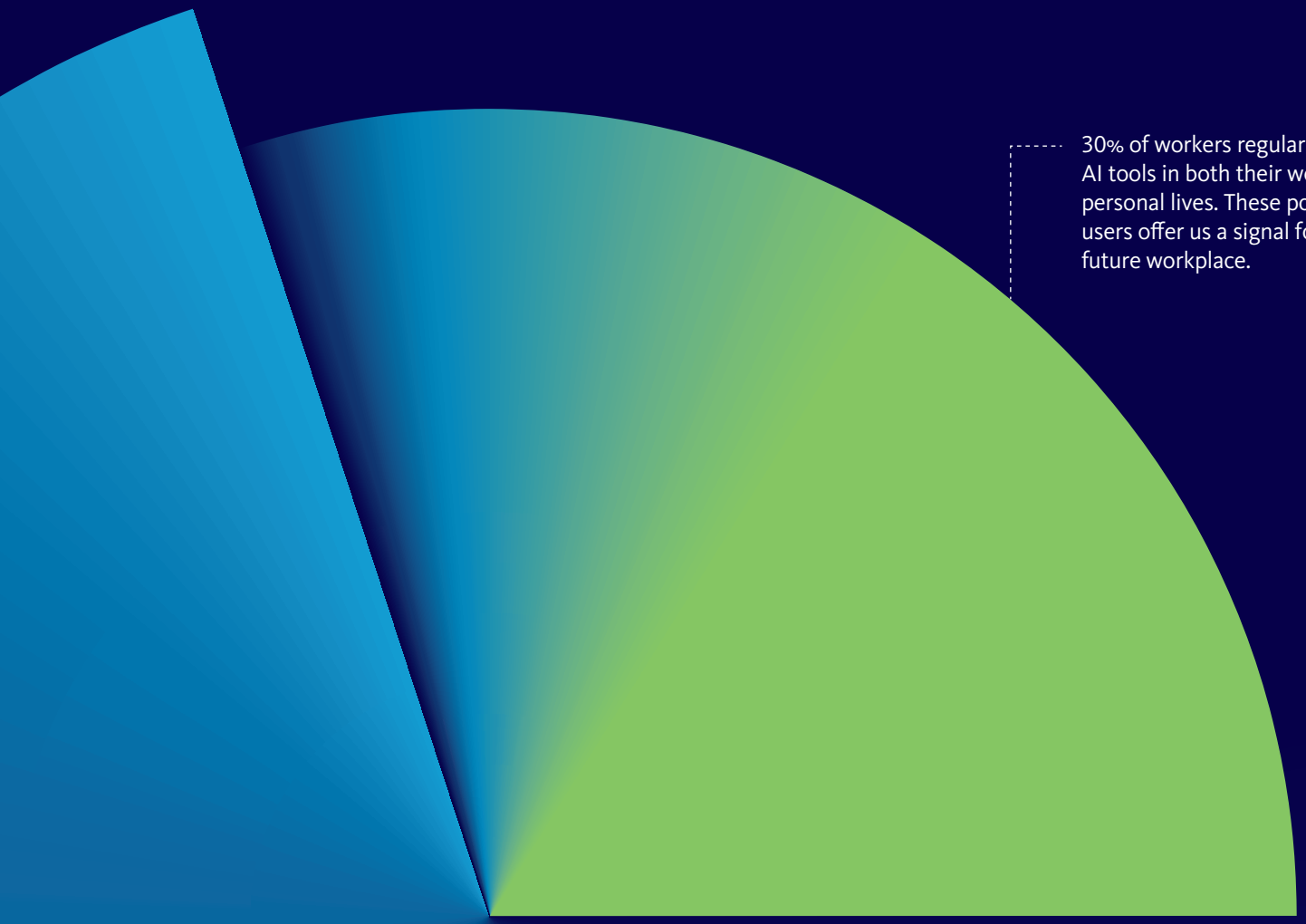
# GLOBAL WORKPLACE SURVEY 2026



30% of workers regularly use AI tools in both their work and personal lives. These power users offer us a signal for the future workplace.

## Will AI make the workplace more human?

Gensler RESEARCH INSTITUTE

JP Morgan Chase HQ — New York, NY

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# AI is changing work. How will it change the workplace?

Every year, we survey thousands of people across the globe to determine what makes a workplace effective and what gets in the way — then we sift through the data with an eye toward what's next.

This year, we continue tracking core metrics on how and where people work, the experiences they have in those environments, and emerging themes, such as workers' hopes for the future and the workarounds they use to optimize their spaces. And of course, there was one topic that was impossible to ignore — AI. Looking at signals from AI adopters related to the physical workplace, we're discovering some surprising insights already.

Early on, some experts envisioned empty desks and abandoned offices as work shifted from people to machines. But emerging research from MIT shows that AI is less likely to eliminate roles outright and more likely to reshape them — expanding some responsibilities, narrowing others, and increasing the demand for hybrid skill sets that blend technical fluency with human judgment.

As routine tasks are automated, workers may be freed to spend more time on big-picture thinking and deeper conversations with their coworkers. Our findings bear that out, revealing that employees who embrace AI spend less time working alone and more time in other work behaviors, learning in particular. Although many people expected AI to decrease our reliance on one another, these workers typically have stronger relationships with their teammates, not weaker ones.

