

# Public opinion in Australia

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We conducted an exploratory online survey of public opinion among N=153 Australian adults, with a mix by gender (skewed towards 60% female), age, and location on 17 April 2023. We covered a variety of topics in relation to AI x-risk.

Most respondents (53%) think it is somewhat likely or very likely that AI will eventually become more intelligent than people. **68% support the FLI's open letter to pause development of AI capabilities for 6 months.**

**40% of people are concerned about AI x-risk.** When asked “Which is more likely to cause mass extinction of humans during this century?” respondents answered:

- 59% Climate change
- 20% AI
- 22% Neither

## Amongst those who are concerned about x-risk:

- Only 10% think the risk is highest in the next three years. Many (31%) think it is **highest 4 to 10 years from now.**
- 59% believe it is possible to mitigate it by **regulation.**
- Respondents have suggested various **reasons why AI may cause the end of the human race** on Earth, such as taking over the world, becoming too powerful, creating weapons of mass destruction, replacing jobs, misusing technologies and gaining consciousness.
- **Best ways to avoid AI x-risk:** Our best chance of avoiding catastrophe caused by AI is to implement strict regulations and safeguards, reduce development and use, and ensure that humans are always in control. We should focus on using AI for beneficial purposes, such as medical research and helping people in need, and avoid using it for jobs that humans can do. We should also create fail-safes and limit its use to non-critical applications.

- 59% are comfortable talking about it with friends and family.

## Amongst those who are not concerned about x-risk:

- The most common reason why they are not concerned is that **regulators would not let it get that far** (23%), followed by AI developers not letting it go that far (20%).
- Respondents believe that AI is unlikely to cause the end of the human race on Earth, as it is not intelligent enough, cannot replace human intellect, and is monitored and regulated by humans. They also suggest that other factors, such as war, climate change, pandemics and overpopulation, are more likely to lead to the end of the human race.
- When asked to paint the portrait of someone talking about AI x-risk, they described these people as silly and probably paranoid, going too far, trying to manipulate, scaremongering and doomsaying, and opinionated.

**Only a minority of respondents tried using Chat-GPT** (16%), but many have heard of it without trying it out (48%). Most people (60%) are unsure if AI labs should be allowed to build and train AI models that are smarter than Chat-GPT.

In a series of question about beliefs about AI capability progress, respondents indicated that:

- 38% believe it should be slowed down;
- 27% believe it is fast;
- 23% believe it is at a safe pace;
- **64% believe we should control it;**
- 34% believe it can be controlled vs. 10% who believe it cannot be controlled;
- 37% believe the Australian government is ill-equipped to manage it vs. 10% who think it's well-equipped.

54% people believe government regulation is the best ways to mitigate the risk of human extinction from AI, followed by 50% who believe it's scientific research, 37% public education, and only 30% self-regulation by industry.

**75% of people believe the Australian government should regulate AI, but 48% are unsure if Australia adequately regulates AI.** 44% do not trust the government to do the right thing when it comes to AI. 46% believe the Australian government should fund AI development.

**73% support prohibition of AI research if it is shown to be unsafe.**

In our sample, 41% of people intended to vote for a Labor candidate at the next federal election, followed by 24% intending to vote LNP, and 13% for the Greens. 37% were Christians and 49% were non-religious.

### [Survey flow of AI survey AU 16 April](#)

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