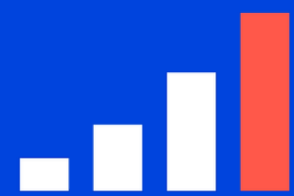
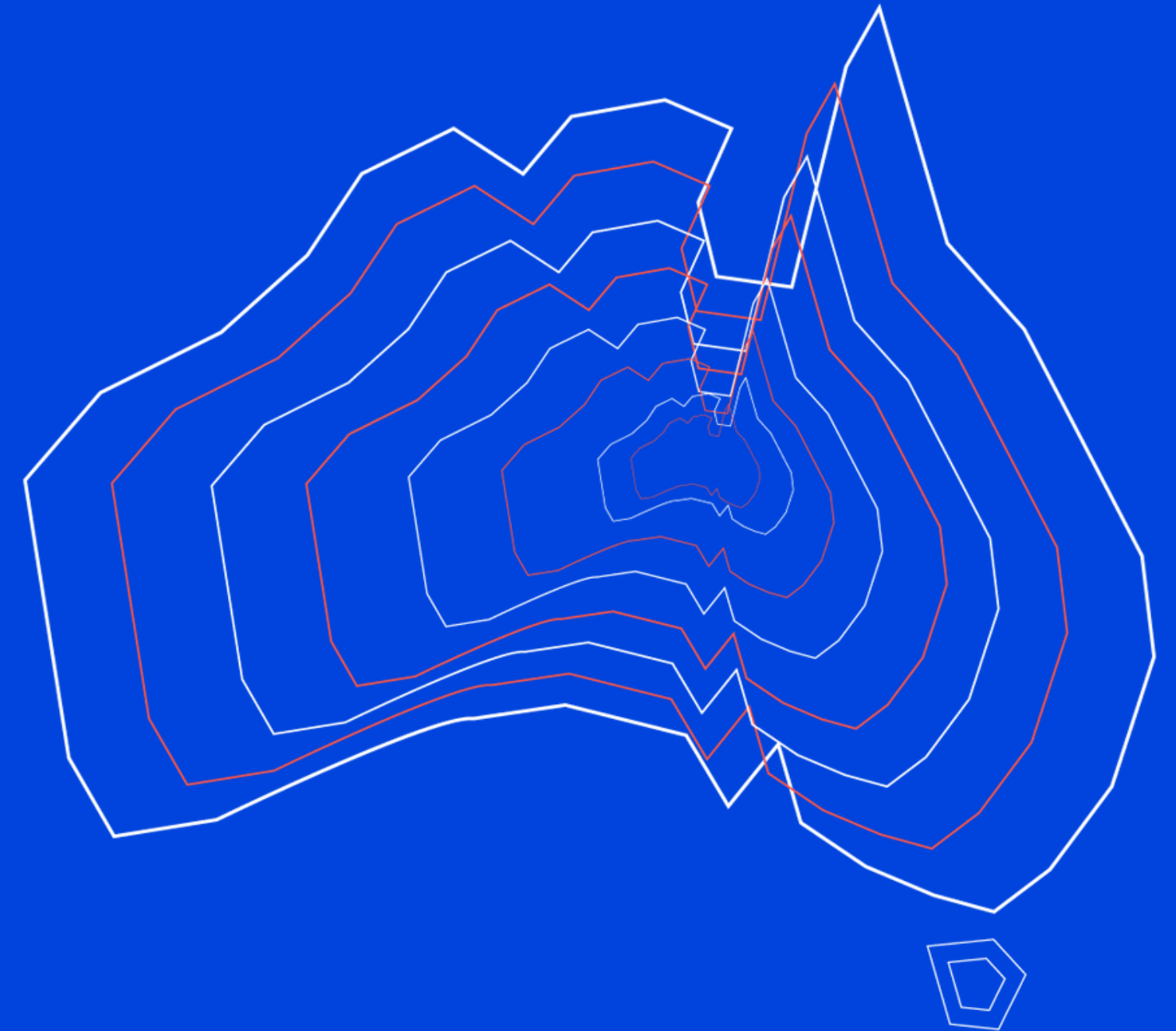
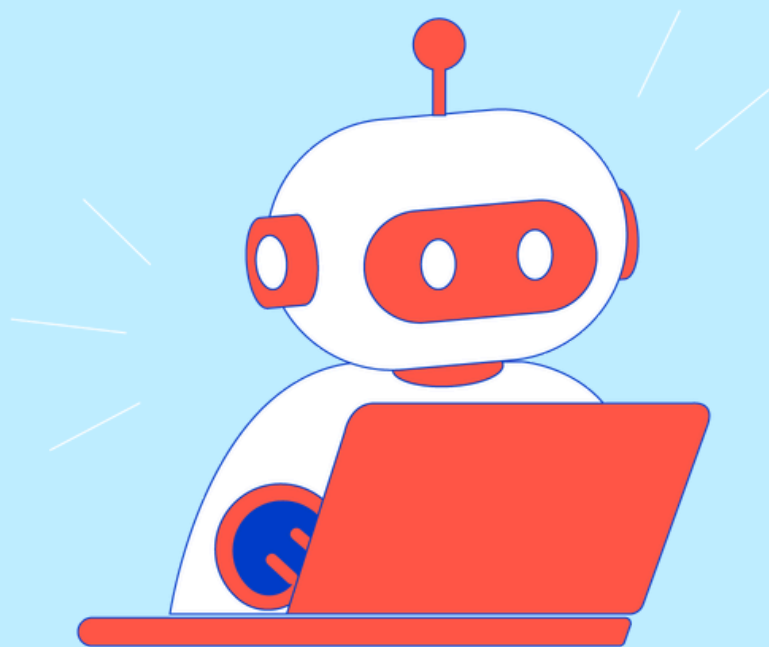


Australian AI Execution Index 2026



The AI scale paradox facing Australian organisations

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About the research

The Australian AI Execution Index 2026 is based on an online survey of 1,000 Australian respondents, conducted through Dynata's panel between 31 July and 12 August 2026: 300 Executive Decision-Makers and 700 Knowledge Workers. The two audiences were sampled independently, not matched from the same organisations.

Enterprise refers to organisations with 1,000 or more employees; Small and Mid-sized to those with 10 to 999. Industry findings exclude cells under 30 respondents, and statistically inconclusive comparisons are not used for headline interpretation.

The Index averages responses to ten statements, rated on a five-point agreement scale and converted to a score from 0 to 100. The ten dimensions are Strategy Alignment, Governance and Risk, Workflow Integration, Leadership Visibility, Workforce Readiness, Cross-Functional Coordination, AI Agent Readiness, Resourcing, Data and Infrastructure, and Business Outcomes.

Scores fall into four bands: Foundational (0 to 39), Emerging (40 to 59), Scaling (60 to 79) and Advanced (80 to 100). The separate AI Execution Level Segmentation combines adoption stage or readiness with the number of measurable improvements across ten outcome areas.

Percentages are rounded to whole numbers; Index scores, ranges, spreads and gaps use one decimal place. Gaps are calculated from unrounded values, so may differ slightly from the displayed figures.

