



UNLOCKING THE UAE'S AI POTENTIAL 2026

The next wave of AI is here, and the UAE is emerging as a global AI leader

Artificial intelligence (AI) is advancing at a pace rarely seen in previous waves of technological change. The move from dial-up internet to 3G [took a decade](#). Today, the emergence of new technologies, such as agentic AI and advanced robotics, means that innovation cycles are moving far faster – compressing what once took years into months. Across the world, AI is rapidly reshaping industries, accelerating innovation cycles, and redefining how businesses compete. New capabilities are enabling technologies to not only assist human decision-making but also to plan, reason, and act autonomously. As these technologies mature, they are compressing innovation timelines dramatically: what once took years to develop and deploy can now be achieved in months.

The UAE is advancing its position in AI transformation, supported by national strategies such as [The UAE National Strategy for Artificial Intelligence 2031](#) and [UAE Centennial 2071](#), which place digital and economic transformation at the centre of the country's long-term ambitions. Abu Dhabi's pledge for the government to become the world's first fully AI-native government by 2027 further underscores the scale and urgency of this agenda, signalling a shift from experimentation with AI to systemic, economy-wide adoption.



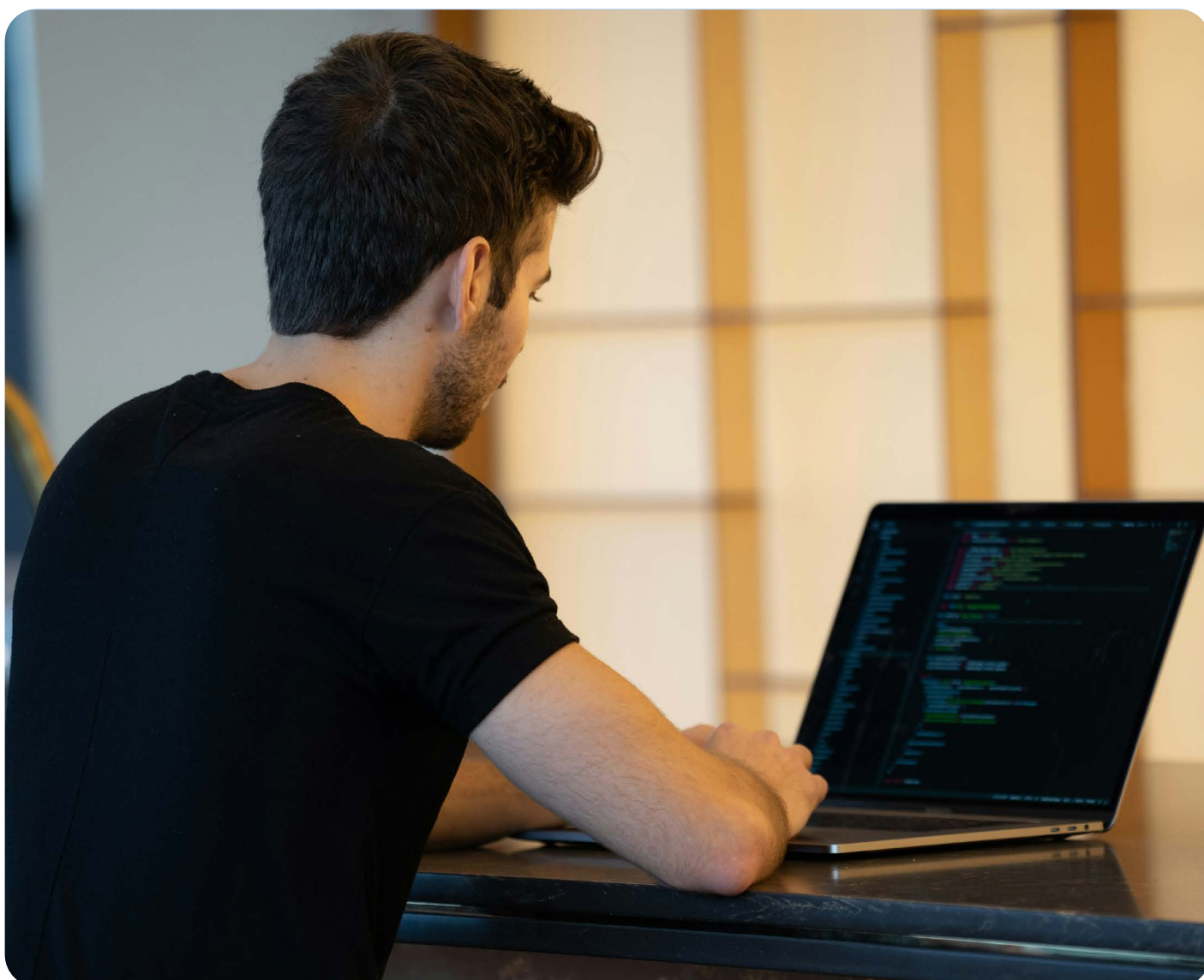
This ambition is already translating into action. Across the UAE, governments and businesses are accelerating investment in AI, cloud infrastructure, and digital transformation. Cloud adoption in particular is emerging as a critical enabler: organisations increasingly recognise that scalable cloud infrastructure is the foundation for developing, deploying, and scaling AI capabilities.

