

Artificial Intelligence in Northern Ireland

Public Awareness, AI Skills and Barriers to Adoption

Evidence from the Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey

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Executive Summary

Artificial intelligence (AI) is becoming increasingly relevant to work, skills, productivity and labour-market inclusion in Northern Ireland. As AI becomes more widely embedded across workplaces, public services and everyday life, it is important to understand not only whether people are aware of AI, but also whether they feel prepared to use it, how they expect it to affect their working lives and what may prevent them from participating in future learning.

This report presents findings from a dedicated AI module included in the 2025 Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey. The module provides an important population-level baseline on public awareness and use of AI; perceived future AI knowledge requirements; participation in AI-related learning; barriers to further learning; expectations about AI's impact on employment, productivity and workforce inclusion; and public concerns about fairness, personal data and environmental impacts.

The survey received 1,244 completed responses from adults aged 18 and over across Northern Ireland. The findings show that awareness of AI is now almost universal, but practical engagement, confidence and preparedness remain unevenly distributed. They also identify how barriers to learning about AI vary across different groups and reveal a substantial gap between recognising the growing importance of AI skills and participating in the learning needed to develop them.

Taken together, the findings suggest that Northern Ireland's policy challenge is not simply to encourage greater AI adoption. It is to ensure that people across different educational, demographic and labour-market groups understand how AI may affect them and have access to the knowledge, confidence and support required to participate in an increasingly AI-enabled economy. This must be accompanied by the governance and protections needed to build and maintain public trust.

Summary findings

Awareness is almost universal, but everyday use is not

Overall, 98.6% of respondents had heard of AI, including 58.4% who believed they had a good understanding of it. A further 40.2% had heard of AI but did not know much about it.

Practical engagement was less widespread. While 41.3% reported using chatbots or smart assistants, 43.1% selected none of the listed forms of day-to-day AI use. The challenge is therefore no longer simply one of awareness. The findings point to a gap between familiarity with AI as a concept and practical engagement with AI tools in everyday life.

Recognition of future skills needs is running ahead of learning

More than two-thirds of respondents (67.7%) agreed that learning to use AI tools will be essential for most jobs during the next five years. However, only 18.6% had undertaken AI-related training, a course or self-directed learning during the previous 12 months.

At the same time, 51.9% said they would like to learn more about using AI. This reveals a substantial gap between recognising AI's future importance and participating in the learning needed to respond to it. It also indicates considerable unmet demand for accessible and relevant AI learning opportunities.

Current AI learning relies heavily on workplaces and self-direction

Among the relatively small proportion of respondents who had undertaken AI-related learning during the previous 12 months, the workplace was the most commonly reported route, selected by 66.7%. Self-directed learning through books, tutorials or online resources was reported by 52.0%, while 31.9% had used an online course or platform. As respondents could select more than one route, these figures do not sum to 100%.

By comparison, only 13.8% reported learning through a university or college. Formal education therefore appears to play a relatively limited role in how adults currently access AI learning. Participation is much more strongly associated with workplace provision or individuals finding and undertaking learning independently.

Taken together, these findings indicate that access to AI learning currently depends heavily on workplace provision and individuals' capacity to navigate learning independently, potentially creating disadvantages for those who have less access to either route.

The emerging AI skills divide includes a gap in perceived relevance

Overall, 55.4% of respondents expected to need at least a fair amount of AI knowledge for future work. However, this varied considerably by qualification level and labour-market position. The combined figure was 64.1% among degree holders, compared with 39.2% among respondents with no qualifications.

Differences were also apparent by labour-market position. Around two-thirds of respondents in full-time employment (66.0%) and those seeking work (65.5%) anticipated needing at least a fair amount of AI knowledge for future work, compared with 38.1% of those looking after the home, 37.5% of full-time carers and 30.5% of respondents who were permanently sick or disabled.

Respondents with lower qualifications were also less likely to believe that AI learning would become essential. While 73.4% of degree holders agreed that learning to use AI

tools would be essential for most jobs during the next five years, this fell to 51.5% among respondents with GCSE grades D-G and 58.5% among those with no qualifications. Uncertainty was also higher among people with no qualifications: 17.0% selected "don't know", compared with 5.0% of degree holders.

Taken together, these findings point to an emerging AI skills divide that is not simply about access to training. It also concerns perceived relevance: groups that may already experience labour-market disadvantage are in some cases less likely to anticipate needing AI knowledge or to regard AI learning as essential for future employment.

This indicates an awareness-to-relevance gap. People may have heard about AI without understanding how it could affect their own occupation, tasks or future skills requirements. If adults with lower qualifications are less likely to view AI as relevant to them, they may also be less likely to seek learning before workplace changes occur. This does not necessarily mean that these groups will be less affected by AI, since the nature and extent of AI-related change will vary across occupations and sectors. However, it raises the possibility that existing labour-market inequalities could be compounded if access to, and engagement with, AI learning develops unevenly.

Barriers differ by life stage and labour-market position

The three most commonly selected barriers to AI learning were the cost of training (27.1%), lack of time because of work responsibilities (26.7%) and not knowing where to learn (26.1%). However, the nature of these barriers differed across groups.

Cost was particularly prominent among younger people and jobseekers, while time pressures associated with work and caring responsibilities affected many working-age respondents and carers. Descriptive subgroup patterns also suggest that digital confidence, difficulty identifying appropriate learning and access to technology were more prominent barriers for some older, disabled and economically inactive respondents.

Barriers to AI learning are therefore not uniform. The findings suggest that a single approach to increasing participation is unlikely to address the different barriers experienced across population groups.

People expect disruption but see qualified productivity benefits

Seven in ten respondents (71.2%) agreed that AI is likely to reduce the number of jobs during the next five years. This indicates widespread concern about the labour-market consequences of AI and the possibility of job displacement.

A smaller majority (50.9%) agreed that AI could make work more productive or efficient. Perceptions of potential productivity benefits varied substantially by qualification level,

ranging from 61.6% among degree holders to 26.8% among respondents with GCSE grades D-G.

There is therefore a notable imbalance between expectations of disruption and expectations of benefit. Respondents were considerably more likely to anticipate AI reducing the number of jobs than to believe it would improve productivity or efficiency. The findings also suggest that expectations of potential productivity benefits are unevenly distributed across the population.

AI's contribution to labour-market inclusion is not yet widely understood

Only 29.8% agreed that AI would make it easier for workplaces to accommodate people currently excluded from the workforce. One-third (33.0%) neither agreed nor disagreed, while 16.1% selected "don't know".

Among the 175 respondents who provided a substantive open-ended response after expressing a positive view of AI's inclusion potential, people with disabilities and neurodivergent people were the groups most frequently identified as potentially benefiting. These responses highlighted assistive technologies, accessible communication, step-by-step task guidance, language support and opportunities for flexible or remote working.

These qualitative responses illustrate how some respondents envisage AI supporting labour-market inclusion however, they should not be interpreted as estimates of the prevalence of these views across the wider population. Overall, the findings indicate considerable uncertainty about AI's potential contribution to inclusion and suggest that its possible benefits in this area are not yet widely understood.

Trust and governance are central to public acceptance

Public concern about AI was high. Overall, 84.2% were very or fairly concerned that personal data might be misused in AI systems, while 80.5% were concerned that AI may not always make decisions that are fair or morally right.

Only 29.2% agreed that the advantages of AI outweigh its potential risks. However, 40.6% agreed that AI could help address major societal challenges in areas such as healthcare, climate and education.

Public attitudes are therefore not simply positive or negative. Respondents recognise AI's potential benefits while remaining concerned about how it will be developed, governed and used. Taken together, these findings suggest that public acceptance of AI is conditional rather than unqualified: respondents recognise potential benefits but place

substantial importance on risks relating to privacy, fairness and the way AI-supported decisions are made.

Environmental impacts matter to a clear majority

Overall, 62.4% of respondents were very or fairly concerned about the environmental impact of the energy used to power AI technologies. Although this was lower than the concern recorded for personal-data misuse and unfair decision-making, it still represented a clear majority.

Environmental impact therefore forms part of the public's wider conception of responsible AI, alongside concerns about data protection, fairness and accountability.

Overall picture

Taken together, the findings reveal a population that is highly aware of AI and increasingly conscious of its potential importance but unevenly prepared for its practical and labour-market implications. The principal challenge is no longer awareness alone. It is the gap between awareness, perceived relevance, practical capability and participation in learning, alongside substantial uncertainty about how the benefits and risks of AI will be distributed.

These differences are particularly important because existing inequalities in qualifications, labour-market participation and digital confidence may shape who is best positioned to adapt as AI adoption develops. The findings therefore provide an important population-level baseline for understanding not only whether AI use and learning increase over time, but whether the benefits, opportunities and capacity to adapt are being shared across different groups in Northern Ireland.

Headline Policy Recommendations

The findings demonstrate that Northern Ireland requires a coordinated approach bringing together AI literacy, education, workforce development, labour-market inclusion and responsible adoption. Expanding the number of AI courses will not be sufficient on its own. Policy action must also help people understand the relevance of AI to their lives and work, connect them with appropriate learning opportunities, address practical barriers to participation, and ensure that AI adoption delivers demonstrable benefits while maintaining public trust.

In response to this evidence, the report sets out nine headline policy recommendations:

1. Establish a universal AI literacy entitlement

Provide every adult in Northern Ireland with access to a free foundation in practical and responsible AI use. Learning should be available through face-to-face, online, supported and blended formats, with recognised progression into occupational, sector-specific and advanced provision. Public engagement should focus on moving people from awareness to practical understanding, relevance and participation.

2. Embed AI literacy and progression across the education and skills system

Develop a connected pathway through schools, further education, higher education, apprenticeships and adult learning. This should build on the proposed Northern Ireland Curriculum 2028, embed relevant AI learning across vocational and academic disciplines, strengthen the capability of educators and careers advisers, and provide visible progression from foundational learning to professional and advanced study.

3. Create coordinated, place-based local pathways into AI learning

Combine a common Northern Ireland-wide framework with locally coordinated delivery reflecting differences in labour markets, rurality, economic opportunities and population needs. Councils, education providers, employment and careers services, employers, libraries and trusted community organisations should provide flexible entry points, supported referrals and practical assistance with barriers such as cost, time, caring responsibilities, connectivity and travel.

4. Target AI engagement and learning support for adults with lower or no formal qualifications

Use plain-language, occupation-specific engagement to demonstrate how AI may affect familiar jobs and tasks. This should be connected to practical demonstrations, assessment of individual needs, foundational digital support where required, assisted entry into appropriate learning, and progression into further education, employment support or workplace opportunities.

5. Expand workplace AI learning and provide dedicated support for SMEs

Recognise workplaces as a principal route into AI learning while ensuring that workplace provision complements rather than replaces universal access. Employers should be supported and encouraged to provide paid learning time, occupation-specific training and meaningful employee involvement in AI adoption and job redesign. SMEs and microbusinesses should have access to subsidised shared training, independent diagnostic support, practical workforce-planning and governance templates, and clear referral routes into appropriate learning and specialist support.

6. Establish a common, trusted navigation framework for AI learning

Create a coherent navigation framework, integrated across existing careers, education, employment, business-support and community services, through which people and employers can find, understand and compare learning opportunities. This should support a “no wrong door” approach, with consistent information and assisted referrals across multiple entry points. AI-assisted natural-language navigation could be tested where it improves access, provided that it is accurate, transparent, accessible and independently evaluated, with telephone, face-to-face and non-AI alternatives retained.

7. Establish proportionate governance and assurance for responsible AI adoption

Establish a common, risk-based approach that supports organisations across the public, private and voluntary sectors to adopt AI responsibly, transparently and accountably. Governance requirements should be proportionate to each application’s purpose, data, potential effects and consequences: lower-risk uses may require basic checks and ongoing monitoring, while systems influencing employment, education, funding, welfare, public services or other significant outcomes should require stronger impact assessment, testing, transparency, independent scrutiny, meaningful human oversight and accessible routes for challenge and redress. Public bodies should apply these principles through particularly clear arrangements for accountability, procurement, impact assessment, public transparency and independent evaluation. Smaller organisations should have access to shared guidance, assessment tools, expertise and assurance support.

8. Integrate AI adoption with workforce-transition planning and Good Jobs objectives

Develop evidence-led sector transition plans identifying changing roles and tasks, opportunities for job augmentation, and workers or occupations at risk of displacement. Workers should have access to learning and transition support before displacement occurs and should participate in decisions about AI adoption and job redesign. The proposed AI Workforce Observatory should connect labour-market intelligence directly with reskilling, careers guidance, sector planning, local responses and early intervention, with attention to job quality and the distribution of productivity benefits.

9. Test AI’s contribution to labour-market inclusion through co-designed pilots

Use independently evaluated pilots to test whether AI can improve accessible communication, assistive technology, inclusive recruitment, workplace adjustments, flexible working and employment retention. Disabled people, neurodivergent people and others facing labour-market barriers should be involved from the outset in defining the problem, selecting solutions and evaluating outcomes. Pilots should assess benefits and risks, retain meaningful human oversight and only proceed to scale where there is credible evidence of accessibility, effectiveness and value.

Taken together, these recommendations seek to move Northern Ireland from widespread awareness of AI towards practical capability, inclusive participation, workforce preparedness and responsible adoption.

Section 1: Introduction

Artificial intelligence (AI) is rapidly reshaping economies, labour markets and societies. Advances in machine learning, generative AI and automation are transforming how businesses operate, how public services are delivered and how individuals work, learn and access information. Increasingly recognised as a general-purpose technology, AI has the potential to drive productivity, stimulate innovation and improve public service delivery. It is fundamentally changing the nature of work and the skills required to participate effectively in an increasingly digital economy. Alongside these opportunities, AI also presents significant challenges relating to workforce preparedness, digital inclusion, ethics, governance, trust and inequality. Understanding how individuals engage with AI, the skills they need to effectively use AI and the barriers they face is an increasingly important policy priority.

Recognising the transformative potential of AI, governments across the world have placed artificial intelligence at the centre of future economic growth strategies. In the UK, the AI Opportunities Action Plan (Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT), 2025) identifies AI to be a key driver of productivity, innovation, public service transformation and international competitiveness. The AI Opportunities Action Plan argues that AI should be viewed as a foundational technology capable of transforming every sector of the economy. It identifies widespread AI adoption as essential to improving productivity and long-term economic prosperity. However, it also recognises that these ambitions will depend not only on technological advancement, but on ensuring that businesses, workers and citizens possess the knowledge, confidence and capabilities required to use AI effectively and responsibly. The AI Opportunities Action Plan therefore places significant emphasis on developing AI skills, supporting lifelong learning, strengthening workforce capability and ensuring that the benefits of AI are realised across the whole economy rather than within a small number of technology-intensive sectors (DSIT, 2025).

Alongside this growing policy focus, an expanding body of UK research has highlighted the importance of understanding how the public perceive, use and engage with AI. While much early AI research has been concentrated on technological capability and business adoption, recent studies have increasingly recognised that successful AI implementation also depends upon public awareness, confidence, trust and acceptance.

Research undertaken by the Ada Lovelace Institute and the Alan Turing Institute demonstrates that public attitudes towards AI are nuanced and context dependent rather

than uniformly positive or negative (Ada Lovelace Institute and Alan Turing Institute, 2023; 2025). Public support varies considerably depending upon how AI is being used.

Respondents generally express greater support for AI applications that improve healthcare, scientific research and public services, while expressing significantly greater concern where AI influences decisions affecting individuals directly, such as recruitment, policing, welfare or criminal justice. They suggest that successful AI adoption depends not only upon technological capability but also upon public confidence, transparency, accountability and effective governance.

More recent findings by Ada Lovelace Institute and Alan Turing Institute across 3,500 UK adults found that 72% of respondents believed that effective laws and regulation would increase their confidence in AI technologies. Almost nine in ten respondents believed that regulators should have powers to prevent AI systems causing serious public harm (Ada Lovelace Institute and Alan Turing Institute, 2025).

Similarly, the National Centre for Social Research identify that public attitudes towards AI remain varied across different population groups and application areas. Rather than viewing AI as a single technology, respondents distinguish between different uses of AI depending upon their perceived benefits, risks and societal implications. This research argues that understanding public awareness, confidence and attitudes should therefore form an integral part of evidence-based AI policymaking (National Centre for Social Research, 2025).

Recent evidence by Duffy et al., (2026) who explored public attitudes towards AI and the labour market across Great Britain, points to a wider AI skills and confidence divide, which is linked to qualification level. The study found that among workers, graduates are more optimistic than non-graduates across every measure of how AI taking over routine tasks might benefit them, and that 35% of non-graduates say none of these opportunities would open up for them, double the share of graduates at 17%. This suggests that qualification-based differences in attitudes towards AI are not simply a matter of differing confidence or optimism, but also of whether AI is perceived as relevant or beneficial at all, a distinction that closely relates to the awareness-to-relevance gap evidenced later in this report.

Collectively, these UK studies demonstrate that successful AI adoption depends not only upon technological capability or business investment but also upon public awareness, confidence, trust and opportunity. They also illustrate the need for social surveys in informing AI policy and governance. While substantial progress has been made in understanding public attitudes towards AI across the UK, comparable population-level evidence has until recently been largely absent within Northern Ireland.

1.1 Understanding AI in the Northern Ireland Context

Northern Ireland continues to experience longstanding productivity challenges, relatively low levels of business innovation and comparatively lower employer investment in workforce training than many other UK regions. A recent Productivity Institute Policy Report, *Harnessing AI to Boost Northern Ireland's Productivity: Implications for People, Business and Government* (Donaldson *et al.*, 2026), identifies AI as one of the greatest opportunities available to improve productivity and living standards within Northern Ireland. However, it also concludes that these benefits are unlikely to be realised without sustained investment in AI capability, workforce development and lifelong learning. The report highlights Northern Ireland's relatively low qualification profile and lower levels of employer investment in workforce training. Consequently, AI could either help reduce or further reinforce existing productivity and labour market inequalities depending upon how successfully individuals, businesses and policymakers respond to technological change (Donaldson *et al.*, 2026).

Reflecting the growing importance of AI, Northern Ireland has witnessed a rapid expansion in AI-related policy, governance and institutional activity. The Department for the Economy in Northern Ireland has set up a new strategic AI and Digital Technologies team and developed an '*AI Strategic Direction*', positioning AI as an enabling technology capable of supporting economic growth, public service transformation and innovation. More recently, the Department for Economy established an AI Advisory Panel to provide independent strategic advice on AI policy, implementation and governance. Their remit spans areas such as productivity, infrastructure, skills, responsible AI adoption and public trust (Department for the Economy, 2026). These developments build upon recommendations emerging from the Matrix Report on AI and the Future of Work (Matrix, 2025), which highlighted AI as a strategic opportunity for Northern Ireland while emphasising the importance of investment in skills, innovation and responsible adoption.

Alongside government initiatives, Northern Ireland has also invested significantly in developing institutional capability. The Artificial Intelligence Collaboration Centre (AICC), established through a partnership between Ulster University, Queen's University Belfast, Invest Northern Ireland and the Department for the Economy, aims to accelerate responsible AI adoption through collaborative research, business support, innovation, professional development and skills enhancement (Artificial Intelligence Collaboration Centre, 2026). More recently, the establishment of the Northern Ireland Assembly All-Party Group (APG) on Artificial Intelligence in 2025, further demonstrates the growing political recognition that AI will influence economic development, education, public services and society more broadly. Collectively, these developments illustrate Northern Ireland's ambition not simply to respond to AI but to position itself as a region capable of harnessing AI to improve productivity, innovation, skills and inclusive economic growth.

Recent research has significantly improved understanding of AI within the Northern Ireland context. Carson and Farry's (2025) strategic overview for the adoption of AI in Northern Ireland, argues that AI should be viewed not simply as a technological development but as a broad economic and societal transformation requiring coordinated policy across infrastructure, education, workforce development, governance and public trust. The report highlights the importance of developing AI literacy across the workforce and wider population, arguing that AI capability is likely to become an increasingly important component of future employability and economic competitiveness. It also emphasises that Northern Ireland's existing skills profile means that investment in education, lifelong learning and workforce adaptation will be critical if the region is to maximise the benefits of AI while avoiding widening inequalities (Carson and Farry, 2025).

The Artificial Intelligence Capability Census, commissioned by the Artificial Intelligence Collaboration Centre (Perspective Economics, 2025) identified 198 organisations actively developing or deploying AI technologies in the NI context. This included specialist AI firms, diversified technology companies and organisations embedding AI within existing products and services. These organisations were estimated to support approximately 1,340 AI-related jobs and contribute around £82 million in AI-related Gross Value Added (GVA) in 2024. The report projects substantial future growth in AI-related economic activity but also identifies continuing challenges relating to talent availability, workforce capability and business adoption. Particularly since the geographical concentration of AI activity is within Belfast and the surrounding area. They recommend further Northern Ireland-specific research to better understand AI adoption, capability and skills beyond the AI sector itself, including larger representative surveys capable of informing future policy (Perspective Economics, 2025).

Whilst there has been increasing attention given to providing an evidence base relating to AI policy, business capability, innovation and productivity in NI, comparatively little attention has been given to understanding how the people of Northern Ireland are engaging with AI. Existing studies tell us considerably more about the organisations developing and adopting AI than about the citizens who will increasingly be expected to use AI in work, education and everyday life. Consequently, there remains limited population-representative evidence concerning public awareness of AI, confidence in using AI technologies, participation in AI-related learning, anticipated future AI skills needs, willingness to develop AI capability, barriers to adoption or attitudes towards AI across the Northern Ireland population. Likewise, relatively little is known about how these experiences differ across demographic, socioeconomic and labour market groups. This represents an important evidence gap. The successful adoption of AI will depend not only upon technological innovation and organisational capability but also upon whether citizens possess the awareness, confidence and skills required to engage effectively with AI.

As AI becomes increasingly embedded across workplaces, education, public services and everyday life those already experiencing labour market disadvantage may be disproportionately affected if AI-related skills become increasingly important for accessing employment, progressing within work or engaging with public services. Understanding who is engaging with AI, who is not, what barriers people experience and where future learning needs exist is essential if AI is to support inclusive economic growth and ensure that the benefits of AI are shared across all sections of society.

Against this backdrop, EPIC Futures NI, a Local Policy Innovation Partnership, led by Ulster University, commissioned a dedicated module into the 2025 Northern Ireland Life and Times (NILT) survey to complement Northern Ireland's emerging AI evidence base by providing a representative assessment of public awareness. It examines current AI use, perceived knowledge and confidence, participation in AI-related learning, anticipated future AI skills needs, willingness to learn more about AI, barriers to adoption and attitudes towards AI's impact on work and society. By linking these findings to the rich demographic and socioeconomic information routinely collected through the NILT survey, the module provides a unique opportunity to understand how engagement with AI varies across different sections of the population and to identify those groups who may require additional support to participate fully in an increasingly AI-enabled economy and society.

The findings presented in this report make an important contribution to Northern Ireland's evolving AI evidence base. They complement existing research by providing robust population-level evidence on public engagement with AI. More broadly, the findings provide an evidence base to inform policies that seek not only to accelerate AI adoption but also to ensure that the opportunities created by AI are accessible across all sections of society. The report concludes by presenting a series of evidence-based policy and practical recommendations designed to strengthen AI capability, reduce barriers to adoption and support inclusive participation in Northern Ireland's AI-enabled future.

Section 2: Methodology

2.1 Survey Source

This report draws on data from the 2025 Northern Ireland Life and Times (NILT) survey. The analysis focuses on the artificial intelligence module, which examined public awareness, understanding, use, learning, barriers, workplace relevance, labour market inclusion, and public concerns relating to artificial intelligence.

The purpose of this analysis was to provide a population-level picture of how adults in Northern Ireland understand and respond to artificial intelligence, with particular attention

to skills, work, inclusion and public confidence. The findings are intended to inform policy discussion around inclusive artificial intelligence adoption, artificial intelligence literacy, and future skills development in Northern Ireland.

2.2 Sample and Weighting

The 2025 Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey involved 1,244 completed responses from adults aged 18 and over across Northern Ireland. Fieldwork was conducted between September and December 2025. The survey used a push-to-web approach, with most respondents completing it online and a smaller number completing by telephone.

The data were weighted using the survey weighting variable, WTFactor. Weighting was applied so that the survey results more closely reflected the adult population of Northern Ireland by age, gender and location. This means that the percentages reported in this analysis are weighted percentages, rather than simply the raw proportions of respondents in the achieved sample.

The achieved sample was broadly balanced by sex, with 49.0% male and 50.6% female respondents, with 0.4% choosing not to specify their sex. Respondents were drawn from all adult age groups and across all 11 council areas in Northern Ireland. The sample included respondents from both urban and rural areas, different qualification levels, and different employment statuses, allowing the analysis to explore patterns across key demographic and labour market groups.

2.3 Artificial Intelligence Module

The artificial intelligence module (asked for the first time in the 2025 survey) included questions on six main areas:

1. Awareness and use of artificial intelligence
2. Perceived artificial intelligence knowledge needs for work
3. Artificial intelligence learning and training
4. Barriers to learning more about artificial intelligence
5. Artificial intelligence and future work
6. Artificial intelligence, labour market inclusion, public concern and trust

The module included questions on whether respondents had heard of artificial intelligence, how they used artificial intelligence in everyday life or work, whether they had undertaken artificial intelligence-related learning, whether they wanted to learn more, what barriers they faced, and how they viewed the possible effects of artificial intelligence on jobs, productivity, inclusion, fairness, data privacy and environmental impact.

Some questions used single-response formats, while others allowed respondents to select multiple options. For example, the question on barriers to learning more about artificial intelligence allowed respondents to select all barriers that applied to them.

