

Digital Disruption Matrix

— 2026 EDITION

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



BNP PARIBAS



An annual map of digital disruption

The Digital Disruption Matrix is an annual barometer that measures technology disruption signals and helps leaders decide where to act.

The Matrix is published by the ESSEC Digital Disruption Chair, which prepares leaders and helps organizations understand and respond strategically to emerging technologies through academic and applied research, thought leadership, and deep collaboration with both the people building these technologies and the executives deploying them.

This report presents a selection of our insights and results. For the complete, updated dataset and interactive tools, visit digitaldisruptionmatrix.com

DATA-DRIVEN, WITH HUMAN INSIGHTS

600+

global industry reports

Startup & Unicorn data

CRUNCHBASE

1,000

industry professionals surveyed

Global Patents

LENS.ORG

20+

hours of expert interviews

Academic Papers

LENS.ORG



SCAN FOR
THE
INTERACTIVE
EXPERIENCE

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Foreword

When the Digital Disruption Matrix was launched in 2025, the central challenge was capturing phenomena that unfolded too quickly for conventional analysis. In its second year, that challenge got steeper. Unlike other frontier technologies, AI is not just settling into how organizations work: it is changing their structural shape, reconfiguring physical operations and supply chains, and shifting the competitive and geopolitical balances that condition what firms can do.

Managing that shift is at the heart of ESSEC's mission. We create and disseminate knowledge that helps leaders act before disruption becomes obvious. We train the next generation to embrace complexity without rushing to certainty. We help organizations transform with both ambition and judgment. The Digital Disruption Matrix is a direct expression of that mission. It maps the convergence of both academic and private research intensity and momentum, capital flows, and practitioner conviction to reveal where disruptive potential is building before it fully materializes.

This year, the asymmetries between the United States, China, and Europe make that work more consequential than ever for any leader operating across borders.

This printed edition gives an overview of the Chair's reading of those forces. Throughout its pages, QR codes open the full interactive version, where our readers, whether students or seasoned practitioners, can start from the Chair's analysis to trace their own paths through the data, and reach their own conclusions.

The Digital Disruption Matrix is designed to bring both a rigorous perspective on the current disruptions at play and the tools and data for all to interrogate it.

Join us and enter the Matrix



Vincenzo Vinzi

Dean & President, ESSEC Business School

Matter

Whether AI as a technology matters is no longer the question. A year ago it was still worth debating; today, among the 1,000 professionals we surveyed, not one doubts AI will reach their work. The conviction holds across every industry and every stage of a career. What divides them is when it reaches their sector and where it pays. The advantage has moved from believing in AI to placing it well.

For now AI is still a technology of the screen, where most meet it and work with it. But it is moving into the physical world, in machines, robots, and the settings they run in. The contest over that ground shows strongly in our dataset.

The United States is committed to leading in Generative and Agentic AI, holding its research lead while gathering the capital and giving rise to the massive unicorns that turn the technology into products used worldwide. China is building the layer beneath, leading the research in Descriptive AI, the intelligence that lets machines make sense of the physical world.

It is turning its Robotics research into companies built to compete globally. Europe is in neither of these races, its only lead being in Quantum research, the technology most practitioners still disregard, yet perhaps the one likeliest to define what comes next.

That is the space this edition is about: the distance between conviction and disruption, the moment ideas become products changing industries. The Matrix that follows is built to be read in that spirit. It does not measure disruption already realized, but the intensity of the signals that precede it, the heat where research, patents, capital, and conviction begin to converge.

We offer it not as a forecast but as an invitation: a partial and evolving map, meant to provoke sharper questions about where the next wave of change will land for our readers.



Prof. Jan Ondrus

Chairholder, Digital Disruption Chair



Jeremy Beaufile

Director, Digital Disruption Chair

How the Heatmatrix is built

Each year, the Heatmatrix is a bird's eye to technology disruption. The five technology families are selected by a college of academic experts and practitioners. Each family is crossed with ten industries, giving the Heatmatrix fifty cells. Every cell carries a signal built from a variety of indicators: unicorn funding, unicorn count, emerging unicorns, startup creation, patents, scholarly output, patent and scholar momentum, and the survey's impact and timeline readings.

The result is an overview of where disruption is gaining traction, where it is accelerating, and where blind spots may lie.

THREE DATASETS PER TECHNOLOGY

Professionals Survey

Reads belief: 1,000 professionals across 41 countries, commissioned and analyzed by the Chair team.

Investment Landscape

Reads money: Crunchbase unicorns, emerging unicorns and startup formation, analyzed by the Chair team.

Research & Patents

Reads science: scholarly publications and patent filings from Lens.org, 2020 to 2025.

