

AI Everywhere.

How UAE business leaders view AI in life, work and society



\$15tn

"AI will add an estimated \$15 trillion to global GDP by 2030"¹

DELL™ – Dell

+15%

AI adoption will "boost global economic output by up to 15 percentage points over the next decade"²

pwc – PwC

~40%

"AI will affect almost 40 percent of jobs around the world, replacing some and complementing others"³

 – IMF

As we face up to the massive power of AI, hyperbole is **everywhere**...

Vendors, analysts, and researchers are all making bold claims about its seismic impact. The AI wave is here, but in truth, no one can fully predict all the changes it is bringing.

For this reason, Endava commissioned our latest research report to find out the reality of AI, not as a prediction but as people are experiencing it in the here and now. This is our latest research report – and we're turning our attention to society, trust, governance, and ethics, in addition to questions about AI in business.

This is because AI's impact will touch all of society. Operational productivity gains are welcome, but for AI to work for everyone everywhere, we need to view it in terms that go beyond immediate business needs.

For this research, **we spoke to 300 business decision makers in the UAE, from owners and the C-Suite to management, across multiple industries.** We asked them about AI in business, in their personal lives, and their views of AI in society and government's role.

The UAE is a pivotal market for AI adoption. It has recently amplified its AI ambitions with a string of major investment strategies, including a landmark agreement with the US to construct the world's largest AI campus outside the United States, in Abu Dhabi; and a commitment to fund a \$1.4 trillion investment framework over the next decade, targeting key sectors including AI.

These developments underscore the UAE's strategic vision to become a global hub for AI innovation. By fostering international partnerships and investing heavily in AI infrastructure, the UAE is not only enhancing its economic prospects but also contributing to the broader discourse on the ethical and secure advancement of AI technologies.

How businesses engage with and react to AI will have far-reaching consequences as they guide massive budgets, workforces, machinery, and payments infrastructure. Their insights will help you better understand and contribute to public discourse, business strategy and policy direction.

Let's find out what they said. →

Key findings



People trust AI with personal decision making

76% of UAE respondents would somewhat or completely trust a completely automated AI to make lifestyle decisions on their behalf.

Our respondents indicated that in addition to allowing AI to make high-stakes business decisions, they are ready to outsource personal responsibilities too, such as career, lifestyle, health and finance decisions.



AI has become a societal utility, not just a business tool

74% agree that access to AI is just as important to UAE society as having access to essential utilities like water and energy.

While AI adoption initially targeted productivity gains, it's now clear it will have a central role throughout civil life. Our respondents view the importance of AI access in terms of critical infrastructure.



Concern that national infrastructure can't cope with AI demands

57% agree that AI cannot be used to its fullest potential due to limitations in the UAE's infrastructure.

Amid high AI usage, there is concern that infrastructure isn't ready to fully support it. Building needs to start now: the International Energy Agency (IEA) predicts energy demands from AI data centres will quadruple by 2030.⁵



Business leaders are optimistic, but are they misallocating capital?

51% of UAE respondents agree that "My organisation is not investing in the right AI technologies that drive meaningful business value".

Most believe that AI is already enhancing efficiency, profitability and innovation. However, a notable portion of employees feel organisations are not yet investing in the ideal technologies to deliver long-term value.



AI adoption is the dominant business priority

Adopting AI is the no. 1 business priority for our UAE respondents; Better client services is no. 2; Investing in other tech is no. 3.

When it comes to competitive advantage, nothing comes close to AI. When asked "What are the top three priorities for your organization during 2025?", adopting AI was cited as number one.



There's a gap in organisations between AI strategy and execution

36% of UAE C-Suite respondents said they expect their company to be at an 'Advanced' stage on the 'AI Transformation Journey' in two years' time, compared to 26% of middle management and 28% of junior management.

More senior respondents are more confident that their AI strategies will deliver success in the next two years. Do we need more cultural alignment around the complexities – and holdups – of transformation?



