

Global AI Diffusion Q1 2026 Trends and Insights

This report analyzes AI diffusion across 147 economies using three time points: H1 2025, H2 2025, and Q1 2026.

The current leader is United Arab Emirates at 70.1%. The fastest total gainer is South Korea, adding +11.2 pp from H1 2025 to Q1 2026.

The strongest acceleration is seen in Jamaica, where recent growth improved by +2.0 pp compared with the prior period.

The key question explored here: is AI diffusion becoming globally democratized, or are the early leaders pulling further ahead?

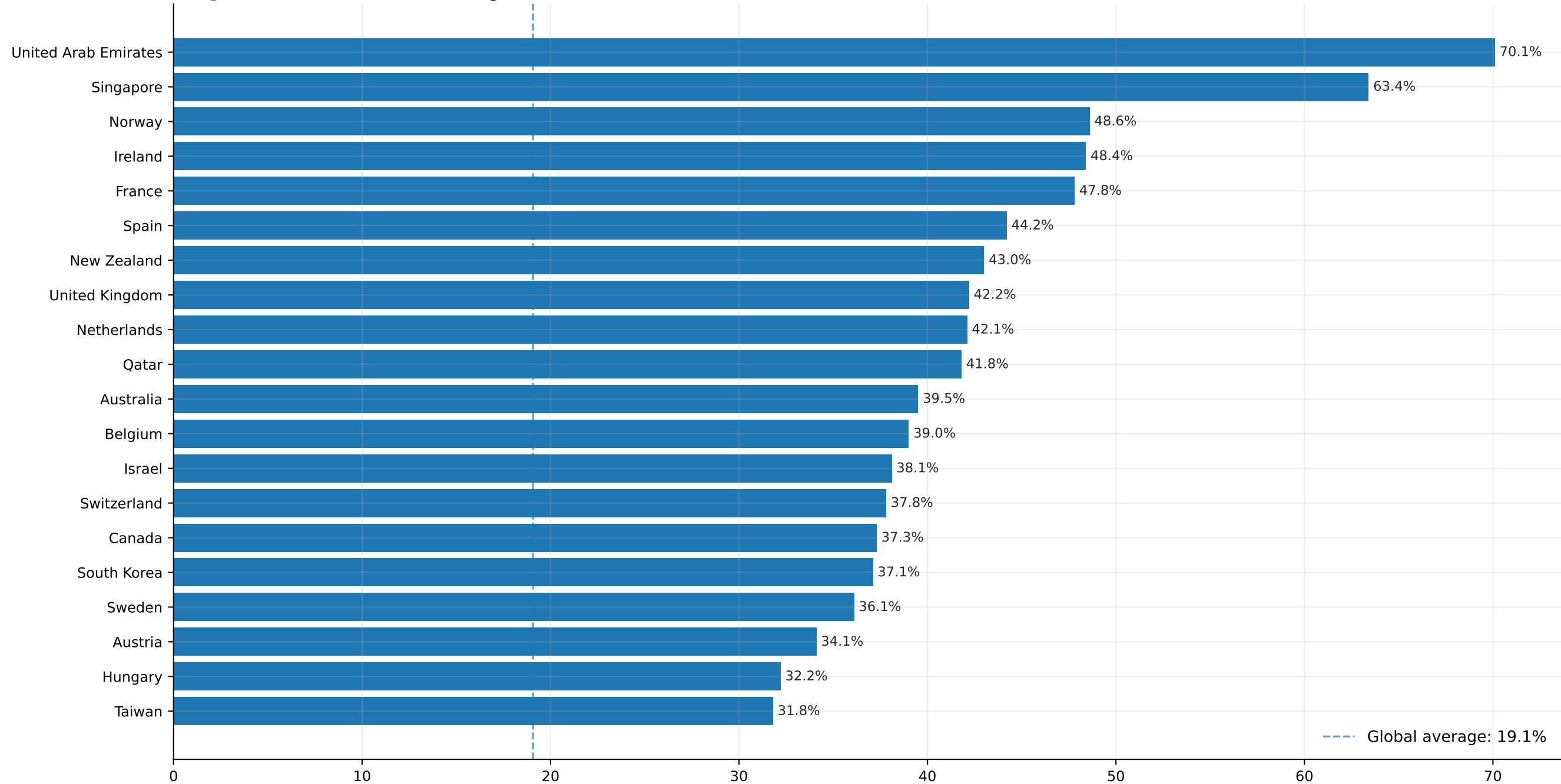
What You Need to Know

Global average AI diffusion in Q1 2026 is 19.1%, while the median economy is at 14.8%. The distance between the mean and median helps indicate whether the distribution is being pulled upward by a smaller set of leaders.

Average total growth from H1 2025 to Q1 2026 is +2.8 pp. The median growth is +2.2 pp, which is used in this report to classify countries into flywheel, mature, catch-up, and laggard groups.

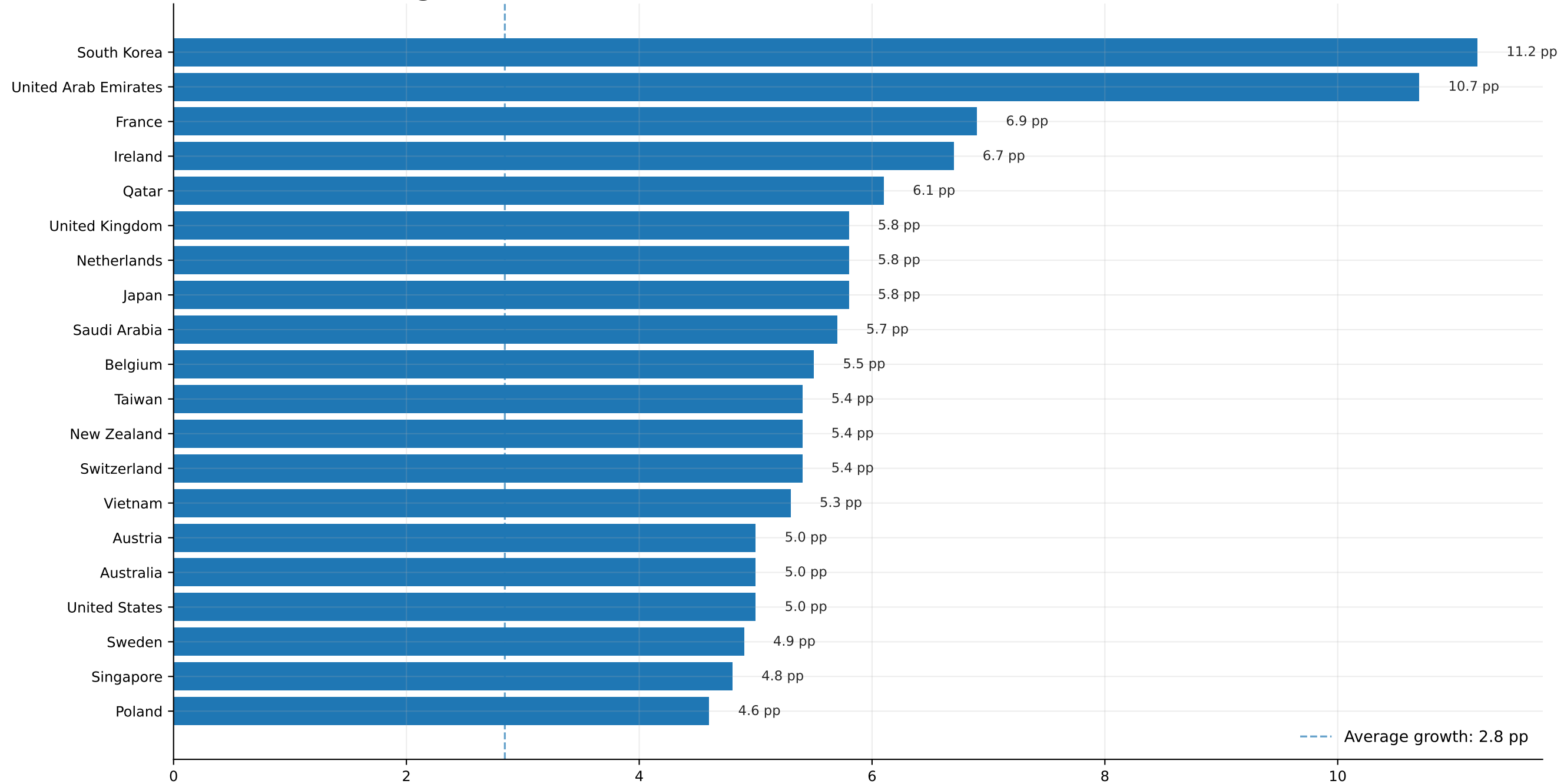
The most analytically useful views are not only the country leaderboard, but also growth momentum, acceleration, regional medians, rank movement, and convergence versus divergence.

