



Our Futures and AI

What do young people think about AI, social media and politics?

As part of the Our Futures and AI Project young people designed a survey and shared it with their peers.

Cromar Future Group, a youth group based in Aberdeenshire explored how young people engage with politics through social media and the impact that AI can have in this space. The young people developed and distributed a survey and had 82 responses. The young people said: *“The aim of our project was to look at AI and its use in politics and on social media. We initially planned to interview local politicians and circulate a survey in schools, but ultimately decided to focus on the survey.”*

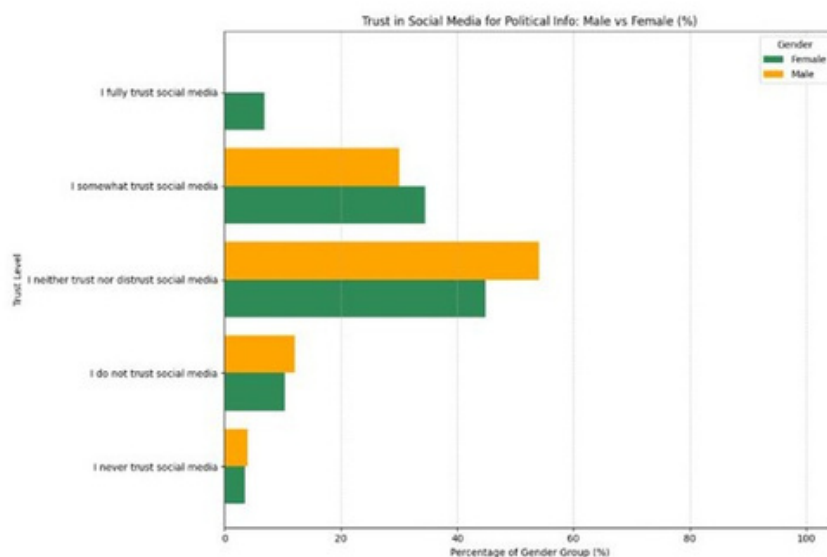


Headline Findings

- 65% of participants were aware of AI usage in social media “often” or “all the time”.
- ChatGPT was the most popular tool, used by 58%. Males lean more into tools like Google Gemini and CoPilot, while females show more interest in Smart Speakers and SnapChat AI.
- 31% of females and 36% of males use AI either “almost every day” or “multiple times a week”.
- Young people are particularly concerned about how AI is being used to generate misinformation and fake news
- 48% of females and 60% of males view AI as “somewhat” or “extremely useful”
- Young people commented that AI should not replace humans in the workplace and expressed concern about the impact for writers, musicians and artists.
- Overall males were more likely to be interested in politics than females: 44.8% of females did not engage in politics compared with 24% of males.
- National and international news was of much more interest to the participants than local.

Find more insights in the [Cromar AI Presentation.pdf](#) which was shared by young people as part of the feedback from the project..

Trust in social media for political info



Trust in Social Media for Political Information (%)

Trust Level	Female (%)	Male (%)
I fully trust social media	6.9%	0.0%
I somewhat trust social media	34.5%	30.0%
I neither trust nor distrust	44.8%	54.0%
I do not trust social media	10.3%	12.0%
I never trust social media	3.4%	4.0%

Key Observations:

- **Neutrality:** The most common stance for both genders is a neutral one (“I neither trust nor distrust”), held by over half of the males (**54%**) and nearly 45% of females.
- **Higher Female Trust:** Female participants appear slightly more trusting overall; **6.9%** of females “fully trust” social media for political info compared to **0%** of males. Combined trust (Somewhat + Fully) is **41.4%** for females vs **30%** for males.
- **Skepticism:** Levels of active distrust (Do not trust + Never trust) are similar across both groups, with males being slightly more skeptical (**16%** total distrust vs **13.7%** for females).
- **Overall Trend:** While the majority remain cautious or neutral, a significant portion of both groups still relies on social media to some degree for political information.

In their own words

Respondents to the survey shared their views

What do you know about how AI works?

"AI's like ChatGPT are Large Language Models which use a huge library of information to 'guess' an answer to what you ask it."

"It has a massive collection of information that it uses to determine the best answer to a prompt according to parameters set by its creator."

"It just tries to predict the next word it should say, based off training that teaches it what words should be used in what context."

