

# PUBLIC SECTOR AI ADOPTION: GERMANY FACTSHEET

A PROJECT BY PUBLIC FIRST FOR THE CENTER FOR DATA INNOVATION, SPONSORED BY GOOGLE



This factsheet draws on findings from the Global AI Adoption Index for Public Services, based on a survey of **3,335 public sector workers** across **ten countries**. This research included a sample of **315** public sector workers in Germany, comprising **189** from local or regional government entities, from **83** national government or national government entities and **43** from other public sector entities.

The index measures how AI is experienced in practice. What is written in government strategies does not automatically translate into real-world impact. Approaches across countries are varied, the index helps explore these differences and make recommendations to improve AI use.

It brings together five indicators that shape real-world adoption: **enthusiasm** for AI, **education** and skills, **empowerment** through clear permission and governance, **enablement** via access to tools, and **embedding** into everyday workflows. Together, these provide a practical snapshot of AI adoption in Germany, set against international peers. Full results are available on the [main index webpage](#).

# PUBLIC SECTOR AI ADOPTION: GERMANY CONTEXT

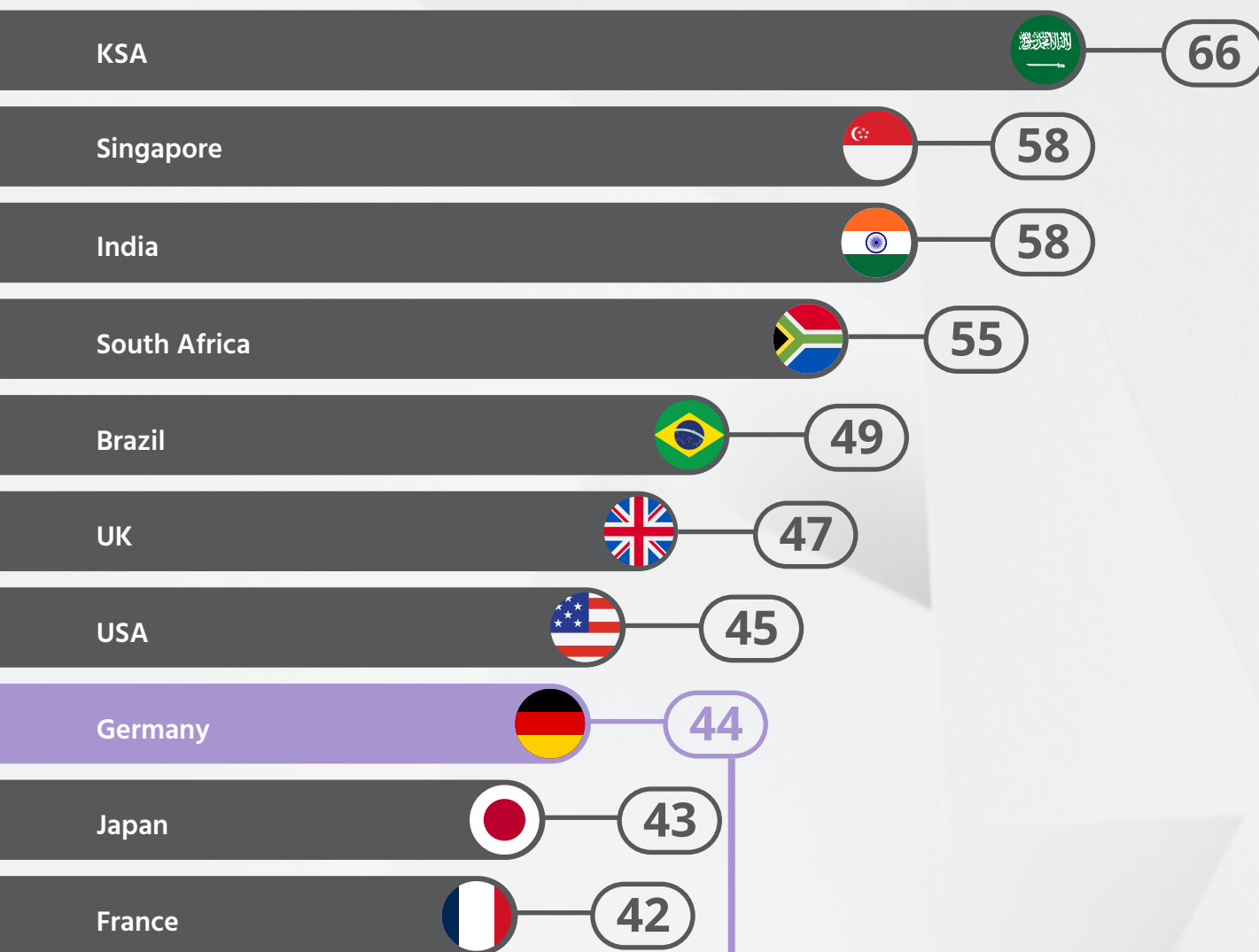
Germany has made substantial and sustained investments in AI, positioning it as a strategic tool for economic competitiveness, industrial innovation and state modernisation. Since launching its **National AI Strategy in 2018**, the federal government has committed **billions of euros** to **research, talent development** and **application of AI**, supported by a **dense network of research institutes and centres of excellence**. This approach reflects Germany's strength in applied innovation and its emphasis on trustworthy AI.

