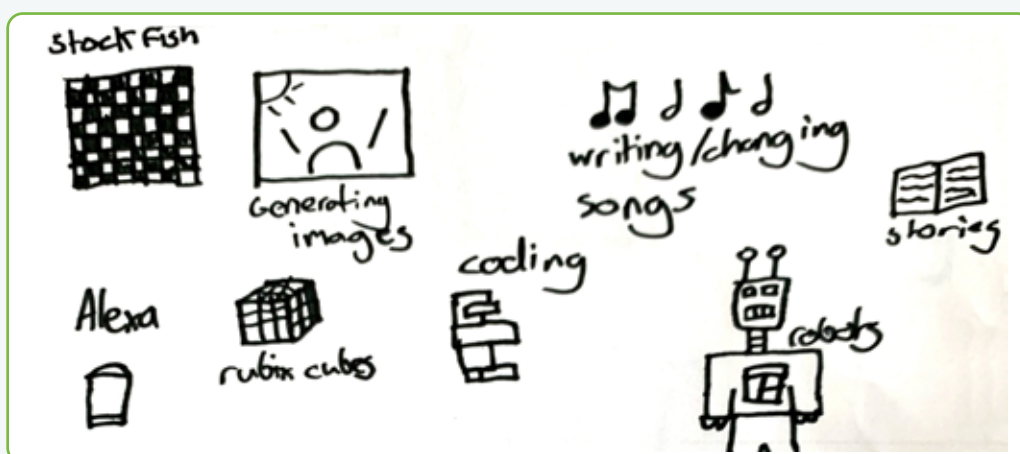# Exploring AI
(Artificial Intelligence)
## with Children &
## Young People

> "AI is a very smart and useful technology but also has its bad sides"
> Girl, aged 11



Prepared by
**Niamh McLoughlin & Siobhan McMullen,**
The Barnardos Online Safety Programme
October 2024

# Table of Contents

# Foreword

Since 2014, the Barnardos Online Safety Programme has been delivering workshops about online safety to children, teachers and parents. In 2019, we partnered with Google.org to expand our programme and to date we have provided workshops to over 90,000 children in over 800 schools in Ireland.

Each year we hold consultations with children and write a report based on what children have told us about their experiences online. The topic of Artificial Intelligence was chosen for this year's consultation report as children increasingly spoke about AI and the role it plays in their lives during our workshops across schools.

This report looks at the relationship between AI and children. We understand that children are interacting with AI technologies in various ways. They are increasingly exploring and using generative AI in their daily lives, as well as passively interacting with AI technologies embedded in most of their online activities. During our consultation, the children we spoke to showed us a range of perceptions about AI, from enthusiastic and optimistic to cautious and fearful. Some children believe that AI is a powerful tool that can improve the future, while others worry that it could become dangerous or harmful.

They told us that they find aspects of AI to be useful and fun; they are using it in ways that help them to understand their world, to further their learning and to explore their creativity. They also told us about their concerns; about how AI can be used to manipulate them and to invade their privacy. While the potential benefits of AI for children are recognised, we must also acknowledge the potential risks.

The report highlights a lot of uncertainty from children, parents and teachers about AI. The future impact of AI on children's lives is unknown, but it is clear that children need help to navigate AI and the online world. As parents, educators and professionals working with children, we must be able to provide the necessary support and guidance.

We hope that this report will raise awareness of the extent that children are engaging with AI and inform a conversation about how we can best educate, guide and support them in their experience while also ensuring their safety and wellbeing online.

**Suzanne Connolly**
CEO
Barnardos

# Methodology

**There was a combined approach to gathering information for this consultation report, using both qualitative focus groups and a quantitative survey.**

We hosted 7 hour-long focus groups over the months of May and June 2024, to investigate children's experiences with Artificial Intelligence.

**Focus Groups:**
We spoke directly with 65 children; girls and boys aged between 10 and 15, from 5th class (primary) to 2nd year (secondary). The focus groups were held in 4 different schools in Dublin, Cork and Kilkenny.

The schools were mixed and single sex, primary, secondary and DEIS schools, located in urban and rural areas. Information was shared through the schools and consent for participation was obtained from parents and the children themselves.

**Surveys:**
We also held 3 surveys amongst the schools we had connected with over the year and their wider school communities.

We asked schools to give one survey to children (470 respondents), one to parents (101 respondents) and one to teachers (63 respondents). Children, parents and teachers were recruited to the survey exclusively through their schools and their consent was obtained.

# Barnardos

Because childhood lasts a lifetime

# Key Findings

**54%**
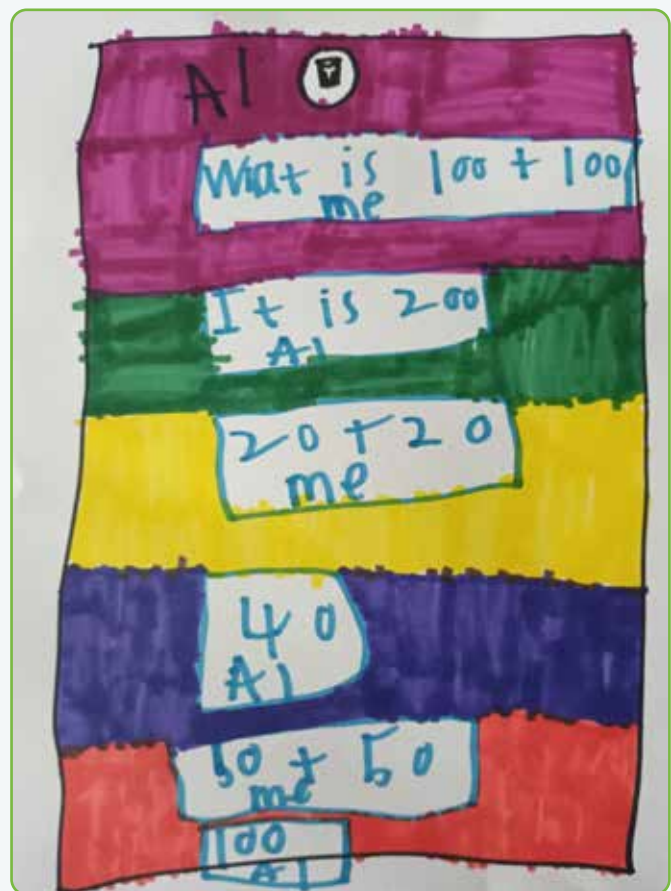
54% of children and young people want to learn more about AI at school

**82%**

82% of children and young people said their parents or teachers know "some", "not too much" or "nothing" about AI

**93%**

93% of parents surveyed said they have concerns about their children using AI

**87%**

87% of parents felt their children learning about AI now was either "important" or "very important"

**95%**

95% of teachers have not received any training in AI

**52%**

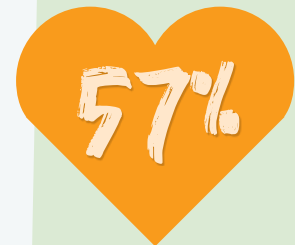52% of children "don't know" if AI will make the future better or not.

**59%**

59% of parents said that the topic of AI comes up in conversation with their children either "never" or "not much".

**93%**

93% of parents reported having "some" or "a lot" of concerns about their children using AI.

**57%**

57% of children said the help they received with AI from their parents or teachers had been "none" or "not too much".

# Definition of Artificial Intelligence

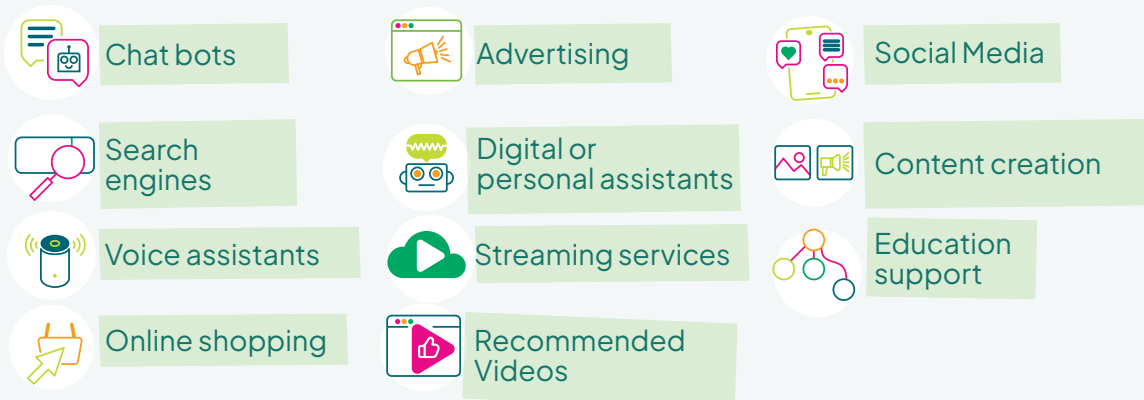## For the purpose of the report, we feel it is important to clarify what we mean when we talk about AI.

