

# AI and Trust at Work

*What a March 2026 survey suggests about AI adoption, human accountability, and the role of human relationships*

Survey window: February 27, 2026 to March 26, 2026 | 32 records collected | 27-29 usable responses by item

**Bottom line.** Respondents are increasingly willing to use AI to accelerate work, but most still reserve judgment, accountability, leadership, and relationship-building for humans.

<b>5.6 / 10</b> Daily task trust	<b>7.4 / 10</b> Confidence with human accountability	<b>4.2 / 10</b> Peer-equivalent trust
<b>6.4 / 10</b> Bias concerns affect trust	<b>3.1 / 10</b> Sensitive/personal AI use	<b>9.6 / 10</b> Human relationships remain essential

Prepared from the uploaded AI & Trust Survey workbook. All technical validation tables are included in the appendix.

## Executive summary

The data points to a stable pattern: people are willing to use AI as a fast, useful helper, but they are not yet willing to treat it like a trusted human peer. **Across this sample, the preferred model is AI plus human accountability - not AI instead of people.**

**1. AI is trusted as a helper more than as a peer.** Respondents gave daily-task trust an average of 5.6 out of 10, but trust that AI insights are as trustworthy as those of a human colleague averaged only 4.2. Operational usefulness is growing faster than deep credibility.

**2. Human accountability is the clearest trust amplifier.** Confidence when a person remains accountable averaged 7.4 out of 10, well above both daily-task trust and peer-equivalent trust. The strongest practical implication is that human review still matters.

**3. Human relationships remain the anchor of trust at work.** This item was the strongest in the survey at 9.6 out of 10, and it showed essentially no negative relationship with AI use. Higher AI use did not make people value human connection less.

**4. Trust appears to build in stages.** The strongest correlations show a ladder from routine work use to broader credibility to personal use. People who trust AI for everyday tasks are more likely to trust it in more personal or reflective contexts.

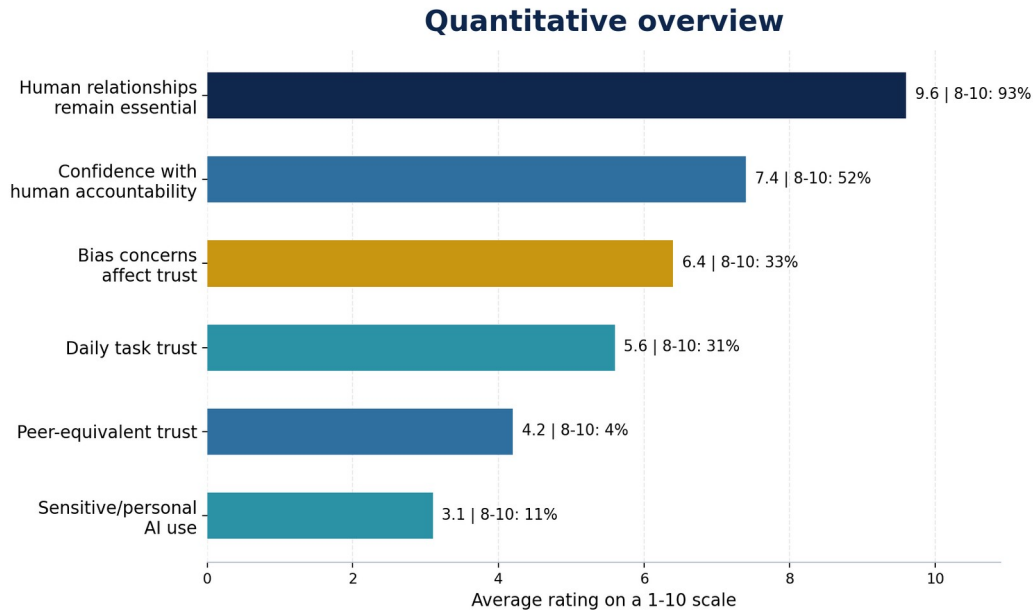
**5. Sensitive use is limited overall, but not absent.** Two-thirds of matched respondents scored personal or emotionally sensitive use at 1-3, yet a smaller subgroup uses AI for relationships, future worries, and self-reflection. Sensitive use is better described as polarized than simply low.

**6. The verbatims describe a clear division of labor.** AI is seen as strongest in speed, summarization, drafting, coding, and repetitive work. Humans are seen as strongest in empathy, judgment, creativity, leadership, and morally consequential decisions.

