

YOUTH AI SURVEY 2026

WORK, STUDY & LEISURE IN THE
AGE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

UGANDA

COUNTRY POLICY BRIEF

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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 Uganda. It draws on country-level data to surface actionable findings and recommendations within the Uganda context.

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1. INTRODUCTION & COUNTRY CONTEXT

Uganda is one of the youngest countries on earth. Roughly 70% of its population is under 30, and the median age sits below 17, making young people the decisive factor in any national development story (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2024). This “demographic dividend” only pays out if young people can find work and earn a living, and AI is now part of that equation.

Uganda’s digital base is expanding unevenly. Mobile connectivity drives access: 92.2% of survey respondents reached AI through their own phone or laptop. Yet Uganda’s internet penetration sits at roughly 22% to 28% of the population, with an estimated 11.5 million active internet users, significantly trailing the broader African average of around 37% to 40%. Data also remains expensive relative to incomes, with mobile data costs exceeding the ITU/A4AI affordability benchmarks (1GB at no more than 2% of average monthly income), and the digital access gap between Kampala and rural districts remains wide. (DataReportal, 2026).

In this context, for Uganda’s overwhelmingly young population, AI tools are already shaping how people study, seek work, and access information. Whether that shapes development positively depends on who has affordable, safe access and who sets the rules. AI is a primary enabler of youth empowerment, providing the precision needed to revolutionise sectors such as agriculture and trade (African Union, 2024).

Uganda has made significant progress in AI regulation. The Ministry of ICT and National Guidance has signalled work towards a national AI and data-governance position with [a roadmap](#); the Data Protection and Privacy Act (2019) is in force; and a growing Kampala tech and innovation scene (hubs, fintech, agritech) gives young people real exposure to AI tools.

WHY THE FINDINGS MATTER

The findings speak to several agendas at once. For digital inclusion, they show where the real barriers sit. For employment and education programming, they show where AI is already changing how young people learn and earn. For child and youth safety, they surface concrete fears about scams, misinformation, and data. And for policy, they reveal a clear, unmet demand among young people to help shape the rules and tools that increasingly govern their lives.

“AI is becoming an important tool for young people because it helps us learn faster, find information easily, and be more creative.

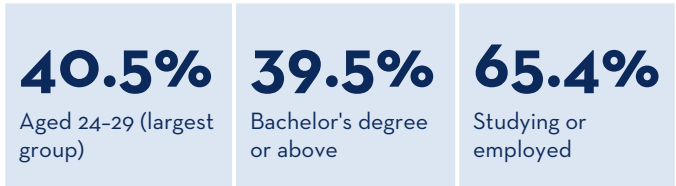
24-YEAR-OLD MALE, JOB SEEKER, URBAN UGANDA

FINDINGS

2. ABOUT THE RESPONDENTS

Females make up 53.5%, males 46.0%, with a small share (under 1%) non-binary, self-describing, or preferring not to say. The largest age band is 24-29 (40.5%), mirroring the 11-country average of 40%.

Most respondents live in urban areas (57.4%); Uganda has stronger peri-urban representation than the 11-country average (22.2% vs 16%), meaning the dataset captures a broader range of settlement types than most country samples, even though its rural share (20.1%) sits just below the survey-wide average of 24%. Combined, non-urban respondents make up over 42% of the Uganda sample. Education levels are high, with 92.9% having completed at least high school and 39.5% holding a bachelor's degree or above, which sits close to the 11-country pattern and is the clearest sign that, even with in-person outreach, the least-educated young Ugandans remain under-represented. Two-thirds (65.4%) are currently studying or in employment.



RESPONDENT PROFILE (UGANDA VS 11-COUNTRY BENCHMARK)

Characteristic	Uganda	11-country avg
Females	53.50%	52%
Aged 18-23	33.30%	35%
Aged 24-29	40.50%	40%
Aged 30-35	26.10%	25%
Urban	57.40%	60%
Peri-urban	22.20%	16%
Rural	20.10%	24%
High school or higher	92.90%	~80%
Bachelor's or above	39.50%	~46%
Living with a disability	3.60%	6.40%

Table 1. Uganda respondent profile against the 11-country benchmark. Benchmark figures from the main Youth AI Survey 2026 report; some are approximate.

