

AI or superintelligence: what is LAC's role?

What if artificial intelligence (AI) were to become capable of enhancing its own capabilities? This possibility lies at the heart of a debate involving technology companies, governments and international organisations. LAC must also ask itself what role it wishes to play in this new phase of digital transformation.

In early September, Jacob Coxon, who worked on the development of AI models at OpenAI and Anthropic, warned of the move towards systems that are increasingly capable of self-improvement and the risks this could pose.

Shortly afterwards, the issue reached the UN. During the General Assembly's High-Level Week, Donald Trump proposed replacing the term "artificial intelligence" with "superintelligence," as the word "artificial" makes a technology he considers real and extraordinary seem false, while António Guterres, the UN Secretary-General, emphasised the need for transparency, oversight and rules to manage the risks of AI.

A day later, Sam Altman, CEO of OpenAI, added that decisions about the future of AI should not be left solely in the hands of technology companies, but should also involve **governments and institutions that are accountable to their societies**.

While the world debates how to develop and regulate AI, Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) faces a more pressing question: **Can it move from simply using AI to also building it?**

The region already makes extensive use of these technologies. By April 2025, Latin America and the Caribbean accounted for 14% of global views on AI solutions, representing around 11% of global Internet users.

However, most of this usage is concentrated on end-user tools, such as applications for generating text and images or answering questions.

According to ECLAC data, 78% of regional views relate to this type of solution, compared with 74% globally. By contrast, tools that enable the development, adaptation or creation of new AI solutions account for 22% in Latin America and the Caribbean, compared with 26% globally. **The region makes extensive use of AI but plays a limited role in its development.**

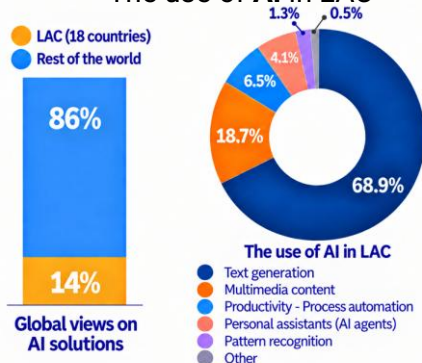
Taking that leap does not mean that every country has to build a model like ChatGPT from scratch. It means developing the capacity to adapt the technology, use their own data and create solutions that meet the needs, cultures and realities of the region.



A recent example shows that it is possible to make progress in this direction. In February 2026, **Latam-GPT** was launched, an open-source language model developed by and for LAC, bringing together 79 institutions from 15 countries, 13 of which are in LAC. Its aim is to incorporate Latin American and Caribbean languages, cultures and contexts that may be under-represented in large global models. Furthermore, as it is open source, it allows developers to adapt it and build new solutions on that basis.

In a world where there is debate over who will develop the most advanced technologies and how they will be regulated, the region also needs to strengthen its own capabilities. **The question is no longer simply how to use AI, but what we can build with it and who we need to do so in LAC.**

The use of AI in LAC



Source: ECLAC

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