22 October 2026

OECD-ICSB Conference on SMEs and Entrepreneurship – Exploring new frontiers

AI AND SMES

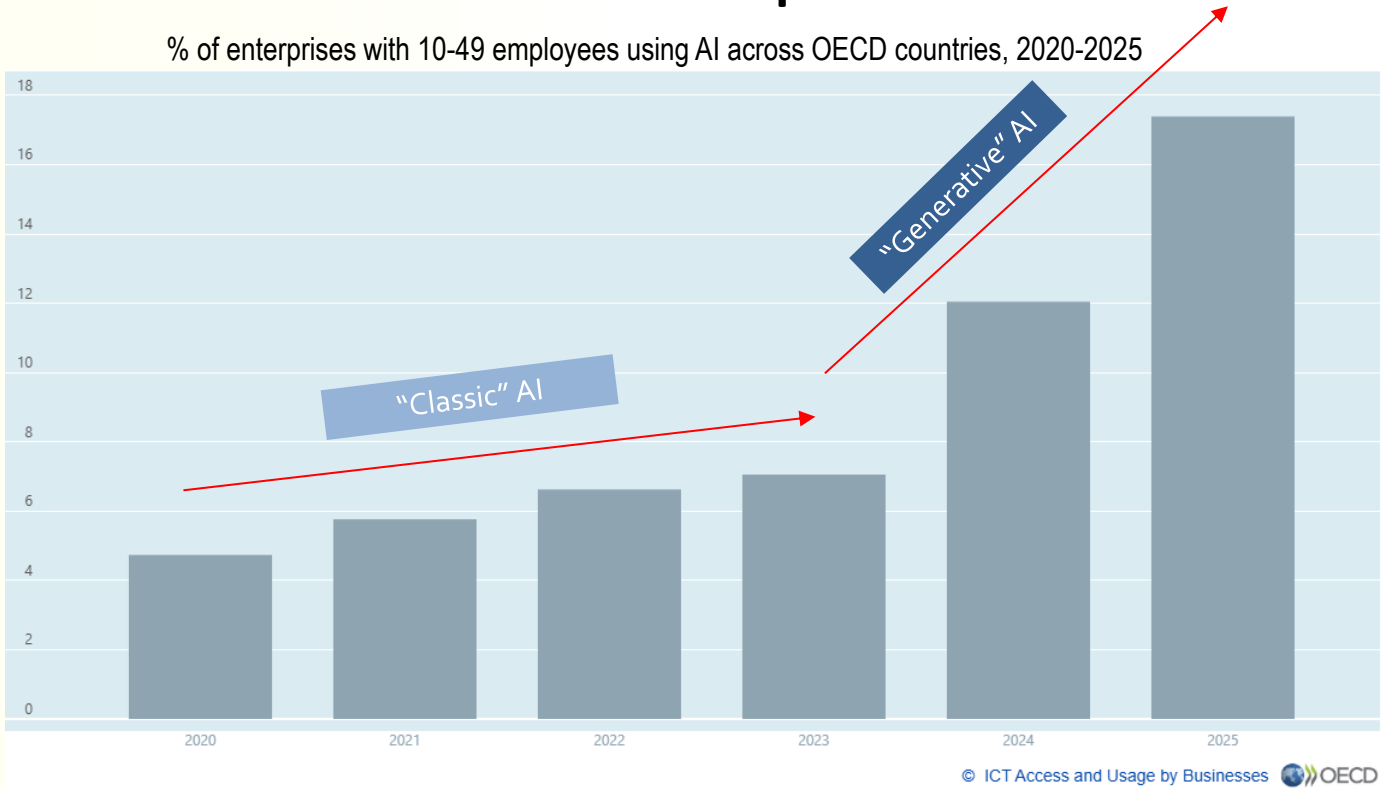
Marco Bianchini, Head of Digitalisation and AI for SMEs Unit, OECD

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- AI uptake by SMEs
- G7/OECD Taxonomy of SME AI adopters
- Policies to enable uptake by SMEs

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AI adoption among small firms is increasing fast especially since LLMs became available to the public