Executive summary

Australia's largest organisations have adopted the most AI, but they are not executing it most effectively. 50% of enterprise respondents report organisation-wide or embedded adoption, compared with 42% in small and mid-sized organisations. Yet enterprises score lower on the Index, at 61.7 compared with 64.9, and lower across all ten dimensions. This is Australia's AI scale paradox.

Leadership confidence and workforce experience also diverge. Executive Decision-Makers give their organisations a score of 75.2; Knowledge Workers give 58.2. This 17.1-point gap widens from 11.6 points in small and mid-sized organisations to 22.5 points in enterprises.

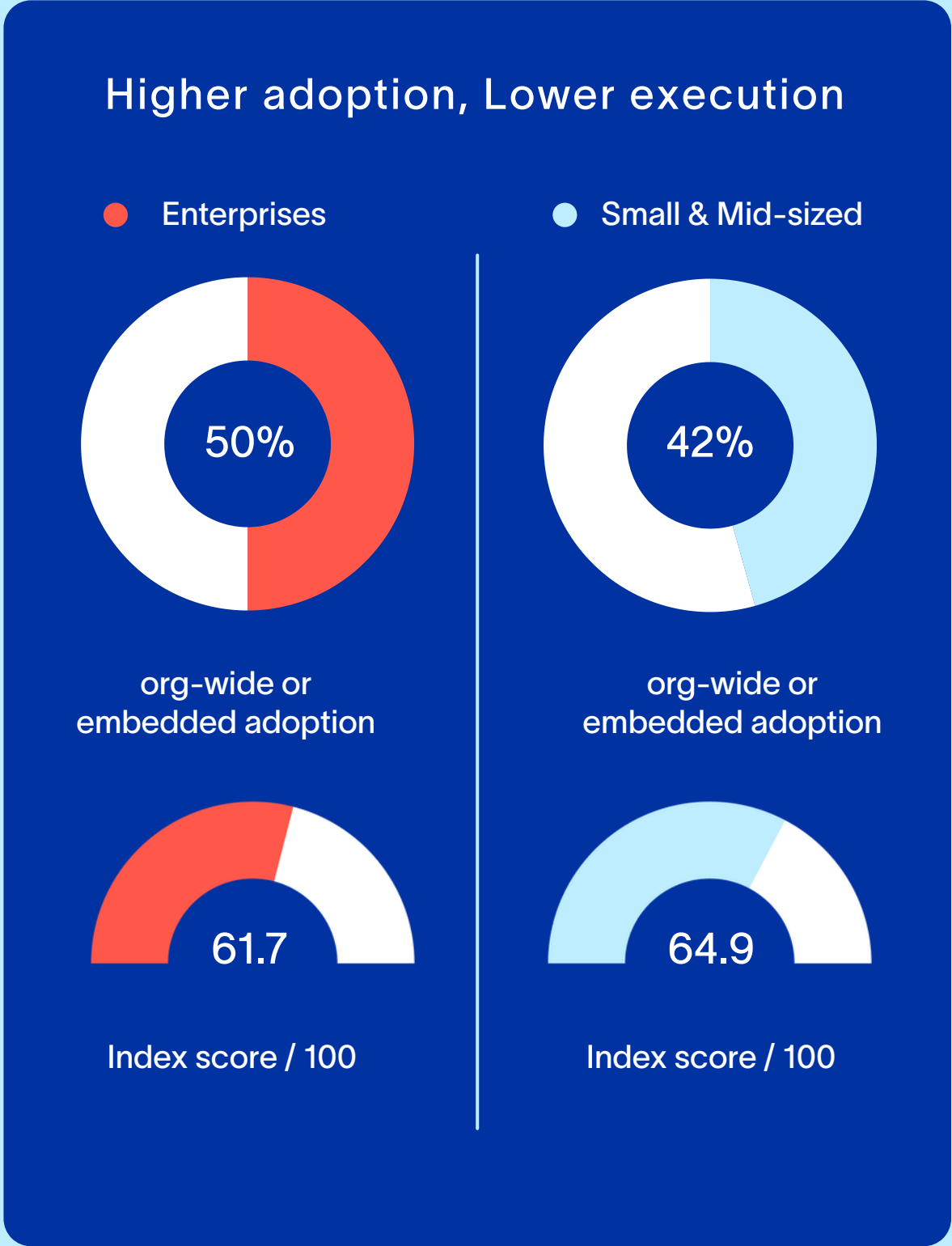
The paradox sits inside a market where AI is already widespread. Ninety-four per cent report at least early experimentation with AI, and 46% say it is organisation-wide or fully embedded. Yet only 22% qualify as AI Executors, combining advanced adoption or readiness with measurable improvements in at least four business outcomes.



The distinction matters because adoption and execution are different capabilities. Adoption means AI is being used. Execution means turning that use into repeatable, coordinated and measurable work across teams, which requires clear priorities, ownership, workflows, skills, systems, governance and measurement. The Index assesses these conditions across ten dimensions, scored from 0 to 100.

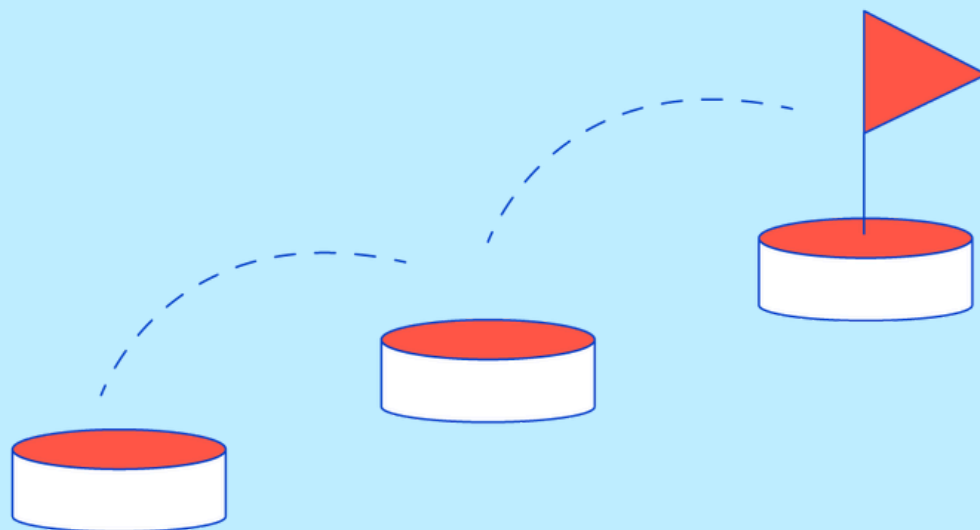
The greatest size-related gaps are in Workflow Integration and Cross-Functional Coordination. At enterprise scale, these capabilities must span more teams, tools, data sources, approval paths and decision layers.

The executive-worker divide shows where plans and day-to-day experience may be out of step. Leaders see strategy, budgets, governance and organisation-level outcomes; workers see whether AI fits the systems and processes they use. The research does not show that this divide causes weaker enterprise execution, but the gap is substantially wider in larger organisations.



There is substantial progress to build on. Ninety-one per cent report at least one measurable improvement from AI in the past 12 months, and leaders and workers report similar gains in productivity and speed. The limitation is breadth: an average of only 3.1 improvements across ten outcome areas.

