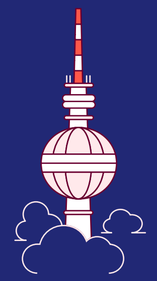
asana
Work Innovation Lab



2025 State of AI at Work: Germany

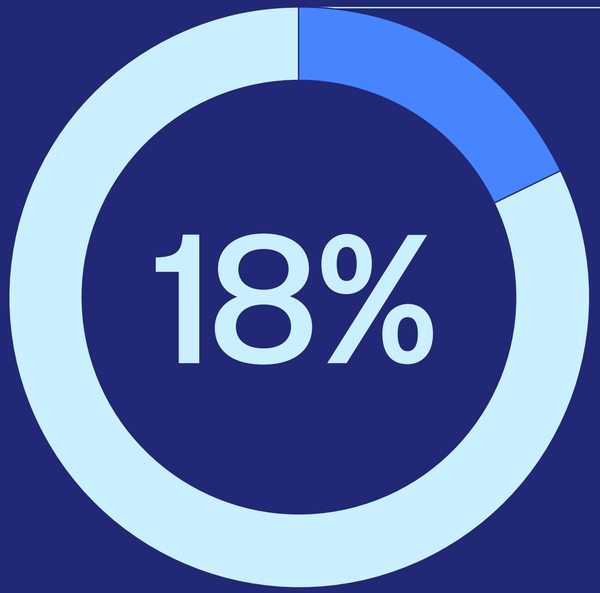
Why AI alone can't fix broken work

Authors

Asana Work Innovation Lab

Dr. Rebecca Hinds
Anna James
Dr. Mark Hoffman

AI adoption is surging. Work transformation isn't.



Only 18% of German organizations have scaled AI organization-wide.

Germany is at a turning point in its AI journey. While adoption has grown rapidly—with 67% of knowledge workers now using AI weekly compared to 56% last year—this rush to use AI is hiding a deeper problem. Despite this surge in adoption, only 18% of organizations have successfully scaled their AI initiatives across the business.

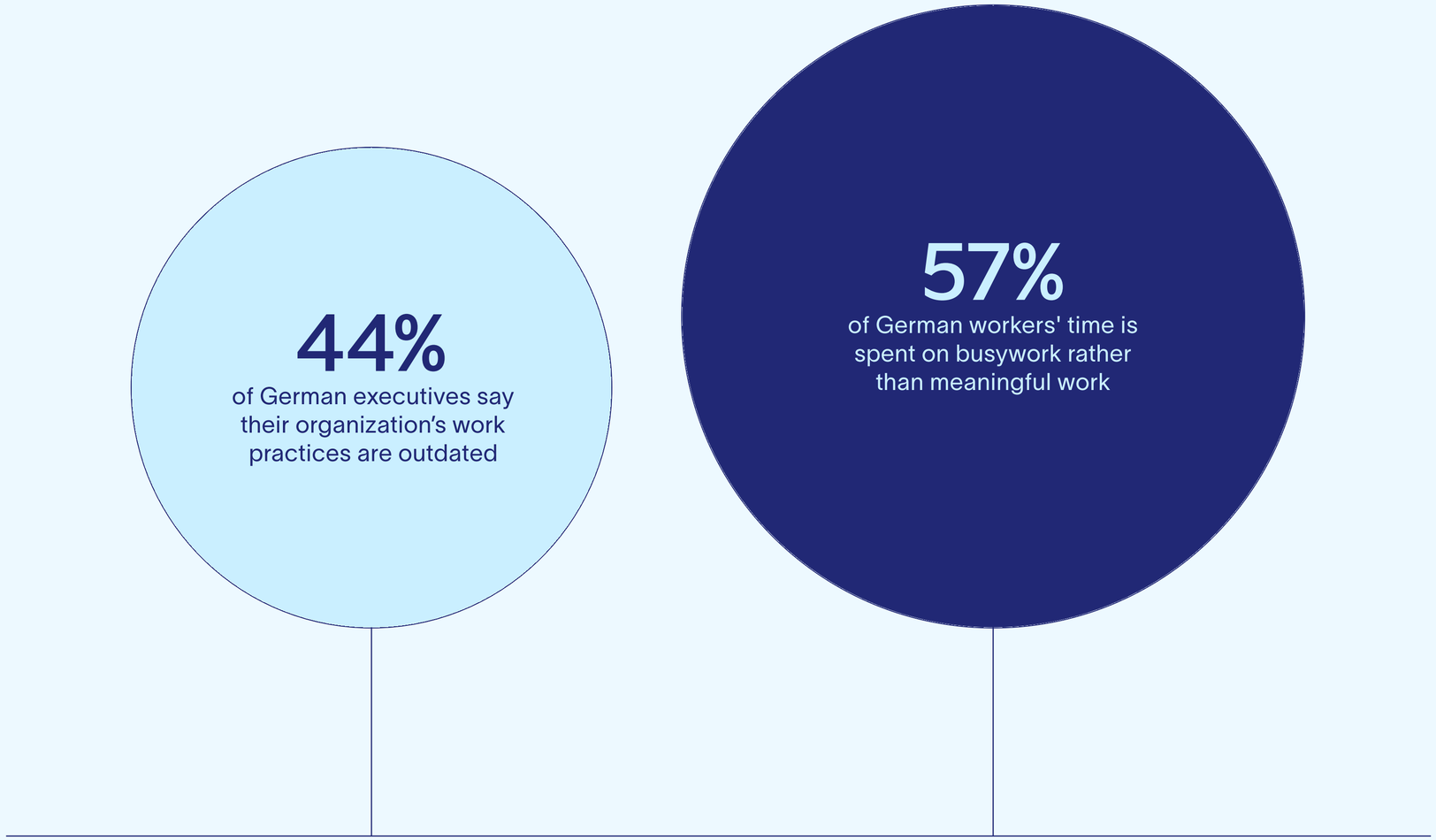
AI has the potential to fundamentally reshape how we work. But instead of rethinking workflows from the ground up, many organisations are just layering new AI tools onto outdated systems. The result? More friction for employees—not less.

This report draws on insights from 2,006 German knowledge workers across industries, roles, and seniority levels. The takeaway is clear: real results from AI start with reengineering how work works.

AI won’t fix broken work

Despite more people using AI, core workplace problems are getting worse. Currently, German workers spend well over half their workweek (57%) on busywork instead of doing meaningful work. This coordination “tax” of work existed before AI, but it's becoming more painful and critical as labor shortages grow and competition intensifies.

Organizations can’t unlock the value of AI without first fixing how work actually gets done. Right now, more than one-third (37%) of German workers say their organization’s work practices are outdated. And the cracks in the system are most visible at the top—nearly half (44%) of German executives say that their organization’s work practices are outdated.



These inefficiencies are becoming increasingly painful despite increased AI adoption. For many German organizations fundamental workplace problems are only getting worse.

Germany has built its reputation on methodical, incremental innovation—an approach that helped establish its global leadership in manufacturing, engineering, and technology. This success stems from Germany's distinctive institutional structure: concentrated corporate ownership, stable employment practices, and strong labor representation create conditions where long-term thinking flourishes and gradual improvements excel. Yet as AI rapidly reshapes work worldwide, this measured stance is becoming a strategic vulnerability.

The lesson is clear: AI alone can't fix broken work. When companies add AI to outdated processes, they just speed up the same problems. To remain competitive, German organizations need to embrace the radical transformation AI demands and move beyond their traditional incremental approach. This means investing in a coordinated work management platform, integrating collaboration systems, fixing broken workflows, and eliminating busywork in favor of skilled and strategic work and continuous learning.

The inefficiencies of these broken systems show up in how German workers spend their weekly time in 2025:

Hours spent searching for information

Hours spent using collaboration technologies

Hours spent answering colleagues' questions

Hours wasted due to unproductive meetings

[1] Hours shown are not mutually exclusive.

The workforce transformation gap

Effectively implementing AI isn't a short-term project. It requires a long-term vision—looking at least five years ahead, to 2030 and beyond. By then, German workers expect fundamental shifts in how work happens: more autonomy, faster decision-making, and better work-life balance.

But these expectations are on a collision course with today's broken work processes and rigid ways of working. Without deeper transformation, AI risks reinforcing the very inefficiencies it's meant to solve.

Skill shift ahead

62% of workers believe continuous skill development will become job-critical by 2030

Yet Only **42%** have set specific AI skill development goals.

Strategic intent, operational drag

46% expect AI to make their work more strategic

Yet **57%** of their time is still spent on low-value work activities—like chasing approvals through email chains or sitting in status meetings.

The AI literacy gap

52% believe their organization will require basic AI literacy

Yet Only **18%** of companies have dedicated AI training budgets.

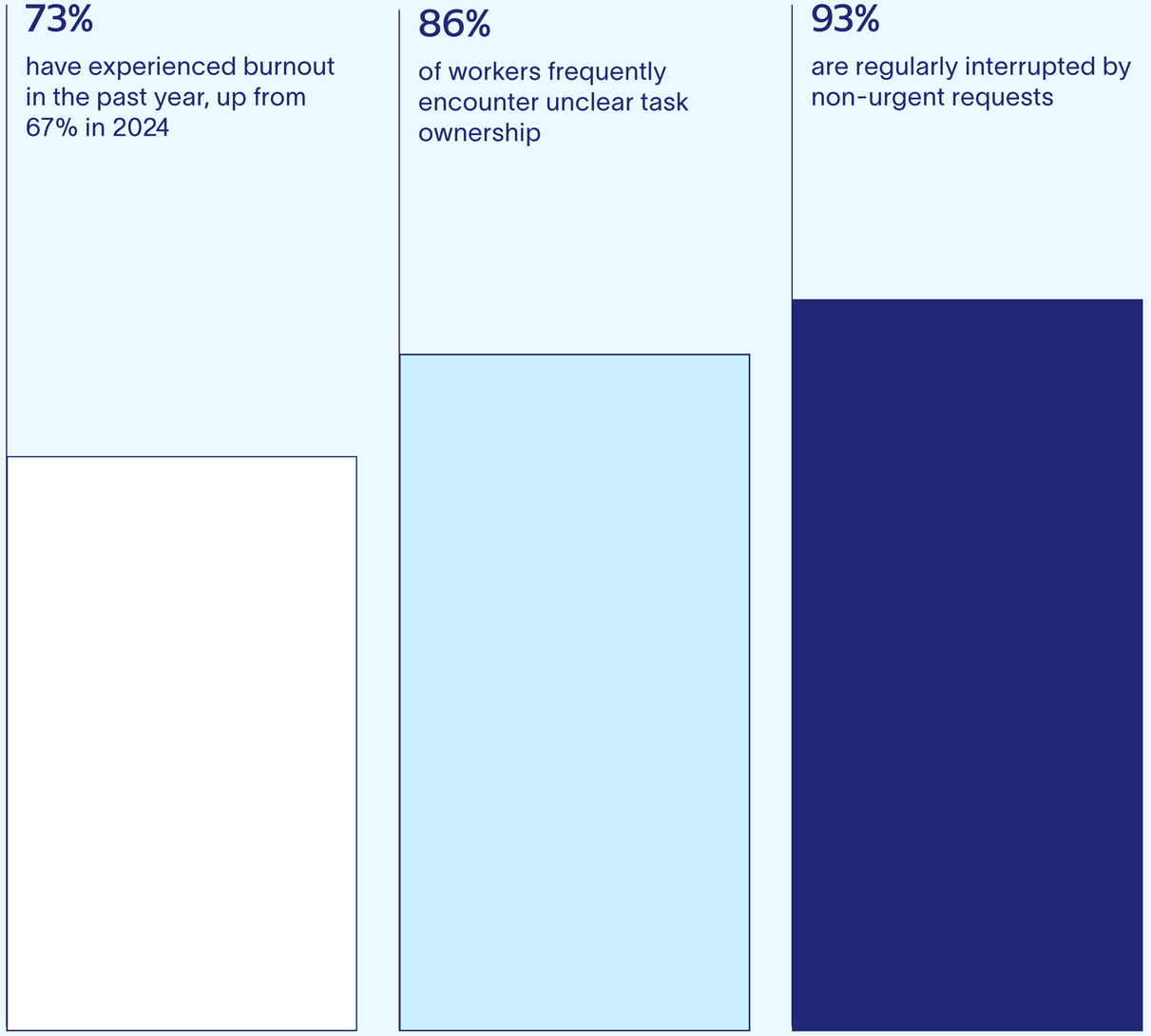
These predictions take on greater urgency when viewed through the lens of Germany's demographic challenges. With one of Europe's oldest populations and lowest birth rates, the German labor market faces mounting pressure.

