Young People's Perception and Use of Generative AI

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Thank you

Introduction

From the author

2023 was an academic year that began with the risk of AI to education. Since ChatGPT's November 2022 launch by OpenAI, the education sector reacted following reports that it passed medical[i] and MBA exams[ii], and with ongoing concerns about potential student cheating that have dominated the conversation.

The 2023 Universities Accord discussion paper reports that "generative AI software presents a range of complex challenges for academic integrity in higher education"[iii]. Within the Australian education sector, the reaction from some universities has included updating academic integrity policies and examination procedures; returning to 'pen and paper' assessments; and considering implementation of AI detection software. Across Australia, most public schools (with the exception of those in South Australia) have outright banned the use of ChatGPT, while some private schools have integrated the technology into their teaching.

Overwhelmingly, discussions about the impact of Generative AI on education have been missing one key voice that bears the greatest impact of the changes this technology brings: students and young people.

To address this issue, in April 2023, YouthInsight conducted the first Australian exploratory study with students and young people to understand their perceptions and use of Generative AI.

This report includes insight from 576 young people aged 14 to 26 across High Schools, Universities, TAFE, Colleges, and in work, focusing on how Gen Z is using AI; their favourite tools; the omnipresent questions about cheating and plagiarism; their self-reported skills and confidence in using AI; their levels of trust in these tools and information they generate; AI ethics, regulations and their overall outlook on an AI future.

The outcomes of this report show that Gen Zs are embracing Generative AI tools. With 65 per cent having used any Generative AI tool at the time of taking the survey, young people are using these tools in ways that support their learning, including self-learning.

Gen Zs report having confidence in AI information accuracy, but are not confident when it comes to determining when something is AI generated. When it comes to checking accuracy, only 66 per cent report to verifying its accuracy. With these statistics in mind, the education sector must consider how it can support and train students in verifying AI generated information, to ensure that AI tools are used appropriately by students.

Gen Z is ready to accept an AI future. With 68 per cent of young people saying that AI tools are here to stay, almost one in two are worried about their impact. While the majority of Gen Zs have not reconsidered their current or future study or career prospects as a results of AI tools, almost one in five have. This is a concerning statistic, and suggests a growing worry in the younger generation about their future. Of these young people, many are reconsidering their study and career pathways due to potential job displacement, while others are considering pivoting into technology.

As workplaces across Australia embrace Generative AI tools, the education sector must ensure that students are afforded appropriate training in AI technology (including its ethics, accuracy checks, discerning between AI and human-generated content, appropriate prompting pathways). This is an opportunity to safeguard student development and training in the use of a tool that may come to be ubiquitous, and one that is already being equated with the reception received by the calculator as it entered the classroom.
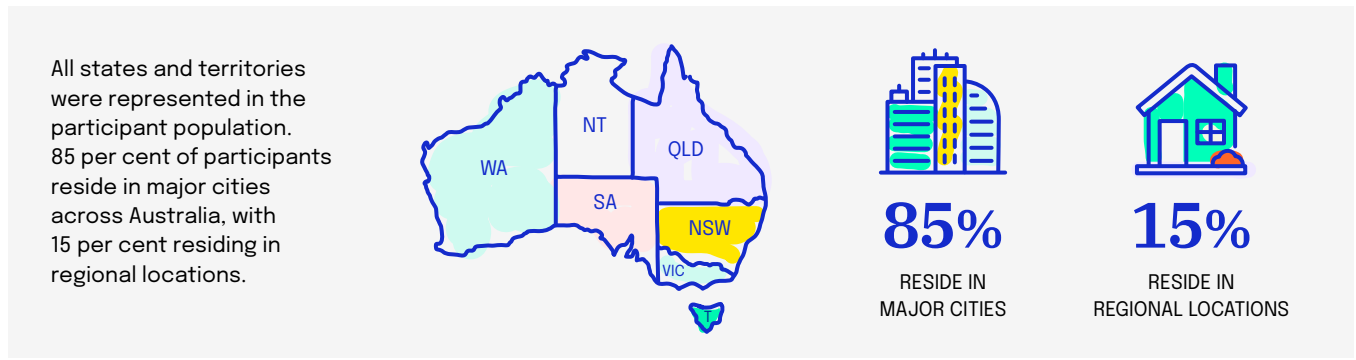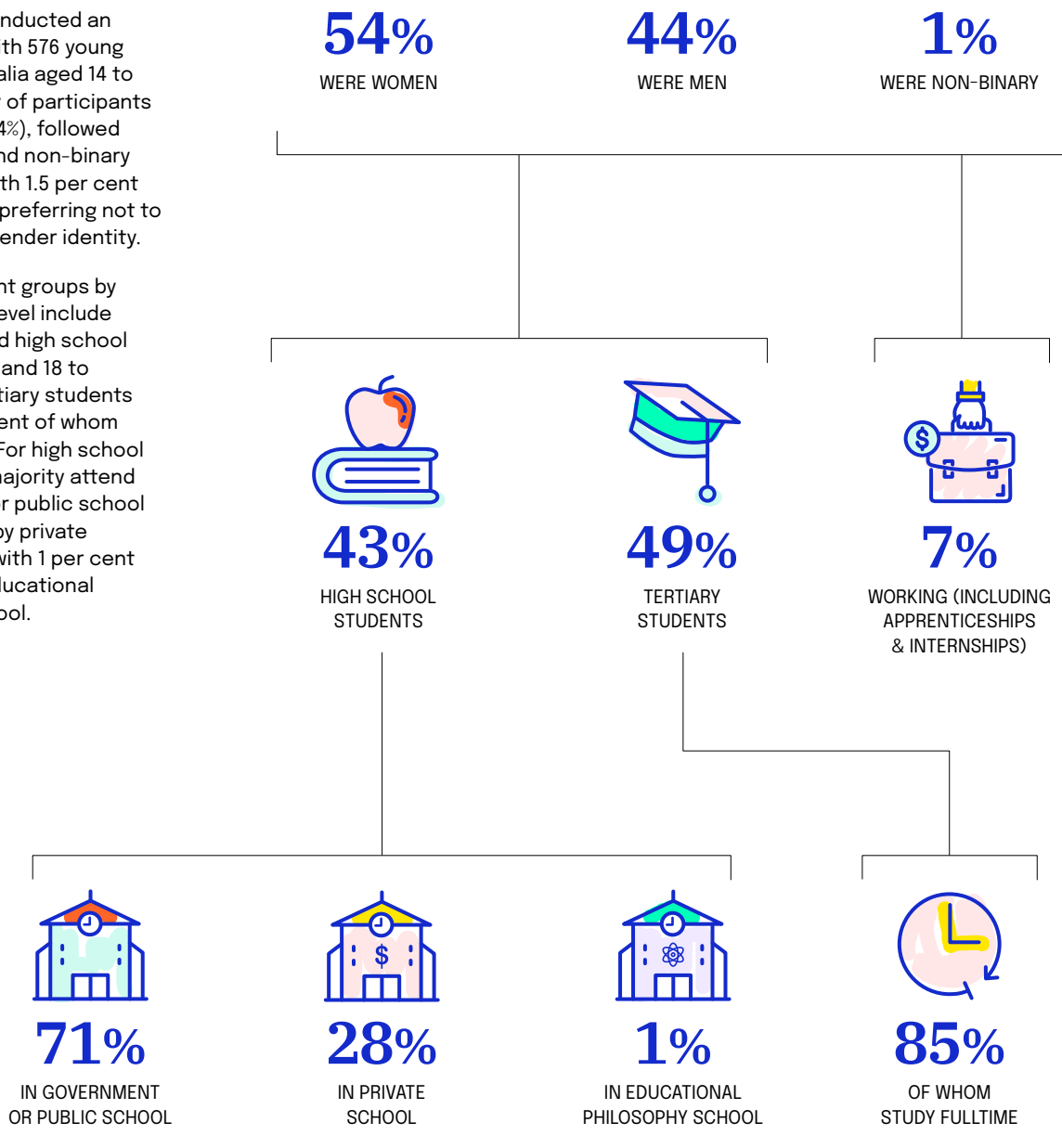
Thank you to the 576 young people who participated in this survey, this exploratory research would not be possible without you.

