



2024

# Fathom Report Summary



# A Public Equally Excited and Concerned with AI Searches for Leaders Who Can Be Trusted with its Development and Implementation.

## A Note from Andrew Freedman, Fathom Co-Founder & Chief Strategy Officer

Far too often the conversations within D.C. and Silicon Valley are out of sync with the rest of the country. Some of this is natural— those most invested in an interest area have a greater understanding of the issues, and have often advanced a conversation beyond the public dialogue. This becomes problematic, however, with AI, where the decisions made may have a dramatic effect on national security, democracy, the economy, and everyday lives. With its insights work, Fathom not only hopes to inform D.C. and Silicon Valley about which issues the public cares about, but also to understand where more education is needed in order to help the public develop more informed opinions. That said, polling is an important, but limited, tool when it comes to taking the public's temperature. For this, and for future insights work, Fathom will marry quantitative data like polls with more qualitative work like focus groups, individual interviews, and solicited feedback.

The topline findings from the poll and qualitative work are in bold below. What they show is a public that is equal parts excited by and skeptical of AI, and that has many concerns and a desire to see guardrails in place as a result. However, the public does not believe that the government is well equipped to create those guardrails at present. It is also ambivalent toward AI companies' ability to do so. It is looking for a broader set of voices to set policy.

Several other interesting takeaways hidden deeper in the data include:

1. The generational divide is far greater than the partisan divide when it comes to being excited vs concerned about AI.
2. As also found in this [poll](#), the race with China polls lower than other priorities. The level of concern is still very high, however. This is notable because historically foreign affairs issues do not tend to poll highly unless there is a war.
3. The level of trust in AI companies to design their own guardrails is right at 50%. Two things to note about that number: First, the public (by a 3 to 1 margin) still wants the government to intervene with guardrails. Second, we may see that trust in AI companies goes down over time as the Edelman Trust Barometer has shown a **marked decrease** in trust in AI companies over the last few years.

Below are the topline takeaways, to learn more download the full [Fathom Report](#).

Voters are familiar with AI, but have mixed perceptions about it — with their strongest concerns about deepfakes and AI replacing humans for decision-making.

A majority (77%) have heard about AI, and a smaller but substantial majority (58%) have used AI in their personal life, work, or schooling. Perhaps not surprisingly, the highest users are the youngest (79% among those 18-34, and 72% among those 35-44).

Voters have mixed feelings about AI, with 32% saying they are “excited” about the technology, 29% “concerned,” and a plurality (35%) saying they are equally concerned and excited. Again, age is the biggest demographic divider, with younger voters much more “excited” than older voters.

Voters’ largest concern is about misinformation and deepfakes — with 85% concerned (54% very concerned). That is closely trailed by AI making decisions without human oversight (82% total concerned, 51% very concerned). They are less worried (though still concerned) about the U.S. losing the AI race to China (65% total concerned, 30% very concerned) and government stifling AI innovation (55% total concerned, 21% very concerned).

<b>Ranked By % Very Concerned</b>	<b>Total Concerned</b>	<b>Very Concerned</b>	<b>Somewhat Concerned</b>	<b>Total Not Concerned</b>	<b>Not Too Concerned</b>	<b>Not At All Concerned</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>
The use of artificial intelligence to generate misinformation about private citizens, including fake photographs, videos and other information that can harm their reputation.	85%	54%	31%	14%	10%	4%	2%
Artificial intelligence making decisions without human oversight.	82%	51%	31%	16%	12%	4%	3%
The use of artificial intelligence to generate misinformation and disinformation – such as fake photographs of videos of the Presidential candidates or false information about them – hurting the election process.	82%	51%	30%	16%	12%	3%	3%
The use of artificial intelligence resulting in job loss or loss in wages.	77%	43%	34%	21%	16%	5%	3%
Artificial intelligence companies using your personal information to train their models.	79%	42%	36%	19%	14%	4%	3%
The use of artificial intelligence accelerating division in America and undermining our democratic norms.	71%	36%	35%	24%	18%	6%	5%
Artificial intelligence reinforcing biases in hiring in load applications.	71%	36%	35%	24%	18%	6%	5%
The United States losing the AI race against China and no longer being the world leader in technological innovation.	65%	30%	35%	30%	21%	8%	5%



