



ECONOMY DIGEST

2026

AI INTEGRATION IN BUSINESS SECTOR IN GEORGIA



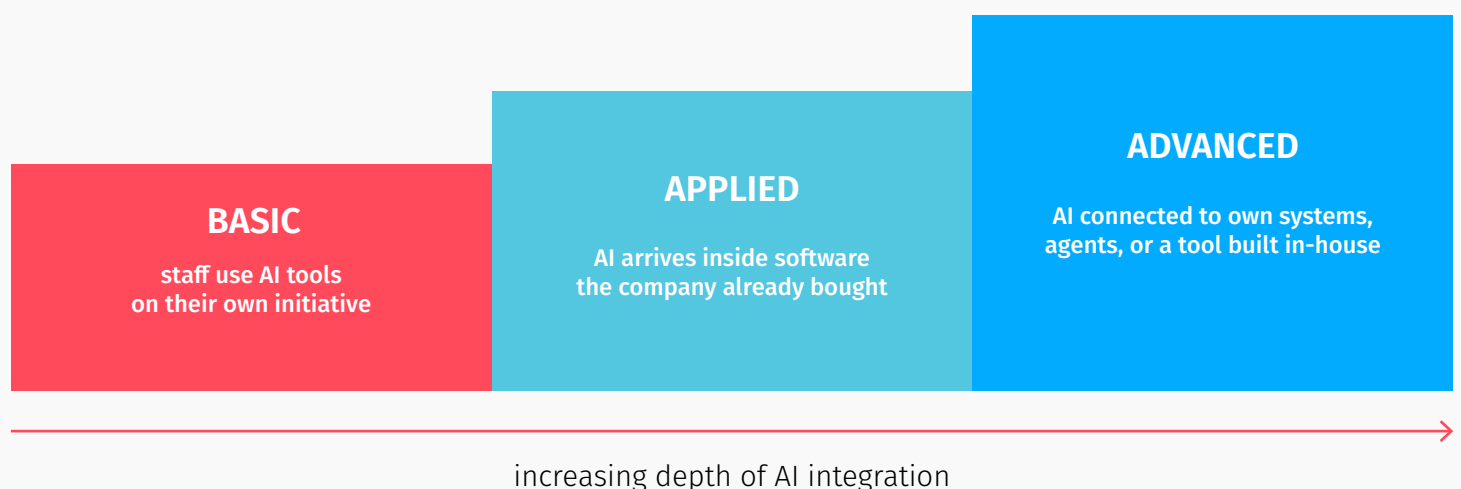
INTRODUCTION

Artificial intelligence integration in business is one of the most important long-term developments to watch. Unlike many economic trends, it is changing quickly, month to month rather than year to year, and reliable data on it is still scarce. Official statistics lag behind the pace of adoption and most existing research is either global in scope or focused on large firms, leaving a gap around how small and medium enterprises in Georgia are actually using AI.

This report draws on two sources to address that gap. The first is official data from Geostat, showing the direction of AI adoption across all Georgian businesses at the national level. Part of the national-level figures presented in this report are the author's own calculations based on the Geostat's enterprise database (Use of information and communication technologies in enterprises, 2025). The second is BTU's own research: a survey of 37 small and medium enterprises from selected sectors, studying how their use is developing.

Most findings on the SME sector below are based on the BTU survey. SME Firms that use AI are grouped by how deeply it is embedded in the business, measured from what they use AI for and how many parts of the company it touches. Firms reporting no AI use at all are covered in the final section. The responding firms come from service sectors: IT, business consulting, accounting, engineering, health services and other business services. Therefore, findings describe AI use in service-sector SMEs rather than in the economy as a whole. Findings are presented as rank order and direction of change, because the sample is small and self-selected.

