



# Enterprise AI

## *The Reality Behind the Hype*

Nitro's independent survey of 1000+ professionals in companies with 500+ employees—including 103 C-suite executives and 900 managers and individual contributors—reveals surprising patterns in enterprise AI adoption, investment strategies, shadow AI, security risks, and more. This report uncovers the disconnect between leadership assumptions and frontline reality, as well as the breakthrough opportunity where strategy and execution align perfectly.

## SURVEY RESULTS

# Key Takeaways

Enterprise AI is at a critical inflection point. Companies are investing millions, yet adoption tells two radically different stories. While 95% of C-suite executives use AI for document processing to achieve measurable time savings, other enterprise tools remain largely unused. Meanwhile, 68% of executives and 50% of employees turn to unapproved consumer AI tools to fill gaps.



### **50-68%** use unapproved AI tools

Both executives and employees supplement approved platforms with consumer AI—signaling that enterprise tools aren't meeting critical needs, and governance gaps exist.



### **75-95%** use AI for document tasks

AI for data extraction and other document workflows achieves near-universal adoption—the breakthrough success story in enterprise AI.



### **\$10M+** is the median AI investment

61% of companies have invested \$10M+ to date, with 70% planning another \$10M+ over the next 12 months—despite mixed adoption results.

This widespread use of shadow AI poses significant security and compliance risks, especially since one-third of employees acknowledge processing confidential data—such as customer information, financial records, and contracts—using unverified tools.

**Yet the paradox reveals an opportunity:** When AI solves specific, high-value problems with clear ROI, adoption is swift and near-universal. When it doesn't, even massive investments can't drive usage.



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The AI market is projected to exceed \$1 trillion by 2031. Document processing with 95% adoption demonstrates that purpose-built AI integrated into platforms that users already trust drives value, high adoption, and measurable ROI at scale. That's the blueprint for enterprise AI success.

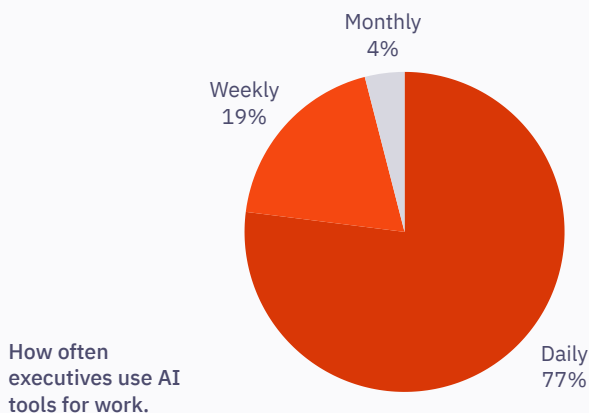
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# Usage Patterns & Pressure Dynamics

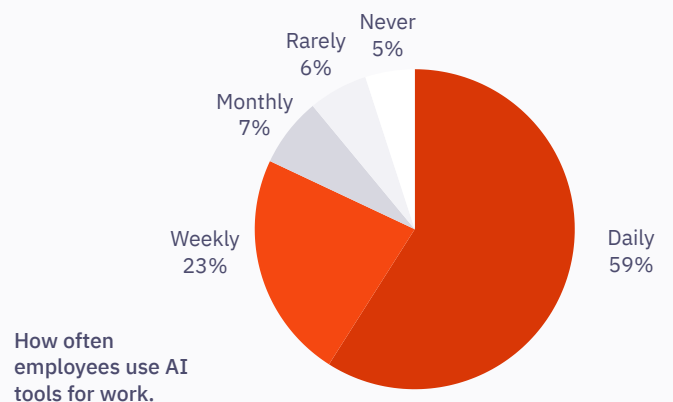
Our survey reveals high AI proficiency across both executives and employees, but surprising disconnects in adoption pressure.

## AI usage is strong across leadership and employees

**96%** of executives use AI for work at least weekly.



**82%** of employees use AI for work at least weekly.



## What this shows

AI capability and willingness are high across both groups, indicating the adoption disconnect isn't a training or resistance problem. Professionals know how to use AI and do so regularly.

# AI adoption pressure is mixed

Executives feel pressure from employees for better AI tools.