In the public sector, AI ambition has been shaped by a strong compliance culture and a complex system, with responsibility spread across federal, state and local administrations. While national strategies and procurement reforms are actively seeking to encourage experimentation, adoption tends to be **cautious and uneven**, with AI use often confined to **pilots** or **specialist projects**.

Germany's challenge is not a lack of capability or intent, but translating its **risk-aware, principles-led approach** into **clearer permissions, approved tools** and **practical pathways** that allow public servants to use AI **routinely and at scale** in everyday work.



## GERMANY IN THE GLOBAL INDEX



Germany sits among the **cautious adopters** in the index, with AI use largely confined to **pilots and specialist teams**, rather than **embedding across everyday workflows**. Heavily prioritising trustworthy and well-governed AI has translated into slow progress on the enabling of confident, routine use by public servants.

- **Over one third** of German public servants report **never having used AI at work**, one of the higher proportions in the index.
- This limited exposure is reinforced by gaps in organisational enablement. **32%** of public servants say they are **unsure what policies or guidance** their workplace has on AI use, and **44%** report that their organisation **does not provide the resources** they need to use AI effectively.

This represents an opportunity for Germany to build on strong governance with greater practical support. With clearer permission for low-risk use and more practical, task-focused training, Germany could translate its emphasis on trust into more confident everyday AI use — strengthening its position over time.

# WHAT OUR RESEARCH SHOWS

Our research positions Germany as a cautious adopter, with AI use in its public sector shaped predominantly by a culture of compliance and limited organisational enablement.



## Enthusiasm 49/100

Perceptions of AI are mixed, with recognition of potential benefits but **limited enthusiasm** and inconsistent experiences. Engagement exists but remains cautious, episodic, or uneven across roles.



## Education 49/100

Training is **limited, low quality, or absent**, leading to **low confidence** and difficulty understanding AI systems. Lack of knowledge and upskilling opportunities are the primary constraints on adoption.



## Empowerment 42/100

AI use is constrained by **unclear, overly restrictive, or poorly communicated rules**, leading to **hesitation and risk aversion**. Concerns about compliance, security, or leadership support significantly discourage use.



