

PUBLIC TRUST IN AI: IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND REGULATION

Introduction

The rapid advancement of Artificial Intelligence (AI) is poised to revolutionise many aspects of life in the UK, bringing both unprecedented opportunities and challenges. While AI is not new, the advent of accessible platforms like ChatGPT has brought it to the forefront of public attention, sparking both excitement and concern.

The UK faces significant challenges in public service delivery, and AI offers potential solutions in areas such as healthcare, education and administration. However, a balanced, evidence-based approach to implementation is crucial.

This report provides UK policymakers and regulators with insights into public attitudes towards AI, drawing on Ipsos' UK and global opinion tracking. Our findings reveal a complex mix of openness and concern among the public, with views varying significantly across AI applications and demographics.

Realising AI's potential requires sustained investment, time, and crucially, public trust. This demands transparent communication about AI development and use, coupled with robust ethical guidelines and regulations. This report delves into these critical considerations, presenting detailed findings on public attitudes that are essential for public sector leaders to successfully deploy AI in alignment with public priorities and values.

We hope you find this report informative and insightful. For more information or to further discuss the findings and implications, please contact me at Trinh.Tu@ipsos.com

**Trinh Tu, Managing Director
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Key takeaways



Despite growing adoption of AI tools by organisations, public understanding and use remain low, particularly among some demographic groups. Proactive, targeted education and engagement is needed to improve AI literacy and access.



The public sees AI as benefiting some groups more than others, with more currently perceiving AI as a risk than an opportunity overall. Building trust will require demonstrating clear benefits and addressing concerns in a transparent way.



People are open to AI assisting humans but uncomfortable with it replacing human judgement for high-stakes decisions. Starting with high-benefit, low-risk applications tied to public priorities will help build public confidence.



The pace of AI regulation is viewed as too slow by most. The UK needs to establish a robust framework drawing on global best practices, with public trust and safety as central objectives.



Many of the workforce do not feel ready for AI. Government and businesses should emphasise AI as enhancing jobs and target skills-building in sectors likely to be most reliant on AI.



Ongoing public engagement to understand evolving attitudes is crucial. Policymakers need to commit to proactively shaping an approach to AI that earns public understanding, trust, and support.

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KNOWLEDGE AND USE OF AI

01



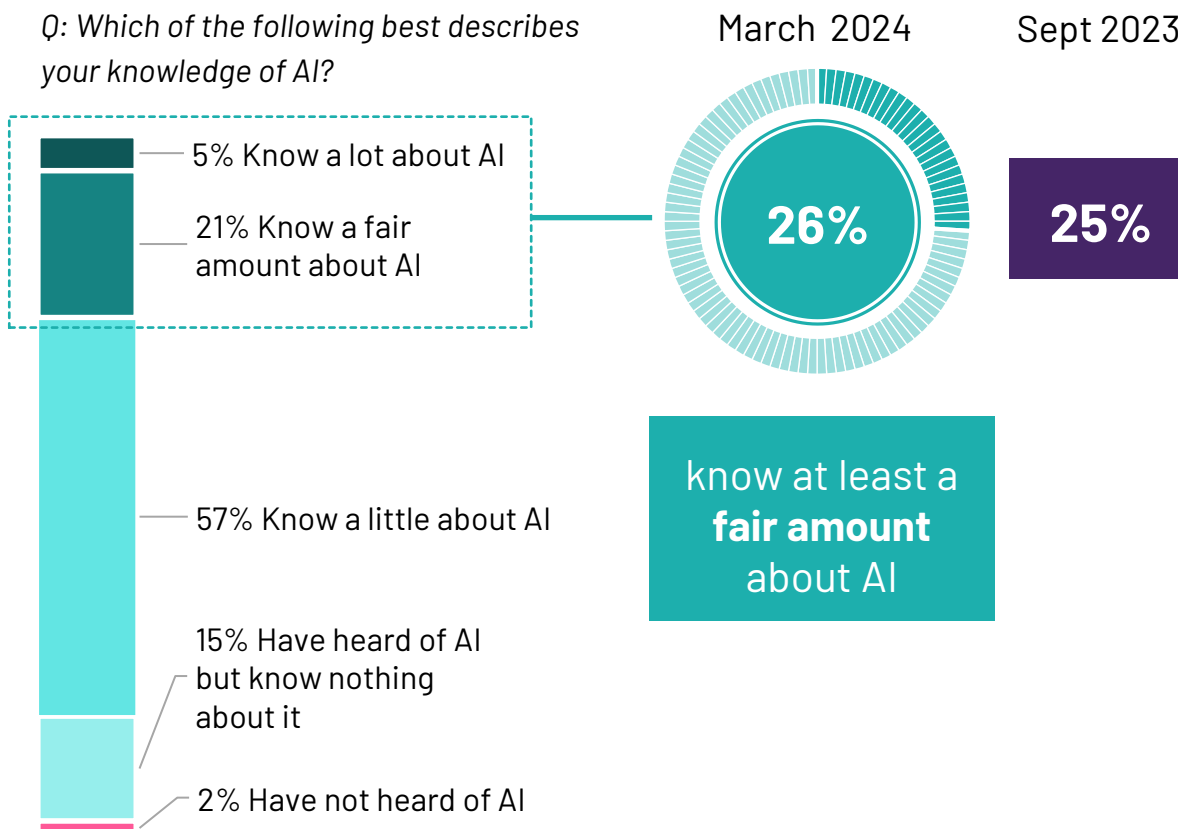
Awareness of AI is almost universal at 98%, but only around a quarter of people say they know at least a fair amount about it. Despite the huge focus on AI in the media and many workplaces, public knowledge has not shifted meaningfully in the last six months, highlighting the gap between the ongoing buzz around AI and limited public understanding.

Those who say they know more include men, younger people, those in-work, graduates, and Londoners. People from ethnic minority backgrounds are also more likely to say they know about AI than their white counterparts.

Notably, the groups who know more about AI tend to have more trust in the technology, feel more comfortable with different use cases, and engage more themselves with AI in their work and personal lives. This suggests a potential divide emerging between those who are more knowledgeable and confident in exploring AI, and those with lower awareness who risk being left behind as the technology advances.

Despite the ongoing focus on AI, public knowledge and use remain low

Q: Which of the following best describes your knowledge of AI?



Base: All UK adults 16+ (n=5,150). March 2024

Most people do not use generative AI in their work or personal lives – and few do so often

Q: How often, if at all, have you used such 'generative' AI tools (including tools like ChatGPT, Jasper and Bard) in your work or personal life?

Work



Personal life



■ Very often ■ Fairly often ■ Not very often ■ Not at all ■ Don't know

Base: All UK adults 16+ (n=5,150); All UK adults 16+ who are in work (n=2,506). March 2024

The rapid development of AI models has led to new applications appearing almost every month. However, despite this progress, only 11% of the public report frequent gen-AI use in their personal lives, a figure mirrored by the 12% of workers who frequently use gen-AI in their jobs.

This suggests that while people may be interacting with AI without always being aware of it, conscious use of AI, particularly gen AI, remains low and has not seen a significant increase between September 2023 and March 2024.

In fact, according to [Ipsos Iris](#), the UK's only endorsed online audience measurement solution, ChatGPT reaches just over 1% of the total UK population. Its average weekly visitation remains lower relative to search and information tools, and still a long way behind Google.

