



AI and humanity at work:

How professionals are balancing efficiency and human connection

Artificial intelligence has moved beyond experimentation and now plays a central role in everyday work. From research and writing to planning and analysis, AI-powered tools are becoming part of how professionals complete tasks, solve problems and make decisions.

Yet as AI adoption grows, an important question remains: what role should technology play in a world where success still depends on human judgment, relationships and trust? To better understand how professionals are navigating this shift, Pipedrive conducted a survey of 1,000 respondents across a range of age groups, industries, and employment statuses. Respondents answered quantitative questions about their perceptions of technology and human connections in the era of AI. Data was collected in the summer of 2026 via a structured online questionnaire, forming the basis of this white paper.

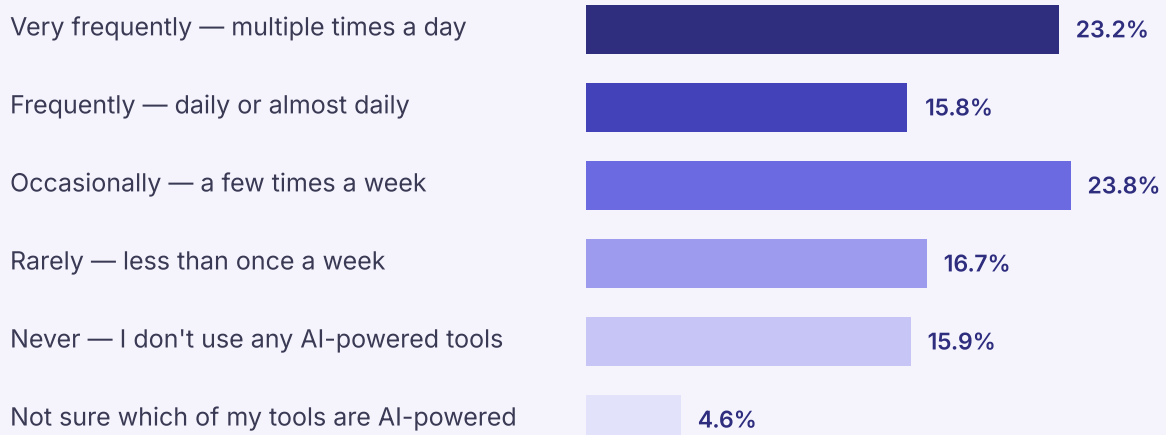
The results reveal a nuanced picture. While AI use is becoming increasingly common and many users expect to rely on it even more in the future, a significant group remains resistant to adoption. At the same time, respondents continue to place a high value on human connection, personal experience, and authentic communication.

Additional findings suggest that the future of work is unlikely to be defined by a choice between humans and AI. In fact, the survey reveals a striking paradox: while AI is becoming part of everyday work for millions of people, professionals still overwhelmingly believe that experience, judgment, and human connection matter more than technology itself.

AI has entered the mainstream, but adoption is far from universal

There is no doubt that AI has firmly established itself as a part of professional life. Nearly **40%** of respondents use AI-powered tools daily, including **23.2%** who use them multiple times a day and **15.8%** who use them daily or almost daily. Among full-time employees, adoption is even stronger, with slightly more than half (**50.2%**) reporting daily usage. Students show the highest levels of engagement, with nearly **58%** using AI every day.

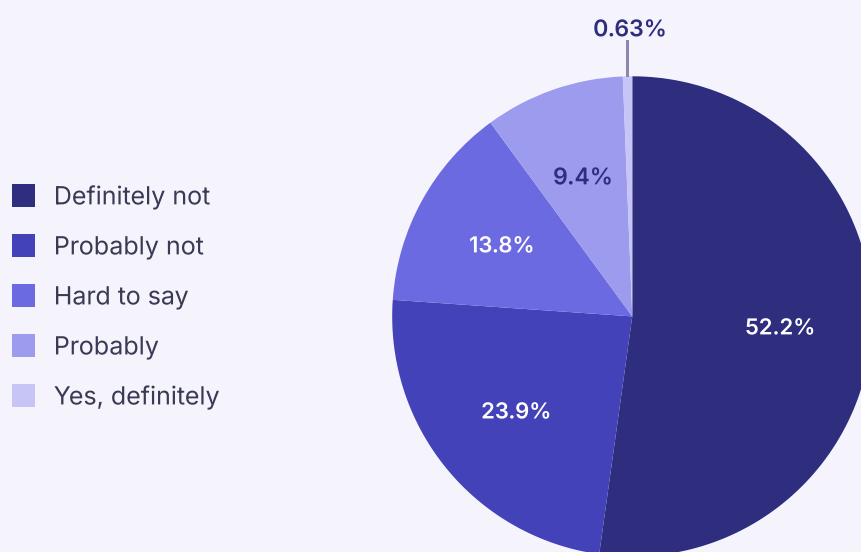
How often do you use AI-powered tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Gemini, Microsoft Copilot, Canva) in your daily work?



