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South African AI Index 2026: executive summary

A World Wide Worx study, in partnership with Altron Digital Business



The South African AI Index 2026 shows a clear gap between **widespread AI adoption and visible value.**

The study surveyed 100 decision-makers at organisations with more than 200 employees.

34.3	20.3	93%	30%	27%	75%
AI Index, out of 100	Frontier Index, out of 100	use GenAI in some form	AI in a live business process	can measure AI's value	report shadow AI use

Three gaps between adoption and value

The value of AI comes from how it is applied, measured and managed. The organisations seeing returns have taken AI into live processes, can measure what it delivers and govern how it is used. Most South African organisations have yet to close these three gaps.

Gap 01

Production

30% have AI running in a **live business process**

52% are still **experimenting**, with no AI yet in a live process

Rate AI's **productivity impact positive**

In production	**80%**
Experimenting	**44%**

Gap 02

Measurement

27% can **measure the value** of their AI initiatives

2x as likely to rate productivity positive when AI's value is measured: **78% against 37%**

14 organisations report a measured cost saving from AI. **All 14 can measure its value**

Gap 03

Governance

75% report unofficial **(shadow) AI use**, up from 52% in 2025

↑ **72%** officially approve GenAI, **double the 35%** of 2025

34% cannot point to **any formal AI control**

The cost of the value gap

AI left in pilots, unmeasured or ungoverned has a price: profit that doesn't move, advantage that doesn't appear and value no one can prove.

6% of other organisations with AI in production report a positive effect on profit, against **62%** that also measure and govern it

82% of organisations that can't measure AI **haven't assessed its financial impact**, or don't know it

27% of organisations that haven't redesigned jobs rate AI positive for competitiveness, against **69%** that have

The frontier opportunity

South Africa adopts AI at a globally comparable rate, but trails on agents and AI in software development. Few organisations yet use AI to do new things.

8% score 50 or more on the **Frontier Index**

1% actively use **AI agents**. 71% have no plans to

4% have AI live in **software development**, the least-used function

~40% of AI value from **agentic AI by 2030**, up from 22% in 2026 (BCG)

Telephone survey of **100 decision-makers** at South African organisations with 200+ employees, 6 to 28 October 2026. A World Wide Worx study, in partnership with Altron Digital Business.