2026 State of Artificial Intelligence (AI) adoption and adaptation by the KENET Academic Community

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1. Introduction

Kenya Education Network (KENET) was constituted as a not-for-profit charitable trust in November 2000 with the key mandate of advancing education and research using ICT and high-speed Internet (see Amended and Consolidated Trust Deed of 2025). As part of the 25th Anniversary celebrations, KENET organized an **Artificial Intelligence (AI) in education and research** workshop during the annual Heads of Member Institutions Forum on December 2-4, 2025. The workshop was attended by over 135 heads of the member institutions who included Vice Chancellors of public and private universities, Principals of tertiary colleges, and CEOs of teaching hospitals, research institutes, and affiliated institutions.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) was one of the focus areas of the 2025 annual forum because it was expected to have a profound effect on higher education and research in Kenya in the same way as in the developed world. The 2025 EDUCAUSE Horizon Report, Teaching and Learning Edition identified AI as a digital technology that is likely to disrupt higher education. One of the recommendations was that higher education institutions needed to develop appropriate institutional AI policies to guide its use.

Anecdotal evidence gathered during the workshop suggested that most of the member institutions did not have institutional AI policies to guide AI adoption and adaptation in administration, learning, teaching, and research in academic institutions. There was also a lack of awareness of how students and staff of member institutions were already using AI, particularly Generative AI in learning, teaching, and administrative work in member institutions.

KENET, therefore, decided to conduct a quick online survey of the **state of AI adoption and adaptation** by the KENET community (i.e., students, faculty, researchers, and staff). The results show a high level of adoption of Generative AI by students and staff of KENET member institutions. However, the level of AI adaptation by the KENET community was relatively low, probably because that requires increased research funding and access to AI computing and storage resources.

The rest of this report is organized as follows: Section 2 presents the methodology used and participation by the KENET community. Section 3 contains results on the state of AI adoption among students and staff of member institutions. The results of the state of AI adaptation are contained in Section 4 while Section 5 highlights the concerns and challenges of adoption and adaptation of AI by the community. Section 6 contains results on the institutional AI policies and guidelines. In Section 7, we highlight the need for training and awareness on AI adoption and adaptation. This is necessary for developing AI policies to guide the adoption and adaptation of AI in the community. Section 9 contains our conclusions.

2. Methodology and Participation

2.1. AI adoption and adaptation

The survey questionnaire was jointly developed by the KENET research services team and research associates who had facilitated the workshop on AI in education and research for Heads of Member Institutions in December 2025.

The survey used the terms AI adoption and AI adaptation that are defined below. These terms were derived from the frontier technologies readiness framework described in the 2025 UNCTAD technology and innovation report that was used for ranking readiness of different countries, including Kenya. AI is one of the 17 frontier technologies identified in the UNCTAD report. However, this survey applied AI adoption and adaptation to individuals rather than countries or institutions as described below.

- **AI Adoption** refers to the capacity of an individual to absorb, deploy, and utilize existing AI technologies to improve learning or research productivity outcomes or improve their productivity.
- **AI Adaptation** is the ability of an individual to take existing, general-purpose AI technologies and customize, contextualize them to suit local languages or datasets, cultural contexts, regulatory frameworks, and to access and use AI compute infrastructure.

The survey, therefore, aimed to understand some aspects of AI adoption and adaptation by students, academic staff and non-academic staff of KENET member institutions. The institutions included public and private universities, tertiary colleges, research institutes, teaching hospitals, and affiliated institutions (e.g., the Commission for University Education and Higher Education Loans Board). Similar surveys have been regularly undertaken by EDUCAUSE in USA as part of the annual Students and Technology series of reports (e.g., the 2026 EDUCAUSE Student and Technology report).

This online survey focused on AI adoption and adaptation by individuals rather than member institutions. A separate survey of AI adoption and adaptation shall be conducted in the future once a significant number of member institutions develop AI policies.

AI adoption and AI adaptation, therefore, assumes that institutional policies are in place to guide the use and integration of AI in institutions. Anecdotal evidence suggests that few institutions have developed AI policies to drive adoption and adaptation. This will be the basis of a future study of the KENET community.

