

YOUTH AI SURVEY 2026

WORK, STUDY & LEISURE IN THE  
AGE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

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# SIERRA LEONE

## COUNTRY POLICY BRIEF

This policy brief presents country-specific findings from the Youth AI Survey 2026, a multi-country study examining how young people aged 18-35 use, experience, and think about artificial intelligence. Conducted globally by Restless Development, the University of Cambridge Centre for Human-Inspired Artificial Intelligence, and Makerere University, the survey collected 1,864 responses from young people, primarily in Africa and South Asia, with the United Kingdom serving as a high-income country comparator.

This brief is intended for national governments, in-country NGO partners, international funders, technology companies, and youth organisations working in Sierra Leone. It draws on country-level data to surface actionable findings and recommendations within the Sierra Leone context.

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Research partners: University of Cambridge Centre for Human-Inspired Artificial Intelligence · Makerere University

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# 1. INTRODUCTION & COUNTRY CONTEXT

## Country Context

Sierra Leone, with a population of 8.73 million (2025), is a youthful nation where nearly 70% of citizens are under 35, according to [Georanks Data](#). This demographic profile positions young people at the centre of the country's economic and social transformation. AI's presence in Sierra Leone is still emerging but increasingly relevant. The government has launched the National Digital Development Strategy (2022) and the Digital Transformation Project (USD 50 million, World Bank-funded) to expand broadband access, strengthen digital skills, and embed inclusive governance within ICT systems. While there is no standalone national AI strategy yet, these frameworks provide the foundation for AI integration. Young people primarily encounter AI through global platforms such as social media, search engines, and mobile applications, which shape their experiences of misinformation, online safety, and digital learning.

This research is particularly important for Sierra Leone because it captures the perspectives of a demographic that is both digitally active and vulnerable to AI's risks. With 122 surveys conducted among youth aged 18–35, the findings provide evidence of how AI is reshaping education, employment, safety, and well-being in real time. As Sierra Leone pursues its digital transformation agenda, these insights are critical for policymakers, civil society, and organisations such as Restless Development to ensure that AI strengthens youth empowerment, gender equity, and national development rather than exacerbating existing divides.

The economy remains anchored in agriculture, mining, and services, but digital industries are gaining traction as part of Sierra Leone's broader development agenda. Despite this potential, internet penetration is relatively low at 20.7%, with about 1.8 million users online and 13.2% of users having active social media accounts (World Bank, ITU, GSMA) [Datareporter](#) 2025. Connectivity gaps are most pronounced in rural areas, where over half the population resides, limiting equitable access to digital opportunities.

“Honestly, AI has helped me become a better version of myself. Growing up here, you don't always have someone to guide you step by step. I use AI to fill that gap; to learn, to practice, to figure things out on my own terms. “

24-YEAR-OLD SELF-EMPLOYED MAN, PERI-URBAN  
SIERRA LEONE

# FINDINGS

## 2. ABOUT THE RESPONDENTS

### Gender Distribution

Of the 122 respondents, 55.7% were male, 43.4% female, and 0.8% preferred not to disclose.

### Age Distribution

The age profile of survey participants highlights the youthful backbone of Sierra Leone's AI journey. The largest share of respondents is aged 24-29 (38%), closely followed by those aged 30-35 (33%), while younger participants aged 18-23 make up 28%.

### Participant Location

54.10% of the survey respondents were based in rural areas, while 41.80% were in urban areas and 2.4% in peri-urban areas.

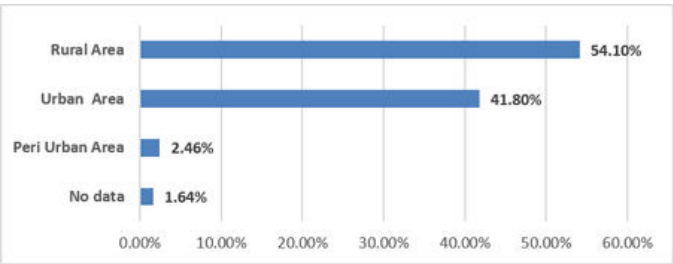


Figure 1 Sierra Leone respondent location Youth AI survey 2026

### Educational Level

A majority of respondents (55.74%) have completed a bachelor's degree, while high school graduates made up 22.13%. In addition, smaller but significant groups include diploma holders (9.84%), vocational or technical training graduates (4.10%), and those with postgraduate degrees (6.56%), each contributing unique perspectives on how education shapes readiness for AI adoption.

