TRUST in the Era of AI

Hill & Knowlton

Executive *summary*

Artificial intelligence (AI) is rapidly evolving and gaining a bigger role in business and society, and we need to know if we can trust it. This white paper explores the factors that build and erode trust in AI, drawing on insights from the Nordic public, Finnish business leaders and political decision-makers, as well as from a literature review of scientific papers and a media analysis.

We summarized our findings into five theses:

1. **AI needs more transparency**
2. **Increasing AI literacy is key to building trust**
3. **AI offers unprecedented efficiency**
4. **Malicious use of AI is real but not inevitable**
5. **The future of AI is in our hands**

To trust AI, especially generative AI, we must understand how it works and the data it is based on. Transparency is indeed crucial to understanding AI as a tool. To trust AI-generated content, we also need to upgrade our media literacy and critical thinking skills and reexamine how we approach text, image, and video. Consequently, identifying risks, developing legislation and regulation, and creating ethical guidelines are seen as key actions to increase trust in AI in the Nordics.

While AI offers us many benefits by streamlining work and increasing efficiency, we must address the concerns related to the new and more effective ways of working. At the moment, automation of routine tasks is still seen as the most important opportunity for utilizing AI. Moreover, the malicious use of AI is emerging as a threat capable of eroding trust in democracy and established institutions. Most people in the Nordics think that the misuse of AI is the main factor reducing trust in AI.

With all of this in mind, the future benefits of AI are in our hands. In a world where it seems like everyone is using AI and progress is exceptionally fast, it is important to manage expectations and not get swept away by the hype surrounding the technology. At the same time, we should continuously explore the benefits of AI for businesses, individuals, and society.

Who, then, are these AI users? According to our survey of 4,000 people in the Nordic countries, two out of three (70%) people know at least a little about AI, and almost one fourth (23%) have tried different AI tools or regularly use them. At the same time, one in three people have heard about AI but do not know anything about it or have not even heard about it. Almost half of our survey respondents believe that they quite or very likely to use AI more in the next five years. Men are more familiar with AI and use AI tools more than women, with over one fourth of men having at least experimented with different AI tools, while the corresponding figure for women is one fifth.

Trust can be established quickly and broken even faster. At the end of the day, trust is one of our most critical resources, and we cannot afford to lose it in the era of AI.

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"The danger is that a lack of trust in AI could stall progress, hindering the potential of AI to solve real-world problems."

Bernard Marr, Futurist

Foreword

As artificial intelligence (AI) continues its rapid advance, reshaping industries and societies around the world, one key question looms large: Can we trust these increasingly capable systems? AI has shown immense potential to improve efficiency, enhance decision-making, and solve the world's greatest challenges. Yet understandable concerns about transparency, bias, and ethical use of AI have created uncertainty and hesitation.

This white paper sheds light on the topic by examining what actions build trust in AI – and what actions decrease it. Drawing insights from recent literature and media discussion, the perspectives of the Nordic public, and the fresh views of Finnish business leaders and political decision-makers, it discusses the factors that will determine the future of AI and possibly the success of Finland in the years ahead.

Finland finds itself at a pivotal moment. Embracing AI offers immense potential for progress and global competitiveness for Finnish businesses and society. As an innovation leader with a highly educated population and strong technological capabilities, the country is well positioned to be an AI trailblazer. But realizing AI's full potential requires more than technical mastery – it requires an environment of trust, ethical guardrails, and transparency.

The path forward begins with understanding – which this paper seeks to offer leaders across Finnish business, politics, and society. Our findings promote optimism about the future with AI while clearly outlining the concerns and societal issues that must be addressed moving forward. By fostering trust, Finland can usher in an AI-driven era of progress, opportunity, and global competitiveness.

The artificial intelligence revolution is underway. In the drafting of this white paper, we have had a fundamentally positive approach to AI. We aim to light the way for Finland to embrace it wholeheartedly while keeping human priorities at the center. Based on the findings, we encourage you to explore the potential of AI, deploy AI and media literacy training, and start scaling up AI projects responsibly and ethically.

