

Analytical report



ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE FOR OLDER ADULTS: Perceptions, Needs, and Usage Practices

(based on focus group
discussions)



2026



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INTRODUCTION



The Ukrainian Media and Communication Institute has been working with people aged 60+ in the field of media and information literacy for several years. Previously, our training traditionally focused on critical thinking, information verification, identifying fakes and other forms of disinformation, as well as explaining how traditional media and social networks function. However, in recent years, artificial intelligence has been developing extremely rapidly. This technology is becoming integrated into many areas of life and is transforming them. We realize that it is important to incorporate AI literacy into our work with older adults, as this will help them adapt more quickly and give them greater confidence in the digital world.

To better understand the attitudes of older adults toward artificial intelligence, as well as to identify their needs in using it, we conducted focus group discussions, the results of which are presented in this analytical report. Overall, these discussions showed that there is often a stereotypical assumption that artificial intelligence is a technology primarily for young people. However, individuals aged 60+ are also open to using it.

This research will help experts from the Ukrainian Media and Communication Institute develop an additional training module on AI for the media and information literacy course designed for older people. We are grateful to the Council of Europe Office in Ukraine for supporting this initiative, as well as to everyone who contributed to this effort.

Diana Dutsyk,
Executive Director,
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METHODOLOGY



Objective

The main objective of this study was to analyze the perceptions of older people regarding artificial intelligence, as well as their needs and practices related to the use of AI tools.

To achieve this objective, a qualitative research approach was applied, using focus group discussions.

Research design

A total of four online focus groups were conducted, bringing together 33 participants from different regions of Ukraine.

The discussions were structured around the following thematic blocks::

BLOCK 1.	General context – use of digital devices and the Internet;
BLOCK 2.	Perceptions of artificial intelligence;
BLOCK 3.	Practices of utilizing AI tools;
BLOCK 4.	Needs of older adults regarding AI tools;
BLOCK 5.	Learning needs related to AI literacy.

Timeline

All focus group discussions were conducted between March 20 and March 27, 2026.

Limitations

As the focus groups were conducted online, participants were primarily older individuals who possess basic digital skills, are able to use various digital devices and platforms (including Zoom), and mainly reside in larger cities with reliable internet.

Consequently, the findings of this study do not fully reflect the perspectives of older adults who lack access to the internet or digital devices, or who do not possess basic digital, media and information literacy skills.

SUMMARY



1

Participants in the focus group discussions demonstrated a general awareness of artificial intelligence technologies. However, their understanding of AI is largely intuitive and not necessarily based on an in-depth knowledge of how these technologies function.

2

Older participants recognize that artificial intelligence has already become an integral part of contemporary life, and many acknowledge the importance of adapting to emerging technologies.

3

Fear of artificial intelligence was not identified as a dominant concern. Nevertheless, participants expressed moderate concerns regarding privacy issues and the handling of personal data when interacting with AI tools.

4

AI is primarily perceived as a practical tool for accessing information and solving everyday tasks. At the same time, participants emphasized the importance of maintaining a critical approach to AI-generated outputs and preserving the value of human experience, knowledge, and social interaction.

5

The most common use of AI among older participants relates to searching for and processing information. Additional areas of application include working with texts and foreign languages, as well as creating presentations, visual materials, and other forms of content.

6

For some participants, AI can also function as an engaging conversational partner for intellectual discussions. However, respondents clearly emphasized that AI cannot replace human experience, emotional intelligence, or personal communication.

7

Most focus group participants reported some experience with AI tools such as ChatGPT, Gemini, DeepL, Grok, Perplexity, and Copilot, although their level of engagement and confidence in using these technologies varies significantly.

8

Overall, the discussions indicate that older people demonstrate a general openness to adopting AI tools and a willingness to learn more about them, provided that appropriate learning opportunities and support are available.

CONTEXT



In Ukraine, despite the ongoing war, digitalization has been accelerated across many areas of life, including public services. At the same time, the role of artificial intelligence continues to grow. However, not all population groups have equal access to this technology or the necessary skills to use it.

According to the results of a sociological survey conducted by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (KIIS) between 14 February and 4 March 2025¹, the use of AI strongly correlates with the age of respondents. The highest level of regular use was recorded among young people aged 18–29: more than half (54%) of respondents in this group reported using AI regularly. In the 30–44 age group, this figure drops to 21%, while among people aged 60 and over, it is only 4%. Gender differences are also evident: 23% of men report regular use of AI, compared to 13% of women. In addition, urban residents use AI significantly more frequently than those living in rural areas.

