AI & IC

Explore the findings of our recent survey to understand membership perspectives on the use and adoption of AI at work.

Institute of Internal Communication

75 YEARS

#WeMatterAtWork

REPORT CONTENTS

Introduction

In late 2022, Silicon Valley firm OpenAI quietly launched ChatGPT, making it available to the general public. As is often the case in the technology world, it released a free 'beta' version so that its functionality could be quickly tested and improvements made. As subsequent interviews with key personnel at OpenAI have revealed, it certainly wasn't expecting its product to go viral.

2023 was the year AI at work went mainstream. Not a day went by without online debate about an AI-fuelled future. Social media platforms were full of warnings for us all to get to grips with generative AI before someone more competent took our jobs from us.

But underneath all the media hype, what's the reality? Who is using generative AI at work and for what purpose? What difference is AI making to the work we do as internal communicators and the work our colleagues do across their various functions? How is it being used and what issues with its adoption does our community foresee?

In December 2023, the IoIC opened a survey to find out how members feel about the first year of AI in their workplaces.

About the survey

Baseline data was collected from **197 IoIC members.**

Respondents represented the private, public and third sectors across a broad range of industries, providing rich anonymised data that has helped us better understand internal communication sentiment towards the adoption of AI into our workstreams. To summarise:

- Respondents represent a range of demographics, with just under 65% working at manager level of above
- All data was gathered anonymously
- Data was collected between 01 December 2023 and 08 January 2024.

Current attitudes towards AI and generative AI

First and foremost, we wanted to understand how comfortable IoIC members feel about the arrival of generative AI.   A Likert-scale question revealed an average score of 3 out of 5. While some respondents feel they understand AI extremely well or well, a large majority feels less knowledgeable. This shows there's still (unsurprisingly) a significant knowledge gap and lots we can do as a membership community to improve this.
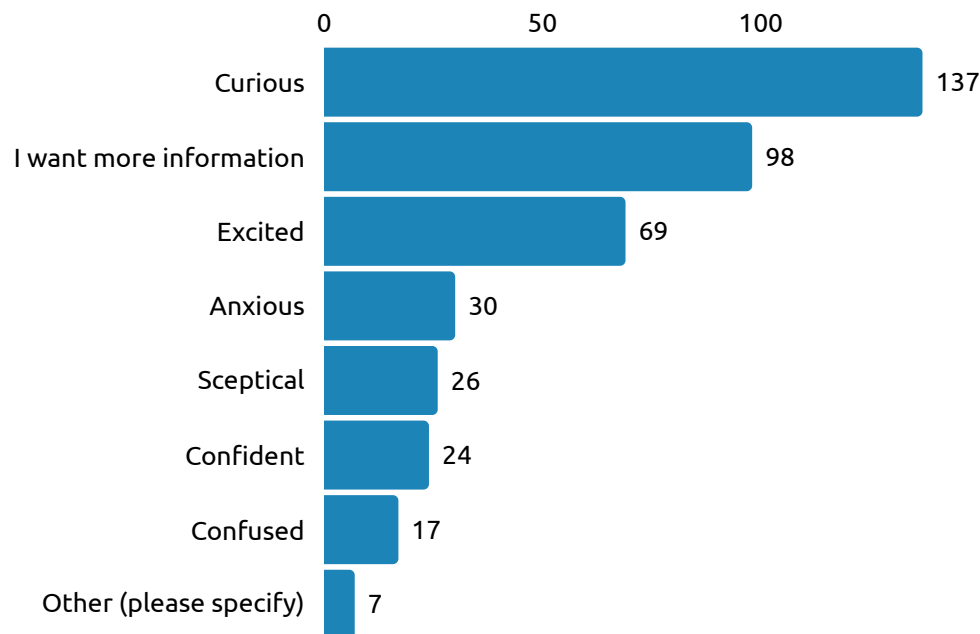
On a scale of 1-5 (with 1 being 'not at all well' and 5 being 'extremely well), how well do you think you understand AI?
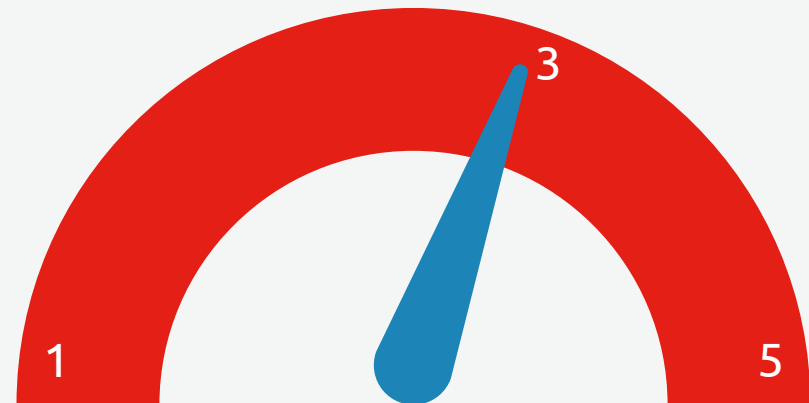
This sentiment is mirrored in the next question we asked about how members feel about the arrival of AI in the workplace.