## Voters want government to create guardrails for AI — but worry about government’s ability to do so.

Two-thirds of voters (66%) believe that government has a role to play in developing guardrails for how AI is developed and used (fig.1), compared to just 20% who want it to stay out of the way, and let Silicon Valley make those decisions. Importantly, this belief crosses party lines (72% of Democrats, 64% of independents, and 60% of Republicans) (fig.2).

Nonetheless, a majority (57%) do not trust the government to do this properly. This finding also crosses party lines, with a 48% plurality of Democrats agreeing (vs. 42% who do trust the federal government), along with majorities of Republicans (61%) and independents (66%).

Their concerns about the government’s abilities to handle the task include that they do not have the expertise to be effective (83% concerned) and that policymakers are too slow to do the job effectively (79% concerned) (fig.3).

	TOTAL
Has a role to play in developing guardrails and protections to address concerns about how artificial intelligence is developed and used	66%
Should stay out of the way and let tech companies in Silicon Valley decide how to develop and use artificial intelligence	20%
Don't Know	14%

fig.1

	GOP	DEM	IND
Has a role to play in developing guardrails and protections to address concerns about how artificial intelligence is developed and used	60%	72%	64%
Should stay out of the way and let tech companies in Silicon Valley decide how to develop and use artificial intelligence	23%	17%	20%
Don't Know	16%	11%	16%

fig.2

*When it comes to trusting elected officials in Washington and the federal government to regulate AI properly, how concerned are you about each of the following?*

	Total Concerned	Very Concerned	Somewhat Concerned	Total Not Concerned	Not Too Concerned	Not At All Concerned	Don't Know
Policymakers lack the knowledge and expertise to effectively regulate AI.	83%	40%	43%	14%	11%	2%	4%
Policymakers are too slow to act to effectively regulate AI.	79%	35%	44%	17%	14%	3%	5%

fig.3



Voters trust a public-private coalition over other stakeholders to ensure that AI develops with proper guardrails.

A majority (65%) say they would trust a public-private coalition that includes companies, scholars and policy experts to help with developing proper AI guardrails. This tests above the companies that are developing AI (50%), the federal government (45%), and elected officials in Washington (39%).

As with other key findings in our survey, this holds across party lines, as well as across all major demographic groups.

*When it comes to helping ensure that AI develops with the proper guardrails, how much do you trust each of the following*

	A public-private coalition that includes companies, scholars, and policy experts	The companies that are developing AI	The Federal Government	Elected Officials
A Lot	18%	14%	11%	8%
Some	46%	36%	35%	31%
Not Too Much	21%	29%	31%	35%
Not At All	8%	17%	21%	23%
Don't Know	6%	4%	3%	4%
<b>SUM: A Lot / Some</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>39%</b>
<b>SUM: Not Much / Not At All</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>57%</b>





## About the Poll

FTP Insights conducted a national online survey among 1,515 registered voters from July 1 through 5, 2024. Molly Murphy from Impact Research (D) and Patrick Ruffini from Echelon Insights (R) served as partners on the survey. The margin of error for an N=1,515 sample size is a +/-2.52% at a 95% confidence interval. Totals are used to combine answer options into summary groups (e.g., 'Very Important' and 'Somewhat Important' into an 'Important' category). Due to rounding, these may not always sum to 100%.



## About Fathom

Fathom is an independent 501(c)(3) that wants to see society successfully transition to a world with AI. This requires that everyone - from businesses and NGOs to everyday people - has a say in what that world looks like. Fathom is here to map the ambitions of a broad and diverse society to the specific steps required to move it toward its vision for the future.

Get involved at [www.fathom.org](http://www.fathom.org).