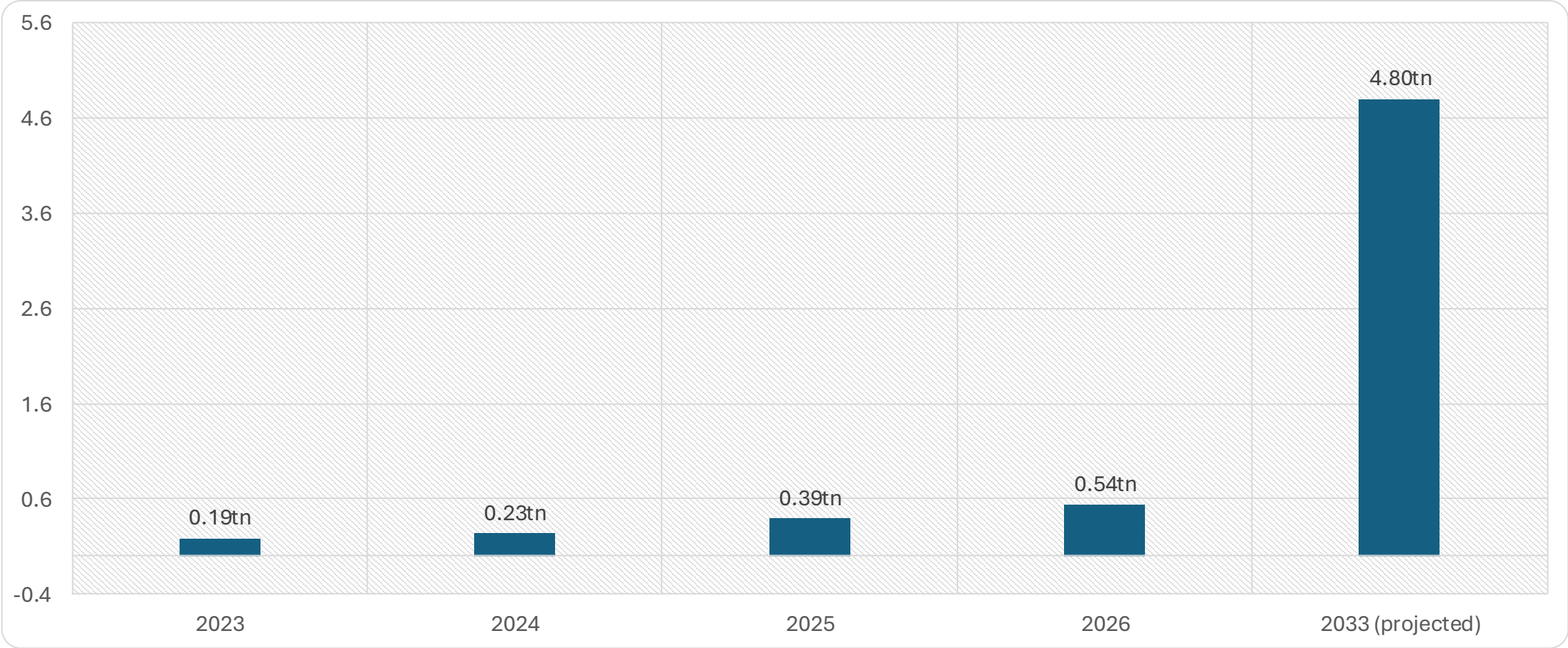


caribbean **ai** taskforce  
final report on ai  
harmonization

dr craig ramlal  
chair caribbean ai taskforce



# The Growing AI Market, USD Tn



# Global AI market expansion against Latin American and Caribbean capture



**6.6%**

of global GDP generated by Latin America and the Caribbean

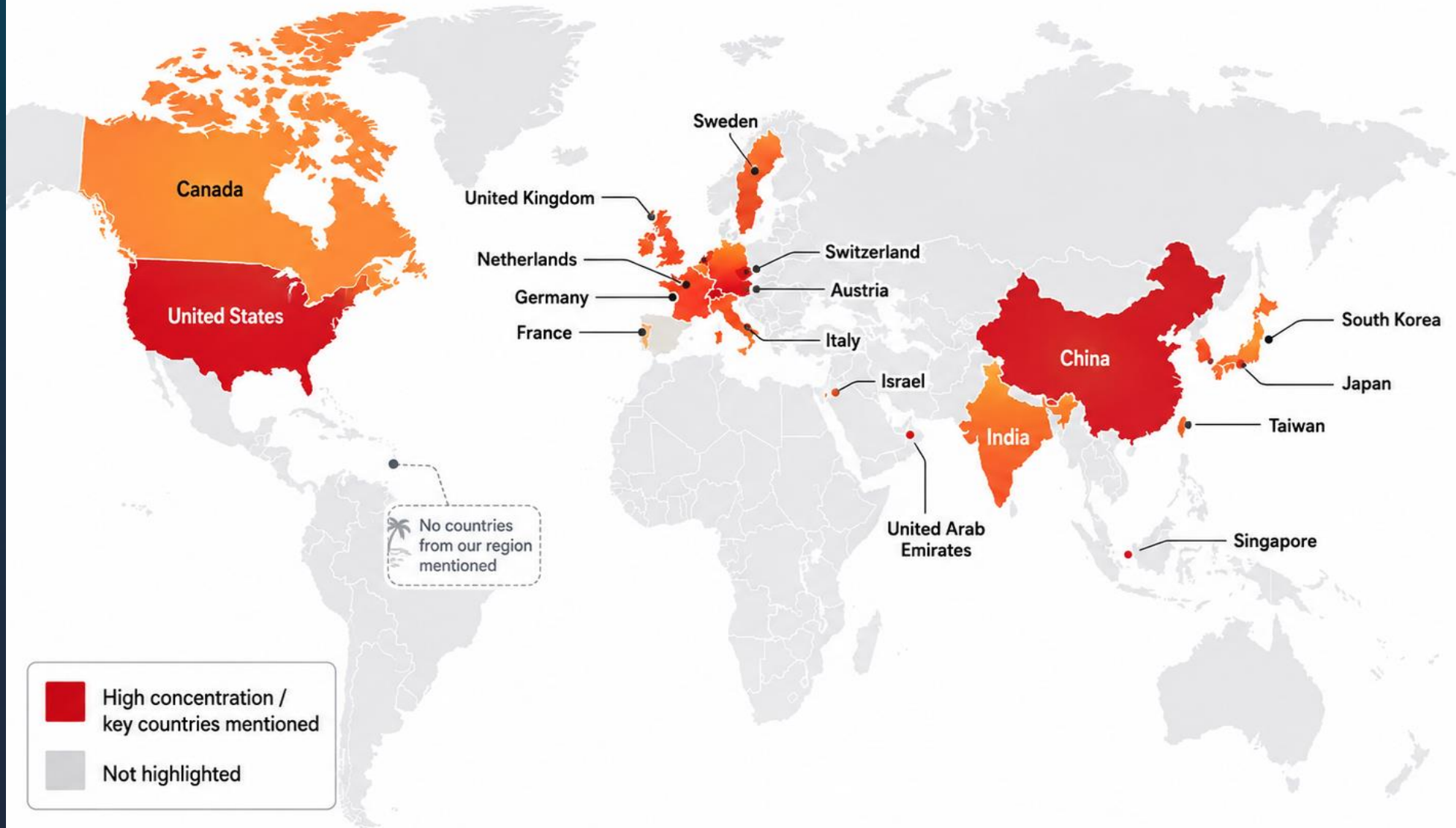
**1.12%**

of global AI investment captured by the same region

- AI integration could add up to USD 0.5 trillion to the LAC economy by 2030 a potential 5.4% boost to regional GDP
- The IMF projects AI could raise a developing country's GDP by 2.7–3.5% over a decade, under favourable conditions
- Within the Caribbean sub-region the deficit is more acute: AI-native enterprises number in the single digits