2.4 Analytical Approach and Limitations

The analysis was primarily descriptive. Weighted frequency tables were used to summarise responses to each artificial intelligence question across the survey sample and to provide estimates that more closely reflect the adult population of Northern Ireland. These descriptive results provide the main population-level findings presented throughout the report.

Cross-tabulations were used to explore how responses varied across demographic and labour-market groups. The principal breakdowns included age group, sex, highest qualification level, employment status, economic activity, employment sector, occupational class and urban or rural location, where relevant. These cross-tabulations were used to identify descriptive patterns in artificial intelligence awareness, use, learning, perceived skills needs, barriers, public concern and views on labour-market inclusion.

For several variables, response categories were combined to support clearer interpretation. For example, “strongly agree” and “agree” were combined where appropriate to show overall agreement, while “very concerned” and “fairly concerned” were combined to show overall levels of concern. Where combined figures are discussed, the underlying response categories are also presented in the associated tables.

Chi-square tests were conducted for each subgroup cross-tabulation as part of the underlying analysis. Most cross-tabulated differences reported in this report were found to be statistically significant. There were a few cross-tabulated relationships which were not statistically significant ($p \geq 0.05$) and should therefore be interpreted with particular caution. These were, perceived AI knowledge needs for work by sex (Table 12); perceived AI knowledge needs for work by urban/rural location and by council area (Table 18); agreement that AI skills will be essential for most jobs, by sex (Table 19); views on whether AI is likely to reduce jobs, by qualification level (Table 26) and by occupation (Table 28); views on whether AI will make it easier for workplaces to accommodate excluded groups, by qualification level (Table 36); and concern about personal data misuse, by age (Table 44).

Although percentages are weighted to provide population-level estimates, some subgroup findings, particularly those relating to people seeking work, full-time carers, people in full-time education and smaller occupational or geographical groups, may be based on relatively small numbers of respondents and should therefore be considered when interpreting the findings.

The number of respondents varies for each question because of survey routing and item non-response. The number of respondents also vary across tables and figures because some tables and figures exclude categories with very small counts (for example, “don't know” or “prefer not to say” responses) to support clearer interpretation. Where this occurs, the reported number of respondents (N) reflects only the categories shown in that table. The relevant overall number of respondents (N) is reported in Appendix I and Appendix II, although this does not necessarily indicate the number of respondents within each subgroup. Percentages for single-response questions may not sum to exactly 100% because of rounding. For multiple-response questions, totals may exceed 100% because respondents could select more than one option. The source data of this module is currently open access and available on the NILT survey website for verification.

Section 3: Findings

The findings are organised into five themes. Theme 1 focuses on awareness and use of AI. Theme 2 examines AI learning and barriers. Theme 3 explores AI and the future of work. Theme 4 focuses on public trust and concern about AI. Theme 5 examines environmental and societal perceptions of AI. Each theme is discussed in turn.

3.1 Theme 1: Awareness and Use of AI

Theme 1 explored the respondent’s awareness and use of AI. Based on a total of 1243 responses, 98.6% identified that they had heard of artificial intelligence before today. Only 1.2% had not heard of AI. Figure 1 identifies that 58.4% identified that they have a good understanding of AI, versus 40.2% who have heard it but do not know much about AI.

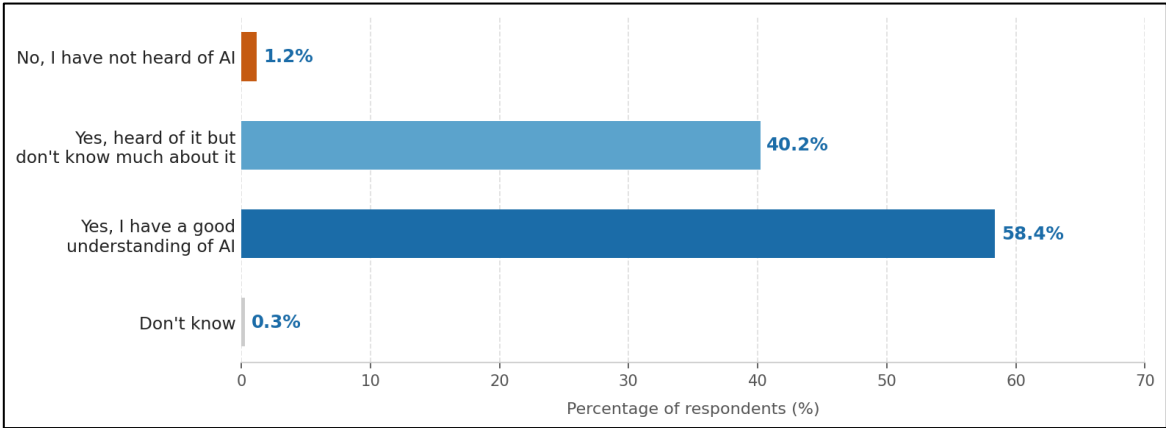


Figure 1: AI Awareness

Respondents were also asked about their daily AI use (with multiple response permitted). The most common form of AI use is through consumer tools such as chatbots or smart

assistants, reported by 41.3% of respondents. 43.1% reported that they did not use any of the listed options suggesting that many individuals may be yet to adopt AI daily. 17.2% reported using AI systems as part of their job. More advanced forms of AI engagement were reporting by only 6.0% who note that they are involved in decisions about how AI is introduced or used in their organisation. 0.9% noted they were employed as AI specialists.

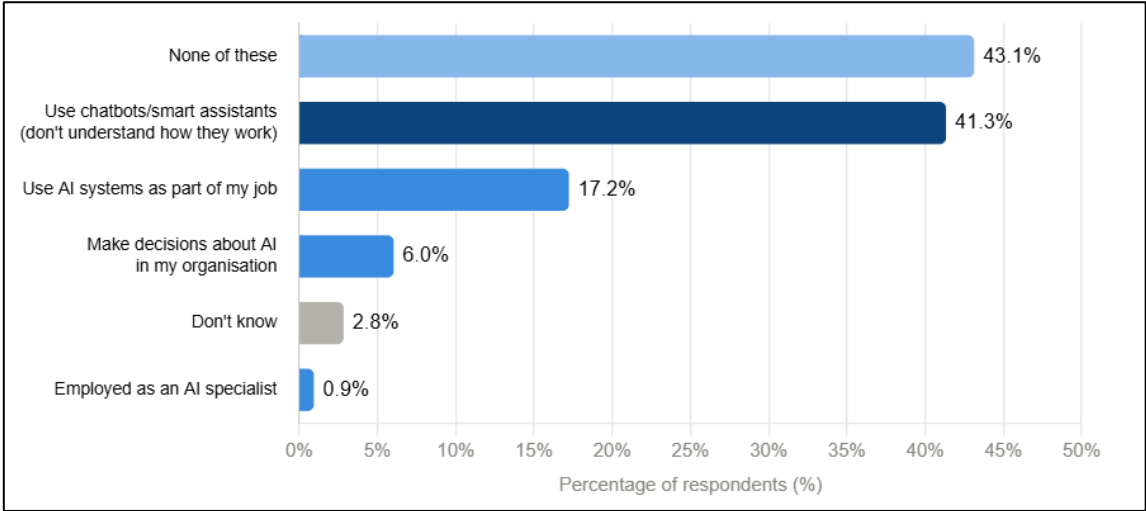


Figure 2: Use of AI on a day-to-day basis

3.1.1 Perceived need for AI knowledge for personal use

The survey explored the publics perceived need for AI knowledge for personal use in future and also for work in the future. The findings related to work are presented in Theme 3, section 3.3.1. Figure 3 shows that over half of respondents i.e. 60.5% believe they will need at least a fair amount of AI knowledge for personal use in the future, with 18.6% anticipating needing a great deal. Only 10.5% believe they will not need AI knowledge at all for personal use. This suggests that AI is expected to become a normal part of everyday personal life for the majority of respondents.

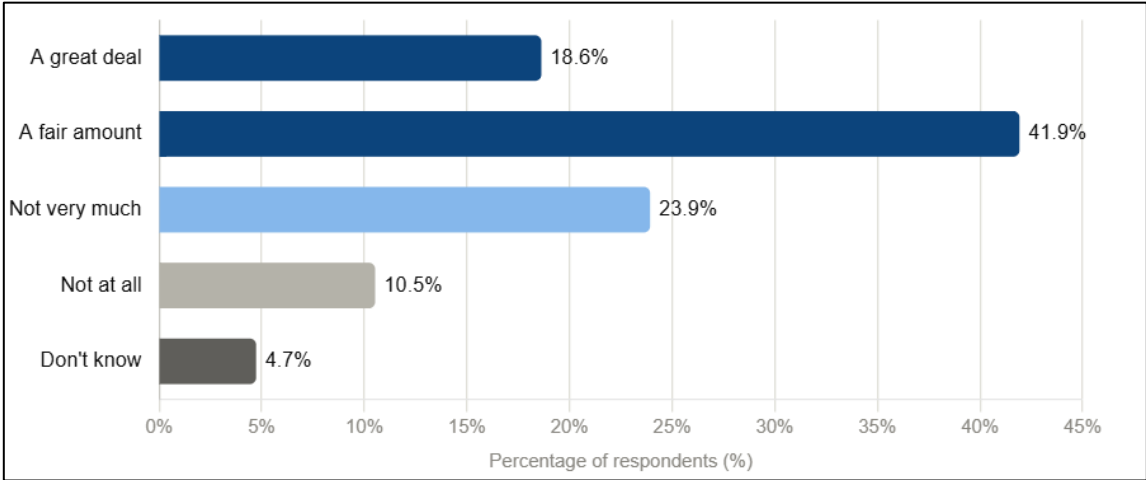


Figure 3: Perceived need for AI knowledge for personal use in future

To delve a bit deeper into the data, perceived AI knowledge need for personal use in future is explored across different the demographic categories of sex, age group, qualification level, and economic activity status.

3.1.1.1 Perceived AI knowledge need for personal in future by sex

There is a modest difference in anticipated AI knowledge needs between male and female respondents. Male respondents are more likely to report needing a great deal of AI knowledge for personal use (21.1% compared with 16.2% of females). Female respondents are more likely to report needing no AI knowledge at all (12.0% compared with 8.6% for male respondents) or to say they don't know (6.2% compared to 3.3% of males). Both sexes report “a fair amount” as the most common response (42.0% male, 42.5% female). Table 1 presents this data.

Table 1: Perceived AI knowledge needs for personal use in future by sex

Group	A Great Deal	A fair Amount	Not Very Much	Not At All	Don't Know
Male	21.1%	42.0%	24.9%	8.6%	3.3%
Female	16.2%	42.5%	23.2%	12.0%	6.2%

3.1.1.2 Perceived AI knowledge need for personal use in future by age group

Between 22.3% and 25.4% of respondents aged under 55 said they would need a great deal of AI knowledge, compared with a smaller percentage 10.4% of both those aged 55 to 64 and those aged 65 and over. This suggests that older individuals will be slower to adopt AI into their personal lives.

Fewer than 15% of respondents in any age group said they would need no AI knowledge at all for personal use. This ranged from 8.5% among those aged 55 to 64 to 14.6% among those aged 18 to 24. Even among respondents aged 65 and over, 79.0% anticipated needing at least some AI knowledge for personal use.

This differs markedly from the pattern for anticipated workplace use, where 47.4% of respondents aged 65 and over said they would need no AI knowledge at all (see Theme 3, section 3.3.1.2). This difference may partly reflect the greater proportion of people in this age group who are retired or no longer economically active. Nevertheless, the findings indicate that many older respondents recognise the relevance of AI to their personal lives, even when they do not expect it to feature in their working lives. See Table 2 for the full results.

Table 2: Perceived AI knowledge needs for personal use in future by age group

Age Group	A Great Deal	A Fair Amount	Not Very Much	Not at All	Don't Know
18-24	25.4%	33.8%	25.4%	14.6%	0.8%
25-34	22.3%	42.6%	23.8%	8.9%	2.5%
35-44	25.1%	44.9%	16.9%	10.1%	2.9%
45-54	23.3%	41.0%	21.4%	10.5%	3.8%
55-64	10.4%	46.8%	28.9%	8.5%	5.5%
65+	10.4%	41.0%	27.6%	11.6%	9.3%

3.1.1.3 Perceived AI knowledge need for personal use in future by qualification level

Degree holders report the highest combined response (a great deal plus a fair amount), at 67.7%, and are the least likely to say they will need no AI knowledge at all for personal use i.e. 7.3%. In contrast, those with no qualifications and those with GCSE grades D-G are most likely to anticipate needing no AI knowledge at all, both at 21.2%, while those with no qualifications are also most likely to report uncertainty i.e. 9.6%, compared with just 7.3% and 2.8% respectively among degree holders. A Level holders show the highest “a great deal” response of any qualification group i.e. 27.3%, echoing the similar pattern observed for AI knowledge needs at work (refer Theme 3, section 3.3.1.3). The data shows a broad tendency for perceived AI knowledge needs to be lower among those with fewer formal qualifications, particularly for the combined “great deal” / “fair amount” response and for the “not at all” / “don't know” responses, although this pattern is not fully linear, as A Level holders report a higher “a great deal” response than degree holders. Table 3 presents this data.

Table 3: Perceived AI knowledge needs for personal use in future by qualification level

Highest Qualification	A Great Deal	A Fair Amount	Not Very Much	Not at All	Don't Know
Degree or higher	21.0%	46.7%	22.2%	7.3%	2.8%
HE Diploma	10.6%	40.6%	30.6%	12.9%	5.3%
A Level	27.3%	38.6%	19.3%	12.5%	2.3%
GCSE A-C	13.5%	42.9%	29.3%	7.5%	6.8%
GCSE D-G	15.2%	28.8%	25.8%	21.2%	9.1%
No Qualification	11.5%	30.8%	26.9%	21.2%	9.6%

3.1.1.4 Perceived AI knowledge need for personal use in the future by economic activity status

Those in full-time education are most likely to anticipate needing a great deal of AI knowledge for personal use i.e. 30.3%, followed by those seeking work i.e. 24.1% and those in full-time employment i.e. 23.6%. At the other end of the scale, full-time carers show the lowest “a great deal” response i.e. 8.7%, while those looking after the home show the highest uncertainty i.e. 14.3% “don't know” responses. Full-time carers also report the highest “not at all” response of any group i.e. 21.7%, narrowly ahead of those permanently

sick or disabled i.e. 21.3%. This is an interesting statistic when it is often suggested that AI can help support those who are furthest removed from the labour market. Table 4 presents the full data for this crosstab.

Table 4: Perceived AI knowledge needs for personal use in future by economic activity status

Economic Activity	A Great Deal	A Fair Amount	Not Very Much	Not at All	Don't Know
Full-time employed	23.6%	44.2%	22.8%	7.3%	2.2%
Part-time employed	13.4%	44.5%	26.2%	11.0%	4.9%
Seeking work	24.1%	41.4%	20.7%	13.8%	0.0%
Retired	11.0%	40.9%	26.0%	12.1%	10.0%
Full-time education	30.3%	33.3%	15.2%	21.2%	0.0%
Looking after home	14.3%	28.6%	33.3%	9.5%	14.3%
Perm. sick/disabled	17.0%	21.3%	38.3%	21.3%	2.1%
Full-time carer	8.7%	43.5%	17.4%	21.7%	8.7%

3.2 Theme 2: AI Learning and Barriers

Theme 2 examines respondents' participation in AI learning, their interest in developing further knowledge and skills related to AI, and the barriers they identify to doing so.

67.7% of respondents agreed that learning how to use AI tools will be essential for most jobs in the next five years. However, only 18.6% had undertaken AI-related learning in the previous 12 months (see Table 5). More than half (51.9%) said they would like to learn more about using AI, while 35.9% did not and 12.2% were unsure.

Table 5: AI Training undertaken in past 12 months

Measure	Yes (%)	No (%)	Don't Know (%)
Undertaken AI-related training, a course or self-directed learning in the previous 12 months	18.6	80.4	1.0
Would like to learn more about using AI	51.9	35.9	12.2

The 18.6% who had undertaken AI-related learning were asked to identify where this learning took place, refer Table 6. The workplace was the most common place reported by 66.7% of learners. Self-directed learning through books, tutorials or online resources was utilised by 52%. This was followed by online courses or platforms (31.9%). A smaller number of individuals reported learning through a university or college (13.8%), a government programme or public initiative (4.6%), or a community or voluntary group (3.0%). This suggests that current AI learning is largely taking place through employment or individuals own self learning, rather than through formal education provision.

Table 6: Where AI Learning took place

Where AI Learning took place	AI Learners (%)
Workplace	66.7
Self-directed learning through books, tutorials or online resources	52.0
Online course or platform	31.9
University or college	13.8
Government program or private initiative	4.6
Community or voluntary group	3.0

(Note: As respondents could select more than one route, these percentages do not sum to 100%.)

3.2.1 Barriers to AI learning

Figure 4 provides a snapshot of the barriers which respondents identified to be preventing them from learning about AI; multiple response permitted. The three most cited barriers across all groups were cost of training (27.1%), lack of time due to work (26.7%), and not knowing where to learn about AI (26.1%).

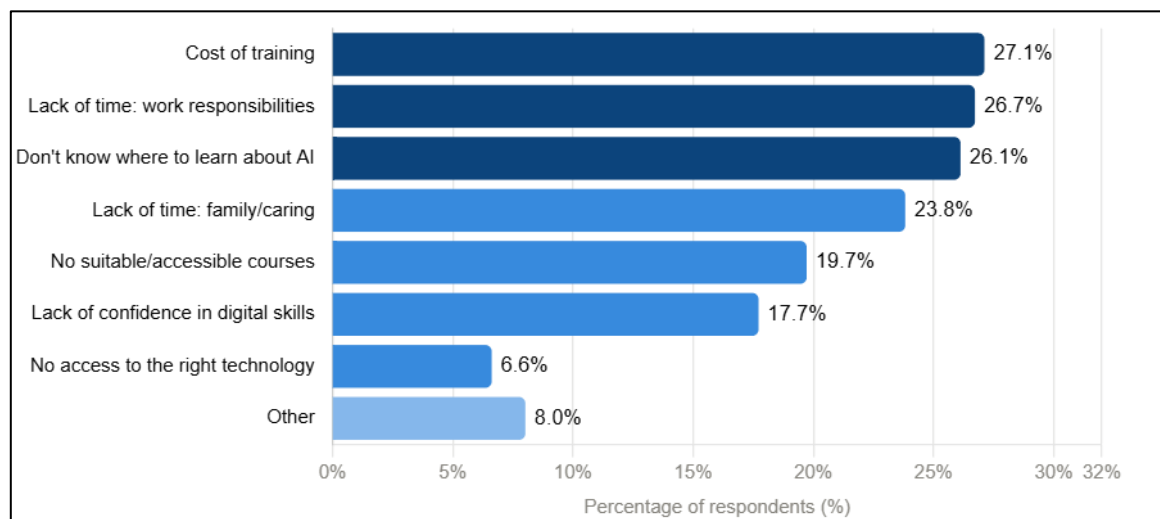


Figure 4: Overall barriers to AI learning

The barriers to AI learning are now discussed per age group, sex, qualification level, economic activity status and occupation to identify any potential differences across demographic characteristics.

3.2.1.1 Barriers to AI learning by age group

The data suggests that different barriers to AI learning are faced across different life stages with multiple response permitted. Table 7 below presents these barriers by age group.

Table 7: Barriers to AI learning by age group

Age	Cost of Training	Don't Know Where to Learn	Lack of Confidence in digital skills	Lack of time due to work	Lack of time due to family or caring	Lack of suitable or accessible courses	No access to the right technology
18-24	35.3%	25.5%	5.7%	27.2%	7.9%	24.4%	8.4%
25-34	27.8%	20.3%	11.0%	36.8%	28.3%	15.6%	4.8%
35-44	29.7%	23.7%	11.5%	40.8%	41.7%	16.2%	7.2%
45-54	27.8%	22.3%	16.2%	35.5%	29.9%	16.1%	6.8%
55-64	24.7%	27.7%	25.7%	23.2%	18.7%	22.5%	5.2%
65+	20.9%	34.1%	27.9%	3.6%	13.2%	24.2%	7.8%

18–24-year-olds noted that they are most constrained by the cost of learning AI. More than one in three (35.3%) cited cost of training as a barrier, the highest of any age group. Not knowing where to learn about AI (25.5%) and lack of suitable or accessible courses (24.4%) were also notable barriers. Only a smaller percentage noted digital confidence to be a barrier (5.7%), the lowest of any age group.

25–34-year-olds face noted time pressures to be their biggest barrier to learning AI. More than one in three (36.8%) cited lack of time due to work responsibilities. More than one in four (28.3%) cited caring responsibilities as being a barrier. Cost was also noted as a key barrier by 27.8% of respondents in this age group.

35–44-year-olds noted the highest time related barrier to AI learning of any age group. They identified that they are facing a double time burden, where work (40.8%) and caring responsibilities (41.7%) are barriers to learning AI. These are the highest figures recorded for either barrier across the whole age range.

45–54-year-olds noted that they also face high time related barriers, with 35.5% identifying work and 29.9% caring responsibilities as barriers. 16.2% noted digital confidence as a barrier.

55–64-year-olds noted that they face barriers related to digital confidence (25.7%) and not knowing where to learn (27.7%). Similarly, 65 and over show the highest barriers related to digital confidence and information of any age group, with 34.1% stating they do not know where to learn and 27.9% citing digital confidence.

3.2.1.2 Barriers to AI learning by sex

When examining barriers by sex, there were two barriers which impacted more women than men (see Table 8). Caring/family responsibilities was cited by 28.2% of female

respondents compared to 19.5% males. Digital confidence was cited as a barrier by 20.4% of female respondents compared to 15.2% of males.

Work responsibilities were cited as a barrier by a similar number of male (26.5%) and Female (27%) respondents. Male respondents cited the cost of training (29.7%) as their highest barrier, of all barrier types.

Table 8: Barriers to AI learning by sex

Barrier to AI Learning	Male	Female	Gap (F–M)*
Cost of training	29.7%	24.7%	-5.0pp
Don't know where to learn	24.6%	27.7%	+3.1pp
Lack of confidence in my digital skills	15.2%	20.4%	+5.2pp
No access to the right technology	7.2%	6.1%	-1.1pp
Lack of time due to work responsibilities	26.5%	27.0%	+0.5pp
Lack of time due to family or caring responsibilities	19.5%	28.2%	+8.7pp
Lack of suitable or accessible courses available	19.3%	20.0%	+0.7pp

*(F–M) = Female minus Male percentage point difference.

3.2.1.3 Barriers to AI learning by qualification level

Barriers to AI learning also varied by qualification level, with different groups facing distinct primary constraints; multiple responses permitted. See Table 9 below.

Table 9: Barriers to AI learning by highest qualification level

Barrier	Degree	HE Diploma	A Level	GCSE A-C	GCSE D-G	No Quals
Cost of training	28.2%	29.3%	25.9%	23.7%	26.3%	19.9%
Don't know where to learn	25.2%	25.7%	28.5%	26.7%	39.6%	22.9%
Lack of confidence in my digital skills	13.3%	19.2%	17.9%	23.9%	26.1%	29.8%
No access to right technology	5.8%	5.6%	6.0%	6.9%	5.4%	11.8%
Lack of time due to work responsibilities	31.7%	24.4%	26.5%	22.9%	18.4%	7.0%
Lack of time due to family or caring responsibilities	24.7%	28.1%	23.5%	28.1%	15.9%	8.6%
Lack of suitable or accessible courses available	22.9%	20.9%	15.7%	16.6%	11.9%	10.4%

Degree holders noted that they are most constrained by time. Almost one in three (31.7%) cited lack of time due to work responsibilities, the highest of any barrier for this group. This was followed by cost of training (28.2%) and not knowing where to learn (25.2%). “No access to the right technology” was the least commonly cited barrier for this group (5.8%), while digital confidence was also comparatively low (13.3%); the lowest reported by any qualification level on this specific barrier.

HE Diploma holders are most constrained by cost of training. 29.3% cited the cost of training, alongside caring-related time pressures (28.1%) and not knowing where to learn (25.7%) as key barriers to AI learning.

Over 1 in 4 A Level holders noted that they are most constrained by not knowing where to learn (28.5%). This is followed closely by work-related time pressures (26.5%) and cost of training (25.9%) as being key barriers to AI learning.

Among GCSE A-C holders identified caring-related time pressures (28.1%), not knowing where to learn (26.7%) and the cost of training (23.7%) as being their top 3 barriers.

Among GCSE D-G holders, almost two in five (39.6%) said they did not know where to learn about AI. This was followed by cost of training (26.3%) and lack of confidence in my digital skills (26.1%).

Those with no qualifications noted that they are most constrained by digital confidence (29.8%) , followed by not knowing where to learn (22.9%) and cost of training i.e. 19.9% (however this was lower than all other groups). Notably, this group reported the lowest time-related barriers (7.0% work, 8.6% family/caring).

3.2.1.4 Barriers to AI learning by Economic Activity Status

Barriers to AI learning also varied by economic activity status, with different groups facing distinct primary constraints linked to their circumstances; multiple responses permitted. See Table 10.

Full-time employed workers face predominantly time-based barriers. More than two in five individuals (41.7%) cited lack of time due to work responsibilities. More than one in four (26.2%) cited family or caring time barriers. For this group, the challenges were less about confidence (12.0%) but of finding time within already demanding schedules.

Those seeking work stated that cost was their most prominent barrier (34.5%). 28.5% of those seeking work also did not know where to go to learn AI.

43% of those in full-time education stated that they did not know where to learn about AI. This is the highest information barrier of any economic activity group, higher even than retired respondents (35.4%). This group which is closer to formal learning institutions appears to be among the least informed about AI learning pathways available to them.

The cost of training (33.3%) and a lack of digital confidence barriers (30.7%) were the biggest barriers for those permanently sick or disabled. Furthermore 17% cited no access to the right technology as being a barrier. This compared to 6.2% of full-time workers who stated this as a barrier.

