

INTUIT QUICKBOOKS

2026 AI Impact Report

Mapping adoption, use, and impact across small to midsize businesses
in the US, Canada, the UK, and Australia



What's inside

Six findings that map where AI stands, and where it's headed. Drawn from more than 34,000 survey responses across the US, Canada, UK, and Australia, and anonymized payment records from more than 5.3 million small to midsize businesses across the US, Canada, and the UK.

Usage is broad, paid commitment is narrower.

Roughly 7 in 10 businesses surveyed say they now use AI regularly, but payment data points to a smaller group, about 1 in 10, actually investing in dedicated AI tools.

The businesses using AI are reporting real results.

More productivity, more revenue, shorter workdays, and more hiring than cuts.

Commitment is sticky.

Among businesses that paid for AI in 2024, roughly 8 in 10 were still paying in 2025. A strong indicator that it's working.

Businesses paying to use AI have a clear profile.

Newer, growth-focused businesses in digital-first industries, led by younger, more educated decision-makers.

The biggest barriers are about trust.

Top AI adoption barriers include data privacy concerns, accuracy concerns, and limited knowledge of AI's capabilities. Cost is a factor, but not the biggest hurdle.

Businesses pull back on AI where human judgment matters most.

AI adoption leads on administrative, marketing, and customer service tasks, but lags in more complex jobs such as employee management, product management, and legal.

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Something shifted for small and midsize businesses in the spring of 2023. The rapid expansion of large language model tools, like ChatGPT and Google Gemini, moved AI from the periphery into everyday use. In the months that followed, AI adoption climbed. Then it kept climbing.

The insights in this report draw from two sources to track what happened next: anonymized records of payments to third-party AI platforms made by more than 5.3 million businesses using QuickBooks or Intuit Enterprise Suite across the US, Canada, and the UK, and survey responses from more than 34,000 small and midsize business owners and operators across the US, Canada, the UK, and Australia, collected across seven quarterly waves from July 2024 to January 2026. Throughout this report, small businesses are defined as those with 0 to 9 employees, and midsize businesses as those with 10 or more employees (up to 99 in most countries, and up to 50 in Australia).

Together, the data tells a clearer story than surveys can alone. Roughly 7 in 10 businesses report using AI regularly, and most are seeing real results, even before they've put budget behind it, including higher productivity, stronger revenue, shorter workdays, and more hiring than cuts. Yet only 1 in 10 businesses are paying for dedicated, standalone AI tools. A majority are still in that free, experimental phase. A smaller but significant group has crossed into paid adoption, and most that did were still invested a year later.

That gap between broad, casual use and paid commitment is where this report begins. The chapters that follow map what changes when AI becomes part of the workflow, who's using it most, what's preventing more widespread adoption, and where AI shows up first.

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CHAPTER 1

Most businesses have tried AI, a smaller committed core is investing in it

AT-A-GLANCE

Surveys show AI use is widespread. Payment data shows a smaller group is paying for it and sticking with it.

When we began tracking AI use through quarterly surveys in July 2024, roughly half of US and Canadian businesses reported using AI regularly. In the UK and Australia, fewer than half did. Eighteen months later, that number climbed to roughly 7 in 10 across every country surveyed. New payment data adds a second lens: the share paying for dedicated AI tools is smaller, but once businesses make that commitment, nearly 8 in 10 stay invested.

BROAD AI USE IS NOW THE NORM, AND DAILY USE IS RISING FAST.

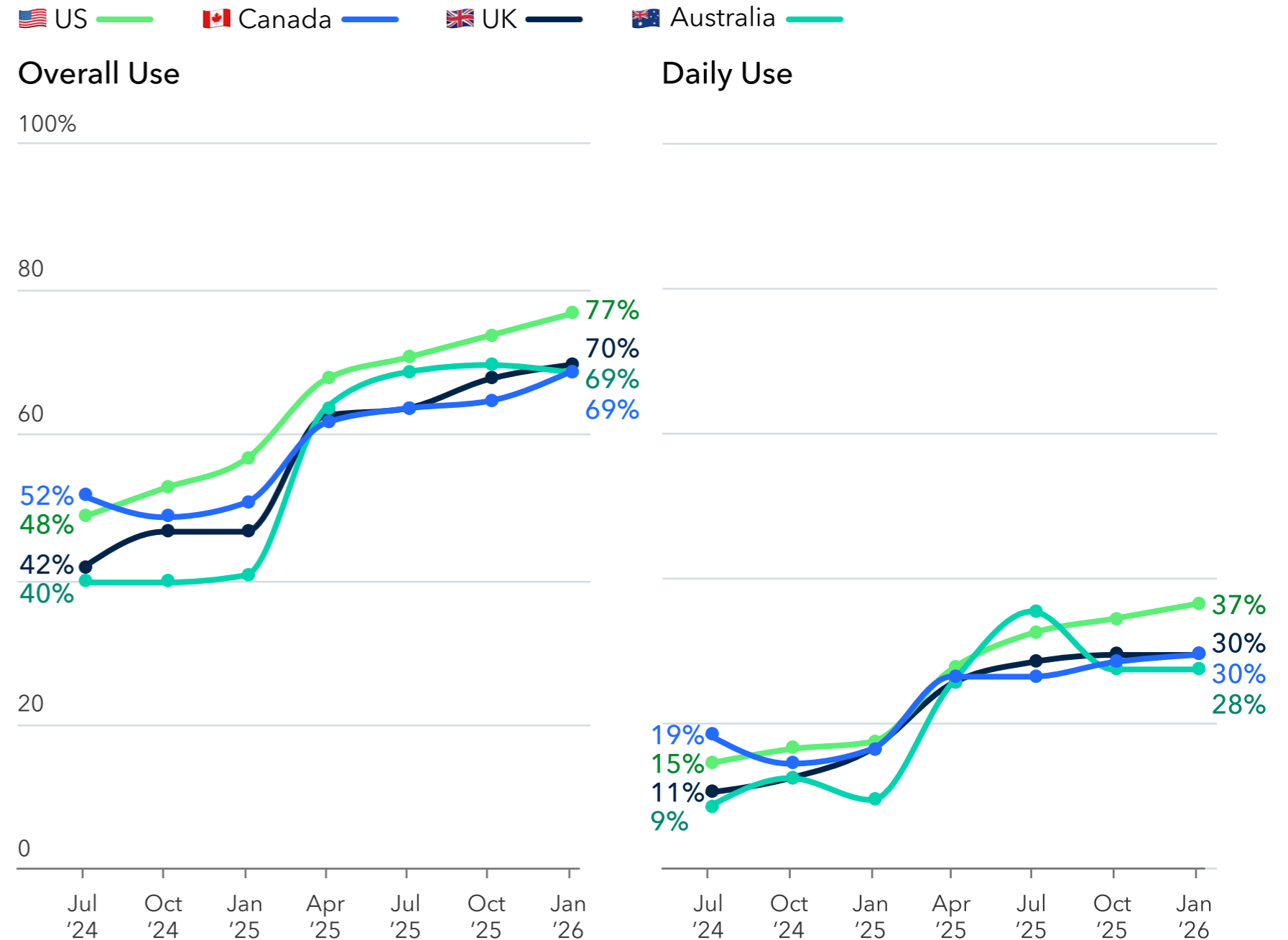
Since July 2024, regular AI use has climbed sharply in every country surveyed. In the US, it rose from 48% to 77% by January 2026. Canada moved from 52% to 69%, the UK from 42% to 70%, and Australia from 40% to 69%. This includes any kind of AI use: free tools, built-in features, and dedicated paid subscriptions.

The momentum is clearest in daily use. In every country, it at least doubled. In Australia and the UK, it more than tripled. The occasional AI user is becoming the habitual one.

Overall AI adoption rates among small to midsize businesses in the US, Canada, the UK, and Australia

Left: Percentages shown are survey respondents reporting monthly, weekly, or daily use of any kind of AI (free or paid) from July 2024 to January 2026.

Right: Respondents reporting daily use only.



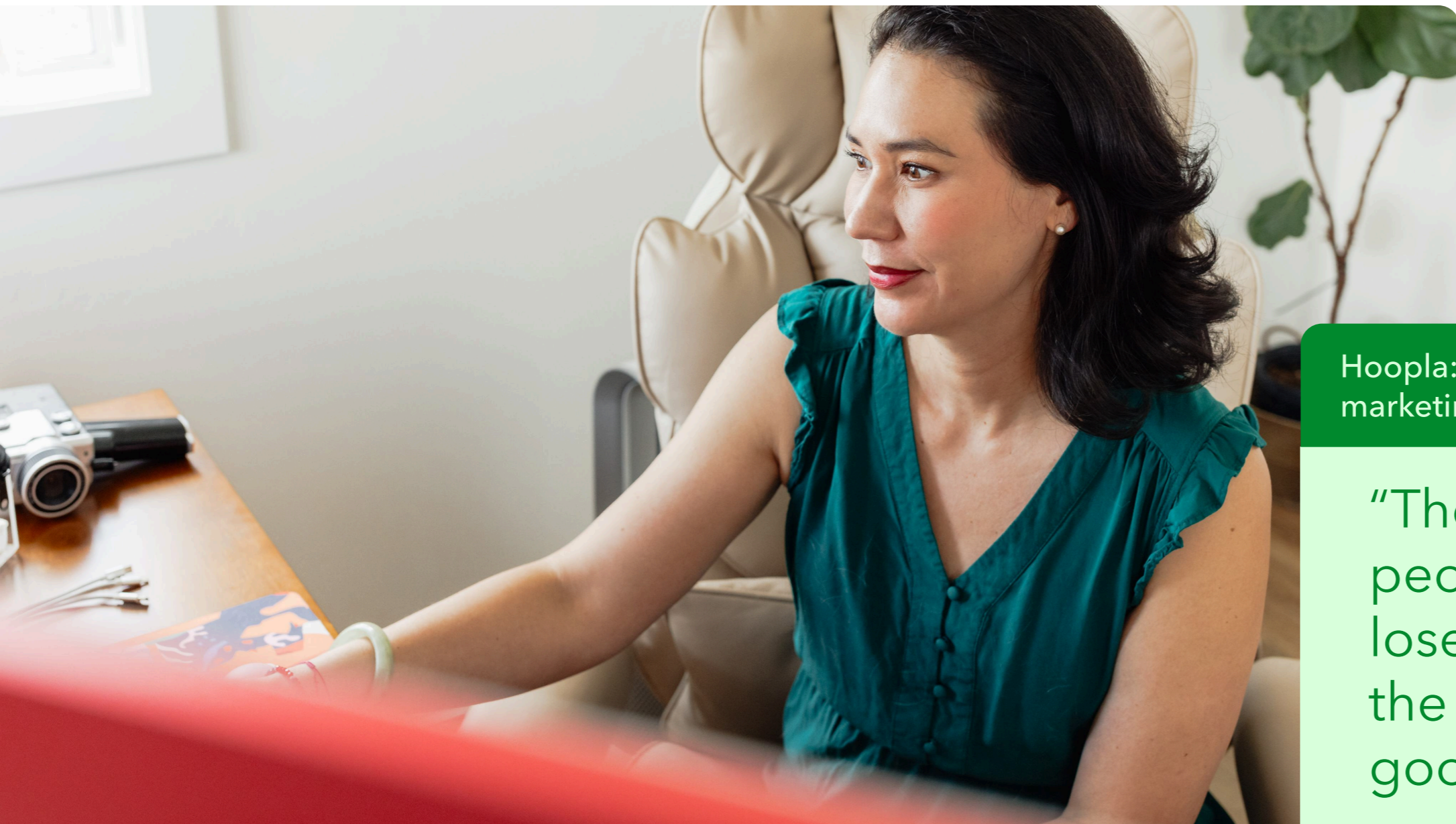
Total sample from surveys commissioned by Intuit from July 2024 to January 2026: 34,364 small to midsize businesses, comprising 17,076 in the US, 6,850 in Canada, 6,648 in the UK, and 3,790 in Australia. Survey question: "How frequently, if at all, do you use any AI-enabled tool for your business? Daily, Weekly, Monthly, Never, Don't know." Values shown are the top three responses. Respondents were given a broad definition of "AI-enabled tools" with common examples.

Source: Figure 1, 2026 AI Impact Report, Intuit QuickBooks

Still, most of the businesses using AI regularly are doing so in a limited way: trying it across a handful of tasks, but not yet treating it as central to how they operate. In every country tracked, that group accounts for half of all businesses using AI.

REAL BUSINESSES. REAL-WORLD AI.

