

Artificial Intelligence survey of UCU members

UCU launched its Future of Work in Post-16 Education project in January 2024, with a webinar and an open call to members to join a working group of UCU members from across the sectors, regions and nations of the union and representing the different equality strands, to undertake the following work:

1. identify threats and opportunities to UCU members of AI and datafication in the HE and FE sectors, including prison and adult education
2. consider what data we have collected already, and how we might collect data on the current and future intended uses of AI in colleges and universities
3. make recommendations to the NEC on what should be in UCU's policy on AI
4. consider and advise on guidance for branches on negotiating on AI and datafication
5. agree a description for the role of Data Rep
6. advise on the content for an AI policy for negotiation with HE and FE employers which takes a rights-based approach to the issues.

The working group was tasked with informing the policy making process of Congress 2025.

As part of the project, the working group undertook two surveys over the Summer and early Autumn of 2024. One was a survey of members to understand members' experiences of AI systems and the impact on their working lives, and this report focuses on the outcomes of that survey.

Key survey findings

Respondents to the survey told us:

- Large Language Models (LLMs) are something our members are dealing with on a regular basis because of student use.
- More than 40% of respondents were already using LLMs in their pedagogy or were working on it.
- The majority of respondents said their institution had a policy on the use of generative AI LLMs and almost 70% of those policies allowed students to use them as long as they reported their use.
- AI technologies are being used in staff disciplinary, capability and performance management processes.
- Identity verification is becoming a norm for our members, and other workplace monitoring is taking place using AI technologies.
- Most respondents were using online communication systems which most found useful. Team support systems and Teaching support systems are also used a lot, but members don't report finding them as useful.
- Over 60% of respondents were concerned about the amount of data held by the AI systems.
- More than 72% of respondents wanted the right to disconnect from work outside of working hours to be enshrined in law.

Respondents to the survey

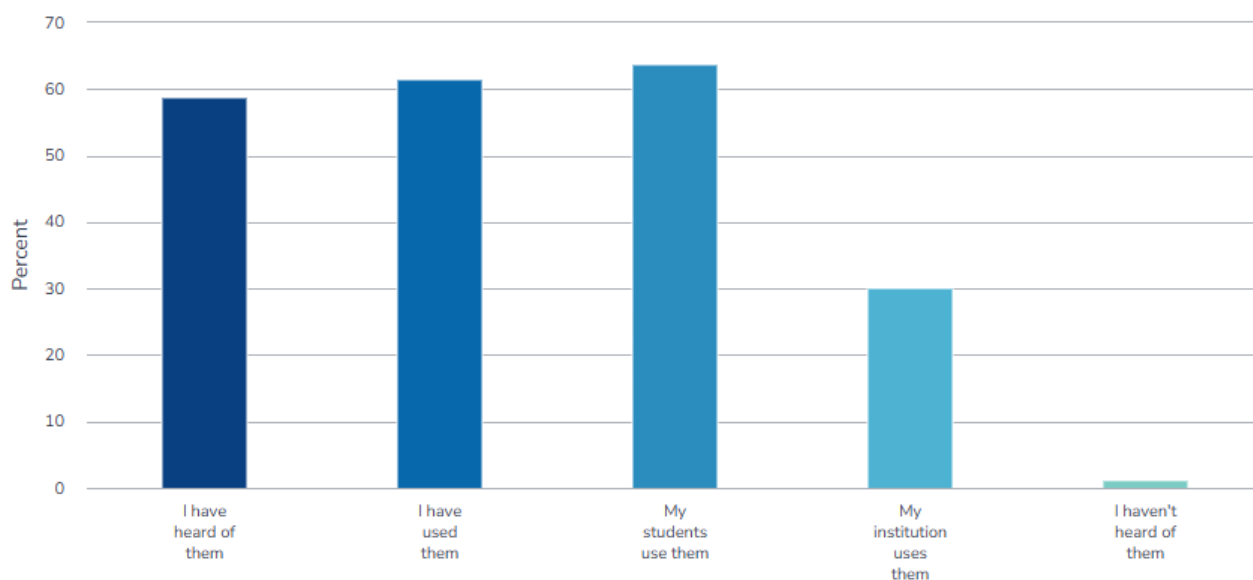
The member survey received 1704 responses, with 1200 respondents completing the survey and 504 partially completing it.

