uxcel

The State of AI in Product Teams

Uxcel’s Report, Sep 2025

Adoption is rising. Enablement is not.

AI has moved from side project to everyday work for many product teams. Leaders see the upside, teams ask for clear guidance on skills, tools, and policy.

This report captures what is actually happening across product management, design, research and engineering. We chart AI adoption levels from Curious to Embedded*, show the lift in productivity and time saved, and highlight the blockers that slow teams down.

The big picture: most teams already use AI often, the average person gains about six hours each week, and one in three companies still offers no structured training.

The goal is simple, turn scattered wins into a repeatable practice.

2,747
professionals surveyed

~1,100
companies represented

12+
industries

* The data in this report comes from a survey of the Uxcel community conducted from June to August 2025. The adoption level combines organizational stance, tool breadth, usage, training, and leadership support. We report descriptive statistics and simple comparisons. See the appendix for the full methodology.

Numbers that set the stage

A fast view of where teams are, what they gain, and the gap that still holds many back.

Together, these numbers show AI is mainstream, the gains are real, and enablement is what turns interest into impact.

70%

Teams already using AI

6h/week

Av. time saved per person

82% vs 33%

Say AI skills matter **vs** get formal training

Contents

Chapter 1

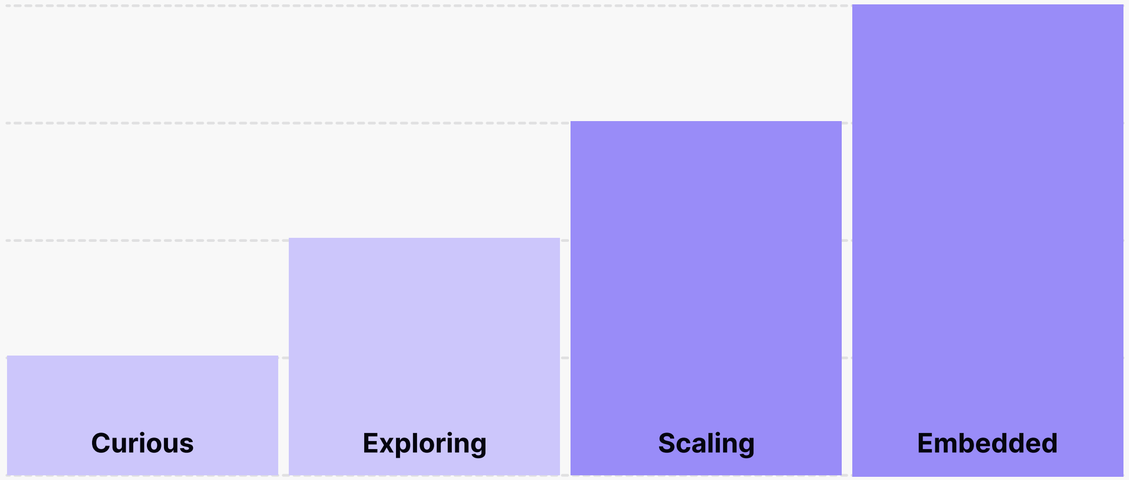
Adoption levels: what we measure

Knowing your adoption level speeds real progress

Adoption level shows how deeply AI sits in day-to-day product work. Use it to set expectations, choose the next step for your team, and compare your situation with peers in this report.

We score adoption using multiple signals: organisational stance, tool coverage, personal usage, training on offer, and leadership sponsorship.

* Curious to know your adoption level? We've created a **short quiz** to help you quickly map your organisation or product team's AI adoption level and get a short action plan.



Low adoption

Interest is real but impact is uneven. Clear pilots, tool access, simple rules, and starter training create the first wave of results.

High adoption

AI is already helping deliver work. Focus shifts to integration across teams, consistent quality, better measurement, and ongoing upskilling.

Why this matters?

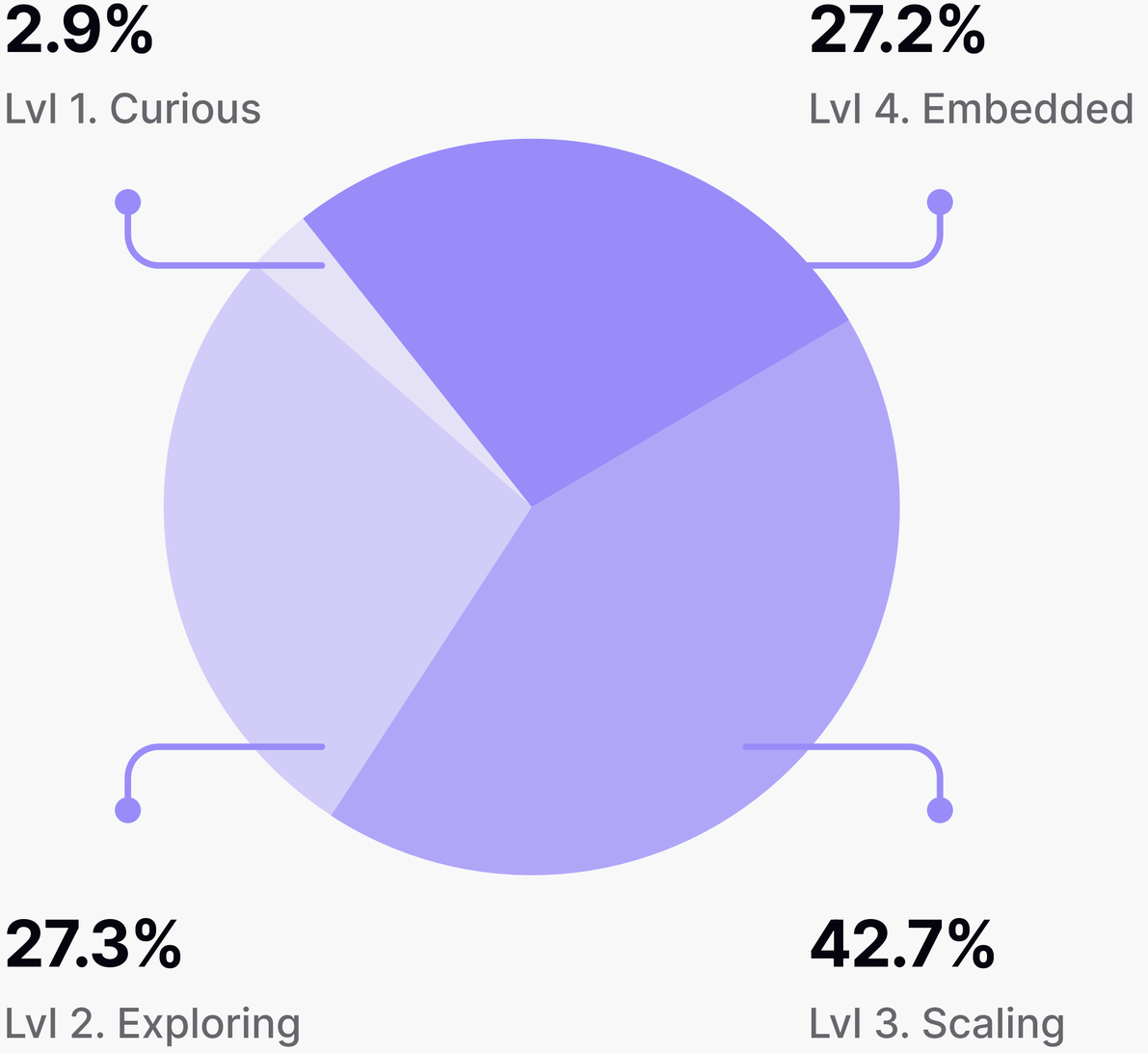
- Reported higher productivity and more hours saved with higher adoption
- Leaders can match investments to level:
  pilots and training for Low, integration and measurement for High.
- A shared definition keeps cross-team conversations clear and honest.

Where teams are today

Most product teams have moved past pilots. The typical organisation sits at Scaling, with AI in live workflows, and a sizeable share already has it Embedded across multiple processes. Exploring is now the middle of the curve rather than the destination, and only a small fringe is still at first steps.

The takeaway is simple: AI use is standard practice for many teams, and progress now depends more on enablement and governance than on tool access.

Live use is the norm, not the exception.

