2025

Copy/Paste/Prompt

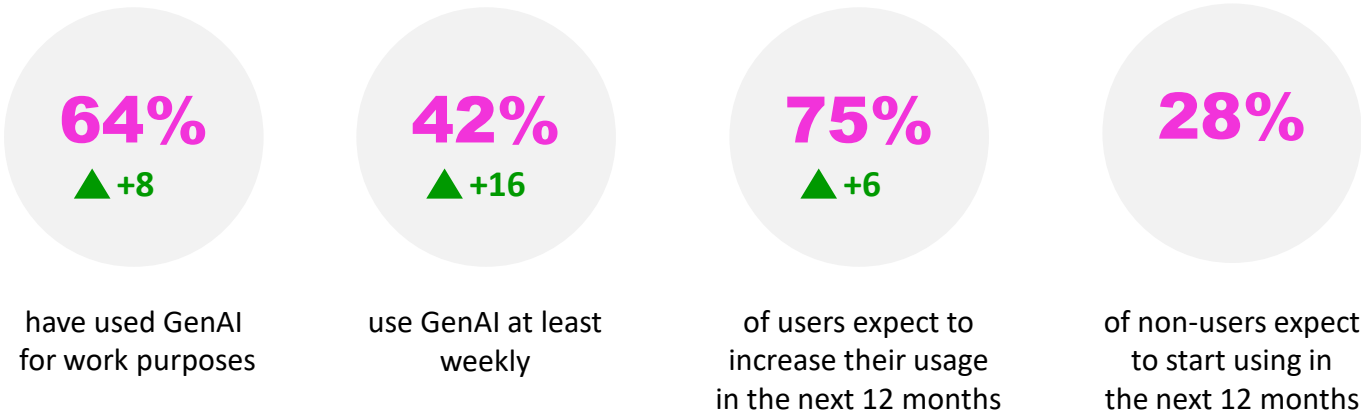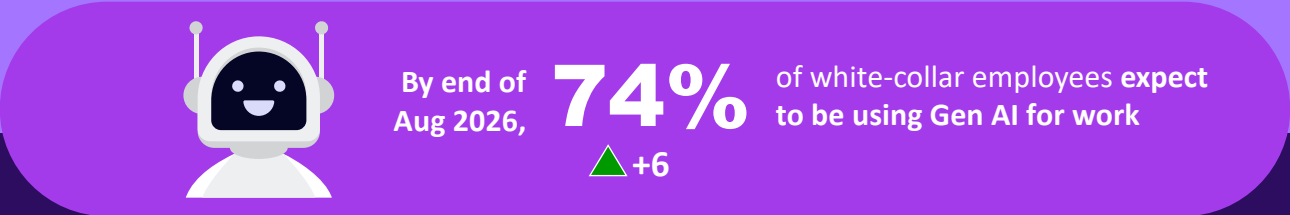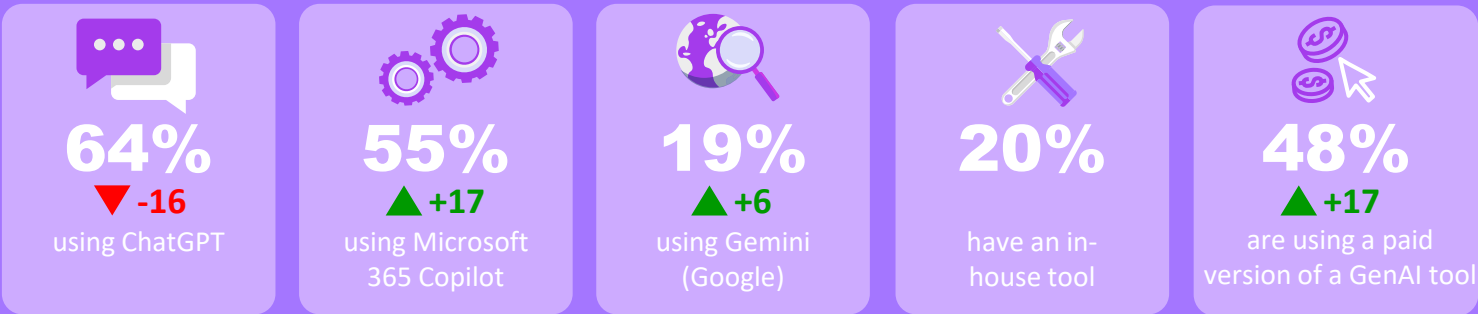## The Hidden Risks of Generative AI in the Workplace

Nearly 2 in 3 white-collar workers have used GenAI for work but 13% users say use is not encouraged by their organisation.

This follows Riskier Business Research in 2024 which highlighted the widespread use of copyrighted material in GenAI prompts. The continuing rise of AI is creating an even greater risk for Australian organisations.

Over the last 12 months, GenAI usage has grown by 15%. Further growth is expected in 2026.