If that trend continues, the physical workplace is likely to become even more important. Environments that foster connection, learning, and experimentation will bolster the trust that fuels collaboration, critical thinking, and imagination — things that AI cannot replicate.

# 20+ Years of Workplace Research

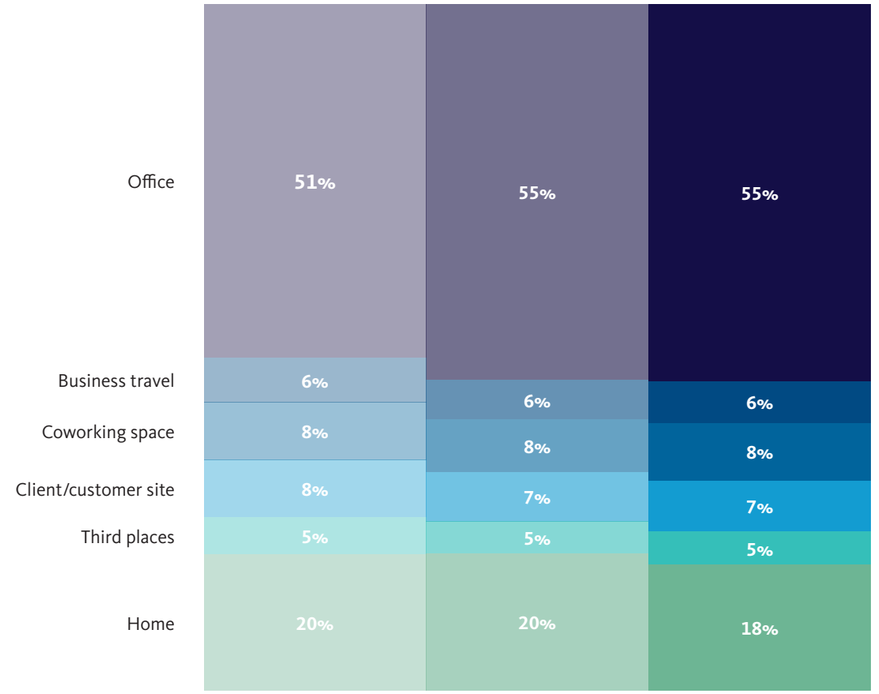
Gensler's Global Workplace Surveys represent the world's most significant ongoing investigation into the performance and experience of the physical workplace for employees. Based on the input of over 120,000 survey respondents over the past two decades — including 16,000+ respondents across 16 countries last year alone — this research reveals how and where work happens today, and how work is shifting over time. Combined with ongoing data on the employee experience and performance, this research brings actionable insight focused on optimizing the innovation and business impact of physical workplace investments.

KEY FINDING

# In an era of uncertainty, how and where people work is surprisingly stable.

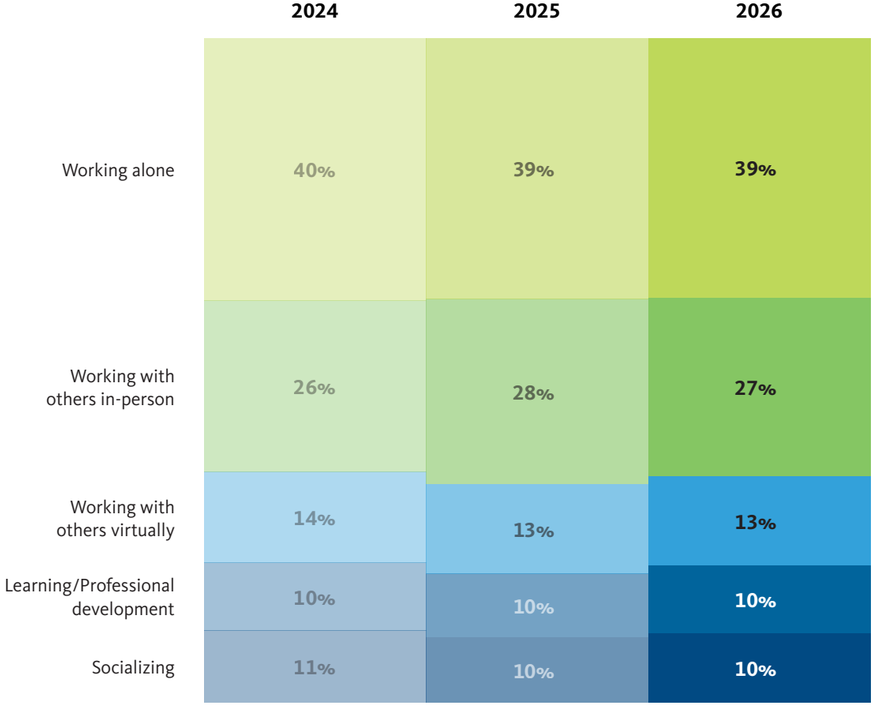
Globally, where people work has remained fairly consistent over our last three years of research, a remarkable stability after the turbulent pandemic and post-pandemic years. The average worker in our study spends more than half of their time in the office, and 26% of the workweek in settings like coworking spaces, client/vendor sites, third places, or while traveling for business. Those off-site hours represent a bigger share of their week than time spent working from home (18%), which is slowly decreasing.