BALANCING THE RISKS AND BENEFITS OF AI

02



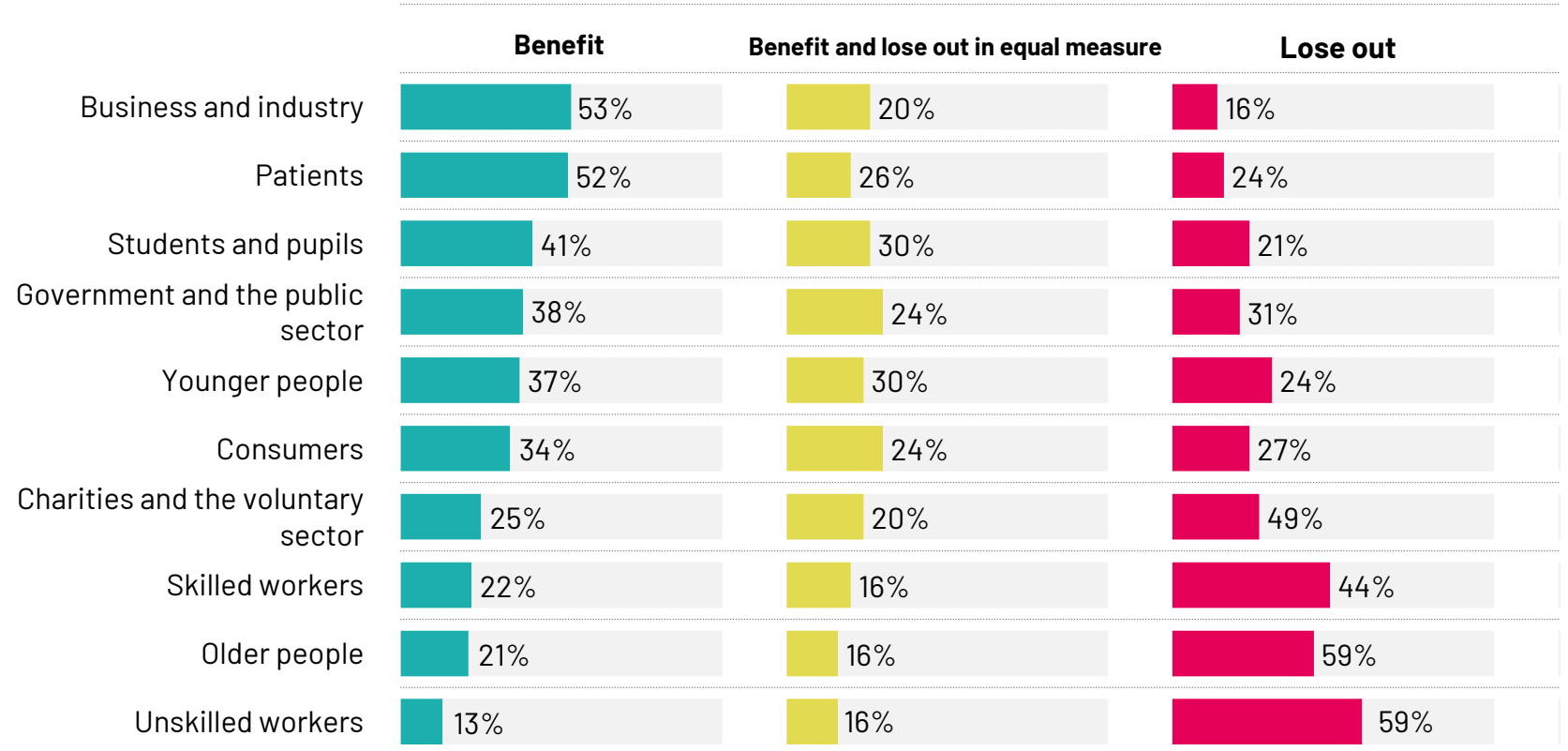
Perceived winners and losers from AI

The public have mixed views on what AI will mean for different groups in society. On balance, they expect businesses, patients, students, public sector organisations, younger people, and consumers to benefit from the technology.

However, others are expected to lose out from AI overall, including both skilled and unskilled workers and older people.

This is likely to reflect concerns around AI replacing workers and barriers around older people knowing how to use AI. At the same time, it suggests the narrative around the benefits of AI is not cutting through for some parts of society.

Q: On balance, to what extent do you think the following will benefit or lose out from AI?



Base: All UK adults 16+ (n=5,098). September 2023

The risks and benefits of AI

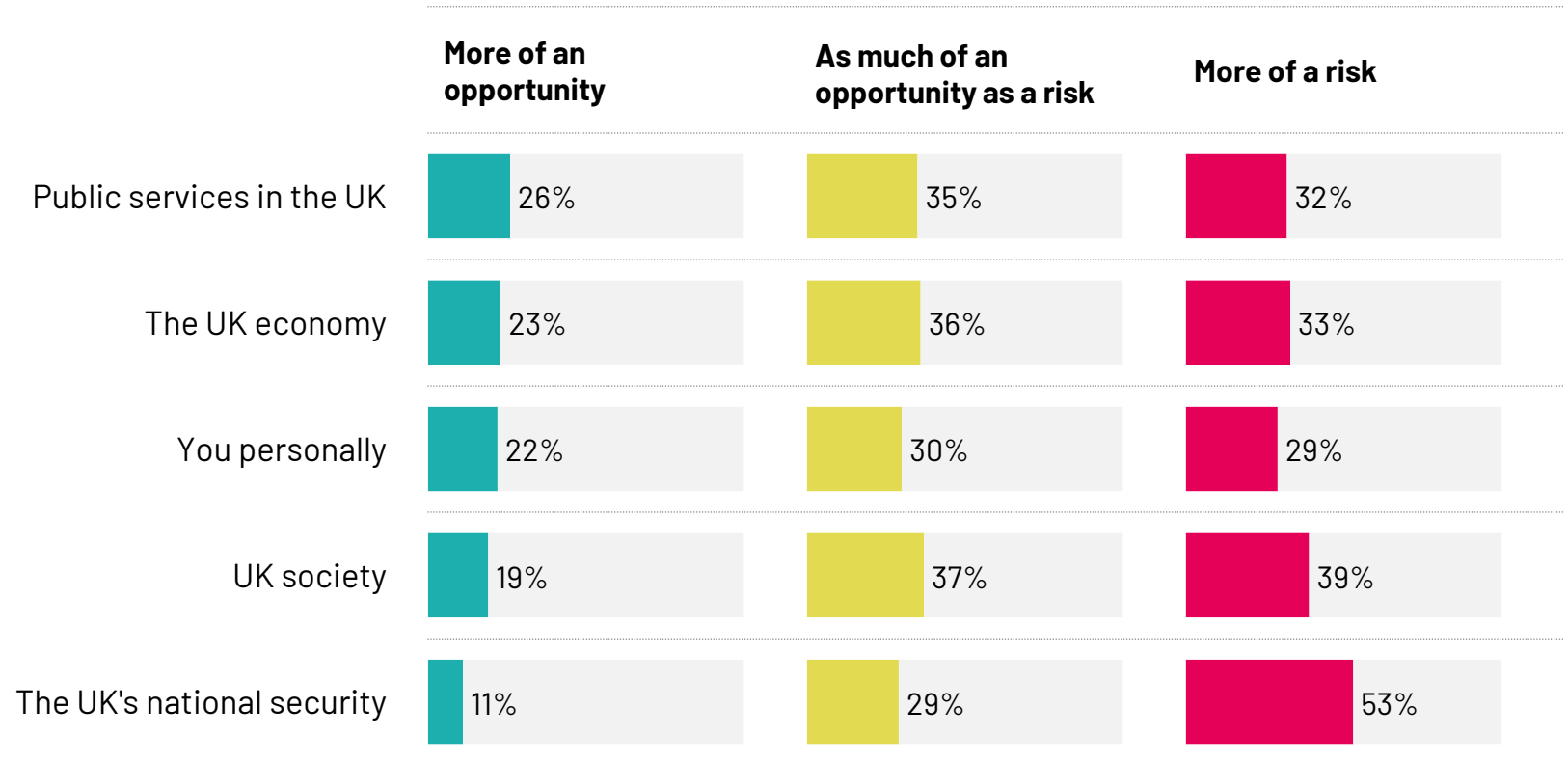
For the UK public, AI continues to be seen as more of a risk than an opportunity when it comes to national security, wider society, the economy and public services.

