



Child and Youth Perspectives on Life Online

U-Report Global Insights 2026
June 2026

Child & Youth Engagement Team – DGCA

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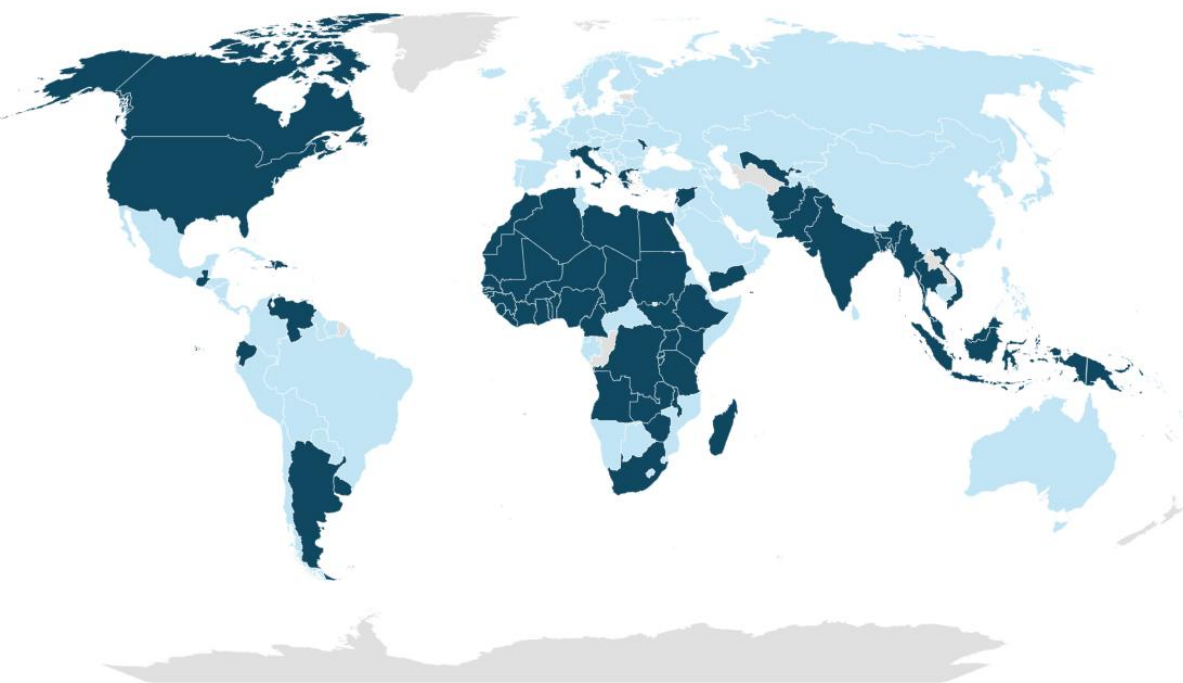
Between January to June 2026, in collaboration with GSMA, UNICEF conducted a global U-Report poll to [understand what life online is really like for children and young people](#). The poll aims to understand [their perceptions of the apps and sites they use, what shapes those feelings \(including the role of AI\)](#) and how these experiences can be [made safer and more supportive](#).

The poll was promoted as part of global and country Safer Internet Day activities. Preliminary results were presented by young people at this year's [Mobile World Congress](#)—the world's largest and most influential connectivity event. Results will continue to support UNICEF's efforts to engage mobile network operators on U-Report and strengthen safe and youth-centred digital spaces.

- **211,300 U-Reporters** took part in the global poll between January 29 – June 6 2026.
- The poll was deployed on **36 U-Report platforms** and gathered perspectives from more than 119 countries. The majority of responses came from countries in WCAR.
- The social media campaign reached over **16.3 million** unique users between the ages of 13 and 24.
- 61% of the total respondents responded via **SMS**, while 39% used digital messaging channels.
- Overall, 61% of respondents were male and 53% were **aged 24 or younger**.

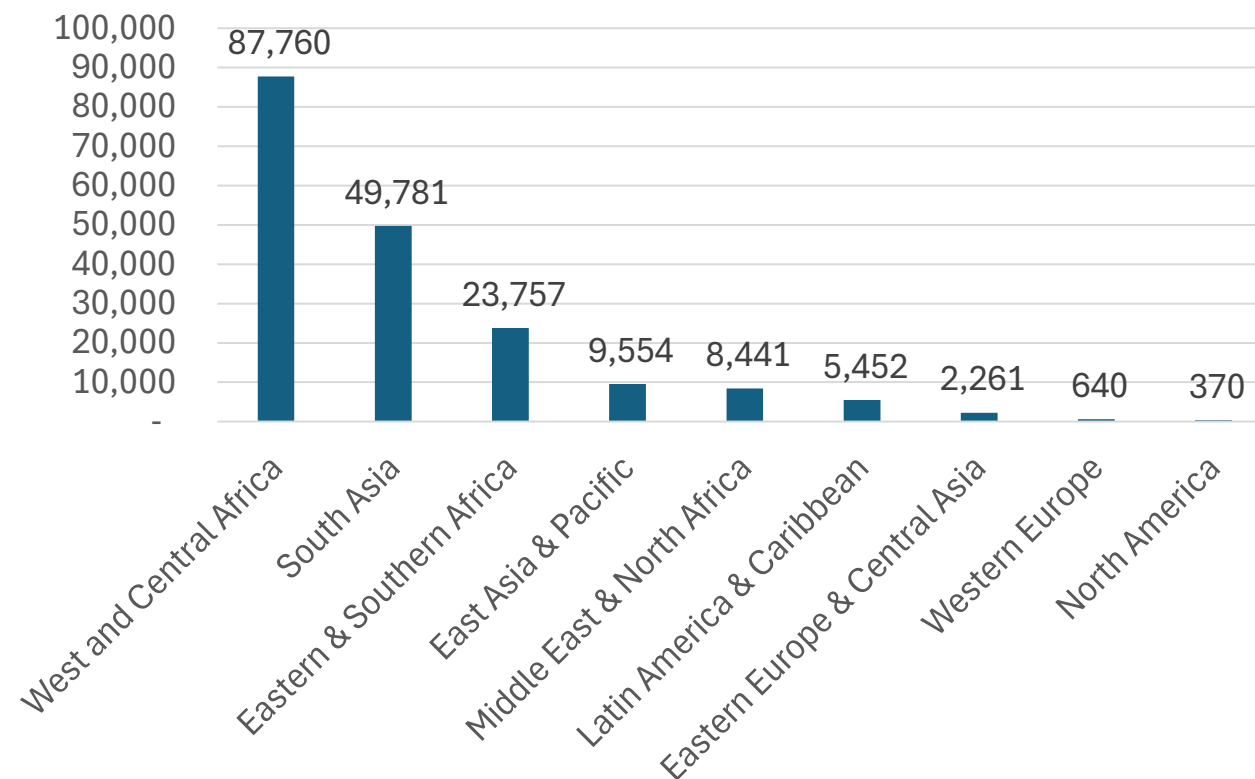
Countries with >100 respondents

Congo, Democratic Republic	70,072	Bangladesh	466
Afghanistan	46,698	Congo	460
Angola	9,283	Guinea-Bissau	439
Nigeria	9,066	Madagascar	419
Indonesia	7,700	Thailand	344
Zambia	3,212	Zimbabwe	323
Syria	3,067	Guatemala	317
Ethiopia	2,777	Liberia	314
Uganda	2,527	Niger	308
Ghana	2,232	Rwanda	294
Ecuador	2,129	Argentina	264
Algeria	1,882	Vietnam	257
Uzbekistan	1,830	Dominican Republic	256
Pakistan	1,505	Mauritania	244
Kenya	1,483	Burkina Faso	243
Haiti	1,467	Canada	231
Egypt	1,093	Myanmar	231
India	968	Cote d'Ivoire	231
Yemen	930	Moldova	230
South Africa	899	Italy (On The Move)	223
Malawi	881	Malaysia	199
Morocco	820	Venezuela	183
Chad	709	Mali	178
Senegal	634	Togo	166
Benin	610	Libya	161
Gambia	608	Guinea	158
South Sudan	601	United States of America	139
Sierra Leone	539	Greece	135
Papua New Guinea	493	Lebanon	127
Burundi	491	Sudan	110
Cameroon	482	Tanzania	109
Uruguay	475	Slovenia	104



Countries with >100 participants
 Other countries

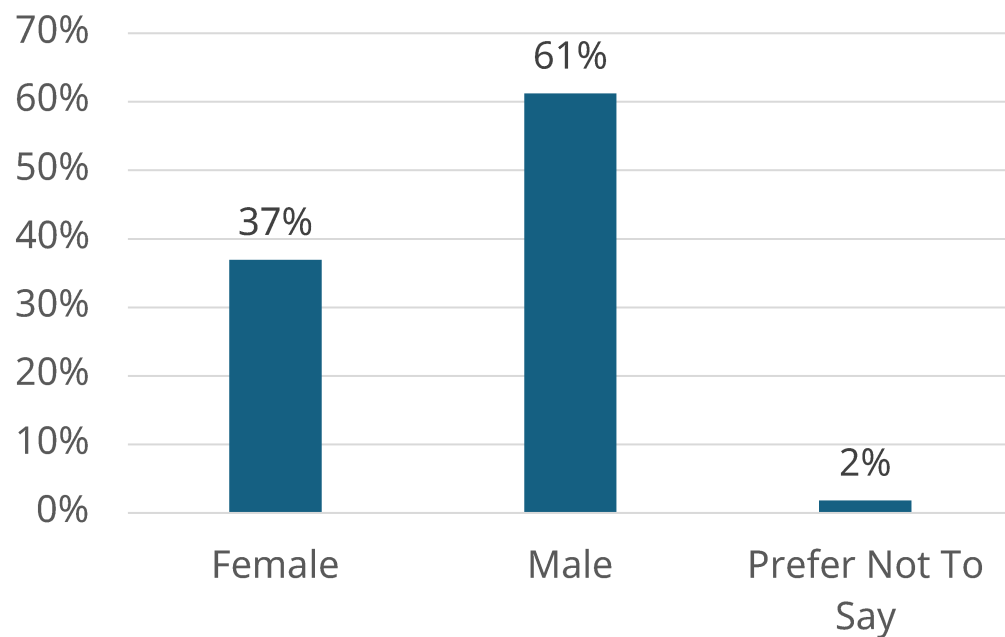
UNICEF Reporting Regions



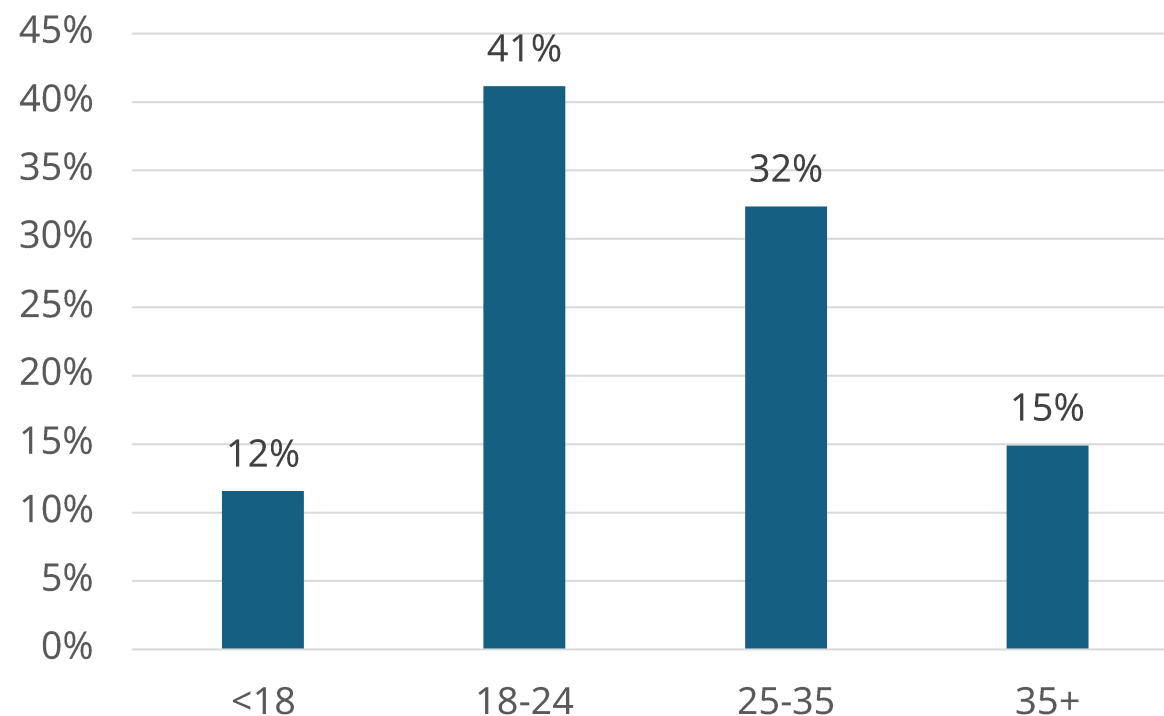
For reference: [REGIONAL CLASSIFICATIONS - UNICEF DATA](#)

Note: Regional comparisons exclude regions with fewer than 1000 respondents (NA, WE)

Gender of respondents



Age of respondents



Age, gender and location are self-reported and voluntary, and not all respondents provide this information. Only some U-Report programmes offer “Prefer not to say” or “Non-binary” gender identity options. Programmes differ in their minimum age requirements to satisfy local laws and platform policies.

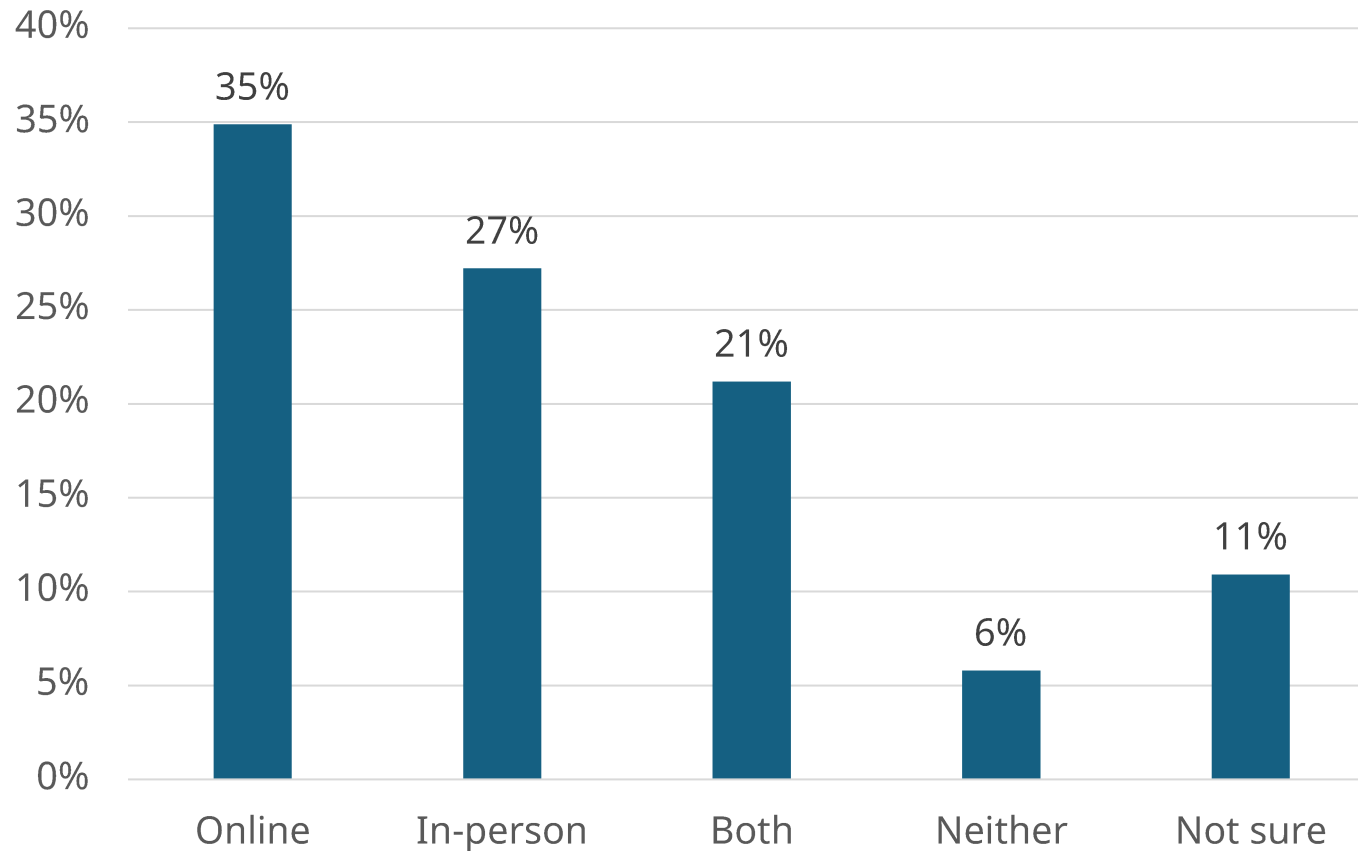
The majority of respondents reported **feeling most confident being their real selves online**. Confidence in online self-expression was higher among younger respondents and frequent AI users, while regional differences indicate that preferences for online and offline expression vary across contexts.

The majority of respondents **felt that children and young people' needs are considered at least sometimes when decisions are made about the apps and sites they use**. This view was broadly consistent across gender and age groups but varied by region and AI usage. Frequent AI users and respondents in EAPR were more likely to say that needs are always considered.

Respondents primarily **valued communicating with friends and family and learning as the most important benefits of internet access**. While these priorities were broadly consistent across gender, age, region and AI usage groups, younger respondents and non-users of AI were more likely to prioritise social connection. Frequent users of AI and respondents in South Asia were more likely to prioritise learning.

**AI usage categories: Frequent or power users are those who reported using AI all the time. Regular users reported using AI about once a day or a few times a week. Rare users reported using AI rarely while non-users reported they do not use AI to the question: How often do you use Artificial Intelligence (AI)?*

Where do you feel most confident being your real self? n= 211,338

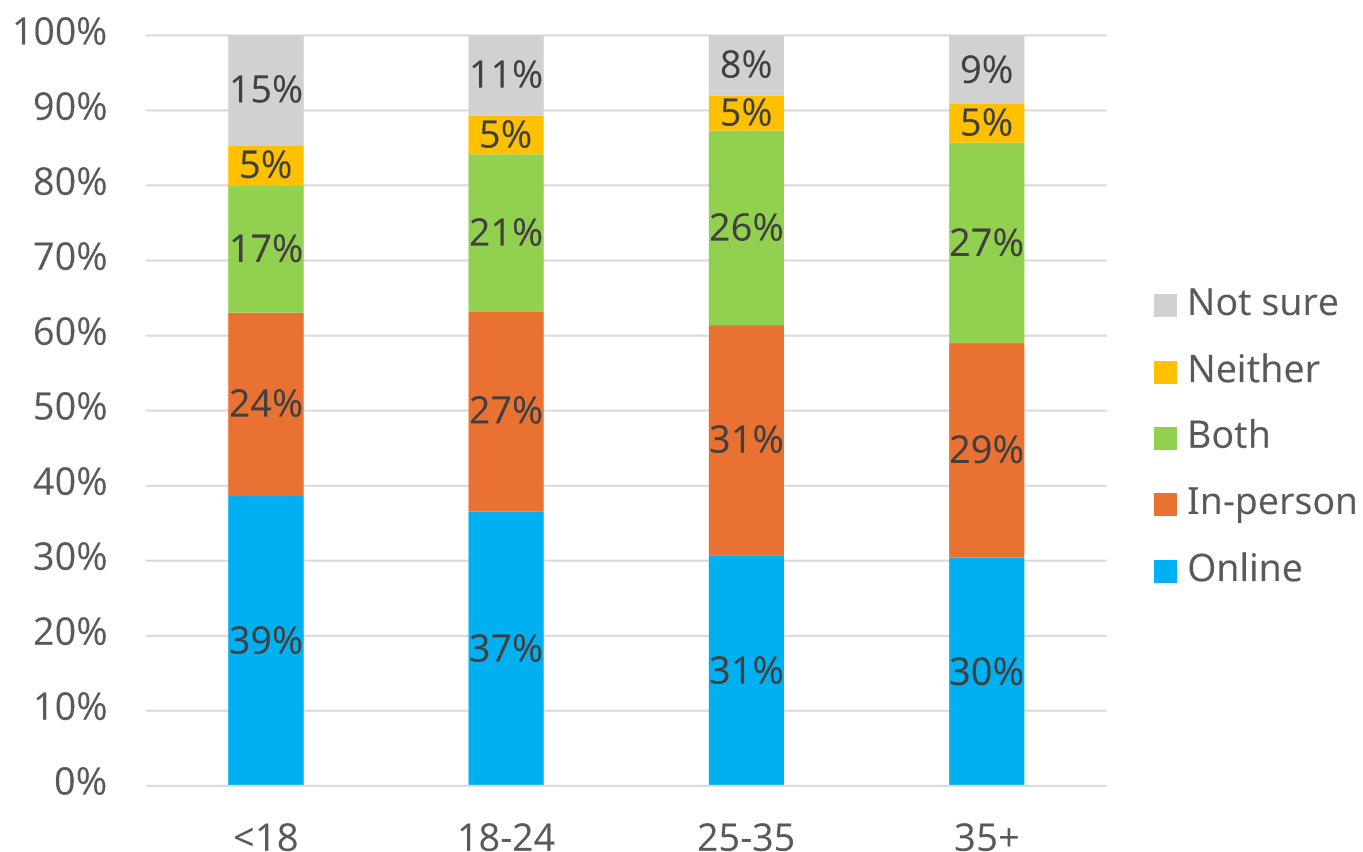


Respondents were most likely to report feeling most confident being their real selves online. Just over one-third (35%) said they feel most confident online, compared with 27% who said in-person and 21% who said both equally. 6% said neither while 11% were not sure.

