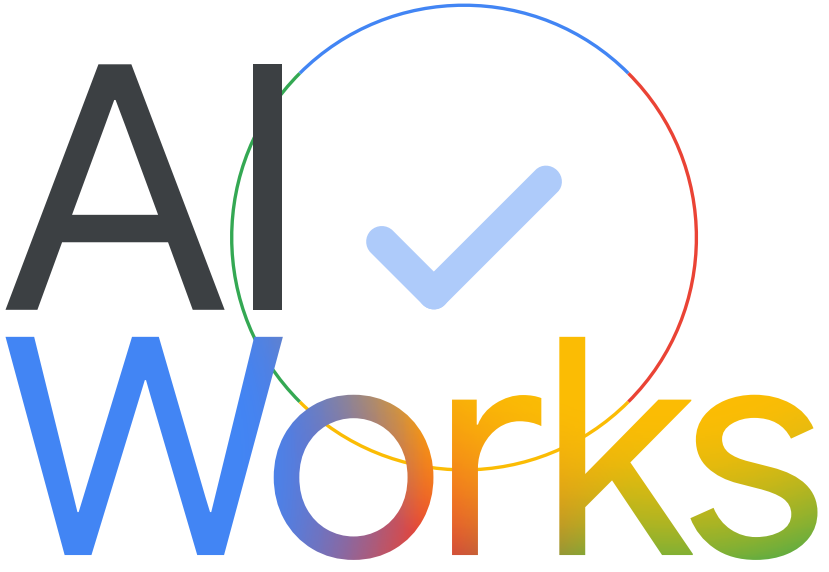
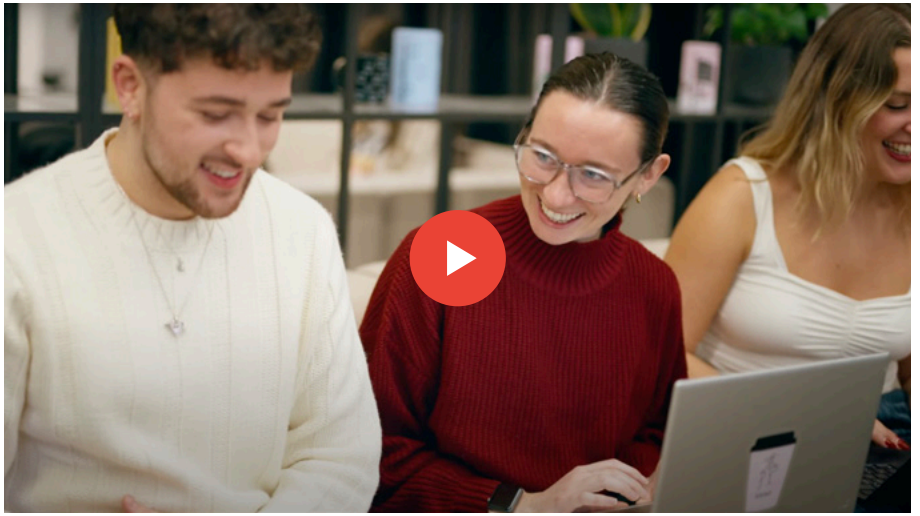


2025 Research Report

A people-first skills pilot, exploring
AI adoption in the workplace

Google

Contents



Watch AI Works in action

Bringing hands-on AI training to workplaces across the UK

Watch on YouTube

Public First worked with Google on the AI Works initiative, ensuring high standards of research integrity and collaboration throughout. As a company partner of the Market Research Society and member of the British Polling Council, Public First adheres to rigorous professional and ethical standards. Fieldwork was conducted between August 2024 and March 2025, with ethical considerations prioritised at every stage. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and those from the qualitative research were assured that their identities would remain confidential in all external reports and publications.

01.

Introducing AI Works

An overview of the key findings, research methodology, and policy recommendations

Google

Research conducted by PUBLIC FIRST

Foreword

AI has the potential to transform the way we work, tackling the UK's productivity puzzle and unlocking economic growth.

Fully realising AI's economic benefits requires widespread adoption of the technology. We need to ensure that workers across the country, in organisations of all types and sizes, have access to AI-powered tools and the skills required to use them. But we're already seeing an AI adoption gap emerging, with women and older workers especially at risk of falling behind the curve.

That's why Google launched AI Works — partnering with Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs), educators, small and medium-sized businesses (SMBs), and a union — to begin to understand AI usage barriers and the most effective ways to supercharge AI adoption.

This report shares the simple, scalable steps — such as empowering teams to use AI and building daily habits — that double AI use and turn AI sceptics into power users.

And AI Works is just the beginning. Our ambition is for these pilots to be a catalyst that encourages the UK's policymakers and business leaders to act now. We can't afford to leave AI adoption to chance, and we're excited to share insights that will enable us to be intentional about unlocking the untapped potential of this transformative technology.

— Debbie Weinstein, President of EMEA, Google

"I thought it was something really complicated, and something you needed a coding language to use. But I learned that it's actually quite simple — we all are now using it."

— Union member, three-months post-training

The UK could unlock £400 billion in economic growth through AI, but half of that depends on adoption. From previous technological waves, we know uptake isn't guaranteed.

Already, we see that women over 55 are four times less likely to use AI than men under 35, and smaller businesses lag behind larger firms. That is bad for growth and for job satisfaction: AI can save time and reduce admin.

In these pilots we were surprised, and encouraged, that after a few hours' training, adoption rocketed. After three months, participants were still using AI in a range of ways, and often daily. We think that is because using AI tools is easy and because the reward — saved time — is immediate.

The training helped many of the people least likely to adopt AI — older, more often women, and less confident users. There aren't many levers that increase productivity and growth, and support those most likely to be left behind. These pilots suggest training is an investment worth making.

— Rachel Wolf, Founding Partner, Public First

KEY FINDINGS

Key findings

Permission to prompt
Workers needed reassurance that the advantage AI gives them is legitimate, fair, and comparable to using the internet or a search engine to complete a task more efficiently. This can be best achieved by giving workers explicit permission to use the technology and setting clear policies on AI tools.

Habit formation leads to experimentation
More than 80% of participants were surprised by AI's capabilities. After three months, most were not only using AI for basic tasks, but also independently seeking prompting tips, watching videos, and reading articles to uncover new features and innovative use cases.

AI adoption increases worker well-being
Pilot participants report that AI upskilling has a significant impact on worker well-being. Workers in each sector estimate AI is now saving them time equivalent to over 122 hours a year, exceeding modelled estimates of 100 hours.

Upskilling significantly narrows AI adoption gaps
Interventions are key to closing the AI adoption gap, particularly among women and older workers. Before training, just 17% of women over the age of 55+ in our cohorts used AI weekly, and only 9% used it daily. Three months later, 56% were using it weekly, and 29% had made it a daily habit.

Scaling AI skills training for national adoption
Across all three cohorts, we noticed that interactive sessions that encouraged hands-on participation, practical demonstrations showcasing real and relevant applications and tailored content designed for each sector's specific needs made the training particularly effective. Sessions on AI prompting and refinement were especially well received.

The positive relationship between optimism and use
As AI usage increased among workers, so did optimism about the technology's impact. This suggests that improved workplace adoption is likely to have a positive impact on overall public sentiment about AI and its evolving role in society.

AI habits are easy to form. Just a few hours of training doubled daily AI usage, with usage remaining high even months after the pilots because AI-powered tools are rewarding and easy to use.

Executive summary

The UK stands to gain £400 billion from AI-driven growth, but only if workers from all corners of the economy embrace the technology. £200 billion of predicted gains are dependent on the workforce adopting AI and using it productively

At present, a third of UK workers report being regular users of generative AI at work.

- Just over three in 10 workers have already embraced AI. Thirty-four percent of workers use generative AI at work, with three-quarters of those using it multiple times a week and nearly half using it daily.
- But the remaining 66% of workers we spoke to did not report using generative AI tools at work, and 57% reported not using a generative AI tool at all in the past 12 months.
- There are big demographic divides. Women over 55 are four times less likely to use AI than men under 35.

Increasing adoption among these groups is imperative, both to avoid the creation of a new "digital divide" and to take full advantage of the economic opportunity. We've learned that most adoption is currently worker-led rather than being directed by leadership. This shows the fundamental appeal of the technology, but leaders must do more to move the UK from organic exploration towards widespread adoption.

AI Works: accelerating AI adoption across the UK

The current pace of AI adoption in UK workplaces presents a clear challenge — the technology arrived with significant fanfare and has since demonstrated a wide range of use cases. But while much has been written about AI's potential, little attention has been paid to the question of how to increase AI adoption.

We know from previous cycles of innovation that new technology is typically embraced by a small cohort of early adopters before permeating the broader market more slowly. Almost two-thirds of jobs across the UK could be augmented by AI, with every sector impacted if not transformed.[1] Given AI's extraordinary economic potential, this long-tail pattern of adoption risks delaying productivity and compromising long-term growth.

To learn more about what can be done to drive adoption, Google worked with Public First and four partner organisations to pilot AI training programmes in three key sectors of the workforce: education, SMBs, and trade union members. Together, these sectors represent a substantial cross section of the UK workforce, selected to encompass both private and public entities, skilled trades, and professional occupations across a number of demographic segments.

Almost two-thirds of jobs across the UK could be augmented by AI

This ensured the research covered a range of workplace environments, worker skill levels, and degrees of familiarity with AI, making it a strong test case for how AI adoption can be encouraged throughout the broader economy. The goal was to uncover the most effective ways to accelerate AI upskilling and adoption across the UK.

To do this, for each group we measured attitudes, confidence levels, barriers, usage levels, appetites, and trust levels concerning AI prior to the training, delivered between 2.5 and 5 hours of bespoke support, then measured attitudes again. To capture the impact on behaviour, we followed up after three months to see if usage levels increased.

1. Public First, Public First supports new AI skills pilot programme from Google, July 2024.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Providing AI training is effective

Our research reveals that just a small amount of training yields major increases in AI adoption. Our research found, at a basic level, just a few hours of training tripled the current usage of AI among trade union members and doubled the current uptake with SMBs and teachers — unlocking substantial growth for the UK.

Modelling by Public First shows that just a few hours of training delivers a 10:1 return on investment. By contrast, previous initiatives such as the Lifetime Skills Guarantee only returned investment at a rate of 1:2.[2]

Women's daily AI usage increased from 18% to

45%

Frontline workers understand the challenges they face better than anyone. As they encounter these problems daily, they are also well-placed to find practical solutions. Through our AI training, workers not only learned how to use AI but also discovered ways to apply it to real workplace challenges. The training created the conditions for AI adoption to grow organically, as people experimented with different use cases and shared their learning with colleagues.

Demographic groups often underrepresented in technology adoption, specifically older participants (those over 55) and women, saw their usage transformed.

- Women's daily AI usage increased from 18% to 45%, and weekly usage increased from 36% to 75%.
- Those over the age of 55 increased their daily usage from 13% to 35%, and their weekly usage from 23% to 62%.
- There was a near-tripling of daily usage for women aged over 55 (from 9% to 29% daily, and from 17% to 56% weekly), though the sample was small.

The impact was clear when we asked respondents what had stuck with them from the training three months on:

"Exploring new tools and not being afraid of trying out new AI tools. Not to be afraid and give up too easily." — **Female, Teacher, 61**

"I'm using Gemini within Gmail to summarise complicated email threads and to help draft and polish emails. I've used Gemini within Sheets to write a formula to split a spreadsheet into separate tabs so that each school is on its own tab." — **Female, IT Manager, 61**

Post-training analysis revealed no significant difference in AI attitudes or usage based on format, whether in-person or through online sessions. This suggests that well-structured, relevant training content is more important than the mode of delivery. As a result, AI training can be scaled efficiently without compromising impact, making widespread adoption more achievable across different sectors.

2. Department for Education, Measuring the Net Present Value of Further Education in England 2018/19, May 2021; HM Treasury, The Green Book: appraisal and evaluation in central government, 2022; Office for National Statistics, Population estimates for the UK, England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland: mid-2022, 2024.

Shifting perceptions of AI

After training, all three cohorts reported feeling greater optimism about the impact technology will have on society, increasing by 22 percentage pts among our education cohort, 13pts among our SMB cohort, and 9pts among our union cohort. There was also a positive relationship between optimism and use, with increased daily use of AI tools correlating with increased optimism about the technology's impact.

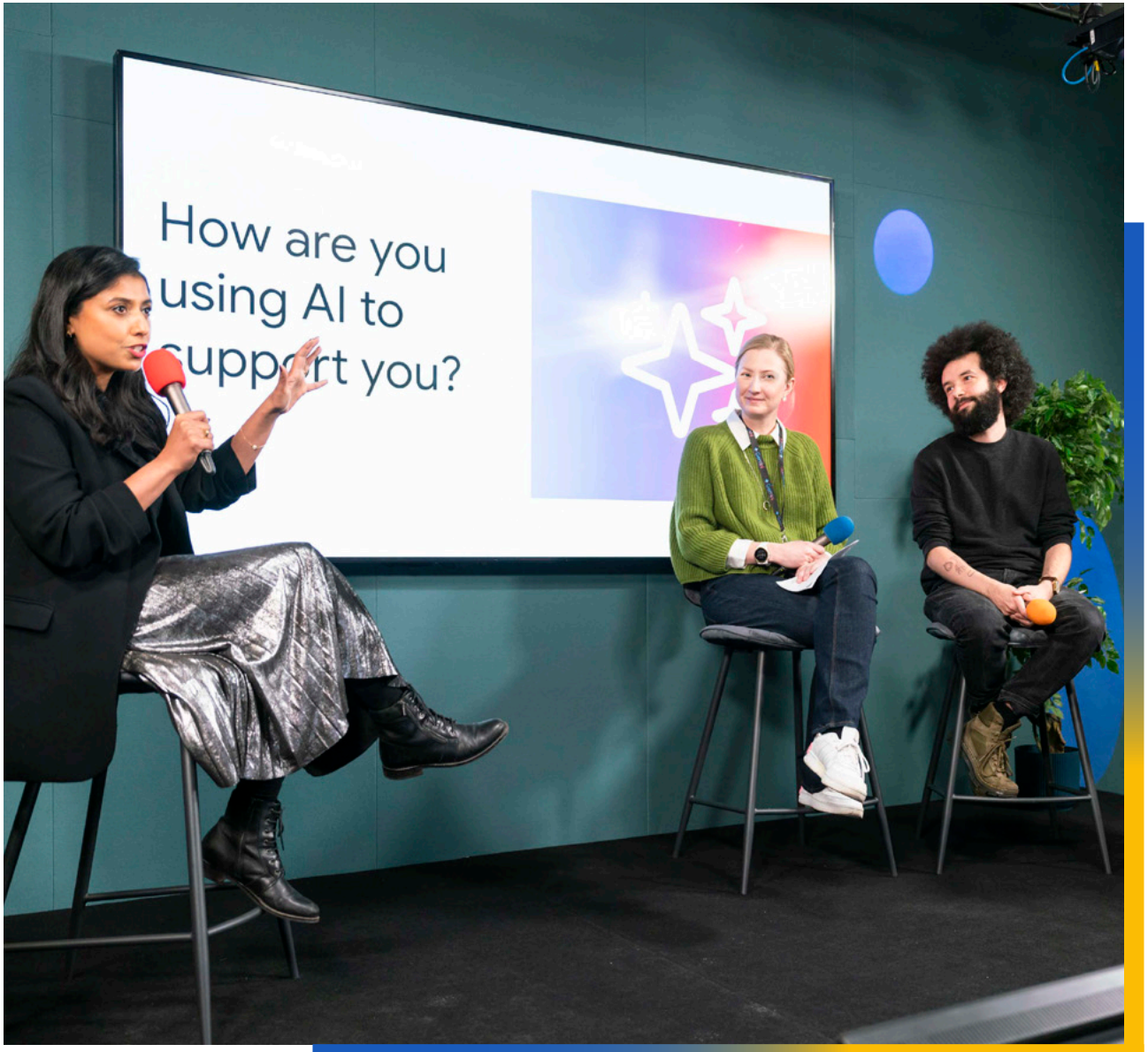
The training also fundamentally changed the way participants thought about AI. At the start of training, most participants said that AI tools were primarily for writing emails or summarising documents and beyond this struggled to imagine its relevance to their work. Post-training, more than 80% said they were surprised by AI's capabilities and after three months, a majority (70%) of participants had started to innovate, independently discovering how AI tools could be used for new use cases not taught in the training. For example, one SMB participant described how they used AI for brainstorming by simulating feedback from different roles in their business.

This all added up to extremely high usage among our cohort after training. The number of education workers using AI daily doubled and the number of trade union members using AI tripled. In addition to boosting productivity, participants also reported meaningful well-being benefits: across each sector, workers estimated that AI saved them the equivalent of 122 hours per year, which exceeded our modelled estimates by 22%.

All in all, we found that training increased participants' confidence, understanding, and trust in the technology, replacing negative assumptions about how AI will impact the future of work with a vision for how these tools can enable more effective performance, freeing them to focus on higher-value tasks.

Post-training, more than 80% said they were surprised by AI's capabilities

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



What we recommend

Supporting adoption across the economy

As identified in the AI Opportunities Action Plan, the Industrial Strategy and Skills England are key to supporting AI adoption and skills development across the economy.

- Businesses need support to equip workers with AI tools, skills, and clear guidelines. As identified in the AI Opportunities Action Plan, the Industrial Strategy will need to set out how AI adoption can be best supported in key industries. Our research shows that workers are looking for explicit permission and guardrails on what they can, and are encouraged to, use AI for. Businesses and public sector leaders should develop practical and positively framed policies that outline the AI tools available, and where it is permitted and appropriate to use them.

- Skills England should support a new accreditation system for modular training that would recognise short, effective training modules. As part of a new National Skills Service, a model of micro credits would mean that workers can take free or paid training courses that have an immediate impact and a route into larger qualifications. For the Government to deliver a lifelong skills programme that is ready for AI, Skills England should work to identify short modules of AI-related training, make provision for these to be recognised, and for funding to be available to workers to access these courses via the new Growth and Skills Levy.

Embedding AI in the public sector

The public sector can lead the way on AI adoption.

- The Government should guarantee AI training for all public sector workers. Ensuring access for NHS, local government, and civil service employees will help to drive adoption among this key segment of the UK workforce. Training should be interactive and role specific, and include practical demonstrations to build confidence and ensure relevance. Follow-up support and clear workplace policies should reinforce learning and encourage long-term AI adoption.

- To support this goal, the Government should launch a larger-scale public sector AI adoption trial, in line with its test-and-learn approach. The goal of the trial would be to identify barriers and solutions to unlock adoption of available but under-utilised AI tools. It should focus on the hardest to reach frontline service delivery teams and back-office personnel, as opposed to those in digital and data roles. Lessons learned will not only provide a generalisable blueprint for driving adoption across frontline services, but also help to set the Government up for success in its plan to recruit 2,000 tech apprentices and deploy specialist tech teams in departments.

- An AI leader should be appointed in every government department Executive Committee, with mandated, regular AI training for all members, ensuring strategic oversight and informed decision-making on AI adoption at the highest levels of government.

- AI training should be integrated across all Civil Service Fast Stream schemes, making AI a core development requirement for future leaders. The Government should assess whether the existing Digital Fast Stream scheme sufficiently covers AI, or if a standalone AI scheme is needed. As AI teams are introduced in each department, all Fast Streamers should be required to complete a rotation in an AI team, embedding AI expertise across the civil service.

As technological advances continue to be made, tracking progress on AI adoption will be key to keeping pace

Tracking progress

As technological advances continue to be made, tracking progress on AI adoption will be key to keeping pace.

- As part of its remit to identify skills gaps, Skills England should track progress with an annual AI Skills and Adoption Survey, ensuring AI is deployed where it can improve efficiency and replace repetitive tasks. The survey should measure AI integration across sectors, workforce readiness, and alignment with the Government's TechTrack goal of increasing digital roles in government.

