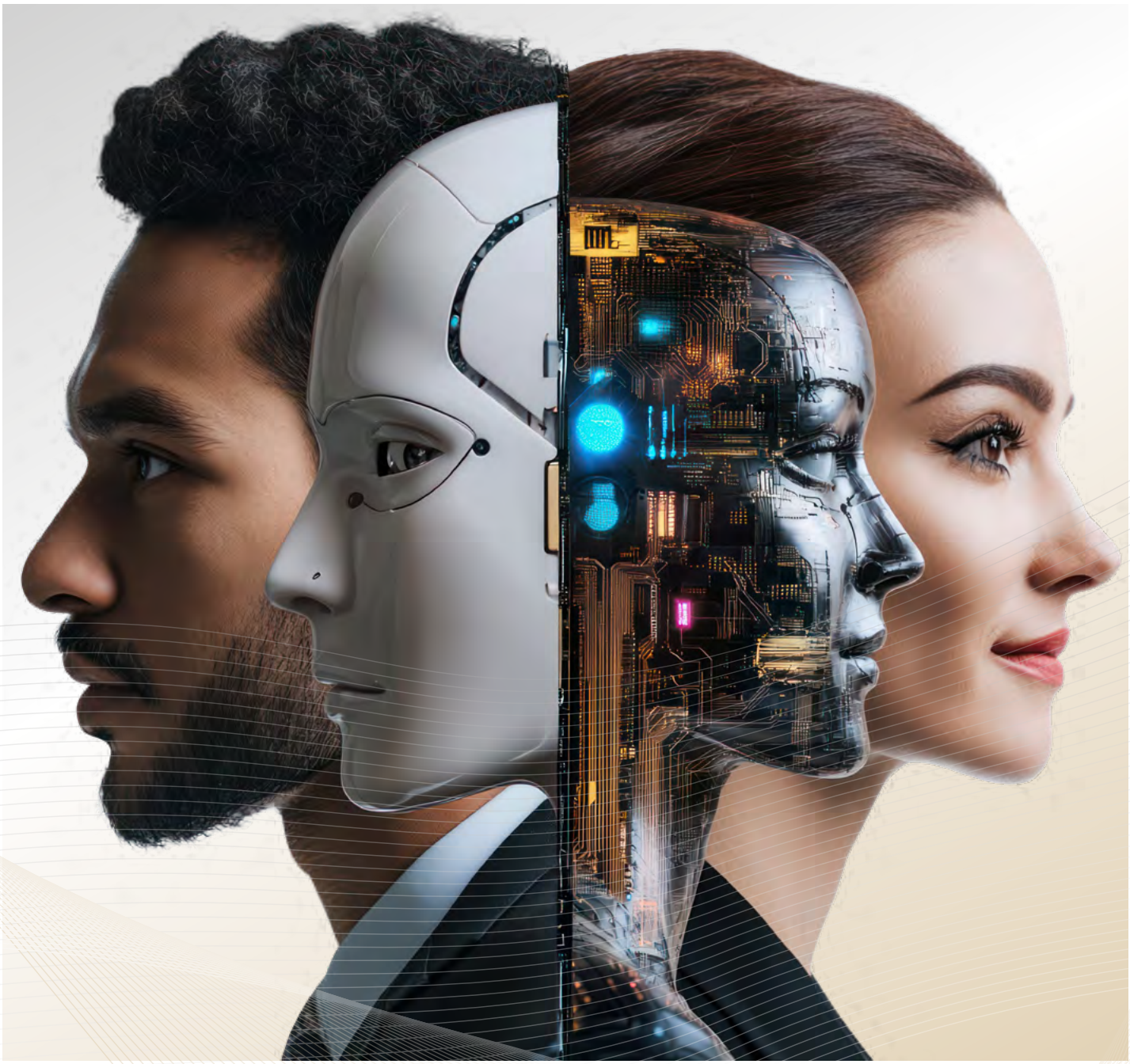

POLICY BRIEF

Leading with Artificial Intelligence

How executives think about AI –
and its implications for the future of leadership

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Contents

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Artificial Intelligence: Redefining Leadership

Artificial intelligence (AI) is among the most significant forces reshaping modern society. While it continues to permeate everyday activities, it has begun to change how decisions are made, strategies are formulated, and work is organized. With its ability to perform complex tasks, AI has the potential to fundamentally transform the workplace and entire occupational fields. Large Language Models (LLMs) such as ChatGPT and Google Gemini have demonstrated that AI is capable of understanding natural language, grasping complex contexts, and generating tailored suggestions in real time. As these models continue to develop and become more powerful, AI is increasingly able not only to automate routine tasks, but also to assume demanding responsibilities typically reserved for executives, such as strategic decision-making and monitoring employee development.

Nonetheless, employees in Germany remain ambivalent about the use of AI in the workplace, often due to a lack of understanding of potential AI applications (IPSOS AI Monitor, 2025). AI-driven opportunities, including efficiency gains, more accurate and data-based decision-making, and the promotion of innovation, are offset by risks such as loss of control, algorithmic bias, and a lack of employee acceptance.

While potential applications of AI are widely discussed, its effects on leadership remain insufficiently studied. How and to what extent AI will reshape leadership roles remains to be seen. Yet, a fundamental transformation of the world of work inevitably also redefines the role of leadership. In this context, executives bear responsibility for proactively shaping and implementing the AI transformation. In fact, their role is twofold: acting as responsible drivers of change on the one hand, while simultaneously allowing their own role to evolve accordingly in the process.

Against this backdrop, the Liz Mohn Foundation conducted a study in conjunction with the market research institute IPSOS. The aim was to understand:

- how managers currently use AI;
- which leadership tasks AI can perform;
- which opportunities and risks they associate with AI;
- the expected impact of AI on organizational and leadership culture;
- how AI-ready they consider their organizations to be today; and
- which factors promote or inhibit the use of AI in organizations.

To this end, 1,000 managers from the fields of business, politics, and culture were interviewed in a nationwide survey.

The survey results provide insights into how managers currently use AI for core leadership tasks, highlighting several of the opportunities and challenges involved. Moreover, they indicate factors which support or inhibit the active engagement and integration of AI and should encourage executives to reflect critically on the potential for AI in their own role going forward.

1.2 Background: Artificial Intelligence and Leadership

What is Artificial Intelligence?
Artificial intelligence (AI) is traditionally understood as the science and technology of intelligent machines (McCarthy, 2007). Such machines can perform human-like cognitive functions, including learning, problem-solving, and decision-making. In contemporary AI research, AI is primarily understood as a rational or intelligent agent – that is, a system that perceives its environment and acts to maximize the likelihood of achieving its goals (Russell & Norvig, 2021).

To identify potential use cases for AI in management, it is essential to examine the various responsibilities associated with leadership. Only when the diverse tasks, organizational duties, and relational aspects of managerial work are clearly understood can we assess where AI might help reduce workload and add value – or where its use may be less appropriate. At its core, leadership can be understood as a goal-oriented, reciprocal process of influence through which the behavior, attitudes, and performance of individuals or groups are coordinated toward achieving a common goal (see, inter alia, Wunderer, 2011; Neuberger, 2011). Moreover, while structural leadership focuses on processes and organizational structures that influence behavior, interpersonal interaction between employees and executives is a defining attribute of direct leadership.

There is no doubt that AI, among other things through its ability to automate processes, will significantly influence structural leadership. Similar to the structural changes brought about by the assembly line or robotic process automation, AI will have far-reaching effects on organizational frameworks and structures, such as the flattening of executive hierarchies. For executives, however, the extent to which AI influences direct leadership and relationships with employees may be of greater importance. Such interactive leadership is defined by direct contact through communication, exchange, and reciprocal relationships between executives and employees.

Although direct leadership is multilayered and complex, recurring core tasks can be identified that characterize its nature. The following systematization of six core task areas is based on established approaches in management and leadership research (see, inter alia, Neuberger, 2011; Rosenstiel & Nerdinger, 2011; Malik, 2019; Wunderer, 2011; Scholz, 2013; Glasl, 2013):

1. **PLANNING:**

   includes the forward-looking design of objectives, tasks, and the targeted use of resources. It forms the basis for taking effective action, can be well supported through methodological approaches, and is often characterized by structured routines.

