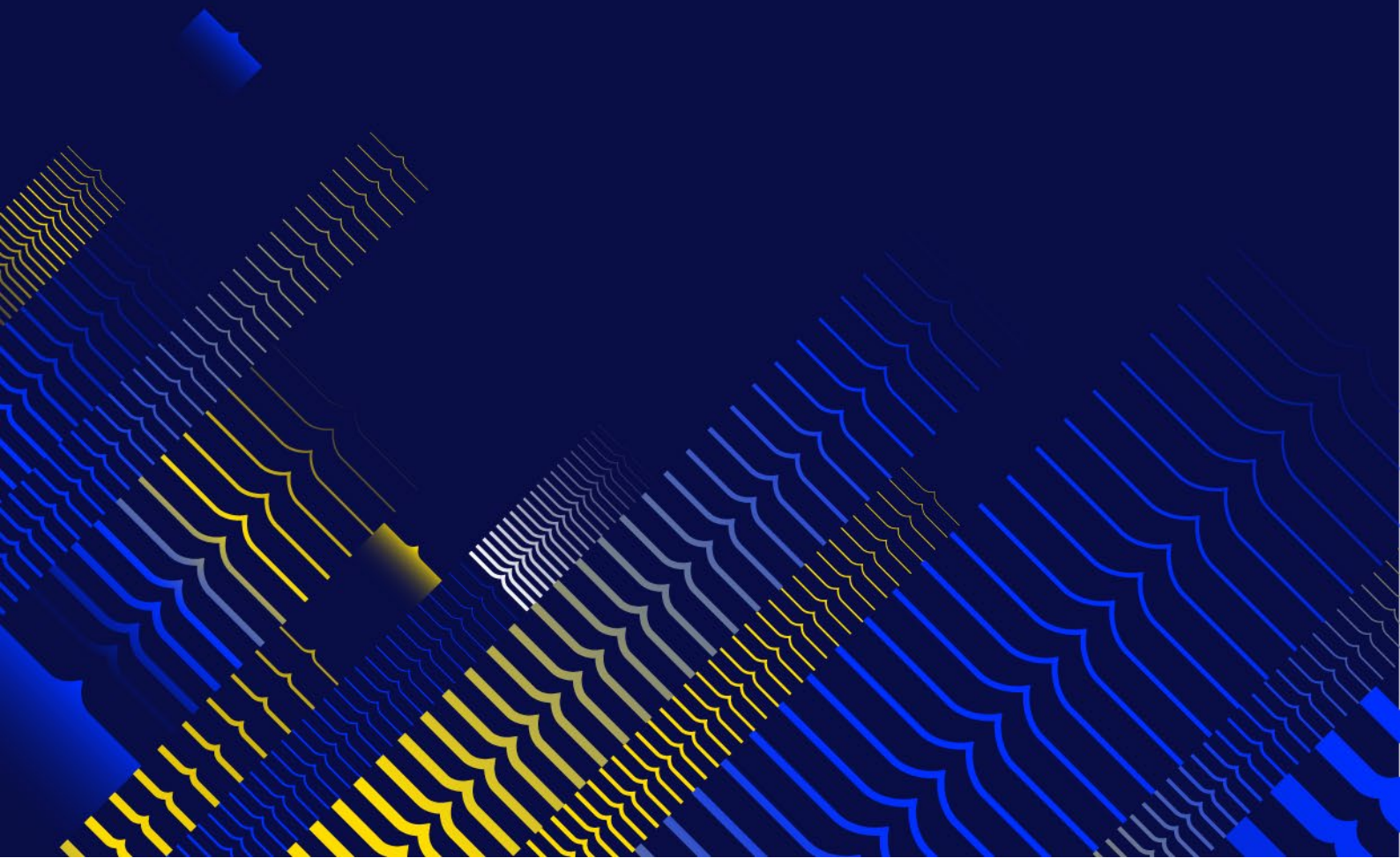
Business Technology Report 2026

A CPA Australia survey of technology usage by business



ISBN: 978-1-922690-68-5

LEGAL NOTICE

The reproduction, adaptation, communication or sale of these materials ('the Materials') is strictly prohibited unless expressly permitted under Division 3 of the Copyright Act 1968 (Cth). For permission to reproduce any part of these materials, please contact the CPA Australia Legal Business Unit - legal@cpaaustralia.com.au.

COPYRIGHT NOTICE

© CPA Australia Ltd (ABN 64 008 392 452) ("CPA Australia"), 2026. All rights reserved.

DISCLAIMER

CPA Australia had used reasonable care and skill in compiling the content of these materials. However, CPA Australia makes no warranty that the materials are accurate and up to date. These materials do not constitute the provision of professional advice whether legal or otherwise. Users should seek their own independent advice prior to relying on or entering into any commitment based on the materials. The materials are purely published for reference purposes alone. CPA Australia, their employees, agents and consultants exclude completely all liability to any person for loss or damage of any kind including but not limited to legal costs, indirect, special or consequential loss or damage (however caused, including by negligence) arising from or relating in any way to the materials and/or any use of the materials. Where any law prohibits the exclusion of such liability, then to the maximum extent permitted by law, CPA Australia's liability for breach of the warranty will, at CPA Australia's option, be limited to the supply of the materials again, or the payment of the cost of having them supplied again.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary 4
Key Findings 5
About the survey 6
Artificial intelligence trends 7
- The state of AI adoption and usage across organisations 7
- What impact is AI having on business? 12
- How AI is being used in accounting and finance teams 14
- Approaches to AI governance 15

Cybersecurity 19
- Business impacts from cyber incidents 19

Business technology priorities for 2027 22
- Technologies businesses expect to increase their use of over the next 12 months 22

Recommendations 25

Executive Summary

Artificial intelligence (AI) adoption has become mainstream. The organisations that will realise the greatest value will be those that integrate AI across their operations, strengthen governance, build workforce capability and maintain cyber resilience.

AI adoption is now mainstream, but deeper integration is needed to unlock greater value

- **89 per cent of businesses now use AI, up significantly from 49 per cent in 2022.**
- **However, only 14 per cent have deeply embedded AI across their organisation.**
- **Businesses with stronger profitability are more likely to have AI integrated across multiple functions (63 per cent vs 50 per cent).**

Although AI adoption is now widespread, it has yet to translate into organisation-wide transformation, with only a small proportion of businesses reporting that AI is fully integrated across their operations. This highlights significant untapped potential for organisations to generate greater value by integrating AI more deeply into workflows, decision-making and business processes. More advanced applications, such as agentic AI, are beginning to emerge but remain far less common than general-purpose AI applications.

Businesses using AI increasingly report productivity gains, improved employee experiences and greater efficiency and accuracy in routine tasks. However, AI is not without its challenges. Data privacy, responsible use, appropriate human oversight and keeping pace with rapid technological change remain key barriers for many organisations. Strong governance, high-quality data, clear accountability and effective risk management will be critical to realising AI's benefits safely and responsibly.

Governance maturity will shape future outcomes

- **Nearly 3 in 10 organisations provide little or no oversight of AI use.**

As AI integration accelerates, governance frameworks will become increasingly important determinants of the value organisations realise from AI. While most organisations have implemented some form of AI governance, many still allow AI use with little oversight or guidance. Addressing this gap will help organisations maximise the value of their AI investments while ensuring AI is integrated responsibly and consistently.

Growing reliance on AI reinforces the importance of cybersecurity

- **19 per cent reported some level of financial loss or operational disruption in 2026 due to cyber incidents, down from 22 per cent in 2025.**

Although reported cyber impacts declined slightly in 2026, cybersecurity remains a critical business risk. As organisations become more reliant on AI and data-driven technologies, strong cybersecurity practices will remain foundational to maintaining trust and resilience.

Businesses are preparing for the next phase of AI

- **55 per cent expect increased investment in data analytics.**
- **52 per cent expect greater use of AI embedded in workplace software.**
- **45 per cent expect increased use of agentic AI.**

Looking ahead, accounting and finance professionals expect businesses to increase investment in data analytics, AI embedded within workplace software and agentic AI tools in 2027. These findings indicate growing confidence that AI can enhance productivity, improve decision-making and create new opportunities for business growth and value creation.

Key Findings

01

AI adoption is now mainstream, with deeper integration offering the next opportunity for value creation

While AI adoption has become widespread, most organisations have yet to fully embed AI into their business. Deeper integration represents the next opportunity to realise greater business value from AI.

02

Businesses are increasingly realising value from AI

Businesses increasingly report that AI is improving productivity, enhancing employee experiences, and increasing the accuracy and efficiency of routine tasks. These benefits demonstrate AI's growing contribution to business performance and operational effectiveness.

03

Privacy and workforce challenges are slowing AI integration

Data privacy concerns, overreliance on AI, reduced human oversight and the pace of technological change are the biggest AI challenges faced by business. Addressing these challenges will be important to enabling responsible and effective integration.

04

AI governance maturity is not keeping pace with adoption

While most organisations have implemented some form of AI governance, many continue to allow AI use with limited oversight or guidance. This gap may be constraining such organisations from realising the full benefits of AI while managing associated risks effectively.

05

Future technology investment is focused on AI-enabled capabilities

Businesses are expected to increase investment in data analytics, AI embedded within workplace software and agentic AI in 2027, reflecting growing confidence in AI's potential to improve productivity, decision-making and business performance.

06

AI is becoming embedded across a broader range of finance activities

While data analytics remain the most common AI use case in finance teams, organisations are increasingly applying AI to research, communications, administrative automation, data quality, risk reviews and workplace learning.

07

Growing reliance on AI and data is increasing the importance of cyber resilience

Although most businesses reported no financial loss or operational disruption from cybersecurity incidents in 2026, cybersecurity remains a critical business risk. As organisations become increasingly reliant on AI and data, strong cyber resilience remains essential for maintaining trust and supporting business continuity.

About the survey

CPA Australia's Business Technology Report 2026 examines how emerging technology trends are shaping business, with a particular focus on AI. The implications of AI on accounting and finance professionals are examined in a separate report, "*The future of work for the accounting and finance profession*."

The report presents the findings of CPA Australia's sixth annual Business Technology Survey, conducted between July and August 2026. The survey received 1,679 completed responses from accounting and finance professionals from a range of markets, including Australia, the Chinese Mainland, Hong Kong, Malaysia and Singapore.

Respondents represented organisations of varying sizes, with 38 per cent working in organisations with 500 or more employees, 30 per cent in organisations with 50 to 499 employees and 30 per cent in organisations with fewer than 50 employees.

More than one-third of respondents held C-suite or other senior leadership positions, while a further third held middle management or supervisory positions.