Three groups of AI-using SMEs



The National Picture: AI Technologies Used

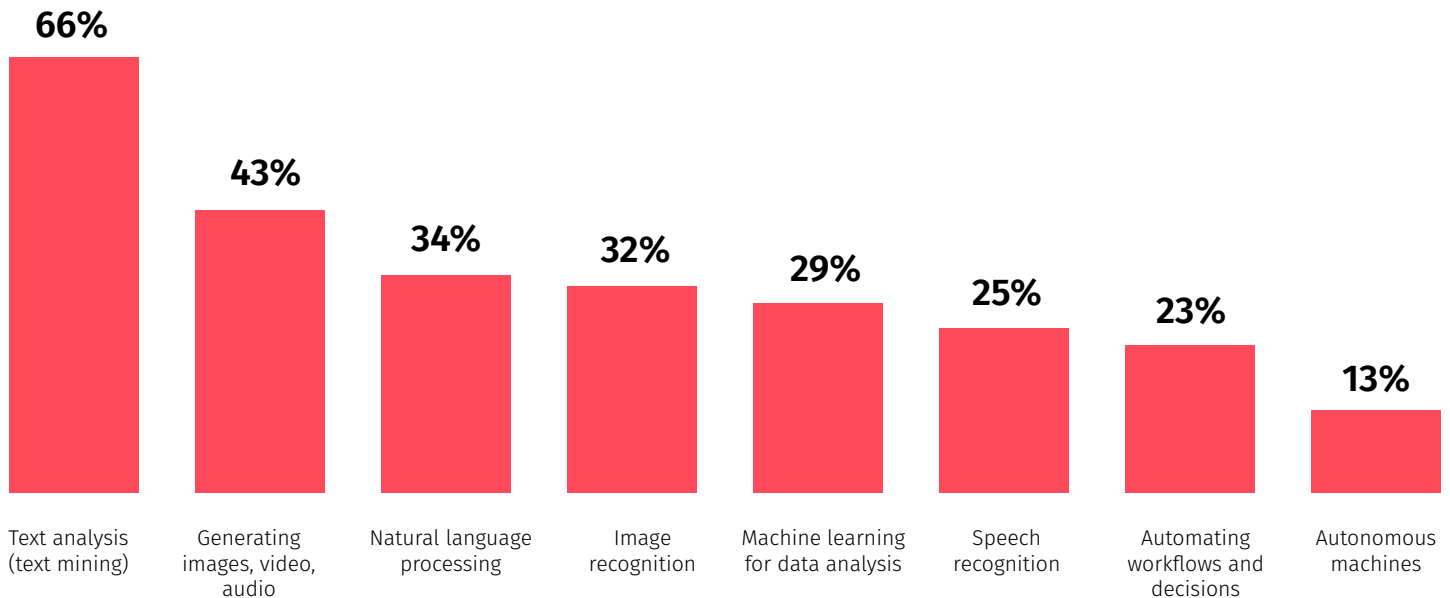
ACROSS THE COUNTRY, AI IN ENTERPRISES MOSTLY MEANS WORKING WITH LANGUAGE AND CONTENT.

Share of enterprises using AI, by size, 2025



Adoption itself remains low. Around four per cent of all enterprises use AI in any form, and the gap by size is wide: large enterprises are roughly eight times more likely to use AI than small ones.

