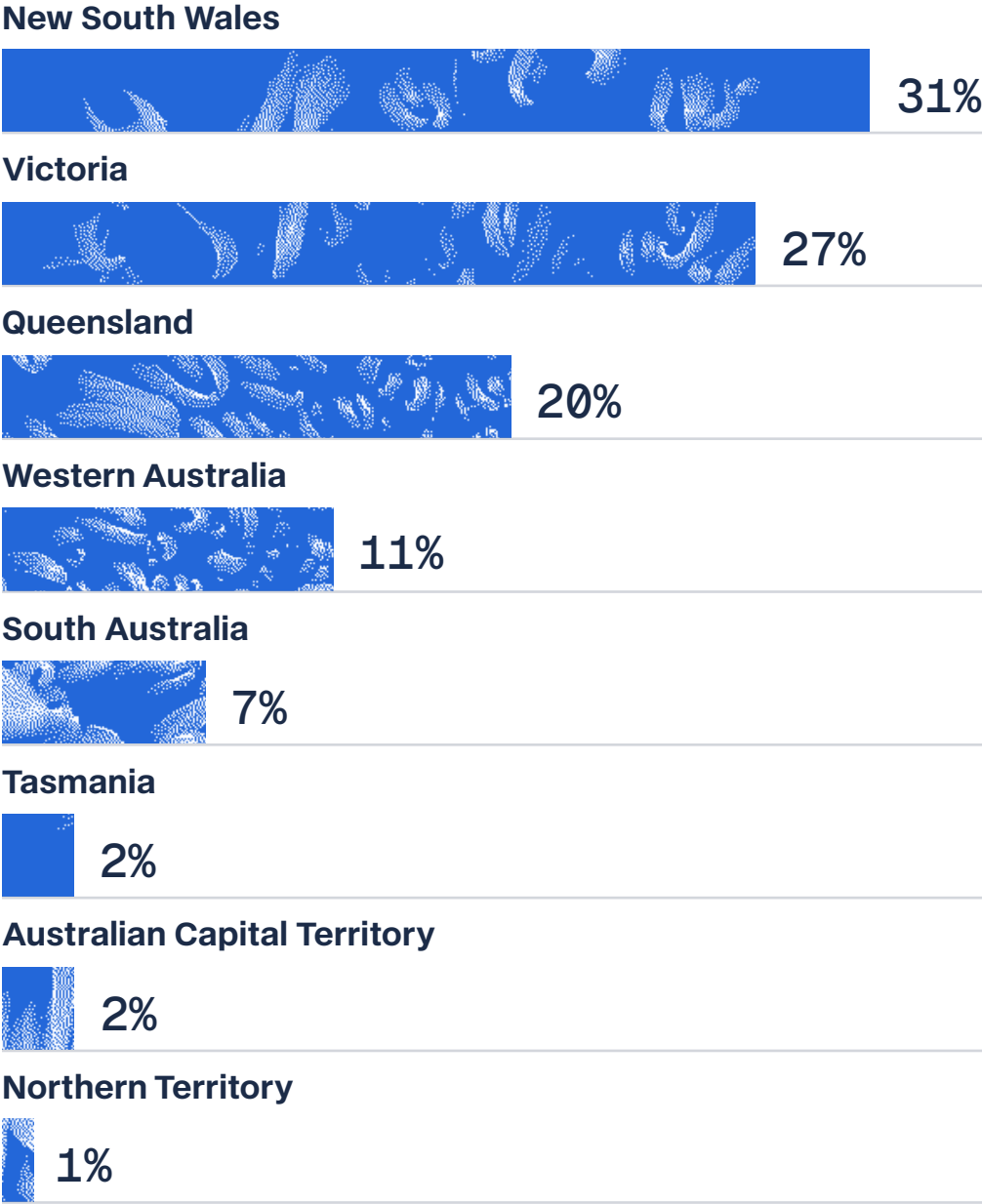
Survey Date
May 2026

The sample includes workers across different ages, locations and employment arrangements, providing a broad view of how AI use, workplace support and workforce change are being experienced across Australia.

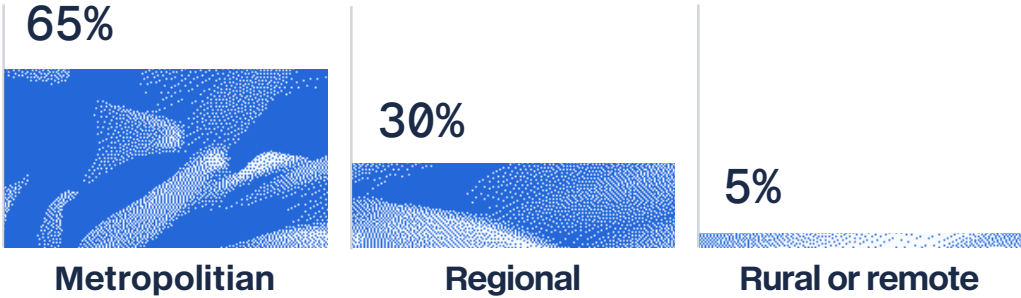
Age



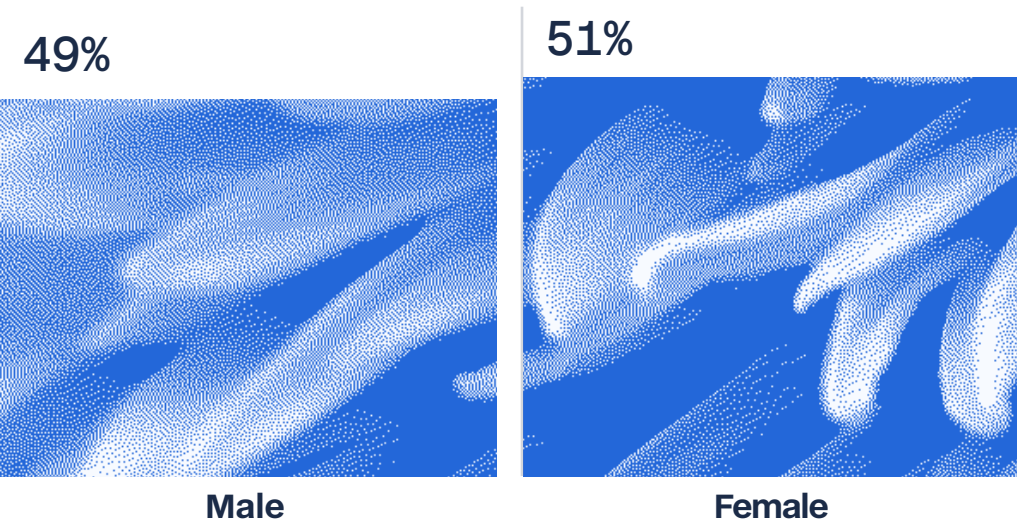
State



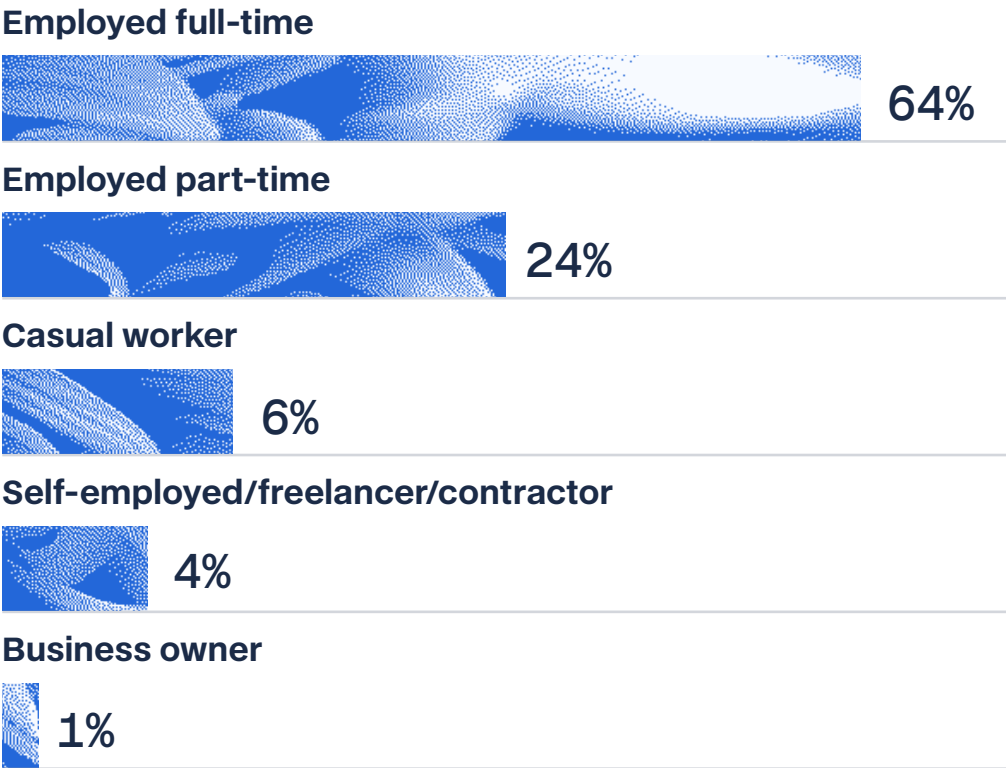
Area

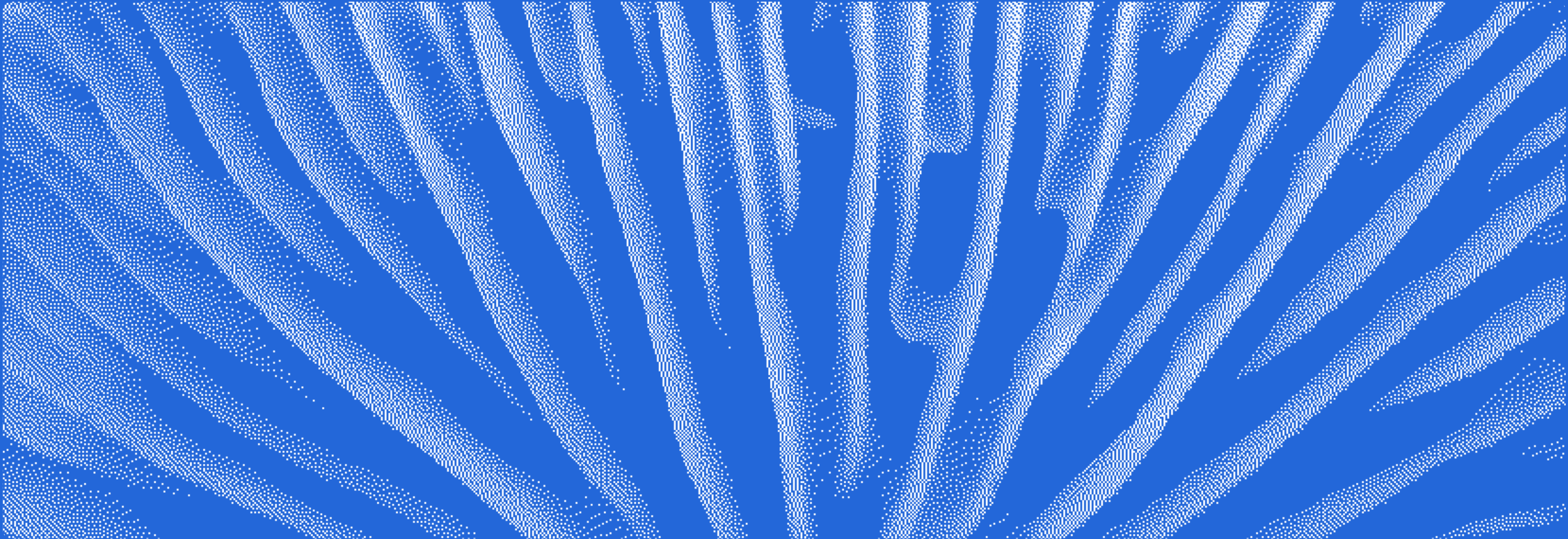


Gender



Employment





**Adoption and
productivity**

AI use is rising faster than confidence in using it for work

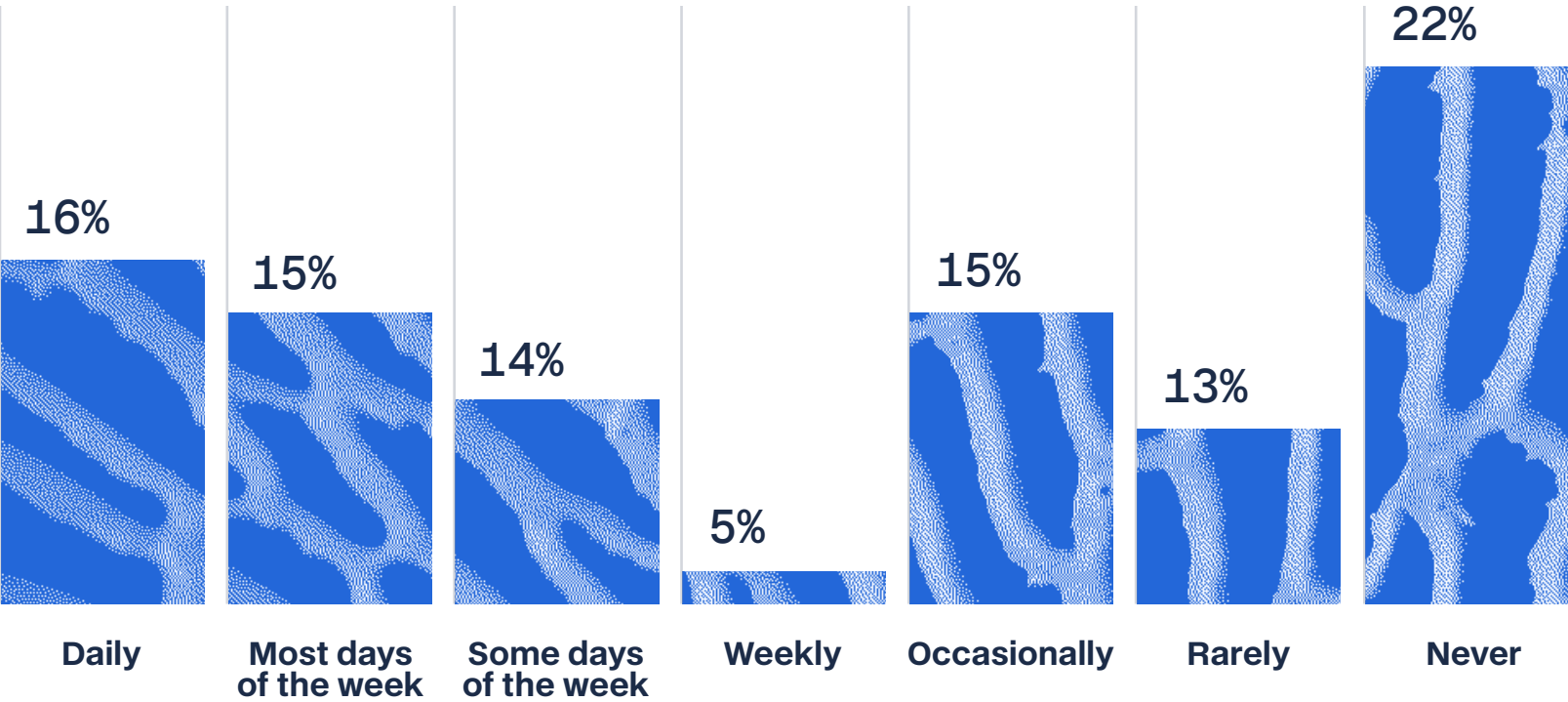
When it comes to how often they use AI, Australian workers are split into two even camps. Half use AI at least weekly, while half use it only occasionally, rarely or never.

