

AMERICAN PUBLIC, INVESTOR, AND EXECUTIVE PERSPECTIVES ON RESPONSIBLE AI DEPLOYMENT

DECEMBER 2025



KEY FINDINGS

1 While Corporate Leaders and Investors Champion Artificial Intelligence (AI), the Public Remains Somewhat Skeptical About Positive Outcomes

Corporate leaders (93%) and investors (80%) overwhelmingly believe that AI will have a positive net impact on society, outpacing the general public (58%). This optimism translates to high expectations of positive effects among corporate leaders and investors for innovation (97% for investors and corporate leaders), worker productivity (corporate leaders: 98%, investors: 94%), profitability (corporate leaders: 96%, investors: 90%), and shareholder returns (corporate leaders: 97%, investors: 86%). The public is less convinced about positive outcomes, particularly where it concerns worker productivity (47%). Despite this skepticism, the majority of Americans (58%) do see AI as a net positive for society.

2 Executives Prioritize Certain Risks, While the Public Worries About Them All

Majorities or pluralities of each group rate AI Safety and Security a top concern (investors: 62%, public: 53%, corporate leaders: 46%). However, corporate leaders and investors are disproportionately concerned about disinformation (rank 1 or 2 – investors: 66%, corporate leaders: 65%,) and malicious use (investors: 64%, corporate leaders: 49%), versus loss of control (corporate leaders: 21%, investors: 12%) and environmental impact (corporate leaders: 15%, investors: 12%). In contrast, the public ranks the top four of five safety risks almost equally (~43% on average rank each risk 1 or 2 in priority), indicating that they see all risks as equally important or concerning.

3 Consensus on the Need for Regulation, But a Divide Over Focus

There is general agreement that the government has a role to play in establishing AI safeguards through standard-setting. But when it comes to the level of intervention by government, the public favors broader AI regulation (58-76% agreement across all policy areas) than corporate leaders and investors, who prioritize policies that address misinformation (79%+) and safety concerns such as content protections or watermarking (72%).

4 In the AI Transition, All Groups Prioritize Worker Training, But Corporate Action May be Falling Short

One area of agreement across all respondent groups is the need for AI training and reskilling for employees. Significant majorities of the public (90%) and investors (97%) say it is critical that companies ensure that AI training and development is available to employees, and roughly three-quarters of corporate leaders say they are planning to implement AI training to support their workers. When asked about how they plan to redistribute AI-related profitability gains, on the other hand, corporate leaders put less emphasis on worker training efforts (15%) than on reinvesting in R&D (30%) and delivering gains to shareholders (28%).

5 The Environmental Gap: When Corporate Priorities Misalign With Public Concerns

Public trust in companies may be undermined if executives' natural focus on positive corporate outcomes leads to an underinvestment in mitigating negative environmental impacts. 56% of investors and roughly a third of both the public and corporate leaders say increased corporate AI usage will have negative impacts on the environment. Yet only 17% of corporate leaders are currently including environmental impact planning in their AI roadmap, and 42% of them say that it is not a part of their strategy. As the energy demand of AI grows and electric and water bills rise, the tension between the public's trust and acceptance of AI technologies is likely to intensify — particularly if companies cannot demonstrate clear, measurable progress in tackling such challenges.

INTRODUCTION

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is rapidly evolving with the power to reshape entire industries and the American economy at large. As corporations integrate AI into their operations, the outputs from these systems generate consequences that carry profound implications for business, the workforce, and society.

[Recent surveys reveal anxiety](#) among the American workforce regarding AI-driven job displacement in the near term; simultaneously, corporate leadership increasingly requires workforce reskilling in AI competencies to drive productivity gains and growth. Strategic deployment of AI that adheres to ethical frameworks and aligns with societal values and expectations holds the potential to yield substantial positive outcomes for workers, customers, communities, shareholders, and society at large.

This report examines how the public, institutional investors, and corporate leaders align — and diverge — on the risks and benefits of AI adoption. This inaugural analysis will continue quarterly through 2026 and beyond in order to track sentiment as the technology and use of AI changes over time.

By capturing these diverse perspectives, JUST Capital aims to help executives develop frameworks for responsible AI deployment that allow companies to serve society's best interests while managing risk, fostering innovation, and unlocking economic growth.

WHO WAS SURVEYED

This survey was designed by JUST Capital as part of its broader polling and public-opinion research program. We received responses from 98 institutional investors and analysts in partnership with Robin Hood Foundation, 111 corporate executives in partnership with Gerson Lehrman Group, and 2,000+ US adults aligned to population benchmarks in partnership with The Harris Poll. Additionally, JUST Capital also conducted qualitative research through six focus groups with 36 Americans and one-on-one interviews with eight corporate leaders responsible for AI strategy and deployment. Data were collected between September 27 and November 14, 2025. The full methodology can be found on page 20.

INITIAL IMPLICATIONS FOR RESPONSIBLE AI DEPLOYMENT

A substantial majority (81%) of the public agrees that CEOs of large companies have a role to play in addressing the ethical use of artificial intelligence. Yet the data reveals significant gaps in three areas: AI safety investment and risk mitigation, workforce transition planning, and environmental impact considerations. These gaps represent potential opportunities for corporate leadership and competitive differentiation, as well as areas of potential risk to monitor.

AI SAFETY INVESTMENT & RISK MITIGATION

Majorities of investors (62%), the public (53%), and corporate leaders (46%) identify AI safety and security as a priority concern, even more so than American competitiveness and growth. Investors and the public expect companies to spend more than 5% of total AI investment on safety, while corporate leaders say they plan to allocate between 1 and 5%.

WORKFORCE TRANSITION PLANNING

Corporate leaders say they are prioritizing AI training and skill development, yet the public and investors expect more comprehensive support for workers displaced by AI technology. The public is concerned that AI adoption is a fundamental shift in the nature of work— 65% or more of the American public believe companies should offer more support for extending compensation periods, extending health benefits, and subsidizing retraining and education than is offered for typical layoffs. The majority of corporate leaders do not plan to offer support beyond existing levels for departing employees.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT CONSIDERATIONS

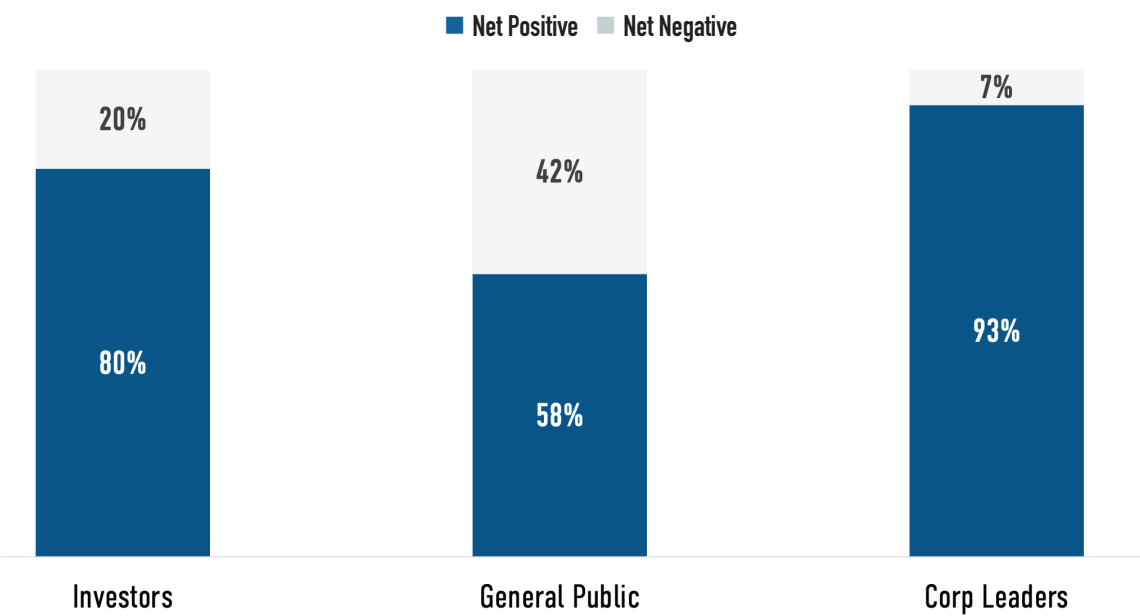
Only 17% of corporate leaders currently include environmental impact planning in their AI roadmap, despite this being a key area of concern among the public as well as investors. Notably, majorities across all three groups agree that companies operating data centers should compensate local consumers for increased energy costs and environmental impacts.