55% of full-time carers cited lack of time due to family or caring responsibilities, signalling significant time-based barriers. They also identified cost of training (29.1%) and digital confidence (27.7%) as key barriers.

42% of those looking after the home cited lack of time due to family or caring responsibilities as a large barrier. 38.4% of this group also identified that they did not know where to go to learn about AI. More than one in six (17.2%) said they did not know what barriers applied to them, the highest 'don't know' response of any large group, suggesting a degree of disengagement from AI learning altogether.

Table 10: Barriers to AI learning by economic activity status

Economic Activity Group	Cost of training	Don't Know Where to learn	Lack of confidence in my digital skills	Lack of time due to work	Lack of time due to family or caring	Lack of suitable or accessible courses	No Access to right technology
Full-time employed	29.7%	21.6%	12.0%	41.7%	26.2%	19.0%	6.2%
Part-time employed	23.9%	26.0%	16.1%	25.5%	28.0%	17.0%	2.5%
Seeking work	34.5%	28.5%	14.5%	20.1%	12.1%	11.4%	7.9%
Retired	22.6%	35.4%	29.8%	2.8%	13.4%	24.3%	8.1%
Full-time education	26.1%	43.0%	10.4%	35.3%	14.2%	25.2%	7.8%
Looking after home	13.2%	38.4%	3.1%	11.1%	42.0%	20.2%	0.0%
Permanently sick/disabled	33.3%	22.5%	30.7%	4.7%	25.6%	19.2%	17.0%
Full-time carer	29.1%	16.3%	27.7%	5.0%	55.5%	10.6%	10.7%

3.2.1.5 Barriers to AI learning by occupation

Barriers to AI learning also varied by different occupations. In this survey, occupations were categorised using NSSEC classification. These are classified into five categories.

1. **Managerial/professional managerial, administrative and professional occupations:**
These include senior managers/administrators responsible for planning, organising

and co-ordinating work and finance (e.g. finance manager, chief executive), and both modern and traditional professional occupations (e.g. teacher, nurse, physiotherapist, social worker, software designer, accountant, solicitor, medical practitioner, scientist, civil/mechanical engineer).

2. **Intermediate occupations:** These include clerical and administrative roles that are neither managerial/professional nor manual (e.g. secretary, personal assistant, clerical worker, call centre agent, nursing auxiliary).
3. **Small employers and own account workers:** These include people who run their own business with employees (small employers) or are self-employed without employees ("own account workers", i.e. sole traders working alone).
4. **Lower supervisory and technical occupations:** These include supervisors overseeing other staff day-to-day, plus skilled technical/craft workers (e.g. motor mechanic, electrician, plumber, printer).
5. **Semi-routine and routine occupations:** These include middle or junior managers (e.g. office manager, retail manager, bank manager, restaurant manager, publican) combined with routine manual and service roles with little discretion (e.g. postal worker, machine operative, security guard, caretaker, farm worker, catering assistant, receptionist, sales assistant, HGV driver, van driver, cleaner, porter, packer, sewing machinist, messenger, labourer, waiter/waitress, bar staff).

As seen in Table 11, respondents in the 'Managerial/professional Managerial, administrative and professional occupations' stated that they face predominantly time-based and cost barriers. Almost one in three (30.6%) cited work responsibilities as a barrier, followed by cost of training (27.4%) and not knowing where to learn (26.2%). More than one in four (25.9%) cited family or caring responsibilities as a barrier to learning AI, and 20.4% also cited lack of suitable courses as a barrier.

Respondents classified as being in 'Intermediate occupations' show the highest cost barrier of any occupational class, with almost one in three (32.8%) citing cost of training, alongside high information barriers (30.3%) along with time related barriers due to work (22.9%) and digital confidence barriers (21.7%).

Respondents who are noted to be 'Small employers and own account workers' cite that family and caring responsibilities are their biggest barrier (31.1%). 26.3% of this group also noted that they did not know where to go to learn. Confidence in digital skills was also a barrier for 22.3% of them. They had the lowest cost barrier of any occupational class (13.5%).

Respondents from the 'Lower supervisory and technical occupations' identified that cost of training was their biggest barrier (30.2%). This was followed closely by not knowing where to learn AI (29.4%). 22.7% also noted that they had a lack of time due to work responsibilities.

Respondents in the ‘Semi-routine and routine occupations’ identified cost to be their largest barrier (29.0%). 23.1% stated that they don't know where to learn AI, while lack of suitable or accessible courses (19.7%) and digital confidence (19.6%) were cited by a similar, smaller proportion.

Table 11: Barriers to AI learning by occupation

Occupations (NS-SEC)	Cost of training	Don't Know Where to learn	Lack of confidence in my digital skills	Lack of time due to work	Lack of time due to family or caring	Lack of suitable or accessible courses available	No access to right technology
Managerial/ professional Managerial, administrative and professional occupations	27.4%	26.2%	16.1%	30.6%	25.9%	20.4%	5.6%
Intermediate	32.8%	30.3%	21.7%	22.9%	29.3%	25.9%	8.8%
Small employers and own account workers	13.5%	26.3%	22.3%	19.0%	31.1%	16.5%	7.4%
Lower supervisory and technical occupations	30.2%	29.4%	18.6%	22.7%	14.8%	17.3%	9.5%
Semi-routine and routine occupations	29.0%	23.1%	19.6%	22.8%	13.9%	19.7%	7.3%

3.3 Theme 3: AI and the Future of Work

This theme explores respondents’ perceptions of the role Artificial Intelligence (AI) is expected to play in the future labour market. It examines two key areas: (i) the extent to which people believe they will need AI knowledge for work in the future, and (ii) perceptions of AI's wider impact on jobs, productivity and workforce inclusion.

Analysis is based on responses from 1,229 respondents (98.8% of the survey sample). Findings are presented across key demographic and labour market characteristics to identify where perceptions differ most and where policy interventions may be required.

3.3.1 Perceived AI knowledge needs for work in the future

Figure 5 shows that over half of respondents (55.4%) believe they will need at least a fair amount of AI knowledge for work in the future. However, this contrasts with the relatively

low participation in AI-related training during the previous 12 months, where only 18.6% respondents stated that they had undertaken AI-related learning in the previous 12 months (refer to section 3.2, Theme 2, for more details). This suggests a gap between anticipated future skills needs and current workforce preparedness.

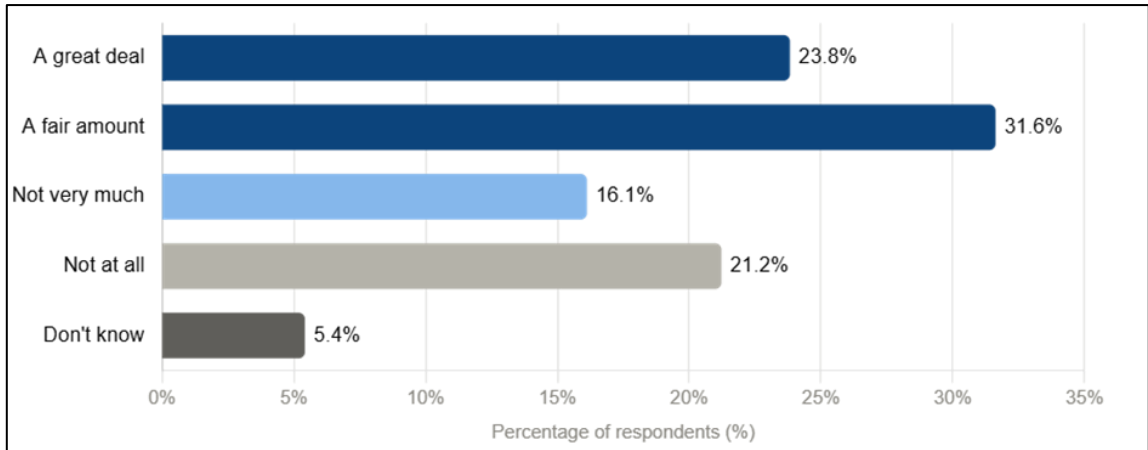


Figure 5: How much AI knowledge do you think you will need for work in future?

Perceived AI knowledge needs for future work are now explored across the following demographic groups: sex, age group, qualification level, occupation, employment sector, economic activity status and geography.

3.3.1.1 Perceived AI knowledge need for work in future by sex

As shown in Table 12 below, there was little difference in the data on the anticipated AI knowledge needs between male and female respondents. Male respondents are slightly more likely to report needing a great deal of AI knowledge for work (27.0% compared with 21.7%), and female respondents are marginally more likely to report needing 'not very much' (18.5% for female compared with 14.5% for male respondents). A chi-square test indicated that this association was not statistically significant. It is therefore not possible to conclude that perceived AI knowledge needs for work differ systematically by sex across the wider population, and the observed variation should be interpreted with caution.

Table 12: Perceived AI knowledge needs for work in future by sex

Group	A Great Deal	A Fair Amount	Not Very Much	Not at All	Don't Know
Male	27.0%	33.0%	14.5%	20.7%	4.8%
Female	21.7%	31.3%	18.5%	22.2%	6.3%

3.3.1.2 Perceived AI knowledge need for work in future by age

As seen in Table 13, there was varying patterns of anticipated AI knowledge needs for work in the future by age.

Across all working-age groups (18-54), the data shows a consistently high level of anticipated AI knowledge need. Between 61.5% and 66.8% of respondents believe they will need at least a fair amount or a great deal of AI knowledge for work, indicating widespread recognition that AI skills will become increasingly important for the future workforce.

Even within the 55-64 age group, 39.5% noted that they will need to know a fair amount of AI knowledge for work in the future. 16% noted they perceive they will need to know a great deal. The decline is more pronounced among respondents aged 65 and over, with 19.9% expecting to require a fair amount of AI knowledge for work and 12% noted that they will need to know a great deal. Almost half (47.4%) noted that they will not require any AI knowledge for work, which could be expected due to many who may be retired or seeking retirement.

Table 13: Perceived AI knowledge needs for work in future by age group

Age Group	A Great Deal	A Fair Amount	Not Very Much	Not at All	Don't Know
18-24	30.0%	31.5%	19.2%	14.6%	4.6%
25-34	31.3%	35.3%	18.4%	11.4%	3.5%
35-44	31.9%	32.9%	18.4%	13.5%	3.4%
45-54	29.4%	37.4%	16.6%	10.0%	6.6%
55-64	16.0%	39.5%	16.5%	23.0%	5.0%
65+	12.0%	19.9%	11.7%	47.4%	9.0%

3.3.1.3 Perceived AI knowledge need for work in future by qualification level

As seen in Table 14, the data shows a broad tendency for perceived AI knowledge needs for work to be higher among those with higher educational attainment, although this pattern is not fully linear. Respondents with a degree reported the highest anticipated need for AI knowledge, with almost two-thirds (64.1%) believing they will require a fair amount or great deal of AI knowledge for work in the future. In comparison, four in ten respondents with no qualifications (39.2%) anticipate needing a fair amount or a great deal of knowledge of AI for future work.

The greatest difference is evident when exploring those who perceive that AI knowledge will not be required. Nearly two in five respondents with no qualifications (39.2%) believe they will not need any AI knowledge for work. A further 11.8% of those with no qualifications stated 'not very much' which denotes over half (51.0%) of those with no qualifications not viewing a large perceived need for AI knowledge for work. This compares with fewer than one in three-degree holders (32.1%). Respondents with no

qualifications are also more likely to report uncertainty, with almost one in ten (9.8%) selecting “don't know”, compared with just 3.8% of degree holders. Their perception of not needing AI or uncertainty, may be partially explained when reflecting on theme 2, where those with no qualifications noted not knowing where to learn and a lack of digital skills as being barriers, signalling a potential lack of knowledge and confidence around AI.

Further, 46.2% of those with GCSE D-G qualifications either responded not very much or not at all in terms of their perceived AI knowledge need for work in future. This group could be at risk of being left behind in terms of AI skills for work in the future.

Overall, the individuals with higher levels of education are more likely to recognise the growing importance of AI in the workplace, while those with lower qualifications appear less likely to perceive AI as relevant to their future employment. This may in part be explained due to differences in occupational exposure, digital confidence or awareness of how AI is expected to transform jobs across sectors.

Table 14: Perceived AI knowledge needs for work in future by qualification level

Highest Qualification	A Great Deal	A Fair Amount	Not Very Much	Not at All	Don't Know
Degree or higher	29.7%	34.4%	14.9%	17.2%	3.8%
HE Diploma	15.9%	28.8%	22.4%	26.5%	6.5%
A Level	21.6%	40.9%	23.9%	10.2%	3.4%
GCSE A-C	19.4%	27.6%	19.4%	27.6%	6.0%
GCSE D-G	14.9%	29.9%	11.9%	34.3%	9.0%
No Qualification	13.7%	25.5%	11.8%	39.2%	9.8%

3.3.1.4 Perceived AI knowledge need for work in future by occupation

Managerial and professional workers report the highest anticipated need for AI knowledge, with almost two-thirds (64.0%) expecting either a fair amount or a great deal of AI knowledge for work. The lowest anticipated need is observed among those employed in semi-routine and routine occupations. Just over one-third (34.8%) anticipate needing a fair amount or a great deal of AI knowledge of work. A similar proportion (33.9%) believe they will not require any AI knowledge at all. Small employers and self-employed workers report the second-lowest anticipated need of any occupational group, with almost half (48.4%) expecting to require either a little or no AI knowledge (i.e. not very much plus not at all).

Table 15: Perceived AI knowledge needs for work in future by occupation

Occupations (NS-SEC)	A Great Deal	A Fair Amount	Not Very Much	Not at All	Don't Know
Managerial, administrative and professional occupations	28.6%	35.4%	13.7%	18.8%	3.6%
Intermediate	22.2%	32.5%	18.8%	17.1%	9.4%
Small employers and own account workers	16.1%	32.3%	24.2%	24.2%	3.2%
Lower supervisory and technical occupations	20.2%	30.8%	18.3%	26.0%	4.8%
Semi-routine and routine occupations	14.8%	20.0%	24.3%	33.9%	7.0%

3.3.1.5 Perceived AI knowledge need for work in future by employment sector

As shown in Table 16, there were only modest differences between employment sectors in the perceived level of AI knowledge needed for future work. Private-sector workers were slightly more likely to anticipate needing at least a fair amount of AI knowledge, that is, either a fair amount or a great deal (61.3%), than those working in the public sector (54.3%) or the voluntary and community sector (60.0%).

Correspondingly, 40.6% of public-sector workers expected to need not very much or no AI knowledge, compared with 33.4% of private-sector workers and 32.7% of those in the voluntary and community sector. Overall, these combined proportions were relatively similar across the three sectors.

Table 16: Perceived AI knowledge need for work in future by employment sector

Employment Sector	A Great Deal	A Fair Amount	Not Very Much	Not at All	Don't Know
Public sector	21.6%	32.7%	16.7%	23.9%	5.1%
Private sector	28.7%	32.6%	14.2%	19.2%	5.4%
Voluntary/community	21.8%	38.2%	23.6%	9.1%	7.3%

3.3.1.6 Perceived AI knowledge need for work in future by economic activity status

Economic activity status showed the clearest differences in anticipated AI knowledge needs among the demographic characteristics examined.

As shown in Table 17, seven in ten (70.3%) of respondents in full-time employment anticipated needing either a fair amount or a great deal of AI knowledge for their future work. A similarly high proportion was recorded among those in full-time education (69.7%), followed by those seeking work (65.5%). This suggests that both current workers

and those preparing to enter or re-enter employment recognise the growing relevance of AI knowledge in the labour market.

Anticipated AI knowledge needs were considerably lower among respondents who were permanently sick or disabled (31.2%) and those who were retired (33.2%). Anticipated need was also comparatively lower, though less markedly so, among those looking after the home (47.6%), part-time employed respondents (50.6%) and full-time carers (54.6%). In each case, these figures represent the combined proportion expecting to need either a fair amount or a great deal of AI knowledge for work in the future. See Table 17 for more details.

Table 17: Perceived AI knowledge need for work in future by economic activity status

Economic Activity	A Great Deal	A Fair Amount	Not Very Much	Not at All	Don't Know
Full-time employed	34.3%	36.0%	17.9%	9.0%	2.9%
Part-time employed	13.4%	37.2%	24.4%	19.5%	5.5%
Seeking work	31.0%	34.5%	10.3%	17.2%	6.9%
Retired	12.1%	21.1%	10.0%	47.5%	9.3%
Full-time education	30.3%	39.4%	15.2%	15.2%	0.0%
Looking after home	19%	28.6%	23.8%	14.3%	14.3%
Perm. Sick/disabled	15.6%	15.6%	17.8%	42.2%	8.9%
Full-time carer	9.1%	45.5%	4.5%	31.8%	9.1%

3.3.1.7 Perceived AI knowledge need for work in future by geography

Geographic location shows little association with anticipated AI knowledge needs for work. As seen in Table 18, perceptions are broadly similar across both urban and rural areas, suggesting that awareness of the future importance of AI is consistent across Northern Ireland rather than being concentrated in particular locations. It should be noted that the chi-square test confirmed that this association was not statistically significant between geographic location and AI knowledge needs for work. This indicates that urban/rural location is not a meaningful factor in perceived AI knowledge needs for work, and the small differences observed should not be interpreted as reflecting real variation across the wider population.

Some variation is observed across local council areas. For example, respondents in Newry, Mourne and Down report the highest proportion believing they will not require AI knowledge for work (31.6%). However, a chi-square test found no statistically significant association between council area and perceived AI knowledge needs. One cell in the crosstabulation had an expected count below 5, reflecting the relatively small sample sizes within some individual council areas. Given this, the observed differences may not reflect real variation across the wider population and should be interpreted with particular

caution. Larger sample sizes in the future would help to explore place-based variance across NI.

Table 18: Perceived AI knowledge need for work in future by geography

Location	A Great Deal	A Fair Amount	Not Very Much	Not at All	Don't Know
Urban/Rural					
Urban	25.0%	33.9%	15.2%	20.5%	5.4%
Rural	23.1%	29.0%	18.7%	23.3%	5.9%
Council Area					
Belfast	30.0%	31.7%	13.9%	18.3%	6.1%
Derry City and Strabane	31.9%	27.7%	14.9%	20.2%	5.3%
Fermanagh and Omagh	31.5%	30.1%	17.8%	19.2%	1.4%
Newry, Mourne and Down	24.6%	21.1%	14.0%	31.6%	8.8%
Antrim and Newtownabbey	16.0%	38.3%	19.1%	21.3%	5.3%
Lisburn and Castlereagh	18.4%	34.7%	18.4%	24.5%	4.1%
Armagh CB and Craigavon	25.4%	34.1%	15.9%	21.7%	2.9%
Ards and North Down	17.9%	36.8%	18.9%	21.7%	4.7%
Causeway Coast and Glens	22.8%	32.6%	16.3%	23.9%	4.3%
Mid and East Antrim	21.7%	37.0%	15.2%	18.5%	7.6%
Mid Ulster	21.3%	29.8%	20.2%	19.1%	9.6%

3.3.2 Perceptions of AI's wider impact on jobs, productivity and workforce inclusion

Respondents were also asked to identify their views on:

- If learning to use AI tools will be essential for most jobs in the next five years
- If AI is likely to reduce the number of jobs in the next five years
- If AI could make work more productive or efficient and
- If AI will make it easier for workplaces to accommodate the needs of people who are currently excluded from the workforce.

Each will be discussed.

3.3.2.1 Learning to use AI tools will be essential for most jobs in the next five years

There was widespread agreement that learning to use AI tools will become essential for most jobs over the next five years. More than two-thirds of respondents (67.7%) agree or strongly agree while fewer than one in ten (9.8%) disagreed or strongly disagreed (Figure 6).

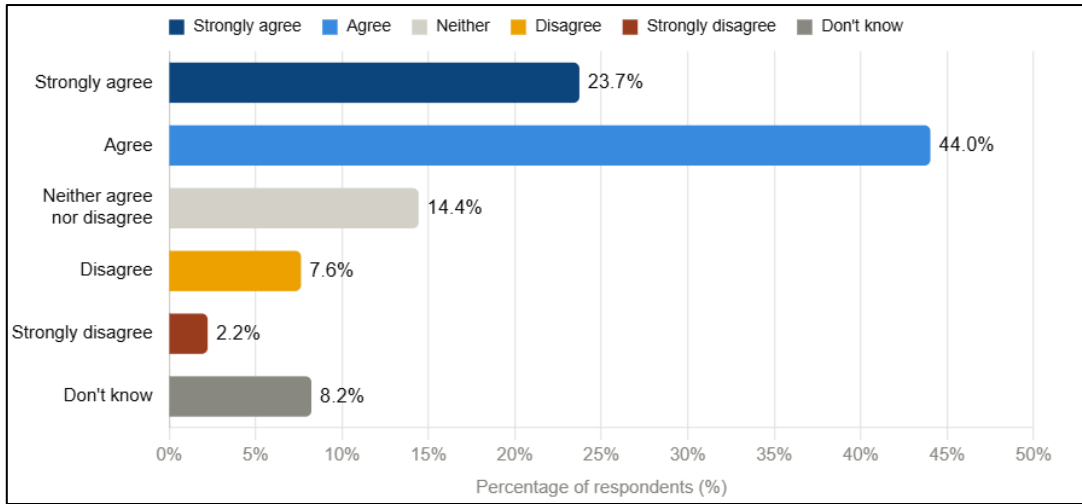


Figure 6: Learning to use AI tools will be essential for most jobs in the next five years

This question was then explored by demographic groups, sex, age group, qualification level, economic activity status and occupation. However, for sex, there was minor variance across answers, as seen in Table 19. A chi-square test confirmed that the association between sex and agreement that AI skills will be essential for most jobs was not statistically significant. It is therefore not possible to conclude that views differ systematically by sex across the wider population, and the minor variation observed in Table 19 should be interpreted with caution.

Table 19: Learning to use AI tools will be essential for most jobs in the next five years, by sex

Group	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
Male	24.1%	43.5%	14.5%	8.4%	2.3%	6.1%
Female	23.3%	44.7%	14.4%	6.8%	1.9%	8.7%

Next, there was little difference by age. While respondents aged 65 and over are slightly more likely to report uncertainty (11.9%), age has relatively little influence on perceptions that AI skills will become essential for future employment, as shown in Table 20.

Table 20: Learning to use AI tools will be essential for most jobs in the next five years, by age group

Group	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
18-24	22.3%	43.1%	13.8%	9.2%	3.1%	6.2%
25-34	29.4%	40.7%	11.3%	14.2%	2.5%	2.0%
35-44	24.6%	42.0%	16.4%	6.8%	1.4%	8.7%
45-54	26.9%	40.1%	14.2%	7.1%	2.8%	8.0%
55-64	21.1%	48.2%	16.6%	4.0%	3.0%	7.0%
65+	18.7%	48.5%	14.2%	5.6%	0.7%	11.9%

3.3.2.1.1 Learning to use AI tools will be essential for most jobs in the next five years by qualification level

Respondents with degrees (73.4%) and A Levels (73.8%) report the highest levels of agreement (i.e. Strongly agree plus agree), that learning to use AI tools will become essential for most jobs. In contrast, agreement falls to 51.5% among respondents with GCSE D-G qualifications.

Respondents with no qualifications also demonstrate considerably greater uncertainty, with 17.0% responding "don't know" compared with 5.0% of degree holders. This suggests that lower educational attainment is associated not only with lower agreement but also with greater uncertainty about AI's future role in the workplace. Table 21 presents the detailed results.

Table 21: Learning to use AI tools will be essential for most jobs in the next five years, by qualification level

Group	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
Degree or higher	27.8%	45.6%	11.5%	7.8%	1.9%	5.0%
HE Diploma	16.4%	40.9%	21.1%	7.6%	4.7%	9.4%
A Level	26.1%	47.7%	12.5%	9.1%	0.0%	4.5%
GCSE A-C	18.8%	48.9%	17.3%	7.5%	0.8%	6.8%
GCSE D-G	11.8%	39.7%	25.0%	7.4%	2.9%	11.8%
No Quals	26.4%	32.1%	18.9%	3.8%	1.9%	17.0%

3.3.2.1.2 Learning to use AI tools will be essential for most jobs in the next five years by economic activity status

Agreement that learning to use AI tools will be essential for most jobs over the next five years varied by economic activity status. Combined “strongly agree” and “agree”, agreement was highest among respondents in full-time education (78.7%) and those seeking work (75.8%). Agreement was also relatively high among those in full-time employment (69.8%) and retired respondents (68.8%), followed by those in part-time employment (64.3%) and those looking after the home (61.9%).

Agreement (Strongly Agree or agree responses) was lowest among respondents who were permanently sick or disabled (53.2%) and full-time carers (54.1%). These groups also expressed greater uncertainty or disagreement: 17.0% of respondents who were permanently sick or disabled selected “don’t know”, while 19.1% neither agreed nor disagreed. Among those looking after the home, 19.0% selected “don’t know”. These findings suggest that perceptions of AI’s future importance differ according to people’s current relationship with the labour market and highlight the value of ensuring that

opportunities to develop AI awareness and skills are accessible to those both within and outside employment. Further details are provided in Table 22.

Table 22: Learning to use AI tools will be essential for most jobs in the next five years, by economic activity status

Group	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
Full-time employed	28.1%	41.7%	13.9%	8.2%	2.7%	4.7%
Part-time employed	18.8%	45.5%	13.9%	13.3%	1.2%	7.3%
Seeking work	24.1%	51.7%	24.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Retired	19.9%	48.9%	14.9%	3.5%	0.7%	12.1%
Full-time education	24.2%	54.5%	9.1%	0.0%	3.0%	6.1%
Looking after home	23.8%	38.1%	9.5%	9.5%	0.0%	19.0%
Perm. sick/disabled	8.5%	44.7%	19.1%	8.5%	10.6%	17.0%
Full-time carer	20.8%	33.3%	20.8%	16.7%	4.2%	4.2%

3.3.2.1.3 Learning to use AI tools will be essential for most jobs in the next five years by occupation

Managerial and professional workers report the highest agreement (strongly agree and agree) that learning to use AI tools will become essential for most jobs (73.5%), while agreement is lowest among lower supervisory and technical occupations (49.6%) and semi-routine and routine occupations (56.9%).