2. **COMMUNICATION:**

   ensures operational communication in day-to-day work. Among other things, it facilitates coordination, motivation, and the flow of information.

3. **MONITORING:**

   involves both monitoring progress and assessing the achievement of objectives. In times of digital performance indicator systems, this task area is increasingly becoming the focus of data-based leadership.

4. **DEVELOPMENT:**

   encompasses all tasks aimed at the individual and collective development of employees – including feedback and coaching, team development, and career advancement. In addition to methodical knowledge, it requires empathy and the ability to reflect.

5. **CONFLICT RESOLUTION:**

   is a task area strongly tied to emotional and social competence. Internal team conflicts require attention, clarification strategies and often a mediating role on the part of the manager – a difficult skill to standardize.

6. **DECISION-MAKING:**

   refers to strategic and operational decisions in dealing with employees, such as selection, promotion, or redefinition of roles. These decisions are often highly relevant, as they involve responsibility, conflicting objectives, and corporate governance.

2 USING AI FOR LEADERSHIP TASKS

The following chapter illustrates the survey results relating to the integration of AI in leadership tasks. It shows how managers currently make use of AI and which potential applications they expect in the future.

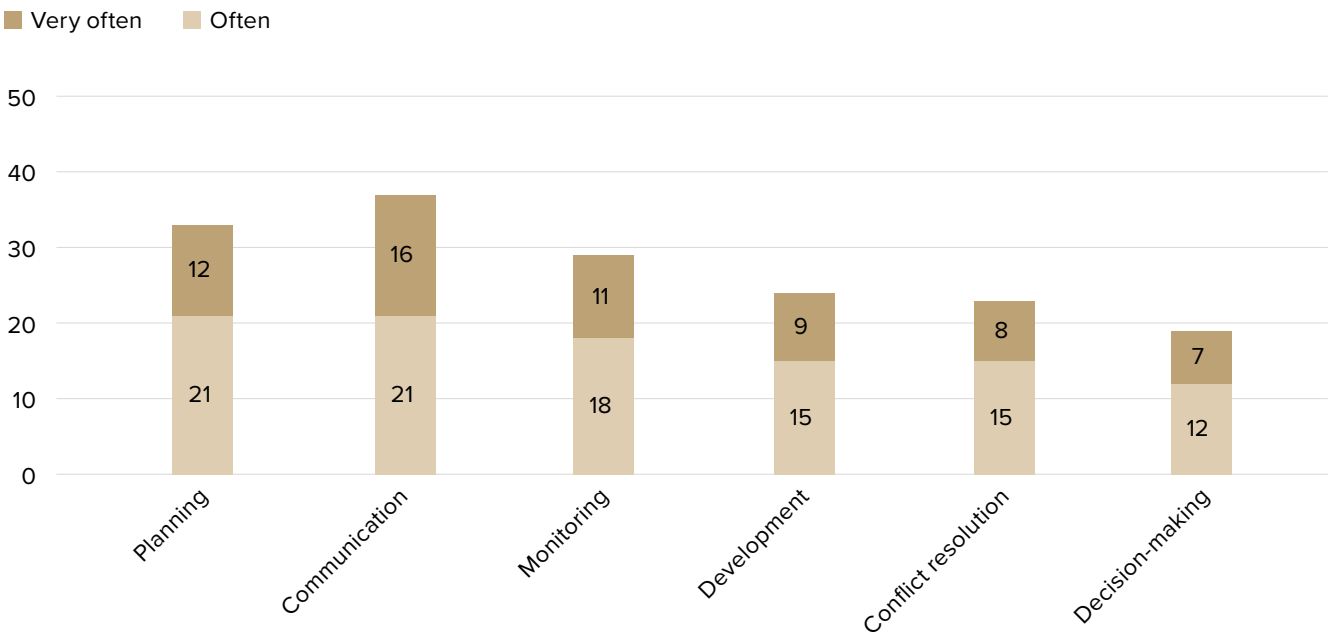
2.1 Current Use of AI for Leadership Tasks

Currently, the majority of respondents do not use AI regularly for leadership tasks (that is, neither often nor very often).

Use varies greatly depending on the nature and complexity of the task. A clear preference for AI use is evident in standardized processes such as planning and communication (see Figure 1), in which approximately one third of managers report regular use. AI's ability to perform routine tasks relieves managers of administrative burdens and allows them to concentrate on strategic activities.

In contrast, the use of AI in more complex tasks – particularly personnel decisions and conflict resolution – remains remarkably low. Only 19 percent of managers use AI in personnel decisions, a reluctance that reveals deeply rooted skepticism about integrating AI into decision-making processes that traditionally rely on fine-tuned human judgment.

Figure 1 | Current Use of AI for Leadership Tasks (as leadership task becomes more complex)



Shown in percent
Question: Please indicate how often you use AI in the following activities ..., N = 1,000, very often and often

Source: Liz Mohn Foundation 2025

The primary obstacle to stronger AI integration is limited confidence in AI's capacity to replicate human judgment and emotional understanding. This is compounded by concerns about algorithmic bias – the possibility that biased training data may reinforce discrimination, prejudice, or stereotypes. In addition, the use of AI in high-risk decision-making contexts often requires co-determination and robust organizational safeguards.

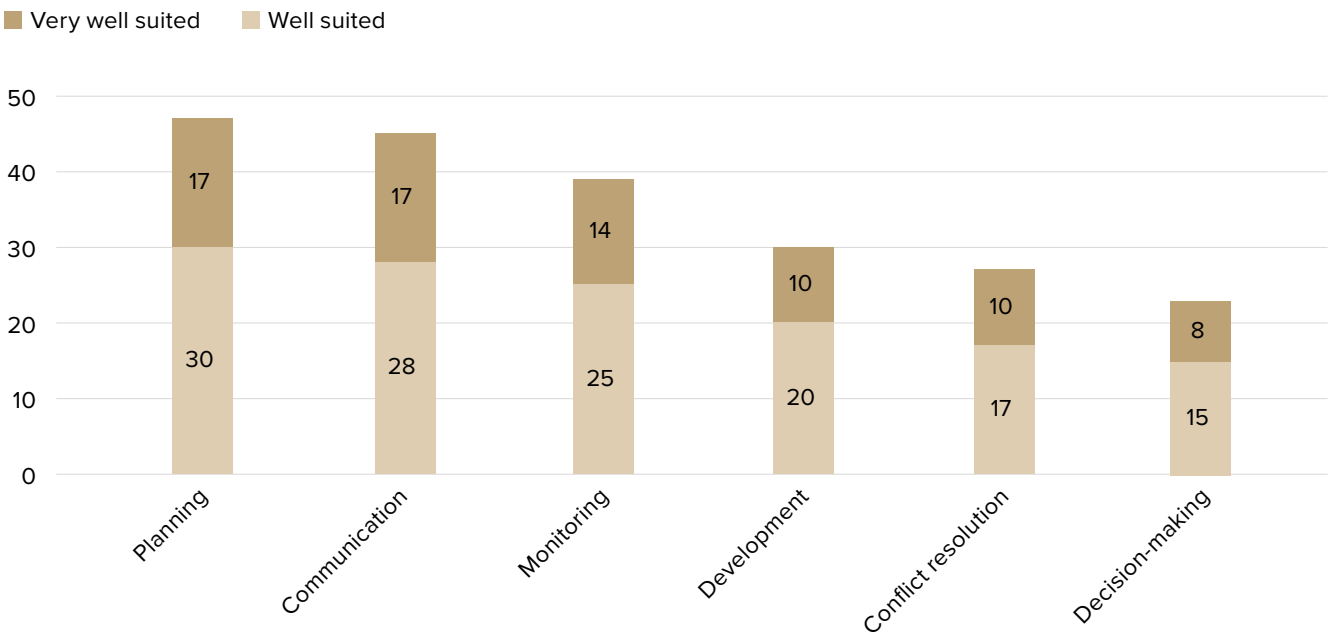
Overall, the data reveals a clear pattern: the more complex the leadership task, the less AI is used. Managers consider AI helpful for routine, structured tasks, but not for tasks involving creativity, empathy, or complex problem-solving.