How people work hasn't changed much either. On average, workers spend approximately 40% of their time working alone, 27% collaborating in person, and 13% engaging with others virtually. Time spent learning/professional development and building social connections increased during the pandemic and has remained stable.




**People continue to spend most of their time working in the office.**

The average percentage of time spent working in each setting during a typical workweek. Office is defined as their company's office, building or site. Third places are defined as coffee shops, libraries, parks, etc.




**How people work during a typical week remains relatively unchanged.**

The average percentage of time spent in each work mode in a typical workweek. Percentage totals may not equal 100% due to rounding to the nearest whole number.

KEY FINDING

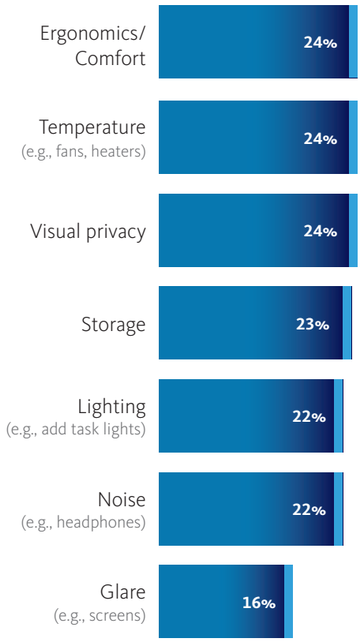
# Stable doesn't mean "good enough." Workers see areas for improvement.

Although where and how people work have stabilized in recent years, persistent challenges remain. Two-thirds of employees are using do it yourself (DIY) approaches to address design issues in their individual workspaces. Meeting rooms are in short supply for many, leading to cancelled meetings and calls taken from open desks (a distraction to others). And unassigned seating, now a reality for nearly 1 in 5 workers, is seen as effective by less than half of those participating.

The ability to personalize a workspace is a central challenge for workers — and a key complaint for those without assigned seats — alongside the hassle of desk setup and the uncertainty of finding a place to work. Aside from personalization, the most common DIY fixes focus on ergonomics, comfort, temperature, privacy, and storage issues (all factors that our years of research connect directly to overall performance). Beyond the desk, the challenges of limited meeting spaces are leading to more than 60% of workers using hallways or staircases for phone calls, taking calls from their desks, or cancelling meetings altogether because they couldn't find an appropriate space.

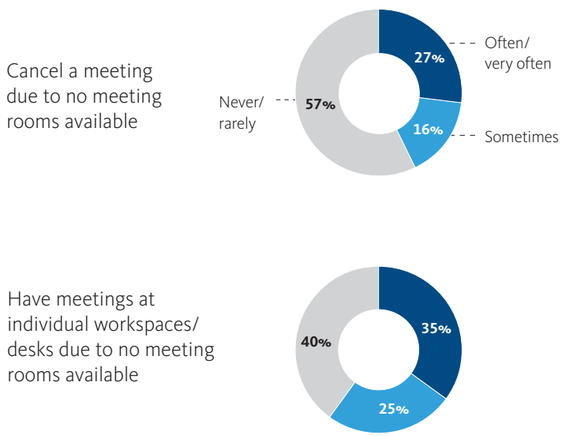
**Beyond personalization, workers are making DIY adjustments related to ergonomics, temperature, privacy, and storage.**

The percentage of respondents who have made the following do-it-yourself fixes to their workspaces to improve design issues.



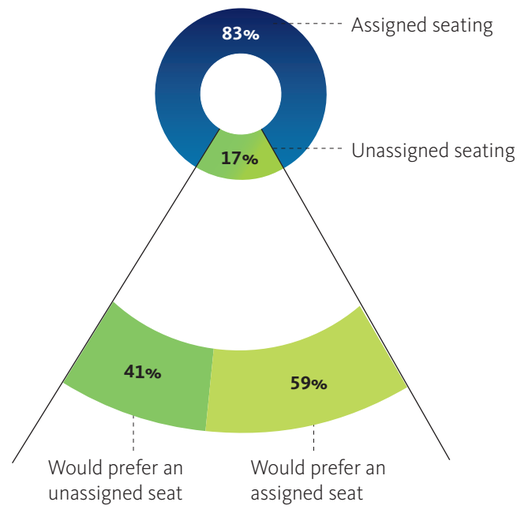

**Limited meeting rooms are reshaping the way people use space.**

The percentage of respondents who do the following in the office.




**Over half of workers in unassigned seating would prefer an assigned seat.**

The percentage of respondents in each seating arrangement and the percentage of respondents in unassigned seating who selected each option.