Here is a definition from Webwise, the Irish Internet Safety Awareness Centre:

*Artificial Intelligence (AI) refers to the development of computer systems that can perform tasks that typically require human intelligence. It involves creating algorithms – a list of rules or steps – that are used by computers to analyse, understand, and respond to information.*[1]

We recognise that the term AI is used to describe a variety of applications that use sophisticated algorithms to answer complex questions or do complex tasks including interacting with users in a way that simulates intelligent conversation.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) applications are transforming the way we learn, work and live. They have the potential to automate tasks, improve decision-making, help with our creative processes and provide valuable insights into our daily operations. However, the use of AI applications also presents new challenges in terms of information security, data protection and also presents wider ethical questions.

These AI technologies and potential uses include:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Chat bots | Advertising | Social Media |
| Search engines | Digital or personal assistants | Content creation |
| Voice assistants | Streaming services | Education support |
| Online shopping | Recommended Videos | |

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1   **Webwise**: https://www.webwise.ie/ai-hub/#:~:text=Artificial%20Intelligence%20(AI)%20refers%20to,understand%2C%20 and%20respond%20to%20information.

**Section 1:**

# Children's Awareness, Understanding & Usage of AI

# AI: In Children's Own Words

Our focus groups and survey with children and young people revealed a range of perspectives on AI. While some participants offered detailed descriptions, the responses highlighted a clear disparity in understanding across all age groups.

"AI is very cool because you can do cool things with it. It could help you with stuff you don't understand and help you do things."
Young person, aged 11

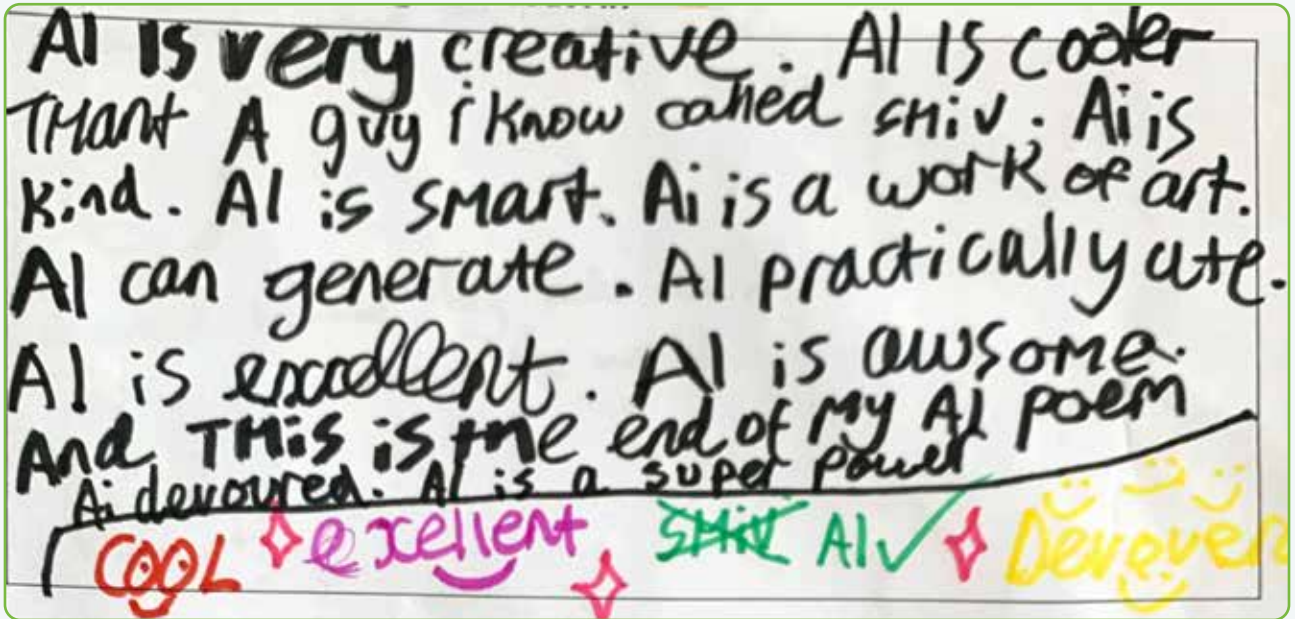"AI is technology that can speak and understand you kinda like Alexa or Siri"
Girl aged 10

"I think it's very cool and helpful but I also know that it can be dangerous and a bit scary because there are hackers and scams and technology that can listen to you like Alexa."
Boy aged 12

"It's a bit scary"
Boy aged 10

AI is very creative. AI is cooler than a guy i know called shiv. Ai is kind. AI is smart. Ai is a work of art. AI can generate. AI practically ute. AI is excellent. AI is awsome. And this is the end of my AI poem Ai devoured. Al is a super power

COOL • exellent • SMART AI ✓ • Derever

Based on themes identified in our survey and in our focus groups, we have grouped responses in the following ways:

**Some children have a basic grasp of AI:**
They see AI as smart machines or robots that can answer questions, generate text and images, or help with tasks. When children spoke about AI giving them "help" "information," and "answers" (111 mentions), this understanding was reflected.

**Some children associate AI with specific technologies:**
Words that came up frequently (57 mentions) such as "Alexa," "Siri," and "Snapchat" suggest they connect AI to virtual assistants or specific phone apps.

**There is an element of fear around AI:**
Words that came up frequently (62 mentions) such as "scary," "creepy," and "bad" demonstrate the apprehension some children are feeling about AI.

**Limited understanding of how AI works:**
There was not much mention of the underlying concepts of AI such as algorithms or machine learning.

The research indicates that while children are exposed to AI in various forms, their understanding of what AI truly is and how it works remains limited. The responses demonstrated a surface level familiarity rather than an awareness of AI's capabilities and implications. This limited understanding indicates that children's exposure to AI is more about using the technology than understanding it.

# How Do Children Feel About AI?

EXcited about new possibilitey.
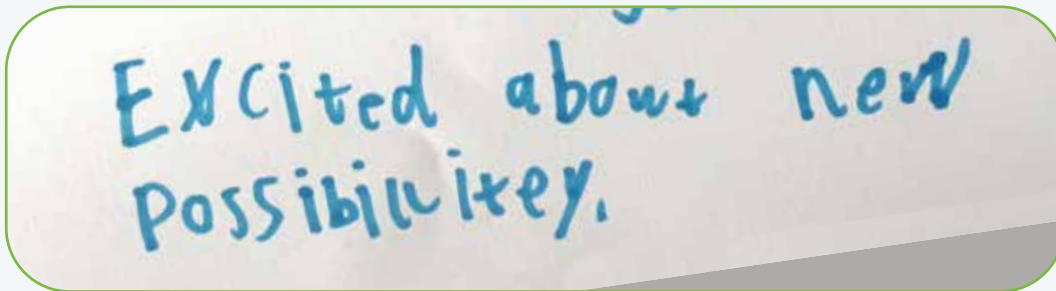
**Positive feelings:**
The most popular feeling about AI technology, robots and smart computers is "super cool", with 34% of children feeling this way.

**34%**

**Negative feelings:**
On the other hand, 17% of children surveyed find AI to be "A bit scary" and 3% indicated "I don't like them."
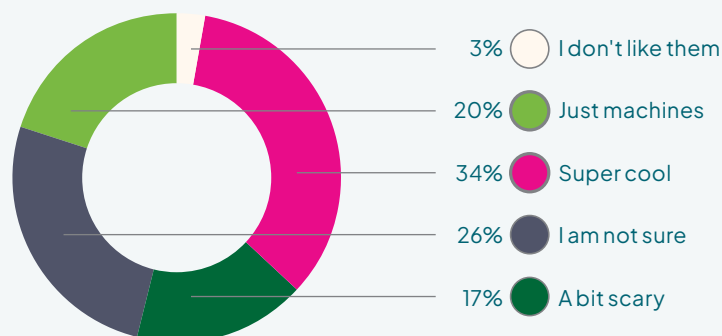
**20%**

**Unsure about feelings:**
The data also shows that 26% of children are still unsure about AI technology, robots and smart computers.

**26%**

## How do you feel about AI technology, robots and smart computers?

- 3% I don't like them
- 20% Just machines
- 34% Super cool
- 26% I am not sure
- 17% A bit scary

The data reveals a clear divide in children's attitudes towards AI technology. While many children are excited by AI, fear and discomfort is also apparent. This is not surprising as even adults find that AI can be a complex and sometimes confusing topic.

## Children's Confidence in Explaining AI
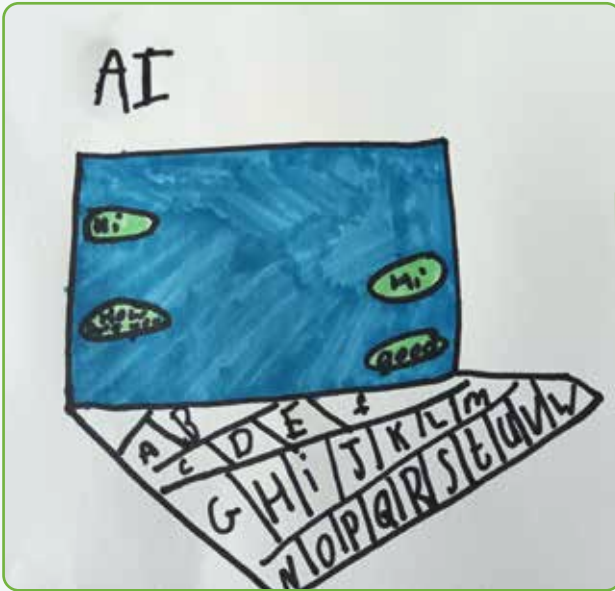


Children were asked to rate how confident they felt in explaining AI to someone else.