Top 20 Economies by Q1 2026 AI Diffusion



--- Global average: 19.1%

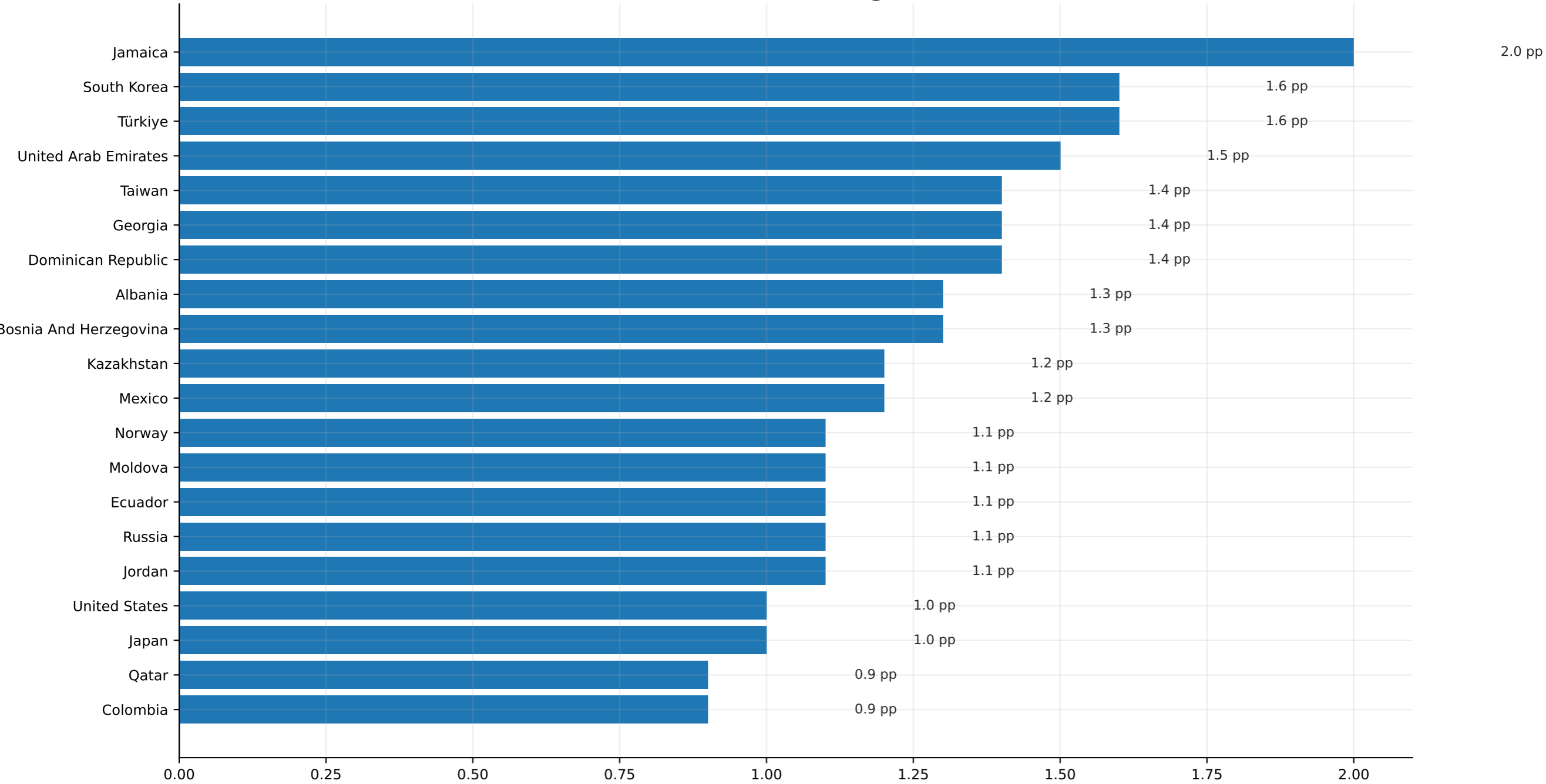
Fastest-Growing AI Diffusion Economies



Total Growth, H1 2025 to Q1 2026

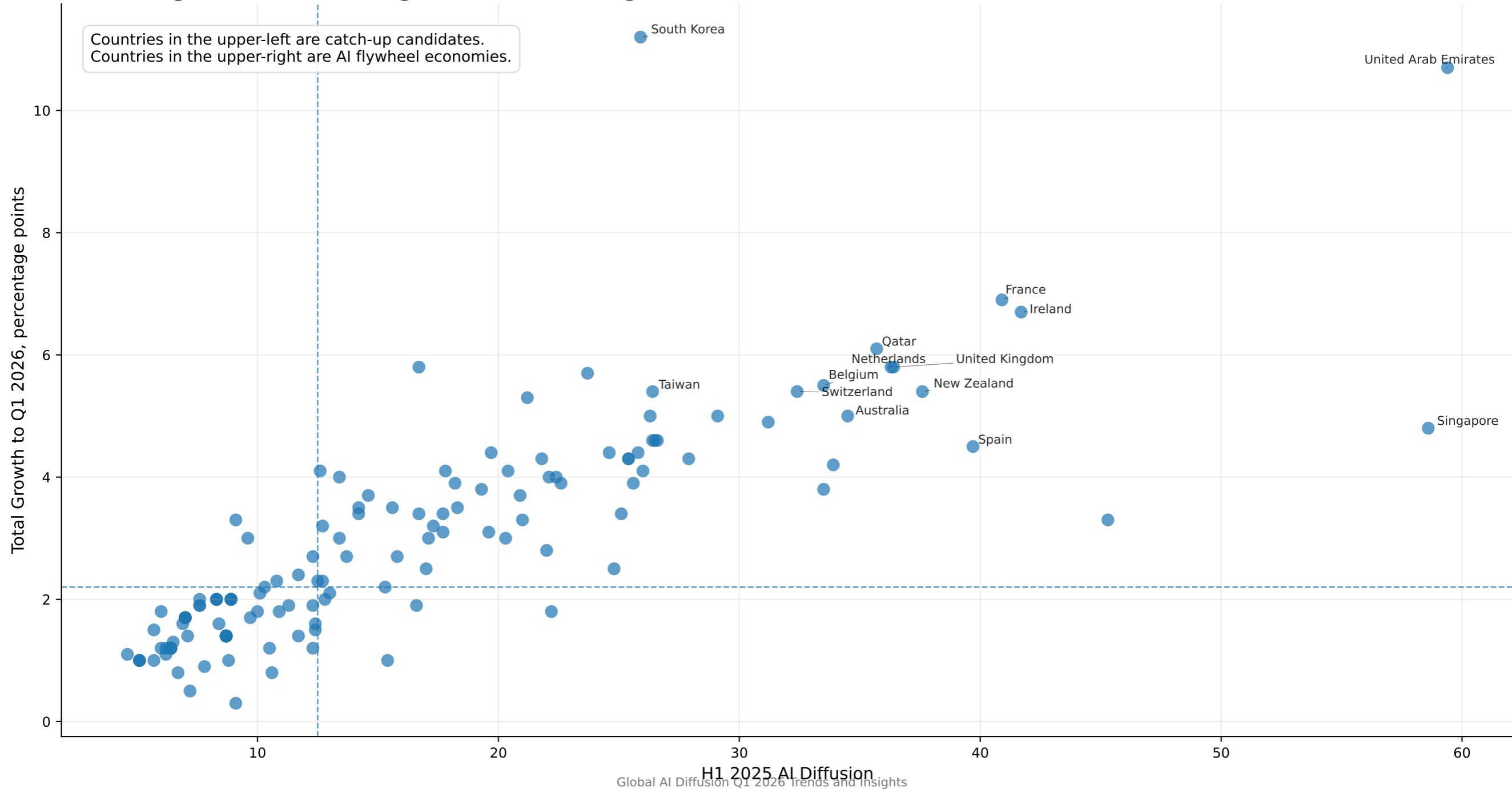
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Countries Where AI Diffusion Is Accelerating Fastest