KEY FINDING

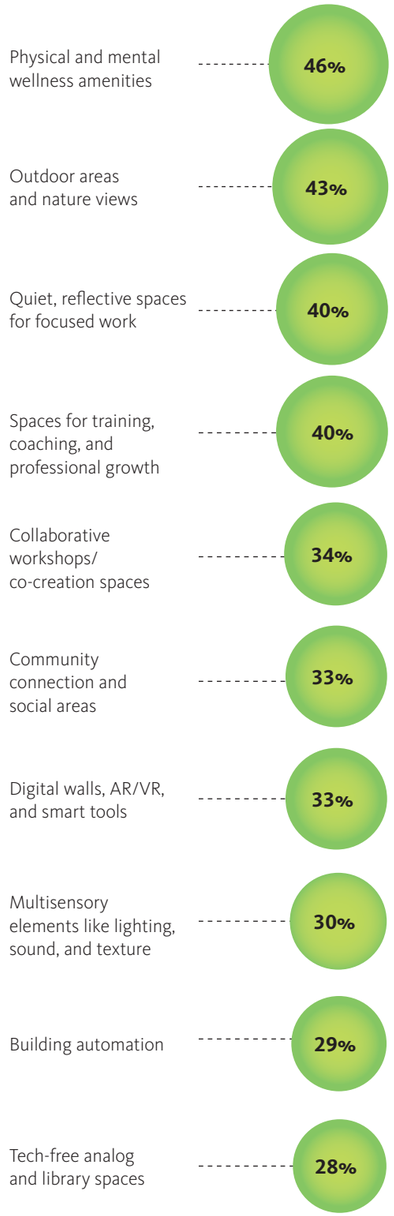
# Workers' hopes for the future focus on wellness — and productivity.

For workers today, the future workplace isn't a choice between extremes; it's a both/and proposition. They want calm, energizing spaces; smart tools alongside tech-free, analog rooms; and work that is both creative and routine, collaborative, and self-directed. These tensions reflect the fluid nature of modern work: People move between deep focus and collaboration, solitude and visibility, routine tasks and creative output. They expect the workplace to support all of these modes and to give them agency over where and how they work.

Crucially, workers also hope that the future workplace becomes more focused on their personal health. Almost half of workers (46%) hope their future workplace is designed to support physical and mental well-being. Outdoor areas and access to nature also ranked highly, along with quiet, reflective spaces and training, coaching, and spaces for professional growth.

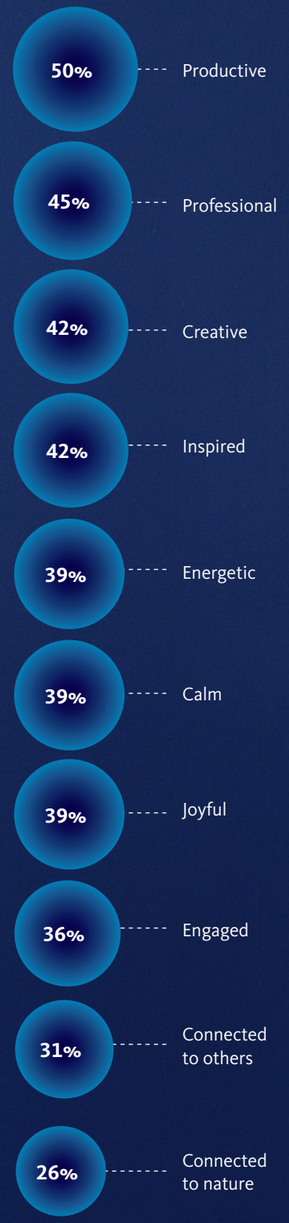
**In the future, workers want their office to prioritize wellness and access to nature.**

The percentage of respondents who selected each option. Respondents could select up to five options.




**Workers hope the future workplace will feel productive and professional.**

The percentage of respondents who selected each option. Respondents could select up to five options.




KEY FINDING

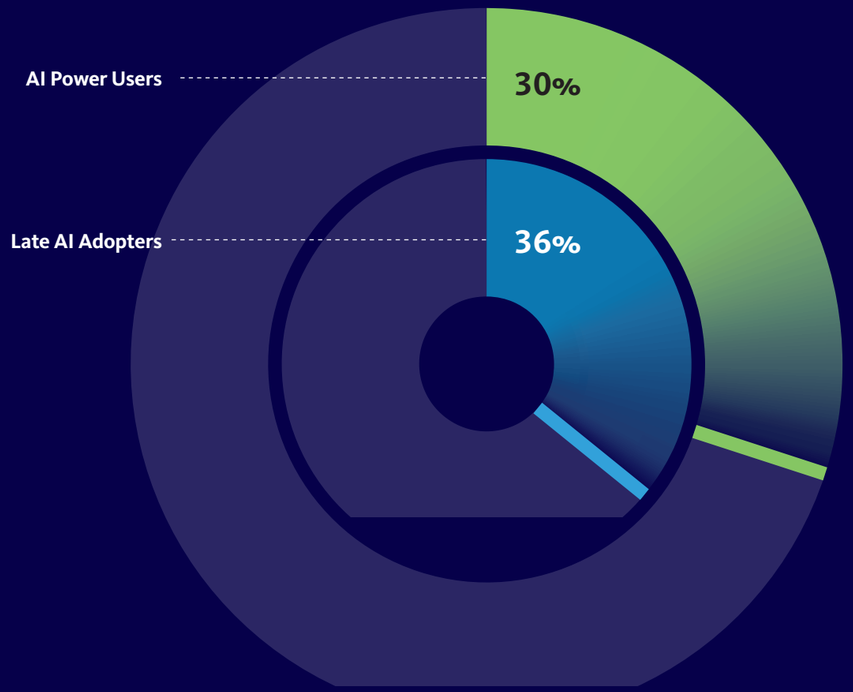
# AI adoption will shape the future workplace.