While most respondents expressed positive emotions (excited or curious), over half (98 out of 180 respondents) selected they'd like more information about AI and how best to use it. It is uplifting to find, however, that relatively few members feel concerned (confused, anxious or sceptical) about the technology.

How do you feel about the arrival of generative AI in the workplace?

| Response	Value
Curious	137
I want more information	98
Excited	69
Anxious	30
Sceptical	26
Confident	24
Confused	17
Other (please specify)	7

We also asked IoIC members how their colleagues feel about the arrival of AI. Here, 88% of respondents said they perceive anxiety, worry or uncertainty amongst colleagues. While a healthy 48% of respondents report colleagues wanting to better understand how best to use it (this was the most selected answer as 87 out of 180 responses), this is offset by uncertainty about how best to use it or gain value from it.

88% perceive anxiety, worry or uncertainty about AI
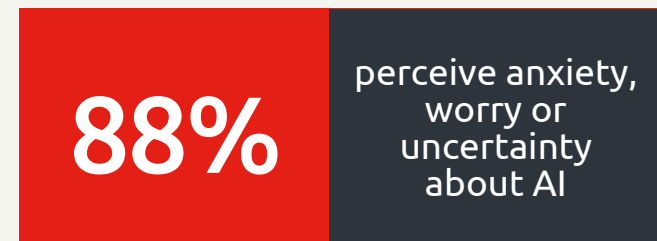
This presents a great opportunity for internal communicators to advocate for clarity and transparency in AI adoption within their organisations.

If generative AI delivers the efficiency gains promised, all internal stakeholders need equipping with the necessary information and skills to maximise benefit from it. Colleagues are unlikely to fulfil their duties well if they feel unsure of their futures or ill-equipped to do their work. A worst-case scenario is that the release of generative AI at work amplifies disengagement.'

How do you feel about the arrival of generative AI in the workplace?

Excited 69
Anxious 30
Confused 17
I want more information 98
Confident 24
Curious 137
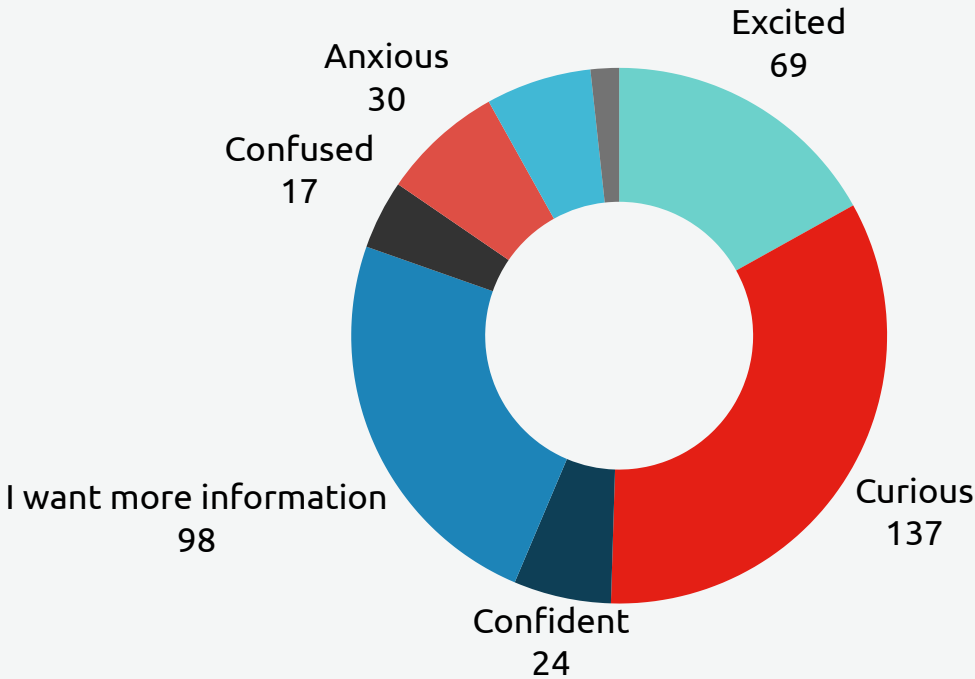
AI and generative AI adoption

We were also keen to understand the extent to which AI and generative AI have already been adopted in the workplace.

Just under 60% of respondents told us AI was already being used in their workplace. Interestingly, one-fifth of respondents don't know if their colleagues have started using it. This presents, in our view, several opportunities to deliver strategic value.

