/// ACSI® SURVEY REPORT | 2026

Americans Are Split on AI

Frequent Users Are Already Picking Winners

Overview

This report summarizes results from a 2,711-respondent American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI®) survey covering user sentiment, usage patterns, and satisfaction with leading AI platforms conducted in March 2026. The findings point to a market where awareness is high, but adoption is uneven; where experience, quality, and trust are shaping which platforms users prefer; and where loyalty is already being built.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- AI usage is simultaneously broad and concentrated. More than half of surveyed respondents say they have not recently used any AI platform, but among those who are accessing AI, usage is heavy and deeply engrained in both work and personal activities.
- Public opinion about AI is polarized, with 21% reporting an "extremely favorable" outlook and an equal 21% "very concerned about the consequences of AI," leaving 58% in the middle with mixed feelings.
- Across six measured platforms, overall customer satisfaction is rated at 73 on a scale of 0 to 100, led by Google Gemini with an ACSI score of 76.
- Satisfaction with AI (73) is on par with energy utilities and within a point of social media platforms—industries not known for particularly strong customer satisfaction.
- Paying customers report higher satisfaction and loyalty to their chosen platform.
- ACSI modeling identifies functional capabilities and trust/data security as the strongest drivers of satisfaction.
- Generational differences are shaping both sentiment and product expectations. Older respondents are more concerned about AI's consequences, while younger adults are more open to AI but report lower satisfaction and loyalty.
- High-income earners are among AI's biggest supporters but are not without reservations concerning negative long-term effects, including the risk of job loss.

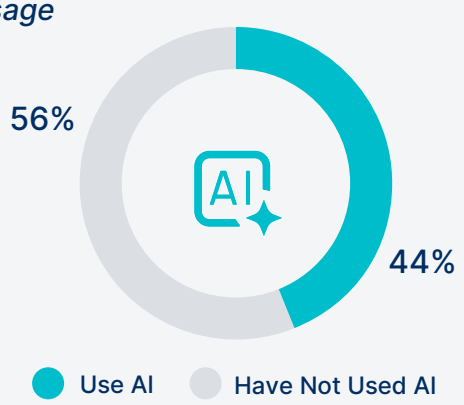
Overall, the ACSI results depict a market that is moving fast among active users but still unsettled for the broader public.

Market Adoption and Consumer Sentiment

More than half of respondents (56%) say they have no recent experience using any AI platform. However, among the 44% who have used AI recently, usage is intense. Specifically, 61% use an AI platform multiple times each day, 25% every few days, and 14% less often.

This "non-user majority versus daily-user minority" pattern suggests that adoption is not simply a question of awareness; for many consumers, AI becomes habitual once it clears a usefulness and trust threshold.

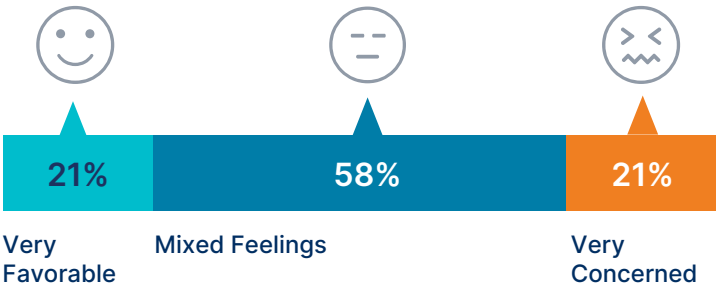
AI Usage



AI Usage Frequency

Sentiment mirrors this uneven uptake. More than one in five respondents (21%) report an "extremely favorable" outlook toward AI, while an equal share (21%) say they are "very concerned about the consequences of AI." The remaining 58% fall somewhere in between, highlighting an important middle segment that may be influenced by product experiences, brand trust, and visible safeguards.

Feelings About AI



Age is a meaningful divider, with baby boomers expressing the sharpest concern: 35% are very concerned about AI's consequences, compared to 6% who view it extremely favorably. Younger groups are less alarmed but still carry notable levels of apprehension. Gen Z, for example, shows both concern (18% very concerned) and optimism (19% extremely favorable views).

The demographic group with the highest rate of AI adoption and greatest optimism-to-concern ratios are high-income earners. Seventy-two percent of respondents with an income of $100,000 or more have used AI recently, with the vast majority using it several times a day. Heavily influenced by AI assisting at work, 39% of this group say they have extremely favorable views of AI, well above the overall average among all respondents.