There's high confidence in the government's AI strategy

76% of respondents agree the UAE government is doing all it can to drive AI in the country; 7% disagree.

Most of our respondents think the government is delivering when it comes to driving AI, reflecting the high levels of AI confidence in the UAE.



Global regulation is desired and required

97% of UAE respondents feel it's important for an independent global organisation or governing AI body to lead the drive for AI; 97% think the government should lead.

To eliminate the risks inherent in AI, our respondents are almost universally in favour of a global organisation to take responsibility for creating common policy and practice around AI.

Using AI: The impact on our daily lives

AI has moved from science fiction to ubiquitous technology in just a few years. **ChatGPT claims it has 400m weekly users,**⁶ and AI assistants are popping up everywhere, with Grok on X, Copilot in Office, and Meta AI in WhatsApp. Its use cases range from creating cartoon characters and asking for movie suggestions to groundbreaking medical research and revealing the mysteries of ancient history.⁷

To understand how it’s proliferating among business leaders, we asked our survey respondents about their familiarity with AI and how often they use it, as well as gaining insight into their views on trust and impact.

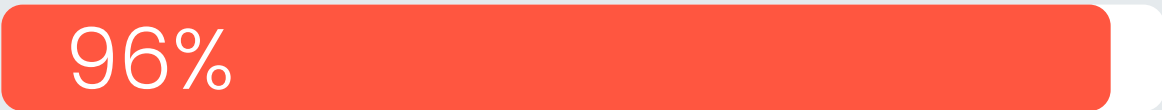
Familiarity and Use



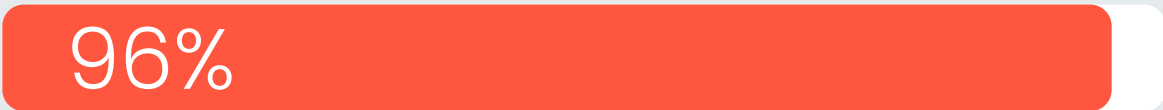
97% of UAE respondents are at least **somewhat familiar with AI and its capabilities**. 28% said completely familiar. 0% said not at all familiar.



92% of UAE respondents **use AI-powered smart devices at least once a month**; 18% use them every day; 6% never do.



96% of UAE respondents **use AI to generate text and images at least once a month**; 20% use it every day; 1% never do.



96% of UAE respondents **have conversations with AI or use it as a companion at least once a month**; 25% do this every day; 1% never do.

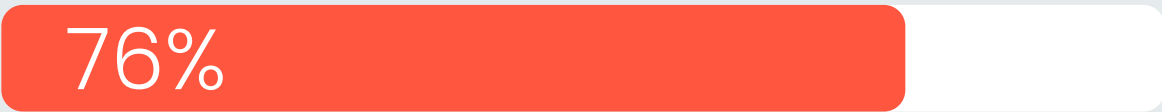
There’s a very high level of familiarity with AI among our respondents, and that extends beyond Generative AI, including Agentic AI, Predictive AI, Automation AI and Conversational AI. They’re also using it regularly, with an overwhelming majority using AI at least once a month and up to a quarter using it every day.

Interestingly, we see AI use fall between very senior roles and middle and junior management, even when using AI in a personal context.

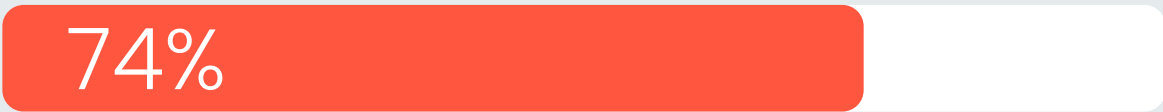


Using AI: The Impact on Our Daily Lives

Trust and Impact



76% of UAE respondents would **somewhat or completely trust** an entirely automated AI to make lifestyle decisions on their behalf.



74% agree that access to AI is just **as important to UAE society as having access to essential utilities** like water and energy.



