

Generative AI and Audiences

Revisiting public attitudes
to the use of AI in media



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Executive summary

In 2023, our research into public attitudes toward Gen AI captured a moment of early experimentation. Audiences were curious, cautious, and just beginning to explore how these tools might fit into their lives.

18 months on what has changed?

For many AI is now a part of everyday life.

In 2023, fewer than half of people had tried Gen AI. Now, over 50% have used it. One in three (35%) use it weekly, up from one in ten a year ago. 60% of monthly users say their usage has increased in the last year. AI has become part of daily life, especially for families and younger audiences, with use cases spanning everything from schoolwork to social content.

While younger audiences are the biggest users, older groups have seen the biggest growth.

While 55% of under 35s use GenAI weekly, the biggest increase in use over the last year has been amongst those aged 55+ (250% increase) followed by those aged 45-54 (220% increase).

Audiences feel conflicted about using AI and the emotional stakes have risen.

People recognise the benefits – saving time, cutting down admin, helping with learning, and helping to unleash creativity – but they're also uneasy. There's ongoing concern about AI replacing human creators and the risk of it distorting truth, especially in trusted industries like media. At the heart of it is a fear that AI could chip away at what makes us human.

The use of AI in media is a key concern.

In emotionally resonant contexts like news, culture and storytelling, audiences expect a human touch and people worry that if AI takes too strong a role, it could undermine trust, replace human creativity, and distort what's real. AI's presence in these spaces prompts greater scrutiny, and the line between assistive and inappropriate use is less forgiving.

The benchmark for acceptability has evolved.

In 2023, value was the key to audiences being comfortable with the use of AI. But in 2025, value alone is no longer enough. Audiences now expect the use of AI to be valuable – being genuinely useful and helping enhance the audience experience; to preserve humanity – protecting the key human roles in media creation; and to be trustworthy – so audiences are clear where and how AI has been used.

The audience's view for what is acceptable use of AI in audio, video and news has evolved.

In audio and video audiences tell us they are often comfortable with the use of AI to support production, but not to create entire programmes or to replace human expressiveness. In news, AI remains highly contentious, fuelling fears of misinformation and loss of trust.



About the research

This updated study was designed to explore shifting expectations and what they mean for media

Specifically, it aimed to:

- 1 Track shifts in awareness, usage and understanding** of Gen AI across the UK.
- 2 Examine how feelings and attitudes are evolving**, and what's changed since our previous study.
- 3 Understand how views on AI-generated content have changed** in emotionally resonant spaces like news, audio and video and what this means for trust and openness.

This work builds on the 2023 qualitative study Embedding the Audience, using a robust, UK-focused methodology:

A nationally representative survey. A 10-minute online survey of 2,000 UK adults, aged 16-75, was conducted between April and May 2025. This quantitative element was designed to measure and validate the shifts in awareness, usage, behaviour, and sentiment, providing a robust, national picture of the UK's evolving relationship with Gen AI. Together, these layers provide a clear picture of how the public's relationship with AI is evolving and what media organisations must do to stay trusted, human and relevant.

Qualitative workshops. We conducted six in-depth online workshops with 36 participants representing a cross-section of UK nations, ages, genders, and levels of digital familiarity. Rather than discussing Gen AI in the abstract, participants were immersed in a series of practical, near-future scenarios. These explored the use of Gen AI in specific media contexts, from AI-generated live sports commentary and AI-assisted screenwriting to the use of Gen AI in creating news summaries. These deliberative discussions allowed us to explore the emotional nuances and ethical lines audiences are drawing as their understanding of the technology matures.



From emerging behaviour to developing habit

AI was a niche curiosity 18 months ago but has rapidly entered the mainstream... moving from a question of **if** people will use Gen AI to **how** they are integrating it into their lives. We are now firmly in an era of widespread acceptance and adoption.

This transformation is happening at a remarkable scale and speed. Awareness is now virtually universal, with 98% of UK adults having at least heard of Gen AI, in comparison to 50% a year earlier¹. More importantly, adoption has crossed a critical threshold: more than half (58%) of the population have used it, and one in three (35%) use it weekly (this was 1 in 10 a year ago²).

This is not a static picture; the pace is accelerating. Among existing users, 60% report using Gen AI more than they did a year ago.

This surge is reflected in the market. Category leader and creators of ChatGPT, OpenAI, saw a 200% increase in UK monthly users since January 2024, reaching 13.1 million people in April 2025. This equates to over 1 in 4 UK internet users. They are also continuing to dominate monthly usage figures, in the same month there were 2.1m and 1.2m people in the UK using Copilot and Gemini respectively. Although, this doesn't account for the ways in which Gen AI is increasingly being imbued into our online experiences – such as online search and in-app assistants.

98%

of UK adults have at least heard of Gen AI, with 1 in 3 (34%) claiming to know a lot/fair amount about Gen AI³

58%

of UK adults have used Gen AI tools in their work or personal life⁴

60%

of Gen AI users use these tools more often than they did 12 months ago⁵

+200%

increase in monthly internet users of OpenAI from Jan '24 to Apr '25⁶

13.1m

people used OpenAI in Apr '25 (1 in 4 UK internet users)⁷

¹ UK data from survey carried out by Ipsos for the BBC, January 2024
² UK data from survey carried out by Ipsos for the BBC, January 2024
³ UK data from survey carried out by Ipsos for the BBC, April-May 2025

⁴ UK data from survey carried out by Ipsos for the BBC, April-May 2025
⁵ UK data from survey carried out by Ipsos for the BBC, April-May 2025
⁶ Source: Ipsos Iris Online Audience Measurement Service, Apr 2025, All aged 15+ using PC/laptop, smartphone or tablet device(s).
⁷ Source: Ipsos Iris Online Audience Measurement Service, Apr 2025, All aged 15+ using PC/laptop, smartphone or tablet device(s).



The user base has broadened far beyond tech enthusiasts, and the rate of growth is accelerating across all age groups. While younger users lead in total numbers, the fastest increase in adoption is happening among older demographics, with a 250% increase in users aged 55+ in the same period. This demonstrates that AI's utility is resonating across generations.

