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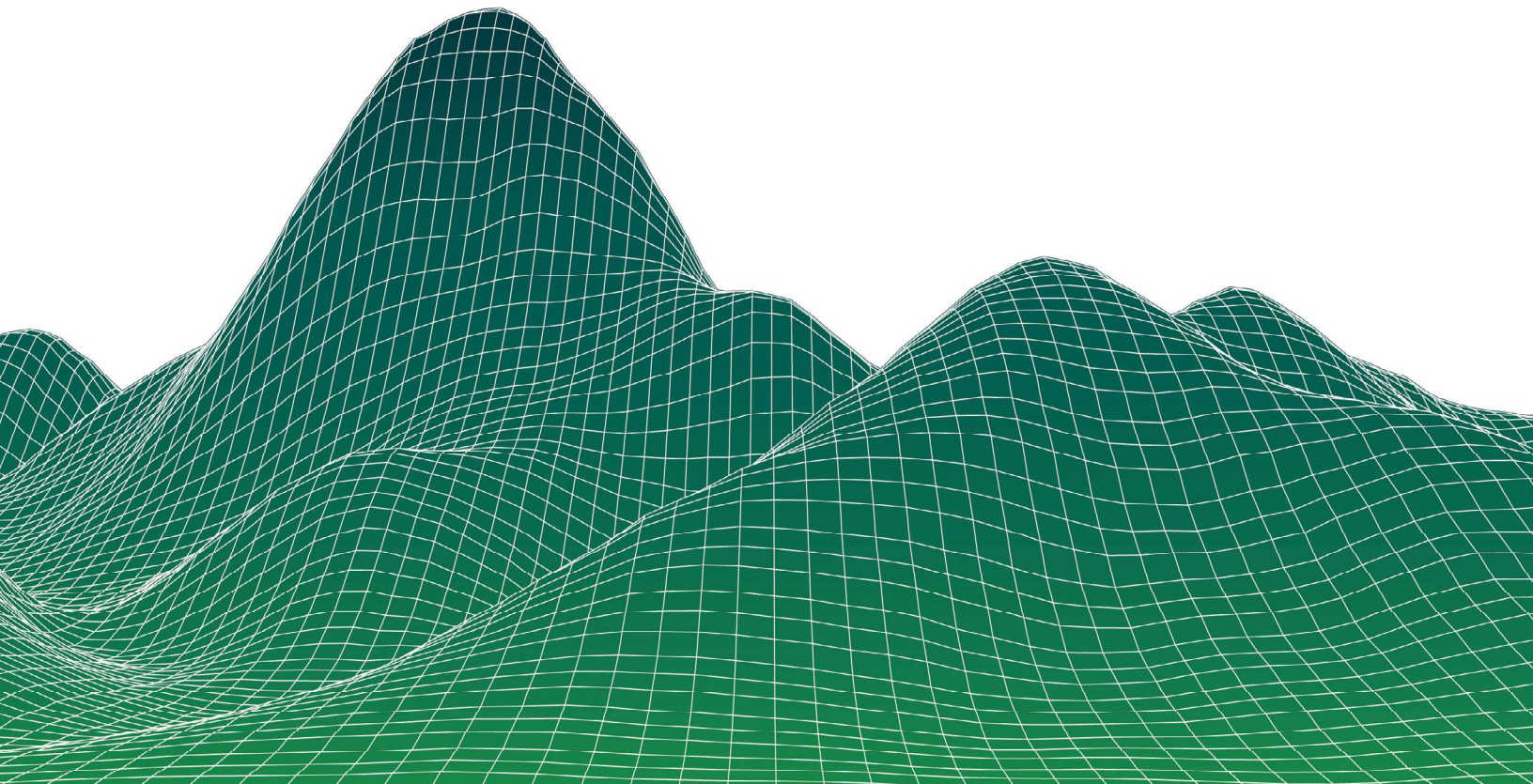
Reward, Risk, and Regulation

