Organisation and Individual Patterns of AI Readiness

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Abstract: This study explores how AI readiness works on organisational and individual dimensions. It contributes to AI readiness research by proposing an AI Readiness Progression Framework through which organisations move from vulnerable to high-performing readiness. The framework is informed by two supporting constructs: Individually-Driven AI Readiness (IDAR), which identifies circumstances where individual AI capability exceeds organisational readiness, and the AI Tensions Index, which identifies five recurring tensions that constrain progression. Together, these constructs suggest that AI readiness should be understood as a multi-level phenomenon shaped by the interaction between individual capability, organisational infrastructure, governance and strategic intent. The organisational analysis reveals a clear progression from Vulnerable to Transitional to AI-enabled readiness as referenced in the Assessment of organisational AI readiness. Some organisations demonstrate minimal structure, sporadic AI use, and no forward strategy. One charity shows strong individual leadership but structural and capacity constraints. Another charity displays consistent, strategic AI application with future focused innovation plans, placing it closest to a high performing archetype. A key discovery is the **asymmetry between organisational and individual readiness** and begins to demonstrate that **individual readiness does not automatically translate into organisational readiness**. However, strong individual capability can accelerate progression when organisational structures permit it. The second pattern that emerges is the presence of "*AI tensions*" (Robertson, 26) across cases of AI usage (4.3). The way the organisational "tensions" are addressed can shape how organisations and individuals imagine their future use of AI. The report concludes with tailored recommendations for SMEs, charities and individuals, mapped across a **Human → Hybrid → Fully AI** maturity pathway to support safe, ethical, and effective adoption.

Keywords: AI leadership, AI organisational and individual readiness, AI capability, AI confidence, AI readiness

1. Literature Positioning and Context

Previous research examining AI-generated sustainability communications identified trust and credibility concerns. These findings are relevant because trust emerged as a recurring factor influencing AI readiness decisions in the present study (Deaville, Robertson, 2023, 2025). The studies highlighted persistent concerns about AI's accuracy, reliability, and the legal and ethical implications of using generative systems in professional communications. These findings informed a conceptual foundation for examining readiness—not only in terms of technical capability but also trust in the AI outputs, and the extent of human oversight required, from the **AI readiness questionnaire (appendix 1**).

The studies demonstrated that audiences cannot reliably detect AI content yet trust declines once AI authorship is disclosed. This credibility reduction is highly relevant to organisational AI readiness: if stakeholders do not trust AI outputs, organisations may be slower to adopt AI-supported workflows or may restrict AI use to internal tasks only, effecting their trajectory on organisational AI readiness.

The present study extends to a broader strategic question: *How do organisations and individuals evolve along a readiness pathway from human-led activity, through hybrid arrangements, to AI-enabled performance?* To develop this, **alongside the researchers AI readiness mapping**, the study incorporates Holmström's (2022) AI readiness framework, which evaluates current and future states across four organisational dimensions: technologies, activities, goals and **organisational boundaries.**

In this context, *organisational boundaries* refer to the extent to which AI reshapes or stretches the limits of the organisation's established processes, structures, communication flows, or role definitions.

The diagnostic tool used in this study was adapted using this expanded framework and appears both in the ethics submission and the mixed-methods survey instrument.

Although Brynjolfsson and McAfee (2017) offered an influential early perspective on the strategic value of artificial intelligence, the AI landscape has changed considerably since its publication. At the time, AI implementation was largely confined to organisations with substantial technical expertise and investment capacity. The emergence of accessible generative AI technologies has since democratised AI use, enabling adoption at both individual and organisational levels. As a result, contemporary research has increasingly emphasised issues of readiness, skills, governance and organisational capability development. In this context, Holmström's (2022) AI Readiness Framework provides a useful bridge between early strategic discussions of AI's potential and current concerns regarding the practical conditions necessary for effective AI integration and digital transformation.

The study draws upon the AI Readiness Framework developed by Holmström (2022), while AI technologies continue to evolve rapidly, the framework remains valuable because it focuses on the organisational and human capabilities required to successfully adopt and integrate AI, rather than on specific AI tools that may quickly become outdated. Holmström (2022) argues that AI implementation should be viewed as part of a broader process of digital transformation, requiring organisations to develop appropriate technological, managerial and cultural capabilities to realise value from AI investments.