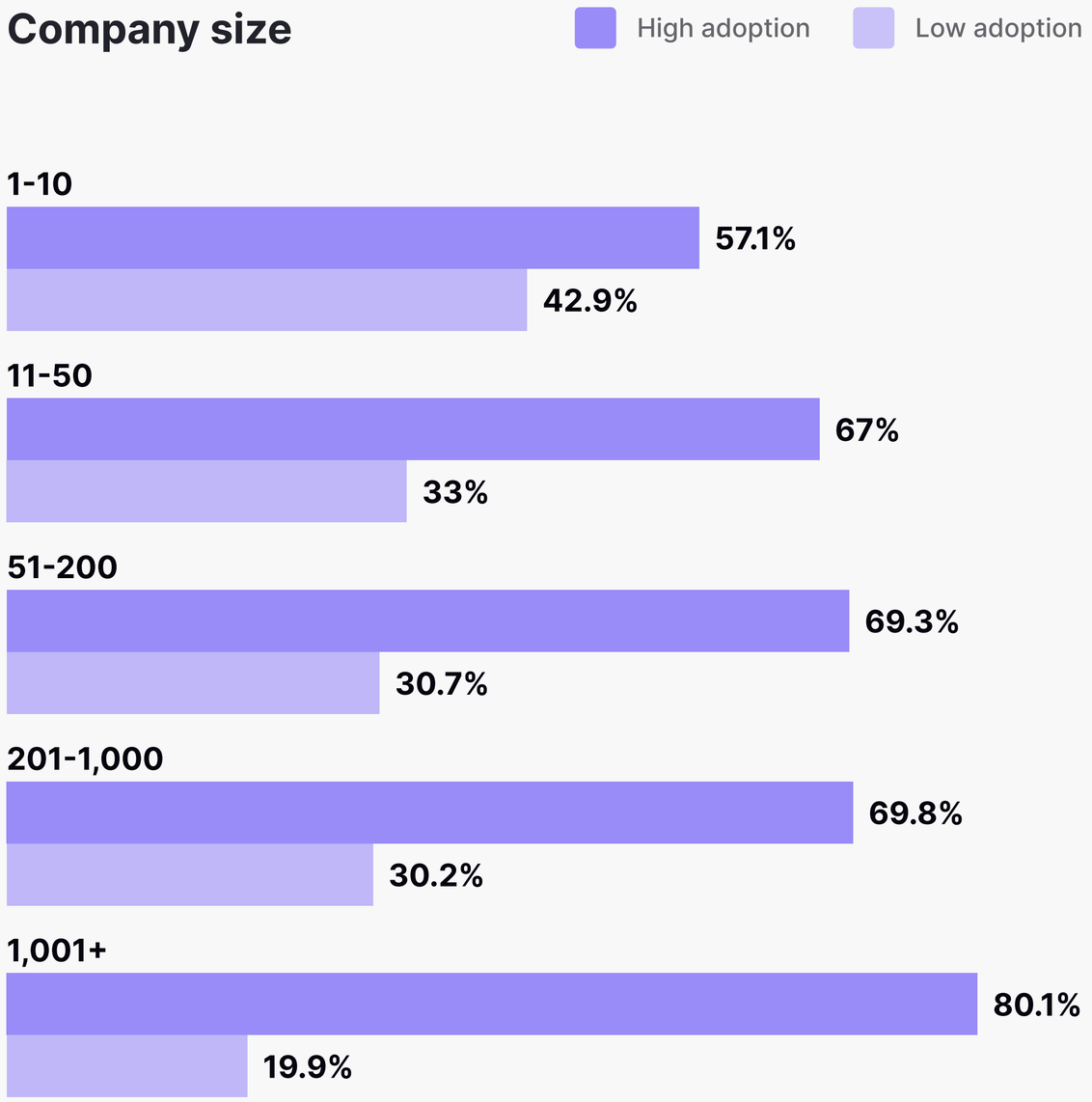


Adoption rises with company size

Adoption rises with headcount. Very small teams sit just over half in the high-adoption band, mid-market firms are around seven in ten, and large enterprises are close to four in five. Bigger organisations benefit from budgets, shared standards, and reusable playbooks.

Smaller teams still show the largest low-adoption share, often due to tighter spend and less structure.

Resources and standards rise with size, yet small teams can close the gap by formalising how they work.

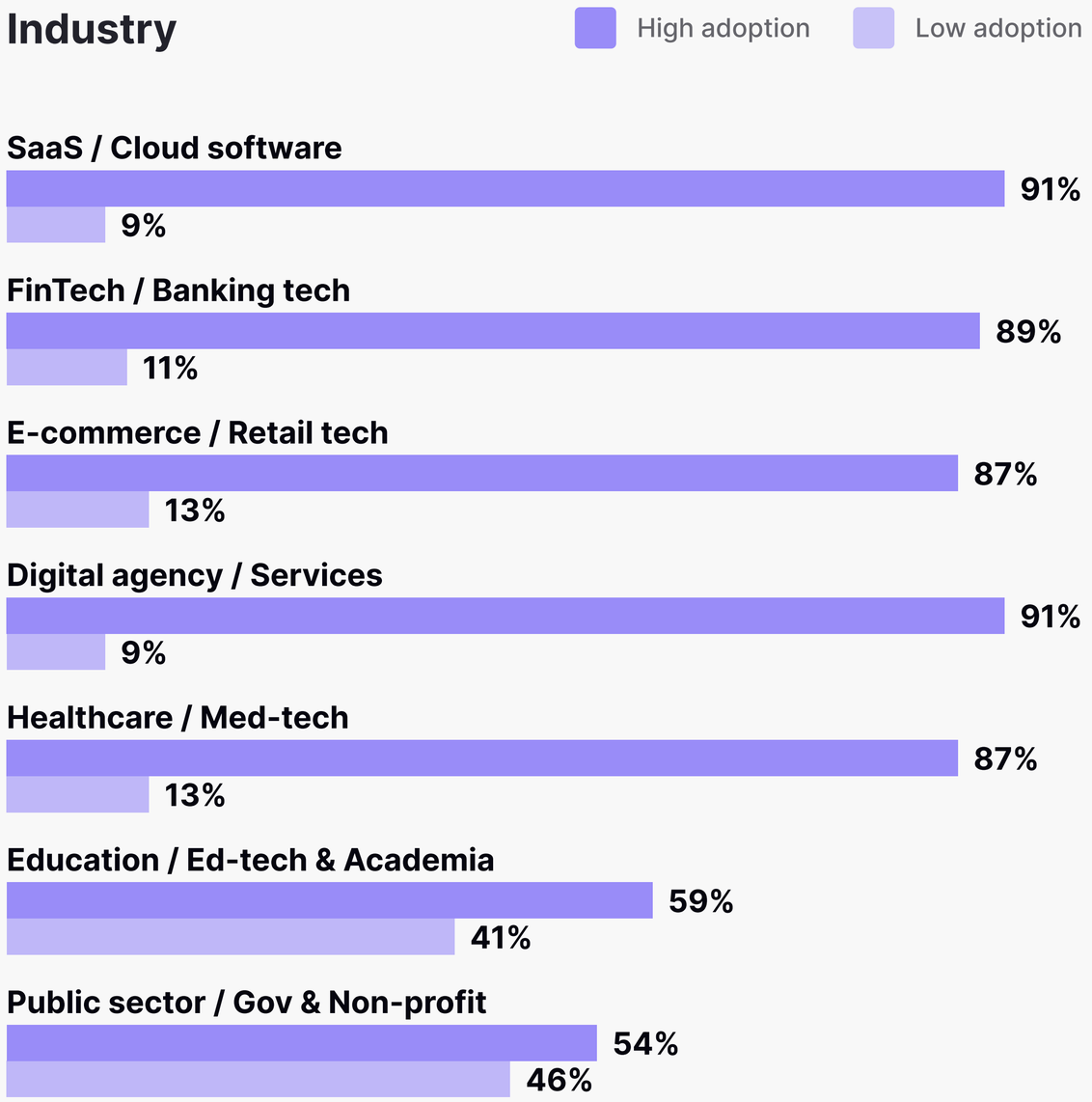


Who's ahead by industry

Tech-forward sectors are furthest along. SaaS, agencies, e-commerce, and healthcare sit at roughly nine in ten in the high-adoption band, with fintech close behind. Manufacturing, education, and the public sector are nearer six in ten.

The gap reflects regulation, legacy stacks, and slower enablement cycles more than appetite.

