

# There's a lot of noise around AI.

This session is not that.

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*Practical tools. Real examples. A few things you haven't heard before.*

# We're All Asking the Wrong Question

*The fear is real. The question just isn't helping you.*

**Will AI  
replace me?**

*Understandable. Everyone is asking it.  
But it assumes your value = your tasks.*



**What am I  
building that  
AI can't replace?**

*This question puts you  
back in control.*

**Your tasks**

can be automated

**Your judgment**

can be amplified

**Your capability**

is yours to build

# We Have Always Done This

*Every generation of workers has had this exact conversation. Here's how it always goes.*

1913

## Assembly Line

The worry:

*"Skilled workers will be obsolete"*

What happened:

Created: logistics, supply chains, manufacturing ops

1979

## The Spreadsheet

The worry:

*"Accountants will lose their jobs"*

What happened:

Created: financial analysis, strategy, business intelligence

1990s

## The Internet

The worry:

*"Retail, media, and travel are finished"*

What happened:

Created: e-commerce, digital marketing, whole new industries

Now

## AI

The worry:

*"Will this replace all of us?"*

What happened:

Creating: ?

*The pattern is always the same: we automate the task, and we discover that humans were always more than the task.*

# Humans Will Always Be Viable

**Yes — AI is doing tasks that used to require people.**

*And yes — some of us turned those tasks into careers.*

**The worry isn't about AI — it's about finding where we still add value.**

*We always have. The answer has always been: build what's next.*

Every tool that has ever displaced human work

**was built by humans.**

The assembly line. The spreadsheet. The internet. AI.

**We're not being replaced by the future. We're building it.**

*The only question is whether you're going to be one of the people doing the building.*

AI PITCH COMPETITION WINNER

# Let's start with a real story.

## Karen & Megan

Creating Community Consulting

*AI Pitch Competition · Minnesota SBDC 2026*

### You'll hear:

- The idea they brought to the competition — and why
- How AI became part of how they actually operate
- What they'd do differently and what they'd do again



**THE PROBLEM**

**Rural communities are required to complete comprehensive needs assessments — but can't afford to do them well.**

*Rushed or underfunded, these assessments leave vulnerable gaps — in the very communities that can least afford them.*

**THEIR SOLUTION: AI Community Intelligence**

**Data  
Aggregation**

Pulls from public datasets, local records, and community inputs — automatically

**Equity  
Analysis**

Surfaces disparities and underserved populations that manual methods miss

**Comparative  
Reporting**

Benchmarks communities against peers — giving rural towns data they never had access to

**Priority  
Triangulation**

Turns complex data into a clear ranked action plan — not just a compliance document

**Turning a compliance burden into a competitive advantage — for rural Minnesota and beyond.**

**Megan Jensen**

Creating Community Consulting

**Karen Pifher**

Creating Community Consulting

FM Small Business Summit | June 23, 2026

# AI in Small Business

*Our Journey, Lessons Learned, & What's Next*

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She/Her | Co-Owner

# Our Journey

2024

Started with a real problem

2025

Built AI tools that fit our work

2025-  
Now

Learned from mistakes,  
moved from  
cautious to confident



Grant Accelerator



# Lessons Learned

Timeless  
Functions

Small Wins

Thought  
Partnership

Task  
Execution

## Start Small

You don't need 15 funnels  
to start using AI.

One use case. One system. Real momentum.



Simple. Strategic. Scalable.

# What's Next

## Pitch Competition Win

Developing Tools that are  
Timeless

### Ignite-ify — CNA project intake

Complete this form to configure your community needs assessment. The AI agent will use these settings to pull, compare, and analyze data.

1 · Agency info

2 · Geography

3 · Scope

4 · Comparisons

5 · Outputs

6 · Review

Organization name

e.g. Beltrami County Public Health

Primary contact name

First and last name

Email address

email@organization.org

Organization type

Select type...

Assessment purpose

What will this assessment be used for? Select all that apply.

Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP)

501(r) hospital compliance

Grant application support

Strategic planning

Capital campaign

Funder reporting

Community engagement

Policy development

Assessment timeline

Urgent — within 30 days

Grant deadline or board meeting driving timeline

Standard — 30 to 90 days

Normal planning cycle with stakeholder engagement

Comprehensive — 90+ days

Full 5-year cycle with community surveys and focus groups



Write a message...

# Let's Keep the Conversation Going

We would love to connect after today, whether you have questions, want to explore tools, or are curious about what is next for CCC.



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[creatingcommunityconsulting.com](https://www.creatingcommunityconsulting.com)

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/creating-community-consulting>