COMPLETE FINDINGS

THE PUBLIC IS LESS ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT POSITIVE OUTCOMES THAN CORPORATE LEADERS AND INVESTORS

Corporate leaders and investors both overwhelmingly believe AI will have a positive net impact on society whereas the general public does not share the same degree of enthusiasm.

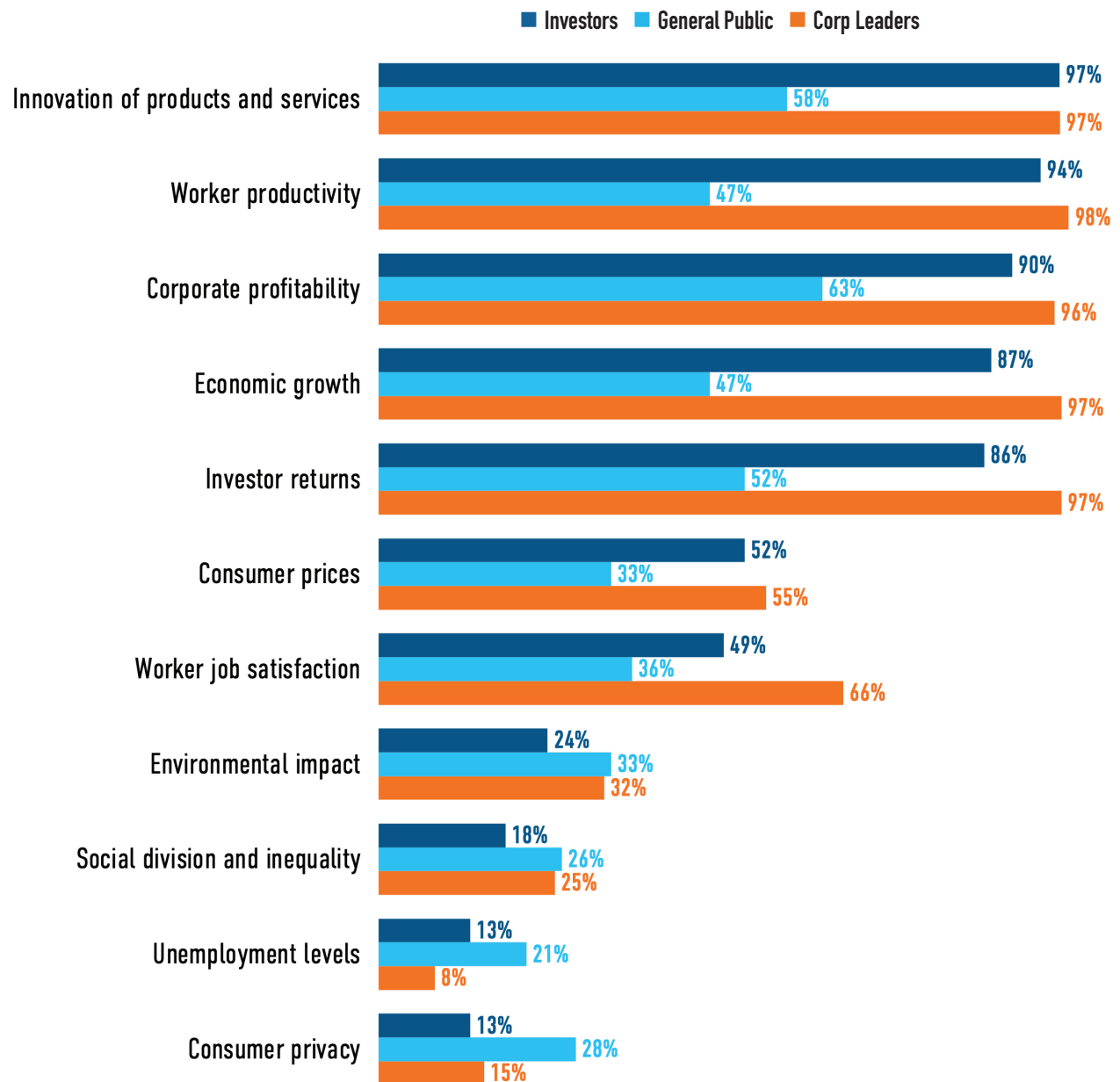
Percentage who foresee AI being a net positive versus at net negative within the next 5 years



When looking at the potential positive impact of AI across a number of dimensions, investors and corporate leaders express very high expectations for enhanced worker productivity, whereas public sentiment on this metric is notably more tempered.

CORPORATE LEADERS AND INVESTORS ARE MUCH MORE OPTIMISTIC THAN THE PUBLIC IS ABOUT AI ACROSS MULTIPLE DIMENSIONS

Percentage who say increased AI adoption by corporations will have a positive net impact on the following areas



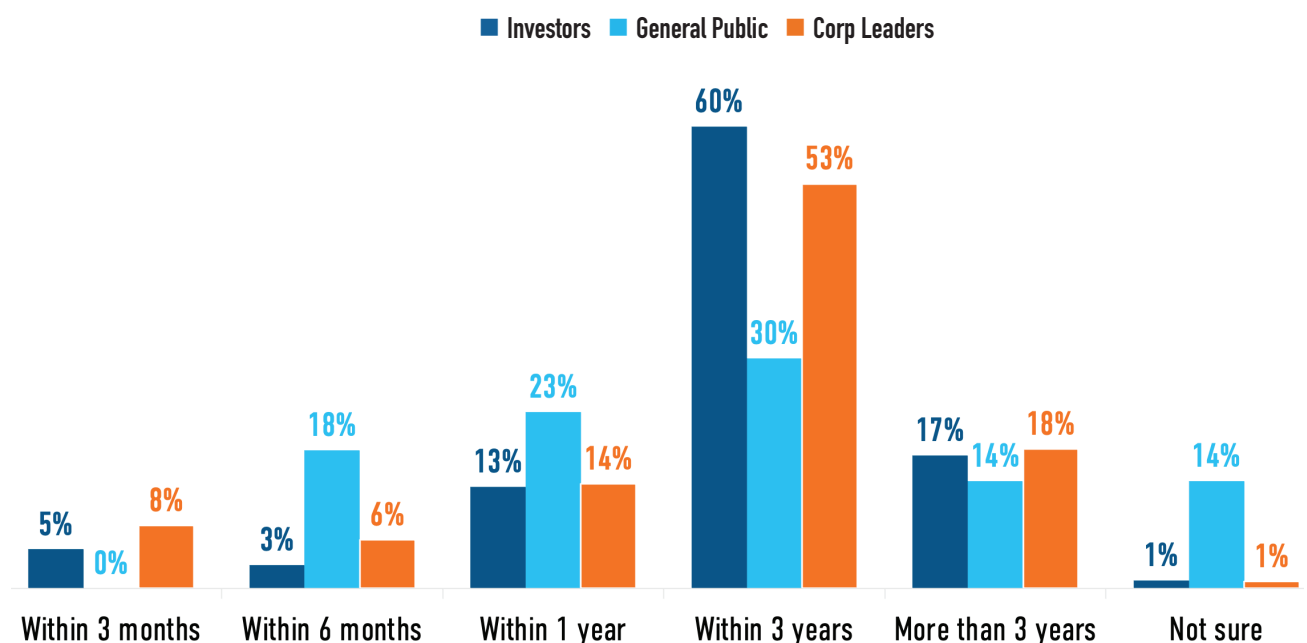


I'm optimistic that AI is going to provide more equal opportunity for a lot of people. I think everyone will be able to have access to a tutor or personal trainer or financial advisor – all these things that were accessible only to the wealthy. I also think innovation will increase at a faster pace, partly because you have AI to help you, and partly because we just have new capabilities and technology that wasn't possible before. But the way people work and the way people live will shift drastically due to AI, both in a positive way, but also it will have some serious implications.