The Holmström (2022) framework was used as the conceptual foundation for the survey design, informing questions relating to participants' personal engagement with AI technologies and their perceptions of organisational AI adoption. Specifically, the framework's emphasis on readiness, capability development and organisational transformation enabled the survey to move beyond simple measures of AI usage frequency. Instead, it facilitated an assessment of the extent to which individuals and organisations possess the knowledge, confidence, infrastructure and strategic orientation necessary to leverage AI effectively.

The use of Holmström's (2022) framework offers several advantages. First, it provides a theoretically grounded approach to understanding AI adoption as a continuum of readiness rather than a binary state of usage or non-usage. Second, it recognises the interplay between individual competencies and organisational support structures, which is particularly relevant when examining AI adoption within higher education institutions and professional environments. Third, by situating AI within the broader context of digital transformation, the framework supports analysis of both current AI practices and future capacity for AI-enabled innovation.

Although published in 2022, the framework remains relevant because many of the challenges associated with AI adoption continue to centre on organisational readiness, skills development, governance and strategic alignment. Recent advances in generative AI have increased the accessibility of AI technologies, but they have also heightened the importance of readiness factors such as digital literacy, ethical oversight and organisational capability development. Consequently, Holmström's (2022) framework provides a robust and enduring lens through which contemporary patterns of AI usage and preparedness can be evaluated.

Recent practitioner and academic literature suggests that AI adoption is increasingly influenced by organisational capabilities rather than solely by technological availability. Chaffey, Hemphill and Edmundson-Bird (2024) argue that digital technologies create value when they are integrated into wider business processes, customer engagement activities and strategic decision-making. This perspective is particularly relevant for SMEs and micro-businesses, where resource constraints often require a more targeted approach to technology adoption. Similarly, Teoh and Goh (2023) emphasise that successful AI implementation depends upon managerial understanding, organisational readiness and the alignment of AI applications with business objectives. These considerations are equally applicable to charitable organisations, which frequently face financial and skills limitations when evaluating emerging technologies.

More recent practitioner-focused works reflect the impact of generative AI on organisational adoption patterns. Almeida (2024) highlights how accessible generative AI tools are lowering barriers to entry, enabling smaller organisations (and in this case of this study, charities and micro businesses) to experiment with AI without substantial investment in technical infrastructure. Nevertheless, the ability to generate value from these technologies remains dependent on leadership, employee skills and governance arrangements.

Albright and Winston (2024) further suggest that data-driven decision-making capabilities are fundamental to extracting business value from AI applications, reinforcing the importance of organisational preparedness and analytical maturity. Taken together, these contributions support the argument that contemporary AI adoption should be viewed not simply as a technological choice but as a function of organisational readiness, capabilities and strategic intent, providing additional justification for the use of Holmström's (2022) AI Readiness Framework within this study.

This research phase seeks to examine how organisations and individuals articulate their present and future AI use, how these uses map onto recognised readiness frameworks, and how patterns emerge across cases with differing resources, sectoral contexts, and personal levels of AI capability.

2. Research Design

The study employs a **mixed-methods exploratory survey**, combining readiness indicators with qualitative data on current and future AI use, based on Holmström's AI readiness framework and insights from Robertson's longitudinal research (2023, 2025). This approach aligns with the researcher's earlier phases of mixed-method

enquiry into AI adoption, where quantitative indicators were enriched by narrative insights into trust, accuracy, and strategic application of AI systems.

The research was conducted in full compliance with the University of Bedfordshire's ethical procedures.

The diagnostic instrument includes three core components:

(a) Organisational self-placement across readiness archetypes

Participants selected the organisational type—ranging from **high-performing** to **vulnerable**—that best reflected their current environment. Each archetype includes descriptors relating to resources, communication style, AI use, and strategic orientation.

(b) Readiness scoring across four domains

Participants rated both *present* and *future* AI readiness across: **Technologies, Activities, Organisational boundaries and Strategic goals.**

These structured statements allowed consistent scoring across all cases and are included in each completed diagnostic, as referenced in the organisational and individual case log (appendix 2).