Profiling the Polarized

Dimension	Extremely Favorable	Very Concerned
Share of population	21%	21%
Age skew	Younger (Gen Z, Millennials)	Older (Baby Boomers)
Income	Over indexes at $100K+	More evenly distributed
AI usage	Heavy, often daily users	Light users or non users
Primary lens	Utility & productivity	Risk & consequences
Top perceived benefits	Time savings, efficiency, work assistance	Limited benefit salience
Top concerns	Job risk, accuracy (secondary)	Job loss, human connection, loss of control
Trust posture	Value outweighs uncertainty	Trust deficits block adoption

Platform Performance: Satisfaction, Competitive Positioning, and Premium Dynamics

Across six measured AI platforms, overall satisfaction averages 73, a score that matches energy utilities. While AI ranks just above internet service providers (72), it falls below, food delivery, social media, and mortgage lenders (all 74)—industries that are not typically recognized for outstanding customer satisfaction. Despite the rapid pace of AI improvements and penetration into the market, user satisfaction is moderated by high expectations and uncertainty from large factions surrounding its long-term enhancements to daily life.

Among the individual platforms, Google Gemini ranks highest with an ACSI score of 76, 2 points ahead of Microsoft Copilot (74). Claude and ChatGPT tie at 73, followed by Grok and Perplexity at 71.

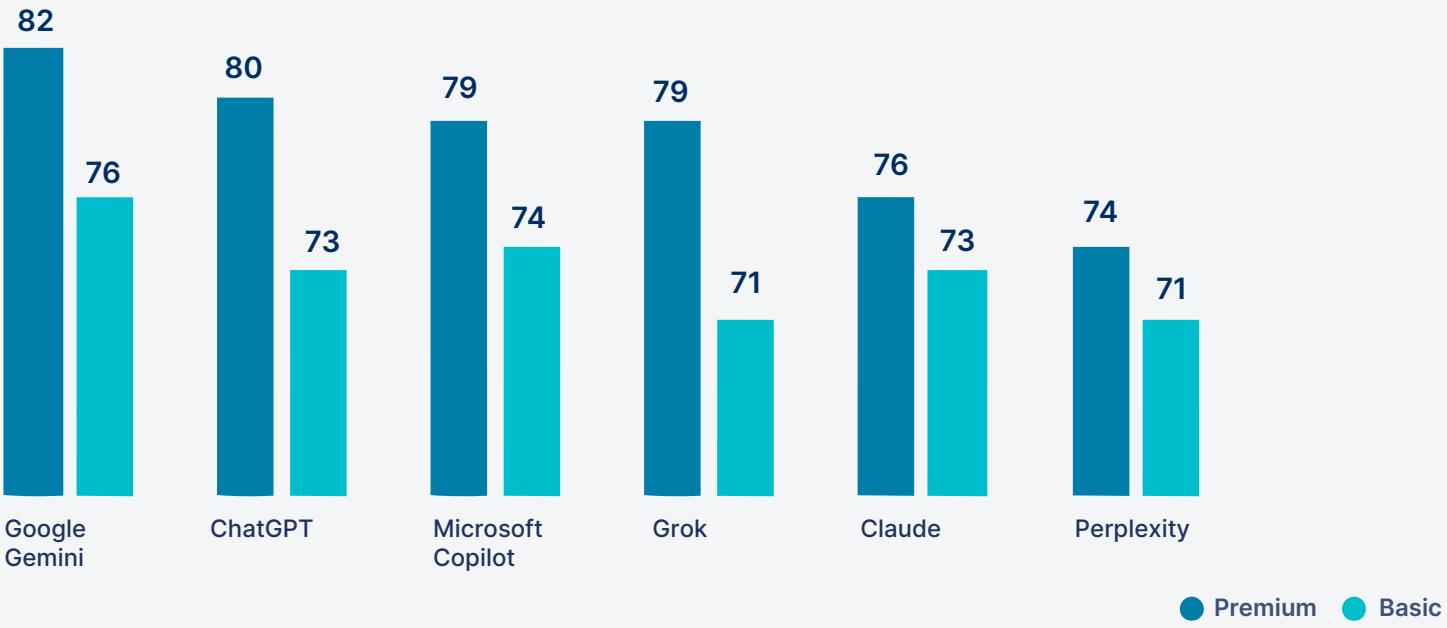
2026 ACSI Scores for AI Platforms

Google Gemini	Microsoft Copilot	Claude	ChatGPT	Grok	Perplexity
76	74	73	73	71	71

Satisfaction rises among people who pay for premium service tiers. ChatGPT shows the largest lift in this segment, moving to second place with a score of 80 among premium users, trailing only Gemini at 82. Loyalty also jumps for users of the top platforms among premium subscribers, indicating that enhanced paid features are retaining users and building brand allegiance.