Results were broadly consistent across gender and channel groups and showed some age-related and regional variations.

See Annex for gender and channel disaggregated charts.

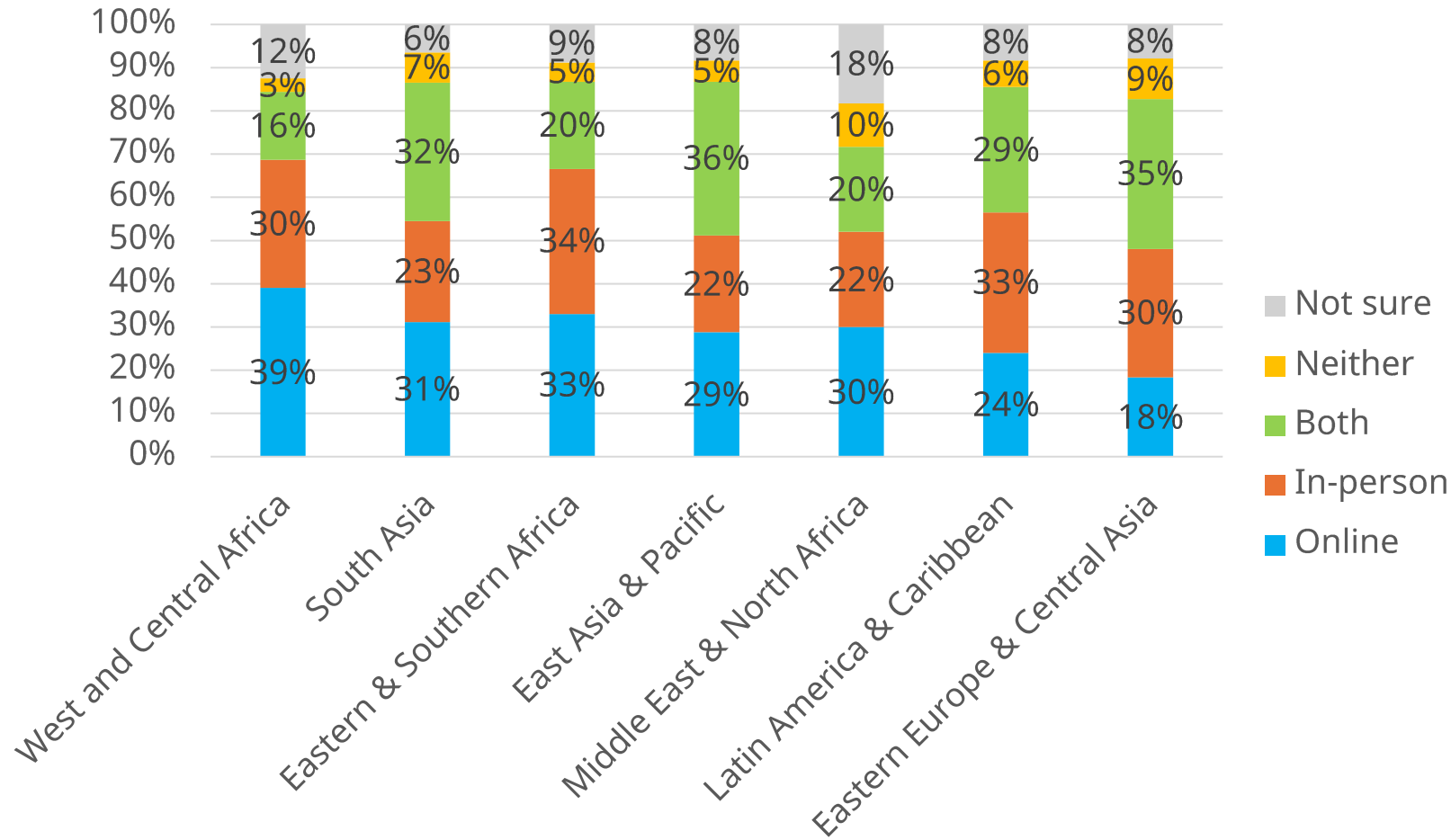
Where do you feel most confident being your real self? By age



Among younger respondents, the majority were more likely to report feeling most confident being their real selves online (39% among those under 18 and 37% among those 18-24) compared to feeling confident in-person (24% among those under 18 and 27% among those 18-24).

Among older respondents, the proportion of those reporting confidence in-person and both is higher and similar to the proportion of those reporting confidence online.

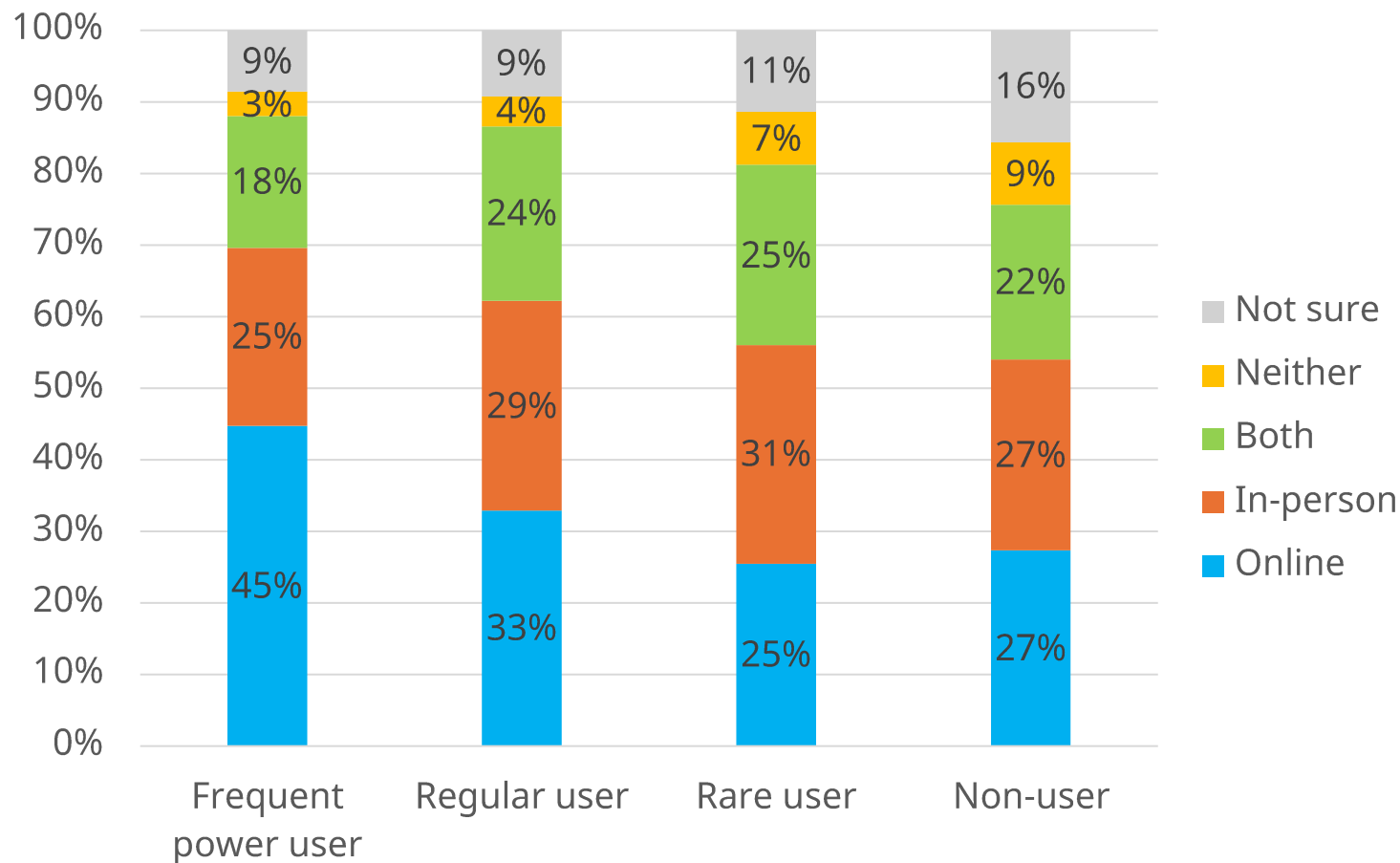
Where do you feel most confident being your real self? By region



Where respondents felt most confident being their real selves varied slightly across regions. Respondents in WCAR were most likely to say they felt most confident online (39%), while those in EECAR were least likely to say the same (18%).

Respondents in EAPR (36%), EECAR (35%) and South Asia (32%) were more likely to say that they felt equally confident online and in person than those in other regions.

Where do you feel most confident being your real self?
By AI usage

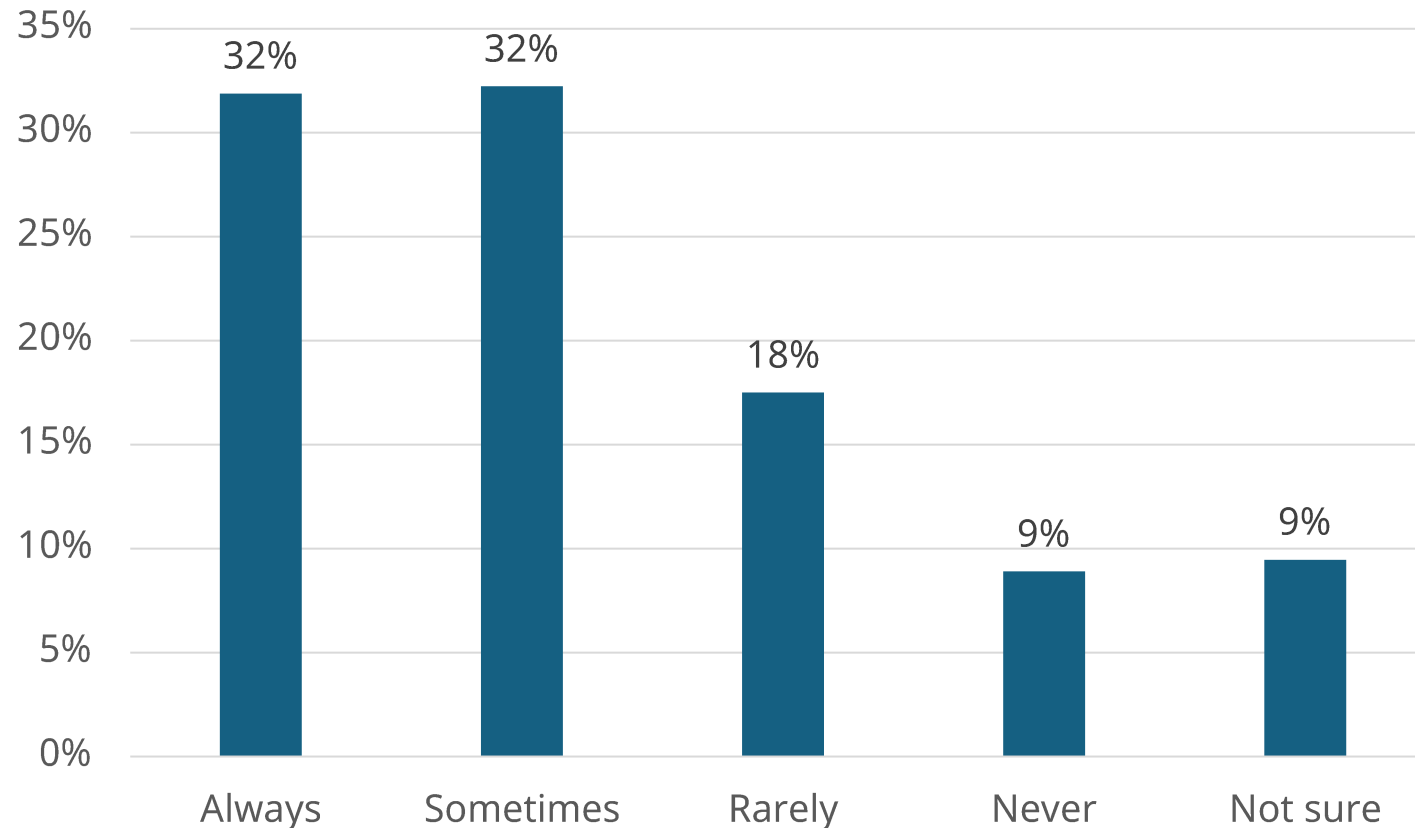


Where respondents felt most confident being their real selves varied by AI usage.

Frequent AI users were more likely to say they feel most confident being themselves online (45%), compared with regular (33%), rare (25%) and non-AI users (27%). Rare users were slightly more likely to say in-person (31%) than online (25%), while non-users were equally likely to choose online and in-person (27% each).

Results may reflect that U-Reporters who are already comfortable in online environments are more likely to adopt AI, that AI use reinforces online confidence, or both.

Are children and young people's needs considered when decisions are made about the apps and sites they use? n= 185,677

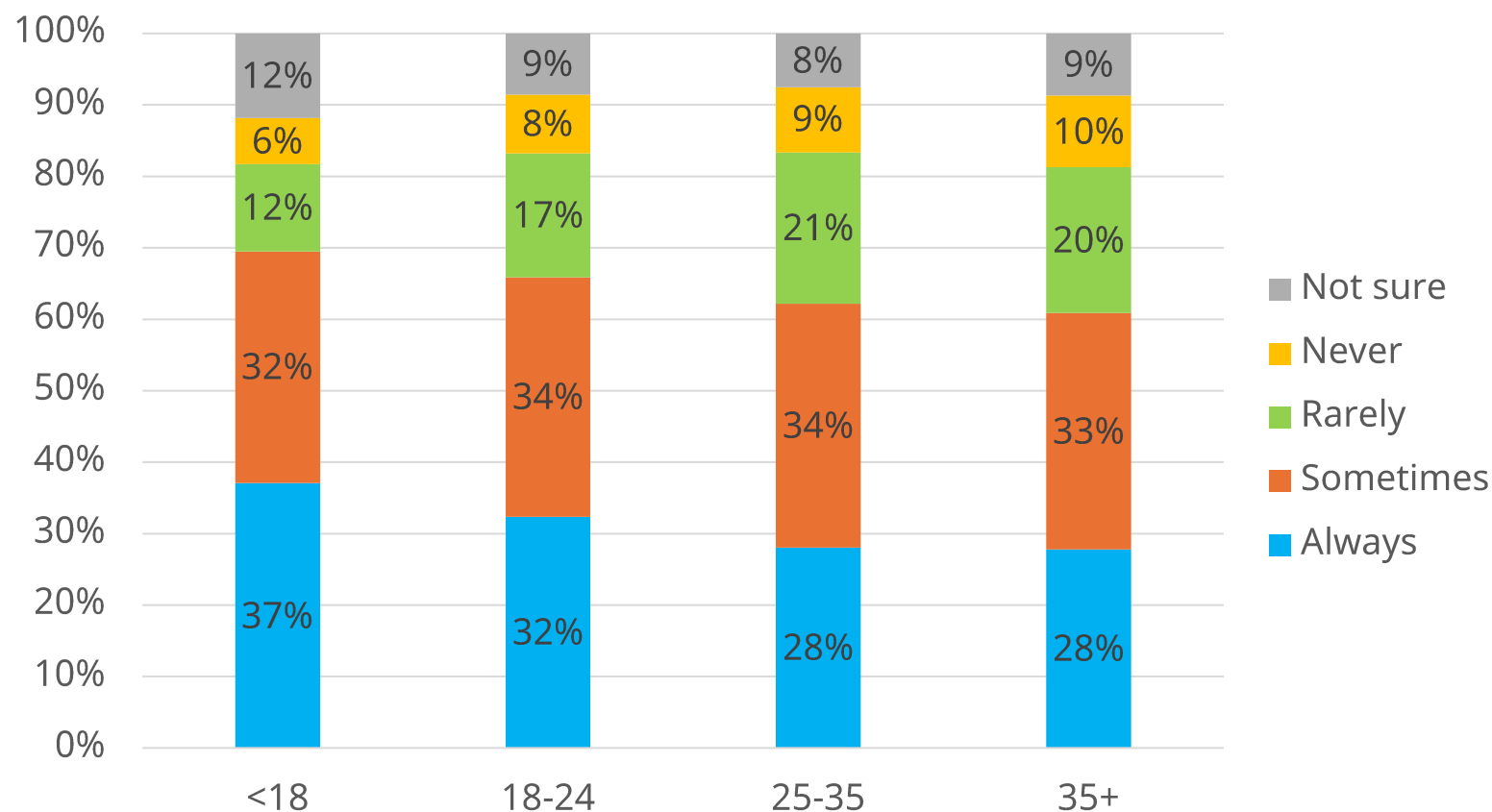


Most respondents felt that children and young people's needs are considered when decisions are made about the apps and sites they use. Nearly two-thirds (64%) said needs are considered always (32%) or sometimes (32%). However, 27% felt they are rarely or never considered, while 9% were not sure.

Results were broadly consistent across gender groups and showed some age-related and regional variations.

See Annex for gender disaggregated charts.

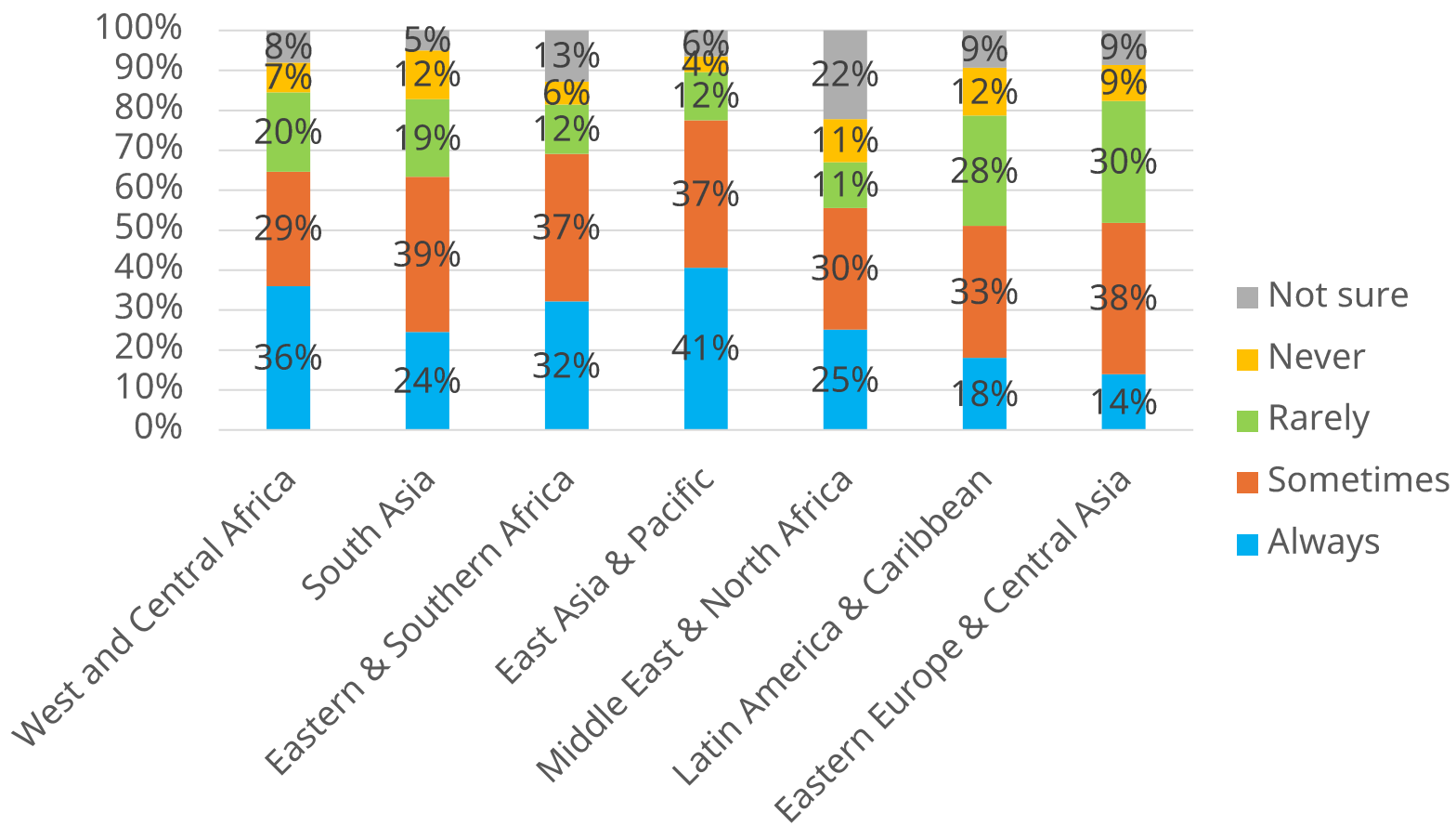
Are children and young people's needs considered when decisions are made about the apps and sites they use? By age



Views on whether children and young people's needs are considered when decisions are made about the apps and sites they use were broadly consistent across age groups. Respondents under 18 were slightly more likely to say needs are always considered (37%), compared with 32% of 18-24 year olds and 28% of respondents aged 25 and over.