Usage is also moving upward, with one in two workers (52%) increasing their AI use over the past year, while just 3% have decreased their usage, and a quarter (28%) remain at the same level.

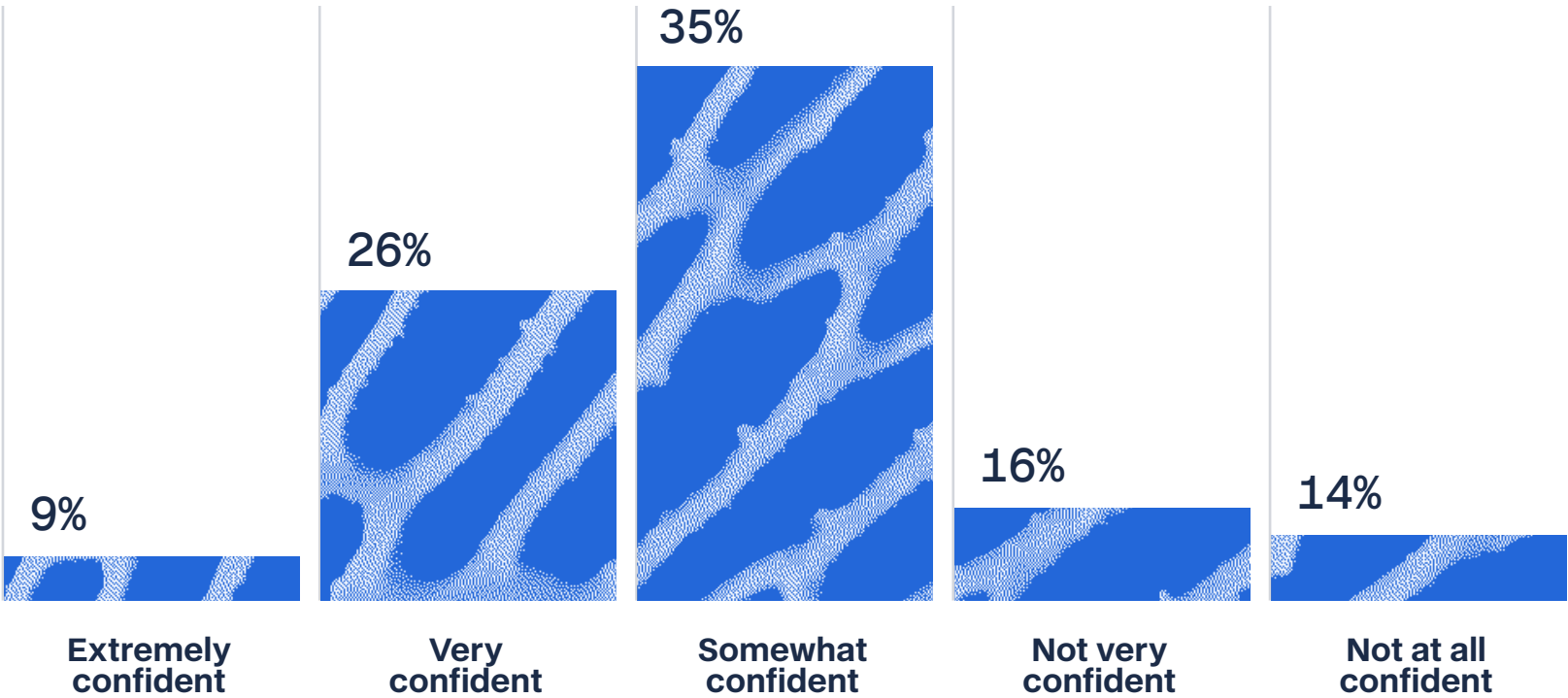
Confidence in using AI for work, however, is still catching up to broader AI use. Only one in three workers are highly confident in using AI for work-related tasks, rising to 61% among those who use AI at least weekly, compared with just 13% among those who use it occasionally, rarely or never.

But as confidence diverges, the next question is whether growing AI use is translating into meaningful productivity gains.

Frequency of general AI use among Australian workers



Confidence in using AI for work



AI is widespread, but deep productivity gains remain narrow

AI is already touching a large share of Australian work. Nearly three in four workers say AI assists with at least some of what they do, but only one in five say it assists with a substantial share of their work.

The productivity gains are more limited. Two in five Australian workers say AI has made them more productive over the past 12 months, but fewer than one in ten say it has made them much more productive.

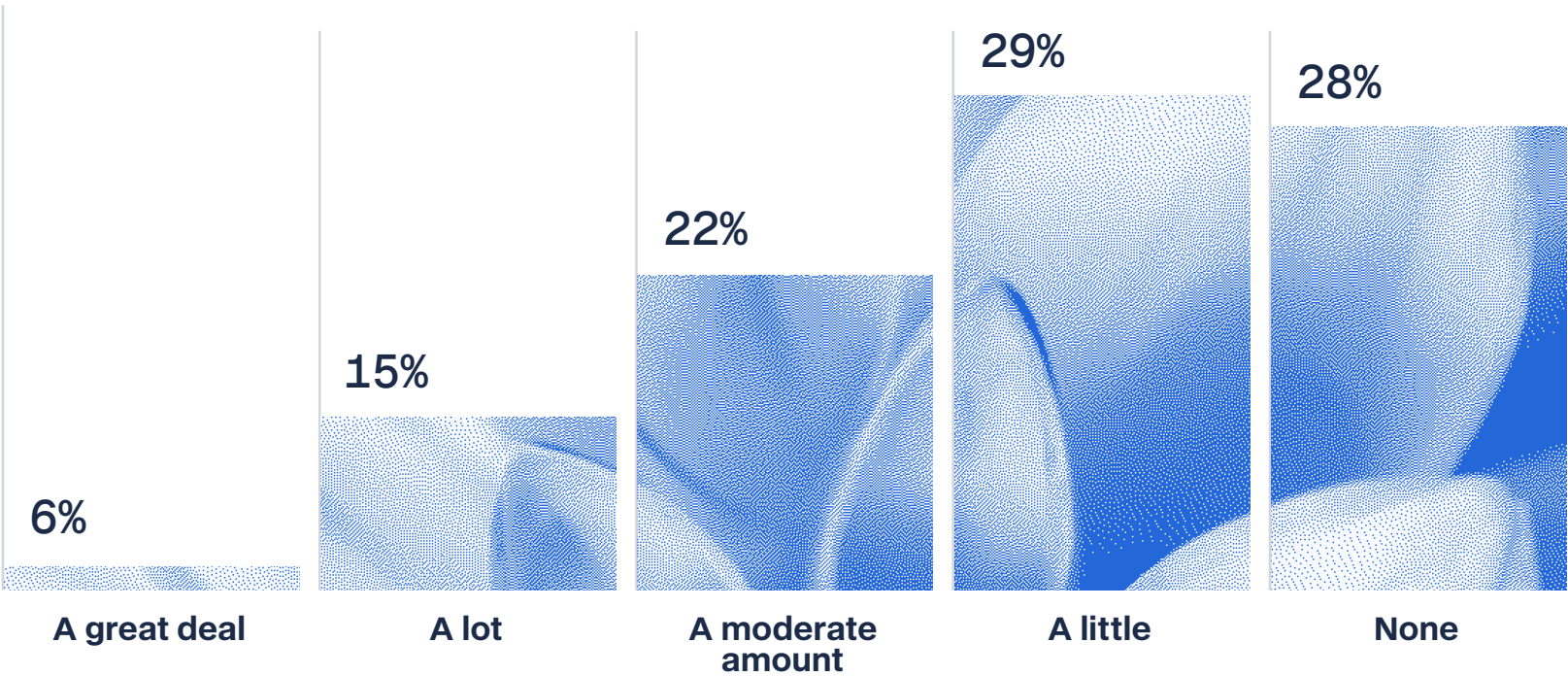
Based on these findings, more than 10 million Australian workers now have AI assisting with at least some of their work, but only around 1.3 million say it has made them much more productive.

This is the productivity challenge for Australian workplaces: turning broad AI assistance into deeper, more consistent productivity gains.

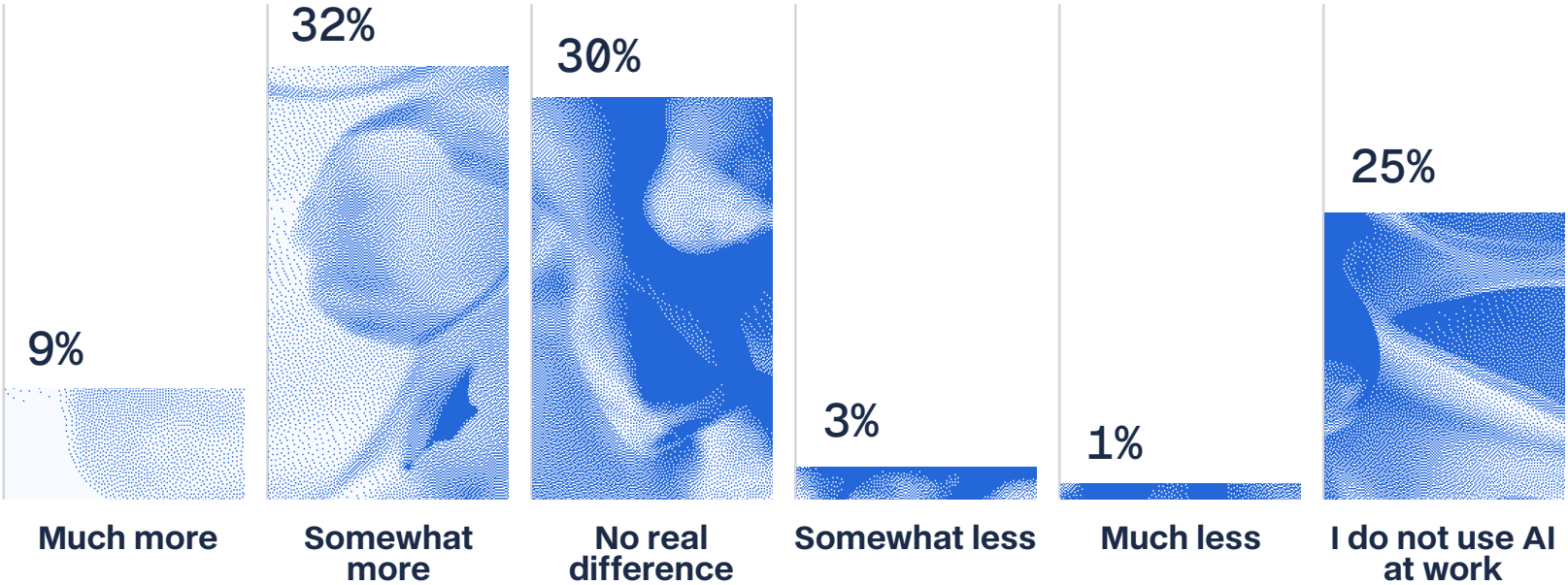
Workers who have embedded AI more deeply into their day-to-day workflows are more likely to report productivity gains. Among workers who say AI assists with a great deal of their work, 90% say it has made them more productive, compared with 31% among those who use AI only a little for work.

More frequent AI use, however, does not automatically translate into deeper productivity gains. What matters is whether AI is being applied to the kinds of tasks where it can create deeper, repeatable value.

How much work AI assists with



Impact of AI on worker productivity



The strongest AI gains appear in role-specific workflows

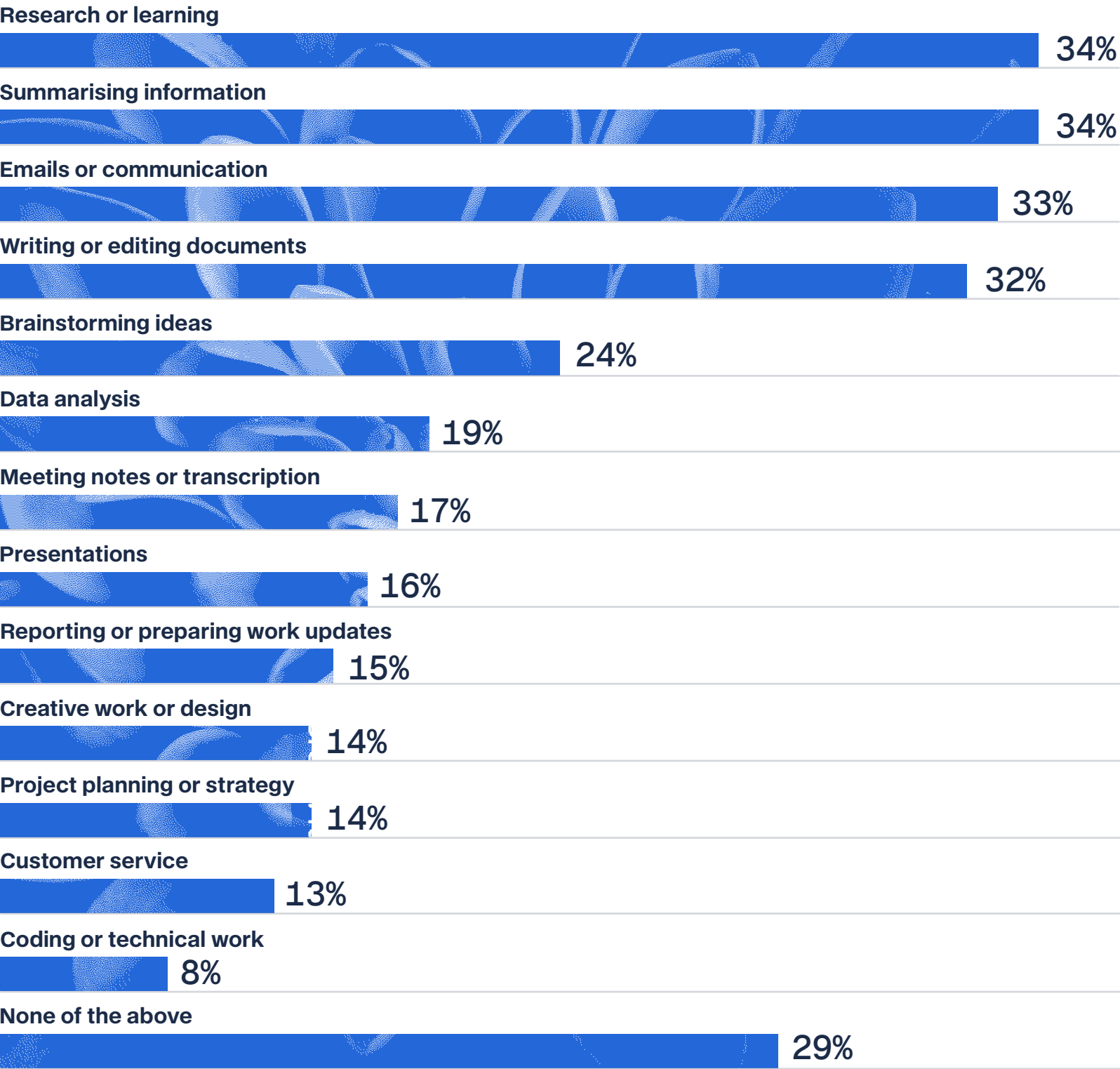
AI is most widely used for research, summarising, emails and writing. But stronger productivity gains appear in more structured or role-specific workflows that remain less common among workers.

