TalkTalk
For Everyone

AI in 2025: An Expert Perspective

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Prepared by Eleanor Manley
Tribes Digital Ltd.

Eleanor Manley's Profile
Eleanor Manley's Portfolio

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I. CONTEXT

Farewell to the AI of 2024: Embracing a Smarter Internet with AI in 2025

The way we think about artificial intelligence (AI) has changed dramatically in recent years, and 2025 is set to bring a new transformation. Back in November 2022, over one million people explored Generative AI within just a week of ChatGPT's release. Since then, waves of AI advancements have shown us how this technology can help create extraordinary everyday solutions.

Many associate AI with large language models (LLMs)—advanced chatbots capable of answering questions and creating content from large datasets. This form of AI, known as Generative AI, has since evolved. Today, with Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG) systems, these tools can connect to the internet, offering a revolutionary way to search and interact with information.

The Evolution of Search Engines

Since the early 1990s, the way we search online has remained largely the same: we decide what we want to know, type it into a search bar, and receive a list of results. Whether we're looking up information like your favourite band's tour dates, trying to navigate and visit a specific page for your daily dose of news or searching for a transaction like buying your weekly shop, this process has remained relatively consistent.

Search engines have built their business models around organising results for users to browse. Over time, companies developed Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) strategies to help websites rank higher on search results, which became a key focus for online visibility.

However, AI is starting to change all of this. Instead of opening 30+ tabs to manually sift through webpages, AI-powered tools can now summarise information from multiple sources in one go. This shift is reshaping the way we search and access information online.

Three Major Changes AI Brings to Search

1. **A New Role for SEO**: As AI is set to become the primary way to retrieve information, traditional SEO may lose its dominance. Websites will need to adapt to how AI prioritises content based on context and relevance rather than SEO rankings alone.
2. **Conversational Search**: Imagine asking questions in plain language and receiving direct, helpful answers instead of scrolling through multiple links. AI-powered tools enable us to also refine our queries and summarise webpages.
3. **More Precise Searches**: With AI, searches can become more specific and tailored, making it easier to find exactly what you're looking for, faster than ever before.

The Rise of Social Media as a Search Tool

Interestingly, it's not just search engines that are undergoing change. Social media platforms are increasingly competing for attention. For example, many teenagers now use TikTok as a search tool instead of Google. Recent studies reveal that about 40% of Gen Z prefer searching on TikTok or Instagram rather than traditional platforms like Google Search[1].

This shift signals a growing preference for:

- **Visual and Bite-Sized Content**: Social media offers quick, engaging answers in an easily digestible format, ideal for today's shorter attention spans.
- **Personalised Results**: Algorithms tailor searches to individual preferences, often making results feel more relevant and relatable.

Looking Ahead to 2025

AI is reshaping how we interact with the internet, and the changes ahead are profound:

- **Integrated Ecosystems**: AI could merge search, communication, and commerce into seamless systems, simplifying online interactions.
- **New Ethical Challenges**: As AI tools shape what we see, questions about transparency, bias, and data privacy will become even more important.
- **Shifts in Behaviour**: People are likely to adapt their skills and habits to navigate this new digital landscape effectively.

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[1] *Gen Z moves on from 'Googling'—TikTok emerges as the new search engine,* Sasha Rogelberg, Fortune, September 10, 2024 - https://fortune.com/2024/09/10/gen-z-google-verb-social-media-instagram-tiktok-search-engine/

For the first time in decades, we're seeing genuine innovation in how we search for and interact with information. Whether through AI-enhanced search engines, conversational chatbots, or social media platforms, the future offers more options and opportunities than ever before. As we move into 2025, we're not just embracing smarter AI—we're welcoming a smarter internet.

II. SURVEY ANALYSIS

Familiarity and Usage

AI Engineer's Perspective

After the hype around AI began to subside in 2024, AI emerged not just as a buzzword confined to tech circles but as a fundamental component of the products and services we interact with daily.

