

WILEY

PREVIEW

ExplanAltions 2025 Key Insights



In 2024, Wiley conducted two in-depth surveys about researchers' views and use of AI throughout the research process. Now, a year later, we are back with new insights. In this preview, we track the evolution of AI in research and identify new opportunities for progress.

Our latest global survey of over 2,400 researchers reveals a community in transition — one that is making great strides in AI experience but still feeling there is ample room for growth.

In just one year:

AI tool use among researchers has surged from

57%
to 84%

For specific use cases related to conducting research and publishing, AI use has increased from

45%
to 62%

And yet despite this rapid growth, our study uncovers the critical barriers preventing these tools from achieving full impact. Our findings illuminate where publishers can power progress in research, bridging the gap between AI awareness and transformative research outcomes.

Want to explore additional, deeper insights? [Register here](#) to receive our full report.

Discover some of our most significant findings in this preview.

1

There were big gains in firsthand AI experience, but researchers are seeking further guidance to help meet their goals

It's clear that researchers are embracing AI's potential, with major strides made in adoption over the past year. Our findings show a dramatic increase in researchers using AI tools for any work — up to 84% from 57% last year. More specifically, we've seen a significant increase in researchers using tools for tasks related to research and publication.

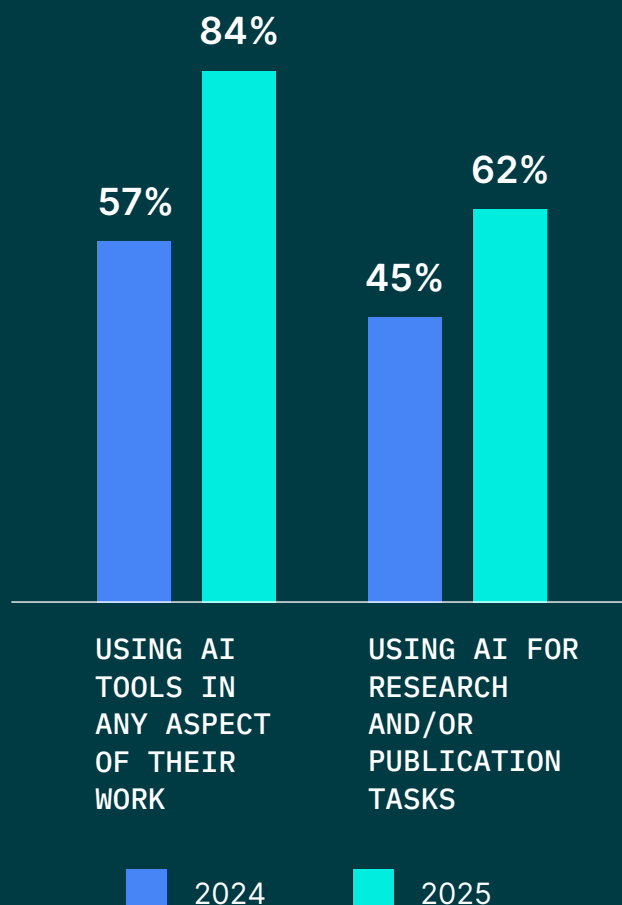
62% of researchers say they've used AI tools for research and/or publication-related tasks — up from 45% in 2024.

Who's even more likely to be using AI for research and/or publication tasks?