While just 9% of workers overall say AI has made them much more productive, this rises to 27% among workers using AI for project planning or strategy, 25% for data analysis, 23% for coding or technical work, 23% for presentations and 22% for creative work or design.

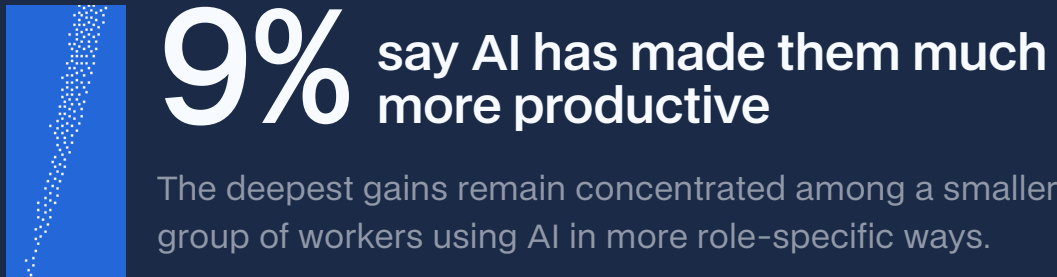
This suggests AI's deepest productivity gains are not necessarily coming from the tasks where it is most commonly used. They are more concentrated in areas where AI is being applied to specific workflows, outputs or decisions.

Together, these patterns point to a broader productivity ladder: many workers are using AI, but the biggest gains appear when it becomes part of specific workflows rather than occasional task support.

Work tasks AI is being used for



Significant productivity gain



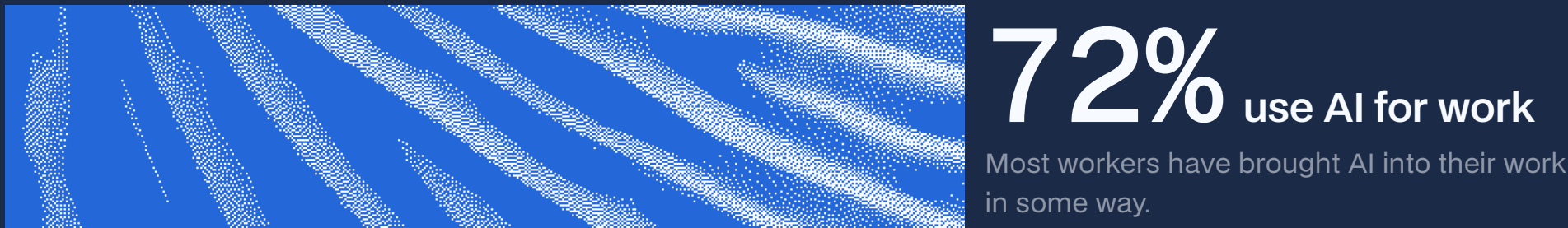
Moderate productivity gain



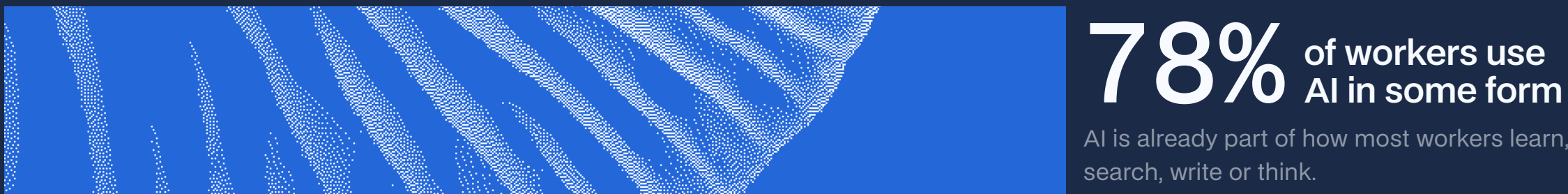
Embedded work use



Workplace AI use



General AI use



The AI Productivity Ladder

The AI Productivity Ladder shows how broad AI use narrows into deeper workplace impact. While most Australian workers use AI in some form, fewer have embedded it into a meaningful share of their role, fewer again are seeing clear productivity gains, and only a small minority say AI has made them much more productive.

Adoption figures alone can therefore overstate AI maturity as widespread use does not necessarily mean the technology has become embedded deeply enough to transform productivity. This suggests the productivity opportunity is not simply getting more workers to use AI more often. It is helping them move up the ladder – from occasional prompts and light task support into role-specific AI capability.

For employers, the task is to identify the workflows where AI is already creating the strongest productivity gains, then make those gains repeatable across teams. As it stands, workers are not moving up this ladder evenly. Some groups are already reporting higher AI use, greater confidence and stronger productivity gains than others.

The higher workers climb, the more AI becomes part of their job

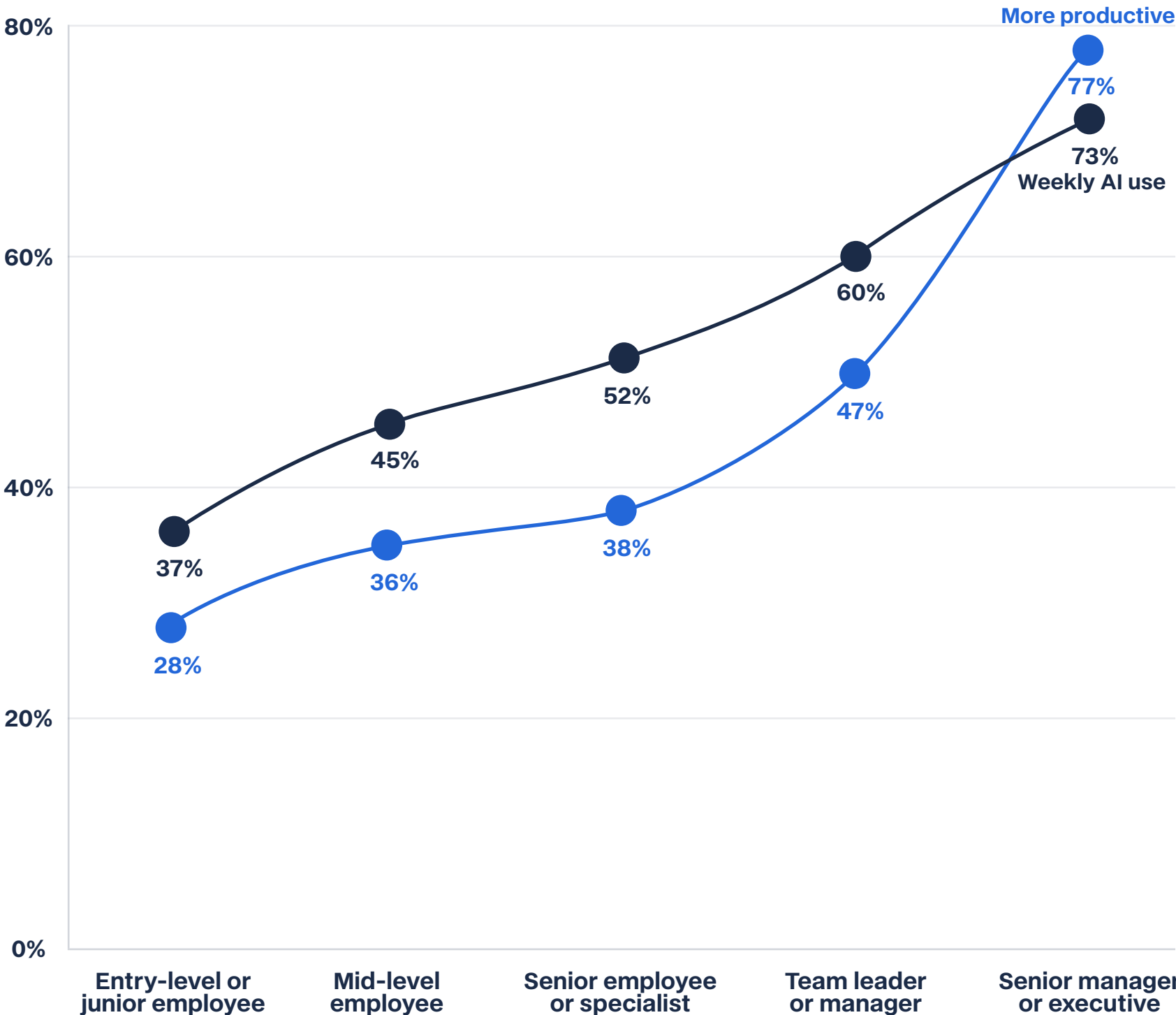
In Australian workplaces AI becomes more deeply embedded as employees move up the workplace ladder into leadership roles. Only around a third of entry-level and junior workers use AI weekly, compared to nearly three quarters of senior managers and executives.

The productivity gap is even more pronounced, with more than three in four senior leaders reporting AI has made them more productive, compared with just one in four entry-level workers.

This reflects how AI is experienced differently across organisational levels, with senior leaders consistently reporting more positive experiences and attitudes towards AI.

Together, these findings suggest AI is becoming a defining feature of senior roles, creating a widening gap between how senior and junior employees experience work. This raises important questions about how workplace expectations and career progression may evolve over time.

Workers who use AI at least weekly and those who say AI makes them more productive, by role level.



Australian industries are moving through the AI transition at different speeds

While AI use has spread across every industry, the pace of adoption and the productivity gains workers report vary considerably between them.

Workers in technology, media and telecommunications, financial and insurance services, and professional, scientific and technical services are the most likely to use AI regularly and to report productivity gains.

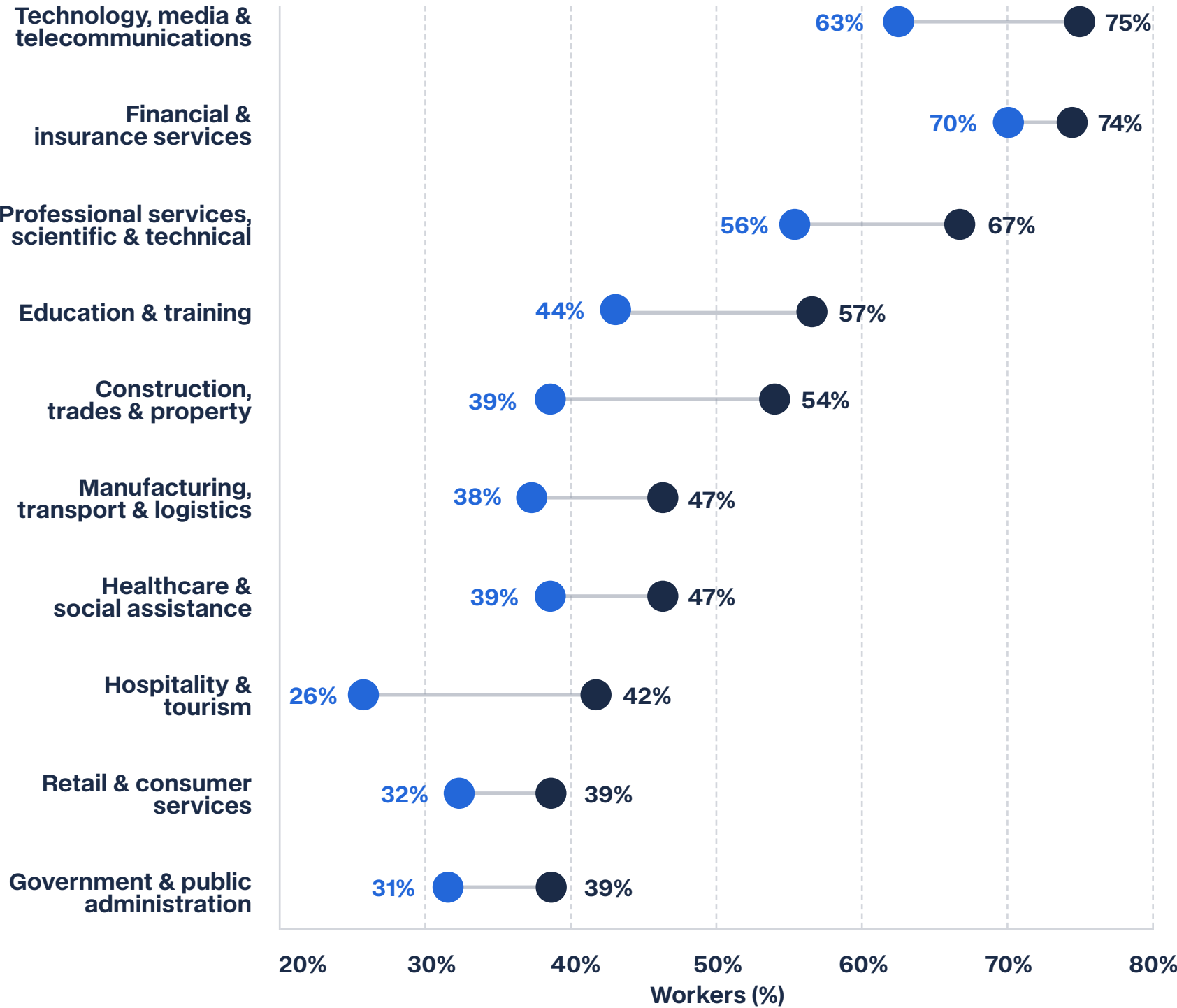
At the other end of the spectrum, government and public administration reports the lowest level of

weekly AI use with relatively modest productivity gains, alongside retail and consumer services and hospitality and tourism.

The findings suggest industries are beginning to separate not simply by AI adoption, but by how effectively organisations are helping workers translate AI into productive work. As AI adoption continues, the gap between industries may become an increasingly important driver of productivity and competitive advantage.

