



**Midjourney Prompt:** Minimal modern illustration of mountain made up binary code.

# Consumer Intelligence on Artificial Intelligence.

A study by Critical Mass



# GO UNTIL S.

- 01     **High Hopes, Measured Concern.**
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AI Is Learning How to Be Human.**
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# INTRODUCTION.

As businesses go full throttle in trying to embrace the latest AI technology, we thought it would be valuable to understand the consumer side of things. What, exactly, do everyday people in the U.S. think about AI? Are they worried? Hopeful? Intrigued? And how much do they know about it?

Apart from sheer curiosity, we have a very specific objective in running this study. AI is impacting how our clients' brands show up in the world. It's influencing the way their products and services meet consumer demands. Our aim is to help our clients navigate these changes with clear data and insight.

We talked to a wide range of people to identify differences among demographic segments. One unifying takeaway—AI is breaking fundamental rules and common expectations about the way technology seeps into our lives.

Enjoy!

**Grant Owens**

Chief Strategy Officer | Critical Mass



01.

# High Hopes, Measured Concern.

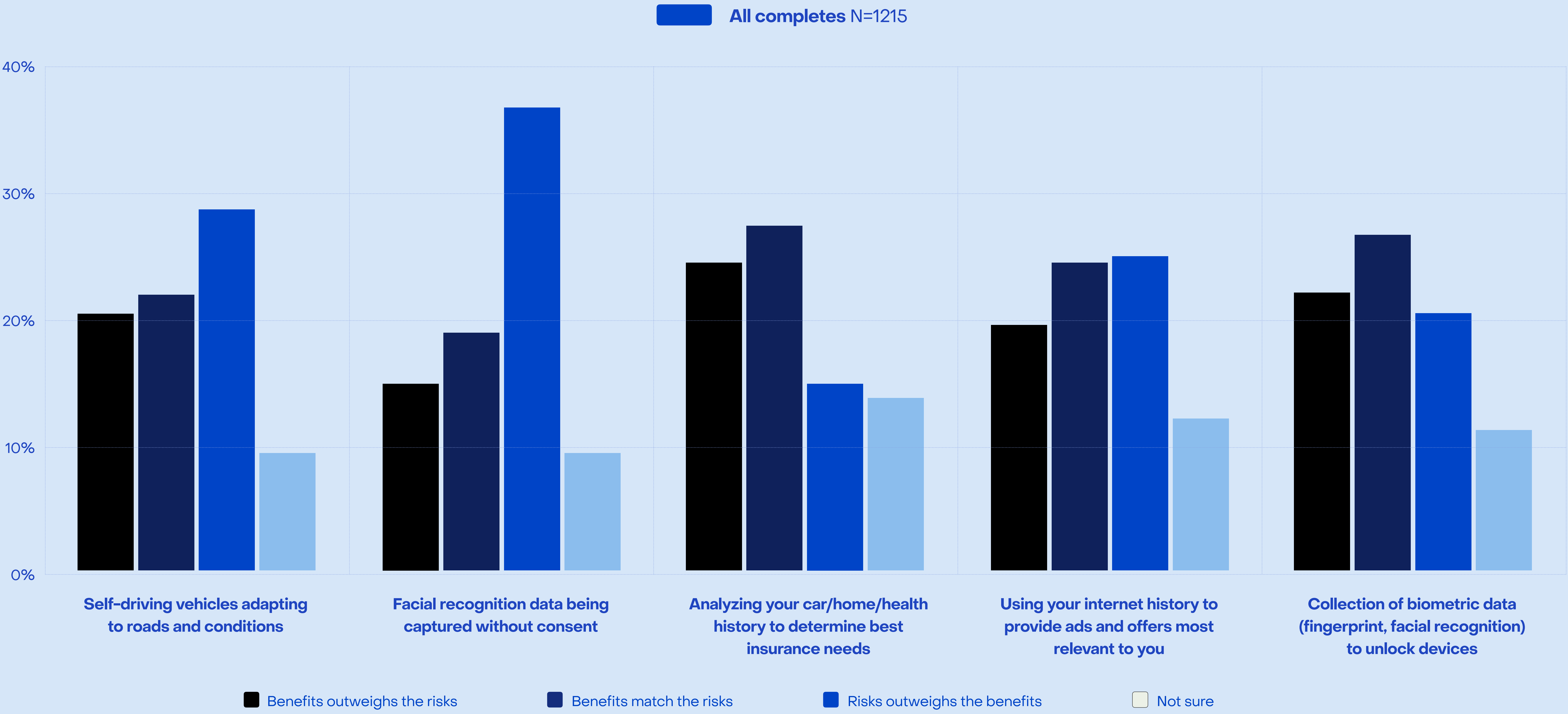
We'll admit it—we wondered if fears of “the Terminator” and other dystopian clichés would dominate consumer attitudes about AI. Turns out—they (mostly) don't!

