ensono®

SPEAK UP 2026

Scaling new heights. Setting new terms.

AI's gains have come at a price for women in tech. They're responding with unstoppable ambition and a new vision of sustainable success.



Your essential ally
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Introduction

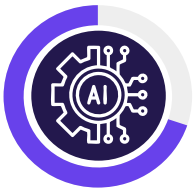
AI is reshaping the careers of women in tech, creating new opportunities alongside new workplace pressures. AI-driven efficiency is boosting productivity, but it's also raising workload expectations — just as many employers are requiring more time in the office.

To better understand how women in tech are navigating these changes, Ensono surveyed 1,500 full-time female-identifying technology professionals across the U.S., U.K., and India.

The sixth annual 2026 Speak Up survey shows that women are embracing AI, building new skills, and remaining highly ambitious. But it also reveals that higher expectations, widespread burnout, and evolving career priorities are reshaping what support women need from employers.

Key findings

70%



rate their AI knowledge and skills as advanced or expert, with the share calling themselves AI experts nearly doubling since 2024.

97%

identify at least one career benefit from AI.



62%



say AI has made their workload more manageable, but **42%** say they're now expected to produce more work in less time.

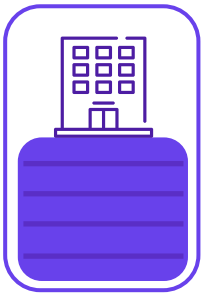
87%

report experiencing some level of burnout.



53%

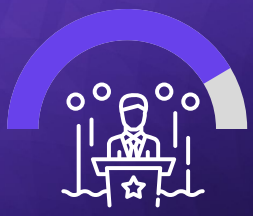
say their organizations require more in-office days than they did a year ago.



49% & **48%**

Nearly half say building skills **(49%)** and maintaining work-life balance **(48%)** have become bigger career priorities.

83%



aspire to executive leadership roles.

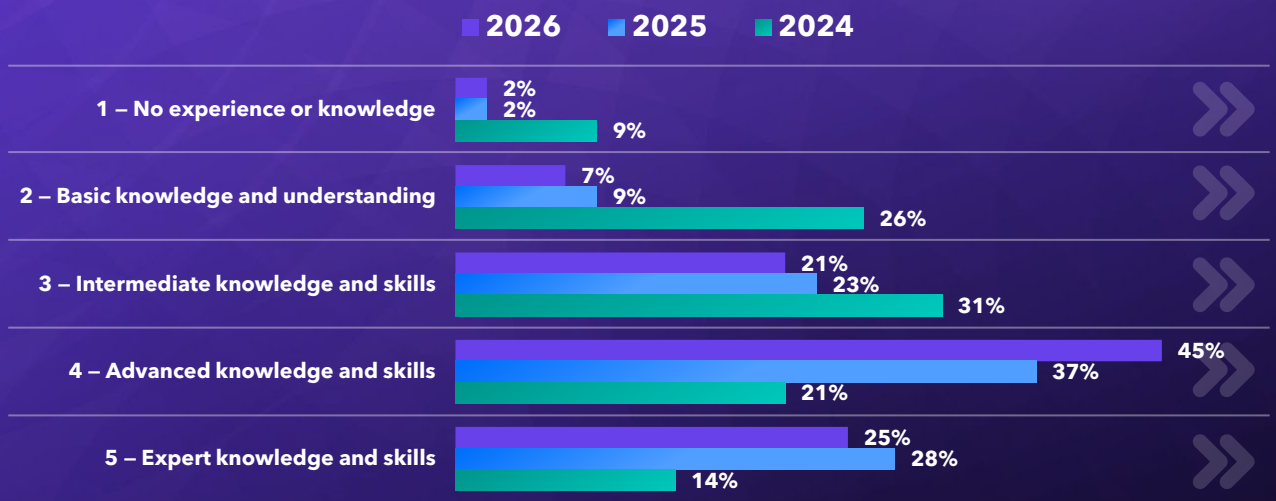
AI is creating opportunities but also raising expectations

AI has become embedded in the everyday work of women in tech. What began as learning how to use generative AI has evolved into applying it confidently across increasingly complex responsibilities. Nearly four in five respondents now rate their AI knowledge and skills as advanced or expert.