- All government departments should conduct regular AI adoption audits, coordinated by the new Centre for Digital Government, assessing where AI can reduce manual workload and enhance productivity. Audits should track progress towards the one in 10 civil servants in tech and digital roles target, and follow the wider ambitions for AI in government as set out in the AI Opportunities Action Plan.

02.

Introduction: The opportunity and the challenge

Why AI's economic potential remains largely untapped and what's at stake for the UK

AI presents the UK with a huge economic opportunity. Previous modelling by Public First in 2023 for Google finds that it could contribute £400 billion in annual economic growth by 2030.[3] Subsequent analysis suggests that up to half of this potential depends on the workforce adopting AI and using it productively.

Slow adoption is not a new phenomenon. History shows this pattern recurring worldwide through successive waves of technology. But the challenge has been particularly pronounced in the UK, where a gap between innovation and implementation has repeatedly undermined economic potential. UK productivity is below the average of other G7 nations, with digital adoption a particular challenge for small businesses that are significantly less likely to adopt technology than businesses in other European countries.[4] Small businesses that do embrace innovation see transformative effects: on average those that introduced innovation in the past three years saw their revenue increase by 14.8%.[5]

3. Public First, Google's Impact in the UK 2023, April 2024.
4. Be The Business, The UK's Technology Moment, 2020.
5. FSB, The Tech Tonic, Aug. 2023.

AI represents a once-in-a-generation chance to grow the economy for everyone

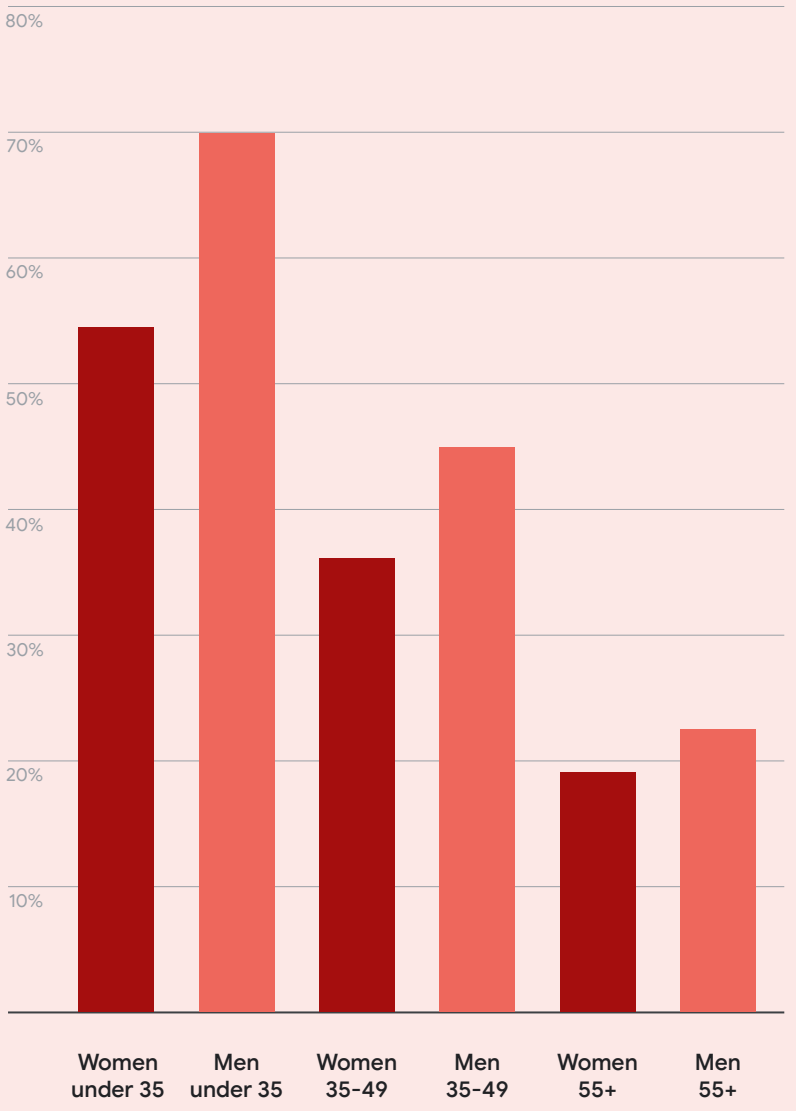
In its December 2024 call for evidence on technology adoption, the Government highlighted that the UK does relatively poorly for knowledge diffusion and knowledge absorption.[6] UK companies also invest less in technology adoption than their international peers.[7] This adoption lag results in suppressed growth, stagnant productivity, and ultimately lower wages and fewer opportunities for people. AI represents a once-in-a-generation chance to grow the economy for everyone — so concerted action is needed to break the old cycle of slow adoption and missed opportunities.

6. Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, Technology Adoption Review, Dec. 2024.
7. TechUK, Joint letter to the Chancellor of the Exchequer: Scaling digital adoption to strengthen the UK economy Oct. 2023.

Our research identified demographic disparities as a primary barrier to achieving widespread AI adoption. Women report lower AI utilisation rates than men across sectors, and that gap widens with age. Without addressing these imbalances, the full economic potential of AI technologies will remain unrealised and workforce skills gaps will get wider.

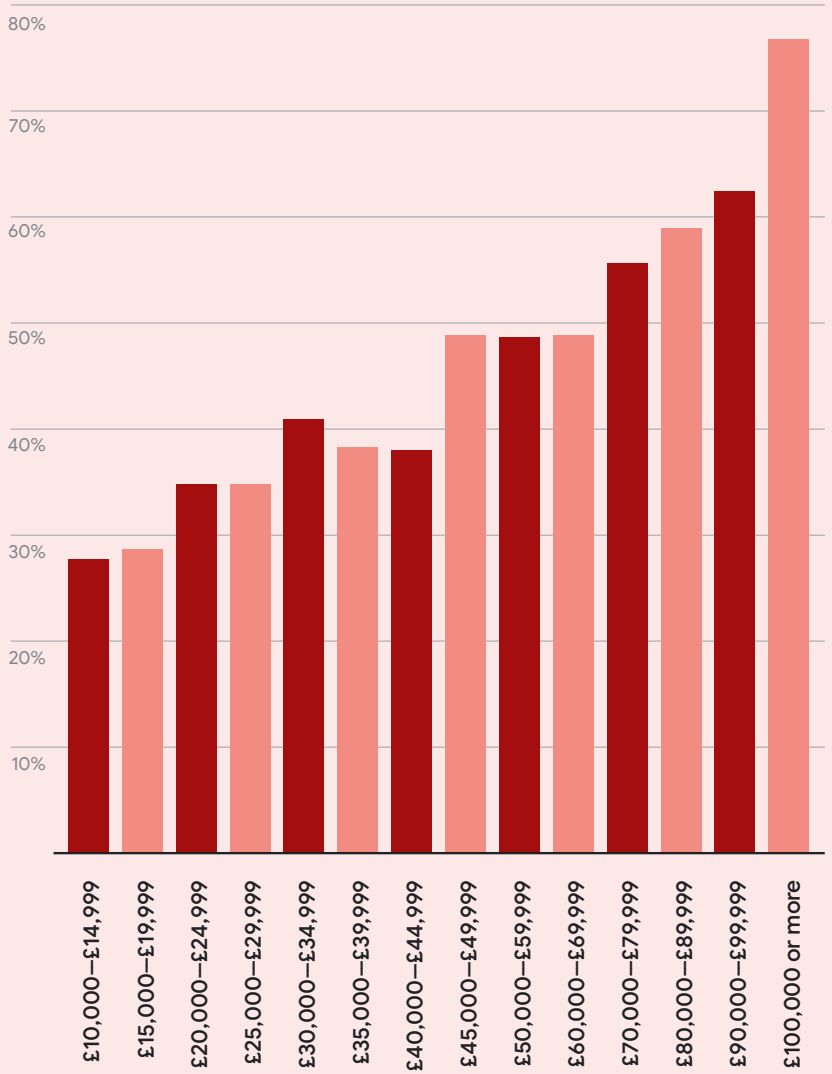
Women report lower AI utilisation rates than men across sectors, and that gap widens with age

Percentage who have used generative AI tools at work



Public First, landscape survey, Feb. 28, 2025–March 7, 2025.

Percentage using generative AI at work by income



Public First, landscape survey, Feb. 28, 2025–March 7, 2025.

34%

of people said they use generative AI tools at work

Socioeconomic factors also have a large impact on adoption rates. High-income professionals demonstrate significantly higher AI utilisation. Further to this, there were clear disparities between sectors.

Of course, adoption isn't just about using a new technology once — it's also frequency of usage. Our survey shows that once workers start using generative AI tools, they use them often. Thirty-four percent of people said they use generative AI tools at work, with three-quarters of those using them at least a few times a week and half using them daily. However, this activity is typically restricted to a small number of use cases: the most common being assisting with communications or writing (59%) and summarising longer documents (59%). Our expectation is that once the baseline rate of adoption increases, engagement levels will rise and this will prompt innovation and an expanded range of use cases.

But how do we encourage worker adoption? While there are plenty of studies looking at AI's potential impact, surprisingly little has been written about how to increase usage outside the core of early adopters. This report addresses that critical knowledge gap with findings from Google's AI Works pilot programme.

03.

AI Works: Purpose and methodology

Identifying AI adoption barriers and testing targeted training in three key sectors of the UK economy

The AI Works pilot programme was designed to:

- Identify barriers to workplace AI adoption through comprehensive research.
- Develop and test hypotheses about adoption challenges in three sectors through tailored training.
- Understand what works in AI training by identifying factors behind successful adoption that can be replicated or scaled for widespread impact.
- Track longer-term behavioural changes via follow-up impact surveys.

From this structured approach, we aimed to quantify potential increases in AI usage and productivity, while gathering insights into which training approaches and policy interventions are most likely to fuel widespread adoption.

PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY

How AI Works was developed

Expert interviews

Public First conducted 18 interviews with experts and representatives spanning trade unions, employers, and both public and private sector experts.

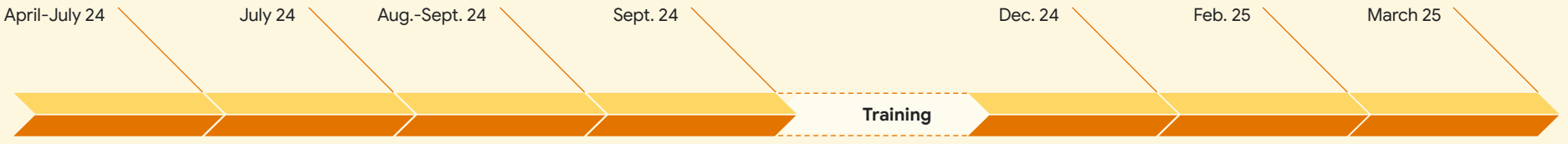
This approach enabled focused discussions on key themes: AI's workplace impact, adoption benefits and challenges, and effective training approaches. Our diverse selection of interviewees also provided insights into cross-industry opportunities and barriers.

Hypotheses

Based on our initial research, we identified three sectors with distinct adoption challenges: teachers (facing high workload), SMBs (with known barriers to tech adoption), and trade union members (where unions have historically played a key role in supporting workers through technological change). For each, we developed targeted hypotheses:

- **For education workers:** demonstrating how AI tools work and behave is key to building trust and giving users confidence — particularly in high-stakes environments.

AI Works project timeline



Baseline research
Expert interviews + literature review
Baselining the state of AI usage in the UK

Sector hypotheses
Initial research drove focus on three core sectors
Education
Unions
SMBs

Landscape analysis
Landscape poll + expert interviews + literature review
Baselining the state of AI usage in the UK

Pre-training analysis
Worker survey and focus groups across three core sectors
Assessing AI attitudes before training

Post-training research
Worker survey + focus groups across three core areas
Understanding worker intentions about AI use immediately post-training

Three-month impact analysis
Worker survey + focus groups across three core areas
Measuring how intentions translated into usage

Landscape analysis follow-up
Second landscape poll
Measuring how attitudes to and usage of AI changed between August 2024 and March 2025

PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY

- **For SMB workers:** creating new AI-related work habits will help empower and upskill owners and employees.
- **For trade union members:** presenting role-specific AI applications will accelerate upskilling and adoption among unionised workers.

While focusing on these three sectors, the study was designed to yield recommendations that would be broadly applicable across the economy.

Based on our initial research, we identified three sectors with distinct adoption challenges: teachers, SMBs, and trade union members

Landscape poll
A sample of 3,100 workers was conducted in August 2024 to benchmark AI usage and attitudes, as well as current access to training. A second landscape poll was conducted in March 2025 to investigate whether public attitudes beyond our selected cohorts had changed in seven months.

Partnerships and recruitment
Google then partnered with three sets of organisations to recruit participants and shape the training programme. These partners helped tailor the training content to the needs of their members, facilitated engagement, provided ongoing support, and played a crucial role in embedding AI adoption within their respective sectors. The organisations were:

- In education, **LEO Academy Trust and Lift Schools.**
- For union members, **Community trade union.**
- For SMBs, **Enterprise Nation.**

Demographic data and baseline engagement levels for participant groups are presented in subsequent deep-dive chapters. But it's worth noting at the outset that all of our training cohorts demonstrated lower confidence with AI and came from demographics with historically lower engagement rates compared to the average for their sector.

Training
Working closely with our partners, we designed bespoke training programmes addressing our hypotheses and tailored to each cohort's specific workplace context:

- Education workers: 2.5-hour in-person workshops followed by up to six 45-minute optional online sessions and 1:1 support over two months. Content covered AI fundamentals, limitations, prompt customisation, and various AI tools.
- Trade union members: Three one-hour sessions delivered through a mix of online and optional in-person formats, with 1:1 training available for participants. Training covered AI fundamentals, responsible use, and effective prompt writing. Participants learned to use AI for tasks such as creating articles, refining emails, and improving business documents.
- SMBs: Five one-hour webinar sessions and four 30-minute lunchtime sessions, emphasising peer learning through case studies of AI integration in sales, marketing, and operations. Or a single full-day programme (delivered in person).

PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY

We designed bespoke training programmes addressing our hypotheses and tailored to each cohort's specific workplace context

Evaluation
For each sector, Public First conducted:

- **Before training,** one to two focus groups and a pre-training survey on attitudes and usage.
- **Immediately post-training,** one to two focus groups and a post-training survey.
- **Three months after training,** two focus groups and a final impact survey.

The research deliberately varied training interventions across cohorts to address sector-specific needs, granting rich insights into real-world adoption patterns. Public First ensured analytical rigour by conducting statistical significance testing on adoption changes and gathering qualitative data through post-training surveys and interviews. While not a formal academic study, this approach offers valuable insights into effective implementation strategies across diverse workplace environments.

Findings and impact

Brief training dramatically increases AI usage, with lasting impact on adoption

In Public First's initial landscape poll, 28% of workers reported using generative AI at work, increasing to 34% six months later. This pattern of modest usage and modest growth held across our targeted sectors, with approximately one-third of education, SMB, and union workers engaging with generative AI at work.
Our training participants reflected these low usage patterns. Before training, only 9% of our union cohort used generative AI daily, compared to 19% in our education cohort and 29% in our SMB cohort.

Most UK workers don't currently see AI as relevant or useful
The landscape surveys suggest that perceived relevance is the biggest barrier to adoption, rather than issues of capability or complexity. Throughout the study, worker confidence about AI remained high (above 80%). However, a majority of respondents considered AI to be irrelevant to their roles. In other words, most UK workers already think they can use AI, they just don't see the point. The qualitative data suggests a two-fold challenge:

- Many workers can't see how to apply AI in their day-to-day work.
- Others have tried AI tools once or twice, but gave up after failing to see a benefit.

Together, these add up to a fundamental gap in understanding: participants simply haven't seen what effective AI use could look like in their specific professional contexts. However, our findings show that targeted training helps bridge this gap by demonstrating AI's relevance to everyday tasks, increasing confidence and ultimately driving greater adoption.

Frequency of usage is also lagging

Even among those who had used generative AI tools at work, reported frequency of usage was low. Just 44% of UK workers who said they used generative AI tools did so at least once a day. This suggests that while many workers are experimenting with AI, they are not yet fully integrating it into their daily workflows. Our findings indicate that a key barrier is the lack of clear guidance on how AI can be effectively applied to their specific roles.

Workers are taking the lead without employer support

AI adoption is largely happening without official workplace guidance. A significant majority of workers surveyed (71%) chose to use AI tools on their own rather than being asked or encouraged by managers or organisations (28%). Six months later, this pattern remained largely unchanged, with 70% continuing to adopt AI independently, while the proportion of those encouraged by their employers dropped slightly to 22%. This organic pattern of engagement suggests that AI training — especially when provided or endorsed by employers — could dramatically boost usage by offering both the skills and official endorsement that many people need before fully embracing a new way of working.

> "It might be because we're quite young and quite digital but there are people asking for [AI] faster than we can give it to them right now. I actually think that's the case in lots of businesses."
> — **Head of digital at a large employer**

AI adoption gaps risk increasing workplace inequality

AI has the potential to radically change workplaces, but AI adoption (and the productivity gains it brings) is far from evenly distributed. Women over 55 are four times less likely to use AI than men under 35.[8] And without targeted training and support, the gap between those who can harness AI effectively and those left behind will only widen.

Women over 55 are four times less likely to use AI than men under 35

8. Public First, National Worker Poll, March 2025.

FINDINGS AND IMPACT

44%

of UK workers who said they used generative AI tools did so at least once a day (pre-training)

One of our expert interviewees, the chief executive of a national membership organisation, observed: "If you look at the distribution of the use of technologies and therefore the levels of productivity within a sector, it is vast. There's no sign of that shrinking over time as technology trickles or diffuses."

In this light, targeted employer-led training represents not just a productivity opportunity, but also an essential intervention to prevent skills gaps within the workforce becoming even further entrenched. And it needn't be expensive. The technologies showcased in our training were mainly low cost or free to use, and training platforms such as Google Digital Garage are free to access for both employers and employees.

1. The results were highly promising

There were large increases in adoption after just a few hours of training

We found that a few hours of training was sufficient to triple estimated daily AI usage with unions, and double utilisation among SMBs and teachers.