Overall, our data reveals that many consumers have shed old sci-fi paradigms and are willing to adopt AI-enabled tools that give them an advantage. Of the people we surveyed, nearly 2 in 3 held positive views around continued AI developments. Nearly 80% hope AI will be used for the betterment of humans, and more than 80% hope AI will make their lives simpler.

When we asked consumers to describe and define AI, some of the most frequently used terms were “helpful,” “faster,” and “automated intelligence.”

That's not to say that our respondents don't harbor certain reservations. Most were quick to mention concerns about job displacement, privacy, and an inability to control AI's increasing power. A large group of respondents were worried about the idea of self-driving vehicles, and, yet, they were relatively unconcerned with the idea that their car, home, and health data are used to determine their insurance needs.

Which of these BEST describes your view on the risks vs. benefits of these AI applications?





02.

# Humans Aren’t Learning AI— AI Is Learning How to Be Human.

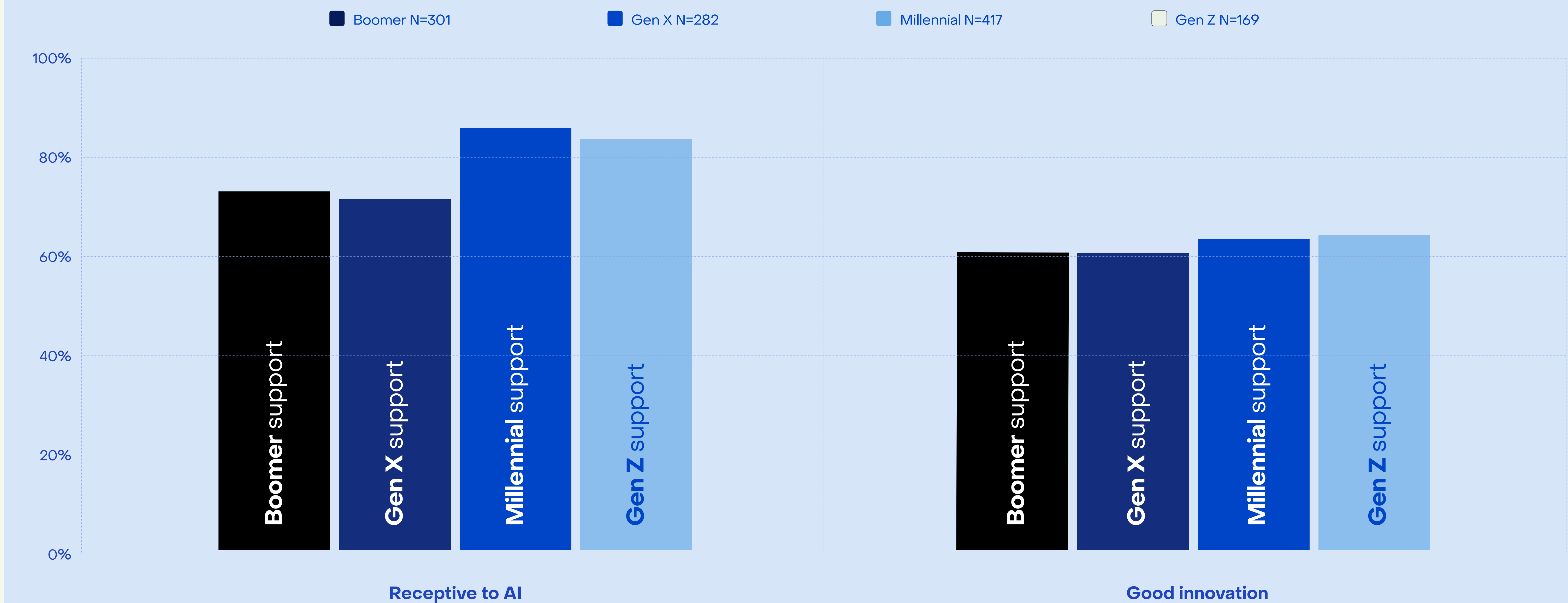
When studying attitudes about technology, you can usually count on strong correlations between demographics and adoption. Most of the time, younger generations jump in, and older generations are more hesitant—a difference we measure in “adoption curves.” In that respect, AI is weird. We did not see a strong correlation between AI adoption and age (and other demographic measures).

