

AI Usage and Attitudes in the Climate Movement

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CLIMATE
ADVOCACY
LAB

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Executive Summary

Artificial intelligence (AI) is a huge topic of conversation everywhere - and climate advocates face unique challenges in navigating this emerging technology. The Climate Advocacy Lab exists to support climate advocates, so we have piloted a new AI Knowledge Hub to help Lab members navigate the ethical, environmental, and practical issues involved in AI.

To do this, we recognized that we need to understand what's really happening in the movement and beyond. So we surveyed 152 Lab members, conducted 2 focus groups, and had 1-1 conversations to identify how AI is currently being used and how climate advocates view AI use in the movement.

We found a movement that is split along clear lines when it comes to using AI.

While some are embracing it, more have taken a principled stance against its use. Those who refuse to use it tend to do so on ethical grounds, but tend to be skeptical about its practical value as well. At that same time, 25% of our respondents say they use it at least once a day, and the Climate Advocacy Lab's recent AI training series was very well-attended, with many attendees looking for a practical way forward with AI. However, even frequent users have serious concerns about the environmental, community, and reputational risks of AI.





Major Findings

1. **Organizations are developing AI policies - but in many cases, it's slow-going.** Only 40% of survey respondents worked for organizations with policies for AI use. We heard from many respondents that while there are conversations about AI in their organizations (71% said there had been a “great deal” or a “moderate amount” of discussion of negative impacts of AI usage at their organizations), many staff are frustrated by a lack of leadership or clear guidance when it comes to AI use.
2. **The concerns about AI are central and can't be ignored** - even the biggest users are concerned. 83% of respondents were concerned about the environmental impacts of climate advocates using AI, and 71% were worried about the reputational risk. Even among daily users of AI, 64% of respondents were concerned about environmental impacts.
3. **Climate advocates ARE using AI - but there's a big divide.** 25% of respondents use AI at least once a day - but 33% never use it at all.
4. **We need capacity building across the movement to use AI efficiently, sustainably, and effectively.** 46% of respondents described themselves as having a beginner skill level or no experience at all. In some cases, that might indicate a lack of desire to use AI, but even among daily users of AI, only 11% described themselves as experts.
5. Climate advocates broadly see AI as **a tool for increased efficiency, decreased busywork, or data processing**, not a creative or organizing tool.

What are the unique concerns climate advocates have when it comes to AI?

Many people across different sectors of society are concerned about the current and potential environmental, community, and labor impacts of AI. But these concerns are not simply theoretical for climate advocates: many are on the frontlines of these advocacy fights. They are in the unique position of having to decide if and how to engage with an emerging technology with aspects that they might be involved in campaigning against (currently or later on).

Data centers have become the locus of advocacy around climate change and AI. While they have existed for decades to support cloud computing, the rise of AI has created unprecedented demand for these facilities, which are known for using a huge amount of electricity and water. In fact, utilities are adding new power plants and even delaying the closure of coal plants to keep up with the energy needs of these centers. And as The Water Hub points out, these facilities often use a huge amount of local water, which puts strain on drought-prone regions.

With little federal- or even state-level oversight, it falls to local communities and organizers to stop these data centers or make them more sustainable. Many of the climate advocates we surveyed or spoke with are active in these fights, making for a situation where AI use involves real ethical dilemmas, as well as reputational risk.



Recommendations for the Climate Movement:

There are no easy or simple answers to the question of how the climate movement should engage with AI. But based on what we learned from 152 climate advocates, we recommend 5 steps for leaders, advocates and funders to consider:

- 1. Create space for healthy, collaborative conversations about AI.** One thing we heard over and over again is that it's difficult to have honest, productive conversations within organizations about AI use. Even in this report, we found it difficult to find people willing to go on record about their use of AI. But these conversations are crucial for navigating the complexities of AI for climate advocates.
- 2. Develop clear but flexible organizational AI policies with ample involvement of staff and lead volunteers.** The best AI policies are created with the input of staff and volunteers, give clear guidance, and can be adapted as the technology evolves.
- 3. Align your organization's approach to AI with your mission and values.** Be specific - for instance, in one case study featured here, a science-based organization knew that AI had the potential to enhance their staff's expertise, but they needed to make sure its use didn't detract from scientific rigor.
- 4. If your organization does allow AI use, invest in staff training.** AI tools can be very powerful when used well, but there's a lot of potential for bias and faulty results. So if you do allow AI use, work with staff to make sure it's being used responsibly and effectively.
- 5. Consider how your organization's values and strengths could add to the data center fight.** Data centers pose a huge threat to our climate, communities, and water supplies - but the campaigns around them offer an equally huge opportunity for cross-class, multiracial organizing. So whether or not your organization uses AI, join those campaigns.

The Climate Advocacy Lab

This report is a project of The Climate Advocacy Lab, which equips the U.S. climate movement with evidence-based insights, skills, and connections needed to build durable power and win equitable solutions. As part of this mission, we provide free **trainings**, **research** expertise, and an extensive **resource library** to our community of over 5,000 climate practitioners from 1,500+ organizations across the nation. We use evidence based on social science research, data and analytics, field experiments, case studies, and campaign lessons learned to help U.S. climate advocates run smarter public engagement campaigns. We raise the sophistication of the field and the appetite for evidence-informed decisions.

The AI Knowledge Hub

The AI Knowledge Hub is a new program of the Lab, intended to support the climate movement in navigating the complex and quickly-changing world of AI technology and politics. The Hub aggregates cutting-edge knowledge about AI, providing insights and guidance to climate advocates, as they try to balance the opportunities of this technology with the unique dilemma of using a technology that many are also advocating against in some form.

The Hub launched this year with a Resource Hub and 6-part training series. The training series was a huge success, with 368 attendees, many of whom attended more than one session. The topics covered were wide-ranging:

- Climate Implications, Responsible Use, And Ethics And Values
- AI 101: Getting Started with Tools, Value, and Purpose
- Building AI Policy That Actually Works for Your Organization
- Beyond the Basics: Advanced AI Skills for Real Work
- AI in Action: Real Applications for Advocacy and Campaigns
- AI and the Future of Work: What It Means for Your Team

Feedback from attendees was overwhelmingly positive, indicating strong demand for discussion and guidance on AI topics in the climate movement. 81% of attendees who took a post-series survey said the series was “very” or “extremely” valuable to them. When asked to rate how likely they would be to recommend it to a colleague on a scale of 1 to 10, the average response was a 9. The biggest benefits of the training series, according to participants, were an increased feeling of comfort discussing AI with colleagues, as well as more agency and motivation in using AI in their own work.

One of the biggest findings in this report is that organizations are not talking enough about AI internally in a way that is productive for staff. But these trainings seemed to provide that opportunity for attendees. 86% of attendee respondents said they shared something they learned in the series with a colleague, 71% said they started a team conversation about AI governance after the training(s) they attended, and 57% said they created or updated their organization's AI policy or guidance document.

What's Next

This report has helped to inform our own planning about what's next for the AI Knowledge Hub. While these plans are still ongoing, we know it will include:

- **Governance and discussion support:** A clear finding from this report is that organizations need support both in developing AI governance, and fostering productive conversations about AI use in their organizations.
- **Data Center advocacy support:** We are currently working with climate groups and communications partners to build a database of online ads to understand what works when it comes to data center accountability, as well as clean energy, and utility accountability. We are also in the early stages of developing a cohort-based training series for coalitions working on data center campaigns.
- **Practical AI use:** As a training organization, we can provide skills-based trainings, guidance on tools, and a community of practice for advocates who want to learn more about using AI.