78% of UAE respondents agree it is inevitable that AI will shape the lives of everyone in the world over the next few years.



79% believe that successful implementation of AI in the UAE will **significantly improve the quality of life of its people**.

Perhaps the most illuminating statistic of all is that our respondents rank AI access close to water and energy in importance. It’s no longer just a business or entertainment tool; it’s a public utility. Of course, an audience of business leaders may be more tech-optimistic than the general population, but it’s a stark indication of just how important and powerful AI is.

Another surprising detail is the extent to which people trust AI to make decisions on their behalf, with a clear majority happy to outsource lifestyle decisions. Again, this varies with age: **60% of Gen Z would completely trust AI to make lifestyle decisions**

without human input, whilst only 18% of Gen X say the same. Although people are clearly comfortable with AI support, it begs the question: can AI really make better choices for you than your own intuition?

The UAE is again extremely AI-comfortable, with high levels of trust in its ability to make personal decisions on behalf of the individual, and a high level of agreement that AI is an essential utility. It’s therefore not surprising that respondents are confident that AI will improve the lives of the people who live there.

“Trust is the critical enabler of any AI strategy. The UAE’s clear national vision, its youthful and tech-savvy demographic, and its digital-first mindset are combining to give organisations a unique opportunity to innovate with confidence. While other regions remain cautious, weighed down by debates over job displacement, our research shows that businesses in the UAE can move forward with certainty, knowing their workforces are not only ready for AI, but actively embracing it.

It will also be fascinating to see how this trust plays out in people’s personal lives. While a business might measure value through productivity and profit, individuals will use different indicators – ones rooted in wellbeing, empowerment and time saved. When people start handing over personal decisions to AI, how will they define success?”

David Boast,
General Manager – UAE & KSA at Endava

AI in business: The compound interest of AI

At Endava, we work with clients on both integrating AI for specific use cases and preparing overall IT estates for AI integration.

That AI has benefits for business is undisputed.

The question now is, “who’s going first?” and “how far?”. Of course, there are risks associated with leading the pack – followers can enjoy the certainty of using a tried and tested AI solution – but the rewards can be even greater.

Those who are already embracing AI are accelerating, gaining ground in efficiency, productivity and insight. Obviously, with large (and often unpredictable) investments needed, deep pockets help. According to McKinsey, companies with at least \$500 million in annual revenue are changing more quickly than smaller organisations.⁸

How are our respondents using and investing in AI in their businesses and how do they assess the value it has delivered?

Investment



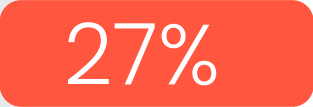
Adopting AI is the no. 1 business priority for our UAE respondents; Better client services is no. 2; Investing in tech other than AI is no. 3.



51% of UAE respondents agree that “My organisation is **not investing in the right AI technologies** that drive meaningful business value”.



36% of UAE C-Suite respondents said they **expect their company to be at an ‘Advanced’ stage on the ‘AI Transformation Journey’ in two years’ time**, compared to 26% of middle management and 28% of junior management.



27% of UAE respondents agree that their organisation is completely AI ready.

AI in business: The compound interest of AI

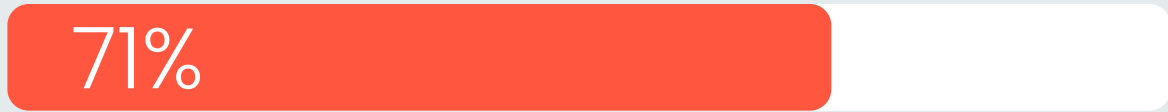
Adopting AI is the number one business priority, emphasising that in 2025 it's seen as the biggest driver of improved profitability, whether that's through new revenues or operational efficiency.

However, there is misalignment between those at the top of organisations and those in the management layer. More owners and the C-suite think they will be 'advanced' AI organisations in the next couple of years than middle and junior management, indicating a discrepancy between the people who set strategy and those who are expected to execute it.

