

CENTRAL FINDING

Attorneys reported moderate, selective AI use despite low trust and widespread concern about accuracy.

INTRODUCTION

AI is increasingly used in legal workflows, but its adoption raises questions about accuracy, confidentiality, bias, accountability, and professional responsibility. This study asks how Richmond legal professionals use AI and how perceived risk shapes that use.

RESEARCH QUESTION

How do legal professionals in Richmond perceive and selectively integrate AI into everyday legal practice?

METHODS

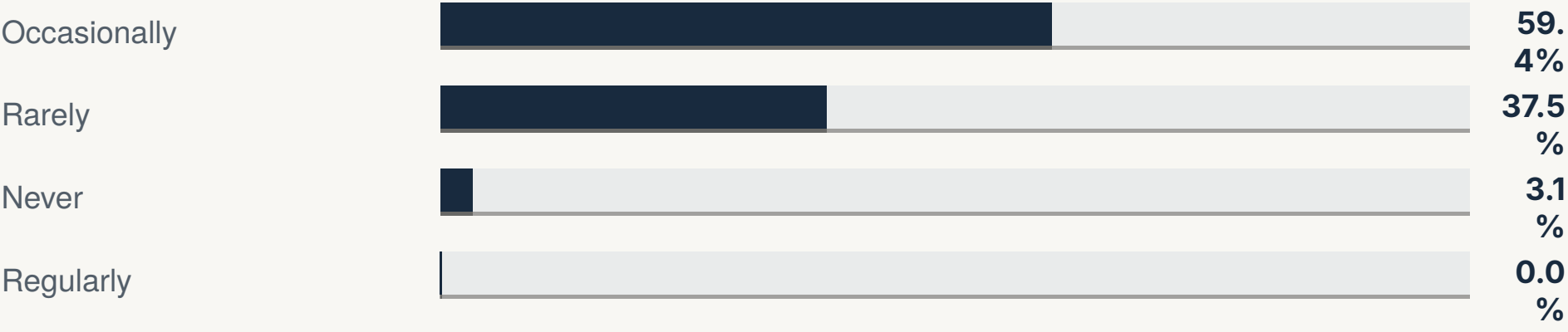
- Mixed-methods design combining a structured survey with a semi-structured expert interview.
- Survey: 32 legal professionals from independent practices and law firms in the greater Richmond area.
- Measured AI-use frequency, task type, trust (1–5), concerns, disclosure expectations, and perceived adequacy of current regulation.
- Interview: 30-minute Zoom interview with Professor and Chair Jason Ross Arnold, Ph.D.

LIMITATIONS

The sample is small and geographically localized. Data are self-reported and may be affected by response bias or professional discretion. Because AI and its regulation are rapidly evolving, findings should be treated as exploratory rather than broadly generalizable.

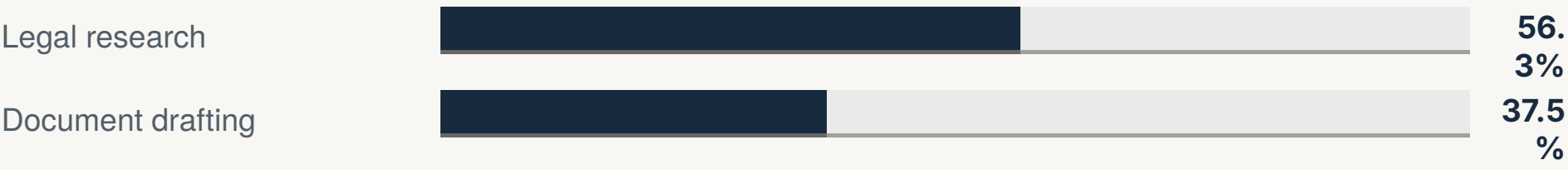
RESULTS

AI use in legal work (n = 32)