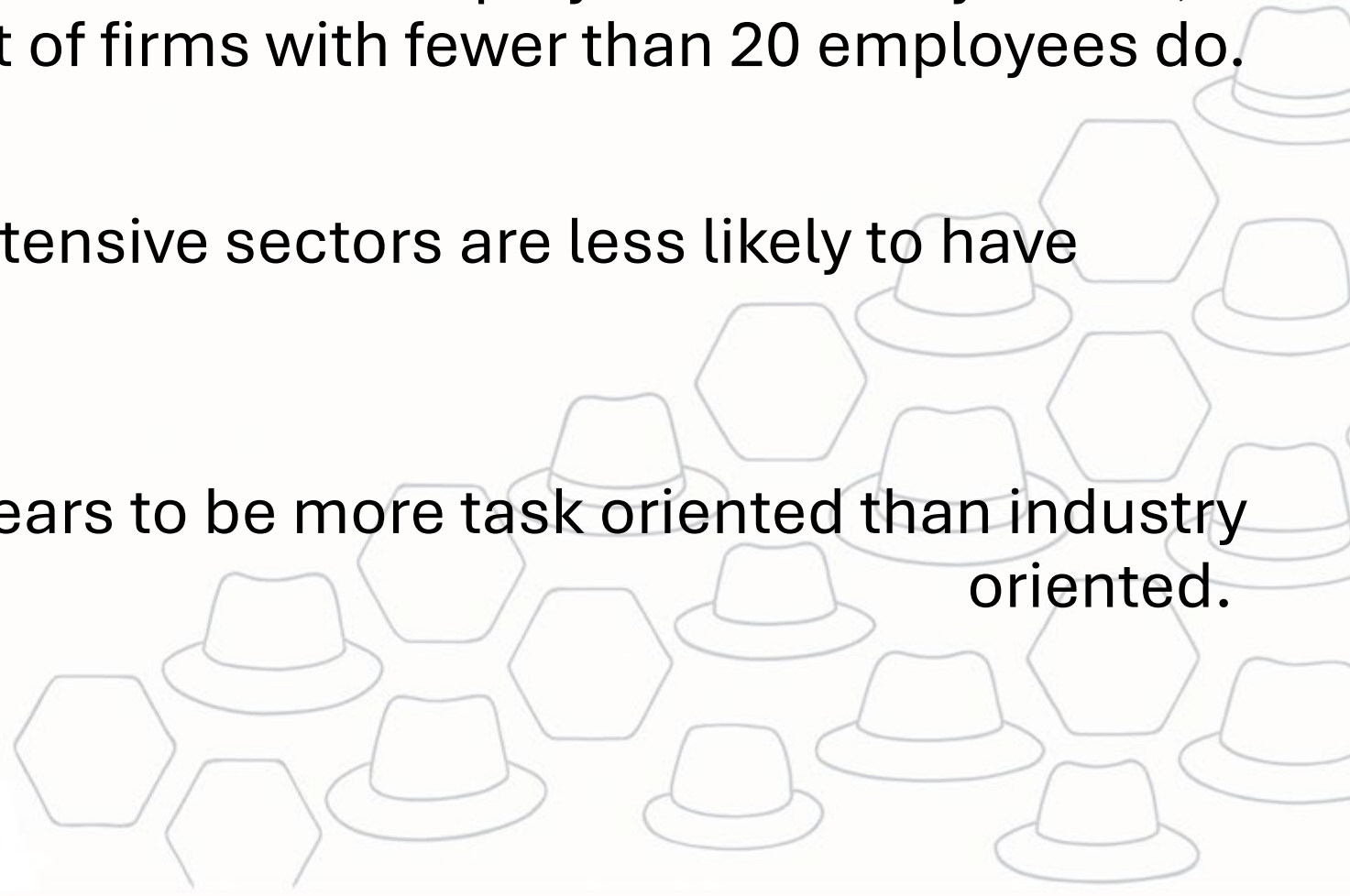


# AI adoption in business grows steadily but unevenly

30 percent of U.S. firms with at least 250 employees said they use AI, while 17 percent of firms with fewer than 20 employees do.

Businesses in more labor-intensive sectors are less likely to have adopted AI.

AI dissemination appears to be more task oriented than industry oriented.

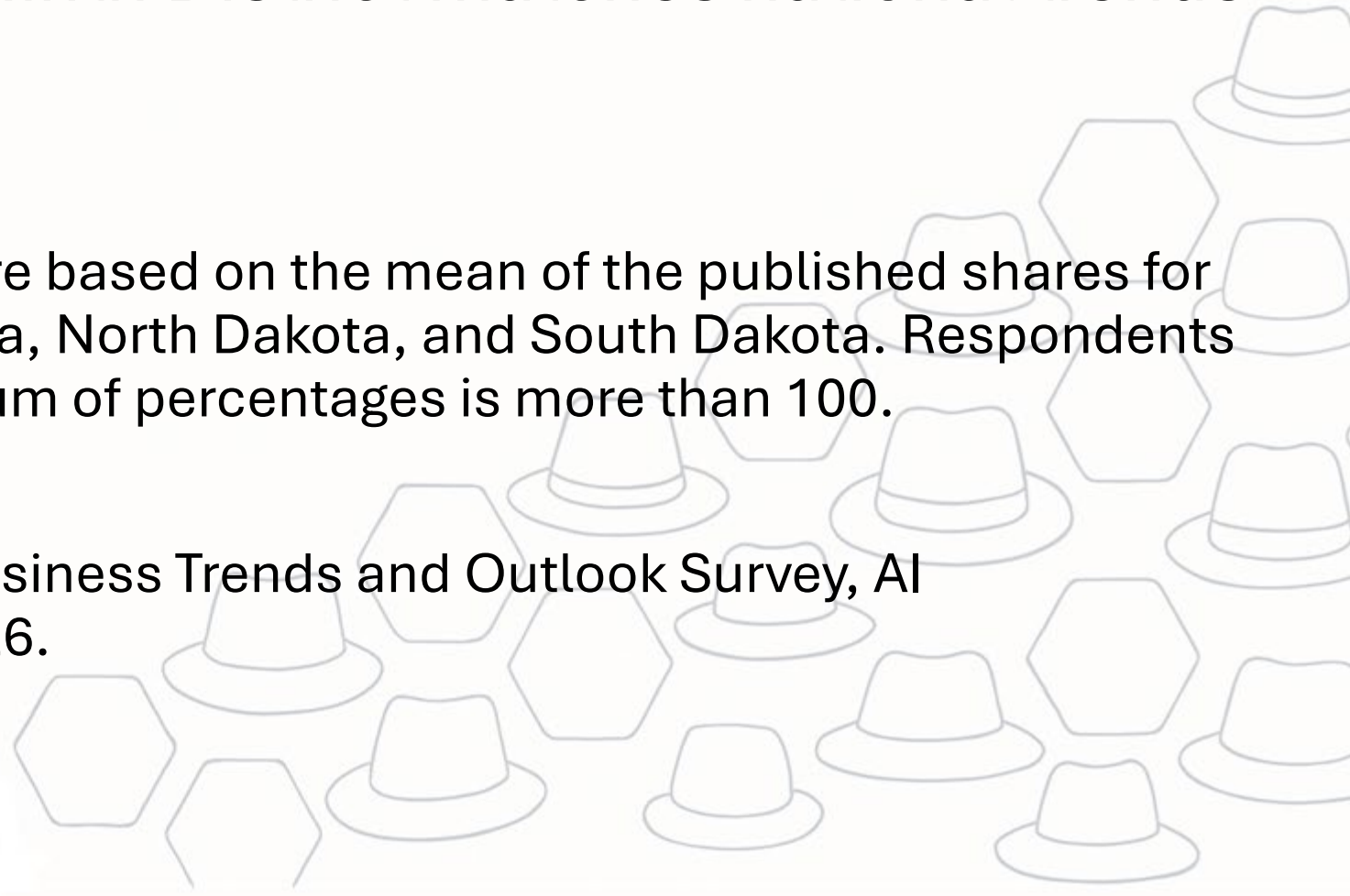


# How are businesses using AI?

Data show the Ninth District matches national trends

**Note:** Ninth District estimates are based on the mean of the published shares for the states of Minnesota, Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota. Respondents could select multiple options; sum of percentages is more than 100.