2.2 Survey administration and participation

The online AI adoption and adaptation survey was administered over a period of two months (February and March 2026) through ICT directors who disseminated the survey link to their respective communities (e.g., students and staff). KENET also sent the survey link to the different mailing lists that it maintains (e.g., mailing lists of researchers, faculty, librarians, finance officers and heads of member institutions). The survey link was also available through the KENET web conferencing platform that is used for remote teaching and virtual meetings.

A total of 7,748 complete responses were received, with about 74% of them being from students. The respondents were mainly from universities as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 – *Responses per membership category.*

Membership category	User population	Responses	Aggregate response rate
Universities	663,631	6,816	1.0%
Tertiary colleges	278,500	603	0.2%
Research institutes	10,813	137	1.3%
Affiliated institutions	5,119	127	2.5%
Teaching hospitals	8,144	65	0.8%
Overall	**966,207**	**7,748**	**0.8%**

Table 2 shows the top 10 universities in terms of the number of respondents. Although it is possible to analyze results for the 10 universities, this report is for the aggregate responses of the community.

Table 2 – *Top 10 institutions in terms of responses.*

No.	Name of institution	Users	Number of respondents	Response rate
1.	Kenyatta University	80,983	879	1.0%
2.	Karatina University	13,126	482	3.7%
3.	Dedan Kimathi University of Technology	9,668	426	4.4%
4.	Moi University	22,078	423	1.9%
5.	Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture & Technology	36,208	312	0.9%
6.	University of Nairobi	53,331	289	0.5%
7.	Technical University of Kenya	15,029	287	1.9%
8.	University of Embu	15,156	282	1.9%
9.	Strathmore University	13,400	212	1.6%
10.	Africa International University	1,752	211	12.0%

3. State of AI adoption by KENET community

3.1 State of Generative AI adoption by students

About 65% of the survey respondents were students who are already intense users of the FREE Generative AI tools such as ChatGPT and Gemini. The main tools in use are Generative AI tools like ChatGPT, Gemini, or Microsoft Copilot.

We wanted to know how the students were using Generative AI tools. Figure 1 shows that 55% of the students were using them to summarize readings (probably distributed in PDF) and 69.5% to brainstorm research topics. Only 20% were using the tools to draft essays, and 18% to generate code (this only applies to Computer Science and ICT students). This suggests that there is a need for institutional policies on the use of AI by students.

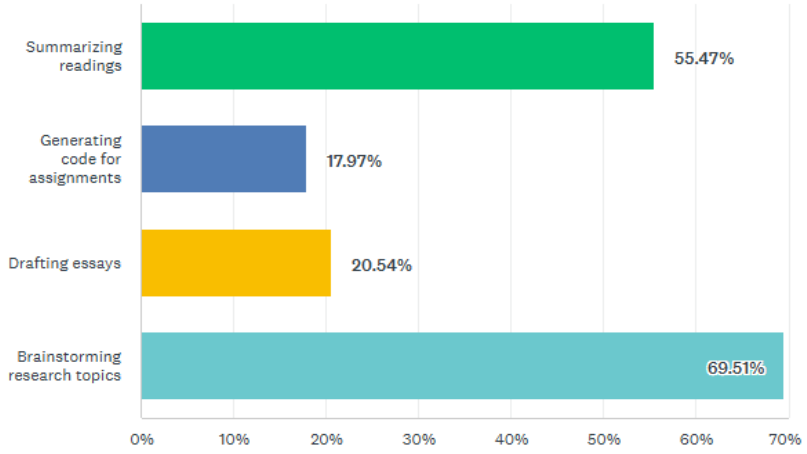


Figure 1 *– Generative AI adoption by students.*

3.2 Generative AI adoption by academic staff

The survey intended to measure the different ways academic staff were using Generative AI to support their work in teaching. Figure 2 shows the different ways academic staff were using GenAI tools. It was surprising that up to 76% of academic staff reported that they were using GenAI tools to prepare lecture slides and up to 64% to design lesson plans. However, only 13% of the academic staff were using GenAI to automate grading. This is likely to be an area of growth in the use of AI, especially for large classes.