The quotes throughout this report are illustrative examples from three small to midsize business leaders who are active AI users. They offer an on-the-ground view of how AI shows up in their day-to-day work. Survey and payment data provide the broader picture.



Hoopla: A US-based branded merchandise business using AI across marketing and operations.

“The learning curve is shorter than most people think. There’s really nothing to lose by trying it. The more you use it, the more you understand what it’s good for.”

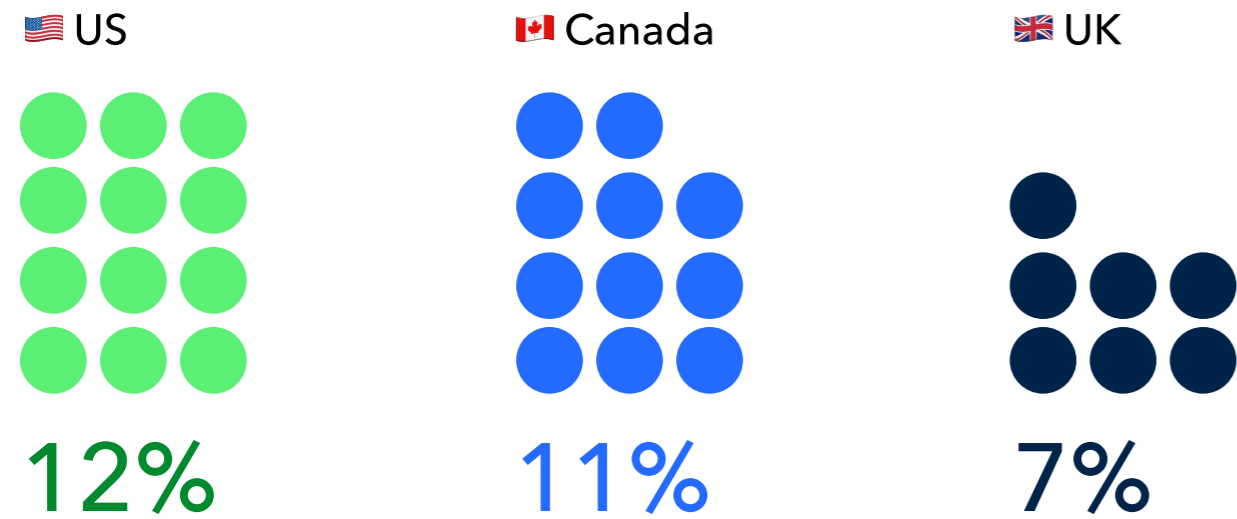
Christina Maag
Founder
Hoopla

MEASURING INTENT: A SMALLER, COMMITTED CORE IS PAYING AND STAYING.

Beyond surveys, anonymized payment records from a different, much larger sample capture something new and narrower: businesses that have put dollars behind dedicated AI tools. That group is much smaller.

In the payment data, 12% of US businesses, 11% in Canada, and 7% in the UK paid for a standalone, third-party AI subscription at least once between 2021 and 2025. While other research has documented AI's broad reach, this is among the first data to put a number on the committed core: the businesses treating AI not as something to try, but as something to invest in.

Share of small to midsize businesses that paid to use AI from 2021 to 2025



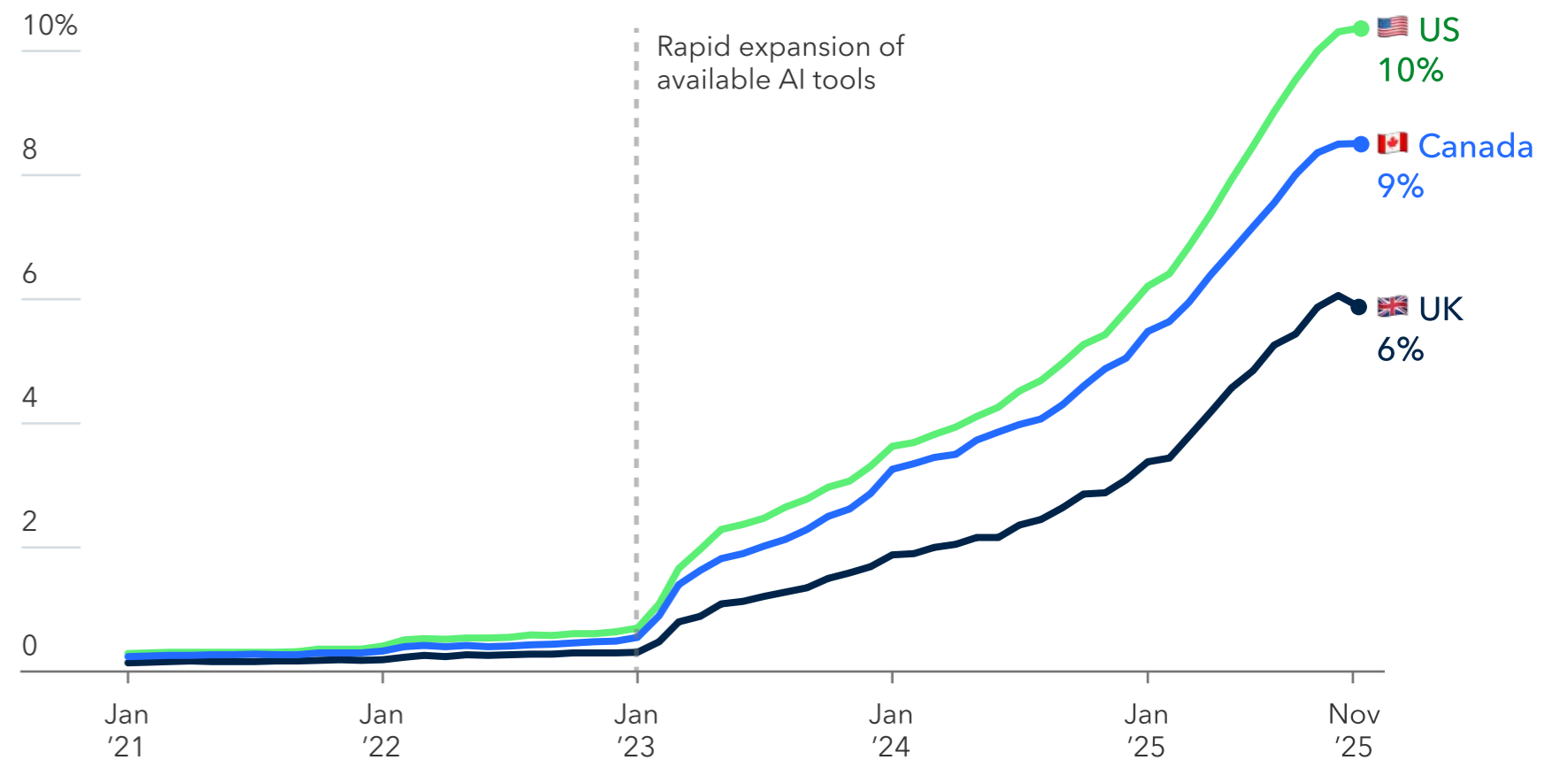
Sample: 4,313,000 US businesses, 521,000 Canadian businesses, and 502,000 UK businesses using the Intuit platform between 2021 and 2025. See Sample and Methodology for full definitions.

Source: Figure 2, 2026 AI Impact Report, Intuit QuickBooks

Payment records go back to 2021, which makes the 2023 turning point visible. That's when paid adoption accelerated sharply, coinciding with the rapid expansion of widely available AI tools, including large language models like ChatGPT, Claude, and Gemini, and more recently agentic AI tools like Intuit Intelligence. As Figure 3 shows, that growth has continued in the years since.

Growth in the number of small to midsize businesses paying to use AI from 2021 to 2025

In all three countries, the upward trend begins in the first months of 2023



Sample: 4,313,000 US businesses, 521,000 Canadian businesses, and 502,000 UK businesses using the Intuit platform between 2021 and 2025. See Sample and Methodology for full definitions.

Source: Figure 3, 2026 AI Impact Report, Intuit QuickBooks

At this time, paid adoption of AI is still a minority behavior. But among the businesses that have crossed the line into sustained use, the signals are consistent; they're seeing the impact and staying the course.



Synapx: A UK-based professional services firm using AI in operations and client work.

“AI is being adopted at a pace we have never seen before... it fundamentally changes how quickly businesses need to adapt.”

Andrew Price
CEO
Synapx

ONCE BUSINESSES COMMIT TO PAID AI ADOPTION, MOST DON'T WALK AWAY.

Among businesses in our sample that paid for AI tools in 2024, 86% in the US, 78% in Canada, and 79% in the UK were still investing in AI in 2025. That level of commitment, sustained across three different markets and through a year of broader economic uncertainty, is a meaningful indicator. Businesses that have crossed the line from trying AI to investing in it are not walking away.

Among small to midsize businesses that have paid to use AI, the share that continued paying from 2024 to 2025



Sample: 535,000 US businesses, 56,000 Canadian businesses, and 36,000 UK businesses using the Intuit platform between 2021 and 2025 that paid for AI subscriptions in that period. See Sample and Methodology for full definitions.

Source: Figure 4, 2026 AI Impact Report, Intuit QuickBooks



CHAPTER 2

Businesses using AI are more likely to report gains than losses

AT-A-GLANCE

In a difficult year for small businesses, those using AI were more likely to say it helped rather than hurt.

The findings matter more when you understand the environment these businesses were operating in. 2025 was a challenging year for businesses across all four countries tracked in this report. In the US, annual [employment](#) at businesses with 1 to 9 employees fell by 49,100 jobs and average real revenue declined by 3.46%, the third consecutive year of declining employment and the fourth of declining revenue.¹

In Canada, [employment](#) at businesses with 1 to 19 employees fell by 73,100 jobs (-1.38%), the largest annual decline since 2015.² In the UK, [employment](#) at businesses with 1 to 9 employees fell by 5,400 jobs (-0.13%), the fourth consecutive year of decline.³

Against that backdrop, surveyed businesses using AI were consistently more likely to report it was working in their favor: increasing revenue, improving productivity, shortening the workday, and driving more hiring than cuts.



“The biggest wins from AI are the ones I didn't see coming. What surprised me most was how much it helped streamline our pricing and processes, something I never would have thought to hand off.”

Christina Maag
Founder
Hoopla

¹ Intuit QuickBooks Small Business Index 2026 US Annual Report

² Intuit QuickBooks Small Business Index 2026 Canada Annual Report

³ Intuit QuickBooks Small Business Index 2026 UK Annual Report

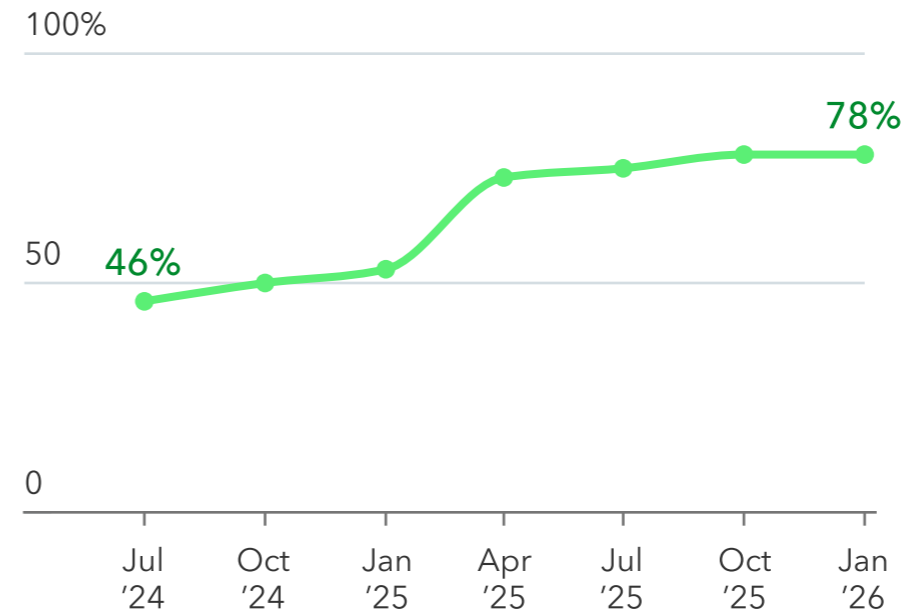
PRODUCTIVITY IS WHERE BUSINESSES USING AI REPORT THE BIGGEST IMPACT.

In every country, roughly 3 in 4 businesses using AI say it has made them more productive. In July 2024, fewer than half said the same.

