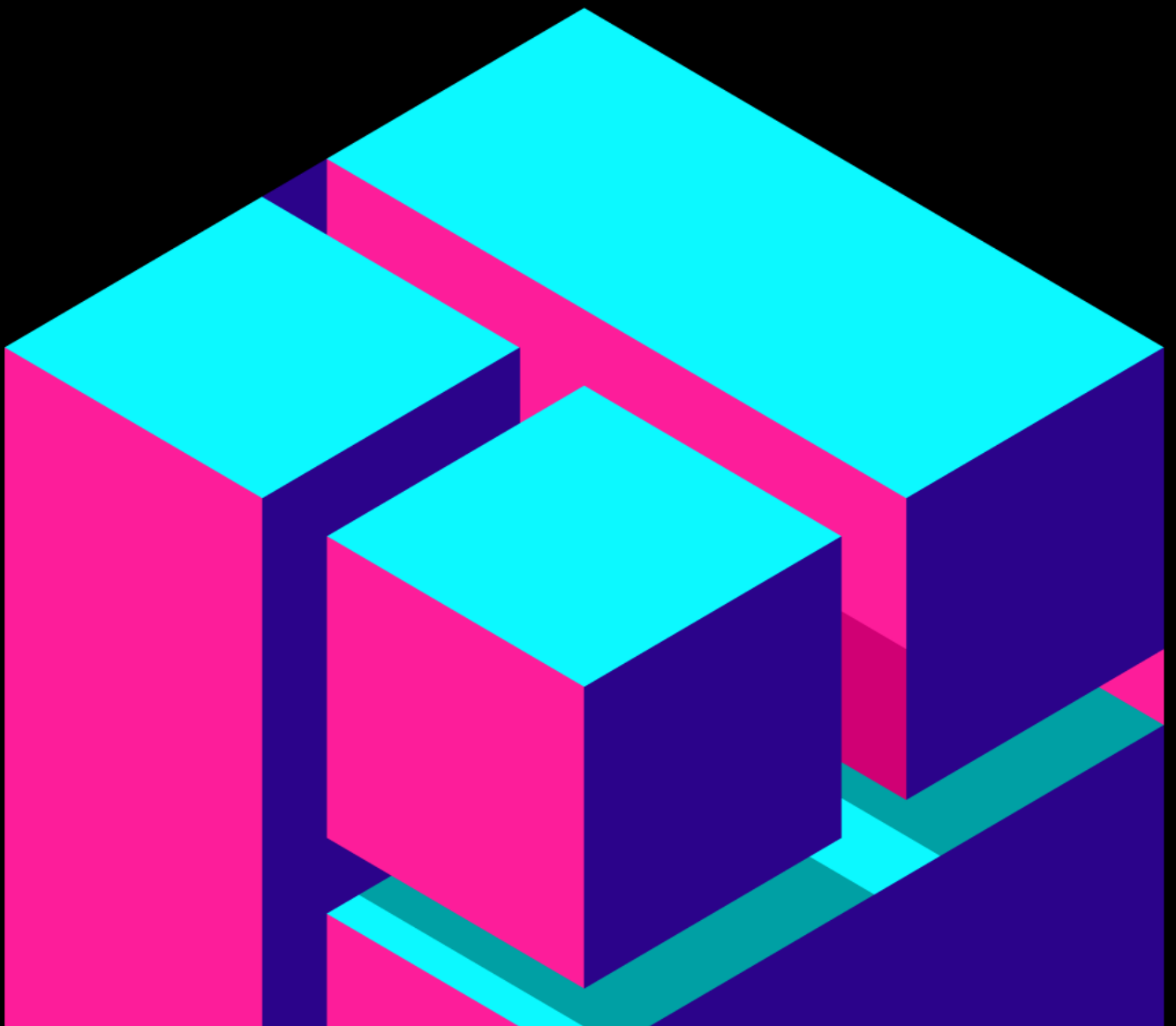# How Australians feel about the rise of AI

Second edition 2024/25 | ACT, NSW and Victoria

Some key findings from this year's survey

01 The Compassion Gap

There is strong, continuing concern about a Compassion Gap – the risk that the world becomes less compassionate as more decisions are delegated to AI in business and government.

Underlying this is a belief by 74.7% of respondents that AIs are worse than typical humans at being compassionate, with a third believing that they lack the compassion of even the least compassionate humans.

02 A Creative Leap

There is a growing sense in the community that AIs are overtaking humans with respect to creativity, with 49% believing that AIs are as least as creative as typical humans, and 8% believing that AI has surpassed all humans.