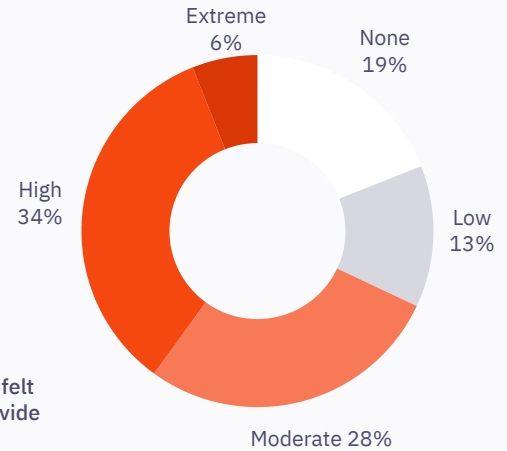
**68%** feel moderate to extreme pressure and **32%** feel low or no pressure.

Yet employees feel little pressure to use AI.

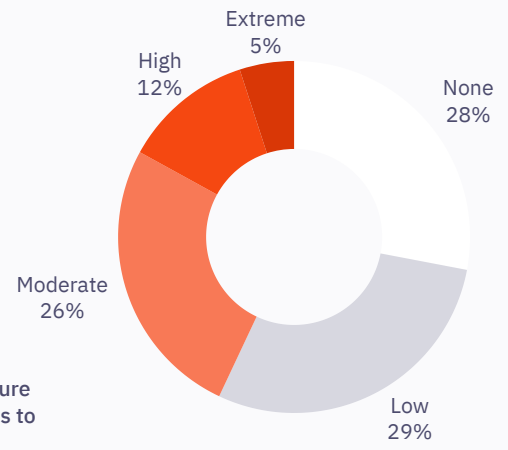
**57%** feel low or no pressure to use AI at work and **28%** feel zero pressure at all.

## The takeaway

Executives believe employees are demanding AI tools, yet most employees report feeling little pressure to actually use them. This suggests employees want AI that solves their specific problems, not AI for AI's sake.



Amount of pressure felt by executives to provide AI tools for work.



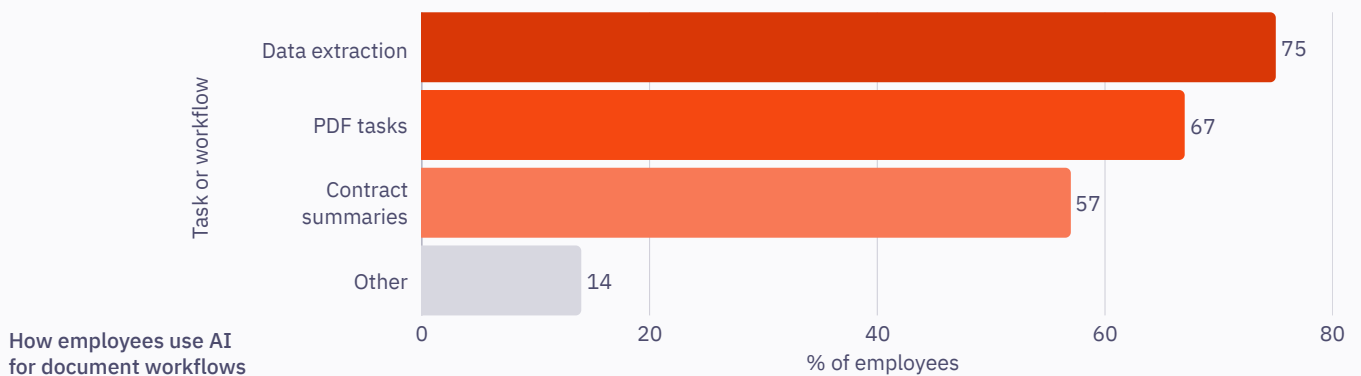
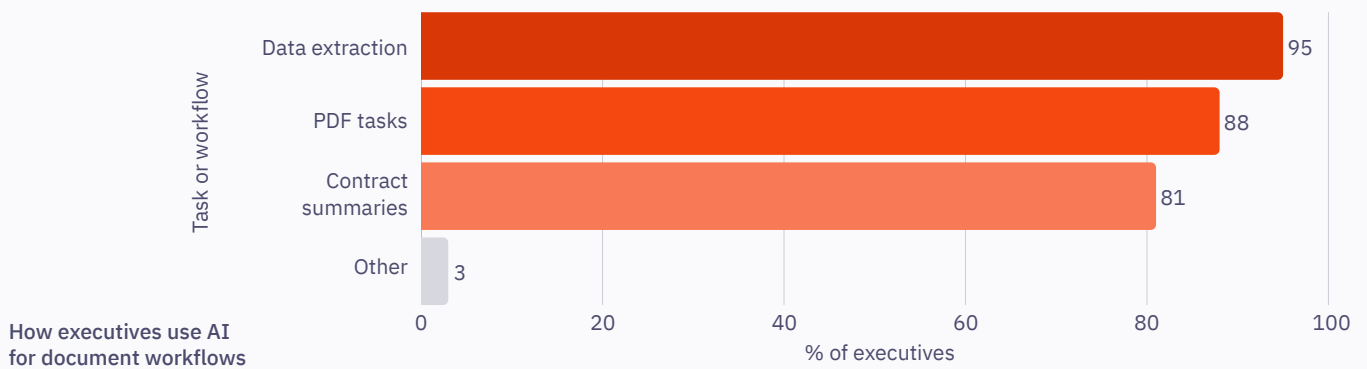
Amount of pressure felt by employees to use AI for work.