American Attitudes Toward Artificial Intelligence



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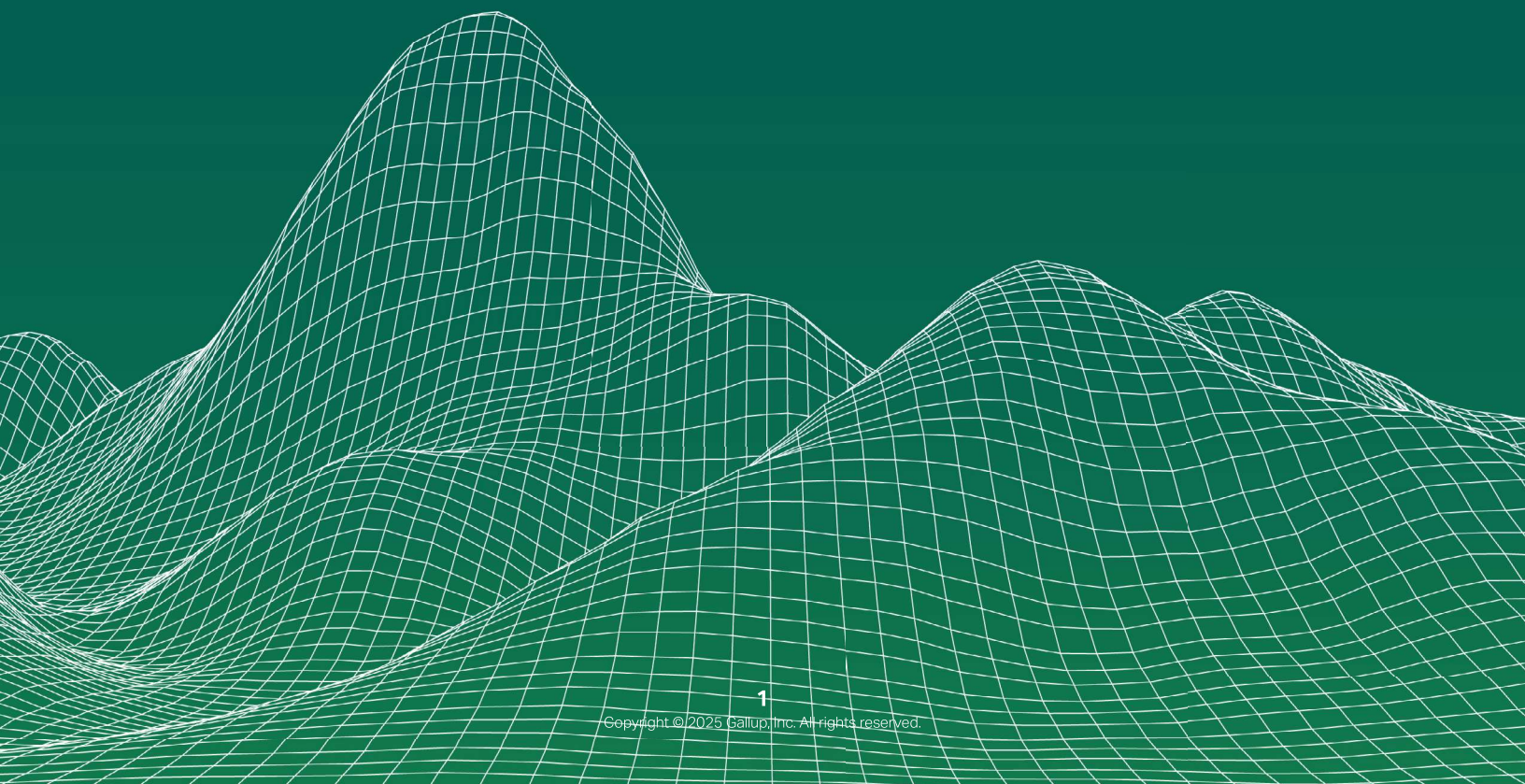


This poll and report were a collaboration between Gallup and the Special Competitive Studies Project, a nonprofit and nonpartisan initiative whose mission is to make recommendations to strengthen America's long-term competitiveness as artificial intelligence (AI) and other emerging technologies are reshaping our national security, economy, and society. The results are based on a nationally representative Gallup poll of 3,128 adults, aged 18 or older, conducted from April 25 to May 5, 2025.

Introduction

The rapid development of AI has transformed public discourse and shaped policy priorities in just a few years. As large language models (LLMs) have hit the mainstream, AI has become a top concern for leaders worldwide who are tasked with responding to this technological revolution.

AI is set to touch and reshape all aspects of modern life. To lead effectively in the age of AI, governments, policymakers, and leaders must have a clear understanding of public sentiment toward it. Understanding public opinion about AI helps illustrate how AI adoption, trust, and shared values could become central to the long-term success of AI innovation and related governance. Thus, these attitudes should shape the broader environment in which AI policy will continue to evolve.

This report explores how the public feels about AI's implications in three interconnected spheres of life: global competitiveness, national security, and the economy. The findings reveal where Americans are aligned, where they are not, and what these dynamics could mean for the path ahead.

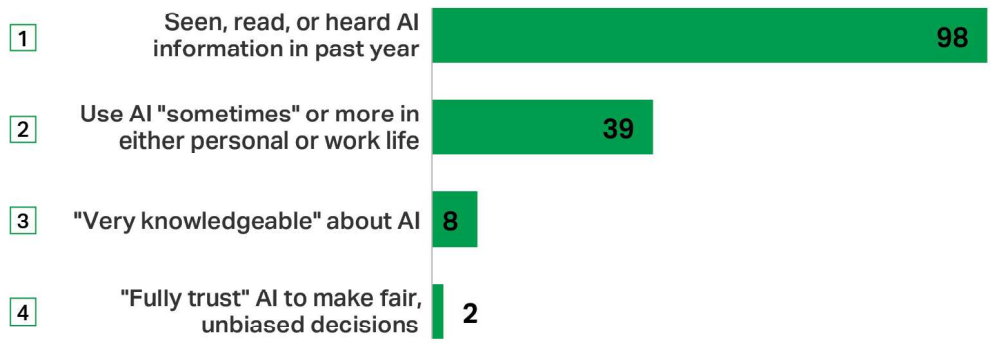
Snapshot: Awareness, Use, Understanding, and Trust

Public opinion toward AI is forming but still nascent. While AI is a major part of the public consciousness, knowledge, use, and trust remain more limited.