Different speeds, same levers: clear rules, tool access, and structured training move every industry forward.

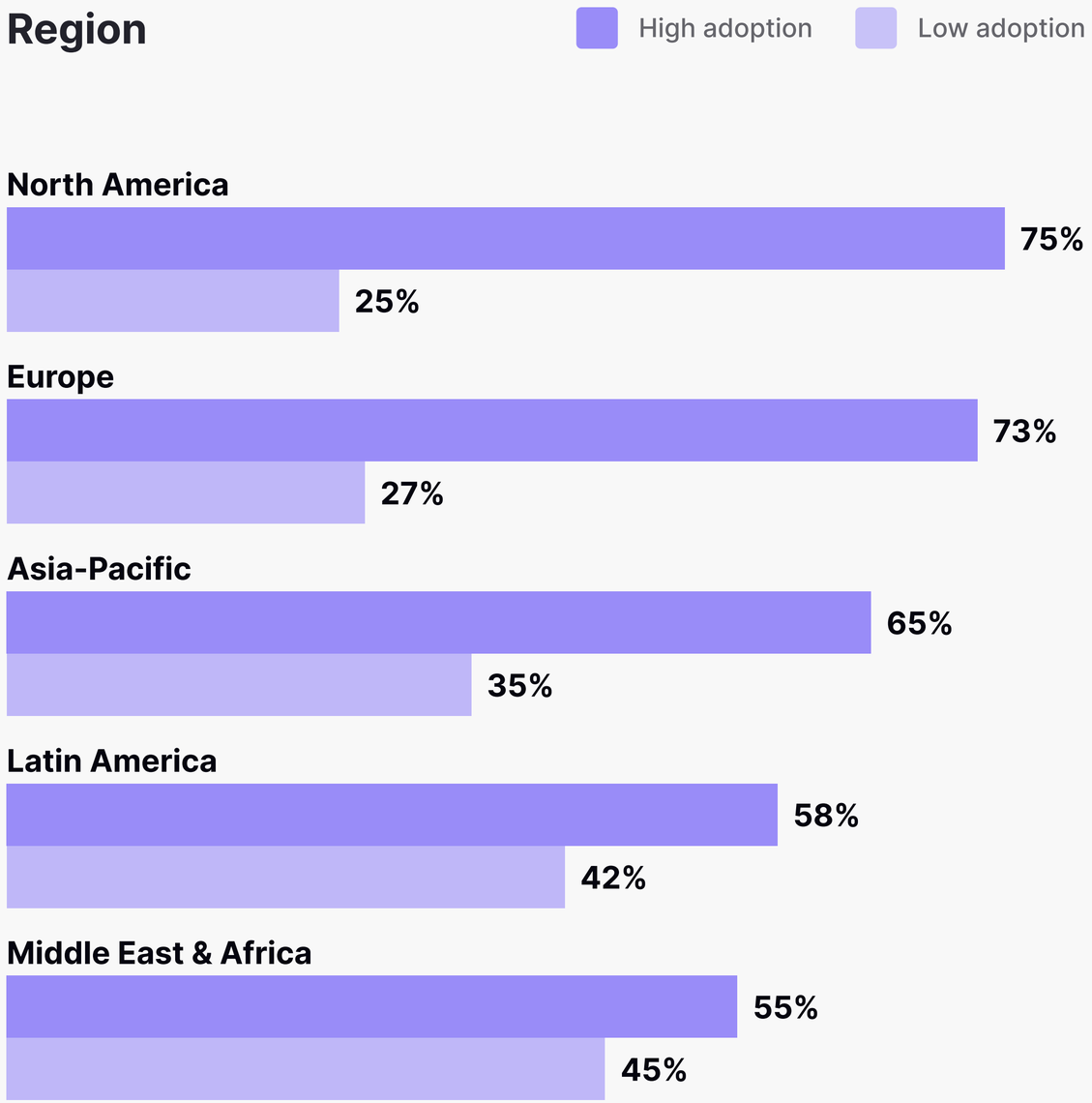


North America and Europe lead

North America and Europe have the largest share of high-adoption teams at roughly three in four. Asia-Pacific sits mid-pack with many teams in Scaling. Latin America and the Middle East & Africa trail at about three in five and just over half, leaving the most room for near-term gains.

Local ecosystems shape speed through talent pools, vendor access, and policy, but the direction is the same everywhere.

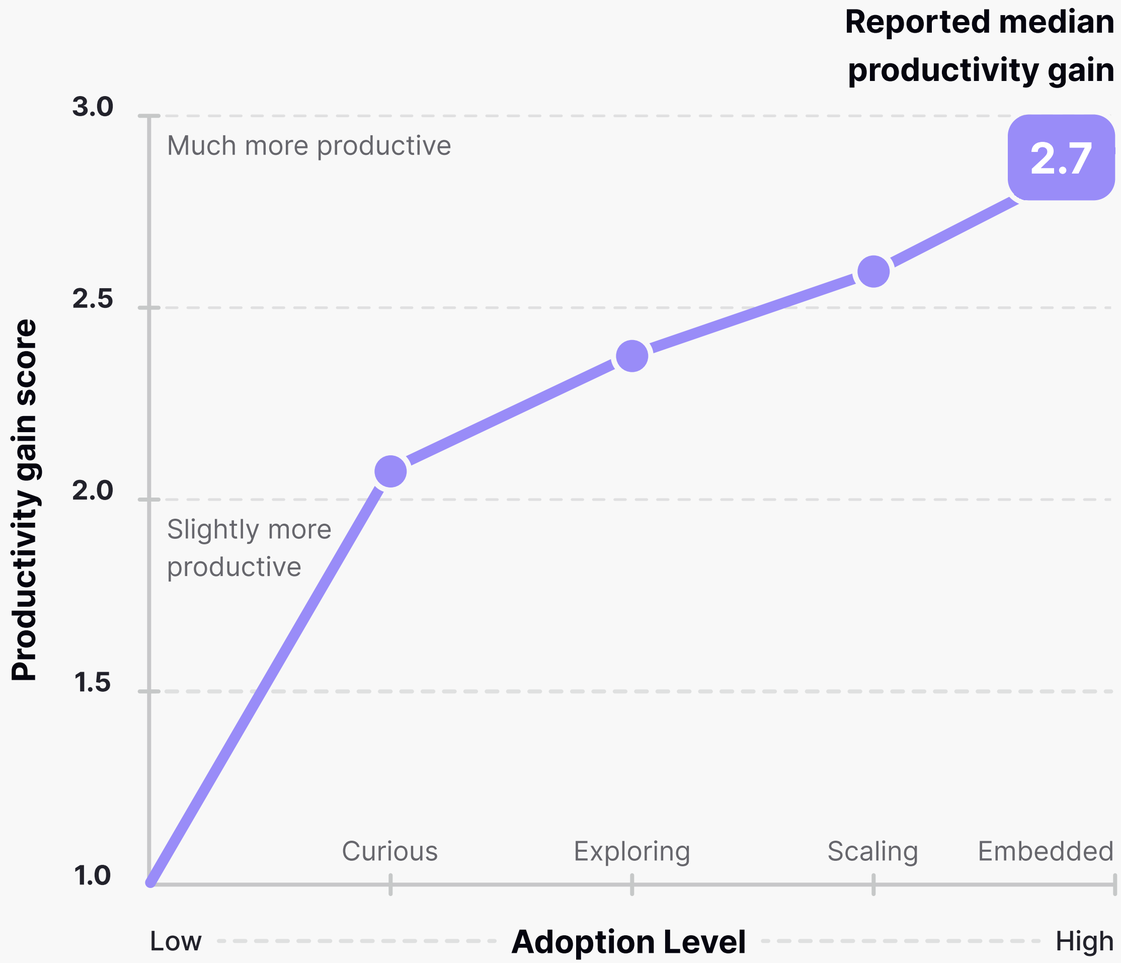
The global momentum is rising as playbooks spread across regions.



Productivity rises with adoption

- The score climbs from 2.17 at Curious to 2.68 at Embedded on a 0–3 scale.
- The median shifts from 2 to 3 once teams reach Scaling, which means "much more productive" becomes the typical answer.
- The steepest jump is Curious → Exploring, suggesting that basic training, clear use cases, and light governance pay off early.