71% of German executives point to skill shortages as a major growth risk, making effective AI implementation not just a competitive advantage but essential for Germany's economic future.

German organizations need AI to offset labor shortages, yet they lack the operational infrastructure to implement it effectively. While 46% of German workers believe AI will be essential for addressing skill gaps, most organizations are building on shaky operational foundations.

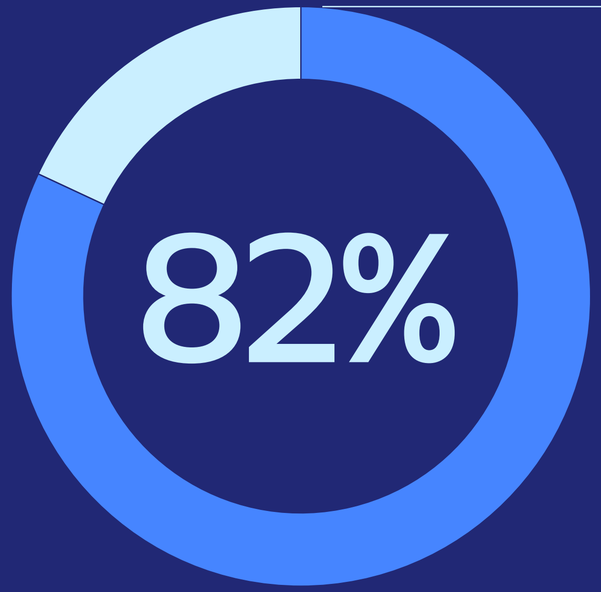
These issues don't just sap productivity—they erode organizations' capacity to adapt to the demographic and technological changes ahead. To meet this challenge, Germany needs more than tech adoption; it needs a distinctly German approach that combines innovation with the kind of systematic, precision-oriented work redesign the country is known for.

The foundation is missing



The adoption gap:

High usage, low integration



82% of German workers say their organization has yet to move past the pilot stage of AI implementation, failing to scale the technology.

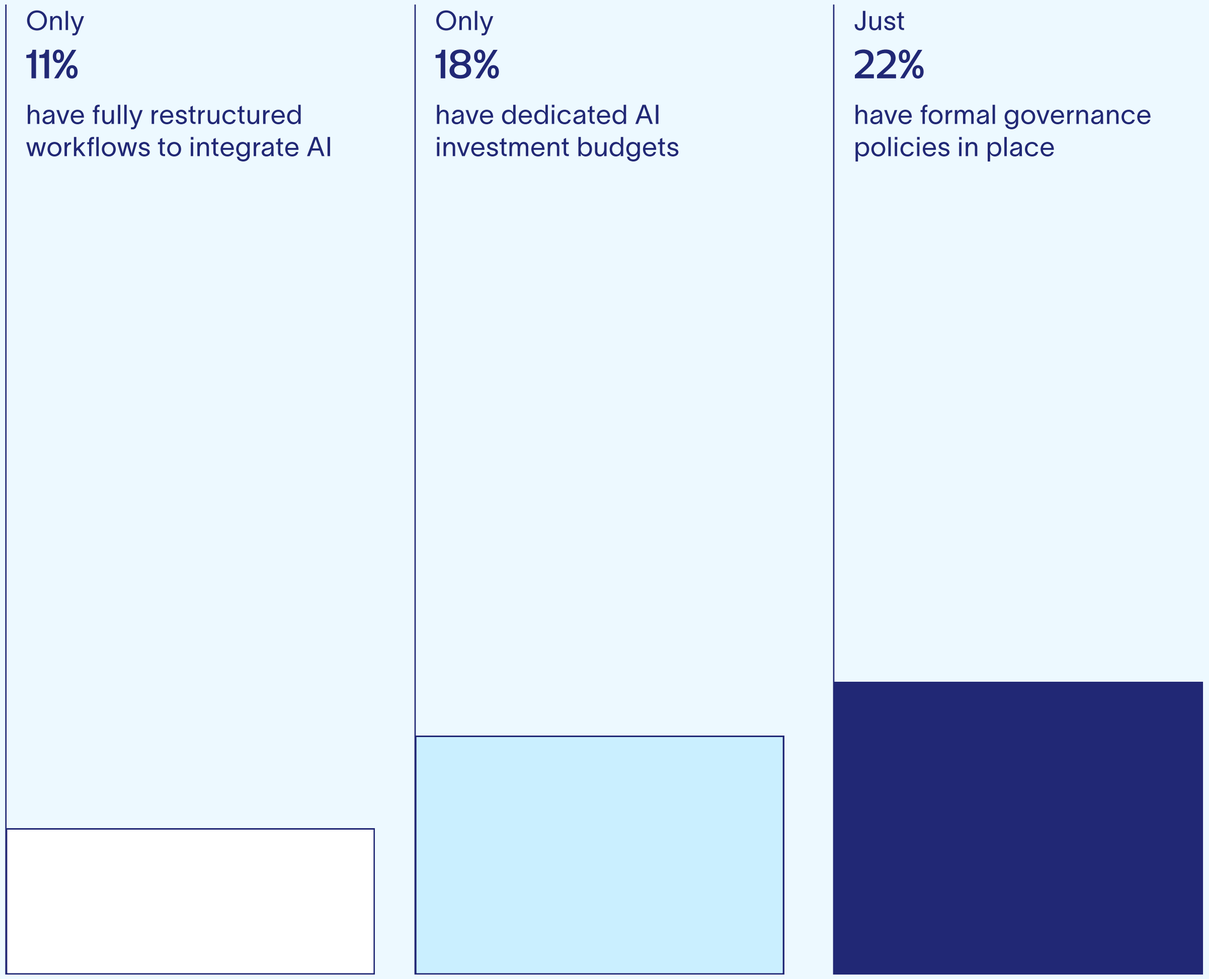
Despite two thirds of German workers using AI weekly (67%), most organizations are still in the early stages of AI implementation. This creates a widening gap between individual experimentation and true organizational change.

Where German organizations stand on AI implementation

AI implementation stage	% of organizations
Stage 1: No current implementation plans or strategies	22%
Stage 2: Some interest, but no formal plans	25%
Stage 3: Formal plans developed, not yet implemented	18%
Stage 4: Pilot implementation in select workflows	17%
Stage 5: Scaled implementation with measurement and optimization	18%

This challenge is particularly striking given Germany's international standing—ranking eighth worldwide and fourth in Europe on the 2024 Oxford Insights' AI Readiness Index.

So what's holding German organizations back? In most cases, it's not a lack of ambition, but a lack of foundational innovation. Many companies are betting on AI to transform their business, but haven't redesigned how the business actually runs.



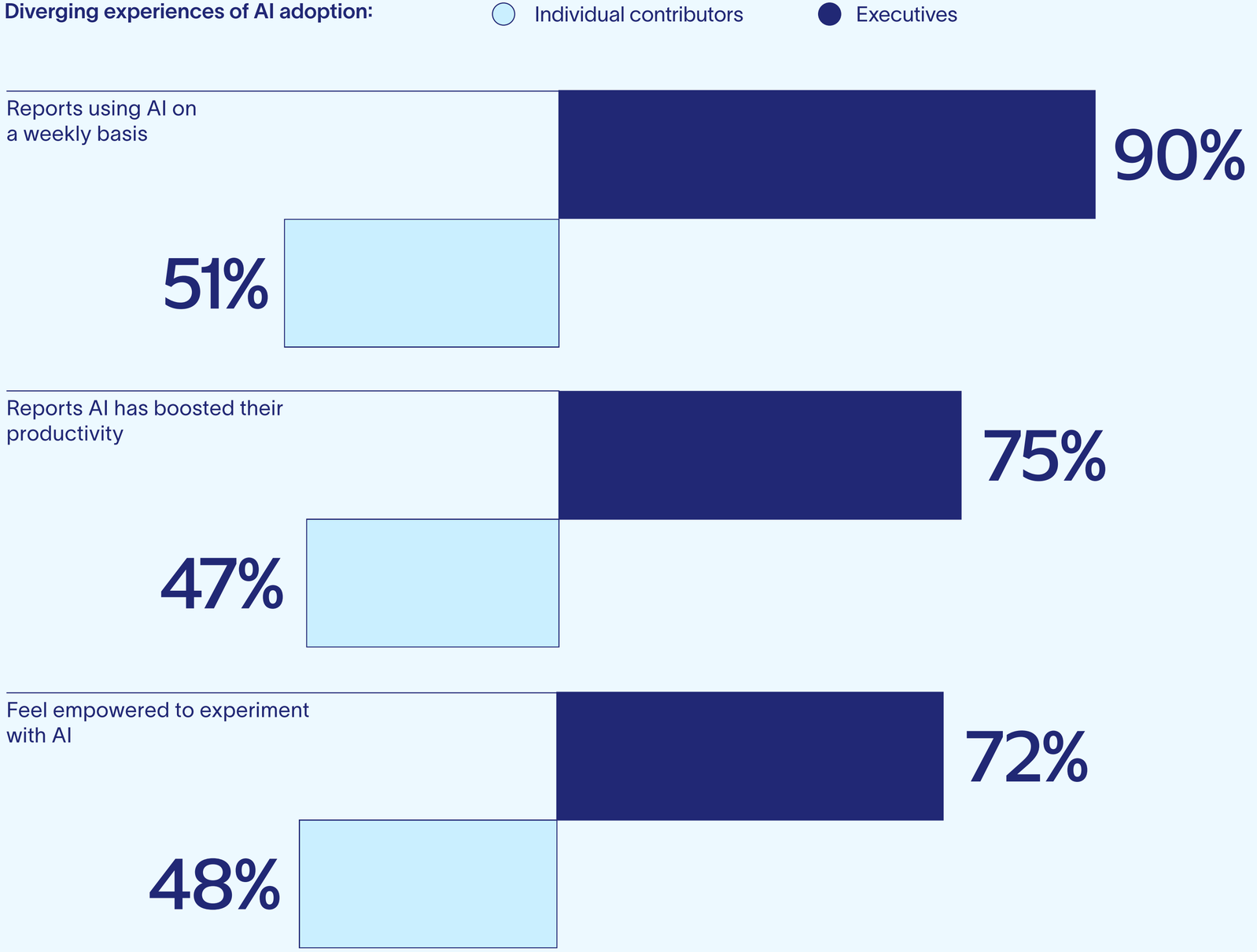
In too many cases, AI is being layered onto outdated systems, inefficient workflows, and unclear decision-making structures—then expected to deliver breakthrough results. But perhaps the most overlooked barrier is the growing perception gap between executives and employees.

While executives are charging ahead on AI strategy, many employees are left out of the loop. The result is a "two-speed workplace" where leaders see and want transformation—while frontline teams still face the same old friction, now with an added layer of complexity.

This disconnect poses a serious risk—especially in Germany, where collaboration, precision, and worker participation are cultural cornerstones. Without bringing everyone along, AI will remain a top-down initiative rather than a company-wide advantage.

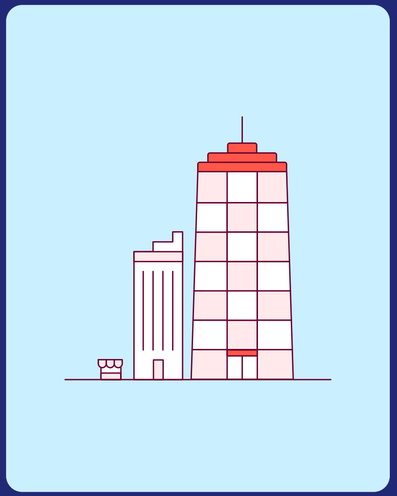
But a small group of German organizations is showing what's possible. These leaders aren't just using AI—they're rethinking how work gets done. And the results aren't incremental. They're transformative.