Increases in AI use across age groups:

15-24 yr olds **+124%**

25-34 yr olds **+204%**

35-44 yr olds **+227%**

45-54 yr olds **+220%**

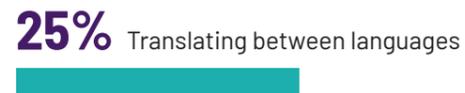
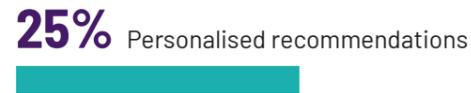
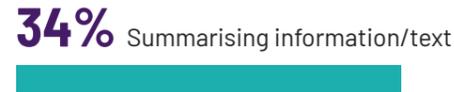
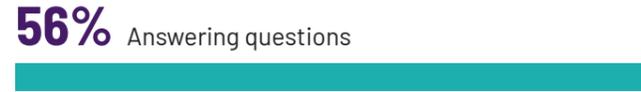
55+ yr olds⁸ **+250%**

While adoption is widespread, two key groups stand out for their high-frequency use:

- Those aged under 35, who are weaving Gen AI into the fabric of their daily lives. A remarkable 79% of this group have used Gen AI, and 55% use it weekly.
- Families, who are turning to Gen AI as a practical assistant. Among households with children, 74% of adults have used Gen AI, with 51% engaging weekly.

For these digitally fluent and often time-poor demographics, Gen AI is primarily a tool for efficiency. It is being used to streamline daily tasks, from answering questions and summarising long documents to generating ideas and writing emails.

Popularity of AI use cases among UK adults who are AI users



“**I like asking AI questions because it gives you facts [...] I get a learning curve out of it.**”

Male, 18-34, High/Medium Digital Familiarity

However, this picture of practical, widespread use tells only half the story. As people become more familiar with Gen AI, their relationship with it does not necessarily become more comfortable. In fact, this growing integration is surfacing a host of new questions and anxieties, creating a far more complicated emotional landscape.



If I need help writing a letter or an application then I'll use AI like ChatGPT for that. It's amazing, it's all there in a few seconds.”

Female, 55+, Low/Medium digital familiarity

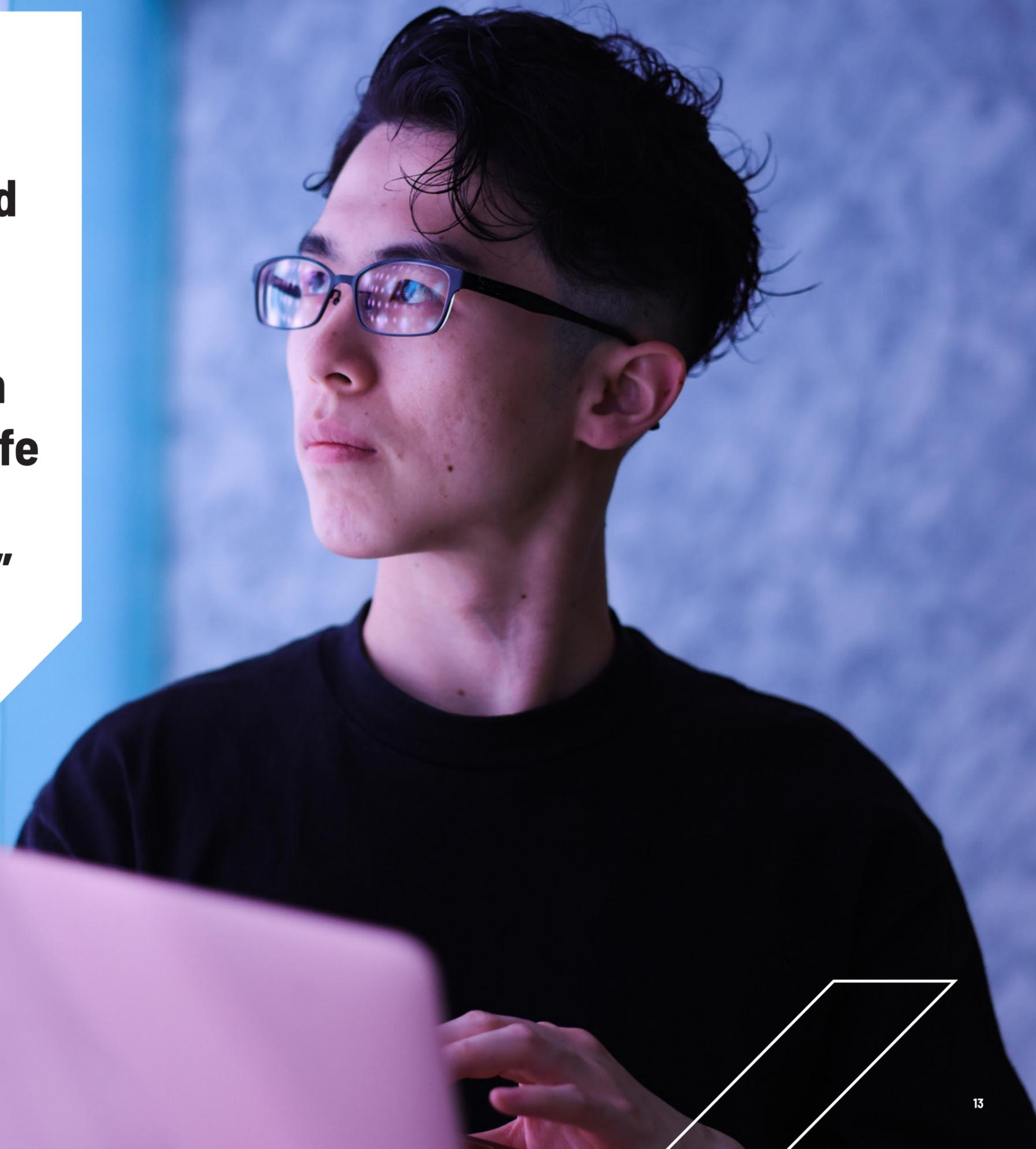
⁸ Source: Ipsos Iris Online Audience Measurement Service, Apr 2025, All aged 15+ using PC/laptop, smartphone or tablet device(s).

⁹ UK data from survey carried out by Ipsos for the BBC, April-May 2025



I find that AI is really involved in my everyday life, though mostly with mundane tasks. There have been times when AI has been in my personal life which can feel intrusive but it's pretty helpful otherwise."

Male, 18-34, High/Medium Digital Familiarity



Audiences have a complicated relationship with AI

As usage deepens, the relationship with Gen AI becomes more emotionally layered. The initial impression of a helpful, even impressive, tool gives way to a growing undercurrent of discomfort. Audiences are caught in a cycle of curiosity and concern; the more they engage, the more questioning they become.