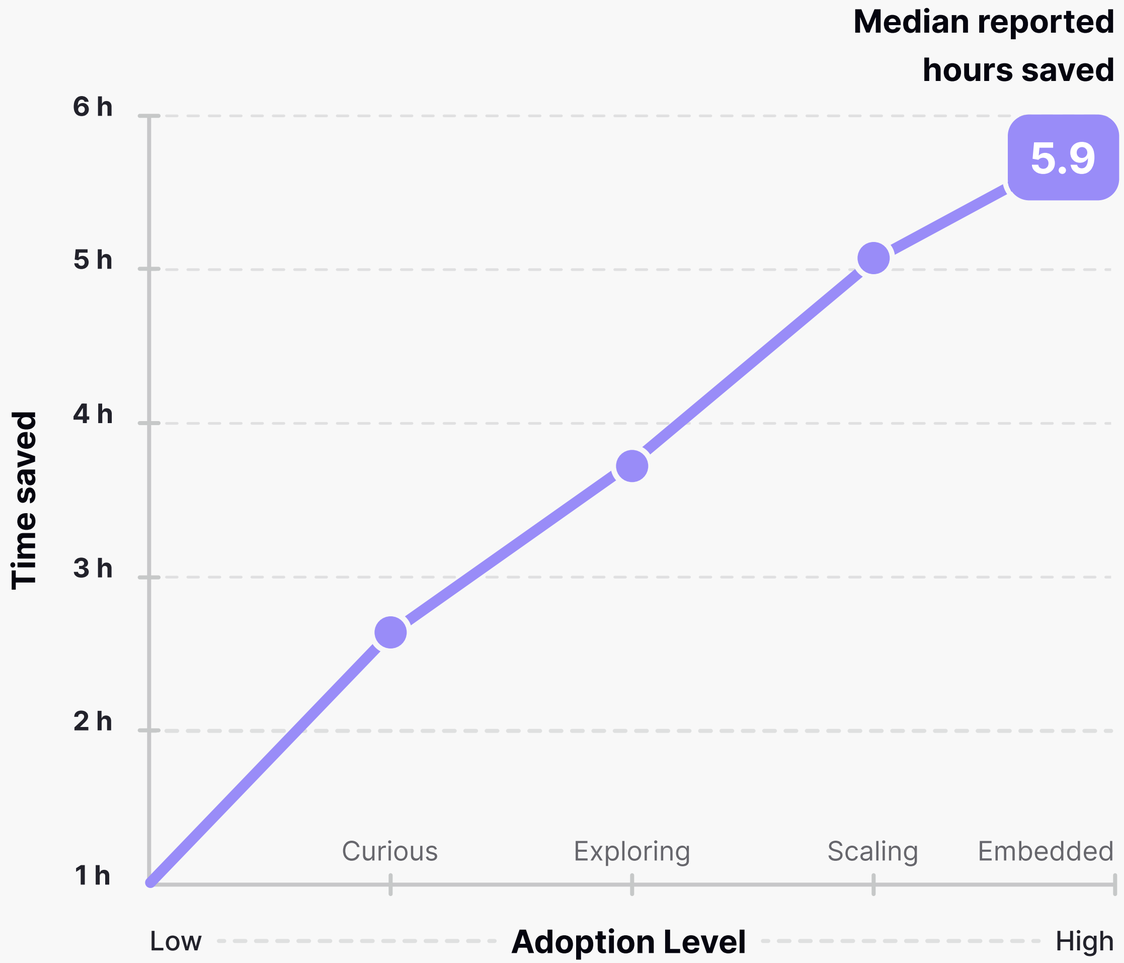
Each move up the ladder brings a clear lift in how productive teams feel.



Time saved increases

- Average time saved increases from 2.72 h at Curious to 5.89 h at Embedded.
- Moving from Low to High adoption roughly doubles weekly time saved per person.
- Gains taper slightly at the top. The big shift happens when teams go from Exploring to Scaling.
- **Business view**: at the current average of about 6 hours a week, the typical person gains roughly one extra working month each year.

The more embedded AI becomes in daily work, the more hours teams win back.



Hours into minutes, and more time for the work that matters.

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AI has changed how we work. Research and idea checks that took hours now take minutes, so we can focus on higher-value decisions. Productivity is up and the quality of our outcomes has improved.

Livinda Christy Monica

Sr. Product Designer at Right-Hand Cybersecurity

Chapter 2

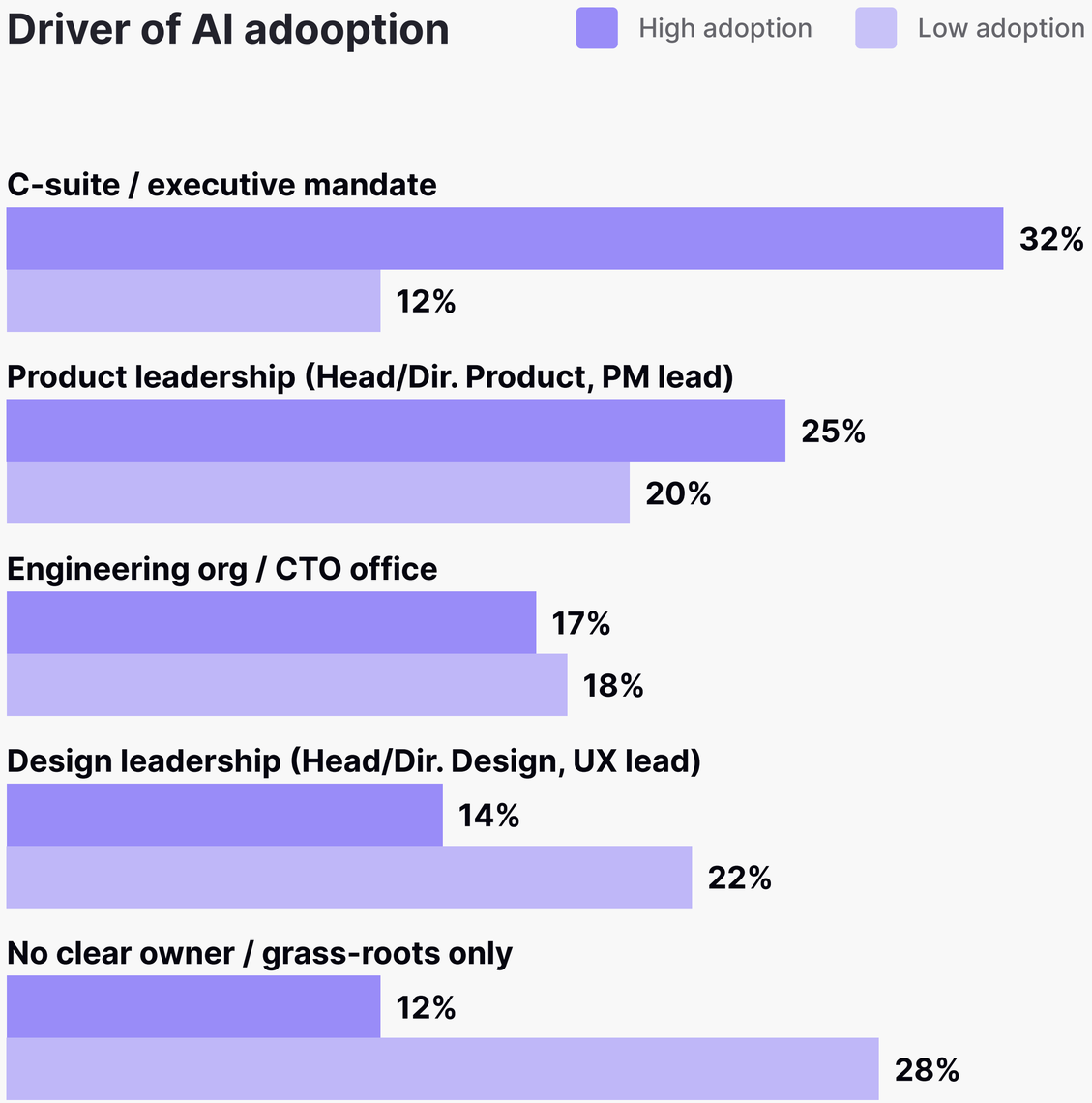
Embracing the change: what the data says

Who leads the change

In high-adoption organisations the C-suite is named as the primary driver almost three times more often than in low-adoption peers. Grass-roots efforts are common early on but fade once teams move past pilots. Design leaders often spark the first trials, then ownership shifts to product and executive leaders as AI becomes day-to-day.