VP Product Management, Software Company

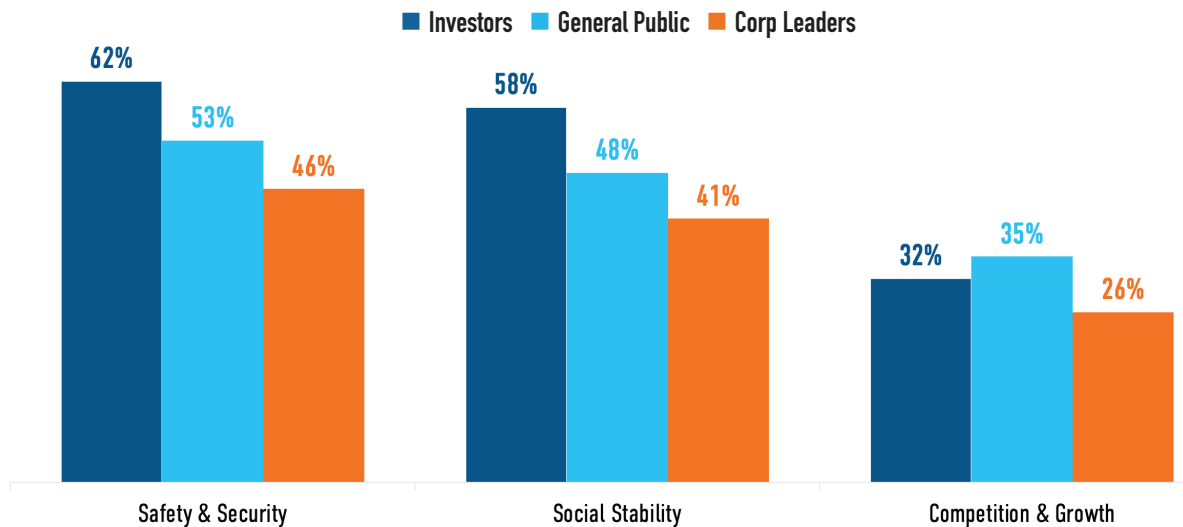
All three respondent groups align in their assessment that AI-driven societal transformation will begin within the next six months to a year, with significant impact occurring within the next three years.

