



Generative AI in Real-World Workplaces: Microsoft's Second Research Report on AI and Productivity

Editors: Sonia Jaffe, Neha Parikh Shah, Jenna Butler, Alex Farach,
Alexia Cambon, Brent Hecht, Michael Schwarz, and Jaime Teevan

Full report URL: aka.ms/productivity-report2



Generative AI in Real-World Workplaces: Microsoft's Second Research Report on AI and Productivity

Microsoft released a new research report focusing on real-world impact of generative AI tools as workers integrate them into everyday complex workflows

Results suggest that the positive productivity effects observed in a lab setting are indeed beginning to manifest in real-world work, and, perhaps even more importantly, they show how generative AI can provide even greater impact as work practices evolve

Summarizes over a dozen recent Microsoft studies from 50+ researchers on the application of generative AI in real-world workplaces – including the first large-scale randomized trial of Copilot with thousands of users from over 60 customers

Link: <http://aka.ms/productivity-report-pdf>

Key Learnings



Generative AI is already helping people be measurably more productive in their day-to-day jobs



The productivity story in real-world workflows is more complex than observed in lab studies (as expected)



Productivity gains associated with generative AI, including time and accuracy, vary by role, function and organization



Variance in adoption and utilization influences AI's impact



Early studies suggest generative AI may affect the cognitive effort required for task completion

Learning 1: AI is already helping people be measurably more productive



Early Access Telemetry Study

Likely largest randomized, controlled study (“clinical trial”) of LLMs in the workplace, compares employees with and without Copilot

Examines over 60 tenants and 6k employees

	Copilot Users
Documents	• 10% more documents created and edited
Emails	• 11% fewer emails read • 4% less time interacting with emails
Meetings	• Effects differed by company



Work Trend Index Survey

Expansive survey aimed to capture user sentiments and experiences with generative AI, broadly

Includes 31K global information workers across 31 countries

- 29% of AI users report being familiar with generative AI, using it at work at least several times a week, and saving more than 30 minutes a day by using it



Bing Chat Log Analysis [\(link\)](#)

Study to understand how people use AI-augmented search differently from traditional search, by task complexity and type of work domain

Analyzes 80k randomly selected, de-identified conversations from Bing Copilot and Bing searches

	High Complexity Tasks	Knowledge Work Domains
Bing Copilot (AI augmented)	37%	73%
Bing Search (traditional search)	13%	37%

Learning 2: The productivity story in real-world workflows is more complex than observed in lab studies



Lab studies show straightforward gains

Designed for tasks hypothesized to be amenable for generative AI, generally showing straightforward and substantial improvements to productivity



As usual, real world has more complexity

Real workflows more complex than controlled lab environments and include tasks at which Copilot is less good or not yet assisting. There are costs to integrating AI into existing workflows



We do see meaningful impacts within real, complex workflows

Impressive to see metrics like documents edited and e-mail time moving significant. Effect sizes lower than some expectations, higher than others



Some benefits are hard to capture

- People report using Copilot much less mentally demanding, but do not differ in a test of cognitive load (Stroop test)
- People using GitHub Copilot report they don't want to do tasks without it, but we find no effect on Engineering Systems NSAT, likely due to the limited time developers spend coding and the influence of other tools and activities
- Perceived time saved is generally larger than actual savings – echoes long line of research suggesting an unmeasured element makes tasks with Copilot more enjoyable (ex: elevator rides with mirrors feel like they go faster)

Learning 3: Productivity gains associated with generative AI, including time and accuracy, vary by role, function, organization



Work Trend Index Survey: By Job Function

Perceived Benefits of AI Integration

(31k+ respondents)

- **Task Automation:** Benefits depend on the extent of tasks in function that can be automated or assisted by AI.
- **Repetitive Tasks:** Most considerable improvements in roles with repetitive tasks or extensive content creation.
- **High Interaction Roles:** Largest gains in productivity, quality, and efficiency in customer-facing roles (Customer Service, Sales) and content creation (Marketing, Creative).
- **Specialized Fields:** More modest improvements in technical fields (Legal, Engineering) due to the complexity and nuance of tasks



Software Developers

- **Automation preference:** (800+ MS developers) Most want to see AI help with automating routine tasks, like generating unit tests and writing documentation
- **Engineering Satisfaction:** (30k+ developers) GitHub Copilot use did not seem to affect Engineering systems satisfaction, likely due to the limited time developers spend coding and the influence of other tools and activities
- **Lab study:** GitHub Copilot improved speed and accuracy on a familiar task, but not on one with unfamiliar concepts and components



Customer Service Agents

- (Lab study) Sellers with licensing chatbot answered faster higher accuracy, more completeness than those without



Security Analysts

- (Lab study) Security analysts with Copilot more accurate and complete than those without. Gains were smaller for experts than novices, but still substantial



Multilingual teams

- (Lab study) Copilot improved accuracy for Japanese speakers trying to understanding an English meeting recording

	Accuracy among Japanese listeners recapping a	
	Japanese Meeting	English Meeting
With Copilot Meeting Recap	96.8%	97.5%
Standard tools	94.8%	83.8%