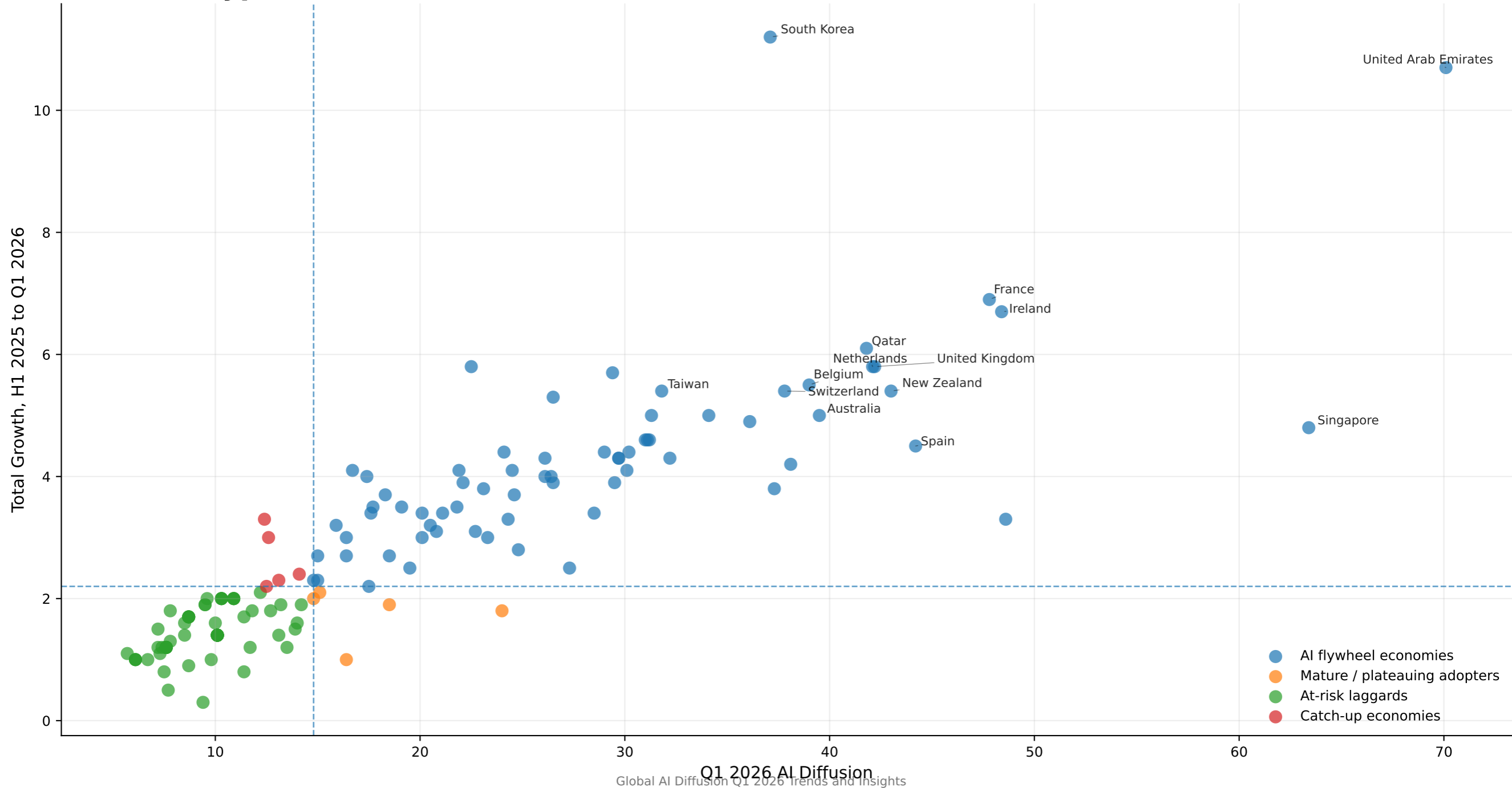


Acceleration = Recent Growth - Prior Growth

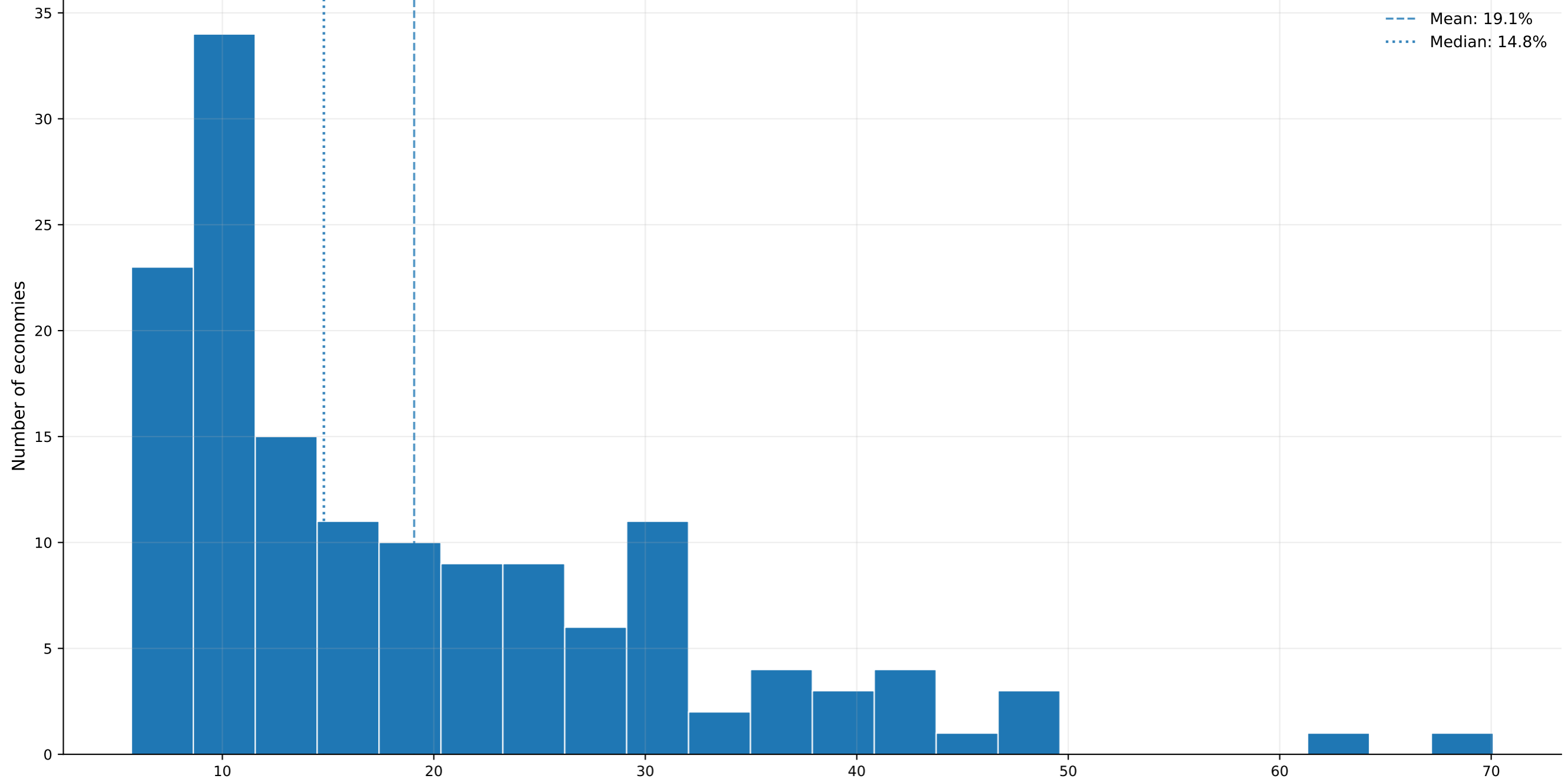
Convergence or Divergence? Starting Position vs Growth



