HART RESEARCH

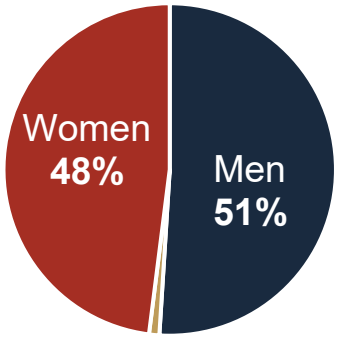
Youth and Artificial Intelligence Survey 2026

Key findings from a national survey of 1,111 youth conducted online

February 10-27, 2026

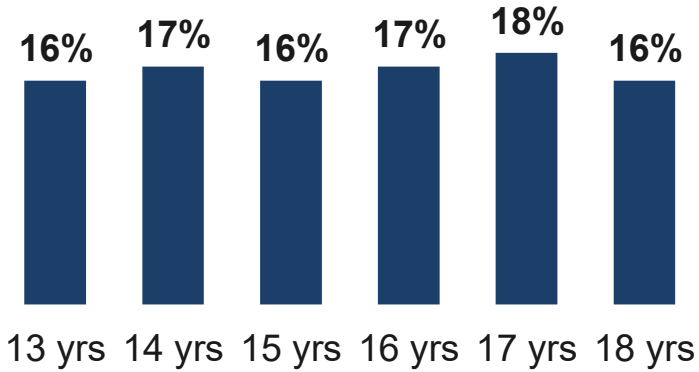
Methodology and Sample Overview

Gender

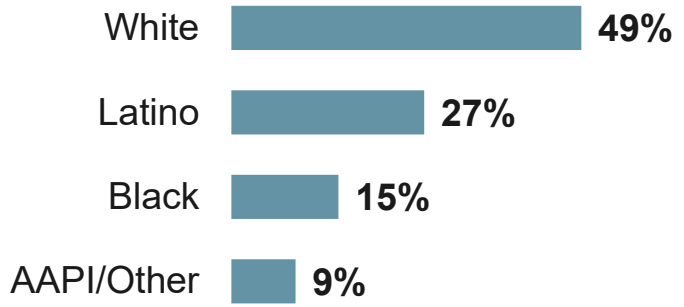


Prefer not to say **1%**

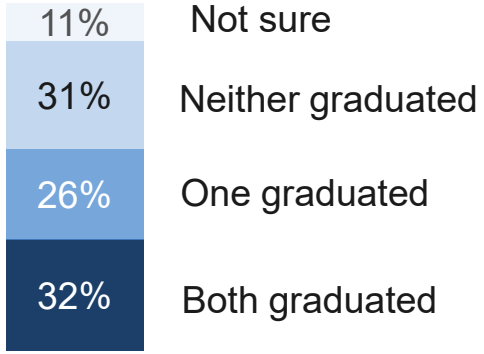
Age



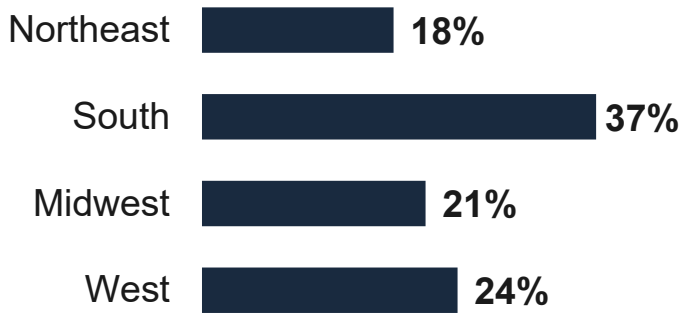
Race



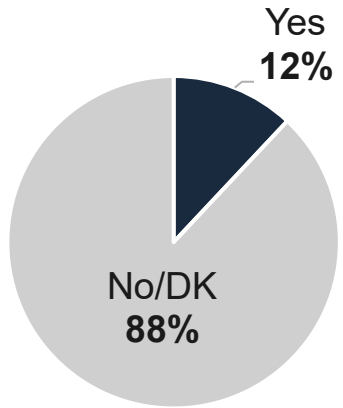
Parents' College Education



Region



4-H Participation



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Key Takeaway: Headlines

1 **Artificial intelligence is reshaping youth's career and job paths, with many feeling unprepared for a world of work where AI proficiency is a requirement.**

2 **Interest in both agriculture and AI is strong, especially among 4-H youth, where engagement in both areas is significantly higher.**

3 **Youth express both excitement and concern about AI, and want to learn how to use AI safely and responsibly**.

Key Takeaways

1

Artificial intelligence is reshaping youth's career and job paths, with many feeling unprepared for a world of work where AI proficiency is a requirement. While many youth expect to use AI skills in their careers, less than half of youth feel prepared to use them in their future work. When evaluating how well schools teach a variety of subject matter, the use of AI tools is the lowest rated area. There is also a real concern around AI-related job displacement, with over six in ten young Americans believing AI will lead to a decrease in job opportunities in many traditional fields like education, engineering, and creative industries.

2

Interest in both agriculture and AI is strong, especially among 4-H youth, where engagement in both areas is significantly higher. Nearly one in five young Americans and two in five 4-Hers express interest in working in agriculture and jobs that are focused on using AI.

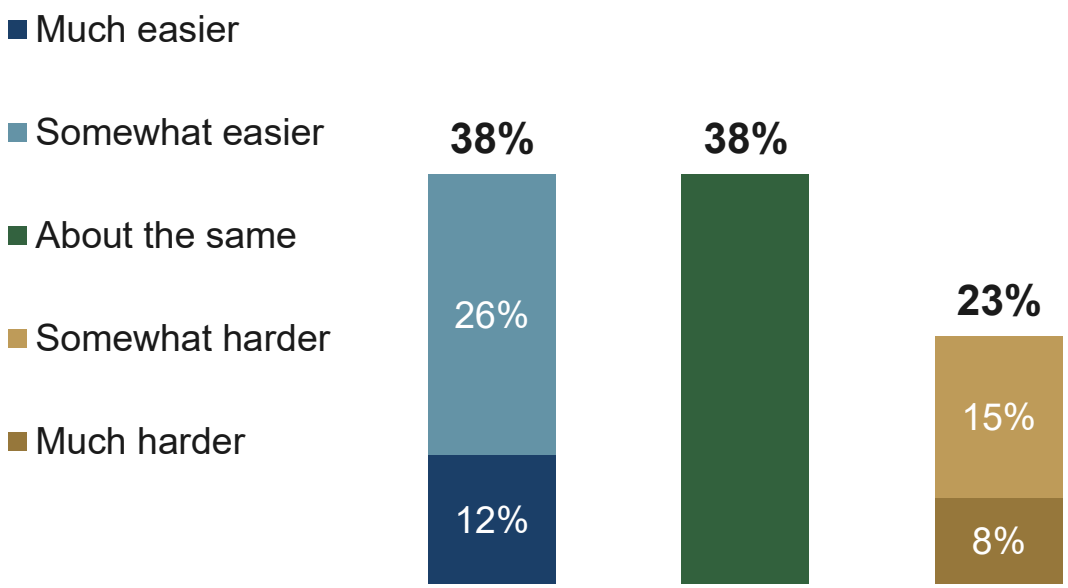
3

Youth express both excitement and concern about AI, and want to learn how to use AI safely and responsibly. There is both concern and excitement about AI and its increased use in daily life. Young people are more positive about AI's potential to increase efficiency and help them in achieving their career and life goals, but worry about its effect on critical thinking skills, jobs, misinformation, mental health and social relationships, and the environment. They also have concerns about AI making it easier for young people to cheat.

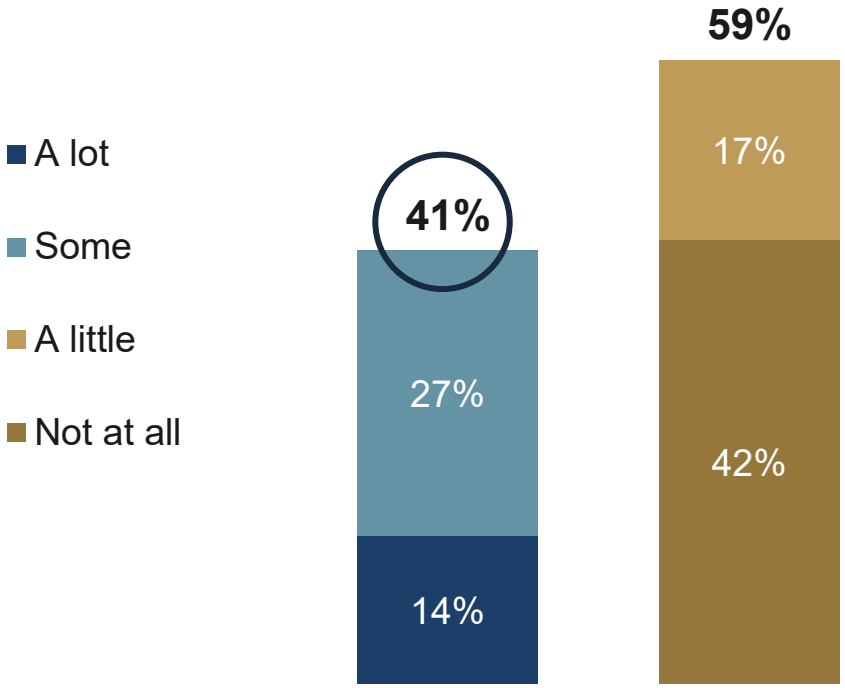
Career and Job Readiness

While most do not think AI will make achieving their goals harder, over four in ten youth have changed their goals because of it.

Do you think AI has made it easier or harder to be able to achieve your future career and job goals?



How much has AI changed the job or career path you are interested in pursuing after leaving school?



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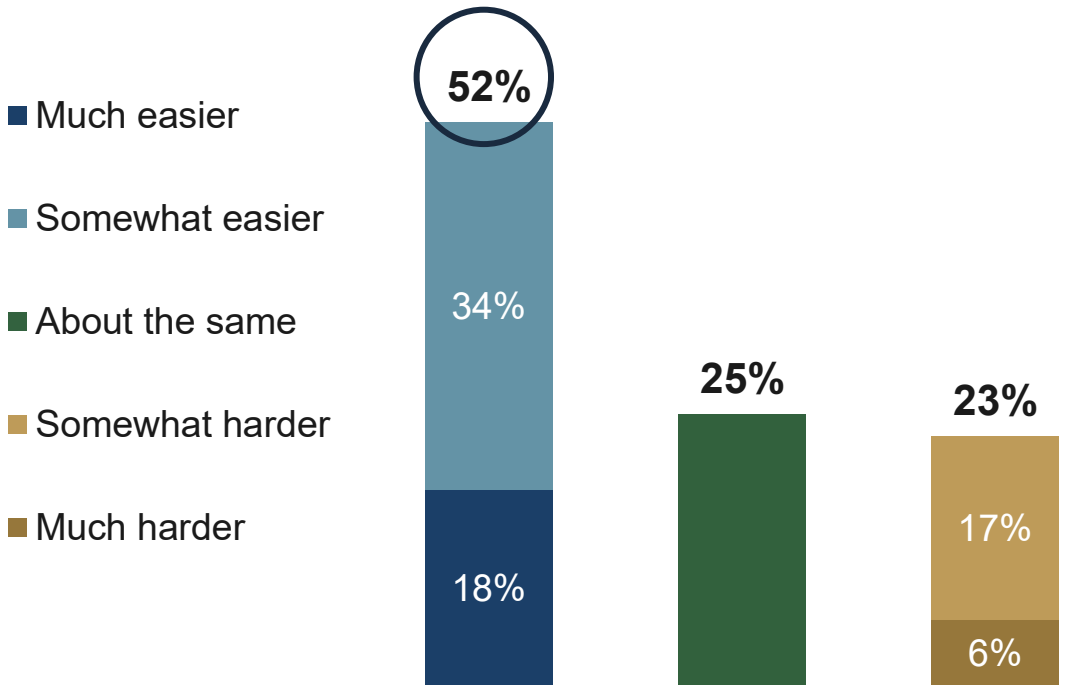
4-Hers: More are changing their career paths due to AI, and believe AI is making it easier to achieve their goals.

4-H: Do you think AI has made it easier or harder to be able to achieve your future career and job goals?



