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VOICES OF GEN Z

How American Youth View and Use Artificial Intelligence

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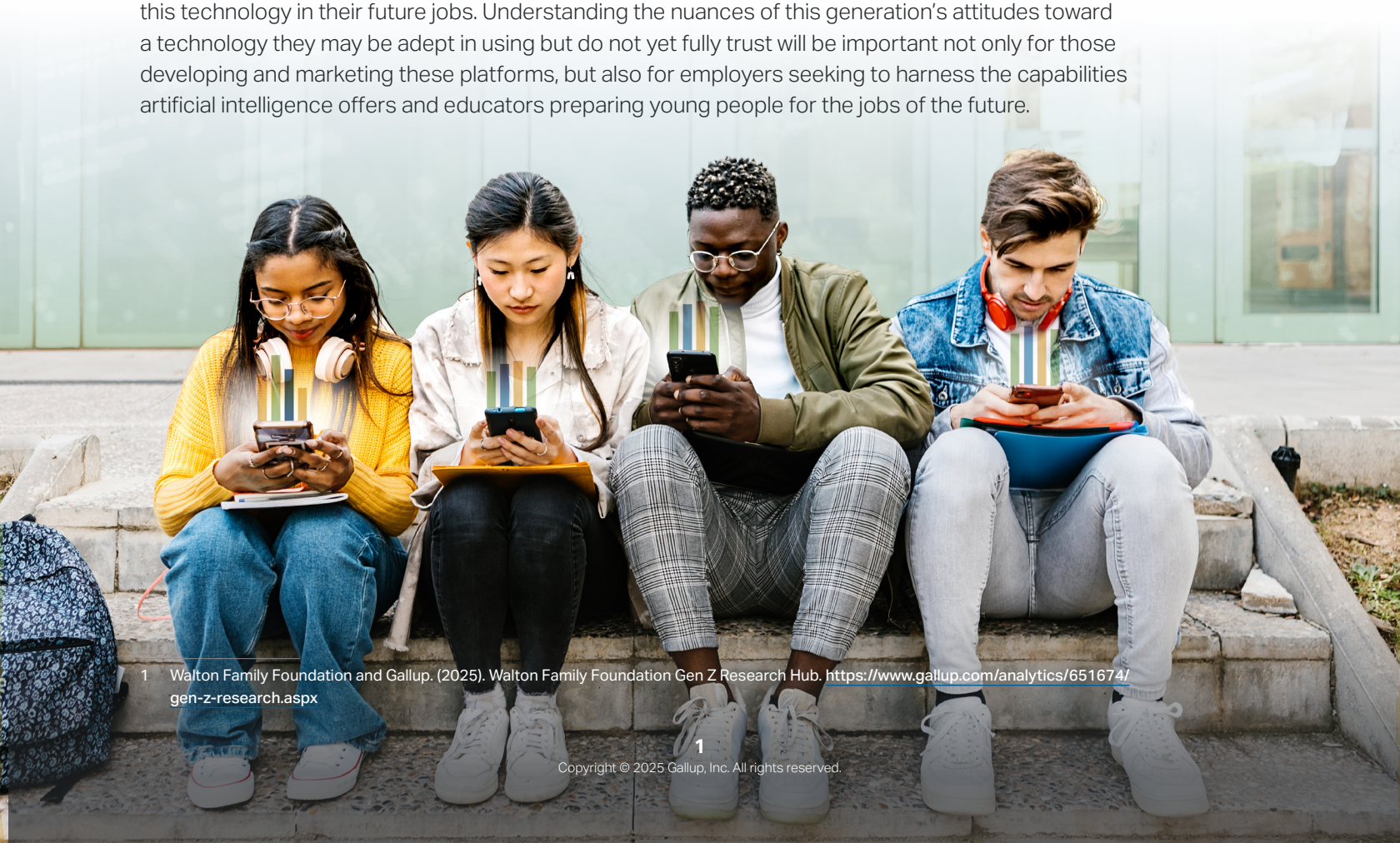
Executive Summary and Key Findings

Generation Z — Americans born between 1997 and 2012 who are now 13 to 28 years old — is arguably the first generation to be made up primarily of "digital natives." The oldest members of the generation were in grade school when popular social media platforms and smartphones were first made available to the public. Meanwhile, the youngest members of the generation were born into a world where those products were already well-entrenched in Americans' daily lives. Since then, the pace of digital development has only quickened, with generative artificial intelligence (AI) products — such as ChatGPT, Microsoft Copilot and Google Gemini — becoming the latest cutting-edge technology that stands to dramatically shift the landscape of how individuals engage with work, education and one another.

Given the highly digital environment that was prevalent when Gen Zers came of age, it might be assumed that the popularization of artificial intelligence would lead to it becoming another tool among the many technologies integrated into this generation's lives. However, new research from the Walton Family Foundation, GSV Ventures and Gallup finds that the perspectives of Gen Z regarding the integration of AI into their daily lives may be more complex than anticipated. The survey is the latest in the *Voices of Gen Z*[1] study and captures the attitudes and experiences of nearly 3,500 13- to 28-year-olds regarding this technology.

The data suggest that young people are skeptical about the effects generative artificial intelligence will have on their lives while actively considering the risks these products pose. Overall, they are more likely to feel anxious than excited about AI and are less likely to trust work products that were created using these tools. Despite these concerns, most Gen Zers say they use AI, recognize the potential benefits and, perhaps most importantly, acknowledge that they will likely need to know how to utilize this technology in their future jobs. Understanding the nuances of this generation's attitudes toward a technology they may be adept in using but do not yet fully trust will be important not only for those developing and marketing these platforms, but also for employers seeking to harness the capabilities artificial intelligence offers and educators preparing young people for the jobs of the future.



1 Walton Family Foundation and Gallup. (2025). Walton Family Foundation Gen Z Research Hub. https://www.gallup.com/analytics/651674/gen-z-research.aspx

Key findings from the survey include:

01.

Most Gen Zers (79%) say they use generative artificial intelligence products, including 47% who do so on a weekly basis; however, they are more likely to say that these tools make them anxious (41%) than hopeful (27%) or excited (36%).

02.

While more than half of Gen Zers agree AI has the potential to make their work and learning more efficient, they are only slightly more likely to say artificial intelligence will help rather than harm their ability to search for accurate information or think creatively. Gen Zers are also more than twice as likely to say AI will harm, rather than help, their critical thinking skills (49% to 22%).

03.

Despite these reservations, about half of Gen Z students say their school should not only permit the use of AI in the classroom (47%) but that schools should be required to teach students how to leverage AI (52%). However, just 28% of students say their school explicitly permits the use of artificial intelligence, while nearly half (49%) say their school does not have clear policies regarding AI.

04.

Similarly, just over half of Gen Z workers (55%) say their employer does not have any rules regarding AI use in the workplace; about one in 10 (11%) say their employer has established "extremely clear" policies.

05.

Both at school and in the workplace, Gen Z students and workers whose institutions implement clear AI use policies are notably more likely than their Gen Z peers to use AI on a regular basis.

06.

Gen Z employees express concerns about the quality of AI-produced work: 36% of Gen Z workers say that the potential risks of artificial intelligence outweigh its benefits, compared with 20% who think the benefits outweigh the risks. Meanwhile, 64% say they would be more likely to trust work products produced by humans than work done — or even aided — by AI.