2.2 Expected Use of AI for Leadership Tasks

In considering managers' view of potential AI applications in leadership tasks, the findings largely align with current usage patterns: managers see more potential for AI in less complex tasks such as planning (47 percent) and communication (45 percent) (see Figure 2).

There remains considerable skepticism about the use of AI in more complex and high-risk leadership tasks, such as conflict resolution or personnel decisions, and managers frequently lack a forward-looking vision for deeper AI integration. Only around 27 percent (conflict resolution) and 23 percent (decision-making) of respondents see potential in these complex areas. Fewer than one third of managers see potential for AI use in development-related tasks (team development, feedback and coaching, and career advancement).

Figure 2 | Potential Future Use of AI for Leadership Tasks



Shown in percent
Question: Please indicate which of these tasks AI could be used for in the future ..., N = 1,000, very well suited and well suited

Source: Liz Mohn Foundation 2025

However, even for less complex leadership tasks, the perceived potential of AI remains limited. Across all leadership tasks considered, the use of AI is currently viewed skeptically by the majority of respondents. This suggests that managers have not yet fully explored the impact and potential of AI in leadership contexts. In particular, executives who currently do not use AI for leadership tasks see little potential for future applications.

In contrast, the general population expresses greater confidence in the integration of AI into leadership tasks. For example, 63 percent of respondents assume that AI will take over the screening of job applications in the future (Ipsos, 2025). This discrepancy suggests that managers may be reluctant to delegate traditional leadership tasks to machine systems, possibly out of concern about losing personal influence and control, or because they are more directly exposed to organizational, legal, and implementation-related hurdles.

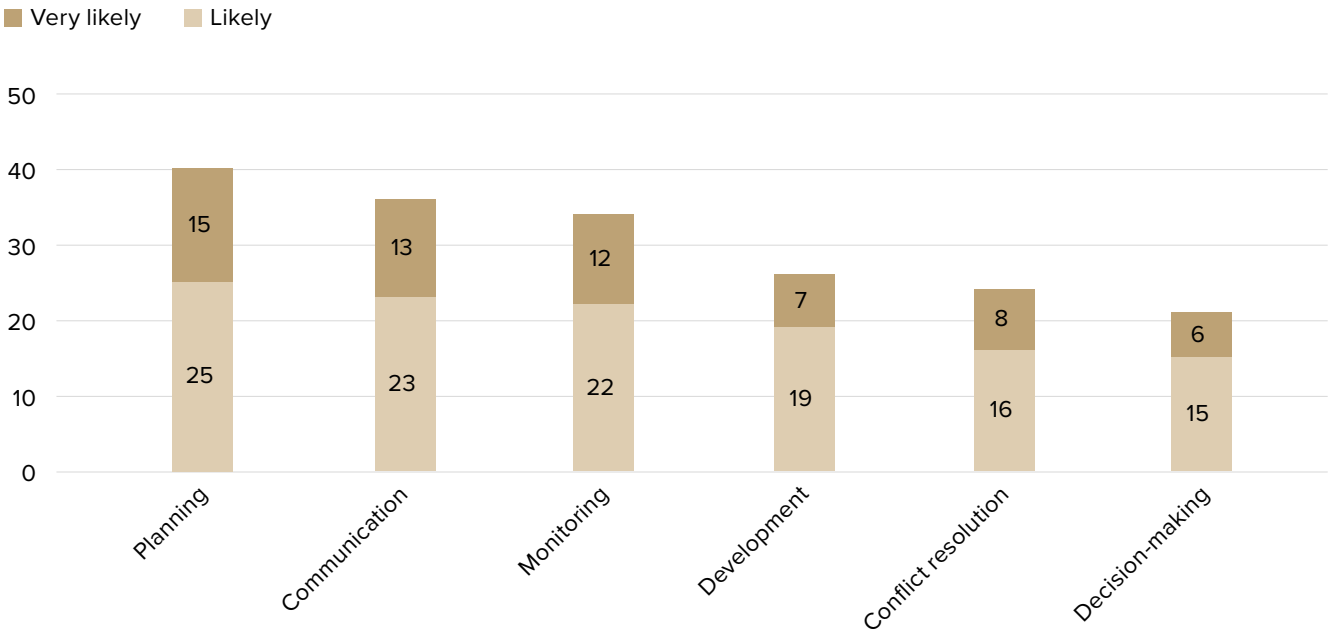
2.3 Expected Replacement of Leadership Tasks by AI

In addition to potential AI use in leadership tasks, the survey also examined expectations regarding the complete replacement of leadership tasks by AI. Managers are more skeptical about full replacement than about the use of AI as a supportive tool. Nonetheless, nearly 40 percent of managers believe that AI could completely replace planning tasks; around 36 percent believe it could replace communication, and 34 percent believe it could replace monitoring tasks (see Figure 3). Significantly fewer executives expect a complete replacement in more complex leadership areas (development: 26 percent; conflict resolution: 24 percent; decision-making: 21 percent).

Overall, managers who can envision a general use of AI in leadership tasks – or who already use AI – also appear more able to imagine the complete replacement of individual leadership tasks. However, because a large proportion of managers remain skeptical about AI use overall, the prospect of full replacement is viewed with particular caution.

These findings underscore the continued relevance of human judgment in complex management contexts. Managers primarily perceive AI as a supportive tool rather than a complete substitute for leadership. At the same time, the results indicate that considerable potential for expanded AI use remains across many leadership domains.

Figure 3 | Potential for AI to Replace Leadership Tasks



Shown in percent
Question: Please indicate how likely it is that the following tasks could be replaced by AI in the future ..., N = 1,000, very likely and likely

Source: Liz Mohn Foundation 2025

3 AI ACCEPTANCE AND IMPACT ON ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

The following chapter highlights how managers assess the opportunities and risks associated with AI and the effects they expect it to have on organizational and leadership culture. It also examines the level of acceptance of AI within their organizations and their perceived "AI readiness." Finally, socio-demographic factors such as age and span of control are considered in order to highlight differences in AI use among managers.

3.1 Opportunities and Risks: AI in the Context of Organizational Culture

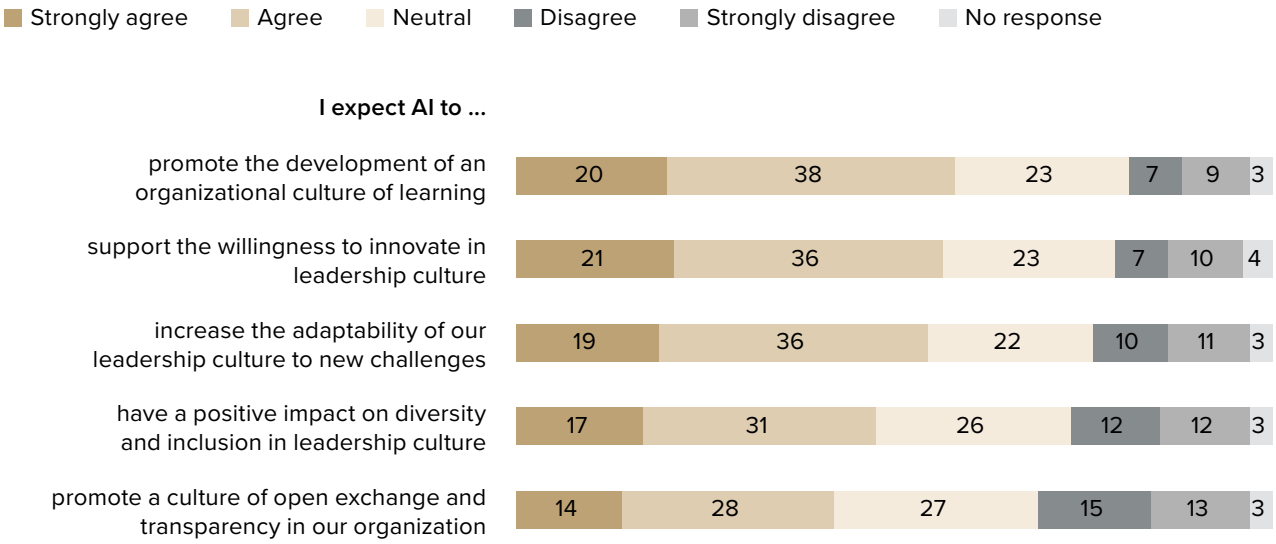
While findings on the current and potential use of AI in leadership tasks primarily provide insights into functional areas of application, an examination of opportunities and risks reveals another equally crucial perspective: the influence of AI on organizational culture. Beyond efficiency gains and technical feasibility, the question arises as to how AI shapes values, norms, and cooperation within organizations – and what long-term cultural developments this may produce.