Yet despite strong ambition and growing investment, AI adoption across the UAE remains uneven. Many organisations – particularly in the public sector and regulated industries – face practical barriers to scaling AI deployments. Concerns around data sovereignty, evolving localisation and compliance requirements, and a shortage of specialised AI talent continue to slow the transition from experimentation to widespread implementation.

As a result, the challenge facing the UAE is no longer one of ambition, but of execution. Businesses are seeking greater clarity and assurance around how AI and cloud solutions can be deployed within evolving regulatory and data governance frameworks. At the same time, many organisations are looking for clearer guidance on how to prioritise meaningful AI applications that address real operational challenges, rather than adopting AI for its own sake.

Addressing these barriers could help unlock the UAE's full AI potential. By helping organisations navigate regulatory complexity, build the necessary skills base, and deploy cloud-enabled AI infrastructure with confidence, the UAE can accelerate the transition from AI ambition to large-scale impact.

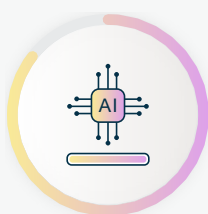
This report explores the opportunities and challenges shaping the UAE's AI adoption landscape. Drawing on a survey of 1,000 businesses and 1,000 citizens across the UAE, it examines how organisations and the public are engaging with AI today, the barriers slowing adoption, and the steps needed to unlock the next phase of AI-driven growth.





Key findings

- AI adoption in the UAE is continuing to increase, with **72%** of businesses having adopted AI, up from **53%** last year. This is a growth rate of **36%** year-on-year. This compares to a growth rate of **29%** in Europe, where adoption is **54%** this year.
- AI adoption is strong across the UAE's key industries: **82%** in the media and entertainment industry have adopted AI, followed by financial services (**79%**), retail (**76%**), and hospitality (**69%**).
- **74%** of businesses say AI adoption is a top or high priority, while **47%** say AI plays a critical or important role in their overall business strategy.



85% of AI-adopting businesses report an accelerated innovation timeline, and **86%** anticipate that AI will accelerate their innovation timelines further.



31% of AI-adopting businesses are harnessing the technology's most advanced use cases for transformation, up from **28%** last year.



A growing digital divide: Many businesses are not using advanced AI tools

Nearly three-quarters of the UAE's businesses have adopted AI. Looking deeper into how businesses are implementing AI – from initial experimentation to full transformation – we see many organisations still remain at basic levels of AI adoption.

1.

Basic adoption:

47% of businesses remain focused primarily on more basic uses of AI and are focused on incremental gains (e.g. driving efficiencies and streamlining processes), rather than innovation (e.g. developing new products or disrupting industries). These businesses are using publicly available chatbots for routine tasks or purchasing ready-made AI solutions.

2.

Intermediate adoption:

19% have advanced to the intermediate stage of AI adoption. These companies are integrating AI across multiple business functions, resulting in efficiency improvements and more innovative customer experiences.

3.

Transformative adoption with AI's most advanced purposes:

31% of businesses have reached the most transformative stage of AI integration, using advanced AI systems, combining multiple models, creating custom AI systems, or deploying agentic or autonomous AI. This is where the real productivity value concentrates – and with it, driving growth and competitiveness. Transformational AI is not only about doing existing work faster; it enables new products and services, new routes to market, and new operating models.

For businesses across the UAE, this progression toward advanced use cases is not as fast as it could be – and crucially, not keeping pace with the innovation of new AI technologies. This poses a core competitiveness challenge. As innovation cycles compress, the ability to deploy advanced AI safely and at scale becomes a key differentiator. In practice, this means moving beyond isolated pilots toward AI that is embedded into core systems, supported by high-quality data, strong governance, and AI-ready talent.

Without deliberate action to enable that shift – through clearer regulatory guidance, stronger skills pipelines, and scalable, trusted cloud foundations – the gap between early leaders and the long tail of enterprises will widen, limiting the extent to which today's adoption momentum translates into broad-based productivity growth and long-term economic transformation.

Beneath this trend, startups are emerging as a bright spot

While many established organisations are still navigating the transition from experimentation to scale, AI-first startups across the UAE are moving much faster. In the startup population, **42%** describe themselves as AI-first or having AI at their core. Their agility, digital-first foundations, and openness to new technologies allow them to adopt and deploy advanced AI capabilities more quickly than many larger organisations: **88%** of startups have already adopted AI, and of these, **53%** are harnessing AI's most advanced use cases.

