

OpenAI

Main Street Entrepreneurship, Powered by ChatGPT

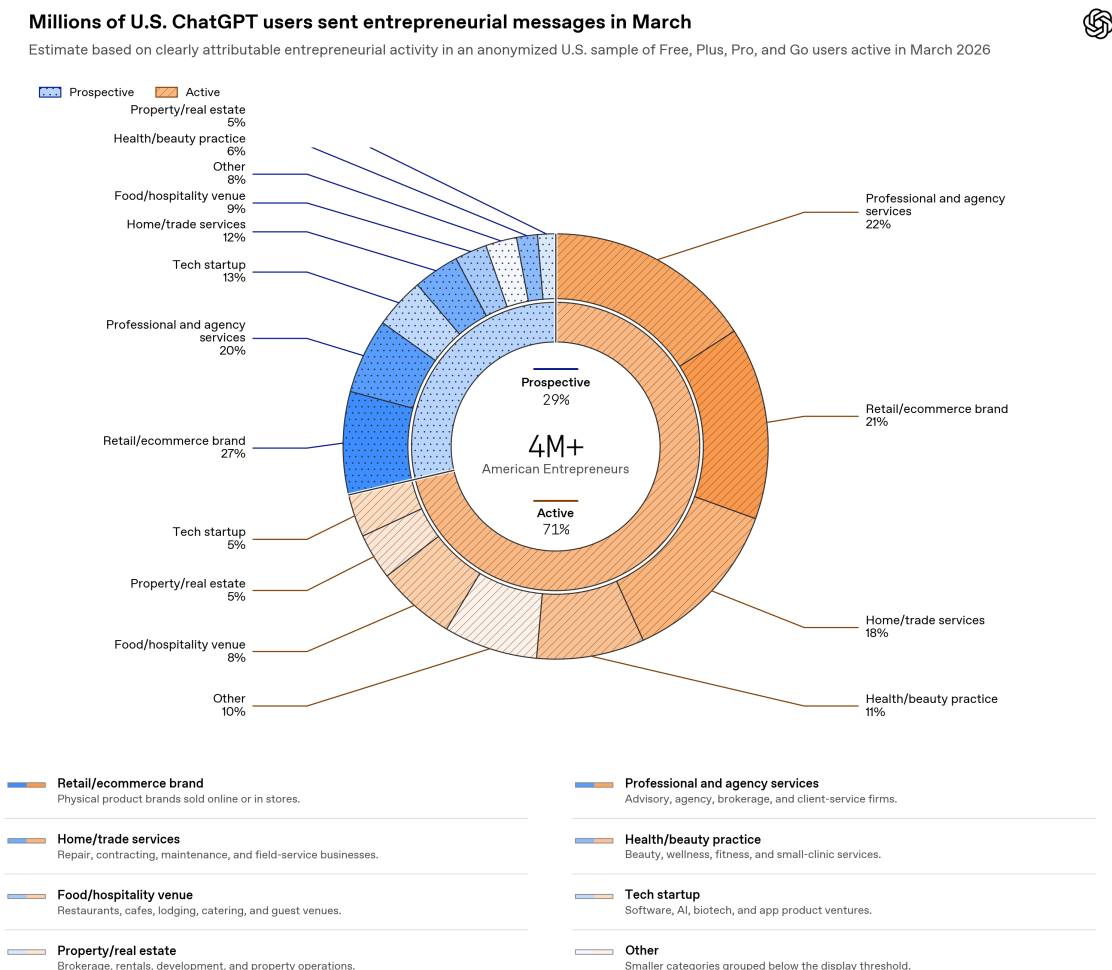


Empowering Entrepreneurs with ChatGPT

Success is often a matter of using the right tools for the right job. But that can be hard when your job doesn't look like the typical 9 to 5. Entrepreneurs often have to move across many parts of a business at once – from marketing and operations, to customer support and sales – and they need tools that can similarly fulfill many functions.