The majority of managers see significant opportunities for AI to promote a learning-oriented organizational culture and to support a willingness to innovate within leadership culture. They are also convinced that AI increases the adaptability of leadership culture to new challenges (see Figure 4). These positive expectations emphasize the potential of AI to foster a forward-looking organizational and leadership culture that promotes innovation.

At the same time, however, there are notable concerns. Most managers fear that AI could contribute to a culture of surveillance and control and lead to increased dependency on technology. There are also concerns that emotional intelligence and the human component of leadership may become less important (see Figure 5). These perceptions reflect widespread uncertainty about the extent to which new technologies may affect – and potentially undermine – the interpersonal dimensions of leadership. Such concerns represent a significant barrier to innovation and help explain the still relatively low level of AI use in leadership tasks.

Overall, the findings indicate that realizing the potential of AI in leadership requires active shaping by managers and their organizations. It is essential to create conditions that build trust, reduce fears, and mitigate risks. The objective is to foster a learning culture that encourages innovation and leverages new opportunities without devolving into one characterized by surveillance and control. In this context, regulatory frameworks must be designed to provide security while avoiding excessive bureaucracy that could hinder innovation (see also Chapter 5: Recommendations).

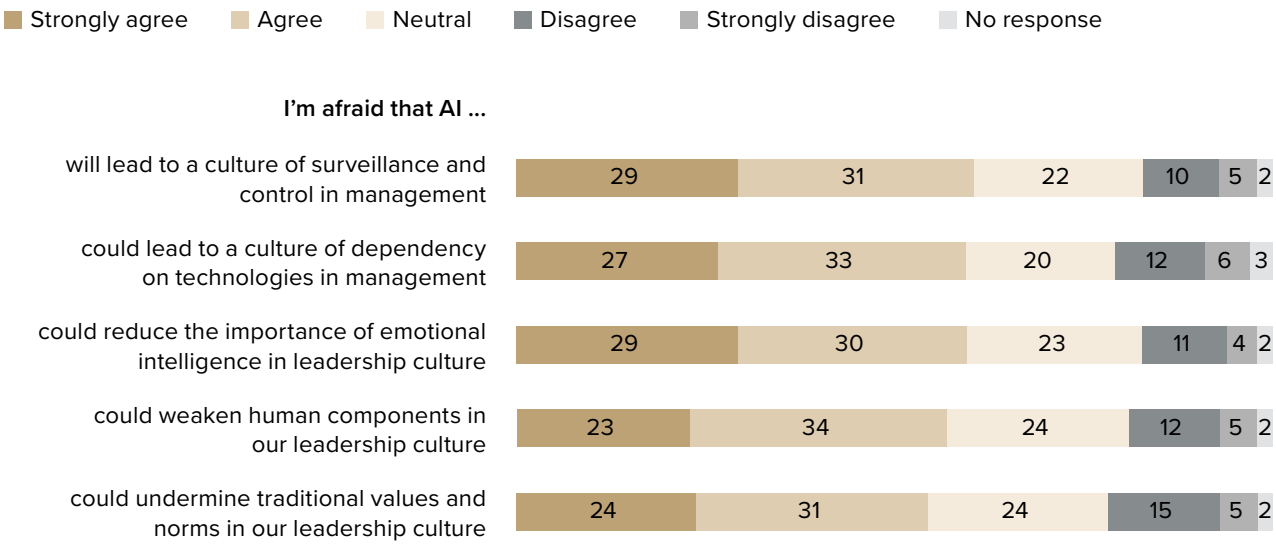
Figure 4 | Expectations of AI in terms of Organizational and Leadership Culture



Shown in percent
Question: Here, we are interested in your expectations regarding a possible change in management culture. – I expect AI to ..., N = 1,000

Source: Liz Mohn Foundation 2025

Figure 5 | Fears about AI in terms of Organizational and Leadership Culture



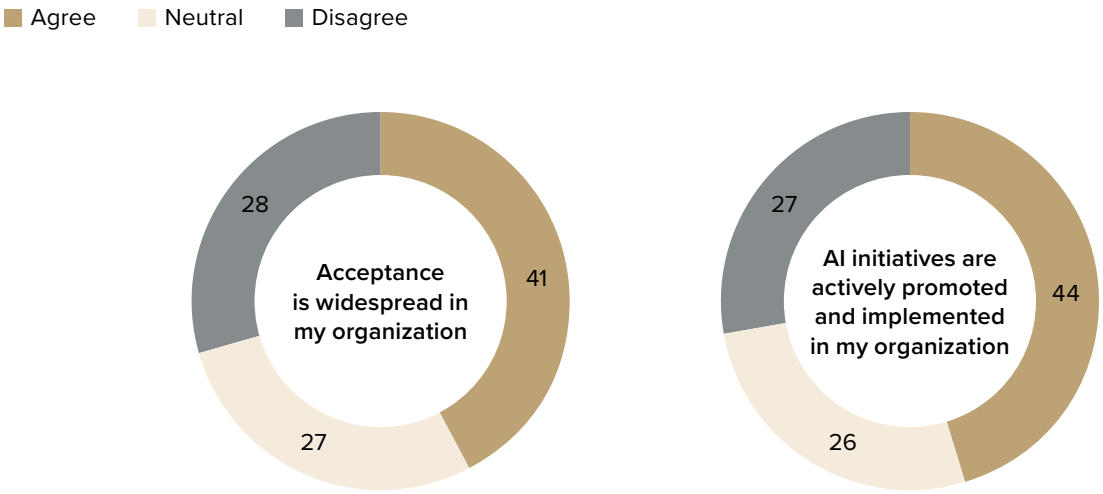
Shown in percent
Question: Here we are interested in your expectations regarding a possible change in leadership culture. – I'm afraid that AI ..., N = 1,000

Source: Liz Mohn Foundation 2025

3.2 Acceptance and AI Readiness of Organizations

Managers have a mixed perception of the AI readiness of their own organizations. Just over 40 percent of executives see widespread acceptance of AI, as well as active promotion and implementation of AI initiatives in their organizations (see Figure 6).

Figure 6 | Acceptance and Promotion of AI in Own Organization



Shown in percent
Question: We would like to know to what extent you think your organization is ready to deal with AI. Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements., N = 1,000

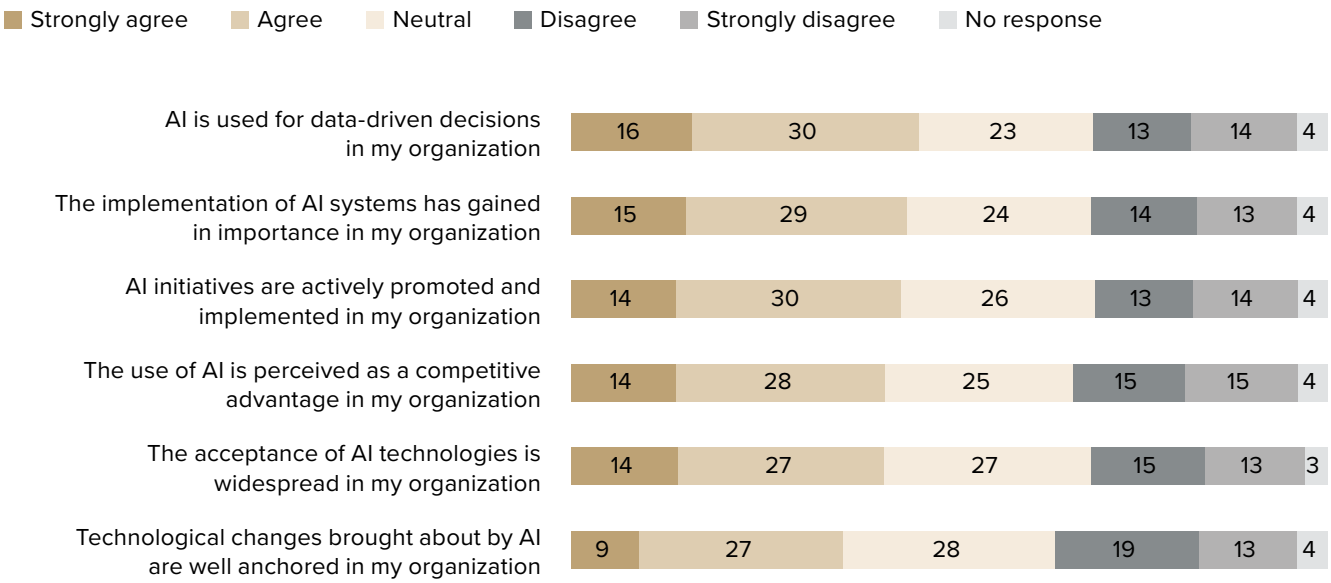
Source: Liz Mohn Foundation 2025

Additionally, in many organizations, AI is used for data-driven decision-making (46 percent). Forty-four percent of managers report that AI integration has gained significance in their organizations and is perceived as a competitive advantage (42 percent).