Table 1: Sierra Leone respondents' educational attainment

| Educational Attainment           | education you have completed |         |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|---------|
|                                  |                              |         |
| Bachelor degree                  |                              | 55.74%  |
| High school education            |                              | 22.13%  |
| Diploma or advanced diploma      |                              | 9.84%   |
| Graduate diploma or certificate  |                              | 1.64%   |
| Postgraduate degree              |                              | 6.56%   |
| Vocational or technical training |                              | 4.10%   |
| Grand Total                      |                              | 100.00% |

More than half of respondents (54.9%) reported not being engaged in any paid work, reflecting the persistent challenge of youth unemployment and underemployment in the country. Among employed individuals, education stands out as the leading sector (27.1%), reflecting the strong presence of young people contributing to teaching, learning, and knowledge transfer. Agriculture, though vital to Sierra Leone's economy, accounts for only 8.2% of youth employment, suggesting that while many live in rural areas, fewer are formally engaged in agricultural work. Health and other sectors each account for 4.9%, indicating smaller but important contributions to service delivery and diverse fields.

|                          |                    |                       |
|--------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| 122<br>Total respondents | 43.44 %<br>Females | 44%<br>Urban dwellers |
|--------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|

|                                   |                                |                                       |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 38%<br>Aged 24-29 (largest group) | 62%<br>Bachelor's degree above | 40%<br>Currently studying or employed |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|

| Characteristic           | Sierra Leone | 11-country avg |
|--------------------------|--------------|----------------|
| Females                  | 43.44%       | 52%            |
| Aged 18-23               | 28.00%       | 35%            |
| Aged 24-29               | 38.00%       | 40%            |
| Aged 30-35               | 33.00%       | 25%            |
| Urban                    | 41.80%       | 60%            |
| Peri-urban               | 2.46%        | 16%            |
| Rural                    | 54.10%       | 24%            |
| High school or higher    | 22.13%       | ~80%           |
| Bachelor's or above      | 55.74%       | ~46%           |
| Living with a disability | 5.74%        | 6.40%          |

Table 2 SL respondent profile against the 11-country benchmark

# 3. HOW YOUNG PEOPLE IN SIERRA LEONE USE AI

## AI Usage among Sierra Leonean Youth

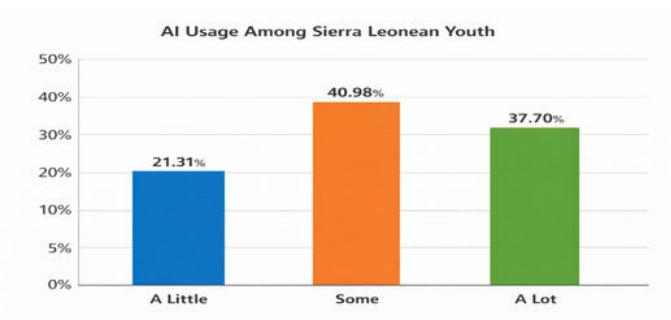


Figure 2 Self-rated knowledge about AI by youths

The data on AI usage among Sierra Leonean youth shows a clear spectrum of engagement. The largest group (40.98%) reported using AI sometimes, reflecting a growing familiarity and gradual integration of digital tools into everyday life. A significant portion (37.70%) reported using AI “a lot,” highlighting a strong core of youth who are actively immersed in technology and innovation. Meanwhile, 21.31% said they use AI “a little,” pointing to those at the early stages of exploration.

## AI Usage by Gender

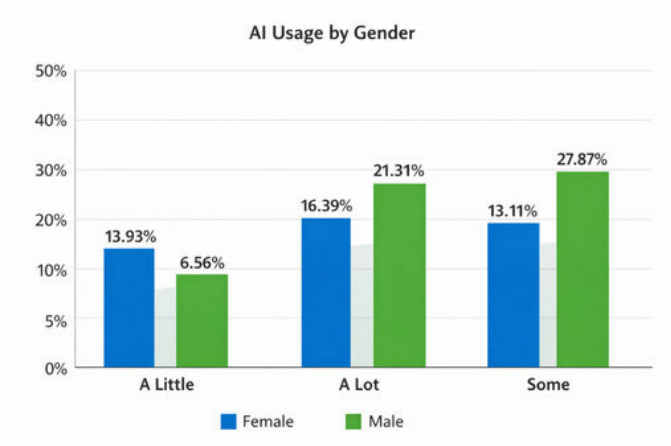


Figure 3: Self-rated knowledge by gender

The data on AI usage by gender among Sierra Leonean youth paints a vivid picture of how engagement varies across gender groups. Overall, 40.98% of respondents use AI, sometimes 37.70% use it “a lot,” and 21.31% use it “a little.” When broken down by gender, males show slightly higher rates of frequent use: 21.31% report using AI “a lot,” compared to 16.39% of females, suggesting that male youth may have greater exposure to or confidence in digital tools. Based on the data collected, females are more likely to report little use of AI than males (13.39% versus 6.56%), suggesting that many are beginning their AI journey and exploring its possibilities.