Disability. 22 respondents (3.6%) identified as persons with disabilities. This is too small a group to analyse with confidence on its own, but their responses are noted where relevant. Their self-rated AI knowledge tracked closely with the rest of the sample.



3. HOW YOUNG PEOPLE IN UGANDA USE AI

AWARENESS AND KNOWLEDGE OF AI

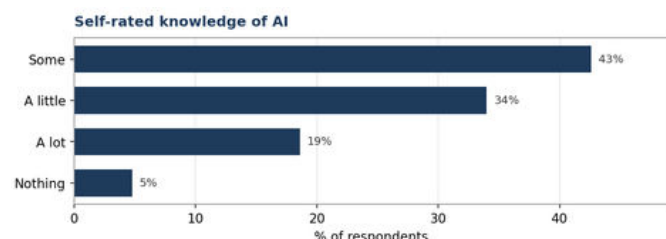


Figure 2. Self-rated knowledge of AI (n=606).

Knowledge is wide but shallow. A combined 61% said they know 'some' or 'a little' about AI, 19% said 'a lot', and 5% said 'nothing'. Read alongside the usage data, this points to a generation that has adopted AI faster than it has come to understand it. Many describe using everyday tools without recognising them as AI, which is a problem for both safe use and informed consent: you cannot question or protect yourself from a system you don't know exists.

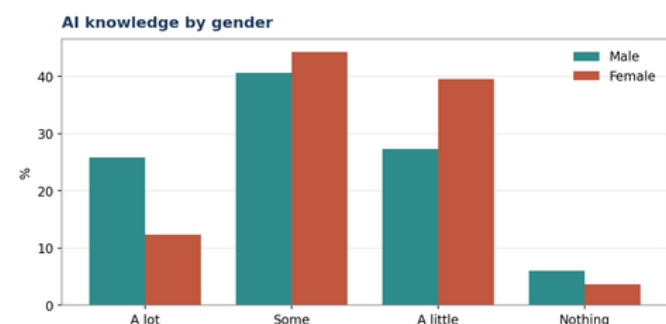


Figure 3. AI knowledge by gender (male n=278, female n=323).

The clearest divide is by gender. 26% of males rated their knowledge 'a lot' versus just 12% of females; males were more than twice as likely to claim high confidence. Females were correspondingly concentrated in 'a little' (40% vs 27% of males). Since females are the larger group in this sample and use AI at similar rates, this is likely a gap in confidence and depth, not in access. The finding is important because confidence shapes who feels entitled to experiment, build, and lead, and a confidence gap this early tends to widen into an opportunity gap later.

Knowledge also rises with education and shows up in frequency of use: 80% of those with a postgraduate degree and 72% of degree holders use AI daily, compared with around 53% of those with only a high school education. The pattern suggests AI fluency is following existing educational advantage rather than levelling it.

ACCESS & DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Access in this sample is personal but precarious. 92% completed the survey on their own phone or laptop, 4% on a family member's device, 3% on a community or shared device, and under 1% in a cybercafé.

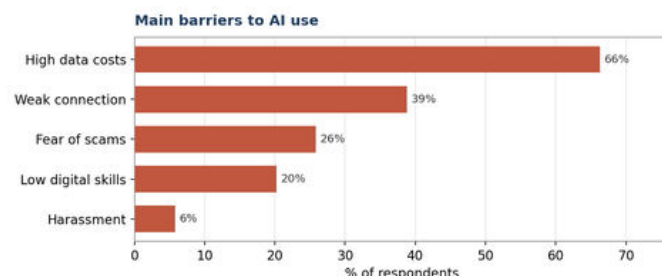
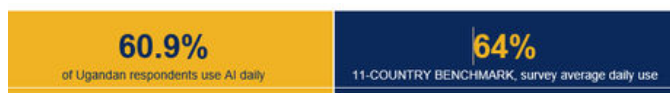


Figure 4. Main barriers to AI use (n=600, multiple choice).

The barriers young people report to AI usage are related to costs and infrastructure. 66% highlighted high data costs as the main barrier to usage, while 39% highlighted weak connection. Affordability is the binding constraint to AI and digital inclusion.

