# Top UK law firms accelerate AI adoption as client demand grows



The UK’s largest law firms are racing ahead in the adoption of artificial intelligence, according to new data from Thomson Reuters. Nearly 80 per cent of the top 20 firms have implemented third-party AI tools, while almost half are developing bespoke systems or partnering to build customised platforms. More than half are also providing AI training to their lawyers, and six firms have invested in AI start-ups or created in-house incubators to drive innovation.

Client engagement is keeping pace with internal investment. All of the top 20 firms have produced AI-focused reports or staged high-profile events to showcase their expertise, and all but one are actively promoting AI to clients. By contrast, among the next 20 firms only around 60 per cent advertise AI use and half have adopted third-party tools, underlining a widening gap between the elite and mid-tier. Across the top 40 firms, 78 per cent now promote their AI adoption, up sharply from 60 per cent a year ago.

The professionalisation of AI within firms is also advancing. The proportion of top practices with designated heads of AI has risen from 35 per cent to 45 per cent in the past year, while more than three-quarters have set up internal digital transformation teams. Smaller firms lag behind, with only a third creating dedicated AI departments. Yet sector-wide, just 24 per cent of law firms have formal AI strategies, leaving many still integrating AI without long-term planning.

Rising client expectations are a major driver. Thomson Reuters found adoption of AI among corporate legal departments and law firms has nearly doubled in a year, from 14 per cent to 26 per cent. Almost 60 per cent of corporate clients now look for panel firms that use AI, largely to gain efficiency and cut costs, while 8 per cent explicitly mandate generative AI in tender requirements.

“The UK’s very largest law firms are responding to pressure to adopt and integrate AI tools — but the next tier of law firms appears to be adapting more slowly,” said Raghu Ramanathan, president of legal professionals at Thomson Reuters. He warned this uneven pace is creating a perceived gap in expertise that mid-market firms must close to remain competitive.

The findings mark a pivotal moment for the UK legal sector. While the biggest firms are positioning themselves as leaders in AI-enabled legal services through investment, training and branding, the challenge remains to extend adoption more widely. Formalising strategies and fostering broader inclusion will be essential if the UK is to maintain its global leadership in AI-driven legal innovation.

Created by [Amplify](https://www.hbmadvisory.com/amplify): AI-augmented, human-curated content.

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.legalcheek.com/2025/09/big-uk-law-firms-out-in-front-in-ai-tech-race/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.lawgazette.co.uk/news/uks-biggest-law-firms-race-to-lead-ai-adoption/5124536.article> - A recent study by Thomson Reuters reveals that 78% of the top 40 UK law firms now advertise their use of AI, up from 60% last year. Among the top 20 firms, 45% have appointed a head of AI, and over 75% have in-house teams dedicated to digital transformation. However, only 24% of UK law firms have a formal AI adoption strategy, with 43% proceeding without one. Raghu Ramanathan, president of legal professionals at Thomson Reuters, noted that clients increasingly recognise AI's potential to enhance productivity and client service, influencing their choice of law firms.
3. <https://www.lawcareers.net/Explore/News/Three-quarters-of-top-20-UK-law-firms-now-promote-use-of-AI-to-clients-02092024> - Research from Thomson Reuters indicates that 75% of the top 20 UK law firms actively promote their use of AI to clients, highlighting their leadership in embracing transformative technology. In contrast, only 45% of firms ranked 21-40 by size are doing the same, underscoring a widening gap between larger and mid-tier firms in AI integration. The study also found that 79% of UK lawyers believe AI will have a transformative impact on the legal sector, with the technology's potential to enhance productivity and client service creating widespread enthusiasm.
4. <https://www.lawcareers.net/Explore/News/Corporate-clients-push-for-AI-adoption-in-law-firms-25042025> - A Thomson Reuters study reveals that corporate clients are increasingly requiring law firms to use generative AI in their operations. The research highlights a significant rise in AI adoption within the legal sector, with the percentage of firms and in-house departments using AI jumping from 14% to 26% over the past year. Notably, 59% of corporate law department respondents want their law firms to utilise AI, likely in hopes of reducing legal costs, and 8% of clients are now specifying in their tender documents that law firms should use generative AI.
5. <https://www.lawgazette.co.uk/news/uks-biggest-law-firms-race-to-lead-ai-adoption/5124536.article> - A recent study by Thomson Reuters reveals that 78% of the top 40 UK law firms now advertise their use of AI, up from 60% last year. Among the top 20 firms, 45% have appointed a head of AI, and over 75% have in-house teams dedicated to digital transformation. However, only 24% of UK law firms have a formal AI adoption strategy, with 43% proceeding without one. Raghu Ramanathan, president of legal professionals at Thomson Reuters, noted that clients increasingly recognise AI's potential to enhance productivity and client service, influencing their choice of law firms.
6. <https://www.lawcareers.net/Explore/News/Corporate-clients-push-for-AI-adoption-in-law-firms-25042025> - A Thomson Reuters study reveals that corporate clients are increasingly requiring law firms to use generative AI in their operations. The research highlights a significant rise in AI adoption within the legal sector, with the percentage of firms and in-house departments using AI jumping from 14% to 26% over the past year. Notably, 59% of corporate law department respondents want their law firms to utilise AI, likely in hopes of reducing legal costs, and 8% of clients are now specifying in their tender documents that law firms should use generative AI.
7. <https://www.lawcareers.net/Explore/News/Corporate-clients-push-for-AI-adoption-in-law-firms-25042025> - A Thomson Reuters study reveals that corporate clients are increasingly requiring law firms to use generative AI in their operations. The research highlights a significant rise in AI adoption within the legal sector, with the percentage of firms and in-house departments using AI jumping from 14% to 26% over the past year. Notably, 59% of corporate law department respondents want their law firms to utilise AI, likely in hopes of reducing legal costs, and 8% of clients are now specifying in their tender documents that law firms should use generative AI.