AI Executors score 82.5 on the Index, compared with 68.1 among AI Adopters, a 14.5-point uplift. They are more likely to have a documented roadmap, dedicated resources, comprehensive training, connected workflows, strong cross-functional coordination and clear ways to measure value. Every dimension separates Executors from Adopters by at least 12 points.



Three actions can help organisations close the gap:

1

Find where leadership strategy and workforce experience diverge by asking both groups the same questions about readiness, visibility, workflow, training, ownership and value.

2

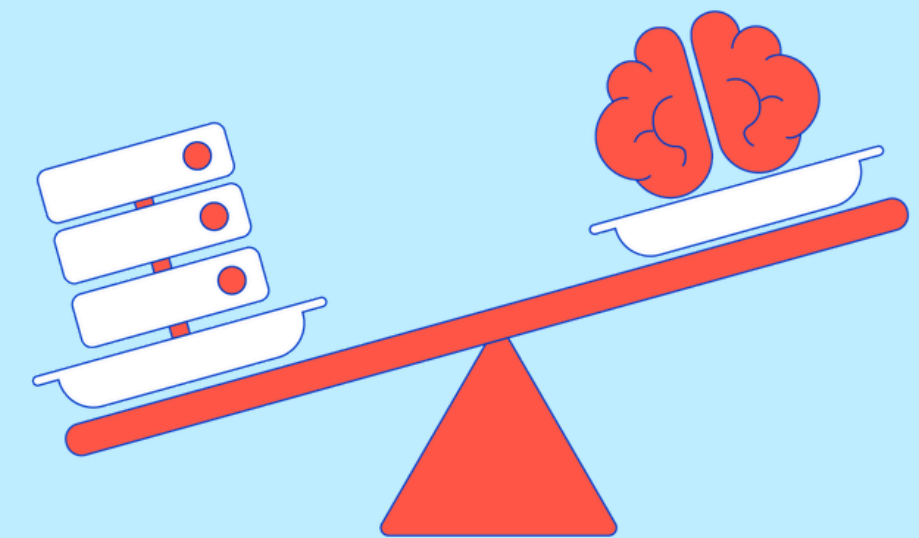
Choose one AI-supported business priority and make it executable through a visible roadmap with an owner, teams, dependencies, guardrails, milestones and a defined outcome.

3

Prove AI in one important end-to-end workflow before scaling it, preparing the people involved and measuring whether the improvement repeats.

Asana can help put this operating model into practice as an AI harness for human-agent collaboration, bringing together context, knowledge, governance and connected workflows around shared goals. Leaders and teams gain visibility into AI-supported work and the coordination needed to expose gaps, turn priorities into roadmaps and scale proven workflows.

Australia's next stage of AI progress will depend less on wider access than on coordinating the work around it. Organisations that connect people, AI, context, governance and workflows around shared goals will be better placed to turn widespread use into sustained performance.



The AI scale paradox

AI has spread rapidly across Australian organisations. Drawing on 1,000 Australian leaders and workers, the Index examines what happens after adoption, as organisations try to turn growing AI use into consistent performance.

Ninety-four per cent report at least early experimentation with AI, and almost half say it is organisation-wide or fully embedded. Yet tools and pilots are not enough. Consistent execution also needs clear priorities, connected workflows, ownership, governance, workforce readiness and ways to measure impact.

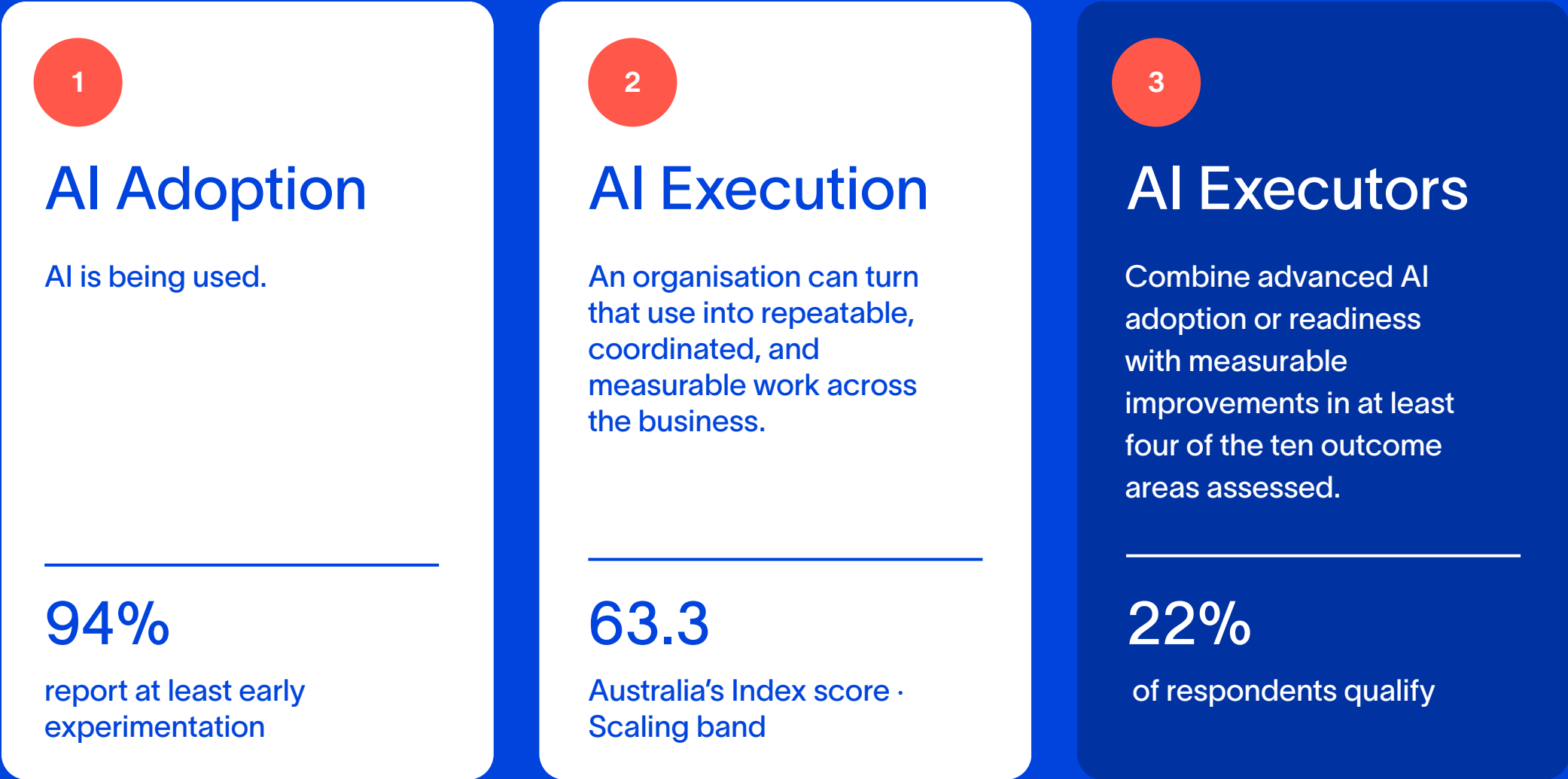
The Index assesses how organisations align AI with strategy, manage governance and risk, integrate it into workflows, maintain leadership visibility, prepare their workforce, coordinate across functions, support AI agents, allocate resources, strengthen data and infrastructure, and deliver business outcomes.