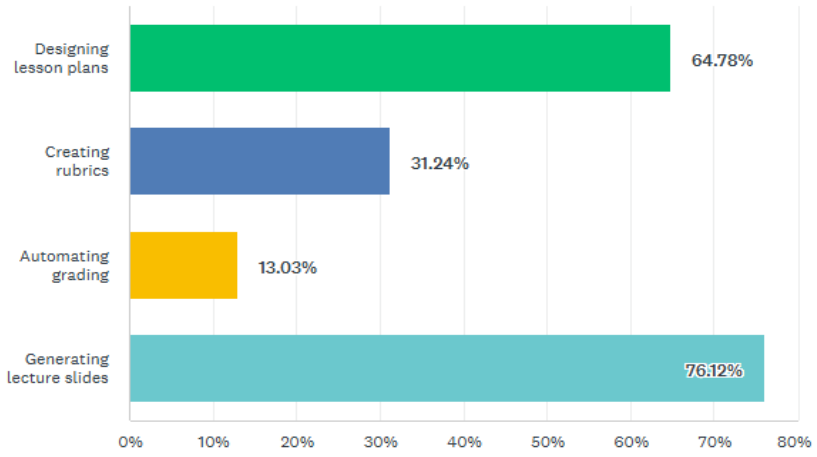


Figure 2 – *Usage of Generative AI by academic staff.*

3.3. AI adoption by researchers

The researchers who completed Q13 included full-time researchers employed in universities and research institutes as well as graduate students. Only about 564 responded to this question. Figure 3 shows that 78% of the researchers were using AI for literature reviews while 30% were using it to draft grant proposals.

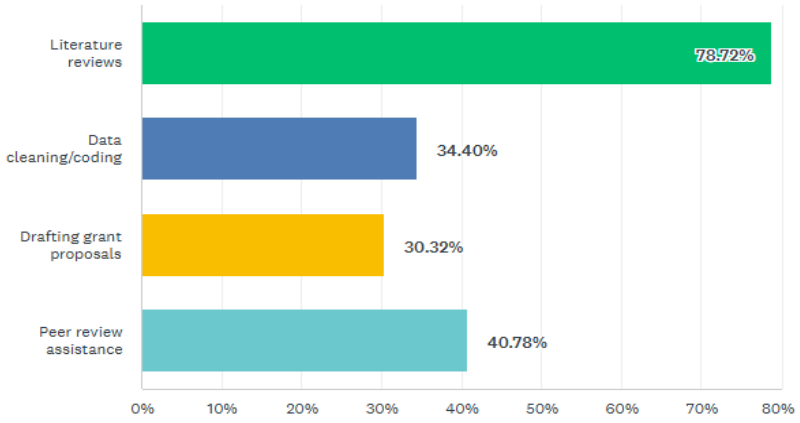


Figure 3 – *Adoption of Generative AI by researchers.*

3.4 Adoption of Generative AI by administrative staff

The survey measured the adoption of AI in four main areas, namely, drafting e-mails and memos, meeting transcriptions, preparing institutional reports, and general data analysis. Figure 4 shows the results with 59% reporting that they were using AI to draft e-mails and memos, about 54% in data analysis, and 40% in virtual meeting notes. This represents high levels of adoption of AI by administrative staff although lower than academic staff.

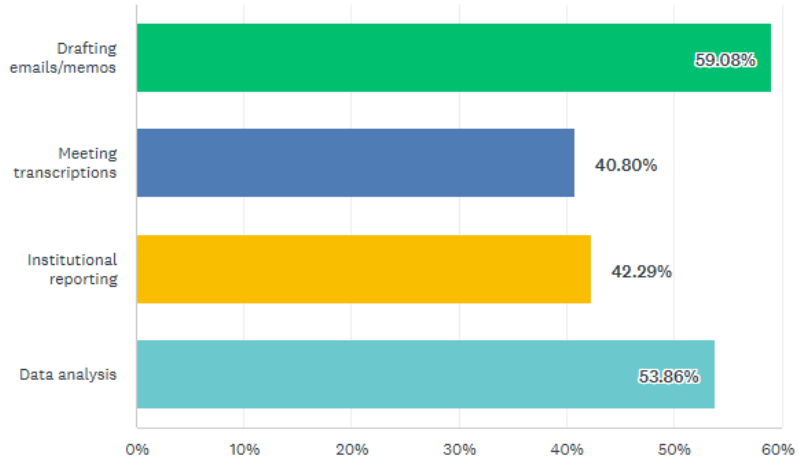


***Figure 4** – Adoption of AI by administrative staff.*

In summary, the survey indicated high degrees of adoption of Generative AI by the KENET academic community.