1. **Near universal exposure:** Ninety-eight percent of adults have seen or heard any information about AI in the past 12 months; just 2% say they have not.
2. **AI users remain in the minority:** Nearly four in 10 Americans (39%) use AI sometimes, always, or often in their lives (32% for personal use and 26% in education or work). Accounting for other factors, being younger and more educated are most predictive of using AI in any capacity.[1]
3. **Big knowledge gaps remain:** Only 8% of Americans say they are "very knowledgeable" about AI; it is slightly higher (13%) among those who use it for work or personally.
4. **Low absolute trust:** Around one in three people trust AI "fully" (2%) or "somewhat" (29%) to make fair, unbiased decisions, while six in 10 do not trust it somewhat (40%) or fully (20%) to do so. Importantly, people who use AI are twice as likely to trust it as those who do not (46% vs. 23%).

CHART 1

Americans who have seen information about, use, and are very knowledgeable about AI (%)



Question wording: In the last 12 months, where have you seen, read, or heard information about AI? Please select all that apply.

How often do you use AI to complete tasks at work or school?

How knowledgeable are you about AI?

How much do you trust or distrust AI's capability to make fair and unbiased decisions?

1 According to other Gallup polling, use of AI in the workplace has risen significantly over time: Pendell, R. (2025, June 16). AI use at work has nearly doubled in two years. Gallup. https://www.gallup.com/workplace/691643/work-nearly-doubled-two-years.aspx

CHART 2

Trust AI to make fair, unbiased decisions by AI use (%)

Note: The "User" group includes those who use it "sometimes" or more.

Values <1% not shown; due to rounding, percentages may sum to 100% ±1.

Question wording: How much do you trust or distrust AI's capability to make fair and unbiased decisions?

AI and the Global Balance of Power

THREE KEY FINDINGS:

1. Most Americans agree that it's important for the U.S. to lead in AI. However, many are uncertain about the country's position with more believing it is falling behind than advancing.
2. More Americans favor international collaboration on AI development than unilateralism, with the strongest support for multilateralism coming from those who think the U.S. is already losing ground.
3. Young Americans are much less likely than their older counterparts to think it is important for the U.S. to have more advanced AI technology than other countries.

There is widespread consensus among Americans that AI will be pivotal in determining the landscape of global competition in the coming years. A majority (55%) of Americans believe that AI is "very important" to the future of the U.S. in the next decade, with a further 30% seeing it as "somewhat important." There is also a clear link between using AI and its perceived importance: 70% of regular users — defined as those who use AI "always," "often," or "sometimes" — see AI as very important to the U.S., compared with less than half (45%) of non-users.

Such strong agreement about the domestic importance of AI is associated with the belief that global competition for AI is already well under way. Most Americans (85%) agree that different countries are currently competing to have the most advanced AI technology, but this competition is part of a broader pattern. Nine in 10 (90%) also agree that countries generally compete with one another to have the most advanced technology.

Americans want to win the competition on AI: 79% agree that it is important for the U.S. to have more advanced AI technology than other countries but are relatively doubtful of this happening. While 34% believe the U.S. is keeping pace with other countries, just as many don't know how the U.S. is faring in the competition (32%). More also think the U.S. is falling behind other countries than moving ahead (22% vs. 12%).

Furthermore, only 15% believe it is "very likely" than the U.S. will have the world's most advanced AI technology in 10 years' time. Equally, relatively few people (10%) see this scenario as "very unlikely." These findings demonstrate a large dose of uncertainty in Americans' views toward their country's place in the global AI race.

CHART 3

Likelihood the U.S. will have the most advanced AI tech 10 years from now (%)

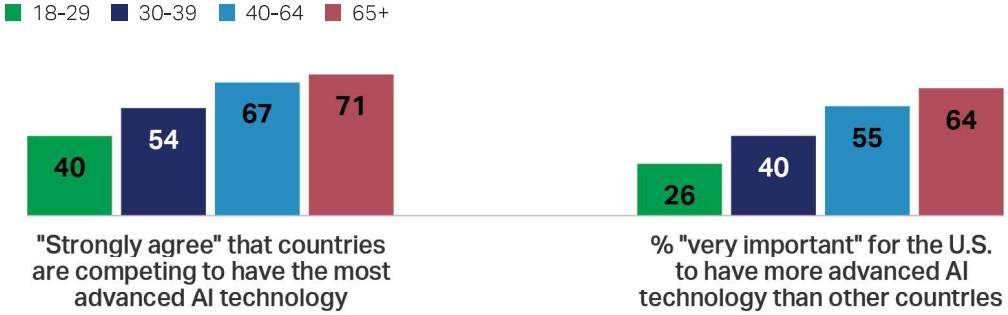
Question wording: In your opinion, what are the chances that the U.S. will have the most advanced AI technology in the world 10 years from now?

