AI Global Public Opinion Tracker at USC

Tracking shifts in public trust, use, and perceptions of AI

Wave 3 Findings, August 2025

UNIVERSITY OF
South Carolina

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College of Information and Communications

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WAVE 3 FINDINGS / SUMMER 2025

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12 Key Takeaways from the AI Global Public Opinion Tracker, Wave 3

1. **AI awareness is surging**. Nearly half of Americans now say they've heard "a lot" or "a great deal" about AI, up from just over a third last year. ChatGPT name recognition is near universal. Younger, better-educated men still lead adoption, but attitudes and direct experience with AI weigh more than demographics in shaping opinions.
2. **Communication use is rising fast**. AI use for creating communication content jumped from 35% to 42% in eight months, driven by idea generation and summarizing. This growth follows a sharp increase in perceived productivity: 80% of users now say AI tools make them more productive, up 20 points in a year!
3. **AI adoption is going mainstream**. Half of U.S. adults have used ChatGPT or similar tools for work or study, up from 43% in late 2024. A gender gap remains, men use AI more than women, but the difference is narrowing.
4. **ChatGPT holds the lead**. It's still the most used AI assistant (83% of AI users), with Google Gemini and Microsoft Copilot gaining ground. The launch of DeepSeek has not significantly shifted these trends.
5. **Trust in AI tools is high**. In its first-ever measurement, AI tool confidence ranked higher than political parties and media outlets. Similar patterns are emerging globally, according to ongoing UNESCO research. Trust is key: lack of it remains the top reason people avoid using ChatGPT.
6. **Public opinion is divided, and shifting**. Half see AI's overall impact as positive, but negative views are up (28%, from 22%), fueled by mis/disinformation fears and the sense that AI content is increasingly indistinguishable from human work.
7. **Job fears are evolving**. Worries about AI replacing jobs are easing slightly, while more people now expect transformation or creation instead. Direct experience with AI strongly shapes these views.
8. **Inequality fears remain high**. 57% believe AI will widen the gap between tech-skilled and non-tech workers.
9. **Views on regulation remain polarized**, with sharp divides over government intervention.
10. **Journalism inspires cautious optimism**. More people now believe AI can improve news quality, but skepticism is strong - especially among those who can't tell AI-generated from human-written stories.
11. **Mis/disinformation concerns persist**. 44% think AI will increase mis/disinformation, and only one-third believe it will reduce it. Linked to this, one in three say AI does more harm than good to democracy.
12. **Machine-like AI wins on trust**. Nearly half prefer AI that efficiently solves technical problems over AI designed to mimic human conversation & empathy.

AI awareness among the US public

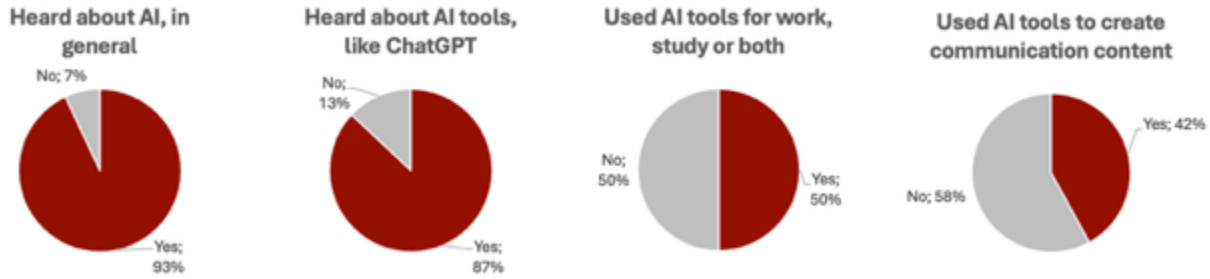


Figure 1. Public awareness and usage of AI tools measured across four variables

Half of Americans report using AI tools for work or study, to varying degrees, and this level of adoption has been reached remarkably quickly, far faster than with previous technologies. For instance, the internet took about five years and personal computers roughly three years to reach only 20% adoption.

How Americans *feel* about AI, and how much they've engaged with it, matters more than demographics. Digital engagement, familiarity with AI tools and underlying attitudes consistently shape both perceptions and behaviors. Positive attitudes toward AI drive adoption and optimism, especially when people see the technology as competent and useful in everyday tasks. That same optimism often tempers concerns about societal risks, including job losses or the spread of mis/disinformation.

Familiarity cuts both ways. Professionals in knowledge and creative fields, more exposed to automation, are especially alert to job displacement. Heavy digital news users and highly educated respondents are likewise quick to see AI as a driver of disinformation. In both cases, proximity sharpens risk perception. Trust, meanwhile, acts as a stabilizer. People with high confidence in the press show more optimism about AI in journalism, while trust in government softens fears of misinformation. Demographics still matter, but unevenly. Age is the clearest divider: young adults adopt and experiment readily, while older people remain cautious and skeptical of inevitability. Gender and education play a secondary role, with men and the highly educated tending toward earlier adoption and stronger views, whether hopeful or wary.

Overall, AI perceptions are not simply a reflection of demographic divides. **They are shaped by a blend of lived digital experience, professional exposure and worldview.** Optimists tend to embrace the tools and foresee benefits; skeptics, often those closest to the technology's disruptive edge, are more likely to predict risks. The balance between these camps will shape how Americans navigate AI's rapid integration into work, news, and public life.

Main implications of the AI Global Public Opinion Tracker, Wave 3

For schools of communication and journalism, these findings signal a shift in how future professionals must be trained. AI is no longer a niche tool, it's moving into the mainstream of content creation, news production and everyday communication. With nearly half of Americans now familiar with AI, and usage rapidly increasing, tomorrow's communicators will be expected to work fluently with these tools, both for efficiency and creative advantage.

However, rising adoption comes with complex challenges.

Mis/disinformation fears are growing, and a significant share of the public can no longer tell AI-generated from human-created content. For journalists, this means trust and verification skills will become even more central. Fact-checking, transparency about AI use, and audience education will be essential to maintain credibility.

The data also show that attitudes and hands-on experience with AI shape perceptions more than age, gender or education, signifying that researchers and students who actively experiment with AI will be better positioned to understand its strengths, limitations and societal impacts, skills that will set them apart in the job market.

Finally, the split between optimism and skepticism around AI in journalism highlights the need for critical literacy: future communicators must be both innovators and watchdogs, embracing AI's potential while guarding against its risks. The next generation must graduate ready to navigate and lead in this rapidly evolving media landscape.

About our initiative & future steps

The University of South Carolina Global Public Opinion Tracker is produced in partnership with UNESCO. The third wave continues to track and analyze public perceptions, adoption patterns and societal impacts of artificial intelligence, building on insights from previous editions. This new release comes at a moment when interest in AI has not only remained strong but has accelerated, as reflected in global and U.S. search trends.

Figure 2. Comparison of worldwide Google Trends search interest for major AI terms over the past five years

Google Trends data show a steady, sustained increase in searches for "artificial intelligence" and "ChatGPT" worldwide over the past five years, with particularly sharp growth since early 2023. ChatGPT, in particular, has emerged as the clear driver of public attention, surpassing "artificial intelligence" in search interest on several occasions and consistently outpacing other AI-related tools such as Gemini, Microsoft Copilot, and DeepSeek.

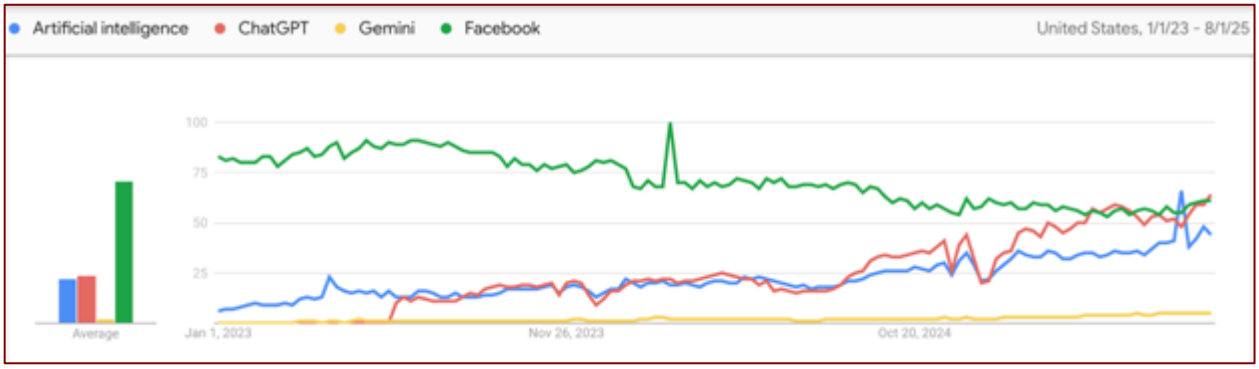


Figure 3. Google Trends data for the United States (2023-2025) comparing search interest in "Facebook", "ChatGPT", "Gemini" and "Artificial intelligence.

In the U.S., the trends reveal an even more striking shift: in 2025, for the first time in the past five years, public interest in ChatGPT surpassed interest in Facebook. This milestone underlines the pace and scale of change in the digital landscape, signaling how generative AI platforms are becoming part of everyday discourse. These dynamics frame the importance of the AI Global Public Opinion Tracker's third wave: understanding how growing awareness and engagement with AI tools are influencing trust, perceived risks and expectations. With AI moving from a niche technological innovation to a mainstream topic of social, political and economic relevance, the need for longitudinal data and comparative analysis has never been greater. This wave provides an updated snapshot of a fast-evolving ecosystem - one in which AI is no longer just a tool, but a central actor in shaping communication and information flows.

Profession segmentation: why it matters for our analysis?

Understanding how different professions engage with and perceive AI is crucial for interpreting the survey results. Work environments shape both the opportunities to use AI and the fears or hopes surrounding its impact. By segmenting[1] people into five occupational groups, we can see how AI adoption habits and risk perceptions vary between sectors that rely on creativity, human interaction, cognitive expertise or manual work.

The five resulting "super-groups" capture AI's different roles across the economy - from the generative potential in creative work, to the assistive role in care professions, to process automation in manual and service jobs. This structure balances detail with clarity, allowing us to track where AI is embraced, where it's viewed cautiously and where its influence is still emerging. It provides the foundation for interpreting all subsequent findings on AI's societal impact.

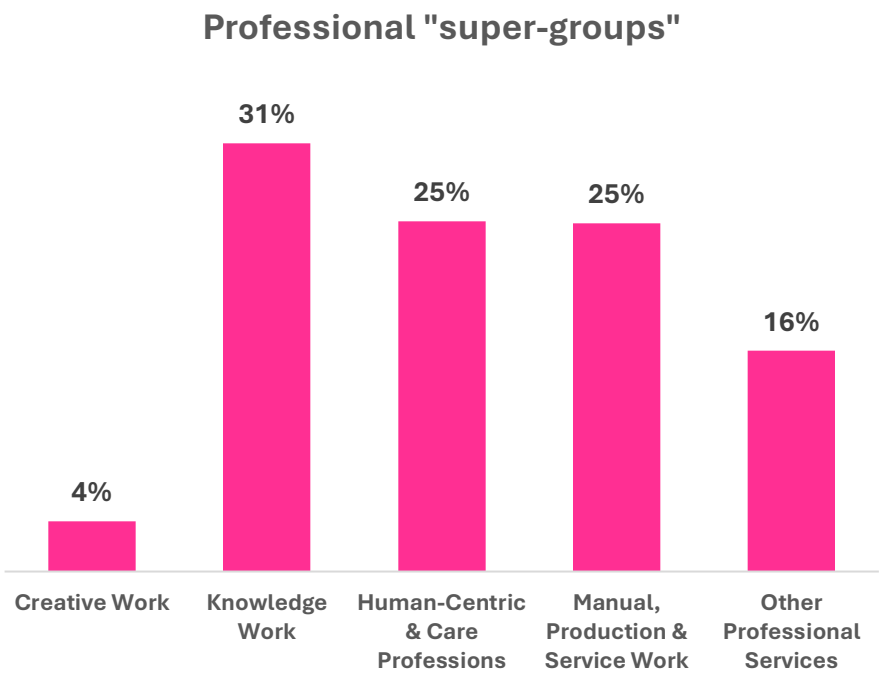


Figure 4. Percentage distribution of survey respondents across five professional categories. Question used for the segmentation: Which industry do you work in or are preparing to work in? Source: Summer 2025 AI Global Public Opinion Tracker at USC.

These "super-groups" capture AI's different roles across the economy and reveal clear socio-demographic profiles:

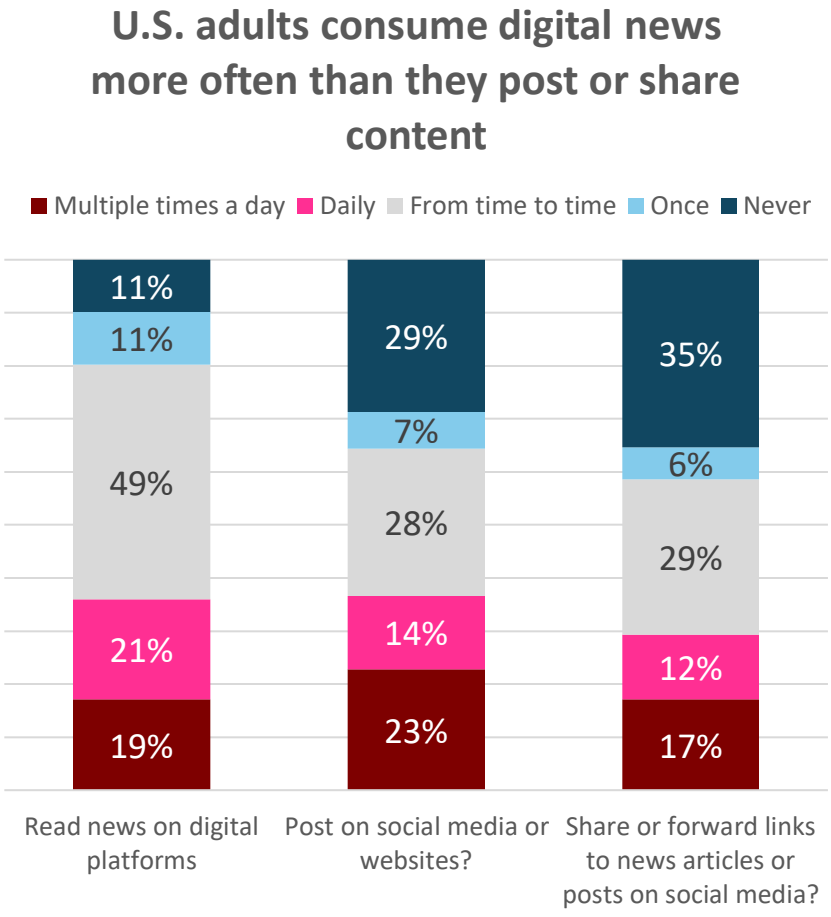
- **Creative Work** – Younger (18–34), mid-level education, in arts, culture, marketing, media, or advertising; above-average income; concentrated above average in the South and West; politically more independent.

[1] This segmentation began with open-ended answers to "Which industry do you work in or are preparing to work in?" - responses that ranged from single-word job titles to company names and sector descriptions. Through a careful coding process, these answers were matched with industry keywords, synonyms and job-related cues. Rare or ambiguous entries were minimized by merging related categories, ensuring each group is meaningful.

- **Knowledge Work** – Prime working age (34–55), male, highly educated, in finance, education, IT, telecom or management; high incomes; more common in the Northeast; politically leaning Republican above average.
- **Manual, Production & Service Work** – Older (45–65), mostly high school education, in hospitality, agriculture, manufacturing, retail or transport; middle incomes; politically leaning Democrat, above average sample.
- **Human-Centric & Care Professions** – Working age (25–55) and older, predominantly female, medium education; includes retirees; in healthcare or public administration; lower incomes; politically unaligned.

We will use this segmentation to understand how professional background shapes variations in responses across the survey - from media consumption and AI tool adoption to attitudes toward AI's impact on jobs, disinformation, and journalism. This occupational lens helps explain why people with different work realities see AI in such different ways.

Media use patterns in the US



Media patterns use

89% of U.S. adults say they at least sometimes get news via digital devices. The latest data show a growing share of U.S. adults who rarely or never interact with news online: 29% never post on social media and 35% never share or forward links, a gap between passive consumption and active participation which highlights a disengaging trend.

After last fall's peak in electoral polarization, online engagement patterns in the U.S. show signs of recalibration. Frequent posting rose 9% over eight months, with smaller gains in daily news reading (+4%) and link sharing (+5%). The share of those who rarely or never post fell, suggesting a post-election easing of political fatigue, as Americans started to re-engage with digital platforms beyond the campaign cycle.

Figure 5. Digital media use patterns in the U.S. Question: How often in the last week did you... Source: Summer 2025 AI Global Public Opinion Tracker at USC.

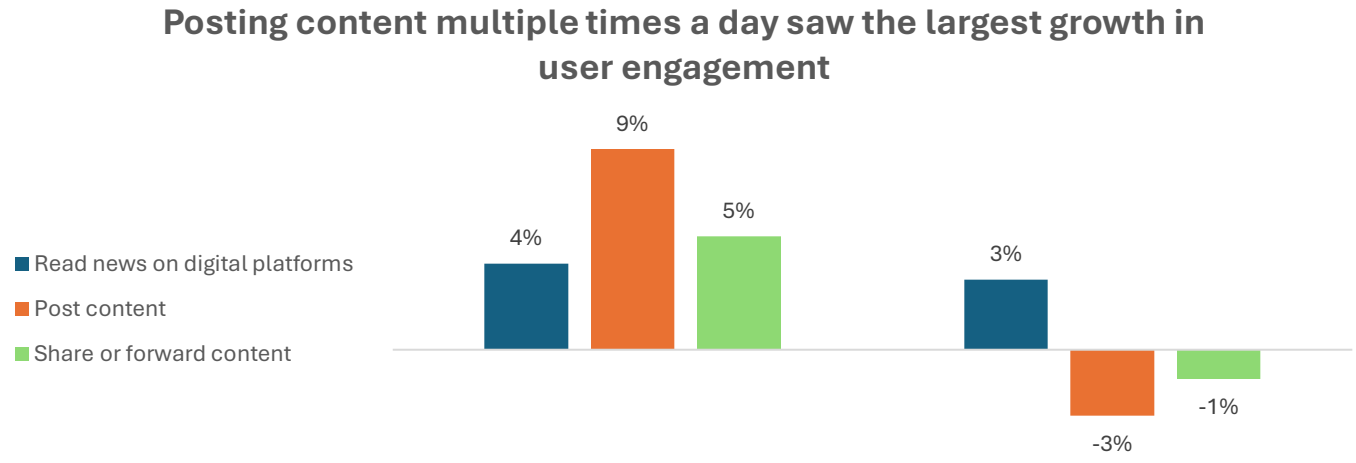


Figure 6. Change in the frequency of digital media use, compared to 2024 data. Source: AI Global Public Opinion Tracker at USC. The chart shows changes from 2024. Positive numbers mean people do the activity more often now, negative numbers mean less often

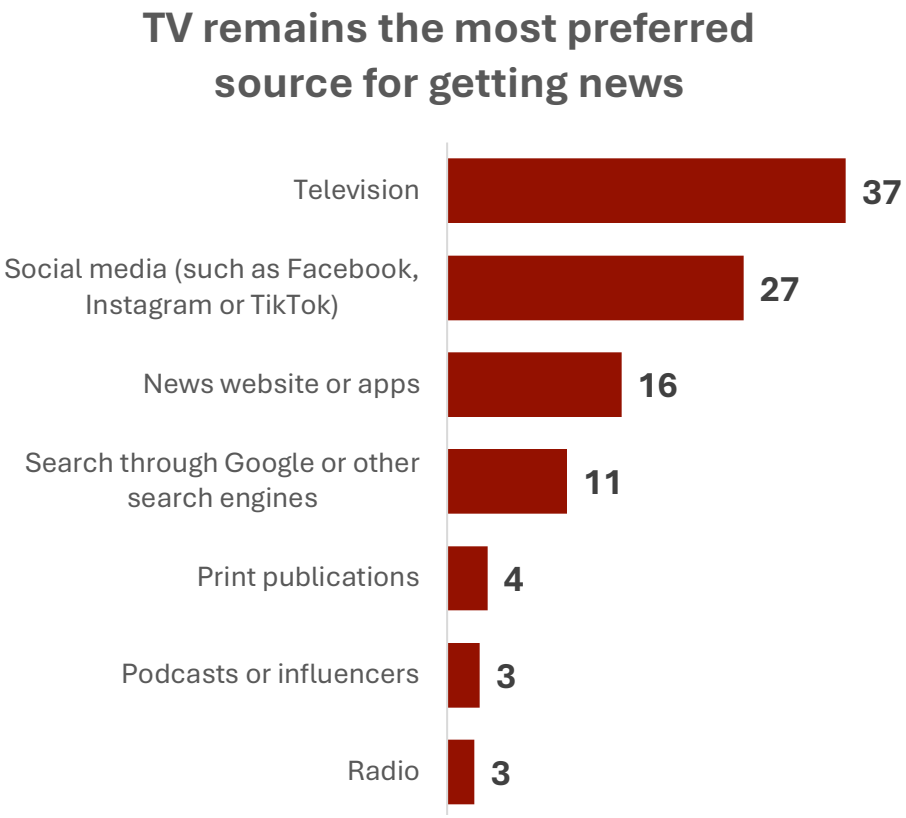


Figure 5. General preferences for news sources. Question: Which do you prefer for getting news, in general? Source: Summer 2025 AI Global Public Opinion Tracker at USC

Television remains the dominant source of news for Americans (37%), well ahead of social media (27%) and news websites or apps (16%). Search engines, print, podcasts, and radio lag far behind. This hierarchy echoes other findings showing TV's enduring reach, particularly among older audiences, while younger groups increasingly favor social platforms with digital growth still unable to displace TV as the top choice nationwide.

News preferences in the U.S. reveal a generational split. Social media dominates among 18–24-year-olds (over 50%), while television is the clear choice for 65+ audiences (around 60%). Middle-aged groups are more evenly split. The pattern aligns with Pew data[2] showing younger adults' shift toward mobile-first, platform-driven news consumption, while[3] older

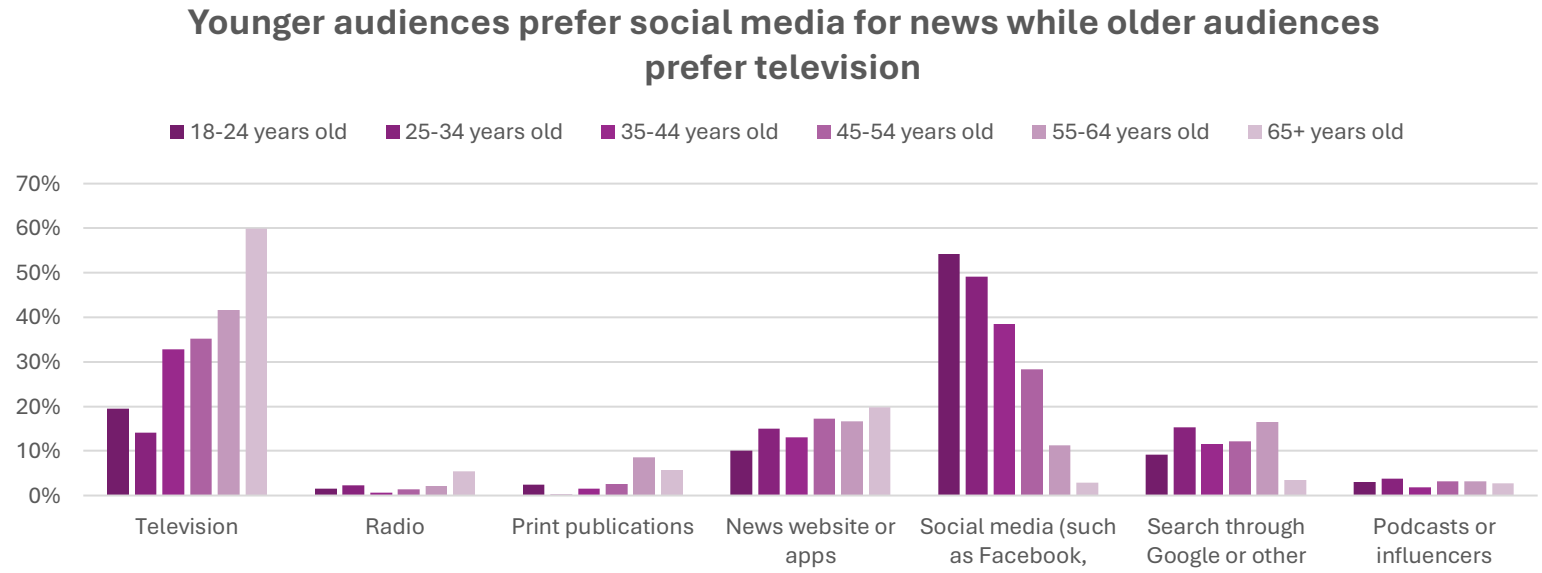


Figure 6. Preferred news sources by age group. Question: Which do you prefer for getting news, in general? Source: Summer 2025 AI Global Public Opinion Tracker at USC

[2] https://www.pewresearch.org/journalism/fact-sheet/social-media-and-news-fact-sheet/
[3] https://www.pewresearch.org/journalism/fact-sheet/news-platform-fact-sheet

Americans remain anchored to traditional broadcast forms.

