Artificial Intelligence and Structural Inequalities in Southern Europe:

Comparative Evidence from Greece (2024-2026)

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Artificial Intelligence and Structural Inequalities in Southern Europe: Comparative Evidence from Greece (2024–2026)

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1. Introduction: From the unknown to extensive use

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As artificial intelligence becomes an increasingly critical part of how many people in Greece seek information, learn, work, find entertainment, and solve everyday problems, questions regarding access, trust, and accountability are taking on an increasingly practical dimension. Two years ago, in 2024, one of the first surveys on citizens' perceptions of Artificial Intelligence in Greece was conducted on behalf of the Eteron Institute (Papagiannis, 2024). Since then, the public debate on artificial intelligence in Greece has moved forward considerably, but it still remains in a transitional period, as the recent diaNEOsis survey confirms (diaNEOsis, 2026). AI is no longer simply a technological issue for experts, nor an abstract scenario about the future of work, education or democracy. In less than two years, it has moved from the level of a largely theoretical discussion about what is coming to a central field of everyday life for millions of citizens in Greece. The Eteron and AboutPeople survey in November 2024 and the diaNEOsis and Metron Analysis survey in January 2026 capture precisely this transition in a very vivid way.

So, if two years ago the main finding was the slightly pessimistic tendency of Greeks regarding the changes that Artificial Intelligence is expected to bring, following the broader trend recorded in Europe and the West (Arora, 2024), by 2026 the picture is more differentiated. This descriptive report builds on the two aforementioned surveys exactly to explore this shifting picture. In 2024, 94.1% had at least heard of AI tools such as ChatGPT, Siri, Alexa or Google Assistant, but only 38.3% of respondents aware of these tools said they had used generative AI systems or large language models for personal or professional use. As expected, in 2026, awareness of AI remains almost universal, with 80.1% saying they know what AI is and an additional 14.9% saying they have heard something about it (95% in total). The major difference lies in use, where in the diaNEOsis survey 65% say they have used AI, even occasionally. Although the question posed to Metron Analysis' sample for diaNEOsis is not fully comparable with the question in the Eteron Institute survey, since the previous one focused more on generative AI/LLMs while the latter is phrased more broadly, the figures are pointing to broader participation.

The report's findings indicate that the adoption of Artificial Intelligence in Greece remains highly uneven -despite relatively high levels of individual usage- and clearly show that business integration of AI still lags behind the European Union average, with significant variations across different social groups. Age and education level emerge as major factors differentiating usage, although

inequalities regarding income and gender are also evident. It is worth noting that widespread AI usage coexists with concerns about privacy, employment, and democracy; meanwhile, support for a regulatory framework and human oversight is a shared stance among both users and non-users, reflecting a broad public consensus. Finally, a comparison with the rest of Southern Europe places these findings in a wider context with socio-political and economic similarities demonstrating that Greece represents a case where regional trends manifest with even greater intensity -making it a case worthy of further investigation.

1.1 Methodological note

It is important at this point to pause on some methodological differences between the two surveys. The 2024 survey was conducted through self-completed online interviews (CAWI) with a nationwide sample of 1,102 people, between 9 and 11 November 2024. The 2026 survey used a mixed methodology, telephone and online (CAWI and CATI), with a representative sample of 1,111 people aged 17 and above, between 8 and 13 January 2026. Moreover, it should be noted that the exclusively online methodology of 2024 likely reached respondents who were already more familiar with digital technologies, whereas the mixed-method approach of 2026 is more inclusive, as it can also reach citizens with little to no knowledge of the internet due to the mixed nature of its sample collection (Bethlehem, 2010; Dillman et al., 2014). These differences in the conduct of the surveys and respondent coverage necessitate caution when comparing the two sets of results. Furthermore, the 2024 results were weighted by gender, age, and the outcome of the June 2023 parliamentary elections, while the 2026 data were weighted only by gender and age.

For that reason, the current study makes use of the results of both surveys in a descriptive and exploratory way in order to find out if inequality in the field of Artificial Intelligence is connected to political, cultural, and socioeconomic factors which existed before the spread of fenerative AI. The extent to which people have access to AI, the relevant skills they possess, and how often and well they use it is influenced by factors such as income, education level, age, gender, and position in the labour market; if these inequalities are not properly tackled, Artificial Intelligence could end up reproducing the ex-

isting gap rather than reducing it. In this context, the comparison between the two studies is supplemented by a comparative analysis of Southern Europe, with the aim of ascertaining whether the same pattern appears in countries that are subject to structural constraints similar to those in Greece.