### Most interesting relationships in the data

Interesting relationship	rho	Plain-English read
Daily task trust <-> Sensitive/personal AI use	0.67	People who trust AI in routine work are much more likely to use it in more personal contexts.
Daily task trust <-> Peer-equivalent trust	0.59	Operational trust appears to come before broader confidence in AI's judgment.
Peer-equivalent trust <-> Sensitive/personal AI use	0.49	Seeing AI as a plausible thought partner is linked to greater willingness to use it for sensitive topics.
Daily task trust <-> Human relationships remain essential	-0.02	A useful non-finding: AI adoption is not crowding out the perceived importance of human relationships.

rho is a ranking-based correlation from -1 to +1. Positive values mean two items tended to rise together; values near zero mean there was little relationship.



Note: the bias item is a caution item - higher scores mean concerns about bias are affecting trust more strongly.

Figure 1. Average score on each 1-10 survey statement.

## Survey overview and approach

The workbook contains 32 dated records collected between late February and late March 2026. **For the quantitative analysis, obvious blank or partial entries were treated as missing rather than zero.** That produced 29 respondents with at least one scaled answer and 27 respondents with a complete set of all six quantitative ratings. Open-ended response bases ranged from 22 to 27 depending on the question.

Spearman correlation was used for the 1-10 ratings because it is well suited to ordered survey scales and small samples. In plain English, it asks whether people who score high on one item also tend to score high on another. For the verbatim questions, responses were lightly thematic-coded, and one response could receive more than one theme.

**How to read the technical terms.** n is the number of usable responses. Mean is the average score. Median is the middle score. rho is the correlation strength, where positive values mean two items rise together. Adjusted p-values in the appendix help show which correlations remained meaningful after checking many pairs at once.

## Quantitative findings

The survey’s core quantitative story is a simple hierarchy: respondents are most aligned around the importance of human relationships, next most comfortable with AI when a human remains accountable, moderately open to AI for daily tasks, and least willing to extend that trust into peer-equivalent or sensitive uses.

**AI is more accepted as a tool than as a peer.** In matched responses, daily-task trust was more than a full point higher than peer-equivalent trust. Only one respondent scored the peer-equivalent item at 8 or higher, which shows how limited that deeper trust still is.

**Human accountability changes the trust picture.** The accountability item had the second-highest average in the survey, and 52% of respondents scored it 8-10. That suggests the most credible deployment model for this audience is still human-in-the-loop rather than fully autonomous AI.

**Sensitive use is uncommon overall, but not uniform.** Sensitive or emotionally adjacent use averaged just 3.1 out of 10, and 13 of 27 respondents scored it at 1. At the same time, three respondents scored it at 9 or 10, indicating a small but real high-trust subgroup.

**Human relationships show a ceiling effect.** Twenty-one of 27 matched respondents gave the human-relationships item a perfect 10. This near-consensus is important substantively, but it also means the item has limited spread, which makes correlations with other items harder to detect.

## Correlation analysis

The correlation pattern is one of the most useful parts of the dataset because it shows how trust appears to expand. The strongest relationships did not connect AI use to reduced respect for human relationships. Instead, they show a trust ladder: people first trust AI in routine work, then begin to treat it as more credible, and only then are some of them willing to use it in more personal settings.

### Strongest relationships in the survey

Positive Spearman correlations mean the two ratings tended to rise together.

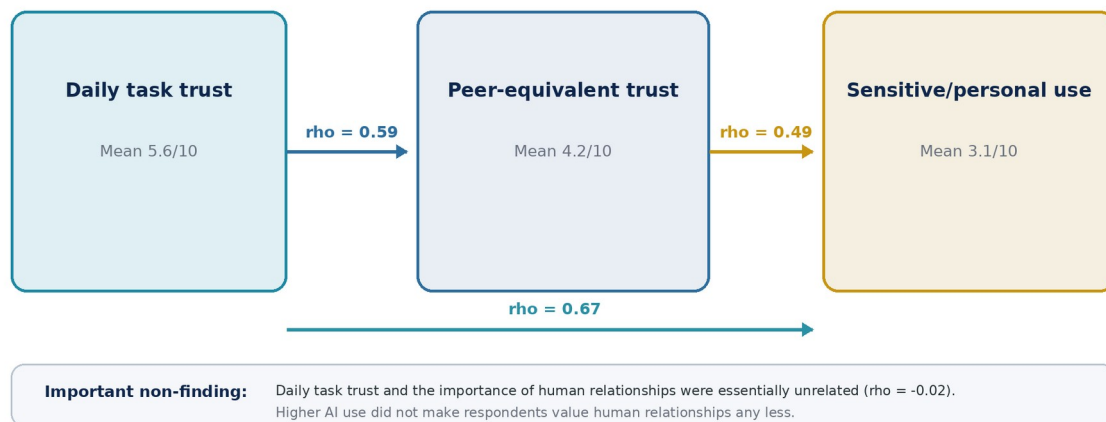


Figure 2. The strongest positive relationships in the survey.