Older respondents were more likely to say needs were rarely or never considered (30%) compared with 18% of those under 18.

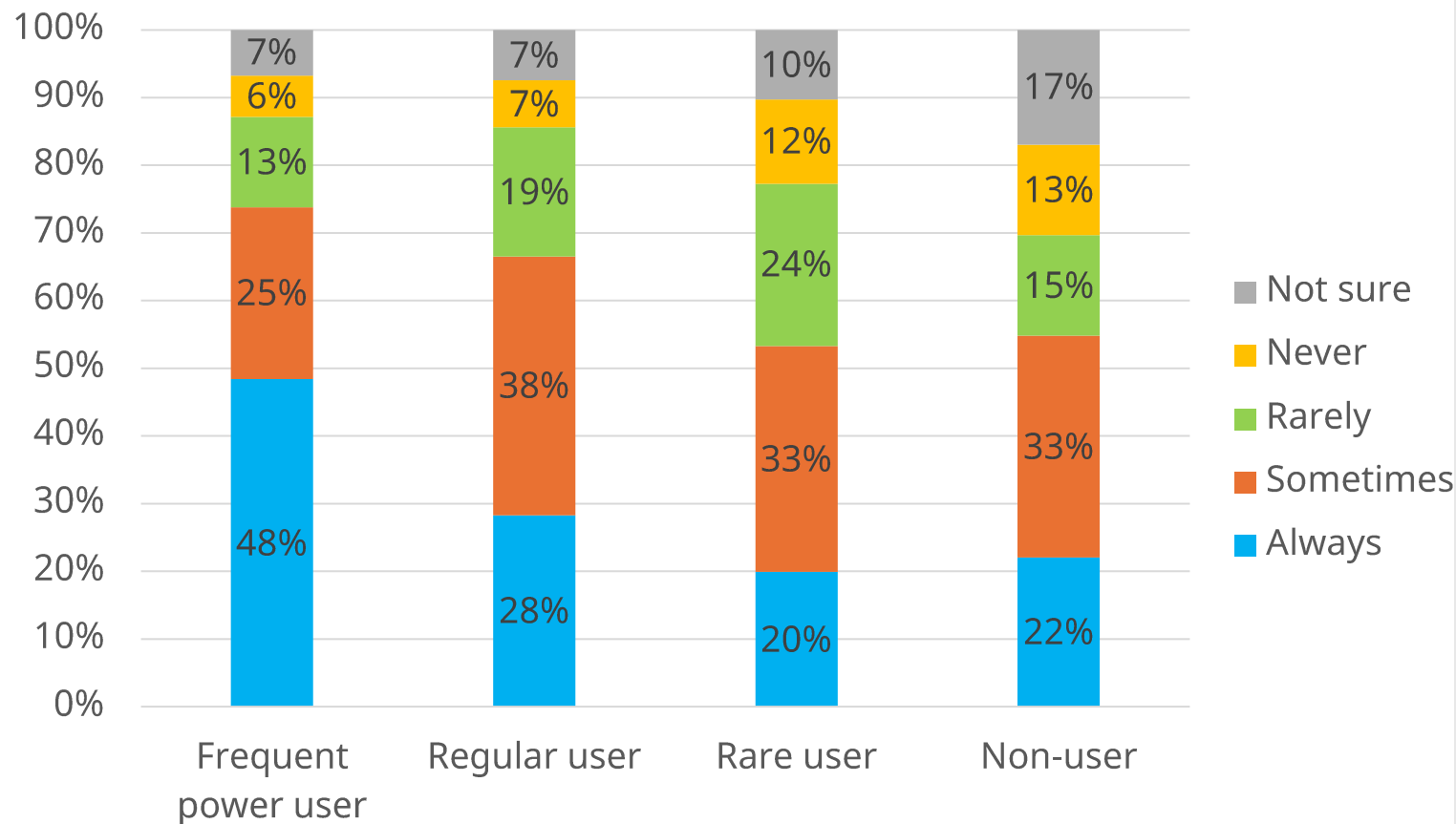
Are children and young people's needs considered when decisions are made about the apps and sites they use? By region



Views on whether children and young people's needs are considered when decisions are made about the apps and sites they use varied across regions. Respondents in EAPR were most likely to say needs are always considered (41%) while those in EECAR were the least likely (14%).

Respondents in EECAR (30%) and LACR (28%) were also most likely to say needs are rarely considered.

Are children and young people's needs considered when decisions are made about the apps and sites they use? By AI usage

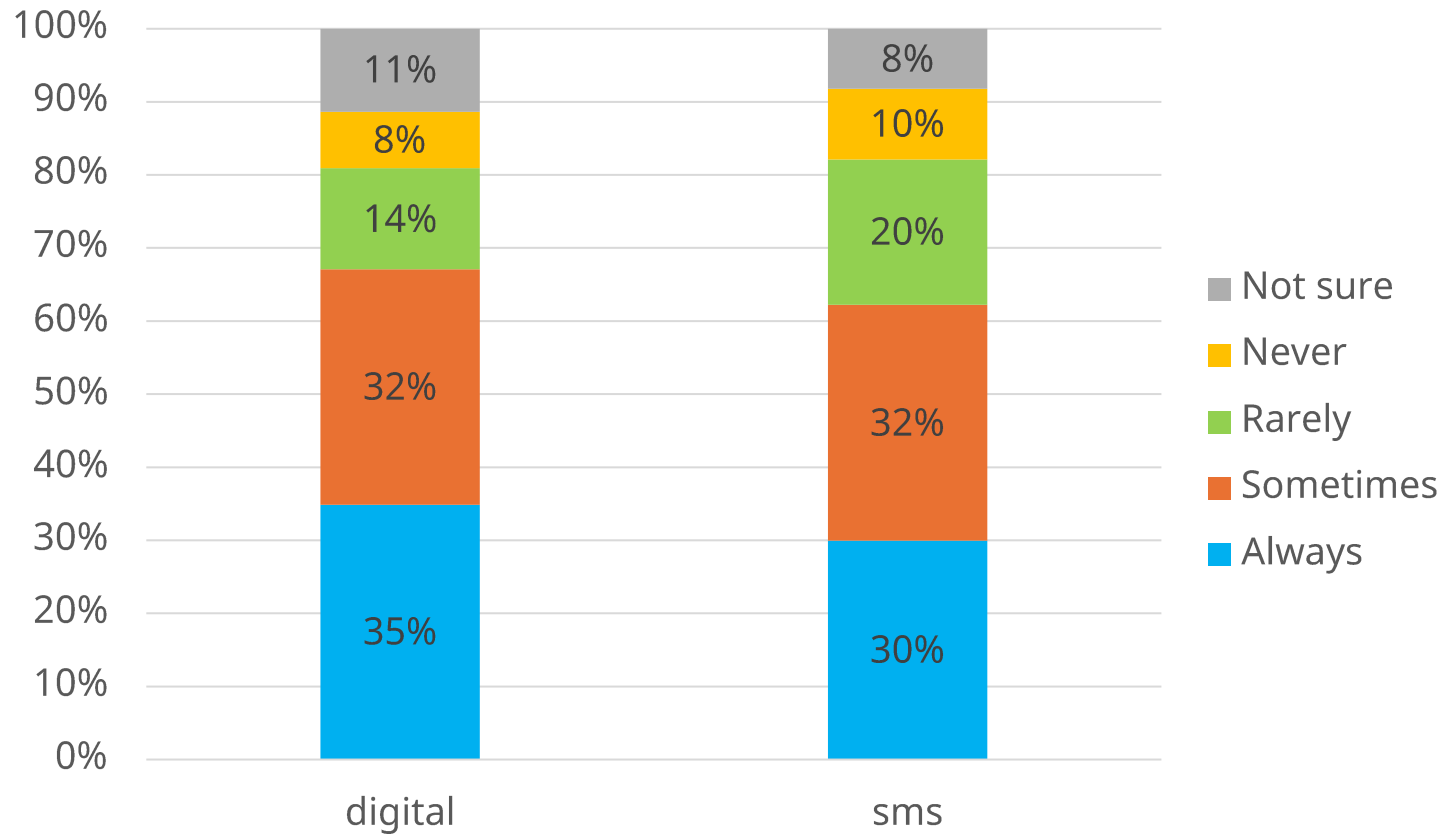


Perceptions of whether children and young people's needs are considered differed across AI usage groups.

Nearly half (48%) of frequent AI users said needs are always considered, compared with around one-fifth of rare users (20%) and non-users (22%). In contrast, rare users (24%) and non-users (15%) were more likely to say needs are rarely considered, while non-users were also the most likely to say never (13%) or not sure (17%).

Results may reflect that U-Reporters who believe needs are considered are more likely to adopt AI, that AI use reinforces this perception, or both.

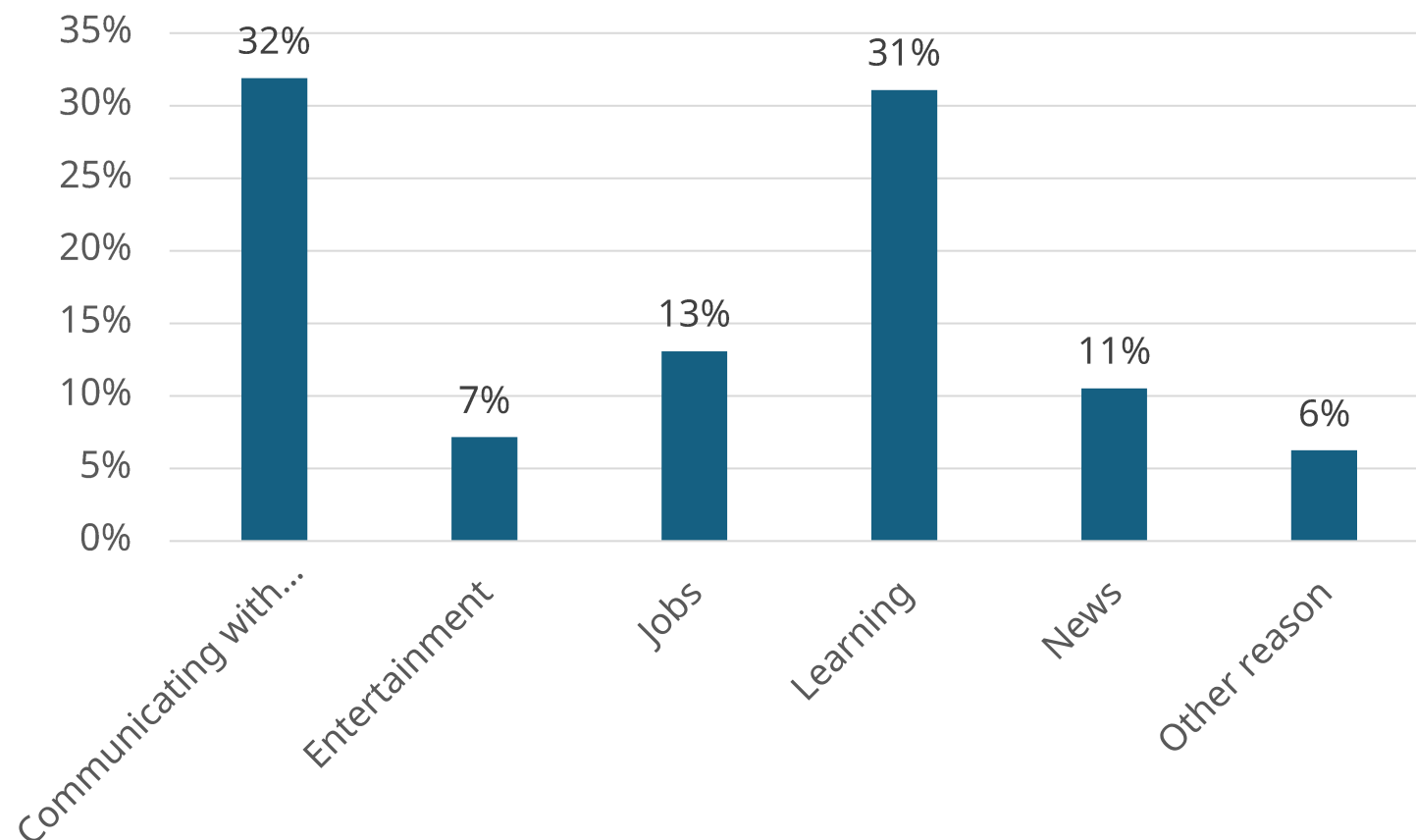
Are children and young people's needs considered when decisions are made about the apps and sites they use? By channel



Perceptions of whether children and young people's needs are considered are broadly consistent across channels.

Respondents on digital channels are slightly more likely to report that needs are always considered (35%) compared to respondents using SMS, while those using SMS are slightly more likely to report that needs are rarely considered (20%).

What's most important about being connected to the internet? n= 145,864

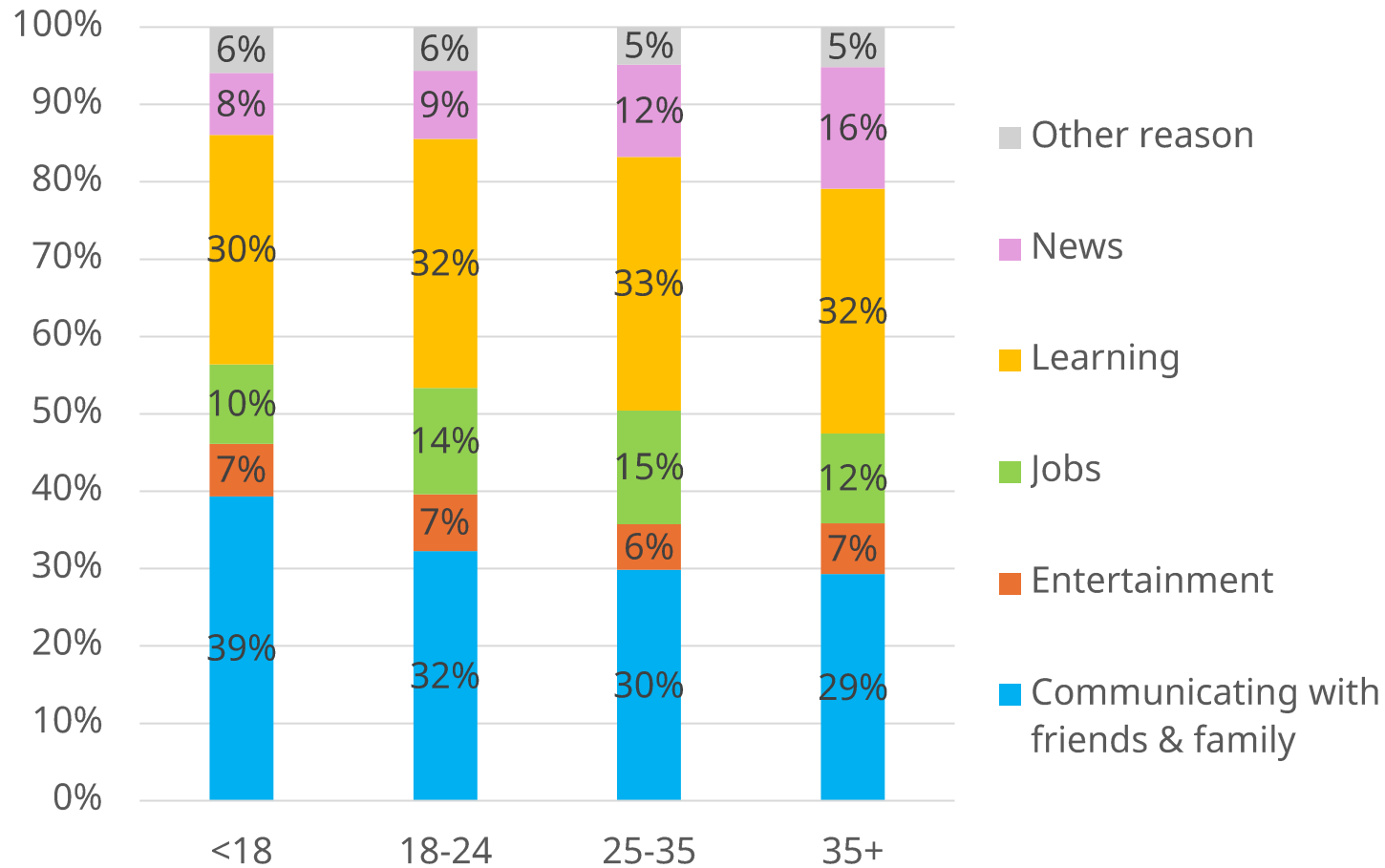


Most respondents reported that communicating with friends and family (32%) and learning (31%) were the most important reasons for being connected to the internet. Jobs (13%) and accessing news (11%) were reported less frequently, while entertainment (7%) and other reasons (6%) were the least commonly selected.

Results were broadly consistent across gender groups and showed some age-related and regional variations.

See Annex for gender disaggregated charts.