People are also unconvinced AI will be good for them *personally*. There have been no significant shifts in this sentiment since September 2023.

Overall, this suggests the public expect some people will gain from AI but remain cautious about the broader societal and economic risks. They will judge AI based on how it is used and its impact.

According to the [Ipsos AI Monitor 2024](#), Great Britain is more nervous than excited about the impact of AI compared to countries in Southeast Asia and Latin America. We are more in line with Europe and the US.

Q: On balance, do you see AI as more of an opportunity or a risk for the following?



Base: All adults 16+ (n=5,098)

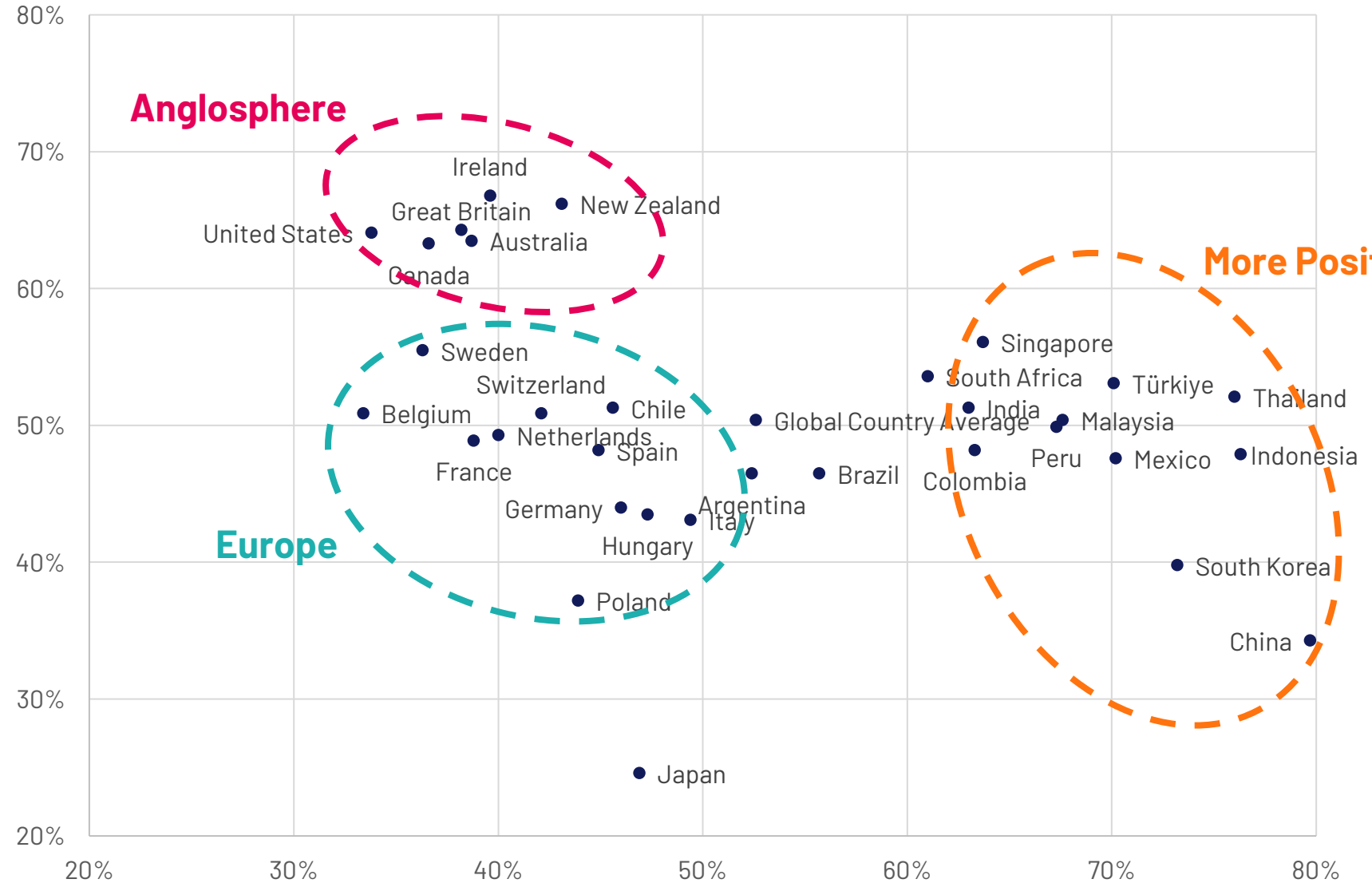
Britons are more likely to be nervous than excited about AI

Q. How much do you agree or disagree with the following?

- Products and services using artificial intelligence make me nervous
- Products and services using artificial intelligence make me excited

Base: 23,685 online adults under age 75 across 32 countries, interviewed April 19 - May 3, 2024