2. What Is Changing? Emerging AI Asymmetries in Greece and Southern Europe

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The first major change concerns the kind of relationship citizens have with AI. The new data record a society that now considers AI part of everyday reality, with 95% stating familiarity with AI, 80% saying they know what it is, and 65% saying they have used it. A previous Metron Analysis survey documented use at 47% three months earlier (Rigopoulos, 2026; Igoumenidi, 2026), while in the 2024 survey 38.3% said they had used generative AI/LLMs. In the two surveys under investigation, users also have a clear social profile, since they are more often men, younger, more educated and with higher income. More specifically, as shown in Table 1, younger people, students, the highly educated, higher-income groups and the economically active population report higher use, while those in the 65+ age group, those in lower education groups and/or with lower incomes remain behind in terms of use. Given the differences in respondent subgroups and samples, Table 1 should be interpreted as a source of descriptive profiles rather than as a basis for directly comparing adoption rates. Nevertheless, this comparison provides rich evidence about the broader trends and the transition that happened during this period.

Table 1. Reported AI use by sociodemographic group in Greece: findings from the 2024 and 2026 surveys

Panel A. Eteron/Aboutpeople survey, 2024		
Characteristic	Group	Reported use (%)
Total	Respondents aware of AI	38.3
Gender	Men	45.1
Gender	Women	31.8
Age	17–34	62.7
Age	35–54	37.7
Age	55+	26.2
Education	Secondary education	27.2
Education	Tertiary education	43.9
Region	Attica	38.8
Region	Outside Attica	37.9
Household income	Below €1,000	42.0
Household income	€1,000–€1,500	37.1
Household income	€1,500–€2,000	33.9
Household income	€2,000–€2,499	34.1
Household income	€2,500+	45.0

Panel B. diaNEOsis/Metron Analysis survey, 2026		
Characteristic	Group	Reported use (%)
Total	Full sample	65.0
Gender	Men	70.5
Gender	Women	59.8
Age	17–24	87.4
Age	25–39	86.8
Age	40–54	74.0
Age	55–64	62.5
Age	65+	34.0
Education	Secondary education	50.3
Education	Tertiary education	71.0
Education	Master’s/PhD	89.4
Region	Attica	69.8
Region	Northern Greece	63.9
Region	Central Greece	59.2
Region	Aegean Islands and Crete	66.1
Household income	Below €1,000	55.2
Household income	€1,000–€1,500	58.3
Household income	€1,500–€2,000	61.8
Household income	€2,001–€3,000	77.8
Household income	€3,000+	85.1

Note: Each panel retains the survey's original categories. The 2024 use question was asked only of respondents aware of AI; the 2026 figure refers to the full sample. The panels are descriptive and should not be read as directly comparable changes.

As mentioned above in 2024, the Eteron survey recorded use of Generative AI/LLMs at 38.3%, while in 2026 the diaNEOsis survey records that 65% of citizens have used AI. This comparison must be read carefully, since in 2024 the question was more specific, focusing specifically on the use of AI systems or LLMs such as ChatGPT, Gemini or Claude, while in 2026 the question is broader and includes all AI applications. While the data may not pinpoint the exact extent or speed of the change, they do show that there has been wider participation over the past two years.

Additionally, it is consistently found that although the reported level of usage is common throughout society, there are still inequalities. In both of the surveys, men report higher rates of usage than women: 45.1% compared with 31.8% in 2024 and 70.5% as against 59.8% in 2026. In 2026, men lead women by about 11 percentage points -a trend which is in line with general digital inequalities (Hargittai, 2002; Helsper, 2021; van Dijk, 2020). At the same time, it is the younger age groups which, as expected, continue to display the highest levels of usage. For example, in the 2024 survey, the usage rate among those aged 17 to 34 was recorded at 62.7%, while in 2026, the corresponding figures are 87.4% for the 17 to 24 group and 86.8% for those aged 25 to 39. What these high numbers -considering their constraints- do suggest, nevertheless, is that the younger respondents are, in general, acquainted with the technology, although this does not necessarily reveal the frequency or the depth of their engagement. This situation is a sharp contrast to the group of people over the age of 65, who are considerably behind: in 2026, only 34% of them had used artificial intelligence. Thus, age is the most significant factor dividing people in their use of artificial intelligence, a pattern that is also seen in the past concerning internet usage (van Deursen & van Dijk, 2014).

