Tracking Responsible AI Adoption
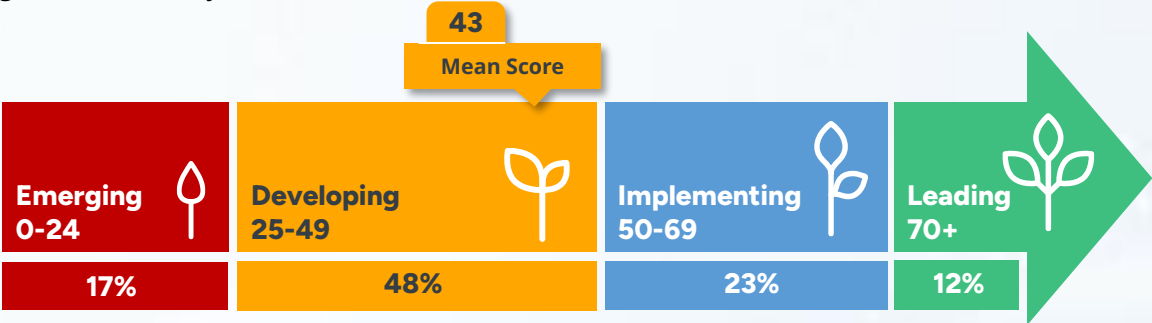
The Australian Responsible AI Index, sponsored by the National Artificial Intelligence Centre (NAIC), provides an in-depth analysis of how Australian organisations are adopting and implementing Responsible AI (RAI) practices. Now in its fourth iteration, the 2025 Index has been updated to align with Australia's Voluntary AI Safety Standard (VAISS), tracking the maturity of AI systems across the 10 guardrails that underpin safe and responsible AI deployment.

Overview

The Index is based on a comprehensive survey of 418 AI decision makers who are responsible for the development and deployment of AI systems within their organisations. The mean Responsible AI Index score for Australian-based organisations is 43 out of 100, representing a one-point decline from the previous year. Encouragingly, more organisations are advancing to the leading stage of RAI maturity.

43
Mean Score

Emerging 0-24	Developing 25-49	Implementing 50-69	Leading 70+
17%	48%	23%	12%

The Index groups organisations into four maturity levels based on their adoption of RAI practices:

Emerging
17% of organisations, +1% from 2024
Minimal implementation (4-5 practices on average); lacking oversight, leadership support, and knowledge. Early in the journey with limited responsible AI practices and minimal oversight.

Developing
48% of organisations, unchanged from 2024
Partial progress (11-12 practices implemented on average); introducing initiatives to improve transparency, explainability, and contestability. Making headway with responsible AI, developing some practices, but momentum is building.

Implementing
23% of organisations, -5% from 2024
Broader implementation (18-19 practices on average); focus on customer and employee engagement, auditing processes, ethical implications, data protection, and security. Actively implementing responsible AI with frameworks and maturity.
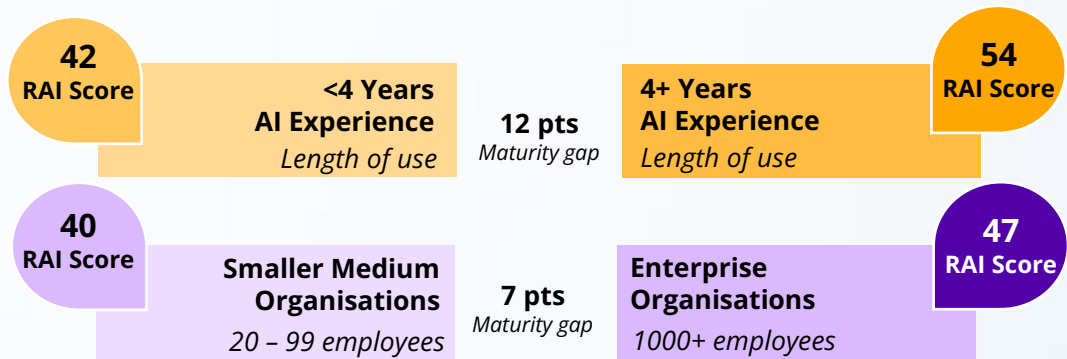
Leading
12% of organisations, +4% from 2024
Extensive RAI adoption (32-33 practices implemented on average); business leadership driving AI strategy, ensuring accountability, and strategic oversight. Pioneers of responsible AI, scaling AI at pace with best-in-class practices.