03 A decline in trust

People believe that AI's trustworthiness will get better over the next decade – however, people's perceptions of AI trustworthiness compared to humans has fallen significantly since last year's survey.

In 2023, 52% of people believed that AIs would become more trustworthy than typical humans in a decade. This year, that percentage fell to 37%.

04 A mix of optimism and pessimism

There is a mix of optimism and pessimism about how AIs will impact our lives, as well as a significant proportion of people who feel that AI won't have much personal impact.

Of the three states/territories we surveyed, ACT had the highest degree of positive sentiment (49% positive against 29% negative) relating to use of AI by government.

In contrast, NSW and Victoria saw negative sentiment outweighing positive sentiment in this area by 11% and 8% respectively.

05 Conscious AI and human rights

About 1 in 4 respondents believed that, if an AI becomes conscious, it should be afforded at least some level of human rights.

Read more research intelligence in our Rise of AI Report 2024 edition.

Artificial is becoming part of our lives, but our caution is growing

With astonishing speed, artificial intelligences are become part of our daily lives. They are our (visible or hidden) advisors, assistants, creative partners and tutors.

In this edition of our Rise of AI survey, 58% of respondents reported direct use of an AI – primarily Large Language Models like ChatGPT, Copilot and Google Gemini, but with a mix of other AI classes like image generators or productivity tools.

What level of trust should we have in AIs? What tasks should we entrust to them, or keep within the domain of humans? What opportunities should government and business embrace?

As a society, what limits should we put in place to safeguard what's important?

There are no easy answers to these questions. AIs outperform humans in many areas, and act as engines for research, creativity and productivity. But they are also vulnerable to bias, they 'hallucinate', they sometimes can't meaningfully show why they arrived at a conclusion or a decision.

Perhaps most importantly, they model humans, but lack genuine humanity – a product of our consciousness and empathy. Last year, we saw concern for about a 'Compassion Gap' – the risk that the world becomes less compassionate as more decisions were delegated to AI. This year, the Compassion Gap was on our minds more than ever.

ThinkPlace^x's second perception tracking survey explores how Australians in ACT, NSW and Victoria view AI's role in society, and how this is changing over time.

Would you rather trust an AI or a human jury with your liberty? An AI or a human doctor with your health? An AI or a human accountant with your finances? If traits like compassion, trustworthiness and creativity are important to you, how do you feel AIs compare to humans today? What about in 2034? What impact will AI's use by government and industry have on your life?

We invite you to engage with these insights, and consider the shape of your preferred future as we move deeper into the age of AI.

Our study in numbers:

444 responses, of which...

47 — identified as Indigenous Australians

62 — Identified as living with disability

57 — identified as culturally/linguistically diverse

41% Identified as male... | 59% as female... | <1% as non-binary/other

Note: This study's overall margin of error is 4.65% against a 95% confidence level, calculated using ABS cohort data for jurisdictions in-scope of the study. Low-quality/low-confidence responses have been excluded from the response count and from analysis.

Exploration 1: Imagine that...

When things get serious, do people want to rely on an AI or on a human?

3 scenarios that characterise and contrast our trust in AIs vs humans

We asked respondents to think about three scenarios that represented a dimension of personal risk – either health, financial or legal. For each scenario, they could select if they would prefer a human or an AI to be involved in a critical role that could – positively or negatively – impact their lives.

We observed that trust in the use of AI in these life domains generally displayed a sense of caution, with a slight decline in trust in AI evident from last year's study. It is clear that most people want other humans to have the the greatest influence in decisions that affect their lives.

However, there is a significant part of the population that is willing to consider the advice of AI as a supplement to that of humans, and 10%-20% of people expressed readiness to rely on AI judgement in all scenarios.

The 3 scenarios

If you had a health issue that needed medication, would you choose a doctor or an AI to prescribe it?

Would you be more willing to entrust your tax return to a human accountant or an AI?

If you were charged with a serious crime, and were innocent, would you prefer a human jury or an AI determine your innocence or guilt at your trial?

Scenario 1: If you had a health issue that needed medication, would you choose a doctor or an AI to prescribe it?

It is 2024. Your doctor prescribes you an antibiotic medication for an infection. Later that day, you go to a pharmacy to get your medicine. At the pharmacy, you are offered a free consultation with an AI. The AI asks you a number of questions about you and your health issue, similar to those asked by the doctor earlier that day, and then prescribes a different antibiotic medication.

Which prescription would you ask the pharmacist to fill?

