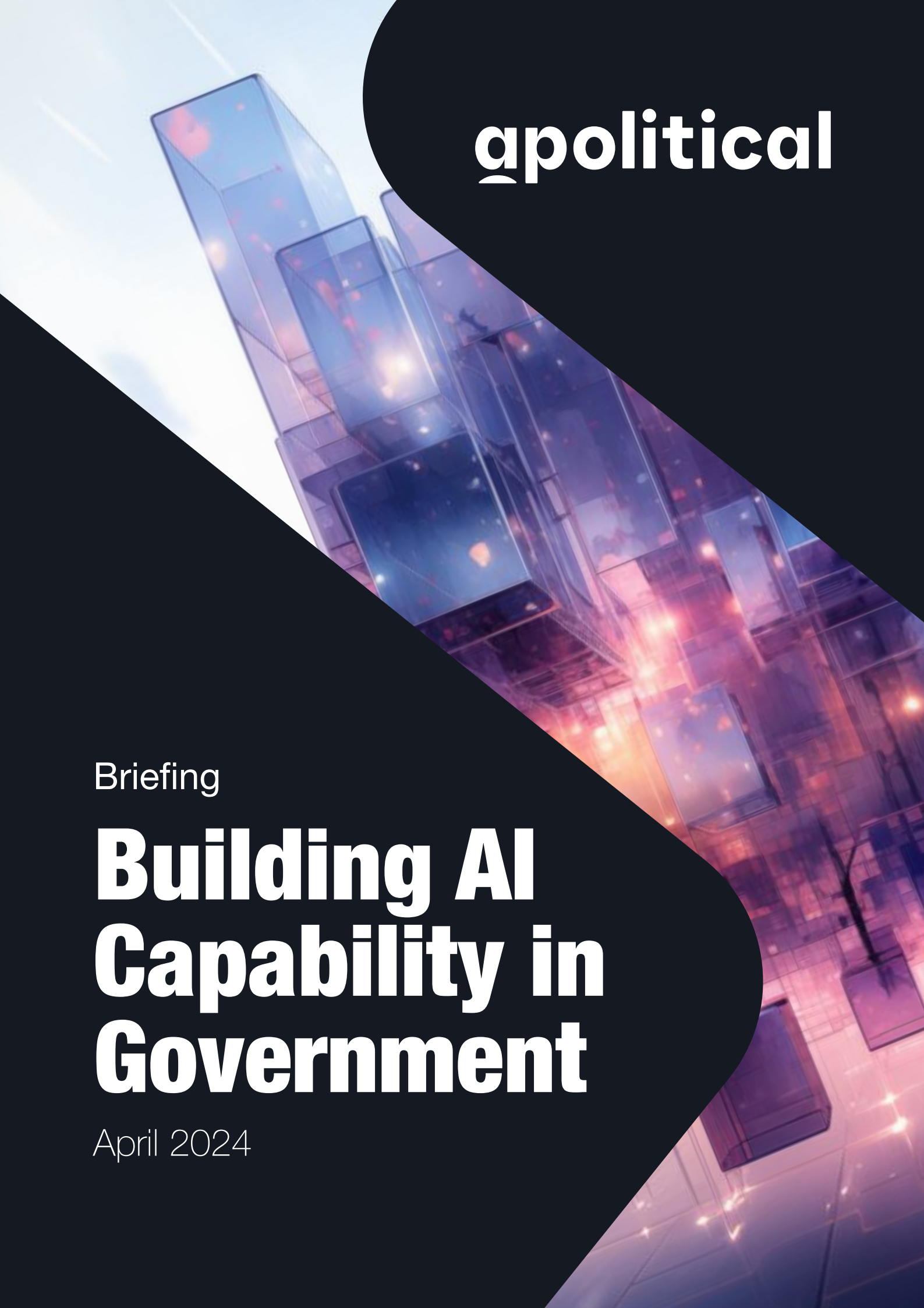




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Briefing

Building AI Capability in Government

April 2024



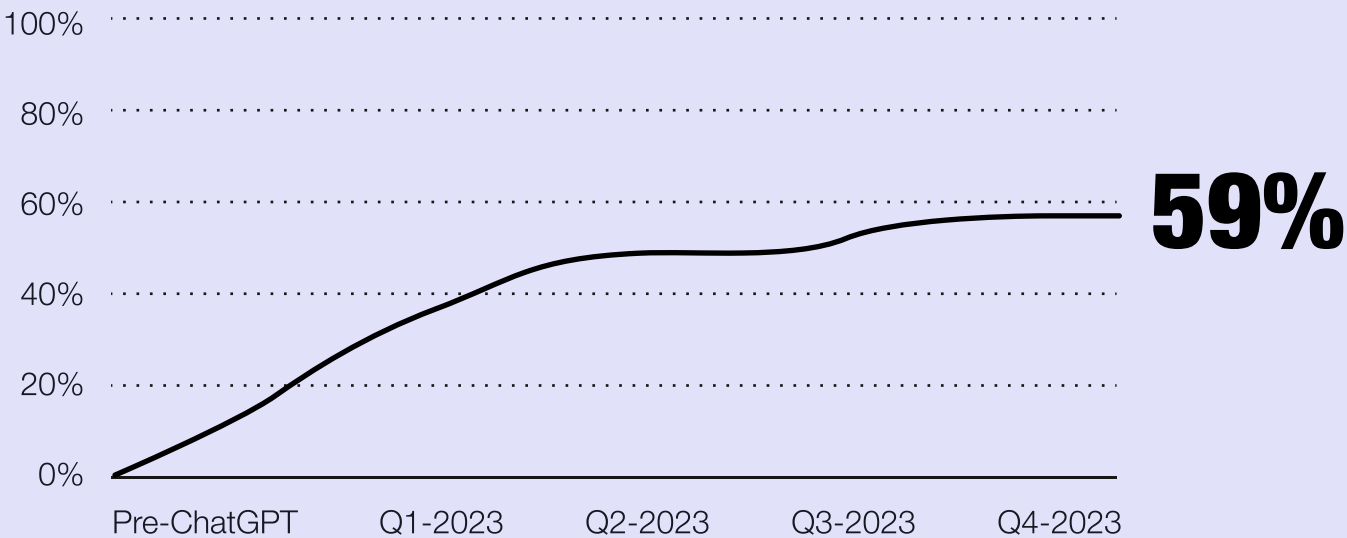
Public servants have rapidly adopted new tools since the generative AI boom

Most technological transformations in government are top-down; not so for generative AI. Apolitical’s research shows that the rapid experimentation of individual public servants has led to a ‘bottom-up’ approach to AI innovation. As early as March 2023, around 40% of public servants in our community were experimenting with generative AI. They were using it — mostly for research and writing — before official guidance was released. That suggests government has kept pace with the private sector; around 40% of private sector employees were using generative AI in early 2023 and recent evidence (Oliver Wyman, November 2023) shows average adoption is at 55%.

Generative AI is so new that experimentation and sharing are the only paths to discovering best practice. Our polling suggests that a majority of public servants (56%) are optimistic and hopeful about AI. They recognise its potential to improve their work and they are eager to receive practical guidance to help them use these new tools. The Government AI Campus is designed to address this need, with courses, events and resources that help public servants experiment responsibly with new tools and a global community of practice to help them share resources and ideas.

Public servants’ adoption of generative AI

Data from Apolitical polling. Average sample size is 520.