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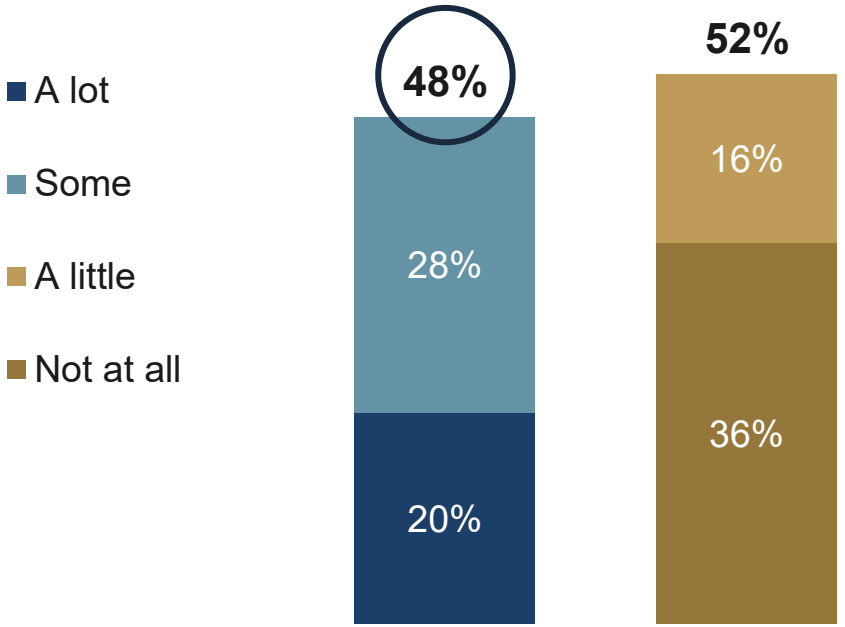

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AI is reshaping young people's career paths by boosting their productivity and learning capacity, and by redefining the opportunities available in industries like healthcare, engineering, and creative fields.

How has AI changed your job or career path?
(Coded word cloud of responses)



"**AI has made my work more efficient**, freeing up time for creative tasks, and opened new career opportunities in tech and automation."

"I want to be an event planner. **I think it would help** aid in organizing or email communication with clients and possible ideas."

"I'm interested in law. AI can be used to **easily search for precedent**."

"**I at first wanted to be a graphic designer**, but with the advancements of AI, I feel that job will soon be replaced by AI."

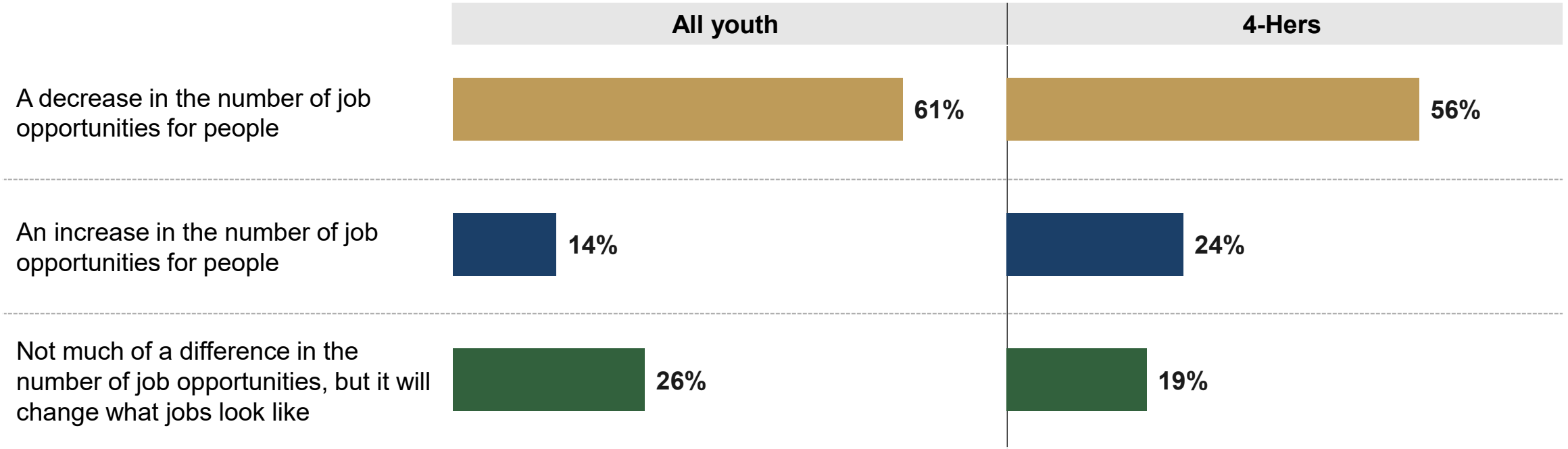
"AI will **eliminate some jobs** and make others more competitive."

"I want to go into making medicine, and I feel like **AI will expedite the more robotic processes** involved in making drugs."

"It has showed me that instead of being a preschool teacher, I want to be a pediatrician, **just by talking to it and getting feedback**."

Majorities of youth, including 4-Hers, believe AI will decrease job opportunities.

Do you think advancements in AI are likely to lead to…?



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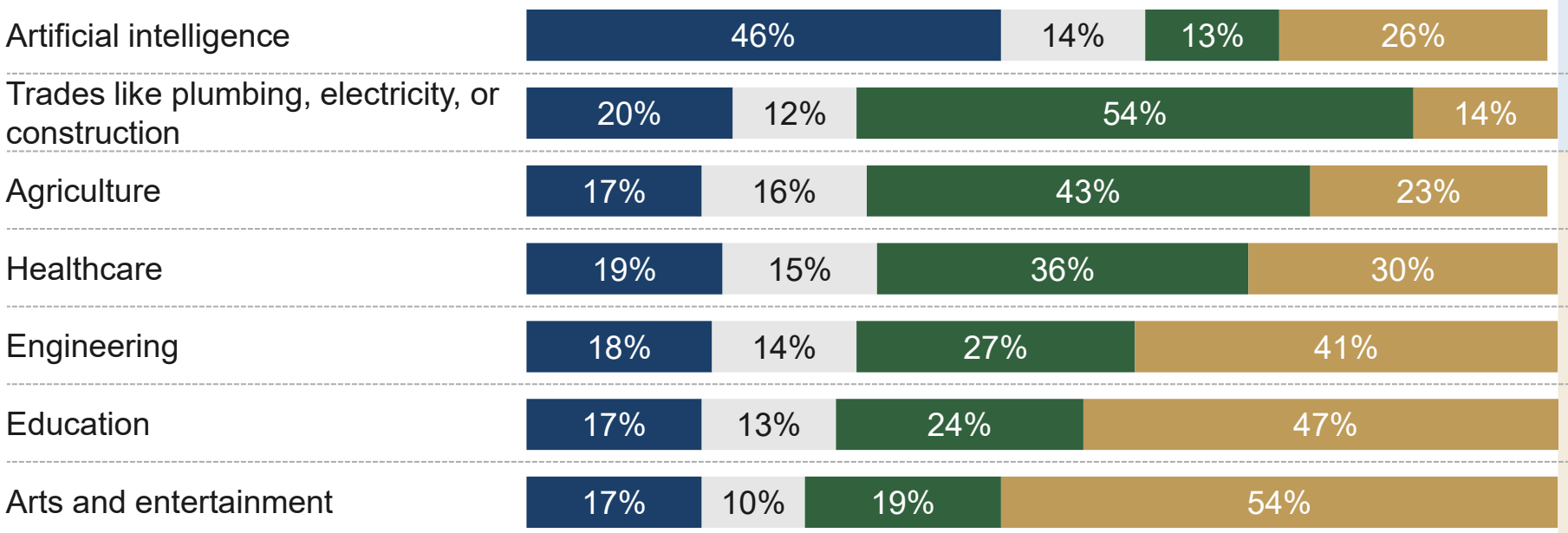
Youth believe that the fields of engineering, education, and arts/entertainment will be hit hardest by job displacement.

What kind of impact do you think AI will have on each of the following industries…?



	DIFF: Create more jobs *minus* Create fewer jobs	
	All youth	4-Hers
Artificial intelligence	+20	+28
Trades like plumbing, electricity, or construction	+5	+5
Agriculture	-6	+1
Healthcare	-11	-5
Engineering	-23	-14
Education	-30	-17
Arts and entertainment	-37	-34

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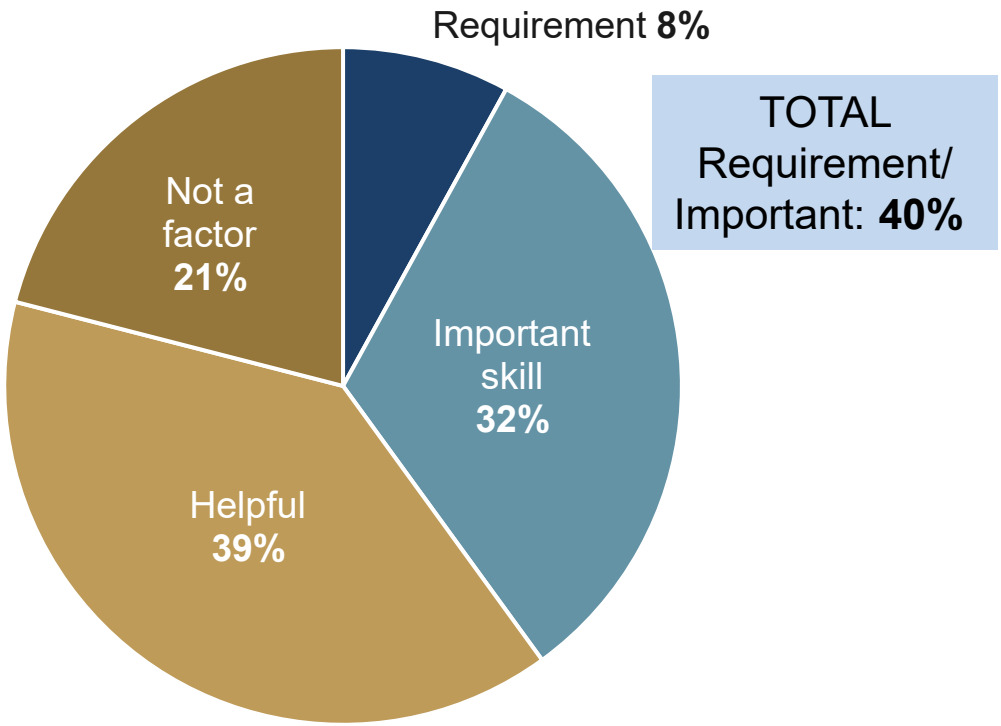
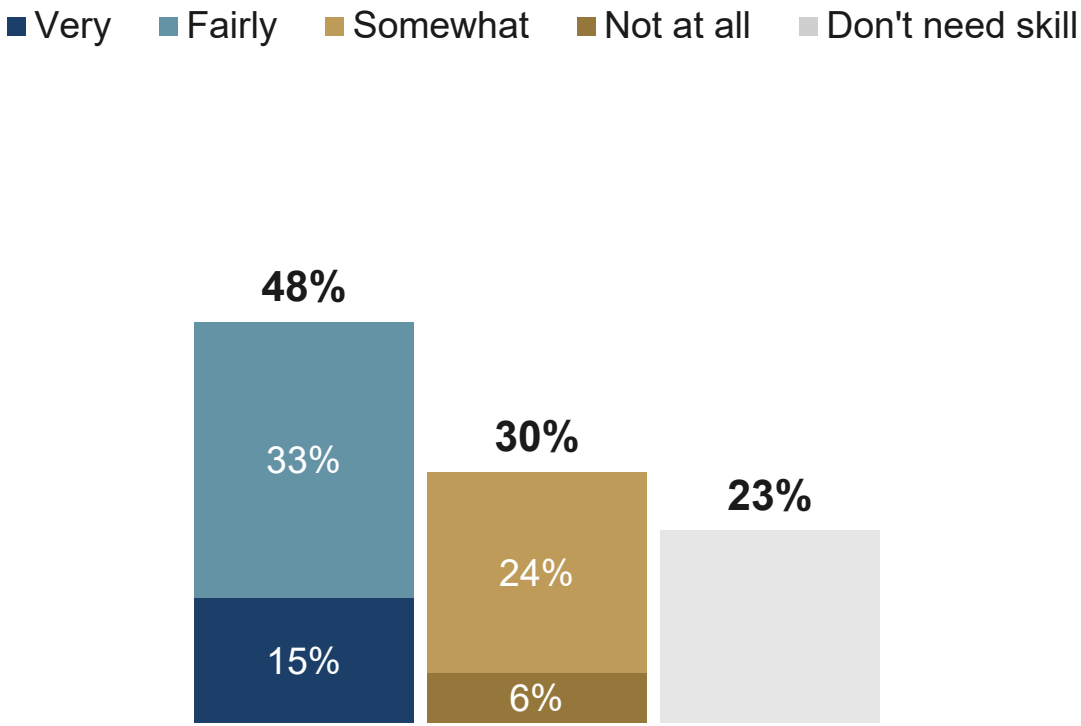
Young Americans believe AI skills will factor into their future careers in some way but less than half feel prepared to use AI.

When it comes to the job or career that you want to pursue after you graduate, how important a factor will AI skills and proficiency be in that job or career?



When you think about the kind of work you want to do in the future, how prepared do you feel you are to use tools like AI?