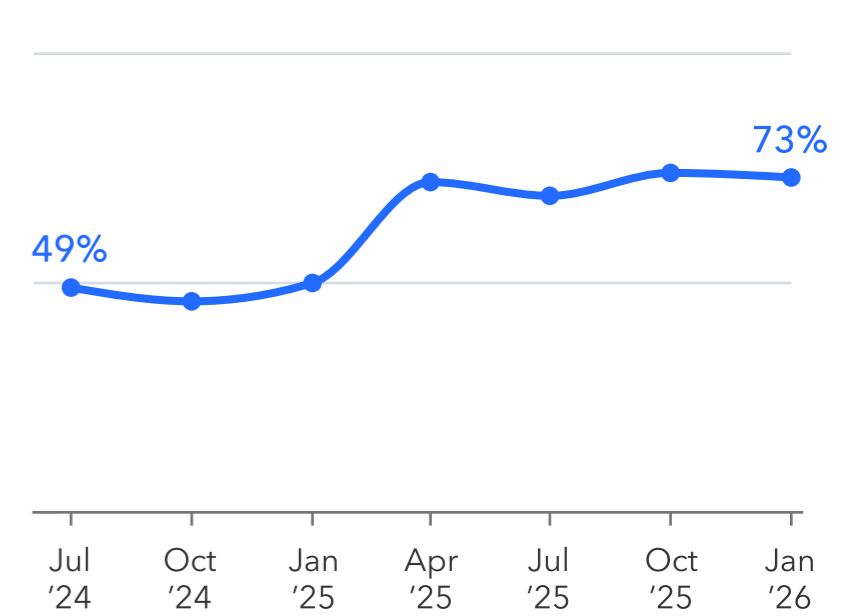
The gains are broad and growing. In the US, 78% of businesses using AI say it has improved their productivity overall, up from 46% when tracking began in July 2024. Canada rose from 49% to 73%. The UK rose from 39% to 77%. Australia rose from 37% to 79%. Across every country, that's a jump of roughly 30 percentage points or more. And the strongest ratings are rising too: in every country, the share calling AI "very helpful" for productivity has grown, in some cases more than doubling.

Share of small to midsize businesses reporting higher productivity due to their use of AI

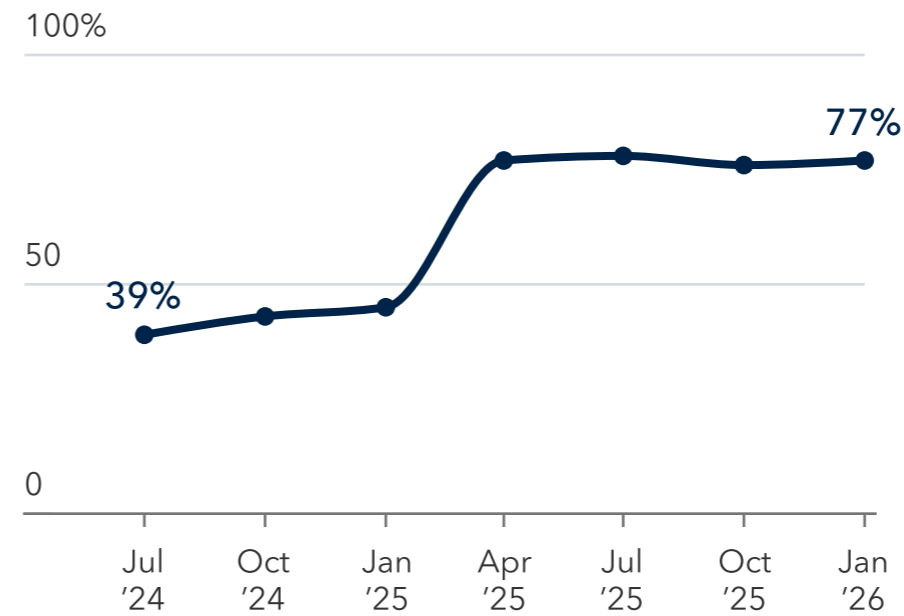
US



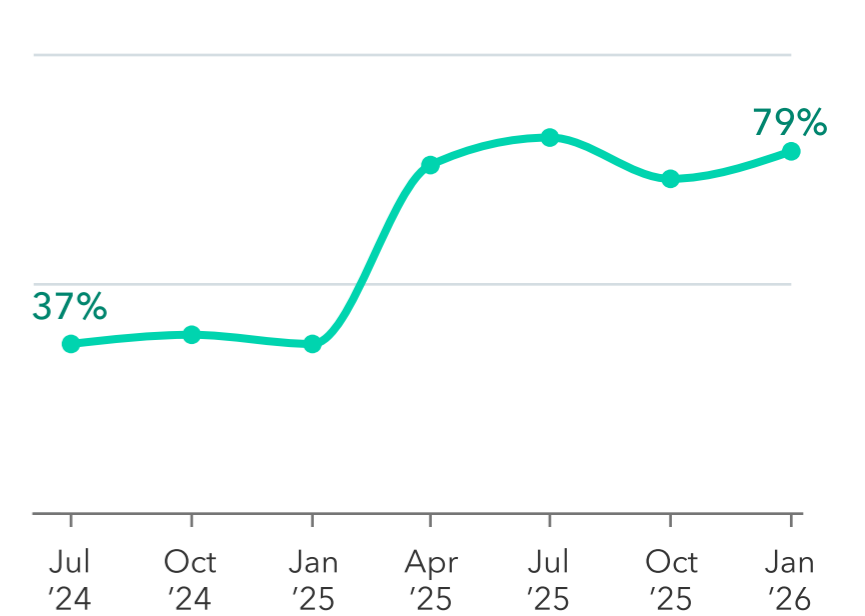
Canada



UK



Australia



Total sample from surveys commissioned by Intuit from July 2024 to January 2026: 28,914 small to midsize businesses, comprising 14,735 in the US, 5,551 in Canada, 5,478 in the UK, and 3,150 in Australia. Survey question: "On a scale of 1-5, which of the following describes your current views of AI's impact on your productivity? 1 - Very unhelpful, 2 - Somewhat unhelpful, 3 - Neutral, 4 - Somewhat helpful, 5 - Very helpful." Values shown are the top three responses.

Source: Figure 5, 2026 AI Impact Report, Intuit QuickBooks



“When you run a small business, burnout is real, especially when a small team is wearing a lot of hats. AI helps give us time back. And that’s priceless.”

Christina Maag
Founder
Hoopla



FAR MORE BUSINESSES REPORT AI IS GROWING THEIR REVENUE THAN SHRINKING IT.

In the US, businesses reporting AI has boosted their revenue outnumber those saying it has hurt it by more than 20 to 1. In January 2026, 43% reported an increase in revenue driven by AI. Only 2% reported a decrease. The same trend holds across Canada (37% vs. 2%), the UK (43% vs. 4%), and Australia (43% vs. 3%). Across all four countries, fewer than 5% say AI has been a drag on revenue, and that gap has stayed consistent every quarter since April 2025.



Among small to midsize businesses that report using AI, the share reporting that **revenue has either increased or decreased as a result of using the technology**

US	Apr '25	Jul '25	Oct '25	Jan '26	Average
Revenue increased due to AI	40%	40%	43%	43%	42%
Revenue decreased due to AI	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%

Canada	Apr '25	Jul '25	Oct '25	Jan '26	Average
Revenue increased due to AI	31%	32%	36%	37%	34%
Revenue decreased due to AI	1%	2%	1%	2%	1%

UK	Apr '25	Jul '25	Oct '25	Jan '26	Average
Revenue increased due to AI	39%	47%	43%	43%	43%
Revenue decreased due to AI	3%	4%	3%	4%	3%

Australia	Apr '25	Jul '25	Oct '25	Jan '26	Average
Revenue increased due to AI	40%	49%	46%	43%	44%
Revenue decreased due to AI	3%	3%	6%	3%	4%

Total sample from surveys commissioned by Intuit from April 2025 to January 2026: 12,742 small to midsize businesses, comprising 6,487 in the US, 2,512 in Canada, 2,325 in the UK, and 1,418 in Australia. Survey question: "To what extent, if at all, has the use of AI affected revenue at the business? Increased, Decreased, No change, Don't know or not applicable." To show the net impact, only the first two responses are included.

Source: Figure 6, 2026 AI Impact Report, Intuit QuickBooks



Olive & Fig: A Canada-based catering and food business using AI for the back office.

“AI handles the busywork so we can focus on delivering the best possible experience to our customers while maximizing revenue.”

Olivia Petrou-Stanchev
Founder
Olive & Fig

ROUGHLY 1 IN 4 BUSINESSES SAY AI HAS GIVEN THEM TIME BACK IN THEIR DAY.

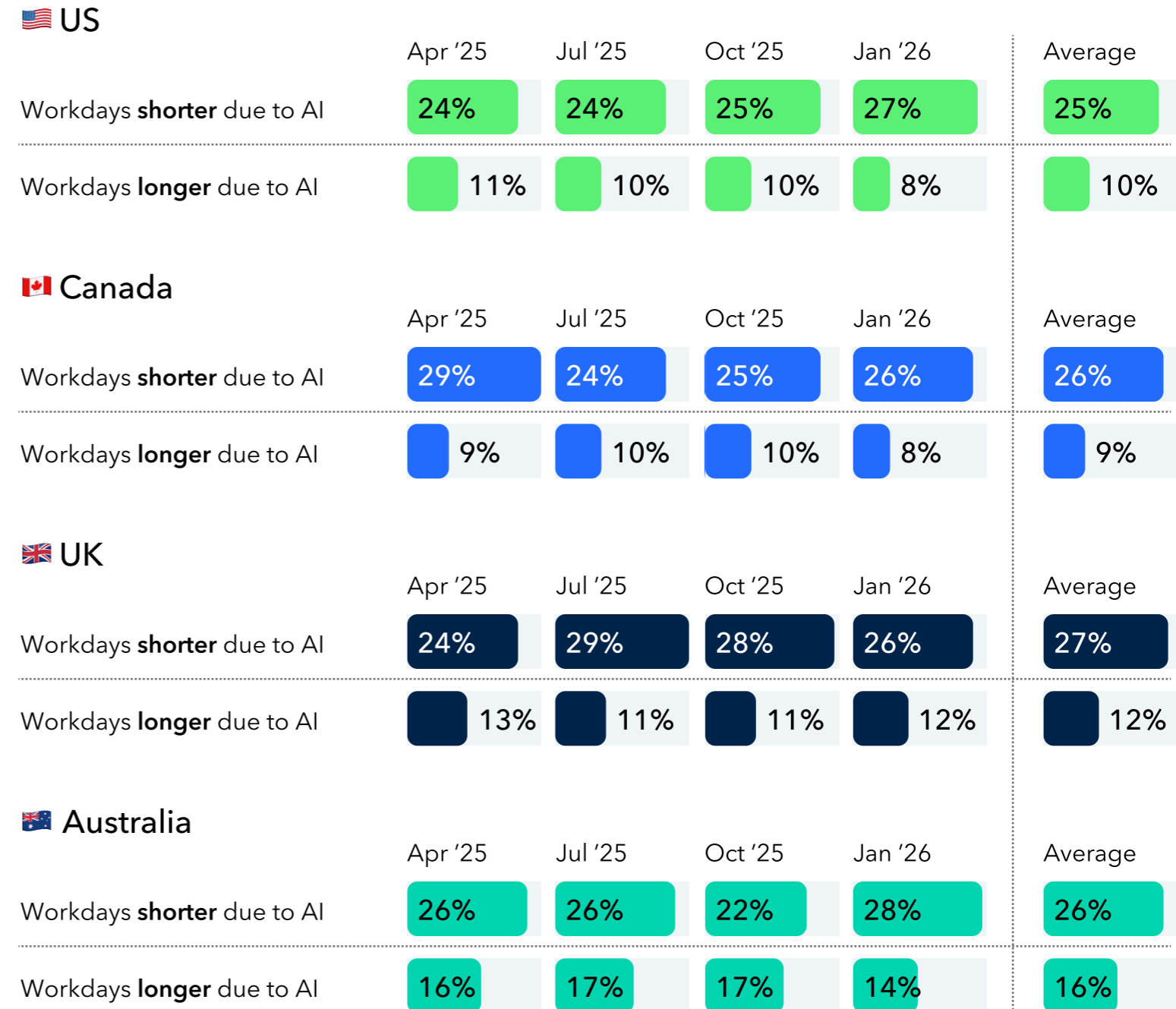
Across all four countries, businesses reporting that AI has shortened their workday outnumber those saying it has lengthened it by at least 2 to 1. In January 2026, 27% of US businesses using AI said it had shortened their workday, compared to just 8% who said it had gotten longer. The pattern holds across Canada (26% shorter vs. 8% longer), the UK (26% vs. 12%), and Australia (28% vs. 14%).