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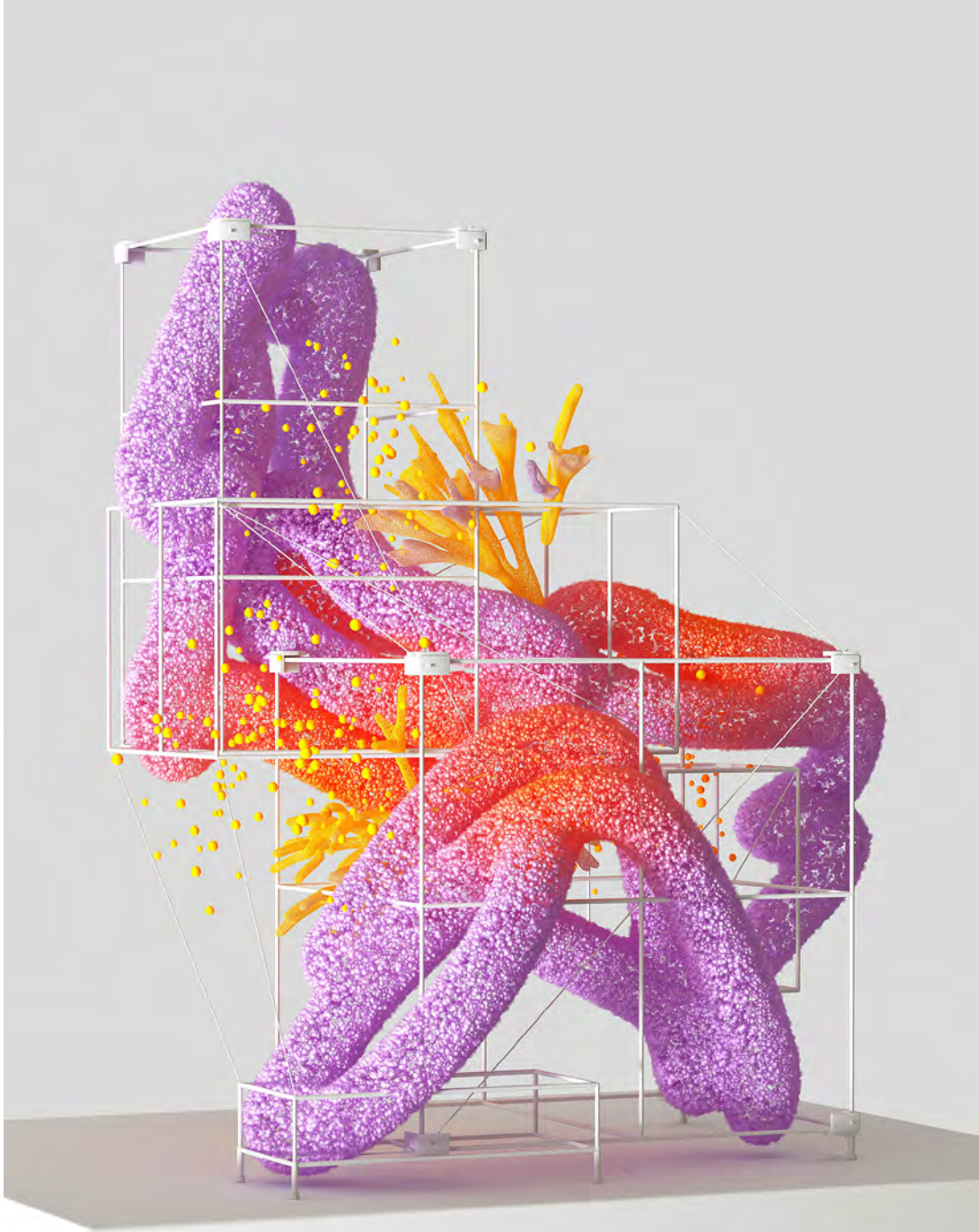
Disclaimer on the use of AI:
Claude 3 Sonnet LLM was used to refine this foreword.



"The AI age doesn't mark the death of trust or authenticity. But it does require a new paradigm that combines human and artificial intelligence."

