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Public Affairs
Council

AI in Public Affairs:

Findings from the 2026 Benchmarking Report

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AI in Public Affairs

Hosted By:



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Poll: Which best describes your organization's current approach to AI?

- A. Experimental or informal
- B. Primarily focused on efficiency
- C. Integrated into core workflows
- D. Embedded in strategic decision-making
- E. Not using AI

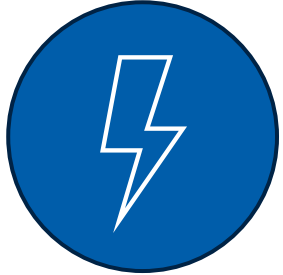
About The AI Benchmarking Report

The findings from the Council's AI Benchmarking for Public Affairs Survey reflect **153 responses from respondents in 14 countries** and provide a snapshot of AI use across the profession in 2026, with selected comparisons to the Council's 2024 AI Use Survey.

Results are based on self-reported responses. Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding or multiple-response questions. Comparisons reflect separate respondent samples and indicate directional changes in the profession rather than changes among the same organizations.



Key Findings



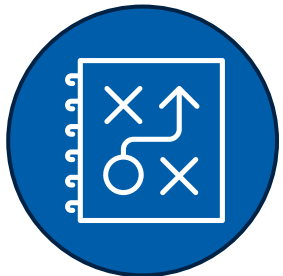
AI has become a mainstream workplace technology, but it is still primarily an efficiency tool.

The profession has largely moved beyond the question "Should we use AI?" but is not yet asking "How does AI fundamentally change how we operate?"



Governance is maturing rapidly, but budgeting and metrics haven't caught up.

Organizations have progressed from experimentation to implementation by adopting AI policies, governance frameworks and formal plans. Yet only 30% have a dedicated AI budget line, and relatively few can quantify AI's value.



AI is viewed primarily as an amplifier of human capabilities, not a replacement.

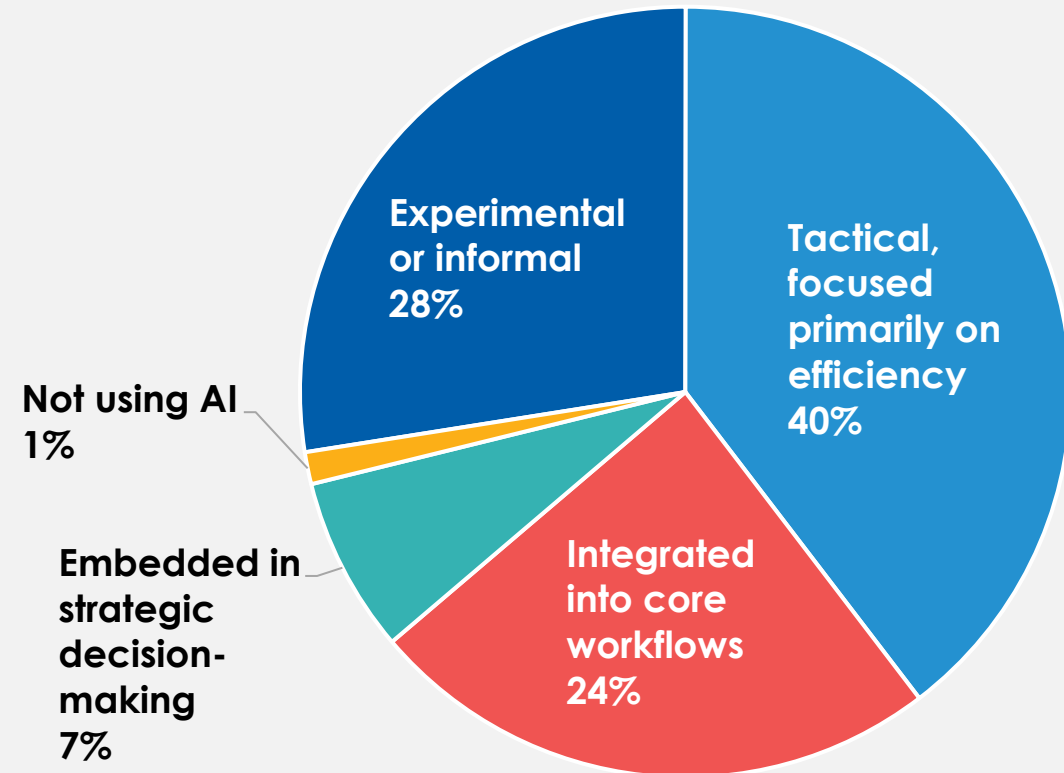
Respondents overwhelmingly see AI as improving efficiency and work quality, while expressing concerns about accuracy, security and professional judgment rather than job displacement.