Australia records a blended score of 63.3, in the scaling band: beyond isolated use, but without all the capabilities needed for consistent execution.

The AI Execution Level Segmentation adds a second lens, grouping respondents by adoption stage, readiness to execute at scale, and measurable improvements in the past 12 months. High adoption alone does not confer Executor status: improvements are also needed in at least four of ten outcome areas.

The result is a national adoption-execution gap. Forty-six per cent describe AI as organisation-wide or fully embedded, yet only 22% qualify as AI Executors. Access has broadened faster than the operating model needed to turn it into results.

AI Adoption, Execution, Executors



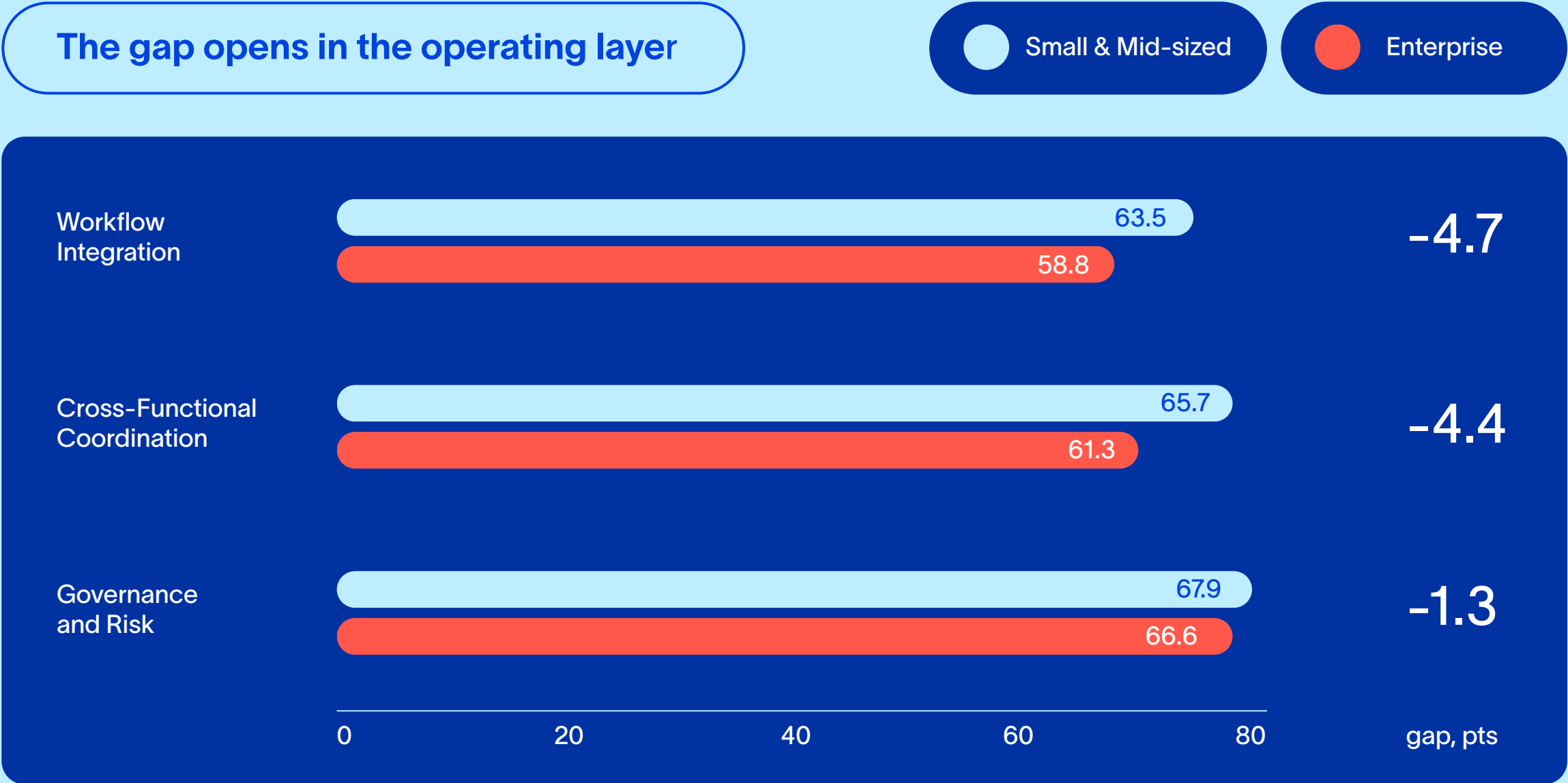
Source: Australian AI Execution Index 2026. n=1,000.

Scale adds adoption and complexity

Enterprises have the expected adoption advantage: half report organisation-wide or embedded adoption, compared with 42% of small and mid-sized organisations. Larger organisations tend to have more investment, specialist expertise, data and infrastructure to fund programs and distribute tools.

Those advantages do not make execution easier. Enterprises record an Index score of 61.7, compared with 64.9 for small and mid-sized organisations, and score lower across all ten dimensions.

The pattern is strongest in the operating layer. Workflow Integration falls from 63.5 to 58.8, a 4.7-point gap, and Cross-Functional Coordination from 65.7 to 61.3, a 4.4-point gap. Governance and Risk shows the smallest gap, from 67.9 to 66.6.



Index dimension scores out of 100, ordered from widest to narrowest gap. Source: Australian AI Execution Index 2026.

Larger organisations can establish policies and controls, but turning them into connected work is harder across more teams, systems and approval paths. More resources extend AI's reach, but also increase the coordination needed to execute well.

