



## **AI in the Village: Awareness, Literacy, Perception and Use Cases from Rural India**

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AI is going mainstream in urban India and it is being increasingly implemented in business and industry across the country. However, we know little about how much knowledge there is of AI in rural areas, to what extent individuals, such as rural youth, and businesses, use AI, and how they use it. We also don't know much about potential use cases for AI in a rural setting. The objective of this study is to interview villagers to learn about 1) their awareness and knowledge of AI; 2) their AI literacy and use; 3) perception of AI, 4) what might be AI use cases in rural India. So far in this ongoing study, we have interviewed about 100 individuals across 10 villages in 3 Districts of Maharashtra. We are set to double these numbers.

### **Preliminary Insights:**

#### **Awareness**

Awareness of GenAI is synonymous with ChatGPT, commonly linked with content and image generation. Regardless of literacy level, most have heard of AI through social media, television, and work conversations. Non-users believe AI can strongly benefit the younger generation, especially in education. Limited understanding of AI often results in people worried about using it incorrectly. English remains a major barrier, limiting people's comfort and access to AI.

#### **Literacy**

AI literacy levels is low, but every village had AI users at various levels. Translation and voice-based AI tools are in use in vernacular language. Advanced users are moving from basic searches to using AI for analysis and decision-making at work. Many use AI unknowingly and indirectly through algorithms on social media & shopping platforms. Usage: White collar workers use AI daily professionally, while others see it as inaccessible or for entertainment.

#### **Perception**

Exposure to TV crime stories about voice scams has shaped a sense of caution toward AI. Individuals familiar with AI see it as a powerful tool, while those less familiar, view it as basic answer tool and often remain skeptical. Villagers fear morphed content could harm reputation, especially affecting women and public figures. Perception divide exists by livelihood: white collar workers view AI as a helpful assistant, whereas blue collar workers often see it as something that can spread misinformation. People know their data is being collected and want stronger protection, but do not know what to do about it.

#### **Use Cases from the Grassroots**

**Agriculture & Livelihoods:** Farmers and workers hope for support that reduces daily uncertainty and helps them make more confident decisions. **Education:** Many see AI as a study partner that can expand learning opportunities beyond what is locally available. **Health:** Dependable guidance that brings care closer to home, especially when medical access is limited. **AI Upskilling:** Villagers prefer hands-on, community workshops over online tutorials for learning new technologies.