Perceived timeframe for when AI will have a significant impact on society

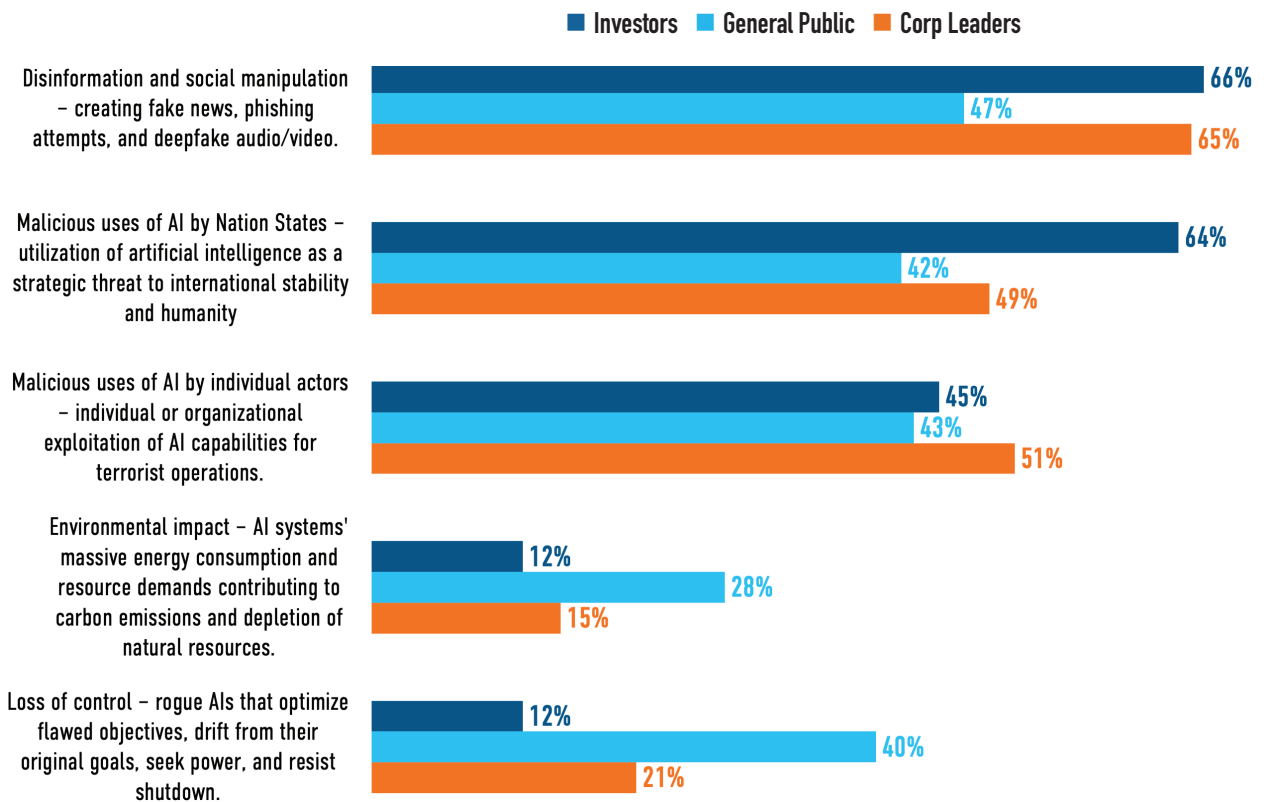


ALL GROUPS RATE AI SAFETY AND SECURITY AND SOCIAL STABILITY AS MORE CONCERNING THAN LAGGING BEHIND GLOBAL COMPETITORS

Percentage who are highly concerned about AI-related issues



AI Safety Risks, Ranked From Most To Least Threatening

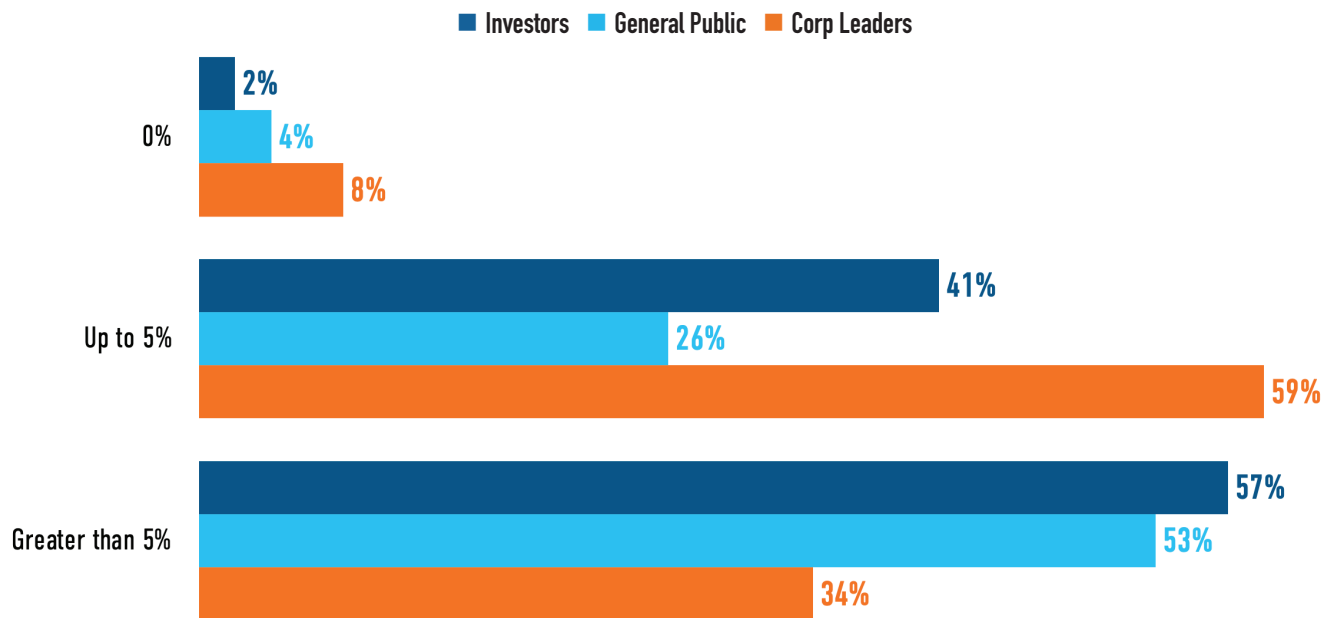


Regarding safety risks more specifically, corporate leaders and investors are disproportionately concerned about disinformation and malicious use versus loss of control and environmental impact. The public, by contrast, rates four of the five listed safety risks as almost equal threats.

ALL GROUPS AGREE THAT CORPORATE LEADERS SHOULD BE DEVOTING A SIGNIFICANT PERCENTAGE TO AI SAFETY MITIGATION

Investors and the public agree that companies should be spending 5% or more of their total AI investment on safety whereas corporate leaders are more likely to say they plan to spend between 1 and 5%.

Percentage of total AI investment that companies should spend on AI safety

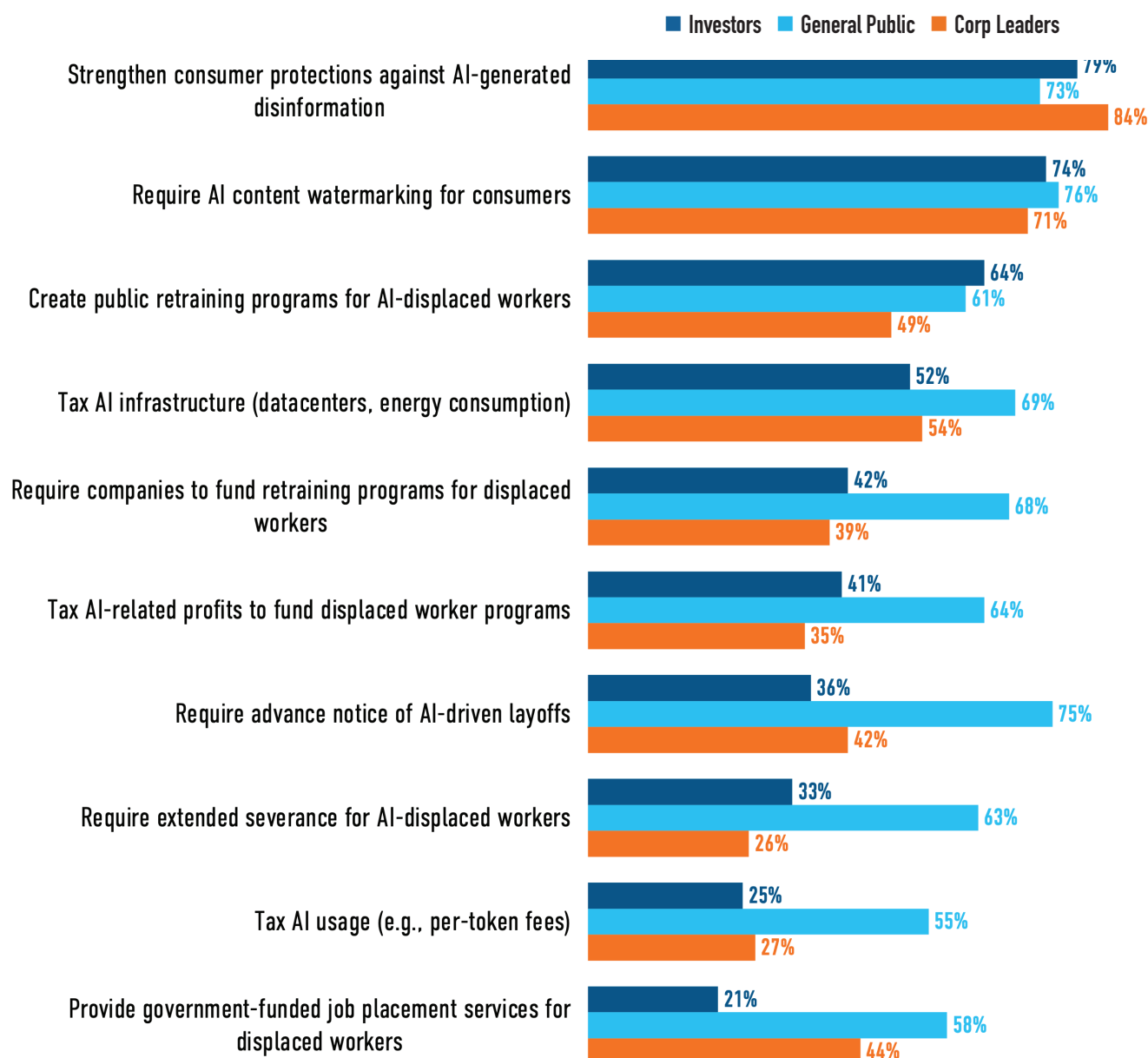


We've seen pretty significant year-over-year increases in safety investment. Let's say you're using design documents for the best device you've ever built [to train AI on internal data and documents]. Now [leaders are] starting to think: how are we securing that data? Where is it going? I can't give you a percentage, but I'll tell you that the willingness, or the appetite for those business leaders to support those safety investments definitely increase.

Head of Technology, Medical Device Manufacturer

THE PUBLIC SUPPORTS BROAD REGULATION ACROSS MULTIPLE POLICY AREAS WHILE CORPORATE LEADERS AND INVESTORS PREFER TARGETED INTERVENTIONS

Percentage that agrees the government should implement the following policies, even if they may slow business innovation or increase cost