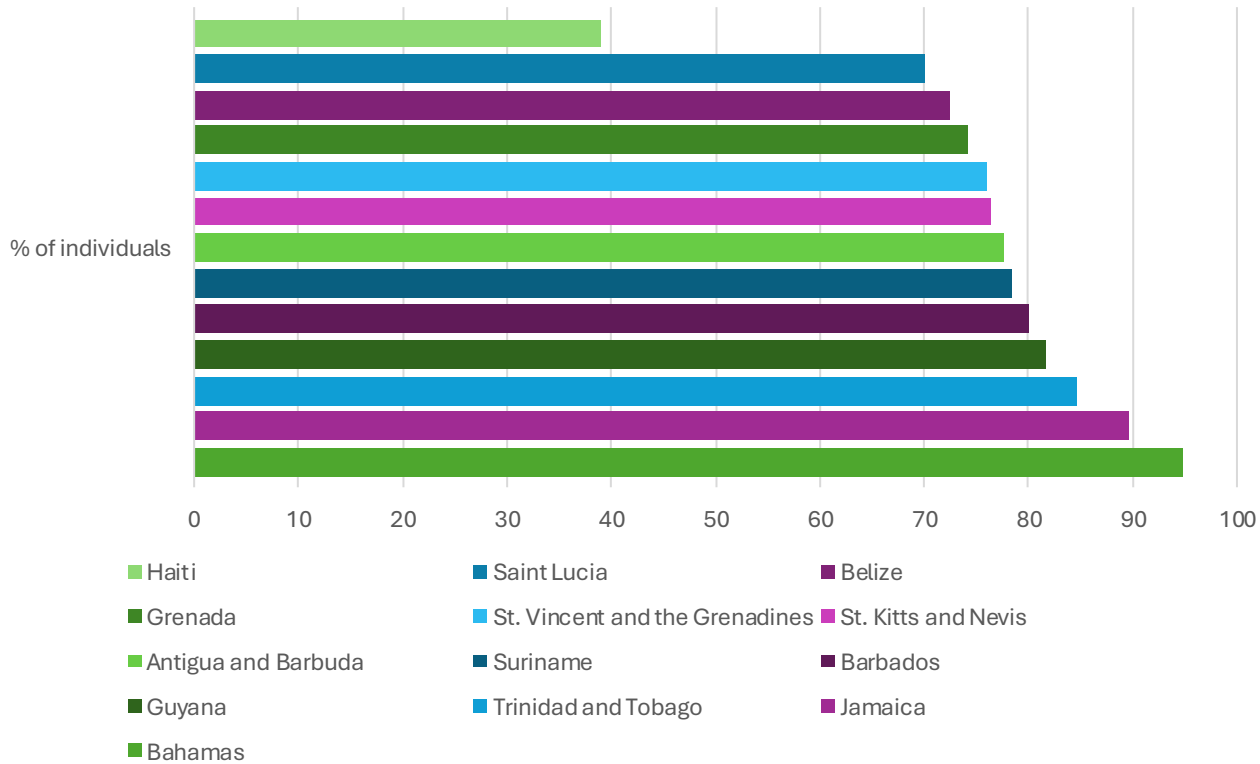
One of the starkest investment-to-output mismatches of any major world region

# Global Concentration of AI Benefits



# The connectivity paradox

Individuals Using the Internet, CARICOM Member States (% of population)



**>5%**

of GNI per capita spent on broadband  
— against the 2% affordability target

**Appears digitally engaged**

**~75%**

of the population of Caribbean SIDS  
used the Internet in 2023

**8.4%**

annual growth in SIDS Internet use  
2014–2023, above the 6.7% global rate

Citizens consume AI-enabled services; almost none of the infrastructure, data governance or value capture happens regionally



# Caribbean Brain Drain and Skills Constraints

Labour force emigrated to OECD nations



Highly educated professionals emigrated



These are among the highest skill-loss rates in the world.

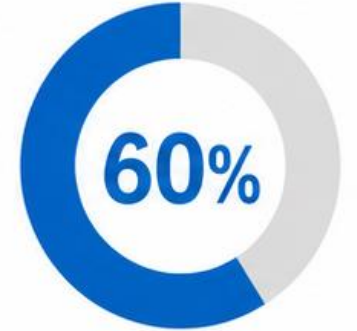


Blue = Caribbean source region



Orange/Red arrows = Talent outflow to OECD states

Businesses struggling to implement new digital technologies



#1 barrier: lack of skilled IT workers



Survey size:

2,500

Caribbean businesses



Persistent out-migration reduces the local talent base needed to build indigenous AI expertise and maintain complex systems.

# Labour-market exposure is concentrated exactly where the region earns

**26–38%**

of employment across LAC countries studied exposed to generative AI

**8–14%**

in the “augmentation potential” category, where AI could enhance productivity

**2–5%**

in the category presenting potential for full automation

**>40%**

of women’s employment exposed in Caribbean and Pacific SIDS

## The gender asymmetry

- ~29% of female-dominated occupations were exposed to generative AI, against ~16% of male-dominated occupations
- Exposure is concentrated in formal, urban and relatively higher-income occupations requiring more education

## The concentrated sectors

- ~60,000 jobs in global services and business-process outsourcing; ICT/BPO industry estimated at ~US\$900 million
- Traditionally concentrated in customer-service, administrative and transaction-processing work; the routine, codifiable functions most susceptible to generative AI
- Workers displaced without a transition mechanism often leave the labour force or the region, intensifying brain drain



