

Executive Summary

WOMEN AND AI: CHALLENGES, PERCEPTIONS, AND PERSPECTIVES IN THE CEE REGION

Introduction

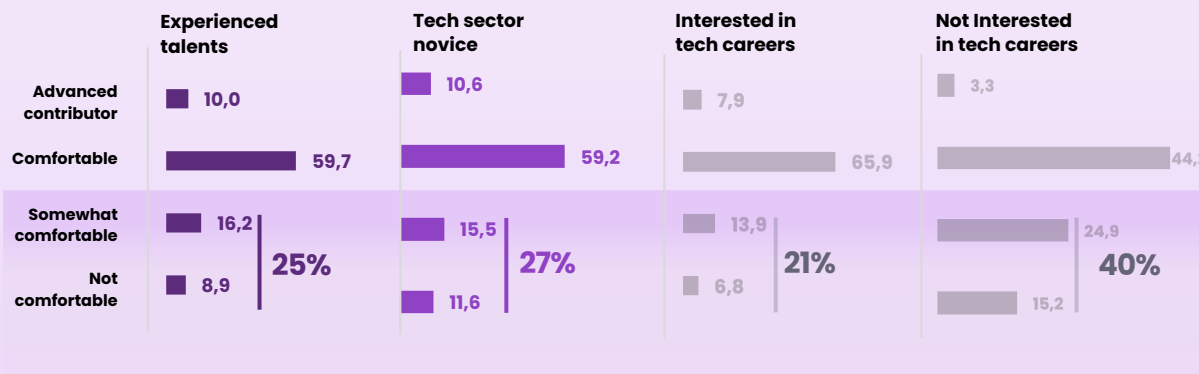
For a long time, there has been a significant gender gap in the technology field, both in terms of using technologies and working within the industry. In today's world, where AI has rapidly emerged and taken over many functions, we decided to study women's tendencies to engage with AI tools.

Overview

The research comprises both qualitative and quantitative analysis, involving over 5,400 respondents and 12 experts from 13 countries. It focuses on women's perceptions, barriers, and attitudes towards AI, aiming to identify solutions for enhancing their engagement with technology.

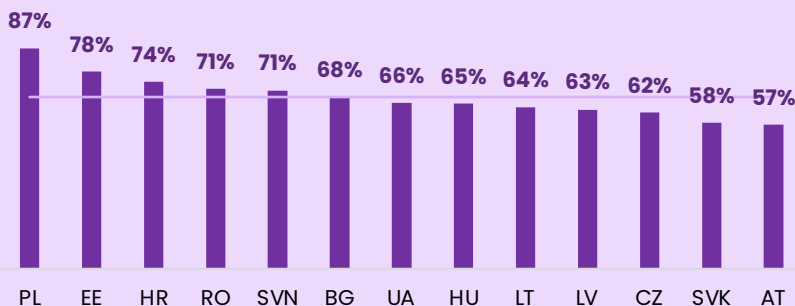
Current Situation

There is a considerable gap in how women with different levels of involvement in the tech industry perceive their tech-related skills. An alarming percentage of the general female population reports a lack of confidence in their abilities. This percentage is reduced by more than half among women interested in tech careers. Surprisingly, 25% of women, regardless of their experience level, do not feel entirely comfortable using general technology. It is unlikely that specialists would find their general tech skills lacking, so it is important to consider how factors such as low confidence, impostor syndrome, lack of encouragement, or limited access to education might influence self-esteem.



AI usage

Respondents from Poland topped the chart with 87% reporting that they have used at least one AI tool. Slovakia and Austria showed the lowest rates of engagement with AI tools. The most popular and well-known use-cases among all groups were language translation, navigation and travel, and search for answers, while financial management and code generation were the least known.



68%

Of all respondents **have used at least one AI tool**

Use of AI tools / Has used at least one AI tool (percentage from respondents per country, %)



Interest

Those involved in the tech sector, and especially the ones considering joining it, showed a high interest in learning more about AI development and tools. 40,3% of the respondents who are not working nor considering the tech field, were not curious to learn about the advancement of AI, showing that many people might not perceive AI as relevant or useful in non-tech fields or jobs.

Time Constraint: 12% of those interested in learning more about AI indicated that they don't have enough time for it, while 52% of the uninterested ones mentioned a time constraint.

Influences

Overall, across all countries, educational background was reported as the highest influence on interest and engagement with AI.

Employer policies appear to influence women's AI usage rates. Policies that allow and guide AI use are linked to the highest usage rates (69.4%), followed by clear, prescriptive policies (64.1%). Such policies are also positively associated with women's perceptions of AI's benefits to their productivity. Conversely, women working under policies that restrict AI usage tend to report feelings of fraudulence or cheating when using AI, as well as fears of AI replacing their roles and leading to job loss. A complete prohibition of AI tools in the workplace correlates with a stronger perception of barriers in general.



A total of 76% of respondents indicated that their employer either has no AI usage policy, does not allow using AI tools, or the employees are not sure about the policy's existence.

Main Barriers

- Concerns about the reduction of human interactions and relationships due to increased use of AI platforms.
- Lack of active engagement with news regarding AI developments.
- Fear of receiving inaccurate or irrelevant information.
- Feeling that others are more adept at learning new technology-related skills.
- Concerns about data privacy and security.
- Reluctance to use AI tools due to insufficient training and support.
- Worry about receiving biased information or answers from AI tools.

Weakly expressed by respondents, emphasized by the experts

Proposed Solutions

- Training at workplace
- Free community courses
- Clear work policy on AI tool usage
- Clearer explanations of AI functionalities and limitations
- User-friendly AI tutorials and resources
- More encouragement, education, and promotion to use AI from the authorities (public sector, employer, school)
- Women's group/community classes
- Women working with AI role models/public figures
- Increased diversity in AI development teams
- Increased representation of women using AI

Weakly expressed by respondents, emphasized by the experts

Value

By identifying key barriers and proposing actionable solutions, the study provides a clear roadmap to enhance women's participation in AI. Implementing these solutions will drive economic growth, promote social equity, and lead to more ethical and effective AI development, ultimately fostering a more inclusive and innovative technology sector.

This will ultimately foster a more inclusive and innovative technology sector, shaping a future society and economy that benefit from the diverse perspectives and talents of all individuals.