Preferred option in 2024			Change from 2023	
The human doctor's prescription	71.4%	██████	▲	+3.7%
The AI's prescription	12.6%	█	▼	−1.1%
Neither, I'd go back to my human doctor for clarification, at a financial and time cost	16.0%	█	▼	−2.6%

General Trend
Responses showed a strong continuing preference towards a human doctor, with a small decline in trust for AI overall since last year.

Gender
Women were 5% more likely to be willing to accept an AI's prescription over one originating from a human doctor or from an AI with a doctor 'in the loop'.

Age
Preference towards an AI declined with age.

In age cohorts below 60 years old, about 1 in 5 would accept the AI prescription. This falls sharply in the 60+ cohort to less than 1 in 20.

While the higher presence of complex/co-morbid health conditions in older cohorts could be a driver of this, this decline in trust by older people in the use of AI for significant real-world decisions was consistent across other life domains, indicating a general trend.
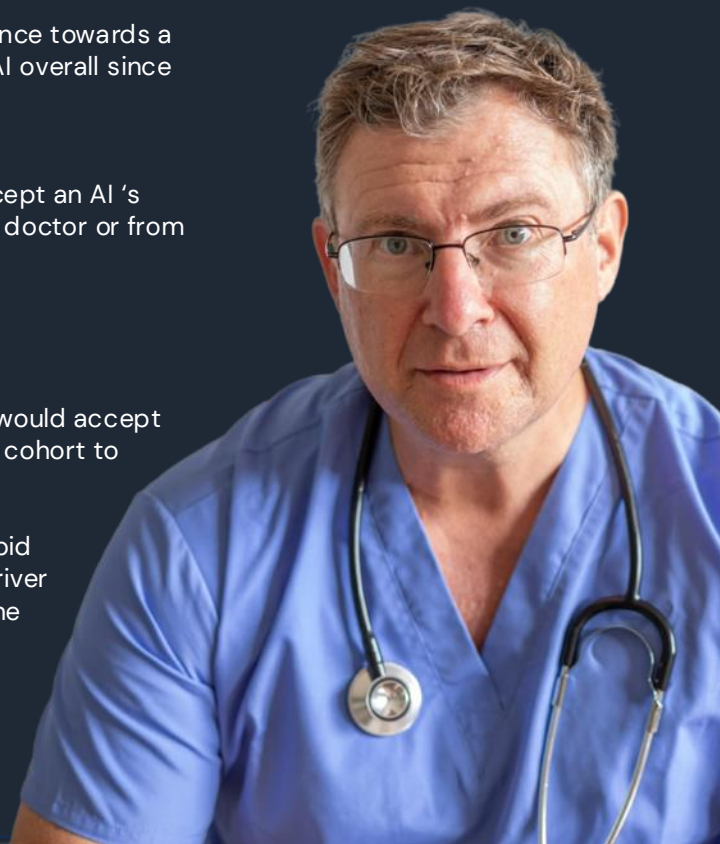
Scenario 2: Would you be more willing to entrust your tax return to a human accountant or an AI?

It is 2024. Your accountant offers you a new service where an AI can complete your tax return at a reduced cost. Which of the following services would you prefer in this situation?

Preferred option in 2024			Change from 2023
Human accountant only, at a high cost	27.3%		▼ -1.3%
Artificial intelligence only, at a low cost	23.8%		▲ +0.2%
Artificial intelligence, with a 15-minute review by a human accountant, at a medium cost	48.9%		▲ +1.1%

General trend
As was the case last year, people tended to prefer an AI with a human accountant in the loop, over a cheaper AI-only service. About a quarter of respondents were willing to lodge a tax return prepared by an AI.

Gender
Men were more trusting of AI for accounting matters, with 76% preferring a less expensive, AI-enabled service – 6% more than women.

Age
Preference towards AI-only financial services generally declined with age, with fewer than 1 in 5 people in the 60+ age cohort willing to use a less expensive, AI-enabled service.

However, the preference for an AI service with human review that reduced accounting fees increased with age, with the 50-59 and 80+ cohorts having the highest preference for a human-in-the-loop service at 58%.

Scenario 3: If you were charged with a serious crime, and were innocent, would you prefer a human jury or an AI determine your innocence or guilt at your trial?

It is 2024. You have been charged with a serious crime, and you are innocent. You are given the choice at your trial about whether you would prefer a human jury or an AI jury to decide if you are innocent or guilty. Which would you prefer?

Preferred option in 2024			Change from 2023
Strongly prefer a human jury	60.4%		▲ +0.8%
Somewhat prefer a human jury	20.3%		▲ +3.3%
Don't mind which	7.7%		▼ -2.0%
Somewhat prefer an AI	10.1%		▼ -1.9%
Strongly prefer an AI	1.6%		▼ -0.1%

General trend
Over 80% of people responded with a preference towards human juries, with less than 2% of respondents expressing a strong preference for an AI jury.