Australian Government
Department of Industry, Science and Resources

National Artificial Intelligence Centre

fifth quadrant

Experience Drives Maturity and Trust

A fundamental finding of the 2025 Index is that **experience and scale are key enablers of trust and maturity** in AI governance. Organisations with more than four years of AI experience achieve an average RAI score of 54, compared to just 42 for those with less than four years. This substantial 12-point maturity gap demonstrates how time in market contributes to stronger governance, risk management, and ethical AI capabilities.

| **42** RAI Score | **<4 Years AI Experience** *Length of use* | **12 pts** *Maturity gap* | **4+ Years AI Experience** *Length of use* | **54** RAI Score |
| **40** RAI Score | **Smaller Medium Organisations** *20 – 99 employees* | **7 pts** *Maturity gap* | **Enterprise Organisations** *1000+ employees* | **47** RAI Score |

Organisational size also plays a critical role in RAI maturity. The largest organisations (1,000+ employees) lead with an average RAI score of 47, whilst medium size organisations (20–99 employees) trail at 40. This 7-point gap suggests that larger organisations possess greater resources, infrastructure, and strategic alignment to support extensive implementation of responsible AI frameworks, highlighting the need for SME-friendly alternative approaches to VAISS implementation.

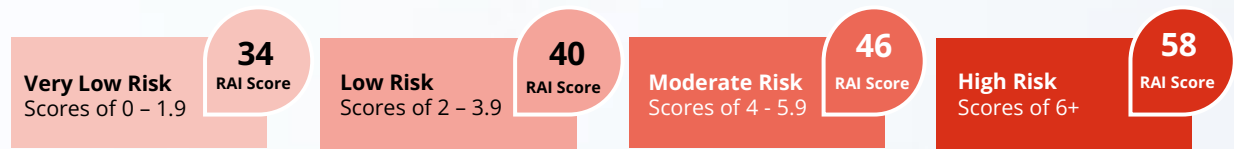## The Confidence-Implementation Gap: A Critical Finding

The most significant discovery of the 2025 Index is a notable gap between organisations' self-assessed performance across the VAISS guardrails and their actual implementation of the responsible AI practices that underpin them. This gap is most pronounced in:

Confidence % High Confidence		Confidence-Implementation Gap	Implementation % Implemented	
Human control mechanisms	58%	**Human Oversight** 35%	23%	Implemented specific oversight and control measures
Rigorous testing and validation	54%	**Testing & Monitoring** 33%	34%	Conducted regular rigorous testing
Ongoing monitoring and auditing	56%		31%	Implemented ongoing auditing mechanisms
Clearly defining leadership accountability	51%	**Accountability & Governance** 27%	25%	Established clearly designated roles with responsibility
Ensuring sufficient resources & training	50%		24%	Required training for developers and deployers
Clear explanations & contest mechanisms	57%	**Contestability** 27%	30%	Set up recourse mechanisms

This gap suggests many organisations can explain what their AI does but lack the governance structures to ensure it operates responsibly, which is a concerning disconnect that poses significant risks as AI deployment scales.
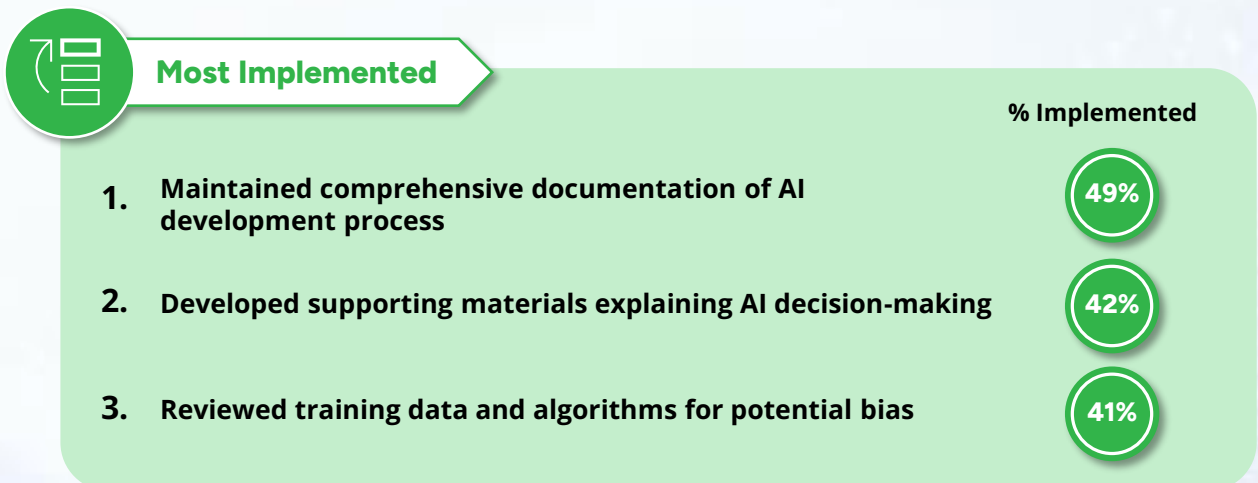
Sophisticated Risk Management Emerges