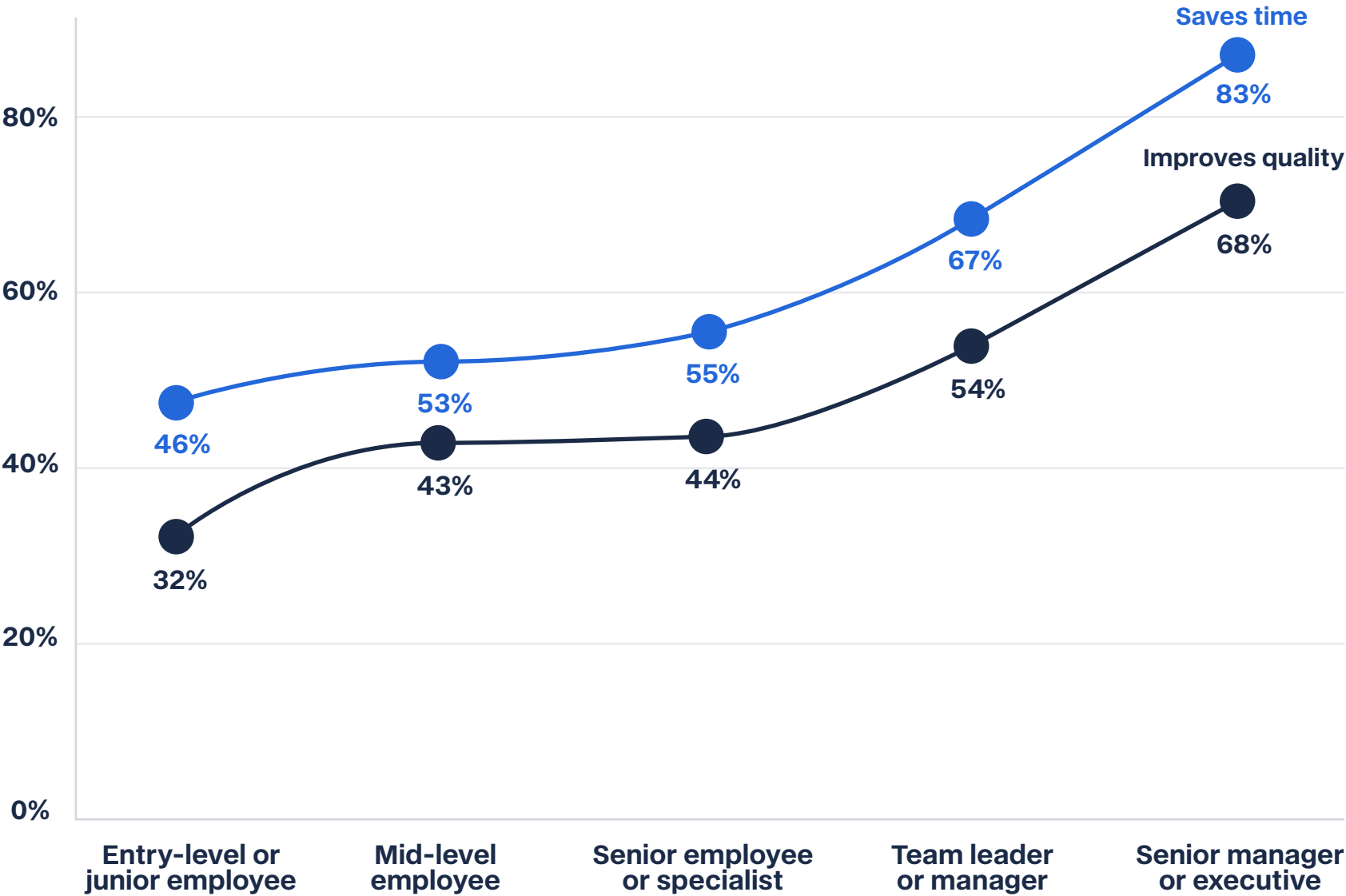
Workers using AI at least weekly and those reporting they are more productive from using it, by industry. Industries further to the right are further through the AI transition.

More productive Weekly AI use



The benefits of AI are not shared equally

Workers who say AI saves them time and those who say it improves the quality of their work, by role level.

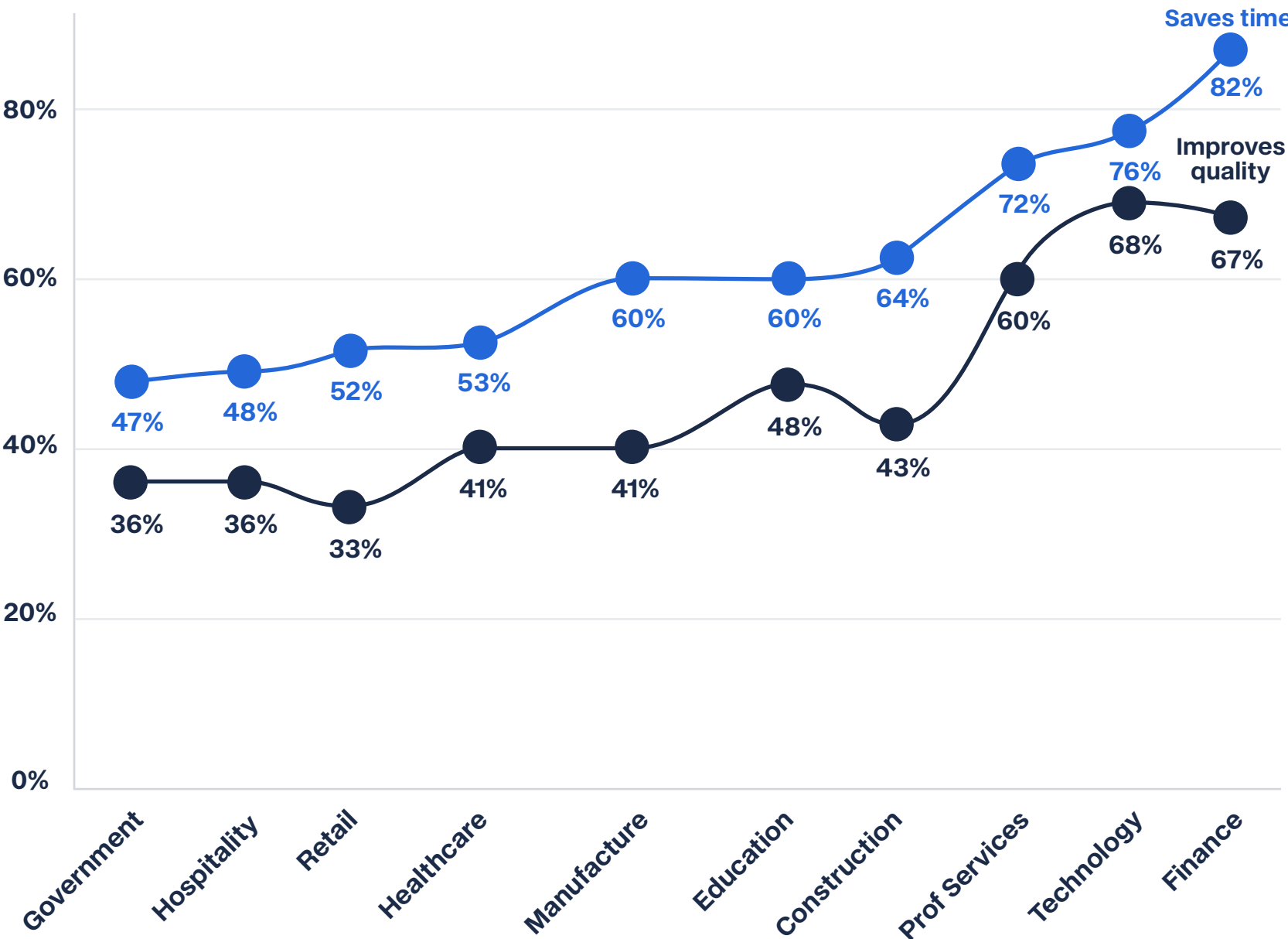


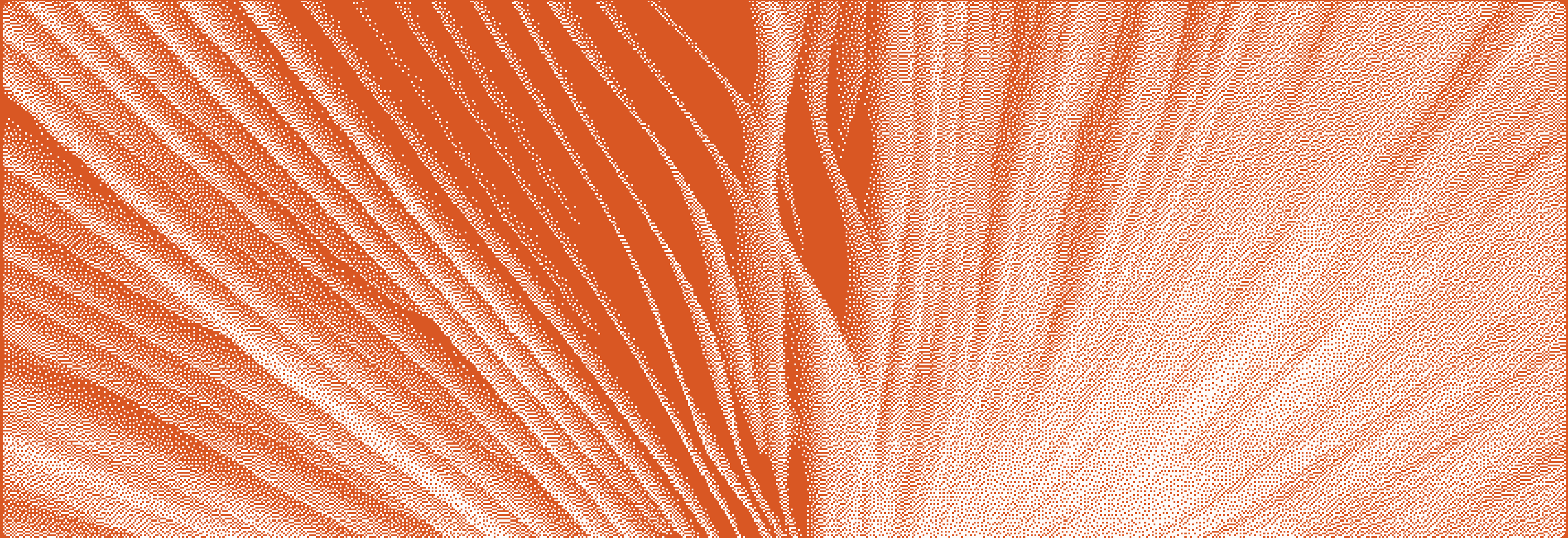
While more than half of Australian workers say AI saves them time (57%) and close to one in two say it improves the quality of their work (45%), these benefits are far from evenly distributed.

Senior leaders and workers in finance and technology are substantially more likely than junior employees and workers in other industries to report that AI delivers meaningful day-to-day value.

Workers who say that AI saves them time and those who say it improves the quality of their work, by industry.

Note: Industry titles abbreviated.





**Workplace
support**

AI adoption is outpacing organisational support

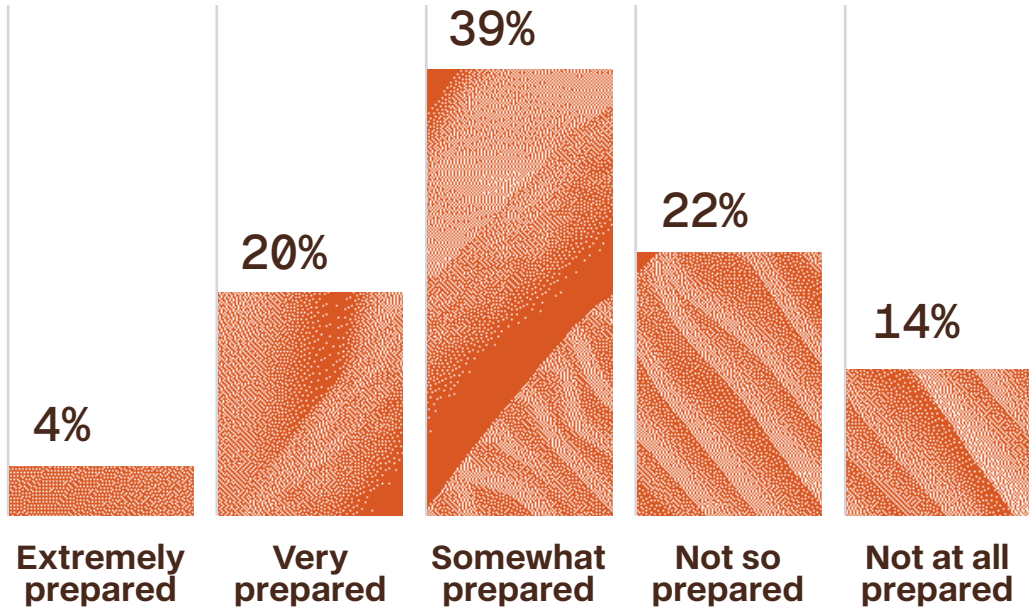
While workers are already bringing AI into their work, many workplaces have not yet built the systems to support that use. Less than a quarter of workers say their workplace is highly prepared for AI, nearly two in three have received no formal AI training, and close to half say their workplace has no clear rules or policies for using the technology.

Together, these findings point to a growing gap between worker adoption and organisational support. Rather than developing AI capability through shared workplace systems, many workers are building it on their own.

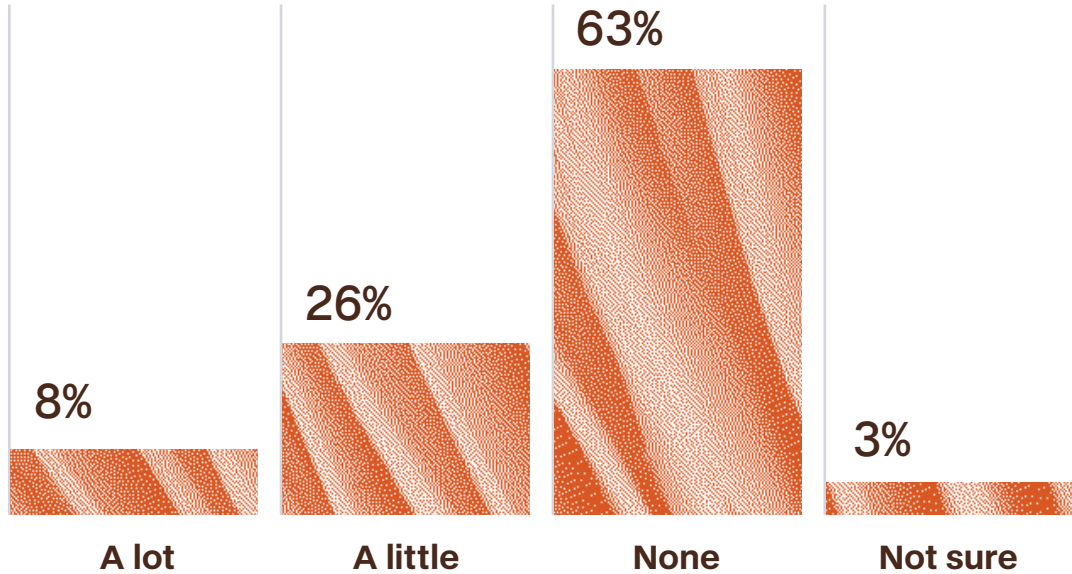
The cost of this gap runs in two directions. Organisations may miss productivity gains because AI use remains narrow or inconsistent, while also taking on avoidable risk as employees make their own decisions about privacy, disclosure and quality control.

Without common guidance, organisations lose the consistency needed to scale AI effectively. Different teams develop different ways of using the technology, making quality, governance and productivity harder to manage. The findings that follow explore how this gap is shaping the way Australian workers learn, use and experience AI at work.