Satisfaction is broadly consistent across most age groups except for Gen Z, whose overall ACSI score is 69. This score trails Millennials, Gen Xers, and Baby Boomers, who all post scores of 74. Loyalty follows the same pattern, with Gen Z's loyalty scores trailing all other age groups by a notable margin.

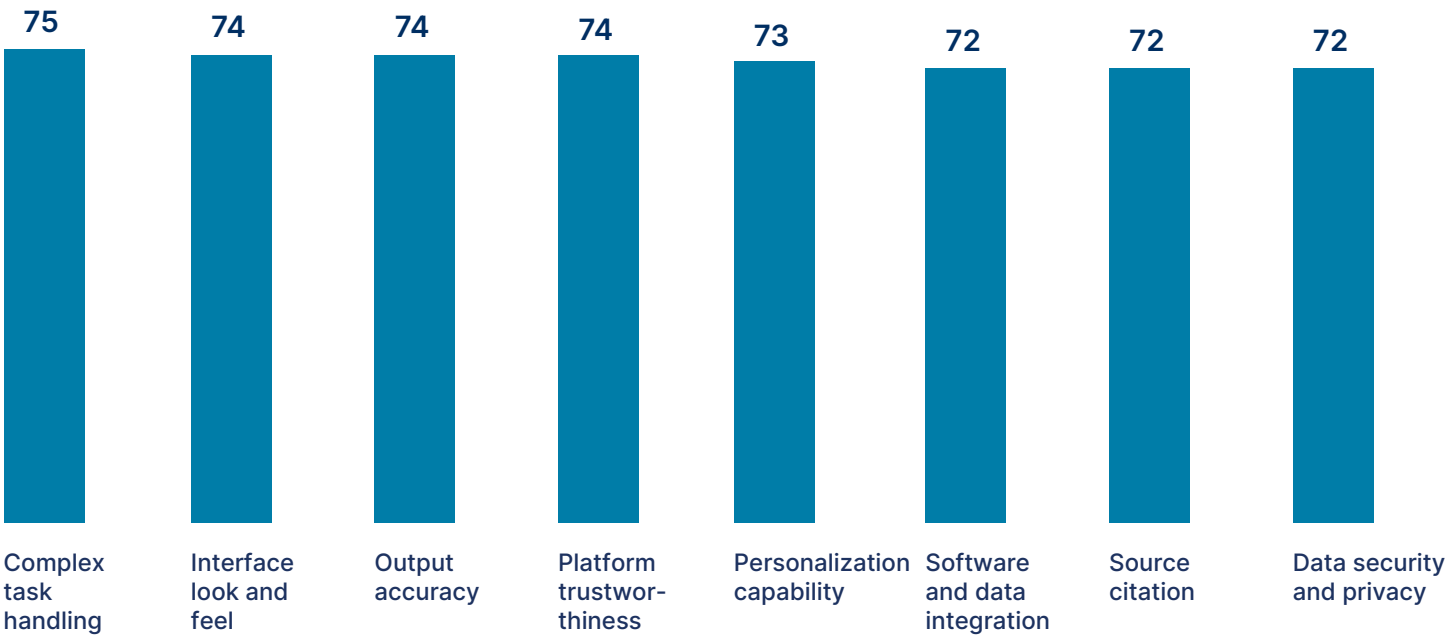
Satisfaction by Service Level



Drivers of Satisfaction

In the aggregate, AI platforms receive consistent customer experience (CX) scores in the low-to-mid 70s. While this indicates a solid performance across core dimensions, AI platforms are not yet delivering top-tier experiences. Workflow enablement attributes, such as complex task handling (75) and output accuracy (74), along with trustworthiness (74) and the look and feel of the user interface (74) receive the highest scores. In contrast, software and data integration (72), source citation (72), and data privacy (72) are somewhat less developed, introducing challenges for users.