The findings suggest that AI is no longer an emerging technology for many workers. Instead, it has become another workplace tool, similar to email, messaging platforms, or search engines. For a growing number of professionals, AI is becoming embedded in daily workflows rather than reserved for occasional experimentation.

However, widespread adoption should not be confused with universal acceptance. While nearly half of respondents expect their AI usage to increase over the next year, the survey also reveals a substantial group that remains unconvinced. Among those who do not currently use AI, more than **76%** say they are unlikely to start using it within the next 12 months. This suggests that the next phase of AI growth may not come primarily from converting skeptics. It is more likely to be driven by existing users incorporating AI into a larger share of their work.

Considering the next 12 months, do you plan to start using AI-powered tools for work-related purposes?



A growing divide between AI users and AI resisters

One of the clearest findings from the survey is the emergence of two distinct groups: those who have embraced AI and those who remain resistant to it. Among current users, enthusiasm remains high. Nearly **60%** of full-time employee users expect their AI usage to increase over the next year. By contrast, most non-users show little intention of adopting the technology.

Interestingly, resistance is not concentrated among the youngest or oldest workers. Instead, it is most common among experienced professionals aged 35 to 54, who account for more than half of all AI resistance. Similarly, nearly **58%** of AI resisters are actively employed full-time, suggesting that skepticism is often found among people with established careers and proven ways of working.

This finding highlights an important challenge for organizations. AI adoption is no longer simply a technology issue; it is a change management challenge. Many experienced professionals may not see a compelling reason to alter workflows that have already delivered success throughout their careers.

50%+

of all AI resistance comes from experienced professionals aged 35 to 54

58%

of AI resisters are actively employed full-time
— skepticism sits with established careers

AI is becoming a thinking partner, not just an automation tool

Public conversations about AI often focus on automation, but the survey reveals a different reality: the most common uses of AI today are research and information gathering (**46.6%**), writing and editing (**35.1%**), and brainstorming (**32.4%**). Meanwhile, traditional automation use cases such as workflow automation (**16.3%**) and coding (**10.7%**) rank considerably lower.

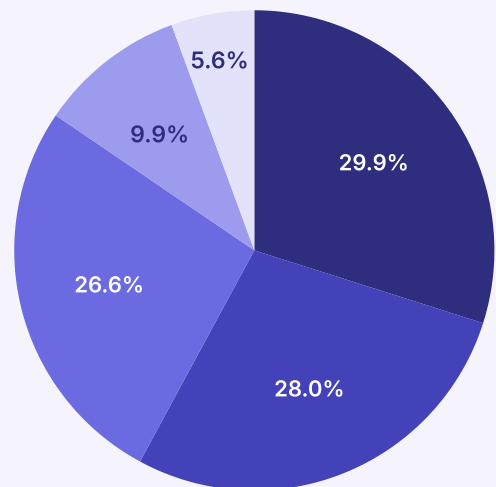
What do you mainly use AI-powered tools for?



The results suggest that workers increasingly view AI as a cognitive tool rather than simply a productivity tool. Instead of replacing repetitive tasks alone, AI is helping people think, learn, generate ideas, and organize information more effectively. This shift is reflected in how respondents perceive AI's role at work. Nearly **30%** believe AI can support both routine and complex work, making it the most common response. Only **5.6%** believe AI should replace most human roles wherever possible. The implication is clear: professionals are looking for AI to augment their capabilities, not to replace them.

How would you describe AI's role in the work you do?