With regards to sectors, AI adoption is particularly emphasised in financial businesses such as wealth management and payments, compared to areas like supply chain, leisure or retail. Regardless of the sector, there is also a feeling that organisations are not investing in the right places – which is perhaps unsurprising with a new technology whose capabilities are not yet fully understood.

Respondents show concern that their AI strategies will not deliver 'advanced' AI organisations, and half believe that they may not be investing in the right technologies.

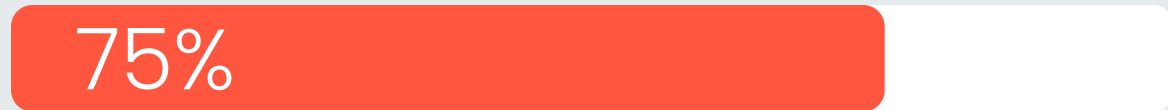
Value



71% of UAE respondents agree the implementation of AI has already had **a direct impact on increasing their organisation's profits**; 8% disagree.



66% of UAE respondents think that if their organisation fails to make significant progress, it would take less than two years for it to lose market share; 35% think it could lose market share in less than one year.



75% of UAE respondents agree successful implementation of **AI in their organisation will significantly improve employee job satisfaction**; 8% disagree.

When it comes to realising value through AI, a majority of our respondents say that it is having a positive impact on profitability, and a majority think that failing to adopt AI properly would negatively impact market share within two years. Given the time it can take to integrate AI into business operations with strategy, training and testing required, especially in larger enterprises, this suggests that those who don't start soon risk losing out.



“Our research shows that people already see the promise of AI being transformed into the profit of AI. This reflects of our experiences with clients, many of whom are enjoying better efficiency and profitability.

AI is like compound interest – the earlier you start, the greater the return over time. We’re seeing that organisations in the UAE understand this, but the research highlights a gap between ambition and execution. Those who align investment, talent and technology now will be tomorrow’s market leaders.”

