

PUBLIC OPINION · UNITED STATES

Americans want AI heavily regulated, but most doubt any government can keep up with the technology

*Roughly two-thirds say they would oppose a data center built where they live***June 23, 2026**

As the AI boom accelerates and the physical footprint of the technology spreads into communities across the country, Americans are sending a clear signal to Washington: take a firm hand with the technology itself, while bracing for a fight over where its infrastructure gets built. The public wants regulation, but it does not believe government is equipped to deliver it — and when the conversation turns from AI in the abstract to a data center down the street, support evaporates almost everywhere.

New data from Angus Reid USA finds 58 per cent of Americans saying government must heavily regulate AI and tech companies, even if it slows development, while just 21 per cent would leave it to the companies to self-regulate. At the same time, 59 per cent say no government is truly equipped to regulate AI quickly enough to keep pace with the technology. That skepticism extends to adoption: 69 per cent say government should be cautious about adopting AI given the risk of unintended consequences, rather than rushing to integrate it into public services.

KEY FINDINGS

- A majority of Americans (58%) want heavy AI regulation even if it slows development; just 21 per cent would leave it to tech companies to self-regulate. Democrats (69%) are more likely than Republicans (51%) to want heavy regulation.
- Faith in government's ability to deliver is scarce: 59 per cent say no government anywhere is truly equipped to regulate AI fast enough to keep pace with the technology, while just 23 per cent disagree.
- Job anxiety runs deep: 42 per cent expect AI to significantly reduce the number of jobs available over the next decade, while just 6 per cent expect significant gains. Another 40 per cent expect a mixed picture.
- Two-thirds of Americans (67%) would oppose a large AI data center built within a few blocks of where they live — opposition that holds at similar levels across regions, age groups, and genders, though it runs deepest among women (71%) and those 55 and older (73%).
- The clearest case Americans see for data centers is America's ability to compete globally in AI and technology (36% good vs. 26% bad). The clearest case against is the local and environmental toll: 60 per cent call data centers bad for energy and environmental sustainability, and 59 per cent say the same for neighborhoods and surrounding communities.

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Part One: Americans prioritize regulation over speed of adoption

Artificial intelligence has moved from a novelty to a fixture of daily life faster than almost any technology in memory. Nine-in-ten Americans (90%) say they know at least a little about how AI works and where it's being used, and roughly four-in-five (80%) say they've actively used an AI platform such as ChatGPT, Gemini, or Copilot in the past three months. But familiarity has not translated into comfort. As the federal government and a patchwork of state legislatures grapple with how — or whether — to rein in the technology, the public is sending a strikingly consistent message: slow down, regulate firmly, and don't trust the pace of government to keep up.

Americans want heavy regulation, even if it slows down development

Asked directly which view comes closer to their own, 58 per cent of Americans say government must heavily regulate AI and tech companies, even if doing so slows development. Just 21 per cent say government should leave this to tech companies to self-regulate, while 21 per cent are unsure.

Which of the following comes closer to your own view about artificial intelligence and regulation?

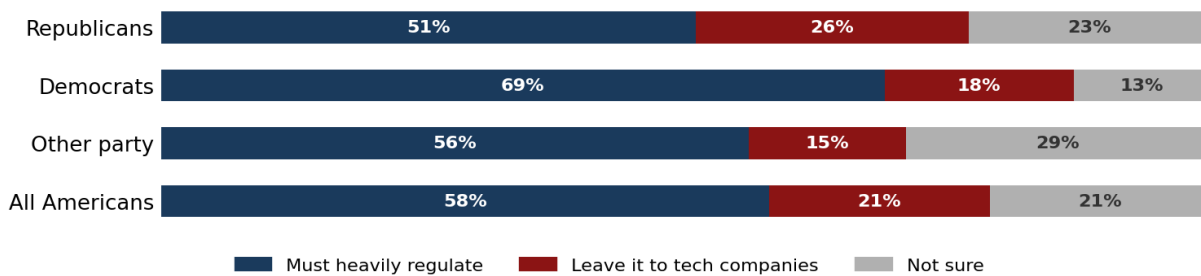


The desire for regulation crosses party lines, though not evenly. Democrats are the most likely to want heavy-handed rules (69%), while Republicans are split more narrowly (51% heavy regulation vs. 26% self-regulation). Those registered with neither major party fall in between.