Education also functions as a critical variable measuring in 2024 a use of 27.2% among graduates up to secondary education and 43.9% among tertiary education graduates, while in 2026 the corresponding figures are 50.3% and 71% respectively. It is also worth noting that among holders of a master's degree or PhD, use reaches 89.4%, showing that educational and knowledge environments are associated with greater opportunities to experiment

with new technologies. This dimension becomes even more critical when we move from the question of whether "I have used or not used" AI to whether "I can use AI in a productive way" because after all, AI can increase productivity in some cognitive tasks, but its benefits are neither automatic nor equally distributed. They depend on the type of work, the level of skills, and the user's ability to integrate the tool into a productive process (Brynjolfsson et al., 2023; Dell'Acqua et al., 2023; Noy & Zhang, 2023).

Geographical differences are more limited, with reported use in Attica being 38.8% in 2024 and 69.8% in 2026, while the remaining regional categories differ between the surveys. In the latest survey of 2026 which contains more specific geographic areas Northern Greece stands at 63.9%, Central Greece at 59.2%, and the Aegean Islands and Crete at 66.1%. So, AI use is not exclusively an Athens-centred phenomenon. At the same time, the income pattern is clearer in 2026 than in 2024, considering that in 2026, reported use successively rises across household-income bands, from 55.2% below €1,000 to 85.1% above €3,000, while the 2024 figures are more uneven.

Eurostat's data are quite enriching at this point (Table 2). Using the narrower definition of generative AI use in the last three months, Eurostat finds for 2025 a use rate of 44.1% in Greece compared with 32.7% in the EU-27. This reflects the significant degree of diffusion of this new technology in Greek society. But does adoption also imply productivity? Greece stands out mainly in private use, with 40.9% compared with 25.5% in the EU, while in professional use Greece is almost at the average, 16.1% compared with 15.4%. In formal education it is slightly higher, with 11.2% compared with 9.3%, while Greece's lead over the EU average is concentrated mainly in private use.

Table 2. Use of Generative AI tools in Greece and the EU, 2025

Indicator	EU-27	Greece	Difference Greece–EU
Use of GenAI, total individuals	32.7%	44.1%	+11.4%
Private use of GenAI	25.5%	40.9%	+15.4%
Professional use of GenAI	15.4%	16.1%	+0.7%
Use for formal education	9.3%	11.2%	+1.9%
Use of GenAI, ages 16–24	63.8%	83.5%	+19.7%
Private use, ages 16–24	45.1%	77.2%	+32.1%
Professional use, ages 16–24	16.3%	8.6%	-7.7%
Educational use, ages 16–24	41.0%	53.7%	+12.7%
AI use by enterprises			
Enterprises with 10+ employees using at least one AI technology	20.0%	8.9%	-11.1%
Small enterprises, 10–49 employees	17.0%	7.3%	-9.7%
Medium-sized enterprises, 50–249 employees	30.4%	15.2%	-15.2%
Large enterprises, 250+ employees	55.0%	37.6%	-17.4%

Source: Eurostat (2025a; 2025b). Unit of measurement: percentage of individuals who used generative AI tools in the last 3 months.

Note: Differences are expressed in percentage points (%). The individual and enterprise indicators refer to different populations and should be considered separately.

Although the EU average may be useful as a point of comparison, it does not always show the considerable variation if we consider that Greece is a country of the South that was hit by the economic crisis while its economy has been organized around tourism, services sectors and has a weak trade balance (Amable, 2003; Farkas, 2016). Consequently, in the European average it is compared to industrial economies such as Germany and economies with historically greater R&D and technological investments such as the Netherlands and the Nordics (OECD, 2024; European Commission, 2025). This is why Table 3 proves helpful when making a more in-depth comparison between Greece, Spain, Italy, Cyprus, Malta and Portugal, constituting a focused although by no means complete set of countries. It is clear that Greece, Cyprus and Malta show relatively high levels of overall usage, while both Spain and Portugal also exceed the EU-27 average, and Italy staying below it. That said, all six countries show marked differences depending on age and educational attainment. Of course, these patterns on their own cannot account for the underlying reasons, whether those

factors lie in the economic structure or in the wider socio-political culture.

