

Google Search trends show South Africans are interested in AI

Google Search trends has shown an increasing interest in artificial intelligence (AI) in South Africa and the rest of the world. The trend reached a record in 2022 and has peaked again in January 2023.



Source: www.unsplash.com

Top searches include: “ai generator” (#3), “ai art” (#4), “what is ai” (#5), and (#6) and “google ai” (#9) - all of which increased by over 5,000%.

AI as a solution

Google, who views AI as a solution for addressing significant societal challenges, like climate change, recently shared their approach to pursuing AI responsibly, which includes the need to prioritise building and testing for safety, and prioritising its purpose for public good.

Matt Brittin, president of Google Africa, the Middle East and Europe said: “It’s great to see people in South Africa showing more of an interest in the transformational technology that is AI. AI is already a key part of many of our lives - in fact, if you use Google tools regularly, you’re probably using AI without even realising: it’s what helps Maps give you the fastest or most fuel-efficient route, or search to find what you’re looking for. We’re continuing to pursue AI boldly and responsibly - creating tools that improve the lives of as many people as possible.”

Online privacy

The trends also show that South Africans are increasingly interested in protecting their cybersecurity and online privacy.

In 2022, searches for “computer security” was the top form of security searched worldwide, while “cybercrime” was searched at record levels around the world. South Africans are clearly also more concerned for their internet safety and computer security - with search interest in both terms rising 70% in 2022. South Africans particularly searched for “rogue security software” (+240%), “SMS phishing” (+210%) and “email spoofing” (+200%).

Google is using AI to address security challenges - including on Gmail, which automatically blocks more than 99.9% of malware, phishing and spam and protects more than 1.5 billion inboxes using AI.

Searches for “private browsing” and “one-time password” reached record levels of search interest in 2022 - while searches for “password manager” - a Google tool that makes it easy to use a strong, unique password for all of your online accounts - increased by 150%.

Bettering skills

South Africans also turned to Google to help them better understand the economy, learn new skills and build their careers.

In an uncertain year economically, searches for inflation reached an all-time global high in 2022 - and a five-year high in South Africa, increasing by 80% since 2021. Trending searches in South Africa included “current inflation rate” (+130%), while South Africans also turned to Google to better understand “oil prices today” (+1,220%) and “petrol fuel prices” (+800%).



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Danette Breitenbach 10 Feb 2023



But South Africans aren't just turning to Google to understand these issues - they're also looking for resources to navigate these challenges and build their careers. Searches for “cybersecurity courses” increased by 240%, while “digital market courses” increased by 90%.

People also turned to Google to prepare for job interviews and find new opportunities: with searches for “how to introduce yourself in interview” increasing by 350%; “how to write a CV in South Africa” increasing by 220%; and “how to negotiate a salary offer” increasing by 190%.

Google itself continues to offer training and advice to those who need it most, having provided digital skills training to 22 million people across Europe, the Middle East and Africa since 2015 through their Grow with Google programme.

Environment

South Africans care about building a more sustainable future - and are using Google to understand how to do that.

These trends also show that South Africans value environmentalism and sustainability. Across the world, searches for “climate change”, “climate crisis”, “eco anxiety” and “sustainability” reached record highs - while in South Africa, searches for “environmentalism” rose by 460%, “green growth” by 270% and “energy transition” by 150%. Topics including greenwashing, solar power, carbon neutrality and electric vehicles all also reached record high levels of search interest.

Searches for environmental disasters were also searched more than ever across the world - with South Africans searching for “flood” (+180%) and “drought” more than ever before.

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