

SOFTWARE AND TECHNOLOGY

## Skepticism grows as AI gets smarter: YouGov

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*Skepticism and uncertainty remain the top sentiments toward AI technology. Image credit: YouGov*

By NORA HOWE

Artificial intelligence (AI) is quickly integrating itself into everyday life processes, from grocery shopping to manufacturing, and consumers are growing skeptical of the implications of machine learning and automation.

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According to data from YouGov's [2021 International Technology Report](#), almost half of consumers, 41 percent, worry about the potential of AI if it is in the wrong hands. Brands looking to incorporate AI into their business models must acknowledge the evident human concern surrounding this innovative technology before devising a plan.

The insights in this study are drawn from an August 2021 custom survey on the topics of automation and artificial intelligence, covering 17 global markets and nearly 19,000 respondents. The results were then compared with YouGov's proprietary data solutions, YouGov BrandIndex and YouGov Profiles, which collect consumer attitudes on an ongoing basis.

### Sentiments toward AI

According to YouGov, skepticism is overwhelmingly a Western market emotion, whereas Eastern and emerging markets skew more toward positive feelings such as acceptance and optimism. For instance, 40 percent of German consumers are skeptical, while this number drops to 9 percent in Indonesia.

By demographic, older generations do not necessarily exhibit higher levels of skepticism towards AI than their younger counterparts.



*Despite preconceived notions of age and digital literacy, older generations are more accepting of AI in a number of markets. Image credit: YouGov*

In China, India, Indonesia and Singapore, AI acceptance increases with age. In the U.K., consumers 18-34 feel more skeptical about AI than those ages 45 and older, at a rate of 42 to 38 percent.

Consumers' main concerns about AI and their understanding of the technology center around the fear of losing control. That being said, beliefs about the impact of automation on society vary across markets and ages.

Four in 10 consumers believe there are equally positive and negative effects of AI on society, while 46 percent of respondents are split half believe it is more positive, half believe it is more negative. The remaining 15 percent are unsure.

Education plays a role in this, as well.



*AI and AR technology have become especially popular within the beauty and retail sector, as it allows consumers to virtually try-on products before purchasing them. Image credit: Este Lauder*

YouGov found a direct correlation between an increase in the number of consumers becoming informed and the proportion that sees positive impacts from AI.

Geographically, Asian consumers are 2-8 times more likely to say AI will have a positive impact on society, while 66 percent of Western consumers claim negative impacts.

#### Industries impacted

There are five major industries consumers said would be most impacted by AI: manufacturing, transportation and mobility, communications, banking/financial services and medicine.

While consumers are generally comfortable with automation in their homes, manufacturing, shopping and mobility, they prefer humans for institutions such as government policy, medicine and education.

Consumers expressed enthusiasm for automation in some spaces, while generally opposing it in other areas.

For instance, 74 percent of consumers prefer their smart home activities to be more automated, while 72 percent prefer primary and secondary education to be more human-led.

At the beginning of 2021, luxury consumers were looking for comfort and convenience in their personal spaces as they found themselves still restrained by COVID-related restrictions. While virtual assistants and artificial intelligence have been incorporated into home systems over the last few years, the technological evolution of luxury real estate has reached far beyond smart speakers.

Due to the pandemic, people are spending more time inside their homes than ever before and their standards for home technology continue to rise at a rapid pace. During a session at the State of Luxury Real Estate eConference on Jan. 14, residential technology integration experts shared the most important element across all home integration systems: simplicity and automatization ([see story](#)).

Additionally, despite only 23 percent of consumers believing retail will be impacted by AI, 70 percent prefer online shopping to be automated.

In a report from September, Statista found that the global market for the use of AI in retail was valued at about \$3 billion in 2019. Over the next eight-year period, the market for AI in retail is estimated grow to a mammoth proportion, reaching \$23.3 billion by 2027 ([see story](#)).

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