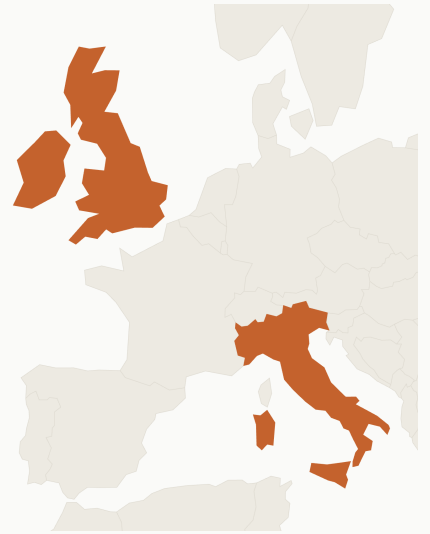


● AI USAGE BENCHMARK · JULY 2026

How the UK, Ireland and Italy actually use AI at work

Two of the largest AI companies published what their users do all day. We read both and ran the comparison for our three markets.



- 01 Anthropic Economic Index, May 2026 period, 121 countries
- 02 Google AI & Economy ATLAS v1.0, 14,653,926 interactions
- 03 ONS, Artificial intelligence in UK businesses, 2023 to 2026

2.39%

of UK Claude conversations are writing a business email: the largest single task in Anthropic's request tree, at its most granular level.

68/21

AI reaches 68% of occupations and touches 21% of tasks in the median one that uses it.

28%

of UK micro businesses use any AI technology, against 49% of firms with 250 or more staff.

Six things the data says. Each one checked against the published dataset rather than the coverage of it.

01

2.39%

At the most granular level Anthropic publishes, the single most common work task a UK professional gives AI is writing a business email. No other individual work task is larger.

03

11.5%

Italy builds. Software development is 11.5% of Italian conversations against the UK's 8.2%, and Italy has the highest work share of the three at 42.9%.

05

28%

Only 28% of UK micro businesses use any AI technology, against 49% of firms with 250 or more staff. The honest summary is not that small businesses use AI badly. Most do not use it at all.

02

21%

AI has reached 68% of occupations, but in the median occupation where it is used at all it touches just 21% of the tasks. Broad, and shallow.

04

47.9%

Ireland is the most personal market of the three, and its careers cluster runs about 38% larger than the UK's.

06

3.3x

The widely quoted gap between Google's 13% and Anthropic's 43% work share is an artefact of which product each study measured, not a finding about how people work.

Between us we are Italian and Irish, and we are both based in the UK. Three markets, one company, and a long-running argument about whether people in each of them actually use AI the same way.

When Anthropic published its Economic Index, we went looking for the answer. Then Google released ATLAS, built on nearly 15 million Gemini interactions.

Two of the largest AI companies had each published what their users really do all day. We could not find the two read side by side against the countries we work in, so we did it ourselves.

What we found stopped us: these are the most capable reasoning tools in commercial history, and the most common thing we ask them to do is look something up and write it up nicely.

What do people actually use AI for at work? Not what you would hope.

Anthropic publishes its request data as a tree. At the finest level it reports, the largest single work task in the UK is business correspondence, at 2.39% of all UK Claude conversations. Nothing else that counts as a discrete work task comes close. Marketing copy and social posts follow. Content creation and copywriting is the biggest category of any kind, at 21.5% in the UK and 22.7% worldwide.

The tasks a business would actually pay for sit far below.

2.39%

Business correspondence, meaning writing emails, is the largest leaf-level work task in the UK tree.

WORK TASK (UK)	SHARE
Business correspondence (emails)	2.39%
Post copywriting	1.62%
Marketing copy	1.37%
Scheduled reporting	1.21%
Presentation authoring	1.08%
Recruitment and HR operations	0.57%
Knowledge base authoring	0.55%
Business reports	0.47%
Financial modelling	0.35%
Invoicing	0.24%

Figure 1. Every row is a leaf-level task, the most granular unit Anthropic publishes. Broader clusters sit above these and are labelled as clusters wherever we use them. Source: Anthropic Economic Index, May 2026.

