

Date: February 3, 2026

Re: Initial Findings on AI's Populist Moment: Voters Want Accountability, Not Opposition

Executive Summary

Over the past six months, we have conducted tens of thousands of interviews nationally with likely voters to understand how Americans are processing AI and this rapidly evolving technology. What follows is a synthesis of our initial findings and represents early patterns we're observing with voters today.

Industry benchmarks show AI capabilities are advancing on an exponential curve. AI now handles tasks that take human experts four to five hours, up from a few seconds in 2019. If the trend holds, **we should expect AI will complete week-long projects independently by the 2028 primaries.**

Our aim is to help Democrats navigate this issue thoughtfully and seize what we see as a political opportunity to ensure AI's development serves broad prosperity rather than narrow interests – particularly in an environment where voters are deeply skeptical of concentrated economic power and elite decision-making.

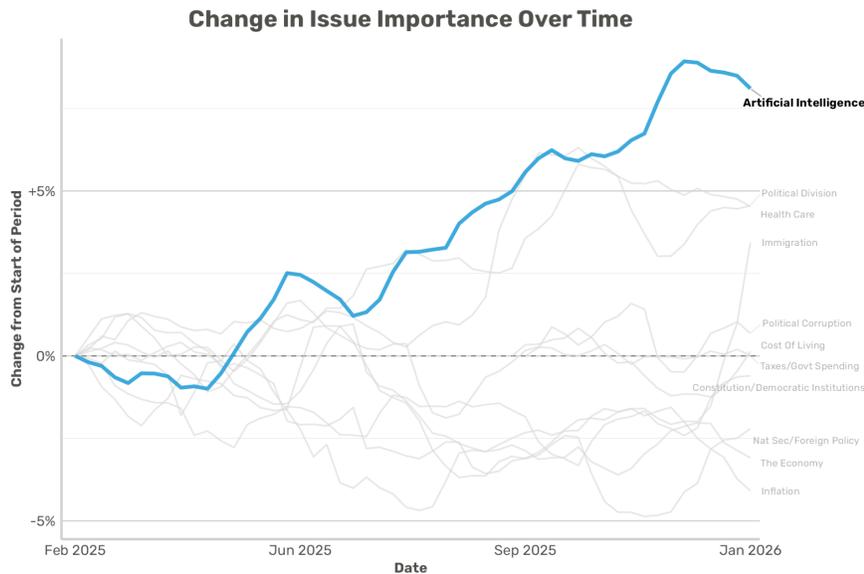
Key Takeaways

- **AI is rising in importance faster than any other issue facing Americans today.** Voters now rate AI as a more important issue to the country than the environment, war in the Middle East, climate change, child care, abortion, student debt, and LGBTQ issues.
- **AI is arriving at a populist moment in which trust in institutions has completely collapsed.** Today, nearly two-thirds of voters say America is rigged for the elite, and more than half say the current economic system is not working. All policy decisions regarding AI must be viewed through these fundamentals of voters' worldviews.
- **Voters are anxious about what AI will mean for them.** While voters lean slightly optimistic about AI's development overall (particularly amongst young, male, and non-white voters), that optimism fades when voters consider potential long-term societal impacts and the speed at which AI is advancing.
- **Voters see clear value from some applications of AI, namely those that save and improve lives,** like breakthroughs in health care, scientific discoveries, and preventing cyberattacks or online crime. But they also have deep fear that human judgment may be displaced by AI, that their data will be harvested, and that tech companies will become too powerful to hold accountable.
- **Voters respond best when messaging validates their anxieties and answers them with concrete protections and a vision for broadly sharing the material benefits created by AI.** The top-performing messages keep humans in charge of high-stakes decisions, protect people from fraud, and tax AI profits to fund Social Security and Medicare. A federal jobs guarantee earns broad support across partisan lines – but design matters: benefits must feel earned, tied to dignified work and programs voters already trust. The political space is open for whoever claims it first.

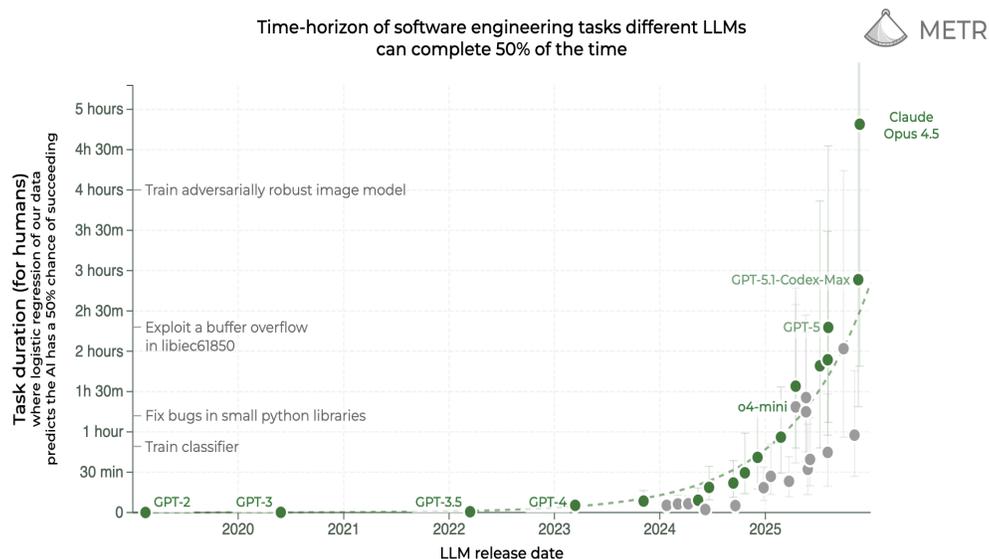
Details for each question can be found sequentially in the Polling Appendix.