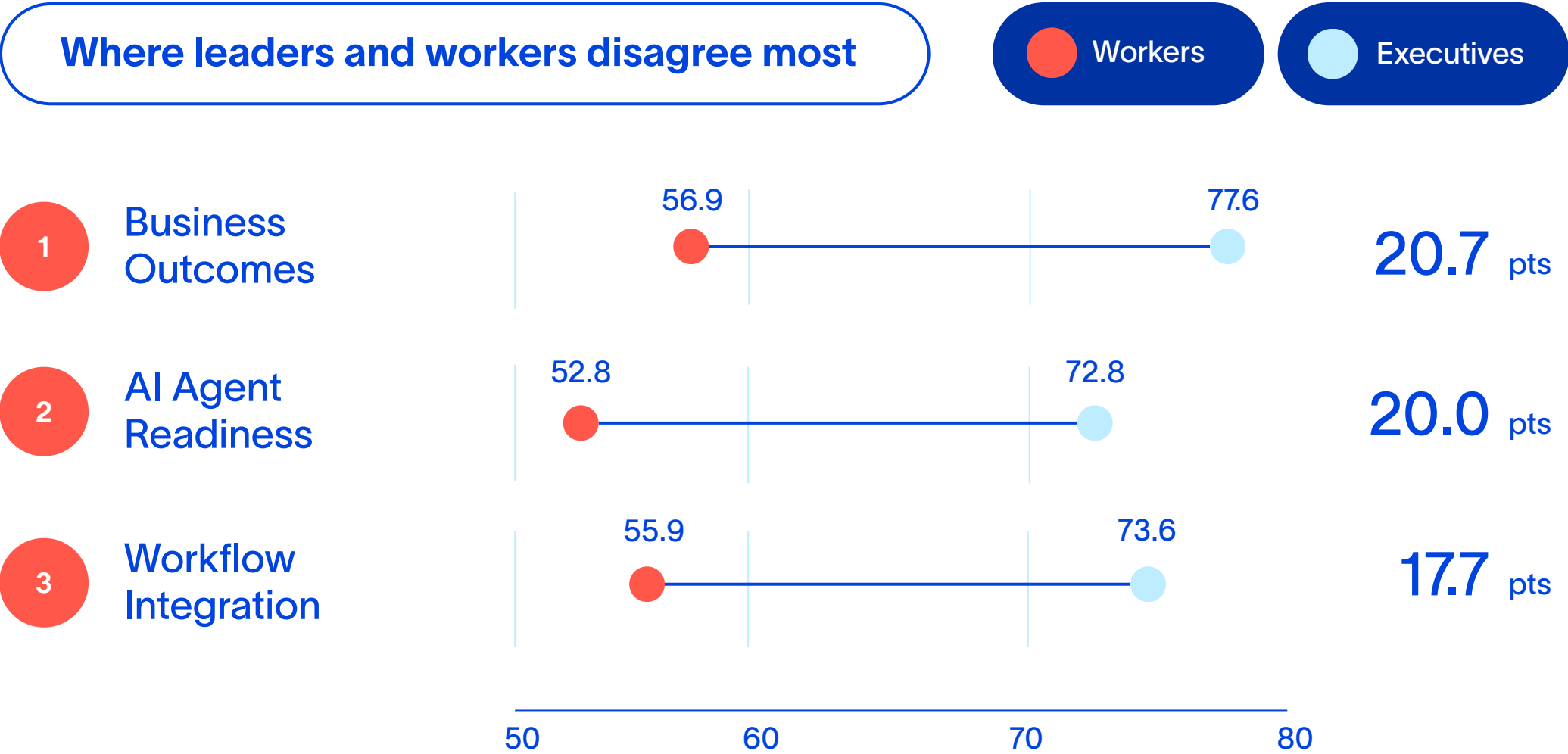
This does not mean smaller organisations have solved execution. Their score remains in the Scaling band, and they face constraints in specialist capability and investment. Size brings a different problem: the operating model must absorb complexity as fast as adoption grows.

Two AI realities inside organisations

Executive Decision-Makers give their organisations an Index score of 75.2; Knowledge Workers give 58.2. The 17.1-point gap places them in different bands: executives see Scaling, while workers sit at the upper end of Emerging.

Neither view is complete. Executives are closer to strategy, budgets, governance and organisation-level results; workers are closer to daily AI use across tools, teams and workflows. A leader may see an approved policy, while an employee sees whether guidance is clear and systems connect.

The gap is widest in Business Outcomes, AI Agent Readiness and Workflow Integration, which depend on AI connecting to real work and producing results employees can see. Governance and Risk is the least divided dimension.



Index dimension scores out of 100; axis shown from 50 to 80. Executives n=300, Knowledge Workers n=700. Source: Australian AI Execution Index 2026.

Organisation size compounds the divide: the executive-worker gap is 11.6 points in small and mid-sized organisations and 22.5 points in enterprises. As organisations grow, leaders move further from local processes, and more units, platforms and layers create room for plans to be interpreted differently.

In larger organisations, the distance between what leadership believes is in place and what the workforce can use is substantially wider, making the gap a useful diagnostic as AI adoption scales.



Visibility is the immediate diagnostic

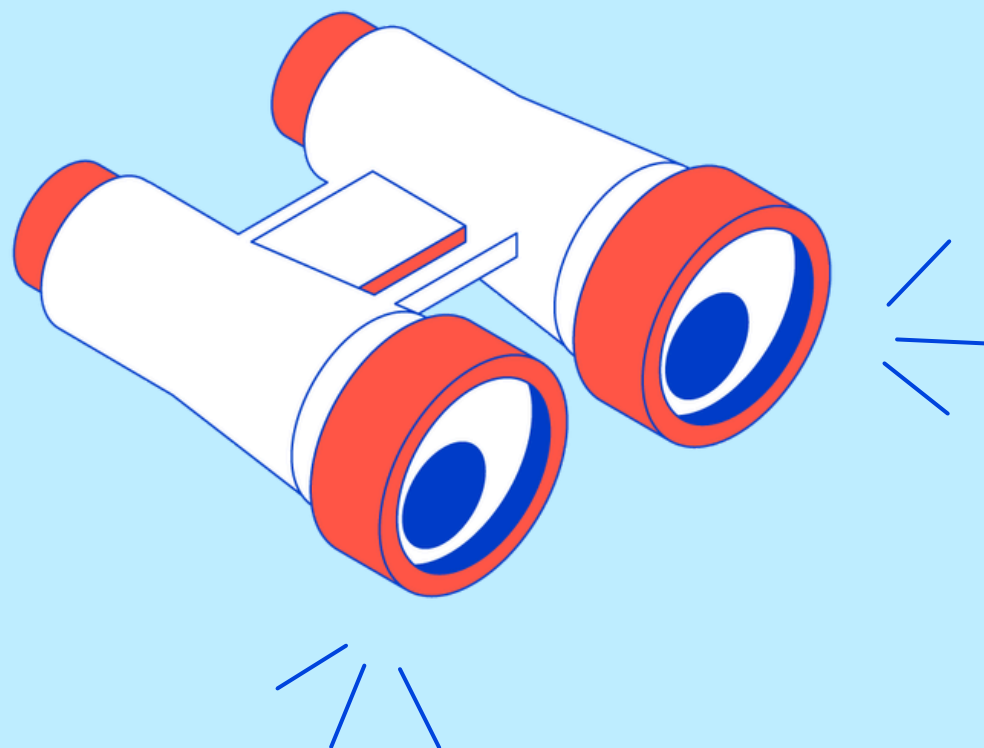
Leadership visibility is one of the clearest examples of the divide. Sixty-one per cent of executives say leadership has full visibility into day-to-day AI use; only 36% of workers agree, a 24.6 percentage-point gap.

This is more than a communications issue. Leaders need an accurate view of AI use to spot duplicated tools, unsupported workflows, weak hand-offs, risks and practices worth scaling. Workers need to see how their activity connects to priorities and who is accountable.

Governance shows a related tension. Eighty-three per cent of executives are confident current governance can support AI execution, yet only 46% report a comprehensive framework and 41% a partial or informal one. Meanwhile, 72% of executives and around half of workers say employees use unapproved AI tools.

Governance confidence may run ahead of employee experience. Policies matter only if people understand them, approved tools meet practical needs and leaders can see how AI is used. Shadow AI can signal both risk and gaps left by slow approvals or unsuitable tools.

Treat disagreement as useful information. Asking leaders and employees the same questions can reveal workflow, training, ownership or visibility problems hidden inside an organisation-wide average.



Different conditions across executive functions

Executives do not form a single group. Technology and Data leaders record the highest Index score, at 79.8, followed by Commercial and People leaders at 76.5 and Operating and Financial leaders at 69.4. The 10.4-point spread shows the leadership view of execution varies by function.

