

Cleveland Fed District Data Brief

10.14.2026 | ISSN 2691-9710

SORCE Insights: An Update on AI and the Data Center Buildout

The Cleveland Fed's Survey of Regional Conditions and Expectations (SORCE) fielded from September 17 through September 24, 2026, included a set of special questions focused on firms' use of artificial intelligence (AI). This question set was last fielded during March 2026 and detailed in [SORCE Insights: How Fourth District Firms Are Using AI](#). In this iteration, firms were also asked to describe their involvement in the data center buildout. This *District Data Brief* discusses the top-line results from these questions.

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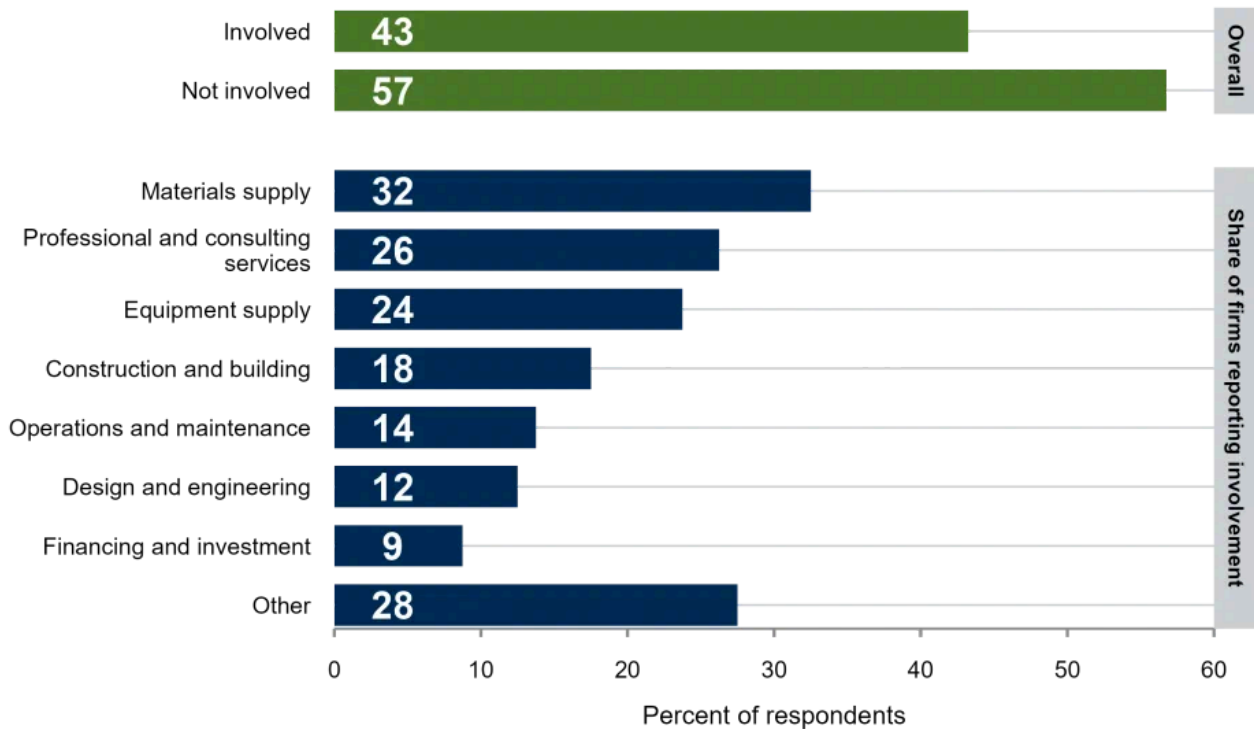
Topics [State and local economies](#)

DOI [10.26509/frbc-ddb-20261014](https://doi.org/10.26509/frbc-ddb-20261014) [↗](#)

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Firms' Involvement in the Data Center Buildout

Forty-three percent of respondents said their firm was either directly or indirectly involved in data center construction. Of the firms that were involved in data center construction, 32 percent were supplying materials, 26 percent were providing professional and consulting services, and 24 percent were supplying equipment.