From curiosity...

The journey into this complicated relationship often begins with a positive experience. Audiences are genuinely impressed by Gen AI's ability to streamline daily tasks, simplify complex information, and provide a creative spark on demand. This tangible value – its power to make life easier and more efficient – is what sparks curiosity about its broader potential.

However, the depth of this curiosity varies based on self-claimed knowledge of AI. Curiosity is stronger among those with medium or high knowledge of AI, who make up 82% of UK adults. In this group, 62% want to learn more and they tend to ask foundational questions about Gen AI, not just what it can do but how and why it works

- How does it work?
- Who built it?
- Will it learn from me?
- How can it make my life easier?

By contrast, 18% of UK adults say they have low or no knowledge of AI, and only 21% of them want to learn more. For this group, curiosity is more practical and surface level, tied to immediate benefits rather than how the technology works.

Across groups, curiosity sits alongside caution. As exposure grows, questions increasingly move from what Gen AI can do to when it should be used and by whom.

...to concern

And yet, regardless of their level of technical curiosity, deeper use of the technology inevitably surfaces anxieties for all users. As Gen AI moves from simple tasks to more sensitive domains, the questions now shift from what it can do to what it might change. The initial appreciation for its utility evolves into a set of pressing concerns:

- Will I become too reliant on it?
- Could it replace real people or jobs?
- Will we lose what makes us inherently human, e.g., creativity and emotional nuance?

- What will this mean for the future of education?
- What happens when it gets things wrong?

We also see parental worries are particularly acute and provide the sharpest example of this growing unease. This concern is rooted in the fact that families are one of the most engaged user groups: with 74% of households with children having used AI and 51% using it weekly, the technology is already a significant presence in the home. They turn to AI as a practical assistant to help manage a heavy mental load, from planning meals to supporting children with homework.

It is this close proximity to their children's development, however, that fuels their anxiety. While some see AI as a useful learning support, many express concern that over-

reliance on AI could short-circuit the learning process, preventing children from developing fundamental skills in critical thinking, problem-solving, and original thought. Furthermore, there is a pronounced fear that children, lacking the experience to be critical, will accept AI-generated answers as fact, making them vulnerable to subtle biases or outright falsehoods.

This specific parental anxiety is a microcosm of the broader unease felt across society. As Gen AI becomes more embedded, people start to question how much control they really have and what's at stake if that control slips away. They're not just worried about how Gen AI functions, but what it represents. The deeper the integration, the deeper the anxiety, with many fearing that, unchecked, Gen AI could erode the very things that make us human.



AI does make me really worried. I think that if AI is being used in various things, like News for example, it worries me that I won't know what to believe. I'm not sure how I'd navigate the information."

Female, 55+, Low/Medium Digital Familiarity

Audience perspectives on Generative AI in the media



Why media matters more

In 2023, audiences were already raising questions about the role of AI in media, especially where it touched storytelling, news, or content shaped by human judgement. But in 2025, those concerns have grown deeper, more pointed, and harder to ignore.

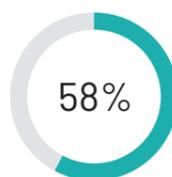
As people's understanding of AI has developed, so too has their awareness of its implications. They're not just asking what's possible, but what's appropriate and where the boundaries should lie.

That evolution is especially sharp when it comes to media. Because unlike some other sectors, media isn't just functional; it's emotional, creative, and cultural. It helps people understand the world, and their place in it. So when AI enters that space, audiences aren't only evaluating capability, they're questioning impact.

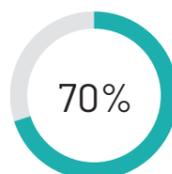


I've actually stopped using Facebook as much now because AI is used in a lot of things on there. Sometimes, you'll go and read a bit of news on there and think oh my God! Is that real? And then you scroll down and realise it's AI generated. It makes you feel a bit stupid that you even believed it."

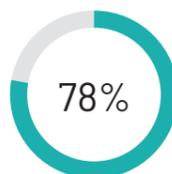
Female, 55+, Low/Medium Digital Familiarity



58% of UK adults agree use of Gen AI in media and entertainment makes them nervous¹⁰



70% of GB adults prefer human-driven content in movies¹¹



78% of GB adults prefer human-driven content in online news articles¹²

A Symbolic Space

For audiences, media isn't just content; it is a powerful force that helps shape who we are and the fabric of society. Because it holds this unique position, both reflecting and creating our shared values and culture – its use of Gen AI is met with far more complex reactions.

In 2023 this distinction was beginning to emerge. But by 2025, as understanding of AI's capabilities has deepened, so too has the belief that media must remain a distinctly human space. The question is no longer simply whether AI is capable but where and how it is appropriate to use in a space with such profound influence.

Audiences expect certain spaces to remain distinctly human, particularly when content touches on truth, identity, or lived experience. The data shows a clear preference for human oversight: 70% of adults prefer human-driven content in movies, a figure that rises to 78% for online news articles. The moment something feels emotionally off or overly machine-led, trust starts to slip, and audiences switch off.

This is not an outright rejection of AI, but a call for clear boundaries.

As audience understanding of Gen AI has matured since 2023, so has their sense of where these boundaries lie. Although audiences see potential for AI to help the media industry – from speeding up production to improving accessibility – sharp lines are still drawn, audiences tell us it must not replace human creativity, judgement, or emotional nuance. Media is not just about generating output; it's about conveying meaning – and importantly for audiences, Gen AI is not allowed to participate in meaning-making.

These boundaries are not abstract; they are drawn with precision, varying significantly depending on the context of the media itself. The following sections explore these nuances in three key domains: Audio, Video, and News. In each area, a clear pattern emerges: audiences welcome Gen AI when it assists or enhances, but resist it when it threatens to replace the essential human elements of creativity, emotional expression, and editorial judgement.

¹⁰ UK data from survey carried out by Ipsos for the BBC, April-May 2025

¹¹ Ipsos AI Monitor 2025

¹² Ipsos AI Monitor 2025



I fear for the younger generation because they've grown up with AI. They see AI everywhere, and I worry that they're seeing AI-made stuff on social media or they're getting information from AI...I'm worried they just take it as it is and that they don't at all source check."

Femal, 18-34, High/Medium Digital Familiarity



Media Specifics: Exploring Audio, Video, and News

What's Changed: Evolving Expectations in Audio, Video and News

The core patterns from 2023 remain: audiences are most comfortable when GenAI is assistive and behind the scenes; more cautious when it touches expression or editorial judgement; and most demanding in news. What has shifted is audience expectations have sharpened, with clearer lines in sensitive or emotionally charged contexts.

