

AI in Strategic Foresight: Reshaping Anticipatory Governance

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Foreword



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In many domains, artificial intelligence (AI) is moving from experimentation to practical application, reshaping the nature of work and enterprise collaboration. Strategic foresight is no exception. AI is beginning to transform how organizations detect, interpret and act on signals of change, offering new capabilities for scanning, analysis and scenario development.

This white paper, developed jointly by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the World Economic Forum, presents new evidence from a global survey of foresight practitioners across government, business, academia and civil society. The results show a field in transition: most practitioners are using AI to support research, automate analysis and expand access to data, while a smaller group is experimenting with AI as

a creative or analytical partner in scenario design and systems mapping.

The report also highlights key barriers to progress: gaps in technical capacity, concerns about reliability and transparency, and the need for governance frameworks that align AI use with public value and ethical principles. Addressing these challenges will determine whether AI strengthens or distorts foresight practice.

This publication aims to inform and inspire foresight practitioners and policy-makers as they navigate this evolving landscape. By investing in AI literacy in foresight teams, creating safe spaces for experimentation and building shared standards for responsible use, we can ensure AI contributes to more anticipatory, adaptive and informed policy-making.

Executive summary

AI's intersection with strategic foresight offers both opportunities and challenges.

Innovations in AI have opened the door to possible future scenarios that would have been unthinkable just a few years ago. The technology affects decision-makers around the world, and perhaps none more than practitioners of strategic foresight – the field where experts explore multiple plausible futures and develop strategies to help organizations, governments and others prepare for events to come. To evaluate AI's impact on strategic foresight, this white paper presents the results of a survey of 167 foresight experts from 55 countries, drawn from the World Economic Forum's Global Foresight Network, the OECD Government Foresight Community and the Dubai Future Foundation.

The results show that a majority of foresight practitioners now use AI in their work. Practitioners report that the technology is useful for essential elements of foresight such as trend analysis, future scenario development and identification of emerging themes and issues. Experts primarily value AI for saving time, saying it streamlines their work by handling repetitive and labour-intensive tasks. Respondents also appreciate AI's ability to process and analyse large datasets, uncovering trends and insights that would be difficult or time-consuming to identify manually.

However, the survey reveals diverging opinions in the field about the technology's usefulness, accessibility and reliability. Many respondents

express concerns about the quality and trustworthiness of AI-generated content, noting that it is prone to hallucinations, operates without transparency and can produce biased results. AI is also reported to have limited capacity for inductive reasoning, as the technology draws from existing knowledge and struggles to embrace the forward-looking perspectives needed for strategic foresight.

The survey also highlights gaps in how AI technologies are seen by practitioners in the public and private sectors, academia and civil society, with those in the private sector feeling most confident in their abilities to use AI in their strategic foresight work. Furthermore, respondents say that in some cases – for example with public sector workers operating under data security and confidentiality restrictions – a lack of established AI usage guidelines can hamper foresight practitioners' ability to fully realize the opportunities AI can offer.

This white paper includes recommendations to take advantage of areas where AI can augment foresight, and to limit its potential pitfalls. These include increasing AI literacy among the global foresight community and encouraging experimentation to move beyond simple use cases of the technology. AI tools can help supplement – but not replace – human efforts in the field of strategic foresight, with AI handling tasks such as data processing and initial drafts, thereby freeing up time for experts' higher-level analysis, interpretation and critical thinking.



Introduction

AI is reshaping the world of anticipatory governance.

Strategic foresight – the disciplined exploration of possible futures to inform present-day decision-making – has long served as a cornerstone for resilience and long-term governance. Effective foresight requires challenging existing mental frames and cognitive biases, and cultivating openness, imagination and creativity to see beyond the immediate and the familiar. It is grounded in the present, yet anchored in an understanding of the past, connecting historical insight to forward-looking analysis. Foresight enables governments, businesses and societies to identify emerging opportunities and risks, and to make more adaptive choices that boost resilience in an increasingly complex and uncertain world.

At the World Economic Forum, the Strategic Foresight team convenes the Global Foresight Network,¹ a community of practice across public and private sectors that serves as an incubator to accelerate and advance the practice of foresight and future-preparedness. At the OECD, the Strategic Foresight Unit champions the OECD Government Foresight Community (GFC),² which brings together public sector strategic foresight practitioners and exchanges information on the latest foresight developments in government for better policy-making. Together the Forum and OECD have been assessing the impact AI will have on the practice of foresight, recognizing that, as AI becomes one of the most transformative forces of the 21st century, it has the potential to fundamentally reshape foresight adoption and methodology.

The intersection of AI and foresight offers both opportunity and challenge – the potential to democratize access to anticipatory tools that were once resource-intensive and institutionally bound, and the risk of distorting or over-automating the very processes it enhances. AI can broaden participation by augmenting analytical capacity, pattern recognition and scenario generation, empowering more actors to explore and prepare for alternative futures. Yet, these same tools can also introduce new dependencies, amplify biases and accelerate short-term decision-making at the expense of deep reflection.

AI is transforming economies, governments and societies with unprecedented speed.³ It is reshaping how value is created, policies are designed and services are delivered. From the

OECD's perspective, the public sector has a unique opportunity to embed AI within the policy cycle, using real-time data and feedback to strengthen foresight, accountability and evidence-based decision-making. The OECD's 2025 *Governing with AI* report and its *Framework for Trustworthy AI in Government* underscore that trustworthy deployment relies on three pillars – enablers, guardrails and engagement – aligning with OECD AI Principles⁴ on human-centred, inclusive growth.

Objective

The same dynamism that fuels AI's promise makes foresight indispensable to its governance. Both the OECD and the Forum recognize that responsible AI requires anticipatory capacity – strategic foresight helps address the Collingridge dilemma by encouraging public bodies and firms alike to experiment, prototype and scenario-plan for shifting technological, social and geopolitical contexts. Public institutions need to build anticipatory capacity to prepare for how AI will reshape their functions and the nature of policy itself.⁵ In parallel, businesses must embed strategic foresight, accountability and transparency into every layer of their AI strategy and operations. This means aligning responsible AI with core business goals, establishing empowered governance and risk frameworks, and ensuring trustworthy data, ethical design and workforce literacy. In doing so, companies can innovate confidently while safeguarding trust, resilience and long-term value creation.

As such, the purpose of this paper is to conduct a first assessment of how the foresight field itself is being transformed by AI. To understand this evolution, the OECD and the World Economic Forum have explored how AI is being integrated into foresight practices across public, private, academic and civil society domains. In mid-2025, a global survey of 167 foresight experts from 55 countries – drawn from the OECD Government Foresight Community, the Forum's Global Foresight Network, and the Dubai Future Foundation network – revealed that two-thirds of practitioners already use AI in their work. The findings that follow provide an early empirical view of how AI is reshaping foresight methodologies, accessibility and the broader ecosystem of anticipatory governance.

AI skills and capacity

A sizeable gap exists in AI skills across sectors.