## DOCUMENT PROCESSING

# Where Reality Exceeds Expectations

Document AI achieves near-universal adoption and delivers measurable time savings that exceed executive expectations.

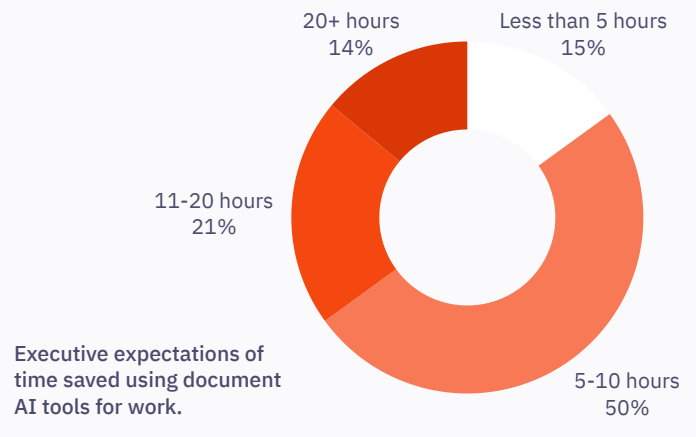
## User adoption rates by document task



# Time savings: Executives underestimate the value

Half of executives (50%) expect document AI tools to save employees 5-10 hours weekly.

The reality is even better: 89% of employees report saving an average of **9+ hours per week** on document tasks with AI.




At scale, the weekly time savings creates transformational productivity.

For a 1,000-employee organization, **9 hours** per week per employee translates to:

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 **480,000** hours reclaimed annually.


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 **\$26 million** in productivity value at standard knowledge worker rates.

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 **5-6 month** payback on a typical \$10M document AI investment.

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 **2.5x** annual ROI in subsequent years.

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This is measurable ROI executives can bank on.

# Why document AI succeeds

When AI solves specific, measurable problems with clear value, adoption happens naturally. Document processing achieves the highest adoption rates because:

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**1**

## The value is immediate

Extract data in 30 seconds vs. 30 minutes manually.

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**2**

## The use case is universal

Nearly every employee processes documents.

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**3**

## The benefits are obvious

Time saved is easily quantifiable.

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**4**

## It fits existing workflows

Enhances rather than disrupts how people work.

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## IDENTIFYING THE GAP

# The Shadow AI Phenomenon

Despite millions invested in enterprise AI, both executives and employees turn to unapproved tools, signaling gaps in approved toolsets.