Research Methodology

In order to prepare this report, Lab staff engaged members of the climate advocacy community in three ways:

- A 29-question survey completed by 152 staff of climate organizations, academics, and funders.
- Two focus groups comprised of 22 participants
- One-on-one interviews with 11 climate advocates.

The surveys and interviews were completed in the first quarter of 2026, with interviews taking place throughout the first two quarters of 2026.

Who completed the survey?

We surveyed 152 individuals for this report. Some key characteristics of the respondents:

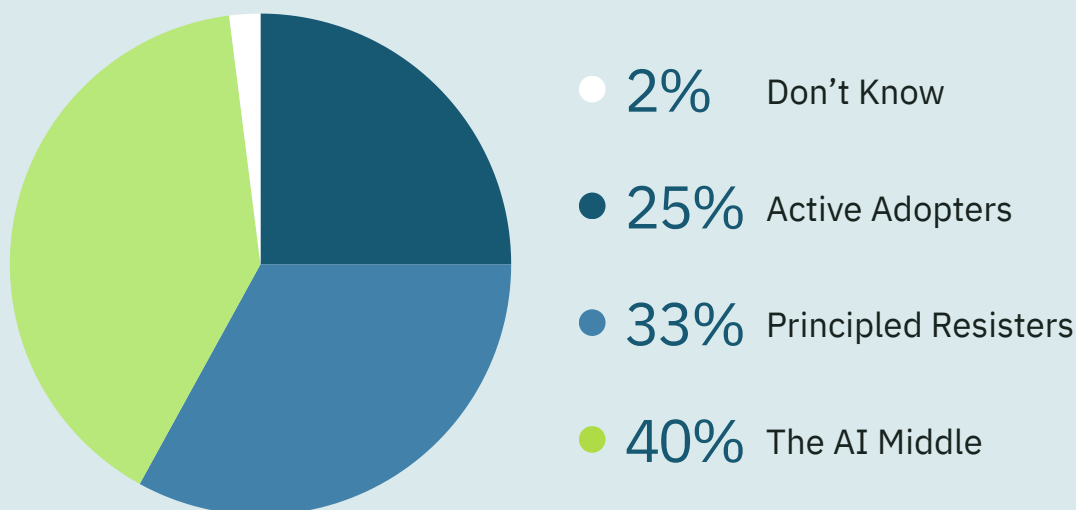
- They represent a wide variety of climate advocacy professionals, with the vast majority working directly for climate advocacy organizations, mostly describing themselves as advocates, organizers, or communications professionals. A smaller number were funders (3.4%) or social scientists (9%).
- 72% come from organizations with under 25 staff members.
- Most (65%) are between the ages of 25 and 44.
- Almost 50% described themselves as having leadership or management roles, with 29% each describing themselves as working in communications or organizing (respondents were able to choose more than one option).

The survey was designed by Justin Rolfe-Redding, who also conducted the two focus groups and several interviews. Raz Pollex analyzed the survey and focus groups, conducted follow-up interviews, and wrote the report. Claude.AI was used in early stages to assist in interpreting survey results and focus group transcripts, though all AI conclusions were rigorously interrogated by a human.

Who is using (and not using) AI in the Climate Movement?

Overall, we noticed that respondents to the survey and focus group participants fell into three broad categories:

- **Active Adopters:** This is a small (25%) but active segment of the sector who report using AI at least once a day in their work (81% of this group use it multiple times each day). This group has concerns about the impacts of AI but also sees the benefits.
- **Principled Resisters:** This group represents 33% of respondents: people who report never using AI for their work (though many do have experience using it). They tend to be both concerned about the impacts of AI and skeptical about its value for their work.
- **The AI Middle:** This is the largest single group of respondents at 40%: they use AI sometimes and are generally interested in seeing how AI can be useful, but are cautious. This group is large but represents everyone from those who use it a few times a week to those who rarely use it.



Principled Resisters

Principled resisters report that they never use AI in their work and tend to have both ethical and/or environmental impact concerns AND concerns about the efficacy of AI for their work. In focus groups, they used words like "inaccurate and unreliable" to describe AI. In the survey, they were the least likely to choose any beneficial areas of AI for their organization from an array of options, and most likely to choose challenges from another set of options.

Their concerns are NOT primarily motivated by job security - while they are the most likely group to believe AI use at their own organizations will result in layoffs or downsizing, only a third believe this. Their biggest concerns about climate advocates using AI were the environmental/climate impacts (95%), bias and "community, social, equity impacts" (85% each), and reputational risk and lack of transparency (80% each). Role-wise, this is a diverse group, but 39% described themselves as working in organizing, 36% in leadership, and 31% in communications.

"AI seems unnecessary, wasteful, and has too much potential for things to go wrong. People like and trust me and my organization because we are people first."

"The rapid deployment and speculative data center load growth from AI has actually really hurt the work that my organization does. It has completely set us back on climate goals and quite frankly we see it as a huge threat to the climate and environmental movement. Additionally LLMs hallucinate and are frequently inaccurate about the information they 'produce.'"

Active Adopters

Active adopters identified themselves as using AI at least once a day in their work. They're confident in their ability to use AI, describing their expertise level as "intermediate" or "advanced." A large segment of this group consists of independent users of AI, with all saying it's been somewhat or very effective for their own work but many saying they don't know how others in their organization use it. However, 60% do agree their organizations would benefit from more AI use (20% disagree!).

They have concerns about AI use by climate advocates, but their concerns are different, and not as pronounced as the resisters' concerns. 65% are concerned about climate/environmental impacts and/or reputational risk, 62% are concerned about AI replacing human judgment, 53% are concerned about bias and 50% are concerned about "community, social, equity impacts" and/or "content that is too generic and/or lacks originality."

The biggest advantages of AI, according to this group, are increased efficiency and reduced amount of time spent on "undesirable" tasks. 65% of this group described themselves as working in leadership roles.

"For better or worse, this tool is here to stay and we have to be able to use it well."

"I do think there is a way to integrate AI while minimizing the climate impacts AND not getting rid of the human factor but the field is too young and immature. I don't know what the answer is, just that I wish more people were working towards a more sustainable and just way of using it."

The AI Middle

The AI Middle is the most diverse group, ranging from people who rarely use AI to those who use it a few times a week. This group is the least likely to have an organizational policy for AI, with 41% saying there's no policy either established or in the works. 65% say AI has been effective in their own work. Like the active adopters, this group saw the biggest benefit in increased efficiency and reduced time on undesirable tasks. 50% of this group were in leadership roles.

"I would really really like guidance on what platforms and tools to use that create the least amount of harm from a sustainability perspective, and what tool will prioritize the safety of our neighbors against ICE."

"My primary concern is overuse of AI leading to people no longer undertaking human led/driven analysis, and intellectual complacency in the climate movement."