And it gets weirder. Adoption curves often get reinforced by learning curves, because people who don’t understand a new technology will tend not to use it. But with AI, humans are not on a technology learning curve; the technology is on a learning curve of humanness.

As AI gets better, it gets more intuitive and will simply use many of the most common modes of human interaction: verbal communication, written language, and widely used visual supports. It may not need to cater to generational differences like other technologies do.

AI may be the first major technology that, when sufficiently advanced and made widely available, can be implemented almost flawlessly across differing demographics. It’s literally unprecedented.

Across generations, there is hope and optimism for how AI will be used.





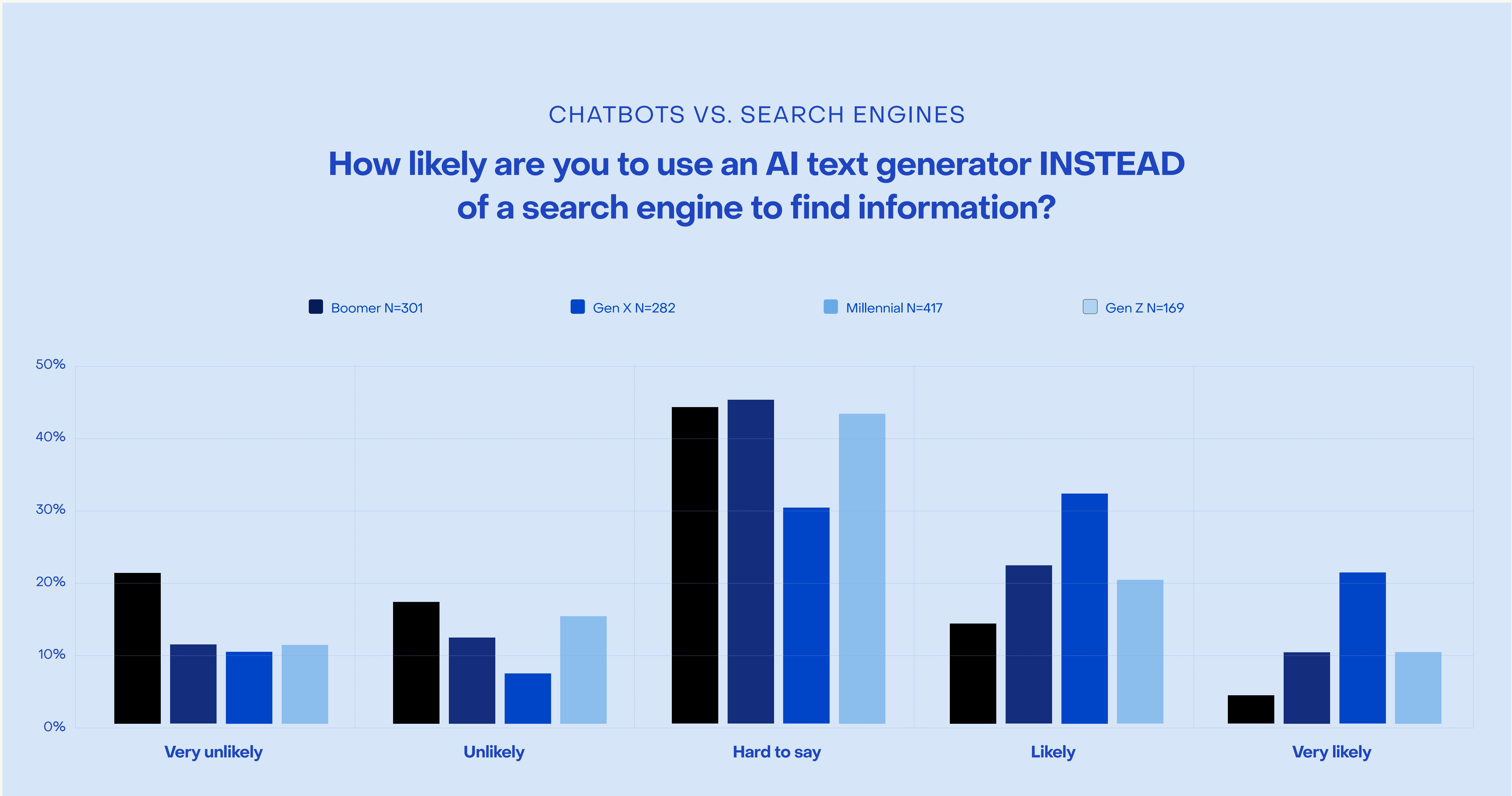
03.