AI Is Everywhere, But Organizational Maturity Remains Uneven

99% of organizations surveyed are **using AI**.

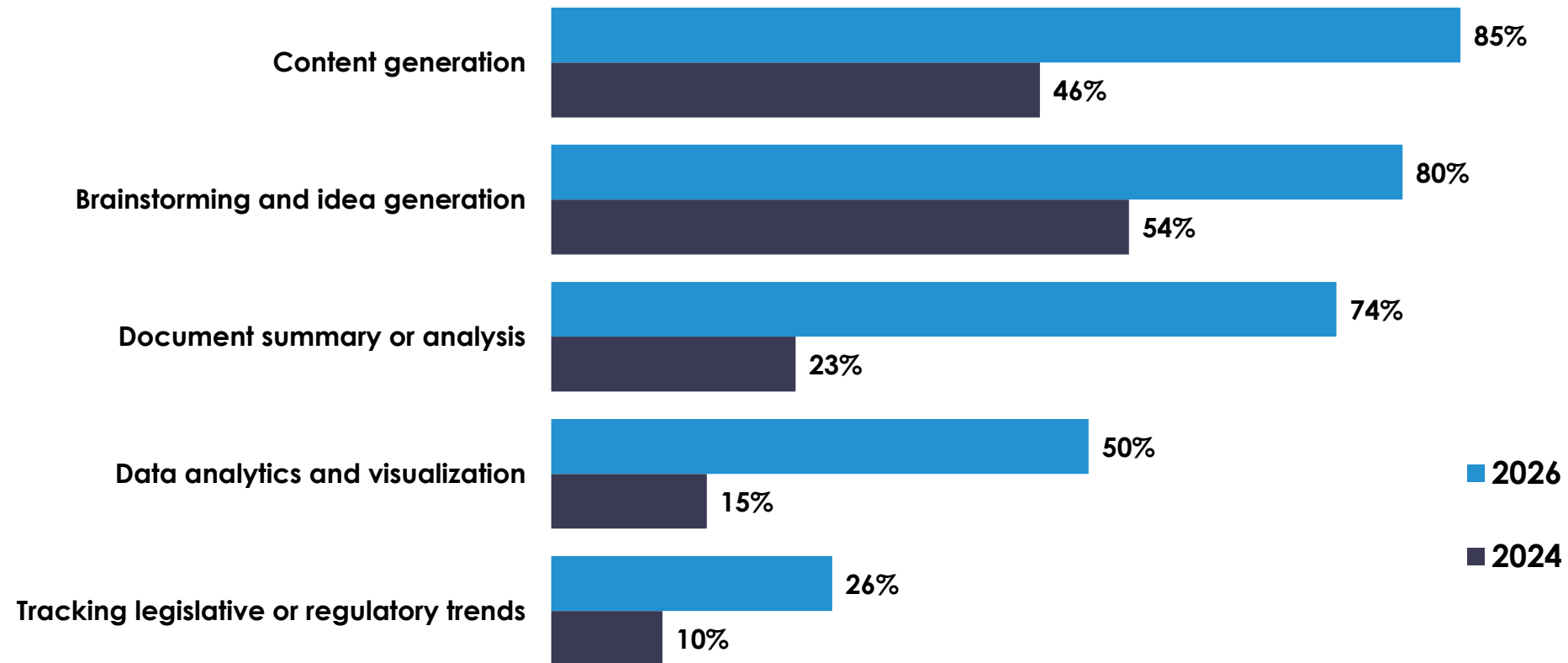
But only **7%** describe AI as embedded in **strategic decision-making**.

Which of the following best characterizes your organization's overall approach to AI?