● TWO NUMBERS PEOPLE WILL GET WRONG

3.66%

Starting a business looks like it beats email. It does not compete on the same footing: it is a cluster one level up the tree, holding competitive research, product comparison, market sizing and entrepreneurship guidance together.

5.57%

Searching electronic sources for information is the UK's top entry in a separate classification, the US occupational task catalogue. Both lenses are legitimate. A number from one cannot be ranked against a number from the other.

How much of the average job does AI actually touch? Google's data answers from a different angle and lands in the same place.

68%

of all occupations show some AI use. Two in three, not all of them.

21%

of tasks are touched in the median occupation where AI is used at all.

3%

of occupations use AI across more than three quarters of their work: software QA testers, HR specialists, document management specialists.

Read those three carefully. Their task catalogues absorb requests from adjacent work, which lifts them up the depth ranking.

Figure 2. Reach against depth. Source: Google AI & Economy ATLAS v1.0, 23 July 2026.

Broad, and shallow. Two thirds of occupations touched, a fifth of the tasks inside them.

Anthropic's classifier also estimates how long each task would take a person working alone, and those estimates run well ahead of the time the conversations themselves take. We have deliberately not put a ratio on that, and you should be sceptical of anyone who does.

It is a model-generated estimate rather than a measurement, it is bucketed by order of magnitude, and a finished conversation is not the same thing as a finished job.

The direction is real. The multiple is not something either dataset can support.

10%

Fewer than one in ten conversations involving complex cognitive work is an attempt to complete the task end to end. That is the reason to be careful with any productivity multiple, and the reason the opportunity is still open.

Italy buys automation, the UK buys process, Ireland buys positioning. One pitch does not travel across these three markets.

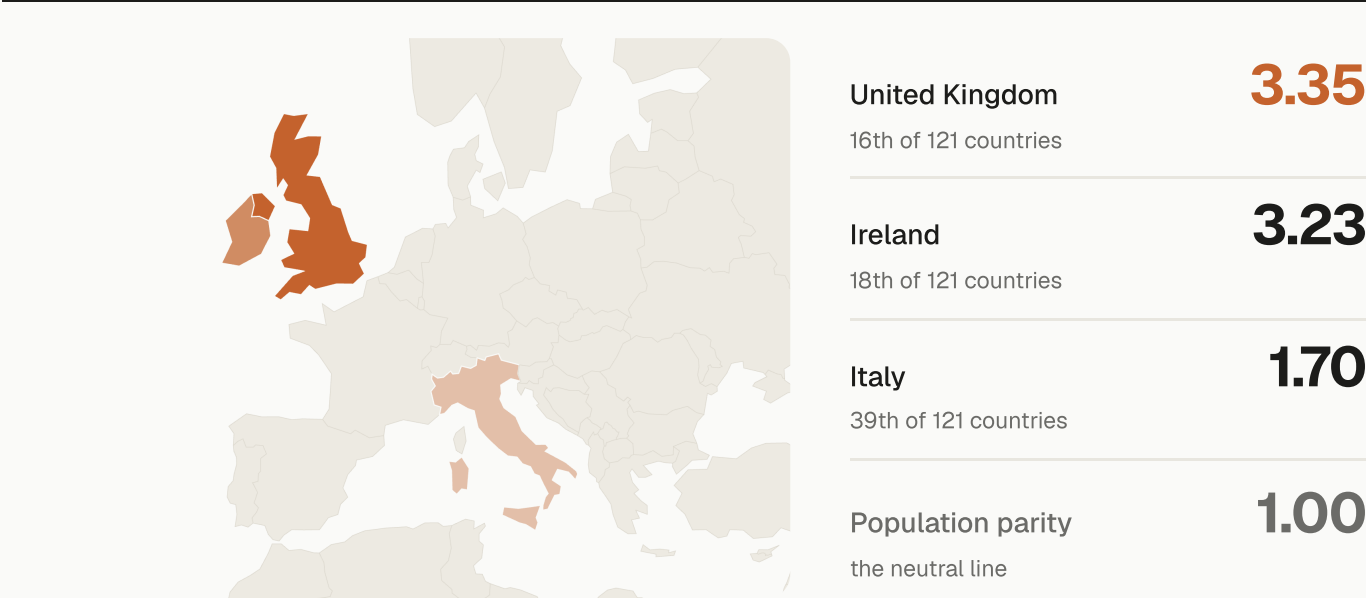


Figure 3. Usage index by market. The index divides a country's share of Claude usage by its share of working-age population, so 1.0 means usage exactly proportional to population.