**Routine trust is the gateway.** Daily-task trust had the strongest link to sensitive or personal use ( $\rho = 0.67$ ) and a similarly strong link to peer-equivalent trust ( $\rho = 0.59$ ). The main implication is that practical usefulness appears to build the foundation for deeper trust.

**Peer-like trust matters because it changes where people take AI.** Once respondents start to see AI as somewhat comparable to a colleague, they are more likely to use it for personal reflection or emotionally adjacent questions ( $\rho = 0.49$ ).

**Bias concerns trend in the expected direction, but not strongly enough to dominate the story here.** The relationships involving the bias item were negative in the expected places, but in this small sample they were not strong enough to stand out once all pairwise tests were considered together.

## Qualitative findings

The verbatim responses sharpen the quantitative picture. Respondents do not describe AI as a replacement for trusted colleagues or human relationships. They describe it as a fast, practical, often useful system for compressing cognitive labor: drafting, summarizing, searching, troubleshooting, organizing, and analyzing.

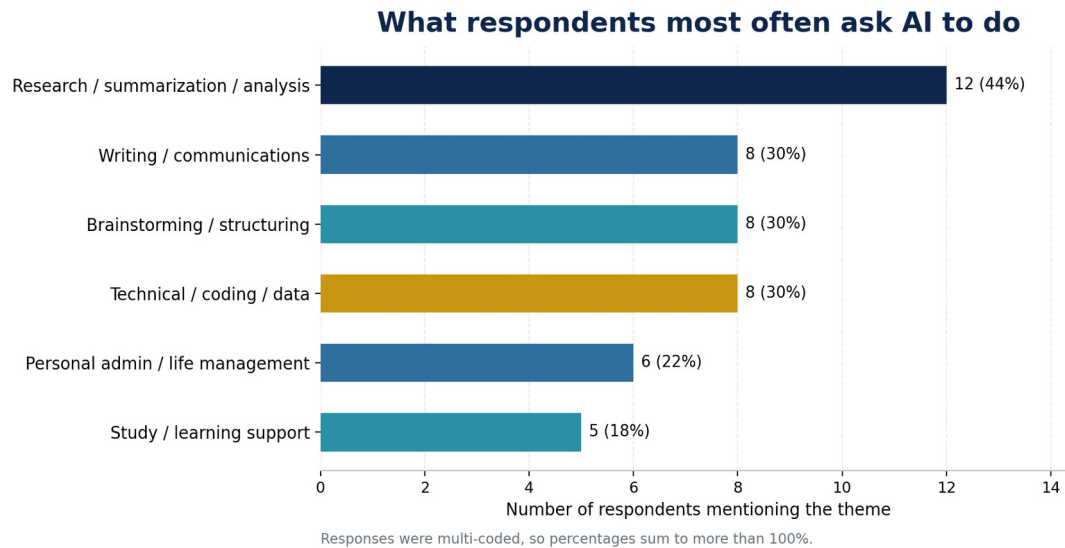


Figure 3. Most common themes in the tasks respondents recently asked AI to perform.

**Current usage is practical, not aspirational.** The most common task themes were research or summarization, writing support, brainstorming, technical help, and study support. This is a sample using AI to save time and structure work more than to hand over authority.

**Requested insights are still bounded.** When respondents asked AI for insights, the most common themes were business or work strategy, general information or utility questions, and support on specific work products such as code, proposals, emails, or rubrics. That is very different from trusting AI to lead, decide, or manage people.

**Sensitive topics split the sample.** Half of the respondents who answered the sensitive-topics prompt said they asked AI nothing personal at all. Among those who did, the most common themes were relationships, future anxiety or self-reflection, and health.