Diverging experiences of AI adoption:



AI competitive advantage:

Why AI Scalers win—and everyone else stalls



Our research shows a clear split between two types of organizations:

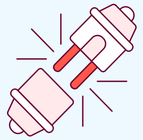
AI Scalers:
These organisations have implemented AI across multiple workflows, backed by systems for measurement, coordination, and continuous improvement.

Nonscalers:
These organisations have experimented with AI and adopted it in pockets—but they haven't been able to scale it across their workforce.

The biggest difference between them? AI Scalers start by rethinking the work itself. They're 110% more likely to be fully redesigning workflows to integrate AI. Nonscalers, on the other hand, try to wedge AI into outdated systems and hope for transformation. It doesn't work.

AI Scalers don't just buy new tools—they use AI to solve the root causes of inefficiency across their organizations. These root causes show up as what we call productivity "taxes": the hidden costs teams pay just to get basic work done.

The four productivity taxes organizations face



The Connectivity Tax
Only 30% of German workers say their teams collaborate effectively across functions. The Connectivity Tax is the cost of disconnection—when people, tools, and teams work in silos. It leads to misalignment, duplicated work, and too much time spent coordinating work.

The Velocity Tax
Only 26% of German workers say information and ideas move quickly between teams in their organization. The Velocity Tax is the drag of bottlenecks—manual handoffs, slow approvals, and outdated tech that stall progress.

The Resilience Tax
Only 35% of German workers are confident in their organization's ability to adapt to unexpected challenges. The Resilience Tax hits when rigid systems, inflexible workflows, and unclear priorities leave teams unable to respond to change.

The Capacity Tax
87% of German workers say they've experienced an unmanageable workload in the past six months. The Capacity Tax is the toll of overload—too many meetings, tools, and distractions that prevent employees from doing their best, most important work.

Breaking free: How AI Scalers cut productivity taxes with AI

As they tackle these four productivity taxes, AI Scalers adopt a fundamentally different approach and mindset. Nonscalers bolt AI onto existing dysfunction and hope for change. Scalers use AI to rethink workflows from the ground up. It's not about doing the same work faster—it's about changing the way work happens.

Productivity Tax	What Nonscalers do	What AI Scalers do
Connectivity Tax	Bolt AI onto fragmented tools and hope it creates alignment across workflows, systems, and teams.	Build a system that actually coordinates work—then use AI to manage the flow of work and align people, tools, and priorities in real-time.
Velocity Tax	Automate broken workflows and hope things speed up.	Redesign workflows to eliminate bottlenecks and delays—then use AI to automate approvals, flag blockers, and speed up decisions.
Resilience Tax	Embed AI in isolated pockets, leaving systems brittle and reactive.	Integrate AI into core systems and workflows—so it can spot risks early, adjust plans dynamically, and help teams adapt in real time.
Capacity Tax	Use AI to squeeze more out of already maxed-out teams.	Use AI to eliminate busywork—and then redirect it to support high-impact efforts like strategy, creativity, and decision-making.

Solving the Connectivity Tax with AI

The Connectivity Tax is the cost of disconnection—when people, tools, and teams work in silos.

Most German businesses don't have a tool shortage—they have a coordination problem. In most cases, they are overflowing with collaboration apps. But when systems are fragmented, teams become fragmented too. What's missing isn't another app—it's a coordination layer: a unified technology stack that connects cross-functional teams, making it easier to align on priorities, share progress, and move work forward, together. Without that connective tissue, things start to fall apart.

How the Connectivity Tax shows up in German organizations:

Only
30%
of German workers say their teams collaborate effectively across functions

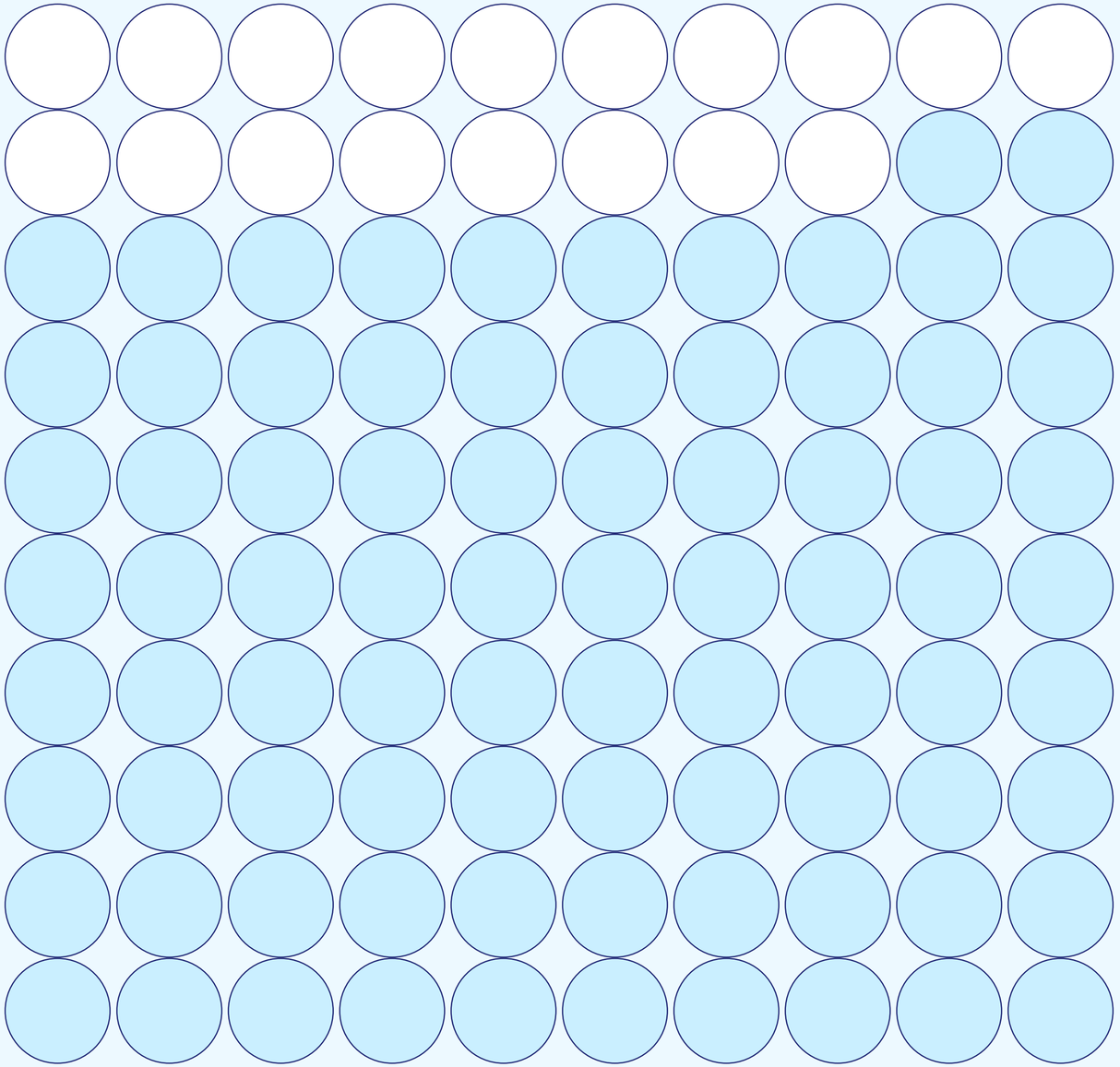
53%
experience regular cross-team miscommunication

50%
face unclear task or project ownership

50%
of workers struggle to find the information they need each week

When AI is layered onto a fragmented foundation, it doesn't solve the coordination problem—it magnifies it. AI may surface more tasks, more updates, and more data—but without a coordination layer, all that information stays trapped in silos. Different teams see different pieces of the puzzle, and there's no clear way to connect it all into coordinated action.

That's why so many organizations feel stuck. They're bolting AI onto systems that weren't designed to coordinate work across teams.



82%

of workers prefer their organization to adopt a standardized set of collaboration tools (up 14% from 2024).

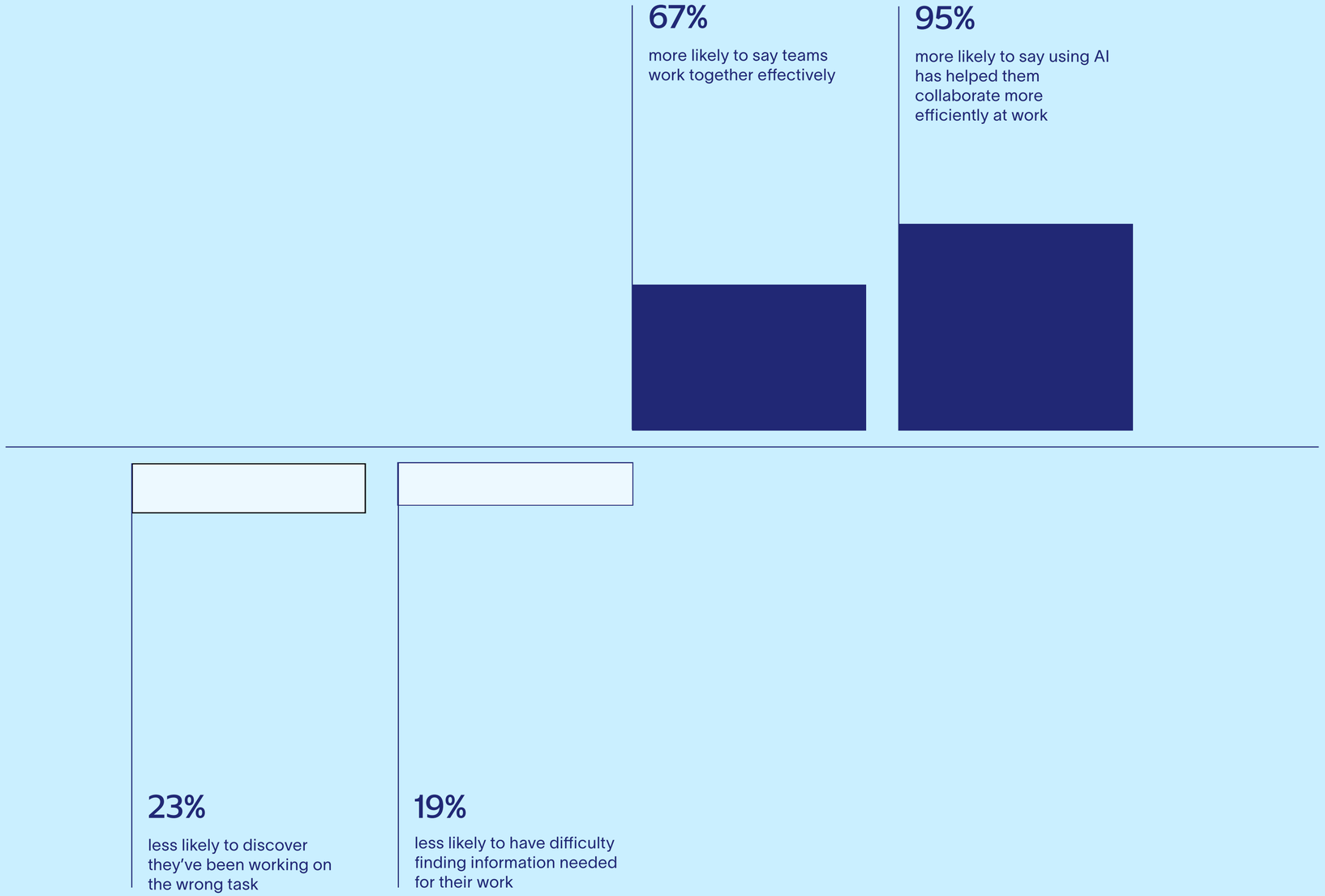
AI Scalers take a different approach

They don't just plug in AI—they use it to reinforce how work flows across teams. They improve how people share information, stay aligned, and execute—across tools, roles, and functions.