Table 3. Use of generative AI tools in selected Southern European EU Member States, by age and education, 2025

Country	All individuals	Ages 16–24	Ages 65–74	Ages 25–64, low education	Ages 25–64, high education
EU-27	32.7%	63.8%	6.5%	13.3%	51.6%
Greece	44.1%	83.5%	10.6%	19.2%	68.8%
Spain	37.9%	75.6%	7.3%	15.3%	52.0%
Italy	19.9%	47.2%	4.6%	5.9%	36.4%
Cyprus	44.2%	76.5%	9.3%	9.3%	66.4%
Malta	46.5%	76.4%	9.8%	14.0%	72.5%
Portugal	38.7%	76.5%	5.8%	11.9%	66.1%

Source: Eurostat (2025a). Percentages refer to individuals who used generative AI tools in the previous three months. The six countries are used here as a focused, non-exhaustive Southern European comparison.

Moving on to Table 4, the diffusion of AI in Southern Europe differs not only in terms of intensity, but also in terms of the nature of use. Greece is the clearest example of asymmetric diffusion, with private use reaching 40.9%, compared to 25.5% in the EU-27, and the second highest among the selected countries after Cyprus. In contrast, professional use is at 16.1%, almost at the EU level (15.4%) and lower than Malta, Cyprus, Portugal and Spain. The greatest Greek vulnerability is found in enterprises, where 8.9% of enterprises with at least ten employees use some AI technology, compared to 20% in the EU-27. The rate in question is the lowest of all the countries cited, and the difference between private use and business adoption acts as a clear sign of a more general imbalance in which society is adopting AI faster than the economy can meaningfully integrate it. On the other hand, Malta has the most balanced situation of all the South-European countries, showing high levels of usage in private, professional, educational, and business con-

texts, while Spain features moderate private use together with a greater degree of integration in education and professional environments. As a result, Greece appears to be encountering difficulties in terms of productive and institutional absorption.

Table 4. Private, professional and educational use of generative AI and enterprise AI adoption, 2025

Country	Private use	Professional use	Formal education	Enterprises using at least one AI technology
EU-27	25.5%	15.4%	9.3%	20.0%
Greece	40.9%	16.1%	11.2%	8.9%
Spain	30.2%	17.9%	16.3%	20.3%
Italy	12.8%	8.0%	6.4%	16.4%
Cyprus	43.3%	22.7%	14.5%	9.3%
Malta	37.2%	29.5%	20.2%	21.5%
Portugal	33.2%	19.9%	14.5%	11.5%

Source: Eurostat (2025a; 2025b). The first three indicators are percentages of individuals; the final indicator is the percentage of enterprises with at least 10 persons employed using at least one AI technology.

Despite the fact that the comparison within the context of Southern Europe reveals shared internal divisions alongside heterogeneous national patterns, Greece should be viewed primarily as a characteristic case study of the gap between private usage and business adoption, rather than as a representative model for the region as a whole. This provides a bridge to understanding citizens' practices and attitudes, without presupposing that familiarity with technology is the sole factor shaping those attitudes. In this light, it worths noting that the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) extends to the fields of information and news, learning and education, and work (Table 5); meanwhile, positive expectations coexist with concerns regarding personal data, democratic institutions, fairness, and critical thinking. Among users, 64.8% utilize it for information and news, 64.1% for learning and education, 52% for work, 45.7% for technical support and repairs, and 37% for entertainment -positive perceptions are also reported in domains related to personal care and health.

Table 5. Selected findings on AI use, attitudes and governance in Greece, 2024 and 2026