### Most common sensitive-topic themes (base n = 22)

Sensitive-topic theme	n	% of base
None / no sensitive use	11	50%
Relationships / social navigation	6	27%
Future anxiety / self-reflection	5	23%
Health / medical	3	14%
Parenting / family care	1	5%

## Where respondents think AI outperforms humans - and where humans still lead

### The role split is clear

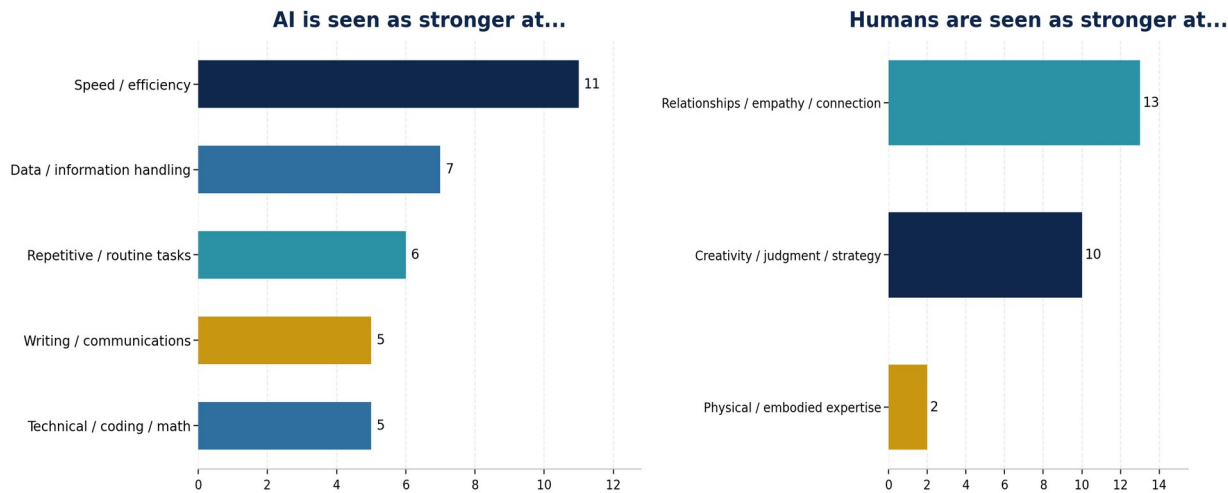


Figure 4. The role split described in the verbatim responses.

The qualitative role split is especially consistent. AI is repeatedly described as faster, better at handling information, more useful for repetitive tasks, and helpful in writing or technical work. Humans are repeatedly described as better at empathy, judgment, creativity, leadership, moral reasoning, and context-rich decisions. The survey does not show a workforce ready to outsource trust; it shows a workforce that wants help with speed and structure while preserving human authority in relational and consequential work.

**Illustrative respondent quote.** "I like to think of AI as an entry level person at a job ... It is fast, and can output things quickly. AI cannot replace human connection ... It cannot be a leader, and it cannot make decisions that affect people."

## Interpretation and implications

- 1. Position AI as a co-pilot, not a peer replacement.** The data supports a message of assistance, acceleration, and support. It does not support a message that AI can already stand in for trusted human judgment.
- 2. Make human accountability visible.** Because confidence rises when a person remains accountable, governance, review steps, and named ownership are not just compliance tools - they are trust-building tools.
- 3. Expect trust to deepen in stages.** Routine work use appears to be the gateway to broader trust. If organizations want adoption, low-risk use cases and visible wins are likely more effective than pushing people immediately toward high-stakes or sensitive uses.
- 4. Do not frame AI adoption as a substitute for relationships.** Respondents overwhelmingly believe human relationships remain essential for trust at work. That belief remained intact even among stronger AI users, which suggests organizations should design adoption narratives that reinforce rather than threaten human connection.

## Limitations

This is a small sample with no demographic or role segmentation, so the results should be read as directional rather than universal. A handful of rows were blank or partial, and one respondent explicitly

noted that the human-accountability item could be interpreted in more than one way. Those limits do not erase the main pattern, but they do matter when deciding how far to generalize.

## Appendix A. Validation and technical notes

This appendix collects the validation data referenced in the main narrative. The goal is to keep the front of the white paper easy to read while still making the underlying calculations visible and interpretable.

### Technical glossary

Term	Short explanation
n	The number of usable responses for an item or analysis.
Mean	The average score across respondents.
Median	The middle score once responses are ordered from low to high.
rho	Spearman correlation. Positive values mean two ratings tended to rise together; values near zero mean little relationship.
Adjusted p-value	A significance check corrected for multiple correlation tests using the false discovery rate approach.
Multi-coded response	A verbatim response could receive more than one theme, so qualitative percentages can add to more than 100%.