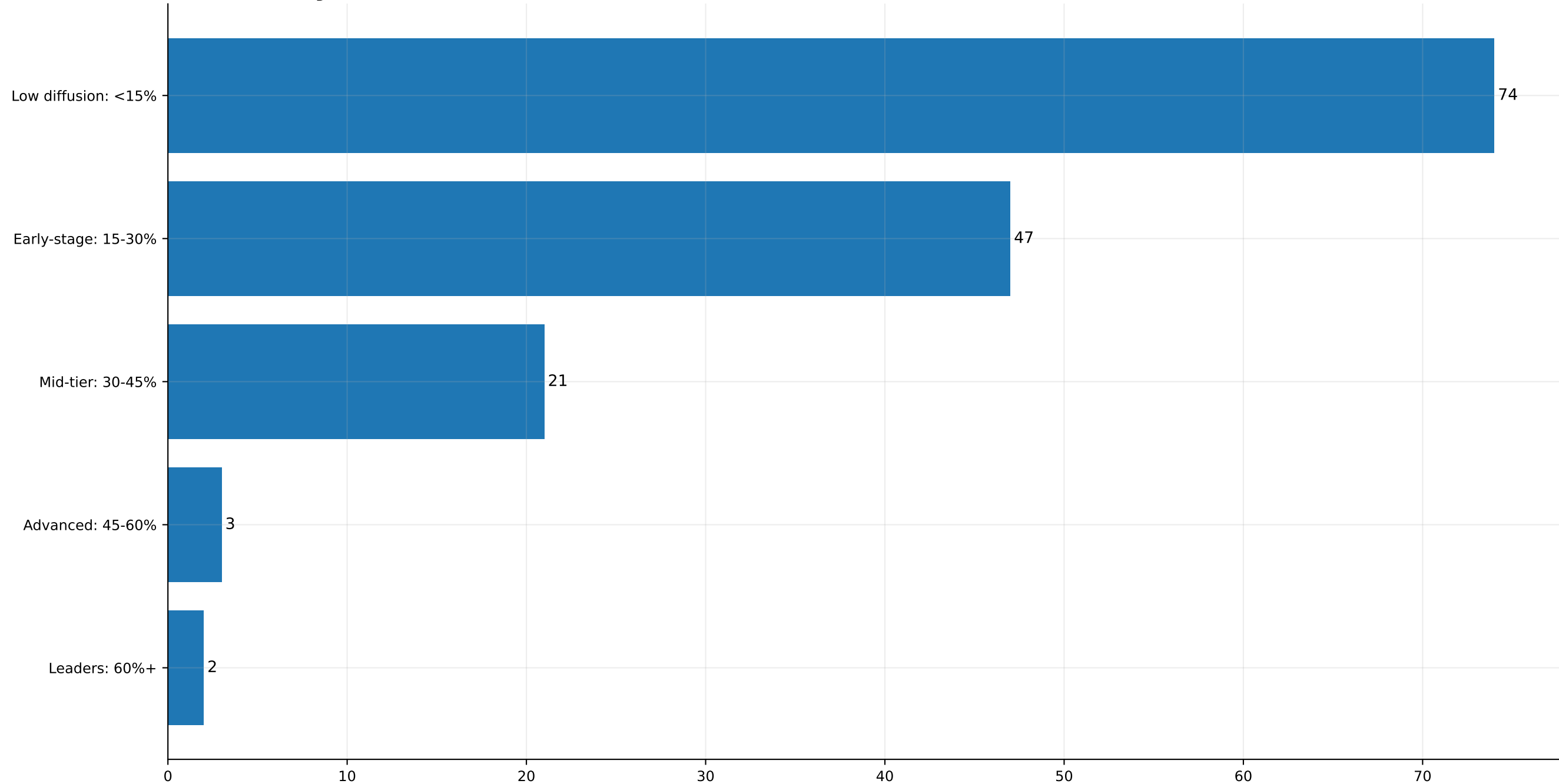
The Four Types of AI Diffusion Economies



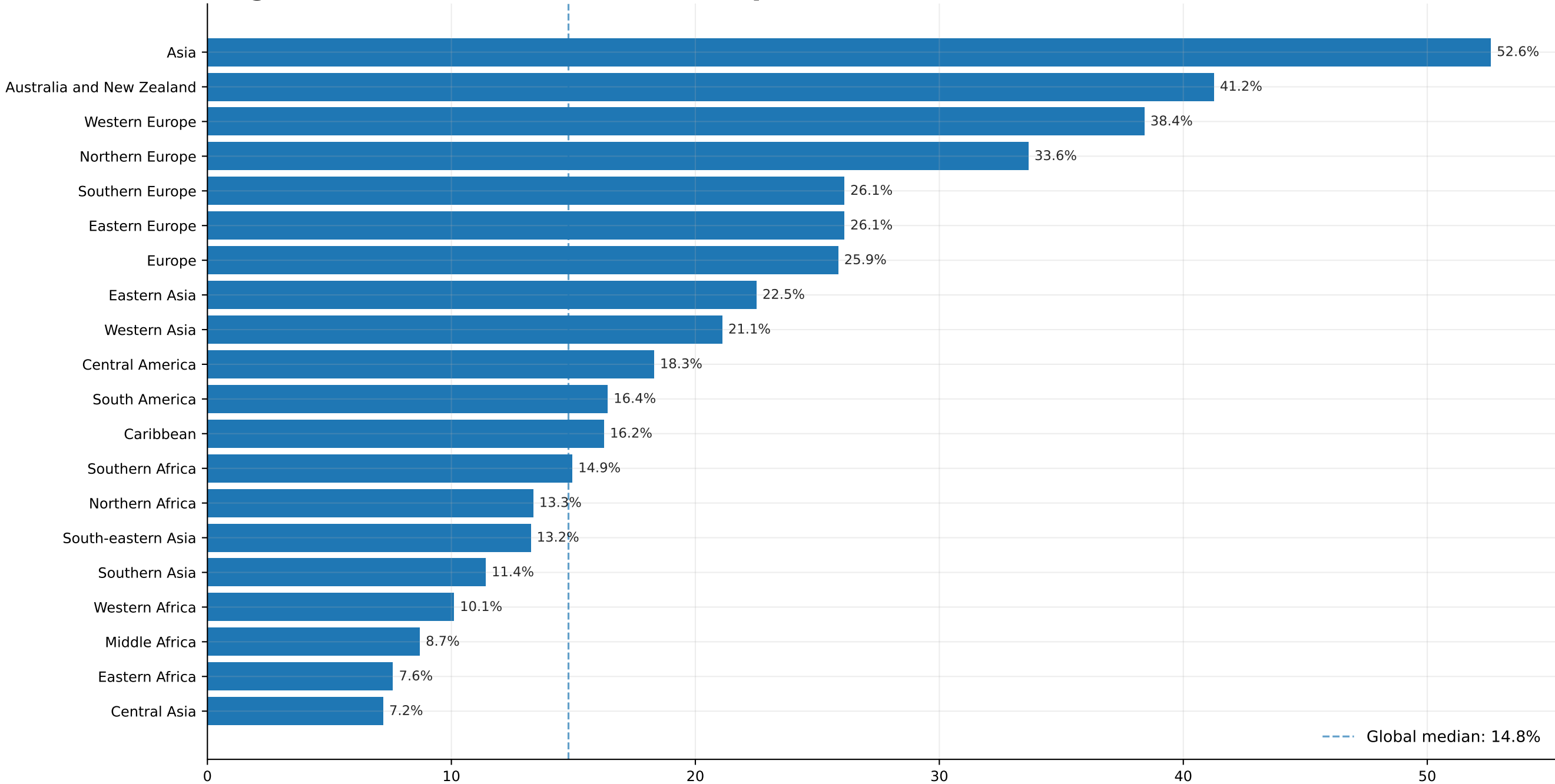
Distribution of AI Diffusion Across Economies



How Many Economies Are in Each AI Diffusion Tier?