CX Scores



...the biggest levers for improving satisfaction are functional capabilities and trust/data security.

A key driver analysis of the individual characteristics of the user experience reveals that the biggest levers for improving satisfaction are functional capabilities and trust/data security. Specifically, the capacity for driving current levels of satisfaction higher is concentrated around the provision of clear safeguards for privacy and data handling, as well as confidence in outputs and the platform reliably carrying out its intended purpose. That said, driver impact differentiation exists at the brand level, indicating that some platforms may have relatively strong impacts in other areas.

Privacy and Advertising as Near-Term Satisfaction Risks

One noteworthy signal in the results is that data privacy for AI (72) sits slightly below the overall AI satisfaction average and in line with the privacy score from the ACSI's social media survey (72). That proximity is important because social platforms have effectively trained consumers to be skeptical about how their information is collected, used, and monetized.

As AI tools become more embedded in work and in sensitive personal domains (professional decision-making, small-business activity, health questions, family matters, and other high-stakes topics), even modest privacy uncertainty can translate into outsized hesitation, particularly for those among the large "persuadable middle" that has not yet formed a stable habit of use.

As such, trust remains a binding constraint on AI adoption and overall satisfaction:

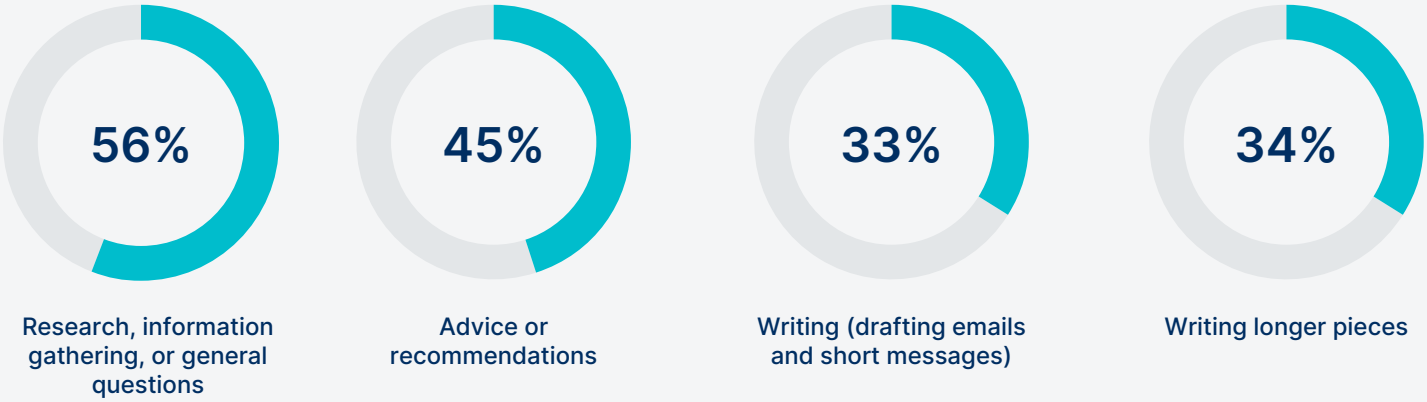
Improvements in capability may not fully convert non-users in the face of fears surrounding prompt histories, files, or other data which could be reused, exposed, or leveraged in ways that are not apparent.

A second related risk comes from monetization design. Social media users have reported negative views about the relevance and trustworthiness of ads. If major AI platforms migrate toward being ad-driven, satisfaction could soften from its baseline score of 73.

AI: Practical Tool First, Creative Resource Second

Among active users, the most common uses of AI are information-driven and task-oriented. A majority use it for research, information gathering, or general questions (56%), and nearly half use it for advice or recommendations (45%). Writing is also a major use task, spanning from drafting emails and short messages (33%) to writing longer pieces (34%).

Information-driven and task-oriented AI use



Beyond text, users also report using AI for image and/or video creation (28%). Several utility and analysis tasks cluster at similar levels, including data analysis (23%); summarizing articles, reports, or books (23%); and shopping/product comparisons (23%).