# The Battle for the Search Bar.

Will entering a prompt into ChatGPT become the way we all search for, well, everything? (Marketers and search experts understandably want to know.) In our study, we found that the average consumer is very much on the fence about switching to new search habits using generative AI. Although, Millennials, out of everyone, were the most bullish.

When we asked consumers about which companies are leading the way with AI, Google was the most mentioned name, with Apple and Microsoft coming in a distant second and third. While Bing may have captured some headlines, it hasn’t changed many assumptions or habits.

As more people try out text generation tools built on natural language models—and as those models become better informed and trained on more real-time content—we’ll be watching this area (and the data around it) with great interest.





04.

## The Canny Valley of Truth.

When we see an object that looks almost human, we get a vaguely uncomfortable feeling. That's known as the uncanny valley between what's human and what's not. It's almost the real thing, but not quite.

When it comes to AI, we're seeing the exact opposite take place. Output from ChatGPT is rife with falsehood and overt bias, but its

users have an affinity for AI-sourced truth claims. There's still a valley, but it's a canny valley, so to speak. Given how easily falsehoods can travel online, and how readily we use digital devices to access information and ideas (rather than keep it all in our heads), the potential for a future plagued by (what amounts to) convincing lies is staggering.

**So, what does all this mean for brands and consumers?**

01.

### TOP UP ON TRUST.

Trust will be even more central to brand relationships—both a core expectation and an opportunity for competitive advantage. If a brand can demonstrate benevolent concern, interest alignment, capability, and other hallmarks of trust, it will set itself apart in this new AI-driven environment. (See Robert Hurley's model in Harvard Business Review, September 2006).

02.

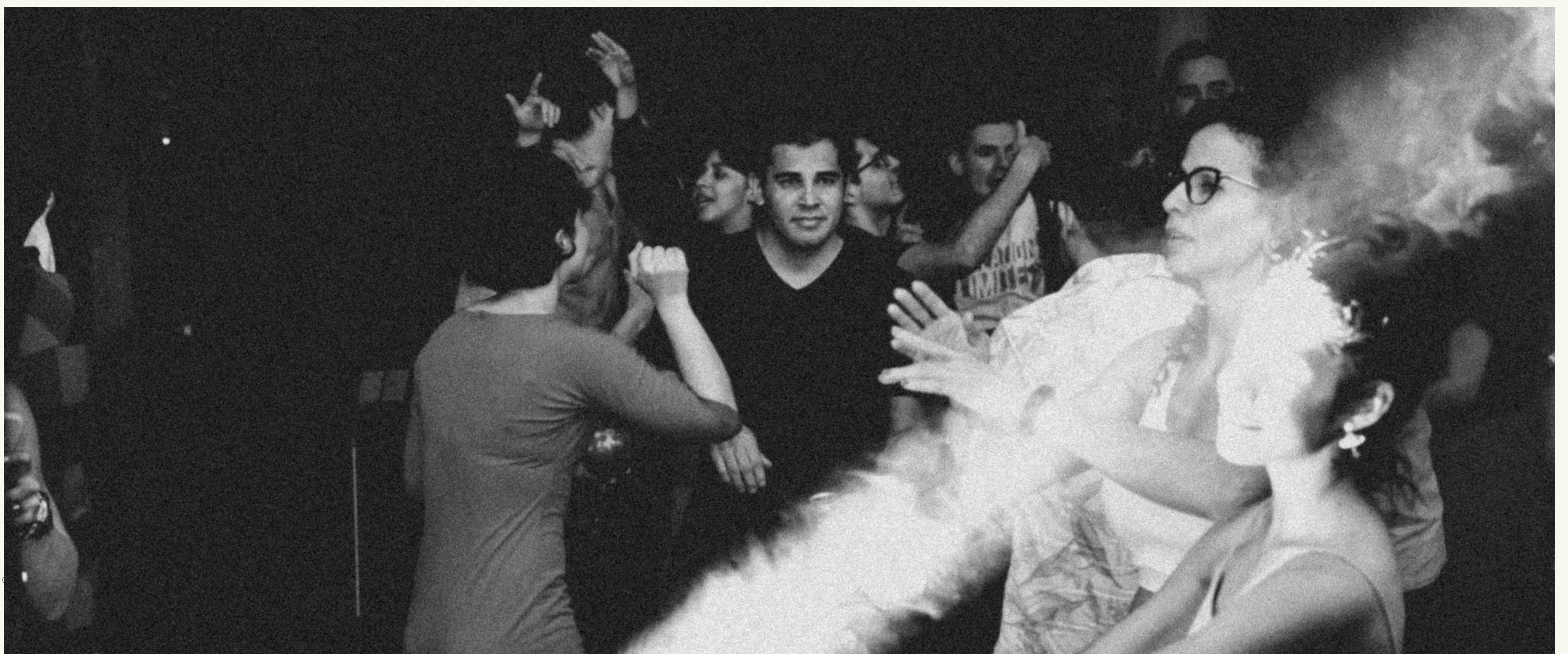
### CURATION FOR THE DURATION.