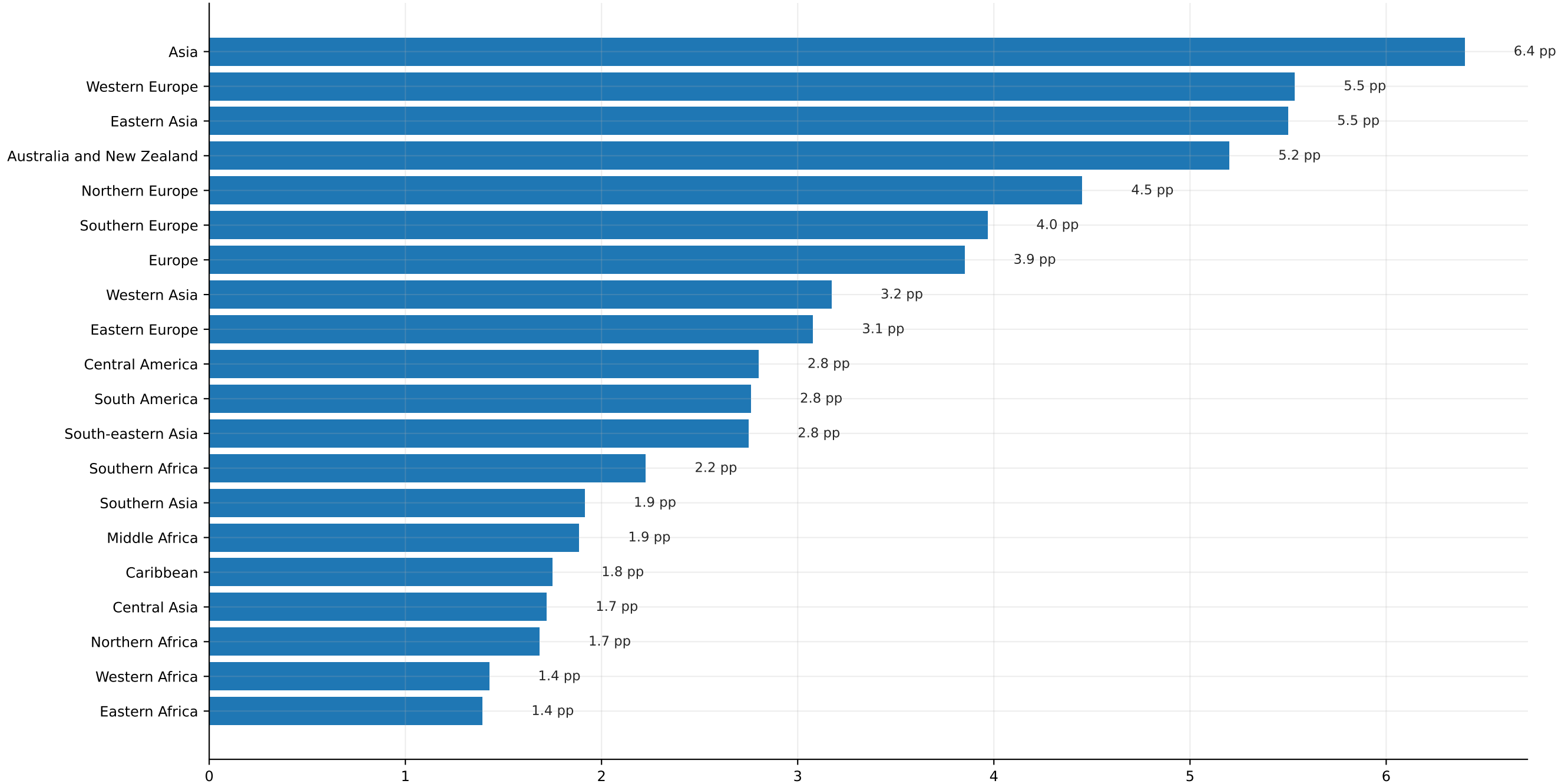
Regional AI Diffusion: Median Adoption



--- Global median: 14.8%

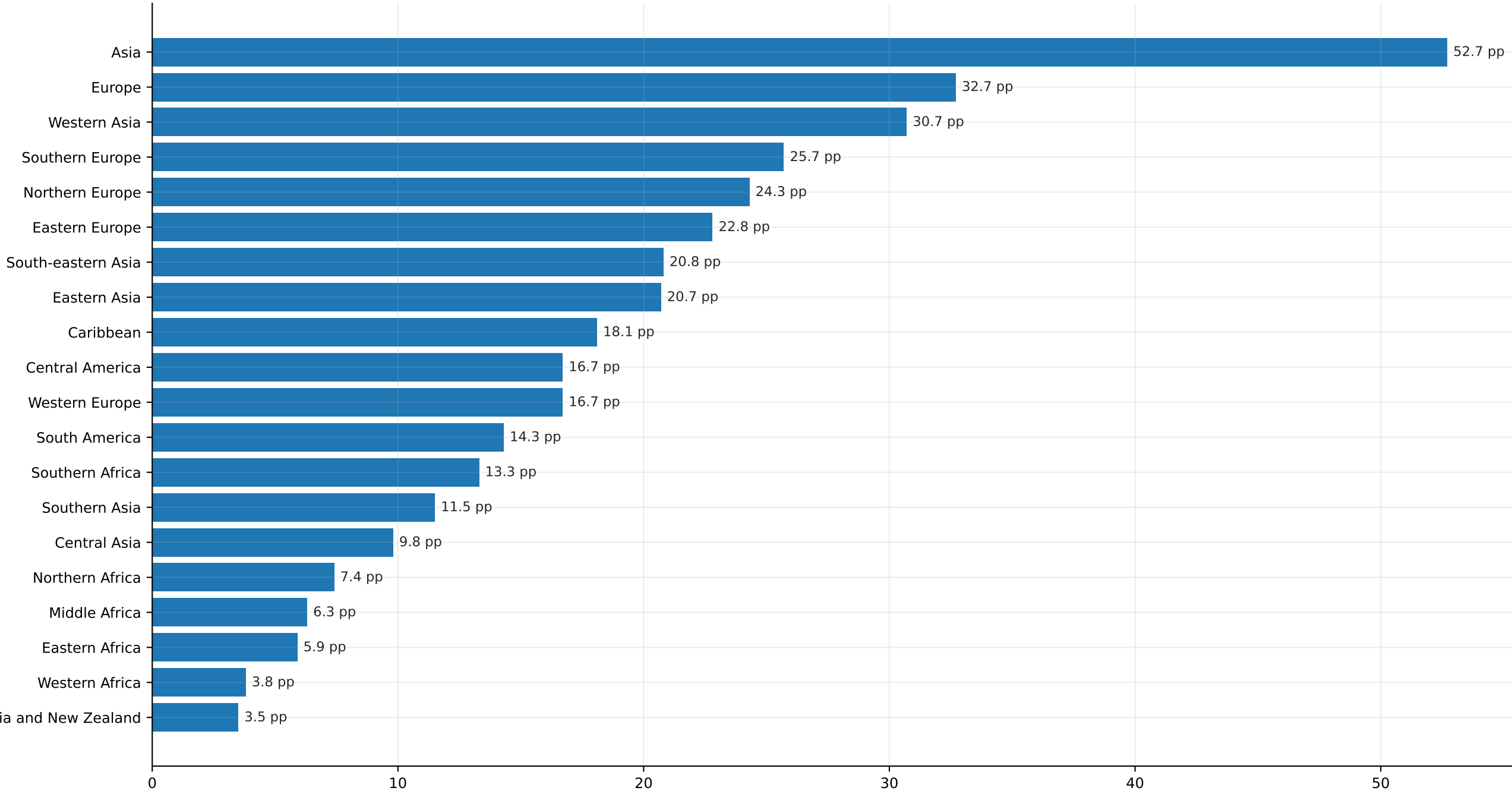
Regional Median Q1 2026 AI Diffusion

Regional AI Diffusion Momentum