Detailed Findings

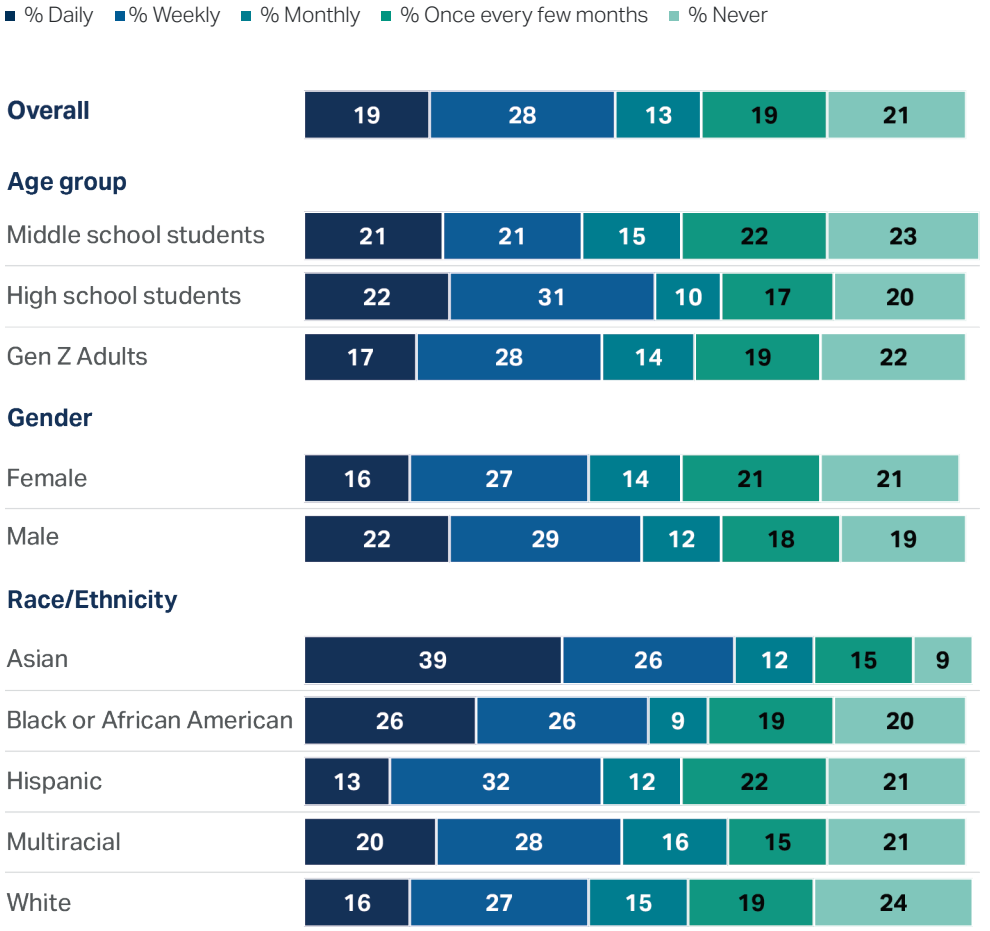
Gen Z is skeptical but realistic about the role of AI in their lives.

As schools and workplaces increasingly find it necessary to integrate or adapt to generative artificial intelligence — a type of AI that uses algorithms to process large amounts of data and find patterns in those data that are used to create novel output, such as text or images — 79% of Gen Z children and adults say they have already begun to use this technology in their daily lives. Nearly half are using ChatGPT, Microsoft Copilot or a similar generative AI platform on a weekly (28%) or daily (19%) basis.

CHART 1

Frequency of Gen Z's Artificial Intelligence Use

In your daily life, how often, if at all, do you use artificial intelligence?

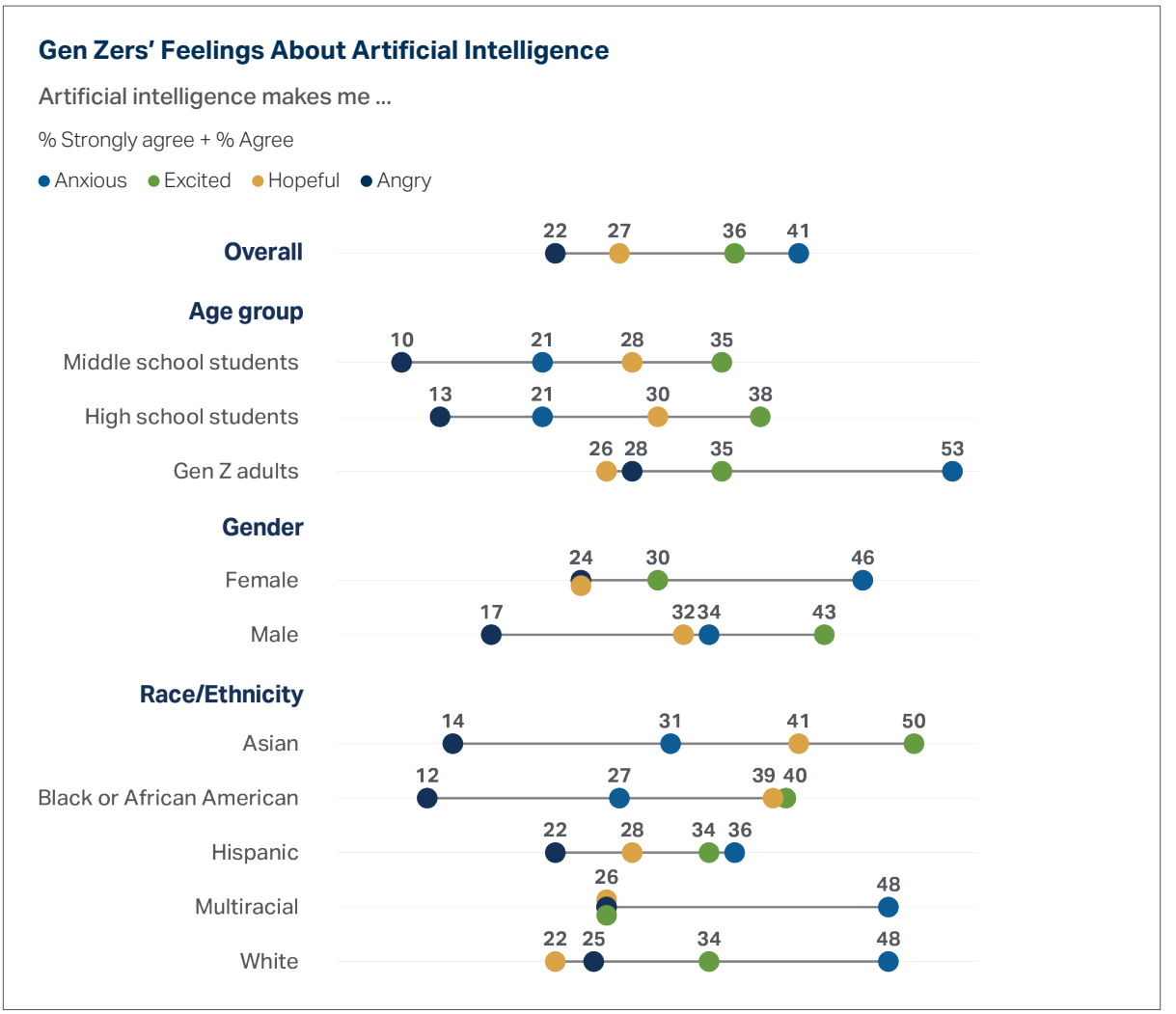


Note: Due to rounding, percentages may sum to 100%, ±1. Sums of response percentages displayed in text are calculated based on addition prior to rounding. As such, sums may vary by ±1 percentage point from those derived by adding rounded values.

While more than three-quarters of Gen Zers across age, race and gender groups say they have ever used artificial intelligence, some groups are especially enthusiastic in their adoption of this technology. Nearly two-thirds of Asian Gen Zers (65%) use AI on a weekly basis, as do 52% of Black Gen Zers; meanwhile, weekly usage is somewhat lower among their Hispanic (45%) and White peers (42%). AI use is also higher among high school students (53%) than Gen Z adults (45%) or middle school students (41%). Among Gen Z, men are also marginally more likely than women to use AI on a weekly basis (51% vs. 44%).

Whether from their extensive personal experience, or by hearing or reading about the rapid advances being made in the field, young people have both positive and negative reactions to AI. While it is most likely to induce anxiety in Gen Zers (41%), nearly as many agree that AI makes them excited (36%). Fewer say that it makes them feel hopeful (27%) or angry (22%).