## Use of AI by youth

The data on how often Sierra Leonean youth use AI tools reveals a powerful rhythm of digital engagement. A striking 73.77% of respondents reported using AI daily, showing that technology has become an integral part of their learning, work, and social interactions. Another 16.39% use AI once a week, reflecting consistent but less intensive engagement, while only 6.56% use it once a month or less. Only a small fraction said they never use AI (0.82%) or don’t know how often they do (1.64%), underscoring widespread awareness and adoption.

## Use of AI by gender

The data on how often Sierra Leonean youth use AI tools, disaggregated by gender, reveal a dynamic and telling pattern of engagement. A striking 73.77% of respondents use AI daily, with males (46.72%) leading this group and females (27.05%) showing strong participation, evidence that AI has become a routine part of life for many young people. Weekly users make up 16.39%, split between 9.02% female and 7.38% male, suggesting steady but less intensive engagement. Occasional users, those who use AI once a month or less, account for 6.56%, primarily females (4.92%), while very few respondents said they never use AI (0.82%) or don’t know how often they do (1.64%).

What do young people use AI for

. A majority (71.3%) reported using AI primarily to learn new skills, indicating that young people see technology as a pathway to growth, empowerment, and future opportunities. Academic support ranks at 22.1%, reflecting AI's role in helping students navigate their studies and improve their educational outcomes. Fewer respondents use AI to find work (4.1%), suggesting that although AI is recognised for its learning potential, its role in employment remains emerging. A small fraction reported no data (1.6%) or that they have never used AI (0.8%), underscoring how widespread adoption already is among youth.

Further analysis of data on what Sierra Leonean youth use AI for highlights education as the dominant driver of engagement. A clear majority (62.3%) reported using AI for educational purposes, showing that young people see technology as a tool to strengthen learning, improve outcomes, and expand opportunities. Work-related use follows at 32.8%, reflecting the growing role of AI in professional tasks and productivity. Social media (2.5%) and healthcare information (1.6%) represent smaller but important areas where AI is beginning to influence daily life, while “other” uses (0.8%) remain minimal.

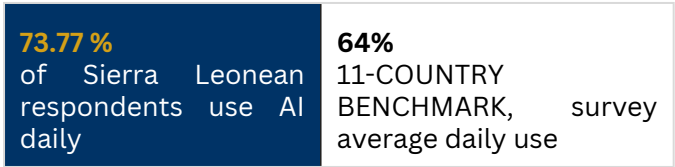
Access to digital Infrastructure

The data on device usage among Sierra Leonean youth shows an overwhelming reliance on personal technology. Nearly all respondents (98.4%) reported using their own telephone or laptop, underscoring the central role of personal devices in accessing AI tools and digital platforms. Only a very small fraction (1.6%) rely on a family member’s device.

Barriers to AI use

The data highlights that the most significant barrier Sierra Leonean youth face in using AI is high data costs, reported by 69.67% of respondents. This underscores how affordability remains the primary obstacle to digital inclusion. A further 18.85% cite weak connections, reflecting persistent infrastructure challenges. Smaller but notable concerns include fear of scams (7.38%), while low digital skills (1.64%) and other issues (2.46%) are less frequently mentioned. Altogether, the findings show that while skills and trust matter, the dominant challenges are structural, cost and connectivity, which must be addressed to unlock equitable access to AI.