Learning 4: Variance in adoption and utilization influences AI’s impact

Consistent Copilot use leads to job benefits



- M365 Copilot user survey (n=885)
- Using Copilot for more than 10 weeks report more benefits compared to those with shorter usage (job enjoyment, reduced meeting attendance)
 - Users who report saving over 11 min/day also report better work-life balance, more interesting and fulfilling work, more motivated and productive

Power Users regularly experiment with different ways of using AI



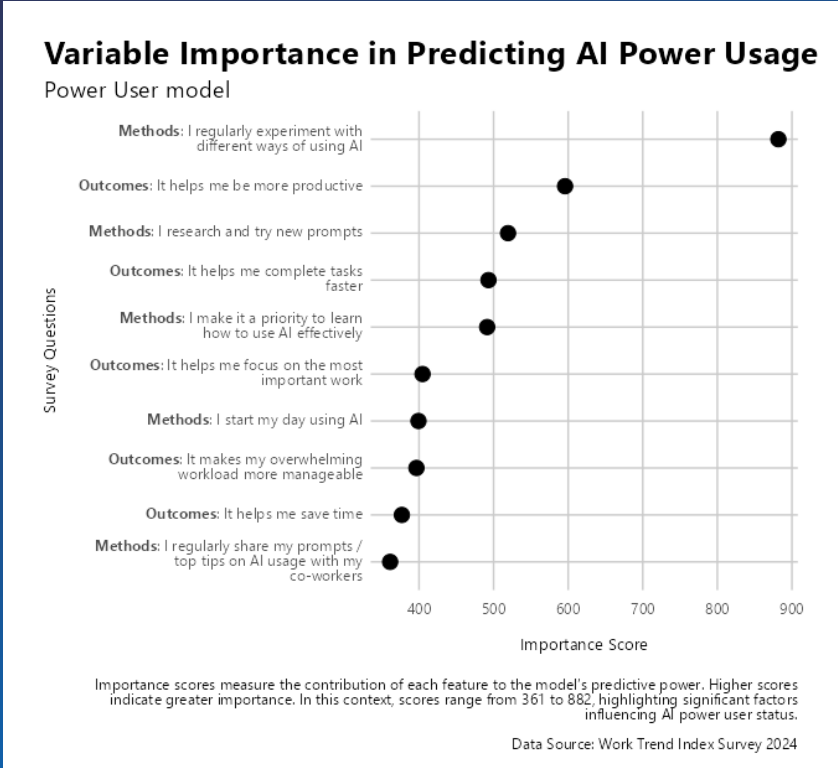
- WTI Survey (n=31k)
- What defines a power user?
Most importantly, they regularly experiment with using AI. Also, less ‘unsanctioned’ AI use and learning focus

Effects of Copilot differ based on usage



- Early Access Telemetry study (randomized)
- Substantial variation across tenants in adoption/usage rates. Substantial difference between effect of being given a Copilot *license* and effect of Copilot *usage*

Responses most predictive of being a Power User



Learning 5: Early studies suggest generative AI may affect the cognitive effort required for task completion

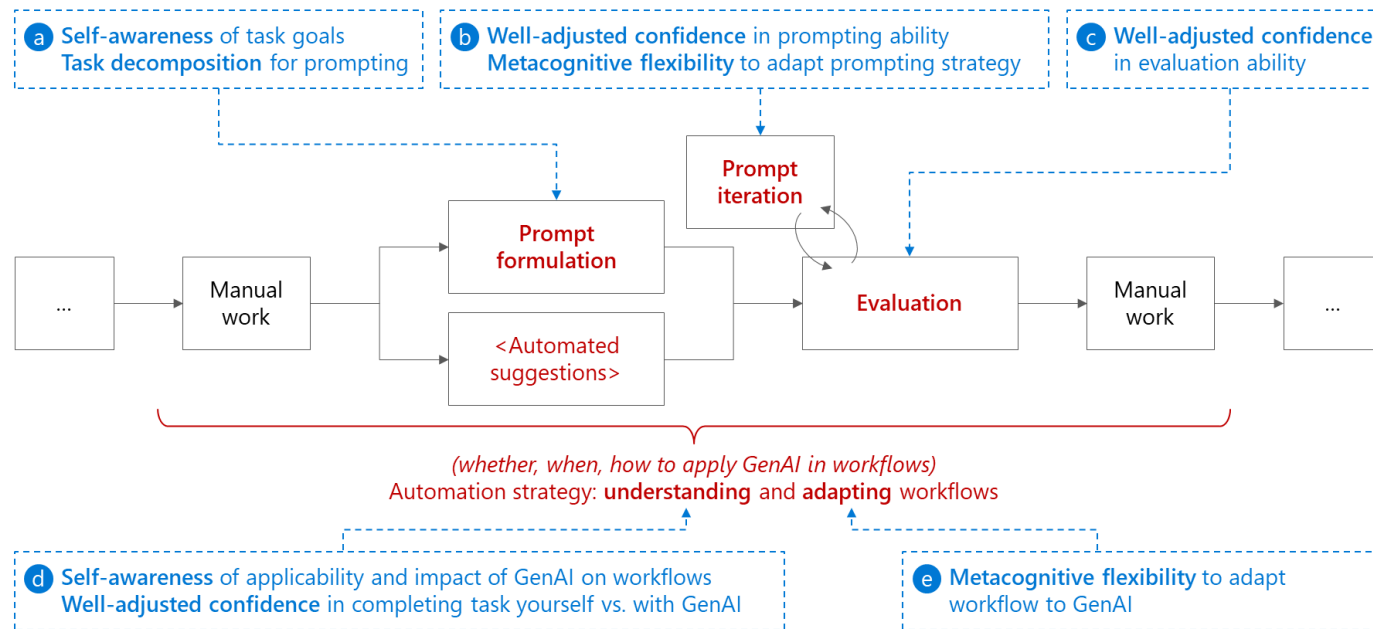
[High-impact paper](#) on generative AI and metacognition discusses how generative AI requires users to “think about thinking” E.g., Task goals, task decomposition, and confidence in one’s ability to evaluate the output

