2027

Life Trends



Walking contradictions

Human behavior has always changed based on context, mood and priorities in the moment. These shifts now feel more pronounced than ever. The opportunity for companies is to embrace the seemingly contradictory behaviors to create real customer value.

accenture

Introduction

Life Trends offers a window into the interplay between people, technology, business and the wider forces reshaping everyday life. In 2027, understanding that interplay is more critical than ever. Consumers are changing, interfaces and brands are changing—all at once.

This year, we see contradictory behaviors everywhere. People use AI every day to design their futures, yet push back against synthesized sameness in their daily feeds, protest local data centers in their communities and resist AI in surveillance and pricing. They embrace breakthrough innovations that promise to help them live longer, healthier lives, but grow weary of an optimization culture that tells them they fall short.

Inside the enterprise, it may be easier to abstract these conflicting feelings, presenting them as metrics on a dashboard to bear in mind, calling them a "say-do" gap in strategic conversations.

But they're vitally important. The messiness of humanity—of holding genuine beliefs that change as the context, mood or priorities of the moment shift—is exactly what brands need to relate to right now. Despite the opportunity for innovation that rapid technological capability affords, defensive corporate execution is creating brand debt, not brand love, especially when customers feel they are a source of extraction. As AI now touches almost every touchpoint—as a mediator of brand discovery, evaluation and, increasingly, the end purchase—brands ultimately still need to connect with the person making the decision.

Investing in what makes the brand special, from the quality of the product to innovation that improves customers' lives and communications that make a connection, is imperative. In China, retail brands are competing for consumers' moments of joy. Elsewhere, brands must prove quality to a hesitant customer who, amid a cost-of-living crisis, asks, "Do I want to spend that money?" In luxury, brands are investing in new ways to inspire awe through immersive stores and live experiences that let customers literally feel the brand.

To lead in this environment, organizations must look past purely self-serving models and deploy innovation to enrich the human experience and protect their brand health for the years ahead. Each of the trends in this report opens a window into that shift. One thing is clear—people are hungry for true innovation that gives value back without demanding a quid pro quo.

Helping organizations navigate this complexity is at the heart of this 20th edition of the Life Trends report. Far from being random noise, these contradictions are leading indicators of where human behavior is heading next. It is a misstep not to build for the whole person, especially with today's AI technologies. Real people don't live in customer segments; they walk through a messy world that forces them to change on a moment's notice. Ultimately, these contradictions are the human compass guiding us toward what matters next.

Research snapshot

The findings in this report draw on local behavioral research from more than 40 Accenture Song teams of designers, researchers, anthropologists and other specialists worldwide, combined with interviews with senior leaders and subject matter experts to shape the trends. We then conducted in-depth interviews with about 100 people across 11 countries; an online survey of 28,000 people across 26 countries to measure the prevalence and magnitude of each trend; netnographic analysis of public online discourse; and interviews with executives from major companies to test the trends and understand how organizations are responding. Where no other source is stated, the data is from our consumer survey. For more information on our research methodology, please see page 55.

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This year's trends

Trend 01

People seeking people

People are seeking genuine human connections, expertise and experiences, while using AI on their own terms.

Trend 02

Reclaiming local

As national sovereignty reasserts itself, people are reclaiming the power of place to ground identity, strengthen local resilience and restore community control.

Trend 03

System override

Scientific breakthroughs are triggering a biological revolution, which is being welcomed by an eager public and sparking change across industries.

Trend 04

Build it yourself

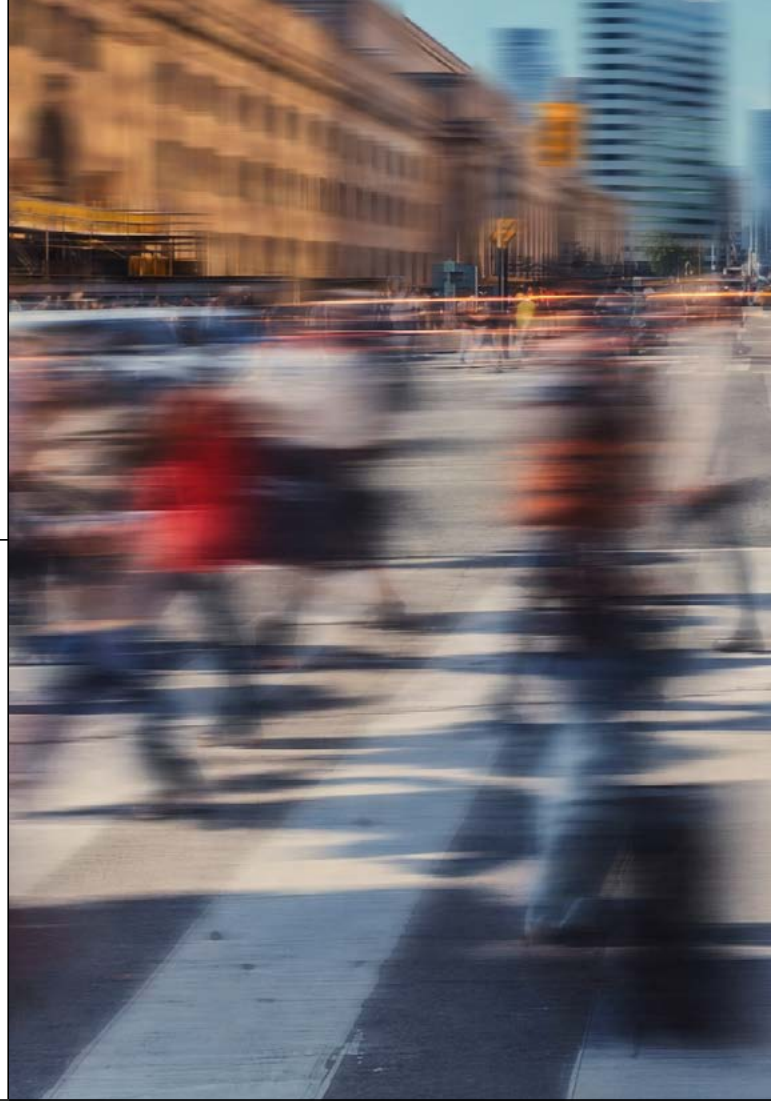
Driven by real-world goals, people are creatively assembling available tools and knowledge to build income and security—with AI supercharging their toolkits.

Trend 05

Wellness burnout

As wellness expands into every domain, constant optimization has a rhythm: Go all in, go too hard, crash out and repeat.

01



People seeking people

People are seeking genuine human connections, expertise and experiences, while using AI on their own terms.



A few years back, the social web started to feel less social, reinventing itself as algorithmic media. We began losing sight of one another as our feeds pushed friends and colleagues to the margins.

Now, the web is reinventing itself again—this time for machines. Content is increasingly shaped by generative AI, leading to monotonous language patterns and a more uniform algorithmic aesthetic. Intellectually, it has become harder to tell whether someone has said something smart that AI has dumbed down or something dumb that AI has dressed up. Either way, it's being dismissed as slop. No surprise, then, that our research shows 50% of consumers globally feel their feeds are becoming irrelevant.

> The diversity of human expression and creativity is converging into aesthetic sameness, where outputs sound alike, look alike and feel alike, at scale.

People welcome AI for search when they choose it but push back fiercely when synthetic content is forced upon them. They want digital agency—deciding exactly when AI belongs—while continuing to prioritize human connection and human-made content elsewhere. This nuance is important to watch.

Human-made is premium

The "human premium," discussed in theory for years, is now manifesting in behavior. In some cases, people are rejecting the convenience of AI. In others, they're pushing back against the sameness it has introduced into their experiences. People are diverse, but AI is erasing that diversity by homogenizing unique nuances and expressions. In response, people are reclaiming taste as distinctly human—because AI cannot recognize or appreciate beauty, quality and context. Across studios, markets, social listening and our survey, the same pattern appears.

Local behavioral research

Berlin Design Studio
AI creates scale, sameness, conformity. Everything feels the same, everything feels perfect. People want tone, context and some roughness back.[1]

Shanghai Design Studio
Gen Z consumers in China are making a conscious and active choice to reach back for aesthetics that were created by humans—more tactile, more rooted, more singular.[3]

Zurich Design Studio
People are choosing activities that are slow, physical and demanding because they are hard, and because hard things produce a quality of satisfaction and ownership that their work lives increasingly fail to deliver.[2]

San Francisco Design Studio
Taste-washing is the new greenwashing ... it comes after work that is not as easy to commodify as code. It comes after our brain and our aesthetic resistance.[4]

Netnography finding

Human-made is becoming a digital status indicator
As synthetic content becomes easier to produce, evidence of human originality is gaining social value. The popularity of posts including phrases like "AI could never" and "Made by humans"—garnering hundreds of thousands of likes across social media platforms—reflects growing appreciation for the distinctly human qualities AI cannot replicate or recognize, including taste, skill and creativity.