Barriers by location. Affordability is a consistent problem across the different locations. 73% of young people in peri-urban areas highlighted it as an obstacle; 64% in urban areas; 62% in rural areas. Weak connection is evidently more pronounced in rural areas (47% vs 36% in urban areas). Low digital skills are reported almost twice as often in peri-urban areas (30%) than in urban or rural areas (17%), which may reflect a group that has devices and some access but less structured exposure to digital tools.

AI use in Uganda is frequent and habitual. Six in ten respondents (60.9%) use AI daily, and 85.4% use it at least weekly, just below the 11-country daily average of 64%. Only 4.0% never use it knowingly. Daily use is remarkably even across groups: 63.5% of females and 58.0% of males, 61.4% urban and 57.9% rural. The 24-29 age band uses AI the most (66.8% daily), reducing to 54.5% among 30-35-year-olds.



Two-thirds (67.1%) use AI to learn new skills, and half (50.0%) for academic support. Creativity, writing and coding (35.4%) and finding work (36.2%) follow. Improving productivity sits at 27.4%. Earning income directly is the rarest use at 11.1%, below the survey average of 14%. Looking at activities in the past 30 days, education and learning leads (69.7%), then social media (47.6%) and work (39.4%); financial (8.1%) and government services (3.8%) trail far behind.

AI USES IN UGANDA (% OF RESPONDENTS)

Use	Uganda %	Pattern
Learning new skills	67.10%	Most common
Academic support	50.00%	High
Finding work	36.20%	Moderate
Creativity/writing / coding	35.40%	Moderate
Improving productivity	27.40%	Moderate
Earning income directly	11.10%	Least common

KEY FINDINGS: AI USE PATTERNS

- **Primary use:** Learning new skills is the most common use in Uganda at 67.1%, above the survey average of 60%.
- **Income gap:** Only 11.1% of Ugandan respondents earn income directly through AI, below the survey average of 14%, despite 36.2% using it to find work. The distance between using AI and being paid through it remains wide.
- **Rural lag:** 12.3% of rural respondents have never used AI, against 4.4% in urban areas and just 1.5% in peri-urban areas. Rural youth show lower uptake across uses.
- **Gender gap:** Unusually, Ugandan females use AI daily slightly more than males (63.5% vs 58.0%). The widest gap by use is creativity/coding, where 38.8% of males engage versus 31.8% of females, which is a 7-point gap, narrower than the survey-wide gender gaps.

These patterns tell a coherent story. Young Ugandans are mainly learners and users of AI rather than creators or earners. They have crossed the access threshold but not the monetisation one. The near-absence of a daily-use gender gap is a genuine bright spot and sets Uganda apart from countries where males dominate frequent use. Rurality, not gender, is the sharper line of exclusion in how often and how widely young people use AI.

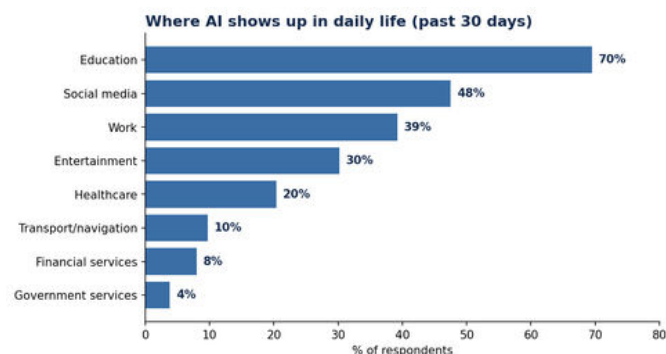


Figure 5. What young people use AI for (n=607, multiple choice).

In the last 30 days, 70% of respondents used AI for educational purposes, followed by social media at 48% and work at 39%. The strong education signal aligns with the open-text responses, in which young people repeatedly describe AI as a research, writing, and study aid.