**Source:** U.S. Census Bureau, Business Trends and Outlook Survey, AI supplement. Published April 2026.



# The Minnesota Picture

**80%**

of businesses nationally

not using AI in any function

**38th**

Minnesota ranks nationally

in AI tool use — despite leading the Ninth District

**#1 reason**

non-adopters sit it out:

"It doesn't apply to our operations"

The gap that matters for this room:

Metro Minnesota



28.4%

Rural Minnesota

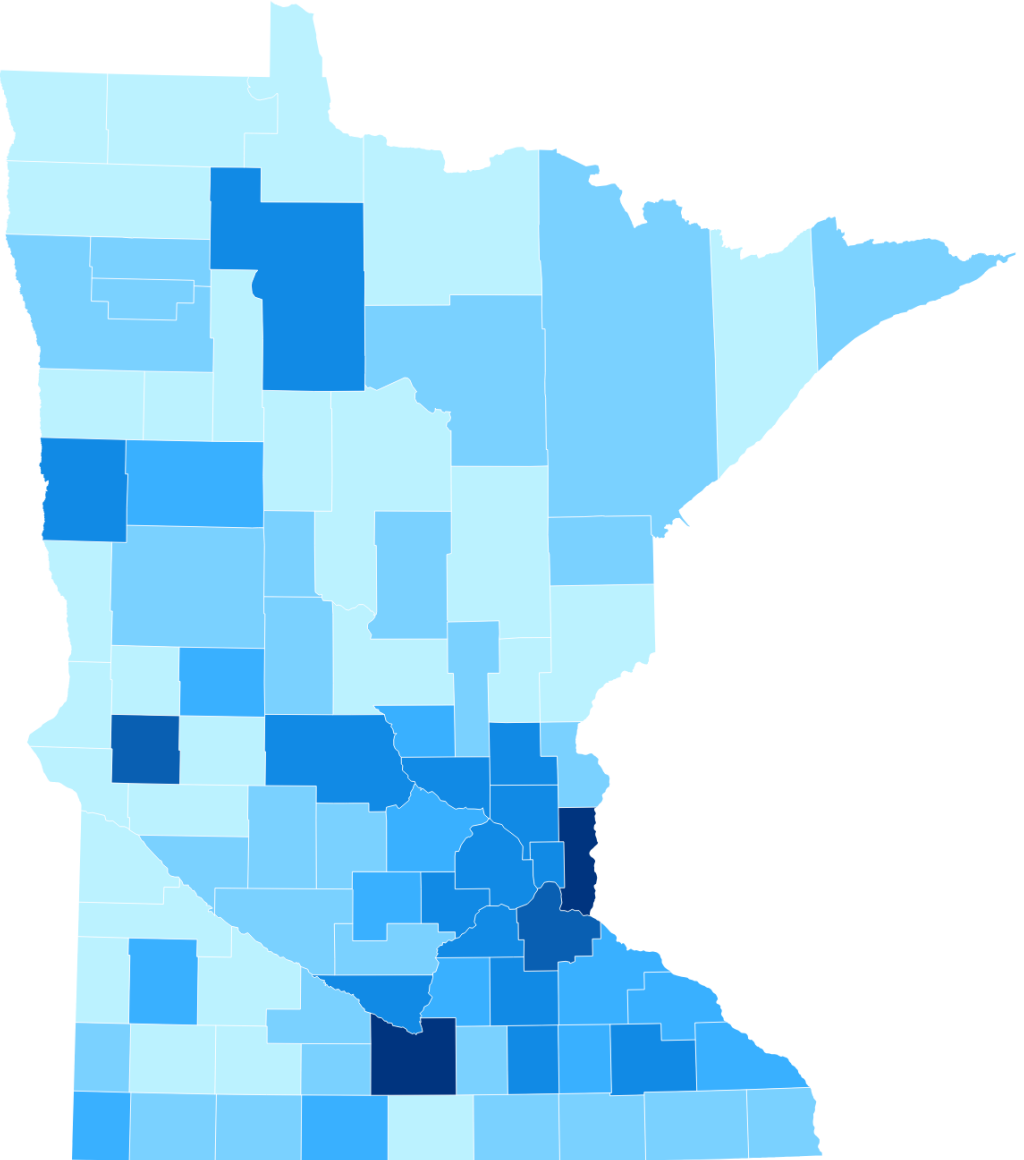
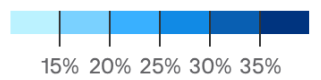