(c) Qualitative descriptions of AI use (present and future)

Participants described how AI is currently used and how they intend to use it in the future. These qualitative accounts provide contextual detail alongside the numerical selections.

3. Findings

3.1 Organisational Readiness Ladder (Vulnerable → Transitional → AI-enabled)

Across the three organisational cases, a clear maturity progression emerges when mapped against the diagnostic framework's readiness dimensions (technologies, activities, organisational boundaries, strategic goals).

Org 1 demonstrates *low/vulnerable* readiness for this micro-company / SME, with minimal present AI use (e.g., occasional social media adjustments) and no stated future strategy, aligning with "resource-constrained, trust-building" profile, on the assessment of organisational AI readiness.

Org2 presents a *transitional* readiness pattern with consistent ticks across most "present" and "future" categories for this charity, indicating recognition of AI's value and an intention to deepen adoption. However, qualitative comments highlight capacity limitations and caution around wider rollout—typical of an organisation "building trust" and "testing AI in low-risk areas" on the assessment of organisational AI readiness.

Org3 shows the highest organisational readiness for this charity. The diagnostic reflects coherent, strategic AI adoption: consistent present–future alignment, organisational boundary stretching, and a developing roadmap that includes a planned public-facing chatbot with dual personas. This places them on the trajectory of "cautious adopter" moving toward "innovation-driven", on the assessment of organisational AI readiness.

3.2 Individual–Organisational Readiness Mismatches

The individual diagnostics reveal that personal AI capability does not always correspond with organisational readiness.

What the IDAR model shows

Individually-Driven AI Readiness (IDAR) is real and visible: When individuals outpace their organisation (e.g., Org2 leadership; Ind1), benefits concentrate locally but **do *not* automatically mature the organisation**.

Alignment is the challenge: Org3 shows that when individual capability and organisational scaffolding **move together, boundary-stretching** (e.g., public-facing tools) becomes viable.

Vulnerable cases need foundations: Org1 exemplifies the "capability gap" — low present use with future ambition but no near-term strategy.

Progress toward high-performing readiness requires alignment between **individual capability** and **organisational infrastructure/strategy**; having one alone is insufficient.

3.3 The "AI tensions" index (five recurring readiness tensions)

Cross-case comparison identified five recurring tensions that shape readiness trajectories:

- **Capability gap** – ambition exceeds current usage (e.g., Org1 aspiring to automate advertising despite minimal present use).
- **Capacity gap** – desire to scale is constrained by time, staffing, or training (Org2 expanding use "when time allows to train and apply properly").
- **Scaling gap** – challenge of moving from internal productivity uses to external, stakeholder-facing automation (Org3 chatbot plans).
- **Accuracy gap** – concerns about hallucinations, factual reliability, and oversight (Ind2 and Ind3).
- **Clarity gap** – willingness to use AI without a clear sense of suitable workflows (Ind3 "would love to use for more specific tasks but not sure what").

These tensions help explain why some cases stall at transitional levels, while others progress toward high-performing status.

As a managerial device, the Index helps leaders identify the dominant friction and match interventions (capability uplift; capacity/time; governance for external deployments; accuracy guardrails; co designed roadmaps).

Progression towards AI-enabled readiness requires alignment between individual capability and organisational capability. The resolution of key AI tensions determines whether readiness becomes embedded across the organisation or remains concentrated within individuals (IDAR).