Executives are more skeptical regarding how well AI is integrated into their organizations. Approximately one third assume that AI is well anchored, while another third assume that it is not well anchored.

What is striking is the consistent rejection of AI in nearly 30 percent of organizations. Managers in these organizations do not perceive widespread acceptance of AI (28 percent) or the active promotion and implementation of AI initiatives (27 percent). Furthermore, respondents indicate that AI is not used for data-driven decisions in their organizations (27 percent), has not gained in importance (27 percent), and is not perceived as a competitive advantage (30 percent) (see Figure 7).

Figure 7 | AI Readiness of Own Organization



Shown in percent
Question: We would like to know to what extent you think your organization is prepared to deal with AI. Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements: N = 1,000

Source: Liz Mohn Foundation 2025

The analysis also shows that acceptance of AI is more robust when it is applied in less traditional areas, such as personnel development. This broader application fosters increased trust, as AI is perceived as a means of improving organizational culture, promoting diversity, and supporting transparent decision-making processes. Inclusive AI systems that promote diversity and are communicated clearly and transparently also enjoy higher levels of acceptance. These findings underscore the need for clear communication strategies and inclusive approaches when integrating AI systems into organizations.

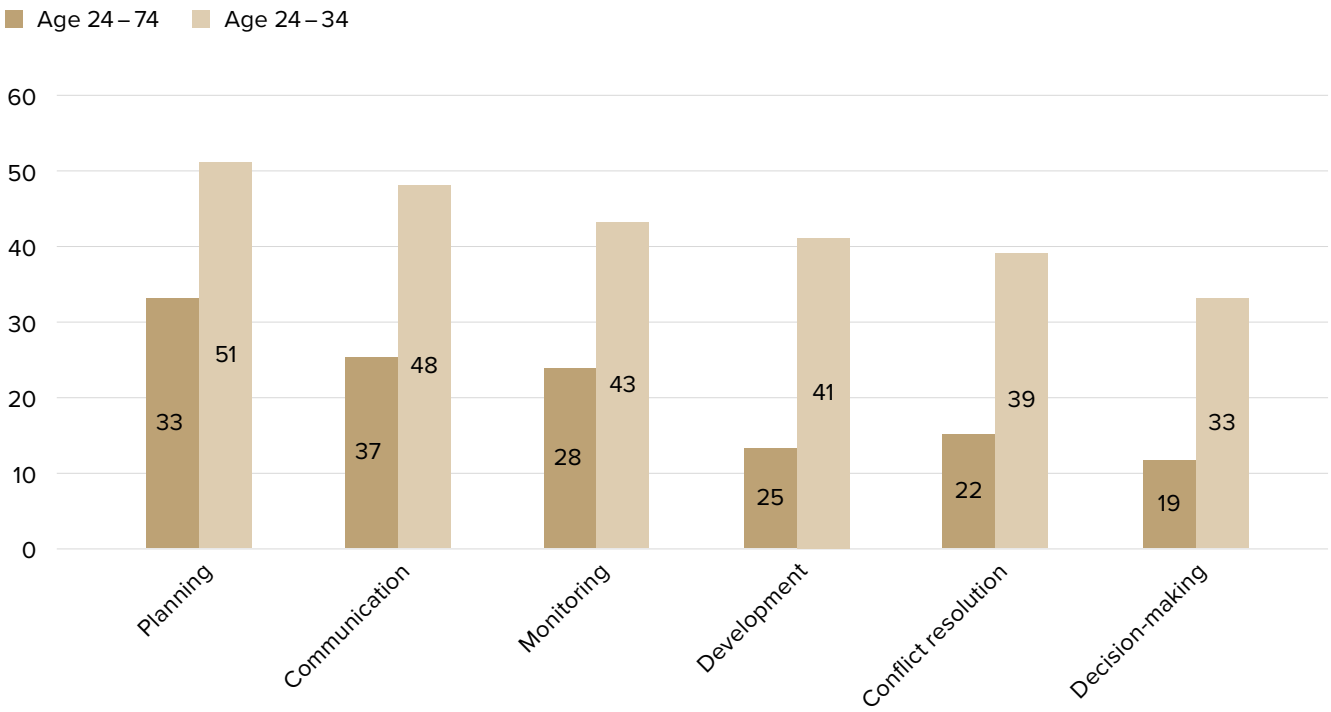
Overall, the findings indicate that organizations and companies in Germany are still far from being AI-ready. Although many organizations are already actively using AI and view it as a competitive advantage, a comparable number continue to refuse its acceptance, promotion, and use.

This reluctance reflects a broader pattern: according to the Ipsos Global Trends study (2024), only 35 percent of Germans believe that AI will make their jobs easier, compared to 50 percent worldwide. The skepticism of German executives is therefore consistent with a generally cautious attitude toward AI.

3.2.1 Age and Gender

A detailed analysis reveals further explanatory patterns that can be attributed to socio-demographic differences. Younger managers are far more open to AI-integration than their older counterparts. Figure 8 shows the current use of AI among young executives aged between 24 to 34 compared to the overall sample group.

Figure 8 | Current use of AI by young managers (24 – 34 years) compared to the overall sample (24 – 74 years)



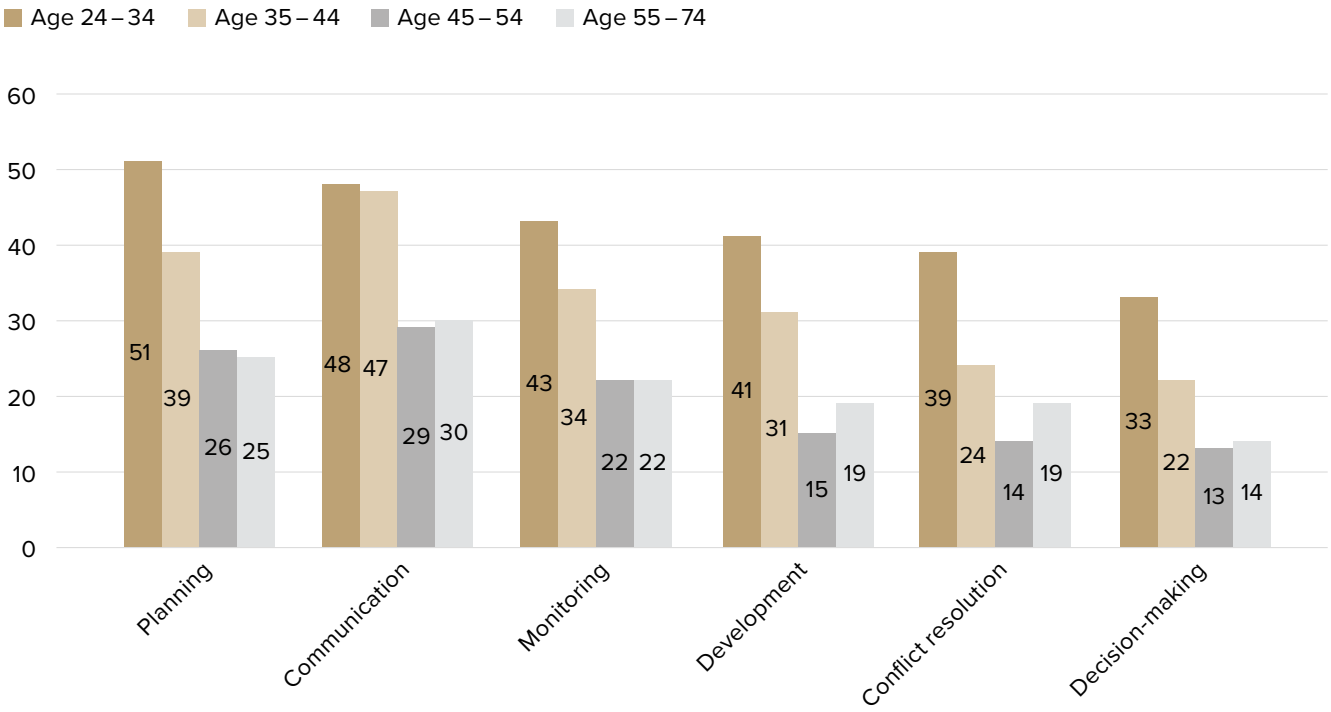
Shown in percent
Question: Please indicate how often you use AI in the following activities. 24–34: n = 153, 24–74: N = 1,000, very often and often