AI Is Less Important Today Than It Will Ever Be

The importance of AI has risen steadily in our issue tracking over the past year. Voters now rate it as a more important issue to the country than the environment, war in the Middle East, climate change, child care, abortion, student debt, and LGBTQ issues. AI is still rated below average overall - cost of living, the economy, inflation, health care, and political corruption dominate - but the relative importance of AI has increased by 8 percentage points over the last year, the fastest increase in importance out of all issues we track.



Economic and societal disruptions from AI will happen sooner than most realize. The length of software engineering tasks AI can reliably complete - measured by how long those tasks take a skilled human - is doubling every seven months. In 2019, AI handled tasks taking humans a few seconds. Today's best models handle tasks that take human experts four to five hours. If the trend holds, AI will independently complete week-long projects by the 2028 presidential primaries. This sets the stage for widespread disruptions over a 1-3 year horizon.



AI's Populist Moment

AI arrives at a moment when trust in institutions has collapsed. Nearly two thirds of voters (64%) believe America is rigged for the elite and that big corporations and the wealthy play by their own set of rules; just 26% believe things are fair. Similarly, a majority (56%) say the economic system is not working. (Figure 1 in appendix) Just 6% report feeling happy or content with the current system. (Figure 2)

Which comes closer to your view?

Response	Overall	Harris 2024	Swing 2020 x 2024	Trump 2024	Did Not Vote 2024
Things in America are rigged for the elite. Big corporations and the wealthy play by their own set of rules, and only they can get ahead.	64%	88%	67%	41%	66%
Things in America are mostly fair for everyone. If you work hard and play by the rules, you can get ahead.	26%	6%	23%	47%	21%
Not sure	10%	6%	11%	13%	13%

Source: Surveys via online web panels, N=6,260 December 8-9

This low-trust, populist context supercharges voters' fears about elites who stand to benefit from AI. Just 27% of voters trust tech companies a lot or some to develop AI to do the right thing. (Figure 3) And by a +52 point margin, voters overwhelmingly agree that decisions about AI should not be left to a small group of private tech companies.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

"Decisions about how AI is developed and used should not be left alone to a small group of private tech companies."

Response	Overall	Harris	Swing	Trump	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+
Strongly agree	42%	46%	36%	39%	33%	34%	42%	50%
Somewhat agree	27%	26%	29%	30%	30%	31%	28%	24%
Somewhat disagree	8%	7%	10%	8%	11%	9%	8%	6%
Strongly disagree	9%	10%	11%	9%	11%	11%	9%	8%
Not sure	14%	11%	14%	15%	16%	16%	14%	12%
Total agree	69%	72%	65%	68%	63%	65%	70%	74%
Total disagree	17%	17%	21%	16%	21%	20%	17%	14%
Net	52%	55%	44%	52%	42%	45%	53%	60%

Source: Surveys via online web panels, N=5,008 January 17-18

As a result, voters are looking for greater oversight on the development of AI. 61% believe that the government should be doing more to regulate AI. (Figure 4) And by a 28 point margin, voters say AI development should be “actively managed to ensure its benefits are shared broadly across society” – over “allowing the private sector to lead AI development, trusting that innovation will benefit society over time.” (Figure 5)

But as candidates and lawmakers step into this void, they need to be mindful of voters' own distrust of them. When asked who should make the most decisions about how AI is being developed, voters are split between outside experts at non-profits and universities (33%), business leaders (18%), and governments (17%). (Figure 6)

To illustrate this point further, when we asked voters to choose who they had more trust in – AI chatbots like ChatGPT or their elected Member of Congress: While overall voters are still inclined to trust their members more (26% chatBots to 40% Members), among voters aged 18-34 the balance of trust is nearly even (35% chatBots to 38% Members).

Who do you have more trust in: AI chatbots like ChatGPT or your elected Member of Congress?

Response	Overall	Harris	Swing	Trump	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+
I trust AI chatbots like ChatGPT much more	9%	10%	10%	8%	12%	11%	11%	6%
I trust AI chatbots like ChatGPT somewhat more	17%	18%	20%	17%	23%	22%	17%	13%
I trust my elected Member of Congress somewhat more	24%	25%	25%	25%	23%	22%	24%	27%
I trust my elected Member of Congress much more	16%	16%	15%	17%	15%	14%	15%	18%
Not sure	33%	31%	29%	33%	26%	31%	33%	36%

Source: Surveys via online web panels, N=8,009 January 17-18

The Optimism-Anxiety Paradox

Voters hold seemingly contradictory views on AI depending on the context you ask them to consider:

Voters are slightly optimistic about the long-term development of AI. Overall they lean slightly more optimistic (44%) about the future development of AI than pessimistic (41%). (Figure 7) Optimism overall is driven by men (+10), younger voters (+11), and non-white voters (Black +14; Hispanic +9, Asian +12).

Generally speaking, would you say you are optimistic or pessimistic about the future development of Artificial Intelligence?

Category	Subgroup	Optimistic	Pessimistic	Not sure	Net
	Overall	44%	41%	15%	2.8%
Gender	Women	40%	43%	17%	-3.2%
	Men	48%	39%	13%	9.8%
Age	18-34	47%	36%	17%	11.1%
	35-49	46%	40%	15%	6.2%

	50-64	43%	42%	14%	0.9%
	65+	41%	44%	15%	-3.5%
	White Non-College	41%	43%	16%	-2.2%
	White College	46%	44%	11%	1.6%
Race w/ White College Split	Black	47%	33%	20%	13.5%
	Hispanic	46%	36%	18%	9.4%
	Asian	48%	36%	16%	11.8%
	Native American	43%	39%	18%	4.7%

Source: Surveys via online web panels, N=2,647 December 30-31

AI optimism and usage are interlinked: Most voters have tried using AI tools themselves, and AI users report using these tools for everyday tasks like searching for information, brainstorming ideas, and writing. (Figures 8-9) That personal experience appears to shape broader attitudes: voters who use AI frequently agree that “things are generally headed in the right direction” by a slight 3 point margin. By contrast, voters who do *not* frequently use AI are far more negative, believing “things are off on the wrong track” by a 17 point margin. (Figure 10)

But voters' moods darken when they think about their practical expectations for the future.

