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An agentic life: How consumer AI usage is shaping future network needs



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Introduction and methodology

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The objective of this ConsumerLab study was to understand how consumers currently use generative artificial intelligence (GenAI), and how they expect to use GenAI by 2030. The primary focus was on smartphone-based AI. The study reveals insights into how AI is driving changes in user behavior, and user readiness for agentic AI, which may impact how we think about demands on future mobile networks. Data was collected between June and August 2025, as well as February and March 2026. The online survey includes responses from more than 43,000 smartphone users aged 15–69 across 27 markets, and over 8,000 interviews were conducted with owners of AI-powered smart glasses in eight markets. These interviews provided insights into how this emerging device category may affect user behavior and connectivity expectations. This report shows how a new group of “AI super users” is reshaping the nature of AI usage, how these changes are raising new demands on connectivity and trust, and how the next phase of AI is moving toward more agentic and distributed forms of interaction across devices.

Key findings from the AI usage report

Today’s “AI super users” provide valuable insights. They are early and enthusiastic adopters of AI, and so their usage, behaviors, and geographic distribution offer a projection of the patterns that will emerge once the general population reaches the same level of AI adoption, along with a view of the expected impact on the development of tomorrow’s networks.

AI super users are mostly found in urban areas, where demand is already high. Yet, their usage shows that networks will need to adapt to more than just additional capacity needs, but also to usage that is more frequent, upload heavy, and multimodal – with demands that involve interaction with multiple media types and devices. AI super users’ behavior also indicates that by 2030, most AI users will seek to stay connected to AI services while on the move, and in densely populated areas with the previously mentioned high demand.

Communications service providers must consider that, as AI usage evolves from its current episodic nature to a more continual stream of interaction, both security and network quality will be more apparent. AI response time is emerging as a key metric of AI users’ network satisfaction, making service reliability a key priority. Users of agentic AI believe they will save one hour of screen time a day by delegating tasks to AI. This increases the likelihood that

these users will delegate tasks to AI agents, making trust, identification, and authentication other key issues.

Significantly, consumers perceive service providers as one of the most trusted actors within the AI realm and expect service providers to play a central role in being able to verify the identities of AI assistants, thereby reducing the risk of harm from fraudulent AI agents. This position of trust has the potential to bring a number of new opportunities for service providers.

Finally, looking ahead to 2030, smartphones appear set to remain the dominant access point for AI apps and services. However, a range of complementary smart devices will also need to be accommodated – and AI smart glasses are emerging as a clear frontrunner. As smart glasses and other form factors bring in more accessible AI through hands-free, head-up usage, a new wave of network requests and requirements will be ushered in, bringing with them a greater need for networks to be able to handle increased burstiness and unevenly distributed demand, through greater network responsiveness and uplink capacity. Yet, widespread adoption relies on more than just technical readiness – device makers must also thoughtfully navigate and address bystander privacy concerns in everyday environments.

AI super users: A small group driving disproportionate AI activity

By 2030

- 5.5+ hours of active AI usage per day
- 5+ different AI software applications used per day
- 60+ AI-related tasks per day
- 15+ AI-driven uploads per day
- 4+ devices used for AI per day
- AI usage across 3+ locations per day

The significance of the AI super user – where future network demand begins

By 2030, two-thirds of smartphone users are expected to interact with AI daily. A small group of AI super users from today may present the key to understanding the future demands this growth will place on the network.

While AI may represent a limited share of today's total network activity, the behavioral shift it's bringing is much larger: The ways users are adopting AI point to changes in behavior that will reshape where, when, and how network demands will emerge over time. Half of all consumers in our survey said they interact with AI on a daily basis, and by 2030 that figure is expected to rise to around two-thirds. However, the growth of AI use is not unfolding evenly. A smaller group of enthusiastic AI users is interacting with AI more frequently and in more varied ways than average – across text, voice, images, and video, often by uploading content to AI services. This group's usage extends across multiple devices and to a wider range of locations throughout the day, particularly away from the home or office.