% Nervous

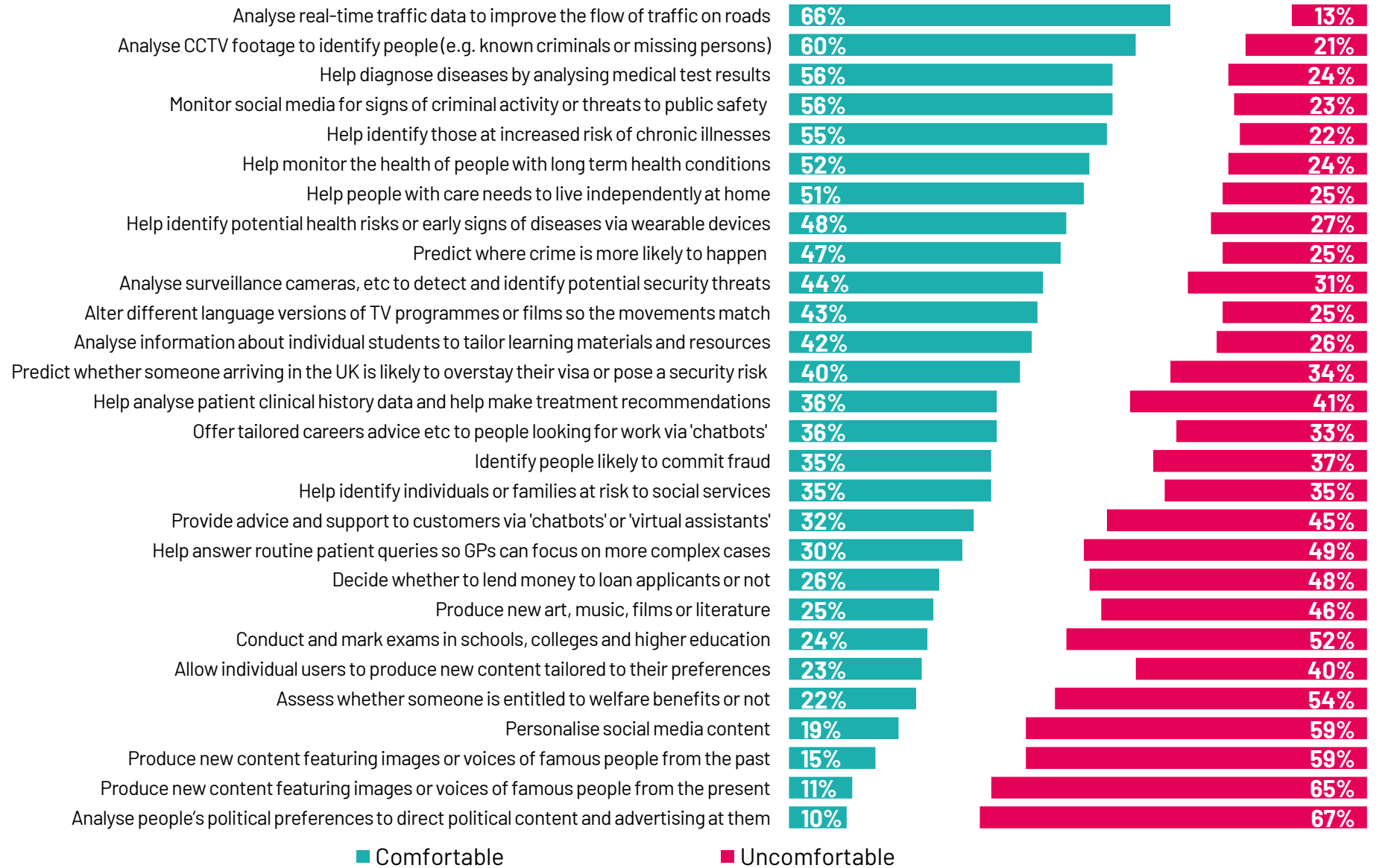


% Excited

It's clear that the specifics matter to the public

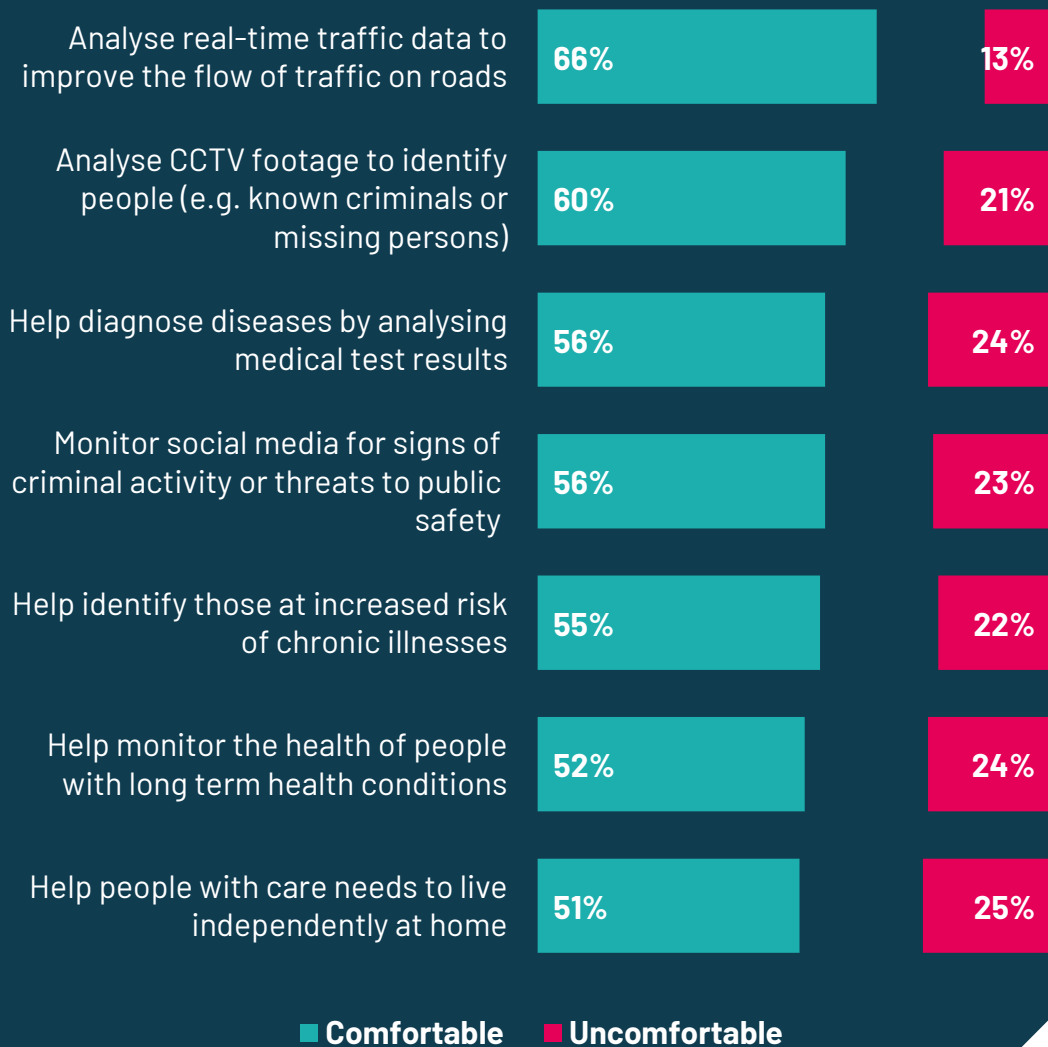
There is no single view of AI as a technology. As we find so often, public views of new technologies are nuanced and depend on the detailed context of how they are used.

Q: Thinking about the current or future use of AI technologies, how comfortable or uncomfortable are you with the following?



Base: All UK adults 16+ (n=5,150). March 2024; All adults 16+ (n=5,098). September 2023. Note that use cases were asked in either March 2024 or September 2023

Q: Thinking about the current or future use of AI technologies, how comfortable or uncomfortable are you with the following?



Base: All UK adults 16+ (n=5,150), March 2024; All adults 16+ (n=5,098), September 2023. Note that use cases were asked in either March 2024 or September 2023.

There is openness to using AI when humans need help

Comfort with AI is highest where the benefits to individuals or society are most clear, and there are few obvious downsides.

For example, most people in the UK are comfortable with using AI to improve traffic flow, to identify known criminals or missing persons, and in various ways in healthcare, such as helping to diagnose diseases, identify those

at increased risk from chronic illnesses, and monitor those with long-term health conditions.

In these cases, people believe that the benefits of AI clearly outweigh the risks for the public.