Gender
Gender was not a significant factor that drove preferences for or against an AI jury.

Age
While age did not significantly change people's preference in most cases, the strongest aversion to AI juries were the youngest (18–29) and oldest (80+) cohorts in the survey, with a 0% expressed preference for AI-only justice.

Other factors
For this scenario, some demographic factors drove responses that diverged from the general population:

- Culturally/linguistically diverse people had 'strong' preference for human juries (72% - vs 59% for the general population)

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People, on the other hand, showed a 20% preference towards AI juries – over double that expressed by the general population or any other cohort

Exploration 2: How do AIs rate?

What is the community perception of how the most advanced AIs and humans compare for important traits, today and in the future?

How the community assesses AI with respect to three important 'human' traits, now and in the future

The most sophisticated AIs are now able to pass for human – but in reality, they are far – perhaps a decade, perhaps a century – from developing anything like human consciousness.

Still, it it is possible and even useful to attribute human-like traits to AIs, so that we can have a touchstone for how they meet our needs and expectations, as their role in human society continues to grow.

Can we trust AIs? Are they truth-tellers? Can they show – or at least behave in a way that emulates – compassion? Are they creative?

We asked respondents to share their perception about AIs, and how they compare against human for three important traits. The three traits are:

Compassion

Trustworthiness

Creativity

Are AIs more or less compassionate than humans today? What about in 10 years' time?

Perceptions of AI compassion today

We see compassion as a fundamentally human trait. A strong majority of respondents – 74.7% – felt that AIs would be worse than typical humans at being compassionate, with a third believing that they lack the compassion of even the least compassionate humans.
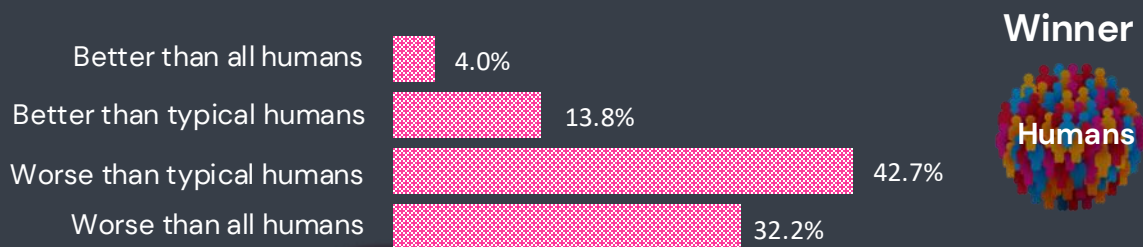
Perceptions of AI compassion in the future

Respondents generally believed that by 2034, AIs will become more compassionate over time. The level of belief in low-compassion AIs reduced by 12.7% to 60%, but belief that compassion is the domain of humanity - at least for the next decade – remained a clear majority view.

The Compassion Gap has persisted

Last year, we saw significant concern about the emergence of a 'Compassion Gap', where people are worried that as AIs displace humans in decision-making roles, compassion would become absent in many decisions that affect people's lives. This year, the level of concern about a Compassion Gap has remained consistent, but with more respondents giving voice to it explicitly.

Today, how do AIs rate on compassion, compared to humans?

Better than all humans	4.0%
Better than typical humans	13.8%
Worse than typical humans	42.7%
Worse than all humans	32.2%

Winner

Humans

By 2034, how do you think AIs will rate on compassion, compared to humans?

Better than all humans	7.5%
Better than typical humans	23.3%
Worse than typical humans	40.9%
Worse than all humans	21.1%

Winner
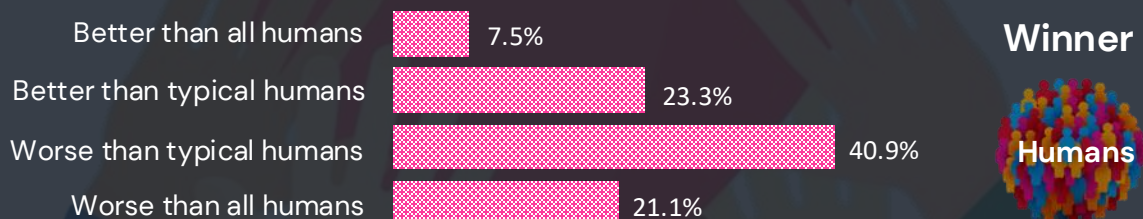
Humans

Are AIs more or less trustworthy than humans today? What about in 10 years' time?