Dr Anna Denejkina
Research Director
YouthInsight

Who participated in this research?

YouthInsight conducted an online survey with 576 young people in Australia aged 14 to 26. The majority of participants were women (54%), followed by men (44%), and non-binary people (<1%), with 1.5 per cent of participants preferring not to disclose their gender identity.

Major participant groups by age and study level include 14 to 18-year-old high school students (42%), and 18 to 26-year-old tertiary students (46%) - 85 per cent of whom study full time. For high school students, the majority attend a government or public school (71%), followed by private schools (28%), with 1 per cent attending an educational philosophy school.

54%
WERE WOMEN

44%
WERE MEN

1%
WERE NON-BINARY

43%
HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

49%
TERTIARY STUDENTS

7%
WORKING (INCLUDING APPRENTICESHIPS & INTERNSHIPS)

71%
IN GOVERNMENT OR PUBLIC SCHOOL

28%
IN PRIVATE SCHOOL

1%
IN EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY SCHOOL

85%
OF WHOM STUDY FULLTIME

All states and territories were represented in the participant population. 85 per cent of participants reside in major cities across Australia, with 15 per cent residing in regional locations.

NT

QLD

WA

SA

NSW

VIC

T

85%
RESIDE IN MAJOR CITIES

15%
RESIDE IN REGIONAL LOCATIONS

Is Gen Z using Generative AI tools?

Use of Generative AI:

Men are more likely to use Generative AI than women, with 14 to 17-year-olds the largest user group.
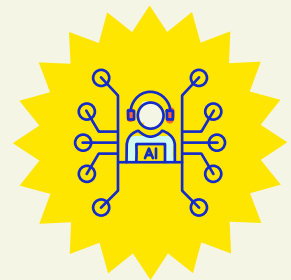
Almost 65 per cent of Gen Zs reported having used Generative AI at the time of taking the survey. This was a significant finding compared to the two remaining groups, including 25.7 per cent who reported not using Generative AI, and, interestingly, 9.7 per cent who were unsure – possibly pointing to the confusion caused by the expanding definition of exactly what AI is when it comes to Generative AI tools.
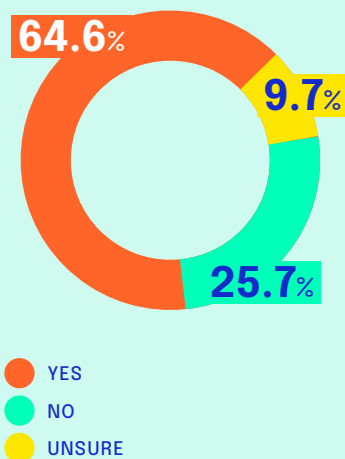
Men were more likely than women to report using Generative AI tools, whereas women were more likely than men to report being unsure if they had used Generative AI.

Though no statistically significant results were found in Generative AI use in an age-group comparison, the data showed a pattern between age and use of AI. Younger age groups were the largest user of AI: 14 to 17-year-olds (70%), 18 to 19-year-olds (65%), 20 to 22-year-olds (59%), and 23 to 26-year-olds (55%).

HAVE YOU EVER USED (IN ANY CAPACITY) A GENERATIVE AI TOOL?

64.6%
9.7%
25.7%

- YES
- NO
- UNSURE

HAVE YOU EVER USED (IN ANY CAPACITY) A GENERATIVE AI TOOL?

	55%	36%	9%	59%	28%	13%	65%	30%	5%	70%	19%	11%
	AGE 23–26			AGE 20–22			AGE 18–19			AGE 14–17		

- YES
- NO
- UNSURE
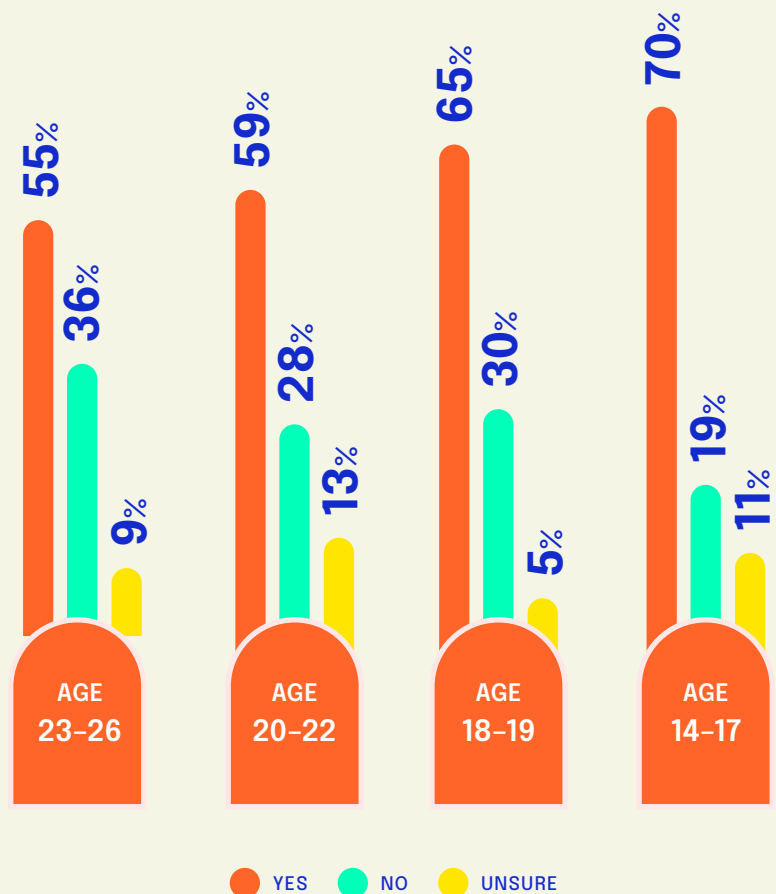
AI Tools Familiarity and Use:

ChatGPT is the most popular Generative AI tool with Gen Zs.

Participants who have used Generative AI were asked about their familiarity with and use of some of the most popular tools, including: DALL-E, Midjourney, Microsoft Bing AI, Stable Diffusion, Bard, ChatGPT, ChatSonic, Chinchilla, LLaMA, Canva AI, YouChat and Jukebox.