Has your organisation started using Generative AI (GenAI)?
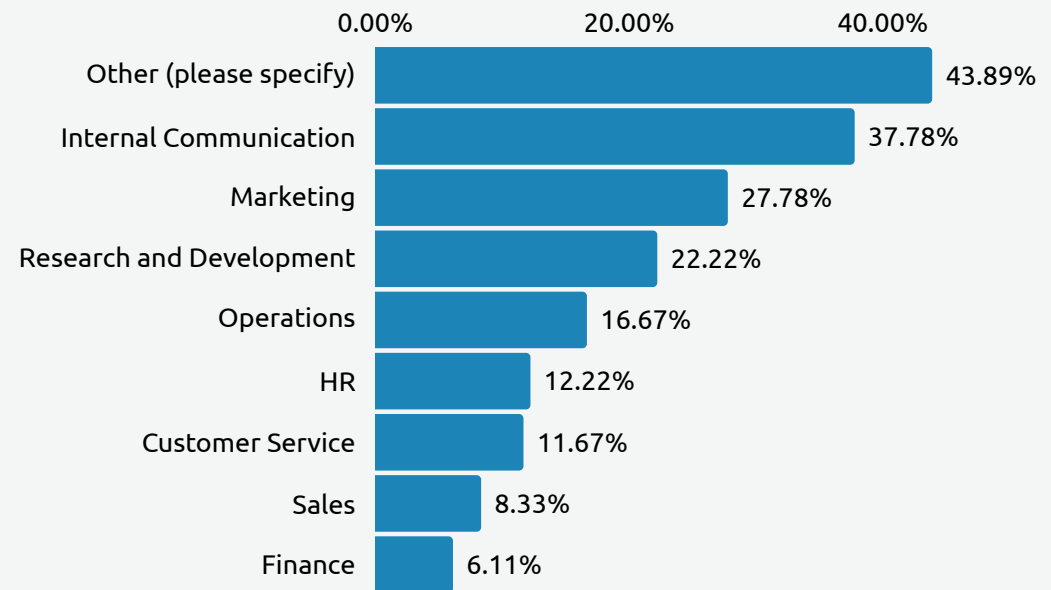

Yes 59%
No 20%
I am not sure 21%
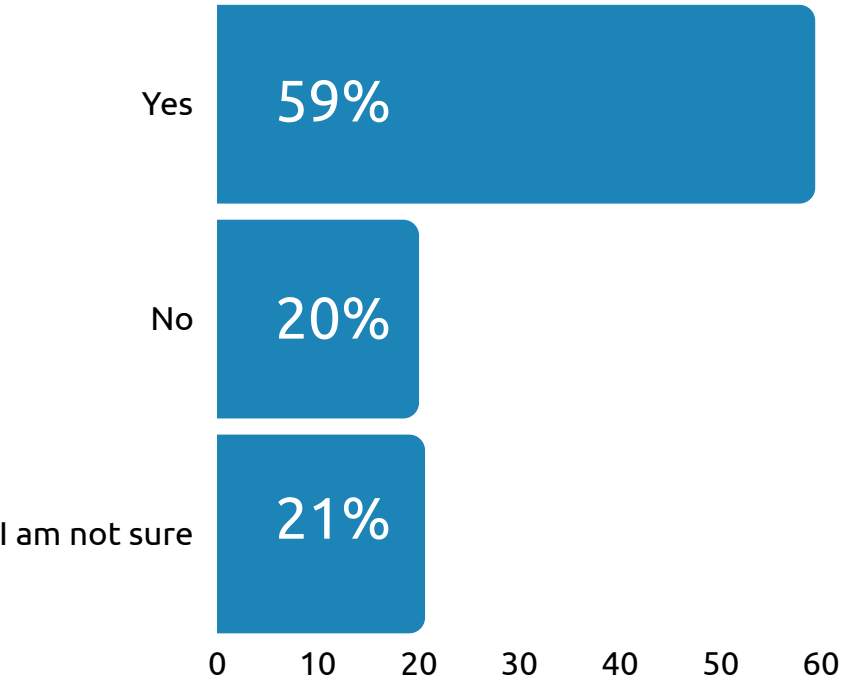
First, as we outlined in our AI and the Future of Internal Communication whitepaper, it's crucially important all organisations understand exactly where AI is being used in the flow of work, so that governance and policy can be drawn up and applied. AI governance frameworks will ensure the technology is used safely and ethically, with minimal harm or drawback for any stakeholder.

Additionally, understanding how colleagues are integrating AI into their workstreams will help senior leadership teams plan strategically for future headcount growth.

We then asked which departments or functions are using AI. You told us it was being used most within internal communication and marketing departments (this made up 66% of your responses). While this is interesting, we found ourselves wondering if this is reported because respondents are more aware of activities in these two areas than in other areas across the business.

Which departments or functions are using it?

| Department	Percentage
Other (please specify)	43.89%
Internal Communication	37.78%
Marketing	27.78%
Research and Development	22.22%
Operations	16.67%
HR	12.22%
Customer Service	11.67%
Sales	8.33%
Finance	6.11%

Many respondents used the free-form textbox at this point to tell us they don't know where AI is being used within their organisations. Again, we see this as an opportunity for internal communicators to get more involved in AI governance. Organisations will need help to write policy and communicate these clearly throughout their departments, teams and functions.

"It's available to everyone. I don't know who is using it."

