

Survey reveals high media usage but low confidence in AI among adult Australians

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A new national [survey](#) has found that most adult Australians use different types of digital media regularly, yet their overall confidence in their digital media abilities remains quite low, showing very little change since 2021.

Two-thirds of adult Australians (65%) use three or more different media

formats on a daily basis, and people who regularly consume a diverse range of media have far more confidence in their media abilities.

Additionally, 4 in 10 adult Australians have experimented with text-focused generative AI services. However, there is a strong overall negative sentiment towards this technology, with the majority of adults wanting regulation to mitigate potential harm.

Many adults report encountering misinformation frequently, and there is strong support for action with 4 in 5 (80%) adults wanting the spread of misinformation addressed, a 6% increase since 2021.

Almost everyone (94%) who wants misinformation to be addressed agrees that people need to be taught how to identify misinformation.

The survey—a collaboration between Western Sydney University, University of Canberra and Queensland University of Technology—asked 4,442 adult Australians in January to April 2024 about their media [literacy](#) abilities and is a follow up to the inaugural survey conducted in 2021.

Lead author Associate Professor Tanya Notley, School of Humanities and Communication Arts and Institute for Culture and Society, said despite almost all Australians using social media and [digital platforms](#) in their [everyday lives](#), progress has been slow when it comes to adult media literacy.

"Most adult Australians are not confident about their ability to identify false and misleading information online, create a video and post it online, edit a digital photo, change [social media](#) privacy settings, or seek help from relevant authorities if they are being harassed online," said Associate Professor Notley.

"We found that there is overwhelming demand among Australians for adult and school-based media literacy education. However, too many Australians have not received any form of media literacy education or they don't have access to support when they need it."

The survey found while most Australians (68%) have heard of the term media literacy, only one-third (33%) have some understanding of what it means.

Older adults, those with a lower level of education and lower household income are less likely to know what media literacy means.

"There is an urgent need for more media literacy educational resources and support to address the media interests, needs, deficiencies and concerns of adult Australians. Australians want action—from governments, [media companies](#) and education providers—on issues that concern them such as online misinformation, the exploitation of their private data, racist or racially insensitive broadcast content, and risks to society that are associated with generative AI," said Associate Professor Notley.

There is strong support for media literacy initiatives: 4 out of 5 (82%) believe media literacy education for adults is needed. Professor Sora Park emphasized the timing is ripe. "Australians want to know more about the rapidly changing media environment. They want to be educated about how to protect themselves and their family from scams and misinformation.

"However, support is not always readily available. Targeted media literacy programs are needed especially for those who have lower levels of media literacy including regional, less educated, older and people living with a disability," said Professor Park.

Associate Professor Notley stated it is important to acknowledge that significant progress has been made since 2021 with a 9% increase in adults who have some understanding of media literacy.

"This is likely the result of the advocacy efforts of the Australian Media Literacy Alliance (AMLA) and the work of Australian organizations who have implemented media literacy programs for young people, or training for teachers and librarians in recent years," she said.

"We recommend that media literacy should be more actively promoted by governments, public institutions, education providers, policymakers, and the corporate sector."

More information: Adult Media Literacy in 2024: Australian Attitudes, Experiences and Needs. apo.org.au/node/327239

Provided by Western Sydney University

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