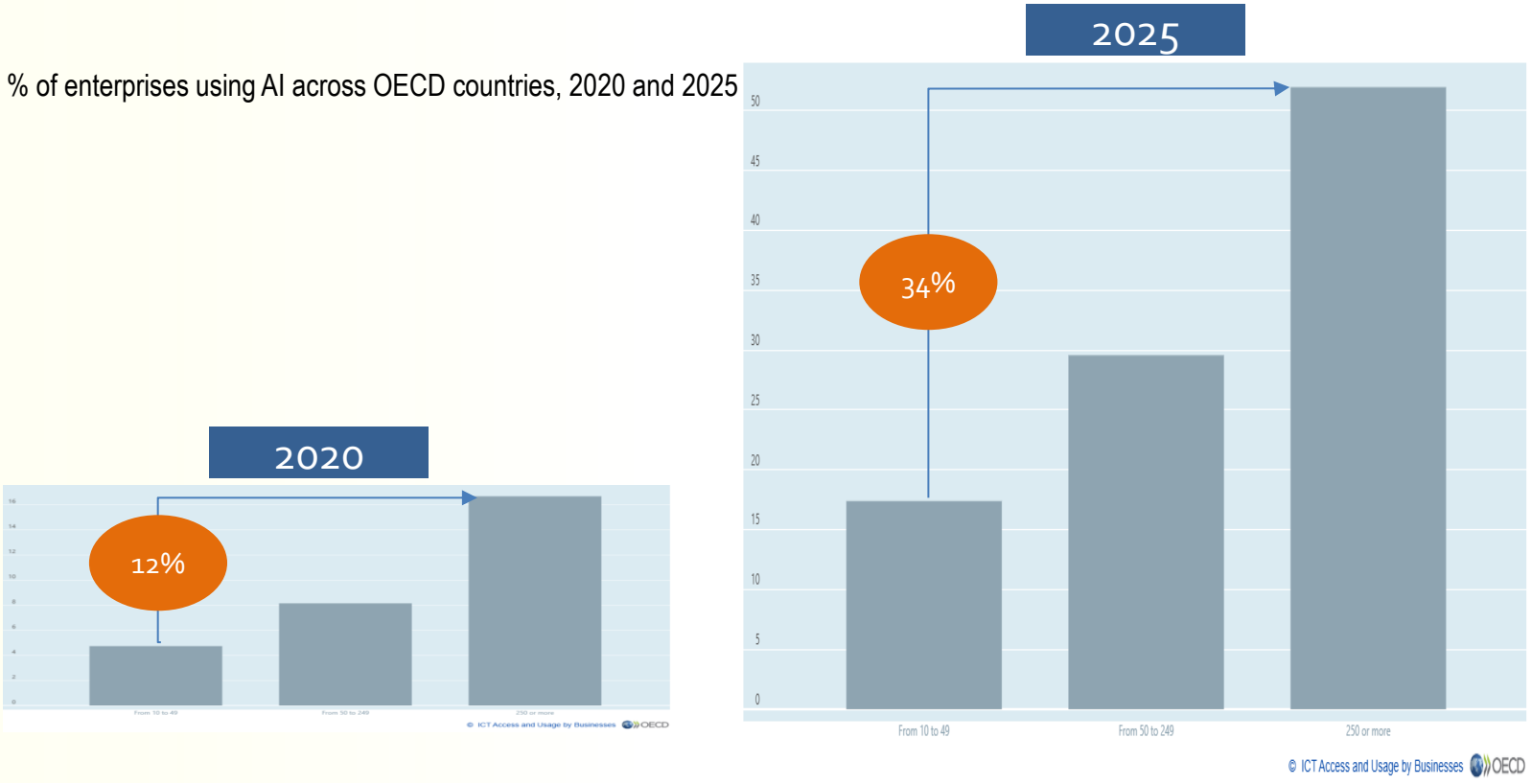


Source accessed in September 2025

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But the gap between SMEs and large firms is large and growing

% of enterprises using AI across OECD countries, 2020 and 2025



Source , accessed in September 2025

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From a G7 mandate to practical tools for policy makers

2025 **Canada's G7 Presidency**

The OECD discussion paper for the G7 introduces a taxonomy of SME AI adopters.

G7 Industry, Digital and Technology Ministers adopt the SME AI Adoption Blueprint (December 2025).

