



How Americans Use, Trust, and Verify AI Search Tools

Widespread adoption meets uneven
trust and inconsistent fact-checking

Executive Summary

In April 2026, **Clear Spark Digital** surveyed 2,127 U.S. adults about how they use, trust, and verify AI-powered search and information tools like ChatGPT, Gemini, and Copilot. The survey covered five areas: how frequently people use AI tools to find information, whether they trust AI search more or less than traditional Google search, how often they verify AI-generated answers, what methods they use to verify, and whether they've made real-life decisions based on AI output.

The results reveal a population that has adopted AI search tools rapidly and broadly, but whose trust, verification habits, and decision-making behaviors are inconsistent and varied.

Key Findings

- **97.6%** of respondents have used AI tools to find information. Only 2.4% have never used them.
- **48%** of Americans use AI tools daily, and more than three-quarters (76%) use them at least weekly.
- **78.5%** of Americans have made a real-life decision based on information from an AI tool.
- About **two-thirds (68%)** of Americans trust AI-powered search results as much or more than traditional Google search results.
- Boomers trust AI more than Gen Z. **33%** of adults 61 and older trust AI search more than Google, compared to just **23%** of Gen Z adults.
- Only **17.4%** of AI users say they always verify AI-generated information, despite nearly 80% using it to make decisions.
- **Fewer than half (46%)** of AI users manually check the sources that AI tools provide.
- **72%** of AI users turn to Google when they want to verify AI. Even among people who trust AI more than Google, **59%** still use Google to check.

About the Survey

This survey was designed to explore how American adults interact with AI-powered search and information tools, with a focus on usage frequency, comparative trust, verification behaviors, and real-world decision-making.

Survey Questions

- How often do you use AI tools like ChatGPT, Gemini, or Copilot to find information?
- Do you trust AI-powered search results more or less than traditional Google search?
- How often do you verify information provided by AI tools?
- What do you do to verify AI information/answers?
- Have you ever made a decision based on information from an AI tool?

Sample and Data

A total of **2,127 U.S. adults** completed the survey in April 2026 via the Prolific research platform. Respondents were screened for U.S. residency, age 18+, and English fluency. Prolific's pre-screened demographic attributes captured respondent sex, age, education level, employment status, industry, and work function.

Of the 2,127 respondents, 51 (2.4%) reported never having used AI tools to find information. These respondents are included in all top-line results for usage frequency, trust, and decision-making, as those questions measure attitudes and behaviors relevant to the full population regardless of personal AI usage.

Questions about verification habits (frequency and methods) are based on the 2,076 respondents who reported having used AI tools at least once, since verification behavior requires direct experience with AI output.

AI Usage Frequency

AI tool usage among American adults is near-universal. **Just 2.4% of respondents said they've never used an AI tool like ChatGPT, Gemini, or Copilot to find information.** Nearly half (48.1%) use these tools every day, and more than three-quarters (76.4%) use AI tools at least weekly.

When asked how often they use AI tools, the responses were:

- Daily - 48.1%
- Weekly - 28.3%
- Occasionally - 11.8%
- Rarely - 9.4%
- Never - 2.4%

Usage by Sex

Men report higher daily usage than women. 54% of men use AI tools daily, compared to 43% of women.

Usage by Age and Generation

Daily usage is highest among adults 61 and older at 61%. This is a counterintuitive finding. AI usage is high across every age group, but older adults are actually the most likely to report daily use.

- 18–24: 46%
- 25–34: 47%
- 35–44: 48%
- 45–54: 49%
- 55–64: 50%
- 61+: 61%

Percentage of respondents that use AI daily, by generation:

- Gen Z (18–28): 45%
- Millennials (29–44): 48%
- Gen X (45–60): 48%
- Boomers+ (61+): 61%

Note: Only 100 respondents were 61 years of age or over, the smallest sample size of any generation.

Usage by Work Function

The highest daily usage rates belong to software engineers (78%), marketers (60%), and IT professionals (57%). Daily usage exceeds 40% in almost every work function measured.

- Software Engineering: 78%
- Marketing: 60%
- IT / Info Security: 57%
- Product Management: 56%
- Data Analysis: 54%
- Sales / Business Development: 52%
- Account Management: 51%
- Education Professional: 50%
- Food Processing / Service: 49%
- Finance / Accounting: 46%
- Design / Creative: 46%
- CX / Customer Support: 45%
- Project / Program Management: 45%
- Administration: 43%
- Research: 42%
- Healthcare Professional: 41%
- Operations: 41%
- Human Resources: 36%
- Public Relations / Communications: 29%

AI Trust vs. Google Search

Trust in AI answers is roughly split, with a slight lean toward less trust in AI compared to Google. But a significant number do trust AI. **About 68% of Americans trust AI-powered search results as much or more than traditional Google search results.**

AI-powered search tools have only been mainstream for roughly two years. The fact that two-thirds of American adults already trust them at least as much as Google, a search engine that has been the dominant information source for more than two decades, represents a significant shift in how people find information online.