Dimension	Eteron survey (2024)	diaNEOsis survey (2026)
ChatGPT / Large Language Models	59.3% consider large language models such as ChatGPT useful for making everyday life easier.	Among AI users, 75.4% report using ChatGPT very or fairly often.
Information/news/ knowledge	60.3% use or would use AI to search for information. This is followed by text translation at 35.9%, entertainment - conversations at 25.1%, and content creation at 24.2%.	58.2% assess the impact of AI on information/news positively or rather positively, while for education the corresponding share is 64.7%.
Feelings	34.9% said they were very or somewhat optimistic, while 37.1% were very or somewhat pessimistic. Finally, 23.7% appeared neutral about the social impact of AI.	The dominant feelings are interest at 54.8% and caution/suspicion at 45.8%. Optimism has a footprint of around 15%, while fear reaches 12%.
Restrictions and regulatory framework	To make AI use safer, respondents' first choices were ensuring transparency at 41.7%, personal data protection at 40.9%, strict legislation at 39.8% and safeguarding through independent bodies at 33.7%.	Among respondents aware of AI, 90.3% favour restrictions on its use, while 8.9% favour leaving it unrestricted.
Human control	31.3% consider the possibility of appealing to a human for a review of AI decisions important.	Among respondents aware of AI, the 87.3% prefer communicating with a person for the service situations specified in the question, while the 12.7% prefer AI.
Risks for the public interest	Excessive dependence on technology at 61.6%, lack of accountability and transparency at 60.9%, job loss at 53.2%, and privacy violations at 53.8%.	The positive impact of AI is low regarding personal data at 25.6%, jobs at 28.3%, and democracy at 38.3%. However, it is high in science (84.9%) and business (80.8%).
Work / productivity	In 2024, 53.2% identified job loss as a key risk. On workplace integration, 30.2% favoured acceleration, while 39.4% neither acceleration nor slowdown, and 18.4% preferred a slowdown.	Among respondents aware of AI, 66.9% of the sample expect a positive or rather positive effect on labour productivity, while the 70.3% expect a negative or rather negative effect on jobs.

Note: The surveys use different questions and respondent bases. The table identifies recurring themes and should not be read as numerical change in equivalent attitudes.

The 2026 survey also shows that ChatGPT is the dominant tool among users, followed at clearly lower levels by Google AI Overview and Gemini, while tools such as Copilot, DeepSeek, Grok and Perplexity show more limited use. The Greek AI experience is therefore still strongly concentrated around a few recognisable major platforms, depicting a strong platform choice and establishing a potential threat regarding digital autonomy. However, despite the mass character of usage, use does not imply uncritical trust. Among users in the 2026 survey, only 5.4% say they fully trust AI and its results, while 64.4% say they trust it quite a lot, 27.8% a little, and 2.4% not at all. Therefore, citizens use AI because they find it useful, but they recognise its limits. When they are not sure about an answer, 86.7% of users say they take further actions. Of these, 83.7% cross-check the answer with other online sources, 35.4% seek human confirmation, and 33.6% ask the system itself for more evidence.

2.2. What remains the same: an ambivalent attitude that persists

Ambivalence towards AI remains a stable feature in both surveys. The 2024 survey showed respondents as slightly more pessimistic than optimistic about the social impact of AI (34.9% optimistic, 37.1% pessimistic and 23.7% neutral). In 2026, overall optimism or pessimism about the social impact is not measured as such, but feelings are recorded. Interest dominates at 54.8%, followed by caution/suspicion at 45.8%. Optimism stands at 15%, fear at 12%, trust at 11.8%, anxiety at 7.3% and pessimism at 6.4%.

The change in the language of responses is as important as the change in percentages. In 2024, the central question was still whether AI would be good or bad for the future of society, while in 2026 a broader repertoire of feelings is recorded. So today, citizens foresee a positive impact of AI on science, business operations, the public sector and bureaucracy, labour productivity, education and environmental protection. At the same time, they view its impact negatively or rather negatively on the protection of personal data, jobs, finding a romantic partner and democracy (diaNEOsis, 2026).

2.3 Social divides: from the digital divide to the experience divide

As already shown above in Table 1, the use of AI systems/LLMs was higher among men than women, among younger people than older people, and among tertiary education graduates compared with secondary education graduates. This trend has two readings. The first is that the familiar digital divides are reproduced: gender, age, education, income and position in the labour market are associated with differences in AI use and attitudes. The second is that the gap is no longer only about access or knowledge, but about experience, since the diaNEOsis survey records that users show much higher interest and greater openness, while non-users express much stronger caution, fear, anxiety and pessimism.

Therefore, the reasons for abstaining from the use of AI tools do not reflect inertia, but are accompanied by value-based caution, lack of skills, distrust towards platforms and concern for the protection of users' rights. Among those who have not used AI but know it, 48.6% say they want to remain "human", 25.8% see no personal benefit, 25.3% cite lack of technological knowledge, 24.1% do not trust the platforms, 20.8% fear a restriction of creativity and critical thinking, and 20.4% worry about personal data (diaNEOsis, 2026). These answers should not be dismissed as solely technophobia. They combine value-based reservations, lack of skills, distrust towards platforms and concern for rights. The policy response, therefore, cannot simply be awareness campaigns. It requires education, practical support, institutional reassurance and clear limits.