Grant Toups, Global Chief Technology Officer at Hill & Knowlton
Welcome to AI – The USC Annenberg Relevance Report 2024

01 AI needs more transparency

"One of the main factors that reduce trust in AI is the lack of transparency and AI's inability to determine where the information comes from, as well as serious and illogical errors, like contradictory information in the results."

Finnish business leader

Can we trust something we do not understand? AI has a so-called black box problem – we do not know how it arrives at the conclusions it presents and what data the analysis it offers is based on. The inner workings of AI models are an enigma to its users.

AI developers are unable and unwilling to disclose how and on what data AI models are trained. This creates a rift in the trust towards AI. Companies developing AI argue that secrecy is necessary for their competitive advantage and for protecting their intellectual property.

In the Nordics, 14% of citizens feel that the reliability of the data used by AI is one of the main factors reducing trust in AI. Additionally, it is not only the reliability of data that causes concern, but also the lack of transparency in how AI utilizes that data, with 15% stating that this lack of transparency also affects their trust in AI. Surveyed Finnish business leaders and political decision-makers also listed these two issues as their main concerns that reduce trust in AI.

Since their launch to the public in late 2022, large language models (LLMs) have become less transparent. At the same time, regulation is lagging, but efforts like the EU AI Act and the Federal AI Governance and Transparency Act in the US continue to press for transparency standards for AI. In the Nordics, 1 in 3 think that increasing AI legislation and regulation as well as creating ethical guidelines or principles for the use of AI (29%) is a top priority.

While regulation will provide more AI transparency in the future, it is likely that the black box problem will remain. LLMs are complex and intricate systems and understanding the ecosystem of data that the models use can be hard for the average user.

One in five people in the Nordics think that training would increase trust in AI. True transparency means not only knowing, but also understanding, how AI works.

"When examining large amounts of data, it feels like AI doesn't always distinguish between fact and fiction."

Finnish business leader

02

Increasing AI literacy is key to building trust

"We can increase trust in AI by continuously improving AI and discovering new and beneficial use cases for a wider audience. We can also build trust by educating and making people understand what AI truly is and helping them identify where the use of AI is appropriate and where it should not be used."

Finnish business leader

AI is no better than the data it has been trained on. This means that human errors and prejudices can be and often are present in the outputs produced by AI. Some of the biases present in AI models have been manually removed, but as AI develops, new ones are expected to emerge.

Some argue that we should approach AI-generated content with the same media literacy we should approach all content. Everything on the Internet is not true. This should not be news to us – regardless of whether the author is a human or AI.

In the Nordics, 1 in 5 think that increasing awareness about AI through training is a top priority. This could include training in understanding how LLMs work, as well as updating media literacy and critical thinking skills. Finnish business leaders and political decision-makers also strongly support increasing training.

A recent global study by the University of Queensland and KPMG found that people trust national universities, research institutions and defense organizations to develop, use, and govern AI. The same study found that people have the least trust in governments and commercial organizations to develop, use and govern AI.

While trust in national universities in the use of AI is high, another recent study by the University College London suggests that no less than 60,000 papers published in 2023 were written at least partially by AI. If AI is used inappropriately in the production of knowledge, it can erode trust in all multipartisan sources.

When organizations adopt AI, it is necessary to define ethical principles for its use. These statements need to include information about who will be responsible for decisions made by AI. According to our survey, 15% of people in the Nordics and 20% of Finns feel that their distrust in decisions made by AI is one of the main factors that reduces their trust in the use of AI in general. Trusting a decision always involves the decision-maker – a human who can be held accountable – taking responsibility for the choices made.

AI has a hard time being better than the data it has been trained on. This means that human errors and prejudices can be and often are present in the outputs produced by AI. Some of the biases present in AI models have been manually removed, but as AI keeps developing new ones are expected to emerge.

The goal is to create a net positive impact on society with the help of AI, whether that means tackling the blank page syndrome or for socially beneficial use cases, such as the elimination of waste.

"I believe trust in AI will increase as its applications become more integrated into everyday life and work."

Finnish business leader

1 in 5 think that increasing awareness about AI through training is a top priority

03 AI offers unprecedented efficiency

"Once we succeed in building trust, we will have plenty of opportunities, for example, to improve efficiency in tasks that require a lot of human resources. But it will take a lot of discussion between businesses, public entities, and civil society."