The most popular AI tool with Gen Z is ChatGPT, with 49 per cent of participants using it regularly or sometimes, followed distantly by Canva AI with 13 per cent of users.

Most participants reported not having heard of AI tools including Midjourney (76%), Stable Diffusion (79%), Bard (78%), ChatSonic (80%),
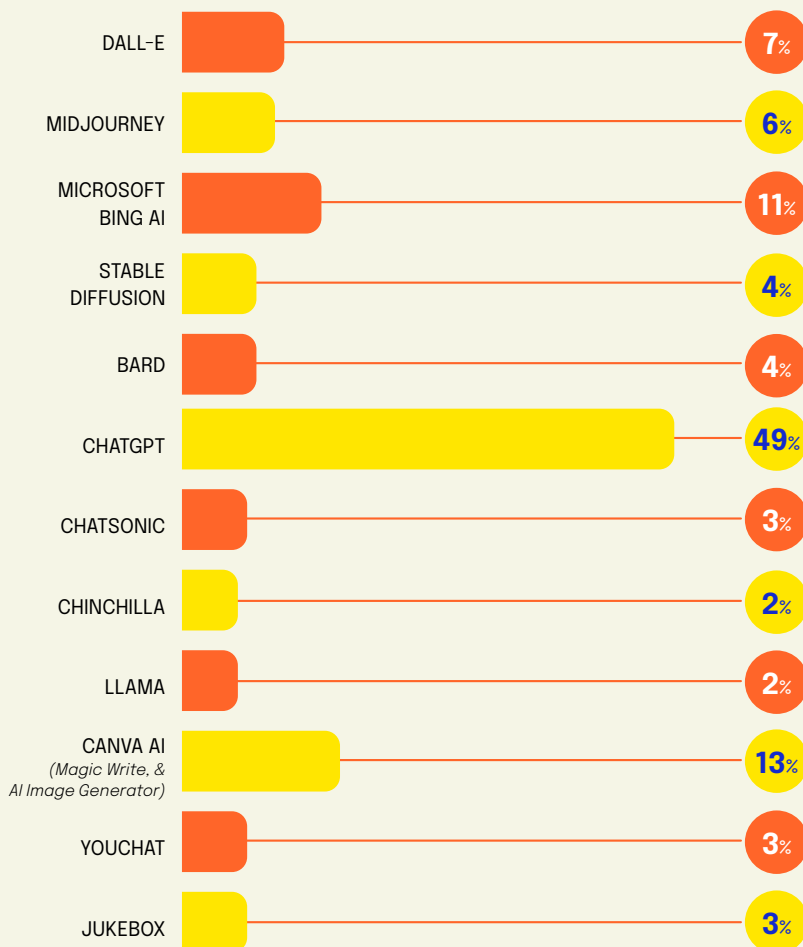
Chinchilla (85%), LLaMA (86%), YouChat (76%) or Jukebox (81%), an important take-away for these organisations if they are trying to reach a younger audience.

Women were most likely to use ChatGPT followed by CanvaAI, whereas men were most likely to use ChatGPT, followed by Microsoft Bing AI.

When asked if participants had a favourite generative AI tool overall, the data found that though women were less likely than men to have a favourite tool, ChatGPT was the favourite tool across all genders and age groups.
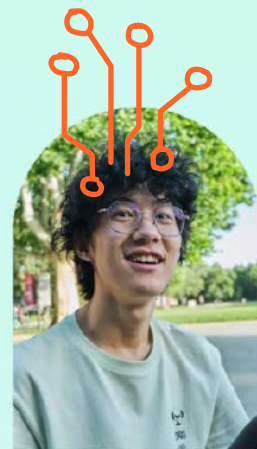
Frequency of Use:

44% of tertiary and high school students are using Generative AI monthly or less frequently, with only 14% using it daily.

For tertiary students, only 18 per cent reported using AI tools on a daily basis, with the majority using it either weekly (32%), monthly or less frequently (42%). It was a similar story with students in high school, with only 11 per cent using AI daily, 32 per cent using it weekly, and 44 per cent using it monthly or less frequently.

Will Gen Z keep using AI?

Young people already using AI are overwhelmingly ready to keep using AI in the next 12 months, with 87 per cent reporting that they are somewhat likely or very likely to do so.

For those not using AI tools already, 56 per cent reported they are not at all likely to use AI tools in the next 12 months, while 38 per cent said that they are somewhat likely to use AI tools in the future. Only 5 per cent reported that they are very likely to do so.

HOW FAMILIAR ARE YOU WITH THE FOLLOWING GENERATIVE AI TOOLS?
(Use it on a regular basis + use it sometimes)

Tool	%
DALL-E	7%
MIDJOURNEY	6%
MICROSOFT BING AI	11%
STABLE DIFFUSION	4%
BARD	4%
CHATGPT	49%
CHATSONIC	3%
CHINCHILLA	2%
LLAMA	2%
CANVA AI (Magic Write, & AI Image Generator)	13%
YOUCHAT	3%
JUKEBOX	3%

Cheating and Plagiarism
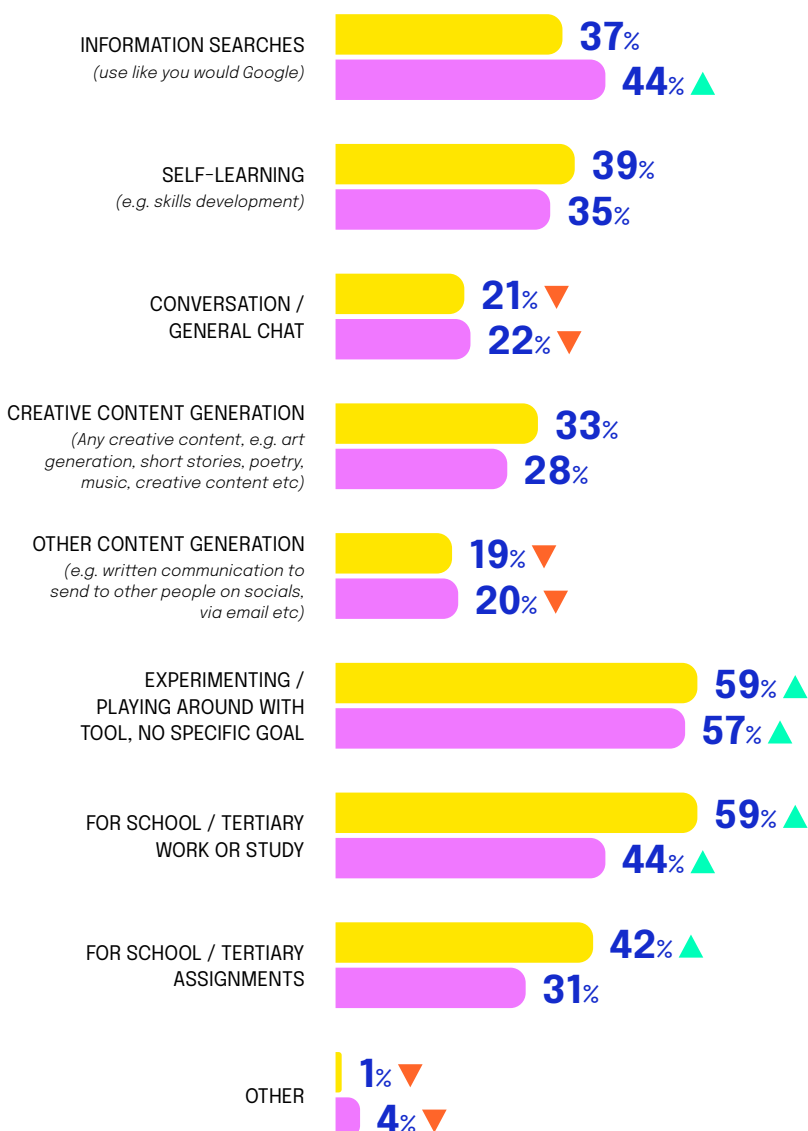
What are students using Generative AI tools for?