Source: Liz Mohn Foundation 2025

This pattern may be attributed, among other factors, to greater acceptance of technology among younger managers. Having grown up with digital technologies, they are more willing to experiment with new tools. They also view the use of AI as an opportunity to establish themselves professionally and secure competitive advantages. Older executives, by contrast, tend to be more risk-averse and to weigh potential negative consequences more carefully.

Both the current and potential use of AI is significantly higher among executives aged 24 to 34, and, to a lesser extent, among those aged 35 to 44 than among managers aged 45 to 54 and 55 to 74 (see Figure 9). Currently, around half of managers aged 24 to 34 use AI for planning and communication, while the potential future use is expected to be significantly higher.

Figure 9 | Current Use of AI by Age and Management Task



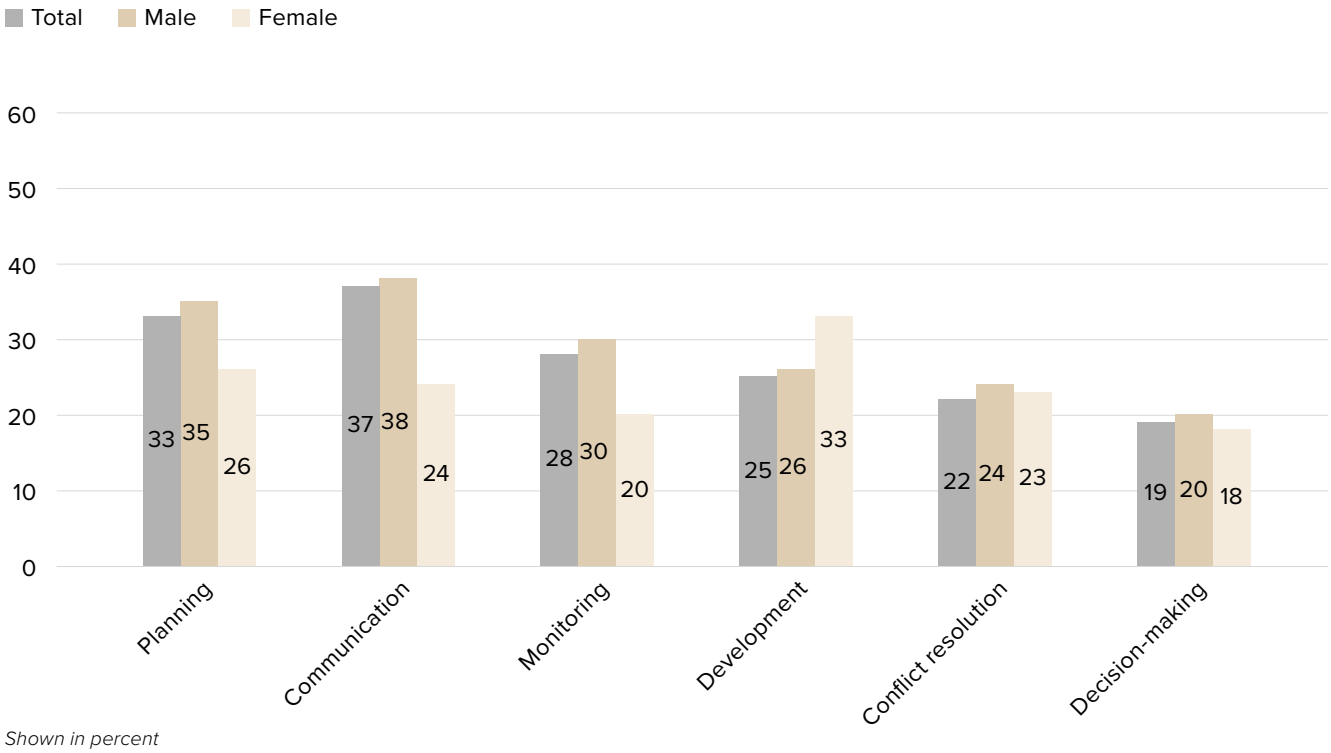
Shown in percent
Question: Please indicate how often you use AI in the following activities. 24–34: n = 153, 35–44: n = 258, 45–54: n = 251, 55–74: n = 338, very often and often

Source: Liz Mohn Foundation 2025

There is also a noticeable increase in AI acceptance with regard to complex leadership tasks; for example, almost 40 percent of managers aged 24 to 34 currently use AI for conflict resolution.

Gender differences are also evident: male managers tend to use AI more frequently than female managers (see Figure 10). Diverging approaches to technology and differing perceptions of risk may help explain this pattern. Women often place greater emphasis on risks such as bias, loss of control, or ethical concerns and are therefore more cautious in their use of AI. Moreover, men tend to overestimate their own digital competence, while women are more self-critical despite demonstrating comparable levels of competence. However, a more cautious approach can also represent an opportunity, as it may encourage more thoughtful and responsible integration of AI into leadership tasks.

Figure 10 | Current Use of AI by Gender



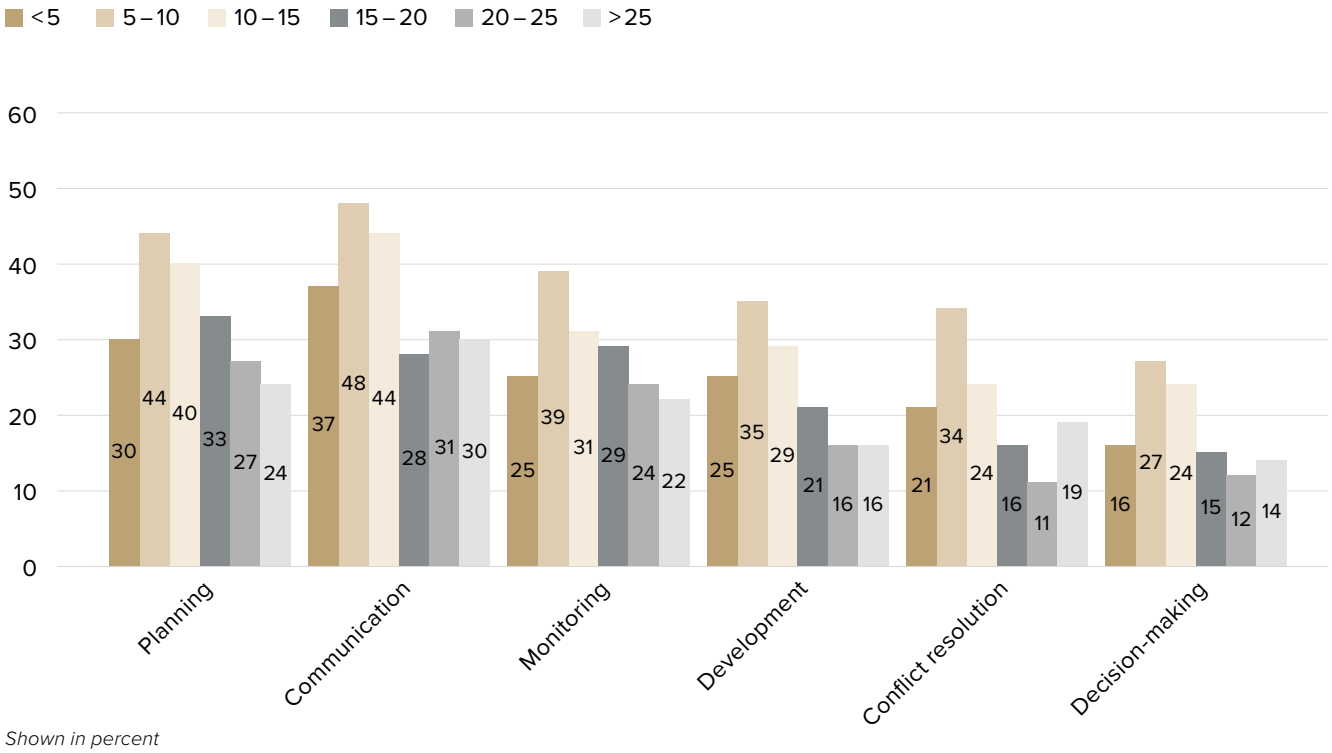
Shown in percent
Question: Please indicate how often you use AI in the following activities. Female: n = 300, Male: n = 700, very often and often