AI powers our mobile phones with voice assistants like Siri and Alexa, helps us find and binge-watch our favourite shows on streaming platforms like Netflix and Disney+ through recommendation algorithms, and gives us those not-so-subtle nudges that Christmas is fast approaching with personalised advertising.

Despite AI's deep integration into our lives, awareness and conscious usage of AI vary significantly among different groups. Familiarity isn't just about recognizing the term "AI" but also understanding its impact and role in our everyday activities. Similarly, frequency of use reflects not only access to AI technologies but also the degree to which individuals incorporate them into their routines.

Several factors contribute to variations in AI familiarity and usage:

- **Exposure and Accessibility**: Younger individuals and those in urban or tech-centric regions have greater access to AI technologies and education.
- **Education and Professional Engagement**: People working in industries where AI is prevalent are more likely to be familiar with it and use it frequently. Occupations like IT, Finance, and Marketing show higher familiarity and usage due to direct interaction with AI tools and systems.
- **Perception and Awareness**: Many people use AI-driven applications without realising they're powered by AI. This unconscious usage can result in lower reported familiarity despite high interaction.
- **Cultural and Societal Influences**: Regions and cities with strong tech industries or educational institutions may promote greater public awareness and usage of AI through media, events, and community programs.

- **Digital Divide**: Older age groups and certain regions may have less exposure to AI due to technological barriers or generally lower usage of technology.

More In-Depth Data Review

Age

Age plays a crucial role in shaping both familiarity with and usage of AI, with younger groups leading the way in both categories. But it's not the digital natives (the youngest generation) that take the lead and the data reveals some intriguing nuances.

The 25-34 age group emerges as the frontrunner in both familiarity and frequency of use. A significant 68.60% are familiar with AI, and 23.78% report daily use, with a mean usage of 12.59 times per month.

Analysis: Interestingly, this group surpasses even the youngest demographic (16-24), where familiarity is slightly lower at 64.89%, and daily usage is 17.94% with a mean of 11.02 times per month. This suggests that professional integration of AI and lifestyle choices likely drive the higher engagement among those aged 25-34.

The 35-44 age group maintains robust familiarity at 64.18%, though daily AI use drops to 17.16%, with a mean of 9.42 times per month. For the 45-54 age group, both familiarity and frequency begin to decline more sharply. Familiarity decreases to 53.54%, and 35.69% report never using AI, with a mean usage of 7.89 times per month. The 55+ age group highlights a significant digital divide. Familiarity drops to 32.23%, daily usage falls to 8.03%, and 57.58% never use AI. The mean usage for this group is just 4.57 times per month,

Analysis: Low mean usage rates among older generations highlight challenges such as limited exposure to technology and a lack of confidence in adopting new tools. This generational gap emphasises the need for targeted education and outreach to empower older demographics, who could benefit from AI with the right resources and support. However, it's also important to recognize that older generations may have different priorities and lifestyles—often shaped by retirement—that reduce the necessity for AI use, both professionally and personally. This suggests that AI adoption strategies should account for varying needs across age groups rather than taking a one-size-fits-all approach.

Gender

The data reveals that men and women have similar levels of familiarity and frequency of AI usage, signalling positive progress toward gender parity in technology engagement. Approximately 52.52% of men and 46.80% of women consider themselves familiar with AI. In terms of usage, 14.70% of men and 14.85% of women use AI daily. The mean usage is also comparable, with men

at 7.90 times per month and women slightly higher at 8.09 times per month. This suggests that when women engage with AI, they do so as frequently as men, reflecting a closing gap in both familiarity and practical application.

Analysis: This parity challenges traditional assumptions about gender disparities in technology adoption, suggesting that initiatives to increase women's participation in tech-related fields are showing promising results. While AI use and familiarity seem to be reaching gender parity, efforts must continue to address and mitigate negative biases in algorithmic outputs, ensuring equitable and fair outcomes for all users.