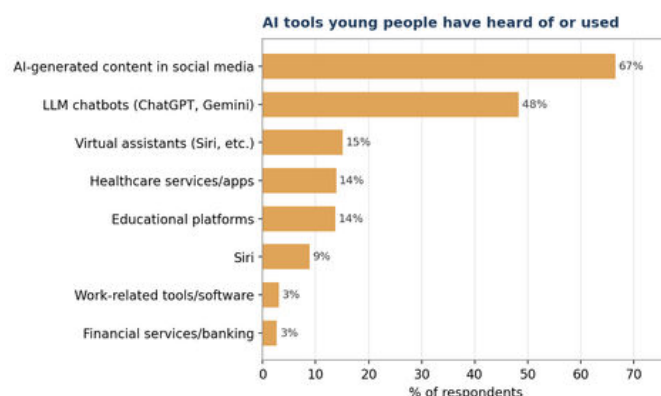


Figure 6. AI tools young people have heard of or used (n=584, multiple choice).

The tools young people recognise are consumer-facing: 67% recognise AI-generated content on social media, and 48% recognise LLM chatbots like ChatGPT and Gemini. Recognition of work tools (3%), financial services (3%), and government services (1%) is very low. Young Ugandans meet AI mostly through their feeds and their chatbots, not through productivity, public, or financial systems.

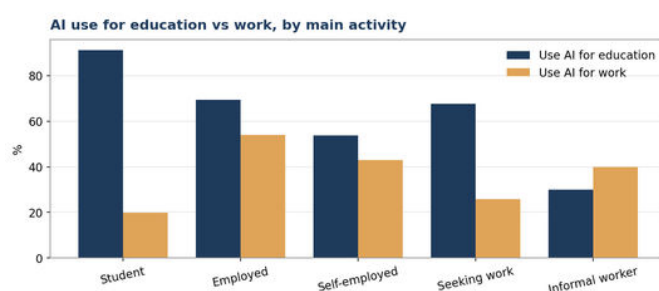


Figure 7. AI use for education vs work, by main activity.

91% of students use AI for education, but only 20% use it for work, likely because the sample is dominated by young people who are not yet working. Among the employed, the pattern flips toward work (54%), while education use remains high (69%), suggesting AI follows young people from study to the workplace. The implication is that students are building AI habits now that will shape their working lives, making schools and universities the highest-leverage places to teach AI.

Users, not makers

Even though few use AI to earn money directly, most say it has improved their income or opportunities in some way. Among those who answered, 85 per cent reported at least some improvement, and a third reported significant or major gains. The benefit is real; it just flows through skills and productivity rather than a direct paycheck.

Reported change in income/opportunities from AI	Share	Running total
Very significant - major improvements	9%	9%
Significant - clear and consistent	25%	34%
Moderate - some noticeable improvement	50%	84%
Slight - occasional improvement	12%	96%
No change at all	5%	100%

The engagement data is the most important finding in this report. Just 13% use AI to build products, 5% develop AI models or tools, 4% train datasets, and under 2% work on physical AI infrastructure. 14% didn't know how they engage with AI at all. Uganda's young people sit almost entirely at the consuming end of the AI economy. The value, the intellectual property, and the high-skill work are created elsewhere. As one respondent put it, young people shouldn't only participate by using AI tools but should be empowered to help create them.



“It has improved my working conditions, research and writing skills. Just need more training on how to use the different AI tools.”

30-YEAR-OLD FEMALE, EMPLOYEE, URBAN UGANDA

FROM LEARNING TO EARNING: THE UNFINISHED TRANSITION

Two-thirds of respondents use AI to build their skills, with only one in nine turning that into income. Closing the gap requires freelancing skills, digital-trade training, and AI-for-enterprise support is where youth-employment programming can add the most value

4. WHO BENEFITS, WHO DOESN'T?

The benefits of AI use are unevenly distributed. The barriers young people name are overwhelmingly economic and infrastructural rather than attitudinal.

Barriers to AI Access



High data costs are the dominant barrier by a wide margin (68.6%), followed by weak connectivity (41.6%), fear of scams (23.6%), low digital skills (22.5%), and harassment (5.6%). The ranking confirms that the problem is rarely the complexity of AI but the high costs and unreliable connectivity.

The barriers fall unevenly. Weak connectivity affects rural respondents the most (47.1%, vs 36.8% in urban). Peri-urban respondents report the highest data-cost burden (73.9%) and, notably, the highest rate of low digital skills (30.6%, compared with roughly 17% in both urban and rural areas), a reminder that the peri-urban fringe is a distinct context. Females report slightly higher barriers than males on every count (e.g. 42.5% vs 34.1% on weak connectivity). Respondents living with a disability report higher data-cost burden (72.7% vs 66.1%), though the small disability sub-sample (22 people) means this is indicative only.