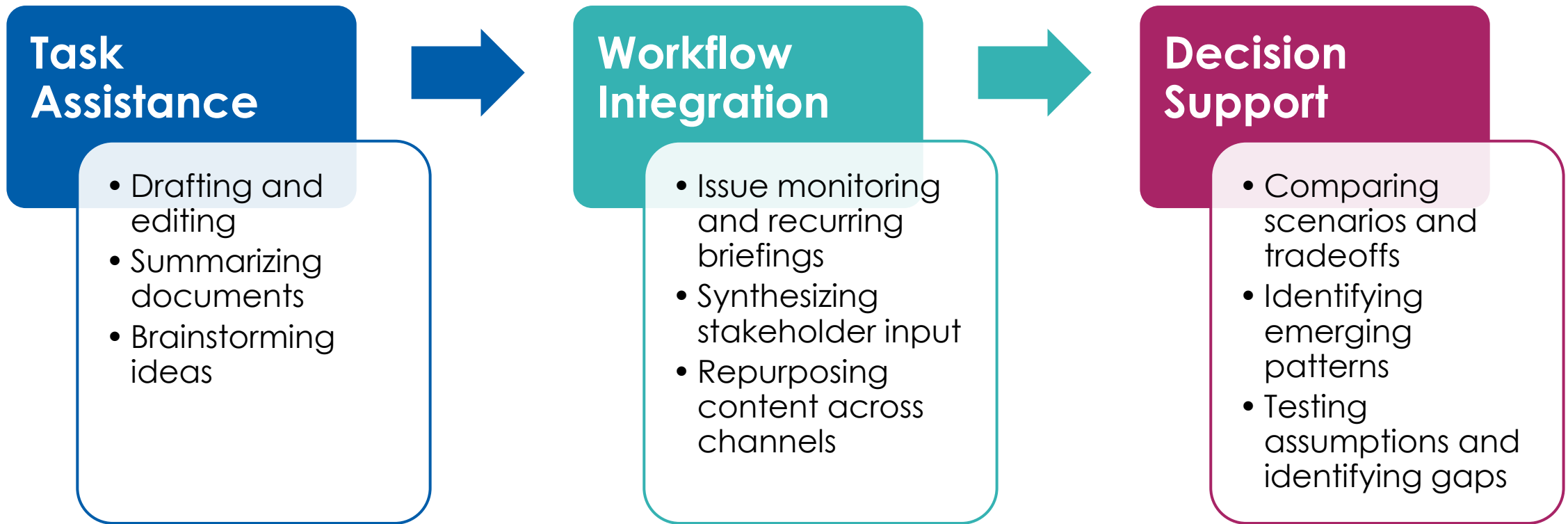


AI Has Spread Across Tasks More Than It Has Changed Strategy

In what ways are you using AI tools to do your job?



What More Advanced AI Use Could Look Like



Strategic integration does not mean handing decisions to AI. It means improving the information, analysis and options available to human decision-makers.

Poll: What do you need most to better incorporate AI into your work?