## Personal AI proficiency is high

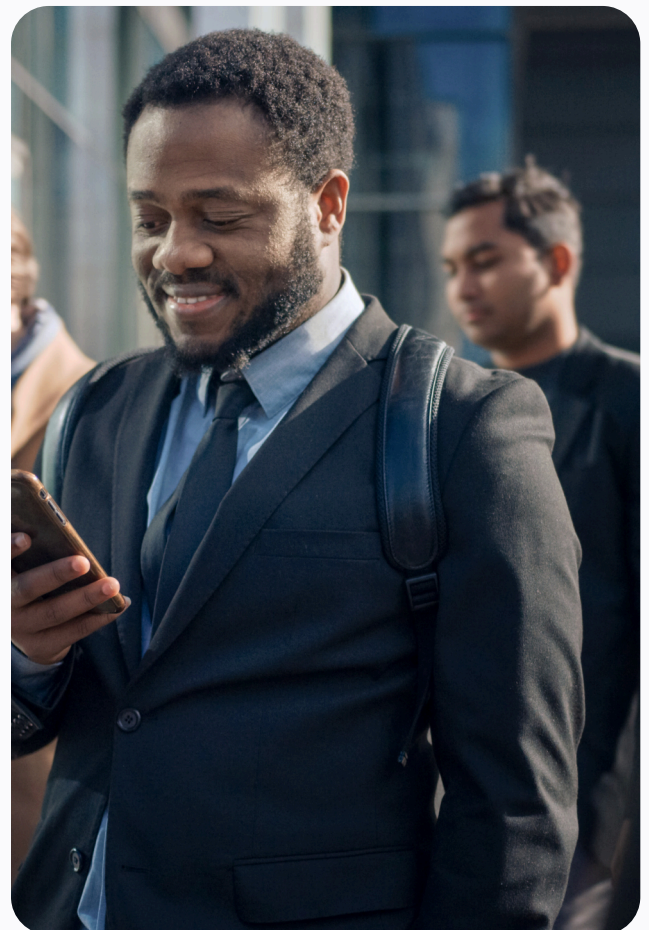
**93%** of executives use AI weekly for personal tasks.

**62%** use AI daily.

**77%** of employees use AI weekly for personal tasks.

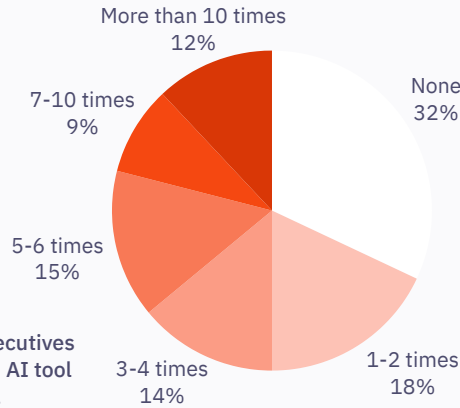
**46%** use AI daily.

This shows that shadow AI isn't about the lack of capability; it's about not having the right tools. When approved tools do not have the features, ease of use, or workflow integration employees need, they turn to unapproved tools.



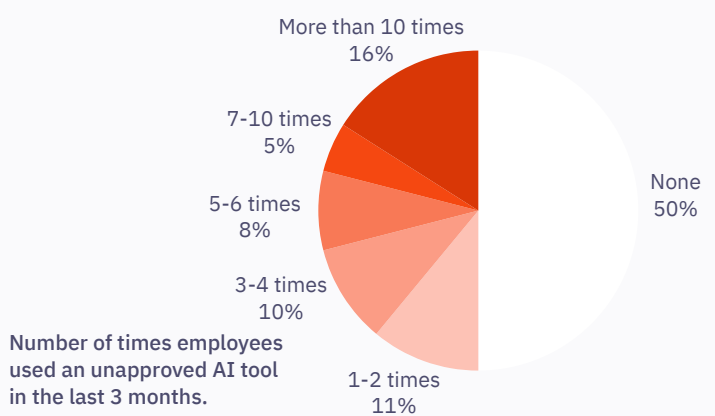
# Widespread unapproved tool usage

**68%** of executives have used unapproved AI tools in the past 3 months; **63%** use at least one unapproved AI tool weekly.



Number of times executives used an unapproved AI tool in the last 3 months.

**50%** of employees have used unapproved tools in the past 3 months, with an average of 3+ unapproved tools used weekly.



Number of times employees used an unapproved AI tool in the last 3 months.

## Why employees turn to unapproved tools

To bridge the gap between 82% of employees using AI at work and 50% using unapproved tools, companies must understand what's driving this behavior.

### Workflow integrations

Tools don't fit existing processes.

### Feature gaps

Consumer AI is frictionless; enterprise tools often aren't.

### Ease of use

Approved tools lack capabilities employees need.

### Speed

Consumer tools provide instant access without procurement delays.

