

# Digital Policy at the BCC

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# Digital Policy at the BCC

Staffordshire  
Chambers of  
Commerce  
Digital Forum

1. Digital Policy Overview at BCC
2. Connectivity
3. Cyber Security
4. AI
5. Summary
6. Questions



# Digital Policy Overview

BCC digital policy divided into three key areas:

## Connectivity

- Broadband and Mobile Connectivity
- Digital infrastructure, including data centres
- Resilient communications network

## Cyber Security

- Responding to the growing cyber threat
- How to strengthen cyber resilience in both private and public sectors
- How to drive business continuity

## AI

- AI Adoption among businesses in the UK
- Drivers and barriers to uptake
- Growth and productivity gains from AI
- Addressing the challenges

# Connectivity: What are we seeing?

BCC Insights Unit

March 2023

**82%**

of firms in urban areas say  
they have reliable  
connectivity

**56%**

of firms in rural areas say  
they have reliable  
connectivity

- Clear rural-urban divide with connectivity. Firms in rural areas cannot be left behind.
- More firms embedding digital tools in their day-to-day work, many requiring connectivity.
- Firms highlighting cases of having poor or no connectivity when they leave their premises.
- Clear economic benefits of better connectivity in the UK.
- Poor connectivity impacts growth and productivity for businesses, and makes digitalisation / uptake of more advanced technology more challenging.

# Connectivity: Government Action



## Project Gigabit

- Government programme to deliver gigabit-capable broadband to UK premises, as part of nationwide objective of achieving 99% nationwide gigabit coverage by 2032.
- Focus on 'hard-to-reach' homes and businesses in rural areas.
- Removing barriers to gigabit-capable broadband, looking at planning and deployment delays.

## Mobile Connectivity

- Shared Rural Network, bringing mobile providers together to address “not-spots” – areas of the UK with patchy / little connectivity.
- Ambition to achieve standalone 5G across the UK by 2030.
- Call for evidence on supporting investment in UK mobile networks.

# Connectivity: BCC Action

## Asks to Government:

- Fast, reliable broadband and mobile coverage is essential for economic growth and productivity.
- Government should confirm long-term funding arrangements to ensure target for full nationwide coverage will be met by 2032 at the latest.
- Government should identify where mobile network capacity is under strain and support innovative solutions where growing demand can be met.
- Government should provide an assessment of threats to UK digital infrastructure, to minimise impact of outages.

## BCC Publication:

- BCC published a [policy report on digital infrastructure](#) in November 2025.

# Cyber Security: What are we seeing?

BCC Insights Unit  
Summer 2025

## Crimes against business



**More businesses have experienced cyber crime and fraud/scams over the past 12 months than physical crime**



**B2B services firms are the least likely to have experienced any of these forms of crime. Large firms and B2C services firms are the most likely to experience physical crime**

# Cyber Security: What are we seeing?

**43%**

of businesses reported experiencing any kind of cyber security breach / attack in last 12 months

**85%**

of businesses that experienced an attack which came from phishing emails

- Increased concerns among businesses in relation to the growing cyber threat.
- A series of significant cyber attacks over 2025 – JLR, M&S etc., impacting smaller businesses in the supply chain.
- Of businesses that incurred a cost from a cyber incident, average financial impact was £3,550.
- However, there remains significant uncertainty as to what businesses should do to strengthen their cyber security.

Statistics from [Government Cyber Security Breaches Survey 2025](#).



# Cyber Security: Government Action



**Cyber Security Action Plan:** Mandatory cyber security and resilience standards across central Government and the wider public sector, setting out need for better visibility of risk, addressing severe risks, improving responsiveness, and boosting resilience – looking at skills and recovery etc.

**Cyber Security and Resilience Bill:** Government legislation to protect more essential services, requiring additional measures in place and preventing disruption to healthcare, water providers, transport and energy.

**Boosting Business Resilience:** Government emphasising that cyber resilience is now a Board level issue. Calls on businesses to adopt [Cyber Essentials](#) and sign up to the [NCSC's Early Warning Service](#).

# Cyber Security: BCC Action

## Asks to Government:

- BCC part of a business-Government group discussing how to strengthen cyber security and emphasising the needs of businesses.
- Clear need for the Government to introduce clear guidance for businesses, so businesses know a) where to find the right information, b) what steps they should be implementing, and c) what to do in the event of a cyber attack.
- BCC promotes Chamber Cyber Essentials.