By 13 points, voters are more pessimistic (39%) about AI's long-term *impact* on society than optimistic (18%). (Figure 11) A majority (57%) say it's moving too fast. (Figure 12) And the vast majority (69%) believe AI surpassing human intelligence would be more harmful rather than beneficial. (Figure 13)

Negative perceptions of AI are not purely downstream of broader angst about Big Tech – there's a specific concern about AI companies and their role in building this future. Anthropic, OpenAI, and especially xAI have net negative favorability ratings. This is especially stark when compared to other major players in Big Tech – Google, Amazon, Facebook – who maintain net positive favorability ratings nationally.

It is important to note, however, that positive brand favorability largely reflects voters' day-to-day experiences as consumers, not trust in these companies' broader societal impact or political responsibility. In other words, Americans may like using these products while simultaneously believing they cause real harm.

Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of [company]?				
Company	Net Favorability	Favorable	Unfavorable	Haven't heard enough to say
Google	+58%	78%	19%	3%
Amazon	+56%	76%	21%	3%
Facebook	+27%	62%	35%	3%
Twitter X	-16%	32%	48%	19%
Anthropic	-5%	8%	13%	79%
OpenAI	-7%	29%	36%	35%
xAI	-22%	11%	33%	56%

Source: Surveys via online web panels, N=4,655 December 19-20

These tensions define the Democratic positioning challenge. Reflexively polarizing against AI (i.e., blanket opposition to development) risks alienating young and diverse voters who see its promise. Lumping AI in together with Big Tech paints over a more complex picture of the specific concern voters have about AI companies. And dismissing or minimizing concerns about AI's pace and risks would fail to address voters' most salient anxieties.

How Voters Evaluate AI's Promise and Risks

Voters see AI's biggest value in benefits that will directly, tangibly change lives. When given a list of potential benefits, voters are most likely to select improvements in diagnosing diseases and healthcare, accelerating scientific breakthroughs, protecting people from cyber crimes, and supporting those with disabilities.

Below are some potential benefits that people associate with artificial intelligence (AI). Which do you find the most valuable?		Overall
Healthcare Improvement	AI helping doctors diagnose disease and improve healthcare	64%
Scientific Breakthroughs	AI accelerating scientific discoveries (e.g. medicine, physics)	62%
Cybersecurity Aid	AI helping detect and prevent cyberattacks or online crime	61%
Disability Support	AI providing support for people with disabilities	60%
Public Safety	AI enhancing public safety and disaster response	56%
Economic Growth	AI creating new industries, jobs, and economic growth	54%
Aging Independence	AI supporting independent living for older adults	49%
Smart Agriculture	AI powering smart tools to improve farming and food systems	49%
Daily Convenience	AI making everyday tasks easier through virtual assistants	48%
Mental Health Support	AI assisting in mental health care and emotional support	45%
Personalized Education	AI expanding access to personalized education and tutoring	45%
Business Productivity	AI boosting productivity and reducing costs for businesses	44%
Government Efficiency	AI improving government services and reducing bureaucracy	40%
Transportation Safety	AI making transportation safer and more efficient (e.g. self-driving vehicles)	36%
Job Automation	AI automating boring or dangerous jobs	35%

Source: Surveys via online web panels, N=4,189 July 23-24

They view the loss of human agency and judgment as some of the highest risks of AI. Voters top three concerns: AI replacing human judgment in healthcare, hiring, and justice; collecting personal data without consent; and being used to manipulate or deceive people. They also fear that AI companies themselves will become too powerful to be held accountable.

Below are some potential risks that people associate with artificial intelligence (AI). Which worries you the most?		Overall
Loss Of Human Judgment	AI replacing human judgment in important decisions (e.g. healthcare, justice, hiring)	68%
Privacy Concerns	AI collecting people's personal data without their knowledge or consent	64%
Manipulation	AI being used to manipulate or deceive people	63%
Corporate Overreach	AI companies becoming more powerful than governments and not being held accountable to the law	59%
Autonomous Decisions	AI becoming independent and making decisions on its own that its creators didn't intend	59%

Value Misalignment	AI making decisions without understanding human values	57%
Disinformation	AI being used to spread disinformation or propaganda	56%
Unpredictable Behavior	AI systems behaving in unpredictable or unintended ways	55%
Weaponization	AI making it easier to develop or use dangerous weapons like bioweapons or nuclear weapons	55%
Job Displacement	AI leading to widespread job loss and economic inequality	54%
Uncontrollable Systems	AI systems being impossible to turn off or control once deployed	54%
Lack Of Safety Regulations	AI companies racing to deploy systems without proper safeguards	53%
Recursive Self Improvement	AI being used to build even more powerful AI, creating systems far more intelligent than humans	51%
Corporate Control	AI being controlled by a few unaccountable corporations	50%
Democracy Threat	AI undermining democracy or interfering in elections	45%
Lack Of System Transparency	AI companies releasing systems they don't fully understand	44%
Late Regulation	AI repeating the same mistakes as social media by being regulated too late	39%
Black Box Systems	AI models operating like "black boxes" with no transparency	37%
Copyright Infringement	AI using copyrighted work without permission from artists or creators	35%
Bias	AI systems reinforcing discrimination or bias	34%
Cruelty Towards AI	AI being treated in cruel or harmful ways	23%

Source: Surveys via online web panels, N=4,189 July 23-24

Taken together, this points to a clear lane: Democrats need a positive vision for AI grounded in helping improve people's day to day lives - through healthcare, scientific discovery, protection from harm - not one focused on economic automation or productivity gains. That vision also must take seriously the concerns voters actually hold: that human judgment may be displaced in high-stakes decisions, that their data will be harvested without consent, and that tech companies will become too powerful to hold accountable.

The Most Persuasive Messaging on AI

Voter sentiment to AI is still quite malleable and open to persuasion. In message testing conducted in late January, we find that the most effective messages for increasing Democratic support were ones that centered on keeping humans in control of consequential decisions, holding bad actors accountable, and ensuring that AI companies pay their fair share to protect benefits that Americans rely on.