The largest number of responses was from members in the Higher Education sector at 1208 responses or 78.8% of total responses. Further Education members made up 17.7% (271) of respondents. Less than 5% of responses were received from members in Adult and Community and Prison Education and from Retired and Unemployed members.

Of those responding to the survey 39.7% (603) were in Teaching & Research roles and 32% (486) were in Teaching roles. Academic-Related, Professional Services Staff made up 19.8% (301) of respondents; 5.6% (85) were Research only staff and 2.9% (44) were Management.

Language Generators

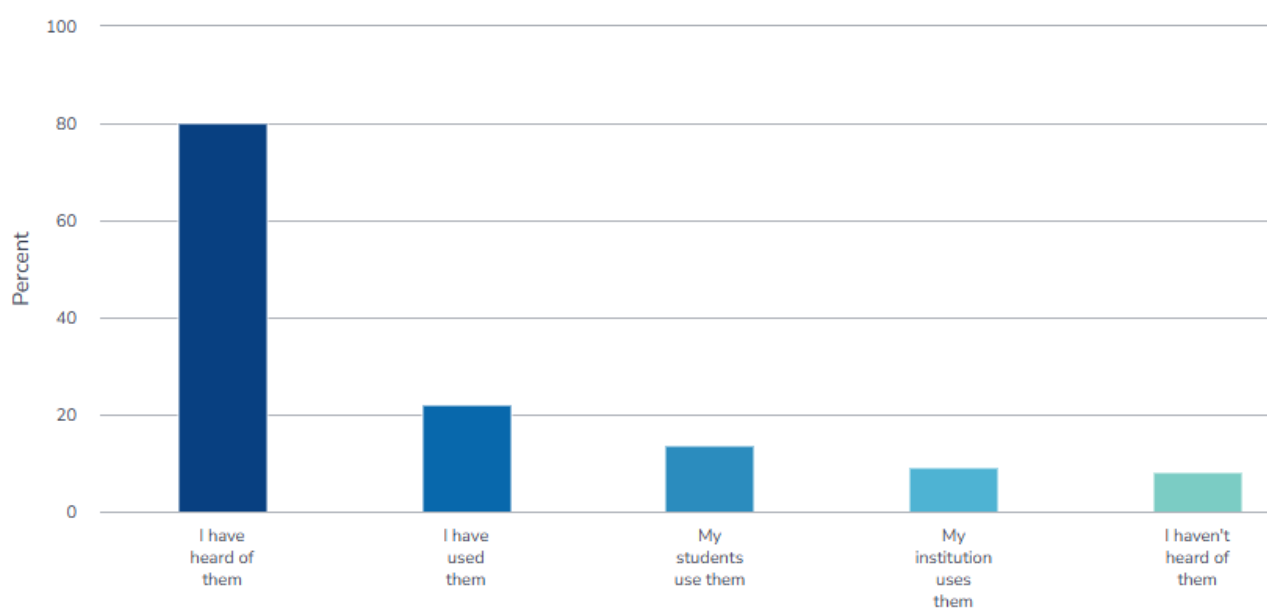
3. Language generators such as ChatGPT?



61.6% of respondents had used Language Generators themselves and 64% said their students used them. 30.2% told us their institutions used them and only 1.4% of respondents hadn't heard of Language Generators. It is clear that the majority of respondents are dealing with these systems on a regular basis.