Engineering or the CTO office is a steady sponsor at about one in six organisations across levels.

Executive mandate plus a clear product owner turns experiments into practice.

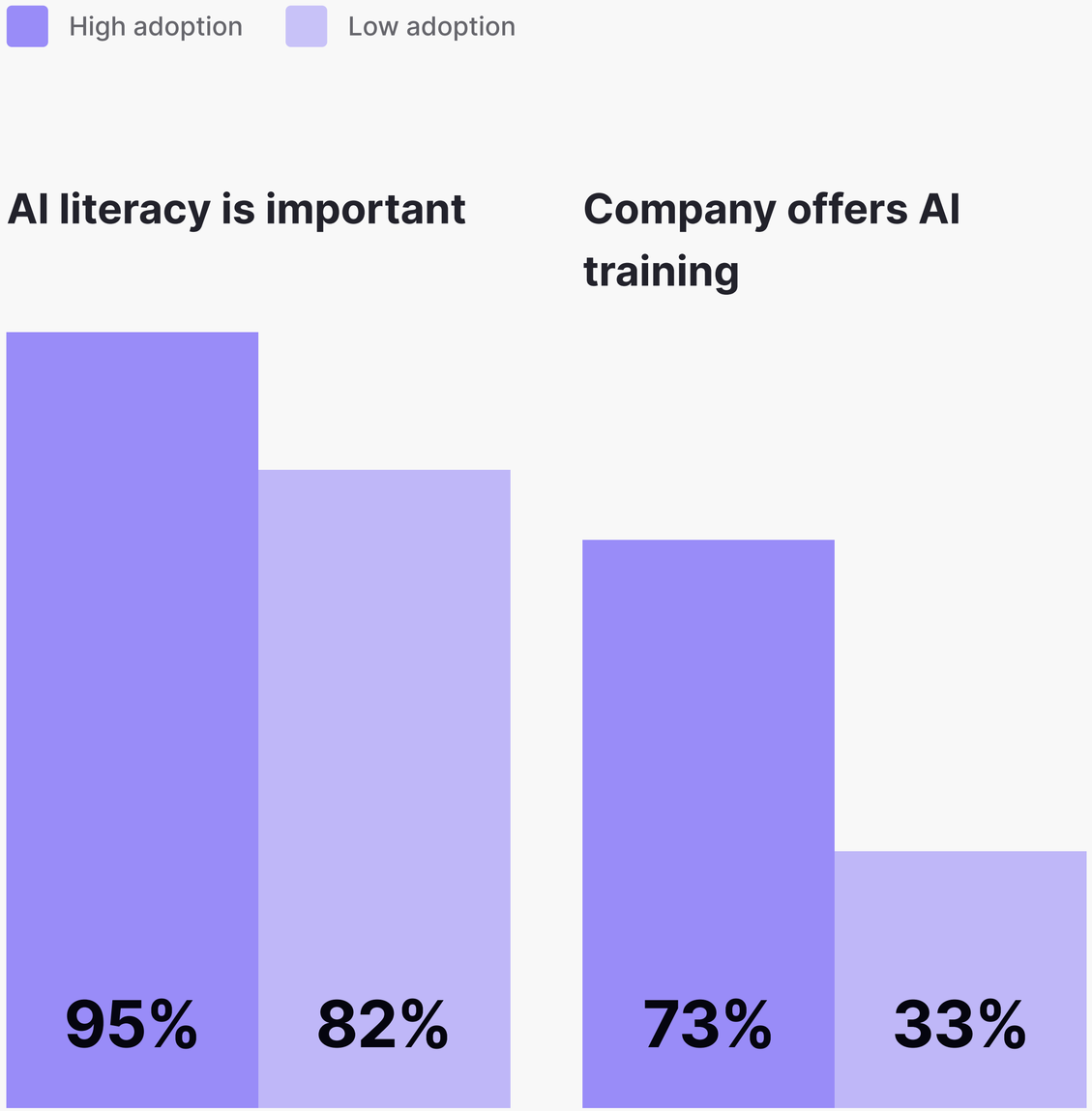


Skills matter to all. Training still lags.

Belief outpaces support in every cohort. In low-adoption organisations, 82% say AI literacy is important, yet only 33% report any training.

High-adoption organisations value it even more at 95%, and 73% offer training, although one in four people still lack structured support.

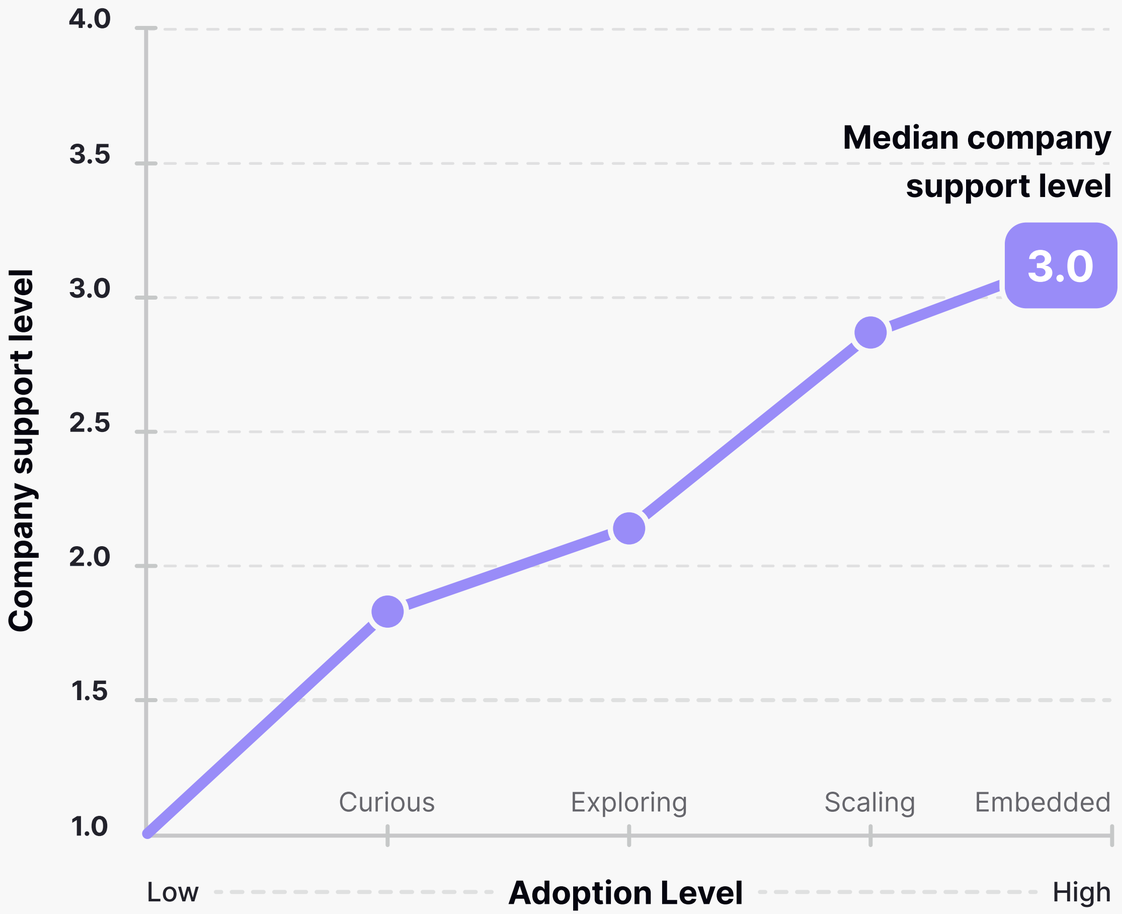
Formal programmes track with maturity: they appear about three times more often in high-adoption organisations than in low ones (28% vs 9%). Lunch-and-learns help, but a real curriculum and budget move the needle.



Support grows with adoption

- Support rises almost linearly. The composite index climbs from 1.75 at Curious to 3.05 at Embedded, adding about 0.5–0.7 points at each step on a 0–4 scale.
- The big jump is Exploring → Scaling. That is where many teams unlock training budgets and clear guidance, which drives broader use.
- There is still a ceiling. Even at Embedded, the average is only 3.05. About one in four people still report no training or low leadership emphasis.

People are ready; training and clear signals set the pace.



Choosing tools without locking in is the real challenge.