# Caribbean Underrepresentation in Global AI Systems

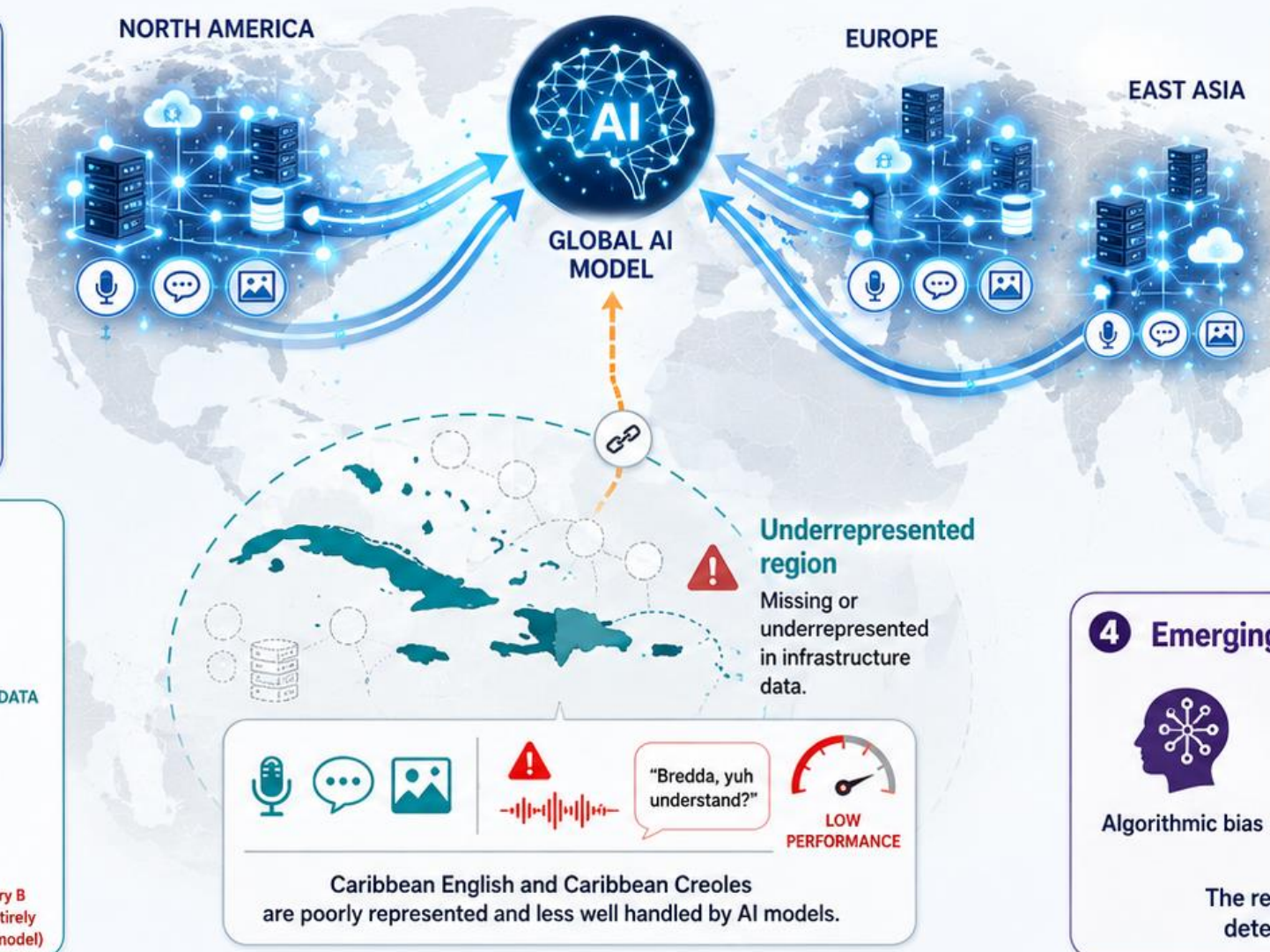
## 1 Absent from datasets

Global AI models are trained overwhelmingly on data from outside the region.



## 2 Not in the analytical frame

A country at the bottom of an index is still counted. A country missing from the infrastructure data is excluded from the model of global AI capacity.