## Enablement 41/100

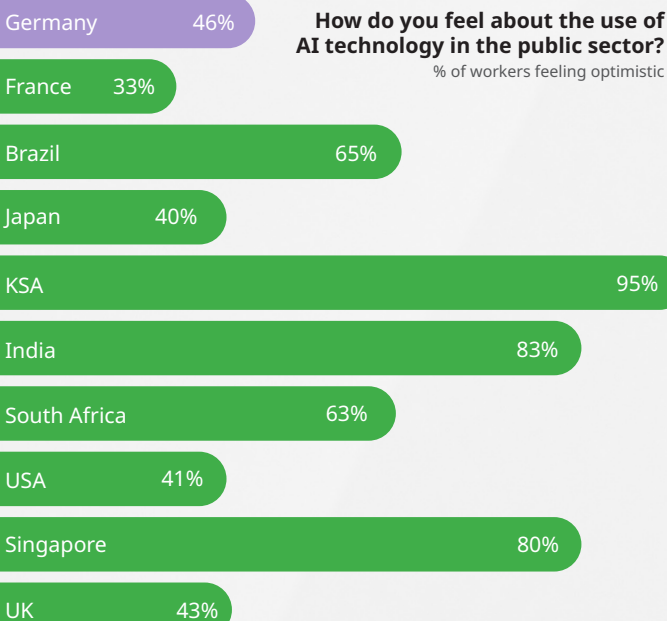
Tool access is **limited or poorly matched** to work needs, resulting in **heavy dependence on personal, unapproved tools or no AI use at all**. Lack of technical support and organisational provision is a major barrier to routine or advanced use.



## Embedding 37/100

**Minimal formal infrastructure**, with **few supporting structures, limited investment**, and **significant barriers to integration** with existing systems. Structural barriers significantly limit the ability to scale AI use.

Enthusiasm for AI is modest. Most German workers are mildly optimistic and believe AI will have only a limited impact on their job, showing little appetite for dramatic AI-driven change. Concerns around AI-related job loss are correspondingly low, with **57%** saying **staff reductions due to AI are unlikely** – AI is viewed as **incremental rather than transformative**. All this is reflected in Germany's 7th place rank across countries for the enthusiasm measure.



Germany's barriers are structural, characterised by weak enablement (9th of 10 in the index), limited empowerment, and poor embedding (both ranked 8th of 10). A majority of workers believe AI is not being used effectively within their team, department, or organisation, including by senior staff. Only **30%** of public servants say their institution has **invested in AI tools, less than half** the level seen in leading countries. Access to enterprise-grade or in-house AI tools remains limited, and many workers report having no formal support structures in place.

Education is also patchy, with more than half of German public servants reporting no AI training and limited depth of understanding, and the lowest score on the education measure across the index. AI use is largely confined to basic, low-risk tasks, with little evidence of workflow integration or system-level adoption across the public sector.

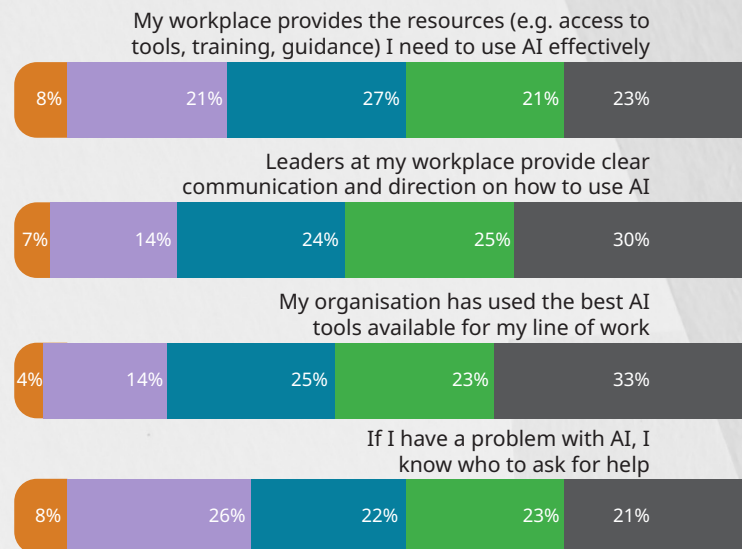
## UNIQUE FEATURES OF GERMANY

What distinguishes Germany from other countries in the cautious adopter tier of the index is the disconnect between individual capability and organisational enablement. German public servants demonstrate comparatively high levels of familiarity with AI and a strong understanding of its potential applications. **Nearly two-thirds (62%)** report feeling **confident using AI tools**, and most indicate that they have already engaged with AI in their personal lives. However, this confidence has not translated into workplace adoption. More than one third of public servants report never having used AI in a professional context.