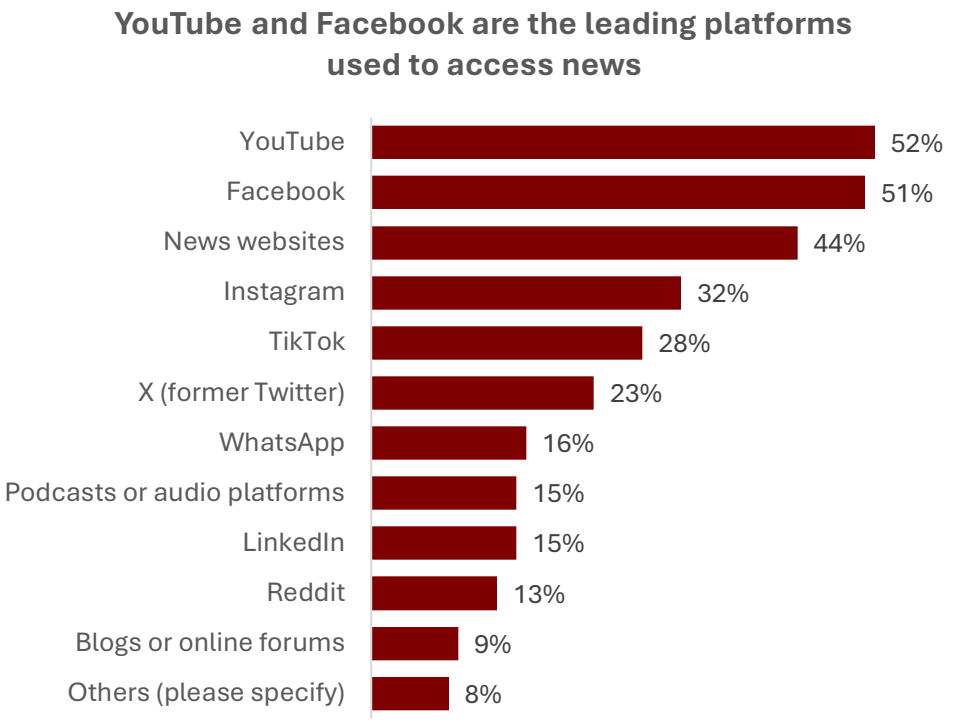


Figure 7. Digital media platforms used for news access. Question: Which of the following digital media platforms did you use to access news in the last week? (Select all that apply). Source: Summer 2025 AI Global Public Opinion Tracker at USC

YouTube (52%) and Facebook (51%) now rival traditional news sites (44%) as the most common gateways to news in the U.S., with Instagram (32%) and TikTok (28%) expanding their reach. X, WhatsApp and podcasts trail behind, each under a quarter of users. This platform mix reflects a continued shift toward video- and feed-driven news discovery, a trend also tracked by the Reuters Institute in its 2025 Digital News Report[4].

Over the past eight months, only WhatsApp (+2%) and news websites (+1%) saw marginal growth in news use, while most platforms stagnated or declined. The relevant drops came for blogs/forums (-5%) and YouTube (-4%), with podcasts, Reddit, and Facebook also losing ground.

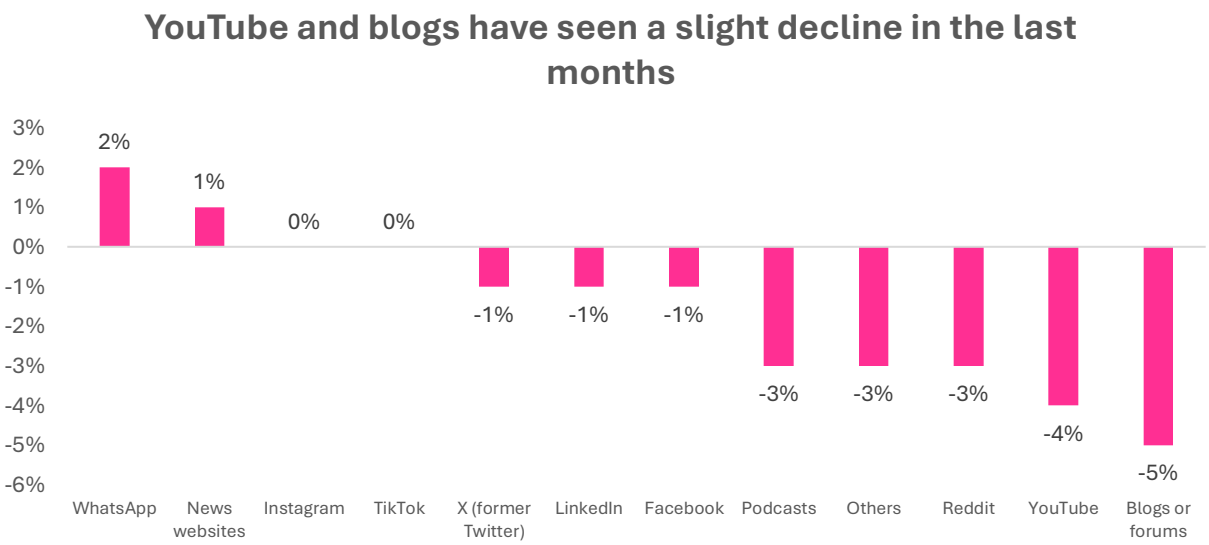


Figure 8. Six-month net change in the use of social media and digital platforms. comparison with previous survey (Winter 2024) results. Source: AI Global Public Opinion Tracker at USC

[4] https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/digital-news-report/2025

Connecting with others who share similar interests remains the top reason Americans post online (49%), virtually unchanged from 2024. However, sharing personal opinions dropped from 44% to 38%, suggesting a slight retreat from overt self-expression. Creative use rose from 20% to 24%, and business promotion saw a notable jump (+5 points). The data hint at a shift toward more targeted, purpose-driven posting, with less emphasis on broad opinion-sharing.

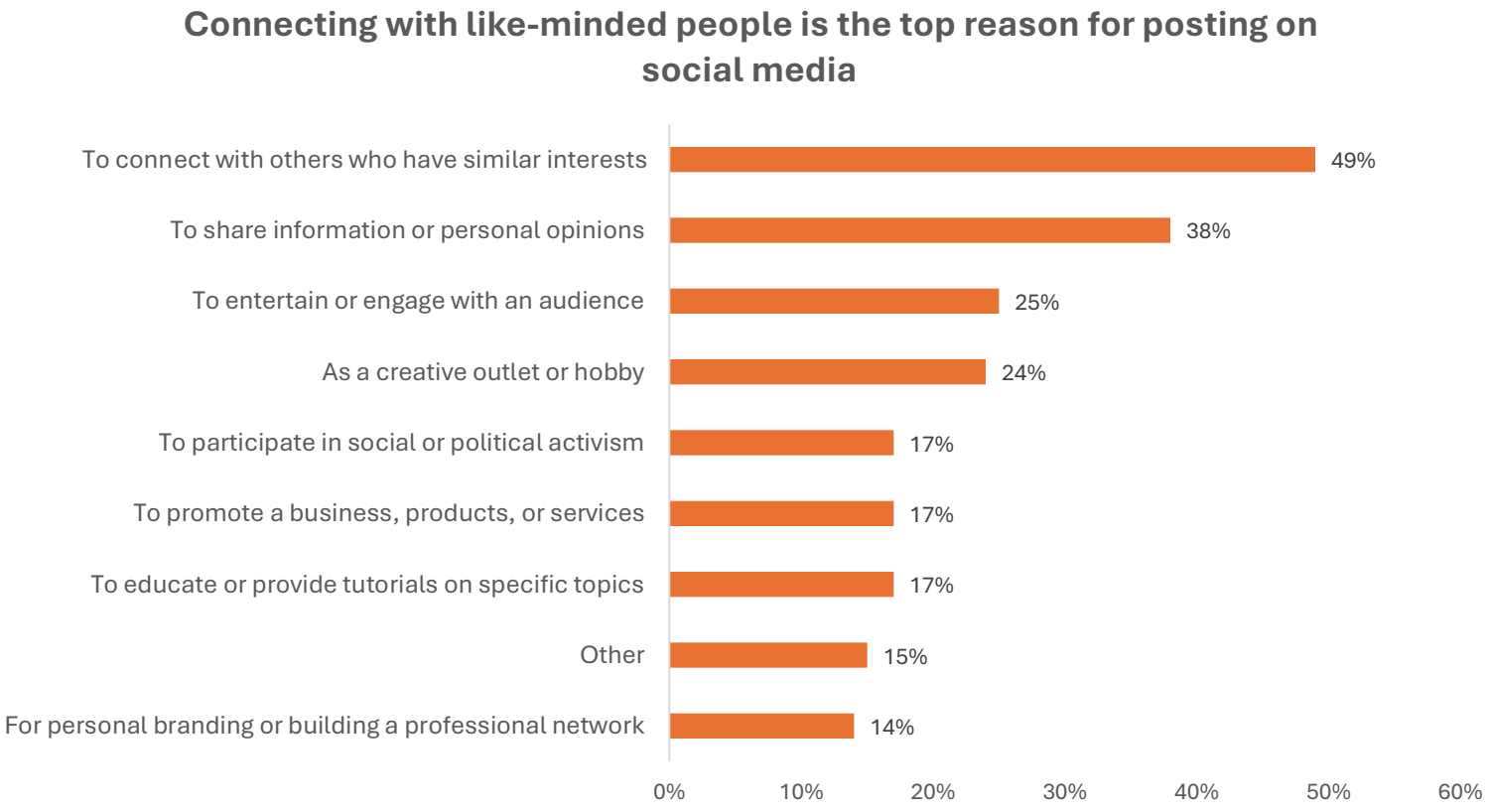


Figure 9. User motivations for posting content online. Question: What is your main reason for posting on social media or websites? (Select all that apply). Source: Summer 2025 AI Global Public Opinion Tracker at USC

AI impact in general

Science & AI impact, in general

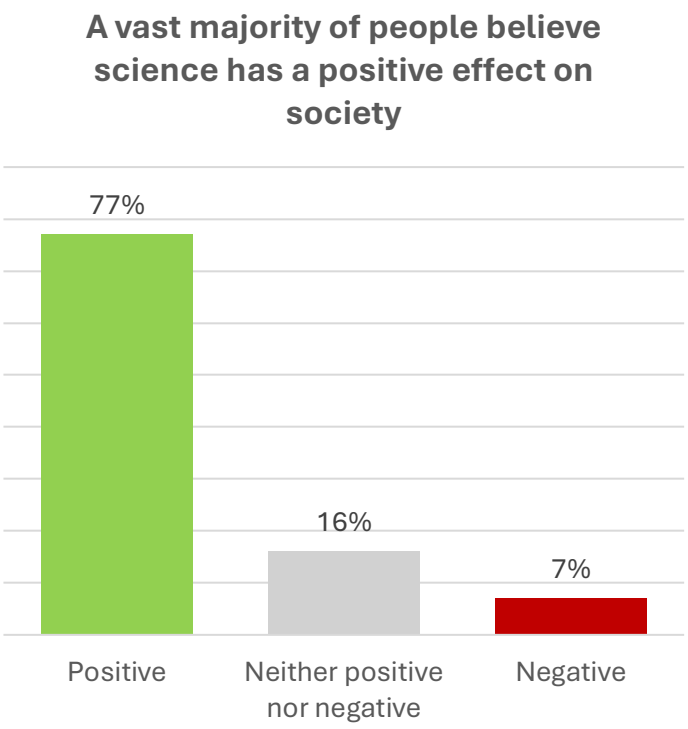


Figure 10. Public sentiment toward the societal impact of science. Question: Overall, would you say science has had a mostly positive effect on our society or a mostly negative effect on our society? Source: Summer 2025 AI Global Public Opinion Tracker at USC

Public confidence in science remains high but has edged down slightly, from 79% rating its impact as positive in November 2024 to 77% in July 2025.

Views that science has had a negative effect rose modestly, from 5% to 7%. While the shift is small, it may reflect growing public debates over emerging technologies, such as AI.

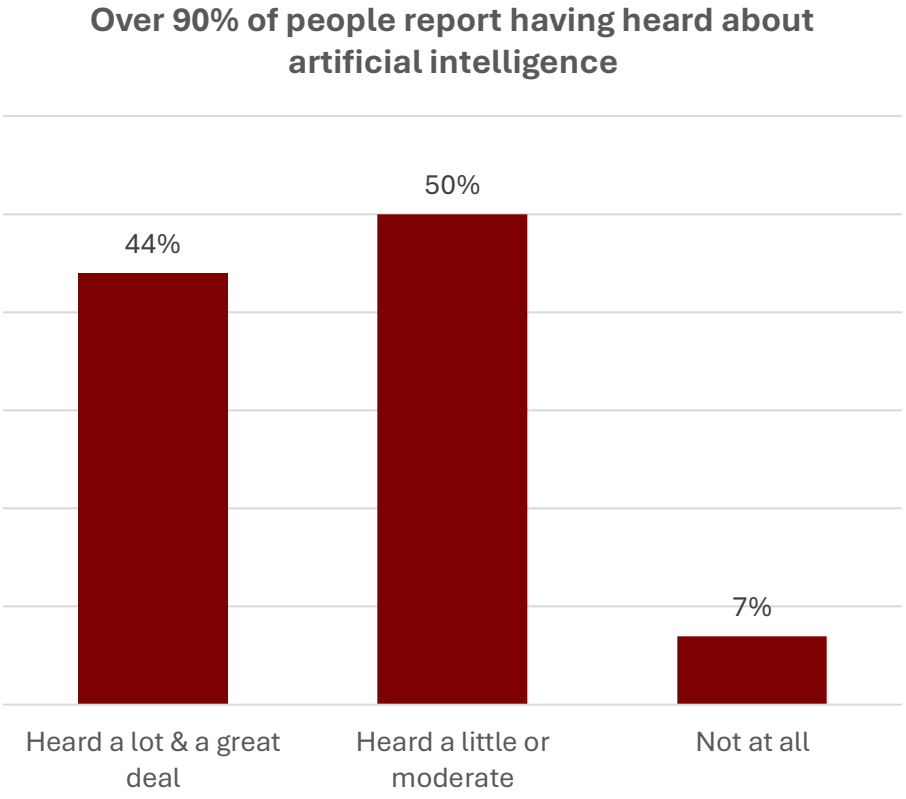
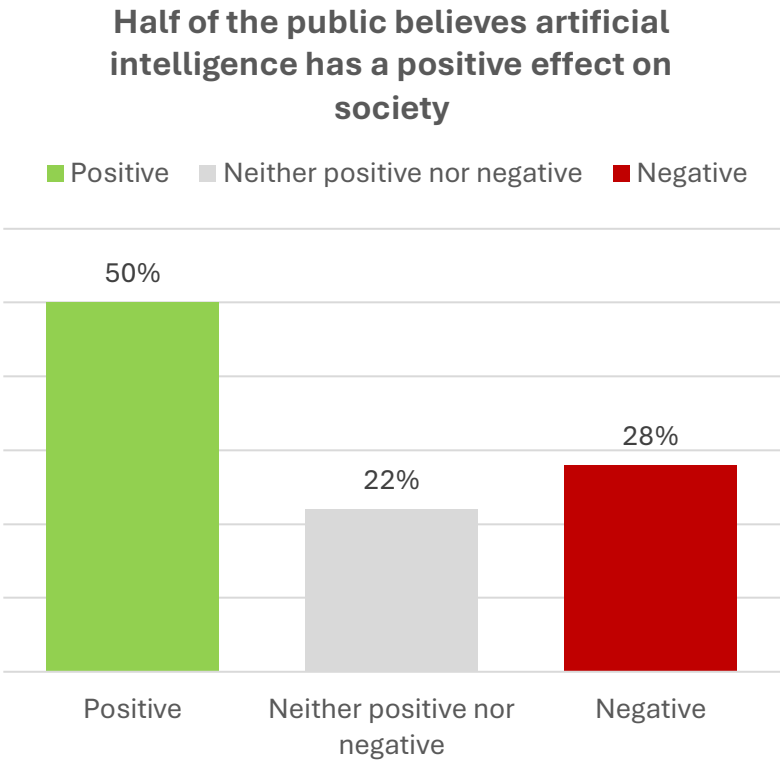


Figure 11. Self-reported public awareness of artificial intelligence. Question: Artificial intelligence (AI) is designed to learn tasks that humans typically do, for instance, recognizing speech or pictures. How much have you heard or read about AI? Source: Summer 2025 AI Global Public Opinion Tracker at USC

Awareness of AI in the U.S. has deepened over the past eight months. The share who have heard "a lot" or "a great deal" rose from 36% in November 2024 to 44% in July 2025, while those reporting only limited familiarity fell. However, the proportion who have heard nothing at all more than doubled to 7%, pointing to a small but notable segment disengaging from AI discussions despite its growing prominence in public debate.

Perspectives about AI impact. Positive or negative?

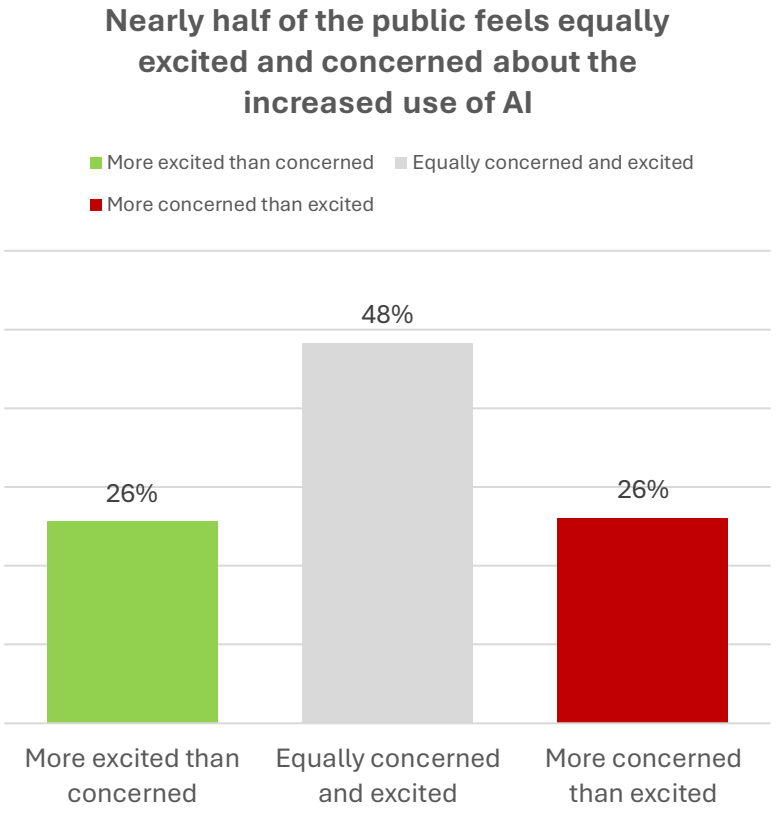


Perceptions of AI's societal impact have polarized over the past eight months. While the share viewing it as mostly positive held steady at 50%, negative sentiment rose from 22% to 28%, and neutral views fell, a shift which might imply that, as AI becomes more visible in daily life, Americans are increasingly split between enthusiasm for its benefits and concern over its risks, mirroring patterns seen in other national surveys on emerging technologies.

Figure 12. Public sentiment toward the societal impact of artificial intelligence. Question: Overall, would you say technology like Artificial Intelligence has had a mostly positive effect on our society or a mostly negative effect on our society? Source: Summer 2025 AI Global Public Opinion Tracker at USC

Public sentiment toward AI tools is shifting toward a more balanced view. Those "equally concerned and excited" rose from 43% in November 2024 to 48% in July 2025, and at the same time the share of those "more concerned than excited" fell from 33% to 26%. Overall, the trends might point towards growing acceptance, but the dominant mood remains one of cautious optimism, reflecting both curiosity and unresolved questions about AI's broader societal impact.

Figure 13. Public sentiment toward AI. Question: Overall, would you say the increased use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools in daily life makes you feel…. Source: Summer 2025 AI Global Public Opinion Tracker at USC



The divide sharpens dramatically when viewed through the lens of profession.

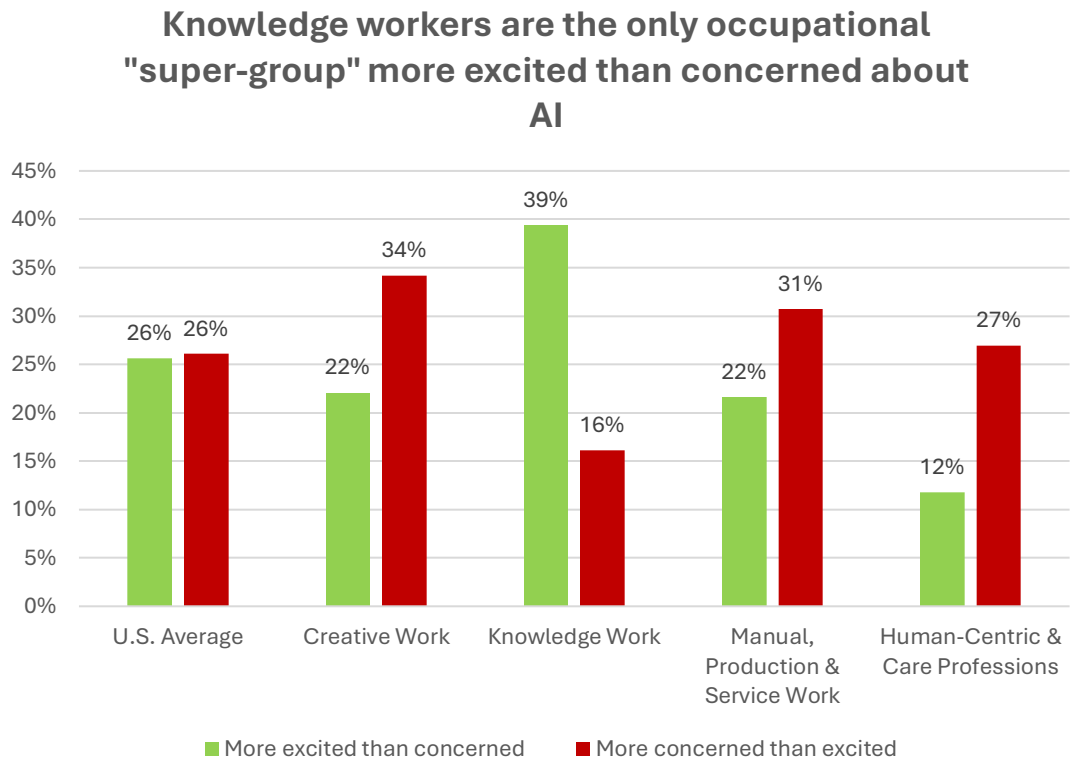


Figure 14. Sentiment toward AI tools broken down by type of work. Question: Overall, would you say the increased use of artificial intelligence tools in daily life makes you feel… Source: Summer 2025 AI Global Public Opinion Tracker at USC

Knowledge workers (those in fields like IT, finance, education and management) stand out as the most optimistic. Nearly four in ten (39%) are more excited than worried, and just 16% lean negative. For these roles, AI is often seen as an efficiency booster or a creative partner, rather than a threat.

The picture flips for other sectors. Creative professionals, despite working in industries where generative AI tools are increasingly common, show higher concern (34%) than excitement (22%), perhaps reflecting fears of being replaced or devalued. Manual, production and service workers also lean negative, with a 9-point gap favoring concern, likely tied to automation worries.

The most skeptical group is in human-centric and care professions, where only 12% feel more excited than concerned, and more than twice as many (27%) lean toward worry. For jobs defined by personal interaction, AI's role remains unclear, and its encroachment potentially unwelcome. This professional split underscores how AI's promise and peril are experienced very differently across the workforce.

ChatGPT & other AI tools

ChatGPT & other AI tools

Awareness of ChatGPT remains high but shows signs of stabilizing.

The share of Americans who have heard "a great deal" or "a lot" grew slightly from 33% in November 2024 to 37% in July 2025, while those with only moderate or little familiarity fell from 54% to 49%. The proportion unaware of the tool held steady at 13%, suggesting its name recognition has largely reached saturation among the U.S. public.