Share of AI-using enterprises applying each technology, 2025

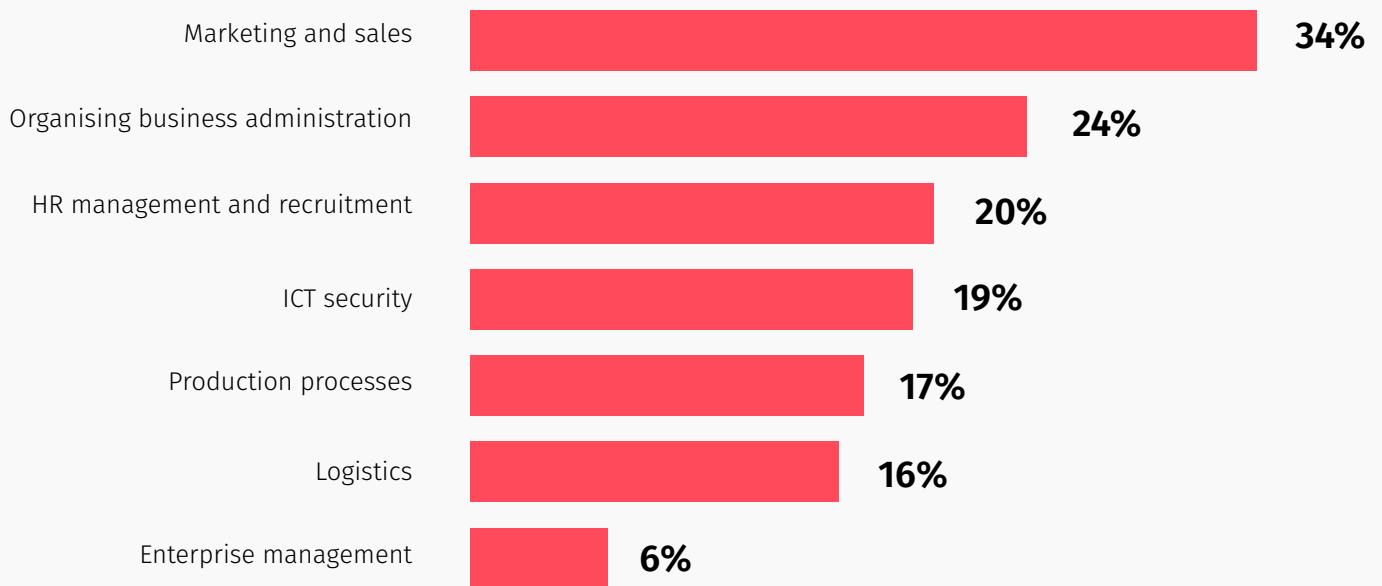


Text analysis is the dominant technology by a wide margin, used by around two thirds of enterprises that use AI at all. Generating images, video or audio follows in second place. **Autonomous machines such as robots and drones are the least used of all**, with workflow automation also close behind.

The national-level data did not show the full picture on adoption characteristics across industries.

MARKETING AND SALES IS THE LEADING AI PURPOSE ON NATIONAL LEVEL.

Share of AI-using enterprises applying AI for each purpose, 2025



Marketing and sales leads by a clear margin, applied by a third of AI-using enterprises. Organising business administration comes second and together these two account for the customer-facing and paperwork sides of a business.

Purposes tied to core operations sit lower. **Managing the enterprise itself is the least common purpose of all**, named by only a small minority.

The comparison is worth drawing carefully. The data covers enterprises of every size and sector.

It is also notable that **two in five AI-using enterprises could not name a single specific business purpose for it**. They confirm that they use AI technologies, but when asked which process it serves, they named none. This suggests that AI has often already entered the firm without yet being attached to any working process.

Combinations of AI Purposes

AI IS RARELY USED FOR A SINGLE PURPOSE; IT SPREADS IN STABLE PAIRS AND TRIOS OF BUSINESS FUNCTIONS.

The most frequent combinations of AI purposes, 2025

Most frequent pairs

Administration	+	R&D	24%
Marketing	+	Administration	22%
Marketing	+	Accounting	18%

Most frequent trios

Marketing	+	Administration	+	ICT security	15%
Production	+	Administration	+	R&D	14%

Share among firms that named at least one specific purpose for AI use.

As noted on the previous page, marketing and sales is the most dominant purpose of AI use. More revealing, however, is how these purposes group together.

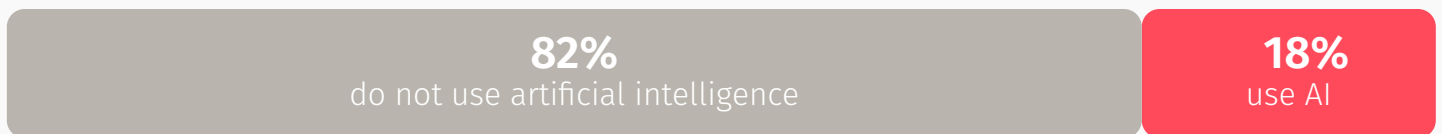
The tightest pair does not involve marketing at all: it is business administration and research and development.

It shows that the purposes most often used together are those concerned with the firm's internal work and development rather than with selling. Marketing appears in almost every combination, yet is rarely its centre, which strengthens the reading that it is an entry point rather than a final goal.

Source: author's own calculations based on the Geostat enterprise survey database, Use of information and communication technologies in enterprises, 2025.

MOST CHAT SERVICES PLACED ON COMPANY WEBSITES DO NOT YET RELY ON ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE.

Distribution of firms with a chat service by AI use, 2025



The presence of a chat service on a website is often read as a good indication of AI adoption. The data shows otherwise: the majority of firms with a chat service use no AI technologies at all. Their chat is either operator-based or built on predefined scenarios.

These firms, often smaller ones, are more weakly equipped digitally. They rarely have organisational systems in which data accumulates and is processed, and rarely have their own technical team. Digital solutions arrive as ready-made services. For them the chat is a service tool rather than an indicator of technological capability.

