AI in Social Work Practice

Findings from a national survey of 1,179 U.S. social workers

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AI is already part of behavioral health practice

01

Already in the room

Chatbots support psychoeducation, symptom monitoring, crisis triage, and service navigation; machine learning can flag suicide risk earlier than screening.

02

The promise

Earlier identification of client needs, more efficient use of scarce resources, less administrative burden, and expanded access to support between sessions.

03

The risks

Threats to consent, privacy, and confidentiality; algorithmic bias; client surveillance; and harms that fall hardest on marginalized clients.

Source: Moritz Center & NASW AI Survey Report, June 2026

A first-of-its-kind national snapshot of AI use

Distributed by NASW, all 50 states represented

1,179

U.S. social workers surveyed

October 2025 – February 2026

Who responded

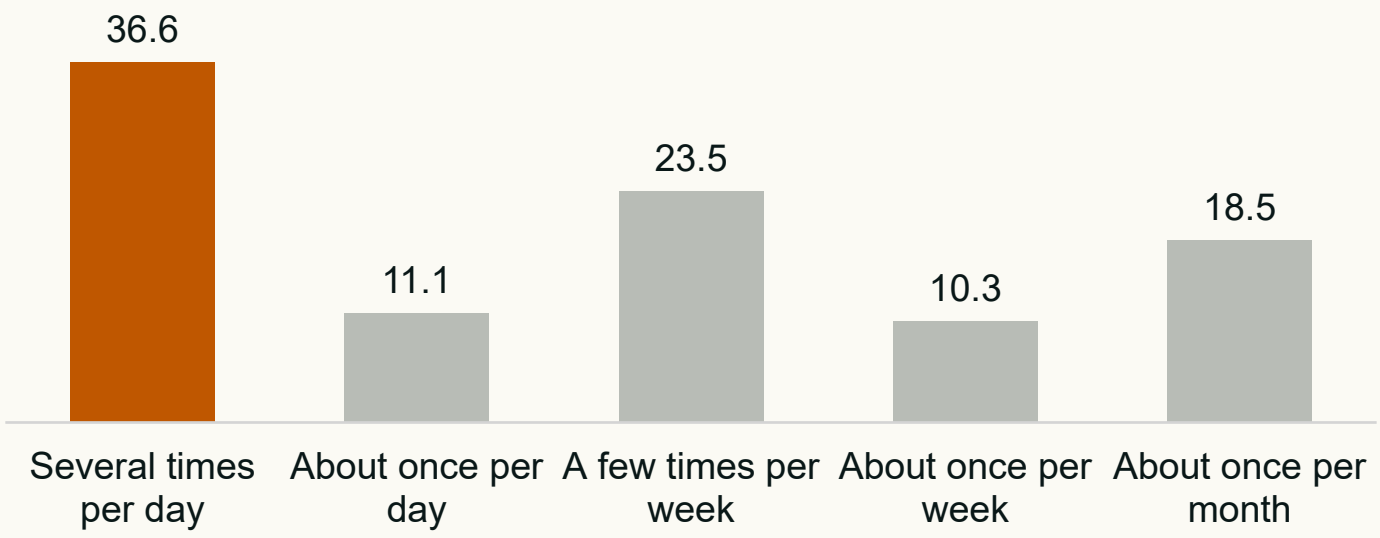
Master's-prepared (MSW or DSW)	79.1%
Practice in clinical mental health	54.2%
Fully licensed (LCSW or LICSW)	58.4%
More than 20 years in the field	34%

Note: Mixed-methods design: descriptive statistics plus thematic analysis of open-ended responses. VA and DoD distribution may overrepresent federally affiliated settings.
Source: Moritz Center & NASW AI Survey Report, June 2026

Nearly two-thirds of social workers use AI

Frequency of AI use (% of AI users)