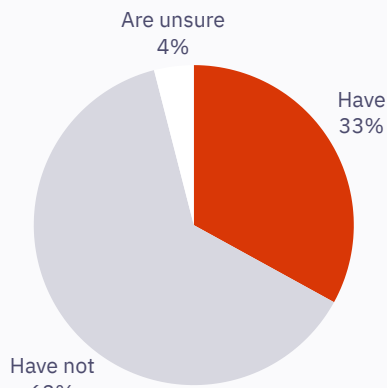
The pattern: When approved tools deliver clear value, shadow AI decreases.

When they don't, employees find workarounds.

# Data Governance & Security Risks

The use of unapproved AI tools exposes sensitive data, particularly when employees process confidential information through unvetted platforms.

**33%** of employees have processed confidential company information through AI tools.



Employee respondents on whether they have ever processed confidential company information through AI tools.

Of respondents that have processed confidential company information through AI, the information contained:

**69%** customer data

**62%** financial data

**56%** contracts/legal documents

**45%** proprietary research and/or company intelligence

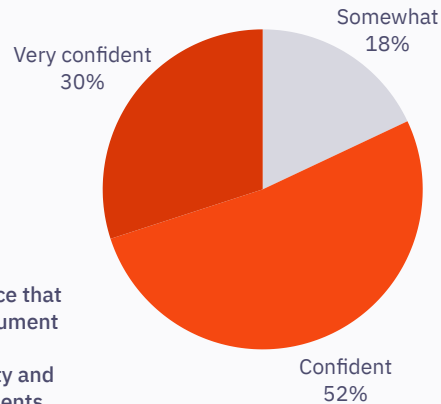
**36%** regulatory filings

## Executives see the risk but can't control it

75% of C-suite leaders believe employees process confidential data through AI daily or weekly, and 68% of those same executives use unapproved tools themselves. Awareness without governance creates a critical vulnerability. With customer data, financial records, and contracts flowing through AI tools, data sovereignty isn't a feature—it's a requirement. Organizations need to know where their data goes, who can access it, and whether it's used to train third-party AI models.

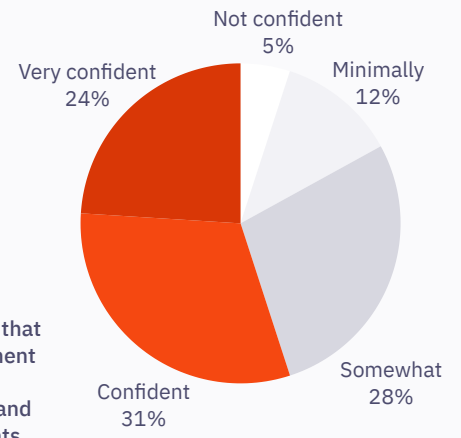
# Security confidence vs. governance reality

**82%** of executives are confident AI tools meet security and compliance requirements.




Executives' confidence that AI tools used for document workflows meet the organization's security and compliance requirements.


**55%** of employees are confident AI tools meet security and compliance requirements.




Employees' confidence that AI tools used for document workflows meet the organization's security and compliance requirements.

## The gap between confidence and practice is concerning

 **51%** of respondents rank security and compliance as the #1 implementation challenge.

 **68%** of executives use unapproved tools while expressing high confidence in security.

 Only **17%** of employees lack confidence in security, despite **33%** processing confidential data through AI.

The governance gap: High confidence paired with widespread unapproved tool usage and confidential data processing suggests many organizations are still developing mature AI governance frameworks.

# Building mature AI governance

Organizations need governance frameworks that address both security and usability.

## Security requirements

- ✔ Enterprise-grade security built into approved tools from day one.
- ✔ Data sovereignty and retention controls that meet regulatory requirements.
- ✔ Clear audit trails for AI usage and data processing.

## Usability requirements

- ✔ Tools that meet employee needs so they don't seek unapproved alternatives.
- ✔ Workflow integration that enhances rather than disrupts existing processes.
- ✔ Clear policies on which AI tools are approved and why.