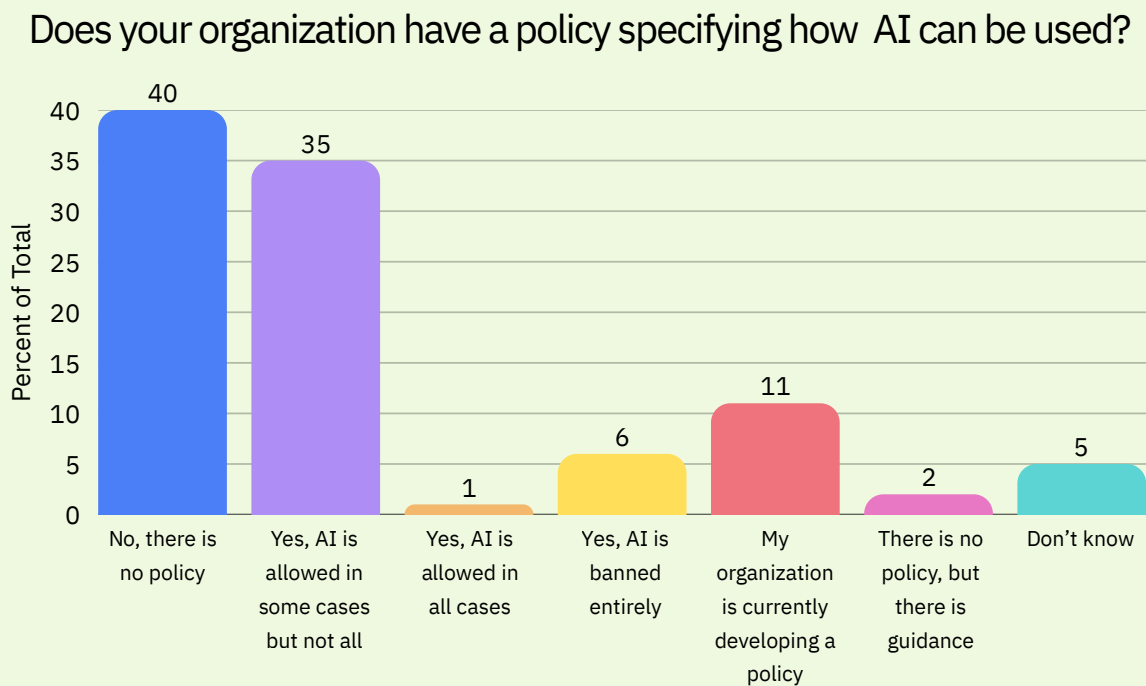
These three groups roughly correspond to attitudes about AI identified by Vanessa Androtti, a Canadian academic who calls them "AI Cheerleading," "AI Abstention," and "AI Strategic Redirection." However, it was hard to find a significant group of respondents in the climate movement who purely fit the description of "cheerleading." Even many of the heaviest users and biggest AI optimists shared significant concerns with the principled resisters, and tended to fit more with the category of strategic redirection.

The Takeaway

AI use and attitudes are highly bifurcated, with most climate advocates at one end of the spectrum or another. While both groups are concerned about the potential impacts of AI, they differ on the intensity of their concern, as well as their optimism about how AI could benefit their climate work.

AI Governance in Climate Organizations

Overall, the state of AI policies at climate organizations is mixed. 38% of participants said their organizations did not have a policy, and 40% said their organization did. A significant number of participants said they didn’t know if there was a policy, that their organization was in the process of developing a policy, or gave a different answer. This reflects the fact that the movement is in a state of flux when it comes to AI usage and governance.

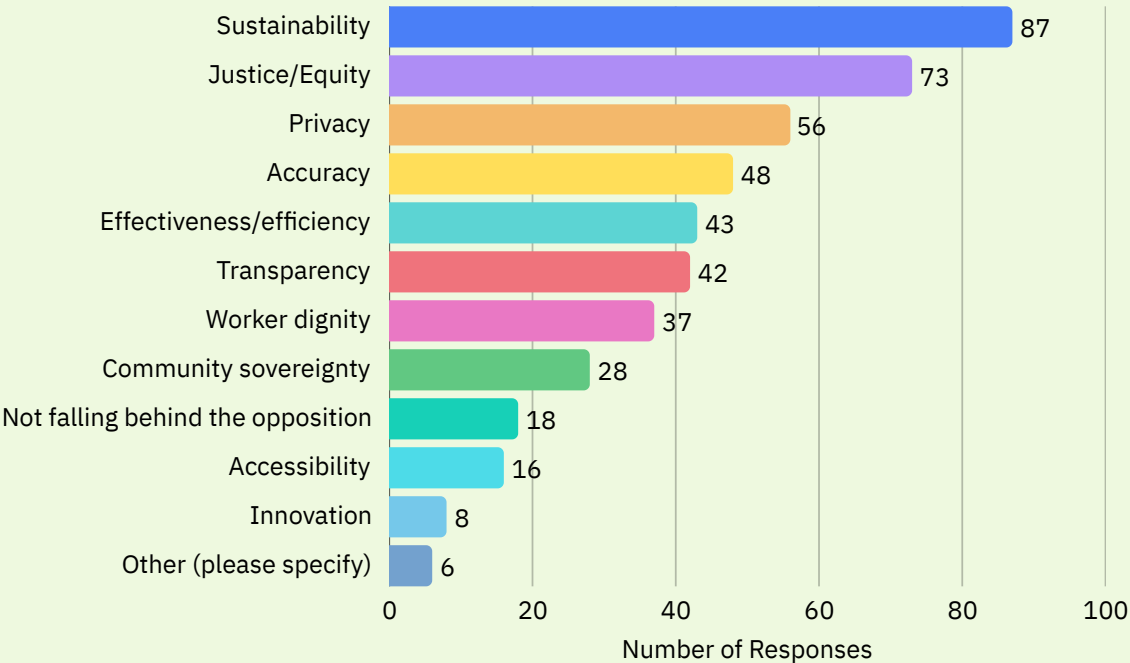


Of organizations that have a policy, 54% said that their policy allows AI in some cases but not all. 10% said it was banned in all cases. Only one respondent said that AI was allowed in all cases.

According to our respondents who did indicate that their organization has an AI policy, adherence seems fairly strong. While 44% did say they didn’t know if people followed the policy, of those who gave an answer, 75% said it was somewhat uncommon for the policy to be violated, very uncommon, or that it never happened. 25% said it was somewhat common and 5% said it was very common. One respondent reported that a staff member had been fired for using ChatGPT in violation of the organization’s policy - though the firing was partly due to the quality of the work produced, not solely because it was created with ChatGPT.

When asked what priorities should guide organizational AI use, respondents chose sustainability, justice/equality, and privacy.

Which priorities do you think should be most important in guiding your organization's approach to AI use?



Anecdotally, we heard frustration from respondents whose organizations did not have a policy:

“Our organization desperately needs an AI policy and conversation but I'm not getting the impression from our leadership that it's a top priority.”

“There is no transparency in my place of employment - I have no idea how others are using or not using AI at work.”

“We are in the middle of creating a policy but the interim position is AI use is not addressed in any meaningful way. It is discouraged in that no one knows what we are ‘allowed’ to use.”

Some of the best AI policy practices we heard about from participants:

- Grounding policy in organizational values: “We used the core values of our organization to organize and lay the foundation for our AI Policy.”
- Giving staff specific guidance for which uses are allowed and which are not: “We are creating a tool so staff with questions just click through to find out if they can use AI in specific ways, and under what rules.”
- Making the policy development process collaborative and iterative, with ample opportunity for staff across the organization to have input into the policy.

The Takeaway

About half of climate organizations either have a policy or are in the process of creating one, but there’s frustration among staff of organizations without a policy.

Case Study: Science-Based Organization (SBO)

We spoke with a senior leader from a large science-based organization (SBO) that has just released the second iteration of its AI policy. They were ahead of the curve, having started the process of their first policy three years ago on the recommendation of a consultant. The consultant astutely pointed out that AI was emerging as both a potentially useful tool and a source of controversy, especially given the organization's work on climate change, sustainability, and racial and economic justice.