The data shows that high data costs are the most significant challenge, affecting 69.67% of respondents, with rural youth (40.98%) particularly impacted compared to urban (26.23%) and peri-urban (2.46%) areas. Weak connections are the second major barrier (18.85%), again concentrated in rural (8.20%) and urban (9.84%) settings, reflecting infrastructure gaps across regions. Fear of scams (7.38%) and low digital skills (1.64%) are less common but still notable, with both risks present in rural and urban contexts



KEY FINDINGS: AI USE PATTERNS

- **Primary use:** Learning new skills is the most common AI use in Sierra Leone at 73.77%, consistent with the 11-country pattern but above the survey average of 60%.)
- **Income gap:** Despite widespread AI engagement, only 4.10% of Sierra Leonean respondents report earning income directly through AI, below the survey average of 14%. The gap between learning/use and direct income generation remains significant.)
- **Rural lag:** Rural respondents in Sierra Leone show lower AI uptake across all uses. 0.82% of rural respondents have never used AI, compared to 7.38% of urban respondents.
- **Gender gap:** The largest gender gap in Sierra Leone is in AI use, where 46.7% of males report using AI for this purpose compared to 27.05% of females, a gap of 20 percentage points, above the survey average for this indicator

“Artificial intelligence is widely used by young people in their personal lives, businesses, and on social media to easily access and store information for future use. We trained plenty of young entrepreneurs in AI tools, using this to develop new products and design and brand messages for many successful entrepreneurs.”

(24, MALE, URBAN, STUDENT)

# 4. WHO BENEFITS, WHO DOESN'T?

## Barriers to AI Access

|                                                   |                                        |                                        |
|---------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| <b>69.7%</b><br>cite high data costs as a barrier | <b>18.9%</b><br>cite weak connectivity | <b>1.6%</b><br>cite low digital skills |
|---------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|

The data shows that the biggest challenge Sierra Leonean youth face in using AI tools is high data costs (69.7%), followed by weak connectivity (18.9%). Smaller but notable barriers include fear of scams (7.4%), other issues (2.5%), and low digital skills (1.6%). Altogether, this highlights that while young people are eager to embrace AI, systemic issues of affordability and connectivity remain the most significant obstacles, with trust and skills playing secondary roles in shaping their digital experience.

## Gender Gaps in AI Knowledge & Economic Impact

|                                                                                                          |                                                                                                            |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>5%-point gap</b><br>gender gap in self-reported AI expertise ('a lot' of knowledge: males vs females) | <b>15%-point gap</b><br>11-country benchmark 38% of males vs 23% of females report 'a lot' of AI knowledge |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

The data on AI usage among Sierra Leonean youth shows that 41% use AI “some,” 38% use it “a lot,” and 21% use it “a little,” reflecting widespread and varied levels of engagement. Gender analysis reveals that males are more represented in higher usage categories, with 21% of males using AI “a lot” compared to 16% of females, and 28% of males using it “some” compared to 13% of females. Conversely, females are more likely to fall into the “a little” category (14% versus 7% for males), suggesting that while males currently dominate moderate and frequent use, females are steadily building their presence in AI engagement.

## Location analysis

The data on AI usage among Sierra Leonean youth show strong engagement, with 41% using AI “some,” 38% “a lot,” and 21% “a little.” Location analysis reveals that rural areas contribute the largest share across all categories, with 20.5% of rural respondents using AI “a lot” and 21.3% using it “some,” compared to 16.4% and 17.2%, respectively, in urban areas. Peri-urban youth show lower engagement, with only small percentages represented. This pattern highlights that, while AI adoption is widespread, rural communities are driving much of the usage, suggesting strong interest and resilience despite connectivity challenges, with urban areas close behind in consistent engagement.

## AI's impact on income and employment by gender

The data on how Sierra Leonean youth use AI show that education is the leading purpose, with 62.3% of respondents, 32.8% female and 29.5% male, using AI to support learning. Work-related use accounts for 32.8%, driven largely by males (23.8%) compared to females (8.2%), highlighting a gender gap in the professional application of AI. Smaller proportions use AI for social media (2.5%, all female) and for healthcare information (1.6%, all male), while “other” use remains minimal (0.8%, male only). This distribution underscores that while education is the dominant driver across genders, males are more engaged in work-related applications, whereas females are more represented in educational and social contexts, pointing to different pathways of digital engagement shaped by gender roles and opportunities.

## Language used for AI

The data on language use shows a strong dominance of English (94.3%), reflecting its role as the primary medium for digital interaction, education, and global connectivity. A smaller share uses their local mother tongue (3.3%), while French accounts for 2.5%, pointing to limited but notable multilingual engagement.