Ukraine is not unique in terms of perceptions and practices related to the use of AI tools by older people. Studies² conducted in different countries show that while awareness of artificial intelligence among older adults is gradually increasing, the practical use of these technologies and the level of trust in them within this age group remain relatively low.

Therefore, it is important to develop AI literacy programmes that take into account the needs and characteristics of people aged 60 and over. Such initiatives are also essential for addressing digital inequalities and ensuring more inclusive access to emerging digital opportunities.

¹ KIIS (2025). Use of artificial intelligence by the population of Ukraine // https://kiis.com.ua/?lang=ukr&cat=reports&id=1528&page=1&fbclid=IwY2xjawKOx_hleHRuA2FibQlXMQBicmlkETFYM-jlteDRnUVR0Mkt3MmFqAR5c4Uuxfkmqp48KJDg4SDH_EQ6E3HjBUITHi4dZPbFlckAxDsYu8A974x88gg_aem_bm4mG-Fv2EtHkJ_aMwCmVMg

² Older Adults' Perspectives on Artificial Intelligence as a Source of Advice // <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC12761853/>



SECTION 1. PERCEPTIONS, NEEDS, AND PRACTICES OF AI USAGE AMONG OLDER ADULTS (60+)

To better understand how older Ukrainians perceive artificial intelligence today, as well as how and for what purposes they use AI tools, the Ukrainian Media and Communication Institute conducted a series of focus group discussions.

1.1. Characteristics of focus group participants



A total of 33 individuals participated in four focus group discussions, including 27 women and 6 men. The vast majority of respondents (30 people) were aged 60 to 75, while three were aged between 75 and 85.

Most participants (29 respondents) held a higher education degree, while one had vocational education and three had secondary education. Some respondents, despite being retired, continue to work part-time or remain professionally active.

The focus group participants were predominantly urban residents, with only two participants from rural areas. Geographically, respondents represented most regions of Ukraine, including the West (Lviv, Lutsk), the Centre (Vinnitsia, Kropyvnytskyi, Poltava, and Poltava region), the South (Zaporizhzhia, Odesa), and the North (Kyiv). Some respondents also held the status of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and originated from eastern regions of Ukraine, although at the time of the discussions, they resided in safer areas.



"I'm an IDP from Mariupol. Now I live in Odesa." (female participant)

“ *I'm from Lviv now, but originally I'm from Luhansk region.*” (female participant)

Some participants attend Universities of the Third Age and had previously taken courses in digital, media and information literacy, including, in some cases, introductory courses on artificial intelligence.

All focus group participants reported that they are confident users of digital devices (computers, smartphones), utilizing them for personal purposes, as well as professional activities for those who continue to work.

All respondents actively use the Internet, primarily for information search, communication, and entertainment.

“ *As a retiree , I'm also a fan of the Internet. I use it to learn things, to watch films, to find information. I have a smartphone. I communicate with my children online, because they live abroad.*” (male participant)

Working participants also use the Internet for professional purposes:

“ *I'm a working retiree, an entrepreneur. I work in programming. I use a computer for communication, for work, for home, and for development.*” (man)

“ *I'm a sole proprietor, so I use the Internet to submit reports and for everything related to my work.*” (female participant)

1.2. Older adults perceptions of artificial intelligence



All participants in the focus group discussions were aware of artificial intelligence and had at least a general understanding of it. Some are already active users of popular AI tools such as ChatGPT. However, in most cases, these perceptions are intuitive rather than based on in-depth knowledge of the technology.

In general, older adults recognize that artificial intelligence has already become an integral part of everyday life. They note that many digital services they use regularly powered by AI in some way, including navigation systems, security systems, digital assistants, and other tools.

In this context, some participants emphasized the need to adapt to new technologies, as it is increasingly difficult to imagine modern life without them.

“ *I attended a training on AI... In general, there's no way without it now. Buying goods, medicines, using Helsi, 'Diia'... 'Diia' also has AI elements. And Google — whatever you ask, it gives you a short answer using AI. So AI is really necessary now. Without it, we won't move forward in this digital world if we stop.*” (female participant)

Most respondents describe artificial intelligence as a product of human activity, referring to it as “a creation of the human mind,” “something invented by people,” or “a field based on human intellectual abilities.”