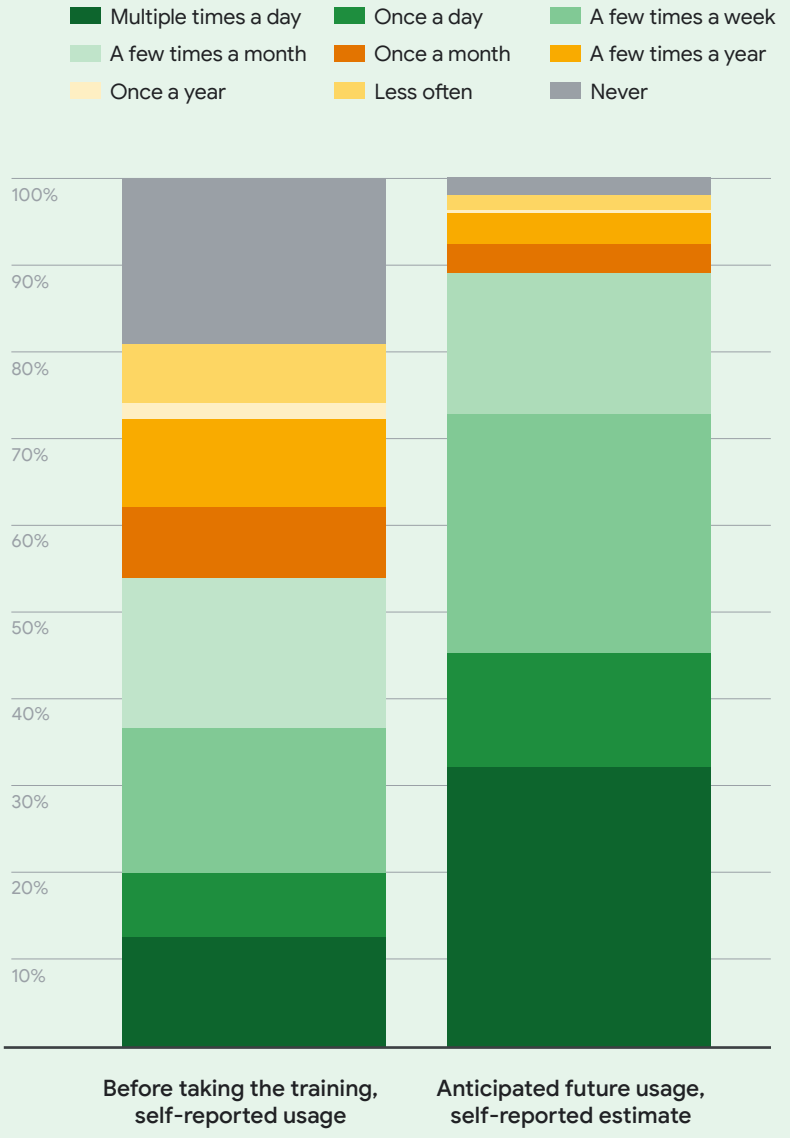
> "I've been playing around with it and trying to use it every day so I think it's just becoming more natural for me to use."
> **— Education, post-training group participant**

This increased engagement appears to stem from three key factors:

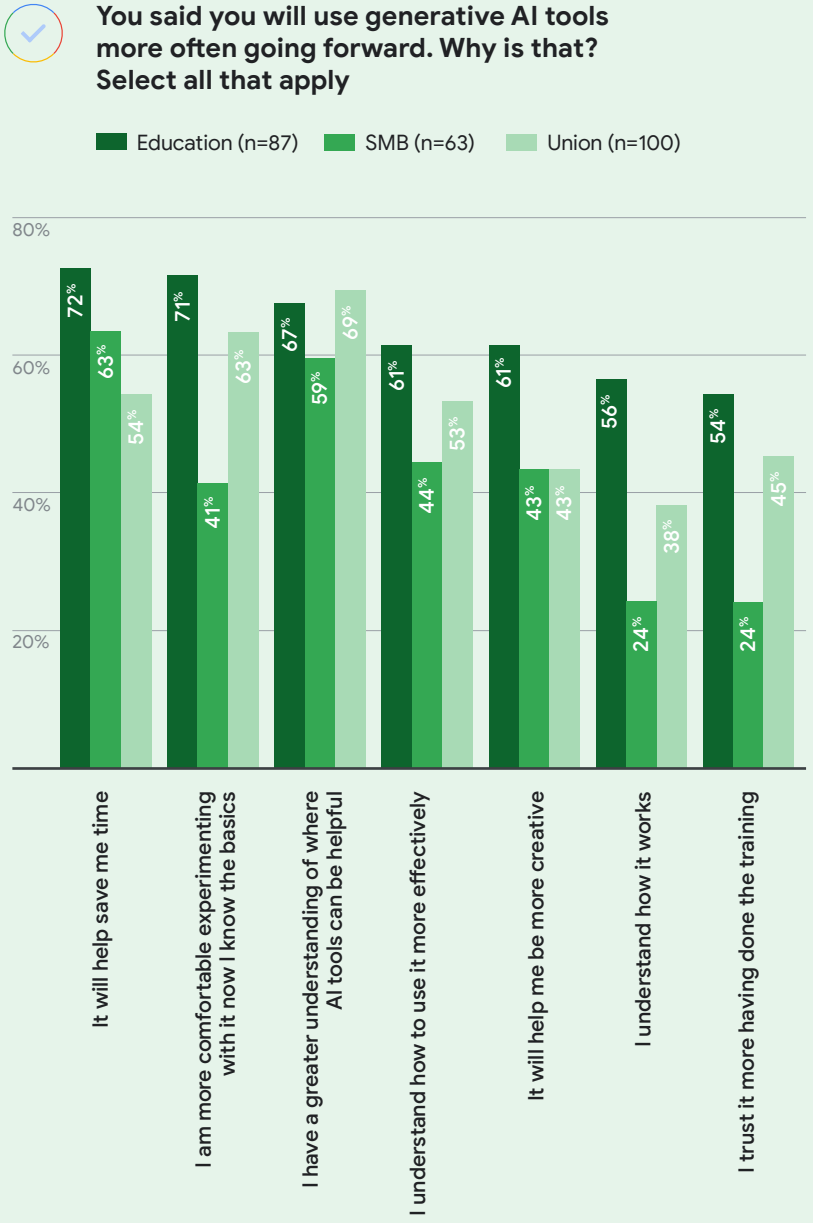
- AI tools are surprisingly easy to use — more like learning a new app than mastering coding or similar technical skills.
- The wide range of practical applications helps users quickly build regular habits.
- Users are rewarded with immediate time-saving benefits that reinforce continued engagement.

Feedback from participants confirmed these findings, with a strong majority across all sectors reporting they were more likely to continue using AI tools. When asked what drove their increased engagement, participants consistently mentioned: better understanding of what AI can do, greater confidence in trying new applications, and tangible time-saving benefits.

Immediately post-training, estimates of previous usage and anticipated future usage



Public First, Aggregate across cohorts post-training surveys, Nov. 7, 2024–Jan. 15, 2025.



Public First. All cohorts post-training surveys. Nov. 7, 2024–Jan. 15, 2025.

"I think it'll make me more time-efficient. Because, although I won't be able to use it necessarily for everything I do, there'll be some areas of my job that it will make much quicker and easier to do, particularly if the council allows me to use it on my work machine."
— Union member, post-training group participant

Participants in our groups often reported enjoying using AI. What began as curiosity quickly turned to appreciation as they discovered how AI can make their work easier, more creative, and even more enjoyable.

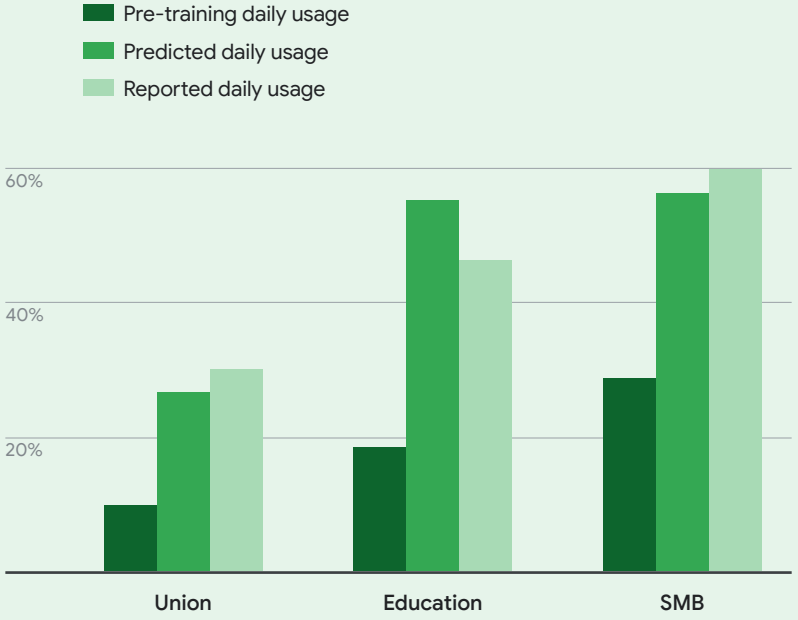
"It's given me a lot of hope. It's given me a confidence boost. There's tools out there to make your job easier and your job enjoyable, and you don't feel defeated because they give you ideas. The AI gives you a narrative that you can work on and start off with."
— Education, three-month post-training group participant

"What I loved the most about the training was the aspects of keeping the human in the loop and AI being an augmentation tool rather than a replacement. So that was the biggest shift; to go from this, almost like, fear to this confidence of it won't do my work for me, but it will help me do my work more effectively."
— SMB, three-month post-training group participant

"It's given me a lot of hope. It's given me a confidence boost. There's tools out there to make your job easier and your job enjoyable."

— Education, three-month post-training group participant

Proportion predicting daily usage in the next three months after training, compared to the proportion reporting daily usage three months later



Public First. All cohorts post-training surveys, Dec. 20, 2024–Feb. 19, 2025. and Public First. All cohorts impact surveys, Nov. 7, 2024–Jan. 15, 2025.

2. High predicted usage matched actual usage, with minimal drop-off

To understand whether training created lasting change, we surveyed workers both immediately after their training and again three months later. This approach let us compare what people thought they would do with what they actually did.

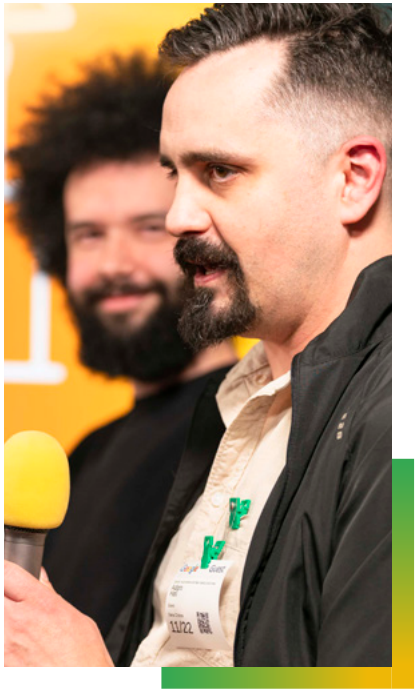
Adoption patterns proved resilient after training. Both predicted usage (measured immediately after training) and actual usage (assessed three months later) maintained consistent levels with very little drop-off. The percentage of participants using AI tools at least a few times a week increased dramatically — from 37% pre-training to 71% three months post-training — with union members in particular making significant gains.[9]

Most notable was the transformation we saw among demographic groups often underrepresented in technology adoption, specifically older participants (those over 55) and women. We found that:

- Women's daily AI usage increased from 18% to 45%, and weekly usage from 36% to 75%.
- Those over the age of 55 increased their daily usage from 13% to 35%, and their weekly usage from 23% to 62%.[10]

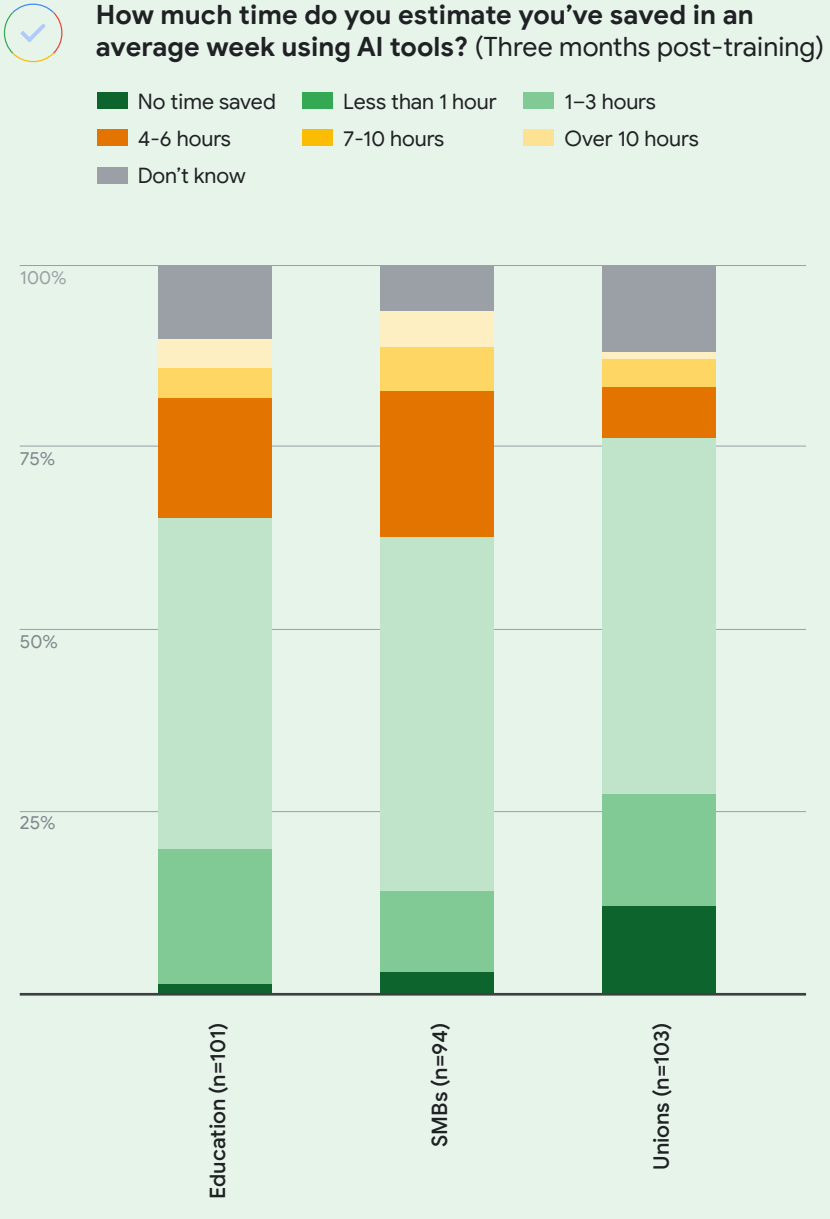
There was also a near-tripling of daily usage for women aged over 55 (from 9% to 29% daily, and from 17% to 56% weekly), though the sample was small.

We saw a consistent relationship between predicted and actual usage patterns in all our cohorts. Immediately after training, 57% of education and 59% of SMB participants predicted they would use AI tools daily. Three-month follow-up data closely matched these projections, with 47% of education participants and 60% of SMB participants reporting daily usage. Improved understanding of role-specific applications of AI was commonly cited as both a driver for initial adoption and for continued use. It is worth noting that the education impact survey took place immediately after the Christmas holidays, which may have contributed to a slight drop-off in reported daily usage as participants returned to their regular routines.



"I think my confidence has really grown. It has become a kind of personal assistant. To be very candid, I use it for almost everything."
— SMB, three-month post-training group participant

9, 10. As the initial sample included many more SMB responses with higher usage rates, Public First weighted to the composition of the impact surveys on cohort. This minimises the risk of the change being a result of fewer SMBs featuring in the impact sample.



Public First. All cohorts impact surveys, Dec. 20, 2024–Feb. 19, 2025.

3. Workers reported time savings of over 122 hours per year — exceeding modelled estimates by 22%

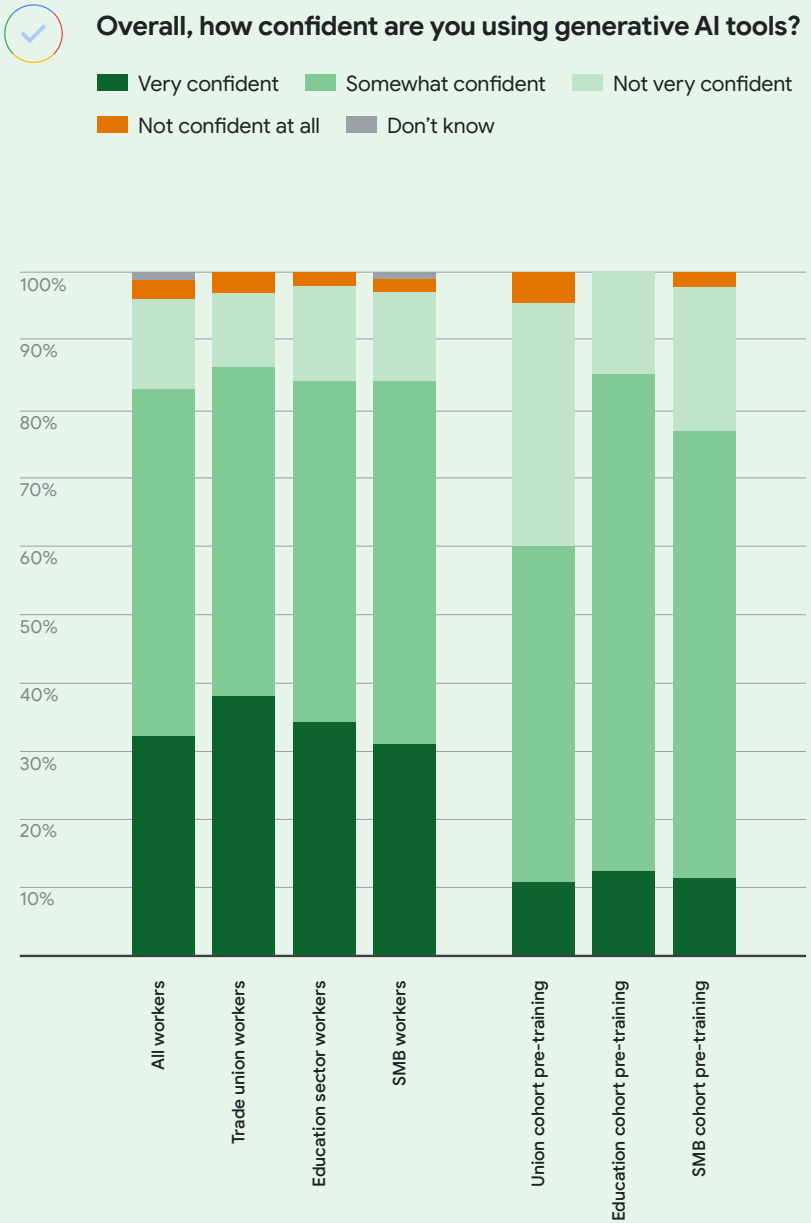
Across all cohorts, participants reported significant reductions in the time spent on routine and administrative work, with estimated annual savings surpassing our initial projections.[11]

While some workers experienced immediate benefits, others highlighted a gradual shift as they became more comfortable integrating AI into their workflows. These findings underscore the potential of AI training to drive long-term efficiency gains, even for those who are still adapting to the technology.

"I have noticed it is gradually reducing workload. I've been planning English [lessons] quite a lot recently, so I have noticed it has helped a lot."
— Education, three-month post-training group participant

These findings underscore the potential of AI training to drive long-term efficiency gains

11. Public First, Google's Impact in the UK 2023, April 2024.



Public First. All cohorts pre-training surveys, Sept. 4, 2024–Jan. 15, 2025 and Public First. All cohorts impact surveys, three-months post-training, Dec. 20, 2024–Feb. 19, 2025.

4. The training increased fluency and drove experimentation

Our training participants started with lower confidence than the average worker polled in the initial survey.

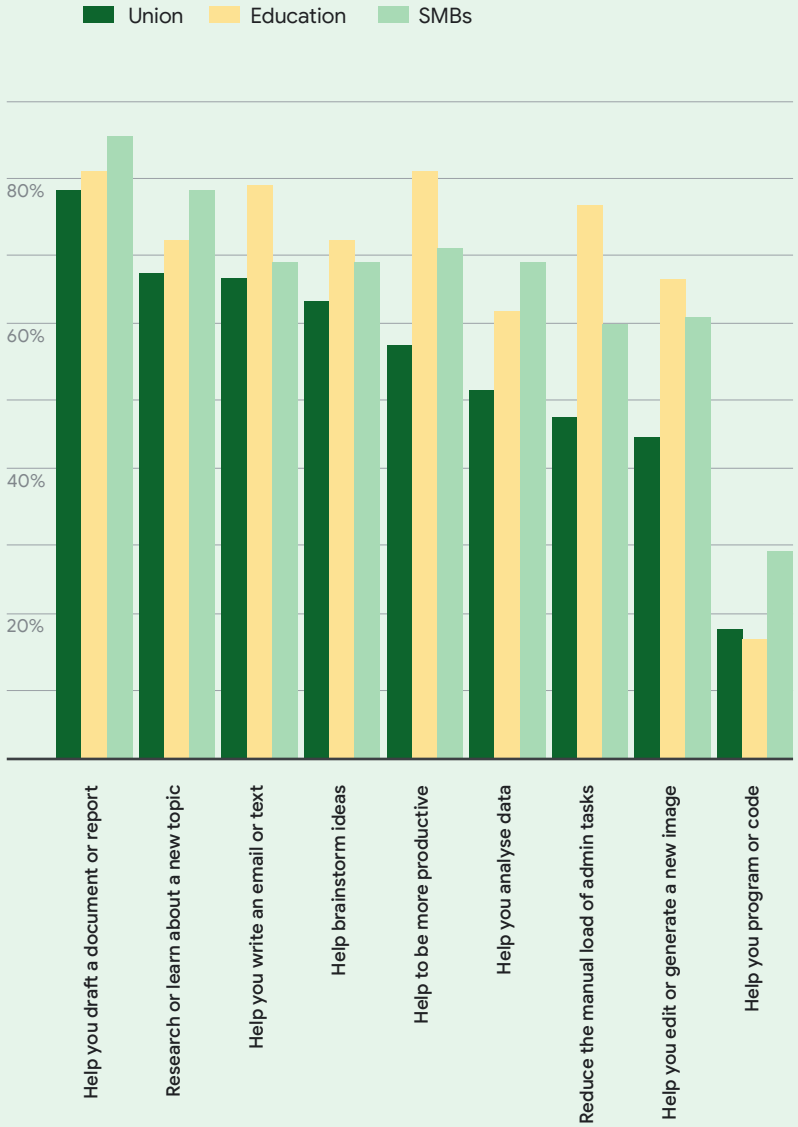
But the training increased their confidence and fluency. This allowed participants to experiment with the technology and discover new use cases.