Here's how AI Scalers use AI to cut the Connectivity Tax:

- **Connect people to the information they need—automatically:** Instead of digging through docs, inboxes, or chat threads, AI surfaces the most relevant updates, tasks, and insights—based on what someone's working on and who they're working with
- **Keep teams aligned through shared, real-time visibility**: AI powers dynamic dashboards that show who's doing what, where work is blocked, and what needs attention—so teams don't rely on status meetings or Slack check-ins to stay on track.
- **Turn unstructured communication into structured, searchable knowledge:** AI transforms meeting transcripts, chat threads, and ad hoc updates into organized records—so information isn't just captured, it's accessible and actionable across teams.

Compared to Nonscalers, AI Scalers are:



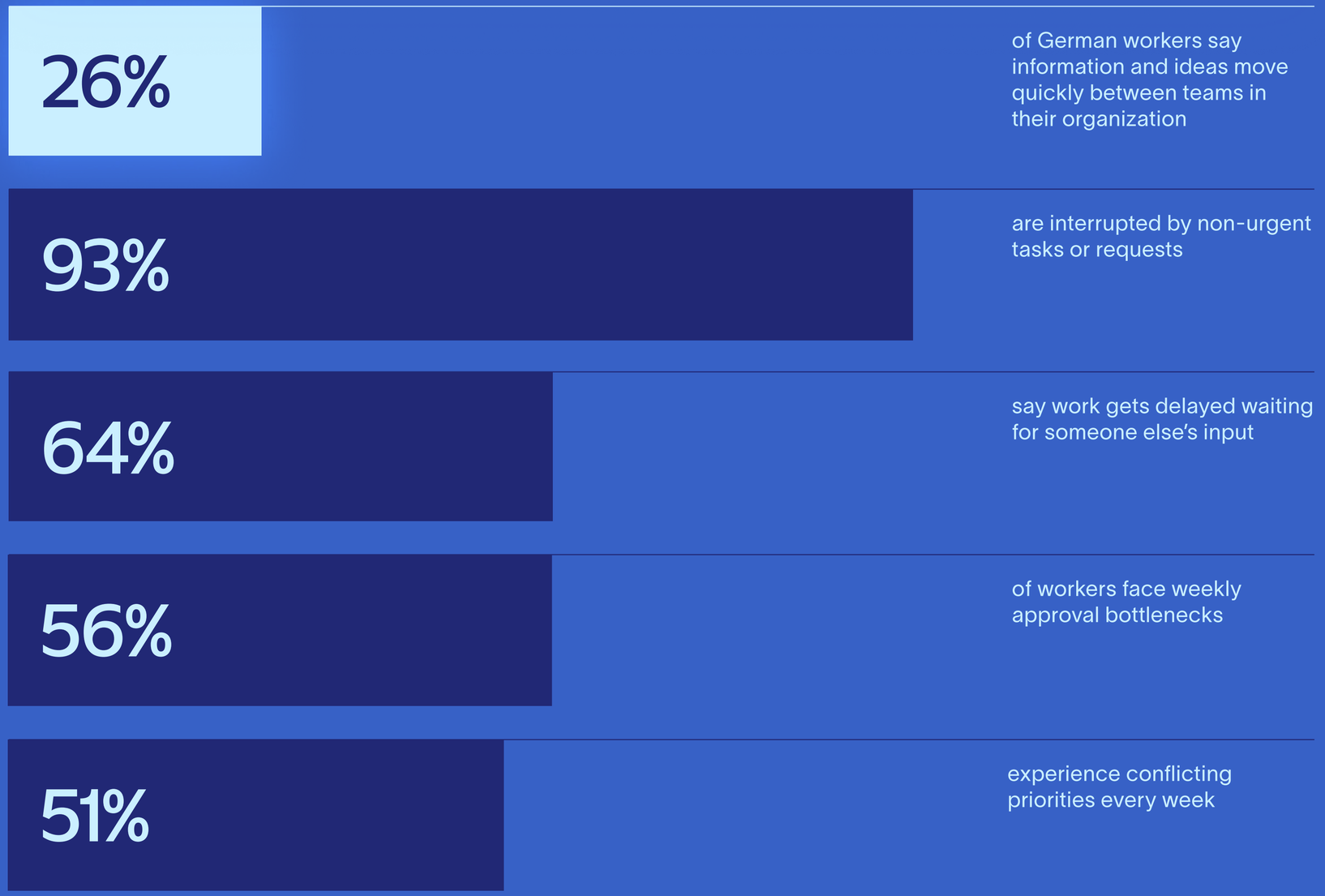
Solving the Velocity Tax with AI

The Velocity Tax is the drag of bottlenecks—manual handoffs, slow approvals, and outdated tech that stall progress.

In today's business environment, speed isn't a luxury—it's a requirement. But many organizations are stuck with systems that can't keep up. Ideas stall in approval queues. Projects wait for feedback. And execution grinds to a halt.

> If workflows are broken, AI doesn't solve the problem—it just helps dysfunction move faster. And when dysfunction moves faster, work slows down.

How the Velocity Tax shows up in German organizations



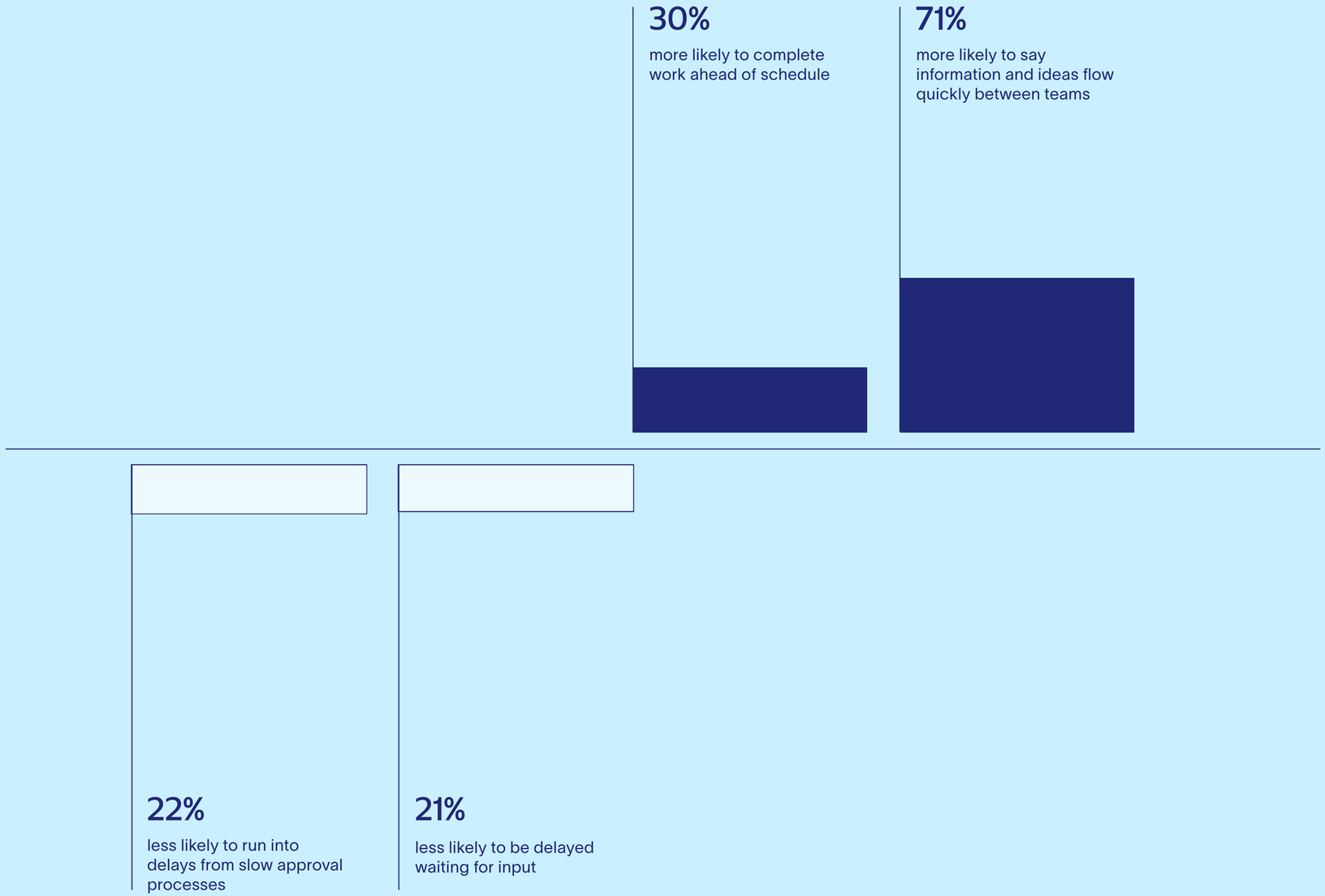
AI Scalers take a different approach

AI Scalers start by reworking workflows to remove bottlenecks and delays—then use AI to accelerate the right things: decisions, handoffs, and execution. They use AI to automate routine approvals, flag potential blockers before they cause problems, and route work to the right people at the right time.

Here's how AI Scalers use AI to cut the Velocity Tax:

- **Automate routine approvals with pre-set logics:** AI clears common roadblocks by auto-approving repetitive, low-risk tasks based on defined rules. That way, managers can skip the rubber-stamping—and keep momentum high.
- **Prioritize work dynamically based on urgency and dependencies:** AI continuously analyzes what matters most—surfacing critical tasks and shifting focus in real time. This helps teams stay aligned and avoid wasting time on low-impact work.
- **Intelligently route work to the right people at the right time:** With visibility into workflows, capacity, and timelines, AI gets the right input from the right person—at the exact moment it's needed. No more chasing sign-offs or reworking decisions made too late.

Compared to Nonscalers, AI Scalers are:



Solving the Resilience Tax with AI

The Resilience Tax hits when rigid systems, inflexible workflows, and unclear priorities leave teams unable to respond to change.

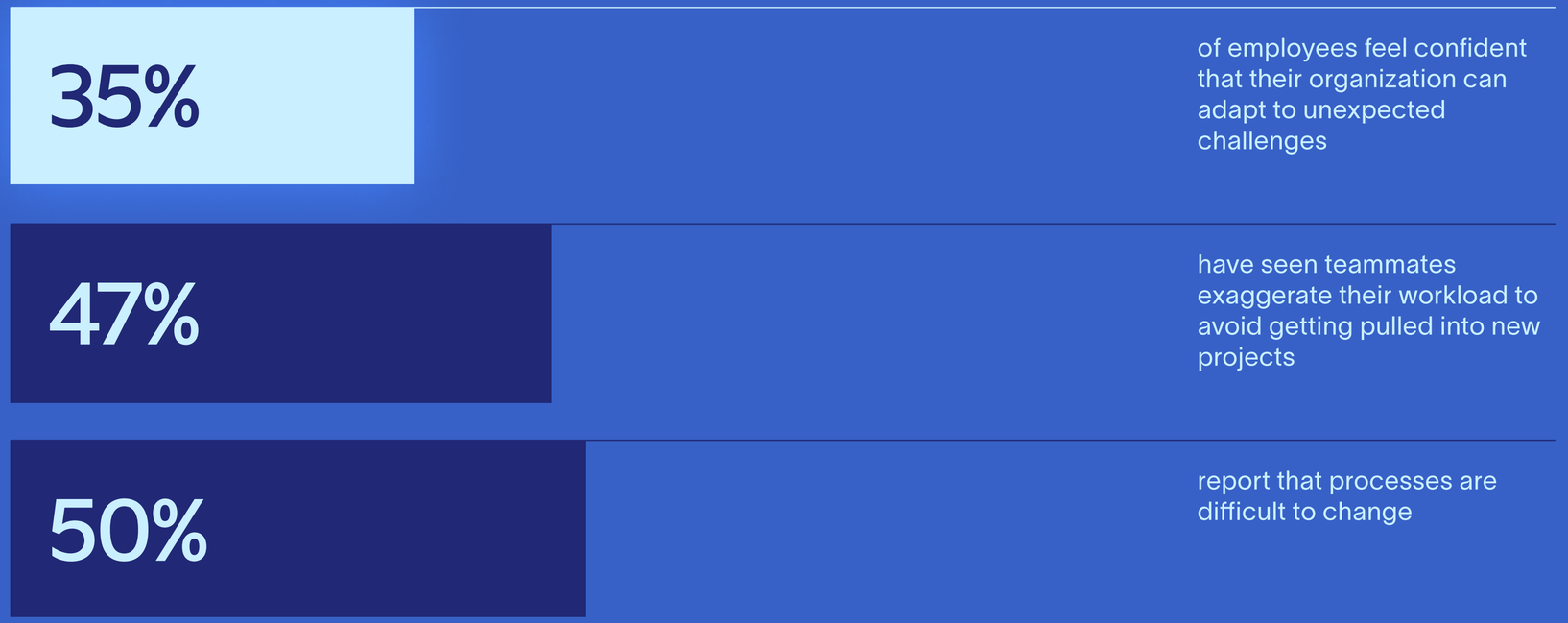
Most organizations aren't built to adapt. In a world of shifting priorities, constant reorgs, and market volatility, resilience isn't a nice-to-have—it's a must-have. But many teams are still operating in systems built for predictability, not agility.