To map this evolution, this study revisited the deliberative exercise from our 2023 research, presenting audiences with a series of current and near-future applications of GenAI in media. By retaining some original scenarios and introducing new ones, we were able to directly measure how sentiments have evolved and where the new boundaries of acceptance lie. This chapter explores the nuances of this landscape, examining the specific lines audiences are now drawing in audio, video and news.

Low and high stakes

Since 2023, a key shift is how audiences judge whether Gen AI in media feels acceptable. Previously, format did much of the work, with audio often feeling more acceptable than video and news attracting the greatest caution. In 2025, audiences take a more nuanced view. They instinctively assess the emotional and editorial stakes of the content and weigh whether Gen AI is simply assisting in the background or actively shaping what they see and hear.

Stakes feel low when Gen AI's role is clearly functional and assistive. These are behind the scenes production tasks that audiences tell us they are now comfortable with, for example generating background music, creating special effects for a trailer, or providing an audio version of a written article. In these cases, Gen AI is seen as a helpful efficiency tool that does not interfere with the core creative message. This drives comfort with the use of AI, particularly among under 35s and those with higher AI literacy.

Comfort fades when the stakes feel high, especially when Gen AI is perceived to have a creative or editorial role, such as creating an entire TV show from scratch or writing original news articles. The discomfort rests on a belief that Gen AI cannot replicate lived experience or emotion, and unease grows when it appears to mimic feeling or steer narratives where empathy and originality matter most.



I think if I read an article about a really serious topic and found out that it was AI generated, I'd have to double check it with a different news source that ideally wasn't AI generated."

Female, 35-54, High/Medium Digital Familiarity



LOW STAKES

HIGH STAKES

Baseline Acceptance

AI makes things quicker or more accessible

Background tasks

Seen as useful and expected by all

Assisted Creation

AI as a springboard, not a substitute

Used for ideas, structure, accessibility

More accepted by higher AI literacy

Creative or Editorial Roles

Who is really in control?

AI-led storytelling, commentary or news

Raises concern, especially where emotion, credibility or originality matter

Audio

In Audio, audiences embrace AI for support, but reject it for expression.

Acceptance for Gen AI in audio is highest when it operates in a supporting, functional role. For example, AI-generated playlists on streaming platforms receive a warm reception, meeting a clear audience demand for seamless curation and content discovery.

Similarly, in the podcast space, listeners say they are now more accepting of AI-generated background music, as they say they prioritise the presenter's message and personality over the background or theme music.

However, this acceptance has firm limits. Audiences say the line is crossed the moment Gen AI moves from supporting the human to replacing human expression. Audiences value the authenticity of a podcast, which they tie directly to the presenter's unique personality and experience. This rejection is even stronger when it comes to the human voice itself, as audience say replacing or mimicking a well loved or known presenter's voice is seen as too precious and unique to be replicated by Gen AI. Its distinct tone, pronunciation, accent, and – most importantly – emotion are the very things audiences connect with.

In 2023 audiences were more likely to accept the use of Gen AI as a research engine and a sounding board for ideas, but now they worry more about overreliance on Gen AI to come up with these ideas. They told us that they do not want to hear ideas fully generated by Gen AI; they want a real person to share their knowledge and perspective.

Audiences told us that the creative efficiency gained by using Gen AI for end-to-end podcast creation is a poor trade-off for the fundamental loss of authenticity.

“When it comes to podcasts, you want the authenticity, like how the speakers go back and forth to each other naturally. With AI, it'd sound like they're reading off a script and wouldn't sound genuine to me.”

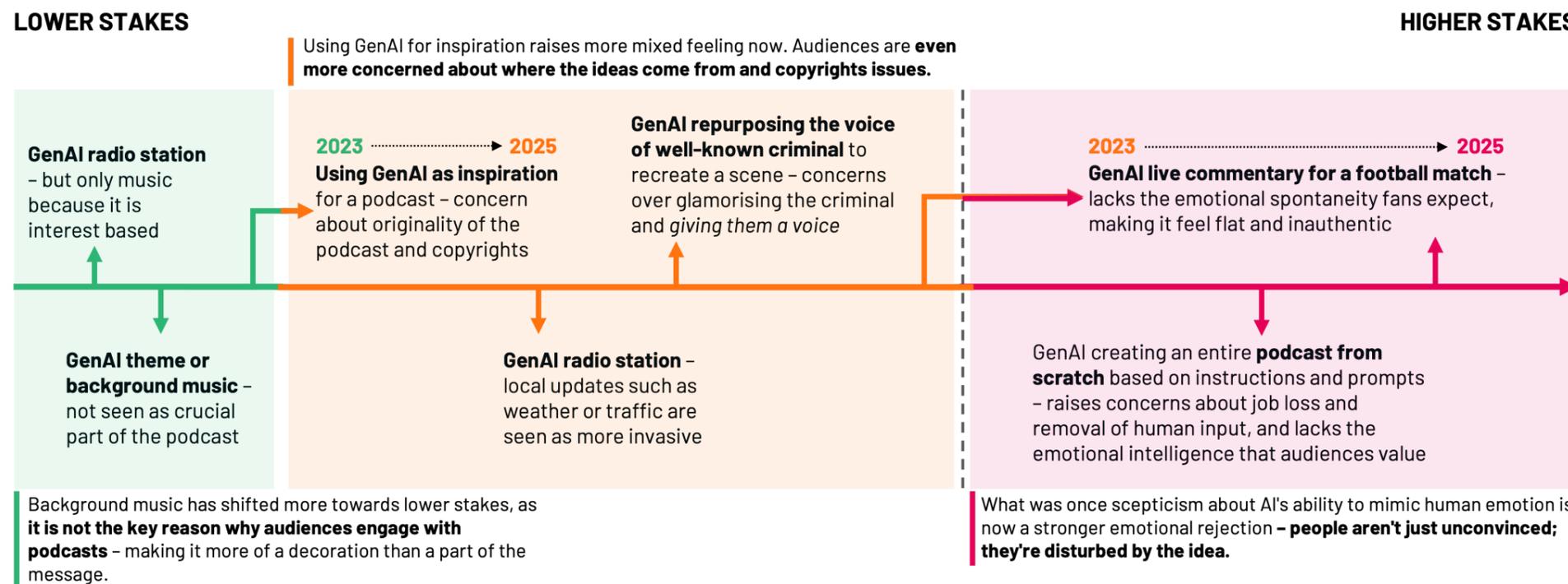
Male, 55+, High/Medium Digital Familiarity

There is also a new red line for audiences in sports content. What began as scepticism about Gen AI's emotional mimicry in 2023, has matured now into a stronger rejection of its use in voiced-over live commentary. For audiences, sport is about more than scores; it encapsulates history, commentator experience, community spirit, and the personalities of athletes.