Region

Regional disparities in AI familiarity and usage offer a snapshot of the UK's digital landscape, reflecting how access to technology and infrastructure shapes engagement. Greater London leads in both metrics, with 57.03% of respondents familiar with AI and 18.63% using it daily, averaging 10.29 times per month. This aligns with London's status as a tech and economic hub, where exposure to AI technologies is likely higher.

In contrast, the North East and Northern Ireland report lower engagement. Only 38.27% in the North East are familiar with AI, and 50.62% report never using it. Northern Ireland shows similar patterns, with 41.07% never engaging with AI. These regions highlight the persistent digital divide within the UK, emphasising the need for targeted initiatives to improve accessibility and education.

Analysis: Despite the lower engagement in regions like the North East and Northern Ireland, the presence of a consistent minority using AI daily suggests an untapped potential. These areas could become ground for AI adoption if challenges like limited infrastructure and lack of digital education are addressed, highlighting an opportunity for governments and tech companies to turn these regions into growth zones for AI by investing in targeted outreach and resources. Unlocking this potential could not only bridge the digital divide but also drive economic innovation in traditionally underserved areas.

City

London stands out as the epicentre of AI familiarity and usage in the UK, with 56.35% of respondents familiar with AI and 18.85% using it daily, averaging 9.51 uses per month. This dominance reflects the capital's thriving tech ecosystem and status as a hub for innovation. Manchester follows suit, with a strong showing of 17.92% using AI daily and an average usage of 8.47 times per month, reflecting the city’s growing reputation as a burgeoning tech hub with increasing opportunities for residents to interact with AI technologies.

In contrast, cities like Belfast and Newcastle reveal stark gaps, with 41.07% and 48.15% of respondents, respectively, reporting they never use AI. Their mean usage rates, at 6.02 and 5.63 times per month, lag significantly behind the national leaders, highlighting the digital divide between tech-forward and less-connected regions.

Interestingly, smaller cities like Nottingham and Plymouth buck the trend, showing unexpectedly high AI familiarity and usage rates. This suggests that city size alone is not the determining factor—local education programs, community initiatives, and targeted outreach may play pivotal roles in fostering AI engagement.

Analysis: Analysing cities provides a more granular view of how urban environments impact AI familiarity and usage. While tech powerhouses like London and Manchester predictably lead, the strong showing in smaller cities like Nottingham and Plymouth underscores the influence of local factors, such as tech-forward education and active community engagement. Conversely, cities with lower engagement, such as Belfast and Newcastle, offer a clear opportunity for targeted interventions to close the digital gap. Furthermore, the high percentage of neutral responses across several cities signals untapped potential—a sign that many residents are open to learning about and embracing AI if given the right resources and incentives. Unlocking this potential could catalyse growth and innovation across the UK, transcending traditional divides between major metropolitan centres and smaller urban areas.

Occupation

Occupational differences reveal distinct levels of AI familiarity across industries:

- Technology: Surprisingly, even in the tech sector, about one-third of professionals remain neutral or unfamiliar with AI, likely due to specialisation in non-AI fields or slower adoption of AI tools within certain niches.
- Finance: Nearly one in five finance professionals report being "extremely familiar" with AI, reflecting its integral role in algorithmic trading, risk management, and fraud detection—areas where AI has transformed traditional practices.
- Marketing: High familiarity levels demonstrate the field's shift toward leveraging AI for data-driven strategies, such as customer segmentation, personalised advertising, and performance analysis.
- Construction (50.79% familiar) and Manufacturing (59.77% familiar): These higher-than-expected familiarity rates highlight AI's growing impact through advancements in automation, predictive analytics, and resource management.
- Healthcare: Only 46.85% familiarity points to barriers like regulatory challenges, data privacy concerns, or insufficient training, despite the potential of AI in diagnostics, treatment planning, and operational efficiency.

- Education: At 48.32% familiarity, the sector shows significant room for growth. Enhanced AI training in educational settings could better prepare both educators and students for an AI-driven world.
- Hospitality: Higher familiarity levels reflect AI's adoption in improving customer service through chatbots, personalization, and operational efficiency.
- Non-working Individuals: A low familiarity rate (38.91%) underscores the importance of professional exposure in driving AI awareness and engagement.

