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SYSTEMS

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The State of AI at Work in Canada

A closer look at heavy industries, worker trust and employer support.

2026

1,100 WORKERS SURVEYED

Research conducted by Angus Reid Group on behalf of Punchcard. Fieldwork: September 2–11, 2026.

A letter from our Managing Partner

Earlier this year, I sat with a room of CEOs and asked where AI was going to make an impact in their businesses. There were a couple of generic answers, and a lot of silence. Almost everyone had tried it, but very few had a concrete answer in terms of how it was going to be applied uniquely to their people or their processes.

Most of what we're hearing in the market is generally about AI at work, as though it looks the same in a government office, an accounting firm, and a construction site. But, I had a hunch it doesn't. So, we decided to ask the people doing the work. In partnership with Angus Reid, we surveyed 1,100 working Canadians to take a closer look at heavy industries like construction, manufacturing, agriculture, and utilities, alongside service sectors like professional services and public administration.

We found that workers have gotten ahead of their employers. Many are using general-purpose chatbots to write reports or look up specs. Most have been given no formal support.

Some are getting hours back every week by using AI tools. Others have quietly picked up a new task: checking whatever the AI produced before anyone else sees it. Some also report new AI responsibilities without a change in title or pay.

The heavy industry results were the ones I found most interesting. Workers in heavy industries report lower AI use and less formal employer support than those in other industries. Their trust also varies by task, with more trust in routine information and paperwork than in decisions affecting worker safety.

If there's one thing I'd ask leaders to take from this report, it's to start with your people rather than the platform. Sit down with the crews and teams who'll be using these tools, ask where AI would save them time and where it would make them nervous, and build the policy around what they tell you. Then treat the review work as real work, with an owner and time budgeted for it.

We've been through our own version of this at Punchcard as we rebuild how our teams deliver, and the software turned out to be the easy part. Figuring out who decides what, and when a person needs to make the call – well, that took a lot longer.

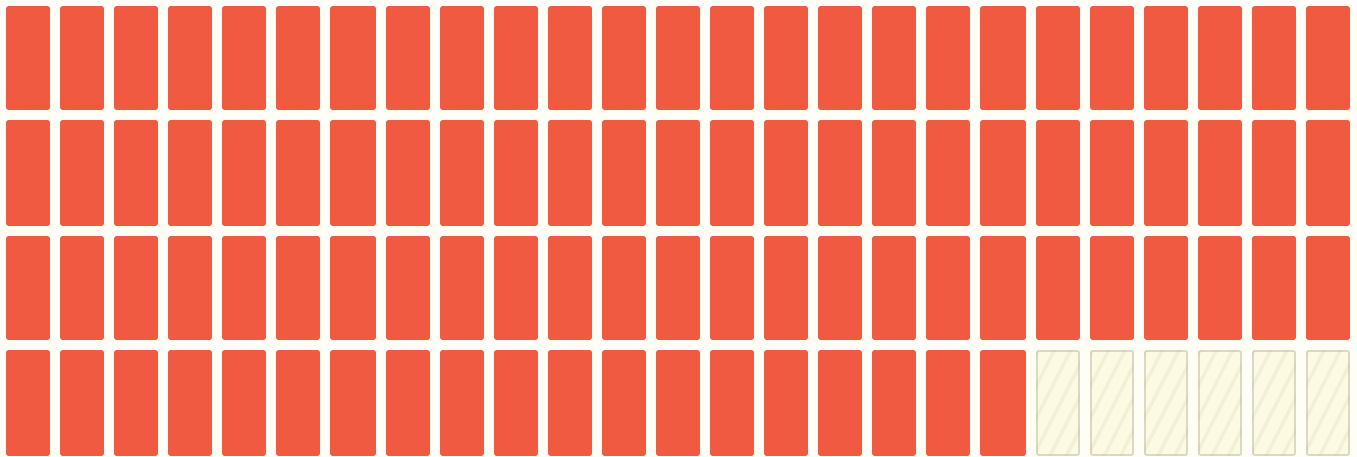
Our work with clients usually starts the same way, with a conversation about the problem long before anyone mentions a tool, and if this report sparks a few of those conversations inside your own organization, it will have done its job.