Perceptions of AI trustworthiness today

Most respondents felt that, currently, AIs are about as trustworthy as typical humans. Only a minority of those we asked felt that they were more trustworthy (5.1%) or less trustworthy (12.3%) than all humans.

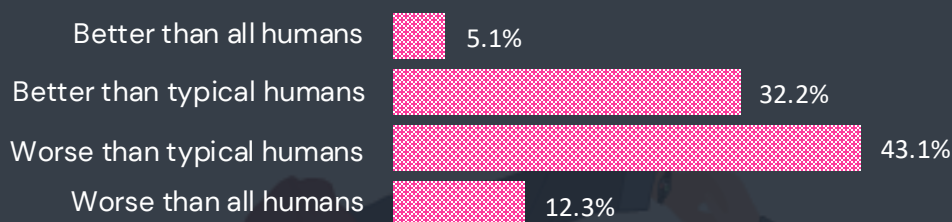## Perceptions of AI trustworthiness in the future

This shifts somewhat in a ten-year timeframe. People's perceptions are that AI's trustworthiness will improve by 2034, with:

- 48.6% of respondents believing AIs will be more trustworthy than typical humans – a jump of 11.3% from today

- The number of people who believe AI trustworthiness will exceed that of humans by 2032 more than doubling, at 10.7%

An overall decline from last year

Interestingly, while the overarching belief is still that AI's trustworthiness will get better over the next decade, people's perceptions of AI trustworthiness has fallen significantly. In 2023, 52% of people believed that AIs would become more trustworthy than typical humans in a decade. This year, that percentage fell to 37%.

Today, how do AIs rate on trustworthiness, compared to humans?

Better than all humans	5.1%
Better than typical humans	32.2%
Worse than typical humans	43.1%
Worse than all humans	12.3%

Winner

Humans

By 2034, how do you think AIs will rate on trustworthiness, compared to humans?

Better than all humans	10.7%
Better than typical humans	37.9%
Worse than typical humans	34.8%
Worse than all humans	9.3%

Winner

AI
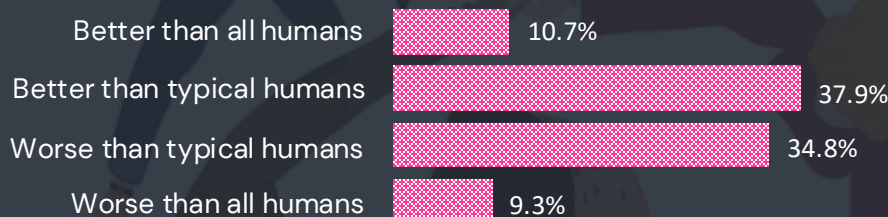
Are AIs more or less creative than humans today? What about in 10 years' time?

Perceptions of AI creativity today

In contrast to last year's findings, respondents today felt that AIs have now overtaken human creativity, with 48.6% believing that AIs are as least as creative as typical humans, and 8.1% believing that AI have surpassed all humans.
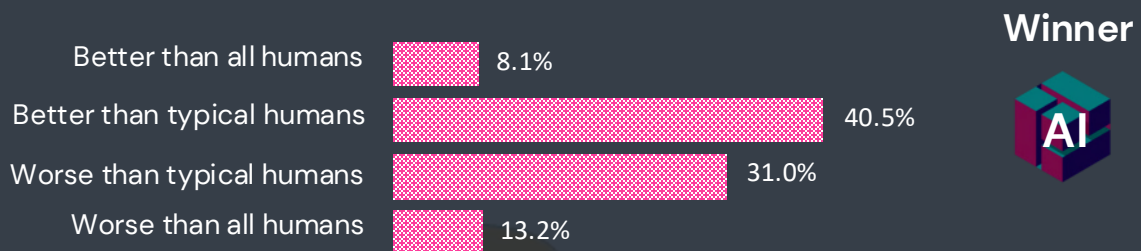
Perceptions of AI creativity in the future

By 2034, most respondents believe that AIs will improve further. Almost 1 in 10 people believe that AI creativity will surpass all of humanity's creativity in the next decade.

## 2024 is the year Australians believe AIs have broken through, creatively speaking

Between the creativity demonstrated by large language models, image generators, music generators, and more recently, video generation, it is perhaps unsurprising that people's perception of AI creativity has shifted quickly in the past year. By some estimates, over 30 million images are being generated each day by AIs, and 10s of millions of chat prompts are being processed by Large Language Models.

The burst of creativity emerging from AI is making its presence felt around the world, and Australia is no exception, with the "better than typical humans" rating jumping from 34% to 40.5% over the last 12 months.