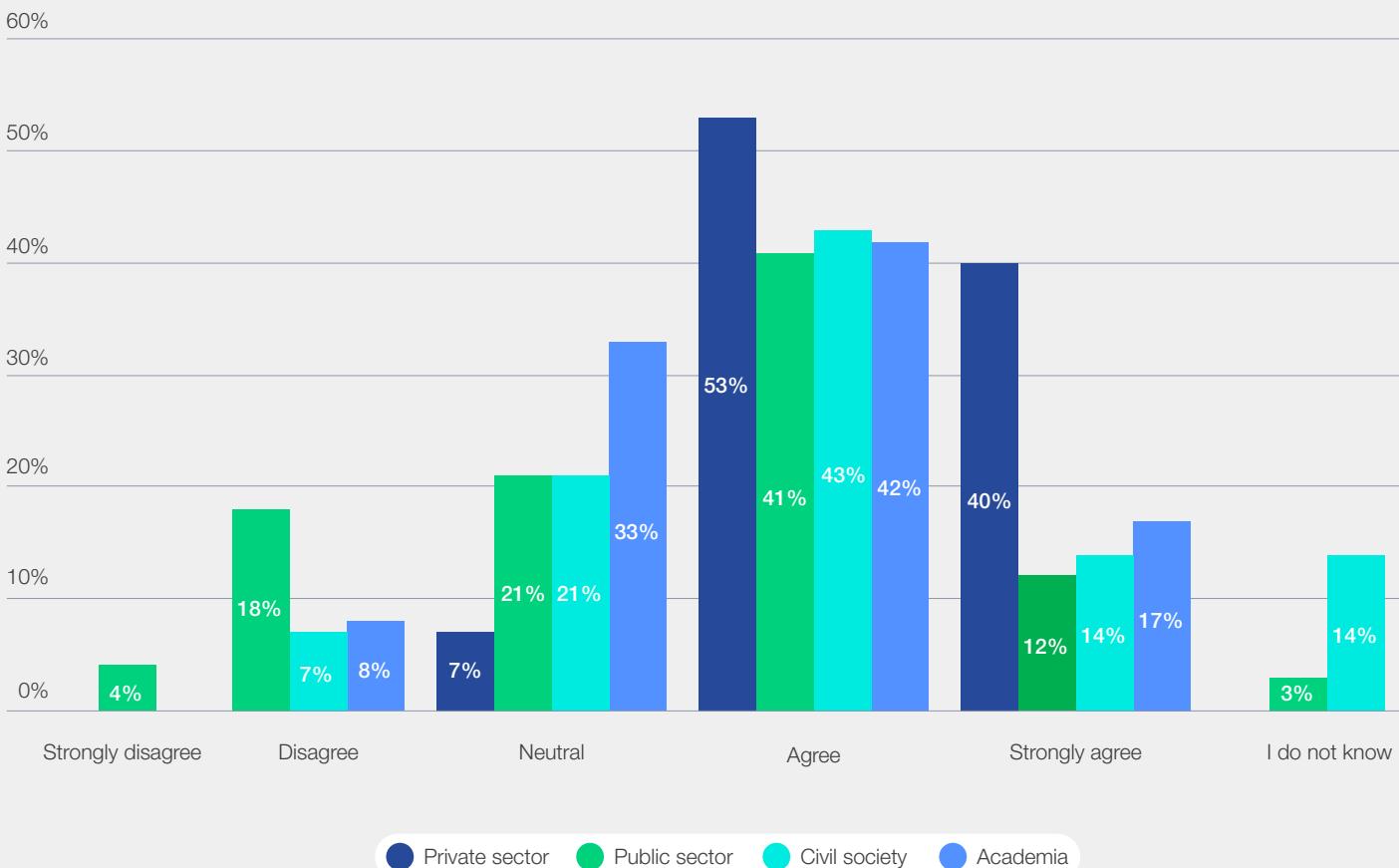
The perception of relevant AI skills for strategic foresight (Figure 1) varies across sectors. Public sector employees in general tend to be more modest in their assessment of their own abilities compared to strategic foresight experts from other sectors, particularly those from the private sector. Some 53% of public sector respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that they had relevant skills to use AI in their strategic foresight work, and similar numbers were reported by

respondents from civil society (57%) and academia (59%). However, 93% of private sector respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement.

Those who did not have experience with AI reported limited ideas about the possibilities that AI may provide. This may point to a need for a more coordinated and systematic increase of AI literacy in the public sector through training and active experimentation.

FIGURE 1 Skills to use AI for strategic foresight

Do you have the relevant skills to use AI in foresight work?



Source: OECD

Currently, the bulk of strategic foresight experts use off-the-shelf AI tools (51% of respondents), while 12% use customized solutions and 32% use hybrid solutions. The most common platforms used by the respondents are CoPilot (22%), ChatGPT/OpenAI (16%), Claude (12%), Gemini (12%), Perplexity (11%) and Deepseek (7%).

Most strategic foresight experts use two or more tools simultaneously, with some using up to 50 different tools. Some 27% of the respondents reported that their organization was collaborating with other organizations to develop AI-enabled foresight, and another 34% said their organization was planning to do so.

Customized tools tend to integrate AI into existing foresight methodologies (e.g. the Radical Technology Inquirer),⁶ develop new tools or use the APIs (application programming interfaces) of different large language models (LLMs) for internal

analysis purposes. These tools are used to collect documents automatically, detect signals or analyse documents in support of foresight activities (see some examples in Box 1).

BOX 1 Examples of tools used by strategic foresight experts

The survey respondents mentioned some specific use cases of AI for strategic foresight:

- Custom AI-based platform designed to generate predictive evaluations of emerging technologies.
- AI-powered platforms designed to provide predictive insights through the simulation of user-guided alternative future scenarios.

- AI-enhanced cloud system that collects and processes multi-source news information using event-based modelling and ontologies.
- AI-enhanced custom oriented platform for the persistent, autonomous reconnaissance of global supply chains.
- Closed-access organizational tools developed by and used within a large international organization.

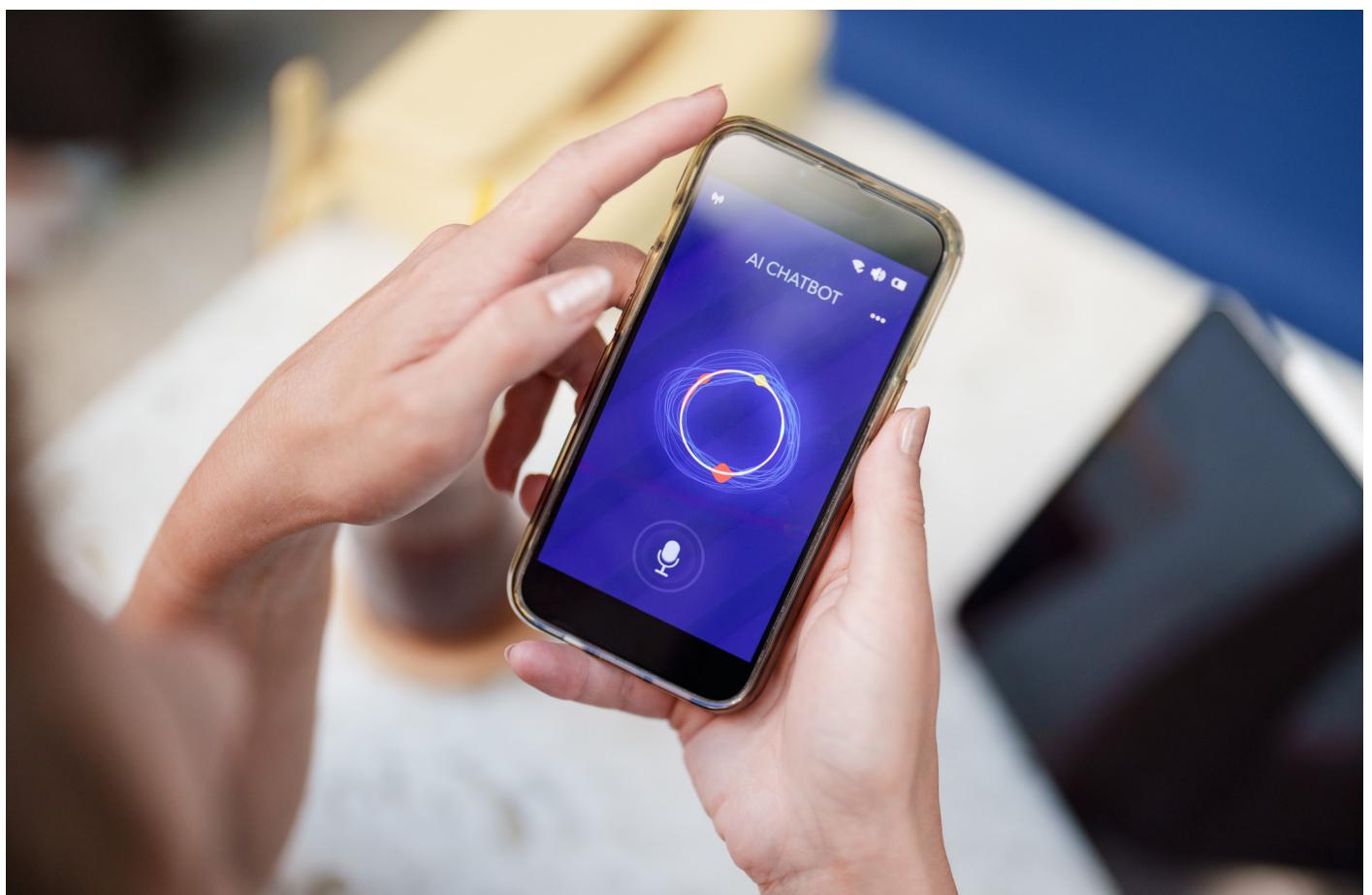
Source: OECD

In sum, strategic foresight experts are using AI predominantly for trend analysis or clustering (69%), scenario development (63%) and horizon scanning (60%) (see figure 2). There are no large differences in use between sectors, albeit those working in academia use AI tools more for horizon scanning, trend analysis and clustering than other sectors, while scenario development is most common in the private sector and civil society.