FOCUS BOX: THE AI AGE GAP

Young Americans are less likely than older adults to think that countries are competing in developing AI, or to see it as very important for the U.S. to be a leader in the global AI landscape.

CHART 4

Perceptions of AI and global competitiveness by age group (%)



Question wording:

Would you agree or disagree that countries are competing to have the most advanced AI technologies right now?

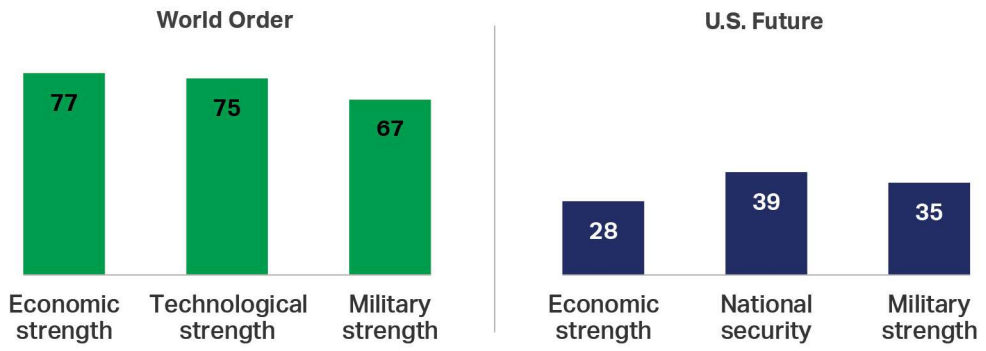
How important is it for the U.S. to have more advanced AI technology than other countries, if at all?

While there is widespread consensus over the need for the U.S. to win the race for global AI competitiveness, Americans also hold a broadly internationalist view toward AI advancement. More favor collaboration with a large group of allies and friendly countries (42%) than a smaller group of allies (19%) or full unilateralism (14%). Support for multilateral development is closely tied to where people think the U.S. stands in the global competition today. Those who see the U.S. as falling behind are more likely to favor working with a larger group of allies (55%) to develop AI than those who think the U.S. is already moving ahead in the global competition (42%).

Thinking about the future of the world order in general, around three in four Americans see economic strength (77%) and technological strength (75%) as very important, slightly ahead of military strength (67%). Yet, Americans take a somewhat different view when it comes to the importance of AI to the future of their own country. AI is seen as more crucial to future U.S. national security (39% "very important") and military strength (35%) than economic strength (28%), reinforcing the finding that many Americans default to seeing AI through the lens of competition and security.

CHART 5

Importance of different aspects to the world order, and importance of AI to each aspect of U.S. future (% very important)



Question wording:

How important do you think each of the following factors will be to the global order in the future — meaning which countries have the most power versus the least power in global affairs?

How important, if at all, do you think AI technology will be to each of the following aspects of the United States in the future?

AI and the Shifting Landscape of Defense

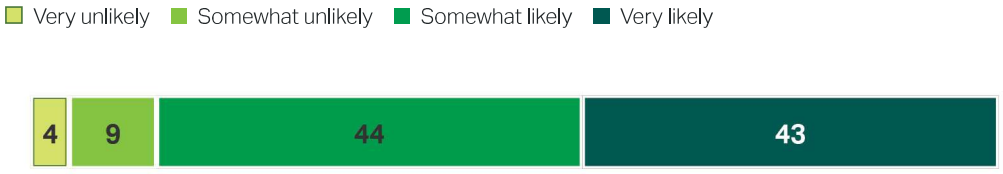
THREE KEY FINDINGS:

1. A clear majority of Americans think it is likely that foreign governments will use AI to attack the U.S., reflecting a widespread sense of trepidation.
2. There are differing opinions over the pros and cons of AI and its application in national security. Young people are particularly skeptical of its impact, despite perceived benefits in detecting threats and improving intelligence.
3. Public support for developing AI-enabled autonomous weapons is conditional, rising when framed as a response to foreign threats.

AI is already playing a key role in U.S. national security across intelligence, defense, and cybersecurity. When considering how Americans feel about the intersection of AI and national security, it is important to consider the defensive mindset they naturally default to. The vast majority of adults (87%) think it is likely that foreign governments will use AI to attack the U.S. in the future, with 43% seeing it as "very likely." Only 4% think this scenario is "very unlikely." This belief is shared across all sectors of American society, irrespective of demographics or familiarity with AI, and points to underlying hesitation in national public opinion.