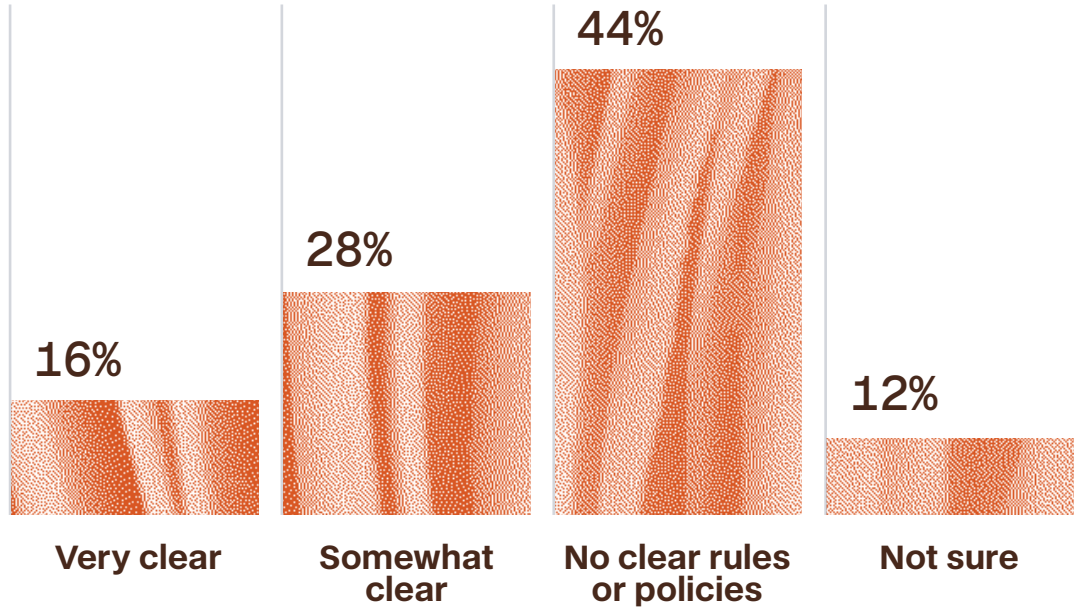
Perceived workplace preparedness for AI



Formal AI training received from workplaces



Presence of clear workplace AI rules or policies



Organisational support varies sharply across industries

The national figures of workplace AI support mask substantial differences between industries. Workers in technology, media and telecommunications and financial and insurance services report some of the strongest organisational support for AI, while it begins to fade across other industries.

The significance of these measures is that they

perform different functions. Training helps worker understand what AI can actually do in their role. Clear rules reduce uncertainty about how it can be used. Preparedness signals overall perceived capability.

In many industries, rules around AI use have developed further than the training and workplace preparedness needed to support it.

Workers reporting formal AI training, those reporting workplace AI rules and policies, and those rating their workplace as well prepared for AI, by industry.

Workers 10% 70%

Technology, media & telecommunications	58%	70%	56%
Financial & insurance services	62%	67%	46%
Professional services, scientific & technical	42%	57%	36%
Education & training	45%	54%	24%
Government & public administration	38%	58%	11%
Manufacturing, transport & logistics	38%	44%	19%
Healthcare & social assistance	23%	39%	20%
Retail & consumer services	25%	30%	22%
Hospitality & Tourism	22%	30%	16%
Construction, trades & property	23%	27%	18%
	AI training	AI rules	AI prepared

In workers' own words

“

It hasn't really been utilised in our workplace and there has been no training provided on how to use it, just that it is available.

Female, 25–34, Government and public administration, Queensland, Regional

“

I see AI influencing strategic planning, decision-making, and how teams approach productivity and innovation. At the same time, it is increasing the need to continuously adapt skills, establish clear governance, and ensure employees use AI responsibly and effectively.

Male, 25–34, Technology, media and telecommunications, Victoria, Metropolitan

“

By not actively investing in AI we are falling behind.

Male, 45–54, Government and public administration, Queensland, Regional

Most workplace AI use is open, but much of it is unguided

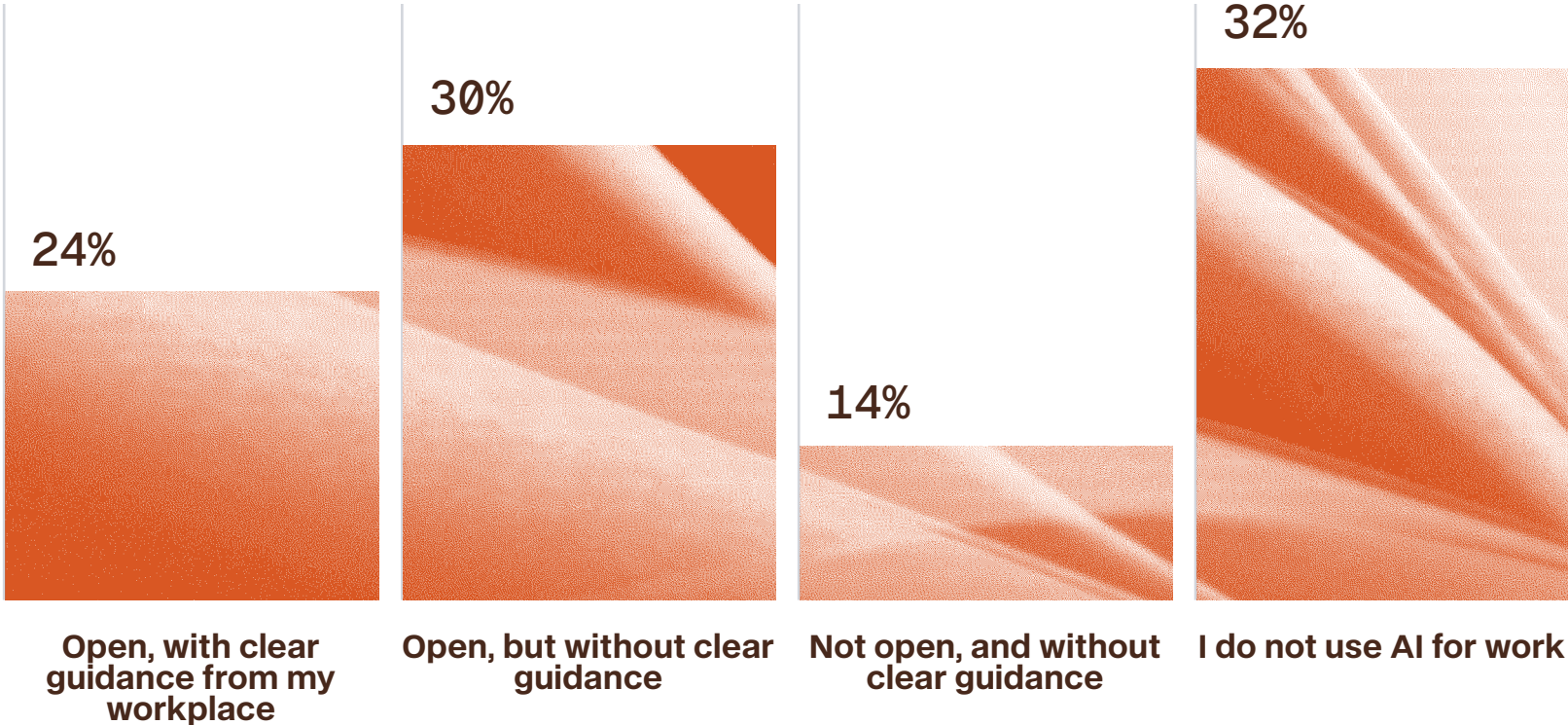
More than half of Australian workers use AI openly at work, but fewer than a quarter do so with clear guidance from their workplace. Taken together, 44% of workers are using AI at work without clear guidance from their employer.

Only 9% of workers say they regularly use AI for work without their employer or manager knowing, but 32% have done so at least occasionally. This shows the key issue is not hidden usage, it is that many are using it in plain sight, but without clear rules, training or support.

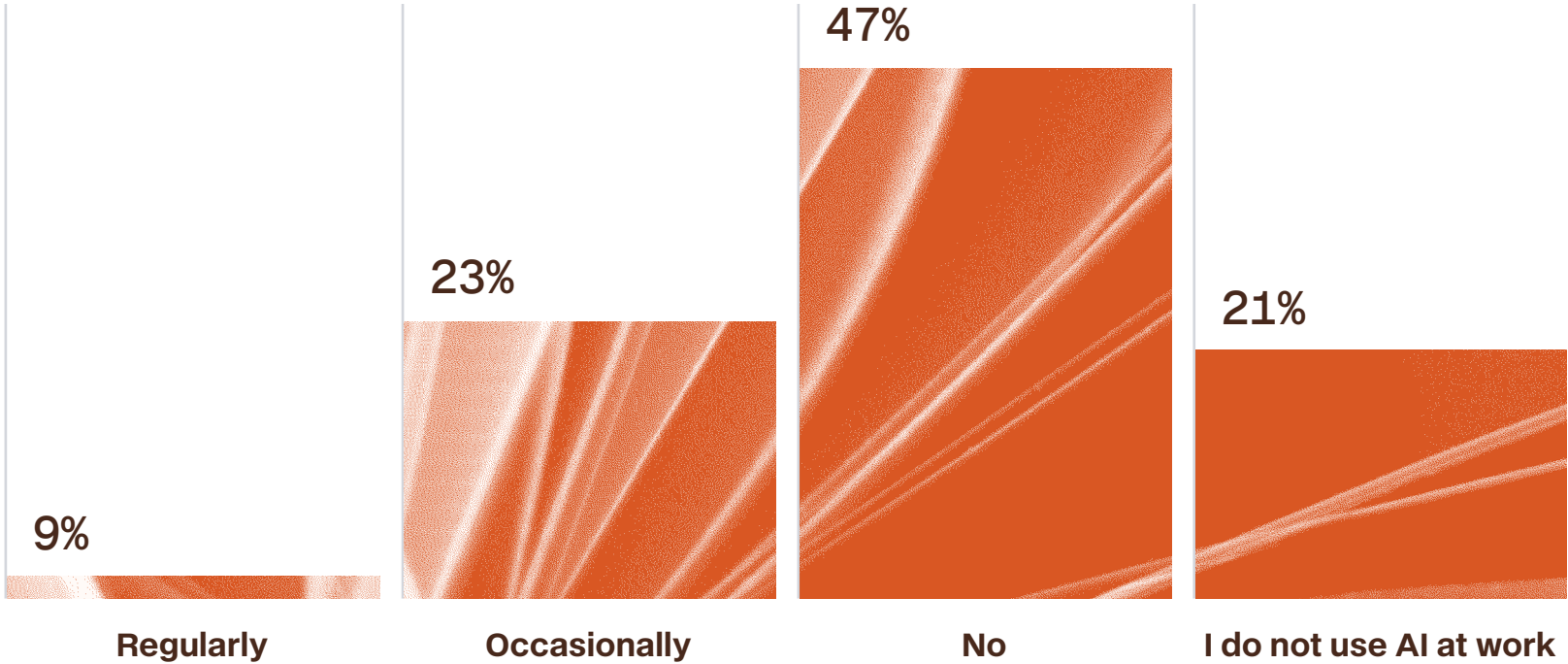
Workers who use AI openly with clear guidance, however, are the most likely to report productivity gains, with 73% saying AI has made them more productive. This compares with 60% of open but unguided users and 38% of those using it neither openly nor with clear guidance.

This pattern points to stronger returns when AI use is not only visible, but supported. The issue then is not only whether workers are using AI openly; it is whether workplaces are helping them use it well.

How open and guided AI use is at work



How often workers use AI without their employer or manager knowing



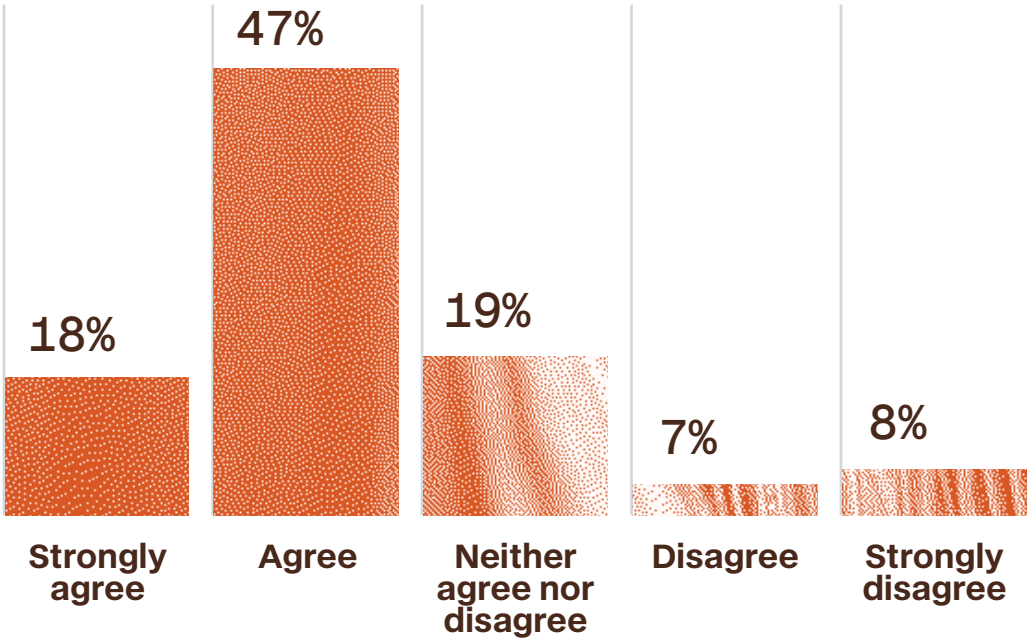
Workers are teaching themselves the AI skills workplaces need

Two-thirds of workers are mostly teaching themselves AI skills, while less than a third say they are getting enough support at work to build them. A third of workers have also not seen clear examples of how to use AI in their role.

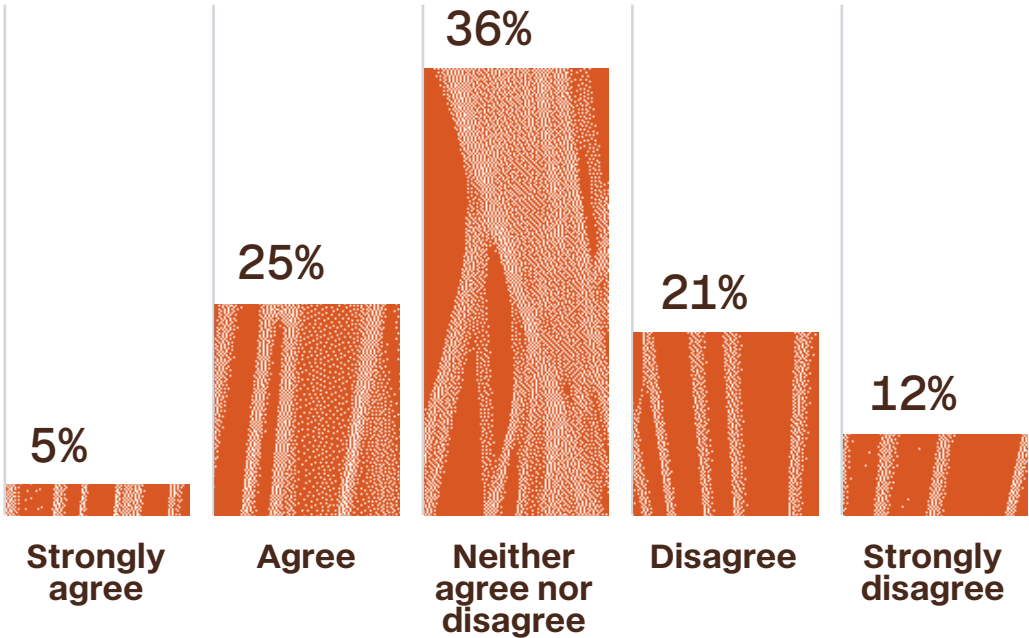
Self-directed learning has helped workplace AI use spread faster than formal systems could keep pace, but it cannot be the final capability model.

When each worker is left to build their own skills, organisations also leave standards, quality and safe use to develop unevenly. Without clearer examples and practical support, AI use may continue to spread faster than workplaces can build shared, reliable ways of using it well in specific roles.