That finding has also been stable over time. On average since April 2025, roughly 1 in 4 businesses in every country report AI has shortened their workday, while fewer than 1 in 6 say it has made their workday longer.

“AI does not make you less busy. It removes friction, which means you progress faster than you previously thought possible.”

Andrew Price
CEO
Synapx

Among small to midsize businesses that report using AI, the share reporting that **workdays are either shorter or longer as a result of using the technology**



Total sample from surveys commissioned by Intuit from April 2025 to January 2026: 12,742 small to midsize businesses, comprising 6,487 in the US, 2,512 in Canada, 2,325 in the UK, and 1,418 in Australia. Survey question: "To what extent, if at all, has the use of AI affected the length of your workdays at the business? Increased, Decreased, No change, Don't know or not applicable." To show the net impact, only the first two responses are included.

Source: Figure 7, 2026 AI Impact Report, Intuit QuickBooks

BUSINESSES USING AI ARE MORE LIKELY TO REPORT HIRING THAN CUTS.

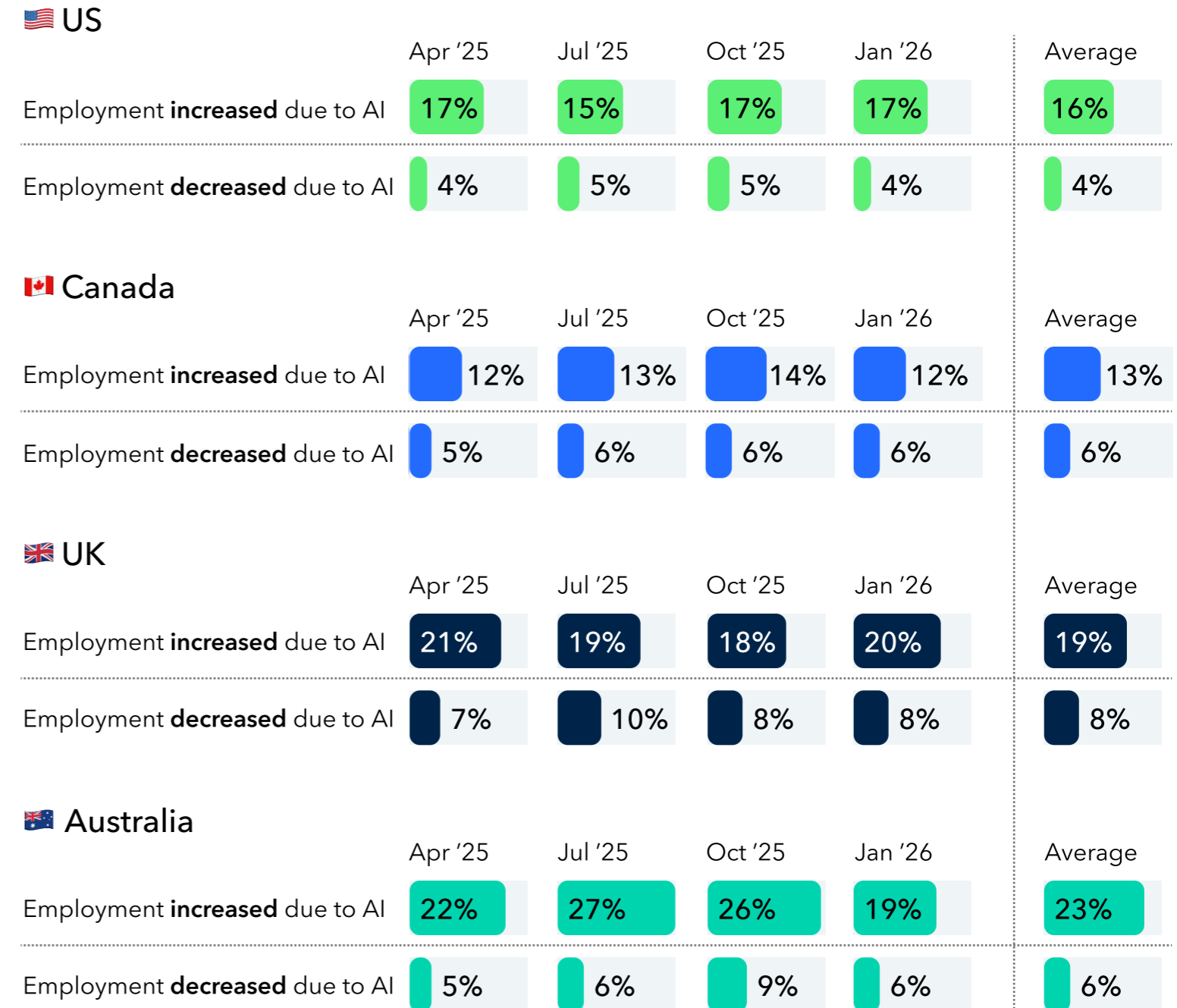
In every country, businesses using AI are more likely to say it has led to more hiring than to staff reductions. In January 2026, 17% of US businesses said AI had increased employment at their business, compared to just 4% who said it had led to cuts. In the UK, 20% reported more hiring versus 8% reporting cuts. In Australia, 19% versus 6%. In Canada, 12% versus 6%.

This finding is worth noting, given the broader employment picture. Across all four countries in 2025, small business employment fell, but among businesses using AI, more reported it was adding headcount versus reducing it.

“Hiring used to fall entirely on me. Now AI helps me figure out pay ranges, write job descriptions, build interview questions and scorecards, and create onboarding plans. It takes pressure off across the whole hiring cycle.”

Christina Maag
 Founder
 Hoopla

Among small to midsize businesses that report using AI, the share reporting that employment has either increased or decreased as a result of using the technology



Total sample from surveys commissioned by Intuit from April 2025 to January 2026: 12,742 small to midsize businesses, comprising 6,487 in the US, 2,512 in Canada, 2,325 in the UK, and 1,418 in Australia. Survey question: "To what extent, if at all, has the use of AI affected employment at the business? Increased, Decreased, No change, Don't know or not applicable." To show the net impact, only the first two responses are included.

Source: Figure 8, 2026 AI Impact Report, Intuit QuickBooks

ON COSTS, MORE BUSINESSES SAY AI IS REDUCING THEM THAN RAISING THEM.

In the US and Canada, businesses saying AI has reduced their costs outnumber those saying it has driven costs up by roughly 2 to 1. In January 2026, 29% of US businesses and 32% of Canadian businesses reported cost reductions, compared to 17% and 15% respectively who reported cost increases.

The gap is narrower in the UK and Australia. In the UK, 27% say costs have fallen versus 24% who say they have risen. In Australia, 25% versus 21%. The cost story is positive across all four countries, but the margin of confidence is clearest in North America.



Among small to midsize businesses that report using AI, the share reporting that **costs have either decreased or increased as a result of using the technology**

US

	Apr '25	Jul '25	Oct '25	Jan '26	Average
Costs decreased due to AI	24%	28%	28%	29%	27%
Costs increased due to AI	19%	17%	16%	17%	17%

Canada

	Apr '25	Jul '25	Oct '25	Jan '26	Average
Costs decreased due to AI	26%	25%	27%	32%	27%
Costs increased due to AI	15%	15%	18%	15%	16%

UK

	Apr '25	Jul '25	Oct '25	Jan '26	Average
Costs decreased due to AI	26%	30%	29%	27%	28%
Costs increased due to AI	20%	23%	20%	24%	22%

Australia

	Apr '25	Jul '25	Oct '25	Jan '26	Average
Costs decreased due to AI	21%	27%	25%	25%	24%
Costs increased due to AI	23%	23%	26%	21%	24%

Total sample from surveys commissioned by Intuit from April 2025 to January 2026: 12,742 small to midsize businesses, comprising 6,487 in the US, 2,512 in Canada, 2,325 in the UK, and 1,418 in Australia. Survey question: "To what extent, if at all, has the use of AI affected costs at the business? Increased, Decreased, No change, Don't know or not applicable." To show the net impact, only the first two responses are included.

Source: Figure 9, 2026 AI Impact Report, Intuit QuickBooks

“AI is best understood as a productivity multiplier. In my experience, businesses do not use it to shrink teams; they use it to elevate the work those teams are able to do.”

Andrew Price
CEO
Synapx



CHAPTER 3

AI adoption is deepest among growth-minded, digital-first businesses

AT-A-GLANCE

The businesses paying to use AI share a recognizable profile across the US, Canada, and the UK.

Paid adoption of AI use is not evenly distributed. As the following sections show, the observed businesses that have paid to use AI tend to be newer, more growth-focused, and led by younger, more educated decision-makers. They're also more likely to operate in industries where the work is already digital and where AI fits most immediately into existing workflows.

NEWER AND HUNGRY FOR GROWTH.

Across the US, Canada, and the UK, younger businesses are more likely to pay for AI tools than more established ones. That gap likely reflects something practical: established businesses carry more entrenched systems and processes, which raises the cost of change. Newer businesses, building their operations from scratch, face fewer of those barriers.

DEFINITIONS

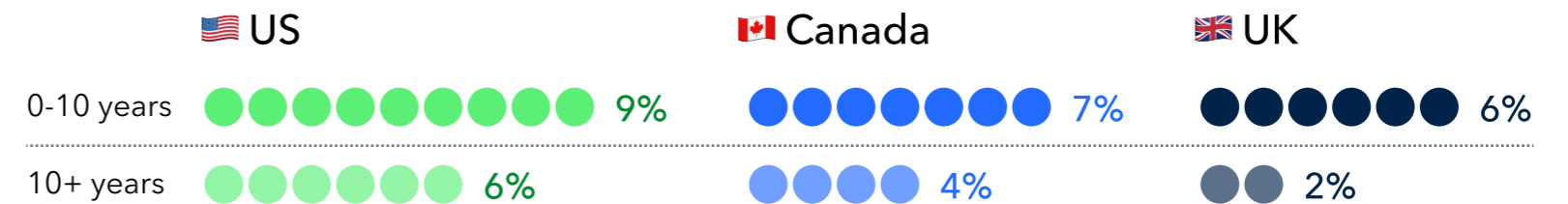
Newer businesses = established in the last 10 years

Younger owners/decision-makers = age 18 to 34

More educated = degree level, minimum

Share of small to midsize businesses paying for AI by business age

The youngest businesses in the samples are more likely to pay for AI services



Sample: 707,000 US businesses, 34,000 Canadian businesses, and 97,000 UK businesses using the Intuit platform between 2021 and 2025 with business age data available. See Sample and Methodology for full definitions.

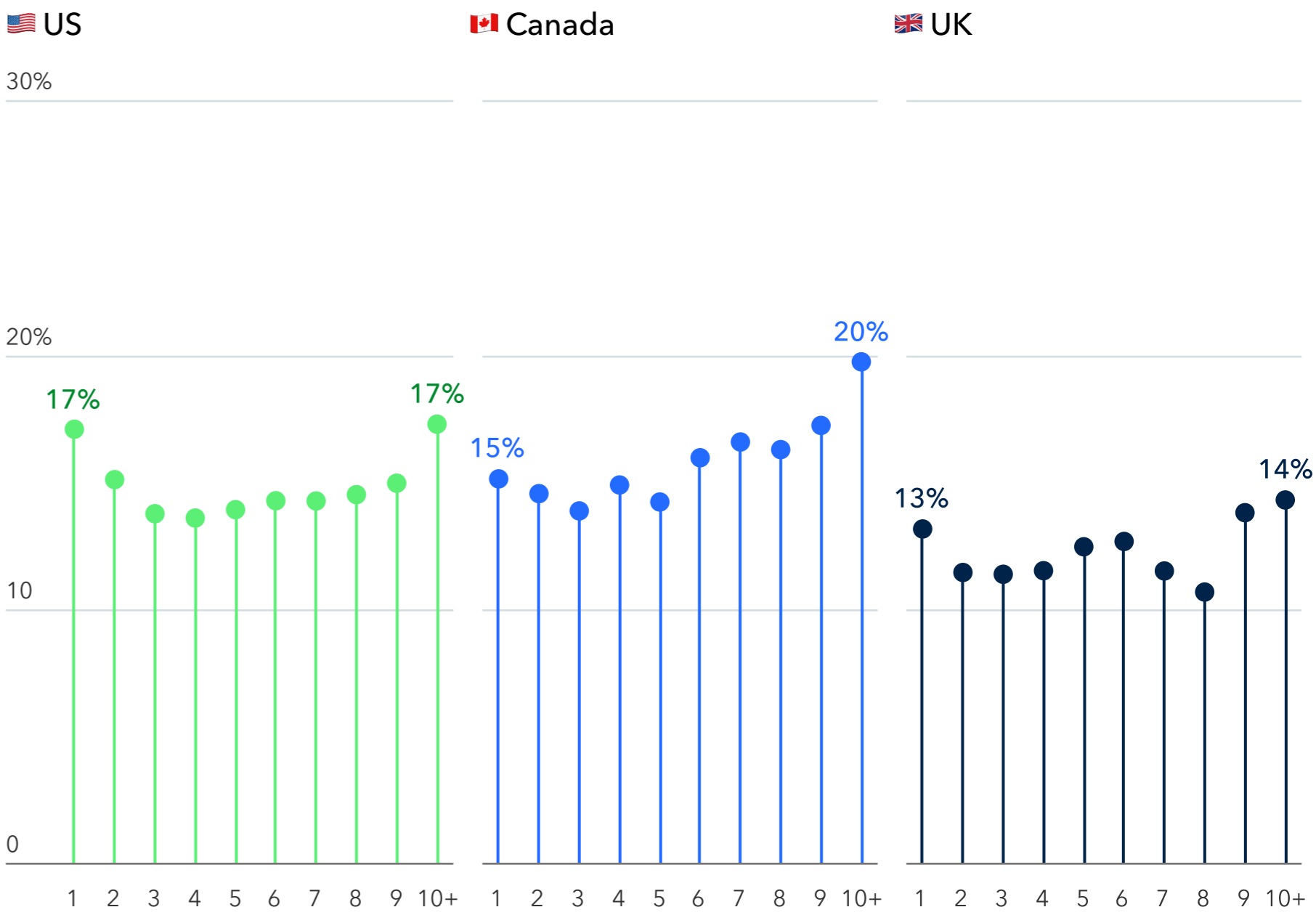
Source: Figure 10, 2026 AI Impact Report, Intuit QuickBooks