## BCC Publication:

- BCC published a [policy report on cyber resilience](#) in February 2025.

# BCC Chamber Cyber Essentials

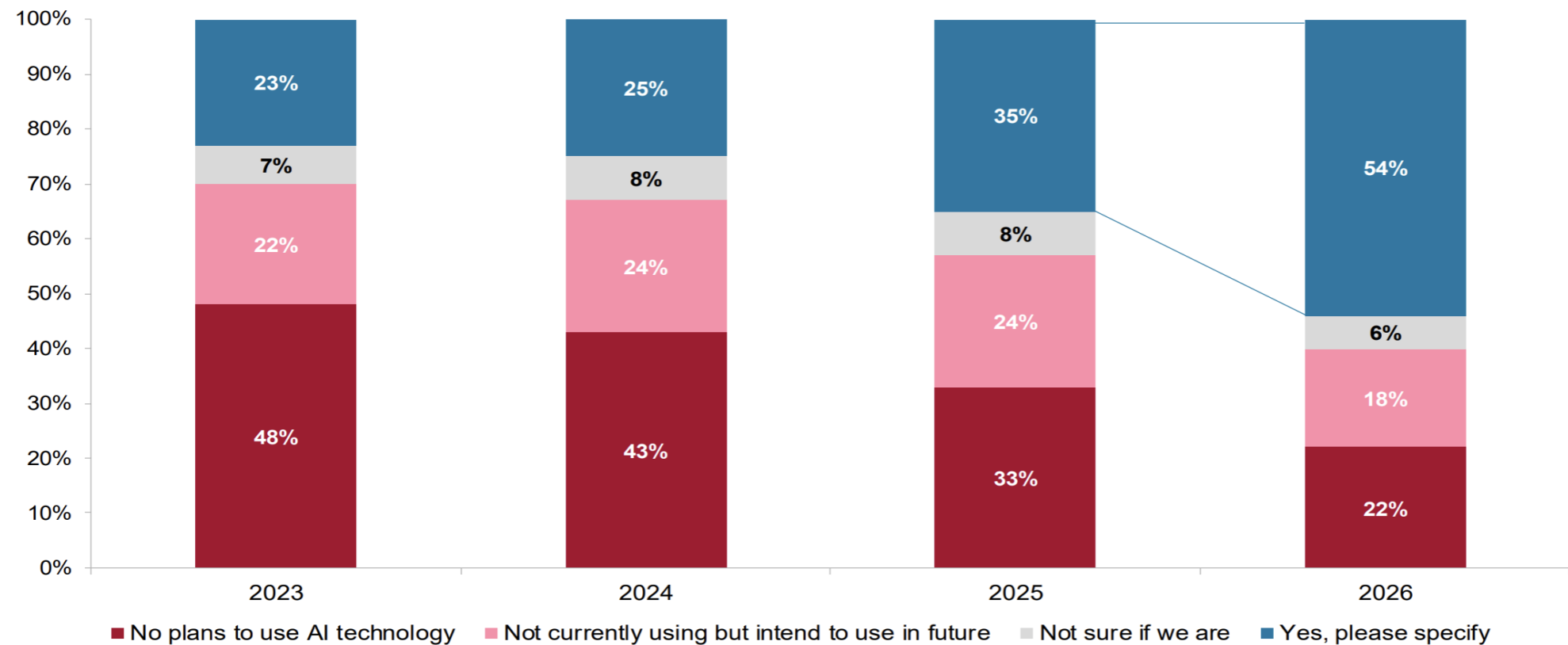
- Cyber Essentials is the minimum baseline cyber security standard for organisations in the UK, helping businesses of all sizes to put in place the measures that can help protect them from most common cyber threats.
- BCC and IASME are working together to help Chamber members achieve the Cyber Essentials certification through a new Chamber Cyber Essentials partnership.
- Organisations certified under Chamber Essentials are 92% less likely to make a claim on their cyber insurance compared to those without certification.



# AI Adoption: What are we seeing?

## AI adoption

AI adoption rates are up compared to previous years



[q2] Is your organisation currently using any specific AI technology?