> "I had a very carefully curated [feed], built brick by brick ... [but] they're pushing a lot of stuff that I'm not interested in. I find myself reporting 'not interested, not interested, not interested' quite often now."
>
> — Melissa, US, Gen X (Accenture Research consumer interview)

Survey

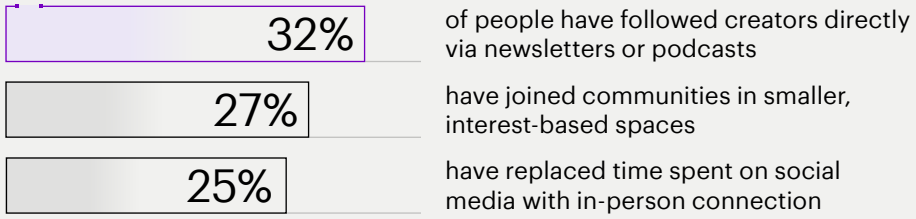
60% of 18- to 24-year-olds globally say brands that use AI for content or advertising look lazy, careless and cheap.

Human presence

People are continuing to turn to private digital networks, where they have full control over the content and conversation without algorithmic intervention. They are paying for direct relationships with the creators they genuinely love, want to hear from and are willing to support. And, as noted in previous trends, they are finding time and space away from screens to connect on a person-to-person level. Our global research captured this movement.

Are you seeking connections beyond algorithms?

In the past 12 months...



n=28,209

Market research

"The Dark Forest" movement – Global
People are exploring invite-only spaces called "dark forests." These are small, intentional communities of real humans that prioritize genuine connection over scale, algorithms and surveillance.[5]

Local behavioral research

Mexico City Design Studio
As algorithms fragment culture into niche bubbles, mass visibility no longer builds relevance. Brands in Mexico operate as cultural nodes to bridge these disconnected worlds—fostering shared rituals, trust and emotional resonance where audiences actually belong.[6]

Milan Design Studio
Luxury brands are moving beyond digital noise by using physical spaces as cultural sanctuaries and experiential anchors—creating quiet, tactile environments where brands are felt, not just seen.[7]

Bogotá Design Studio
In Colombia, a growing shift toward screen-free blocks, paper planning and mindful rest is turning leisure into a conscious act completely outside digital control. This behavior is driven by contralgoritmia (counter-algorithmics)—a philosophy that actively resists algorithmic hegemony in everyday digital spaces.[8]

Chicago Design Studio
Through device "bricking," minimalist hardware and analog hobbies, consumers introduce deliberate friction—spending real money to keep AI strictly walled out of daily life.

"[On Reddit] there are no expectations, nothing to keep up with. It's a community where you see real people talking about stuff."

— Michelle, UK, Millennial (Accenture Research consumer interview)

"With our key customers and our employees, nothing replaces real one-to-one relationships."

Isabelle Minneci, Deputy Chief Human Resources Officer, L'Oréal (Accenture Research executive interview)

What it means

At its core, human connection is how we navigate the tension between the familiar and the strange. As algorithms and generative AI flood our feeds with synthetic sameness, the digital world feels increasingly uncanny and unpredictable. "People seeking people" is our drive to regain our bearings.

We evaluate trust through consistency; when a person's words, actions and presence align, they feel familiar and safe. When those signals feel artificial or misaligned, trust drops. This is why the "human premium" has shifted from a theoretical concept into active behavior. Driven by the effort heuristic—our innate tendency to value things that require visible human effort—people are migrating to private backchannels, physical spaces and direct creator relationships where authenticity feels tangible.

Crucially, this isn't a blanket rejection of technology. People still value AI, but only on their own terms—demanding utility when they choose it, while protecting human-centric experiences when they don't. The permission space for AI is still being defined by users, but one thing is clear: authenticity is no longer something people merely prove to each other; it is a movement they are actively seeking.

As brands continue tailoring content for agents and algorithms, people are finding more value in algorithm-free zones. Human authenticity and actual human presence have become the premium. And people are clear—they are choosing each other. Four insights follow.

Insight 1: People follow people, not platforms

Distinct voices are becoming more valued. People want to engage directly with the person behind the work, finding "signs of life" where nuance and individuality thrive—in the intimate monologue of a favorite podcaster or the loyal community of a Substack writer. For users, creator-focused platforms offer a vital return to unfiltered consciousness.

> "Smaller creators, like micro- and nano- [influencers], tend to have a lot more trust, and they're baked into these niche communities. And brands need to continue to stay in those niche communities."
>
> — Influencer marketing director (Accenture Research expert interview)

Insight 2: Creators are still hugely influential for discovery

But they are constantly re-evaluating their channels to connect with their audiences. Our survey found that 64% of creators (respondents who have earned at least $200 in the past year from creating content online) say they make the content they think will land better online, not necessarily the content they'd like to make. Hard-won differentiation is disappearing. The risk of commoditization is real. Brands are concerned that large language models and generative AI optimization may reduce them to "dumb pipes" delivering product specs and automated price comparisons.

Insight 3: Belonging is the new marketing objective

People are gravitating toward brands, creators and spaces that function as shared cultural anchors—points of convergence where different identities, perspectives and subcultures can coexist without dissolving their differences. This demand for human connection is forcing organizations to overhaul everything from brand strategy to loyalty and community building. Long-term value now belongs to brands capable of hosting meaningful connection across fragmented audiences. Just as creators are moving to owned channels to cultivate direct relationships, brands must transition from chasing mass reach to facilitating genuine belonging.

> "I always push my clients to make a newsletter. You already have a community of people who trust you, who went the extra mile to subscribe. That's the number one way to grab extra income. The other way is Discord. That's really close to community, as one-on-one as you can get."
>
> — Content strategist (Accenture Research expert interview)

Insight 4: Effort signals humanity

In a time of instant responses and synthetic outputs, people value visible effort more than ever. This rejection of the "too easy" is why behind-the-scenes footage revealing how an ad was made can garner as much engagement as the final TV spot. Content showing artisans at work, designers innovating and the messy creative process behind a polished result is far more than storytelling. It helps build trust at the exact moment customers are weighing purchase decisions.

Strategic moves to make

People are still choosing people. Your brand's edge lies in the people, places and communities where they find meaning.

1. Build brand salience by name

Strong brand equity must be built before a consumer ever types a prompt. Invest in it now so consumers ask AI tools for you by name, not "the best option in the category."

2. Protect your customer relationships

Complement platform distribution with owned, high-intent media and meaningful digital channels. The risk of becoming interchangeable inside someone else's platform is real. Guard against it.

3. Become a cultural venue, not just an advertiser

As automated feeds flatten discovery, long-term affinity will be built in physical spaces and community experiences that only you can create. Forward-thinking brands will build environments—online and offline—that facilitate genuine connection.

The bottom line

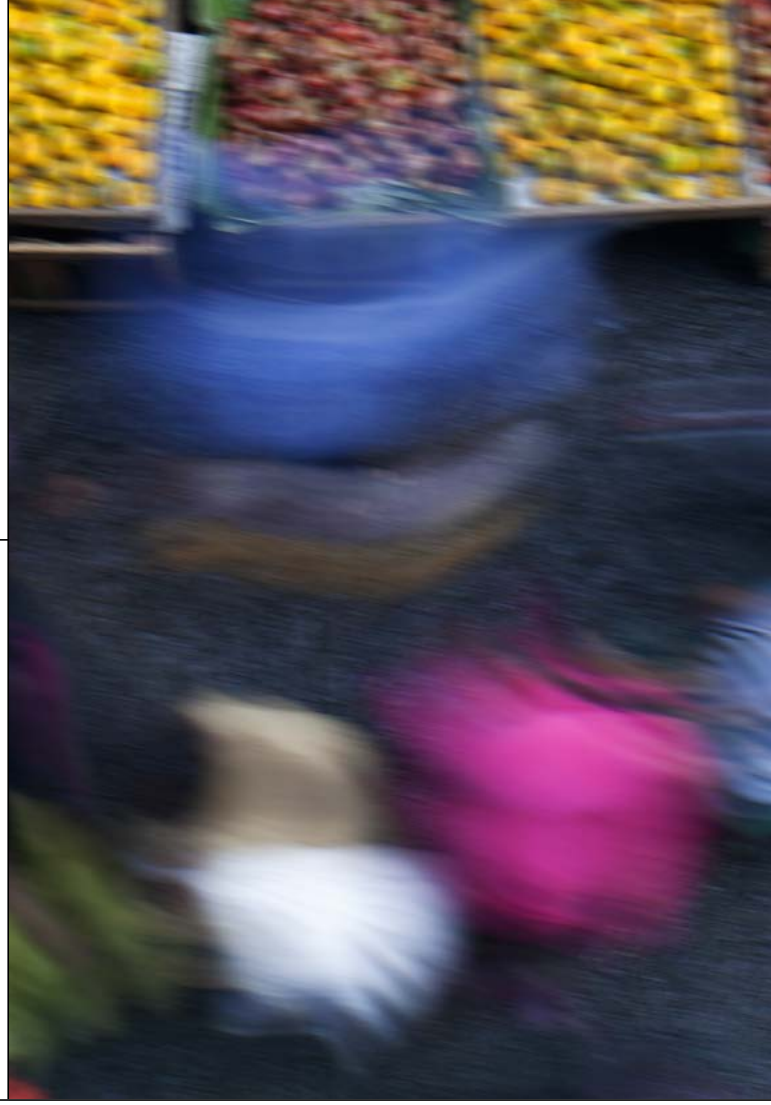
Trend 01 | People seeking people

The web will keep reinventing itself for machine consumption. Brands will keep optimizing for agents. AI agents will keep flooding feeds with synthetic content, pitching to other AI agents in an endless, sterile feedback loop.

Humans will tolerate it to an extent, but they're becoming more selective about where connection feels worth their time. Today, those places are the smaller, trusted digital spaces and real-world experiences where human presence means something.