4. State of AI adaptation by the KENET community

4.1 Development of datasets for AI research or teaching

AI adaptation involves building, cleaning or labelling datasets to support AI applications in teaching or as part of their AI research (e.g., AI in nutrition or translation). Only about 15% of the academic staff and researchers indicated they were already developing datasets.

About 65% of the respondents indicated that the development of the data was self-funded while 16% reported that the development of the datasets was funded by their institutions. Consequently, most of the datasets were stored in personal laptops or disks (66%) and/or in personal clouds such as Google cloud (30%). Only 20% of the datasets were stored in institutional repositories, and another 16% were in public repositories. This means that many of these datasets are not shared by the research or innovation community. Figure 5 summarizes the results.

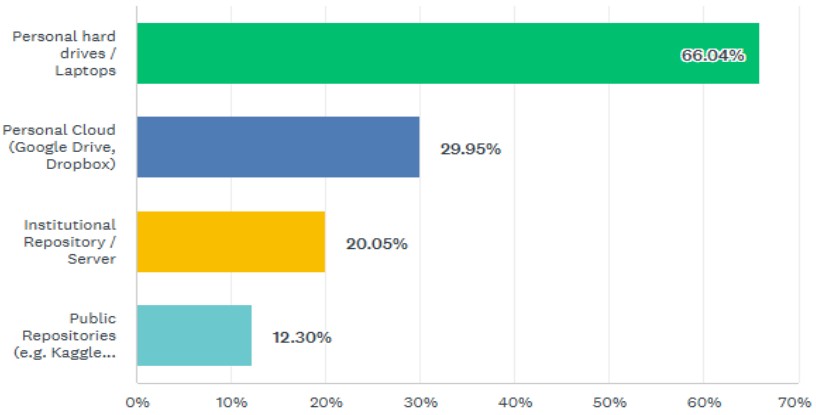


Figure 5 – *Storage location for AI datasets.*

4.2 Institutional or funding bodies support for development of AI dataset

Although most of the AI researchers were funding development of datasets, Figure 6 shows the demand for institutional or funding bodies support in the development of AI datasets. About 53% of the respondents indicated they require training in open science and sharing of datasets while 54% required funding for data collection and labelling. About 50% required institutional support with data storage and backup while 39% reported that they would require training or guidance on data privacy and ethical AI practices.

This feedback is necessary for the development of institutional and academic community AI policies and strategies.

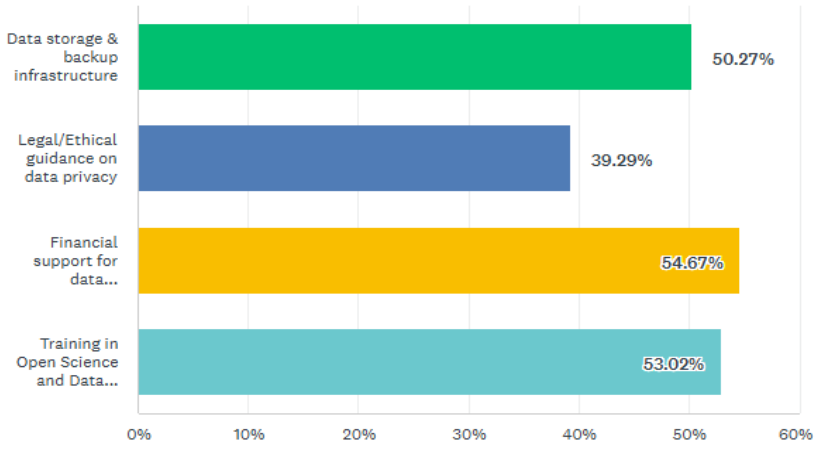


Figure 6 – *Requirements for institutional or funding bodies support by AI researchers.*

4.3 Demand and access to AI research computing resources

Apart from support for development and storage of AI datasets, AI adaptation requires AI research computing facilities for running large data models or training custom models. This requires research computing with GPUs. Figure 7 shows that 44% of respondents run lightweight applications that only require CPUs while 31% of the respondents required research computing with GPUs to run large models or to train models.