CHART 6

Perceived likelihood of foreign governments using AI to attack the U.S. (%)

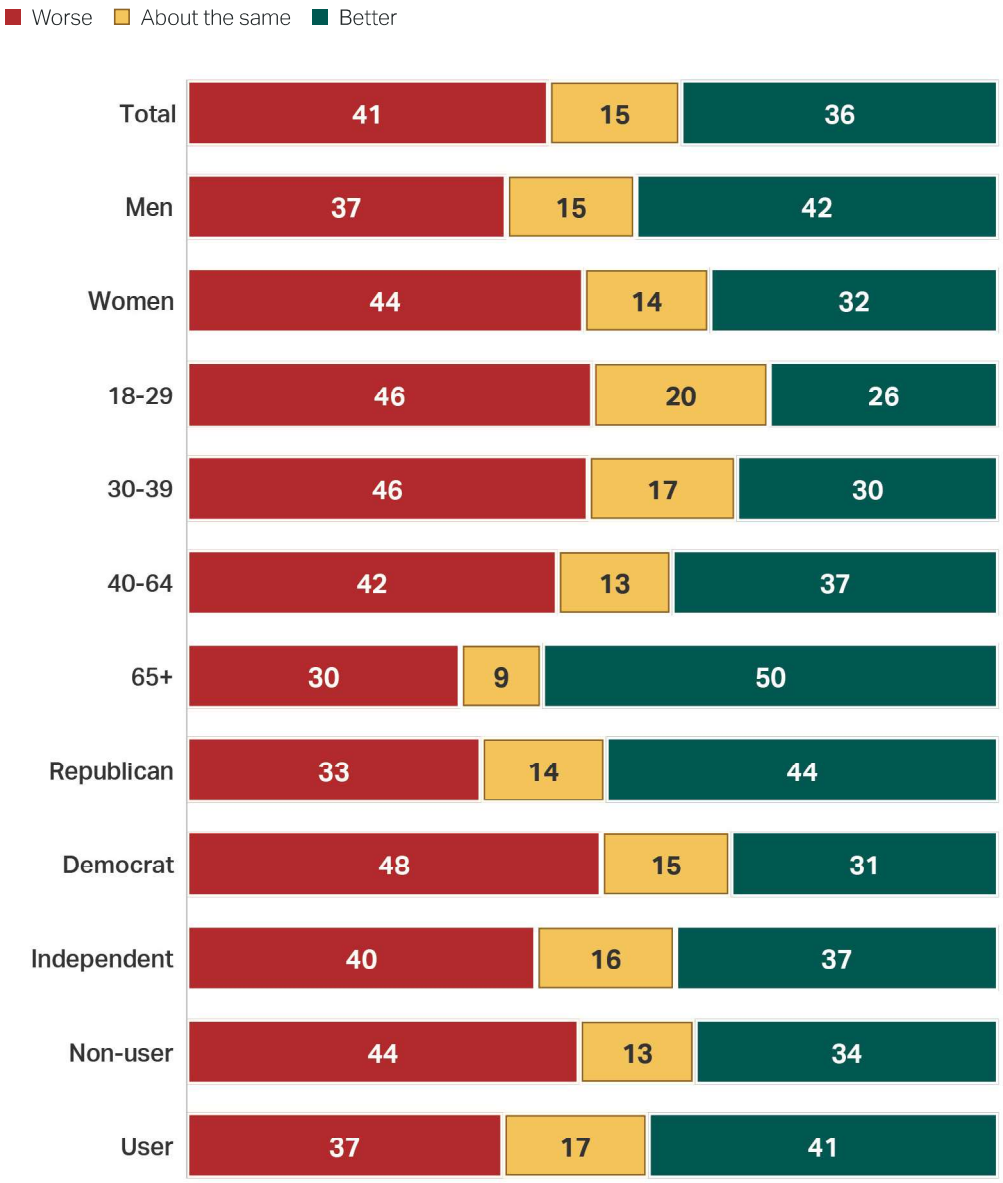


Question wording: How likely or unlikely do you think it is that each of the following scenarios will occur in the next 20 years? Foreign governments using AI technology to attack the United States.

Despite the widely held beliefs that foreign governments will attack the U.S. with AI, and of its general importance to the future of the country, Americans are split on whether AI will make national security risks better (36%) or worse (41%). Men, older adults, Republicans, and AI users are more likely to view AI's impact on national security positively, while women, young people, Democrats, and AI non-users take a more negative view of its impact.

CHART 7

Whether AI will make U.S. national security risks better or worse by demographics (%)



Note: "Don't know" responses not displayed in chart, thus totals don't add up to 100%. The Use AI group includes those who use it "sometimes" or more.

