



*Project Showcase:*

**PROVIDING GOVERNMENT WITH ESSENTIAL  
DATA ON BUSINESSES' AI SAFEGUARDS**

**Keen to understand AI adoption rates and cybersecurity practices, the Department for Science, Innovation & Technology (DSIT) commissioned us to survey UK businesses.**

This important research revealed a significant gap between usage and protective measures, helping DSIT make a strong case for more support for organisations and the need for further exploration.

## ABOUT THE CLIENT

Formed in 2023, DSIT aims to position the UK as a leader in global science and technology. They focus on the UK's scientific, research, and technological advancements, while ensuring infrastructure and regulations support the economy, public services, national security, and government priorities.



Department for  
Science, Innovation,  
& Technology

## THE CHALLENGE

AI's impact and emergence into public consciousness has made numerous headlines over the last few years. It's something that governments have been very keen to get a handle on, especially considering its rapid evolution and huge potential to transform the way society functions.



**According to DSIT, there are more than 3,000 AI companies in the UK, generating more than £10bn in revenues, employing more than 60,000 people in AI related roles, and contributing £5.8 billion in Gross Added Value to the economy.**

However, without suitable protections and precautions in place, there are also significant risks. Businesses are vulnerable to harms such as automated attacks, breaches of data privacy and misinformation. There's an urgent need to address this to ensure the safety, resilience, privacy, fairness, and reliability of AI systems. As its growth is likely to outpace regulation, it is crucial to quickly gather quality information to establish robust security scaffolding and support.

One of DSIT's immediate priorities after its formation was to assess the level of AI uptake, the purposes for which businesses were using it, and the cybersecurity measures they had implemented. We were commissioned to assess UK businesses' use of AI and their cyber security practices and attitudes – an area for which, at the time, the government had evidence gaps that needed addressing.





# THE APPROACH

We conducted a Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) survey of 350 UK businesses across seven sectors. The team identified these as sectors where AI uptake was likely to be high, as well as Critical National Infrastructure sectors where cybersecurity vulnerabilities could have significant societal impacts. The sample was stratified across these industries, with 50 interviews allocated to each area, to enable analysis by sector as much as possible.

One of the main challenges of the project was determining the specifics of AI usage. This included identifying whether businesses were actively using AI or considering its implementation, and assessing the extent to which AI tools were integrated into their systems. It was clear that we needed to ensure language was accessible and avoid technical jargon as much as possible – a tricky balance considering the complexity of the subject matter and the diverse backgrounds of the audience. Through careful questionnaire design, we were able to generate good quality data in this area.

**The speed of AI's development necessitated a quick-turnaround too, so the Department could quickly gather important data on sentiment and behaviours. We managed to deliver the required numbers and findings in just over a month.**



### February 2023:

DSIT is formed with ambitions to make the UK a science and technology superpower by 2030

### January-February 2024:

CATI interviews take place

### January 2025:

Our work is used to inform the formation of the Code of Practice for the Cyber Security of AI

### 2025-2026:

We have continued our work in this area with the DSIT, currently working on the AI Business Adoption Survey, with findings due to be published in the near future

### November 2023:

IFF is commissioned by DSIT to map vulnerabilities associated with AI and Cybersecurity through the understanding of business practices

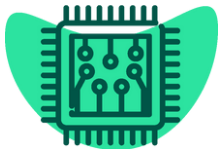
### May 2024:

Findings from our research are published online

### February 2025:

AI Safety Institute becomes the AI Security Institute, a directorate within the Department that conducts AI security research to test the safety and impact on society

## OUR FINDINGS



**Two thirds (68%)** of businesses surveyed were currently using AI, while 32% had plans to adopt it in the future

### Of the businesses currently using AI:

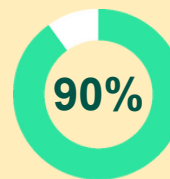


Over half have been using it for at least one year, with 64% deploying one type of AI technology, 22% using two types of AI and 14% using three or more

47%

**Nearly half of respondents** had no specific cyber security practices in place specifically for AI

### When asked more generally about cyber security practices:



**90%** of all businesses had at least one governance or risk management arrangement in place

Over the last 12 months, just over three-quarters (78%) of businesses had taken at least one measure in an effort to **identify cyber security risk**



## THE IMPACT

The results from the study suggested some cause for concern and need for action. 14% of businesses had not considered cybersecurity for AI, and 47% did not have specific arrangements for AI-related risks. But over half of businesses had been using it for at least one year, with 64% already deploying at least one type of AI technology. Few were aware of the implications or risks associated with AI's use.

The survey's key findings provided DSIT with compelling arguments for more research and the development of AI cybersecurity practice and regulation. The Department has since undertaken a range of further work around AI and cyber security to complement the survey findings, and used the research to contribute to the creation of the Code of Practice for the Cyber Security of AI.

And with a constantly changing AI landscape, there's always the need for more up-to-date information on the latest perceptions and activity around the technology. We are currently running another comprehensive survey of 3,500 UK businesses for DSIT (this time supplemented by a round of follow-up qualitative interviews) to provide more robust, detailed data and insights on AI adoption across the economy.



**These findings tell us that there is a lot of work to do to ensure that UK firms are staying safe while making the most of the opportunities that AI has to offer. It was great to help the Department inform their strategy in this area, and we continue to support them in gathering valuable information on AI adoption, with a large-scale survey of businesses currently underway.**

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