HRPA | Human Resources Professionals Association

Generative AI in the Workplace

HRPA Survey Report

April 2023

Table of Contents

Introduction

Generative AI technologies, like ChatGPT and DALL-E, have made massive strides in their capabilities recently, seemingly offering limitless possibilities for creating original text, images, audio and more. These models can be programmed to generate new and innovative content – far beyond what we've seen traditional AI do in the past, and while the possible applications for using generative AI in the workplace are impressive, there are also many unknowns about this technology that could lead to potential risks and issues if it is not used responsibly.

Between March 21 to 24, 2023, HRPA ran a pulse survey of its membership to gain insights into their attitudes and behaviours regarding the use of generative AI technology in the workplace. The survey explored if, and how HR professionals are using the technology in their organizations, the benefits and challenges they have experienced, and how they are planning to mitigate the risks associated with using AI.

205 respondents participated in the survey from a range of industries and employment backgrounds. The survey revealed that while there has been some interest and early adoption of generative AI in workplaces, most respondents have no current plans to adopt this technology into their workflows and feel as if they need to learn more about it before they are comfortable using it.

Reading the Survey Report

Definitions
The term "generative AI" is used throughout the report and is defined as a type of artificial intelligence that is trained on large amounts of information and uses algorithms to create original content such as text, audio, images, code etc.

Survey Data
The survey had a small sample size of 205 respondents. While the responses present some insight into how HR professionals view generative AI, the results should be interpreted with caution.

Survey responses are presented as a percentage, rounded to the nearest whole number. Responses to some questions may not total 100% due to rounding.

The following map provides the full titles for industry abbreviations used in the report:

MAN = Manufacturing

NFP = Not for Profit

WR = Wholesale/Retail Distribution

BFPI = Banking, Finance, Pension Funds & Insurance

GPC = Government / Public Commissions

HSS = Health & Social Services

APREE = Agriculture, Primary Resources (Mining, Forestry), Engineering & Energy
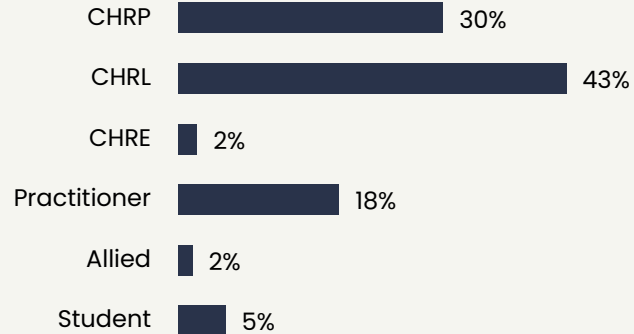
CST = Construction & Skilled Trades

IT = Information Technology
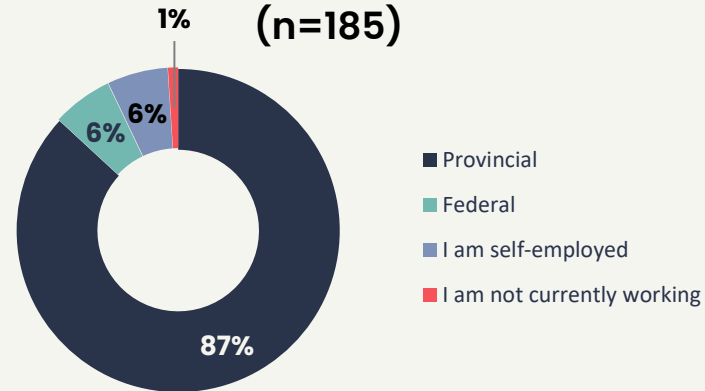
EDU = Educational Institutions & Services

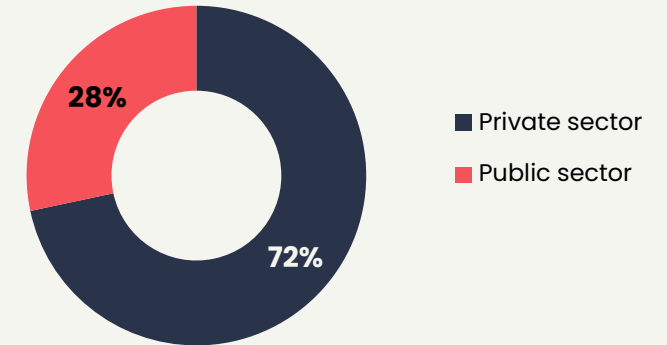**BPS** = Business & Professional Services
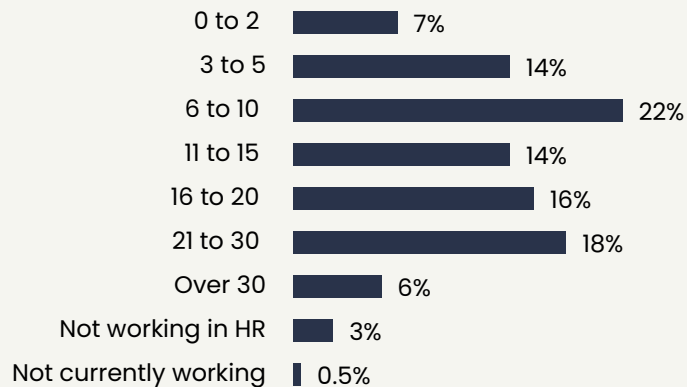
Survey Demographics