Some participants offered more technical interpretations, describing AI as a program or system of software capable of learning and adapting to user requests. In these views, AI is understood as a set of algorithms that work with databases and knowledge systems to enable rapid search and processing of information.

At the same time, participants’ perceptions are also influenced by popular culture and science fiction. Some explicitly referred to literature and movies that shaped their understanding of artificial intelligence.

“ *When we were young, everyone was into science fiction, reading Isaac Asimov. And now we’re faced with the fact that this is our reality. I remember from Asimov that one of the laws was that a robot could not harm a human.*” (female participant)

A common perception is that AI functions as a large repository of knowledge. Participants often describe it as a source of “encyclopedic information” that provides quick and accessible answers. In this sense, AI is frequently compared to encyclopedias or digital reference systems.

“ *For me, AI is like encyclopedic knowledge that you can quickly find and get in a very accessible form. It kind of listens to how you speak, what you’re interested in, and adapts to you.*” (female participant)

Some respondents also perceive AI as a friend, interlocutor, or a source of support, particularly for people who may feel lonely.

“ *AI is like a friend who gives me answers to all my everyday, professional, and analytical questions.*” (female participant)

At the same time, participants consistently emphasized that artificial intelligence cannot fully replace human experience, emotions, and personal communication.

Overall, older people’s perceptions of artificial intelligence combine interest in new technologies with a cautious and critical attitude toward their capabilities. AI is primarily viewed as a useful tool for accessing information and solving practical tasks. At the same time, respondents stressed the importance of maintaining a critical approach to AI-generated outputs and preserving the value of human experience, knowledge, and social interaction.

1.3. Emotional component of interaction with artificial intelligence



Older people do not demonstrate a strong fear of new technologies; rather, they tend to show curiosity and interest, as evidenced by the focus group discussions.

“ I don't have any fears. Older people often do, but I don't. For me, it's more about curiosity. I want to learn more.” (female participant)

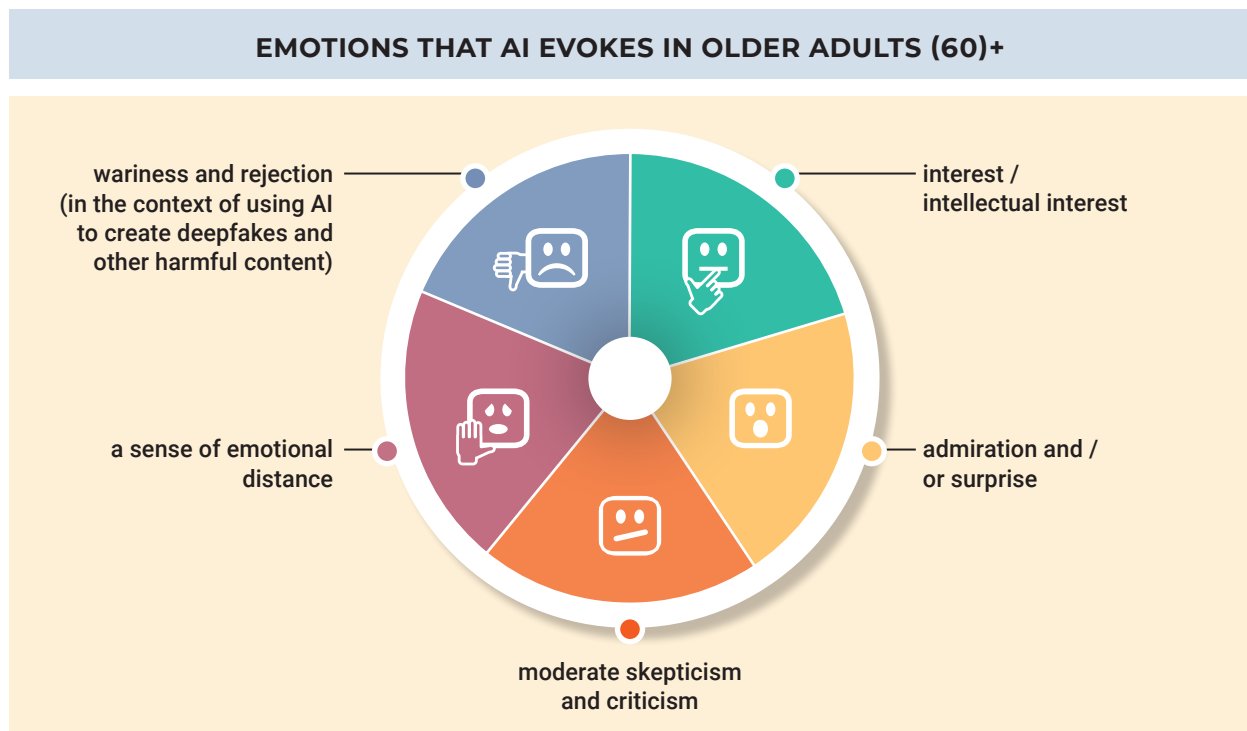
Although fear of artificial intelligence is not a dominant emotion, some participants expressed moderate concerns related to privacy and the handling of personal data. Awareness that digital technologies can collect and store user information created a certain level of discomfort and encouraged participants to be cautious when interacting with AI tools.