In fact, the percentage of women in tech who rate themselves as AI experts has nearly doubled over the past two years, **increasing from 14% in 2024 to 25% in 2026 [Fig. 1]**. But as AI creates new opportunities, it's also changing what employers expect from their workforce.

[Fig. 1] ensono

Self-rated generative AI knowledge and skills (2026 vs. 2025 vs. 2024)



Organizations are helping women develop new AI skills, but support is uneven

Even as AI expertise grows, respondents recognize that keeping pace with AI will require continuous learning. More than four in 10 (43%) say their biggest concern is needing to constantly develop new skills to remain competitive.

Organizations are helping fuel that progress. More than three-quarters of respondents (78%) say their employer is actively supporting employees as AI becomes a larger part of everyday work. However, that support varies by work environment. Just 69% of remote employees say their employer actively supports AI adoption, versus 80% of hybrid and 78% of in-person respondents.

43% say their biggest AI concern is needing to constantly develop new skills to remain competitive.

Regional differences are also pronounced. Respondents in India report the strongest organizational support, with 87% saying their employer actively helps employees adapt to AI tools, compared to 76% in the U.K. and 72% in the U.S.

Women are also increasingly influencing how AI is adopted. Nearly half (46%) say women play a leading role in shaping AI tools and strategy at their organization, while another 43% say women contribute to AI decisions without typically serving in leadership roles.

Who's leading – and falling behind – in AI readiness?

India leads AI adoption: 80% of respondents in India rate their AI knowledge as advanced or expert, compared to 67% in the U.S. and 64% in the U.K.

Millennials are the most AI-confident generation: 75% rate their AI knowledge as advanced or expert, compared to 68% of Gen Z, 60% of Gen X, and 52% of baby boomers.

Remote employees lag behind: Only 53% of remote respondents rate their AI knowledge as advanced or expert, versus 73% of hybrid and 70% of in-person respondents. This could be due to uneven organizational support: Remote employees are less likely to say their employer actively supports AI adoption, compared with hybrid and in-person employees (see above).

AI is helping women advance their careers, but also adding new demands

AI is creating tangible career benefits beyond efficiency. Nearly every respondent (97%) identifies at least one meaningful benefit from AI. Helping produce higher-quality work (49%) and helping learn new skills more quickly (45%) rank highest. Most women say AI has made work more manageable (62%) and nearly half (47%) say it has made their responsibilities more strategic **[Fig. 2]**.

But greater efficiency doesn't always translate into less work. More than two in five respondents (42%) say they're expected to produce more work in less time because of AI. That suggests productivity gains are quickly setting new performance expectations rather than simply reducing workloads.

[Fig. 2] ensono

How AI tools have impacted workloads over the past year

# 01	62%	My workload has become more manageable
# 02	47%	My responsibilities have become more strategic
# 03	42%	I am expected to produce more work in less time
# 04	17%	My workload has become more overwhelming
# 05	8%	AI tools have not significantly impacted my workload

Key takeaways:

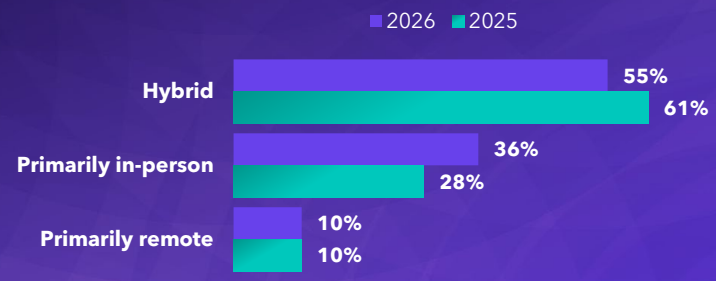
- Women in tech have rapidly developed AI expertise, and most say their organizations actively support AI adoption.
- AI is making work more manageable and strategic for many respondents, but it has also increased expectations to produce more work in less time. Employers should ensure that AI-driven productivity gains promote sustainable workloads rather than setting unrealistic performance expectations.

Burnout is the cost of constantly increasing work demands

> **The workplace continues shifting back toward in-person work.**

[Fig. 3] ensono

Work model among women in tech (2026 vs. 2025)



Hybrid remains the most common work model, with 55% of respondents reporting a combination of in-person and remote work. But at the same time, the share working primarily in person has increased to 36%, up from 28% last year [**Fig. 3**].

