September 16 2026, 09:00 (CEST)

Mind the GA(I)P - British entrepreneurs sceptical about using AI despite many wasting time on admin

- 51% of British business owners have used AI to support their business in the past 12 months. vs other major European economies
- UK founders blame a lack of knowledge or trust more than their Western European counterparts
- Despite two thirds of business owners (67%) saying admin tasks take up a quarter or more of their time, and one in six (18%) saying admin swallows more than half

London, 16 September 2026 – British business owners are among the least likely in Western Europe to have put artificial intelligence to work in their companies despite government plans to make UK plc some of the fastest adopters in the G7 and Europe. A lack of trust or knowledge is holding them back despite admin and red tape swallowing up a quarter or more of their time each week according to new research from bunq, the world's first GenAI-powered bank.

The survey of 4,510 founders across the UK, Ireland, Spain, Germany and France found that just 51% of British business owners had used AI to support their business in the past 12 months. In Germany the figure was 79%, in France 76%, and in Spain 73%.

Admin that never goes away:

The reluctance is harder to explain given how British founders usually describe their working week. Two thirds (67%) said administrative tasks take up a quarter or more of their time, and one in six (18%) said admin swallows more than half.

That burden is not the paperwork of getting started. Only 13% of UK founders named regulation and administrative burden as their main challenge, behind finding financing (24%) and simply getting the business running (22%). It's the ongoing admin load that follows that never gets cleared.

It shapes what founders want changed. Asked what would make the most difference and British business owners split between reduced business rates (26%), easier access to finance (25%) and lower or simpler tax filing requirements (24%). More than four in ten said the government incentivises entrepreneurs poorly or actively disincentivises them.

What's actually stopping them:

Asked to name the single biggest barrier preventing wider use of AI in their business, British founders were more likely than those in any other market surveyed to point to a lack of knowledge or trust – cited by 38%, against 26% in Spain and 25% in France.

They were simultaneously the least likely to blame cost. Just 26% of UK founders named price as their main obstacle to deployment.

"*Being sceptical about a new tool until you see the actual value is good business sense,*" said J**oe Wilson, Chief Evangelist at bunq.** *"Entrepreneurs juggle everything: finance, logistics, red tape… and that's where AI needs to win them over, by taking the admin off their plate and giving them back their time to focus on their actual business, not paperwork. Tech should fit around the business you're building, not the other way around."*

The generation that already made the switch:

Within the UK, the divide runs sharply along generational lines. Among British founders aged 25 to 34, 73% had used AI in the past year. Among those aged 55 to 64, the figure fell to 23% – a gap of 50 percentage points.

That divide appears to be a distinctly British and Irish phenomenon rather than a simple function of age. Spanish founders in the same 55-to-64 bracket reported AI use of 62%, nearly three times the UK rate for the same generation.

Notes to editors

Research conducted online by Pollfish among 4,510 business founders across five markets between 16 and 28 July 2026. Sample sizes: UK (1,000), Spain (1,000), Germany (1,000), France (1,000), Ireland (510). All respondents had previously launched a business.

About bunq

bunq, Europe's second-largest neobank, has built the first user-centric bank. By developing a product rooted in its users' wants and needs, bunq makes life easy for location-independent people and businesses, starting from the way they manage money: how they spend, save, budget and invest. As the world's first GenAI-powered bank, bunq offers its users safe, secure and simple 24/7 financial support—user-centricity at scale.

Pioneering many things considered impossible, bunq was the first bank to get a greenfield European banking permit in over 35 years, raised the largest Series A round ever secured by a European fintech (€193 million), and was the first EU neobank to achieve structural profitability. As part of its mission to build the first global neobank, bunq has also received its U.S. broker-dealer license and applied for its Mexican banking license, with more global expansion to follow. Learn more: www.bunq.com.

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