HRPA Registration Class (n=189)

- CHRP — 30%
- CHRL — 43%
- CHRE — 2%
- Practitioner — 18%
- Allied — 2%
- Student — 5%

Provincially or Federally Regulated (n=185)

- Provincial — 87%
- Federal — 6%
- I am self-employed — 6%
- I am not currently working — 1%

Sector (n=187)

- Private sector — 72%
- Public sector — 28%

Years worked in HR (n=189)

- 0 to 2 — 7%
- 3 to 5 — 14%
- 6 to 10 — 22%
- 11 to 15 — 14%
- 16 to 20 — 16%
- 21 to 30 — 18%
- Over 30 — 6%
- Not working in HR — 3%
- Not currently working — 0.5%

Organization Size by Employees (n=189)

- Self-employed — 7%
- Fewer than 10 — 4%
- 10 to 99 — 25%
- 100 to 499 — 33%
- 500 to 999 — 7%
- 1000 to 5000 — 10%
- Over 5000 — 13%
- Not currently working — 1%

Industry (n=185)

- Other — 20%
- MAN — 12%
- BPS — 12%
- NFP — 12%
- GPC — 7%
- Edu — 7%
- HSS — 6%
- BFPI — 5%
- IT — 5%
- WR — 4%
- APREE — 4%
- CST — 4%
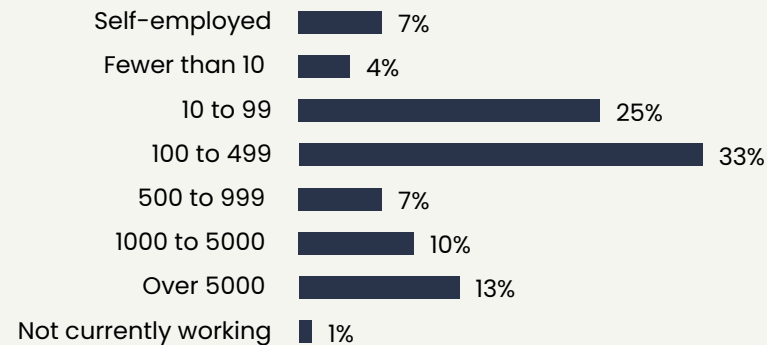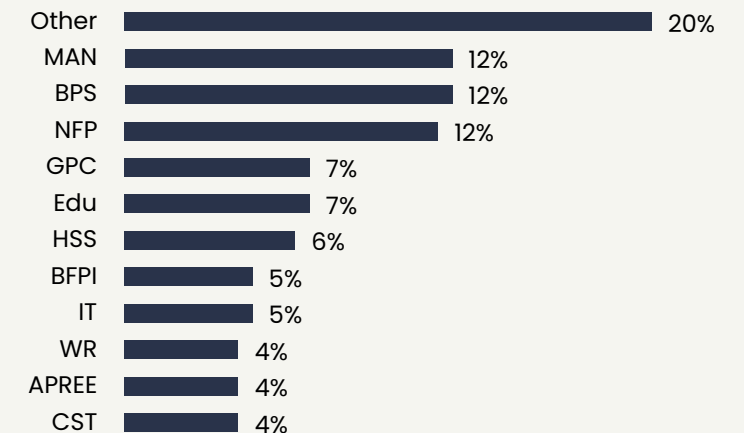
Using Generative AI in the Workplace