People who feel upbeat about AI's impact on society, are comfortable with its growing presence, and view the tools as *competent* (able to solve problems or hold clear conversations) are far more likely to have used ChatGPT. Younger, better-educated men also stand out, but optimism and perceived capability are the real engines of adoption. Human-centric and care workers lag behind other groups

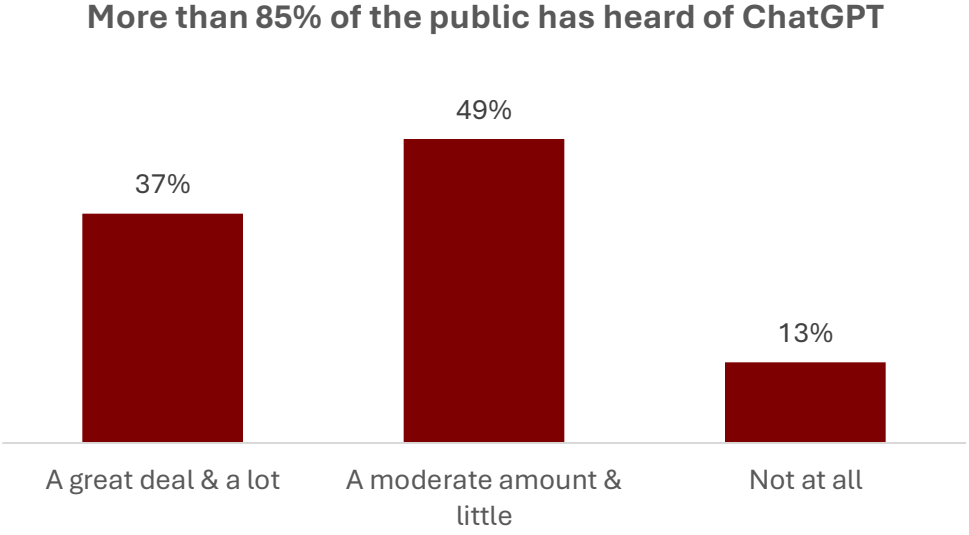


Figure 15. Public awareness levels of the AI tool ChatGPT in July 2025. Question: How much, if anything, have you heard about ChatGPT, an artificial intelligence (AI) tool used to create text? Source: Summer 2025 AI Global Public Opinion Tracker at USC

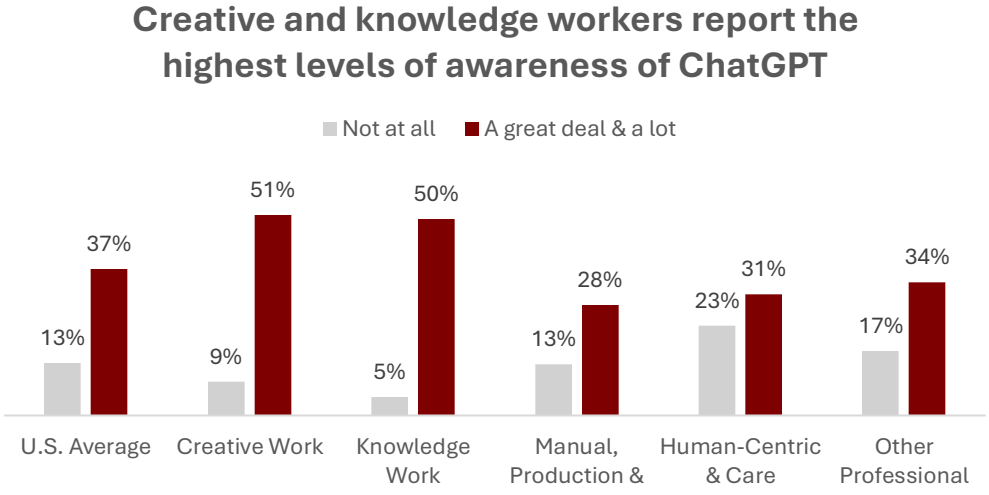


Figure 16. Familiarity with ChatGPT across different occupational "super-groups". Question: How much, if anything, have you heard about ChatGPT, an artificial intelligence (AI) tool used to create text? Source: Summer 2025 AI Global Public Opinion Tracker at USC

Familiarity with ChatGPT varies sharply by profession, revealing where AI awareness is already embedded and where it still has ground to cover.

Creative workers and knowledge workers are at the top of the awareness curve, with roughly half in each category (51% and 50%, respectively) reporting high familiarity. This makes sense: both sectors have been early adopters of generative AI tools for

writing, brainstorming and content creation, and their day-to-day work is more directly exposed to AI discussions in media and professional circles. At the other end of the spectrum, manual, production and service workers, as well as human-centric and care professions, show significantly lower awareness, a finding which points to a slower diffusion of AI knowledge into sectors less directly tied to digital workflows. These awareness gaps matter: they influence adoption rates, shape perceptions of AI's risks and benefits and could deepen divides in how different professional groups prepare for an AI-driven future.

A short story of who's using ChatGPT, and why

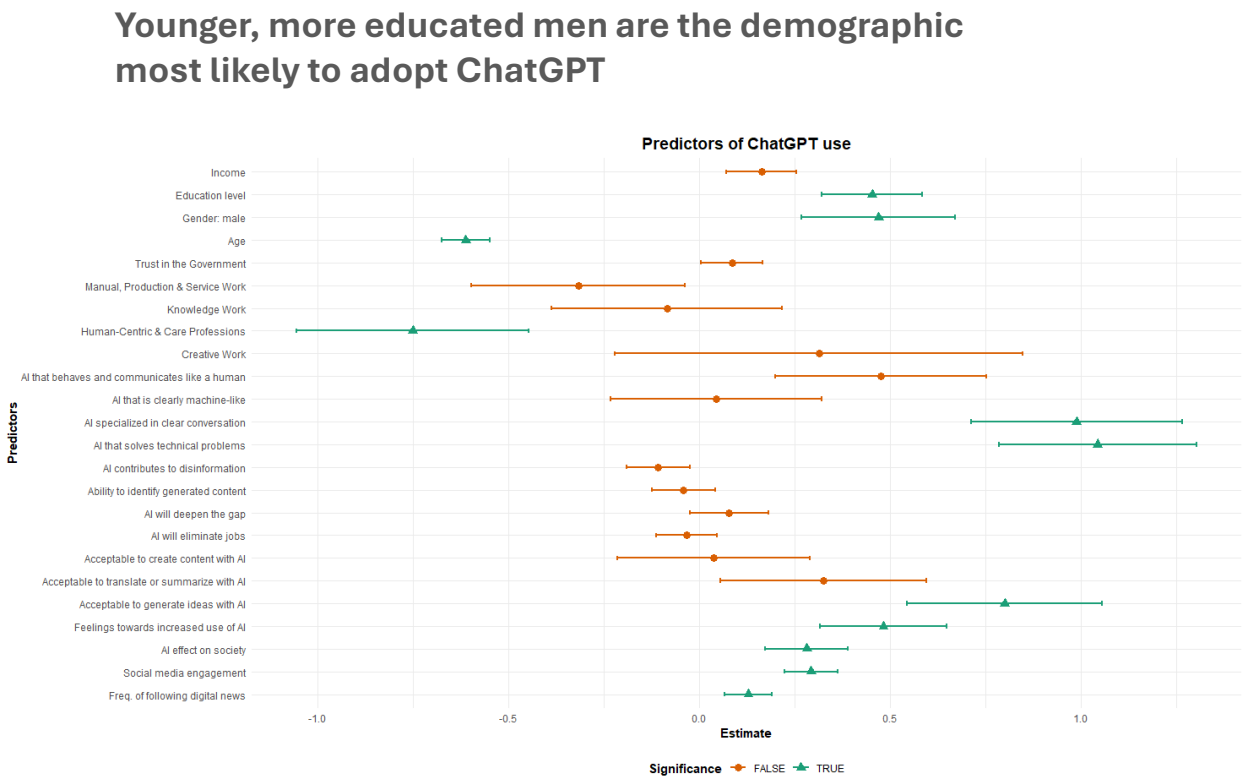


Figure 17. Factors predicting the adoption of ChatGPT. Data source: Summer 2025 AI Global Public Opinion Tracker at USC

In a regression, adoption clusters around younger, better-educated, higher-income men who are heavy users of social media and digital news, and who feel upbeat about AI's impact. Older adults and people in care-focused jobs lag behind.

Demographics matter. Age is the sharpest divider: the younger you are, the more likely you've tried ChatGPT. Men outpace women and usage rises with education and, more modestly, with income. Workers in human-centric and care professions are significantly less likely to be users, while other occupation groups don't show clear differences.

Media habits are strong signals. People who engage more on social media and follow digital news more frequently are more likely to use ChatGPT, implying that exposure and curiosity in information-rich environments help drive experimentation with AI tools.

Attitudes and perceived utility are the biggest accelerants. Users are much more likely to believe AI's overall effect on society is positive and to feel comfortable with its growing presence. Crucially, concrete capabilities matter: seeing AI as good at solving technical problems or at carrying on clear conversations is strongly associated with adoption.

Comfort with using AI to generate ideas is another standout predictor. By contrast, simply approving AI for translation/summary tasks, or even for creating full content, doesn't reliably separate users from non-users.

What doesn't move the needle? General worries about job losses, mis/disinformation or widening social gaps aren't significant predictors. Nor are trust in government or confidence in spotting AI-generated content. A preference for human-like AI shows only a small, secondary link to use.

Key takeaway: adoption is propelled less by fear or fad and more by a mix of optimism, media engagement and a belief that AI is practically useful - especially when it solves problems clearly and helps people think, not just produce content.

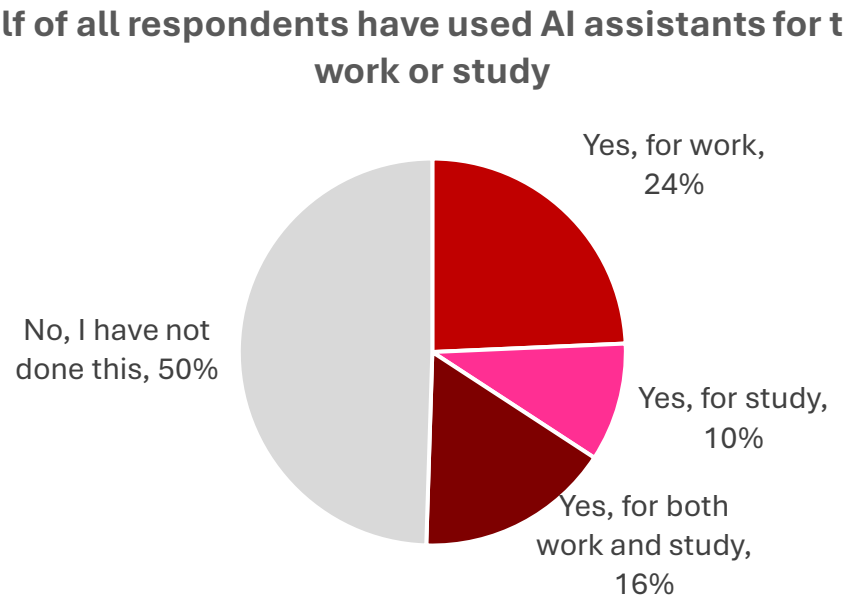


Figure 18. Adoption of AI assistants for professional and academic purposes. Question: Have you ever used ChatGPT or other AI assistants to help with your work or study? Source: Summer 2025 AI Global Public Opinion Tracker at USC

Half of Americans now say they have used ChatGPT or similar AI assistants for work or study, up from 43% eight months ago. The share reporting they have never used such tools dropped from 57% to 50%, signaling a steady rise in adoption for everyday tasks.

So, AI tool usage for work or study is now at the halfway mark nationally.

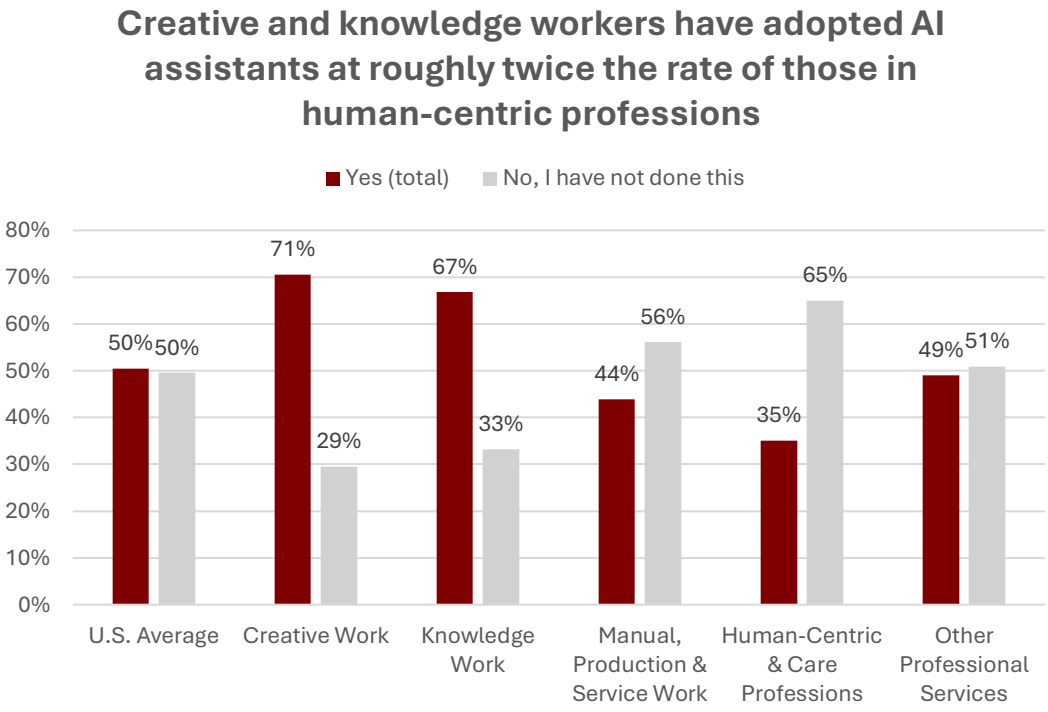


Figure 19. Adoption of AI assistants across occupational "super-groups". Question: Have you ever used ChatGPT or other AI assistants to help with your work or study? Source: Summer 2025 AI Global Public Opinion Tracker at USC

But the professional breakdown shows striking contrasts in adoption.

Creative workers are the clear leaders: 71% report having used AI tools for professional or academic purposes, the highest of any group. This indicates the sector's early embrace of AI for tasks like content creation, design ideas, and campaign planning.

Knowledge workers follow closely at 67%, with AI often applied to drafting, data analysis and workflow optimization.

Adoption drops sharply in more hands-on sectors. Just 44% of manual, production and service workers have tried AI for work, while a majority (56%) have not. In human-centric and care professions, use is even lower, only 35% report using AI, and nearly two-thirds say they haven't engaged with these tools.

These patterns likely reflect both lower exposure to digital workflows and skepticism about the relevance of AI assistants to relationship-driven or physical tasks. Thus, while AI is moving into the mainstream, it is doing so unevenly. Sectors already embedded in digital and creative processes are leading the charge.

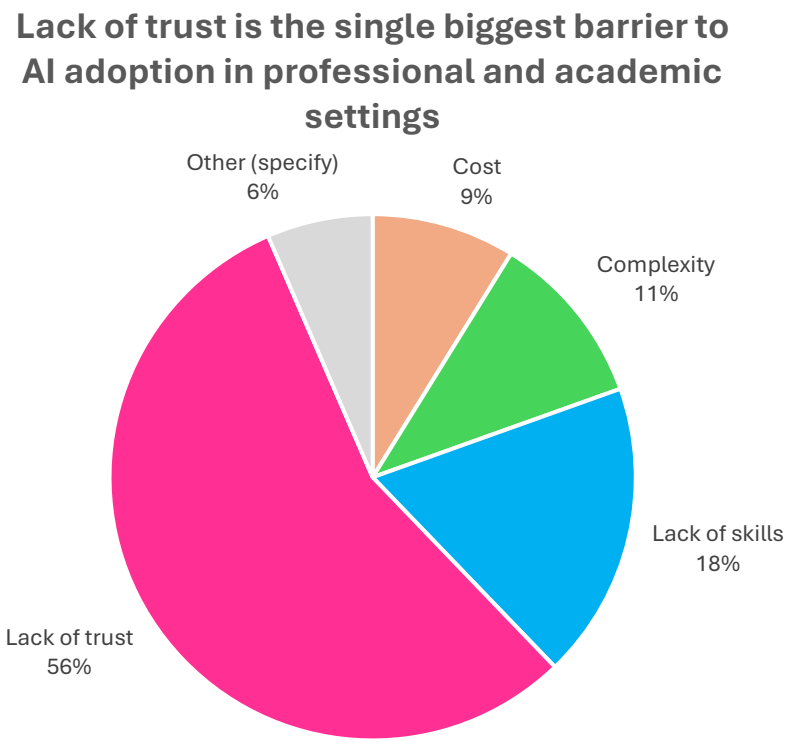


Figure 20. Primary obstacles to the adoption of AI tools. Question: What are the main barriers to adopting AI in your work or study? Choose the most important one… Source: Summer 2025 AI Global Public Opinion Tracker at USC

Among Americans who do not currently use AI tools for work or study, the biggest barrier is lack of trust, cited by 56% of respondents. Other obstacles include lack of skills (18%), complexity (11%), cost (9%), and miscellaneous factors (6%). The dominance of trust issues signals how concerns over reliability, bias and transparency remain the primary hurdle to adoption, even as overall awareness and usage of AI continue to grow.

Brands: ChatGPT vs other options

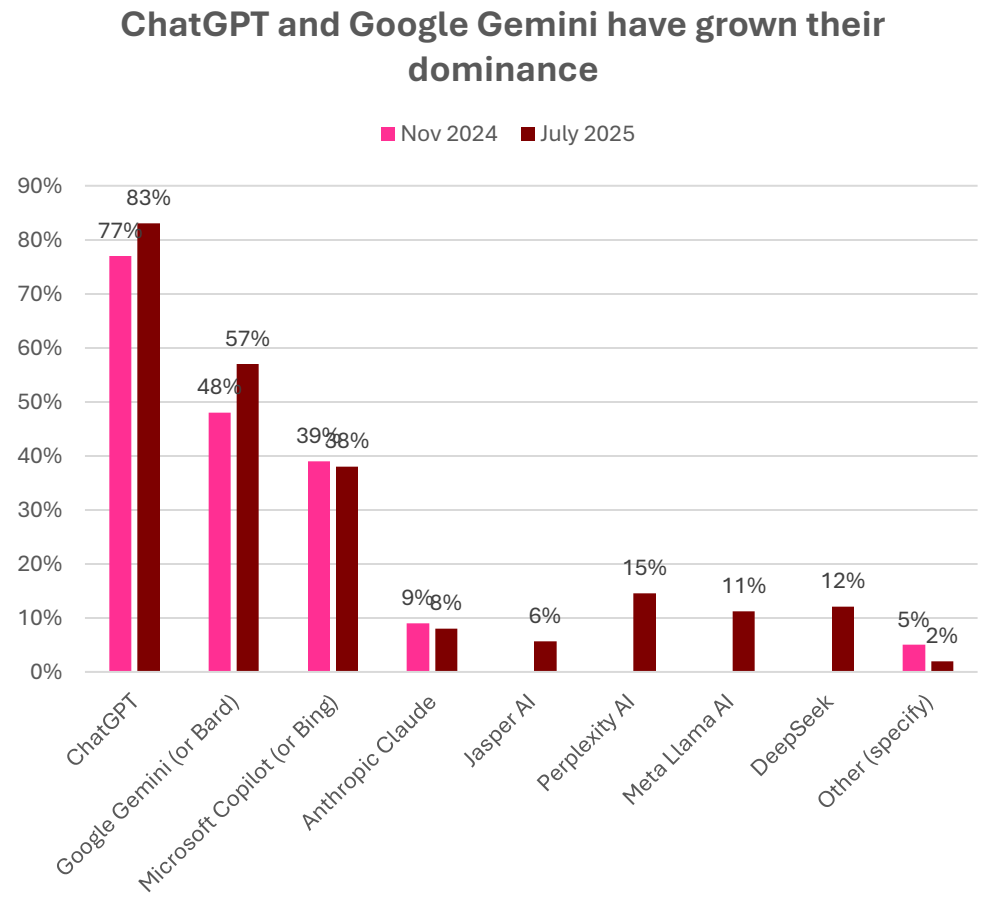


Figure 21. Comparison of AI assistant usage between November 2024 and July 2025. Question: Which type of AI assistant have you used? (Select all that apply) – selected choice. Source: AI Global Public Opinion Tracker at USC (waves 2 & 3)

AI Tools Adoption: Among Americans who named specific AI assistants they use, ChatGPT remains the clear leader, rising from 77% in November 2024 to 83% in July 2025. Google's Gemini recorded a significant jump, from 48% to 57%, reflecting a notable growth strategy and stronger market presence.

For the first time, the survey measured additional tools, both well-known and newly publicized. Despite heavy media attention at launch, DeepSeek reached only 12% adoption, indicating limited market traction.

Microsoft Copilot use remained stable at around 38–39%.

Impact of AI assistants in productivity

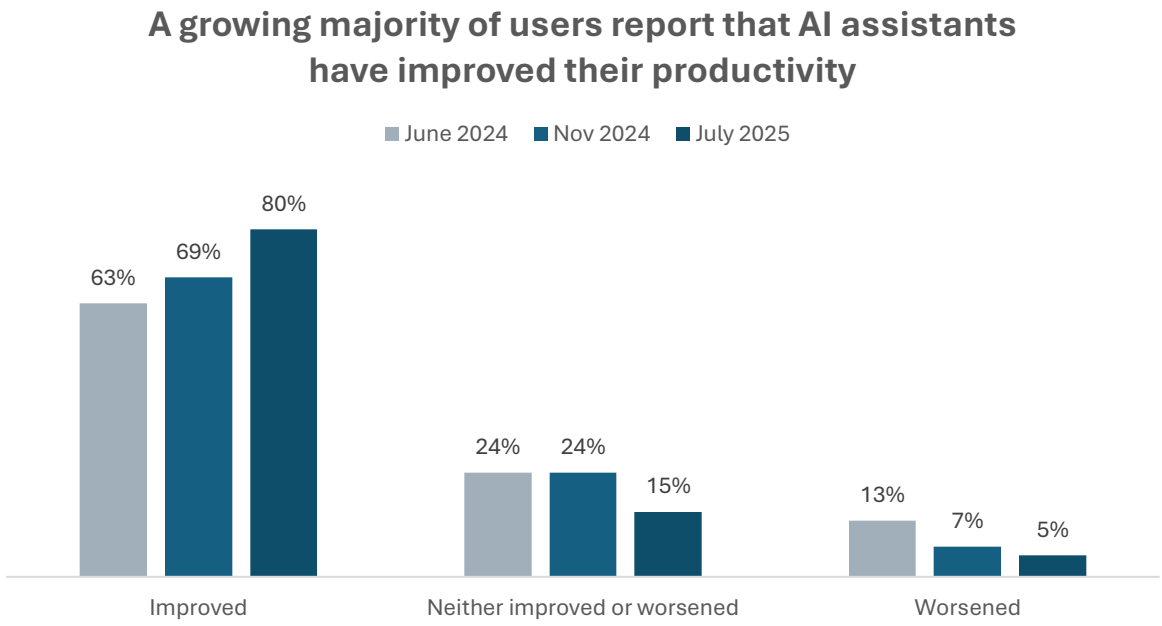


Figure 22. Longitudinal comparison of AI's perceived effect on user productivity. Question: How has this AI assistant affected your productivity at work or study? Source: AI Global Public Opinion Tracker at USC (all waves)

Perceived productivity gains from AI assistants have surged over the past year - up nearly 20 percentage points, from 63% in June 2024 to 80% in July 2025, a sharp rise which reflects the growing success of these tools in delivering tangible value to users. Those seeing no change dropped to 15%, and negative impacts to just 5%, implying that as familiarity increases, AI assistants are becoming firmly embedded as productivity enhancers in both work and study.