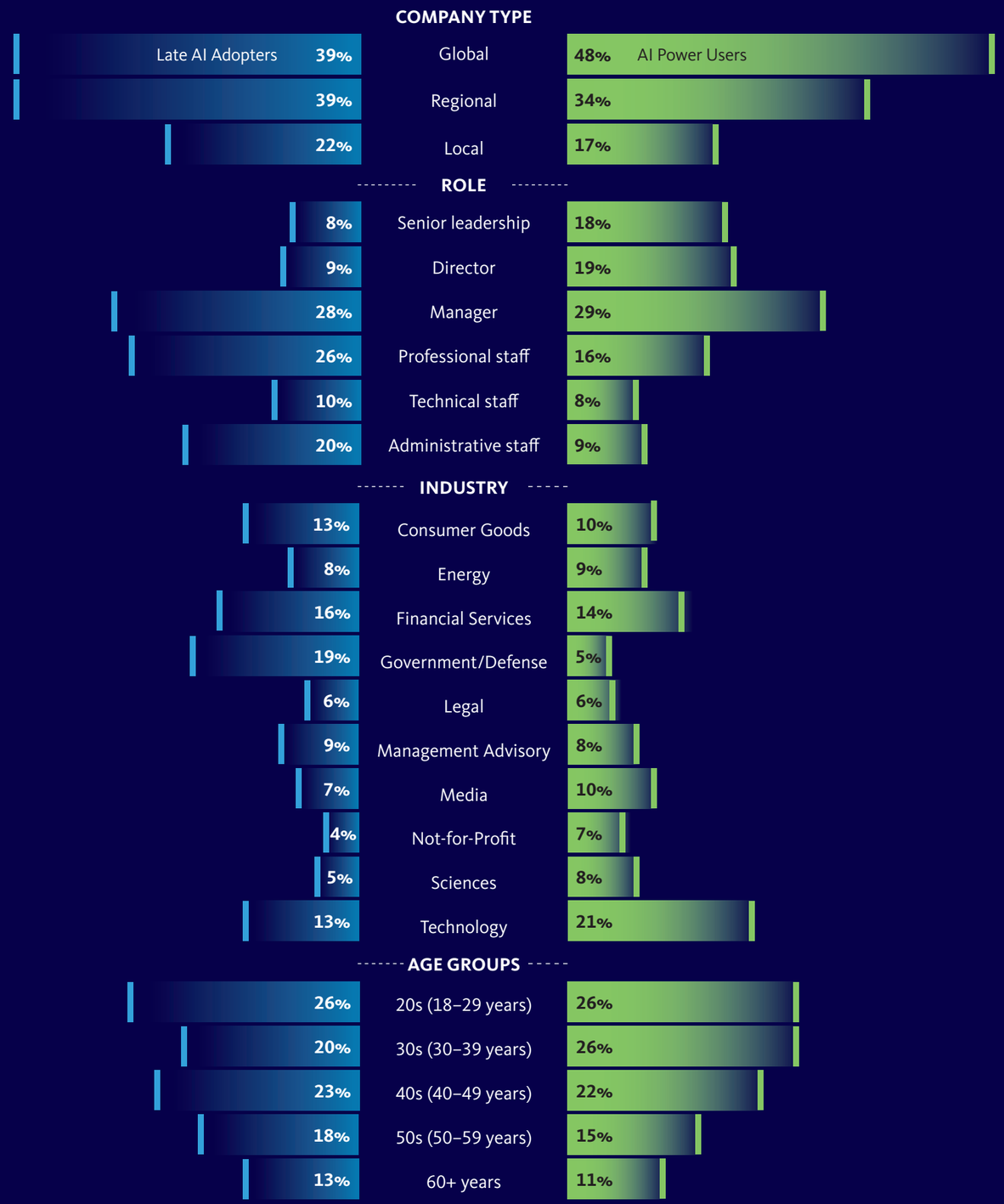
To glean signals on the future AI-infused workplace, we identified workers who are a few steps ahead of the curve: People who regularly use AI tools in both their work and personal lives are categorized as "AI Power Users," representing 30% of our sample, as compared to late adopters who rarely or never use AI, representing 36% of our sample.

AI Power Users obviously span demographics and industries, but they're more likely to be in their 30s and hold senior leadership roles; they're also more concentrated in media, technology, sciences, energy, and nonprofits. AI power users are also three times as likely to identify their companies as innovative.

**Who are AI's power users?**

AI power users are defined as workers who regularly use AI tools in both their work and personal lives; late adopters use AI infrequently or not at all.