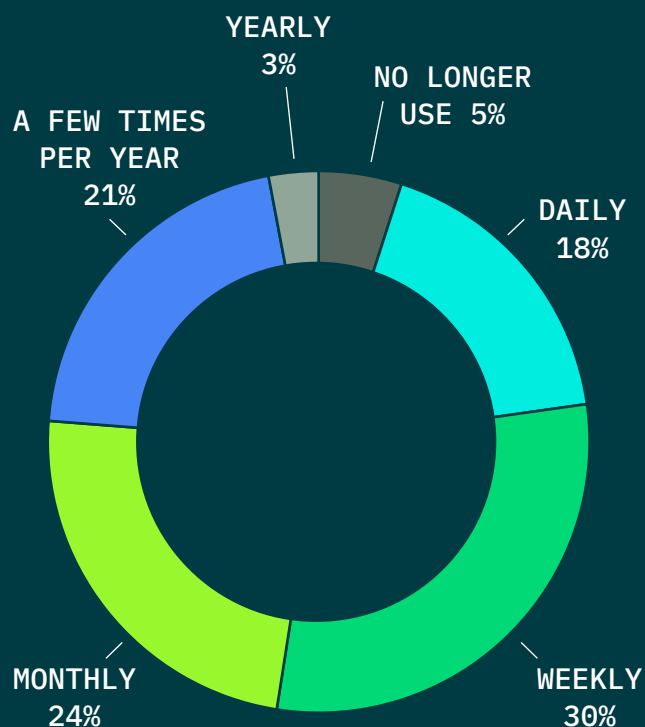
- Researchers in the APAC region (**72%**), particularly China (**75%**)
- Researchers in the field of Business, Economics, & Finance (**70%**)
- Early career researchers (**70%**)
- Researchers in Physical Sciences fields (**66%**)

AI is increasingly part of researchers' regular workflows and processes, with **72%** of researchers using the tools they've adopted at least monthly, and just under half (**48%**) using them at least weekly.

AI use: 2024 vs. 2025



Q: How often do you typically use each of these tools?



Base: 2024 n=1,043-4,946; 2025 n=2,118-2,430

Despite this, among certain researchers there's a clear desire to extend their use of AI even further. For those who want to be early¹ or average² adopters of the technology, close to half say they've been only "a little" successful in using AI to the extent that they'd like. In APAC, particularly China, researchers feel they have even further to go to meet their AI usage goals: **61%** of researchers in APAC, and **68%** of researchers in China, say they've been only "a little" successful in meeting their goals for using AI to date.

¹want to be "a trailblazer who helps lead the way" or "a somewhat early adopter who stays ahead of the curve"

²want to "keep pace with what is typical in my field and/or organization"

2

Researchers turn to ChatGPT and similar tools – not because they're best for science and research, but because they're most accessible