At the same time, these concerns did not translate into a negative attitude toward the technology. Rather, they reflect a broader sense of caution toward the digital environment among older people.

“ For everyday use, it's very useful. But if you think about the future, it can be a bit worrying... It's developing so fast.” (female participant)

“ I'm not afraid of AI, but sometimes I think it knows too much about me. And that makes me uncomfortable — you don't really know where that information goes.” (female participant)

Overall, the focus group discussions revealed the following range of emotions that older people associate with artificial intelligence:



A small proportion of respondents stated that AI does not evoke any particular emotions for them, as it is perceived simply as a work tool.

“ I don't have any emotions. I think it's just a tool.” (male participant)

The use of AI to create deepfakes and other harmful content causes the most negative emotions and rejection among older people.

“ There are indeed a lot of deepfakes in the information space, especially on social media. If your first reaction to a piece of news is strong negative emotion or even hatred, you should check it — most likely it's a fake or a deepfake.” (female participant)

“ Sometimes I hear a doctor speaking on YouTube, and I can already tell it's AI. I've become wary of any information.” (female participant)

1.4. Practices of using AI tools by people aged 60+



Most focus group participants reported using well-known artificial intelligence tools to varying degrees, including ChatGPT, Gemini, DeepL, Grok, Perplexity, and Copilot. However, their level of engagement and confidence in utilizing these technologies differs. In most cases, users rely on one or two tools that they find the most convenient.

THE MOST COMMON PRACTICES OF AI USE AMONG OLDER ADULTS (60+) INCLUDE

	searching for and processing information;
	working with texts (translation, structuring, generating headings, etc.);
	creating presentations, visualizations, and graphic materials;
	communication;
	learning (for example, studying foreign languages);
	performing routine tasks and optimizing workflows (for those who are employed);
	solving everyday tasks (such as planning trips, finding routes, or getting advice in various life situations).

“ I use it in my work... to make reports, to simplify routine tasks, to create plans and instructions.” (male participant)

“ Different tools are used for different needs. ChatGPT — for creative tasks. Gemini — for information. Copilot — for creating images and working with photos. But all of this needs to be checked and controlled.” (female participant)

One of the most common AI usage practices among respondents is searching for and processing information. Participants noted that these technologies have significantly simplified access to knowledge: whereas previously finding information required considerable time, including working in libraries, today answers can be obtained almost instantly. AI is also used to explain unfamiliar terms, clarify facts, or obtain reference information. For some participants, it effectively functions as an advanced search engine or a digital encyclopedia.

The second important area is working with texts and languages. Older people often use AI to translate, edit, and structure materials, generate headlines, or assist in writing texts. Some participants also use AI as a tool for learning foreign languages.

The third most common practice is creating presentations, visualizations, and graphic materials. Focus group participants (primarily those who are still working) noted that these tools significantly accelerate the preparation of presentations and visual content, allowing them to structure information quickly and present it in a clear and accessible way. Some also experiment with image generation.

Older adults also use AI tools to solve everyday tasks, such as planning trips, finding routes, or obtaining advice in various life situations.

At the same time, particular attention should be paid to the issue of using AI for communication, where a clear ambivalence in attitudes is observed across all groups.

On the one hand, some respondents noted that artificial intelligence can serve as an interesting interlocutor or partner for intellectual conversations. As mentioned above, some even perceive it as a kind of companion.