CHART 2



For many, the emotional impact is not binary. While 26% of Gen Zers say artificial intelligence only makes them feel excitement or hope and 30% say it only makes them anxious or angry, just under one in five Gen Zers (17%) say that artificial intelligence causes them to feel at least one positive emotion and at least one negative emotion. On the other hand, 27% of Gen Zers say that AI does not make them feel any of these four emotions.

Sentiments surrounding this technology vary by subgroup, following some of the same patterns seen with AI usage. As one might expect, more frequent usage of AI is correlated with more positive feelings toward the technology, while Gen Zers who use AI less frequently — if at all — are more likely to say the technology elicits negative emotions. Adults, women and White and multiracial Gen Zers — less frequent AI users — are notably more likely to feel anxious about artificial intelligence than to feel excited about it; conversely, K-12 students, men, and Asian and Black Gen Zers are more likely to feel excited than anxious.

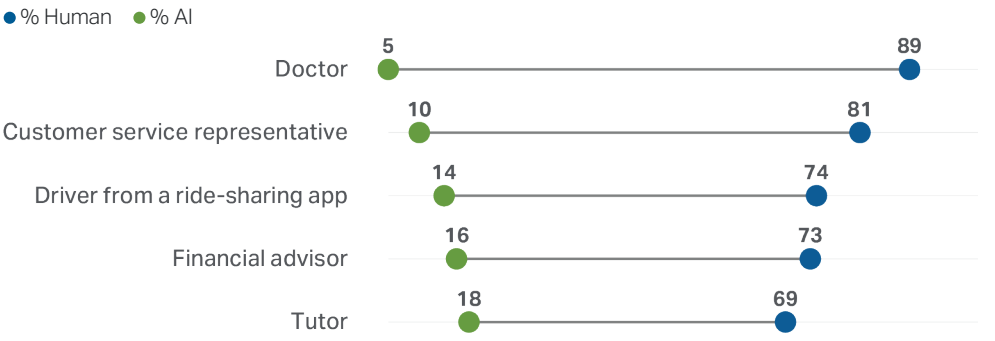
Still, even 29% of daily AI users say that the technology makes them feel anxious, and 30% of those who use it no more than monthly are excited by AI. Gen Zers who have never used AI have a markedly different emotional reaction to the technology than their peers: More than half (55%) say AI makes them feel anxious, while just one in 10 say it makes them excited.

General anxiety about artificial intelligence is not the only indication that Gen Z has reservations about incorporating it into several areas of their life. When asked whether they would prefer AI versions of five different services, at least two-thirds of Gen Z adults indicate they would still prefer human-run versions. While this is perhaps unsurprising in the case of doctors and financial advisors — who may be called upon to deliver potentially life-altering advice that Gen Z does not yet trust AI to reliably provide — just 10% of young adults prefer AI customer service representatives over a human equivalent.

CHART 3

Gen Zers' Preference for AI-Delivered Versus Human-Delivered Services

If you had to choose between two options that were the same price, with one being human and the other being fully run by artificial intelligence, which would you prefer?



Note: "No preference" option is not shown.

Among Gen Z adults no longer in K-12.

This strong preference for human-delivered services extends even to the most avid adopters of artificial intelligence: No more than 30% of daily AI users say they would prefer an AI-run version of any of the five services.

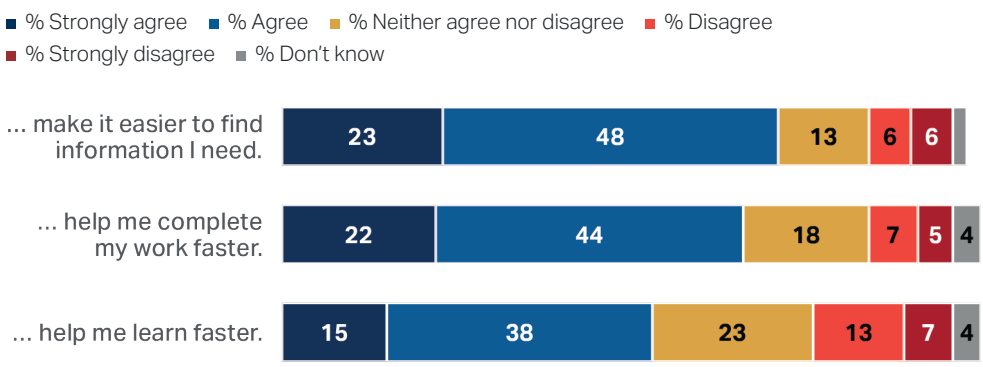
Gen Z sees artificial intelligence as a double-edged sword.

Despite having some reservations about integrating artificial intelligence into their daily lives, most young people are still doing so to varying degrees, likely because they acknowledge the potential benefits of using these tools. Nearly three-quarters of Gen Zers (72%) agree that AI can help them find information more easily, two-thirds (66%) say it can help them work faster and just over half say it can help them learn faster (53%).

CHART 4

Perceived Benefits of Artificial Intelligence Use

Artificial intelligence tools can ...



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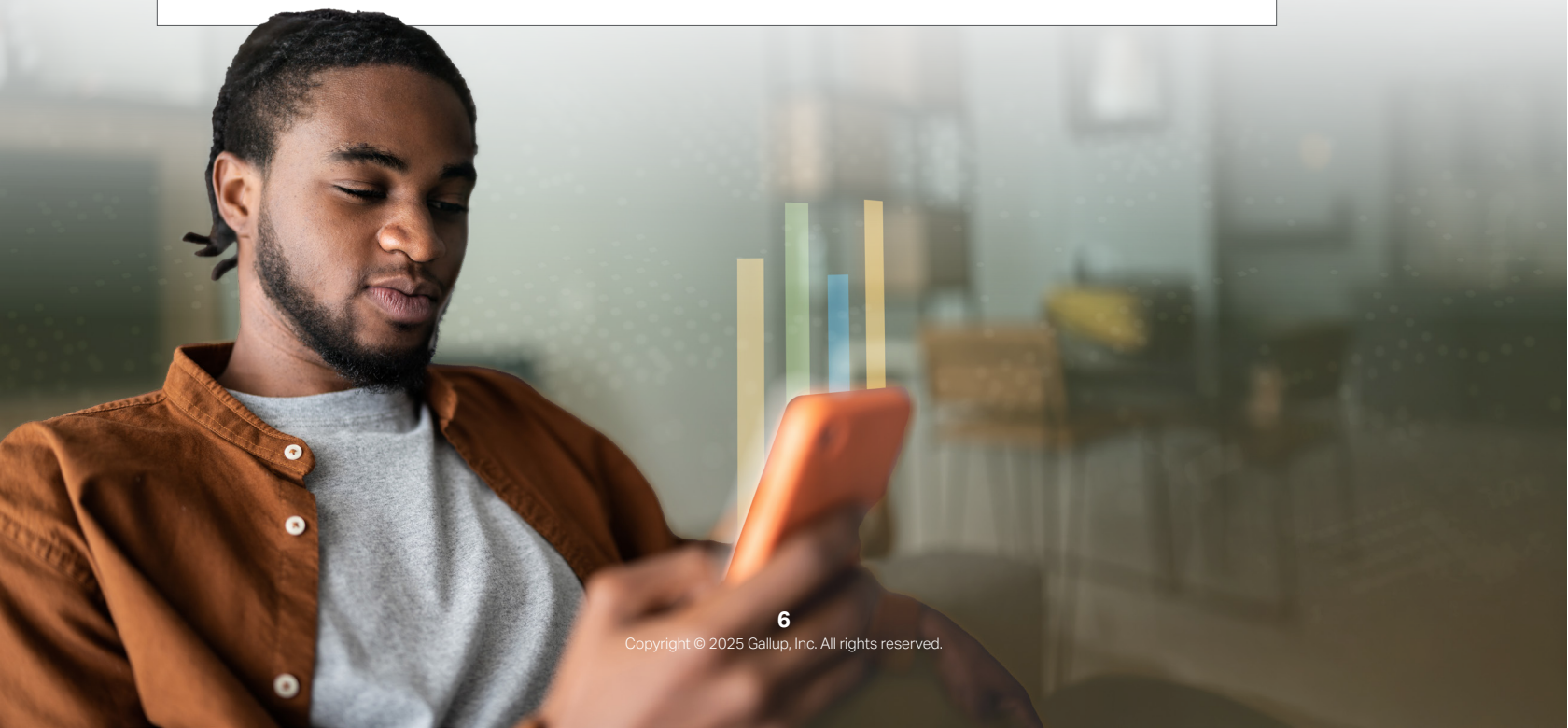