But people are wary about being misled or humans being replaced by AI

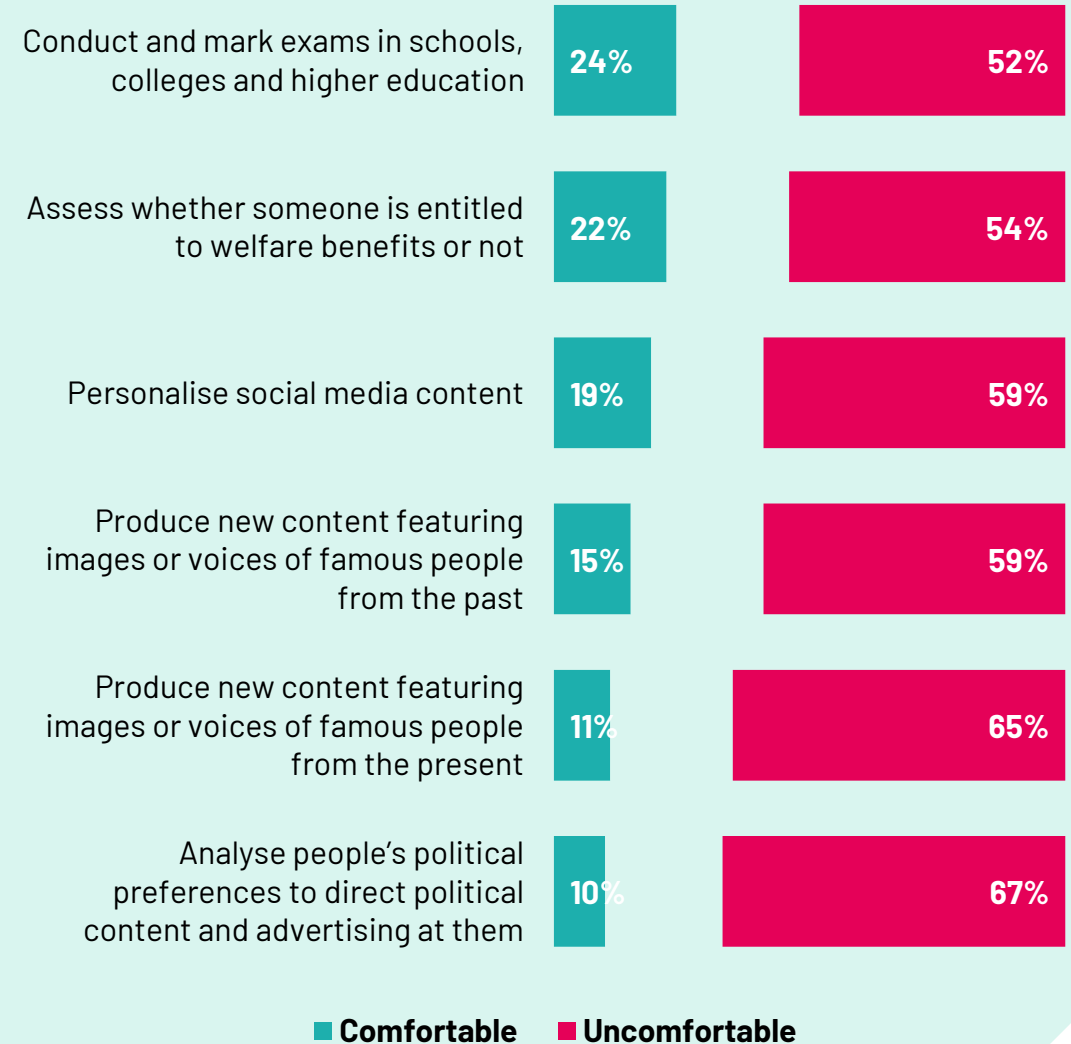
However, there are also many uses of AI that make people feel uncomfortable.

They are most uncomfortable where AI could be used to mislead by creating 'fake' content featuring famous people, or filtering or personalising the content that people see.

This may be because most do not feel confident that they could differentiate AI-generated audio (78%), images (71%), or video (71%) from the real thing.

People are also uncomfortable with AI making high-stakes decisions that significantly impact people's lives without human oversight, such as assessing welfare benefits (22% comfortable) or marking exams (24%).

Q: Thinking about the current or future use of AI technologies, how comfortable or uncomfortable are you with the following?



Base: All UK adults 16+ (n=5,150). March 2024; All adults 16+ (n=5,098). September 2023. Note that use cases were asked in either March 2024 or September 2023.



Levels of comfort with different AI use cases vary across demographic groups

The use of AI in healthcare and security settings have some of the highest levels of comfort overall. However, this also hides some of the largest variations between different groups in society.

For example, when it comes to healthcare, comfort is much higher among those who know about AI compared to those who do not. Similarly, men are more comfortable than women, and graduates are more comfortable than non-graduates with the potential healthcare uses.

There are big differences between age groups too. Those aged 16-24 are much more likely to be comfortable than over 75s with the use of AI in media, the use of chatbots (whether in customer services, education and health settings) and in analysing personal information to tailor content for individuals.

Conversely, those over 75 are much more likely to be comfortable than those aged 16-24 with the use of AI in health and security settings (e.g. detecting crime, identifying those likely to commit fraud, and detecting security threats).

This adds further complexity to understanding public views of AI, emphasising how perceptions are shaped by broader priorities and attitudes. These findings also demonstrate that those in charge of AI policy will need to take a nuanced approach to building public trust, tailoring their communications and outreach to the needs and concerns of different groups. A blanket approach is unlikely to work given the wide range of views across the population.

Building public trust in AI

To build public trust in AI, policymakers and regulators need to adopt a gradual approach to expanding its use. They should start with applications that have well-defined benefits and minimal perceived risks. These initial AI deployments should be clearly linked to outcomes that matter to people. For example, using AI to reduce waiting lists, support preventative care, and to help more people stay in work align well with public priorities.

Openly talking about the positive impacts of early AI projects can pave the way for public

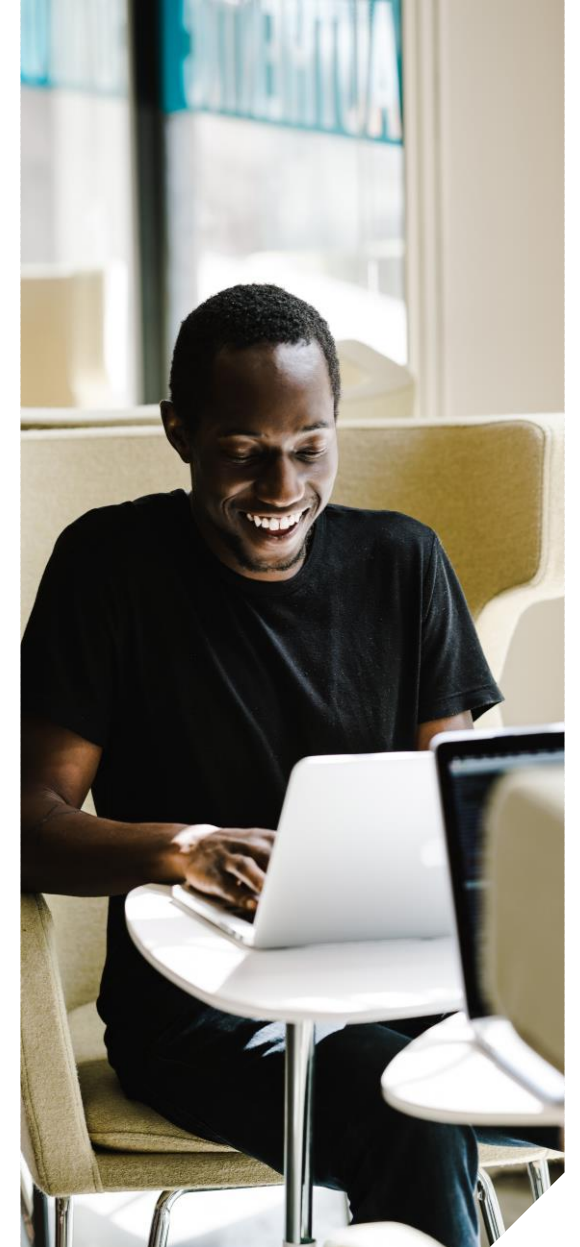
acceptance in more complex areas over time.

At the same time, adopting clear guidelines for the use of AI will reassure the public and businesses when engaging with AI and its outputs.

This gradual approach will resonate with the public, helping to build trust, since over half of the public (53%) believe that public services shouldn't use new technologies like AI until they have been proven reliable in other sectors. This will also help to alleviate existing public concerns over the sharing of personal data

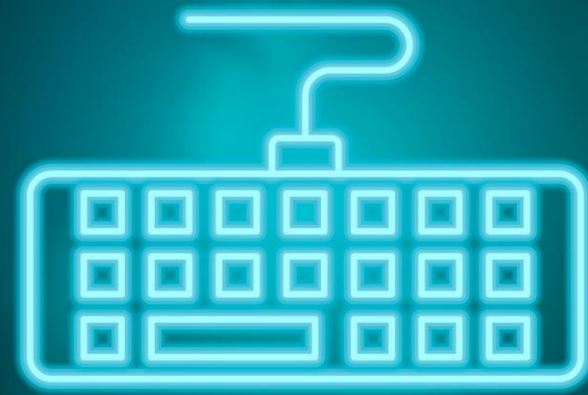
across public service organisations, which is key to realising the potential efficiency gains in public services from AI adoption.

