

A third of UK employees admit to using AI covertly to get ahead at work

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New research from The Access Group, a leading provider of business management software, has revealed that 35% of workers admit to using AI covertly to do tasks they were supposed to do themselves and didn't tell their boss about, posing questions about the security of AI in the workplace.

This figure jumps to 55% among 18-29 year-olds, with over a quarter (26%) confessing they've done this 'many times'. In contrast, only 14% of over-60s admit to having used AI to gain an advantage.

The research, outlined in the 'AI at Work' report, also found that generative AI is rapidly transforming the workplace. Where AI tools are available, 59% of UK workers report reduced stress in the workplace.

The survey, involving 1,134 employees across 12 industries, suggests that AI may hold the key to reversing a 15-year rise in workplace-related anxiety. Since 2008, the number of UK workers reporting stress, depression or anxiety has more than doubled, reaching 875,000 in 2023.

Dr Phil Parker, a health & happiness expert, said:

"AI could free us for more leisure time, take care of annoying mundane tasks or give teams time to connect and support each other on a more human level.

"For people who are neurodiverse or suffering from anxiety, AI could be a gift. It could take over tasks that overwhelm us and be easily trained to support our differing needs, be tailored to the best way to communicate with us and, research has shown, has the benefit of being free of the judgement or opinions some humans bring.

"AI will be a feature of all our futures. Employers can best help staff feel part of this future through open and effective communication about both the benefits and other changes these advances will bring."

Generative AI Adoption on the Rise

The research highlights that workers in tech (74%) and finance (68%) are leading the adoption of AI tools,

with those in health, social care, and the public sector (45%) quickly catching up. In fact, 82% of respondents across all industries said AI helps them produce better work, a testament to the technology's transformative potential.

AI Confidence: Gender and Generational Gaps

Confidence in using AI also varies widely. According to the survey, men are twice as likely as women to rate their confidence with AI as 10 out of 10 (4% vs. 2%, respectively). Conversely, 3.3% of women gave themselves the lowest possible confidence score of 1, slightly higher than the 2.4% of men who did the same.

Generational differences are even more pronounced. 11% of Gen-Z (18-24 year-olds) rated themselves highly confident in using AI tools, nearly double the 6% of Gen-X (45-59 year-olds). Among older employees, confidence declines further, with just 2% of over-60s scoring themselves highly.

AI: A Tool for Productivity and Innovation

Despite these confidence gaps, AI's ability to improve workplace outcomes is broadly recognised. With 82% of employees acknowledging AI's impact on the quality of their work, it's clear that the technology is being embraced as a tool for productivity and innovation. Yet, the evolving role of AI raises questions about its integration, particularly across different industries, genders and age groups.

The findings come as The Access Group continues to roll out [Access Evo](#), its AI-enabled business software platform that operates in a secure, closed environment.

Marko Perisic, Chief Product and Engineering Officer at The Access Group said:

"The research underscores our view that employees see AI not just as a tool but as a game-changer, enabling them to shift their focus to more meaningful, human-centred tasks. By automating routine and administrative functions, AI frees up time for employees to engage in creative and strategic work, fostering both personal fulfilment and workplace innovation.

"This is why AI integration is so transformative—it enhances workflows, boosts efficiency, and reduces the fear of falling behind in an ever-evolving tech landscape. The findings make it clear: AI is not just reshaping how we work, it's redefining what we can achieve. With Access Evo, organisations can harness the power of AI to reduce employee stress, boost productivity and allow teams to focus on high-value, purpose-driven activities."

The survey also highlighted that AI is helping employees work more efficiently, with over half (55%) of respondents saying AI saves them time every week by automating repetitive tasks like data analysis and customer support. And 42% believe it saves their organisation money too.

Data security remains a critical concern despite these benefits, with nearly half of respondents citing it as a top issue.

Marko added: "We've designed our AI-enabled software experience Access Evo to operate securely within our platform in a closed environment, ensuring that sensitive data stays protected and isn't exposed to external risks."

As AI adoption continues to rise, organisations should focus on using the technology to reduce workload stress and give their people ways to work differently. By unlocking AI's full potential while ensuring data privacy, organisations can achieve their goals with confidence

For the full survey report, visit [AI at Work](#).