Using AI for communication

Using AI tools for communication

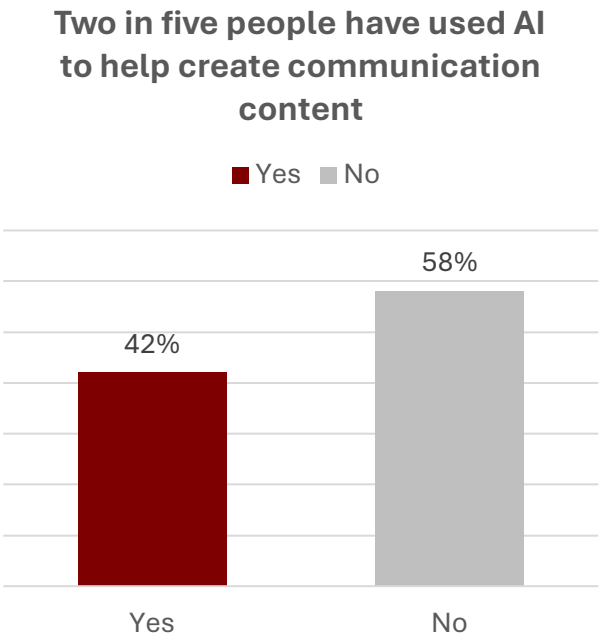
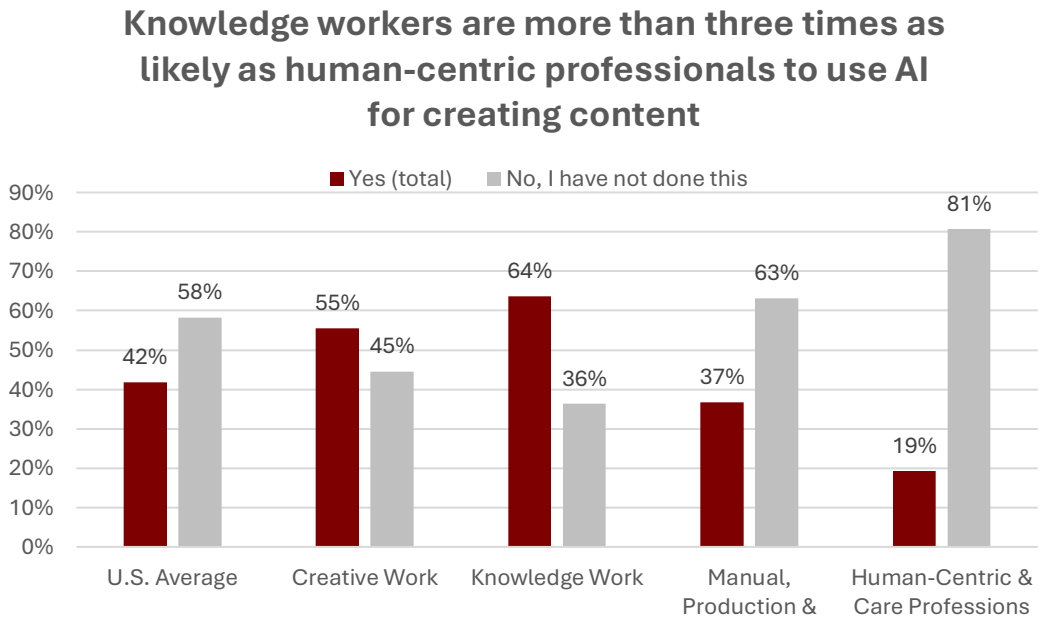


Figure 23. Adoption of AI assistants for communication content creation. Question: Have you ever used ChatGPT or other AI assistants to help with creating communication content? Source: Summer 2025 AI Global Public Opinion Tracker at USC

The share of respondents using ChatGPT or other AI assistants to create communication content rose from 35% in November 2024 to 42% in July 2025. While a majority (58%) still report never doing so, the growth is notable given the audience's relevance - many are preparing for careers in communication, journalism, or related fields where AI-assisted content creation is increasingly becoming an industry standard.

Again, the data shows a clear professional divide in adoption rates. **Knowledge workers lead the pack, with nearly two-thirds (64%) reporting they've used AI to create communication materials**. Creative professionals follow at 55%, reflecting their frequent use of AI for idea generation, campaign concepts and copywriting.

Manual, production and service workers are less engaged in this area, with 37% reporting use, which reflects both lower integration of AI into their workflows and less emphasis on text-based or creative communication tasks in their daily roles.



The most striking gap is in human-centric and care professions (as defined in pag 7-8), where only 19% have used AI for communication content, and a dominant 81% say they have not. For roles that rely heavily on personal interaction and trust, AI-assisted communication may be viewed as less relevant, or even inappropriate. These differences underscore how AI adoption is closely tied to job function.

Figure 24. Use of AI assistants for content creation across occupational "super-groups". Question: Have you ever used ChatGPT or other AI assistants to help with creating communication content? Source: Summer 2025 AI Global Public Opinion Tracker at USC

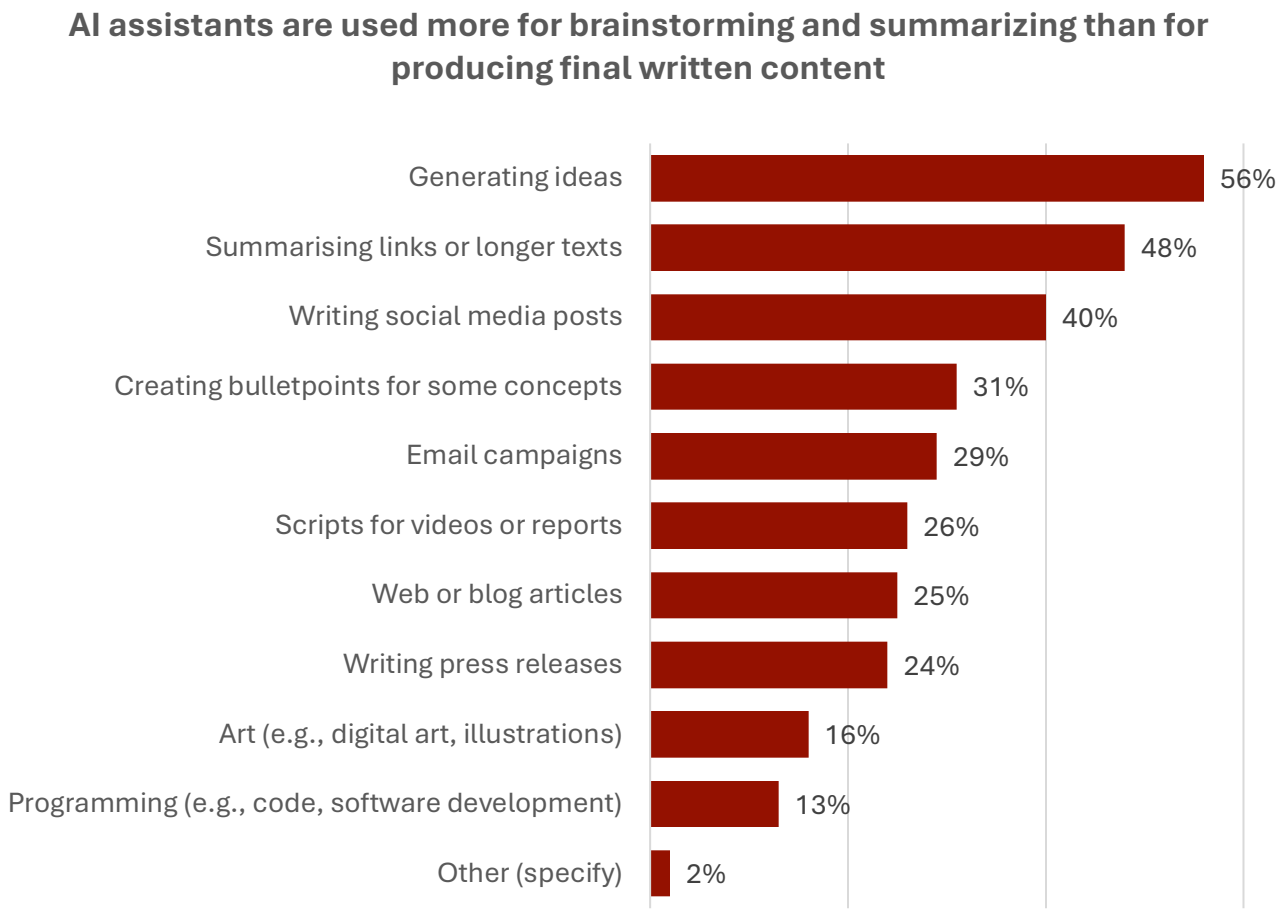


Figure 25. Specific applications of AI assistants in communication tasks. Question: What types of communication-related tasks do you use ChatGPT or other AI assistants for? Source: Summer 2025 AI Global Public Opinion Tracker at USC

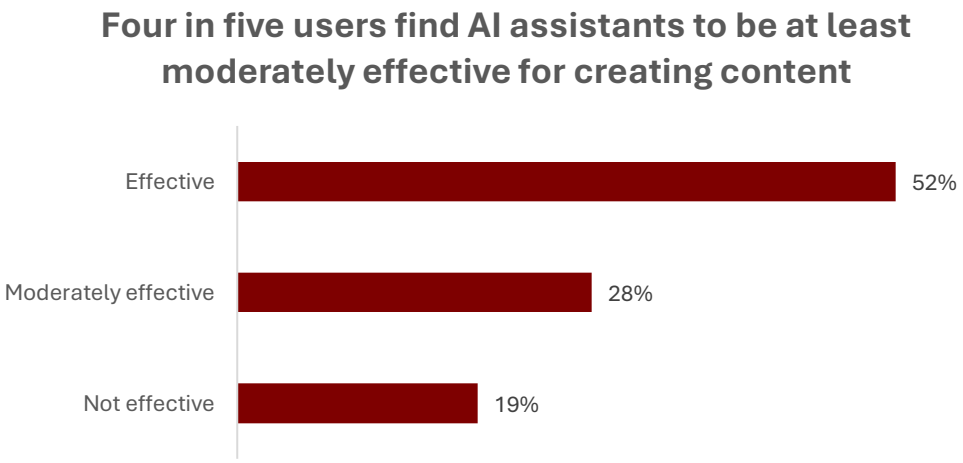


Figure 26. User-perceived effectiveness of AI in the content creation process. Question: How effective do you find AI assistants in aiding your content creation process for communication tasks? Source: Summer 2025 AI Global Public Opinion Tracker at USC

Among U.S. adults who use AI assistants for communication-related work, the most common applications are generating ideas (56%), summarizing long texts (48%), and writing social media posts (40%).

Tasks such as creating bullet points, email campaigns, and scripting for videos or reports follow. This finding echos other research results that show AI adoption in content production is highest for

ideation and drafting, with lower uptake for more specialized outputs like press releases[5].

For the communication and journalism fields, these trends highlight AI's integration into everyday workflows, supporting speed and creativity - while also raising questions about originality and editorial control.

Perceptions of AI assistants' effectiveness in communication-related content creation have shifted slightly over the past eight months. In July 2025, 52% of U.S. adults who use these tools rated them as "effective," down from 61% in November 2024. Meanwhile, the share calling them "moderately effective" rose to 28%, and "not effective" climbed to 19%.

This implies a recalibration of expectations: while most users still see clear benefits, growing familiarity may be leading to more nuanced, and sometimes more critical, assessments of AI's role in creative and editorial work.

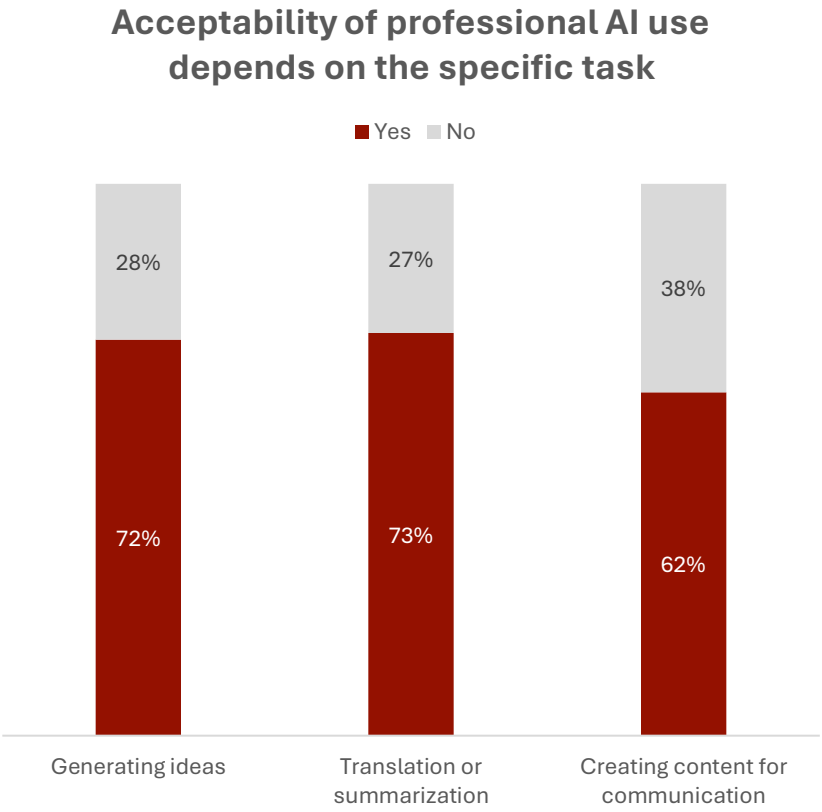


Figure 27. Public perception of the acceptable uses of AI by professionals. Question: Do you think it is acceptable for professionals to use ChatGPT or other AI tools for... Source: Summer 2025 AI Global Public Opinion Tracker at USC

A strong majority of U.S. adults view it as acceptable for professionals to use AI tools for generating ideas (72%) or for translation and summarization (73%). However, acceptance drops to 62% when it comes to creating full communication content, suggesting that while the public is comfortable with AI as a support tool, they are more cautious about its role in producing finished outputs.

A key trust threshold could be identified based on this finding: moving from ideation or assistance to full content creation is seen as a bigger step, carrying

[5] https://muckrack.com/blog/2025/01/16/state-of-ai-in-pr-2025

greater implications for authenticity and authorship.

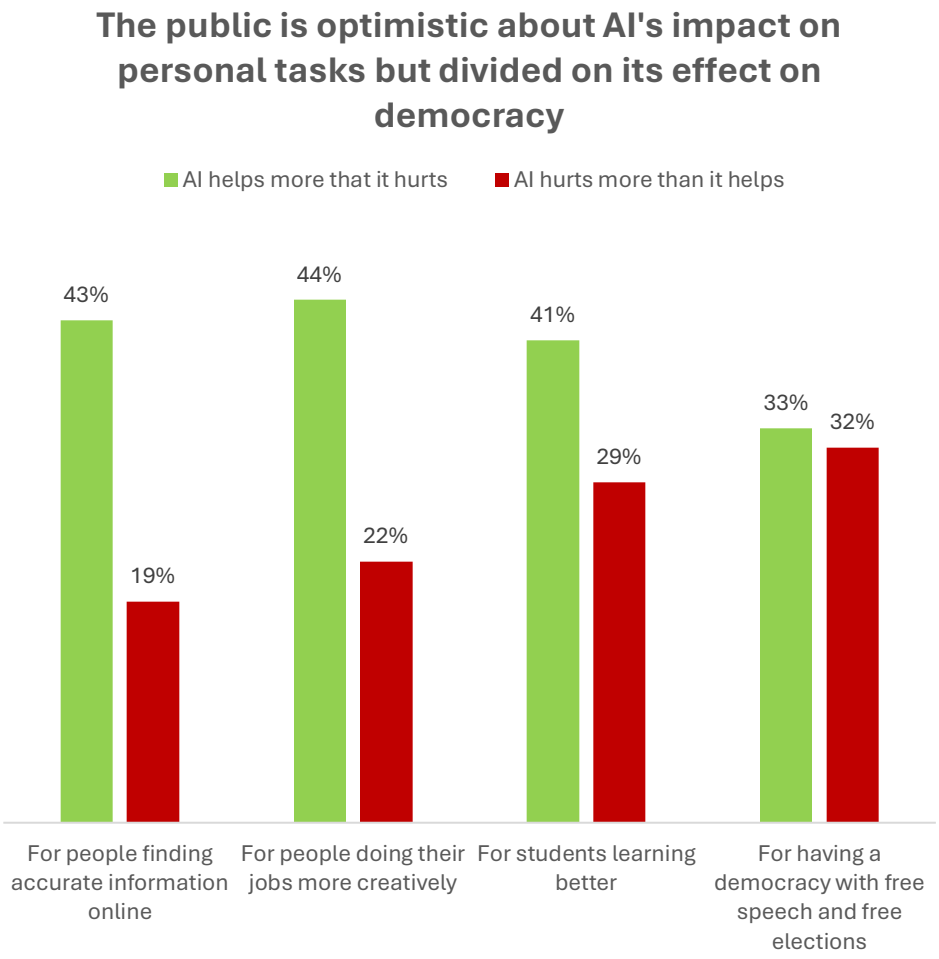


Figure 28. Comparative perceptions of AI's helpfulness versus harmfulness across various domains. Source: Summer 2025 AI Global Public Opinion Tracker at USC

For **finding accurate information online**, optimism has grown: 43% now say AI helps, up 5 points from last year, compared with 19% who see it as harmful. In the workplace, 44% think AI helps people do their jobs more creatively, unchanged from last year, while 22% believe it hurts, indicating a stable, positive outlook in professional contexts.

Education perceptions are more mixed: while 41% see AI as helping students learn better, 29% think it hurts, up 2–3 points in negative sentiment compared with last year – a small but notable shift which might indicate growing caution about AI's role in learning, even as many still value its potential benefits.

Impact of AI on democracy

Impact of AI on democracy

This year's survey expands the lens by measuring, for the first time, public perceptions of AI's impact on democracy. On this front, **opinions are almost evenly split**: 33% believe AI helps more than it hurts free speech and elections, while 32% believe the opposite, revealing a deep ambivalence about AI's political role.

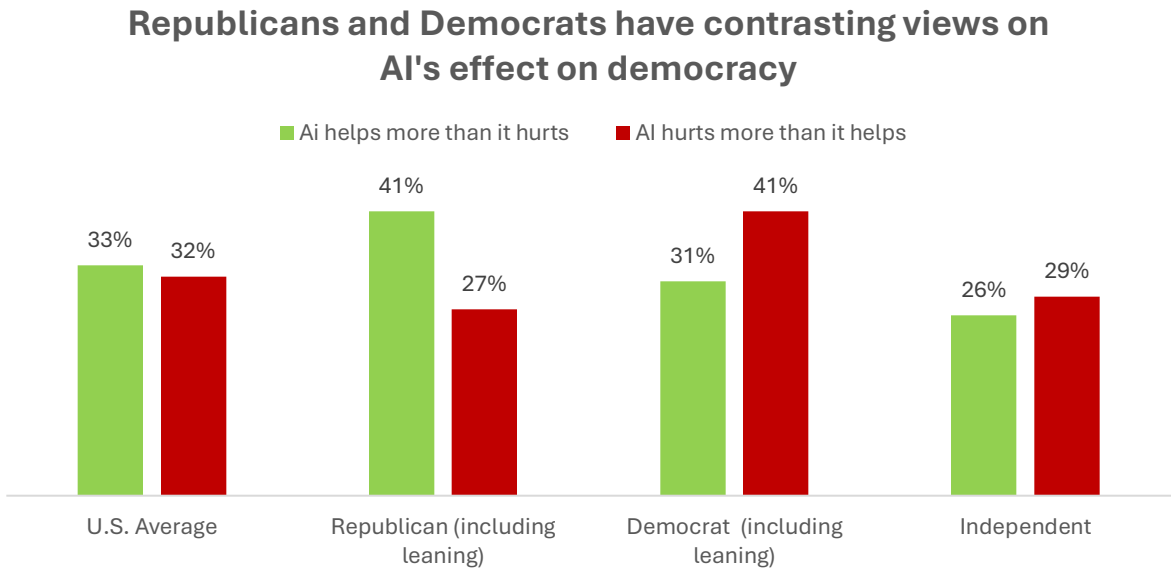


Figure 29. Perceptions of AI's impact on democracy, broken down by political affiliation. Question: For having a democracy with free speech and free elections, do you think artificial intelligence (AI) is doing more to help or to hurt? Source: Summer 2025 AI Global Public Opinion Tracker at USC

Views on AI's impact on democracy show clear partisan differences. Among Republicans and those leaning Republican, optimism is stronger - 41% believe AI benefits democracy, compared to just 27% who see it as harmful. For Democrats, the picture flips: 41% think AI does more harm, while 31% see more good. Independents are the most skeptical, with only 26% saying AI helps and 29% saying it hurts, leaving a large share (45%) undecided or neutral.

These patterns reflect deeper partisan attitudes toward technology, governance, and trust in institutions. Republican optimism could be linked to viewing AI as a tool for efficiency, innovation, and free expression without heavy regulation. Democratic concerns likely stem from fears about AI's role in spreading misinformation, undermining trust in elections, and amplifying polarization. Independents' ambivalence may indicate a lack of strong partisan framing, but also lower exposure to concrete examples of AI's democratic benefits.

The divide suggests that debates over AI and democracy will increasingly align with broader political narratives. For communicators, journalists, and policymakers, understanding these partisan lenses will be relevant for framing AI's role in public life and addressing concerns.

Challenges in using AI tools. Main complaints

Barriers in integrating AI have shifted slightly between November 2024 and July 2025, with varying degrees of improvement and persistence across key areas.

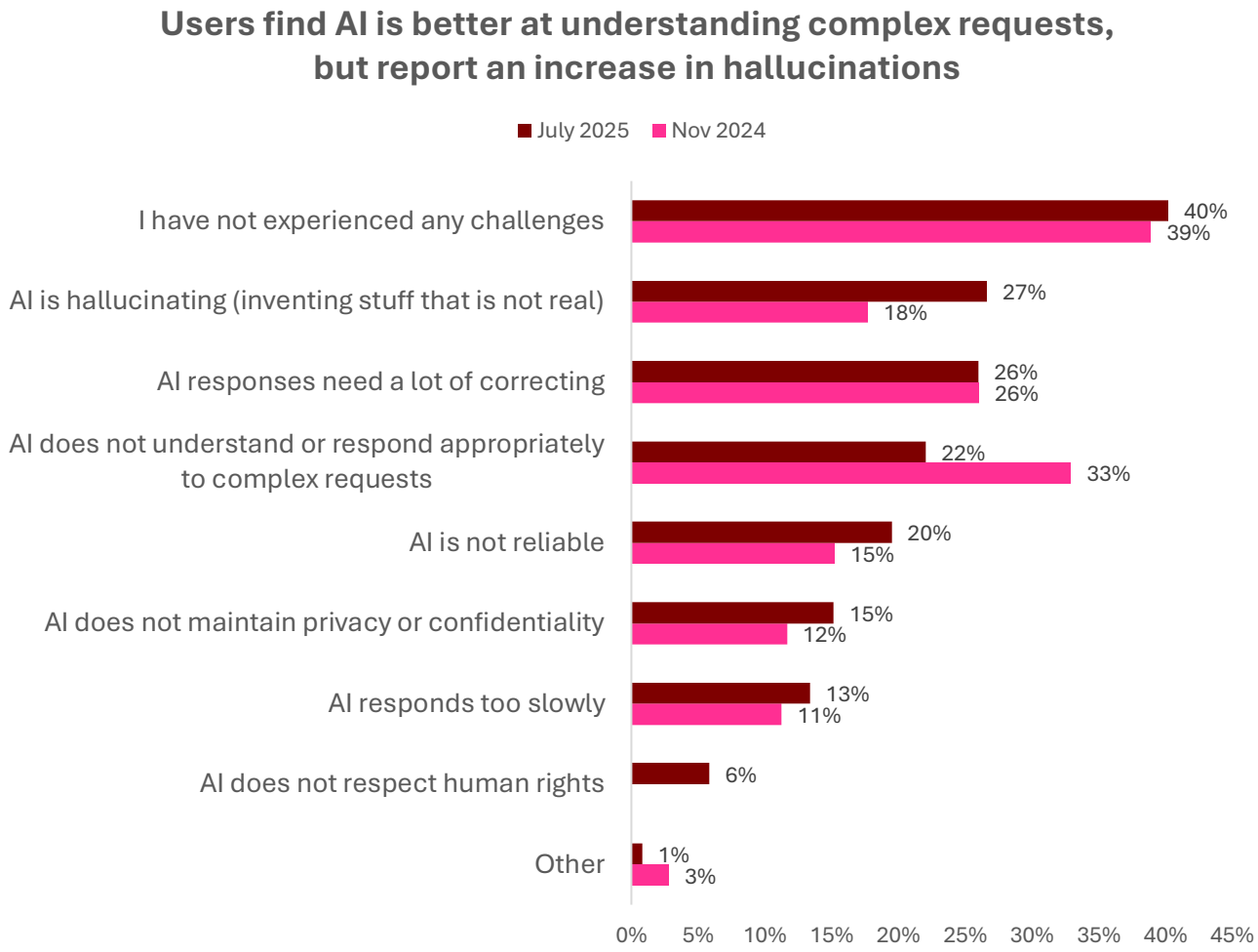
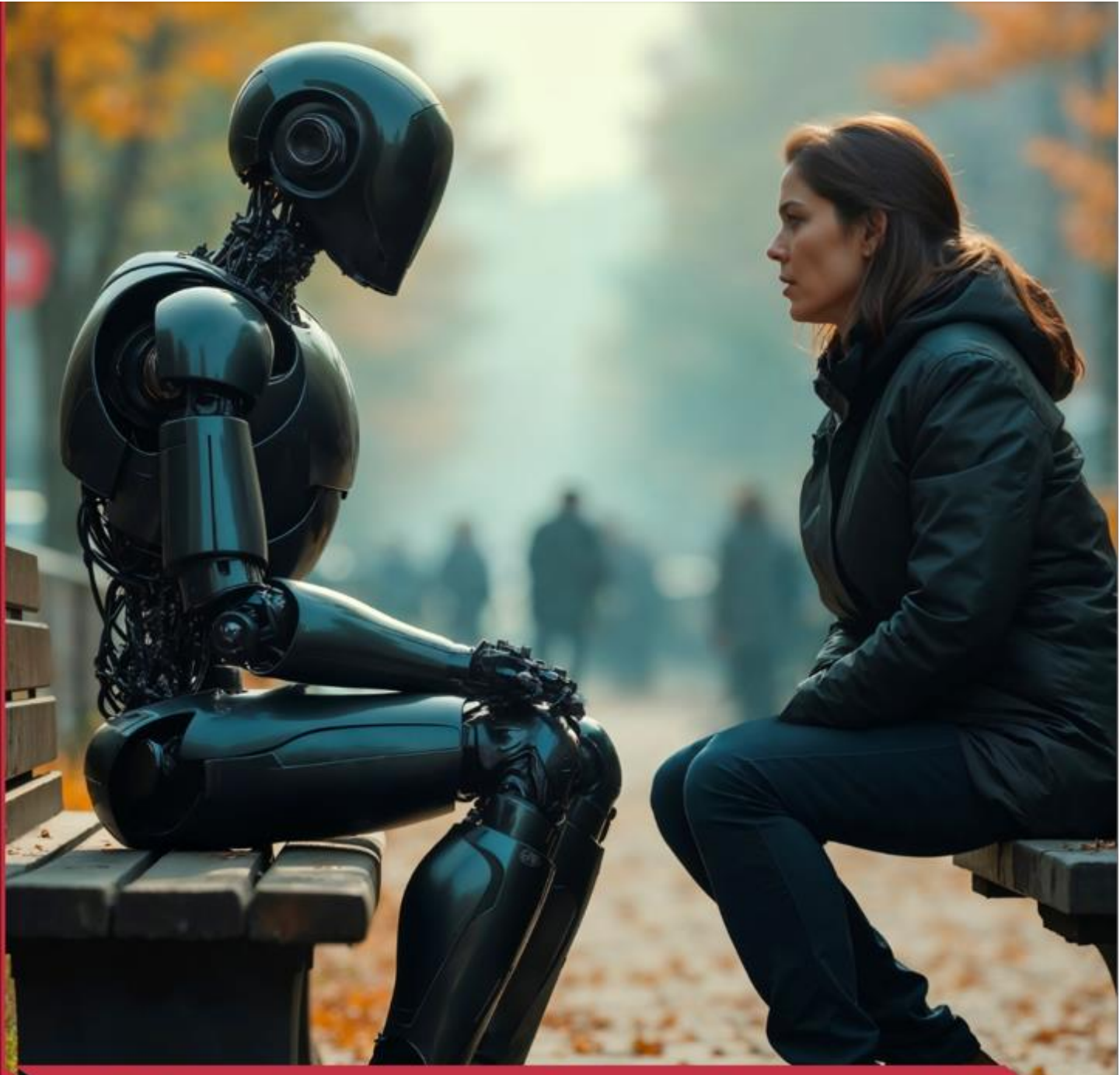