"Not much, but I know it affects the environment and has something to do with water and cutting trees in a negative way."

"I know images are not real and the information can be wrong."

Do you have any concerns about using AI?

"Maybe shouldn't be giving it so much data since I don't know where it goes."

"It is biased. It can fall victim to misinformation on the Internet."

"YES, it is very much taking artists jobs away and I would like to be pixel art person."

"Not really because if you know how to use it correctly I don't see any harm."

"Yes, there are many concerning uses of AI that some companies are using it to make questionable choices and making bad decisions with it and it needs to be stopped and filtered out."

Note that in reply to this question, 20% of respondents said no, they didn't have concerns.

Find the full responses from respondents in the [Final Survey Report](#).

Using AI to analyse the survey

AI tools were used to analyse the data from the survey and two different AI tools, Copilot and Gemini, were compared.

Read the exploration of analysing using AI tools in the [Final Survey Report](#).

The Final Survey Report contains all of the free text comments gathered in the survey, so that the respondents voices can be heard directly.

The output from Gemini was felt to be much more reliable than from Co-pilot. Les Ellis, The youth worker leading on the project comments,

“Participating in this project has been a pleasure and an eye opener. The young team that produced the survey and helped with its distribution, did a great job. Unfortunately though, the oldest two who wrote the survey questionnaire and produced the presentation in the YouthLink pack, were on their final year prelims when the results came in. So I, the youth worker, did the analysis of the survey using Google’s Gemini Ai. Then last week, I thought it would be interesting to put the results through Microsoft’s CoPilot to see the difference. It asked if I would like the report to be youth friendly, so of course, I said yes. It also asked whether I would like it to make policy recommendations. I answered yes to that too. At no stage did I ask it to make up questions or refer to its external database for its recommendations. The best way I can describe the difference is that working with Gemini is like working with a learned Professor who generally understands data analysis, has some sort of sense of integrity and does a pretty good job. Working with CoPilot was more like working with an over-excitable 14 year old, who gave it a shot, got bored and then proceeded to make things up! This is a 20 question survey. So you can imagine my astonishment when working through the process with CoPilot, it did not stop at question 20, but proceeded to continue to question 26 and produced 98 pages of policy recommendations and analysis on a basis of 82 data entries and questions and tables it had made up itself.”

Response to Cromar Future Group AI survey analysis

Dr Amy Calder, Senior Research Officer, YouthLink Scotland

As part of the Include Plus Network funded project exploring '[Our Futures and AI](#)', Cromar Future Group, a youth group based in Aberdeenshire explored how young people engage with politics through social media and the impact that AI can have in this space. The young people developed and distributed a survey and had 82 responses. Due to the timing of the project when the young people had exams, the youth worker took responsibility for analysis. The youth worker decided to compare AI analysis tools to see how it made sense of the survey data – using both Google's Gemini AI and Microsoft's Co-Pilot. What follows is a really interesting insight into the benefits and also the challenges faced when using AI for analysis.

As Senior Researcher at YouthLink Scotland I have watched from the sidelines as AI has emerged as a research tool. I have attended webinars on the ethics of its use in analysis and had multiple conversations with other third sector researchers. The truth is it makes me nervous. I think this is partly driven by an old school approach to how to code (draw out key themes) and analyse data, particularly qualitative data (words rather than numbers). Cromar Future Group analysis has really prompted me to think about our approach, how we move with the times and utilise the tools available whilst keeping our research integrity, creating ethical boundaries and protecting the data.

Reading the reports produced by AI and the youth worker's reflections has raised many questions for me, including:

- How safe is it to input data into AI tools?
- How do we know AI is 'correctly' interpreting and analysing the data?
- When it comes to qualitative data analysis do we need a human touch?
- Are we deskilling if we use AI to analyse data rather than interrogating the data ourselves?
- If we plan to use AI to analyse data does this need to be part of the consent process for those taking part in the research?
- When using AI for analysis how much are we critically thinking about the findings?
- Should we be supporting young people to use AI for analysis or encouraging a longer form approach?

Cromar Future Group's approach to their research is a great prompt for discussion and highlights the need for open dialogue. It has certainly prompted me to think about writing a policy about how we support young people to use AI in youth-led research. What questions does it prompt you to think about?

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