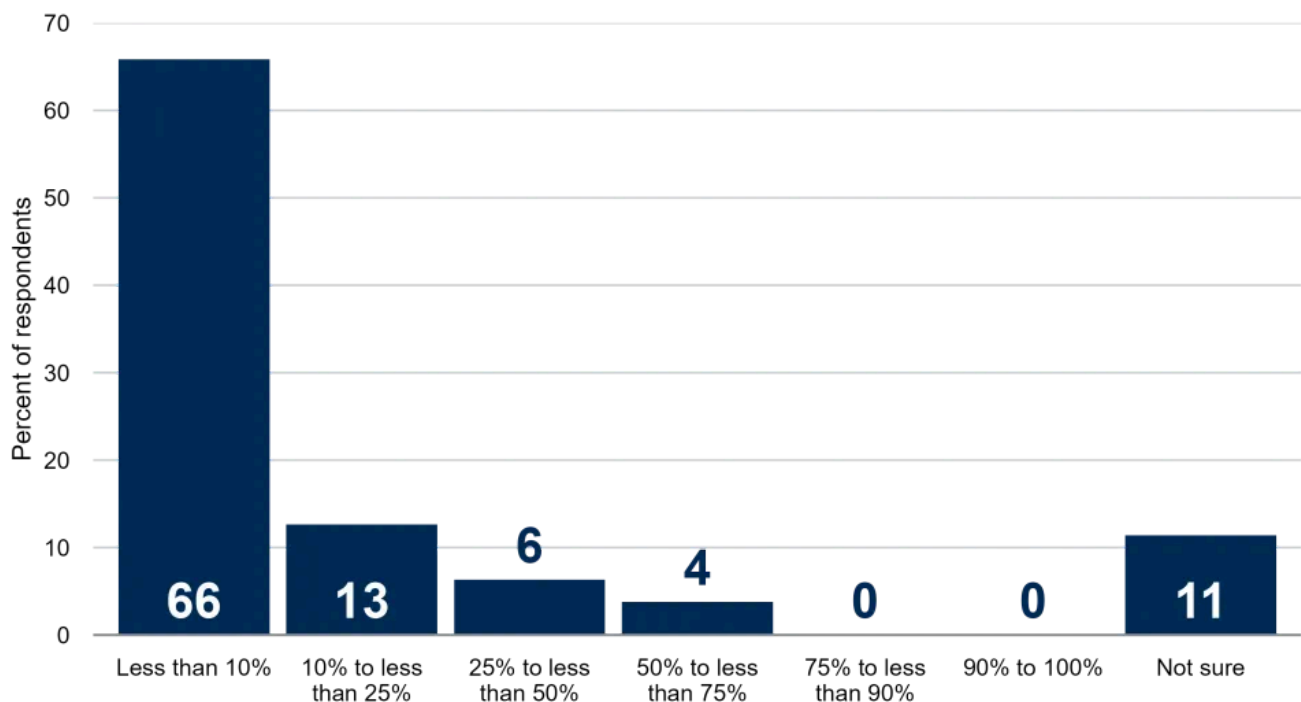
Source: Cleveland Fed SORCE

Question: How, if at all, is your organization directly or indirectly involved in the construction of data centers? *Select all that apply. This includes cases where your company is a contractor or subcontractor, or where your products/services are used in the construction of data centers.* (n = 185)

Note: In each detailed category, the share of firms reporting involvement is calculated as the percentage of those that said they were involved in some way. (n = 80)

Share of Revenue from the Data Center Buildout

Among firms that were involved in data center construction, a majority said that less than 10 percent of their revenue was generated by this work. Another 19 percent of firms said data center construction accounted for at least 10 percent but less than half of their revenue. Four percent of firms said data center construction generated at least half of their revenue.