More than half of respondents (53%) say their organization requires more in-office days than it did a year ago. The trend is consistent across regions, with roughly half of respondents in India (58%), the U.S. (51%) and the U.K. (50%) reporting increased in-office requirements.

The return to the office is only one part of the pressure women report experiencing. For many women in tech, in-office expectations are increasing alongside rising workloads, caregiving responsibilities, and constant pressure to adapt to new technologies.



Women see in-office face time as important for career advancement

As organizations increase in-office requirements, visibility appears increasingly tied to career growth. More than nine in 10 women in tech (92%) agree that being visible in person is important for career advancement, including 52% who strongly agree.

That perception is strongest at organizations that have fully returned to the office. Nearly two-thirds (63%) of respondents working primarily in person strongly agree that in-person visibility matters for career advancement, compared to 45% of hybrid employees.

In-office work resurfaces old challenges, especially for caregivers

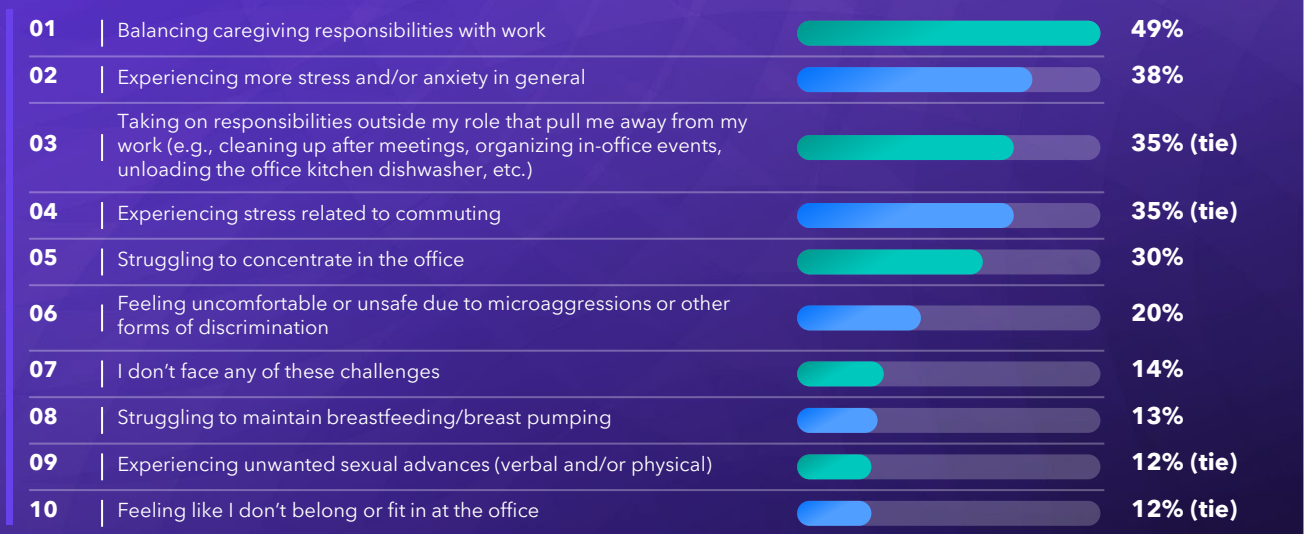
While greater in-person visibility may create career opportunities, it doesn't eliminate the practical challenges of working in the office. Nearly half of respondents (49%) continue to struggle balancing caregiving responsibilities with work, making it the top challenge associated with in-person work for the second consecutive year **[Fig. 4]**.

Hybrid employees report greater caregiving challenges than their in-person peers, with 54% citing this issue compared to 42% of primarily in-person respondents.

Beyond caregiving, respondents also say in-person work contributes to increased stress and anxiety (38%), more responsibilities outside their formal roles (35%), commuting stress (35%) and difficulty concentrating in the office (30%).

[Fig. 4]: ensono

Top challenges with in-person work



Workplace pressures vary by region

Respondents in India are also more likely to strongly agree that in-person visibility matters for career advancement (62%) than those in the U.S. (48%) or U.K. (45%).