SBO's first step was to survey their staff and see how people felt about AI. They found a wide variety of opinions, from ethical concerns to a desire for training on how to use AI effectively. The leader we spoke with convened a working group to develop the first iteration of their policy, which covered appropriate use, bias mitigation, and data privacy. The main objective was to reduce risk as the organization recognized there were, very likely, users of the technology without appropriate guardrails. The policy received feedback from multiple perspectives across the organization and continued to receive feedback after the implementation.

A critical element of any AI policy is that it be adaptable and iterative, as both AI and our understanding of it evolves. Last year, they conducted staff listening sessions to see how staff were feeling about the AI policy and its use. 138 staff members participated and they found that 58% of participants were skeptical about AI use, citing concerns about environmental impact, data privacy, and scientific credibility.



The updated policy rests on a set of foundational principles:

- AI should be used to enhance human expertise, judgment, and creativity, but never replace the scientific rigor, ethical reasoning, and mission commitment that define SBO's work. No layoffs due to AI implementation.
- AI use is optional.
- While AI tools can support our work, humans have final ownership over the resulting product and accountability for the results.
- We will be responsible stewards of AI tools.

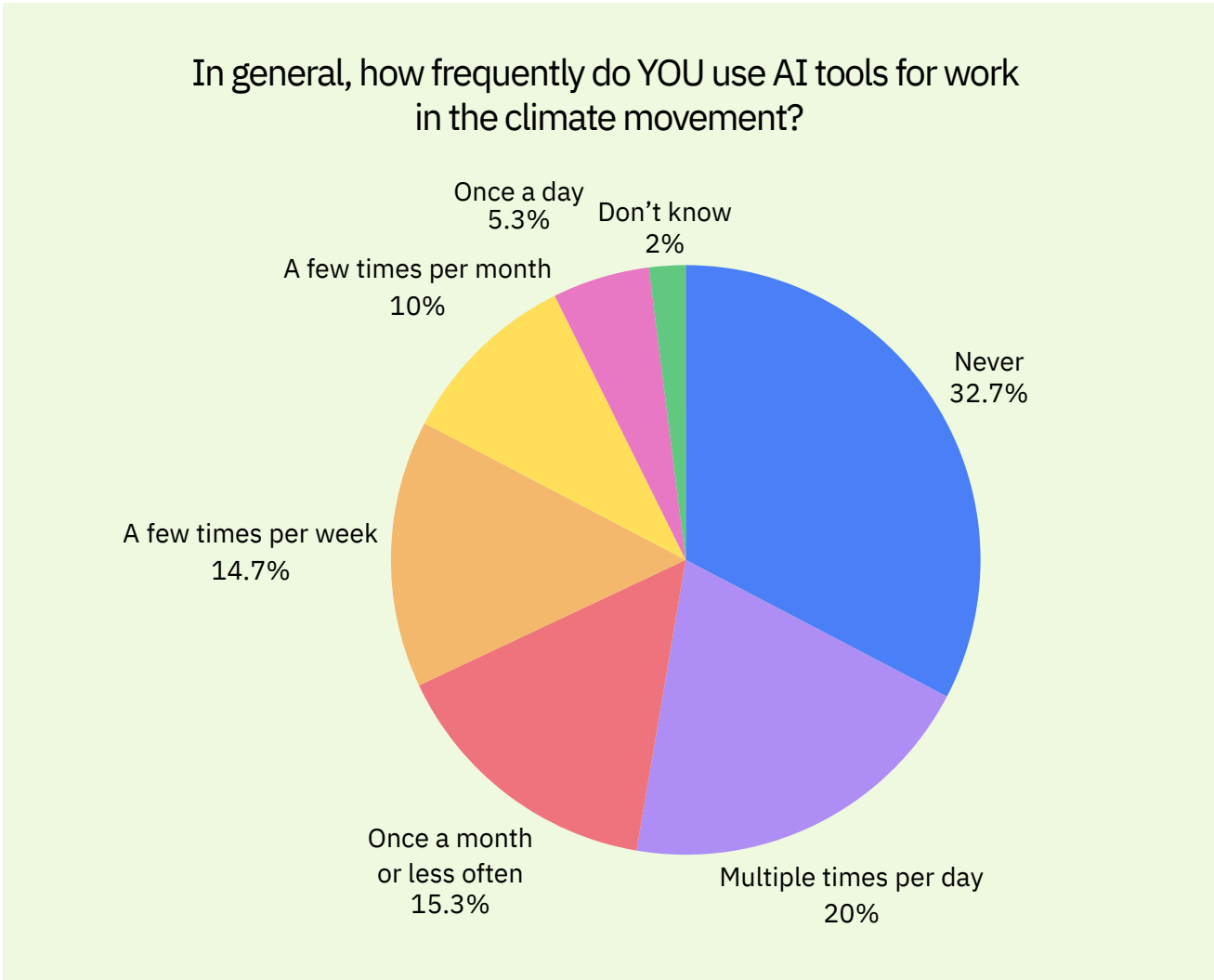
The policy puts special attention and barriers on uses of AI where consequential decisions are being made; the provenance of data, information, or ideas must be preserved (which is important to SBO as a scientific organization); or public-facing materials are being created. It also provides guidance on specific use cases, employing a stoplight system for low-stake activities like drafting agendas (green - can be used), data analysis (yellow - can be used with expert oversight), and handling sensitive or confidential data (red - prohibited).

Along with this policy, SBO is implementing staff education workshops/webinars on appropriate usage and the environmental and community impact of AI. It's too early to know how this policy will play out in practice, but SBO's approach of listening to staff and iterating on the policy means that any issues that arise will have a venue for being addressed.