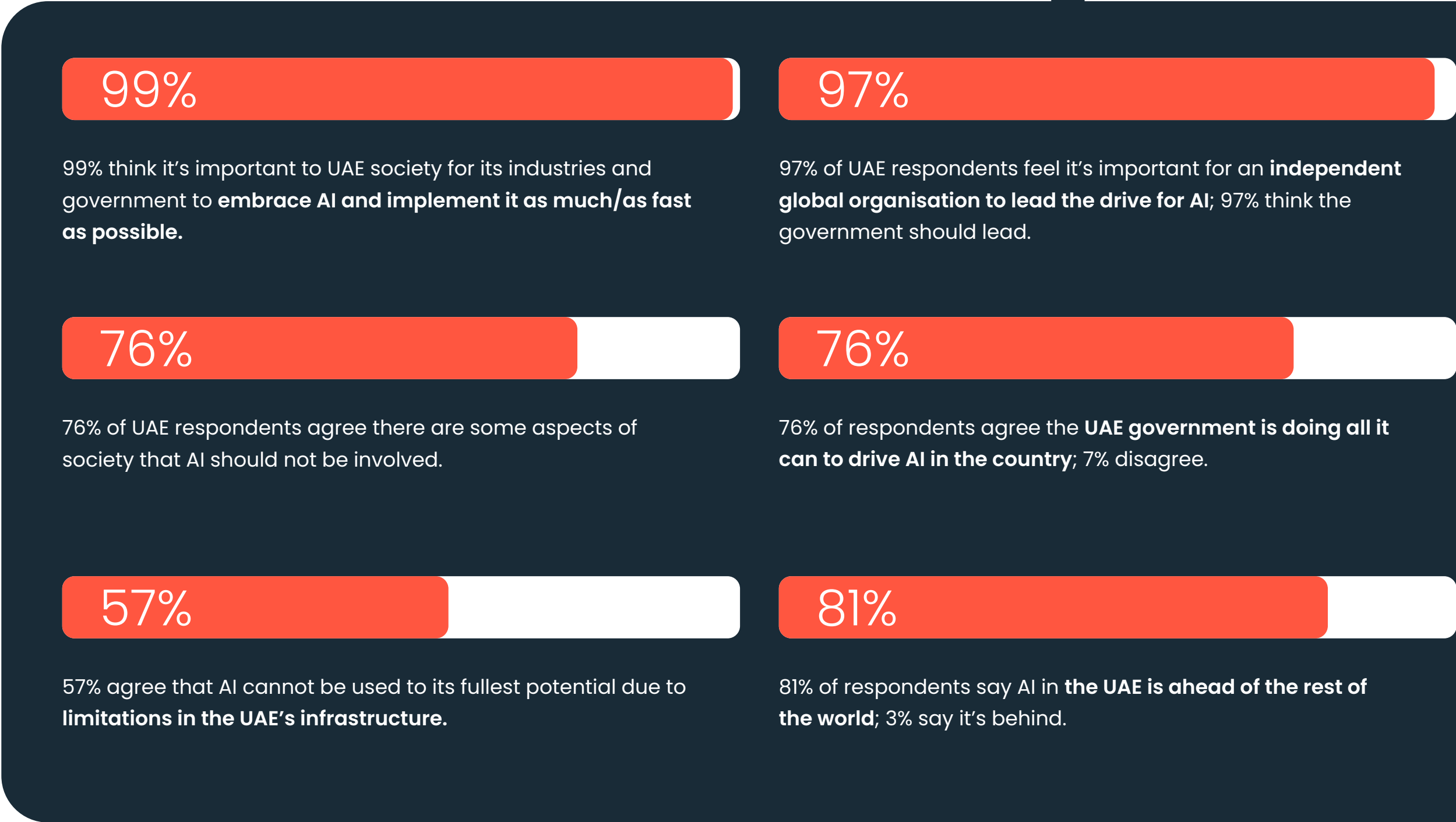
David Boast,
General Manager – UAE & KSA at Endava

AI in society: Governance and ethics

As AI infrastructure and models become central to economic and societal progress, shifting global power dynamics become more important.

Is it safe to rely on foreign-developed AI platforms? Should the UAE or any other nation build its own AI models? Will there be a centralised, global set of ethical AI standards? And who decides?

These might be the biggest questions in technology right now – and well beyond the means of any one business to steer. But, always, our collective solutions need to align with individual attitudes across the business world. As we move into an era of AI everywhere, these governance questions need to be settled.



AI in society: Governance and ethics

Given our respondents have shown themselves to be AI optimists, it's not surprising a clear majority think the government should be helping to embrace and implement AI.

What's less predictable is the almost universal support for a governmentally-driven, global body on AI usage. While decades-long debates continue to tick over around the openness and regulation of the internet, it seems people have very quickly coalesced behind oversight for AI. This suggests that our respondents really do see AI as an exceptional technology, not just the next step in a long chain of digital innovation.

While our respondents identified the USA and China as leaders in AI adoption and usage, UAE respondents placed the Middle East in third place, showing a positive belief in their own region's AI stature. This confidence in AI leadership aligns with confidence in government, with a majority believing the government is doing all they can to drive AI in the country.

However there's still work to do: over half of the respondents think that national infrastructure needs to be updated to recognise the full potential of AI.

When asked to think about which issues would be most important to address in a future context of full societal AI adoption, our respondents demonstrated some interesting demographic trends. Older workers are more likely to be concerned about ethical and moral issues like bias and privacy than younger colleagues, while younger workers are generally more attuned than their older colleagues to issues around skills gaps and cultural resistance.

One thing seems clear: agreement that governments should intervene does not imply certainty about how governments should intervene. For a technology as impactful as AI, solutions will need to reflect attitudes across nations and demographics.