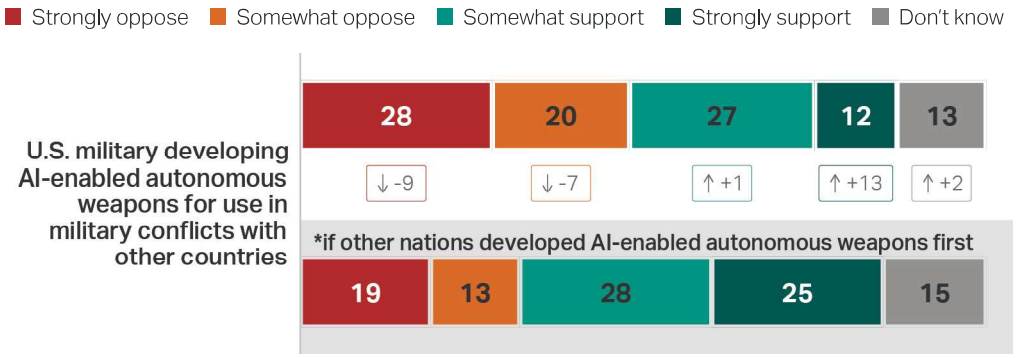
Question wording: For each of the following, do you think advancing AI technology will make the U.S. better off or worse off?

However, there are some military applications for AI that Americans are more optimistic about. About twice as many adults believe AI will improve the quality of national intelligence information rather than reduce it (38% vs. 20%), and three times as many think AI will improve the ability to detect military threats rather than reduce the ability to do so (41% vs. 14%).

More Americans oppose developing AI-enabled weapons for use in military conflicts (48%) than support developing them (39%). However, if other nations were to develop such AI-enabled weapons first, support for U.S. development jumps to 53%, and opposition falls to 32%. This shift highlights a primarily defensive and deterrent mindset.

CHART 8

Views on the U.S. military developing AI-enabled autonomous weapons (%)



Note: Due to rounding, percentages may sum to 100% ±1.

Question wording: To what extent do you support or oppose the U.S. military developing AI-enabled autonomous weapons for use in military conflicts with other countries?

If other nations (including nations that are not U.S. allies) develop autonomous weapons for use in military conflicts, then to what extent would you support or oppose the U.S. military developing autonomous weapons for use in military conflicts with other countries?

AI and the American Economy: Hopes and Concerns

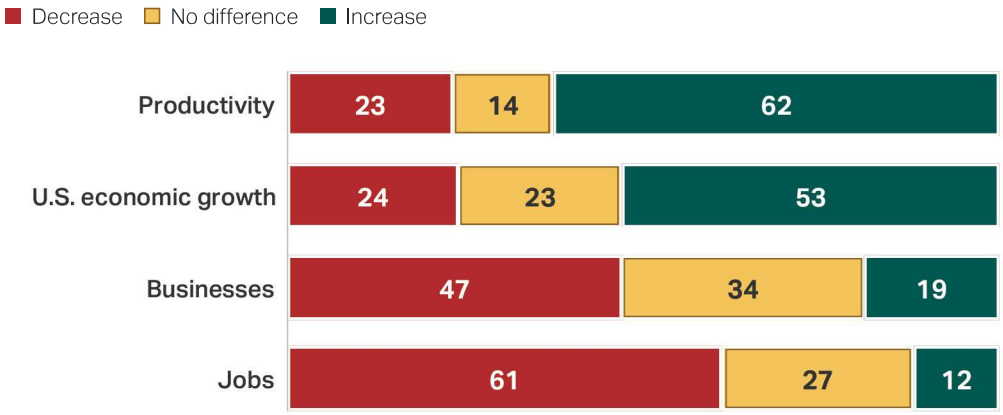
THREE KEY FINDINGS:

1. Americans express optimism about AI's potential to boost economic growth and productivity, even as they worry it will eliminate jobs and businesses.
2. Of those who lose their jobs because of AI, half of Americans believe that "some" will be able to learn new skills in a different industry, while just 3% believe "all" workers replaced by AI will find new jobs.
3. Creating or expanding workforce training and education programs is a popular policy that spans across party lines.

This research reflects uncertainty among Americans over how AI will affect the economy. On one hand, there is optimism that AI will improve productivity (62%) and boost economic growth (53%), particularly among wealthier and more educated adults. On the other, there is pessimism regarding the direct and immediate impacts of AI destroying more businesses (47%) and jobs (61%) than it creates, particularly among workers. These contrasting beliefs — that AI can grow the economy and boost productivity while displacing the jobs and workers at the heart of it — highlight the uncertainty and differences that underpin U.S. attitudes. Such mixed views suggest that economic outcomes alone do not drive public approval, and that perceptions of fairness, risk, and disruption could play a significant role in shaping support for future economic strategies regarding AI.

CHART 9

Optimism and pessimism about AI's impact on the economy (%)



Note: Wordings vary by question but shown as "Increase" and "Decrease" for simplicity; due to rounding, percentages may sum to 100% ±1.

Question wording: How do you think AI technology will impact productivity in the workplace?

Do you think AI technology will boost U.S. economic growth, reduce it, or have no impact?

In the next 10 years, do you think AI technology will create more businesses than it destroys, destroy more businesses than it creates, or will it be about equal?

In the next 10 years, do you think AI technology will create more jobs than it destroys, destroy more jobs than it creates, or will it be about equal?