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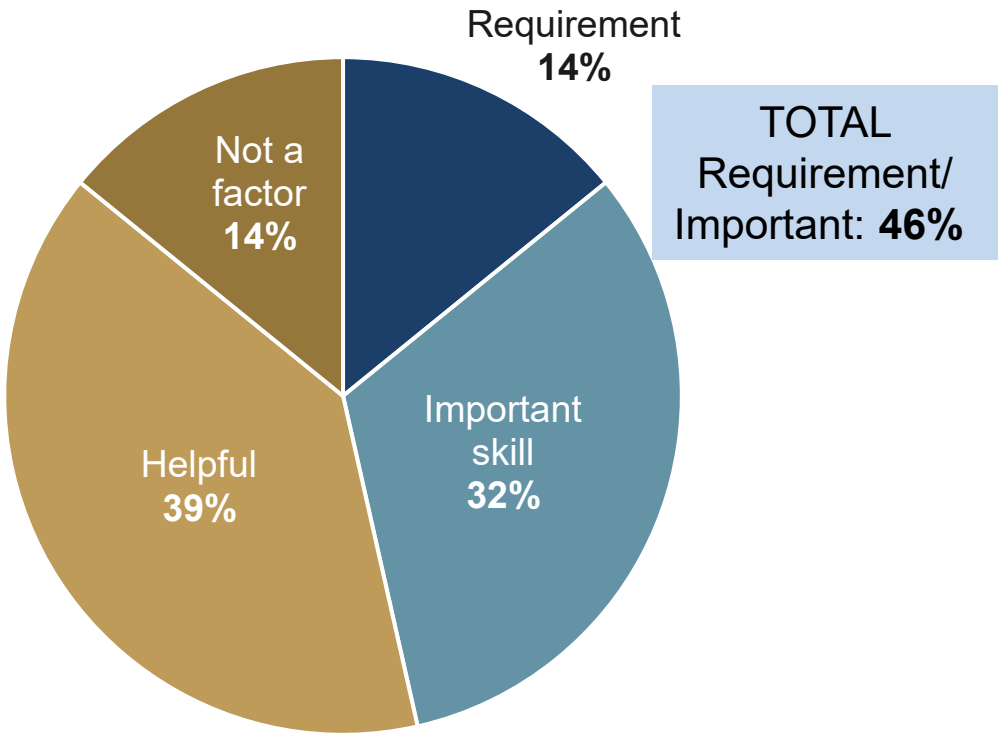
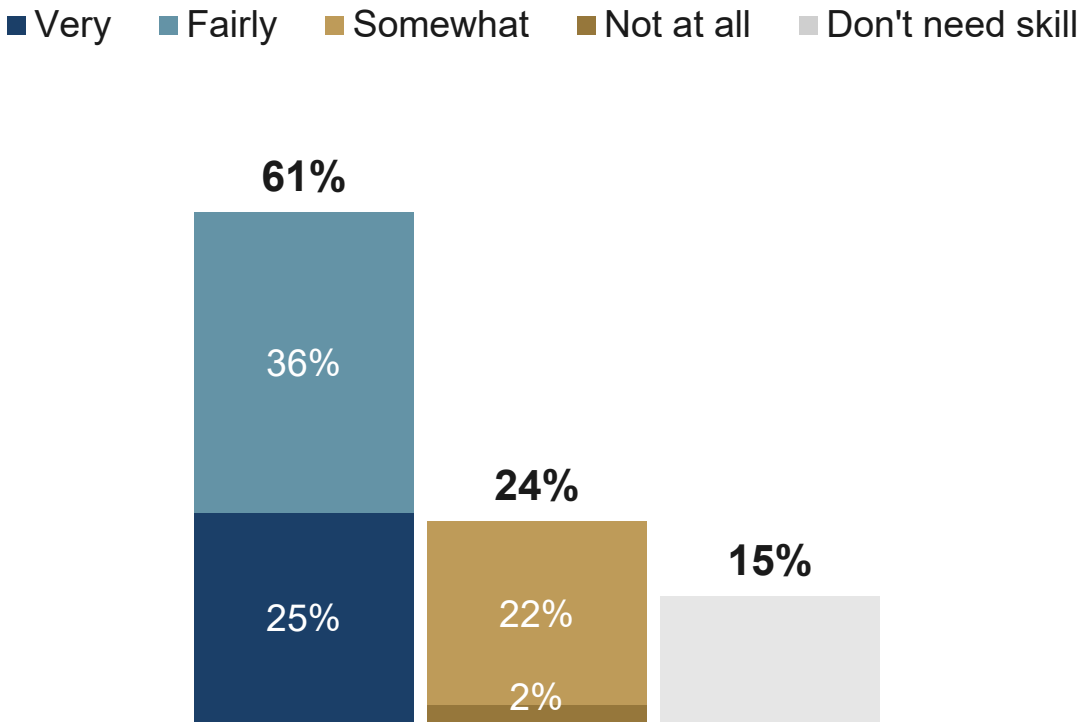
4-Hers: More likely to expect AI skills will be a requirement or important in their future careers and feel prepared to use them.

4-H: When it comes to the job or career that you want to pursue after you graduate, how important a factor will AI skills and proficiency be in that job or career?



4-H: When you think about the kind of work you want to do in the future, how prepared do you feel you are to use tools like AI?



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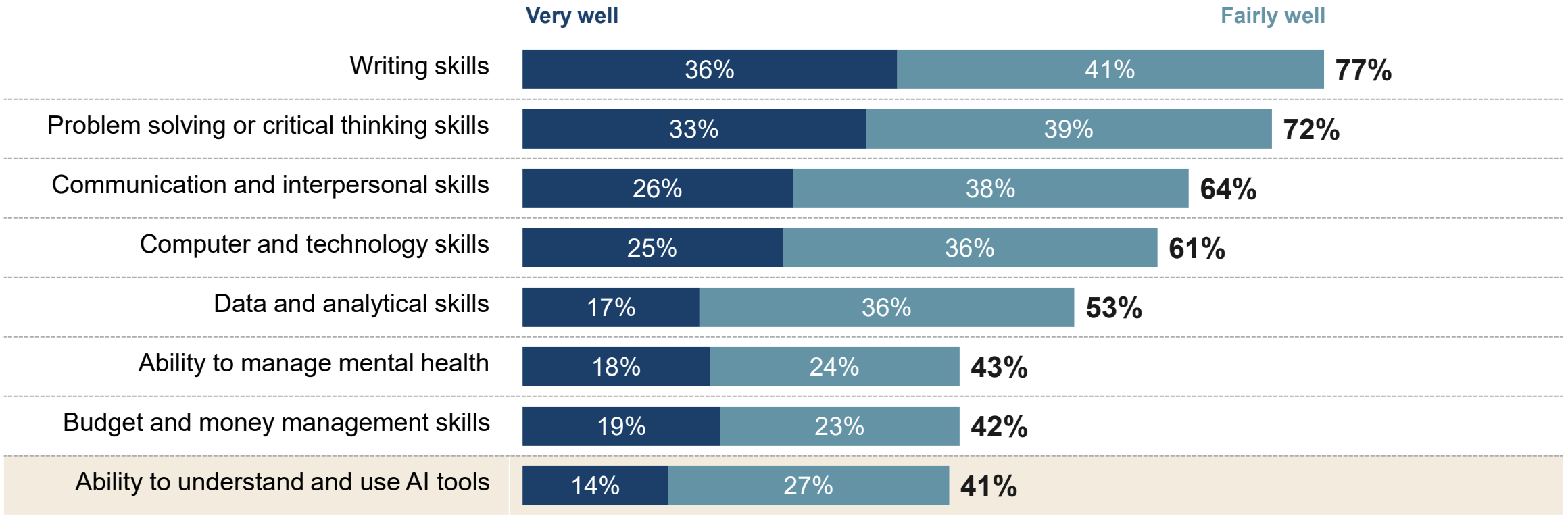
While youth believe that schools are preparing them well for traditional skills, there is work to be done on using AI.

How well do you believe that your school is preparing you for success in your career and life in…?



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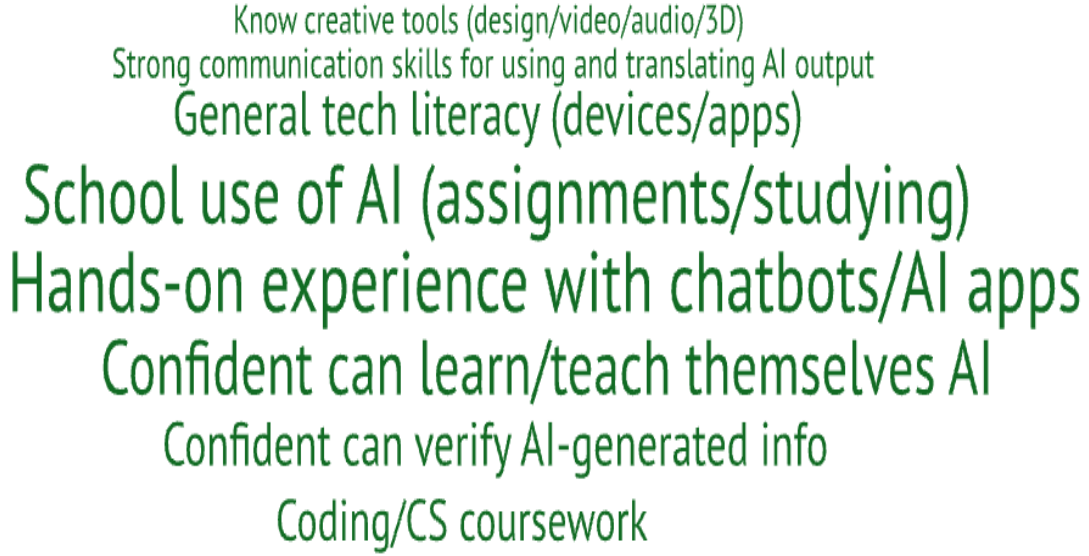
To help improve their confidence with AI, youth cite hands-on experience and how to validate/fact-check information + real-world applications.

(Coded word clouds of responses)

What skills or experiences have made you feel prepared to use tools like AI in your future work?



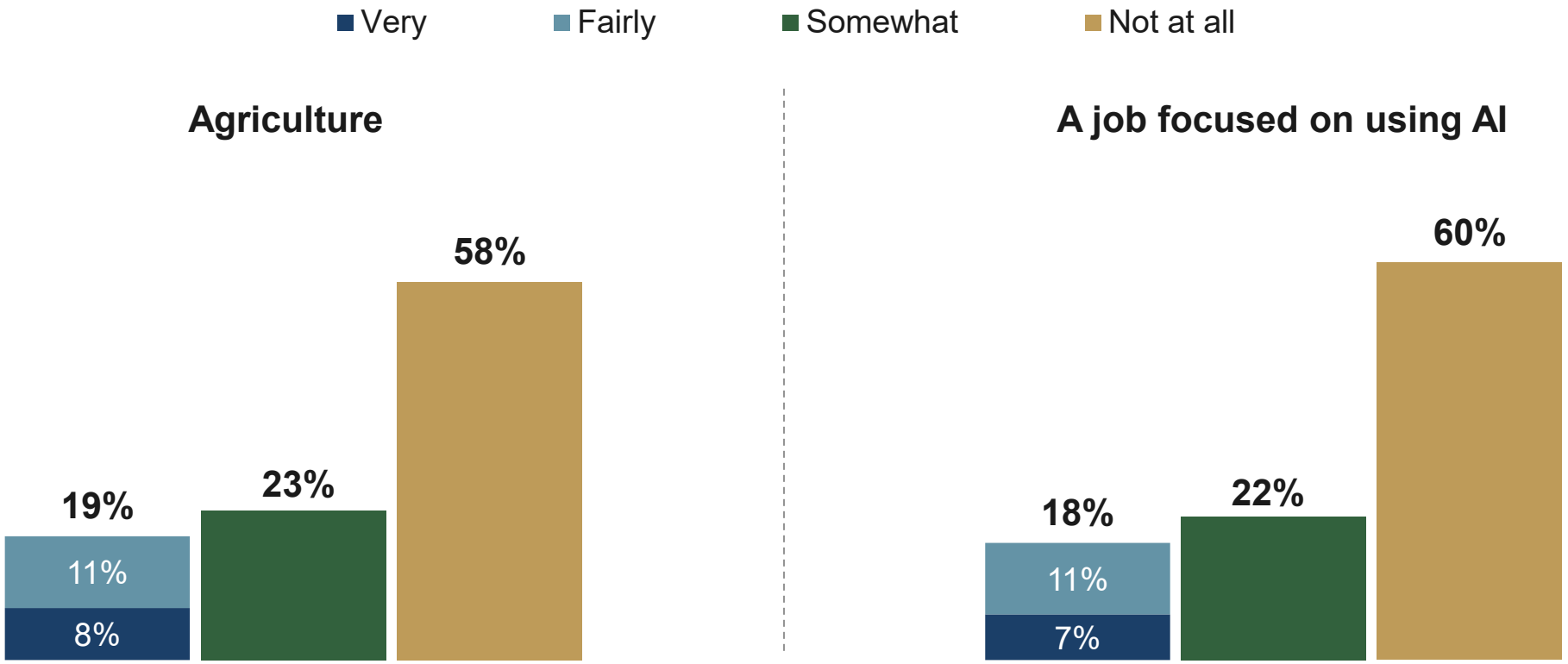
What would you need to know or learn to feel prepared to use tools like AI in your future work?