AI Scalers take a different approach

Before adopting AI, AI scalars rebuild the system to bend, flex, and adapt as priorities shift. That means creating a single source of truth, unifying work in one platform, and designing workflows that can flex as priorities shift. Only then do they layer on AI.

When AI is applied to a brittle system, it doesn't create flexibility—it just cracks faster under pressure.

How the Resilience Tax shows up in German organizations



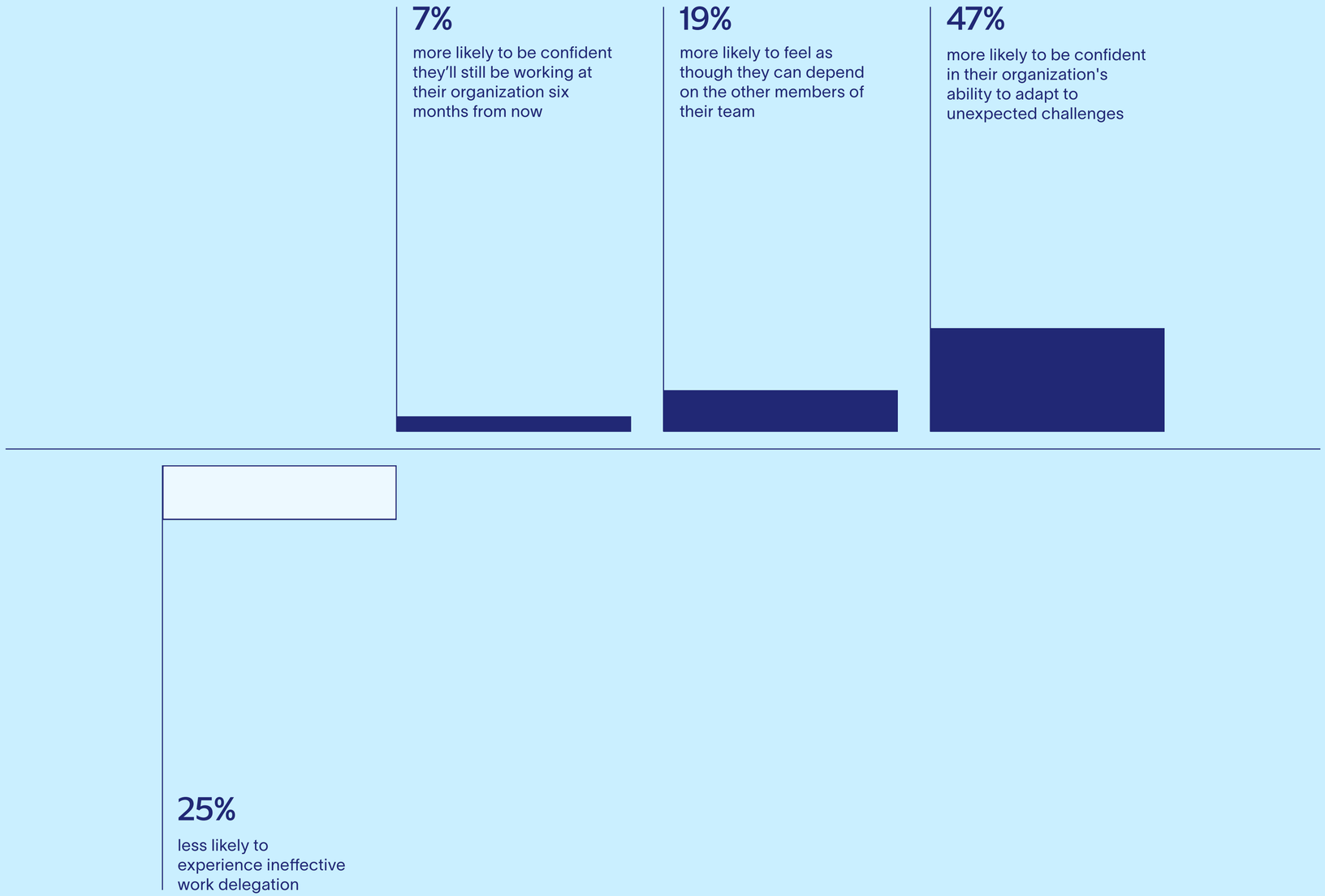
AI Scalers take a different approach

Before adopting AI, AI scalers rebuild the system to bend, flex, and adapt as priorities shift. That means creating a single source of truth, unifying work in one platform, and designing workflows that can flex as priorities shift. Only then do they layer on AI.

Here's how AI Scalers use AI to cut the Resilience Tax:

- **Preserve institutional knowledge:** AI captures the context behind decisions, tracks how workflows evolve, and stores that knowledge in an accessible way. So when roles change or team members leave, continuity doesn't break—teams can pick up right where they left off.
- **Adjust priorities in real time:** AI monitors shifting goals, workloads, and capacity—helping teams adapt dynamically. Resources are reallocated, timelines updated, and focus re-centered without scrambling or delays.
- **Enable responsive coordination:** AI gives leaders a real-time view of who's overloaded, what's at risk, and where help is needed most. That visibility allows teams to rebalance work quickly and keep critical priorities moving forward.

Compared to workers at Nonscalers, workers at AI Scalers are:



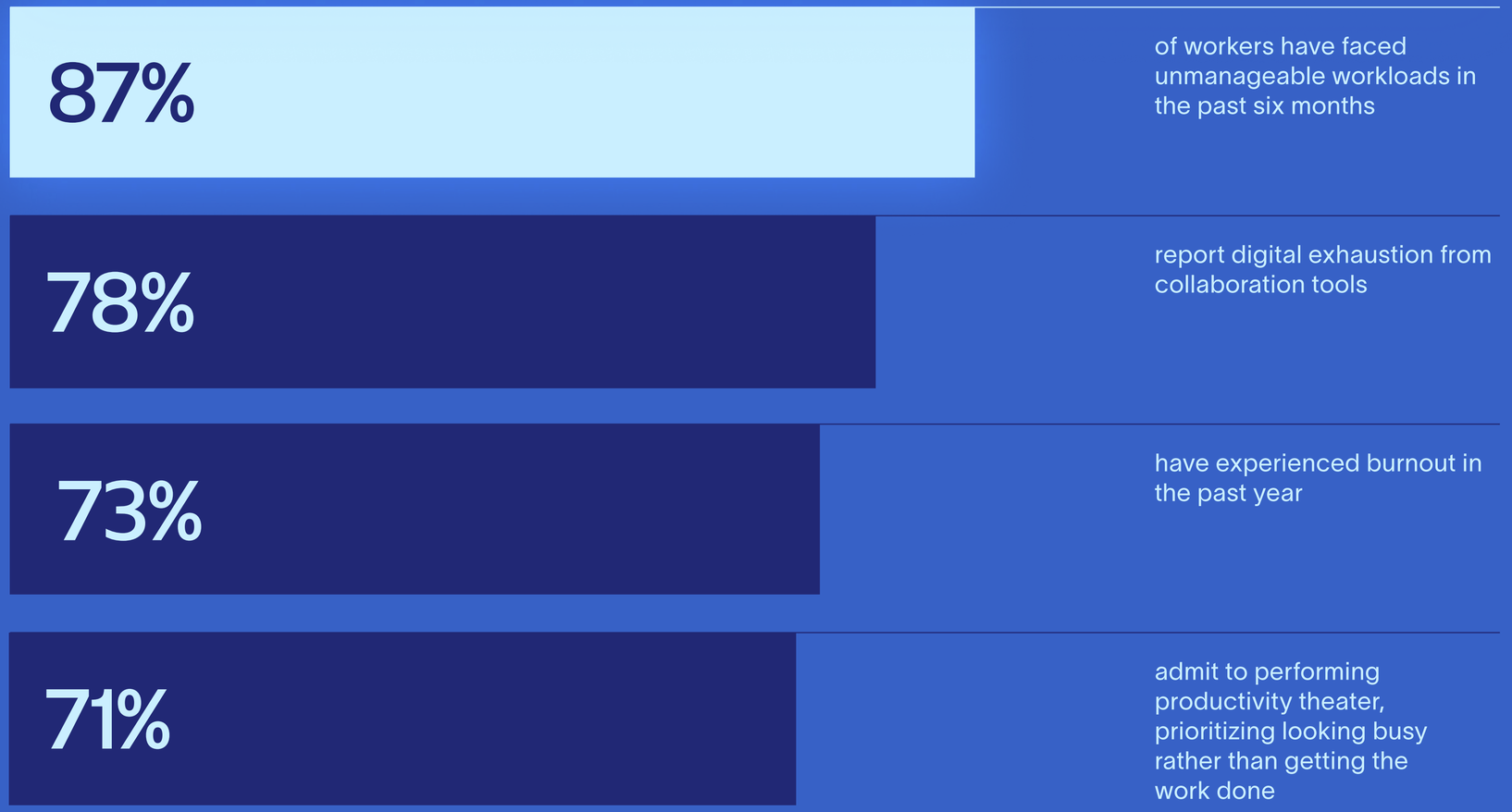
Solving the Capacity Tax with AI

The Capacity Tax is the toll of overload—too many meetings, tools, and distractions that prevent employees from doing their best, most important work.

Today's workers are overwhelmed and exhausted. Burnout is rising. Focus is fractured. And calendars are packed with more and more unproductive meetings.

When AI is layered onto a broken system, it doesn't lighten the load—it just pushes people to run faster on the same hamster wheel.

How the Capacity Tax shows up in German organizations



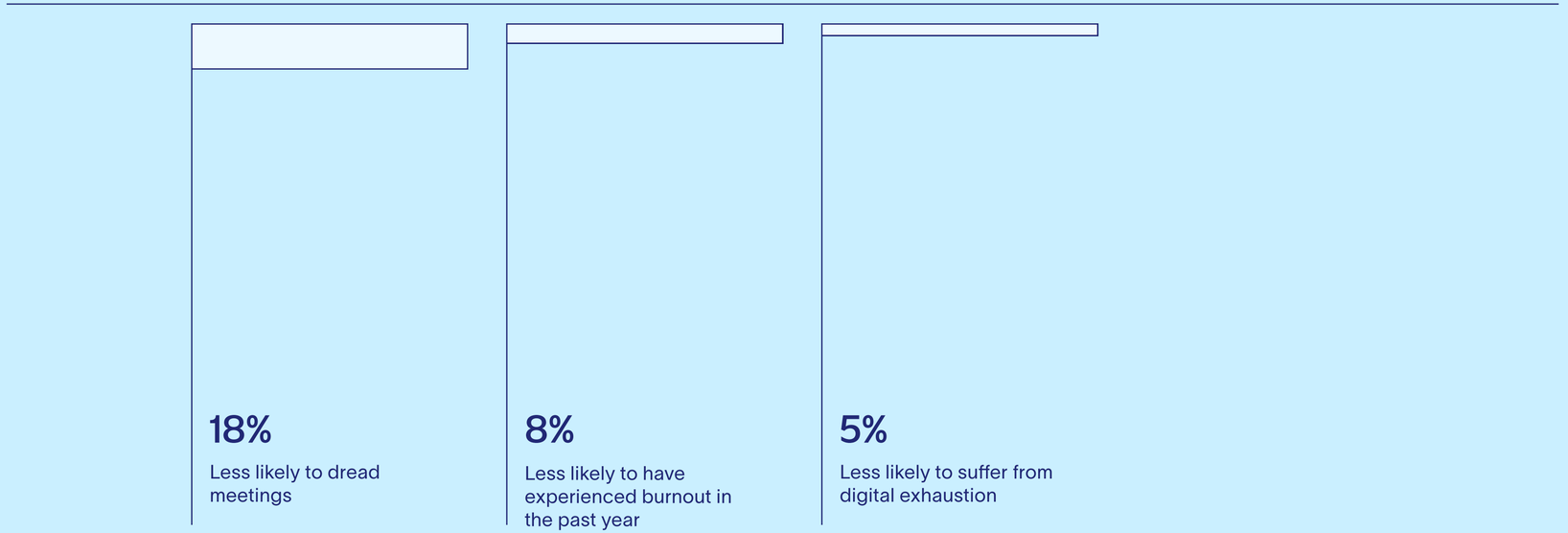
AI Scalers take a different approach

AI Scalers don’t use AI to squeeze more from burned-out teams—they use it to protect capacity, preserve focus, and prevent overload before it starts.