- AI can support both routine and more complex work
- AI is mainly useful for automating repetitive tasks
- I'm not sure
- AI should handle most tasks, with minimal human involvement
- AI should replace most human roles where possible

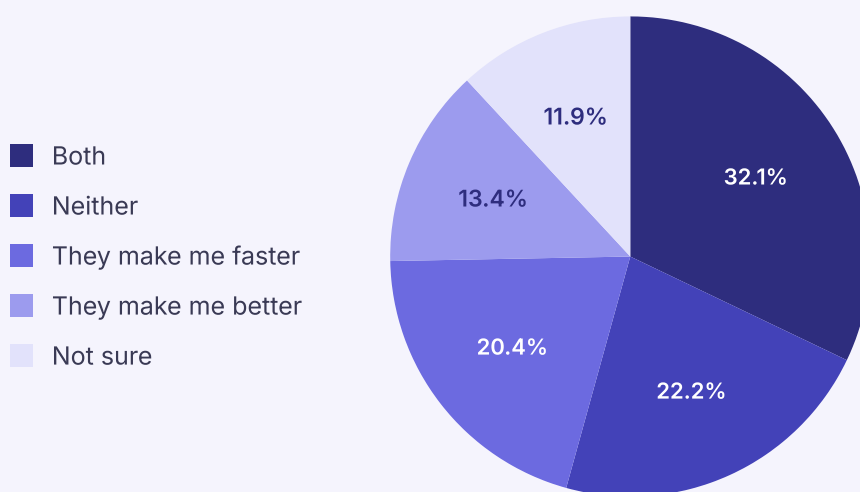


Productivity gains are real, but not universal

For many professionals, AI is already creating measurable workplace benefits. More than **50%** agree that AI helps free up time for more meaningful interactions with colleagues and customers, while **40.1%** expect AI to have a positive impact on their work-life balance.

When asked about performance, **32.1%** say AI makes them both better and faster at work, while another **20.4%** say it makes them faster. This suggests that a majority of users experience at least some productivity benefit from AI. However, the gains are far from universal. More than one in five respondents (**22.2%**) say AI makes them neither better nor faster. This highlights an important reality often overlooked in discussions about AI: access to technology alone does not guarantee value. Success depends on how effectively people learn to integrate AI into their workflows.

Do AI tools make you better or faster at your work?

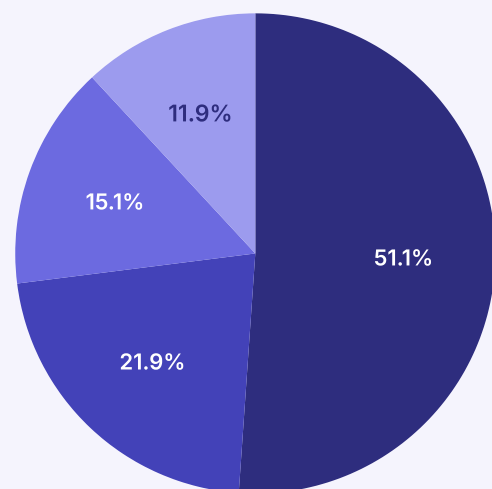


Human connection remains the foundation of professional success

Despite growing AI adoption, respondents remain remarkably consistent in what they believe drives success at work. More than half (**51.1%**) say their professional success is primarily driven by personal experience and judgment. Another **21.9%** credit relationship-building and influence, while only **15.1%** identify advanced AI tools as the main contributor to success. The findings suggest that workers do not see AI as a substitute for expertise. Instead, they see it as a tool that can complement skills that are still fundamentally human.

Which of the following has the biggest impact on your success at work?

- My personal experience and judgment
- My ability to build relationships and influence others
- Advanced AI tools that generate content, analyze data and handle tasks
- Essential infrastructure — my standard software, hardware and internet

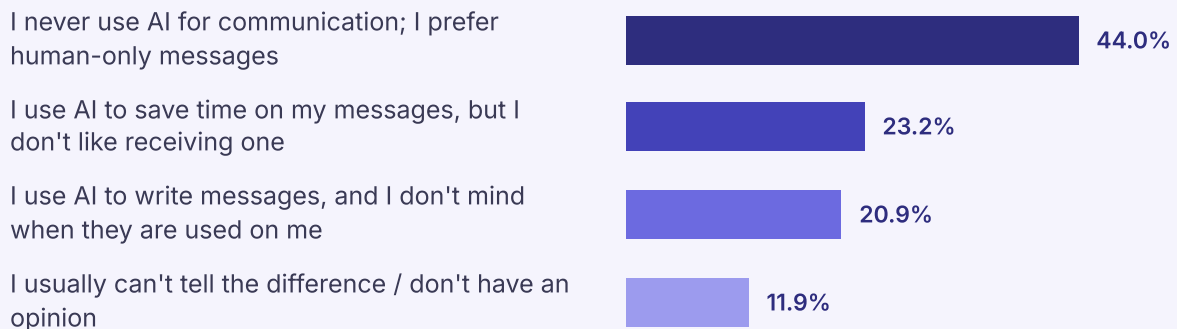


The survey reinforces this perspective in another striking way, with nearly three-quarters (**73%**) of respondents describing building genuine human connections as either very or extremely important in their professional lives. This view remains consistent across age groups and employment types, highlighting that even as AI becomes more capable, workers continue to view trust, relationships, and human judgment as irreplaceable.