Of startups that have adopted AI, **61%** report transformative or significant productivity gains, and a further **27%** report moderate productivity gains, and have seen increasing revenues (**69%**), enhanced customer experience (**66%**), improved decision-making and insights (**64%**), stimulating innovation (**63%**), and enhanced automation and efficiency (**60%**).

Companies like [Property Finder](#), [Maqsam](#), and [Careem](#) are already building innovative products and scaling at speed. Their momentum shows what is possible when talent, ambition, and technology come together. While these AI-first innovators are moving fast, many other businesses risk being left behind unless the conditions for confident AI adoption are strengthened. Only **51%** of large businesses in the UAE have adopted AI – falling behind their startup counterparts.

The result is an emerging two-tier AI economy – where AI-first startups surge forward, but many other enterprises struggle to move beyond pilots or adopt AI in ways that genuinely transform their operations.



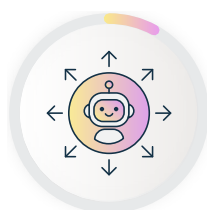
Agentic AI: Awareness is rising, but deployment remains limited

Next-generation AI technologies – such as agentic AI, physical AI, and advanced robotics – will play a significant role in the next phase of AI-driven innovation. These technologies move beyond traditional AI tools by enabling systems to plan, reason, and take actions autonomously across complex tasks. As these capabilities mature, they have the potential to reshape industries, accelerate innovation cycles, and unlock entirely new business models.

However, the data suggests that while awareness is beginning to grow, most organisations are still some distance from deploying these technologies in practice:



Less than a third of businesses (**32%**) say they have heard of agentic AI.



Of those who are familiar with the technology, only **9%** report that they have fully deployed agentic AI, while a further **9%** are experimenting or piloting the technology.



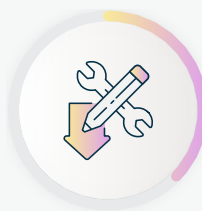
When the technology was explained, a further **57%** say they have plans to use agentic AI or are considering it, while **30%** say they'd have no plans to adopt it.



The majority of businesses do not feel ready to adopt these emerging technologies, but startups are leading the charge:



Only **21%** of businesses say they feel fully or very ready to adopt next-generation AI technologies such as agentic AI, physical AI, and advanced robotics – contrasted by the **62%** of startups who report they are ready.



35% of all businesses say they are only somewhat ready, and **44%** say they are slightly ready or not ready at all. For those who say they are not ready at all for next-generation AI, the most frequently cited barriers are a shortage of AI and digital skills, insufficient internal financial resources, and legal uncertainty arising from new AI or digital regulations.

Businesses point to persistent constraints that block the move from readiness to real deployment, including skills shortages (**46%**), insufficient internal financial resources (**38%**), and legal uncertainty (**21%**). Unless businesses are empowered to adopt the next wave of AI, the digital divide between those using only basic AI tools for incremental efficiency gains and harnessing AI's most advanced purposes for transformation risks entrenching.

Case study: The ENTERTAINER - Reinventing customer engagement with generative AI



The **ENTERTAINER** is a leading lifestyle platform known for its “Buy One Get One Free” offers, serving millions of users across the UAE and beyond. As consumer expectations continue to evolve, the company is transforming from a traditional savings app into an AI-powered lifestyle companion, redefining how users discover merchants, plan experiences, and engage with the platform in a more intelligent and personalized way.

At the core of this transformation is H.A.P.I.™, a multilingual generative AI assistant built on [Amazon Bedrock](#). H.A.P.I.™ enables natural conversations in both English and Arabic and orchestrates multiple AI agents – including a planner for personalized itineraries, a search assistant for discovering relevant offers, a support agent for seamless issue resolution, and an escalation assistant that connects users with human agents when needed.

Designed to place both users and merchants at the center of the experience, the platform is powered by AWS services to deliver intelligent, real-time engagement at scale. [Amazon OpenSearch Service](#) enables semantic and conversational search capabilities, while [Amazon Personalize](#) delivers tailored recommendations based on user behaviour and preferences. [Amazon Bedrock Guardrails](#) help ensure safe and responsible AI interactions.

By leveraging AWS, The ENTERTAINER is enhancing customer engagement through personalized, contextual, and conversational experiences, while continuing to evolve its platform and strengthen its position at the forefront of AI-driven innovation within the lifestyle technology sector.



Industries across the country are thriving, but barriers risk holding them back

While the average of **31%** of the UAE's businesses report that they are harnessing the most advanced uses of AI, key industries are surging ahead – particularly financial services (**45%**), media and entertainment (**41%**), retail (**36%**), and hospitality (**27%**), where advanced adoption stands well above or in line with the national average. These industries are increasingly using AI to develop new digital services, enhance customer experiences, and improve operational efficiency.

