



### **American workers sound the alarm on AI workplace readiness**

*As businesses increasingly integrate AI into daily work, a new national survey sheds light on how professionals perceive the technology's potential impact—and what more needs to be done*

**PULLMAN, Wash.** – Half of the professional workforce (48%) is concerned they will be “left behind” in their careers without opportunities to learn how to leverage artificial intelligence (AI) in the workplace, according to a new report released by Washington State University’s Carson College of Business.

The report shows most professionals see a critical role for higher education in preparing future graduates to use AI when entering the workforce.

"For educators, the evolution of AI underscores the importance of equipping our students with innovative tools that are reshaping work across diverse sectors," said Debbie Compeau, Carson College of Business interim dean. "We've convened a working group around generative AI to integrate these advancements into our existing programs and explore how AI can transform business education. When we embrace the potential of AI to create value and transform work—while also addressing legitimate concerns regarding its use and impact—we create a learning environment that allows our students to excel in an AI-driven future."

The Carson College of Business study, conducted in collaboration with KRC Research, examines American professional workers’ preparedness for the use of AI in the workplace. The report surveyed 1,200 full-time working adults in the U.S. who are in a management, professional or related occupation and work with computers or technology devices. The survey explores awareness and attitudes toward AI training and readiness initiatives for using AI in the workforce.

#### **Key findings include:**

**The impact of AI in the workplace:** Today, over half of American professionals (56%) say they use AI, ranging from analyzing data from predicted trends (30%) to using generative AI to produce content or communications (24%), and more.

- 72% believe AI can be highly impactful for work in their industry if used appropriately.
- Just over half of professionals (52%) believe AI is likely to pose dangers that can negatively impact their organization and organizational/employee safety.
- Almost half (49%) of all professionals say their organization has not provided *any* resources or information on AI and its use for work, and nearly four in ten professionals (39%) have not taken advantage of *any* resources to teach them how to use AI in their work roles.
- Half of professionals (51%) are concerned their organization will fall behind in its industry if it does not embrace AI.

**A critical role for higher education in AI readiness:** A majority of professionals agree: today’s college graduates should be prepared to use AI upon their entry into the workforce (83%) and see a critical role for higher education in preparing future graduates to use AI.



- 74% of professionals believe incoming college graduates should already have experience using AI prior to entering the workforce.
- 88% believe U.S. colleges and universities should provide educational opportunities for students to learn about AI and its practical uses.
- Two in three professionals (65%) believe the U.S. will likely become less competitive than other countries if colleges and universities do not provide dedicated education and training on AI technologies.

**Gender as a factor in workplace applications of AI:** While women and men shared many common views on AI in the workplace and the role of higher education in preparing graduates, the survey revealed notable gender gaps in access, usage and optimism.

- More than half of women (55%) say their organization hasn't provided them with any resources or information about AI, compared to just 43% of men.
- Just one in three women (32%) have relied on mentors or work resources to learn about AI use in their roles, compared to 42% of men.
- Fewer female professionals say they use AI in their jobs today (41% vs. 47% of men), and fewer feel confident explaining AI and how it can be used in their work (56% vs. 71%).
- Compared to women, more male professionals believe AI can be highly impactful for work in their industry if used appropriately (76% vs. 68%).

“WSU is committed to preparing our students and professionals for the future of work. Our report reveals AI is already a reality in many industries and sectors but there are also significant gaps and challenges in its adoption and use, especially for women,” said Julie Nelsen, assistant professor and director of the Carson College of Business Center for Professional Sales. “We encourage organizations to create inclusive and accessible AI resources and opportunities to foster a culture of curiosity, collaboration and innovation around AI.”

**Workplace seniority and AI engagement:** The most senior professionals—top leadership and upper management—are more engaged in using and learning AI, more optimistic about its potential at work and more united in their feelings that higher education should prepare new graduates to use AI in the workforce, compared to the less senior individual contributors (non-managers).

When compared to junior-level individual contributors, senior leaders were more likely to report:

- Being provided with AI resources or information about AI and work by their employers (68% vs. 36%).
- Having used resources provided by mentors and employers to learn about AI's use in their roles (48% vs. 25%).
- Feeling confident in being able to explain AI and its uses for their work (81% vs. 48%).
- Believing AI is likely to cause long-lasting, transformative changes that positively impact work in their industry (74% vs. 56%) and employee retention (39% vs. 20%).

[Read the full report.](#)



### **About the Survey**

The survey was conducted online by KRC Research, a market research firm, from November 28 to December 16, 2023, among 1,200 full-time professional workers in the U.S. All respondents are adults who work in a management, professional or related occupation and work at least 30 hours a week in a role that requires spending at least one hour each day using a computer or similar technology device. The survey includes an oversample of 300 professionals in the Pacific Northwest states of Washington, Oregon and Idaho; the oversample and other geographic regions have been weighted to representative U.S. Census targets.

### **About the Carson College of Business**

The WSU Carson College of Business is accredited across all business disciplines at the baccalaureate, master's and doctoral levels by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business. Faculty across disciplines produce scholarly and applied research at the main campus in Pullman and at Vancouver, Everett and Tri-Cities locations and Global Campus. International activities include academic centers in China and Switzerland and thriving partnerships with several schools around the globe. Innovative online programs supplement face-to-face offerings.

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