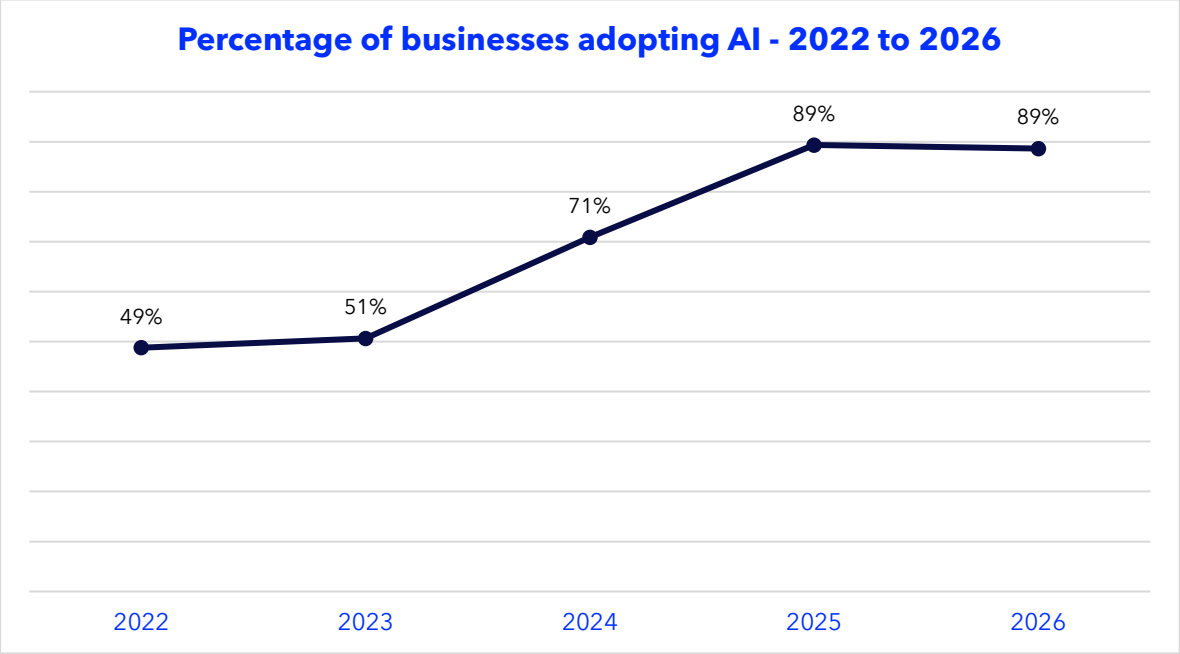
Artificial intelligence trends

The state of AI adoption and usage across organisations

AI adoption has matured across the surveyed markets, with deeper integration now key to unlocking greater business value.

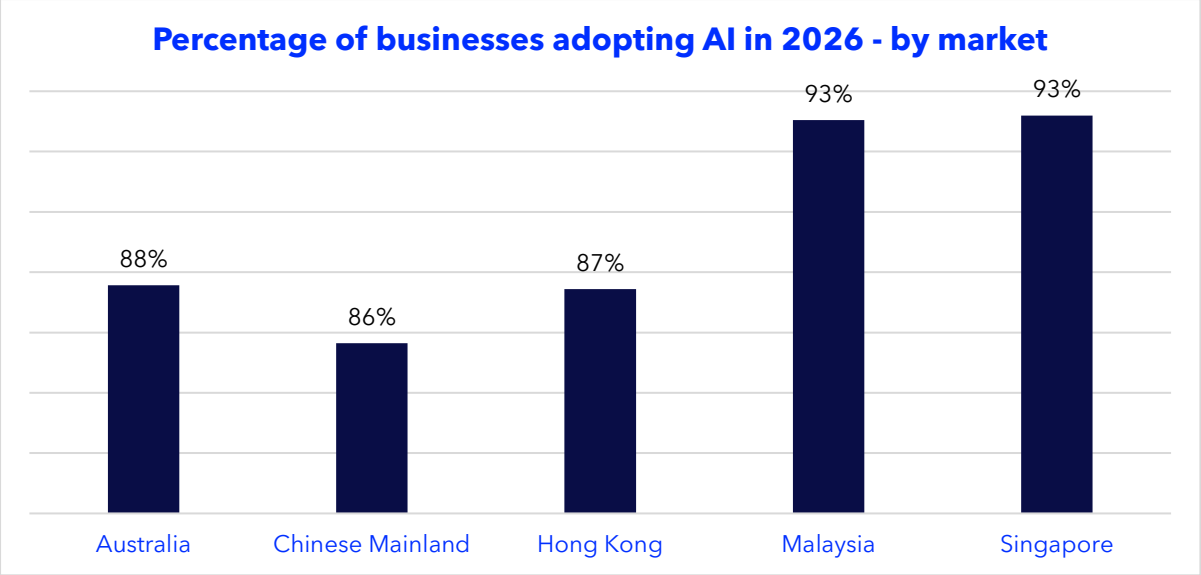
Overall, AI use remains widespread, with 89 per cent of businesses reporting that they use AI. However, more advanced applications such as custom-built AI solutions and agentic AI are less common, and only a small proportion of organisations report that AI is extensively used across their operations. These findings suggest the next phase of AI will be driven by deeper integration into business processes, workflows and decision-making rather than broader AI adoption.

Businesses rapidly increased their adoption of AI between 2022 and 2025, reaching near-universal levels by 2025. Given this, it is unsurprising that AI adoption remained stable in 2026.



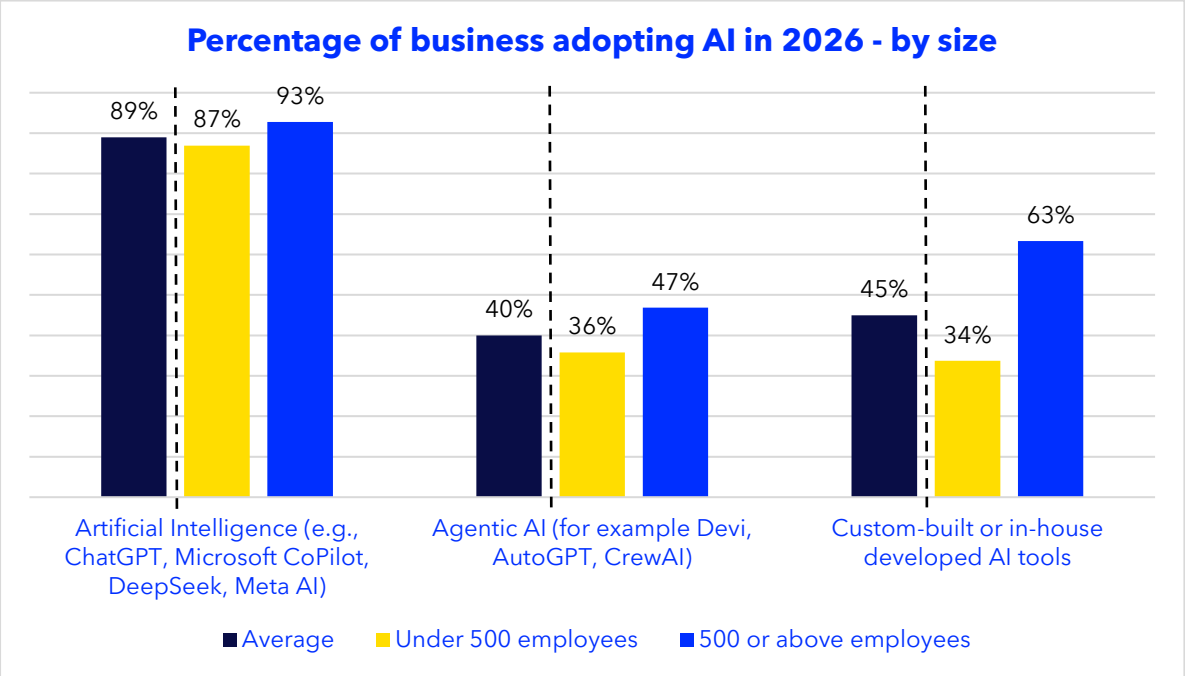
AI adoption is now firmly established across all surveyed markets.

Malaysia and Singapore recorded the highest rates of adoption, with 93 per cent of businesses in both markets reporting AI use. Australia (88 per cent), Hong Kong (87 per cent) and Chinese Mainland (86 per cent) also reported similarly high adoption rates.

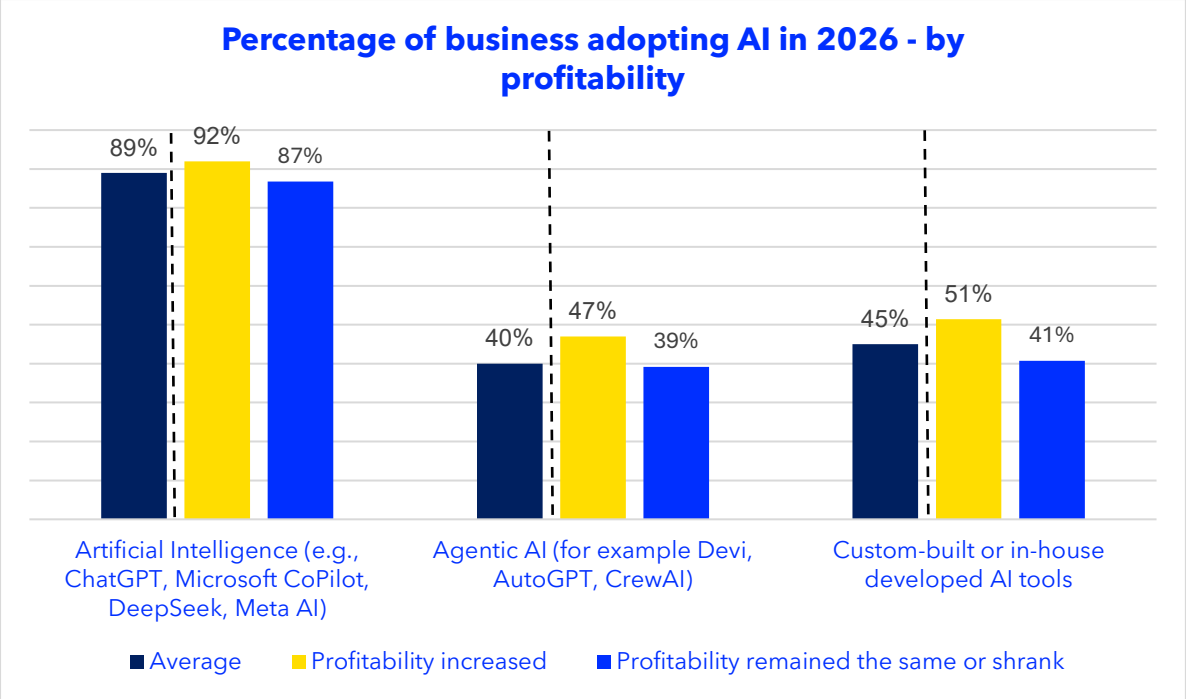


AI adoption is similarly high across businesses of all sizes, indicating that access to AI technologies is not limited to larger organisations. The challenge for business, especially smaller businesses are now less about adoption and more about effectively integrating AI to maximise value, supported by appropriate governance and oversight.