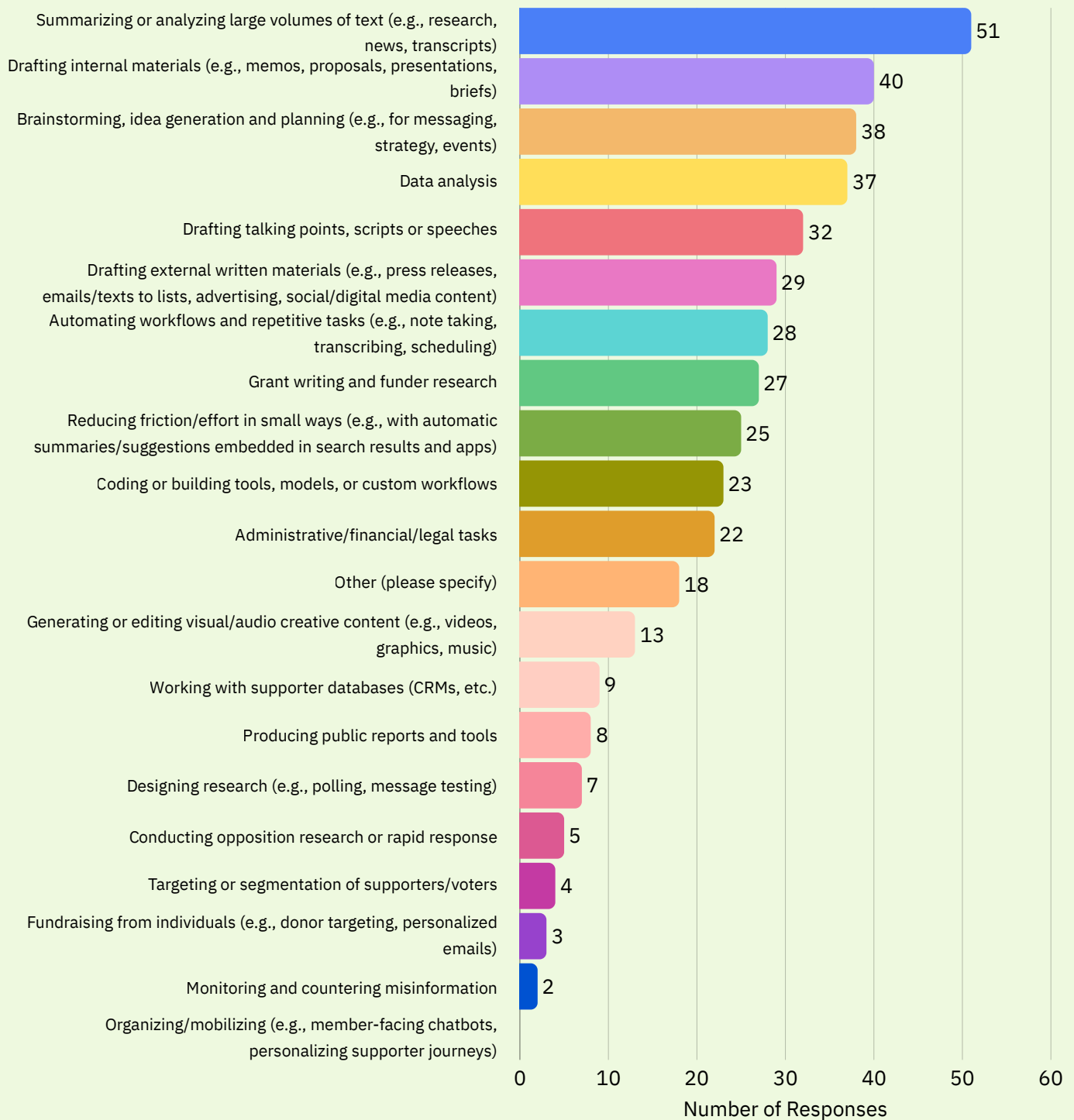
AI Usage Trends

There is a wide variety of AI usage in the climate movement, both in terms of how much advocates use AI, and what they use it for.



Usage patterns were fairly consistent across roles, though those who described themselves as data or social scientists, or consultants were most likely to be frequent users - 45% of social scientists, 57% of data scientists, and 33% of consultants said they used AI at least once a day. Organizers were the most likely to say they never use AI - 45% gave this answer.

In what areas has AI been beneficial to your organization's work, if any?



We also noticed some interesting trends in terms of what respondents find AI beneficial for - and what they don't.

Beneficial

Processing large amounts of information: 52% of respondents said AI has been beneficial in helping their organization summarize/analyze large volumes of text, with respondents mentioning regulatory and legislative information. Another 37% said AI had been beneficial for data analysis. However, some respondents reported that these summaries were unreliable.

"[AI has helped in] more efficiently tracking state climate legislation, which has allowed us to broaden the scope of what we can cover."

"We synthesize large research blocks into easier to digest funder briefings and Executive summaries."

"Our policy tracker has auto-generated AI summaries of bills, which are often unreliable, and cannot be trusted to replace real review of a bill."

Internal materials and planning: 40% said it was beneficial for creating internal materials (like memos and presentations) and 38% said it was beneficial for brainstorming. Others mentioned it's useful for creating first drafts.

This reflects a sentiment that we found: AI is helpful for sorting through information and producing first drafts, but not necessarily trustworthy for public-facing materials or communications.

"We have used AI to support research and communications tasks, such as organizing background information, summarizing long documents for internal review, and helping edit drafts that are then carefully checked by us as humans. The main value has been time savings on administrative and synthesis work, rather than substantive analytical or strategic decision-making."

"[AI is] great for getting a crappy first draft."

Not Beneficial

Direct communication with supporters: None of our respondents said that they found AI helpful for uses like member-facing chatbots, and only 3% said it was beneficial for fundraising from individuals. (The latter may be a reflection of the small number of development/fundraising staff in the pool of respondents.)

“I’ll say that relying on AI instead of developing the actual relationships that power social movement work is one of my top concerns.”

Mixed Bag

Making work easier and more efficient: We were surprised to learn that only 28% named “automating workflows and repetitive tasks” and only 25% named “reducing friction/effort in small ways” as benefits of AI use in their organizations. However, when asked how AI has benefited their organization, the most popular answers were that it reduced staff time spent on undesirable work like “busy work, boring tasks, etc.” (62%) and increased efficiency of staff time (50%).

This is an interesting contradiction: it may speak to a hope that AI **could** make work efficient, but that existing tools are falling short - as several respondents noted, having to double-check the accuracy of AI’s work makes it less efficient. However, many respondents did mention note-taking and interpreting meeting transcripts as beneficial uses.

“AI has been useful in automating some tasks in our CRM database that would take one to two hours of staff time to do manually every week.”

“[AI has] limited use to serve as a database to help speed up workflows - I find too many errors to really trust it consistently except for the most mundane tasks.”

“AI is best used as a support for repetitive tasks, it can’t and shouldn’t replace the advocate’s voice.”

Creating materials for external audiences: We believe this reflects the tension mentioned above - respondents recognize AI can be helpful in creating content, but are skeptical about the quality of that content and reputational risks of using AI-generated content. 32% mentioned “drafting talking points, scripts or speeches,” 29% mentioned “drafting external written materials,” and only 13% mentioned creating audio/visual materials as beneficial uses. Several respondents mentioned using tools like Grammarly or using AI to translate materials into different languages.

“Some staff have turned in email blast content obviously generated by AI that was not good or not on-message. Also, someone submitted website content that was not accurate and not on message.”