Many also use AI for data and scenario visualizations. Civil society also tends to do

more predictive modelling or forecasting (33% of respondents using AI in the sector), which could possibly be linked to many digital government initiatives in the sector.

In addition to the outlined functionalities, strategic foresight experts also reported using AI for designing persona profiles, extrapolating wild cards and extreme scenarios, looking for bias or blind spots in thinking (especially expanding human-generated analysis) and as a reference library for strategic foresight methodologies.



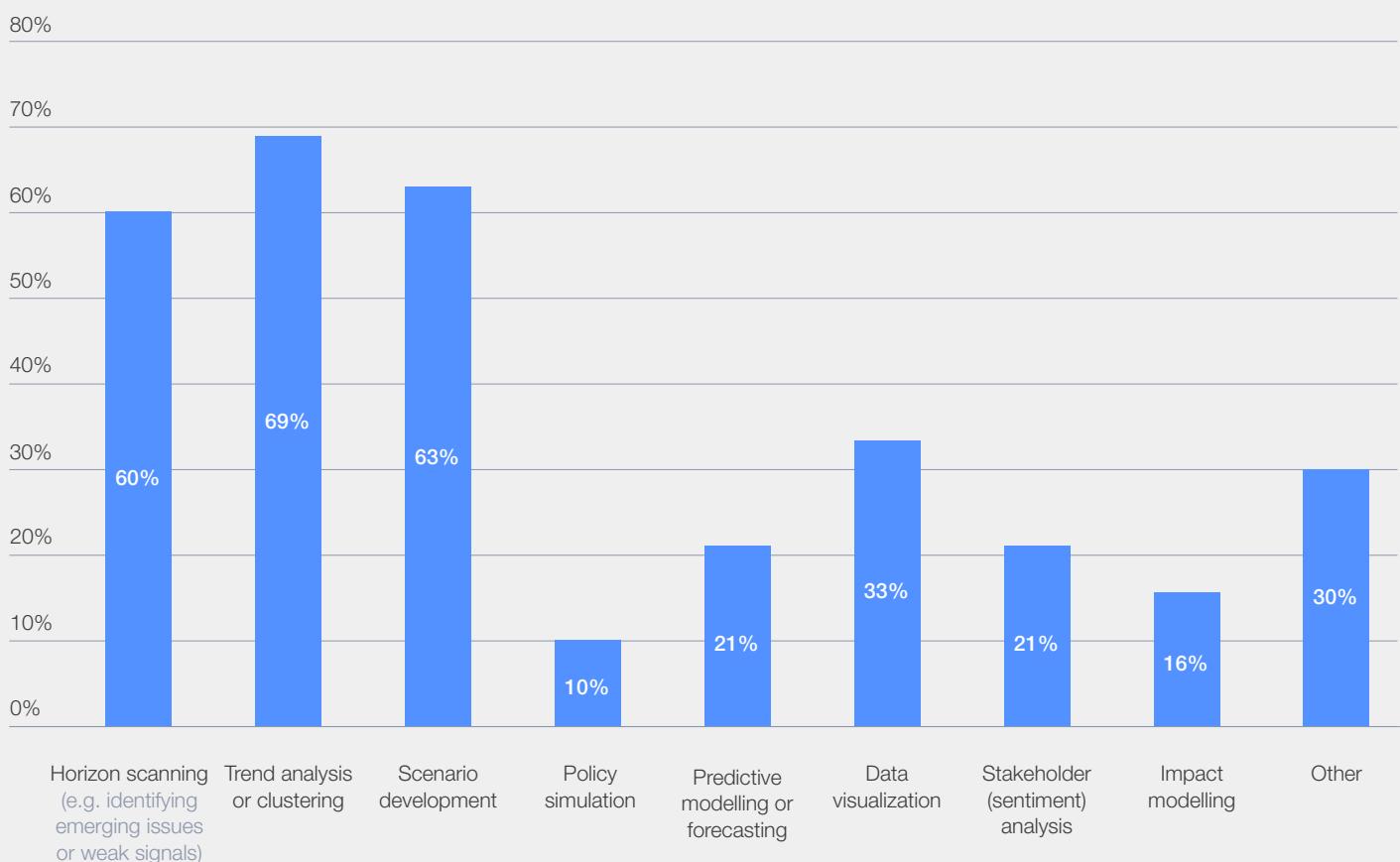
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AI integration into strategic foresight

AI tools are used as a supplement to human work, not a replacement.

FIGURE 2 Functions of AI in strategic foresight

How is AI being applied in your organization for strategic foresight? (Multiple choice)



Note: Data represented for respondents currently using AI in their strategic foresight work

Source: OECD



When it comes to the integration of AI into strategic foresight processes in general, practice varies.

① Level one: AI for analysis augmentation

Those who have not experimented with a variety of tools or do not have customized solutions tend to use AI for simpler tasks in the research phase (synthesis of data, initial scanning, sensemaking, etc.). This is true for the majority of strategic foresight experts surveyed. Here, AI tools are particularly useful for gathering, organizing and synthesizing large amounts of information on a case-by-case basis, providing a base layer of insights that can later be deepened and contextualized by human experts. AI tools are seen as complementary but stand-alone solutions, which mainly contribute to human-centred workflows.

AI tools are purely supplemental; they help speed the workflow by about 10-15%, but they require careful analysis and existing expertise.

② Level two: AI as creative sparring partner

The next reported level of maturity tends to be using AI as a sparring partner and idea generator, wind-tunnelling ideas and stress-testing human-generated content. At this point, AI tools help to systematize and summarize signals, offer ideas for the structure of the study, suggest scenarios based on the uploaded data, help to compare the collected signals with other factual data and help to speed up the search for relevant information. Here, survey respondents reported direct efficiency and productivity increases, such

as increased throughput of scenarios developed, wider wind-tunnelling activities and increased scalability of outputs.

AI tools are a useful support to scan horizons and work on environmental scanning, engage in megatrend analysis and simulation, speculate futures and prepare visualizations for leadership with short notice. While AI helps to increase speed and provides (in many cases) analytical depth, it has to be considered as a complement to human expertise and experience, not as a substitute.

③ Level three: AI integrated and customized into workflow

The third level is currently very rare and denotes the integration of AI into the entire strategic foresight process, with various fit-for-purpose tools developed for horizon scanning, options and combinations of methods, scoping the research question, testing it and communicating it externally. For these cases, more tailored tools are utilized that allow for complexity mapping, pattern detection, etc. Here, strategic foresight experts are actively experimenting with AI applications (including AI agents) on a continuous basis, including actively automating different parts of the strategic foresight process such as signal detection, trends analysis, scenario development, simulations and stress testing, visualization of alternative futures and other outputs.

AI is integrated as a significant component of the foresight process. Experts are actively experimenting with AI applications that enable capabilities previously infeasible, including automated document collection, automated signal collection and automatic analysis of documents as inputs for scenario development and other foresight outputs.

Benefits and challenges

AI's advantages come with potential hazards.

The perception of AI's usefulness for strategic foresight (Figure 3) varies across sectors, with a generally positive perception, except in the public sector. This perception is certainly influenced by "experience of use" – those who have used AI for strategic foresight in practice have a much higher perception of its usefulness. As such, 43% of those

who had experience with using AI reported that the technology was either essential or highly useful to their work, another 47% of this group found it moderately useful; the corresponding numbers for those who had not used AI for strategic foresight were 16% (essential or high relevance) and 33% (moderately useful).