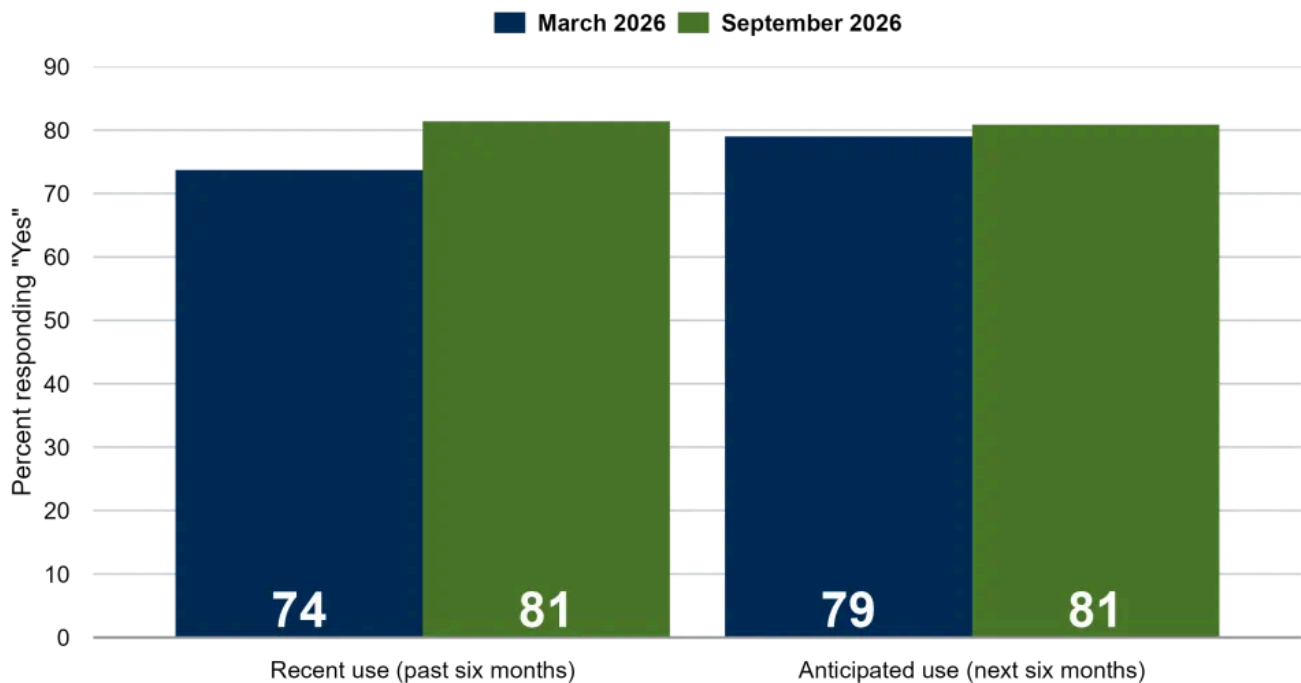
Source: Cleveland Fed SORCE

Question: Approximately what share of your revenue is generated from your direct or indirect involvement in data center construction? *Provide your best estimate for all projects where data centers are the end use.* (n = 79)

Note: Excludes those who said their firm was not involved in data center construction.

Firms' Recent and Anticipated Use of AI

Eighty-one percent of respondents said their firms had used AI for business processes or tasks in the past six months, compared to 74 percent who said the same in March 2026. Over the next six months, 81 percent said they plan to use AI for business processes or tasks, compared to 79 percent who said the same in March.