The research reveals that organisations using AI for higher-risk applications - such as recruitment, legal compliance, and customer personalisation - are appropriately matching these with stronger responsible AI capabilities. Organisations utilising high-risk use cases (scoring 6+ on the risk assessment framework) achieve an average RAI score of 58, compared to 34 for very low-risk organisations, demonstrating mature risk management approaches that enable safe deployment of complex use cases.

Very Low Risk
Scores of 0 – 1.9
34 RAI Score

Low Risk
Scores of 2 – 3.9
40 RAI Score

Moderate Risk
Scores of 4 - 5.9
46 RAI Score

High Risk
Scores of 6+
58 RAI Score

Implementation Priorities Show Technical-Governance Divide

The most implemented RAI practices continue to focus on technical documentation rather than governance accountability:

Most Implemented

% Implemented

1. **Maintained comprehensive documentation of AI development process** — 49%

2. **Developed supporting materials explaining AI decision-making** — 42%

3. **Reviewed training data and algorithms for potential bias** — 41%

Least Implemented

% Implemented

1. **Established clearly designated roles with AI responsibility** — 25%

2. **Identified and assessed human rights risks** — 25%

3. **Required training for AI developers and deployers** — 24%

This pattern indicates organisations prioritise technical explainability over fundamental governance structures, which is a concerning trend that VAISS guardrails are designed to address.
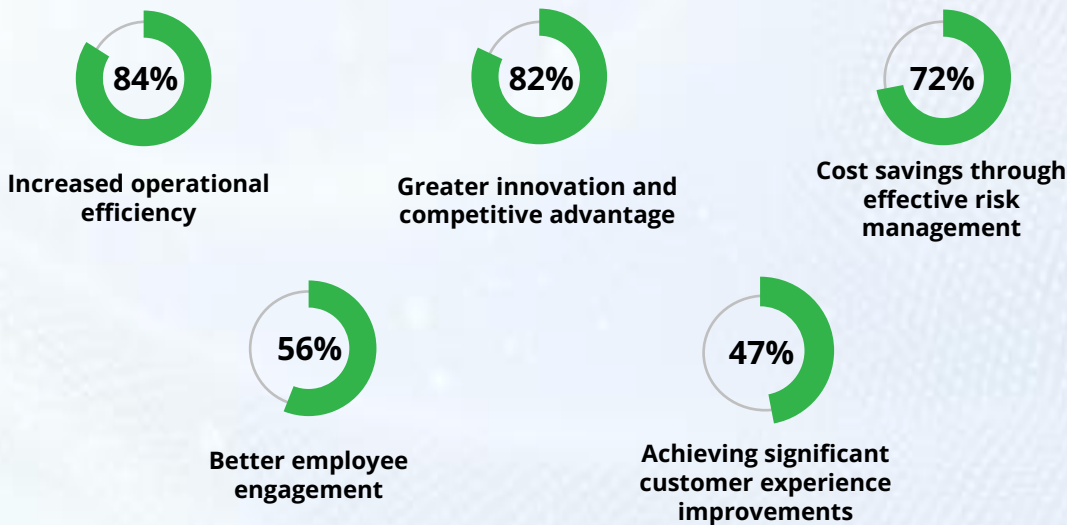
Strategic Priorities Reveal Foundational Focus

Looking ahead, Australian organisations are prioritising foundational VAISS guardrails, with strongest focus on:

Strategic Priorities

% High Priority

1. **Data Governance & Protection:** Improving data quality standards and protection measures — **27%**

2. **Compliance:** Upgrading documentation and record-keeping systems — **25%**

3. **Risk Management** Enhancing processes to identify and mitigate AI-related risks — **24%**

Notably, there is lower priority given to stakeholder-facing guardrails such as contestability mechanisms (19%) and engagement initiatives (18%), suggesting organisations are strengthening internal frameworks before addressing external transparency requirements.