Finnish political decision-maker

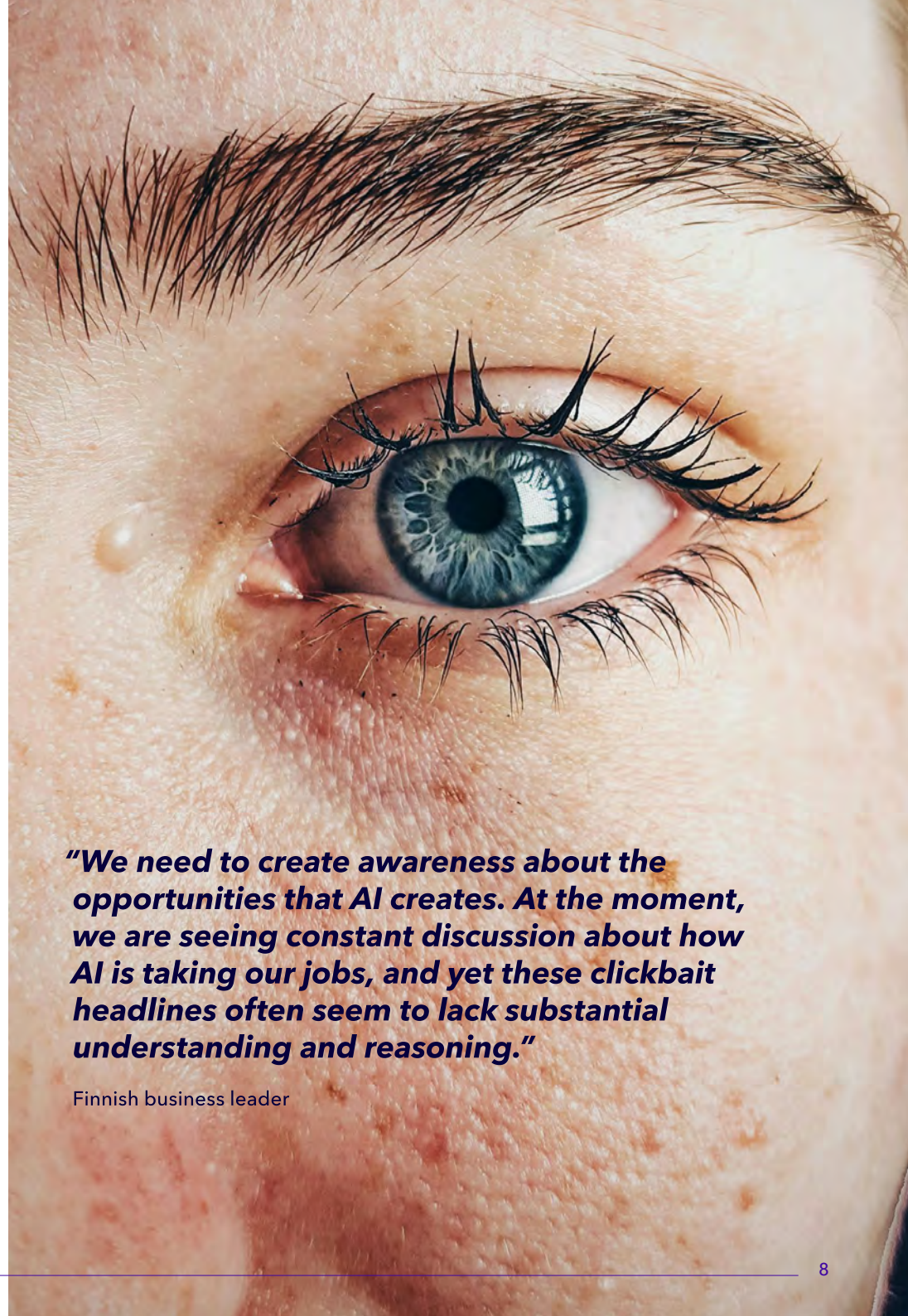
Streamlining routine tasks through automatization is an opportunity brought to us by AI. With the help of AI, professionals are allowed to focus more of their time on what is essential rather than on administration or other manual tasks. In the Nordics, one in three view automation of routine tasks as the most important opportunity for utilizing AI. The importance is further highlighted among Finns (42%).

