The EY Australian AI Workforce Blueprint

What Australian workers really want

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Shape the future with confidence

Closing the confidence gap: why AI success starts with human leadership

Artificial intelligence (AI) is transforming the way we work. More than two-thirds of Australian office workers have used it in the past month. Those who use it daily say they save four or more hours each week. But while the technology is advancing rapidly, confidence in its use is not keeping pace. The EY global AI Sentiment Index reveals a striking divide: while 82% of people have consciously used AI, trust in the organisations deploying it remains fragile.

This disconnect is even more pronounced in the workplace. In Australia, only 32% of workers rate their AI proficiency as high, and just 35% have received any formal training. Many feel uncertain, unsupported, or even restricted from using AI at work. This is not just a skills gap, it's a culture gap.

To close it, organisations must go beyond deploying tools. They must build confidence and empower people. That's why EY Australia is calling on leaders to secure a "License to Lead" - to earn trust, build confidence and create the conditions for meaningful engagement with AI. Because success with AI isn't just about algorithms, it's about agency.

The data is clear: workers want to use AI. They see its potential to reduce repetitive tasks, enhance creativity, and improve work-life balance. But they need support. They need ethical guardrails, intuitive tools and inclusive training. Most importantly, they need leaders who understand that AI adoption is not a technology challenge; it's a human one. Organisations that win in AI will be those who put humans at the centre and focus on their people. This is your license to lead. Use it to shape a future where AI empowers everyone.

Andrew Cosgrove
EY Global Insights Leader

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Supporting your people to deliver innovation through AI

In an era defined by rapid technological advancement, AI stands out as a transformative force, offering unprecedented opportunities for innovation across various sectors. The EY Australian AI Workforce Blueprint highlights the critical role AI will play in shaping the future of work.

AI is not merely a tool for automation; it is a catalyst for reimagining how we work, collaborate and create value. The integration of AI into organisations can improve productivity, streamline processes and unlock new avenues for growth. However, to harness these benefits effectively, it is critical to prioritise the human element – fostering a culture that embraces change, encourages continuous learning, and values the contributions of each individual.

The findings of this study highlight the importance of adopting a human-centred approach towards AI, recognising that this new technology should augment human capabilities rather than replace them. It is about empowering our workforce with the skills and knowledge necessary to thrive in an AI-driven landscape. This requires investment in training and development, ensuring employees are equipped to navigate the complexities of AI and leverage its potential to drive innovation.

At EY Australia, we are dedicated to fostering differentiated alliances and sustainable practices that will help enable organisations to thrive in this rapidly changing landscape. Together, we can unlock the full potential of AI, to serve as a powerful enabler for innovation and success.

Katherine Boiciuc

EY Regional Chief Technology and Innovation Officer, Oceania

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AI is just starting up in my workplace, but it is proving to make my day more efficient, less time consuming and more organised.

Amal (pseudonym),
Australian office worker

A Nation on the Brink of Transformation

Australia's workforce is standing at a pivotal moment. While 68% of computer-based workers have used AI in the past month, only 35% have received formal training. This gap between enthusiasm and enablement is Australia's opportunity and risk.

The findings from our April 2025 national survey of 1,003 workers reveal a workforce eager to embrace AI, but held back by confidence, clarity and capability.

This blueprint is not just a technology roadmap; it's a leadership agenda. The challenge now is not simply to deploy AI, but to empower people to use it meaningfully, confidently, and ethically.

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From Readiness to Results: Shifts and Strategies for AI Adoption

With the first half of 2025 behind us, the time for exploration is over. The data shows strong early engagement with AI, but also persistent gaps in confidence, skills, and trust. Australian workers are ready to embrace AI, and now it's up to leadership to meet them with the right tools, training, and culture.

> "
>
> AI is going to permeate all aspects of society very quickly, and companies that do not adopt and adapt are going to be at a disadvantage
>
> *Jason (pseudonym), Australian office worker*

Three key shifts are already reshaping how Australians engage with AI. These shifts are not abstract trends, they are the levers through which organisations can turn readiness into results.

1. Making AI Work for Everyone

Artificial Intelligence is already delivering measurable value, 30% of daily users say it saves them four or more hours per week. Yet only 26% of workers use AI daily, suggesting its full potential remains largely untapped.

As AI tools become more embedded in workflows, they offer not just time savings, but scalable, on-demand intelligence that helps workers shift from task execution to higher-value thinking. To unlock this, leaders must empower people, not just platforms. That means building confidence across all levels through hands-on training, peer learning, and visible leadership support. Empowerment is about giving people permission to explore, experiment, and grow with AI.