Facial, speech or emotional recognition systems

4. Facial, speech or emotional recognition systems?



80.4% of respondents had heard of facial, speech or emotional recognition systems, but only 22.4% reported using them, and only 14% said their students used them. 9.4% said their institution used them. It would be interesting to know on what basis employers are using such systems.

How AI technologies are being used in members working lives

Value	Percent		Responses
Dealing with students	55.1%		682
Disciplinary, capability or performance management	18.3%		226
Ending employment or withdrawing work	1.0%		12
Health monitoring	4.2%		52
Line management functions	3.2%		39
Monitoring and surveillance	6.5%		80
Recording of teaching sessions	20.8%		257
Recruitment	4.2%		52
Training of staff	13.8%		171
Writing content	52.1%		645
None of the above	10.8%		133
Other - Write In (Required) (click to view)	17.5%		217

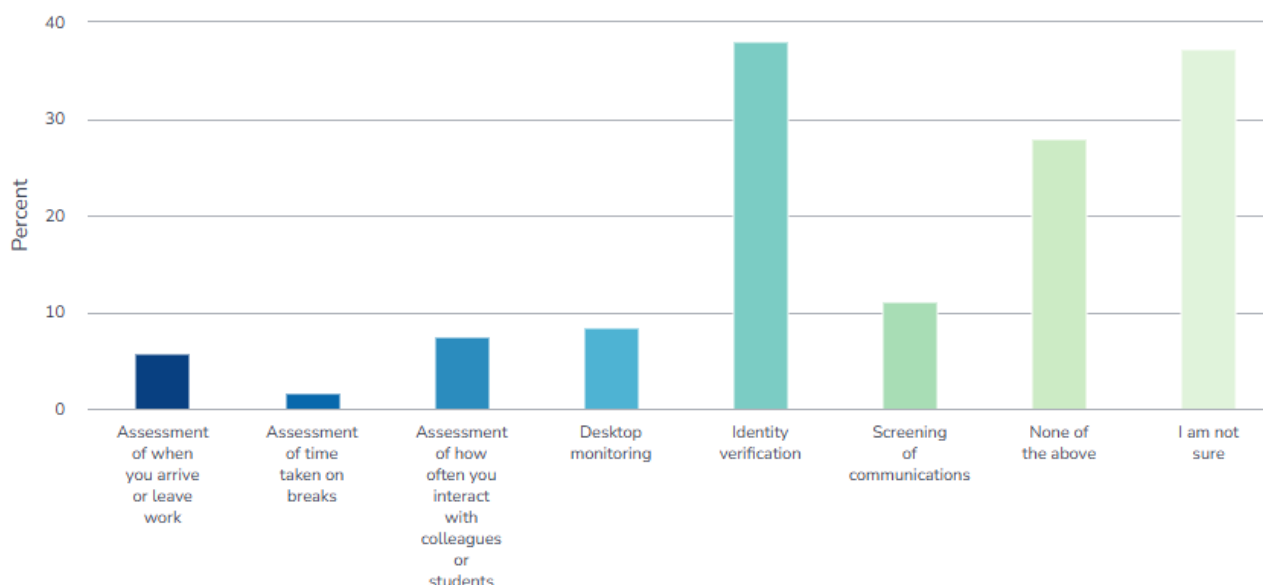
Respondents reported a number of ways these technologies were being used in their working lives. The majority of respondents (55.1%) told us that they were used when dealing with students, and 52.1% used them in the writing of content. 20.8% used them in the recording of teaching sessions.

More worryingly 18.3% reported their use in disciplinary, capability and performance management. This raises concerns about whether human review and judgement were also part of these processes and is something UCU branches should be scrutinising.

13.8% of respondents reported the use of such technologies in the training of staff. It would be useful to gather more information about which systems are being used here and for what purposes.

Monitoring Technologies

13. Have you experienced technology that monitors your activities at work in the following ways? Please tick all that apply.