Lower supervisory and technical workers report the highest level of disagreement (strongly disagree and disagree, 22.8%), while semi-routine and routine workers report the greatest uncertainty (12.1%). These findings suggest that workers in some lower-skilled occupations may be less convinced that AI will become central to their future work, despite ongoing technological change across many sectors. See Table 23 for more details.

Table 23: Learning to use AI tools will be essential for most jobs in the next five years, by occupation

Group	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
Managerial, administrative and professional occupations	25.8%	47.7%	11.9%	7.0%	1.7%	5.5%
Intermediate occupations	20.5%	43.6%	17.9%	7.7%	2.6%	7.7%
Small employers and own account workers	24.6%	41.0%	18.0%	6.6%	0.0%	9.8%
Lower supervisory and technical occupations	21.0%	28.6%	17.1%	17.1%	5.7%	10.5%
Semi-routine and routine occupations	13.8%	43.1%	21.6%	4.3%	5.2%	12.1%

3.3.2.2 Views on whether AI is likely to reduce the number of jobs in the next five years

As seen in Figure 7, more than seven in ten respondents (71.2%) agree or strongly agree that AI is likely to cut jobs in the future. While just 6.3% disagree and strongly disagree.

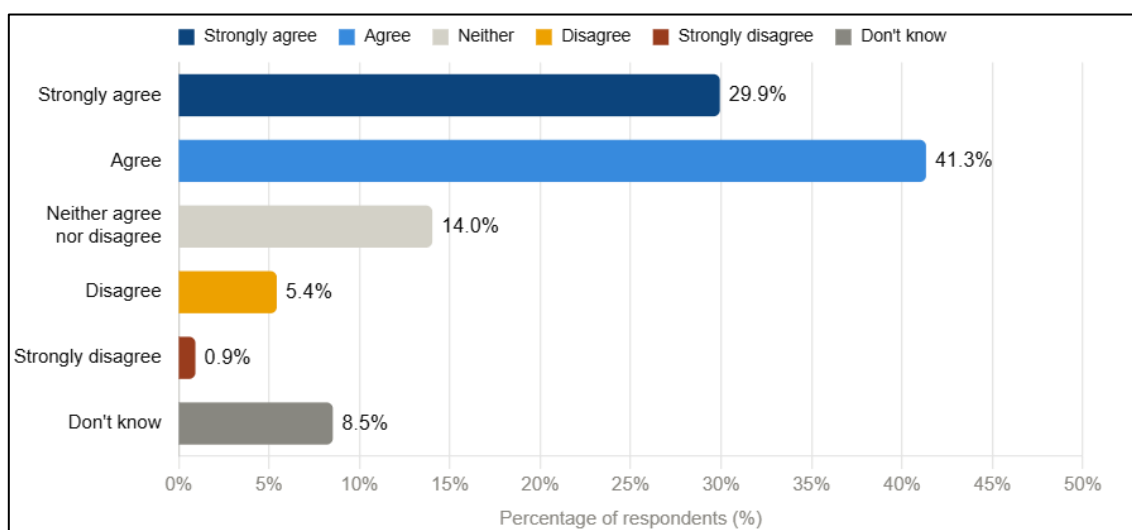


Figure 7: Views on whether AI is likely to reduce the number of jobs in the next five years, by age group

Responses to this statement were also explored across demographic groups, including sex, age group, qualification level, economic activity status and occupation. These findings are presented in the following sections.

3.3.2.2.1 Views on whether AI is likely to reduce the number of jobs in the next five years, by sex

There is little difference between men and women in their views that AI is likely to reduce the number of jobs in the next five years. Combined agreement is high and similar across both sexes (70.5% male, 72.3% female). Men are slightly more likely to disagree (7.8% compared with 5.0% of women), while women are somewhat more likely to say they don't know (9.7% compared with 6.3% of men). Refer to Table 24 for more details.

Table 24: Views on whether AI is likely to reduce the number of jobs in the next five years, by sex

Group	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
Male	30.9%	39.6%	15.3%	7.0%	0.8%	6.3%
Female	29.3%	43.0%	12.9%	4.0%	1.0%	9.7%

3.3.2.2.2 Views on whether AI is likely to reduce the number of jobs in the next five years, by age group

Age shows one of the clearest gradients in this theme. Combined agreement (strongly agree and agree) that AI is likely to reduce the number of jobs in the next five years is highest among 18–24-year-olds (81.9%) and declines steadily with age, falling to 63.9% among those aged 55–64, before rising slightly to 66.7% among those aged 65 and over. Disagreement is low across all age groups signalling that all age groups feel that AI is likely to reduce the number of jobs. Refer to Table 25 for more details.

Table 25: Views on whether AI is likely to reduce the number of jobs in the next five years, by age group

Group	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
18-24	46.5%	35.4%	9.4%	0.0%	1.6%	7.1%
25-34	34.5%	43.8%	11.3%	6.9%	1.0%	2.5%
35-44	33.8%	39.1%	12.1%	7.2%	1.4%	6.3%
45-54	29.2%	40.6%	18.4%	4.7%	0.9%	6.1%
55-64	23.8%	40.1%	20.3%	5.9%	0.5%	9.4%
65+	21.1%	45.6%	12.2%	5.9%	0.4%	14.8%

3.3.2.2.3 Views on if AI is likely to reduce the number of jobs in the next five years by qualification level

By qualification level, most groups showed relatively high agreement that AI is likely to reduce the number of jobs over the next five years. Agreement was highest among A Level holders (76.1%), followed by GCSE A-C holders (74.4%), degree holders (73.1%), HE Diploma holders (71.8%) and respondents with no qualifications (71.0%). Agreement was lower among respondents with GCSE D-G qualifications, at 57.4%, although this still represented a majority of the group. Disagreement remained low across all qualification groups, ranging from 4.1% to 7.4%. Respondents with GCSE D-G qualifications also showed the greatest uncertainty, with 17.6% selecting “don’t know”, compared with 5.2% of degree holders. The overall association between qualification level and views on whether AI is likely to reduce the number of jobs was not statistically significant. The observed differences should therefore be interpreted with caution and cannot be assumed to represent a wider population pattern. Nevertheless, the lower level of agreement and greater uncertainty among GCSE D-G holders are descriptively interesting and may warrant further exploration using a larger sample. Table 26 provides further detail.

Table 26: AI is likely to reduce the number of jobs in the next five years by qualification level

Group	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
Degree or higher	29.8%	43.3%	14.4%	6.3%	1.1%	5.2%
HE Diploma	31.2%	40.6%	12.9%	3.5%	0.6%	11.2%
A Level	37.5%	38.6%	11.4%	4.5%	0.0%	8.0%
GCSE A-C	30.8%	43.6%	10.5%	4.5%	0.0%	10.5%
GCSE D-G	25.0%	32.4%	20.6%	4.4%	0.0%	17.6%
No Quals	25.5%	45.5%	12.7%	5.5%	1.8%	9.1%

3.3.2.2.4 Views on whether AI is likely to reduce the number of jobs in the next five years by economic activity status

Agreement that AI is likely to reduce the number of jobs over the next five years is high across all economic activity groups. The most striking finding is among respondents seeking work, 96.5% of whom agree or strongly agree. However, this result should be interpreted with caution because of the relatively small number of respondents in this group (n = 29). Agreement is also notably high among those in full-time education, at 84.8%. Uncertainty is greatest among retired respondents and those looking after the home, with 14.8% and 14.3%, respectively, selecting “don’t know”. Further details are provided in Table 27.

Table 27: AI is likely to reduce the number of jobs in the next five years by economic activity status

Group	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
Full-time employed	33.1%	37.9%	16.7%	7.3%	1.5%	3.5%
Part-time employed	22.4%	48.5%	11.5%	4.2%	0.6%	12.7%
Seeking work	51.7%	44.8%	0.0%	3.4%	0.0%	0.0%
Retired	21.6%	46.3%	12.7%	4.2%	0.4%	14.8%
Full-time education	42.4%	42.4%	6.1%	3.0%	0.0%	6.1%
Looking after home	28.6%	47.6%	9.5%	0.0%	0.0%	14.3%
Perm. sick/disabled	34.0%	40.4%	12.8%	2.1%	0.0%	10.6%
Full-time carer	29.2%	41.7%	16.7%	8.3%	0.0%	4.2%

3.3.2.2.5 Views on if AI is likely to reduce the number of jobs in the next five years by occupation

Across all occupational classes, a clear majority of respondents agreed that AI is likely to reduce the number of jobs over the next five years. The proportion who agreed or strongly agreed ranged from 69.4% among small employers and own-account workers to 76.1% among those in semi-routine and routine occupations. Disagreement was low across all occupational groups, ranging from 2.9% among those in lower supervisory and technical occupations to 8.1% among small employers and own-account workers. Uncertainty was highest among small employers and own-account workers, with 12.9% responding “don’t know”, followed closely by those in lower supervisory and technical occupations, at 12.6%. However, the overall association between occupational class and views on whether AI is likely to reduce the number of jobs was not statistically significant. It is therefore not possible to conclude that views differ systematically by occupational class across the wider population, and the observed variation should be interpreted with caution. Nevertheless, the descriptive differences are of interest and may warrant further exploration using a larger sample. Table 28 provides further detail.

Table 28: AI is likely to reduce the number of jobs in the next five years by occupation

Group	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
Managerial, administrative and professional occupations	29.0%	41.6%	15.4%	6.9%	0.8%	6.2%
Intermediate occupations	26.5%	46.2%	15.4%	1.7%	1.7%	8.5%
Small employers and own account workers	22.6%	46.8%	9.7%	8.1%	0.0%	12.9%
Lower supervisory and technical occupations	32.0%	41.7%	10.7%	1.9%	1.0%	12.6%
Semi-routine and routine occupations	37.6%	38.5%	11.1%	2.6%	0.9%	9.4%

3.3.2.3 AI could make work more productive or efficient

Respondents were asked whether AI could make their work more productive or efficient. Half of respondents (50.9%) strongly agreed or agreed with this statement, while 14.7% strongly disagreed or disagreed. Almost a quarter (22.5%) neither agreed nor disagreed, and 12.0% said they did not know. Figure 8 provides further detail.

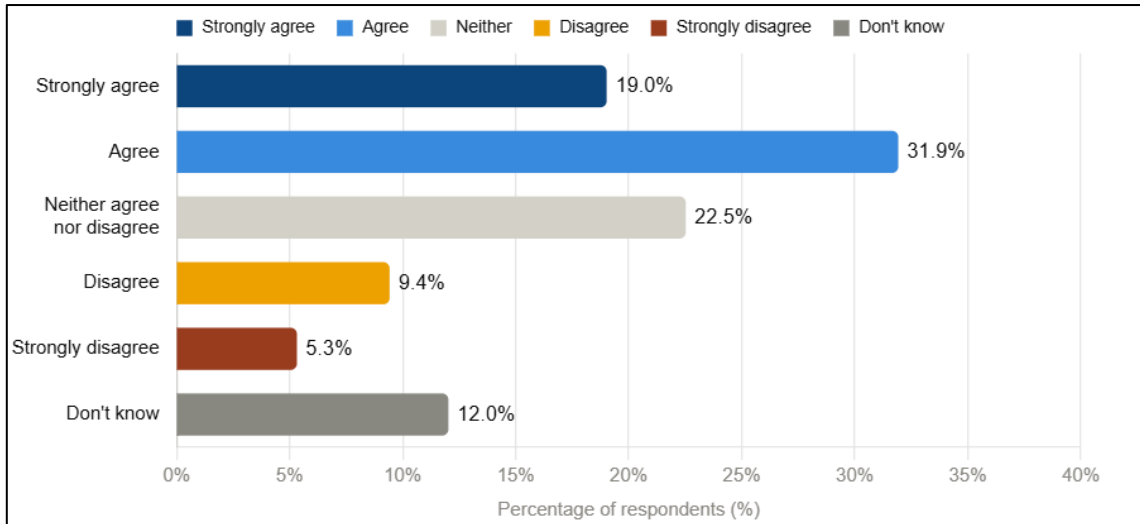


Figure 8: AI could make work more productive or efficient

Responses to this statement were also explored across demographic groups, including sex, age group, qualification level, economic activity status and occupation. These findings are presented in the following sections.

3.3.2.3.1 AI could make work more productive or efficient by sex

There were slight differences in responses by gender. Male respondents show slightly stronger agreement that AI could make work more productive or efficient, with a combined agree response of 55.7% compared with 47.5% among female respondents. Females are also slightly more likely to disagree (17.6% combined disagree compared with 12.0% of men) and to report uncertainty (12.1% compared with 9.8% of men). Refer to Table 29 below for more details.

Table 29: AI could make work more productive or efficient by sex

Group	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
Male	22.2%	33.5%	22.5%	8.2%	3.8%	9.8%
Female	16.5%	31.0%	22.8%	10.9%	6.7%	12.1%

3.3.2.3.2 AI could make work more productive or efficient by age group

Perceptions of AI's potential to make work more productive or efficient differed only modestly across most age groups. Combined agreement (Strongly agree + agree) responses was slightly higher among respondents aged 25-34 (59.6%), 35-44 (58.4%) and 45-54 (57.4%) than among those aged 18-24 (54.7%) or 55-64 (51.0%). This may indicate somewhat greater recognition of AI's potential benefits among respondents with experience in the workplace.

A more pronounced difference was evident among respondents aged 65 and over, where combined agreement (strongly agree + agree) responses fell to 33.7%. This group also expressed greater uncertainty with 31.1% neither agreeing or disagreeing and 25.4% selected “don’t know”. This suggests that awareness of AI’s potential workplace benefits may be lower among the oldest age group. Further details are provided in Table 30.

Table 30: AI could make work more productive or efficient by age group

Group	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
18-24	25.0%	29.7%	18.8%	8.6%	11.7%	6.3%
25-34	26.1%	33.5%	18.7%	14.8%	4.4%	2.5%
35-44	26.8%	31.6%	19.6%	7.7%	6.7%	7.7%
45-54	22.3%	35.1%	22.3%	9.0%	4.3%	7.1%
55-64	11.6%	39.4%	22.2%	11.6%	4.0%	11.1%
65+	8.7%	25.0%	31.1%	6.1%	3.8%	25.4%

3.3.2.3.3 AI could make work more productive or efficient by qualification level

Perceptions of AI’s potential to make work more productive or efficient varied by qualification level. Combined agreement, those who strongly agreed or agreed, was highest among respondents with a degree or higher qualification (61.6%) and those with A levels (58.6%). Agreement was lower among respondents with an HE diploma (41.4%) or GCSE grades A-C (39.8%), and lowest among those with no qualifications (30.2%) or GCSE grades D-G (26.8%).

Respondents with lower qualification levels also expressed greater uncertainty. Among those with GCSE grades D-G, 35.8% neither agreed nor disagreed and 26.9% selected “don’t know”. The corresponding figures among those with no qualifications were 32.1% and 22.6%. Overall, the findings suggest a broad association between higher qualification levels and greater recognition of AI’s potential workplace productivity benefits. Further details are provided in Table 31.

Table 31: AI could make work more productive or efficient by qualification level

Group	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
Degree or higher	24.7%	36.9%	17.6%	8.0%	5.0%	7.7%
HE Diploma	12.4%	29.0%	27.8%	14.2%	5.9%	10.7%
A Level	19.5%	39.1%	23.0%	9.2%	4.6%	4.6%
GCSE A-C	9.0%	30.8%	30.1%	14.3%	5.3%	10.5%
GCSE D-G	10.4%	16.4%	35.8%	7.5%	3.0%	26.9%
No Qualifications	11.3%	18.9%	32.1%	9.4%	5.7%	22.6%

3.3.2.3.4 AI could make work more productive or efficient by economic activity status

Views varied by economic activity status. Combined agreement (strongly agree or agree) that AI could make work more productive or efficient was highest among those seeking work (65.5%), followed by those in full-time employment (62.7%) and full-time education (57.6%). Agreement was lower among part-time employees (48.8%), those looking after the home (47.7%), full-time carers (34.7%) and retired respondents (34.5%). It was lowest among respondents who were permanently sick or disabled (23.9%). See table 32.

Table 32: Views on whether AI could make work more productive or efficient by economic activity status

Group	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
Full-time employed	26.0%	36.7%	17.6%	11.0%	4.9%	3.9%
Part-time employed	12.2%	36.6%	23.2%	14.0%	6.1%	7.9%
Seeking work	34.5%	31.0%	17.2%	6.9%	3.4%	6.9%
Retired	10.8%	23.7%	30.1%	6.1%	3.2%	26.2%
Full-time education	27.3%	30.3%	12.1%	12.1%	12.1%	6.1%
Looking after home	4.8%	42.9%	23.8%	0.0%	0.0%	28.6%
Perm. sick/disabled	8.7%	15.2%	37.0%	4.3%	15.2%	19.6%
Full-time carer	4.3%	30.4%	34.8%	13.0%	4.3%	13.0%

More than a quarter of those looking after the home (28.6%) and retired respondents (26.2%) selected 'don't know', while 37.0% of respondents who were permanently sick or disabled and 34.8% of full-time carers neither agreed nor disagreed. These findings suggest that perceptions of AI's potential productivity benefits are less established among groups who may have less direct or consistent engagement with the workplace.

3.3.2.3.5 AI could make work more productive or efficient by occupation

Perceptions of AI's potential to make work more productive or efficient varied by occupational group. Combined agreement, comprising those who strongly agreed or agreed, was highest among respondents in managerial, administrative and professional occupations (61.1%). This was followed by those in intermediate occupations (46.6%) and small employers and own-account workers (41.9%). Combined agreement was considerably lower among those in lower supervisory and technical occupations (30.8%) and semi-routine and routine occupations (29.6%).

Uncertainty was also more evident among some occupational groups. Almost one-fifth (19.2%) of respondents in lower supervisory and technical occupations selected "don't know", while 31.7% neither agreed nor disagreed. Among those in semi-routine and routine occupations, 29.6% disagreed or strongly disagreed, equal to the proportion who

agreed or strongly agreed. Overall, the findings indicate that recognition of AI's potential productivity benefits was greater among those in managerial and professional occupations than among those in lower supervisory, semi-routine and routine occupations. Further details are provided in Table 33.

Table 33: AI could make work more productive or efficient by occupation

Group	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
Managerial, administrative and professional occupations	23.1%	38.0%	18.5%	8.5%	3.5%	8.5%
Intermediate occupations	13.8%	32.8%	26.7%	9.5%	6.9%	10.3%
Small employers and own account workers	11.3%	30.6%	29.0%	12.9%	8.1%	8.1%
Lower supervisory and technical occupations	12.5%	18.3%	31.7%	11.5%	6.7%	19.2%
Semi-routine and routine occupations	8.7%	20.9%	29.6%	15.7%	13.9%	11.3%

3.3.2.4 Views on whether AI will make it easier for workplaces to accommodate the needs of people who are currently excluded from the workforce.

As part of the future-of-work theme, respondents were asked whether artificial intelligence would make it easier for workplaces to accommodate the needs of people who are currently excluded from the workforce.

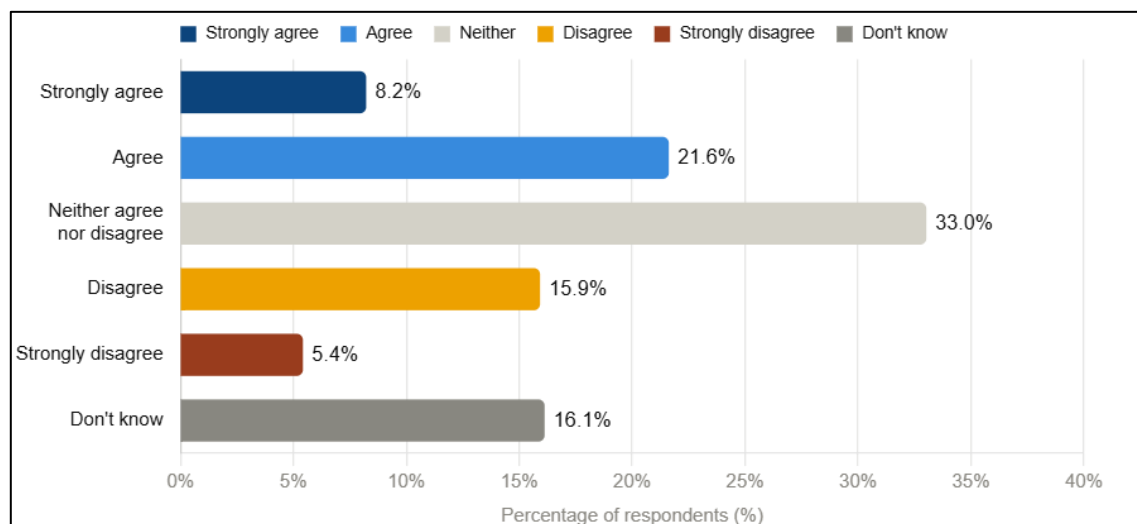


Figure 9: AI will make it easier for workplaces to accommodate the needs of people currently excluded from the workforce

As shown in Figure 9, 29.8% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with this statement, while 21.3% disagreed or strongly disagreed. One-third (33.0%) neither agreed nor disagreed, and 16.1% selected “don’t know”. Agreement was lower than for the other future-of-work statements, while the “don’t know” response was the highest recorded within this theme. Overall, the findings indicate considerable uncertainty about the potential role of artificial intelligence in supporting greater labour market inclusion.

Responses to this statement were also explored across demographic groups, including sex, age group, qualification level, economic activity status and occupation. These findings are presented in the following sections.

3.3.2.4.1 AI will make it easier for workplaces to accommodate the needs of people currently excluded from the workforce by sex

Views were broadly similar among men and women. Combined agreement, comprising those who strongly agreed or agreed, was 29.5% among men and 30.7% among women. Around one-third of both men (34.1%) and women (32.4%) neither agreed nor disagreed.

Some differences were evident in the other responses. Men were more likely than women to disagree or strongly disagree (23.8% compared with 18.5%), while women were more likely to select “don’t know” (18.5% compared with 12.6%). Overall, however, the findings show limited differences by sex in perceptions of artificial intelligence’s potential to support greater workforce inclusion. Further details are provided in Table 34.

Table 34: AI will make it easier for workplaces to accommodate the needs of people currently excluded from the workforce by sex

Group	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
Male	9.2%	20.3%	34.1%	17.5%	6.3%	12.6%
Female	7.5%	23.2%	32.4%	14.1%	4.4%	18.5%

3.3.2.4.2 AI will make it easier for workplaces to accommodate the needs of people currently excluded from the workforce by age group

Views varied by age group, although the findings do not show a consistent pattern across all ages. Combined agreement, comprising those who strongly agreed or agreed, was highest among respondents aged 25 to 34 (42.9%) and lowest among those aged 65 and over (19.7%). Agreement among the remaining age groups ranged from 25.5% to 33.2%.

Respondents aged 18 to 24 recorded the highest combined disagreement (30.7%), followed by those aged 25 to 34 (25.6%). Uncertainty was most evident among older respondents. Among those aged 65 and over, 25.7% selected “don’t know”, while 42.5%

of those aged 55 to 64 neither agreed nor disagreed. Overall, the findings suggest considerable uncertainty across age groups about the potential for artificial intelligence to support greater workforce inclusion. Further details are provided in Table 35.

Table 35: AI will make it easier for workplaces to accommodate the needs of people currently excluded from the workforce by age group

Group	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
18-24	9.4%	22.0%	29.9%	17.3%	13.4%	7.9%
25-34	13.3%	29.6%	22.7%	21.2%	4.4%	8.9%
35-44	12.0%	19.2%	32.2%	15.4%	4.3%	16.8%
45-54	5.7%	27.5%	32.2%	15.6%	5.7%	13.3%
55-64	7.0%	18.5%	42.5%	15.5%	1.5%	15.0%
65+	4.1%	15.6%	37.2%	11.5%	5.9%	25.7%

3.3.2.4.3 AI will make it easier for workplaces to accommodate the needs of people currently excluded from the workforce by qualification level

Descriptively, views varied by qualification level, although there was no consistent pattern of agreement increasing with qualification level. Combined agreement, comprising those who agreed or strongly agreed, was highest among respondents with A Level qualifications (39.3%), followed by those with GCSE grades A–C (33.1%). Agreement was broadly similar among degree holders (30.8%), those with an HE Diploma (29.4%) and respondents with no qualifications (28.3%). It was lowest among those with GCSE grades D–G (17.7%).

Uncertainty was most evident among respondents with no qualifications, 28.3% of whom selected “don’t know”, followed by those with GCSE grades D–G, at 22.1%. A relatively high proportion of the latter group also neither agreed nor disagreed (38.2%). However, the overall association between qualification level and views on whether AI will make it easier for workplaces to accommodate groups currently excluded from the workforce was not statistically significant. It is therefore not possible to conclude that views differ systematically by qualification level across the wider population, and the observed variation should be interpreted with caution. Nevertheless, the lower agreement among respondents with GCSE grades D–G and the comparatively high levels of uncertainty among some qualification groups are descriptively noteworthy and may warrant further exploration using a larger sample. Further details are provided in Table 36.