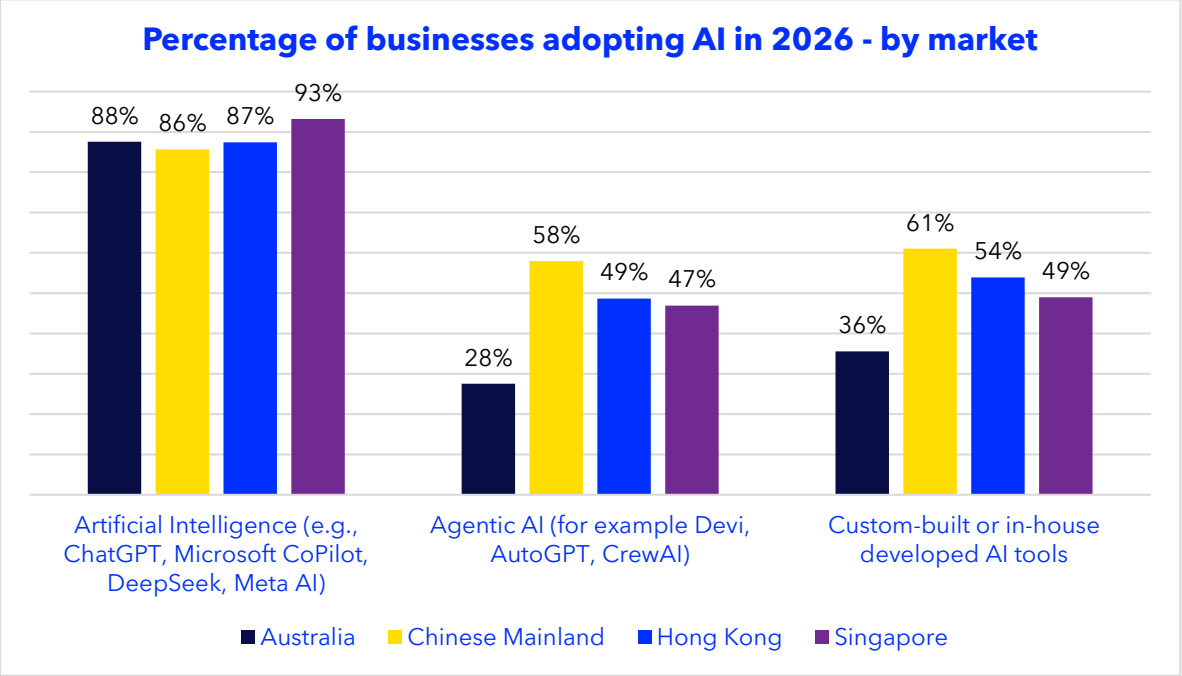
Although the use of large language models (LLMs) such as ChatGPT, Microsoft Copilot, Claude and DeepSeek are widely used, more advanced AI applications remain less common. Only 45 per cent of respondents reported using custom-built or in-house AI solutions, while 40 per cent reported adopting agentic AI. Larger businesses are significantly more likely to develop AI tools in-house, likely reflecting greater access to resources and technical expertise.



More profitable businesses are also more likely to adopt AI, including custom-built AI tools and agentic AI. While the survey does not establish causation, the results suggest a relationship between stronger AI adoption and business performance.



Adoption of more advanced AI applications varies considerably between markets, with businesses in the Chinese Mainland reporting the highest use of both agentic AI (58 per cent) and custom-built AI tools (61 per cent). This may reflect a greater focus by Chinese businesses on developing and deploying AI solutions tailored to specific needs, rather than relying on off-the-shelf tools.

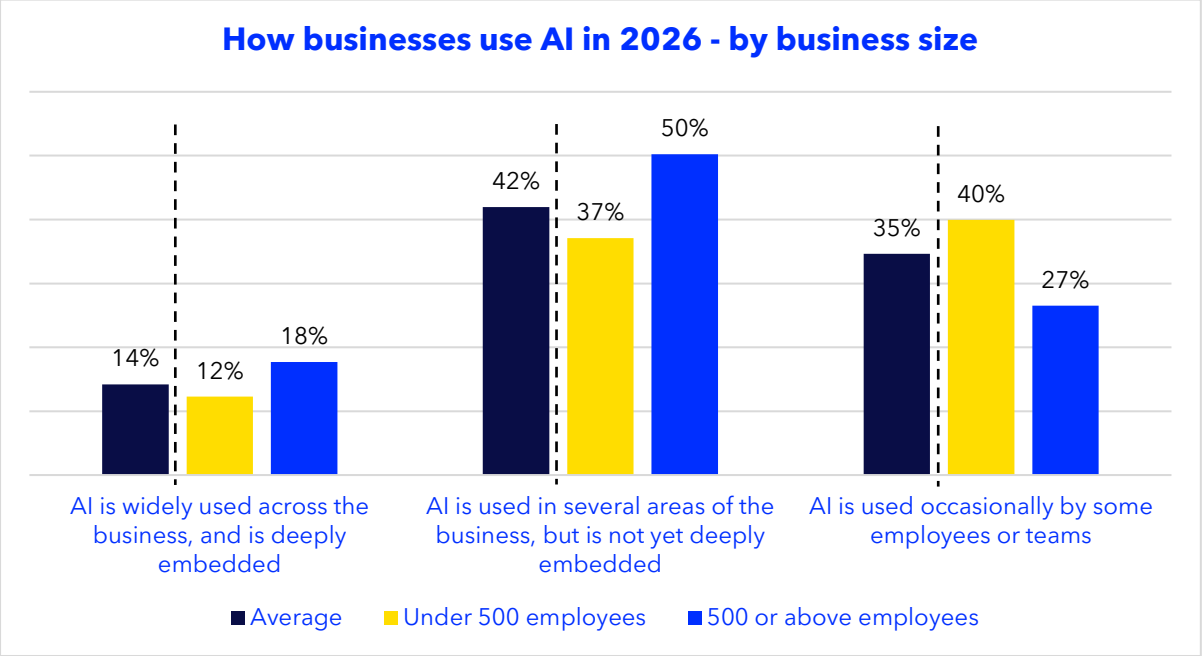


Despite widespread AI adoption, deep integration across business operations remains relatively limited. While 89 per cent of businesses report adopting AI to some degree, only 14 per cent say it is extensively embedded across their entire operations. This result is largely unchanged from 2025 and suggests many organisations remain in the early stages of AI integration.

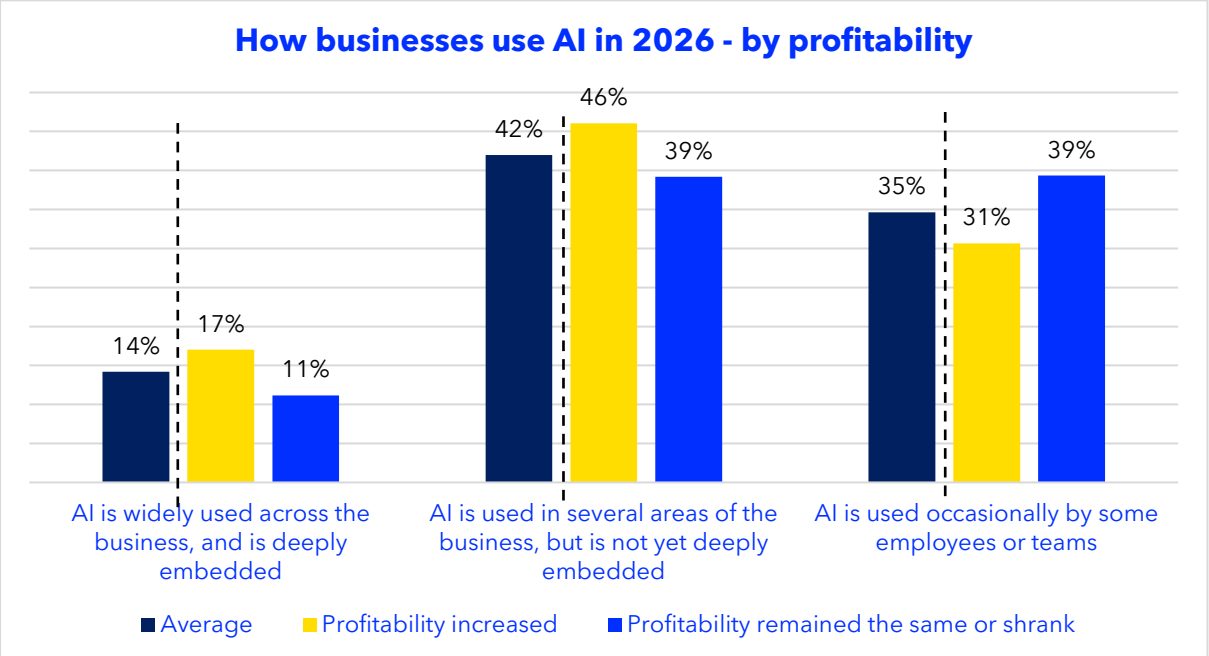
Larger organisations, more profitable businesses and businesses in Hong Kong and the Chinese Mainland report the highest levels of AI integration.

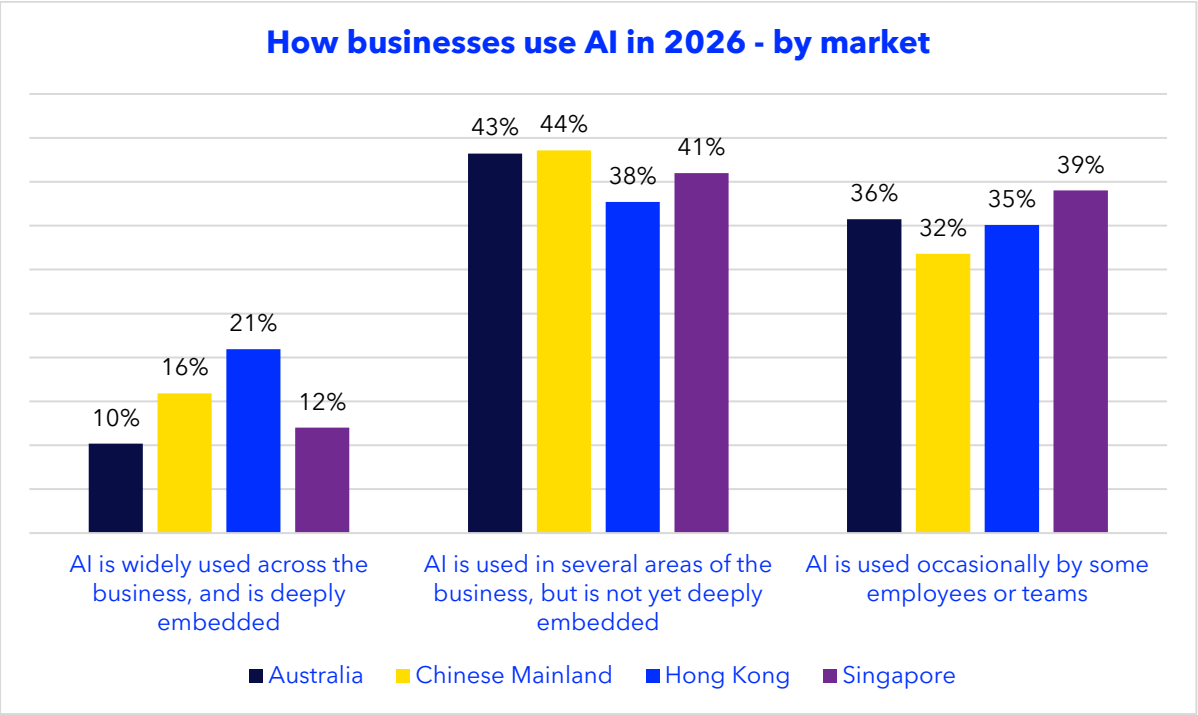
Nearly two-thirds (63 per cent) of businesses that reported higher profitability in 2026 indicated that AI is either widely used across their entire business or across several business functions, compared with 50 per cent of businesses whose profitability remained unchanged or shrank, indicating a link between strong AI use and profitability.

Similarly, Chinese Mainland businesses are the most likely to report that AI has been integrated across multiple areas of their business or throughout the entire organisation (60 per cent). In contrast, Australian businesses are the least likely to report full and partial AI integration (53 per cent).