UK Advice and administration Advice and recommendations make up 13.6% of everything Claude produces for UK users against 10.7% globally, the single largest deviation in the UK's output profile. It leads the three markets on business process and operations at 4.8%, and has the highest share of study-related use at 17.5%. It is also the most hands-on: 55.2% of UK conversations are collaborative rather than hand-offs, against 51.4% worldwide. Two caveats, and we would rather say them than have someone else find them. Ireland produces more advice than the UK does. And the UK's work share, 39.0%, sits below the global 43.4%.	IE Careers and self Nearly 48% of Irish conversations are personal rather than work or study, the highest of the three, and its work share is the lowest at 36.3%. Health questions run higher than either neighbour, at 1.88% against the UK's 1.48% and Italy's 1.46%. Its standout is careers. CV writing accounts for 1.57% of all Irish conversations against the UK's 0.93%. Grouped, the careers work comes to roughly 5.4% of everything Irish users do, against 3.9% in the UK and 1.9% in Italy.	IT Building and processing Italy ranks lowest of the three on the usage index, but the mix is the most technical and the most work-oriented: 42.9% of Italian conversations are work, against 39.0% in the UK and 36.3% in Ireland. Software development is 11.5% of Italian conversations, matching the global average, while the UK sits at 8.2%. Document processing runs 5.3% against the UK's 3.1%. Translation is four times the UK rate. Presentation authoring is the highest of the three at 1.67%.
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Where the three markets diverge.

United Kingdom Ireland Italy



Figure 4. Bars are scaled within each row, so compare markets across a row rather than between rows. Source: Anthropic Economic Index, May 2026.

The work and personal split

Italy is the only one of the three close to the global work share. Ireland is the furthest from it.

Work Personal Coursework

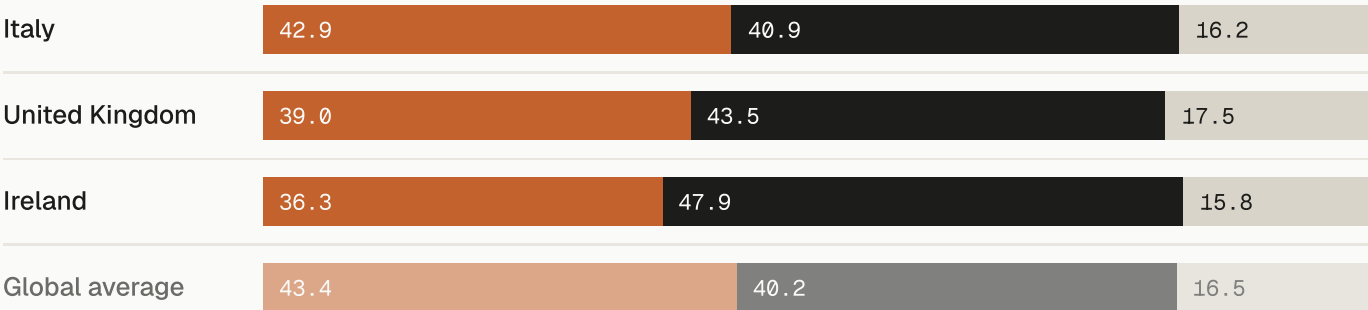


Figure 5. Share of all classified conversations, in percent. Source: Anthropic Economic Index, May 2026.

Why the 13% against 43% work statistic is wrong. It describes a product's audience rather than how people work.

