



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New surveys find that most Americans support AI regulation, believing that AI risk mitigation is a global priority

SAN FRANCISCO, 28 Sept 2023 – Rethink Priorities, a think tank that conducts research on important and neglected issues, has released the findings of three studies of U.S. public opinion on artificial intelligence (AI) policy and risk.

US Public Opinion of AI Policy and Risk

The first poll, titled "U.S. Public Opinion of AI Policy and Risk," surveyed a sample of 2,444 US adults, post-stratified to be representative of the U.S. population. Key findings from the study include:

- **Support for a pause on AI research outstrips opposition across different framings and surveys.** The study estimates that 51% of the population would support a temporary pause on some types of AI development, 25% would oppose, 20% remain neutral, and 4% don't know.
- **Many more people think AI should be regulated than think it should not.** The study estimates that 70% believe *Yes*, 21% believe *No*, and 9% don't know.
- **Expectation of extinction from AI is relatively low in the next 10 years but increases in the 50-year time horizon.** An estimated 9% of the population think AI-caused extinction to be moderately likely or more in the next 10 years, and 22% think this in the next 50 years.
- **AI ranks low among other perceived existential threats to humanity.** AI ranked below all four other specific existential threats asked in the survey, with an estimated 4% thinking AI is the most likely cause of human extinction. For reference, an estimated 42% of people selected nuclear war as the most likely cause of human extinction and 8% selected a pandemic.
- **Despite perceived risks, people tend to anticipate more benefits than harms from AI.** An estimated 48% expect more good than harm, 31% more harm than good, 19% expecting an even balance, and 2% reported no opinion.

U.S. Public Perceptions of CAIS Statement on AI Risk

The second poll, titled "U.S. public perception of CAIS statement and the risk of extinction," built upon the first study by examining the degree to which the American

public's views of AI risk aligned with an open statement from the Center for AI Safety (CAIS). The statement proposed that “mitigating the risk of extinction from AI should be a global priority alongside other societal-scale risks such as pandemics and nuclear war.” This study surveyed 2,407 U.S. adults, post-stratified to be representative of the U.S. population. Key findings include:

- **Attitudes towards the CAIS statement were positive.** A majority of the population supports (58%) and agrees with (59%) the CAIS statement, relative to 22% opposition and 26% disagreement.
- **Day-to-day worry about AI remains low.** The study estimated that most (68%) U.S. adults would say that, at most, they only worry a little bit in their daily lives about the possible negative effects of AI on their lives or society more broadly.
- **Public estimates of the chance of extinction this century from AI are highly varied: the most common estimate is around 1%.** Most people are expected to give relatively low probabilities to the chance of extinction from AI, but the median estimate is 15% and the mean is 26%.

Why some people disagree with the CAIS statement on AI

Given that the second poll found that 26% of the population disagreed with the CAIS statement, the third study examined the ways in which people disagreed with the statement. Of those who disagreed with the statement, the study found that:

- **36% of respondents found other priorities more important than AI risk.** Climate change in particular was commonly mentioned. This theme particularly strongly occurred among younger disagreeing respondents (43.3%) relative to older disagreeing respondents (27.8%).
- **23% of respondents rejected the idea that AI would cause extinction,** though some of these respondents agreed AI may pose other risks.
- **7.9% of respondents thought that AI was not yet a threat,** though it might be in the future.

View full reports

Our first report, "U.S. Public Opinion of AI Policy and Risk," conducted by researchers David Moss and Jamie Elsey, is available [here](#).

Our second report, "U.S. public perception of CAIS statement and the risk of extinction," conducted by researchers David Moss and Jamie Elsey, is available [here](#).

Our third report, "Why some people disagree with the CAIS statement on AI," conducted by researchers David Moss and Willem Slegers, is available [here](#).

About Rethink Priorities

Rethink Priorities, a think tank and research consultancy, has a mission to support organizations, researchers, and changemakers in their endeavors to create maximum

impact for humans and animals in the present and in the long-term future. Employing evidence-based approaches, the organization strives to identify areas where resources can be most effectively utilized and offers guidance in directing them towards those areas. This is achieved through conducting rigorous research to provide insights to policymakers and philanthropists, as well as facilitating the establishment of new organizations to tackle key challenges.

The scope of Rethink Priorities' work encompasses crucial and neglected areas, such as animal welfare, artificial intelligence, climate change, global health and development, and other initiatives aimed at safeguarding a thriving and sustainable future.

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