The Workforce Readiness Report

AI Edition

Executive Summary

Roughly 90% of managers and individual contributors are using AI at work. Its widespread access and appeal have drawn people in to help with everything from routine tasks to organizing projects and expanding the limits of their creativity.

Despite its ubiquity, not everyone feels the same way about the technology. Skillsoft's Workforce Readiness Survey found that there is a clear gap between how leaders and individual contributors feel about AI readiness.

In essence, leaders feel prepared to get the most out of AI — workers don't. Roughly 77% of managers somewhat or strongly agree their company has set them up for success in learning AI skills. Individual contributors don't feel as strongly, with the percentage dropping to 60%. Managers are also more trusting of AI in most or all situations.

There's a clear gap in readiness to embrace this technology.

AI is everywhere, but the systems that help people use it — skills development, on-the-job training, clear governance — haven't caught up. Most organizations still don't formally measure skills in a way that gives them clarity into proficiency or comfort. Just 13% of managers and 11% of individual contributors say their organizations use formal assessments.

More often than not, training arrives after the tool, and comprehensive AI governance may not come at all, as only 9% of individual contributors and 12% of leaders reported company-wide governance for these tools. This can have a negative effect on productivity and cost as companies quickly scale the use of these tools but see lower quality results.

From this survey, you'll gain clarity on the workforce's readiness to get the most out of AI, about the rigor and efficacy of training programs, and where the gaps between perception and reality are widest and ways to bridge the divide.

Key Takeaways

9 in 10

workers now use AI at work — but only about 1 in 10 say their companies have comprehensive AI governance in place.

77%

of managers say they're set up for success learning new AI skills, but only 60% of individual contributors feel the same.

1 in 10

organizations use formal skills assessments. 29% rely on manager evaluations to judge skill proficiency.

16%

of individual contributors and 23% of managers receive training before new tools roll out.

41%

Managers expect AI to speed up how quickly entry-level workers advance to higher level responsibilities.

AI is in the workflow — but readiness is uneven

In the survey, AI use at work is widespread. Among individual contributors, 86% use generative AI tools. It's 93% for managers.

Look closer and the picture changes. When asked whether their company has set them up for success learning AI skills, only 24% of individual contributors strongly agree. Another 36% somewhat agree. Nearly 1 in 5 either disagrees or strongly disagrees.

Leaders see it differently. Most (77%) somewhat or strongly agree their company has set them up for success.

From the top, the AI rollout looks well underway. From the floor, it looks more like a tool was handed over without clear guidance on how or when to use it. The findings support that notion.

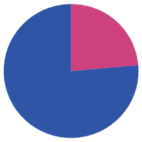
When asked about AI guidelines at work, the highest percentage of respondents — roughly 30% — said it varies by team, but they're undocumented, inconsistent.

Both points of view are valid but remain at odds with each other:

- Managers see the potential in the technology, embracing it and expecting their teams will too.
- Individual contributors have mixed feelings about its use and whether it's as effective as their managers say.

24%

of individual contributors strongly agree they're set up for success.



Leaders see it differently.

77%

somewhat or strongly agree their company has set them up for success.

Workers remain wary of AI, with governance lagging behind

Relatively few trust AI completely, and yet, the lion's share feel they can trust what AI generates in most situations.

Managers (22%) were more likely than individual contributors (17%) to completely trust what AI gives them. The most common answer for both groups was that they trust it in most situations (37% of managers, 30% of individual contributors).

The rest of the group was more cautious. A quarter of individual contributors say they trust AI for specific use cases. It was 20% for managers. About 14% of individual contributors say they're cautious and verify outputs before using them (12% of managers), and 6% say they don't trust AI at all (4% of managers).

Then there's governance. About 1 in 10 respondents said that their organization has comprehensive AI governance — policies, training, and ongoing oversight — even as use of these tools remain widespread at roughly 90%. The most common state is informal guidance that varies by team or manager. For 21% of individual contributors and 14% of managers, there's no guidance at all.

"Today's AI adoption often resembles carrying fire on sticks: impressive, portable, and risky when unmanaged," said Asha Palmer, Senior Vice President, Compliance Solutions, Skillsoft. "Moving from experimentation to value requires a more disciplined approach."

When training arrives after tools roll out, people decide for themselves when and how to use them. Some may adopt them with gusto, whereas others may not. The real concern is how they're being used and whether mechanisms are in place to curb risky behavior or even poor output, like work slop, that can burden productivity and become costly at scale.