Sam Jenkins

CO-FOUNDER & MANAGING PARTNER, PUNCHCARD

AI output often needs more work



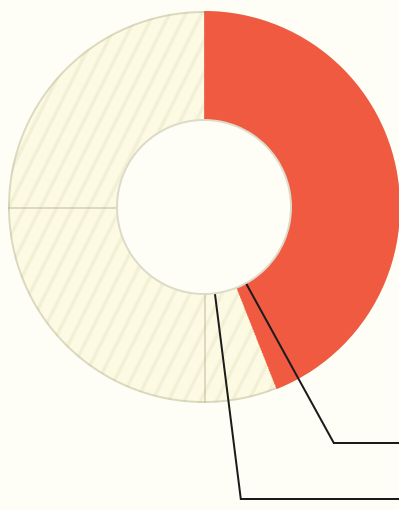
94% of AI users surveyed across industries report reworking at least some AI-generated output.

Rework means making a meaningful correction or partly redoing AI's work before using it. That extra work matters when assessing what AI saves.

553 AI users answered this question; 519 reported that at least some AI output needs rework. The 94% describes people, not the share of AI output that needs fixing. It does not measure time spent on rework.

Source: Angus Reid Group for Punchcard, September 2026.

AI is changing what people do at work



44%

of AI users surveyed across industries say AI has affected their role.

In particular, AI has affected the roles of 42% of AI users in heavy industry and 48% in other industries.

Heavy industry **42%**

Other industries **48%**

CHANGES TO ROLES



19%

Regularly check or review AI-generated work



14%

AI handles tasks they used to do themselves



10%

Have new AI duties without a change in title or pay

ROLE CHANGES AMONG AI USERS IN SELECTED HEAVY INDUSTRIES

Transportation, warehousing and logistics

54%

Manufacturing

45%

Oil and gas

45%

Agriculture

32%

Construction

31%

0% 25% 50% 75% 100%

553 AI users answered this question: 354 in heavy industry and 199 in other industries. The industry chart includes 59 in transportation, warehousing and logistics and 75 in construction. People could choose more than one change. The heavy industry and other industries figures are a descriptive comparison. The 19% measures a work responsibility, not how often AI makes mistakes. Industry comparisons use smaller groups.

Source: Angus Reid Group for Punchcard, September 2026.

AI saves time for some, but not everyone



Across industries, 65% of AI users answering this question report saving time, while 35% report none. People who report saving time estimate an average of 6.1 hours a week. The average applies only to the group reporting savings.

553 AI users answered this question; 362 of them (65%) reported saving time and 191 (35%) reported none. These are workers' estimates, not independently measured time savings. The survey does not tell us whether people included time spent fixing AI output in their estimates.

Source: Angus Reid Group for Punchcard, September 2026.

What happens to the time AI saves?

Among AI users who report saving time, here's what changed.

More free time or less pressure



Nothing has changed



More output or higher workload expectations



Higher pay or recognition



0% 25% 50% 75% 100%

Saving time does not lead to the same result for everyone. Some report less pressure; others report more work or higher expectations. Just 4% report higher pay or recognition.

The people who chose “nothing has changed” still reported saving time. Their answer describes what those savings led to.

362 AI users who reported saving time answered this question. People could choose more than one answer, so the percentages should not be added together.

Source: Angus Reid Group for Punchcard, September 2026.

In heavy industry, trust often means checking

AI users in heavy industry are more likely to trust AI with routine information and paperwork than with decisions involving worker safety.