Analysis: These findings reveal that industry-specific dynamics heavily influence AI familiarity. While finance and marketing professionals naturally lead due to AI's direct relevance in their fields, the strong showing in construction and manufacturing suggests a broader shift as traditional industries embrace technological advancements. Conversely, sectors like healthcare and education demonstrate significant untapped potential. Regulatory hurdles and the lack of tailored training programs may be holding these industries back. Interestingly, the low familiarity among non-working individuals (38.91%) could also correlate with age and retirement status, as older individuals may have had limited exposure to AI during their careers and may not see its immediate relevance in their daily lives.

Key Takeaways

- **AI is Everywhere, Even if Unnoticed**: AI quietly powers many of our daily interactions, but not everyone recognises its presence.
- **Younger Generations Lead the Way**: The 25-34 age group stands out as the most familiar with and frequent users of AI, benefiting from both professional integration and lifestyle habits.
- **Gender Equality in AI Engagement**: Men and women now use AI at nearly identical rates, reflecting progress in gender parity in technology.
- **The Digital Divide is Real:** Older adults and certain regions, such as the North East and Northern Ireland, show significantly lower familiarity and usage.
- **Tech Hubs Drive Engagement**: Cities like London and Manchester lead in AI familiarity and usage, while smaller cities and rural areas often lag behind.
- **Occupation Shapes Engagement**: Professionals in IT, Finance, and Marketing are the most familiar with and frequent users of AI, while healthcare and education sectors show room for growth.

Recommendation for the Reader - Where Can You Learn More About AI?

Whether you're looking to boost your professional skills or simply want to understand more about AI, here are some great resources:

- **"Artificial Intelligence: Ethics and Societal Challenges" by the University of Leeds**
  A free online course exploring the ethical considerations and societal impacts of AI.
  Artificial Intelligence: Ethics and Societal Challenges - FutureLearn
- **"Elements of AI" by the University of Helsinki and the University of London**
  A free course introducing the basics of AI without requiring a background in maths or programming.
- **"Artificial Intelligence: Distinguishing Between Fact and Fiction" by the University of Sheffield**
  A free course to help you understand what AI is, its capabilities, and limitations.
  Artificial Intelligence: Distinguishing Between Fact and Fiction - FutureLearn
- **"Two Minute Papers" YouTube Channel**
  Easy-to-understand explanations of the latest AI research in short videos
- **Andrew Ng's Insights**
  As a leading AI influencer, Andrew Ng shares valuable knowledge through talks, articles, and courses.
- **"The Batch" Newsletter by DeepLearning.AI**
  A weekly newsletter with the latest AI news, curated by experts.
  The Batch Newsletter

AI in Everyday Life

AI Engineer's Perspective

Beyond niche applications to becoming a ubiquitous presence that enhances our daily routines, AI is here to stay. From simplifying internet searches to curating personalised shopping experiences, AI is no longer a background technology but a tool that people actively use to enrich themselves, learn new skills and make life more convenient.

And we're all embracing AI in diverse ways:

- Internet Browsing: AI algorithms refine search results, making information more accessible and relevant.
- Online Shopping and Social Media: AI personalises recommendations, helps find the best deals, and connects people with products and content that match their interests.
- Creative and Educational Pursuits: Individuals are leveraging AI for studying, creating content, and exploring new hobbies, highlighting a shift toward using technology for personal growth.
- Personal Assistant: Even during festive seasons like Christmas, AI has become a valuable assistant, helping people plan, shop, and manage their holiday tasks more efficiently.

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More In-Depth Data Review

AI-Driven Internet Searches

Internet browsing emerges as the most popular use of AI, with nearly half of the respondents utilising AI-enhanced search engines. In terms of gender and geographic location, internet search is widespread and shows high engagement, suggesting that AI-enhanced browsing is valued across the board.