38.1% of respondents told us they experienced Identity Verification technologies at work. Since such technologies can retain Special Category data and personal data, it would be useful to scrutinise this finding further.

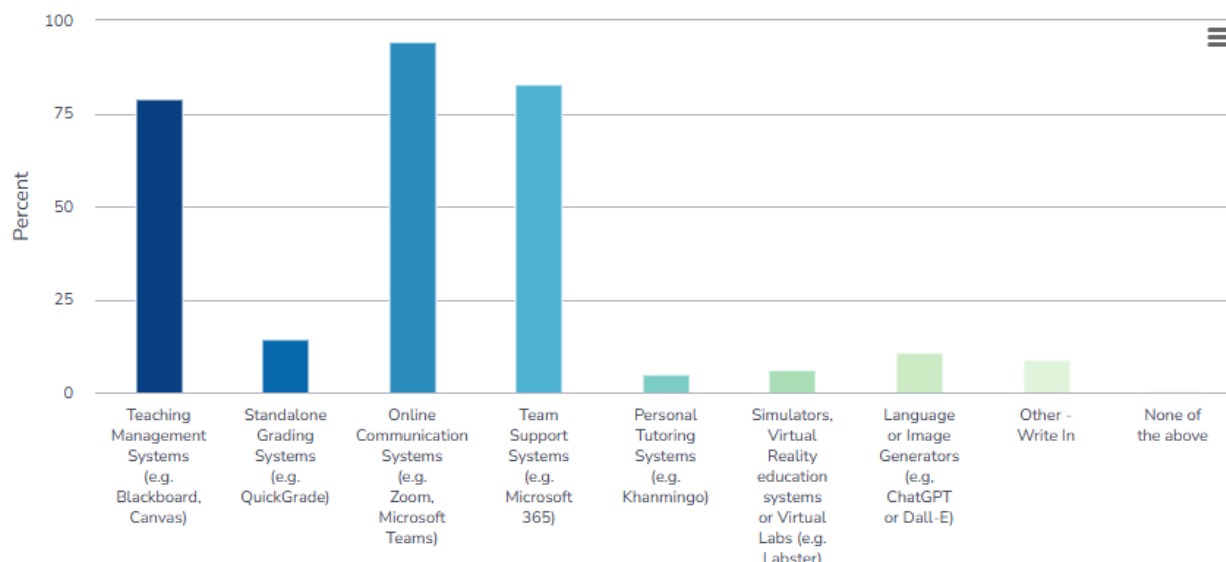
11.2% of respondents told us their communications were screened and 8.5% told us they experienced desktop monitoring. 7.5% of respondents said technology was monitoring how they interacted with colleagues and students, and 5.8% said it recorded when they were arriving at or leaving work. Although this level of scrutiny by employers was reported only by a minority of respondents, it does suggest a real lack of trust in staff and potentially has a worrying impact on professional autonomy.

37.3% of respondents weren't sure if they had experienced these technologies and 28.1% had experienced none of the above.