Figure 30. Evolution of user-reported challenges with AI assistants. Question: Have you faced any of the following challenges in integrating AI into your work or study? (Select all that apply). Source: AI Global Public Opinion Tracker at USC (Wave 2 & Wave 3)

In July 2025, 40% of U.S. adults using AI for work or study reported no challenges, virtually unchanged from November 2024. However, some specific issues shifted notably: reports of AI "hallucinating" rose sharply from 18% to 27%, while difficulties with handling complex requests dropped from 33% to 22%. Reliability concerns increased slightly (15% to 20%), as did worries about privacy and confidentiality (12% to 15%). Thus, while a stable share of users experience smooth integration, perceptions of AI accuracy and trustworthiness remain fluid.



Ethical aspects & regulation of AI

Ethical aspects of AI & Regulation

Between November 2024 and July 2025, two notable dynamics emerged regarding privacy and ethics in AI use.

First, reported privacy issues increased from 14% to 21% of users, an indication that as AI assistants become more integrated into everyday work and study, a growing number of people encounter potential breaches or feel uncomfortable with how their data is handled. Although most respondents (79%) say they have not experienced privacy problems, this rise signals that vulnerabilities may be more common than users initially realize.

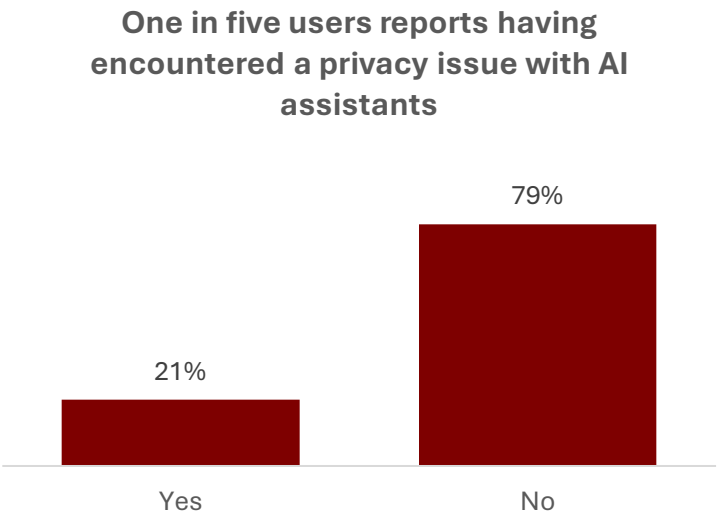


Figure 31. User-reported incidence of privacy issues with AI. Question: Have you encountered any privacy issues with AI assistants, so far? Source: Summer 2025 AI Global Public Opinion Tracker at USC

Second, awareness of ethical guidelines or best practices for AI use remains limited, even though it has improved slightly - from 36% to 42%. This still leaves a majority (58%) unaware of such standards in their field. This knowledge gap is critical: without awareness of existing rules, users may fail to identify when privacy or ethical breaches occur, or may inadvertently misuse AI tools.

The convergence of these trends - rising self-reported privacy issues alongside persistent gaps in ethical awareness - creates a significant risk profile. People unaware of guidelines are less likely to apply safeguards, challenge questionable AI behavior or make informed decisions about tool selection and data sharing. As AI adoption spreads, addressing this blind spot through education and clear industry standards becomes essential to mitigate harm and maintain public trust.

Given the growing integration of AI into various fields, increasing awareness of these guidelines is vital for ensuring responsible and informed adoption.

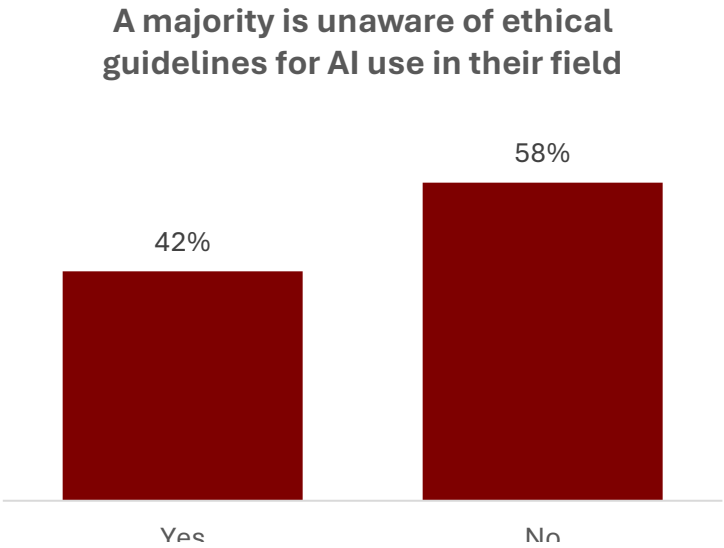


Figure 32. Awareness of ethical AI guidelines. Question: Are you aware of ethical guidelines or best practices for AI use in your field? Source: Summer 2025 AI Global Public Opinion Tracker at USC

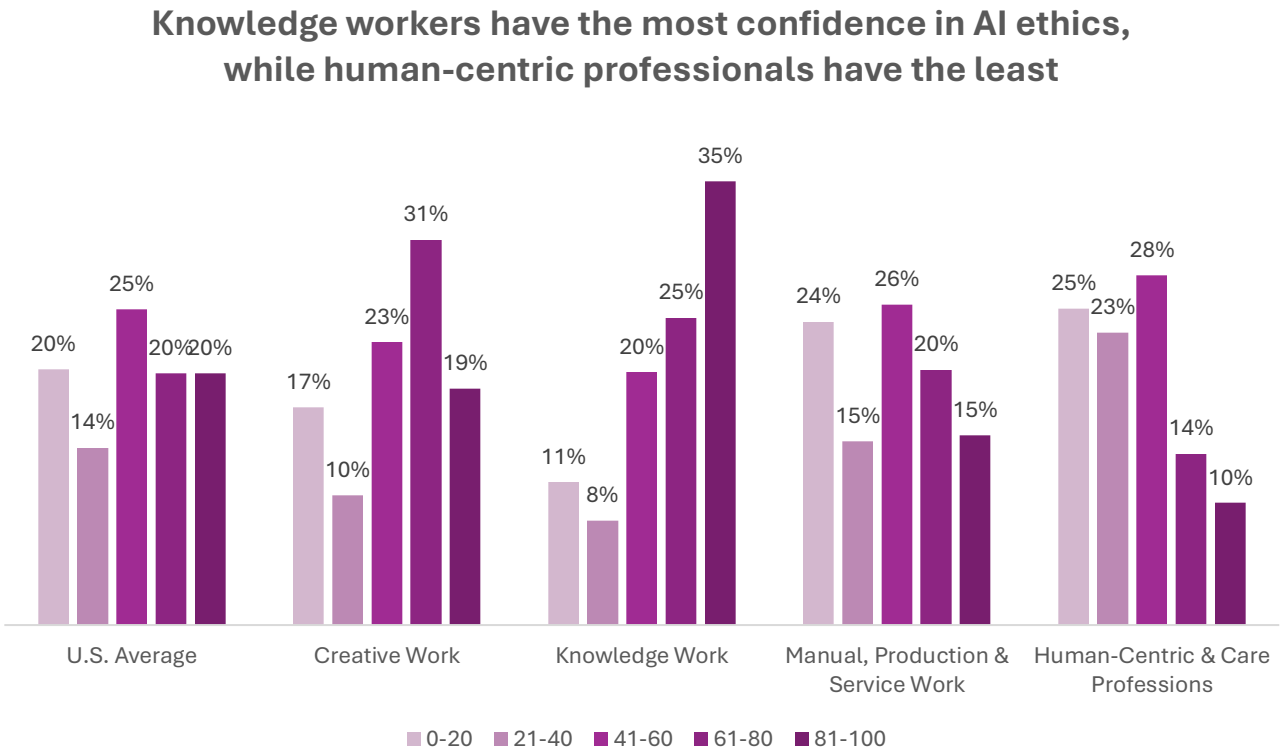


Figure 33. Confidence in AI's ethical behavior across occupational "super-groups". Question: How much do you believe that AI will act according to ethical standards and values? (With 1 being lowest and 100 being highest, assigning any number in between to represent your confidence in AI ethics). Source: Summer 2025 AI Global Public Opinion Tracker at USC

Confidence in AI's ethics sits at a cautious midpoint nationwide, averaging **51 out of 100** on a scale where 1 means no trust and 100 means full trust. This "glass-half-full" rating suggests Americans are split between optimism and skepticism over whether AI will uphold ethical standards and values.

Across professions, differences emerge. **Knowledge workers are the most confident, with a higher share giving AI ethics ratings above 60**, while creative workers and those in human-centric roles show more caution.

Manual, production, and service workers fall close to the national average, reflecting balanced but uncertain views.

The data shows no overwhelming faith or deep distrust, rather, a national wait-and-see stance on AI's moral compass.

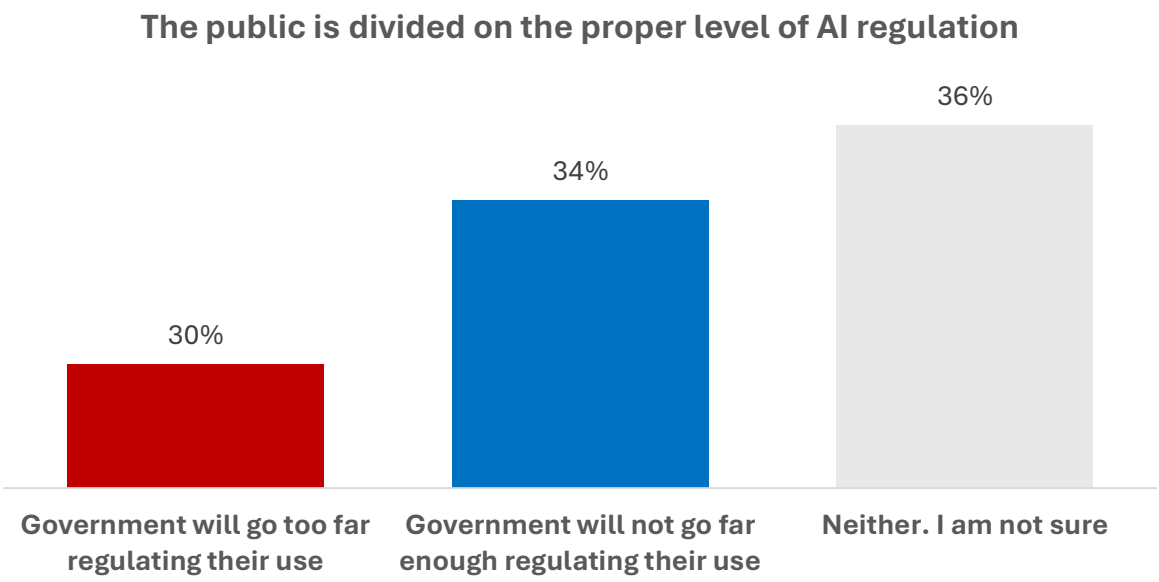


Figure 34. Public concerns regarding the regulation of chatbots. Question: As chatbots like ChatGPT become more widespread, which is your greater concern of the following? Source: Summer 2025 AI Global Public Opinion Tracker at USC

Public concern about AI regulation is mounting at a critical juncture. Survey data show increased anxiety over both overreach (government going too far: 30%, up from 25%) and especially under-regulation (not going far enough: 34%, down from 43%), signifying deep public ambivalence about striking the right balance in overseeing AI tools.

These concerns aren't isolated, and recent polling reinforces the trend. YouGov data[6] show that 71% of Americans want stricter AI regulation. These insights reinforce a growing imperative: as discussions intensify around human responsibility in AI deployment, the demand for effective oversight has never been more urgent. The divergence across demographics, particularly along party lines and between expert and public sentiment, underscores the need for inclusive policymaking.

[6] https://today.yougov.com/technology/articles/51803-americans-increasingly-skeptical-about-ai-artificial-intelligence-effects-poll

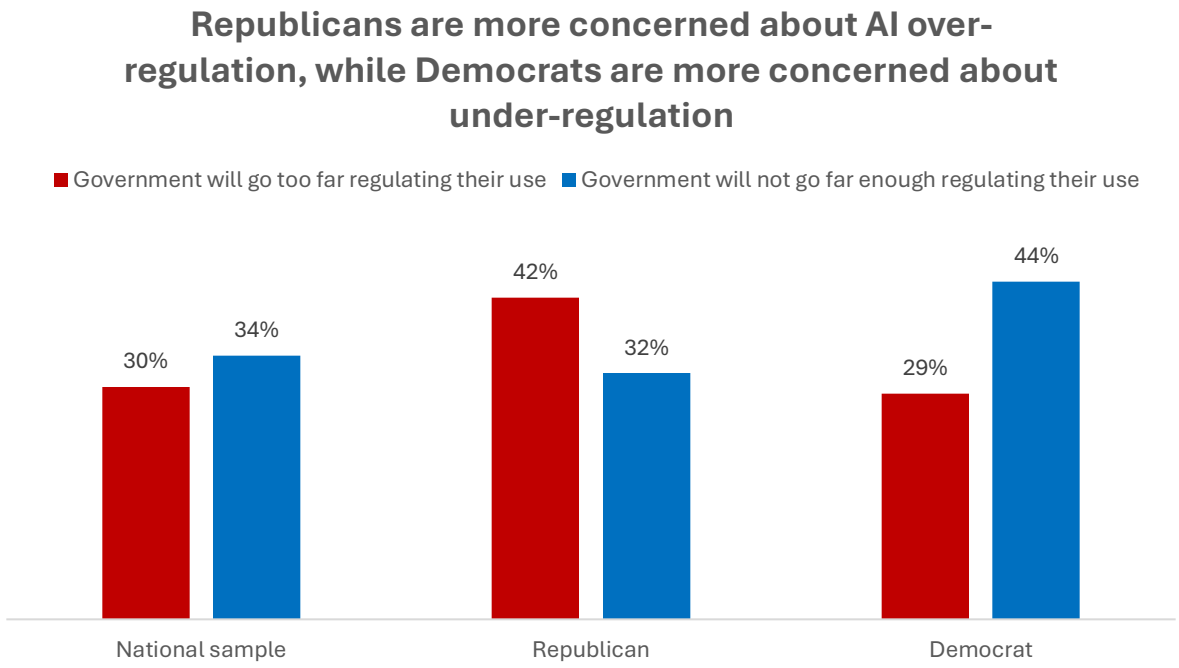


Figure 35. Partisan differences in regulatory concerns about chatbots. Question: As chatbots like ChatGPT become more widespread, which is your greater concern of the following? Source: Summer 2025 AI Global Public Opinion Tracker at USC

The data shows a sharp partisan divide in how Americans view the regulation of AI tools like ChatGPT. Although nationally, opinions are relatively balanced, breaking the numbers down by party affiliation reveals a very different picture.

Republicans are significantly more likely to fear overregulation, with 42% saying the government will impose excessive restrictions, compared to just 32% who see insufficient oversight as the bigger problem – aligned, as expected, with a broader conservative preference for limited government intervention in markets and emerging technologies.

Democrats, by contrast, lean in the opposite direction: 44% are more concerned about the government not regulating AI enough, while only 29% fear excessive oversight, reflecting the party's tendency to support stronger consumer protections and proactive measures to address potential risks from new technologies.

Similarly, 2025 Pew Research study[7] reveals that close to 60% of U.S. adults (and experts alike) worry the government won't regulate AI effectively, with Democrats more concerned than Republicans (64% vs. 55%).

The findings highlight that the AI regulation debate is not purely technical but deeply ideological. This polarization could complicate efforts to pass balanced legislation, especially as AI adoption accelerates. Without bipartisan consensus, the U.S. risks either under-regulating in ways that leave gaps for misuse-or over-regulating in ways that slow innovation.

[7] https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2025/04/03/how-the-us-public-and-ai-experts-view-artificial-intelligence/#regulation-and-responsible-ai

Impact of AI on future jobs

Impact of AI on future jobs

Optimism about the future of jobs is on the rise.

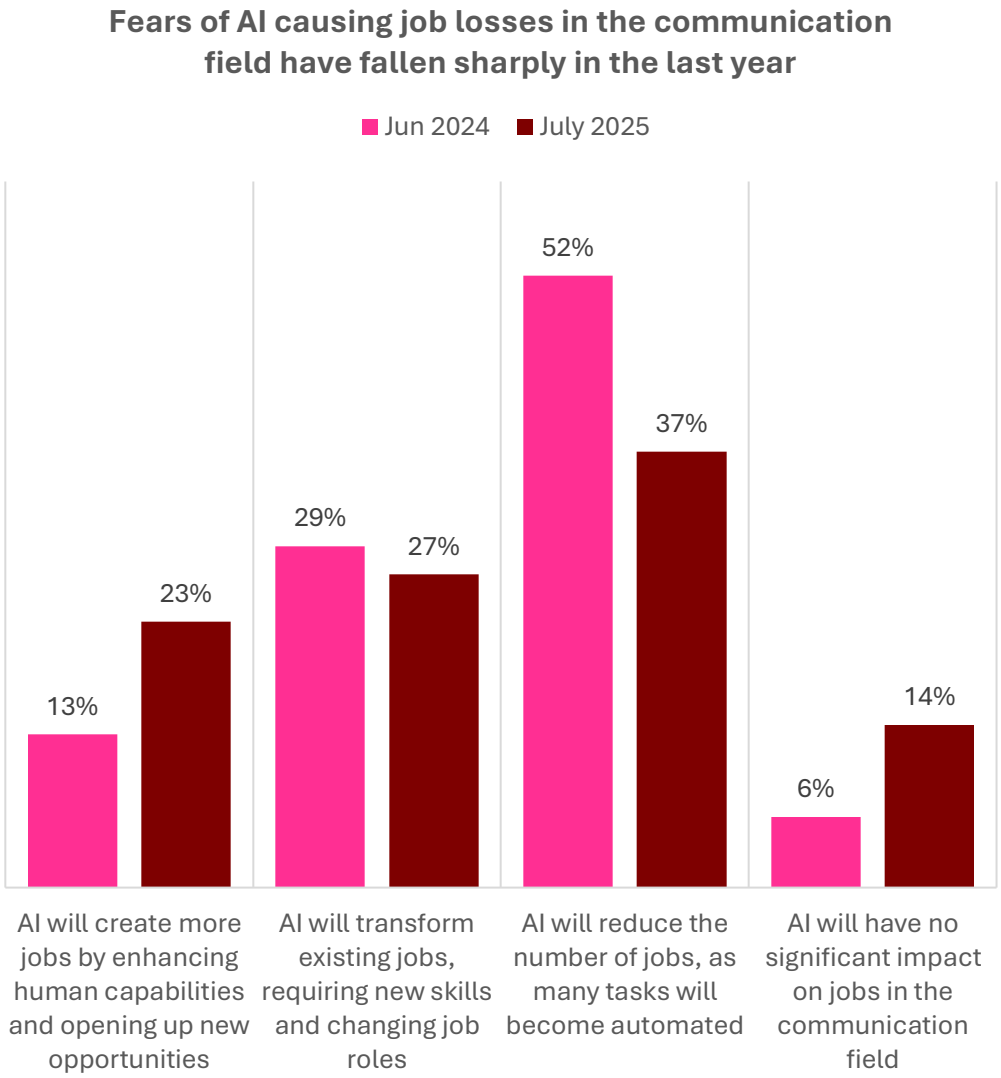


Figure 36. Shifting public perceptions of AI's impact on communication jobs. Question: Considering the increasing use of AI assistants in tasks like writing emails, creating content, or managing social media, how do you think these technologies will affect jobs in the communication field? Source: AI Global Public Opinion Tracker at USC (Wave 2&3)

U.S. adult perceptions of AI's impact on communication jobs have shifted notably over the past year. In July 2025, 23% believe AI will create more jobs by augmenting human skills, up from 13% in June 2024.

Transformation of current jobs remain the main option for 27% (quite similar with data from last year).

Although a substantial 37% still worry AI will reduce job numbers through automation, this share is down from 42% last year. A growing 14% view the impact as negligible.

Thus findings indicate that attitudes are moving away from a simplistic "AI will cut jobs" narrative toward a more nuanced view that emphasizes role transformation and skill evolution. Such reframing mirrors broader labor market analyses. McKinsey describes "superagency"[8] where AI amplifies human creativity and productivity rather than replacing it. PwC's 2025 Global AI Jobs

[8] https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/mckinsey-digital/our-insights/superagency-in-the-workplace-empowering-people-to-unlock-ais-full-potential-at-work

Barometer notes AI-exposed workers receive up to a 56% wage premium and industries integrating AI see up to four times faster revenue growth[9].

However, a different Microsoft study cautions that communication-intensive roles like writers and translators remain among the most exposed to disruption[10], an evolving perception underscoring the urgency for reskilling and proactive adaptation in the communication sector.