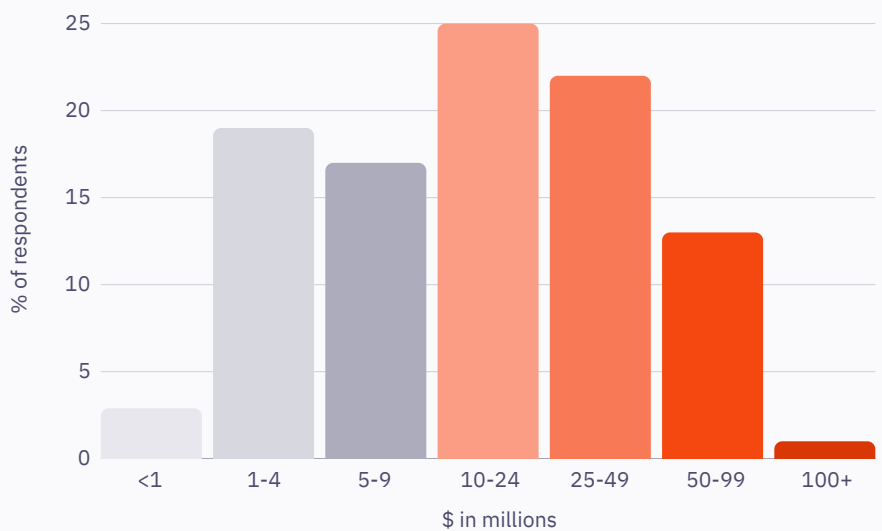
# Investment vs. Impact

Companies are doubling down on AI despite mixed adoption results, signaling long-term conviction but also the need for more targeted strategies.

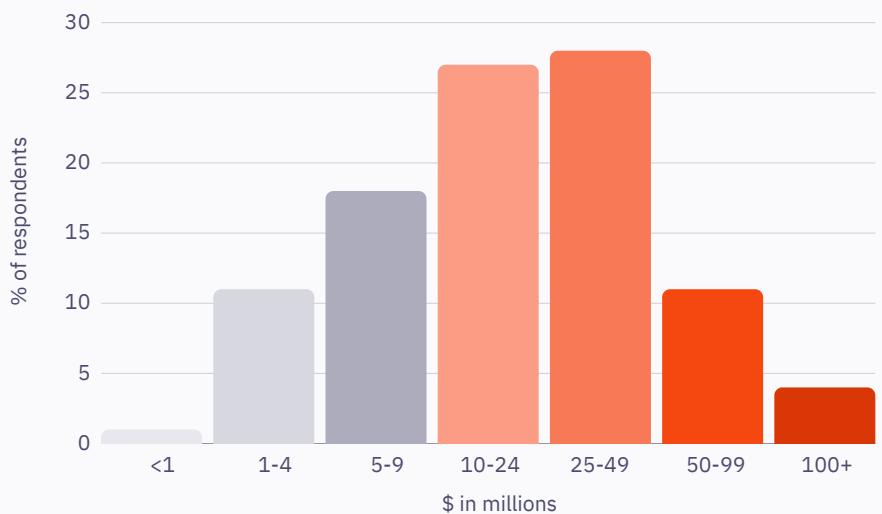
## Investment scale and trajectory

**61%** have already invested \$10M+ in AI.

**70%** plan to invest \$10M+ in AI over the next 12 months.



Business AI investments to date



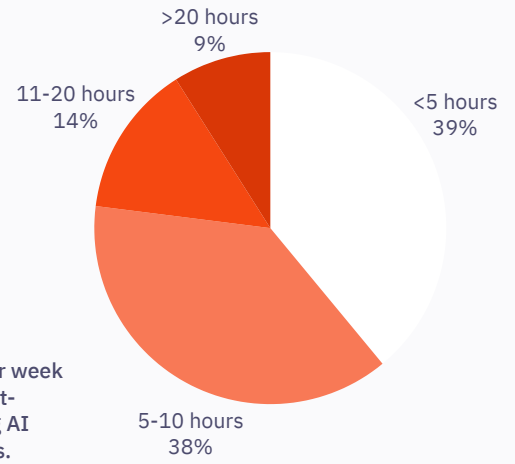
Expected AI investments in the next 12 months

# The expected productivity returns for document tasks

**85%** of executives expect employees to save 5+ hours weekly on document tasks.

**50%** of executives expect 5-10 hours saved per week.

Only **14%** of executives expect over 20 hours saved weekly.



Actual reported productivity returns for document tasks average **9+ hours per week**.