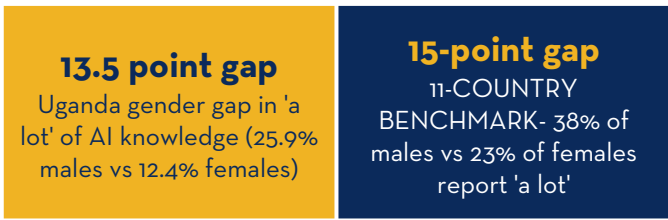
Barrier	Urban	Peri-urban	Rural
High data costs	64.90%	73.90%	62.80%
Weak connectivity	36.80%	36.60%	47.10%
Low digital skills	17.30%	30.60%	17.40%
Fear of scams	25.40%	29.90%	22.30%

Table 3. Barriers to AI use by location (% citing each barrier). Respondents could select multiple barriers.

“In my local language, Luganda, AI barely knows the spellings, grammar and how to interpret sentences. It's not even familiar with our culture at all, which increases mistakes when it comes to things concerning our own world.”

24-YEAR-OLD RESPONDENT, PERI-URBAN UGANDA

Gender Gaps in AI Knowledge & Economic Impact



Uganda's most revealing equity finding is the mismatch between use and confidence. Females use AI daily slightly more than males, yet only 12.4% of females report knowing “a lot” about AI against 25.9% of males, a 13.5-point gap close to the survey-wide pattern. Females cluster in the “some” (44.3%) and “a little” (39.6%) bands. As the main report notes, international research finds that males tend to overrate their digital skills and females to underrate theirs at equivalent performance levels, so this gap likely reflects confidence and recognition rather than real capability. Regarding AI's impact on income and employment, Ugandan males and females report almost identical expectations (around 52% expect improvement), suggesting that the finding may reflect self-belief rather than outcomes.

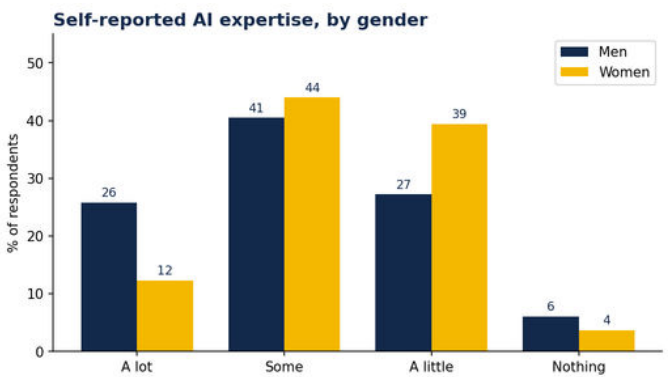


Figure 4. Self-reported AI expertise by gender. Males are about twice as likely to claim 'a lot' of expertise.

What young females are telling us
Ugandan females are not behind in using AI; they use it daily more than males do. They are behind on claiming expertise. Programmes that hand females credentials, visibility, and the language to describe what they already do will close more of this gap than basic-access campaigns.

Language and exclusion

Language is a less visible structural barrier. The majority of respondents (95.2%) accessed AI in English; only 6.6% used their mother tongue, and 2.0% used Swahili. Yet, 18.5% say they would like AI tools in their local languages. Interest is nearly three times higher than current use, and interest in Swahili has almost doubled. Young people describe Luganda outputs as thin, grammatically weak, and culturally blind, and say AI is “skewed towards global-north knowledge systems” and “barely represents indigenous knowledge.” English dominance flattens what AI can mean for them, and it disadvantages those least comfortable in English, disproportionately rural-based and less-educated youth.

The rural AI access gap

Rural-based young Ugandans are three times more likely never to have used AI, face the worst connectivity, and are least served by English-only tools. Without targeted action on rural data costs, connectivity, and local-language content, AI will widen Uganda's existing urban-rural divide rather than close it.