50 per cent of Gen Zs use AI to experiment with the tool and for help with their schoolwork or study, while 1 in 5 students report using it for conversation.

Across the board, students were less likely to use Generative AI for conversation and general chat when compared to other uses of the tool. But with 1 in 5 students reporting that they use Generative AI for conversation, this is a vital factor to take into account for the Education sector, with previous YouthInsight research pointing to isolation felt by students at University, and their want for connection with peers.

WHAT HAVE YOU USED GENERATIVE AI TOOLS FOR?

🟡 HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS 🟣 TERTIARY STUDENTS

INFORMATION SEARCHES
(use like you would Google)
🟡 37%
🟣 44% ▲

SELF-LEARNING
(e.g. skills development)
🟡 39%
🟣 35%

CONVERSATION / GENERAL CHAT
🟡 21% ▼
🟣 22% ▼

CREATIVE CONTENT GENERATION
(Any creative content, e.g. art generation, short stories, poetry, music, creative content etc)
🟡 33%
🟣 28%

OTHER CONTENT GENERATION
(e.g. written communication to send to other people on socials, via email etc)
🟡 19% ▼
🟣 20% ▼

EXPERIMENTING / PLAYING AROUND WITH TOOL, NO SPECIFIC GOAL
🟡 59% ▲
🟣 57% ▲

FOR SCHOOL / TERTIARY WORK OR STUDY
🟡 59% ▲
🟣 44% ▲

FOR SCHOOL / TERTIARY ASSIGNMENTS
🟡 42% ▲
🟣 31%

OTHER
🟡 1% ▼
🟣 4% ▼

High school students n=179
Tertiary school students n=170

TERTIARY STUDENTS:

Tertiary students are primarily using AI for information searches (44%), experimenting and playing around with the tool (57%), and for tertiary work or study (not assignments) (44%).

What are they least likely to use AI for? This includes conversation/general chat (22%) and content generation, including written communication to send to other people on socials, via email and so on (20%).

When it comes to their assignments, only 31 per cent of students reported using AI for this purpose.

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS:

Similarly to tertiary students, students in high school are most likely to use AI for experimenting and playing around with the tool and for school work or study (not assignments) – both at 59 per cent. Unlikely tertiary students, those in high school are additionally most likely to use AI for school assignments (42%) – here, we need to be careful with the data, as this does not provide evidence for cheating, and cannot be extrapolated as such. Further in the report, we unpack exactly how students are using AI for help with their assignments and studies.

When it comes to what high school students are least likely to use AI for, this includes conversation/general chat (21%), and content generation including written communication to send to other people on socials, via email and so on (19%).

Are students using AI to plagiarise?

Overwhelmingly, it's a no. But they are using it for help with their work.

In this study, only 75 high school students overall reported using AI for their school assignments. When asked if they told their teacher about doing this, 3 in 5 said no (61%). This drops to 55 per cent for the 105 high school students that use AI for their schoolwork or study, with 45 per cent reporting that they do tell their teachers.

When it comes to tertiary students, only 53 students reported using AI for their assignments, with 3 in 5 reporting that they did not tell their tutor, lecturer or professor about doing so (66%). Like

with high school students, we see a greater number of tertiary students using AI for tertiary work or study, with 75 reporting doing so, and of these 2 in 5 telling their tutor, lecturer or professor (40%).

Of the students who had used Generative AI in any capacity, we asked if they had ever used Generative AI to plagiarise on their tertiary or school assessments. The majority reported that they had not and would not in the future (71%), with only 9 per cent reporting that they had and would do

so again. These findings are in line with previous Australian research which found that 8 to 11 per cent of university students have submitted assignments written by someone else[iv]. Importantly, more than 4 out of 5 students (83%) reported that they would not use Generative AI to plagiarise in the future regardless of how they've used these tools before.

In an age group comparison, students 18 to 19 were less likely than those aged 14 to 17 to report using AI for this purpose now and in the future.
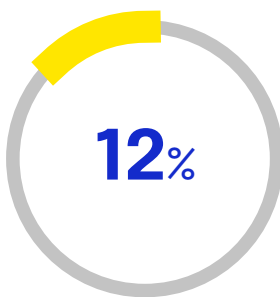
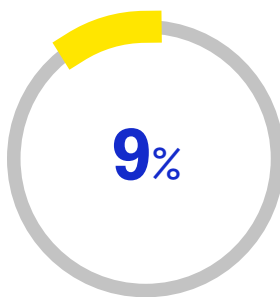HAVE YOU EVER USED GENERATIVE AI TOOLS
TO PLAGIARISE* ON AN ASSIGNMENT?

71%
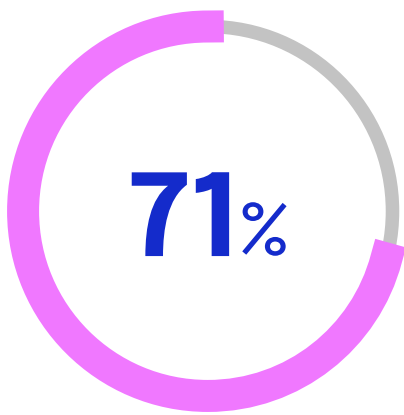
NO, AND WOULD
NOT IN THE FUTURE

8%
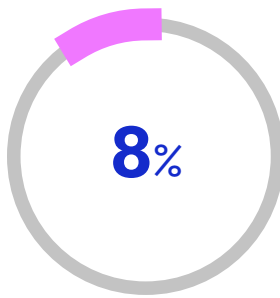
NO, BUT WOULD
IN THE FUTURE

12%

YES, BUT WOULD
NOT IN THE FUTURE

9%

YES, AND WOULD
AGAIN IN THE FUTURE

n=327

** Plagiarism is defined as presenting work that is not your
own without acknowledging the original source of the work.*

AI use and perceptions of cheating:

Gen Z is undecided.

When asked if using AI tools for university assignments was cheating, tertiary students were split, with 35 per cent saying yes, 36 per cent saying no, and 29 percent being unsure. With almost 1 in 3 being unsure, it highlights that students are recognising that there is nuance to the use of AI for studies.

Q. Do you consider using Generative AI tools for university/TAFE or college assignments cheating?
(Tertiary students)

"Depending on how it's used. For major assignments and copying word for word is wrong."

"It's not your own work, it's grabbing bits of other people's work from online sources and mashing them together, plagiarism."