Size also plays a role, but the pattern differs by country. In the US, both the smallest and largest businesses are slightly more likely to pay for AI than those in between. In Canada, larger businesses are more likely to pay for AI, and that gap grows as businesses get larger. In the UK, paid AI use is fairly consistent regardless of size.



Share of small to midsize businesses paying for AI by number of employees from 2021 to 2025



Sample: 500,000 US businesses, 80,000 Canadian businesses, and 25,000 UK businesses using the Intuit platform between 2021 and 2025 with employment data available. See Sample and Methodology for full definitions. The y axis shows the percentage of the sample paying to use AI services. For the US, the shape of the distribution is robust to controlling for sector and business age. "Controlling for sector and business age" means the analysis isolated the relationship between business size and intensity of AI use by holding industry and age constant. This ensures the differences shown are attributable to the size of the business, rather than its sector or when it was established.

Source: Figure 11, 2026 AI Impact Report, Intuit QuickBooks



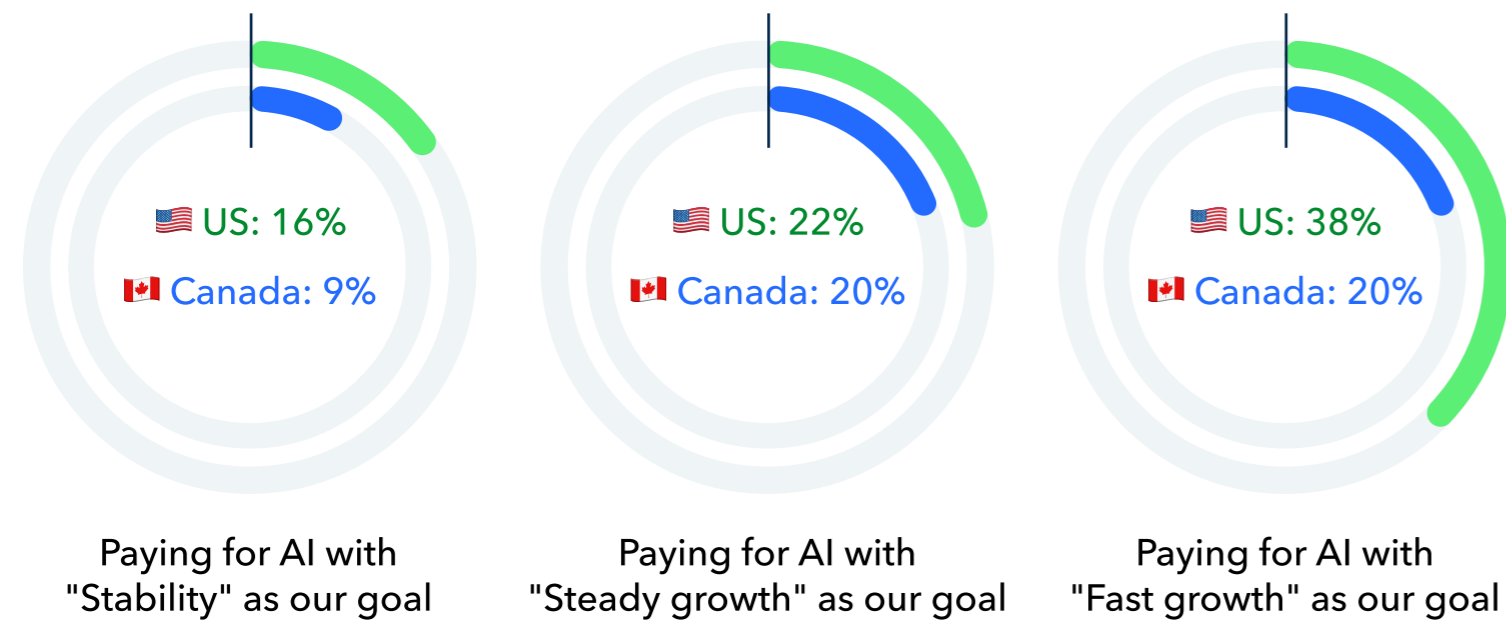
“AI allows a small team to operate with the maturity, governance, and delivery capability of a much larger organisation.”

Andrew Price
CEO
Synapx

In the US and Canada, growth ambition may also be a predictor of willingness to pay: businesses targeting fast growth are more likely to pay to use AI than those focused on stability, with the gap between the two running to more than 20 percentage points in the US.

Share of small to midsize businesses paying for AI by self-reported business growth goal

Businesses targeting fast growth are more likely to pay for AI services



Sample: 1,430 US businesses and 620 Canadian businesses using the Intuit platform between 2021 and 2025 that paid for AI subscriptions in that period and completed Intuit-commissioned surveys from April 2025 to January 2026. Data for the UK isn't available. See Sample and Methodology for full definitions. The single-choice survey question was as follows: "Which of the following best describes your business's appetite for growth? Fast growth. A business that rapidly expands; Steady growth. A business that grows at a manageable pace; Stability. A business that sustains itself but doesn't grow; Don't know/none of the above."

Source: Figure 12, 2026 AI Impact Report, Intuit QuickBooks



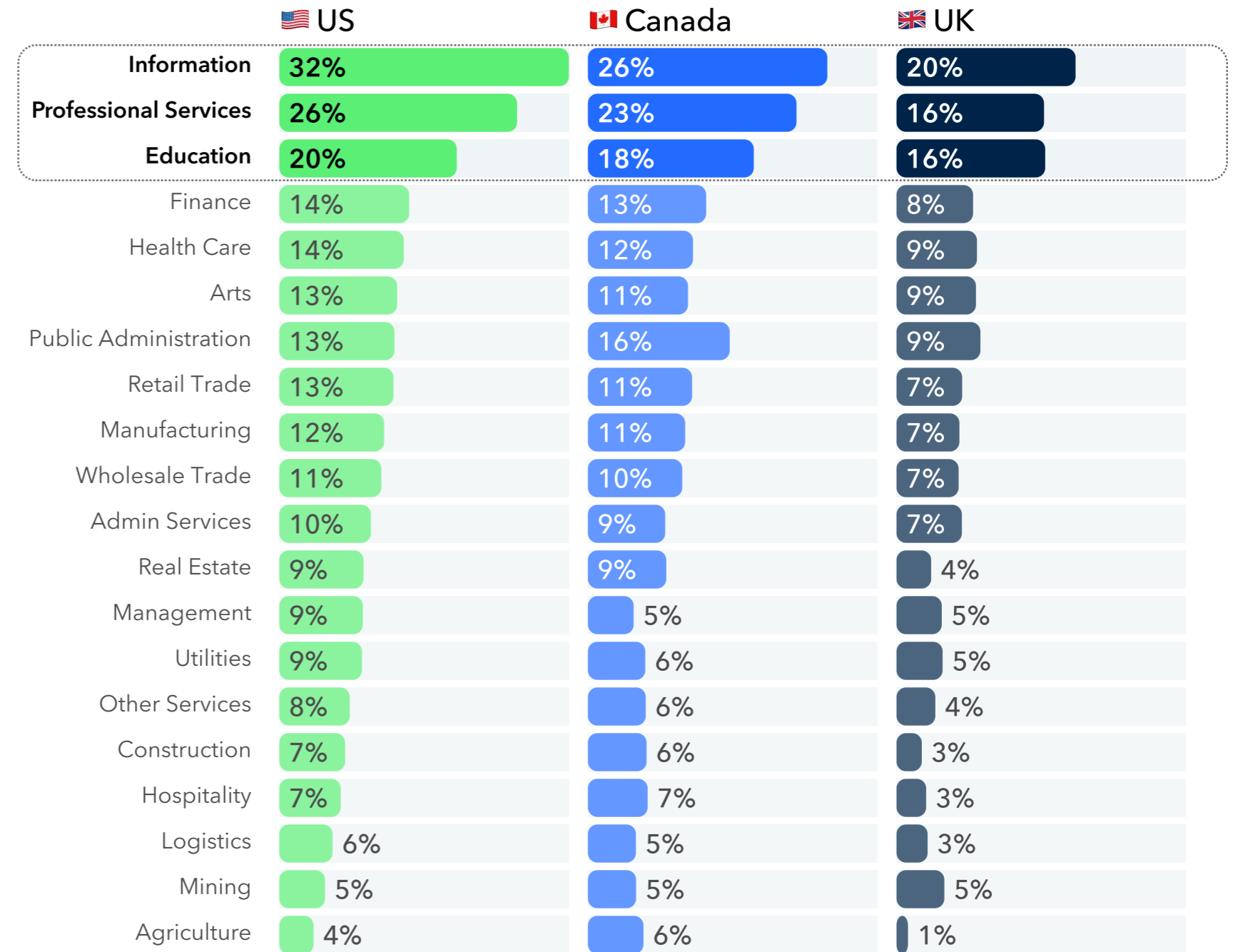
"AI accelerates business maturity, and maturity is what unlocks sustainable growth, not just short-term efficiency."

Andrew Price
CEO
Synapx



Share of small to midsize businesses paying for AI by sector from 2021 to 2025

Service sectors have typically been more reliant on AI than product sectors



DIGITAL-FIRST INDUSTRIES ARE LEADING THE WAY.

The top three sectors where small to midsize businesses are the most likely to pay for AI are the same in every country tracked: information, professional services, and education. These industries run largely on writing, analysis, and client communication, tasks where AI fits directly into existing workflows. In the US, 32% of information sector businesses paid for AI between 2021 and 2025. In Canada, 26%. In the UK, 20%.

Sample: 3,996,000 US businesses, 449,000 Canadian businesses, and 414,000 UK businesses using the Intuit platform between 2021 and 2025. See Sample and Methodology for full definitions. "More intensive AI users" are businesses in the sample that paid for an AI subscription at any point from 2021 to 2025. Sectors are defined by the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) and the UK's Standard Industrial Classification.