> "I am not very good with computers, but I now feel confident using AI. It used to frighten the life out of me. So, yeah, if I can use it, anyone can."
> **— Union member, post-training group participant**

After three months, communication and writing tasks remained the primary AI applications across our cohorts (69%), but a majority of participants also began to innovate with new use cases. For example, 48% said they had used generative AI to brainstorm new ideas and for creative thinking, 41% to assist with learning about a new topic, and 54% to assist with summarising or simplifying longer documents. Seventy percent said they had discovered a new use or application for AI tools in the three months since the training.

> "I think it's made me more confident. Although I think the confidence comes more from using the tools rather than from the training per se. What the training did was inspire me to think about using it in different ways."
> **— SMB, three-month post-training group participant**

Which of the following will you use generative AI to help with in the future?



Public First. All cohorts impact surveys, three-months post-training, Dec. 20, 2024–Feb. 19, 2025.

5. Cultivating responsible use of AI

After training, participants developed a more nuanced understanding of when and how to use AI outputs. Many reported implementing their own checks and balances, cross-referencing multiple tools, considering the values of different AI providers, and being mindful of data confidentiality. This shift reflects a deeper level of critical engagement with AI.

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We strictly uphold responsible data practices, put users in control of their information, and are actively implementing privacy safeguards tailored to the unique needs of our AI products.

To learn more visit ai.google/responsibility/safety/

FINDINGS AND IMPACT

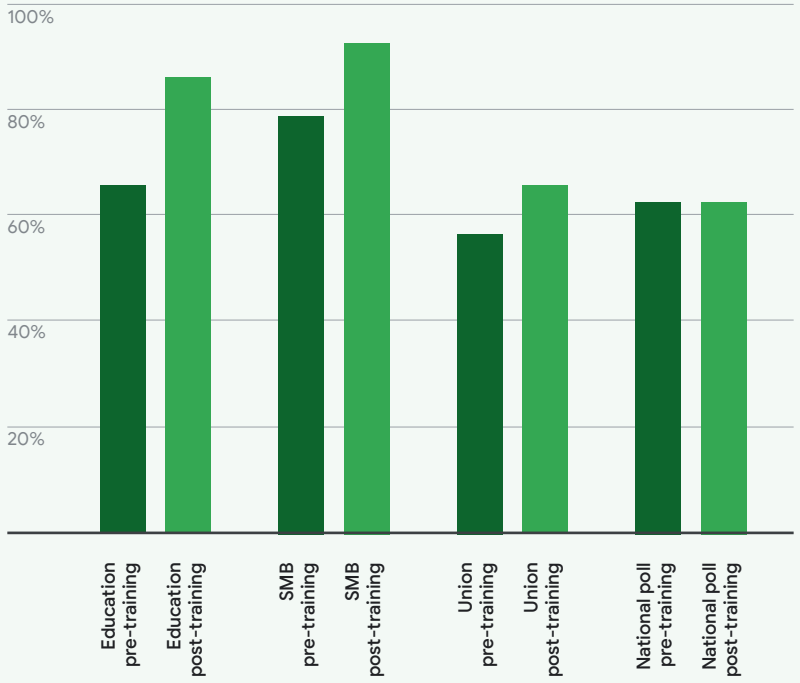
6. As usage increases, so does optimism about the technology's impact

The influence of AI training extends beyond just building technical skills: it fundamentally reshapes participants' perspectives on the role of AI in society. After completing the training, the share of education workers who felt optimistic that technology would have a positive impact on society jumped by 22pts, from two-thirds (66%) to well over three-quarters (87%). Similar patterns emerged across other cohorts, with optimism rising by 13pts among SMBs and 9pts among trade union members. This finding is particularly significant for policy development, suggesting that improved workplace adoption is likely to have a positive impact on overall public sentiment about AI and its evolving role in society.

Some participants noted that seeing AI's practical applications firsthand gave them a sense of agency over the technology, and made them more confident about integrating it into their daily routine.

"I work in marketing, so I think it [AI] will completely change my role, and that's one of the reasons that I was so keen to learn about it. I think you can stick your head in the sand and you'll just get overtaken by those who are embracing the technology."
— SMB, three-month post-training group participant

Perception of optimism towards technology pre- and post-training



Public First. All cohorts pre-training surveys, Sept. 4, 2024–Jan. 15, 2025. and Public First, All cohorts post-training surveys, Nov. 7, 2024–Jan. 15, 2025.

7. AI as an equaliser: enhancing accessibility for everyone

Beyond improving efficiency, many participants found that AI played a crucial role in making work and education more accessible and inclusive. Some teachers reported that AI tools helped them adapt lessons more effectively for pupils with special educational needs. In workplaces, AI was seen as a powerful support system for neurodivergent individuals, assisting with information processing and communication in ways that made tasks more manageable. This newfound accessibility not only boosted individual confidence but also reinforced AI's potential to create more equitable learning and working environments.

"Being a special needs teacher, we find it quite difficult to adapt lessons, because there's not very much resource out there ... And sometimes trying to put that into a lesson plan can be quite difficult, so being introduced to Gemini has cut my workload quite a lot."
— Education, three-month post-training group participant

"I have a few people [staff] who are neurodivergent and have used it in some incredible ways. There's someone who has ADHD ... Since the training she stepped up the AI usage to help translate things in a way that she understands."
— SMB, three-month post-training group participant

"I've got into HR because I have a passion for fairness, for equal opportunity. English is not my first language. I'm autistic. I have had so many people help me in my career, make little adjustments for me here and there, so I could deliver incredible work, and I feel like AI can do what these incredible people have done for me with a lot less effort. So it's that equaliser. You know, it helps me be that equaliser."
— SMB impact group participant

"I think you can stick your head in the sand and you'll just get overtaken by those who are embracing the technology."

— SMB, three-month post-training group participant

8. Scaling AI skills training for national adoption

Feedback across all cohorts highlighted a few key elements that made the training particularly effective:

- Interactive sessions that encouraged hands-on participation.
- Practical demonstrations showcasing real applications relevant to participants' work.
- Tailored content designed for each sector's specific needs.

Sessions on AI prompting and refinement received especially positive feedback. Participants emphasised how seeing real-world examples helped them better understand AI's practical value, particularly for writing documents and handling administrative tasks. Many appreciated the structured approach where trainers guided them through different applications and provided immediate feedback.

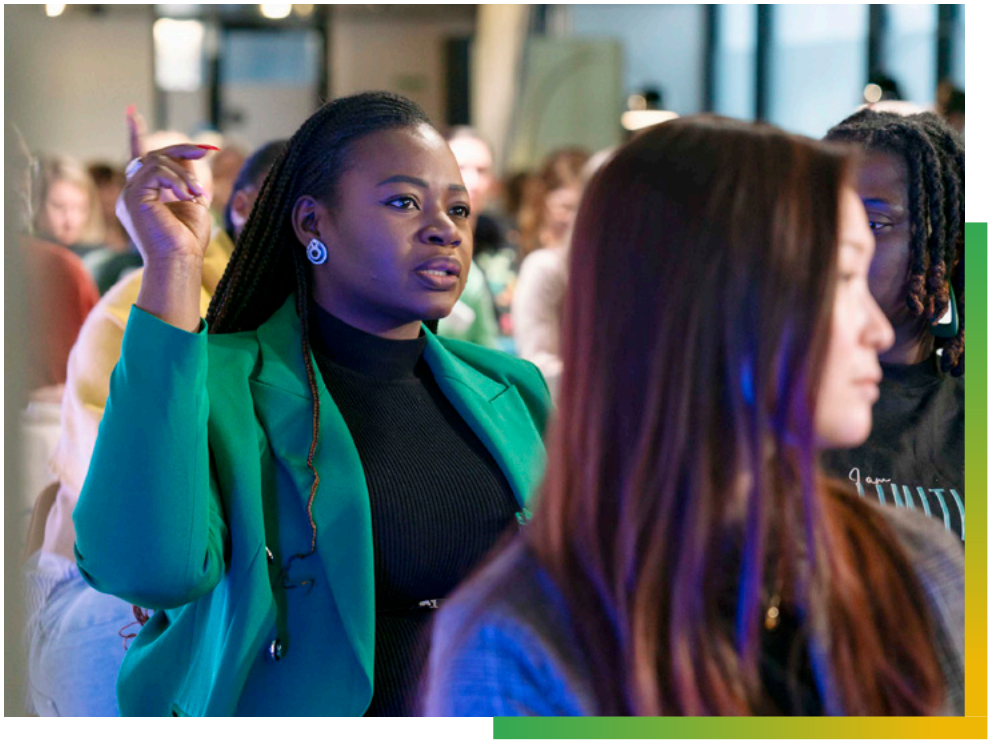
> "The area of prompt engineering was something that I found extremely useful. Because, before then, I'd been using it, but when I got to see how I could further use it to enhance my work, I mean, it just blew my mind."
> **— SMB, three-month post-training group participant**

Participants also praised the 1:1 sessions, particularly those that allowed for deeper discussion on AI use cases relevant to their work. This level of personal engagement was especially valuable for those unsure about how AI applied to their daily tasks.

> "The session I had, it was wonderful, because he just demonstrated how I could personally use it. I was doing a research project, so he just showed me how I could use it to carry out my project. Getting that insight was something I never expected. It was a good learning experience for me."
> **— SMB, three-month post-training group participant**

Post-training analysis revealed no significant difference in AI attitudes or usage based on delivery format, whether in-person or through webinars. The consistency of response across training methods suggests that the content and structure of the training mattered more than the mode of instruction. This is particularly encouraging as it suggests that optimising for scalability should be possible without sacrificing impact.

FINDINGS AND IMPACT



Participants emphasised how seeing real-world examples helped them better understand AI's practical value

It is also noteworthy that the training had relatively low dropout rates. We speculate that this could indicate that organisational buy-in played a significant role in sustaining engagement, with participants being more likely to complete the training if they believed that it aligned with their organisation's priorities.

02.

Education Sector Pilot

A deep dive on findings and observations from our training pilot

Google

In partnership with LEO Academy Trust Lift Schools

"We're always looking for new ways to improve the experience of our staff and pupils and we see a number of ways that AI can help us to do just that. AI can help us to better cater to the various needs of the children in our classrooms, capture the imaginations of pupils struggling to grasp new concepts, and even assist our support staff with the day to day running of our schools, and this pilot is key to achieving these goals."

— Phillip Hedger, CEO, LEO Academy Trust

"AI has tremendous potential to support our teams with administrative tasks and transform the learning experience for our pupils. It's incredibly important for the nation's educators to be equipped with the knowledge needed to teach and inspire the next generation about a technology which is set to transform the way we live and work."

— Martin Simpson, Director of Technology, Lift Schools

LEO Academy Trust

Lift Schools

EDUCATION SECTOR PILOT

In summary

1. AI could be particularly important for teachers, as they manage current workloads and the responsibility of helping the next generation understand this new technology. Yet adoption remains surprisingly low; our landscape polling indicates that AI training is a low priority for education workers, with only 22% choosing to focus on AI training if given a choice of different training options.

2. Our initial hypothesis assumed trust was the primary barrier to AI adoption; instead, perceived relevance to specific job tasks proved more significant.

3. Teachers frequently expressed concern that using AI constituted "cheating" — suggesting explicit institutional permission is critical for widespread adoption within education.

4. After bespoke training, adoption increased dramatically, delivering time savings exceeding our projections by almost 10%. Success stemmed from the tools' intuitive usability, integration into daily routines, and immediate benefits.

5. How will adoption take hold? Administrative tasks will serve as the primary pathway for AI in schools, addressing a pain point in teacher retention. For "high-stakes" applications — classroom instruction and direct pupil engagement — additional leadership endorsement appears necessary.

6. Following the training, teachers began using AI for a much broader range of tasks than before, from document writing and administration, lesson, and curriculum planning, to student assessment and feedback.

7. Finally, one of the most unexpected outcomes of the training was how quickly participants became advocates for AI, actively sharing techniques and best practices with colleagues. This organic peer-to-peer learning suggests that even small scale training interventions can spark a much larger cultural shift, embedding AI adoption far beyond the initial group of trainees.

Education

Results from our AI training pilot

AI could relieve teacher workload

AI has the potential to transform education. Public First modelling found that AI could enhance 74% of roles in education and potentially save teachers up to the equivalent of 109 hours a year, which exceeded our previous estimates of 100 hours a year by almost 10%.[12] This time saving would be equivalent to a 16% increase in the teacher to pupil ratio, or over 31,000 new teachers (a 7% staff increase).

We know that time matters in education. Nearly half (49%) of teachers and school leaders believe their workload is unmanageable and beyond their control, and just 22% say their workload is acceptable.[13] In the initial landscape poll, 77% of those working in education reported working outside their contracted hours.

The problem is not the core teaching role — 78% of teachers say they enjoy their job "most or all of the time". The problem is administrative burden. 74% of teachers report spending too much time on administrative tasks, and nearly half (49%) say the administrative burden has increased in recent years.[14] This level of workload is actively harming retention and recruitment. One-third (34%) of teachers and leaders are considering leaving the profession within the next year, with the overwhelming majority of these (90%) citing excessive workload as the primary reason. And the inflow of new teachers can't keep pace — recruitment for 2023–24 reached just 50% of its target, continuing a long-term trend of under-recruitment.[15] Improving job satisfaction could play a crucial role in supporting the government's pledge to recruit 6,500 new teachers during this Parliament, helping to attract and retain talent in the education sector.

AI adoption is low, and AI training is a low priority

"I'll be honest, I was a bit dismissive. That's why when I saw the opportunity, I was like, 'How much longer can I go on dismissing this?'."
— Teacher, three-month post-training education group participant

The initial landscape survey revealed significantly low AI adoption within the education sector. While teachers receive regular professional development — more than four-fifths reported being offered training within the past year — less than one in four identified AI training as a priority. This lack of prioritisation was mirrored in institutional provision: only 23% of respondents indicated that "AI tools [have been] required or provided as an option for use by employees". For the majority of teachers who had taken part in training, the focus of their most recent training was compliance (36%) or soft skills (20%), and only 4% reported a focus on AI/machine learning and 8% on advanced technological skills (e.g. coding skills, big data analysis).

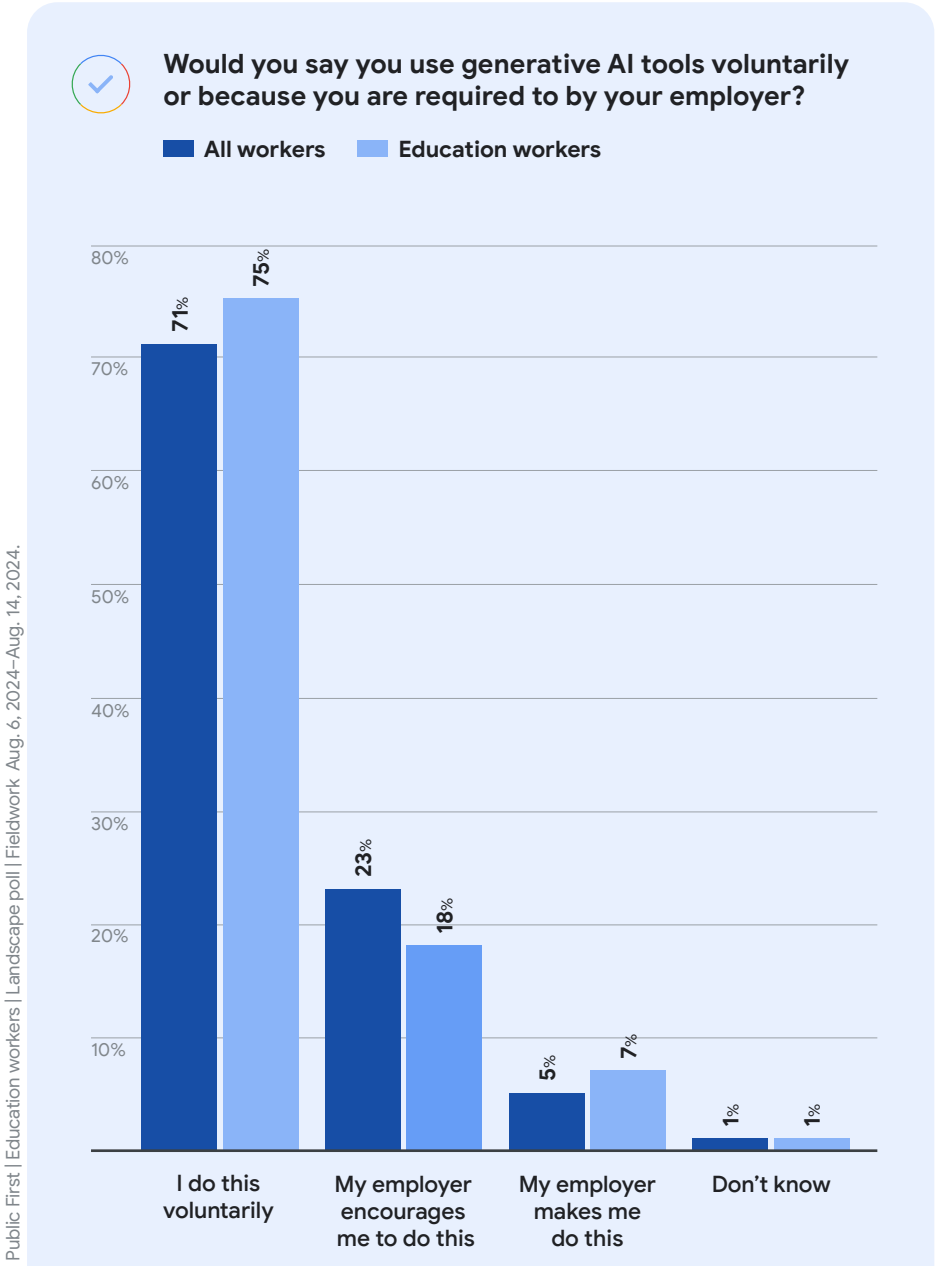
51%

reported no use of generative AI tools at work in the past 12 months

Perhaps unsurprisingly, generative AI remains largely unused within educational settings. The majority of education professionals in the landscape survey (51%) reported no use of generative AI tools at work in the past 12 months. Where such tools were used, adoption was predominantly teacher-initiated rather than institutionally directed.

From these baseline findings, we tailored our training to answer two fundamental questions:

- How can we effectively increase AI adoption among teachers and other education professionals?
- Does AI adoption yield the time-saving benefits predicted by our models?



12. Public First, Google's Impact in the UK 2023, April 2024.
13, 14, 15. Department for Education, Working lives of teachers and leaders: wave 3, Nov. 2024.