13.1%

*2x gap — and Fargo-Moorhead sits right at that dividing line.*

# Share of working-age adults who use AI, Q1 2026

National: 31.3% | Minnesota: 26.3%

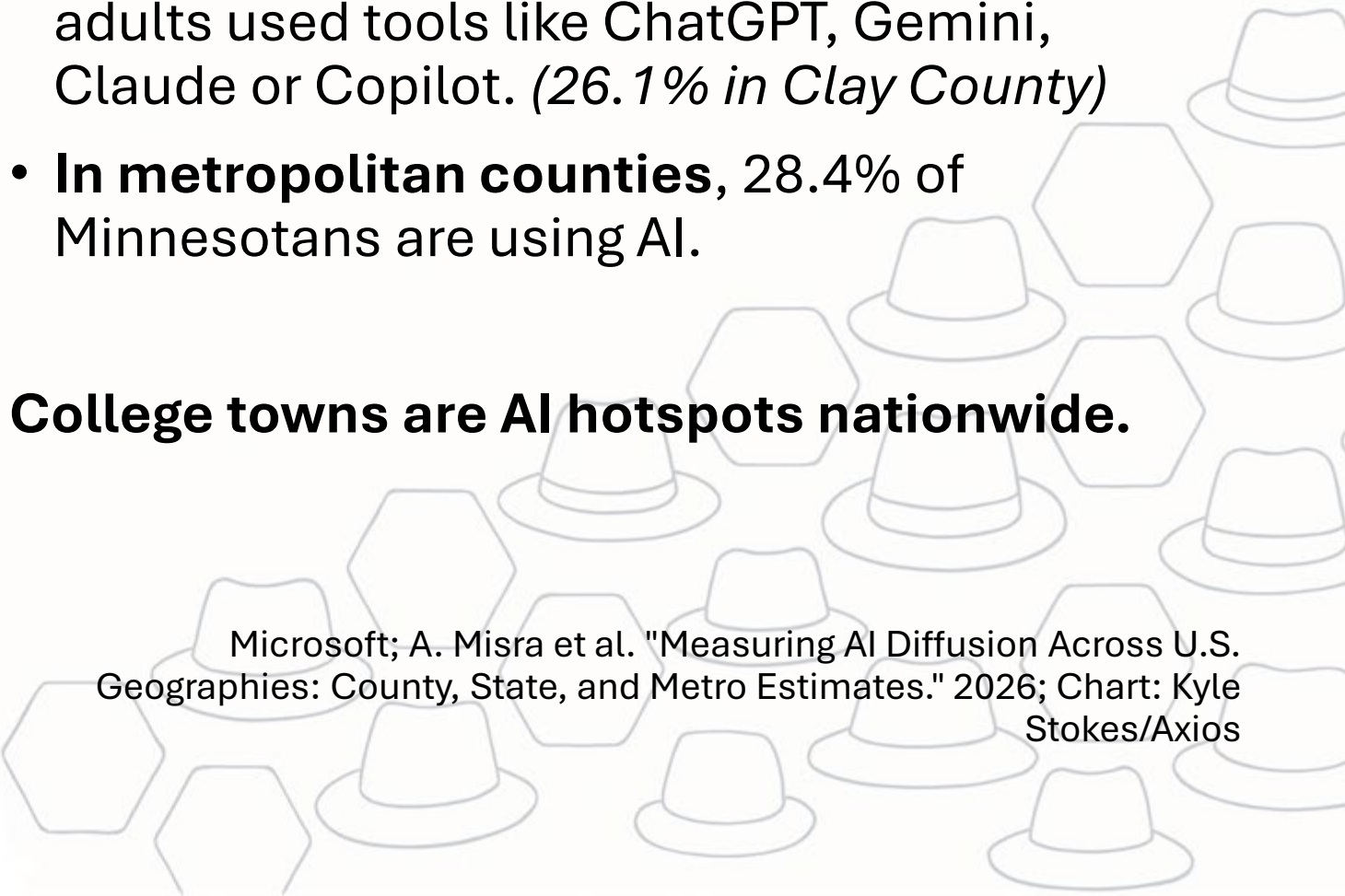


Minnesotans who live in cities are twice as likely to use AI tools as those who live in rural communities

- **In rural Minnesota**, 13.1% of working-age adults used tools like ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude or Copilot. (26.1% in Clay County)
- **In metropolitan counties**, 28.4% of Minnesotans are using AI.

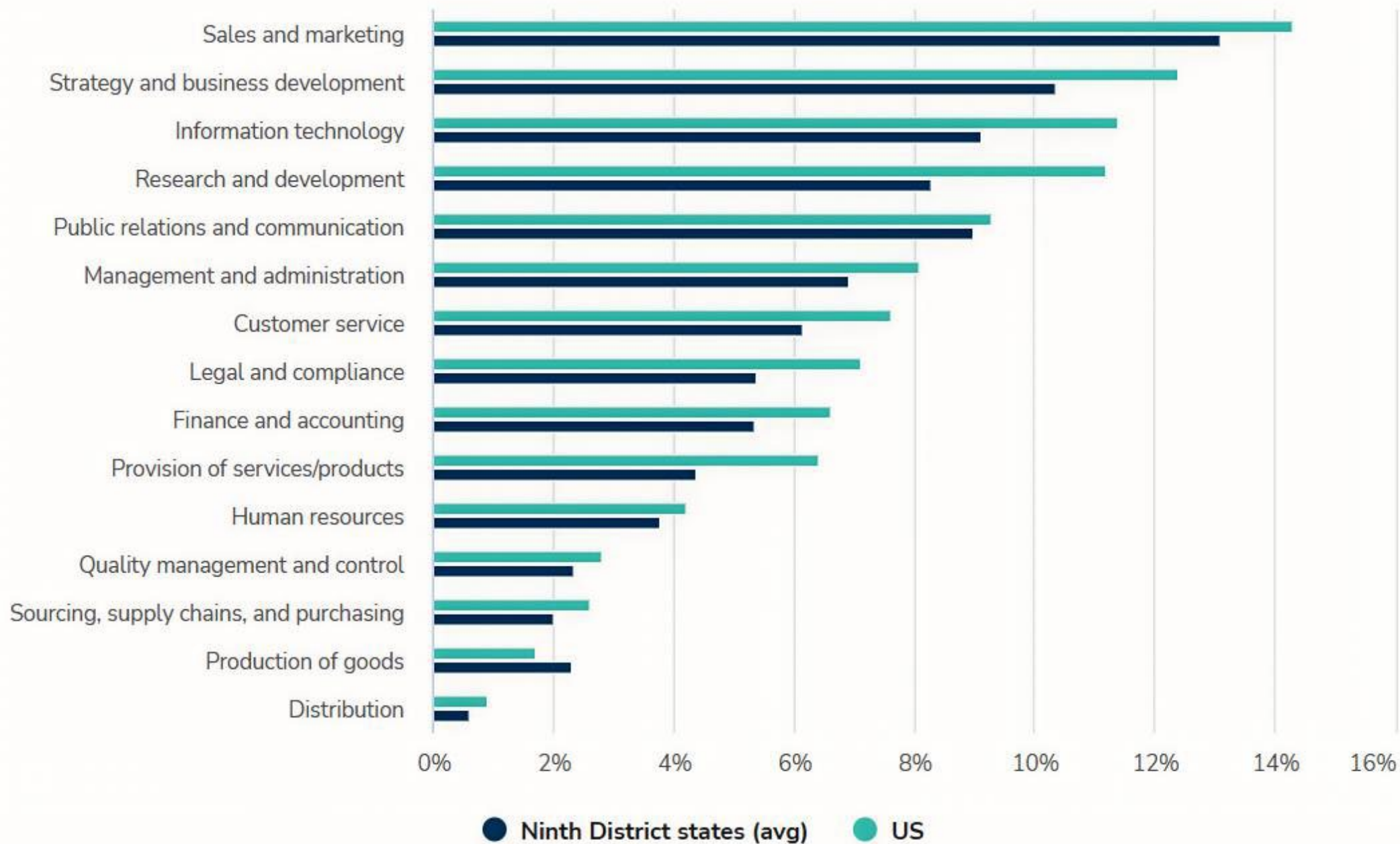
**College towns are AI hotspots nationwide.**

Microsoft; A. Misra et al. "Measuring AI Diffusion Across U.S. Geographies: County, State, and Metro Estimates." 2026; Chart: Kyle Stokes/Axios



# Businesses using AI by business function

Share of all surveyed businesses



# Sales & Marketing

54% of SMBs  
use AI for marketing

- Social media posts and captions
- Email campaigns and newsletters
- Product and service descriptions
- Ad copy for all major platforms
- Blog posts and website content
- Lead scoring — likeliest to buy
- Personalized follow-up messages
- Repurpose one post, multiple formats

*Marketing is the #1 entry point for AI in small business — and the fastest place to see a return on time invested.*

# Data Analysis & Reporting

62% of SMBs cite  
this as their #1 use

- Sales reports in plain language
- Customer buying trend analysis
- Cash flow forecasting
- Weekly business dashboards — auto
- Customer review theme analysis
- Month-over-month comparisons
- Identifying your highest-margin products
- Flagging underperforming periods

*AI gives small businesses the reporting capability previously reserved for enterprises with dedicated analytics teams.*

# Customer Service

46% of SMBs use  
AI customer tools

- 24/7 FAQ chatbot on your website
- Email and complaint responses
- Routing incoming support requests
- Auto follow-up after a purchase
- Message translation — 100+ languages
- Customer history summary per call
- Detecting patterns in complaints
- Scripts for common service calls