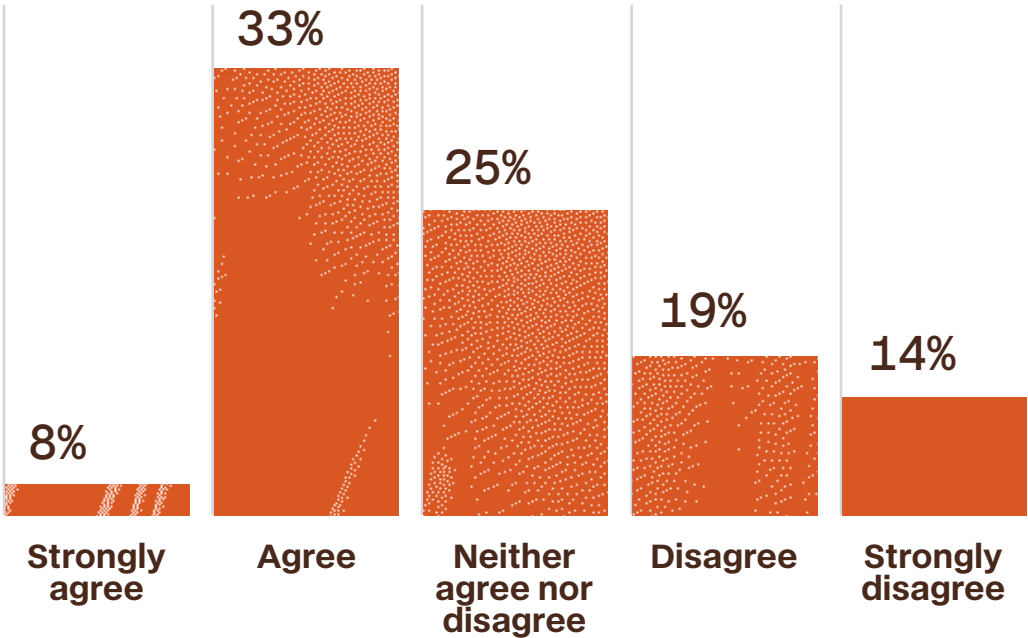
I am mostly teaching myself how to use AI



I am getting enough support to build practical AI skills at work



I have seen clear examples of how AI can be used in my specific role





**Workforce
change**

AI is reshaping roles more than eliminating them

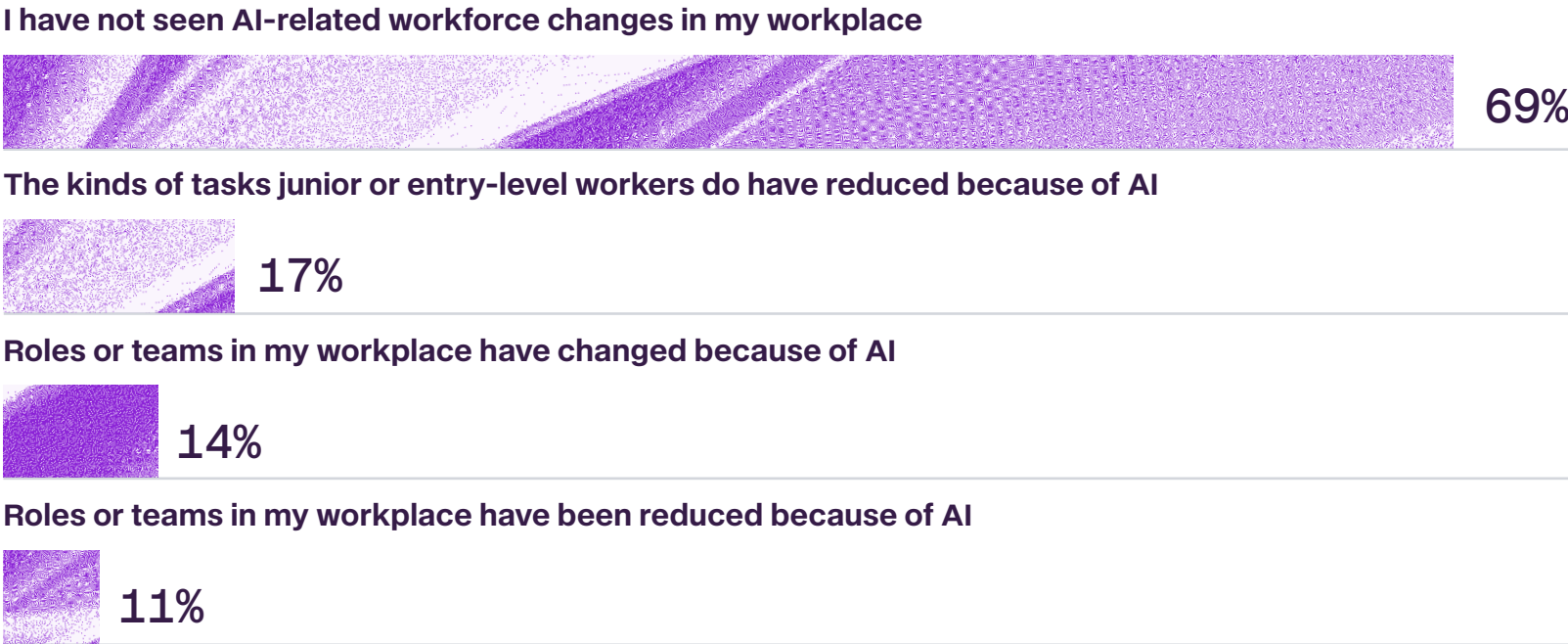
Close to one in three Australian workers have seen or experienced AI-related workforce changes in their workplace. Around half of workers who use AI at work have seen these changes, compared with just 4% of non-users, suggesting workforce redesign is most advanced where AI has already entered day-to-day work.

The most common signs of change are not outright job cuts, but changes to the shape of work. AI is reducing the kinds of tasks junior or entry-level workers do and changing roles or teams. But workforce reduction is also happening – one in ten workers say roles or teams in their workplace have already been reduced because of AI.

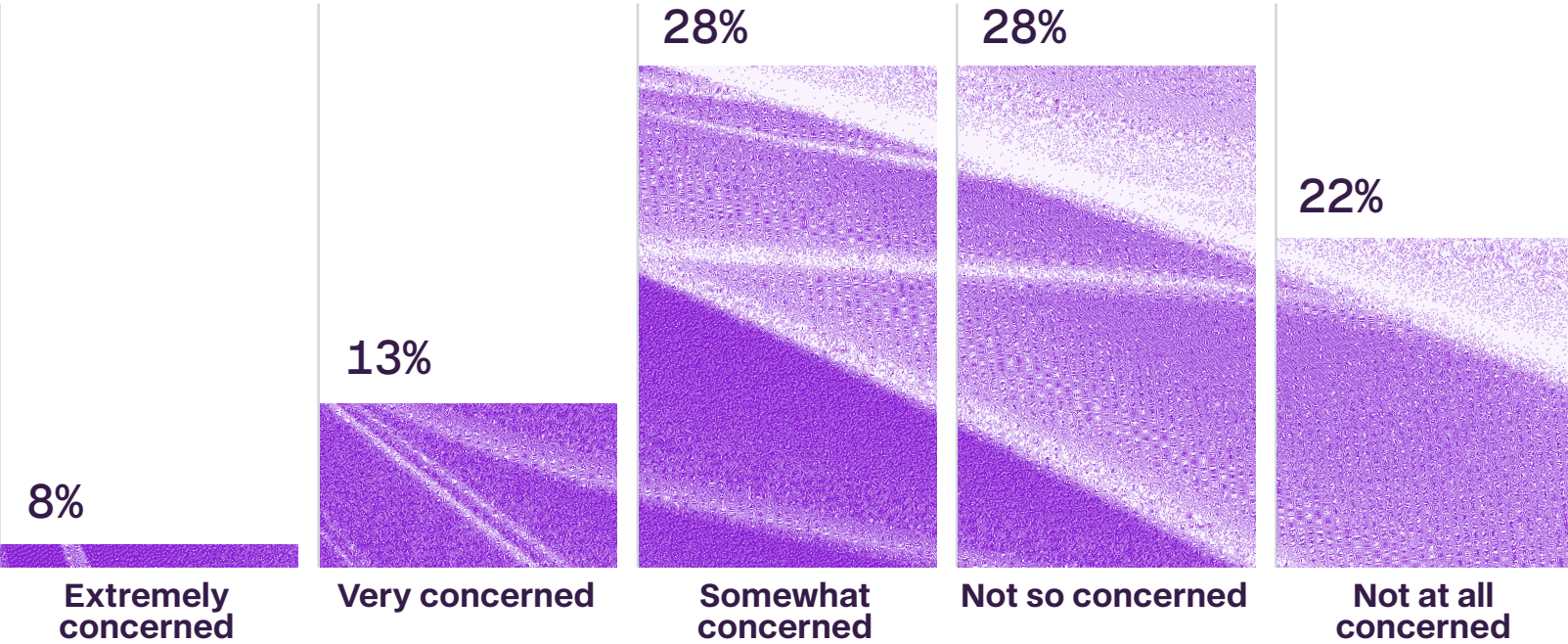
This matters particularly for junior and entry-level work. The routine tasks AI can absorb are often also the tasks through which workers learn how an organisation operates and build the judgement required for more senior roles. **The productivity value of removing routine work therefore needs to be weighed against the developmental value that work once provided.**

The emerging story is neither mass displacement nor harmless augmentation. AI is already changing the shape of work, and workforce reductions are part of that picture. These early changes make trust critical so workers can believe AI-related workforce decisions will be handled transparently and fairly.

AI-related workforce changes seen at work



Concern about AI-related job losses at work



In workers' own words

“

The roles I do that used to be admin based are now not there. I have now been directed to do other things.

Male, 25–34, Construction, trades and property, Victoria, Metropolitan

“

AI is making it easier to do certain elements of my work, but it is also making me worried that I'll get replaced the moment it gets cheaper to run an AI than it is to pay my wage. So probably just security is the biggest impact.

Female, 25–34, Technology, media and telecommunications, Western Australia, Regional

“

Our role is largely a decision making role where we make decisions in line with legislation. However, we have seen AI start to do most of the entry level admin tasks such as email triaging. Most of the time, the robots get it wrong but I have seen some improvements.

Female, 25–34, Government and public administration, Queensland, Metropolitan

Workplace trust is low, but stronger when AI use is supported

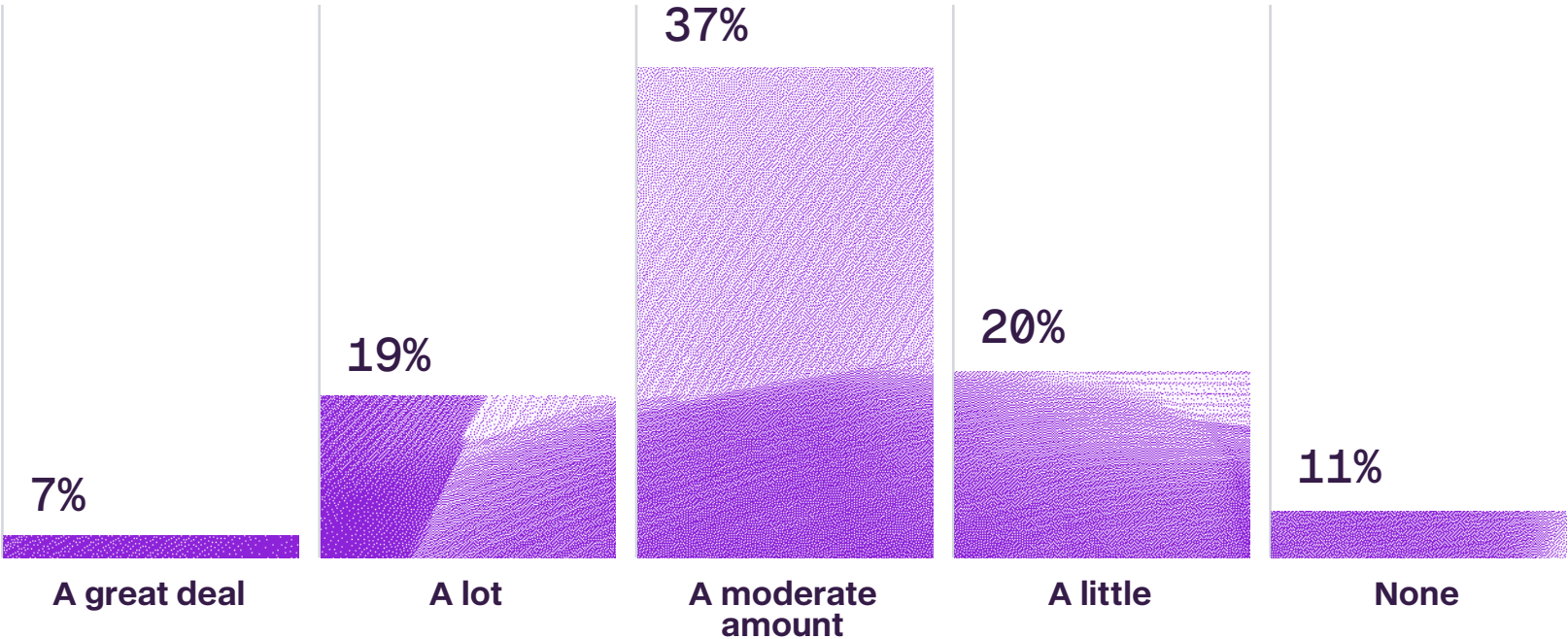
As AI begins reshaping work, only a quarter of Australian workers place a high degree of trust in their workplace to handle AI-related job changes fairly. Currently, workers with little or no trust outnumber those with high trust.

But trust is not lowest among workers closest to AI-related workforce change. Workers who use AI openly and with guidance from their workplace are the most likely to have seen or experienced AI-related workforce changes, yet they report the highest trust in how their workplace manages AI job changes.