■ TRUST AI COMPLETELY ■ TRUST AI, WITH REVIEW

Routine procedures, product specs or how-to information



Reports, logs or job paperwork



Technical drawings, manuals or spec sheets



Safety, compliance or code requirements



Decisions affecting worker safety or carrying physical risk



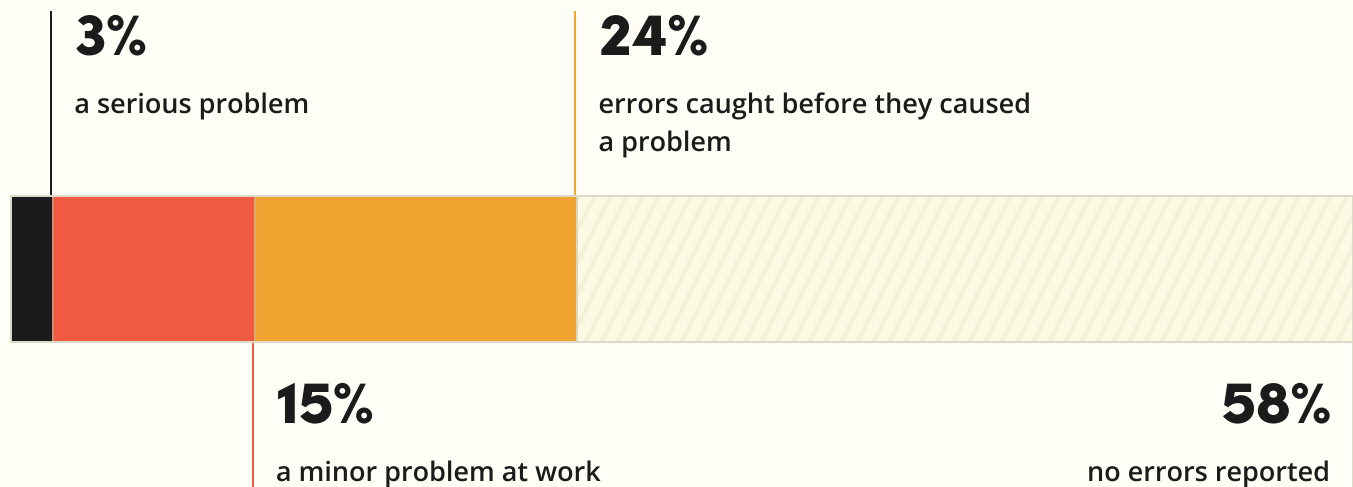
For routine information, 68% trust AI with review and 9% trust it completely. For decisions involving worker safety or physical risk, those figures fall to 27% and 2%. In both cases, trust more often comes with a check of the work.

354 AI users in heavy industry answered this question. Trust includes complete trust and trust with review. People who chose "not applicable" are included in the calculation. Percentages are rounded. All eight tasks are listed in the appendix.

Source: Angus Reid Group for Punchcard, September 2026.

Some AI mistakes cause problems. Others are caught.

AI users across industries reported these experiences with AI-generated output.

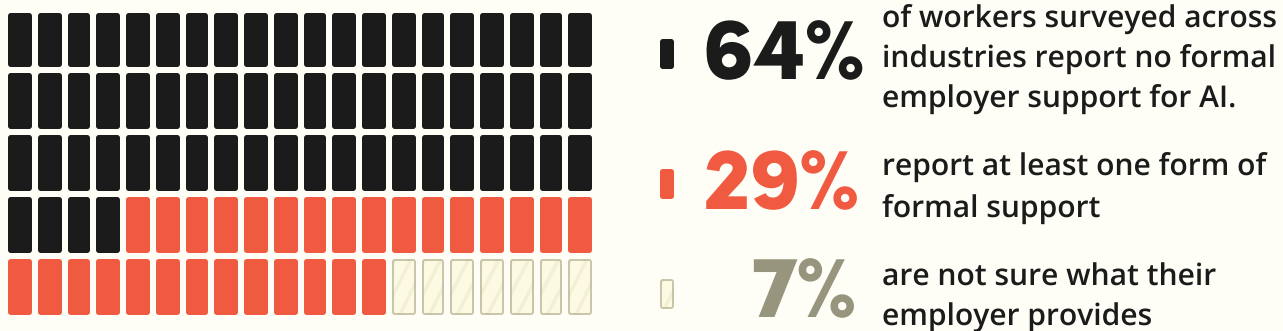


18% reported a minor or serious problem; 15% report a minor problem and 3% report a serious one, such as a safety incident or financial loss. 24% reported catching errors before they caused a problem.

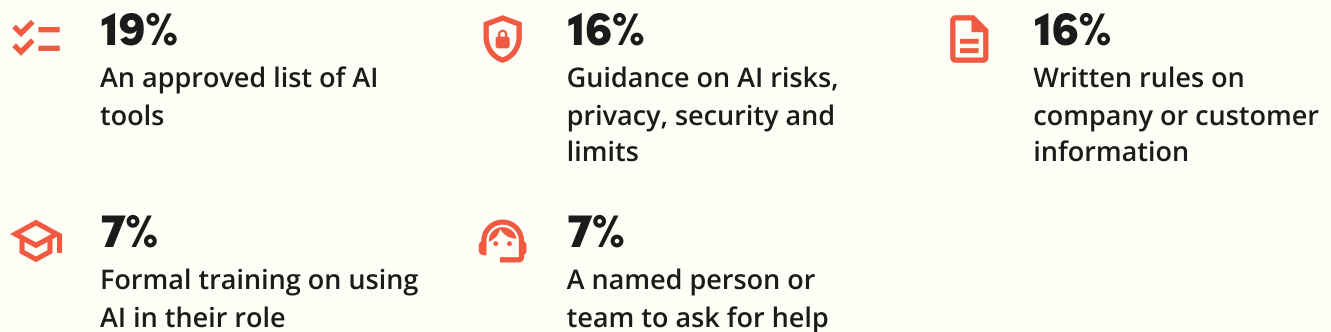
553 AI users answered this question. These findings concern errors and problems. They are different from the earlier question about work that needs correcting or partly redoing.