*AI chatbots handle up to 80% of routine customer questions without human involvement — freeing your team for higher-value work.*

# Operations & Administration

58% of SMBs  
save 20+ hrs/month

- Meeting transcription and summaries
- SOPs and employee handbooks
- Scheduling and calendar management
- Auto-tagging expenses by category
- Estimates and proposals auto-drafted
- Voice memo → formatted action list
- Contracts summarized to key points
- Task lists from project notes

*At \$25/hr, reclaiming 20 hours per month = \$6,000/year returned to your business — before touching revenue.*

# Finance & Bookkeeping

Built into QuickBooks,  
FreshBooks & Wave

- Auto-categorizing transactions
- Flagging data errors and odd expenses
- P&L summaries in plain language
- Cash flow gaps predicted 30–60 days
- Tax-prep documentation compiled
- Overdue invoice follow-up reminders
- Actuals vs. budget — auto-compared
- Financial summaries for bank meetings

*You may already have AI in your accounting software — most small business platforms built it in by mid-2025.*

# Hiring & HR

Reduces time-to-hire  
by 30–50%

- Job postings from requirements
- Résumé screening before you review
- Interview questions for the role
- Onboarding checklists and training
- Performance review templates
- Offer letters and HR policy drafts
- Employee announcements drafted
- HR FAQ chatbot for the team

*For a small business owner recruiting without an HR team, AI compresses weeks of screening work into hours.*

# Retail, Service & Trades

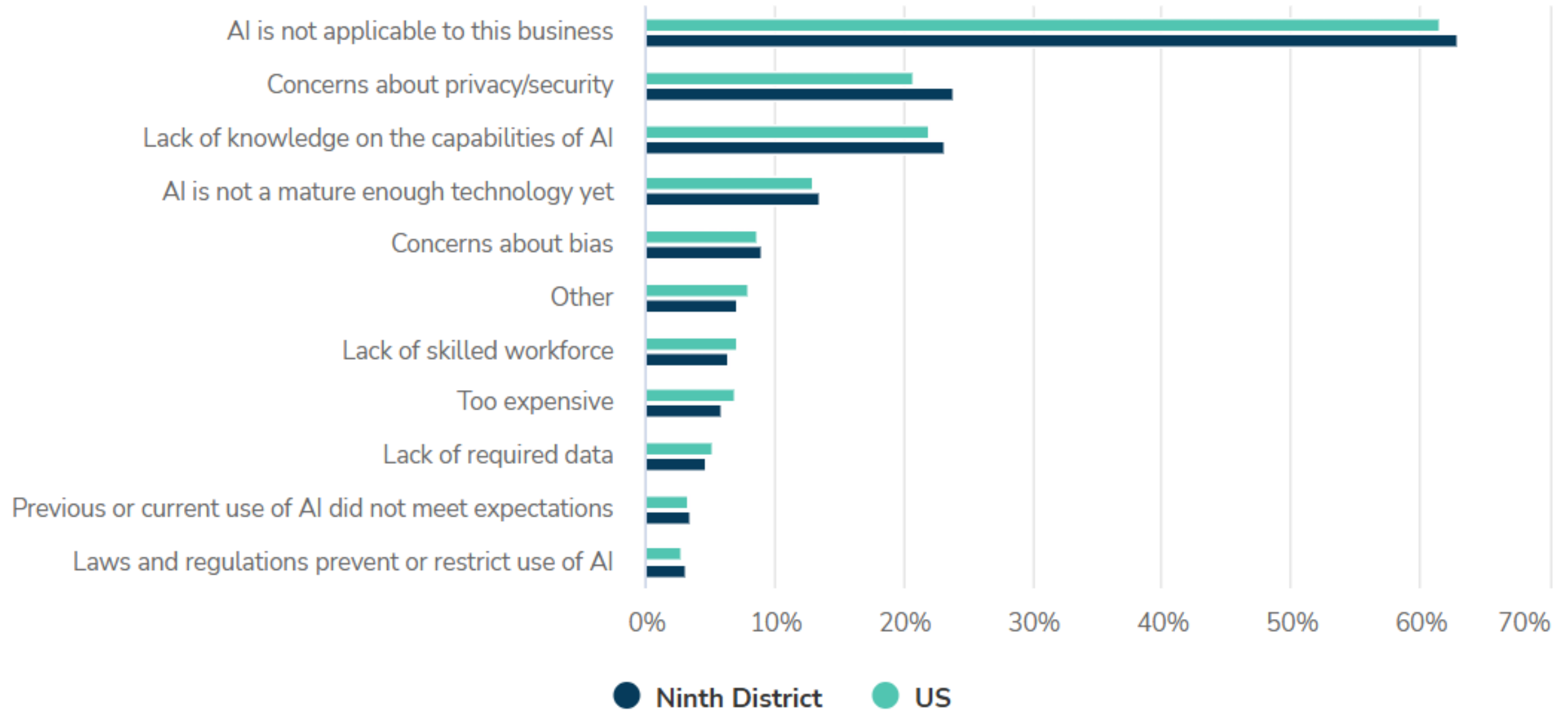
Lowest adoption =  
highest opportunity

- Inventory level predictions
- Staff scheduling by demand forecast
- Service quotes auto-generated
- Service call routing by geography
- Scope-of-work from client notes
- Automated appointment reminders
- Google and online review responses
- Top sellers vs. slow movers analyzed

*Construction, trades, and hospitality have the lowest AI adoption nationally — and the greatest first-mover advantage for those who act now.*