2026 **France's G7 Presidency**

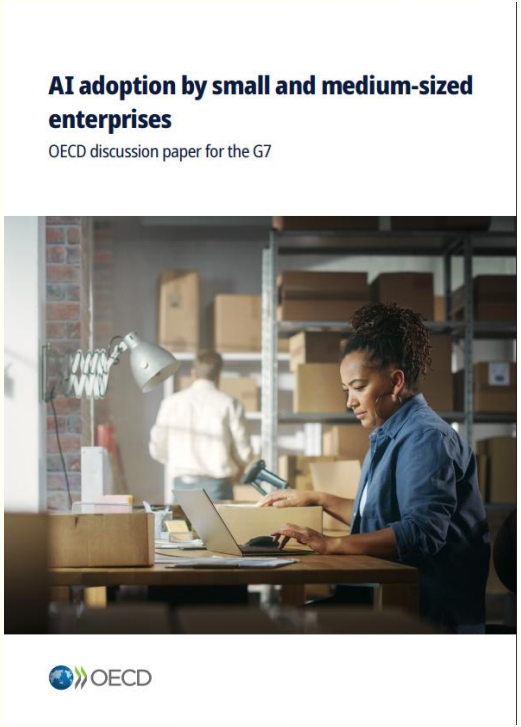
At the request of the G7 IDT track, CFE and STI develop **an SME AI Readiness tool.**

Next **Beyond the G7**

Possible extension of coverage beyond G7 countries, and the same lens applied with partners, starting with ASEAN.

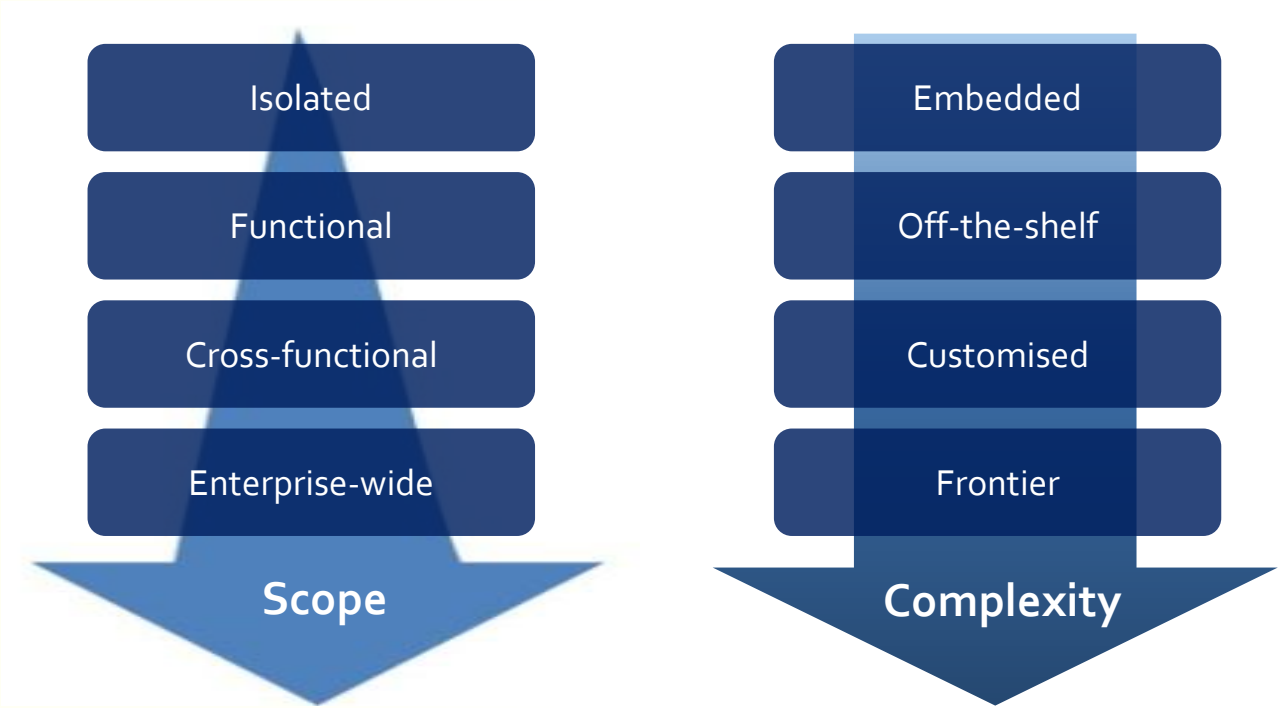
In the Committee's Programme of Work: intermediate output result 1.3, "Driving digital and AI uptake in SMEs".

