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Mental well-being for all

Research report, June 2026

Living and working with AI

How the Dutch workforce is adapting

A survey of 1,575 working Dutch people aged 18 and over, conducted by NorthSea and Prime Insights for OpenUp in May 2026.

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How the Dutch workforce is adapting

A survey of 1,575 working Dutch people aged 18 and over, conducted by NorthSea and Prime Insights for OpenUp in May 2026.

AI use amongst the Dutch working population has almost doubled in a year, from 40% in mid-2025 (CBS, Feb-26) to 77% in May 2026 (OpenUp, June-26). Looking up information is still the main use case, but **one in five workers now uses AI to discuss thoughts or emotions.** The question is no longer whether people use AI, but how they use it and how they feel about it.

77%
use AI at work

20%
discuss their emotions or thoughts with AI

11%
sometimes lose sleep over AI

41%
do not feel supported by their employer in the AI transition

At work, 41% of workers do not feel supported by their employer in the AI transition, and 27% expect AI to reduce the number of jobs in their organisation. **Employers have a role to play in building trust and supporting their people through this shift.**

Also from the study:

- Among those who use AI for emotions, use ranges from mild forms, such as practical advice (25%) and a reflective diary (18%), to AI as a substitute for a professional (12%).
- 37% experience (mostly) positive feelings around the rise of AI, 22% experience (some) negative feelings towards the rise of AI
- 27% of workers believe there will be fewer jobs in their sector due to AI, rising to 35-45% in specific sectors (Public Sector, Media)
- More frequent use of AI and employer support both correlate (r=0.3-0.4) with more positive feelings towards AI and greater confidence to get along in the AI-transition

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AI in private life

Three in four use it to look things up, one in five to process their feelings: how Dutch people use AI in private.

Outside work, most private AI use is practical: looking up information (76%), comparing purchases (31%) and planning travel (29%). Alongside these, **one in five (20%) use AI to discuss thoughts or emotions**. Whether this is advisable depends on the way AI is put to work.

Using AI for emotions is not one thing. The effect depends on what people use it for.

Whether it's responsible to use AI for thoughts or emotions, highly depends on the use case. For simple questions, reflection and venting, it can actually help a large group of people. When people have heavy feelings, strong sadness or anxiety, it can be counterproductive by reinforcing validation

Examples when asked how AI is used emotions:

"I use AI as a kind of talking diary. A way to vent, but also to put things in perspective."

"I tell it what's on my mind, the way you'd talk to a therapist."

"With my burnout recovery, by helping me build a daily plan."

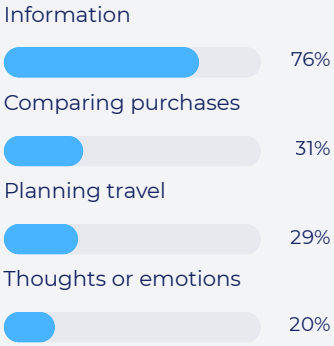
Clients use AI to order their thoughts or prepare for a difficult conversation. For those people it works and I genuinely encourage it. But with more severe challenges, like an anxiety disorder, someone is constantly seeking reassurance and confirmation, AI ends up feeding the very thing they're struggling with. So in those cases we advise using it sparingly, or only with a professional involved

Gijs Coppens
Healthcare psychologist and founder of OpenUp

Who uses AI for emotions

27% women
15% men
29% for 25 to 34-year-olds

What Dutch People use AI for privately (% of total group)



How people apply AI for discussing thoughts or emotions
(% of people that self-report using AI for thoughts or emotions)

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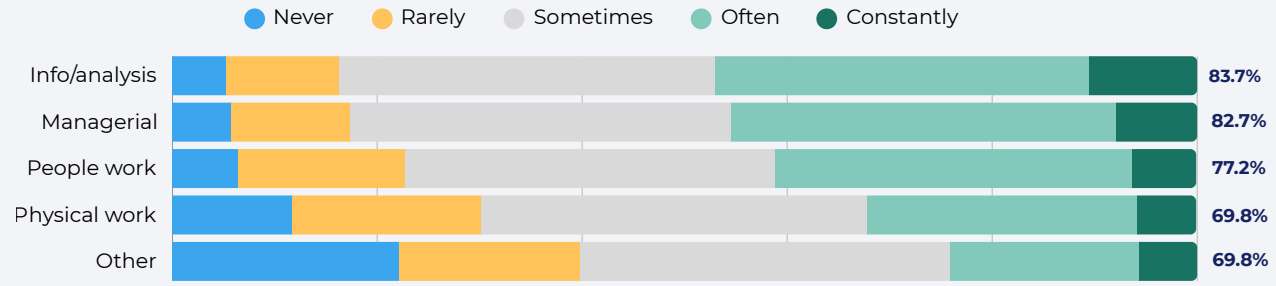
AI in the workplace

In a single survey wave, only 8% of Dutch workers say they never use AI. Four in ten now use it often or constantly.