Technology and Data leaders are closest to AI strategy, platforms and technical capability. Commercial and People leaders focus on how AI reaches customers and employees. Operating and Financial leaders need clearer evidence that programs are controlled and delivering operational or financial value.

These perspectives are interdependent. Technical capability without operational ownership produces tools separate from core work; enthusiasm without standards fragments adoption; investment without visible measures makes it hard to prioritise.

The executive sample was split evenly, with 100 respondents per group. Around 52% hold a C-suite title; the rest are Vice Presidents, Directors or Heads of Function with influence over AI tools, strategy or investment.

For leadership teams, the spread is a reason to compare assumptions before setting an enterprise-wide plan, using a shared roadmap of priorities, owners, milestones, dependencies and measures.

Tech leaders rate execution highest



10.4

point spread between the highest and lowest function

The industry perspective

Industry adds another layer. Technology and Telecommunications records a combined Index score of 74.4, compared with 48.3 in both Education and Government. This 26.1-point spread shows the national average contains materially different conditions.

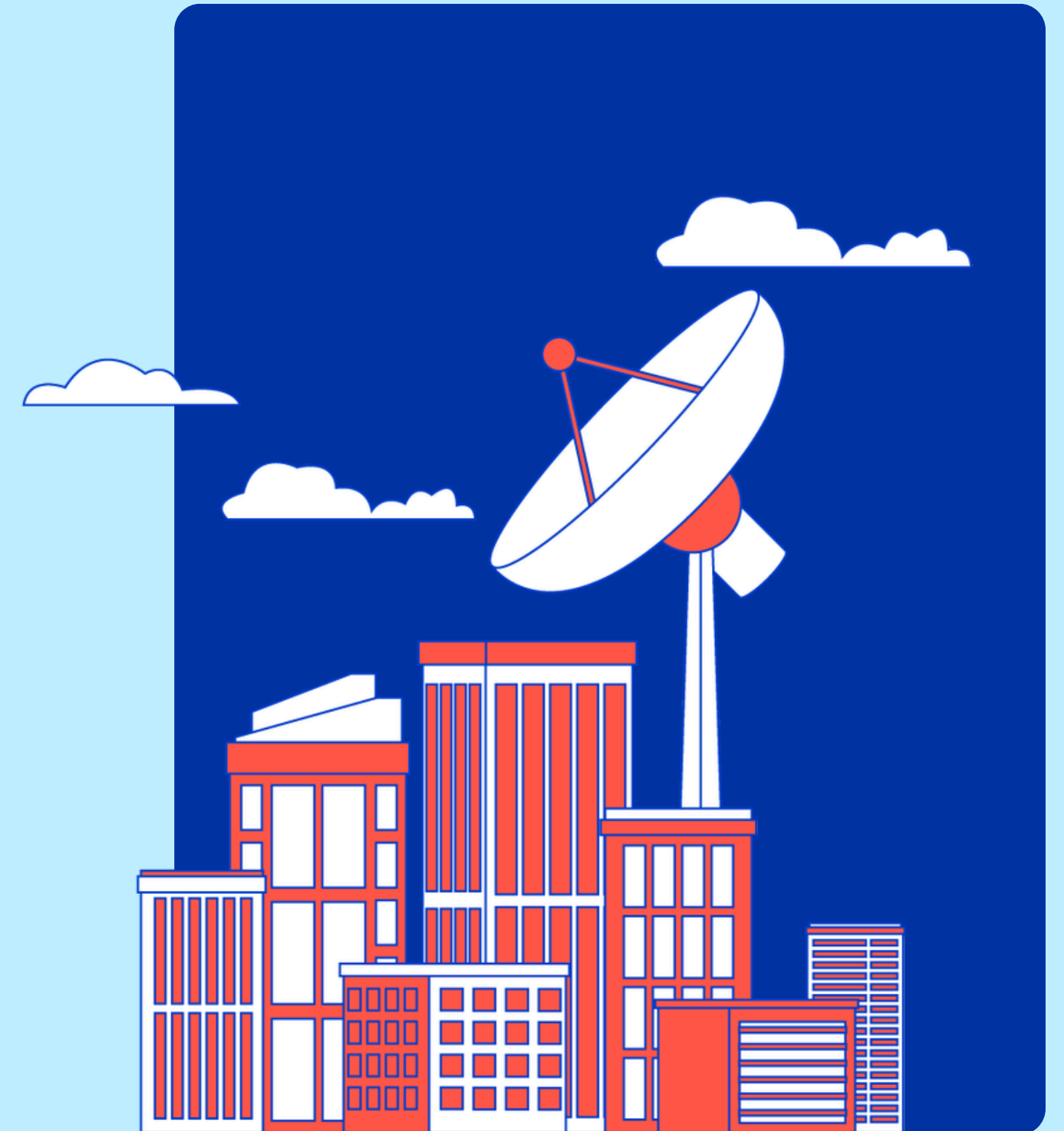
The contrast is sharper among Knowledge Workers: Technology and Telecommunications scores 72.5 and Education 43.9, a 28.6-point gap, reflecting very different conditions for strategy, systems, skills and coordination.

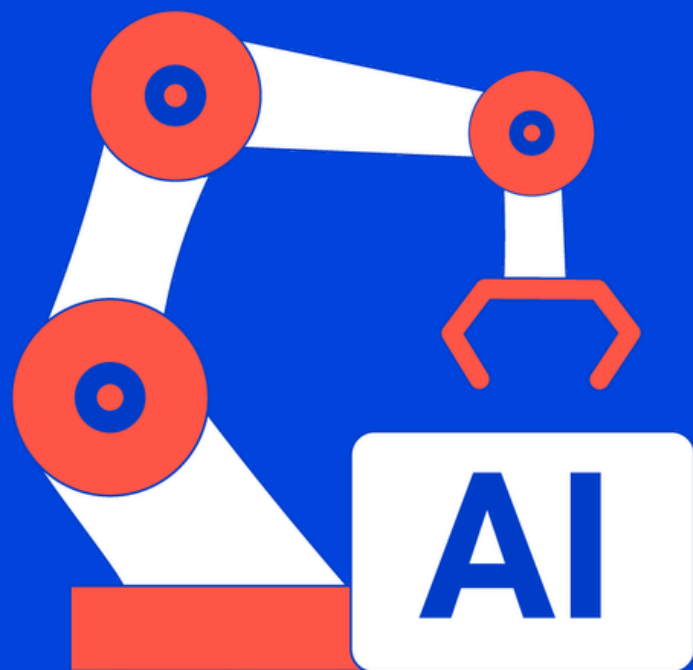
Executive scores are tightly clustered, from 72.6 to 77.5 among sectors with a reportable base. The 4.9-point spread is not statistically significant, so sector conditions are more visible where AI is used than where plans are set.

In Government and Education, lower worker scores matter for public services, teaching and other work that depends on consistency and trust. They reflect the conditions around use, such as fragmented systems, workforce readiness and complex stakeholder groups, rather than willingness to adopt AI.

Retail is another demanding environment. Distributed operations, frontline teams and dependencies across commercial, supply chain, technology and service functions make coordinated implementation essential. A tool that improves one task adds little if it cannot connect to the work around it.

Industry shapes execution conditions, but leaders still need to identify which capability is constraining execution and whether workforce experience matches the plan.