THE FIVE TECHNOLOGIES



Descriptive AI



Generative &
Agentic AI



Blockchain &
Decentralized
Systems



Physical AI &
Robotics



Quantum
Computing

THE TEN INDUSTRIES



Energy



Materials



Industrials



Consumer Goods



Healthcare



Financial Services



Information
Technology



Communication &
Creative Services

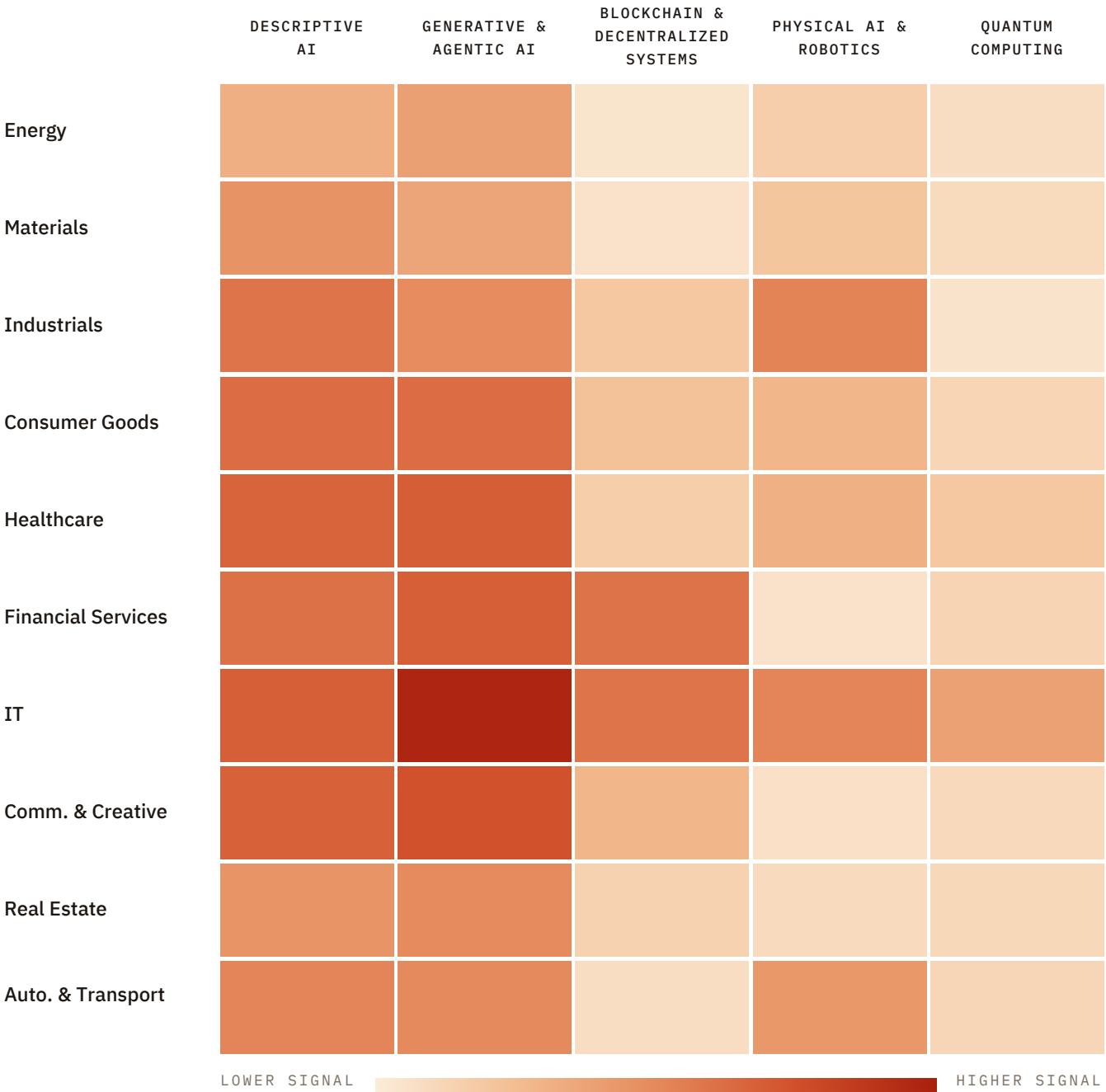


Real Estate



Automotive &
Transport

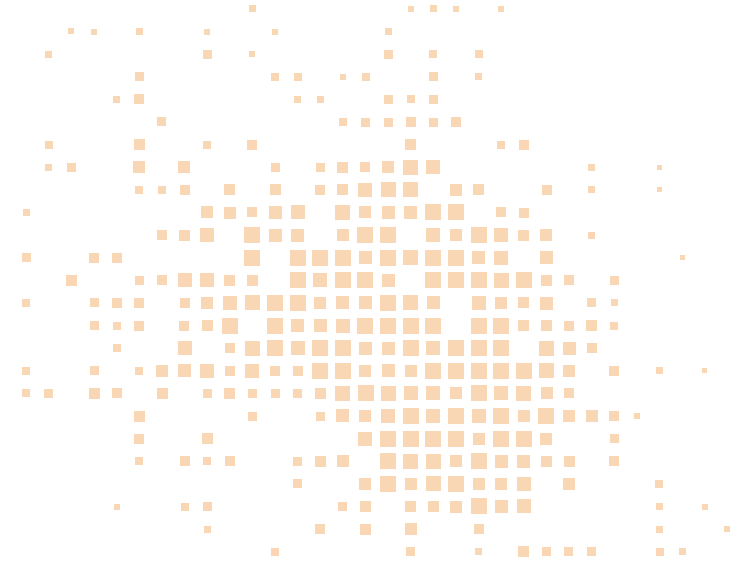
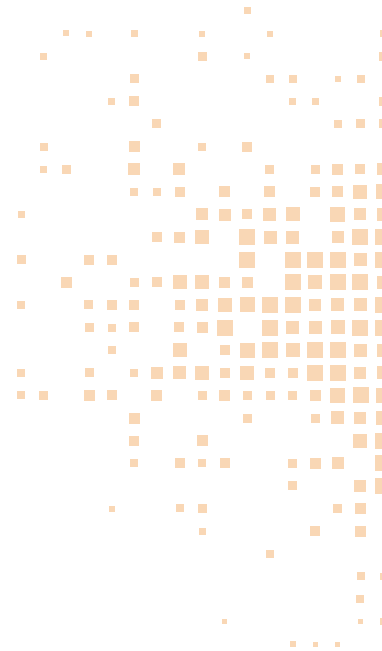
The Heatmatrix



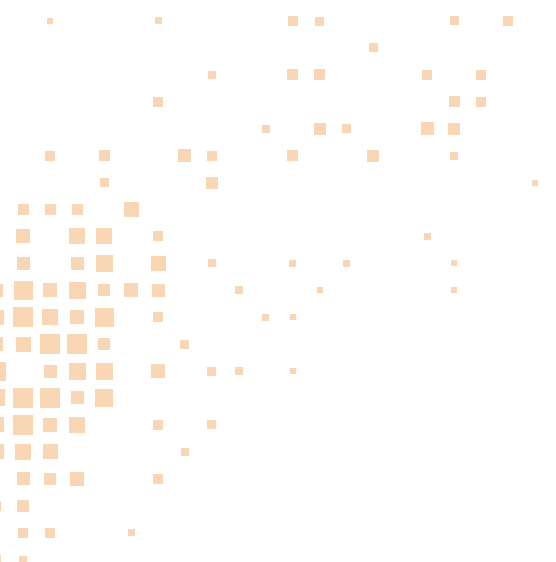
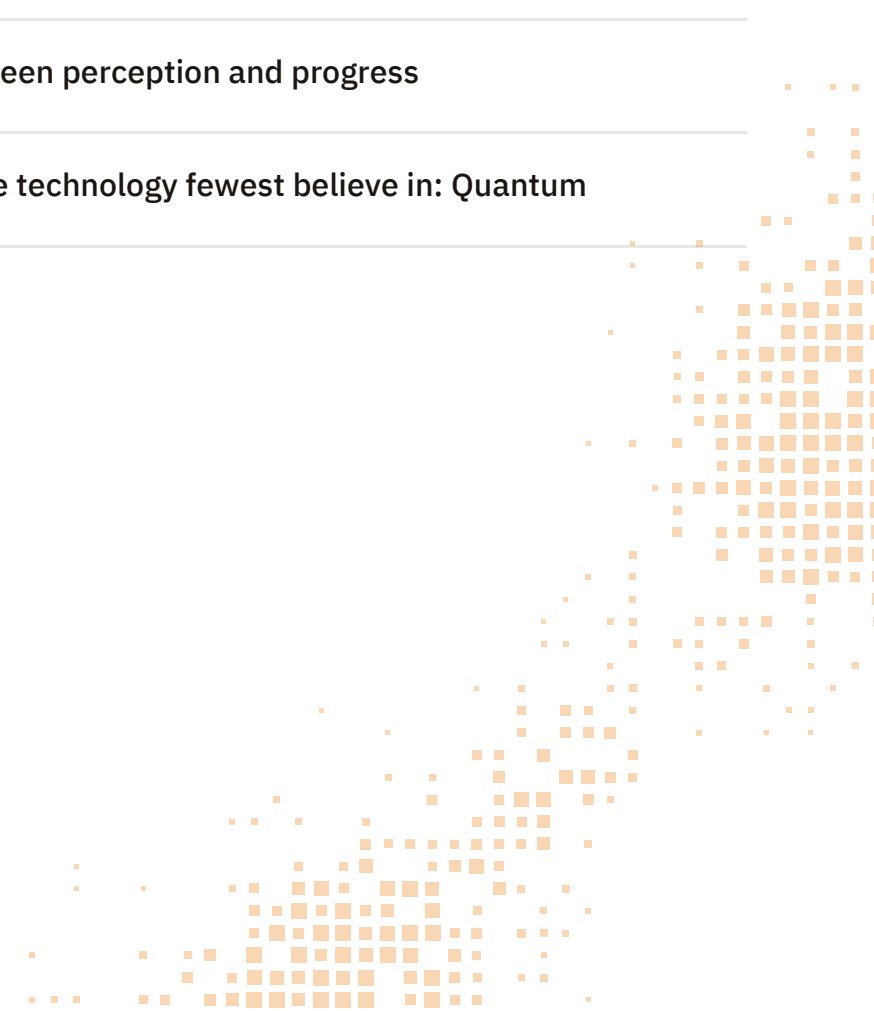
Enter the Matrix

Scan to explore the full interactive Heatmatrix, cell by cell, on:
digitaldisruptionmatrix.com/heatmatrix





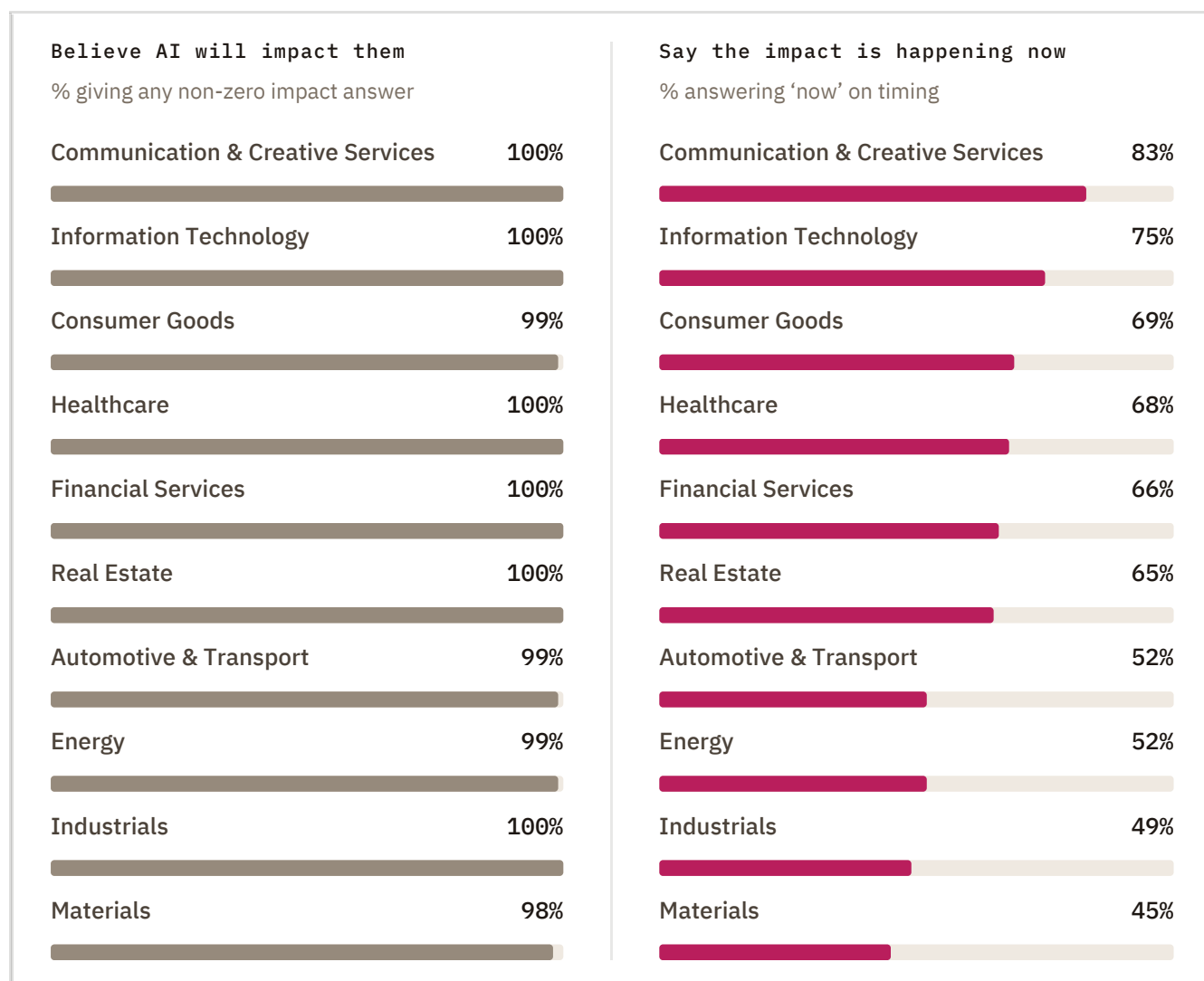
Key Findings

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- 01** Unanimous that AI is coming, divided on timing
-
- 02** Agentic AI: universal demand, American supply
-
- 03** Physical AI needs robots and brains; China is racing ahead in both
-
- 04** The empire strikes back: Blockchain is being captured by the banks it set out to disrupt
-
- 05** Quantum: the widest gap between perception and progress
-
- 06** Europe's research lead is in the technology fewest believe in: Quantum
-
- 

Unanimous that AI is coming, divided on timing

In just a year, **Agentic and Generative AI** has won an argument no other technology in the matrix has matched. Across all ten industries, almost no one doubts AI will affect their work, and the conviction holds from the newest careers to those past twenty-five years.