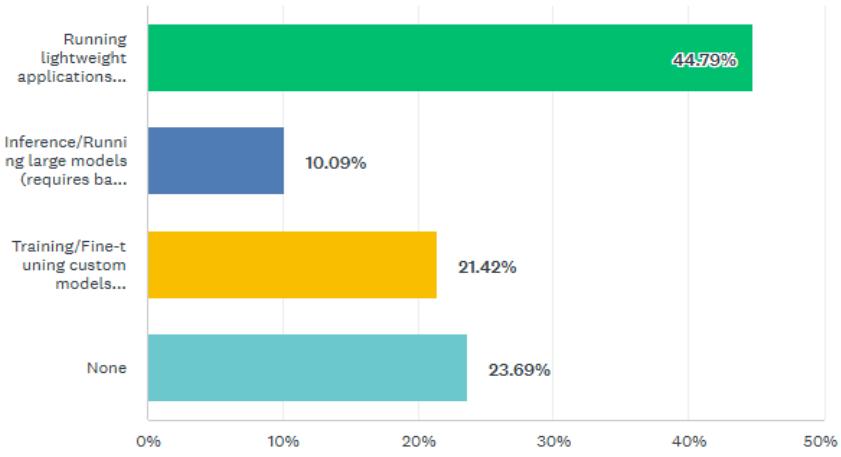


Figure 7: *AI compute requirement.*

Only 11% of the respondents reported that they had sufficient access to GPU while 32% had limited access to GPU for their AI research, as shown in Figure 8.

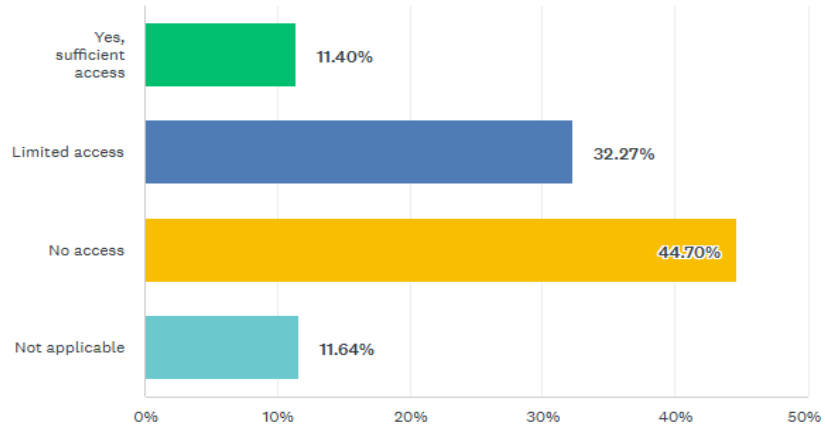


Figure 8: *Access to GPU resources.*

The KENET research computing platform (Virtual Lab and GPU cluster) was used by up to 10% of the respondents. About 8.9% were using GPU workstations, and 37% were using ordinary CPU-based desktops or laptops (See Figure 9 for details). Notice that up to 4.4% of the respondents were using either CHPC in South Africa (1.44%) or public cloud for the research computing (3%). This is a niche group of researchers running compute-intensive applications. About 37% of respondents did not have any AI compute requirements mainly because they were users of Generative AI tools (i.e., not involved in AI adaptation)