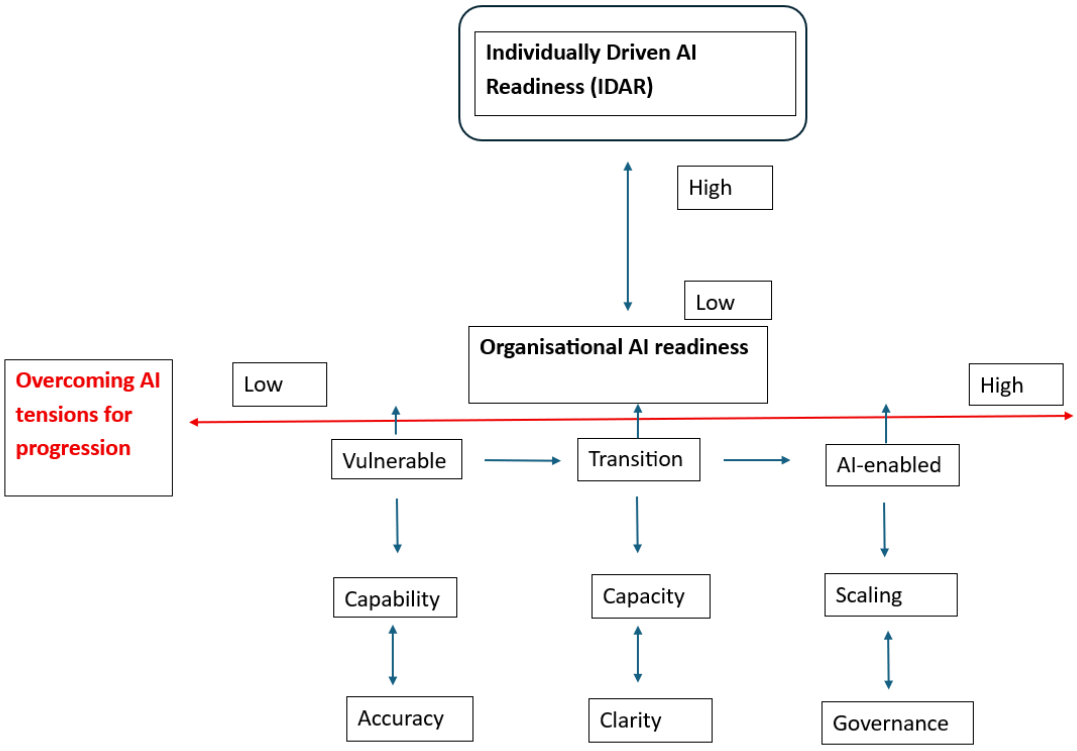

Figure 1: AI readiness as a function of individual and organisational readiness

3.4 Cross-case Themes Supporting the "Vulnerable to High-performing" Trajectory

Across all six cases, four overarching themes emerge:

1. **Structure + strategy drive readiness acceleration:** Org3 demonstrates how strategic clarity and planned boundary-stretching (e.g., external chatbots) support higher-order adoption.

2. **Individuals can be catalyst but do not guarantee organisational readiness:** Org2 and Ind1 show how individual leaders can achieve high personal value from AI, even when organisational readiness remains transitional.
3. **Organisational boundaries determine the ceiling of safe adoption:** Org1 operates in a low-risk, low-resource boundary (internal tweaks only), whereas Org3 is preparing to extend boundaries outward through automated stakeholder-facing tools.
4. **Trust, accuracy, and reliability remain central limiting factors:** Ind2 and Ind3 explicitly note "hallucination" and accuracy concerns, constraining willingness to scale AI use beyond narrow tasks.

3.5 Interim Conclusions

Together, the six cases illustrate that movement from **human-led** to **hybrid** to **AI-enabled** readiness depends on:

- alignment of individual and organisational capability
- strategic intent and governance
- resource availability, and
- the organisation's willingness to stretch boundaries safely and purposefully.

These findings directly support the next-stage analysis in the Discussion section.

4. Discussion

4.1 Interpreting the Readiness Ladder: From Human-led to AI-enabled

The three organisational cases collectively demonstrate progression from **vulnerable** through **transitional** to **AI-enabled** readiness when assessed against the diagnostic domains (technologies, activities, organisational boundaries, goals).

Earlier phases of the research found widespread AI tool use alongside continuing concerns about accuracy and trust; the current ladder clarifies **where** such concerns tend to slow adoption (vulnerable/transitional stages) and **how** governance and planning at higher-performing stages mitigate them.

4.2 Individually-driven AI Readiness (IDAR) as a Contribution to Readiness Theory

A central contribution of this study is the concept of **Individually-Driven AI Readiness (IDAR)**, which describes a condition where individual capability, confidence, and intent develop faster than organisational structures, governance, and strategic direction. **Ind1** typifies IDAR, demonstrating high personal proficiency in drafting, planning, and meeting-related activities while operating within an environment characterised by fragmented and predominantly human-led processes. **Org2** exhibits a similar dynamic at leadership level, where the CEO derives significant value from AI use, but organisational adoption remains constrained by capacity and structural limitations.