38% of children that took part in the survey demonstrated a neutral level of confidence (3 stars) in explaining AI to someone else and a combined 27% of respondents indicated low confidence (1–2 stars) in explaining AI.

**65%**

While some respondents lacked confidence, a combined 35% felt somewhat confident or very confident (4–5 stars) in explaining AI.

**35%**

## Using the stars below, please rate how confident you would feel explaining AI to someone else.



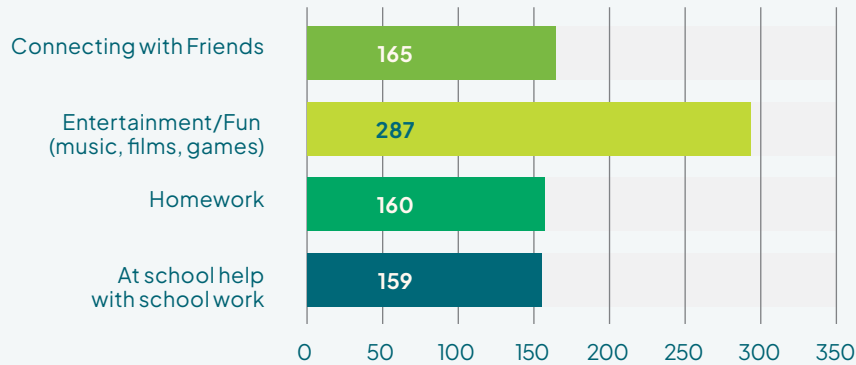| | 1 ★ | 2 ★★ | 3 ★★★ | 4 ★★★★ | 5 ★★★★★ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| count | 47 | 70 | 161 | 99 | 49 |
| % | 11% | 16% | 38% | 23% | 12% |
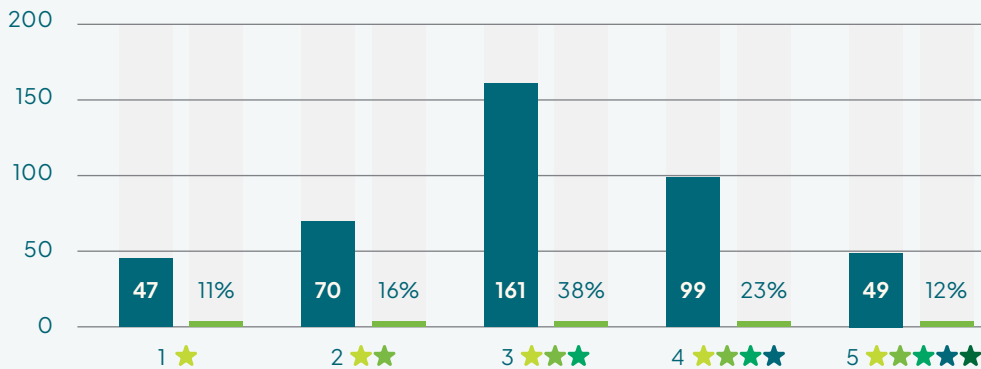
## How Children Would Most Like to Engage with AI

When asked how they would most like to use AI, children demonstrated a high preference (67%) for using AI for fun and entertainment purposes, engaging with AI in order to enhance their experiences with music, films and games.

**67%**

A notable number of children (39%) said they would like to use AI for social connectivity, 38% said they engaged with AI for educational support at home and 37% mentioned help at school.

**39%**

## In what way do you think you would most like to use AI?
(tick all that apply)

| Category | Value |
|---|---|
| Connecting with Friends | 165 |
| Entertainment/Fun (music, films, games) | 287 |
| Homework | 160 |
| At school help with school work | 159 |

Scale: 0 50 100 150 200 250 300 350

# Where Children have Learned about AI

When children were asked where they have heard about AI, 267 respondents (63%), said that they have learned about AI from platforms such as TikTok and YouTube.

**63%**

A further 111 children mentioned platforms such as Snapchat and Instagram, and 105 children and young people mentioned other social media or apps.
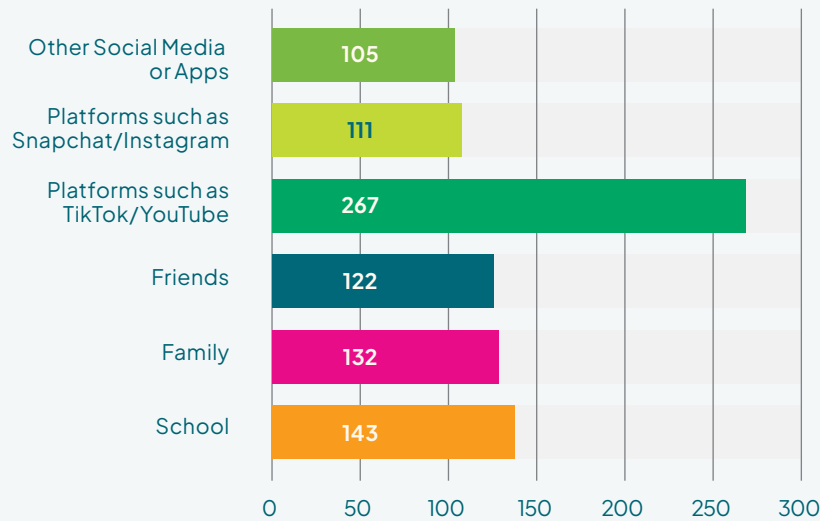
**216** children

While social media platforms appear to be the dominant source of information for children in relation to AI, some respondents also mentioned school (143) and family (132).

**275** children

While it was clear that children are developing their knowledge of AI through a variety of sources, it is somewhat concerning that social media platforms were the primary source of information with platforms such TikTok, YouTube, Snapchat, and Instagram leading the way.

School and family appear to play a secondary role compared to social media. This reliance on social media indicates that children's understanding of AI could be shaped more by trending content, recommended content, influencers and peers, rather than structured reliable resources.

## Where have you heard about AI?
### (Tick all that apply)

| Source | Value |
|---|---|
| Other Social Media or Apps | 105 |
| Platforms such as Snapchat/Instagram | 111 |
| Platforms such as TikTok/YouTube | 267 |
| Friends | 122 |
| Family | 132 |
| School | 143 |

*Chart x-axis: 0, 50, 100, 150, 200, 250, 300*

## Section 1 Conclusion:

The findings from this section highlight a diverse range of awareness, understanding, feelings and confidence among children regarding AI technology. While many children view AI positively, there is also a significant level of uncertainty, fear and a lack of understanding apparent.

This highlights a need for efforts, at school and at home, to deepen children's comprehension of AI beyond its application in familiar technologies and beyond what they are exposed to from social media platforms.

There is a need for more accurate, balanced, and educational discussions about AI in both school settings and at home, to ensure that children are receiving reliable information beyond what is found online.

# Positive Reflections - What is good about AI?

Because childhood lasts a lifetime

It is clear from our consultation process that this generation perceive AI as having wide ranging benefits in their everyday lives across a number of fronts:

- Help and assistance

- Information access, answering questions

- Learning, homework and study

- Creativity, entertainment, art and fun

- Advice, recommendations and communication

## Help and Assistance

When asked what is good about AI, young people overwhelmingly indicated that they see AI as a tool that can provide help and assistance with tasks in their day to day lives (131 mentions).

**131** mentions



"It can help us with everyday tasks and make things quicker"
Girl aged 12

"It can do mundane tasks"
Boy aged 16

"It is fancy and does your chores and stuff that you don't want to do"
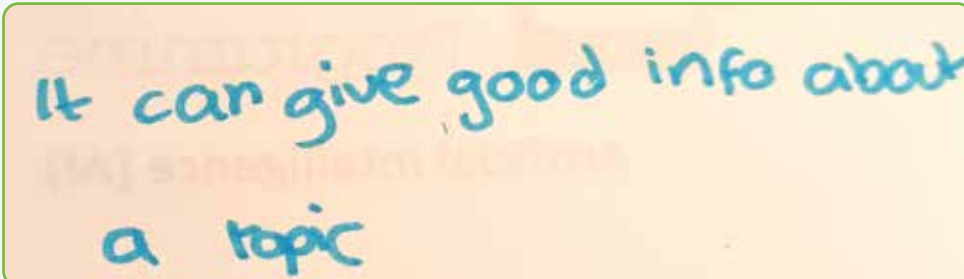Young person aged 10

# Access to Information

Information access also came up frequently (89 mentions).