"It depends how you plan on using it. Most of us use it as a starting point for assignments, such as what references to use, what ideas or concepts to include and discuss. It would only be considered cheating if the entire assessment was written by these tools."

"Assignments are meant to test your ability to think, research and find answers by yourself. It's almost the same as asking a professional to write your essays for you."

"I only use the AI for an explanation for computing- not an entire solution or submission for my assignments."

"Just another efficient way to gather information, in the real world we will have ChatGPT at our disposals anyways."

Unlike tertiary students, those in high school were less likely to consider the use of AI for school assignments as cheating (27%), with 39 per cent saying it's not cheating, and 33 per cent being unsure. On this topic, there was no significant difference between public and private school students.

Q. Do you consider using Generative AI tools for school assignments cheating?
(High school students)

"You aren't retaining the information that you are making an AI give you, compared to when you have to manually research for the topic you are most curious about."

"It doesn't allow school students to do their own work and know what they are capable of. It also gives them an unfair advantage."

"Most of my mates use Generative AI to do assessments for them without them doing any study unlike the rest of the class, so yeah, I think it's cheating a little."

"If you just copy paste what the AI says then yes it's cheating, but I think if you use it to give you an example as to how to write your work it should be ok."

"School assignments should be based off an individual's ability to compose a piece of work, not frame a question to an AI. However, I also believe that the tools do provide valuable information that can be used in a student's own assignment and wider knowledge."

"As long as you aren't plagiarising, it's the same as using Google, but better."

"Depending on how you use it. For assignments it is but if you use it for study or just for your own purposes, it is like or similar to looking something up online."

"It is just like using a calculator. It may later on be adapted as a normality that schools will have to regulate and be flexible with in the future."

Skills and Confidence

Gen Z's AI skills and confidence in use:

Men are more confident in using AI than women, and more likely than women to say they are very skilled or somewhat skilled.

Men were more likely to report being somewhat confident or very confident in using Generative AI tools (74%) compared to women (56%). Overall, the majority of Gen Z reported being somewhat confident in using AI (53%), with 35 per cent reporting that they are not at all confident or not very confident.

It was a similar story when we asked participants to rate their AI skills. Men were again more likely than women to report being very skilled or somewhat skilled (70%).

Looking at the full participant population, 43 per cent consider themselves as not at all skilled or not

● WOMEN   ● MEN

56%
30%

NOT AT ALL SKILLED
+ NOT VERY SKILLED

44%
70%

VERY SKILLED
+ SOMEWHAT SKILLED
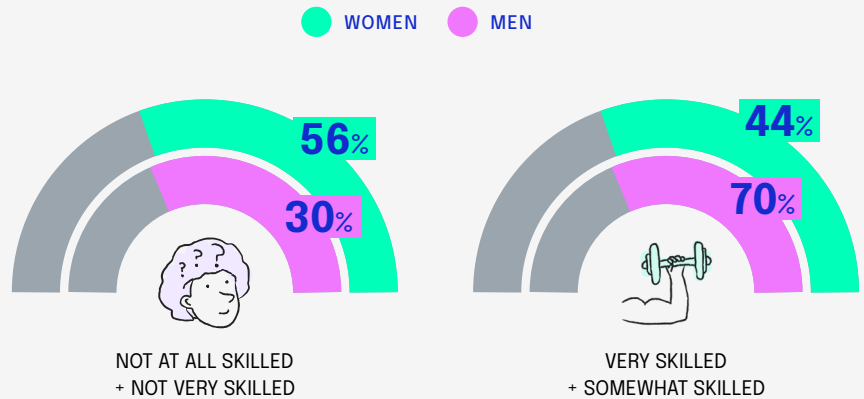
very skilled, with 57 per cent reporting that they are very skilled or somewhat skilled.

These data show that for a large proportion of students, they have low confidence and skills levels when it comes to using Generative AI tools – something the education sector needs to pay close attention to and consider

how it can implement training within its system to better support students of all genders and age groups. With both self-confidence and skills being higher in men than women, the education sector must build up the skills and confidence of all to ensure that Generative AI tools and future jobs using these tools don't become an occupation that favours some over others.

n=361

(Non-binary participants and those who did not disclose their gender were not included in this analysis due to low number of participants n=11)

Determining AI Information Accuracy:

Gen Zs have confidence in AI information accuracy, but are not confident when it comes to determining when something is AI generated – with women reporting less confidence overall.

61 per cent of young people reported that they are not at all confident or not very confident when it comes to being able to tell when content is AI generated, with only 34 per cent reporting some level of confidence in this task. Here, men were more likely than women to be somewhat confident or very confident (46% vs 32%).

62 per cent of Gen Zs reported that they are somewhat confident when it comes to the accuracy of information and content generated by AI tools, and the majority reported that they verify the accuracy of information generated by AI tools (66%).

DO YOU TYPICALLY VERIFY THE ACCURACY OF INFORMATION GENERATED BY AI TOOLS?

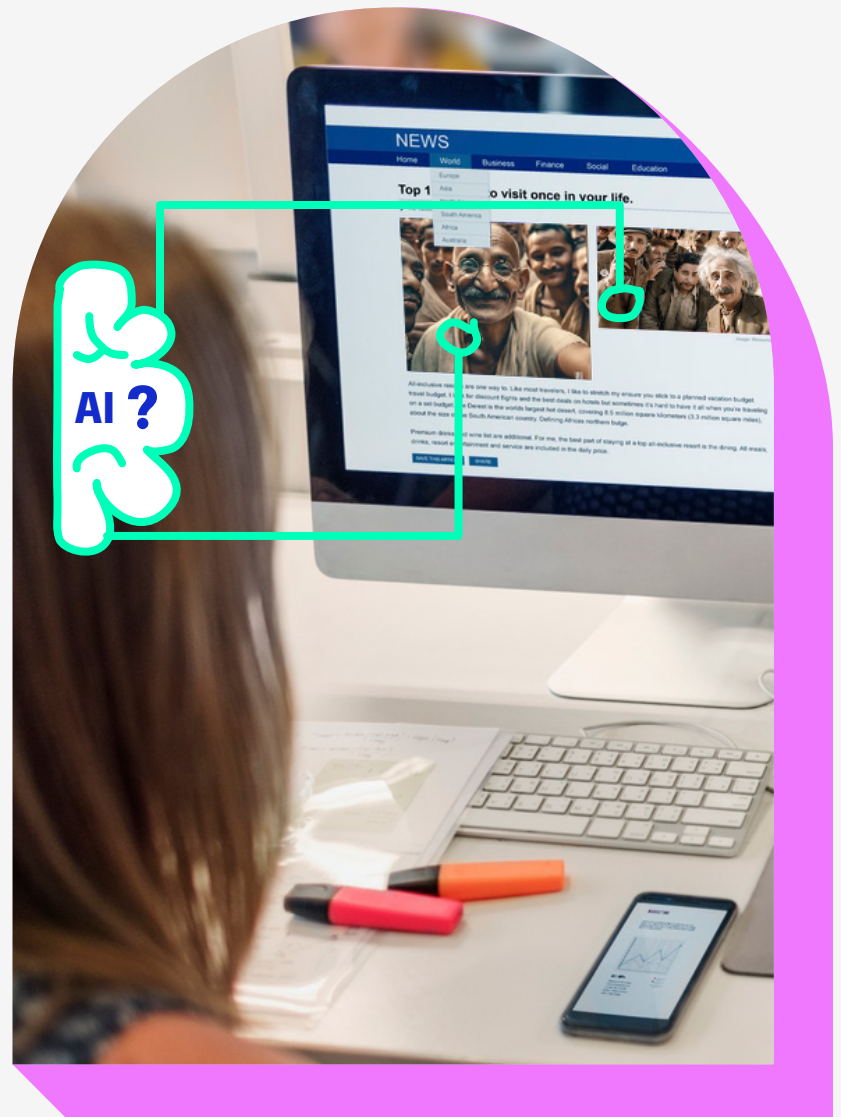● HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS   ● TERTIARY STUDENTS