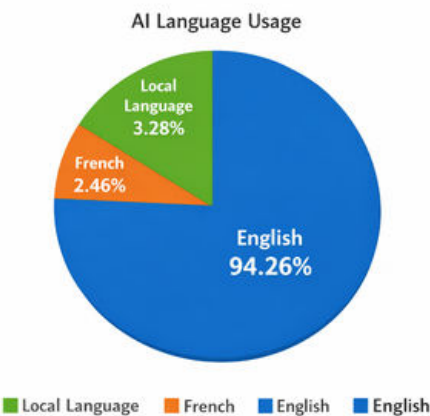


Figure 4 Languages used when using AI

## Gender Analysis of Language Use

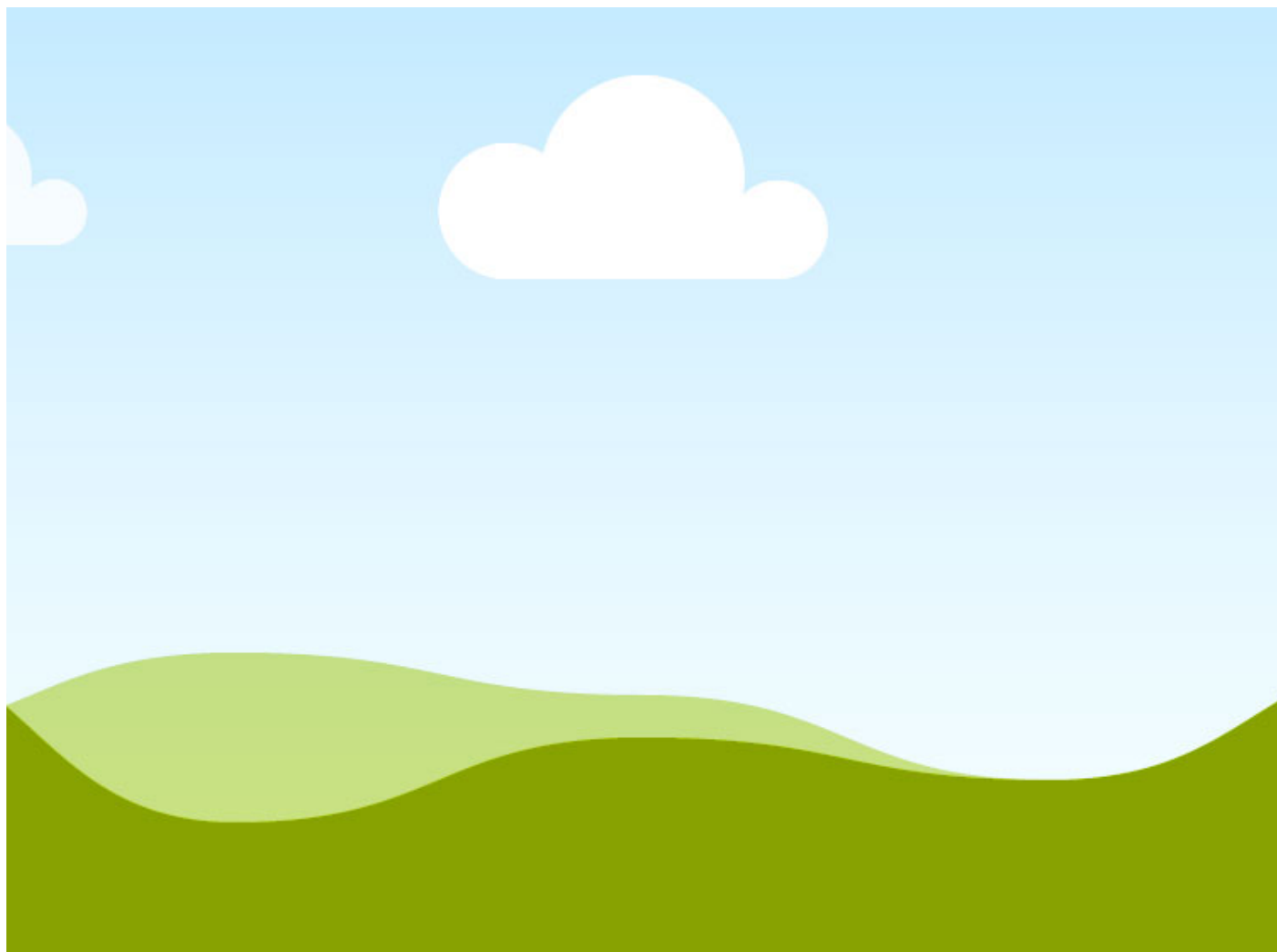
From a gendered perspective, both males (53.3%) and females (40.2%) predominantly use English, indicating broad accessibility and comfort with the language across genders.