This is the opportunity. Brands now have both the reason and the permission to create new forms of meaning and belonging because the old ones are shadows of their former selves. The new creative and strategic brief? People are choosing people. Build for that.

02



Reclaiming local

As national sovereignty reasserts itself, people are reclaiming the power of place to ground identity, strengthen local resilience and restore community control.



This trend around "local" is routinely read as a consumer preference story—people buying local groceries, supporting neighborhood businesses. But our research reveals a broader renegotiation of who controls "place," happening simultaneously across nations, corporations, communities and individuals.

For decades, globalization and digital technology minimized geography in pursuit of global scale and frictionless speed. The web was placeless, and physical communities were treated as the "final mile" of an invisible e-commerce system.

That dynamic is unraveling.

> Place now carries greater weight as an anchor for culture and human identity and as a core pillar of national security and regional resilience.

This isn't just happening at the state level—consumers are mirroring it in their own backyards. As big tech expands into local physical spaces, people are bringing a sovereign mindset to their choices, demanding to know how their environment, data and local interests will be protected.

What was once a gentle consumer preference for "local" is hardening into a demand for greater control and reciprocity. People expect a direct say over what institutions take from and contribute to their surroundings. Already, 63% of people globally say companies should earn the right to operate by creating local jobs.

Increasingly, "local" is no longer an afterthought or a geographic radius. The renewed importance of place is taking shape through physical territories and digital spaces. In parliaments and pubs. In legislatures and group chats. In brand preference surveys and neighborhood planning meetings. Together, these shifts are rooted in the same desire—people want to regain control over the places, systems and resources that shape their lives.

Regionalism rising

National sovereignty is reasserting itself with direct consequences for ordinary life. Fragile supply chains, rising conflict and political turmoil have pushed security and resilience to the forefront. The European Commission's Tech Sovereignty Package targets reliance on foreign suppliers across chips, cloud and AI, while the Brazilian state of Goiás passed its own law on critical minerals.[9,10] Natural resource sovereignty is now a live-wire political issue. These macro-level shifts are deeply personal. Place is fundamental to who we are, and governments and citizens are tying physical location directly to collective pride and autonomy.

Local behavioral research

Riyadh | Dubai | Doha Design Studios
We're no longer looking to the outside world for validation or copying global templates. We are building modern progress on our own terms—grounded in our heritage, quiet strength and an unshakeable pride in who we are.

Rio de Janeiro Design Studio
As calls for "Sovereign Brazil" grow, a clear tension emerges: we champion national autonomy while watching our critical natural resources and rare-earth mines being sold to foreign hands.[11]

Sydney, Fiftyfive5 research
Nearshoring has become a way of life in Australia. From the food on the shelf to the friend down the street, people are shrinking their radius of trust—not out of fear, but as pragmatic adaptation.

Copenhagen Design Studio
We need a "rearmament of the spirit"—building the mental and cultural capacity to withstand global destabilization—according to Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen. Navigating this fragile world requires cultivating local resilience, self-sufficiency and a collective defense of our core values.[12]

Market research

Technological dependency is a strategic liability – Europe
The European Commission's Tech Sovereignty Package targets Europe's reliance on non-European tech suppliers across the full stack—chips, cloud, AI and infrastructure.[13] This reflects the principle that you can't protect what you don't control.

Survey findings

The grocery basket is going local
In the past year, **60%** of consumers globally have shifted grocery purchases toward local products and companies, led by European consumers at **64%.**

For organizations, earning local acceptance means different things in different markets. (Chart shows a selection of regional response data.)

	Global	North America	Latin America	Europe	Asia
Create jobs locally	63%	62%	**72%**	68%	55%
Source from local producers	40%	41%	35%	**49%**	34%
Respect local culture in advertising	40%	37%	38%	31%	**48%**
Base (n)	28,209	3,015	4,035	8,050	10,078

We asked participants: What do you think a foreign brand should do to "earn its place" in your country or region?

> "For anything related to health, safety, banking, tech security—I want it to originate from my own country. I chose a security product from a US company simply because if something went wrong, I'd have some form of recourse. That peace of mind mattered more than the price difference."
>
> — Dawn, US, Gen X (Accenture Research consumer interview)

Big tech goes local

The push for greater control over place is moving into the digital domain as technology embeds itself into our physical spaces.

> Silicon Valley's "move fast and break things" ethos is running into challenges as its need for speed faces resistance from people who want to know what these powerful corporations take from their communities and what they give back.

Now that technology is becoming more visible in the physical world, people are pushing back against the idea that progress should come without their consent. They want greater transparency and shared value. They want clear safeguards around how their lives are recorded and how their data is used. And they want tech companies to be open about the resources their infrastructure requires and the benefits it will bring locally.

Local behavioral research

Atlanta Design Studio
Data centers make bad neighbors. From shady land swaps and secret water hookups to strained power grids and microclimates, Georgia communities are fiercely pushing back against runaway tech misbehavior.

London Design Studio
As smart glasses turn every venue into an unconsented recording set, UK businesses are drawing a firm line—banning recording eyewear to protect customer privacy, restore trust and preserve physical spaces as sanctuaries from constant surveillance.

Multiple US Design Studios
We wanted to keep the neighborhood safe, but putting a camera at every entrance feels like trading our freedom for a digital leash. Protection shouldn't require constant surveillance.

Chicago | London Design Studios
As surveillance pricing seeps into more experiences, people are actively protesting invasive, unfair algorithms. Consumers are pushing back against extractive tech and demanding strict boundaries to protect their digital and personal autonomy.

Netnography finding

Data center criticism reached an all-time high of 3 million mentions in online discussions in the second quarter of 2026, more than all of 2025 combined.

> "AI can become the perfect spy because we share so much with it. I don't want that to continue in areas like social media, where an intelligence is watching us to anticipate our behavior—I find that very dangerous, and I hope marketers or social media companies stop that kind of AI activity."
>
> — Stephane, France, Gen X (Accenture Research consumer interview)

What it means

> The thread running through all of our research is place. Place as identity, as sovereignty, as something that can be protected.

Anthropologically, this reflects a recurring pattern in which periods of expansion and openness are followed by periods of re-rooting and reconnection.

Many leaders read the renewed importance of place as a headwind. The pressure is real, and businesses are on the defensive. Sovereignty is indeed a priority for industry. And it is easy to see the consumer contradictions here. People want both lower prices and local businesses to survive. They want the convenience of global technology and sovereignty over their own communities.

Boardrooms often view national sovereignty purely through the lens of policy, supply chains and regulation, treating the consumer as a passive buyer. In reality, the consumer is an active voter, worker and citizen who ultimately holds the real power. A corporate strategy built around global scale that ignores domestic public sentiment is vulnerable to sudden regulatory shifts, tariffs and outright bans driven by consumer backlash.

Insight 1: Local is where the next competitive advantage lives

In 2021, 78% of Chinese consumers preferred international beauty brands. By 2025, that figure had fallen to 37% as domestic brands gained ground.[14] While global brands optimized costs, domestic competitors invested in products and a value exchange that gave something back. Loyalty followed quality, and companies that relied too heavily on brand value while allowing product value to degrade lost out. Those domestic capabilities are now positioned to expand globally.

Insight 2: Place is part of your product

Globally, 62% of consumers say they can tell when a brand genuinely understands their culture versus when it is performing understanding—a figure that rises to 80% in Africa and 66% in Latin America. Local markets can no longer be treated as the final mile. Decision-making, research and development (R&D), creative authority and community partnerships belong closer to the customer.

> "Localization is a long-term investment, not short-term ROI. We justify it because it drives customer lifetime value, builds stickiness and loyalty, and reduces commoditization by price-driven competition."
>
> — Director of Loyalty, Telco Industry

Insight 3: Local connects with people

AI creates an opportunity to make content locally relevant to people. Brands need to think bigger than just swapping backgrounds on product photos. Marketers can use AI to stay current with local humor, weather and cultural moments, helping brands respond with greater awareness and nuance in real time.

> "Just as much as you need to understand the local specificities, you also need to look for the commonalities of human needs to operate on a global level."
>
> — Vincenzo Riili, Global CMO, IKEA Retail (Accenture Research executive interview)

Strategic moves to make

As trust fragments, people are choosing what feels closer, safer and more reciprocal. Your edge lies in the communities where meaning and trust take root. Three ways to get started:

1. Rebalance global scale with local proximity

Globalization optimized for price and speed and stripped out domestic capabilities, regional skills and independent supplier ecosystems. Some of what was optimized away is worth rebuilding. Back-office systems and infrastructure remain best placed globally. Customer-facing capability, R&D, creative authority and community partnerships belong closer to the market. The businesses that move voluntarily will be ahead of those forced by regulation.

2. Match what you take with what you give

Map where your growth depends on local resources, infrastructure and goodwill. Then put something meaningful back. Invest in local suppliers, skills, services or the facilities and connections that strengthen the communities where you operate. Treat this as an investment that protects your ability to operate and expand, not simply an exercise in corporate responsibility.

3. Stop treating local as a marketing gimmick

Local is not a landscape to be papered over with translated slang, regional imagery or hollow cultural nods. Consumers see through shallow localization gimmicks. Instead, use AI and research to understand local nuances more deeply. Both will help marketing teams better understand context, timing and other signals to keep a pulse on what is relevant, and act on what they learn.