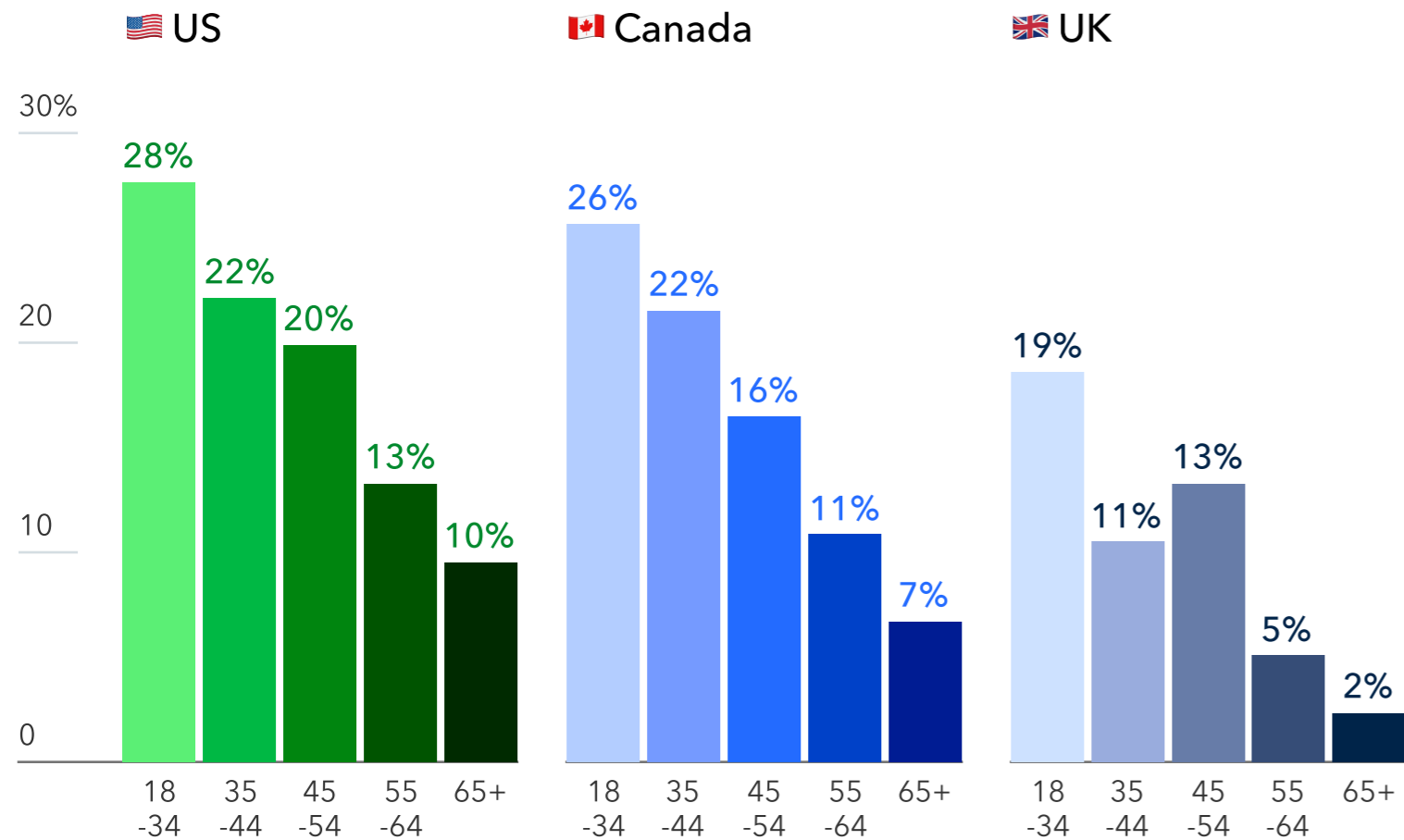
Source: Figure 13, 2026 AI Impact Report, Intuit QuickBooks

YOUNGER, MORE EDUCATED LEADERS ARE OUT FRONT.

Across every country tracked, younger business owners and decision-makers are more likely to pay for AI than older ones, and that gradient is consistent and steep. In the US, 28% of businesses led by owners aged 18 to 34 paid for AI, compared to 13% of those led by owners aged 55 to 64.

Share of small to midsize businesses paying for AI by leaders' age

Businesses with younger owners or operators are more likely to pay for AI



Sample: 3,686 US businesses, 1,649 Canadian businesses, and 692 UK businesses using the Intuit platform between 2021 and 2025 that paid for AI subscriptions in that period and completed Intuit-commissioned surveys from April 2025 to January 2026. See Sample and Methodology for full definitions. Survey respondents were either the owners of the business or senior leaders with executive decision-making capabilities.

Source: Figure 14, 2026 AI Impact Report, Intuit QuickBooks



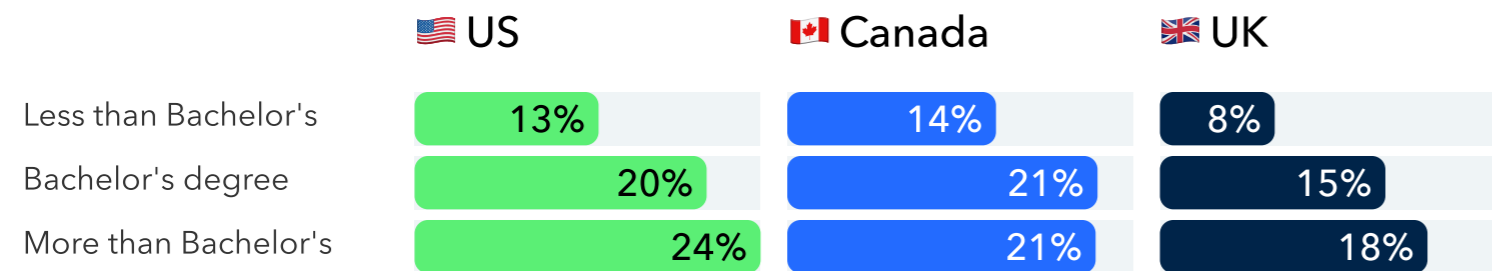
“Not everyone on my team adopts AI at the same pace, and that's okay. Gen Z picks it up without any guidance. I don't micromanage. I just ask, 'Have you tried putting that into AI as a starting point?'”

Christina Maag
Founder
Hoopla

Education level follows a similar pattern. In the US, Canada, and the UK, businesses led by people with degree-level education are more likely to pay for AI than those without. In the US and Canada, greater financial literacy is also a predictor of intensity, independent of education level.

Share of small to midsize businesses paying for AI by leaders' education level

Businesses owned or operated by people with degree-level education are more likely to pay for AI services

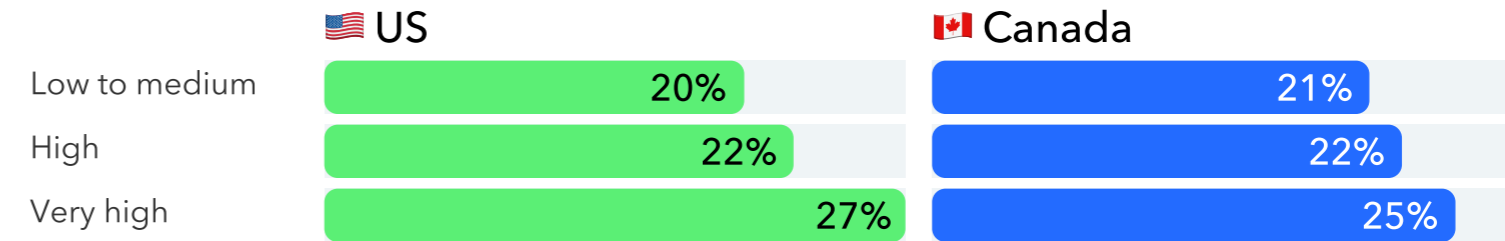


Sample: 3,342 US businesses, 1,600 Canadian businesses, and 979 UK businesses using the Intuit platform between 2021 and 2025 that paid for AI subscriptions in that period and completed Intuit-commissioned surveys from April 2025 to January 2026. See Sample and Methodology for full definitions. Survey respondents were either the owners of the business or senior leaders with executive decision-making capabilities.

Source: Figure 15, 2026 AI Impact Report, Intuit QuickBooks

Share of small to midsize businesses paying for AI by leaders' financial literacy

Businesses owned or led by people with financial expertise are more likely to pay



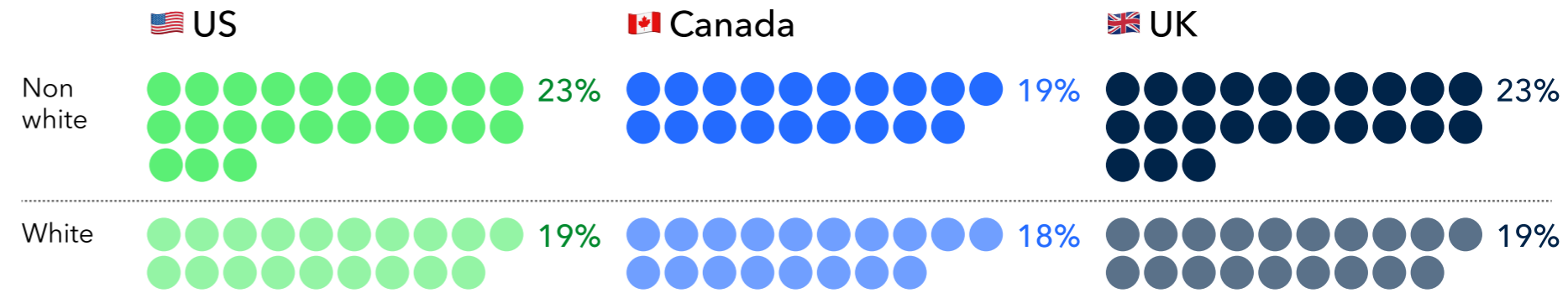
Sample: 1,466 US businesses and 634 Canadian businesses using the Intuit platform between 2021 and 2025 that paid for AI subscriptions in that period and completed Intuit-commissioned surveys from April 2025 to January 2026. Data for the UK isn't available. See Sample and Methodology for full definitions. The single-choice survey question was as follows: "On a scale of 1-5 (1 = very low, 5 = very high) how would you rate your level of financial literacy? 'Financial literacy' is your ability to understand and manage finances. Please select one response: 1 - very low; 2 - low; 3 - not low, not high; 4 - high; 5 - very high."

Source: Figure 16, 2026 AI Impact Report, Intuit QuickBooks



In the US and the UK, businesses with non-white owners or leaders are more likely to pay for AI than those with white owners. The gap is modest but consistent, 23% versus 19% in both countries; though it's not clear whether this is driven by age differences within these populations, with non-white populations in the US and UK being younger, on average, than white populations.⁴ By gender, male and female-owned businesses pay for AI at a similar rate across all three countries.

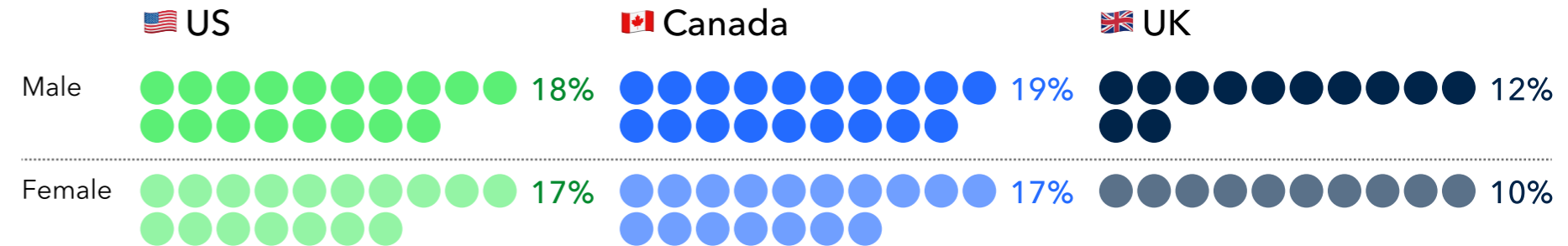
Share of small to midsize businesses paying for AI by leaders' race



Sample: 6,201 US businesses, 2,738 Canadian businesses, and 1,544 UK businesses using the Intuit platform between 2021 and 2025 that paid for AI subscriptions in that period and completed Intuit-commissioned surveys from April 2025 to January 2026. See Sample and Methodology for full definitions. Survey respondents were either the owners of the business or senior leaders with executive decision-making capabilities. Respondents were grouped into the two categories shown (above) to maintain sufficient sample sizes.

Source: Figure 17, 2026 AI Impact Report, Intuit QuickBooks

Share of small to midsize businesses paying for AI by leaders' gender



Sample: 3,131 US businesses, 1,614 Canadian businesses, and 926 UK businesses using the Intuit platform between 2021 and 2025 that paid for AI subscriptions in that period and completed Intuit-commissioned surveys from April 2025 to January 2026. See Sample and Methodology for full definitions. Survey respondents were either the owners of the business or senior leaders with executive decision-making capabilities.

Source: Figure 18, 2026 AI Impact Report, Intuit QuickBooks



⁴ Sources: [Demographic Turning Points for the United States: Population Projections for 2020 to 2060](#), US Census Bureau; [Ethnic group by age and sex, England and Wales: Census 2021](#), Office for National Statistics (UK).

CHAPTER 4

The biggest barriers to AI are about trust

AT-A-GLANCE

Across all four countries, the top three barriers are the same: privacy concerns, fear of errors, and limited knowledge of what AI can do.

