

New NetApp Research Identifies Trade-off Between UK Business' Sustainability and AI Ambitions

2025-03-18

- 92% of UK businesses acknowledge the environmental impact of single-use data, but addressing it remains a challenge
- Over a quarter (26.5%) of businesses expect their data footprint to grow by more than 50% due to AI projects.
- British technology businesses are unwilling to miss out on the AI opportunity despite environmental impact: Nearly 8 in 10 (77.6%) IT leaders have already adapted data management processes for AI.

London, UK – March 18, 2025 – NetApp® (NASDAQ: NTAP), the intelligent data infrastructure company, today announced new research which reveals that UK technology companies are struggling to balance sustainability and AI ambitions due to their current approach to data management. The overwhelming majority of UK IT leaders (92%) are aware of the negative environmental impact of single-use data and are keen to reduce emissions from IT operations. However, the competitive advantages of AI are compelling, and business leaders estimate that AI projects will cause their data estates, including single-use data, to grow by an average total of 41%.

IT leaders understand the impact of single-use data

Sustainability remains a top consideration and priority for companies, and the IT function is becoming more important in realising these ambitions. An overwhelming 85% of IT leaders see data management as the key to cutting their carbon footprint, with reducing emissions cited as the top driver for addressing single-use data.

Most respondents have measures in place to manage single-use data, like regularly cleaning their data estates, but these may be falling short of their desired impact, as an estimated 38% of data remains unused. This is compounded by UK technology companies feeling they have too much data to sift through and reporting that they find it more economical to expand rather than clean up their storage. Similarly, a quarter (26%) of IT leaders struggle to identify what to keep, or which data will be useful in AI projects. This is likely to intensify as AI accelerates data expansion.

Matt Watts, Chief Technology Evangelist at NetApp, said, "NetApp has long highlighted the issue of single-use data, which consumes storage space indefinitely after its initial creation. Today's findings identify not just a challenge in data management, but a conundrum and a fine balance: British businesses want to reap the benefits and opportunities presented by AI, while reducing the carbon footprint of their data. Tackling single-use data is a

key piece of this puzzle, and businesses must continue to invest more in reviewing and staying on top of their data estates.”

Businesses are ready for AI's data appetite

British technology businesses are unwilling to miss out on the AI opportunity, despite the fact that collecting increasing amounts of data to fuel AI applications will likely increase the amount of single-use data they store. Three out of four IT leaders have successfully adapted their data management for AI and are readying for expansion, recognising that the success of this technology depends on having robust data infrastructure in place.

UK technology leaders anticipate a 41% average increase in their data footprint due to AI. This is a significant expansion for businesses with decades of stored and mismanaged data. For some, this surge will be even more dramatic. Over a quarter (26.5%) expect data growth to exceed 50%, highlighting the immense data demands of AI-driven operations.

Nicola Acutt, Chief Sustainability Officer at NetApp, added: “While awareness around the environmental impacts of AI and data is front of mind for many now, translating that awareness into action is where things get complex. The answer isn't necessarily to downsize data, or to make do with less. Businesses require practical expertise, resources and solutions, with sustainability baked in from the very start, to effectively manage their data and ensure more responsible AI implementation.”

Sue Daley OBE, Director at techUK, added: “These findings suggest that UK technology businesses are at a critical juncture of their innovation and sustainability journey. It is encouraging to see many taking an active effort to reduce the emissions of IT operations. As AI implementation accelerates across businesses, it will be important to further build on these efforts, ensuring that resources and infrastructure are aligned to support responsible growth.”

Methodology

The research was conducted by Censuswide, with 1,000 Decision-makers and data managers/architects or similar aged 25+ within the technology and digital services sector in the UK between 23.01.2025 – 28.01.2025. Censuswide abides by and employ members of the Market Research Society which is based on the ESOMAR principles. Censuswide are also members of the British Polling Council.

About NetApp

NetApp is the intelligent data infrastructure company, combining unified data storage, integrated data, operational and workload services to turn a world of disruption into opportunity for every customer. NetApp creates silo-free infrastructure, harnessing observability and AI to enable the industry's best data management. As the only enterprise-grade storage service natively embedded in the world's biggest clouds, our data storage delivers seamless flexibility. In addition, our data services create a data advantage through superior cyber resilience, governance, and application agility. Our operational and workload services provide continuous optimization of performance and efficiency for infrastructure and workloads through observability and AI. No matter the data type, workload, or environment, with NetApp you can transform your data infrastructure to realize your business possibilities. Learn more at www.netapp.com or follow us on [X](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Facebook](#), and [Instagram](#).

NETAPP, the NETAPP logo, and the marks listed at www.netapp.com/TM are trademarks of NetApp, Inc. Other company and product names may be trademarks of their respective owners.