The bottom line

Trend 02 | Reclaiming local

Localism is not a cycle that will ease when trade tensions settle. It's the cumulative response to decades of broken promises. Governments and consumers are moving in the same direction, reasserting control over what happens in their communities, on their terms. Businesses that read this as friction will spend the next decade managing it. Those that read it as a signal will use the fracturing of the global model to do what globalization's logic always discouraged. Go deep. Go local. Earn it. The differentiation that comes from genuinely belonging to the places where you operate cannot be replicated by a competitor running the same global playbook.

03



System override

Scientific breakthroughs are triggering a biological revolution, which is being welcomed by an eager public and sparking change across industries.



For most of history, the threats that shaped human experience were external. Deadly ice ages, devastating droughts, the raw isolation of geographic barriers. We built tools to conquer that world. We built climate-controlled cities, mastered agriculture and connected the world through transit and communication. The external environment, for all its hostility, was more controllable.

Our internal threats—cancer, obesity, heart disease, addiction—followed a different timeline. These were the threats that waited inside us, immune to the tools used to reshape the world outside. We learned to manage them, but they brought physical burdens for patients and emotional burdens for families.

That is changing. Globally,

> 70% of people say they are more hopeful than ever that the health issues they care about most will be solved in their lifetime.

Their optimism is emerging alongside advances in metabolic medicine, oncology and other fields. We are moving beyond managing chronic symptoms toward changing the systems that cause them—a system override on human biology.

GLP-1 receptor agonists (RAs) can influence the brain pathways that shape appetite and addiction. Meanwhile, next-generation mRNA treatments could train the immune system to recognize and attack cancer cells. Together, these advances are redefining what people believe medicine—and their own bodies—can achieve.

This generational moment cuts across demographics, giving people new ways to influence how they age and what later life looks like. It is also blurring industry boundaries.

> "These [GLP-1 medications] are good medicines. I think they're going to become the most widely prescribed medications in the history of the world. The genie is out of the bottle."
>
> — Metabolic health executive (Accenture Research expert interview)

> Social media has democratized complex drug-trial data into more accessible content, increasing public awareness of scientific breakthroughs and fueling early consumer demand.

This creates a powerful collision. On one side, game-changing interventions such as GLP-1s can reduce "food noise" and other vulnerabilities, shifting some spending from impulsive to highly considered. On the other, an empowered, impatient public may demand access to these treatments before full approval to reclaim control over their choices. This dynamic is set to reshape lifestyle categories and markets far beyond healthcare.

Biological intervention

We are witnessing life science innovations that change what the body can do—and what medicine can undo. After years of research into its underlying systems, scientists and engineers are developing interventions that alter biological pathways rather than simply manage their effects, pushing the frontier of what's possible. The result is a growing set of treatments designed not only to extend life but also to improve its quality.

Market research

Metabolic interventions rewriting human limits
Retatrutide improved sleep apnea and knee pain in Phase 3 trials. Separately, observational studies link existing GLP-1 drugs to lower breast cancer incidence and slower cancer progression and to fewer substance use disorders; trials are under way.[15,16,17]

GLP-1s curbing compulsions
By targeting core brain reward pathways, GLP-1 medications do far more than silence constant food noise. They hold profound promise for curbing compulsive consumption, offering a breakthrough way to reset systemic addiction and cravings in observational studies.[18,19]

New hope for pancreatic cancer
Targeted RAS(ON) inhibitor pills like daraxonrasib offer revolutionary hope for metastatic pancreatic cancer, doubling overall survival rates and delivering superior pain control and the FDA approved it about six months early.[20]

Vaccines preventing skin cancer recurrence
Experimental mRNA vaccines are opening a powerful new frontier in oncology. By helping prevent high-risk melanoma from recurring or spreading, personalized therapies represent a crucial shift in reactive treatment.[21]

> "I've been on Zepbound since September 2025, and I've lost 52 pounds. A lot of people see it as cheating. But I was prediabetic, extremely overweight and had high blood pressure. The GLP-1 has helped bring me to health, and I think it's rewiring my brain."
> — Melissa, US, Gen X (Accenture Research consumer interview)

> "What's exciting is the convergence of people wanting health, with access to more information than they've ever had before, and categories of products like GLP-1 that can actually impact physiology and make chronic disease management better."
> — Sasha Semienchuk, Vice President of Marketing, Novo China (Accenture Research executive interview)

Survey finding

64% of men + 61% of women globally think having real control over [the physical state of] their bodies feels more possible today than ever before.

Impatient demand

Chronic pain, addiction, cancer and cardiovascular disease steal years from people's lives and cause profound suffering. Faced with that reality, people are not waiting for permission. When the system moves too slowly, they go around it. They are turning to gray-market products and compounded medications, while people with cancer request unapproved drugs as soon as trial data appears. Rapid adoption suggests that many people will accept calculated risks when frontier science offers the possibility of better health outcomes than established treatment options.

Market research

GLP-1s go mainstream

GLP-1s have officially entered the mainstream. Across the US, UK and Brazil, skyrocketing demand and private spending are fundamentally redefining global healthcare markets faster than ever.[22,23,24,25]

Patient demand races ahead

When lifesaving treatments show exceptional results, desperate patients can't wait for bureaucracy; they are flooding cancer centers, according to the AP and pressuring regulators to approve breakthrough drugs ahead of schedule.[26,27]

Compounds and generics

In the US, approximately 1 in 5 GLP-1 users reported taking a compounded version of the medication.[28] In China, at least 10 biotech firms have filed for generic biosimilar semaglutides, preparing to enter markets at lower prices when patents expire.[29]

A booming gray market

In the UK alone, unprecedented demand is fueling a massive gray market, forcing border authorities and regulatory agencies to seize tens of thousands of illicit weight-loss doses.[30,31]

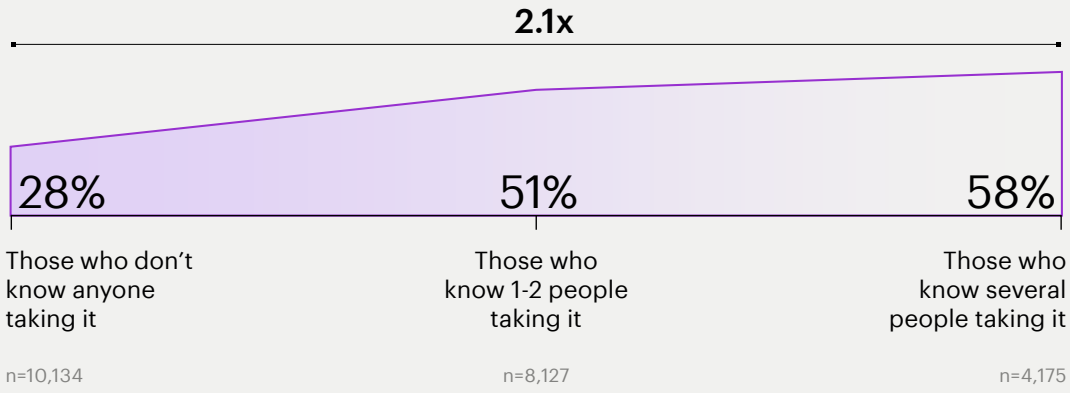
> "Originally, GLP-1s were horrendously expensive—even middle-class folks would struggle to pay a thousand, $2,000 a month. Now you can get an oral GLP-1 for $150 a month at the higher doses. ... The big thing with GLP-1s right now is with the cost structures you will save that much in food cost per month, without a doubt."
>
> — Concierge physician and clinic owner (Accenture Research expert interview)

Survey findings

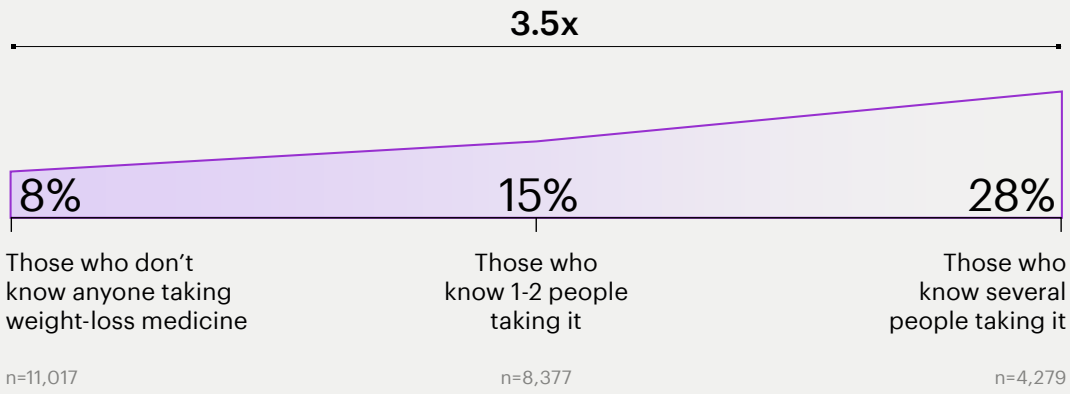
Those who know several other people using weight-loss medicine are twice as likely to be open to trying it themselves compared with those who don't know anyone taking such medicine and they are more than three times as likely to be willing to try "anything" that could significantly improve their energy, focus or physical health.