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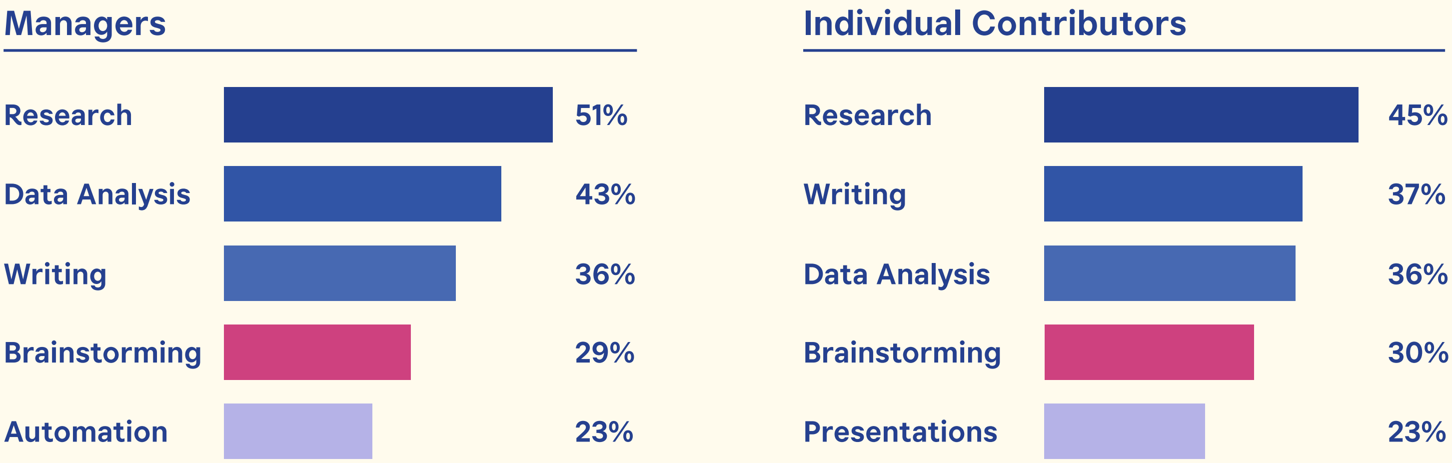
How generative AI is used across roles



Without skills visibility, AI readiness becomes guesswork

Organizations are largely guessing at what their employees are capable of, lacking visibility into their skills and proficiency.

Roughly one-quarter of individual contributors and 29% of leaders say manager evaluation is the primary method their company uses to understand what people can do. Formal skills assessments come in at just 11% of individual contributors and 13% of leaders. At least 10% of individual contributors report no formal method at all.

Manager judgment is a useful input. As a primary measurement system, it's fragile. It's inconsistent across teams. It's slow to update. It's vulnerable to bias. And it doesn't scale to the speed of AI.

It's a structural problem. Job descriptions have stood in as a shortcut for capability for decades. They've always been imperfect, but when the work is changing quarterly or even faster, a static role definition can't tell a leader who's ready and who isn't.

A little less than one-third of individual contributors strongly agree their job description accurately reflects their day-to-day work. Individual contributors (43%) and managers (46%) agreed in part, but not whole. Less than 10% of both groups disagreed.

The problem here is ambivalence. Titles and job descriptions aren't a direct reflection of the work. People step outside of those imaginary lines every day. The compounding effect of this is that employers don't know what their employees can do or their level of capability.

When leaders need to fill critical gaps or expand their leadership bench, they'll rely on their best guess rather than concrete data. Relying on legacy job descriptions or subjective manager reviews will only go so far.

These findings support the need for organizations to improve visibility to make better decisions regarding their talent.

11%

of individual contributors and 13% of managers reported **no formal skills assessement at all.**

29%

of leaders say manager evaluation is the primary method their company uses to understand what people can do.

"Too many organizations are still operating with significant skills blind spots — relying on outdated role data or self-assessment instead of a clear, skills-based view of their workforce."

— Ciara Harrington, Chief People Officer, Skillsoft

Training exists, but there's room for improvement

The majority of individual contributors (76%) and managers (90%) say their employers offer some kind of formal training. Most have access to a mix of resources spanning many topics. However, training isn't always offered when it's needed most.

When training does land, employees often can't get to it. Lack of time is the top barrier to building new skills, cited by 58% of leaders and 59% of individual contributors. A lack of training budget, a lack of manager support, and irrelevant material follow closely behind.

Respondents were clear about what they want. What employees are ultimately after is confidence. Both groups want to feel better about their capabilities, especially as people decide which work still makes sense for humans versus AI.