Population: Respondents who use AI



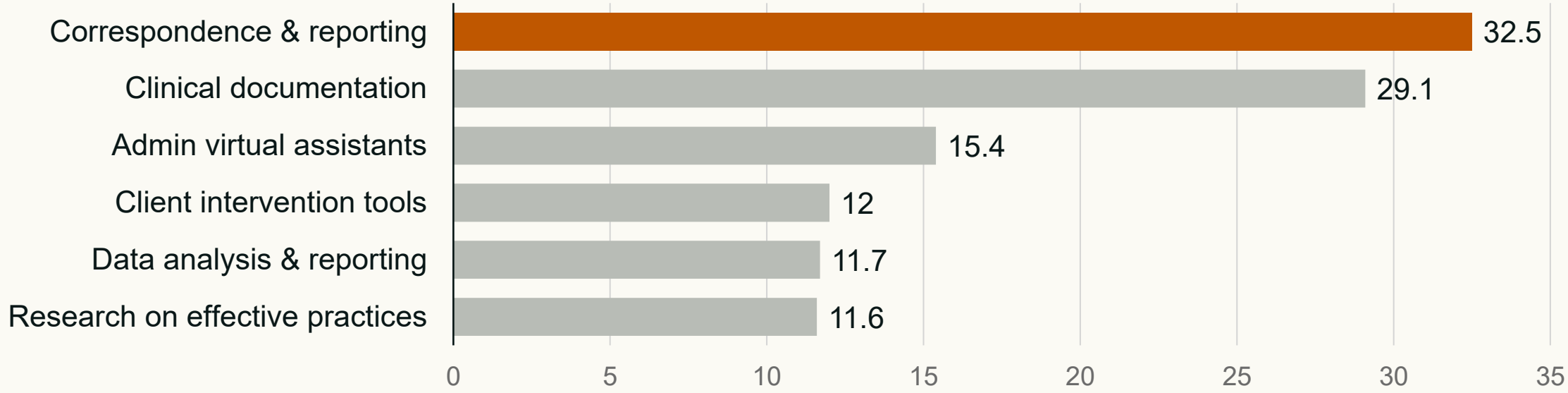
- About 8 in 10 AI users engage at least weekly
- 36.2% do not use AI at all — adoption is broad, not universal
- Use appears in every practice area surveyed, from psychotherapy to policy

Source: Moritz Center & NASW AI Survey Report, June 2026

Documentation and administrative work are primary AI use types

Use of each AI application (% of all respondents)

Population: 1,179 survey respondents; (Multi-select responses; shares do not sum to 100%)

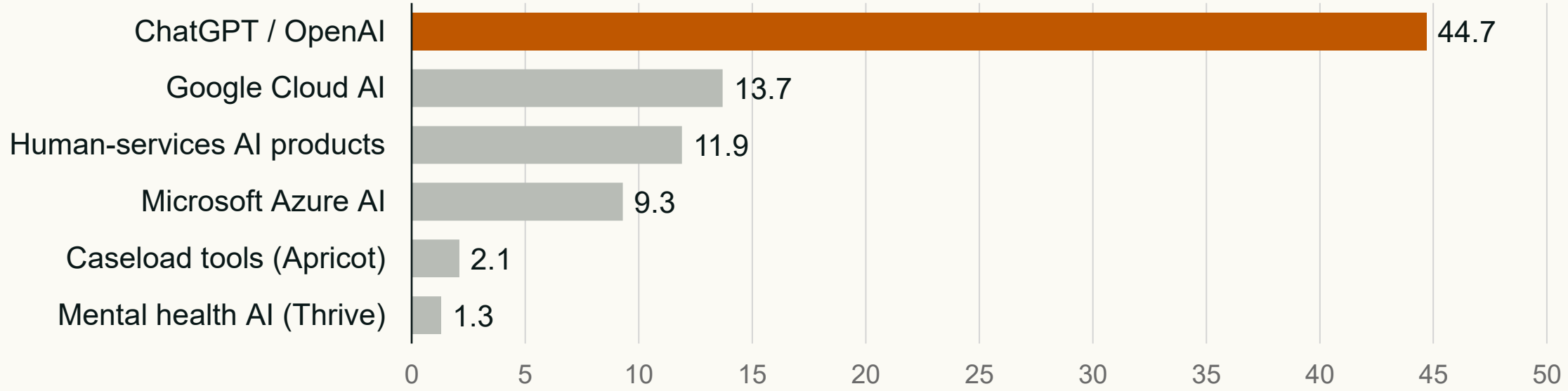


Note: Respondents could select multiple applications; top categories shown.
Source: Moritz Center & NASW AI Survey Report, June 2026

General-purpose tools dominate, but specialized AI is emerging

Use of each AI platform (% of all respondents)

Population: 1,179 survey respondents; (Multi-select responses; shares do not sum to 100%)



Note: Also cited: Perplexity (1%), military or government tools (1.1%), Anthropic Claude (0.9%). Multiple selections allowed.