AI can be used to expand our human capabilities. Major impacts can already be seen across sectors. AI is enhancing the ways we understand and communicate with one another, revolutionizing financial fraud investigations and making our roads safer for travel. In healthcare, AI models may identify ultra-early stages of disease invisible to the human eye.

On the flip side, some have voiced concerns regarding AI's effects on the job market. According to McKinsey, the jobs of knowledge workers and the highly educated may be particularly at risk. Finnish IT sector employees have expressed worries and confusion regarding AI's impact on the future of their jobs. Artists have been outraged that text-to-image and text-to-video generators have been taught using copyrighted materials, and that AI-generated "art" is infringing on intellectual property.

However, a study by ETLA Economic Research concludes that rather than putting jobs at risk, AI is more likely to have a positive impact on Finland's future job market. In the Nordics, only 16% state that job losses caused by the use of AI are among the main factors reducing their trust in AI. What is feared more is the diminishing human role in decision-making when using AI (23%).

Rather than replacing us, AI can augment us and improve our efficiency in ways we have never seen before. What we need to ensure is that we control AI, not the other way around.



"We need to create awareness about the opportunities that AI creates. At the moment, we are seeing constant discussion about how AI is taking our jobs, and yet these clickbait headlines often seem to lack substantial understanding and reasoning."

Finnish business leader

04 Malicious use of AI is real but not inevitable

"There is an awareness that criminal actors have considerable resources to adapt AI for their malicious purposes."

Finnish business leader

The danger of disinformation lies in AI possibly undermining society's ability to solve problems. Experts warn that AI generated disinformation threatens to deceive audiences and erode an already embattled information ecosystem by flooding it with intentional inaccuracies and untrue content. This ranges from very personal harms such as non-consensual sexual deepfakes to advanced AI video generation (e.g. Sora and Veo) employed in manipulating the outcomes of elections and politics.

Another alarming instance of AI misuse concerns fraud. Deloitte has argued that generative AI can be leveraged for various fraudulent activities, including identity fraud, voice spoofing, synthetic identity fraud, and document forgery fraud. In the worst-case scenario, this could lead to a state of constant suspicion that everything might be a scam. If used maliciously to produce and target information, AI can exacerbate "filter bubbles" and prevent us from understanding one another, eroding public trust and democracy.

The data from the Nordics underscores this concern. The possible misuse of AI for harmful purposes (e.g. scams) was seen as the primary reason (40%) for the decrease in trust in AI among Nordic citizens. Among older individuals (aged 60–79), this misuse of AI is an even more pronounced worry and a significant barrier to trust. A repeated concern raised by Finnish business leaders was the use of AI by malicious states or other actors to manipulate and harm people.

The societal use of AI needs rules and regulations. Among the Nordic people surveyed, the top three ways to increase trust in AI were identifying risks related to AI (32%), increasing legislation and regulation related to AI (31%), and creating ethical guidelines or principles for the use of AI (29%). Identifying risks was a particularly important factor among Finns (50%).

The malicious use of AI is not an inevitable fact. In fact, legislators and the developers of LLMs are continuously developing policies and guardrails to prevent malicious use. We can imagine a world where AI is used to build mechanisms to incentivize truthful information sharing and to help us learn about the world with more cooperative strategies. If used to counter disinformation, AI can validate and clarify uncertainties in data. In the Nordics, data analysis and interpretation were listed among the top three opportunities for the beneficial use of AI.

"AI feels unpredictable, and it is difficult to assess all the ways we are able to utilize it, lawfully and unlawfully."

Finnish political decision-maker

05

The future of AI is in our hands

"One of the key factors that reduce trust towards AI are the excessively high expectations that AI cannot yet fulfill."