AI in Agriculture

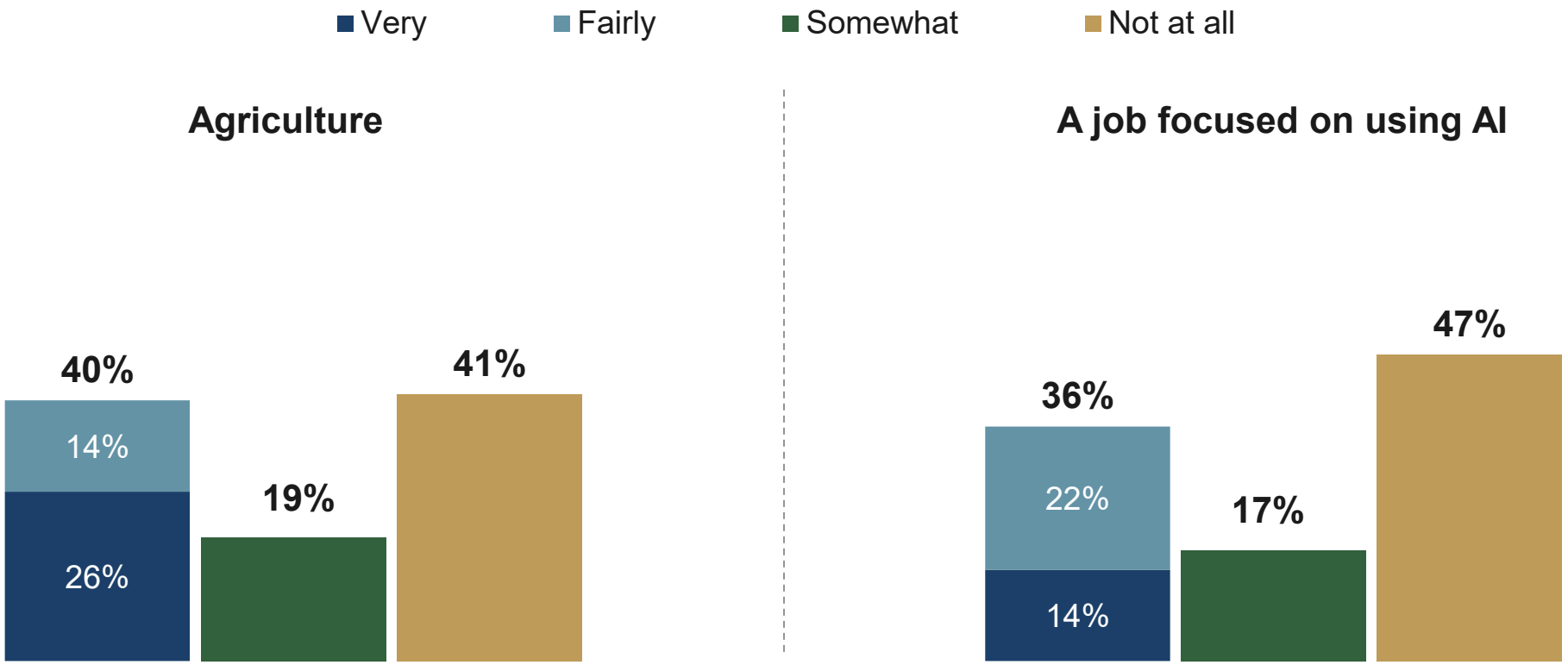
Nearly one in five young Americans express interest in careers in agriculture and AI.

After you graduate, how interested are you in working in…



4-Hers: Over one-third of 4-Hers express interest in careers in agriculture and AI.

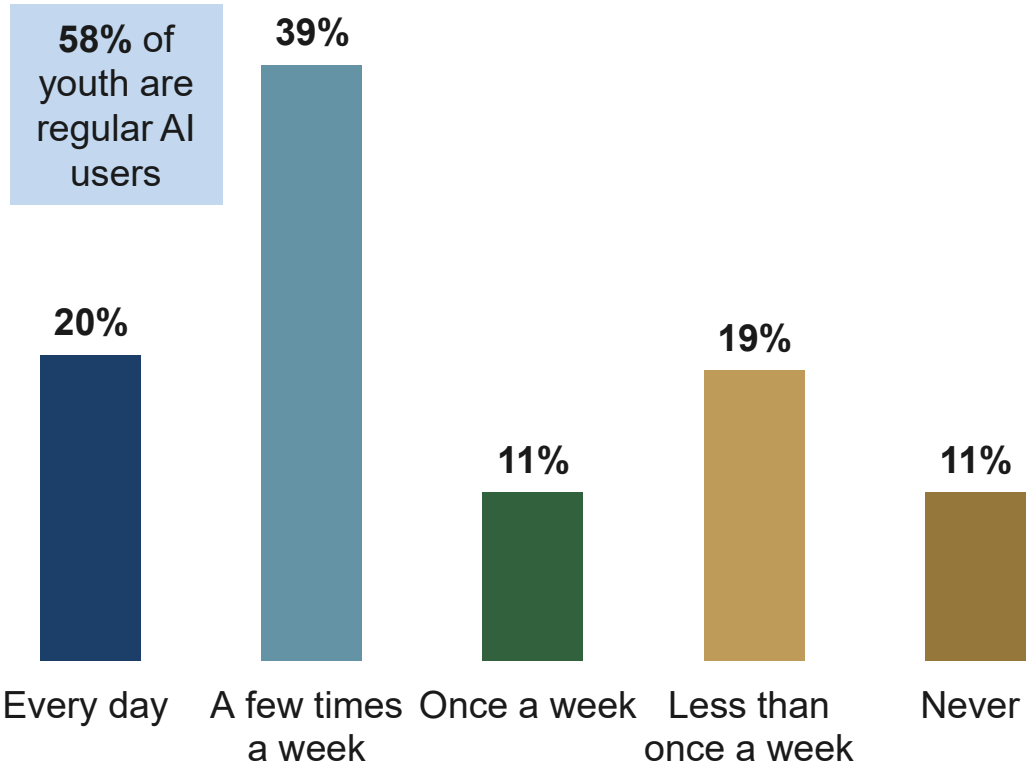
4-H: After you graduate, how interested are you in working in…



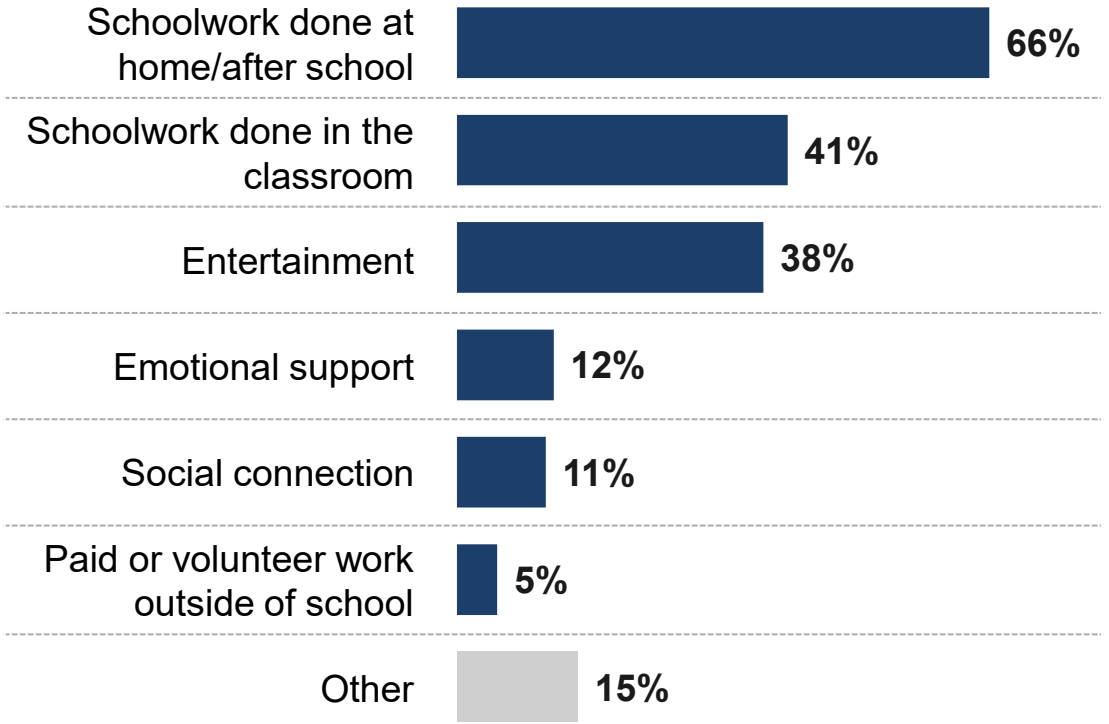
AI Awareness

AI use is pervasive and most often used for schoolwork at home.

How often do you use AI programs or tools?



What do you use AI programs or tools for…?



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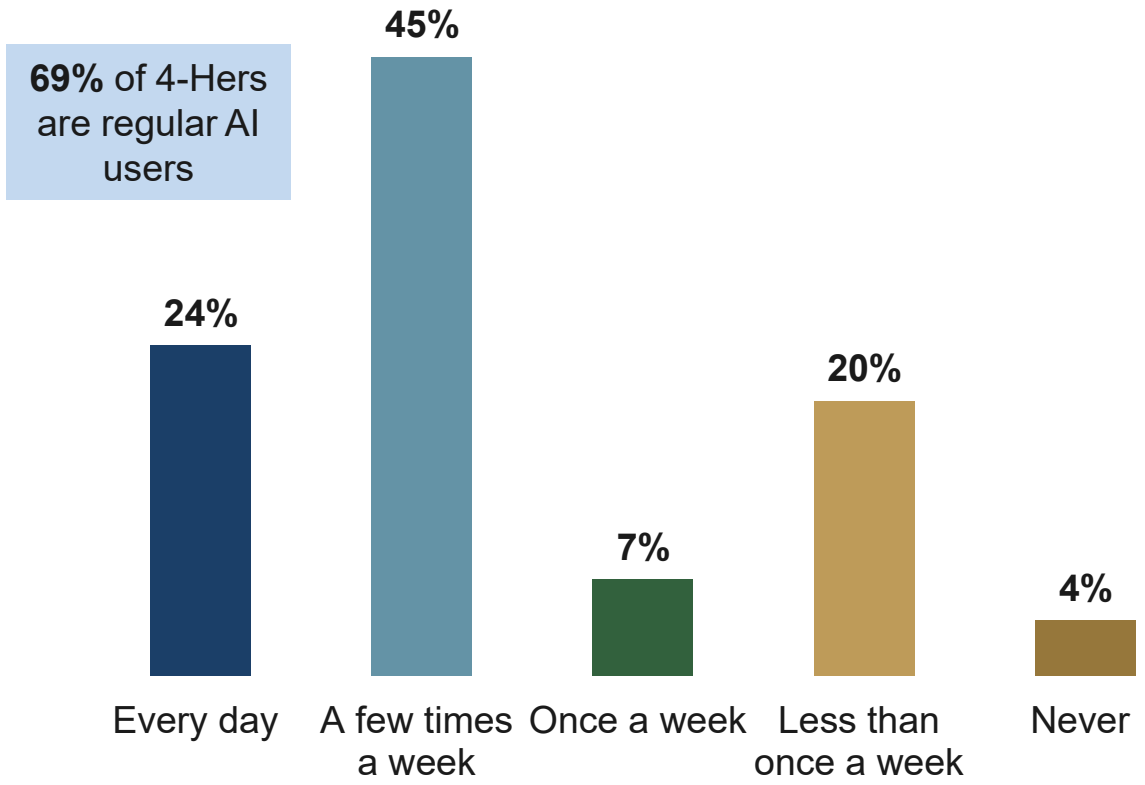
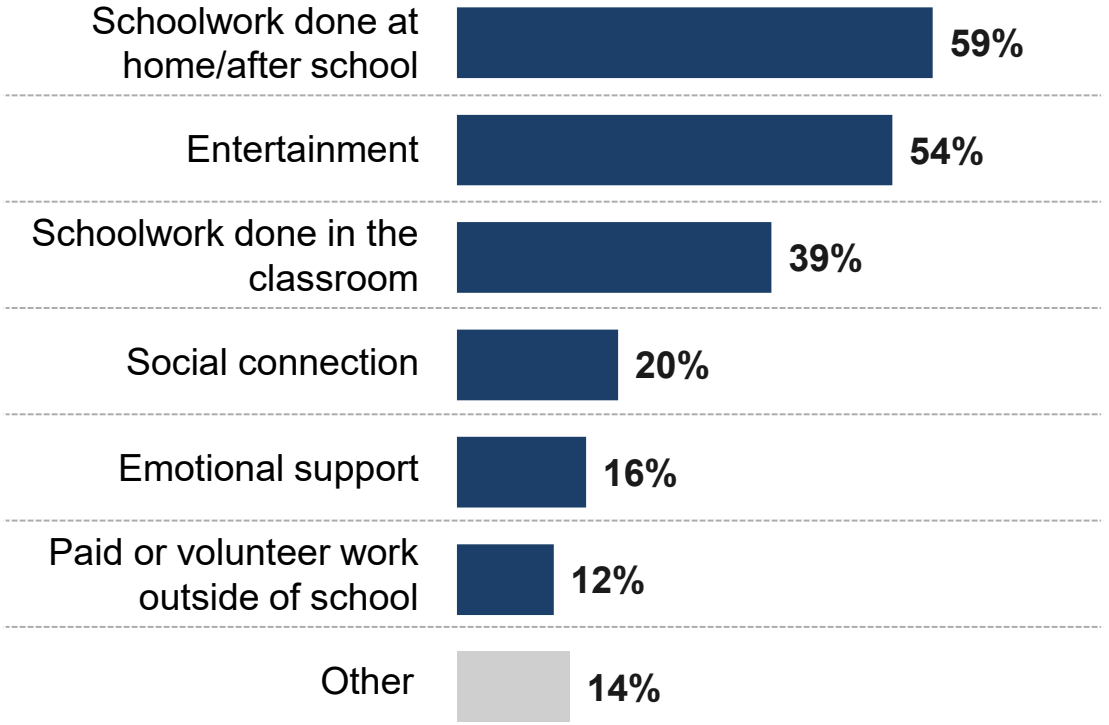
4-Hers: More likely to be regular AI users and use AI for entertainment and other reasons outside schoolwork.