The pattern in who pays to use AI helps explain what's holding others back. Across all four countries, the biggest barriers are trust and knowledge: concerns about data privacy, accuracy, and uncertainty about what AI can actually do. The top three barriers are nearly identical across markets, and together they point to the same underlying issue: for many businesses, the challenge isn't getting access to AI, it's gaining enough confidence to use it more deeply.

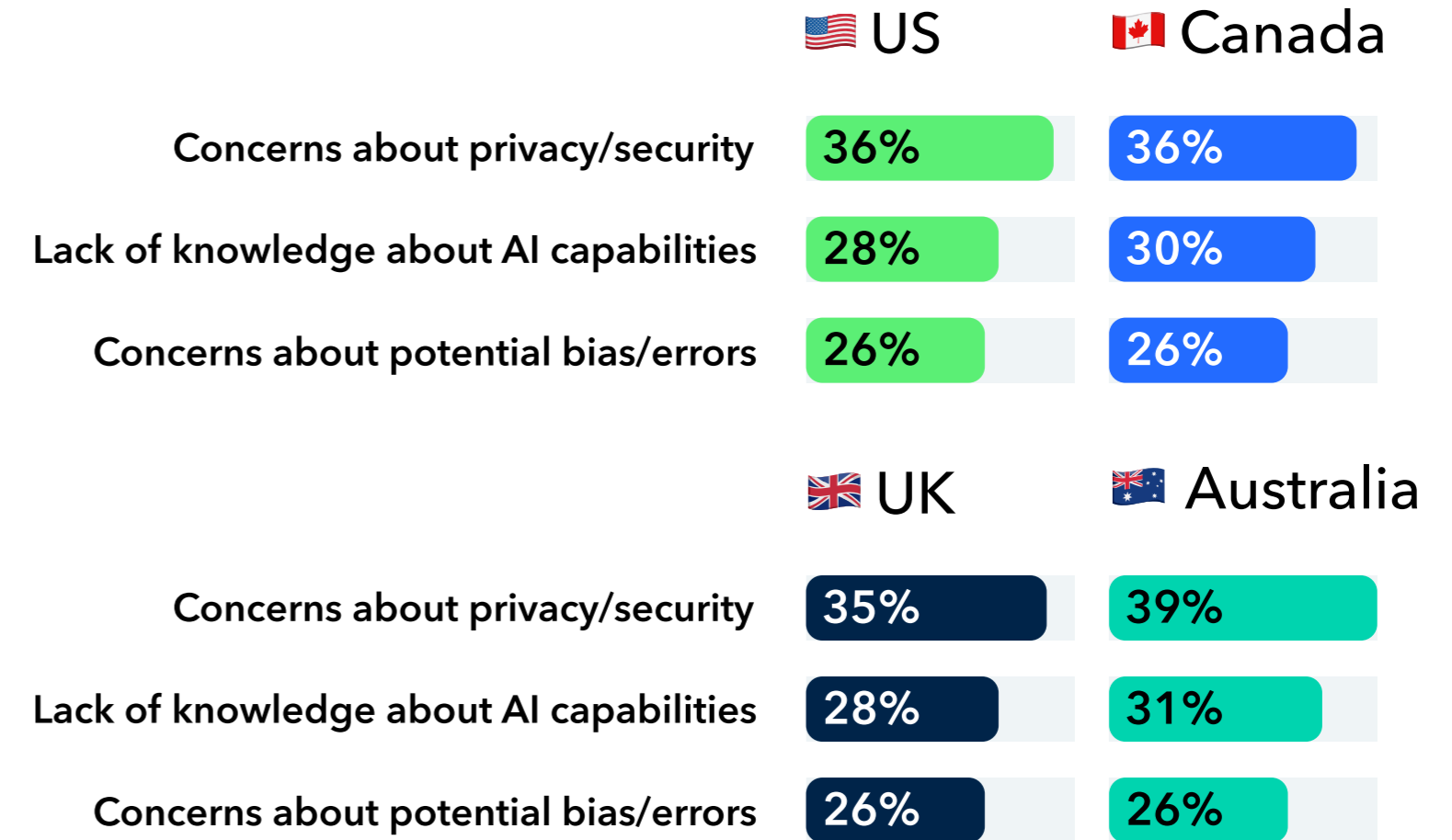
PRIVACY AND SECURITY CONCERNS TOP THE LIST IN EVERY COUNTRY.

In January 2026, privacy and security concerns were the single most cited barrier to AI adoption in every country tracked: 36% in the US, 36% in Canada, 35% in the UK, and 39% in Australia. That finding has been consistent across every quarterly wave since we began tracking. It is not a momentary hesitation. It is a persistent, structural concern.

Lack of knowledge about AI capabilities follows closely behind in every country, cited by 28% of US businesses, 30% in Canada, 28% in the UK, and 31% in Australia. Concerns around accuracy, or AI having a potential bias or making errors, round out the top three barriers across all four markets, each at 26%.

Together, these three barriers are versions of the same underlying question: What happens when AI gets it wrong? For businesses weighing whether to go deeper with AI, that question doesn't have a simple answer, and the data suggests many are waiting until it does.

Top AI concerns among small to midsize businesses



Total sample from a survey commissioned by Intuit in January 2026: 4,376 small to midsize businesses, comprising 2,222 in the US, 827 in Canada, 820 in the UK, and 507 in Australia. Survey question: "Which of the following, if any, have prevented or discouraged you from using AI, or from making more use of it?" Values shown are top three responses from the January 2026 survey wave.

Source: Figure 19, 2026 AI Impact Report, Intuit QuickBooks



“AI can give us a starting point, but it still takes humans to make something work in the real world... For us, creativity and human judgment still carry a lot of weight.”

Christina Maag
Founder
Hoopla

COST IS A CONCERN, BUT NOT THE MOST DOMINANT ONE.

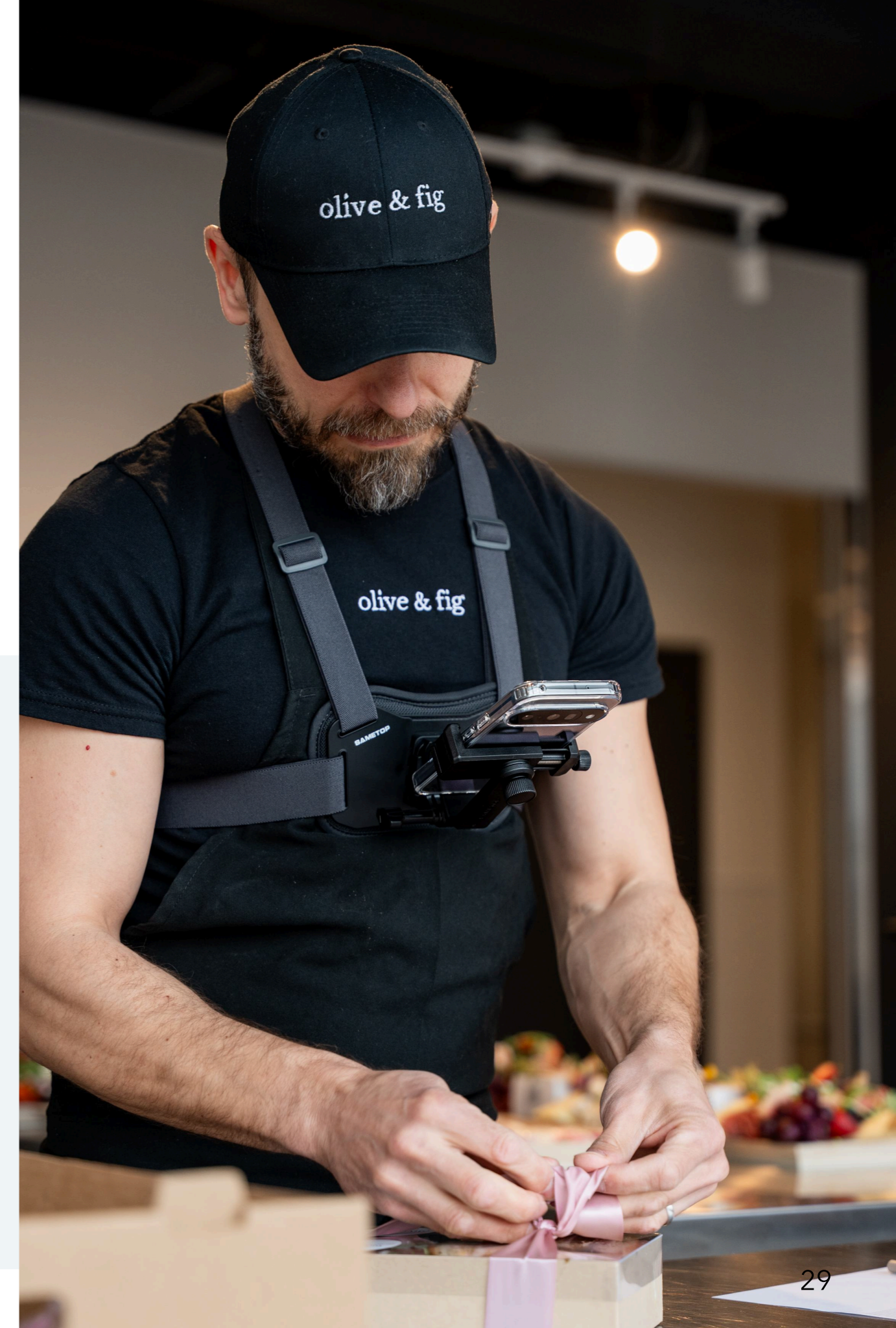
Cost versus benefit to the business ranks fourth among concerns in the US and Canada, and sits similarly in the UK and Australia. Roughly 1 in 5 businesses in every country cite it as a barrier. That's not a trivial number, but it trails trust and knowledge concerns. For most businesses holding back on AI, the issue isn't primarily what it costs, it's whether they can trust it enough to rely on it.

A MEANINGFUL SHARE REPORT NO CONCERNS AT ALL.

Not every business is hesitating. Between 16% and 18% of businesses across all four countries report no concerns about AI at all. That group isn't the majority, but it's not insignificant either. It represents the businesses that have already cleared the trust threshold, and their retention and impact numbers suggest they're not looking back.

“You could save a lot of time and energy implementing AI in certain areas of your business while still remaining hands-on in the areas that matter most to you.”

Olivia Petrou-Stanchev
Founder
Olive & Fig



CHAPTER 5

AI is used most in admin and marketing, and least in people and legal decisions

AT-A-GLANCE

Businesses lean on AI most for writing drafts and process coordination, not high-stakes calls.

Where businesses are deploying AI reflects the nature of the work itself. AI use is highest in tasks that have clear inputs and outputs, and where it can do a first pass that a human can quickly review. It's lowest in tasks that depend heavily on context, responsibility, or human relationships. The pattern holds across the US, Canada, the UK, and Australia.