EDUCATION SECTOR PILOT

How we ran the training

Google partnered with two two Multi-Academy Trust (MATs) — LEO Academy Trust and Lift Schools — to offer 300 education staff an initial 2.5-hour in-person training on AI. This was followed by a series of voluntary online workshops over three months. Overall we trained 475 education staff through the programme.

The training programme was structured around two core components:

- **Explaining AI** — introducing participants to AI as a concept; how generative AI works in general terms, it's inherent strengths and limitations (including hallucinations, biases, and privacy implications).
- **Practical application and skill development** — providing bespoke training on specific AI tools, including those available through Google for Education alongside platform-agnostic solutions. Teachers were equipped with frameworks for effective prompting (from basic to advanced applications); methodologies for matching tools to specific tasks; and mechanisms for experimentation, including developing personalised workbooks containing effective prompts.

	FIRST LANDSCAPE SURVEY	PRE-SURVEY COHORT
Female	61%	84%
Male	39%	16%
Mean age	42 years	41 years
Confidence using AI tools (among users)	34% of AI users very confident 84% of AI users confident	13% of users very confident 85% of users confident

Public First measured usage and attitudes to AI using pre-training surveys and focus groups; post-training surveys and focus groups; and then a final survey and focus group three months after the training concluded.

How our cohort compared

Our trainees skewed more female and were less confident with AI than the average education worker. Overall the group was less likely to have proactively engaged with AI than their sector peers.

Survey responses:
Pre-training, 506; post-training, 471; impact (three months on), 104

Our initial hypothesis assumed trust was the major barrier to adoption

We developed a hypothesis for teacher groups that was designed to be applicable across sectors: Demonstrating how AI tools work and behave is key to building trust in the product and giving users the confidence it will deliver effectively.

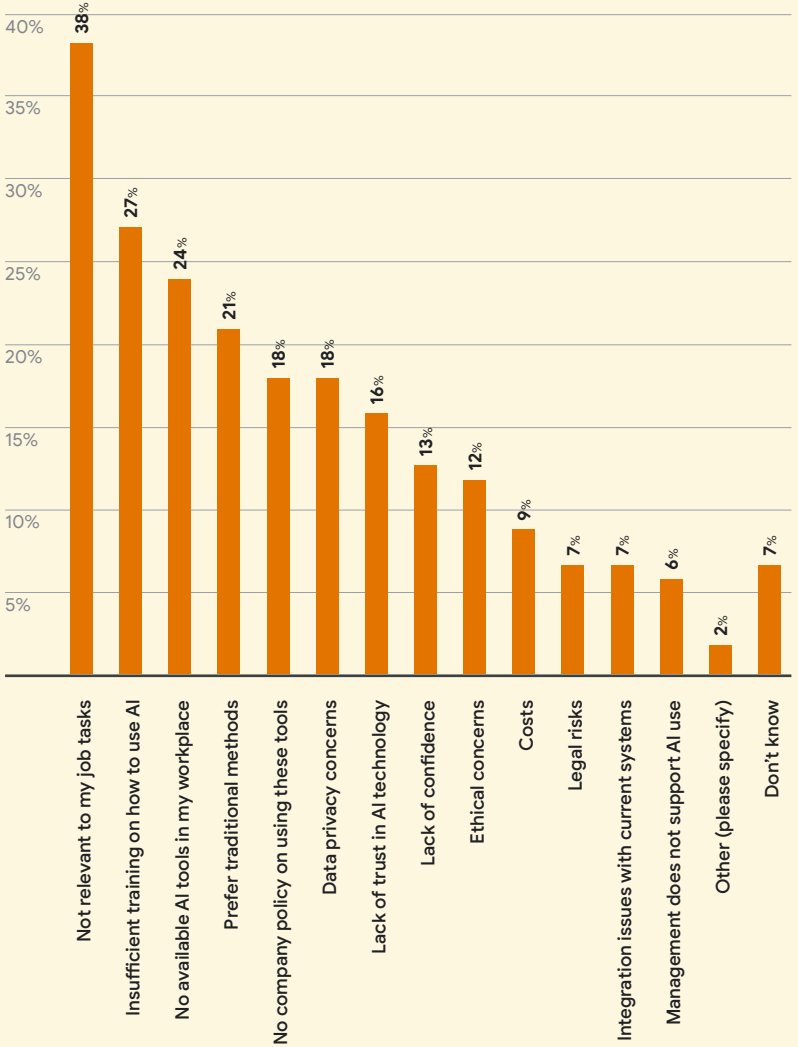
We chose this hypothesis because research on the adoption of new technologies often shows a correlation between trust, confidence, and product efficacy and adoption. Concerns about i) the privacy of AI; ii) the reliability of AI; and iii) the quality of AI were the top cited reasons not to expand it in the workplace.[16] In many of our expert interviews, trust was also cited as a core barrier for employees.

In fact, relevance mattered more than trust

Testing our hypothesis against the initial landscape poll revealed that "trust was not the primary barrier to adoption among education workers".

16. BCG survey, Jan. 2023.

You mentioned you do not use generative AI tools at work. Why is that?



Public First | Education workers | Landscape poll | Fieldwork Aug. 6, 2024–Aug. 14, 2024.

When asked why they didn't use generative AI at work, the most common answer was lack of relevance to my job (38%), followed by lack of training (27%), and availability (24%). In contrast, only 18% were concerned with data privacy, 16% with trust, and just 12% with ethics.

Training impact: boosting AI adoption and reducing workload

"I use AI to log and summarise things. It just saves time. For example, I was using AI today to help with my workload, which meant I had an extra 20 minutes. I was able to spend those 20 minutes with a pupil to turn their diary around and get them back into lessons."
— Education post-training group participant

AI usage increased dramatically
Comparing usage pre-training with three months after training, the proportion of education workers using AI weekly increased from 46% to 78%, while daily usage more than doubled, increasing from 19% to 47%.

Three months post-training, education workers reported saving 2.9 hours per week using AI. This translates to 109 hours a year, greater than our initially modelled estimate of 100 hours.

AI was also seen as aiding human judgement rather than replacing it — a development viewed as positive in our post-training focus groups.

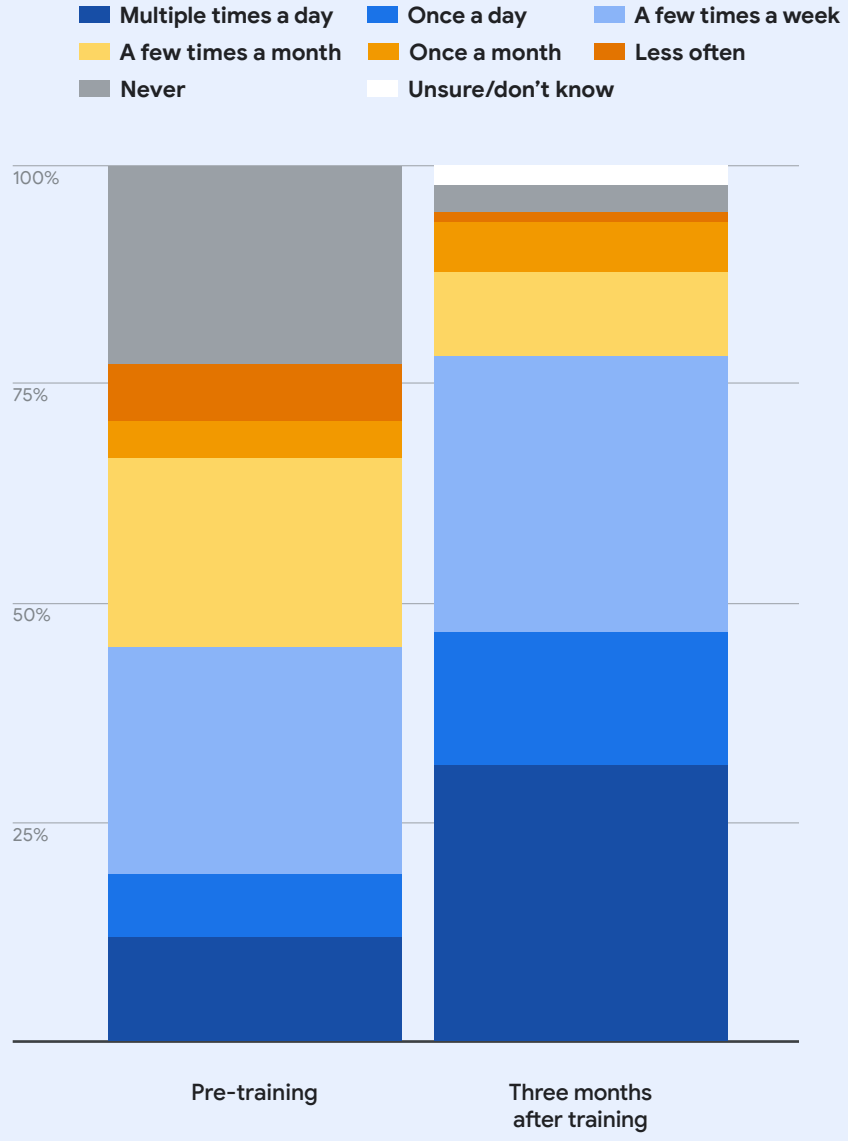
"It's going to be transformational for teaching because teachers spend so much time doing administrative tasks that actually draw them away from the teaching and learning and curriculum development. The things they actually like."
— Teacher, three-month post-training education group participant

Education workers reported saving

2.9

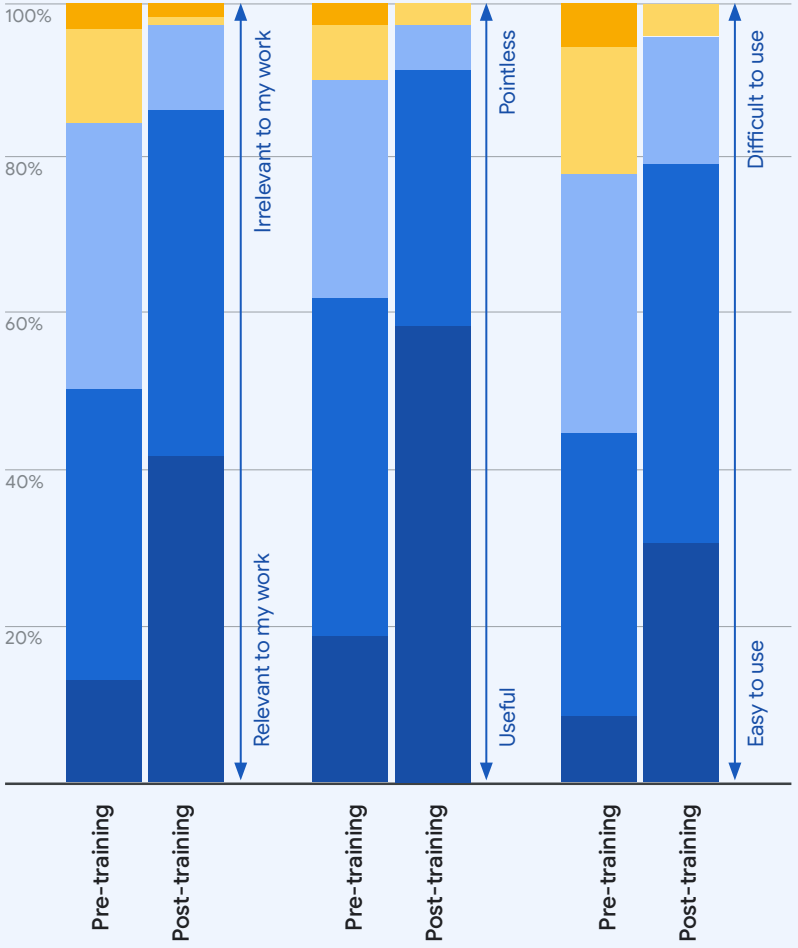
hours per week using AI

Change in AI use from before and after the training



Public First | Education workers | 3 Months Post-Training Survey | 20th December - 5th February
Public First | Education workers | Pre-Training Survey | Fieldwork 4th Sept - November 8th

How would you rate the application of AI tools in your work using the following scales?



Respondents were asked to rate each statement on a sliding scale from 1 to 5, where 1 represents one end of the spectrum (e.g. "Irrelevant to my work") and 5 represents the opposite (e.g. "Relevant to my work").

Public First | Education workers | Pre- and post-training surveys | 2024

Teachers also felt AI had a tangible impact on their working hours, with one noting, "AI has given me the chance to focus more on other areas and projects, reducing my workload in the evenings". This suggests that AI in education will deliver benefits that go beyond productivity gains to enhance teacher wellbeing and ultimately increase staff retention.

Why adoption increased: Inculcating habits and encouraging experimentation

> "I think when we went into the training in September, it gave everybody that security blanket that this is OK for us, that it's not cheating using AI. It's just finding the time to play."
> **— Female, SEN Teacher**

Our immediate post-training focus groups revealed that AI usage habits are quickly and easily formed and these habits lead to more experimentation, with participants finding new ways to use the technology. In our post-training survey, more than eight in 10 (86%) said that the training opened their eyes to how AI could be applied to their work, and 90% said they were surprised by what AI could do.

> "We've had time to play around with the different apps and different applications ... to do something during the week and then come back to it."
> **— Vice Principal, post-training group participant**

Why adoption increased: Building confidence and trust

Education workers left the training significantly more likely to describe AI as relevant, useful, and easy to use.

The relevance and understanding also appeared to directly impact trust, with teachers explaining that their confidence in AI increased as initial fears dissipated.

> "I don't think I really knew what I was doing, and I didn't really trust what I was getting. So sometimes it was just a case of learning how to better use it to help, and I have used it now in the classroom in front of children, which I wouldn't have done before."
> **— Three months post-training education group participant**

How teachers used AI after training

Before training, education workers primarily saw generative AI as a writing and communication tool. After training, the use cases broadened significantly. Writing and communications remained the most common uses, but all other categories of task saw large increases.

77%

used a generative AI tool to assist with communications or writing post-training

Below we have outlined some examples of how AI training has given workers the confidence to explore and adapt the technology in ways they had not initially considered.

Personal productivity

"I've discovered some Chrome app called Text Blaze. It's an add-on on Chrome, and it basically summarises it. You put in anything, any sort of writing you want. You give it a command and it will copy it all out for you on our document. So what I've been doing is, I've been getting my templates for emails or whatever I need, creating these templates in AI, moving it with text layers, giving its own command."

Planning and organisation

"When I've been on Google Meet, it comes up and it's like, 'Oh, do you want me to make notes on the meeting?' And that's quite helpful, because then I have a summary afterwards about what we've said without having to write it down, which is quite handy."

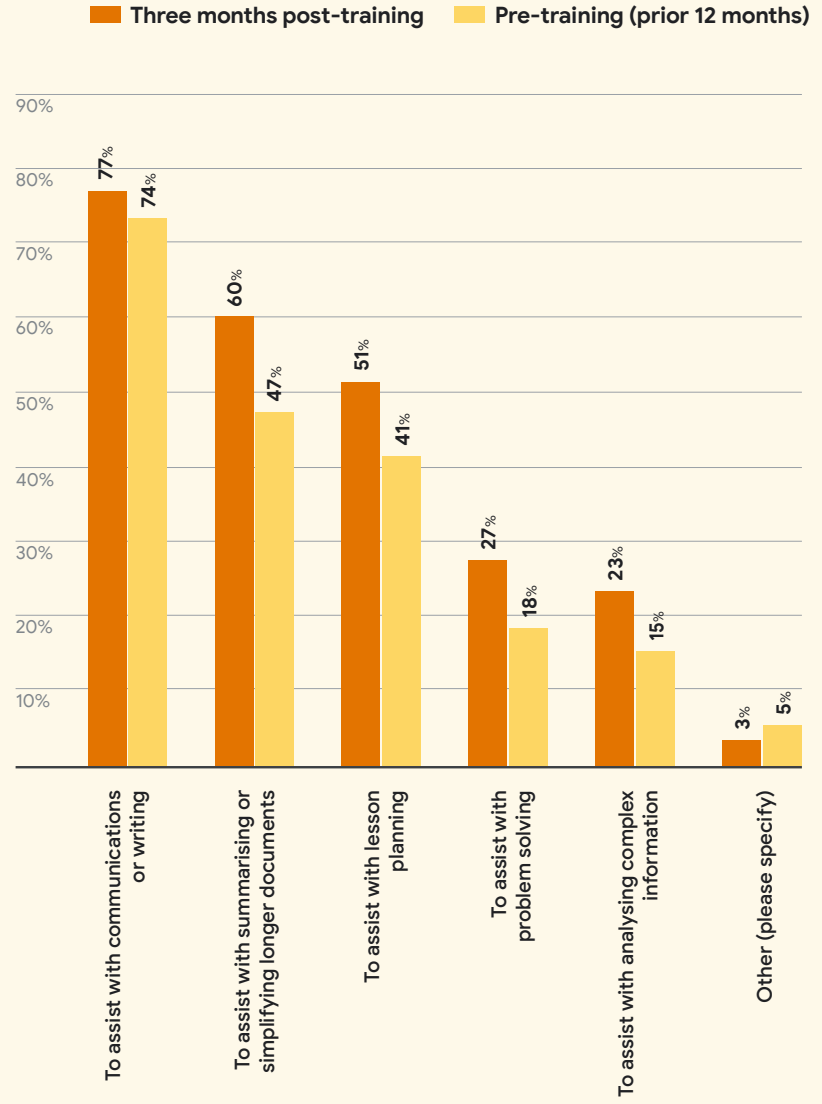
Creative and visual content design

"I use Canva to help advertise and create the posters for the school musical."

"To create images for PowerPoints for my children at school in terms of lesson planning. Because obviously you can use Google Images, but the images aren't precisely what you're looking for. I found it really handy that you could type into ChatGPT and just say, 'I need an image of something completely ridiculous', and it will just give you this thing that you've created, put on your slides, and that could be a monkey roller skating or whatever."

We also saw signs of peer-to-peer learning emerging organically after the training, creating a ripple effect. This is extremely important for driving scale. Training doesn't simply increase AI usage for direct recipients, it also creates organic momentum and offers a sustainable route to widespread adoption.

And how have you used a generative AI tool in the past [three months/12 months] at work?
Select all that apply.



Public First | Education workers | 3 Months Post-Training Survey | 20th December - 5th February
Public First | Education workers | Pre-Training Survey | Fieldwork 4th Sept - November 8th

"A lot of my family are also teachers. Speaking to them, they were exactly where I was before the training. So as soon as I said to them, 'I've done this', and I showed them how I was planning, they were like, 'I wish I'd known that. I've literally planned all of this, and it could have saved me half the time.' So showing them the little tricks that I've learned, they've now tried it, and they've noticed the difference as well."
— Three-month post-training education group participant

"In the geography network meeting, we talked about different applications that people were using and what they were using it for, and that was quite useful to get a brainstorm of different people's ideas about how they were using it as well."
— Three-month post-training education group participant

Remaining challenges: Trust, reliability, and institutional uncertainty

Questions about reliability and repeatability were the biggest concerns among education workers post-training, with doubts lingering for some teachers about whether the technology could be trusted in "high-stakes" classroom situations, such as presenting in front of a class. These concerns remain the largest barriers to adoption, as is often the case for new technologies, where trust typically develops over time. Even after training, 38% of teachers reported that worries about AI's reliability would stop them from using it more. Trust in AI did improve post-training, but 20% of education workers still do not trust AI for high-stakes tasks. Privacy concerns were the second-biggest issue, cited by 31% of education workers.

Uncertainty about whether using AI is *allowed* adds another layer of hesitation. Teachers in focus groups frequently expressed concern about whether AI use was considered acceptable. One participant describes the mindset among teachers three months after training: "It's not cheating using AI. It's OK. I think there was a lot of misconception from people that if they used it, they were seen as cheating."

Another referenced problems with a lack of guidance from government:

"I think it (education policy) is so loose that people are hesitant. They're a bit like, 'We're not really sure if we're meant to be doing this, so let's not do it just in case it's bad' ... That's part of the issue."
— Three-month post-training education group participant

This suggests that clearer guidance is needed, reinforcing that AI is not just permitted but also beneficial. Without explicit institutional support, teachers will remain hesitant to integrate AI into their day-to-day work.