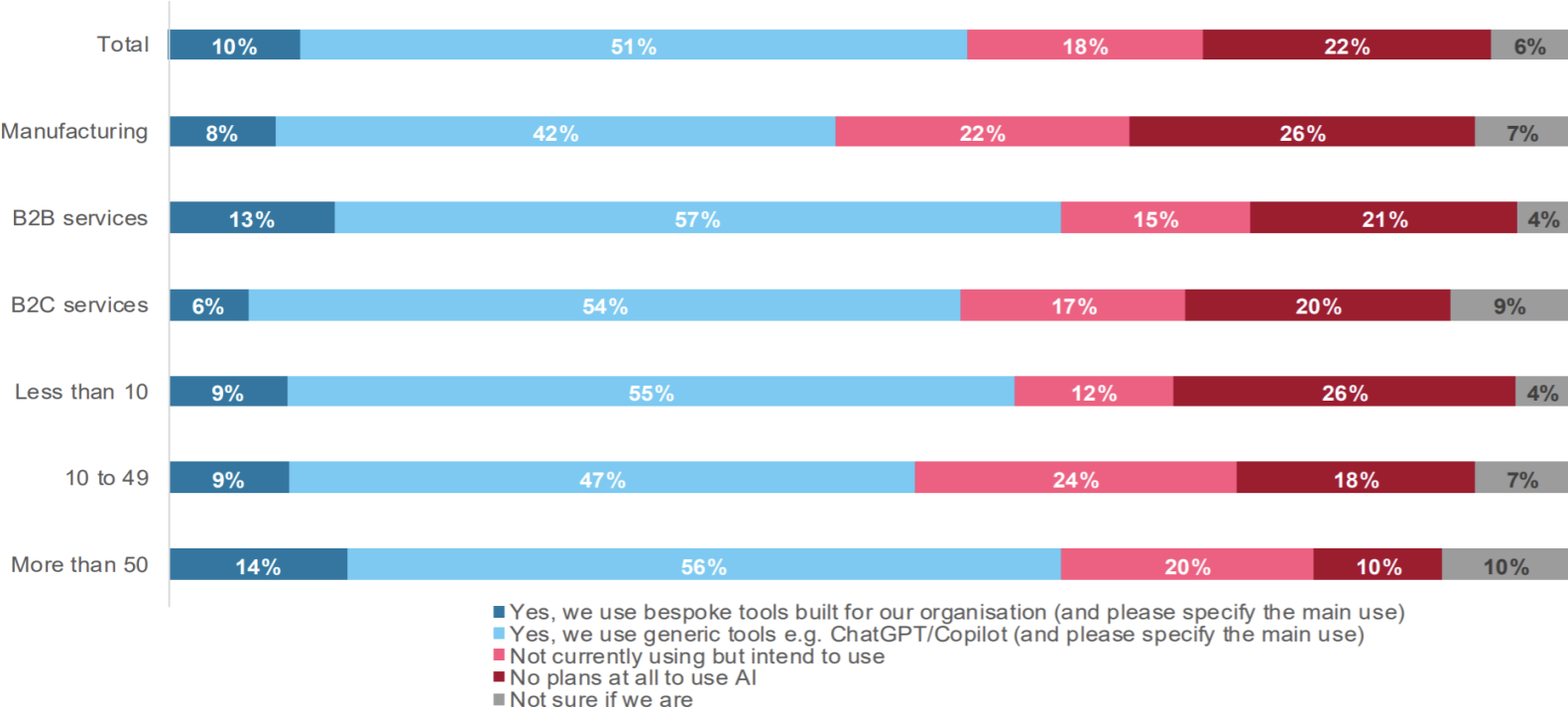
BASE: (2026: N = 668)

# AI Adoption: What are we seeing?



## AI adoption

**B2B services and larger firms are adopting more AI...**  
...with manufacturing and small firms least engaged



| Bespoke tools (main use):        | Generic tools (main use): |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Content Creation & Writing       | CRM system                |
| Research & Data analysis         | Process Optimization      |
| Admin tasks (e.g. meeting notes) | Data interpretation       |

[q2] Is your organisation currently using specific AI technology?