## Preferred Language

The data shows that English remains the most preferred language for AI interaction among Sierra Leonean youth, with 85.3% choosing it as their ideal medium. Meanwhile, local languages account for 9.0%, suggesting a desire for more culturally relevant and accessible AI tools, while English-French combinations (3.3%) and French-Swahili (0.8%) indicate emerging multilingual interest.

“Subscription-based data challenges are a major deterrent to the effective use of AI. It limits full access since I’m unable to subscribe daily due to the high cost of data

[22, female, rural, student]



# 5. YOUNG PEOPLE'S AI CONCERNS

The data show that Sierra Leonean youth express strong concerns about the broader implications of AI, particularly regarding the concentration of power and data ownership. Over half (56.6%) worry “a lot” about the power of AI companies, while 50.8% feel the same about who owns their data, reflecting deep anxieties about control, transparency, and accountability in the digital space. Environmental impact also registers prominently, with 49.2% concerned “a lot” showing awareness of sustainability issues tied to technology. Social dimensions are equally important: mental health and wellbeing (34.4% “a lot,” ) and working conditions for data workers (36.1% “a lot,” ) highlight how youth connect AI to human-centred challenges. Altogether, this paints a picture of a generation that is embracing AI at the same time critically questioning its ethical, social, and environmental consequences, underscoring the need for policies that balance innovation with fairness, safety, and sustainability.

In Sierra Leone, gender patterns in AI-related concerns mirror the male-dominant trend observed in Nigeria and Tanzania, contrasting sharply with Uganda’s more balanced, female-leaning profile. Sierra Leonean males consistently express greater concern across multiple domains, particularly regarding data ownership and the power of AI companies, with males accounting for roughly 60% of those highly concerned compared to 39% of females. This gap reflects a broader pattern of male-led engagement with AI’s ethical and structural implications, possibly linked to greater exposure to technology and professional use. Unlike in Uganda, where females’ concerns are more pronounced, Sierra Leone’s data reveal a clear inversion: males are driving the discourse on AI accountability and control. This gendered dynamic underscores the need for deeper research into how access, education, and digital confidence shape perceptions of AI across different African contexts.

The data show that Sierra Leonean males express slightly greater concern about AI’s broader effects than females. Male respondents (29.5%) are more worried about the power of AI companies compared to female respondents (26.2%), reflecting greater male engagement with issues of technological control and influence. Similarly, concern about environmental impact is also greater among males (26.2%) than females (22.1%), suggesting that males may be more attuned to the systemic and global implications of AI, while females’ responses indicate growing awareness but perhaps less direct exposure to these debates.

| Concern domain                   | 'A lot' | 'A little' | Not at all |
|----------------------------------|---------|------------|------------|
| Who owns my data                 | 50.82%  | 28.69%     | 9.02%      |
| Power of AI companies            | 56.56%  | 22.13%     | 7.38%      |
| Environmental impact             | 49.18%  | 34.43%     | 6.56%      |
| Mental health & wellbeing        | 34.43%  | 42.62%     | 16.39%     |
| Working conditions, data workers | 36.07%  | 37.70%     | 13.11%     |

Table 3 AI concern domain rate among young people

Daily users in Sierra Leone express the greatest concern across all five domains, with the largest gap in data ownership (60% of male respondents vs 39% of female respondents, a 21-percentage-point difference). The finding shows that familiarity breeds concern. Does this pattern hold in Sierra Leone? Yes, the country’s figures reveal a distinctly male-dominant concern profile, unlike Uganda’s female-leaning pattern and closely aligned with Nigeria and Tanzania, where males consistently drive higher levels of worry across AI domains.

## Misinformation & Safety

|                                          |                                               |                                 |
|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 71.31% concerned about AI misinformation | 44.26% say safety concerns limit their AI use | 64.75% want stronger laws on AI |
|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|

The data show that misinformation is a major concern among Sierra Leonean youth, with 71.31% reporting being worried about it. A smaller group, 22.13%, report no concern, while 5.74% express occasional concern. This distribution highlights that misinformation is widely recognised as a serious issue in Sierra Leone’s digital landscape, reflecting both the risks of unreliable information and the growing awareness among young people of its impact on trust, decision-making, and social stability.