Table 36: AI will make it easier for workplaces to accommodate the needs of people currently excluded from the workforce by qualification level

Group	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
Degree or higher	8.3%	22.5%	32.5%	17.2%	5.3%	14.2%
HE Diploma	5.9%	23.5%	35.3%	16.5%	4.7%	14.1%
A Level	11.2%	28.1%	25.8%	21.3%	4.5%	9.0%
GCSE A-C	11.3%	21.8%	35.3%	12.0%	5.3%	14.3%
GCSE D-G	1.5%	16.2%	38.2%	14.7%	7.4%	22.1%
No Quals	11.3%	17.0%	30.2%	11.3%	1.9%	28.3%

3.3.2.4.4 AI will make it easier for workplaces to accommodate the needs of people currently excluded from the workforce by economic activity status

Views varied by economic activity status, although there was no consistent pattern across groups. Combined agreement, comprising those who strongly agreed or agreed, was highest among respondents seeking work (44.8%). This was followed by those in full-time employment (36.6%) and full-time education (33.4%). Agreement was lowest among full-time carers (18.1%), retired respondents (19.0%) and those who were permanently sick or disabled (21.2%).

Responses were particularly divided among those seeking work, with 44.8% agreeing and 31.0% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. Respondents in full-time education recorded the highest combined disagreement (45.5%), despite relatively high recognition elsewhere in the survey that AI skills will be important for future employment. Uncertainty was highest among those looking after the home, with 31.8% selecting “don’t know”, followed by retired respondents (23.7%) and full-time carers (22.7%). Overall, the findings reveal mixed views about the potential for artificial intelligence to support greater workforce inclusion. Further details are provided in Table 37.

Table 37: AI will make it easier for workplaces to accommodate the needs of people currently excluded from the workforce by economic activity status

Group	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
Full-time employed	10.1%	26.5%	31.8%	16.2%	5.1%	10.3%
Part-time employed	4.8%	21.1%	33.1%	18.1%	3.0%	19.9%
Seeking work	24.1%	20.7%	20.7%	24.1%	6.9%	3.4%
Retired	4.9%	14.1%	38.5%	13.1%	5.7%	23.7%
Full-time education	15.2%	18.2%	15.2%	30.3%	15.2%	6.1%
Looking after home	4.5%	18.2%	36.4%	9.1%	0.0%	31.8%
Perm. sick/disabled	2.1%	19.1%	34.0%	14.9%	8.5%	21.3%
Full-time carer	4.5%	13.6%	40.9%	18.2%	0.0%	22.7%

3.3.2.4.5 Views on whether AI will make it easier for workplaces to accommodate the needs of people currently excluded from the workforce by occupation

Views varied across occupational groups. Combined agreement, comprising those who strongly agreed or agreed, was highest among respondents in intermediate occupations (36.5%), followed by those in managerial, administrative and professional occupations (31.4%). Agreement was lower among small employers and own-account workers (27.5%), semi-routine and routine occupations (19.7%), and lower supervisory and technical occupations (19.4%).

Table 38: Views on whether AI will make it easier for workplaces to accommodate the needs of people currently excluded from the workforce by occupation

Group	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
Managerial, administrative and professional occupations	8.2%	23.2%	33.1%	16.3%	5.3%	14.0%
Intermediate occupations	6.8%	29.7%	33.1%	11.9%	5.1%	13.6%
Small employers and own account workers	6.5%	21.0%	35.5%	19.4%	1.6%	16.1%
Lower supervisory and technical occupations	10.7%	8.7%	35.9%	16.5%	11.7%	16.5%
Semi-routine and routine occupations	4.3%	15.4%	37.6%	16.2%	6.0%	20.5%

Respondents in lower supervisory and technical occupations recorded the highest combined disagreement (28.2%). Uncertainty was evident across all occupational groups, with approximately one-third or more neither agreeing nor disagreeing. The proportion selecting “don’t know” was highest among those in semi-routine and routine occupations (20.5%). Overall, the findings indicate widespread uncertainty about the potential for artificial intelligence to support greater workforce inclusion, particularly among those in lower supervisory, semi-routine and routine occupations. Further details are provided in Table 38.

3.3.2.5 Open-ended responses on how AI could support workforce inclusion

Respondents who strongly agreed or agreed that artificial intelligence would make it easier for workplaces to accommodate people currently excluded from the workforce were asked two follow-up open-ended questions: 1) “Which groups of people could AI most effectively assist to enter the workforce?” 2) “How do you think that AI could assist these groups of people to enter the workforce?”

Of the 1,229 respondents who answered the original question, 367 strongly agreed or agreed and were therefore invited to answer the two follow-up questions. This comprised 101 respondents who strongly agreed and 266 who agreed. Among this group, 175

provided a substantive response to the first question, while 149 provided a substantive response to the second. As these questions were asked only of respondents who strongly agreed or agreed with the original statement, the findings represent the views of those who were already positive about the potential contribution of AI to workforce inclusion. They should not be interpreted as representing the views of the full sample.

Four themes emerged from responses concerning the groups that AI could most effectively assist. People with disabilities and neurodivergent conditions were identified most frequently, appearing in 99 responses. A further 63 responses did not identify a specific excluded group. Smaller numbers identified people facing language barriers or those with low literacy or limited digital skills. Further details are provided in Table 39.

Table 39: Thematic classification of open-ended responses on groups AI could help enter the workforce

Theme	Description	Count
People with disabilities and neurodivergent conditions	Physical disabilities, mobility issues, visual/hearing impairments, learning disabilities, dyslexia, autism (ASD), mental health conditions, sensory impairments	99
People with language barriers	English as a second language, migrants, foreign nationals, non-native speakers	9
People with low literacy or limited digital skills	Limited IT skills, digital literacy, “digitally challenged”	4
No specific excluded group named	General or sector-based mentions (e.g. young people, IT sector, graduates, unemployed, “everyone”) without identifying a specific excluded characteristic	63
Total		175

Six themes emerged from responses about how AI could assist excluded groups to enter the workforce. The most frequently identified specific forms of support were step-by-step task guidance and administrative assistance, assistive and accessibility technologies, and skills training and career support. Other suggested mechanisms included translation and language support and enabling remote or flexible working.

However, the largest theme comprised general statements about AI’s potential benefits, such as saving time or making tasks easier, without identifying a specific way in which it could support entry into the workforce. This suggests that, even among respondents who viewed AI positively, many did not identify a clear practical mechanism through which it could improve workforce inclusion. Further details are provided in Table 40.

Table 40: Thematic classification of open-ended responses on how AI could help groups enter the workforce

Theme	Description	Count
Assistive/accessibility technology	Screen readers, voice-to-text, dictation, text-to-speech, accessible interfaces	23
Translation and language support	Automatic translation, simultaneous interpretation, language practice	13
Enabling remote or flexible working	Working from home, distance learning, reduced need to travel/commute	11
Step-by-step task guidance and admin support	Task guidance, writing emails/CVs, proofreading, communication support	24
Skills training and career support	Learning new skills, upskilling, job-search/interview preparation	17
General benefit/no specific mechanism named	Generic statements (e.g. "saves time," "more efficient," "makes it easier") without describing how	61
Total		149

3.4 Theme 4: Public Trust and Concern about AI

This theme explores respondents' perceptions on the risks, fairness, and broader societal implications of Artificial Intelligence (AI). It examined respondents' perception through two statements: (a) "that AI may not always make decisions that are fair or morally right" (b) "How my personal data might be misused in AI systems".

3.4.1 Concern that AI may not always make decisions that are fair or morally right

Respondents were asked how concerned they were that artificial intelligence may not always make decisions that are fair or morally right. The findings indicate widespread concern, with 80.5% reporting that they were very or fairly concerned. This comprised 42.8% who were very concerned and 37.7% who were fairly concerned.

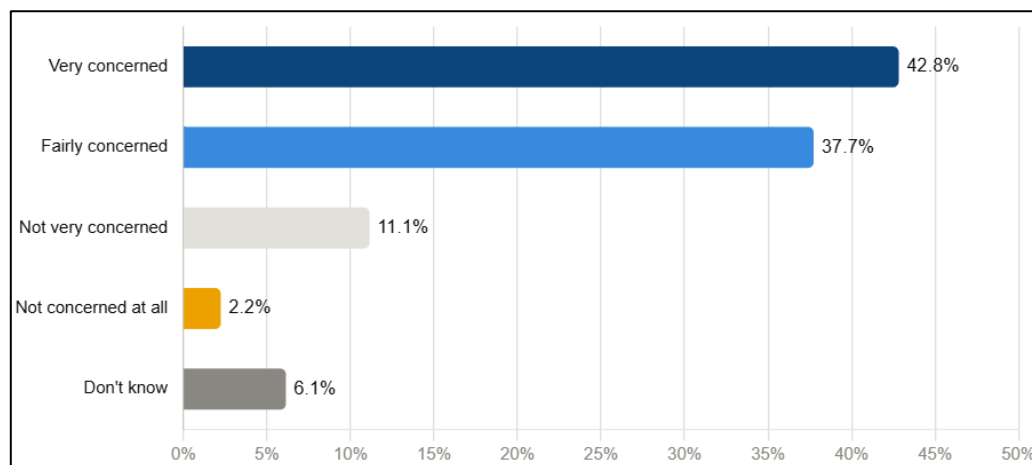


Figure 10: Level of concern that AI may not always make decisions that are fair or morally right

By comparison, 13.3% were not very concerned or not concerned at all, comprising 11.1% and 2.2%, respectively. A further 6.1% selected “don’t know”. Overall, the results indicate considerable unease about the fairness and morality of decisions made using artificial intelligence. Further details are provided in Figure 10.

Responses were also analysed by sex and age group, with the findings presented below.

3.4.1.1 Level of concern about AI fairness by sex

Concern was high among both men and women, although women reported somewhat higher levels. The combined proportion who were very or fairly concerned was 83.0% among women, compared with 77.8% among men.

Men were more likely than women to report that they were not very concerned or not concerned at all (17.3% compared with 9.6%). Women were slightly more likely to select “don’t know” (7.5% compared with 4.8%). Overall, however, the findings indicate that concern about the fairness and morality of artificial intelligence decisions was widespread among both sexes. Further details are provided in Table 41.

Table 41: Level of concern that AI may not always make decisions that are fair or morally right, by sex

Group	Very Concerned	Fairly Concerned	Not Very Concerned	Not Concerned at All	Don't Know
Male	41.5%	36.3%	14.3%	3.0%	4.8%
Female	44.1%	38.9%	8.1%	1.5%	7.5%

3.4.1.2 Level of concern about AI fairness by age group

Concern was high across all age groups, with the combined proportion who were very or fairly concerned ranging from 75.6% among respondents aged 18 to 24 to 84.0% among those aged 45 to 54. Although the differences were relatively modest and did not follow a consistent linear pattern across age groups, some variation by age was nonetheless evident.

Respondents aged 25 to 34 recorded the highest combined proportion who were not very concerned or not concerned at all (19.2%). Uncertainty was highest among those aged 65 and over, 9.4% of whom selected “don’t know”. Overall, the findings demonstrate consistently high concern across age groups, alongside some variation in the strength of concern and levels of uncertainty. Further details are provided in Table 42.

Table 42: Level of concern that AI may not always make decisions that are fair or morally right, by age group

Age Group	Very Concerned	Fairly Concerned	Not Very Concerned	Not Concerned at All	Don't Know
18-24	46.5%	29.1%	12.6%	3.9%	7.9%
25-34	44.3%	33.0%	17.7%	1.5%	3.4%
35-44	39.9%	40.9%	10.6%	2.4%	6.3%
45-54	48.6%	35.4%	8.0%	3.3%	4.7%
55-64	37.7%	43.7%	12.6%	1.0%	5.0%
65+	40.4%	40.8%	7.5%	1.9%	9.4%

3.4.2 Concern about how personal data might be misused in AI systems

Respondents were asked how concerned they were that their personal data might be misused in artificial intelligence systems. Concern was slightly higher than that expressed about the fairness of AI decision-making. Overall, 84.2% were very or fairly concerned, comprising 47.9% who were very concerned and 36.3% who were fairly concerned.

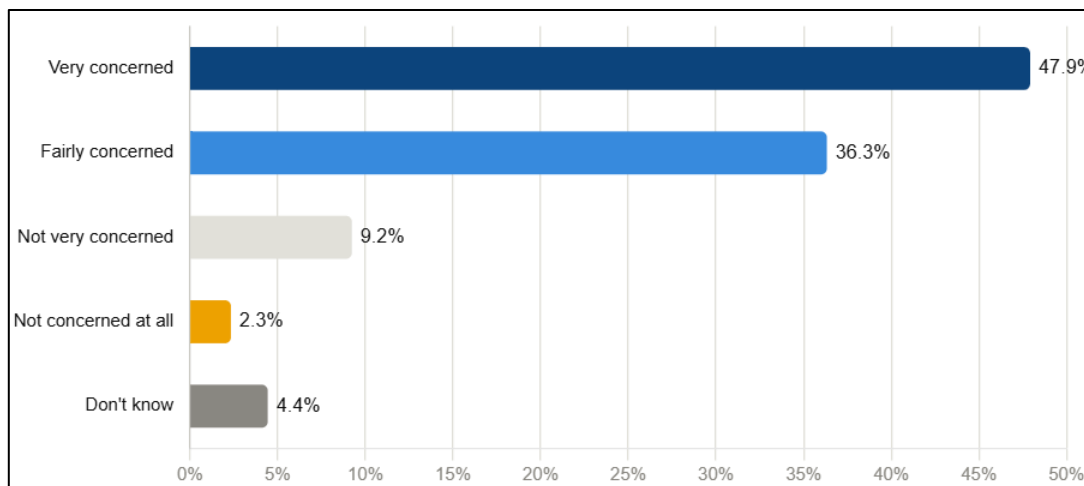


Figure 11: Level of concern about how personal data might be misused in AI systems

By comparison, 11.5% were not very concerned or not concerned at all, comprising 9.2% and 2.3%, respectively. A further 4.4% selected “don’t know”. The relatively low level of uncertainty indicates that most respondents had formed a view about the potential misuse of their personal data. Further details are provided in Figure 11. Responses were also analysed by sex and age group, with the findings presented below.

3.4.2.1 Level of concern about personal data misuse by sex

Concern about the potential misuse of personal data was high among both men and women. The combined proportion who were very or fairly concerned was slightly higher among women than men (85.9% compared with 82.6%). The difference was more evident

among those who were very concerned, with 52.1% of women selecting this response compared with 43.4% of men.

Men were more likely than women to report that they were not very concerned or not concerned at all (14.0% compared with 8.8%). Women were slightly more likely to select “don’t know” (5.3% compared with 3.3%). Overall, the findings indicate widespread concern among both sexes. Further details are provided in Table 43.

Table 43: Level of concern about how personal data might be misused in AI systems, by sex

Group	Very Concerned	Fairly Concerned	Not Very Concerned	Not Concerned at All	Don't Know
Male	43.4%	39.2%	11.0%	3.0%	3.3%
Female	52.1%	33.8%	7.3%	1.5%	5.3%

3.4.2.2. Level of concern about personal data misuse by age group

Concern was consistently high across all age groups. The combined proportion who were very or fairly concerned ranged from 79.8% among respondents aged 25 to 34 to 86.8% among those aged 45 to 54. There was no consistent increase or decrease in concern by age. A chi-square test confirmed that the association between age group and concern about personal data misuse was not statistically significant.

Respondents aged 25 to 34 recorded the highest combined proportion who were not very concerned or not concerned at all (17.3%). The proportion selecting “don’t know” was low across all age groups, ranging from 3.0% to 6.3%. It is therefore not possible to conclude that concern about personal data misuse differs systematically by age across the wider population, and the observed variation should be interpreted with caution. Nevertheless, the descriptive differences are of interest and may warrant further exploration using a larger sample. Overall, the findings demonstrate widespread concern about personal data misuse across the age groups examined. Further details are provided in Table 44.

Table 44: Level of concern about how personal data might be misused in AI systems, by age group

Age Group	Very Concerned	Fairly Concerned	Not Very Concerned	Not Concerned at All	Don't Know
18-24	39.7%	40.5%	9.5%	4.0%	6.3%
25-34	44.8%	35.0%	14.8%	2.5%	3.0%
35-44	50.5%	34.6%	8.7%	1.4%	4.8%
45-54	53.3%	33.5%	7.5%	1.9%	3.8%
55-64	48.0%	37.0%	9.5%	2.5%	3.0%
65+	47.2%	38.3%	6.3%	2.2%	5.9%

3.5 Theme 5: Environmental and Societal Perceptions of AI

This theme examines respondents' views about the potential societal benefits and environmental impacts of artificial intelligence (AI). It covers three questions: whether the advantages of AI outweigh its potential risks, whether AI can help solve major societal challenges, and the level of concern about the environmental impact of the energy used to power AI technologies. The findings for each question are presented below.

3.5.1 Views on whether advantages of AI outweigh its potential risks

Respondents were asked whether they agreed that the advantages of AI outweigh its potential risks. Just under three in ten (29.2%) strongly agreed or agreed, comprising 6.0% who strongly agreed and 23.2% who agreed. A slightly smaller proportion (24.6%) disagreed or strongly disagreed, comprising 17.1% who disagreed and 7.5% who strongly disagreed.

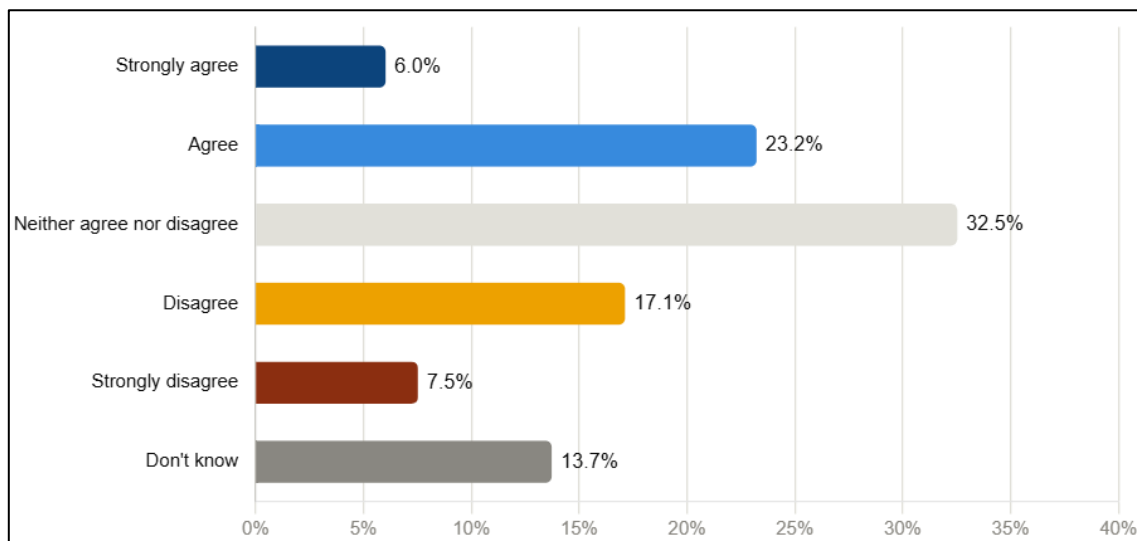


Figure 12: Views on whether advantages of AI outweigh its potential risks

The largest proportion (32.5%) neither agreed nor disagreed, while a further 13.7% selected “don’t know”. Together, 46.2% gave a neutral or uncertain response, indicating considerable uncertainty about whether the advantages of AI outweigh its potential risks. Further details are provided in Figure 12.

Responses to the statement “The advantages of AI outweigh its potential risks” were also analysed by sex and age group. The findings are presented below.

3.5.1.1 Views on whether advantages of AI outweigh its potential risks by sex

Combined agreement, comprising those who strongly agreed or agreed, was higher among men than women (36.2% compared with 22.4%). Women were more likely than men to neither agree nor disagree (35.3% compared with 29.5%) and to select “don’t know” (16.9% compared with 10.5%).

Combined disagreement was broadly similar among men and women (23.7% and 25.4%, respectively). Overall, men were more likely to express a positive view of the balance between the advantages and risks of AI, while women were more likely to give a neutral or uncertain response. Further details are provided in Table 45.

Table 45: Advantages of AI outweigh its potential risks, by sex

Group	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
Male	8.3%	27.9%	29.5%	16.9%	6.8%	10.5%
Female	3.9%	18.5%	35.3%	17.5%	7.9%	16.9%

3.5.1.2 Views on whether advantages of AI outweigh its potential risks by age group

Combined agreement, comprising those who strongly agreed or agreed, was relatively similar among respondents aged 18 to 64, ranging from 26.5% among those aged 45 to 54 to 33.7% among those aged 25 to 34. Agreement was lowest among respondents aged 65 and over (22.8%).

Combined disagreement was highest among those aged 18 to 24 (39.7%) and was generally lower among older age groups, reaching 17.9% among those aged 65 and over. However, this decline was not entirely consistent across the intervening age groups. Conversely, uncertainty was highest among respondents aged 65 and over, 22.0% of whom selected “don’t know”, compared with 8.7% of those aged 18 to 24. Overall, the youngest respondents were more likely to disagree that the advantages of AI outweigh its risks, while the oldest respondents were more likely to express uncertainty. Further details are provided in Table 46.

Table 46: Views on whether Advantages of AI outweigh its potential risks, by age group

Group	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
18-24	10.3%	22.2%	19.0%	24.6%	15.1%	8.7%
25-34	8.9%	24.8%	30.7%	18.3%	6.9%	10.4%
35-44	6.8%	25.1%	30.4%	16.9%	8.7%	12.1%
45-54	3.3%	23.2%	35.5%	17.1%	9.0%	11.8%
55-64	4.0%	27.5%	36.0%	13.5%	6.5%	12.5%
65+	4.5%	18.3%	37.3%	14.9%	3.0%	22.0%

3.5.2 Views on whether AI can help solve major societal challenges

Respondents were asked whether they agreed that AI can help solve major societal challenges, for example in healthcare, climate and education. Views were more positive than for the previous question concerning whether the advantages of AI outweigh its risks. Four in ten respondents (40.6%) strongly agreed or agreed, comprising 8.4% who strongly agreed and 32.2% who agreed. See figure 13.

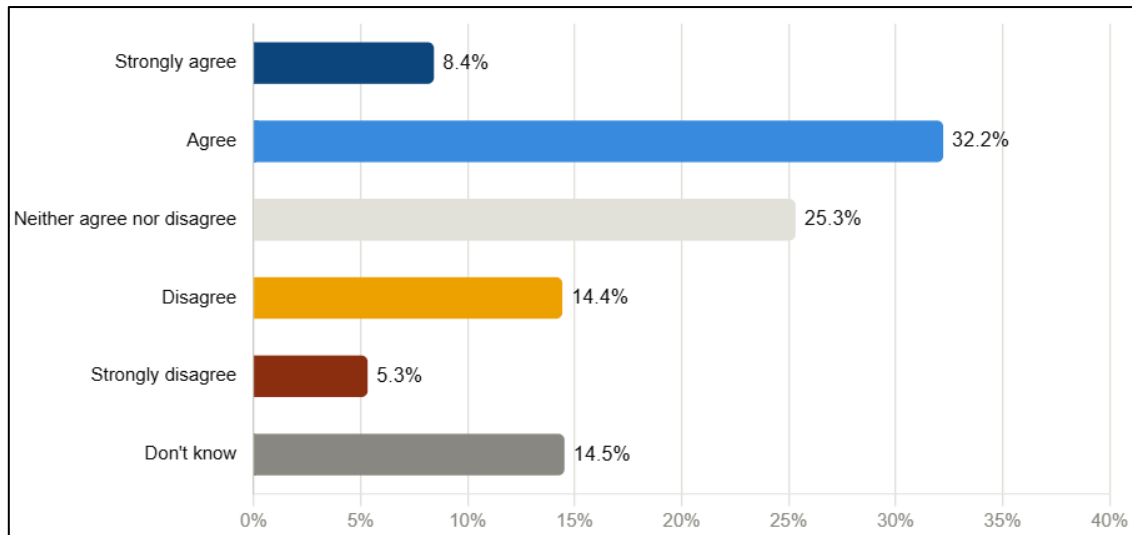


Figure 13: Views on whether AI can help solve major societal challenges

By comparison, 19.7% disagreed or strongly disagreed, comprising 14.4% who disagreed and 5.3% who strongly disagreed. A quarter (25.3%) neither agreed nor disagreed, while a further 14.5% selected “don’t know”. Overall, respondents were more likely to recognise AI’s potential contribution to specific societal challenges than to conclude that its advantages outweigh its risks more generally.

Responses to the statement “AI can help solve major societal challenges, for example in healthcare, climate and education” were also analysed by sex and age group. The findings are presented below.

3.5.2.1 Views on whether AI can help solve major societal challenges, by sex

Combined agreement, comprising those who strongly agreed or agreed, was higher among men than women (50.5% compared with 31.0%). Women were more likely than men to disagree or strongly disagree (23.0% compared with 15.8%), neither agree nor disagree (28.4% compared with 22.2%), and select “don’t know” (17.5% compared with 11.5%).

Overall, men expressed more positive views than women about AI’s potential to help address major societal challenges. Further details are provided in Table 47.

Table 47: Views on whether AI can help solve major societal challenges, by sex

Group	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
Male	11.2%	39.3%	22.2%	11.5%	4.3%	11.5%
Female	5.5%	25.5%	28.4%	17.0%	6.0%	17.5%

3.5.2.2 Views on whether AI can help Solve major societal challenges by age group

Combined agreement, comprising those who strongly agreed or agreed, was broadly similar across age groups. It ranged from 37.2% among respondents aged 55 to 64 to 43.9% among those aged 25 to 34, with no consistent relationship between age and agreement.

Combined disagreement was highest among respondents aged 18 to 24 (33.3%) and was generally lower among older age groups, reaching 10.8% among those aged 65 and over. However, the decline was not consistent across every age group. In contrast, the proportion selecting “don’t know” increased with age, from 9.3% among those aged 18 to 24 to 22.7% among those aged 65 and over.