## 89
mentions

Respondents indicated that they see AI as a means to gain knowledge about any topic and AI could answer any question that they throw at it.

It helps You with undersanding things.

It can give good info about a topic

"It can help you make things easier and help when you can get stuck"
Boy aged 12

"You can search anything without anybody's help"
Boy aged 11

"It can give explanations for questions and it can give information"
Girl aged 12

# Learning

Learning (Homework & Study) also emerged as a top theme (70 mentions). Respondents indicated that AI can be used as a homework or study helper that can assist them with breaking down homework assignments when their parents or teachers are unable to help them.

**70** mentions

It can help you with home-work and studies. Like in Google if you don't know something you can do take the photo and it will search it for you.

it helps me with my homework.

"If I'm stuck with any homework it can easily explain it to me but not give me the answers"
Girl aged 11

"I suppose it's good that you can get help with your homework if your parents can't help you"
Girl aged 11

It can do your homework. It is really smart.

# Creativity and Entertainment

Children and young people told us (47 mentions) that they are drawn to the creativity and entertainment potential of AI.

**47** mentions

For this generation, AI is a tool for the imagination & artistic exploration.

what is good about AI is it can maybe help bring accessibility of thing like cool arb etc

AI can help with the creative process in art storywriting etc. and is used as a tool.

It can make logos / Pictures for you, saving time.

AI wow!!

"AI is mostly good because you can ask it to write stories, draw pictures, create recipes and answer questions"
Girl aged 12

"AI is a program with a lot of potential, it can help people generate images or stories for their entertainment"
Girl aged 14

"AI can make images and it can make videos also with a very quick speed and they are quite accurate"
Boy aged 12

# Advice, Recommendations and Communication

Other topics that came up when asked what is good about AI is AI can give advice & recommendations and can be used for communication (35 mentions).

**35 mentions**

It can help you with your study's and work
It can help if you want talk to someone but don't have anyone to talk to

**"It helps me communicate with my friends and family"**
Girl aged 11

**"AI is good - can talk to friends online"**
Boy aged 11

**"AI can help in a lot of ways like giving advice"**
Boy aged 12

**"It can help you listen to music and suggests stuff to me on my phone"**
Boy aged 11

**"When stuck on a project that you have no clue what to do it on, AI may give you different suggestions that may make your project much more interesting and exciting."**
Girl aged 11

## Section 2 Conclusion:

It is clear from the consultation process that children and young people see AI as a part of their everyday lives and something that can offer them significant benefits.

Learning, information access, and assistance with tasks are valued, along with AI's ability to simplify homework and study tasks and answer questions instantly. However, the use of AI for educational support and information could be a cause for concern without guidance from the education system for appropriate usage, an area the Department of Education needs to prioritise in the future.

The enthusiasm for exploring AI for creative and entertainment pursuits may highlight how these technologies are reshaping how young people experience art and leisure.

Finally, the mentions of AI's role in advice and communication may highlight a growing dependency on AI for decision making and social interaction.

Overall, the positive reflections demonstrate both the opportunities AI presents for enhancing young people's lives and the importance of guiding its use in a balanced and informed manner.

# Negative Reflections – What is not so good about AI?

*People aan use it in a bad way.*

## While children and young people see the benefits of AI, their survey and focus group responses also revealed their scepticism.

Several key themes emerged, highlighting concerns about the potential pitfalls of AI, such as:

- Malicious use
- Fear of AI "taking over"
- Privacy concerns & creepiness
- Misinformation & unreliability
- Future job displacement

## Malicious Use

When asked what is not so good about AI, malicious use emerged as the biggest concern that presented among children and young people (93 mentions).

**93** mentions

Children are aware of the potential for AI to be misused for cheating or scams. Many children mentioned catfishing, people pretending to be others and the potential for it to be used by predators.



*Can be used to manipulate people*

**"It can fake different identities"**
Girl aged 14

**"It is too easy to do fake or malicious things with AI"**
Girl aged 14

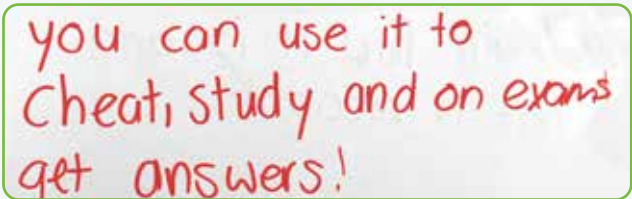**"It can be used to manipulate people"**
Boy aged 13

**"You don't know if it's real or not. People can create pictures & pretend its them"**
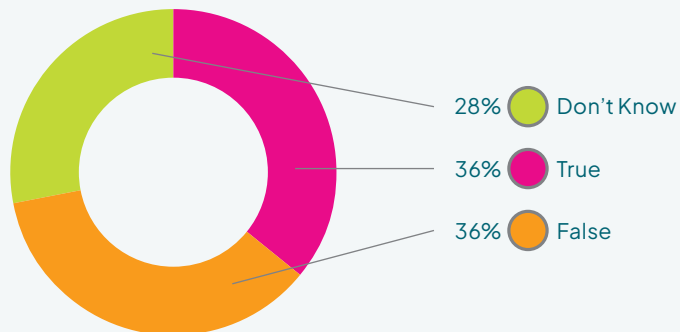Girl aged 13
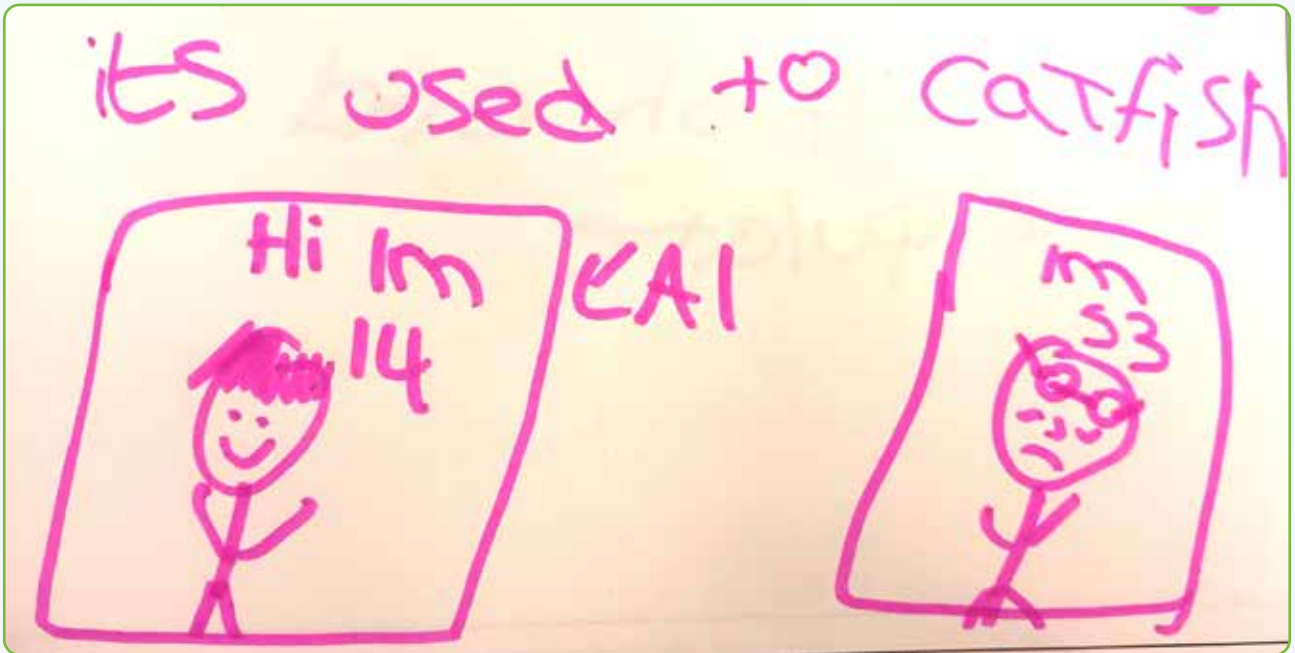
There were a lot of mentions of cheating from children and young people when talking about AI and it was frequently listed as one of its features.





Interestingly, when children were asked in our survey if they thought that using AI for school work or homework was cheating, 36% indicated that they felt it was cheating, 36% felt it wasn't and 28% said they didn't know.



**Using AI for school work or homework is cheating**

28% Don't Know

36% True

36% False

# Fear of AI "Taking Over"

Some children expressed fears that AI could eventually become more advanced than humans and potentially "take over the world" (61 mentions).