Our latest report on “AI adoption by Small and Medium Sized Enterprises”



AI adoption is defined along two key dimensions:

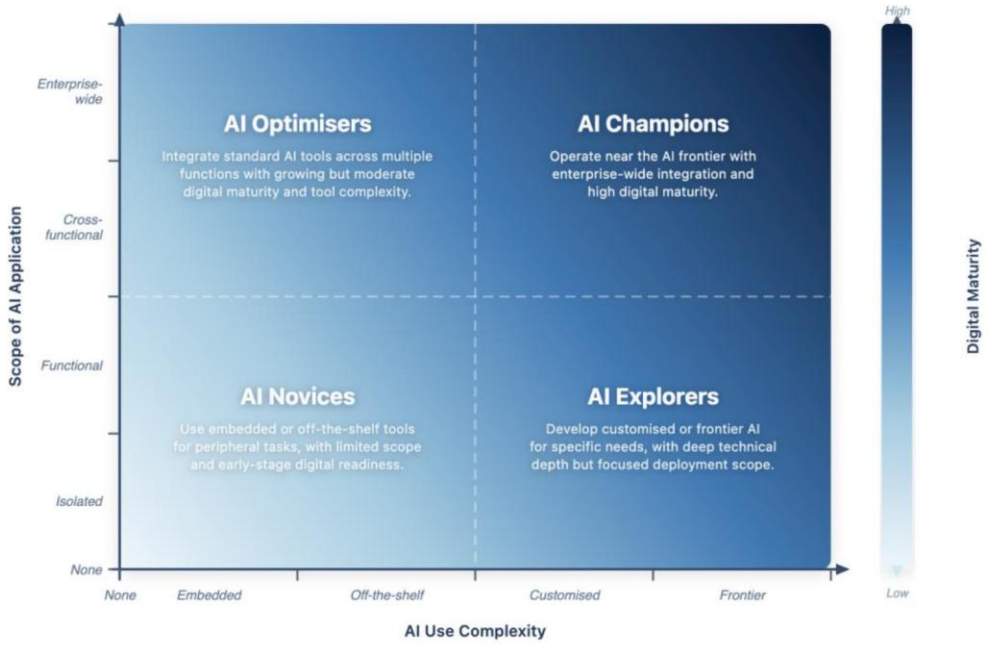
Scope and Complexity



Source: OECD (2025) AI adoption by small and medium-sized enterprises

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G7/OECD Taxonomy of SMEs AI Adopters launched under Canada's G7 presidency in 2025



AI Novices use AI features embedded in everyday software, or a single off-the-shelf tool, for one or few tasks