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Our team is open to using AI, but the hard part is not betting everything on one tool. Many vendors are racing for this space, which makes selection tricky. I prefer Bolt, my colleague prefers V0, and we also have Figma in our stack.

Andrew Dunne

Senior Product Designer at Flipdish

Where people go to upskill in AI

- Self-directed leads. Most people start with open-web content and layer in online courses when they want structure.
- Internal sharing helps, but isn't universal. Many teams run lunch-and-learns, yet a majority still leans on external sources.
- Only a small minority isn't upskilling right now, which tracks with the gap in formal company support.

The desire to learn is clear, but most learning still happens outside formal company programs.

Social media / blogs / YouTube	**65%**
Online courses & certifications	**54%**
Internal learn knowledge-sharing	**38%**
AI-focused newsletters	**29%**
I don't up-skill at the moment	**13%**

The real reasons people upskill

- Growth beats fear. People build AI skills to advance their careers and stay relevant; job-loss anxiety is a minority motivator.
- Practical upside wins. Everyday productivity and better product quality are stronger hooks than abstract strategy.
- Pressure is secondary. Fewer cite "meeting company expectations"; most learning is self-directed.
- Pay helps, but isn't the hook.

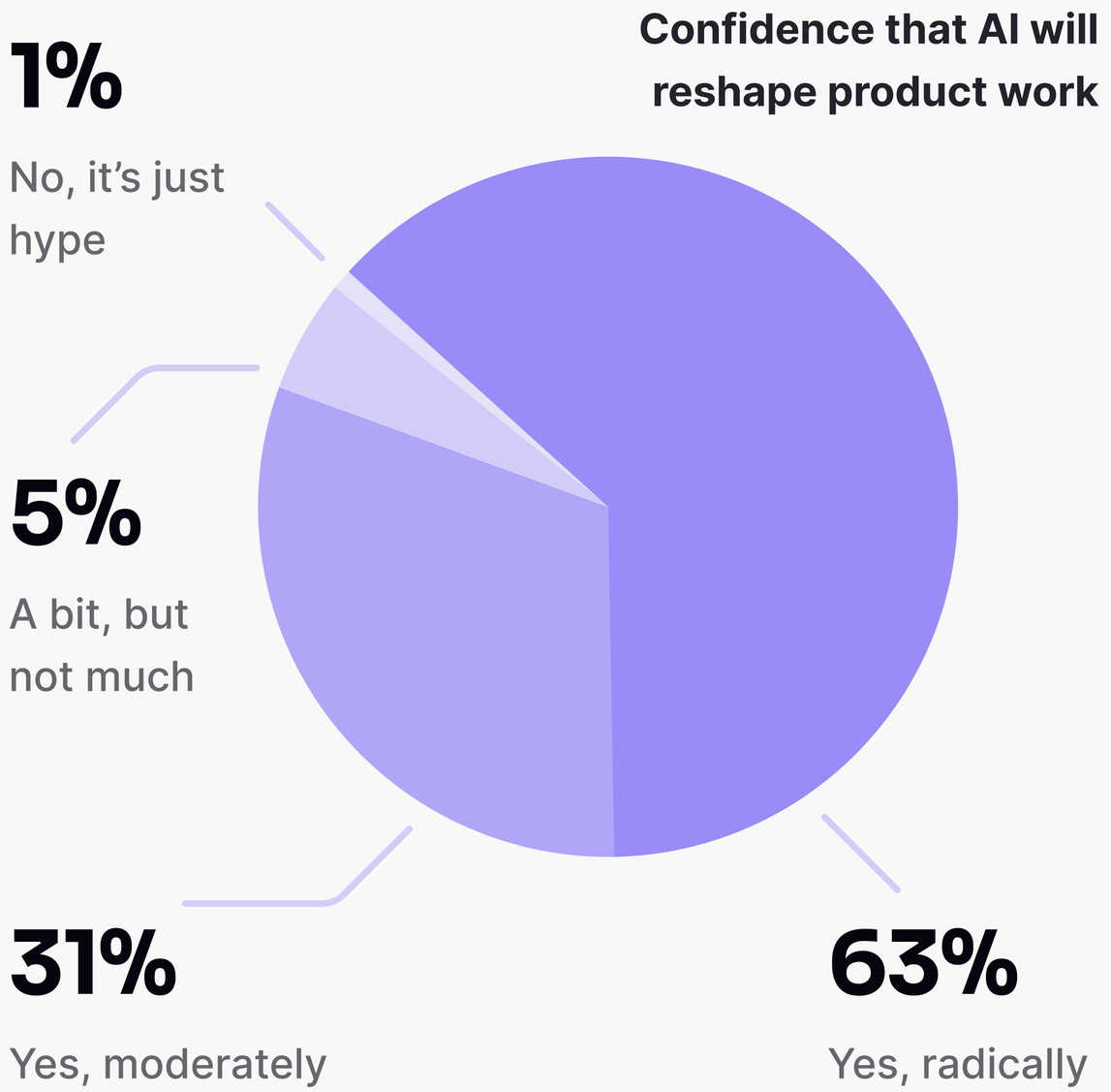
Frame learning around advancement, relevance, and clear productivity gains.

Career advancement	**66%**
Staying relevant & future-proofing my role	**62%**
Boosting productivity	**55%**
Higher-quality outputs	**44%**
Meeting company performance expectations	**30%**
Higher compensation	**28%**
Fear of job displacement if I don't learn	**18%**

Product work in 3 years: AI-led shift

- Consensus on change: 94% expect at least a moderate shift in how product teams work over the next three years.
- Strong signal: 63% predict a radical shift to day-to-day practice, not just small tweaks.
- Tiny sceptic slice: Only 1% call it hype.

The debate isn't if change is coming, but how fast. This puts a premium on skills, clear policies, and moving pilots into real workflows.

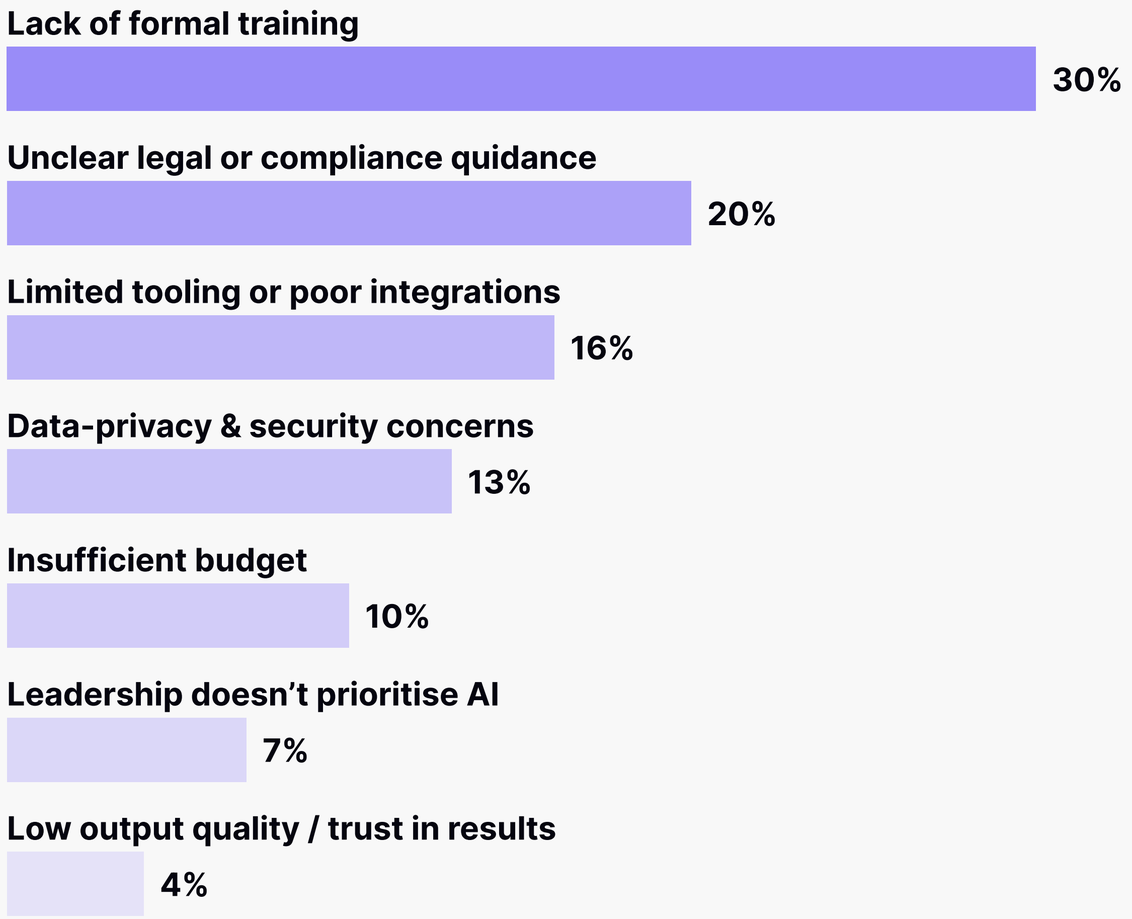


What holds teams back

Know-how is the biggest brake. Without formal training, people are unsure how to use AI safely and well, so pilots stall. Next comes policy clarity; vague legal or compliance rules make teams hesitate, especially in regulated sectors.