Table 48: Views on whether AI can help solve major societal challenges, by age group

Group	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
18-24	10.1%	30.2%	17.1%	18.6%	14.7%	9.3%
25-34	9.4%	34.5%	23.6%	17.2%	5.4%	9.9%
35-44	8.7%	30.8%	27.9%	13.9%	7.7%	11.1%
45-54	6.2%	32.7%	24.6%	19.0%	4.3%	13.3%
55-64	7.0%	30.2%	32.2%	12.1%	2.0%	16.6%
65+	9.7%	33.5%	23.4%	8.9%	1.9%	22.7%

This is similar to the pattern observed for the previous question, with the youngest respondents more likely to disagree and the oldest respondents more likely to express uncertainty. Further details are provided in Table 48.

3.5.3 Concern about the environmental impact of the energy used to power AI technologies

Respondents were asked how concerned they were about the environmental impact of the energy used to power AI technologies. A majority expressed concern, although this was lower than the levels recorded for the fairness of AI decision-making and the potential misuse of personal data earlier in the report.

Overall, 62.4% were very or fairly concerned, comprising 28.2% who were very concerned and 34.2% who were fairly concerned. By comparison, 28.4% were not very concerned or not concerned at all, comprising 21.8% and 6.6%, respectively. A further

9.1% selected “don’t know”. The findings indicate that the energy used to power AI technologies was a concern for most respondents, although it was viewed as less concerning than AI fairness or personal data misuse. See Figure 14.

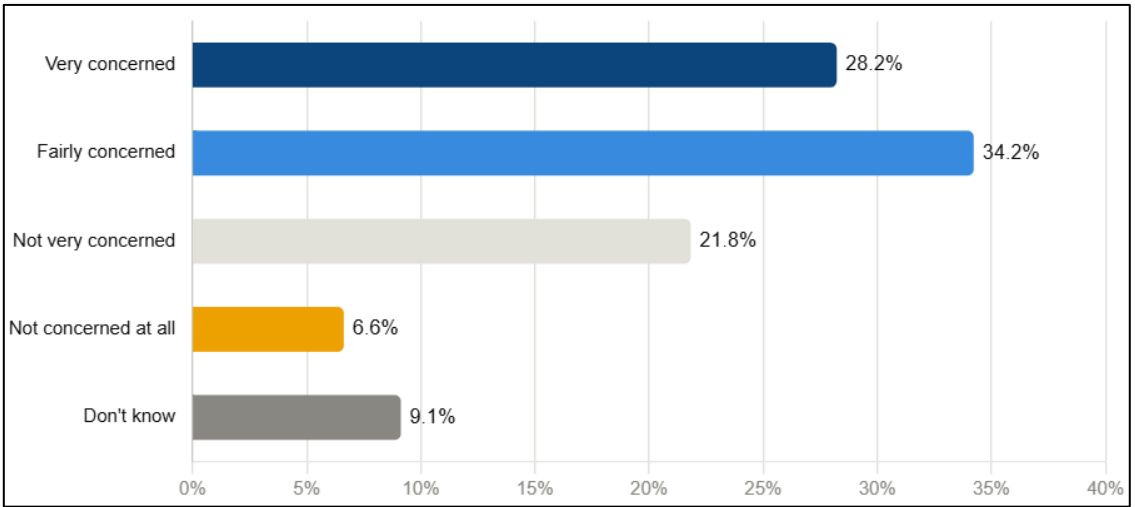


Figure 14: Level of concern about the environmental impact of the energy used to power AI technologies

Responses concerning the environmental impact of the energy used to power AI technologies were also analysed by sex and age group. The findings are presented below.

3.5.3.1 Level of concern about the environmental impact of AI by sex

The combined proportion who were very or fairly concerned was higher among women than men (65.5% compared with 59.4%). Men were more likely than women to report that they were not very concerned or not concerned at all (34.5% compared with 22.6%).

Women were also more likely than men to select “don’t know” (12.0% compared with 6.2%). Overall, women expressed greater concern about the environmental impact of AI, while also reporting higher levels of uncertainty. Further details are provided in Table 49.

Table 49: Level of concern about the environmental impact of the energy used to power AI technologies, by sex

Group	Very Concerned	Fairly Concerned	Not Very Concerned	Not Concerned at All	Don't Know
Male	26.6%	32.8%	25.3%	9.2%	6.2%
Female	29.8%	35.7%	18.5%	4.1%	12.0%

3.5.3.2 Level of concern about the environmental impact of AI by age group

Overall levels of concern were broadly similar across age groups. The combined proportion who were very or fairly concerned ranged from 59.6% among respondents

aged 35 to 44 to 64.7% among those aged 55 to 64. There was no consistent relationship between age and overall concern.

There were, however, differences in the strength of concern. Respondents aged 18 to 24 and 25 to 34 were the most likely to report being very concerned (37.8% and 34.0%, respectively). Older respondents were more likely to report being fairly concerned, with this response highest among those aged 55 to 64 (40.3%) and those aged 65 and over (38.4%).

Uncertainty was highest among respondents aged 65 and over, 12.7% of whom selected “don’t know”. Overall, age appears to be more closely associated with the strength of concern than with whether respondents were concerned. Further details are provided in Table 50.

Table 50: Level of concern about the environmental impact of the energy used to power AI technologies, by age group

Age Group	Very Concerned	Fairly Concerned	Not Very Concerned	Not Concerned at All	Don't Know
18-24	37.8%	25.2%	22.0%	7.1%	7.9%
25-34	34.0%	29.1%	22.7%	7.4%	6.9%
35-44	26.4%	33.2%	23.6%	8.7%	8.2%
45-54	27.2%	33.8%	22.5%	6.6%	9.9%
55-64	24.4%	40.3%	21.9%	5.5%	8.0%
65+	25.0%	38.4%	19.4%	4.5%	12.7%

Section 4. Policy Implications and Recommendations

4.1 Policy Implications

The findings provide a clear mandate for action on AI literacy, learning and responsible adoption in Northern Ireland. Awareness of AI is almost universal, and the majority of respondents recognise its growing importance for employment. However, practical participation in AI-related learning remains limited and unevenly distributed across different demographic, educational and labour market groups. The principal policy challenge is therefore no longer simply to raise awareness of AI, but to help people recognise its relevance to their lives and work, participate in learning, and use AI more confidently and responsibly.

This requires a population-wide approach to AI literacy rather than a policy focused only on specialist technical skills. This is highlighted by the gap between attitude and behaviour, whereby, 67.7% of respondents agreed that learning to use AI tools will be essential for most jobs in the next five years. Only 18.6% had undertaken AI-related learning during the previous 12 months. At the same time, 51.9% reported that they

wanted to learn more. This indicates substantial unmet demand but also suggests that demand may not automatically translate into participation without accessible provision, clear guidance and practical support.

The findings also demonstrate that a uniform training offer would be insufficient. Cost, work pressures, caring responsibilities, confidence, technology access and uncertainty about where to learn affect different groups in different ways. Provision must consequently be flexible, affordable and available through multiple routes. Online learning has an important role, but it cannot be the only route available to people with limited digital confidence, those without access to suitable technology, or those who require more personalised support.

Particular attention is required for adults with lower qualification levels. Respondents with fewer or no formal qualifications were less likely to anticipate needing AI knowledge in their future work and more likely to be uncertain about its relevance. This does not necessarily mean that their jobs will be less affected. It may instead indicate that information about AI and the future of work is not reaching these groups in ways that connect with their occupations and everyday experience. Policy therefore needs to bridge the gap between general awareness of AI and a practical understanding of how it may change familiar jobs and tasks, as well as future employment opportunities.

The pattern of existing learning also has implications for delivery. Among respondents who had undertaken AI learning, workplace training and self-directed learning were the most commonly reported routes. Only 13.8% reported learning through a university or college. This should not be interpreted as evidence that schools, colleges or universities are failing, since the survey covered adults and did not measure the quality or complete volume of institutional provision. It does, however, suggest that formal education providers are not yet the most visible route into AI learning for many adults.

No single organisation will be able to meet the needs of all learners. Employers are well placed to provide job-specific learning to existing workers, but an employer-led model alone would risk excluding jobseekers, economically inactive adults and people working for organisations with limited training capacity. Further education can lead accessible adult and occupational provision, while universities can integrate AI across disciplines, provide micro-credentials and support advanced and professional learning. Schools have a foundational role, while libraries, councils, careers services, Jobs and Benefits Offices, trade unions, disability organisations and community providers can engage people who may not approach a formal education provider independently.

AI skills policy must also be connected to workforce transition, job quality and inclusion. Seven in ten respondents expected AI to reduce the number of jobs during the next five years, while respondents' views of its productivity benefits were less certain. Skills programmes should therefore be accompanied by credible information about

occupational change, opportunities to retrain before displacement and meaningful involvement of workers in decisions about job redesign.

Trust is equally important. High levels of concern about data misuse, unfair decisions and environmental effects demonstrate that public confidence cannot be built through skills provision alone. Responsible governance, transparency, human oversight, accessibility, clear public communication, routes to challenge consequential decisions and attention to environmental performance must be integral to AI adoption.

The Northern Ireland Draft Artificial Intelligence Strategy 2026 referred to here as the Draft AI Strategy (The Executive Office, 2026), establishes commitments relating to AI literacy and training, educational provision, workforce capability and citizen engagement. The findings in this report provide timely population-level evidence that can help translate these commitments into targeted action and add empirical weight to their importance. The report provides evidence on awareness of AI, its perceived relevance to employment, participation in AI-related learning, demand for further learning and the barriers preventing participation. By identifying inequalities in preparedness and confidence, particularly by qualification level and labour-market status, the findings can help determine which groups require additional support and inform the design of accessible learning routes. The Draft AI Strategy therefore provides the overarching policy framework, while this evidence helps identify what inclusive implementation needs to look like across the wider adult population and workforce.

As this is the first Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey to include a dedicated AI module, the findings establish a new population-level baseline covering AI awareness, knowledge, learning, barriers, employment expectations and wider public attitudes. The findings on fairness, transparency, human oversight, societal benefit and environmental impact also provide population-level evidence of the expectations and concerns that should inform the responsible AI principles set out in the Draft AI Strategy and their practical implementation.

Taken together, the findings highlight the need to address unequal preparedness, remove practical barriers to learning, prioritise adults with lower qualification levels, coordinate provision across relevant organisations and create trusted routes through which individuals and employers can identify appropriate learning opportunities. They also demonstrate that AI capability development must be connected to workforce transition, labour-market inclusion, job quality and responsible governance. On this basis, nine interconnected policy recommendations are proposed below. These recommendations translate the population-level evidence into practical actions to support the inclusive, coordinated and responsible development of AI capability across Northern Ireland. They may also inform planning for the future implementation of the Draft AI Strategy.

4.2 Policy Recommendations

4.2.1 Recommendation 1: Establish a universal AI literacy entitlement

Every adult in Northern Ireland should be entitled to access a free foundation in practical and responsible AI use. This should be a population-wide entitlement rather than support available only to people working in digitally intensive jobs or already seeking technology-related training. Clear, inclusive and sustained communication will be essential to ensure that people across all communities are aware of the entitlement, understand its relevance and know how to access it.

The entitlement should provide a common foundation covering:

- what AI is and where people are likely to encounter it;
- how to use common AI tools safely and effectively;
- how to assess the reliability and limitations of AI-generated content;
- personal data, security, copyright and intellectual property;
- bias, discrimination, accessibility and environmental impact;
- the importance of human judgement and oversight; and
- how AI may affect jobs, workplaces and public services.

The universal entitlement should apply to the foundation level. Provision should be modular and designed as an accessible entry point into further learning rather than as a single standalone course. Completion should be recognised and, where relevant, capable of being converted into micro-credentials or contributing towards recognised qualifications.

Beyond this universal foundation, people should have clear routes into intermediate, occupational and advanced AI learning according to their employment circumstances, career aspirations and learning needs. This does not mean that every adult should receive free advanced AI training. Rather, government should ensure that appropriate progression opportunities are available through further and higher education, vocational provision, employability programmes and employer-supported learning. Public funding should be targeted particularly towards people who might otherwise be excluded from these opportunities, workers affected by technological change and sectors in which AI capabilities are becoming strategically important.

The survey findings demonstrate the need for this support. Although 67.7% of respondents agreed that learning to use AI tools will be essential for most jobs over the next five years, only 18.6% had undertaken AI-related learning during the previous 12 months. A universal foundation would help convert widespread recognition of AI's importance into practical capability while ensuring that access does not depend on occupation, employer, income or previous educational attainment.

Awareness alone is unlikely to produce this change. Awareness of AI is already near universal, with 98.6% of respondents having heard of AI, while only 58.4% reported a good understanding of it. Communications and provision should therefore focus on building practical understanding, demonstrating relevance to everyday life and different occupations, increasing confidence and providing clear routes into learning. The objective should be to move people from awareness to understanding, relevance and action.

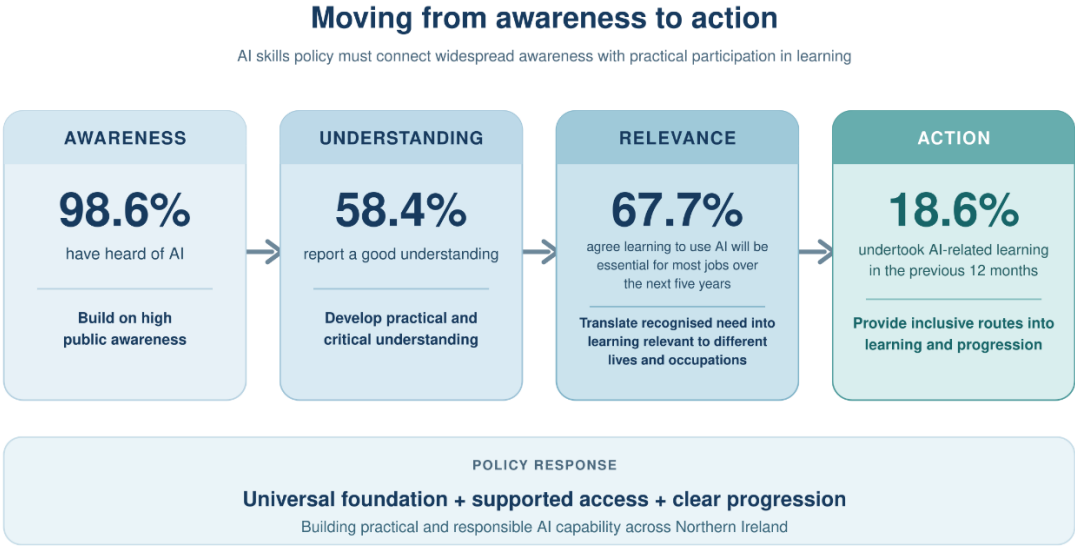


Figure 15: Moving from awareness to action through AI skills training

Note: The percentages shown derive from separate survey questions and should not be interpreted as a measured conversion funnel.

Northern Ireland is not starting from the beginning. The Artificial Intelligence Collaboration Centre’s AI Learning Lab provides free online learning for eligible adults in Northern Ireland, including courses in AI fundamentals, responsible application, prototyping and data readiness. Its courses require no previous AI qualifications and therefore provide an important foundation on which the entitlement could build (AICC, 2026a). The AICC, with support from the Department for the Economy, has also funded a limited number of places on AI-related postgraduate courses at Ulster University and Queen’s University Belfast. These provide valuable advanced progression opportunities, although the number of places is limited, participation is subject to eligibility and entry requirements, and this form of provision cannot provide a universal foundation (AICC, 2026b).

The PEACEPLUS-funded North-West Digital Employment Pathways Training Hub (NW DEPTH) provides another important model. It offers fully funded learning extending from introductory digital skills to accredited AI-related micro-credentials and postgraduate provision. Its structured pathways demonstrate how shorter courses can support progression towards recognised qualifications. However, eligibility is geographically focused on the North West cross-border and wider PEACEPLUS programme area, and

funded places are limited. It therefore complements, but cannot replace, a Northern Ireland-wide entitlement (Ulster University, 2026a).

At UK level, AI Skills Boost gives adults across the UK, including Northern Ireland, access to free online courses provided by government and industry partners. Selected courses have been assessed against the Skills England AI foundation skills for work benchmark, and learners completing eligible courses can obtain a government-backed digital badge (DSIT, 2026a; Skills England, 2026). This considerably expands the volume and range of learning available, but it is primarily an online, workforce-focused offer delivered through multiple external providers. It does not in itself guarantee that adults in Northern Ireland will know about the courses, perceive them as relevant or receive the support necessary to participate.

Published reporting also focuses principally on aggregate course completions. Although 1.7 million course completions had been reported by June 2026, published information does not indicate how many unique individuals were reached, the proportion of learners who completed after enrolling, participation within Northern Ireland or whether people with lower qualifications and other under-represented groups are benefiting (DSIT, 2026b). Provider and course-level completion figures have not been published because of commercial sensitivity (DSIT, 2026a). More detailed monitoring would therefore be required to determine whether provision is reaching the adults most at risk of exclusion.

The entitlement proposed in this recommendation should be implemented by coordinating, extending and quality-assuring existing provision rather than creating an entirely separate training system. The Department for the Economy could establish a common Northern Ireland foundation framework and map existing courses against its learning outcomes. Courses meeting the framework could contribute to the entitlement, while gaps in content, accessibility, recognition or delivery could be addressed through additional commissioned provision.

The AICC could provide a central digital foundation and coordinating hub, linked to the wider UK AI Skills Boost offer. Further education colleges, councils, Labour Market Partnerships, libraries, community and voluntary organisations, universities and employers should provide supported, blended and face-to-face routes. These routes will be particularly important for people who lack digital confidence, suitable technology or the ability to learn independently. The proposed arrangements for providing these different access routes are developed further in Recommendation 4.2.3.

Implementation should be supported by a common system for recognising completion and monitoring participation, progression and outcomes. The success of efforts to develop and expand AI learning provision should be judged not simply by whether courses are available, but by whether people across Northern Ireland know about them,

can access and complete them, develop practical capability, and progress into further learning where appropriate.

This recommendation would help to operationalise the foundation level of the basic, intermediate and advanced skills framework proposed in the Draft Artificial Intelligence Strategy (The Executive Office, 2026). It would also strengthen the proposed public-awareness activity by linking awareness directly to practical capability and participation. The universal foundation would provide a common starting point, while the education, vocational, occupational and inclusive-access measures proposed in the following recommendations would create differentiated routes into more specialised learning.

Suggested lead and delivery partners: The Department for the Economy, working with the Department of Education, Department for Communities, Northern Ireland's 11 councils, Labour Market Partnerships, Local Economic Partnerships, further and higher education providers, the AICC, employers, trade unions, libraries, and voluntary and community organisations.

Suggested measures: Awareness and understanding of AI; participation and completion; progression into further learning; changes in confidence and practical capability; movement from awareness into learning; and participation by age, sex, disability, employment status, qualification level, council area and rurality.

4.2.2 Recommendation 2: Embed AI literacy and progression across the education and skills system

AI literacy should be embedded across Northern Ireland's education and skills system as a connected, lifelong learning pathway. Schools should establish universal foundations; further education should provide accessible adult, vocational and occupation-specific learning; and higher education should integrate relevant AI learning across disciplines while supporting professional and advanced capability. These pathways should be complementary and interlinked, enabling people to progress according to their needs, circumstances and aspirations. Across every stage, AI literacy should extend beyond learning how to operate particular tools. Learners should develop the ability to use AI safely, effectively and critically; assess the reliability of its outputs; understand its ethical, legal and social implications; and consider how it is changing occupations, workplace tasks, public services and wider society.

The NILT survey covered adults aged 18 and over and therefore does not provide direct evidence about the knowledge, experiences or learning needs of school pupils. However, the inequalities in preparedness and low participation in AI-related learning identified

among adults support preventative action across the life course. While 55.4% of respondents expected knowledge of AI to be important for their future work, this ranged from 64.1% among respondents with degree-level qualifications to 39.2% among those with no formal qualifications. Only 18.6% of adults had undertaken AI-related learning during the previous 12 months. Establishing strong and equitable foundations throughout education would help prevent these differences in preparedness from becoming more deeply embedded.

These differences should not be interpreted as indicating that adults with lower qualification levels will be less affected by AI. They may instead suggest that information about AI-related change is not reaching everyone in ways that connect with familiar occupations and employment opportunities. Education and skills providers should therefore consider anticipated changes in occupations and skills requirements alongside expressed learner demand when planning provision.

The proposed *Northern Ireland Curriculum 2028: An Entitlement to Excellence and Equity* (Department of Education, 2026a) provides an immediate policy route through which these foundations could be established. It proposes Digital Technology as a new subject from Foundation Stage to Key Stage 3, with AI-related learning structured progressively across the curriculum. At Key Stage 2, pupils would learn that AI tools generate outputs based on the prompts they receive and that refining prompts can influence the quality of the results. By Key Stage 3, they would learn how AI models identify patterns and generate content; examine the benefits and limitations of using generative AI to create code and the need for review and verification; and consider realistic AI-generated content, privacy, intellectual property, accessibility and environmental impact (Department of Education, 2026b).

Implementation should build on this proposed framework. However, AI literacy should not be confined to technical competence within Digital Technology. Connections should also be established with the proposed Personal, Social, Civic and Careers (PSCC) subject, particularly its Relationships and Society and Careers and Futures elements (Department of Education, 2026c). This would enable pupils to consider how AI may reshape occupations, workplace tasks and career pathways, as well as its implications for public services, digital citizenship, equality and participation in society. Across these areas, curriculum content and supporting resources should address bias, discrimination and fairness while reinforcing the continuing importance of human judgement.

This emphasis on universal provision is reinforced by the latest international evidence. The OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2025 found that opportunities at school to develop AI literacy were more common among socio-economically advantaged students, creating a risk of a widening AI divide. Establishing a

statutory foundation for all pupils would help mitigate this risk from the outset (OECD, 2026b).

Successful implementation will depend on building AI capability across the school workforce before and alongside the introduction of the new curriculum requirements. Teachers will need sufficient confidence, practical knowledge and critical understanding to support pupils in developing AI literacy effectively. The Department of Education should therefore establish a coordinated and adequately funded programme of professional learning spanning initial teacher education and continuing professional development. This should include protected time for learning, practical and subject-specific training, reliable teaching resources and sustained support, rather than relying primarily on one-off guidance or self-directed learning. School leaders and careers advisers will also require appropriate training and access to current labour-market evidence to inform curriculum planning and guidance on how AI is changing occupations and skills requirements.

Further education should provide accessible routes into AI learning for school leavers, adult learners, workers, jobseekers and people returning to the labour market. Northern Ireland's six further education colleges should embed relevant AI learning across essential skills, apprenticeships, employability programmes and vocational qualifications. They should also offer modular and sector-specific provision that enables learners to apply AI within different occupational contexts and to progress from introductory learning to recognised qualifications where appropriate.

Higher education institutions should continue to develop approaches to embedding appropriate AI literacy across disciplines. This can build on activity already under way, such as Ulster University's ELEVATE initiative, which uses a Business School living-lab approach to develop student AI literacy (Bustard and Rawat, 2025). A further example is the Forging AHEAD AI Fellowship, through which business students worked with employers and AI specialists on live organisational challenges. The programme combined practical workshops, mentoring and employer-led projects, with two participating students subsequently securing employment directly through the initiative (Ulster University, 2026).

Higher education provision should support students in understanding how AI is affecting knowledge, professional practice, research integrity, ethics and decision-making within their disciplines. Universities can also contribute through short courses, microcredentials and professional learning, alongside conversion courses and advanced specialist provision. Together, these different forms of provision can enable graduates, professionals and other adult learners to update or deepen their capabilities without necessarily undertaking a full degree programme.

Ongoing investment in staff capability will support this work across further education, higher education, vocational training and adult-learning provision. University and further education lecturers, tutors, careers professionals and learning-support staff should have opportunities to develop their practical and critical understanding of AI, including its application within different disciplines, occupations and forms of learning. The Department for the Economy and Department for Education should work with providers to support professional development that keeps pace with technological change and enables staff to support learners at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels.

The visibility and discoverability of provision will be as important as its availability. Among respondents in full-time education, 43.0% identified not knowing where to learn about AI as a barrier, despite their existing connection to formal education. The Northern Ireland Executive’s Draft Artificial Intelligence Strategy also notes that AI may already be embedded within further education courses without being prominent in course information or marketing materials (The Executive Office, 2026). Colleges, universities and other providers should therefore ensure that AI-related content and progression opportunities are clearly identified and communicated. This should connect with the common, trusted navigation framework proposed in Recommendation 4.2.6, through which learners and advisers could identify provision and understand the relationship between different learning and progression opportunities.

Further and higher education pathways should be complementary and interlinked. Learners should be able to move between introductory, vocational, professional and advanced provision without unnecessary duplication or loss of recognition. Introductory courses and micro-credentials should contribute towards recognised qualifications where appropriate, supported by clear information about entry requirements, progression opportunities and the relationship between different forms of provision.