58%
74%

42%
26%

YES

NO
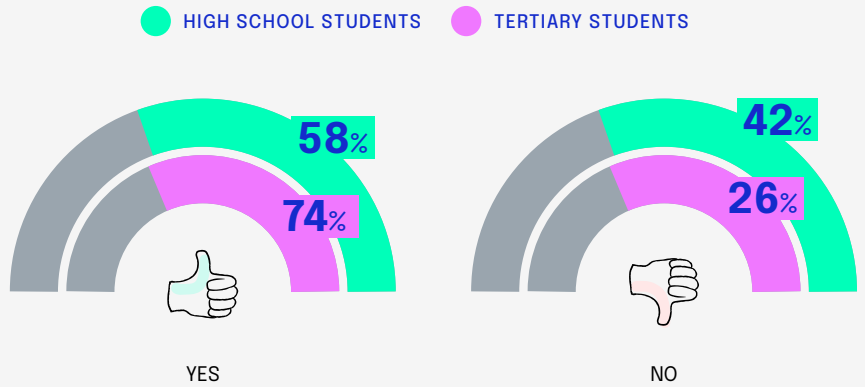
n=349

HOW CONFIDENT ARE YOU IN BEING ABLE TO TELL WHEN SOMETHING IS AI GENERATED?

SOMEWHAT CONFIDENT

34%

4%
VERY CONFIDENT

61%

NOT AT ALL CONFIDENT + NOT VERY CONFIDENT
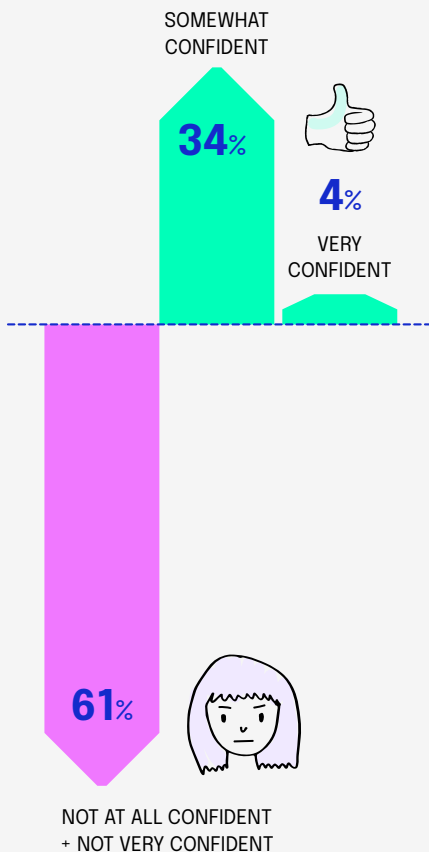
n=540

Perceptions

Gen Z on the Advantages and Disadvantages of AI:

Older Gen Zs are more concerned about Job Displacement than younger age groups, while efficiency and self-learning are rated as top advantage and benefit of AI.

Gen Zs have varying perceptions of Generative AI by gender but not by age group, with women more likely to have a neutral view of the technology, and men more likely to have a positive view. Overall, Gen Z is on the fence, with the majority reporting that they have a neutral view of Generative AI in 2023 (55%).
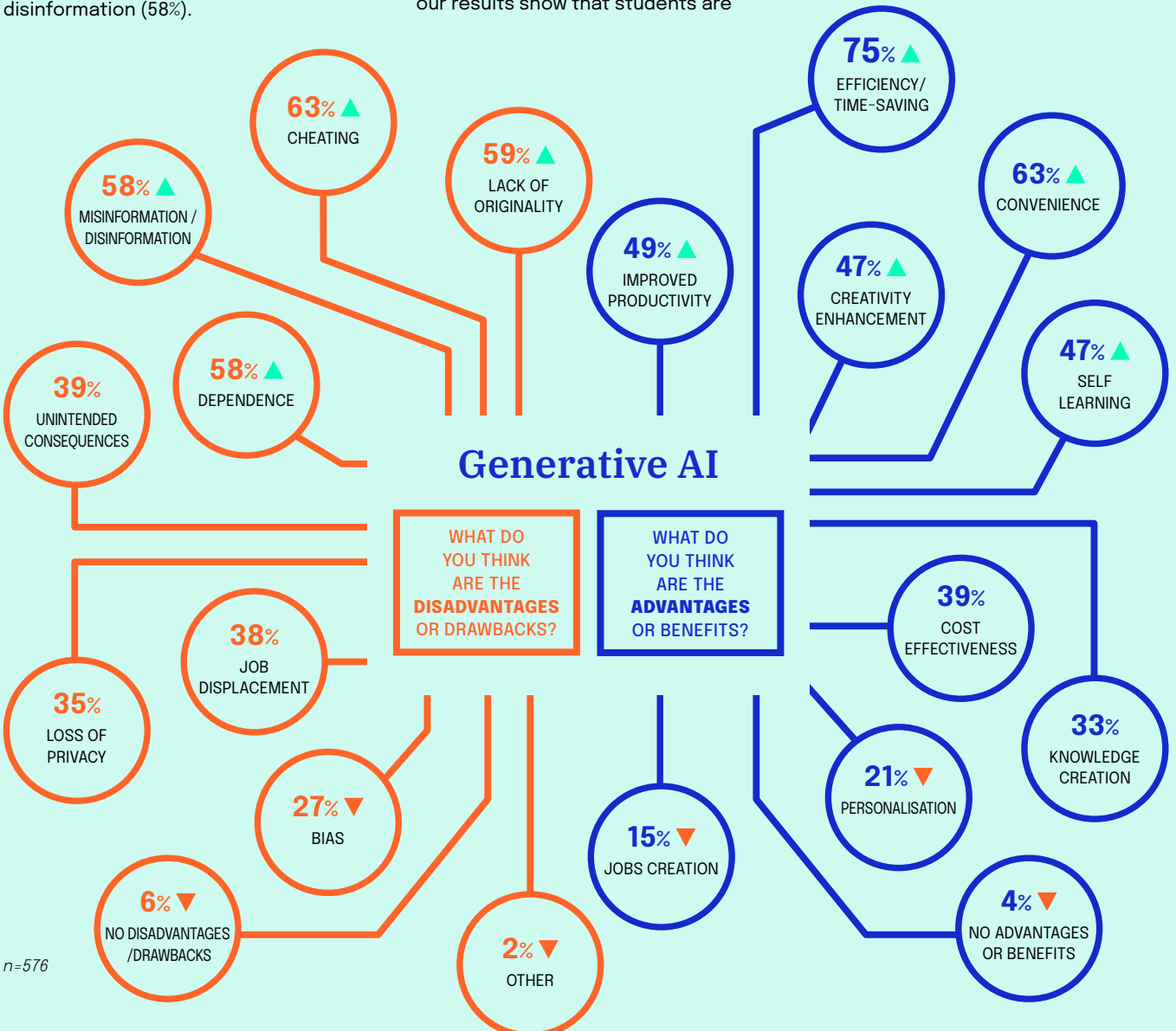
When it comes to disadvantages or drawbacks of AI, Gen Z are most concerned about lack of originality (59%), cheating (63%), dependence on the tool (58%) and misinformation and disinformation (58%).