What's most important about being connected to the internet? By age

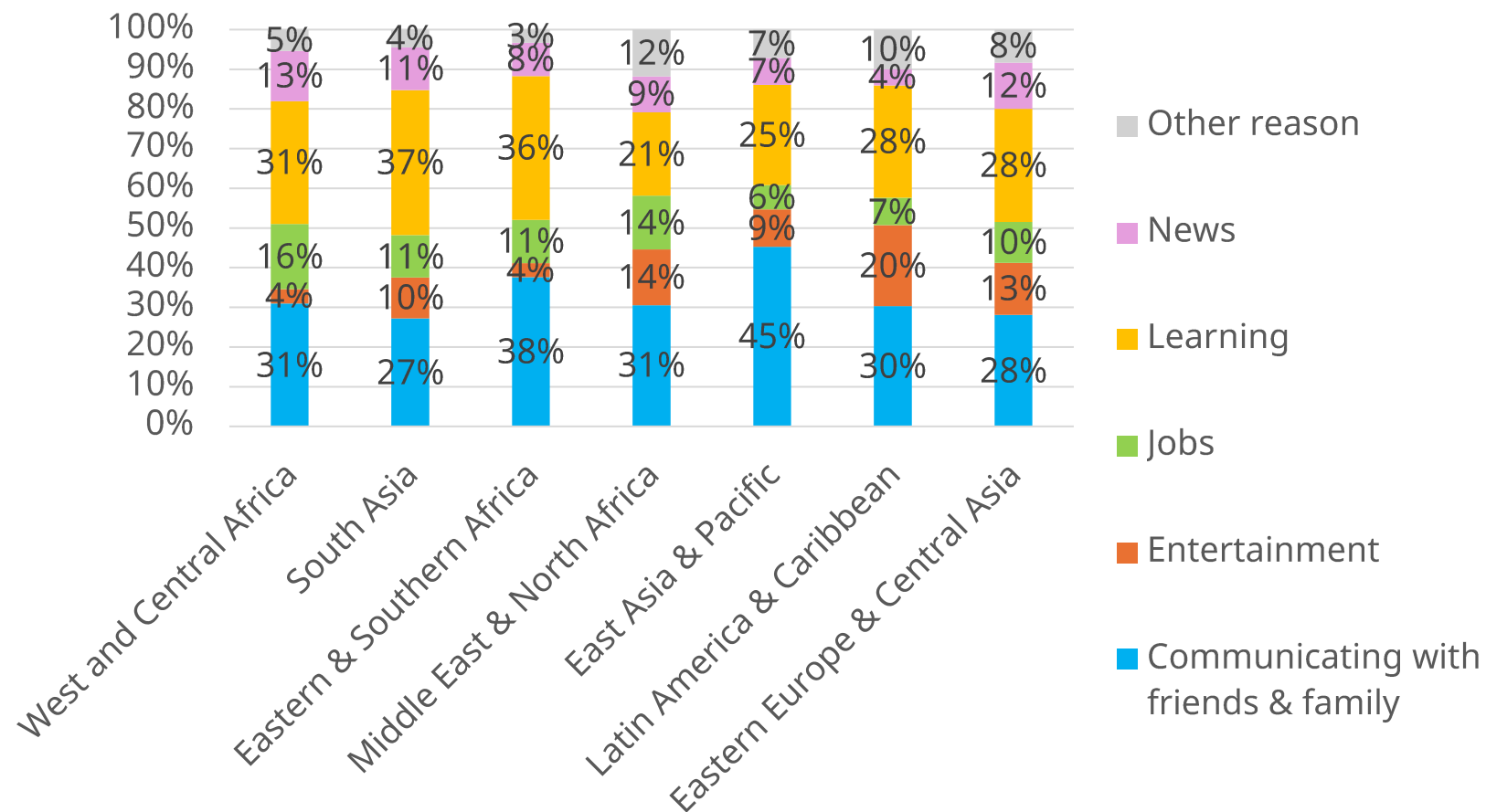


Views on the most important benefit of being connected to the internet were broadly consistent across age groups.

Respondents under 18 were more likely to report communicating with friends and family as the most important benefit (39%) compared with 32% of 18-24 year olds and around 30% of older respondents.

Learning remained a top priority across all groups while respondents aged 15-35 were more likely to report jobs (15%) and those older were more likely to report news (16%).

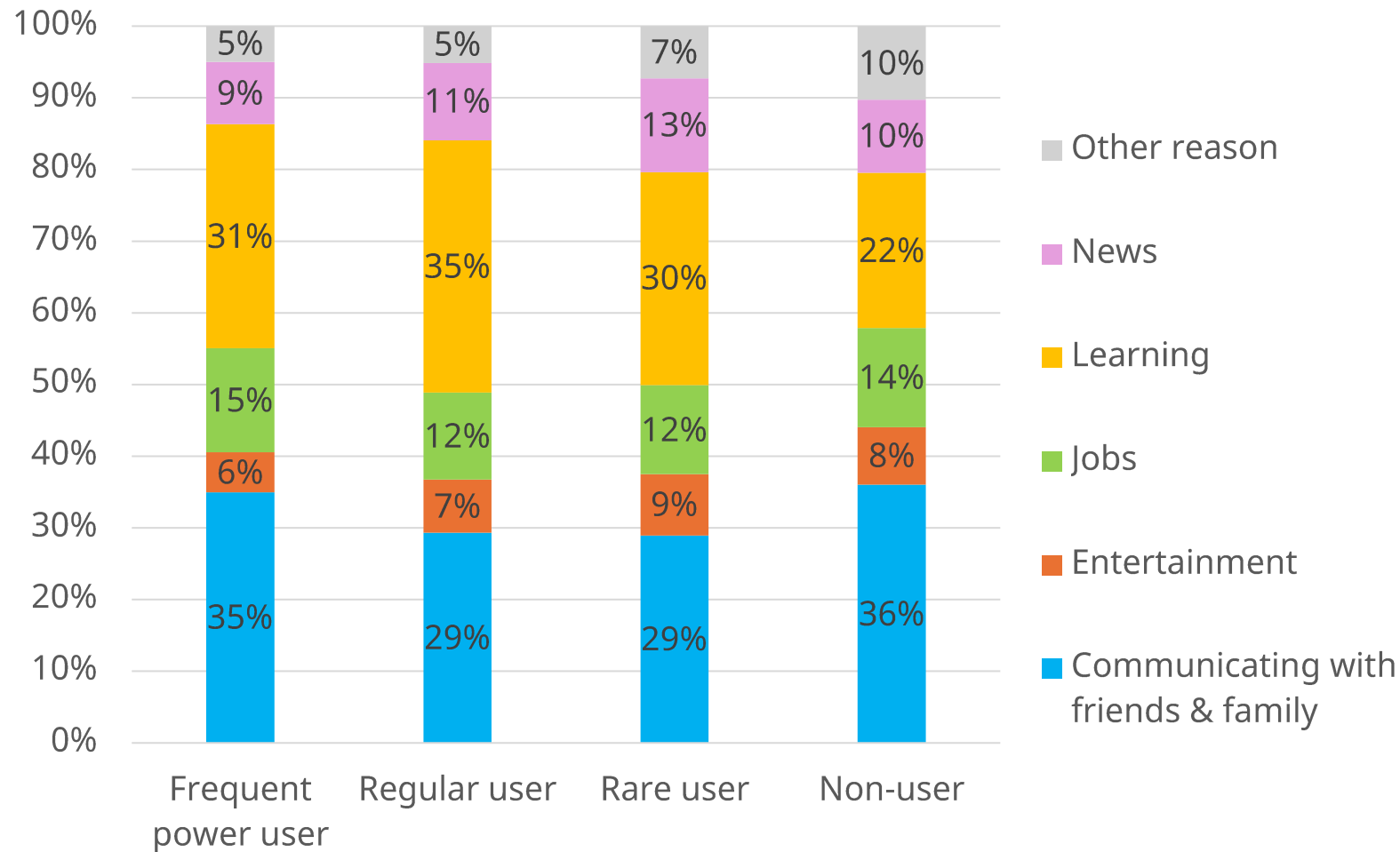
What's most important about being connected to the internet? By region



Across all regions, communicating with friends and family and learning were the most commonly reported benefits of being connected to the internet, although their relative importance varied by region.

Respondents in EAPR (45%) and ESAR (38%) were more likely to report communicating with friends and family, while learning was a higher priority among respondents in South Asia (37%) and EECAR (28%).

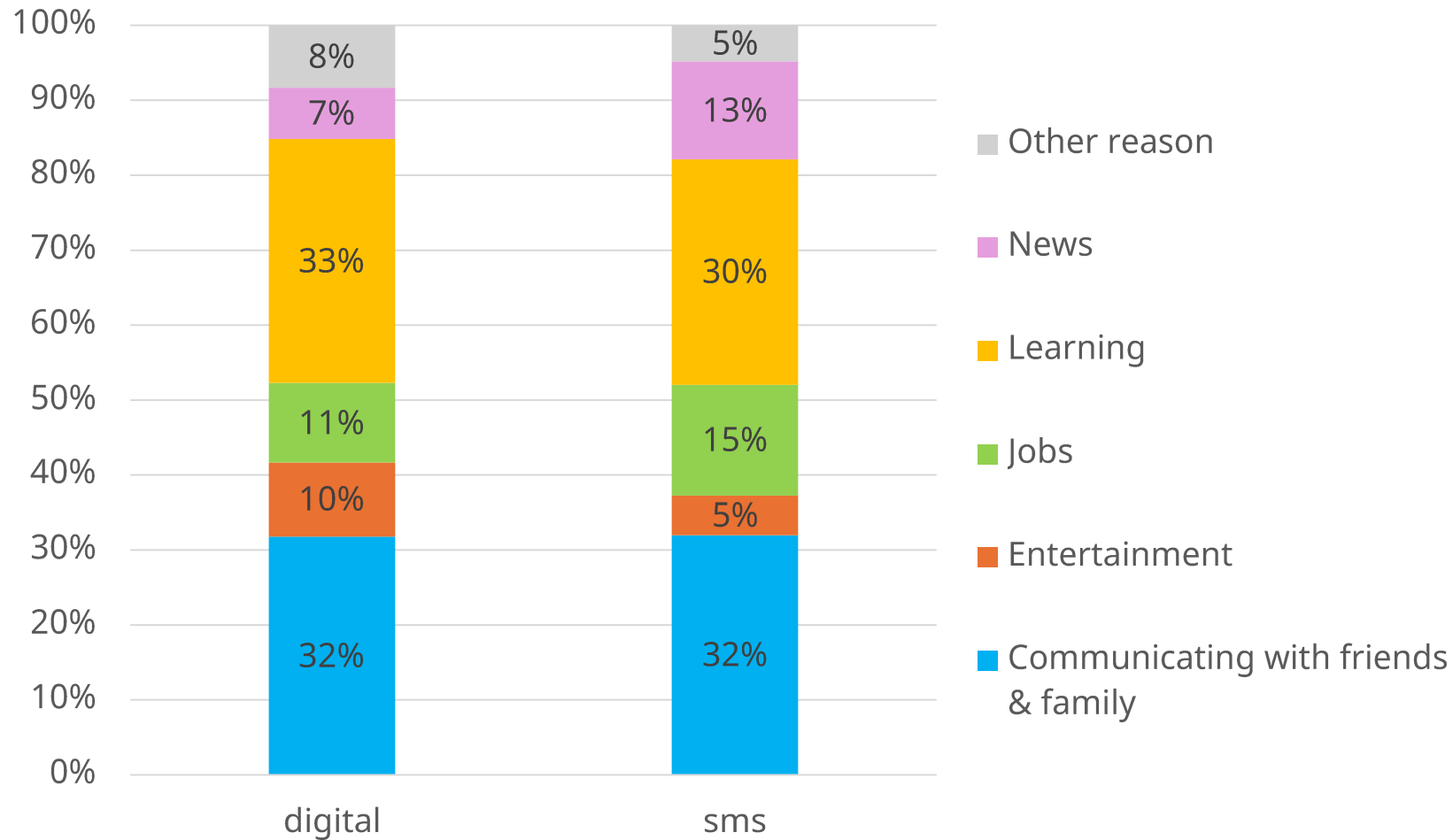
What's most important about being connected to the internet? By AI usage



The most important benefits of being connected to the internet reported were broadly similar across AI usage groups. Communicating with friends and family and learning were consistently reported as the most important priorities

Frequent and regular AI users were more likely to report learning (31-35%) as an important benefit, while non-users were more likely to prioritise communicating with friends and family (36%) and less likely to identify learning (22%).

What's most important about being connected to the internet? By channel



The most important benefits of being connected to the internet reported were broadly similar across channels. Communicating with friends and family and learning were consistently reported as the most important priorities

Respondents on SMS were slightly more likely to report staying updated with news (13%) as an important benefit compared to respondents on digital channels (7%).

AI use was high among respondents with two-thirds (66%) reported using AI at least few times a week, including 45% who use it about once a day or more. AI use was higher among younger respondents and respondents in WCAR, while older respondents and respondents in MENA were more likely to report using AI rarely or not at all.

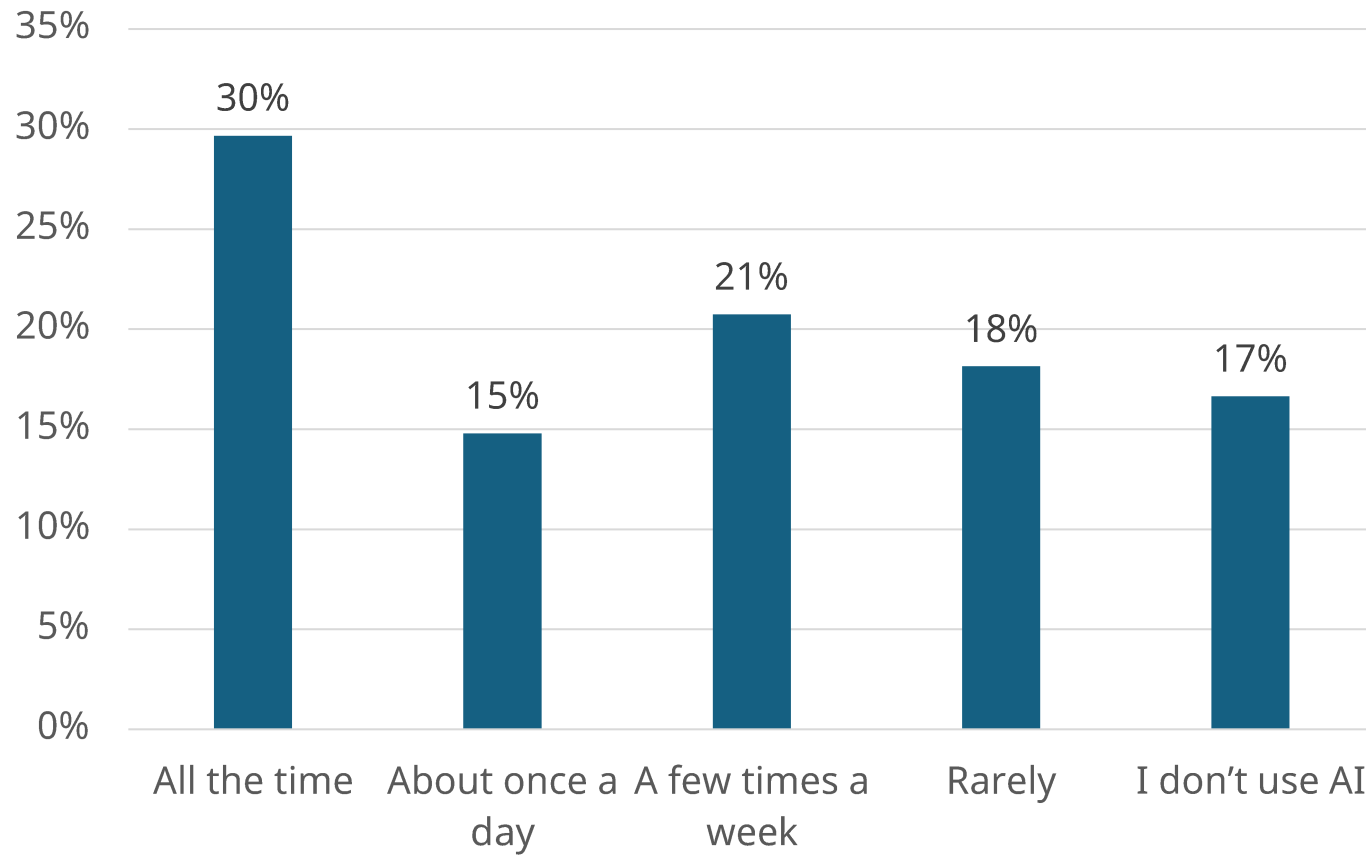
Among respondents who do not use AI, lack of awareness was the most commonly reported barrier, followed by lack of access and perceived need. Reasons reported were broadly consistent across gender and age group but varied by region, with access and awareness reported most frequently in South Asia, while respondents in EECAR and MENAR were more likely to say they did not need AI. Respondents using SMS were more likely to report lack of awareness and access compared to respondents on digital channels who were more likely to report not needing it.

The majority of respondents felt that AI-generated information is relevant to their country, with around four in five reporting that it is either specific or somewhat specific to their country. This perception was broadly consistent across gender and showed some variations by age and region.

The majority of respondents reported verifying AI-generated information by checking another source or asking follow-up questions, rather than trusting it outright. Older respondents and respondents in EAPR, EECAR and LACR were more likely to verify AI-generated information compared to younger respondents and those from other regions.

How often do you use Artificial Intelligence (AI)?

n= 171,804

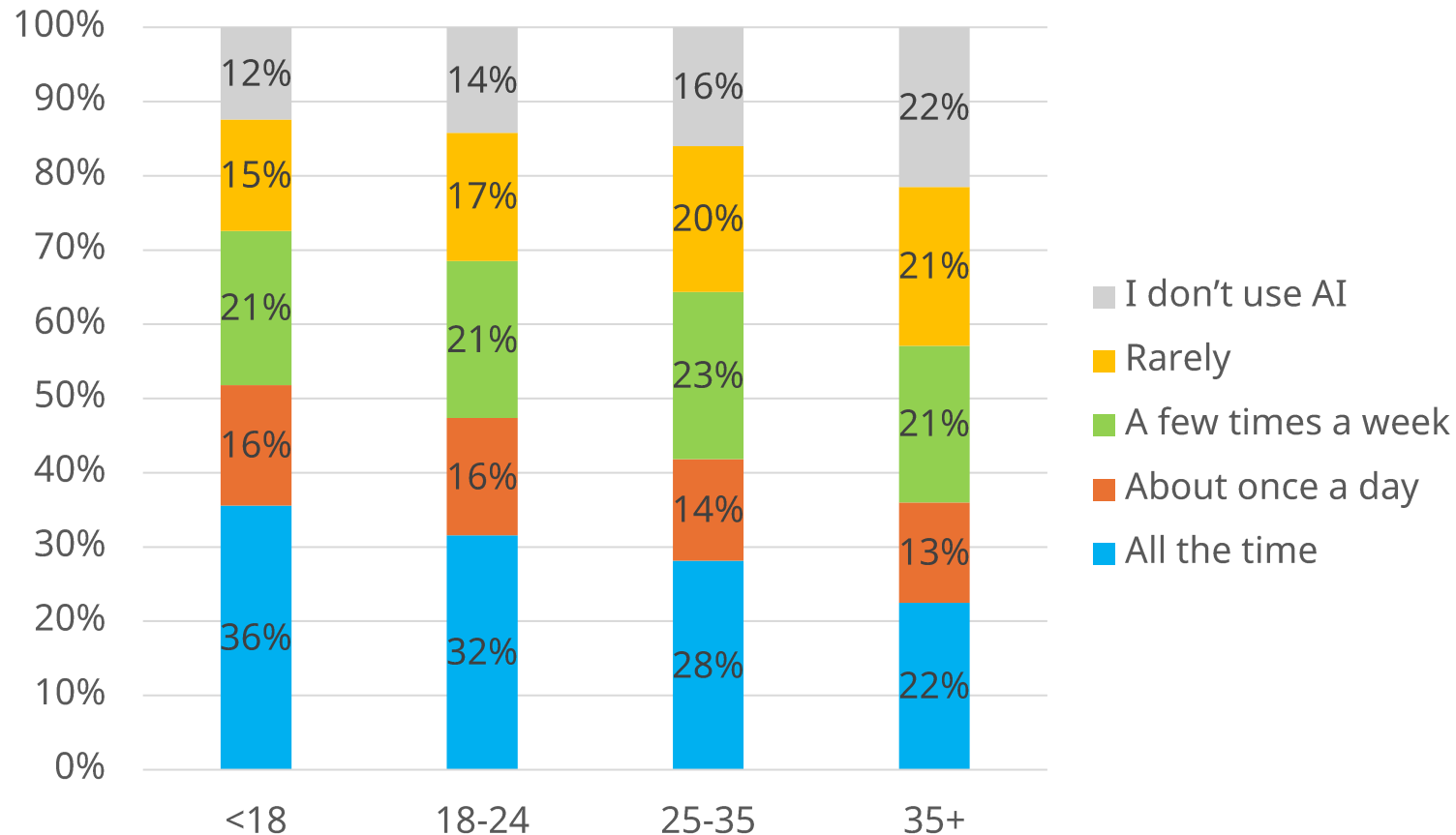


AI use was reported as high among the respondents. Two-thirds (66%) reported using AI at least a few times a week, including 45% who use it about once a day or more. 18% said they use AI rarely while 17% don't use AI at all.

AI use was broadly consistent across gender groups and showed some age-related and regional variations.

See Annex for gender and channel disaggregated charts.