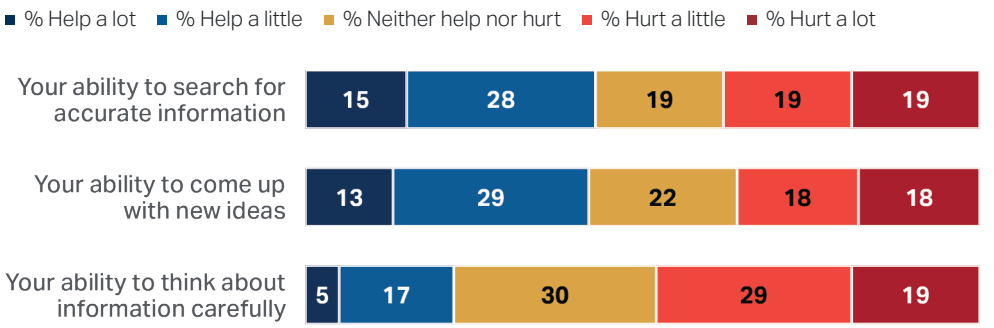
Whether Gen Zers use artificial intelligence more because they believe it will benefit their work or learning, or because those benefits become clearer with more frequent use of AI, greater use of artificial intelligence is correlated with increased agreement that these tools positively impact all three work and learning outcomes. As a result, the heaviest users of AI — including men, K-12 students, and Asian and Black Gen Zers — are also more likely than average to acknowledge artificial intelligence offers these benefits.

Still, young people — including early adopters of artificial intelligence — concede that increased reliance on this technology likely poses trade-offs, specifically in their own ability to accomplish the very tasks that AI tools are being used to augment. Gen Zers are marginally more likely to believe AI helps rather than hurts their ability to search for accurate information (43% vs. 38%) and come up with new ideas (42% vs. 36%). However, about half of Gen Zers (49%) are concerned that artificial intelligence will harm their ability to think carefully about information — more than twice the percentage who believe AI will help their critical thinking skills (22%).

CHART 5

Projected Effects of Artificial Intelligence Use on Gen Zers' Cognitive Skills

How much do you think artificial intelligence will help or hurt each of the following aspects of your life?



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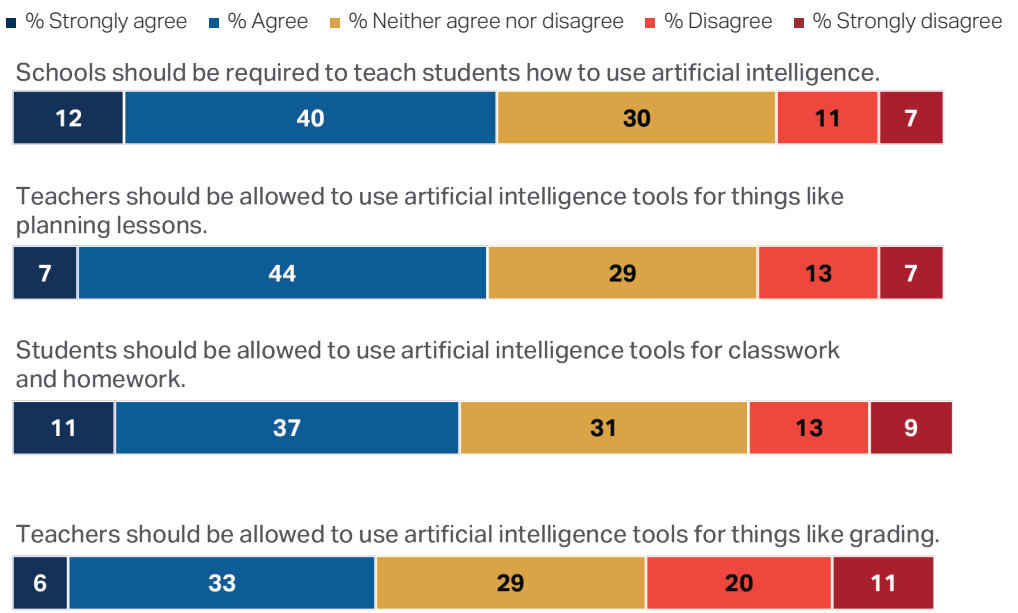
Even daily users — who arguably have the most reliable understanding of the effect this technology has on their capabilities — acknowledge the potential drawbacks of artificial intelligence. While more than half of these superusers believe AI helps their ability to search for accurate information (55%) or come up with new ideas (54%), about three in 10 believe AI tools harm those skills (28% and 32%, respectively). As with their peers, they are also more likely to believe artificial intelligence hurts their ability to think critically about information than to believe it helps (43% vs. 33%).

Students want to develop AI skills in the classroom, but many schools do not have clear AI policies.

One additional indication that Gen Z understands the role artificial intelligence will likely play in their futures is the priority they place on engaging with these tools from an early age. About half of Gen Z middle and high school students believe they should not only be *permitted* to use AI tools to help them complete their classwork and homework (47%) but also that schools should be *required* to help students understand how they can leverage this emerging technology (52%).

CHART 6

Gen Z Students' Preferences for Artificial Intelligence Use in School



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Among Gen Z K-12 students.

These students largely agree that their teachers should also be permitted to integrate artificial intelligence into their preparation activities, such as lesson planning (51%), though they are marginally less comfortable with teachers using AI tools for the higher-stakes activity of adjudicating students' grades (39%).

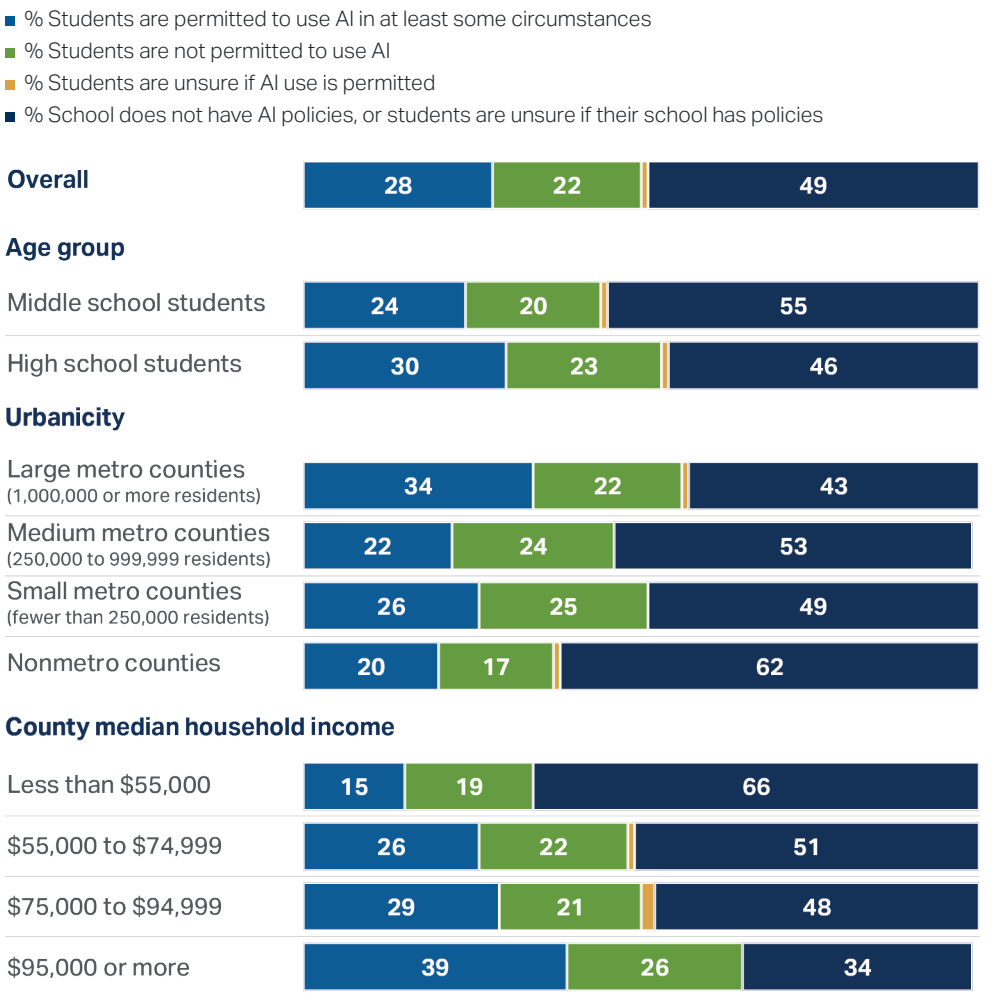
Unfortunately, while students indicate schools have a role in preparing them to enter a world that is increasingly using artificial intelligence, schools themselves appear to be behind in determining how best to do so. According to student reports of their own school's policies, only about half of middle and high schools (51%) appear to have clearly stated policies governing permissible use of AI tools by students. Students whose schools do have policies are nearly as likely to prohibit the use of artificial intelligence (22%) as they are to allow its use in at least some circumstances (28%).