BASE: (Total: N = 668; Manufacturing: N = 209; B2B services: N = 298; B2C services: N = 161; Less than 10: N = 257; 10 to 49: N = 190; More than 50: N = 153)



# AI Adoption: What are we seeing?

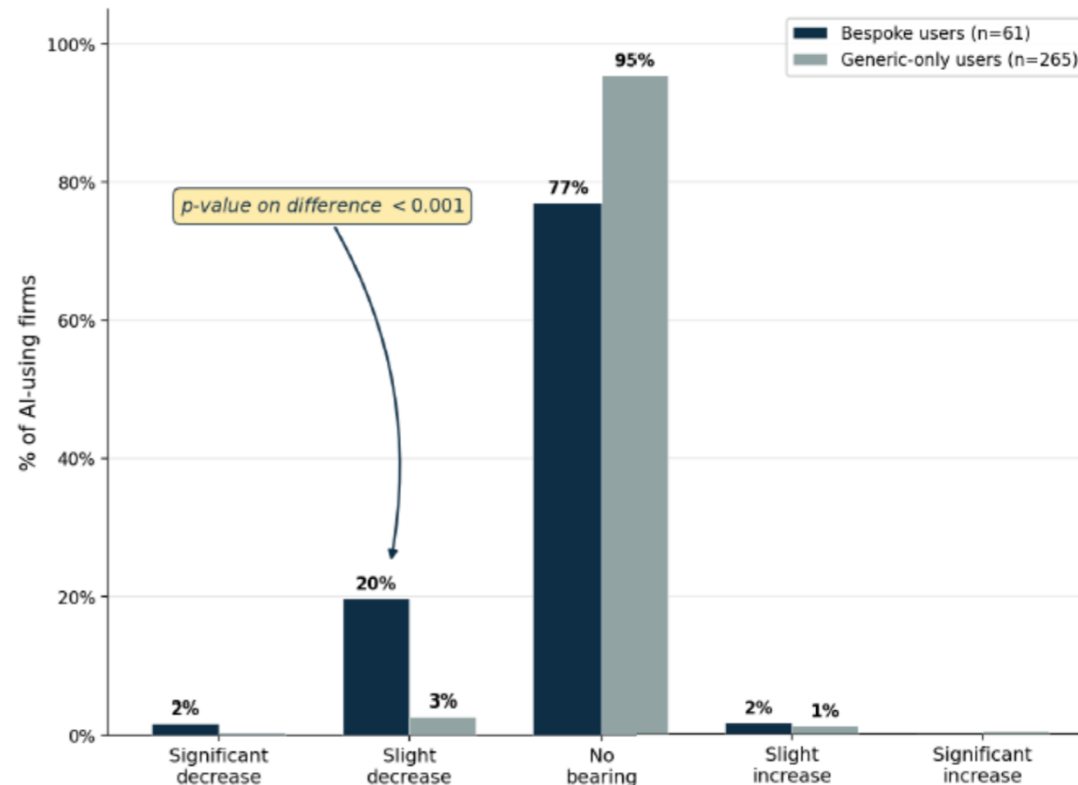
BCC Insights Unit

February 2026

## Impact of AI

AI hasn't changed headcount for most businesses, but users of bespoke AI are far more likely to report decreases

Figure 3: Impact of AI on headcount in the past 12 months: bespoke vs generic-only AI users



Note: Data from BCC Business Outlook Survey, January 2026. AI-using firms only (excludes "unsure" responses).  
p-value from Fisher's exact test on the proportion reporting any headcount decrease (significant or slight) across the two groups.