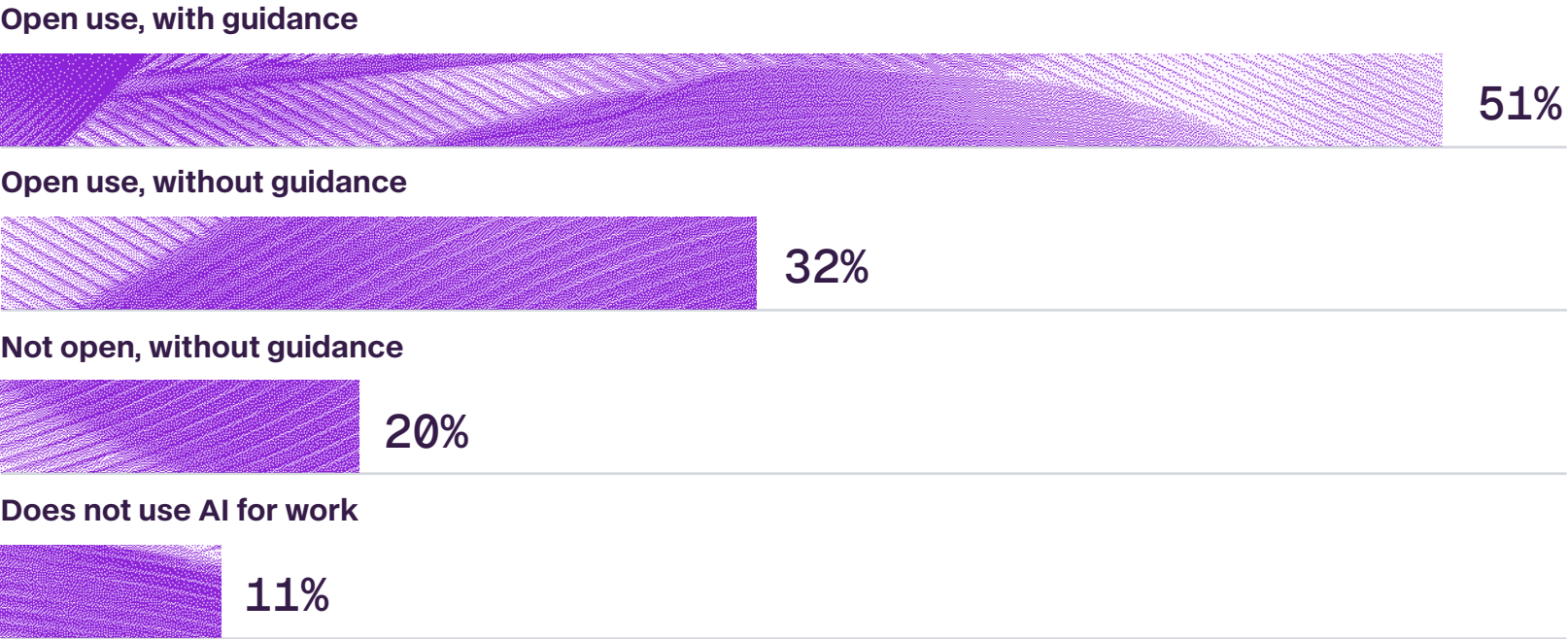
In financial and insurance services more than half of workers report seeing some form of AI-related workforce change, higher than most industries. Yet they also report among the highest levels of open AI use and workplace trust, showing organisations can better navigate AI disruption when workers feel supported through the process.

This suggests trust depends less on exposure to AI disruption than on whether AI use is open, guided and supported in the workplace. This means trust needs to be built before AI-related change accelerates further.

Trust in workplace to manage AI job changes fairly

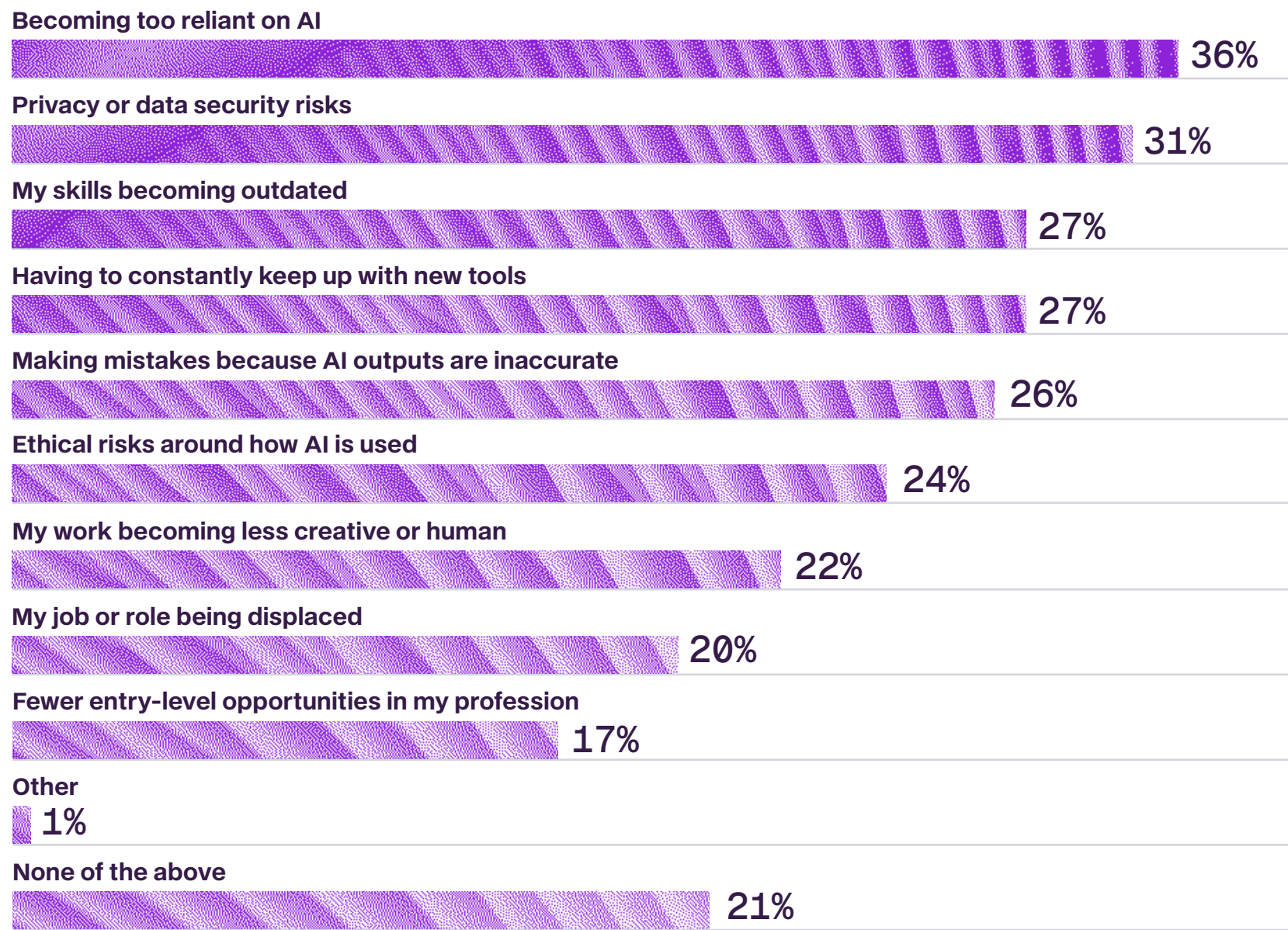


High trust in workplace to manage AI job changes fairly, by AI workplace-use group



AI dependence feared more than job loss

Top work and career AI concerns



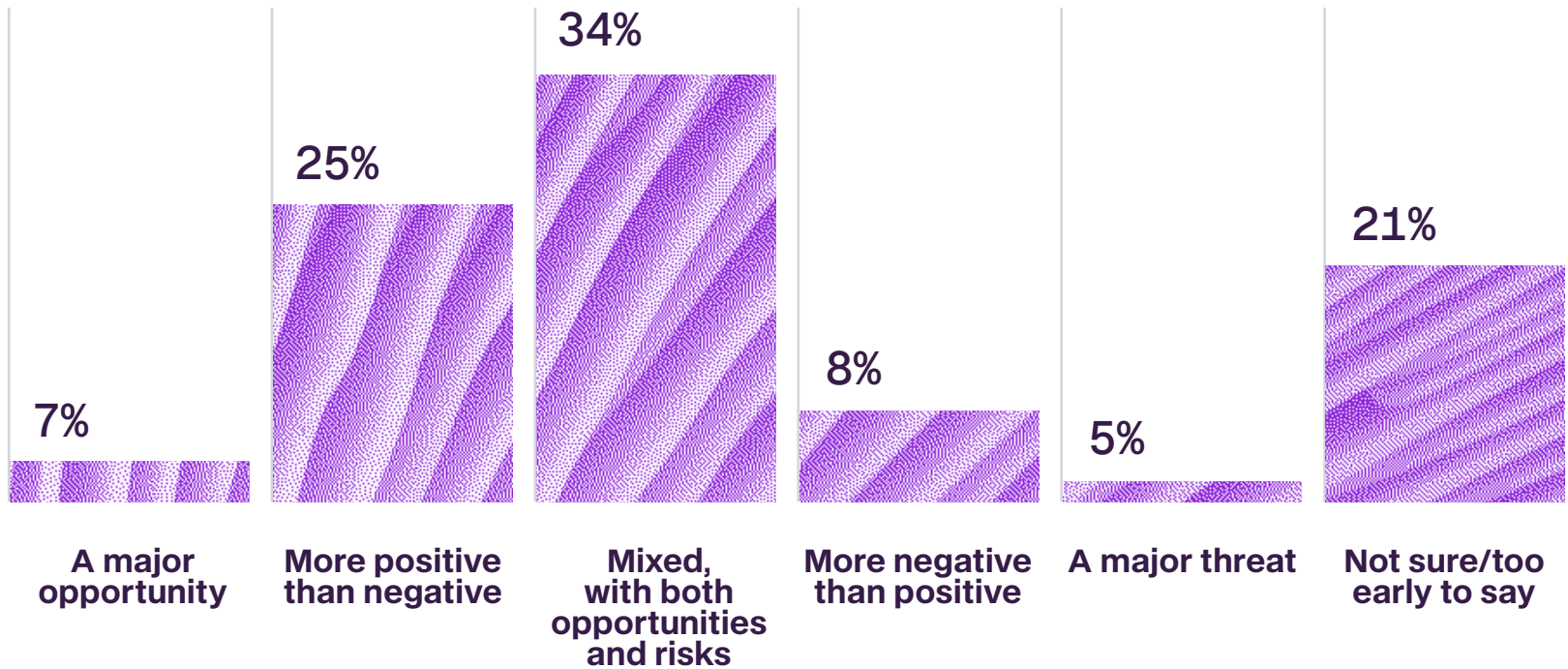
Even as AI begins reshaping work and many workers remain cautious about how workplaces are managing the transition, job loss is not the concern dominating workers’ minds. Just one in five workers are worried about their job or role being displaced by AI, while nearly twice as many are worried about becoming too reliant on the technology.

Despite these concerns, around one in three workers see AI as positive for their own profession, compared with just over one in ten who see it as negative. Four in five workers also say AI has not reduced their own career security.

This points to a more revealing AI anxiety than job loss. Workers are using AI and can see the benefits, but they are also questioning what happens to their own judgement, confidence and capability as more of their work is supported by the technology.

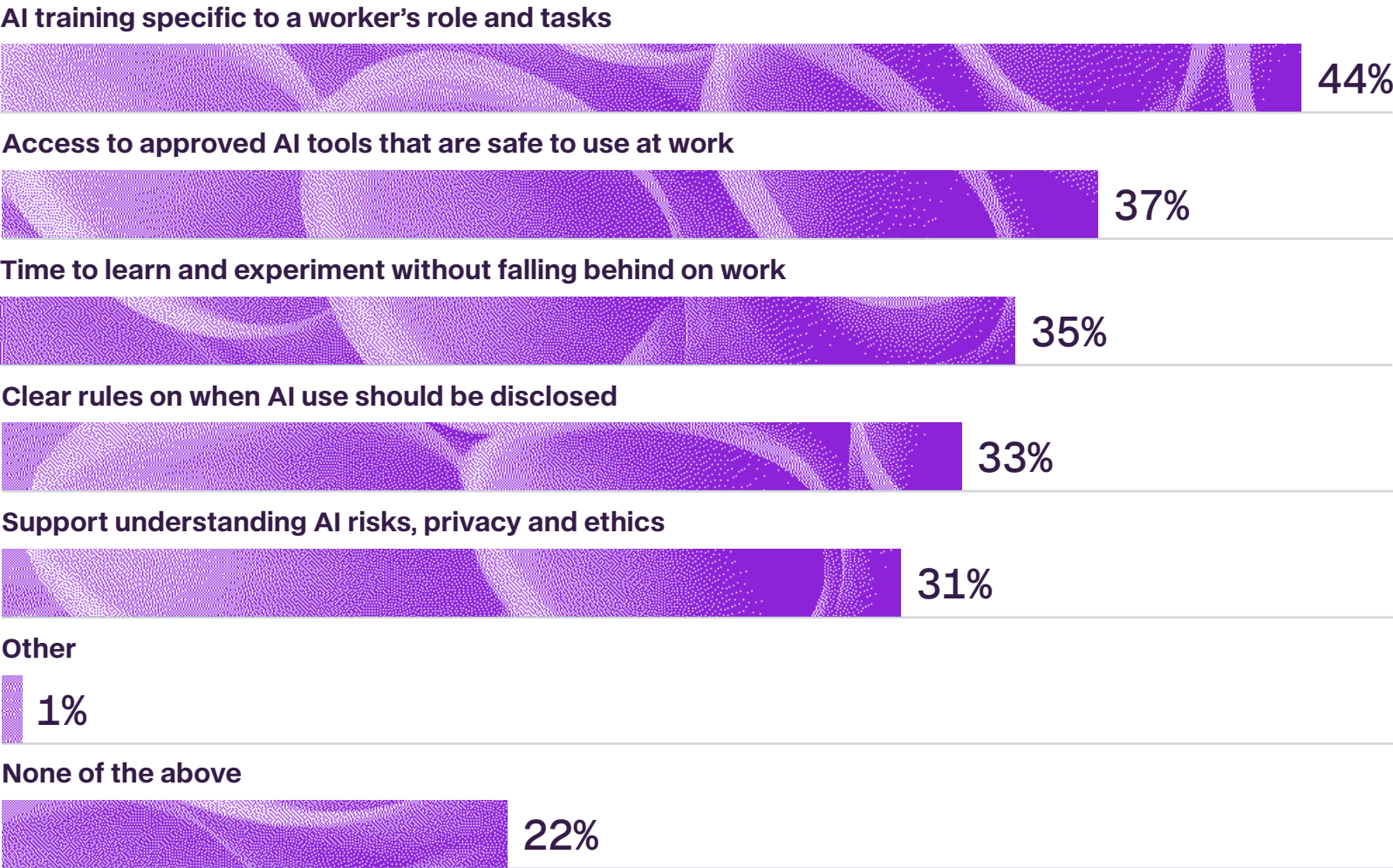
This shifts the issue from whether workers will use AI to whether workplaces are ready to support them to use it with confidence, judgement and care.

How workers see AI affecting their profession



What workers say would unlock better AI use and trust

What helps workers use AI better



Note: Respondents could select up to three responses each.