Table 6. Why citizens do not use Artificial Intelligence applications (2026)

You said that you have not used any Artificial Intelligence (AI) applications/tools at all. Why? (Up to 3 choices)	
I do not find any personal benefit	25.8%
I worry about my personal data	20.4%
I do not trust its answers	18.6%
I do not have technological knowledge/skills	25.3%
For ethical reasons	7.9%
I do not have access to the internet	1.4%
It will create dependence for me	8.8%
It will limit my creativity and critical thinking	20.8%
I do not trust Artificial Intelligence (AI) platforms	24.1%
I want to remain "human"	48.6%
I do not know what it is / I do not understand it	8.2%
Other (spontaneous)	3%
Don't know (spontaneous)	2.9%

Note: Percentages refer to non-users who were aware of AI, approximately 30% of the full sample. Respondents could select up to three answers, so percentages do not sum to 100%.

The gender dimension requires particular attention. In 2026, women use AI less, express less interest and optimism, and show higher fear than men. As Vogiatzis notes, again this should not be read as a simple lack of familiarity, but as fear linked to real risks such as algorithmic bias, the reproduction of stereotypes, gender discrimination at work, deepfakes and uses that disproportionately affect women and children (Vogiatzis, 2026).

2.4. Broad support for regulation and differing levels of trust

The clear trend that emerges from 2024 to 2026 is the continued call for regulation. In 2024, the people who took the survey named transparency, clear explanations of how the application works and protection of personal data before strict legislation as the main factors for safer use of AI. Responsibility for ensuring safety and for regulation was shared out among a number of parties, such as companies, the state, the European institutions, and also both national and international independent authorities, with no one organisation becoming clearly the leading one. This shows that there was no agreement over which of the stakeholders should have the main responsibility. In 2026 support for imposing restrictions on AI use is widespread and much more clear. Of people who are familiar with AI, 90.3% think that restrictions should be put in place while only 8.9% back unrestricted use. This strong level of support is seen whether or not individuals use AI.

While support for regulation remains strong, trust in entities expected to provide education about AI is also significant. Universities and research centres are the most trusted, with 74.4% of respondents expressing complete or considerable trust. They are followed by family and friends (55.4%), technology companies (48.5%), diaNEOsis as a research organisation (41.6%), and AI systems themselves (41.1%). Lower levels of trust are reported for independent authorities, the European Union, international organisations, employers, government ministries, and the media, with the media receiving particularly low trust. Although the survey question addresses trust in sources of information rather than regulatory competence, the results highlight a potential public education role for universities and research centres as Greece implements the EU AI Act.

The 2026 survey shows that 87.3% of the respondents would rather interact with a human than use an AI programme when dealing with issues in fields like banking, healthcare, or utilities. According to the 2024 Eteron survey, 31.3% of the participants considered it important to be able to appeal AI decisions to a human. Since these questions concern different aspects of human involvement, they should be understood with caution.

2.5. Work, democracy and rights as high-risk fields

Concern about the future of work, personal data, accountability and democracy shows persistence over time. In 2024, the main risks from AI use were excessive dependence on technology (61.6%), lack of accountability and transparency in decisions (60.9%), job loss (53.2%) and violation of privacy (53.8%). In 2026, 79.3% of AI users agreed or tended to agree that AI improves their efficiency at work. In separate questions to respondents aware of AI, 66.9% expected a positive or rather positive impact on labour productivity, while 70.3% expected a negative or rather negative impact on labour market and employment. In other words, respondents expect potential gains in efficiency and productivity while also anticipating job-related risks.

This dual attitude is anticipated, as citizens do not require technical expertise to recognize that a technology can simultaneously increase productivity and alter the distribution of labor. The central challenge is not whether artificial intelligence will eliminate jobs, but rather which workers will benefit, which will be replaced, which will require retraining, and which may be excluded from emerging productive networks. At this point, the old 2024 question about accelerating or slowing down integration in workplaces becomes even more important. At the time, the largest group asked neither for acceleration nor for slowdown, while those who wanted acceleration were more than those who wanted slowdown. This is a question that would be worth exploring again.

To understand the above more thoroughly, the Special Eurobarometer 554 carried out in spring 2024, is very useful because it captures Greeks' sensitivity regarding the protection of work. Regarding the general impact of recent digital technologies, including artificial intelligence, Greece closely aligns with the average of the rest of the European Union countries. Specifically, 64% of respondents in Greece report a positive impact on the economy compared to 62% in the EU. At the same time, 59% of Greeks report a positive impact on society compared to 56% of the EU average, and 63% of the Greek respondents report a positive impact on quality of life compared to 62% of the EU average. However, a significant divergence emerges when the focus shifts to the workplace and internal power relations.