# AI Adoption: What are we seeing?

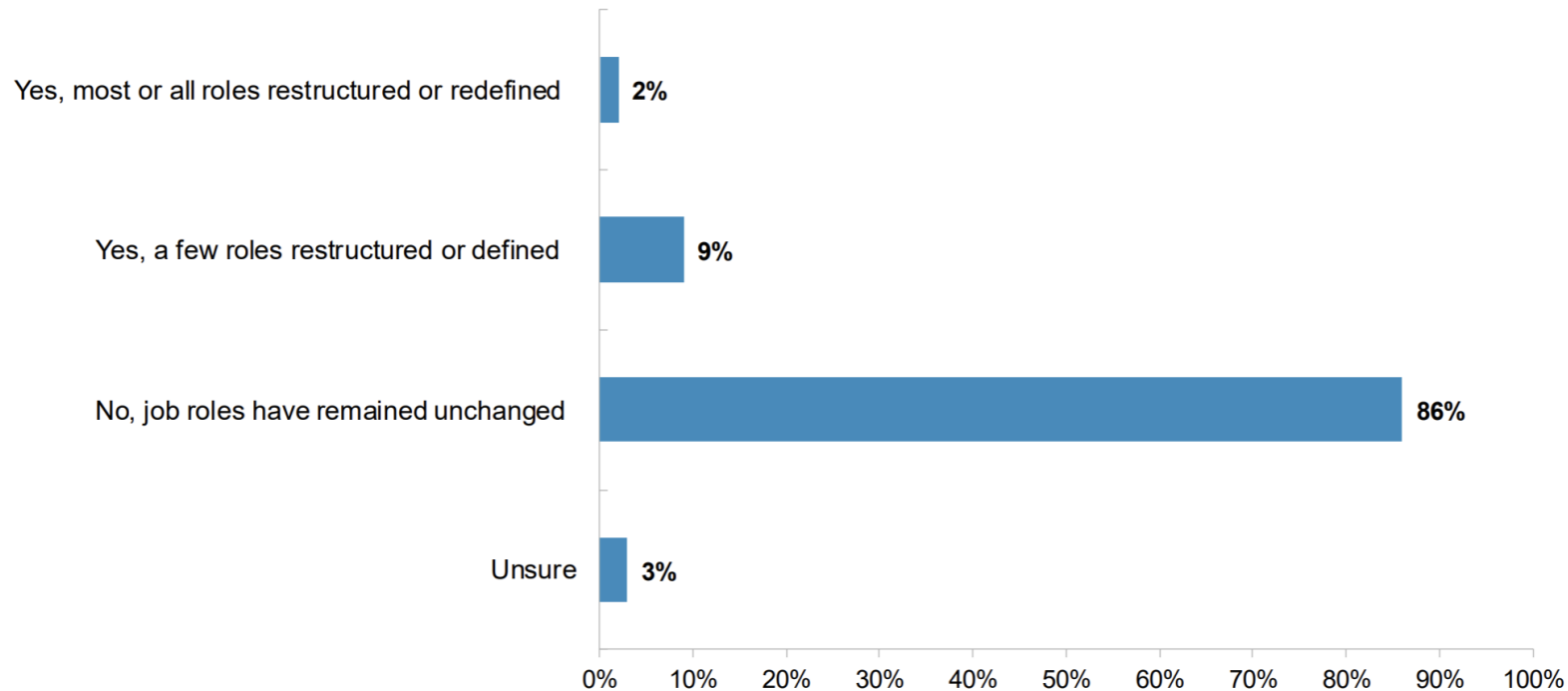
BCC Insights Unit

February 2026



## Impact of AI

**The majority of firms report no change to job roles as a direct result of AI**



[q6] Have any existing job roles in your organisation been restructured or redefined as a direct result of AI?