A final boundary is drawn not around creative authenticity, but around personal intrusion. While interest-based algorithms for music continue to

be welcomed, the idea of a fully personalised AI radio – providing news, ads, and local updates – feels too invasive, although it was accepted to an extent in 2023. An AI-powered radio that “learns too much” about its users is seen as offering little added value in exchange for a significant loss of privacy, crossing a line from helpful curation to unwelcome surveillance.

Low and High Stakes Audio use cases evolution





When you think about commentators and people doing voice overs, you know that they have a type of banter which is what engages you to watch it. I think it's going to lose that element if AI takes over."

Female, 18-34, High/Medium Digital Familiarity

Video

In Video, audiences support AI for enhancing production, but not for replacing perspective.

Audiences have long been accustomed to technological advancements in video, where progress in CGI and animation is often visible to the naked, untrained eye. They view Gen AI powered tools for special effects as a natural evolution of this process, becoming more accepting of them now than they were in 2023. These tools are now seen not as a threat, but as another innovative piece of software that amplifies visual storytelling and empowers creative teams, and they now receive a warmer reception. As a result, animations and SFX have moved from mid stakes to lower stakes for most audiences.

At its core is the belief that the act of storytelling – of making an audience feel entertained, amused, moved, or connected – is a fundamentally human endeavour. They are uncomfortable with the idea of a machine trespassing into this territory, regardless of genre. As one participant noted, even the manufactured drama of reality TV would not be the same without the spark of a real human producer injecting tension or drama.

For media organisations, the challenge is to strike a delicate balance: using Gen AI to **enable** storytelling without allowing Gen AI to **tell** the stories.

However, this acceptance has clear and firm limits. It wavers the moment Gen AI encroaches on core creative processes, moving from enhancing production to dictating perspective, such as in scriptwriting or full TV show generation. Notably, the nature of this concern has matured over the past 18 months. While fears about job losses which were present in 2023 persist, the more profound anxiety now centres on the preservation of human artistry. Audiences express deep concern that AI-driven narratives, lacking lived experience, will be devoid of the emotional depth and richness that come from a human creator.



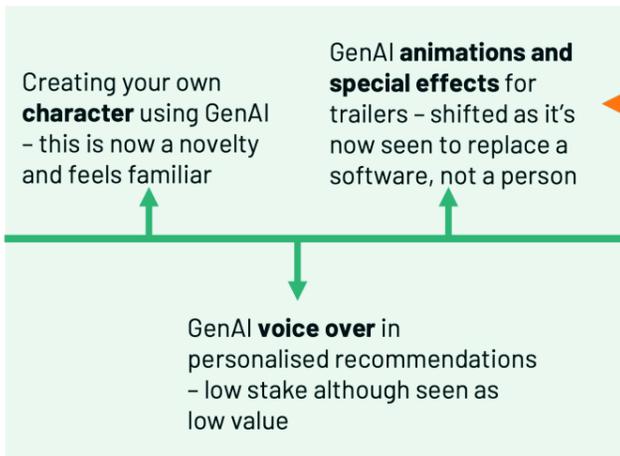
I find that there’s not much human creativity in using AI for shows at all. I think a film or a show will lose that human essence, especially if the actors, scripting and directing are made by AI. It all just seems too much. If AI was its own genre for film and shows then it’d be fine because it’s meant to be that way, but otherwise, it feels too artificial.”

Female, 55+, High/Medium Digital Familiarity



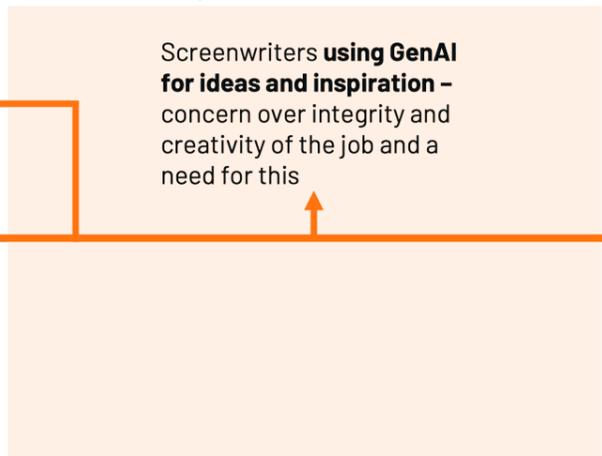
Low and High Stakes Video use cases evolution

LOWER STAKES

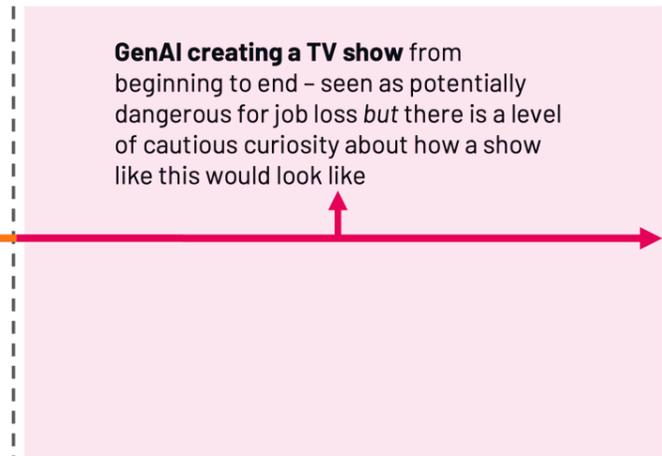


Audiences are now more comfortable with using GenAI for **animation and special effects**, as they now see it as just another software – they also assume it’s been happening for a while.

Audiences are unsure about using GenAI for inspiration when trying to produce creative ideas – as creativity is seen as **inherently human characteristic**.



HIGHER STAKES



Audiences are hesitant about fully AI-generated content, **fearing a loss of human creativity and artistic expression in storytelling** – but they accept that GenAI video could evolve into a genre on its own.