Equity verdict: On current trends, AI is likely to deepen existing inequalities in Uganda rather than close them. The young people best placed to benefit are urban, educated, comfortable with English, and have personal devices. Those at the margins face intersecting constraints: cost, connectivity, language, and lower confidence.



5. YOUNG PEOPLE'S AI CONCERNS

Across five concern domains, data ownership emerged as the main concern: 48.6% of respondents highlighted that they are concerned “a lot” about who owns their data, ahead of the power of AI companies (34.9%), environmental impact (31.4%), mental health and wellbeing (30.5%), and working conditions for AI data workers (30.4%).

Gender patterns in Uganda are mild and female-leaning, unlike the sharp male-dominant inversion the main report flags in Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and Tanzania. This pattern of female concern is systematically reversed in Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and Tanzania, where male respondents express the highest concern across multiple domains. Ugandan females report slightly higher concern than males across every domain, most visibly on working conditions for data workers (33.7% vs 27.0%) and mental health (32.9% vs 28.3%), but the gaps are approximately 7 points. Uganda does not show the dramatic female-dominated data ownership gaps seen in the UK or India.

Concern domain	'A lot'	'A little'	Not at all
Who owns my data	48.60%	29.00%	22.40%
Power of AI companies	34.90%	31.80%	33.30%
Environmental impact	31.40%	28.90%	39.70%
Mental health & wellbeing	30.50%	40.10%	29.30%
Working conditions, data workers	30.40%	36.00%	33.60%

Table 4. Level of concern across five AI domains in Uganda (valid base per domain: 564-593).

Daily AI users in Uganda are the most concerned about AI risks, not the least. On data ownership, 51.6% of daily users express high concern, compared to just 17.4% of those who never use AI, which is a 34-percentage-point gap, wider even than the 21-point gap in the full dataset. The pattern repeats across every domain: power of AI companies (38.0% daily vs 16.7% never), environmental impact (37.1% vs 4.3%), mental health (32.5% vs 8.3%). The young Ugandans who understand AI best are the ones raising the alarm.

Misinformation & Safety

67.8% concerned about AI misinformation (yes + sometimes)	68.0% say safety concerns limit their AI use (yes + sometimes)	56.3% want stronger laws on AI
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Misinformation worries most young Ugandans: 46.8% are concerned, another 21.0% are sometimes concerned, leaving under a third (32.2%) unconcerned. 36.1% highlight that safety worries limit their AI use, 31.9% sometimes, and 31.9% not at all. As the main report puts it, young people show “pragmatic accommodation”: they continue using AI while harbouring genuine reservations.

What Would Make AI Safer?

Asked what would make AI safer, young Ugandans prioritised governance and skills. Stronger laws top the list (56.3%), followed by digital literacy training (51.8%) and community awareness campaigns (42.9%). Safety is thus regarded as a public, political task for government and education systems.

What would make AI safer	Uganda %	Rank
Stronger laws	56.30%	1
Digital literacy training	51.80%	2
Community awareness campaigns	42.90%	3
Better reporting systems	31.40%	4
Platform accountability	24.90%	5
AI design that considers females	10.60%	6

Table 5. What young Ugandans say would make AI safer (% selecting; multiple selections allowed).

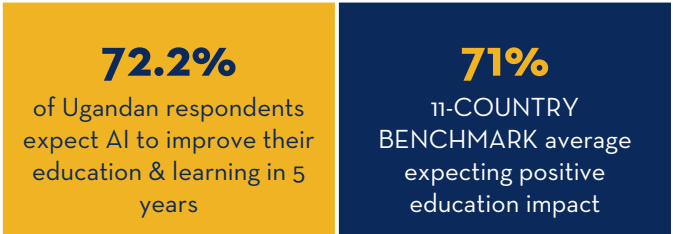


“AI concerns should not be limited to digital infrastructure questions. The deeper concerns should be in AI governance: which data, whose privacy, who is accountable, automation at whatever cost?”

30-YEAR-OLD MALE, EMPLOYEE, URBAN UGANDA

6. EMPLOYMENT, FUTURES & SENTIMENT

Young Ugandans are generally hopeful about AI, but the hope is not uncritical. On whether AI might affect their income sources, responses were widely split: 25.0% were neutral, 22.2% a little worried, 19.4% very worried, and a combined 33.4% unsure. Putting the two worried bands together, 41.6% express some worry about AI and their income, though real anxiety is sitting alongside real optimism.