# Why are businesses not planning to use AI?

Share of businesses not using AI



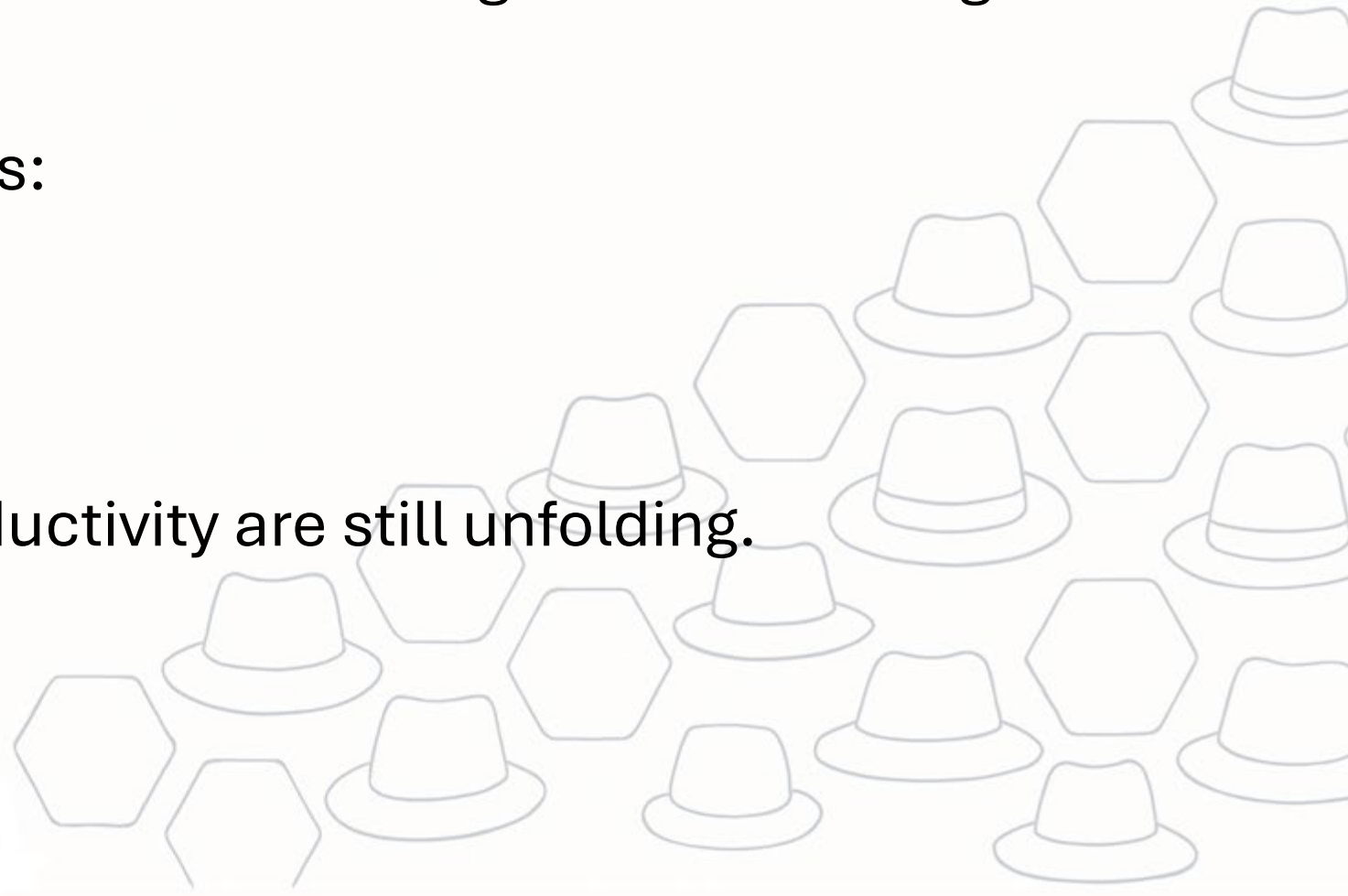
# Overall, there is nuance between the extremes

AI is neither transforming all business overnight nor is it sitting idle.

Instead, AI adoption remains:

- Experimental
- task-specific
- uneven across firms

Its effects on labor and productivity are still unfolding.



# Comparing Gen AI Platforms | June 2026



 **Claude**

 **perplexity**

 **Gemini**

 **ChatGPT**

 **Grok**

# ChatGPT (OpenAI)

*The Swiss army knife — broadest feature set, best ecosystem*

Plus \$20/mo · Pro \$200/mo  
GPT-5.5 flagship (Apr 2026)

## STRENGTHS

- Most complete product: image gen, voice, canvas, code interpreter
- GPT-5.5: best autonomous agentic workflows and computer use
- Deepest Microsoft and enterprise integration
- Best memory, personalization, and UX polish
- Largest custom GPT / plugin marketplace

## WEAKNESSES

- Instruction drift on long, multi-part prompts
- Can be overly agreeable — risk in consulting/compliance
- Pro tier at \$200/mo expensive for most users
- Citation accuracy weaker than Perplexity or Gemini

## UNIQUE / UNMATCHED

GPT-5.5 Pro parallel compute for hardest problems; DALL-E 4 native image gen/editing; most mature custom GPT ecosystem; Codex for autonomous terminal-based coding.

PRICING TIERS — FREE TO \$30/MO

# ChatGPT — OpenAI

The only platform with a \$8 middle tier — but read the fine print on ads

FREE

\$0

GPT-4o (limited)

- ✓ GPT-4o access
- ✓ Web browsing (limited)
- ✓ Image generation (limited)
- ✗ Daily message caps
- ✗ Ads shown in the US

Good starting point

GO

\$8/mo

GPT-5.3 Instant

- ✓ 10× more messages
- ✓ File uploads included
- ✓ Image generation
- ~ Not the flagship — GPT-5.3 only
- ~ Still shows ads in the US

More volume, same experience

PLUS

\$20/mo

GPT-5.5 flagship

- ✓ GPT-5.5 — the flagship
- ✓ Unlimited messaging
- ✓ Full memory across chats
- ✓ Voice mode + DALL-E 4
- ✓ No ads

The real upgrade — skip Go

ChatGPT Go launched January 2026. Ads are shown in the US on Free and Go tiers.

# Gemini (Google)

Advanced ~\$20/mo  
Gemini 2.5 / 3.1 Pro (2026)

*The multimodal powerhouse — best context window and Google integration*

## STRENGTHS

- Leads independent benchmarks: ARC-AGI-2 (77.1%), GPQA Diamond (94.3%)
- 1M token context window — best for giant document analysis
- Deepest Google Workspace integration (Gmail, Docs, Sheets, Drive)
- Best real-time accuracy via Google Search grounding
- Most affordable API (\$2/\$12 per M, 3.1 Pro)

## WEAKNESSES

- Reputation lags capability — underestimated by many users
- Weaker writing quality than Claude for nuanced prose
- Agent/automation ecosystem less mature than ChatGPT/Claude
- Deep Research reports take several minutes

## UNIQUE / UNMATCHED

Native Google Workspace AI; 1M context window at consumer pricing; Google Search-grounded deep research; leads independent benchmarks in abstract reasoning and graduate science.

# Gemini — Google

The only platform where the \$8 tier is genuinely worth it — especially if you use Drive

FREE

**\$0**

Gemini 2.5 Flash

- ✓ Fast, capable Flash model
- ✓ 1M token context window
- ✓ Google Search grounding
- ✗ Usage limits apply
- ✗ No Deep Research

Strongest free tier available

AI PLUS

**\$7.99/mo**

Gemini 3 Pro (limited)

- ✓ 2× usage limits vs free
- ✓ 200 GB Google Drive storage
- ✓ Daily Brief from Gmail + Calendar
- ~ Not full 3.1 Pro model
- ✗ No Deep Research feature

Worth it if you use Google Drive

AI PRO

**\$19.99/mo**

Gemini 3.1 Pro

- ✓ Full Gemini 3.1 Pro model
- ✓ Deep Research included
- ✓ Full Workspace AI integration
- ✓ Leads independent benchmarks
- ✓ Best value API pricing

Best for Google Workspace users

Pricing restructured at Google I/O, May 2026. AI Pro replaces the former 'Advanced' plan.