All of the top messages tapped into voters' core anxieties (as outlined above): that AI will displace human judgment in moments that matter most, and the gains from AI will be concentrated, rather than shared widely. The top performing messages (all in the top 20% of Democratic messaging tested over the past year) had the following frames:

Keeping human oversight in AI work (95th percentile):

"Important decisions about healthcare, job applications, and legal rights should be made by people, not machines. They will require human oversight for high-stakes decisions and stop corporations from hiding behind algorithms. When your life is on the line, you deserve a human being who is accountable."

Protecting Americans from fraud (92nd percentile):

*"Americans deserve to trust what they see and hear. AI-generated scams, fake voices, and deepfake videos are already tricking families, seniors, and small businesses. **We should require safeguards, labeling, and accountability so people are protected from fraud and deception and bad actors cannot weaponize AI to rip people off.**"*

Taxing AI companies to bolster the social safety net (87th percentile):

*"Democrats will use taxes on AI profits and tech billionaires to protect programs working families depend on. That money will strengthen Social Security, expand Medicare, and increase food assistance so no American goes hungry. **When corporations make billions from AI, those gains should put food on your table and secure your retirement.**"*

And creating profit caps for AI to stop "rewarding the richest" (80th percentile):

*"Working families shouldn't pay higher prices while billionaires and AI companies rake in record profits. **There should be a cap or a tax on extreme profits from [AI's] biggest winners,** so the people who benefit most from AI and the economy pay their fair share. It's a clear choice: stop rigged rules that reward the richest."*

Meanwhile, many messages Democrats are adopting today – such as data centers' strain on the power grid, American competition with China, and AI's impacts on mental health – performed significantly below average (specifically in the bottom third of all messages tested). **This doesn't necessarily mean that these policies are unpopular – but it does mean Democrats should consider centering frames that are more persuasive to voters' current economic and broader anxieties.**

This initial set of message testing research suggests the following strategic messaging implications for Democrats and democracy-aligned actors:

- **Lead with accountability, not innovation.** Voters want to hear how Democrats will hold AI companies responsible and keep humans in charge – not how AI will boost GDP.
- **Avoid solely techno-optimist framing.** Messages emphasizing AI's benefits without acknowledging risks or demanding accountability underperform. This includes frames about education, skills, and making government more efficient.
- **Redistributive proposals should be tied to existing social safety net programs.** While taxing AI profits performed well when tied to specific programs (Social Security, Medicare), an unconditional universal basic income proposal was the least effective message tested (continue reading for further research on UBI).

You can find all of the messages tested in this battery in Figure 14 in the appendix.

Policy Case Study: Addressing Large-Scale Unemployment Through A Federal Jobs Guarantee

Seventy-one percent of voters believe large-scale AI unemployment is likely over the next decade – a fear that transcends class and partisan lines. This threat is particularly critical for Democrats, who are more likely to be in professions with high AI exposure (see our 2025 research with Chapman University’s Jonathan Hersh and UPen’s Daniel Rock; Slides 30-31 [here](#)).

How likely do you think it is that Artificial Intelligence (AI) will cause large-scale unemployment in the United States over the next decade?

Response	Overall	Harris 2024	Swing 2020 x 2024	Trump 2024	Did Not Vote 2024
Very likely	28%	32%	26%	25%	34%
Somewhat likely	43%	44%	43%	41%	38%
Not very likely	18%	15%	19%	21%	14%
Not at all likely	3%	3%	3%	3%	5%
Not sure	8%	6%	8%	9%	9%

Source: Surveys via online web panels, N=4,874 January 17-18

A federal jobs guarantee earns 59% support when constructed carefully. The proposal we tested: full income replacement up to \$150,000 for anyone who loses their job to AI, conditional on accepting a government-assigned community job, funded by taxes on corporations and the wealthy. Support is net-positive across partisan lines - 66% of Harris voters, 56% of swing voters, 52% of Trump voters.

Consider a proposal for a Federal Job Guarantee designed to address AI displacement.

Under this plan, the government would guarantee full income replacement (up to \$150,000) for anyone who loses their job to AI, provided they accept a new government-assigned job improving their community. The program would be paid for by raising taxes on corporations and the wealthy, with no tax increases for other Americans.

Do you support or oppose this proposal?

Response	Overall	Harris 2024	Swing 2020 x 2024	Trump 2024	Did Not Vote 2024
Strongly support	21%	27%	19%	15%	24%
Somewhat support	38%	39%	37%	37%	38%
Somewhat oppose	12%	10%	13%	14%	11%
Strongly oppose	12%	8%	13%	16%	11%
Not sure	17%	15%	17%	18%	16%
Support	59%	66%	57%	52%	62%
Oppose	25%	19%	26%	30%	22%
Net	34%	47%	31%	22%	40%

Source: Surveys via online web panels, N=4,859 January 17-18

But the design of a federal jobs guarantee matters tremendously. When asked in the abstract whether the government should guarantee jobs or let the market work, voters split (42% government, 34% market). Trump voters unsurprisingly prefer the market approach (44% to 32%), with swing voters nearly evenly split.

Which of the following comes closer to your view regarding the government's role in the age of AI?

Response	Overall	Harris 2024	Swing 2020 x 2024	Trump 2024	Did Not Vote 2024
The government has a responsibility to guarantee jobs for workers replaced by AI, even if it requires creating a large new federal program.	42%	53%	38%	32%	52%
The government should not create guaranteed jobs , and should instead focus on private sector growth so workers can find new roles on their own.	34%	24%	37%	44%	23%
Not sure	23%	23%	24%	23%	25%

Source: BSurveys via online web panels, N=4,855 January 17-18

We also find a work requirement for financial assistance is critical for any AI financial support proposal. When asked about Universal Basic Income (UBI), we find a plurality of voters – including Democrats – prefer work requirements.