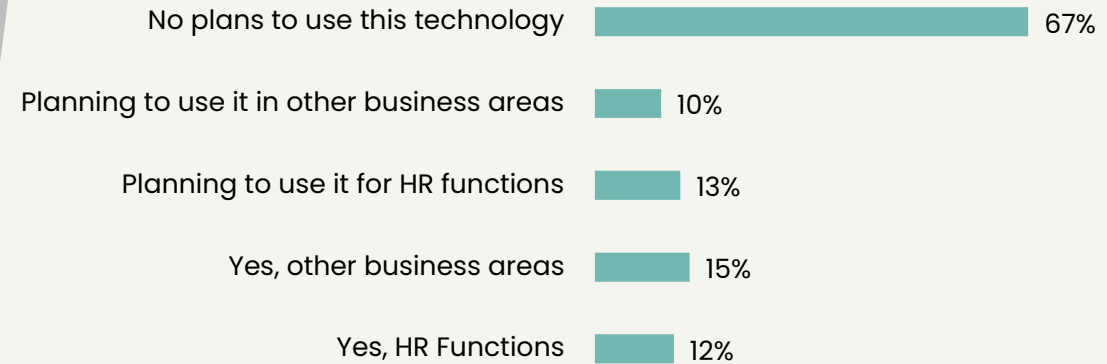Generative AI technology has been grabbing headlines recently, with much of the discourse surrounding how it will be used in the workplace.

While there is much excitement around the possibilities generative AI can offer, the survey found that two-thirds of respondents do not have any current plans for using the tech in their workplaces, or policies in place to address its use.

Some workplaces have begun using generative AI or are in the planning stages, with one-in-five saying they are using it for HR functions or in other business areas. While almost no respondents currently have a policy in place, 13% are planning to implement one.

The survey results are not surprising considering how novel the technology is, and it will be interesting to observe how it is adopted by organizations as it continues to evolve.

Q: Does your organization use generative AI technology for HR functions or in any other business areas?* (n=205)

Category	%
No plans to use this technology	67%
Planning to use it in other business areas	10%
Planning to use it for HR functions	13%
Yes, other business areas	15%
Yes, HR Functions	12%

*Respondents could make multiple selections.

Q: Does your organization have a formal policy addressing the use of generative AI in the workplace? (n=205)

- 0.5%
- 13%
- 86%

Legend:
- Yes
- No
- No, but we are planning to implement one
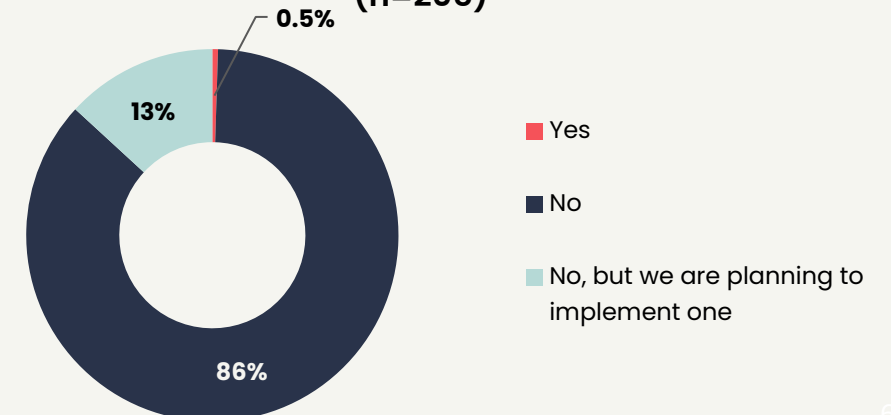
Concerns with Generative AI

The leading reason preventing respondents from using generative AI is that they need to learn more about it (66%). This response was by far, the biggest reason for respondents, selected more than twice as much as the next most common response, data privacy and security concerns (31%).

Survey respondents also recognized risks associated with the technology as reasons why they are not planning to use it, however comments revealed that many HR professionals believe these risks can be mitigated if the tech is used responsibly and with caution.

Why is your organization not planning to use generative AI?*
(n=137)

Need to learn more about it	66%
Data privacy and security concerns	31%
Need to see more advancements with the technology first	23%
Concerns with the quality of its outputs	21%
Plagiarism and intellectual property concerns	20%
It would not be helpful with the work that we do	15%
Other	12%

*Respondents could make multiple selections.

