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Opinions about AI vary depending on countries' level of economic development

Ipsos survey for the World Economic Forum unveils mix of positive feelings and concerns about AI's impact on people's lives

New York, NY, January 5, 2022 — A new Ipsos survey for the World Economic Forum finds that, on average, six out of 10 adults from 28 countries expect that products and services using artificial intelligence will profoundly change their daily life in the next three to five years. Half of them feel it has already been the case in the past few years.

Six in ten also agree that products and services using AI make their life easier, but only half say they have more benefits than drawbacks and four in ten adults admit that AI-powered products and services make them nervous. Just half say they trust companies that use AI as much as they trust other companies.

At a global level, majorities of people expect AI will make things better for them and their family with education and learning, entertainment, transportation, their home, shopping, safety, the environment, and food and nutrition. However, people across the world are evenly divided on the benefits of AI when it comes to their income, personal and family relationships, and employment (47%). Those who expect AI will improve their situation when it comes to the cost of living and to freedom and legal rights are a minority in most countries.

The survey highlights a clear divide between high-income and emerging countries in attitudes toward AI. Citizens from emerging countries are significantly more likely than those from more economically developed countries to report being knowledgeable about AI, to trust companies that use AI, and to have a positive outlook on the impact of AI-powered products and services in their life.

These are some of the findings of a survey of 19,504 adults under the age of 75 conducted on Ipsos' Global Advisor online platform between November 19 and December 3, 2021.

Detailed Findings

Familiarity with AI

On average for all 28 countries surveyed, almost two-thirds (64%) claim they have a good understanding of what AI is, but only half (50%) know which types of products and services use AI

- Unsurprisingly, reported familiarity with AI is highest among business decision-makers (74% say have a good understanding of what it is) and business owners (73%), those with a university degree (71%), and those in their country's upper-income tier (71%). It is also notably higher among males than females (by 9 percentage points).



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- The same demographic groups are also significantly more likely to say they know which types of products and services use AI.
- Geographic variations are even broader: Reported “good understanding of AI” ranges from lows of 41% in Japan and 42% in Italy to highs of 78% in South Africa, 76% in Chile and Peru, and 75% in Russia. Reported knowledge of products and services that use AI ranges from 32% in Japan to 76% in China.

Trust in companies using AI

Only half (50%) trust companies that use AI as much as they trust other companies. Trust in companies that use AI is highly correlated with familiarity.

- The likelihood to trust companies that use AI as much as other companies is highest among business decision-makers (62%), business owners (61%), the more affluent (57%) and those with a higher-education degree (56%), and lowest among those are 50 and older (44%), those with no higher education (45%), and those who are not employed (45%).
- There is an even wider divide between emerging countries and high-income countries:
 - Majorities trust companies that use AI as much as other companies in nearly all emerging countries, most of all China (76%), Saudi Arabia (73%), and India (68%).
 - In contrast, only about one-third in many high-income countries are as trusting of AI-powered companies, including Canada (34%), France (34%), the United States (35%), Great Britain (35%), and Australia (36%).

How much impact on daily life?

Six in ten (60%) expect that products and services using AI will profoundly change their daily life in the next 3-5 years and half (49%) say it has already been the case in the past 3-5 years. Areas people expect AI will change most for them and their family in the coming years are, in order: education and learning (cited by 35%), safety (33%), employment (32%), shopping (31%), and transportation (30%). Demographic and geographic differences on how much products and services using AI are perceived to change daily life mirror those for familiarity with AI and trust in companies that use AI.

- 72% of business decision-makers say it will change their life in the next few years vs. 54% of those who are not employed; 80% in China and Saudi Arabia expect AI to change their life, but of less than half in Canada, Germany, France, Great Britain, and the U.S. do.
- AI’s impact on education and learning is most widely expected by those who are under the age of 35 and those who are highly educated, its impact on safety by older adults, its impact on employment by those in the 35-49 age group, and its impact on shopping, transportation, and entertainment by the more affluent.
- Particularly large percentages of Latin Americans expect AI to trigger changes in education, safety, and employment while the Chinese are those most prone to expecting AI to change shopping, transportation, entertainment, and their home. On the other hand, expectations of AI-driven change in education and learning are especially low in Japan and France.