Finnish business leader

There are opportunities and risks related to both using and not using AI. While AI unlocks substantial possibilities for us to elevate our capabilities, its misuse may create a threat to credibility through misinformation, hallucination, and ethical dilemmas. There are many examples of backlash that businesses and other actors have faced after hopping on the AI train and using the technology inappropriately. For instance, using AI to generate messages that address sensitive topics may come off as wildly insincere. Trusted media outlets have published AI-generated false news because of inadequate fact-checking. Businesses have reportedly found themselves involved in non-existent business scandals hallucinated by AI.

Still, there is a sense of urgency related to using, learning about, and scaling up AI in business. There is a notion that "everyone" is using AI and if you or your business is not, you will fall behind the competition. For employees, this same sense of urgency is prevalent in the media – if you do not know how to use AI, you will lose your job to someone who does.

But just how confidently can we expect AI to respond to our future expectations? LLMs are growing and improving rapidly, but progress may be hindered by data and hardware bottlenecks. Recent studies have also begun to emphasize the concept of "AI hype", which has multiple ways of eroding trust if the promises of AI prove not to live up to expectations. According to Kevin LaGrandeur from the Global AI Ethics Institute, hype regarding AI's capacities is detrimental as it can lead businesses to rushed and irresponsible development of innovations.

Whichever way we choose to look at it, the window of opportunity is open right now. To map a way forward, we have three key recommendations for Finnish business leaders:

1. **We need to make AI as regular part of our life as brushing our teeth. Start now to seize opportunities and mitigate risks.**
2. **The era of AI has revolutionized the requirements for media literacy and critical thinking. We need to adopt a new mindset.**
3. **Trust in AI depends on how we humans use it. Always keep ethics as a top priority.**

This is a pivotal moment in time. Embracing AI offers immense potential for progress and global competitiveness, and realizing this potential for Finnish businesses and society requires a solid foundation of trust. By demanding transparency, establishing ethical guardrails and addressing societal concerns, Finland can lead the way in creating an era propelled by the progress and opportunities presented by AI.

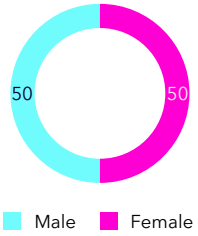
Decoding the Data

Unless otherwise stated, the data in this white paper consists of Nordic survey data supplemented by the views of Finnish business leaders and political decision-makers. The Nordic survey data included a total of 4,000 people aged 18–79 from Finland, Sweden, Norway, and Denmark. The results of the Nordic survey were complemented by an online survey of Finnish business leaders (n=32) and political decision-makers (n=17). The Nordic data was gathered during April 24–30, 2024, and the data of business leaders and political decision-makers during April 18–May 15, 2024.

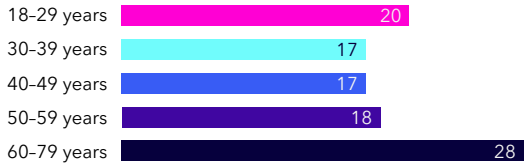
The quotes by anonymous Finnish business leaders and political decision-makers used in the white paper were collected as open answers included in the survey.

