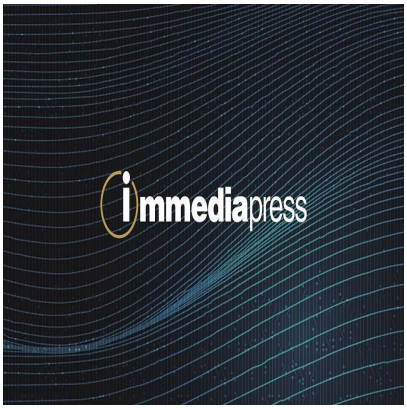


AI boom risks widening divide between rich and poor nations as major study from Ayre Think Tank reveals $360 billion divide

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ST JOHNâ??S, Antigua and Barbuda, Nov. 5, 2026 /PRNewswire/ â?? Artificial intelligence risks deepening the gap between rich and poorer nations, with a new study calculating a $360 billion difference in potential economic gains between the Commonwealth countries best prepared for the technology and those lagging behind.

The Ayre Index, unveiled at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Antigua and Barbuda, examined conditions facing 732 million people aged 15 to 29 across all 56 member states.

Only 15 countries met its benchmark for youth AI readiness. Those nations could see a combined $389.2 billion increase in the level of their economies after 10 years under the studyâ??s middle scenario, compared with $29.2 billion across the other 41 countries.

The $360 billion gap is twice the size of the $174 billion in development aid given by the worldâ??s major donor countries last year.

Singapore topped the rankings, followed by Malta, Australia, Britain and Canada. Malawi and Lesotho finished last. Only Mauritius, South Africa and Nigeria among the Commonwealthâ??s 21 African members reached the readiness benchmark.

The research suggests that installing networks does not automatically create opportunity. In Togo, 4G coverage reaches almost everyone, yet fewer than half of young people report using the internet. In Malawi, electricity reaches a fifth of the population.

There are gaps even where enthusiasm is high. About 90% of young Nigerians surveyed expected to use AI for work or education within a year, but Nigeria scored just 0.8 out of 10 on measures of conventional digital capability.

Entrepreneur and philanthropist Calvin Ayre, the founder of the think tank behind the index, said: â??AI is going to change how we work, how we do business and how wealth is created. Nobody can afford to be complacent.â?• Governments, he said, must give young people the skills and opportunities to succeed.

Even meeting the benchmark is no guarantee of work: South Africa qualified, but unemployment stood at 46.3% among its young labour force.

The study drew on 1,128 sources but also exposed how little comparable evidence exists about young peopleâ??s actual AI capabilities in some countries.

Its central warning is that access alone is insufficient. Skills, affordable connectivity, routes into employment and support for entrepreneurs will determine whether AI creates new businesses and better jobs â?? or reinforces existing economic divides.

More at: https://calvinayre.com/for-progress-think-tank.

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