Here’s how AI Scalers use AI to cut the Capacity Tax:

- **Eliminate low-value tasks:** AI handles repetitive admin, status updates, and routine communications automatically—reducing context-switching and freeing teams to focus on work that actually moves the needle.
- **Protect focus time:** Smart scheduling and notification controls help teams carve out time for deep work. AI prioritizes work based on urgency and impact—so people spend more time thinking, and less time reacting.
- **Balance workloads in real time:** By analyzing capacity, complexity, and shifting priorities, AI helps leaders distribute work sustainably and flag burnout risks before they become real problems.

Compared to workers at Nonscalers, workers at AI Scalers are:



The AI adoption spectrum:

Meet the four personas shaping AI’s impact

Even in organizations successfully scaling AI, employees are using and approaching the technology in vastly different ways. Our research identifies four distinct personas that influence how AI transforms (or doesn't transform) organizations.

Transformers see AI as a teammate—not just something to offload tasks onto, but something to work with—so they engage with it more intentionally. They experiment, iterate, and adapt their workflows to make the most of what AI can do.

They're not asking, "How can AI help me do this faster?"

They're asking, "What should this work look like if AI is part of the team from the start?

Transformers are five times more likely than Skeptics to see AI as a teammate, not just a tool.

Understanding each persona—how they think, how they engage with AI, and what they need to get more value from it—is essential to scaling AI across the organization.

The four AI personas	% of knowledge workers	Role in AI adoption
Skeptics	14%	Resisting and disengaged
Traditionalists	20%	Cautiously experimenting
Integrators	29%	Embedding AI into workflows
Transformers	36%	Redesigning work processes to maximise AI's value

The Skeptics

"This AI thing will blow over."

Who they are: Skeptics don't trust AI, don't use it, and don't see the point. To them, AI feels like a top-down mandate that benefits leadership more than frontline workers. Some tried it once and found it lacking. Others see it as a threat to their role or routine. Either way, the result is the same: disengagement.

Key characteristics	Why it matters
Concentrated on the front lines: Most common among individual contributors (18%)	AI resistance is highest at the front lines—where adoption is often expected but least supported.
Minimal usage: 53% of Skeptics aren't using AI at all, and only 25% are using AI on a weekly basis	This isn't passive avoidance—it's active skepticism. Lack of trust leads to disengagement—which only reinforces their doubts.
Disillusioned: 46% would roll back AI development if they could	This isn't hesitation—it's active pushback. Disappointing early experiences have led them to dismiss AI as overhyped.
Little perceived career relevance: 57% don't believe job security depends on adapting to AI (50% more likely than the average worker)	Without a clear link to career growth, there's no incentive to engage—and some fear it may make them more replaceable.
Lack of learning goals: Only 21% have set learning goals around AI (50% less likely than average)	Mired in skepticism, they don't set learning goals—because they don't see the point. Why invest time in something they've already decided won't deliver?
Low tolerance for failure: 16% stop using AI after their first unsuccessful attempt	One misstep is all it takes. Skeptics rarely give AI a second chance—locking in their resistance.

Skeptics save just 6.5 hours per week from using AI—while still meaningful, it's the lowest of any group. When Skeptics do use AI, they reallocate the time they save to taking breaks or personal time (22% more of their saved time than average workers), reflecting their narrow view of AI as merely a transactional tool.

In contrast, they underinvest in areas that could create real business impact, dedicating 43% less of their saved time to strategic thinking, 31% less to strategic planning, and 30% less to project management compared to the average worker. This allocation pattern reveals their fundamental disconnect from AI's strategic potential—they see it as a way to reduce workload rather than transform how work creates value.

How to drive more value for Skeptics with AI	
01 **Make adoption feel easy, not risky:**	Traditionalists aren’t trying to reinvent their workflows—they’re trying to reduce friction. Focus on micro-upgrades like ready-made workflows, reusable prompt templates, or smart task suggestions that fit naturally into their routine.
02 **Embed AI into familiar rituals:**	Help Traditionalists build AI into routines they already trust. For example, automatically draft meeting summaries after standups or generate status updates without manual effort. When AI shows up in places they already work, it feels like support—not disruption or a threat.
03 **Create a safe space to experiment:**	Traditionalists often worry about “breaking” something or using AI the “wrong” way. Give them low-stakes environments—like sandboxes or non-critical team workflows—where they can test, tweak, and learn without pressure. A space where it’s safe to fail builds confidence faster than any formal training module.

The Traditionalists

> "I'll use AI—just don't ask me to change."

Who they are: Traditionalists are pragmatic. They're open to AI—but only on their terms. They gravitate toward safe, intuitive, low-risk use cases that deliver quick wins without forcing them to change how they work. Think email drafts, meeting notes, and content summaries. If AI makes their job easier, they're in. But if it asks them to rethink their workflow or learn new skills? That's where they hit pause.

Key characteristics	Why it matters
Distributed across role levels: 27% of individual contributors, 27% of managers, and 23% of executives	Traditionalists span the org chart—from executives to frontline roles—suggesting their mindset is driven more by personal comfort and perceived control than by seniority or function.
Moderate persistence: 44% give up after 2-3 failed attempts	Traditionalists are more patient with AI compared to Skeptics but if AI doesn't deliver quickly, they revert to manual methods—highlighting that their commitment to AI is conditional on its speed and effectiveness.
Selective AI use: 66% use AI weekly, focused on email (25%) and summaries (23%)	Traditionalists have found their AI comfort zone with content generation tasks. These low-risk, high-reward uses don't disrupt workflows—but also don't lead to deeper transformation.
Anxious upskilling: 43% of Traditionalists feel overwhelmed by the speed at which they need to learn how to use AI	They're making cautious efforts to build their AI skills, but limited AI training restricts how deeply they integrate the technology.

Traditionalists save about 11 hours per week using AI, with 62% reporting productivity gains. But because they're using AI to do more of what they've always done, not to work differently, they're not maximizing those gains.

Traditionalists dedicate 13% more of their time saved using AI to research and information gathering than the average worker—focusing on collecting information rather than applying it strategically. Their above-average investment in creative thinking (7% more of their saved time compared to the average worker) is promising, but they still underinvest in strategic thinking (3% less of their saved time compared to the average worker). This focus on efficiency rather than transformation reveals their comfort: using AI as a faster version of existing tools rather than as a catalyst for new approaches to work.

How to drive more value for Traditionalists with AI	
01 **Make adoption feel easy, not risky:**	Traditionalists aren’t trying to reinvent their workflows—they’re trying to reduce friction. Focus on micro-upgrades like ready-made workflows, reusable prompt templates, or smart task suggestions that fit naturally into their routine.
02 **Embed AI into familiar rituals:**	Help Traditionalists build AI into routines they already trust. For example, automatically draft meeting summaries after standups or generate status updates without manual effort. When AI shows up in places they already work, it feels like support—not disruption or a threat.
03 **Create a safe space to experiment:**	Traditionalists often worry about “breaking” something or using AI the “wrong” way. Give them low-stakes environments —like sandboxes or non-critical team workflows—where they can test, tweak, and learn without pressure. A space where it’s safe to fail builds confidence faster than any formal training module.

The Integrators

"AI's not a hack—it's how I work now."

Who they are: Unlike Skeptics and Traditionalists, Integrators have moved beyond experimentation—embedding AI into the core of how they work. AI is built into their daily processes, not layered on top. It's not an afterthought—it's foundational to how they coordinate tasks, collaborate across teams, and drive results. For Integrators, AI isn't a side tool. It's part of the system.

Key characteristics	Why it matters
Clustered in leadership roles: 34% of executives and 37% of managers	Integrators are more common in leadership roles that oversee teams and systems. That's one reason why they're more likely to value AI that is embedded in broader workflows, not just personal tasks.
Report high productivity gains: 74% report AI has improved their productivity—significantly higher than Traditionalists (62%) and Skeptics (23%)	By embedding AI into workflows—not just using it occasionally—they see stronger returns than Traditionalists and Skeptics.
Show high tolerance for iteration: 44% are willing to give AI more than 4 prompts before giving up	Integrators treat AI as a system to work with. They iterate and refine, treating prompt fluency as a core skill for long-term integration.
Feel empowered to experiment: 68% feel empowered to experiment with AI at work	Experimentation is essential for integration—enabling Integrators to evolve their workflows with AI at the center.
Set formal learning goals: 49% have set specific professional development goals for AI skills	AI fluency is part of their professional growth. This long-term mindset moves them from dabbling to deep integration.
Use agents regularly: 50% use AI agents at work	Because Integrators embed AI into their workflows, they naturally gravitate toward AI agents, which allow them to automate not just isolated actions, but entire workflows.

Integrators adopt a more intentional, structured approach to reinvesting their AI time savings. They save 11 hours weekly using AI, with 74% seeing productivity improvements. Unlike Traditionalists, they're not just doing the same work faster—they're embedding AI throughout their workflow systems.

Integrators optimize across the board, using AI to enhance both high-level strategy and day-to-day operations rather than focusing on just one area. These workers distribute their AI dividend across both strategic and practical activities, allocating 7% more of the time saved using AI to strategic planning and 7% more to administrative tasks than the average worker.

How to drive more value for Integrators with AI	
01 **Position them as mentors:**	Traditionalists aren’t trying to reinvent their workflows—they’re trying to reduce friction. Focus on micro-upgrades like ready-made workflows, reusable prompt templates, or smart task suggestions that fit naturally into their routine.
02 **Invest in deeper fluency:**	Integrators have mastered the basics. Now they’re on the edge of transformation. With the right support, they can move from embedding AI into workflows to redesigning those workflows altogether. Help them get there with advanced, hands-on training that goes beyond prompts—think multi-system automation, agent design, and orchestrating work across teams and tools.
03 **Give them room to redesign—not just optimise:**	Integrators are great at improving broken processes—but they can do more. With the right backing, they can rebuild from the ground up. Challenge them to rethink workflows entirely, not just make legacy systems faster.

The Transformers

"We’re not tweaking work —we’re redesigning it."

Who they are: While Integrators focus on embedding AI into existing workflows, Transformers rethink the workflows themselves. They’re not just improving how work gets done —they’re questioning what work should look like in an AI-powered world. Rather than using AI to optimize the current system, they use it to design a new one from the ground up.