AI Optimisers integrate off-the-shelf tools across several business functions

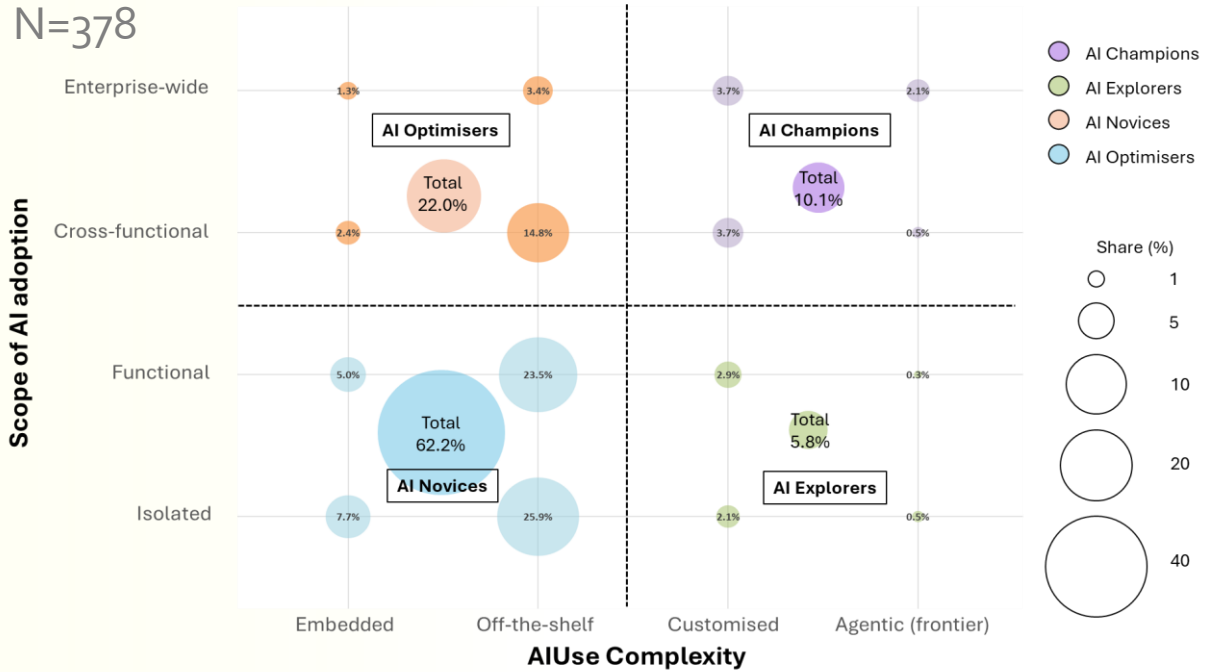
AI Explorers develop or customise more complex applications, often with their own data, in a narrow area

AI Champions embed advanced AI widely across operations and decision-making

Not a ladder. Firms follow different pathways; the lens asks which needs each policy instrument is designed to serve.

In Korea, the majority of SMEs are AI Novices or AI Optimisers

- AI Novices (62.2%) > AI Optimisers (22.0%) > AI Champions (10.1%) > AI Explorers (5.6%)



Note: Quadrant totals the shares (5) across all bubbles within each quadrant (AI-using SMEs)

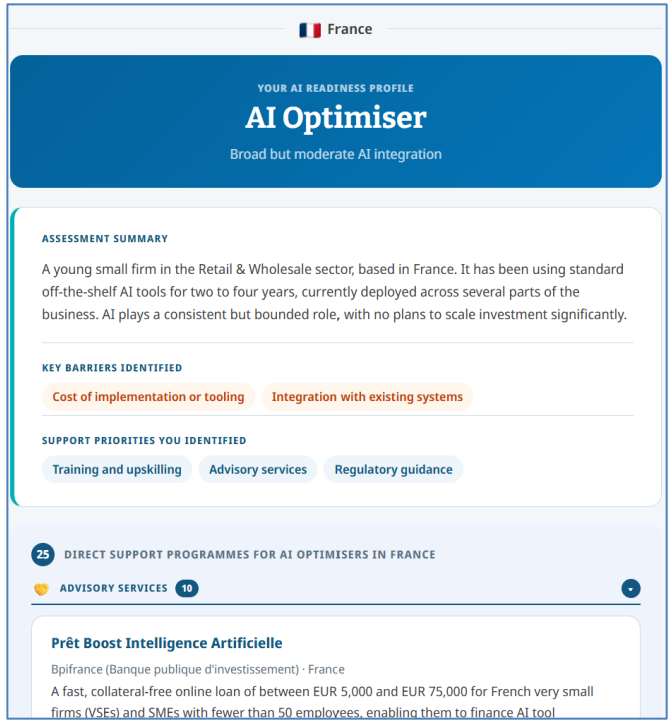
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SME AI Readiness tool, developed under France's G7 Presidency

How it works

1. Answer ~5 minutes of **questions**.
2. Get classified into an **adopter profile**.
3. Receive profile-matched **policy recommendations**.
4. Explore and connect to **relevant, actionable programmes.**

Try it: sme.oecd.ai



AI SME Policy Navigator: a searchable database of 580+ policies across G7 countries

What the Navigator does

1. **Classifies** each programme using the OECD taxonomy as the organising framework.