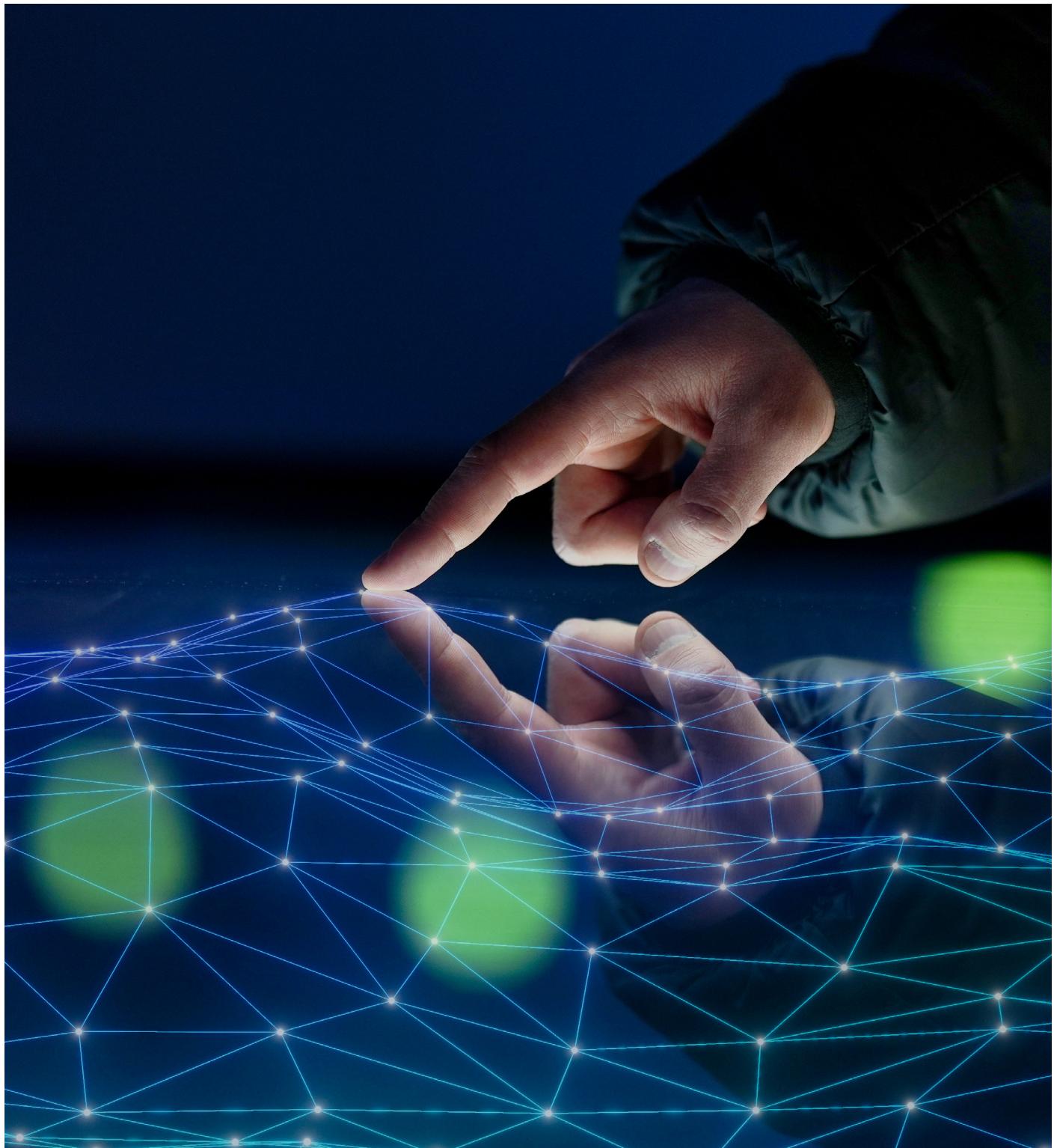
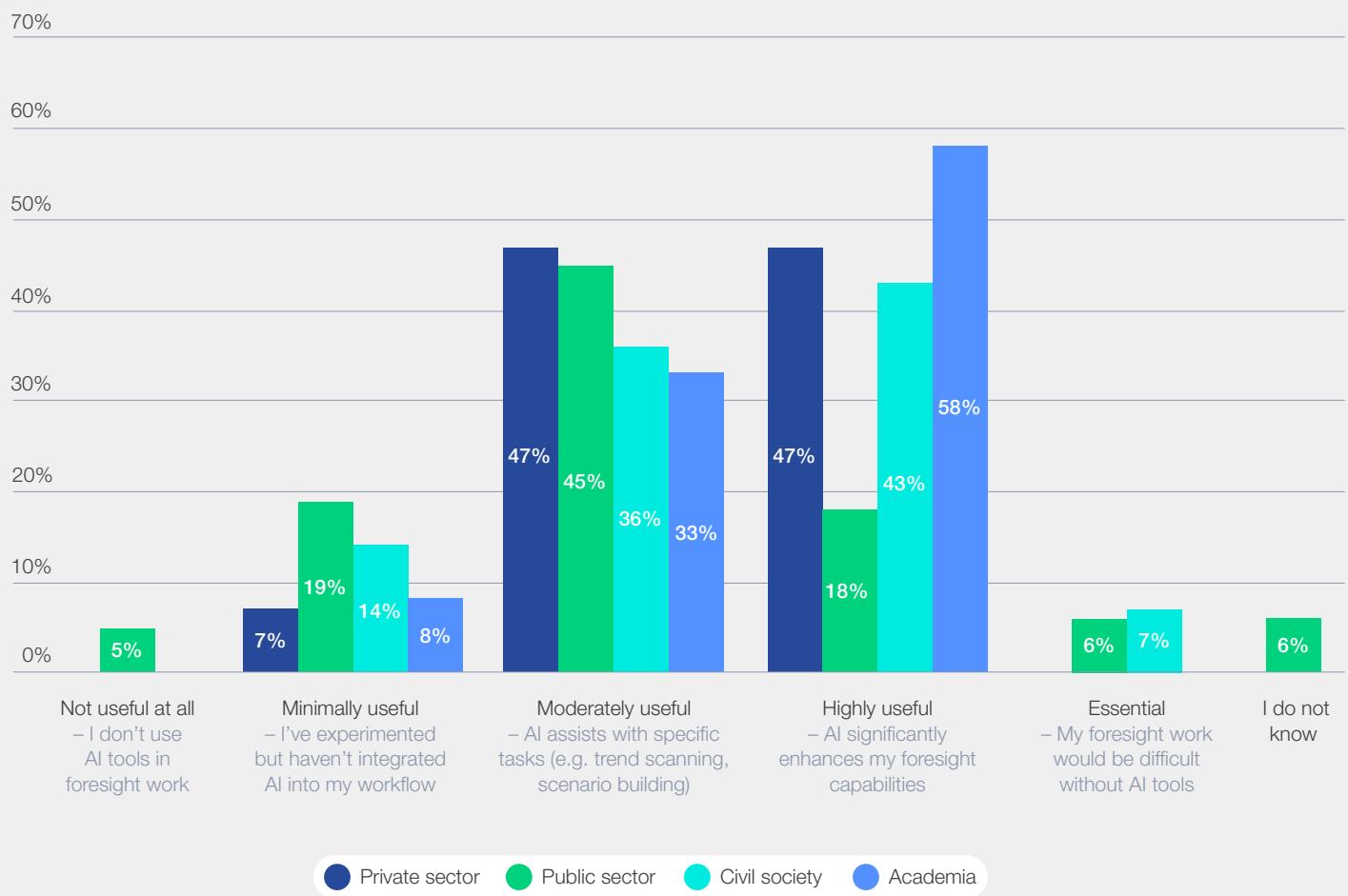


FIGURE 3 | Usefulness of AI for strategic foresight

How useful do you currently find AI tools in strategic foresight work?



Source: OECD

As such, there is a strong consensus among those strategic foresight experts who currently use AI that the technology is most valuable for its ability to accelerate and streamline processes, particularly in the early stages of foresight work. This efficiency gain allows practitioners to focus on more complex, high-level tasks that require human judgement and creativity. The benefits of using AI in strategic foresight reported by those using it can be grouped into six key themes:

1. Time efficiency and acceleration (39%): AI is primarily valued for saving time and accelerating workflows. It streamlines research, analysis and production by handling repetitive and labour-intensive tasks, allowing faster completion of outputs.
2. Data processing and analysis (17%): Respondents appreciate AI's ability to process and analyse large datasets efficiently, uncovering trends and insights that would be difficult or time-consuming to identify manually.