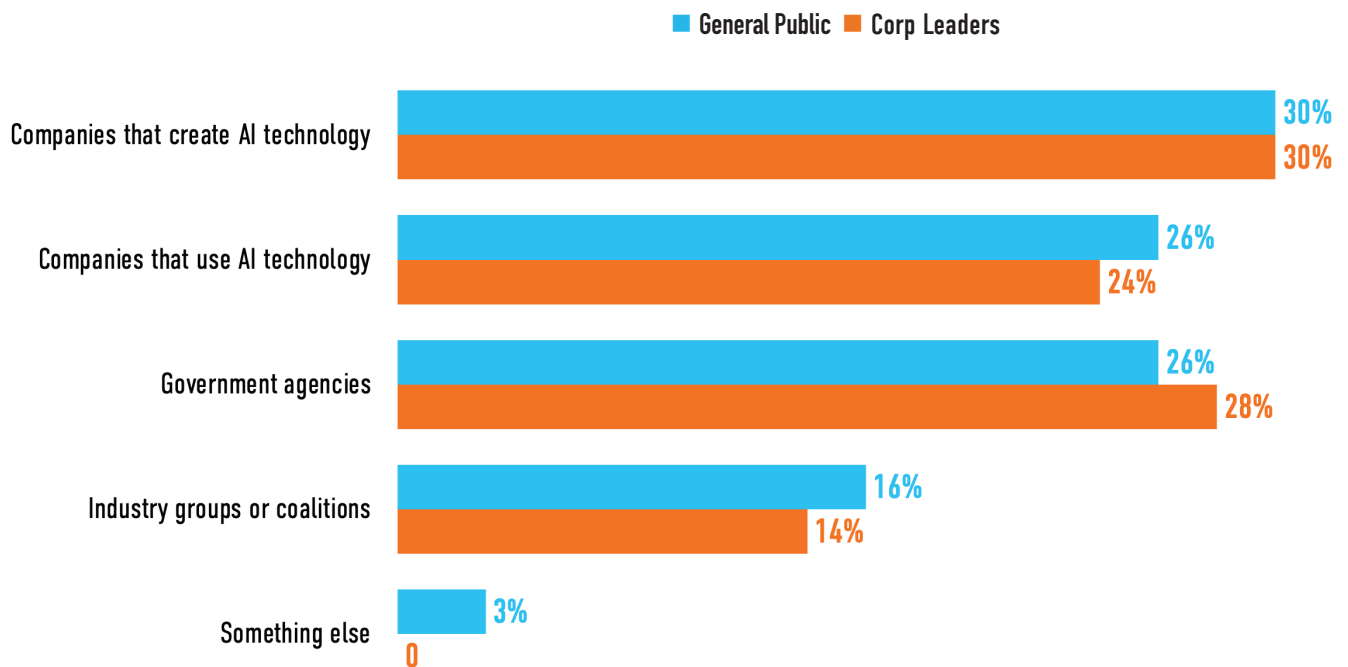


About two thirds of the public think that the government should take a role in creating guardrails to reduce the risks of AI deployment. Substantial majorities between 55% and 76% expect a government role in each of the covered risk areas.

By contrast, investors, and corporate leaders agree on a more limited set of regulations, focusing more on consumer protections and intellectual property protection and less on taxing AI usage and AI-generated profits as well as extended financial support for displaced workers.

THE PUBLIC AND CORPORATE LEADERSHIP SAY AI RESPONSIBILITY SHOULD BE DISTRIBUTED ACROSS COMPANIES AND GOVERNMENTS

Percentage of responsibility assigned to each group in order to ensure AI is used responsibly and safely



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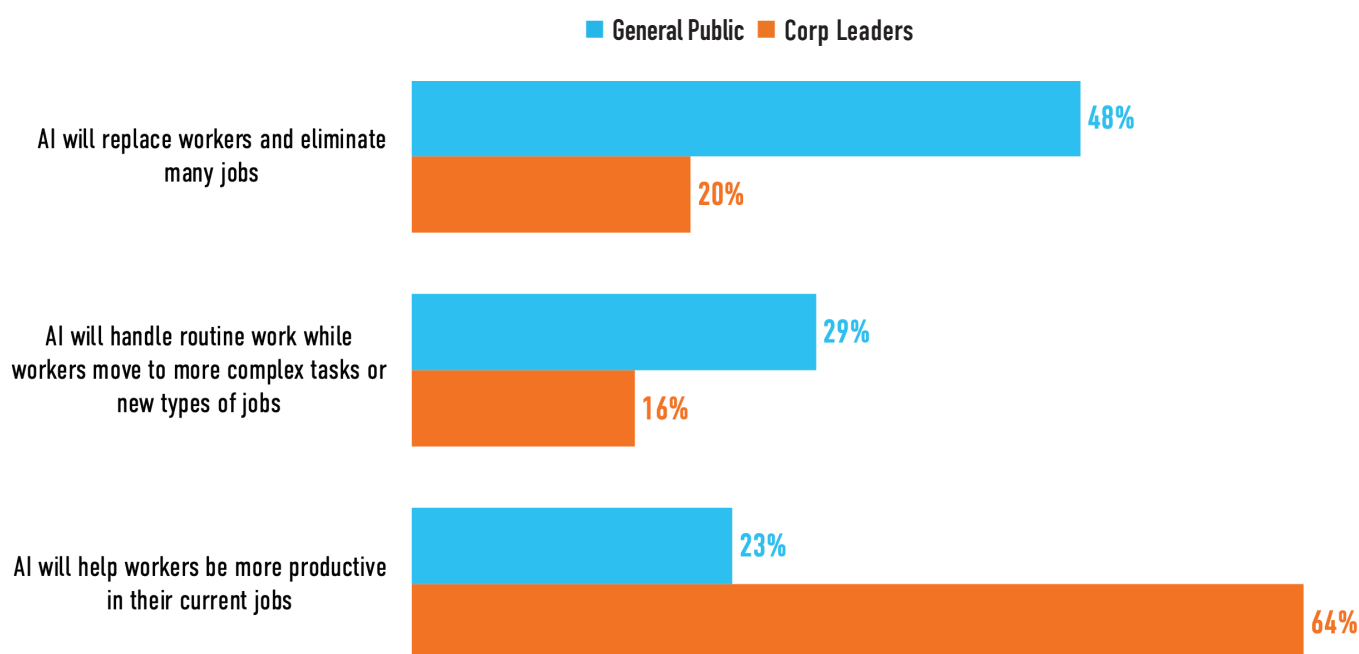
If something bad happens, your brand name is going to be tarnished even if you have this identity indemnity clause in your contracts with your providers. The company is ultimately responsible. Your leadership is responsible. Your CEO is responsible. That's why a lot of companies are slow-walking AI right now.

Distinguished Engineer, Manufacturing Company

PUBLIC FEARS JOB REPLACEMENT WHILE LEADERS EXPECT WORKER AUGMENTATION

The survey findings reveal widespread public concern that companies' growing adoption of AI will have swift, direct consequences for workers through job cuts.

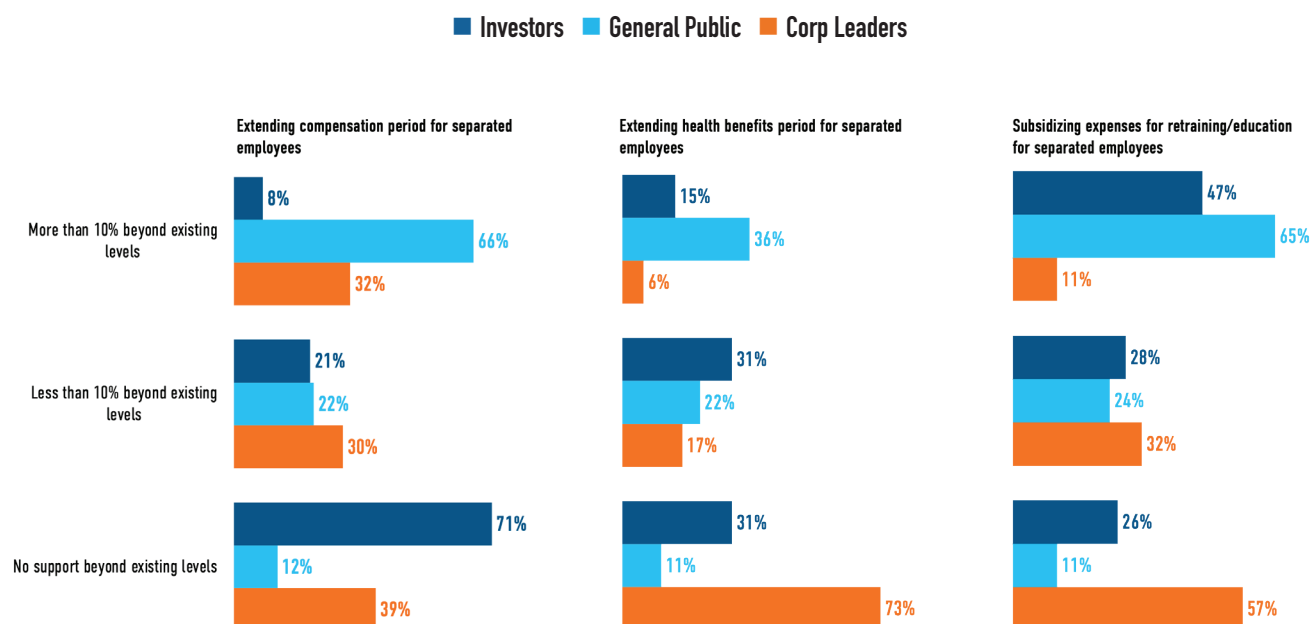
Percentage agreement on how AI will affect jobs the most in the future