If the government decides to provide financial support to people displaced by AI, which approach would you prefer?

Response	Overall	Harris 2024	Swing 2020 x 2024	Trump 2024	Did Not Vote 2024
People should be required to work in a government-assigned community job to receive benefits	40%	41%	40%	40%	34%
People should receive cash payments (Universal Basic Income) without a requirement to work	18%	24%	16%	11%	28%
The government should not provide special financial support for AI displacement	17%	10%	18%	23%	12%
Not sure	26%	25%	26%	26%	25%

Source: Surveys via online web panels, N=4,852 January 17-18

Clearly, further research is needed, and all initial research should be consumed with appropriate skepticism as voters consider hypotheticals. However, the data suggests that careful policy design that creates any financial assistance as an *earned* benefit will be critical for wider political support.

Case Study: The Politics of Data Centers

Today's emerging politics around data centers offers a clear test case for how voters weigh AI development when costs and benefits are uneven. Voters' baseline opposition to data centers is real: voters oppose new data centers in their local community by 13 points (31% support, 44% oppose). Harris voters are the most opposed at -22 net. Even Trump voters, who tend toward more favorable views of AI development, sit at only -4.

Generally speaking, do you support or oppose new AI data centers being built in your local community?

Response	Overall	Harris 2024	Swing 2020 x 2024	Trump 2024	Did Not Vote 2024
Strongly support	6%	4%	6%	8%	8%
Somewhat support	25%	22%	26%	28%	27%
Somewhat oppose	23%	23%	24%	24%	25%
Strongly oppose	21%	25%	20%	16%	21%
Not sure	25%	26%	24%	24%	20%
Support	31%	26%	32%	36%	35%
Oppose	44%	48%	44%	40%	45%
Net	-13%	-22%	-12%	-4%	-11%

Source: Surveys via online web panels, N=2,788 December 29-30

On nearly every axis, voters see more reason to be concerned about data centers than they see potential benefits. When asked about impacts on electricity, 41% of voters believe data centers "place strain on the existing grid and could drive up utility costs or risk blackouts" more than as a way to "fund the buildout of more electricity generation."

Which of the following comes closer to your view regarding the impact of data centers on the power grid?

Response	Overall	Harris 2024	Swing 2020 x 2024	Trump 2024	Did Not Vote 2024
The demand from data centers provides the necessary investment to fund the buildout of more electricity generation , making the grid more robust for everyone.	16%	15%	19%	17%	23%
Data centers consume huge amounts of electricity, which places strain on the existing grid and could drive up utility costs or risk blackouts for families.	41%	51%	44%	32%	41%
Not sure	42%	34%	38%	51%	36%

Source: Surveys via online web panels, N=2,369 December 29-30

That said, uncertainty across nearly every axis is very high. Roughly one-quarter to nearly half of voters select “not sure” on basic questions about grid impact, jobs, water use, and national competitiveness – suggesting many voters do not yet have a clear understanding of how data centers function or the tradeoffs they involve.

When considering impacts on jobs, 37% of voters say **data centers "employ very few people compared to the land and energy they use"** more than "bring high-paying tech jobs" (25%).

Which of the following comes closer to your view regarding jobs and the local economy?

Response	Overall	Harris 2024	Swing 2020 x 2024	Trump 2024	Did Not Vote 2024
We should welcome data centers because they bring high-paying tech jobs and encourage other modern businesses to move to our state.	25%	23%	26%	27%	23%
We should be skeptical of data centers because, after construction is finished, they employ very few people compared to the amount of land and energy they use.	37%	47%	37%	27%	41%
Not sure	38%	30%	37%	46%	36%

Source: Surveys via online web panels, N=2,367 December 29-30

When it comes to concerns regarding water use and the environment, a plurality of voters (39%) say **data centers "threaten local water supply."**

Which of the following comes closer to your view regarding water use and the environment?

Response	Overall	Harris 2024	Swing 2020 x 2024	Trump 2024	Did Not Vote 2024
Data centers are becoming more efficient and are a clean industry compared to traditional factories that cause heavy pollution.	24%	20%	25%	29%	27%
Data centers require massive amounts of water for cooling systems, which threatens our local water supply during droughts.	39%	50%	40%	29%	38%
Not sure	36%	30%	34%	43%	35%

Source: Surveys via online web panels, N=2,365 December 29-30

A national competitiveness frame also fails to win against local priorities. 48% of voters say "we should not sacrifice our local communities or resources just to help big tech companies grow faster."

Which of the following comes closer to your view on the role of the United States in AI technology?

Response	Overall	Harris 2024	Swing 2020 x 2024	Trump 2024	Did Not Vote 2024
It is critical to build data centers quickly so the United States remains the global leader in AI and does not fall behind countries like China.	22%	16%	21%	27%	24%
While AI is important, we should not sacrifice our local communities or resources just to help big tech companies grow faster.	48%	58%	50%	39%	47%
Not sure	30%	26%	28%	34%	29%

Source: Surveys via online web panels, N=2,363 December 29-30

But offer voters something tangible and the picture inverts. When told a data center would lower their property tax bill by 10%, support swings from -13 net to +41 net, a 54-point shift. Even Harris voters, the most skeptical group, move from -22 to +27.

If a new data center project guaranteed that the tax revenue it generated would lower your local property tax bill by 10%, would you support or oppose the project?

Response	Overall	Harris 2024	Swing 2020 x 2024	Trump 2024	Did Not Vote 2024
Strongly support	20%	15%	19%	25%	19%
Somewhat support	39%	36%	40%	42%	37%
Somewhat oppose	9%	12%	10%	6%	12%
Strongly oppose	9%	12%	8%	6%	9%
Not sure	23%	25%	23%	22%	23%
Support	59%	51%	59%	67%	56%
Oppose	18%	24%	18%	12%	21%
Net	41%	27%	41%	55%	35%

Source: Surveys via online web panels, N=2,361 December 29-30

Data center fights encapsulate the core predicament Democrats face on AI and emerging technologies more broadly. As evidenced by the research above (and public polling), voter opinions on data centers are still very shapeable. Specifically, voters approach data centers (and AI more broadly) with suspicion not because they reject progress outright, but because they doubt it will serve them. But when voters see specific, tangible benefits flowing to their community - and believe AI prosperity will be broadly shared rather than captured - support rises sharply.