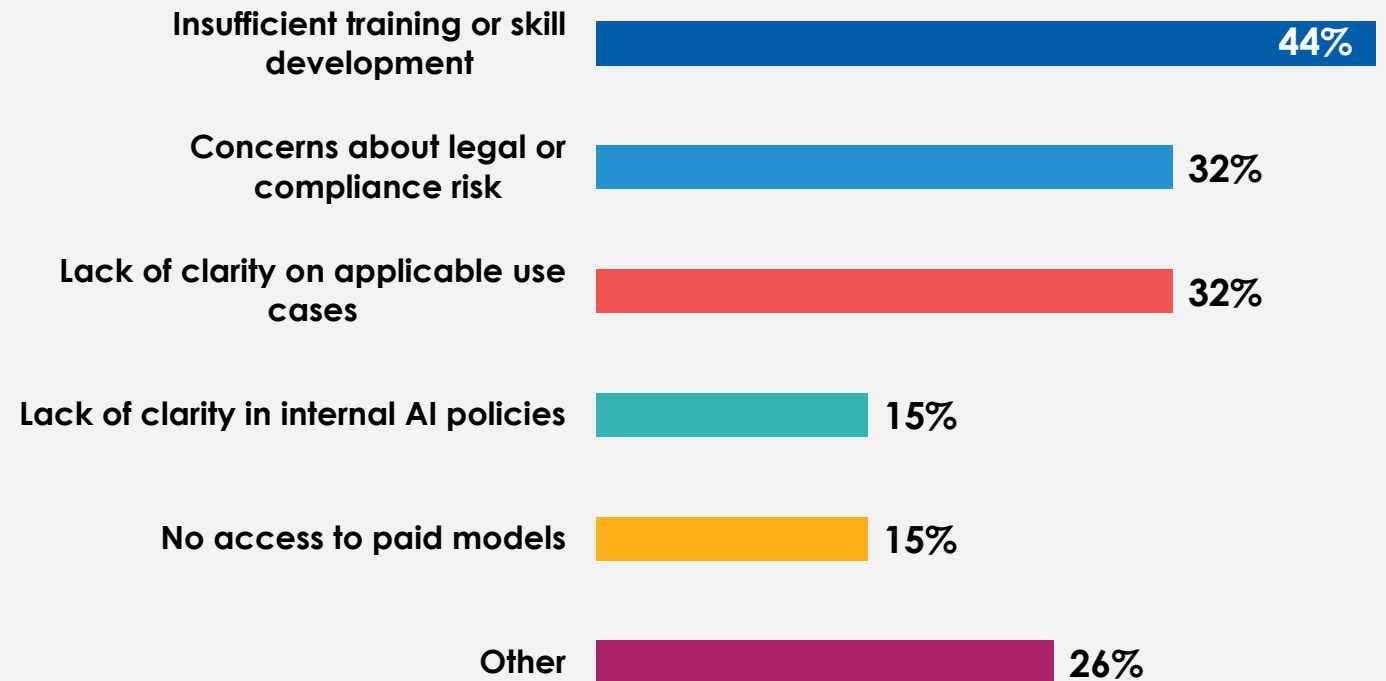
- A. More training
- B. More time to experiment
- C. More imagination/better use cases
- D. Clearer internal policies
- E. Access to more/better/different AI models



Employees Are Ready to Move Faster Than Their Organizations

64%
would prefer to use
AI **more** than they
currently do

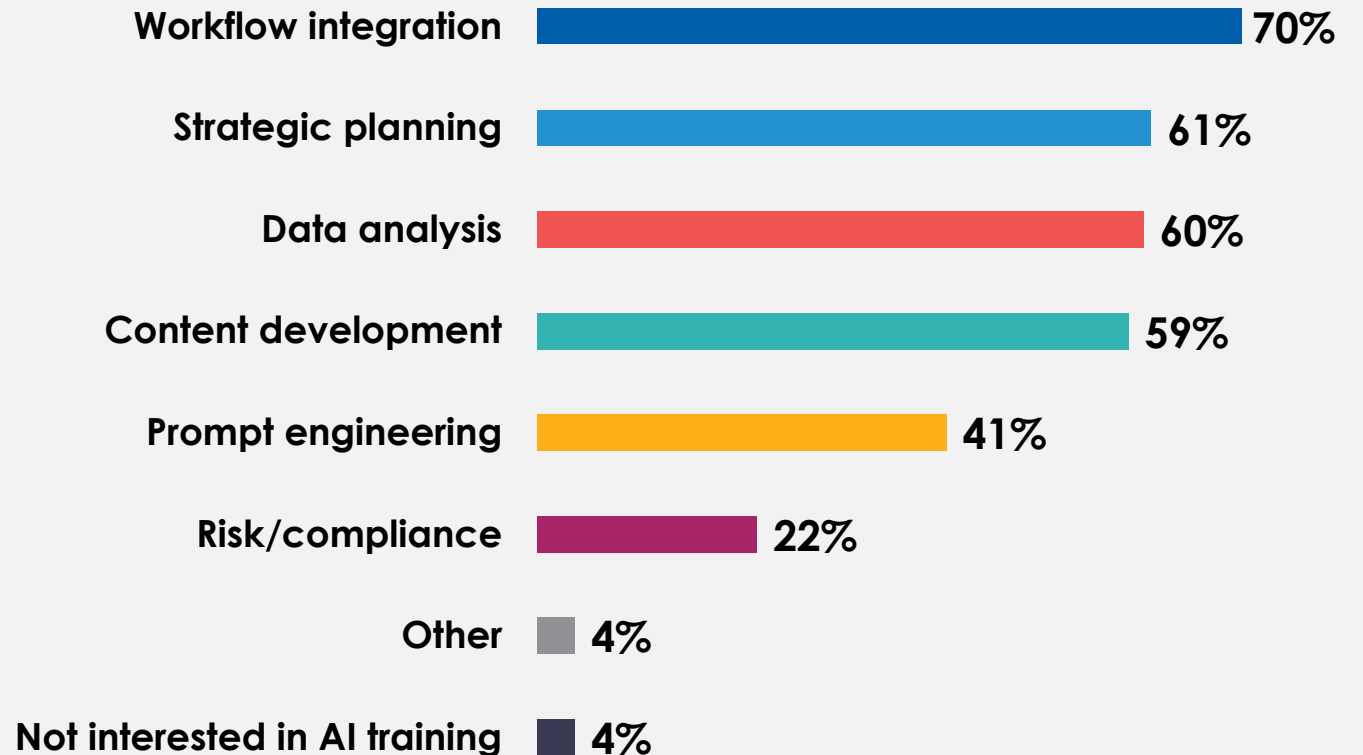
If you prefer to use AI more, what
are the barriers you face?