German public servants are not necessarily hostile to AI at work, but many lack clarity on how to engage with it safely and appropriately. **More than 1 in 3** feel their workplace is **making it difficult to use AI** where it would be helpful. A majority find that leaders fail to provide clear communication or direction on how to use AI, and 32% are unsure whether their organisation has a formal AI policy at all.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

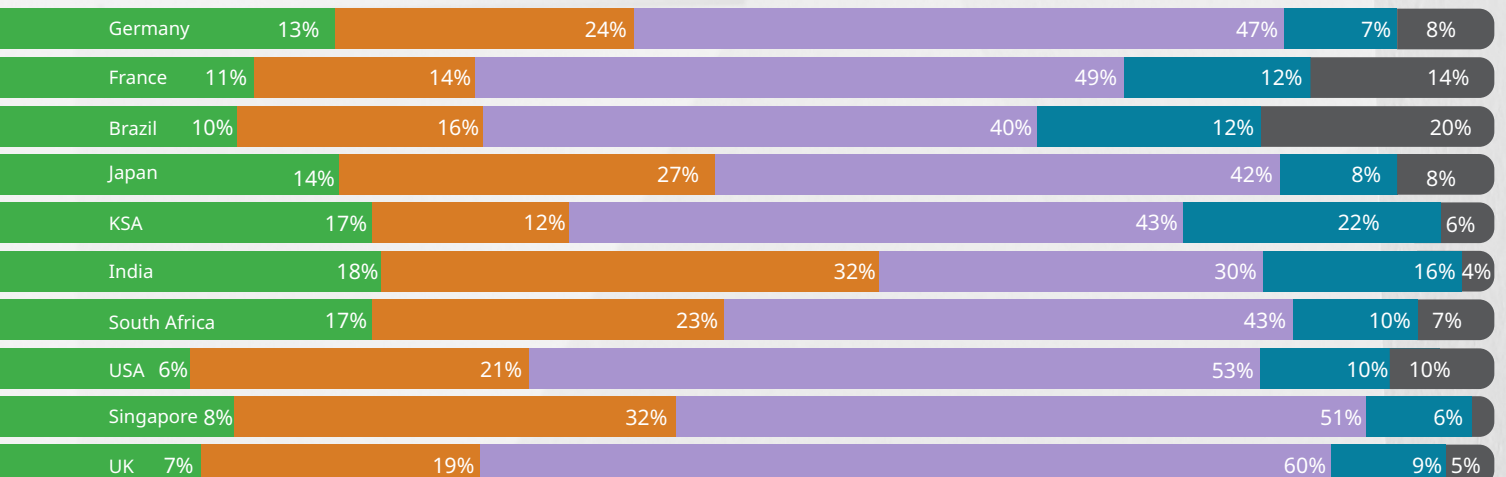
● Strongly agree ● Somewhat agree ● Neither agree nor disagree  
● Somewhat disagree ● Strongly disagree



Culturally, Germany is characterised by a risk-aware, compliance-oriented approach that prioritises caution over experimentation. This is reflected in what public servants say would encourage greater use of AI, with assurance around **data privacy and security (38%)** and **clear guidance** on how to apply AI in the public sector (**37%**) cited most often. At the same time, most report that they have never used AI at work without their manager's knowledge or through personal accounts. In this context, unclear rules do not lead to informal experimentation but instead discourage use altogether, even where individuals might use technology personally.

And thinking about the existing rules on AI at your workplace - whether formal or informal - which of the following best describes your views?