**61** mentions

"AI is robots taking over the world"
Girl aged 10

"AI is vast and interesting but if AI ever becomes sentient it would most likely mean our demise"
Boy aged 13

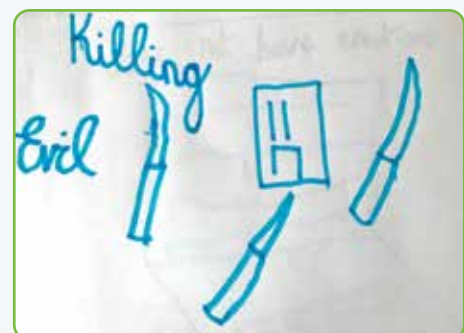"I think it's a very cool thing to have although it can be a bit scary when you hear robots take over the world."
Boy aged 13
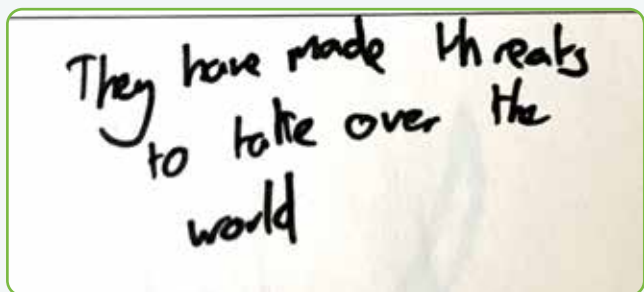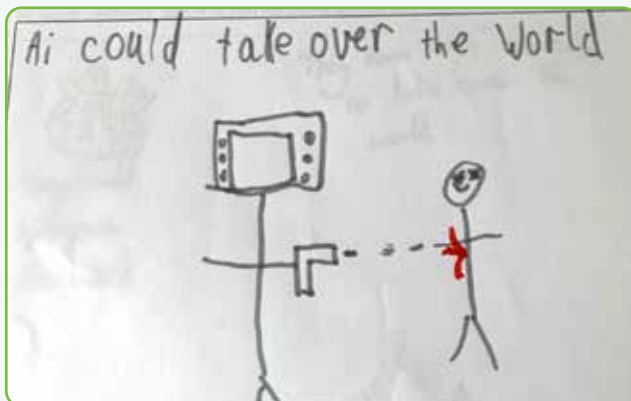
"It could potentially destroy the world."
Girl aged 11

## Privacy & Creepiness

Children told us that they sometimes find AI intrusive, with constant personalised recommendations or data collection practices that they feel is creepy (41 mentions).

**41**
mentions

"Sometimes it can give you a creepy reply"
Girl aged 11

"It is a creepy robot which can steal private info about you like where you live"
Girl aged 11

## Misinformation

Another worry identified was misinformation & unreliability (36 mentions). Children are bombarded with information online, and they demonstrated a fear of AI being used to spread fake content or manipulate them.

**36**
mentions

Respondents highlighted concerns that AI can create convincing but untrue stories, images and videos blurring the lines between fact and fiction. The survey also highlighted anxieties about AI simply providing inaccurate information.

when AI is purposely used to spread false info or is claimed as original

It can trick you into thinking most things you see are true

"AI is not always accurate with its results, and can sometimes get information wrong as it is pulling from what it is taught, and may mix unnecessary information in"
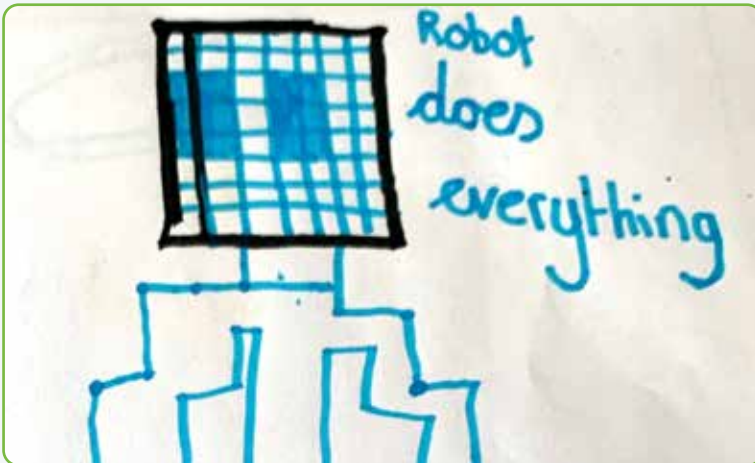Girl aged 15

"Fake media can be spread"
Girl aged 14

"Harder to tell what is real from what is fake online"
Boy aged 11

# Future Job Displacement

Despite their young age, the children and young people in our survey and focus groups expressed a concern about the future and that AI may reduce job opportunities for their generation (27 mentions).

**27**
mentions



"When AI is much more developed in the future, it may take away different jobs that humans currently have which will make jobs harder to get."
Girl aged 10

"It's a job killer"
Girl aged 12

"We don't know enough about it and we will lose our jobs"
Boy aged 11

"If it does do all our jobs there will be no more reasons to get up and you won't get enough exercise"
Boy aged 10

## Section 3 Concluding Remarks:

The negative reflections from children and young people regarding AI reveal their significant concerns about truth versus deception online. Along with their discomfort and weariness about issues such as privacy, and security.

These reflections emphasise the need for a careful and responsible approach to AI development and use, ensuring that young people's concerns are heard and addressed in order to promote a safer and more trustworthy experience for children and young people.

# Section 4:
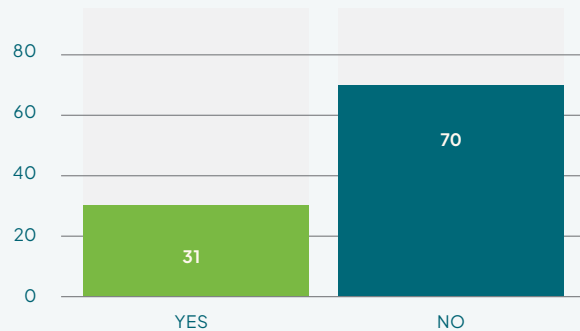
# With Parents & Teachers

# Children's AI Usage According to Parents

Most parents that we surveyed felt their children were not currently using AI and 93% of the parents we spoke to reported having "some" or "a lot" of concerns about their children using AI.

**Does your child currently use AI?**



**Do you have any concerns about your child using AI?**



- 26% — I have a lot of concerns
- 7% — I don't have any concerns
- 67% — I have some concerns
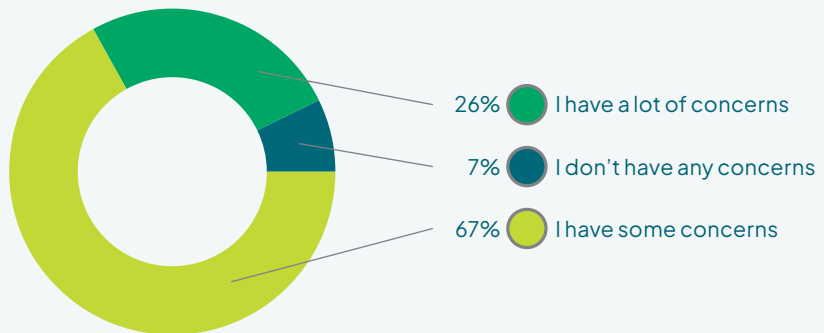
Despite this, the majority of parents indicated that their children have used the following technologies, all of which have AI embedded in their experience:

- ✳ Devices with voice assistants e.g. Siri, Alexa etc
- ✛ Educational apps or games that recommend activities or content
- ● Social platforms e.g. Snapchat, Instagram
- ♥ Content creation & sharing platforms e.g. YouTube, TikTok
- ✤ Messaging services e.g. Whatsapp, telegram

## Which of the following has your child used?
### (Tick all that apply)



| | Value |
|---|---|
| Messaging Services E.g. Whatsapp, Telegram | 64 |
| Content Creation & Sharing Platforms E.g. | 64 |
| Social Platforms E.g. Snapchat, Instagram | 54 |
| Educational Aps Or Games That Recommend | 64 |
| Devices With Voice Assistants E.g. Siri, Alexa Etc. | 77 |
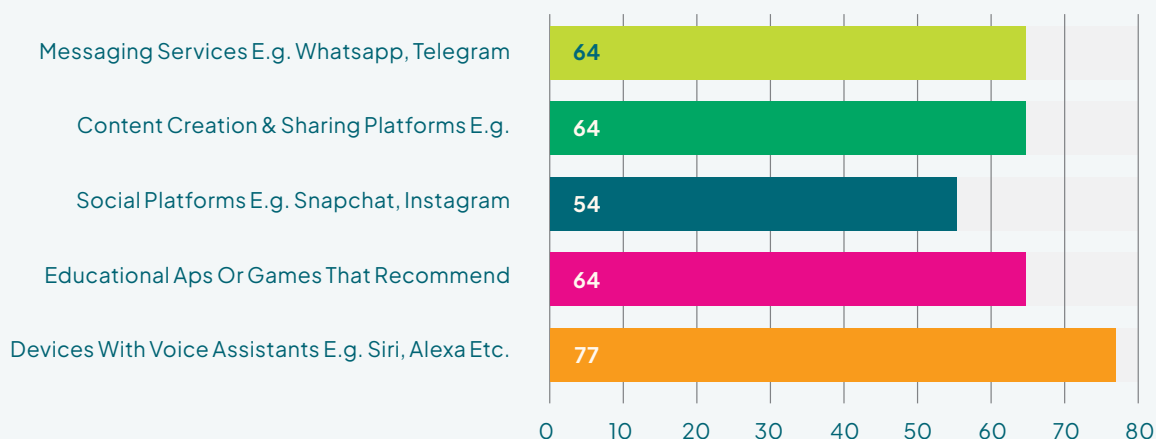
This may demonstrate that a significant number of children are engaging with AI technologies, and that parents are not fully aware of the amount of AI embedded in many common online activities and experiences.