FIRMS WITH ONLINE SALES USE AI FIVE TIMES MORE OFTEN, THOUGH NOT NECESSARILY FOR SELLING ITSELF.

AI adoption rate by presence of online sales, 2025

Firms with online sales



Firms without online sales

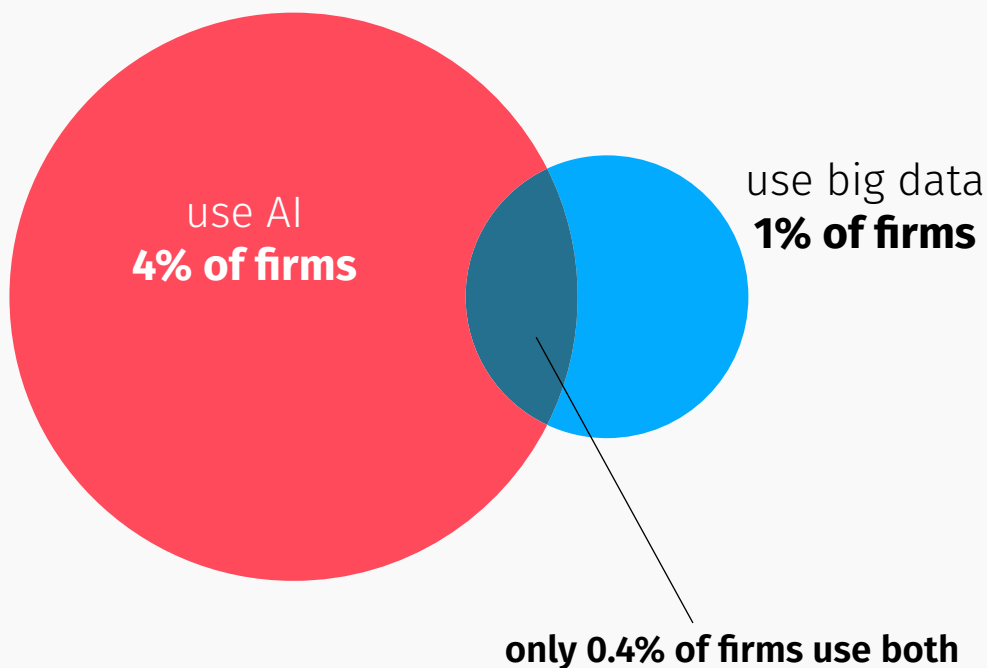


Among firms with online sales the AI adoption rate is 16%, against only 3% among firms without them. The gap is fivefold.

This does not mean that AI is used for selling. Only about half of online-selling AI users name marketing and sales as a purpose of their AI use. Online trade is therefore more a marker of digital maturity than a direct reason for adopting AI.

BIG DATA AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE ARE LARGELY INDEPENDENT PRACTICES.

Firms using big data and firms using AI, 2025

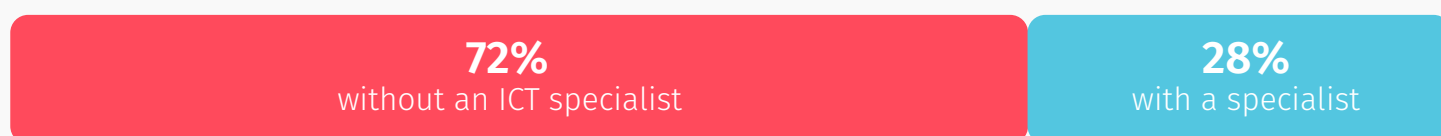


It is often assumed that artificial intelligence is a natural continuation of big data. In Georgia the data does not support this. 43% of big data users use AI, while only 10% of AI users use big data.

It is also worth asking who the firms are that use big data but not yet AI. These are mostly larger and systemically better equipped firms: most have organisational systems in which data accumulates, and some have their own technical team. They already collect and process data, but have not yet begun to build AI on top of it. This indicates that having data infrastructure does not by itself lead to AI adoption.

AI ADOPTION HAPPENS IN GEORGIA WITHOUT ICT SPECIALISTS TOO, THOUGH THEIR PRESENCE SHARPLY RAISES THE LIKELIHOOD OF IT.