## 3 Readiness gaps

Smaller Caribbean states may be missing from readiness indices because key indicators are not consistently collected or reported.

| KEY INDICATORS (Example) | Collected Consistently | Reported Publicly |
|--------------------------|------------------------|-------------------|
| Digital infrastructure   | ✓                      | ✓                 |
| Education & skills       | ✓                      | ○                 |
| R&D investment           | ○                      | ○                 |
| AI governance            | ○                      | ○                 |
| Data availability        | ✗                      | ✗                 |

Many missing or incomplete

## 4 Emerging risks



When countries are missing from the underlying data, they are not just ranked lower they may be invisible to the systems used to assess global AI capacity.



# The AI Research Gap

The one capability that cannot be procured, harmonised or imported

**154**

validated technology startups mapped across 15 Caribbean countries

**15 of 15**

assessed ecosystems placed in the earliest “Activation Phase”

**60%**

of surveyed organizations delayed in implementing digital-transformation plans

**73%**

of total R&D expenditure carried by business across the OECD; a risk-absorption role absent here

## The structural constraint

- Caribbean startup finance is thin: ventures depend on founders’ savings, family and friends; formal angel networks are rare
- Financial systems remain oriented to collateral-based bank lending, not the patient, loss-tolerant equity early-stage ventures require
- The risk is not that inventions become foreign-owned, but that research stays uncommercialized or its value is captured outside the region

## It is achievable at Caribbean scale

- Jamaica’s BIGEE programme, backed by an initial US\$25 million IDB facility
- The EU / IDB Lab-financed CARIBEquity blended-finance facility for Caribbean private-sector innovation
- Institutional anchors already exist: UWI’s AI Innovation Centre, UTT, University of Guyana, Anton de Kom University, UTech, and emerging OECS nodes

What is missing is not the institutions; it is the partnership, support & financing architecture that converts them into a pipeline

Intentionally left blank

# CARICOM is the only comparable bloc with no collective AI instrument

| Body / Bloc                                  | Instrument                                        | Nature                 |
|----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| European Union                               | EU Artificial Intelligence Act                    | Binding regulation     |
| Council of Europe                            | Framework Convention on AI                        | Binding treaty         |
| African Union                                | Continental AI Strategy                           | Strategic framework    |
| Organization of American States              | Declaration & Plan of Action on AI (incl. MIGDIA) | Declaratory / guidance |
| Arab League (via ALECSO)                     | Charter on AI Ethics                              | Declaratory            |
| ASEAN                                        | AI Governance and Ethics Guide                    | Voluntary guidance     |
| OECD                                         | AI Principles                                     | Voluntary principles   |
| G7                                           | Hiroshima AI Process                              | Voluntary process      |
| G20                                          | AI Principles                                     | Voluntary principles   |
| Latin America (20 states, incl. 6 Caribbean) | Declaración de Santiago (Oct. 2023)               | Declaratory            |
| <b>CARICOM</b>                               | <b>None</b>                                       | <b>—</b>               |



# What harmonized AI policies and recommendations must actually do

|                       |                                                                                                  |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Institutional</b>  | Shared regional oversight bodies pooling regulatory talent no single state can afford            |
| <b>Technical</b>      | Open data standards, API compatibility, data portability to prevent vendor lock-in               |
| <b>Organisational</b> | Aligned procurement and algorithmic auditing workflows across ministries                         |
| <b>Legal</b>          | Cross-border regulatory compatibility so an AI service lawful in one state is lawful in another  |
| <b>Ethical</b>        | Unified values, using the UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of AI as the baseline              |
| <b>Semantic</b>       | Shared regional definitions of “high-risk AI”, “autonomy”, “bias” to prevent legal fragmentation |