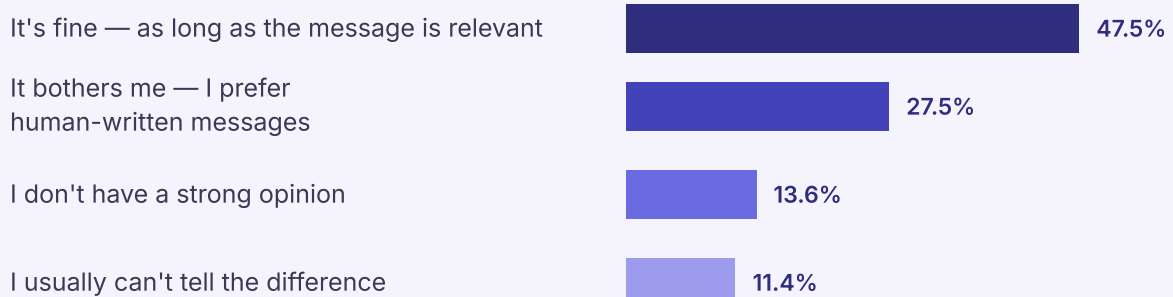
The authenticity challenge: people want AI to sound more human and more like themselves

The tension between technology and humanity is more visible in communication. While AI-generated messages are becoming increasingly common, respondents remain divided on how comfortable they are with them. **44%** say they never use AI for communication and prefer messages written entirely by humans. At the same time, nearly half (**47.5%**) say receiving an AI-generated message is acceptable as long as it is relevant and useful.

Which best describes your feelings on AI-generated communication?



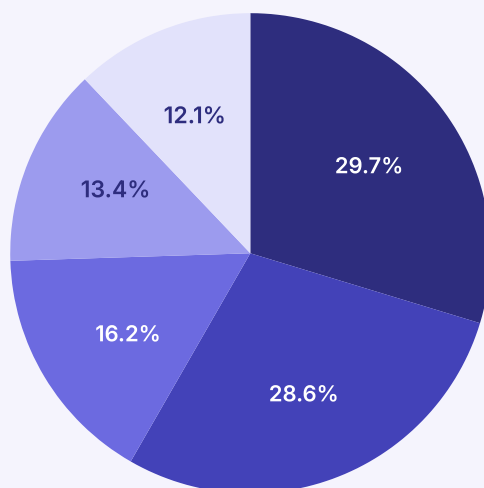
How do you feel when you receive a message that you know was written by AI?



Perceptions of AI-generated content remain mixed. The most common view (**29.7%**) is that AI content still feels too generic or robotic, while only **12.1%** believe it is as good as human-written content.

In your opinion, how would you describe AI-generated content today?

- Still too generic or robotic
- Surprisingly close to human writing
- Improving, but not quite there yet
- Not sure / haven't seen much AI content
- As good as content written by a human



The findings also reveal a path forward. Among people who use AI for communication, **70%** say it is at least somewhat important that AI-generated messages sound like them, including **46%** who say it is essential. This suggests that authenticity may become one of the defining challenges of the AI era. People are not necessarily rejecting AI-generated communication, but rather they are rejecting communication that feels impersonal.

People are not rejecting AI-generated communication. They are rejecting communication that feels impersonal.

In conclusion

The survey findings point to several practical lessons for organizations navigating the growing role of AI.

- 01 Adoption strategies should focus as much on people as technology.** The biggest barrier is no longer access to AI tools but convincing skeptical employees of their value.
- 02 Organizations should view AI as a tool for augmentation rather than replacement.** Employees already see personal experience, judgment, and relationships as their greatest strengths, and successful AI initiatives should reinforce those capabilities, not undermine them.
- 03 Efficiency alone is not enough.** As AI-generated content becomes more common, authenticity, trust, and human connection may become even more valuable differentiators.
- 04 Invest in measuring outcomes rather than just adoption.** Tracking how many employees use AI tools tells only part of the story. The more important question is whether AI use translates into better decisions, stronger client relationships, and improved performance. These are outcomes that workers themselves say drive professional success.