AI-using firms by presence of ICT specialists, 2025



but the likelihood of adoption differs sharply:

Firms with ICT specialists



Firms without ICT specialists



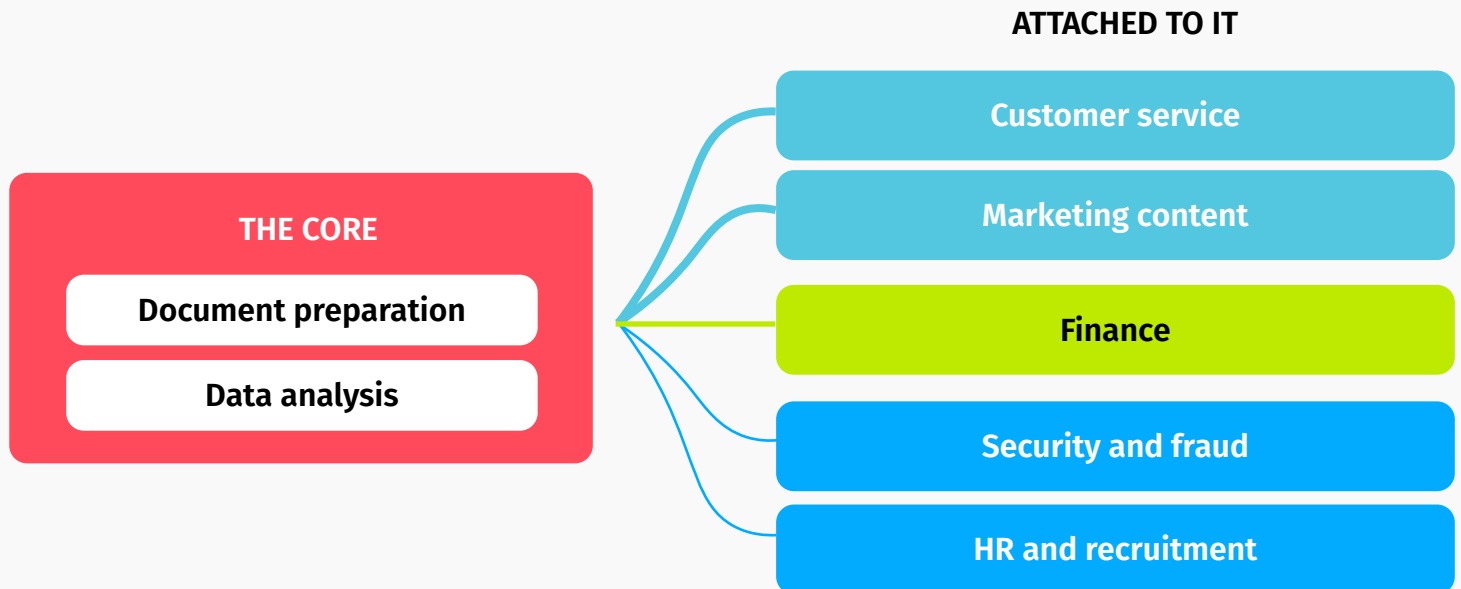
72% of AI-using firms have no ICT specialist at all. Moreover, almost a third of this group report that they modified or developed AI software with their own resources. AI adoption is therefore often in the hands of employees whose main job is not IT.

At the same time, the presence of ICT specialists in a firm remains the single strongest predictor of AI adoption. Firms that tried to hire an ICT specialist during 2025 are also more often AI users than those who already employ one, which suggests that firms have actively begun searching for technical competence because of the AI transition.

Where SME Firms Apply AI

AI ENTERS THROUGH DOCUMENTS AND DATA AND EVERY OTHER USE IS BUILT ON TOP OF THAT BASE.

How areas of AI use attach to one another



Line thickness shows how often each area is used together with the core.