Source: Moritz Center & NASW AI Survey Report, June 2026

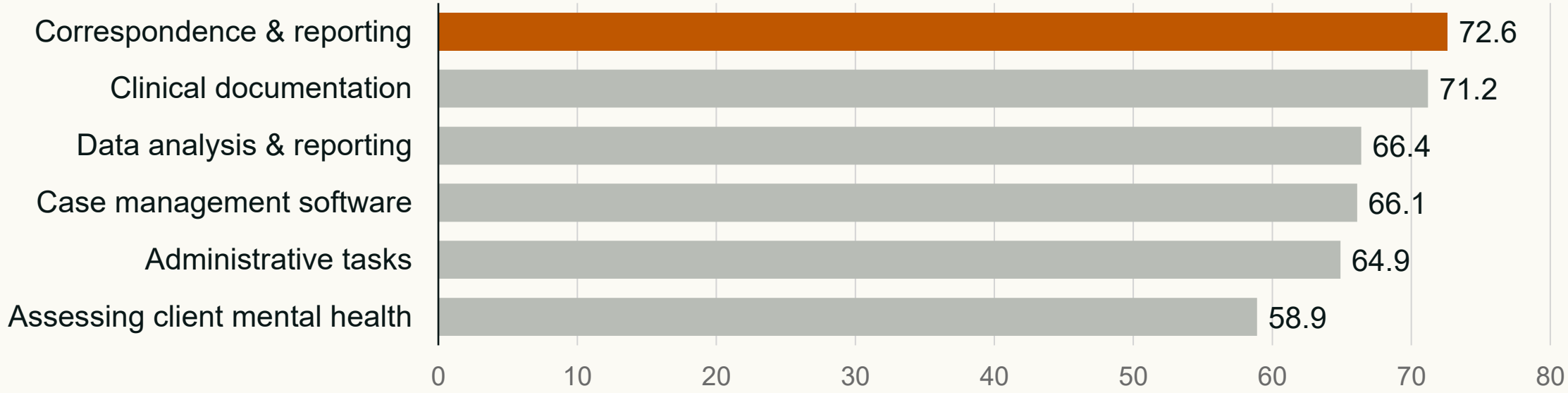
Popular AI tools for social workers

AI Tool	Primary Use	Social Work Setting
ChatGPT	Writing, research, program planning	All settings
Microsoft Copilot	Documentation, email, administration	Hospitals, government, nonprofits
Claude	Research, policy and document analysis	Research, administration
Google Gemini	Writing, research, productivity	Education, nonprofits
Upheal	Therapy notes and session summaries	Clinical practice
Mentalyc	Clinical notes and treatment planning	Behavioral health
Blueprint	Documentation and measurement-based care	Mental health
Eleos Health	Clinical documentation and quality assurance	Community mental health
Magic Notes	Case notes and assessments	Child welfare, social services
Wysa	AI-supported mental health self-management	Digital behavioral health
Limbic	Mental health intake and triage	Health systems

Practitioners rate AI most useful for documentation and admin

Rated very or extremely useful (% of users of each application)

Population: Users of each application; (Ratings among users only)