3. Idea generation and creativity (12%): AI supports creativity by generating new ideas, first drafts and alternative perspectives, helping users overcome creative blocks and explore novel directions.
4. Scenario development (10%): AI enhances scenario-building by rapidly generating, refining and testing multiple future scenarios, improving both speed and completeness in strategic foresight.
5. Improved quality and scope (7%): AI helps improve the overall quality, structure and breadth of work, enabling more comprehensive research and better-designed outputs.
6. Support for non-experts and beginners (4%): AI makes foresight methods more accessible by reducing expertise and resource barriers, helping newcomers participate more effectively in analytical or strategic processes.

In conclusion, the survey results clearly show that AI is perceived as a powerful tool for enhancing the efficiency, speed and scope of strategic foresight. While it is not yet seen as a replacement for human expertise – with several respondents noting the need for “checking

legitimacy” and expert analysis – it is widely viewed as a valuable partner that handles the heavy-lifting of data processing and initial drafts, freeing up human practitioners for higher-level analysis, interpretation and critical thinking.

3.1 Reported challenges

The biggest challenges in integrating AI into strategic foresight are related to ethical or governance concerns, lack of technical expertise and difficulty in aligning AI with human-centred foresight (Figure 4). Technical expertise is, unsurprisingly, less of a barrier for those who have already used AI for strategic foresight (Figure 5), but keeping up with the best tools available was reported as a challenge across the board. Resistance from leadership or stakeholders was reportedly faced mostly by public sector, civil society and academia members; this is reportedly not an issue for the private sector respondents who participated in the survey.

Additional challenges reported by strategic foresight experts (both who use and do not use AI already) were related to the unreliability of AI outputs: their

quality and tendencies towards hallucinations, lack of transparency, language and other biases, and noise. Moreover, in many cases AI was reported to have limited capacity for inductive reasoning. Because AI systems are built upon only existing knowledge, they struggle to identify forward-looking perspectives, unknown/low probability signals and potential disruptions, all of which are necessary for strategic foresight.

Furthermore, especially in the public sector context, data security concerns and government silos were listed as barriers. To improve the quality of outputs, more intentionality and tailoring in both use and tools was seen as necessary. However, strategic foresight experts also reported a lack of resources and time for necessary experimentation.

FIGURE 4 Challenges to integrating AI into foresight practices

Which of the following challenges do you face in integrating AI into foresight?

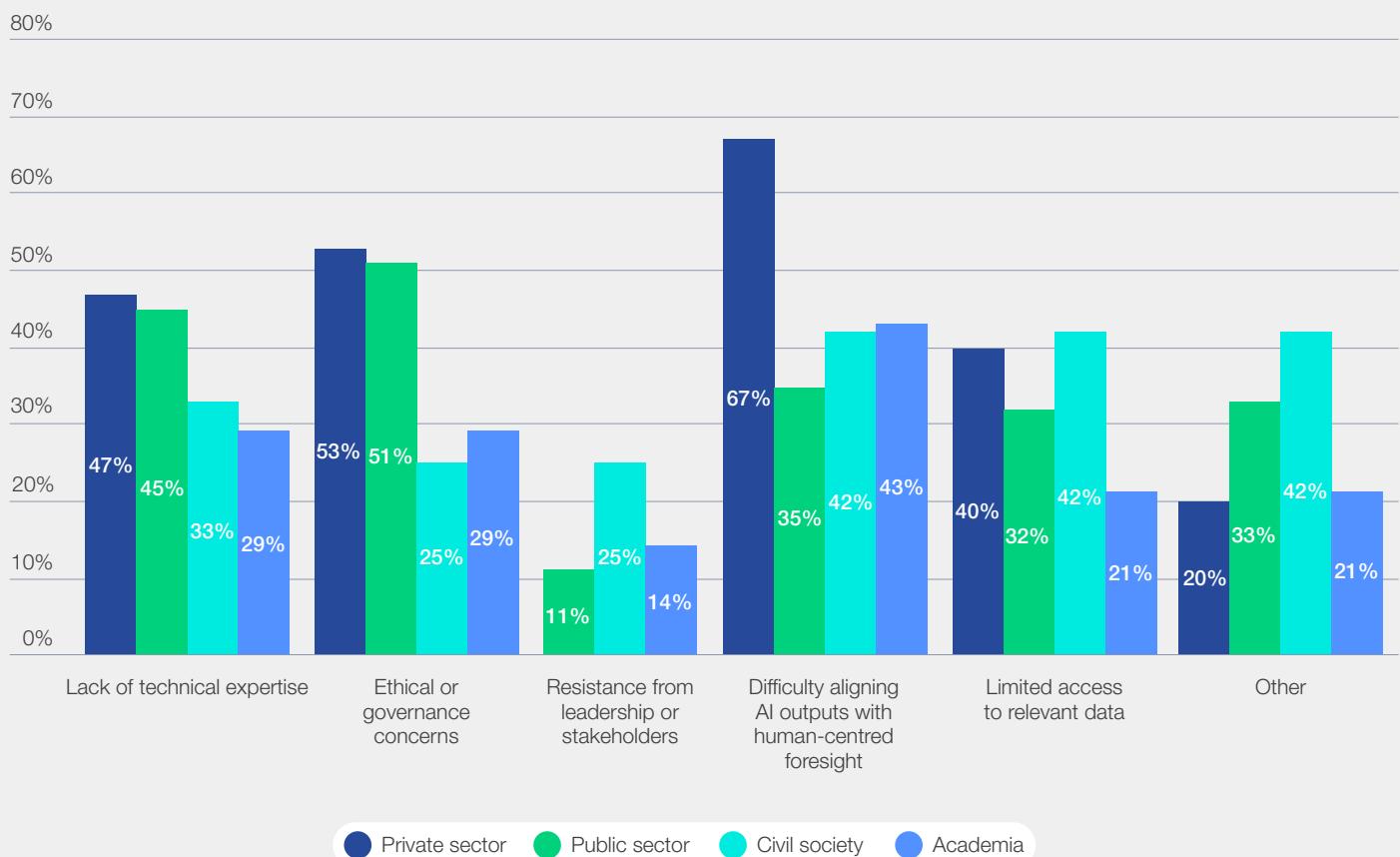
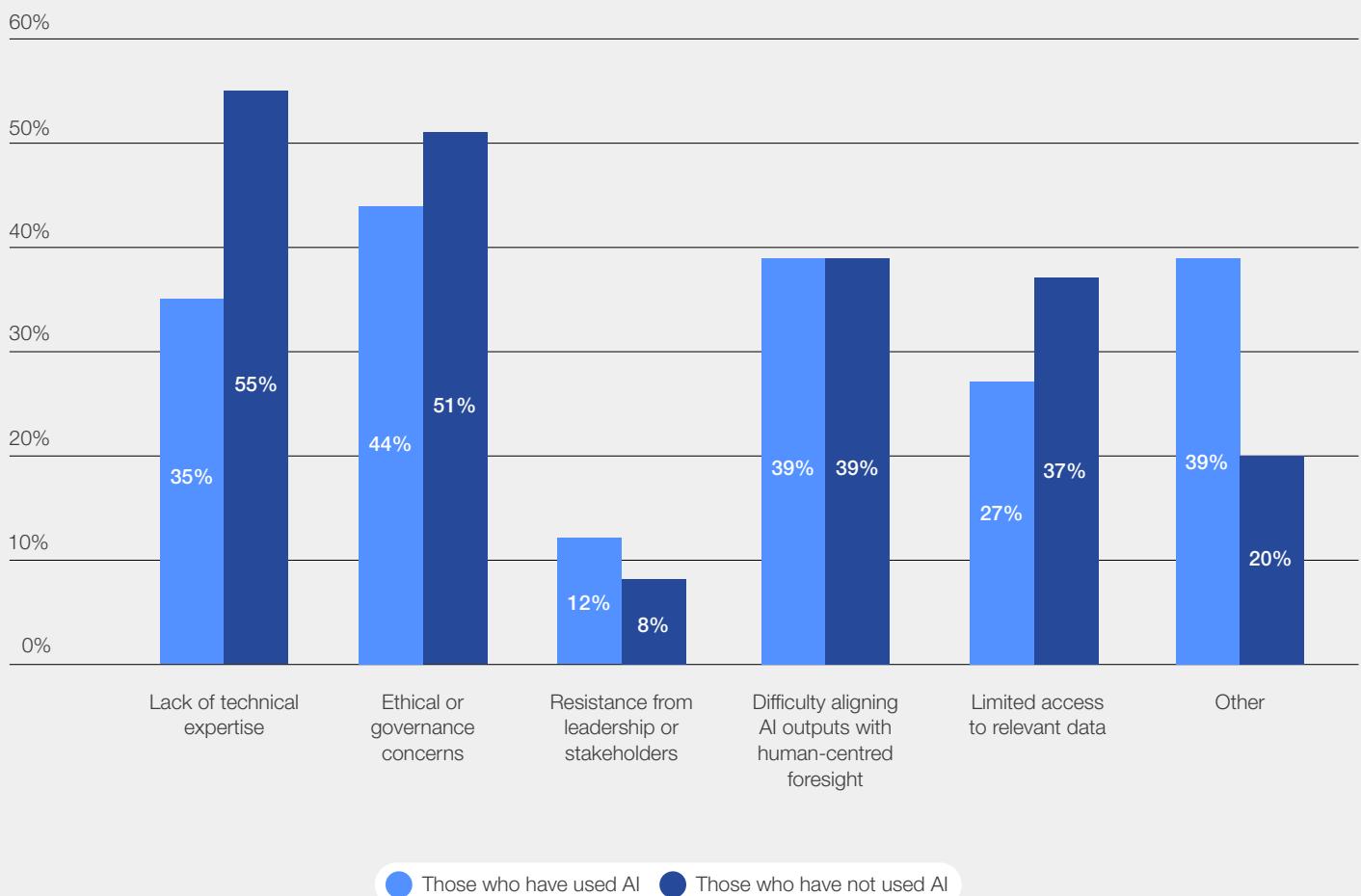