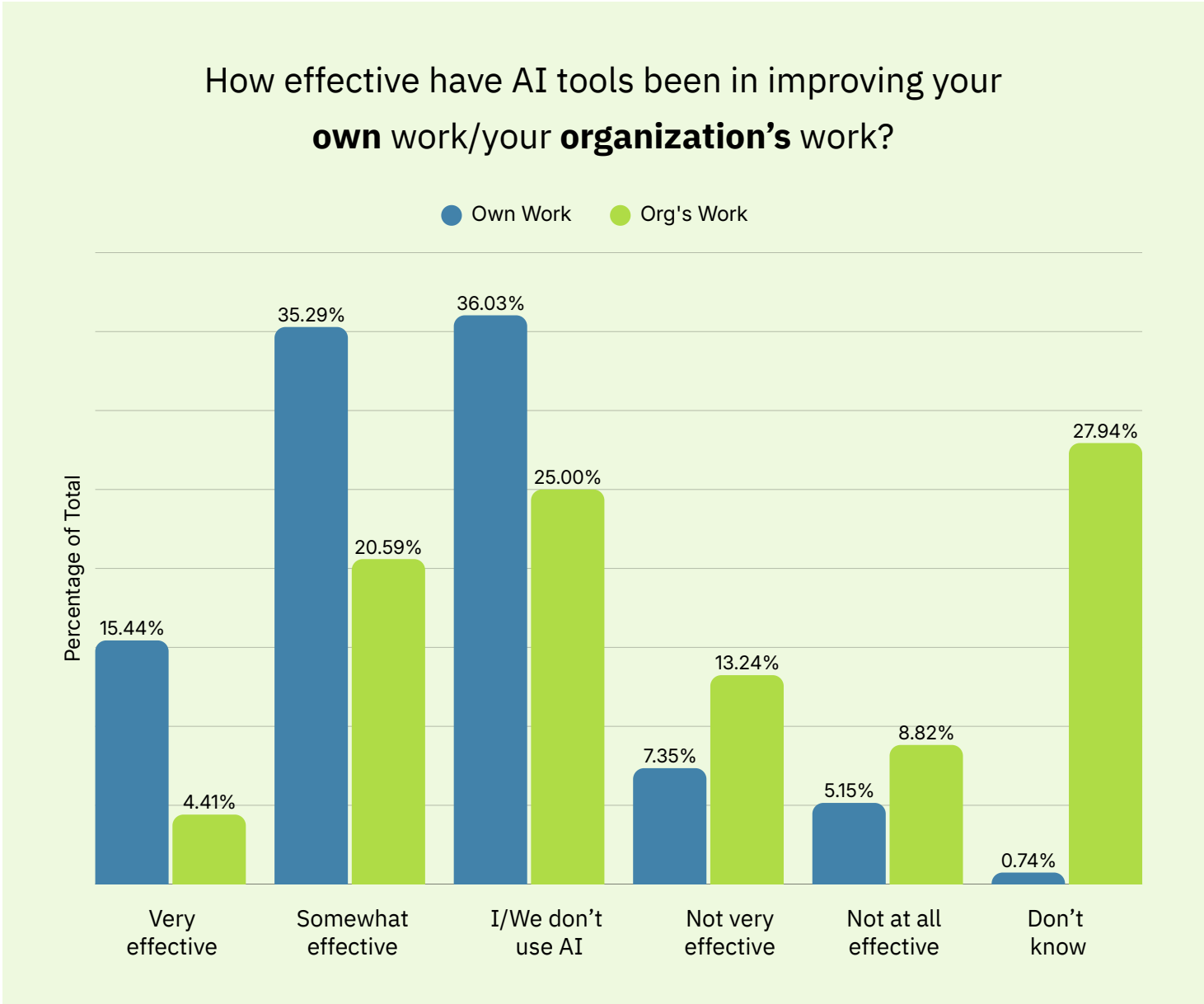
“We have implemented Grammarly as an editing support tool for our communications team, to good results.”

The Takeaway

Of those who use AI, they found it most useful for processing large amounts of information and data analysis, creating internal materials, and brainstorming. No one is using it to communicate directly with individual supporters or members of the public, and there’s a big split about its use in creating public-facing materials, with people concerned about accuracy and authentic voice.

Attitudes Towards AI

Attitudes toward AI use were unsurprisingly complex among our respondents, with a wide variety of attitudes towards how beneficial AI was for their work and the work of their organizations. Some key trends we noticed:

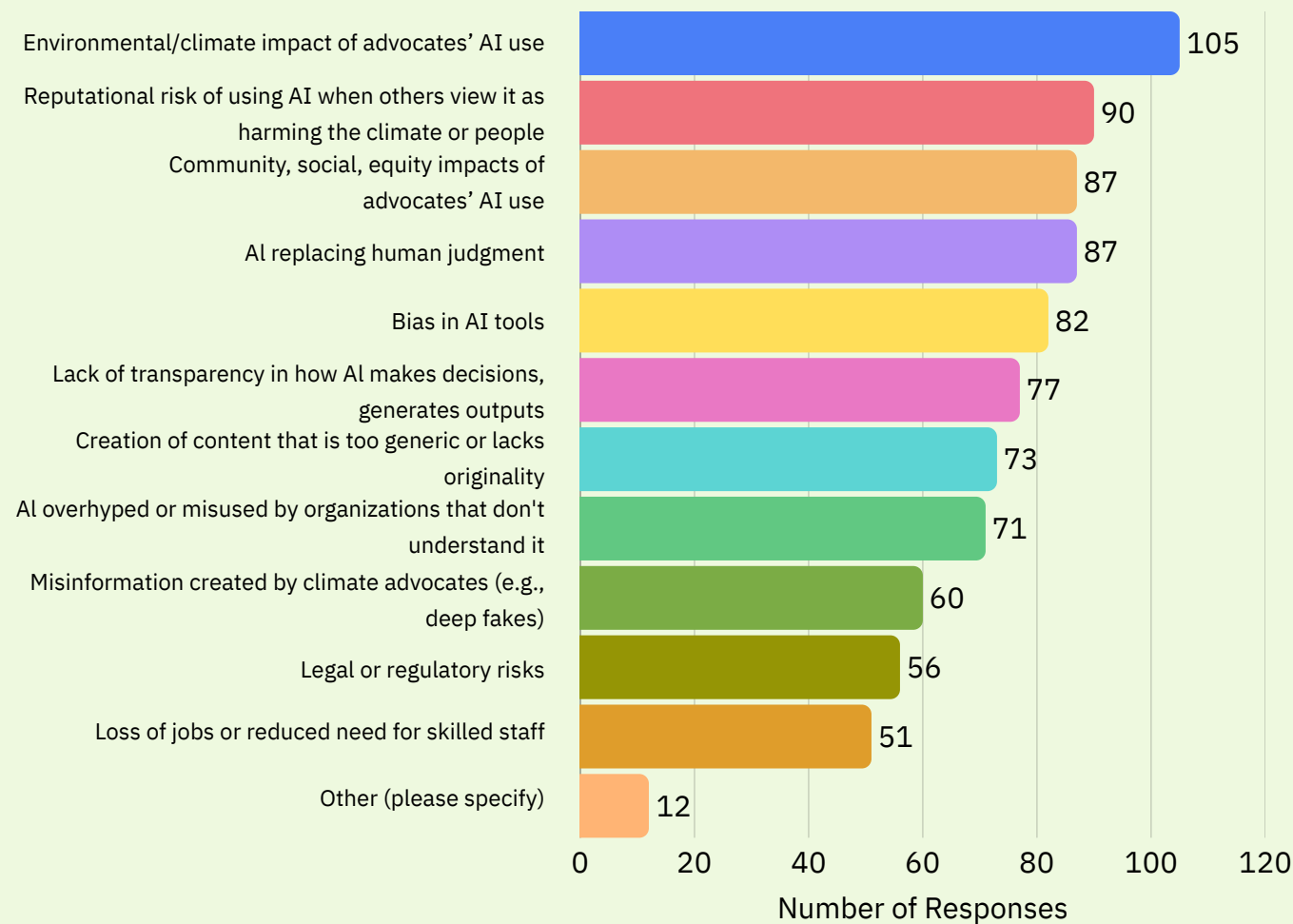


Concerns about the environmental and social impacts of AI cannot be ignored:

Whether or not they personally use and see benefit in AI for their work, respondents were overwhelmingly concerned about the environmental impacts of AI (83%) and the “community, social, and equity impacts of AI” (69%).

“The biggest challenge is justifying the use of AI when we know the climate and community impacts of training these models. Despite specialized use cases, they are completely unregulated and potentially dangerous for the general public.”