But unanimous belief is not a blanket green light. Where AI actually bites differs sharply by sector, visible in the use cases professionals themselves rank highest. Everyone agrees AI is coming; far fewer have worked out when it pays off.



Agentic AI: universal demand, American supply

The United States is committed to leading **Agentic and Generative AI**, and on the numbers it is far ahead. It retook the top spot in academic research, even as China accelerated and narrowed the gap. Research is the only contest that stays close. In companies and capital, there is no rival: the US holds about 77.8% of the world's Agentic and Generative AI and 73% of the related patent applicants are from American companies.

That concentration gives the US ownership of the technology the rest of the world is counting on. In our survey, nearly every professional, in every industry, expects Agentic and Generative AI to reshape their work, yet almost none of it is built, funded or controlled where they are. Such dependence carries strategic, commercial and geopolitical weight, and explains why Europe increasingly frames AI as a question of sovereignty.

UNIVERSAL DEMAND, AMERICAN SUPPLY

The US is leading the research...

#1

US rank in academic research for Agentic and Gen AI

73%

of the 15 top patent applicants are American

...and crushing the commercialization

94%

of all agentic & GenAI unicorn funding comes from American unicorns

77.8%

of all agentic & GenAI unicorns are American

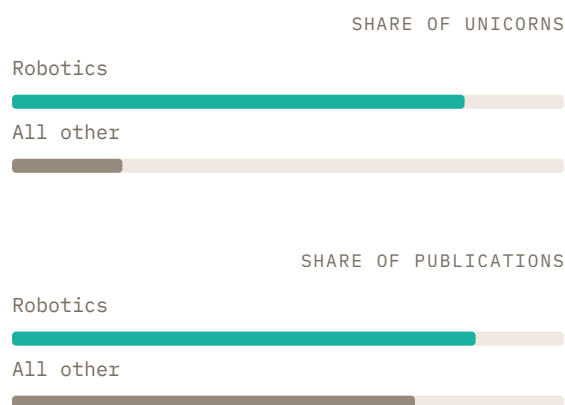
Physical AI needs robots and brains; China is racing ahead in both

Physical AI & Robotics is unlike other technologies in China's portfolio: China's share of global unicorns in this field matches its share of the world's research, both near 38%, the signature of a deliberate strategy: not just to lead the science, but to convert it into companies that compete worldwide.

But robots are the visible half of Physical AI. The other half is the intelligence that runs them. As AI moves off the screen and into machines, **Descriptive AI**, the layer that makes sense of the world from data, will have to handle a far more complex, physical reality. China leads that academic research too, ahead of both the United States and Europe.

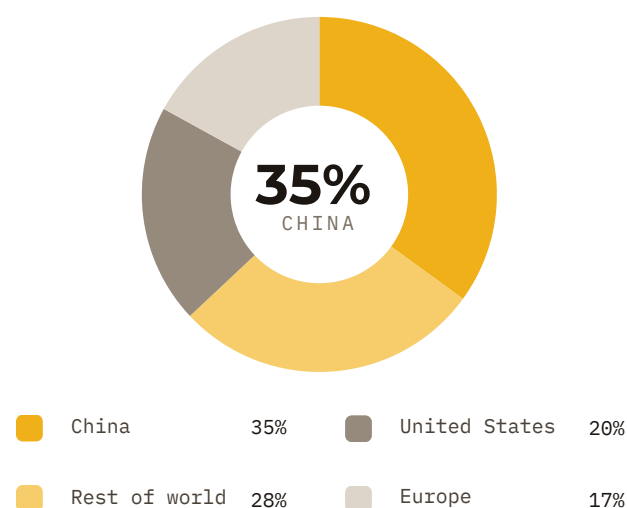
China is building the machines...

China's world share, robotics vs all other tech



...and their intelligence layer

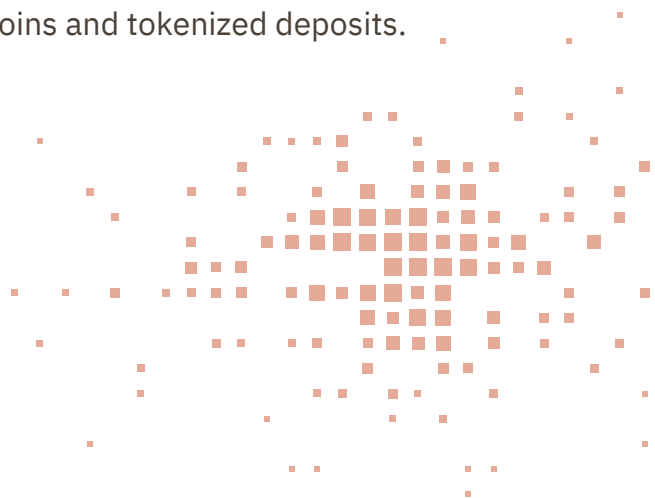
China's share of descriptive-AI research, 2025



The empire strikes back: Blockchain is being captured by the banks it set out to disrupt

Two forces pull in opposite directions. Founders are leaving the field: **Blockchain** is the only technology in the matrix where startup formation is falling, down nearly 40% in three years, with patent growth essentially flat. At the same time, the incumbents are arriving. Wells Fargo, outside the top tier of Blockchain patent filers in 2020, is now the world's second-largest; the share of major banks among the leading filers is rising.

The capital did not leave, however, concentrating in finance and IT. Built to bypass banks, **Blockchain** is being absorbed as their settlement layer, behind stablecoins and tokenized deposits.



Incumbents climbing the patent table

~2×

Banks' share of the top blockchain patent filers has roughly doubled since 2022.

Major banks now lead the patent filings

Wells Fargo 2nd-largest filer

Bank of America climbing

J.P. Morgan top filers

Capital One top filers

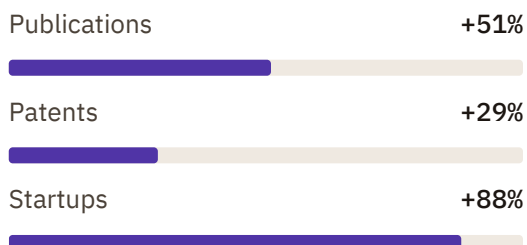
Quantum: the widest gap between perception and progress

Quantum earns the most skeptical verdict of any technology in the matrix: nine in ten surveyed professionals expect its impact only years away, or never. Yet every hard indicator points the opposite way. Academic publications have more than tripled since 2020, so have patents, and new company formation jumped 88% in a single year.

The base is still small, but small and compounding fast is exactly how every major technology began. The gap between what professionals expect and what the field is doing is the widest in the matrix.

The science is accelerating...

Publications, patents & startups, 2024–2025 growth



...but the professional disbelief is strong

Most dismiss quantum on both timing and impact

9 in 10 expect impact only later (2+ yrs), or never

1 in 2 expect no or only minor impact on their industry

The most skeptical verdict of any of the five technologies in the matrix.

Europe's research lead is in the technology fewest believe in: Quantum

Quantum is the one technology in the matrix where Europe leads the world in academic research. The EU, UK and Switzerland together account for about 30% of global Quantum publications, ahead of both the United States and China. In no other frontier technology does Europe sit in first place.

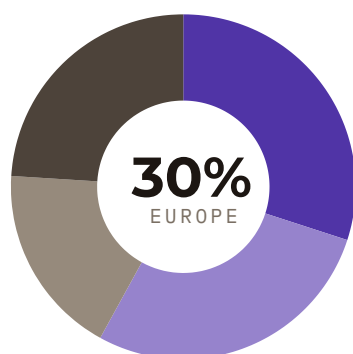
This lead runs against the prevailing mood: like the rest of the world, professionals in Europe rank Quantum the furthest off of any technology.

Europe's best scientific position is therefore its least believed, a frontier where it leads the world, in the field its own market is most inclined to dismiss.

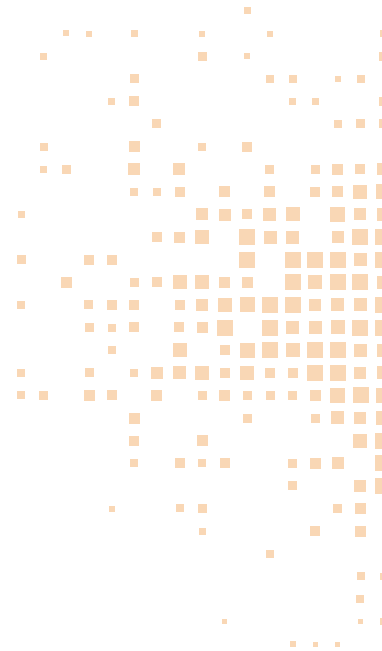
The strategic question is whether Europe funds and commercializes this lead while the field is still early, or repeats the pattern seen across the matrix, where its science migrates abroad to become someone else's companies.