The story begins with how rapidly AI has taken hold. Daily use is now the norm rather than the exception, and the workplace and private life have blurred: people research, write, and brainstorm with AI at work, then look things up, plan, and increasingly confide in it at home.

By type of work % Sometimes, Often or Constantly

% besides each bar = share using AI for the type of work at least sometimes

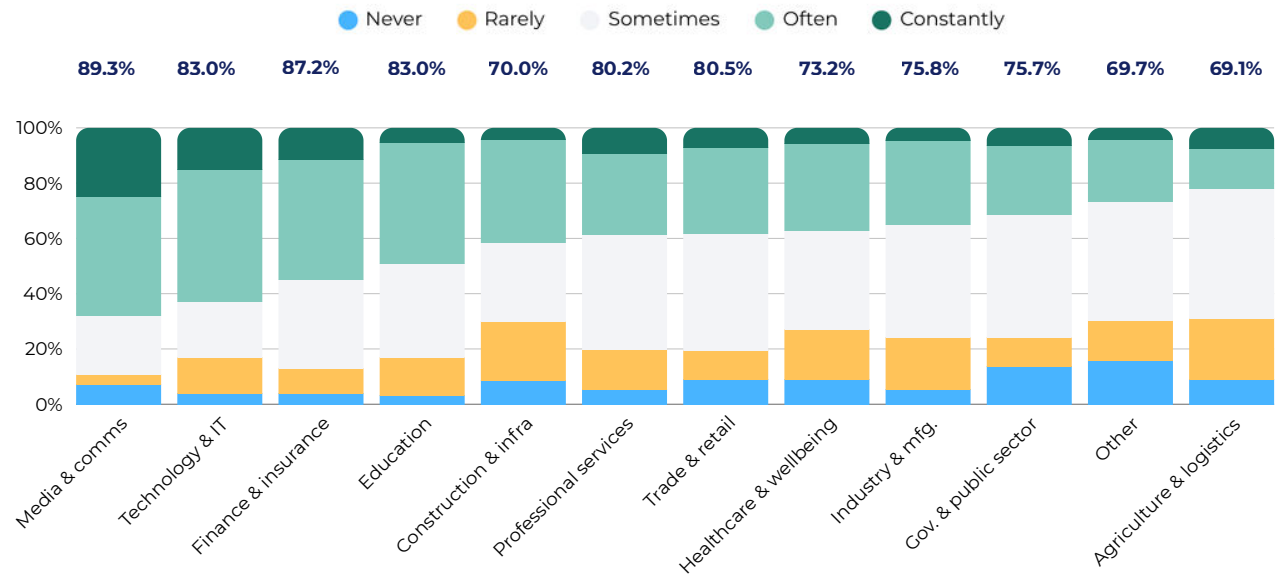


Top sectors by AI intensity: Technology & IT, Finance & insurance, Professional services. Lowest: Construction, Agriculture & logistics, Healthcare frontline roles.

The intensity gap is generational. Among 25–34-year-old knowledge workers, 63% use AI often or constantly. Among 55–64-year-olds in non-knowledge roles, that figure is closer to 14%. The same workforce is using two very different versions of the same tool.

How often AI is used in each sector

% above each bar = share using AI at least sometimes, often or constantly



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AI causes worry for some people

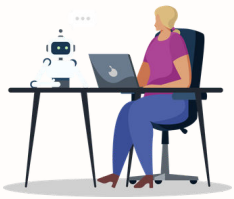
22% of respondents experiences negative feelings towards the rise of AI, 41% do not feel supported by their employer in the AI-transition

AI-Anxiety is real, but it is not the dominant feeling across the working population

22% of surveyed people experiences (some) negative feelings towards the rise of AI. The group of people with positive feelings is over 1.5x larger at 37%, and most people have neutral feelings. When asked if AI developments influence sleep patterns, 11% say they sometimes (or more often) experience disturbed sleep from the rise of AI.

What feelings do you get from the developments around AI?

Employees are struggling with three core questions



Can I use AI at work?

77% of workers use AI, but for which tasks is it allowed?

How do I keep up?

41% of all NL workers do not feel supported by their employer in the AI transition

What about my role?