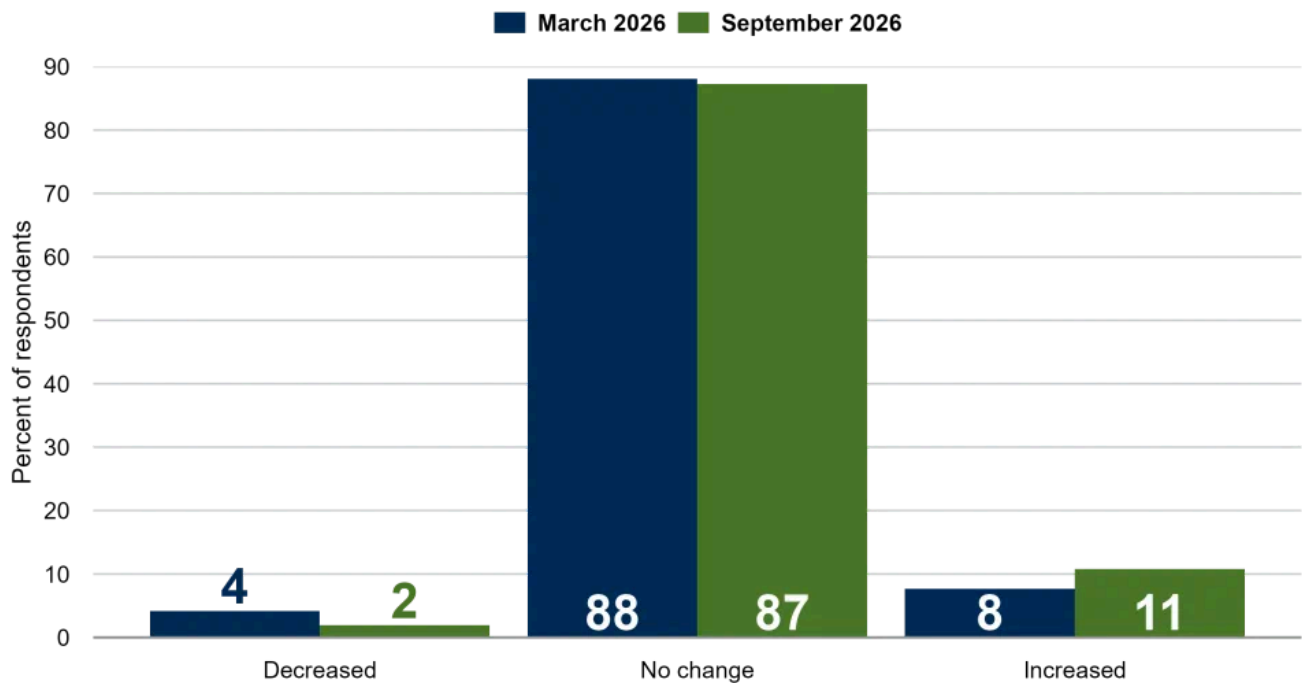
Source: Cleveland Fed SORCE

Question 1: In the past six months, has your organization used AI for any part of your business processes or tasks? Please answer “No” if you only use AI for internet searches. (194 respondents in March and 193 in September)

Question 2: Over the next six months, does your organization plan to use AI as part of your business processes or tasks? (195 respondents in March and 193 in September)

Impact of AI on Firms' Employment Levels

Most firms that reported using AI in the past six months said their use of AI did not change their staffing levels. Eleven percent of firms said their AI use had increased their staffing levels in the past six months, compared to two percent who said AI had decreased their staffing levels. These responses were similar to those collected in March 2026.