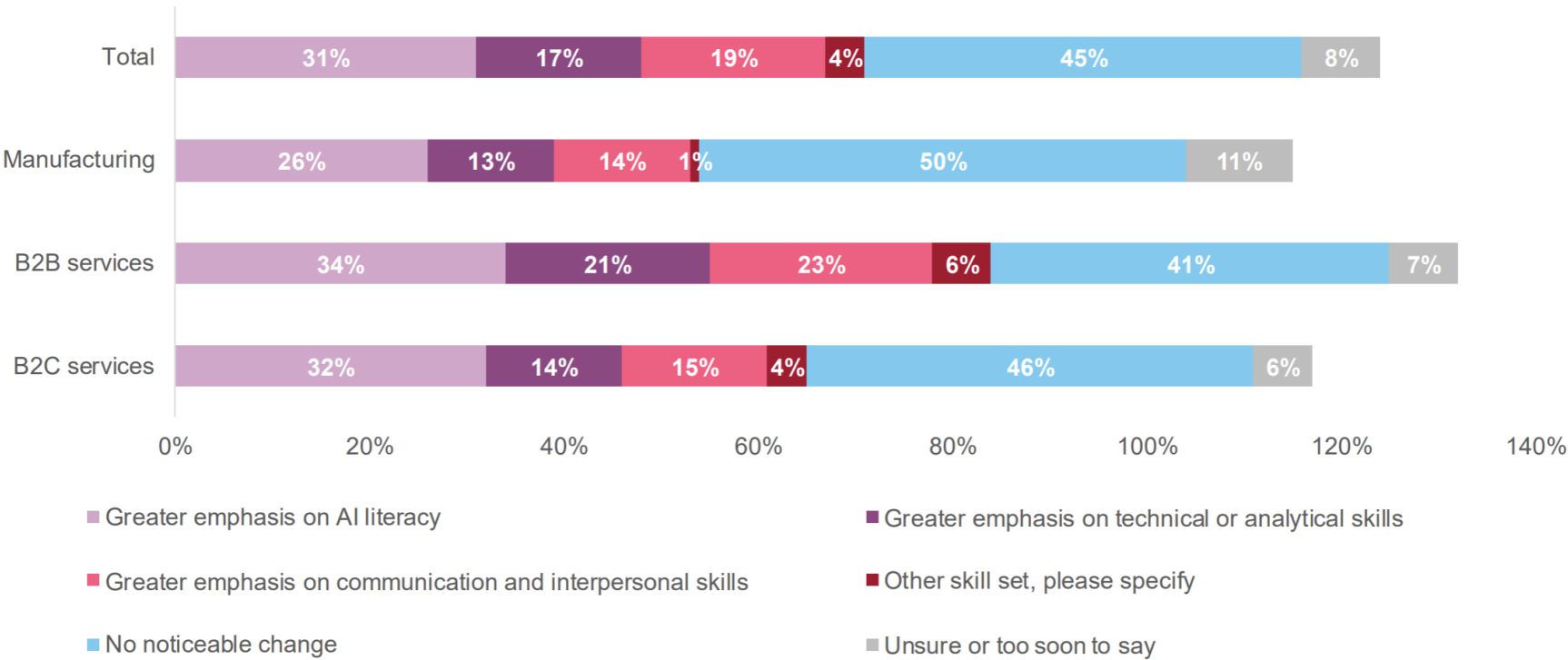
BASE: (Total: N = 591)

# AI Adoption: What are we seeing?



## Impact of AI

Firms are most likely to report no change to the skills their organisation needs, or a greater emphasis on AI literacy



[q7] Has AI changed the skills that your organisation needs?

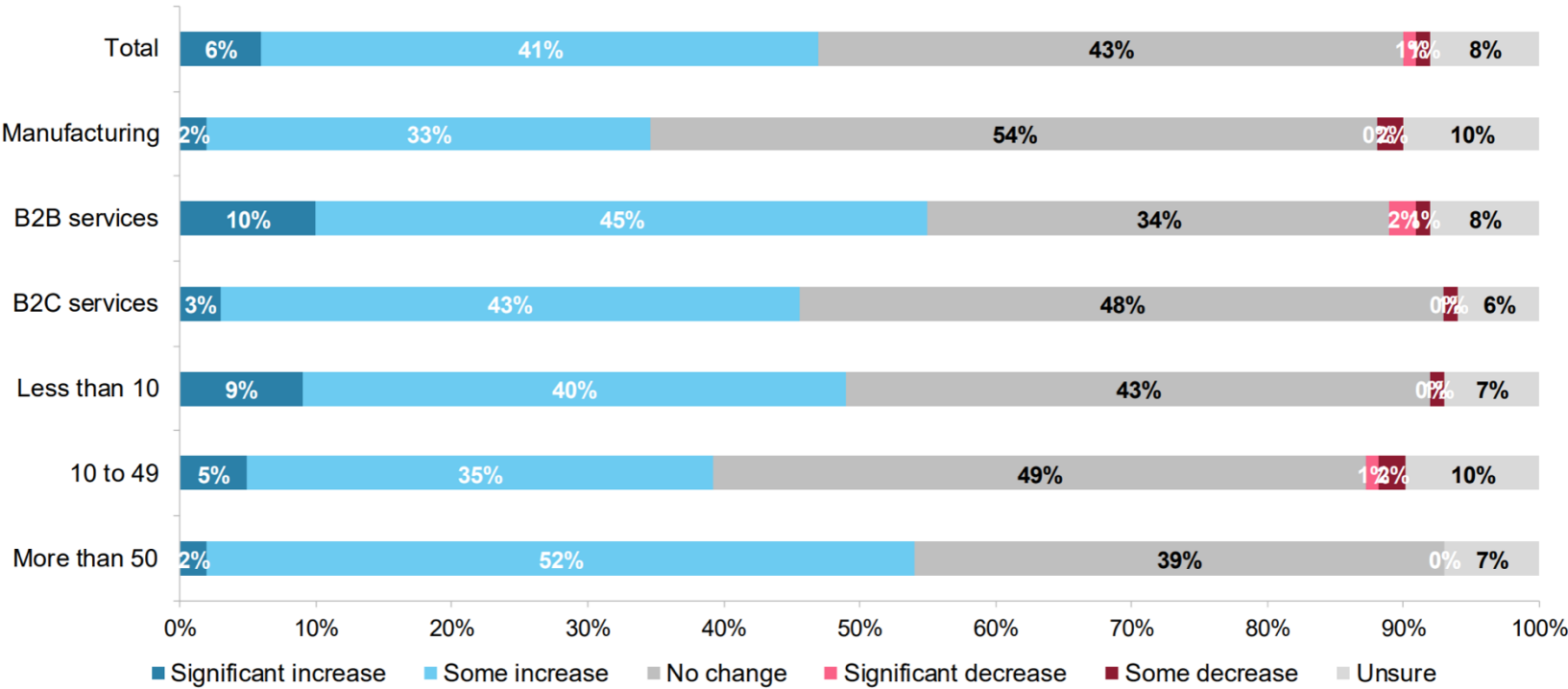
BASE: (Total: N = 332; Manufacturing: N = 90; B2B services: N = 158; B2C services: N = 84)