News

In News, GenAI remains highly contentious, fuelling fears of misinformation and loss of trust.

Similarly to 2023, nowhere are the stakes higher than in News. Audience acceptance for AI continues to be confined to a narrow set of low-stakes, functional tasks that support accessibility or efficiency. For example, generating an audio version of a written article was widely accepted in 2023 and is still accepted now. The audiences are also slowly warming up to other functional tasks, but only when the core journalistic work is done by a real person, such as generating a headline for a piece fully researched and written by a journalist.

However, even this limited acceptance is fragile. Applications once considered lower stakes in 2023, such as Gen AI images, are now viewed as highly contentious. This shift is driven by a greater public understanding of how easily misinformation can be created and spread. As audiences have become more educated on the risks, their tolerance for Gen AI's proximity to editorial content has diminished.

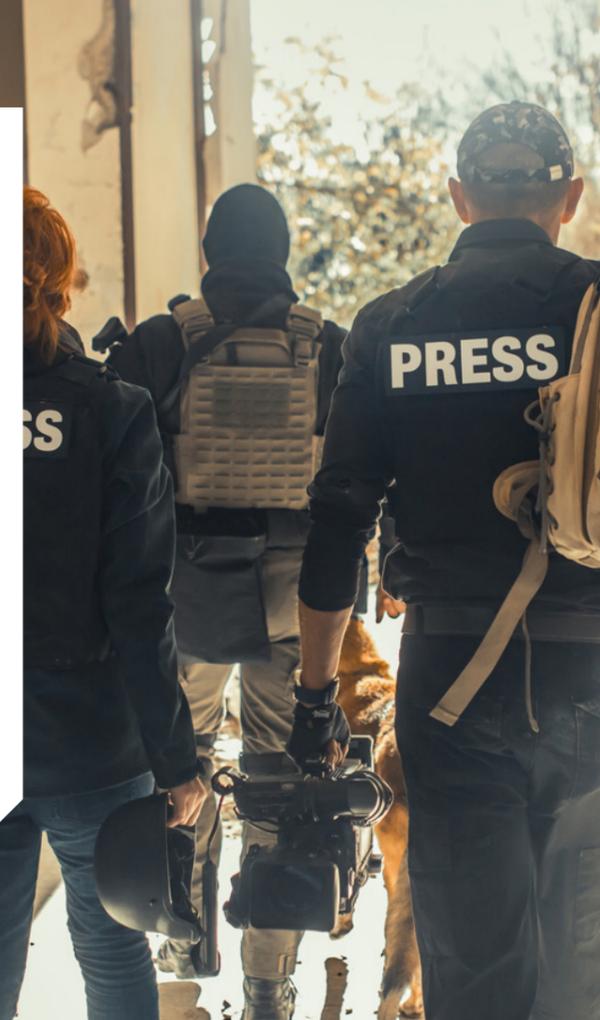
The ultimate red line is the use of Gen AI to produce original news content, a prospect audiences overwhelmingly reject. This is rooted in the belief that news requires absolute human oversight, as the consequences of a Gen AI error can be severe, both for society and for the individuals involved. Furthermore, there is a deep-seated fear that AI risks diluting journalistic standards and integrity, leading to a long-term erosion of trust in the profession itself.

Ultimately, the boundary is drawn at anything that risks eroding confidence in what is real. In news, trust is paramount, and audiences are profoundly wary of any tool that could undermine it.



The thing I keep going back to is the possibility of the information being given is false or not entirely correct. There's a lot of people online that will believe anything they read, so even if sources and data are mentioned, it doesn't mean that what AI has made is true."

Male, 18-34, High/Medium Digital Familiarity



Low and High Stakes News use cases evolution

LOWER STAKES

GenAI headlines based on an article written by a journalist - now green as the journalist already did the *hard* work

GenAI audio version of an article written by a journalist - great for accessibility

Headlines generated by GenAI are now lower stake, as it is assumed that **a journalist has already completed the hard work of writing an article themselves.**

Audiences distrust GenAI used to create content requiring human perspective, such as summaries, **fearing journalism is compromised.**

GenAI summaries based on an article written by a journalist - more concerning than headlines because they require more thought

HIGHER STAKES

GenAI images to accompany an article written by a journalist - fear of unnecessary risk of misinformation when other sources of images are available

Used to produce original news content, e.g. an article - news requires strict human oversight

Images are now high stake because audiences **fear GenAI could amplify misinformation** as trust is non-negotiable. The red line is drawn at anything that risks eroding confidence in what's real.