Policymakers and regulators also need to keep engaging with the public to understand how views on AI are evolving. For example, drawing lessons from public engagement around net zero, fairness and making sure no-one is left behind are likely to be key principles for AI rollouts too.



AI AND WORK

03



Job replacement and support

Workers' views on AI's impact on their jobs are still taking shape. Only 7% think roles like theirs will be mostly or completely replaced by AI in the next 3-5 years, though this is higher in certain sectors like information and communication (16%) and administration (14%).

The industries where the public expects to see the biggest reductions in work opportunities are customer services and manufacturing, while teaching, healthcare, and social care are seen as less vulnerable.

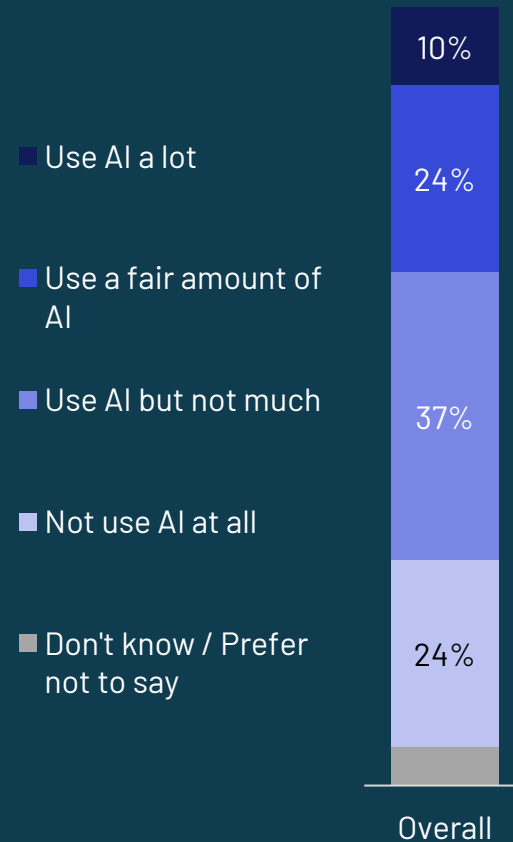
However, 71% of workers expect AI will be used in job roles like theirs in the next 3 to 5 years, with 34% thinking AI will be used

a fair amount or a lot. Despite this, only 39% have taken steps to prepare for AI at work, with just 12% having done training. [Separate Ipsos research](#) finds 49% of UK office workers have not had the opportunity to learn about using AI professionally.

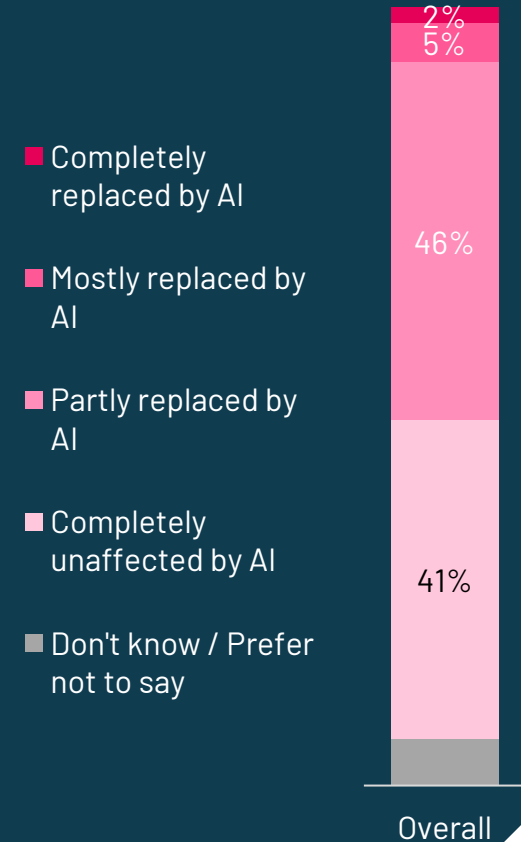
While workers may not be immediately concerned about AI replacing them in their jobs, there is a desire to know more about AI as it becomes more common in the workplace. The findings also suggest a significant need for upskilling and reskilling initiatives, particularly for small and medium-sized businesses who may have limited resources and expertise.

Q: Thinking about job roles like your current one, to what extent do you think AI technologies will (i) be used in (ii) replace job roles like yours in the next 3 to 5 years?

In the next 3 to 5 years, job roles like mine will ...



In the next 3 to 5 years, job roles like mine will be ...



Base: All UK adults 16+ who are in work (n=2,506). March 2024

Developing the skills needed for AI

For AI to benefit all of society, people need to feel confident using it, both in their daily lives and at work.

Currently, workers and jobseekers are almost evenly split between those who feel confident they have the skills to use AI in their jobs and those who don't (36% versus 40%). This confidence gap is wider among certain groups, reflecting the overall pattern of differences relating to AI: men are more confident than women, graduates more than non-graduates, and Londoners more than average.

The demographic gaps are even starker when it comes to AI knowledge. Among those who say they know at least a fair amount about AI, confidence in work-relevant AI skills is almost five times higher than among those with less AI knowledge (63% vs. 13%). This highlights a major divide between those well-positioned for the AI transition at work and those at risk of being left behind. Without concerted efforts to upskill underserved groups, there is a real danger that AI could exacerbate existing inequalities in the workforce.

Q: How confident, if at all, are you that you have the skills you might need in order to use AI in your current job role / in the job you want to do?



Base: All UK adults 16+ who are in work or looking for work (n=2,681). March 2024

Challenges and opportunities for employers

The skills divide is a particular concern in the UK because so many businesses are small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). While AI has the potential to boost productivity, many SMEs are likely to face significant challenges in building their own AI capabilities and providing staff training, given limited resources and expertise. The AI skills gap among workers, especially those from less advantaged backgrounds, could make it even harder for SMEs to adopt AI technologies effectively.

Clear guidelines, use cases and alignment with key international

markets are crucial for SMEs to use AI responsibly and efficiently. SMEs will need targeted support, which could include providing access to shared AI resources and expertise; offering tailored training programs for staff at various skill levels; and developing guidance on managing the workforce implications of AI, such as addressing potential job displacement and building a culture of continuous learning.

Policymakers will need to work closely with SME- and sector-representatives to understand their unique needs and challenges around AI adoption.





Challenges and opportunities for employers

Employers and policymakers will also need to make significant efforts to upskill the broader workforce for AI. This will involve building a robust evidence base on the specific AI skills needed in different sectors and roles to tailor training to different jobs and knowledge levels.

Importantly, upskilling for AI should be framed not just as a necessity but an opportunity. In the near term, this means emphasising AI's potential to assist with routine tasks and boost productivity, rather than posing a threat to jobs, to help address worker concerns.

