WORLD BANK GROUP | KOREA GREEN GROWTH TRUST FUND

YOUTH PERCEPTIONS & USE OF AI

This study, conducted by KGGTF's 3rd Youth Internship Program (2026), explored **how young adults perceive and use AI**, with a particular focus on its **ethical and environmental implications. As one of the most active groups of AI users, young adults** are **likely to shape future norms, expectations, and adoption patterns around AI** technologies. The research examined their awareness of issues such as privacy, fairness, accountability, and AI's environmental impact, including data center energy consumption. By shedding light on how future users understand and engage with these challenges, the study provides insight into the development of more responsible and sustainable AI practices.

PURPOSE

Examine how AI risk and environmental awareness shape attitudes and use of Ai among youth in Korea, to inform evidence-based digital literacy and green AI policy.

PARTICIPANTS

117 young adults (ages 20–39) in South Korea, convenience sampling survey.

METHOD

Cross-sectional online survey (2026), 15-item Likert scale across five constructs.

117	20–39	70.1%	50.4%	59.0%	82.1%
respondents	age range (74.4% aged 25–29)	female	STEM field	use AI 6+/day	use for research/work

KEY FINDING

Increasing risk awareness does not produce AI skepticism, nor induce "environmental behavior"— it produces more thoughtful engagement. Policy that builds awareness builds better users.

Sophisticated-user hypothesis: risk awareness (M=4.82) predicts positive attitudes (β=+0.339, p<.001)

Top GenAI Services Subscribed

ChatGPT and **Gemini** dominate; most respondents **use more than one service.**



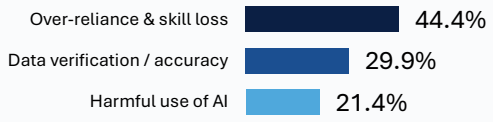
Attitudes & Risk Awareness (1–5)

High risk awareness coexists with **strongly favorable attitudes toward AI.**



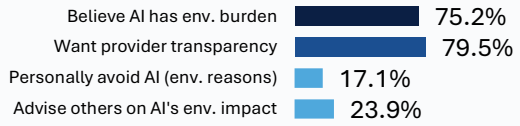
Main Concerns About AI Use

Over-reliance and **skill loss** is the **top concern**, well ahead of misuse or accuracy concerns.



Environmental Awareness vs. Behavior

Awareness of AI's environmental cost is high, but it **rarely converts into personal avoidance behavior.**



IMPLICATIONS

POLICY

- Reframe risk literacy as engagement, not fear campaigns
- Urge AI developers to clearly state their energy usage and environmental footprint
- Environmental AI curricula for heavy users

EDUCATION

- Integrate AI ethics into STEM curricula
- Cross-disciplinary AI literacy for non-STEM students
- Targeted modules for heavy daily users
- Urge environmental-conscious usage of Ai
  i.e., *"Precise prompts for specific and necessary purposes"*

AI DEVELOPERS

- Greater transparency on energy use may activate green behavior
- Responsible-use features may reinforce positive attitudes

CONCLUSION

Youth are not passive recipients of the AI revolution — they are its primary users, critics, and potential reformers. The findings call for investment in nuanced digital literacy that treats awareness as an asset, environmental stewardship as a design challenge, and responsible use as a learnable skill.

Research Team
KGGTF: Jiyon Shin, Suhyun Bang
2026 KGGTF Youth Internship Program Cohort: Tongyu Kim, Jihye Kang, Woojeong Yang, Chaeyeon Ahn, Seungwoo Yoo

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WHY PEOPLE PREFER THEIR AI TOOL

(Larger text = mentioned more often)

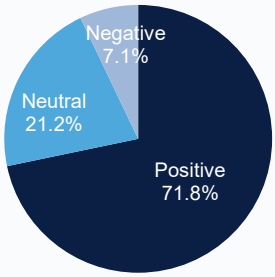
Search and research value dominates the responses, followed closely by **coding support** and **general intelligence/capability**.



HOW DO PEOPLE FEEL ABOUT AI?

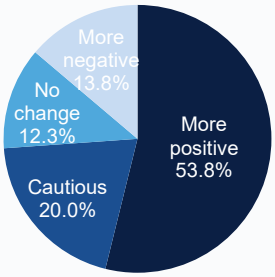
Overall Sentiment Toward AI (n = 85)

Nearly three-quarters of respondents feel **positively about AI**, with negative sentiment limited to a small minority.



Perception Shift Since First Use (n = 65)

More than half say their **view of AI has grown more positive over time**, while only 13.8% report growing more negative about AI.



WHAT PROMPTS IMPRESSED USERS MOST

Share of prompt examples by category (coded open-ended responses) (n = 40)

Information seeking and personal/daily use lead as the **most impressive** use cases, each cited by over a quarter of respondents.

Personal & Daily Use

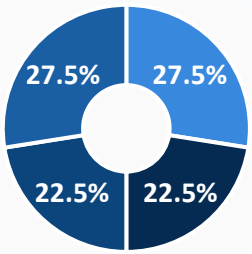
27.5%

e.g., travel planning, daily to-dos

Writing & Documentation

22.5%

e.g., writing reports, presentations



Information Seeking & Learning

27.5%

e.g., literature search, academic summaries

Coding & Analysis

22.5%

e.g., code generation, debugging help

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