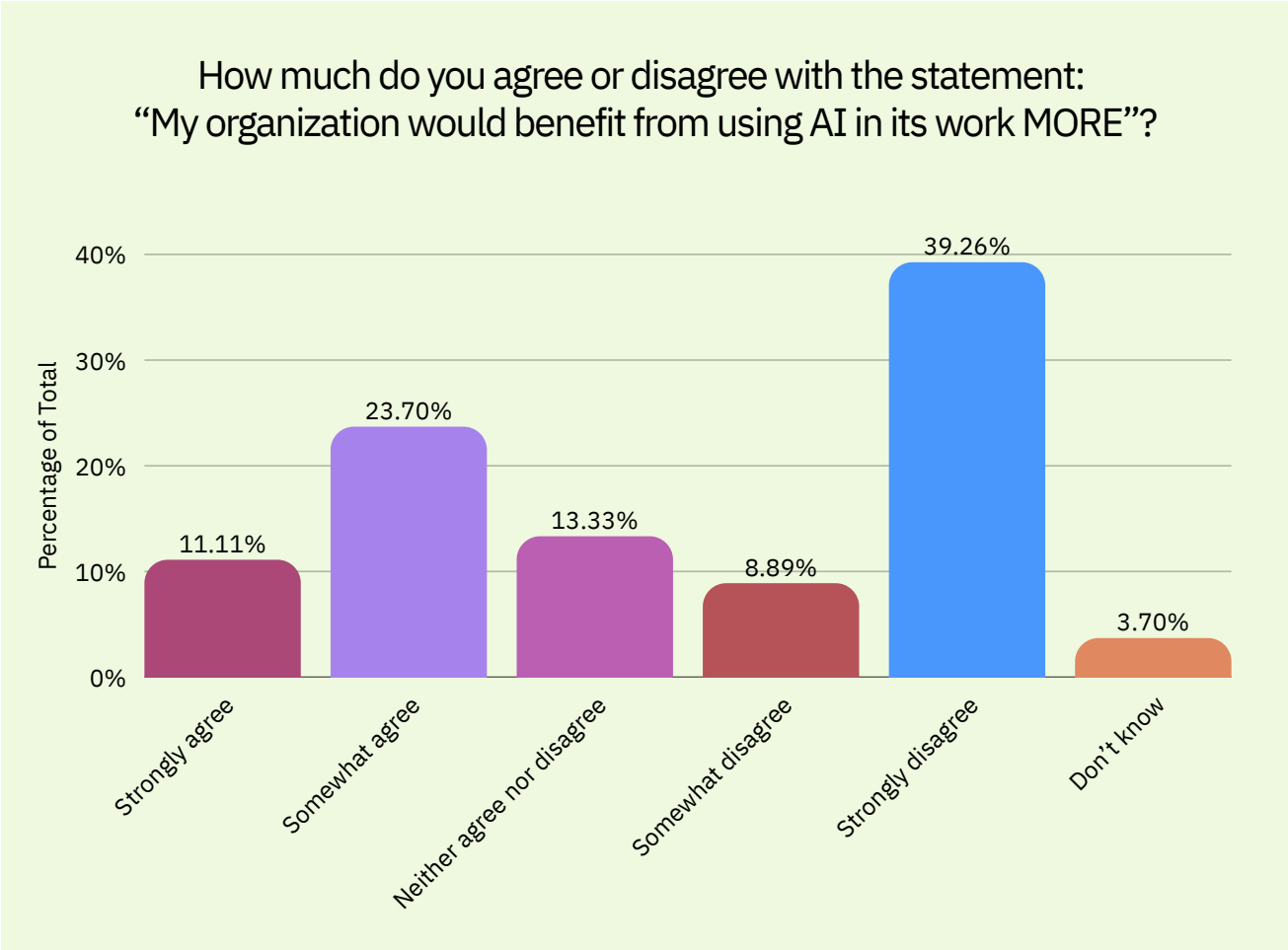
What concerns do you have about how AI might be used by climate advocates, if any?



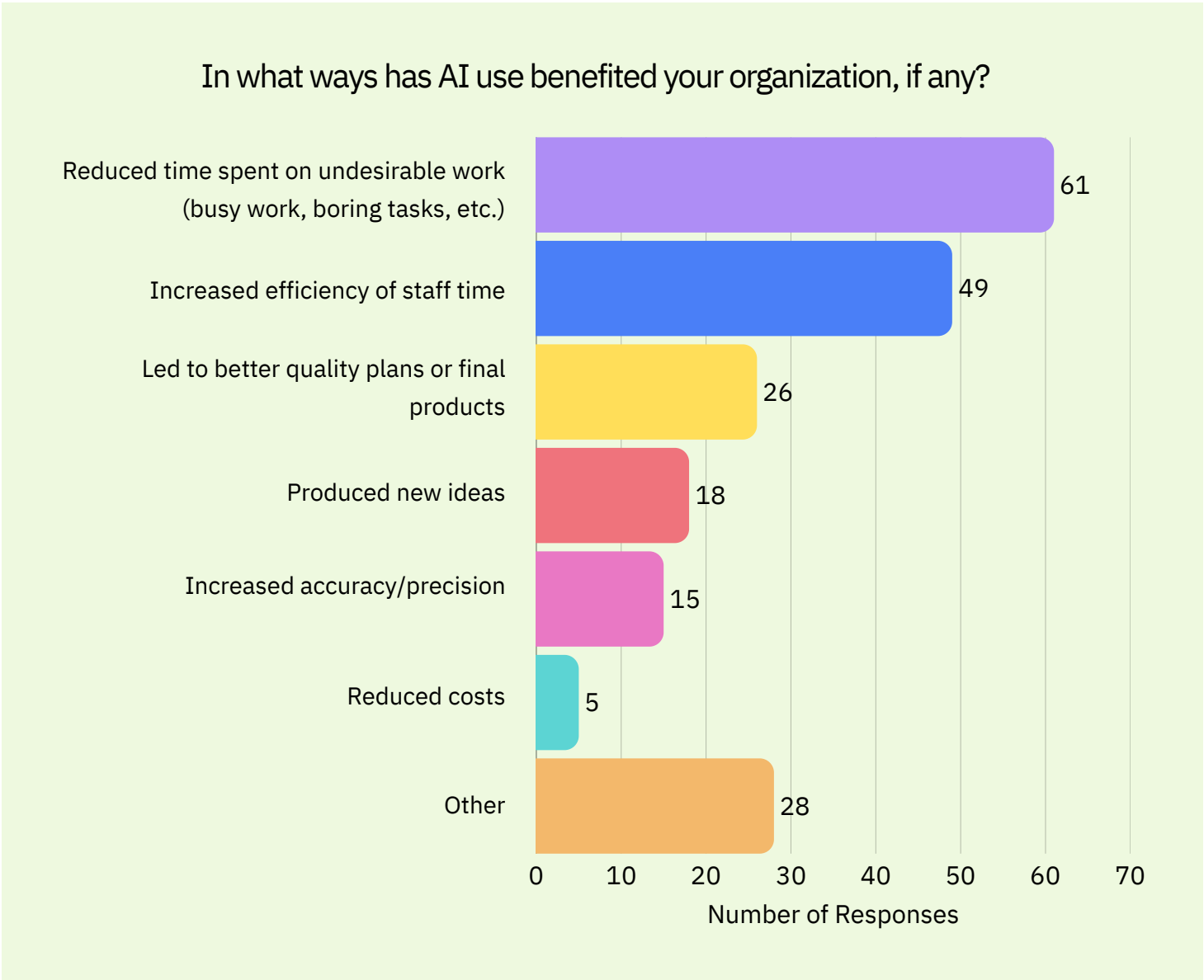
Respondents didn’t tend to feel AI produced better-quality work: The biggest benefits noted for AI were in its ability to be more efficient and reduce busywork, but few felt it led to better plans or final products (28%) or increased accuracy/precision (15%). In comments and focus groups, we heard from many who were concerned about AI producing worse work products (less authentic/creative, more error-filled), or degrading staff members’ skills.

“I don't think it's a tool that's actually often the best for anyone. But in particular for the research that I do in my role, I think it's inaccurate and unreliable.”

“I have created a few tools to help me and close colleagues automate tasks we would not otherwise be able to do, but they are nonessential.”