Openness to try weight-loss medicine (when not tried yet)

Excluding 'don't know / not sure' answers



Openness to try "anything" that could significantly improve their energy, focus and physical health



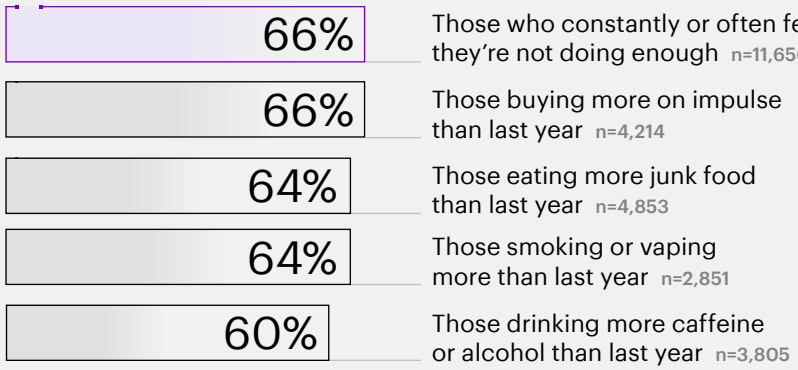
Would you consider an "off switch" for cravings?

While people may be wary of medication, our research found that 51% of global consumers would consider a treatment that effectively "switches off" a craving—provided it is safe and affordable. Those most eager to try it are driven by a feeling of inadequacy and a sense that they are not doing enough.

We asked: If a safe, affordable treatment could switch off a craving you struggle with, how likely would you be to try it?

Among which consumers is the desire to switch off cravings the strongest?

% likely to try it · global average 51%



What it means

At our core, we hate uncertainty. That's why challenges like illness, aging and addiction hit so hard—they strip away our sense of control. But when we see the real impact of change, whether firsthand or through our social circles, it gives us a powerful boost of hope and confidence.

While the public welcomes breakthroughs in metabolic health and oncology, their economic shockwaves will ripple beyond healthcare. On one front, GLP-1-based therapies, including newer multi-agonists, are quieting neurochemical cravings and extinguishing dopamine-driven impulse loops. On the other, precision oncology is shifting cancer care from broad, debilitating interventions to targeted, life-extending therapies that can preserve quality of life and personal dignity.

Together, these medical leaps shatter the historical divide between the uncontrollable physical body and the self-determined mind. People want safe, verified treatments, but personal circumstance can shift priorities and behaviors when they face an urgent diagnosis or a promising new health solution.

Demand will shift across food, retail, advertising, wellness and insurance.

> Businesses will need to anticipate not just wider adoption, but entirely new consumer behaviors and the complex ethical tensions these life-changing medications create.

Four insights help inform brands on what actions to take.

Insight 1: The systemic reach of multi-agonist drugs

Beyond dramatic weight loss, these multi-agonist therapies are being associated with profound systemic effects across other major diseases, in observational studies cited above, including lower breast cancer incidence, reduced risk of progression to late-stage cancer and changes to the brain's reward circuitry linked to addiction, food noise and compulsive consumption. Healthcare could shift from managing isolated, chronic symptoms to addressing the shared metabolic and neurological drivers of interconnected conditions.

> "People just become disinterested in alcohol to a greater degree [after GLP-1s]. We don't treat heart disease or cancer the same way we did in 1935. I'm a big proponent of harm reduction. If somebody's drinking 25 or 30 drinks a week and we can get them to six or seven, that's a big win."
>
> — Metabolic health leader (Accenture Research expert interview)

Insight 2: Social channels accelerate drug demand

Social media has become a key channel for raising consumer awareness of pharmaceutical advances. Clinicians are building large followings by "stitching" or reacting to viral health claims, effectively peer-reviewing public health discussions as they unfold. They decode trial data in real time while patients share lived experiences that carry far more trust than traditional pharma ads. Yet as consumer demand races ahead of regulation, nonmedical creators use the same channels to hype unapproved alternatives. Health brands must now navigate a fast-paced environment where credible science battles continuously with unregulated viral claims.

Insight 3: Stigma will slow adoption but won't stop it

Leading health institutions, including the World Health Organization, consider obesity a chronic disease, yet society often treats it as a behavior problem. That judgment fuels a cultural paradox. People are shamed both for having larger bodies and for taking medication to change them. In our research, 56% of people globally say losing weight with medication feels less "earned" than doing so with diet and exercise. But family studies estimate that genes account for roughly 40 to 70% of differences in body weight.[32] As evidence reshapes perceptions of obesity and its treatment, stigma will begin to bend.

> "There are people using GLP-1s who are finally being given the headspace to change their relationship with food and their habits around it.... I think it should be shown as a complementary thing, not an either/or."
>
> — Rachel, UK, Millennial (Accenture Research consumer interview)

Insight 4: Hope is the most powerful driver

For families living with addiction, research into GLP-1 RAs' effects on gambling, alcohol and drug dependency offers hope. These treatments could provide a biological bridge out of compulsion and help restore relationships strained by addiction. Cancer care tells a related story. Modern treatments can provide some patients with more targeted options while preserving more of their quality of life. They can retain their hair and energy while their immune systems learn to do the fighting. That is more than medical progress. It can help people retain a stronger sense of self.

Strategic moves to make

Biological breakthroughs will reshape people's expectations of appetite, health and longevity. Businesses need to prepare for shifts in consumer demand, with implications across industries. Here are a few.

1. Shift brand strategy from quick impulse to considered value

Modern advertising business models face a foundational challenge as GLP-1s quiet the "wanting" in people's heads and disrupt the physics of persuasion. Many companies, including consumer packaged goods brands, depend on stimulating appetite and impulse. If adoption continues, brands may need products and tactics designed for a more considered, conscious consumer.

2. Modernize patient care services around multifunctional therapies

Governments and healthcare providers will need to redesign patient services around metabolic health. As use of GLP-1/GIP/glucagon RAs continues to grow, service efficiency will come into the spotlight as a single class of multifunctional drugs begins to treat a range of conditions and diseases.

3. Outpace gray-market volatility with direct-to-consumer speed

An impatient public isn't willing to wait years for standard regulatory rollout cycles, trial approvals or insurance coverage. Legacy brands that move slowly face massive volatility, losing market share overnight to agile compounding pharmacies and direct-to-consumer health platforms.

4. Align brand portfolios with the "GLP-1 savings" lifestyle reallocation

Consumers are doing the personal trade-off math in their heads—recognizing that paying $150 to $200 a month out of pocket on compounded or generic options may be offset by savings on food, dining out and alcohol. As people experience physical changes, spending could shift from passive consumption toward retail.

The bottom line

Trend 03 | System override

For centuries, human progress meant pushing back against an external world that threatened to overwhelm us. The frontier has moved inward, and the tools to navigate the human body are arriving fast.

As the tools weaken the commercial loop built on monetizing impulse, spending may become more deliberate and value-driven. Employees and customers alike are reframing their own health battles with greater hope.

Faced with one of the biggest consumer shifts we have seen in years, leaders must take this trend seriously. It will change marketing because it is changing demand. It will affect productivity as people remain healthier for longer, reshape health services around the world and alter the lives of family and friends.

If progress means increasing control over one's environment, we are entering an era in which the human body itself is becoming more changeable.

04



Build it yourself

Driven by real-world goals, people are creatively assembling available tools and knowledge to build income and security—with AI supercharging their toolkits.



> Humans have always improvised, combining whatever tools are at hand to build, adapt and move life forward.

In French, this resourceful figure is called a *bricoleur*. In English, we call them a DIYer; in Spanish, a *manitas*; in Japanese, a ***kiyō na hito*** (器用な人); and in Chinese, a ***qiǎoshǒu*** (巧手). The tools and technology change, but this drive to create with what we have is pure human nature.

That impulse is translating into greater control over how people earn, solve problems and meet everyday needs. In the past year, 67% of consumers globally say they have made money beyond their main job. That momentum is set to accelerate over the next 12 months: Another 13% are likely to seek income beyond their main source; 45% plan to learn a practical or manual skill to make money; and 53% intend to become more self-sufficient in areas such as energy, food or repairs.

Today, the tools at our fingertips are remarkable. AI can guide someone through an unfamiliar task. Platforms can turn skills or assets into income. Peers can share knowledge gained from solving the problem you are facing. With these resources, motivated people are navigating life as they always have—by finding a way forward.

When the tools change, what people attempt changes too. The boundaries of what feels possible expand. Someone who fixes their own plumbing with AI guidance, builds a product without a developer or generates an income stream from a kitchen table is doing something extraordinary. Yet it's becoming increasingly ordinary.

People are combining the resources available to them to make progress on their own terms. One pattern we observed is that assembling income from multiple sources—platforms, new skills, networks—has become a default strategy for financial resilience. One job or one deep skill no longer feels sufficient. Separately, people are using AI to build or fix things that once required a team or specialist. AI is collapsing the distance between identifying an unmet need and bringing the desired outcome to life.

Income stacking and side-skilling

It's a tough market for people trying to make ends meet. Simply put, people now have to do more. They are being pushed to explore side jobs because their primary income isn't sufficient or secure. The income portfolio mindset is already prevalent among young people just starting their careers, and it's becoming the norm across demographics. Tech platforms have made micro-entrepreneurship accessible at scale. People have never had more ways to build new sources of income and resilience for themselves.

Local behavioral research

Droga5 Dublin
Creative Agency
Cynical about traditional employment after economic disruption, Gen Z is swapping single job titles for tech-powered "side stacking." By building portfolio careers, they become the CEOs of their own futures—prioritizing income security over job security.