- Much more trust in AI: 6.7%
- A little more trust in AI: 19.9%
- About the same: 41.3%
- A little less trust in AI: 20.5%
- A lot less trust in AI: 11.6%

Trust by Generation

Generation	Trust AI More	Trust AI Less	Number of Respondents
Gen Z (18-28)	23%	39%	393
Millennials (29-44)	26%	35%	1,102
Gen X - 45-60	29%	23%	532
Baby Boomers+ (61+)	33%	21%	100

Trust by Sex

Men trust AI more than Google at a slightly higher rate than women (28% vs. 25%). The larger gap shows up in skepticism: 36% of women trust AI less than Google, compared to 28% of men.

Trust by Education

Graduate and doctoral degree holders trust AI at higher rates than those with undergraduate degrees or less. This finding aligns with the decision-making data (covered later in this report), where more educated respondents are also more likely to have acted on AI-generated information.

Education	Trust AI More	Trust AI Less	Number of Respondents
High school diploma	25%	30%	385
Technical / community college	24%	29%	287
Undergraduate degree	25%	34%	950
Graduate degree	34%	32%	378
Doctorate degree	30%	28%	79

Decision Making Based on AI

Nearly 4 in 5 Americans (78.5%) have made a real-life decision based on information from an AI tool. Only 16.1% said they have not, and 5.4% were unsure.

This signals that AI has moved well past the experimental or novelty phase and into everyday decision-making for a large majority of the population.

Decisions by Sex

Men are slightly more likely to report making AI-based decisions than women (82%, 75%).

Decisions by Generation

Decision rates are high and **remarkably consistent across all age groups**. Adults 61+ have a slightly lower rate (74%) and higher "not sure" responses.

Percentage of respondents who have made a decision based on AI:

- Gen Z: 79%
- Millennials: 79%
- Gen X: 77%
- Boomers+: 74%

Decisions by Education Level

More educated respondents are slightly more likely to have made decisions based on AI, not less. Combined with the trust data (graduate degree holders also trust AI at higher rates), education appears to correlate with confident adoption rather than avoidance.

Percentage of respondents who have made a decision based on AI:

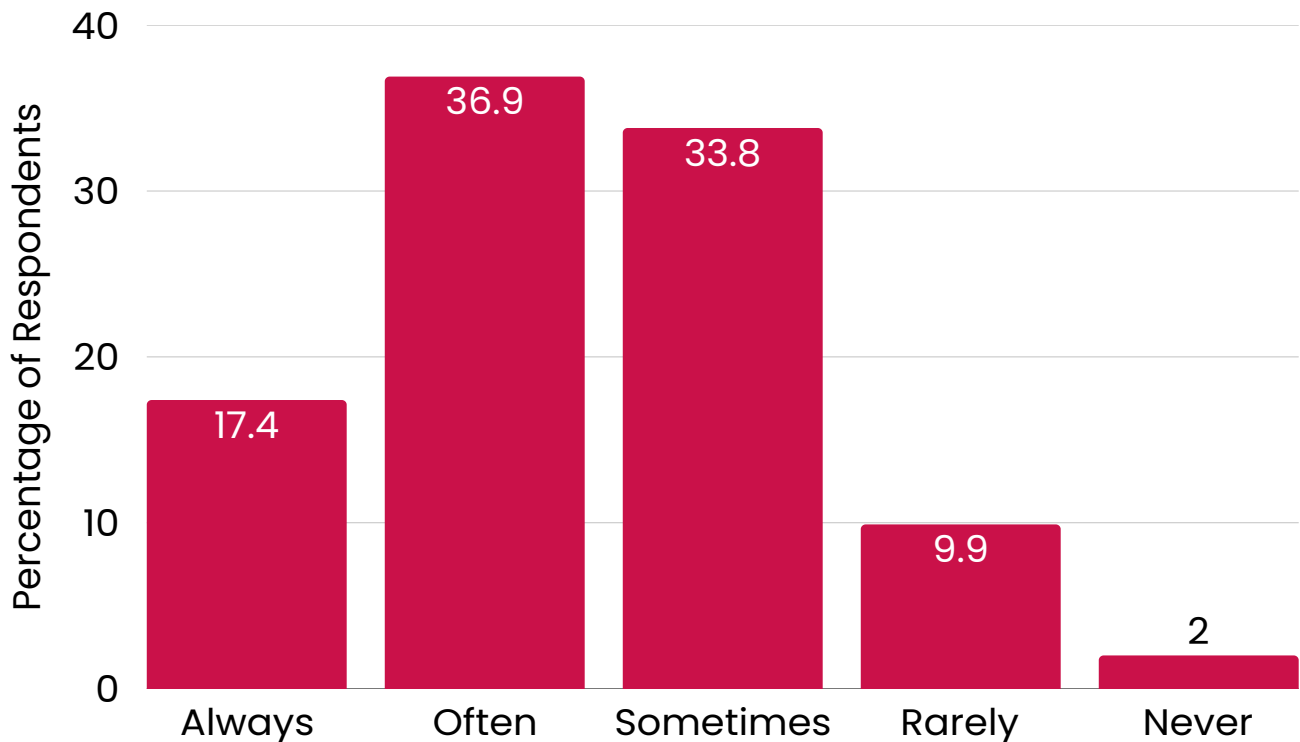
- High school diploma: 76%
- Technical / community college: 78%
- Undergraduate degree: 79%
- Graduate degree: 81%
- Doctorate: 80%