Europe leads the quantum science

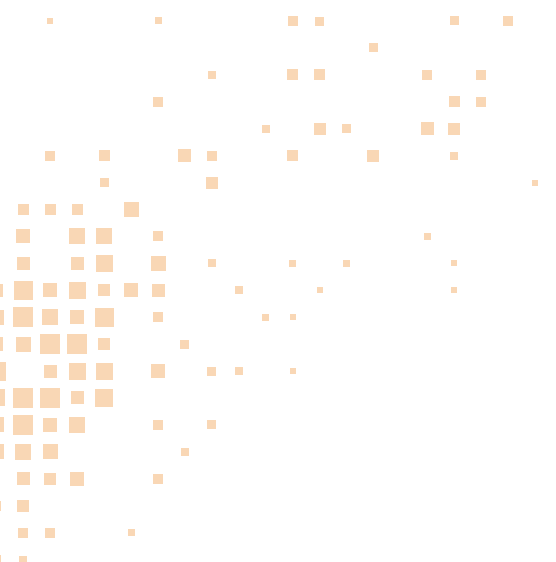
Share of global quantum publications (%)
among top 15 countries



Europe	30%
China	18%
United States	28%
Rest of world	24%



The Technologies



01

■ Descriptive AI

02

■ Generative & Agentic AI

03

■ Blockchain & Decentralized Systems

04

■ Physical AI & Robotics

05

■ Quantum Computing





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Descriptive AI

Descriptive AI encompasses traditional AI approaches that analyze and interpret existing data to identify patterns, make predictions, and derive insights. This technology forms the foundation of practical AI applications in industry through machine learning, statistical analysis, and pattern recognition.

THE CHAIR'S PERSPECTIVE

The invisible AI, where China lays tomorrow's foundations

Descriptive AI, the analytics, forecasting, and classification layer, is the most mature technology in the matrix. The professionals treat it as already here: 91% expect impact now or soon, the highest immediacy score of any family. While newer technologies compete for investment and corporate attention, descriptive AI has crossed into infrastructure, the stage where research, capital and adoption have fully met.

That maturity makes a geographic divide easier to read here than anywhere else. The United States leads decisively on companies and capital, while China now tops the scholarly activity index, ahead of the US by a wide margin.

This matters as physical AI accelerates. The infrastructure layer beneath it will have to evolve, and regions that treat today's research lead as settled may find it a future weakness. China, on the publication numbers, is moving ahead, while others appear to take the current relevance of the infrastructure for granted.

READ MORE ARTICLES ON THIS TOPIC

SCAN TO OPEN ON SUBSTACK

AI's Energy Problem Was Here Before the War. It Will Stay After.



Analog Computing: Are the Billions invested in GPUs Going to Waste?

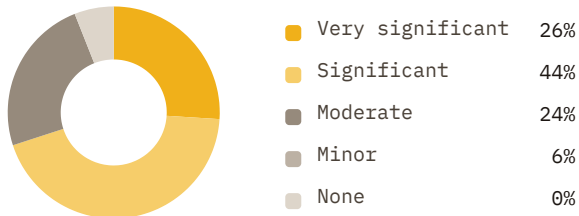


Professionals Survey

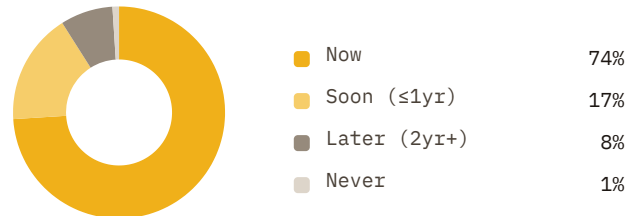
#2

Descriptive AI is ranked #2 of 5 among professionals.

Strength of expected impact



Expected time horizon of impact



Which industries see the most impact

- Communication & Creative Services
- Consumer Goods
- Healthcare

Most-voted use cases

- #1 Predictive Maintenance (next-gen) ENERGY
- #2 Demand Prediction & Inventory Optimization CONSUMER GOODS
- #3 Predictive Maintenance for Building Assets REAL ESTATE

Survey of the Chair, March 2026. 1,000 professionals across all sectors.

Investment Landscape

#1 OF 5

TECHNOLOGIES BY VOLUME OF UNICORNS

+35.7%

STARTUP CREATION TREND · 2024 → 2025

Top Country - Volume of Unicorns

1		United States	63.8%
2		China	11.3%
3		United Kingdom	3.7%
4		Germany	2.6%
5		Israel	2.6%

Top Unicorns - Total Funding

1	OpenAI	\$79B
2	Anthropic	\$64B
3	Databricks	\$27B
4	Waymo	\$27B
5	Cruise	\$16B

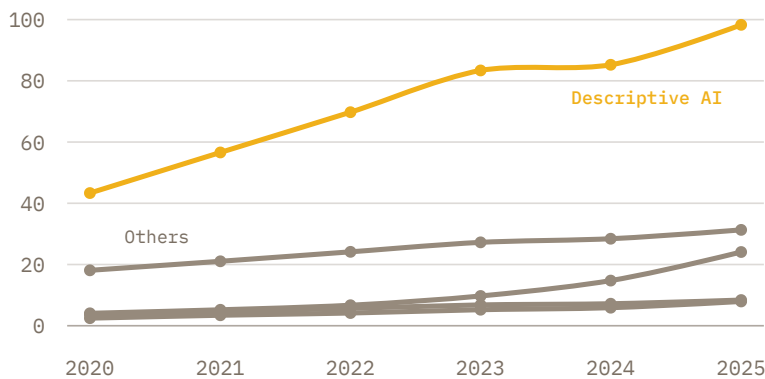
Crunchbase data, February 2026, analyzed by the Chair's team.

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FULL
DATA



Research & Patents

Publication Growth



Descriptive AI

vs 2020 +126.8%

vs 2024 +15.3%

2024 → 2025 GROWTH BY SOURCE

Patents +6.1%

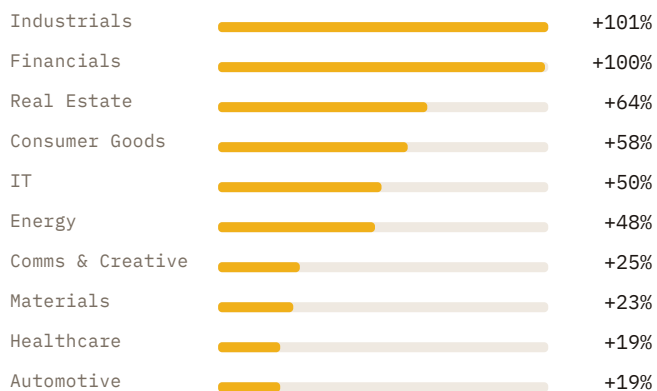
Scholar +25.9%

Combined score, patents 50% + scholar 50%, max 100.

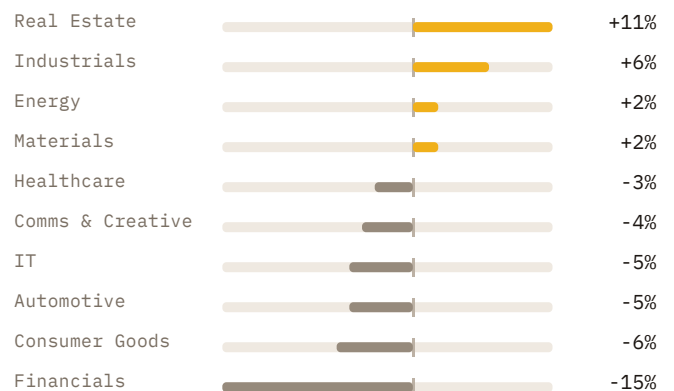
Signal by Industry

YOY GROWTH · 2024 → 2025

Academic Publication Growth

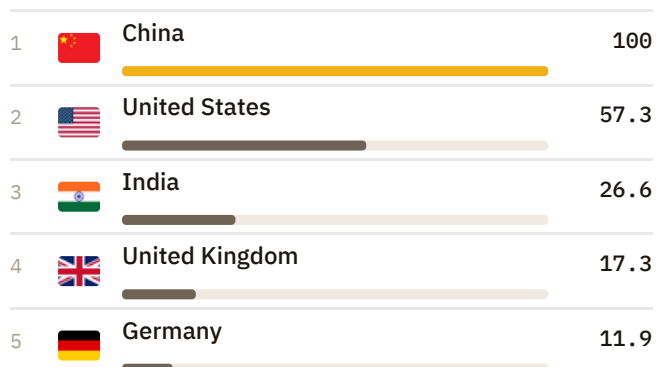


Patent Publication Growth



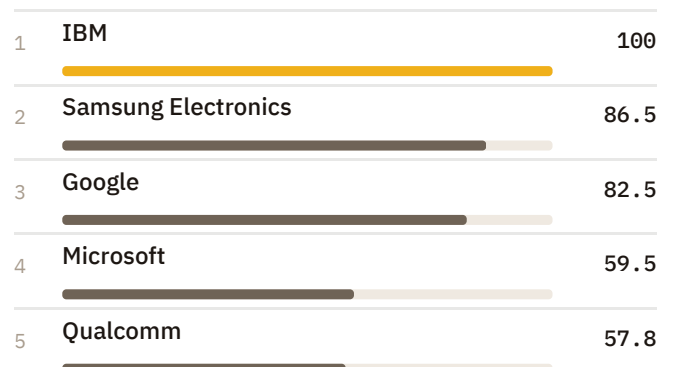
Academic Leaderboard: Most Active Countries

LEADER = 100



Patent Leaderboard: Most Active Companies

LEADER = 100



Lens data, May 2026, analyzed by the Chair's team. Indexed scores, leader = 100.

EXPLORE
FULL
DATA





EXPLORE ONLINE

Generative & Agentic AI

Generative AI and Agentic AI refer to AI systems that can create new content (text, images, code, synthetic data) and autonomously plan and execute multi-step actions to achieve goals. This technology leverages large language models and neural networks to generate novel outputs based on patterns learned from training data.