## Top implementation challenges reported by executives

- 1 Security and compliance: **51%**
- 2 Cost and ROI: **44%**
- 3 Employee adoption: **44%**
- 4 Integration with existing systems: **43%**
- 5 Admin governance and control: **39%**
- 6 Scalability and license flexibility: **37%**
- 7 Vendor support and training: **28%**

# Measuring success: What document AI teaches us

While **44%** of executives struggle to measure ROI on broad AI investments, document AI tools demonstrate the formula for success:



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 **95%** executive adoption rate

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 **9+ hours** saved per week on average

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 **\$26M** annual productivity value for 1,000 employees

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 **5-6** month payback period with 2.5x annual return

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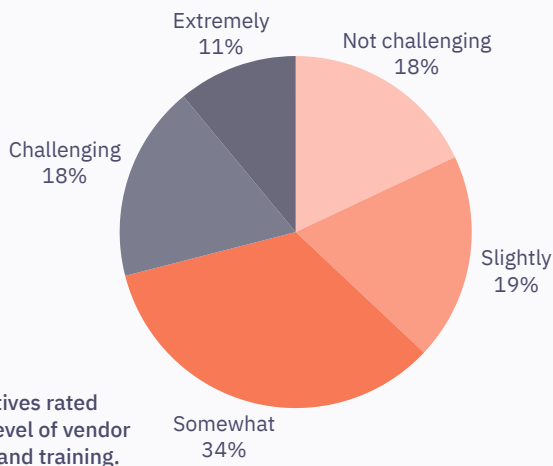
The lesson: Organizations that invest in focused, measurable use cases with clear productivity gains achieve higher adoption and ROI at scale. Those pursuing broad “AI transformation” initiatives without specific outcomes face the challenges 44% report—unclear returns despite significant investment.

# The Training & Enablement Gap

Most organizations have invested in AI training, though the quality and pressure to adopt it vary significantly.

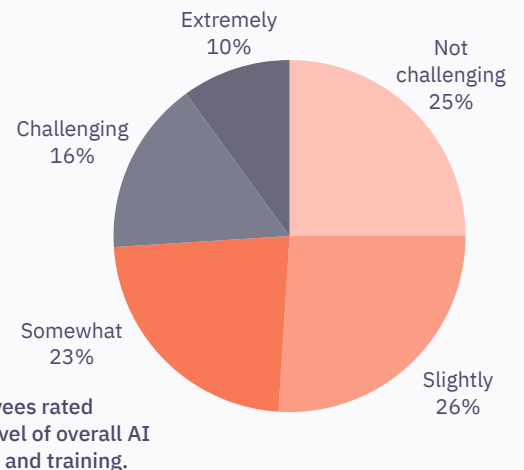
## The challenges with AI tool support and training

**71%** of executives report minimal to no challenges with AI vendor support and training.



How executives rated challenge level of vendor AI support and training.

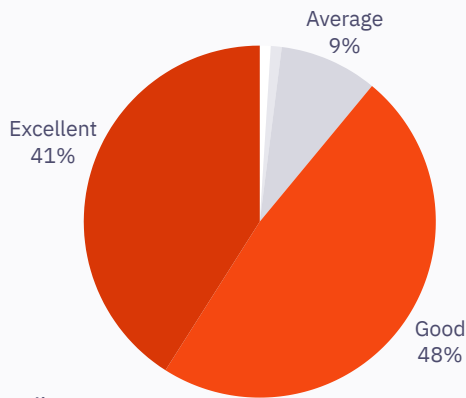
**74%** of employees also feel that AI support and training are not a top challenge.



How employees rated challenge level of overall AI tool support and training.

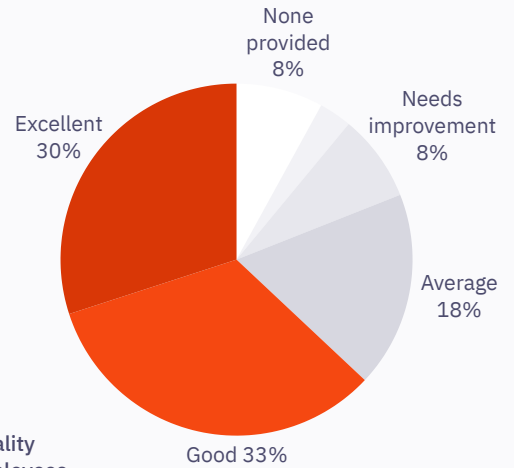
# Training quality ratings

**89%** of executives rate AI training as above average in their workplace.



AI training quality ratings by executives.