“ I find it interesting to argue with it, to speak different languages, even Surzhyk or dialect.” (female participant)

“ I started talking to it about a movie I liked. It doesn't argue or get upset, and we just kept discussing it. In the end, we even started building a new storyline together. It's interesting because with a person, it doesn't always work like that. It knows more, offers more options, and builds a line of reasoning. I thought: wow, what an interlocutor. I was impressed.” (female participant)

On the other hand, some older adults perceive the use of AI as an interlocutor as a substitute for real human interaction, which they describe as colder, less sincere, and lacking emotional depth. This highlights that authentic human communication remains an important value for this age group.

“ I don't think it's really possible to communicate with it.” (female participant)

“ *When you communicate with artificial intelligence, there’s still a feeling that it’s something cold and not alive. When we communicate with a person, there are mutual feelings, empathy.*” (female participant)

Overall, the focus group discussions indicate that people aged 60+ are gradually integrating artificial intelligence tools into their learning, work, and everyday practices. At the same time, their use of AI is largely pragmatic in nature: it is not perceived as a replacement for human knowledge or experience, but rather as a supportive tool that expands access to information and facilitates the performance of specific tasks.

Importantly, older users demonstrate a high level of caution and critical awareness regarding AI-generated outputs, which contributes to the development of a responsible and reflective approach to interacting with new technologies.

1.5. Needs of older adults in AI tools and training



All participants in the focus group discussions demonstrated a high level of interest in using artificial intelligence tools.

At the same time, most of them do not consider themselves confident users and express a desire to learn how to utilize AI in a more informed and purposeful way. However, not all participants are yet able to clearly articulate their needs, as their experience with AI remains limited.

Some focus group participants emphasized that they would first like to understand the basic capabilities and limitations of artificial intelligence, and only then move on to more advanced practices.

“ *I would like information about how AI is developing, what the main directions are, what programs exist. And, of course, it would be good to have at least a few online sessions to learn how to use different tools — not just ChatGPT, but others as well. And in general, to understand how AI is developing, what its advantages are, where it is all going. To have a general picture of AI development.*” (female participant)

Some participants also expressed a desire to become familiar with a wider range of AI tools and to better understand their potential.

“ *I think it would be very useful to have some kind of algorithm for how to properly interact with different models — how to use them, what not to do. Because a lot depends on the user. How to communicate with it correctly so that there is no harm — neither to the person nor to the system.*” (female participant)

Overall, the needs of older people in this area are well reflected in the following statement from one of the participants:

“ *The areas where AI can be most useful for people 60+ are health, self-education, creativity, and leisure.*” (female participant)

Thus, group discussions demonstrate that older people would like to use AI tools for the following purposes:

- **FOR INFORMATION SEARCH AND ANALYSIS:** including the rapid search and structuring of information, explanation of complex concepts or new terms, and assistance in navigating large volumes of information;
- **AS AN AUXILIARY TOOL FOR SELF-EDUCATION:** in particular, for learning foreign languages, accessing educational materials, and explaining complex topics;
- **FOR SUPPORTING PROFESSIONAL AND CREATIVE ACTIVITIES:** including writing stories, greetings and even poems, creating presentations and images, and assisting in writing or editing various texts;
- **FOR PERFORMING EVERYDAY TASKS:** from translating texts into different languages to planning trips or handling other daily matters;
- **AS AN AUXILIARY TOOL IN HEALTH-RELATED MATTERS:** including explaining medical information, structuring recommendations, preparing questions for doctors, and navigating medical terms and examination results (provided that AI is used only as a supportive tool);
- **FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF CRITICAL THINKING AND MEDIA LITERACY:** learning to verify information received from AI, understanding the risks of hallucinations and errors, and developing skills for the responsible and safe use of technology;
- **FOR SOCIAL INTERACTION AND COMMUNICATION:** using AI as an additional tool for communication and discussion of topics of interest, as well as maintaining connections with family through digital tools and joint projects.

Focus group participants also demonstrated a strong interest in learning and acquiring new knowledge about artificial intelligence in these areas.

In terms of training formats, opinions varied: some participants preferred in-person learning, while others supported online or blended formats. Online learning was considered convenient due to flexibility of participating regardless of location, as well as the ability to access recordings and review the material. At the same time, some respondents emphasized the importance of in-person interaction with a trainer, which allows for immediate feedback and fosters a stronger emotional connection.



SECTION 2. | AI LITERACY: RECOMMENDATIONS

The development of AI literacy is a pivotal element of the Council of Europe’s strategy. In May 2024, it adopted the world’s first international treaty on the regulation of artificial intelligence — the Council of Europe Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence.