27% of workers expect AI to have a negative impact on number of roles in their organisation

Relationships between AI use, AI support, and reduced worries over AI

What's correlated?	Direction (in plain language)	Correlation coefficient
Frequency of AI use ↔ feelings about AI	The more often someone uses AI, the fewer negative feelings they report.	Medium, r = −0.34
Frequency of AI use ↔ view of society	The more often someone uses AI, the more positive they are about its impact on society.	Medium, r = +0.47
Frequency of AI use ↔ confidence in keeping up	The more often someone uses AI, the more confident they feel about keeping up.	Medium, r = +0.31
AI integration at work ↔ feelings about AI	The more AI is embedded in the work, the fewer negative feelings someone reports.	Medium, r = −0.33

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Sentiment & support by sector

28% of knowledge workers believe there will be fewer jobs in their organisation in the future, Media & Communication and Government & Public Sector rank highest

Job type & industry	% believe AI will reduce jobs in org.	% doesn't feel supported by employer	% confident to get along with changes due to AI	n
Knowledge worker, average	**28%**	**31%**	**57%**	**732**
Media & communication	44%	19%	75%	16
Government & public sector	38%	40%	57%	76
Trade & retail	31%	32%	40%	81
Industry & production	28%	38%	72%	53
Professional services	27%	43%	53%	60
Education	25%	40%	60%	20
Finance & insurance	25%	15%	55%	112
Healthcare	25%	41%	56%	73
Technology & IT	24%	15%	68%	123
Agriculture & logistics	20%	28%	52%	25
Construction & infrastructure	15%	39%	46%	26
Other	30%	51%	58%	67
Non-knowledge workers, avg.	**27%**	**50%**	**42%**	**843**
Combined average (all resp.)	**27%**	**41%**	**49%**	**1.575**

- % concern about jobs = share that is 'Strongly' or 'Partly' negative about the impact of AI on jobs within their own organisation
- % not supported = share that feels 'Not at all' or 'Barely' supported by their employer in the AI transition
- % confident in keeping up = share that has 'Largely' or 'Fully' confidence in being able to keep up with AI
- Knowledge worker (broad definition) = respondents who selected 'I primarily process information, analyse, or advise' or 'I combine these (e.g. in a managerial role)'. Non-knowledge worker = respondents either doing physical work or working directly with people (e.g., healthcare, education)
- 'Other' = respondents who selected a sector outside the 11 pre-set options, mainly hospitality, transport/logistics, and sports/tourism/culture

Methodology

n = 1,575 Dutch workers via NorthSea and the Prime Insights panel, fieldwork 20-26 May 2026. Accepted responses for respondents of 18 years or older and 16+ hours/week employed. 25 multiple choice questions on AI usage, including 3 open text questions around specific AI worries and AI usage for emotional purposes.

What companies can do

22% of Dutch working population experiences negative feelings towards the rise of AI, 41% do not feel supported by their employer in the AI-transition

Companies are starting to offer support with the technical shift, but the human dimension is often overlooked. To support workers in the AI-transition, support needs to extend beyond training and safety standards to psychological safety, mental support, activation and inclusion.

Prioritise psychological safety
Create room for people to share their feelings around the AI-transition. Not everybody will be excited at first. Managers need to be able to share this change is also new or stressful for them.

Offer mental well-being support
Experimenting with AI can lead to brain-fry, i.e., mental fatigue. Support people in building habits for recharging during the day and recognising fatigue

Encourage everyone to experiment
Getting more familiar with AI, and experimenting with AI in a safe setting, is the strongest correlation with increased confidence for using AI and less negative feelings

Start building the skills of the future
Skills like strategic thinking, creative work and human interaction will become more important. Investing in these skills on time helps prepare people for the future, and provide a contour of what's to come

The AI-transition needs focus on the human aspect.

OpenUp helps 2.000+ companies build resilient teams and navigate change, **discover OpenUp today (link)**

At ChannelEngine, we see AI development as a critical service for both our business and our people. We want everyone on our team to be equipped to thrive in it, not just keep up with it. We believe AI adoption is first and foremost a people transition. Because everyone learns differently - by doing, reading, or seeing others - we treat AI like any other L&D journey: with mandatory e-learning, peer-led Lunch & Learn sessions, and hands-on experimentation during our global company meetup. Technology is the easy part; bringing your people along is where the real work happens.

Jorrit Steinz
CEO & Founder ChannelEngine,
OpenUp Customer

At De Jong & Laan, we encourage the use of AI. We train and support our employees so they can use AI responsibly, both in their work and in their personal development. We give them room to experiment, and we have now also started using OpenUp's AI well-being coach (currently in beta).

We show that it can be helpful to make use of this, without losing sight of privacy. This is what makes it broadly embraced across the organisation.

Danine Gerritsen
Advisor Viality, De Jong & Laan,
OpenUp Customer

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