6 in 10 Indian women (61%) reporting caregiving challenges versus 46% in the U.S. and 39% in the U.K.

Higher expectations may drive higher rates of burnout

These pressures appear to be taking a cumulative toll. Nearly nine in 10 women in tech (87%) report experiencing at least some level of burnout, with 60% describing themselves as moderately, very, or extremely burned out.

When asked what contributes most to burnout, respondents point to increasing workplace expectations rather than any single policy. Producing more work in less time (36%), feeling pressure to always be available (34%), and balancing caregiving responsibilities (32%) rank as the leading contributors.

Key takeaway:

- Returning to the office is only one factor shaping the employee experience. For many women in tech, rising expectations extend beyond where they work to include expectations to produce more work in less time, caregiving responsibilities, and constant pressure to adapt.
- Organizations should view burnout as more than an individual well-being issue. Addressing flexible work arrangements, caregiving support, and realistic performance expectations can help create more sustainable workplaces while improving retention.

Women don't see career success as one-size-fits-all

Leadership ambitions remain strong among women in tech. More than eight in 10 respondents (83%) say they aspire to advance into an executive leadership position, either within their current organization or elsewhere, virtually unchanged from last year. This aspiration is particularly strong in India, where 90% of respondents report wanting to reach executive leadership, compared to 83% in the U.K. and 75% in the U.S.

These findings suggest that high rates of burnout (see Section 2) don't extinguish women's ambition. However, they should be a reminder to employers that developing female leaders isn't just about offering clear pathways to leadership. It also means providing working environments that make those ambitions sustainable over the long term.

Different work models also align with different leadership ambitions. Less than half (45%) of remote respondents want to pursue executive leadership roles, compared to 87% of both hybrid and primarily in-person respondents. Given that women perceive in-office time as important to advancement (see Section 2), it's possible that employees who are less interested in leadership self-select into remote positions, or remote employees may simply find executive roles less accessible.

Career success doesn't always mean a promotion

While leadership remains an important goal, women are increasingly defining career success beyond advancement alone. Nearly half say building skills and expertise (49%) and maintaining work-life balance (48%) have become bigger priorities over the past year, followed by advancing into leadership roles (42%) and achieving long-term job stability (40%).

Those priorities are also reflected in what women value most at work today. Work-life balance ranks as the most important workplace factor (40%), followed by flexible working hours (32%). Feeling valued for their contributions and clear opportunities for advancement tie for third (29%).

Meanwhile, access to AI training and upskilling opportunities ranks alongside competitive compensation (24%), suggesting AI readiness is becoming an increasingly important part of the employee experience.

[Fig. 5]: ensono

Top workplace priorities at respondents' current career stage



For some women, opting out of executive roles is an intentional choice

Not every woman sees executive leadership as the right path. Among respondents who aren't pursuing leadership, satisfaction with their current role (43%) wins out over concerns about leadership stress (42%) as the top reason for opting out **[Fig. 6]**.

Preference for hands-on technical work also increased to 41%, up from 35% last year, while relatively few respondents cite a lack of confidence (11%) or skills (6%). These findings suggest many women are making more deliberate career choices rather than stepping away from leadership because of a perceived lack of readiness.

[Fig. 6] ensono

Top reasons for not pursuing executive leadership roles



Key takeaway:

- Women in tech continue to aspire to leadership, but they're increasingly defining career success on their own terms. Growth today means more than climbing the corporate ladder. It also includes developing new skills, maintaining work-life balance, and building long-term career sustainability.
- Organizations can better support and retain women in tech by creating multiple pathways for growth, whether through leadership development, technical career advancement, AI upskilling, or flexible work environments that enable long-term success.

Supporting women in tech means making career growth sustainable

Women in tech are embracing AI, building new skills, and pursuing ambitious career goals – even as workplace expectations rise, burnout persists, and definitions of success evolve.

To help women thrive amid these shifts, organizations must ensure pushes for AI-driven productivity gains are matched with realistic performance expectations and meaningful support, including flexible workplace policies and opportunities for continuous learning and career growth.

By creating environments where women can build AI expertise, advance on their own terms, and sustain long-term career success, organizations will be better positioned to attract, retain, and empower the talent shaping the future of technology.

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