What audiences want from Generative AI now

From embedding to future proofing

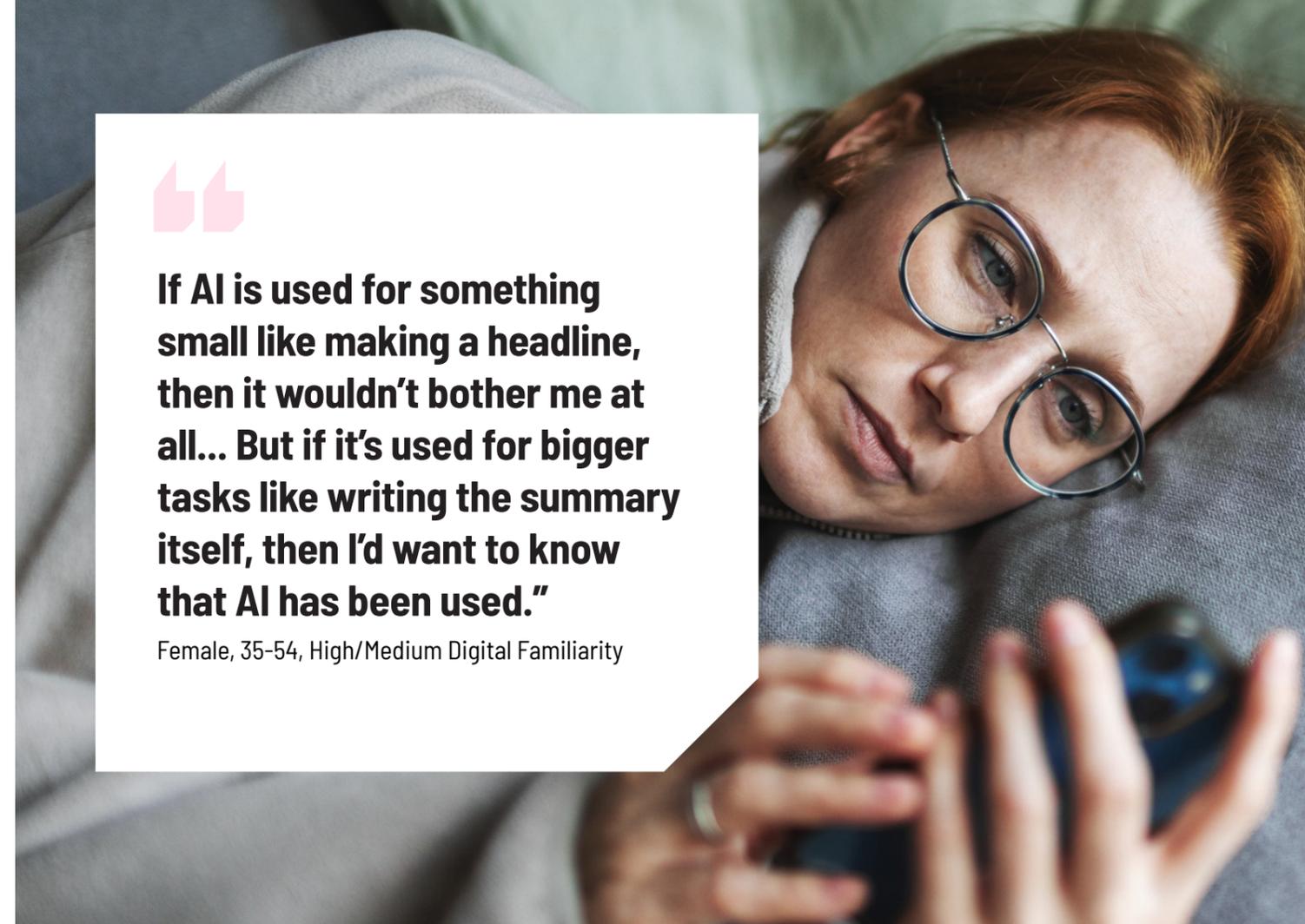


The emerging benchmark rests on three linked pillars that audiences consider together:

- **Value:** Gen AI should be genuinely useful and enhance the experience.
- **Humanity:** It should preserve the emotional intelligence, creativity and judgement that make content meaningful.
- **Trust:** Audiences want confidence in the process, provenance and purpose behind its use.

While audiences continue to value the practical benefits of Gen AI, the basis for comfort with the use of AI has broadened since 2023. Then, Value did most of the work in building receptiveness, with Humanity and Transparency playing supporting roles. Now, as Gen AI becomes more visible in media contexts, audiences are applying a wider test: utility remains central, but it is now weighed alongside Humanity and Trust, which carry comparable weight in judgements about acceptability.

These are not separate checks but a connected system. Audiences move between them depending on context, and gaps in one area can reduce confidence in the others. Ongoing reassurance about why Gen AI is used, where humans are involved, and how standards are upheld helps sustain receptiveness. The following sections set out what audiences now expect within each pillar.



If AI is used for something small like making a headline, then it wouldn't bother me at all... But if it's used for bigger tasks like writing the summary itself, then I'd want to know that AI has been used."

Female, 35-54, High/Medium Digital Familiarity

Value

In 2023, Value did most of the work in building receptiveness to Gen AI. Now it still matters, but it is judged more selectively and alongside Humanity and Trust. Audiences increasingly distinguish between low-stakes, assistive roles that do not change meaning or voice and higher-stakes uses that shape ideas or output, and they tend to look for a rationale tied to public value as well as internal efficiency.

Acceptance is steady for functional, behind the scenes uses. Where Gen AI influences the content itself, audiences want to know why it is used, who is accountable, and that usefulness does not override accuracy or authenticity. Value

tends to land best when it is delivered with visible human judgement and credible process.

For media organisations, this suggests starting with audience need and being clear about purpose. Use Gen AI where it clearly helps audiences discover, access or personalise content in a meaningful way, and keep assistive uses positioned as supportive. Be clear about how human oversight applies, and balance convenience with accuracy and authenticity. Value is more likely to resonate when it is delivered alongside Humanity and Trust.

Humanity

Audiences still recognise what Gen AI can do, but acceptance now depends as much on protecting what feels uniquely human in media as on utility. They prefer Gen AI in supportive roles, not substituting emotional intelligence, creativity and judgement. Sensitivity is heightened in contexts like sport, history, grief, injustice and celebration, where lived experience and moral perspective shape how stories land. Preference for human delivery remains strong, with an expectation that these qualities are protected rather than mimicked.

As Gen AI plays a bigger role in how stories are made, audiences look for visible human judgement. They want clarity on who is responsible for the final message, not just the data behind it. Signals such as editorial sign off, clear bylines and brief explanations of how Gen AI was used help reassure that humans are shaping the narrative and are accountable.



I wouldn't want to watch or listen to something if AI was the one doing most of it. To me, it'd sound like a machine was doing the talking so you wouldn't get that human, lived experience out of it. It wouldn't sound authentic."

Male, 35-54, High/Medium Digital Familiarity

For media organisations, this means keeping human judgement and voice at the forefront in storytelling and sensitive contexts. Use Gen AI to elevate access, craft and ideation rather than replace creative tone or editorial perspective. Make oversight visible at key touchpoints so accountability is clear.

Trust

In 2023, basic transparency often reassured audiences. In 2025, with half (50%) of UK adults believing Gen AI will make disinformation on the internet worse, audiences are asking a different set of questions: Can I trust this, and who is accountable if it is wrong? Simple disclosure only goes so far. Trust now rests on visible care, verification and responsibility, and 43% say they are more likely to trust the use of Gen AI in the newsroom if outputs have been fact checked.

Audiences expect layered transparency where it matters most, covering provenance (where content came from and who was involved), principle (the values and standards applied) and purpose (why Gen AI was the right tool). 63% say responsibility for AI governance and regulation in media should sit with the UK government and independent regulators, yet they still hold media brands directly responsible and expect them to act as a safeguard against inaccurate or biased information.

Audiences tell us they want clarity they can trust. Proportionate explanations, such as when and why Gen AI was used, who reviewed it, and how it was made, can help, and where useful, a brief outline of the guardrails in place can make standards feel more visible.



A bit of governance around how, what, and why AI is used would make me quite happy... to make sure that it's ethically correct when it does go out would help me feel like I can trust the information."