2. Building Confidence with AI

While AI is increasingly present in the workplace, confidence and capability remain uneven. Only 32% of workers rate their AI proficiency as high, and many feel unsure about how to use it meaningfully.

The next shift isn't about managing AI, it's about enabling every worker to engage with it confidently. That starts with investing in foundational skills, prompt creation, ethical use, and simple agent interaction. These basics unlock fluency and help ensure AI is used with purpose and clarity.

3. Working Smarter with AI

Generative text platforms dominate current use, with 40% of workers engaging with them, but virtual assistants are rising. 27% of Australian workers already use them, and adoption is expected to grow as tools like Microsoft Copilot become more embedded in daily operations.

AI is not just a tool, it's a mindset. Organisations must foster environments where safe, supported experimentation is encouraged. That means removing fear of failure, celebrating small wins, and showing how AI can enhance, not replace, human contribution.
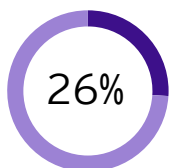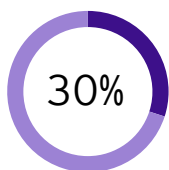
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Making AI work for everyone

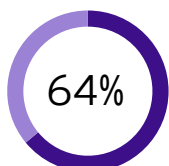## Top AI tools being consciously used by Australian workers
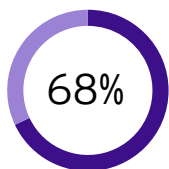
68% Have used AI at work in the last month.

26% Say they use AI everyday for their job.

30% Of workers who use AI everyday believe it saves them four hours or more in a week.

64% Of these workers believe AI is having a somewhat or extremely positive impact on their job.

AI's impact goes far beyond saving time, but that's often where the journey begins. For many workers, the first noticeable shift is a lighter admin load. But the real magic happens with continued use: the more people engage with AI, the more they feel its value.

- 72% say AI helps cut down repetitive tasks
- 70% report greater efficiency and productivity
- 66% believe it opens the door to more creative and innovative ways of working

Yet, these benefits aren't being realised by everyone and that's where leadership can make a real difference. By encouraging adoption and building confidence, leaders can unlock AI's compounding effect: the more it's used, the more transformative it becomes.

AI starts by freeing up time, but it quickly becomes a catalyst for better work, helping people focus, think bigger, and work smarter.

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Building confidence with AI

Confidence is the cornerstone of AI adoption. While many Australian workers are eager to embrace AI, confidence remains uneven, shaped not just by access and training, but by experience, trust, and mindset.

Despite growing exposure to AI, confidence is still a major hurdle. Our research highlights this lack of confidence is particularly pronounced among part-time workers, those in government and public sector roles, women, and older generations. These groups are more likely to report feeling less confident using AI, underscoring the need for targeted support and inclusive enablement. Building trust, providing purpose and enabling safe experimentation are essential.

Confidence isn't just about knowing how to use AI, it's about believing you can. Workers need clarity on how AI fits into their role, trust in the tools they're given, and the psychological safety to experiment and learn. That's where leadership plays a pivotal role.

Building confidence at scale means:

- Creating trust through transparent communication and ethical deployment
- Connecting AI to purpose so workers see its relevance to their day-to-day
- Encouraging experimentation by fostering environments where it's safe to try, learn, and grow

Workers who haven't used AI in their job over the last month...

54% — Say they aren't confident using it

42% — Haven't been given a clear reason/purpose to use it

30% — Don't have a clear understanding of how it would help them

26% — Say they aren't permitted to use it by their employer

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Creating the conditions for confidence

To build an AI mindset, organisations must first recognise the uneven terrain. Sector-specific gaps in AI skillsets must be acknowledged before meaningful cultural change can take root. Government and public sector workers report the lowest proficiency (29%), while industrial and energy workers lead at 39%.

But this isn't just a training issue, it's a cultural one. Many workers, particularly older generations, underestimate their own abilities. This self-doubt is compounded by a lack of support and clarity. Organisations must go beyond formal training and foster a culture of experimentation, peer learning, and AI fluency, ensuring no one is left behind in the AI transformation.