## Internal communication and workplace AI adoption

We then wanted to find out how many members' organisations have already established a taskforce to oversee the healthy adoption of AI at work. Just over 40% of respondents' organisations have a team in place to address the ethical concerns of AI and/or explore beneficial application or use-cases. Just under 40% report no such taskforce within their organisation and a further 19% of respondents aren't sure whether such a team exists.

Is there an AI taskforce or similar in your organisation to co-ordinate the potential adoption and the use of AI?

Yes — 42%
No — 39%
I am not sure — 19%

0.00% 10.00% 20.00% 30.00% 40.00% 50.00%
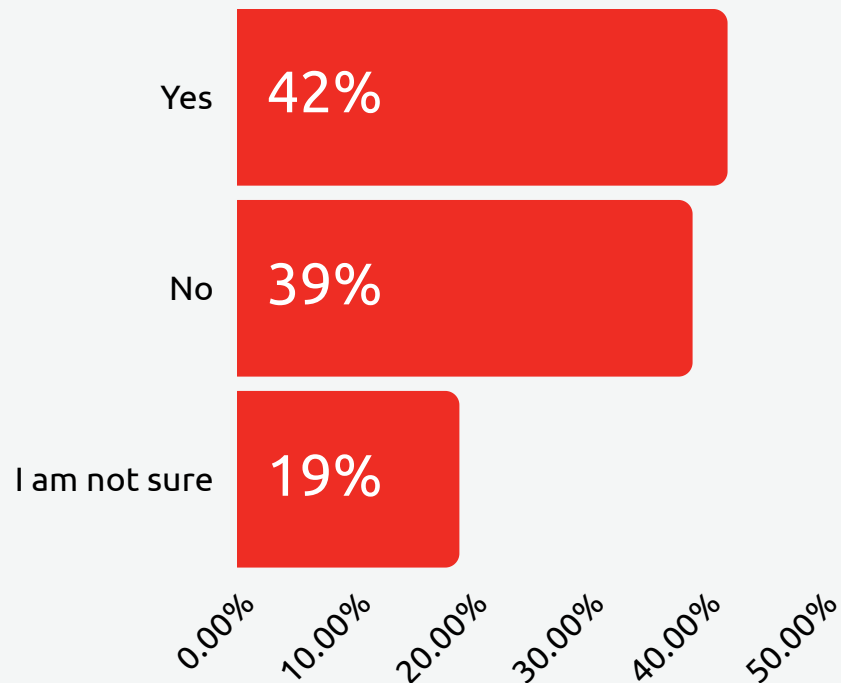
Next we asked whether internal communicators themselves were part of any such taskforce. While 46% said yes, another 47% said no.

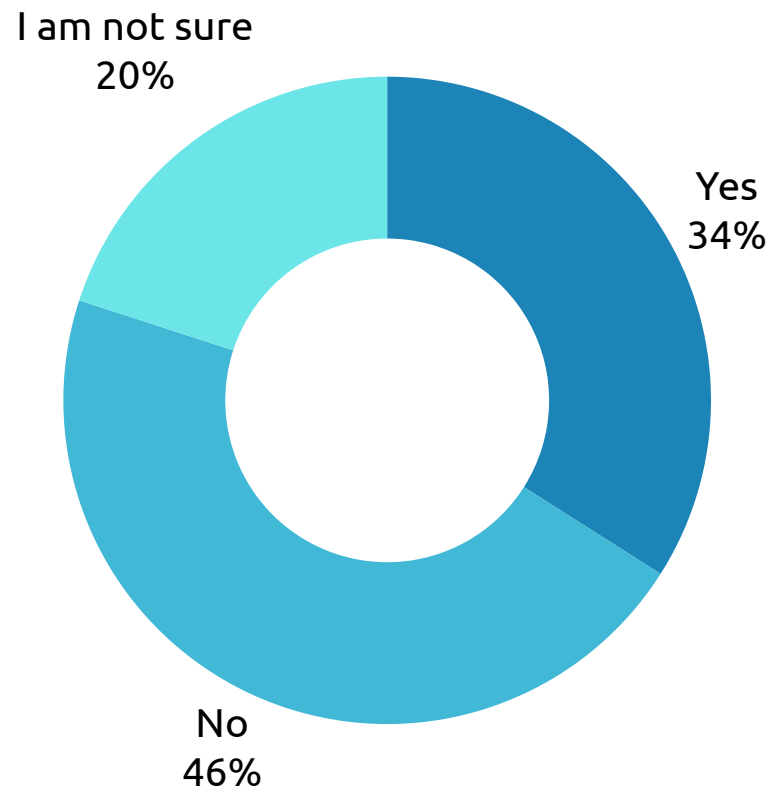**Are you or one of your IC colleagues part of the taskforce?**