# AI Adoption: What are we seeing?



## Impact of AI

Almost half of firms expect AI to increase their productivity, larger organisations and B2B firms are the most likely to say this



[q9] Over the next twelve months, what impact do you think AI will have on your organisation's overall productivity?

BASE: (Total: N = 655; Manufacturing: N = 205; B2B services: N = 290; B2C services: N = 160; Less than 10: N = 254; 10 to 49: N = 188; More than 50: N = 147; Exporters: N = 197)

# AI: Government Action



**AI Opportunities Action Plan:** Government strategy for AI, published in January 2025, focusing on driving AI upskilling for 10 million workers, embedding AI into public services, and a Sovereign AI Unit to drive support for UK AI companies.

**AI Growth Zones:** Government designated 5 AI Growth Zones to unlock investment and accelerate the build out of data centres for AI. This will create thousands of jobs across the UK, driving both local and national economic growth.

**AI Safety:** Funding for the AI Security Institute, and working with regulators to promote safe AI innovation through an AI Growth Lab and cross-economy sandboxes.

# AI: BCC Action

- BCC part of the Digital Adoption Taskforce, representing the needs of businesses to adopt safe, effective AI.

## Asks to Government:

- Targeted support for different sectors and sizes of businesses, to ensure that they benefit from the most relevant use of AI.
- Develop an AI Roadmap Toolkit for businesses, with guidance on use of AI.
- Support digital skills through national strategy to update education curricula to help both current and future workers.

## BCC Publication:

- BCC published a [report with insights on AI adoption](#) in September 2025.
- BCC published a [policy report on impact of AI on the future of work](#) in March 2026.



# Digital: What are we seeing?



1. **Connectivity** continues to be an area of concern for many businesses, particularly in rural areas. Poor connectivity is a significant barrier to growth for businesses, particularly mobile connectivity.
2. **Cyber security** concerns have increased in recent years, following significant highly-reported cyber attacks across the UK. But many businesses are unclear as to what they can do to strengthen their cyber security.
3. **AI adoption** has increased but this varies among size and sector of businesses. Need for Government to address some of the barriers to uptake and promote safe, effective AI adoption.

# Role of BCC

- We are regularly meeting with Government – with both ministers and officials from:
  - o The Department for Business and Trade
  - o The Department for Science, Innovation and Technology
  - o The Treasury
- We have supported policy work through a number of groups in Government, including:
  - o The Digital Adoption Taskforce
  - o Cyber Resilience Group with Government
- Our research and policy reports get strong pick up in the media.



# What's happening in 2026?

Areas of focus for the BCC

## AI Academy

BCC supporting AI adoption and upskilling through our AI Academy – with tailored, role-specific training for all.

## Chamber Engagement

More engagement and events planned with Chambers and members to drive AI adoption across the BCC.

## Insights

Continuing to build on our research and data to directly contribute to conversations in Government about digital opportunities and challenges for businesses.

## Thought Leadership

How to promote **good** AI – putting businesses at the centre of national conversations about how to drive safe and practical use of AI to drive growth and innovation, and address legitimate challenges.

# Any questions?

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