Indicates need for more metacognitive support in generative AI systems/tools, including:

- Breaking down complex tasks into sub-tasks
- Explainability and helping people learn an accurate mental model of what the systems can do
- Providing evaluation support
- New non-text-forward interfaces

A small, internal lab study found people reported Copilot lightened the cognitive load, but tests did not show lessened cognitive fatigue

Metacognitive demands at different steps of generative AI usage



This the second Microsoft report covering research on AI’s impact on work

FIRST REPORT

Early LLM-based Tools for Enterprise Information Workers Likely Provide Meaningful Boosts to Productivity



Dec 2023

The first report focused on understanding the **potential impact** of generative AI tools as people begin to use AI for work.

- Synthesized eight Microsoft-run research studies on AI’s impact on productivity.
- Most studies were lab-based, and explored tasks for which existing literature already suggested AI would do well.
- The included studies consistently found meaningful increase in speed of execution without a significant decrease in quality.
- Available at aka.ms/productivity-report1

SECOND REPORT

Generative AI in Real-World Workplaces



July 2024

The new report focuses on **real-world impact** of generative AI tools as workers integrate them into everyday complex workflows.

- Synthesizes fourteen Microsoft studies, including the largest randomized controlled trial on generative AI in organizations.
- Focused on field research but includes some lab studies.
- Results suggest positive productivity effects are beginning to manifest in real-world work, and show how generative AI can provide even greater impact as work practices evolve.
- Available at aka.ms/productivity-report2



Appendix

The new report synthesizes results from 14 recent studies

Studies of workers using AI on the job

- Early Access Program Telemetry Study
- Work Trend Index Study
- Copilot Usage in the Workplace Survey
- Study on Generative Search Engines and Task Complexity

Specific Roles and Functions

- Comparing across Roles in Copilot Usage in the Workplace Survey
- Towards Effective AI Support for Developers: A Survey of Desires and Concerns
- Problem-Solving Styles and Confidence Generating Prompts for GitHub Copilot
- GitHub Copilot and Engineering System Satisfaction

A Selection of New Lab Studies

- Comparing the Effect of Different Task Types on Effective Use of GitHub Copilot
- Understanding the Impact Copilot for Security Has for Security Professionals
- Experiment with Licensing Chatbot for Sellers
- The Effect of Copilot in a Multi-lingual Context
- Impact of Generative AI on Metacognition
- Impact of Copilot on Cognitive Load

Additional details from three of the studies in the new report

Studies of workers using AI on the job



Early Access Program Telemetry Study:
Compares employees with/without Copilot

Over 60 tenants and 6k employees

Largest Controlled Study of Generative AI Productivity Impacts to date

Large-scale randomized controlled field experiment of Copilot for Microsoft 365, focusing on real-world use

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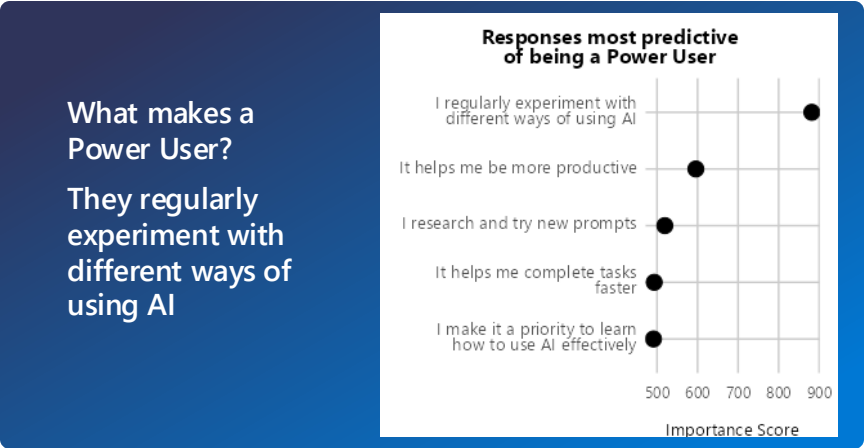


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