Key characteristics	Why it matters
Predominantly executives: 30% of executives are Transformers, compared to just 11% of individual contributors.	Transformers tend to sit in senior roles with visibility across functions. Their position and authority allow them to fundamentally rewire workflows from the top down.
Highly enthusiastic about AI: 81% feel enthusiastic about using AI in the workplace, 56% more likely than the average knowledge worker	They don’t just adopt AI—they lean into it. That enthusiasm drives curiosity, experimentation, and system-level thinking about how work should happen in an AI-first environment.
High tolerance for failure: 41% rephrase their prompt if they encounter unsatisfactory AI output	Transformers know redesign isn’t linear—they learn from failure and iterate, and use missteps as feedback to improve.
Focused on skill transformation: 59% recognize the need to develop new skills to collaborate effectively with AI	They know new systems require new roles. Transformers invest in future-fit skills—not just tool fluency, but the ability to collaborate with AI as a partner.
See AI as a key collaborator: 72% say they can collaborate with AI, just like they do with other people	Transformers don’t treat AI as just a tool—they treat it as a true collaborator. For them, AI isn’t a shortcut; it’s a strategic partner. It doesn’t just help one person move faster—it helps the entire system move smarter.
Advanced agent use: 86% use AI agents—the highest of any group	They don’t just automate—they architect new workflows. Agents let them design intelligent, low-friction systems that scale with less manual oversight.
Best-in-class productivity gains: 93% report productivity gains (vs. 74% of Integrators, 62% of Traditionalists, and 23% of Skeptics)	Their results aren’t marginal—they’re transformative. These gains come not from speeding up legacy work, but from building better systems entirely.

Exponential impact: Beyond efficiency to transformation

Transformers don't just save time—they reinvent how it's used. They reclaim 12 hours per week through AI, with an impressive 93% reporting productivity gains. This isn't incremental improvement—it's a complete transformation.

These visionaries strategically reinvest their AI dividend where it creates maximum value: 13% more of their saved time in strategic thinking, 13% more in process improvement, and 15% more in both project management and mentoring compared to the average worker. This pattern reflects a fundamental difference in mindset—Transformers don't just use AI to work faster within existing systems; they leverage the technology to redesign systems themselves, driving organization-wide change that compounds over time.

Transformers may be just 18% of your workforce—but they punch way above their weight. Most companies underuse them. The smart ones put them at the center of the AI strategy.

How to drive more value for Transformers with AI	
01 **Give them a platform—not just praise:**	Transformers are already reshaping how work gets done. Don’t just applaud them—amplify them. Invite them to lead peer trainings, run demos, or present to execs. Visibility turns them into internal influencers—and accelerates adoption across the organization.
02 **Codify what they create:**	They’re building new workflows, prompts, and playbooks—don’t let those breakthroughs stay siloed. Capture and share them across the org so others can build on what works. Innovation should scale, not stall.
03 **Put them in the rooms where strategy happens:**	Transformers rethink what's possible with AI. Get them involved in AI councils, roadmap reviews, and planning meetings. Their ground-level insight helps pressure-test high-level plans—and ensures your AI strategy reflects real transformation, not just surface change.

The mix that makes AI work

It’s easy to think the perfect AI organization is packed wall-to-wall with Transformers—visionaries reinventing work with every prompt. It’s not.

Our research shows that loading up on too many Transformers can be just as risky as being overrun by Skeptics. With too many Transformers, change happens too fast—tools roll out faster than people can be trained or systems can keep up. But swing too far the other way, and a team full of Skeptics gets stuck in an endless pilot loop—testing, hesitating, and never scaling.

The most effective AI organizations—the ones that successfully scale—are the ones with the right mix of personas.

Personas	Impact
Skeptics	Slow things down when necessary and ask tough questions
Traditionalists	Keep things grounded and ask "does this actually work?"
Integrators	Make AI operational and turn experiments into systems
Transformers	Push boundaries and reimagine possibilities

AI Scalers create environments where all four personas are empowered to use AI in their work and drive real productivity gains.

How AI Scalers empower every role

Leading by example:

At AI Scalers, 68% of workers say their managers use AI effectively, compared to just 40% at Nonscalers

Creating space to experiment:

80% of workers at AI Scalers feel empowered to try AI, versus 56% at Nonscalers

Making skills development a priority:

Workers at AI Scalers are 60% more likely to have set specific AI learning goals.

What keeps workers trapped as Skeptics or Traditionalists? There are three significant barriers holding them back:

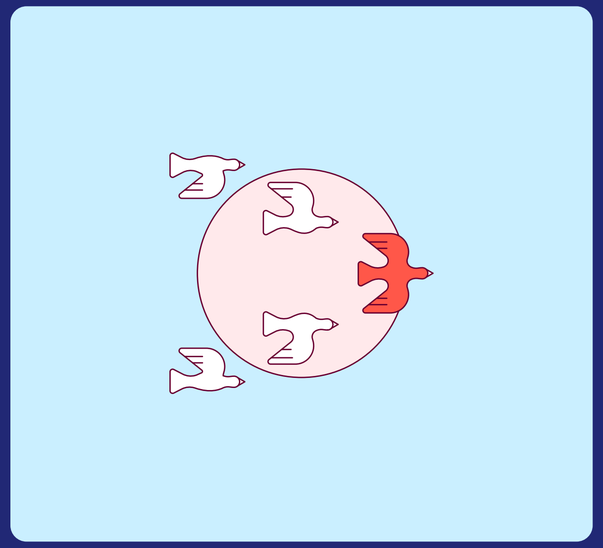
- **Time pressure blocks experimentation:** Workers at Nonscalers are 37% more likely to report insufficient time for AI experimentation, creating a catch-22 where they need AI skills to work efficiently but lack the time to develop them.
- **Learning confusion causes stagnation:** Nonscalers' workers are 36% more likely to report not knowing where to learn about AI, indicating that fragmented or inaccessible training resources significantly impede adoption.
- **Feeling overwhelmed leads to avoidance:** 34% of workers at Nonscalers feel overwhelmed by the speed at which they need to learn AI, compared to 29% at AI Scalers. This highlights how the perceived complexity of AI drives hesitation and resistance.

These factors create a perfect storm at Nonscalers: workers lack time, guidance, and confidence—the exact resources needed to progress along the AI adoption spectrum. By contrast, AI Scalers systematically remove these barriers, creating pathways from skepticism to transformation that benefit both individuals and the organization.

The four AI personas	Ideal makeup	What they contribute
Skeptics	14%	Redesign work from the ground up. Push boundaries, see what's possible.
Traditionalists	20%	Make AI operational. Turn experiments into systems. Connect vision to reality.
Integrators	29%	Keep the wheels turning. Adopt cautiously, ask "Does this actually work?"
Transformers	36%	Slow things down when it is necessary. Ask the uncomfortable questions. Keep the hype in check.

The future of work:

How AI Scalers are preparing for 2030



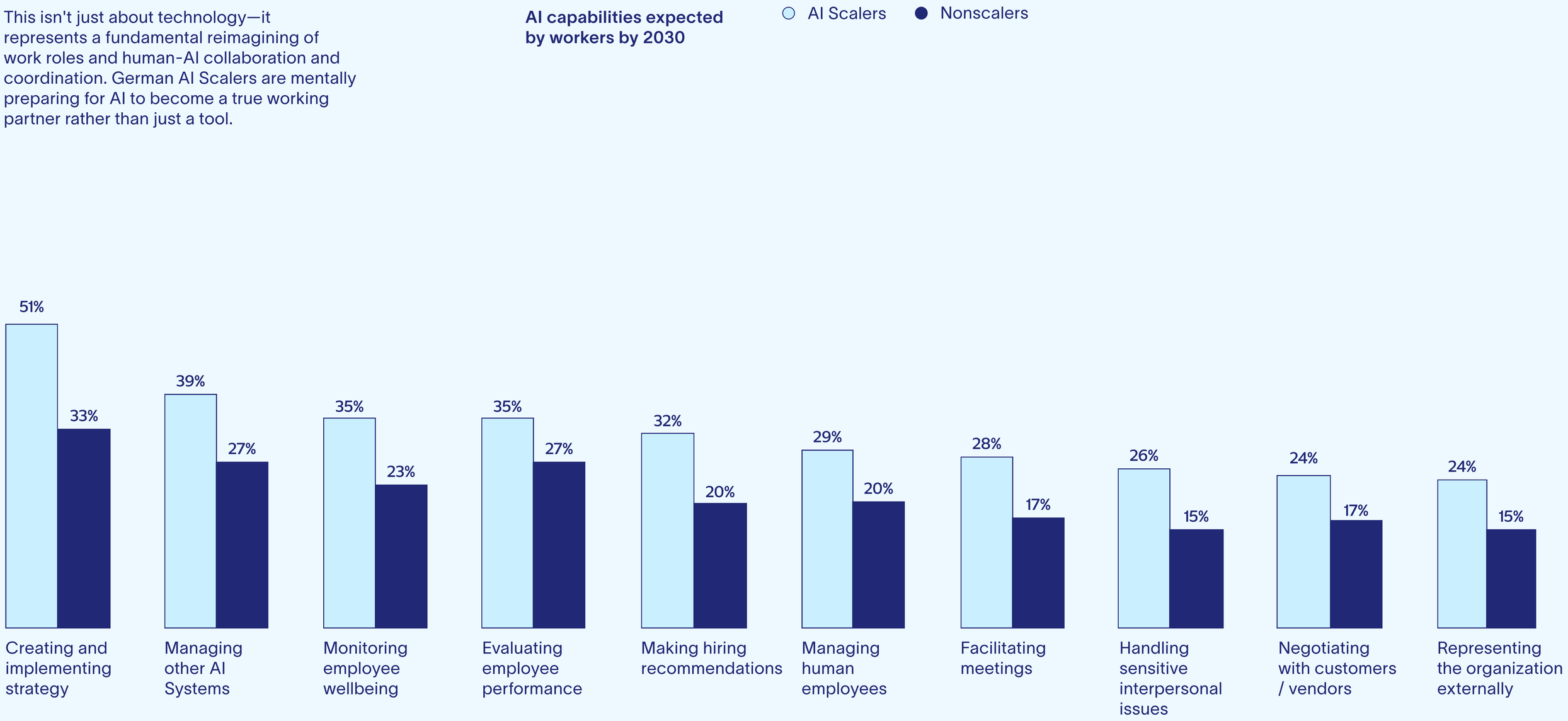
While most German organizations are still working to implement AI effectively today, AI Scalers are already preparing for a fundamentally different workplace by 2030. The vision and execution gap between AI Scalers and Nonscalers reveals not just different rates of adoption, but entirely different expectations for how work will be structured.

AI's expanding role in the German workplace

AI Scalers envision a future where AI takes on increasingly sophisticated responsibilities. This vision gap extends across work activities, from facilitating meetings to making hiring recommendations and creating and implementing strategy.

This isn't just about technology—it represents a fundamental reimagining of work roles and human-AI collaboration and coordination. German AI Scalers are mentally preparing for AI to become a true working partner rather than just a tool.