“The old Spider-Man quote, ‘with great power comes great responsibility’, is pertinent as we head into the AI era. AI is powerful, arguably as much so as any other technology ever invented, so the institutions deciding on ethical practices have a huge responsibility to bear.

The question still remains: who will it be that makes the ethical, moral and regulatory decisions?

Whoever it is, from our clients’ perspective, regulation is welcomed, as it provides clarity, guidance and some form of legal protection. It allows long-term planning to take place in a consistent legislative environment, which de-risks investment and makes it far more palatable for boards to approve.”

*David Boast,
General Manager – UAE & KSA at Endava*

Conclusion

Conclusion and methodology

With AI moving so fast, both in terms of adoption and development, it's critical for business decision makers to keep up to date with its current context.

This research helps to do that, highlighting some interesting developments. Many of the people we spoke to really hold AI with very high regard. It's not just that they use AI regularly, but that they trust it, in some cases implicitly, both with business decisions and with very personal decisions. They see its potential utility as up there with energy itself. But there is clearly some reticence to accept AI completely into society without some guardrails, as we found a high level of support for some form of global governing body for AI.

In a business context, organisations are already seeing increased profits using AI, and the priority is continued AI adoption. No particular surprises there. But while the investment continues, middle and junior management – the people tasked with rolling out AI – are less sure of its success than the board room. Besides that, there's suspicion that not all this spending is creating value.

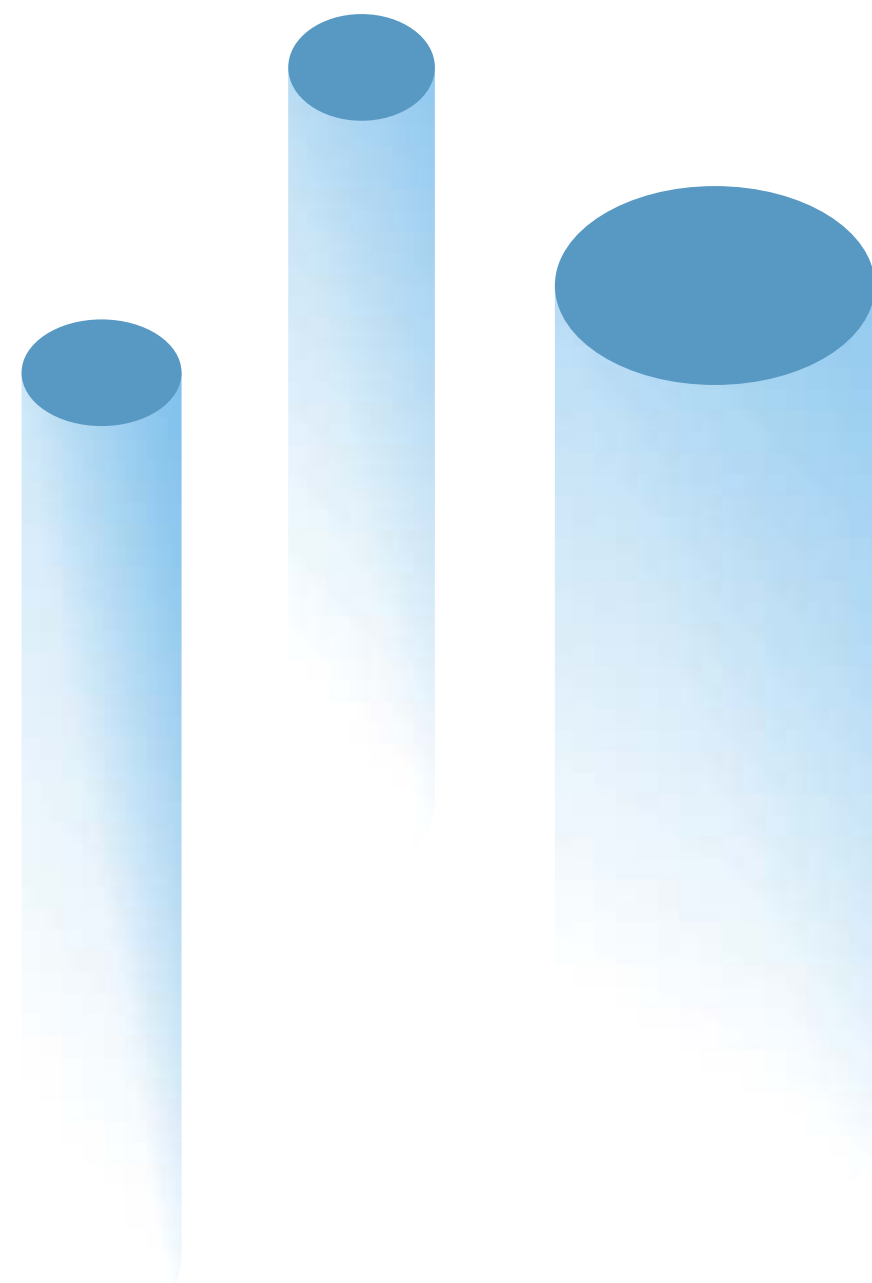
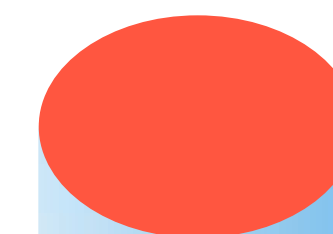
If there's one through-line to all of this, it's that the question is no longer one of what or when, but one of how. How do we capitalise on wide social engagement and trust with AI, how do put investment in the right places to deliver the right advantages, and how do we collaborate across organisations and borders to ensure AI reaches its full potential.