Source: Liz Mohn Foundation 2025

3.2.2 Disciplinary Leadership Experience and Span of Control

The findings show that the use of AI varies according to disciplinary leadership experience (see Figure 11). Managers with five to ten years of experience are most likely to use AI in their tasks – around 48 percent in communication and 44 percent in planning. As experience increases, usage tends to decline, particularly among those with more than 20 years of leadership experience. Managers at the beginning of their careers (less than five years of experience) tend to use AI less frequently than those with moderate experience, but still more frequently than experienced colleagues. Overall, this suggests that AI use is most prevalent during the mid-career stage, while greater experience is associated with a more conservative approach. Accordingly, management experience does not appear to be a key determinant of AI use.

Figure 11 | Current Use of AI by Disciplinary Leadership Experience (in Years)

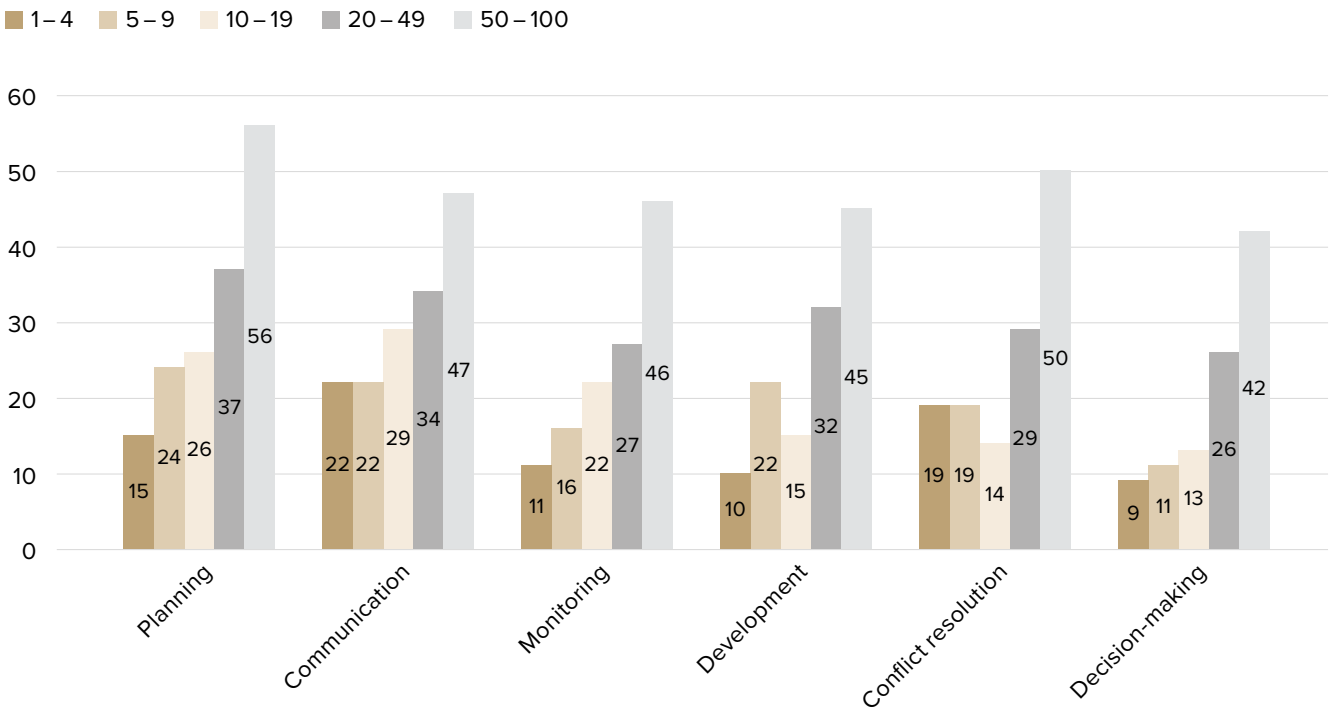


Shown in percent
Question: Please indicate how often you use AI in the following activities. <5 years of disciplinary leadership experience: n = 163, 5–10: n = 225, 10–15: n = 162, 15–20: n = 107, 20–25: n = 108, >25: n = 27, Don't know: n = 108, very often and often

Source: Liz Mohn Foundation 2025

On the other hand, span of control appears to have a significant influence on AI use. The data show that AI use increases significantly as the number of employees directly managed by an executive grows (see Figure 12). Greater managerial oversight is therefore more frequently associated with AI use, suggesting that AI is more strongly integrated into leadership tasks in larger organizations with more complex structures. This indicates that AI is already being used more routinely in large corporations, whereas small and medium-sized enterprises still have some catching up to do.

Figure 12 | Current Use of AI by Span of Control



Shown in percent
Question: Please indicate how often you use AI in the following activities. 1–4 employees directly managed by the executive: n = 158, 5–9: n = 170, 10–19: n = 201, 20–49: n = 180, 50–100: n = 187, No employees: n = 104, very often and often

Source: Liz Mohn Foundation 2025

3.2.3 Perception of AI as a Strategic Competitive Advantage

A key finding of the study is that the perception of AI as a strategic competitive advantage significantly increases its acceptance within organizations. Organizations that clearly position AI as a key element in achieving a strategic advantage enjoy significantly greater AI acceptance among their managers. This underlines how important it is for managers to communicate and act on the strategic importance of AI in their department and across the entire organization. In this context, careful preparation for the introduction of AI plays a crucial role. Promoting AI initiatives and strategically integrating technological changes support the transition to AI-based processes and promote their acceptance.

4 CONCLUSION: BETWEEN POTENTIAL AND SKEPTICISM

The aim of the study was to examine how leadership tasks are changing in the age of artificial intelligence – what opportunities are emerging, what limitations are becoming apparent, and how managers understand and shape AI's role in the future.

The findings show that while AI has reached management, it is largely not yet integrated into leadership tasks. To date, artificial intelligence has been used mainly for standardized leadership activities, such as planning and communication, with around one third of respondents reporting regular AI use. However, executives remain reluctant to integrate AI into more complex tasks such as decision-making, development, or conflict resolution. The results indicate that a lack of trust, concerns about bias, and the still irreplaceable role of human judgment prevent deeper integration.

This distinction strongly shapes how executives assess the potential use cases for AI. While they recognize its potential in clearly structured tasks, complex responsibilities are expected to continue to rely on human competencies. Only a small minority view the complete replacement of leadership responsibilities as a realistic possibility. Overall, AI is currently perceived as a supportive tool rather than a substitute in management.

AI therefore remains ambivalent for organizational and leadership culture. On the one hand, it opens opportunities for innovation and learning; on the other, it raises fears about surveillance and the loss of human competence and interaction. This is reflected in practice: while around 40 percent of organizations actively promote AI, just under 30 percent consistently refuse to use it. German companies are therefore still a long way from fully realizing their AI readiness.