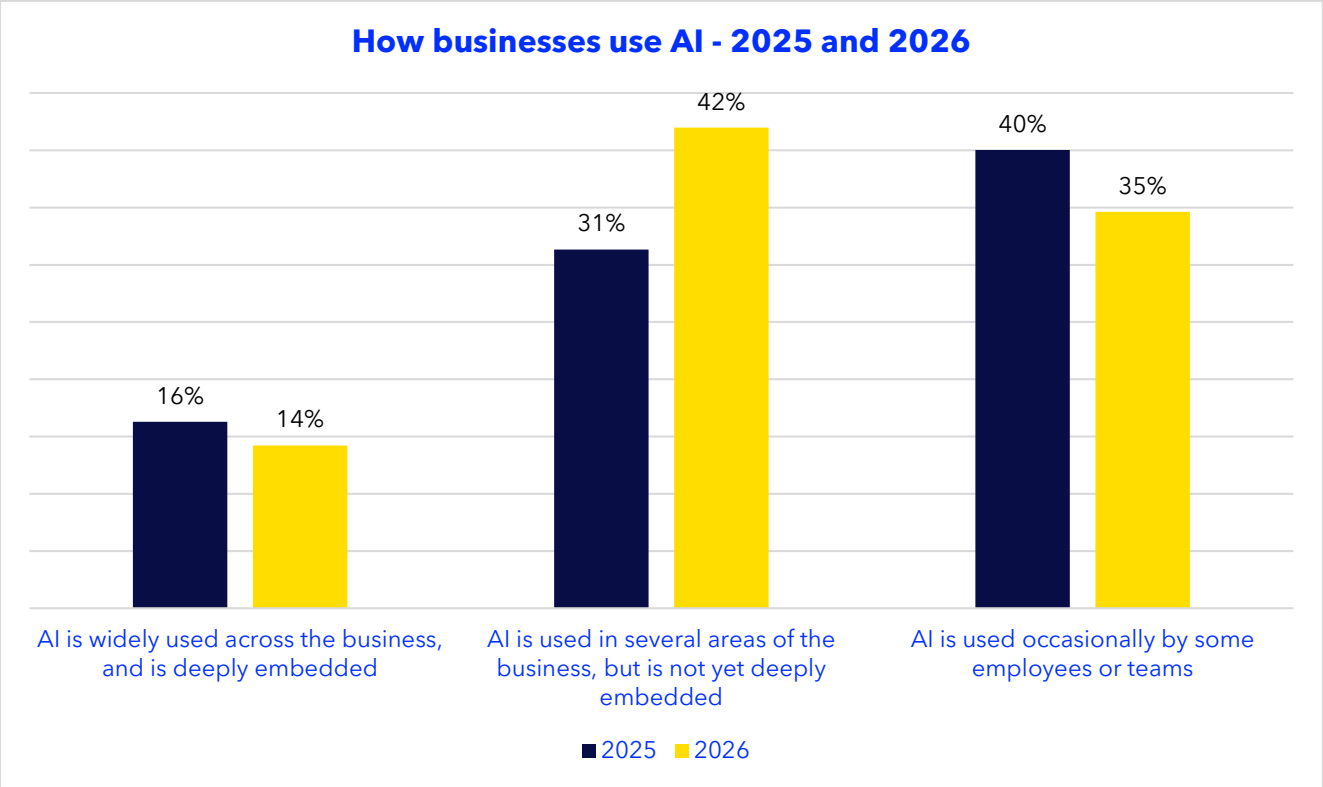


While the survey does not establish causation, the association between AI integration and profitability suggests that organisations which embed AI more broadly are already realising value from their technology investments.





Although deep integration remains uncommon, there are signs that organisations are progressing beyond isolated AI adoption. Compared with 2025, more businesses reported deploying AI across several areas (42 per cent in 2026 compared with 31 per cent in 2025), indicating that increasing numbers of organisations are moving beyond isolated or experimental AI use.

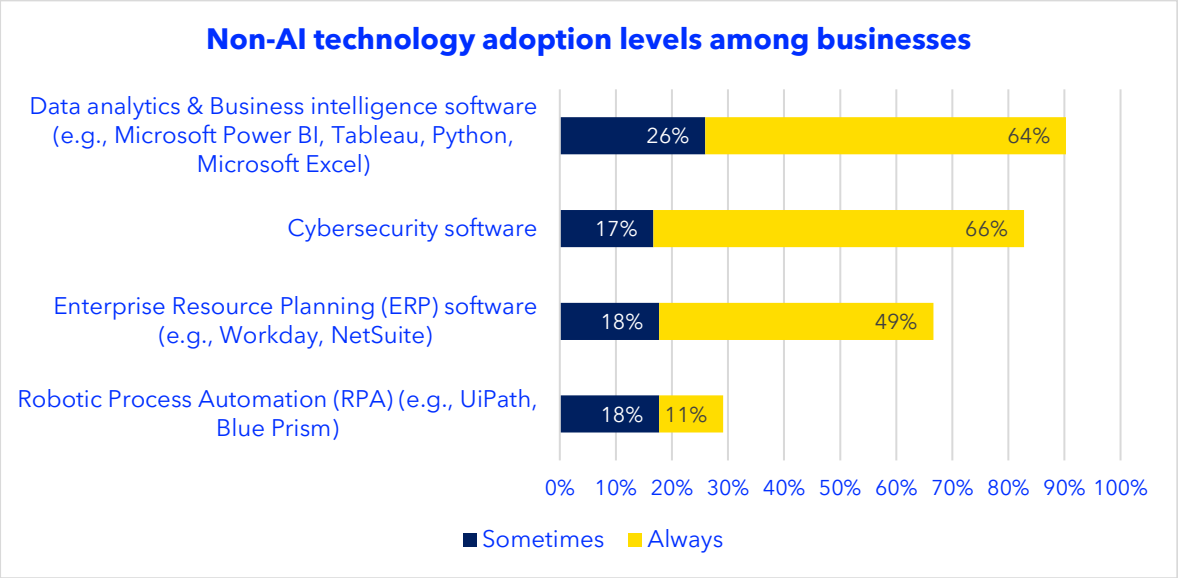


The findings suggest that future gains from AI will depend more on successful integration across business functions and workflows. Achieving this will require strong AI capabilities among employees and leaders, high-quality data, workflow redesign and a greater focus on evaluating return on investment, alongside robust governance, risk management, ethics and professional judgement.

Accounting and finance professionals are well placed to support this transition by helping organisations strengthen governance, manage risk, improve data quality, measure performance and realise value from AI investments.

In relation to other digital technologies, the survey found:

- Use of data analytics and business intelligence software remains widespread, with 90 per cent of respondents reporting that their business uses these technologies.
- Cybersecurity software continues to be widely used, with 84 per cent of respondents reporting its use.
- Enterprise resource planning (ERP) and customer relationship management (CRM) systems remain popular, with around two-thirds of respondents indicating their business uses these technologies.
- Robotic process automation (RPA) usage continued to fall, declining from 36 per cent in 2025 to 25 per cent in 2026. This may reflect a shift towards AI-enabled automation tools.



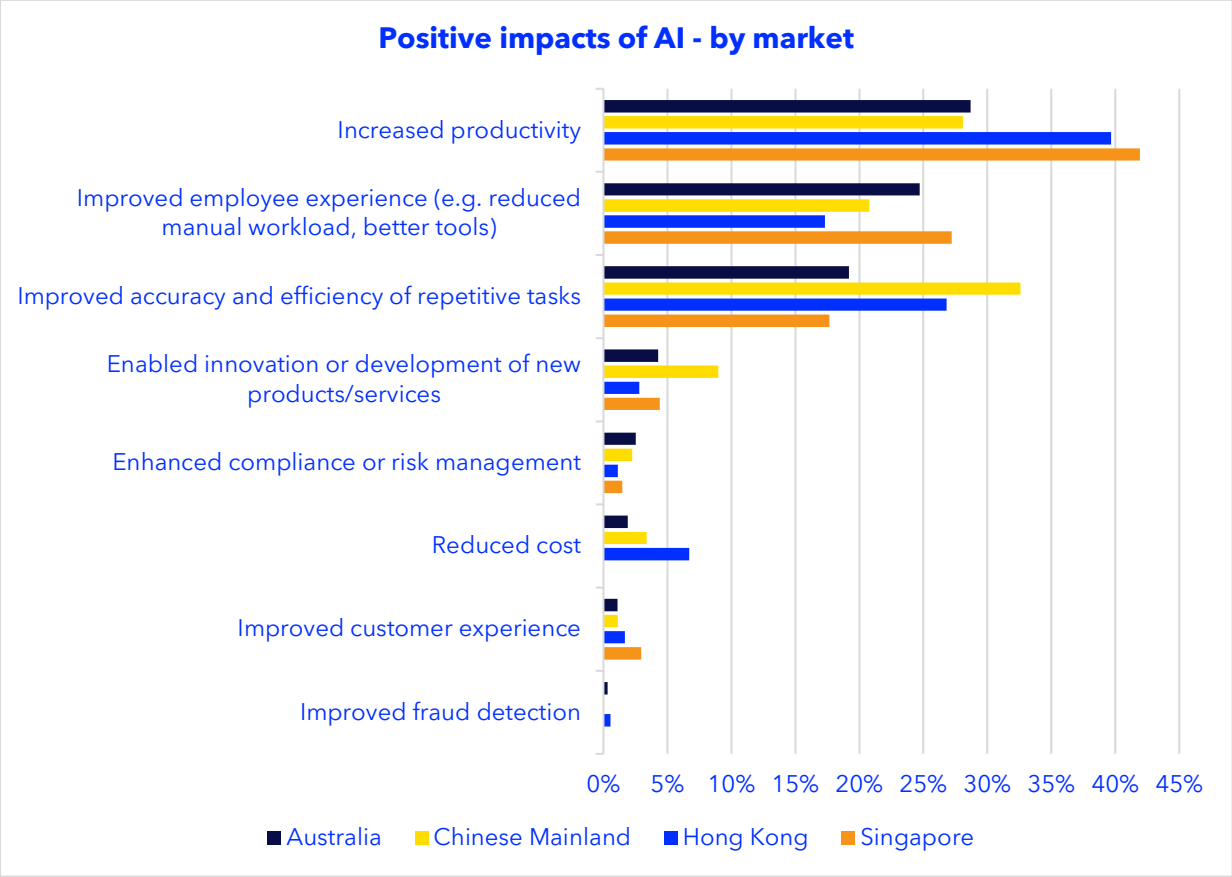
What impact is AI having on business?

Businesses are becoming more effective at converting AI into productivity and workforce benefits, although governance and implementation challenges remain.

