

Public Attitudes Towards Artificial Intelligence: The Impact of Perceived Threats, Potential Benefits vs. Risks, and Trust

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Abstract:

Understanding public attitudes toward artificial intelligence (AI) is crucial for shaping the responsible development and deployment of AI technologies, aligning them with public expectations, and addressing societal concerns and ethical considerations. The goal of this research was to gain a comprehensive understanding of how the public perceives AI and the factors that influence these perceptions. Our research problem based around researching the complex relationships between various aspects of AI, such as perceived threats, societal benefits, trust in AI institutions, and overall attitudes toward AI. We laid the groundwork in the theoretical part by researching existing knowledge about theoretical foundations of attitudes, about AI, and the attitudes of public towards AI. This theoretical background provided essential context for our research into public attitudes toward AI. In the empirical part, we conducted a detailed survey based on stratified sample of adult population of the Republic of Slovenia (n = 205-209) to gather data on how the public feels about AI. This involved asking participants about their views on AI as a potential threat, its societal benefits, the level of trust they have in institutions and companies responsible for AI, and their overall attitudes toward AI. In our study, we found that individuals who perceive AI as a potential threat to their jobs or privacy tend to hold more negative attitudes toward AI. Interestingly, our research revealed that whether people think AI is beneficial for society or poses risks does not have a strong impact on their overall views about AI. Equally surprising, our results suggest that trust in institutions and companies involved in AI development does not appear to be a major factor in shaping public attitudes toward AI. These findings offer a detailed perspective on how the public views AI. They carry significant implications for policymakers, businesses, and AI developers, highlighting the importance of responsible AI development. It is crucial to address personal concerns and work on building trust and confidence in AI technologies among the public.

Keywords:

artificial intelligence (AI), public attitudes, perceived threats, potential benefits vs. risks, trust.