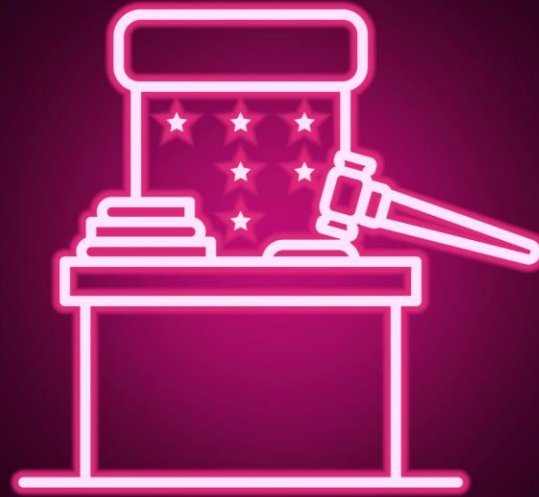
Of course, some job displacement from AI is inevitable, and support will be needed for those affected. The government, businesses and education providers will need to work together to enable effective career transitions, including moving into newly created AI-related roles.

Engaging workers directly in shaping the AI transition will also be important. Establishing AI ethics principles and guidelines in the workplace, developed in consultation with staff, can further boost trust.

Preparing the workforce for AI will need to be an ongoing process. As the technology evolves, so too will the skills required to work effectively alongside it. Employers and policymakers will need to commit to continuously assessing and addressing AI skills gaps.

REGULATING FOR SAFE AI

04



Public trust and safety

As AI technologies rapidly advance, it is crucial that the development and use of these powerful tools is governed by a strong regulatory framework. This is essential to ensure that AI is used safely, ethically, and in ways that benefit society as a whole.

However, our findings show that public trust in AI varies depending on who is using it. While hospitals and GPs are seen as more trustworthy, there's less confidence in local councils and the UK government to use AI responsibly. The police fall somewhere in between.

This reflects the wider picture of trust we see across different organisations. It emphasises that these existing views will shape public attitudes towards AI's use in various settings.

Q: How much do you trust the following to use AI in a (i) responsible (ii) safe way?

Trust to use AI in a responsible way



Trust to use AI in a safe way



■ A great deal or a fair amount

■ Not very much or not at all

Base: All UK adults 16+ who are in work (n=2,506). March 2024

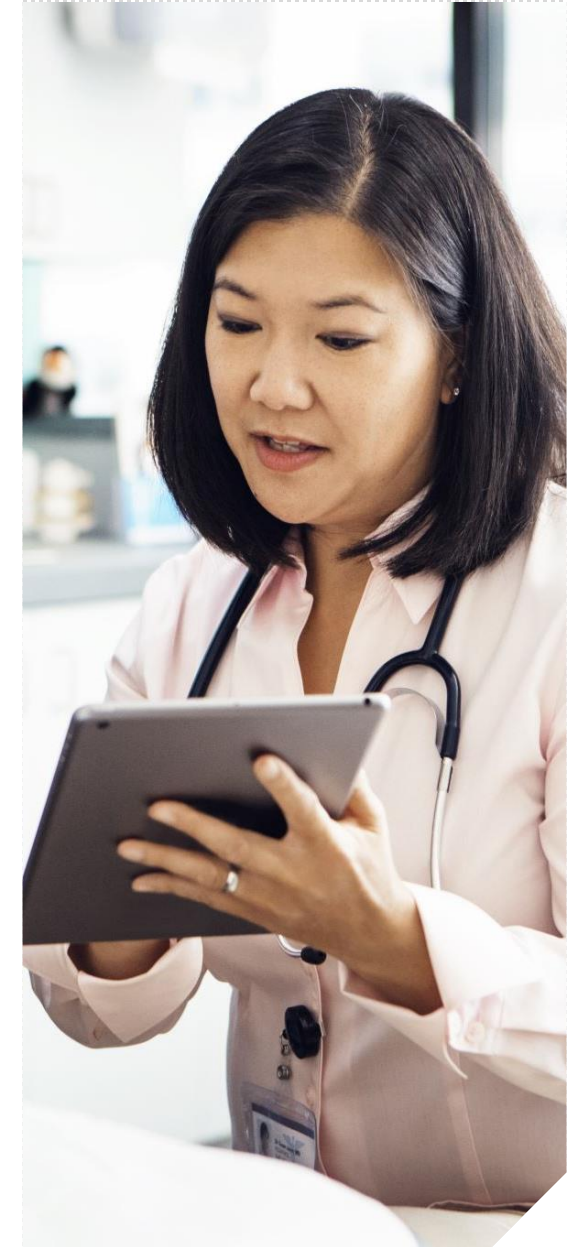
Implications for AI rollout in public services

These differences in trust have significant implications for how AI is rolled out across public services.

For the NHS, there is a relatively strong foundation of public confidence to build on. Communicating clearly about how AI is being used to improve patient care, while emphasising the ongoing role of human clinicians, can help maintain this trust. This aligns with the finding that the public is more comfortable with AI in healthcare when used to support rather than replace human expertise and decision-making.

However, for local councils and the government, lower levels of trust present a challenge. These organisations will need to work to convince the public that AI will be used safely and ethically. This could involve establishing clear frameworks for AI accountability and oversight, engaging with the public to understand and address their concerns, and being transparent about how AI systems are being deployed. Research indicates that transparency and human oversight are key to public comfort with AI use in areas like policing and benefits assessments.

The police will also need to carefully consider how they communicate about AI use, given the sensitivities around law enforcement. Building robust safeguards against unfair outcomes and allowing for public scrutiny of AI policing tools will be key. This responds to public discomfort with AI being used in ways that could worsen existing inequalities.



Addressing concerns through regulation

More broadly, our findings underscore the urgent need for policymakers and regulators to take active steps to build public trust in AI.

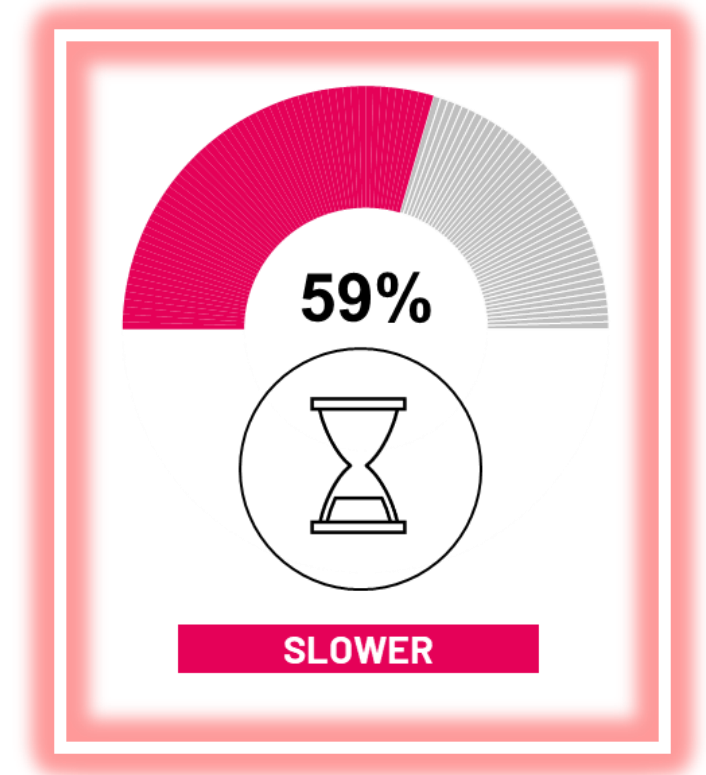
A majority of the UK public (59%) believes that AI regulation is lagging behind the pace of technological change. Similar proportions believe that the UK Government (60%), international governments (64%), and technology companies (57%) are not doing enough to regulate AI development and use.

There are also doubts about global cooperation on AI safety, with 58% sceptical that countries can effectively

work together. Despite this, 7 in 10 believe the UK should take a leading role in addressing these issues, suggesting a desire for the UK to set a global example in AI governance.