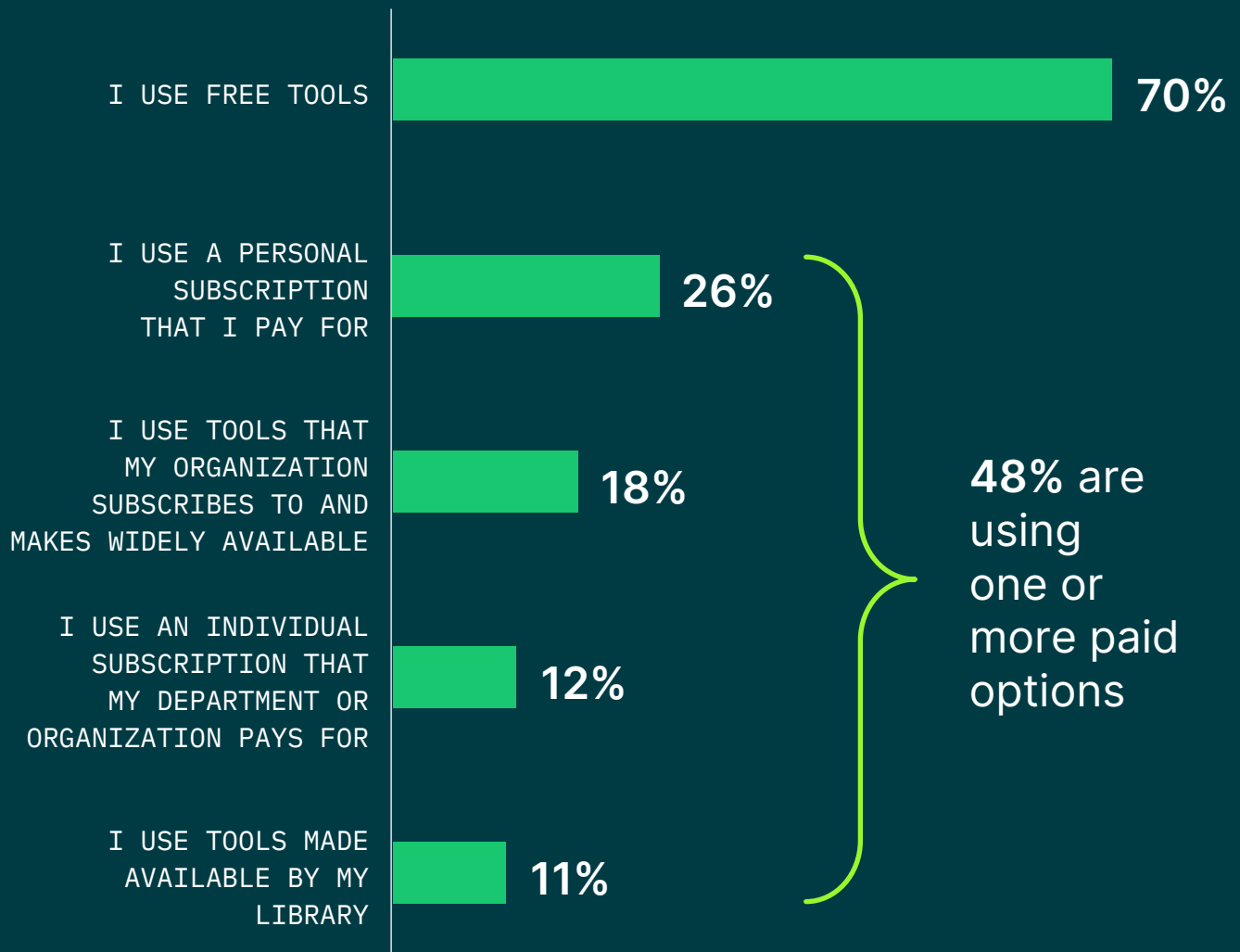
While researchers are using AI more, they're most often using widely available, general-purpose tools like ChatGPT, rather than those specialized for science and research. This suggests that researchers are relying on what's most accessible to them; in fact, usage of general-purpose AI tools far exceeds that of research- and science-specific tools.

80% of researchers have used a general-purpose AI tool, compared to just **25%** who have tried one or more specialized AI tools for research.

Lack of awareness is a major factor in this disparity: on average, just **11%** of researchers had heard of each specialized tool we asked about.

Further, access remains a barrier for many. Less than half (**40%**) of researchers agree that their organization provides them with access to the AI tools and models they need to successfully make use of AI in their work. The importance of accessibility is also apparent in the number of researchers using free versus paid tools: seven out of ten are making use of available free tools, while less than half are using any paid options.

Q: How do you most commonly get access to the AI tools you use? Select all that apply.



Base: n=2,430

Even among researchers using paid options, most (71%) are also using one or more free tools. This suggests that many researchers are employing a patchwork of solutions to try to meet their needs and goals for AI use.

With awareness and accessibility being key, there's a need for better support to help researchers leverage the full power of specialized AI tools in their work.