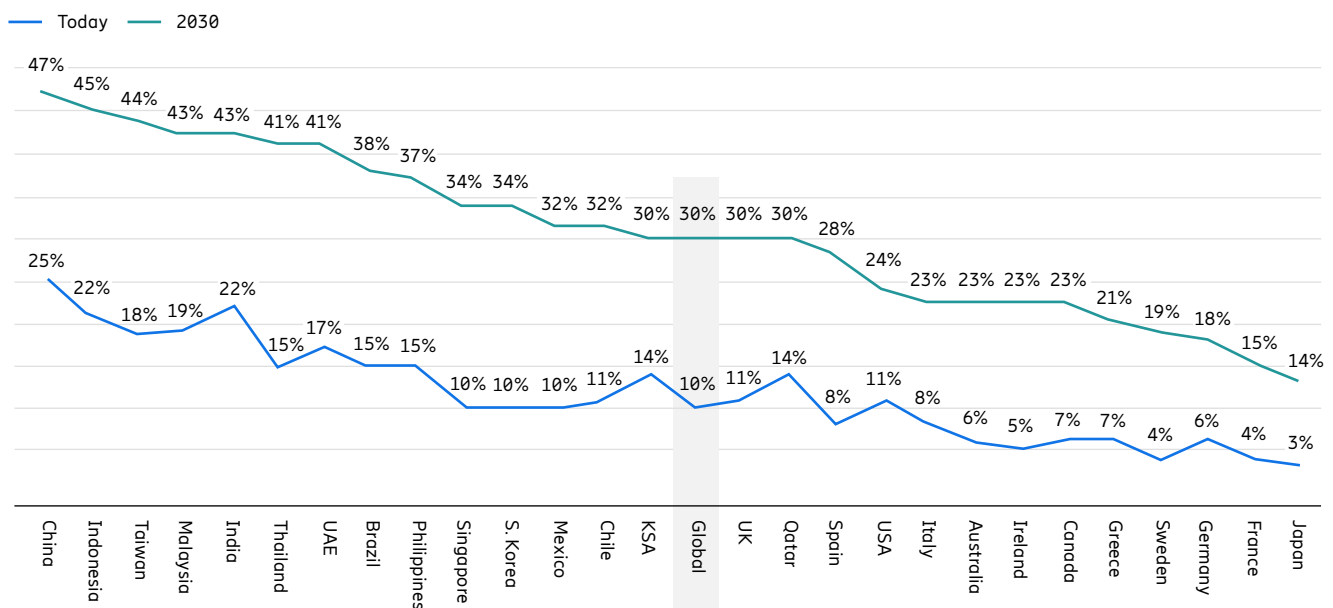
Today, these AI super users represent around 10 percent of consumers and, by 2030, AI super users are expected to make up 30 percent of consumers, while accounting for over 80 percent of all AI activity. In addition, it is thought that AI super users will increase their daily AI usage from around 3 hours to 5.5 hours per day. While today's AI super users spend about 2.5 times longer using AI, when compared to an average smartphone user, by 2030 this is expected to increase to around four times.

This suggests that the future of AI usage will be shaped disproportionately by a small but influential group of users whose behavior is already molding today's norms. This follows the trend seen from early video streaming adopters, whose usage foretold not just the behavioral trends of later adopters – but also led to

service providers investing much-needed additional resources to downlink capacity. AI super user behavior indicates a similar presentiment and need, but this time for uplink capacity. The behavior of AI super users also foreshadows the broader shifts explored in this report: more multimodal and mobile AI use, more agentic activity, and a more distributed device landscape.

For service providers, the challenge ahead is complex. AI super users point to a future in which network demand is increasingly shaped by more frequent AI interaction, more upload-driven usage, and a greater dependence on connectivity while on the move – meaning that demand will also be more bursty and unevenly distributed. AI user behavior, and the expected development of demand, is therefore likely to amplify network pressures in locations that are already at critical capacity.

Figure 1: Share of daily multimodal AI users today and in 2030 – by market (see page 4)



Note: Differences between markets are influenced not only by AI maturity, but also by demographic factors such as population age. Consumers were asked about the ways they use AI today and the ways they expect to use AI in 2030. The 2030 figures represent stated consumer expectations and are not forecasts of actual adoption.