Public concern about the risks of AI, coupled with a lack of confidence in using and understanding it, reveals significant barriers to public acceptance. Convincing the public that the benefits of AI outweigh the potential drawbacks will require demonstrable progress in AI regulation and a clear commitment to addressing public concerns.

Q: To what extent do you think regulation for AI in the UK is keeping pace with developments in AI technologies?



Base: All adults 16+ (n=5,098). September 2023

CONCLUSIONS

05



By valuing public opinion and proactively addressing public concerns policymakers, regulators, and businesses can work together to build the essential public trust in AI needed to realise the full potential of AI in a responsible and inclusive way

Conclusions

The findings of this report highlight the complex nature of public attitudes towards AI and the need for proactive measures to build trust and ensure responsible and inclusive AI development. Specifically, they highlight the need for policymakers, regulators, and businesses to collaborate to:

- 1** Develop clear and evolving principles for AI use that prioritise fairness, non-discrimination, privacy protection, and societal well-being
- 2** Improve public understanding of AI through transparent communication about its applications, decision-making processes, and benefits
- 3** Actively involve the public in shaping AI policies and regulations to bridge the gap between public understanding and the advancement of AI
- 4** Work with other countries to create a shared approach to AI governance, with the UK taking a leading role in promoting AI safety
- 5** Support responsible AI innovation by funding research and creating safe spaces to test new AI uses
- 6** Invest in building dedicated AI regulatory capacity and expertise to keep up with this rapidly changing technology
- 7** Provide tailored support and resources for SMEs to adopt AI responsibly and efficiently
- 8** Encourage businesses, education providers, and government to work together to develop and integrate AI skills training programs
- 9** Regularly assess and address the impact of AI on workforce inequality, particularly for disadvantaged groups

APPENDIX

06



ABOUT IPSOS

Ipsos is the leader in social research, evaluation and strategy. Our Public Affairs experts bridge the gap between government and the public, providing robust research and analysis, directly supporting policy development.

We cover broad issues that shape the delivery of public services in modern society and how to engage the public in the policy-making process.

We are a team of more than 300 social research, evaluation and policy specialists, each offering expertise in a particular part of the public sector, ensuring we have a detailed understanding of specific sectors and policy challenges.

This, combined with our methodological and communications expertise, ensures that our research makes a difference for decision makers and communities, driving better policy and practice.

The challenges facing the UK, and the ambition of the new Government demands a broad research and evidence toolkit. Beyond data collection, we pride ourselves in our ability to translate insights into actions. Overleaf, we provide an overview of the essential tools for maximizing mission impact.

Further reading

[Ipsos Global Trends 2023](#)

[Ipsos AI Monitor 2024](#)

[Ipsos State of Learning for UK Office Employees 2024](#)

[Ipsos: Attitudes Towards AI at Work 2023](#)

[Ipsos: Debating Responsible AI – the Expert View 2023](#)

[Ipsos: Public Attitudes to AI 2023](#)



Ipsos UK KnowledgePanel

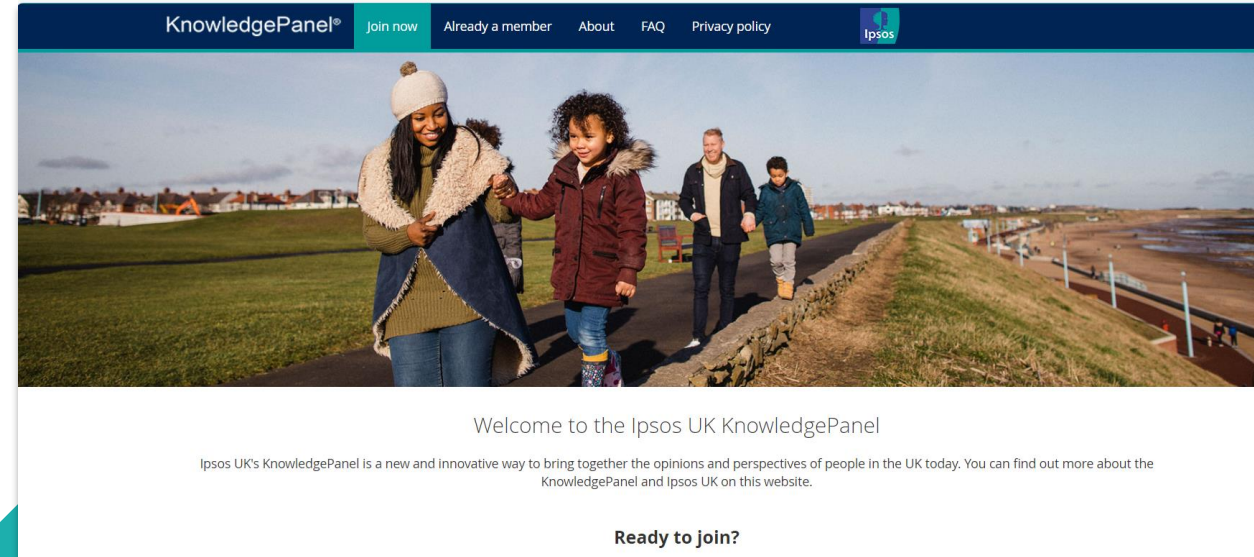
The research for this report was conducted using the Ipsos UK KnowledgePanel. As the UK's largest online random probability panel, it provides a robust and representative sample of the population.

The panel consists of over 25,000 members, recruited using random probability address-based sampling, considered the gold standard in UK survey research. This approach ensures that every household in the UK has an equal chance of being selected to participate, minimizing bias and ensuring the panel accurately reflects the diverse UK population.

To maintain the panel's integrity and inclusivity, Ipsos provides tablets, internet access, and technical support to digitally excluded households,

allowing them to participate fully in online research. This eliminates differential mode bias and maximizes the potential of online research to deliver comprehensive insights into UK public opinion.

The findings presented in this report are based on responses from two nationally representative samples drawn from the Ipsos UK Knowledge Panel: 5,098 UK adults aged 16+ surveyed between 14-20 September 2023, and 5,150 UK adults aged 16+ surveyed between 21-27 March 2024.



How can research and evidence support the AI transition?

Deliberative Research

Deliberative research, dialogue and public engagement **bring the public voice into decision making.**

From Citizens Assemblies, to Public Dialogue, deliberation and public engagement are critical tools for finding solutions to complex knotty problems that involve informed trade-offs and require people-centred change.

Contact:
[Michelle Mackie](#)

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We support policy makers to **develop strategies and policies that deliver for citizens.**

Our team of former Civil Servants work with policymakers to co-design strategies and policies, bringing to bear Ipsos' deep understanding of 'what works' and citizens experience on policy.

Contact:
[Nathan Bransden](#)

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The application of behavioural science helps **create positive individual, organisational and societal change.**

Our research and consultancy helps define, diagnose, design and evaluate the opportunities for behaviour change interventions that will help achieve new policy aims.

Contact:
[Steven Ginnis](#)

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Policy and programme evaluation helps **demonstrate impact and identify opportunities for learning** and should be a key part of any new programme delivery.

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Contact:
[Chris Hale](#)

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Effective public communications are a critical tool for driving positive social change.

Our dedicated communications research specialists help public sector organisations with their strategic planning, testing, monitoring and evaluation, assisting them in their work to **inform and engage the public successfully.**

Contact:
[Bridget Williams](#)

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Foresight done right, and activated, is empowering. It helps **focus attention on what can be changed now for a better tomorrow.**

Our Trends and Foresight experts integrate data, insight and frameworks to understand macro forces, shifts in society, markets, and people, and signals of the future.

Contact:
[Michael Clemence](#)