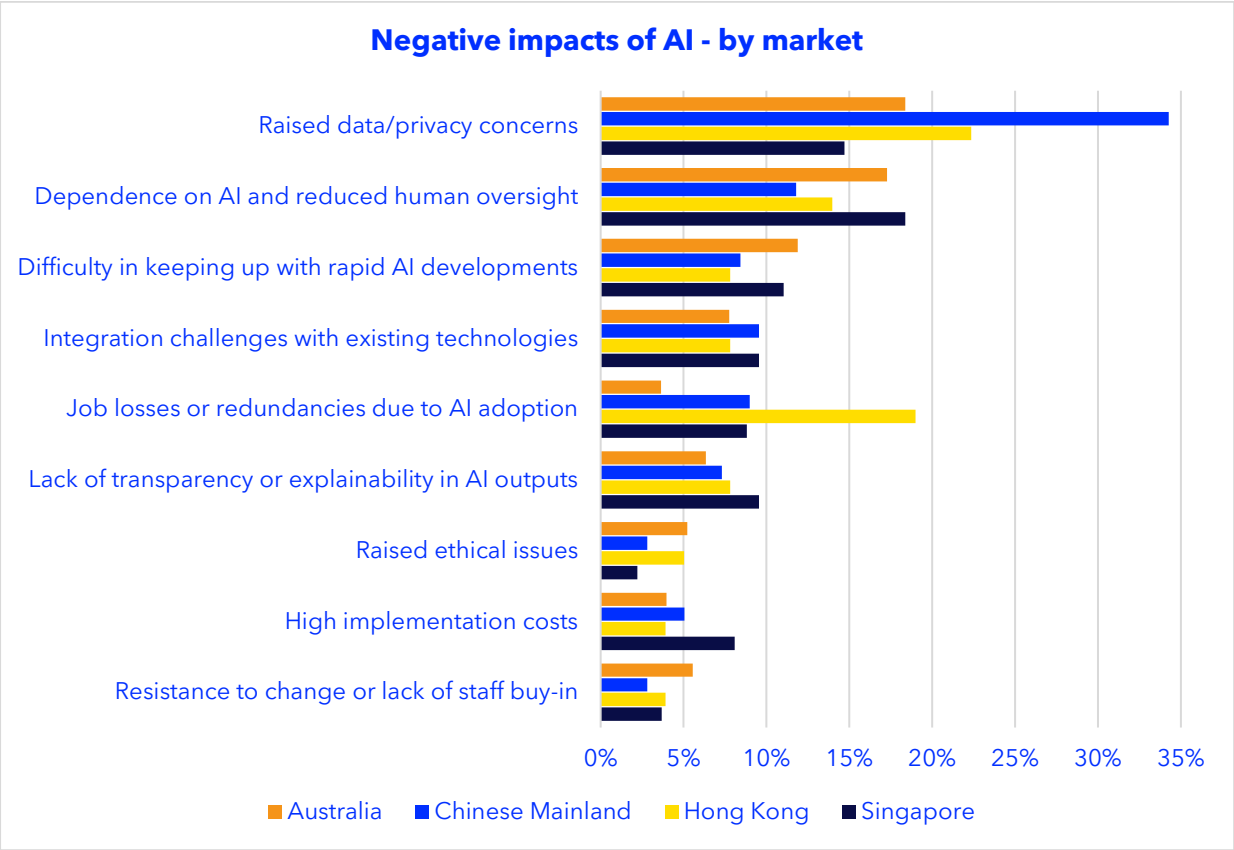
Improved productivity, enhanced employee experience, and greater accuracy and efficiency remain the most reported benefits of AI adoption. Compared with 2025, a greater proportion of businesses reported productivity gains and improvements in the employee experience. This suggests organisations are becoming more effective at applying AI to improve operational performance, streamline routine tasks and reduce manual effort.

Businesses in Singapore and Hong Kong are most likely to report productivity improvements from AI, while those in the Chinese Mainland are the most likely to report gains in the accuracy and efficiency of repetitive tasks. Chinese Mainland businesses are also the most likely to report that AI has enabled innovation and the development of new products or services.

Despite these benefits, relatively few businesses report that AI has fundamentally transformed their business model or become a major source of innovation. This suggests that, for most organisations, AI is currently delivering incremental operational improvements rather than transformational change.



Despite the benefits, challenges remain. Data privacy and security concerns remain the most cited challenge associated with AI adoption across all surveyed markets, particularly in the Chinese Mainland. Respondents also reported concerns about overreliance on AI, reduced human oversight and keeping up with rapid technology change. These challenges may limit an organisations' ability to integrate AI more deeply into their operations and fully realise its potential value.



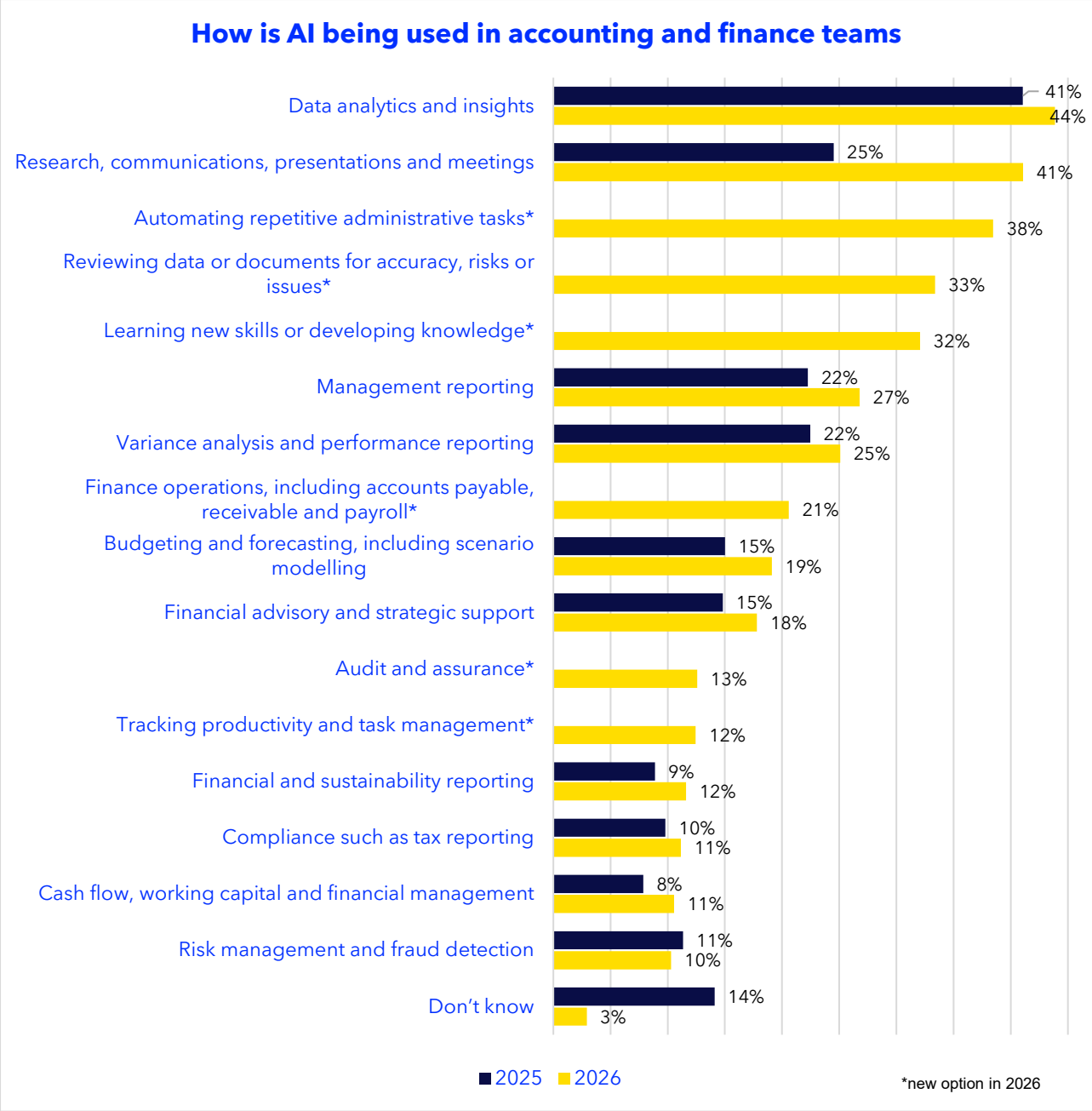
Taken together, the findings suggest that many organisations have moved beyond experimenting with AI and are beginning to realise operational benefits. However, achieving sustained value creation will depend on organisations successfully addressing governance, privacy, oversight and implementation challenges while embedding AI more effectively into business processes and decision-making.

How AI is being used in accounting and finance teams

AI use is expanding across a broader range of accounting and finance activities

While data analytics and insights remain the most common AI use case in finance teams, organisations are increasingly applying AI across a broader range of activities, including research, communications, administrative process automation, data quality, risk reviews and workplace learning. AI also continues to support management accounting activities, including management reporting, variance analysis and budgeting.

The growing range of applications suggests that AI is becoming increasingly embedded in everyday accounting and finance tasks rather than being confined to a limited number of specialised use cases.

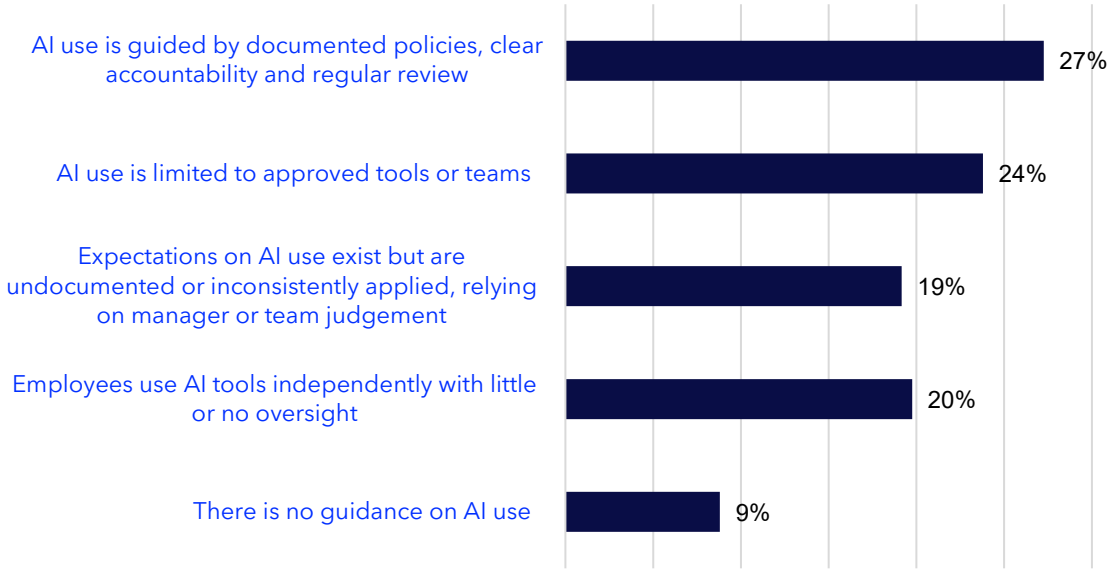


Approaches to AI governance

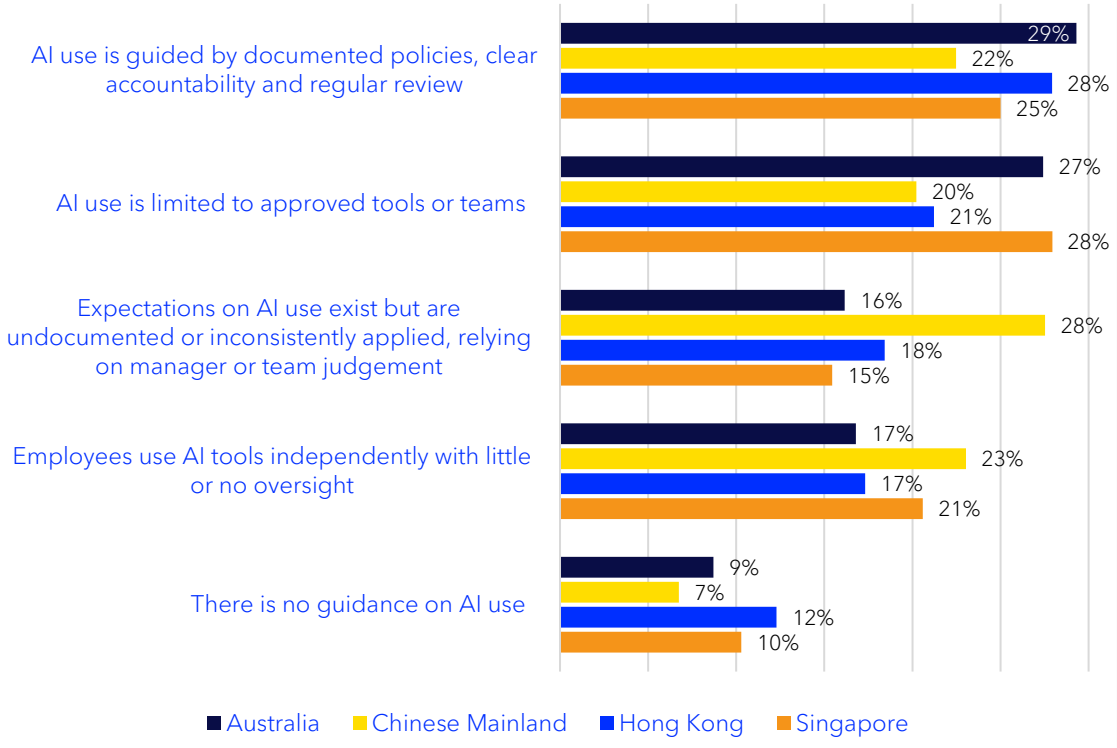
AI governance maturity is not keeping pace with AI adoption in some organisations.