Today, how do AIs rate on creativity, compared to humans?

Winner

Better than all humans	8.1%
Better than typical humans	40.5%
Worse than typical humans	31.0%
Worse than all humans	13.2%

By 2034, how do you think AIs will rate on creativity, compared to humans?

Winner

Better than all humans	17.0%
Better than typical humans	42.5%
Worse than typical humans	23.5%
Worse than all humans	9.7%
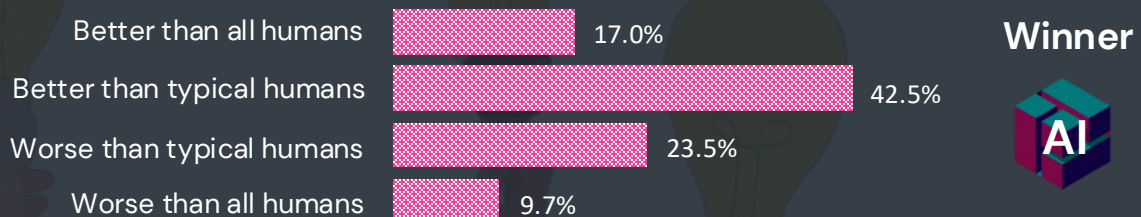
Exploration 3: What should happen when AIs achieve consciousness?

It's not clear how far away machines that qualify as 'conscious' are...but if and when it happens, how do people feel about assigning human rights to artificial intelligences?

If AIs become conscious, similar to humans, should they be granted human rights?

Today, the clear consensus of experts is that even the most sophisticated Large Language Models like OpenAI's ChatGPT and Google Gemini lack consciousness – self-awareness, subjective experiences, true emotions.

But – whether it's in 10 years or a 100 – conscious AI is a real possibility, with some researchers believing the first glimmers of consciousness are already evident in AI today.

So how will society respond once AI does become conscious? In particular, should we grant conscious AIs any of the rights we currently think of as 'human rights'?

23% of respondents believe that, at least to some extent, consciousness intelligence – whether human or machine – should enjoy some level of human rights.

Opinion prevalence: We should grant AIs some/all human rights if they become conscious

All respondents	**23%**	
ACT	21%	
NSW	22%	
Victoria	23%	
Men	22%	
Women	24%	

Exploration 4: What do we hope for? What do we fear?

What did the community say about the risks and the opportunities that AI present to society, or to them personally, as our use continues to increase and AIs' power continues to improve?

How do you feel the use of Artificial Intelligence will affect your life?

There is a mix of optimism and pessimism about how AIs will impact our lives, as well as a significant proportion of people who feel that AI won't have much personal impact.

Use by business
- 8%
- 34%
- 23%
- 26%
- 9%

Use by government
- 7%
- 32%
- 21%
- 30%
- 10%

■ Very positively   ■ Somewhat positively
■ It will have no effect on me   ■ Somewhat negatively
■ Very negatively
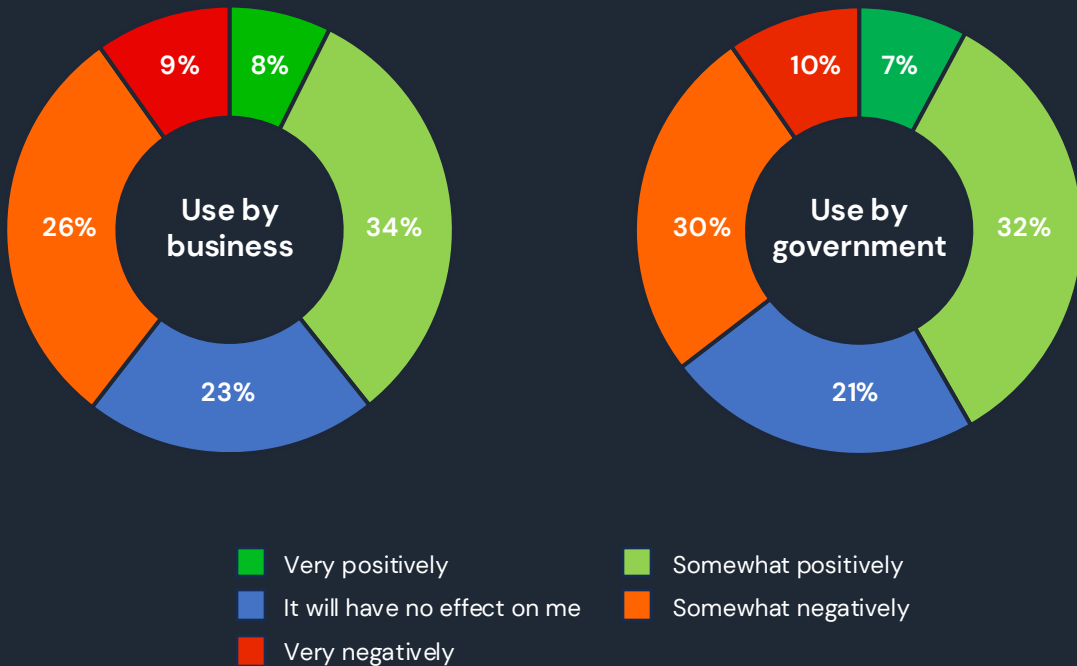
NSW and Victoria have pessimistic views about the use of AI by government. ACT was significantly more optimistic.
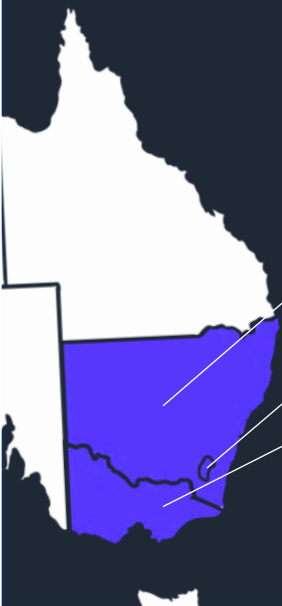
NSW: 32% positive sentiment , 43% negative sentiment about the use of AI by Government