64%
▲ +8
have used GenAI for work purposes

42%
▲ +16
use GenAI at least weekly

75%
▲ +6
of users expect to increase their usage in the next 12 months

28%
of non-users expect to start using in the next 12 months

Those in PR, Advertising & Marketing, Pharmaceuticals & Life Sciences, and Technology are most likely to be using GenAI

64%
▼ -16
using ChatGPT

55%
▲ +17
using Microsoft 365 Copilot

19%
▲ +6
using Gemini (Google)

20%
have an in-house tool

48%
▲ +17
are using a paid version of a GenAI tool

By end of Aug 2026, **74%** ▲ +6 of white-collar employees **expect to be using Gen AI for work**

Research was conducted in September 2024 and 2025 by Fiftyfive5, an independent market research agency, and consisted of a 10-minute online survey with over 1000 white-collar employees (excl. government and education) who have used Generative AI tools for work purposes, across a range of industries and business sizes.

▲▼ *indicates significant growth/decline vs 2024*

GenAI usage is becoming habitual, driving creativity and efficiency, and increasingly becoming a replacement for search engines

68%

believe GenAI tools have helped them be more creative and innovative at work

73% ▲ +6

believe GenAI tools have improved their efficiency at work

50% ▲ +11

often use GenAI tools instead of traditional search engines (such as Google) for work

36% ▲ +5

believe they would be negatively impacted if they lost the ability to use GenAI tools for work
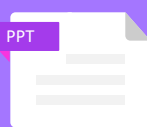
How is GenAI being used at work?

62% ▲ +18

using weekly for text generation

15%

using weekly for generation of slides or presentations

14%

using weekly for image generation

Most common uses of GenAI for text…

70% ▲ +6

for refinement of internal text (written by self or colleagues)
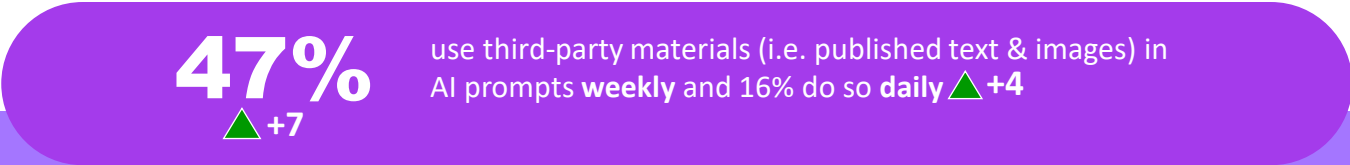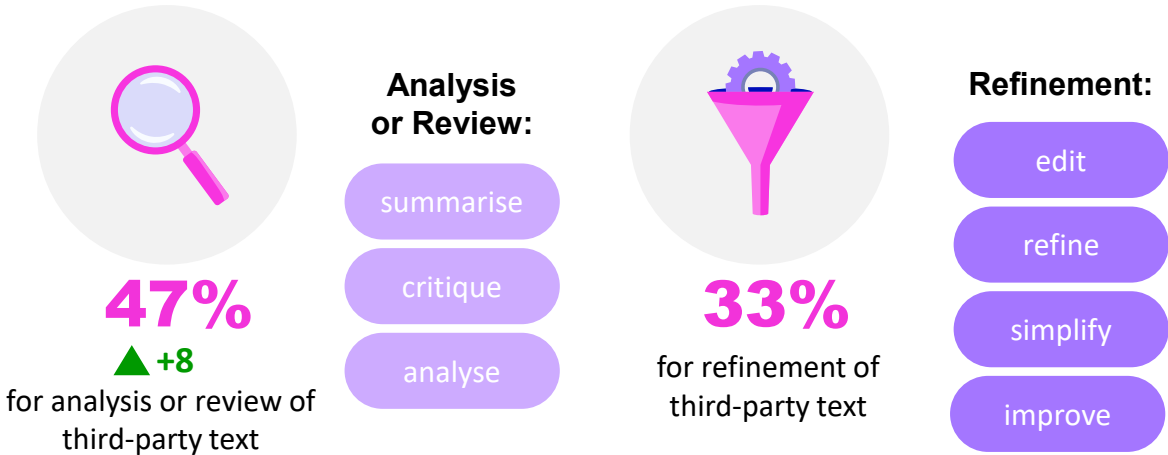
57% ▼ -6

for creation of new text

56% ▲ +5

for research/ background intel

▲▼ *indicates significant growth/decline vs 2024*

How is third-party material being used in AI prompts?

Among those who have used AI for text-generation…

47% ▲ +8
for analysis or review of third-party text

Analysis or Review:
- summarise
- critique
- analyse

33%
for refinement of third-party text

Refinement:
- edit
- refine
- simplify
- improve

47% ▲ +7
use third-party materials (i.e. published text & images) in AI prompts **weekly** and 16% do so **daily** ▲ +4

On a weekly basis, employees engage in multiple methods of third-party material inclusion.