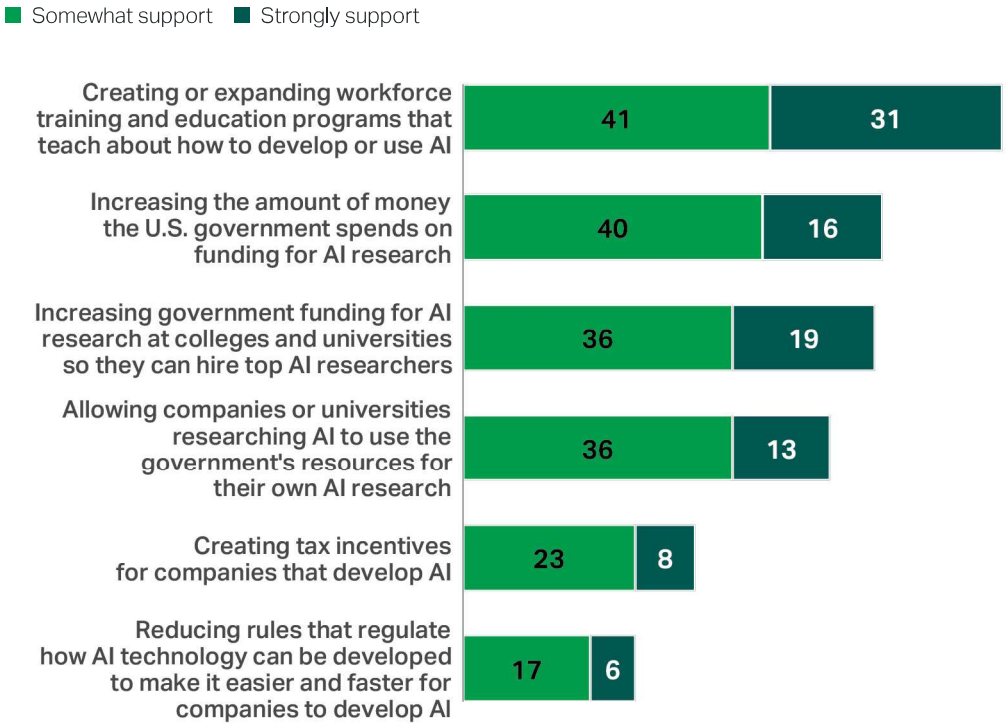
When asked whether worker retraining programs can mitigate the short run effects of AI on the labor market, respondents seem equally uncertain. For those workers who are replaced by AI in the next decade, Americans generally believe that "a few" (24%), "some" (51%), or "most" workers (20%) will be able to learn new job skills in a different industry, while just 3% think "all" workers replaced by AI will find new jobs. Similarly, very few (2%) think "none" will find new jobs if they are replaced by AI.

Concerns over what AI will do to the job market and businesses are reflected in the AI policies that Americans favor most. By far, the most popular policy asked about in this survey was creating or expanding workforce training and education programs that teach people how to develop or use AI (72% support). The idea of creating or expanding workforce training and education programs is equally popular regardless of political identification.

Workforce training is significantly more popular than other AI-related policy options, such as increasing funding for AI research. Much smaller segments support creating tax incentives (31%) or reducing regulations (23%) for companies developing AI. These findings highlight a clear need for robust training programs and a restructuring of early education to accommodate AI-related economic changes in a more proactive manner.

CHART 10

Support for different AI-related policies (%)



Question wording: To what extent do you support or oppose the U.S. taking the following actions?

Conclusion: AI and the Way Forward

The findings presented in this report paint a picture of a nation where attitudes toward AI are still forming as the technology has rapidly hit the mainstream. Almost no one has escaped news about AI in the last year, but regular use of AI has yet to become as mainstream as the discussion surrounding it.

Public opinion is neither settled nor simple. Instead, it is a complex web of hopes, concerns, and conditional support, shaped by relatively limited direct experience and partial trust. Americans are alert to AI's potential and wary of its risks. While they want their country to lead in AI, few are confident it will. They expect to be attacked by foreign governments with AI but favor a multilateral approach to advancing technology. And people look forward to an economic future of healthy growth and productivity, while simultaneously worrying about their jobs and businesses. Understanding these areas of consensus and tension will be crucial in navigating the path forward, as public opinion can both shape and constrain policy. As AI evolves, so too must the conversation that defines its place in American society.

These findings raise several considerations for AI policy moving forward. First, the relationship between AI use and trust, with users showing significantly higher confidence levels than non-users, suggests that greater adoption may build public confidence in AI technology over time. Carefully managed deployment and exposure programs could help bridge the current confidence gap.

While far from absolute, Americans also demonstrate more support for AI applications in defensive contexts and for deterrence capabilities, recognizing that technological leadership in this domain is important in maintaining strategic advantages in an increasingly competitive and uncertain international environment.

