AI deepens Malaysia's digital divide

❯ Usage skews towards higher-income earners

ARTIFICIAL intelligence (AI) is becoming Malaysia's next digital divide as its adoption continues to go mainstream.

According to a recent online study, while 67% of Malaysians say they have used an AI tool in the past three months, usage has risen from 48% among households earning below RM3,500 to around 80% among those earning RM8,000 and above.

As not everyone is benefiting from AI equally, the gap reflects differences in Malaysians' everyday exposure to AI, shaped by time, access and confidence.

Higher-income Malaysians are more likely to have better devices and more reliable connectivity, which may make it easier for AI tools to show up naturally at work and within the apps they already use.

However, lower-income groups may face more friction, from fewer chances to try these tools to limited access that makes experimenting harder. If these barriers are not reduced, the gap could widen further and become much harder to close.
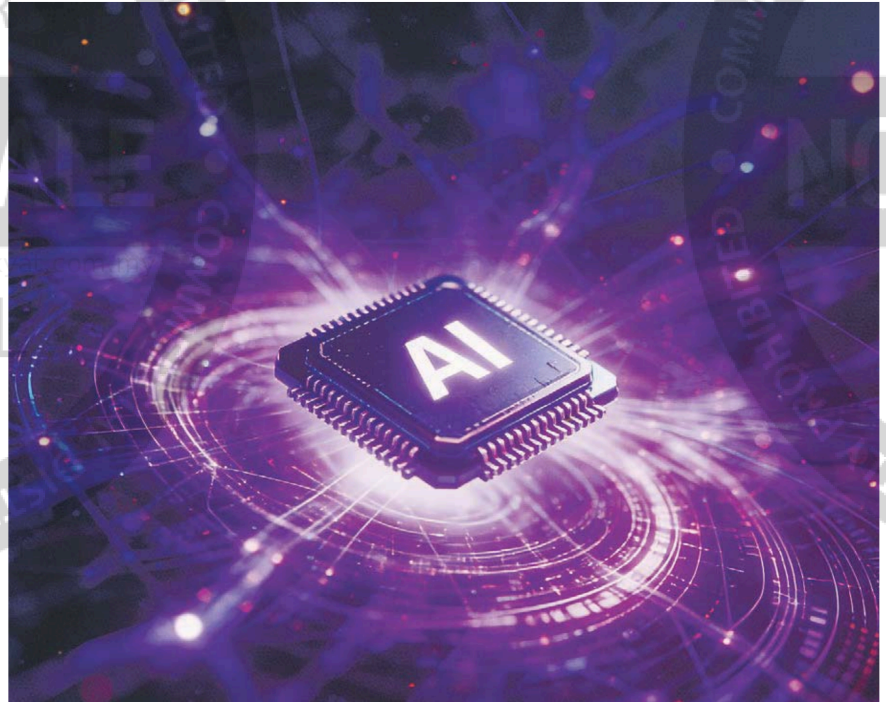
Bridging gap

For AI to more equally benefit Malaysia, accessibility to it should be widened for lower income groups while strengthening guidance and trust, as the latter two are existing practical hurdles ever since the technology began to rapidly improve.

Beyond income, the study by Vodus Research also points to a clear age gap. Respondents aged 25 to 34 had the highest AI adoption, with about 85% reporting recent usage, while only around one in three Malaysians aged 55 and above say they have used AI tools in the past three months.

With 55% of respondents worried that AI may provide inaccurate information, many Malaysians treat AI as a starting point rather than the final answer. Trust is shaping usage and 67% also say they are concerned about data privacy.
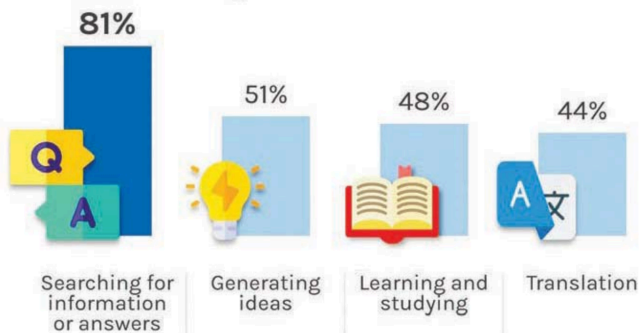
As a result, verification remains common. Even when Malaysians use AI to search for information, 78% still use Google as part of the process to double-check what they find. Reflecting this caution, 39% say whether they use AI depends on the task.

The findings are based on the Vodus AI Consumption Study Malaysia 2026, an online quantitative survey of 2,556 Malaysian adults aged 18 and above.

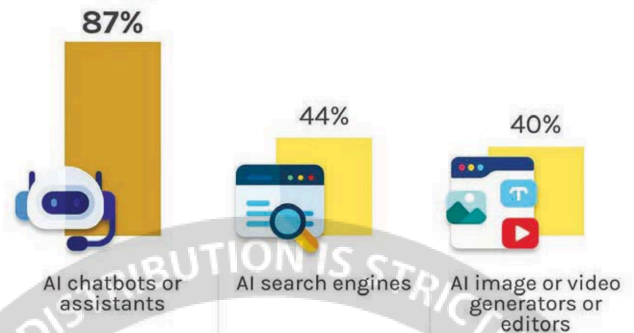55% of survey respondents worry that AI may provide inaccurate information. – *123RFPIC*

Top uses for AI

81% Searching for information or answers

51% Generating ideas

48% Learning and studying

44% Translation

Vodus Research, AI Consumption in Malaysia Study 2026

AI is primarily being used to search for information or answers.

Types of AI tools used

87% AI chatbots or assistants

44% AI search engines

40% AI image or video generators or editors

Vodus Research, AI Consumption in Malaysia Study 2026

The study finds that out of all AI tools, AI chatbots and assistants rank the highest in usage.