The findings suggest that individual readiness alone is insufficient for organisational AI maturity. Rather, progression occurs when **individual capability is matched by organisational infrastructure, governance, resources, and strategic intent**. As illustrated in **Figure 1**, the transition from vulnerable to high-performing readiness depends on resolving a series of recurring tensions, including capability, capacity, scaling, accuracy, and clarity gaps. Where these tensions remain unresolved, AI readiness is likely to remain concentrated within individuals rather than becoming embedded across the organisation.

The placement of organisations and individuals on the dual-axis model further demonstrates why AI champions are important but insufficient on their own. Individuals can act as catalysts for adoption, but without organisational mechanisms to diffuse, support, and govern AI capability, readiness may stall in a state of IDAR. Consequently, movement towards AI-enabled and high-performing readiness requires the alignment of both individual and organisational readiness, alongside the mitigation of the tensions that constrain progression.

4.3 Trust, Accuracy, and Disclosure: Continuity with Earlier Findings

Scepticism in the individual cases ("hallucination" concerns; selective use for legal review) aligns with earlier evidence that, while usage is widespread, **trust and content quality** remain **rate-limiting** factors for scale, particularly in decision-support contexts where human oversight is required (Dwivedi, Y.K., et al., 2023). The communication study's credibility findings help explain why organisations often keep AI to internal productivity

tasks before moving into public-facing use. The present findings extend this logic by showing where on the ladder of organisational AI readiness, which factors bind and **how** governance and planning enable progression.

4.4 Implications for the Readiness Roadmap

A pragmatic Human → Hybrid → Fully AI-enabled pathway emerges:

- **Human-led (vulnerable):** stabilise processes; clarify goals; pilot internal productivity; address capability and clarity on the role of AI first.
- **Hybrid (transitional):** co-pilot with documented oversight; invest in capacity (time/training) and reliability protocols; pilot limited boundary stretching.
- **AI-enabled (higher-performing):** formalise governance, accuracy checks, and escalation; extend external automation where stakeholder risk is understood; align individual champions with organisational systems to avoid IDAR stall-points.

This staged approach explains not only **what** to do but **when**, and why mis-sequenced scaling without foundation blocks in first, might amplify tensions rather than resolving them—because accuracy, trust, and governance are the principal **rate-limiting** conditions.

4.5 Limitations and Transferability

This is an **intentionally limited sample** designed for pattern-finding rather than statistical inference. The logical next steps include scaling the sample, adding longitudinal follow-ups, and incorporating performance outcomes (efficiency, quality, stakeholder trust).

5. Sector and Individual Recommendations for AI Readiness

The findings indicate that while the **AI readiness pathway is consistent**, its application varies according to organisational context and individual capability. Across all cases, progress depends less on sector and more on how effectively capability, structure, and governance are aligned.

For **micro companies**, the priority is establishing **foundational stability**. In vulnerable contexts, AI adoption should be focused on a small number of clearly defined, low-risk tasks. The emphasis should be accuracy, maintaining brand integrity, and linking AI use directly to business needs rather than exploratory adoption. Movement beyond this requires governance and increasing confidence through controlled use.

For **charities**, the key constraint is **capacity rather than intent**. Although awareness of AI value is evident, adoption is often limited by time, training, and safeguarding considerations. As a result, AI is most effectively deployed first in internal productivity workflows before being extended into stakeholder-facing activities. Progression requires structured experimentation alongside clear ethical and operational guidelines that protect organisational trust and the mission integrity.

At the **individual level**, variation in readiness reflects differences in confidence, perceived risk, and clarity of application. High-readiness individuals tend to develop effective personal workflows but risk operating in isolation of organisational structures. Moderate users adopt AI selectively, often applying critical evaluation to mitigate risks. Lower-readiness individuals demonstrate willingness but lack clear use-case definition, reinforcing the importance of guided, low-risk entry points.

Across these cases, the evidence reinforces a central insight as illustrated in Figure 1, progression towards AI-enabled readiness requires alignment between individual capability and organisational capability. It is not determined by access to tools, but by the alignment of capability, structure, and intent. Where this alignment is absent, adoption remains fragmented or constrained; where it is present, organisations can move more confidently from internal use toward broader, strategically aligned implementation.