Confidence and capability must be nurtured through culture, not just curriculum. This means creating environments where workers feel safe to try, fail, and grow. It means celebrating curiosity, encouraging cross-generational mentoring, and embedding AI into the rhythm of work, not as a bolt-on, but as a mindset.
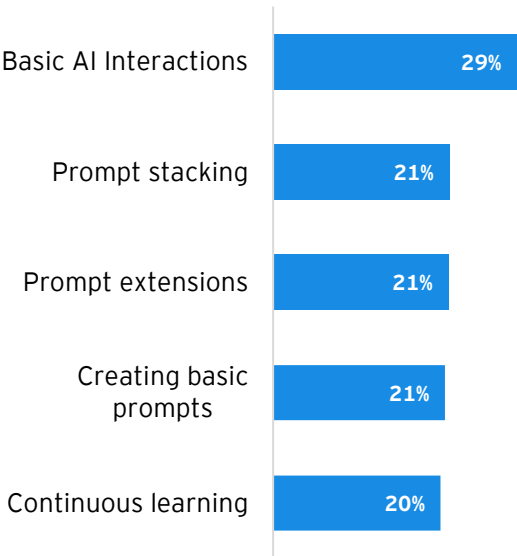
Self-reported proficiency remains low, with an average rating of just 32 out of 100. The generational divide is stark:

- Gen Z: 46 %
- Millennials: 37%
- Gen X: 25%
- Baby Boomers: 18%

Building AI confidence across the workforce requires thoughtful enablement strategies that meet people where they are, regardless of role, background, or experience level. Organisations can foster capability through targeted training tailored to different learning styles, peer mentorship programs that encourage cross-functional collaboration, and inclusive workshops that focus on practical, everyday applications of AI. By creating environments where all employees feel supported and empowered to engage with AI, organisations can unlock broader adoption and innovation.

EY AI self-reported proficiency index (average rating out of 100)

The top-rated AI skills (% who believe they are very/extremely proficient at each skill)

Skill	%
Basic AI Interactions	29%
Prompt stacking	21%
Prompt extensions	21%
Creating basic prompts	21%
Continuous learning	20%

Source: EY Australian AI Workforce Blueprint research

Base: *Australian worker who are required to use a computer in their day-to-day employment.

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Building trust through transparency

Australian workers are cautiously optimistic about AI's role in the workplace. While 59% believe it's a great idea for companies to automate routine tasks, and 64% say AI is having a positive impact on their job, only 35% feel the implementation of AI has been transparent and well communicated.

Critically, with almost two thirds of Australian workers left in the dark on their organisation's implementation strategy of AI, trust remains a key barrier to widespread adoption. Workers are concerned about how AI is being deployed at an organisational level, and they worry about using it 'correctly' as well as what it means for their future:

- Over 70% worry about breaching data or regulatory requirements

- 60% fear losing critical thinking skills

- 58% believe AI will be used to justify demands for greater productivity rather than reduce workload

- 54% worry about job losses

These findings highlight the importance of ethical deployment, clear communication, and inclusive engagement strategies. Building trust is not just about compliance—it's about confidence. Organisations must be transparent about how AI is used, involve workers in the conversation, and ensure that AI enhances rather than undermines the human experience at work.

Potential Concerns

Are concerned about breaching data or regulatory requirements if they use AI

72%

Worry about losing critical thinking skills if they use AI at work

60%

Believe AI will be used to justify demands for greater productivity rather than helping reduce their workload

58%

Worry about job losses in their sector as a result of AI usage
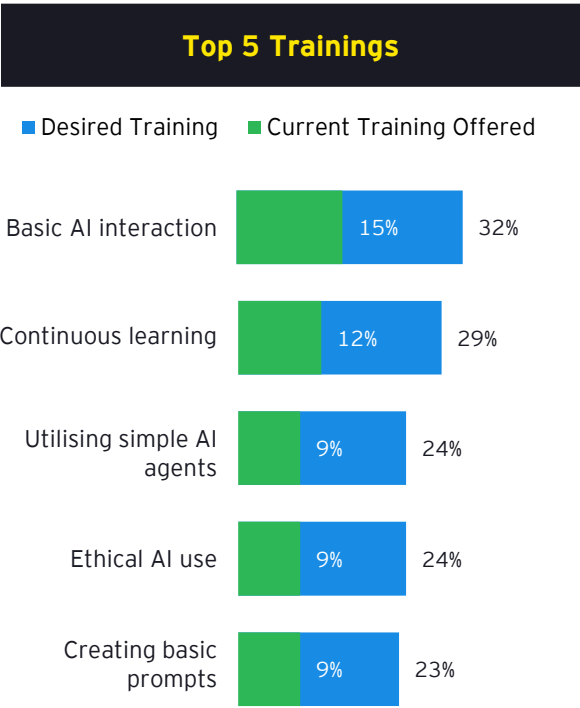
54%

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Equipping workers with confidence and capability

Training is the next frontier in Australia's AI readiness. While 66% of workers say they want their employer to provide more formal AI training, only 35% have received any. This gap between desire and delivery is a critical barrier to unlocking AI's full potential.