I am not sure 7%
Yes 46%
No 47%
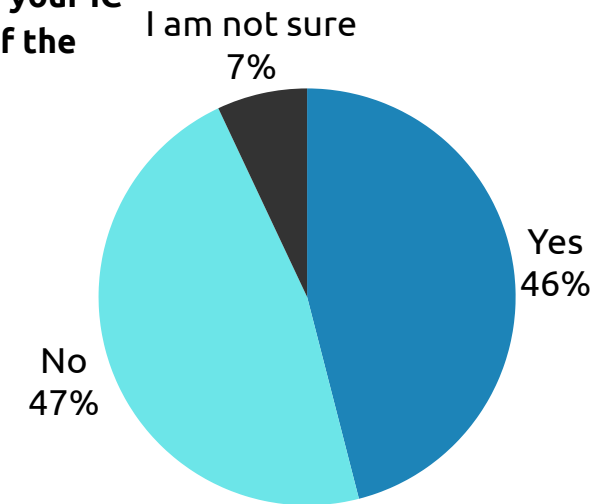
This is another opportunity to add value. Internal communicators have a pivotal role to play in advocating for the safe adoption of AI and helping create ethical guidelines to minimise bias and reduce the risk of proprietary, private or confidential information being inadvertently disclosed outside of the organisation. Clearly documented policy regarding AI adoption should be disseminated across the organisation with review sessions held to ensure each internal stakeholder fully understands how and when to best use these new tools.

On this topic, we asked internal communicators' if their organisations had already drafted policies for the use of AI in the workplace. Only 34% of respondents said yes. Once again this is an opportunity to deliver value, as policy writing is a niche strategic skill that internal communication as a profession lends itself perfectly to.

It was interesting to see that over half (53%) have been responsible for creating the tactical wrap-around messaging for the introduction of these new policies to colleagues.
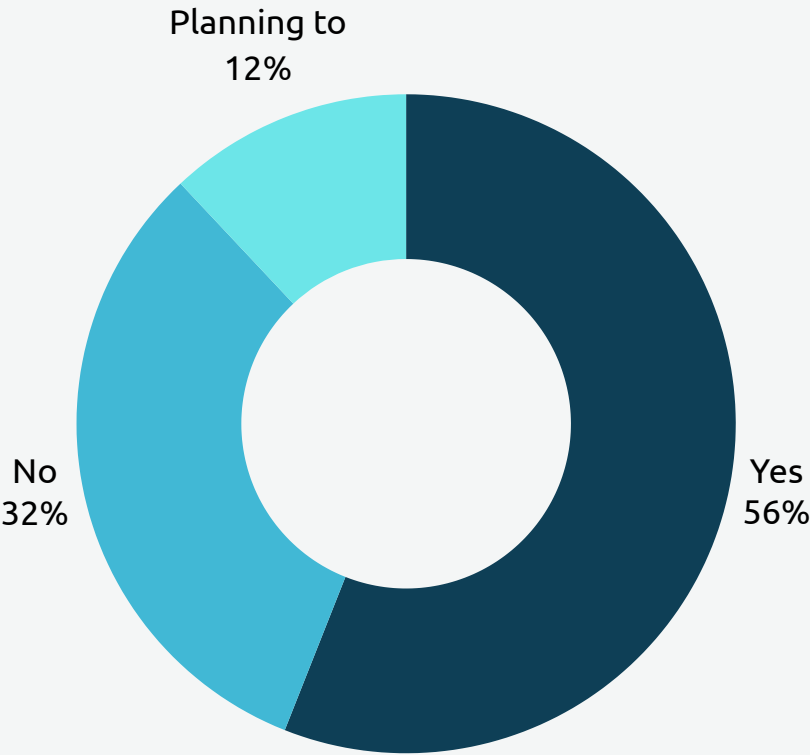
Has your organisation drafted policies for the use of AI by the workforce?

I am not sure
20%

Yes
34%

No
46%

Have you or your IC colleagues been involved in the drafting messages for the roll out of these policies to employees?