Areas of Future Research

Across this research, one finding is clear: voter attitudes toward AI are not settled, but they are evolving rapidly. Voters' sentiments are being formed in real time – shaped less by even AI itself, and more by whether voters believe its benefits can be broadly shared with the collective vs. captured by elite, powerful actors. This creates opportunity (and risk) for Democrats, but the window for shaping policy opinion will close shortly if Democrats don't move quickly.

This set of findings is just the beginning of much longer, ongoing feedback we hope to conduct. In Q2, we aim to hire an AI Policy Fellow to help conduct significant research into several policy areas, including but not limited to: federal job guarantee and other benefit frameworks for Democrats to be able to address long-term unemployment; tax levels and revenue destinations for AI companies and how other profit-sharing models would be perceived at the state and federal level; how user interfacing with AI agents can impact (or increase) democratic participation.

Additionally, we are working to collect data on the tasks that people perform in their jobs, along with occupation data, to understand the types of work at highest risk of job displacement from AI and attitudes of Americans in these jobs as their work changes. For more information on this research, please contact our team.

Finally, our policy research is only as good as our policy ideation, and with the speed and fluidity of the AI transition we welcome any and all suggestions for policy proposals or potential frameworks to test.

Polling Appendix

Figure 1:

Do you believe the economic system in America today is..

Response	Overall	Harris 2024	Swing 2020 x 2024	Trump 2024	Did not vote 2024
Mostly fair	28%	10%	27%	46%	22%
Mostly unfair	56%	78%	56%	35%	64%
Not sure	15%	12%	17%	19%	13%
<hr/>					
Mostly working	33%	12%	32%	54%	27%
Mostly not working	56%	80%	55%	33%	56%
Not sure	11%	8%	13%	13%	17%

Source: Surveys via online web panels, N=4,969 December 8-9

Figure 2:

How are you feeling about America's economic system?

Response	Overall	Harris 2024	Swing 2020 x 2024	Trump 2024	Did not vote 2024
Happy	2%	1%	2%	3%	2%
Content	4%	2%	4%	6%	4%
Hopeful	24%	4%	20%	43%	15%
<hr/>					
Sad	10%	14%	11%	7%	14%
Worried	45%	57%	48%	32%	49%
Angry	11%	19%	9%	3%	8%
<hr/>					
Not Sure	5%	3%	7%	6%	7%

Source: Surveys via online web panels, N=3,078 December 8-9

Figure 3:

How much do you trust the companies developing Artificial Intelligence (AI) to do the right thing?

Response	Overall	Harris	Swing	Trump	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+
A lot	3%	3%	3%	3%	5%	3%	3%	2%
Some	24%	23%	26%	24%	24%	25%	25%	22%
Not much	36%	36%	36%	36%	31%	33%	34%	40%
Not at all	26%	28%	25%	24%	28%	27%	25%	25%
Not sure	12%	11%	10%	13%	12%	12%	13%	12%

Source: Surveys via online web panels, N=12,880 December 26-January 25

Figure 4:

Do you believe that the government should do more or less to regulate AI?

Response	Overall	Harris	Swing	Trump	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+
The government should do more to regulate AI	61%	66%	64%	58%	53%	54%	62%	68%
The government is doing enough to regulate AI	12%	10%	12%	13%	14%	13%	11%	10%
The government should do less to regulate AI	7%	7%	8%	7%	11%	10%	7%	3%
Not sure	20%	17%	16%	23%	22%	23%	20%	18%

Source: Surveys via online web panels, N=5,006 January 22-25

Figure 5:

Which of the following statements do you agree with most?

Response	Overall	Harris	Swing	Trump	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+
The US should actively manage AI development to ensure its benefits are shared broadly across society	48%	54%	48%	42%	51%	49%	47%	47%
The US should allow the private sector to lead AI development, trusting that innovation will benefit society over time	20%	19%	26%	22%	22%	21%	20%	20%
Not sure	32%	27%	26%	36%	27%	31%	33%	34%

Source: Surveys via online web panels, N=2,816 Jan 29-30

Figure 6:

Who do you think should make the most decisions about how AI is developed?

Response	Overall	Harris	Swing	Trump	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+
Business people who are trying to build useful products and make a profit.	18%	14%	21%	23%	20%	18%	18%	18%
Governments who are trying to promote the public interest.	17%	17%	18%	18%	20%	17%	17%	16%
Outside experts in non-profit organizations and universities.	33%	41%	36%	24%	37%	35%	31%	31%
Not sure	32%	28%	25%	36%	24%	29%	34%	35%

Source: Surveys via online web panels, N=7,477 January 22-25

Figure 7:

Generally speaking, would you say you are optimistic or pessimistic about the future development of Artificial Intelligence?

Category	Subgroup	Optimistic	Pessimistic	Not sure	Net
	Overall	44%	41%	15%	2.8%
Gender	Women	40%	43%	17%	-3.2%
	Men	48%	39%	13%	9.8%
Age	18-34	47%	36%	17%	11.1%
	35-49	46%	40%	15%	6.2%
	50-64	43%	42%	14%	0.9%
	65+	41%	44%	15%	-3.5%
Race w/ White College Split	White Non-College	41%	43%	16%	-2.2%
	White College	46%	44%	11%	1.6%
	Black	47%	33%	20%	13.5%
	Hispanic	46%	36%	18%	9.4%
	Asian	48%	36%	16%	11.8%
	Native American	43%	39%	18%	4.7%
Income three-way	Lower Income	37%	39%	24%	-1.5%
	Middle Income	43%	43%	14%	-0.3%
	Upper Income	47%	41%	12%	6.1%
2024 Vote Choice	Harris	44%	40%	16%	4.3%
	Trump	43%	42%	14%	0.9%
	Third Party	48%	35%	17%	12.9%
	Did not vote	46%	37%	17%	8.7%

Source: Surveys via online web panels, N=2,647 December 30-31

Figure 8:

How often do you use ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, Grok or any other Artificial Intelligence (AI) model?