Analysis: Interestingly, the highest usage is among the 55+ age group, where 58.26% use AI for internet searches. This challenges the stereotype that older adults are less tech-savvy, suggesting they appreciate AI's ability to simplify information access and further suggests that younger groups are searching elsewhere like social media.

Online Shopping

AI's role in online shopping,through personalised recommendations and streamlined experiences, is embraced by nearly a third of respondents with 35-44 years olds leading with 33.33% using AI for online shopping, possibly reflecting their busy lifestyles and need for convenience and more women (32.78%) than men (25.68%) using AI for shopping, which aligns with broader shopping habits.

Analysis: While online shopping appears to be an emerging daily use of AI, it's worth noting that many users might not realise the extent to which AI is integrated into these platforms. Features like product recommendations, personalised promotions, and virtual assistants operate seamlessly in the background, enhancing the shopping experience without explicit recognition from users. This unconscious usage highlights the deep integration of AI into modern retail, as well as opportunities to increase consumer awareness of its benefits.

Social Media

Social media platforms rely on AI for content curation, with 28.03% of respondents engaging with AI features such as tailored feeds. Younger users dominate, with 35.27% of 16-24-year-olds using AI on social media. Usage decreases with age, dropping to 17.12% among the 55+ group.

Analysis: AI on social media is a key driver of engagement among younger generations. The low adoption among older adults suggests an opportunity for platforms to expand their appeal with more inclusive features.

Streaming Music or Videos

AI personalises entertainment for 27.17% of respondents, helping them discover tailored content for their favourite music or video streaming platforms. The 35-44 age group reports the highest usage at 30.83%, likely reflecting their desire for customised leisure experiences. Professionals in Marketing (38.46%) and IT (37.01%) show the strongest engagement, indicating crossover between personal and professional applications.

Analysis: Streaming platforms effectively use AI to retain users by tailoring recommendations to individual preferences. High adoption in creative and tech occupations suggests that AI's influence extends beyond entertainment into professional inspiration.

Controlling Smart Home Assistants

25.54% of respondents use AI for managing smart home devices and usage peaks among 45-54-year-olds (28.33%), reflecting this group's investment in convenience and automation, likely linked to their family life.

Analysis: The steady adoption of AI-driven smart home technology underscores its role in improving daily convenience. Its popularity among middle-aged adults suggests a potential growth market in younger demographics as they become older.

AI Holiday Helper

AI is transforming holiday preparation, with 28.36% of respondents using it to find deals, especially among the 35-44 age group (39.27%). Women (29.13%) are slightly more likely than men (27.54%) to rely on AI for bargain hunting. 21.87% use AI for online shopping, with adoption highest in London (30.58%) and among 35-44-year-olds (32.34%). 21.72% turn to AI for gift recommendations, particularly younger adults (16-34) and tech-forward cities like Greater London (28.14%) and Manchester (26.01%). 20.12% use AI for budget tracking, with the 35-44 age group leading at 27.39%, equally split across genders.

Analysis: AI is proving indispensable for managing holiday tasks, reducing stress and saving time. Tools for finding deals and managing budgets are especially valued by family-focused demographics, while younger users embrace AI for creative inspiration. An interesting insight is the strong engagement in cities like Nottingham (28.28%), showing that AI's benefits extend beyond major urban centres, reshaping how diverse communities approach holiday planning.

Diverse Uses of AI

Beyond the primary applications, respondents shared other innovative ways they use AI:

- Education: AI's role in education is steadily growing, with respondents using it for language learning, accessing online courses, and receiving personalised tutoring.