4-H: How often do you use AI programs or tools?



4-H: What do you use AI programs or tools for…?



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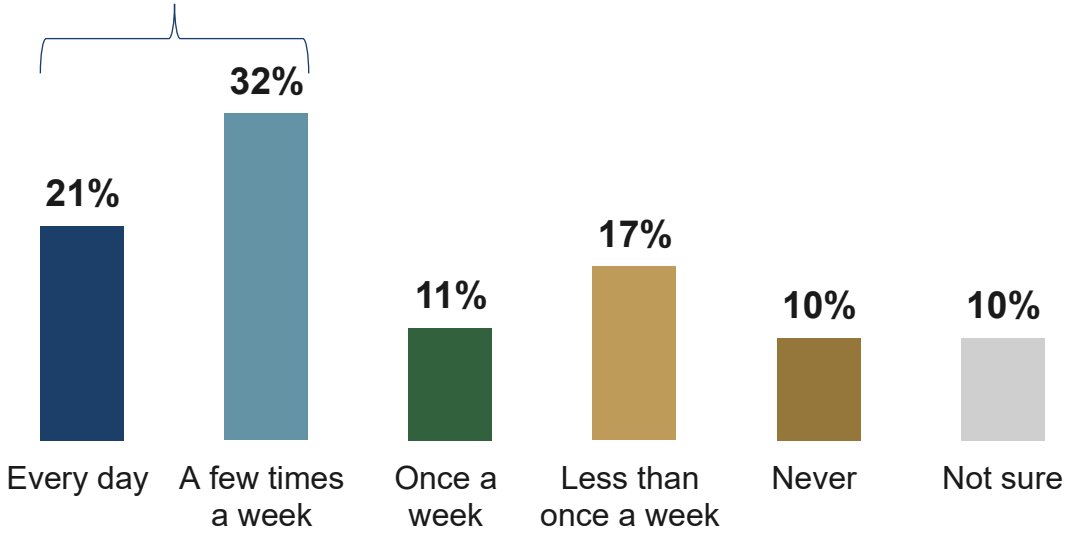
In ten years, young Americans believe they will be using AI in their daily lives, particularly for learning, their career, and financial-related tasks.

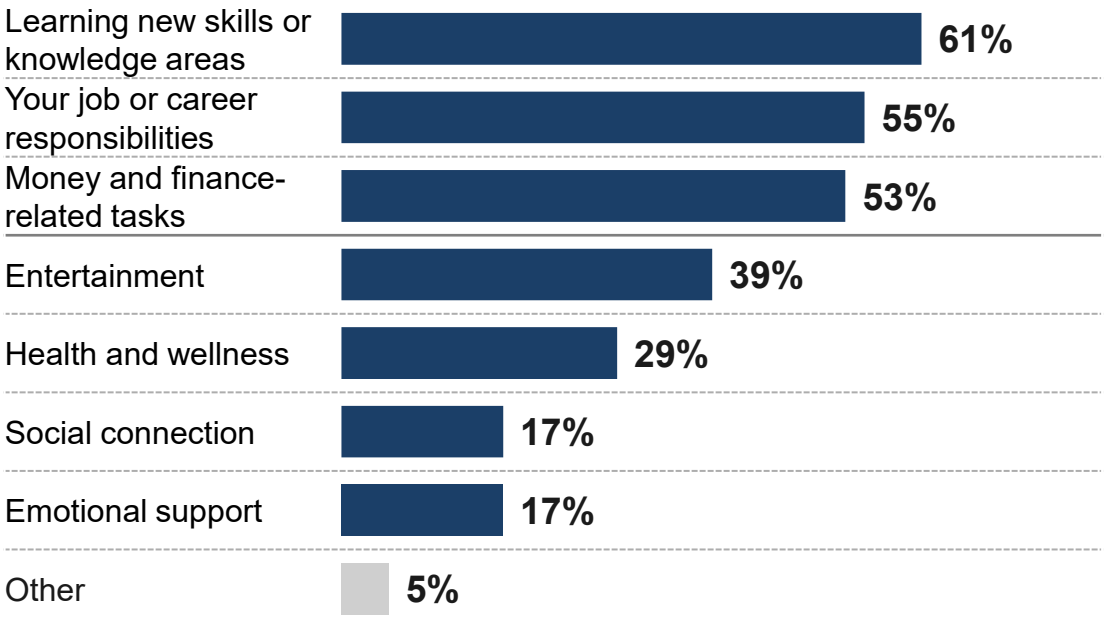
Thinking about ten years from now…

How often do you think you will use AI programs or tools?

52% of youth expect they will be regular AI users



What do you think you will use AI programs and tools for…?



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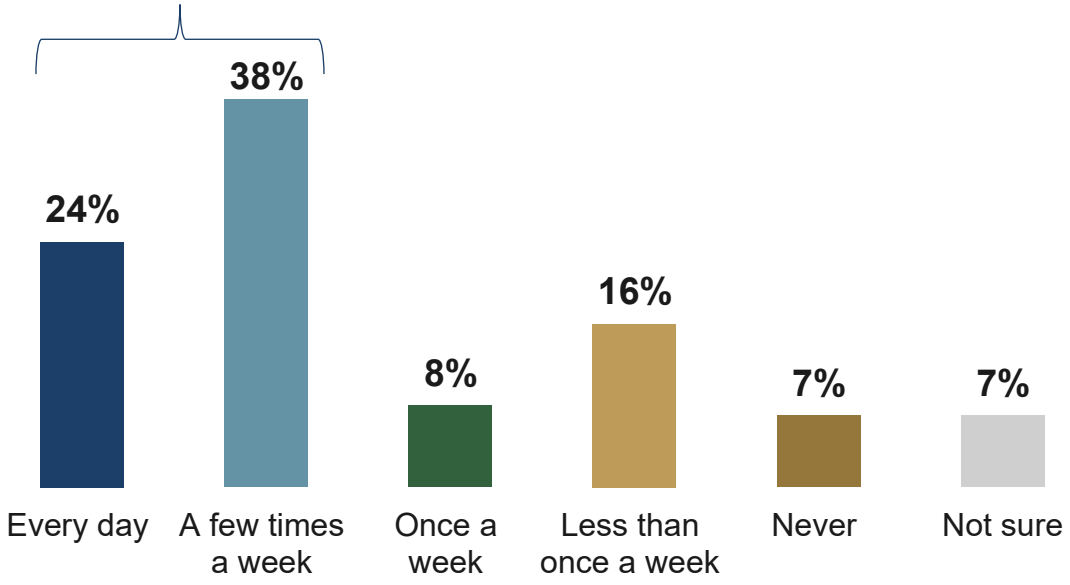
4-Hers: Even more likely to expect to use AI in their future lives, and for areas in and outside of work.

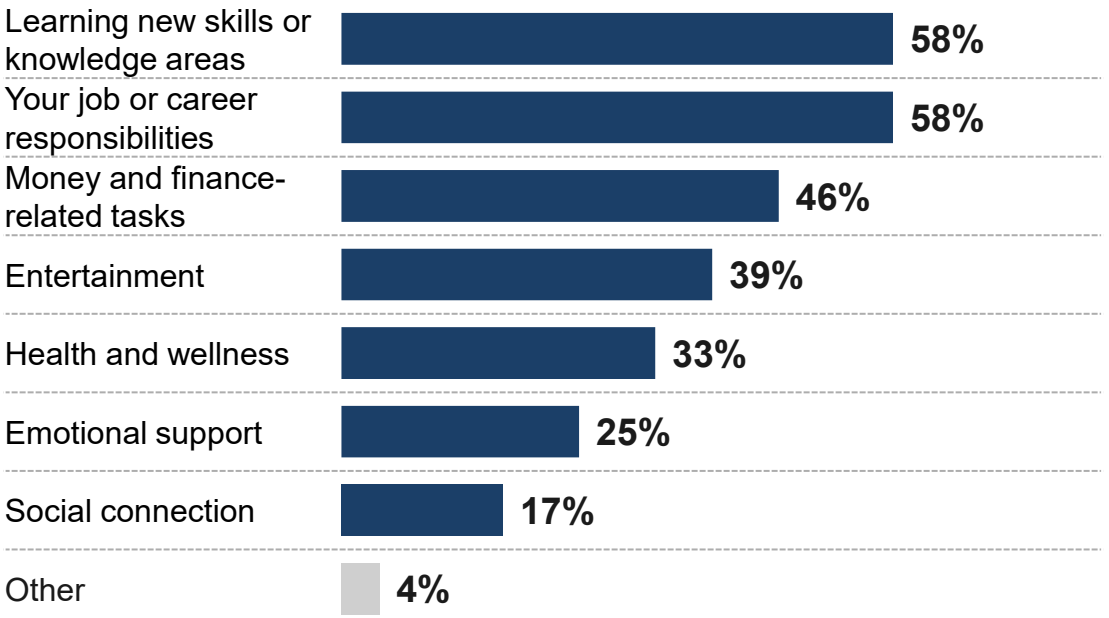
Thinking about ten years from now…

How often do you think you will use AI programs or tools?

62% of 4-Hers expect they will be regular AI users



What do you think you will use AI programs and tools for…?



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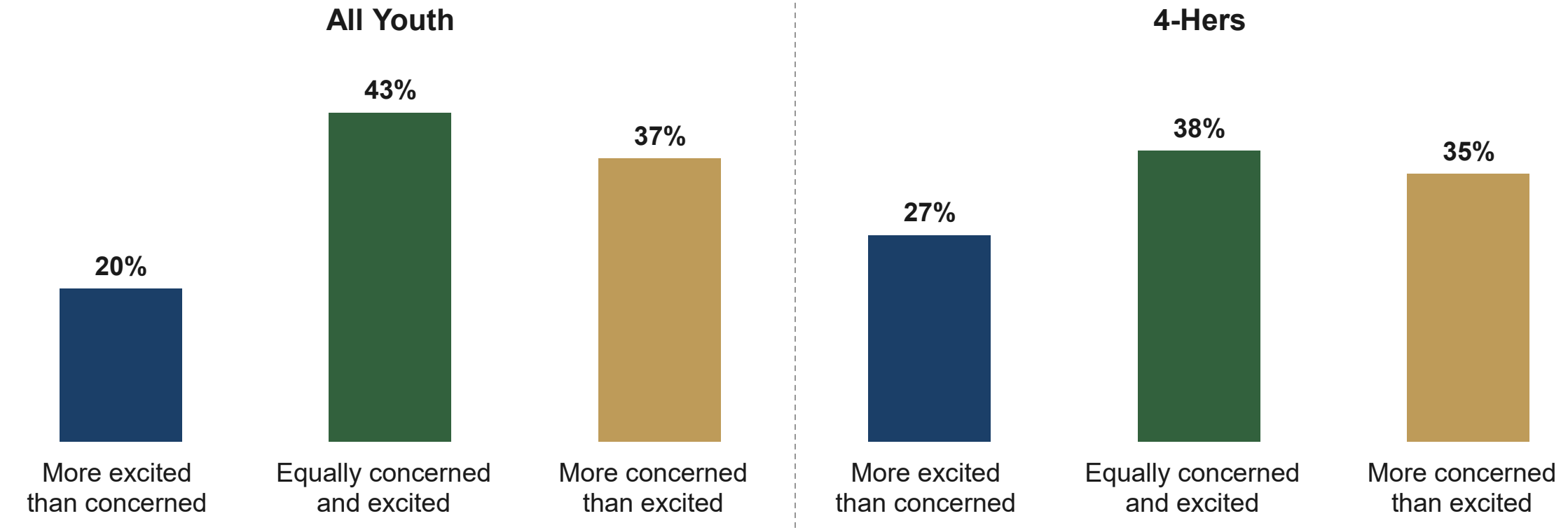
Youth, including 4-Hers, express mixed feelings toward AI, leaning more concerned about it than excited.

Overall, would you say the increased use of artificial intelligence (AI) in daily life makes you feel…?