Response	Overall	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+
Daily	12%	18%	17%	13%	6%
Weekly	15%	22%	18%	16%	9%
Monthly	8%	13%	10%	9%	5%
Rarely	24%	22%	27%	25%	24%
Never	40%	25%	29%	38%	56%

Source: Surveys via online web panels, N=5,035 January 22-25

Figure 9:

Have you used (or would you consider using) an AI chatbot, such as ChatGPT, Claude, or Gemini, to...

	Overall (% Yes)	18-34 (%Yes)	35-49 (%Yes)	50-64 (%Yes)	65+ (%Yes)
Search for information or get an explanation	58%	69%	69%	56%	45%
Brainstorm ideas or solve a problem	52%	62%	64%	49%	39%
Help you write or edit something (ex: emails, essays, social media posts)	46%	60%	62%	43%	26%
Get help with school or learning something new	43%	55%	50%	41%	31%
Assist with job or work-related tasks	38%	54%	50%	34%	23%
Ask health-related or medical questions	38%	44%	46%	34%	33%
Generate images, music, or other creative content using AI	36%	52%	49%	36%	18%
Chat for fun or entertainment	34%	47%	42%	31%	21%
Write code or do technical work	24%	39%	30%	19%	12%
Talk about life advice, values, or philosophical questions	20%	34%	28%	15%	9%
Talk to for emotional support or to reduce stress or loneliness	18%	32%	24%	14%	8%

Source: Surveys via online web panels, N=3,697 July 22-26

Figure 10:

GPT Usage	% of Voters	Things are generally headed in the right direction	Things are off on the wrong track	Net
Frequent User, Likes GPT	13%	48%	45%	+3%
Everyone else	87%	36%	52%	-17%

Source: Surveys via online web panels, N=3,800, May 12-14

Figure 11:

Overall, how optimistic or pessimistic are you about the long-term impact of Artificial Intelligence on society as a whole?

Response	Overall	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+
I am optimistic about AI	18%	19%	19%	19%	16%
I am pessimistic about AI	39%	38%	37%	36%	43%
Not sure	29%	30%	30%	30%	26%

Source: Surveys via online web panels, N=39,805 Nov 15-25

Figure 12:

How do you feel about the current pace at which artificial intelligence (AI) is advancing?

Response	Overall	Harris	Swing	Trump	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+
It's moving too fast	57%	59%	58%	56%	54%	53%	57%	61%
It's moving at the right pace	26%	24%	27%	28%	32%	31%	25%	22%
It's moving too slowly	2%	2%	3%	2%	3%	3%	3%	1%
Not sure	15%	14%	12%	14%	12%	14%	15%	16%

Source: Surveys via online web panels, N=8,535 January 22-25

Figure 13:

If AI became more intelligent than humans, do you think it would be mostly beneficial or mostly harmful to people?

Response	Overall	Harris	Swing	Trump	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+
Much more beneficial	4%	3%	4%	4%	6%	5%	4%	2%
Somewhat more beneficial	13%	12%	17%	13%	18%	17%	10%	10%
Somewhat more harmful	28%	30%	31%	27%	27%	26%	29%	29%
Much more harmful	41%	41%	39%	42%	36%	36%	43%	45%
Not sure	14%	14%	11%	14%	13%	16%	14%	14%
Total beneficial	17%	15%	21%	17%	24%	22%	14%	12%
Total harmful	69%	71%	70%	69%	63%	62%	72%	74%
Net beneficial	-52%	-56%	-49%	-52%	-39%	-40%	-58%	-62%

Source: Surveys via online web panels, N=8,559 January 22-25

Figure 14:

Message Category	Message Name	Message Content	Governor Vote Choice Percentile
Regulation/ Accountability	Keep Humans in Charge	Important decisions about healthcare, job applications, and legal rights should be made by people, not machines. They will require human oversight for high-stakes decisions and stop corporations from hiding behind algorithms. When your life is on the line, you deserve a human being who is accountable.	95%
Policy	Stop AI Scams and Deepfakes	Americans deserve to trust what they see and hear. AI-generated scams, fake voices, and deepfake videos are already tricking families, seniors, and small businesses. We should require safeguards, labeling, and accountability so people are protected from fraud and deception and bad actors cannot weaponize AI to rip people off.	92%
Populist	Fund Vital Programs	Democrats will use taxes on AI profits and tech billionaires to protect programs working families depend on. That money will strengthen Social Security, expand Medicare, and increase food assistance so no American goes hungry. When corporations make billions from AI, those gains should put food on your table and secure your retirement.	87%
Populist	Billionaire Profit Cap	Working families shouldn't pay higher prices while billionaires and AI companies rake in record profits. There should be a cap or a tax on extreme profits from the biggest winners, so the people who benefit most from AI and the economy pay their fair share. It's a clear choice: stop rigged rules that reward the richest.	80%
Regulation/ Accountability	Protect Human Creativity	Human creativity should not be stolen or replaced by machines. Artists, writers, musicians, and creators are seeing their work copied by AI systems without consent or pay. Democrats will protect creative workers, require permission and compensation, and ensure technology supports human expression instead of exploiting it for corporate profit.	69%
Policy	Kids Safety	Kids' safety must come first with AI technology. Parents need real tools and control that we didn't have during the social media era. AI companies must verify users' ages, set time limits, ban companion bots for children, and build safety into one national standard with no loopholes so families can protect their children.	68%
Regulation/ Accountability	Privacy Protections	AI companies are collecting your personal data without your knowledge or consent, then using it to make billions. We need to require AI companies to get your permission before using your information and give you control over your own data. Your private life should not be harvested for corporate profit without you knowing.	59%
Policy	Federal Job Guarantee	Democrats are proposing to guarantee a good-paying community job for any worker displaced by AI, with full income replacement up to \$150,000. This program will be paid for by taxes on corporations and the wealthy, not working families. Americans deserve the dignity of meaningful work, and AI job loss should not mean permanent unemployment.	53%
Science/Health	Healthcare Progress	AI can save lives by helping doctors catch diseases earlier, reduce medical errors, and make major progress in curing diseases. This technology can reach all Americans, especially families in areas with few doctors. With strong privacy rules and proper oversight, AI will make healthcare better, more affordable, and improve outcomes without putting personal information at risk.	53%
Policy	Worker Retraining	Artificial intelligence could eliminate millions of jobs across many industries in the next decade, hitting lower-income workers the	52%