CHART 7

Gen Z Students' School Policies Regarding Artificial Intelligence Use

Does your school have rules about using artificial intelligence for schoolwork?

If yes: Are you allowed to use artificial intelligence for your schoolwork?



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Among Gen Z K-12 students.

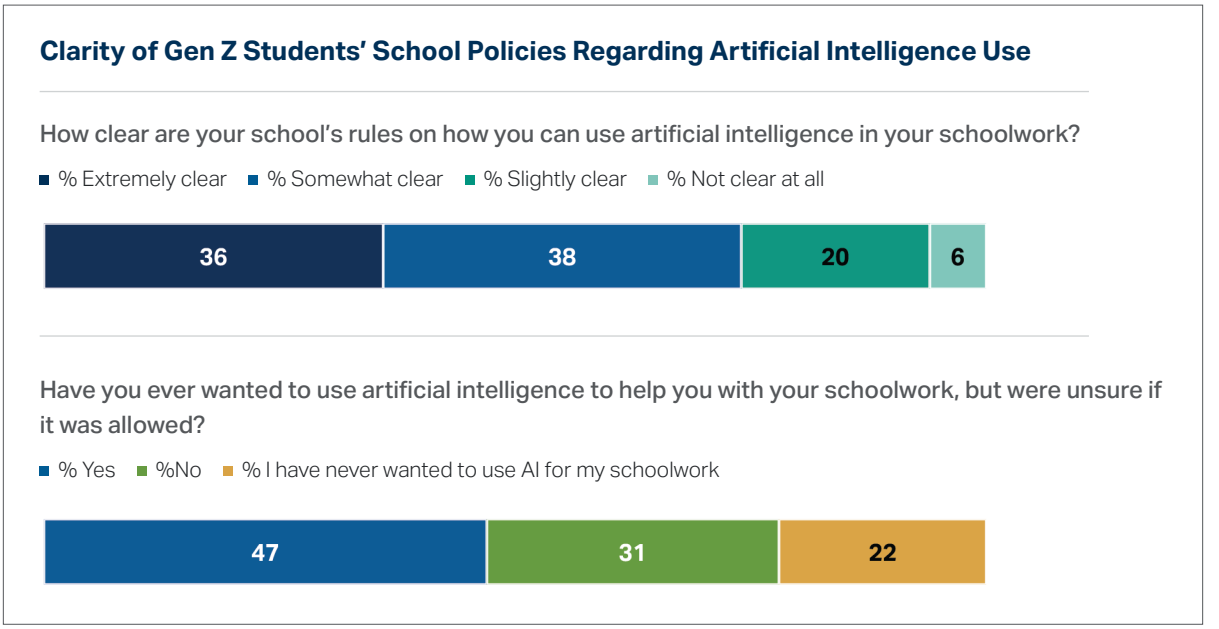
Certain types of schools have been more proactive in establishing artificial-intelligence-use policies than others. Just over half of high school students (54%) say their school has rules about AI use, compared with 45% of middle school students. Additionally, students living in metro counties are notably more likely than their peers living in nonmetro counties to say their school has instituted AI policies (54% vs. 38%); this is especially true of students living in the largest metro counties (57%). Similarly, students in wealthier counties are far more likely than others to say their school has rules regarding AI: About two-thirds of students in counties with a median household income of $95,000 or more (66%) attend schools with AI policies, compared with 34% of students living in counties with a median household income under $55,000.

Students living in wealthier and more urban communities are more likely than their peers to say their school has instituted AI policies and that those policies allow them to use AI for their schoolwork.

Students from wealthier and more urbanized areas are also more likely to attend schools that permit artificial intelligence use. Nearly four in 10 students from the wealthiest counties (39%) say their school allows AI use, while 26% say AI use is banned; by comparison, students in counties with a median income below $55,000 are more likely to say their school bans AI use (19%) than allows it (15%). A similar, if less pronounced, trend emerges based on students' urbanicity: 34% of students in large metro areas are allowed to use AI in the classroom, compared with 22% of their peers in medium metro areas, 26% in small metro areas and 20% in nonmetro areas.

Creating policies related to artificial intelligence is an important first step for schools, but clarity in how this rapidly evolving technology can or cannot be used is just as important. However, according to students, most schools' policies are at least somewhat lacking in this respect. Among the students who say their school has AI policies, about one in three (36%) say those policies are "extremely clear," while about one in four say the rules are only "slightly clear" (20%) or "not clear at all" (6%).

CHART 8



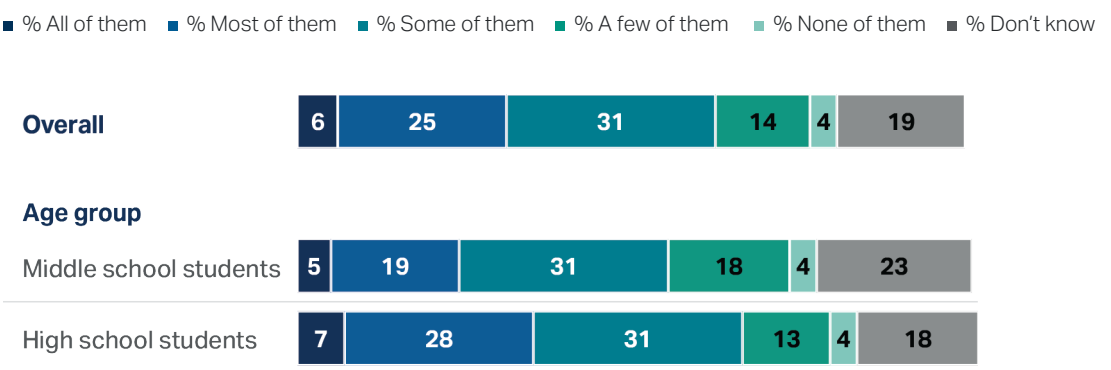
This lack of clarity in how schools regulate students' artificial intelligence use — whether because those policies are unclear or because there is no policy at all — may be causing some students to temper their engagement with these tools. Nearly half of students (47%) say that there have been times when they wanted to use artificial intelligence to help them complete schoolwork but were unsure whether doing so would be allowed by their school.