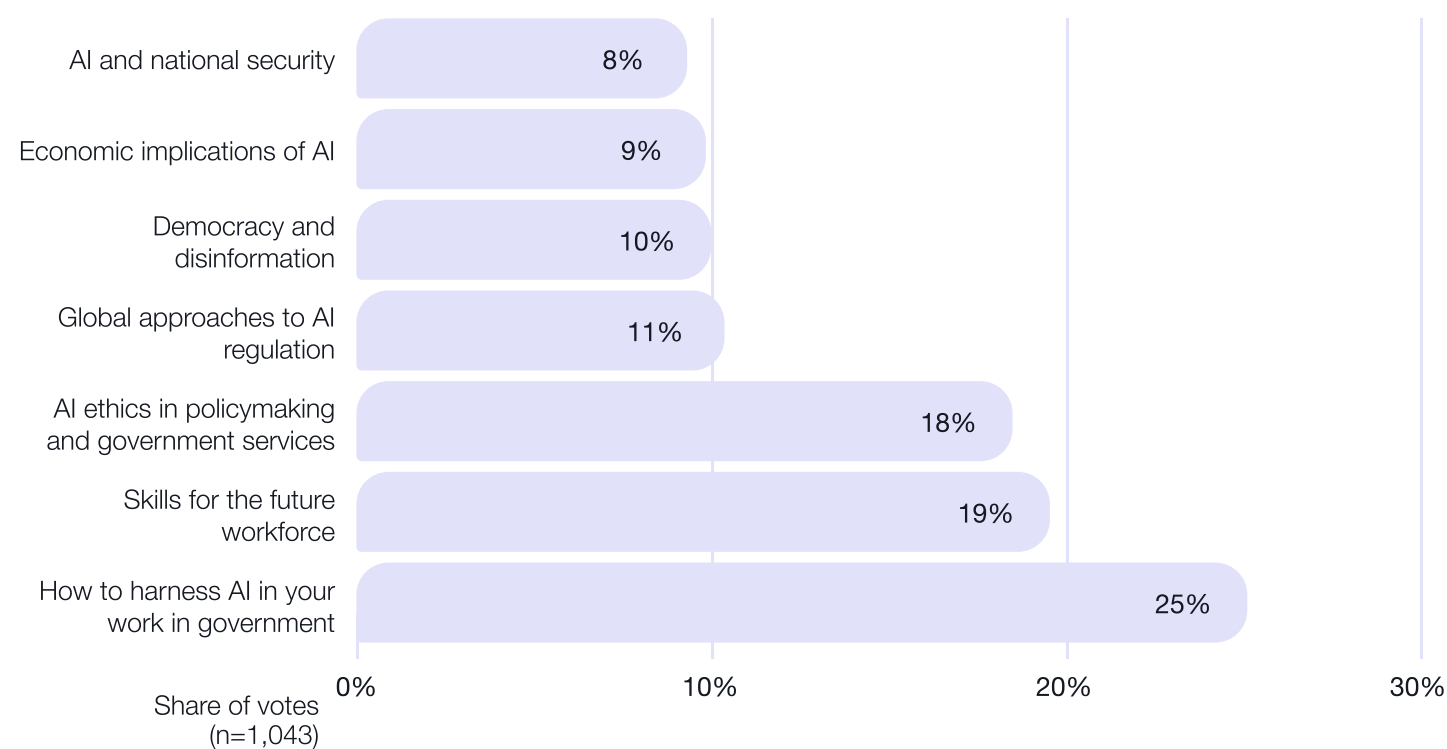


Public servants want to develop practical knowledge to harness generative AI

Apolitical’s polling and user data consistently shows that public servants want to get to grips with how to use AI in their daily work. Live virtual events offered through our AI Campus have attracted several thousand registrants, which shows just how much public servants want to keep up with this technological revolution. Our polling shows that public servants are predominantly (40%) using generative AI to help them with research and writing tasks; a smaller proportion (17%) are focused on developing more strategic use cases, in policy and service delivery. Each of these applications have different considerations for capability building, from information literacy to understanding privacy issues and mitigating bias.

Which AI topics do public servants want to learn about?

Apolitical community poll | July 2023





Governments are moving fast to build AI capability

Governments around the world are investing to build their AI capacity. People and skills are critical to this effort and we're witnessing a rapid push to deliver training at scale.