### Data quality summary

Data quality checkpoint	Value
Total workbook records	32
Rows with any quantitative response	29
Complete quantitative cases	27
Open-text bases	Tasks 27   Insights 26   Sensitive topics 22   AI vs human roles 27

**Table A1. Descriptive statistics for the six scaled items**

Code	Item	n	Mean	Median	SD	Low (1-3)	High (8-10)
DT	Daily task trust	29	5.55	6.0	2.59	27.6%	31.0%
HA	Confidence with human accountability	29	7.41	8.0	2.37	3.4%	51.7%
PT	Peer-equivalent trust	27	4.22	4.0	1.69	25.9%	3.7%
BC	Bias concerns affect trust	27	6.41	7.0	2.36	11.1%	33.3%
SU	Sensitive/personal AI use	27	3.11	2.0	2.95	66.7%	11.1%
HR	Human relationships remain essential	27	9.59	10.0	0.89	0.0%	92.6%

For the bias item, a higher score means concerns about bias are more strongly affecting trust.

**Table A2. Full set of unique pairwise correlations**

Pair	n	rho	p	p_adj	Significant after FDR
DT - SU	27	0.67	0.0001	0.0022	Yes
DT - PT	27	0.59	0.0011	0.0081	Yes
PT - SU	27	0.49	0.0095	0.0475	Yes
DT - BC	27	-0.30	0.1331	0.3097	No
PT - BC	27	-0.29	0.1390	0.3097	No
HA - SU	27	0.27	0.1815	0.3097	No
HA - BC	27	0.26	0.1876	0.3097	No
BC - SU	27	-0.26	0.1895	0.3097	No
HA - HR	27	0.26	0.1974	0.3097	No
DT - HA	29	0.24	0.2065	0.3097	No
SU - HR	27	-0.17	0.4062	0.5540	No
PT - HR	27	-0.15	0.4669	0.5836	No
HA - PT	27	0.11	0.5830	0.6727	No
BC - HR	27	0.09	0.6452	0.6912	No
DT - HR	27	-0.02	0.9231	0.9231	No

Code key: DT = Daily task trust, HA = Confidence with human accountability, PT = Peer-equivalent trust, BC = Bias concerns affect trust, SU = Sensitive/personal AI use, HR = Human relationships remain essential.

**Table A3. Key paired score comparisons (matched respondents only)**

Comparison	Matched n	Mean A	Mean B	Mean difference	p
HA vs DT	29	7.41	5.55	1.86	0.0028
DT vs PT	27	5.37	4.22	1.15	0.0113
HA vs PT	27	7.56	4.22	3.33	<0.0001
HR vs DT	27	9.59	5.37	4.22	<0.0001
HR vs PT	27	9.59	4.22	5.37	<0.0001

These Wilcoxon signed-rank tests check whether the same respondents tended to rate one item higher than another.

## Appendix B. Qualitative coding summaries

To protect respondent privacy, the appendix reports aggregate themes rather than raw verbatims. Each response could receive more than one code, so percentages are not designed to add to 100%.

### Tasks requested of AI (base n = 27)

Theme	n	% of base
Research/summarization/analysis	12	44.4%
Writing/communications	8	29.6%
Brainstorming/structuring	8	29.6%
Technical/coding/data	8	29.6%

Personal admin/life management	6	22.2%
Study/learning support	5	18.5%
Low/no use	1	3.7%
General utility/language	1	3.7%

### Insights requested of AI (base n = 26)

Theme	n	% of base
Business/work strategy	10	38.5%
General information/utility	7	26.9%
None/no insight use	5	19.2%
Work-product support	5	19.2%
Personal/future advice	2	7.7%

### Sensitive/personal topics discussed with AI (base n = 22)

Theme	n	% of base
None/no sensitive use	11	50.0%
Relationships/social navigation	6	27.3%
Future anxiety/self-reflection	5	22.7%
Health/medical	3	13.6%
Parenting/family care	1	4.5%

### Perceived AI strengths at work (base n = 27)

Theme	n	% of base
Speed/efficiency	11	40.7%
Data/information handling	7	25.9%
Repetitive/routine tasks	6	22.2%
Writing/communications	5	18.5%
Technical/coding/math	5	18.5%
No clear AI edge	1	3.7%

### Perceived human strengths at work (base n = 27)

Theme	n	% of base
Relationships/empathy/connection	13	48.1%
Creativity/judgment/strategy	10	37.0%
Physical/embodied expertise	2	7.4%