2. **Allows comparisons** among countries: where are the gaps?

3. Powers the SME AI Readiness Tool's **recommendation** engine.

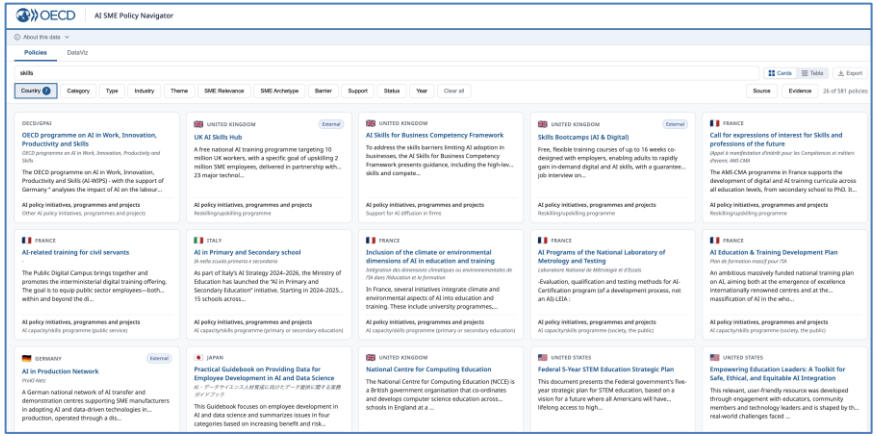


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- The impact of Generative AI
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Key Takeaways

- **AI's uptake among SMEs is going fast** and has accelerated in the last couple of years, but gaps in uptake with large companies remains and grows

- **Most SMEs are still "AI novices"** using off-the-shelf tools for single tasks, but some are starting to **integrate more advanced AI tools across their business**

- **Governments** can enable SMEs to uptake AI by focusing on **connectivity and access to human capital, finance, and data/computing power**