# Claude (Anthropic)

Pro \$20/mo · Max \$100–200/mo  
Opus 4.7 flagship (Apr 2026)

*The precision instrument — best writing, coding, and professional reasoning*

## STRENGTHS

- Best-in-class writing: nuance, tone matching, voice
- 87.6% SWE-bench Verified — strongest code review and repo reasoning
- Most consistent output; best instruction following
- Highest developer adoption: 43% (Stack Overflow 2025)
- Best MCP support; powers Cursor, Windsurf, Claude Code

## WEAKNESSES

- No native image generation (major gap vs ChatGPT/Gemini)
- Limited video understanding
- Smaller context window than Gemini (200K vs 1M)
- Fable 5 access requires usage credits after June 22, 2026
- Fewer native integrations — relies on MCP/API

## UNIQUE / UNMATCHED

Claude Code is the de facto standard for AI-assisted development; best MCP implementation; unmatched writing quality at professional and creative levels; strongest for high-stakes documents (legal, compliance, grants). Fable 5 now leads on complex long-horizon tasks.

# Claude — Anthropic

*No middle tier — free is genuinely capable, and Pro is a clear step up*

FREE

**\$0**

*Claude Sonnet 4.6*

- ✓ Sonnet 4.6 — strong model
- ✓ File uploads and docs
- ✓ Web search included
- ✗ Daily message limits
- ✗ No Opus 4.7 or 4.8 access

**Best free writing assistant**

NO MIDDLE TIER

*Claude goes straight from free to \$20/mo.*

*No \$8 option exists.*

PRO

**\$20/mo**

*Claude Opus 4.7*

- ✓ Opus 4.7 — best writing AI
- ✓ 5× more usage
- ✓ Extended thinking mode
- ✓ Priority access
- ✓ Best for client deliverables

**Best for writing and consulting**

*Claude has no \$8 tier. The upgrade path is free → Pro (\$20) → Max (\$100+). Fable 5 on Pro/Max through June 22, 2026; usage credits required after.*



SuperGrok \$30/mo · Heavy \$300/mo  
Grok 4.3 flagship (Apr 2026)

*The real-time specialist — unmatched social intelligence and trend analysis*

## STRENGTHS

- Direct X/Twitter firehose — real-time social data before mainstream media
- Competitive API: \$1.25/\$2.50 per M tokens (Grok 4.3)
- 2M token context window on Grok 4.20 multi-agent model
- Unlimited image generation on SuperGrok (\$30/mo)
- Less restrictive moderation for flexible conversations

## WEAKNESSES

- Weakest citation accuracy: 94% hallucination rate (CJR benchmark)
- Tied to X platform — ecosystem limits for non-X users
- Enterprise/compliance story underdeveloped vs peers
- Full flagship requires \$300/mo Heavy plan
- Smaller third-party developer ecosystem

## UNIQUE / UNMATCHED

Live X/Twitter social stream integration — no other major AI has this. DeepSearch for real-time social sentiment. Best value for casual power users at \$30/mo with unlimited generation.

# Grok — xAI

The real-time social intelligence platform — free is very limited, SuperGrok is \$30

FREE

**\$0**

Grok 3

- ✓ Grok 3 model
- ✓ Access to X/Twitter data
- ✗ ~10 prompts per 2 hours
- ✗ No DeepSearch
- ✗ No image generation

Very limited — for quick tests only

NO MIDDLE TIER

*No \$8 option.*

*Next step is SuperGrok at \$30/mo.*

SUPERGROK

**\$30/mo**

Grok 4.3 flagship

- ✓ Grok 4.3 — flagship model
- ✓ Unlimited messages
- ✓ DeepSearch — real-time web
- ✓ Image generation + voice
- ✓ Live X/Twitter social data

Only worth it for social/news intel

Grok has no \$8 tier. The gap between free (very limited) and SuperGrok (\$30) is the widest of any platform.



Pro \$20/mo · Max \$200/mo  
Sonar Pro (Cerebras-powered)

*The research engine — best citation accuracy, lowest hallucination rate*

## STRENGTHS

- Lowest citation hallucination: 37% CJR (vs 67% ChatGPT, 94% Grok)
- Pro \$20/mo includes GPT-5.4, Claude Opus, AND Gemini access
- Best 'catch ratio' — corrects other models' confident wrong answers
- Sonar API: fastest inference via Cerebras infrastructure
- Max: Model Council runs 3 frontier models simultaneously

## WEAKNESSES

- Not general-purpose — weak at writing, coding, creative tasks
- 37% citation hallucination still means 1 in 3 may be fabricated
- Limited file analysis vs Claude/ChatGPT/Gemini
- EU AI Act compliance uncertainty
- Weak agentic / automation capabilities

## UNIQUE / UNMATCHED

Model Council (Max \$200/mo): simultaneously queries GPT-5.4, Claude Opus, and Gemini 3.1 Pro, then synthesizes where they agree and diverge — best multi-model arbitration in a single product.

# Perplexity

The research platform — the free tier is surprisingly generous

FREE

**\$0**

Sonar (base model)

- ✓ Unlimited Quick Search
- ✓ 5 Pro Searches per day
- ✓ 5 Deep Research per day
- ✗ No premium model access
- ✗ Research caps for heavy use

Most generous free research tier

NO MIDDLE TIER

*No \$8 option.*

*Next step is Pro at \$20/mo.*

PRO

**\$20/mo**

GPT-5.4 + Claude + Gemini

- ✓ Unlimited Pro Search
- ✓ 20 Deep Research per day
- ✓ GPT-5.4, Claude & Gemini access
- ✓ File uploads and analysis
- ✓ Model Council feature

Best multi-model value at \$20

Perplexity has no \$8 tier. The free tier includes more daily research capability than most platforms offer paid.

Feature	ChatGPT	Gemini	Claude	Grok	Perplexity	
Reasoning & intelligence	✓	★	✓	✓	~	
Writing & communication	✓	~	★	~	~	
Web search / research	~	✓	✓	✓	★	✓ Full
Persistent memory	★	✓	✓	~	~	~ partial
PDF / doc analysis	✓	✓	★	~	~	★ best-in-class
Data / financial analysis	★	✓	✓	~	✗	✗ absent/weak
Code generation	✓	✓	★	~	~	
Image generation	★	✓	✗	✓	~	
Voice conversation	★	✓	~	✓	✗	
Agent / computer use	★	~	✓	~	✓	
Google Workspace	~	★	~	✗	~	
Real-time / social data	~	✓	✓	★	✓	

# Critical caveats for June 2026

**This landscape is moving faster than any prior technology cycle.**

- Gemini's benchmark scores now lead most independent evaluations but its reputation hasn't caught up — it is likely underused.
- Grok's citation accuracy remains a serious liability for professional use.
- The 37% hallucination rate even on Perplexity means citations must be verified before use in client-facing work.
- The "\$20 tier" remains the single best value point in AI history — most users have no reason to pay more.