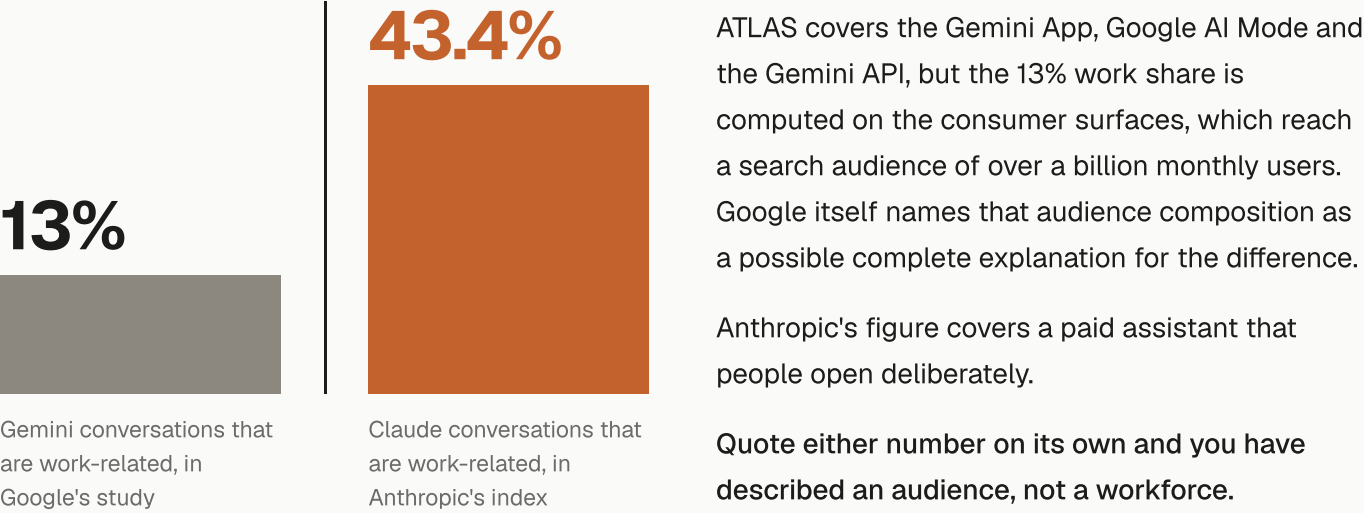


Figure 6. The same question asked of two different populations. Sources: Google ATLAS v1.0; Anthropic Economic Index.

AI adoption among UK SMEs

Neither AI study reports anything by company size. The Office for National Statistics does, and the picture is stark.

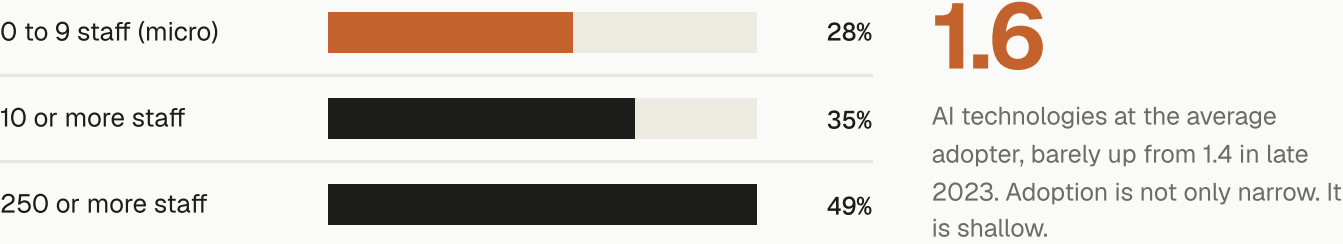


Figure 7. Firms using at least one AI technology on the ONS definition, which counts named technologies rather than any tool with an AI feature in it. Private surveys using the looser definition report UK adoption above 50%. Source: ONS, Artificial intelligence in UK businesses, 2023 to 2026.

Who uses AI the most, relative to their size. All three of our markets run well ahead of population parity. None of them lead.