To that end, Greece is more cautious than the European average, since only 48% had a positive perception of the use of robots and AI at work, compared with 62% in the EU. At the same time, 80% in Greece agreed that because of robots and AI more jobs will be lost than created, compared with 66% in the EU, while the view that robots and

AI “steal” jobs reached 79% in Greece and 66% in the EU. This comparison outlines a profile for Greece characterised by strong concern.

Table 7. Attitudes towards robots, AI and workplace uses of digital technologies in Greece and the EU, 2024

Indicator	EU-27	Greece	Difference Greece–EU
Positive perception of the impact of recent digital technologies -including AI- on the economy	62.0%	64.0%	+2%
Positive perception of the impact of recent digital technologies -including AI- on society	56.0%	59.0%	+3%
Positive perception of the impact of recent digital technologies -including AI- on quality of life	62.0%	63.0%	+1%
Positive perception of the use of robots/AI at work	62.0%	48.0%	-14%
Negative perception of the use of robots/AI at work	32.0%	46.0%	+14%
Agree that more jobs will be lost than created	66.0%	80.0%	+14%
Agree that robots/AI are a good thing for society	63.0%	55.0%	-8%
Agree that AI requires careful management	84.0%	91.0%	+7%
Agree that robots/AI steal jobs	66.0%	79.0%	+13%
Negative attitude towards processing/storing workers’ personal data	49.0%	62.0%	+13%
Negative attitude towards monitoring workers	63.0%	74.0%	+11%
Negative attitude towards dismissals through AI systems	78.0%	87.0%	+9%

Source: Special Eurobarometer 554, fieldwork 25 April–22 May 2024. Figures refer to all respondents aged 15+, including those outside employment. The final three indicators concern digital technologies including AI.

Among respondents familiar with Artificial Intelligence (AI), 33.9% view its expected impact on privacy protection as somewhat negative, while 37.6% view it as negative, meaning that approximately 71.5% hold a negative or somewhat negative opinion, whereas only 25.6% lean towards a positive view. Perhaps the most significant finding is that these concerns coexist with widespread support for imposing restrictions, and this pattern is common among the majority of the respondentes: women, older age groups, and non-users of the technology express greater concern, yet even users hold a clearly negative view.

Furthermore, democracy and justice are also areas where the expected impacts are deemed marginal or negative. In the diaNEOsis survey (2026), citizens regard AI's impact on science and business as highly positive, yet they appear far more skeptical or negative regarding its relationship with democracy and justice. The same pattern is observed concerning high-stakes decisions. Among AI users in 2026, there is a relatively high willingness to use the technology for grading school or university assignments, entertainment, receiving nutritional advice, and evaluating résumés. However, willingness drops regarding AI involvement in legal cases, financial management, autonomous vehicles, medical diagnoses, and finding a romantic partner reflecting that anticipated impact and perceived risk shape the willingness to delegate specific tasks despite the trust towards technology.

3.
From artificial to collective intelligence for a Digital Social Contract

3. From artificial to collective intelligence for a Digital Social Contract

If we try to condense the change in trends, what emerges is broader but still unequal participation, together with a significant digital divide, where whoever uses AI has a different emotional and cognitive starting point from whoever has no contact with it, while sociodemographic variables also reveal the age, gender, educational and income inequalities that shape this divide. Both surveys document a strong demand for safeguards and cross both surveys, positive expectations coexist with concern about particular uses with high risk and major cost of error when human oversight is eliminated from the process. In a sense the feeling of lacking accountability for situations involving high stakes which are critical for individuals' life might be driving this pattern. In both surveys, the same anxiety appears around transparency, personal data, accountability and the protection of work. Therefore, from the initial recognition period, we have entered a transitional period that is not simply about adapting to a new reality, but about shaping a social contract. The question is not only which tools society will adopt in everyday life, but under what rules, in which institutions, with what guarantees and for what purposes.