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Thank you



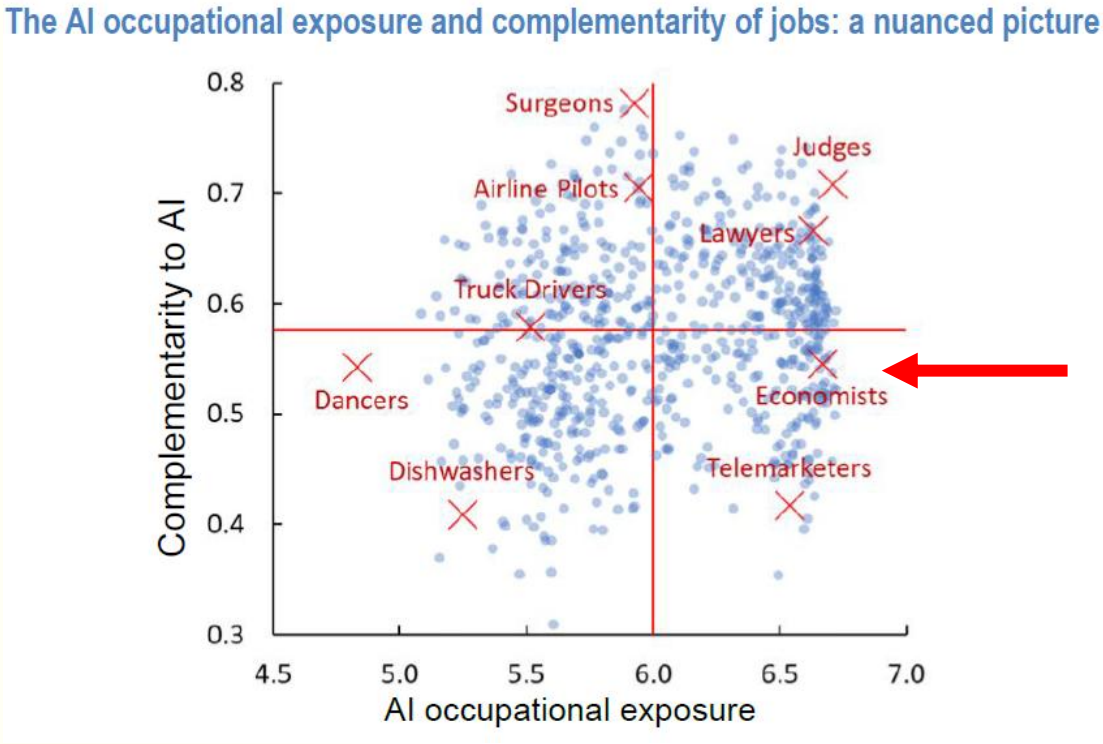
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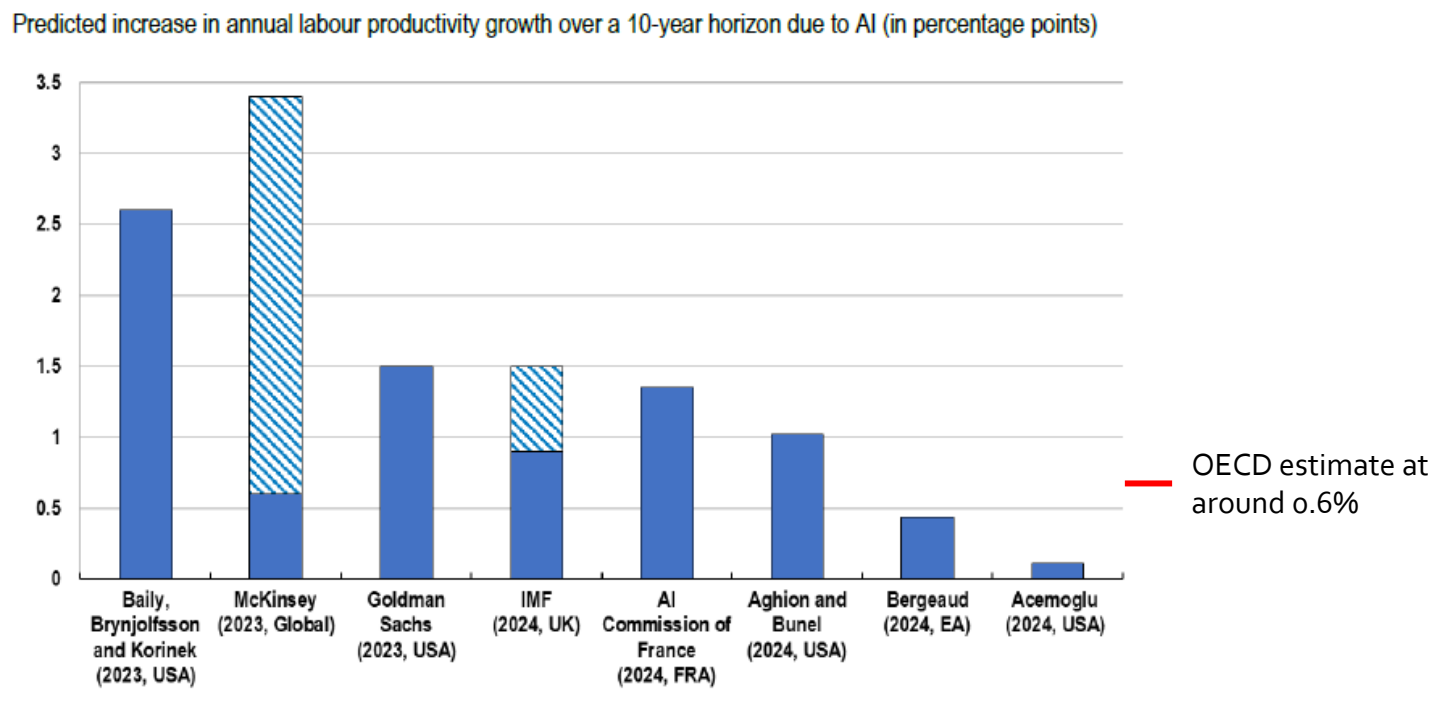
OECD

Generative AI is expected to have a strong impact on jobs



Source: The Impact Of Artificial Intelligence On Productivity, Distribution And Growth (OECD, 2024)

Researchers have very different estimates of the impact of Generative AI on productivity over the next 10 years



Source: Miracle or Myth? Assessing the macroeconomic productivity gains from Artificial Intelligence (OECD, 2024)