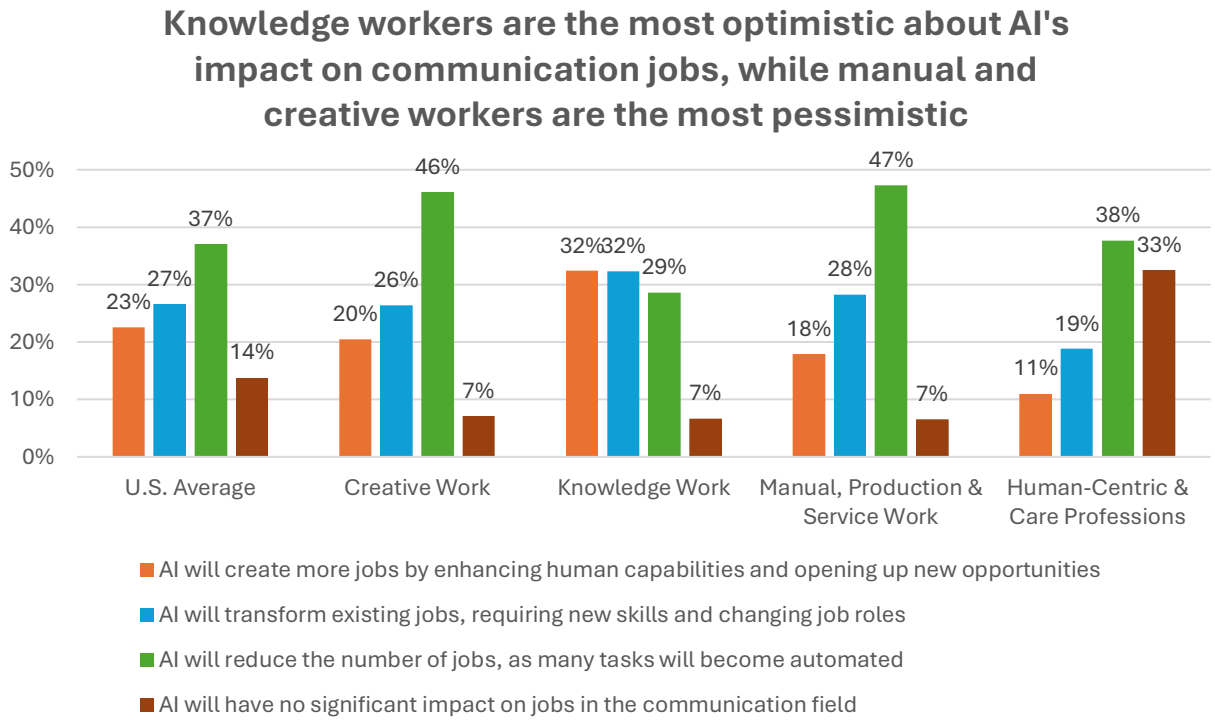


Figure 37. Expectations of AI's effect on communication jobs across occupational "super-groups". Question: How do you think these technologies will affect jobs in the communication field? Source: Summer 2025 AI Global Public Opinion Tracker at USC

When it comes to the future of jobs in communication, opinions are sharply divided, by profession. Profession-specific patterns are striking. **Creative workers and those in manual, production, and service roles are the most pessimistic**, with 46% and 47% respectively predicting job losses due to automation. **Knowledge workers are more balanced**, splitting almost evenly between expecting transformation (32%) and expecting job cuts (29%), with another 32% anticipating new opportunities. **In human-centric and care professions, skepticism is tempered by uncertainty**: 38% foresee job losses, but a substantial 33% believe AI will have little or no impact on their work—reflecting the sector's reliance on interpersonal skills and trust.

[9] https://www.pwc.com/gx/en/issues/artificial-intelligence/ai-jobs-barometer.html
[10] https://www.investopedia.com/microsoft-study-identifies-jobs-vulnerable-to-ai-is-your-position-secure-11781758?

These findings highlight a core tension: while some see AI as a tool for growth and innovation in communication, many - especially in hands-on or creative roles - fear it as a disruptor that will shrink opportunities rather than expand them.

So, who expects AI to replace jobs?

Our regression model points to a clear profile: people working in knowledge and creative roles, men, younger adults, and those who already know a fair bit about AI. Each of these factors is linked to stronger expectations that AI will take over human work. In particular, employees in knowledge jobs and in creative fields stand out as the most convinced that change is coming.

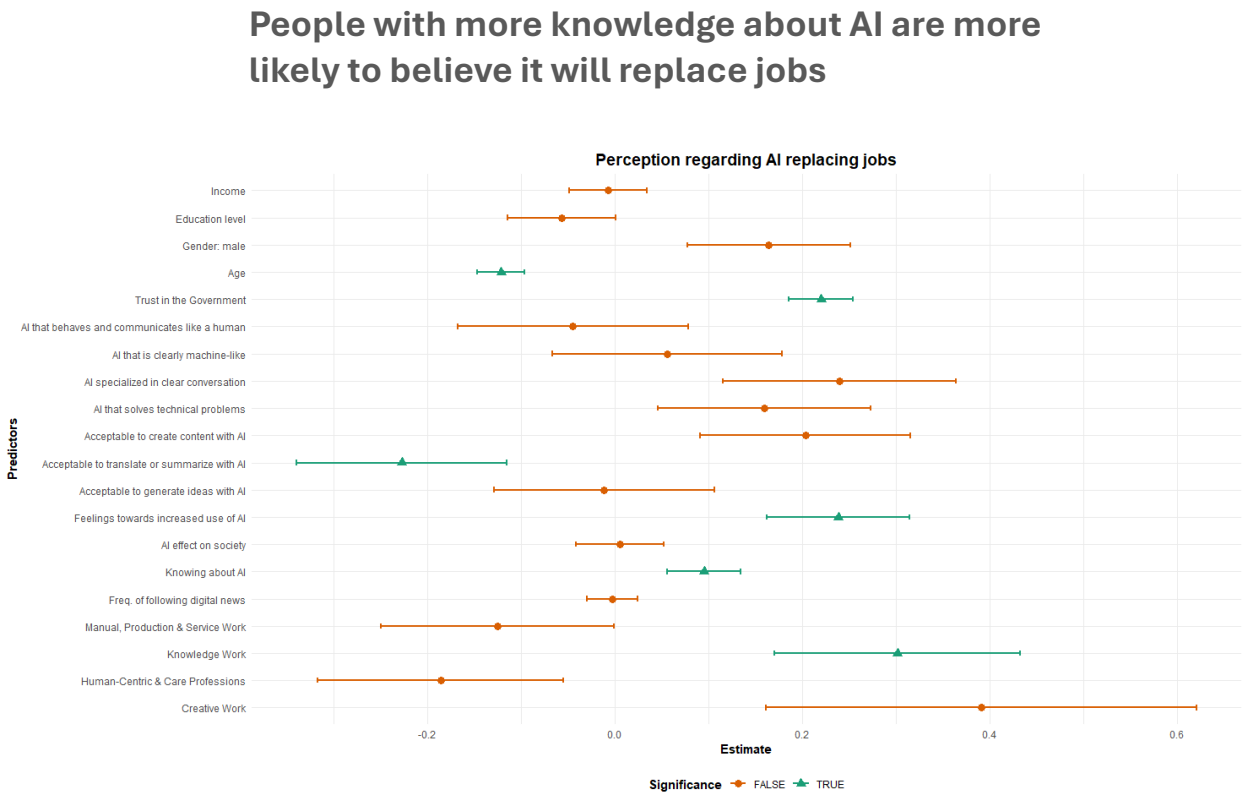


Figure 38. Predictive factors for the belief that AI will replace jobs. Source: Summer 2025 AI Global Public Opinion Tracker at USC

Attitudes and familiarity amplify that view. People who feel generally comfortable with AI's growing presence - and who say they're familiar with the technology - are more likely to predict job displacement. Seeing AI as good at holding clear conversations also nudges expectations toward replacement, suggesting that when people experience convincing, capable systems, they extrapolate to the workplace.

Everyday acceptance splits the public. If you're okay with AI helping *create* content, you're more inclined to think it will replace jobs. But if you mainly accept AI for safer, bounded tasks like translation or summarization, you're less likely to foresee widespread displacement. The signal here is simple: **the broader and more generative the role you allow AI to play, the more disruptive you expect it to be**.

Demographics tell a secondary story. Age is the strongest personal divider: the older the respondent, the less they expect AI to take jobs. Men are more pessimistic about job security than women. Interestingly, higher trust in government also tracks with stronger expectations of replacement - perhaps reflecting a belief that policymakers won't (or can't) slow the technology's advance. By contrast, education and income show no clear link once other factors are considered.

What doesn't move opinions? Following digital news more often, general views on whether AI is good or bad for society, and working in manual or care-focused jobs are not reliable predictors of expecting job loss.

Bottom line: expectations about AI and work are driven less by media diets or macro attitudes and more by proximity to knowledge work, male identity, youth, comfort with expansive AI uses, and hands-on familiarity with the tools themselves.

New questions about the future of jobs

To better understand AI's impact on the future of jobs, we added three new questions in this wave of measurement. Below are the responses, offering relevant nuances on public opinion.

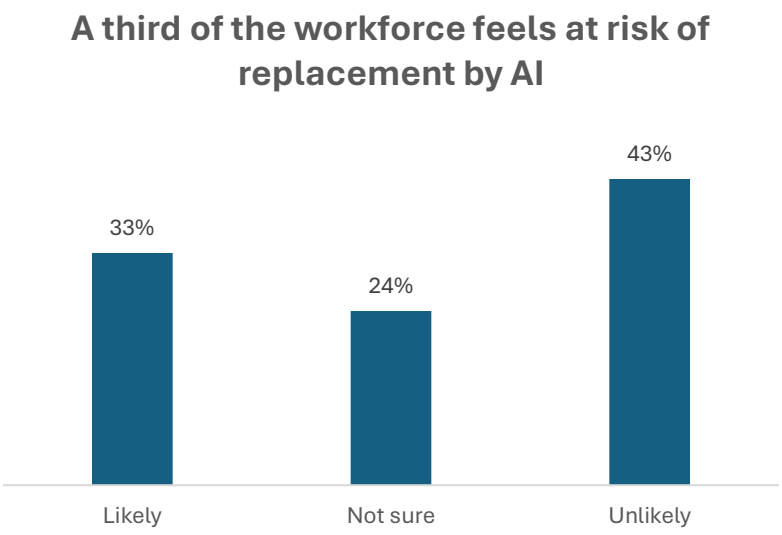


Figure 39. Perceived risk of job replacement by AI. Question: How likely is it that your current job could be partially or fully replaced by AI in the next five years? Source: Summer 2025 AI Global Public Opinion Tracker at USC

This new question offers a fresh perspective on job security in the AI era, providing a snapshot of how U.S. adults perceive the short-to-medium-term risk to their own positions. One-third (33%) believe their current job is likely to be at least partially replaced by AI within five years, a substantial share given the rapid adoption of automation tools. Meanwhile, 24% remain uncertain, a sign that many workers are unsure how AI will intersect with their roles, perhaps reflecting uneven awareness of AI's capabilities across industries.

The largest group, 43%, see replacement as unlikely, suggesting a degree of confidence either in the resilience of their profession, in the complementary, rather than substitutive, role of AI – or simply a type of job that involves less activities compatible with AI.

By including this question for the first time, the survey captures a baseline for tracking whether anxiety about AI-driven job loss will grow or fade as technology and policy mature.

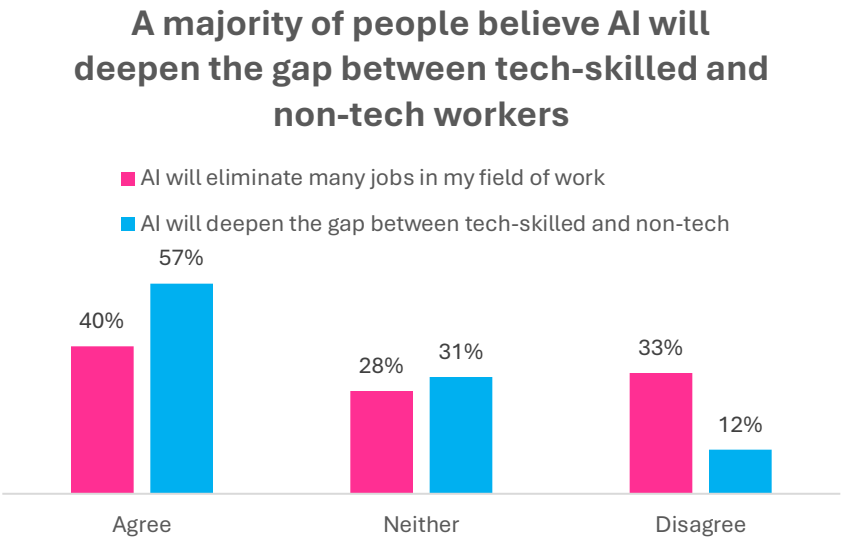


Figure 40. Public agreement with statements on AI's impact on jobs and skills. Question: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Source: Summer 2025 AI Global Public Opinion Tracker at USC

Other new questions explore not only fears of job elimination but also concerns about widening inequality between workers with strong tech skills and those without.

Four in ten respondents (40%) believe AI will eliminate many jobs in their field, echoing ongoing anxieties about automation's disruptive potential.

Americans are divided on AI's impact on jobs, with creative and knowledge workers feeling most at risk. Nationally, 33% believe they could be replaced within five years, and 40% expect AI to cut many jobs in their field.

Creative (47%) and knowledge workers (46%) show the highest personal replacement fears, alongside major concerns about sector-wide job losses. Manual, production, and service workers are less worried (25% expect replacement), while human-centric and care professions see the lowest personal risk (20%), though a third still anticipate industry cuts. Overall, job anxiety is highest where AI can easily automate cognitive or creative tasks.

The more striking finding is that a majority (57%) agree AI will deepen the gap between tech-skilled and non-tech workers, thus suggesting that the public increasingly sees AI not just as a threat to employment volume but as a driver of structural inequality in the labor market.

Only 12% reject the idea of a widening skills gap, indicating that most people acknowledge some degree of risk, even if they are uncertain about the scale. Meanwhile, a significant minority (about a third) disagree that AI will eliminate many jobs, underscoring a split between those who expect displacement and those who anticipate adaptation or role transformation instead.

While AI adoption is likely to boost productivity, it will disproportionately benefit those with advanced digital capabilities. Tracking these perceptions over time will help reveal whether inequality concerns rise alongside actual market shifts.

Impact of AI on journalism

AI impact on journalism

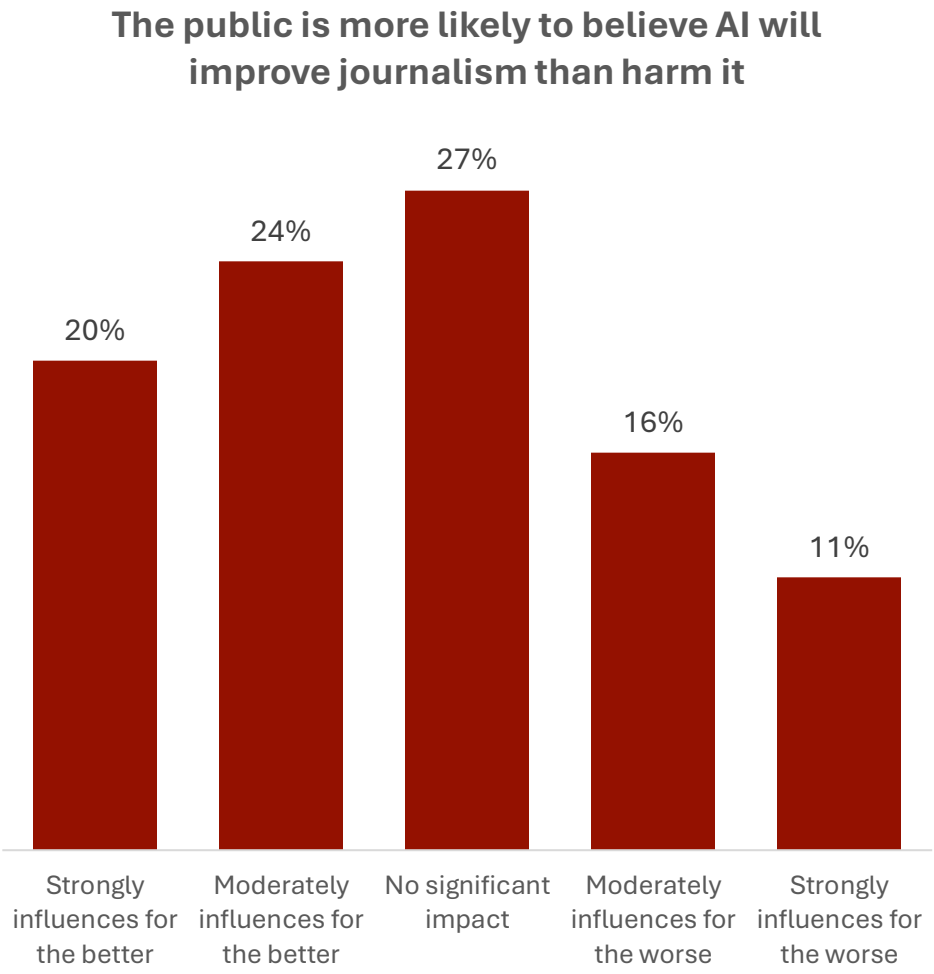


Figure 41. Public outlook on AI's influence on the quality of journalism. Question: To what extent do you believe AI can influence the quality of journalism for better or for worse? Source: Summer 2025 AI Global Public Opinion Tracker at USC

Public perceptions of AI's impact on journalism have shifted modestly but meaningfully over the past year. The share of respondents who believe AI can improve the quality of journalism rose from 42% in November 2024 to 44% in July 2025, suggesting a gradual increase in optimism. This may reflect growing familiarity with AI-assisted tools for fact-checking, data analysis, and content production.

At the same time, pessimism has eased: the proportion who see AI as harming journalism dropped sharply from 35% to 27%, a decline which could indicate that early fears about misinformation and loss of editorial control are giving way to a more nuanced view, perhaps influenced by public discussions on transparency and ethical AI use in media.

Interestingly, the group who believe AI will have no significant impact grew slightly (from 23% to 27%), pointing to a segment of the public that remains skeptical about AI's transformative potential in journalism—either for better or worse.

Overall, these trends align with findings from the Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2025[11], which highlights both the opportunities AI offers for improving efficiency and personalization, and the persistent need for human oversight to preserve editorial integrity.

[11] https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/digital-news-report/2025/how-audiences-think-about-news-personalisation-ai-era

Belief that AI increases disinformation is the strongest predictor of a negative look on AI in journalism

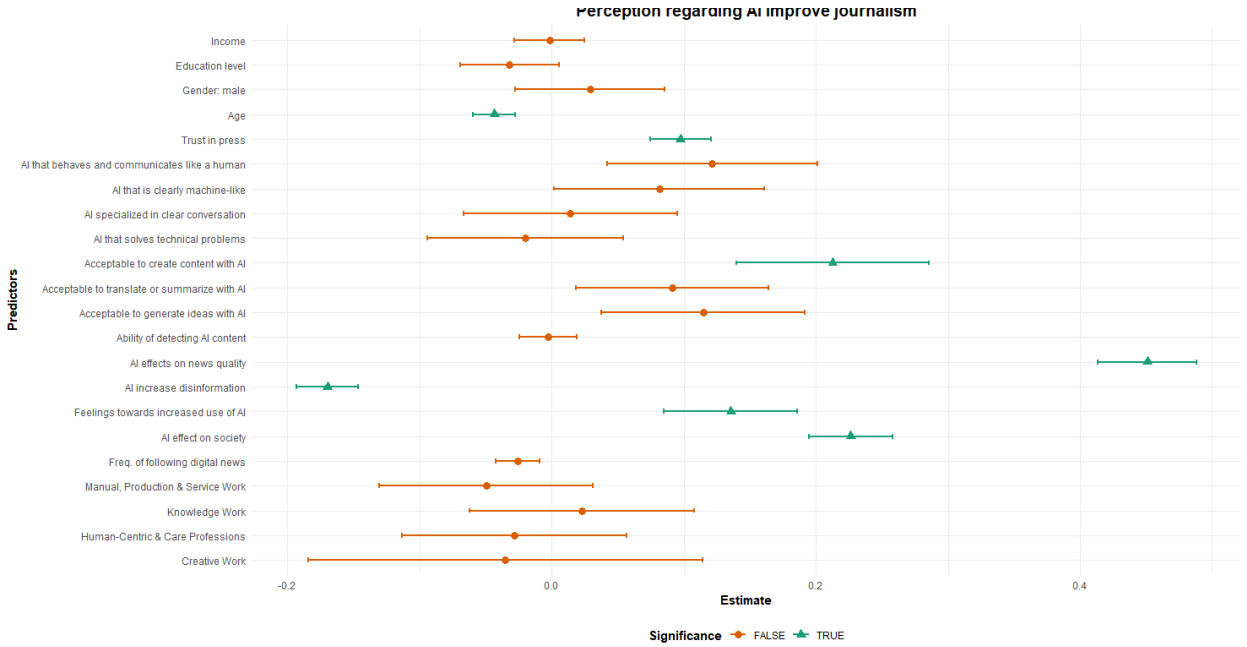


Figure 42. Predictors for the belief that AI will improve the quality of journalism. Source: Summer 2025 AI Global Public Opinion Tracker at USC

Here's what moves public opinion about AI's impact on journalism in the U.S.

The clearest divider is worldview, not demographics. People who already feel positive about AI's overall impact on society, and who think AI can lift news quality, are markedly more likely to say AI will improve journalism. Optimism is a powerful accelerant.

Practical comfort also matters. Acceptance of everyday uses - letting AI translate or summarize, brainstorm ideas, or even help create content - is strongly associated with believing AI can make journalism better. When people see concrete, helpful roles for AI, their expectations for the newsroom rise.

On the flip side, worries about misinformation pull views in the opposite direction. If someone thinks AI will increase disinformation, support for AI improving journalism drops sharply - the strongest negative signal in the model. Confidence in personally spotting AI-generated content, however, doesn't meaningfully change opinions either way.

Institutional trust is part of the story. Higher trust in the press is linked to more optimism about AI's contribution to journalism, suggesting that confidence in news organizations opens the door to

seeing technology as a partner rather than a threat. Frequent followers of digital news are also more upbeat, likely because they encounter more examples of useful AI in information spaces.

Preferences about how AI should behave play a role: favoring AI that communicates in a more human-like way tracks with a belief that it can improve journalism, while a preference for clearly machine-like systems shows no clear effect.

Demographics, by contrast, fade into the background. Age shows a small negative association (older adults are less convinced AI will help) while income, gender, education, and job type show no consistent, meaningful differences once other factors are considered. In short: attitudes and media habits, not who you are, do the heavy lifting.

Bottom line: optimism about AI's usefulness, trust in the press, and hands-on acceptance of practical AI tasks are the key predictors of believing AI will improve journalism; fear of more disinformation is the main brake.

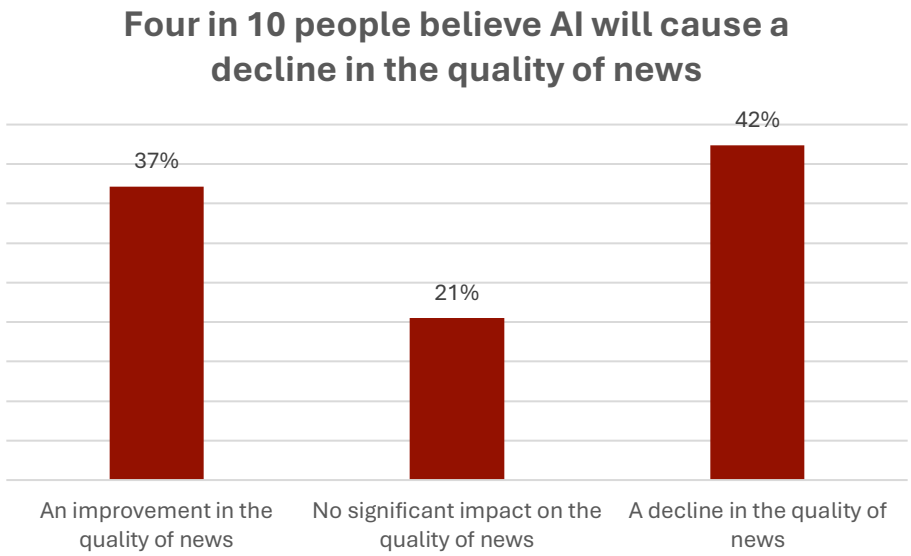


Figure 43. Public expectations regarding AI's impact on the quality of journalism. Question: Do you think the use of AI in journalism will mostly lead to... Source: Summer 2025 AI Global Public Opinion Tracker at USC

The new question on AI's role in journalism reveals a public that remains sharply divided, but with a clear tilt toward skepticism. A plurality of respondents (42%) believe that the use of AI in journalism will mostly lead to a decline in news quality, reflecting persistent concerns about automation introducing errors, stripping nuance or amplifying biases without adequate editorial oversight.

Meanwhile, 37% see AI as a potential driver of improvement, pointing to its capacity for speeding up fact-checking, analyzing large datasets and freeing journalists from routine tasks to focus on in-depth reporting. This optimism aligns with examples of AI-powered investigative tools already being used in major newsrooms.

The remaining 21% expect little to no significant impact, a stance that could indicate either limited exposure to AI-driven journalism or a belief that human editorial processes will remain dominant regardless of new tools.