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Does AI improve daily life?

Six in ten (60%) say products and services using AI make their life easier, but only half (52%) say they have more benefits than drawbacks and four in ten (39%) say these products and services make them nervous. Again, demographic and geographic differences on appreciation of products and services using AI match those about familiarity, trust, and perceptions of AI's impact on daily life:

- 87% in China and 80% in Saudi Arabia say AI-powered products and services make their life easier vs. 39% in France and 41% in the U.S.
- 78% in China and 76% in Saudi Arabia say they have more benefits than drawbacks vs. 31% in France, 32% in Canada, 33% in the Netherlands, and 35% in the U.S.

Areas where people most expect AI to make things better for them and their family consist of: education and learning (AI expected to make it better by 77%), entertainment (77%), transportation (74%), the home (73%), shopping (70%), and safety (69%). Six in ten also expect AI to make things better for the environment (62%) and for food and nutrition (61%). However, the global public is evenly divided on the benefits of AI on income (better for 53%), personal and family relationships (50%), and employment (47%). Only four in ten expect AI will improve their situation when it comes to the cost of living (42%) and freedom and legal rights (37%).

- The average for all 13 areas of those saying they will make life better is no less than 70% in all China, India, Saudi Arabia, and all six Latin American countries surveyed. In contrast, it is only 41% in Belgium and 42% in Canada.
- In certain countries, the percentage of those expecting AI to have a positive impact varies little across categories. It is the case in India, Peru, Malaysia, and Argentina. In contrast, people tend to be a lot more discriminating when it comes to which areas AI will improve and which it will not in several other countries: Italy, Japan, South Korea, Russia, Turkey, and the U.S. For example, 79% of Italians and 72% of Americans think AI will improve their home, but only 19% and 16%, respectively think it will improve their freedom and legal rights.



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About the Study

These are the results of a 28-country survey conducted by Ipsos on its Global Advisor online platform. Ipsos interviewed a total of 19,054 adults aged 18-74 in the United States, Canada, Malaysia, South Africa, and Turkey, and aged 16-74 in 24 other markets, between November 19 and December 3, 2021.

The sample consists of approximately 1,000 individuals in each of Australia, Brazil, Canada, mainland China, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Japan, Spain, and United States, and 500 individuals in each of Argentina, Belgium, Chile, Colombia, Hungary, India, Malaysia, Mexico, the Netherlands, Peru, Poland, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Sweden, and Turkey.

The samples in Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Poland, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, and the United States can be taken as representative of their general adult population under the age of 75.

The samples in Brazil, Chile, mainland China, Colombia, India, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, and Turkey are more urban, more educated, and/or more affluent than the general population. The survey results for these countries should be viewed as reflecting the views of the more “connected” segment of their population.

The data is weighted so that each country’s sample composition best reflects the demographic profile of the adult population according to the most recent census data.

“The Global Country Average” reflects the average result for all the countries and markets where the survey was conducted. It has not been adjusted to the population size of each country or market and is not intended to suggest a total result.

Where results do not sum to 100 or the ‘difference’ appears to be +/-1 more/less than the actual, this may be due to rounding, multiple responses, or the exclusion of “don’t know” or not stated responses.

The precision of Ipsos online polls is calculated using a credibility interval with a poll of 1,000 accurate to +/- 3.5 percentage points and of 500 accurate to +/- 5.0 percentage points. For more information on Ipsos' use of credibility intervals, please visit the Ipsos website. The publication of these findings abides by local rules and regulations.



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About Ipsos

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Our passionately curious research professionals, analysts, and scientists have built unique multi-specialist capabilities that provide true understanding and powerful insights into the actions, opinions, and motivations of citizens, consumers, patients, customers, or employees. We serve more than 5000 clients across the world with 75 business solutions.

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