Occupation data reveals that 39.25% of those in Education are using AI in their professional settings, indicating its integration into teaching practices.
    - ***Analysis***: This data underscores the expanding role of AI in education, where tools are being leveraged to enhance both teaching methods and student engagement. AI's ability to provide personalised learning experiences is fostering continuous improvement and making education more adaptive to individual needs.
- Creative Content Creation: AI is also empowering creative pursuits, with younger users at the forefront. 16-24-year-olds are the most active in using AI for tasks like writing, graphic design, and music production, reflecting their comfort with emerging technologies.
    - ***Analysis***: The adoption of AI for creative purposes highlights its potential to democratise creativity, making sophisticated tools accessible to individuals regardless of technical expertise. Younger users' digital fluency positions them as innovators in AI-driven creative applications, signalling a shift toward technology-enabled self-expression.

Key Takeaways

- **AI is Enhancing Everyday Experiences:** From browsing the internet to shopping and entertainment, AI adds convenience and personalization to daily routines.
- **Cross-Generational Adoption**: Older adults are actively using AI, especially for internet searches and holiday tasks, indicating broadening acceptance.
- **People Use AI for Personal Growth:** Beyond practical tasks, individuals are leveraging AI for education and creative pursuits, highlighting a shift toward self-enrichment.
- **Holiday Preparations Made Easier**: AI assists with finding deals, gift recommendations, and even cooking, streamlining holiday planning.

Recommendation for the Reader - What's the Best Everyday Use of AI?

Getting Started:

- Identify Your Needs: Think about areas in your life where you could use a helping hand or want to save time.
- Start Small: Try using a virtual assistant on your phone, explore personalised playlists on a music streaming service or even download an AI-driven app on your phone.
- Stay Open-Minded: Embrace the convenience and personalization that AI offers and don't hesitate to explore new applications.

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Trust and Perception of AI

AI Engineer's Perspective

As AI continues to permeate all aspects of our lives, it often feels like an unstoppable wave of change. While technological advancements can seem overwhelming, particularly for those less familiar with AI, society retains the agency to guide this transformation responsibly.

The widespread adoption of Generative AI has sparked concerns about its implications, including fears of a leap toward Artificial General Intelligence (AGI). These anxieties underscore the need for deliberate governance. Thoughtful regulation, like the EU AI Act, can provide guardrails, categorising AI systems by risk levels to ensure safety without stifling innovation. By steering AI advancements with transparency and ethics at the forefront, society can build trust and confidence in this transformative technology.

More In-Depth Data Review

General Sentiment Toward AI

Data shows that 35% of respondents view AI positively, while 27% hold negative views. The remaining 38% express neutrality, suggesting a large portion of the population is undecided about AI's societal impact. Generational differences are stark: 51.52% of 25-34-year-olds view AI positively, compared to just 26.24% of the 55+ demographic. Occupational trends align similarly, with tech professionals (57.14%) leading in positivity, while those in healthcare (41.07%) and public services (38.18%) remain cautious.

Analysis: These findings highlight a dichotomy: younger generations and tech-aligned professions perceive AI as a tool for opportunity, while older individuals and industries with less AI integration remain sceptical. This divide stems from differences in exposure, familiarity, and perceived relevance. Bridging this gap requires tailored education and regulation to demystify AI, mitigate risks, and foster optimism.

Trust in AI's Reliability

Trust in AI stands at 45%, with 36.65% expressing neutrality and 17.78% distrusting its reliability. Generational trends persist: 25-34-year-olds report the highest trust (55.32%), while the 55+ group remains sceptical (41.14%). Notably, trust levels are higher among men (49.12%) than women (41.50%) and peak in tech-forward regions like Greater London (50%).

Analysis: The significant neutral segment underscores the importance of building public confidence in AI. Transparent AI systems that explain their operations can help transform

undecided users into advocates. Additionally, gender and regional differences highlight gaps in outreach and education that must be addressed to foster inclusive trust in AI technologies.

Occupational Insights

Tech (57.14%) and marketing (49.21%) professionals exhibit the highest trust levels, reflecting their frequent use of AI tools in professional settings. In contrast, the healthcare sector (41.07%) and public administration (33.33%) report lower trust, reflecting cautious integration of AI.

