

New SCSP-Gallup Report: Americans Agree on How the Country Should Prepare for AI

WASHINGTON, D.C., September 16, 2026 — At a time when consensus is difficult to find on almost any critical issue, Americans across the political spectrum agree on how the country should approach artificial intelligence, according to a new report by the Special Competitive Studies Project (SCSP) and Gallup, "[Looking to the Future: American Priorities for AI in 2026](#)." Democrats, Republicans, and independents all agree on a shared set of responses on education, workforce training, safety, regulations, and AI oversight. The report is the second annual study tracking U.S. attitudes toward AI.

This consensus comes as Americans are using AI more than they did a year ago and say they know more about it even as trust remains flat and concern about AI's impact on jobs and the economy has grown. Rather than dividing Americans across ideologies, however, these shared concerns have also produced a shared view of how to address them.

"The key finding in this year's data is that Republicans, Democrats, and independents want the same things: teach STEM, train workers on the job, put safety and security ahead of speed, and let independent experts test these systems before the public depends on them," said Ylli Bajraktari, president of SCSP. "America's edge in this competition will not come from adoption alone; it will come from a public that has reason to trust what it is adopting. We should build on this consensus while we have it."

AI Skills, Use, and Trust

Americans' concerns about AI and jobs have deepened since last year. Seven in 10 Americans (70%) expect AI to destroy more jobs than it creates over the next decade, and more now expect AI to reduce economic growth (45%) than boost it (36%), reversing the pattern from 2025, when positive views (53%) far outpaced negative ones (24%). Consistent with last year, a majority of Americans (52%) expect AI to improve workplace productivity.

On preparing the workforce, 72% of Americans support promoting STEM education to equip workers with the skills to use AI in their future jobs, and 66% support creating on-the-job training programs that teach workers AI skills. Republicans, Democrats, and independents express similar levels of support for both. The public overall remains split on adding AI skills to core K-12 classes like math or reading, with 45% in support and 44% opposed.

Americans are already taking the initiative to learn about AI on their own. More than twice as many have asked an AI tool for help understanding AI as have asked another person (57% vs. 23%), and a quarter (26%) have completed online training videos or articles. However, only 16% have completed employer-provided training and formal pathways such as certification programs (9%) and vocational

or technical school programs (5%) are rare. The gap between informal self-teaching and formal training is why the public's call for STEM and on-the-job training is critical.

Half of Americans (51%) now say they use AI at least sometimes at work, school, or in their personal lives, up from 39% in 2025. Two in three (68%) describe themselves as knowledgeable about AI, up from 60% last year. However, overall trust in AI is flat. Fewer than three in 10 Americans (28%) trust AI to make fair and unbiased decisions, in line with the 32% who said the same in 2025, and just 2% trust it fully.

Americans who use AI regularly trust it far more than those who don't. Among Americans who use AI at least sometimes, 43% trust it, compared with 12% of those who rarely or never use it. Trust among regular users held steady over the year, but non-users have grown more skeptical.

"The public is becoming more experienced with AI while simultaneously becoming more cautious about its economic implications," said Gallup principal, Justin Lall. "That combination of firsthand use and lingering concern makes workforce preparation more important than ever."

Americans Agree on Safety, Regulation, and Oversight

While Americans share concerns over AI, they also broadly agree on how to respond.

Nearly four in five (79%) say the government should maintain safety and data-security rules even if that slows AI development, versus 7% who would prioritize speed. Six in 10 (60%) say the U.S. government should create AI regulations, more than any other option, and only 2% say there should be no rules at all. 75% say independent experts should test and evaluate the safety of new AI systems before they are widely used, more than the share that say government agencies (52%) or the companies themselves (35%) should do the testing.

Room for Compromise Where There is Disagreement

The consensus does not cover every issue raised by AI, but the differences suggest the potential for a compromise rather than a stalemate. For example, Republicans are more supportive than Democrats of mandatory age-verification requirements (12 point gap), expanding AI in manufacturing (12 point gap), increasing energy production for AI systems (16 point gap), and reducing AI-related regulation (11 point gap). On the other hand, Democrats are more supportive of increasing government funding for AI research at colleges and universities (55%, compared with 44% of Republicans). Both parties support allowing companies and universities to use government resources for research at similar levels.

These differences do not follow a single ideological line. Rather, each party has priorities that align with one another: workforce training, safety-first rules set by the government, and independent testing before AI systems are released to the public. Americans also see the path forward as a partnership. A plurality of Americans (42%) say government and business should have equal influence over how AI is developed, far more than the number of Americans who want either government (24%) or business (18%) to lead. On the AI questions that matter most, Americans have already provided an outline of an agreement. The task now facing policymakers is to build on that foundation.

About SCSP

The Special Competitive Studies Project (SCSP) is a non-profit, non-partisan initiative with a mission to make recommendations to strengthen America's long-term competitiveness as artificial intelligence (AI) and other emerging technologies are reshaping our national security, economy, and society.

About Gallup

Gallup delivers analytics and advice to help leaders and organizations solve their most pressing problems. Combining more than 85 years of experience with its global reach, Gallup knows more about the attitudes and behaviors of employees, customers, students and citizens than any other organization in the world.