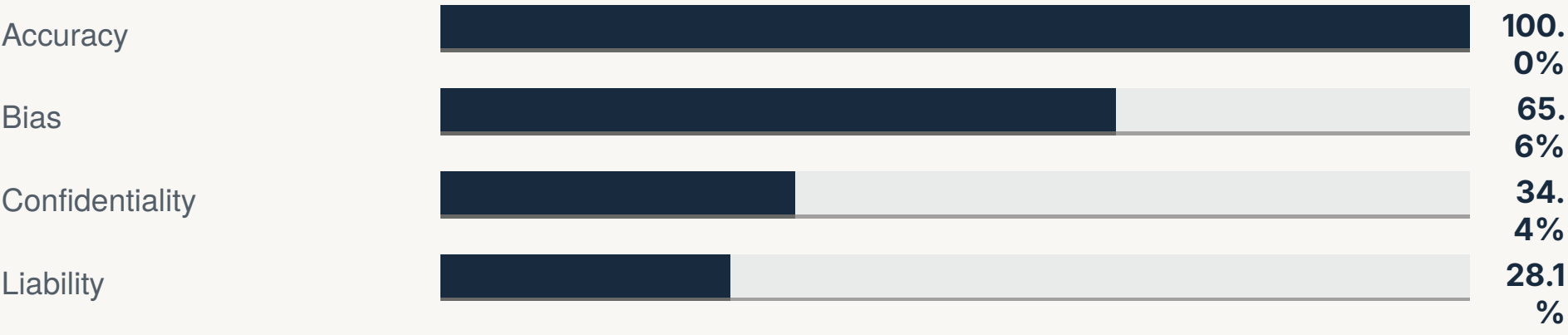
No respondent reported regular AI use.

Primary AI task (n = 32)



Client communication was minimally reported.

Reported concerns about AI (n = 32)



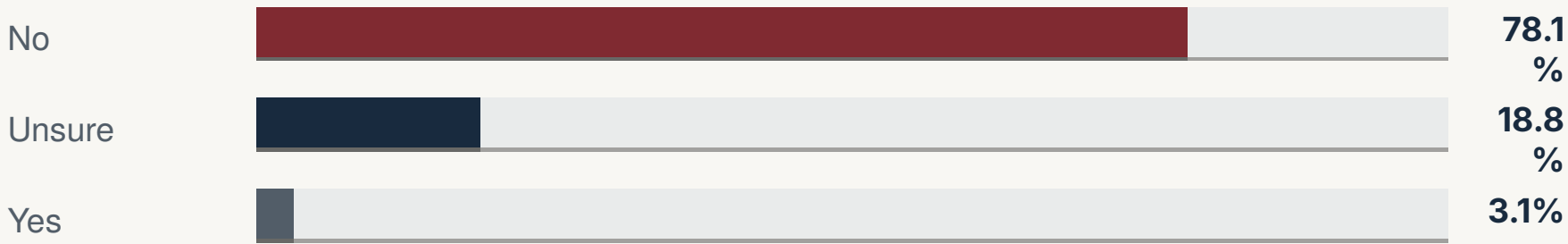
Multiple concerns could be selected.

TRUST & GOVERNANCE

2.59 / 5 mean trust in AI-generated information

56.3% selected a trust rating of 3; 37.5% selected 2. Only one participant selected 4, and none selected 5.

Current laws adequately regulate AI?



Should AI use be disclosed?



DISCUSSION

The results point to a risk-sensitive adoption pattern. Attorneys appear willing to use AI where outputs can be internally checked—especially research and drafting—while avoiding higher-risk, client-facing uses. Moderate adoption alongside low trust suggests efficiency may outweigh confidence in reliability.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- Broad ethical principles do not always translate into clear daily workflows.
- Professional guidance could define appropriate use cases, disclosure expectations, and when human oversight is necessary.
- Further research should test whether these patterns persist across larger and more diverse legal communities.

CONCLUSION

Richmond legal professionals are not rejecting AI; they are selectively integrating it while remaining skeptical of its reliability. Their choices appear shaped by perceived professional risk, efficiency, and uncertainty about formal oversight—resulting in informal self-regulation while governance develops.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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