THE CHAIR'S PERSPECTIVE

A delegation era begins, led by the USA

Generative and Agentic AI sits at the matrix's center of gravity. It ranks as the most disruptive technology by a wide margin. The conviction is close to unanimous: a large majority expect significant impact within the year, and almost nobody expects none. The hard data reinforces this belief rather than tempering it. Research, scholarship, and startup formation are all growing faster here than in any other family. Capital has concentrated just as quickly, led by the fundraising of giants such as OpenAI and Anthropic.

What sets this technology apart is that perception and evidence point the same way, a sign that the easy phase is ending. Once everyone is certain, the advantage shifts from early adoption to execution: who delegates to these systems most effectively. The patent landscape, led by Microsoft and Google, suggests incumbents are best placed to capture the wave.

With capital, companies, and patents all concentrated in the United States, and nearly every professional surveyed in Europe and elsewhere expecting to be affected, the story moves past industrial competition. This technology is reshaping how managers everywhere work and understand problems, while Europe holds almost no cards.

READ MORE ARTICLES ON THIS TOPIC

SCAN TO OPEN ON SUBSTACK

The Age of Generative Answers



Should AI Learn to Dream to Achieve AGI?

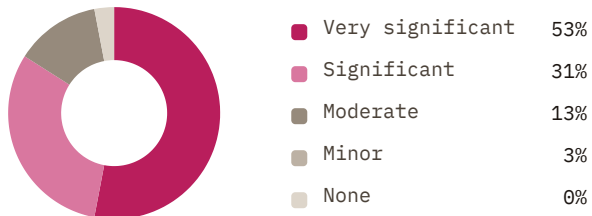


Professionals Survey

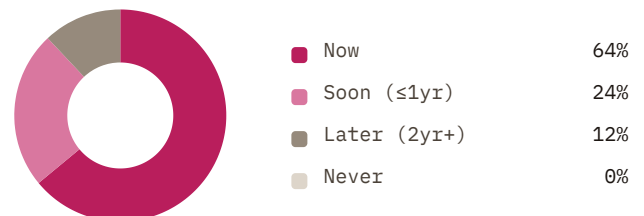
#1

Generative & Agentic AI is ranked #1 of 5 among professionals.

Strength of expected impact



Expected time horizon of impact



Which industries see the most impact

- Information Technology
- Communication & Creative Services
- Financial Services

Most-voted use cases

- #1** Autonomous Software Development ('Vibe Coding') INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
- #2** Agentic Back-Office and Front Office FINANCIAL SERVICES
- #3** Autonomous IT Operations (AIOps) & Agentic Service Desk INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Survey of the Chair, March 2026. 1,000 professionals across all sectors.

Investment Landscape

#3 OF 5

TECHNOLOGIES BY VOLUME OF UNICORNS

+144.4%

STARTUP CREATION TREND · 2024 → 2025

The fastest growth of the five technologies.

Top Country - Volume of Unicorns

1		United States	77.8%
2		Germany	5.6%
3		China	4.2%
4		United Kingdom	4.2%
5		Israel	2.8%

Top Unicorns - Total Funding

1	OpenAI	\$79B
2	Anthropic	\$64B
3	Scale	\$16B
4	Project Prometheus	\$6.2B
5	Magic Leap	\$4.3B

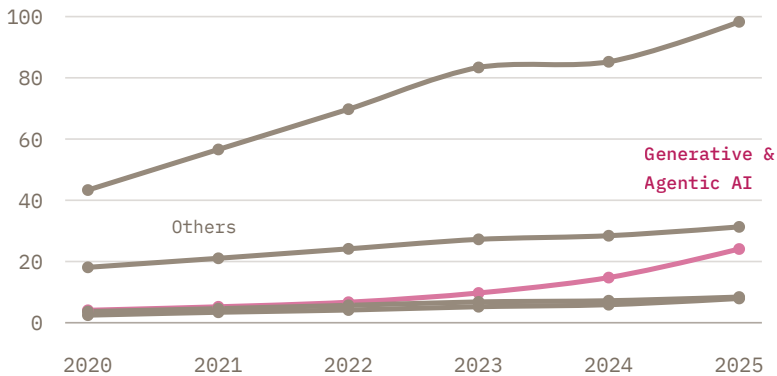
Crunchbase data, February 2026, analyzed by the Chair's team.

EXPLORE
FULL
DATA



Research & Patents

Publication Growth



Generative & Agentic AI

vs 2020 +493.1%

vs 2024 +63.3%

2024 → 2025 GROWTH BY SOURCE

Patents +48.4%

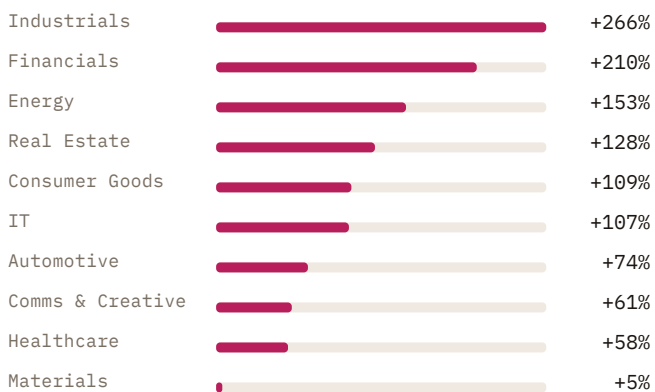
Scholar +79.0%

Combined score, patents 50% + scholar 50%, max 100.

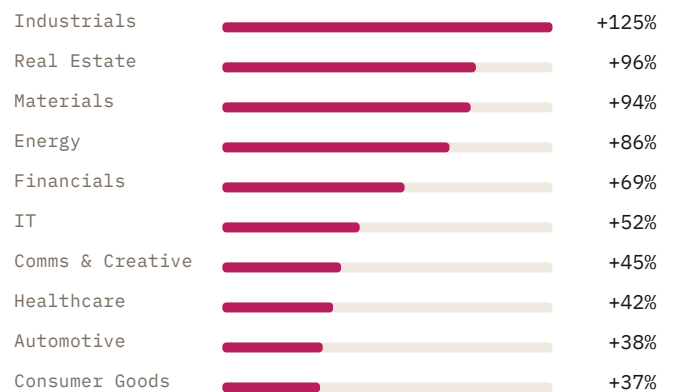
Signal by Industry

YOY GROWTH · 2024 → 2025

Academic Publication Growth

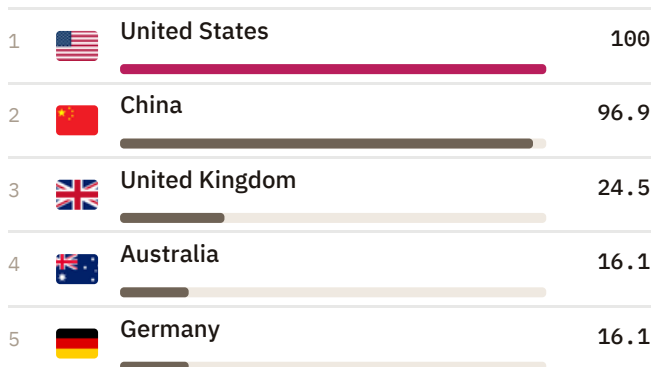


Patent Publication Growth



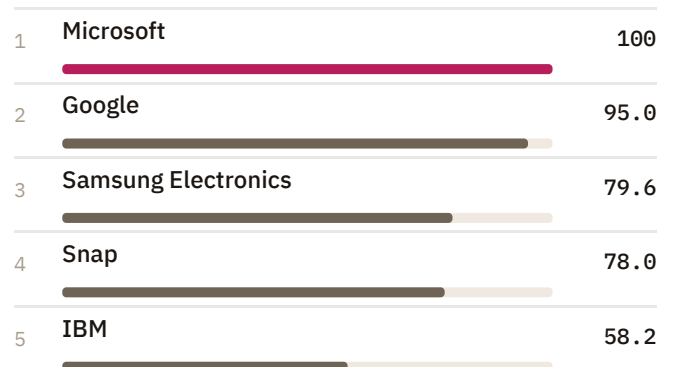
Academic Leaderboard: Most Active Countries

LEADER = 100



Patent Leaderboard: Most Active Companies

LEADER = 100



Lens data, May 2026, analyzed by the Chair's team. Indexed scores, leader = 100.

EXPLORE
FULL
DATA





EXPLORE ONLINE

Blockchain & Decentralized Systems

Blockchain technology enables secure, decentralized record-keeping and transactions without requiring central authority. It creates transparent, immutable records across distributed networks, supporting applications from cryptocurrency to supply chain tracking.

THE CHAIR'S PERSPECTIVE

Built to disrupt the banks, absorbed by them

Blockchain is the matrix's contrarian case. Professional conviction sits near the bottom, skepticism runs high, and it is the only technology where new company formation is shrinking. Read on its own, that looks like a sector in retreat.

The patent record points elsewhere. Its leaders now include big traditional banks, with Wells Fargo having risen to second place and Bank of America climbing. The capital in play runs to billions, concentrated in finance and IT. A meaningful share of finance's emerging-unicorn pipeline is blockchain. The technology built to disintermediate banks is being absorbed by them, as the settlement layer beneath stablecoins and tokenized assets.

Blockchain is not dying. It has been captured by the very incumbents it set out to replace, and is replacing their infrastructure.

READ MORE ARTICLES ON THIS TOPIC

SCAN TO OPEN ON SUBSTACK

Who Gets to Print the Dollar?