CASE STUDY

Streamlining lesson planning and engaging pupils

Cheryl Narayanan, a dedicated special needs teacher at Pioneer School, joined Google's AI Works training with the hope of easing her workload and better supporting her pupils, many of whom rely on different styles of communication due to their special educational needs.

Before the training, her experience with AI was limited to occasional use for personal tasks, but she was eager to see how technology could transform her teaching. The training opened her eyes to AI's potential, equipping her with practical tools to create more engaging, tailored lessons such as creating new images through AI that will appeal to her pupils.

Since completing the training, she has embraced AI in her classroom, using Gemini to streamline lesson planning and create interactive activities, such as generating custom sentences to bring a literacy lesson to life. AI has not only saved her time but also made learning more accessible and enjoyable for her pupils Inspired by her own success, Narayanan now encourages colleagues to explore AI's potential and plans to lead a workshop during an upcoming inset day. Describing the training as a "confidence booster", she emphasised how AI has transformed her approach to teaching, giving her the tools to focus on what matters most — helping her pupils grow. Looking ahead, she believes AI will become an indispensable part of education, while stressing the importance of ethical safeguards and continued training to ensure its responsible use.

EDUCATION SECTOR PILOT

CASE STUDY

Simplifying teaching tasks and personalising support

Dave Sweet, a humanities teacher and department head with 15 years of experience at Ryde Academy, joined Google's AI Works training to explore how technology could ease his workload and enhance pupil learning.

While he had some prior experience with AI tools, Sweet hoped the training would deepen his understanding. The training equipped him with practical skills and new insights. Sweet found particular value in tools such as Gemini, Canva, and NotebookLM, which revolutionised his approach to lesson planning, exam preparation, and resource creation.

One standout example was using NotebookLM to simplify four years of examiners' reports into clear, actionable guidance for a struggling pupil, transforming what would have been hours of work into minutes. AI also streamlined his leadership duties, from creating bespoke textbook content for out-of-date curriculum topics to generating differentiated reading materials tailored to individual pupil needs.

Sweet described the training as a "game-changer", boosting his confidence in using AI effectively and responsibly. Looking ahead, he sees AI becoming an integral part of education, not just for saving time but also for creating richer, more personalised learning experiences while ensuring ethical boundaries remain firmly in place.

EDUCATION SECTOR PILOT

What we covered in the training

This training series consisted of up to six 45-minute sessions broken up over the following three topic areas, with live demos and Q&As. Prompts, case studies, and examples were all tailored to education use cases. A condensed 2.5-hour session was delivered in person to an inset day cohort, focusing on sections 1 and 2.

1. Understand

Introduction to AI
- Understand existing use cases for AI
- Define AI and machine learning
- Explain how generative AI works

Creating with AI
- Explore different types of models
- Interact with generative AI tools

Responsible use of AI
- Describe strengths and limitations
- Explore privacy and security

2. Explore

Introduction to prompting
- Use a framework to write better prompts
- Practice prompting for different scenarios
- Evaluate outputs for accuracy and effectiveness

Bring AI into your practice
- Identify tasks which are a good fit
- Explore and compare different tools

Advanced prompting
- Use AI as a source of personal feedback
- Recognise the importance of iteration

3. Develop

Enhance your practice
- Reflect on practice to date
- Experiment with new and existing tools

Plan for the future
- Utilise your AI Works playbook
- Stay up to date with future development

03.

Union Members Pilot

A deep dive on findings and observations from our training pilot

Google

In partnership with community

"Community is committed to empowering our members with the skills and knowledge to thrive in a world of rapid technological change. Our partnership with Google is a testament to that commitment. AI has the potential to positively transform the working lives of many of our members. By providing them with the tools and training to harness this technology, we're not only ensuring they remain at the forefront of their industries, but also unlocking significant economic benefits for the UK as a whole. This is about ensuring that the future of work is one where technology empowers workers, not replaces them."

— Roy Rickhuss CBE,
General Secretary, Community

community

In summary

1. AI could help trade union members contribute an additional £89 billion of economic value, but slow adoption means this potential is not being fully realised.[17]

2. Understanding and relevance proved to be closely linked — the more people understand AI, the more relevant they believe the technology to be to their work. In our landscape survey, of union workers who say AI is self-explanatory, 79% think AI is relevant to them and only 14% irrelevant. In our union member cohort, the starting level of knowledge and understanding was lower, leading to a lower perception of AI's relevance to their work.

3. Our cohort of union members had lower confidence in AI than their peers, citing insufficient training on how to use AI as their main reason for not using the technology.

4. Weekly AI use more than tripled three months after training once the cohort gained baseline knowledge. Perception that AI was applicable to job roles only increased modestly, from 56% before training to 64% immediately post-training.

5. A substantial increase in understanding of AI is responsible. When asked why usage increased, trade union members were over twice as likely to select "I understand more about how AI tools work" and "The training helped me understand how I could use it at work" than any other option.

6. This supports our distinction between relevance and understanding. Most trade union members already recognised AI's relevance and potential to their role; what they lacked was knowledge of how to use it in their roles. Greater understanding, not perceived relevance, drove the usage increase.

7. While training increased understanding of AI, concern about permission remains a barrier. Only 46% of trade union members were confident in their understanding of their employer's AI policy, and 58% said security concerns were likely to stop them using AI going forward.

17. Public First, Google's Impact in the UK 2023, April 2024.

Trade union members

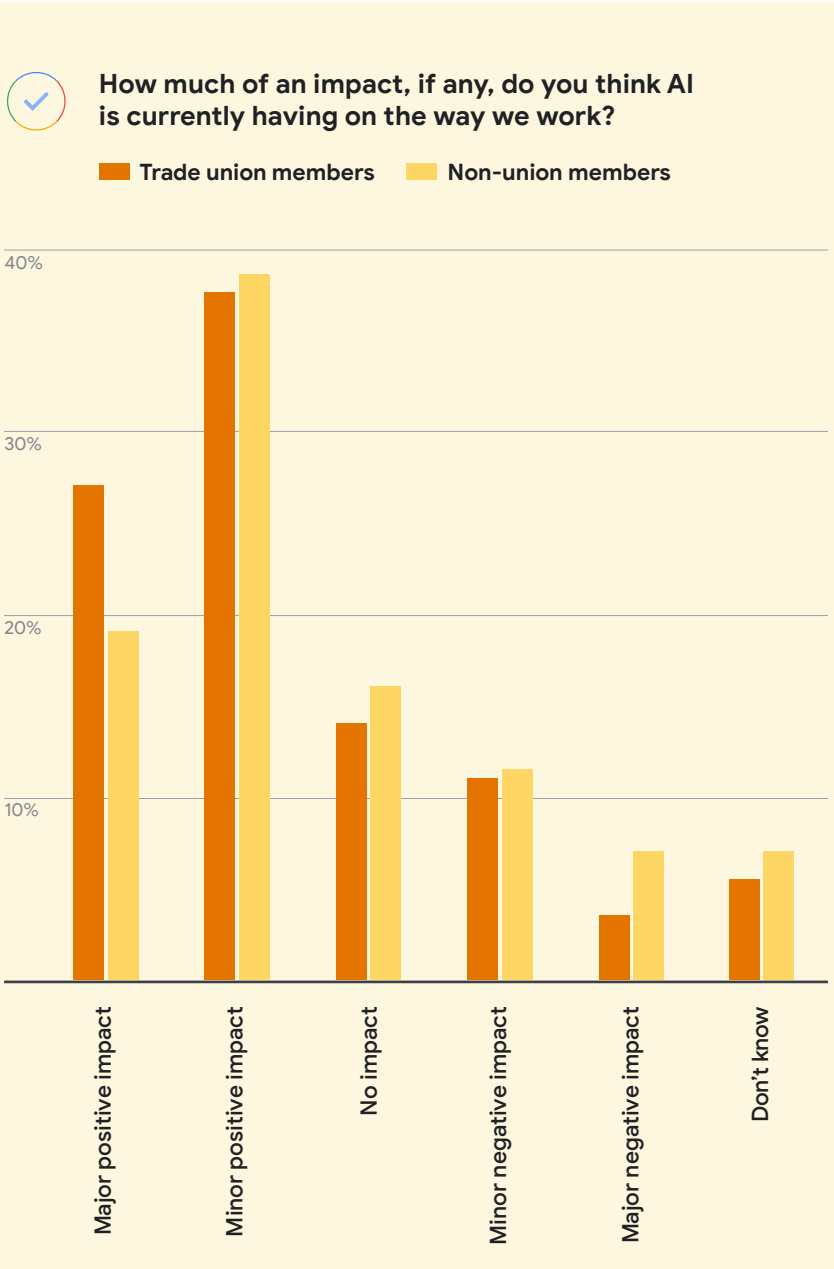
Results from our AI training pilot

AI could massively increase the economic value generated by trade union members, and workers are optimistic about the technology's impact

Trade unions have long supported their members as they navigate industrial change and adapt to new technology. And unions are well-placed to continue this vital role as AI rolls out across the UK workforce. Economic modelling from Public First suggests that AI could help union members contribute an additional £89 billion of economic value to the UK — and in the polling, union members were enthusiastic about AI's potential to enhance their work.

During our research phase, both our expert interviewees and some union members expressed concern about AI's impact on jobs — a recurring issue during previous waves of industrial and technological change.

"I suppose the essay question is, what is the digital transition for blue-collar workers and how do you get people to a place where they feel more comfortable; that technology isn't coming for their jobs and is not going to be bad for them? And, actually, they can see how it helps them?"
— Trade union senior leader



Public First | Union workers | Pre-Training Cohort Survey | Fieldwork 25th Sep - 15th Jan 2024
Public First | Union workers | Impact Survey | Fieldwork 27th Jan - 17th Feb 2025

37%

of trade union members think better training programmes would encourage them to use generative AI tools more

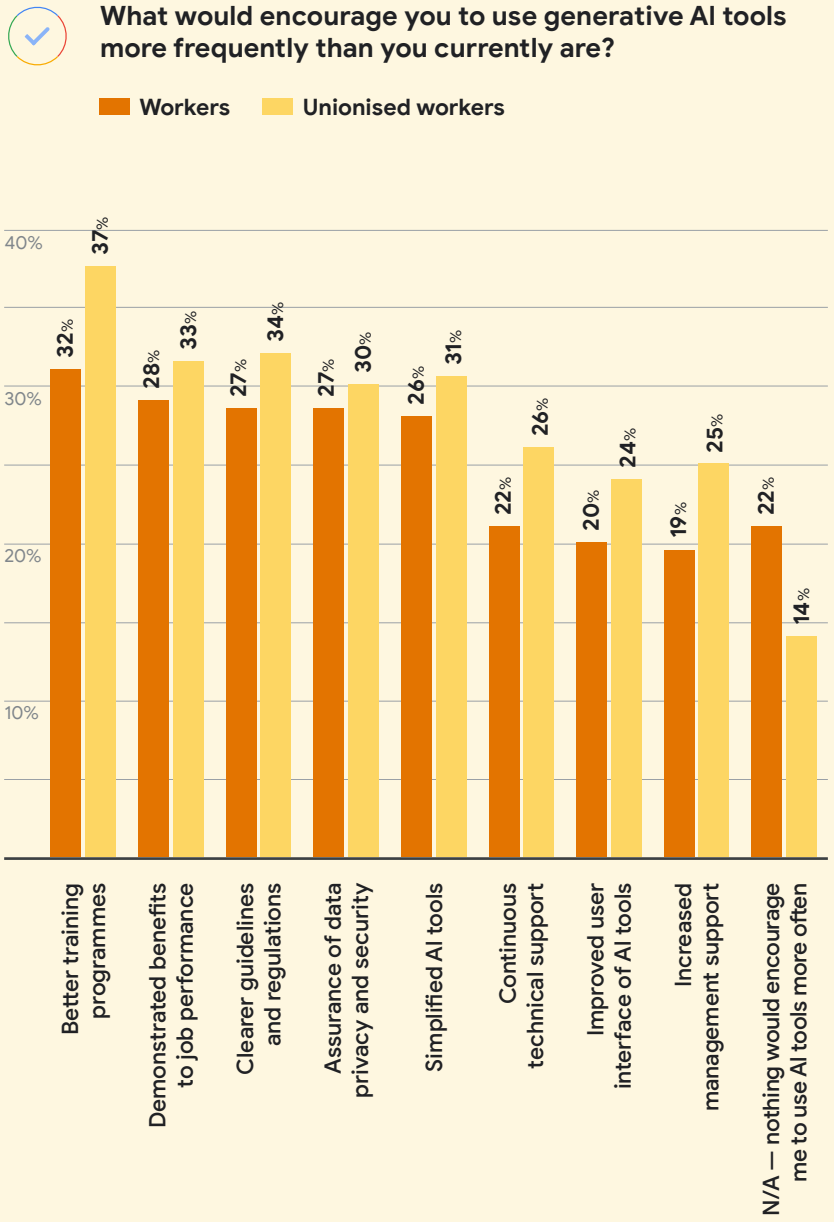
However, contrary to this expectation, union members actually proved more likely than non-members to say "AI tools could make my job easier" (versus adding complexity) and "AI tools will let workers focus on the more creative, strategic, or enjoyable parts of the work" (versus increasing demands on workers to do more with less).

This may be the result of shifts in the composition of union membership. Unions traditionally drew upon majority blue-collar jobs, but now around two-thirds (62%) of union members in the UK have a degree or equivalent higher-education qualification[18] — a rate 12 pts higher than for non-union workers.

The optimism wasn't unqualified, with union members more sensitive to some potential AI downsides than other groups. In the poll, they were slightly more likely to say that AI was already reducing the need for human workers (17% versus 11% for the non-union members), and in our qualitative research fear from media reports on AI came up regularly.

"All I'd heard was things in the media, and I wanted to understand the positives and any negatives more than just hearing rumours. I don't want to be a dinosaur, I want to be able to use this to understand how it can be used in a positive way."
— Union member, post-training focus group participant

18. Department for Business and Trade, Trade Union Membership, UK 1995-2023: Statistical Bulletin, May 2024.



Landscape Survey - Union Workers

Driving understanding was key to accelerating adoption with this cohort

We developed a hypothesis for trade union members based on expert interviews with key stakeholders: showing unionised workers generative AI applications that are relevant to their roles will accelerate AI upskilling and adoption. But in practice, driving understanding was the main factor that unlocked adoption for our cohort.

Understanding and relevance proved to be closely linked — the more people understand AI, the more relevant they believe the technology to be to their work. In our landscape survey, of union workers who say AI is self explanatory, 79% think AI is relevant to them and only 14% irrelevant. In our union member cohort, the starting level of knowledge and understanding was lower, leading to a lower perception of AI's relevance to their work.

> "At first, I thought when AI takes over, it's going to be like robots taking over the world. But it really changed my perspective. AI can actually enhance my work. The way we are growing and shifting in a lot of workplaces, it's a quite useful tool."
>
> — Trade union member, three-month post-training group participant

TRADE UNION SECTOR PILOT

How we ran the training

In our training, we wanted to increase understanding of how union members can integrate AI into their daily workflow. Google partnered with Community union to offer 404 union members three one-hour live webinars, as well as three optional in-person training sessions specifically curated to assist union representatives in their role supporting members, as well as 30-minute bookable 1:1 mentoring sessions on AI available to the whole cohort.

The training included:

- **Introduction to AI** — providing union members with a basic understanding of key principles and the strengths/weaknesses of AI tools.
- **Tangible use cases** — demonstrating specific tasks and tools relevant to trade union members' work contexts.
- **Prompt engineering guidance** — teaching participants how to write effective AI prompts.

Public First measured usage and attitudes to AI in pre-training surveys and focus groups; post-training surveys and focus groups; and then a final survey and focus group three months after the training completed.

How our cohort compared

Our union cohort was older and less confident using AI tools than the average union member. While they volunteered for the programme, they represented a lower-engagement demographic within the union membership.

	FIRST LANDSCAPE SURVEY	PRE-SURVEY COHORT
Female	50%	52%
Male	50%	47%
Mean age	42 years	53 years
Confidence using AI tools	38% of AI users very confident. 86% of AI users confident.	11% of users very confident. 60% of users confident.

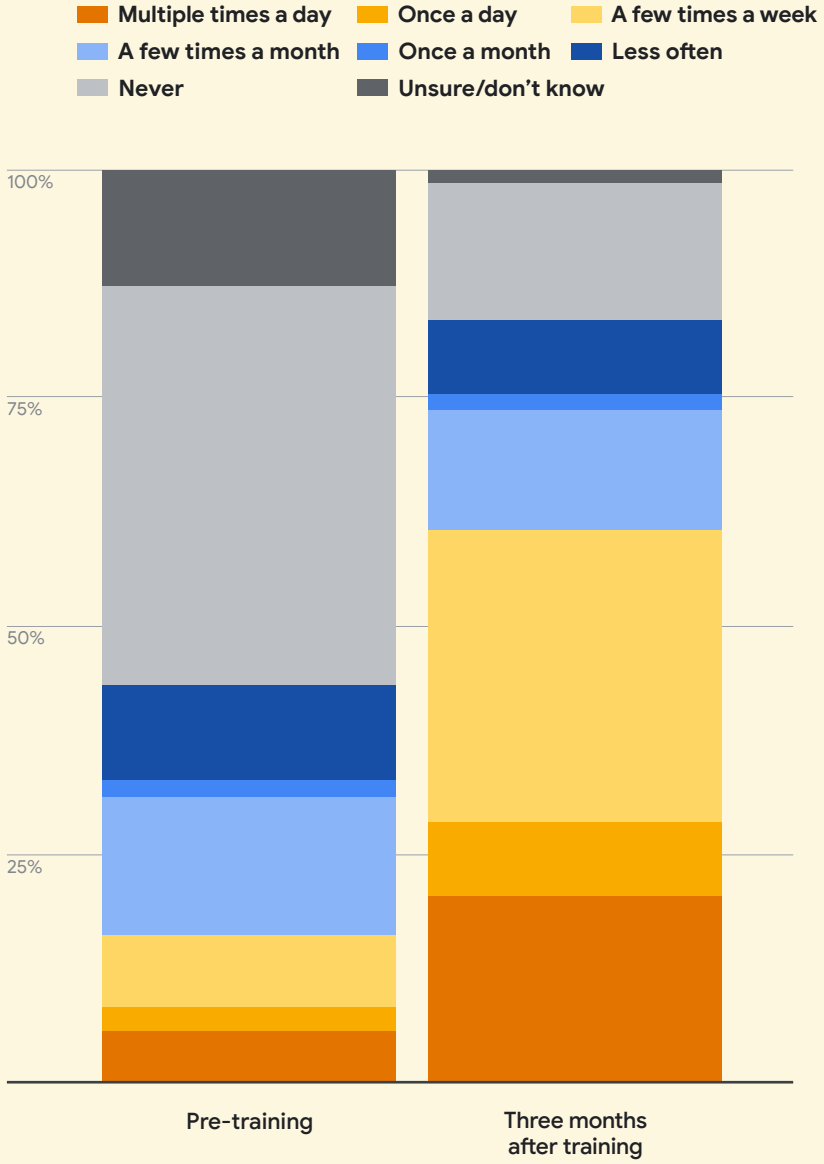
Survey responses: pre-training, 145; post-training, 119; impact (three months on), 122

This suggests that lack of knowledge about how to use AI, rather than a failure to see its potential in their roles, was the obstacle.

Our trade union cohort reported different adoption barriers compared to the broader union population from the landscape poll; relevancy was not a key barrier to adoption for our union cohort unlike in our landscape survey. Our cohort, started with significantly lower engagement levels, with only 60% of those who had used AI expressing confidence using AI versus 86% in the general trade union member sample; and low adoption within our cohort stemmed primarily from confidence issues and knowledge gaps. When asked what prevented them from using AI, almost half of our union participants cited insufficient training.

Unsurprisingly, union members identified training as the key factor that would encourage increased AI adoption — placing even higher importance on this than the average worker. Interestingly, they showed no strong preference for who delivered this training, whether peers, external consultants, managers, or union representatives. Our data also revealed that union members placed greater emphasis on concrete job-performance benefits compared to the average worker.

Change in AI use pre- and post-training



Public First | Unions workers- Pre and Post-Training Survey. Public First | Union workers | Pre-Training Cohort Survey | Fieldwork 25th Sep - 15th Jan 2024
Public First | Union workers | Impact Survey | Fieldwork 27th Jan - 17th Feb 2025

12.5

working days annually was the reported equivalent time saved through AI application

Training impact: big increases in adoption and time savings

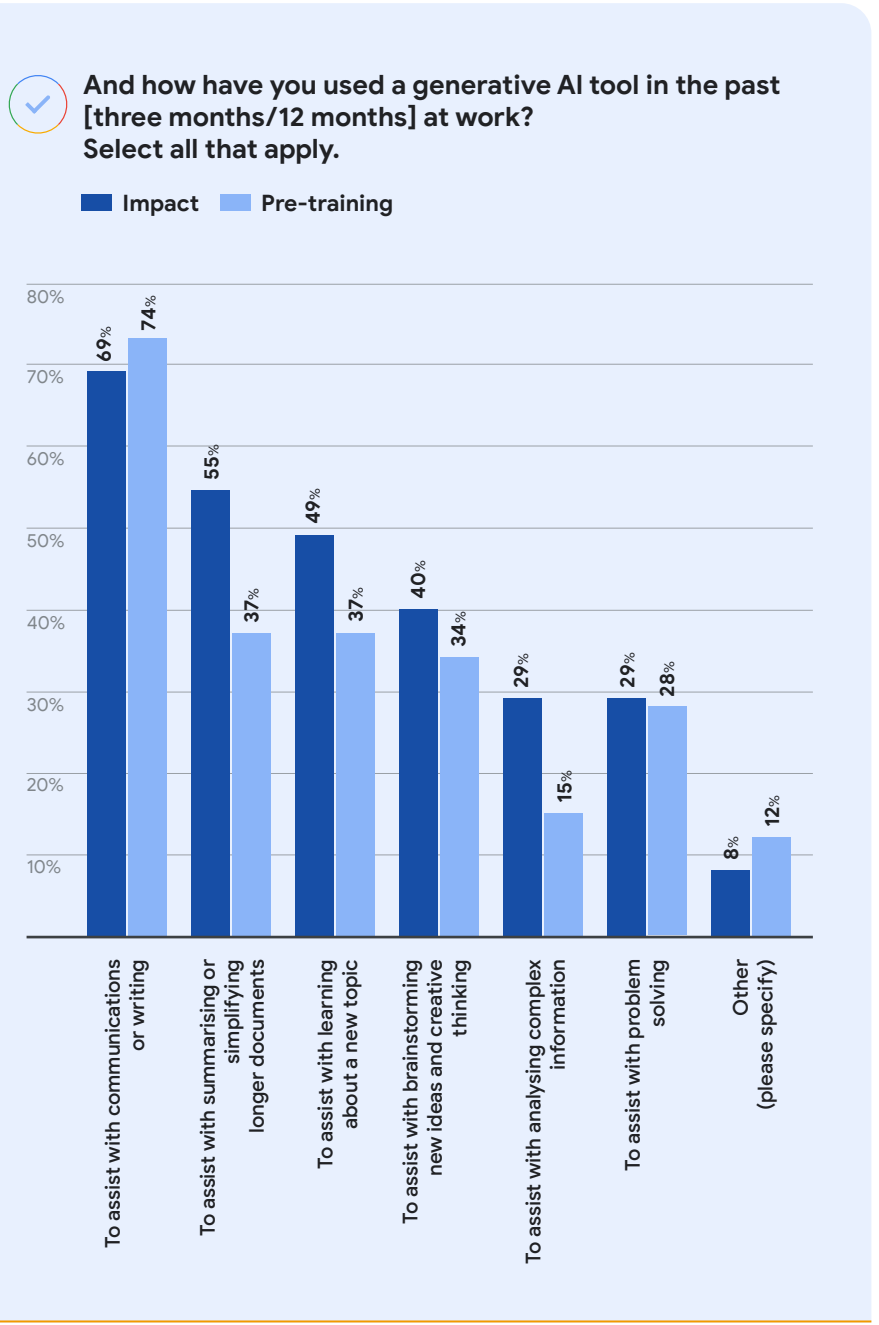
A three-month follow-up survey revealed significant growth in usage among our union cohort. Daily AI use increased from 9% before training to 29% afterward, while weekly usage tripled from 17% to 61%. Importantly, union members reported saving an average of 2.1 hours per week through AI application — equivalent to around 12.5 working days annually.

Union members also used AI for a broader range of tasks after the training

Summarising information
"It is amazing at summarising information. Other government organisations are constantly pumping out documents for us to try and read and make sense of, and AI just bangs them out. They're publicly available so you don't even need to copy and paste them in. You can just ask for a summary of the relevant changes and things."

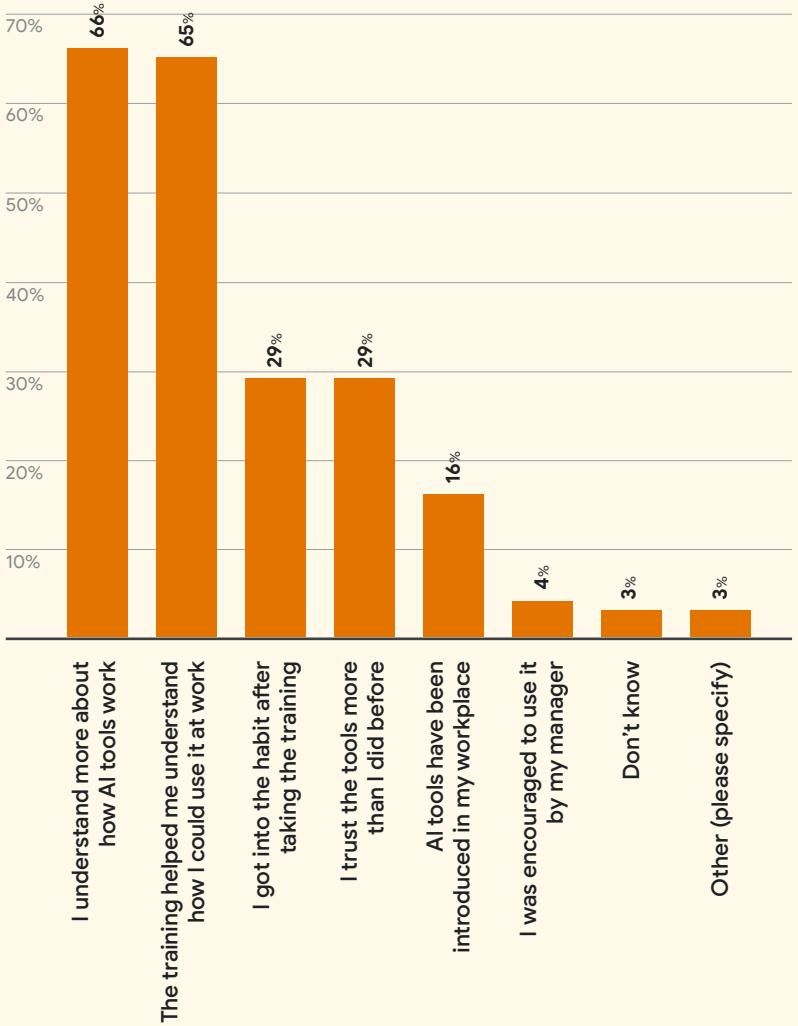
Concept development and brainstorming
"Quite recently, I asked one of the [AI] platforms to give me [some ideas]. I thought I'd really test the limits. I said, '[Give me] 50 campaigning ideas around health inequality that would be of interest to the Government'."

Drafting and editing
"So I put it into AI. I said, 'Create an evaluation and feedback form'. And, you know, whoosh, I had 20 questions, which were in different sections. So I think we've tweaked it very slightly, but I would say probably 98% of what was created using AI was brilliant."



Public First | Union workers | Pre-Training Cohort Survey | Fieldwork 25th Sep - 15th Jan 2024
Public First | Union workers | Impact Survey | Fieldwork 27th Jan - 17th Feb 2025

You said you have used generative AI tools in the past three months at work. Which of the following, if any, best explains why?
Select up to three



Public First | Union workers | Impact Survey Fieldwork 27th Jan - 17th Feb 2025

65%

said the training helped them understand how they could use AI at their work

Increased usage was driven by increased understanding of AI

The training transformed both understanding and intended usage of AI among our union cohort. In our post-training survey, 58% of union participants reported they were likely to increase their AI usage due to newly gained understanding of helpful applications. The same percentage acknowledged that the training had introduced them to AI use cases they wouldn't have previously considered.

> "I thought it was something really complicated, and something you needed a coding language to use. But I learned that it's actually quite simple, and we all are now using it."
> **— Union member, post-training group participant**

Addressing key misconceptions about AI accessibility and impact on jobs

The training effectively dispelled a common perception that AI was too technically demanding to use. In our focus groups, participants — particularly older workers — frequently expressed surprise at how accessible the technology proved to be:

> "I was really surprised that it's not difficult to use, because I am rubbish on computers. It's just not part of my job. I never did it in school or anything."
> **— Union member, post-training group participant**

Workers emphasised that the training gave them a solid foundation and the confidence to start using AI, making it feel more approachable and less intimidating:

> "It just gave us a really good grounding and made me feel that, yeah, I could give it a go. It wasn't anything to be worried about. And I have used it and I hadn't before, because I really didn't know anything about it."
> **— Union member, three-month post-training group participant**

Privacy, workplace policies, and other organisational barriers

Despite strong improvements in AI confidence and adoption, there are still some major impediments to adoption. The biggest uncertainty for union members is whether their organisation supports AI use. Only 46% of union members feel confident that they understand how their employers would like them to use AI tools. After training, concerns shifted notably — from lack of training and questions about relevance to more practical issues around privacy protocols and organisational policies.

As in other cohorts, the lack of clear organisational policies also manifest as concern that using AI could be perceived as cheating:

> "I'd almost feel like I was cheating in some way to use it. There's a negative commentary around it that's something to be fearful of."
> **— Union member, post-training group participant**

CASE STUDY

Cutting admin time to focus on care

Tania da Silva, a team manager in a supported living home, joined Google's AI Works training to explore how AI could enhance her work.

Initially unfamiliar with AI's potential, da Silva was surprised by how tools such as Canva, which she had associated with creative jobs, could streamline her work. She now uses it to design invitations for residents' birthday parties and postcards for holidays, while Gemini assists with report writing, staff training materials, and meeting preparation.

AI has significantly reduced her administrative workload, allowing her to focus more on supporting residents with learning disabilities. Da Silva has embraced AI as a time-saving, accessible tool, while remaining mindful of the need to verify outputs.

She actively encourages colleagues to explore AI, demonstrating how it refines writing, simplifies communication, and enhances creativity. Looking ahead, da Silva sees AI becoming an integral part of her role, not as a replacement but as a powerful support tool, making her work more efficient while freeing up time to focus on the human connection essential in care settings.

TRADE UNION SECTOR PILOT

CASE STUDY

Enhancing learning and knowledge sharing

Carl Ravenhill, a steelworker at Tata Steel, joined Google's AI Works training to stay ahead of technological changes he saw shaping the future of work.

While he had dabbled with AI for personal use, he lacked the skills to use AI effectively. The training introduced him to a range of tools, revealing AI's versatility beyond simple queries.

Ravenhill was particularly impressed by how AI could simplify complex topics, breaking down technical jargon into layman's terms, and by creative applications like designing visuals through Canva.

He now uses AI to streamline training materials and organise knowledge into concise, accessible formats.

Ravenhill is an enthusiastic advocate, encouraging colleagues to explore AI and sharing tips from his training. He sees AI as an essential tool for the future — not just enhancing individual productivity but also empowering entire workforces.

TRADE UNION SECTOR PILOT

What we covered in the training

This training series consisted of three one-hour sessions with live demos and Q&As. Prompts, case studies, and examples were all tailored to sectors represented within Community union. A condensed in-person version was delivered over 2.5 hours for union representatives, with examples tailored to tasks and responsibilities of union representatives.

1. An introduction to AI

- Key concepts of AI: what is AI, breaking down jargon and understanding it in practice
- How AI works: types of generative AI models and how it works
- Using AI responsibly: limitations and watch-outs, responsible use

2. Getting hands-on with AI tools

- Using AI tools to support writing: web applications, voice typing, transcribing handwriting
- Using AI tools for designing: creating posters & images
- Using AI tools for understanding and condensing large volumes of information
- Using AI tools to learn new skills
- Key considerations when selecting new AI tools

3. Writing effective prompts

- An overview of prompt engineering
- Techniques for crafting effective prompts
- Effectively reviewing prompt outputs

04.

Small & Medium Businesses Pilot

A deep dive on findings and observations from our training pilot

Google

In partnership with Enterprise Nation

SMB SECTOR PILOT

"Small businesses already recognise AI is key to increasing the efficiency and the speed with which they can efficiently fly through a long list of complicated and time-consuming tasks. There is an emerging confidence and skills gap that must be addressed if these businesses are going to truly benefit from the transformative power of this technology."

— Emma Jones CBE, Founder, Enterprise Nation

Enterprise Nation

In summary

1. Reported confidence in AI is high among small and medium business (SMB) workers, but adoption is low and usage is infrequent. Workers need to be shown clear use cases through training to see the full benefits of AI.

2. But small businesses lack the capacity to do training themselves. SMB workers receive disproportionately less training than their counterparts at larger businesses.

3. Training is the biggest barrier to adoption. Sixty-two per cent of those who participated in our training said that they didn't use AI more at work because of insufficient training, more than the second and third most-cited problems combined.

4. Following tailored training on clear applications of AI for SMBs, adoption was transformed. The number of SMB workers making daily use of AI doubled (from 29% to 60%). In our focus groups, workers repeatedly said that being trained on relevant use cases of AI was key to increasing their usage.

5. There was a clear shift from ad hoc experimentation before training to purposeful integration of AI in their workflow three months after training. In our focus groups, workers often referenced the positive effects of the 1:1 training sessions and the practical, demo-based Lunch & Learn sessions.

SMB Results from our AI training pilot

Reported confidence in AI among SMBs is high, but adoption remains low

SMB workers expressed strong confidence in their digital skills in the initial landscape poll: 92% said they felt confident using technology and 84% who use AI specifically reported feeling confident in doing so. However, high reported confidence did not equate to adoption. Despite 71% of SMB workers seeing AI as at least a little applicable to their work, only 38% of SMB workers reported actually using AI in the past 12 months.

This pattern reflects wider trends in digital adoption. UK SMBs invest less in technology and have lower digital adoption than their G7 counterparts, but believe they are at the same level as their international peers.[19] Large organisations in the UK also consistently outperform SMBs in digital adoption, scoring an average of 7.6 out of 10 in technology utilisation, compared to 7.3 for medium-sized businesses and just 6.6 for small businesses.[20] This may be because larger businesses provide more training: 69% of those employed by SMBs in our landscape survey had received some formal training, compared to 81% of those in larger organisations. Asked how they had learned the most recent skill they had acquired at work, nearly a third of SMB employees (29%) had taught themselves, compared to 19% of those at larger organisations. This was even higher among employees at the smallest organisations (under 10 employees), with 42% of those having taught themselves.

Workers agree that lack of training is the main barrier to adoption

More SMB workers in our training cohort (62%) cited insufficient training as a barrier to greater usage of AI than the second and third barriers combined. In our focus groups, workers repeatedly cited the need to be shown practical use cases of AI.

From these discussions, we also found that many SMB workers were aware of AI and occasionally used it, but lacked understanding of how to fully leverage its capabilities.

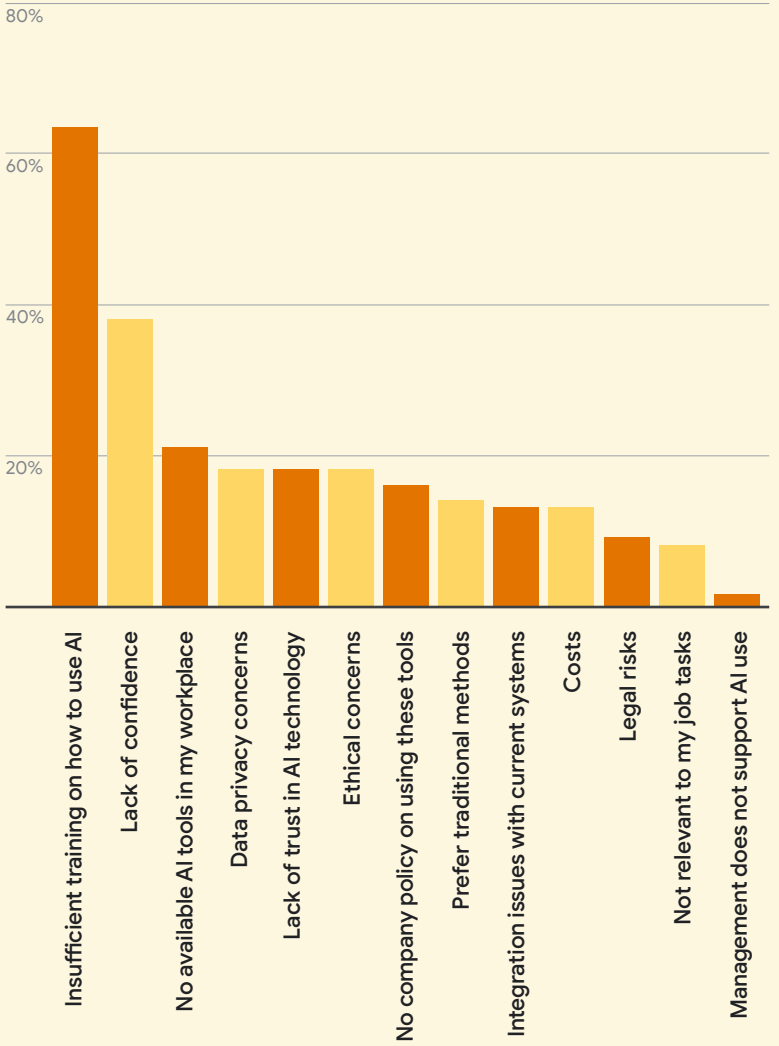
Without targeted training interventions, the current pattern (high confidence but low usage) will persist, limiting the potential economic gains AI could bring to the SMB sector and the wider UK economy.

62%

cited insufficient training as a barrier to greater usage of AI

19. Be the Business, G7 Productive Business Index, Aug. 2023.
20. The economic and social benefits of digitalisation, A Cebr report for Virgin Media O2 Business, Oct 2024

You mentioned you do not use generative AI tools at work. Why is that?
Select all that apply (N = 89)



Public First | SMB workers | Cohort Survey | Fieldwork 19th Sep - 21st Nov 2024

SMB SECTOR PILOT

How we ran the training

In our training, we designed a programme to transform SMB adoption of AI, encouraging workers to develop regular usage habits and integrate these tools into their daily workflows. Google partnered with Enterprise Nation to offer 905 SMB workers a series of core webinars, practical demo-based Lunch & Learn events (for Marketing, Sales, Operations, and Personal Productivity), and live in-person training day events.

The training included:

- **Core webinars** introducing foundational AI concepts through weekly sessions, ensuring regular exposure and skill reinforcement.
- **Lunch & Learn sessions** featuring panel discussions where relatable users demonstrated practical AI applications.
- **In-person workshops** showing how AI tools could be integrated into daily tasks and routines.

Our training incorporated key habit-formation principles identified through our literature review. These behavioural concepts significantly influence how people adopt and integrate new skills into their routines. Public First measured usage and attitudes to AI in pre-training surveys and focus groups; post-training surveys and focus groups; and then a final survey and focus group three months after the training.

How our cohort compared

Our SMB cohort began with significantly lower AI confidence than the average SMB worker. Despite volunteering for the programme, they showed less initial engagement with AI tools than their industry peers.

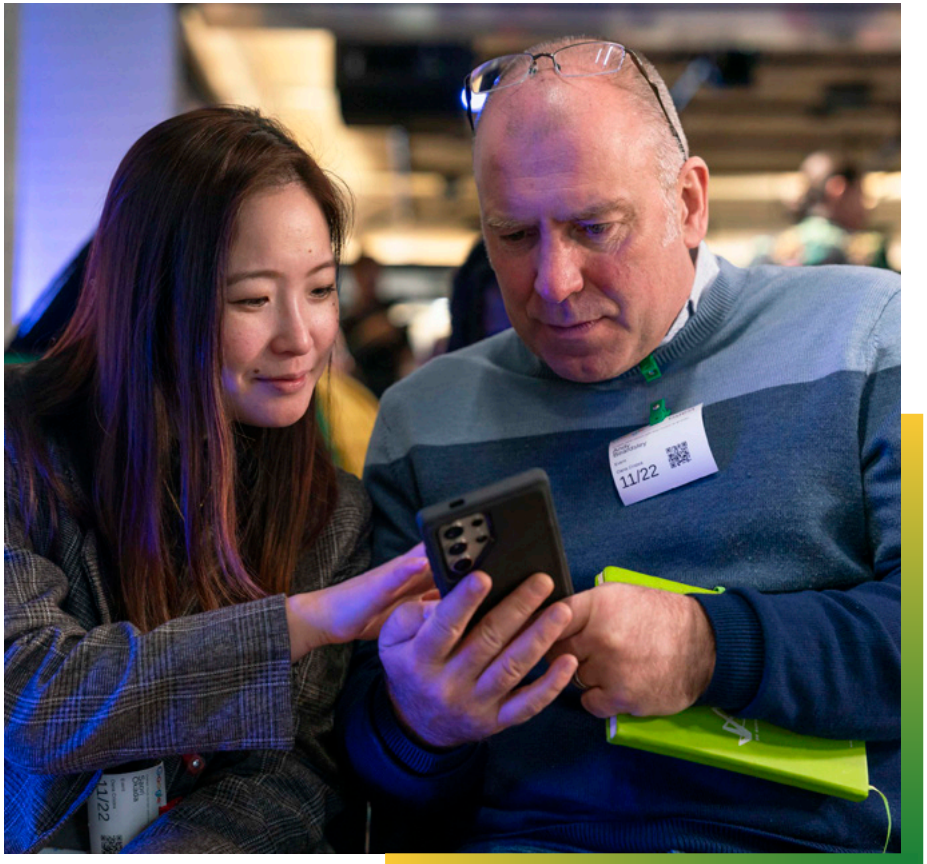
PRINCIPLE FROM HABIT RESEARCH	HOW WE ADAPTED THE TRAINING
Ebbinghaus forgetting curve: Knowledge retention declines rapidly after initial learning, with the sharpest drop occurring within the first few days. However, spaced learning or distributive practice can reduce the rate of forgetting.	The training programme was spread across weekly webinars and Lunch & Learns for **regular exposure and repetition**.
Social support: People are strongly influenced by the behaviour of those around them. Finding the right social support helps habits to form.	Bringing together groups of SMBs for panel discussions where **peers demonstrated real-world AI applications** helped participants see how similar businesses were using these tools.
Situational cues: These help form habits by associating specific contexts or triggers with particular behaviours, reinforcing the habit loop.	We designed practical modules showing exactly when to use AI during common daily tasks, **linking specific work situations with appropriate AI applications**.

	FIRST LANDSCAPE SURVEY	PRE-SURVEY COHORT
Female	48%	57%
Male	52%	41%
Mean age	42 years	47 years
Confidence using AI tools among users	40% of users very confident 93% of users confident	11% of users very confident 77% of users confident

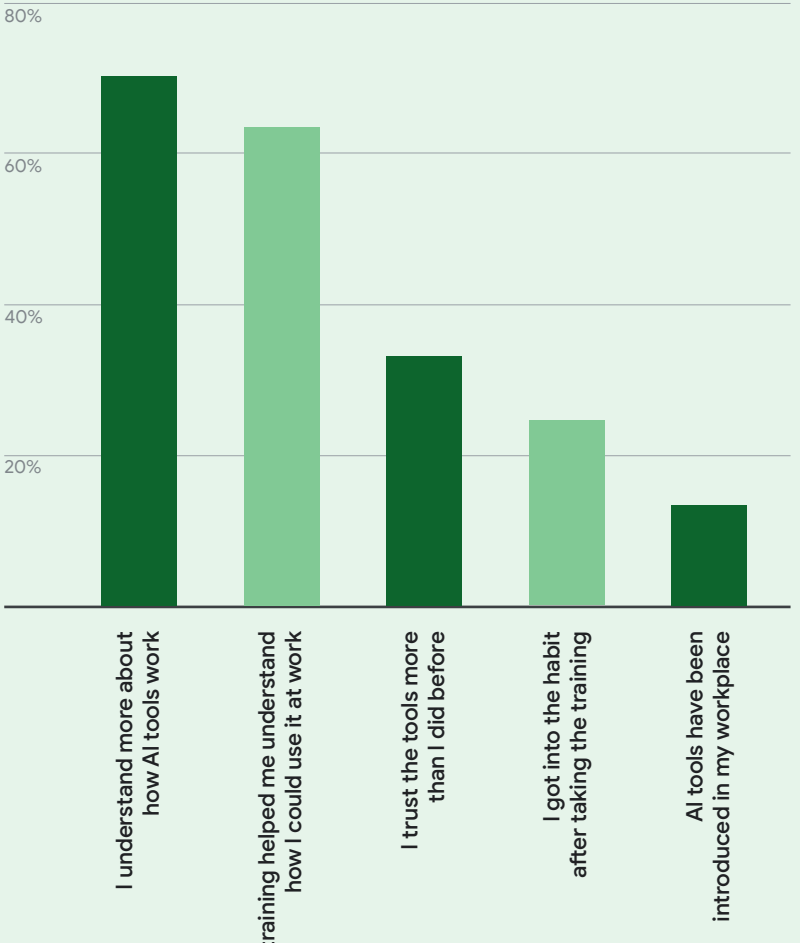
Survey responses:
pre-training, 594; post-training, 71; impact (three months on), 95

Our initial hypothesis emphasised the need to drive adoption by encouraging new habits

We developed a hypothesis for SMB workers that was designed to reflect the systemic challenges SMBs face around digital adoption: Encouraging workers to adopt new AI-related habits will help to upskill and empower workers to use AI.



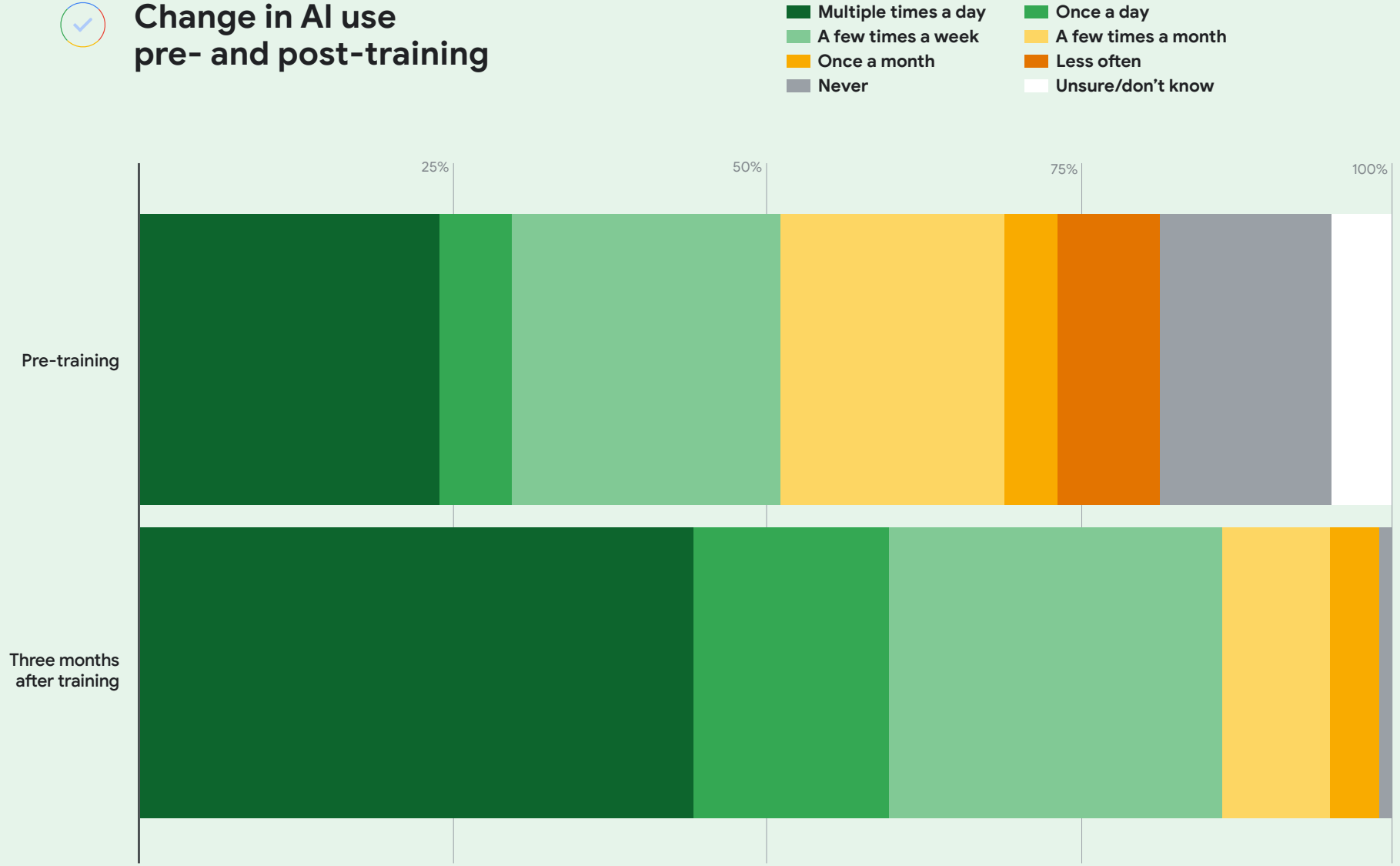
You said you have used generative AI tools in the past three months at work. Which of the following, if any, best explains why?
Select up to three. (N=40)



Public First | SMB workers | 3 Months Post-Training Survey | Fieldwork 21st Jan - 19th Feb 2025

SMB SECTOR PILOT

Change in AI use pre- and post-training



Public First | SMB workers | 3 Months Post-Training Survey | Fieldwork 21st Jan - 19th Feb 2025
Public First | SMB workers | Pre-Training Survey | Fieldwork 19th Sep - 21st Nov 2024

AI training did lead to big daily usage increases as new habits formed
The proportion of SMB workers using AI daily increased from 29% to 60% after training, and the number of workers who used AI at least weekly increased to 86%.

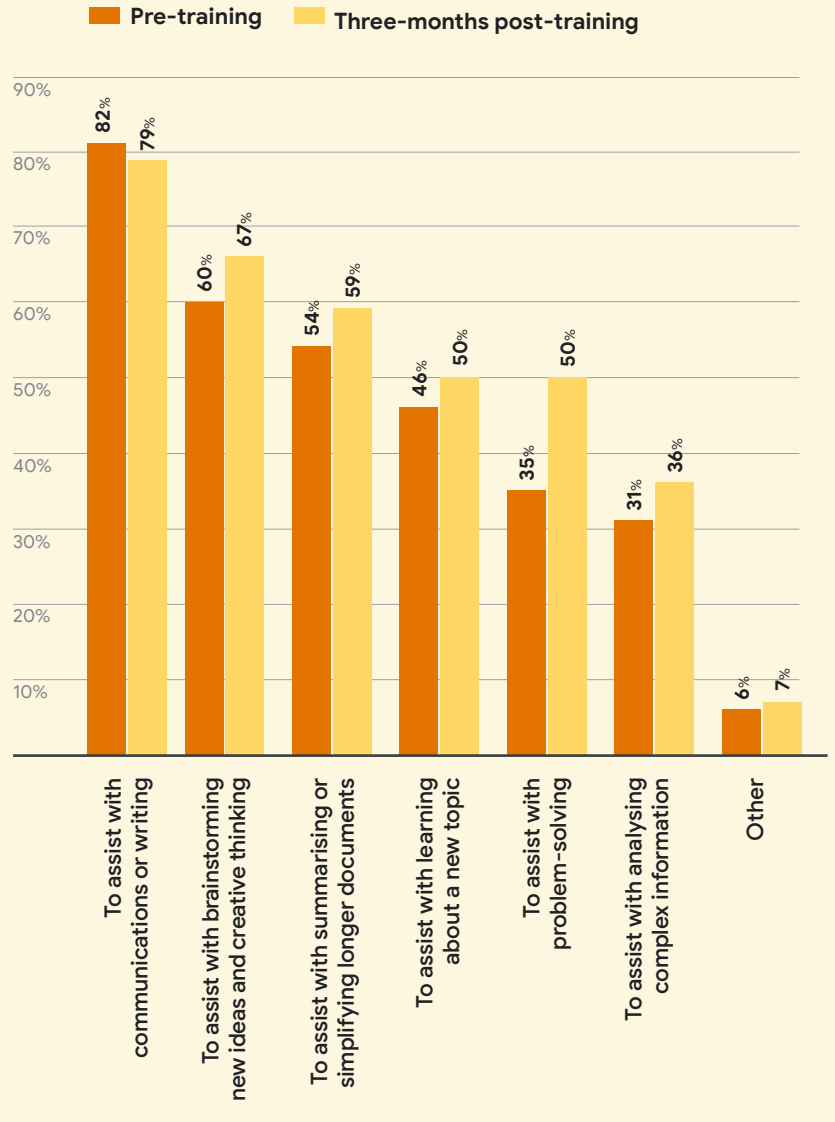
In the focus groups conducted three months after the training finished, SMB workers consistently commented positively about the training's clear relevance to their work and the real-world use cases we were able to share.

"I think one of the most eye-opening examples for me was when somebody was talking about how they simulated different roles in their businesses so that they could brainstorm. The idea of having a virtual team when you work on your own was quite mind-blowing."
— Three-month post-training SMB group participant

After training, the number of workers who used AI at least weekly increased to

86%

How have you used a generative AI tool in the past three months at work?
Select all that apply.



Public First | SMB workers | 3 Months Post-Training Survey | Fieldwork 21st Jan - 19th Feb 2025
Public First | SMB workers | Pre-Training Survey | Fieldwork 19th Sep - 21st Nov 2024

AI use cases evolved in the months after training
The period after training saw a significant broadening of AI use cases among SMB workers. But the most common use of AI — assisting with communications and writing — actually fell slightly. This likely reflects a shift away from ad hoc experimentation towards purposeful integration of AI into their daily workflow. In our impact focus groups, workers highlighted that while in the past they might have experimented with apps, training allowed them to intentionally use AI for a wider range of tasks:

"I just wanted a more structured way to gain a better understanding of its potential and how I could actually incorporate it, or help my clients with it."
— Three-month post-training SMB group participant

15%

increase, post-training in AI use to assist with problem-solving

After the training, workers progressed from using AI for occasional tasks to integrating it into their daily workflows — streamlining content creation and improving decision-making. This shift occurred because training helped them experience the immediate benefits of AI. Previously, many SMBs reported abandoning AI tools when they didn't see quick results, but our training helped participants discover tangible rewards that reinforced continued usage and helped new habits to form:

> "I've been able to create spreadsheets with it, things that I wouldn't have thought. I initially thought that spreadsheets were not my thing — doing all these formulas and stuff, it's too tedious. But since learning how to use Gemini the right way — oh, my god, Gemini is my best friend. I'm loving it. It's been an absolute lifesaver."
> **— Three-month post-training SMB group participant**

After training, many reported using AI to streamline administrative tasks they previously found time consuming. Others reported using AI as a brainstorming tool to develop ideas and refine business strategies.

Increasing productivity

"What I found really interesting was the various uses that you can use AI for, whether it's professional — there's the marketing, operational function. For us now it really has streamlined our operations; it's made things quite time-efficient for us as well."

Concept development and brainstorming

"Since the training, I have been using AI as a sounding board on everything, and just to re-steer my direction when I lose it a little bit — almost like with a colleague just bouncing ideas off it or helping me synthesise different threads of bits that I have going on. We work remotely in our team so it's really useful having a tool to just help me flesh things out, rather than bothering colleagues or spending ages thinking it over until it comes to me."

Creative content generation

"I found the marketing component really helpful. So I never really used AI for marketing or for anything. We use ChatGPT now and I literally can be like 'Can you write me a marketing campaign for 16-to-24-year-olds around mental health?' and it'll literally come up with one in five or 10 seconds. That would usually take me an hour."

Drafting and editing

"When a client comes in for their first consultation, we'll then put together a script. We've been using AI to invent these scripts, which is really saving time. And then I'm able to kind of do a bit of a cut and take out what isn't suited from that script, but it has been quite effective."

"Lately, I changed my website, so I took some screenshots of each of the pages and then submitted them to AI, and it would give me feedback on everything. It would ask me to change this and that. So it was really good."

"I've been using it [AI] in developing the content for our website and it's been very useful ... helping me to develop the content and also giving me the strategy on how to develop the website [...] I'll just tell it 'This is what I've done so far. What do you think?' And, surprisingly, it will come out with some very brilliant ideas, and I'll take it from there."

CASE STUDY

AI approach to inclusion at Grind

Dan Menezes Melo, a people operations manager at Grind, joined Google's AI Works training to explore how AI could enhance his work and support his team.

With a background in technology and HR, he saw the training as an opportunity to promote responsible, ethical use while streamlining tasks such as policy writing and project planning. The emphasis on AI as an augmentation tool, rather than a replacement, empowered Menezes Melo to use AI for generating document outlines, refining communications, and ensuring clarity and inclusivity.

The training also sparked broader adoption across Grind, with colleagues embracing tools such as Gemini for notetaking and brainstorming, and NotebookLM to create audio overviews. One neurodivergent colleague used AI to simplify complex instructions, boosting her independence: a transformation Menezes Melo deeply related to as an autistic professional and non-native English speaker.

AI now provides him with the same accommodations that he once relied on from supportive colleagues, from clarifying jargon to ensuring inclusive language. Menezes Melo sees AI as an indispensable equaliser, creating a more accessible, empowering workplace for everyone.

What we covered in the training

Webinar series

This training series consisted of five one-hour sessions with live demos and Q&As. Prompts, case studies, and examples were all tailored to small-business use cases.

Understanding Machine Learning
- What is AI and the sort of problems you could apply machine learning to
- Understand how some different machine learning models work
- An overview of how to prepare data for a machine learning project

Boost Your Productivity with AI
- Understand what generative AI is and how it works
- Tools to apply generative AI across a range of tasks
- An introduction to prompting

Getting Hands-on with AI Tools for SMBs
- Tools to support with writing content
- Tools to support with designing content
- Tools to support with understanding and condensing large volumes of information

Prompt Engineering for Small Businesses
- An overview of prompt engineering
- Techniques for crafting effective prompts
- Effectively reviewing prompt outputs

Using AI Responsibly for Small Businesses
- An introduction to responsible AI
- Security and privacy risks of AI
- Checklist for using AI responsibly

Lunch & learn series

These 30-minute micro-sessions were hosted at a lunch-friendly time over Google Meet with demos presented by three guest speaker panellists on the following topics:
- Personal Productivity
- Sales
- Marketing
- Operations

Each panellist presented specific examples of AI tools they've implemented in their work. The format followed:
- Task overview
- Identification and benefits of the AI tool for supporting the task
- Bringing others along on the journey and overcoming challenges

Live sessions

Three day-long live sessions consisted of a combination of the above modules delivered to groups of SMB workers in person.


Google