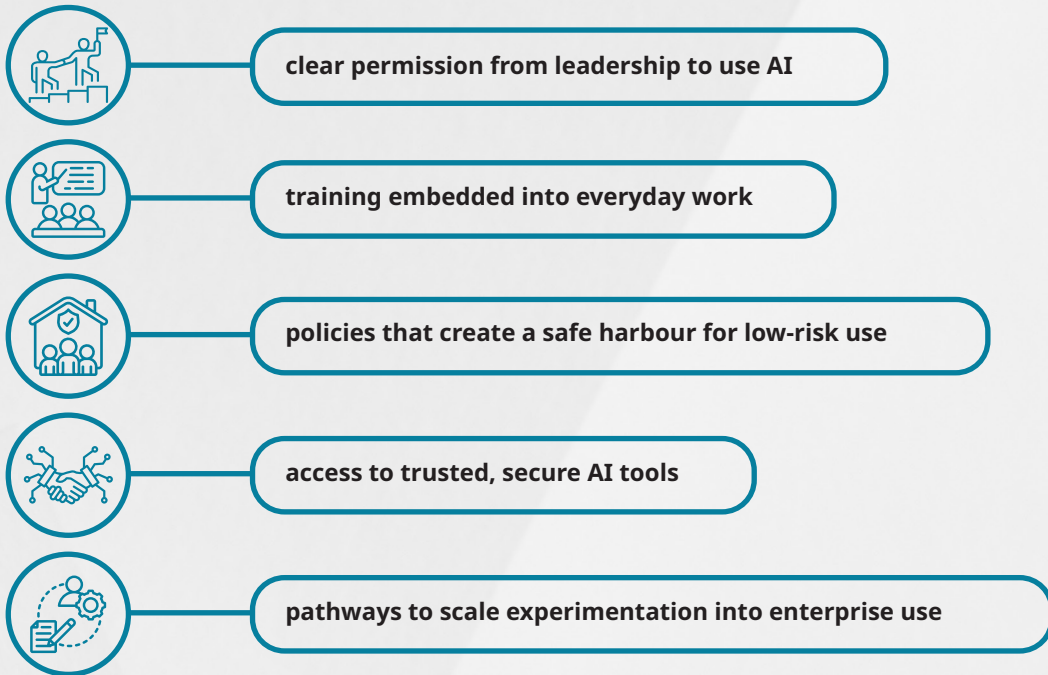
● They are far too restrictive and make effective use difficult ● They are somewhat restrictive and limit use more than they should  
● They strike the right balance ● They are somewhat too lenient and allow more use than is appropriate ● They are far too lenient and fail to provide safeguards



Germany's challenge is therefore not awareness or outright resistance, but the absence of clear rules, tools and pathways for use. In a strongly compliance-oriented environment, uncertainty discourages experimentation. Further, the regulatory environment does little to incentivise adoption, particularly in the public sector, requiring compliance with the **EU AI Act**, **GDPR** and Germany's **Federal Data Protection Act (BDSG)**. These layers of complexity for users and providers are compounded by public sector sovereignty priorities, with the recent announcements surrounding a 'EuroStack', plus stringent cloud-security requirements. The opportunity for Germany lies in pairing its risk-aware culture with clearer guidance, broader access to approved tools, and stronger system integration—enabling public servants to use AI consistently and at scale.

# HOW TO ENHANCE AI USE IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR: STEPS THAT CAN BE TAKEN IN GERMANY

Our research points to five actions that consistently support stronger AI adoption across countries:



Together, these create the conditions for public servants to move from basic experimentation to confident use that can prepare the ground for significant public sector transformation.

## WHAT MATTERS MOST FOR GERMANY

For Germany, the challenge is **not awareness or resistance**, but **enablement**. Public servants are broadly familiar with AI, comfortable using it in their personal lives, and not strongly opposed to its use at work. What is missing are the clear permissions, tools and structures needed to translate this latent capability into routine deployment. Three priorities stand out:

# 1

### Put clear permission and approved tools in place

In a strongly compliance-oriented system, uncertainty discourages use. German public servants report high confidence in AI but low workplace adoption, largely because rules are unclear and access to approved tools is limited. **Clear, centrally endorsed guidance** on what AI can be used for— alongside access to **trusted, enterprise-grade tools** — would unlock use quickly by **removing fear of non-compliance** and signalling that AI is a **legitimate workplace tool**.

# 2

### Convert awareness into practical capability through targeted training

While awareness of AI is high, formal training is patchy and often absent. Short, role-specific training focused on real public sector tasks would help staff move from basic, low-risk experimentation to more confident and effective use. In Germany's context, training is also a governance tool: it provides reassurance that AI is being used appropriately and responsibly.

# 3

### Establish formal pathways to experiment and scale

German public servants are unlikely to experiment without explicit approval. Creating **governed sandboxes, supported pilots** and **clear routes to scale** successful use cases is therefore essential. These structures would allow experimentation to happen safely, visibly and at pace — aligning Germany's risk-aware culture with practical delivery.