FIGURE 5 | Challenges to integrating AI into foresight practices

Which of the following challenges do you face in integrating AI into foresight?



Source: OECD

Given these concerns, despite efficiencies, users have significant reservations about AI's trustworthiness and ability to deliver truly novel or nuanced insights without extensive human oversight. These can be summarized by frequency of mentions as follows:

1. Output quality and trustworthiness (30%): The main concern is that AI often produces unreliable, shallow or unoriginal outputs. Respondents doubt its ability to deliver deep analysis, novel insights or credible foresight without human oversight.
2. Transparency and verification (12%): Practitioners struggle with AI's lack of transparency and unclear reasoning. Because the sources and logic behind its outputs are hidden, significant human effort is required for validation and fact-checking, turning the process into an audit rather than an exercise.
3. Bias and data limitations (10%): Respondents worry about biased and narrow outputs due to AI's dependence on English-language, Western and historical data. Its limited access to private

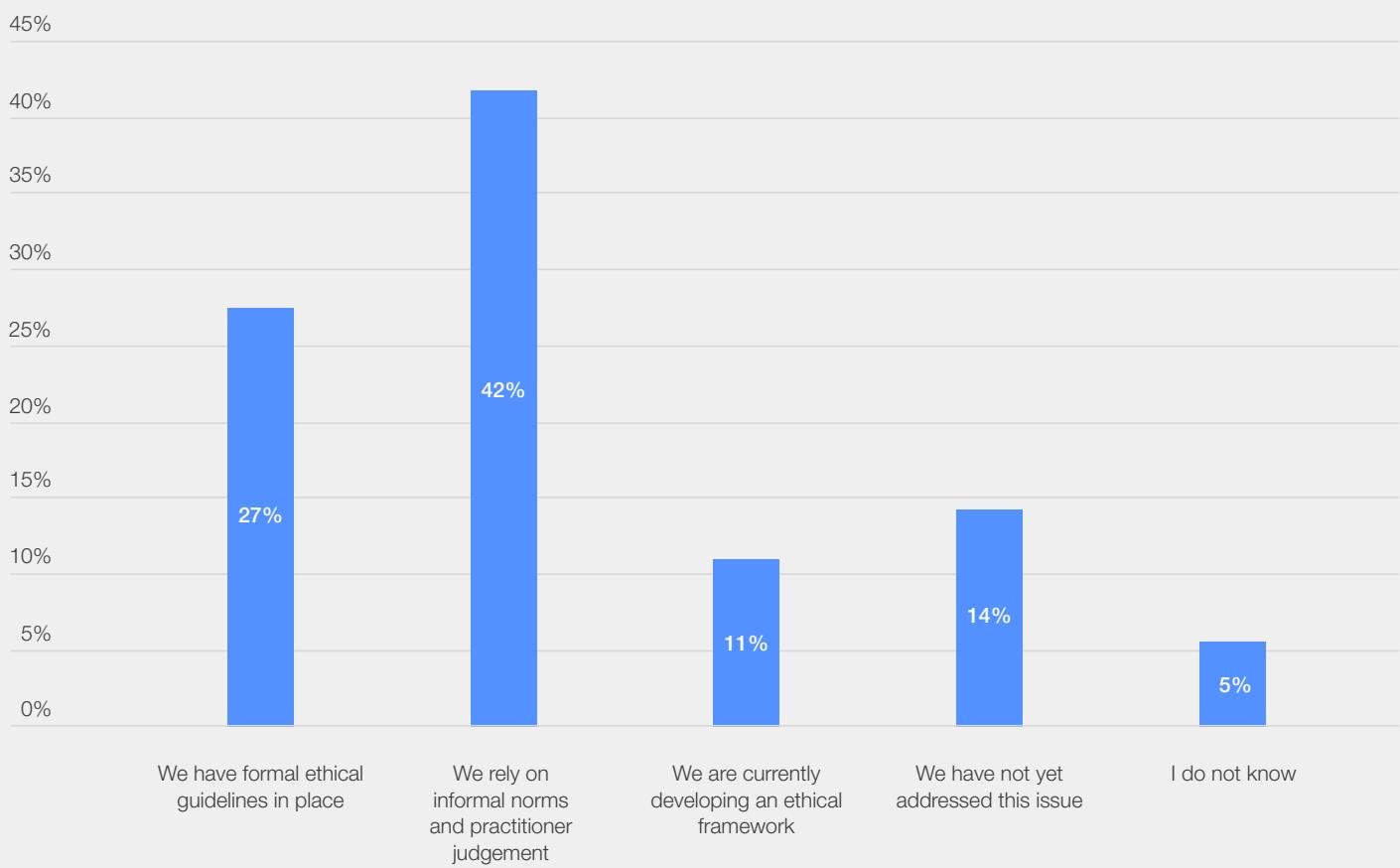
or emerging information restricts global and forward-looking analysis.

4. Organizational and ethical issues (10%): Concerns extend to data security, unclear rules on ownership and citation, and the risk of over-reliance on AI. Many organizations lack formal ethical frameworks to guide responsible use. This is problematic – only 27% of experts using AI already said their organizations had formal ethical guidelines in place (Figure 6).
5. Methodological and usage challenges (10%): Using AI effectively is seen as difficult. Crafting strong prompts and maintaining quality requires expertise, with AI often reverting to simple or inconsistent outputs.

The challenges outlined above indicate that AI is currently viewed as a tool that augments, rather than replaces, human expertise, requiring careful and continuous oversight to ensure the quality and ethical soundness of foresight work.

FIGURE 6 | Presence of ethical guidelines

How do you address the ethical risks associated with AI in foresight work?



Note: Data represented for respondents currently using AI in their strategic foresight work

Source: OECD



Perspectives on the future

Foresight practitioners must ensure that AI does not undermine the field.

As AI is developing rapidly and its impacts are difficult to assess holistically, a majority of strategic foresight experts surveyed said the risks connected with the technology were contextual and dependent on how AI is designed, governed and applied (Figure 7).