## Engaging with Children on AI

57% of children said they had received "none" or "not too much" help with AI from their parents or teachers. 53% of children also said they "don't know" how their parents or teachers feel about them using AI.

**How much help have you received about AI from teachers or parents?**

- 7% A lot
- 23% None
- 34% Not too much
- 36% Some
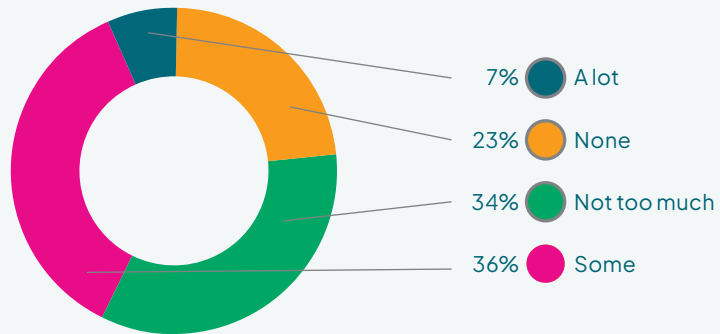
**My parents and teachers do not want me to use AI**
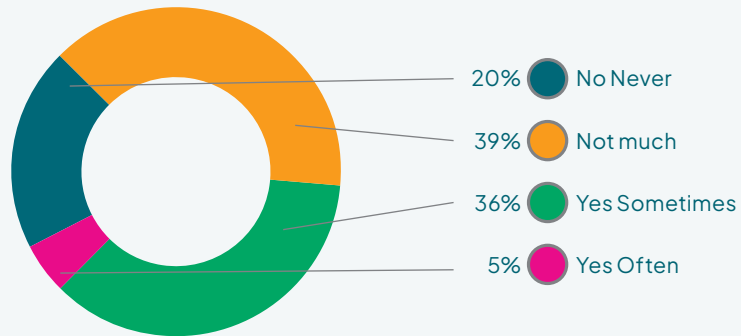
- 15% True
- 32% False
- 53% Don't Know
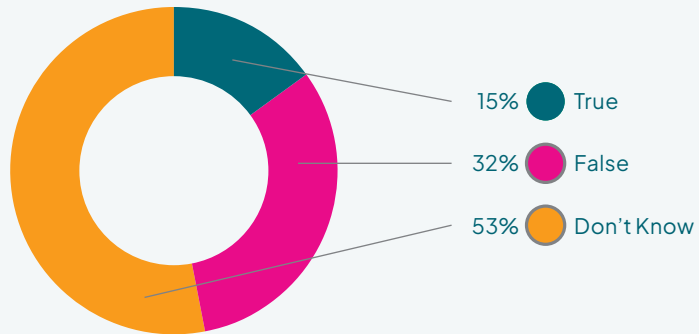
60% of teachers reported that discussions about AI among students either "never" or "rarely" happen, with a further 37% saying they occur sometimes. Only 3% said discussions happen often.

59% of parents stated that the topic of AI comes up in conversation with their children either "never" or "not much." 36% said conversations happen "sometimes" and only 5% said conversations about AI happen often.

**Do your students ever discuss AI in class or independently?**

- 28% Never
- 32% Rarely
- 37% Sometimes
- 3% Often
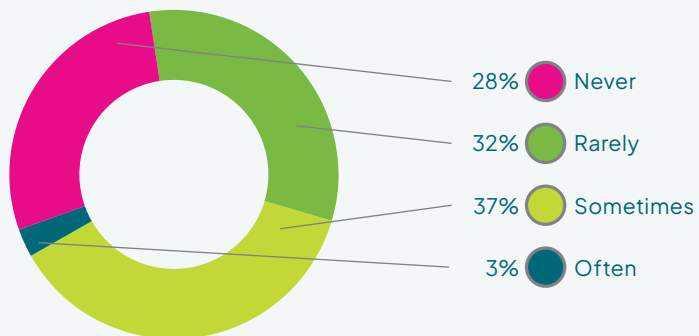
## Does the topic of AI ever come up in conversation between you and your child?

20% No Never
39% Not much
36% Yes Sometimes
5% Yes Often

The data shows that many children are not getting help or guidance about AI from parents or teachers, and many are unsure of how adults feel about their use of AI. Similarly, most teachers and parents that we surveyed said that discussions about AI with children rarely occur, if at all. This indicates a gap in communication and education.

As AI becomes increasingly integrated into children's lives, there is a growing need for more active involvement from parents and teachers to provide guidance, ensure safety, and help children navigate the complexities of its usage.
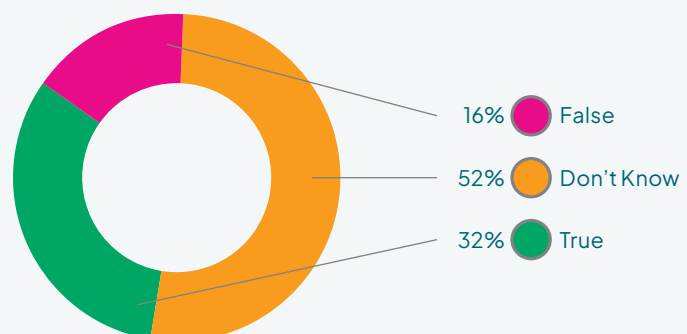
## Future Impact of AI
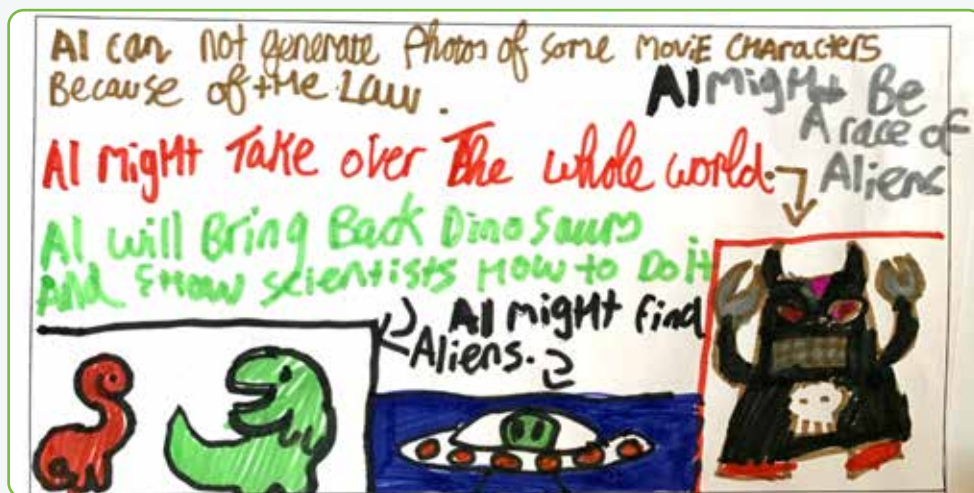


When we asked children if they thought AI would make the future better, there was no clear consensus but the most popular response (52%) was "Don't Know".

A significant number (32%) believe that AI will make the future better, while a smaller portion (16%) believe it will make the future worse.

### AI will make the future a better place

16% False
52% Don't Know
32% True

When we asked teachers and parents whether AI will have a positive or negative impact on children's lives, they were also mostly unsure. They were also a little less optimistic than the children.

62% of teachers and 64% of parents responded that they "didn't know enough about it yet." Meanwhile, 20% of teachers and 21% of parents felt it would have a negative impact, while 18% of teachers and 15% of parents felt that AI would have a positive impact on children's lives.