Q: Is your organization concerned about employees using generative AI in an unauthorized way to carry out their tasks? (n=199)

- Yes — 16%
- No — 53%
- It depends on their role in the organization — 31%
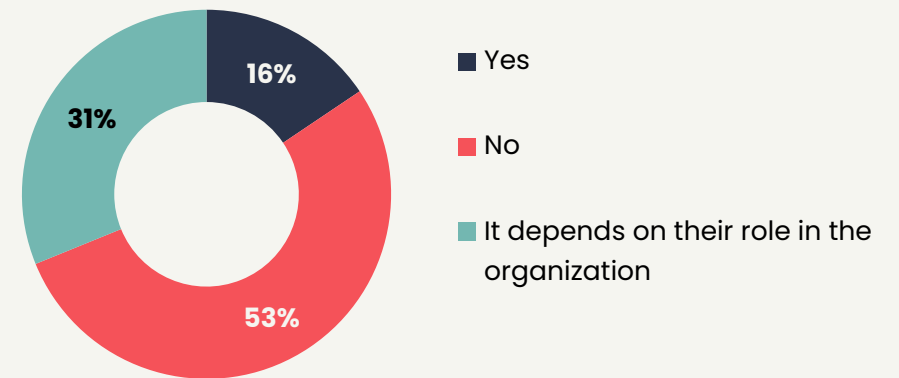
53%

Of respondents said they are not concerned about employees using generative AI in an unauthorized way, while 31% said it depends on their role in the organization.

Those who did have concerns about unauthorized use of generative AI in the workplace listed privacy and security risks, lack of originality and plagiarism, and poor outputs from the programs as common reasons.

Generative AI for HR Functions

While generative AI is still a relatively new and advancing technology, some HR professionals have begun thinking about how it can be applied to common HR functions.

12% Are **currently using** generative AI technology for HR functions.

13% Are **planning to use** generative AI for HR.

The top HR functions that respondents are using, or planning to use generative AI are largely related to writing and administrative work. Those who were self-employed were more than twice as likely than any other organization size category to say they are using or planning to use generative AI for HR functions (54%).
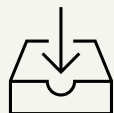
Top HR Functions for Generative AI

63% Writing job descriptions

56% Writing policies

56% Administrative tasks

Q: Which HR functions has your organization applied or planning to apply generative AI technology?* (n=48)

HR Function	%
Writing job descriptions	63%
Policy writing	56%
Administrative tasks	56%
Writing interview questions	50%
Research	35%
Training	33%
Communicating with job applicants	23%
Onboarding	19%
Other	17%

*Respondents could make multiple selections.

Benefits & Challenges

Considering the potential risks associated with the use of generative AI in the workplace, it is notable that nearly two-thirds of respondents did not report experiencing any challenges using the technology.

When challenges were compared against the HR functions respondents are using AI to complete, those using it for writing policies and interview questions were the most likely to say they have not experienced challenges.

Most of the respondents using generative AI did report positive benefits, with the two biggest being time savings and efficiency, although 13% said that they have not seen any benefits using the technology.

Q: Has the use of generative AI benefitted your organization in any of the following ways?* (n=38)

Benefit	%
Time savings	79%
Improved efficiency	71%
Higher quality work deliverables	45%
Easing heavy workloads	39%
Cost savings	29%
We have not seen any benefits	13%
Increased employee engagement	5%
Other	0%

Q: Has the use of generative AI introduced any of the following challenges for your organization?* (n=38)

Challenge	%
We have not experienced any challenges	63%
Data privacy and security risks	29%
Increased risk of bias or discrimination	21%
Plagiarism & intellectual property complications	21%
Leadership pushback	18%
Poor quality outputs	8%
Employee pushback	8%
Customer pushback	5%
Other	5%

*Respondents could make multiple selections.

Mitigating the Risks

Those who are using or planning to use generative AI were asked how they are addressing or planning to mitigate risks associated with data privacy, and bias and discrimination. Each risk has the potential to cause significant harm to direct and indirect users and can easily go undetected if the technology is not being used with care.

Responses varied for each risk, with some taking a more proactive approach to planning, while others were using the technology with caution in the absence of a formal strategy or policy.

"We are limiting what information is given to the program, understanding we don't know where that info is going."

Many respondents indicated that they have not planned for risks associated with bias and discrimination, which is concerning considering how prevalent bias can be in AI programs that have been designed by humans who carry their own personal biases.

As generative AI becomes more widely used, HR professionals will need to consider new technologies through a diversity, equity and inclusion lens and demand transparency from the vendors who develop these programs on how their information is being used.

Q: How has your organization been monitoring and mitigating risks surrounding AI-based stereotyping, discrimination?

- ✕ Risk not being addressed
- Reviewing and adjusting outputs
- Not a concern with how the tech used.

Q: How is your organization ensuring that sensitive data is protected when using generative AI technology?

- ⚠ Limiting data inputs & not using sensitive data
- Using software like VPNs & firewalls
- ✕ Risk not being addressed

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