As part of National Small Business Week, we are releasing a new analysis that shows many entrepreneurs are already turning to ChatGPT for that kind of flexible support. In March, at least 4 million people used ChatGPT to help plan, start, run or grow a business. This is economic empowerment: AI is helping more people access capabilities and expertise that were previously expensive or specialized.

Fig. 1



Our privacy-preserving classifier only counted cases where a message explicitly tied the user to their business or showed them actively exploring a specific business idea. This is a conservative approach by design. Further, this sample only covered consumer accounts, so we interpret 4 million as a lower bound, with the true level of entrepreneurial use likely substantially higher. We explored what kinds of activities arise both among active entrepreneurs who currently run a business, and among prospective entrepreneurs who are planning a future business.

Entrepreneurship in ChatGPT looks more like Main Street than Silicon Valley

The most common usage spans retail, professional services, and trades. Much of this activity is concentrated in service-based businesses, where founders often start lean and perform many of the business functions themselves. In that context, AI serves not just as a writing tool, but as a marketer, operations assistant, bookkeeper, and, in effect, a first hire.

Top industries for active entrepreneurs

| Industry | Active entrepreneurs |
|----------------------------------|----------------------|
| Professional and agency services | 22% |
| Retail/e-commerce | 21% |
| Home/trade services | 12% |
| Health/beauty practice | 11% |
| Food/hospitality venue | 8% |

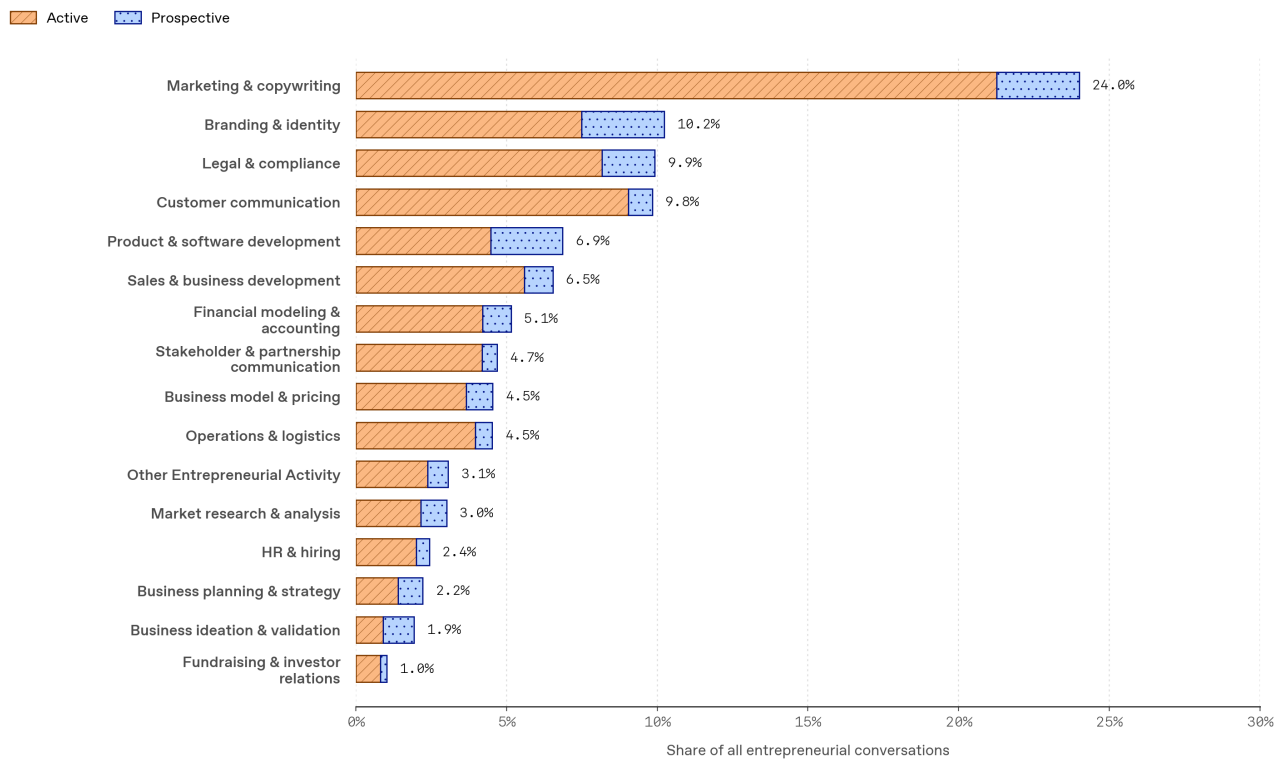
Top industries for prospective entrepreneurs