Media coverage highlighting dire predictions—including higher-than-normal unemployment rates—likely drives the public's fear of AI-driven job replacement. This shapes their view of AI as a more profound transformation than past technological changes, and suggests why they expect companies to dedicate more than 10% of AI budgets to supporting displaced workers.

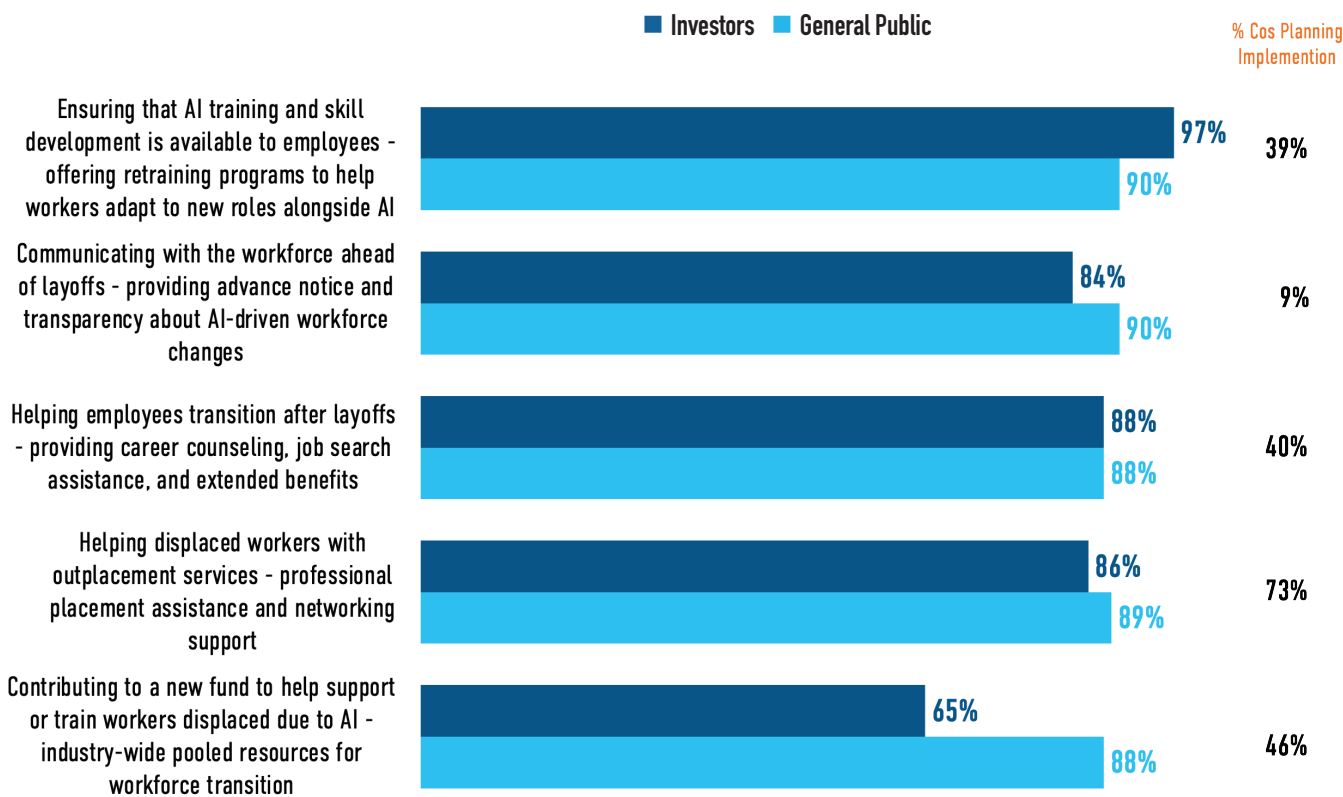
THE PUBLIC WANTS COMPANIES TO SPEND MORE ON DISPLACED WORKERS

Level of support (beyond existing levels) the companies should provide to workers displaced by AI



STRONG SUPPORT FOR EMPLOYEE AI TRAINING MATCHES CORPORATE PLANS

Percentage who say it is critical for companies implementing AI to take the following actions to support their workforce