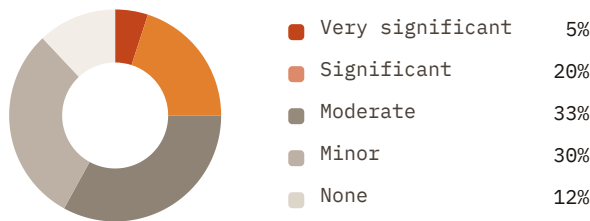


Professionals Survey

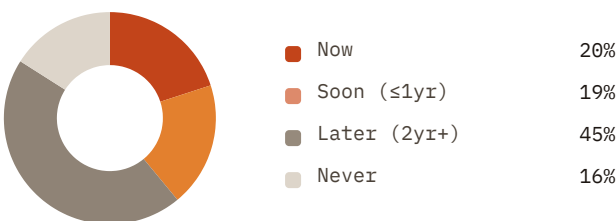
#4

Blockchain & Decentralized Systems is ranked #4 of 5 among professionals.

Strength of expected impact



Expected time horizon of impact



Which industries see the most impact

-  Financial Services
-  Consumer Goods
-  Healthcare

Most-voted use cases

- #1 Tokenization of Real-World Assets (RWAs) FINANCIAL SERVICES
- #2 Corporate Stablecoins for Treasury & Settlements FINANCIAL SERVICES
- #3 Digital Product Passports (DPPs) CONSUMER GOODS

Survey of the Chair, March 2026. 1,000 professionals across all sectors.

Investment Landscape

#2 OF 5

TECHNOLOGIES BY VOLUME OF UNICORNS

-11.6%

STARTUP CREATION TREND · 2024 → 2025

The only technology in decline.

Top Country - Volume of Unicorns

1		United States	51.9%
2		Canada	5.8%
3		United Kingdom	4.8%
4		Cayman Islands	4.8%
5		Singapore	3.8%

Top Unicorns - Total Funding

1	Trade Republic	\$2.7B
2	Polymarket	\$2.3B
3	Binance	\$2.0B
4	Kraken	\$1.4B
5	NYDIG	\$1.4B

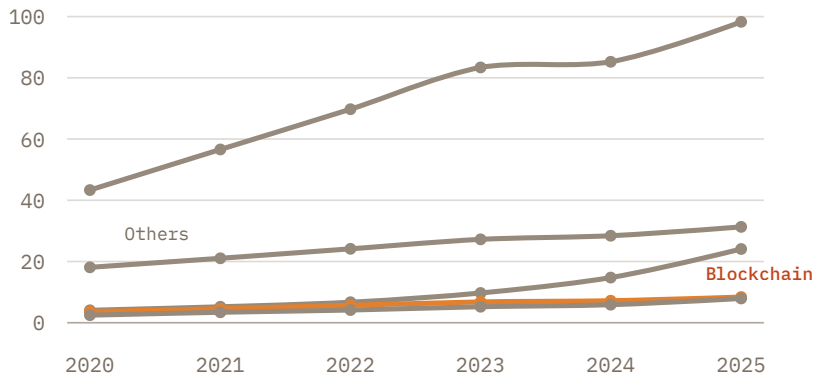
Crunchbase data, February 2026, analyzed by the Chair's team.

EXPLORE
FULL
DATA



Research & Patents

Publication Growth



Blockchain & Decentralized Systems

vs 2020 +130.5%

vs 2024 +16.7%

2024 → 2025 GROWTH BY SOURCE

Patents +0.2%

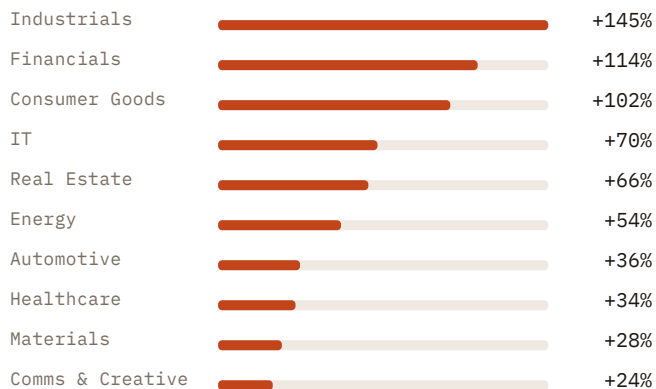
Scholar +39.8%

Combined score, patents 50% + scholar 50%, max 100.

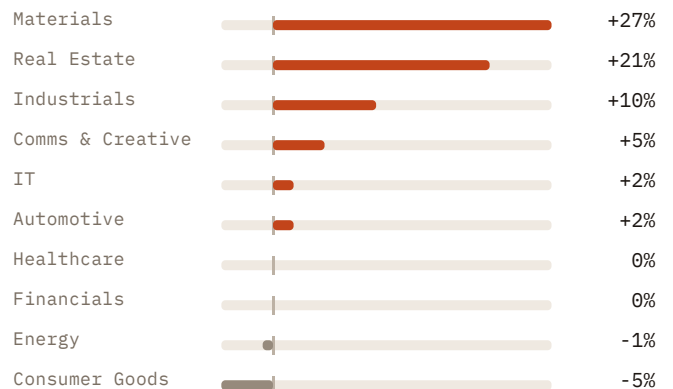
Signal by Industry

YOY GROWTH · 2024 → 2025

Academic Publication Growth

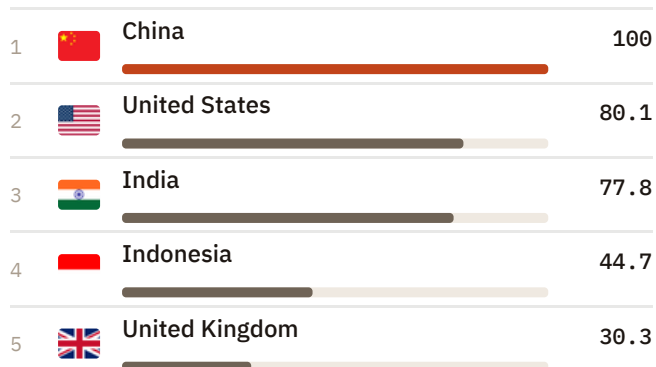


Patent Publication Growth



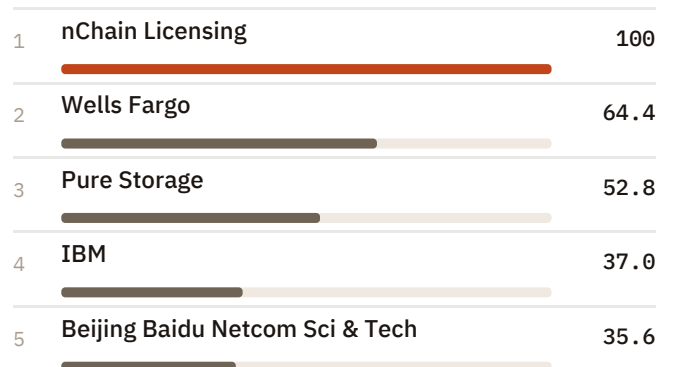
Academic Leaderboard: Most Active Countries

LEADER = 100



Patent Leaderboard: Most Active Companies

LEADER = 100



Lens data, May 2026, analyzed by the Chair's team. Indexed scores, leader = 100.

EXPLORE
FULL
DATA





EXPLORE ONLINE

Physical AI & Robotics

Physical AI and Robotics encompasses the design and deployment of physical systems that can perceive, reason, learn, and act in the real world with varying levels of intelligence and autonomy. This includes robotics, embodied AI, autonomous systems, and technologies combining intelligence with physical interaction.

THE CHAIR'S PERSPECTIVE

The most contested technology on the global map, and China's strongest card

Physical AI and robotics is the clearest theater of international competition in the matrix. It is the one technology where China rivals the United States head to head: on the unicorn map the US leads at 48.9%, but China follows close behind at 38.3%, a contest that exists in no other family. China tends to lead the research output while the West builds the companies. Robotics is where it does both, which makes this its strongest strategic card.

Robotics is patent-heavy for how few companies it spawns. It generates several times more patents per new startup than descriptive or generative AI, outdone only by quantum computing. The patent leaders show why: Qualcomm, Samsung, Nvidia, and Intel sit at the top. Incumbents already hold the pieces for a step-change.

Several AI-and-robotics ventures founded since 2025 have already reached unicorn status, split across geographies, a sign capital now reads the physical world as the next frontier. Yet professionals have not caught up: only 43% expect impact now or soon, a market still pricing robotics as tomorrow's problem.

READ MORE ARTICLES ON THIS TOPIC

SCAN TO OPEN ON SUBSTACK

Edge AI: When Big Tech Goes Small

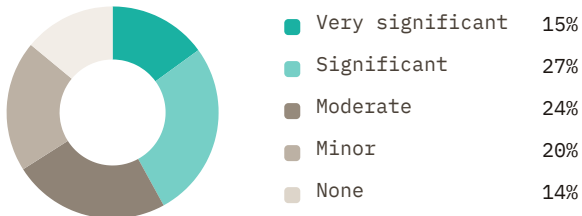


Professionals Survey

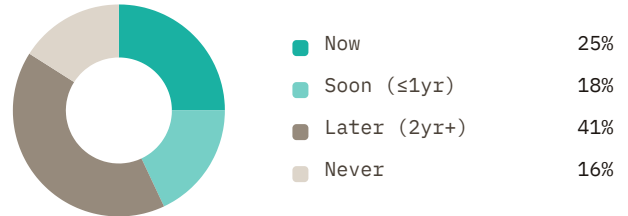
#3

Physical AI & Robotics is ranked #3 of 5 among professionals.