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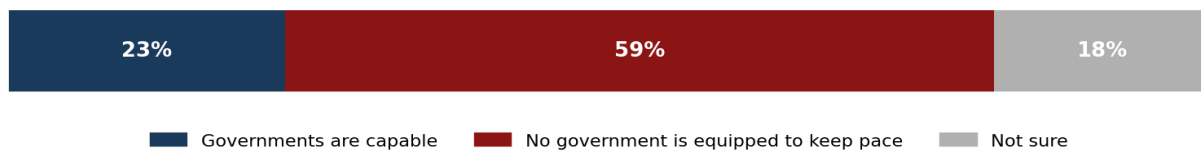
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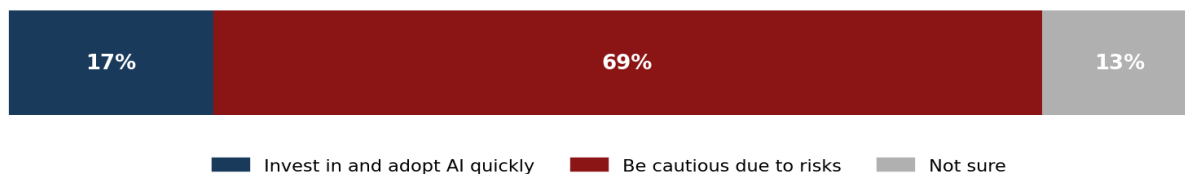
Even as the appetite for regulation is broad-based, confidence that any government can actually deliver it is in short supply. 59 per cent of Americans say no government — in the U.S. or anywhere else — is truly equipped to regulate AI quickly enough to keep pace with the technology, while just 23 per cent believe governments are capable of doing so effectively as it develops.

Thinking about governments in the U.S. and around the world, which statement comes closer to your own opinion?



That skepticism carries directly into how Americans think government itself should use AI. 69 per cent say government should be cautious about adopting AI given the risk of unintended consequences, compared to just 17 per cent who want government to actively invest in and adopt the technology to streamline public services. State and federal agencies have already begun rolling out AI-assisted tools — from chatbot-driven citizen services to automated case processing — even as the public voices broad unease about the pace of that rollout.

Which comes closer to your own view?



Job loss anxiety runs deep

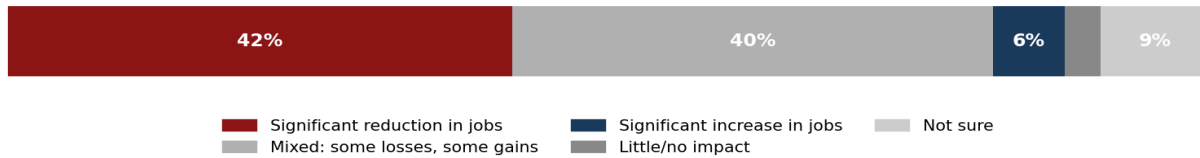
Concern about AI's impact on jobs is one of the most consistent findings in this survey, regardless of how the question is framed. Asked how AI will change the American job market over the next decade, 42 per cent of Americans say it will significantly reduce the number of

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available jobs, while just 6 per cent expect a significant increase. Another 40 per cent foresee a mixed picture, with some jobs lost and others gained.

How do you think AI will change the American job market in the next 10 years or so?



Worry about AI replacing one's own job specifically is more muted than worry about the labor market broadly: just 26 per cent say they are personally worried about AI replacing their own job, while 66 per cent see it instead as a tool to enhance their work, or are simply not very worried. That gap — between a grim macro outlook and comparative personal confidence — echoes a pattern seen in other developed economies grappling with AI's labor-market disruption, and suggests Americans see the threat as real but somewhat abstract, something happening to “the job market” more than to themselves specifically.

Part Two: Data centers a hard sell, wherever they're proposed

The infrastructure race behind the AI boom has moved from data centers as an abstraction to data centers as a neighborhood issue. More than 4,000 facilities are already operating across the country, concentrated in hubs like Northern Virginia, Texas, and California, with thousands more planned or under construction. The pace of that expansion has triggered a wave of organized local resistance: research firm [Data Center Watch](#) found that at least 75 data center projects worth more than \$130 billion were blocked or delayed in the first quarter of 2026 alone — matching the total for all of 2025 — with active opposition groups spanning 49 states.