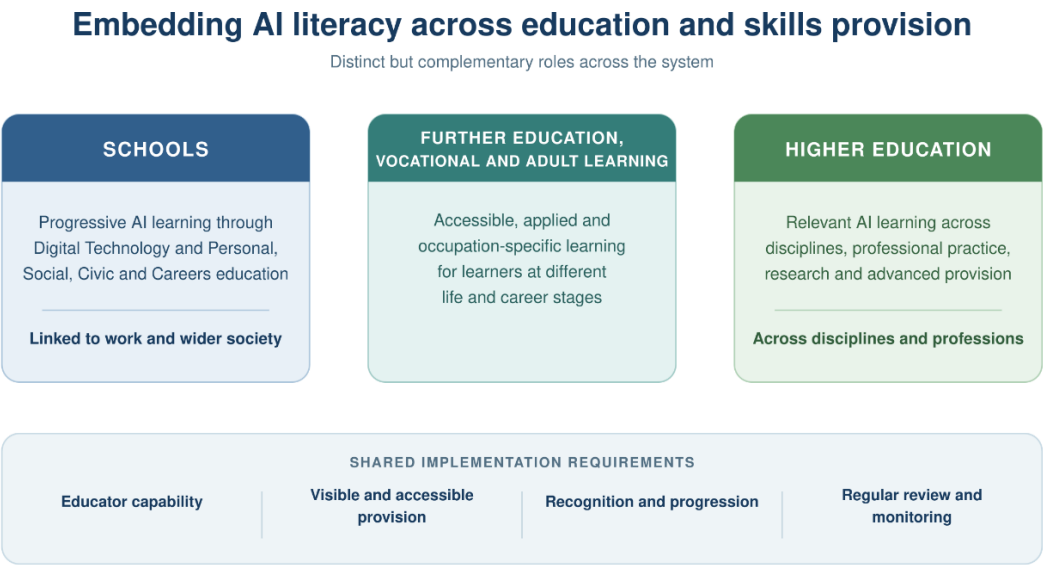


Figure 16: Embedding AI literacy across Northern Ireland’s education and skills system

International exemplar practices

International exemplar practices provide useful design principles for Northern Ireland, although many initiatives remain too recent for their longer-term effects to be evaluated. Estonia's AI Leap programme combines learner access to AI tools with educator capability development and phased implementation (Ministry of Education and Research, 2025). Ireland's further education AI micro-qualifications demonstrate how modular, industry-informed learning can be connected to occupational contexts (SOLAS, 2026). Finland's *Elements of AI* and *Building AI* courses illustrate how universities can make introductory learning openly accessible while providing progression towards more advanced and credit-bearing study (University of Helsinki and Reaktor, 2018; 2020).

The UNESCO AI competency frameworks for students and teachers provide a complementary benchmark covering AI knowledge and application, ethics, human agency and professional practice (Miao and Cukurova, 2024; Miao, Shiohira and Lao, 2024). Collectively, these examples support phased implementation, investment in educator capability, modular and occupationally relevant provision, clear progression, and the integration of ethical and human-centred understanding with technical knowledge.

Implementation should begin with a coordinated mapping of existing AI-related provision across schools, further education, higher education, apprenticeships, employability programmes and adult learning. This should identify duplication and gaps in subject coverage, geographical access, delivery methods, qualification levels and provision for groups at greater risk of exclusion. It should also examine whether existing opportunities are visible, understandable and easy to navigate. Provision should then be developed against a shared progression framework linked to the foundation entitlement proposed in Recommendation 4.2.1.

Curriculum content, professional learning and supporting resources should be reviewed regularly to reflect changes in AI technologies, their applications and the evidence concerning their effects on work and society. Participation in professional learning, together with changes in staff confidence and capability, should also be monitored across schools, further education, higher education and other forms of learning provision.

Monitoring should distinguish between enrolments, course completions and unique learners and should report progression into further learning where possible. Data should be disaggregated by age, sex, disability, employment status, prior qualification level, council area and rurality. Monitoring should examine not only who accesses and completes provision, but also the factors influencing whether different groups perceive AI learning as relevant, accessible and trustworthy.

Gender-related differences require particular attention. Women were more likely than men to identify caring or family responsibilities and a lack of digital confidence as barriers to learning and expressed higher levels of concern about fairness and personal-data misuse. They were also less likely to agree that AI's advantages outweigh its risks or that AI can help address major societal challenges. These differences should not be interpreted as deficits in willingness or capability. Rather, they demonstrate the importance of considering the barriers, experiences, confidence and perceptions that shape engagement with AI learning.

This recommendation supports the Northern Ireland Executive's Draft Artificial Intelligence Strategy proposal for an integrated education AI strategy and its commitments to review provision, identify gaps, strengthen educator capability and broaden AI learning across disciplines (The Executive Office, 2026). It also supports the proposed entitlement to progressively structured Digital Technology education within *Northern Ireland Curriculum 2028* (Department of Education, 2026a; 2026b).

Suggested lead and delivery partners: The Department of Education should lead school curriculum implementation, working with the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment, the Education Authority, schools, teacher-education providers, careers services and relevant professional bodies. The Department for the Economy should lead post-school implementation, working with further education colleges, universities, qualifications and awarding bodies, training providers, employers, trade unions, professional associations, Northern Ireland's 11 councils, Labour Market Partnerships and Local Economic Partnerships.

Suggested measures: Coverage and progression of AI learning across curriculum stages, subjects, disciplines and vocational pathways; visibility and discoverability of provision; participation by teachers, lecturers and other education professionals in AI-related professional learning; changes in staff confidence and capability; enrolment, completion and progression across further education, higher education, vocational and adult-learning provision; recognition and transferability of micro-credentials; barriers to participation; changes in learners' understanding of AI's occupational relevance; and participation and outcomes by age, sex, disability, employment status, prior qualification level, council area and rurality.

4.2.3 Recommendation 3: Create coordinated, place-based local pathways into AI learning

The availability of AI courses will not, by itself, ensure participation. Recommendations 4.2.1 and 4.2.2 establish the proposed universal foundation and the role of the education and skills system in providing AI learning. This recommendation addresses how that provision should be coordinated and accessed locally. Northern Ireland should create

place-based pathways that connect people with learning suited to their circumstances, starting point, employment situation and wider learning goals.

This approach should reflect the Northern Ireland Executive's Draft Artificial Intelligence Strategy's recognition that Northern Ireland requires a place-based response reflecting its distinctive governance arrangements, academic institutions, labour market, industrial sectors and population needs (The Executive Office, 2026). Local pathways should operate within consistent Northern Ireland-wide arrangements for quality, recognition, information and monitoring, while retaining sufficient flexibility to respond to differences in economic structure, rurality, employment opportunities, population needs and existing provision.

The survey findings demonstrate the need for practical support. The most commonly reported barriers to AI learning included cost (27.1%), lack of time due to work (26.7%) and not knowing where to learn (26.1%). Local pathways must therefore make provision easier to access, offer flexible routes and address the practical circumstances that prevent people from participating.

Local pathways should connect with the trusted Northern Ireland-wide navigation route proposed in Recommendation 4.2.6. Councils, careers services, Jobs and Benefits Offices, libraries and voluntary and community organisations should provide assisted referral and face-to-face support for people who require additional help. These local entry points should use consistent and current information about learning level, occupational relevance, location, delivery format, cost, accessibility, eligibility and accreditation.

Responsibilities within each local ecosystem should be clear:

- **Councils** should connect regional policy with local economic-development, employability and community networks.
- **Labour Market Partnerships** should identify local participation barriers, coordinate employability provision and referrals, and commission targeted interventions where appropriate.
- **Local Economic Partnerships** should identify employer demand, sectoral priorities and emerging economic opportunities.
- **Education and training providers** should maintain current information about their provision, coordinate timetables and referral arrangements, establish clear progression routes between organisations and work collectively to address identified local gaps.
- **Jobs and Benefits Offices and careers services** should connect jobseekers, workers considering occupational change and economically inactive people with appropriate learning and employment support.
- **Libraries and voluntary, community, disability and employability organisations** should provide trusted local access, outreach and additional support for people less likely to approach formal institutions directly.

- **Employers, trade unions and professional bodies** should identify workplace needs, engage workers and support the development of occupational and sector-specific pathways.

Each local area should have a clearly identified coordinating arrangement responsible for bringing these organisations together, maintaining an overview of local provision and monitoring referrals, participation and progression. Existing council, Labour Market Partnership or other established partnership structures should be used wherever possible, avoiding the creation of an additional layer of governance.

Local pathways should be co-designed with intended learners, employers and organisations representing communities and groups facing barriers to participation. Communication, referral processes and delivery arrangements should be developed and tested with intended users to ensure that they are understandable, accessible and relevant to local circumstances. This should include people with lower levels of formal qualification, disabled and neurodivergent people, economically inactive people, rural communities and people with limited digital confidence.

Local partnerships should use evidence about their populations, industries and labour markets to identify gaps and coordinate provision. If established, the proposed AI Workforce Observatory identified in the Draft Artificial Intelligence Strategy could support this work by providing evidence about changing occupations, workplace tasks and skills requirements (The Executive Office, 2026). The NILT survey findings provide a population-level baseline that could form one component of this wider evidence base if a stable set of relevant questions is repeated over time.

Learning should be available through face-to-face, online and blended formats and at different times, including evenings and weekends. Part-time and asynchronous options will be important for workers and people with caring responsibilities. Information about free or funded opportunities and other financial support should be clearly communicated. Where required, participation support should include access to suitable equipment and connectivity, accessible materials, and assistance with travel or caring costs.

Rural accessibility should be considered explicitly when deciding where and how provision is delivered. Online learning should not be treated as a complete solution to geographical barriers, particularly where people lack reliable connectivity, suitable equipment, digital confidence or the ability to learn independently. Local outreach, supported digital access and periodic face-to-face provision may therefore be required.

Community-based AI learning champions or peer mentors could help make the subject less intimidating, demonstrate practical applications and refer people to appropriate learning. They should receive suitable training and remain connected to established

education, training and careers pathways rather than being used as a substitute for qualified provision or professional guidance.

This recommendation would give practical effect to the place-based approach set out in the Northern Ireland Executive's Draft Artificial Intelligence Strategy and its emphasis on flexible educational provision, mentorship, peer advocacy, citizen engagement and voluntary and community-sector participation (The Executive Office, 2026). It would help prevent a multi-provider system from becoming fragmented or difficult to access, while enabling delivery and participation support to reflect different local labour-market conditions and population needs.

Suggested lead and delivery partners: The Department for the Economy and Department for Communities, working with the Department of Education, The Executive Office, Northern Ireland's 11 councils, Labour Market Partnerships, Local Economic Partnerships, education and training providers, Jobs and Benefits Offices, careers services, employers, trade unions, professional bodies, libraries and voluntary, community, disability and employability organisations.

Suggested measures: Geographical and rural coverage; responsiveness to local labour-market and population needs; availability of face-to-face, online, blended and flexible provision; visibility and use of local referral and guidance services; referrals between organisations and progression following referral; access to equipment, connectivity and other participation support; participation, completion and progression by underrepresented groups; changes in reported barriers, confidence and practical capability; gaps in local provision identified and addressed; and differences in reach and outcomes between delivery models and areas.

4.2.4 Recommendation 4: Target AI engagement and learning support for adults with lower or no formal qualifications

Adults with lower or no formal qualifications should be a priority group within the universal entitlement and local access pathways proposed above. A targeted intervention is needed to help people understand how AI may change the tasks involved in their current jobs or the jobs they may seek, and to connect this understanding directly to relevant learning and employment support.

Overall, 55.4% of respondents expected to require at least a fair amount of AI knowledge for their future work. This ranged from 64.1% among degree holders to 39.2% among respondents with no formal qualifications. This difference does not demonstrate that people with lower qualification levels will be less affected by AI. It may indicate that

information about AI-related labour-market change is not reaching them in ways that connect with their occupations and employment opportunities.

Differences are also evident across occupational groups. Managerial and professional workers were considerably more likely to anticipate needing AI knowledge for their future work than respondents in semi-routine and routine occupations. This reinforces the need to ensure that AI is not presented primarily as relevant to professional, managerial or technology-intensive employment.

These differences should not be interpreted as evidence of a deficit among learners. Messages about AI that focus primarily on technology-intensive occupations may not make its relevance to other forms of work clear. Engagement should therefore use practical examples to demonstrate how AI may change tasks across a wide range of occupations, including administration, customer service, logistics, manufacturing, retail, hospitality, care and public-facing services.

Digital confidence must also be addressed as part of this intervention. Lack of confidence in existing digital skills was identified as a barrier to AI learning by 29.8% of respondents with no formal qualifications and 26.1% of those with GCSE grades D-G. Higher levels were also evident among several groups more likely to experience labour-market exclusion, including people who were permanently sick or disabled, full-time carers and retired respondents. Targeted AI learning should therefore not assume a common level of underlying digital confidence. Where required, participants should be able to access supported entry routes and foundational digital-skills assistance alongside AI learning.

To put this recommendation into practice, targeted support should connect an understanding of AI's occupational relevance with entry into learning and subsequent progression. Core components should include:

1. **Explaining occupational relevance:** use plain-language information to show how AI may change tasks across particular sectors and occupations.
2. **Providing practical exposure:** offer short demonstrations and taster sessions using examples relevant to participants' current work or employment interests.
3. **Identifying individual needs:** discuss participants' experience, digital confidence, employment goals, support requirements and preferred ways of learning.
4. **Supporting entry into learning:** refer participants directly to free, modular and accessible provision, with assistance to enrol and foundational digital support where required.
5. **Enabling practical application:** where appropriate, provide opportunities to apply learning through workplace projects, work placements, supported practice or realistic occupational exercises.
6. **Supporting progression:** connect participants with further learning, recognised qualifications, workplace development or employment support.

Figure 17 summarises how these components could operate as a supported pathway from initial engagement through to learning, application and progression.

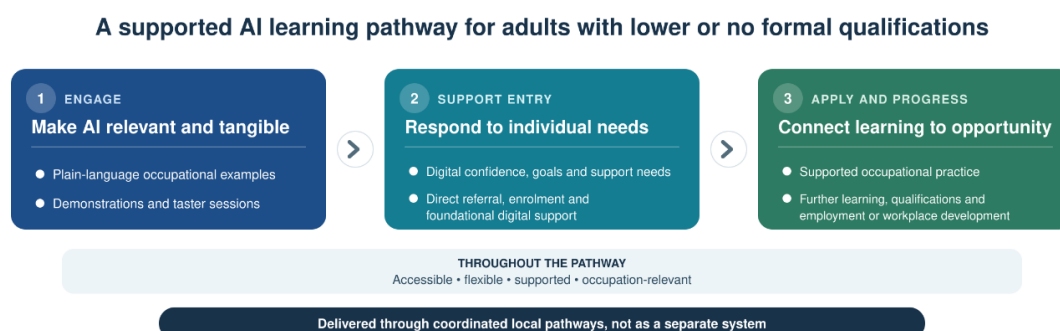


Figure 17: A supported AI learning pathway for adults with lower or no formal qualifications

Communications and learning materials should be developed and audience-tested with the intended participants. They should avoid technical jargon and exaggerated claims, presenting a balanced account of how AI may augment work, change particular tasks or contribute to displacement. Examples should include technical and non-technical occupations and should be updated as labour-market evidence develops.

This intervention should be delivered through the coordinated arrangements proposed in Recommendation 3 rather than established as a separate system. Councils and Labour Market Partnerships should coordinate local outreach and referrals. Local Economic Partnerships, employers and trade unions should help identify relevant sectors, occupations and workplace examples. Further education colleges, careers services, Jobs and Benefits Offices and voluntary and community organisations should provide trusted routes into learning and employment support.

This recommendation adds an explicit inclusion focus to the Draft Artificial Intelligence Strategy's (The Executive Office, 2026) proposals for public awareness, foundational AI literacy and workforce capability. It also responds to the Strategy's recognition that digital-skills inequalities could leave some groups less able to benefit from AI adoption. It identifies adults with lower or no formal qualifications as a priority group and ensures that awareness activity leads to practical learning and progression rather than ending with the provision of information.

Suggested lead and delivery partners: The Department for the Economy and Department for Communities, working with Northern Ireland's 11 councils, Labour Market Partnerships, Local Economic Partnerships, further education colleges, careers services,

Jobs and Benefits Offices, employers, trade unions, and voluntary and community organisations.

Suggested measures: engagement by adults with lower or no formal qualifications; digital-confidence needs identified and addressed; movement from initial engagement into learning; enrolment, completion and progression; changes in understanding of AI's occupational relevance; progression into further learning, recognised qualifications or employment support; and narrowing qualification-related differences in participation and perceived relevance.

4.2.5 Recommendation 5: Expand workplace AI learning and provide dedicated support for SMEs

Workplaces should be one of the principal routes into AI learning because they can connect training directly with changing technologies, tasks and organisational practices. Workplace provision should complement, rather than replace the universal and publicly accessible learning proposed above in Recommendation 1, section 4.2.1.

Among respondents who had undertaken AI-related learning during the previous 12 months, 66.7% identified workplace training as one of their learning routes. This highlights the central role that employers already play within the AI learning landscape. However, the survey does not establish whether access to workplace training is evenly distributed across employers, occupations and contract types, and it should not be assumed that all workers have equal access. Furthermore, 26.7% of respondents identified lack of time because of work as a barrier, indicating that simply making courses available will be insufficient unless employees are also given sufficient time and flexibility to participate.

Reported barriers also varied descriptively by occupational group. Among respondents in managerial and professional occupations, time and cost were the most commonly identified constraints, at 30.6% and 27.4%, respectively. Among small employers and own-account workers, caring responsibilities were the most frequently identified barrier (31.1%), while cost was the least frequently selected (13.5%). Workplace provision and support for SMEs should therefore reflect the different circumstances affecting participation rather than being designed around the assumption that a single barrier applies across all groups.

Employers should be supported and encouraged to:

- assess how AI may affect roles, tasks and skill requirements;
- consult employees and trade unions when introducing AI or redesigning work;
- provide paid time for relevant AI learning;
- offer practical, occupation-specific training that includes responsible and safe use;
- develop managers and workplace learning champions who can support adoption;

- provide progression from foundational learning into intermediate, advanced or specialist capability;
- recognise learning in ways that are transferable where possible;
- ensure that frontline, part-time, temporary and lower-paid workers can participate; and
- monitor the effects of AI adoption on skills, workload, equality and job quality. SMEs, particularly microbusinesses, may lack dedicated learning and development staff, technical expertise, time and resources. Support should therefore include:
 - subsidised training delivered jointly to groups of SMEs and tailored to sector-specific needs;
 - independent diagnostic support to assess readiness for AI adoption, potential workforce implications and appropriate technology and training needs;
 - train-the-trainer support for managers, workplace learning champions and organisations supporting SMEs;
 - simple, proportionate templates for workforce consultation, responsible AI-use policies and staff training plans; and
 - clear referral routes into suitable further education, higher education and other accredited learning, alongside specialist support through the AICC.

Councils and Local Economic Partnerships should help identify local and sectoral demand and connect SMEs with appropriate support. Further education colleges, the AICC, sector bodies and employer organisations should collaborate to develop shared provision that reduces the cost and administrative burden for individual businesses.

Where public funding supports AI adoption, proportionate conditions should require recipient organisations to explain how they will develop their workforce, consult affected employees and manage risks to equality and job quality. Organisations should also set out how workers affected by substantial task or role changes will be supported through reskilling, redeployment or progression. Requirements should be proportionate to the size of the organisation and the scale of public support.

This recommendation complements the Draft Artificial Intelligence Strategy's (The Executive Office, 2026) proposed public-sector capability programme, train-the-trainer approach and the work of the Artificial Intelligence Collaboration Centre. It extends these principles across the wider economy and connects support for AI adoption with workforce development, employee participation and Good Jobs.

Suggested lead and delivery partners: The Department for the Economy and Invest Northern Ireland, working with Northern Ireland's 11 councils, Local Economic Partnerships, further education colleges, the Artificial Intelligence Collaboration Centre, sector bodies, employer organisations, trade unions and professional associations.

Suggested measures: employer participation; SME and microbusiness coverage; paid learning hours; participation by occupation and contract type; completion and progression; employee involvement in AI adoption and job redesign; adoption of workforce-development plans; and employee-reported confidence, preparedness and job-quality outcomes.

4.2.6 Recommendation 6: Establish a common, trusted navigation framework for AI learning

Northern Ireland should establish a common, trusted navigation framework through which individuals, employers and advisers can find, understand and compare AI learning opportunities and access appropriate advice and support. The framework should provide a shared, accessible source of accurate and current information about provision available from multiple education and training providers. It should be integrated with existing careers, skills, employment, business-support and community infrastructure rather than operating as another disconnected portal. The need is clear: 26.1% of respondents identified not knowing where to learn as a barrier to AI learning.

The discoverability challenge extends even to people already connected with formal education. Among respondents in full-time education, 43% identified not knowing where to learn about AI as a barrier. Alongside the Draft Artificial Intelligence Strategy's observation that AI provision is not always prominent in education-provider marketing, this indicates that expanding provision will not be sufficient unless people can readily identify what is available, understand its relevance and determine which opportunities are appropriate for them.

The navigation framework should provide the common information infrastructure for a "no wrong door" approach. Individuals and employers should be able to access it directly online, while careers advisers, Jobs and Benefits staff, librarians, councils, business advisers, community organisations and other intermediaries should be able to draw on the same information when providing guidance or making supported referrals. Regardless of where a person first seeks help, they should receive consistent information and be connected to suitable learning and support.

The framework would not replace the organisations delivering AI learning or the education and skills pathways proposed in Recommendation 4.2.2. Instead, it would bring together consistent information about provision delivered by further education colleges, universities, training providers, the Artificial Intelligence Collaboration Centre, employers, community organisations and other providers, making these opportunities easier to find, understand, compare and access. It would support the coordinated local pathways proposed in Recommendation 4.2.3 by providing the common information, standards and referral infrastructure on which local partnerships and trusted access points can draw.

Individuals, employers and advisers should be able to compare learning opportunities by:

- entry level and prior knowledge;
- occupational or sector relevance;
- practical skills and intended learning outcomes;
- cost and eligibility for funding;
- duration and time commitment;
- delivery format and location;
- accessibility and learner-support arrangements;
- accreditation or micro-credential;
- progression opportunities; and
- intended learner group.

The underlying information should be accurate, current and presented consistently across publicly funded provision. Common information and quality standards should allow users to understand what a course covers, who it is intended for, what prior knowledge is required, what support is available, whether completion is recognised and how the learning relates to particular occupations, workplace tasks or progression opportunities. Providers receiving public funding should be required to supply and regularly update this information in an agreed and reusable format.

The framework should support conventional search and comparison functions alongside clear, accessible information for people who already know what they are seeking. It could also include AI-assisted natural-language querying, enabling individuals and employers to describe their circumstances, learning goals, employment situation or business requirements in their own words and receive information about potentially relevant provision. This could help address difficulties created by unfamiliar terminology and fragmented information, particularly for smaller employers and individuals who may not know which course, qualification or provider to search for.

Any AI-assisted functionality should draw only on accurate and regularly updated provider information. It should clearly identify the sources used, explain the basis on which opportunities have been presented and allow users to verify the information provided. Users should also be able to search and navigate the framework without using AI. AI-assisted navigation should support, rather than replace, professional careers advice, skills assessment and assisted referral. The effectiveness, accessibility and accuracy of any AI-assisted element should be independently evaluated before wider implementation.

Although the framework should provide a common route to information, it should not be digital-only. People with limited digital confidence, poor connectivity, accessibility requirements or difficulty navigating education and skills systems should also be able to

access the same information and support by telephone, face to face and through non-AI routes. Alternative formats and additional support should be provided for people who require them.

Careers advisers, Jobs and Benefits staff, librarians, councils, Local Economic Partnerships, Labour Market Partnerships, community organisations and employability providers should be supported to use the framework when providing guidance and making referrals. Employers and business advisers should similarly be able to access and share the same information through established employer-support channels, including Business Info NI and other relevant public services. This would allow the shared framework to be reached through multiple organisations without creating separate and potentially inconsistent sources of information.

Referral arrangements should connect careers advice, skills assessment, learning provision, learner support and subsequent employment or progression support. Where appropriate, individuals should be supported to move from introductory AI awareness into occupationally relevant learning, recognised qualifications, workplace application or further study. Referral processes should record whether users successfully accessed, enrolled in and completed the recommended provision rather than measuring the number of referrals alone.

Figure 18 illustrates how a common navigation framework could support multiple routes into provision. Individuals and employers could access the framework directly online, while trusted intermediaries could draw on the same information to provide advice and supported referral through telephone, face-to-face and community-based routes. Learning would continue to be delivered by multiple providers, with the framework making that provision easier to identify, compare and access.

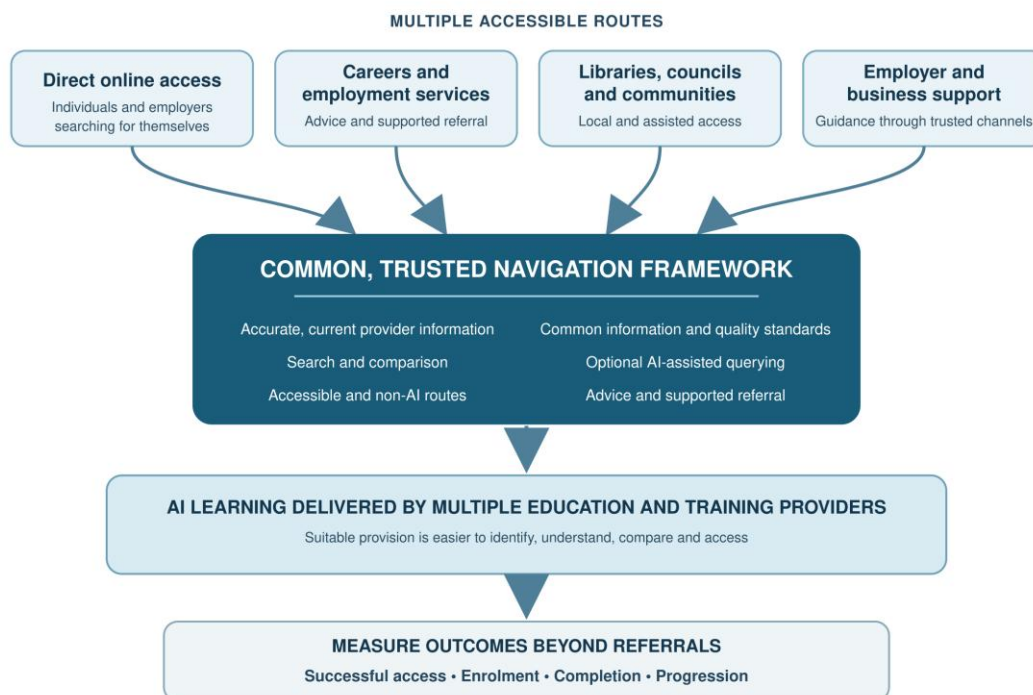


Figure 18: A supported AI learning pathway for adults with lower or no formal qualifications

Northern Ireland practice example: The Employer Compass

An early Northern Ireland example of this approach is the Employer Compass, commissioned through the EPIC Futures NI Phase 2 Policy Commissioning Call and developed by Intrinsic Ai and Pivotal Policy in collaboration with EPIC Futures NI and Ulster University Business School. Using apprenticeships as its initial use case, the pilot explored how conversational AI and natural-language querying could help employers navigate fragmented skills information and identify potentially relevant provision.