ACT: 49% positive sentiment, 29% negative sentiment about the use of AI by Government

Victoria: 34% positive sentiment, 42% negative sentiment about the use of AI by Government

Theme 1: A compassion gap

As AIs become more prevalent in government and business, there is growing community concern that compassion will become more and more absent from society. People see compassion as both important and as the domain of humans, and are worried that the widespread adoption of AI will strip this out of many parts of our lives.

Indicative quotes

"I hope they don't use it, as the Robodebt issue showed, there is no compassion in computers"

"I think it will take the humanity out of things"

"There is no humanity or compassion with AI and that is an important consideration when making decisions"

"Decisions made by AI won't be able to take into account the compassion and human reasoning that humans can"

"I am very concerned about artificial intelligence as it has no feelings or compassion"

"I feel it is impersonal and not as accurate as human kind needs."

"Hope is to create a more advanced and livable [sic] world with AI. Concern is human will become more distant from each other and over controlled by AI"

"My concern regarding the use of AI in government is empathy, compassion and mercy. AI is only as good as the person that programs it. I am not sure that AI can have emotions like humans"

"Well I certainly hope they won't be using them [for] injuries or to replace a doctors because I firmly believed that you cannot replace these human abilities. A lot of what these humans do in these jobs are also related to compassion, a hunch if you want to call it That gut feeling, that a computer could never recreate"

Note: to ensure no bias is introduced through an editing process, no spelling or grammatical corrections have been applied to quotes from the research.

Theme 2: Job insecurity

Fear is growing about job losses associated with AI adoption by business, with people worried about their job security and that of their children. While many are optimistic about the opportunity presented by AI for better, more productive and more personalised business performance, job insecurity emerged as a dominant economic theme.

Indicative quotes

"It will take over the world we will not have any jobs or security with AI"

"I'm concerned whether AI will replace jobs and lead to unemployment"

"The loss of jobs and the mental health and housing crisis that comes with that."

"Eventually there will be no jobs left for humans and robots and AI will have taken over and then the government will just have to hand out money to everyone to survive"

"I hope it will make life easier and concerned it might replace real people in jobs"

"There will be less jobs for humans"

"I hope that it is governed responsibly and doesn't start taking over people's jobs and making life worse for so many people"

"People jobs might be in jeopardy"

'It will eliminate so many human jobs and the government still requires so much human elements"

"As a poor person, I don't want AI to save money for business owners and make finding a job for everyone else infinitely more difficult with zero support or fundamental structural change to society. If it can do my job snd [sic] I can still enjoy life, great"

Note: to ensure no bias is introduced through an editing process, no spelling or grammatical corrections have been applied to quotes from the research.

Theme 3: A take-over

In 2023, there was significant concern about existential risk – that AIs would become conscious and enslave or eliminate humanity. This fear's prevalence has declined significantly (but has not gone away). There is also growing concern that AIs will displace humans, leading to more time spent dealing/complying with with AIs or experiencing AI-generated content and decisions.