Sociodemographic differences reinforce this picture. Younger managers tend to be more open, experimental, and more likely to use AI, while older executives are more cautious, more sensitive to risk, and place greater emphasis on potential disadvantages. Thus far, men have been slightly more likely to use AI, whereas women tend to take a more critical view of its risks – an approach that may, in turn, promote more careful and reflective integration. The results also show that the wider an executive's span of control, the more likely AI is to be used for leadership tasks. Organizations that clearly position AI as a competitive advantage also enjoy higher levels of acceptance.

Overall, the study demonstrates that AI is steadily entering management, but its integration remains characterized by ambivalence – between evident potential and lingering reservations. Looking ahead, it will be crucial for managers to build trust in technology, incorporate diverse perspectives into the integration process, and understand their role as active agents of change. Management in the age of AI means harnessing the efficiency gains of technological systems without losing sight of the human core of management: empathy, judgment, and responsibility.

5 RECOMMENDATIONS: AI AS THE KEY TO SUCCESSFUL LEADERSHIP

The findings of this study illustrate how the use of AI requires not only technical, but also cultural and structural changes. Based on these insights, key implications for managers, organizations, and society can be formulated, as outlined below.

5.1 Implications for Managers

The introduction of artificial intelligence into organizations requires managers to fundamentally rethink how they understand their role as leaders and how they carry out their responsibilities.

Traditional leadership tasks must be examined in order to identify opportunities for AI integration or even replacement. Such reflection creates transparency and helps clarify where human judgment remains irreplaceable and where it may become redundant. The findings demonstrate that certain leadership tasks are increasingly becoming replaceable and should encourage managers to critically examine and reimagine their own role. Why, after all, should the transformation of the world of work affect only employees and not leadership roles as well?

A conscious decision must also be made regarding how best to use the time and resource gains generated by AI. It is the responsibility of management to make meaningful use of these new freedoms, whether by creating more space for strategic thinking, employee development, innovation, or societal engagement. Deciding where to invest human resources therefore makes it crucial to identify which tasks will continue to be performed exclusively by humans in the future – or may even gain in importance – such as leading through inspiration and values, resolving conflicts, or fostering creativity and empathy.

AI integration thus requires not only technical expertise, but also conscious reorientation. Executives must actively shape and adapt their role in line with the tasks they wish to remain responsible for in the future. This shift offers an opportunity to align leadership more closely with the qualities that make organizations human, resilient, and future-proof in the digital age.

To fulfill this role, managers should develop their data literacy, strengthen ethical leadership skills, and build a solid foundational understanding of AI systems. Only in this way can executives realistically assess opportunities, critically examine risks, and successfully shape the integration of AI. They should consciously understand their role as architects of change – not merely as users of AI, but as active drivers of transformation within their organizations.

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5.2 Implications for Organizations

The introduction of artificial intelligence brings efficiency gains and cost savings for organizations, but also profound changes to management structures and self-perceptions. The possibility that individual leadership tasks or even entire management positions could be replaced by AI has considerable potential to create uncertainty, both among employees and managers themselves. To prevent this uncertainty from leading to blockages, resistance, or fear, clear communication about the goals, benefits, and limitations of AI is essential. It is crucial that organizations do not view this transformation purely as a rationalization process, but rather as an opportunity for further development.

A central benefit of AI also gives rise to a key question: what should be done with the time and resources that are freed up? Organizations that successfully leverage these resources can devote more energy to innovation and creativity. Rather than viewing human resources solely as a "cost factor," AI integration makes it possible to deploy people where their unique skills are most needed – particularly in tasks requiring empathy, social intelligence, and creative drive. In this way, AI does not become a threat, but rather a lever for better and more human-centered cooperation.

For this to succeed, organizations must cultivate a culture that takes fears and uncertainties seriously and addresses them openly. Concerns about losing relevance or even one's job are understandable, but they can be transformed into a constructive and open attitude toward AI through transparent dialogue formats, opportunities for participation, and continuous training. The aim should be to create framework conditions that promote trust and enable the constructive use of AI – without slowing progress through excessive regulation or bureaucratic hurdles that create barriers to innovation. When managers lead by example as architects of change, provide orientation, and demonstrate the benefits of AI in relation to shared goals, trust can emerge. The transition to AI-supported organizations therefore requires not only technical solutions, but above all clear value-based leadership and the active shaping of future visions in which people remain at the center.

It is also crucial that AI be anchored as a strategic component of organizational development. Organizations that view AI as a competitive advantage and communicate this consistently have been shown to achieve higher levels of acceptance. At the same time, they should consciously address the ambivalence associated with AI: opportunities for innovation and a culture of learning on the one hand, and concerns about surveillance, loss of control, or erosion of human qualities on the other. Open communication about both benefits and limitations, as well as targeted support for different groups of managers – for example through training programs or participatory formats – can help build trust. Organizations should also promote an inclusive and transparent AI culture, for instance through pilot projects and the inclusion of diverse perspectives. This not only increases trust in AI systems, but also supports diversity, fairness, and acceptance within the workforce.

5.3 Implications for Society

The implications of AI are not limited to business but have far-reaching impacts on society as well. In particular, the relationship between employers and employees will need to be rebalanced. Intensive dialogue with social partners is essential in order to reshape this relationship in a constructive and sustainable manner. AI is fundamentally changing the logic of the division of labor, responsibilities, and value creation – and thus also the expectations placed on managers and employees. This development requires shared guidelines that provide security and orientation and strengthen social cohesion.

At the same time, this phenomenon is leading to a fundamental shift in the understanding of leadership. As traditional leadership tasks are increasingly supported or replaced by AI, the question arises as to what constitutes leadership: the control of processes, or the ability to inspire, create meaning, and assume social responsibility? This inevitable redefinition of leadership must be discussed not only within organizations, but across society as a whole, as it affects the understanding of leaders as role models and sources of orientation in times of uncertainty and upheaval.

Through successful AI integration, managers gain the opportunity to devote greater capacity to areas that are central to the functioning of democracy and the common good, such as strengthening civil society structures, promoting dialogue and participation, or actively defending democratic values. In doing so, they can become contributors to a vibrant and responsible society that extends beyond the boundaries of their own organizations.

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APPENDIX

Methodology

The findings of this study are based on an online survey conducted by the Liz Mohn Foundation in January 2025. 1,000 executives from the worlds of business, politics, and culture aged between 24 and 74 were interviewed, of whom 30 percent were women and 70 percent were men. The average age is 47.9 years. The respondents are divided into top, middle, and lower management levels, are responsible for different numbers of employees, and have different levels of disciplinary leadership experience (see info box). Two thirds of the managers are employed in business, mainly in industry, trade, construction, real estate, IT, and finance.

Initially, the data were evaluated descriptively; in addition, a random forest analysis was used to identify complex relationships between the variables and the most important factors influencing the use of AI in leadership tasks. The study thus provides both an overview of the current state of AI integration and in-depth insights into key influencing factors.

Overview

Survey period: January 2025 (online survey)

1,000 executives from business, politics, and culture

Age: 24 – 74 years (Ø 47.9 years)

Gender: 30 percent women, 70 percent men

Management level: 16 percent top, 53 percent middle, 31 percent lower

Scope of responsibility: 33 percent up to 9 employees, 20 percent 10 – 19, 33 percent more than 20, 10 percent without direct employees

Disciplinary leadership experience: 39 percent under 10 years, 27 percent 10 – 20 years, 24 percent over 20 years

Data analysis: Descriptive evaluation + random forest analysis

All percentages in the document have been rounded to whole numbers; rounding differences are possible.

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Liz Mohn Stiftung

The non-profit Liz Mohn Foundation's projects are grouped into the following program areas: International Relations, Creating Leadership Cultures, Power of Culture, and Global Talents. One of Liz Mohn's and the foundation's heartfelt concerns is building bridges of understanding across languages and borders in order to bring people of different nations, cultures, professions and positions, as well as from different generations, into dialogue with each other. The foundation continues the activities of the Liz Mohn Center gGmbH and the Liz Mohn Cultural and Music Foundation within an independent institution.

For more information:
www.liz-mohn-stiftung.de

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