Therefore, it is crucial that the discussion moves away from sterile techno-optimism or techno-pessimism (Kelly, 2023) and towards a creative process of institutional precision, but also imagination. Institutional precision means that each application must be assessed based on the field of use, the level of risk, the possibility of control, the quality of data, human oversight and the right to appeal. Institutional imagination means that AI must be integrated into policies that improve real needs. In simple terms, it should be used to offer better public services, more accessible knowledge, support for small businesses, skills upgrading, reduction of inequalities and protection from algorithmic harms. Hence, in this context, 'collective intelligence' means that citizens, workers, educators and civil-society organisations have a role in deciding where AI is introduced, how its effects are evaluated and who remains accountable.

For this reason, a social contract for AI cannot be exhausted in legal compliance. It must include transparency, accountability, human oversight, protection of personal data, the right to contest decisions, accessible information, participation of social actors, coordinated educational interventions, support and continuous monitoring of social impacts -among others. The existing European framework organises AI based on levels of risk, prohibits practices that threaten citizens' rights and safety, and provides strict obligations for high-risk systems, requiring risk assessment, data quality, documentation, trace-

ability, human oversight, accuracy and cybersecurity (European Commission, 2026). Despite its thorough provisions regarding AI safety this framework lacks multi-level coordinated policies for a range of aspects such as re-skilling, employment protection, reducing inequalities or stimulating innovation. At the same time, because AI is not simply a neutral tool, the credibility of regulation must be based on independent institutions, universities, research centres and authorities for the protection of citizens' rights, so that the AI transition includes guarantees for safeguarding democracy, cultivating social trust and protecting the public interest (Smuha, 2025; Voeneky et al., 2022).

4.
Conclusion

4. Conclusion

Greece has entered the era of Artificial Intelligence's rapid expansion through the LLMs, with citizens making intense individual use, but without this intensity necessarily translating into increased productivity, business integration or trust towards the tools this general-purpose technology provides them. Thus, while in 2026 use has increased dramatically compared with 2024, and AI has acquired a role in finding information, learning and solving everyday problems, citizens are asking even more strongly for limits, transparency, data protection and human oversight. We therefore observe that the abstract ambivalence recorded in 2024 is today translated into more specific concerns, but also into a demand for the imposition of a clear regulatory framework.

At the same time, the critical issue for the coming years will not only be whether Greeks use AI more, but who can make meaningful use of it, with what skills, and in which professional and educational environments. The gap recorded in relation to age, gender, education and income shows that AI can either function as a tool of empowerment or strengthen already existing inequalities, a development that requires an organised plan and coordinated policy actions. The high private usage in Greece, combined with lower business adoption compared with the European average, also shows that the country has social momentum, but not yet sufficient productive and institutional integration of the technology.

Moreover, the comparison with Southern Europe reinforces this observation, highlighting Greece as a case that captures the broader pattern of the South with exceptional intensity, combining rapid individual adoption with sharp age and educational gaps and weak adoption by businesses. This asymmetry constitutes the central risk for the mitigation of inequalities, but also the ineffective diffusion of AI into the fabric of production. Unless skills and organizational capacity are distributed more evenly, mass adoption may coexist and ultimately preserve or even reinforce the socio-economic inequalities that preceded AI, making Greek society -and to a lesser extent those of the European South- extremely vulnerable and its structural productive weaknesses irreversible.

For this reason, the political challenge is not simply to convince society that AI is useful -since this already seems to be happening-, but in creating the necessary and sufficient conditions so that its use becomes trustworthy, fair and democratically guaranteed. This translates into stable and bold investment in workforce skills, public education, support for small businesses, protection of vulnerable groups from the negative aspects of AI, oversight by independent bodies and clear rules for high-risk applications.

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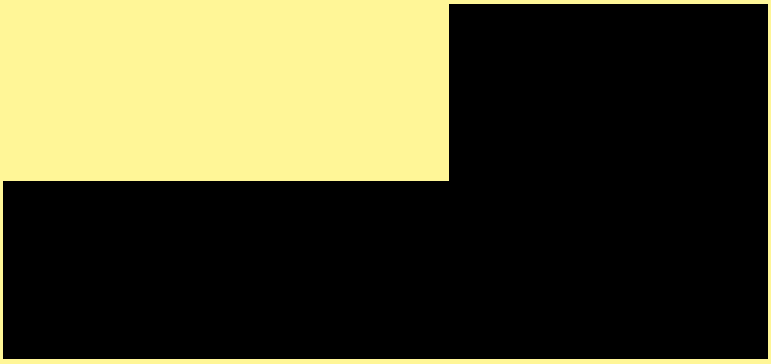
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