Taken together, these results suggest that while there is openness to AI's potential, a trust deficit persists. The data mirror broader trends in technology adoption: without strong transparency measures and clear accountability for mistakes, skepticism will likely remain the dominant sentiment.

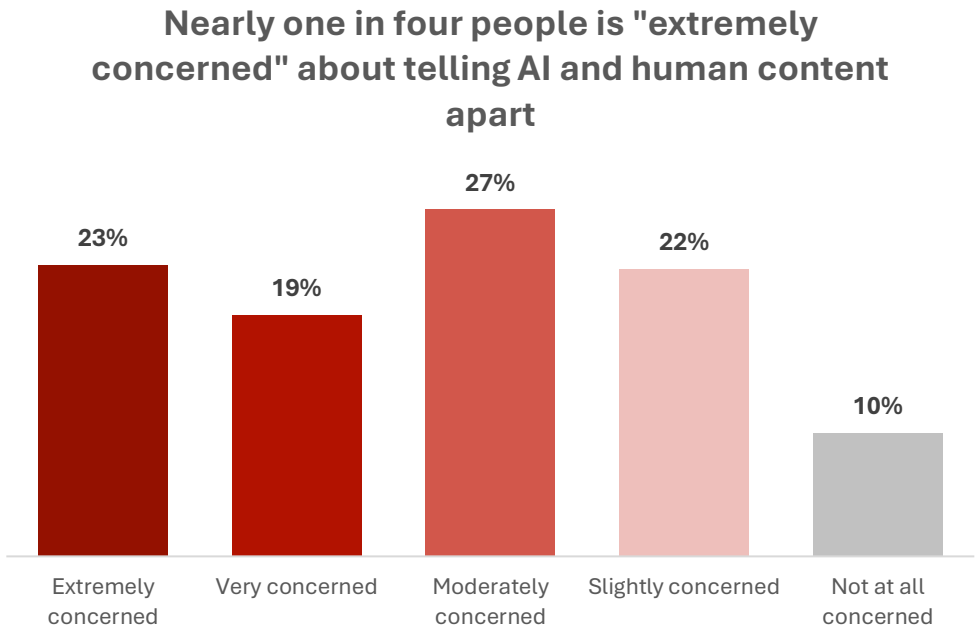


Figure 44. Public concern over identifying AI-generated content. Question: How concerned are you about not being able to tell whether content was written by a human or by AI? Source: Summer 2025 AI Global Public Opinion Tracker at USC

Concern about distinguishing AI-generated from human-written content remains high, with 42% of respondents expressing strong concern and a further 27% moderately concerned, pointing to a persistent trust challenge in the media and information ecosystem, where the inability to verify authorship risks eroding public confidence in content authenticity. The detailed breakdown shows that 23% are "extremely concerned" and 19% "very concerned," underscoring that for a significant portion of the public, this is not merely a theoretical issue but an urgent one. At the same time, 32% are less concerned.

The divide reflects broader societal attitudes toward AI: those with higher digital literacy or professional exposure to AI may see it as manageable, while others - especially in contexts where misinformation can have serious consequences - view it as a direct threat. As AI-generated text becomes more sophisticated, maintaining transparency about authorship and strengthening detection standards will be critical. Without such safeguards, the gap between highly concerned and less concerned audiences could deepen, potentially fragmenting public trust in journalism and online discourse.

Impact of AI on mis/disinformation

AI impact on mis/disinformation

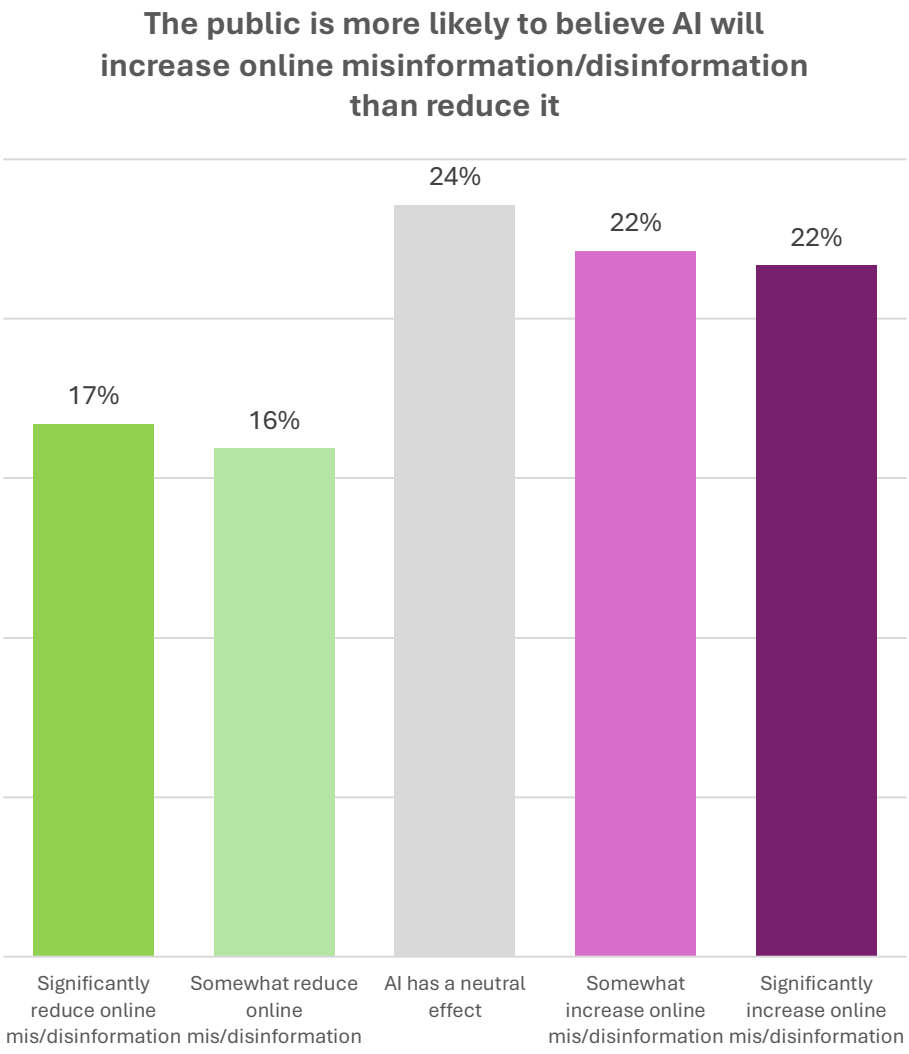


Figure 45. Public perception of AI's role in online misinformation/disinformation. Question: To what extent do you think AI can contribute to online misinformation and disinformation? Source: Summer 2025 AI Global Public Opinion Tracker at USC

Public opinion is divided on whether artificial intelligence can help with the spread of false information online. That includes both misinformation - false claims shared by people who believe them - and disinformation, which is false content created to deceive. Only 17% of respondents believe AI can significantly reduce such problems, and a further 16% think it can somewhat help, a combined 33% who see AI as a net positive in this area. By contrast, 44% believe AI could exacerbate the issue (22% "somewhat" and 22% "significantly"), pointing to fears that generative AI tools could be weaponized to create convincing false narratives at scale.

Interestingly, the largest single group - 24% - believes AI will have a neutral effect, suggesting skepticism about its transformative potential for either harm or benefit. This middle ground may reflect uncertainty about whether technological safeguards, fact-checking algorithms and detection systems can keep pace with the speed and sophistication of AI-generated misinformation.[12]

The split in public opinion suggests that trust in AI as a solution will depend heavily on transparency, regulation, and visible success stories in combating harmful content.

[12] These findings echo recent research by the Center for Countering Digital Hate, WEF (*The Global Risks Report 2025*) and the Reuters Institute, which highlight AI's dual potential: it can automate content verification and enhance detection, but it can also produce misinformation faster than it can be moderated.

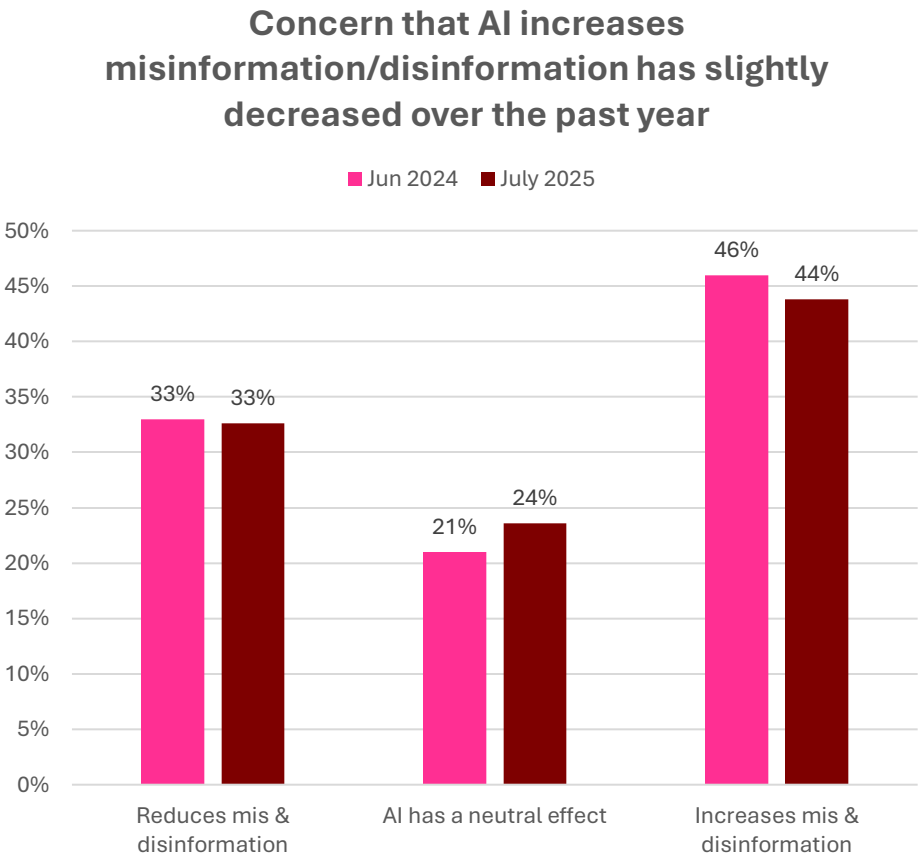


Figure 46. A year-over-year comparison of public perception of AI's role in misinformation. Question: To what extent do you think AI can contribute to online misinformation and disinformation? Source: AI Global Public Opinion Tracker at USC (Waves 1&3)

Public attitudes toward AI's role in online misinformation and disinformation have remained remarkably stable over the past year, with only subtle shifts that hint at evolving perceptions.

The share of respondents who believe AI reduces misinformation is steady at 33% in July 2025, up slightly from 31% in November 2024 but equal to June 2024 levels, indicating that optimism about AI's corrective potential has plateaued.

Those who see AI as having a neutral effect have increased marginally, from 21% in mid-2024 to 24% now. On the other hand, the proportion who believe AI increases misinformation has dipped slightly, from 47% in November 2024 to 44% today, though it remains the largest group. This sustained plurality aligns with widespread concerns that generative AI can mass-produce persuasive falsehoods at unprecedented scale, a risk underscored in recent studies by the Pew Research Center[13] and MIT Media Lab[14].

Overall, while outright fear has softened slightly, the data reveal a persistent trust gap: AI is still seen more as a potential amplifier of misinformation than as a definitive solution.

[13] https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2025/04/28/americans-largely-foresee-ai-having-negative-effects-on-news-journalists/
[14] https://www.media.mit.edu/projects/ai-false-memories/overview

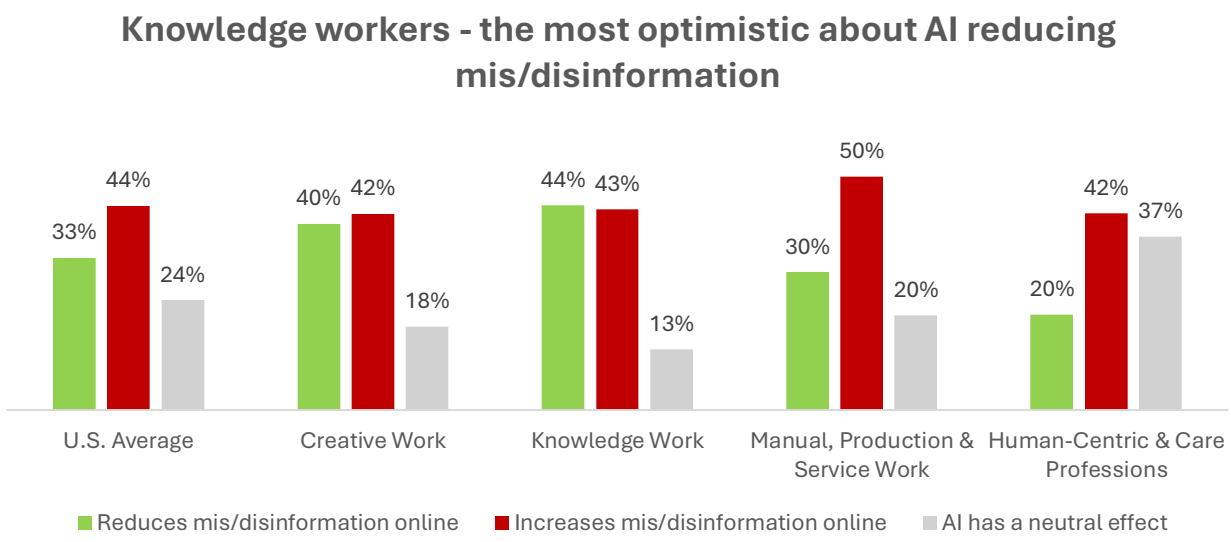


Figure 47. Perception of AI's role in misinformation and disinformation across occupational "super-groups". Question: To what extent do you think AI can contribute to online misinformation and disinformation? Source: Summer 2025 AI Global Public Opinion Tracker at USC

Concerns about AI's role in spreading online mis/disinformation are widespread but vary significantly by profession. **Manual, production, and service workers are the most alarmed - half believe AI will worsen the problem, with only 30% seeing it as a solution**.

Creative and knowledge workers are split almost evenly between those who see AI as reducing false information (40% and 44%) and those who think it will make things worse (42% and 43%). This balance suggests a mix of optimism about AI's potential in fact-checking and content moderation, alongside fears about its capacity to generate convincing false content.

Human-centric and care professions are also divided, with 42% citing a harmful effect but a relatively high 37% believing AI will have a neutral influence.

Who thinks AI will turbocharge mis/disinformation?

In our regression model of U.S. adults, the perception that AI will fuel mis/disinformation is shaped far more by exposure and outlook than by simple demographics. The strongest signals cluster around what people read, what they know about AI, and whether they see the technology as useful or risky.

Disinformation worries gather among the most exposed and informed: frequent digital-news followers, people who say they know about AI, and the more educated. Manual/service workers are also more likely to expect AI to fuel falsehoods. Counterweights include optimism about AI's social effects, comfort with its increased use, and seeing it as technically capable; idea-generation acceptance is a notable buffer.

Higher education linked to stronger belief that AI increases disinformation

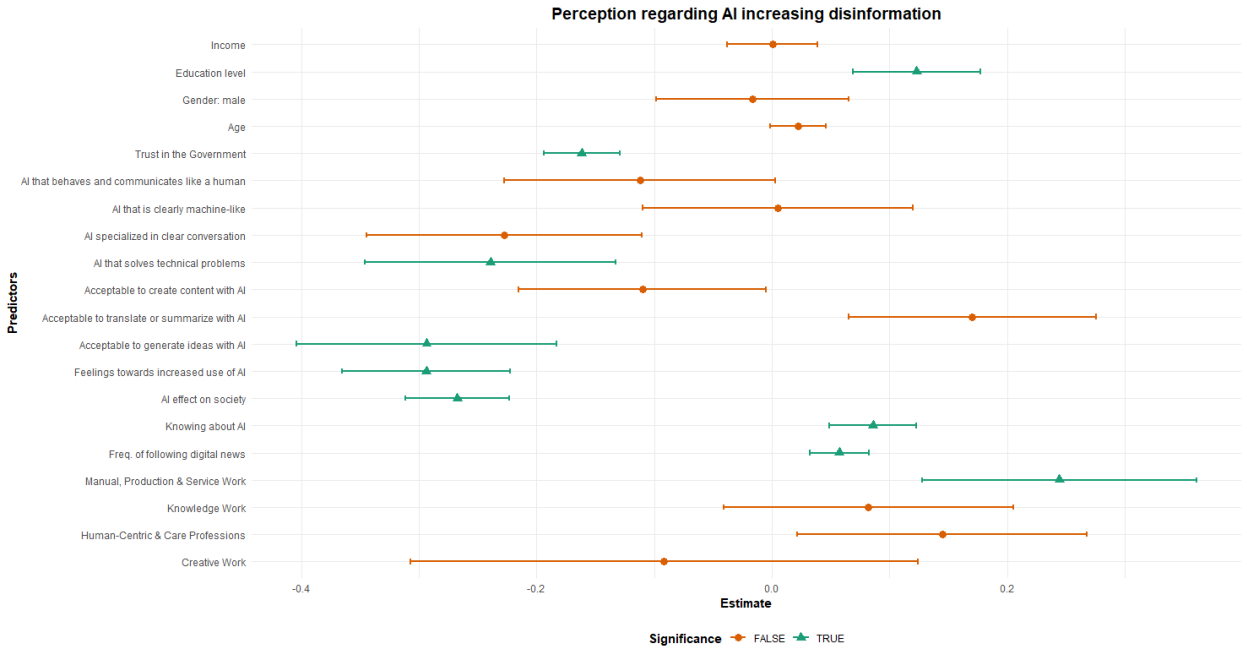


Figure 48. Regression estimates for predictors of perceiving AI as increasing disinformation. Source: Summer 2025 AI Global Public Opinion Tracker at USC

Four predictors push concern upward.

- First, people working in manual, production and service jobs are notably more likely to expect AI to boost falsehoods.
- Second, heavy followers of digital news lean the same way - news junkies spot the problem early.
- Third, those who say they "know about AI" also anticipate more disinformation.
- Finally, higher education correlates with greater worry.

Several attitudes dampen fear. When respondents feel good about AI's growing presence, or say AI is generally beneficial to society, they are less likely to foresee a disinformation surge. Believing that AI is competent - solving technical problems or carrying on clear conversations -also lowers concern. Comfort with using AI to **generate ideas** shows the steepest drop in worry. Higher trust in government is another buffer against alarm. Together, these point to a simple story: **experience and optimism blunt anxiety**.

Meanwhile, some things don't move opinions. Age, gender and income show no reliable association, nor do most occupational groups outside manual/service work. Preferences for

"human-like" or clearly machine-like behavior don't matter much, and simply accepting AI for translation/summarization or for full content creation does not reliably predict worry either.

Bottom line: **anxiety about AI-driven disinformation concentrates among the most exposed (highly educated news followers who already know the tools) while trust, optimism and hands-on, idea-level uses temper that anxiety**. The debate is not just about what AI can do; it's about whether people feel equipped to steer it.

AI types

AI types / Human-like or Machine-like?

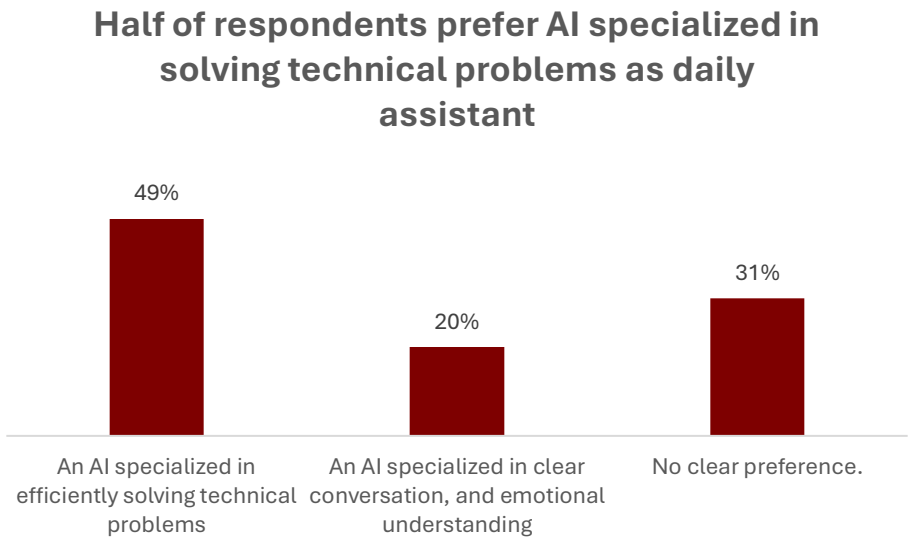


Figure 49. Preferred type of AI for daily assistance. Question: If you had to choose only one type of AI as your daily assistant, which would you prefer? Source: Summer 2025 AI Global Public Opinion Tracker at USC

When asked to choose just one type of AI for daily assistance, nearly half of respondents (49%) opted for a tool specialized in efficiently solving technical problems. This strong preference suggests that practical utility remains the top priority for most people, with efficiency and problem-solving skills outweighing softer capabilities like conversation or empathy. Only 20% said they would prefer an AI focused on clear communication and emotional understanding, indicating that while "human-like" interaction is valued, it is not the primary expectation from AI assistants.

Interestingly, 31% expressed no clear preference, which could signal two things: either respondents see value in both types of capabilities, or they are still exploring how AI might best fit into their routines.

As AI tools continue to evolve, this divide between those seeking efficiency and those valuing human-like interaction could shape how companies design and market AI assistants. For now, the data shows that "getting things done" clearly wins over "having a good conversation."

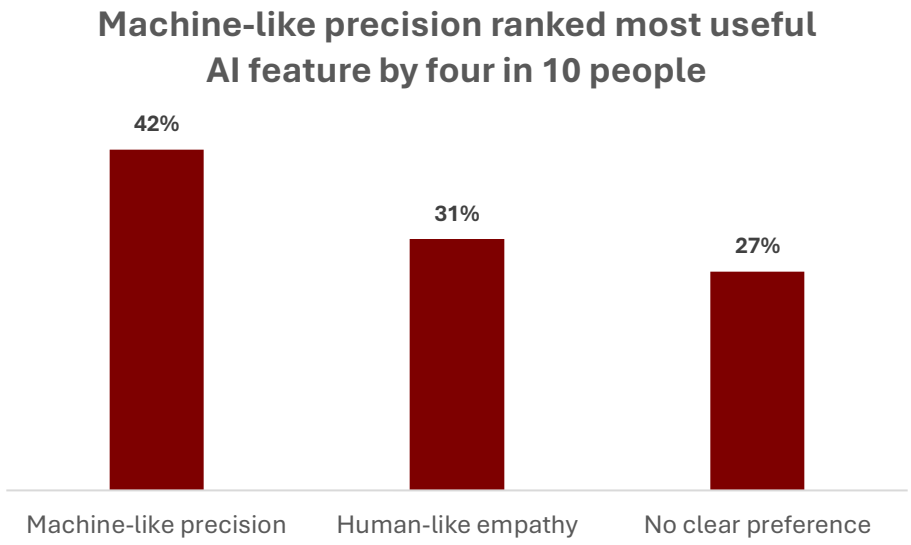


Figure 50. Preferred AI feature considered most useful. Question: If you had to choose only one feature of AI that you consider useful, which would you prefer? Source: Summer 2025 AI Global Public Opinion Tracker at USC

When asked to identify the single most useful feature of AI, respondents leaned strongly toward **machine-like precision** (42%), underscoring a continued emphasis on accuracy, efficiency and reliability and mirroring earlier findings in the survey showing that problem-solving capability is the dominant expectation for AI in daily use.

However, a notable 31% selected **human-like empathy** as their top choice, confirming that a significant minority values relational and emotional capabilities. This group may be more inclined toward AI's role in customer service, mental health support or other interaction-heavy contexts where trust and understanding matter as much as technical correctness.

Again, 27% expressed no clear preference, potentially reflecting uncertainty about which AI qualities are most beneficial, or perhaps an openness to a hybrid approach.

The split highlights an emerging design challenge for AI developers: while "hard skills" remain in higher demand, "soft skills" are not far behind. Studies like PwC's *CX in the age of AI and beyond*[15] report (2025) have found that combining accuracy with emotionally intelligent responses can increase user satisfaction and brand trust. As AI adoption expands, the balance between these two attributes could become a defining factor in competitive differentiation.