Roughly two-thirds of managers feel confident or very confident their skills will remain relevant over the next one to two years. Among individual contributors, that number drops to 58%.

When asked what type of training they want most, customized courses aligned to their jobs ranked first for both individual contributors (51%) and managers (53%). Instructor-led training came in second for both groups (49%, 51%). Training in the flow of work — content that's available exactly when it's needed — ranked third.

Put together, the picture is consistent: people want practical, job-aligned training that meets them in the work, and they want it before the tool lands, not after.

76%

of individual contributors and 90% of managers **have access to some kind of formal training.**

23%

of managers receive training before new tools roll out.

AI won't outright eliminate entry-level jobs, but it'll change them

The dominant story about AI and entry-level workers has been a grim one: AI takes over entry-level work, pushing people out of the job. The result? The talent pipeline collapses.

But the evidence of this survey paints a different picture.

About a quarter of managers and a third of individual contributors say AI will outright replace jobs.

When asked how they expect AI to impact entry-level jobs, respondents largely believe it'll change how talent is hired and evaluated. Other common answers included speeding up how quickly entry-level workers take on more responsibility and heightened job expectations. Both groups also expect AI to shift entry-level work from routine tasks toward problem-solving and collaboration.

That's a more nuanced read than the popular narrative, and it lines up with how leaders are thinking about workforce design. The work isn't disappearing, but it is changing.

"AI is reshaping how people learn to do the work. Without intentional redesign, efficiency gains today could create expertise shortages tomorrow," said Palmer, who cautions of an apprenticeship crisis.

For decades, foundational roles have been where future leaders built judgment, communication, and organizational fluency through repetition. When AI absorbs that repetition, formative experiences may disappear.

The main worry is that entry-level workers won't cut their teeth in the same way their predecessors did. The question for leaders isn't whether AI will replace roles — it's whether organizations are deliberately designing the experiences that build the next generation of judgement.

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AI adoption outpaces AI skills. Here's how to close the gap.

More than anything, this survey reveals a consequential gap: one between a highly advanced, disruptive technology and the capabilities and support to use it.

Closing the gap is where leaders should spend their energy.

As powerful as these tools are, it's the people who use them that will effect change at scale. Technology alone can only go so far; the same is true for people. But when working together — assured, supported, and trained — the possibilities grow exponentially.

For those organizations onboarding AI-powered tools and hoping to see returns from them, there are at least four steps to take to close this gap:

Make skills visible before scaling AI further

Stop relying on manager judgment as the primary measurement system. Implement formal skills assessments tied to the work, not the job title. You can't manage what you can't see — and right now, most organizations are operating without that visibility.

Align training to rollout speed

When fewer than 1 in 4 workers receive training before a new tool lands, learning is structurally behind. And even when it is available, too few feel they have the time to take the training. Build training into the rollout calendar, not after it.

Get ahead of governance

Most workers are operating under informal AI guidance that varies by team or manager. That inconsistency is its own risk. Comprehensive governance is reported by just 9-12% of respondents. The companies that establish governance now will shape the norms others will be required to adopt as regulators catch up.

Treat manager capability as the readiness multiplier

Manager evaluation is the most common skills measurement method. Manager support is also the third-most-cited barrier to building new skills. The same group is doing both jobs, often without the leadership skills to do either at scale. But imagine if they're well-equipped to support talent development? They amplify the capabilities of their teams many times over.

The companies that close the readiness gap will be the ones that built the management discipline around them — visible skills, timely learning, clear governance, and capable managers. That's the work ahead.

Resources to help

- How AI has changed workforce capability
- What it takes to drive AI success
- How to write an AI policy for your organization
- The skills management playbook
- From learning outputs to business outcomes: the case for workforce readiness

Methodology

The Skillsoft Workforce Readiness Report was conducted through an independent market research firm between March and April 2026. The survey included 2,000 full-time individual contributors, managers, and executives across North America, the United Kingdom, and Germany, examining AI usage, skills readiness, training practices, and governance.

About Skillsoft

Skillsoft (NYSE: SKIL) is a global leader in skills management for the human + AI era. The AI-native Skillsoft platform gives a clear view of workforce capability, closes critical skill gaps, and proves the impact of skills on business outcomes. With Skillsoft, organizations can build AI-ready teams, lower the cost and time of workforce development, and reduce execution risk as work continues to change. Thousands of organizations worldwide trust Skillsoft to power workforce readiness.

Learn more at www.skillsoft.com

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