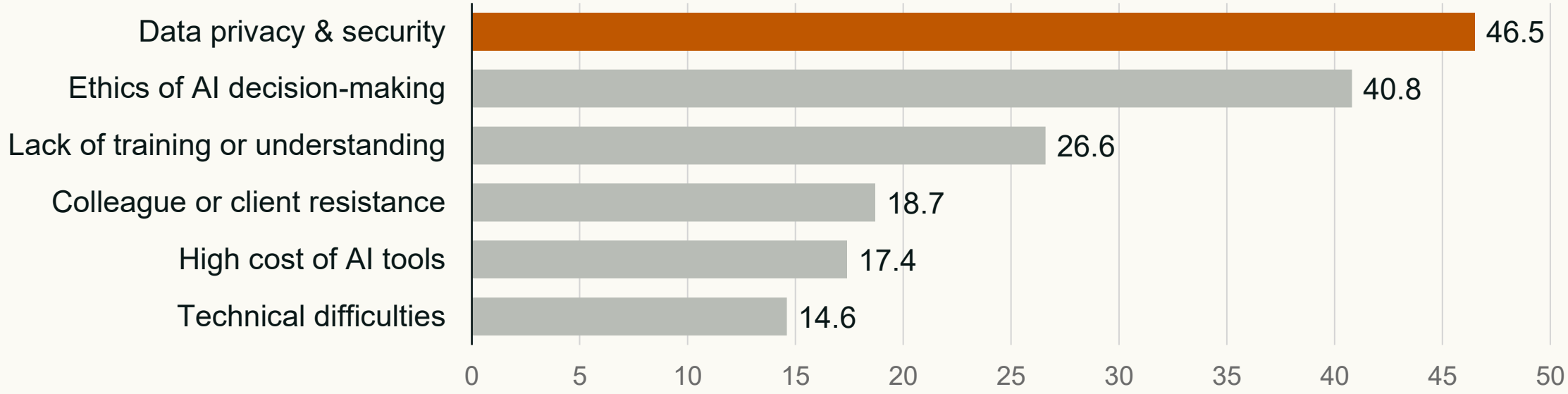
Note: Share rating each application very or extremely useful. Predictive analytics for risk assessment scored lowest at 38.8%.

Source: Moritz Center & NASW AI Survey Report, June 2026

Privacy and ethics concerns are the biggest barriers

Challenge to using AI in practice (% of respondents)

Population: 1,179 survey respondents; Multi-select responses; shares do not sum to 100%)

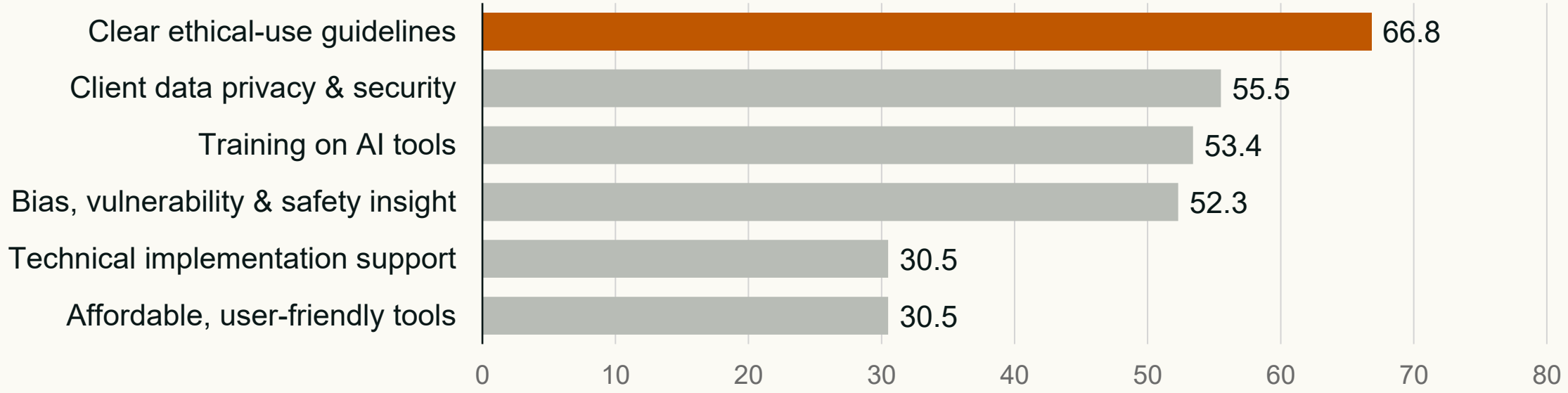


Source: Moritz Center & NASW AI Survey Report, June 2026

The clearest demand: ethical guidance, safeguards, and training

Support needed for AI integration (% of respondents)

Population: 1,179 survey respondents; (Multi-select responses; shares do not sum to 100%)



Note: Respondents could select multiple needs; top six shown. A quarter also want collaboration with AI experts on custom solutions.