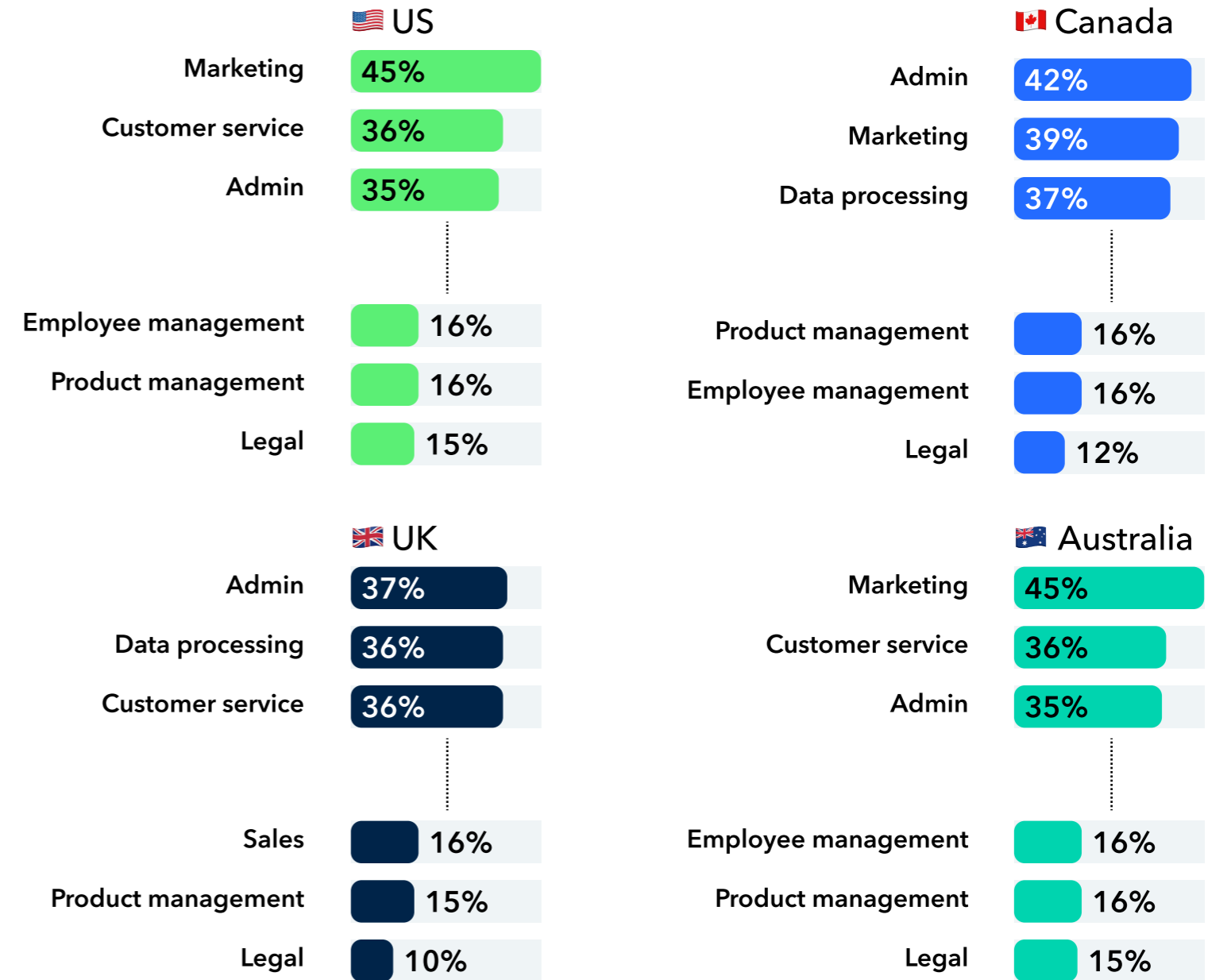
AI SHOWS UP MOST IN PRACTICAL, TANGIBLE TASKS.

On average since April 2025, the top use cases follow a consistent pattern across all four countries: marketing, admin, and customer service all rank highly, though the exact order varies by market. These are areas where the task is relatively well-defined. The output is tangible, the scope is contained, and there's a clear role for human review before anything is finalized.

The most recent data shows some country-level variation. In the US, marketing leads (45%), followed by customer service (37%) and bookkeeping (35%). In Canada, marketing tops the list (41%), followed by admin (37%) and customer service (34%). In the UK, admin leads (43%), followed by marketing (39%) and customer service (36%). In Australia, data processing comes first (38%), followed by admin (36%) and marketing (34%).

The latest US results stand out: bookkeeping has entered the top three tasks where businesses report using AI. As noted earlier, survey data captures a wide spectrum of use. This likely reflects AI that's already embedded in the tools businesses use every day, rather than a wholesale shift to AI-only bookkeeping. The signal is that AI is increasingly becoming part of the workflow, not replacing it.

Top tasks for AI among small to midsize businesses that report using the technology



Total sample from surveys commissioned by Intuit from April 2025 to January 2026: 12,656 small to midsize businesses, comprising 6,436 in the US, 2,484 in Canada, 2,318 in the UK, and 1,418 in Australia. Survey question: "In a typical workweek, which of the following tasks (if any) is AI currently helping the business with?" Results shown are the average for the top three and bottom three responses across four waves of the survey (April 2025, July 2025, October 2025, and January 2026).

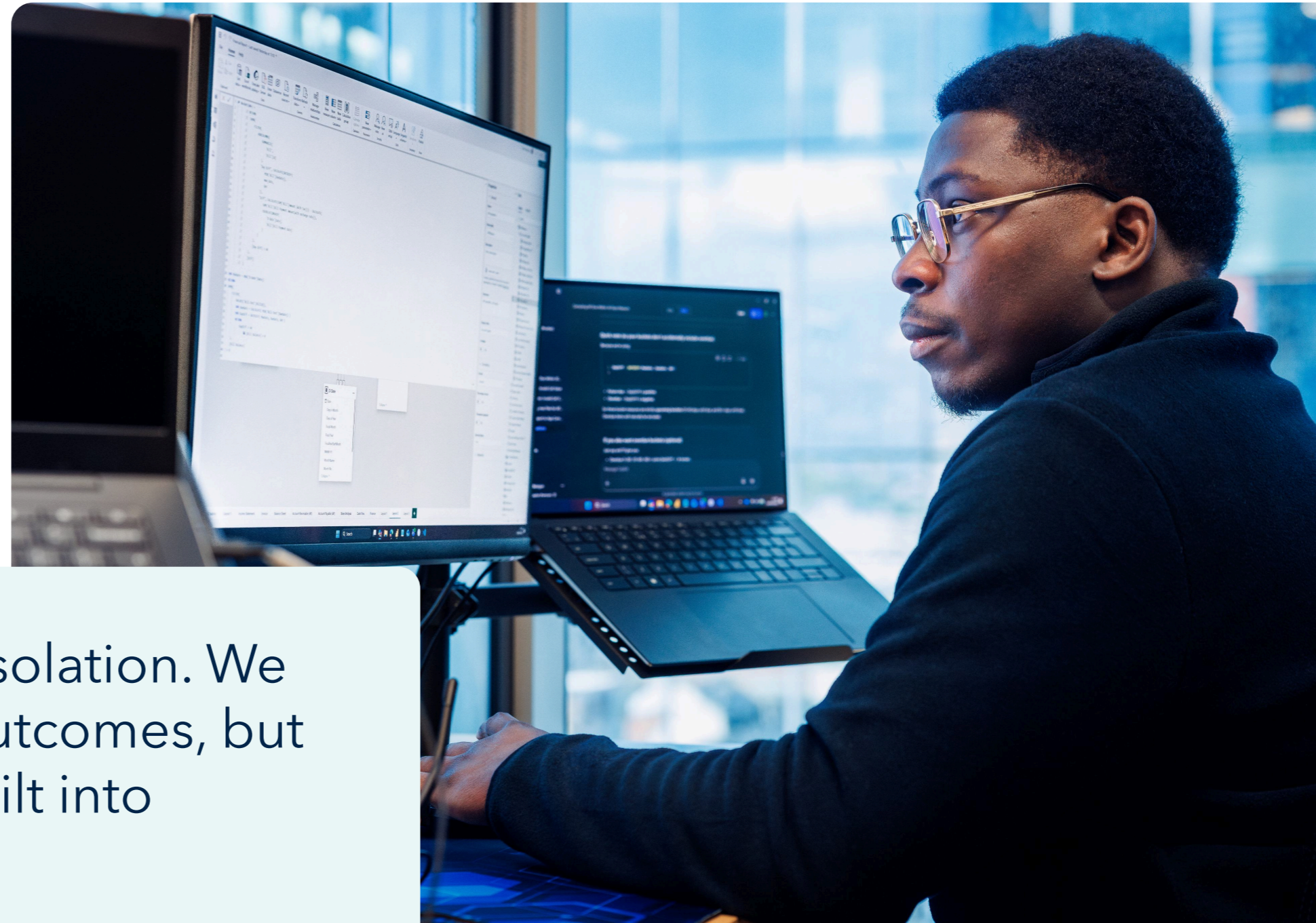
Source: Figure 20, 2026 AI Impact Report, Intuit QuickBooks

THE IMPORTANCE OF HUMAN JUDGMENT: WHERE AI SHOWS UP LEAST.

On average since April 2025, legal, product management, and employee management consistently sit near the bottom across all four countries. These are areas where work is harder to bound: decisions involving context that's difficult to fully hand off, responsibilities that can't easily be separated from the person holding them, and judgment calls where human oversight is critical to get it right.

Legal is the starkest example. It sits at or near the bottom in every country, in every quarterly wave, without exception. That consistency is its own finding. Across every market and every time period tracked, businesses are drawing the same line in the same place.

Collaboration also sits near the bottom in the most recent data. Businesses are not only holding back on AI where work is judgment-heavy, they also appear to be actively preserving human connection where it matters most, even as AI takes on more of the routine work around it.



“AI should not be left to operate in isolation. We use it to move faster and improve outcomes, but with intentional human oversight built into every critical step.”

Andrew Price
CEO
Synapx



“We can focus on other areas of the business where perhaps AI cannot be utilized, such as physically experimenting with recipes, generating content in the kitchen, and customer service and finance.”

Olivia Petrou-Stanchev
Founder
Olive & Fig

Sample and methodology

SUMMARY

The 2026 AI Impact Report uses both **administrative** and **survey** data to examine the extent and impact of AI use among small to midsize businesses in the US, Canada, the UK, and Australia. The methodology behind the research was developed by an international team of economists led by Ufuk Akcigit, the Arnold C. Harberger Professor of Economics at the University of Chicago, in collaboration with Intuit.

The administrative data was provided by a total sample of **5,335,000** small to midsize businesses using Intuit products between 2021 and 2025. Of these, 4,313,000 are in the US, 521,000 are in Canada, and 502,000 are in the UK. The survey data was provided between July 2024 and January 2026 by a total sample of **34,364** owners and operators of small to midsize businesses. Of these, 17,076 are in the US, 6,850 are in Canada, 6,648 are in the UK, and 3,790 are in Australia.

OBJECTIVES AND DEFINITIONS

As noted above, the objective of the research was to establish the extent and impact of AI use among small to midsize businesses in the US, Canada, the UK, and Australia, based on the following definitions:

- **Broadest measure of AI use:** share of businesses in the sample reporting regular use of any kind of AI (free or paid versions).
- **Narrower measure of AI use:** share of businesses in the sample paying to use dedicated AI tools.
- **Impact of AI use:** self-reported impact (positive, neutral, or negative) of the regular use of any kind of AI (free or paid versions) AI on revenue, employment, costs, working hours, and productivity.
- **Small businesses:** 0 to 9 employees (or 1 to 9 when focusing on employers).
- **Midsize businesses:** 10+ employees (generally 10 to 99 except in Australia, where 50 is the upper limit).

ADMINISTRATIVE DATA

Firms included in the administrative data sample (n=5,335,000) are small to midsize businesses with at least 12 months of complete monthly revenue data recorded on Intuit’s platform. Within this sample, firms are categorized as paying to use AI if they paid a subscription for a dedicated AI tool at any point between 2021 and 2025. The majority of these payments were recorded between 2023 and 2025. The total, international sample of paying AI users is 627,000. The per-country samples of paying AI users are 535,000 in the US, 56,000 in Canada, and 36,000 in the UK. The majority of the analysis focuses on the subsamples of paying AI users. These firms are further categorized as “continuing to pay” AI subscriptions if they made payments in 2024 and 2025. Conversely, firms that recorded payments in 2024 but not 2025 are categorized as having “stopped paying” for AI subscriptions. Paying AI users are categorized by sector using the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) in the US and Canada and the Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) in the UK. To protect privacy, all data processing was completed by Intuit and results have been aggregated.

SURVEY DATA

Firms included in the survey data sample (n=34,364) are small to midsize businesses in the US, Canada, the UK, and Australia that responded to Intuit’s [quarterly Small and Midsize Business Insights surveys](#) between July 2024 and January 2026. Respondents are the owners or senior executives of businesses with 0-100 employees in the US, Canada, and the UK, and of businesses with 0-50 employees in Australia. The overall sample sizes per country, per survey wave are as follows:

	Jul 2024	Oct 2024	Jan 2025	Apr 2025	Jul 2025	Oct 2025	Jan 2026	Total
 US	3,012	2,800	2,487	2,240	2,244	2,071	2,222	17,076
 Canada	1,013	1,018	1,036	1,031	981	944	827	6,850
 UK	1,158	1,063	939	980	865	823	820	6,648
 Australia	700	513	519	532	503	516	507	3,790
Total	5,883	5,394	4,981	4,783	4,593	4,354	4,376	34,364

All respondents are compensated for their time. Respondents are invited to complete the anonymous, online survey questionnaires in one of two ways: either by Dynata, on Intuit’s behalf; or directly, by Intuit. Respondents contacted directly by Intuit are businesses currently using Intuit products (Intuit customers). Before completing the surveys, Intuit customers are asked to give their consent for their answers to be linked to information stored on Intuit’s platform. Respondents who do not give consent do not complete the survey. Among those who gave consent, 10,483 firms are also included in the “paying AI users” sample described above. Of these, 6,201 are in the US, 2,738 are in Canada, and 1,544 are in the UK.



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