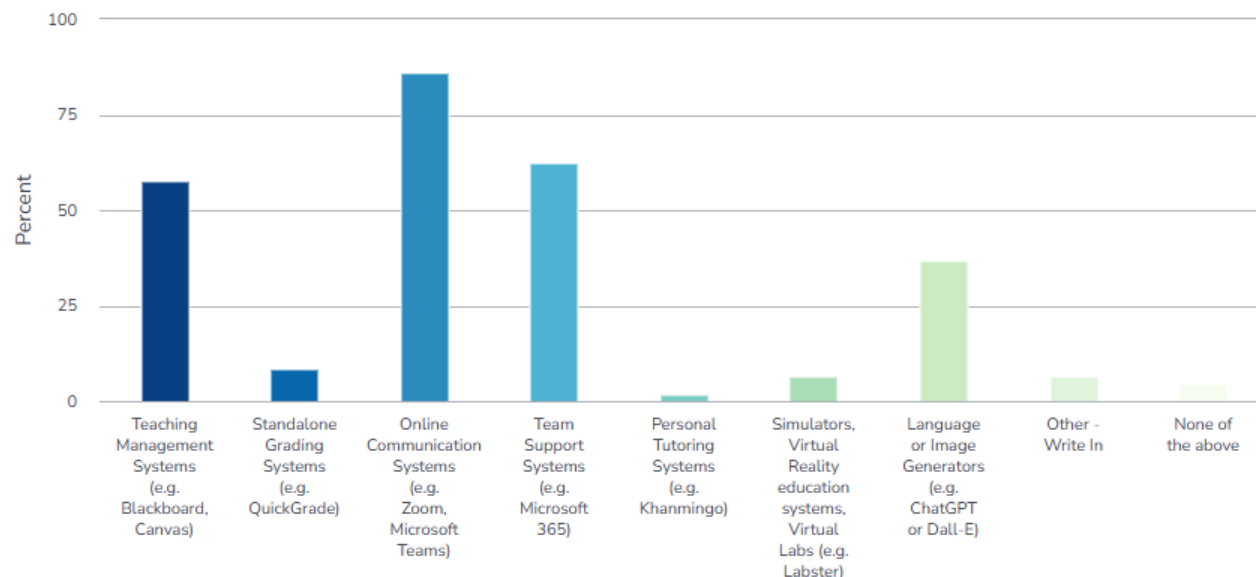
Types of technologies used

We asked members about a number of different types of technologies, asking who used them and whether they were useful.

6. Which of the following software systems or platforms does your institution require staff and students to use?



9. Which of the following software systems or platforms do you find useful?



Online Communication systems

We asked about online communication systems such as Microsoft Teams and Zoom. 94.5% of respondents told us their institution required staff and students to use them; 71.8% said they used them by choice; 85.4% told us their students used them and 87.4% of respondents said they found them useful.

Team Support systems

We asked about Team support systems such as Microsoft 365. 83.1% of respondents told us their institution required staff and students to use them; 52.8% told us they used them by choice and 62.2% of respondents told us they found them useful.

Teaching Management systems

The survey asked about Teaching Management systems such as Blackboard and Canvas. 81.7% of respondents told us their institution required staff and students to use them; 35.6% of respondents used them by choice; 74.6% reported that students used them and 58% reported finding them useful.

Standalone Grading systems

The survey asked about standalone grading systems such as QuickGrade. 14.5% told us that their institution required staff and students to use them; 4.8% of respondents used them by choice and 8.5% of respondents reported finding them useful.

Language or Image generators

We asked about the use of language or image generators including ChatGPT and Dall-E. 11.2% of respondents told us their institution required staff and students to use them; 40.2% of respondents used them by choice; 62.1% told us their students used them and 37.2% told us they found them useful.

Simulators and VR or virtual labs

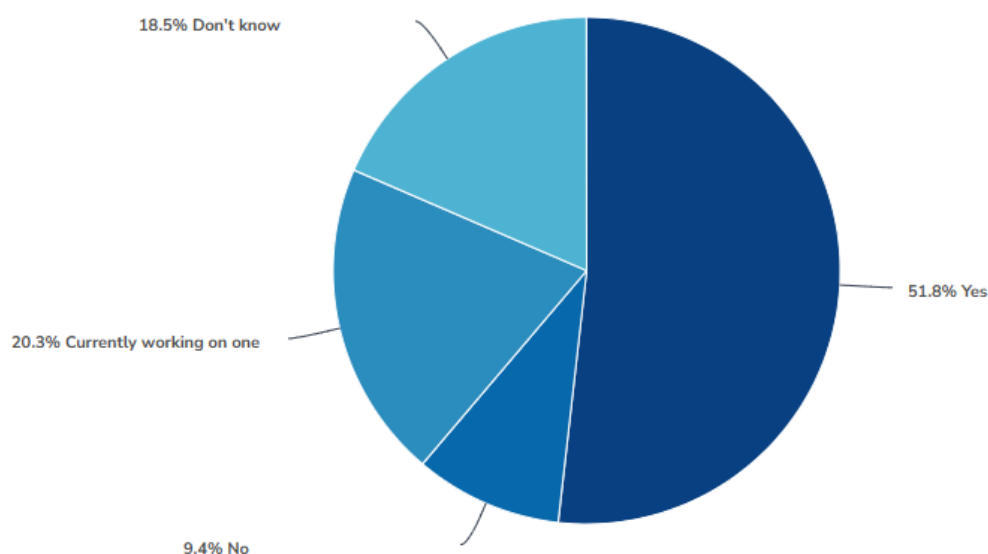
The survey asked about the use of simulators and virtual reality or virtual labs such as Labster. 6.2% of members responding reported that their institution required staff and students to use them; 5.4% of respondents used them by choice; 9.6% reported students using them and 6.8% told us them found them useful.