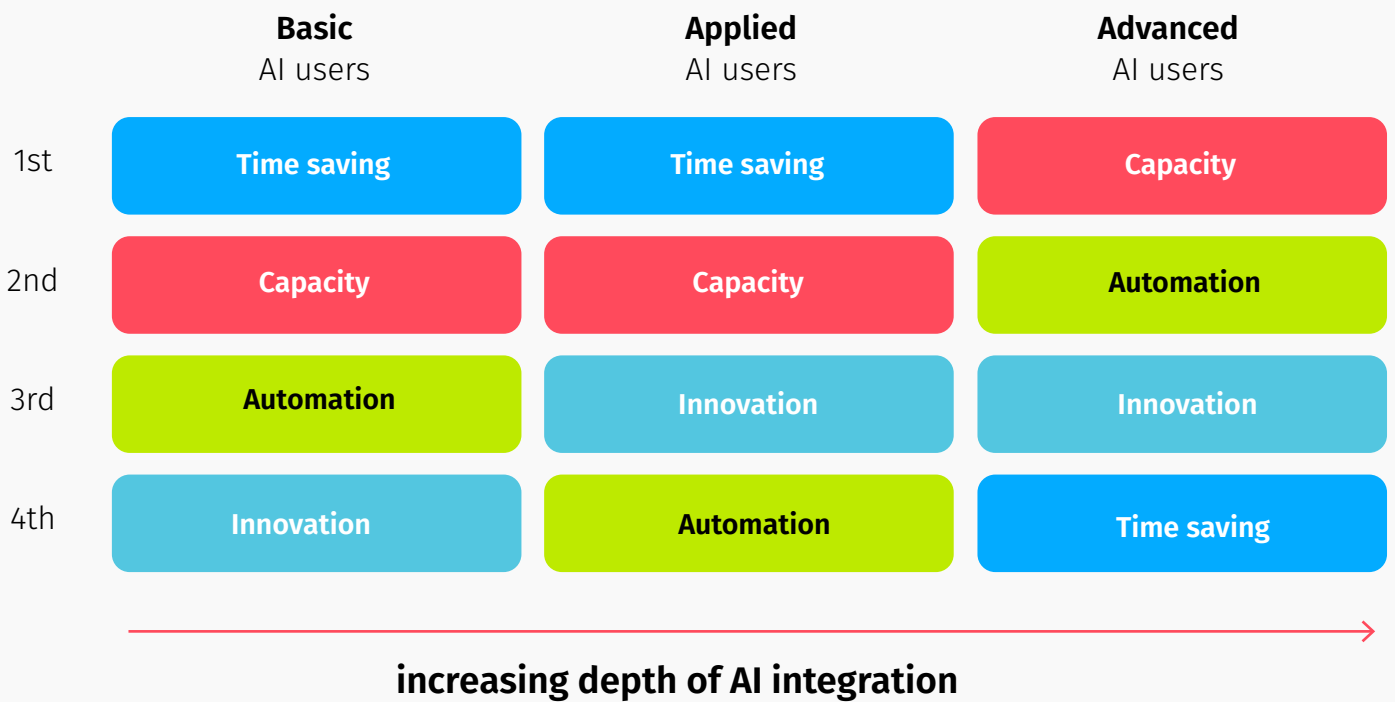
Areas of AI use in SMEs are not independent choices. **Document preparation and data analysis** form a base that almost every AI-using SME firm shares. Everything else attaches to that base. **Marketing content and customer service** are the first additions and they mark a real threshold: this is the point at which AI output starts reaching people outside the company. **Finance, security monitoring and HR** sit furthest out and behave differently again, appearing only in SME firms already using AI across several other areas.

Adoption in SME firms follows a sequence. They start with general office work and extend outward, which means the areas that matter most are also the ones reached last.

What AI Actually Changed in SME Firms

BASIC AI USE BUYS TIME; DEEPER INTEGRATION BUYS CAPACITY AND AT THE DEEPEST LEVEL DOES ANYTHING GENUINELY NEW APPEAR.

Rank of reported effects across groups of firms

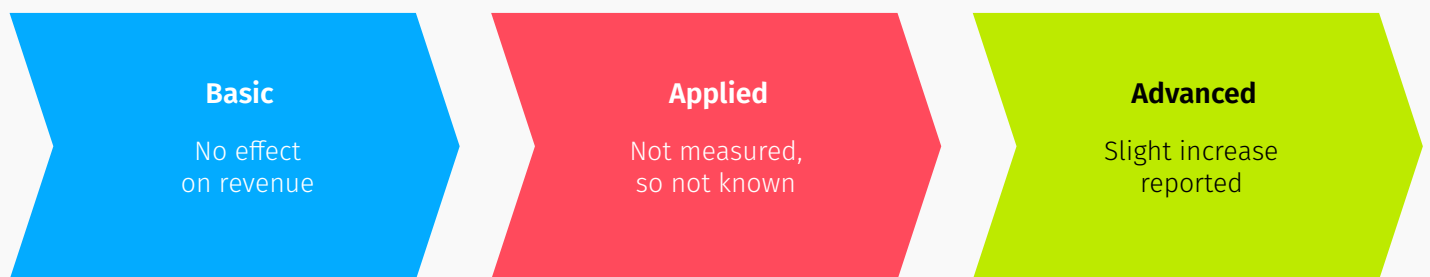


- Time saving**
the same work takes less time
- Capacity**
more work absorbed without new staff
- Automation**
the task runs without a person
- Innovation**
new things become possible

We split the surveyed SME firms based on how deeply they use AI (see introduction). SME firms using AI at a basic level mostly talk about time: they most frequently mentioned that the same work now gets done faster by the same people. Advanced AI user SME firms mentioned this far less often, not because time stops being saved, but because larger effects take over.