Strength of expected impact



Expected time horizon of impact



Which industries see the most impact



Industrials



Automotive & Transport



Materials

Most-voted use cases

#1 Automating Manual Industrial Processes MATERIALS

#2 Humanoid & Industrial Robots in Auto Manufacturing AUTOMOTIVE & TRANSPORT

#3 Humanoid Robots on Factory Assembly Lines INDUSTRIALS

Survey of the Chair, March 2026. 1,000 professionals across all sectors.

Investment Landscape

#4 OF 5

TECHNOLOGIES BY VOLUME OF UNICORNS

+13.9%

STARTUP CREATION TREND · 2024 → 2025

Top Country - Volume of Unicorns

1		United States	48.9%
2		China	38.3%
3		Germany	2.1%
4		Canada	2.1%
5		France	2.1%

Top Unicorns - Total Funding

1	Project Prometheus	\$6.2B
2	Nuro	\$2.3B
3	Zipline	\$1.9B
4	Figure	\$1.9B
5	Skild AI	\$1.8B

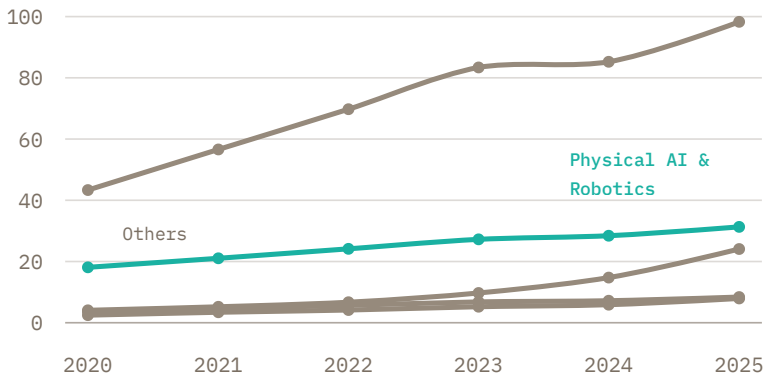
Crunchbase data, February 2026, analyzed by the Chair's team.

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DATA



Research & Patents

Publication Growth



Combined score, patents 50% + scholar 50%, max 100.

Physical AI & Robotics

vs 2020 +73.0%

vs 2024 +10.2%

2024 → 2025 GROWTH BY SOURCE

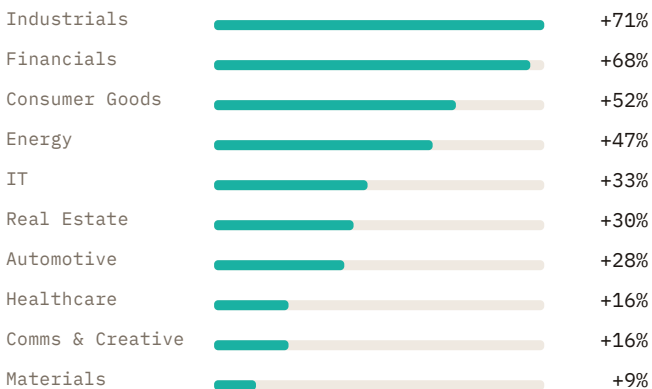
Patents +5.9%

Scholar +20.4%

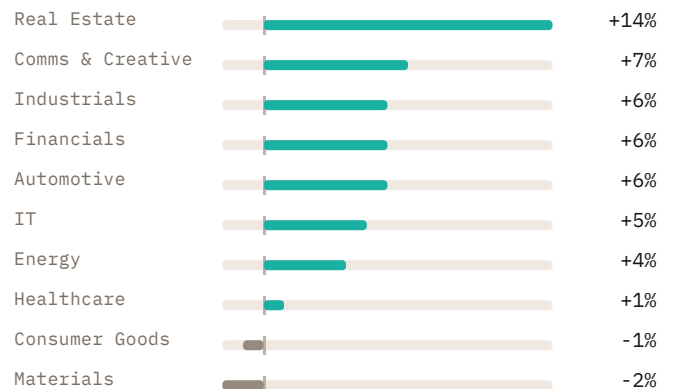
Signal by Industry

YOY GROWTH · 2024 → 2025

Academic Publication Growth

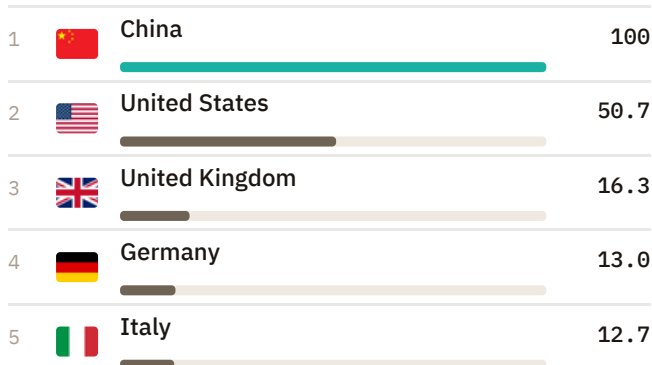


Patent Publication Growth



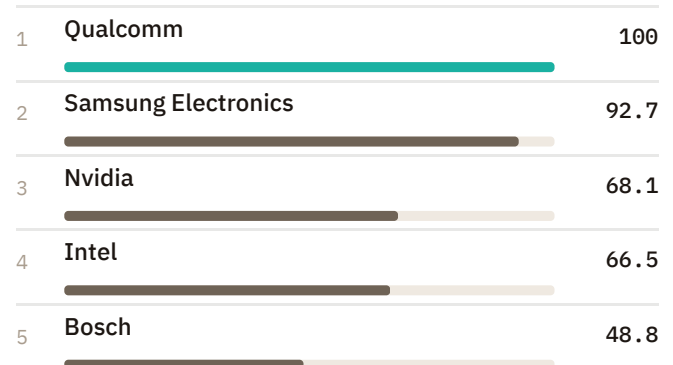
Academic Leaderboard: Most Active Countries

LEADER = 100



Patent Leaderboard: Most Active Companies

LEADER = 100



Lens data, May 2026, analyzed by the Chair's team. Indexed scores, leader = 100.

EXPLORE
FULL
DATA





EXPLORE ONLINE

Quantum Computing

Quantum Computing harnesses quantum mechanical phenomena like superposition and entanglement to perform computations. This technology enables exponentially faster calculations for specific problems, particularly in cryptography, material science, and complex system optimization.

THE CHAIR'S PERSPECTIVE

Dismissed as distant, compounding fast, and Europe's to play

Quantum is the matrix's belief-versus-data gap in its purest form. Professionals rank it last of the five technologies and treat it as a problem for another day: around nine in ten expect impact only in two years or more, or never, and more than half expect little or no impact at all. A technology deemed perennially "two years away."

Yet the clock is already running. Post-quantum standards exist, harvest-now-decrypt-later attacks are already being staged, and the gap between available protection and adoption is where the risk sits. The frontier is also moving closer: new company formation rose 88% in a year, second only to agentic and generative AI. From its low base, quantum is compounding faster than almost anything in the matrix.

This is where Europe is best placed: several of its countries rank among the world's research leaders, and European companies are already drawing real funding, even as capital has yet to catch up. That head start lasts only as long as the doubt does.

READ MORE ARTICLES ON THIS TOPIC

SCAN TO OPEN ON SUBSTACK

A New Path with Photonic Quantum Computing

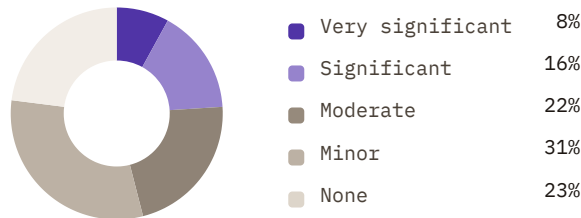


Professionals Survey

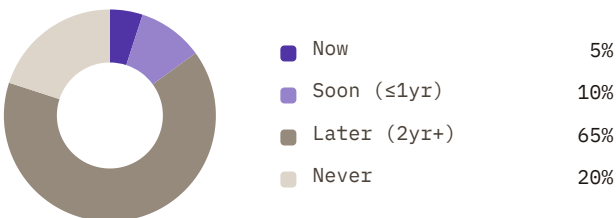
#5

Quantum Computing is ranked #5 of 5 among professionals.

Strength of expected impact



Expected time horizon of impact



Which industries see the most impact



Healthcare



Information Technology



Financial Services

Most-voted use cases

#1	Accelerating Drug Discovery via Molecular Simulation	HEALTHCARE
#2	Portfolio Optimization & Complex Financial Simulations	FINANCIAL SERVICES
#3	Simulating Quantum Chemistry	MATERIALS

Survey of the Chair, March 2026. 1,000 professionals across all sectors.

Investment Landscape

#5 OF 5

TECHNOLOGIES BY VOLUME OF UNICORNS

+88.2%

STARTUP CREATION TREND · 2024 → 2025
Second fastest growth of the five technologies.