Tooling and integration slow scale but are not the main cause. Budget and licences matter in pockets, and lack of executive priority shows up mostly in low-adoption organisations. Quality worry has largely faded; few now see model output as the core problem.

Skills and rules unlock progress; tools and budget help, but they are not the primary bottlenecks.



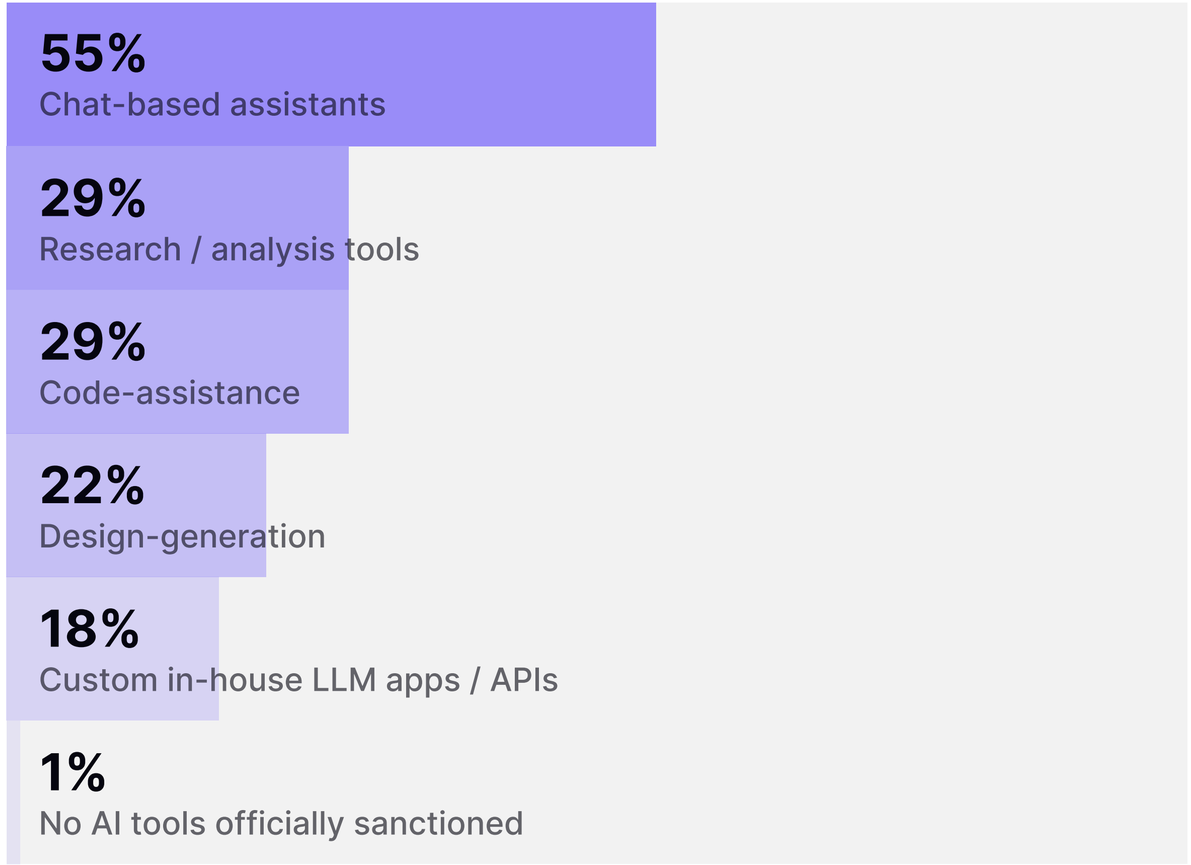
Chapter 3

Impact on work & productivity

Top tasks & Top tools

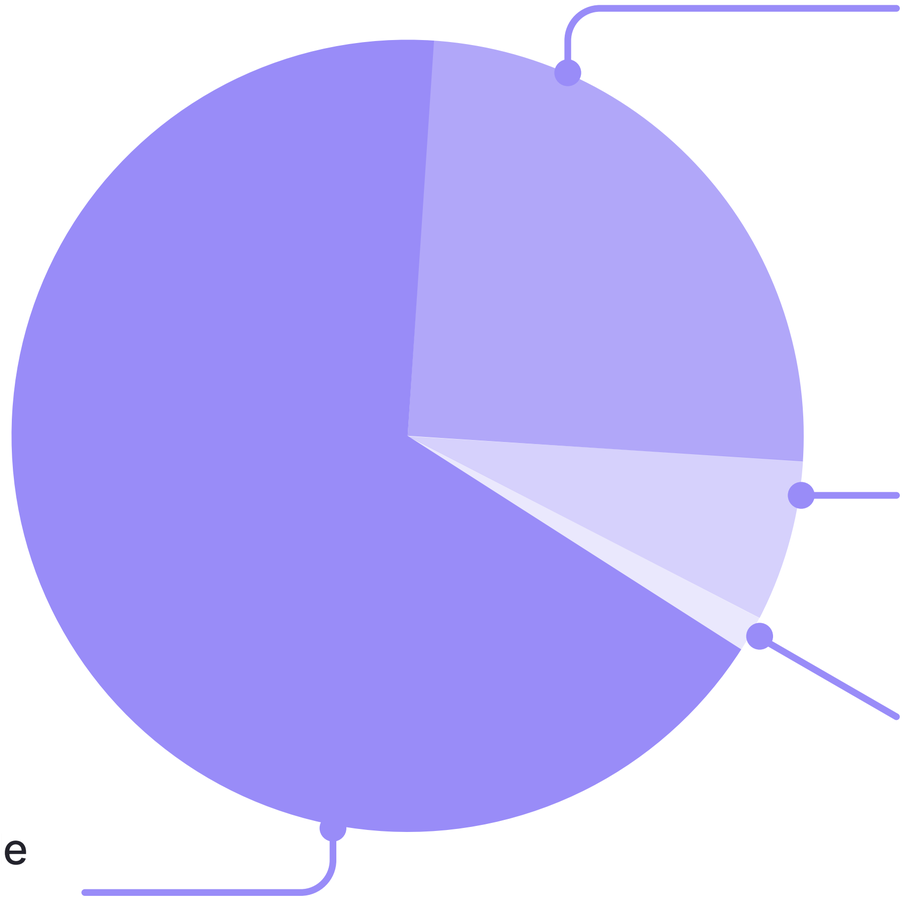
What teams use AI for

What tools companies support



AI use is now part of the daily routines

Most teams use AI every week already; the next step is deeper integration, not just more access.