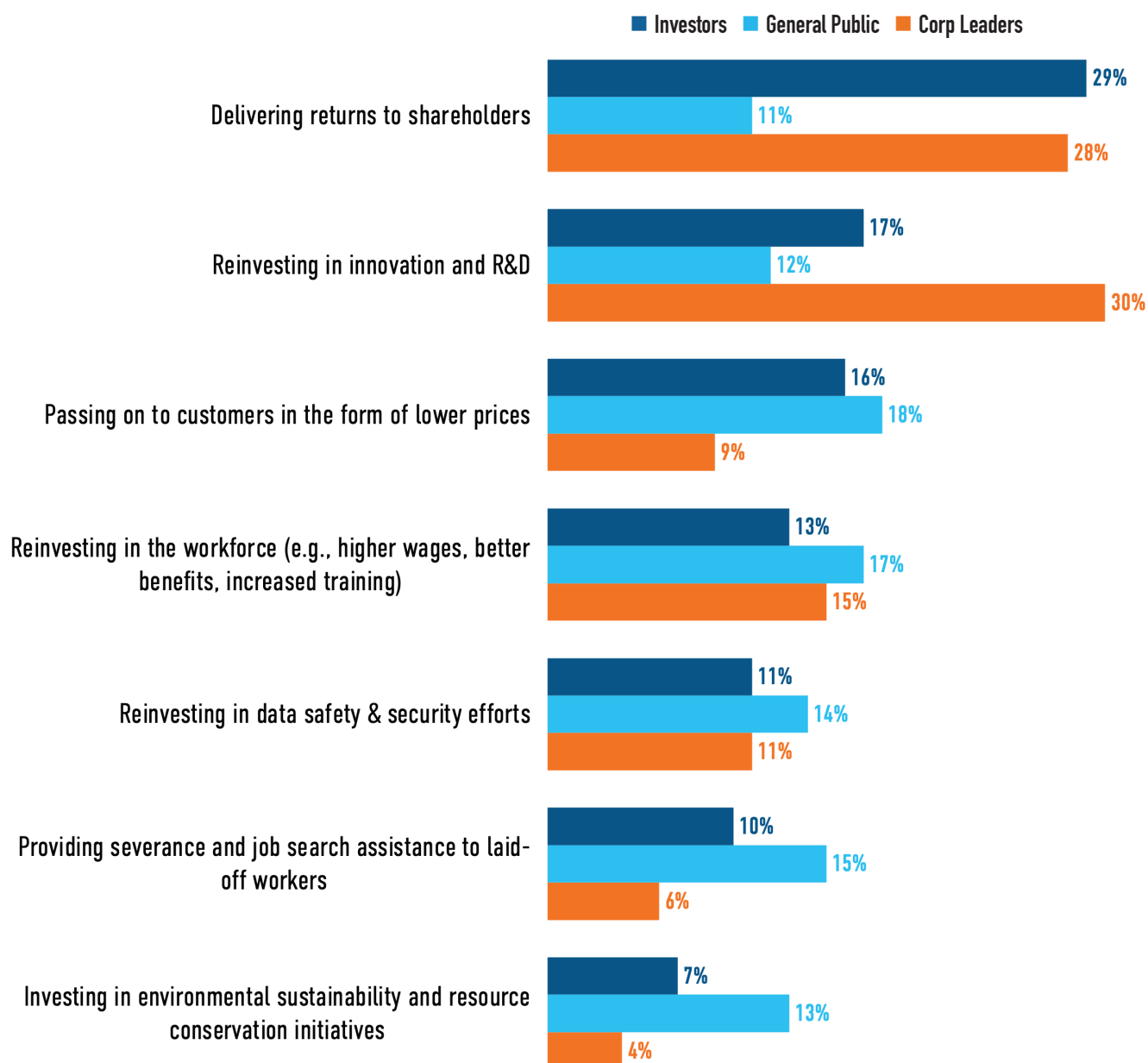


The best way to train people is to put secure tools into people’s hands. There’s really no better way to learn than to actually get your hands dirty. Super users who are already using the tool often come up with really good ideas that could change the company.

Director of AI, Pharmaceutical/Medical Company

QUESTIONS REMAIN ABOUT WHETHER CORPORATE LEADERS ARE CURRENTLY BACKING THEIR WORKFORCE COMMITMENTS WITH ADEQUATE INVESTMENT

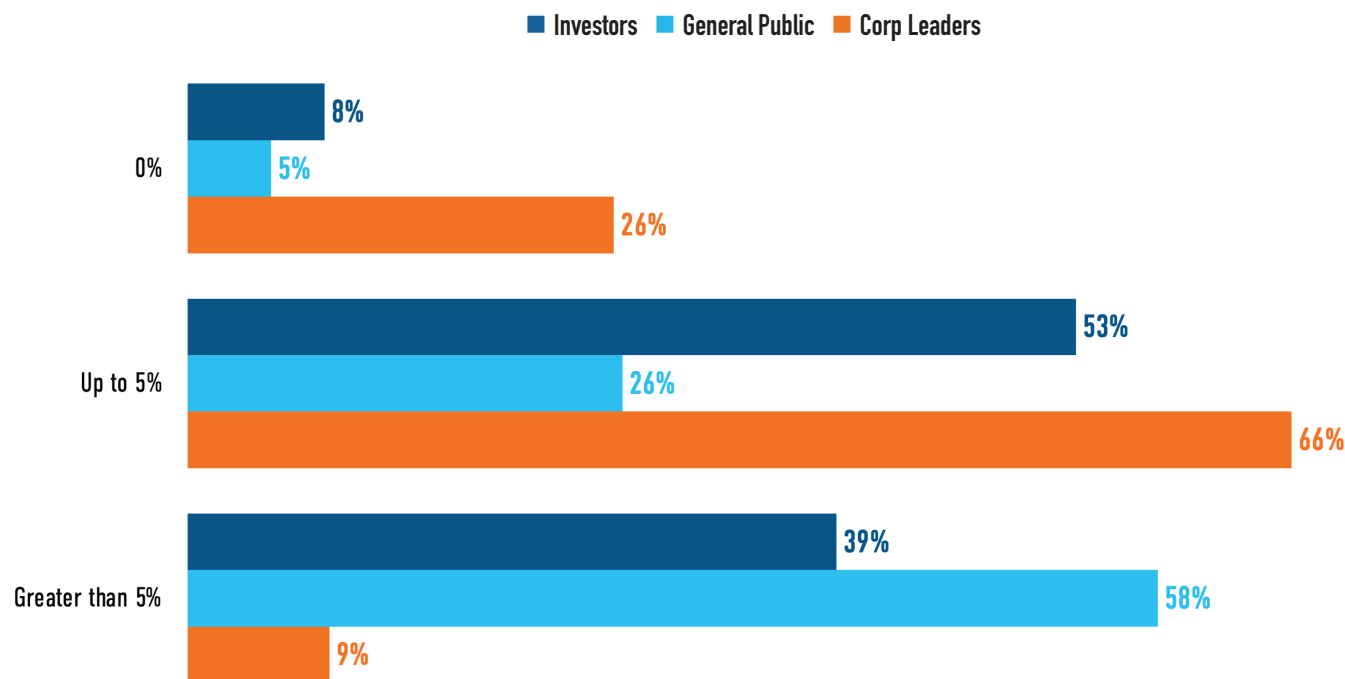
Percentage of AI-related profitability that should be distributed by Area



Responses to the suggested distribution of AI-related profitability gains reflects this tension: shareholder returns and reinvestment in innovation and R&D receive substantially greater priority than worker training efforts among corporate leaders and investors.

MOST LEADERS INDICATE WILLINGNESS TO ALLOCATE SOME AI INVESTMENT TOWARD WORKER SAFETY NETS

Percentage of total AI investment that companies should allocate to support workers displaced by AI (e.g. retraining, severance, transition assistance)

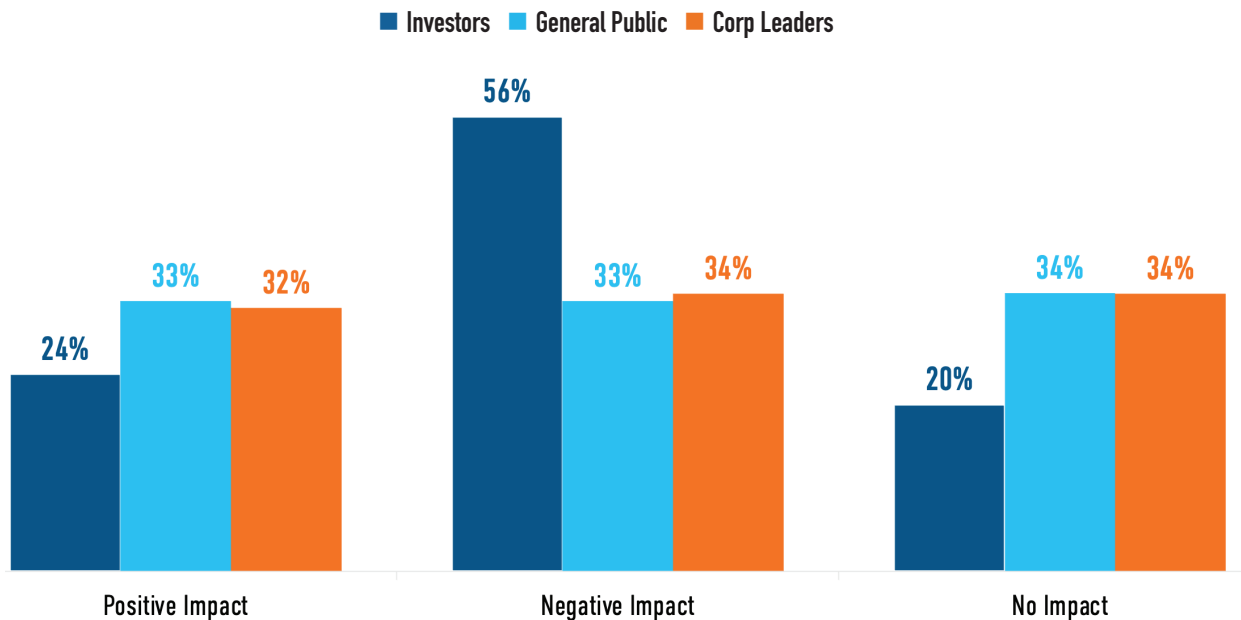


The proportion of total expenditure by corporate leaders, however, is lower than what the public and investors suggest they should allocate.