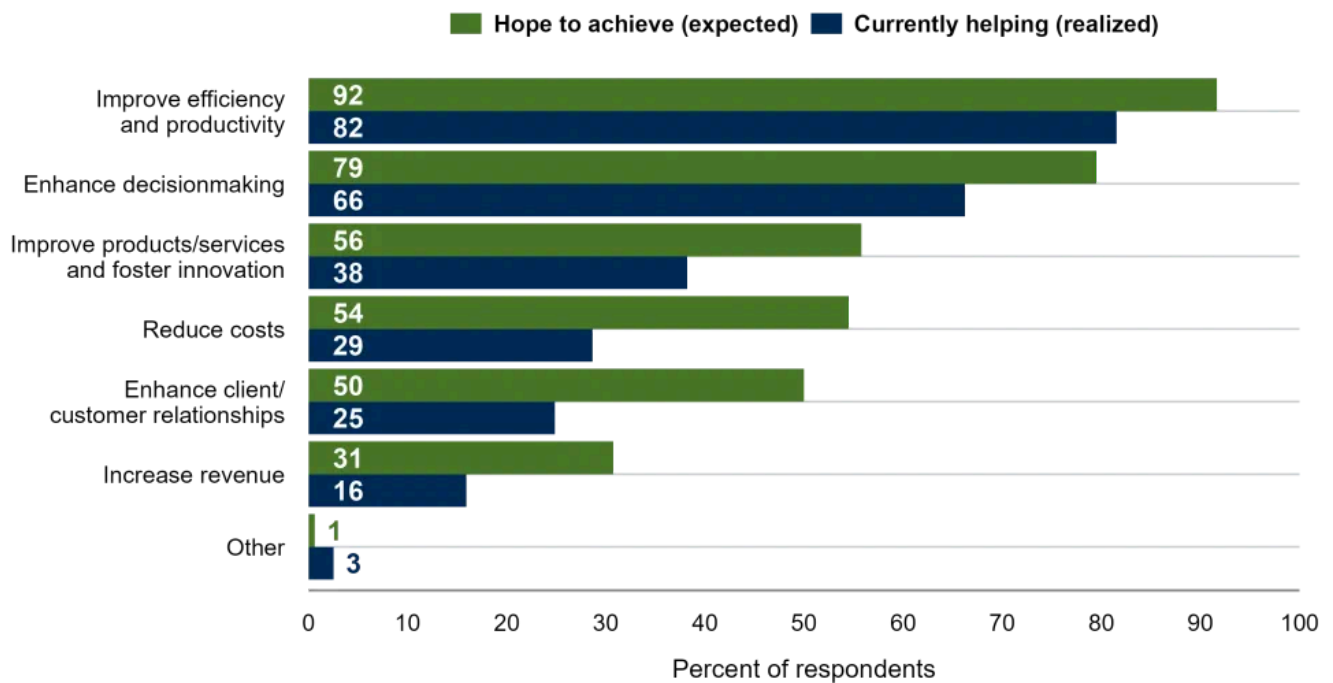
Source: Cleveland Fed SORCE

Question: In the past six months, how did the use of AI affect your organization's staffing levels?

Note: Includes only those who said their company had used AI for business processes or tasks (143 respondents in March and 157 in September).

Realized and Anticipated Benefits of AI Use

Firms most often said AI helped them improve efficiency and productivity (82 percent), and a smaller majority said AI helped them enhance decisionmaking (66 percent). Across all benefits of AI use, firms were more likely to say AI would help them achieve the benefit in the future than to say AI was currently helping them achieve the benefit.



Source: Cleveland Fed SORCE

Question 1: For your organization's AI efforts, do you believe that AI is currently helping your organization with the following? *Select all that apply.* (n = 157)

Question 2: For your organization's AI efforts, do you believe that AI will help your organization achieve any of the following? *Select all that apply.* (n = 156)

Note: Includes only those who said their company had used AI in the prior six months or planned to do so in the coming six months.

The Cleveland Fed’s Research Department gathers and analyzes timely economic information from businesses and community contacts to inform our Beige Book contribution and to prepare for Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) meetings. One way we obtain this information is through the Survey of Regional Conditions and Expectations (SORCE), a business conditions survey sent to firms across the Fourth District, which comprises Ohio, western Pennsylvania, eastern Kentucky, and the northern panhandle of West Virginia. The SORCE is administered eight times per year. In addition to the set of standard questions asked during each round of the survey, the Cleveland Fed routinely asks a set of “special questions” to explore timely issues that may be impacting businesses across the Fourth District. The SORCE Insights *District Data Briefs* share the results from the “special questions.” For more information on SORCE, visit <https://clevelandfed.org/SORCE>.

Suggested Citation

Isler, Mitchell, and Brett Huettner. 2026. “SORCE Insights: An Update on AI and the Data Center Buildout.” Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland, Cleveland Fed District Data Brief. <https://doi.org/10.26509/frbc-ddb-20261014> 

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