Looking toward the economic implications, Americans' optimism about AI's potential to drive growth and productivity is tempered by their concerns about immediate labor force disruptions. Americans see the transformative economic potential of AI but want proactive measures, particularly retraining programs and educational initiatives, to ensure that labor market adjustments don't undermine the technology's perceived benefits. This nuanced perspective suggests that successful AI integration will require coordinated policy responses that maximize economic opportunities while protecting workers and businesses during the transition period.

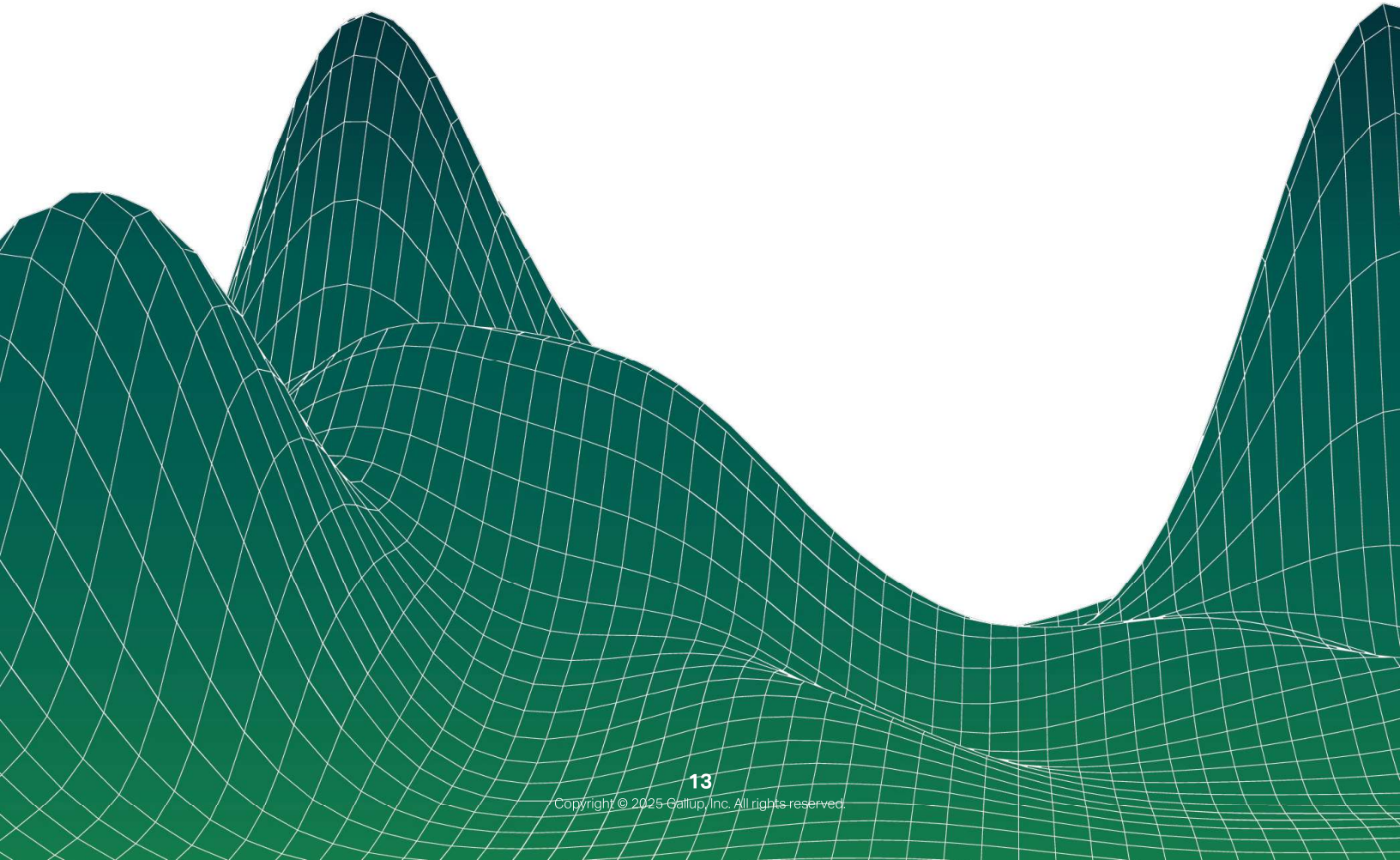
Methodology

The 2025 SCSP-Gallup study is based on a Gallup Panel web survey completed by 3,128 adults in the U.S., aged 18 and older, conducted April 25 to May 5, 2025. The Gallup Panel is a probability-based longitudinal panel of U.S. adults whom Gallup selects using random-digit-dial phone interviews that cover landlines and cellphones. Gallup also uses address-based sampling methods to recruit Panel members. The Gallup Panel is not an opt-in panel.

The sample for this study was weighted to be demographically representative of the U.S. adult population, using the most recent Current Population Survey figures.

For results based on this sample, the margin of sampling error at the 95% confidence level is ±2.1 percentage points for response percentages around 50% and is ±1.3 percentage points for response percentages around 10% or 90%, design effect included. Margins of error are larger for subsamples.

In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of public opinion polls.



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