Multimodal AI usage is raising the bar on connectivity and trust

As AI use changes from occasional interactions to a more continuous stream of real-time interactions, user awareness of network quality and security will increase, bringing opportunities for service providers.

AI is extending beyond occasional prompt-based use into a more continuous means for users to search, create, communicate, and make decisions. What begins with AI super users is expected to spread across the broader AI user base, as AI usage becomes more multimodal, multi-device, and mobile. Users in Asian markets are anticipating a much more fundamental transformation to the ways they will interact with AI. While 89 percent of US and European users have usage limited to text-based prompting, nearly one in four consumers across APAC and Latin America already interact with AI using voice, video, images, and documents. Six Asian markets in the study (China, Indonesia, Taiwan, Malaysia, India and Thailand) cross the 40 percent threshold for expected intensive multimodal AI use by 2030, compared with 30 percent globally (see Figure 1 on page 3). This suggests that AI's multimodal frontier may not be defined by the world's most digitally mature markets. By 2030, the daily share of multimodal AI users, multi-device AI users, and the number of on-the-go locations¹ in which AI is used is expected to triple. This will shift demand toward higher uplink needs, greater cross-device context sharing, and a more distributed network load. Together, these changes will raise the bar for network experience, increasing

Over half of daily AI users are strongly worried about fake or hacked AI assistants acting on their behalf.

50%

the need for connectivity that works reliably, responsively, and wherever the moment arises.

AI users don't distinguish between network and compute delays – they judge their overall experience. The more people use AI, the more response speed shapes their perception of the network. Among AI super users, satisfaction with AI response time accounts for around 20 percent of overall network satisfaction, compared with just 8 percent among smartphone users overall. While compute and inference dominate AI response times today, evolving AI architectures could make network performance increasingly consequential.

Beyond making poor connectivity more noticeable, everyday AI use for actions and decision-making increases the need for users to have confidence in the systems. Sufficient trust is more than just a condition for adoption. Trust also shapes how deeply users interact with AI and whether AI-driven behaviors become lasting habits. This becomes even more important as AI draws on more personal information, such as history, habits and individual preferences, and becomes more capable of acting in someone's name. More than half of all daily AI users are strongly worried about fake or hacked AI assistants acting on their behalf. This shows that trust in AI is not only about content accuracy or response quality, but also about identity, verification, control, and confidence that the interactions are legitimate and secure. There is, however, a broader opening for service providers, who stand out as the most trusted actor in verifying AI assistants' identities, ahead of device OS providers, AI developers, device manufacturers, and security firms. Trust in service providers is particularly

AI response time is 2.5x more critical in driving network satisfaction for AI super users than for average users.

2.5x

strong in Europe, with countries such as Germany, Greece, France, Ireland, and Sweden selecting them as the most trusted actor, but overall trust in service providers is strongest in Thailand, China, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates, all of which registered scores higher than 40 percent.

Service providers are starting to carve out a distinct role in AI governance, anchoring their consumer value proposition around trust and data sovereignty. Swisscom proved the commercial viability of this approach when its privacy-centric 'myAI' assistant – a locally hosted assistant that guarantees zero training on user prompts – drew 67,000 registered users shortly after rollout. This signals a strong consumer demand for sovereign AI services that protect personal data from third-party profiling. This topic is explored further in the Ericsson blog post, "Is trust the Achilles' heel or the force behind agentic AI adoption?"²

Service providers rank highest among tested ecosystem actors for verifying identities of AI assistants.

#1

¹ Multimodal AI usage: Using at least four of the five input modes – text, images, videos, and voice as well as multiple uploads.

Multi-device AI usage: Using AI on a smartphone or tablet, computer, and another device.

On-the-go AI usage location: Cafés, bars, restaurants; when commuting; while driving; while traveling, or when out and about in the city.

² Ericsson blog, "Is trust the Achilles' heel or the force behind agentic AI adoption?" (July 2026).

The next billion subscribers could be invisible

The ability to delegate tasks to an AI agent or multiple agents that can act on users' behalf will lead to an increase in AI-triggered background actions on networks. Consequently, traditional subscription models will need to evolve to become more outcome driven.