In the last year, industries have also launched new AI-driven products or services:



Financial services – **54%**



Media and entertainment – **58%**



Retail – **47%**



Hospitality – **33%**

The financial services industry is leading in terms of readiness for next-generation AI, with **38%** reporting they feel ready, followed by professional services (**36%**), media and entertainment (**34%**), and healthcare (**25%**).

However, these industries remain held back by structural barriers. The top four are:

Media and entertainment

1. Shortage of AI and digital skills **49%**
2. Insufficient internal financial resources **41%**
3. Lack of clarity and confidence around data control, access, and governance **33%**

Retail

1. Technical or data related barriers (e.g. legacy systems, poor data quality, integration challenges) **52%**
2. Insufficient internal financial resources **44%**
3. Shortage of AI and digital skills **36%**



Financial services

1. Regulatory complexity operating AI or digital services across borders
2. Legal uncertainty arising from new AI or digital regulations
3. Lack of clarity and confidence around data control, access, and governance

48%

41%

38%

Hospitality

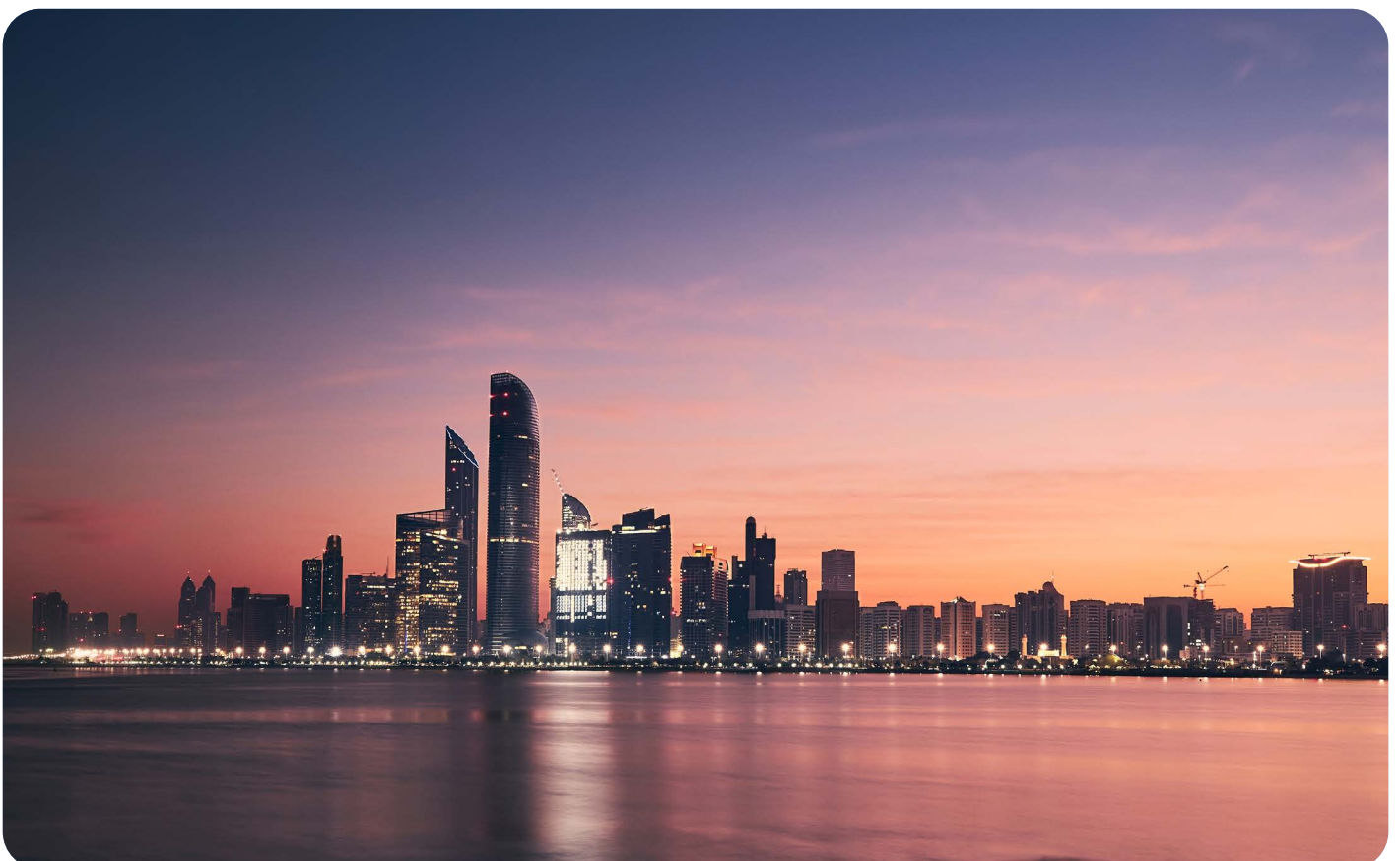
1. Shortage of AI and digital skills
2. Insufficient internal workforce capacity
3. Unclear business case or ROI

71%

46%

39%

Taken together, these findings highlight that several of UAE's leading industries are already demonstrating the transformative potential of AI, leading the way on what is possible when organisations combine strong digital foundations, access to cloud infrastructure, and a willingness to innovate.