How Often People Verify AI's Answers

Verification frequency data is based on the 2,076 respondents who reported having used AI tools at least once.

Just over half of AI users (54%) say they verify AI output "always" or "often." About 12% rarely or never verify.

How often do you verify information provided by AI?



The Verification Decision Gap

78.5% of all respondents have made decisions based on AI, but only 17.4% of AI users say they always verify the information AI provides.

About 9% of all respondents have made decisions based on AI, while rarely or never verifying. Among that group, 90% trust AI as much as or more than Google.

Verification by Generation

Younger users report higher verification rates than older users. Gen Z and Millennials are both more skeptical of AI (on the trust question) and more diligent about checking its output. Gen X and Boomers trust AI at higher rates and verify less often.

Generation	Always / Often Verify	Rarely / Never Verify	Number of Respondents
Gen Z	57%	11%	383
Millennials	58%	10%	1073
Gen X	47%	16%	522
Baby Boomers+	48%	18%	98

Verification by Education Level

Verification correlates clearly with education level. Only 4% of doctorate holders rarely or never verify, compared to 15% of those with a high school diploma or technical degree.

Education	Always / Often Verify	Rarely / Never Verify	Number of Respondents
High school diploma	50%	15%	371
Technical / community college	48%	15%	283
Undergraduate degree	55%	11%	927
Graduate degree	59%	9%	371
Doctorate	65%	4%	79

Among Daily Users

Among daily AI users specifically, only 14% say they always verify. The largest group (41%) says "often," and 34% says "sometimes." About 10% rarely or never verify.

Verification habits of daily AI users:

- Always: 14%
- Often: 41%
- Sometimes: 34%
- Rarely: 9%
- Never: 1%

Ways People Verify AI's Answers

Verification method data is based on the 2,076 respondents who reported having used AI tools at least once. Respondents could select multiple methods.

- Google search: 72%
- Cross-check with trusted sources: 60%
- Manually check sources provided by AI: 46%
- Ask follow-up questions to AI: 41%
- Ask a different AI tool: 15%
- I don't verify: 3%
- Other: 2%

Google is Still the Trust Anchor

Google is the dominant verification tool by a wide margin, used by nearly three-quarters of AI users. And even among respondents who say they trust AI more than Google, 59% still turn to Google when they need to verify something.

AI hasn't fully replaced traditional search as the place people go when they need to feel confident about an answer.

Shallow Verification

Google search is the most common verification method, but a Google search is often just another quick lookup rather than rigorous fact-checking. Asking follow-up questions (41%) means the user is still relying on AI itself to validate its own output. And 15% verify AI by asking a different AI tool entirely.

The more rigorous methods lag behind. **Only 46% of AI users manually check the sources or citations that AI tools provide.** This is arguably the single most effective way to catch AI errors and hallucinations, and more than half of users skip it.

Survey Methodology

This survey was conducted by Clear Spark Digital in April 2026 using the Prolific.com research platform.

Sample: 2,127 U.S. adults

Screening criteria: U.S. residency, age 18+, English fluency

Demographic data: Prolific's pre-screened demographic attributes were used to capture respondent sex, age, education level, employment status, industry, and work function.

Survey instrument: Five questions covering AI tool usage frequency, comparative trust between AI search and Google search, verification frequency, verification methods, and whether respondents had made real-life decisions based on AI-provided information.

Data handling: Of the 2,127 respondents, 51 (2.4%) reported never having used AI tools to find information. These respondents are included in all top-line results for usage frequency, trust, and decision-making, as those questions measure attitudes and behaviors relevant to the full population regardless of personal AI usage. Verification questions (frequency and methods) are based on the 2,076 respondents who reported having used AI tools at least once, since verification behavior requires direct experience with AI output.

Sample composition: The sample skews toward employed adults (74% full-time, 20% part-time) and is drawn from Prolific's opt-in research panel, which tends to be more digitally engaged than the general U.S. population. Results should be interpreted as reflective of a broad, demographically diverse American adult audience with at least moderate internet access, rather than as a probability sample of the full U.S. adult population.

Media inquiries: For media inquiries, please contact Marc Shorb at marc@clearsparkdigital.com.