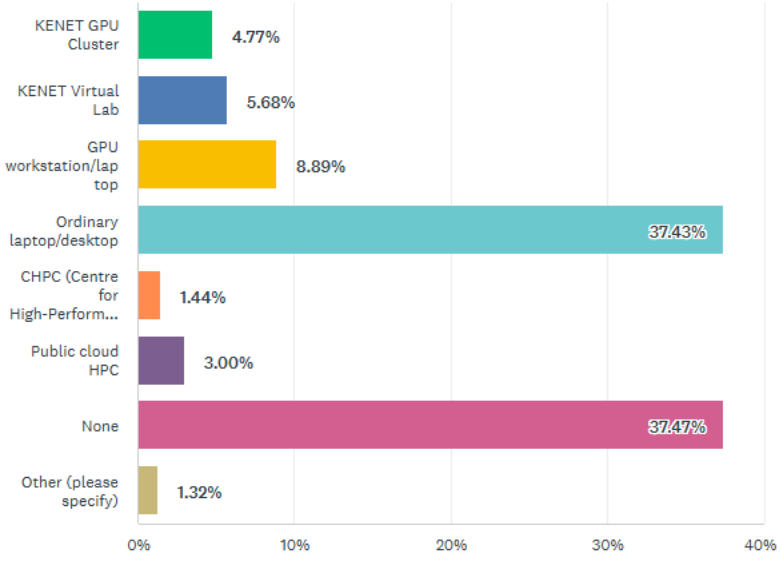


Figure 9: *Research computing options for researchers.*

5. Challenges and concerns about AI adoption and adaptation

The survey results show there is high adoption of AI in teaching, learning, research, and administration. There is also an emerging AI adaptation by Kenyan researchers especially in developing datasets or running compute-intensive applications. However, there are concerns in the AI adoption and adaptation as shown in Figure 10.

About 39% of the respondents reported that they were concerned about lack of training in AI while about 38% were concerned about the effect of AI on data privacy. Only 17% of the respondents were concerned about the impact of AI on job security.

About 55% of the respondents reported concerns on AI errors, inaccuracies, and biases. Thus, a high percentage of respondents do not trust AI models and algorithms. Only about 10% of the respondents had no concerns of AI adoption and/or adaptation.

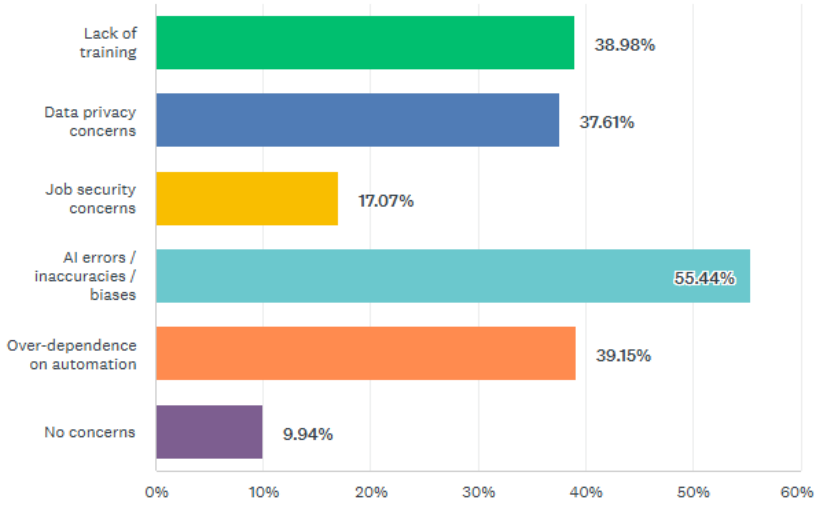


Figure 10: *Concerns of AI adoption and adaptation.*

6. Institutional AI policies and guidelines

AI adoption, adaptation, and innovation should be guided by AI institutional policies and guidelines. However, only 33% of the respondents reported that their institutions had clear policies and/or guidelines as shown in Figure 11. Moreover, about 42% of the respondents were not sure if their institutions had any institutional AI policies or guidelines. There is, therefore, an urgent need for institutions to develop institutional AI policies to guide the adoption and adaptation of AI by the academic community of Kenya.

