

5 things to know about teens' views on AI today

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Findings from our research with RXN Group show teens are thoughtful and curious about AI.

Today, we're releasing the U.S. Future Report about teens' views on AI. Beyond working with academic advisors and parents, building safe, supportive digital spaces also requires listening to the young people using them. To better understand how American youth navigate the digital, cultural, and educational landscapes of generative AI, our partner RXN surveyed over 1,000 U.S. teens (ages 13-17), separate samples of 1,000 teens in six states, and paired quantitative data with in-depth focus groups. The findings show American teenagers are demonstrating thoughtful agency, critical curiosity, and active engagement with emerging technology.

Here are five lessons we learned from talking to teens across the country about generative AI.

1. AI is an interactive study partner, not a shortcut.

A widespread concern among adults is that teens will use AI tools primarily as shortcuts to bypass learning. Our research demonstrates that most teenagers view AI through a much more collaborative lens, using it as an ongoing interactive sounding board to deepen their understanding. Ninety-four percent of U.S. teens report having used AI in the past year, but rather than seeking automated shortcuts, 74% of those teens use AI weekly or more as an interactive study partner to help unpack complex topics and spark new ideas.

When asked about their specific use cases, teens highlighted practical academic applications:

- Homework research (61%)
- Searching for answers to daily questions (52%)
- Spell-checking and editing writing (51%)

2. AI is fuel for creative expression.

Generative AI is a powerful tool for creative exploration, expanding digital curiosity, and prompting teens to pick up new creative skills. Rather than replacing human imagination, generative AI is providing teenagers with the momentum and tools to realize their creative ideas:

- Seventy-four percent (74%) of teens agree that AI tools have helped them discover new interests or skills.

3. Many teens are active, critical evaluators of information.

To verify credibility of AI-based information, teens routinely employ multi-step checking strategies:

- Fifty-five percent (55%) actively cross-check facts against other trusted sources, including news outlets, textbooks, and verified websites.
- Fifty-four percent (54%) ask a trusted adult, such as a parent or teacher.
- Forty-six percent (46%) check the credibility of specific websites or original authors.

4. There's a real digital literacy gap — and teens want to close it early.

While teens are applying critical thinking on their own, they're also explicitly asking for structured, foundational digital literacy education to help them navigate digital environments safely. Nearly two-thirds of teens (64%) believe young people should begin receiving digital literacy and responsibility lessons by fifth grade. However, current school curricula fall short of this demand: Only 57% of teens report that their school currently offers digital literacy or technology classes, leaving nearly one in three teenagers without access to formal instruction in these areas.

5. Family trust remains the ultimate anchor for online safety.

Despite shifts toward online independence, we heard that family is the core foundation for teens navigating digital safety and wellbeing:

- Sixty-seven percent (67%) of U.S. teens surveyed trust their parents or other family adults most to guide them about healthy online habits—no other source reached even 9%.
- Seventy-eight percent (78%) of teens in the research describe their current online and offline balance as healthy and balanced.
- Eight in ten teens state they are likely to approach a parent or guardian regarding major online concerns, including suspected scams or fraud, privacy issues, uncomfortable online interactions, or instances of cyberbullying and harassment.

Building a safe and empowering digital environment for young people is a collective mission. Ensuring youth digital wellbeing requires a "village" effort that brings together technology companies, policymakers, civil society, educators, families, and young people themselves.

<https://blog.google/innovation-and-ai/technology/families/teens-ai-research-findings>