REVENUE EFFECTS FOLLOW INTEGRATION, BUT MOST SURVEYED SME FIRMS HAVE NO WAY OF KNOWING, BECAUSE THEY DO NOT MEASURE IT.

What firms in each group mostly said



A noticeable revenue increase was reported only among advanced AI users.

Basic AI user SME firms almost unanimously said that AI has had **no effect on revenue**. This is consistent with what they described earlier: faster individual work, but no change in what the company sells.

Applied AI user SME firms mostly said not that AI did nothing, but that they **do not measure it**. These SME firms are no longer certain AI has had no effect, yet they have built no way to observe one.

On the other hand, **advanced** AI user SME firms frequently mentioned a slight revenue increase.

AI SKILLS SPREAD SIDEWAYS BETWEEN COLLEAGUES AND SME FIRMS RARELY TEACH THEM FORMALLY.

How AI knowledge actually moves through a company

most common



least common

Colleagues share experience with each other

the most common practice: knowledge moves sideways, not top-down

Internal instructions and guidelines

given informally, often framed around safe use

Formal training

rare, and only among advanced AI users

In the surveyed SME firms the dominant pattern is not training at all but colleagues sharing experience with each other. Respondents describe it directly: staff are treated as capable of working it out themselves, particularly in technical teams and knowledge circulates horizontally rather than being delivered from above.

Below that sit informal instructions and guidelines, typically framed around caution rather than capability. Formal training is rare across SME firms and appears only among advanced AI user firms. Where it exists, it mostly targets coding and system automation, building new services and safe use of AI, rather than general AI literacy.

SME Firms are relying on their employees to educate each other. This works while AI use stays informal, but it leaves no shared standard, no record of what was learned and nothing to hand to a new employee.

FOR MOST SURVEYED SME FIRMS AI IS A SUBSCRIPTION LINE RATHER THAN AN INVESTMENT.

What firms describe as their AI-related costs

AI is BOUGHT

Basic and Applied AI users

- Subscription for AI tools
- Fees for Supported Software

AI is BUILT

Advanced AI users

- GPU servers
- Model testing, adaptation, fine-tuning and inference.
 - API usage charges
- Integration into own systems

Across the basic and applied AI user SME firm groups the answers are strikingly uniform. Asked to describe their AI costs in detail, SME firms mostly named a subscription or a licence and nothing further.

Only among advanced AI user SME firms do costs take a different shape, covering GPU servers for testing, adaptation and inference of AI models, fine-tuning work, API usage charges and integration into own systems.

Reasons Not Using AI for SME Firms

NON-USE OF AI IS A DEMAND PROBLEM NOT SUPPLY.

Stated reasons for not using AI

1st

The benefit is unclear in our case

we cannot see what it would do for a business like ours

2nd

Employees lack the necessary knowledge

nobody inside the company could take it on

3rd

Everything else

firm scale, data security and privacy, and other concerns

The leading reason is that SME firms cannot see the benefit in their own case. The second is that employees do not have the necessary knowledge. Everything else, from firm scale to data security and privacy concerns are more isolated cases.

Their openness supports this reading. Asked whether they would consider working on an AI topic, they answered positively.

These SME firms are not waiting for AI to become cheaper or safer, but to be shown a use case that applies to a business like theirs.

WHAT IS AI ECONOMY DIGEST?

AI Economy Digest is a quarterly electronic research report issued by the BTU Center for Entrepreneurship.

The report reviews current innovative trends in Georgia and the global economy, covering key topics such as AI connection to the digital transformation process, the impact of AI on the labor market, AI integration into business processes, practices for disseminating relevant knowledge, etc.

The purpose of the report is both to consolidate existing information and to generate new practical knowledge about the AI ecosystem.

Each research report will be co-authored by different researchers. The current edition is authored by BTU affiliate Associate Professor Tsotne Zhghenti.