Moreover, this lack of clarity is likely contributing to adverse outcomes for both schools and students. Just under one in three students (32%) think "all" or "most" of their peers are using artificial intelligence on assignments when they should not be. This perception is especially prevalent among high school students (35%).

CHART 9

Incidence of Inappropriate Artificial Intelligence Use in Schools

How many of your classmates do you think use artificial intelligence for their schoolwork when they aren't supposed to?



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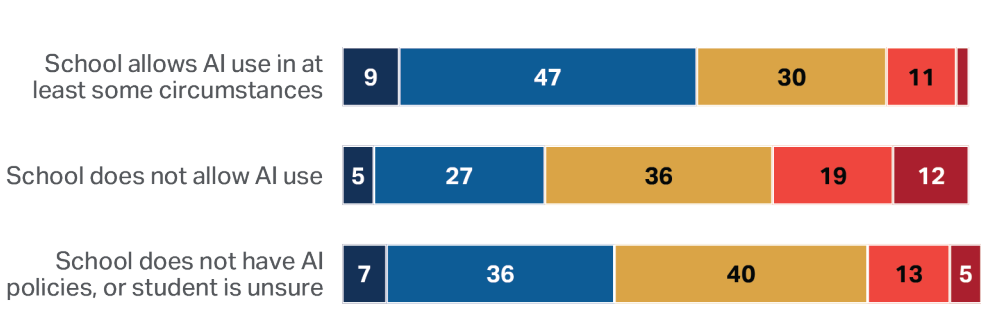
When the rules around artificial intelligence are unclear, students who want to follow the rules may be unnecessarily cautious in avoiding AI use, while their peers may simultaneously be using these tools to gain an unfair advantage over those who are not. Additionally, schools that do not establish clear AI use policies may be enabling students to skirt important learning activities by using AI to complete them while also limiting their own recourse to penalize students for using AI in ways schools consider unethical or off-limits.

Conversely, students suggest that actively implementing these policies has positive learning effects. In addition to being associated with increased engagement with artificial intelligence, 57% of students who attend schools that clearly regulate AI use agree they will be prepared to use these tools in their postgraduation lives.

CHART 10

Impact of School Policies on Gen Zers' Postgraduation Artificial Intelligence Skills

When I graduate from high school, I will know how to use artificial intelligence in my daily life.



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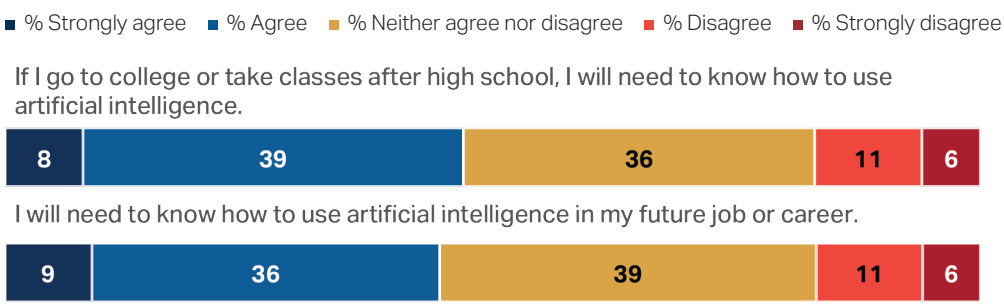
Meanwhile, students whose schools ban AI are not only less confident about how to use AI than students who are permitted to use AI in school but are also less confident than students whose schools do not have a clear AI policy.

Gen Z acknowledges the role AI will play in their future jobs but are hesitant to integrate AI into their current work.

While not the majority, many Gen Z students recognize that having confidence in their own artificial intelligence skills may be important to their postgraduation success. Just under half of middle and high school students (47%) think they will need to know how to use artificial intelligence if they plan to attend some kind of postsecondary education, and nearly as many (44%) believe they will need these skills in their future careers.

CHART 11

Gen Z Students' Outlook on Postgraduation Artificial Intelligence Use



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Among Gen Z K-12 students.

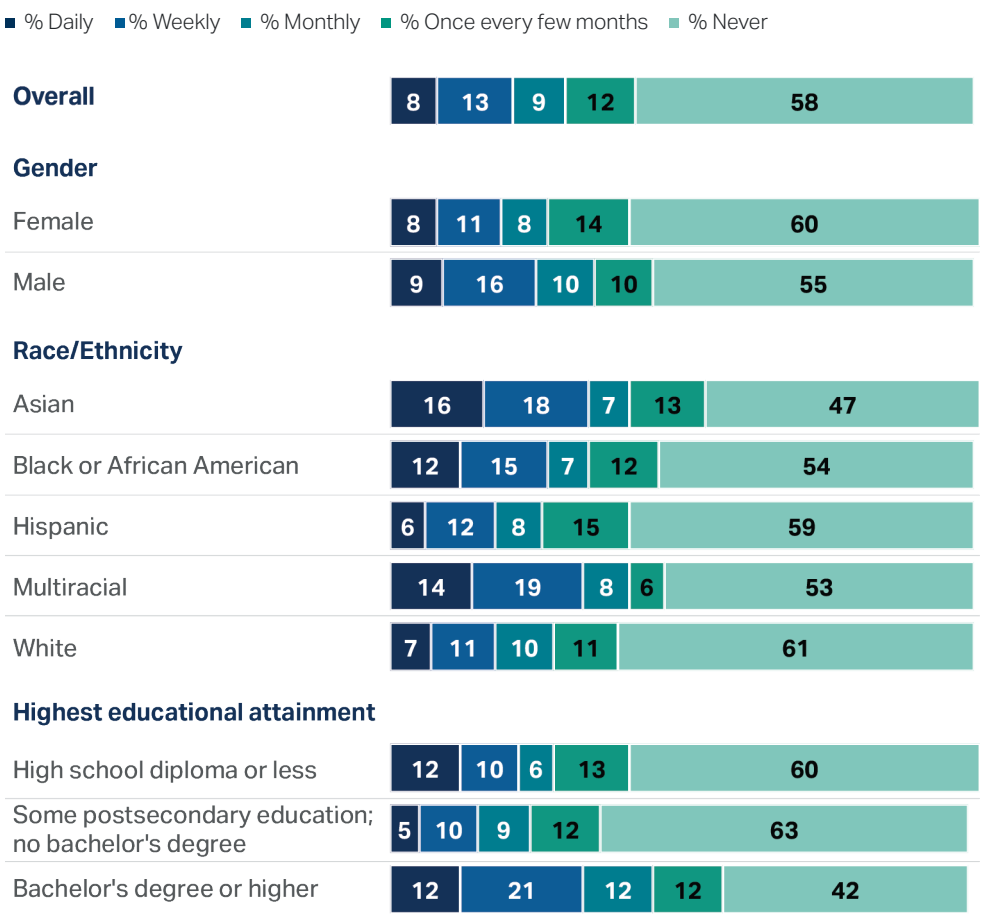
Incidentally, these perceptions are also related to schools' artificial intelligence policies: 53% of students who attend schools that permit AI use agree they will need to know how to use these tools in their future jobs, compared with 36% of students in schools that ban AI and 43% of students whose schools do not have clear AI policies.

That said, while many of the youngest members of Gen Z believe they will need to use artificial intelligence in their jobs, a smaller percentage of their older peers say they are already doing so. Nearly six in 10 Gen Z adults (59%) say they use AI on at least a monthly basis; however, they are about half as likely to say they use these tools for their work at least once a month (30%).

CHART 12

Frequency of Gen Z Employees' Workplace Artificial Intelligence Use

For your work, how frequently do you use artificial intelligence?