Benefits of personal use vs. organizational use: While 51% of respondents said AI has been effective at improving their own work, only 35% said the same for their organization’s work overall. Only 34% said their organization would benefit from more AI use, with 48% disagreeing.



Organizational values and reputational risk: Over and over again, we heard from respondents about concerns that AI use is at odds with important organizational values. This is reflected in conversations happening within organizations, whether or not they have active campaigns around AI and data centers. It's also reflected in the 71% of respondents who worried about the reputational risk of using AI as climate advocates, as well as respondents we heard from who use AI but don't talk about it.

"The most critical barrier [to using AI] is accuracy or reliability of AI generated content/insights - we just can't use a tool we can't rely on."

"Based on personal and off-the-record reports it's made our work more efficient and increased capacity but it's not something that's openly discussed at work."

Heavy AI users are individual users, not cheerleaders: While those who use AI at least once a day have the most positive view of AI, they are also the most likely to say they don't know how much others in their organization use it, or how AI use has impacted their organization. Additionally, we had difficulty finding heavy users willing to speak candidly with us for this report, a reflection of the cultural taboo against using AI in many organizations.

"I use AI at my job but I pretend I don't because I'm afraid of being judged for the environmental impact of AI and I fear that it will make my job redundant."

"It's been hard for people to experiment with it. People have a lot of feelings about AI and not many conversations lead to common ground."

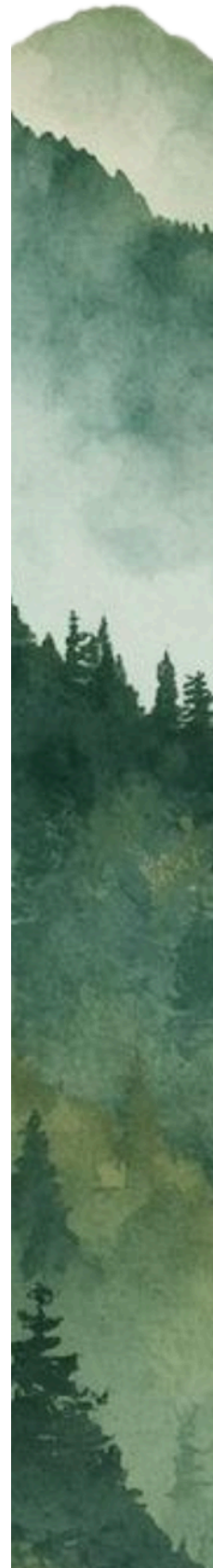
"The staff's public attitude about AI is very negative, though I think privately they are using AI tools."

Case Study: Community-Based Organization (CBO)

We spoke with one leader who we thought really epitomized the complex feelings about and approaches to AI we saw among respondents who were skeptical about AI. This leader is a deputy director with a state-based, grassroots, community, leadership development, and advocacy organization (which we'll call CBO, short for "community based organization"). He himself does not think AI is appropriate for use by staff or volunteers of his organization, but does not want to take a hardline stance and ban it entirely.

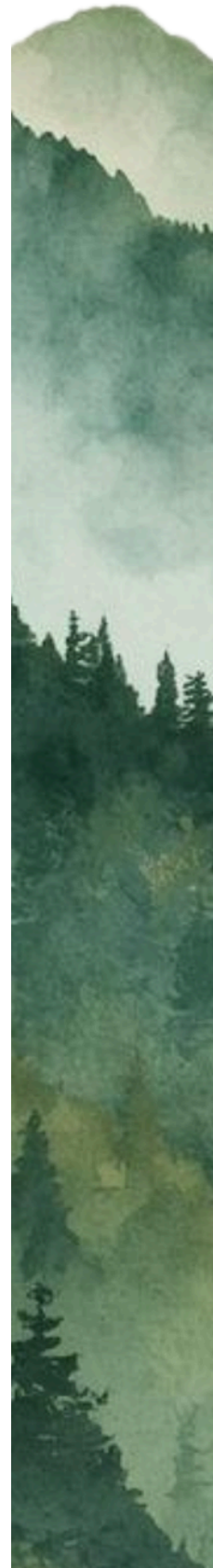
Like many people in the climate movement who are critical of AI, his concerns are both about the impact of data centers and the quality of the work AI produces. CBO is active in the fight against a huge proposed data center that would use more electricity than any other facility in the state, as well as a huge amount of water in a region subject to droughts. So he and his colleagues are intimately familiar with the negative impacts of data centers.

But we spent most of our conversation talking about the practical ways that test uses of AI had fallen short. He shared one example of an AI note-taking tool they tried for a two-day staff meeting. The results were disappointing: 24 pages of repetitive content, more like a transcript than notes. They wound up having to go through those pages to extract the notes they wanted - which took more time than it would have taken to just have human note-takers. In another instance, a staff member used AI to create an online flyer that other staff members felt looked generic.



The leader we spoke to noted that many staff members want to ban AI use or “call out” people for using AI, but he prefers they keep having conversations about it, and look for creative ways to steer people away from AI use. In response to the AI flyer incident, a senior intern ran a workshop on how to use Canva to make flyers - turning this controversy into an opportunity to develop community skills, an approach in line with the organization’s youth leadership development values.

Finally, this leader pointed out a clear issue in the world of AI: lack of federal regulation. In the absence of regulation, this industry is growing unchecked, and leaving grassroots organizations like theirs left to navigate ethical and practical concerns that we should be addressing as a society.



Conclusion

This report represents a snapshot of a moment as the climate movement grapples with a fast-moving and rapidly changing technology. As we heard from many respondents, it's important to understand how the movement engages with both AI and with the efforts to protect our climate, water, and communities.

Once again, **here are our recommendations for the climate movement**, based on what we heard from those in the movement:

- 1. Create space for healthy, collaborative conversations about AI.** One thing we heard over and over again is that it's difficult to have honest, productive conversations within organizations about AI use. Even in this report, we found it difficult to find people willing to go on record about their use of AI. But these conversations are crucial for navigating the complexities of AI for climate advocates.
- 2. Develop clear but flexible organizational AI policies with ample involvement of staff and lead volunteers.** The best AI policies are created with the input of staff and volunteers, give clear guidance, and can be adapted as the technology evolves.
- 3. Align your organization's approach to AI with your mission and values.** Be specific - for instance, in one case study featured here, a science-based organization knew that AI had the potential to enhance their staff's expertise, but they needed to make sure its use didn't detract from scientific rigor.
- 4. If your organization does allow AI use, invest in staff training.** AI tools can be very powerful when used well, but there's a lot of potential for bias and faulty results. So if you do allow AI use, work with staff to make sure it's being used responsibly and effectively.
- 5. Consider how your organization's values and strengths could add to the data center fight.** Data centers pose a huge threat to our climate, communities, and water supplies - but the campaigns around them offer an equally huge opportunity for cross-class, multiracial organizing. So whether or not your organization uses AI, join those campaigns.

What's Next

And here's what you can expect from the Lab as we develop our AI program:

- **Governance and discussion support:** A clear finding from this report is that organizations need support both in developing AI governance, and fostering productive conversations about AI use in their organizations.
- **Data Center advocacy support:** We are currently working with climate groups and communications partners to build a database of online ads to understand what works when it comes to data center accountability, as well as clean energy, and utility accountability. We are also in the early stages of developing a cohort-based training series for coalitions working on data center campaigns.
- **Practical AI use:** As a training organization, we can provide skills-based trainings, guidance on tools, and a community of practice for advocates who want to learn more about using AI.

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