| Industry | Prospective entrepreneurs |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Retail/e-commerce | 27% |
| Professional and agency services | 20% |
| Home/trade services | 18% |
| Health/beauty practice | 6% |
| Food/hospitality venue | 9% |

What Entrepreneurs Use ChatGPT For

Fig. 2

Entrepreneurial chats with ChatGPT span marketing, product work, legal help, and more
Share of all entrepreneurial conversations by primary activity category, stacked by stage



Entrepreneurial activity is concentrated in tasks like marketing, branding, and legal/compliance. Prospective entrepreneurs are more likely to use ChatGPT for branding and product development, while active entrepreneurs are more likely to use it for communicating with customers.

Top use cases for active entrepreneurs

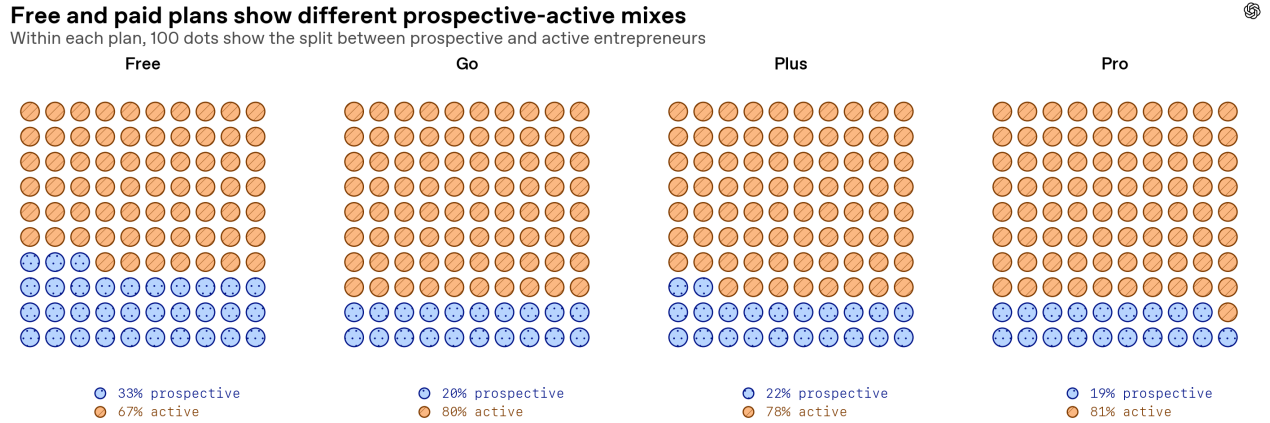
| Use case | Share |
|------------------------------|-------|
| Marketing & copywriting | 26% |
| Customer communication | 11% |
| Legal & compliance | 10% |
| Branding & identity | 9% |
| Sales & business development | 7% |

Top use cases for prospective entrepreneurs

| Use case | Share |
|--------------------------------|-------|
| Marketing & copywriting | 15% |
| Branding & identity | 15% |
| Product & software development | 13% |
| Legal & compliance | 10% |
| Business ideation & validation | 6% |