Model routing (using different models for different task types) outperforms any single-platform commitment for power users and developers.

# Before We Talk Platforms, Let's Talk Terms

*Four terms appear on every AI privacy page. Here's what they actually mean for your business.*

## SOC 2 Type II

The Gold Standard

An independent auditor watched the company's security systems work in real time — for at least 6 months — and confirmed they actually protect your data. Not just policies on paper.

**What it means for you: The company has been independently verified to handle data responsibly.**

## ISO 27001

International Standard

An internationally recognized framework for information security. Means the company has systematic, documented processes for protecting data from breaches, leaks, and unauthorized access.

**What it means for you: Their security isn't improvised — it follows a globally recognized playbook.**

## HIPAA BAA

Healthcare Data

If you handle health information — patient records, medical notes, insurance data — you are legally required to have a signed Business Associate Agreement with any vendor touching that data.

**What it means for you: You CANNOT legally use a platform without a BAA if you work with health data.**

## GDPR / DPA

EU Privacy Law

The EU's privacy law. A Data Processing Addendum is a contract specifying how a vendor handles your data under GDPR. Required if you have any EU customers, employees, or process EU citizen data.

**What it means for you: If your business touches the EU, you need this in place with any AI vendor.**

# The Privacy Line: Consumer vs. Business

Free and \$20 plans offer the same protection. Certifications only apply at the business tier.

	Free Plan	\$20 / mo	Business/Enterprise Tier
ChatGPT	~ Trains by default <i>Opt out in Settings</i>	~ Same as free <i>Must opt out manually</i>	✓ No training <i>SOC 2, ISO 27001, HIPAA BAA</i>
Gemini	✗ Trains by default <i>May use to improve products</i>	✓ No training <i>Best privacy at \$20</i>	✓ No training <i>SOC 1/2/3, FedRAMP, HIPAA</i>
Claude	✓ No training by default <i>Must opt IN to share</i>	✓ No training by default <i>Same privacy as free ✓</i>	✓ No training <i>SOC 2, ISO 27001, HIPAA configurable</i>
Grok	✗ Trains by default <i>Use Private Chat to opt out</i>	✗ Trains by default <i>\$30/mo — still consumer terms</i>	~ No training claimed <i>No major certs confirmed yet</i>
Perplexity	✗ Trains by default <i>Data routes thru OpenAI + Anthropic</i>	~ Trains by default <i>Features added, not privacy</i>	~ No training claimed <i>SOC 2 claimed, HIPAA unconfirmed</i>

● Trains on your data      ● Trains — opt out available      ● No training by default      ● No training + certified

# One Subscription: Where to Start

1

**ChatGPT Plus/Business — \$20/mo**

Broadest features, best ecosystem, top agentic AI

2

**Claude Pro — \$20/mo**

Best writing, coding, and document analysis

3

**Perplexity Pro — \$20/mo**

Best research value — bundles 3 flagship models

4

**Gemini Advanced — ~\$20/mo**

Best if you live in Google Workspace

5

**Grok SuperGrok — \$30/mo**

Only if social / real-time intelligence is a core need

# Walk Before You Run

01

## Basic Prompting

*Ask. Get an answer. Refine.*

- Write this email
- Summarize this doc
- Give me 5 ideas for...

Where everyone starts.  
Always useful.

02

## Structured Prompting

*Templates, context, consistent inputs*

- "Act as a..., Here is my..., Give me..."
- Role + Context + Task + Format
- Saved prompt libraries

Saves time on  
repeatable tasks.

03

## Custom GPT / Assistant

*Pre-configured with your business rules*

- Your tone and brand voice built in
- Your SOPs and FAQs loaded
- One-click, consistent outputs

For things you  
do every week.

04

## Agent / Workflow

*AI that acts across tools autonomously*

- Runs on a schedule, no prompt needed
- Connects CRM, email, calendar, docs
- Multi-step tasks executed end-to-end

Now you need  
a human manager.

The deeper you go, the more you need a human manager for your AI worker.

You don't set an agent and forget it. You hire it, train it, check its work, and manage its performance.

# Someone on Your Team Is Already Using AI

*Probably without a policy, a shared tool, or your knowledge.*

## WHAT LEADERSHIP ASSUMES

*"Nobody is using AI here yet."*

*"We'll adopt it together when we're ready."*

*"There are no AI risks in our org yet."*

*"AI adoption starts with leadership."*

## WHAT'S ACTUALLY HAPPENING

➡ **Multiple people are using free tools every day.**

➡ **Everyone already has different tools and habits.**

➡ **Business data is already going into unvetted tools.**

➡ **It already started — without them.**

**This isn't a crisis — these are your early adopters.**

*The question is whether you build with them or wait until it becomes a policy problem.*

# Going Far Together

*You can't mandate your way to AI adoption. You can make it safe to try.*

## 01 Ask before you mandate

Find out what's already working on the ground. Don't build an AI strategy without talking to the people doing the actual work.

## 02 Keep the policy short

Two pages, plain language. A 40-page AI policy nobody reads is not a policy — it's a liability. Simple rules spread faster and hold better.

## 03 Remove barriers before forcing adoption

Give people access to approved tools. Make it easy for the willing. Don't force the skeptics, focus energy on reducing friction, not manufacturing enthusiasm.

## 04 Upskill together, openly

Nobody is an AI expert yet. Learning in public builds trust faster than training decks. Share what's working, what isn't, and what surprised you.

## 05 Make it everyone's responsibility

Not IT's job. Not the CEO's job. Not one enthusiastic employee's personal project. When it's everyone's, it actually spreads.

## BEFORE YOU GO

The tools are on the table.

The information is in this room.

Every disruption in history was built by humans,  
worried about by humans, and survived by humans who kept building.

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*The only question that mattered at the start of this session still matters right now.*

**What version of you are you building  
that AI can't replace?**

WHAT'S NEXT FOR YOU

# AI Resource Lab

West Central Minnesota SBDC

## 3-Part Video Bootcamp

*30 minutes — what AI is, how it works, and how to start today*

## Curated AI Tools

*Tools organized by business task — no tech background required*

## Custom Training & Advising

*Reach out for team workshops, 1-on-1 advising, and more*



*Scan to visit the AI Resource Lab*

Questions? Reach out anytime — we're here to help.

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