Average Total Growth, H1 2025 to Q1 2026

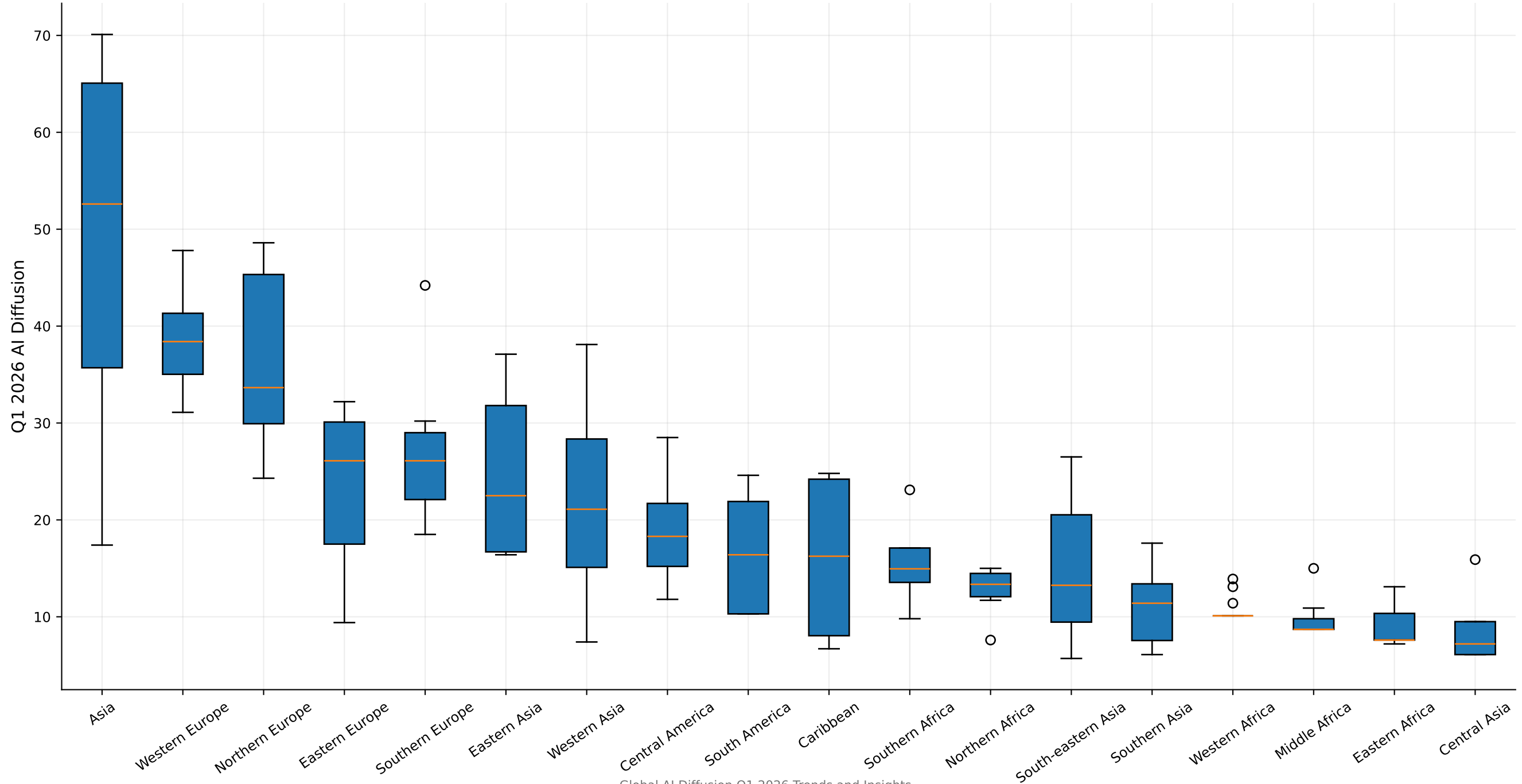
Which Regions Are Most Unequal Internally?



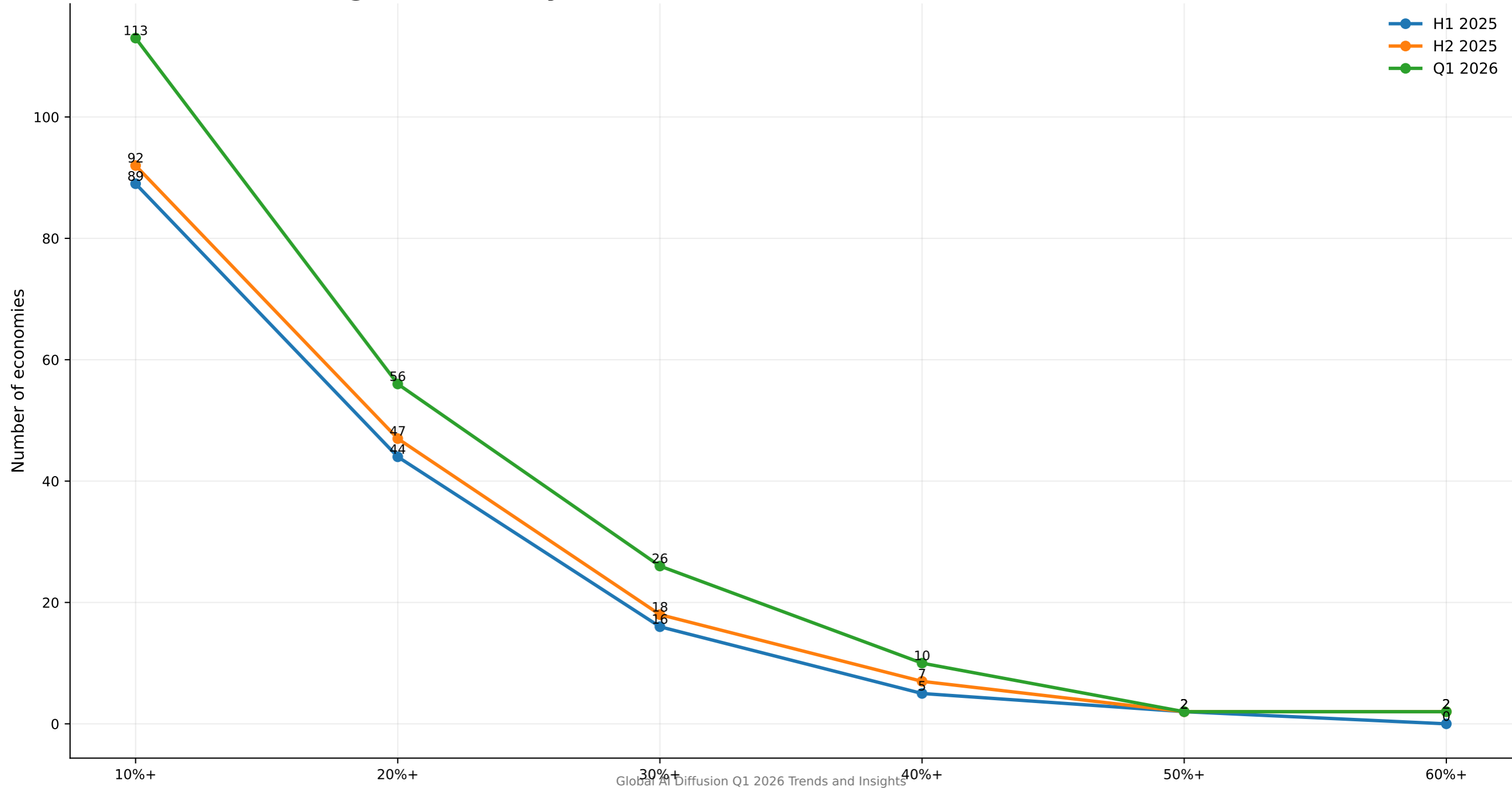
Regional Spread: Max Q1 Diffusion - Min Q1 Diffusion