Female, 18-34, Low/Medium Digital Familiarity

Conclusion

The terms of engagement with Gen AI have changed. In the 18 months since our initial research, audiences have moved from a position of cautious curiosity to one of lived experience. This has shifted the central question from what Gen AI can do, to what it should do – particularly within the emotionally and culturally vital space of media.

This report was designed to map these new audience expectations, providing a framework for media organisations seeking to innovate responsibly. Our research shows that the initial acceptance driven by Gen AI's functional value has been replaced by a more complex and demanding set of criteria. Audiences now instinctively balance the Value of a Gen AI application against its impact on Humanity and their ability to Trust it. While they see a role for Gen AI, they are drawing sharp and sophisticated lines around its use, demanding that human judgement, creativity, and accountability remain visible and protected.

These views are not static. They have already evolved significantly and will continue to do so as the technology matures and its presence in our lives deepens. Therefore, ongoing dialogue and a commitment to understanding these audience perspectives are essential.



Appendix

Technical note

Nationally representative survey

This study was conducted by Ipsos on behalf of the BBC. Ipsos conducted a 10-minute online survey of a representative sample of 2,000 participants aged 16-75 in the UK. Fieldwork took place in April 2025. All data were weighted to be nationally represent of the UK market in terms of age within gender, region, educational attainment and working status.

Online deliberative focus groups

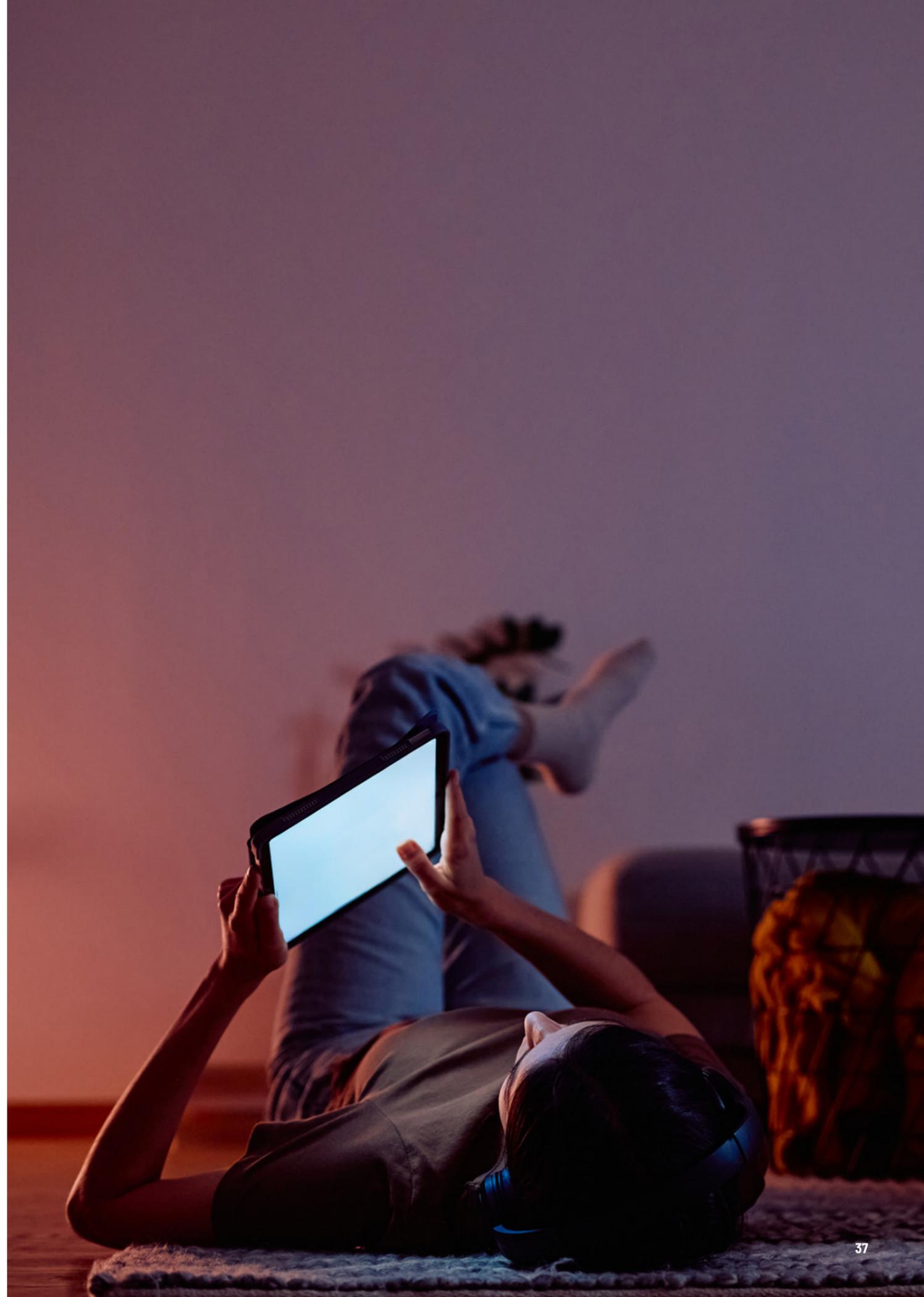
Ipsos conducted six in-depth online workshops in May 2025 with 36 participants representing a cross-section of UK nations, ages, genders, and levels of digital familiarity.

- x6 2-hour deliberative workshops with 36 participants in the UK
- Split by age groups and digital familiarity

Sample Specification

- Per workshop, participants had:
- An even mix of gender
- Mix of ethnicity
- All to engage with core areas of interest, e.g. content (news, weather, sport, education) and media types (broadcast/VOD, radio, sounds, etc.)
- A mix of social seg and income
- Split by age bracket and level of digital familiarity in the UK follows:

UK						
Workshop#	1	2	3	4	5	6
Age	18-34		35-54		55+	
Digital Familiarity	Med/High	Low/Med	Med/High	Low/Med	Med/High	Low/Med



About Ipsos

In our world of rapid change, the need for reliable information to make confident decisions has never been greater. At Ipsos we believe our clients need more than a data supplier, they need a partner who can produce accurate and relevant information and turn it into actionable truth.

This is why our passionately curious experts not only provide the most precise measurement, but shape it to provide a true understanding of society, markets and people. To do this, we use the best of science, technology and know-how and apply the principles of security, simplicity, speed and substance to everything we do.

So that our clients can act faster, smarter and bolder.

Ultimately, success comes down to a simple truth:
You act better when you are sure.

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