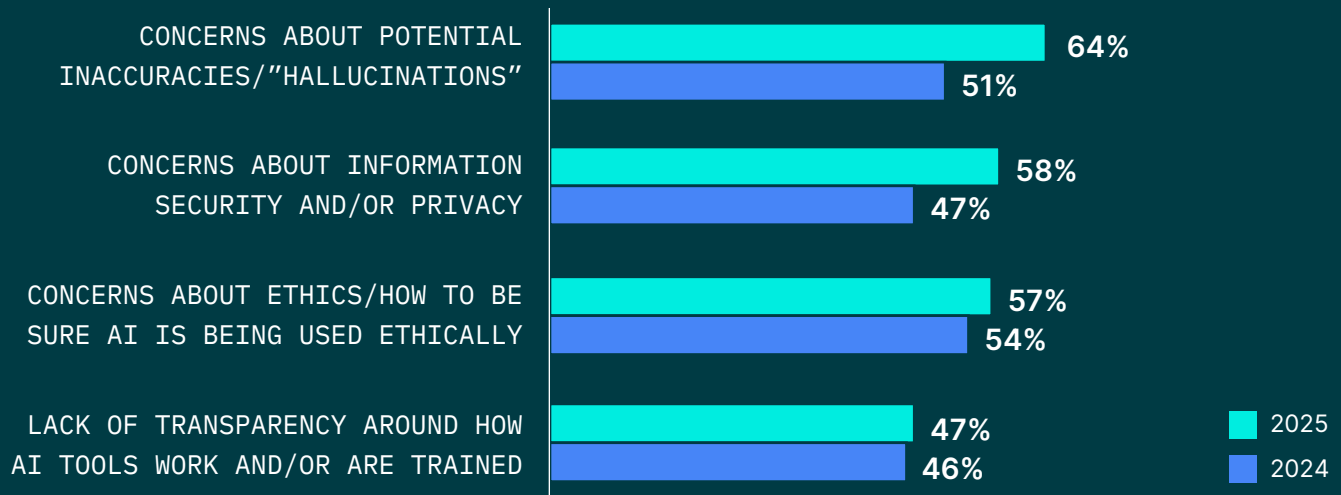
3

Experience breeds caution: researcher concerns about specific aspects of AI models are greater than they were last year

While AI use has increased, major barriers to AI adoption are still present. Some core concerns have grown as AI use has become more widespread, suggesting researchers' firsthand experiences have increased their level of caution.

Concerns about potential inaccuracies and hallucinations are even more likely to be cited as a barrier to using AI this year (64% this year vs. 51% last year). Concerns about information security and privacy are also increasingly likely to be an obstacle to greater AI use (58% cite as a barrier this year vs. 47% last year).

Q: What, if any, barriers or obstacles are preventing you from using AI in your work to the extent that you would like? Select all that apply.



Base: 2024 n=4,946; 2025 n=2,430

Addressing these challenges will be essential in helping researchers gain confidence and feel more empowered as they navigate evolving AI use.

4

There has been a reality check: researchers are recalibrating their expectations of what AI can currently do

Increased use of AI has also led to a reality check for researchers in terms of what the available tools can currently do well. Our findings suggest that researchers' views of AI are undergoing a course correction after hitting peak hype — something that's an inevitable evolutionary phase in most major technological shifts.

Last year, researchers believed that AI already exceeded human ability for **53%** of the use cases we tested.

This year, they think that's true for less than one-third of use cases.

This course correction aligns with recent news and studies about the adoption of AI in multiple industries and sectors (as noted in the [Gartner Hype Cycle for Artificial Intelligence, July 2025](#)). Researchers are moving beyond the initial excitement and, as they use AI, are coming to a better understanding of its present limits and future potential.

Some groups of researchers remain more optimistic about AI's current capabilities. Those more likely to think AI is presently outperforming humans include:

- Early adopters of AI (they think AI currently exceeds human ability in **59%** of use cases)
- Researchers in the Healthcare (**57%**) and Corporate (**50%**) sectors
- Researchers in the APAC region (**45%**), particularly China (**47%**)
- Researchers whose field of study falls under Medicine (**48%**) or Computer Science (**43%**)

5

Reality check does not mean failure: most researchers say AI boosts their efficiency