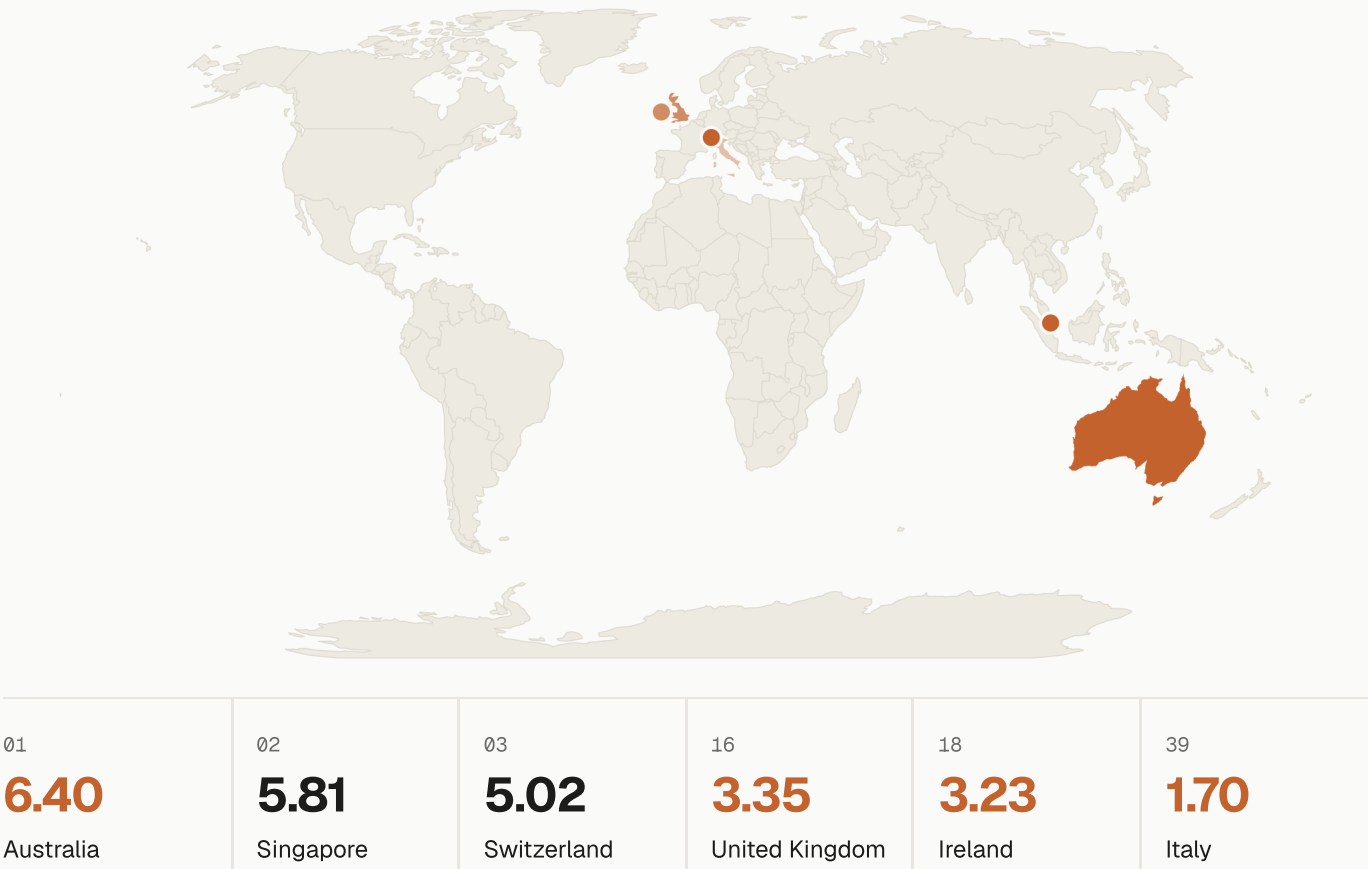


Figure 8. Anthropic usage index, ranked position of 121 countries. The countries we cite are picked out in terracotta, with a dot where the country is too small to read at this scale. Source: Anthropic Economic Index, May 2026.

3.66%

of UK conversations.
3.83% in Ireland, 3.16% in Italy.

One bright spot, and it is a large one

Starting a business, the cluster covering competitive research, product comparison, market sizing and entrepreneurship guidance, outranks every named business-operations cluster in all three markets. People bring AI the decision. They just do not yet bring it the work that follows.

Among firms that have adopted, around three fifths use AI to improve business operations. So the honest summary is not that small businesses use AI badly. Most do not use it at all.

Among those who do, the work is orientation and communication rather than operations. That is a training gap, not a technology gap.

The gap is the opportunity.

None of this is a criticism of anyone. It is where the technology sits a few years into public use, and the same pattern appeared in two independent datasets built by two competing labs.