The AI du jour will be gone in a few weeks; so a brand that can be known for its ability to curate relevant AI functionality over the long term will be more useful to consumers than a brand that happens to find a way to use the AI of today.

03.

### DON'T MAKE A SCENE.

Brands must integrate AI flawlessly and keep the focus where it belongs: on the customer experience. AI tools should be enablers, not show stoppers, and they should fit seamlessly in the customer journey, not awkwardly. Brands should be wary of leaning on the momentary shine of AI to the detriment of true substance.





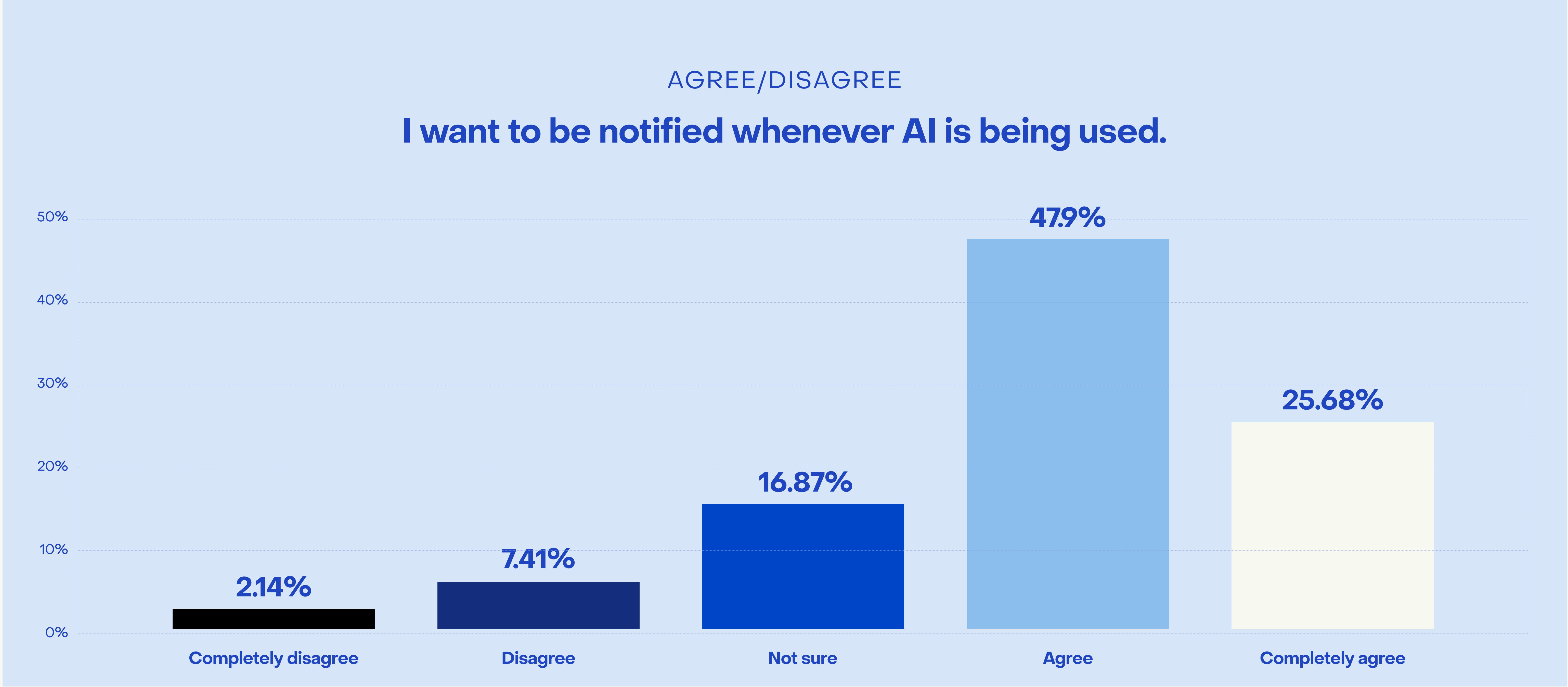
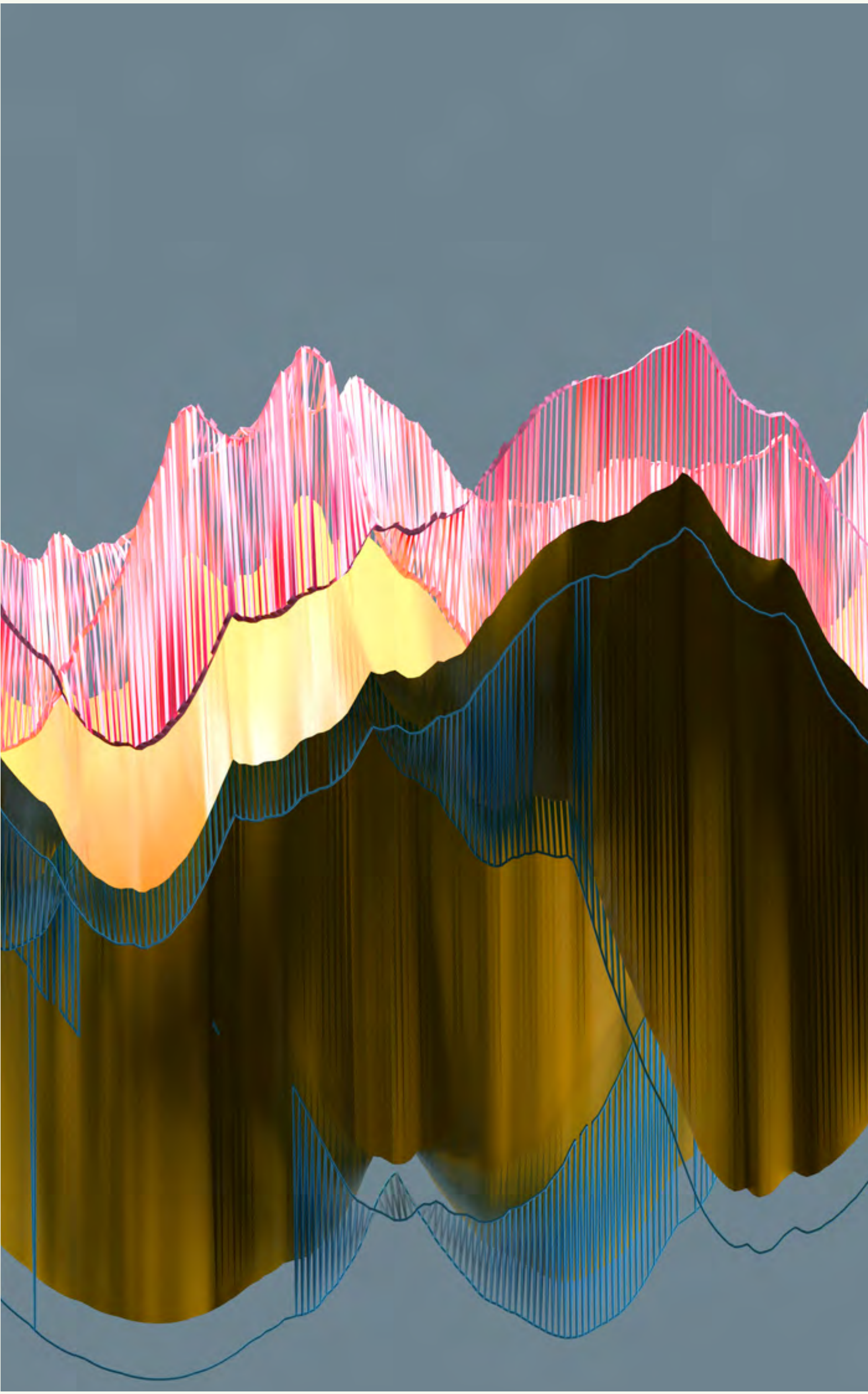
05.