20 to 22-year-olds were more likely to worry about job displacement than younger Gen Zs aged 14 to 17 (46% vs 32%).

Gen Zs rated efficiency and time-saving (75%), convenience (63%), improved productivity (49%) creativity enhancement (47%) and self-learning (47%) as the top advantages and benefits of Generative AI tools.

Though cheating with the use of AI is a high area of concern for Gen Zs, our results show that students are

unlikely to cheat, and if they are using AI for school or university work, it is to help them with this work, and not for the purpose of plagiarism. Here, we might be seeing the impact of media and public discussions about AI hyper focusing on cheating as an outcome of these tools, whereas the reality is different, with Gen Zs outlining what it is exactly that they are concerned about when it comes to Generative AI.
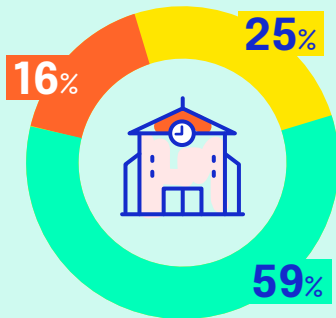

Generative AI

63% ▲ CHEATING

58% ▲ MISINFORMATION / DISINFORMATION

59% ▲ LACK OF ORIGINALITY

75% ▲ EFFICIENCY/ TIME-SAVING

63% ▲ CONVENIENCE

49% ▲ IMPROVED PRODUCTIVITY

47% ▲ CREATIVITY ENHANCEMENT

47% ▲ SELF LEARNING

39% UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

58% ▲ DEPENDENCE

WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE **DISADVANTAGES** OR DRAWBACKS?

WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE **ADVANTAGES** OR BENEFITS?

39% COST EFFECTIVENESS

38% JOB DISPLACEMENT

35% LOSS OF PRIVACY

33% KNOWLEDGE CREATION

21% ▼ PERSONALISATION

27% ▼ BIAS

6% ▼ NO DISADVANTAGES /DRAWBACKS

15% ▼ JOBS CREATION

2% ▼ OTHER

4% ▼ NO ADVANTAGES OR BENEFITS

n=576

Skills development for education and careers:

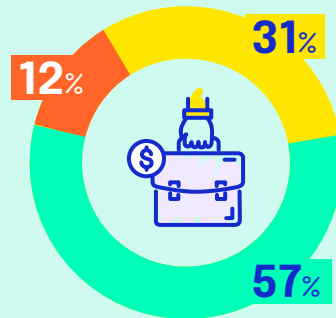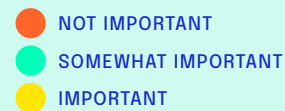## Gen Z is overwhelmingly in favour of developing skills to use Generative AI for their studies and careers.
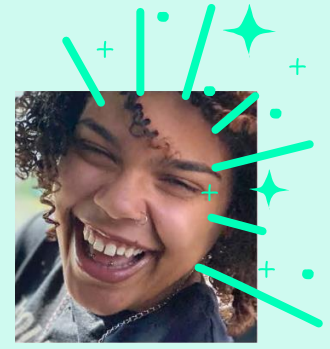
DO YOU THINK IT IS IMPORTANT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE TO DEVELOP SKILLS TO USE GENERATIVE AI TOOLS EFFECTIVELY...

25% **16%** **59%**

31% **12%** **57%**

... FOR THEIR STUDIES IN SCHOOL OR AT UNIVERSITY?

... IN THEIR WORK AND CAREERS?

● NOT IMPORTANT
● SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT
● IMPORTANT

84 per cent of Gen Zs reported that it is somewhat important or important for young people to develop skills to use Generative AI effectively for their studies at school or University, with 88 per cent holding the same view when it comes to work and careers. These data are a call to action for education providers across Australia to support students in their skills development while in school, and to future-proof their careers.

We asked students to rate their agreement with statements related to the future of AI use in the education sector and at work. When it came to schools and universities banning students from using Generative AI tools for schoolwork and assignments, Gen Zs were split: 34 per cent disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement, while 34 per cent agreed or strongly agreed.

Most participants (45%) agreed or strongly agreed that high school and University students should be trained in using Generative AI tools for study or work.

Looking at work and careers, 49 per cent of Gen Zs agreed that workers should be using Generative AI tools at work, with only 16 per cent disagreeing with this statement, and when is comes to workplaces embracing the use of Generative AI, 55 per cent agreed that this should be done.

Impact on Education, Work, and Society

Gen Z is anticipating the impact of AI on education and work do be both positive and negative, while the majority is unsure about what AI means for society overall (40%).

73 per cent of Gen Zs say that AI will impact education, but when it comes to the type of impact, young people are nuanced, reporting that it will bring both positive and negative outcomes (48%).

**Q. What do you think are the potential impacts of Generative AI tools on society?**

"People will become unsocial as they will talk to each other less and spend more time using AI."

"I think they will progress so fast that society won't know what to do with generative AI."

"It is already having an impact, I see AI stealing artists' work and ideas all the time without providing them credit."

"AI can be used to be harmful in society especially in terms of politics, using it to create deepfakes of politicians saying things such as declaring war on another country."

"Can increase efficiency in tasks, however many ethical dilemmas such as deepfakes, originality, theft, manipulation, etc."
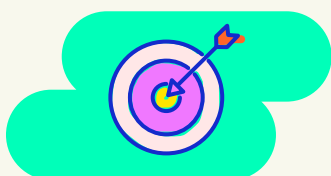
Cheating was again of primary concern, as well as lack of originality of thought and reliance on AI, while personal development and learning, better student outcomes, productivity and support were reported as positive outcomes.

Q. What do you think will be the potential impacts of Generative AI tools on education?

"Better student outcomes (i.e. fewer gaps between student results, on account of it being a tool all have access to, as opposed to something like tutoring)."

"Encourages people to be more active in their own development and learning."

"Helps students learn new phrases and helps them gather their ideas. [Some] students with learning disabilities or [who are] neurodivergent can't put their words into sentences and AI helps them gather their ideas and turns it into a phrase they can understand."

"I truly believe it can be something magnificent, not a destructive tool, like others have claimed. We must embrace it rather than shun it. It is a tool to extend our conscious."

"People will rely on it too much, and they will lack the ability to think and create for themselves."

"Because students will stop learning and instead get AI to do everything for them."

"People won't be showing the depth of their knowledge but the depth of what the AI creates."