The Next Stage of Development is Workflow Integration Training

Respondents want help moving from experimentation to integration

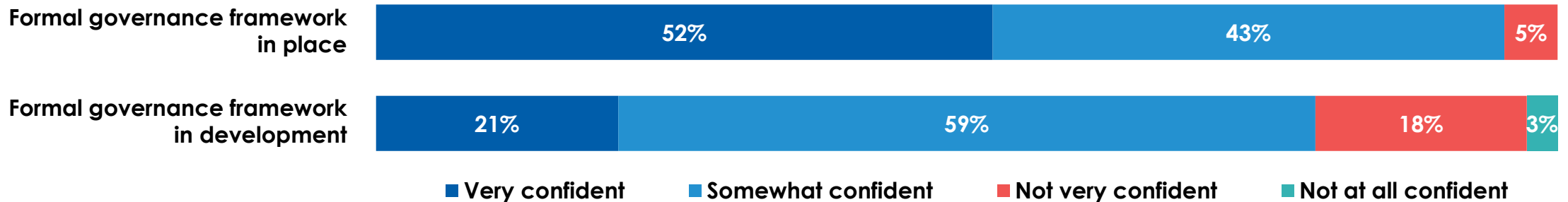
In which areas would AI training be most valuable to you?



AI Governance Can Enable Adoption

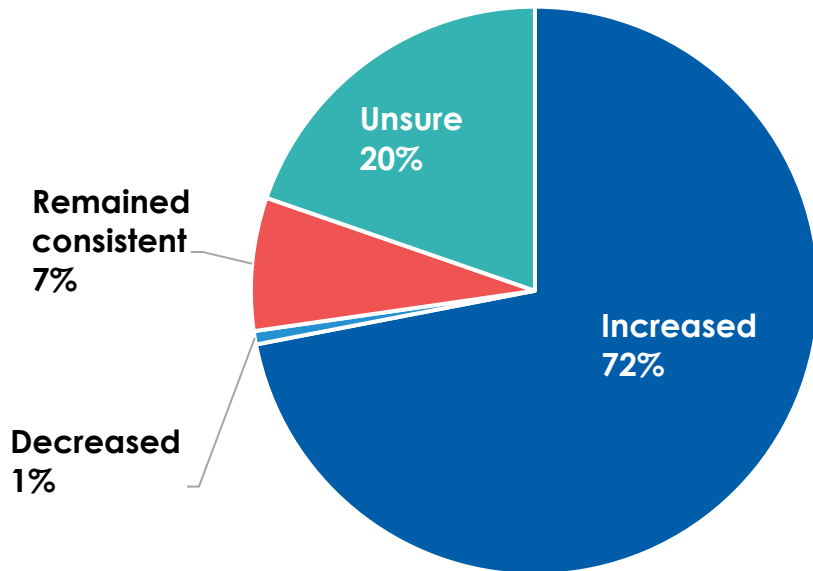


How confident are you in your organization's responsible and secure use of AI?