[15] https://www.pwc.in/assets/pdfs/pwc-et-cx-report-2025.pdf

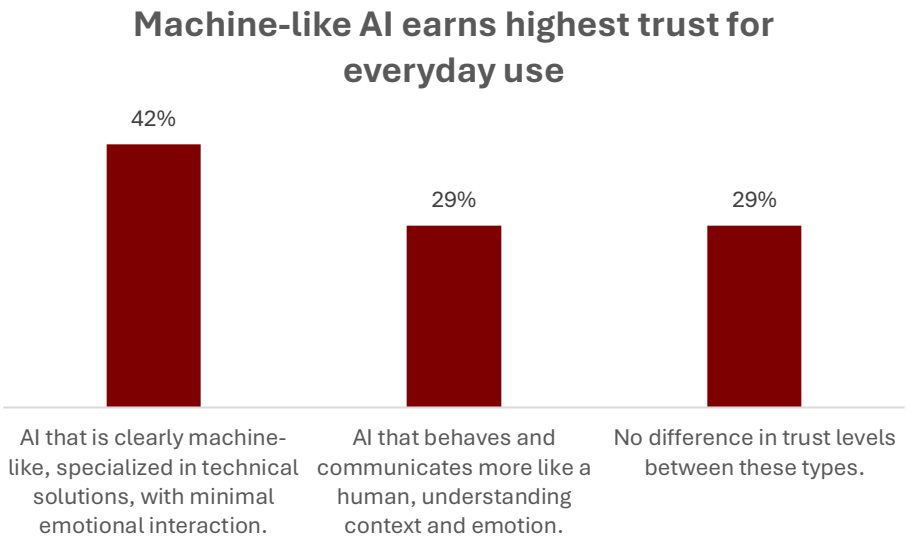


Figure 51. Comparison of trust levels in machine-like versus human-like AI. Question: Which type of AI would you trust more in your everyday life? Source: Summer 2025 AI Global Public Opinion Tracker at USC

Trust in AI appears to lean toward the **machine-like** model, with **42%** of respondents favoring systems specialized in technical solutions and minimal emotional interaction, confirming that for many users, predictability and precision remain central to perceived trustworthiness.

By contrast, **29%** express greater trust in **human-like AI** - systems that understand context, emotion and nuance and communicate accordingly. This group likely values relational engagement and interpretive capacity, qualities that can enhance communication in service, healthcare or education.

Interestingly, another **29%** report **no difference** in trust between the two types, indicating that for nearly a third of the public, trust depends less on the AI's interaction style and more on other factors.

With AI becoming more integrated into everyday decision-making, trust will hinge both on functionality and on the fit between the AI's style and the user's situational needs.

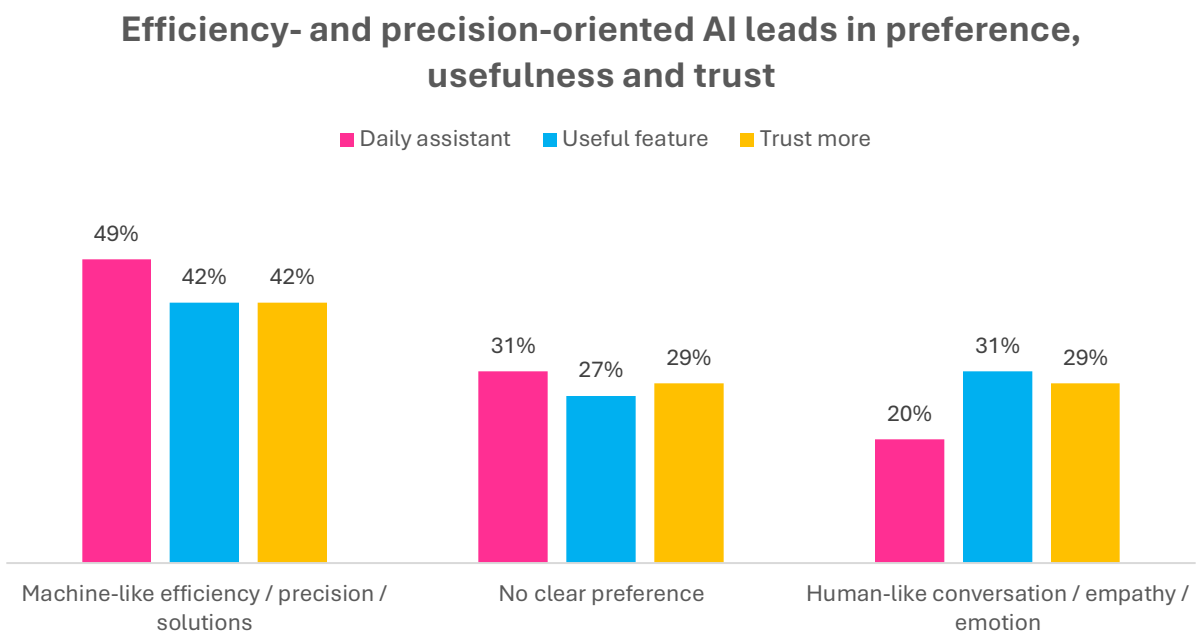


Figure 52. Comparison of AI type preferences, perceived usefulness, and trust levels. Source: Summer 2025 AI Global Public Opinion Tracker at USC

Across all three measures - daily assistant preference, most valued feature and trust - **machine-like AI** consistently comes out on top. Nearly half (49%) would choose a technically efficient AI as their daily assistant, and 42% name precision as the most useful feature and the most trusted trait. By contrast, **human-like AI**, oriented toward conversation, empathy and emotion, garners smaller but steady support at around 20–31% across all questions. A significant middle group (27–31%) shows no strong preference, emphasizing that context or task type may be more decisive than style alone.

Framed in pop culture terms, respondents seem to lean more toward an "**R2-D2" model** - highly competent, efficient and reliable in technical problem-solving - than toward a "**C-3PO" model**, which excels in nuanced conversation, cultural fluency and interpersonal interpretation. The fact that empathy and human-like communication remain consistently valued by a substantial minority indicates that the "C-3PO" profile still has an important niche, particularly for roles requiring trust-building and emotional resonance.

Thus efficiency and problem-solving dominate current AI preferences, but public attitudes acknowledge the complementary role of human-like traits. In practice, the most trusted AI ecosystem might blend the strengths of both archetypes.

Trust in AI & other institutions

Political trust. Main divisions in the US, during elections

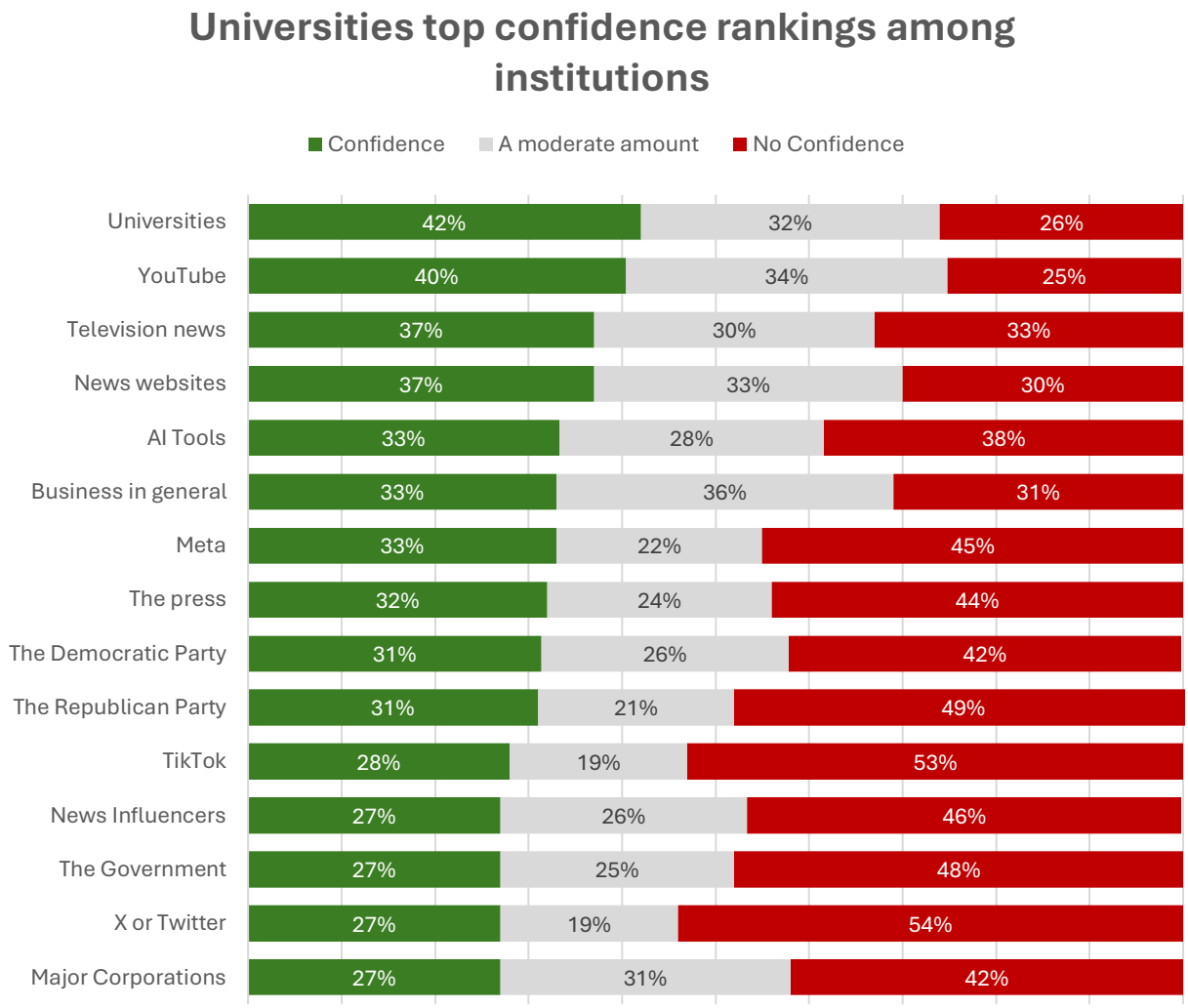


Figure 53. Confidence levels in selected institutions and platforms. Source: Summer 2025 AI Global Public Opinion Tracker at USC

Confidence in institutions remains uneven, with significant variation across sectors. Like last year, Universities top the list, with 42% of respondents expressing confidence, followed closely by YouTube (40%).

Traditional media outlets such as television news and news websites register confidence levels of 37%, while the press stands slightly lower at 32%. **New to the measurement this year, AI tools achieve a 33% confidence rate** (a score that, despite being mid-range, positions them above several established institutions, indicating a surprisingly strong entry for a first-time measure).

Business in general also scores 33%, while major tech platforms like Meta (33%) and TikTok (28%) face higher distrust levels, with "no confidence" responses at 45% and 53% respectively.

Political institutions fare worse: both the Democratic and Republican parties receive only 31% confidence, with nearly half of respondents expressing distrust. The government and major corporations record similarly low trust scores. Social platforms like X/Twitter have one of the highest distrust rates at 54%.

Looking at the year-on-year changes, some institutions have seen notable gains in confidence. Meta shows the largest increase (+10.9%), followed by news websites (+9.1%) and the Republican Party (+8%). TikTok (+7.8%), television news (+7%), and major corporations (+6.9%) also improve, though from relatively low starting points. By contrast, the Democratic Party remains stagnant (-0.1%), showing no meaningful recovery in public trust.

Trust in institutions varies sharply across professional groups, revealing clear divides in how different sectors perceive credibility.

- Knowledge workers consistently report higher trust than the national average in almost every institution measured - from the press (44%) and television news (52%) to universities (58%) and AI tools (47%).
- Creative workers tend to align more closely with national averages, showing moderate trust in most categories but stronger ratings for YouTube (54%) and universities (42%).
- By contrast, manual, production, and service workers display lower trust across the board, with especially low confidence in the press (25%), government (18%), and major corporations (18%).
- Human-centric and care professions are the most skeptical group overall, often posting the lowest ratings—particularly for political parties, news websites, and business in general.
- Other professional services generally mirror knowledge workers, with above-average trust in universities (47%), television news (45%), and AI tools (40%).

Knowledge-heavy sectors tend to trust more, while hands-on, service-oriented roles show deeper skepticism. These gaps could influence how different segments respond to media, technology adoption, and policy initiatives in the future.

Key takeaway. The relatively strong initial score for AI tools suggests that, despite ongoing debates over automation, misinformation and job displacement, the public is willing to place a moderate level of trust in these technologies, more than in some traditional political or media actors. This positioning could shift rapidly as AI tools become more embedded in everyday life, particularly if transparency, accountability and reliability are demonstrably upheld. In a context where institutional trust is fragile, AI tools start from a middle ground, offering both opportunity and risk for future perception.

Factor analysis. Two relevant segments of public

Legacy media cluster separately from digital media

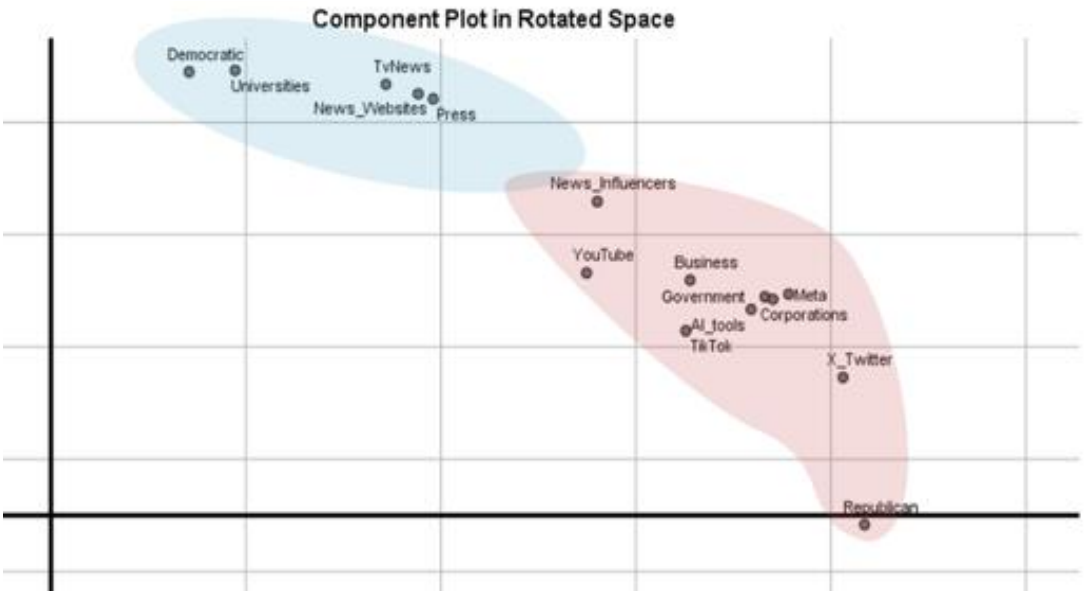


Figure 54. Factor analysis plot showing clusters of institutions by confidence patterns. Data source: Summer 2025 AI Global Public Opinion Tracker at USC

This chart presents the results of a factor analysis of trust scores across a range of institutions, revealing a clear two-cluster structure in public confidence. **Trust patterns were grouped into two clusters**. On the left (with blue) sit legacy, information-anchored institutions, like universities and mainstream news (TV news, news websites, the press), together with trust in the Democratic Party. On the right (with red), a second cluster aggregates market- and platform-centric actors: business and major corporations, government, big social platforms (X/Twitter, TikTok, Meta, YouTube), and – crucially - AI tools. In other words, confidence in AI co-varies with confidence in the business/"new tech" sphere, not with the university/news area.

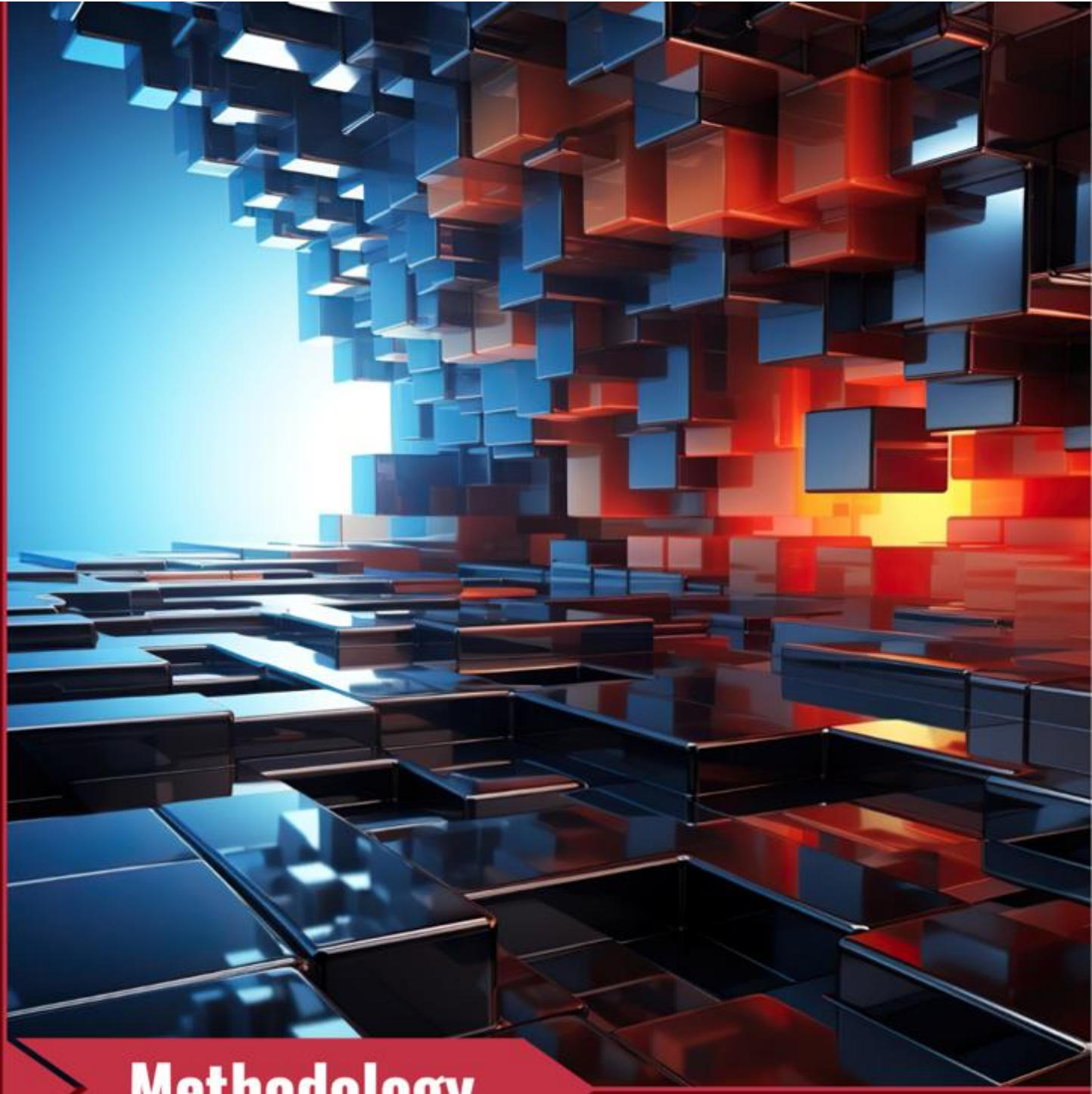
This pattern is consistent with broader public opinion. The Reuters Institute[16] documents persistent ideological splits over platforms and technology's role in news, with conservatives and progressives diverging on trust and governance of digital intermediaries. Pew likewise shows[17] stark partisan differences around the tech sector: most Republicans perceive big tech as biased toward liberals and are more likely to worry about censorship, while Democrats are comparatively less

[16] https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/digital-news-report/2025/dnr-executive-summary
[17] https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2024/04/29/americans-views-of-technology-companies-2/

skeptical of platforms' political tilt. Also, Gallup's recent readings[18] find overall partisan gaps in institutional confidence widening, reinforcing the idea that audiences sort across broad "institutional families," including business-oriented ones.

Although Republican voters often express suspicion of "big tech's" ideological lean, their preferences on regulation tend to emphasize the risks of government overreach more than under-regulation (another way trust can align with a pro-market governance stance). Our factor map captures that macro-sorting: AI confidence travels with confidence in business and high-visibility platforms, while trust in traditional educational and journalistic institutions coheres on a separate axis. This polarization of institutional trust helps explain why debates about AI (and platform governance) map so cleanly onto the country's wider political and cultural fault lines.

[18] https://news.gallup.com/poll/692633/democrats-confidence-institutions-sinks-new-low.aspx



Methodology

Methods. How we did this research

The survey explores various aspects of AI, including its impact on news consumption, social media engagement, and professional tasks related to communication. It aims to gather data on the frequency of AI tool usage, the types of tasks AI assists with, and the overall sentiment towards AI's role in communication.

Survey Design and Coordination

This survey was designed by a team of experts led by Dr. Dan Sultanescu and Dr. Linwan Wu, from the College of Information and Communications, University of South Carolina. This report benefited from the analyses and feedback of experts, including Dr. Tom Reichert, Randy Covington, Dr. Dana Sultanescu, Dr. Andreea Stancea, Leo Sultanescu and Emil Pislaru. Our primary objective was to measure the use and perception of artificial intelligence (AI) in communication within the United States.

Methodology

The survey was conducted in July 15-30 using the Computer-Assisted Web Interviewing (CAWI) method via the Qualtrics platform. A total of 1,009 complete responses were collected. It is important to note that online samples tend to under-represent the opinions and behaviors of people who are not online (typically those who are older, less affluent, and have limited formal education). Moreover, because people usually opt in to online survey panels, they tend to over-represent people who are well educated and socially and politically active.

Sampling and Data Collection

The survey sampled respondents across different age groups, genders, and regions in the United States. It included individuals from various educational backgrounds and professional fields, ensuring a comprehensive overview of AI usage and perceptions.

Weighting and Representativeness

The database was weighted to be representative of the U.S. voting population based on the most recent U.S. Census data. Adjustments were made for age, gender, education, ethnicity/race, location, income, and occupation type. These adjustments were relatively small, ensuring that the results accurately reflect the population.

Data Analysis

The data collected provides valuable insights into the current state of AI integration in communication. It highlights both the benefits and challenges associated with AI, offering a detailed look at how AI is perceived and utilized across various communication platforms and professional contexts.

Descriptives of the sample. Weighting

The Summer 2025 AI Global Public Opinion Tracker at USC survey was conducted in July, 2025, by University of South Carolina, using Qualtrics panel respondents. This poll is based on a nationally representative probability sample of 1,009 adults ages 18+.

The margin of sampling error is plus or minus 3 percentage points at the 95% confidence level, for results based on the entire sample of adults. The margin of sampling error considers the design effect. The margin of sampling error is higher and varies for results based on sub-samples. Sampling error is only one potential source of error. There may be other unmeasured non-sampling errors in this or any poll.

In questions that permit multiple responses, columns may total substantially more than 100%, depending on the number of different responses offered by each respondent.

The study was conducted in English. The data were weighted by age, gender, household income, Census region, education, occupation, race/ethnicity. We did not weight the sample by vote. The demographic benchmarks came from 2023 Current Population Survey (CPS) from the US Census Bureau.

- **Age**: Respondents are categorized into the following age groups: 18-24 years old (9.4%), 25-34 years old (17.3%), 35-44 years old (16.5%), 45-54 years old (16.5%), 55-64 years old (16.8%), and 65+ years old (23.6%).
- **Gender**: Respondents identify as male (49.0%), female (50.0%), non-binary/third gender or prefer not to disclose (1.0%).
- **Race/Ethnicity**: Categories include White/Caucasian (68.7%), Black/African American (12.6%), Asian (5.7%), and smaller groups such as American Indian/Native American or Alaska Native (0.8%), Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander (0.2%), and others (5.6%).
- **Education**: Levels range from *Some high school or less* with 4.1% to *Graduate or professional degree (MA, MS, MBA, PhD, JD, MD, DDS etc.)* with 22.5%. There are respondents in the category *Some college, but no degree* (15.3%), followed by the respondents with Bachelor's degree (22.0%). Another other category was *Associates or technical degree* with 14.4%.
- **Occupation**: Respondents' current occupations are categorized as follows: White-collar professionals (36.1%), retired individuals (24.8%), blue-collar workers (9.0%), unemployed (10.6%), homemakers (4.7%), students (5.7%), freelancers (3.5%), and other occupations (5.5%).
- **Income**: Respondents' total household income before taxes over the past 12 months is distributed as follows: Less than $25,000 (17.1%), $25,000-$49,999 (19.8%), $50,000-$99,999 (28.3%), $100,000-$199,999 (27.4%), and more than $200,000 (7.4%).
- **Region**: Geographic representation spans the Midwest (21%), Northeast (17%), South (38%), and West (24%).
- **Political Affiliation**: Respondents identify their political affiliation as follows: Republican (36.1%), Democrat (28.9%), Independent (20.7%), and no preference (14.3%).
- **Party Leaning**: Respondents indicate their party leaning as follows (base: 349 respondents, independent or no preference): The Republican Party (16.2%), The Democratic Party (27.0%), and neither of them (56.8%).

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