Yes	53%
No	19%
I am not sure	27%

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60%
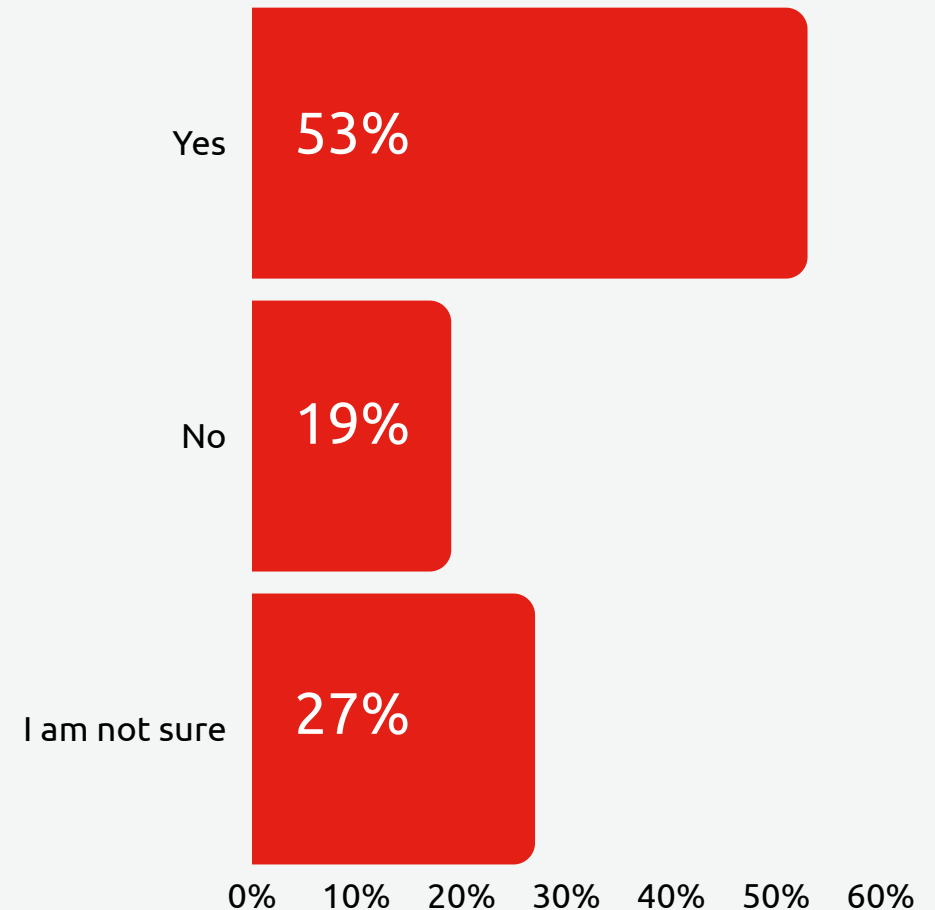
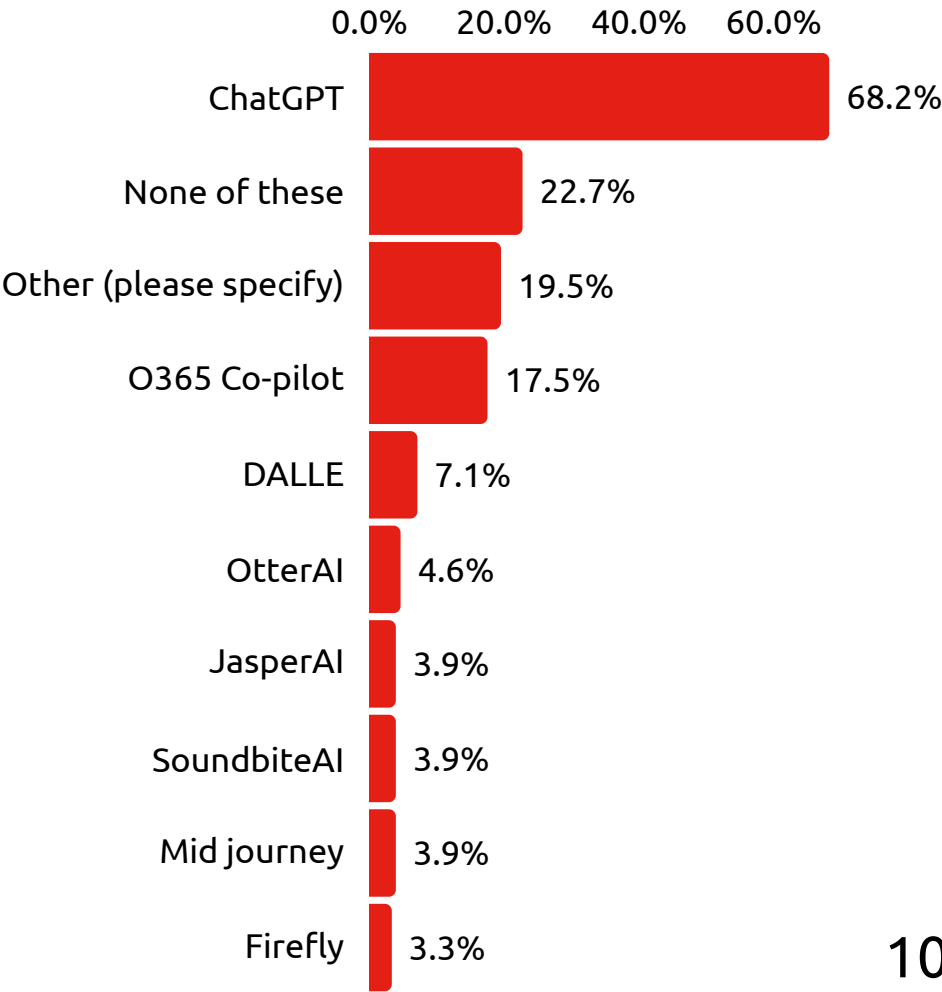# Generative AI as an internal communication tool

Finally, we were keen to understand the extent to which generative AI is being used to aid and assist internal communication itself. 56% of you told us you are already using these tools, and a further 12% plan to.

