

Gen Z Resentment Toward AI Grows as Adoption Stagnates and Workplace Fears Mount

Walton-GSV-Gallup survey finds young people are feeling angrier about AI, cautious about integrating AI in the classroom

WASHINGTON, D.C. — April 9, 2026 — Gen Z is growing increasingly angry about the role of artificial intelligence in their lives. A [new Gallup survey](#) released today by the Walton Family Foundation and GSV Ventures shows that a generation once seen as AI's early adopters is now sounding the alarm on its risks, particularly in the workplace.

While the majority of Gen Zers (51%) still use the technology weekly, growth has slowed to a crawl, increasing only four percentage points over the past year. This stagnation in adoption is accompanied by a sharp decline in positive sentiment. Excitement and hopefulness have dropped by 14 and nine percentage points, respectively, while 31% of Gen Z now report feeling outright anger toward the technology, up from 22% last year. Anxiety remains high, with slightly more than four in 10 young people continuing to report feeling uneasy about the technology's trajectory.

The Workplace Risk Gap

Nearly half of Gen Z workers (48%) now believe the risks of AI in the workforce outweigh its benefits, a significant 11-point increase over the prior year. This skepticism persists even as 56% of Gen Zers acknowledge that AI tools can help them complete their work faster. However, this recognition of speed comes with a steep perceived cost: Eight in 10 Gen Zers (80%) believe that relying on AI to complete tasks faster will likely make learning more difficult in the future.

Furthermore, the belief that AI is a reliable driver of productivity is fading. The percentage of Gen Zers who agree that AI tools can help them complete work faster has declined by 10 points since 2025.

Despite these fears, over half of K-12 students (52%) believe they will need to know how to use AI for higher education, and 48% expect to use it in their future careers.

"Gen Z isn't rejecting AI outright, but they are reassessing its role in their lives. What we're seeing in the data is a generation that recognizes AI's utility but is increasingly concerned about its long-term impact on learning, trust and career readiness," said Stephanie Marken, senior partner at Gallup. "Their growing skepticism signals a need for more thoughtful integration of these tools in both school settings and the workplace."

Schools Make Progress, Students Cautious

Incidence of school policies regarding AI, as well as access to these tools, have increased notably over the past year. According to Gen Z K-12 students, nearly three-quarters (74%) of schools now have policies regarding AI and academic work, a 23-point increase from last year.

However, as access and rules expand, students are becoming more skeptical about AI being used in the classroom and there is an emerging perception of academic dishonesty. Roughly four in 10 students (41%) believe that most or all of their classmates are using AI for schoolwork even when they are not supposed to. This atmosphere of peer distrust coincides with a broader shift in student sentiment.

"Gen Z is sending us a strong signal and we must treat it as a call to act, not a perception to explain away," said Romy Drucker, director of the Education Program at the Walton Family Foundation. "It is imperative that we listen and adapt to help students feel confident, motivated, and engaged in an AI world."

Gen Z Prioritizes Human-Led Services

Preference for AI-powered services remains low among Gen Zers when asked to choose between technology or humans to provide a service. Fewer than 20% of Gen Zers would choose AI for services like tutoring, financial advice and customer service. The overwhelming majority of the digitally native generation still prefers that a human perform these tasks, highlighting a clear desire for human connection over automated efficiency.

Methodology

Results are based on a Gallup Panel™ web survey conducted February 24-March 4, 2026, with a sample of 1,572 14- to 29-year-olds living in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The Gallup Panel is a probability-based panel of U.S. adults who are randomly selected using address-based sampling methodology. Gallup also recruits using random-digit-dial phone interviews that cover landlines and cellphones.

Within the overall sample, 695 14- to 18-year-old children were reached through adult members of the Gallup Panel who indicated they had at least one child 18 or younger living in their household. The remaining 877 18- to 29-year-old respondents are members of the Gallup Panel.

For the sample of 695 parents of Gen Z children, the margin of sampling error is ± 4.7 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. For the total sample of 1,572 Gen Z respondents, the margin of sampling error is ± 3.6 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. For the sample of 656 Gen Z respondents still enrolled in K-12 school, the margin of sampling error is ± 5.4 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. For the sample of 916 Gen Z youth who are no longer enrolled in K-12 school, the margin of sampling error is ± 4.6 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. Margins of error for subgroups are higher.

About Walton Family Foundation

The Walton Family Foundation is, at its core, a family-led foundation. Three generations of the descendants of our founders, Sam and Helen Walton, and their spouses work together to lead the foundation and create access to opportunity for people and communities. We work in three areas: improving education, protecting rivers and oceans and the communities they support and investing in our home region of Northwest Arkansas and the Arkansas-Mississippi Delta. To learn more, visit waltonfamilyfoundation.org and follow us on [Facebook](#), [X](#) and [Instagram](#).

About Gallup

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