Source: Angus Reid Group for Punchcard, September 2026.

Most workers report no formal support

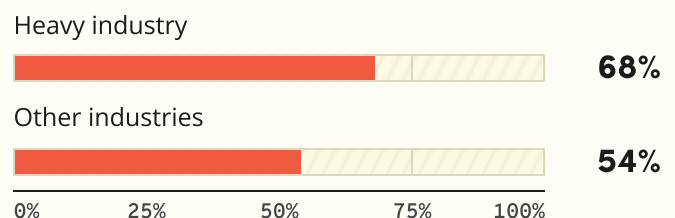


Support provided by employers



No formal support is more common in heavy industry

68% of workers surveyed in heavy industry report no formal AI support from their employer, compared with 54% in other industries.



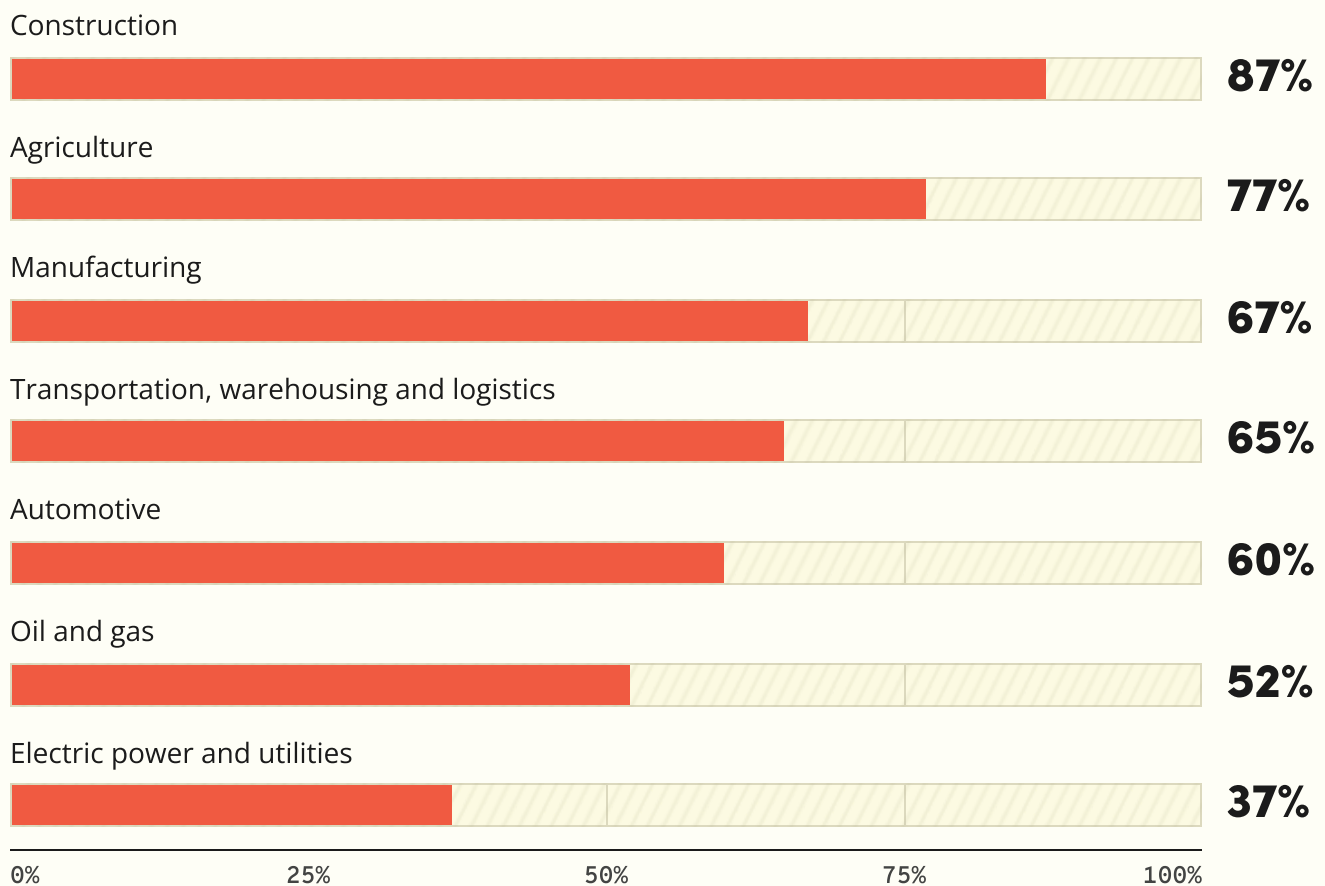
Base: all workers surveyed. “No formal support” means none of the listed support options; it does not exclude informal help. People could select more than one type of support, so the individual shares overlap and do not add to 29%. Industry groups: 746 workers in heavy industry and 364 in other industries.