Indicative quotes

"I feel AI technology is increasing at a rate faster than our human population can keep up with"

"That we will become over-reliant and accepting of a black box and then without knowing why or how decisions are made, be forced to accept them with no other options given"

"[I am worried about] It's impact on the creative endeavours such as music and art"

"Scared that they are taking over the world and will start wars that were cannot control"

"I worry about the intelligence levels of future generations of humans."

"We should not replace the work of actual humans with AI at all. Look at Robodebt and how that disaster ruined lives"

"I am concerned that we will rely too much on AI and humans will lose skills. People will definitely lose social skills and our society will be more insular. It will be harder for younger people to developed into emotionally mature adults"

"I'm concerned that AI is getting out of hand and that it will eventually run the whole country"

"Artificial Intelligence will destroy the world"

"They will take over"

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Theme 4: Better lives, better world

There is optimism that AI can have a positive impact on both our lives and our world. As individuals, people see that AI can improve the services they receive, making things more personalised and accurate, and taking away onerous tasks. For the community, they feel that there are problems AI can help solve that have remained intractable until now. These are reasons to embrace AI, cautiously.

Indicative quotes

"My hope is that AI can be used to help solve major issues like climate change, but I fear that it could have negative consequences"

"Hope is to create a more advanced and liveable world with AI. Concern is human will become more distant from each other and over controlled by AI"

"I hope they continue to use it to find cures for diseases and actually helping people instead of making life harder"

"Basic human necessities made easier"

"Eliminating language barriers"

"Improved safety and security with AI"

"I hope it will help us solve issues that we have been unable to solve previously"

"AI can streamline and enhance public services, making them more efficient and accessible. For example, AI could help in managing traffic, improving healthcare delivery, and optimising resource allocation"

"I have hopes that it will automate our lives and make them easier, but I'm worried about the trust we will put into the systems beyond their capabilities"

Note: to ensure no bias is introduced through an editing process, no spelling or grammatical corrections have been applied to quotes from the research.

Theme 5: Government caution

Opinions about Government and AI are mixed. Some see that there is an opportunity to speed up decisions or assist with better decision-making. Others see it as perilous, with potential for introducing bias, a loss of privacy or a deluge of disinformation and deepfakes. Robodebt – even though it was not an AI system - remains on people's mind as an evidence point about how government technology can go wrong.

Indicative quotes

"I hope it makes government make better decisions and policies, especially with infrastructure projects"

"I am concerned it will be used to formulate policies without adequate consultation or understanding of the human element"

"as long as the government can be trusted to handle it for the good of the people I have no problems with it"

"I hope the government uses it for positive purposes to save time/have new ideas instead of accessing data or doing anything negative"

"Bias in data analytics and prejudice"

"Reduce the cost of services and regulation"

"We should not replace the work of actual humans with AI at all. Look at Robodebt and how that disaster ruined lives"

"I just hope it can offer unbiased solutions to any present and future problems"

"Using AI to better spend the budget and make better decisions based on numbers and facts rather than thinking about votes"

"streamlining services and more efficiency, better decision making"

"Collection of my history in all aspects of my life would feel like I was under survellence [sic] no privacy"

Note: to ensure no bias is introduced through an editing process, no spelling or grammatical corrections have been applied to quotes from the research.

Theme 6: Regulate it

There is support for a governmental role in regulating AI so that it works for society. People are concerned that things are moving fast, and that unregulated AI will be used inappropriately, without enough care, or in ways that will be detrimental to their lives. Some also want to ensure that regulation doesn't reduce the opportunity for positive impact that AI might otherwise have.

Indicative quotes

"[I hope] That it's strongly regulated in regards to commercial use"

"they put regulations in place so you know when you have been interacting with AI"

"I feel AI technology is increasing at a rate faster than our human population can keep up with. AI needs to be better regulated by government and business"

"[I'm worried] That they will regulate it to the point where it isn't helpful"

"At the moment far too few checks and balances needs more regulation"

"I want strong governance and legislation of the use of AI"

"Regulations need to be implemented"

"That it's properly regulated and monitored"

"[I hope] that it doesnt [sic] get too regulated"

"Regulation of AI, to ensure it is reliable and authentic"

"It's crucial for there to be transparent policies and regulations in place to ensure that the deployment of AI in government serves the public interest and minimises risks"

"It will be used for things that bring us joy – art, creativity, and funding will be cut to these sectors. They won't act fast enough to develop laws around the usage of AI and the ethics. You already see it with deep fakes etc. and it's scary"

Note: to ensure no bias is introduced through an editing process, no spelling or grammatical corrections have been applied to quotes from the research.

Want to know more?

We are able to provide executive and decision-maker briefings to government agencies, UN bodies and NGOs that meet ethics screening requirements.

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