Personal Tutoring systems

The survey asked about the use of personal tutoring systems such as Khanmango. 5.2% of respondents told us that their institution required staff and students to use them; 1.4% said they used them by choice; 4.4% told us their students used them and 2.1% said they found them useful.

Generative AI language models

10. Does your institution/work group have a policy on student use of generative AI language models such as ChatGPT?

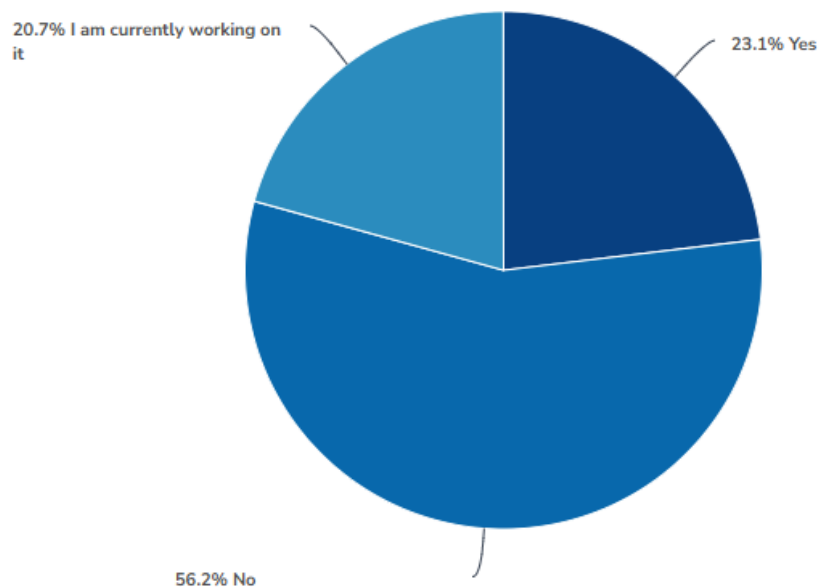


51.8% of respondents said their institution had a policy on student use of generative AI language models or large language models (LLMs) such as ChatGPT. 20.3% told us that their institution was working on one.

Of the respondents who told us that their institution had a policy:

- 19.7% told us use is banned.
- 67.9% said students can use them but must say so.
- 44.5% said students can use them if it is part of the curriculum.
- 3.9% said students can use them without restriction.