Case study: Dubizzle Group - Powering MENA's digital marketplace with data and AI



Dubizzle Group is the #1 Classifieds company in MENA, and a household name across UAE. The Group operates a portfolio of market-leading digital platforms including Dubizzle, Bayut, PropertyMonitor and DriveArabia. Together, these platforms serve over 20 million users per month across the MENA region, making the Group a cornerstone of digital commerce.

At the heart of this ecosystem are Bayut and Dubizzle, two of the region's most trusted digital marketplaces. With half of the UAE's population visiting at least one of its platforms each month, the Group's reach is matched by a powerful in-house technology foundation: 3 tech centres, 3+ petabytes of data, 20+ proprietary products, and 78 AI models generating up to half a million predictions every minute.

At that scale, delivering the right listing to the right person at the right time is no small feat. Behind the scenes, Dubizzle's platforms process between 30 and 40 billion data records using [Amazon Redshift](#) and [Amazon Redshift Serverless](#) - a cloud-based data warehouse that analyses massive datasets in real time, generating intelligent insights across property, automotive, and classifieds. This means the platform can understand user behaviour, spot trends, and surface the most relevant results instantly.

Search is where AI truly comes to life. Powered by [Amazon OpenSearch Service](#), Dubizzle Group's AI-driven transaction and recommendation search engine processes over 3 billion events every month – learning from how users browse, click, and interact to surface the most relevant recommendations faster and more accurately.

Underpinning it all, AWS infrastructure keeps things running smoothly – ensuring the platforms are always online and responding quickly, so the experience feels seamless whether you're browsing apartments in Dubai or cars in Abu Dhabi. As Dubizzle Group acquired new platforms over the years, it brought them all onto AWS, creating a unified technology foundation that gives each platform the ability to innovate and scale on its own.

This cloud and AI foundation allows Dubizzle Group to continuously enhance personalisation, improve marketplace matching, and lead the evolution of digital commerce across MENA.

Capability, collaboration, and competitiveness through choice and flexibility

When asked what digital sovereignty means to them in practice, businesses most frequently emphasise strong protections around data and governance: Two-thirds (**66%**) identify robust data protection, privacy, and cybersecurity standards as the most important element, a further **58%** say sovereignty means ensuring that local laws apply to data regardless of the nationality of the technology provider, while **55%** emphasise the importance of clear rules governing who can access data and under what conditions. Just over half (**51%**) also highlight the importance of maintaining control over where and how data is stored and processed, while **40%** associate digital sovereignty with greater resilience against geopolitical, economic, or supply-chain disruptions.

At the same time, businesses emphasise the importance of access to global technologies:



87% say access to global technology companies is important for AI adoption.



84% say access is important for innovation.



89% say access is for scaling quickly.



In the UAE, businesses tend to view digital sovereignty through the lenses of trust, control, resilience, and competitiveness. For most organisations, sovereignty is about ensuring confidence in how digital infrastructure operates, including how data is protected, governed, and accessed, while still enabling participation in a globally connected digital economy. At the same time, digital sovereignty is not understood as a single, fixed concept. Interpretations vary across Emirates and sectors, particularly between the public sector and commercial environments. This creates a degree of complexity for organisations operating across Abu Dhabi, Dubai, and federal institutions, where expectations and regulatory approaches can differ.

Importantly, there is limited appetite for sovereignty approaches that increase cost without improving competitiveness: only **4%** of businesses would support greater public investment in AI and cloud infrastructure if it resulted in higher costs for their organisation. At the same time, **34%** cite lack of clarity and confidence around data control, access, and governance as preventing AI expansion – underlining that trusted frameworks and secure infrastructure remain essential to scaling adoption.

Together, these insights suggest that enabling secure and scalable AI adoption in the UAE will require trusted governance frameworks, resilient digital infrastructure, and continued access to global technology innovation. Strengthening collaboration with local partners – while preserving customer choice and openness – will be essential to supporting secure, competitive AI adoption at scale.

AWS supports priorities through local collaboration

AWS's approach aligns directly with these priorities. Through collaborations with local telecom providers, global cloud capabilities are combined with locally operated, nationally aligned infrastructure.

AWS's ongoing collaboration with e& continues to combine AWS's cloud infrastructure and solutions with e&'s network capabilities as we address the most stringent customer requirements across the public sector and regulated industries, including healthcare, finance, and oil and gas in the Middle East.

