LEADING THE WAY

Mark Coates *reveals why the UK and Ireland lead Europe in active AI adoption for physical security*

Verkada has released its 2026 State of Cloud Physical Security Report, uncovering that 49 percent of organisations in the UK and Ireland are actively using AI in their physical security systems – the highest level among the five European countries surveyed. An additional 27 percent report they are piloting or testing the technology, suggesting AI has already moved beyond experimentation for many organisations. Expectations for the technology are also high. 86 percent of UK and Ireland respondents believe AI will move physical security from mainly reactive to proactive within the next three years.



Yet adoption is moving faster than some of the structures needed to manage it. Only 37 percent have a comprehensive AI governance policy covering physical security, while 40 percent have general AI guidelines that are not specific to physical security. A further 16 percent are still developing their governance framework. The gap is similar when it comes to proving AI's value. Just 34 percent have formal metrics and quantified ROI for AI in physical security, while 46 percent track some metrics informally. 15 percent have not attempted to measure ROI at all.

Among UK and Ireland organisations already using or piloting AI, the most widely deployed capabilities include AI-verified alarm monitoring (52 percent), real-time motion, loitering or line-crossing alerts (47 percent), AI-generated incident reports (44 percent), facial recognition (43 percent) and AI-powered proactive deterrence (automated voice warnings) (43 percent).

Organisations are also looking to AI embedded within security infrastructure to deliver practical operational benefits. 58 percent say AI has delivered, or is expected to deliver, faster incident investigations, while 56 percent point to improved real-time threat detection. Other expected or experienced benefits include proactive crime prevention (40 percent), fewer false alarms (39 percent) and lower overall security operating costs (36 percent).

AI is also changing security roles rather than simply eliminating them. Whilst 17 percent report no impact on staffing, 19 percent of respondents say headcount has remained the same, but roles have shifted towards more analysis and less manual review, and 22 percent say the same number of people have become more effective. 17 percent report increasing headcount to manage AI systems, compared with 19 percent that have reduced headcount through AI efficiencies.

As organisations increase their use of AI, regulation has become a significant factor in technology decisions. 82 percent of UK and Ireland respondents say government regulation around AI has a significant or moderate influence on physical security purchasing decisions.

Those concerns are already translating into decisions about individual AI capabilities. Some 42 percent have restricted or avoided facial recognition because of regulatory concerns, 41 percent have done so for real-time biometric identification and 30 percent for automated decision-making without human review. Only 21 percent say regulation has not restricted their AI adoption.

Vendor transparency is becoming an important purchasing criterion. 97 percent say transparency about how a physical security vendor's AI models work is extremely important, with 49 percent reporting that they treat it as a purchasing requirement. Similarly, 94 percent say compliance with relevant international regulations and standards is extremely or very important when evaluating physical security vendors, with more than half (52 percent) describing it as a hard requirement.

The research also points to cloud infrastructure becoming the foundation for the next phase of physical security. In the UK and Ireland, 22 percent of organisations now operate fully cloud-managed physical security infrastructure, while 70 percent use a mixture of cloud-managed and on-premise systems. Only 8 percent remain fully on-premise.

Among UK and Ireland organisations that are not yet fully cloud-managed, 92 percent are planning or already undertaking a partial or full transition to cloud-managed physical security. Confidence in the direction of travel is high. Nine in ten (90 percent) UK and Ireland respondents agree that the future of physical security is cloud-based, while 94 percent say cloud makes it easier to manage security systems across multiple sites.

Investment is following. 77 percent expect their physical security budgets to increase over the next 12 months, including 23 percent expecting increases of at least 20 percent. When asked to choose their single top investment priority, cloud storage and infrastructure ranks first in the UK and Ireland at 32 percent, followed by cybersecurity at 30 percent and AI analytics and video intelligence at 22 percent.

AI in physical security is no longer a future consideration for organisations in the UK and Ireland. Nearly half are already actively using it, and businesses are seeing the potential to detect threats faster, accelerate investigations and make security teams more effective. What stands out in the data – and too, reflected in conversations with organizations across the UK and Ireland – is that AI embedded within security infrastructure is now also delivering practical operational benefits. ●

Mark Coates IS Vice President of EMEA at Verkada.

Among UK and Ireland organisations using or piloting AI, the most widely deployed capabilities include facial recognition (43 percent)

Picture credit: AdobeStock