From AI wins to enterprise transformation

Australian organisations are already seeing value. Ninety-one per cent identify at least one measurable improvement in the past 12 months, from speed and project delivery to customer experience, revenue, cost, productivity, decision-making, innovation, quality and employee experience.

But gains are widespread, not yet broad: an average of 3.1 of ten areas. Almost every executive reports measurable value, at 99%, compared with 88% of workers. Leaders may see aggregated results, while workers assess AI by changes to their own tasks.

The groups align on immediate benefits. Forty-three per cent of executives and 41% of workers report improved productivity; speed of execution is reported by 48% and 50%.

Views diverge further from daily tasks. Executives are 19 percentage points more likely than workers to report revenue growth, 18 points more for innovation and 17 points more for customer experience. Workers may struggle to see how AI-supported tasks connect to commercial results.

Decision-making follows the same pattern: 83% of executives say AI has accelerated decisions, compared with 62% of workers. That benefit may not reach employees if approvals, hand-offs or systems remain slow.



Make value visible and owned

Outcome measurement works when employees can see what the organisation is improving and who owns the result. Fourteen per cent of workers say there is no clear owner for AI value or are unsure; no executives report an absence of ownership.

Accountability may exist in leadership structures without being visible in the work. Employees may not know who decides whether a use case is successful, resolves trade-offs or acts when a workflow creates rework.

Governance is still developing. From 77% to 87% report that a framework or guidance is being built or in place, but only 41% to 46% report the strongest form: a comprehensive framework for executives, or clear formal rules for workers.

Clear AI principles create alignment before use cases scale. They should establish what AI is for, where human judgement is essential, what responsible use requires and how value and risk are assessed, then be built into everyday workflows and guidance.

Moving to enterprise transformation means connecting outcomes to shared priorities. Each use case needs a baseline, a defined workflow, a named owner, and measures visible to both the people doing the work and the leaders funding it, creating a feedback loop between them.

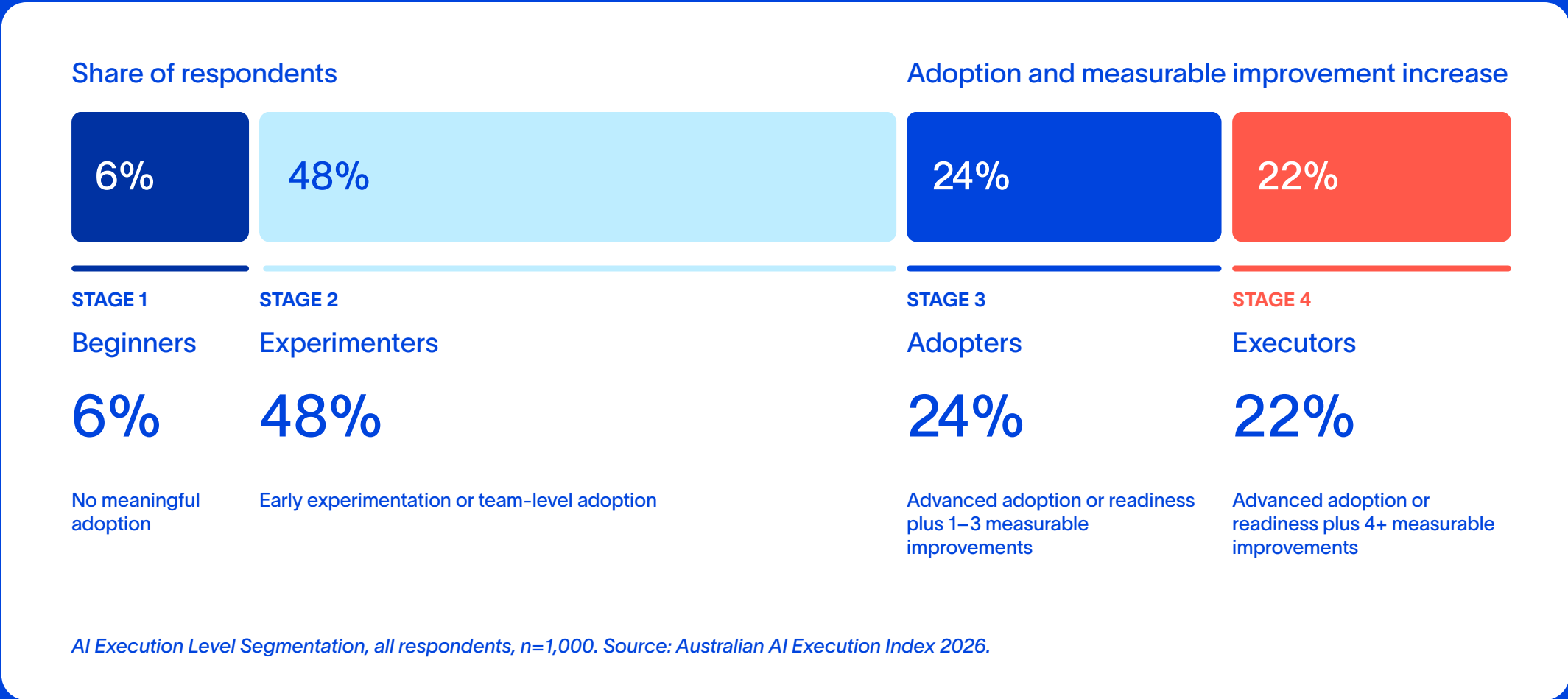


What AI Executors do differently

The AI Execution Level Segmentation identifies four groups: Beginners, Experimenters, Adopters and Executors, based on adoption stage, readiness to execute at scale and measurable improvements. The Index is calculated separately, so score differences show how the operating environment changes between segments.

AI Executors account for 22% of respondents and score 82.5, in the Advanced band. AI Adopters score 68.1, in the Scaling band. The 14.5-point uplift spans the whole operating model: every dimension separates the two groups by at least 12 points.

The largest differences are in Strategy Alignment (16.1 points), Workflow Integration and Resourcing (15.4 each) and Business Outcomes (15.2). Strong execution combines a clear reason to use AI, resources, integration into core processes and evidence of value.



Executors also plan differently. Sixty-one per cent have a documented roadmap with defined priorities, owners and measures, compared with 36% of Adopters, a 24.3 percentage-point gap. A roadmap shows which use cases matter first, who is accountable and how progress will be assessed.

Among Knowledge Workers, 59% of Executors report comprehensive training in practical and responsible AI use, compared with 29% of Adopters. Training works best when specific to the role and workflow, including when to seek human review.

Seventy-six per cent of executive Executors report a dedicated AI budget and team, compared with 65% of executive Adopters. Dedicated funding moves AI beyond informal effort, and a named team gives standards and accountability a home.

Leadership and workers see different factors

Executives and workers emphasise different parts of the Executor model. Leaders see Resourcing and Strategy Alignment as major differentiators: setting priorities, allocating investment and sustaining ownership.

Workers see sharper changes in Workflow Integration, Data and Infrastructure Readiness, and Cross-Functional Coordination. They experience execution through the workflow around them: whether tools connect, information is available and hand-offs work.

These views are complementary. Leaders set direction, resources and accountability; teams need usable systems, training, clear workflows and coordination. Measurement connects the two.