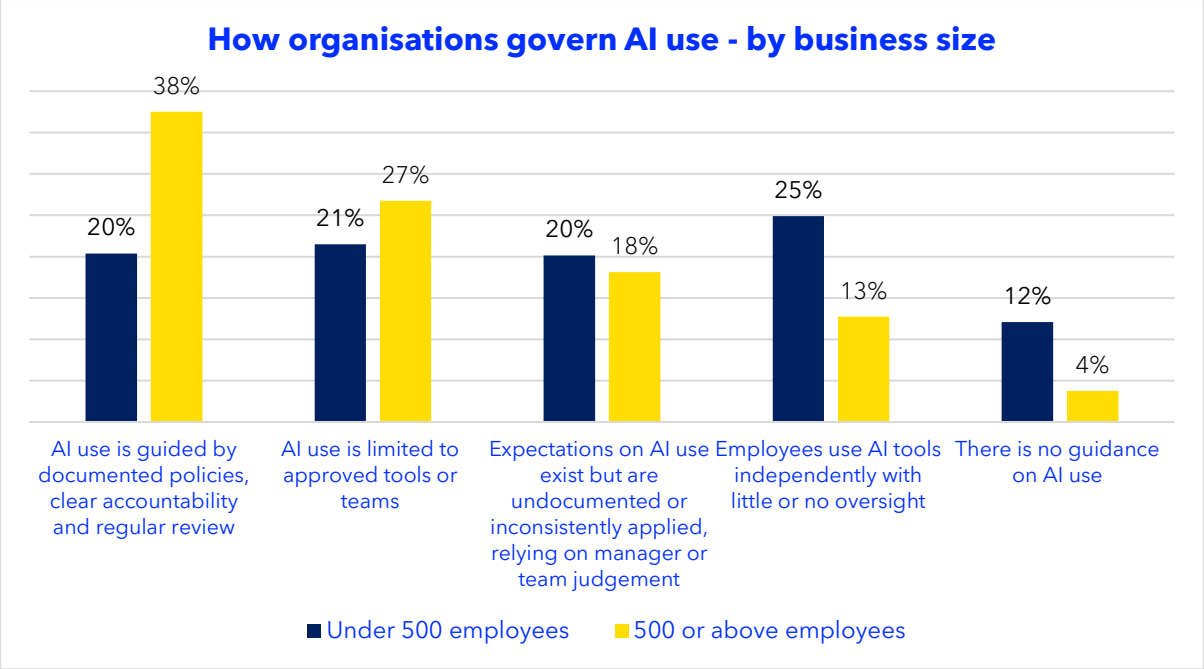
While most organisations have implemented some form of AI governance through policies, approved tools or controlled usage frameworks, 29 per cent of organisations still allow AI use with little oversight or provide no guidance at all. A further 19 per cent of respondents reported that their organisation has expectations regarding AI use, however these expectations are undocumented, inconsistently applied or left to managerial discretion.

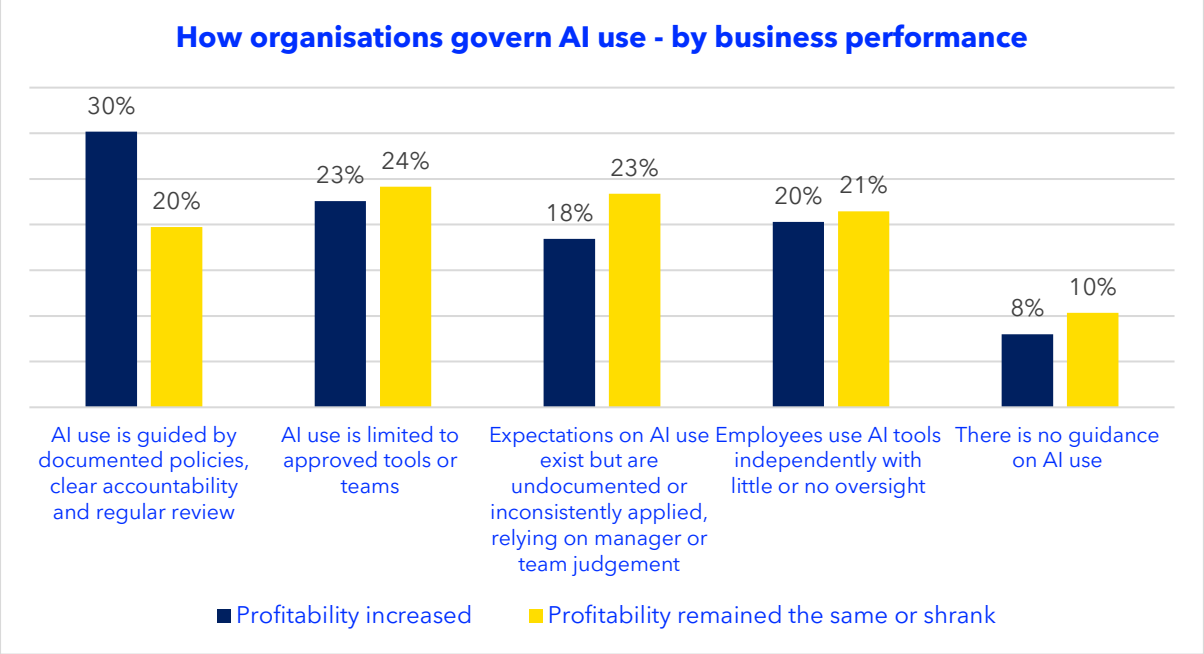
How business govern AI use



How business govern AI use - by location







Governance maturity varies across organisations. Larger businesses are more likely to have established formal AI governance arrangements, while smaller businesses are more likely to rely on informal oversight or allow employees to use AI tools independently.

This highlights a governance gap at a time when more organisations should be seeking to expand AI use and integrate it more deeply into business operations.

Effective governance helps organisations deploy AI responsibly, align its use with business objectives and provide employees with greater clarity about appropriate use. Well-designed governance frameworks can also support the responsible scaling of AI and help manage emerging risks.

Organisations that have not yet established AI governance arrangements can draw on practical guidance and resources developed by governments and regulators. For example, Australian

businesses can access resources released by the government to support the development of AI policies.

As organisations move beyond AI adoption and towards deeper integration, those with well-defined and understood governance frameworks are likely to be better positioned to build trust, strengthen accountability, manage risk and realise greater value from their AI investments.

Cybersecurity

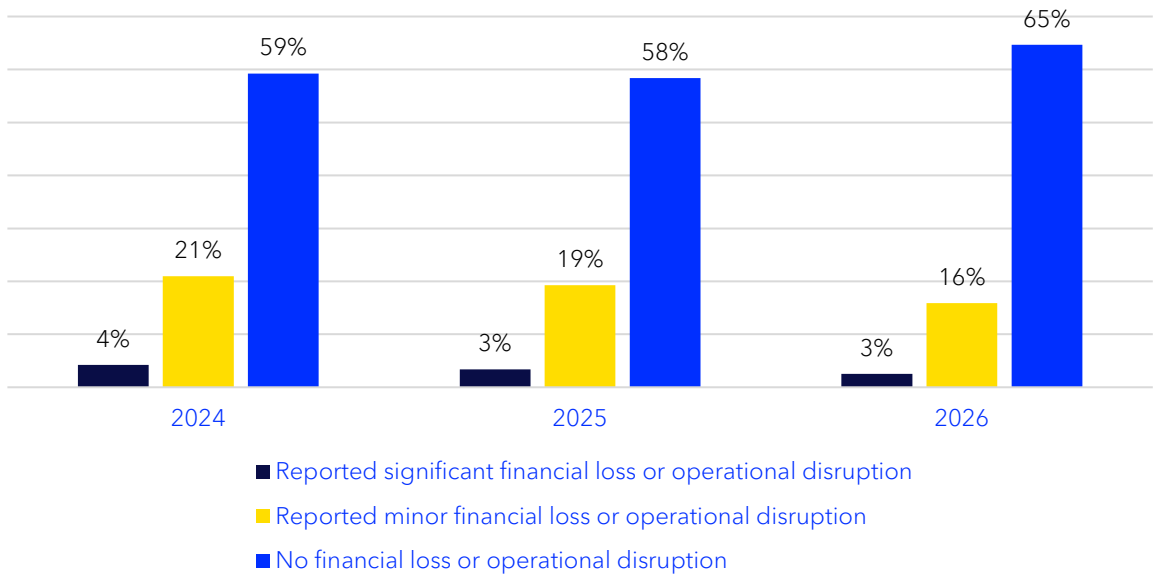
Business impacts from cyber incidents

Serious business impacts from cyber incidents remain uncommon

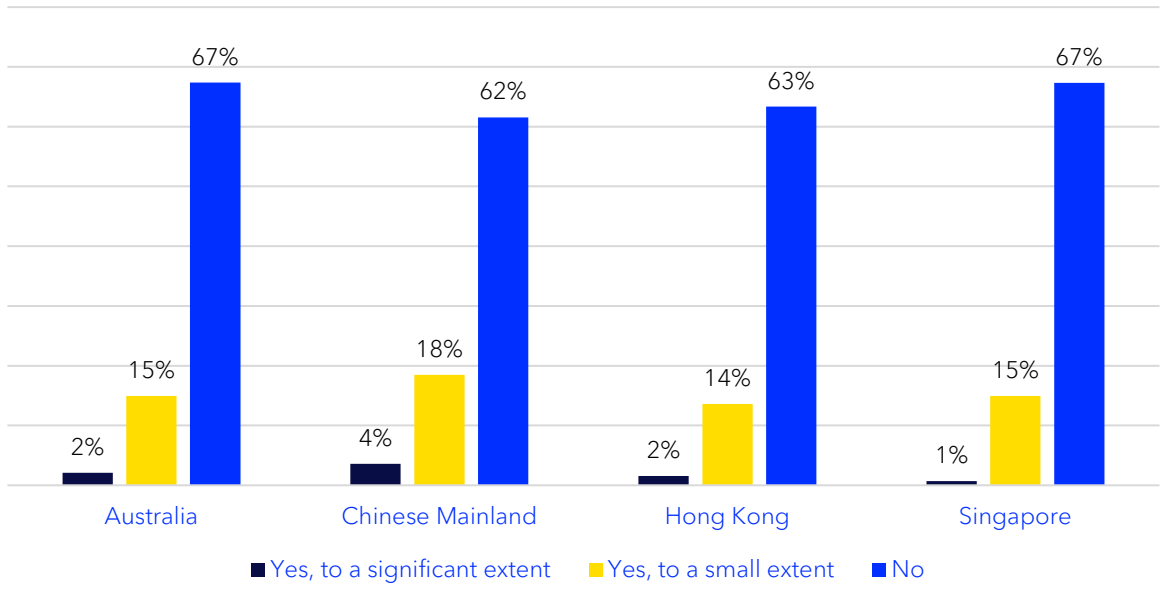
In 2026, 65 per cent of businesses reported no financial loss or operational disruption from a cybersecurity incident in the previous 12 months, up from 58 per cent in 2025.