5.1 Cross-sector Recommendations

Three universal principles apply:

- **Resolve the dominant tension first**: (e.g., workshops, sharing, training for capability gaps, governance for scaling gaps)
- **Align individual and organisational readiness:** to avoid Individually-Driven Readiness (IDAR) stall-points, selecting ambassadors can help on the pathway
- **Expand organisational boundaries gradually:** moving from internal use to external deployment only when trust and accuracy are assured

5.2 Summary

AI readiness progression is not driven by technology alone, but by the **synchronisation of capability, strategy, and governance**.

A phased approach enables organisations to scale responsibly while managing risk, maintaining trust, and avoiding fragmented adoption.

Ethical Declaration: The project adheres to the University of Bedfordshire's Research Ethics Committee procedures and the Academy of Management Code of Ethics. The researcher's ethics documentation outlines procedures for informed consent, anonymity, data protection, and participant welfare, ensuring all responses—both organisational and individual—were collected under appropriate safeguards (appendix 1).

AI Declaration: AI tools including CoPilot and ChatGPT were accessed to help assimilate and code the data with some useful prompts for the research paper.

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Appendix 1: Assessment of Organisational AI Readiness Questionnaire

Q1. Where do you think you are across the 5 org. types; highlight the most appropriate description below.

Category	Org typology	Resources	Comms Style	AI Application	Strategic Focus
High	Org1: High-performing, innovation-driven	Abundant	Integrated, proactive	Internal AI	Optimise, innovate, scale
	Org2: Operationally sound, cautious adopter	Stable	Structured, consistent Internal AI		Improve efficiency, pilot external AI
Medium	Org3: Transitional, seeking efficiency	Limited	Reactive, basic	Hybrid AI/Human	Build trust, test AI in low-risk areas
Lower	Org4: Resource-constrained, trust-building	Scarce	Manual, fragmented	Human-led	Stabilise, build foundations
	Org5: Vulnerable, reactive	Minimal	Ad hoc	Human-led	Survival, trust-building

Q2. Please place tick ✅ in box most appropriate box.

AI readiness score	None	Low	Moderate	High	Excellent
Technologies					
Present **Our present AI technology (portfolio) adds value to our organization** ✅					
Future **We have a strategy for using our AI technology (portfolio) to add value to our organization** ✅					
Activities					
Present **Our present key activities are supported by AI in ways that add value to our organization** ✅					
Future **We have a strategy for using AI to support key activities in ways that add value to our organization** ✅					
Boundaries					
Present **Our present organisational boundaries are stretched by AI use in ways that add value to our organization** ✅					
Future **We have a strategy for using AI to change our organisational boundaries in ways that add value to our organization** ✅					
Goals					
Present **Our present AI use supports our goals in ways that add value to our organization** ✅					
Future **We have a strategy for using AI to support our goals in ways that add value to our organisation**					

Appendix 2: Organisational and individual case log - respondents key

Label	Type	Size	Summary of each case
Org1	SME	The survey was completed by the CEO and Founder of a diving company (categorised as a micro company), with an annual turnover not publicly available, and with fewer than 10 UK employers.	Low readiness, vulnerable profile
Org2	Charity A	The survey was completed by the CEO and Founder of the Community Interest Company with an annual turnover legally limited to £632,000, and with fewer than 10 UK employers.	Medium readiness; strong individual use but structural constraints
Org3	Charity B	The survey was completed by the Director of Fundraising and Communications of the	Higher readiness; strategic, future oriented

Label	Type	Size	Summary of each case
		conservation charity with an annual turnover of £3.6m and 41 UK employers.	
Ind1	Professional 1	The survey was completed by the Project Manager within pet group with an annual turnover of £1.3 billion and 361 UK employers.	Higher individual readiness; limited organisational structure
Ind2	Professional 2	The survey was completed by a Lecturer within the School of Agriculture, Policy and Development with an annual turnover of £353.7 million and with 4,000 UK employers.	Moderate readiness; education context
Ind3	Professional 3	The survey was completed by the Head of Financial Planners with an annual turnover of £142.3 million and 1,200 employers.	Low-moderate readiness; cautious adopter