INVESTORS ARE MUCH MORE CONCERNED ABOUT THE IMPACT OF AI ON THE ENVIRONMENT THAN THE PUBLIC AND CORPORATE LEADERS

Corporate leaders and the public are ultimately unsure what type of impact AI will have on the environment, with roughly equal percentages saying that the impact will be positive, negative or nonexistent.

Percentage who say increased AI usage will have a positive, negative, or no impact on the environment



I think there's going to be an inflection point probably three to five years out where you've got to start to show those ROI gains, and then you've got to have incentives to find ways to make [data centers] much more energy efficient. Does that return on investment provide the incentives to create more energy efficiency and environmental policies down the road? Right now, it's a very big open question.

VP/GM Business Development, Software Technology Company

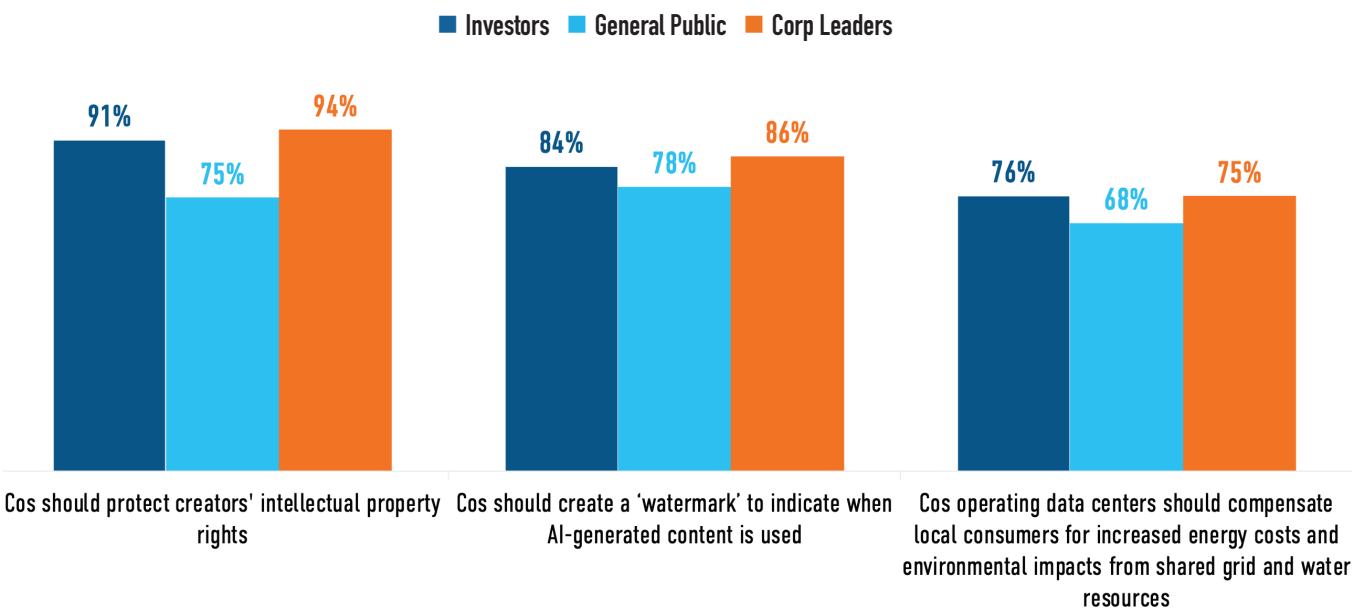
42% OF CORPORATE LEADERS SAY ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT IS NOT CURRENTLY PART OF THEIR AI DEPLOYMENT STRATEGY

Percentage of corporate leaders who are engaging in varying stages of environmental impact planning in their AI implementation



STRONG MAJORITIES AGREE THAT COMPANIES SHOULD COMPENSATE ENERGY CUSTOMERS FOR COST INCREASES CAUSED BY INCREASED AI USAGE

Percentage who agree with the following areas of risk mitigation



Growing AI energy demands and rising utility bills are likely to strain public trust in AI technologies—particularly as local customers experience higher energy costs firsthand.

SUMMARY

This research represents an initial step in beginning to define responsible AI deployment. Areas of underinvestment or gaps between investor, public, and corporate expectations represent key opportunities for impact, leadership, and competitive differentiation. As AI tools and workstreams continue to permeate the business ecosystem, JUST Capital will continue to track perceptions quarterly and identify opportunities for the technology to positively impact workers, customers, communities, and shareholders.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

JUST Capital regularly conducts independent, methodologically rigorous surveys to track Americans' priorities, values, and expectations for corporate behavior, which serve as a foundational input into its JUST Intelligence tool, rankings, and research products. For this research, JUST Capital conducted a survey focusing on the responsible usage of AI in organizations, fielded among three populations of respondents: Investors, Corporate Leaders, and the General Public.

Investors

The survey was designed and fielded by JUST Capital using the Qualtrics online survey platform. Respondents comprised registered attendees of the The Robin Hood Investors Conference, an annual event hosted by the Robin Hood Foundation that brings together leaders from finance, tech, business, and policy to discuss investment ideas and market trends. Data collection took place between September 27 and October 10, 2025. JUST Capital received a total of 98 responses of which 56 were Institutional Investors and the remainder comprised Analysts and other job functions.

Corporate Leaders

The survey was designed and fielded by JUST Capital using the Qualtrics online survey platform. The sample was provided by Gerson Lehrman Group, a global information services consulting company that provides clients access to expert consultants seeking advice across a wide range of subjects. Data collection took place between October 31 and November 14, 2025. JUST Capital received a total of 111 responses of which 91 were c-suite executives and 20 were senior level executives operating in a strategic business decision making capacity regarding AI implementation in organizations of 500 or more employees.

In addition to the survey of corporate leaders, JUST Capital team members conducted eight interview sessions with a diverse cross-section of executives closely involved with corporate AI adoption in their workplaces. Interviews with corporate leaders ranged in length from 45 minutes to an hour and were conducted between November 5 and 18, 2026. Interviewees covered a wide range of industries, from technology providers to pharmaceuticals and health care, financial services, and information technology services. Interviewees were guaranteed that their statements or organizational affiliations would not be attributed to them without their express consent.

General Public

The survey was designed by JUST Capital and conducted online within the United States by The Harris Poll between October 02 and 06, 2025, and fielded among 2,052 adults ages 18+ and older. The sampling precision of Harris online polls is measured by using a Bayesian credible interval. For this study, the sample data is accurate to within +/- 2.6 percentage points using a 95% confidence level.

Additionally, JUST Capital conducted six 75-minute focus groups among the American public via Zoom. Each group had 6 participants and groups were separated into the following segments: two groups of members from the general public, two groups of workers at large companies (500+ employees), and two groups of young workers (age 18-29). Across participants a mix of demographics and firmographics, and each respondent must have some working knowledge of AI and have used it either personally or professionally. Focus groups were conducted September 9–11, 2025.

ABOUT JUST CAPITAL

JUST Capital is an independent nonprofit founded in 2014 to demonstrate that just business - as defined by the American public - is better business. By surveying 200,000+ Americans, tracking corporate performance on stakeholder priorities, and providing data-driven insights to business leaders, JUST Capital has helped improve job quality for 2.6 million workers and reached over 30 million Americans through media partnerships. The organization's JUST Intelligence platform, currently in beta with over 100 free corporate users and fully launching in 2026, will provide AI-powered tools enabling corporate leaders to create value for stakeholders, shareholders, and society at large.

For more information about JUST Capital, visit justcapital.com

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