The next step toward embedded and interactive AI use is agentic AI. Agentic AI can take on tasks on behalf of users – with or without human involvement. This marks AI becoming a more continuous layer of support that can interpret intent and carry out actions within defined boundaries. Early iterations are already visible in markets such as China, where agentic AI usage is common and mature. Alibaba's Qwen AI super-app features "One-sentence ordering", an agentic service that turns simple cravings and shopping desires into ready-to-pay orders by automatically selecting nearby shops, applying top discounts, and setting delivery details. According to an Alibaba report from February 2026, the feature was used nearly 200 million times during the 2026 Spring Festival in China.



By 2030, 38 percent of users expect to use agentic AI.

38%

Today, just 4 percent of smartphone users make use of agentic AI apps and features, and this is expected to rise to 38 percent by 2030. This suggests that delegation will become a larger part of everyday digital life. Users expect that delegating routine tasks such as comparing products, coordinating schedules, or managing recurring purchases could save around one hour of screen time a day. Users are also drawn to AI agents that protect privacy, simplify purchases, and monitor health and wellbeing. AI super users are already central to this early adoption: Among the current agentic AI users, four out of five are AI super users.

For networks, the key consideration is that agentic AI can generate persistent background activity on top of existing digital behavior, rather than traffic triggered only by single user-initiated sessions. In practice, this could involve multiple AI agents checking information and coordinating across services to complete delegated tasks. To the user, this may appear as one completed task or saved screen-time moment; to the network, it may be composed of many small API and tool calls and exchanges across applications and services. For mobile networks, the performance bottleneck shifts away from peak downlink bandwidth toward deterministic low latency, resilient signaling management, and predictable uplink capacity to prevent autonomous execution chains from stalling.

The rise of agentic AI disrupts the long-standing model of tying network access strictly to a person's device plan. Instead of humans managing subscriptions, autonomous invisible agents will act as proxy subscribers, dynamically buying micro-slices of

Users expect AI agents to save them one hour of screen time a day.

1 hr

performance tailored to specific outcomes only for the few seconds needed to complete an urgent task. This opens the door to future connectivity offers that are tailored not only to people or devices, but also to agents or specific outcomes. In some cases, an agent may need assured responsiveness, security, or low latency for a short period while completing a specific task. This raises a question: In such a scenario, will service providers continue to sell gigabytes, or will they sell guaranteed outcomes for agents?

Future studies from Ericsson ConsumerLab plan to explore how such agent-driven services could be valued, packaged, and purchased.

AI-powered smart glasses set to reshape user behavior and network demand

In 2030, smartphones are expected to remain the primary device for AI experiences. However, AI-powered smart glasses are emerging as a complementary device, enabling hands-free, head-up AI experiences that are reshaping user behavior and increasing demands on networks. Their wider adoption will depend on resolving privacy and trust concerns.

As AI becomes more embedded, multimodal, and agentic, the related device landscape is starting to broaden. Close to one-third of smartphone users are expected to start using AI on a new device by 2030, pointing to a future where AI experiences are not limited to a single screen.

In recent years, several AI device categories have emerged, including AI-powered pins, pendants, wristbands, and smart glasses. Among these, smart glasses have gained the most visible market traction and stand out as the most promising form factor beyond the smartphone. According to Omdia, global shipments reached 8.7 million units in 2025³ and are forecast to exceed 35 million by 2030.⁴

While adoption of AI-powered smart glasses is still low and usage is experimental among early adopters like AI super users, initial signs of behavior shifts have emerged. This is reflected in

higher engagement in the capturing of images and videos, social media posting, and live streaming. About 6 out of 10 smart glasses users report their engagement in these activities has increased after adopting the device. For networks, this behavior shift increases demand for uplink capacity and network responsiveness as more content is uploaded for cloud-based storage, online or live sharing.