**As teachers, do you think that AI will have a positive or negative impact on children's lives?**

18% Positive
20% Negative
62% Don't know enough about it yet
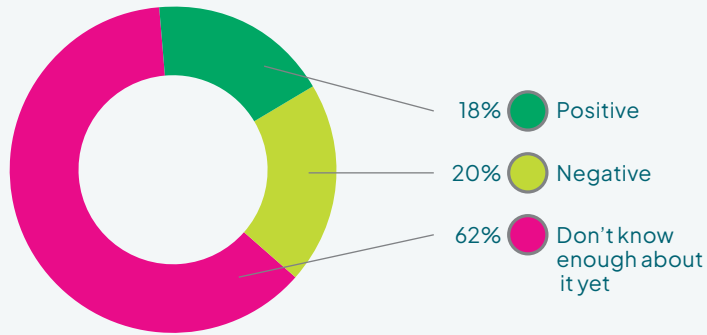
**As parents, do you think that AI will have a positive or negative impact on your children's lives?**

15% Positive
21% Negative
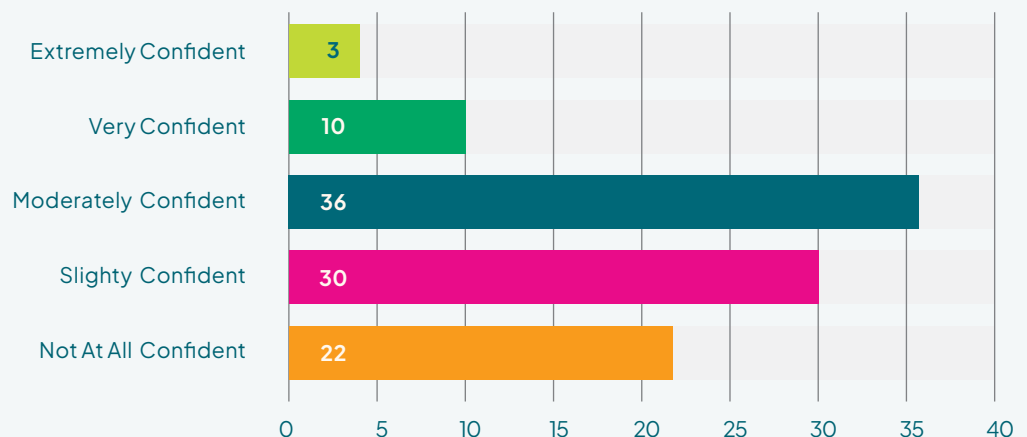64% Don't know enough about it yet
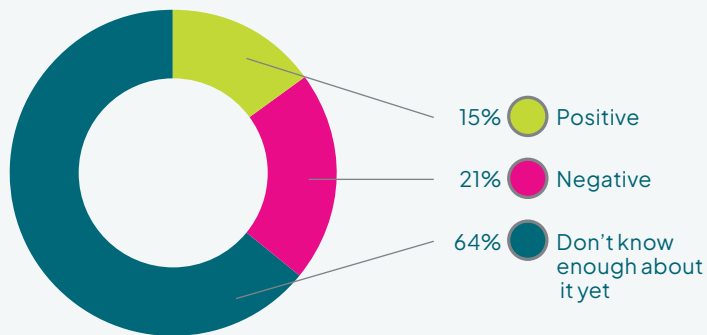
The mixed responses from children, parents, and teachers demonstrates the broad uncertainty about AI in general, uncertainty about the impact of AI on the future and the impact AI on children's lives.

## Confidence and Feelings about Future

We asked parents how confident they felt about explaining AI. The majority of parents (68%) are not very confident in explaining AI to someone else. Only a small portion of parents (13%) feel very confident explaining AI.

**On a scale of 1 to 5, how confident are you in explaining what artificial intelligence (AI)?**

| | |
|---|---|
| Extremely Confident | 3 |
| Very Confident | 10 |
| Moderately Confident | 36 |
| Slightly Confident | 30 |
| Not At All Confident | 22 |

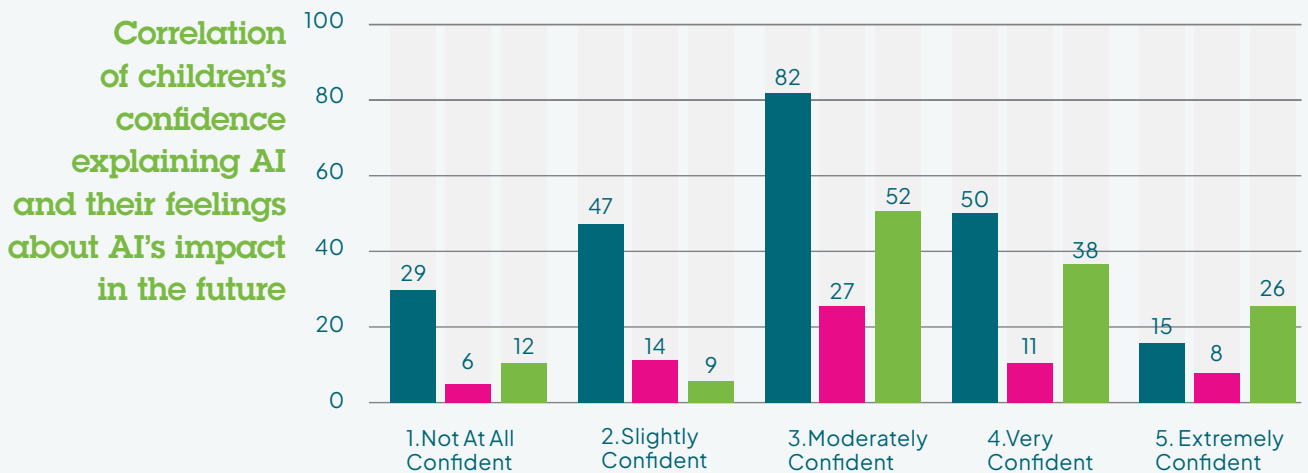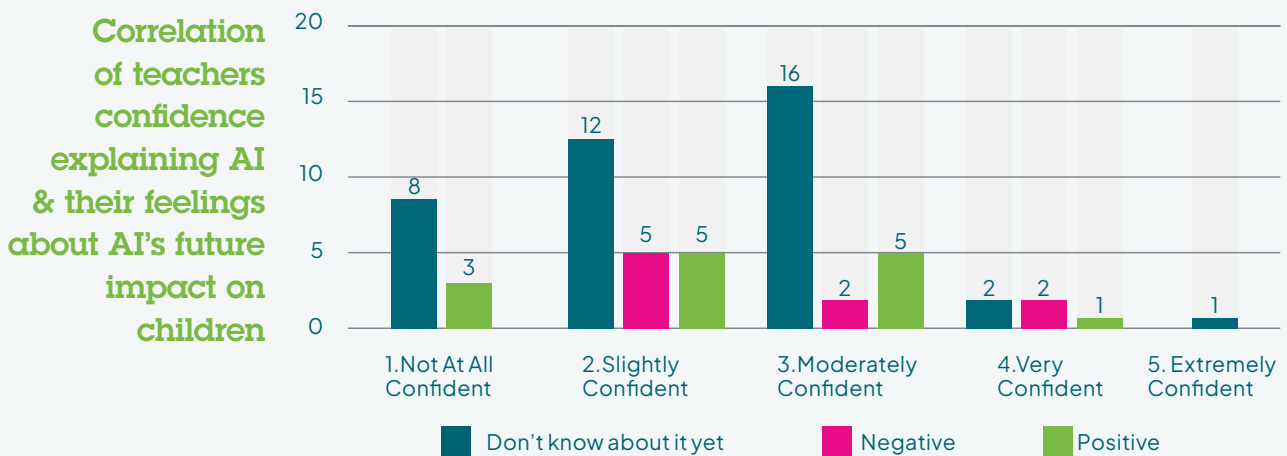0    5    10    15    20    25    30    35    40

When we look at the correlation between parent's confidence and parents' feelings towards AI's impact on their children's future, we can see a relationship. As parents feel more confident, their feelings about AI's likely impact on their children's future becomes more positive.

**Correlation of parents confidence explaining AI & their feelings about AI's future impact on children**
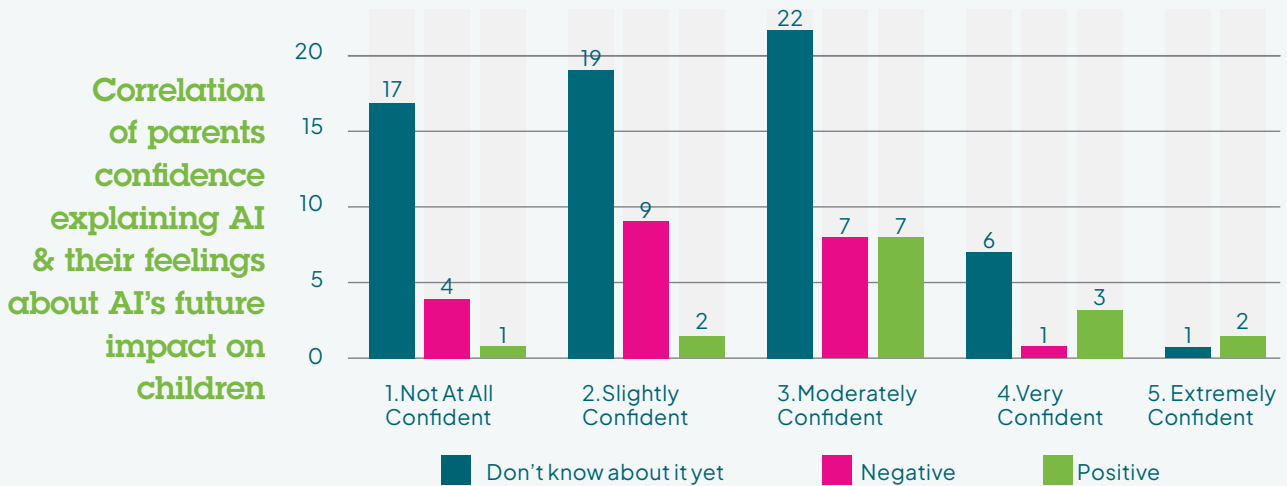


This is also the case when we look at the same data from the teacher's and children's survey which may suggest that the more we know about AI, the more positive we feel about its usage.