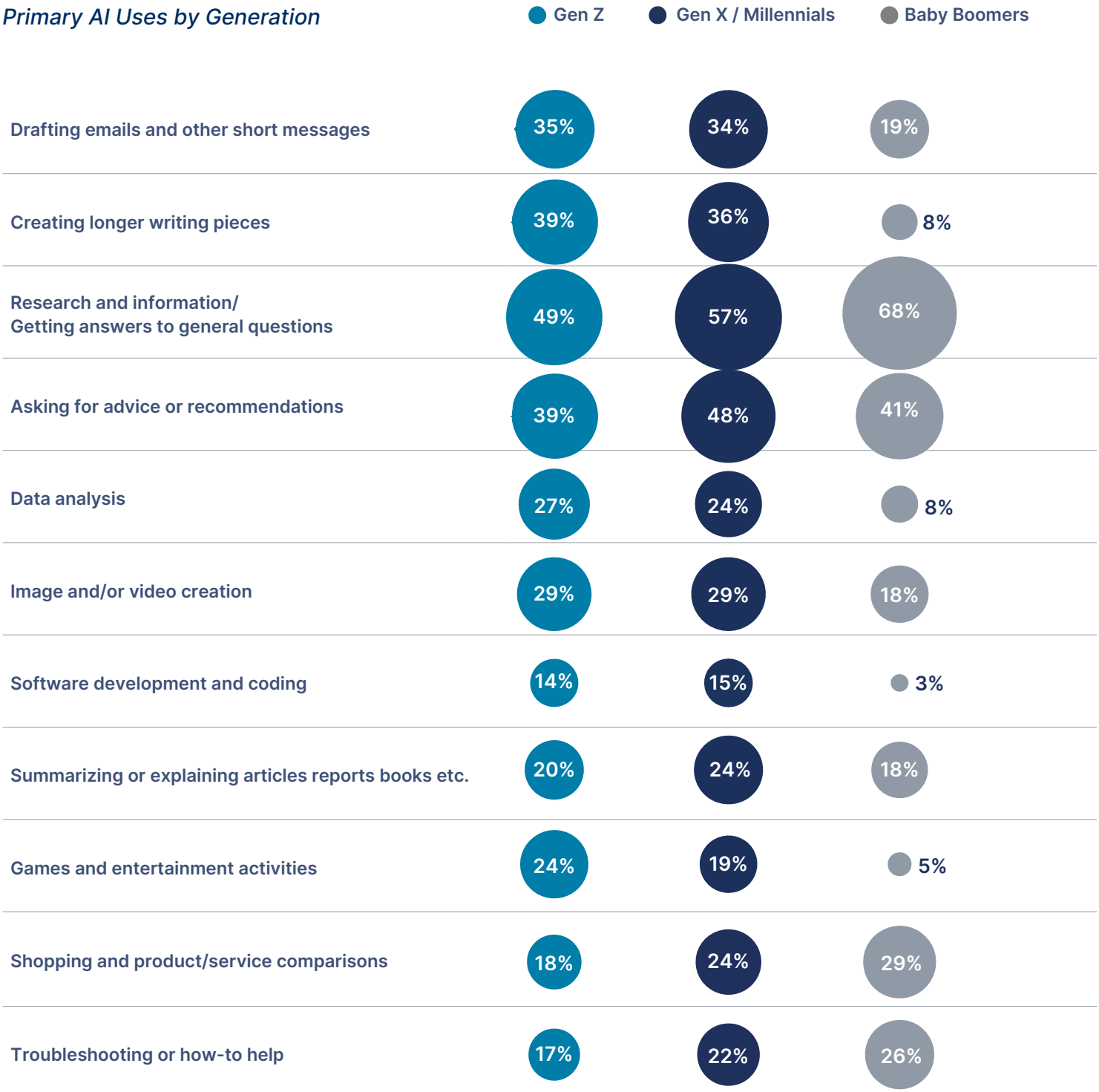
AI use commonly involves both personal and work purposes, though it leans personal. Survey results showed that 29% of AI users say they use it exclusively for personal use, 8% exclusively for work, while the vast majority use it for both.

Other personal and work purposes for AI

Primary platform preferences also vary by age. Younger individuals are more likely to use Grok and ChatGPT, whereas older users favor Gemini and Copilot. Millennials surpass all other generations both in how often they use AI and in the diversity of their use cases.