Singapore Design Studio
Pressured by economic uncertainty, Singaporeans are embracing side-skilling by developing new capabilities alongside their primary jobs. Building skills in trades, crafts or side projects offers genuine resilience, fulfillment and multiple income streams beyond linear careers.[33,34]

San José, Costa Rica
Design Studio
Driven by rising living costs and stagnant wages, Costa Ricans are adopting multi-income survival strategies. Building flexible portfolio careers and side-income streams provides the financial resilience and autonomy a single traditional job no longer guarantees.

Copenhagen Design Studio
As traditional employment loses reliability, workers in Copenhagen are embracing fluid work identities. Expanding what counts as work by monetizing adjacent skills and side projects helps maintain personal security outside rigid, linear career structures.

Netnography finding

Side-questing is the new normal

A new gamified language is emerging online as "side-quest maxxing" and similar terms frame extra income streams and skills as opportunities to level up. The fact that the behavior now has its own slang shows how normal, even aspirational, the portfolio life has become. While the framing sounds playful, the destination is serious: online use of the term "solopreneur" grew 70% between 2024 and 2026, signaling that what began as a coping strategy is hardening into a deliberate professional identity.

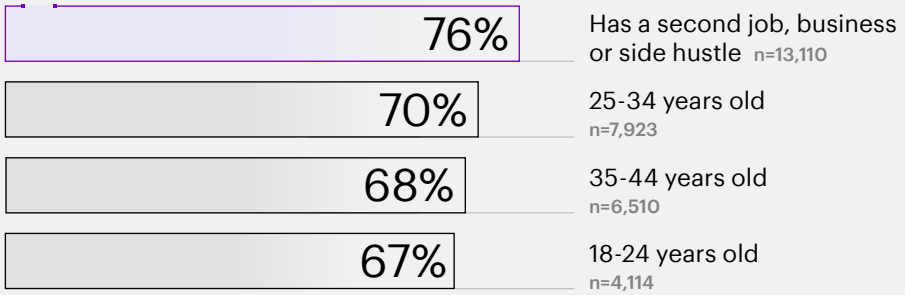
> "I've got a nine-to-five job, but I'm also freelancing. Salary alone, honestly speaking, that's not enough, and it will never be enough."
>
> — Portia, South Africa, Millennial (Accenture Research consumer interview)

> "Human manual skills and emotional interactions are things that cannot be replaced. Many people are considering learning skilled trades or guiding their children toward this direction—hands-on, practical skills are likely to be less replaceable in the future."
>
> — Mr. Fan, China, Millennial (Accenture Research consumer interview)

Survey findings

Relying on a single job is too risky financially for me
The consumer groups in which the statement resonates most.

% agree + strongly agree · global average 63%



Building new skills
56% of people ages 18 to 34 globally plan to learn a practical or manual skill to make money in the next 12 months; even **23%** of those ages 55 to 64 share this ambition.

AI joins the maker toolkit

Every day, people are using AI to pursue ideas—solving problems, creating things and launching ventures more quickly and cheaply than ever before. AI is not creating a new kind of person. It is giving an existing kind of person—motivated, resourceful, impatient with friction—the means to match their ambition. The desire to build was already there. What has changed is the belief that building is possible.

Local behavioral research

Shanghai Design Studio
Across Shanghai, AI is empowering solo operators to launch one-person companies. Democratized digital capabilities allow individuals to scale side hustles, learn new skills and redefine career independence on their own terms.

San Francisco Design Studio
As traditional tech roles fall to precarity and built-in layoff cycles, Bay Area workers are leveraging AI tools and personal capital to bypass corporate employment, turning individual ideas into autonomous, AI-driven businesses.

London Design Studio
In the UK, AI vibe coding is fundamentally democratizing software. By eliminating technical barriers, creating functional applications no longer requires a coding background—just natural language prompts, clear vision and human judgment.

Interview findings

"Cheap tools and AI augmentation have compressed idea to reality. Moving from concept to execution is no longer reserved for funded studios—it turns individual initiative into default, tool-enabled entrepreneurship."

— James Temple, Chief Design Officer, Accenture Song

"AI didn't write my music—it helped me learn how to create it," observes Mills, a classically trained musician. When he decided to expand into electronic music, he used ChatGPT as a contextual teacher. But it hasn't removed the work. "I still have to listen, make choices, practice, reject suggestions and develop my own taste." (Instagram: @lukichmusic)

— Luke Mills, Global Customer Service Lead, Accenture Song

> "The possibilities that I can now achieve are completely mind-blowing. I can conjure up a web app that's functioning within a few hours."
>
> — Entrepreneur (Accenture Research expert interview)

> "I've almost never gotten outside help from an electrician or similar. I do everything myself, with the help of AI or videos. When I have a problem, I go online, search for it and I always get instructions."
>
> — Arslan, Germany, Millennial (Accenture Research consumer interview)

Survey findings

In the past year, **15%** of people globally used AI tools to create a product or service to sell. Looking at those who have a second job (employed by someone else) or run their own business, the share is **27%**. Among those with a side hustle, the share is **20%**.

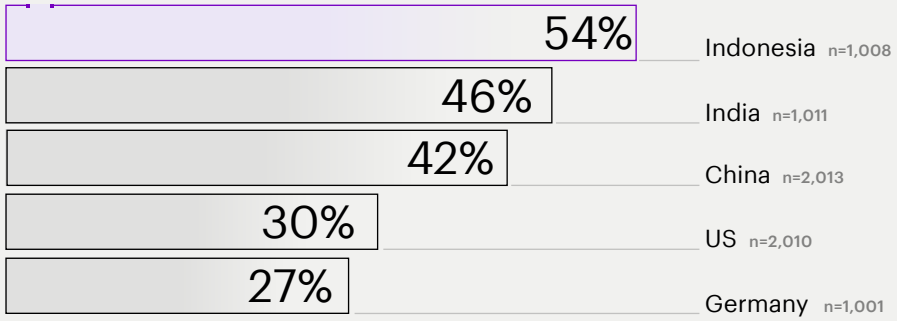
People with a second job or their own business are the likeliest to use AI to make something to sell

% who use AI tools in the past year to create a product or service to sell



AI is helping people build things they lacked the skills for, most of all in Indonesia

% saying that AI has enabled them to build something they would not otherwise have had the skills for (select countries)



What it means

The rise of "build it yourself" reflects how humans reclaim agency, time and again. As institutions grow sluggish and complex, people would rather take matters into their own hands than wait around for top-down solutions. Creating something is personal. It taps back into a fundamentally human impulse where people find energy in the hands-on process of making it. Today's powerful tools extend that instinct, changing who can create, what they can build and how quickly they can act.

Yes, people still want conventional work and reliable income. But they know that ideal has become harder to reach. That is why they are diversifying their income and using AI-enabled tools to support their inherent maker spirit.

> "Everyday entrepreneurship" is accelerating and generating hyperlocal innovation. People are making their own worlds a little better by learning skills just in time, solving immediate problems and potentially earning or saving money along the way.

For a growing share of the global workforce, this mindset is reshaping how people work, build and make a living.

Insight 1: Grit drives the new self-reliance

While standard career tracks remain relevant, a growing number of people no longer see them as sufficient for achieving prosperity or resilience. Human grit is filling that gap. Armed with digital platforms, skilled trades and accessible AI, individuals are increasingly stepping out on their own to assemble multiple income streams. They use AI as a force multiplier, learning skills in the moment to overcome immediate constraints and gain greater financial independence.

> "I never thought I'd be building a startup—I always wanted a traditional job. But now I feel I'm going in a different path than I initially thought."
>
> — Krisha, India, Gen Z (Accenture Research consumer interview)

Insight 2: User workarounds reveal unmet needs

When people hit a wall with an existing product, service or system, creative restlessness drives them to engineer their own solutions. They share these workarounds on Reddit, YouTube and other online communities, where their hacks can spread fast. For businesses, these unsolicited fixes are free R&D from the most motivated people in your customer base.

Insight 3: Unlimited capability doesn't create unlimited desire

Most assumptions about AI's future begin with capability and assume action will follow automatically. It will not. People are building because they already wanted to; AI simply gave them the tools that matched their ambition. Capability met desire. That sequence matters. For any organization, the question is not whether the tools exist but whether the motivation does. Tools without motivation produce nothing.

Strategic moves to make

As people forge their own paths, businesses must equip them to act, channel their motivation and learn from what they create. Here are three ways to begin.

1. Arm self-reliant builders with modular tools

Shift your platform strategy from "do it for them" to "enable them to do more for themselves" by providing open APIs, modular toolkits and AI copilots. When resourceful customers can customize, monetize or build on your ecosystem, they gain greater control and more reasons to stay—deepening loyalty through value rather than switching friction.

2. Drive real ownership internally by slashing bureaucracy

People building for themselves are not necessarily more talented than employees; they are more motivated. They have skin in the game and no bureaucracy slowing them down. Businesses can recreate those conditions internally with smaller teams, real ownership and leaders willing to sit with uncertainty long enough for something meaningful to develop.

3. Harvest user hacks for free product R&D

Actively listen across low-code forums, developer channels and user communities to scout for unsolicited workarounds. Treat these grassroots solutions as free product intelligence. They can reveal unmet needs, product limitations and new use cases that formal research may miss.