# It’s Not Only about Consent —It’s about Control, Too.

AI has suddenly become very visible and very real. It’s in the public eye as never before. The consumers we surveyed are well aware of it, and they want to be asked for their consent before brands expose them to it.

But here’s the irony: many people don’t realize that, for a long time now, AI has been used on them in a myriad of hidden ways. And we felt this irony intensify as we learned that consumers’ desire for consent actually veers into a desire for control, as well.

In other words, there's a huge disconnect between AI-based practices and consumer expectations, and trust hangs in the balance. Brands who both disclose their use of AI and give consumers control over how AI is used will have a chance to leapfrog their competition where trust is concerned—a lift in long-term loyalty in exchange for short-term gains. And the companies who choose to move ahead without consent may need to spend a lot of time winning back lost trust down the road.





06.

## This Time, It's Personal.

In all our years of running surveys, no technology ever elicited the range of deeply emotional responses that AI did.

When we asked consumers to describe their hopes and fears for the future of AI, they used language that's usually reserved for social issues or personal relationships. When discussing fears, respondents talked about job losses and existential threats.

Their hopes, however, were much more variegated.

One respondent said “[my hope is] that it is quite reliable and trustworthy.” Another simply said, “I hope that it is good.” But a number of respondents hoped it would help the world become a better place, and they sometimes answered in very specific ways, such as, “I hope it ends world hunger.”

We were particularly fascinated by how often respondents used the pronoun “they” in reference to AI. When we asked, “What fears do you have about the future of AI?” We heard responses such as, “I fear that **they** will take over,” or “that **they** try to replace humans,” or “I am concerned **they** may start thinking for themselves.” Our respondents were personified AI.

And, in what could only be called a sign of the times, we repeatedly encountered the sentiment that AI could “make the world even more disconnected.” But, our respondents also had hope that it would save us time—time that we can use to reconnect with each other. All we can say is, cheers to that.





# TOP 3 HOPE

for how AI will be used.

“I hope that AI develops further in ways that make life simpler for me.” **78%\***

“That it will become more advanced.” **76%\***

“I hope it will be used for the betterment of humans.” **74%\***

# TOP 3 WAYS

consumers think they use AI technologies.

**78%\*** Voice recognition

**73%\*** Translate written language

**71%\*** Getting directions

# TOP 4 FEARS

about the future of AI.

**77%\***  
“That if the wrong people got in control that it may be used for evil.”

**77%\***  
“AI will take away jobs from humans.”

**73%\***  
“I am concerned with people becoming dependent on AI.”

**72%\***  
“Privacy.”

\* Expected support  
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# AI & ChatGPT.

39<sup>/100</sup>

Of users **do not know** how to use

## ChatGPT

as a search tool.

26<sup>/100</sup>

Of users are **very unlikely** to use

## ChatGPT

as a search tool.

# Younger Generations

are more receptive to AI art.

“I am just as likely to buy art created by AI as I am to buy art created by a human.”

52%

of **Millennials** agree/  
strongly agree

38.5%

of **Gen Z** agree/  
strongly agree

18%

of **Boomers** agree/  
strongly agree

27%

of **Gen X** agree/  
strongly agree

# Self-Driving Cars & Facial Recognition.

Consumers are concerned about the risks of self-driving vehicles and facial recognition data.

FACIAL RECOGNITION BEING CAPTURED WITHOUT CONSENT

46%

Risks outweigh benefits

18%

Benefits outweigh risks



# SURVEY METHODOLOGY.

For this report, we conducted an online survey.

Our sample size was 1,220 respondents over the age of 18, who roughly fit the general population profile in the U.S. We asked both qualitative and quantitative questions.

The survey was in field during February 2023.





Consumer AI

# GOODTAG.

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