Of this uptake, most respondents are using ChatGPT or Microsoft Copilot. Coming up with new ideas for content or assisting with the drafting of news items and blogs seem by far to be the most popular use, although you tell us it's also being used to help write executive summaries and prepare speeches, amongst other things.

Have you started using GenAI in your work?

Planning to 12%

Yes 56%

No 32%

What GenAI tool(s) are you using?

Tool	Percentage
ChatGPT	68.2%
None of these	22.7%
Other (please specify)	19.5%
O365 Co-pilot	17.5%
DALLE	7.1%
OtterAI	4.6%
JasperAI	3.9%
SoundbiteAI	3.9%
Mid journey	3.9%
Firefly	3.3%

As a final pulse-check, we wanted to find out the extent to which internal communicators worry that their roles might be threatened by AI. A reassuringly healthy 84% of respondents said no.

There is an overarching sense within the membership community that generative AI will drive efficiency, allowing internal communicators to focus on more strategic work. This includes fact-checking, measuring communication effectiveness and the more human aspects of person-to-person communication.

Do you feel your role is threatened by AI?
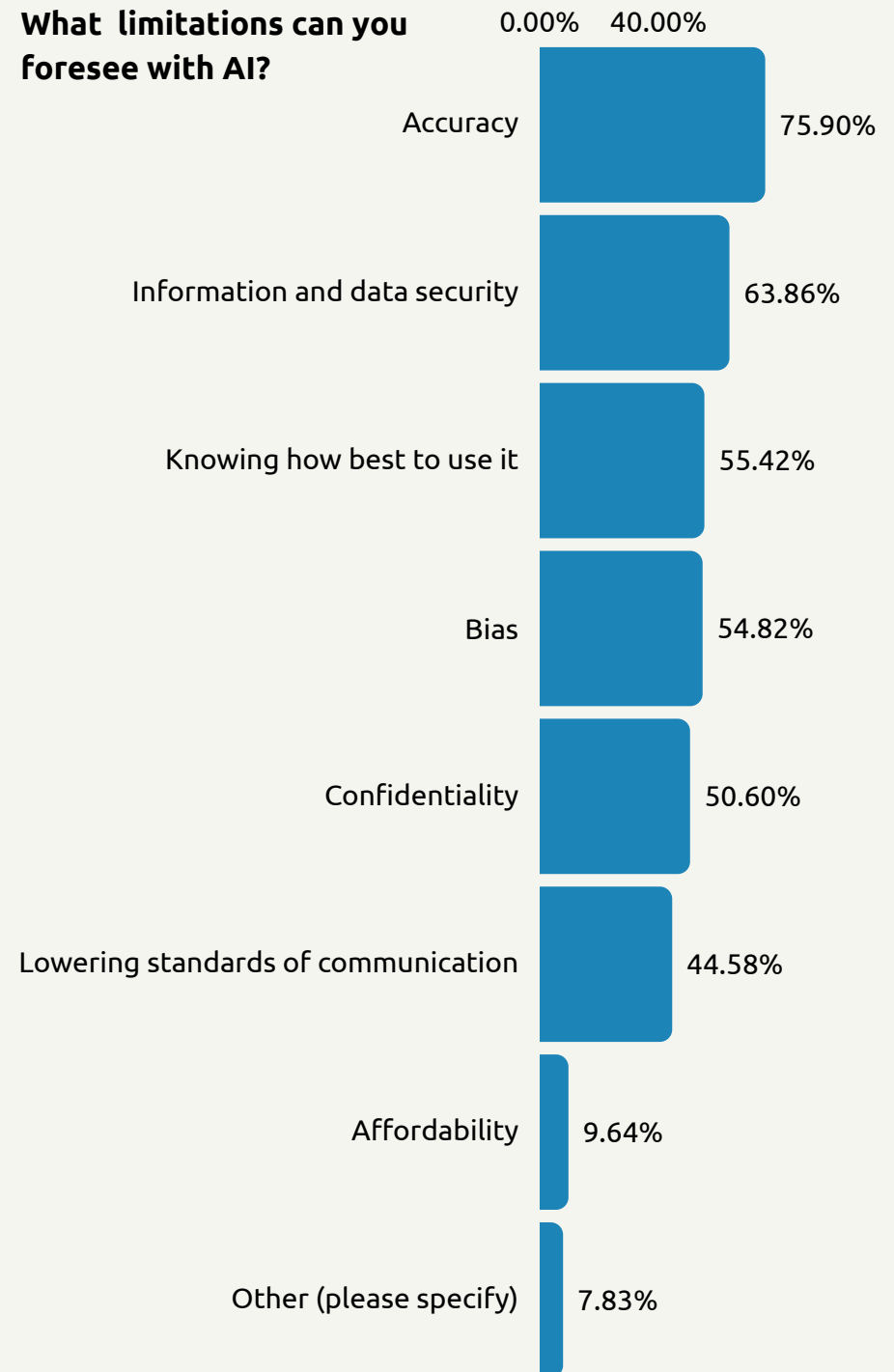
Yes
16%