Analysis: Industries with high trust are typically those where AI's benefits are well-documented and visible. In contrast, healthcare's lower trust levels reflect concerns about ethics, safety, and compliance with strict regulations. By addressing these challenges with robust safeguards and industry-specific frameworks, such as the EU AI Act's risk-based classifications, trust can be expanded across more cautious sectors.

Key Takeaways

- **Public Sentiment is Mixed:** While 35% view AI positively, 38% remain neutral, signalling an opportunity to engage and educate the undecided.
- **Trust is Growing but Uneven**: Trust levels vary by demographic, region, and profession, reflecting the need for tailored approaches to build confidence in AI systems.
- **Regulation is Essential:** Comprehensive frameworks like the EU AI Act can help balance innovation with safety, ensuring AI's growth is ethical and equitable.
- **Education is Key**: Bridging generational and professional divides requires targeted outreach, emphasising transparency, reliability, and the societal benefits of AI.

The Future of AI: Companionship?

AI Engineer's Perspective

The concept of AI companionship has long been a staple of science fiction. As AI evolves, many have imagined its potential to serve as a companion—offering emotional support, friendship, or even romantic interaction — and raises questions about what we expect from relationships, both human and digital.

Interestingly, AI could help address some of society's most pressing issues, such as loneliness and isolation. With populations ageing and social structures shifting, AI could provide companionship for the elderly or those living alone. However, as with any innovation, AI companionship requires thoughtful development to avoid reinforcing biases, creating unhealthy dependencies or simply shifting society in a way that does not resonate with us.

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More In-Depth Data Review

AI Companionship Potential

Overall, only 11% of respondents view AI dating positively, while 60.81% express negative sentiments. Younger generations are less critical, with 22.26% of 35-44-year-olds and 18.81% of 25-34-year-olds showing openness to the concept. In contrast, the 55+ demographic is the most resistant, with 70.57% holding negative views. The gender divide is notable, as women (65.73%) are more likely to feel negative about AI dating compared to men (55.60%). Regionally, cities such as Manchester (13.87%) and Greater London (19.77%) display higher acceptance, while areas like Northern Ireland show significantly lower receptiveness.

Analysis: The significant variation in acceptance across generations and genders highlights how familiarity with and exposure to AI shape perceptions. Younger people, raised in a more digitally integrated world, may be better positioned to see AI as an emotional tool, whereas older generations view it with scepticism. Gender trends propose an interesting outlook: AI personas, often designed with feminine traits like Alexa and Siri, may subtly influence men to feel more at ease engaging with AI in an emotional or personal capacity.

AI in Romantic Contexts

Sentiment toward AI dating reveals a mixed yet predominantly negative outlook, with only 11% of respondents expressing positivity compared to 60.81% holding negative views. Like above, the data appears to be following similar trends: Younger generations are notably less critical, with 22.26% of 35-44-year-olds and 18.81% of 25-34-year-olds showing openness to the concept. In stark contrast, resistance is strongest among the 55+ group, where 70.57% view AI dating negatively. Gender dynamics also play a role, as women (65.73%) are more likely than men (55.60%) to reject the idea, hinting at differing comfort levels with AI in personal contexts. Regionally, cities like Manchester (13.87%) and Greater London (19.77%) show greater acceptance, reflecting their status as more tech-forward hubs. On the other hand, areas like Northern Ireland exhibit lower enthusiasm, emphasising the diverse cultural and regional attitudes toward AI in romantic scenarios.

***Analysis*:** It's intriguing to note the difference in responses between general AI companionship and AI in romantic relationships. While 25% of respondents see AI as a potential companion, only 11% view AI dating positively. This suggests that while AI companionship may be seen as a solution for loneliness or practical support, introducing AI into romantic or deeply personal spaces raises greater ethical and emotional concerns. These contrasting views may signal a cultural and psychological boundary that society is hesitant to cross.