In December 2025, the Steering Committee for Media and Information Society (CDMSI) of the Council of Europe approved the document “*National Media and Information Literacy (MIL) Strategies – Practical Steps and Indicators*”³. This document aims to provide member states with practical guidance on developing or improving their national media and information literacy (MIL) strategies. It also includes recommendations on the integration of AI literacy.

The document concludes that AI literacy should encompass three interrelated dimensions:

- 1. TECHNOLOGICAL** — understanding how artificial intelligence functions and how it is developed;
- 2. PRACTICAL** — the effective use of AI systems;
- 3. HUMAN** — understanding the impact of AI on human rights, democracy, and the rule of law.

³ National Media and Information Literacy (MIL). Strategies Practical Steps and Indicators // <https://rm.coe.int/prems-009626-gbr-2553-cdmsi-guidelines-for-national-media-and-informat/48802ad4ed>

The document also recommends that AI literacy curricula include the following topics:

- the impact of AI on human well-being, gender equality, and social inclusion;
- issues related to privacy, autonomy, and discrimination;
- the use of AI in the spread of misinformation and fake news;
- the history of AI development;
- the role of “ghost workers” involved in training AI systems;
- the risks of surveillance, manipulation, and interference with individual choice;
- the impact of AI on employment;
- implications for the environment and sustainable development;
- broader implications for democracy, social justice, and human rights.

Based on the aforementioned document and the findings of the focus group discussions, experts from the Ukrainian Media and Communication Institute propose the following recommendations:

- 1 Starting training with an introduction to the basic principles of artificial intelligence, including what AI is, how generative models work, and their key capabilities and limitations. It is also advisable to provide an overview of various AI tools and explain their functions at the initial stage of training. Focus group participants emphasized the importance of understanding the underlying logic of the technology before moving on to its practical application;
- 2 Structuring training around practical, real-life situations, particularly those related to health, everyday life, leisure, creativity, and self-education. A strong practical focus is likely to improve comprehension and increase motivation to use AI tools;
- 3 Including dedicated modules on critical thinking and media literacy. Focus group discussions demonstrated that older users are aware of the risks of errors and “hallucinations” in AI outputs. Therefore, training should cover topics such as information verification, fact-checking, critical assessment of AI-generated responses, and the responsible use of AI;
- 4 Providing separate sessions on how to formulate queries (prompts) for AI systems. These should include practical exercises, examples of effective prompts, and guidance on refining and clarifying responses;
- 5 Adopting an inclusive and adaptable methodological approach. Training for older adults should be paced, step-by-step, and flexible. Given the varying levels of digital skills within this group, content should be structured progressively. It is advisable to incorporate: (a) step-by-step instructions; (b) real-life examples; (c) hands-on exercises; and (d) opportunities to revisit and repeat the material;

6

Ensuring accessible and flexible learning formats. The majority of respondents expressed a preference for blended learning. Where face-to-face training is not feasible, it is recommended to offer online sessions with access to recordings, supplementary learning materials, and the creation of an online community (e.g., via social networks) for communication and exchange of experience;

7

Allocating dedicated time to ethical aspects of AI use, including issues related to responsibility, trust, and the societal implications of these technologies.

In today's information environment, which is rapidly transforming under the influence of artificial intelligence, AI literacy training should become an integral component of media and information literacy courses. Understanding how algorithms work, as well as the capabilities and limitations of AI tools, is critically important for developing citizens' ability to navigate an information space saturated with disinformation and other harmful content.

For this reason, the NGO Ukrainian Media and Communication Institute (UMCI) plans to expand its media literacy guide for older adults (60+) "[Wisdom Against Manipulation](#)" with an additional section dedicated to artificial intelligence — **"AI Tools Training for Older Adults to Enhance Media Literacy and Build Resilience to Disinformation."** This section is intended to combine explanations of the basic principles of how artificial intelligence functions, the development of practical skills (including skills to counter disinformation), the fostering of critical thinking, and a focus on users' everyday needs. It may also include, but not be limited to, the following topics:

- History of the development of artificial intelligence and basic principles of its operation.
- Ethical and legal aspects of the functioning of AI (including issues of privacy, gender equality, discrimination, etc.).
- Overview of AI tools and their functionality.
- Practical use of AI tools. Writing prompts. AI agents and AI assistants.
- AI and the countering of disinformation.