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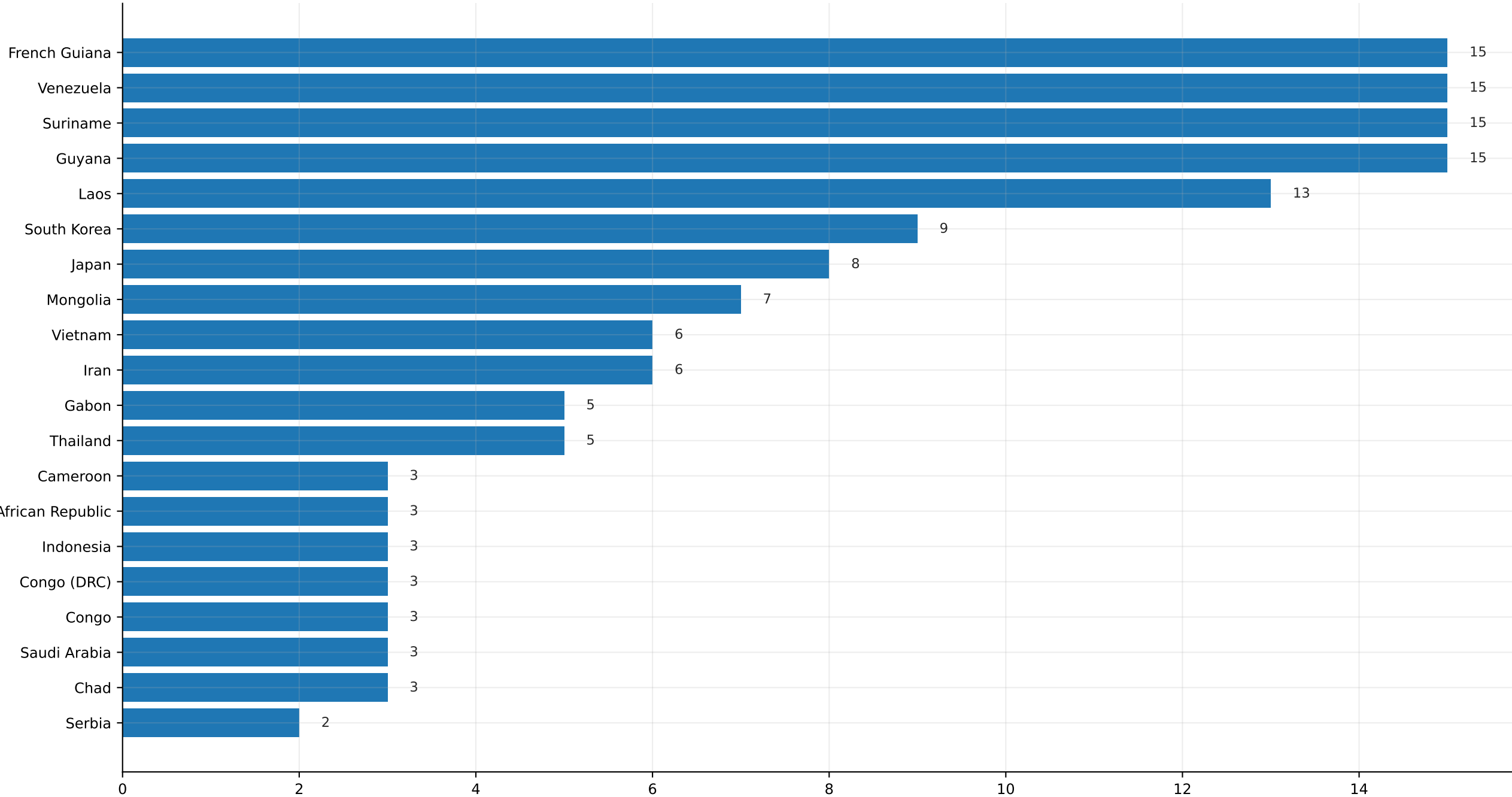
Regional Distribution: Breadth vs Outliers



Threshold Crossings: How Many Economies Reached Each Diffusion Level?

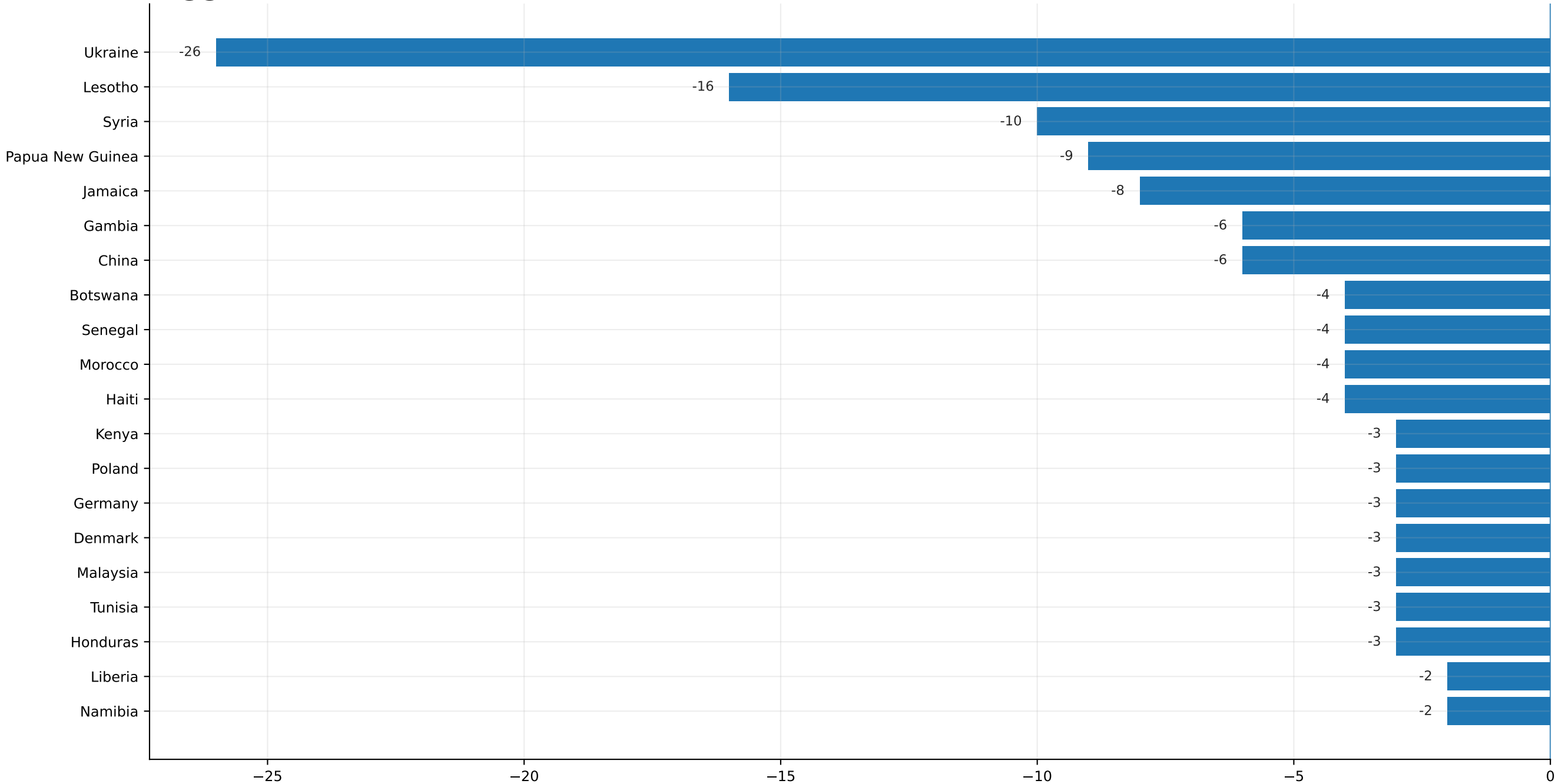


Biggest Rank Climbers



Rank improvement, H1 2025 to Q1 2026

Biggest Rank Decliners



Rank change, H1 2025 to Q1 2026

Top 25 Economies by Q1 2026 AI Diffusion

Rank change is positive when a country moved up the leaderboard.

Q1 Rank	Economy	Region	Q1 2026 AI Diffusion	Total Growth pp	Acceleration pp	Rank Change H1 to Q1	Quadrant
1	United Arab Emirates	Asia	70.1%	+10.7 pp	+1.5 pp	+0	AI flywheel economies
2	Singapore	Asia	63.4%	+4.8 pp	+0.2 pp	+0	AI flywheel economies
3	Norway	Northern Europe	48.6%	+3.3 pp	+1.1 pp	+0	AI flywheel economies
4	Ireland	Northern Europe	48.4%	+6.7 pp	+0.9 pp	+0	AI flywheel economies
5	France	Western Europe	47.8%	+6.9 pp	+0.7 pp	+0	AI flywheel economies
6	Spain	Southern Europe	44.2%	+4.5 pp	+0.3 pp	+0	AI flywheel economies
7	New Zealand	Australia and New Zealand	43.0%	+5.4 pp	-0.4 pp	+0	AI flywheel economies
8	United Kingdom	Europe	42.2%	+5.8 pp	+0.8 pp	+0	AI flywheel economies
9	Netherlands	Western Europe	42.1%	+5.8 pp	+0.6 pp	+0	AI flywheel economies
10	Qatar	Asia	41.8%	+6.1 pp	+0.9 pp	+0	AI flywheel economies
11	Australia	Australia and New Zealand	39.5%	+5.0 pp	+0.2 pp	+0	AI flywheel economies
12	Belgium	Western Europe	39.0%	+5.5 pp	+0.5 pp	+1	AI flywheel economies
13	Israel	Western Asia	38.1%	+4.2 pp	-0.2 pp	-1	AI flywheel economies
14	Switzerland	Western Europe	37.8%	+5.4 pp	+0.6 pp	+1	AI flywheel economies
15	Canada	Northern America	37.3%	+3.8 pp	+0.8 pp	-2	AI flywheel economies
16	South Korea	Eastern Asia	37.1%	+11.2 pp	+1.6 pp	+9	AI flywheel economies
17	Sweden	Northern Europe	36.1%	+4.9 pp	+0.7 pp	-1	AI flywheel economies
18	Austria	Western Europe	34.1%	+5.0 pp	+0.4 pp	-1	AI flywheel economies
19	Hungary	Eastern Europe	32.2%	+4.3 pp	+0.5 pp	-1	AI flywheel economies
20	Taiwan	Eastern Asia	31.8%	+5.4 pp	+1.4 pp	+1	AI flywheel economies
21	United States	Americas	31.3%	+5.0 pp	+1.0 pp	+2	AI flywheel economies
22	Denmark	Northern Europe	31.2%	+4.6 pp	+0.4 pp	-3	AI flywheel economies
23	Germany	Western Europe	31.1%	+4.6 pp	+0.4 pp	-3	AI flywheel economies
24	Poland	Eastern Europe	31.0%	+4.6 pp	+0.4 pp	-3	AI flywheel economies
25	Italy	Southern Europe	30.2%	+4.4 pp	+0.4 pp	+1	AI flywheel economies