**Correlation of teachers confidence explaining AI & their feelings about AI's future impact on children**



**Correlation of children's confidence explaining AI and their feelings about AI's impact in the future**

# Importance of Learning about AI

54% of children said they would like to learn more about AI in school, 25% said they would not and 21% were unsure.

**I would like to learn more about AI in School**

25% False
21% Don't Know
54% True
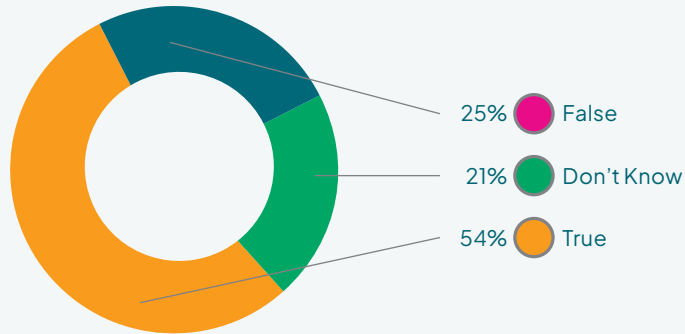
The majority of teachers and parents who completed our survey felt that it is very important for children to learn about AI as its usage continues to grow and develop.

87% of surveyed teachers feel it is either "important" or "very important," and 87% of parents also recognise the importance of their children learning about AI by choosing either "important" or "very important."

**As teachers, how important do you think it is for children to learn about AI now, as its usage grows and develops?**

0% Not Important
13% Somewhat Important
31% Important
56% Very Important
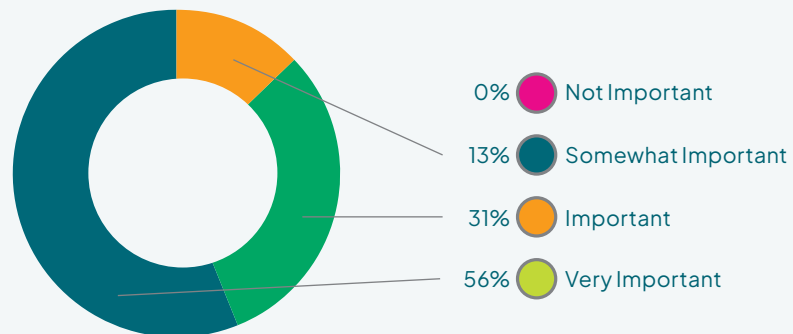
**As parents, how important do you think it is for children to learn about AI now, as its usage grows and develops?**

1% Not Important
12% Somewhat Important
31% Important
56% Very Important
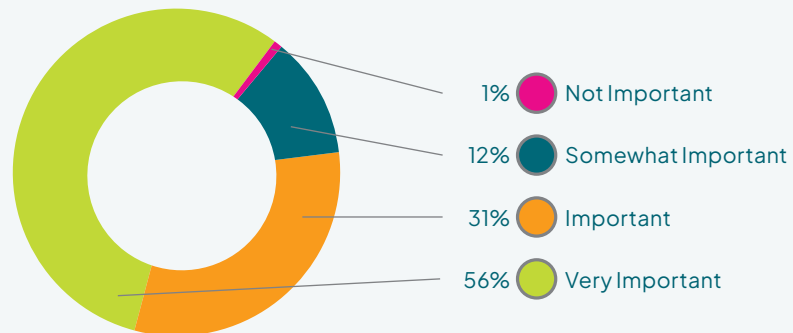
However, 95% of teachers reported that they had not received any training or professional development in AI or in using AI in the classroom or with children, and 77% do not currently use any AI-powered educational tools or resources in their classrooms.

While the data shows a strong consensus among parents and teachers on the importance of children learning about AI, it also demonstrates that parents do not feel informed enough to engage with their children on the topic and that the majority of teachers have not had the necessary training to engage with children on AI and most are not explicitly bringing AI educational resources into their classrooms.

**Have you received any professional development or training about AI?**

5% Yes
95% No
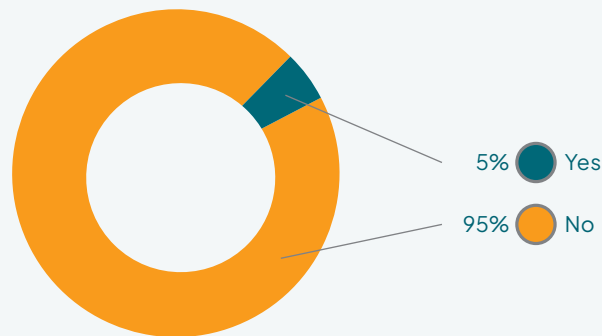
**Do you currently use any educational tools or resources powered by AI in your classroom?**

23% Yes
77% No
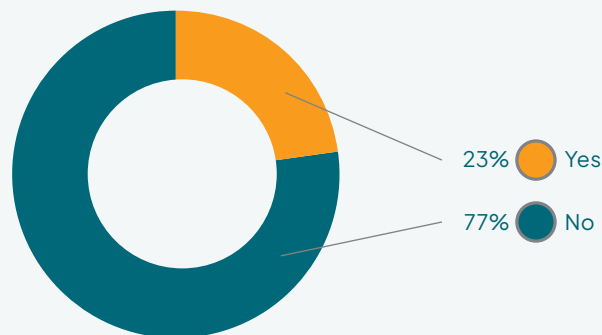
## Section 4 Conclusions:

The data from this section reveals a disconnect between parents' perceptions and the actual usage of AI technologies by their children.

While many parents express concerns about AI and feel uncertain about its implications, their children are actively engaging with AI through various embedded technologies such as voice assistants, educational apps, and social media platforms. This gap shows us that parents may not fully recognise the extent of AI's integration into their children's daily lives.

The limited discussions and guidance from both parents and teachers about AI highlight the need for increased education and communication on the topic.

The mixed feelings about AI's future impact, coupled with the lack of confidence and training among adults, highlight the necessity for more comprehensive AI education for both educators and parents.

# Report
# Conclusions

# Children and young people enjoyed expressing their wide-ranging thoughts and feelings about AI, including what they like about it and how they use it, as well as their worries and fears.

It is clear that AI is becoming a significant part of the lives of children and young people. However, their understanding is still developing, and they often feel uncertain about its benefits and risks. Children are also unsure about their parents and teachers views on AI and how they should be using it. Parents and teachers similarly lack confidence in AI, how they should engage with it in relation to children or how to guide children in its use.

Through this consultation, we have identified that children need more than just exposure to AI, they need a deeper understanding of it, and how to better ensure they can benefit most from it while protecting themselves from any potential harms. Their current knowledge is often shaped by social media, where content can be misleading. This highlights the importance of providing children with reliable information from trusted sources beyond what they experience in their exposure online and from social media platforms.

Children require more discussion, guidance, and engagement on AI from the adults in their lives, in particular from parents and teachers. The latter want more training to better support their students, while the former need trustworthy information to help support and guide their children.

## Help, Support and Recommendations

**Children and young people that we spoke to in our focus groups and that participated in our survey mentioned some aspects of AI in which they want help with:**

* Most children and young people expressed a desire for basic AI literacy in order to understand what AI is and how it works.

* They want to learn how to use AI in practical applications like assisting with homework, daily tasks and creative projects.

* Many were interested in knowing about the benefits of AI, learning how to interact with AI responsibly and also learning about the risks of using AI and how to identify AI-generated content.

* Some children and young people mentioned wanting to learn about how AI is used in social media and AI generated content on social media platforms.

* A few mentioned wanting to learn about how AI is changing the workforce and employment landscape.

### Recommendation to Government:
Ensure school curriculum includes practical lessons on understanding AI, its benefits, risks and how to use it safely and responsibly.

**Parents that took our survey identified several types of help and support needed in order for them to understand AI and guide their children's interaction with it:**

- Parents said they need trustworthy, unbiased information about what AI is, how it works, and its potential benefits and drawbacks.

- They want age-appropriate materials that explain AI in a way that's easy for their children to grasp.

- They want strategies and practical tips on how to help their children use AI safely and responsibly.

- They want help in teaching their children critical thinking skills to evaluate information from AI sources and how to identify and mitigate AI biases.

### Recommendation to Government:
Provide parents with accessible, easy-to-understand resources to help them guide their children safely and confidently in their engagement with AI.

**Teachers that took our survey strongly emphasised a need for training and resources to support teaching AI to students and integrating it into the classroom:**

- The most common request was for professional development or training on AI itself, including how to use it safely and effectively (mentioned in the majority of responses).

- Some teachers requested training on specific aspects of AI, such as safety considerations for students, how to identify AI-generated content and using AI for lesson planning.

- Many teachers requested access to curriculum materials or resources that could be used to teach students about AI.

### Recommendation to Government:
Provide teachers with clear guidelines and practical training to confidently teach and guide students in understanding and using AI.
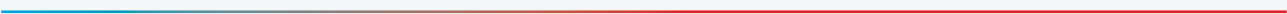
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