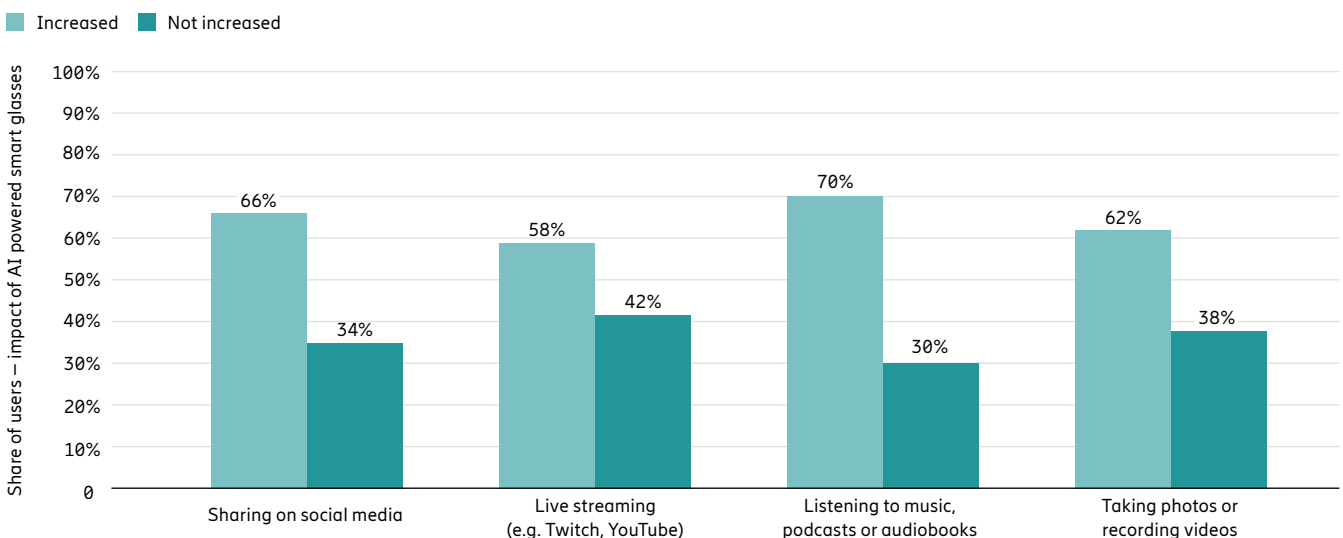
Early adopters are broadly positive about AI-powered smart glasses, with more than 80 percent satisfied with their overall experience. Yet, satisfaction with specific aspects reveals a more nuanced picture. Compared with user expectations three years ago – when users were still looking for lighter and more portable alternatives to XR headsets⁵ – today's smart glasses have passed the wearability test. They have become much lighter and closer to everyday eyewear in look and

"The main challenge I face is the low battery life. It doesn't last as long as I would like it to, especially when I'm out at an event or a party. It just doesn't last as long, and there are times where I have to switch and rely on the phone instead."

Female smart glasses user
in her 30s, living in the US.

feel, making them more appealing to style-conscious users. Unsurprisingly, battery life emerges⁶ as a constraint for prolonged use in addition to bystander privacy and lack of personal context. This matters because many of the behaviors smart glasses enable are most valuable when users are mobile across different locations and contexts. To help ease battery life constraints, network providers can help offer a

Figure 2: AI-powered smart glasses trigger behavior change



³ Omdia article, "Global AI glasses shipments reach 8.7 million units with Mainland China emerging as the fastest-growing market" (March 2026).

⁴ Omdia article, "AI glasses market poised to hit 10 million units in 2026, Omdia forecasts" (September 2025).

⁵ Ericsson report, "Augmented tomorrow: AR experiences beyond smartphones and AR filters" (May 2024).

⁶ Ericsson playbook, "Edge deployment strategies for communications service providers" (2023).



solution with an offload of compute through network-enabled edge computing solutions.⁷

However, the strongest factor linked to the overall user experience is how quickly the AI assistant responds. For smart glasses, this matters because delays can make the service feel less capable in the moments when users rely on it the most. Research shows 7 out of 10 use AI-powered glasses while walking or traveling in urban areas, while 4 out of 10 use them in stadiums or event venues. While model compute and inference currently account for the lion's share of end-to-end response times, that baseline assumes an open pipe. In crowded environments like stadiums, where smart glasses compete for scarce uplink resources alongside thousands of live video streams and image uploads to the

cloud, the wireless network itself becomes the primary choke point, stalling the instant responses that smart glasses promise. As more time-sensitive applications and use cases emerge, such as live AI assistance, latency and uplink will become increasingly important for determining whether smart glasses feel useful in practice.