Top 25 Fastest-Growing Economies

Growth is measured from H1 2025 to Q1 2026.

Economy	Region	H1 2025 AI Diffusion	Q1 2026 AI Diffusion	Total Growth pp	Relative Growth %	Acceleration pp	Quadrant
South Korea	Eastern Asia	25.9%	37.1%	+11.2 pp	43.2%	+1.6 pp	AI flywheel economies
United Arab Emirates	Asia	59.4%	70.1%	+10.7 pp	18.0%	+1.5 pp	AI flywheel economies
France	Western Europe	40.9%	47.8%	+6.9 pp	16.9%	+0.7 pp	AI flywheel economies
Ireland	Northern Europe	41.7%	48.4%	+6.7 pp	16.1%	+0.9 pp	AI flywheel economies
Qatar	Asia	35.7%	41.8%	+6.1 pp	17.1%	+0.9 pp	AI flywheel economies
United Kingdom	Europe	36.4%	42.2%	+5.8 pp	15.9%	+0.8 pp	AI flywheel economies
Netherlands	Western Europe	36.3%	42.1%	+5.8 pp	16.0%	+0.6 pp	AI flywheel economies
Japan	Eastern Asia	16.7%	22.5%	+5.8 pp	34.7%	+1.0 pp	AI flywheel economies
Saudi Arabia	Western Asia	23.7%	29.4%	+5.7 pp	24.1%	+0.7 pp	AI flywheel economies
Belgium	Western Europe	33.5%	39.0%	+5.5 pp	16.4%	+0.5 pp	AI flywheel economies
Taiwan	Eastern Asia	26.4%	31.8%	+5.4 pp	20.5%	+1.4 pp	AI flywheel economies
New Zealand	Australia and New Zealand	37.6%	43.0%	+5.4 pp	14.4%	-0.4 pp	AI flywheel economies
Switzerland	Western Europe	32.4%	37.8%	+5.4 pp	16.7%	+0.6 pp	AI flywheel economies
Vietnam	South-eastern Asia	21.2%	26.5%	+5.3 pp	25.0%	+0.7 pp	AI flywheel economies
Austria	Western Europe	29.1%	34.1%	+5.0 pp	17.2%	+0.4 pp	AI flywheel economies
United States	Americas	26.3%	31.3%	+5.0 pp	19.0%	+1.0 pp	AI flywheel economies
Australia	Australia and New Zealand	34.5%	39.5%	+5.0 pp	14.5%	+0.2 pp	AI flywheel economies
Sweden	Northern Europe	31.2%	36.1%	+4.9 pp	15.7%	+0.7 pp	AI flywheel economies
Singapore	Asia	58.6%	63.4%	+4.8 pp	8.2%	+0.2 pp	AI flywheel economies
Germany	Western Europe	26.5%	31.1%	+4.6 pp	17.4%	+0.4 pp	AI flywheel economies
Poland	Eastern Europe	26.4%	31.0%	+4.6 pp	17.4%	+0.4 pp	AI flywheel economies
Denmark	Northern Europe	26.6%	31.2%	+4.6 pp	17.3%	+0.4 pp	AI flywheel economies
Spain	Southern Europe	39.7%	44.2%	+4.5 pp	11.3%	+0.3 pp	AI flywheel economies
Serbia	Southern Europe	19.7%	24.1%	+4.4 pp	22.3%	+0.8 pp	AI flywheel economies
Italy	Southern Europe	25.8%	30.2%	+4.4 pp	17.1%	+0.4 pp	AI flywheel economies

Regional Summary

Regions with too few countries should be interpreted carefully.

Region	Countries	Q1_Median	Q1_Mean	Total_Growth_Mean	Acceleration_Mean	Spread	Share Above Global Avg
Asia	4	52.6%	48.2%	+6.4 pp	+1.1 pp	+52.7 pp	75.0%
Australia and New Zealand	2	41.2%	41.2%	+5.2 pp	-0.1 pp	+3.5 pp	100.0%
Western Europe	6	38.4%	38.6%	+5.5 pp	+0.5 pp	+16.7 pp	100.0%
Northern America	1	37.3%	37.3%	+3.8 pp	+0.8 pp	0.0 pp	100.0%
Northern Europe	6	33.6%	36.4%	+4.5 pp	+0.7 pp	+24.3 pp	100.0%
Americas	1	31.3%	31.3%	+5.0 pp	+1.0 pp	0.0 pp	100.0%
Southern Europe	9	26.1%	26.8%	+4.0 pp	+0.7 pp	+25.7 pp	88.9%
Eastern Europe	9	26.1%	22.7%	+3.1 pp	+0.5 pp	+22.8 pp	55.6%
Europe	2	25.9%	25.9%	+3.9 pp	+1.0 pp	+32.7 pp	50.0%
Eastern Asia	5	22.5%	24.9%	+5.5 pp	+0.8 pp	+20.7 pp	60.0%
Western Asia	11	21.1%	21.6%	+3.2 pp	+0.6 pp	+30.7 pp	63.6%
Central America	7	18.3%	18.9%	+2.8 pp	+0.6 pp	+16.7 pp	42.9%
South America	13	16.4%	16.5%	+2.8 pp	+0.6 pp	+14.3 pp	46.2%
Caribbean	4	16.2%	16.0%	+1.8 pp	+1.0 pp	+18.1 pp	50.0%
Southern Africa	4	14.9%	15.7%	+2.2 pp	+0.3 pp	+13.3 pp	25.0%
Northern Africa	6	13.3%	12.6%	+1.7 pp	+0.4 pp	+7.4 pp	0.0%
South-eastern Asia	8	13.2%	14.8%	+2.8 pp	+0.4 pp	+20.8 pp	37.5%
Southern Asia	7	11.4%	11.0%	+1.9 pp	+0.4 pp	+11.5 pp	0.0%
Western Africa	15	10.1%	10.6%	+1.4 pp	+0.2 pp	+3.8 pp	0.0%
Middle Africa	7	8.7%	9.9%	+1.9 pp	+0.2 pp	+6.3 pp	0.0%
Melanesia	1	7.7%	7.7%	+0.5 pp	+0.3 pp	0.0 pp	0.0%
Eastern Africa	14	7.6%	8.8%	+1.4 pp	+0.4 pp	+5.9 pp	0.0%
Central Asia	5	7.2%	9.0%	+1.7 pp	+0.4 pp	+9.8 pp	0.0%

Methodology and Caveats

This analysis treats the input percentages as percentage-point diffusion values. Growth is therefore reported in percentage points, not percent, unless explicitly labeled as relative growth.

Regional and income-group analysis depends on country name matching. The script uses `country_converter` when installed. Countries that cannot be matched are labeled Unknown.

The data can identify patterns, leaders, laggards, acceleration, and possible convergence or divergence. It cannot by itself prove why a country is ahead or behind.

For deeper causal analysis, join this dataset with GDP per capita, internet penetration, cloud infrastructure availability, education, enterprise software adoption, AI policy indicators, and startup ecosystem measures.