KEY FINDING

# AI power users spend more time learning and report stronger team relationships.

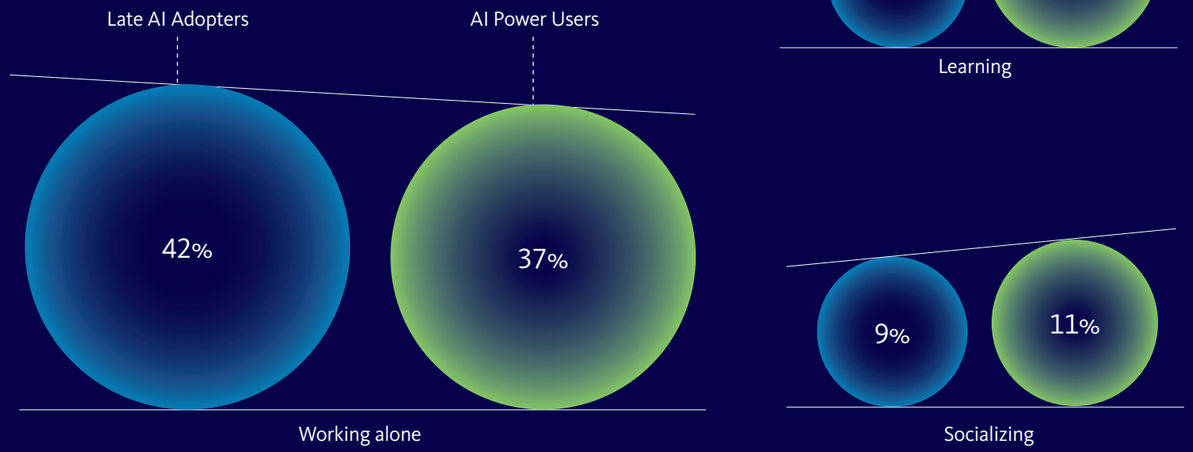
Our data suggests, somewhat counterintuitively, that AI power users spend less time working alone, and more time learning, working with others virtually, and socializing, compared to late adopters. This may be because AI frees them from rote tasks and allows them to invest energy in relationships and creativity. These power users also rate every work mode (working alone, working with others in-person, working with others virtually, learning, and socializing) as more critical to their own job performance than late adopters. AI power users are more likely to rank access to technology as a top reason to come into the office than late adopters (40% vs. 29%).

Despite their tech-forward habits, AI power users remain deeply connected to the human side of work. They report stronger team relationships, scoring higher on trust, collaboration, and reliability, compared to late adopters. They report more open idea-sharing, learning from colleagues, and meaningful friendships. This suggests that organizations looking to empower AI adoption should invest not only in robust technology, but also in creating new opportunities (and spaces) for learning, collaboration, and social interaction that supercharge these behaviors.



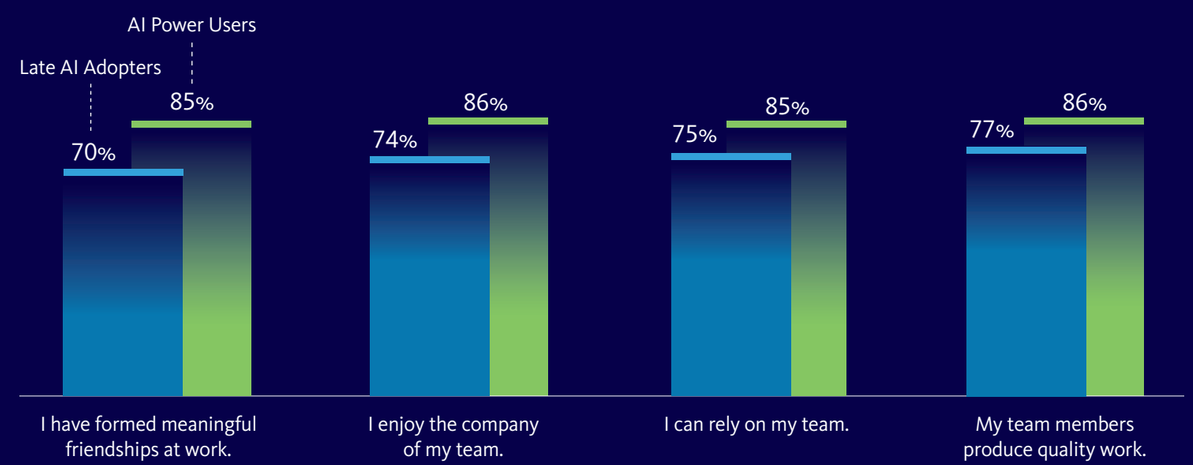
**AI power users spend more time collaborating virtually, learning, and socializing.**

The average percentage of time spent in each work mode in a typical workweek.




**AI power users have stronger team relationships.**

The percentage of respondents who agree or strongly agree with each statement.



KEY FINDING

# Learning-oriented workers use the workplace differently.

Seventy percent of AI power users rate learning/professional development as highly critical to their job performance, compared to only 44% for late adopters. So we took a closer look at all workers who consider learning critical (i.e., when asked how critical learning is to their job performance, selected 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale).

Unsurprisingly, workers who rate learning as highly critical spend more time learning compared to those who place a lower value on learning (12% of their workweek vs. 7%), and are more likely to experiment with new ways of working (60% vs. 41%).

The connection between AI adoption and learning in the workplace is clear; as adoption continues to grow, learning will take on increased importance as individuals and organizations need to adapt and up-skill. We need to create a vision for the new learning-oriented workplace.

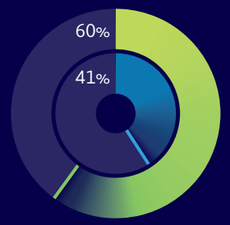
Our analysis reveals the items most closely associated with effective learning atmospheres are design look and feel; noise level; ability to rearrange meeting-room furniture; equipped with the latest technology; and access to spaces to relax, recharge, and take a break.