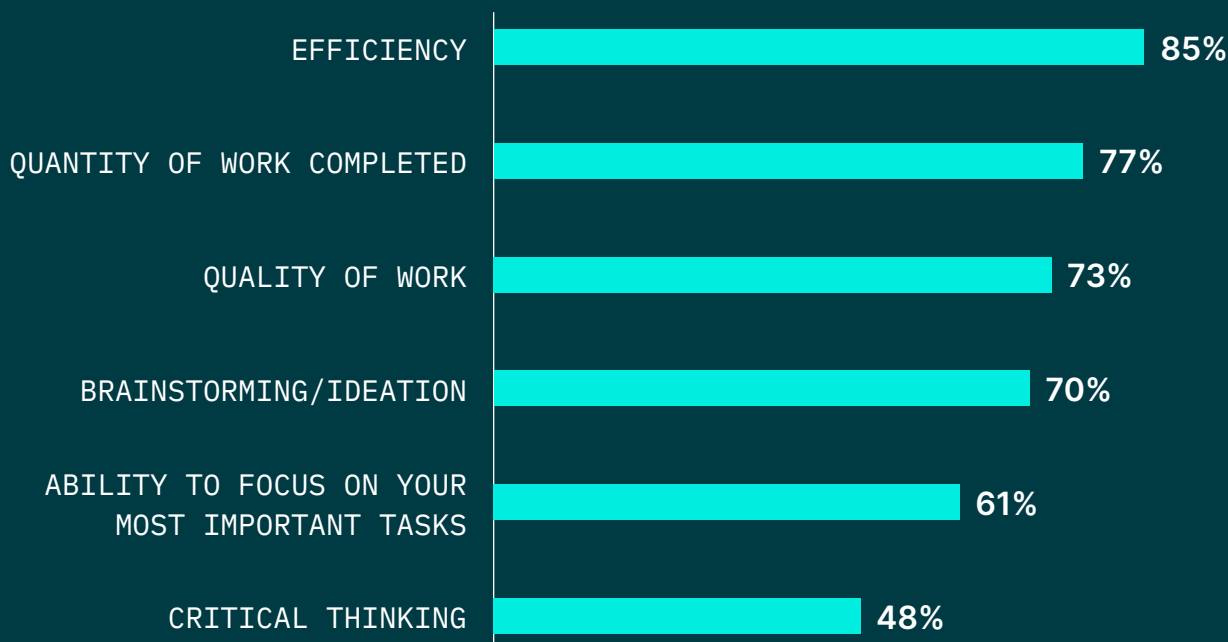
While researchers' expectations may have been tempered, this shift doesn't mean that their use of AI has been unsuccessful. Despite changing views about what AI can currently do, the majority of researchers say that it's been an effective and valuable help in many areas of their work.

85% of researchers using AI report that it has helped their efficiency.

Close to three-quarters of researchers who've used AI say that it's helped them with the quantity (**77%**) and the quality (**73%**) of their work. **70%** also find it valuable for brainstorming and ideation. These positive experiences highlight the potential for AI use not just in improving efficiency, but as a technology that can elevate the whole research journey.

Q: Based on your experiences to date, what impact — if any — does using AI have on the following aspects of your work as a researcher?

% Somewhat/Strongly helps



Base: Researchers who have used any AI n=2,059

6

Tempered expectations today give way to high anticipation for greater AI use in the future

Despite some reservations about current capabilities, researchers have high expectations for the future role of AI in research. This optimism is evident in their willingness to embrace autonomous agents. Even more so than in 2024, researchers expect to see a big uptick in AI use in their fields.

On average, 83% of researchers expect the AI use cases we tested to become widespread in their fields in the next two years. That's a significant increase from just **57%** who felt the same way last year, suggesting a growing belief in AI's potential. There's also a high degree of willingness to embrace future agentic tools. When asked to imagine a future state where agentic tools can perform specific use cases, **57%** of researchers on average said they'd allow a future agentic AI tool to act autonomously on their behalf. This creates exciting opportunities to develop reliable, trustworthy AI agents to support researchers in the future.