		hardest. We need the public and private sector to work together to invest in worker retraining and transition support, so AI creates opportunity instead of leaving working families behind without good-paying employment.	
Regulation/ Accountability	Community Decision- Making	Communities deserve a real voice in how AI is used. Decisions about data centers, surveillance, and automated systems are often made without local input. We should protect community control so families, workers, and local leaders have a say instead of having technology imposed on them by distant corporations or bureaucrats.	52%
Populist	Corporate Accountability	Since AI companies are built on public research and taxpayer-funded work, profits shouldn't just go to a handful of billionaires. We should modernize corporate responsibility so that when AI companies win, Americans win too. If corporations make billions using American infrastructure and talent, they must invest in our workers, economy, and communities.	50%
Populist	Share AI Profits With Americans	Americans should benefit from AI that was built on decades of taxpayer-funded research, public data, and government investment. When AI creates billions in new wealth, that money should help working families, not just make the rich even richer. AI profits should fund lower electric bills, free education, healthcare, and more- so everyone benefits.	48%
Populist	Lower Everyday Costs	AI should make everyday life cheaper and simpler for working families. Too often, new technology raises fees, adds complexity, and benefits corporations first. We should make sure AI lowers costs, reduces paperwork, and improves basic services so regular people actually feel the benefits in their daily lives.	47%
Science/Health	Healthcare Access For All	AI can make healthcare better, cheaper, and more accessible for every family. Patients in underserved areas already use AI to receive healthcare and health advice - for better outcomes and insurance navigation. Laws must be updated so all families can use AI tools to improve their health now, not just wealthy people in big cities.	45%
Progress/ Competition	Boosting American Productivity	AI can help workers do more with less, cutting paperwork, speeding healthcare decisions, and helping small businesses compete with larger firms. Used right with clear rules, AI raises wages, improves services, and strengthens the middle class by guiding technology toward helping people rather than replacing them or eliminating job security.	42%
Regulation/ Accountability	Pause AI to Protect Democracy	AI is moving too fast for our democracy to keep up. We need a moratorium on the most dangerous AI development so the American people, not just a handful of billionaires, can have a say in shaping our future. We need to slow down and get this right before it is too late.	40%
Regulation/ Accountability	Water Consumption	Data centers' water consumption threatens local supplies in communities with little political power. Tech giants often hide information and drain resources while locals bear the costs. Communities deserve transparency, protected groundwater, and corporations must be held accountable to residents instead of extracting resources without consequences.	39%
Progress/ Competition	Cutting Red Tape	The government cannot fall behind on AI. Too many leaders want to ignore this technology or stick their heads in the sand. We need to improve government services, cut red tape, and serve the public better, while setting rules that make sure that AI works for the people, not against them.	38%
Progress/ Competition	Protect Small Businesses	AI should help small businesses compete, not wipe them out. Right now, the biggest tech companies use AI to dominate markets and squeeze out local businesses. We should enforce competition rules so	37%

		AI strengthens entrepreneurs, family businesses, and local economies instead of concentrating power in a few corporate giants.	
Policy	Civil Rights Protections	AI must not discriminate or deny opportunity. AI systems are already used to screen job applicants, approve loans, and decide who gets housing or benefits. Without clear rules, these systems can reinforce bias and lock people out unfairly. We should require testing, audits, and enforcement so AI treats everyone fairly and protects basic civil rights.	35%
Regulation/ Accountability	Mental Health and Autonomy	AI should not manipulate emotions or exploit loneliness. Some AI systems are designed to keep people hooked, replace real relationships, or influence behavior without consent. We should set limits so technology supports mental health, respects human autonomy, and strengthens real human connection instead of undermining it.	32%
Progress/ Competition	Competing with China	AI leadership helps America compete with China and authoritarian rivals. If the United States leads in safe, responsible AI, we set global standards protecting democratic values instead of following them. America must invest in research, workers, and infrastructure to keep critical technology in trusted hands and strengthen our national security.	29%
Policy	Education and Skills	AI-powered personalized learning tools help students and workers gain new skills faster and cheaper than traditional pathways. These tools open doors for people who cannot afford expensive education, support lifelong learning, and help workers adapt as the economy changes instead of falling behind in a rapidly transforming job market.	29%
Progress/ Competition	Build America's Energy Future	We cannot win the AI race without massive investment in American energy. Last year, China added nine times more energy capacity than the United States. We need to build the energy infrastructure AI requires while creating good union jobs, strengthening our power grid, and lowering electricity costs for working families. America must build to lead.	25%
Regulation/ Accountability	Power Grids	Massive AI data centers strain the power grid during heat waves and storms, increasing blackout risks for families and small businesses. When outages happen, everyday Americans suffer most. Big tech users must help strengthen the grid infrastructure they depend on, ensuring reliable electricity for everyone when you need it most.	24%
Policy	Universal Basic Income	As AI creates massive wealth with less human labor, they believe everyone deserves to share in the gains. All Americans should receive a universal basic income, funded by AI profits, so all Americans can live with dignity – even if their job is disrupted by AI. Technology was built on public research and taxpayer investment, so the benefits belong to everyone, not just billionaires.	24%

Source: Surveys via online web panels, N=5,404 January 23