

ThinkAI Blog Research — AI Adoption for Irish Businesses (Blog 5, May 2026)

Primary Keyword: AI adoption

Date: May 2026

SOURCE 1 — Google / Amárach Research: Irish SME AI Adoption Survey (March 2026)

Source:

<https://techbuzzireland.com/2026/03/03/80-of-smes-say-ai-can-transform-their-business-but-lack-of-skills-keeps-adoption-rates-low/>

Methodology: 400 Irish SMEs surveyed by Amárach Research, commissioned by Google, March 2026

Key Stats:

- 80% of Irish SMEs believe AI can positively impact their business
- 65% expect AI to drive growth in 2026
- 20% of Irish SMEs are not using AI for any business task
- Top barriers: fear of making mistakes (30%), lack of skills (27%), cost (24%), unsure where to start (16%)
- 57% believe they are behind competitors in adopting AI
- 50% are concerned their business could be left behind without AI
- 33% of micro-businesses (under 10 employees) not using AI at all vs. just 7% of larger SMEs (50–250 employees)
- Businesses operating 16+ years are 3x more likely to have no AI usage than newer firms (1–5 years)

SOURCE 2 — Mayo / West of Ireland Regional AI Adoption Data (Connaught Telegraph, April 2026)

Source:

<https://www.con-telegraph.ie/2026/04/07/skills-gap-holds-back-ai-adoption-in-mayo-and-across-the-west/>

Region: Mayo, Galway, Sligo, Roscommon, Clare

Key Stats:

- 74% of SMEs in these counties believe AI can positively impact their business
- 66% expect AI to drive growth in 2026
- Top regional barriers: lack of skills (29%), fear of making mistakes (24%), cost (19%), unsure where to start (12%)
- 60% believe they are behind competitors in adopting AI
- 53% concerned they could be left behind without it

- Google, LEO Network, and Enterprise Ireland hosting face-to-face AI skills events in the west

SOURCE 3 — AI Economy Ireland 2026 (Trinity College Dublin / Microsoft Ireland)

Source: <https://www.thinkbusiness.ie/articles/ai-economy-ireland-2026-sme-large-firm-gap/>

Key Stats:

- 92% of Irish organisations using or planning to use AI — near-universal adoption
- AI adoption in Ireland surged to 91%, nearly doubling from 49% in 2024
- AI projected to add at least \$250 billion to Ireland's economy by 2035
- Widening maturity gap between SMEs and larger organisations risks constraining national productivity
- Ireland appointed its first-ever Minister for Artificial Intelligence in January 2025

SOURCE 4 — DBI / RTÉ Irish Business AI Investment Survey (April 2026)

Source: <https://www.rte.ie/news/business/2026/0422/1569449-businesses-ai-adoption/>

Methodology: 140 Irish-based companies

Key Stats:

- 65% plan to invest in AI in 2026; 60% of those expect to invest €10,000 or less
- 68% identified lack of skills and training as the single biggest constraint to AI adoption
- DBI warning: current investment levels support only limited AI adoption, likely just generative AI licensing
- Report: 'The biggest risk to Irish jobs from AI would be Ireland's failure to adapt, adopt, and keep up'

SOURCE 5 — Irish SMEs AI Adoption Report (Viatel / ThinkBusiness, September 2025)

Source: <https://www.thinkbusiness.ie/articles/viatel-irish-smes-ai-adoption-report/>

Methodology: 150 Irish business decision-makers

Key Stats:

- Nearly one-third of SMEs have yet to adopt AI — but the landscape is changing rapidly
- Proportion using fully integrated AI systems projected to more than double: from 7% to 17% over the next 12 months
- Trusted external support is critical — SMEs cannot afford failed experiments
- Structured planning, governance, and external expertise essential for moving from AI curiosity to strategic deployment

SOURCE 6 — ProfileTree: Irish SME AI Implementation Guide (May 2025)

Source: <https://profiletree.com/from-pilot-to-productivity-irish-smes-implement-ai/>

Key Guidance:

- Identify high-impact use cases; assess feasibility; secure resources; implement focused pilots; measure and expand
- Most successful implementations begin with clearly defined challenges where AI delivers tangible benefits
- Build capability and confidence through early wins before scaling
- Phased, ROI-focused approach makes AI achievable for Irish SMEs with limited resources

SOURCE 7 — AI Training for Irish SMEs (ProfileTree, May 2025)

Source: <https://profiletree.com/ai-training-for-smes-in-ireland/>

Key Stats:

- 35% of Irish SMEs have already adopted some form of AI technology
- Additional 48% actively planning implementation within the next 12 months
- 62% of Irish SMEs identify lack of AI skills and knowledge as primary barrier

Dublin Retail Chain Case Study (12 locations):

- Inventory management AI reduced stockouts by 42% and decreased overall inventory costs
- Customer recommendation engine increased average basket value by 27%
- Staff scheduling AI improved labour efficiency by 18%
- Predictive maintenance reduced equipment downtime by 36%
- Overall 215% ROI on combined training and implementation investment

SOURCE 8 — Irish National Digital and AI Strategy (William Fry / February 2026)

Source:

<https://www.williamfry.com/knowledge/ireland-publishes-new-national-digital-and-ai-strategy-key-takeaways-for-business/>

Key Government Commitments:

- Government to publish new sectoral AI Adoption Strategy in 2026 with ambitious targets and defined milestones
- Enterprise Ireland developing a differentiated AI Adoption Roadmap, organised by sector
- Enterprise Ireland to appoint AI Sector Champions to promote adoption
- New Observatory for Business AI Readiness (OBAIR) to track adoption metrics in real time

- AI and digital awareness/literacy campaign targeting SMEs specifically
- CeADAR (Ireland's national centre for applied AI) to be expanded

SOURCE 9 — AI Implementation Roadmap: 6-Phase Guide (Space-O, May 2026)

Source: <https://www.spaceo.ai/blog/ai-implementation-roadmap/>

Key Implementation Guidance:

- Gartner: 30% of generative AI projects will be abandoned after proof of concept by 2025 — underscoring need for structured approach
- 6-phase framework: assess readiness → identify use cases → pilot → measure → scale → optimise
- Scaling timeline: 8–12 weeks for initial scaling after successful pilot
- Investment: scaling phase requires 40–50% of total AI budget
- Continuous improvement phase: model performance monitoring, business KPI tracking, user adoption rates, ROI

SOURCE 10 — ProfileTree: How Irish SMEs Can Leverage AI Tools (June 2025)

Source:

<https://profiletree.com/how-irish-smes-can-leverage-ai-tools-grants-productivity-and-next-steps/>

Key Practical Guidance:

- Simple ROI forecast format: 'We save 20 staff hours weekly = €X monthly' offset by tool cost
- Roll out in stages — pilot the AI tool with a small team or subset of tasks first
- Document best practices, assign an internal champion or 'AI lead', gather feedback
- Track key metrics: time saved, error reduction, or boost in conversions
- If staff fear AI replacing them, emphasise how it complements them, freeing them for higher-value tasks

IRISH USE CASES (from ThinkAI and Irish source research)

USE CASE 1 — Dublin Retail Chain (AI Implementation across 12 locations)

- Inventory management AI: stockouts down 42%, overall inventory costs reduced
- Customer recommendation engine: average basket value up 27%
- Staff scheduling AI: labour efficiency up 18%
- Predictive maintenance: equipment downtime down 36%
- Overall ROI: 215% on combined training and implementation

USE CASE 2 — Galway Clothing Retailer (n8n + Shopify)

- AI workflow monitoring stock, triggering reorders, handling customer queries, drafting social posts
- Results: 12% increase in auxiliary revenue; 80% reduction in manual admin and social media time

USE CASE 3 — Mayo Distributor (n8n + Xero)

- 500 invoices/month automated: reading PDFs, matching to purchase orders, flagging discrepancies
- Processing time per invoice: from 6 minutes to 30 seconds
- Error rate: reduced from 10% to under 1%

IRISH FUNDING SUPPORTS

- Enterprise Ireland Innovation Vouchers: up to €5,000 for AI feasibility studies
- Digitalisation Vouchers: up to €9,000 for digital transformation consultancy
- Local Enterprise Office (LEO): grants + subsidised advisory support
- Skillnet Ireland: sector-specific AI upskilling for existing staff
- Government AI Adoption Strategy 2026: sectoral targets and Enterprise Ireland roadmaps

COMPLIANCE NOTES

- EU AI Act: full enforcement August 2026
- Most SME uses (chatbots, productivity tools, scheduling, admin) = limited/minimal risk
- High-risk uses (HR screening, credit scoring) require audit logs, human oversight, documentation
- GDPR: DPIA required where applicable; data minimisation; EU data residency preferred
- Ireland's DPC actively monitoring compliance