Similarly, 64 per cent of Gen Zs said that AI tools will have an impact on work and careers, with the majority reporting that it will be both positive and negative (38%).

Efficiency, help and productivity were seen as some of the top positive outcomes of Generative AI tools at work, while dependence and job displacement were seen as the negative implications.

Q. What do you think will be the potential impacts of Generative AI tools on work and careers?

"I think it'll definitely help with time efficiency. Many people use it to write emails now and it feels personalised so it definitely can help cut down time."

"Encourages people to be more motivated in their own development and education."

"Reducing need for time spent on menial digitally completed tasks."

"People will become too reliant on AI and will not know how to do their job properly; can be unsafe."

"Again they will be used as a replacement for people doing their own work."

"Employee could become reliant on AI technologies, reducing work ethic, increase laziness and complacency."

"People would lose their jobs if generative AI is able to produce the same if not better work than humans."

# AI Ethics and Regulations – What do Gen Zs say?

Gen Z is in favour of AI regulations.

When asked if it is ethical to use generative AI tools overall, young people again showed that they view use of AI with nuance, with 60 per cent reporting that its ethics depends on what the tools are used for.

As for the impact of AI, most Gen Zs are worried (48%). Women were more likely than men to be worried about its impact (53% vs 42%), while Gen Zs aged 14-17 were least worried of all age groups (34%). Here, participants reported job displacement, misinformation, privacy and cheating as some of their main worries.

When it comes to regulations around the use of Generative AI, again most Gen Zs are in favour (64%), with women more likely to be in favour of regulations than men (70% vs 56%).

DO YOU THINK THERE SHOULD BE REGULATIONS ON THE USE OF GENERATIVE AI TOOLS?

● WOMEN ● MEN

YES
70% ▲
56% ▼

NO
11% ▼
19% ▲

UNSURE
19%
25%
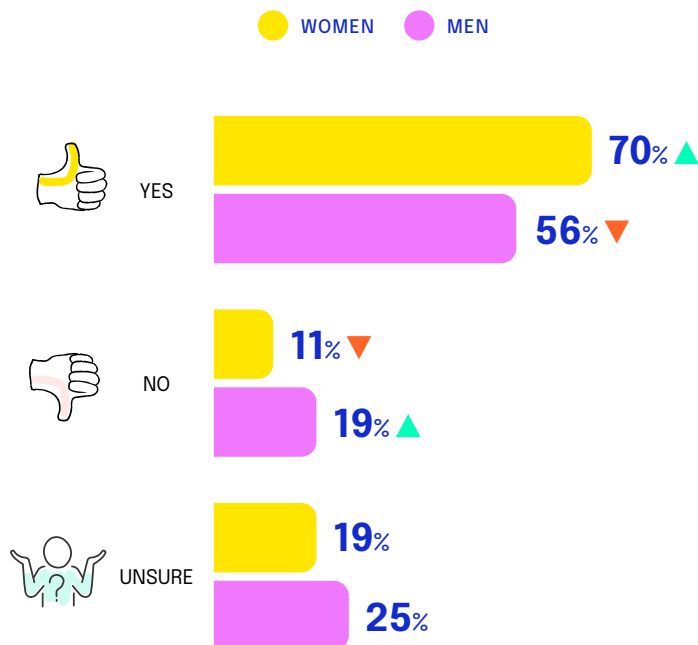
n=562

(Non-binary participants and those who did not disclose their gender were not included in this analysis due to low number of participants n=14)

An AI Future, Gen Z Careers, and Hype

Almost 1 in 5 Gen Zs have reconsidered their current or future study and career prospects because of Generative AI.

Gen Z is ready to accept an AI future, with 68 per cent saying that AI tools are here to stay. Men were more likely than women to be positive about the future of Generative AI tools (41% vs 23%), while women were most likely to have a neutral outlook (49%). Overall, Gen Z is optimistic (31%) and at this stage neutral (42%) about the future of generative AI tools.

While the majority of Gen Zs have not reconsidered their current or future study or career prospects as a results of generative AI tools, almost 1 in 5 have, suggesting a growing concern in the younger generation about their future. Of these young people, many are reconsidering their study and career pathways due to potential job displacement, while others are considering pivoting into technology. This is a topic that will be further explored in future YouthInsight research, to unpack the impact of Generative AI on students' study and career prospects.

Q. How have Generative AI tools or AI overall made you reconsider your current or future study or career pathway, and what might your pathway look like now?

"I think there are some jobs that can be replaced with AI, so I want a job that cannot be done by a machine."

"I might go into a career in biomedical engineering instead of medicine. I thought because medicine would be better with Generative AI, then I would work behind the machines."

"I have an option to become someone that can help with the advancements of AI in the future."

"I have diverted from jobs that could potentially be done through artificial intelligence."

"My pathway is involved with business so, what's the point if a machine can do my work for me."

"I am now considering working with technology such as through cyber security and I am researching into software engineering too."

"Makes me consider whether I should be studying IT/computer science related subjects as it seems like a lot of jobs might be taken over by AI."

"They made me think about what jobs will be taken over by AI and made me consider options I've never thought about before because I'm scared of choosing a job that will be taken over by AI one day."

"It has made me question whether the career I am aiming for will exist in the future as it may be replaced by AI."

We asked our participants about their reactions and views to media and public discussions about AI when it comes to young people. Of the 63 per cent who were aware of these debates, participants raised concerns about the devaluation of their degrees, frustration with AI potentially undermining academic integrity, as well as benefits of AI, and its potential to support students in their studies.

Q. What are your reactions and views on these discussions and/or media reports?

"They do concern me that as students our degree may hold less value as people are less likely to use independent thought."

"They make me feel like all the work and effort I put into my subjects doesn't matter because some AI geek will do better than me without having to put in any effort."

"I felt disgusted by this seeing as some students are working immensely hard to do something, while others can simply cheat their way in minutes."

"I feel a level of frustration, given it undermines academic integrity, and creates further inequality within the academic space, where false rewards are provided."

*"They make me worried that these few people are going to ruin it for everyone else."*

"Mixed emotions. Some students whether they are from high school or university have always cheated. Some people even pay others to create high standard assessment pieces. AI isn't necessarily new to the realm of students cheating, it is just a new way of doing things. However, media and news outlets probably promote the use of AI (unintentionally) by blasting it on TV. There are still benefits of AI despite the negatives."

"They make me feel proud that students are able to use AI tools in order to better understand their scope of study."

"I think they make me optimistic for a future with AI integration."

Of the 31 per cent of Gen Zs who were aware of media discussions about pausing or completely stopping the development of Generative AI tools, Gen Z is split, with 43 per cent saying yes to only pausing development and 49 per cent saying no to both.

And are Generative AI tools over-hyped? Gen Z is currently split – most participants said that generative AI tools are not overhyped (41%), while 35 per cent are on the fence. With social media being awash with AI prompt-guides, user-guides, top tools lists, and posts about new generative AI tools launching daily, its content creators can breathe a sigh of relief as Gen Z is saying the hype is apt.
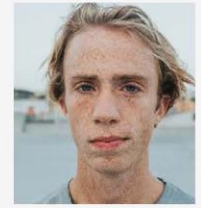
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