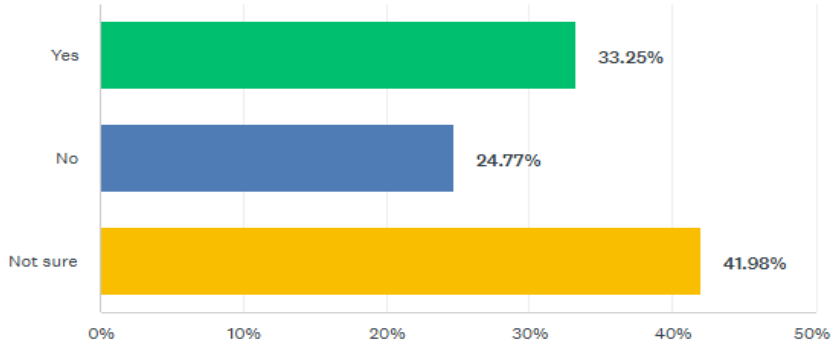


Figure 11: *Awareness of institutional AI policies.*

Although only 33% of the respondents reported that their institutions had clear institutional policies, they were aware of the institutions' approach to AI as shown in Figure 11. We observe that 27% of the respondents reported that institutional approach was motivated by policing use of AI, that is, the focus was on detecting the misuse of AI in teaching, learning, research, and administration. In fact,

only about 17% of the respondents considered the institutions to be mostly or fully focused on integration of AI in the academic sector.

Thus, it appeared that most of the institutions had a negative perception of AI and did not consider AI adoption to be an essential new skill for students and staff. This was despite the fact that 76% of the respondents reported that AI use had either moderately or significantly enhanced their productivity.

This suggests the need for capacity building of senior leadership on AI adoption and adaptation and the productivity benefits of AI. This would be necessary before the development of comprehensive institutional AI policies.

There will also be a need to integrate AI in degree or diploma courses in universities and tertiary colleges.

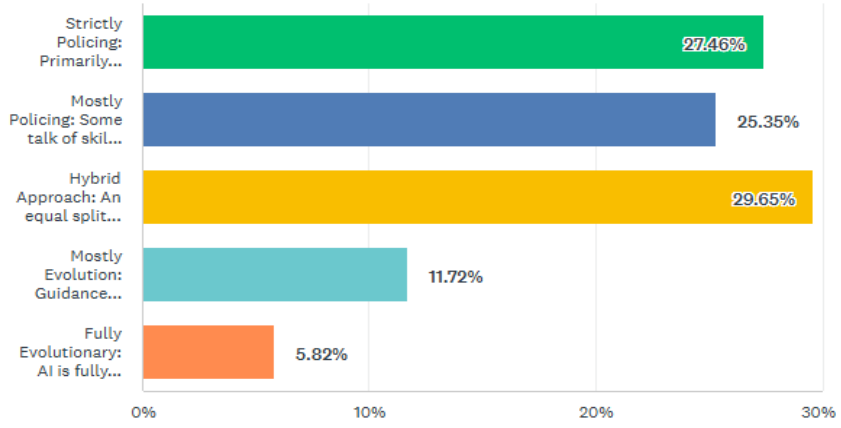


Figure 12: *Institutional approach to AI adoption and adaptation.*

7. Demand for Training in AI adoption and adaptation

Only about 13% of the respondents reported that they had received formal training on AI or attended training workshops on AI. Despite the lack of training, 45% of the respondents reported to be moderately or fully comfortable with integration of AI into their daily work. However, 65% of the respondents reported that training in advanced AI tools for research would be most beneficial for their work as shown in Figure 13. The survey results also show that close to 60% of respondents would find hands-on practical training on the use of Generative AI in teaching and/or research beneficial. There was also demand for training in ethical use of AI (47% of respondents).