Input Methods

- **33%** Copy and paste ▲ +7
- **26%** Upload a file / document ▲ +9
- **25%** Include a link to a webpage ▲ +4
- **23%** Include a reference (e.g. book title) ▲ +4

Input Materials

Material	Percentage
Image or photo	24% ▲ +5
Report or business paper	22%
News/Magazine article	20%
Journal article	15%
Book or eBook (whole book or pages/extracts)	8%

"I had a bunch of journal articles that mentioned parts of a topic for a literature review I was doing. I asked it to scan the documents then summarise what it could find about the topic in my literature review."

Marketing Manager, Science & Research

"I was preparing a business overview document looking at a local company. I used a recent article from the Australian Financial Review that had financial details in it cause the company was private. I used AI to summarise the information I needed."

Consultant, Professional Services

"I used a detailed article with a number of stats and asked the AI to pull out the statistics from the article and summarise them so they were presentable."

Operations Manager, Banking

▲▼ *indicates significant growth/decline vs 2024*

As the use of Generative AI grows, so do the associated risks and governance concerns relating to copyright

Use of third-party materials in AI prompts	Sharing of AI outputs	'Shadow' usage of AI tools	Lack of understanding

Widespread use of third-party material

59% ▲ +9

have used GenAI for analysis, refinement or summarisation of third-party text at work

47% ▲ +7

copy-paste, upload, link, or reference third-party materials in AI prompts weekly

SHARING OF OUTPUTS

75%

are sharing outputs internally with colleagues

29%

are sharing outputs with people outside their organisation

Those in leadership positions are **52%** more likely to share GenAI content externally

'SHADOW' USAGE

11%

are using GenAI for work even though their organisation doesn't encourage it
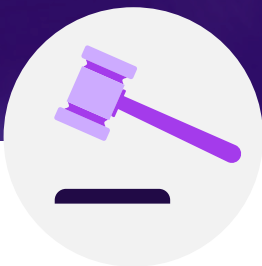
LACK OF COPYRIGHT UNDERSTANDING

Only **25%**

say they understand the copyright terms and conditions of the AI tools they use

▲▼ *indicates significant growth/decline vs 2024*

GenAI has heightened employees' awareness and concern around copyright and expectations on businesses to promote responsible use and ethical behaviour

72%
think about complying with copyright laws when using AI for work purposes

38%
are concerned about including third-party material in prompts

23%
are not sure if they should be

59%
would have greater peace of mind if their organisation had a copyright licence that allowed use of third-party content in AI tools for work

The most concerned groups are those working in Legal professions and those in Finance, Data & Strategy roles.

Staff do not feel adequately trained

Only
42% ▲ +11
think their employer provides sufficient training opportunities about how to use GenAI for work

▲▼ indicates significant growth/decline vs 2024

Does your organisation have a GenAI policy? Does it cover ethical use and address the potential risks of copyright infringement?

65%
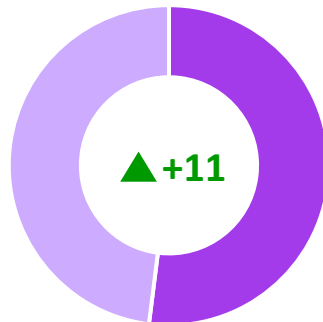believe management at their organisation **encourages** the use of GenAI tools

▲ +15
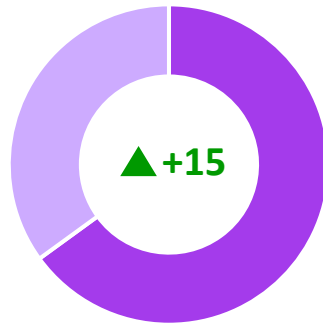
Many organisations encourage the use of GenAI but don't have a policy in place

...but only
52%
think their organisation has a **policy** about use of Generative AI at work

▲ +11

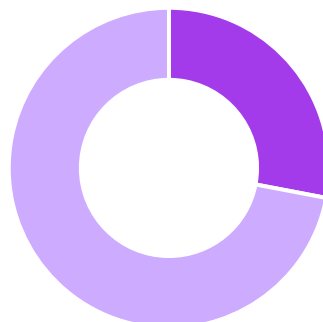### Who is responsible for policy development?

33%
Legal team

29%
Senior management

...and only
28%
think their organisation has an AI policy which covers **copyright**

Who is responsible for policy implementation?

35%
Senior management

26%
Operations

23%
Legal team

▲▼ *indicates significant growth/decline vs 2024*

What you need to know

01

Penetration has increased by 15% over the last year. The latest research reveals that 64% of employees use GenAI tools with 47% of these using third-party material in inputs or prompts at least weekly.

02

Most users (75%) don't understand the terms of use of these tools and licensing requirements around use of third-party material. This raises ethical concerns and increases the risk of copyright infringement.

03

Compliance and risk are key concerns cited by 83% of GenAI users. Only 52% believe their organisation has clear policies around governance, use and risk management.

04

Copyright protects published text and images used by staff in Australian organisations such as news and magazine articles, journal articles, industry reports and trade publications, including when used in GenAI tools.