A further 16 per cent reported minor financial loss or operational impact resulting from a cybersecurity incident, while only 3 per cent reported a significant financial loss or major operational disruption.

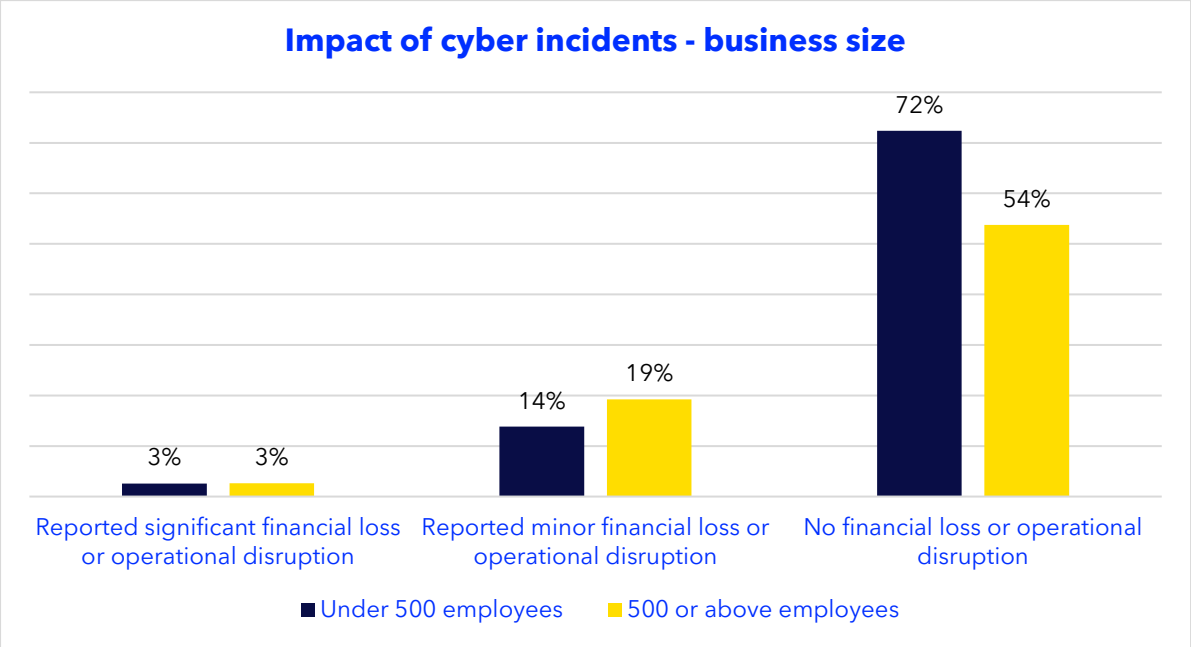
Impact of cyber incidents on business

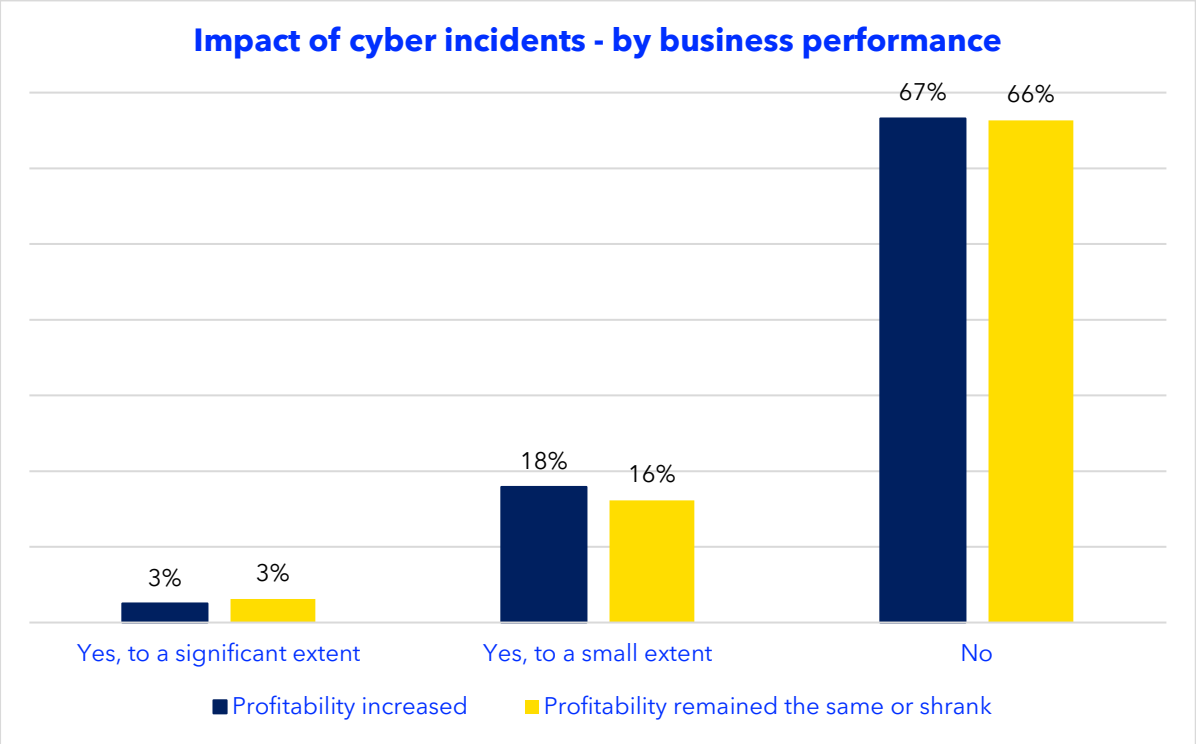


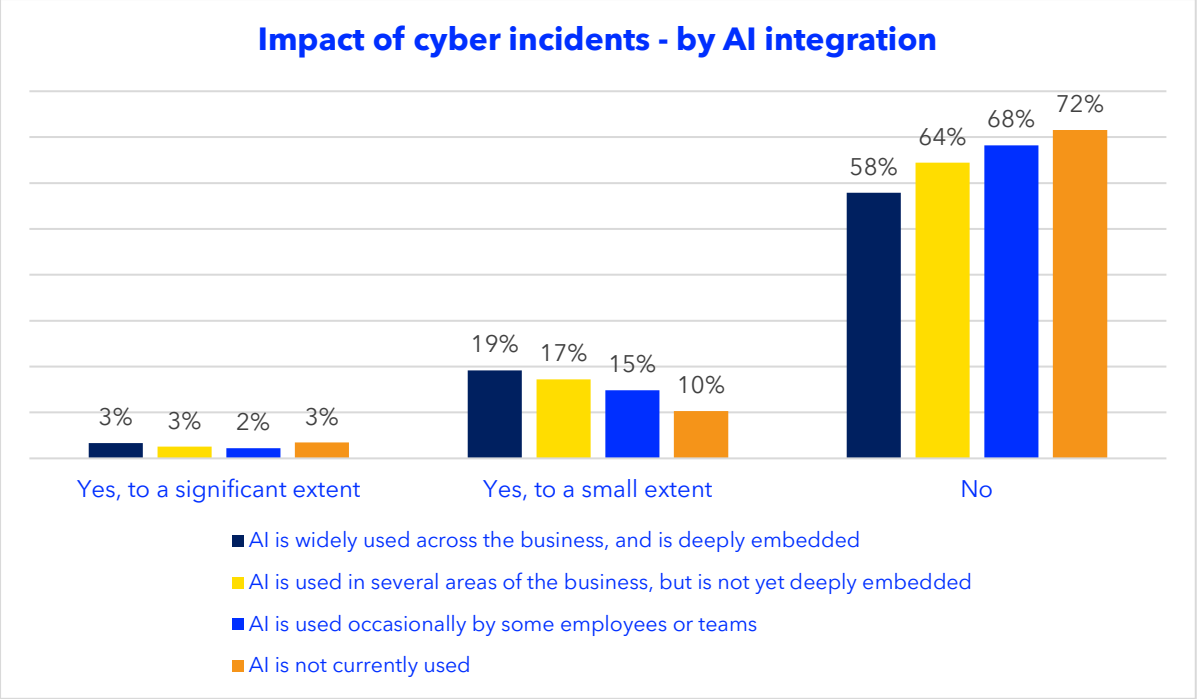
Impact of cyber incidents on business - by market



These results suggest that, while cyber incidents remain a persistent business risk, relatively few businesses report significant financial losses or operational disruption.






Impact of cyber incidents - by AI integration
3%
3%
2%
3%
19%
17%
15%
10%
58%
64%
68%
72%
Yes, to a significant extent
Yes, to a small extent
No
AI is widely used across the business, and is deeply embedded
AI is used in several areas of the business, but is not yet deeply embedded
AI is used occasionally by some employees or teams
AI is not currently used

Business technology priorities for 2027

Technologies businesses expect to increase their use of over the next 12 months

Organisations expect to increasingly focus on integrating AI more deeply into their operations.

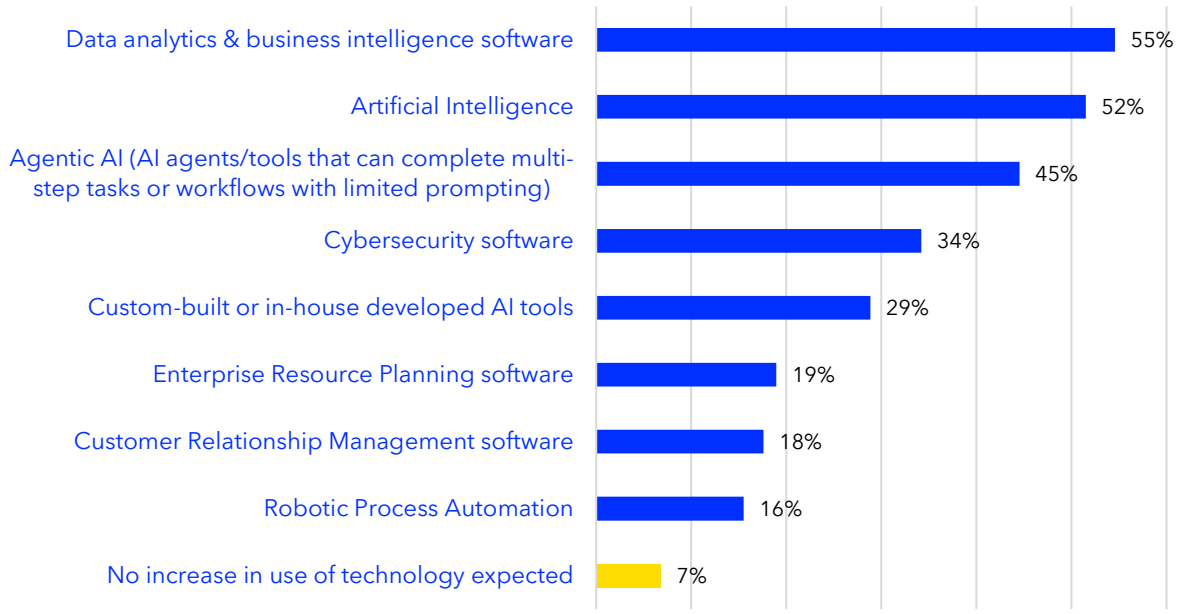
According to accounting and finance professionals, the highest technology priorities for businesses over the next 12 months are data analytics, AI embedded within workplace software and agentic AI tools.