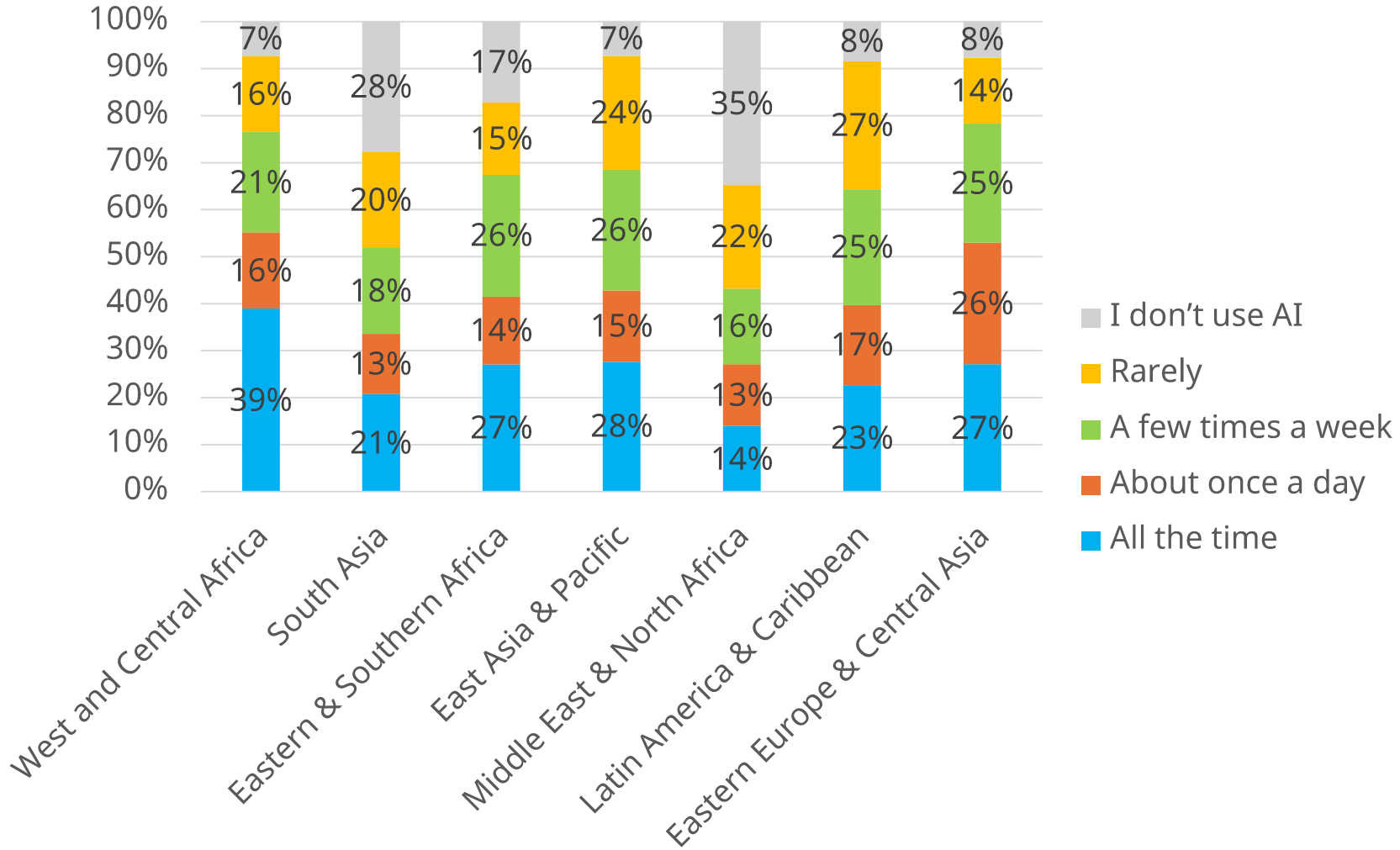
How often do you use Artificial Intelligence (AI)? By age



Younger respondents were more likely to report using AI all the time (36%) compared to older respondents.

In contrast, older respondents were more likely to report they either they do not use AI at all or used it rarely.

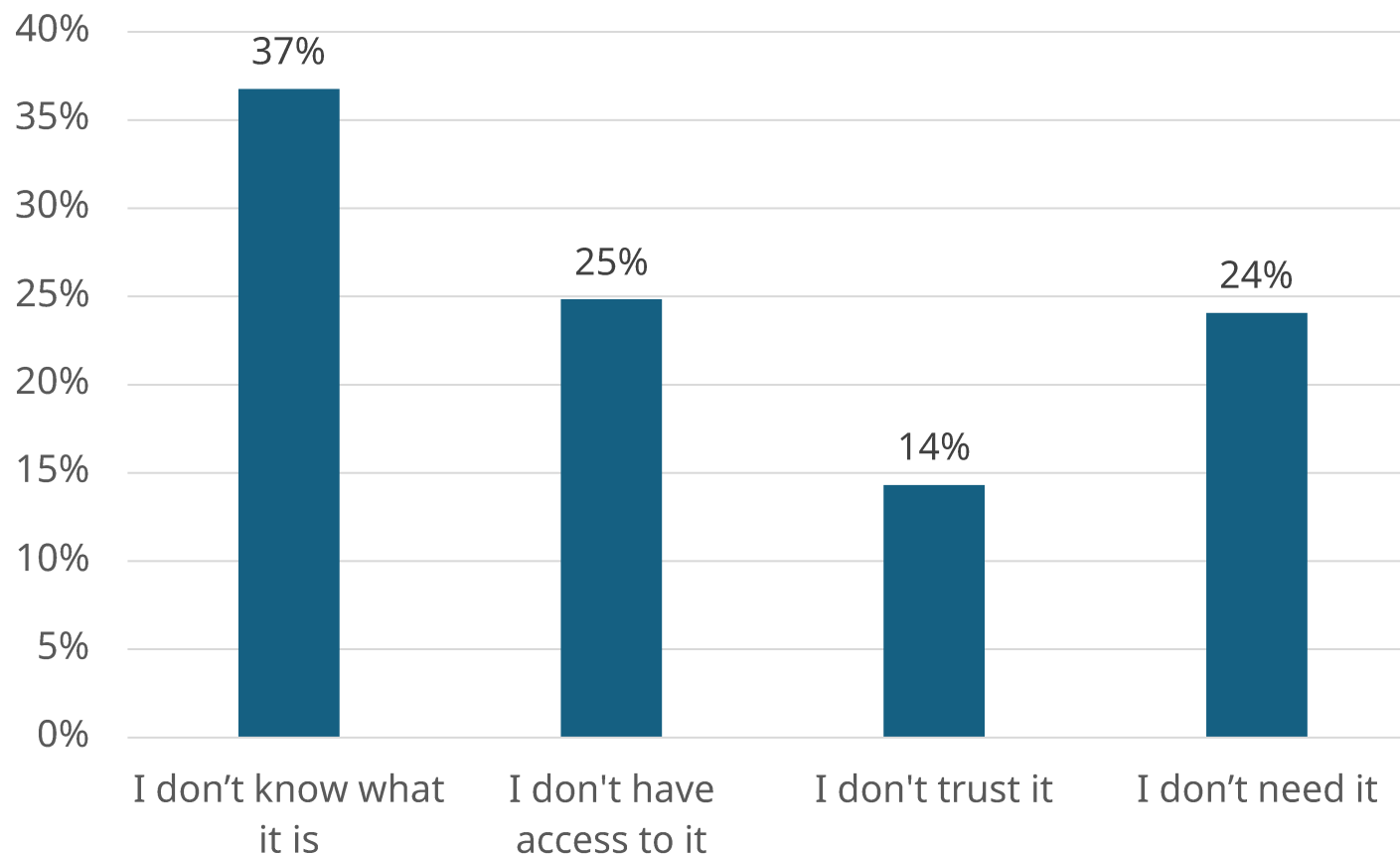
How often do you use Artificial Intelligence (AI)? By region



Respondents from MENAR and South Asia (driven by responses from Afghanistan) were more likely to report not using AI or using it rarely.

Across all other regions, reported AI use was generally high, with more than half of respondents reporting that they used AI at least a few times a week. The highest levels of AI use was reported in WCAR.

Why don't you use AI? n= 20,565

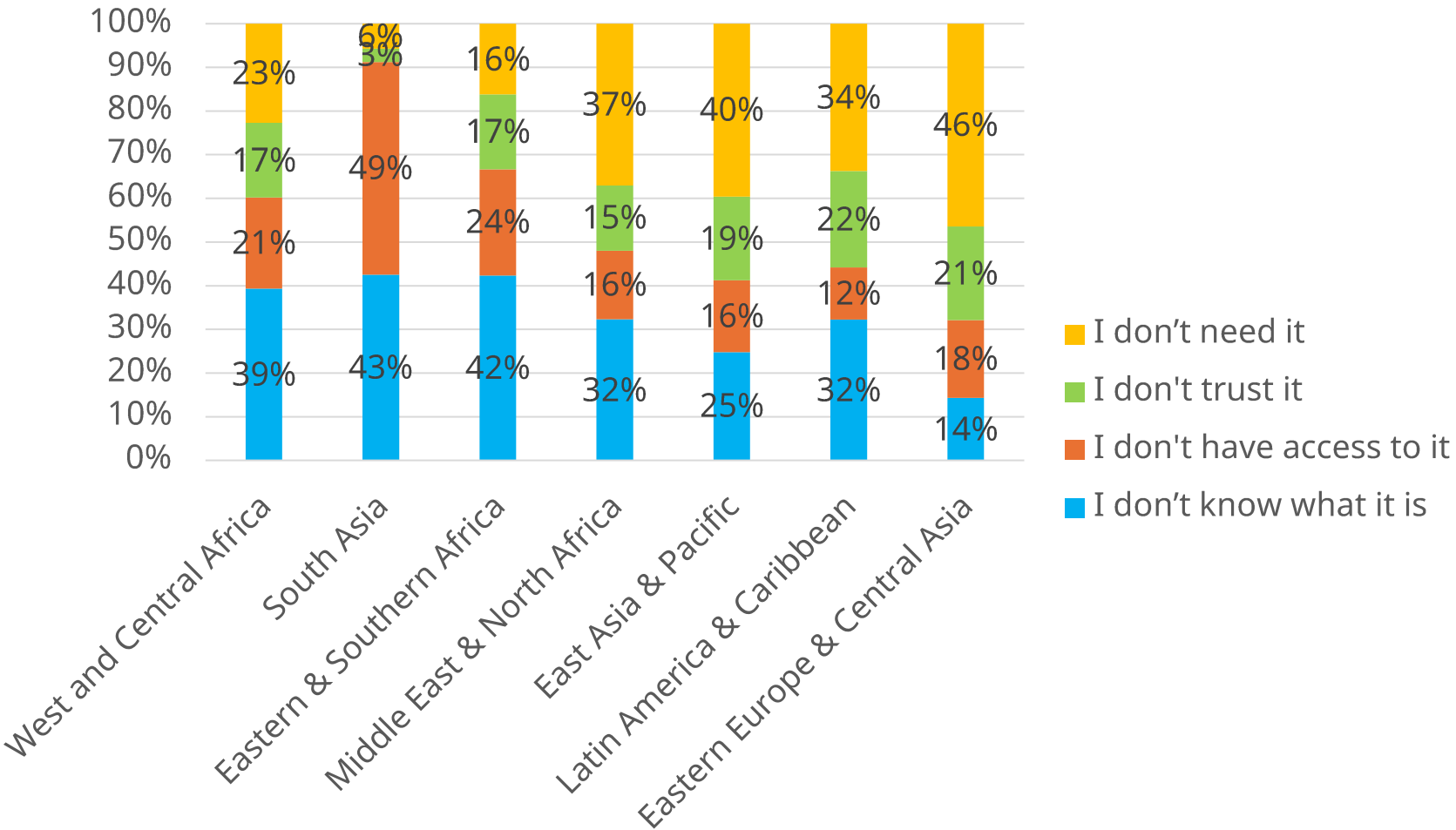


Among those respondents who don't use AI at all, the most commonly reported reason was not knowing what AI is (37%) Other reasons included not having access to it (25%), not needing it (24%) and not trusting it (14%).

Results were consistent across gender and age groups and showed some regional variation.

See Annex for gender disaggregated charts.

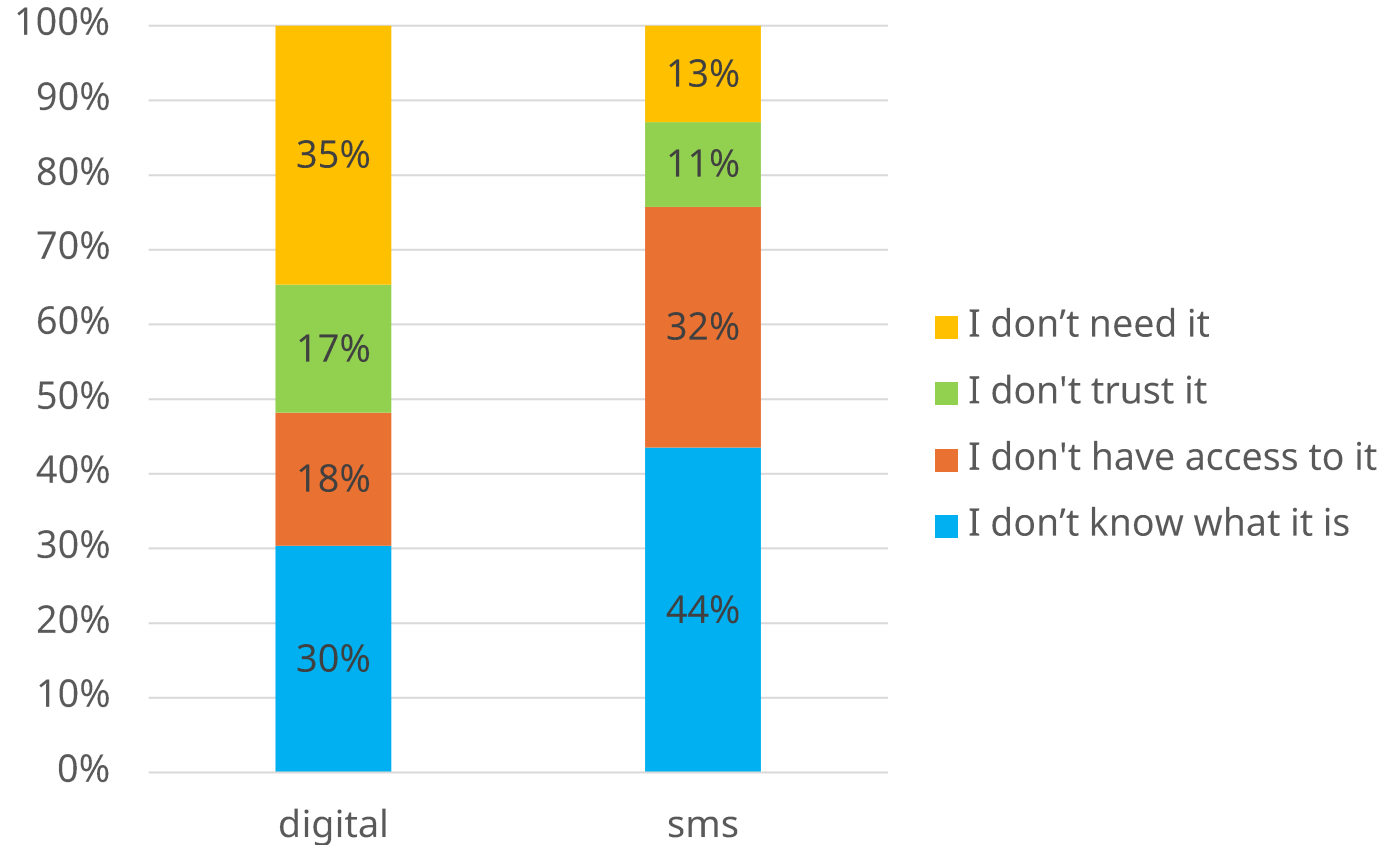
Why don't you use AI? By region



Respondents from South Asia were more likely to report that they don't use AI because they don't have access to it (49%) or did not know what AI is (43%).

In contrast, respondents from EECAR or MENAR were more likely to report they don't need it compared to other regions than to report access or knowledge as a barrier.

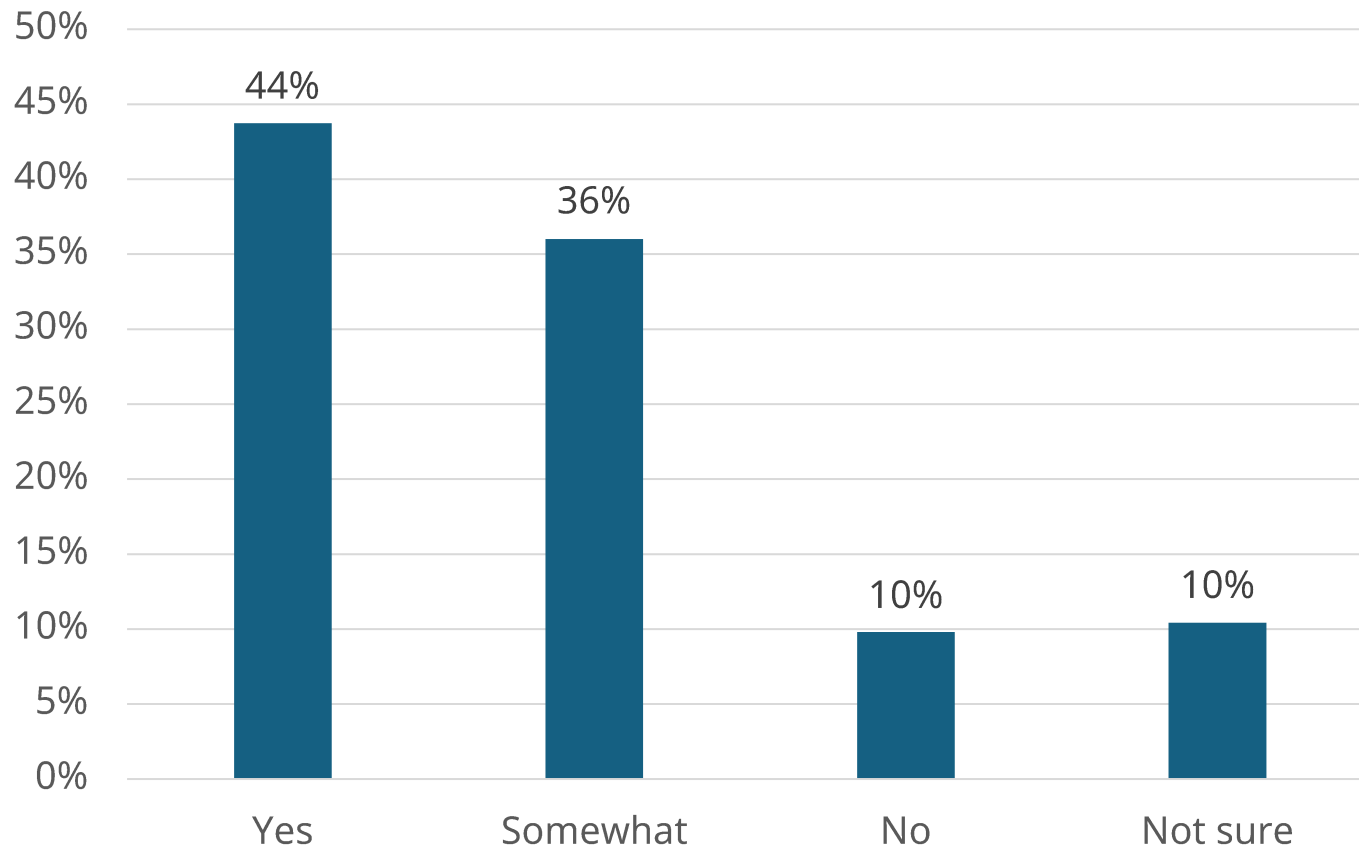
Why don't you use AI? By channel



Respondents using SMS were more likely to report that they don't use AI because they don't know what it is (44%) or they don't have access to it (32%) compared to respondents using digital channels (Facebook, Whatsapp, Instagram, Telegram, Viber or the U-Report App).

In contrast, respondents on digital channels were more likely to report they don't use AI because they don't need it (35%).