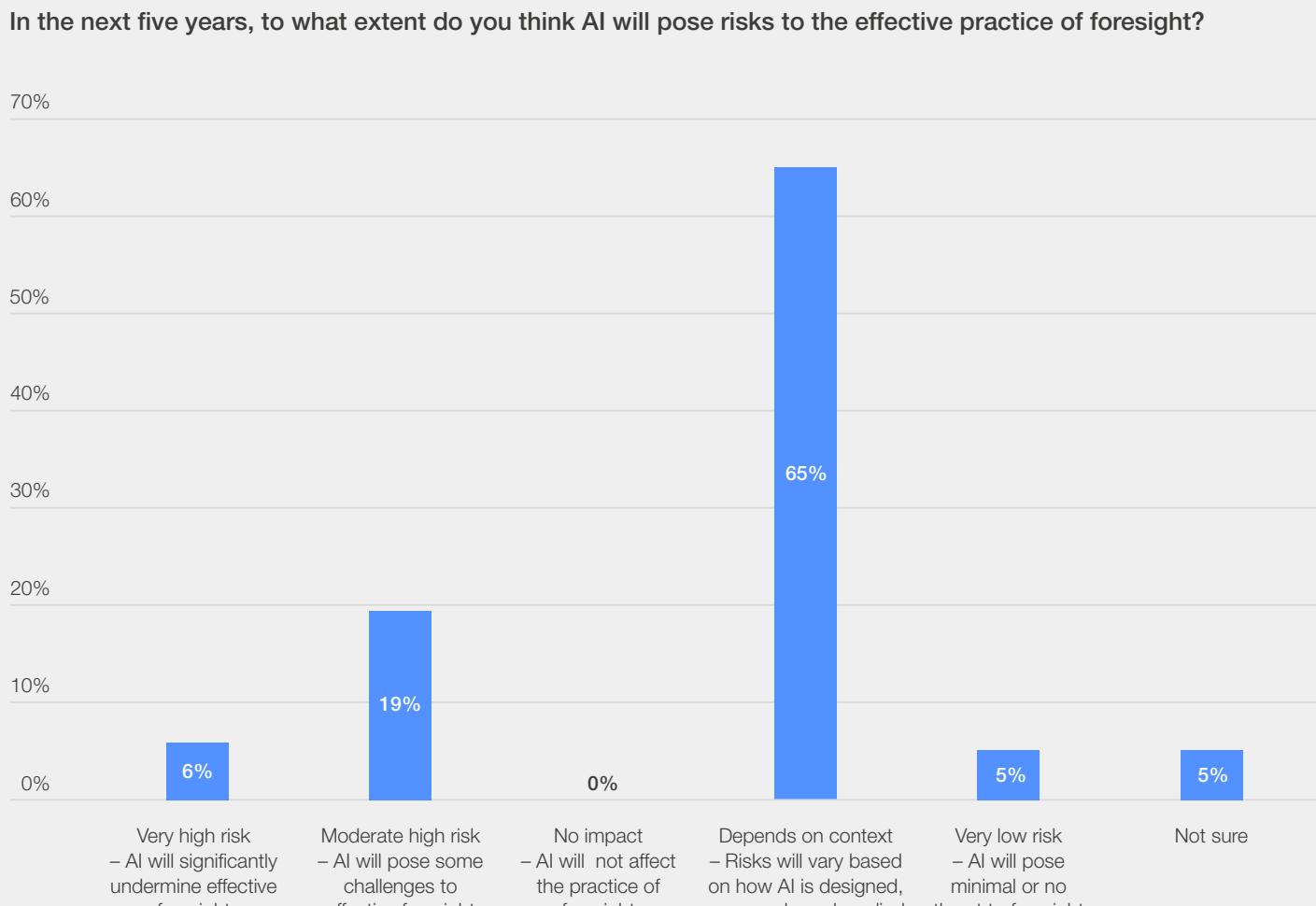
Nevertheless, 19% of the respondents predicted moderate risks to the profession and 6% of respondents judged there to be a very high risk that AI will significantly undermine effective foresight practices. The proportions of these responses were largely the same for both those already using AI in their strategic foresight practice and those who were not doing so yet.

As strategic foresight practitioners are also facing the Collingridge dilemma (not all risks associated with AI will be foreseeable before adoption at scale and the establishment of path dependencies that are hard to break), these risks should be taken seriously.

With this in mind, anticipatory capacity is needed in the public sector in general, but also in the strategic foresight practice itself to tackle these risks as early as possible through experimentation and by following risk management practices.⁷



FIGURE 7 | AI's level of risk to strategic foresight



Source: OECD

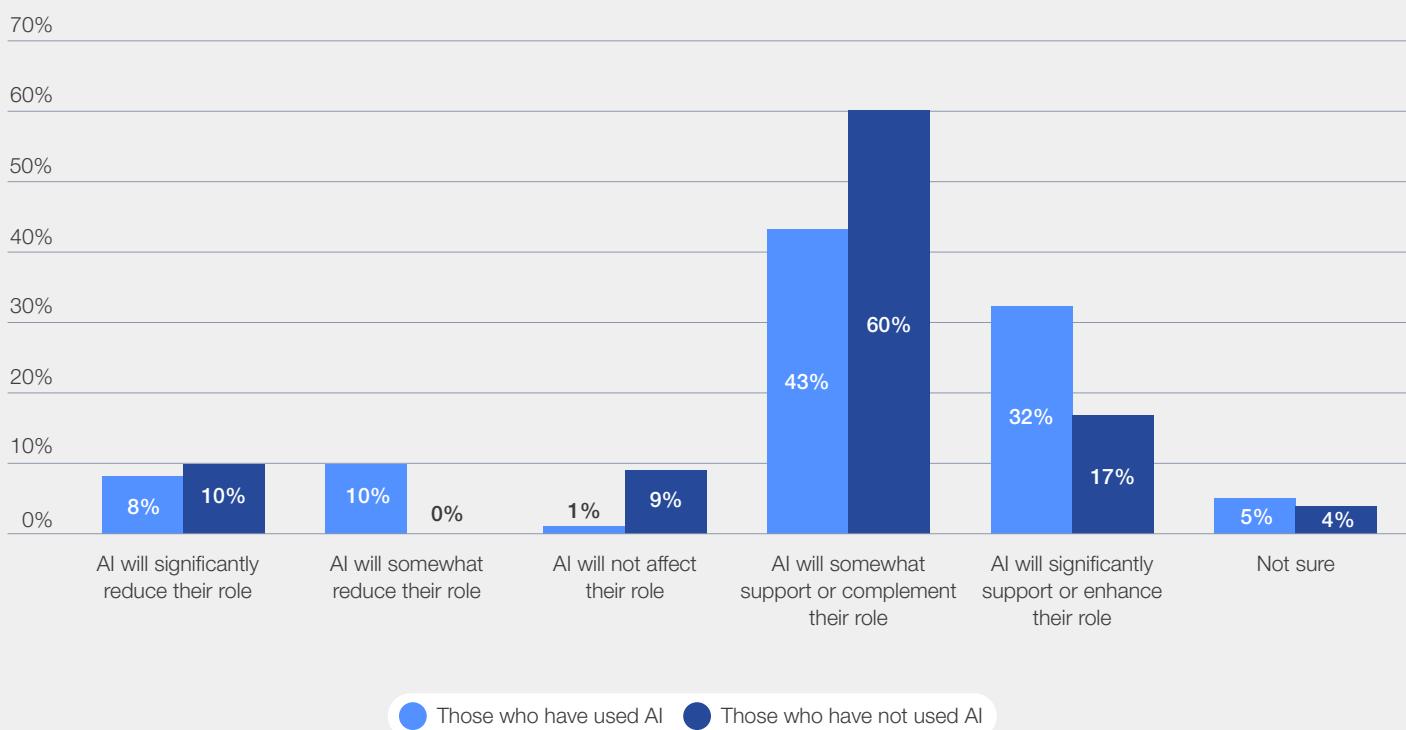
The views of experts on the more specific impacts of AI on strategic foresight practitioners themselves and the technology's influence on decision-making varied based on their prior experience with AI (see Figures 8 and 9). For example, 18% of respondents who had experience with AI in strategic foresight predicted that AI will significantly or somewhat reduce their role, while 32% of the same group said AI will significantly support or enhance their role (Figure 8).

Similarly, on the positive side, 22% of those having experience with AI said they expected the technology to have strongly positive impact on strategic foresight being integrated into decision-making, compared

to only 11% from the group who were not using AI in their strategic foresight work (Figure 9). On the whole, on both accounts, the majority across both groups tended to evaluate the impact of AI on the profession positively rather than negatively.