Overall, the results point to a landscape where the younger generations are somewhat cautiously integrating AI into their lives, both professionally and personally, ranging from information lookup to software development. Older generations, on the other hand, generally have a more targeted approach to using AI, with Baby Boomers largely leveraging it in its capacity as a high-powered search engine (68%) or shopping comparison tool (29%).

Primary AI Uses by Generation



Key Concerns and Perceived Benefits

When asked about concerns, respondents most often cite a potential loss of personal connection through reduced human-to-human interactions (43%).

Job-related worries follow closely, including the risk of job loss for future generations (37%) and the risk of losing your own job (31%). Additional concerns include the risk of inaccurate information (22%), loss of control over AI (20%), and traditional education systems becoming obsolete (18%). Smaller numbers of respondents cite increased societal inequality (10%) and a general loss of purpose felt by the population (9%) as concerns.

Top AI Concerns

43% Fewer human-to-human interactions	**37%** Risk of job loss for your children/future generations	**31%** Risk of job loss for yourself	**22%** Risk of inaccurate information or outputs
20% Loss of control over AI	**18%** Traditional education systems becoming obsolete	**10%** Increased inequality throughout society	**9%** Loss of a sense of purpose

Concerns surrounding potential job loss are felt most strongly by younger generations, while older age groups tend to have higher rates of concern surrounding reduced human interactions, a potential loss of control over the AI, and the risk of being misled by inaccurate information and outputs. While there are differences in the degree of concern across categories, the bottom line is that all age groups note substantial concerns in multiple areas. The onus is on AI platforms to build confidence throughout the population over time so that widespread adoption and trust become a reality.

Despite the abundance of concerns, significant optimism for AI also exists. Overall, respondents most often point to improved access to information (39%) as a primary benefit resulting in favorable views of the technology's evolution. A second tier of benefits includes AI saving time and simplifying everyday tasks (29%) and enabling higher levels of efficiency and effectiveness at work (29%). Additional benefits are more opportunities for individual creativity enabled by AI (18%), enhanced healthcare and improved quality of life (17%), increased equality throughout society (13%), and more accessible education (10%).

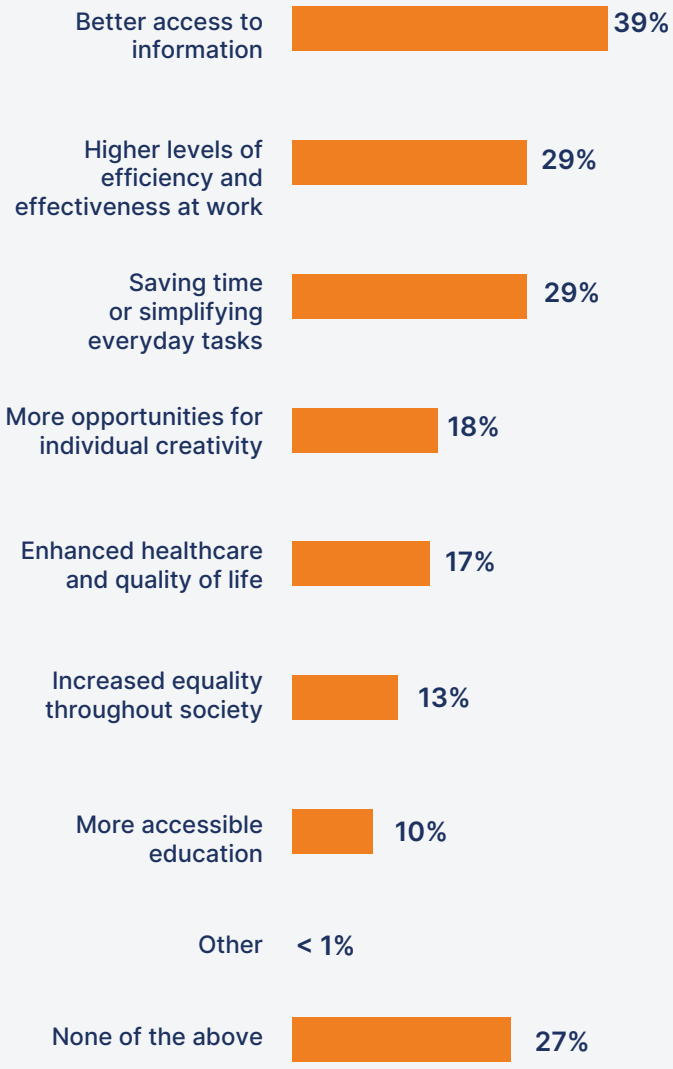
Generational differences also emerge for AI's most exciting benefits. Gen Z respondents are much more bullish on AI's ability to bring about increased equality throughout society, selected as one of the most exciting benefits of AI by 19% of this group. That is almost 10 times the 2% of Baby Boomer respondents who see increased equality as an exciting potential benefit. Millennials are somewhere in middle when it comes to the equality issue and have the greatest optimism around higher levels of efficiency relative to other age groups.