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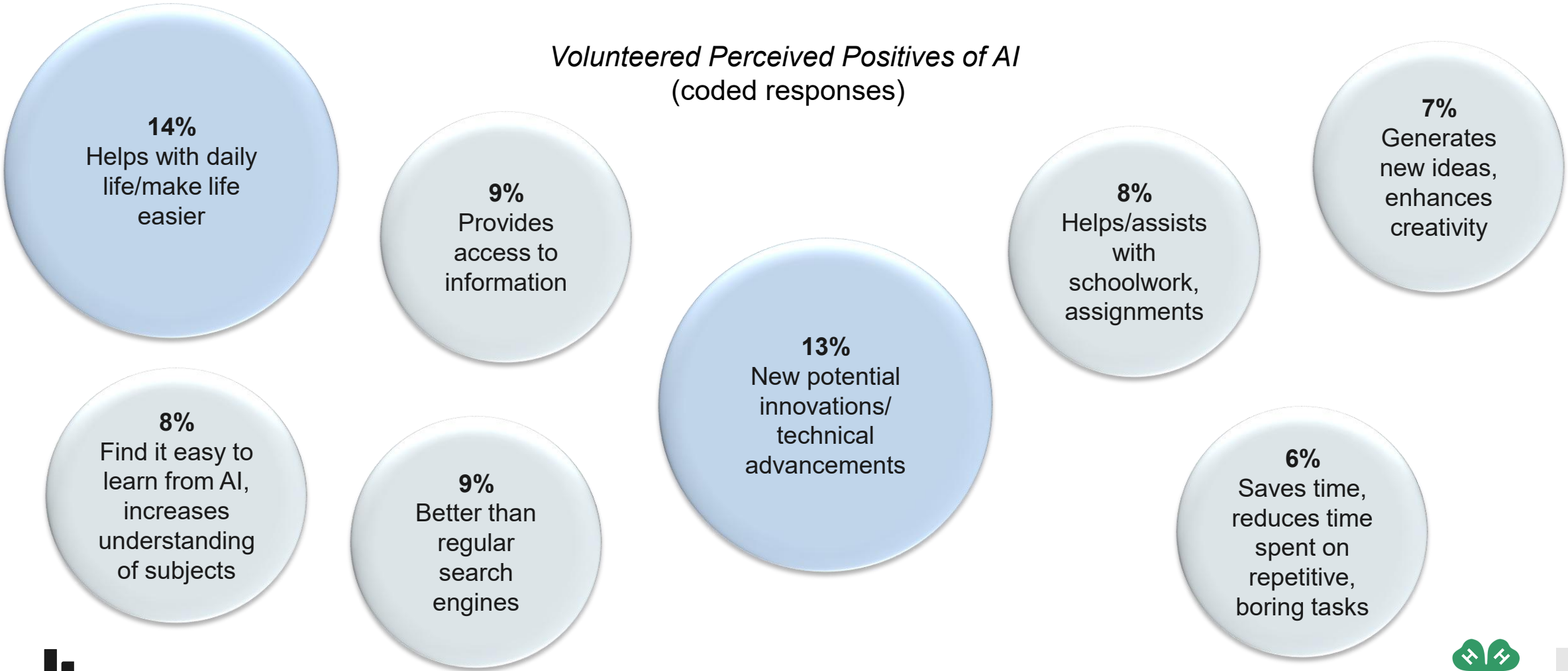
Excitement is highest for AI's potential for innovation, ability to increase speed and efficiency, and as a resource for learning.

Volunteered Perceived Positives of AI
(coded responses)



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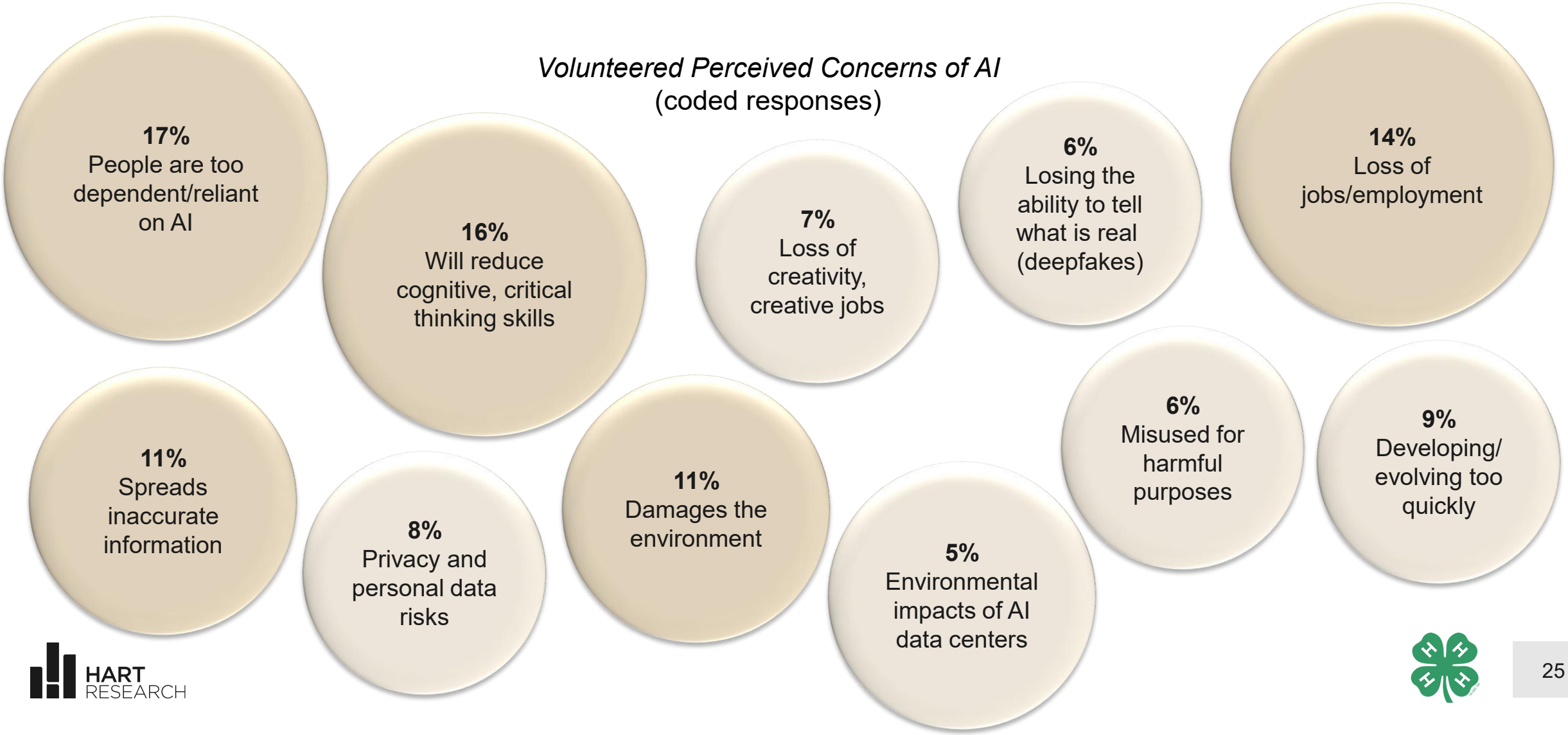
Overdependence on AI, loss of critical thinking, and job displacement are the most top-of-mind concerns for youth.

Volunteered Perceived Concerns of AI
(coded responses)



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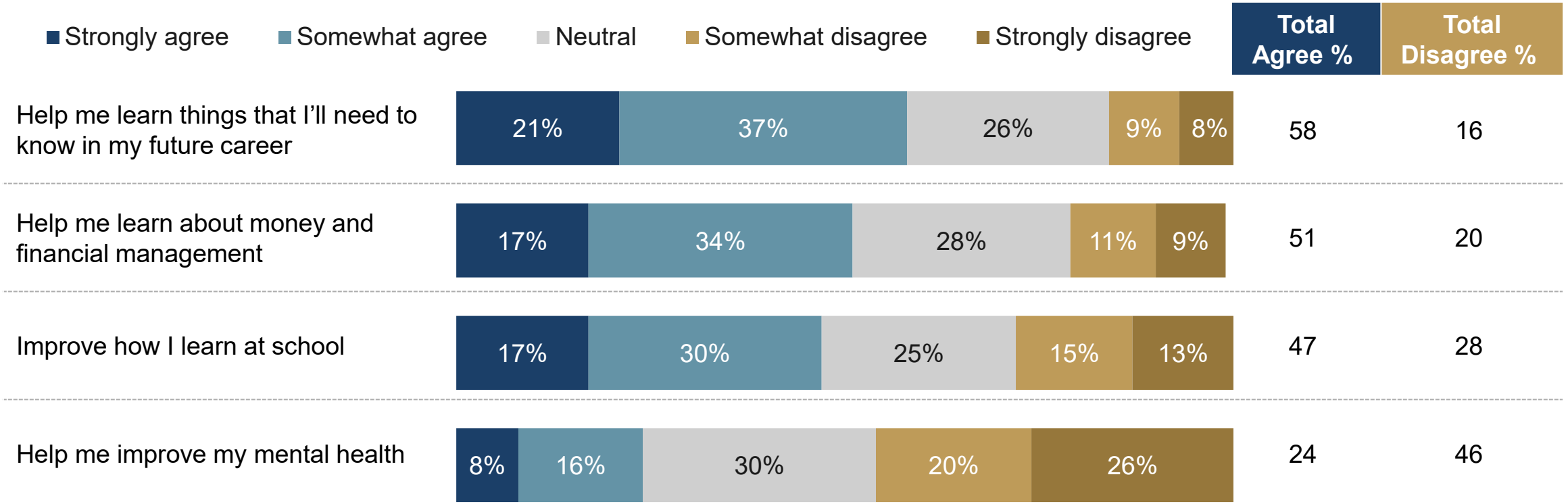
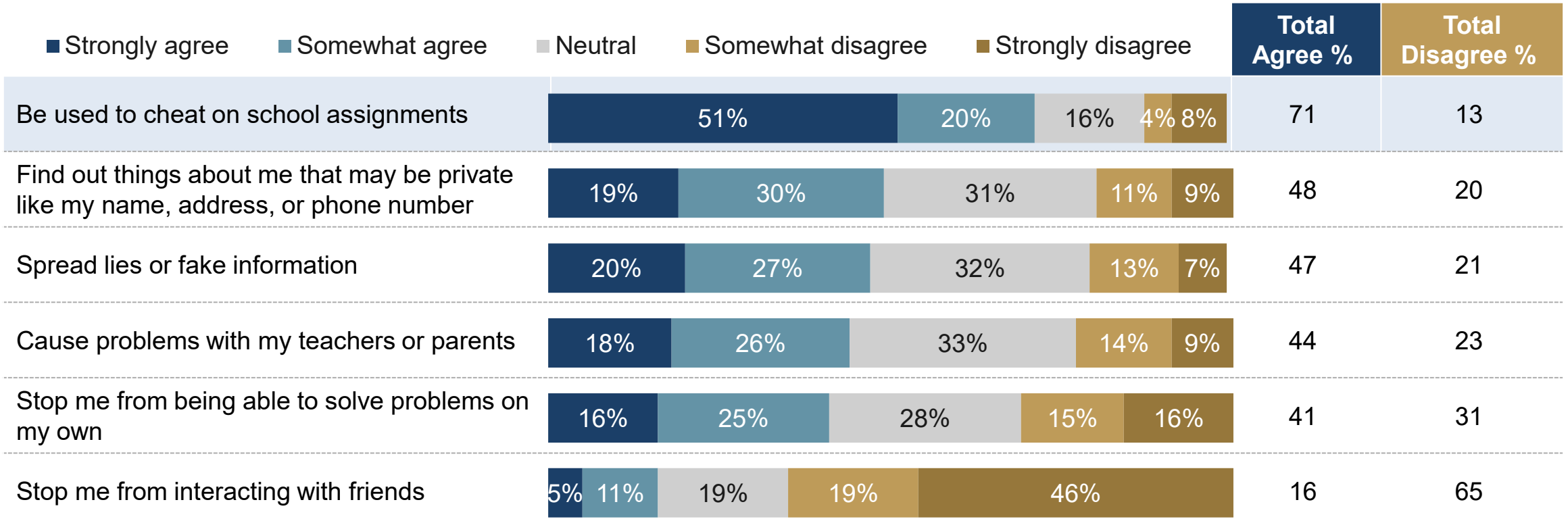
Most expect AI will be useful for helping them learn, prepare for careers, and manage money, but not for their mental health.

Do you agree or disagree AI will…?



Youth express many concerns about AI, with the strongest, most overwhelming one being use of AI to cheat.

Do you agree or disagree AI will…?