No
84%
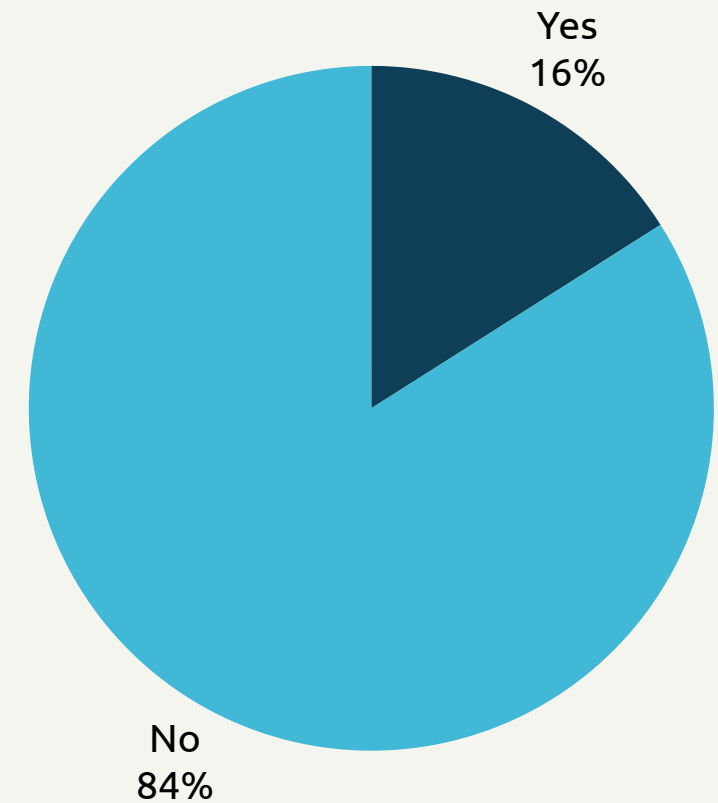
In conclusion

Used diligently, IoIC members feel generative AI has the potential to assist their work and remove some of the more laborious aspects of internal communication. This will free up time to focus on more human-centric aspects of communication and deliver value to the organisation at large.
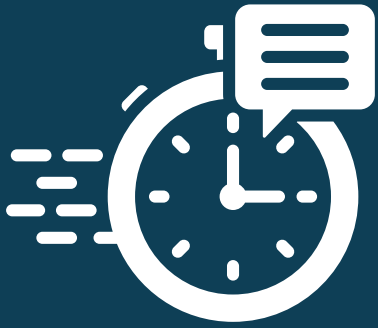
You've told us, however, that AI adoption doesn't come without concerns. You're most worried about accuracy, information and data security, bias and confidentiality. You want to know how best to use this new technology. You share a concern it could lower the generic standard of communication over time.

By and large, however, it's clear members want help to better understand both how to leverage the advantages these tools bring and help colleagues to do so, too. Members want more case studies, ethical guidance, training and webinars and regular updates on tools.

This has been a fascinating exercise in getting the pulse on how we regard generative AI as a profession, so a massive 'thank you' to all who participated. Armed with these useful insights, we will continue to deliver content and materials that help you successfully navigate this new work landscape.

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What limitations can you foresee with AI?

Limitation	Percentage
Accuracy	75.90%
Information and data security	63.86%
Knowing how best to use it	55.42%
Bias	54.82%
Confidentiality	50.60%
Lowering standards of communication	44.58%
Affordability	9.64%
Other (please specify)	7.83%

"AI will allow internal communication professionals to go further faster, particularly IC teams of one. AI will increase efficiency, allowing IC professionals to focus more on efforts that AI cannot replace, such as relationship building, employee engagement, and strategic planning."

Survey Respondent

"I think it could make things easier and quicker but could also have a negative impact in terms of trust and the quality of written communications."

Survey Respondent

"It will speed up the content creation process - it's harder to start from scratch than to have something to critique. It only provides a template - the tone of voice, empathy, values and warmth will still be inputted by us."

Survey Respondent
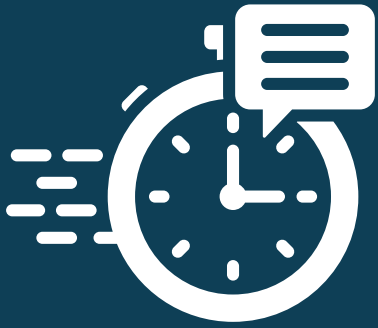
"It will help IC to always operate at a strategic level and focus more on our supporting/coaching role by taking away the lower level tasks that can be done much more quickly using AI. Our role is to focus on the human side of culture change, engagement and creating connections to purpose. AI will never be able to replace us if we evolve our role to where we always add value."

Survey Respondent

"I think people will start to use it for what they think is convenience without considering if the task should be done or not. If they're using it for churning out emails, they're not considering the purpose of those emails. If we're replacing 'the grunt work' of comms, why are we not considering why we're doing the grunt work? It's being rushed into without considering long term strategy and consequences."

Survey Respondent

We thank you for your support in our survey.

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