Background information on the Nordic respondents

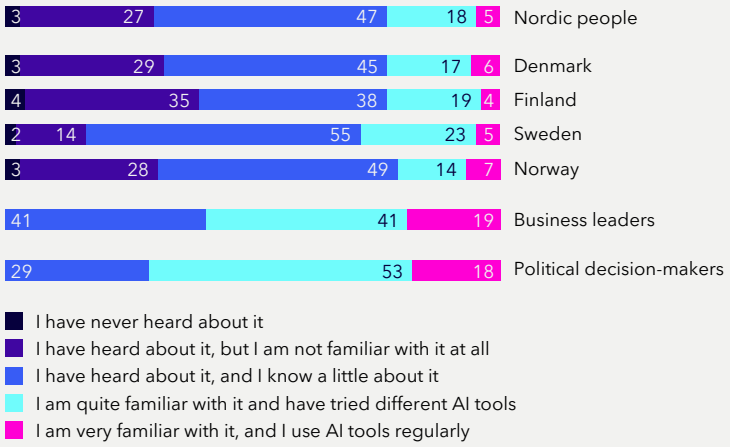
Gender



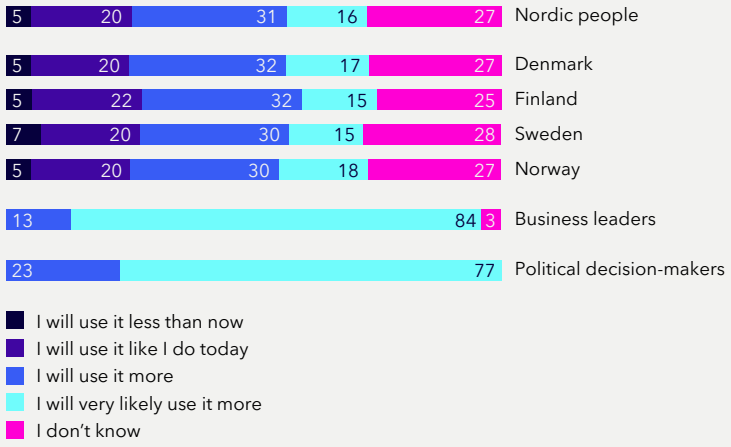
Age Groups



Some two-thirds of people in the Nordics know at least a little about AI, and about one fourth have tried different AI tools or regularly use them.
How familiar are you with artificial intelligence (AI)? (%)



Nearly half of the people in the Nordics are quite likely to use AI more in the next five years
How do you see your use of AI in the next five years' time? (%)



Identifying risks, increasing legislation and regulation, and creating ethical guidelines are seen as the key actions to increase trust in AI among the people in the Nordics

% of respondents selecting in their top three

Only the most significant categories are presented

Misuse of AI is the main factor reducing trust in AI the most among the people in the Nordics

% of respondents selecting in their top three

Only the most significant categories are presented

Automation of routine tasks, data analysis, and risk management are seen as the key opportunities for people to trust the help of AI with

% of respondents selecting in their top three

Only the most significant categories are presented

Methodology

This white paper "Trust in the Era of AI" discusses findings based on a Nordic omnibus survey, a survey on Finnish business leaders and political decision-makers, as well as a literature review and media analysis on the topic of trust and AI, all conducted by Hill & Knowlton.

The Nordic survey data was collected via an online survey in Bilendi's M4 Research panel on April 24–30, 2024. The survey, including similar questions and a similar sample group, was carried out simultaneously in Finland, Sweden, Norway, and Denmark. The target group of the survey included Finns, Swedes, Norwegians and Danes18-year-old and older. A total of 4,000 people aged 18–79 responded to the survey, with a thousand respondents from each country. The sample is nationally representative by gender and geographical location in each country. The margin of error for the data is approximately +/- 3 percentage points relative to the initial sample.

The results of the Nordic survey were complemented by an online survey of Finnish business leaders and political decision-makers. A total of 32 Finnish business leaders and 17 Finnish political decision-makers participated in the survey.

The literature review and media analysis focused on mapping what has been written about how we trust AI and how AI impacts trust on four levels. We began our analysis by examining trust on four different levels: societal, company, team, and individual.

We have used three levels of sources in the literature review:

1. We examined scientific sources on trust and AI, reviewing primarily meta-analyses.
2. We looked at company reports and white papers that discuss trust and AI.
3. We compiled examples from the media on how AI has reportedly either increased or decreased trust, providing real-life examples on the relationship between trust and AI.

The media analysis was conducted in two waves: in November 2023 and in May 2024. The source base of the analysis consisted of Finnish language media, as well as large opinion setting English language digital news media, including newspapers, press releases, news agencies, trade magazines, eTV and eRadio, as well as company white papers and reports.

The findings from academia, business, and media were compiled to provide an overview of future possibilities and challenges regarding trust and AI.

We have leveraged LLMs in the drafting of this white paper. However, all findings and content have been reviewed and finalized by the human contributors. Hill & Knowlton's closed AI environment Creative Studio was used to help map topics and themes, translate, and summarize text for this white paper. Creative Studio accesses multiple different LLMs, such as Open AI GPT, Google Gemini, and Claude Sonnet.

"Broken trust is hard to restore."

Finnish political decision-maker

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TRUST in the Era of AI

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