But the distance between what these tools can do and what we currently ask of them is the entire commercial opportunity of the next few years. It closes fastest for people who learn to drive it properly.

And it closes first inside organisations that treat this as a skill to be taught rather than a licence to be bought.

We are a training business, so of course we would say that. The numbers are public. Check them.

● WORK WITH US

Close the gap in your own business. We design AI capability and embed it inside your team.

Lab Live is free and runs the first Thursday of every month.

Book a free call

Join the next Lab Live

The six questions we get asked about this data.

What do most people use AI for at work?

Writing. At the most granular level Anthropic publishes, the largest single work task in the UK is business correspondence, at 2.39% of all UK Claude conversations, followed by social post copywriting and marketing copy. Content creation is the largest category of any kind, at 21.5% of UK conversations.

What percentage of businesses use AI in the UK?

As of June 2026 the ONS reports that 35% of UK businesses with ten or more employees use at least one AI technology. That falls to 28% for micro businesses with nine staff or fewer, and rises to 49% for firms with 250 or more.

How deeply is AI used inside jobs?

Google's ATLAS study found AI has reached 68% of occupations, but in the median occupation where it is used it covers only about 21% of tasks. Just 3% of occupations show AI use across more than 75% of their work.

Which countries use AI the most?

On Anthropic's usage index, which divides a country's share of Claude usage by its share of working-age population, Australia leads at 6.40, followed by Singapore at 5.81 and Switzerland at 5.02. The UK ranks 16th of 121 at 3.35, Ireland 18th at 3.23 and Italy 39th at 1.70.

Is AI replacing jobs, according to this data?

Neither dataset can answer that. Both describe what people asked their tool to do, not employment outcomes. Anthropic states explicitly that its data cannot support conclusions about job displacement, and fewer than 10% of complex work conversations in Google's data are attempts to complete a task end to end.

Do Italy, Ireland and the UK use AI differently?

Substantially. Italy's mix is the most technical and the most work-oriented, with software development at 11.5% of conversations against the UK's 8.2%. Ireland is the most personal at 47.9%, with a careers cluster around 38% larger than the UK's. The UK leads on business process and study-related use, and is the most collaborative of the three.

Three primary sources, and the cross-comparison done ourselves. No figure here is second-hand reporting.

01

Anthropic Economic Index

May 2026 period, 121 countries, published detail down to region and subtopic level.

anthropic.com/economic-index

02

Google AI & Economy ATLAS v1.0

Published 23 July 2026. 14,653,926 de-identified interactions across the Gemini App, Google AI Mode and the Gemini API. The 13% work share we quote is computed on the consumer surfaces, not on the API.

03

Office for National Statistics

Artificial intelligence in UK businesses, 2023 to 2026. The only one of the three that reports by company size.

How we read the Anthropic tree

Request data is published as a hierarchy. Individual tasks such as business correspondence sit at the leaf level; groupings such as starting a business or translation sit above them. We label clusters as clusters, and we never rank a cluster against a leaf. Where we group tasks ourselves, as with the careers figures, that grouping is ours and not a category the dataset defines. Anthropic separately maps the same conversations onto the US occupational task catalogue, which is a different classification and cannot be compared line by line with the request tree.

Limitations we think you should know about

Both AI studies describe observed usage of their own product, not AI adoption across the market.

Neither identifies users, employers or company size, which is why the SME figures come from the ONS instead.

Not published means an entry fell below the privacy threshold. It never means a measured zero.

Both are single-month snapshots with no trend series, so nothing here shows growth or decline.

Shares are of all classified conversations, so a topic at 2% of everything is a considerably larger share of the working subset.

Both studies map conversations onto US occupational taxonomies, which makes it difficult to judge whether an occupation is over-represented outside the United States.

About the authors

This analysis was produced by the team at NoCodeLab, an AI training and enablement consultancy working across the UK, Ireland and Italy. We teach organisations how to get more from AI tools than a well-written email, which makes us an interested party in pointing this pattern out.

Corrections

Every figure was re-verified against the published datasets at source on 29 July 2026. If you spot an error in our reading of these datasets, tell us and we will correct it publicly.

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