While the smartphone remains central to the connected AI ecosystem, the future points toward ambient agentic AI – always-on, proactive systems that anticipate needs and act autonomously on the user's behalf. This intelligence will increasingly be embedded natively across vehicles, smart glasses, and next-generation wearables. In this multi-device paradigm, advanced connectivity becomes the intelligent fabric – dynamically orchestrating

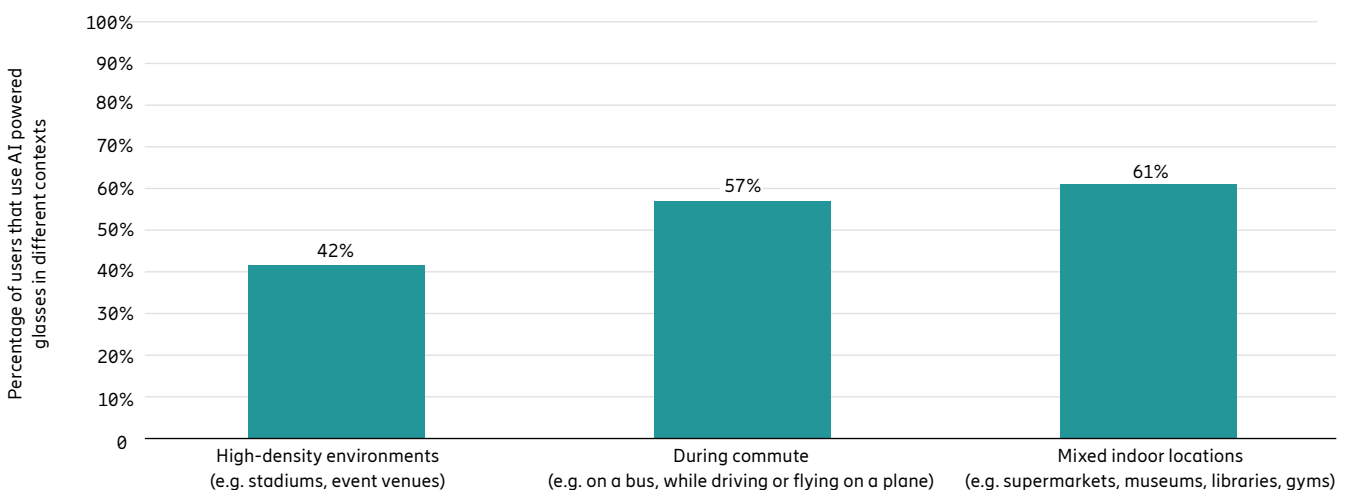
"Most of the time I try to avoid using them in super noisy places, or areas with poor connectivity as it can affect their performance."

Male smart glasses user in his 40s, living in the UK.

compute and context based on device capabilities and real-time network conditions, while navigating critical consumer trust and privacy expectations.

Ericsson ConsumerLab will continue to track user perceptions, adoption barriers, and technological shifts across this landscape. [Subscribe](#) to our reports and insights to stay ahead of the next frontier in consumer AI and connectivity.

Figure 3: Use contexts—AI powered smart glasses



⁷ Ericsson playbook, "Edge deployment strategies for communications service providers" (2023).

About Ericsson

Ericsson Consumer & IndustryLab explores the future of technology for consumers, enterprises and a sustainable society. We deliver world-class market research, actionable insights and design concepts to drive innovation and sustainable business development. We provide a scientific, fact-based analysis regarding the environmental, social and economic impacts and opportunities of ICT. Our knowledge is gained from global consumer, enterprise and sustainability research programs, including collaborations with leading customers, industry partners, universities and research institutions. Our research programs cover in-depth studies and over 100,000 interviews with consumers, working people and decision-makers each year, in 30 countries – statistically representing the views of 1.1 billion people.

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