Here, help from an experienced partner is vital. While nobody has full clarity on every change coming over the horizon, expertise and insight is building fast, and businesses like Endava are developing the cross-sectoral view to really share the knowledge of what works and what doesn't.

The AI transformation is underway, and it's more than process-deep; it'll send ripples throughout all organisations and industries, through our personal lives, and it will run deep into our culture and societies. **Use the insights here, speak to experts and speak to your colleagues, and go get your organisation set up for AI success.**

Methodology

Endava partnered with the research and insights company 3Gem to survey employees of large companies in the UAE, selecting for respondents with a self-reported seniority level of management or higher. 3Gem polled 300 UAE-based respondents via an online panel in May 2025.



About Endava

Technology is our how. And **people** are our why.

We are a next-generation technology services partner, enabling our customers to accelerate growth, tackle complex challenges and thrive in evolving markets. **With an AI-native approach, we embed intelligence into every aspect of delivery** – helping organisations boost efficiency, drive innovation and stay competitive.

Our AI-enabled delivery framework integrates cutting-edge technology with deep industry expertise. Underpinned by core modernisation, it empowers businesses to augment intelligence, streamline operations and achieve lasting impact.

Beyond delivering solutions, we transfer knowledge. Every engagement equips our customers with the skills and strategic insights to harness AI, modernise core systems and build AI-first capabilities – enabling them to adapt, scale and shape what’s next.

Reach out to us to explore how **we can help you.**

Let’s connect



Footnotes:

1. [The Road to an AI Revolution – Dell](#)
2. [AI adoption could boost global GDP by an additional 15 percentage points by 2035, as global economy is reshaped: PwC Research – PwC](#)
3. [AI Will Transform the Global Economy. Let’s make Sure it Benefits Humanity. – IMF](#)
4. [UAE Strategy for Artificial Intelligence – UAE](#)
5. [Energy demands from AI datacentres to quadruple by 2030, says report – The Guardian](#)
6. [OpenAI’s weekly active users surpass 400 million – Reuters](#)
7. [AI helps scholars read scroll buried when Vesuvius erupted in AD79 – The Guardian](#)
8. [The state of AI: How organizations are rewiring to capture value – McKinsey](#)