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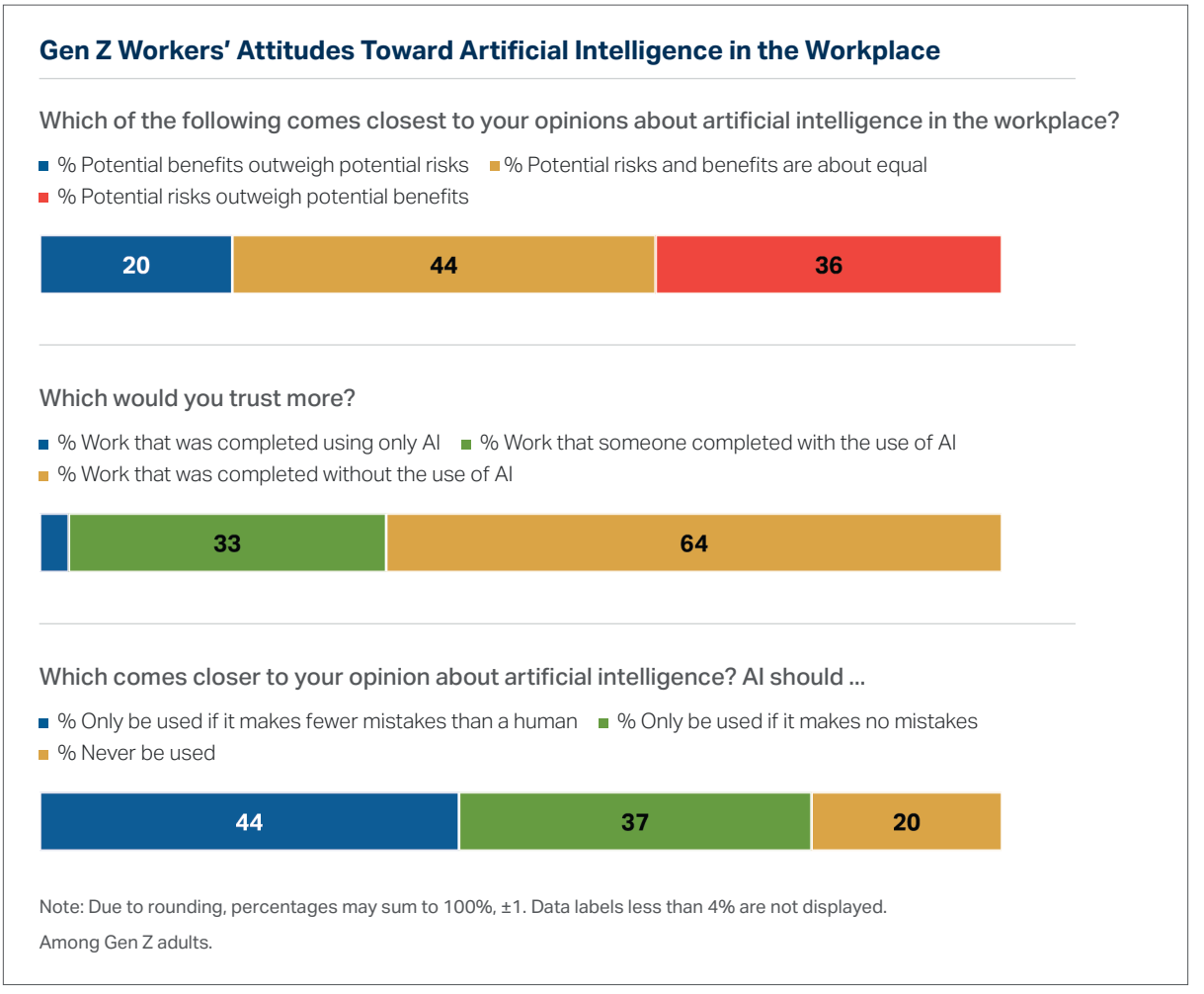
Among Gen Z adults.

As with demographic patterns in the uptake of artificial intelligence, certain cohorts of Gen Z are more likely to say they have integrated AI into their work. This is especially true of those with a bachelor's degree: 45% of these workers use AI on at least a monthly basis, compared with 27% of workers with a high school diploma and 25% of those with some postsecondary education but no bachelor's degree. Adult men (35%) and Asian Gen Zers (40%) are also more likely than average to say they use AI at work.

One of the reasons for the gap in Gen Zers' general artificial intelligence use and their integration of these tools into work may be the trust — or lack thereof — they have in the output of these products. At the broadest level, Gen Z workers are about twice as likely to believe AI poses a net risk than a net benefit. About one in three of these workers (36%) say the risks of artificial intelligence outweigh its benefits, while 20% say the benefits of bringing AI into the workplace outweigh the risks.

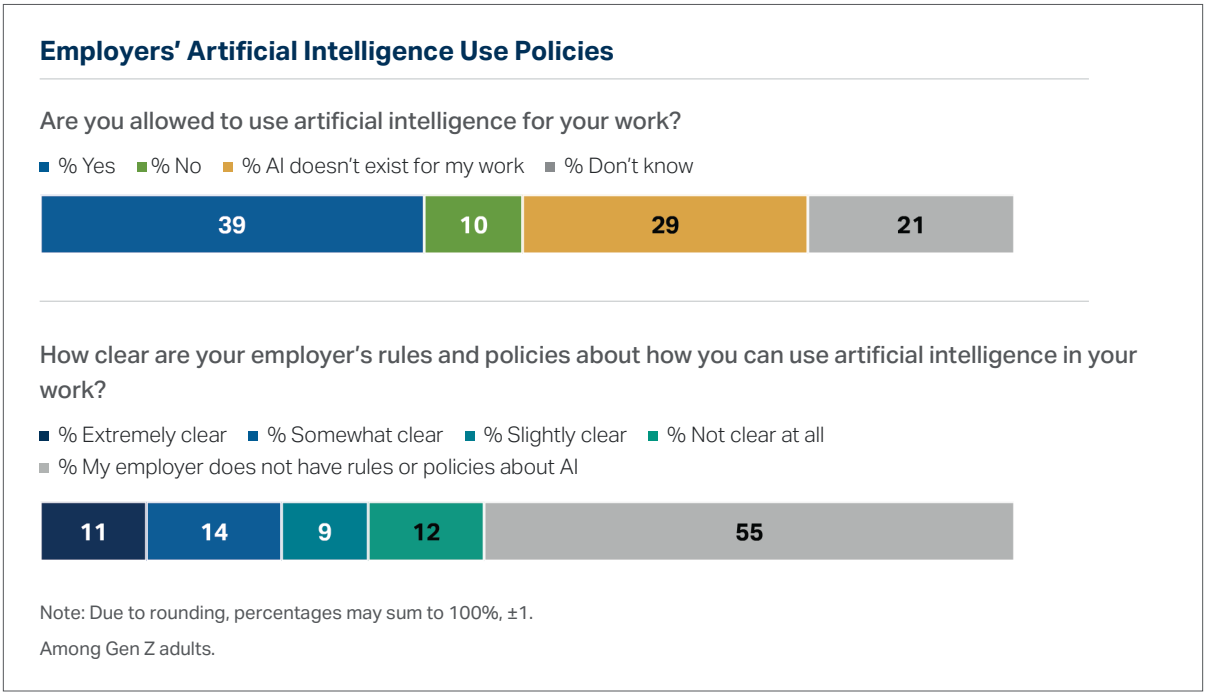
CHART 13



For many, the perceived risks may relate to the quality of output artificial intelligence can currently deliver. Nearly two-thirds of Gen Z workers (64%) say they would place the most trust in work produced exclusively by humans rather than work that was entirely produced by artificial intelligence or even work that was primarily produced by a human with the assistance of AI tools. One in three workers say they would be most likely to trust AI-assisted work, while just 3% are most likely to trust work that was only completed by AI.

The quality of artificial intelligence products is a key factor influencing workers' decisions to engage with these tools. However, as with students and their educational institutions, understanding when and how AI usage is permissible under privacy, ethical and other standards is crucial for its broader adoption in the workplace. Just 10% of workers say their workplace has explicitly banned the use of AI, but an additional 21% are unsure. Meanwhile, 39% of workers are certain that their workplace permits it.