Top Country - Volume of Unicorns

1		United States	42.9%
2		Finland	14.3%
3		Canada	14.3%
4		United Kingdom	14.3%
5		China	14.3%

Top Unicorns - Total Funding

1	PsiQuantum	\$2.3B
2	SandboxAQ	\$975M
3	Quantinuum	\$925M
4	IQM Quantum Computers	\$569M
5	Xanadu	\$269M

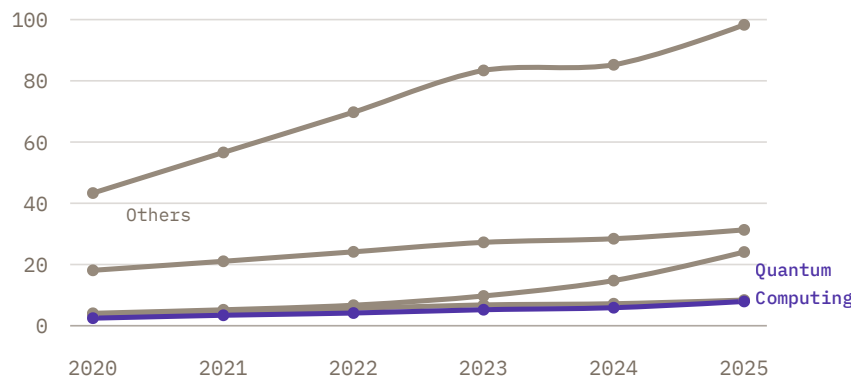
Crunchbase data, February 2026, analyzed by the Chair's team.

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Research & Patents

Publication Growth



Combined score, patents 50% + scholar 50%, max 100.

Quantum Computing

vs 2020 +221.1%
vs 2024 +34.6%

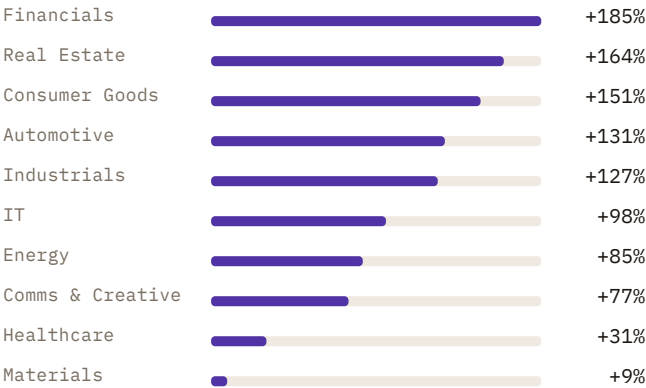
2024 → 2025 GROWTH BY SOURCE

Patents +28.8%
Scholar +51.0%

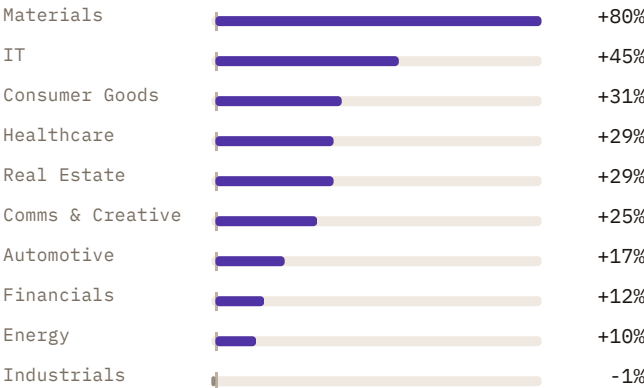
Signal by Industry

YOY GROWTH · 2024 → 2025

Academic Publication Growth

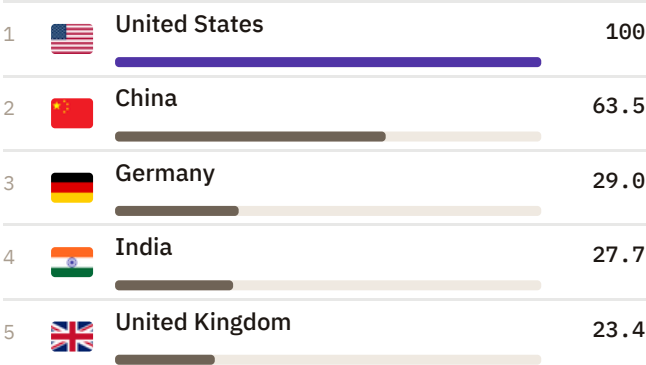


Patent Publication Growth



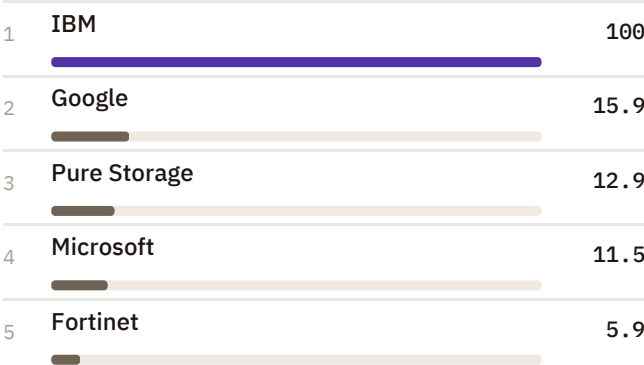
Academic Leaderboard: Most Active Countries

LEADER = 100



Patent Leaderboard: Most Active Companies

LEADER = 100



Lens data, May 2026, analyzed by the Chair's team. Indexed scores, leader = 100.

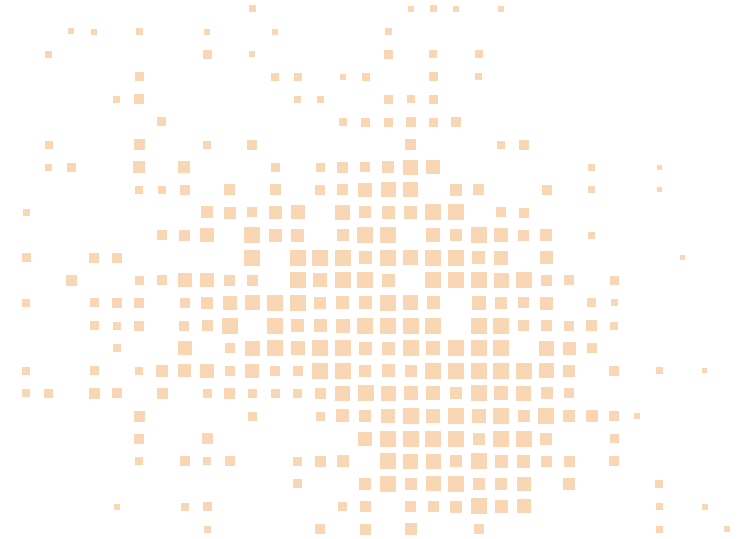
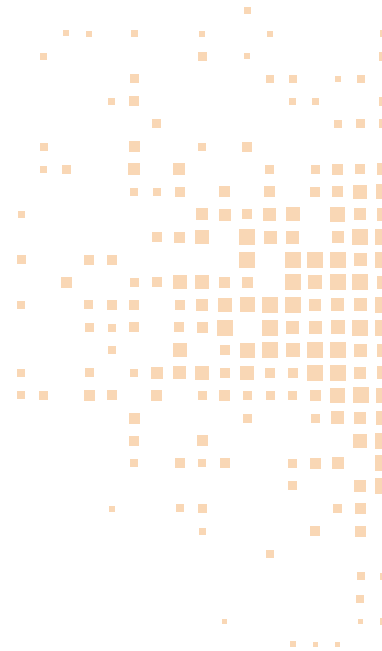
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DATA



Enter The Matrix



SCAN FOR THE
INTERACTIVE EXPERIENCE



The Industries

01 ⚡ Energy

03 ☀️ Industrials

05 ❤️ Healthcare

07 🧠 Information Technology

09 🏠 Real Estate

02 📦 Materials

04 🛒 Consumer Goods

06 🏦 Financial Services

08 💬 Communication & Creative Services

10 🚗 Automotive & Transport

Enter the Matrix

Access detailed insights for each industry on the interactive website

digitaldisruptionmatrix.com/explore/industry



No hype. No FOMO. Just the signal.

The Chair regularly publishes concise, carefully curated deep dives on frontier technologies: AI, quantum computing, robotics, blockchain and beyond. Clear, neutral context, trade-offs and frameworks for leaders who need to understand digital disruption without dedicating their entire week to research.

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BLOCKCHAIN

01 Who Gets to Print the Dollar?

Stablecoins promised to democratize money. What they are really doing is forcing a reckoning over who controls it.



AI & ENERGY

02 AI's Energy Problem Was Here Before the War. It Will Stay After.

The conflict in Iran forced a structural constraint into the open. But the math was already broken.



EDGE AI

03 Edge AI: When Big Tech Goes Small

From cloud-bound to pocket-sized: the new AI infrastructure.



QUANTUM COMPUTING

04 A New Path with Photonic Quantum Computing

Let there be light particles: what if the quantum breakthrough isn't in electrons, but in light itself?



AGI RESEARCH

05 Should AI Learn to Dream to Achieve AGI?

From LLMs to World Models, the race to go beyond language.



AI SEARCH

06 The Age of Generative Answers

GEO, AAO, AEO... How AI is reshaping online search and what business leaders should be doing right now.



COMPUTING

07 Analog Computing: Are the Billions Invested in GPUs Going to Waste?

A 2,000-year-old technology could save us from the impending AI bubble pop.



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Where could the Matrix take you?

01 EXPLORE YOUR INDUSTRY

Get a tailored cut of the Matrix data for your sector and see how your industry compares across the five technologies.

02 GO DEEPER INTO THE FINDINGS

Ask us about the data, methodology or findings behind the report and explore the signals that matter most to you.

03 BRING THE MATRIX TO YOUR TEAM

We can provide a presentation or tailored briefing to help your team understand the implications of disruptive technologies for your business.

04 WORK WITH US

From research collaborations to partnerships and sponsorships, we are open to exploring new ways to extend the research.

CONTACTS

 digitaldisruption@essec.edu

 [Chaire Digital Disruption ESSEC](#)

SINGAPORE

5 Nepal Park, 139408 Singapore

FRANCE

3 Avenue Bernard Hirsch, 95021 Cergy-Pontoise Cedex, France



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