Executors still have room to improve. Only 47% say AI is concentrated on high-value business problems. Strong execution should make it easier to stop, redesign or deprioritise work that does not contribute to an important outcome.

The research points to connected work management as a core AI capability: a shared place to make goals, portfolios, workflows, owners, dependencies, guardrails and measures visible, connecting strategic intent to the work that produces results.



Three actions to close the AI execution gap

Organisations do not need to solve every dimension at once. They need to diagnose where execution is breaking down, make one priority executable and build a repeatable way to scale what works. Asana connects goals, portfolios, projects and workflows so the same plan is visible from executives to delivery teams.

Action 1: Expose the gap between strategy and experience

Make the two views of execution visible. Ask leaders and employees the same short questions: Are they ready to use AI at scale? Can leadership see how it is used? Does it fit workflows? Have people been trained? Is ownership clear? Is it delivering value?

The purpose is to locate friction, not decide who is right. A visibility gap may show leaders lack a view of local use; a training gap that guidance is too general; an ownership gap that accountability has not reached employees.

Choose the largest gap and examine it in one real workflow, with the people who do the work, the accountable leader, and the data, technology, risk and workforce functions. Shared portfolio and workflow visibility shows where plan and experience separate.

First move

Run a five-question pulse with one leadership group and one team using AI. Assign an owner to investigate the largest gap and report back on its cause.

Measure of progress

Repeat the pulse after the intervention. Look for greater agreement and fewer reports of unclear ownership, limited visibility or workflow barriers.

1 Ask

Put the same six questions to leaders and teams

Readiness

Visibility

Workflow fit

Training

Ownership

Value

2 Find the biggest gap

Where do the two groups' answers differ most?

Leaders



Team



3 Assign an owner

Investigate it in one real workflow and report back on the cause

Conceptual graphic. Bars in step 2 are illustrative, not survey data.

Action 2: Turn one AI-supported business priority into a visible execution roadmap

Start with one high-value business problem, not a tool. Define the outcome to improve, the baseline for measuring progress, and why AI suits the work.

Map what it takes to deliver: an accountable owner, participating teams, key decisions, dependencies, data and system needs, guardrails, milestones and success measures, including where human approval remains necessary.

Manage the roadmap in a shared work management platform, so leaders see progress, risks and dependencies, and teams see how their work connects to the goal and where to get support. In Asana, goals define the result, portfolios give a cross-initiative view, and projects coordinate delivery.

A shared roadmap also aligns leadership functions: Technology and Data leaders define system and data needs; Operating and Financial leaders clarify controls, investment and value; Commercial and People leaders plan adoption, roles and training.

First move

Document one priority use case from goal to workflow. Name the owner, teams, decision points, dependencies, guardrails, baseline and intended outcome before expanding access or investment.

Measure of progress

The initiative has a named owner, visible milestones, managed dependencies and a measurable outcome, assessed against the baseline rather than tool use.



All managed in one shared work platform (e.g. Asana goals, portfolios, projects). Illustrative — not a product screenshot.

Action 3: Embed, enable, measure, then scale



Select one important end-to-end workflow and redesign it around AI, rather than inserting AI into a single task. Mapping it first sets a baseline and shows where a faster step could simply move the bottleneck.

Prepare the people who perform and oversee the workflow. Training should cover data and tools, acceptable use, human review, escalation and how to record errors, so people understand both how to use AI and why the workflow is changing.

Track operational and business measures together in a shared work environment: completion time, quality, rework, adoption and compliance alongside the original priority, such as faster delivery, better service or lower cost.

Review results with the teams involved. Capture where the workflow improved, where it created new work and what needs attention, then update the workflow and guidance before applying it elsewhere.

Scale only when the improvement is repeatable and the conditions behind it are understood, documenting the workflow, decisions, training, dependencies and measures for the next team.

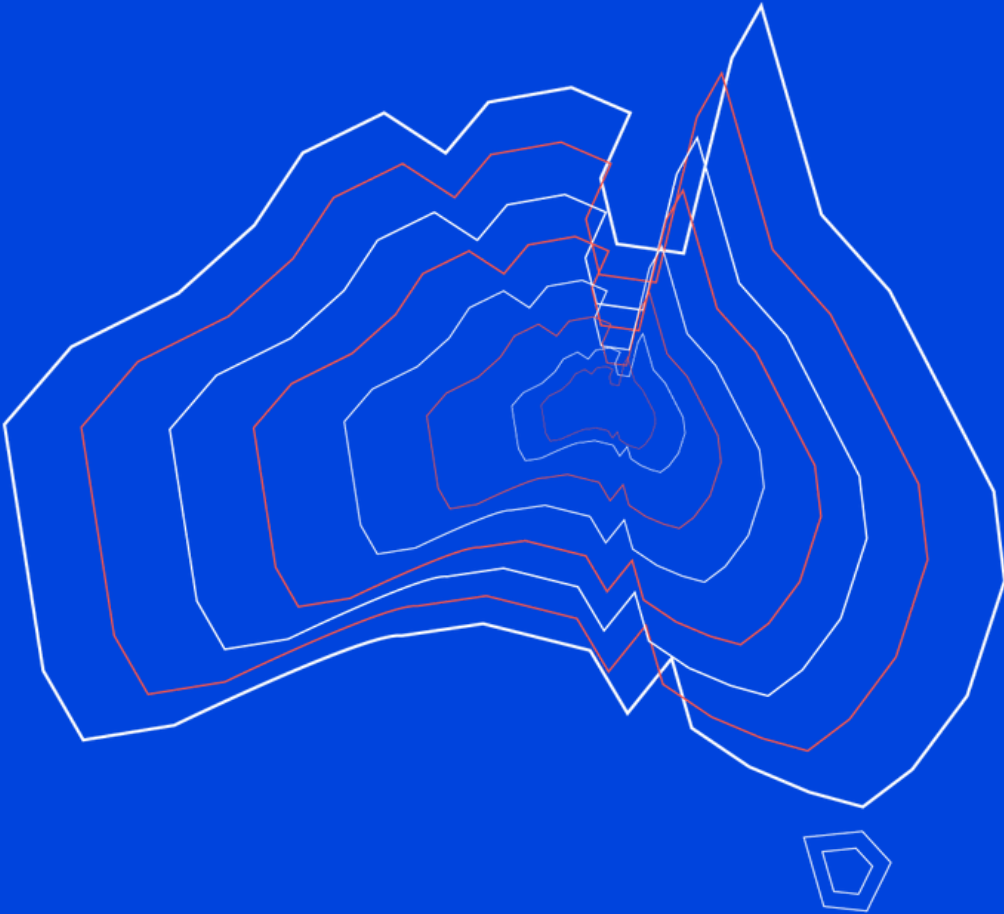
First move

Map one end-to-end workflow, define where AI supports it, prepare the people at each stage and set a review date for the test.

Measure of progress

Compare speed, quality, rework, adoption and the business outcome with the baseline. Expand only when the improvement persists and is supported by ownership, training, systems and governance.

The next stage



Australian organisations have cleared the adoption threshold. The next stage requires discipline around the work itself. By making goals, workflows, ownership, dependencies and outcomes visible and connected, Asana can help close the distance between leadership ambition and workforce experience. Progress will come from coordinated, measurable work, not more AI in isolation.



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An Asana research report