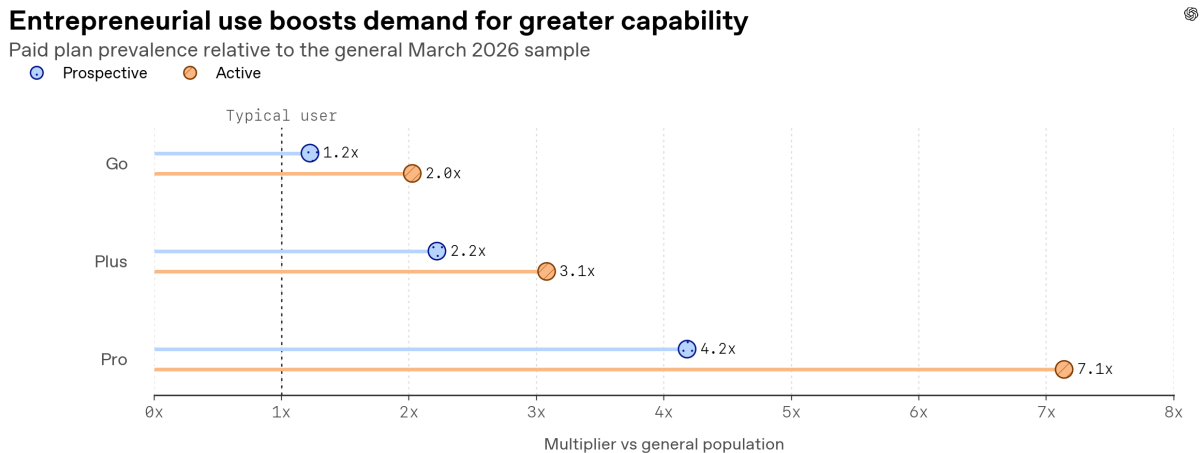
Plan Mix and Tier Usage

Fig. 3



We also find that active entrepreneurs are disproportionately represented on higher-tier plans compared with both the broader US consumer sample and users who have not yet started their business. This suggests that usage deepens once a business is operational. This relationship is further explored in the next figure.

Fig. 4



This pattern suggests that entrepreneurs may place especially high value on more capable tools as their work moves from the idea stage to day-to-day operation. In many cases, ChatGPT appears to be filling a real tooling gap for entrepreneurs in an environment where work is varied, hyper-specific, or potentially underserved by traditional software.

Other Work on ChatGPT and Small Businesses

If you're interested in learning more about how entrepreneurs use AI, you can read research on how prospective entrepreneurs use ChatGPT to learn about what they might earn through their business in [ChatGPT and the Price of Work](#) or [OpenAI's Small Business Survey](#).

Methodology

As with all ChatGPT usage analyses conducted by the OpenAI Economic Research team, no humans ever reviewed the content of any messages. We used automated, privacy preserving classifiers to take a look at all March 2026 messages from a fully randomized sample of over 300,000 US ChatGPT users on consumer plans¹ to capture a snapshot of ChatGPT use related to entrepreneurship.

Our methodology was intentionally conservative: rather than counting everyone who mentioned a business, startup, or side project, we required evidence that the messages clearly tied a venture to the user and showed concrete business activity or specific venture exploration. The results are, therefore, a lower-bound estimate of entrepreneurship in ChatGPT usage. For instance, since some activity predated March, referenced only indirectly in the observed chats, or too ambiguous to separate from employee work, freelancing, gig work, or casual side activity is not counted.

We also explored what kinds of activities are showing up in these entrepreneurial conversations to understand how ChatGPT is used as a tool, both among entrepreneurs who are actively running a business, and among those who are planning future ventures. We see that a significant portion of conversations center around marketing and branding, but we also see that for these users, ChatGPT isn't just a writing assistant. The high share of use cases spanning topics like legal and compliance, for example, shows users leveraging ChatGPT to tackle the regulatory overhead associated with running or starting a business.

¹ "Consumer plans" includes ChatGPT Free, Plus, Pro, and Go plans.