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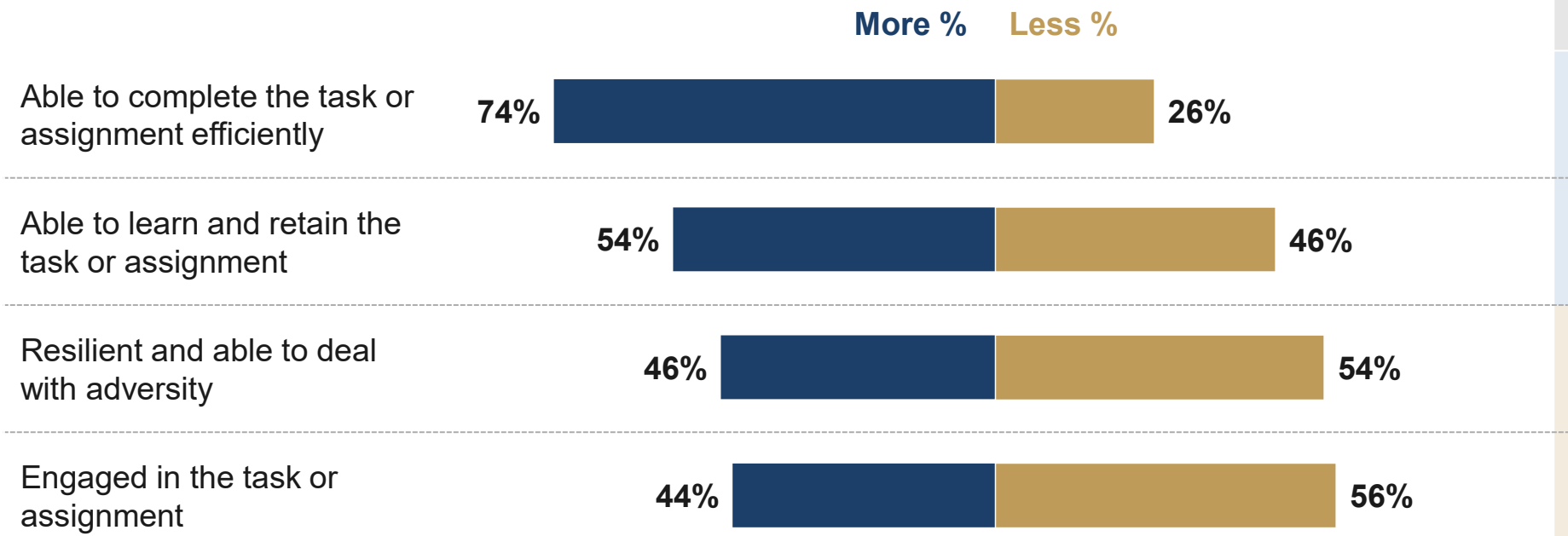
Youth believe AI improves their efficiency and are split on whether it improves their learning, resilience, and engagement.

Do you believe artificial intelligence makes you MORE or LESS…?



	Diff: More *minus* Less	
	All youth	4-Hers
Able to complete the task or assignment efficiently	+48	+57
Able to learn and retain the task or assignment	+8	+7
Resilient and able to deal with adversity	-8	+7
Engaged in the task or assignment	-13	+1

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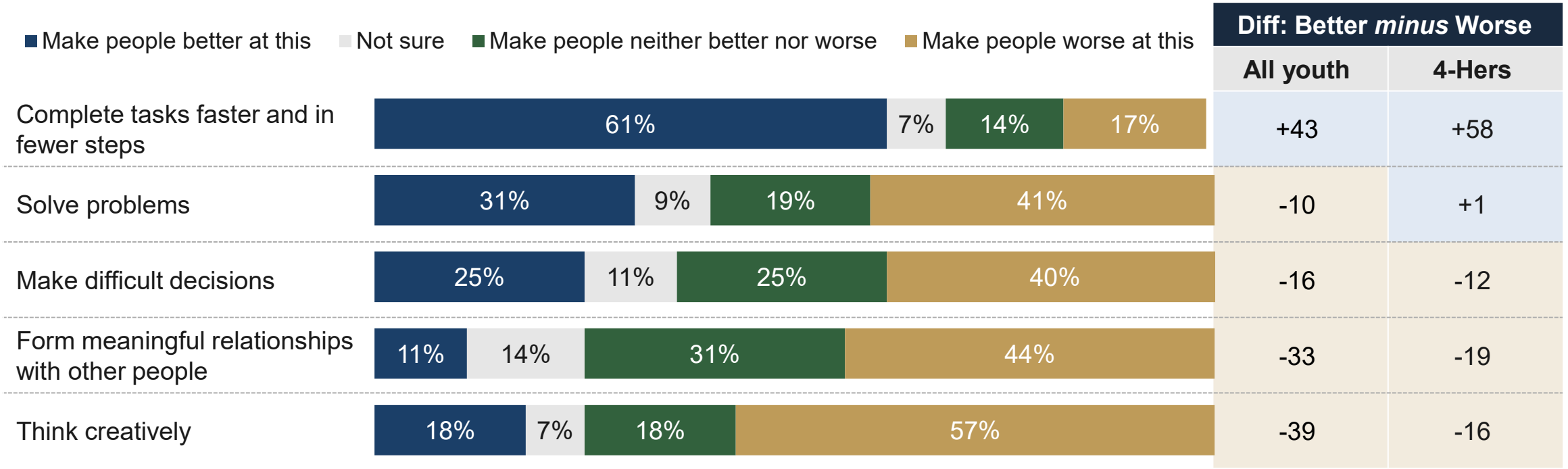
AI is also expected to have a net negative effect on decision-making, relationship-building, and creativity.

How do you think the increased use of artificial intelligence (AI) in society will impact people's ability to…?



	Make people better at this	Not sure	Make people neither better nor worse	Make people worse at this	Diff: Better *minus* Worse: All youth	Diff: Better *minus* Worse: 4-Hers
Complete tasks faster and in fewer steps	61%	7%	14%	17%	+43	+58
Solve problems	31%	9%	19%	41%	-10	+1
Make difficult decisions	25%	11%	25%	40%	-16	-12
Form meaningful relationships with other people	11%	14%	31%	44%	-33	-19
Think creatively	18%	7%	18%	57%	-39	-16

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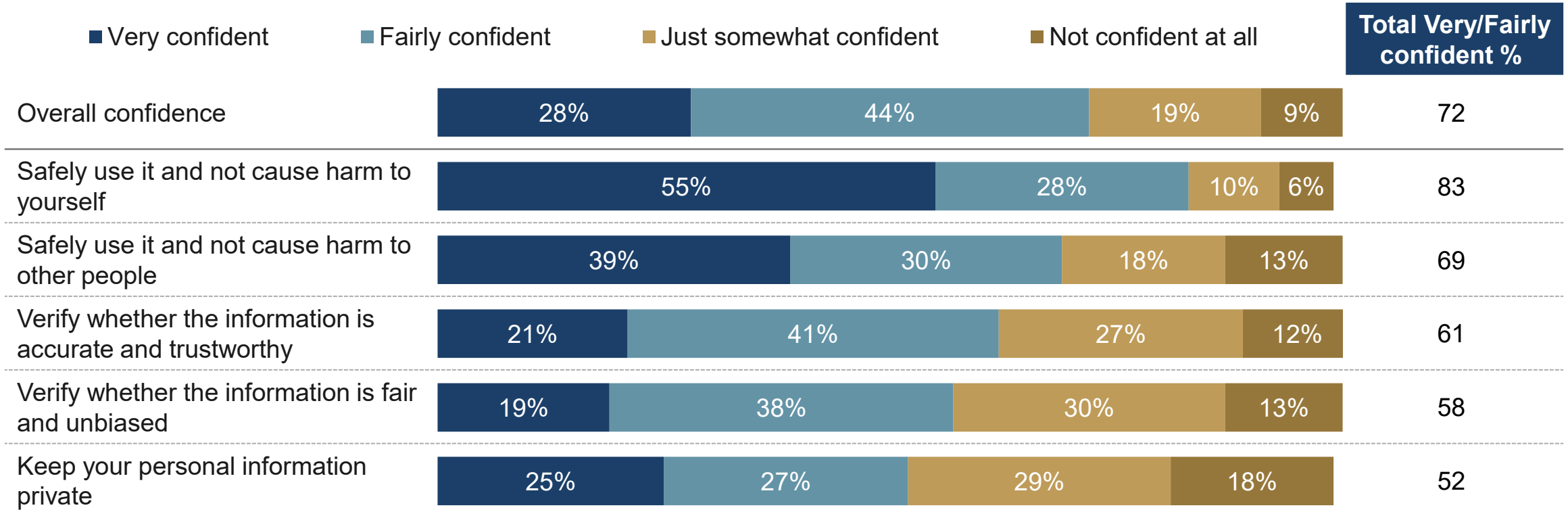
Youth overall report confidence in AI, but confidence is lower on whether the info is trusted, fair, and keeping personal information private.

Ratings of confidence in using AI.



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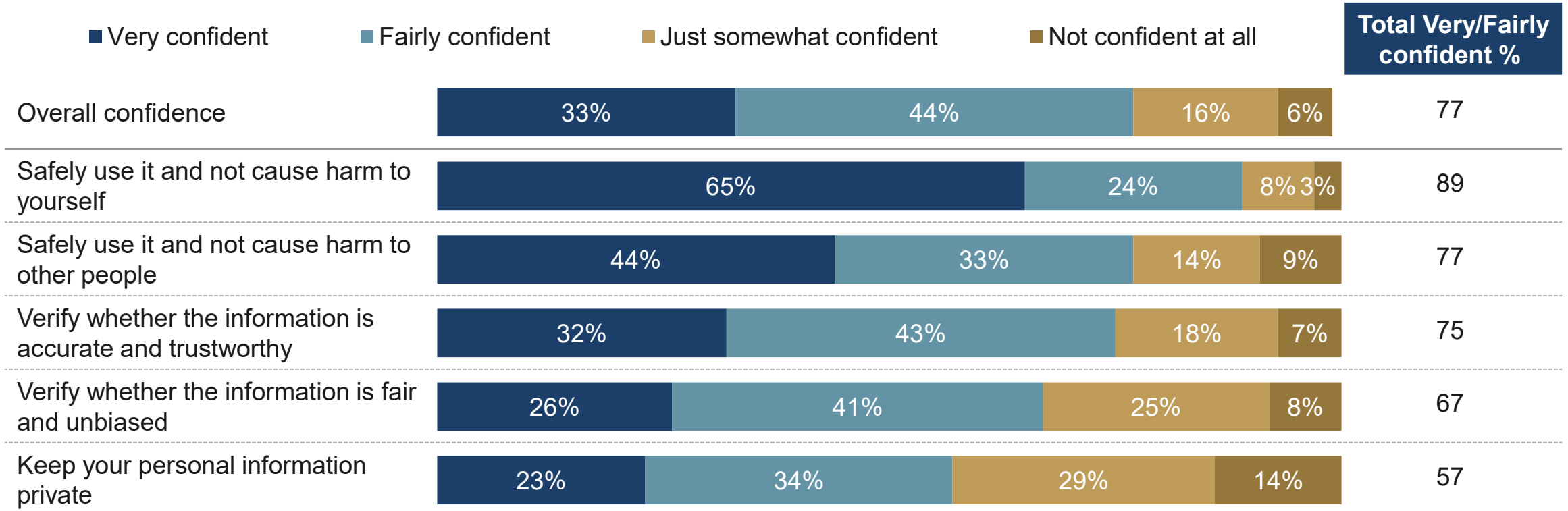
4-Hers: Feel more confident in using AI, but they also report lower confidence in understanding if information is fair and their personal information is private.

Ratings of confidence in using AI.



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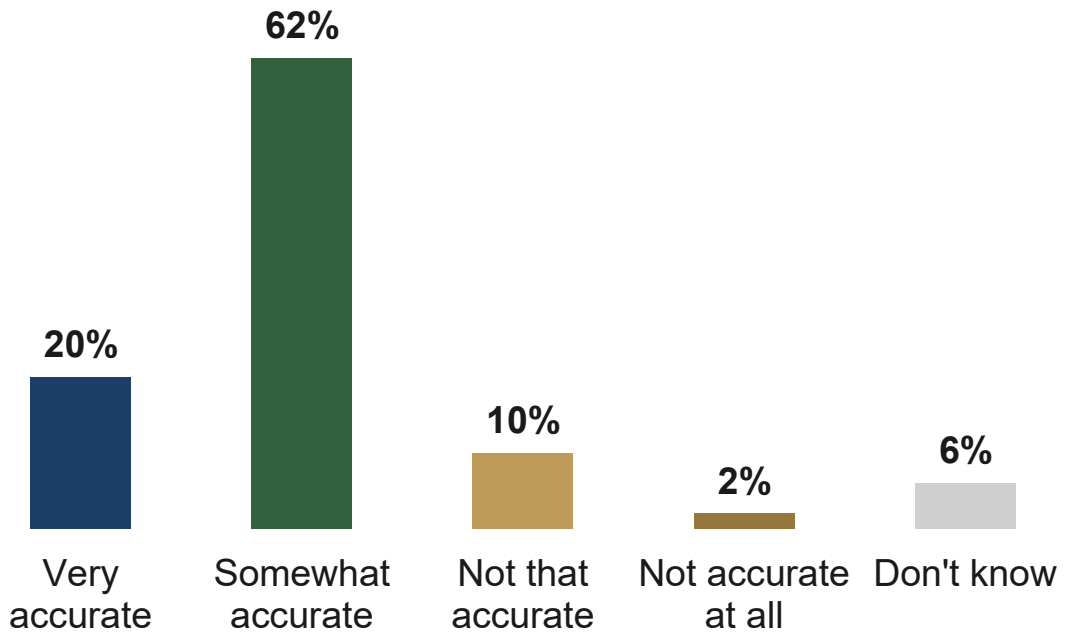
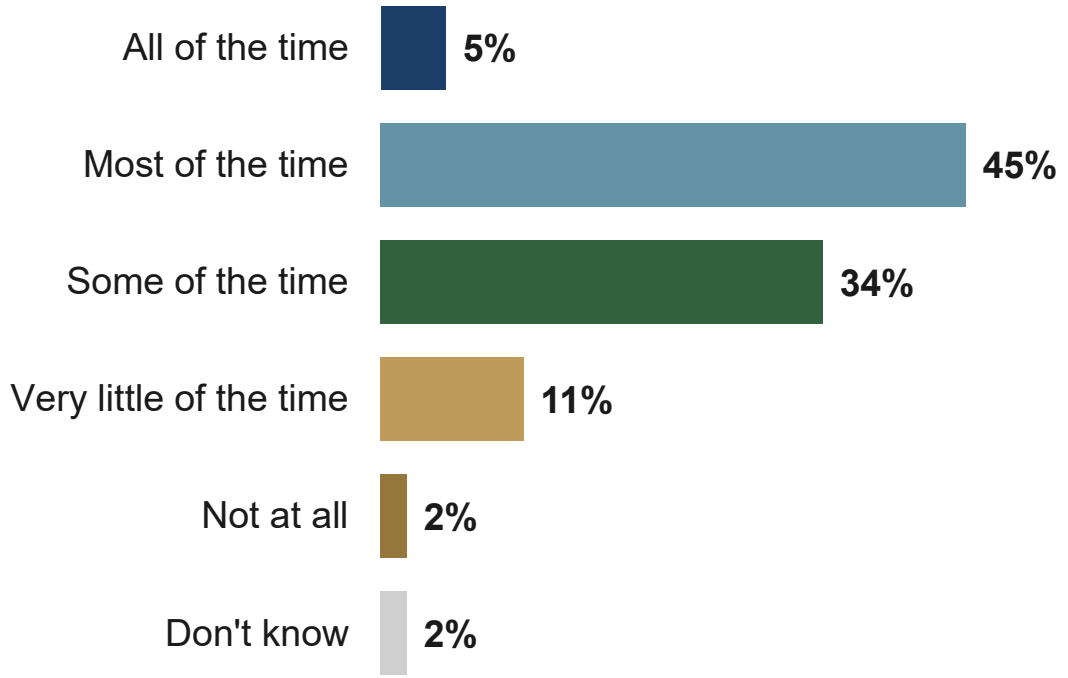
Most understand that not all information they get from AI is very accurate or trustworthy all of the time.