**Workers who value learning the most behave differently.**

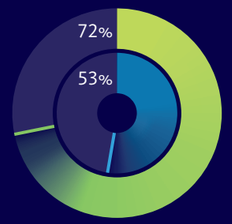
Adjusted percentages comparing respondents who rated the criticality of learning as a 1, 2, or 3 vs. a 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale, controlling for role, gender, living situation, age, company size, industry, and country.

- High learning criticality
- Low learning criticality

**PERCENT OF WORKERS WHO OFTEN OR ALWAYS DO THE FOLLOWING IN THE OFFICE**

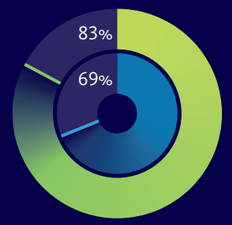



Experiment with new ways of working.

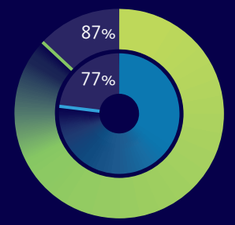



Learn something new.

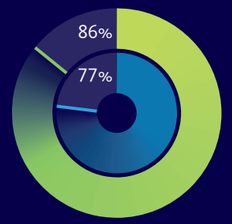
**PERCENT OF WORKERS WHO AGREE OR STRONGLY AGREE**



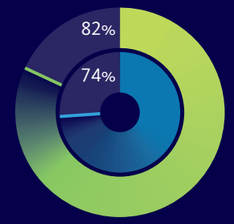

I am aware of what other teams in my organization are working on.




I am aware of what others on my team are working on.




I am able to learn from my team members.




My team members encourage open sharing of new ideas.

**Space factors most closely associated with workplace effectiveness for learning.**

Based on differences in the likelihood of rating learning effectiveness as 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale, between respondents with high vs. low ratings, controlling for all space items, role, gender, living situation, age, company size, industry, and country.

**SPACE ATTRIBUTES**

- Design look and feel of workspace
- Noise level of workspace
- Ability to rearrange furniture in meeting rooms
- Design look and feel of open meeting areas
- Design look and feel of corridors, stairways, and hallways