Workers are clear about where they need support. The top five areas where they want training are:

- Basic AI interactions
- Creating effective prompts
- Ethical use of AI
- Utilising simple AI agents
- Continuous learning

Closing the confidence gap requires more than access to tools; it demands investment in capability. For some, training is a way to deepen curiosity and skill. For others, it's a lifeline, an essential step towards overcoming fear, uncertainty, and resistance. Organisations must prioritise inclusive, intuitive training that meets workers where they are. This means designing programs that are accessible across generations, roles, and skill levels, and that empower people to use AI meaningfully in their day-to-day work.

Top 5 Trainings

■ Desired Training   ■ Current Training Offered

Training	Current Training Offered	Desired Training
Basic AI interaction	15%	32%
Continuous learning	12%	29%
Utilising simple AI agents	9%	24%
Ethical AI use	9%	24%
Creating basic prompts	9%	23%

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Working smarter with AI

Generative text platforms are the most popular among Australian workers, with research, admin, and work planning being the most popular tasks. Virtual assistants have strong traction and are commonly used for the same purposes.
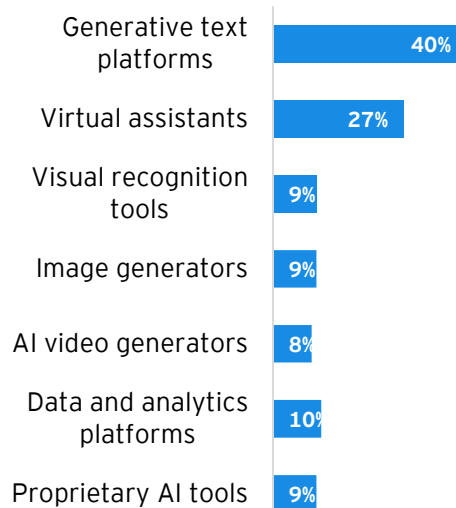
With virtual assistants like Microsoft Copilot becoming more embedded in workplaces, these categories may converge, especially as virtual assistants integrate into organisational platforms and become more effective at admin and workplace workflows.

As tools like Copilot become embedded, we expect a convergence that redefines how tasks are delegated and completed, shifting from manual execution to intelligent orchestration.

Australian workers are clear about where they want their organisations to focus. When asked what they believe employers should invest in to support AI adoption, five priorities stood out.

These priorities reflect a workforce that is ready to embrace AI, not just for productivity but for wellbeing, creativity and strategic impact. These are not just preferences; they are a roadmap. By investing in these areas, organisations can close the confidence gap, unlock productivity and build a workforce that is not just AI-ready but AI-confident.

Top AI tools being consciously used by Australian workers

Tool	%
Generative text platforms	40%
Virtual assistants	27%
Visual recognition tools	9%
Image generators	9%
AI video generators	8%
Data and analytics platforms	10%
Proprietary AI tools	9%

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Shaping the future with confidence

Australia's workforce is ready. The data is clear, workers want to use AI, they see its potential, and they're asking for support. But success won't come from deploying tools alone. It will come from leadership that empowers people, builds trust, and invests in capability. The future of work is not humans versus machines, but a rethinking of work to allow people and machines to thrive together. This is your license to lead. Use it to shape a future where AI empowers everyone.

Raj Sharma

EY Global Managing Partner –
Growth & Innovation

Connect with us

This research is made possible through the dedicated efforts of EY professionals from around the world. By bringing a team of multidisciplinary professionals together, we can help organisations better understand their people and revolutionise the workplace.

Get in touch to dive deeper into data behind this report, hear about our own journey at the EY organisation and discuss how we can help your organisation move from creating AI super learners to fully realising the opportunities AI brings.

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About the research

The AI Workforce Blueprint Report is based on research conducted by EY Studio +. We surveyed 1,003 Australian workers who use a computer in their daily roles to understand how AI is shaping their work lives. The survey explored a broad range of topics related to AI in the workplace – how often they use AI, what they use it for, how they feel about it, their concerns and how confident they are with skills like prompt engineering.

To help ensure the findings reflect the broader workforce, we used a stratified random sampling method with quotas based on age (18+), gender, and location aligned to census data. Results were weighted accordingly to help ensure statistical reliability and national representativeness.

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EY | Building a better working world

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