Value Gained from AI Standards & Guidelines

Organisations who have implemented AI standards are reaping the rewards, experiencing increased operational and cost efficiencies, reduced risk and greater innovation and competitive advantages. This is particularly prominent among Leading organisations:

84%
Increased operational efficiency

82%
Greater innovation and competitive advantage

72%
Cost savings through effective risk management

56%
Better employee engagement

47%
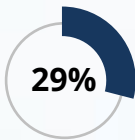Achieving significant customer experience improvements

Leading organisations implementing AI standards and guidelines achieve these outcomes at nearly triple the rate of Emerging players, demonstrating standard's effectiveness in driving both responsible practices and superior business results.
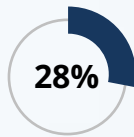
AI Delivers Strong Business Outcomes

AI is delivering strongest results in operational efficiency and data-driven decision making, with organisations fully achieving significant productivity gains:

30%

Have enhanced resource optimisation and productivity

29%

Have faster access to accurate data for decision making
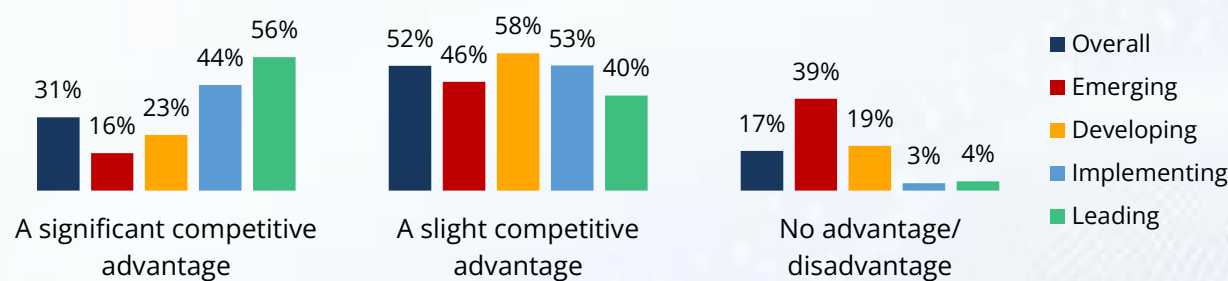
28%

Have improved customer experience and engagement

However, around one fifth of organisations are yet to achieve meaningful outcomes in revenue generation, suggesting untapped potential in this area.

Competitive Advantage of Responsible AI

The recognition that adopting RAI practices can enhance business competitiveness continues to increase. Organisations continue to see the competitive advantages of implementing AI responsibly.

Bar chart legend:
- Overall
- Emerging
- Developing
- Implementing
- Leading

A significant competitive advantage: 31%, 16%, 23%, 44%, 56%

A slight competitive advantage: 52%, 46%, 58%, 53%, 40%

No advantage/disadvantage: 17%, 39%, 19%, 3%, 4%

Future Outlook

The evidence from the 2025 Index is clear. Responsible AI isn't just about compliance; it's about building the foundation for sustainable AI-driven growth. As Australia develops its national AI capability, organisations must bridge the confidence-implementation gap by translating their self-assessed capabilities into concrete, measurable practices aligned with the VAISS guardrails. This requires recognising that maturity develops through experience and that different organisational contexts demand flexible yet robust approaches to responsible AI governance.

Responsible AI Resources

RAI Self-Assessment Tool: This tool provides organisations with their RAI score benchmarked against industry peers, and generates tailored, high-level guidance to help them understand how to move forward in their RAI journey.

Voluntary AI Safety Standard (VAISS): Access for a guide on responsible AI implementation.

The National AI Centre (NAIC) has a range of resources, events and news to support your AI journey.

Download the full **Australian RAI Index 2025** report here.