**63%** of employees rate AI training as above average.



AI training quality ratings by employees.

## Bridging the gap

Organizations invest heavily in AI training (63% rate it as good or excellent), yet 50% of employees and 68% of executives still turn to unapproved tools. This suggests the adoption challenge isn't education; it's tool selection. Employees don't need more training on tools that don't meet their needs. They need better tools that require less training. Document AI's high adoption with minimal training proves this principle.



# What This Means for Your Organization

Understanding the disconnect between AI investment and adoption is valuable, but only if it informs better decisions. With **70%** of companies planning to invest another **\$10M+** in AI over the next 12 months, the stakes are high for selecting the right tools. Companies that succeed at focused, valuable AI deployment with quantifiable improvements will dominate their industries.

## Before your next AI investment, consider:

### Is the use case specific and measurable?

Document processing achieves **75-95%** adoption because employees immediately see time savings. Broad “AI transformation” initiatives struggle without clear value propositions.

### Does it fit existing workflows?

The highest adoption rates come from AI that enhances current processes in systems users already trust, without requiring new behaviors or systems.

### Is governance built in from day one?

With 33% of employees processing confidential data through AI, enterprise-grade security and data sovereignty aren't optional features—they're mandatory.

### Can you measure ROI within 90 days?

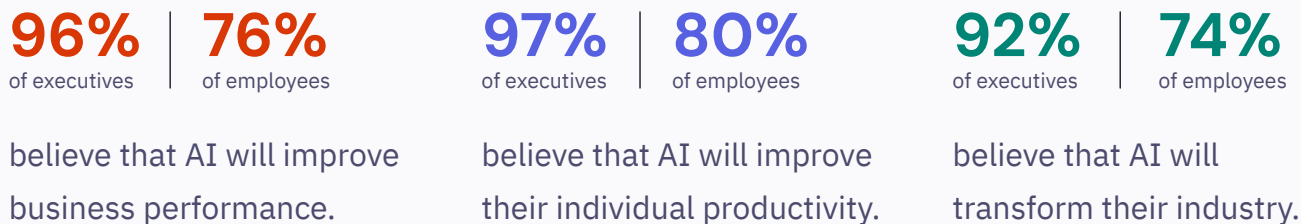
The clearest AI successes show quick, quantifiable value. If benefits take 6-12 months to materialize, user adoption will suffer.

### Have you addressed the approved vs. unapproved tool gap?

50-68% using unapproved tools signals unmet needs. Understanding what functionality employees seek outside approved channels can inform better tool selection.

# The Path Forward: What the Data Shows

An overwhelming majority of executives and employees agree that AI will have a major impact in the next 12 months.



The belief in AI’s potential is nearly universal. The opportunity is translating that belief into measurable results. Organizations achieving strong adoption and proven ROI share three strategic objectives:

## ① Focus on high-value, specific use cases

Rather than broad AI deployments, identify problems with clear, quantifiable solutions. Document processing, data extraction, and workflow automation succeed because employees immediately see time savings. Start with use cases where value is obvious, not aspirational.

## ② Build enterprise-grade governance from the start

Consumer AI tools are popular because they’re frictionless. Enterprise AI must be both easy to use and highly secure. For regulated industries processing customer data, financial records, and contracts, these controls are non-negotiable.

## ③ Design for adoption, not just capability

The highest adoption rates come from tools that require minimal training and enhance existing processes. Prioritize intuitive interfaces, workflow integration, and problem-solving over deploying complex platforms that require behavioral changes.

# About this report

This research was conducted by Nitro in partnership with Zogby Analytics and Pollfish, surveying 103 C-suite executives and 900 managers and individual contributors across the United States, United Kingdom, and Canada in October 2025.

Industries surveyed: Professional Services (44%), Financial Services (33%), Manufacturing (21%), Legal, and others.

Methodology: Separate surveys ensured independent responses from C-suite executives and manager/individual contributor populations, enabling analysis of perception gaps. All percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number for clarity.

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For enterprise solutions: Learn how Nitro's document solutions deliver seamless workflows and the AI adoption rates and security governance your strategy needs.

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