25%
Weekly (a few times per week)

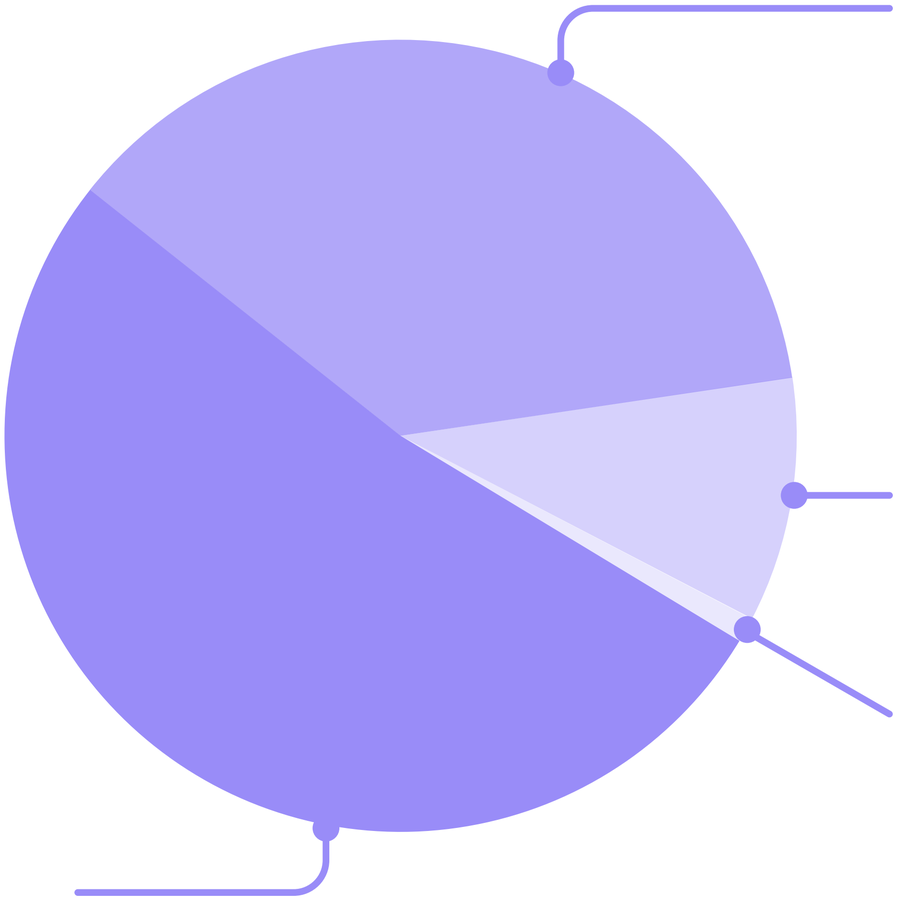
7%
Occasionally (monthly or less)

1%
Tried once / never

67%
Daily / multiple times a day

Most teams feel a clear lift

The productivity signal is strong and widespread; the next win is turning "slightly" into "much more."



37%
Slightly more productive

10%
No noticeable impact

1%
It actually slowed me down

52%
Much more productive

From time saved to capacity gained

Even a modest six hours per employee per week represents an 11–12 % capacity boost on a 40-hour schedule.

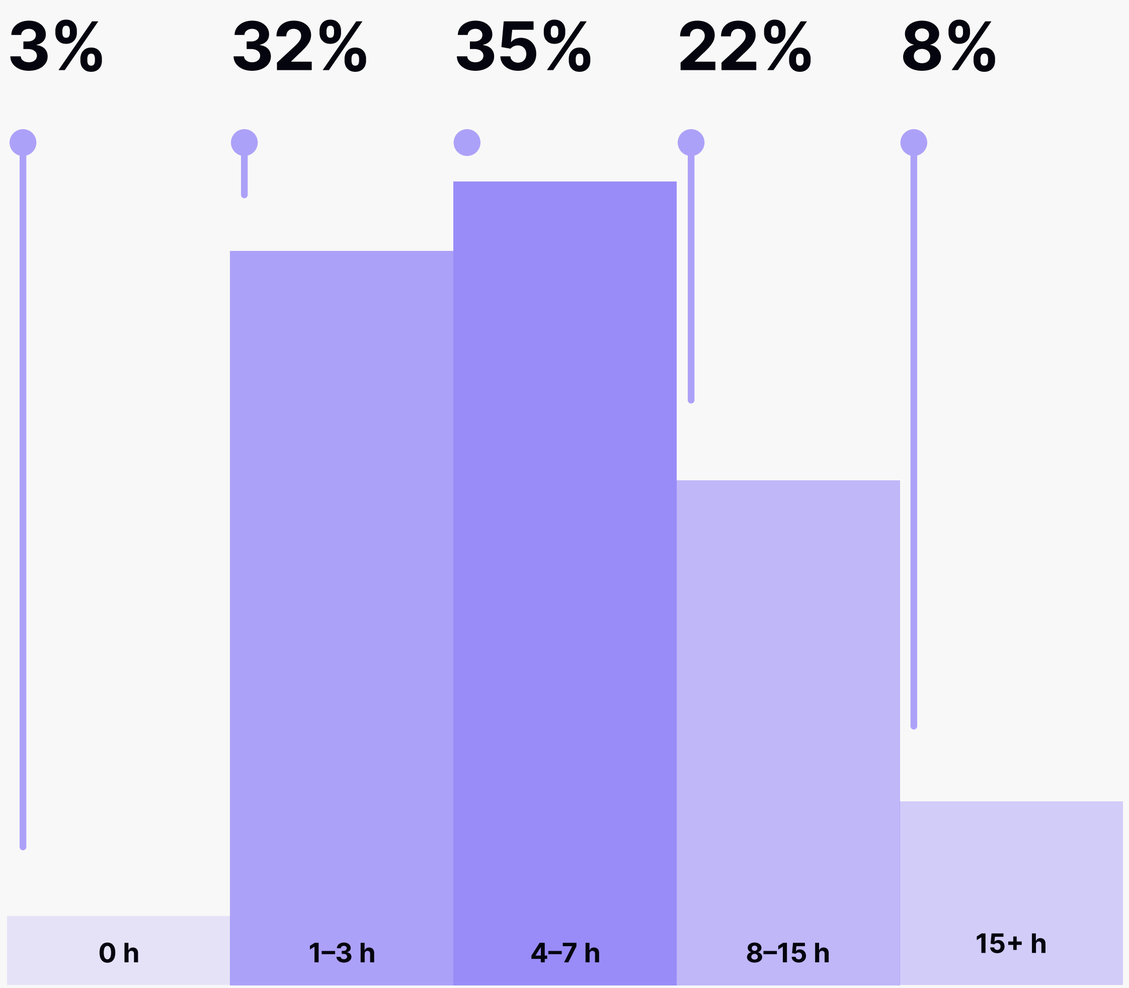
Put differently: after rolling out AI, the average team effectively gets an extra working month of effort from every full-timer each year — capacity that can fund new features, faster iterations, or simply a lighter load on overstretched staff.

$15k

in extra annual productivity value/employee

* at a $50/h rate

How much time people get back each week



Bonus

Recommended courses

AI Fundamentals for Designers

by Dr. Slava Polonski

Explore AI concepts, principles, and practices essential for creating human-centered, trustworthy AI-powered experie...

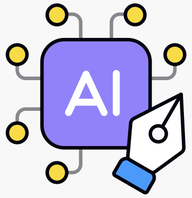
3h • Intermediate • ★ 4.4

AI Prompts Foundations

by Alesya Dzenga

Learn to craft precise AI prompts to accelerate your product design and development workflows.

2h • Intermediate • ★ 4.5



Enhancing UX Workflow with AI

by Colin Michael Pace

Learn how to integrate AI into UX design to create smarter, more personalized user...

4h • Intermediate • ★ 4.5

Human-Centered AI

by Dr. Slava Polonski

Learn AI design principles to create user-centered, trustworthy, and effective AI experiences.

3h • Advanced • ✲ New

Report methodology

We ran a global survey in July 2025 and received **2,747 responses from product, design, engineering, and research professionals** across five regions and more than a dozen industries. The sample represents about 1,100 companies using unique work-email domains as a conservative proxy. Core demographics were required, so all headline cuts by region, role, industry, and company size use nearly the full sample.

Analyses that needed every input for the Adoption Level score relied on a scorable subset **of 1,767 people (64%)**.

Quantitative answers were mapped to simple scales: productivity 0–3, hours-saved bands to their midpoints, literacy importance 0–4.

We built a four-step **Adoption Level** index by combining five signals: organisational stance, tool breadth, personal usage, training availability, and leadership sponsorship. Throughout the report we group levels as **Low (Curious + Exploring)** and **High (Scaling + Embedded)**.

We use descriptive statistics only and clear cross-tabs. Any ROI illustration multiplies average hours saved by a conservative fully loaded hourly cost ($50) to provide an order-of-magnitude view.

This transparent approach delivers a reliable read on how product teams are **adopting, learning, and benefiting from AI today.**

Want to know your AI adoption level?

Take a short quiz to measure you level and get an action plan that matches your result.

Take the quiz

Looking to upskill your team?

Let us show how Uxcel can help your product team adopt to the AI skill shift, fast.

Request a demo