How accurate do you think the information is that you personally get from AI?



How much do you trust the information that you personally get from AI?



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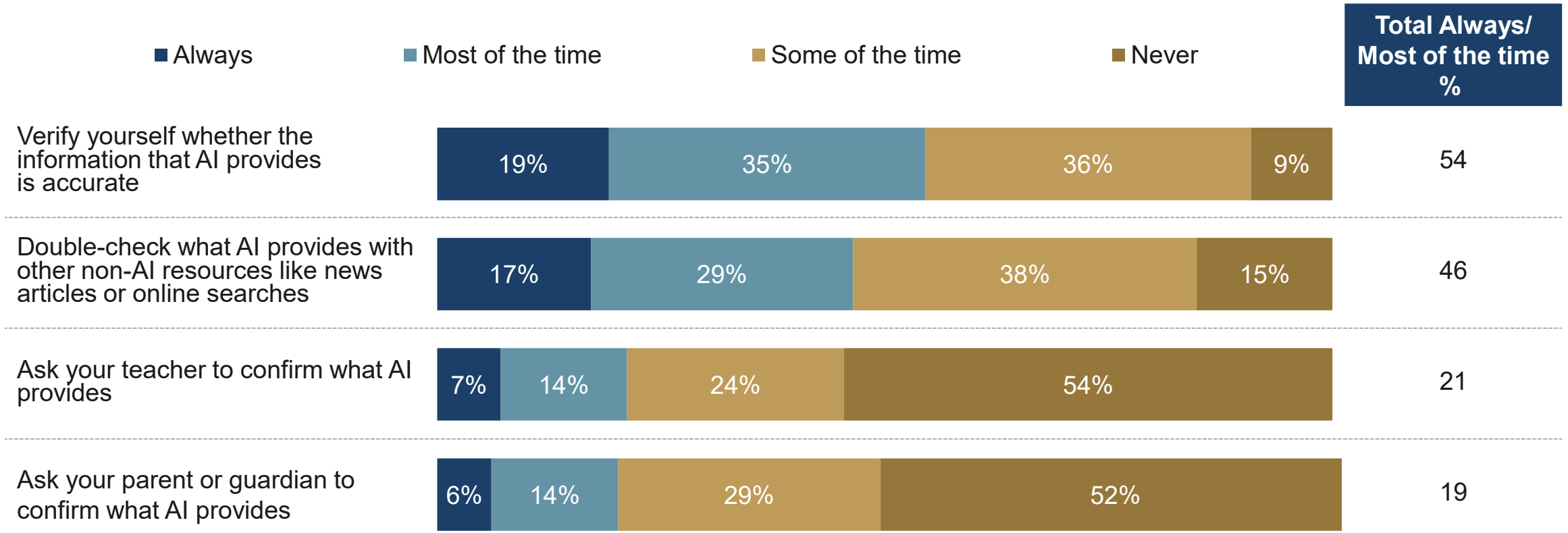
Young people are not always checking the accuracy of the information they get from AI, and even less likely to turn to teachers and parents for help.

When you use AI, how often do you…?



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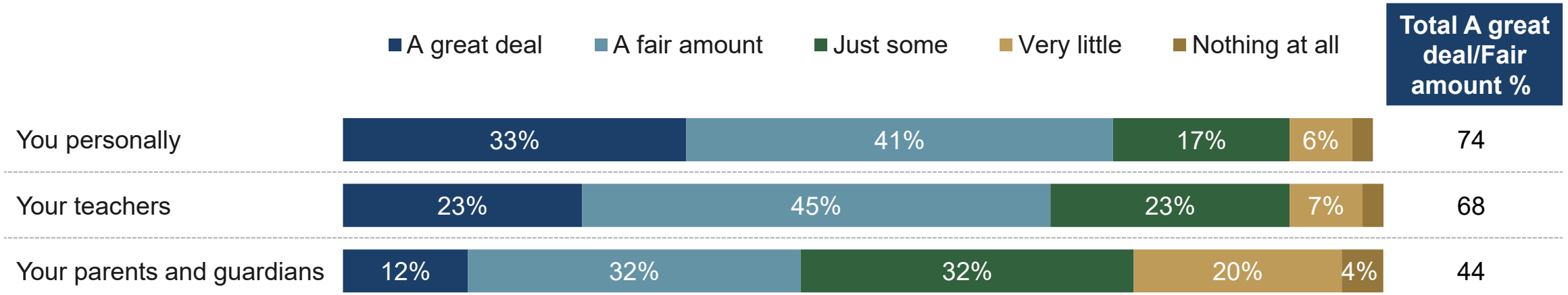
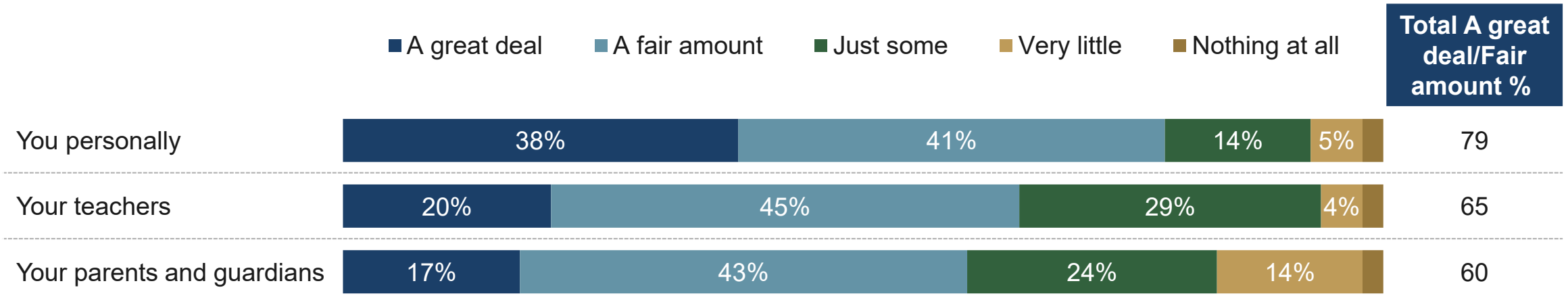
Youth rate their AI knowledge higher than the adults in their lives, especially parents.

Ratings of knowledge about artificial intelligence and how to use it well.



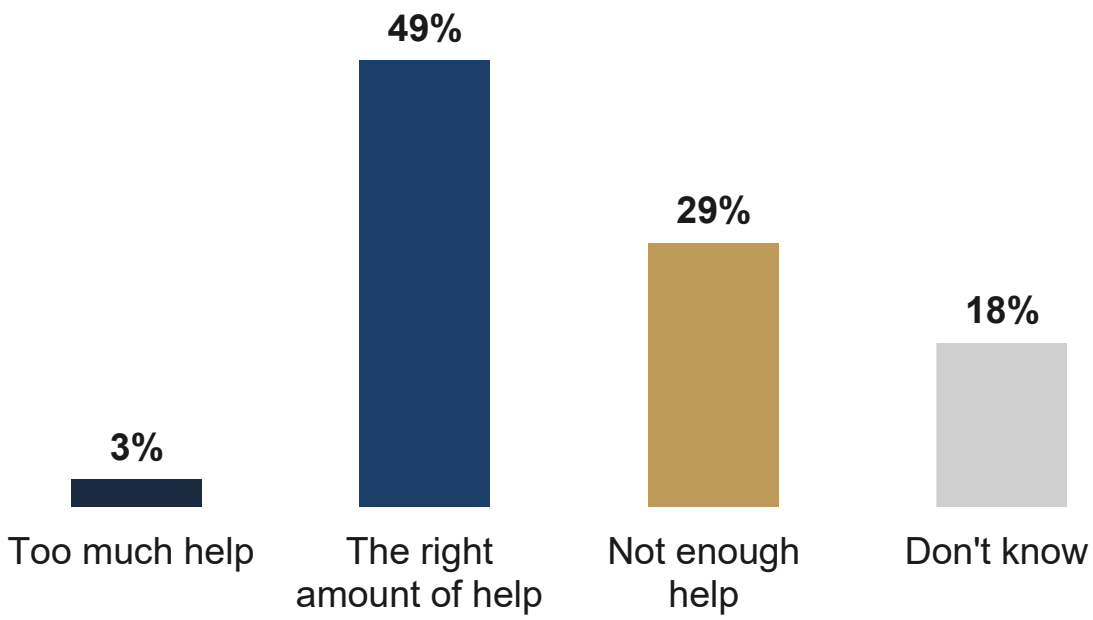
4-Hers: Just as likely to rate their AI knowledge above adults, with an even larger gap between teachers and youth.

4-H: Ratings of knowledge about artificial intelligence and how to use it well.

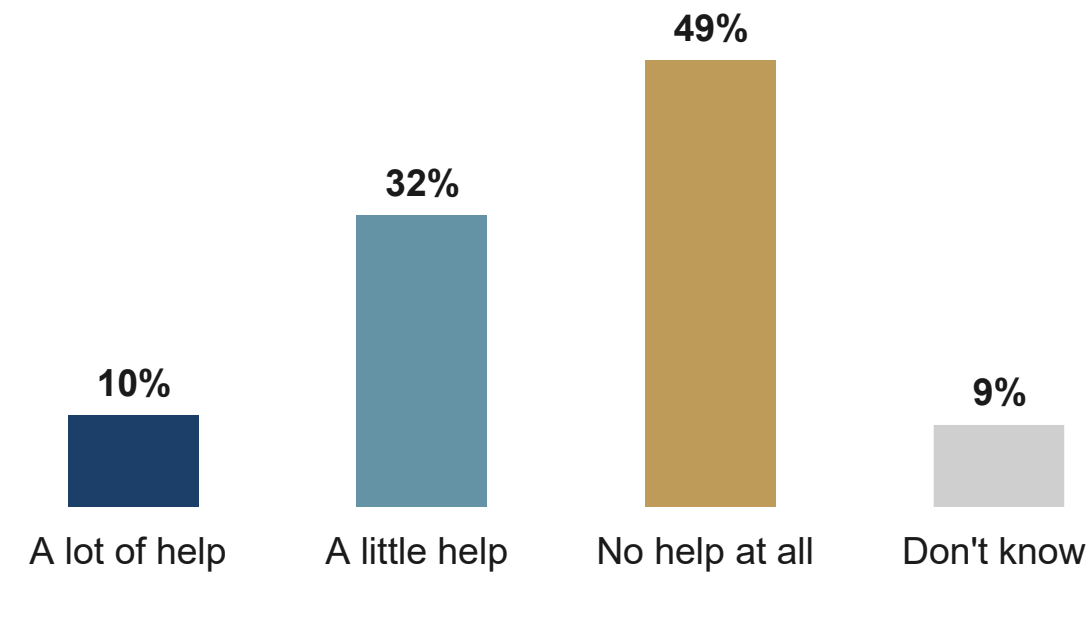


Nearly three in ten youth say they are not getting enough help from adults in how to use AI, though many also say they do not want help.

How much help did you get from adults in learning how to use AI?
(Among current AI users)



How much help would you like to get from adults in learning how to use AI?



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