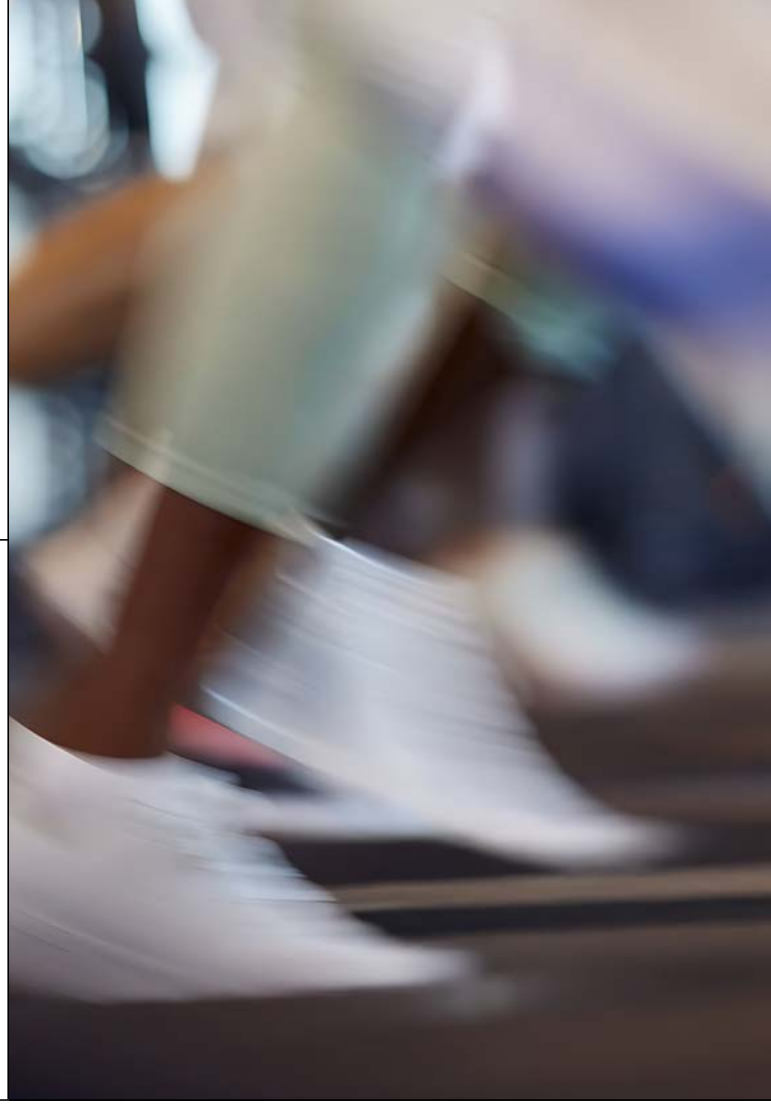
The bottom line

Trend 04 | Build it yourself

People are not waiting for permission or the right moment to create their own paths. They are combining skills, time, platforms, AI tools and peer knowledge to build custom livelihoods, products and solutions. Whether driven by economic necessity, creative curiosity or a desire for greater self-reliance, the outcome is the same. Creation is becoming more distributed, accessible and difficult for established institutions to control.

As we enter an era in which more people can solve problems, generate income and act on ideas without following traditional pathways, the challenge to businesses is direct. Are you building for this new class of creators, or are you becoming the friction they route around?

05



Wellness burnout

As wellness expands into every domain, constant optimization has a rhythm: Go all in, go too hard, crash out and repeat.



> Globally, 83% of people follow some form of health improvement or optimization routine—yet more than half of them find it exhausting.

Wellness has outgrown its traditional definition; where it once meant basic health, it has now expanded into finance, relationships, beauty, career and social presence. Today, every domain of human life comes with its own protocol, metrics and implied standard of failure.

We increasingly describe human behavior using the language of machine optimization. Today's online culture attaches the '-maxxing' suffix to almost any life area, driving an obsessive trend toward tuning every detail of daily existence. It's everywhere—looksmaxxing, sleepmaxxing, moneymaxxing, auramaxxing—with a 270% increase in online mentions in the past year according to our netnographic research. Technology intensifies the pressure by making habits quantifiable through apps, trackers, nudges and dashboards. The pursuit of wellness has become a lot of additional work.

Of course, people are not machines. Our lives are not software to tweak, and our outcomes are not linear. Is the push for longevity coming at the expense of living? As people weigh these costs, our research points to a growing failure mode: wellness burnout. Globally, 45% of people swing between pushing themselves too hard and giving up completely.

Since when has wellness made us so unwell?

People are responding to this pressure in opposite ways. Some go all in on hyperoptimization across multiple areas of life, hoping to keep up with ever-shifting goals. Others step away from the self-improvement hustle, embracing imperfection and recognizing failure, idleness and pleasure as parts of being human.

To the maxx

The benchmarks for success now touch every part of a person's life. More information is available than ever before, and with it come expectations that often exceed what people can realistically sustain. Physical health. Financial security. Relationship quality. Career momentum.

Through hyperpersonalization, brands and platforms have capitalized on the drive for self-improvement. The "-maxxing" lexicon is the clearest sign that being a person has become a full-time management role.

Modern internet culture has repackaged timeless human pursuits as bite-sized slang. Sleepmaxxing targets personal health, moneymaxxing financial savvy, looksmaxxing personal glow-ups and auramaxxing social presence—all modern spins on classic self-improvement. When balanced, these practices can help us build better habits. Unchecked, they can turn living into an exhausting, performative checklist.

Local behavioral research

Sydney, Fiftyfive5 research
From looksmaxxing to sleepmaxxing, attaching "-maxxing" to every behavior has evolved from an internet meme into an algorithmic worldview. When big life goals feel impossible, hyperoptimizing small daily wins becomes the only way to win.

Oslo Design Studio
Norwegians are turning rest into a performance review. With sleep-tracking apps and biohacking backfiring into anxiety, self-care has become a high-stakes metric—transforming nighttime sleep into an extension of corporate pressure.

Market research

Extreme budgeting meets side hustle culture
Moneymaxxing treats wealth creation as an aggressive daily game. Driven by digital finance communities, practitioners combine extreme budgeting, high-yield investing, side hustles and micro-capital allocation to take complete control of their personal net worth.

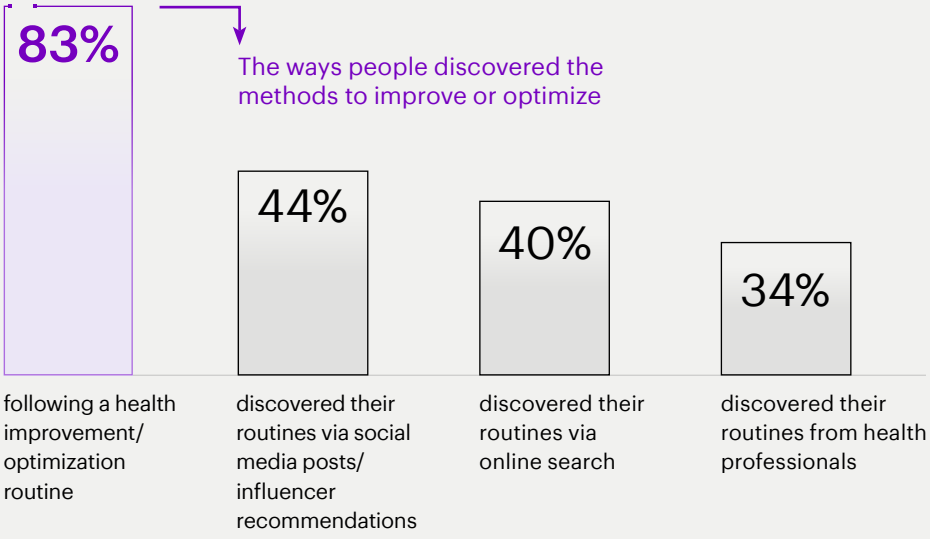
The pursuit of personal magnetism
Focusing on nonverbal communication, posture and social confidence, auramaxxing aims to project undeniable, high-status personal magnetism. Practitioners refine body language and interpersonal dynamics to control how their energy is perceived in social space.

> "There's a form of pressure around having the 'perfect body'—especially for women, no cellulite, that kind of thing—shown through tons of videos and photos of 'perfect' women. It is a form of pressure, in the sense that you can feel a bit diminished seeing it."
>
> — Monia, France, Gen X (Accenture Research consumer interview)

> "Whilst I think it's a good thing that we become more aware of how things impact our vitals, I feel like we live in a world now where everything is outsourced, and we've lost intuition and understanding of our own bodies because we rely on fitness trackers to do it."
>
> — Rachel, UK, Millennial (Accenture Research consumer interview)

Survey findings

Most often, people discover their routines via social media and influencers



n=28,209

Rest and rebellion

Somewhere between the sleep score, savings tracker and relationship audit, people reach their limit. A countercurrent is emerging globally. Across Asia, Latin America and Europe, for example, people are reclaiming their time through slow living, deliberate idling and analog pleasures.

Others seek relief through consumption, rejecting the pressure in risky and rebellious ways. Our local behavioral research indicated a rise in drinking, drug use and gambling across multiple markets exposing what can happen when optimization culture goes too far. The need for relief is real, but the outlets are not always healthy.

