BTOS AI Core Question Updates

December 3, 2025

From November 17, 2025, the BTOS changed the wording of its core AI questions, based on expert feedback and cognitive testing. The new wording uses broader language ("in any of its business functions") to better help respondents capture their use of AI, replacing the previous "in producing goods or services" used in earlier versions of the survey.

Original current usage question:

> In the last two weeks, did this business use Artificial Intelligence (AI) in producing goods or services? (Examples of AI: machine learning, natural language processing, virtual agents, voice recognition, etc.)

Updated current usage question:

> In the last two weeks, did this business use Artificial Intelligence (AI) in any of its business functions? (Examples of AI: machine learning, natural language processing, virtual agents, voice recognition, etc.)
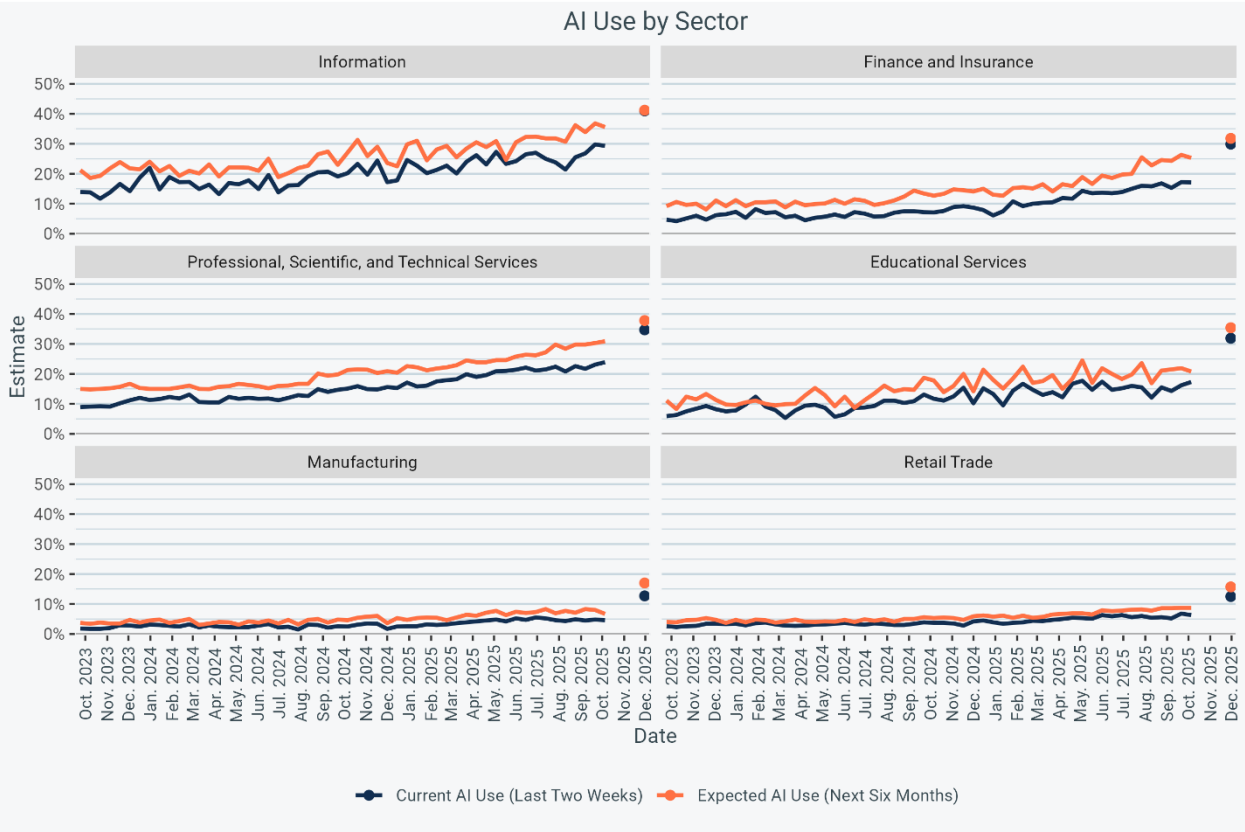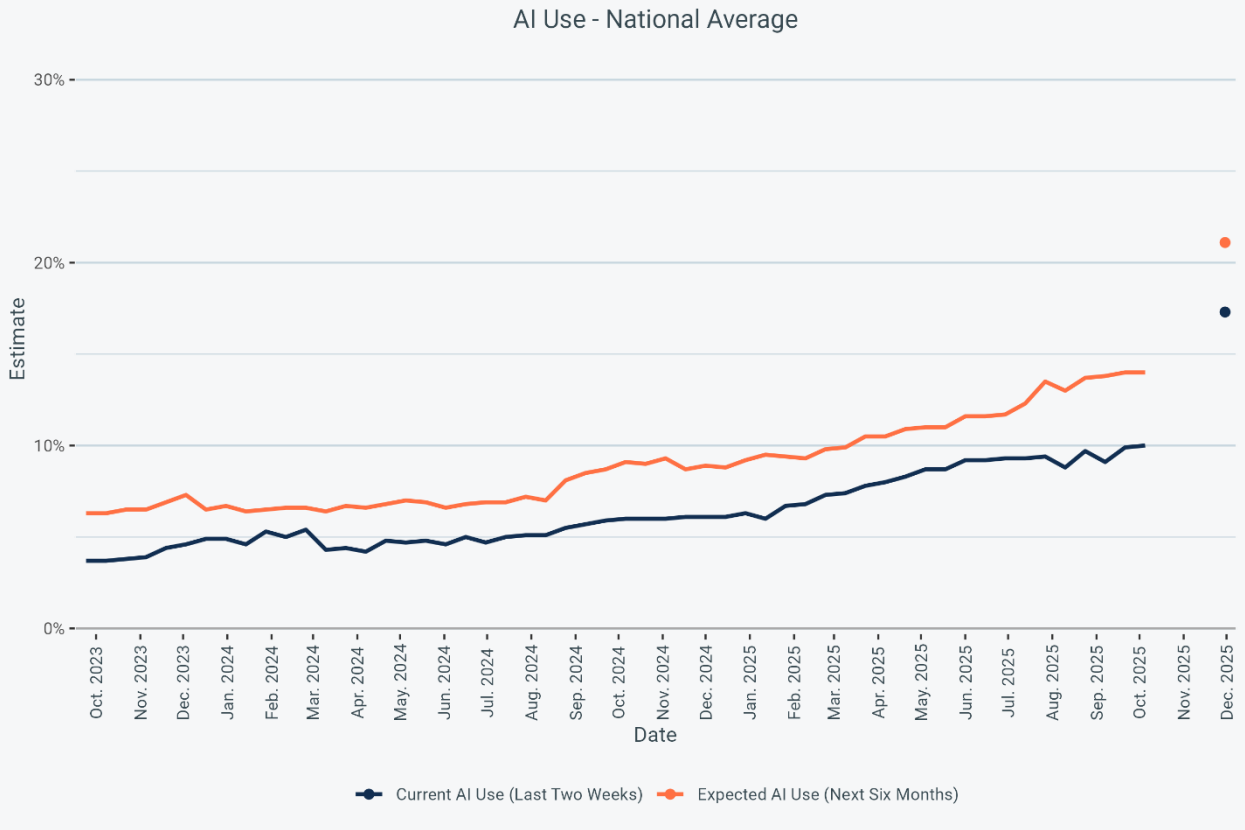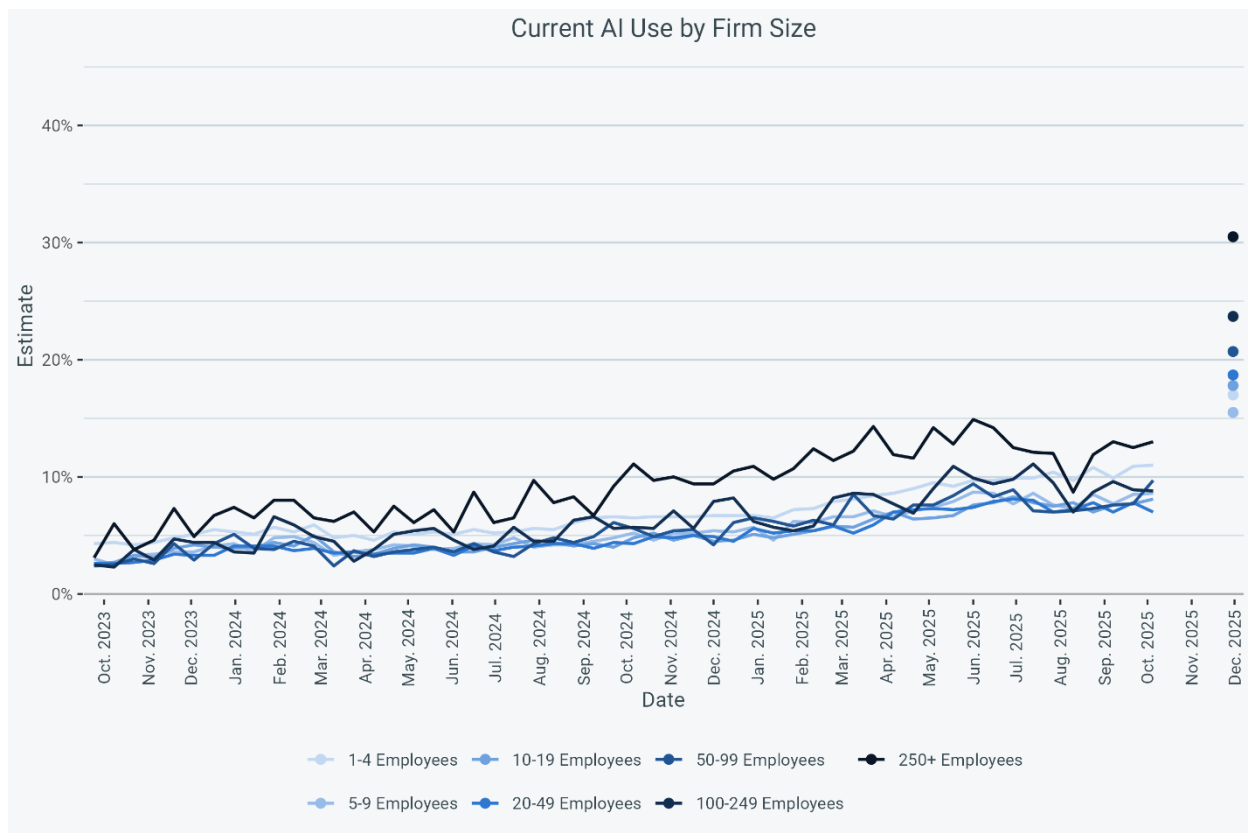
Original future usage question:

> During the next six months, do you think this business will be using Artificial Intelligence (AI) in producing goods or services? (Examples of AI: machine learning, natural language processing, virtual agents, voice recognition, etc.)

Updated future usage question:

> During the next six months, do you think this business will be using Artificial Intelligence (AI) in any of its business functions? (Examples of AI: machine learning, natural language processing, virtual agents, voice recognition, etc.)

Due to a level shift observed in conjunction with the new question wording, the decision was made to create a new time series for the AI questions, beginning with data released on December 4, 2025. For reference, old and new time series are presented below on the same visualization to better illustrate the shift in the share of businesses reporting artificial intelligence usage. The Core Questions downloads contain the new time series data. Old data with the "producing goods and services" wording are available in the AI Core Questions (Original) table under the historical data tab.

AI Use - National Average

AI Use by Sector

Current AI Use by Firm Size

Legend: 1-4 Employees, 10-19 Employees, 50-99 Employees, 250+ Employees, 5-9 Employees, 20-49 Employees, 100-249 Employees

Frequently Asked Questions

- Why was this change made?

Balancing what types of AI use are significant for a business has been a substantial question for both our program and similar surveys addressing the topic.

The original BTOS AI question was added to the survey in Fall 2023, adapting question wording used in the 2018 Annual Business Survey and designed to be consistent with previous questions fielded in similar surveys. In the time since the original question was developed, the AI field has evolved significantly, as has usage amongst individuals and businesses. Consequently, based on expert feedback the BTOS began testing updated wording to the question in early 2025. This testing resulted in several findings: first, some respondents felt the question did not apply to their business as they did not see their business as a producer of goods or services and therefore did not consider the question applicable to their operations. Other respondents answered no to the AI question at first, but further discussion during the interview demonstrated they were using AI – in ways that were not directly connected to producing goods or services, but in other ways important for their business (for instance: using AI tools in the hiring process; assisting with project management, accounting, or R&D; or with AI tools provided as part of software workflows).

- Will the BTOS still be asking if businesses are using AI in "producing goods and services?"

No – the new language ("business functions") replaces the old question wording beginning 12/4/25.