- In November 2025, AWS and e& announced the commercial availability and full operational readiness of the UAE Sovereign Launchpad, a cloud offering that accelerates the adoption of cloud and AI services for UAE government agencies, along with regulated customers in healthcare, financial services, education, space, oil & gas, and non-profit sectors.
- Powered by AWS, offered by e&, and endorsed by the UAE Cybersecurity Council (CSC), the UAE Sovereign Launchpad contributes to the UAE's journey toward a more secure national digital infrastructure. It enables government agencies and customers to deploy all workloads, except those classified as Secret and Top Secret, while ensuring alignment with the UAE CSC's National Cloud Security Policy.

This model demonstrates that sovereignty and competitiveness are not in tension. By combining trusted local collaborations with advanced global cloud capabilities, organisations can meet sovereignty requirements while accelerating AI adoption.



Challenges are holding back businesses in the UAE from adopting AI for transformation

While the region is moving fast, several barriers and structural challenges must be addressed to ensure that momentum translates into broad-based, sustainable growth.

1. Sovereignty concerns remain a barrier to AI adoption.

34% cite lack of clarity and confidence around data control, access, and governance as preventing AI adoption and expansion of use. Organisations across the UAE and the wider region consistently highlight the importance of both clear, trusted frameworks for data control and access, as well as the ability to scale globally, to support their AI ambitions and global competitiveness.

As cloud regions expand and collaborations deepen, businesses are increasingly able to adopt AI with confidence, helping to build a form of digital sovereignty that strengthens capability rather than limiting access to world-class technology. This approach allows organisations to innovate securely today while shaping their long-term sovereignty vision, building on existing capabilities, not rebuilding the entire value chain.

2. Skills shortages and limited AI upskilling slow the shift from ambition to action.

A shortage of digital and AI skills remains one of the most significant barriers to scaling AI adoption across the UAE. Nearly half of organisations (**48%**) cite a lack of digital skills as a major obstacle to adoption, while **40%** report that they struggle either greatly or somewhat to attract local talent with the necessary expertise. On average, businesses say it takes 5.8 months to find an employee with the right digital skills, creating delays in implementing new AI projects and scaling existing ones. At the same time, **45%** of organisations say that the digital skills gap is directly hindering their ability to innovate.

Despite growing awareness of the importance of skills development, investment in workforce training remains uneven. On average, only **31%** of employees have received digital skills training. To address the shortage, many businesses are increasingly competing for scarce talent: **81%** say they would be willing to increase salary offers to candidates with the right digital skills, by an average of **39%**, in order to attract them.

Universities and training partners already play an important role in developing talent, but businesses report that more needs to be done to close the gap between education and industry needs. In particular, organisations are calling for more industry-led training programmes, practical job-ready skills development, and stronger collaboration with cloud providers to enable faster upskilling. Without stronger and more scalable skills programmes spanning government, universities, and employers, many organisations risk remaining stuck in the early stages of AI experimentation rather than deploying solutions at scale.

3. Limited incentives for innovation and scale hold back wider AI growth.

Financial constraints and limited scaling pathways also continue to slow the expansion of AI across the UAE economy. Around **31%** of organisations say that insufficient internal financial resources are preventing them from expanding AI adoption, highlighting the challenge many businesses face in funding large-scale digital transformation. At the same time, government support remains an important catalyst: **72%** of organisations say that public incentives – such as grants, tax incentives, or other support mechanisms – are crucial or very important to their decisions to adopt AI.

These challenges are particularly pronounced for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), whose AI adoption rates remain slightly below the national average at **68%**. SMEs often face greater difficulty accessing funding, procurement opportunities, and the support networks needed to scale innovative AI solutions. While innovation zones and regulatory sandboxes have helped organisations experiment with new technologies, businesses report that these initiatives do not always provide clear pathways to scale solutions across industries or markets.

As a result, many companies emphasise that limited access to funding and scaling support is restricting their ability to grow into AI-first businesses capable of competing regionally or globally. Strengthening access to financial support, procurement opportunities, and growth pathways will therefore be critical to enabling the next phase of AI-driven innovation across the UAE economy.



Encouragingly, new initiatives are emerging to address precisely these gaps. One example is [Ignyte](#), a digital platform to empower the next generation of start-ups and entrepreneurs on their journey toward global growth. [Ignyte](#) aims to empower over 100,000 start-ups by connecting founders with a global network of investors, mentors, corporates, and government entities creating a comprehensive growth ecosystem.

If these barriers persist, the UAE risks missing its window of competitiveness just as global AI capabilities accelerate.