Over a five-year horizon, optimism is strongest for education and learning (72.2% expect improvement, matching the 11-country average of 71%) and solid for employment and economic opportunities (52.0% expect improvement). But the employment picture is polarised: 30.0% expect their employment prospects to worsen. On online safety (28.4% expect it to worsen) and mental wellbeing (27.0% worse). Employment expectations are near-identical for males and females (around 52% positive each)-optimism is shared across genders.

5-year expectation	Better	Worse	No change
Education & learning	72.20%	12.90%	14.90%
Employment & economic opportunities	52.00%	30.00%	18.10%
Mental wellbeing	35.80%	27.00%	37.20%
Online safety	28.90%	28.40%	42.70%

Table 6. How young Ugandans expect AI to affect their lives over the next five years (valid base: 567-587 per item).

What Would Make AI Safer?

A sentiment analysis of open-ended responses (183 substantive comments classified using a keyword approach) confirms Uganda's position near the optimistic "leapfrog" end of the spectrum. About 64% of comments read as positive or hopeful, 27% as negative or concerned, and 9% as mixed, giving a net positive sentiment score of roughly +0.37 on a -1 to +1 scale. Positive sentiment is driven by learning, productivity, and opportunity, where young people are calling AI a "blessing" for trading, a "reading mate," and "the future." Negative sentiment clusters around job automation, dependency and lost critical thinking, privacy, and misuse such as online harassment.

(Note: sentiment was scored on cleaned English-language text using a transparent lexicon method; it is indicative, not definitive, and some responses were lightly cleaned for spelling.)

Where Uganda sits. Uganda leans clearly towards the "AI leapfrog opportunity" story rather than the "displacement and exclusion" story that characterises high-income contexts like the UK. Optimism is high, daily use is nearly-universal, and young people frame AI as a tool to break into new work. However, the leapfrog depends on closing the cost, rural, language, and confidence gaps documented in Section 4. Left unaddressed, the same enthusiasm could translate into the polarised, displacement-anxious outlook already visible in the 30% who expect employment to worsen.

Why this matters for youth employment
Uganda's optimism is an asset, but it is fragile. 52% expect better job prospects from AI while 30% expect worse. Whether optimism or anxiety wins depends on whether young people can convert AI skills into income.

What young people are telling us

- "AI is here to stay". Many treat AI like an irreversible part of the future to be embraced and used constructively. (25-year-old male, informal worker, rural Uganda)
- "Keep the human touch." Writers, scientists, and creatives insist AI should assist, not replace, human judgement and creativity. (32-year-old female, employee, urban Uganda)
- "We need more training." A recurring plea: young people like AI but want structured help to use it well. (30-year-old female, employee, urban Uganda)
- "Let us build, not just use." Young people want to participate in creating AI tools, not only consuming them. (31-year-old male, self-employed, peri-urban Uganda)
- "Governance is the real question." The most reflective responses move past access to ask who owns the data, who is accountable, and at what cost. (30-year-old male, employee, urban Uganda)



"Being a trader, AI is actually a blessing because I can easily organise vast amounts of data in a short period. So I use it to position myself in the market."

25-YEAR-OLD MALE, INFORMAL WORKER, RURAL UGANDA

7. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Three messages run through Uganda's data. First, young Ugandans have already adopted AI daily and widely, and with real enthusiasm so the policy question is how to make that access affordable, safe, and fair. Second, the benefits are unequally shared along lines of cost, geography, and language, and young females report far less confidence than young males, making this a gender issue too. Without deliberate action, AI will widen Uganda's existing divides. Thirdly, young people are clear-eyed: the heaviest users are the most concerned, and they are asking for stronger laws, better skills, and a real say in how AI is governed.

The overall story is a conditional leapfrog. Uganda has the youth population, the optimism, and the everyday AI fluency to use this technology to break into new types of work and learning. What it lacks is affordable data, rural connectivity, local-language tools, recognised skills for young females, and a genuine pathway from learning to earning, which are precisely the things that policy, funders, technology companies, and NGOs can supply. Those benefiting most today are urban, educated, English-comfortable young people with their own devices. Those being left behind are rural, less educated, less connected, and least served by English-only tools.