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Key Takeaways

- A Mixed Future for AI Companionship: While 25% of respondents believe AI could offer meaningful emotional support, scepticism remains significant, with generational and regional divides shaping the narrative.
- Generational Gaps Highlight AI Comfort Levels: Younger demographics are more open to AI as an emotional tool, reflecting their integration into a digital-first world, whereas older generations remain largely resistant.
- Gender Dynamics Influence Perceptions: Men show greater openness to AI companionship, potentially influenced by societal norms and AI personas, often designed with feminine characteristics.
- AI as a Tool Against Loneliness: Beyond romantic scenarios, AI holds potential as a non-human companion to combat loneliness, offering emotional support in a range of contexts.
- A General Rift on AI Dating: Only 11% view AI dating positively, suggesting that introducing AI into romantic or deeply personal spaces raises greater ethical and emotional concern.

Recommendation for the Reader - AI Companionship in Pop Culture

Explore how AI companionship has been imagined in various forms of media to gain insight into its potential and pitfalls:

- **Films:**
  - *Her* (2013): An introspective take on AI romance and emotional connection.
  - *Blade Runner 2049* (2017): Examines the line between human and AI relationships.
- **Books:**
  - *Klara and the Sun* by Kazuo Ishiguro: A poignant story of an AI designed to provide companionship.
  - *Machines Like Me* by Ian McEwan: Explores morality and relationships with humanoid AI.
- **Television:**
  - *Westworld*: Explores complex dynamics of AI-human relationships.
  - *Black Mirror*: Offers cautionary tales about the risks of over-reliance on AI companions.
- **Art and Installations:**
  - AI-driven installations like *AI: More Than Human* explore emotional and artistic connections with AI.

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III. APPENDIX

Glossary

- Artificial Intelligence (AI): The ability for machines to carry out tasks that normally require human intelligence[2].
- Artificial General Intelligence (AGI): A field of theoretical AI research that attempts to create software with human-like intelligence and the ability to self-teach.[3]
- Bias in AI: The occurrence of biassed results due to human biases that skew the original training data or AI algorithm—leading to distorted outputs and potentially harmful outcomes.[4]
- Ethics in AI: AI ethics is a multidisciplinary field that studies how to optimise AI's beneficial impact while reducing risks and adverse outcomes.[5]
- Generative AI: A subset of AI that utilises machine learning models to create new, original content, such as images, text, or music, based on patterns and structures learned from existing data.[6]
- Large Language Models (LLMs): A deep learning algorithm that can recognize, summarise, translate, predict and generate text and other forms of content based on knowledge gained from massive datasets.[7]
- Recommendation Algorithms:a class of machine learning that uses data to help predict, narrow down, and find what people are looking for among an exponentially growing number of options.[8]
- Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG): an AI framework that combines the strengths of traditional information retrieval systems (such as search and databases) with the capabilities of generative large language models (LLMs).[9]
- SEO: short for search engine optimization—is about helping search engines understand your content, and helping users find your site and make a decision about whether they should visit your site through a search engine.[10]
- Virtual Assistants: help users or enterprises with a set of tasks previously only made possible by humans.[11]

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[2] Google, 2023 - https://cloud.google.com/learn/what-is-artificial-intelligence#section-2
[3] Amazon, 2024 - https://aws.amazon.com/what-is/artificial-general-intelligence/
[4] IBM, 2023 - https://www.ibm.com/topics/ai-bias
[5] IBM, 2024 - https://www.ibm.com/topics/ai-ethics
[6] Cornell, 2024 - https://teaching.cornell.edu/generative-artificial-intelligence
[7] Nvidia, 2023 - https://blogs.nvidia.com/blog/what-are-large-language-models-used-for/
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[9] Google Cloud, 2024 - https://cloud.google.com/use-cases/retrieval-augmented-generation
[10] Google Developers, 2024 - https://developers.google.com/search/docs/fundamentals/seo-starter-guide
[11] Gartner, 2024 - https://www.gartner.com/en/information-technology/glossary/virtual-assistant-va

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Recommended Next Steps

- Set up data collection and data cleaning guidelines
- Create data visualisations
- Build internal memo/ presentation about future of AI