Africa

- The Commonwealth Secretariat has launched an AI learning platform called 'Digital Readiness for Public Sector Leaders' in partnership with Intel (March 2023).
- South Africa's Department of Public Service and Administration has unveiled its ambition to train 1.2 million public servants on digital and data essentials, including AI. 🇿🇦

Europe

- The European Commission's Directorate-General for Structural Reform Support has a flagship initiative to help create 'AI-ready public administrations'. A key part of the effort includes training on digital skills, to enable officials to use AI tools effectively. 🇪🇺

North America

- The AI Training Act (Dec 2022) puts strategic emphasis on capability building in AI adoption. Federal guidance issued in April 2024 directs agencies to appoint an 'AI Talent Lead', who will lead the effort to increase AI training opportunities for federal employees. 🇺🇸



South America

- Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia and Uruguay all have provisions for capacity building in their national AI strategies. Uruguay's is unique because it focuses AI adoption exclusively on the public sector. In March 2023, they launched a series of online courses for a range of officials in government, from junior technical professionals to legal staff and decision-makers. They have a target to deliver training to every organisation in the central administration. 🇺🇾

Asia

- GovTech Singapore launched its Data&AI Literacy Primer course in 2019. It was designed as a wide-scale capacity building initiative, with tailored learning pathways for different user profiles. More than **90,000 public officers** — 60% of the workforce — have completed the course. 🇸🇬
- GCC countries are **collaborating** on AI training for public officials. In July 2023, Qatar's Government Development Bureau piloted an immersive three-day training programme for 19 civil service leaders from across the Gulf. 🇶🇦

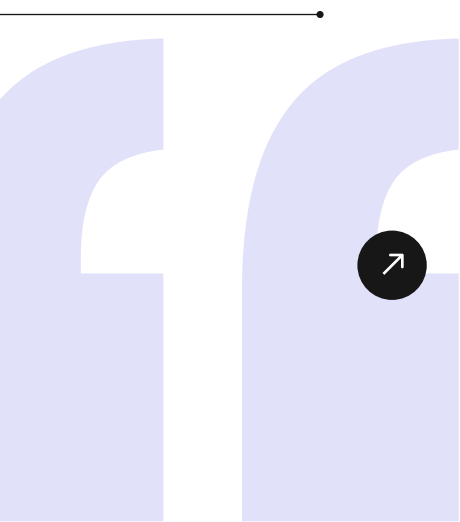
Oceania

- More than 7,000 Australian public servants across 50 agencies are participating in a **6-month trial** to experiment with new generative AI tools in their work. As part of the programme, participants are required to complete learning modules and knowledge assessments. The trial concludes in June 2024. 🇦🇺



CASE STUDY

The critical first step to AI transformation



“The first stage of any change process is raising awareness. That’s where we are right now in the public service. We need to raise awareness about AI.”



Iason Foscolos,

Change Manager, Directorate-General Simplification and Digitalisation, Federal Public Service Policy and Support, Belgium

As an experienced digital change manager who has led AI projects in the Federal Public Service Policy and Support, Iason Foscolos didn’t enrol on the AI Campus as a typical learner. He signed up to discover new ways to encourage and educate his colleagues about AI. Belgium has a mature digital government infrastructure, but its ranking in recent European e-government benchmarks suggests room for improvement. The influential AI4 Belgium coalition concluded that “too few” public institutions are experimenting with AI.

Iason wanted to use the AI Campus resources as a thought leadership tool for his team, where there are varying levels of awareness about AI. Iason encouraged them to explore the case studies, resources and communities available through the AI Campus. In his view, AI transformation can’t happen until there is AI awareness. He believes that more colleagues in government need a deeper understanding of AI. “We need to understand what it is, where you can get added value, what you can do with it and what you can’t do with it.”

Even within his team, Iason has seen how that knowledge can spark ideas for change.

“My colleagues are now coming to me with ideas. We’ve talked about creating an AI-powered, one-stop-shop search bar to help citizens navigate federal services.”

Imagine the ideas and conversations that could be sparked if officials across Europe were part of a community exploring, learning and talking about AI.

About Apolitical Insights



Apolitical is a unique community where nearly 250,000 public servants from over 160 countries learn and connect with their peers.

Our diverse community ranges from senior leaders navigating the complexities of digital transformation and climate policy to new public servants improving their project management skills. Through courses, articles, events, communities of practice, surveys, polls, interviews and more, we have countless touch-points with the global public service, which gives us a unique insight into what's driving government.



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