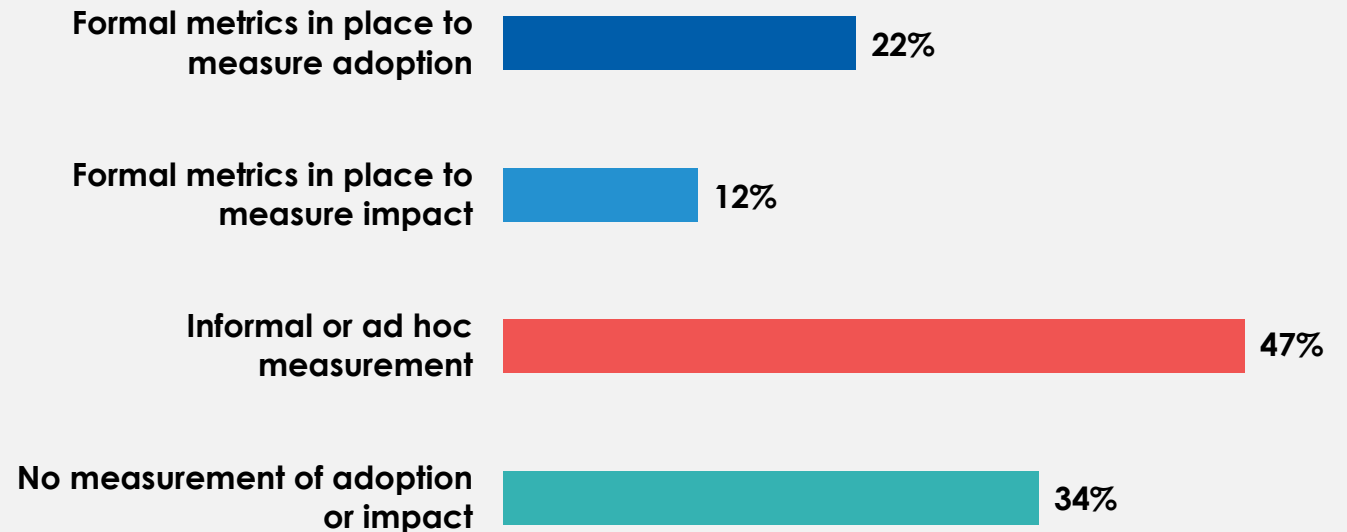


Spending Has Outpaced Measurement

Has your organization increased, decreased or maintained spending on AI-related tools or training in the past 12 months?



Does your organization formally measure AI adoption and its impact on workflows or performance?



Measuring AI's Value

Area	Questions to Ask
Adoption	Are employees using approved tools? For which workflows?
Efficiency	Has AI reduced time, cost or turnaround time?
Quality	Has the work improved? How often do people need to correct or substantially revise AI output?
Risk	Are employees following data, verification and approval requirements?
Decision value	Does AI help teams identify risks, compare options or make better-informed decisions?

Start with one recurring workflow, establish a baseline and compare results before and after introducing AI.

Top Benefits



Improves efficiency and time management



Improves work quality



Provides more sophisticated analysis and insights

Top Concerns



Factual inaccuracies and bias in AI-generated content or analysis



Privacy and data security



Erosion of professional skills (e.g., writing, critical thinking)

Workforce Impact is Low, But Increased Change is Anticipated

68%

say AI has not impacted the size, structure or composition of their public affairs team

6%

report a significant impact

11%

cited potential job loss as a top concern

53%

expect that to change in the next 3-5 years

Priorities for the Next Phase of AI Use



Integrate AI into recurring workflows

Identify a few repeatable processes where AI could improve speed, quality or analysis. Document how AI fits into the work rather than leaving each employee to improvise.



Set clear rules for data and review

Define what employees can enter into different tools, which outputs require verification and when human approval is mandatory.



Develop staff skills and judgment

Train employees using real public affairs work. Reinforce the subject-matter expertise and critical thinking required to evaluate AI output.



Measure value and prepare for change

Track adoption, time, quality and decision value. Use the results to guide investment and anticipate changes to roles and responsibilities.

Poll: What is your top priority for the next year?

- A. Identify processes or workflows where we can integrate AI
- B. Develop an AI governance framework, use policy, or implementation plan
- C. Build my (or my team's) AI skills through training and practice
- D. Implement metrics/benchmarks to measure the value of AI
- E. Build a business case to convince leadership to invest in AI

Questions?