AWS is committed to supporting the digital transformation of governments and businesses

- AWS is working with local experts to build skills and opportunities across the UAE and MENA more broadly.
- AWS has backed partners like the UAE's Technology Innovation Institute (TII), which has used Amazon SageMaker and Amazon Bedrock in its mission to develop globally competitive models that can be deployed on even widely accessible CPUs. This reflects the shared ambition to democratise access to powerful AI tools so that the best ideas, no matter where they come from, can be built, scaled, and shared with the world.
- Alongside AWS's ongoing collaboration with e&, these initiatives build on AWS's strong record of investing in local education initiatives, training, and start-up enablement programs to support the region's digital transformation and economic development plans:
 1. AWS and e& are closing the skills gap through the [AI Nation - Afaaq Initiative](#) alongside a [US\\$1 billion strategic partnership](#): To help close the gap and through this nationwide upskilling program, e& and AWS are empowering 30,000 people across the UAE with free access to world-class AWS training, expert-led coaching, and sponsored certifications, everything needed to build the AI and cloud skills that companies are actively looking for.
 2. AWS has reached over 680,000 individuals in Middle East North Africa and Turkey with skills and training initiatives and is on track to reach 2M by 2030.
 3. [Qudwatech](#), a 12-week mentorship program designed to nurture Emirati women in technology at all career stages. Through AWS mentors, the program will provide opportunities for professional development, challenging and inspiring Emirati women entering the field or looking to enhance their skills.
 4. AWS estimates that the AWS Middle East (UAE) Region will support nearly 6,000 full-time jobs annually.
- AWS is also supporting startups through its [AWS/CTIB Cybersecurity Startup Accelerator](#) Program to advance 'Made in UAE' cybersecurity innovations. This multi-year government-backed initiative sets an ambitious goal to accelerate more than 500 cybersecurity startups.
- Finally, Mohamed bin Zayed University of Artificial Intelligence (MBZUAI) has signed a [multi-year collaboration agreement with AWS](#) to advance AI research, enhance technical skills, and accelerate startup growth across the UAE and the wider region. The collaboration deepens MBZUAI's efforts to connect academic research with industry application and supports the UAE's National Strategy for Higher Education 2030. One of the strategy's core pillars, the Expanded Professional Experience initiative, calls for greater student exposure to real-world environments through practical training and on-campus projects. This collaboration delivers directly on that objective.

The UAE must take strategic decisions to unlock its AI potential

To turn the UAE's ambition into confident, scalable AI adoption, the country must focus on a set of strategic, targeted actions. The UAE can accelerate progress by concentrating on areas where momentum already exists, strengthening enabling infrastructure, and ensuring businesses have the confidence and capability to deploy AI at scale.

1. The UAE should prioritise scaling strategic areas where the country already demonstrates strong momentum and competitive advantage.

- The UAE has already developed strong momentum in a number of sectors where AI adoption can deliver immediate competitive advantage. In particular, gaming, fintech, and digital consumer platforms are thriving in the UAE's dynamic digital economy and demonstrate the potential for AI-first companies to succeed in highly competitive consumer markets.
- At the same time, sectors such as logistics, energy, industrial innovation, and sustainability present significant opportunities for AI-driven efficiency, automation, and optimisation across complex systems and supply chains.
- By prioritising these areas of strength, the UAE can accelerate real economic impact. This approach should be supported through local collaborations while maintaining access to leading global technologies. Doing so will allow the UAE to meet national sovereignty requirements while continuing to benefit from the innovation and scale of the global technology landscape.

2. The UAE must increase access to funding for businesses of all types and sizes.

- Unlocking the full potential of AI adoption will require stronger financial and market support across the entire business landscape. AI-first startups need access to funding, customers, and clear scaling pathways so they can grow into regional and global champions.
- At the same time, SMEs, which form a large share of the UAE economy, require practical support to adopt AI for the first time. This includes incentives, technical guidance, and accessible cloud environments that lower both financial and technical barriers to entry.
- Continued investment in public-sector digitalisation will also remain critical, as government adoption often sets the benchmark for trusted, high-impact AI deployment and can help stimulate wider adoption across the economy.

3. The UAE needs policies that support delivery at scale and make it easier for organisations to adopt AI with confidence.

- While the UAE has already taken important steps through national AI and digital strategies, the next phase should focus on enabling use-case-driven implementation at scale. AI should be deployed to solve real economic and societal challenges, rather than being adopted purely for experimentation.
- National strategies should prioritise choice, interoperability, and access to leading technologies, ensuring organisations can adopt the solutions that best fit their operational needs and sector-specific use cases. At the same time, businesses require greater clarity and consistency around data governance, localisation, and compliance requirements across different Emirates.
- Governments can further accelerate adoption by simplifying procurement systems so that SMEs and AI-first companies can contribute innovative solutions, while also continuing to lead by example in deploying next-generation technologies.
- Supporting cross-border collaboration within the region will also help AI-first businesses scale beyond their domestic markets. In parallel, developing trusted cloud frameworks will provide organisations with the reassurance they need to deploy AI securely and responsibly on world-class infrastructure.