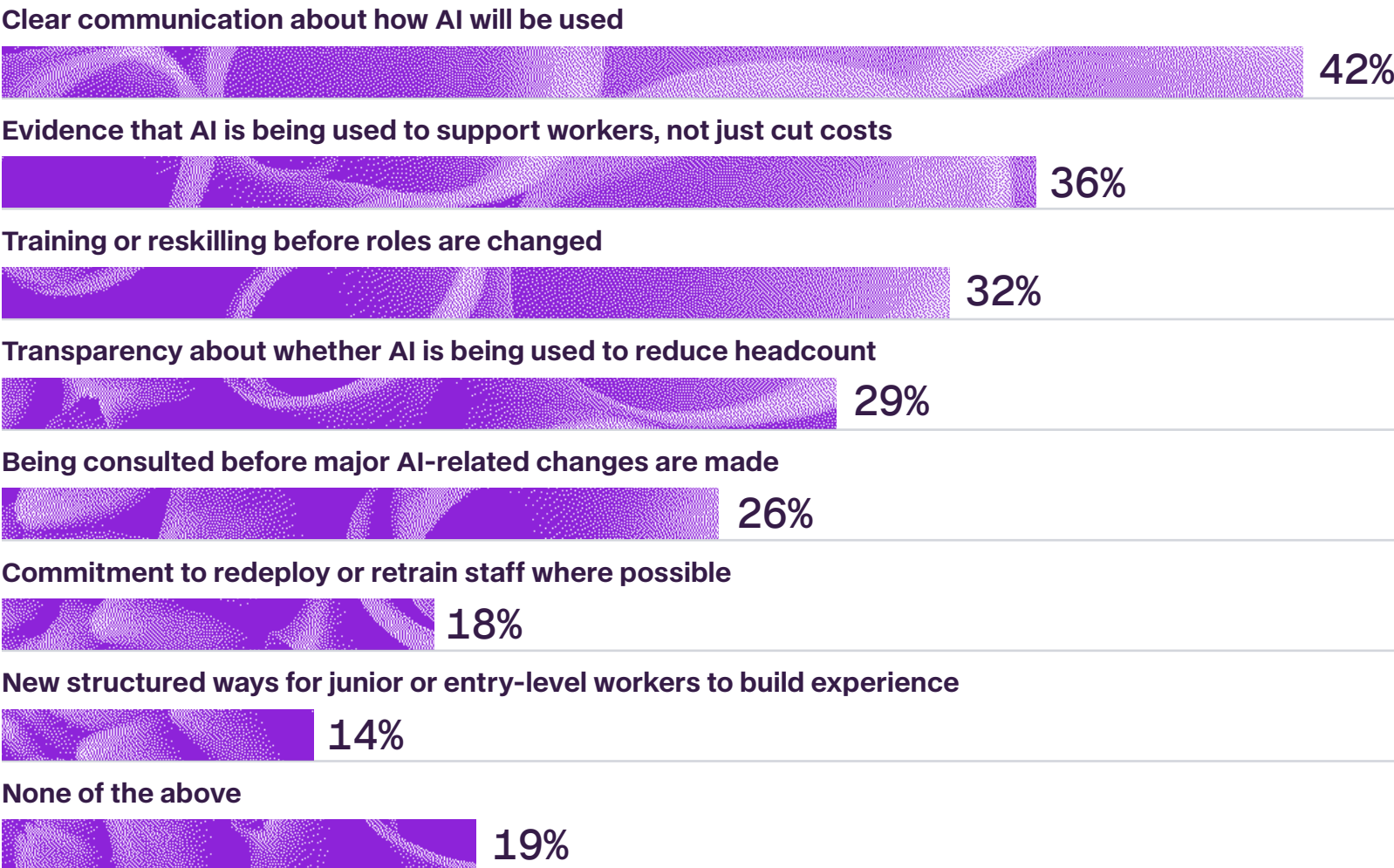
Close to half of workers say AI training specific to their role and tasks would help them use AI more effectively, ahead of access to approved safe tools, and time to learn and experiment. This shows workers need more than general AI awareness. They need to understand how AI fits into the actual workflows, decisions and responsibilities of their job.

The same practical needs appear in what builds trust around AI-related job changes. Workers most

want clear communication about how AI will be used, followed by evidence that AI is being used to support workers rather than just cut costs, and training or reskilling before roles are changed.

These point to the central task for employers – to make AI a supported part of work rather than another source of uncertainty. Combined with the report's wider findings, these form part of a broader solution to the AI breakpoint in Australian workplaces.

What builds trust in how workplaces manage AI change



Note: Respondents could select up to three responses each.

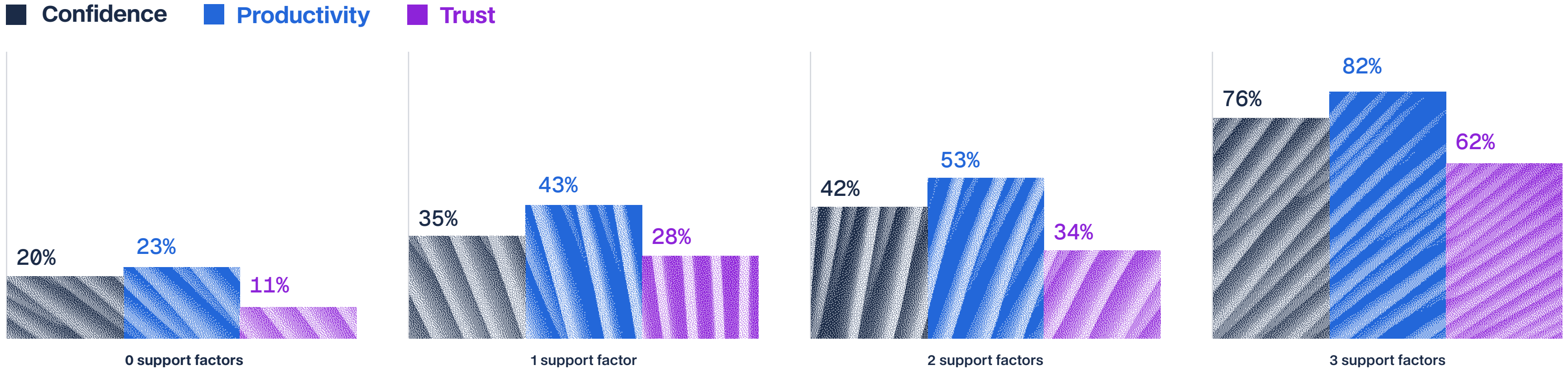
Workers with more AI support report better AI outcomes

The relationship between organisational support and worker outcomes is clear. Workers who report their workplace having AI training, AI rules and policies, and AI preparedness are substantially more likely to feel confident using AI, achieve productivity gains and trust their workplace to manage AI workforce changes fairly.

As each support factor is added, worker outcomes improve consistently across all three measures. Workers with all three support factors present in their workplace are 3.9 times more likely to feel

highly confident using AI, 3.5 times more likely to report productivity gains, and 5.6 times more likely to highly trust their workplace to manage AI-related job changes fairly than workers without any of these present.

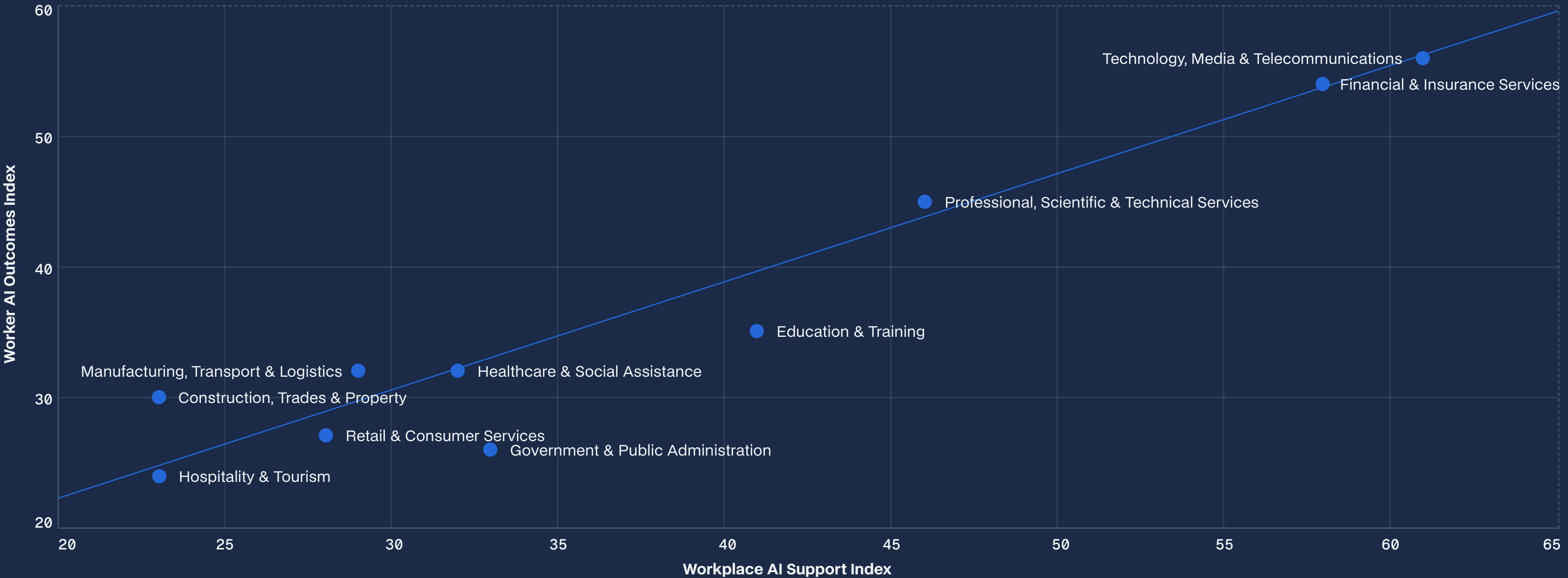
These findings show organisational support for AI is critical. As AI becomes embedded in everyday work, the organisations realising the greatest benefits are likely to be those investing not only in AI technology, but in the workplace systems that help their people use it well and with trust.



Industries with stronger AI support report better worker outcomes

Across Australian industries, stronger organisational support for AI is consistently associated with better worker outcomes. Industries where workers are more likely to receive AI training, have clear workplace AI rules and feel their organisation is well prepared for AI also report higher confidence using AI, greater productivity gains and stronger trust.

The Support Index is the average of AI training, workplace AI rules and workplace preparedness. The Outcomes Index is the average of AI confidence, productivity gains and trust. Industries further to the right report stronger organisational support, while those closer to the top report stronger worker outcomes.



What this means for employers

This is not primarily a story of workers fearing AI. It is a story of workers embracing AI faster than organisations are supporting them, while questioning what the technology means for their skills, judgement and trust at work.

The next stage of AI maturity will involve bringing organisational support up to the pace of worker adoption. In practice, that means providing the training, clear workplace rules and organisational preparedness needed to turn already widespread AI use into more confident, trusted and productive ways of working. Workplaces providing stronger AI support are already demonstrating that this is possible.

Industries are moving through the AI transition at different speeds. While technology, media and telecommunications, financial and insurance services, and professional, scientific and technical services are embedding AI more deeply into everyday work, others such as government and public administration remain in earlier stages of adoption.

Taken together, the findings paint a picture of Australia's emerging AI-ready worker.

They are most likely to work in a leadership or specialist role, be part of a leading AI industry such as technology, media, finance or professional services, and work in an organisation that provides AI training, clear workplace rules and is well prepared for AI.

The challenge for employers is to ensure these conditions are not confined to senior roles, but become the norm across every level of the organisation.

The greater risk for organisations therefore is not worker resistance to AI but unmanaged adoption of it: employees teaching themselves, using it without clear guidance, and navigating the technology without shared standards. Left unchecked, this creates inconsistent capability, uneven productivity and unnecessary distrust.

For employers the opportunity is to close this support gap before it widens further. Organisations that succeed will be better placed to turn widespread AI use into consistent productivity gains across their workforce, rather than leaving those benefits concentrated in certain teams, roles or industries.

Next steps for employers

↳ Turn AI use into value

- **Map high-value AI workflows**

Start with the tasks where stronger productivity gains are already appearing – such as project planning, data analysis, coding or technical work, presentations and creative work – then identify the equivalent workflows, decisions and outputs inside your organisation. This helps move AI use beyond broad experimentation into areas where it can create deeper, repeatable value.

- **Build role-specific AI capability**

Train workers around the tasks where AI can create real value in their role. Workers need clear examples of what good AI use looks like in their specific job, team and workflow. Combine formal training with clear workplace rules, approved tools and practical support so workers know not only how to use AI, but how to use it confidently within their role.

- **Create approved pathways for experimentation**

Give workers safe tools, time to learn and permission to test AI on low-risk tasks without hiding it. This allows organisations to learn from worker-led experimentation before it becomes informal, uneven or unmanaged.

- **Redesign roles and pathways**

When AI changes junior and entry-level work, create new ways for workers to build the experience and judgement that routine tasks once provided. This may include mentoring, job rotations, problem-solving and exposure to real decisions, rather than assuming experience and judgement will develop automatically once those tasks disappear. Employers should also think carefully about which tasks are worth automating and which can continue to provide important learning value to build people's expertise.

Next steps for employers

↳ Build an AI-ready organisation

- **Build quality checks into AI use**

Make clear when AI outputs need human review, where human judgement is essential and how workers should check accuracy, bias, confidentiality and tone before using AI-generated work. This directly addresses workers' concerns about mistakes, reliability and becoming too dependent on the technology.

- **Set clear rules for AI use**

Define where AI is allowed, where disclosure is required, what tools are approved and what information should never be entered into AI systems. Clear rules reduce the grey zone where workers use AI without guidance or visibility.

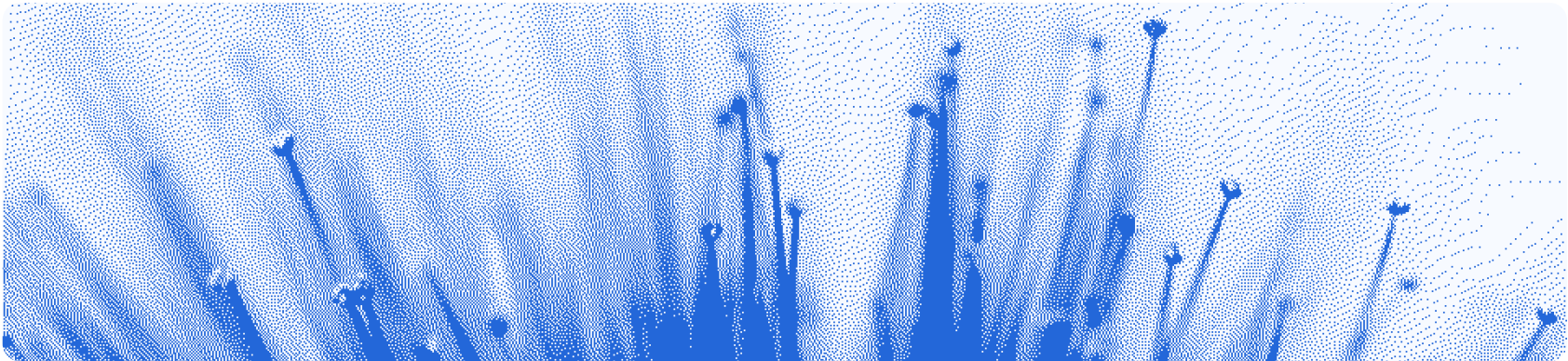
- **Build trust before major workforce change**

Encourage AI use to be open, guided and supported rather than informal or hidden. Clearly communicate how AI will be used, whether to improve productivity, redesign roles, reduce costs or influence headcount planning, and explain how employees will be retrained, redeployed or otherwise supported where work changes. Trust is much easier to build before major AI-related change than after workers feel it is already happening to them.

- **Assess your AI maturity**

Understand where your organisation sits today by measuring worker AI use, confidence, productivity, organisational support and trust. Organisations cannot improve AI capability effectively without first understanding where the greatest gaps exist across teams, roles and functions.

About Breakpoint



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Behaviour is rarely random.

When people do not act as expected, the explanation is often treated as a lack of awareness, motivation or communication.

We start from a different assumption – behaviour usually turns at a specific point. That point can be found, explained and unlocked.

Breakpoint is a behaviour-led research and strategy consultancy for organisations navigating moments of change, growth or friction.

We help decision makers understand why people adopt, resist, disengage or change – and what it takes to move them forward.

The Breakpoint model looks at the context driving behaviour, the tension it creates, the point where existing systems stop matching how people actually behave, and the practical unlocks that can shift behaviour.

Using survey research, behaviour-led analysis and strategic storytelling, Breakpoint turns data into clear narratives and media-ready insights.

For research partnerships, commissioned reports or strategic communications enquiries, contact: find@thebreakpoint.com.au



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