Does the information you get from AI feel specific to your country? n= 130,032

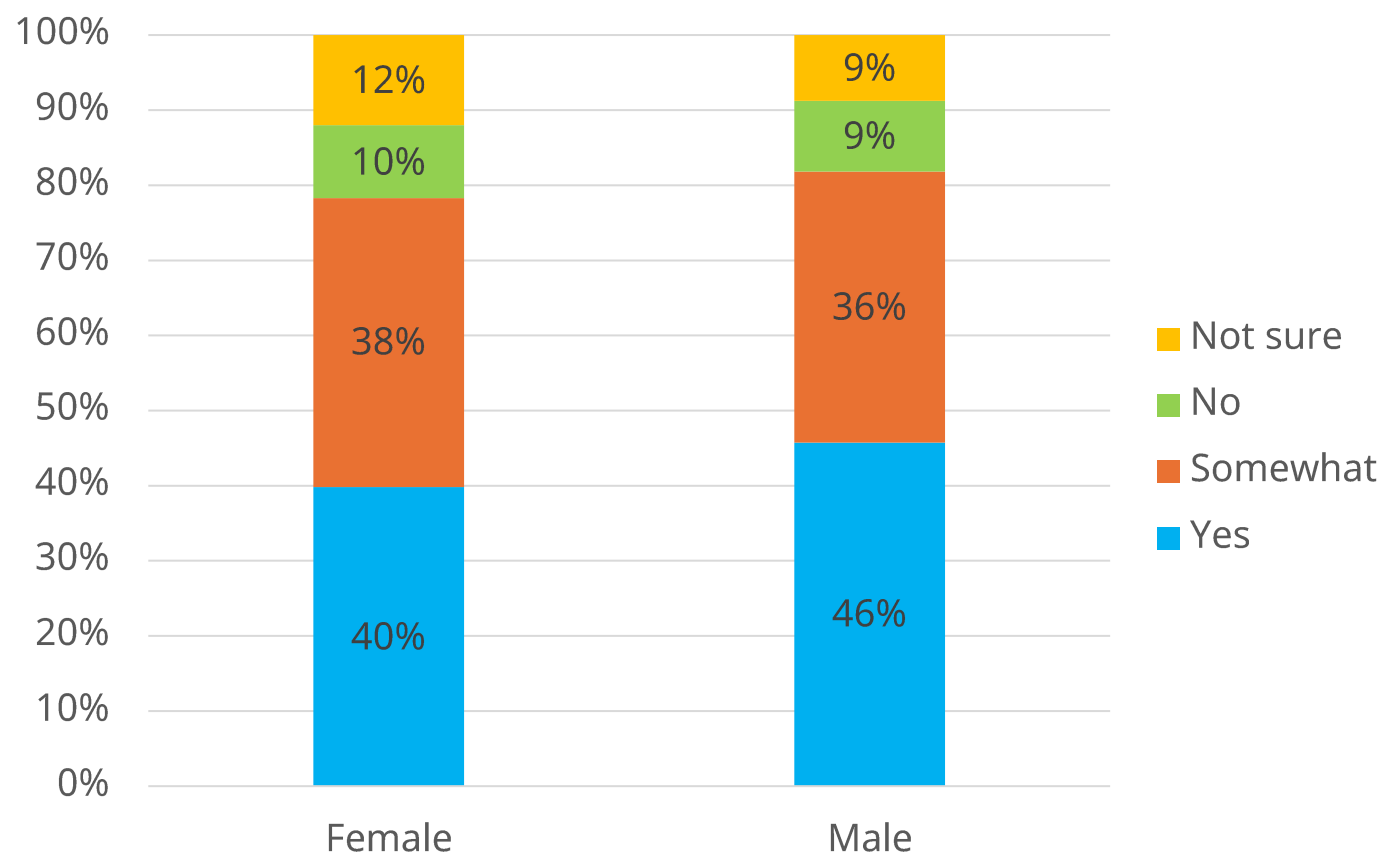


Most respondents felt that AI-generated information is at least somewhat relevant to their country. Around four in five respondents answered either 'Yes' (44%) or 'Somewhat' (36%).

Results were consistent across age and channel groups and showed some gender and regional variation.

See Annex for gender and channel disaggregated charts.

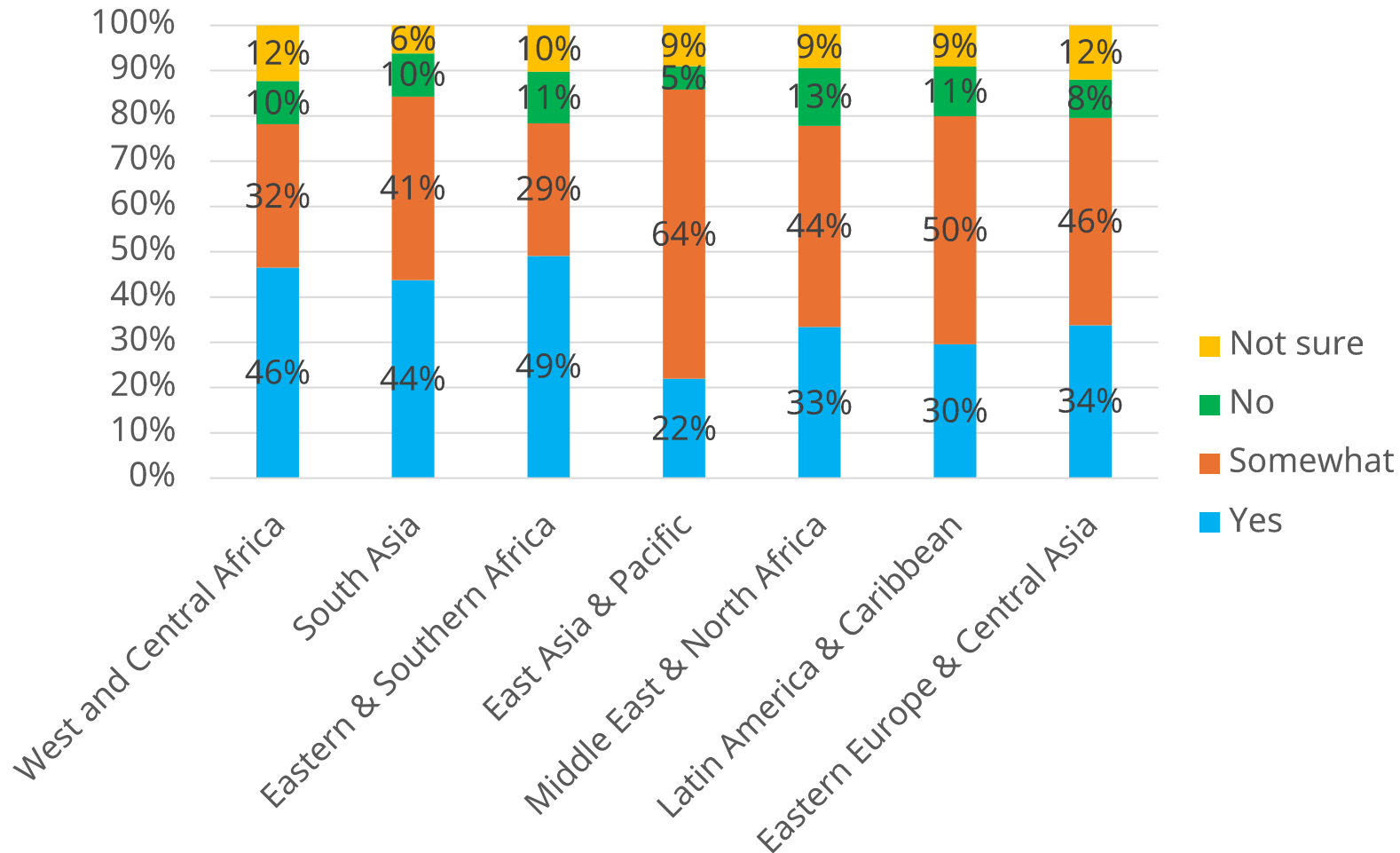
Does the information you get from AI feel specific to your country? By gender



Male respondents were slightly more likely than female respondents to report that AI-generated information was specific to their country (46% vs. 40%), while female respondents were slightly more likely to respond 'Somewhat' (38% vs. 36%) or 'Not sure' (12% vs. 9%).

The proportion of respondents who felt AI-generated information was not specific to their country was low and similar across both gender groups.

Does the information you get from AI feel specific to your country? By region

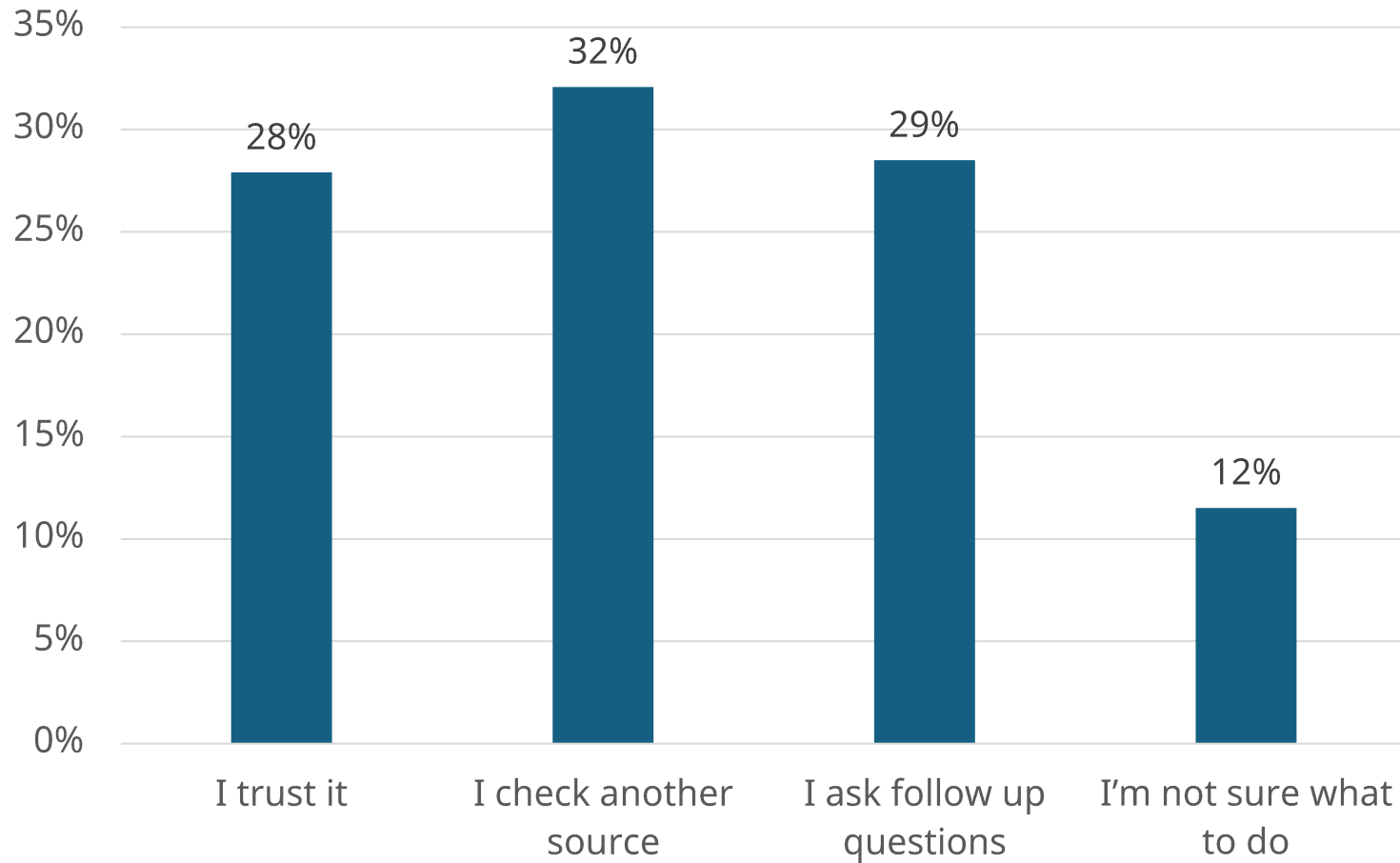


Across regions, most respondents felt that AI-generated information is at least somewhat relevant to their country, with respondents in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia most likely to report 'Yes'. Respondents from EAPR were most likely to report 'Somewhat' relevant (64%).

Across all regions, the proportion of respondents who felt AI-generated information was not specific to their country was low.

How do you treat information you get from AI?

n= 128,458



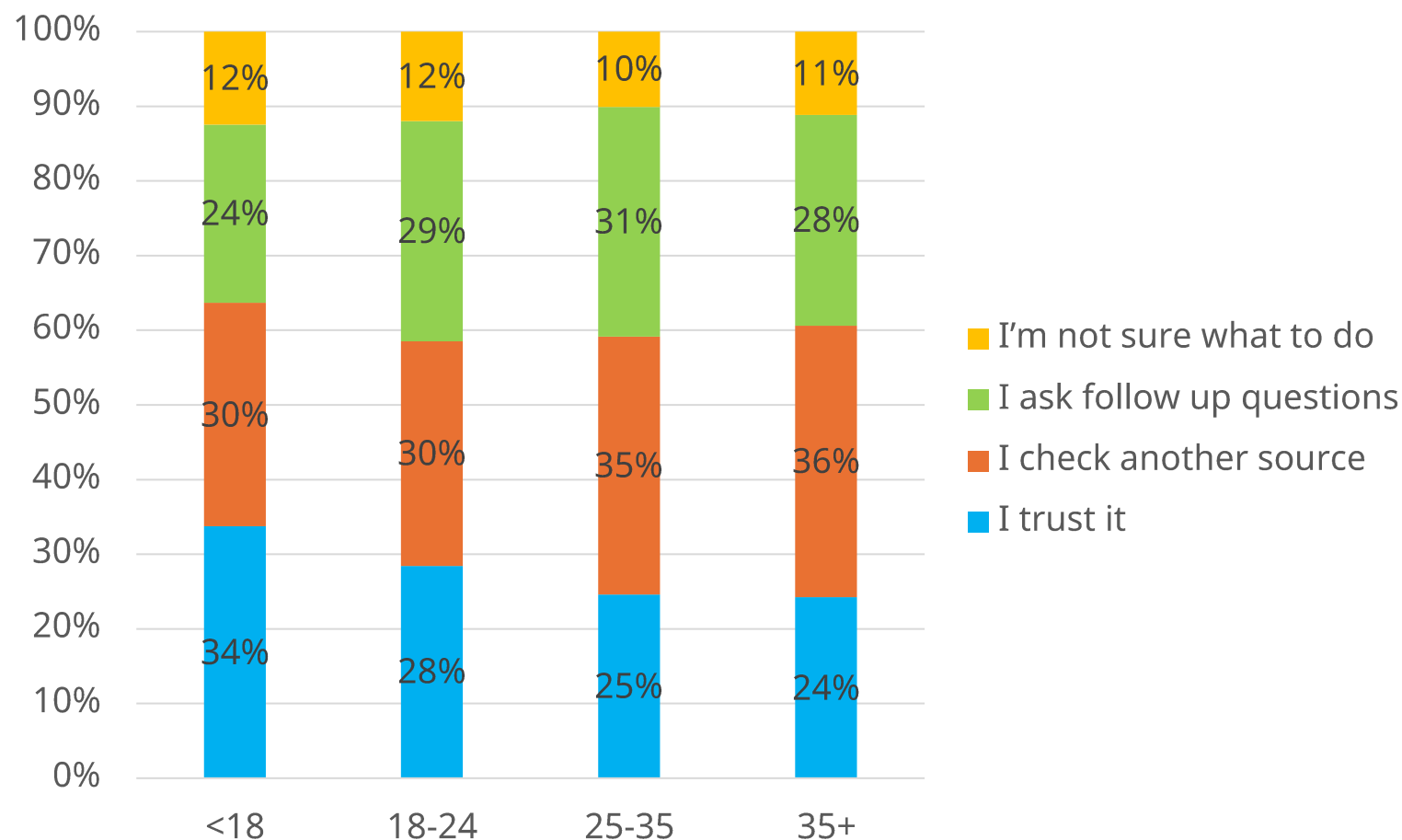
Respondents were more likely to report that they would verify or probe AI-generated information than to trust it outright. 32% reported they checked another source and 29% reported they asked follow-up questions. A notable 28% noted that they trusted the AI-generated information while 12% reported they were not sure what to do.

Results were consistent across age groups and showed some gender and regional variation.

See Annex for gender disaggregated charts.

How do you treat information you get from AI?

By age

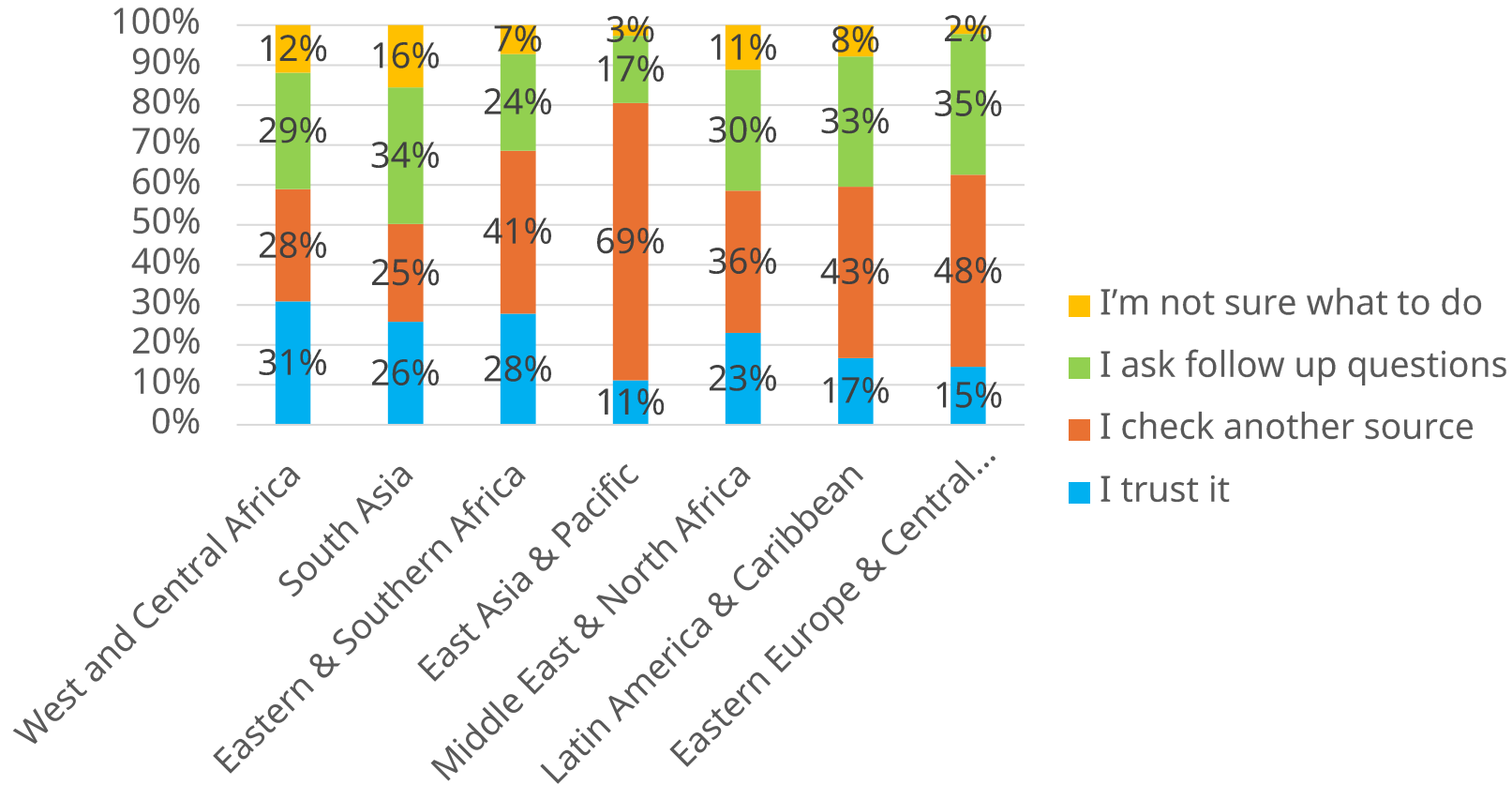


Younger respondents, especially those under 18 (34%), are the most likely to report trusting AI-generated information while trust declines steadily among older groups.

In contrast, older respondents are more likely to verify AI-generated information by checking another another source, especially among those aged 25 and older (35%).

Across all age groups, similar proportions report asking follow-up questions while a low proportion are unsure how to act on AI-generated information.

How do you treat information you get from AI? By region



Trust in AI-generated information is highest among respondents in WCAR (31%) and ESAR (28%), and lowest in EAPR (11%) and EECAR (15%)

In contrast, checking another source is the dominant response to AI-generated information among respondents in most regions, especially in EAPR (69%), EECAR (48%) and LACR (43%).

Across all regions, similar proportions report asking follow-up questions while a low proportion are unsure how to act on AI-generated information.

For results of response to open-ended question: What's the one thing you wish governments and companies understood better about your life online?, see:

[Life Online open-ended response analysis](#)

This data reflects the information shared by participating U-Reporters and is not statistically representative of young people globally or in any specific country or region. U-Report does not aim to achieve statistical representativeness, and no sampling stratification or post-stratification weighting was applied.

Age, gender and regional disaggregations are intended to provide additional context to the overall findings by highlighting where experiences and perspectives differed across respondent groups. These differences should not be interpreted as representative estimates of wider populations, but rather as insights into the diversity of views and experiences shared by respondents.