Source: Angus Reid Group for Punchcard, September 2026.

AI support varies across heavy industries

Construction had the highest reported share without formal AI support among the heavy industries shown.

Workers reporting no formal employer support for AI



Respondent bases: construction 179; agriculture 77; manufacturing 117; transportation, warehousing and logistics 153; automotive 50; oil and gas 79; electric power and utilities 51.

Includes workers whether or not they use AI. No formal support can include informal briefings or discussions. Industry sample sizes vary.

Source: Angus Reid Group for Punchcard, September 2026. Employer-support question.

About the research

WHO TOOK PART

Angus Reid Group conducted this survey for Punchcard from September 2–11, 2026. Participants were working adults in Canada who belonged to the Angus Reid Forum. They worked full-time, part-time or were self-employed or contractors.

The survey included additional recruitment in heavy industries, such as manufacturing, construction, natural resources, utilities, automotive and agriculture.

WHO ANSWERED EACH QUESTION

Not every question was answered by the same group.

- AI use and employer support: workers across the survey.
- Rework, changes to roles, time savings and errors: 553 AI users who confirmed using AI in a follow-up question.
- What saved time led to: 362 AI users who reported saving time.
- Heavy-industry trust: 354 AI users in heavy industry.

Industry comparisons use the smaller groups named on each page.

WHAT THE FINDINGS TELL US

The findings describe what people reported at one point in time. They do not prove what caused those experiences or independently measure AI's value to a business.

Rework means a meaningful correction or partly redoing AI's work before using it. The survey did not measure the time spent on that rework. It cannot tell us whether rework outweighs time saved or whether a lack of employer support causes rework.

Trust includes trust with review. People who chose "not applicable" remain in the trust calculations. Some questions allowed more than one answer, so those percentages should not be added together.

ABOUT THE SAMPLE

For comparison only, a randomly selected sample of about this size would have a margin of error of roughly ± 3 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. That is not an established margin of error for this survey.



Is your AI setup creating more work than it saves?

AI can save time and still leave work to fix. We help you look at your tools, how work gets done and the support your team needs.

Talk to our team →

punchcard.io/contact/

ABOUT PUNCHCARD

Punchcard builds custom software, improves existing systems and helps teams get more from Microsoft 365.

We start with the business problem and work with your team to find a useful next step.

Appendix: More survey results

Findings for questions featured in this report.

How AI is changing people’s roles

Survey question: “Thinking about how AI has affected your role, which of the following apply to you?”

WHAT CHANGED	SHARE
At least one change to their role	44%
Regularly check or review AI-generated work	19%
AI handles tasks they used to do themselves	14%
AI usage is tracked or monitored by the employer	10%
Have new AI duties without a change in title or pay	10%
Employer or manager requires AI use at work	9%
Formal responsibility for AI governance, policy or safe use	6%
AI use is part of their performance review	4%
Manages AI agents that carry out work on their own	4%
Job title or description officially changed to reflect AI duties	1%

Employer support for AI

Survey question: “Regardless of whether you personally use AI, which of the following has your employer provided when it comes to AI at work?”