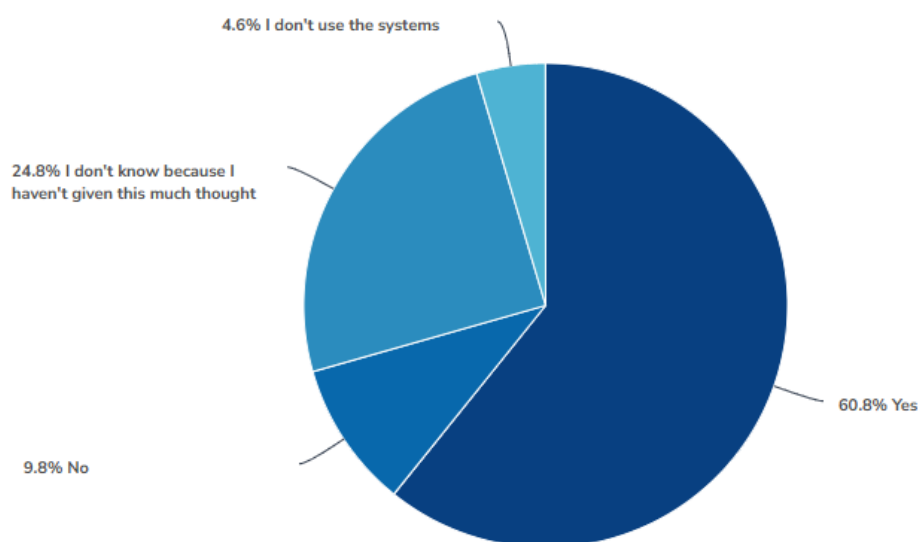
12. Have you incorporated the use of ChatGPT-like technologies into your pedagogy?



23.1% of respondents told us that they had incorporated LLMs into their pedagogy and 20.7% said they were working on it currently.

Data Retention

14. Are you concerned about the amount of data these systems are required to hold to operate?



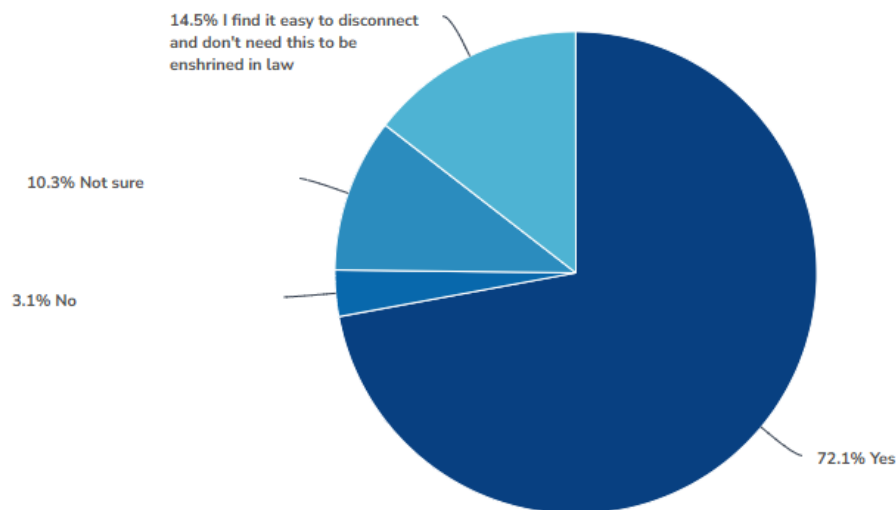
60.8% of respondents were concerned about the amount of data these systems are required to hold to operate, although 24.8 % of respondents hadn't given the issue much thought.

63.3% were concerned about the amounts of their personal data the systems held, but again 20.7% of respondents hadn't given this much thought.

56.6% were concerned about the amount of students' personal data the systems held.

Disconnecting from technology

17. Would you like the right to disconnect from work outside of working hours to be enshrined in law?



72.1% of respondents wanted the right to disconnect from work outside of working hours to be enshrined in law.

Conclusions

UCU members are interacting on daily basis with Artificial Intelligence systems in their working lives. Some members are choosing to use these systems, others are being forced to interact with them because of the actions of students or their employer. Our members are both keen users of AI systems and severe sceptics, plus every position in between, which makes this a difficult issue for the union to navigate.

It is clear from the survey that we need to ensure members better understand their data rights and that UCU continues its fight to ensure members can draw clear lines between work and home life through fighting for the right to disconnect.