The pilot was tested with employers and showcased to a wider group of skills and policy stakeholders. Its evaluation indicated that conversational navigation could help employers express their needs in familiar language, overcome terminology barriers and identify relevant information more efficiently. It also highlighted the importance of structured and current provider data, clear information about costs and funding, effective distribution through services that employers already use, and connections with wider labour-market, business-support and careers information.

The Employer Compass should be understood as a proof of concept rather than evidence of sustained impact or an endorsement of a particular supplier or product. Its findings nevertheless provide practical learning for the design, accessibility, information requirements, governance and independent evaluation of any future AI-enabled skills-

navigation framework. The pilot report and associated learning are publicly available through the EPIC Futures NI website or can be requested from epicfutures@ulster.ac.uk.

Recommendation 6 would give practical effect to the Training and Literacy principle and the skills, capability-development and citizen-engagement ambitions contained in the Draft Artificial Intelligence Strategy (The Executive Office, 2026). It would create a clearer route from awareness and interest to advice, enrolment, participation and progression. It also aligns with the Department for the Economy's Skills Action Plan and its commitment to an inclusive, forward-looking skills ecosystem in which everyone has a pathway to enhance their existing skills.

Suggested lead and delivery partners: The Department for the Economy, working with the Careers Service, Department for Communities, education and training providers, the AICC, councils, Local Economic Partnerships, Labour Market Partnerships, Jobs and Benefits Offices, libraries, Business Info NI, business-support organisations, employers, trade unions, community and voluntary organisations and employability providers.

Suggested measures: awareness and use of the navigation framework and its different access routes; accuracy, currency and coverage of provider information; successful and completed referrals; conversion from enquiry to enrolment; participation, completion and progression by learner group; user satisfaction; accuracy and usefulness of AI-assisted responses; identification and correction of misleading or biased outputs; availability and use of telephone, face-to-face and non-AI support; and accessibility and outcomes for people requiring additional assistance.

4.2.7 Recommendation 7: Establish proportionate governance and assurance for responsible AI adoption

Northern Ireland should establish a coherent and proportionate approach to AI governance and assurance. The aim should be to support beneficial adoption while ensuring that AI is used responsibly, transparently and accountably. As AI use develops across workplaces, businesses and public services, organisations need sufficient clarity and confidence to adopt it without exposing individuals, workers or communities to avoidable harm.

The survey findings indicate that people recognise both the potential and the risks of AI. While 50.9% agreed that AI could improve productivity or efficiency, 84.2% were concerned about the misuse of personal data, 80.5% were concerned that decisions made using AI could be unfair or morally wrong, and 62.4% were concerned about its environmental and energy impacts. Only 29.2% agreed that the advantages of AI outweigh its risks. These findings suggest that adoption and public confidence will depend

partly on whether people believe that appropriate safeguards, accountability and opportunities for human review are in place.

Governance should not be approached as a single set of requirements applied equally to every use of AI. The level of scrutiny and assurance should reflect:

- the purpose for which the AI system is being used;
- the sensitivity and quality of the data involved;
- the extent to which people are identifiable or affected;
- whether the system informs or makes decisions;
- the potential consequences of error, bias or misuse;
- the availability of meaningful human oversight;
- the scale and reversibility of any potential harm; and
- whether the system affects employment, education, funding, welfare, public services or other important opportunities.

Low risk uses, such as administrative support or tools that assist with drafting and summarising, may require basic checks, clear user guidance, data protection and ongoing monitoring. Systems that influence people's employment, entitlements, access to services or other significant outcomes should require more rigorous impact assessment, testing, transparency, independent scrutiny, human review and routes for challenge and redress. Some applications may be inappropriate where their risks cannot be adequately mitigated or meaningful human accountability cannot be maintained.

A common governance and assurance framework should provide practical expectations covering:

- a clearly defined purpose and evidence that the proposed use is appropriate;
- the quality, relevance, security and lawful use of data;
- privacy and protection against the misuse of personal information;
- testing for inaccurate, discriminatory or systematically biased outcomes;
- equality, accessibility and the effects on different population groups;
- transparency about when and how AI is being used;
- clear allocation of responsibility within the adopting organisation;
- meaningful human oversight and responsibility for final decisions;
- accessible opportunities to question, challenge or seek review of significant decisions;
- employee and trade-union engagement where AI affects jobs, tasks, monitoring or working conditions;
- ongoing monitoring, evaluation and reporting of incidents or unintended consequences;
- environmental impacts where these are likely to be material; and
- accountability across adopting organisations, suppliers and technology providers.

Governance should be enabling as well as protective. Clear and proportionate expectations can give organisations greater confidence to experiment with and adopt AI responsibly, while identifying risks before systems are implemented or expanded. Smaller organisations, including SMEs, community organisations and smaller public bodies, should have access to shared guidance, assessment tools, technical expertise and assurance support rather than being expected to develop separate governance arrangements independently.

People likely to be affected by higher-risk uses of AI should be involved in their design, testing and evaluation. Engagement should include groups that may face disproportionate risks because of disability, age, sex, race, socioeconomic circumstances, digital exclusion or previous experiences of discrimination. Where the survey cross-tabulations identify significant differences in levels of concern, confidence or perceived risk, these should inform engagement and communication approaches.

Public bodies should apply the same proportionate principles but will require particularly clear arrangements where AI involves public funds, personal or administrative data, or decisions affecting access to services and entitlements. Depending on the level of risk, this should include:

- publishing information about significant uses of AI through a public AI register;
- completing equality, privacy, accessibility and wider impact assessments;
- identifying the organisation and senior official accountable for each system;
- maintaining meaningful human oversight for decisions affecting individuals;
- providing accessible processes for explanation, challenge and human review;
- including requirements for transparency, testing, security, auditability and supplier accountability in procurement;
- avoiding unnecessary dependence on a single supplier, model or proprietary system; and
- independently evaluating whether systems produce better, fairer and more inclusive outcomes.

These arrangements should complement rather than duplicate existing legal and regulatory requirements. The framework should help organisations understand how data protection, equality, employment, consumer-protection, procurement and sector-specific obligations apply when AI is designed, purchased or used. Responsibility for an AI system and its effects should remain with the organisation deploying it and should not be transferred entirely to an external supplier.

Organisations will also require the capability to apply proportionate governance effectively. Senior leaders, commissioners, procurement teams, data specialists, HR professionals and frontline staff should receive role-appropriate training in responsible AI use, risk assessment and accountability. Shared expertise and assurance capacity should

be developed across Northern Ireland so that responsible adoption does not depend solely on the resources available within individual organisations.

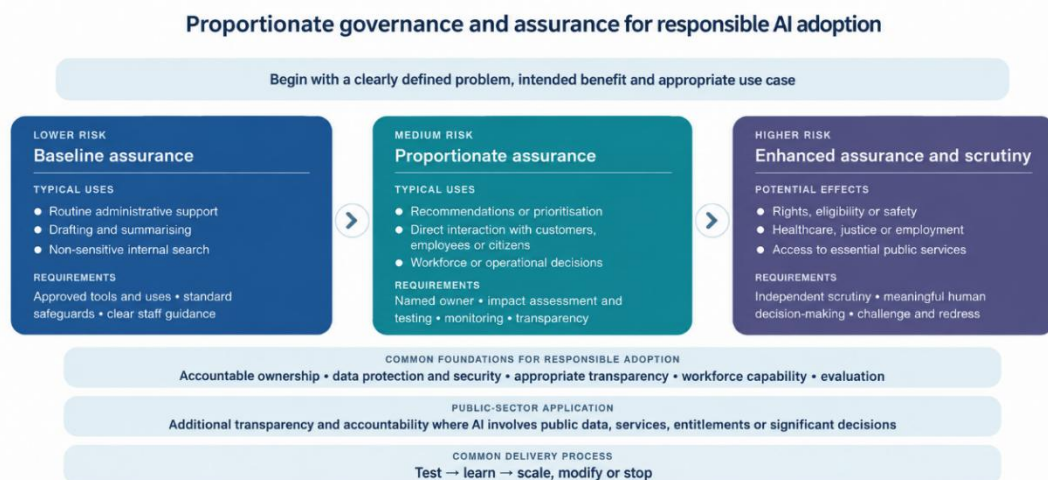


Figure 19: Proportionate governance and assurance for responsible AI adoption

This recommendation would provide a practical foundation for the responsible-AI principles and proposed governance arrangements contained in the Draft Artificial Intelligence Strategy. It would extend their relevance beyond public administration while recognising the additional responsibilities attached to higher-risk public-sector applications. The intention is to create the confidence, capability and safeguards needed for Northern Ireland to adopt AI responsibly, with governance requirements that are proportionate to the nature and consequences of each use.

Suggested lead and delivery partners: The Executive Office and the Department of Finance, working with the Department for the Economy, the proposed AI Governance Board, public bodies, local government, education and research institutions, employers, trade unions, business organisations, technology providers, civil-society organisations and representatives of groups likely to be affected by AI-enabled decisions, with appropriate advice and input from regulators and statutory bodies, including the Information Commissioner’s Office and the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

Suggested measures: adoption and application of the common governance and assurance framework; proportion of AI systems assigned an appropriate risk level; number and quality of impact assessments; coverage and completeness of the public-sector AI register; evidence of engagement with affected groups; availability and use of human review and redress processes; accuracy, fairness and accessibility of AI-enabled outcomes; reported incidents and corrective action; compliance with procurement and transparency requirements; organisational capability to apply the framework; public confidence; and evidence that governance requirements remain proportionate to the risks and consequences involved.

4.2.8 Recommendation 8: Integrate AI adoption with workforce-transition planning and Good Jobs objectives

AI adoption should be integrated with workforce planning, employee participation, skills development and job quality. The survey does not establish that AI will reduce employment; rather, it demonstrates a widespread expectation of significant labour-market change. 71.2% of respondents agreed that AI is likely to reduce the number of jobs over the next five years, while 50.9% agreed that it could improve productivity or efficiency. Taken together, these findings underline the importance of developing credible plans to realise the potential benefits of AI while anticipating and managing its possible uneven effects on workers.

Northern Ireland should develop evidence-led sector transition plans, prioritising the sectors, occupations and groups of workers most exposed to potential change.

These plans should:

- identify occupations, roles and tasks likely to change;
- distinguish between risks of displacement and opportunities for job augmentation or the creation of new roles;
- assess workforce and skills implications at an early stage of AI adoption;
- provide existing workers with access to learning before displacement occurs;
- support movement into adjacent roles and sectors;
- involve employees and trade unions in decisions about adoption and job redesign;
- assess the potential effects of AI on workload, employee monitoring, autonomy, job security, progression, wellbeing and other dimensions of job quality;
- protect access to learning and transition support for workers in lower-paid, routine or otherwise vulnerable occupations; and
- consider how anticipated productivity gains could contribute to better jobs, including through opportunities for improved pay, progression, working conditions, job design or reduced workload.

The Department for the Economy's Good Jobs priority¹ provides an appropriate framework for considering these wider effects. The Department has adopted the Carnegie Framework, which identifies seven dimensions of job quality: terms of employment; pay and benefits; health, safety and psychosocial wellbeing; job design and the nature of work; social support and cohesion; voice and representation; and work-life balance (Department for the Economy, n.d.). Applying these dimensions would ensure that assessment of AI's

¹ The Department for the Economy's Good Jobs priority seeks to increase the proportion of working-age people in secure, well-paid and fulfilling employment. In 2024, the Department consulted on proposals for a Good Jobs Employment Rights Bill covering terms of employment, pay and benefits, employee voice and representation, and work-life balance. It subsequently published its consultation response and announced a package of proposed reforms, including an Employment Rights Bill and complementary legislation, statutory Codes of Practice and guidance. The proposed Bill had not been enacted at the time of writing.
<https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/topics/good-jobs>

workforce effects extends beyond the number of jobs created or displaced to consider the quality of work that remains or emerges.

Publicly funded AI-adoption programmes should incorporate proportionate consideration of workforce effects. Participating organisations should be supported to assess how proposed applications may affect roles, tasks, skills and job quality, and to explain how employees will be engaged and supported as work changes. Requirements should be proportionate to the scale and likely workforce impact of the proposed adoption.

The Draft Artificial Intelligence Strategy proposes an AI Workforce Observatory to support continuing horizon-scanning of AI-related changes in employment and skills and explicitly connects this with longer-term workforce preparedness and reskilling. This proposal draws on the MATRIX foresight study, *AI and the Future of Work in Northern Ireland* (Matrix, 2025), produced by the Northern Ireland Science Industry Panel on behalf of the Department for the Economy. If established, the proposed AI Workforce Observatory should form part of the wider workforce-transition infrastructure rather than operate principally as a data or horizon-scanning function. It should bring together existing and emerging labour-market intelligence, employer evidence, technology trends and workforce data to identify where AI is changing tasks, skills requirements and employment demand, and which workers and sectors may require early intervention.

This intelligence should feed directly into sector transition plans, curriculum and provision planning, careers advice, employer support and targeted reskilling. It should also inform the AI and Digital-focused Public Sector Skills Academy proposed in the Draft Artificial Intelligence Strategy, as well as public-sector workforce planning and the governance arrangements proposed in Recommendation 7. In turn, evidence generated through public- and private-sector AI adoption and evaluation should feed back into the Observatory so that intelligence reflects actual implementation as well as forecasts.

Councils, Local Economic Partnerships and Labour Market Partnerships should help translate Northern Ireland-wide and sector-level intelligence into responses reflecting local labour-market conditions, employer needs and barriers to participation. This would connect the Strategy's Workforce Observatory proposal with its wider place-based approach.

Policy should avoid presenting training as a complete response to potential job displacement. Some workers may also require careers guidance, income and employment support, recognition of prior learning and practical assistance to move between occupations or sectors. Support should begin when significant workforce change is anticipated rather than only after redundancies have occurred.

This recommendation would extend the workforce-readiness and reskilling ambitions of the Draft Artificial Intelligence Strategy by connecting horizon-scanning and AI adoption

with practical transition support, employee participation and job quality. It would also align AI policy with the Department for the Economy's wider Good Jobs objective and its adoption of the Carnegie Framework for understanding job quality. This recommendation concerns the workforce consequences of AI adoption; it is not intended to prescribe changes to employment law, which are being taken forward through a separate Good Jobs employment-rights policy and legislative process. Its purpose is to ensure that AI adoption and workforce-transition activity support, rather than undermine, Northern Ireland's established Good Jobs objectives.

The recommendation also aligns with the Department for the Economy's Economic Vision (Department for the Economy, 2024), particularly its objectives to increase the number of Good Jobs and raise productivity, and with the Department for the Economy's Skills Action Plan (Department for the Economy, 2025) commitment to an inclusive, forward-looking skills ecosystem.

Suggested lead and delivery partners: The Department for the Economy, working with the Department for Communities, the Office of AI and Digital, Invest Northern Ireland, education and training providers, employer organisations, trade unions, sector bodies, councils, Local Economic Partnerships, Labour Market Partnerships and labour-market research organisations.

Suggested measures: coverage of sector transition plans and proportionate workforce-impact assessments; evidence of Workforce Observatory intelligence informing policy and provision; access to training and transition support before displacement; employee and trade-union participation; retention, redeployment and subsequent employment outcomes; changes across relevant job-quality indicators; distribution of productivity benefits; and differences in access and outcomes by occupation, qualification level and population group.

4.2.9 Recommendation 9: Test AI's contribution to labour-market inclusion through co-designed pilots

AI's potential to support labour-market inclusion should be tested through practical, independently evaluated pilots. Only 29.8% of respondents agreed that AI would make it easier for workplaces to accommodate people currently excluded from the workforce, while 33.0% were neutral and 16.1% did not know. This indicates that the potential contribution of AI is not yet widely recognised, while evidence of its practical benefits remains limited.

Among the 175 substantive open-ended responses from respondents who considered this potential, disabled people and neurodivergent people were identified most frequently as

groups that might benefit. Pilots should therefore begin with clearly identified barriers and test whether AI can produce better outcomes than existing approaches.

Pilots could examine the use of AI for:

- accessible communication and alternative formats;
- assistive technologies;
- support for neurodivergent workers;
- accessible recruitment processes and job matching;
- identifying and implementing workplace adjustments;
- flexible and remote working;
- task support and job retention; and
- personalised careers and learning support.

Relevant Northern Ireland departments should work with disabled people's organisations, neurodiversity organisations, employers, trade unions and education and employment-support providers to identify and commission a small portfolio of co-designed pilots. Disabled people, neurodivergent people and other intended beneficiaries should be involved as equal partners in defining the problem and intended outcomes and throughout the design, governance and evaluation of the pilots. Their participation should be appropriately supported and resourced and should begin before technologies are selected or procured, rather than being limited to feedback after deployment. This would give practical effect to the Draft Artificial Intelligence Strategy's requirement that citizen engagement reflect the diversity of Northern Ireland's population and help prevent bias, disadvantage and exclusion from being reinforced. It also recognises that public confidence is unlikely to be generated through communication alone: potential benefits should be demonstrated through direct involvement and evidence of improved outcomes.

Pilots should assess potential benefits and risks. These include inaccessible design, inaccurate outputs, inappropriate inferences, bias, privacy concerns, increased surveillance and discrimination in recruitment or employment decisions. AI outputs should not be the sole basis for final decisions about recruitment, access to support, performance management or continued employment. Meaningful human oversight, accessible routes to challenge decisions and non-digital alternatives should remain available.

Participation should be voluntary and should not require individuals to provide unnecessary personal, disability or health information. Appropriate equality, accessibility and data-protection assessments should be completed before deployment. Pilots should supplement rather than replace employers' responsibilities to provide reasonable adjustments and appropriate human support.

Evaluation should be independent of the technology provider and should compare outcomes with existing practice. Successful approaches should only be expanded where there is clear evidence of benefit, accessibility and value for money, and where identified risks can be adequately mitigated. Findings from unsuccessful pilots and evidence of unintended consequences should also be published to inform future policy and procurement.

This recommendation would give practical effect to the Human Oversight, Fairness and Transparency, Data Governance and Societal Benefit principles set out in the Draft Artificial Intelligence Strategy. It also aligns with the Department for Communities' draft *Disability and Work: A Strategy for Northern Ireland* (Department for Communities, 2025), particularly its emphasis on co-production and on enabling disabled people, people with health conditions and neurodivergent people to access, sustain and progress in quality employment.

Suggested lead and delivery partners: The Department for Communities and the Department for the Economy, working with the Office of AI and Digital, disabled people's organisations, neurodiversity organisations, employers, trade unions, employability providers, further and higher education providers, councils, Local Economic Partnerships, Labour Market Partnerships and independent research and evaluation organisations, with appropriate input from equality, accessibility and data-protection bodies and technology providers.

Suggested measures: recruitment and sustained-employment outcomes; retention and progression; the timeliness and quality of workplace adjustments; participant experience, autonomy and trust; accessibility; inaccurate or discriminatory outcomes; complaints and requests for review; employer adoption following successful evaluation; and value for money. Outcomes should be examined by participant group where sample size and confidentiality permit.

Section 5: Conclusion

Taken together, these recommendations seek to move Northern Ireland from widespread awareness of AI towards practical understanding, capability, inclusive participation and responsible adoption. They are closely aligned with the direction of the Northern Ireland Executive's Draft Artificial Intelligence Strategy, particularly its emphasis on literacy, education, workforce capability, responsible governance, sustainability, societal benefit and citizen engagement.

While the Northern Ireland Executive's Draft Artificial Intelligence Strategy establishes a broad framework centred particularly on responsible public-sector AI adoption,

governance and capability, the findings from this study demonstrate the importance of ensuring that implementation reaches across the whole population and economy. Access to AI learning should not depend on a person's employment status, qualification level, digital confidence, location or ability to navigate provision independently. Nor should AI adoption proceed separately from workforce-transition planning, labour-market inclusion, job quality and appropriate accountability. A place-based approach is also required so that implementation reflects differences in local labour markets, economic opportunities and barriers to participation across Northern Ireland.

The central policy challenge is therefore not simply to increase the number of AI courses available. It is to create a coordinated system that helps people understand how AI is relevant to their lives and work, enables them to identify and access appropriate learning through trusted and accessible routes, and supports organisations to adopt AI in ways that are responsible, proportionately governed, publicly trusted and capable of delivering demonstrable benefit. Delivering this will require coordinated action across government, education, employers, careers and employment services, trade unions and community organisations, with targeted support for those at greatest risk of being left behind.

The Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey AI module provides a population baseline against which progress can be assessed. Repeating a stable core of questions at planned intervals would show whether practical AI use and participation in learning are increasing, whether barriers and inequalities are narrowing or widening, and whether public confidence is changing as adoption develops. This evidence could inform the proposed AI Workforce Observatory and enable policy, investment and provision to be refined over time.

The findings therefore provide both an evidence base for action and a means of judging whether that action succeeds. By combining universal access to AI learning with targeted support, coordinated and place-based delivery, workplace learning, workforce-transition planning, proportionate governance and independently evaluated inclusion initiatives, Northern Ireland can seek to ensure that AI adoption strengthens capability, inclusion and Good Jobs rather than reinforcing existing inequalities. The opportunity is not simply to prepare people for an AI-enabled future, but to enable people across Northern Ireland to participate in shaping that future and sharing in its benefits.

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Appendix I: Number of respondents (N) who answered questions in the Figures

Figure	Figure name	N
1	AI Awareness	1243
2	Use of AI on a day-to-day basis (Multiple response permitted)	1229
3	Perceived need for AI knowledge for personal use in future	1229
4	Overall barriers to AI learning (Multiple response permitted)	1229
5	How much AI knowledge do you think you will need for work in future?	1229
6	Learning to use AI tools will be essential for most jobs in the next five years	1229
7	Views on whether AI is likely to reduce the number of jobs in the next five years, by age group	1229
8	AI could make work more productive or efficient	1229
9	AI will make it easier for workplaces to accommodate the needs of people currently excluded from the workforce	1229
10	Level of concern that AI may not always make decisions that are fair or morally right	1222
11	Level of concern about how personal data might be misused in AI systems	1222
12	Views on whether advantages of AI outweigh its potential risks	1221
13	Views on whether AI can help solve major societal challenges	1220
14	Level of concern about the environmental impact of the energy used to power AI technologies	1223

Appendix II: Number of respondents (N) who answered questions in the Tables

Table	Table name	N
1	Perceived AI knowledge needs for personal use in future by sex	1219
2	Perceived AI knowledge needs for personal use in future by age group	1218
3	Perceived AI knowledge needs for personal use in future by qualification level	1152
4	Perceived AI knowledge needs for personal use in future by economic activity status	1191
5	AI Training undertaken in past 12 months	1126
6	Where AI Learning took place	228
7	Barriers to AI learning by age group (multiple responses permitted)	1225
8	Barriers to AI learning by Sex	1224
9	Barriers to AI learning by highest qualification level (multiple responses permitted)	1156
10	Barriers to AI learning by economic activity status (multiple responses permitted)	1194
11	Barriers to AI learning by occupation (multiple responses permitted)	1125
12	Perceived AI knowledge needs for work in future by sex	1217
13	Perceived AI knowledge needs for work in future by age group	1215
14	Perceived AI knowledge needs for work in future by qualification level	1149
15	Perceived AI knowledge needs for work in future by occupation	1122
16	Perceived AI knowledge need for work in future by employment sector	1143
17	Perceived AI knowledge need for work in future by economic activity status	1186
18	Perceived AI knowledge need for work in future by geography (a) Urban/Rural (b) Council area	(a) 1222 (b) 1225
19	Learning to use AI tools will be essential for most jobs in the next five years, by sex	1217
20	Learning to use AI tools will be essential for most jobs in the next five years, by age group	1214
21	Learning to use AI tools will be essential for most jobs in the next five years, by qualification level	1154
22	Learning to use AI tools will be essential for most jobs in the next five years, by economic activity status	1196
23	Learning to use AI tools will be essential for most jobs in the next five years, by occupation	1124
24	Views on whether AI is likely to reduce the number of jobs in the next five years, by sex	1219

Table	Table name	N
25	Views on whether AI is likely to reduce the number of jobs in the next five years, by age group	1221
26	Table 26: AI is likely to reduce the number of jobs in the next five years by qualification level	1154
27	Table 27: AI is likely to reduce the number of jobs in the next five years by economic activity status	1195
28	Table 28: AI is likely to reduce the number of jobs in the next five years by occupation	1122
29	Table 29: AI could make work more productive or efficient by sex	1213
30	Table 30: AI could make work more productive or efficient by age group	1213
31	Table 31: AI could make work more productive or efficient by qualification level	1144
32	Table 32: Views on whether AI could make work more productive or efficient by economic activity status	1187
33	Table 33: AI could make work more productive or efficient by occupation	1116
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