**Chair: Craig Ramlal**

Executive Director, Artificial Intelligence  
Innovation Centre, UWI-STA

**Vice Chair: Christopher Reckord**

Chairman, National AI Task Force,  
Jamaica

**Coordinator: Shernon Osepa**

Strategic Advisory, Caribbean  
Telecommunications Union

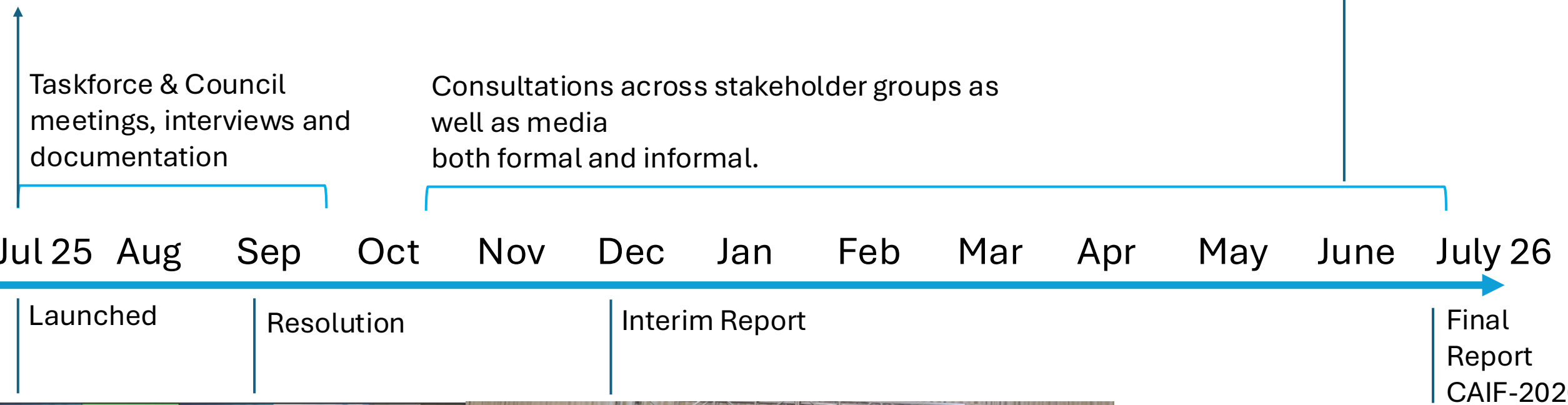


|                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                       |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Armstrong Alexis,<br>Deputy Secretary General,<br>CARICOM                                               | Elvia Smith-Maduro<br>Permanent Secretary,<br>Government of the Virgin Islands                                                                     | Dave Dowrich<br>Vice President & Chief Financial<br>Officer, Teachers Insurance and<br>Annuity Association of America                    | Preetam Maloor<br>Head of Emerging Technologies,<br>International Telecommunications<br>Union                                                                                                                                                                | Nicholas Fuller<br>Vice President, AI & Automation,<br>IBM                                            |
| Annie Baldeo<br>Executive Officer, Economics,<br>Telecommunications Authority<br>of Trinidad and Tobago | Michelle Grell-Bereaux<br>Lead of International Digital<br>Development Affairs, The Utilities,<br>Regulation and Competition<br>Authority, Bahamas | Nia Nanan<br>Senior Research Analyst, Caribbean<br>Telecommunications Union                                                              | Junior McIntyre<br>Deputy National Chief Digital Officer,<br>Trinidad and Tobago                                                                                                                                                                             | John Lewis<br>Director, ICT<br>Government of Trinidad & Tobago                                        |
| Edmund Burke<br>Digital ICT Director,<br>Government of Grenada                                          | Tracy Hackshaw<br>Chef d'Enterprise,<br>Universal Postal Union, UN                                                                                 | Opal Neil<br>Former Senior Director Regulatory<br>Affairs,<br>Columbus Communications                                                    | Michelle Garcia<br>Marketing & Comms Specialist,<br>Caribbean Telecommunications<br>Union                                                                                                                                                                    | Haley Trott<br>Deputy Secretary,<br>Government of the Virgin Islands                                  |
| Deidre Cousins<br>Chief Information Officer,<br>GraceKennedy Ltd                                        | Sharukh Hussain<br>Director Innovation Unit,<br>Office of the Prime Minister,<br>Guyana                                                            | Kurleigh Prescod<br>Chief Executive Officer,<br>Telecommunications Authority of<br>Trinidad and Tobago                                   | Cordel Green<br>Executive Director,<br>Broadcast Commission, Jamaica                                                                                                                                                                                         | Amit Uttamchandani<br>Technology Consultant,<br>Caribbean Signal                                      |
| Vilas Dhar<br>President, Patrick McGovern<br>Foundation                                                 | Francola John<br>Regional Focal Point,<br>CTU-NoW                                                                                                  | Russell Gardiner<br>Director of Technology,<br>Turks and Caicos Islands<br>Telecommunications Commission                                 | Desiree Zachariah<br>Manager, Business and Data<br>Analytics,<br>Ministry of Information<br>Communications Technologies,<br>Antigua and Barbuda                                                                                                              | Charles Douglas<br>Director,<br>CANTO                                                                 |
| Tariq Mohammed<br>Chair,<br>Caribbean ICT Youth Network                                                 | Gary Kalloo<br>Director, Business Development &<br>Implementation,<br>Caribbean Telecommunications<br>Union                                        | Kirk Sookram<br>Deputy Chief Executive Officer,<br>Telecommunications Authority<br>Trinidad and Tobago                                   | Richard Feveck<br>IT Specialist,<br>Caribbean Telecommunications<br>Union                                                                                                                                                                                    | Sean Thorpe<br>Dean,<br>Faculty of Engineering and<br>Computing, University of Technology,<br>Jamaica |
| Shanea Lewis<br>Policy Analyst,<br>Caribbean<br>Telecommunications Union                                | Leslie Lee Fook<br>Director,<br>INCUS Services                                                                                                     | Rick Logan-Stanford<br>Team Lead – Infrastructure, Policies<br>and Legislation,<br>Ministry of Homeland Security,<br>Trinidad and Tobago | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 36 members.</li> <li>• members serving in their own capacity from private sector, NGOs and public sector (nominates from 7 countries), multilaterals...</li> <li>• support from ITU, CARICOM secretariat</li> </ul> |                                                                                                       |