The recommendations below follow directly from three diagnostic findings: access is wide but unequal; young people are users, not makers; and governance demand is strong but unmet. Each recommendation targets the actor best placed to act, with a suggested first step and the survey evidence that motivates it.

FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF UGANDA

- 1. Make data affordable.** Work with regulators and operators towards the ITU/A4AI target of 1GB of mobile data costing less than 1% of average monthly income, which is UGX 200,000 or USD 55 ([Uganda National Household Survey 2016/17](#)), with youth- and education-focused data bundles. High data costs are the number-one barrier for 66.3% of respondents.
- 2. Finalise and youth-proof a national AI and data-governance framework.** Build on the Data Protection and Privacy Act (2019) with clear, enforceable AI rules. 56.3% want stronger laws, and data ownership is the top concern (48.6%).
- 3. Close the rural connectivity gap.** Prioritise rural and peri-urban connectivity and public-access points in the national digital agenda. 12.3% of rural youth have never used AI, and 47.1% cite weak connectivity. Creating free data points in rural areas could help; Zimbabwe's model of subsidised internet cafés in post offices offers one example worth adapting.
- 4. Embed AI and digital literacy in education and TVET.** Add practical, ethics-aware AI literacy modules to secondary, vocational, and university curricula, with deliberate outreach to close the confidence gap for young females. 51.8% of respondents name digital literacy training as their top safety measure; curricula should treat this as a stated demand.

FOR TECHNOLOGY COMPANIES

- 1. Price for low incomes.** Offer affordable or free tiers and local-currency pricing for AI tools; dollar subscriptions exclude most young Ugandans. Cost is the dominant barrier, and only 11.1% earn income through AI to offset it.
- 2. Invest in Luganda and other Ugandan languages.** Improve local-language quality and cultural grounding. 18.5% want local-language tools (triple the current 6.6%), and users describe Luganda outputs as thin and culturally blind.
- 3. Be transparent about data and provide accountability.** Offer clear, plain-language data-ownership terms and reporting/redress channels. Data ownership is the top concern and 31.4% want better reporting systems.
- 4. Design with young females and low-skill users.** Build onboarding and guidance that lift confidence, not just access, given that females use AI as much as males but report far less expertise.

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

- 1. Fund free-access digital spaces.** Support public Wi-Fi, community hubs, and device-sharing in rural and peri-urban areas where connectivity and cost bite hardest.
- 2. Back youth-led AI research and participation.** Resource ongoing, youth-led evidence-gathering and create real channels for young people to shape AI policy which they are also asking to build and govern.
- 3. Prioritise AI literacy that includes fact-checking and ethics.** Pair access with critical skills: 67.8% worry about misinformation. Target females' confidence specifically.
- 4. Build the evidence base on learning-to-earning.** Fund research and pilots on converting AI skills into income, the clearest gap in the Ugandan data (67.1% learn, 11.1% earn).



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

31-YEAR-OLD FEMALE, URBAN UGANDA (YOUTH AI SURVEY 2026)

1. **Run youth-led AI literacy and safety programming.** Use the Youth Collective and in-country hubs to deliver practical, ethics-aware AI training with fact-checking and online safety modules, reaching rural and peri-urban youth.
2. **Target the learning-to-earning gap.** Build employability and entrepreneurship programmes that turn AI skills into income through freelancing, digital trade, and AI-for-enterprise, hence closing the 67% who are learning vs 11% who are earning gap.
3. **Centre young females' confidence and equity.** Design females-focused cohorts, credentials, and peer mentoring that convert females's high usage into recognised expertise and economic gain.
4. **Amplify youth voice in AI governance.** Channel young Ugandans' clear governance concerns into national and global AI policy spaces, and advocate for local-language and affordability commitments from companies and government.

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Country resources

For more on this research or Restless Development's work on AI and digital rights in Uganda, contact the Uganda Hub via uganda@restlessdevelopment.org. National statistics to source: Uganda Bureau of Statistics, ITU, GSMA, Uganda Communications Commission, and the Ministry of ICT and National Guidance