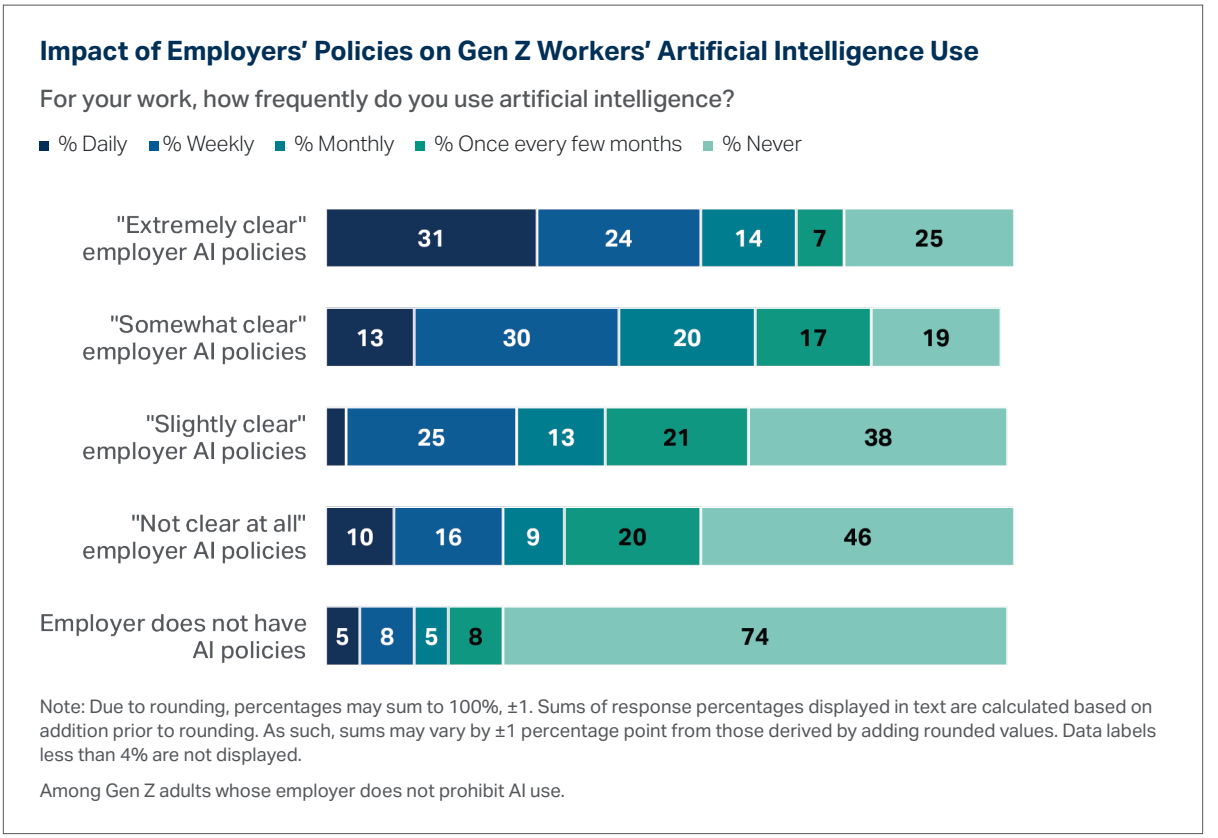
CHART 14



Moreover, employers also struggle to clearly communicate the boundaries of artificial intelligence use to workers — if they have communicated them at all. More than half of workers (55%) say their workplace has not instituted a formal AI use policy, and among those whose employers do have rules, only 11% say these policies are "extremely clear." The rest say the rules are "somewhat clear," "slightly clear" or "not clear at all."

Once again, clarity in these policies may facilitate workers' uptake of artificial intelligence: Among workers who say their employer's AI policy is extremely clear, and that this policy does not prohibit AI use, 55% say they use artificial intelligence on at least a weekly basis. The rate is 11 to 29 points lower among their peers whose employers have less clear AI policies and just 13% among workers whose employers do not have an AI use policy.

CHART 15



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Among Gen Z adults whose employer does not prohibit AI use.

While the relationship between a lack of AI policy and lower levels of AI usage may be due in part to the 29% of workers who believe artificial intelligence does not exist for their work, this trend holds true even when limiting analysis to employees who say AI is available for their work. Moreover, employers who institute formal artificial intelligence policies may inadvertently lead employees to explore how they can use AI in their work in ways they may not have previously considered.

Implications

When ChatGPT was released to the public in November 2022 as one of the first widely available generative artificial intelligence platforms, it took just two months to reach 100 million users.[2] Since then, these tools have penetrated nearly every corner of American life, perhaps most notably in the workforce: According to the World Economic Forum's 2024 ***Future of Jobs Report***, 45% of global employers consider artificial intelligence and big data capabilities to be "core skills" for their workforce — a 17-percentage-point increase in just one year.[3] The survey also found that over 90% of American employers project AI skills will continue to grow in importance to their business by 2030.

As Generation Z becomes a larger segment of the American workforce — surpassing the share of baby boomers in 2024[4] — these teenagers and young adults generally acknowledge the impact artificial intelligence is having on their education and workplaces, as well as the importance of having AI skills for their careers. However, it would be a mistake to assume Gen Z will seamlessly adapt to the new paradigm, as many appear skeptical of the technology.

Although a strong majority of 13- to 28-year-olds say they have some experience with artificial intelligence, and just over half acknowledge that these tools could make their work and learning more efficient, that efficiency has yet to translate into confidence in its quality and reliability, with just one in three Gen Z workers trusting AI-influenced work over work done entirely by humans. Moreover, young people are nearly as likely to believe artificial intelligence will harm their ability to think creatively as they are to believe it will help; meanwhile, they are twice as likely to believe it will harm, rather than help, their critical thinking skills. Navigating these concerns will be important to earning Gen Zers' buy-in for school and workplace AI initiatives.

For developers looking to expand their artificial intelligence products to a wider market, and employers looking to upskill their AI workforce, Gen Zers might be harder to sell on AI than expected. However, several activities would likely encourage more young people to lean into artificial intelligence. Chief among these considerations are AI use policies: The data demonstrate a positive relationship between Gen Zers' adoption of artificial intelligence in school and the workplace and these respective institutions' implementation of clear policies regarding how AI tools may be used. This is especially critical for students in lower-income and less urban areas; if artificial intelligence is going to be a "great equalizer,"[5] ensuring young people in underserved communities have equitable access to and support in learning these technologies will be critical in preparing them, as well as their peers, to join the workforce of the future. Therefore, it is incumbent on both educators and employers to understand how AI fits into their classrooms and workplaces, create clear guidelines regarding appropriate use, and communicate the benefits that this new technology can have on learning and work.

2 Thorbecke, C. (2023, November 30). A year after ChatGPT's release, the AI revolution is just beginning. CNN. https://www.cnn.com/2023/11/30/tech/chatgpt-openai-revolution-one-year/index.html

3 World Economic Forum. (2025, January). Future of Jobs 2025: Insight Report. https://reports.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Future_of_Jobs_Report_2025.pdf

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Methodology

Results are based on a Gallup Panel™ web survey conducted March 6-13, 2025, with a sample of 3,465 13- to 28-year-olds living in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The Gallup Panel is a probability-based panel of U.S. adults who are randomly selected using address-based sampling methodology. Gallup also recruits using random-digit-dial phone interviews that cover landline and cellphones.

Within the overall sample, 1,460 13- to 18-year-old children were reached through adult members of the Gallup Panel who indicated they had at least one child 18 or younger living in their household. The remaining 2,005 18- to 28-year-old respondents are members of the Gallup Panel.

For the total sample of 3,465 Gen Z respondents, the margin of sampling error is ±2.4 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. For the sample of 1,460 children still enrolled in K-12 school, the margin of sampling error is ±3.3 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. For the sample of 2,005 Gen Z youth who are no longer enrolled in K-12 school, the margin of sampling error is ±3.3 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. Margins of error for subgroups are higher.

All reported margins of sampling error include computed design effects for weighting. In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of public opinion polls.

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