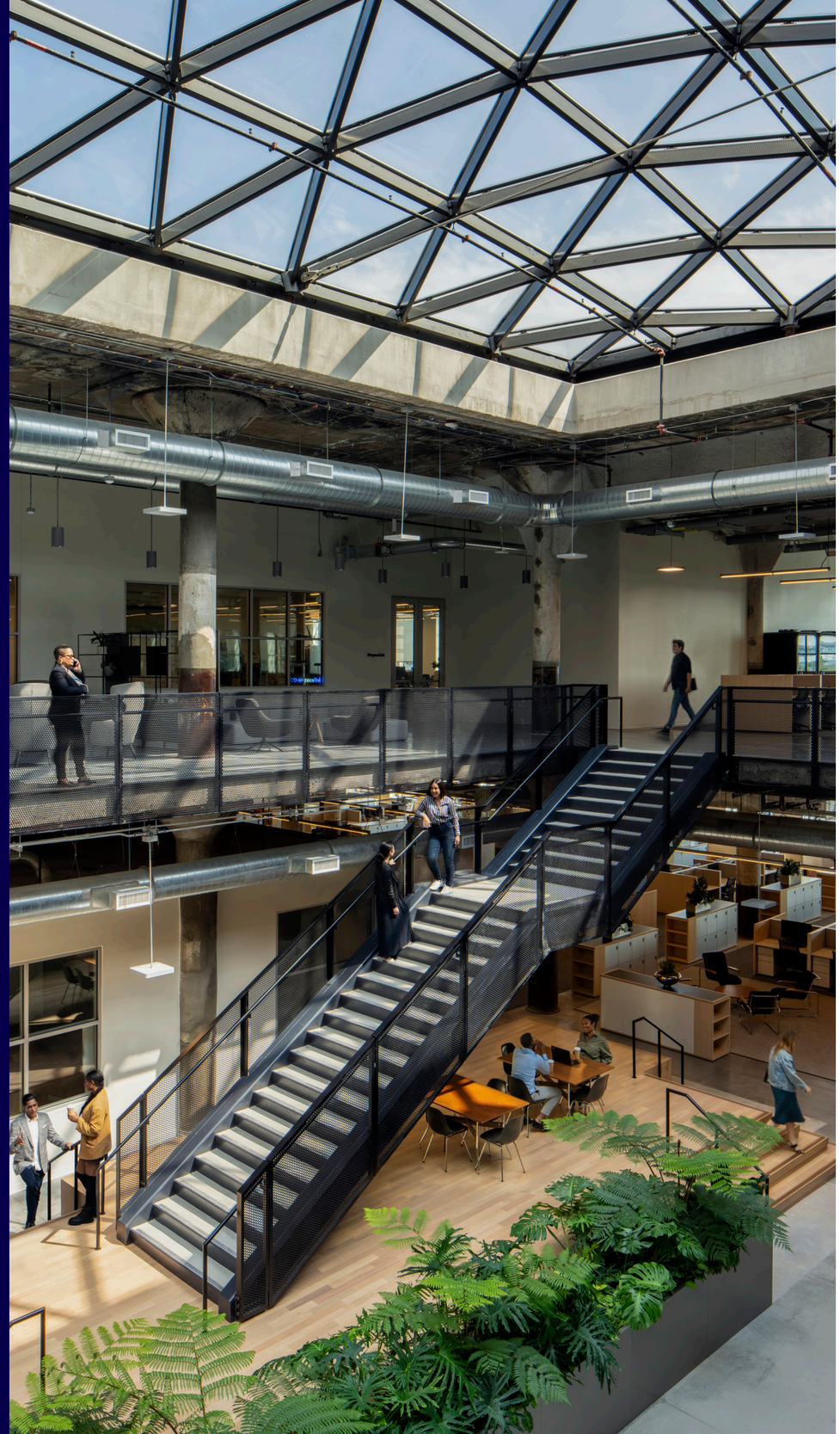
**EXPERIENCE ATTRIBUTES**

- The office environment is beautiful.
- The office environment is equipped with the latest technology.
- It's easy to access spaces to relax/recharge/take a break.
- It's easy to access spaces for focused concentration.

# A new value for the physical workplace

AI isn't simply a tech transition; it's a people transition. And in times of technological upheaval, the most successful organizations invest in workplaces that nurture creativity, trust, and curiosity. We believe the widespread adoption of AI will favor companies that are tech-forward and human-centric — those that recognize that the physical workplace is not simply a cost, but a critical investment in their people.

As AI changes how work happens, the workplace is taking on a new role. As workers continue to emphasize learning and social connections, the physical workplace will continue to be a critical investment in people and their performance. Spaces that support wellbeing, adaptability, and collaboration will help organizations attract, retain, and empower talent; strengthen teams as they adapt to and evolve in partnership with AI and other technological advances; and overall, empower organizations to be more connected and more innovative, now and into the future.




APPENDIX

# Methodology

Data for Gensler's Workplace Survey were gathered via an anonymous, panel-based survey of 16,459 full-time, office-based workers in 16 countries, conducted online between July 22 and September 12, 2025. The countries included in this year's survey are the same as those included in Gensler's 2024 and 2025 Global Workplace Surveys, except for the Dominican Republic, which was added to the sample for the first time this year. Survey respondents were required to be employed full-time in one of 10 industries, work from an office environment at least some of the time, and work for a company, organization, or firm with at least 100 total employees (50+ for the legal industry). Respondents were recruited by a third-party research partner, with whom we worked to ensure balanced distributions across gender, age (18+), and geography. Respondents received an honorarium for their participation. Multiple checks were implemented to manage response validity. The survey could be taken in U.S. or UK English, French, Spanish, German, Arabic, Simplified or Traditional Chinese, or Japanese. The median survey completion time was 21 minutes.

All survey respondents answered questions about their general workplace behaviors, experiences, and preferences for the physical work environment, as well as rated their space effectiveness, functional features, and service and amenity offerings. Respondents also answered questions regarding their sense of engagement, team dynamics, feelings of belonging, commitment, well-being, and perceptions of their company's innovativeness. Additionally, the study explored how workers adapt their workspaces, the extent to which they use AI, and their aspirations for the future of work. Respondents were anonymous to Gensler, and the workplaces and office spaces evaluated were not necessarily designed by Gensler.

Statistical analyses primarily consisted of comparing results and measures of association to assess the direction, magnitude, and both the statistical and practical significance of relationships between two or more groups. These included ANOVA and t-tests to compare group means and pairwise z-tests at a 95% confidence level. We also estimated multivariate models using ordinary least squares (OLS) regression to identify associations and generate predicted values and used Gelbach decompositions to assess variation between groups. The margin of error is +/-3% for each country-specific subsample.

# Sample Descriptions

| Company size | |
|---|---|
| 42% | 100–999 employees |
| 38% | 1,000–9,999 |
| 14% | 10,000–99,999 |
| 6% | 100,000+ |

| Age range | |
|---|---|
| 27% | 18–29 years |
| 23% | 30–39 years |
| 22% | 40–49 years |
| 16% | 50–59 years |
| 12% | 60+ years |

Percentage totals may not equal 100% due to rounding to the nearest whole number.

For more information on how and where employees work, filtered by country, age, role, and industry, please see our website at www.Gensler.com.

| Gender | |
|---|---|
| 56% | Male |
| 44% | Female |

| Role | |
|---|---|
| 13% | Administrative staff |
| 20% | Professional staff |
| 10% | Technical staff |
| 28% | Manager |
| 15% | Director |
| 14% | Senior leadership |

| Industry breakdown | |
|---|---|
| 11% | Consumer Goods |
| 9% | Energy |
| 15% | Financial Services |
| 11% | Government/Defense |
| 7% | Legal |
| 8% | Management Advisory |
| 10% | Media |
| 6% | Not-for-Profit |
| 7% | Sciences |
| 17% | Technology |

| Country | |
|---|---|
| 7% | Australia |
| 7% | Canada |
| 7% | China |
| 6% | Colombia |
| 3% | Costa Rica |
| 2% | Dominican Republic |
| 7% | France |
| 7% | Germany |
| 7% | India |
| 7% | Japan |
| 7% | Mexico |
| 5% | Saudi Arabia |
| 7% | Singapore |
| 5% | United Arab Emirates |
| 7% | UK |
| 7% | U.S. |



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