Source: Moritz Center & NASW AI Survey Report, June 2026

Cautious optimism, focus on the human relationship

01

Measured acceptance (n = 94)

“AI can reduce administrative burden, support clinician sustainability, and increase access to care when used ethically and intentionally.”

02

The human core (n = 99)

“AI is here. Our role is to shape how AI is ethically implemented in our field as a tool, not a replacement for the human experience.”

03

Demand for guidance (n = 119)

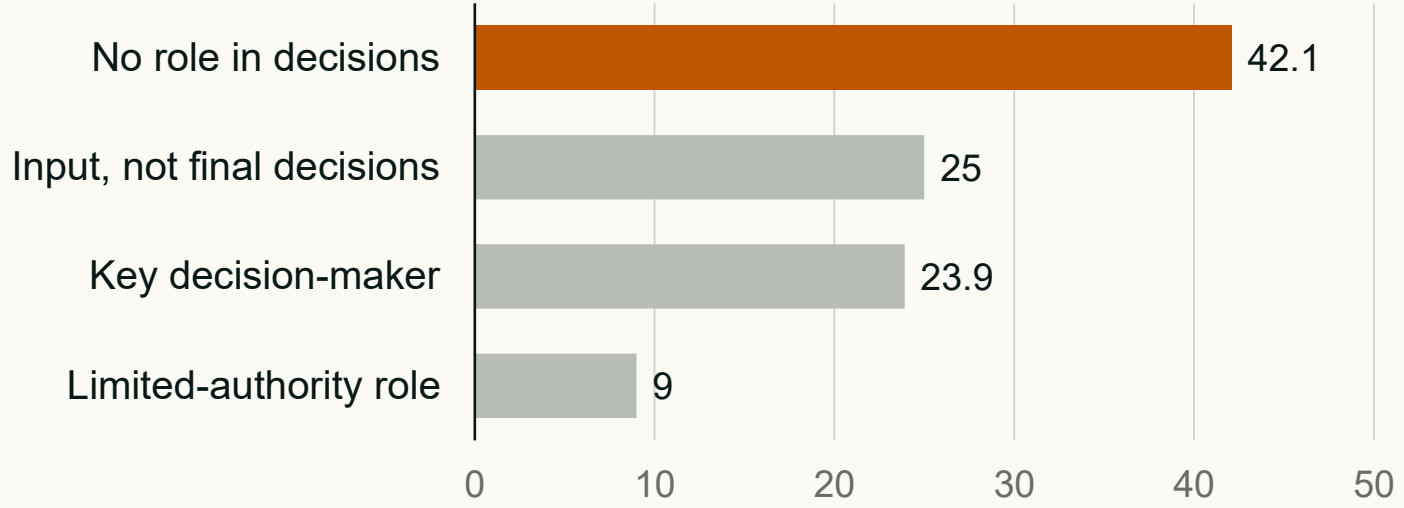
“We are in desperate need of guidance on ethical use.” Ethical concerns (n = 202) and skepticism (n = 115) led the 407 comments.

Source: Moritz Center & NASW AI Survey Report, June 2026

Most practitioners have no seat at the AI decision table

Role in AI decision-making (% of respondents)

Population: Survey respondents (N = 1,093); Geography: United States; Period: Surveyed Oct 2025 – Feb 2026; Baseline: N/A (Composition of roles); Status: actual



- 73% agree AI will play a larger role in social work's future
- Most workplaces: minimal or partial adoption, not integration
- Views split on whether AI is negative: 44% agree, 31% disagree

Source: Moritz Center & NASW AI Survey Report, June 2026

Five priorities for the profession

1 **Ethical guidance**

Develop profession-wide AI guidance grounded in the NASW Code of Ethics: privacy, consent, transparency, bias, and environmental impact.

2 **AI literacy**

Invest in training across career stages through continuing education, supervision, and social work curricula.

3 **Advocacy**

Push for client data, safety, and equity protections at organizational, state, and federal levels.

4 **A seat at the table**

Involve social workers in AI selection, policy, and evaluation decisions.

5 **Better tools**

Support development and evaluation of social-work-specific AI that improves outcomes without compromising ethics.

Source: Moritz Center & NASW AI Survey Report, June 2026

Read the report:

