

AI & Accessibility

Narrative Report

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Executive Summary

AI has rapidly moved from an emerging technology to an everyday workplace tool, becoming a regular part of how employees work, learn, and solve problems. Workers are adopting AI at scale and largely view it as a valuable tool that enhances productivity, accelerates task completion, and improves work quality. While enthusiasm outweighs skepticism, workers are not blindly embracing the technology. Employees recognize the limitations of AI, acknowledging that while it can streamline work, it can also introduce complexity and require careful oversight. As AI becomes more embedded in professional environments, workers are increasingly focused on developing the skills needed to use it effectively and responsibly. Demand is strongest for real-world training, practical examples, and clear governance.

Accessibility also emerges as a major opportunity area. Employees increasingly recognize AI's potential to make work and learning more inclusive. At the same time, the findings reveal important gaps in organizational readiness. Many employees are uncertain whether accessibility is adequately addressed in workplace AI policies, and a meaningful share are unsure how well current AI tools support people with different access needs, indicating that organizational policies, training, and awareness have not yet fully kept pace with this opportunity.

Survey Methodology

The survey was conducted online within the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of University of Phoenix from June 22 – 29, 2026 among 1,019 employed adults ages 18+ who have taken a professionally presented training or a school course in the past 12 months ("recent working learners").

Data were weighted where necessary by age, gender, race/ethnicity, region, education, employment, marital status, household size, household income, and smoking status to bring them in line with their actual proportions in the population.

Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in our surveys. The sampling precision of Harris online polls is measured by using a Bayesian credible interval. For this study, the sample data is accurate to within +/- 3.8 percentage points using a 95% confidence level. This credible interval will be wider among subsets of the surveyed population of interest.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to other multiple sources of error which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including, but not limited to coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments.

Summary of Findings

I. AI Adoption and Integration: From Novelty to Necessity

AI is no longer an emerging technology. It is becoming a standard part of how people work, learn, and develop professionally.

Three-quarters of recent working learners (75%) report using AI tools in their work or for school at least weekly, including 36% who use them daily, underscoring how deeply AI is becoming integrated into everyday work. Among AI users, nearly all (97%) have used AI to support tasks in the past year. The most common uses include writing or editing work emails, messages, or documents (60%), summarizing meetings, readings, policies, or instructions (46%), creating presentations, reports, or other deliverables (45%), and troubleshooting a work or school task (45%). Rather than replacing work, AI is increasingly becoming part of how work gets done. [Q1, Q5]

II. AI Adoption Has Outpaced Hesitation, But Not Without Reservations

Enthusiasm for AI outweighs skepticism, though concerns about privacy, security, and accuracy persist.

As AI becomes more common in the workplace, workers are generally optimistic about its potential. Six in ten recent working learners (61%) describe themselves as AI enthusiasts, while only 39% identify as AI skeptics. At the same time, their enthusiasm is tempered by caution. When asked how they feel about using AI at work, recent working learners are nearly equally likely to report feeling interested or curious (43%), cautious (42%), or excited about what it can do (42%). Concerns remain prevalent as well, with nearly 2 in 5 reporting concerns about privacy or security (39%) and the accuracy of AI-generated outputs (37%). This mix of optimism and caution reflects a workforce that views AI as an increasingly permanent part of the workplace. The debate is no longer whether AI has a role at work, but how to use it effectively, responsibly, and securely. [Q2, Q3]

III. Workers Are Experiencing Real Benefits

Workers report that AI helps them work faster, improve quality, and build confidence in adapting to a rapidly evolving workplace.

The strongest indicator of AI's staying power may be that workers are already seeing tangible returns. The majority of recent working learners agree AI helps them complete some tasks more quickly (84%) and improves the quality of some of their work or learning (79%). Around 3 in 4 feel prepared to adapt as AI tools change (76%), and a similar proportion say they know how to evaluate whether AI-generated information is accurate (74%). However, adoption has not eliminated friction. A slight majority (51%) acknowledge that AI sometimes makes a task more complicated. [Q4]

IV. The Biggest Opportunity Is No Longer Access, It's Confidence

Workers are looking for practical, hands-on guidance that helps them apply AI confidently in real-world workplace situations.

As AI becomes more integrated into professional life, workers increasingly want support that helps them use it effectively. The most valuable forms of learning are practical rather than theoretical. Recent working learners say the top three resources that would be most helpful in preparing them to use AI effectively in their job, career field, or professional learning are real-world examples from their field or industry (36%), hands-on practices using realistic workplace scenarios (34%), and step-by-step demonstrations of common tasks (33%). This is followed closely by examples of effective AI prompts and how to improve them (30%) and tutorials on AI tools used in their industry (29%). Around 1 in 10 (12%) say micro-credentials or digital badges demonstrating AI skills learned would be most helpful. These findings suggest the primary barrier is not access to AI tools, but confidence in applying them effectively to everyday work. [Q6]

V. AI's Future May Depend on Trust as Much as Technology

Workers want the benefits of AI, but they also want the training, oversight, and safeguards needed to use it responsibly.

When considering what responsible AI use should look like, training emerges as the top priority. Nearly 3 in 5 recent working learners (58%) report responsible AI use at work or school should include training – whether on how to use it effectively and responsibly (43%) or how to use it accessibly (23%). More than a third of recent working learners want clear rules regarding when and how AI may be used (37%), human review for important decisions or high-impact work (36%), and privacy and data-security protections (34%). At the same time, workers continue to place high value on human judgment and oversight. Recent working learners say the top three most valuable AI and accessibility skills in their current or desired career field would be understanding when AI-generated content needs human review (45%), writing prompts that produce clearer, more accessible content (34%), and reviewing captions, transcripts, summaries, or image descriptions for accuracy (34%). Workers are signaling that successful AI adoption requires more than access to tools. It requires trust, training, and human judgment. [Q11, Q12]

VI. AI's Next Frontier Isn't Just Innovation, It's Inclusion

Workers increasingly see AI as a tool that can improve both accessibility and inclusion across work and learning environments.

While much of the conversation around AI focuses on productivity, there is growing potential for AI to make workplaces and learning experiences more accessible. More than half of recent working learners (55%) report that their workplace's AI policy or guidance addresses accessibility considerations. However, significant gaps remain: 14% say accessibility is not part of their AI use policy, 18% report their workplace has no AI use policy at all, and another 14% are unsure. Even among those who use workplace AI tools, only around a quarter (27%) say those AI tools available through their workplace or professional learning environment support people with difference access needs *very well*. [Q7, Q8]

Despite these gaps, workers see clear opportunities for AI to improve accessibility. The top three workflows that would benefit the most from AI accessibility tools being: creating accessible documents, presentations, websites, or learning materials (38%), presenting information in different formats such as plain language, audio, summaries, or translations (33%), and training employees or learners on accessibility practices (30%). [Q9]

Perhaps most importantly, AI appears to be helping workers build accessibility awareness itself. Among those already using AI in the workplace, 3 in 5 (60%) say AI has improved their knowledge of and ability to use accessibility standards and guidelines, including nearly 1 in 5 (19%) who report *significant improvement*. This growing accessibility awareness is reflected in the skills workers say will matter most going forward. Around one in four recent working learners say the top three most valuable AI and accessibility skills in their current or desired career field would be checking AI-generated content for accessibility (26%), choosing AI tools that are accessible to different users (25%), and knowing how to report accessibility barriers in AI tools (22%). [Q10, Q12]

VII. Future Readiness and the Demand for Education

Workers are eager to build their AI skills, but many still lack clear pathways to support and guidance.

Workers demonstrate an openness toward seeking help when needed. More than 4 in 5 recent working learners (84%) say they would feel comfortable asking for help, training, or accommodations if they experienced difficulty using AI, including nearly half (48%) who say they would be *very comfortable* doing so. Yet there is a disconnect between willingness and access. While workers are generally ready to seek support, only 56% say they know where to get help if they had difficulty accessing or using AI tools at work or in a professional learning environment. More than 1 in 5 (22%) are unsure. This disconnect points to a growing opportunity for employers and educators to ensure the resources, guidance, and training pathways are easy to find, accessible, and well communicated. [Q13, Q14]

Conclusion

The findings reveal a workforce that is approaching AI with both optimism and pragmatism. Workers are eager to embrace the opportunities AI creates, but they are equally clear about what is needed for long-term success: practical training, clear guidance, human oversight, strong privacy protections, and responsible governance. They recognize that success with AI depends not only on access to technology but also on the skills, confidence, and judgment required to use it effectively.

The research also highlights an important emerging opportunity. Beyond productivity gains, workers increasingly see AI as a vehicle for greater accessibility and inclusion. From creating accessible content to improving awareness of accessibility standards, AI has the potential to help organizations build more equitable experiences for employees and learners alike. The organizations best positioned to realize AI's full potential will be those that invest as much in people as they do in technology.