SUPPORT PROVIDED BY EMPLOYERS	SHARE
No formal AI support	64%
At least one type of formal AI support	29%
A list of approved AI tools	19%
Guidance on AI risks, privacy, security and limits	16%
Written rules on entering company or customer information into AI	16%
Informal briefing or discussion at a team, toolbox or safety meeting	9%
Formal training on using AI in their role	7%
A named person or team to ask for help	7%

553 AI users across industries answered the role-change question. Employer support was asked of all workers surveyed across industries. People could choose more than one answer. The totals for “at least one” and “no formal support” come from the research provider; do not calculate them by adding the rows. Answer labels are shortened for readability.

Source: Angus Reid Group for Punchcard, September 2026.

AI use and time savings

AI use at work

Survey question: “Which of the following AI tools do you use in your work?”

REPORTED AI USE	SHARE
Uses AI for work overall	52%
Standalone, general-purpose AI assistants or websites	32%
AI features built into general workplace software	27%
AI tools customized or configured for the organization	7%
AI built into a specialist tool for part of the job	5%
AI tools specifically developed for the organization	5%
AI features built into machinery, equipment or operational systems	4%

Asked of all workers surveyed across industries. AI-use categories can overlap.

Time savings

Survey question: “In a typical week, roughly how much working time do AI tools save you?”

REPORTED TIME SAVINGS	RESULT
Average hours saved each week by people who report saving time	6.1 hours
Say AI saves them no time at work	35%

553 AI users across industries answered the time-savings question; the 6.1-hour average uses the 362 who reported saving time. These are people’s estimates, not independently measured time savings.

Answer labels are shortened for readability.

Source: Angus Reid Group for Punchcard, September 2026.

What saved time led to, and reported errors

Outcomes of saved time

Survey question: “Thinking about the time AI saves you at work, what has it mostly turned into?”

REPORTED OUTCOME	SHARE
More free time or less pressure	39%
Nothing has changed	38%
More output or higher workload expectations	27%
Higher pay or recognition	4%

362 AI users who reported saving time answered this question. People could choose more than one answer. “Nothing has changed” describes what the saved time led to, not whether time was saved.

Errors and problems

Survey question: “Has AI-generated information or output ever led to a mistake, safety issue, or costly error in your work?”

REPORTED EXPERIENCE	SHARE
AI output caused a problem at work	18%
A minor problem or error, but nothing serious	15%
A serious problem, such as a safety incident or financial loss	3%
Errors were caught before they caused a problem	24%

553 AI users across industries answered this question. The 18% total includes both minor and serious problems. Do not add it to the 15% and 3% figures.

Answer labels are shortened for readability.

Source: Angus Reid Group for Punchcard, September 2026.

Trust in AI: all eight heavy-industry tasks

Survey question: “For each task below, how much do you trust AI to get it right without close checking?”

The responses distinguish complete trust from trust that includes review. Each row uses the same base of 354 heavy-industry AI users answering the question.

TASK	TRUST COMPLETELY	TRUST WITH REVIEW	NO TRUST	N/A
Routine procedures, product specs or how-to information	9%	68%	16%	6%
Reports, logs or job paperwork	5%	66%	22%	7%
Technical drawings, manuals or spec sheets	4%	49%	32%	15%
Safety, compliance or code requirements	3%	49%	26%	22%
Canadian codes and standards	3%	46%	23%	27%
Loads, materials, measurements or mixing/dosing ratios	6%	41%	26%	27%
Equipment faults or machinery troubleshooting	3%	39%	31%	27%
Decisions affecting worker safety or carrying physical risk	2%	27%	45%	26%

354 AI users in heavy industry answered this question. “No trust” means “Do not trust AI for this task at all.” “N/A” means “Not applicable.” People choosing N/A are included in the calculation. Rounding means rows may total 99% or 101%, and adding rounded trust figures may differ from the total calculated from the original answers.

How much AI output needs rework?

Survey question: “Of the work AI produces for you, roughly how much requires a meaningful correction or needs to be partly redone before you can use it?”

94% of AI users across industries answering this question say at least some AI output needs rework. The table shows how much of that output they report needing to correct or partly redo.

SHARE OF AI OUTPUT THAT NEEDS REWORK	SHARE OF AI USERS ANSWERING
None (0%)	6%
1–25%	37%
26–50%	25%
51–75%	16%
76–99%	11%
All of it (100%)	5%

553 AI users answered this question. 519 reported some rework and 34 reported none. The 94% describes the share of people reporting any rework, not the share of all AI output needing rework. The survey did not measure how long rework takes. Percentages are rounded.

Source: Angus Reid Group for Punchcard, September 2026.