Researchers with even higher expectations for widespread AI use include:

- Researchers in the APAC region (**93%**), including China (**94%**)
- Early career researchers (**89%**)
- Researchers in the fields of Computer Science (**88%**), Business, Economics, and Finance (**86%**), and the Physical Sciences (**86%**)
- Researchers in the Corporate sector (**86%**)

7

Most researchers want help with AI but aren't getting the institutional support they're looking for

Researchers find themselves caught between growing concerns about AI models — such as their current limitations — and their optimism and expectations for the future. Many recognize that they need guidance in the present, yet most say they aren't getting that essential support from their institution or organization.

A lack of clear guidelines and training continues to be a significant barrier to AI use for 57% of researchers.

More hindered by a lack of guidelines and training

- Researchers in Medicine (**64%**) and Social Sciences (**68%**)
- Later career researchers (**61%**)
- Average adopters of AI (**64%**)
- Researchers in the Americas (**63%**)

Less hindered by a lack of guidelines and training

- Computer Science researchers (**39%**)
- Corporate sector researchers (**44%**)
- Researchers in APAC (**52%**), particularly China (**47%**)
- Early career researchers (**53%**)

This highlights a critical need for more support to help researchers navigate AI with confidence. Institutional support is falling short of meeting needs. Less than half of researchers (**41%**) agree that their organization provides them with the guidelines and best practices they need to successfully make use of AI in their work.

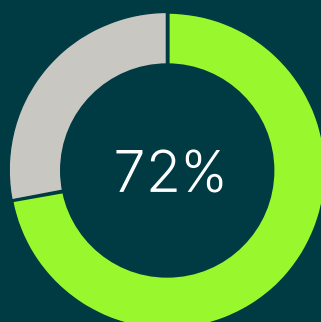
And the desire for this support is clear — **73%** of researchers think that it's important for publishers to provide clear guidance on the use of AI in the research and publishing process. This presents a huge opportunity for publishers and institutions alike to step up and provide the resources that researchers need — and want — to effectively harness AI's potential.

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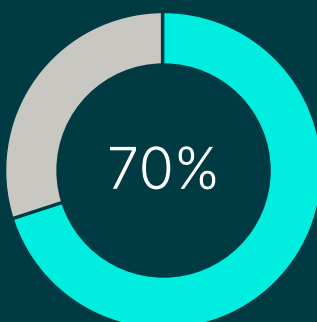
Researchers demand disclosure to legitimize the appropriate use of AI

As the role of AI in research grows and evolves, so does the conversation around transparency. Researchers recognize the importance of disclosing AI use — on the part of researchers, and of editors and reviewers.

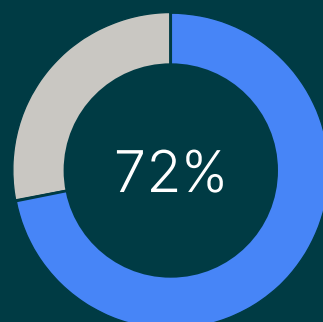
Nearly three-quarters of researchers want peer reviewers and editors to disclose details about the AI they use in the review process. This includes:



WHICH TOOL
THEY USED



A GENERAL
DESCRIPTION
OF HOW THEY
USED IT



DETAILED INFORMATION
ON WHICH PARTS OF
THE REVIEW AI WAS
USED IN DRAFTING
OR EDITING

Base: n=717

Expectations around transparency extend to authors, too. As peer reviewers (and consumers of research), most researchers say it's highly important for authors to disclose how they used AI in their methods (**77%**), in their drafting and editing (**66%**), and in the creation and editing of their figures where AI use is permitted by journal guidelines (**79%**). By championing disclosure and transparency, we can address a major source of distrust in AI use across the research community.

While AI adoption among researchers has dramatically increased in just one year, our survey reveals that increased experience has bred greater caution about AI's limitations. However, researchers remain optimistic about the future potential of AI tools and urgently need institutional support and publisher guidance to bridge the gap between AI's current capabilities and transformative research outcomes. Publishers and institutions must step up to provide the specialized tools, training, and disclosure frameworks that researchers are actively seeking to responsibly harness AI's power in scholarly work.

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