# Timeline

COTED-ICT  
Recognised the work of the Caribbean AI Taskforce as important for the formulation of regionally harmonised AI policies for CARICOM member states

Supported by CARICOM Secretariat and ITU





DATA &  
COMPUTE



GOVERNANCE



ECONOMY



TALENT &  
SKILLS



PUBLIC  
SECTOR AI



RESILIENCE



ONE  
VOICE



# Pillar 1: Data, Digital Infrastructure & Compute



## **Recommendation 1: Pursue a shared, regionally anchored digital and data infrastructure strategy.**

- a) Governments should prioritize harmonization of data-protection and cross-border data-flow frameworks across CARICOM, reducing the current fragmentation that constrains both regional data-sharing and AI model development.
- b) Regional institutions should explore the feasibility of shared, distributed compute and data infrastructure, modeled on small-state and distributed approaches.
- c) Governments should prioritize climate-hardening of any shared digital infrastructure investment, given the region's exceptional climate exposure.
- d) Open-source and open-standard approaches should be prioritized over proprietary lock-in wherever feasible, to preserve future flexibility and reduce long-run dependency costs.

# Pillar 2: Governance, Ethics & Standards



## **Recommendation 2: Establish a harmonized Caribbean AI governance framework, anchored in existing international norms.**

- a) CARICOM should develop a regional AI governance framework anchored explicitly in the UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of AI, avoiding duplication of normative work already settled at the global level.
- b) The framework should establish minimum regional standards for algorithmic transparency, risk classification, and public-sector AI procurement, while allowing member states flexibility in domestic implementation appropriate to their institutional capacity.
- c) Governments should designate or strengthen an existing regional body, rather than necessarily creating a new one, to provide ongoing oversight and coordination, consistent with the principle that policy survives longest when anchored in institutions that already outlast political cycles.
- d) Member states should expand participation in UNESCO's Readiness Assessment Methodology and equivalent diagnostic tools, to build a shared, comparable evidence base for governance design across the region.
- e) The regional governance framework should require AI systems deployed in or serving the Caribbean to be assessed for disparate performance and impact across Caribbean languages, dialects, and demographic groups before public-sector deployment, and CARICOM should develop coordinated capacity to detect and respond to AI-generated disinformation.

# Pillar 3: Economic Transformation, Innovation & Industry



**Recommendation 3: Sequence economic-transformation policy from foundational adoption toward higher-value innovation, built on a structured research-to-commercialization pathway, rather than attempting to leapfrog directly to frontier development.**

a) Governments should prioritize policies that lower the cost and complexity of AI adoption for existing micro, small, and medium enterprises before prioritizing frontier research investment, given the region's current readiness profile.

b) Regional and national innovation-support mechanisms (sandboxes, challenge funds, accelerator support) should be designed to draw on patient, blended capital appropriate to the longer innovation cycles AI ventures require, rather than short-cycle grant funding alone.