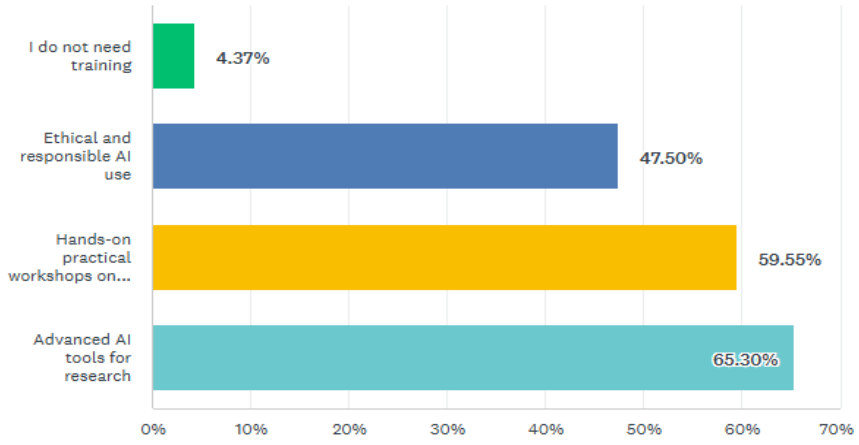


Figure 13 – *Training needs of the KENET community.*

8. On-campus Internet access for AI adoption and adaptation

AI adoption and adaptation require affordable, high-speed on-campus Internet access. The survey results show that 56% of the respondents access the Internet through institutional WiFi or eduroam from their own devices (laptops or smartphones) and only 7% from institutional computer labs or desktops in the offices. Surprisingly, 36% of them were using personal mobile data bundles while on campus! This suggests very limited WiFi coverage or low-quality Internet access on campus.

The solution is for institutions to expand on-campus WiFi coverage to support AI adoption and adaptation. There is also a need for affordable off-campus Internet access solutions, for example, by extending WiFi to off-campus student hostels.

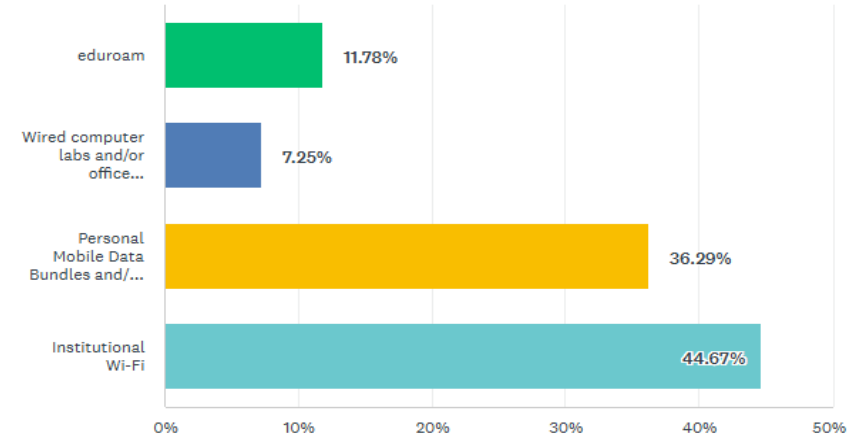


Figure 14 – *On-campus Internet access.*

9. Conclusions

The quick survey was conducted in the months of February and March 2026 and collected perception data that indirectly measure AI adoption and adaptation from about 7,748 respondents, 65% of them students. There was no attempt to measure AI innovation in our community as defined in the 2025 UNCTAD technology and innovation report. The results show that up to 92% of the KENET community are regular users of Generative AI tools. Overall, the results show a high degree of AI adoption by the academic community.

KENET measured AI adaptation indirectly using the respondents' capacity to develop localized datasets and the associated demand for affordable AI computing and storage resources. Although only 15% of respondents were involved in AI adaptation projects or activities, it was clear that the academic community required enhanced access to institutional or community AI compute or storage resources. This AI adaptation community was using the FREE research computing platform that includes a small GPU cluster for their projects that include developing AI localized datasets and training of AI models. There will be a need to scale up the GPU cluster to support AI research and innovation.

The survey identified the need for training in AI for the KENET community. For example, only 13% of respondents had received formal training in AI. There is a high demand for training in advanced AI tools for research as well as AI ethics. In addition to the training, KENET member institutions needed to develop institutional AI policies that aim to increase the degree of AI adoption, adaptation, and innovation for improved learning outcomes, increased research productivity, and enhanced institutional administrative efficiencies.

Overall, 74% of the respondents had access to on-campus WiFi or wired Internet access. However, 36% of the respondents needed to use expensive mobile data bundles while on campus, mainly due to limited WiFi coverage or low-quality Internet. This was a barrier to AI adoption and adaptation by the KENET member institutions. Member institutions will therefore need to invest in digital campus infrastructure.

KENET will use the survey results to develop template institutional AI policies, organize AI training workshops for academic and administrative staff as well as the senior leadership of member institutions. KENET will also promote the integration of AI in diploma and degree programmes through the training workshops and setting up working groups.