AI capabilities expected by workers by 2030



Reshaping organizational structures and practices

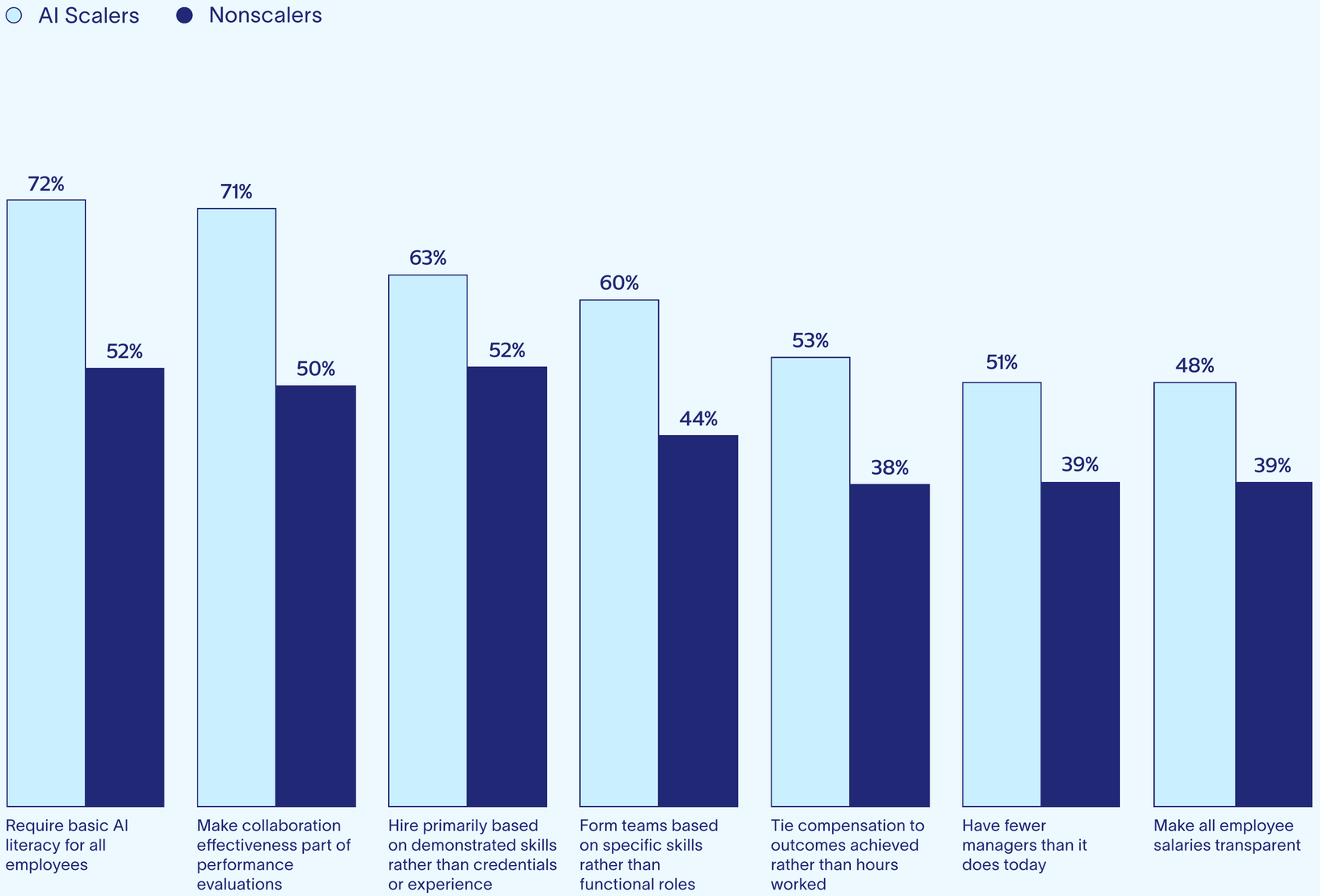
The German workplace of 2030 won't just feature more AI—it will be structurally different. AI Scalers anticipate more flexible, skills-based, and outcome-focused work environments.

> 79% of workers at AI Scalers believe continuous skill development will be required to keep their jobs by 2030.

These expectations will require a restructuring of how work is organized, measured, and rewarded. AI Scalers envision work as more fluid, with fewer traditional managers, more transparent compensation, and greater focus on demonstrated skills rather than formal credentials.

German organizations that aren't preparing now for the workplace of 2030 risk finding themselves unable to adapt to the new work paradigms that AI enables.

By 2030, German workers expect their organizations to:



From hype to real results:

How to move your organization forward

Too many organizations are still chasing headlines—running flashy pilots, experimenting in silos, and hoping for transformation. But the companies actually getting results—the AI Scalers—are doing something different.

They’re laying the groundwork that makes AI work in the real world. They’re building systems where adoption scales, impact compounds, and their most forward-thinking employees—Transformers—can lead the way.

These organizations offer a blueprint for any company looking to move beyond experimentation and into real, organization-wide value.

Strategy 01

Eliminate the organizational “taxes” that drag everything down

You can’t bolt AI onto a broken system and expect it to fix things. AI Scalers start by removing the friction that slows work down—targeting the four hidden "taxes" that quietly erode productivity.

Fix the Connectivity Tax
by building a coordination layer first. Make sure people, data, and decisions can flow across teams within a unified work management platform—before layering AI on top.

Tackle the Velocity Tax
by embedding AI across workflows—not just in isolated tools. Use it to spot risks early, surface misalignments, and help teams adjust before issues become disruptions.

Strengthen Resilience
by embedding AI across workflows—not just in isolated tools. Use it to spot risks early, surface misalignments, and help teams adjust before issues become disruptions.

Protect Capacity
by eliminating low-value work, not just speeding it up. Use AI to reduce noise, guard focus time, and prevent burnout—not pile on more busywork in disguise

Strategy 02

Meet your employees where they are in their AI journey

AI doesn’t scale with a one-size-fits-all approach. AI Scalers recognize that employees sit at very different stages of adoption—and they design around that.

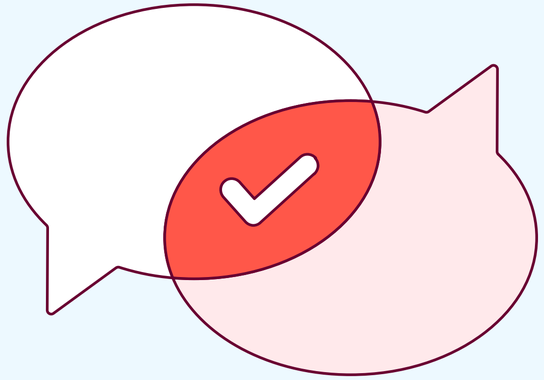
Empower Transformers
with a platform to lead. Let them showcase what’s working and coach others.

Help Integrators
go deeper—redesigning workflows, not just optimising tasks.

Support Traditionalists
with practical use cases that reduce friction and deliver quick wins.

Engage Skeptics
with low-risk ways to test AI and see personal value firsthand.

The goal isn’t uniformity—it’s momentum. When you meet people where they are, AI adoption spreads faster and sticks longer.



Strategy 03

Bridge the executive-employee disconnect

Executives are charging ahead with AI—using it weekly, seeing productivity gains, and setting bold visions. But many employees are still waiting: for access, for training, or for a reason to care. The result? A growing disconnect between those designing the strategy and those expected to carry it out.

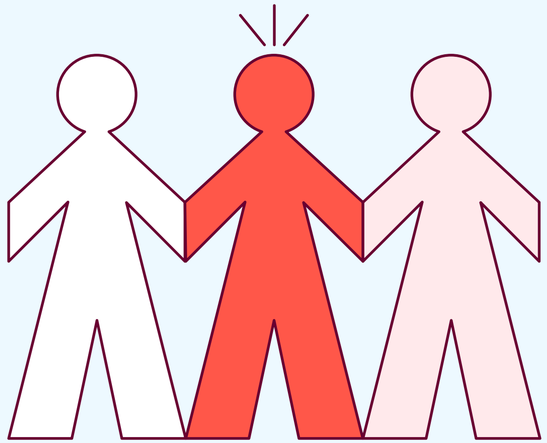
Lead by example
Executives don’t just talk about AI—they use it. When leaders bring AI into meetings, decisions, and everyday workflows, it signals that adoption isn’t optional—it’s how work happens now.

Invest in skill-building at every level
AI fluency isn’t just for the C-suite. AI Scalers train across the organization—especially at the front lines. Today, only 22% of organizations have usage policies, and just 20% have dedicated AI training budgets.

Measure what matters
AI Scalers don't just track AI ROI. They track human-centered metrics, like whether employees actually use the technology and whether they enjoy using it.

AI success isn’t just about the tools—it’s about the system. The most successful organizations don’t chase the hype. They rewire how work gets done, create space for adoption to take hold, and design for long-term, human-centered impact.

Build cross-functional governance
AI strategy doesn’t stay locked in the boardroom. Scalers bring in voices from across departments and levels to co-design tools, policies, and practices that actually work in practice—not just on paper.



Conclusion:

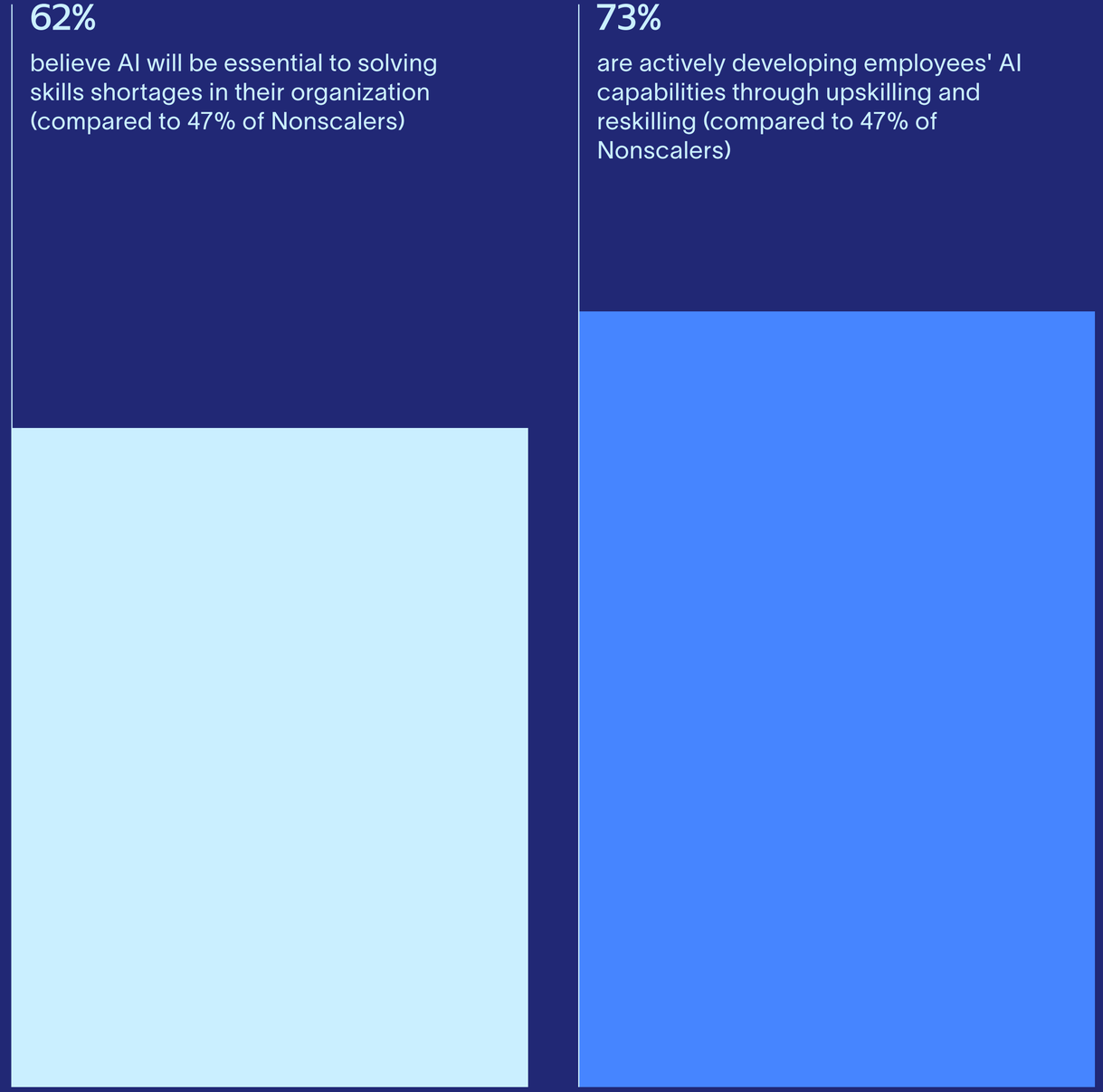
Germany’s moment of transformation

By 2030, leading German organizations will operate on fundamentally different principles. Information will move fluidly across teams, decision-making will become increasingly automated, and talent will be redeployed toward higher-value, strategic work. This next-generation model doesn’t abandon Germany’s traditional strengths—precision, engineering rigor, and collaborative culture—it amplifies them with the speed, scale, and adaptability that AI enables.

The divergence between AI Scalers and Nonscalers is widening. AI Scalers are rethinking workflows, building governance frameworks, and investing in AI capability today. They’re creating structural advantages that will compound over time—especially as demographic pressures shrink the labor pool and increase the demand for productivity.

These demographic challenges give Germany's AI transformation particular urgency. AI Scalers recognize this reality and are taking steps to mitigate the risks.

By the end of this decade, AI will no longer be a competitive differentiator—it will be a baseline requirement. The question for German business leaders is not whether to transform, but whether they will lead that transformation or be left adjusting to the changes driven by others.



Methodology

This research from the Asana Work Innovation Lab surveyed 2,006 knowledge workers in Germany in April 2025. Respondents were all employed knowledge workers. Executives included in this research are defined as Director role levels and above.