AI and the Dynamics of High-Income Earners

Those in the high-income group making over $100,000 are finding great utility in AI's professional assistance, with high usage rates for drafting emails, writing longer pieces, research, data analysis, software development, and report summarizations. These heavy users report relatively strong rates of improved efficiency, better access to information, and time savings brought about by AI. However, users in the high-income bracket do not come without their reservations as well. This group shares the concern of others, particularly when it comes to the risk of job loss, fewer human interactions, and the risk of using inaccurate information.

The feelings and behaviors of the high-income group illustrate a fascinating dynamic that likely resonates with many other groups as well. On one hand, an accelerated use of AI tools is proving to be helpful for many tasks in ways that improve one's quality of life. On the other hand, despite the utility and lean into AI, this enthusiasm is tempered by the unknown future this new technological frontier carries.

Most Exciting AI Benefits



Strategic Implications

For companies deploying AI in customer-facing experiences, the battleground exists for the skeptical: the 56% reporting no recent AI use and the 58% whose sentiment around AI sits between the extremes of "extremely favorable" and "very concerned." That means adoption will likely be won through practical value and credible safeguards rather than a flashy interface and general hype. At the same time, reputational risk is real, and it is fundamentally human. The top concern from respondents is the effect of reduced human-to-human interaction (43%), followed by job disruption anxieties (37% worry about job loss for future generations and 31% worry about losing their own job).

Implications for CX/AI Platform Strategy

Strategic Area	Implications for Favorable Users	Implications for the Majority Middle	Implications for Concerned Users
Growth lever	Enhance performance & workflows	Prove practical value while reinforcing safeguards	Reduce fear & uncertainty
Product focus	Accuracy, advanced tasks, pro use cases	Simple, reliable use cases + visible human fallback and guardrails	Privacy, controls, transparency
Trust role	Important but not gating	Credible safeguards are required to move from interest to habit	Primary adoption barrier
Productive messaging	Productivity, efficiency, results	"Help me do this better" + "here's how we protect you"	Safety, oversight, human role
Premium strategy	Effective for loyalty & monetization	Earn trust first; then upsell based on demonstrated everyday value	Ineffective without trust first
Human AI balance	Automation acceptable	Design for augmentation: keep human touchpoints where they matter most	Human touchpoints critical
Strategic objective	Retain and deepen usage	Convert "persuadables" into repeat users through consistent experiences	Gradual conversion over time
Primary risk	Quality failures	Any misstep (bad output, unclear data use, too much automation) pushes them toward concern	Reinforcing fear and resistance

On the competitive side, the data suggests experience quality is already separating platform winners from the pack, especially in paid tiers. Additionally, the Gen Z satisfaction and loyalty gap as compared with older user groups indicates that the youngest adults may be the hardest segment to delight and retain, raising the bar for product usefulness and trust.

Overall, the ACSI results depict a market that is moving fast among active users but still unsettled for the broader public.

Platforms and brands that combine clear functional value with strong trust and data security signals are best positioned to convert the large middle and sustain loyalty.

About the ACSI

The American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI®) is a national economic indicator and a leading provider of customer analytics products that help organizations build lasting customer relationships and prove ROI on experience investments. ACSI's AI-enhanced platform delivers intuitive dashboards and cause-and-effect analytics that pinpoint the quality drivers most predictive of customer allegiance, retention, price tolerance, and financial performance. ACSI data has been shown to correlate strongly with key micro and macroeconomic indicators, including consumer spending, GDP growth, earnings, and stock returns.

Founded in 1994 at the University of Michigan's Ross School of Business, the ACSI measures customer satisfaction with more than 400 companies in over 40 industries, including federal government services, based on approximately 200,000 annual interviews.

Learn more at **theACSI.org**