

The White Collar exodus: One third of Knowledge Workers planning career exit due to AI fears

New research from Adaptavist finds 25% of career changers are considering moving into an industry less exposed to AI

LONDON, UNITED KINGDOM, June 16, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Businesses around the world are facing a massive "white collar exodus", as fears surrounding AI are driving knowledge workers to look for alternative professions, new research from digital transformation consultancy [Adaptavist](#) reveals.

The research, which surveyed 2,500 professionals across the UK, US, Canada, Germany and Spain, found that one in three (33%) are actively looking to change to a different industry due to fear of AI, with 25% specifically considering moving into an industry less exposed to AI, such as manual work.

This flight from white collar office roles is most pronounced among younger generations, with 41% of Gen Z and 37% of Millennials contemplating a career change due to AI-related anxiety.

While much of the focus of AI disruption has been on the impact on entry-level and graduate roles, these findings highlight a broader risk. With Millennials now making up a significant proportion of mid-level and senior talent, businesses face potential disruption not just to early careers pipelines, but to experienced roles that are critical for continuity, leadership, and future growth.

The drivers behind career departures

The move toward manual or 'AI-proof' roles is fuelled by a fear of displacement:

- Role obsolescence: 54% of workers are concerned that AI will reduce the need for their role within the next five years, and 40% worry AI will make their current role entirely obsolete.
- Expertise erosion: 46% feel frustrated that tasks requiring years of specialist expertise can now be done by almost anyone using AI tools.
- Devaluation: Nearly a quarter (23%) of workers explicitly feel their personal expertise is less valued by their organisation since the widespread adoption of AI.

The quality of the office environment is also contributing to the exodus. 39% of employees report they are struggling to keep up with the pace of change, while 48% feel overwhelmed by the constant 'AI Slop' of news and updates. This digital noise is leading to burnout, with 36% of workers actively reducing their use of AI tools due to 'AI fatigue'.

Retrain, reinvent, or retire

The research highlights a workforce at a crossroads. While 74% are actively learning new skills to stay relevant in their field, others are considering a more permanent exit. 34% of respondents said AI has made them think about retiring earlier than planned, and 11% intend to retire within the next 24 months.

This potential exodus poses a clear risk to enterprises. With 37% of workers reporting lower engagement and a quarter considering leaving their roles, businesses stand to lose significant expertise. However, [previous research from The Adaptavist Group](#) indicates that when AI is implemented with appropriate training and support, it can improve job satisfaction and deliver greater organisational value, suggesting that outcomes are closely tied to how the technology is introduced and adopted.

Neal Riley, Innovation Lead at The Adaptavist Group, commented: "This research shows that leaders can no longer afford to overlook the human impact of AI adoption. If introduced without clarity or support, AI risks undermining confidence in hard-earned skills and fuelling unnecessary fear about the future of work.

However, when implemented thoughtfully and transparently, AI has the potential to enhance roles, not diminish them, freeing people from repetitive tasks and enabling them to focus on more meaningful, high-value work. The priority for organisations now should be ensuring employees are equipped with the right training, context, and support to adapt.

This isn't about replacing people, but about designing ways of working where technology strengthens both performance and job satisfaction."

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Methodology: Research surveyed 2,500 knowledge workers from the UK, US, Canada, Spain, and Germany in March 2026. The research was conducted by Attest.

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Founded in 2005, we're a global provider of transformative solutions and a trusted partner to

Atlassian, [monday.com](https://www.monday.com), AWS, GitLab and many more. Our expert consultancy aligns strategy, platforms, and people with powerful tailored solutions that redefine how work is delivered and achieve sustained business outcomes.

Experts in cloud, service management, work management, DevOps, agile, and AI, we are the pioneer brand of The Adaptavist Group, a family of companies whose team spans over 1,000 employees, with a 22,000+ customer base representing more than half the Fortune 500. We combine the best talent, technology, and processes to make it easier for our customers to excel—today and tomorrow.

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