Dubai AI Seal

The UAE is also introducing practical mechanisms to strengthen trust and transparency in AI adoption. [Dubai's AI Seal](#), developed by the Dubai Centre for Artificial Intelligence, acts as a verification framework that helps businesses and government entities identify trusted AI providers. [AWS has successfully obtained the highest Tier S certification](#) under the Dubai AI Seal framework (Seal No. 71), recognising its contribution to Dubai's AI landscape and reinforcing its position as a trusted provider of AI and cloud services in the region.

The initiative introduces tiered recognition levels reflecting the maturity and economic contribution of AI providers, helping governments make more informed procurement decisions while giving businesses greater credibility and visibility in the market. By strengthening trust, transparency, and confidence across the landscape, initiatives such as Dubai AI Seal can help accelerate responsible AI adoption at scale.

4. The UAE must significantly expand access to AI skills to ensure organisations can deploy and scale AI effectively.

- Building a strong AI talent base remains one of the UAE's most powerful levers for accelerating adoption. Governments across the region have already recognised the importance of skills development, with the UAE strengthening university collaborations, expanding AI-focused learning pathways, and investing heavily in the knowledge economy. However, the scale of AI transformation means these efforts must continue to grow.
- Skills initiatives should be expanded, better connected, and made accessible to a broader range of workers, including both technical specialists and non-technical professionals who increasingly need AI literacy in their roles.
- By broadening access to training and upskilling opportunities, the UAE can ensure that organisations across sectors have the talent and expertise required to deploy AI effectively and capture its full economic potential.
- The economic impact of enabling this transformation is great – previous research from AWS and Telecom Advisory Services found that cloud and cloud-enabled AI contributed US\$8.9 billion to the UAE's GDP in 2023 alone. Across both MENA and South Africa as a whole by 2030, this contribution is estimated to reach \$484 billion, with up to \$60 billion alone coming from cloud-enabled AI through that period.

The window for leadership is open – the UAE must act to capture it

The UAE has the foundations and ambition behind AI and broader digitalisation – establishing itself as a leading region globally – supported by world-class national visions, thriving startup landscapes, strong public-sector digital agendas, and energetic youth populations.

AWS is part of that foundation. AWS's infrastructure, partners, and customers span the UAE and wider region, supporting innovators across every major industry – from government and financial services to media, gaming, and logistics.

By addressing skills bottlenecks, clarifying regulatory expectations, strengthening collaborations, and sustaining access to best-in-class global technologies, the UAE can turn early leadership into lasting global competitiveness.



Appendix

Methodology:

The fieldwork for this study was undertaken by Strand Partners' research team for Amazon Web Services (AWS). This research has followed the guidance set forth by the UK Market Research Society and ESOMAR. For the purposes of this study, business leaders are defined as founders, CEOs, or members of the C-suite in organisations.

'Citizens' are nationally representative members of the public based on the latest available census.

For inquiries regarding our methodology, please direct your questions to: polling@strandpartners.com.

In the UAE:

- We conducted a survey targeting 1,000 nationally representative members of the public, ensuring representation based on age, gender, and region.
- Additionally, we surveyed 1,000 business leaders, representative by their business size, sector, and region.

Sampling:

Our sampling process used a mix of online panels that are recognised for their validity and reliability. These panels are carefully curated to ensure diverse representation across various demographics. For the business leaders, the panels are selected with a consideration for organisational size, sector, and position within the company. Our objective with the sampling strategy is to achieve an optimal mix that mirrors the actual distribution of our target populations in the respective markets.

Weighting techniques:

Post-data collection, we applied iterative proportional weight to correct any discrepancies or over-representations in the sample.

Survey:

This study was designed with the objective of delving deep into the digital landscape:

- Usage patterns: This survey gauges the evolving patterns of digital technology usage. We are particularly interested in examining the adoption and implementation levels of technologies, focusing on cloud computing and artificial intelligence.
- Perceptions and attitudes: The survey seeks to unearth the prevailing perceptions and attitudes towards digital technologies, understanding the perceived benefits, challenges, and potential ramifications of both present and emerging tech solutions.
- Barriers and opportunities: The survey scrutinises the predicted challenges and potential avenues that both businesses and individuals anticipate on their digital trajectory. This involves pinpointing challenges, from skill deficits to regulatory complications, and recognising opportunities for growth, innovation, and market development.
- 'Size of the prize': The survey shed light on the economic repercussions and growth prospects linked with digital transformation. By elucidating the 'size of the prize', we aspire to stress the importance of digital transformation and foster further investments and technology adoption.

Disclaimers:

- All figures in this report are estimates only that are based solely on third-party data and surveys.
- Customer examples and case studies referenced in this document are provided for illustrative purposes only and do not constitute endorsements of Amazon Web Services or its services. Individual results may vary. Customer participation and outcomes are subject to change.