U-Report data should complement, rather than replace, more statistically robust methods of data collection and should not be used as a single source of information for decision-making.

UNICEF values the voices of young people and seeks to recognize their experiences and views, and the data are considered a reliable reflection of the information the respondents have provided to U-Report.



U-Report is UNICEF's community for young people, by young people, where they can raise their voices on issues that matter to them, get trusted information and take action in their communities.

U-Report uses digital technologies and real-time insights to shape policies and decisions in communities, countries and around the world, working side-by-side with young people every step of the way.

Partnering with

40M U-Reporters

1M in U-Report Global

90+ countries worldwide

Who we are, what we do & why we do it

The **Child & Youth Engagement Section** is responsible for **strengthening UNICEF's capacity to engage young people as advocates for their rights through our flagship campaigns and initiatives; and ensuring their perspectives and voices are an integral part of our communications and advocacy.**

Why young people? More than 1.8 billion young people live in the world today—about 1.4 billion in just 20 countries. This generation is an active force driving change.

By investing in young people as active citizens and advocates for the rights of children and youth, UNICEF will help young people reach their full potential and deliver on our strategic organizational priorities more effectively and sustainably.

Learn more about us on our [ICON Site](#)

Thank you.

Child & Youth Engagement Section
Contact for the report: tlama@unicef.org



Life Online

Q. Confidence	Online	In-person	Both	Neither	Not sure
Overall	35%	27%	21%	6%	11%
24 and under	37%	26%	20%	5%	12%

Q. Needs considered	Always	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Not sure
Overall	32%	32%	18%	9%	9%
24 and under	34%	33%	16%	8%	9%

Q. Importance of being connected	Communicating with friends & family	Entertainment	Jobs	Learning	News	Other reason
Overall	32%	7%	13%	31%	11%	6%
24 and under	34%	7%	13%	32%	9%	6%

Results for those 24-and-under are broadly consistent with the overall findings, with differences of a few points.

AI

Q. AI use frequency	All the time	About once a day	A few times a week	Rarely	I don't use AI
Overall	30%	15%	21%	18%	17%
24 and under	32%	16%	21%	17%	14%

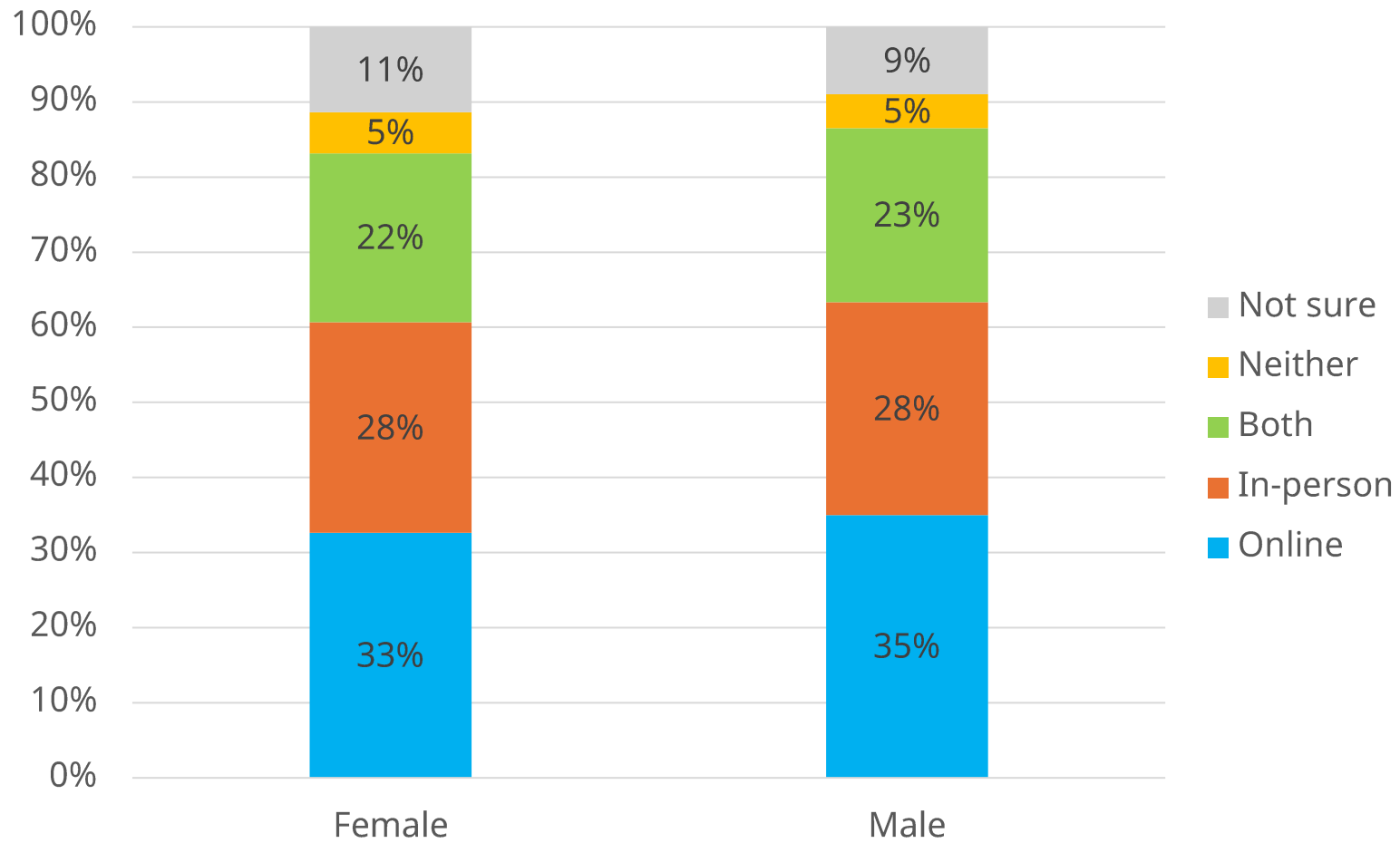
Q. Barriers to AI use	I don't know what it is	I don't have access to it	I don't trust it	I don't need it
Overall	37%	25%	14%	24%
24 and under	41%	28%	12%	19%

Q. AI info specific to country	Yes	Somewhat	No	Not sure
Overall	44%	36%	10%	10%
24 and under	43%	37%	9%	11%

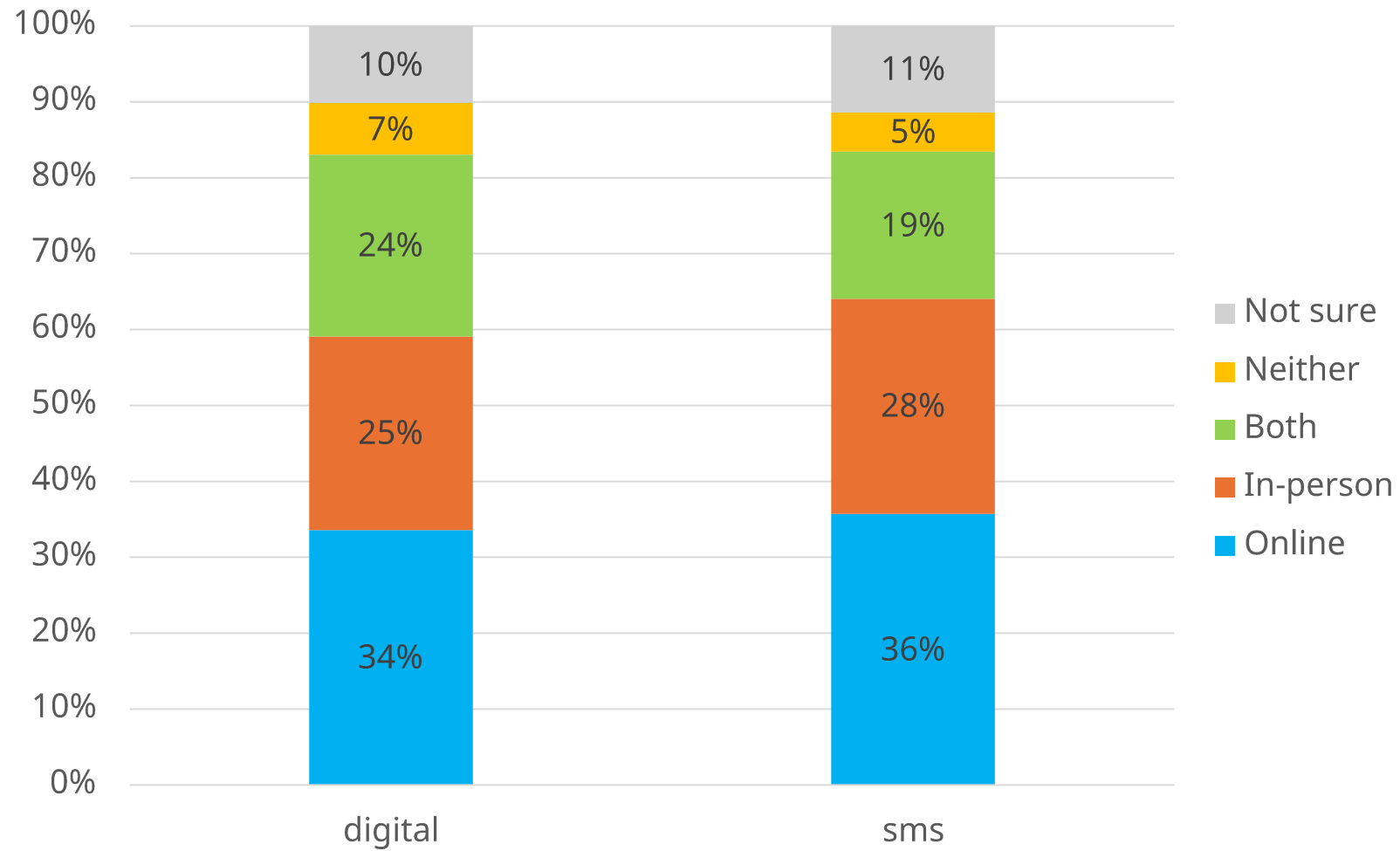
Q. Critical thinking	I trust it	I check another source	I ask follow up questions	I'm not sure what to do
Overall	28%	32%	29%	12%
24 and under	30%	30%	28%	12%

Results for those 24-and-under are broadly consistent with the overall findings, with differences of a few points.

Where do you feel most confident being your real self?
By gender

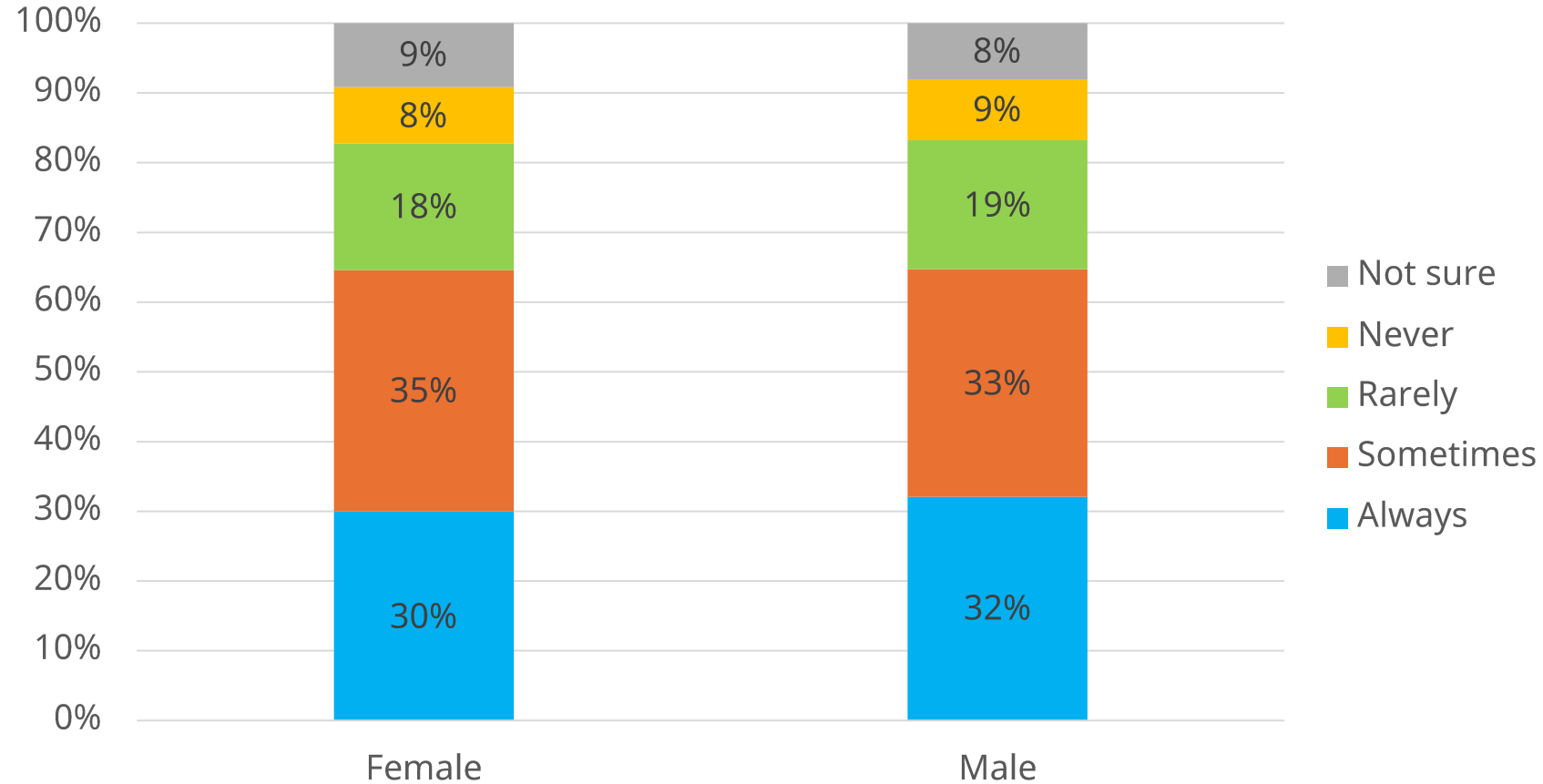


Where do you feel most confident being your real self?
By channel

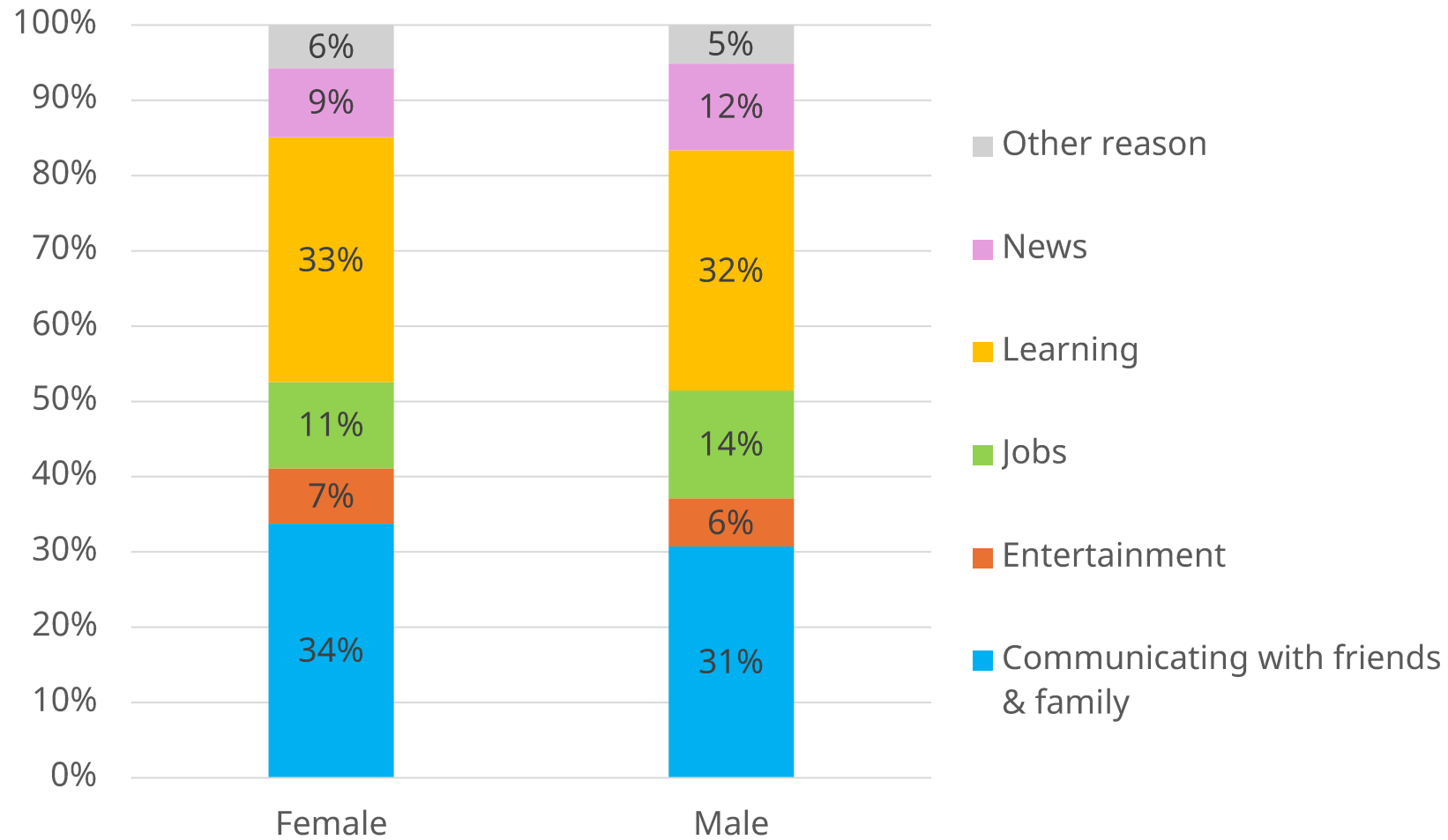


Are children and young people's needs considered when decisions are made about the apps and sites they use?