Local behavioral research

Tokyo Design Studio
Overwhelmed by choice fatigue and optimization demands, Japanese consumers are embracing *bonyari*—a state of intentional idleness where they do nothing, watch fireplace streams and claim the ultimate luxury of simply existing without justification.

Buenos Aires Design Studio
Moving from anger to weariness, Argentines are staging a quiet rebellion against the productivity loop—rejecting speed and algorithmic optimization to protect their remaining peace through slow, screen-free idleness and analog presence.

Paris Design Studio
Faced with ungovernable systems, French youth are splitting between rigid self-control and pure escapism—using everything from quiet retreat to rising substance use to cope with a world where long-term planning feels entirely futile.

Sydney Design Studio
Tired of constant pressure and a stagnant future, Australians are trading hyperoptimization for debauchery—turning to alcohol, partying and substances as immediate, physical antidotes to a world that feels impossible to control.

> "I will meditate and I will try to put the phone and work away and take some time to myself just to listen to quiet music or [do some] meditation. ... I've had to improve my ability to do this over the years because the phone definitely gets overwhelming."
>
> — Jolie, France, Gen X (Accenture Research consumer interview)

> "I sometimes feel unhappy about controlling sugar because I really enjoy sweet things. So I often wonder: Is it really necessary to sacrifice part of my life experience for the sake of so-called beauty and body shape?"
>
> — Ms. Li, China, Gen Z (Accenture Research consumer interview)

> "There's a trend of taking ashwagandha—people no longer take it [only] because they have anxiety. It can make them numb to a lot of things so they don't have to stress about them. ... I have a child I need to take care of. If I get numb to emotions, how am I going to connect with my child?"
>
> — Anathi, South Africa, Gen Z (Accenture Research consumer interview)

Survey findings

41% of people globally, and about

50% of those ages 18 to 34 say what they see online makes them feel they are not doing enough with their body, health or life.

What it means

> At the heart of this trend is a fear of falling short—that we are not doing enough, becoming enough or living as well as everyone else.

When we're constantly exposed to other people's polished success, our own efforts can quickly start to feel like they aren't enough.

We are now expected to manage our physical health, finances, relationships, mental state and social presence against shifting benchmarks. Self-improvement is a natural instinct, but it has limits. We want to feel healthier, safer and more in control, but every tweak in pursuit of bettering ourselves comes at a cost to our sense of balance.

When every dimension of being human requires a strategy, schedule and standard to meet, life becomes a never-ending performance review. You cannot live in the moment when life comes with an unending to-do list. For brands, the challenge is understanding when the pursuit of improvement stops feeling helpful and starts adding to the pressure.

Insight 1: People are looking for balance

People naturally reach a point when trading social connection, comfort, relaxation and everyday pleasures for a theoretical, marginal increase in life expectancy or a little bit more money in the bank begins to feel like a terrible deal. They constantly and often subconsciously evaluate these trade-offs.

Insight 2: People's insecurity is the hook for personalization

Personalized social feeds in almost any category can leave users feeling that they are not enough. Within days, sophisticated real-time algorithms can turn basic curiosity about self-improvement into an obsession. Social media feed technology has evolved for more than a decade, but today's hyperaggressive content blasting and rapid spiral into extreme "-maxxing" loops represent a new level of intensity.

Insight 3: We are humans, not machines to optimize

People want to become better versions of themselves by absorbing new information, guidance, tips and products. But we are not software with deterministic outcomes, and every optimization requires sustained human effort. Try as they might, people will fall short, run away or rebel. Everyone has a breaking point where demands on the body and mind become too much.

Strategic moves to make

Consumers are drawing a line between health and hyperoptimization. Brands that respond to this correction will design for sustainable human engagement.

1. Take the pressure off the everyday user

Most products in optimization-adjacent categories are designed around the behaviors of the highly committed customers, then marketed to a much broader audience whose habits and motivations look very different. For most people, the time, effort and discipline these products demand are difficult to sustain, creating a gap that drives churn. Half of people say that constantly trying to improve themselves is exhausting. Brands can better serve the majority by designing for sustainable engagement with flexible commitments, rest modes and milestones that make "good enough" feel like progress.

> "We are increasingly aware we need to take pressure off people."
>
> — Ann-Camilla Kjæmpe, Vice President of Marketing, Arla Foods (Accenture Research interview about Arla's "average cooking club," which aims to turn cooking into a relaxed, shared effort rather than a stressful performance)

2. Focus on quality of life, not risk

When brands frame everyday life as dangerous, consumers can become numb to warnings and stop engaging. Shift messaging away from longevity anxiety and toward joy and quality of life. Position products as enablers of everyday pleasures and social connection, not tools for constant risk management.

3. Design ethical content loops

Social feeds that pull users into potentially dangerous maxxing rabbit holes are accumulating regulatory and reputational risk. Platforms and brands that build healthier, nonaddictive engagement loops will earn durable trust from a consumer base that is learning to identify and exit the extractive ones.

The bottom line

Trend 05 | Wellness burnout

Wellness burnout signals a core shift in consumer psychology as people turn from data-driven hyperoptimization toward firmer boundaries. The growth playbooks of the past decade—gamification, relentless push notifications, anxiety-driven funnels and hyperquantified user experiences—are hitting a wall. Consumers are exhausted, and simply … human.

Life shouldn't feel like an audit, and brands that monitor every choice need to tread carefully. The business model built on manufactured inadequacy is running out of road. The next growth cycle in categories where people are expected to optimize themselves—across fitness, finance, food, productivity, mental health—belongs to brands that make people feel capable rather than like they're falling behind.

Final thoughts

Each year, these trends inform how our clients think about what's next for their customer strategies. They often act as catalysts for deep conversations among leaders about the contradictions shaping people's choices. That's exactly what organizations need more of right now. Open exchanges grounded in early consumer signals can help leaders across the C-suite determine how their organizations should show up for customers as AI moves further into everyday life. Curiosity about other perspectives and candid debate will guide the work it will take to get there.

It doesn't surprise us that most executives we work with are ignoring stratospheric AI headlines. They're skeptical—rightly so—of extremes but optimistic about AI's potential.

Internally, they're embracing AI where it creates and compounds real value. When the hype exceeds the experience, they pull back to reconsider how and where they're deploying AI, what needs to change and why.

Externally, they need to decide where AI adds real value to the shopping experience. That means identifying where customers will gladly delegate effort and where their own presence provides a kind of satisfaction no agent can replicate. It also means adapting as customer expectations change and people's comfort with different uses of AI shifts.

Across these trends, we see people embracing technological progress even as they push back against it. Those contradictions are not problems to solve; they reveal what matters: connection, agency, trust and choice.

There is no single playbook for navigating these shifts, but there is a clear starting point: pay attention to the signals, talk through the tensions and stay grounded in what your brand stands for. That is how complexity becomes insight and how insight gets put to work.

How Accenture can help

In an accelerating world, organizations can no longer optimize individual functions in isolation. Growth now depends on harmonizing the total customer experience across every interaction, channel and moment that matters.

Accenture Song is uniquely positioned to deliver this transformation at scale. We combine creativity, technology, data, AI and deep industry expertise to help clients create intelligent, connected experiences that drive measurable business outcomes.

Our approach unifies customer data into a real-time, AI-native foundation that is ecosystem-agnostic and client-owned. We orchestrate cross-functional growth strategies, redesign experiences around customer needs and enable organizations through human and agent collaboration, AI-enabled workflows and operational reinvention.

What differentiates Accenture Song is our ability to connect strategy and execution across the entire customer agenda—from brand and experience to commerce, sales and service—while combining the craft of world-class creativity with the scale of enterprise technology and AI.

With more than 90,000 professionals across 54 countries, deep ecosystem partnerships across Adobe, Salesforce, Google, AWS and Microsoft, and one of the world's largest creative and technology workforces, Accenture Song helps clients reinvent how they grow, serve and retain relevance with customers.

Come talk to us, and let's build what comes next.

About the research

Qualitative research

Accenture conducted approximately 100 in-depth consumer interviews in 11 countries in August 2026. The research also included in-depth conversations with subject matter experts in media, technology, life sciences and medicine to capture practitioner perspectives. Finally, interviews were conducted with executives from major companies to test the trends and identify how organizations are responding.

Consumers were interviewed in 11 countries:
Australia, Brazil, China, France, Germany, India, Japan, South Africa, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States

Quantitative research — consumer survey

Accenture fielded a global consumer survey of 28,209 respondents across 26 countries in August 2026, providing statistically representative grounding for the themes identified through qualitative research. In the survey, 4,472 respondents, whom we define as "creators," indicated they had earned a minimum of $200 in the past 12 months from creating content online via YouTube, X, newsletters, etc.

The 26 markets surveyed:
Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Colombia, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, Nigeria, Philippines, Poland, Singapore, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States, Vietnam

Netnographic research

Accenture conducted ongoing netnographic research using a social listening platform to track real-time online discourse relevant to the trend themes—monitoring specific phrases, hashtags and communities across Instagram, Reddit, TikTok, X and YouTube. We analyzed volume, sentiment and emotional tone throughout the research period to capture live developments and emerging signals.

Theoretical validation

Walnut, part of Accenture Song, brings together academics who study what drives people's decisions. The team reviewed our research and narrative, helping identify the behavioral, anthropological and psychological forces that explain each trend.

We use generative AI in our research production process. Our research experts review and validate the generative AI outputs with traditional research methods where possible, applying Accenture's Responsible AI standards.

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