Gender Gap in Misinformation

The data reveal that 71.3% of Sierra Leonean youth are concerned about misinformation, showing strong awareness of its impact on trust and social discourse. Gender analysis indicates that males (40.2%) express slightly higher concern than females (30.3%), suggesting that males may be more exposed to or affected by misinformation in digital spaces. Meanwhile, 22.1% of respondents, split almost evenly between 10.7% female and 11.5% male, say they are not concerned, and 5.7% express occasional concern. This pattern highlights that while misinformation is widely recognised as a threat, males tend to engage more critically with it, whereas females’ concern, though substantial, may reflect different levels of digital exposure or trust in online information sources.

What Would Make AI Safer?

The data shows that Sierra Leonean youth overwhelmingly believe stronger laws are the most effective way to make AI safer, with 64.8% supporting legal and regulatory measures. This reflects a clear demand for government and institutional accountability in managing AI risks. Other safety measures, such as better reporting systems (12.3%), digital literacy training (9.8%), and community awareness campaigns (4.1%), also feature, indicating recognition of the need for both policy and public education.

The data show that Sierra Leonean youth overwhelmingly view stronger laws as the most important measure to make AI safer, with 65% of respondents supporting this option. Gender analysis reveals that males (40%) are more likely than females (25%) to emphasise legal safeguards, highlighting a male-led push for regulatory accountability. Females, however, show stronger representation in areas such as better reporting systems (7% vs 6% for males) and digital literacy training (6% vs 4% for males), suggesting a preference for community-level and educational interventions. Smaller proportions of both genders support community awareness campaigns (5% female, 3% male) and platform accountability (2% female, 4% male), while only females (1.6%) highlight the importance of AI design that considers females.

“Guidance on how to use AI responsibly for projects and entrepreneurship opportunities, ensuring young people are safe from cybersecurity issues.”

(21, male, rural, student)

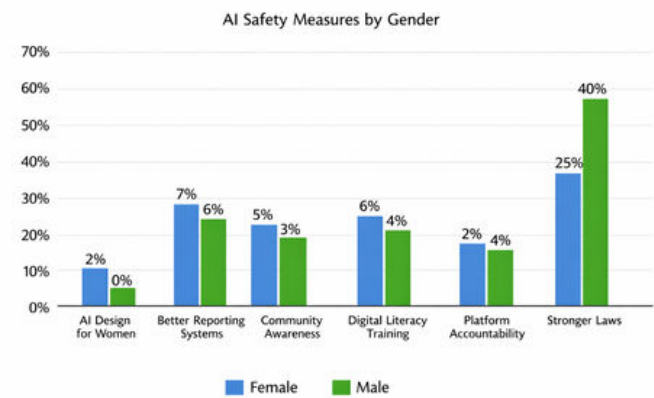


Figure 6 Safety measures by gender youth AI survey 2026

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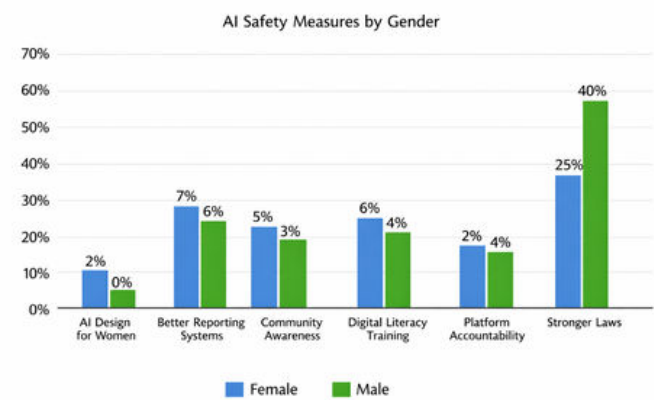


Figure 6 Safety measures by gender youth AI survey 2026

# 6. EMPLOYMENT, FUTURES & SENTIMENT

73.77%

Of the Sierra Leonean respondents expect AI to have a positive impact on education & learning in the next 5 years

11-COUNTRY BENCHMARK  
11-country average: 71% expect a positive impact on education

The data indicates that AI has had a largely positive influence on education and learning among Sierra Leonean youth. A significant 73.77% expect AI to positively impact education and learning in the next five years, while 13.93% expect both to worsen and 5.74% expect no change. ,

## Employment and Economic Opportunities

A majority (60.7%) expect their prospects to improve with AI, indicating optimism about technology’s role in expanding access to jobs, entrepreneurship, and digital income streams. However, 22.9% feel employment and economic opportunities will worsen, possibly due to limited access, skills gaps, or fears of job displacement.

## Gender Analysis

The data shows that young people expect AI to positively impact employment and economic opportunities in Sierra Leone. Gender analysis reveals that males (34.43%) are more positive than females (25.41%). On the other hand, 22.95% expect worsening opportunities, split between 13.11% male and 9.84% female, pointing to challenges such as job displacement or unequal access.