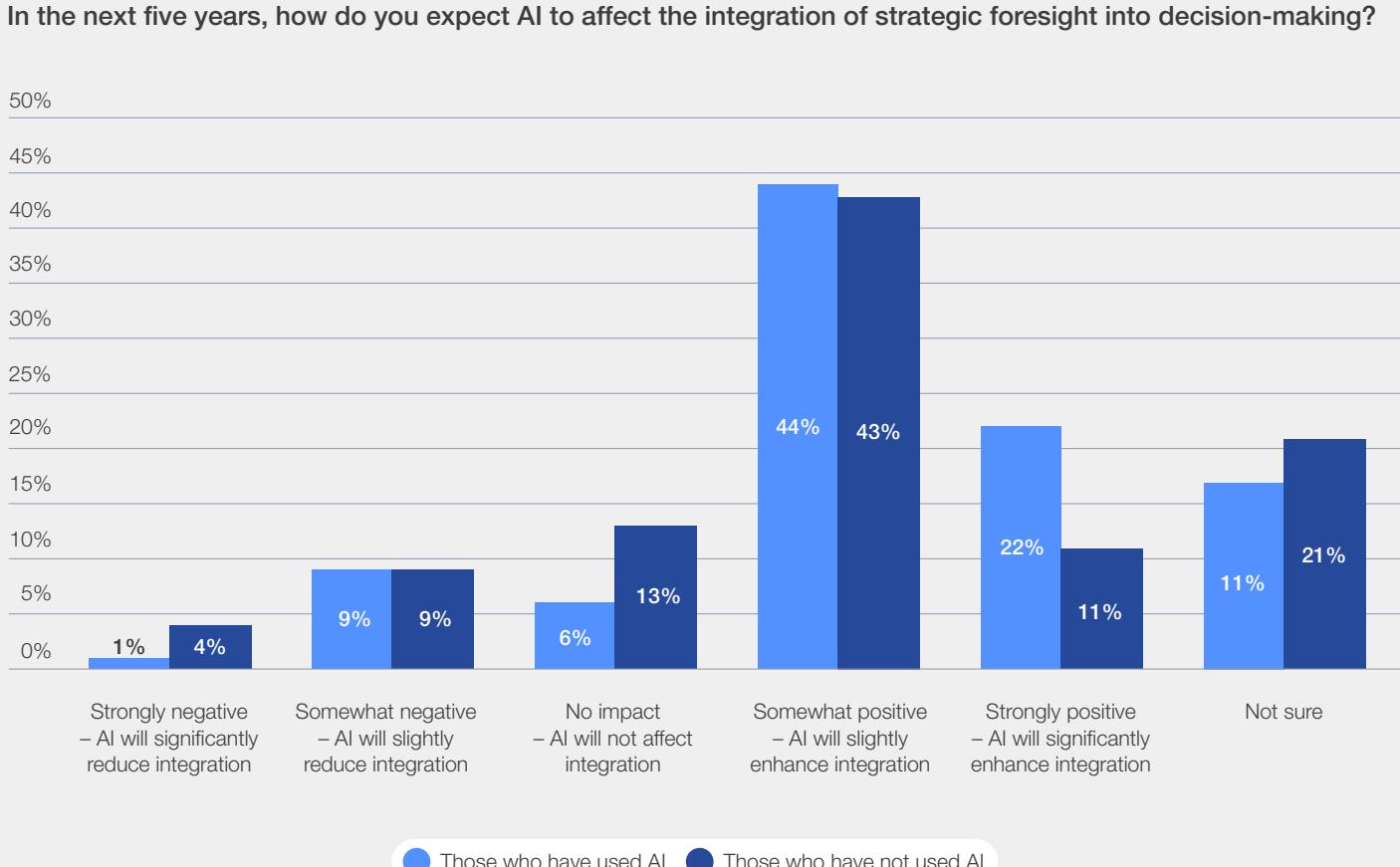
A contradictory risk that arises is: the use of AI may make foresight more accessible to people and therefore more widely used but, if the foresight outputs are of poor quality due to the issues previously identified, trust in the process may be lost, thus undoing progress made in embedding foresight into decision-making.

FIGURE 8 | AI's influence on the role of strategic foresight practitioners



Source: OECD

FIGURE 9 | AI's impact on the integration of strategic foresight into decision-making



Source: OECD

Conclusion

The insights from the OECD-World Economic Forum survey highlight a pivotal moment for the foresight profession. While the findings confirm AI's potential to enhance efficiency, they also reveal a range of challenges and uncertainties.

Opportunities

Increasing AI literacy: A notable finding is the disparity in perceived AI skills across sectors, with public sector respondents reporting a more modest assessment of their capabilities compared to the private sector. This may necessitate a coordinated and systematic increase of AI literacy in the public sector through training and active experimentation.

Practitioners, particularly those without prior experience, often have limited ideas about AI's potential, and can therefore be less well positioned to identify, and avoid, its pitfalls. An active, experimental approach is crucial, as the survey found that experience with AI significantly increases the perception of its usefulness. This is not simply about adopting off-the-shelf tools but also about automating different parts of the strategic foresight process, augmenting human creativity and developing tailored solutions.

Moving beyond simple use cases: The survey indicates that most strategic foresight practitioners currently use AI for simpler tasks, such as synthesizing data, initial scanning and sense-making. While this is a valuable starting point, the future lies in more advanced applications. Practitioners should invest time in using AI as a sparring partner and idea generator, and to systematize and summarize signals, suggest scenarios and compare collected data. The aim is for a level of maturity where AI is integrated into the entire strategic foresight process, with tailored tools developed for complexity mapping, pattern detection and communication of findings.

Developing human-centred workflows: The survey reinforces the notion that AI tools are purely supplemental and require careful analysis and existing human expertise. Strategic foresight practitioners should invest in developing workflows that leverage AI to handle the "heavy lifting" of data processing and initial drafts, thereby freeing up time for higher-level analysis, interpretation and critical thinking. The objective is to use AI to enable capabilities previously infeasible, such as automated signal detection and large-scale document analysis, while maintaining human oversight for nuance and originality in addition to verification of outputs.

Challenges

The survey highlights that while most practitioners are optimistic about AI's potential, they also recognize significant risks.

Guarding against unreliable and biased outputs:

The most frequently cited challenge is the quality and trustworthiness of AI-generated outputs. This includes the concern of hallucinations, weak and shallow content, and a general lack of originality or imagination. Practitioners must maintain a critical mindset and implement robust verification protocols to fact-check AI outputs, especially since a lack of transparency regarding sources and logic is a major concern. Different AI tools could be used in parallel to validate and check results.

Addressing ethical and governance gaps: The survey found that a significant challenge is a lack of clear ethical guidelines and governance. This is compounded by data security and confidentiality restrictions, which prevent the feeding of sensitive internal documents into AI engines. Strategic foresight practitioners may need to advocate for and help develop ethical frameworks that address issues of data ownership, accountability and responsible use of AI.⁸ Across countries, there is a lack of guidance and resources to experiment with AI in government in a responsible way.⁹

Tackling skill gaps: The survey highlighted a differing AI literacy rate among strategic foresight experts. Successfully experimenting with and integrating AI into strategic foresight processes also requires a certain level of skills in both AI and data management. Targeted hiring and internal upskilling and training programmes for strategic foresight teams can help increase the internal capacity needed to ensure a more systemic uptake of AI.

Overcoming organizational inertia: The survey showed that respondents in the public sector, civil society and academia face resistance from leadership or other stakeholders when integrating AI. This is linked to a general climate of risk aversion and a lack of resources and time for the necessary experimentation. Practitioners need to build a compelling case for the value of AI, demonstrating its benefits through small-scale experiments and pilots. Successfully integrating AI into foresight may be one of the best ways to demonstrate the systemically connected issues affecting any organization and, as such, this integration could help governments overcome exactly those silos.

Maintaining and enhancing human expertise:

The findings present a key dilemma for the profession: while AI can enhance productivity, there is a risk of “deskilling” or over-reliance on the tools with significant limitations. AI’s ability to provide existing knowledge rather than forward-looking perspectives means that human foresight expertise may be more critical than ever to identify unknown, low-probability signals and potential disruptions.

Taken together, these findings suggest that AI is becoming both a catalyst and a capability test for strategic foresight itself. As governments and businesses depend on foresight to navigate uncertainty, the uneven distribution of AI skills

– particularly the public sector’s relative lack of confidence compared to industry – signals a widening gap in anticipatory capacity.

The integration of AI into strategic foresight is not a technical problem to be solved but a strategic transformation to be managed. The path forward requires deliberate investment in human and technological capabilities, robust governance to ensure trustworthiness, and a culture of continuous experimentation. By taking these steps, governments and businesses can ensure that AI becomes a powerful enabler of more resilient, creative and insightful decision-making – strengthening their ability to navigate uncertainty and shape the future with confidence.



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