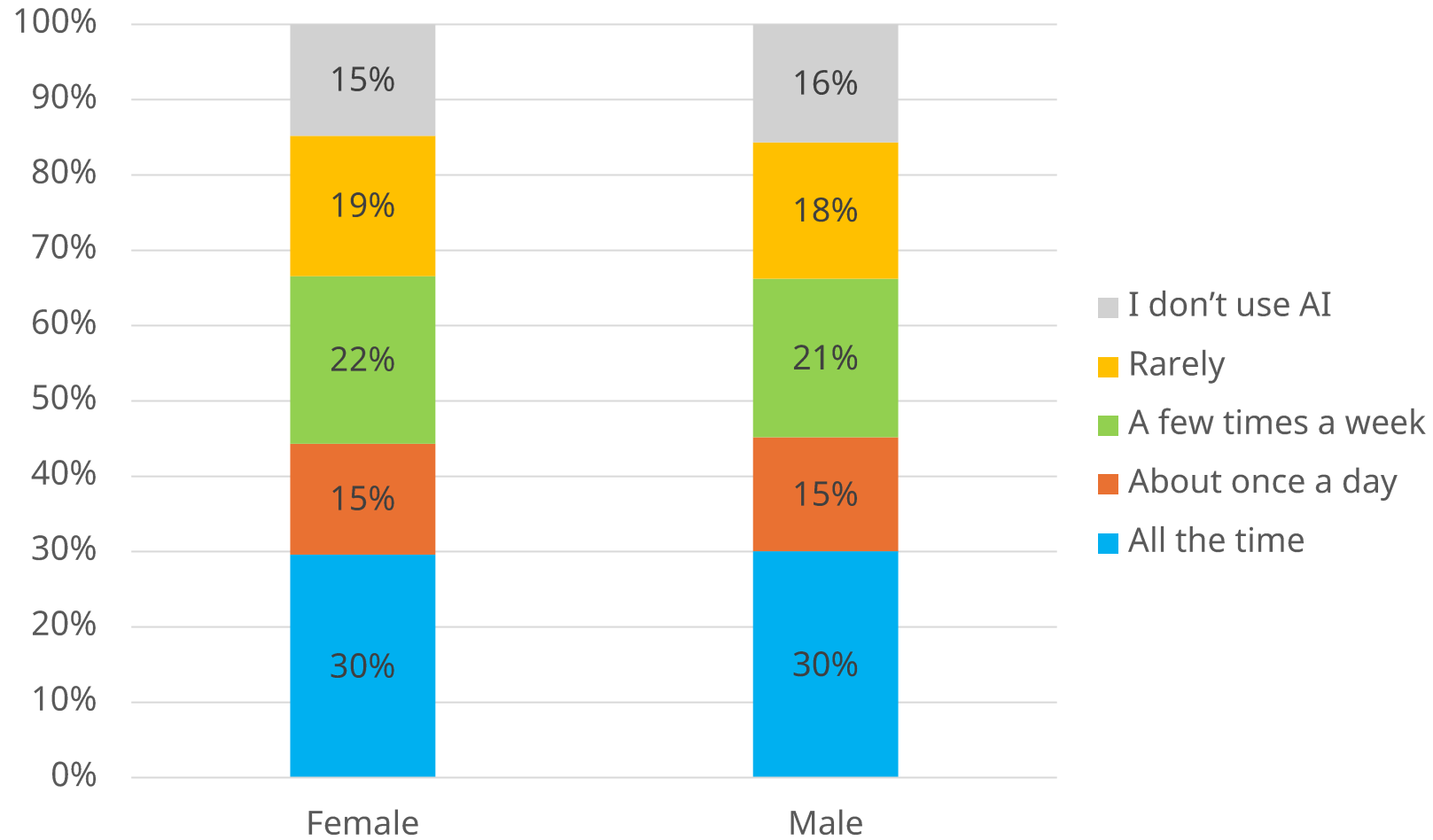
By gender

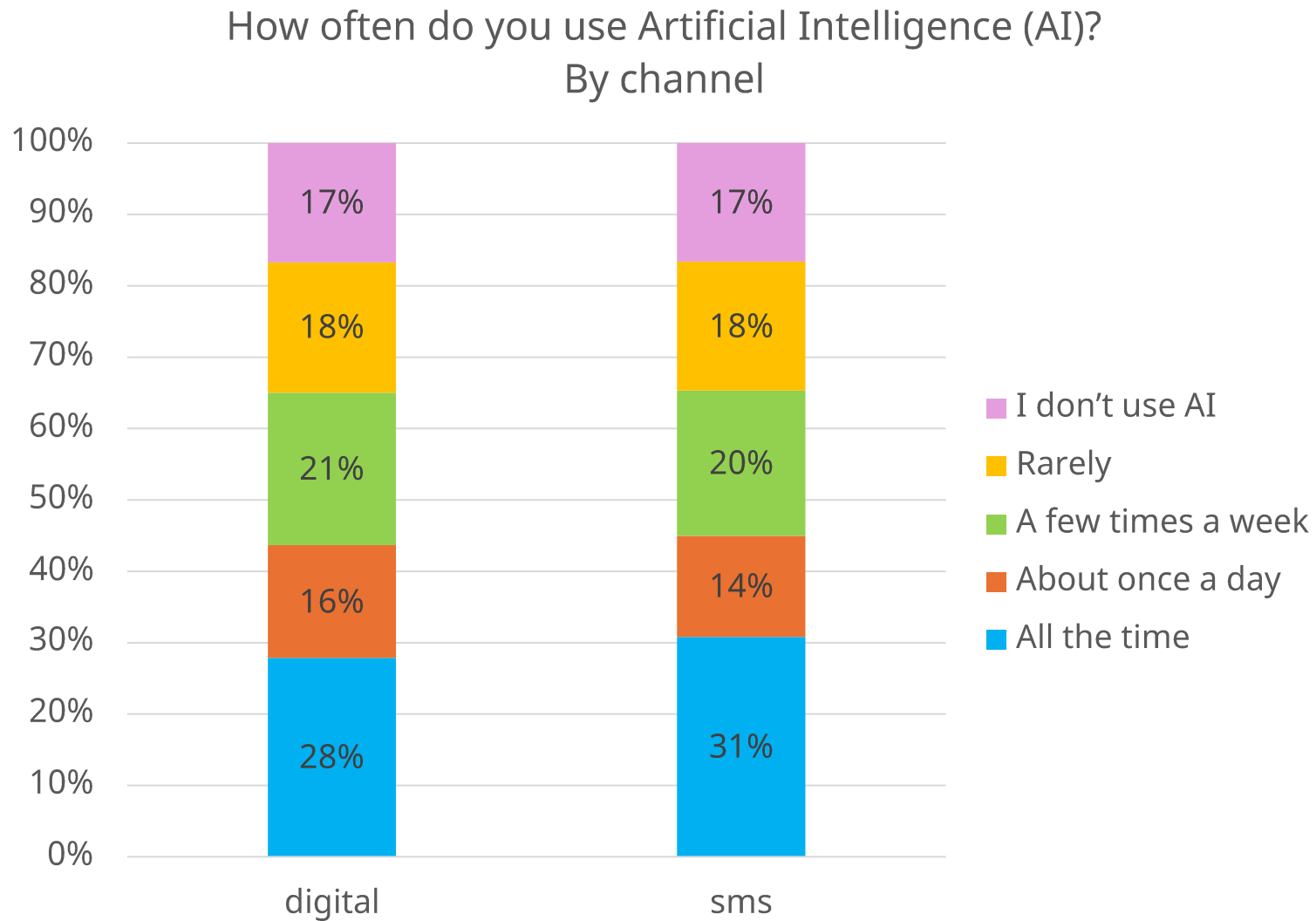


What's most important about being connected to the internet? By gender

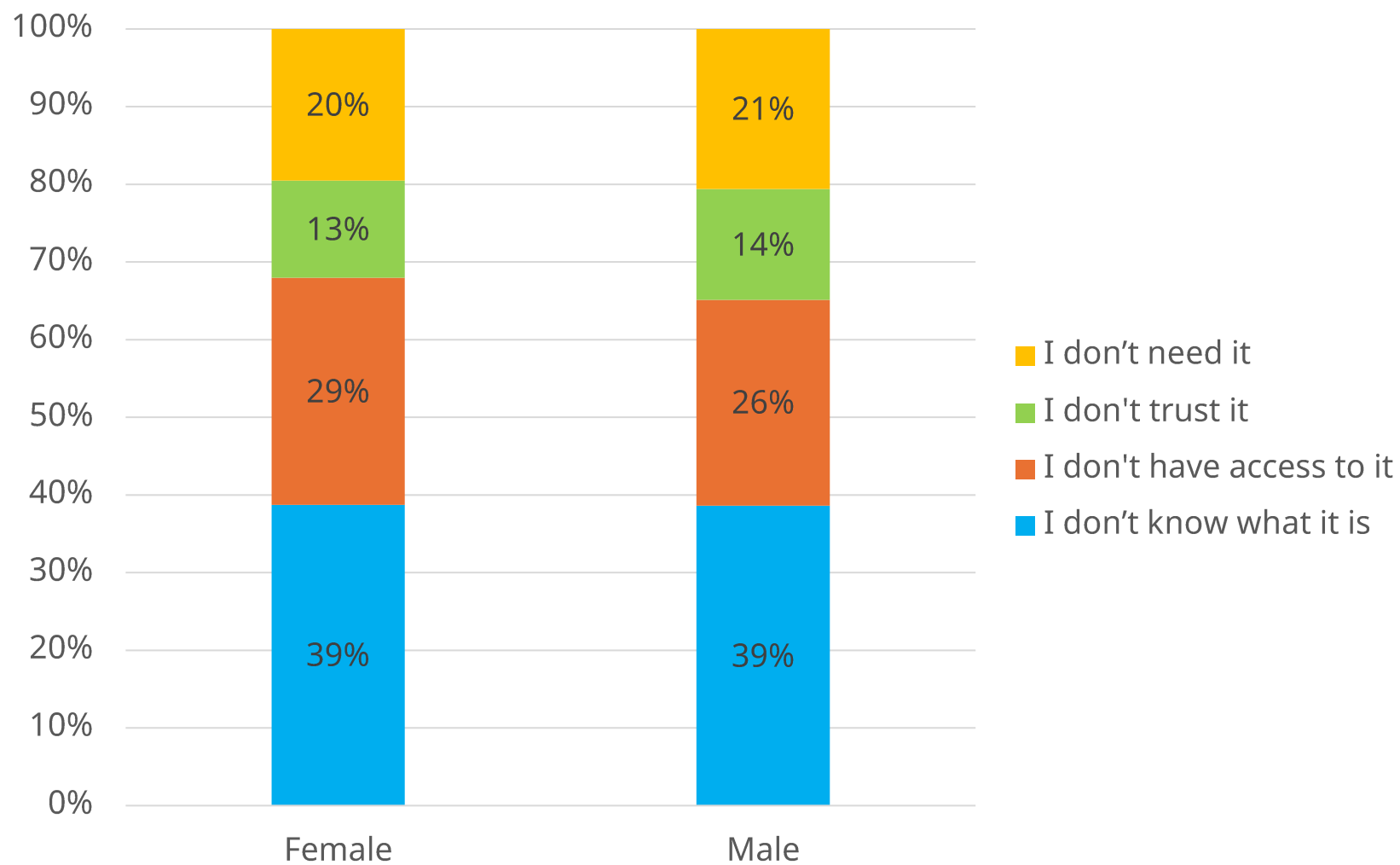


How often do you use Artificial Intelligence (AI)? By gender

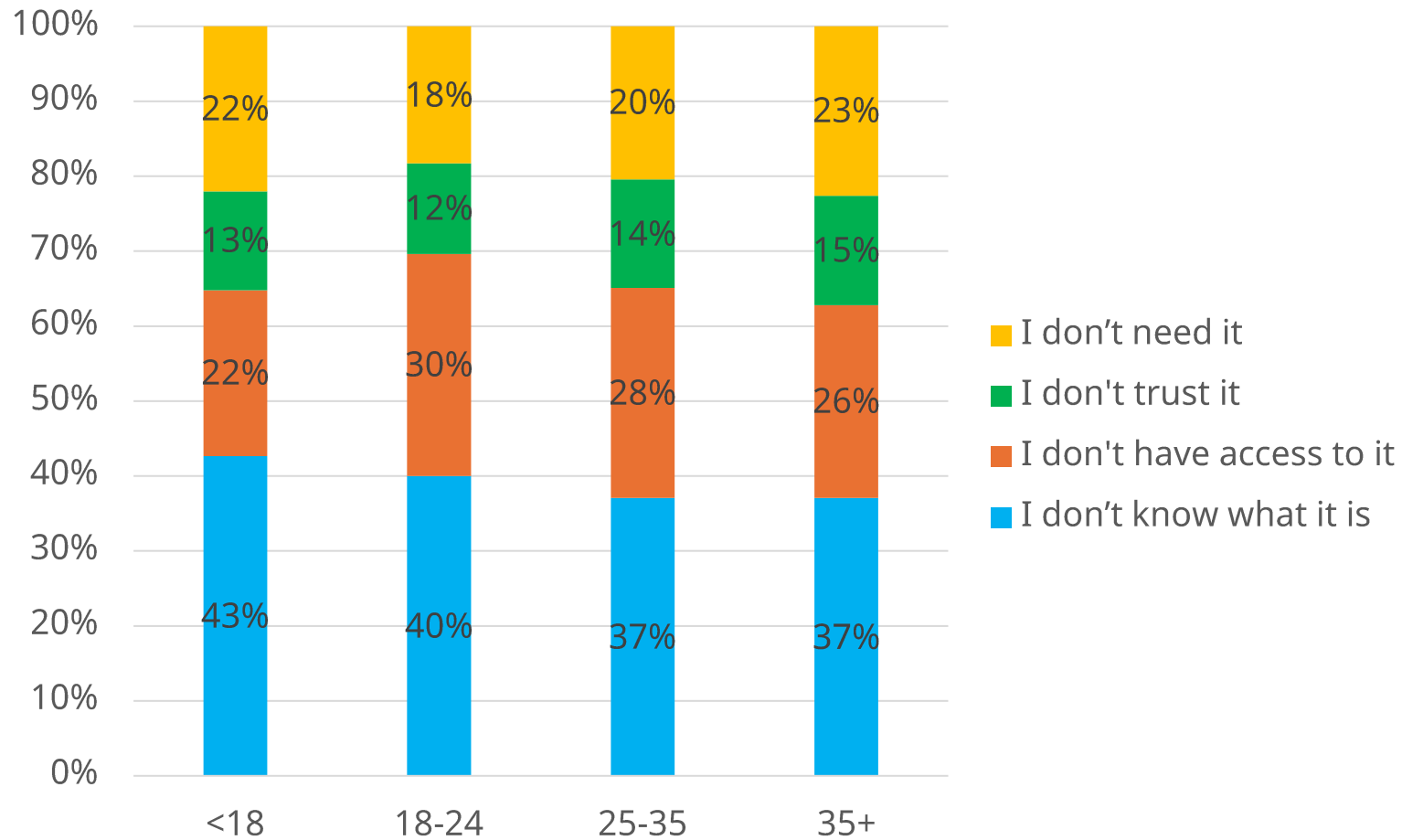




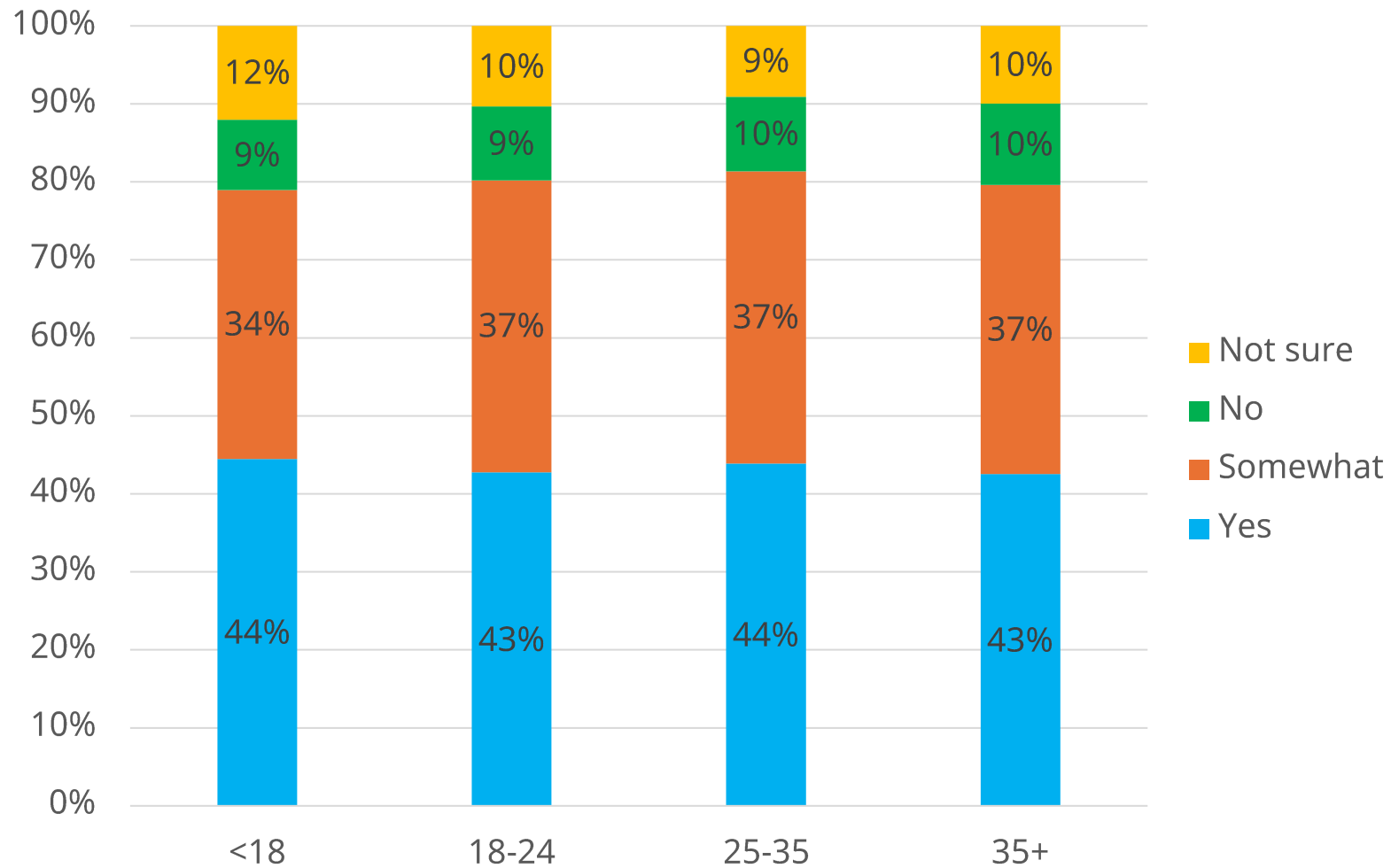
Why don't you use AI? By gender



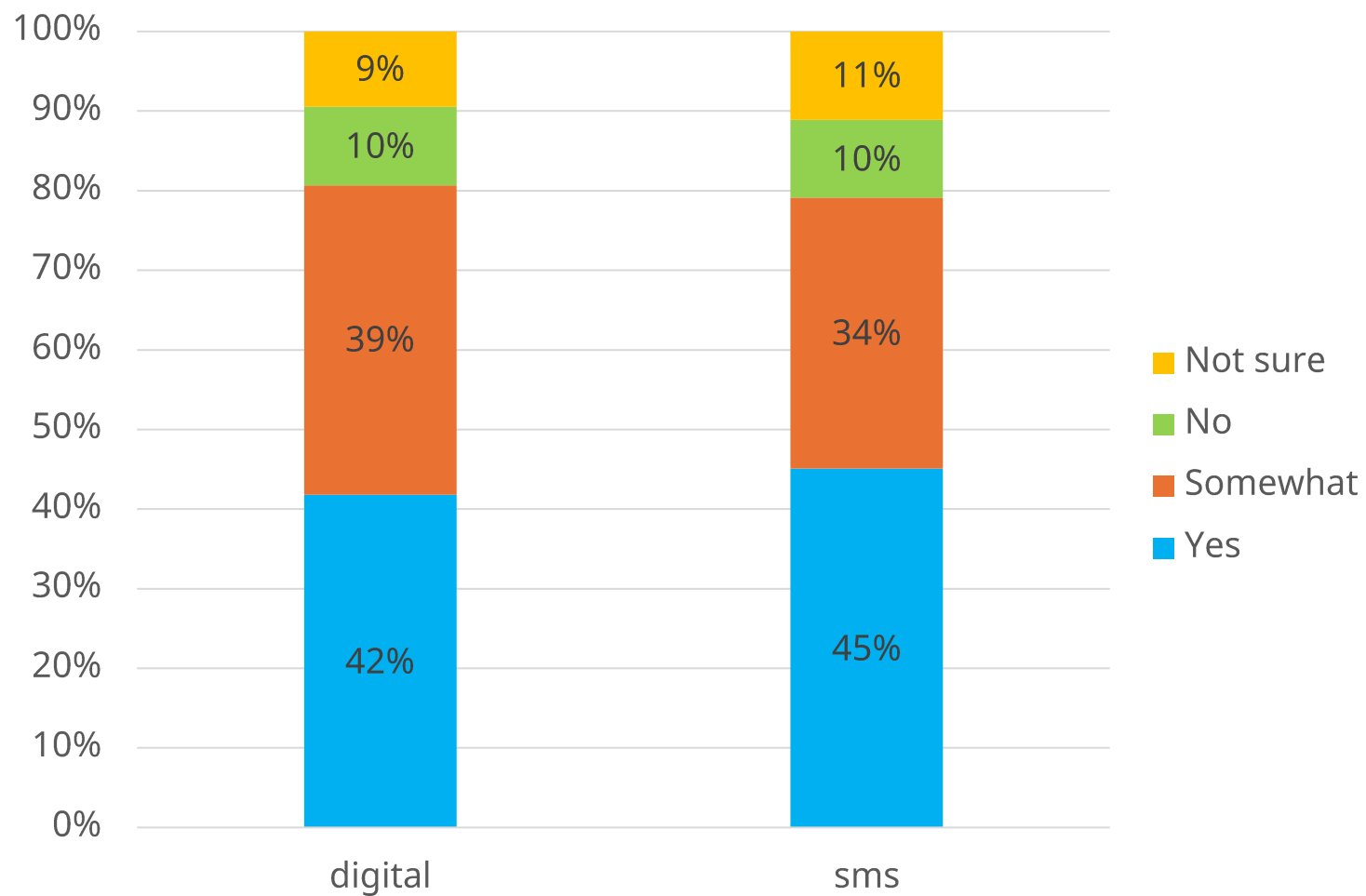
Why don't you use AI? By gender



Does the information you get from AI feel specific to your country? By age



Does the information you get from AI feel specific to
your country? By channel



How do you treat information you get from AI? By gender