## Online safety

The data show that perceptions of online safety among Sierra Leonean youth are mixed: 38.5% expect improvements, while 29.5% believe their safety will worsen, citing concerns such as exposure to misinformation, privacy risks, and cyber threats.

## Gender Analysis

The data on online safety in Sierra Leone reveal a mixed picture: 38.5% of youth expect their safety to improve, while 29.5% expect it to worsen. Gender analysis shows that males (20.5%) are slightly more likely than females (18.0%) to expect their safety to improve, but females are more likely to be among those who expect their safety to worsen (17.2% female vs 11.5% male). Interestingly, males dominate the group expecting no change (16.4% male vs 4.1% female).

## Mental Well-being

The data indicates that young people expect AI to positively impact their mental well-being. A majority (54.1%) expect their mental well-being to improve, suggesting that AI tools may provide support, access to information, or new opportunities that enhance confidence and outlook. At the same time, 27.5% expect no change, while 18.4% expect their well-being to worsen, pointing to possible stressors such as misinformation, digital overload, or exclusion from benefits.

# 7. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

AI's trajectory in Sierra Leone is one of cautious optimism, where young people see clear benefits in education, livelihoods, and digital engagement, but remain deeply concerned about safety, trust, and inclusivity. The evidence shows that while AI is improving learning outcomes and opening new economic opportunities, its impacts are uneven; males report greater gains than females, and nearly a third of youth feel less safe online. This dual reality underscores the urgency of embedding AI into Sierra Leone's National Digital Strategy (2021–2025) and aligning it with frameworks like the Cybersecurity and Data Protection Act, while ensuring that youth voices and gender equity are central to implementation.

Restless Development's in-country programming is well positioned to bridge these divides. Its youth-led digital literacy initiatives, community awareness campaigns, and focus on empowerment can complement national policy by ensuring that AI's benefits reach all young people, especially females and rural communities. By combining structural safeguards with grassroots capacity-building, Sierra Leone can harness AI to drive equitable development while mitigating risks that could otherwise deepen existing inequalities.

## FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF SIERRA LEONE

### Strengthen Governance and Regulation

- Embed AI-specific safeguards into Sierra Leone's National Digital Strategy (2021–2025) and ICT frameworks.
- Establish a national AI ethics and accountability task force under the Ministry of Information and Communications.
- Integrate youth perspectives into the Cybersecurity and Data Protection Act consultations to ensure relevance.

## FOR TECHNOLOGY COMPANIES

### Build Trust and Safety in Digital Spaces

- Strengthen reporting systems for online harms, with youth-friendly channels for redress.
- Partner with civil society to run community awareness campaigns on AI risks and safe practices.
- Require platforms operating in Sierra Leone to adopt local accountability mechanisms for transparency in data use and content moderation.

## FOR ALL SECTORS (GOVERNMENT, CIVIL SOCIETY, FUNDERS, ACADEMIA)

### Promote Inclusive Access and Gender Equity

- Launch mentorship and micro-grant schemes to support females' participation in AI-driven economic opportunities.
- Prioritise affordable data access in ICT rollouts to reduce barriers for females and rural youth.
- Embed gender-sensitive design principles into AI projects to ensure inclusivity.

## FOR RESTLESS DEVELOPMENT & NGO PARTNERS

### Expand Digital Literacy and Skills Training

- Scale up Restless Development's youth-led programs with AI awareness modules on misinformation and online safety.
- Partner with universities to integrate AI and data skills into curricula, with scholarships for females.
- Create community-based digital literacy hubs in rural areas to close connectivity and skills gaps.

“AI is becoming one of the most powerful tools shaping how we work, learn, and live- honestly, we're still just at the beginning.”

31-year-old female, urban Sierra Leone

# REFERENCES & FURTHER READING

The following references support the analysis in this policy brief. For a full reference list, see the main report: Barford, A., Malomalo, M., Occhini, G., Mugeere, A., Mugabi, N., Gupta, S., Agboeze, N., Mwesigwa, D., Korhonen, A., Manyalo, P. and Nyiraneza, M. (2026). *Work, Study and Leisure in the Age of Artificial Intelligence: The Youth AI Survey 2026*. University of Cambridge: Cambridge; Makerere University: Kampala; and Restless Development: Harare. <https://doi.org/10.17863/CAM.130137>

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## Country-Specific Resources

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