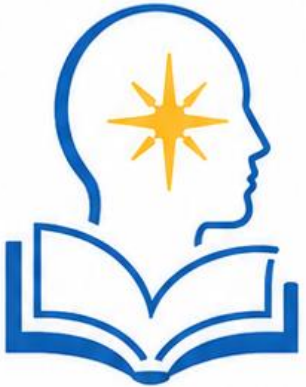
c) Governments should evaluate the case for Caribbean-specific language and data resources, including support for regional languages and Creoles currently underserved by global AI tools, as a distinct strategic asset rather than a marginal accessibility feature.

d) Trade and investment-promotion bodies should treat AI-related foreign direct investment and outsourcing opportunities as a distinct strategic category, given the scale of global capital currently being mobilized by comparator regions.

e) Regional authorities should establish a staged research-to-commercialization financing pathway, anchored in university-based research institutions, that funds fundamental research (multi-year, patient capital, evaluated on knowledge and talent outputs) and applied research (shorter-cycle, milestone-based grants, evaluated on prototype and adoption evidence) under distinct instruments, and that channels a defined, published share of resulting commercial returns, licensing income, or spin-out proceeds back into upstream research funding, so that public investment in AI research compounds over time rather than ending at the pilot or publication stage.

# Pillar 4: Talent & Skills

**Recommendation 4: Build a tiered talent pipeline spanning mass digital literacy through to specialist AI research capacity.**



- a) Governments should prioritize foundational digital and AI literacy at scale, across the public sector, education system, and small business community, recognizing that this tier reaches the largest number of beneficiaries per unit of investment.
- b) Regional tertiary institutions, led by the University of the West Indies and equivalent national institutions, should be supported in developing applied AI and data-science training pathways targeted at practitioner-level public and private sector roles
- c) A smaller number of advanced research and specialist scholarships should be maintained to retain a pipeline of regional AI expertise, recognizing that this tier will necessarily reach far fewer people but is necessary to sustain the other tiers over time
- d) Governments should treat organizational and integration barriers to AI adoption, not only raw technical-skills gaps, as a distinct and addressable category of the talent challenge, consistent with recent regional survey evidence.
- e) Alongside building new AI talent, governments and regional training institutions should design transition pathways, reskilling toward higher-value analytical, quality-assurance, and AI-supervision roles, for workers in occupations most exposed to generative-AI displacement.



# Pillar 5: Public Sector AI



## **Recommendation 5: Use public procurement and public-service delivery as the proving ground for Caribbean AI governance standards.**

- a) Governments should pilot AI-enabled public service delivery in a small number of high-value, low-risk domains (such as routine administrative processing or citizen information services) before extending to higher-risk domains such as benefits determination or law enforcement.
- b) Public procurement standards for AI systems should require basic transparency and auditability commitments from vendors, consistent with the governance framework proposed in Pillar 2, so that public-sector adoption itself reinforces regional governance norms.
- c) Governments should treat public-sector AI pilots as a deliberate source of regional learning, with findings shared across CARICOM rather than retained nationally, given the limited capacity any single member state has to evaluate outcomes alone.
- d) Leverage public-private partnerships financed through development finance institutions. Given SIDS' constrained fiscal space and middle-income ineligibility for concessional finance, Member States should structure public-sector AI deployments as PPPs blended with DFI financing using public procurement as the proving ground for Caribbean AI governance standards.

# Pillar 6: Natural Disaster & Climate Resilience

**Recommendation 6: Prioritize AI-enabled early-warning and resilience applications as a flagship, co-benefit-generating regional investment.**



- a) Regional disaster-management institutions, led by CDEMA, should evaluate the feasibility of an AI-enabled multi-hazard early-warning capability for the Caribbean, drawing on comparable Pacific SIDS models, rather than each member state pursuing separate national systems.
- b) Any shared digital infrastructure built under Pillar 1 should explicitly incorporate disaster-resilience requirements (redundancy, climate-hardening, rapid failover) from the outset, rather than retrofitting them later.
- c) Given that agriculture represents a comparatively small share of regional GDP but a disproportionately large share of regional employment, governments should evaluate AI-enabled agricultural advisory tools as a resilience and food-security priority, with reference to comparable yield and resilience gains documented in Kenya and India.

# Pillar 7: Regional Leadership, Trade & Global Interoperability



## **Recommendation 7: Establish CARICOM as a coordinated voice in global AI governance.**

- a) CARICOM should designate a coordinated regional position and representation for the Global Dialogue on AI Governance and related UN processes, rather than allowing member states to engage individually or not at all.
- b) The region should evaluate the case for a CARICOM-wide AI governance instrument building on, rather than duplicating, the Declaración de Santiago commitments already held by six Caribbean states to close the coordination gap identified in
- c) Regional bodies (the CTU, CROSQ, and others) should pursue interoperability and mutual-recognition arrangements with comparable small-state and regional blocs (the OECS, the Pacific Islands Forum, and others) to share the cost of standards development that no single Caribbean state can bear alone.

end

