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54% of Americans say AI helps make more time for the parts of life that matter

Data from The Harris Poll and Quad shows Americans welcome AI's convenience but still prefer human connection

SUSSEX, Wis., November 17, 2026 — Quad (NYSE: QUAD), a marketing experience company that solves complex marketing challenges for its clients, and The Harris Poll are highlighting consumer AI sentiment data from their recently released study, Return of Touch: The Human Advantage. The survey of more than 2,000 Americans revealed a tension between consumers' desire to use AI for efficiency and their concerns about its growing role in their daily lives.

Consumers prioritize convenience and control

Sixty-eight percent of Americans believe AI can improve shopping convenience if it is designed with their interests in mind. For example, AI can help shoppers narrow their choices and complete routine shopping tasks more quickly. The perceived benefit reaches beyond the store, with 54% of Americans saying AI helps make more time for the parts of life that matter.

Still, consumers want to decide when and where AI shows up, with 74% of people reporting that they are open to AI recommendations as long as they can easily ignore or turn them off.

"People want AI to handle the mundane so they can get back to what actually matters. That's the deal consumers are making. But here's what marketers need to understand: the time AI frees up isn't going back to screens. People want to spend it in the real world, with real people. So if you're using AI to optimize every brand touchpoint into oblivion, you're missing the point. Use it to clear the path, then show up as a human on the other side," said Libby Rodney, Chief Strategy Officer, The Harris Poll.

Brand (dis)trust in the age of AI

Preferring AI for convenience doesn't mean consumers trust brands to use it in every way. Only about half of respondents report that they trust brands to responsibly use AI for product images and videos (49%), personalized coupons and discounts (53%) or customer service agents (48%) — and

notably, just 38% of Americans trust AI to automatically change prices based on demand or shopping behavior.

Consumers also want brands to be transparent about AI use. Eighty-one percent of Americans trust brands more when they're clear about what is and isn't AI-generated, and 70% want transparency about how AI is collecting their shopping data.

Despite believing that AI presents an opportunity to improve some aspects of the online experience, 66% of Americans are overwhelmed by how quickly it's becoming part of everyday life, and 75% report that AI-generated content has made it harder to trust what they see when shopping online. The same amount (75%) report that much of what they see from brands now feels overly polished or artificial.

"Gen Z shudders when brands act inauthentic, but really, everyone feels that way, and we've seen more missteps than sure-footed moves by marketers when it comes to AI," said Tim Maleeny, Chief Client Strategy and Integration Officer for Quad. "AI can potentially help deliver more for all consumers, but efficiency can't come at the expense of the human touch and genuine experiences that build trust and help people feel a connection with a brand."

Americans still want human interaction, and imperfection

Consumers also prefer human involvement over AI across every shopping interaction measured, particularly in customer service and support (66%), in-store checkout (58%) and in-store navigation (52%). Sixty-eight percent want reassurance that AI will assist, rather than replace, store and customer-service staff.

Eighty percent of Americans say human, imperfect brands stick with them more than those presenting AI-generated perfection. Moreover, 64% say they would pay a premium for products guaranteed to be human-designed or handcrafted.

This study was conducted by The Harris Poll on behalf of Quad from July 23 to August 12, 2026, among 2,004 U.S. adults ages 18 and older. The fourth installment of a multi-part, multi-year study, this latest survey included 134 Gen Z (ages 18-29), 509 Millennials (ages 30-45), 562 Gen X (ages 46-61), and 738 Boomers (ages 62 and older). Data were weighted where necessary to reflect the U.S. adult population.

Find additional data from the survey here and the full press kit here.

About Quad

Quad (NYSE: QUAD) is a marketing experience, or MX, company that helps brands make direct consumer connections, from household to in-store to online. The company does this through its MX Solutions Suite, a comprehensive range of marketing and print services that seamlessly integrate creative, production and media solutions across online and offline channels. Supported by state-of-the-art technology and data-driven intelligence, Quad simplifies the complexities of marketing by removing friction wherever it occurs along the marketing journey. The company tailors its uniquely flexible, scalable and connected solutions to each client's objectives, driving cost

efficiencies, improving speed-to-market, strengthening marketing effectiveness and delivering value on client investments.

Quad employs approximately 10,000 people in 10 countries and serves approximately 2,100 clients including industry leading blue-chip companies that serve both businesses and consumers in multiple industry verticals, with a particular focus on commerce, including retail, consumer packaged goods, and direct-to-consumer; financial services; and health. Quad is ranked among the largest agency companies in the U.S. by Ad Age, buoyed by its full-service media agency, Rise, and creative agency, Betty. Quad is also one of the largest commercial printers in North America, according to Printing Impressions.

For more information about Quad, including its commitment to operating responsibly, intentional innovation and values-driven culture, visit quad.com.

About The Harris Poll

The Harris Poll is one of the longest-running surveys in the U.S., tracking public opinion, motivations and social sentiment since 1963. Now part of Harris Insights & Analytics, we provide market intelligence that helps businesses and policymakers make informed decisions. To learn more, visit https://theharrispoll.com.

Media Contact

Sarah Mikhailova
Media Relations Manager
212-672-1319
sumikhailova@quad.com