Technology priorities vary across surveyed markets. Respondents from Singapore are the most likely to expect their business to increase its use of agentic AI (56 per cent), while respondents from Hong Kong are the most likely to anticipate increased use of AI embedded within workplace software (61 per cent) and data analytics (58 per cent).

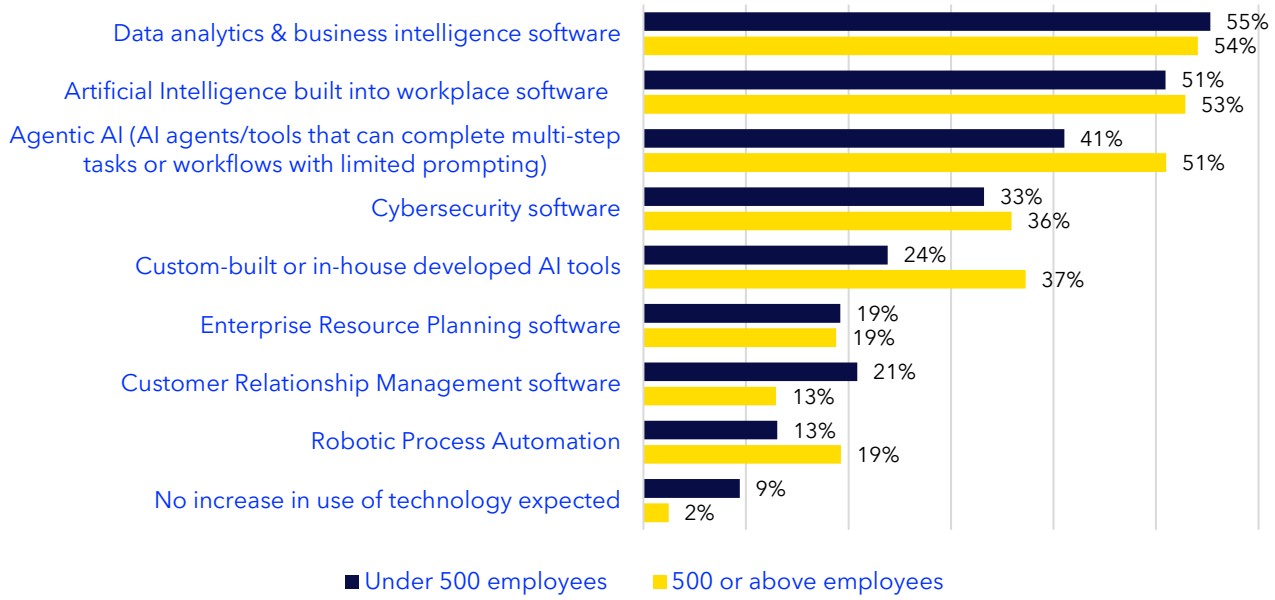
In the Chinese Mainland, 43 per cent of respondents expect their business to increase its use of custom-built or in-house developed AI tools, the highest result among the surveyed locations.

Australian respondents are the most likely to expect increased use of cybersecurity software (40 per cent).

Technologies businesses expect to use more in the next 12 months

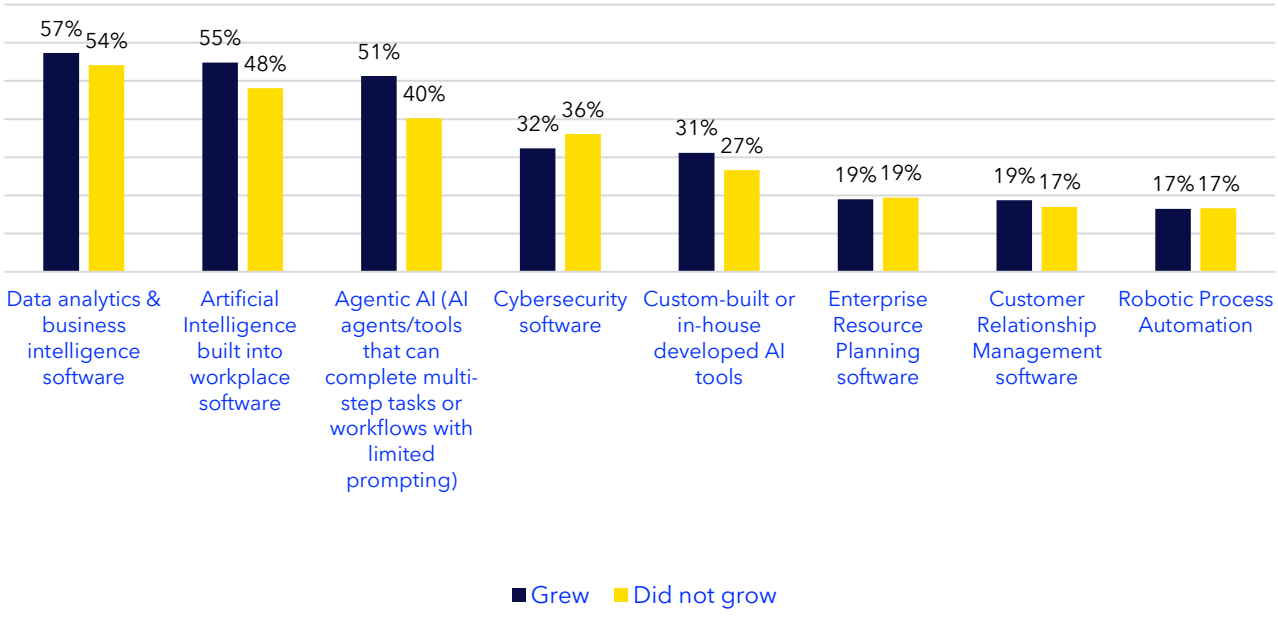


Technologies businesses expect to use more in the next 12 months - by business size

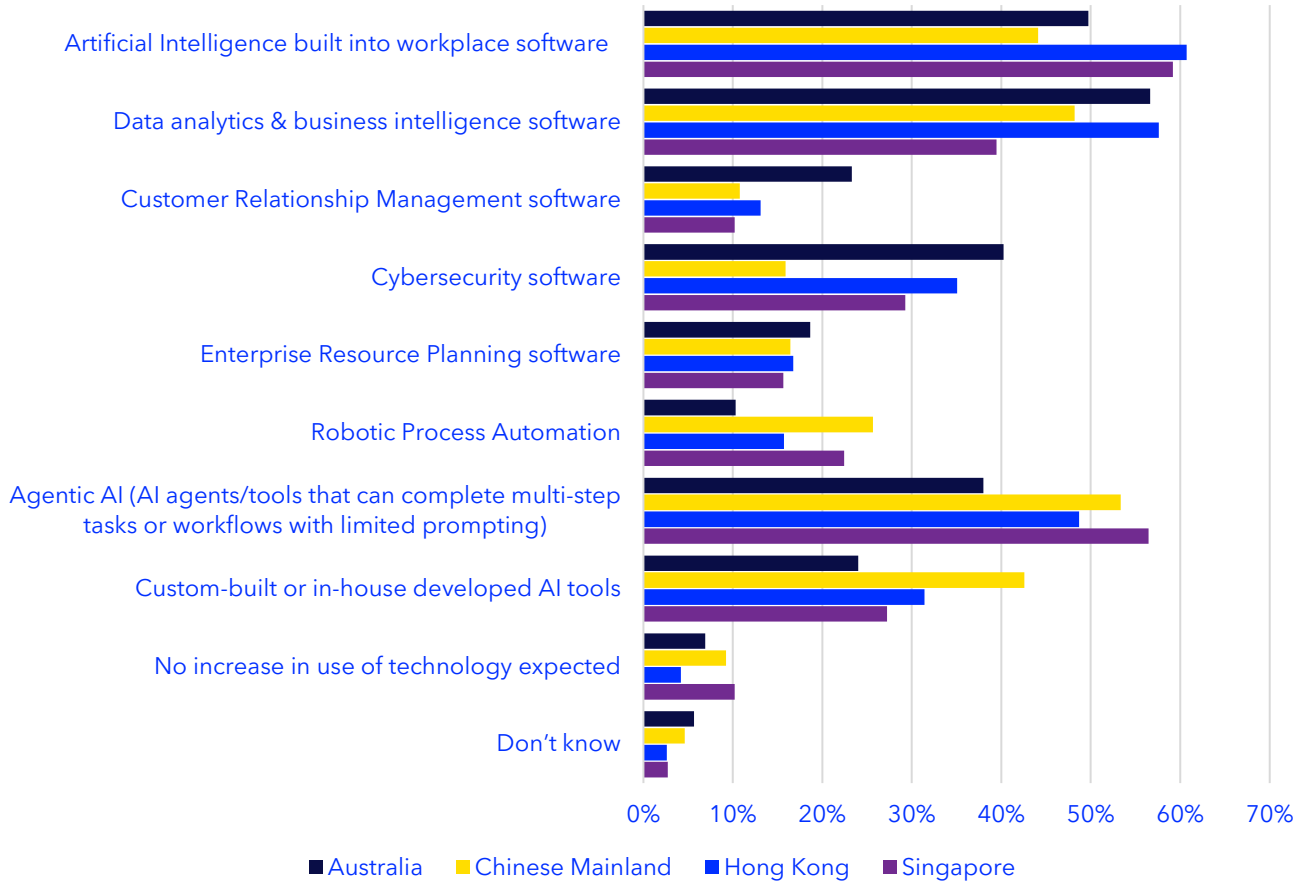


Taken together, these findings suggest 2027 will mark a shift from AI experimentation to deeper AI integration, with increasing numbers of businesses embedding the technology into business processes, workflows and decision-making. Strong expected growth in the use of agentic AI in Singapore, the Chinese Mainland and Hong Kong, together with increased investment in custom-built AI tools in the Chinese Mainland indicates a growing focus on deploying more advanced AI capabilities and embedding AI more deeply within business operations.

Technologies business expect to use more in the next 12 months - by business performance



Technologies business expect to use more in the next 12 months - by market



Recommendations

Based on the survey findings, CPA Australia recommends that organisations:

01

Move from AI adoption to AI integration

Realising measurable value from AI requires moving beyond experimentation. Organisations should focus on integrating AI into business processes, systems and decision-making to improve productivity, enhance performance and deliver better business outcomes.

02

Establish governance frameworks that enable responsible AI use

As AI becomes more deeply embedded in business operations, organisations need governance frameworks that provide clear accountability, oversight and data management. Effective governance helps manage privacy and security risks, support appropriate human oversight and build trust in AI use.

03

Build the human capabilities needed for AI success

Technology alone does not deliver transformation. Organisations should invest in workforce capability so employees can use AI effectively and translate technological investment into improved business performance.

04

Prioritise cybersecurity and risk management

The expanding use of AI and other digital technologies is occurring against a backdrop of growing cyber threats and increasing regulatory expectations. Organisations should strengthen cybersecurity and risk management capabilities to protect information, maintain trust and support resilience.