# Barclays survey finds near-universal AI adoption momentum among UK firms



A new Barclays survey shows that nearly nine in ten UK business leaders are now using AI to tackle pressing challenges such as rising energy costs and infrastructure demands. Of the 1,000 executives polled, 32% of firms have already recruited AI talent, while a further 42% plan to expand AI-focused hiring, highlighting the growing demand for specialist skills. On average, UK businesses invested £236,000 each in AI over the past year, reflecting a serious commitment to embedding AI into operations.

The findings echo wider adoption trends. Research from Moneypenny shows 39% of companies already use AI, with another 31% considering adoption. Of those already on board, 28% have rolled out AI across their entire organisation, while 40% are deploying it in specific areas—suggesting a steady move towards full integration.

At the executive level, enthusiasm is even clearer. PwC’s 28th Annual Global CEO Survey reports that 93% of UK CEOs have adopted generative AI in the past 12 months, outpacing the global average of 83%. More than half credit AI with improving employee efficiency, underscoring that adoption is already translating into productivity gains.

Economically, the UK AI sector is expanding rapidly. Forbes Advisor estimates the market is already worth over £21 billion, with potential to hit £1 trillion by 2035. More than 432,000 UK firms now use at least one form of AI technology, while the number of AI-focused companies has grown sixfold in the past decade.

Government data shows adoption varies by size: 68% of large firms, 34% of mid-sized firms, and 15% of SMEs have implemented AI tools. Meanwhile, AWS reports a 33% rise in UK AI adoption in the past year, with a new business adopting AI every 60 seconds.

Together, these insights suggest the UK is moving decisively towards becoming a global leader in AI adoption and responsible innovation. While smaller firms face barriers to scaling AI, momentum is strong—driven by investment, skilled recruitment, and leadership commitment. If sustained, the UK’s AI-enabled transformation could deliver major productivity boosts and long-term economic growth.

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.standard.co.uk/business/business-news/budget-barclays-b1246107.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.standard.co.uk/business/business-news/budget-barclays-b1246107.html> - A recent survey by Barclays reveals that UK businesses have collectively invested nearly £236,000 each in artificial intelligence (AI) over the past year. The study indicates that 68% of companies are turning to AI to address key business challenges, including energy costs and infrastructure. Additionally, 32% of firms have already hired or are currently hiring for AI-focused roles, with another 42% planning to do so in the near future.
3. <https://www.moneypenny.com/uk/resources/blog/the-state-of-ai-adoption-in-uk-businesses/> - According to Moneypenny's data, 39% of UK businesses are currently using AI, with an additional 31% seriously considering its adoption. This brings the total interest in AI to nearly 70%. The survey also highlights that 28% of businesses are fully embracing AI across their organisation, while 40% are adopting it in specific areas. ([moneypenny.com](https://www.moneypenny.com/uk/resources/blog/the-state-of-ai-adoption-in-uk-businesses/?utm_source=openai))
4. <https://www.pwc.co.uk/press-room/press-releases/research-commentary/2024/uk-ceos-ahead-of-global-peers-on-genai-adoption---93--have-adopt.html> - PwC's 28th Annual Global CEO Survey reveals that 93% of UK CEOs have adopted generative AI (GenAI) to some extent in the past 12 months, surpassing the global average of 83%. The survey also notes that more than half (53%) of UK CEOs report that GenAI has already enhanced employee efficiency. ([pwc.co.uk](https://www.pwc.co.uk/press-room/press-releases/research-commentary/2024/uk-ceos-ahead-of-global-peers-on-genai-adoption---93--have-adopt.html?utm_source=openai))
5. <https://www.forbes.com/uk/advisor/business/software/uk-artificial-intelligence-ai-statistics/> - Forbes Advisor reports that the UK AI market is valued at over £21 billion and is projected to grow to £1 trillion by 2035. The number of UK AI companies has increased by over 600% in the last decade. Additionally, around one in six UK organisations, totaling 432,000, have embraced at least one AI technology. ([forbes.com](https://www.forbes.com/uk/advisor/business/software/uk-artificial-intelligence-ai-statistics/?utm_source=openai))
6. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ai-activity-in-uk-businesses/ai-activity-in-uk-businesses-executive-summary> - Government data indicates that approximately 15% of UK businesses have adopted at least one AI technology, equating to 432,000 companies. The adoption rate varies by company size, with 68% of large companies, 34% of medium-sized companies, and 15% of small companies having adopted AI. ([gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ai-activity-in-uk-businesses/ai-activity-in-uk-businesses-executive-summary?utm_source=openai))
7. <https://www.aboutamazon.co.uk/news/aws/aws-unlocking-ai-report-uk-business-adoption> - An AWS report reveals that AI adoption in the UK has grown by 33% in the last year, with more than half (52%) of businesses now using AI. The report also highlights that at least one business adopts AI every 60 seconds in the UK. ([aboutamazon.co.uk](https://www.aboutamazon.co.uk/news/aws/aws-unlocking-ai-report-uk-business-adoption?utm_source=openai))