Some of the highest-profile fights have played out far from the usual tech hubs. In Box Elder County, Utah, hundreds of residents turned out to [oppose a 40,000-acre data center](#) campus backed by investor Kevin O'Leary, with opponents now pushing for a ballot referendum to overturn the county's approval. In Virginia, long considered ground zero for data center growth, a coalition of environmental and homeowner groups has organized to slow new projects amid concerns over land use and grid strain. New York's legislature passed [a one-year moratorium](#) on large data center permits, while a similar bill in Maine was vetoed by the governor after passing the statehouse. These fights cut across the usual partisan map: opposition has emerged in both red and blue states, driven by concerns that range from water and electricity costs to noise, property values, and the sense that communities are being asked to host massive industrial infrastructure with little say in the matter.

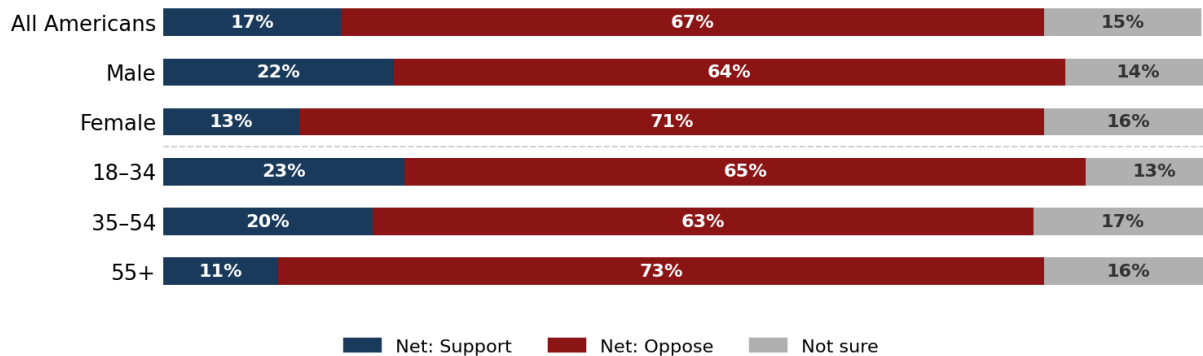
Opposition holds steady across regions, ages, and genders

Against that backdrop, it's little surprise that data center construction faces a skeptical American public almost everywhere. Asked whether they would support or oppose a large AI data center being built within a few blocks of where they live, two-thirds (67%) of Americans oppose the idea, while just 17 per cent support it and 15 per cent are unsure.

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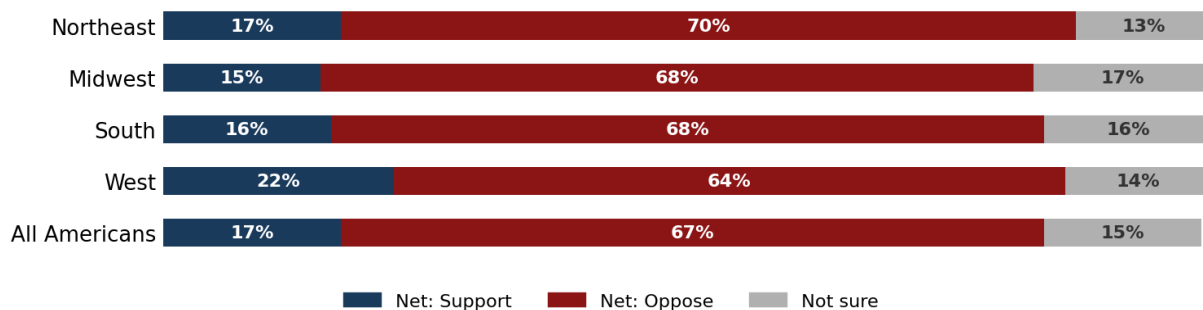
If a large AI data center was proposed within a few blocks of where you live, would you support or oppose it being built there?



Opposition is broadly consistent across demographic lines, though a few patterns stand out. Women oppose data centers near their homes at a higher rate than men (71% vs. 64%), echoing national polling that has found women voicing more intense opposition to data center construction than men. Opposition is also somewhat higher among older Americans (73% among those 55+) than younger adults (65% among those 18–34), though even the youngest age group opposes the idea by nearly three-to-one.

Regionally, opposition is fairly uniform, ranging from 64 per cent in the West — home to a wave of new data center proposals in states like Colorado and Utah — to 70 per cent in the Northeast.

If a large AI data center was proposed within a few blocks of where you live, would you support or oppose it being built there?



Weighing the pros and cons

Pressed on the broader cost-benefit calculation, Americans see some real upside to large AI data centers, but the case grows weaker the closer the impact gets to daily life. The most positive assessment is reserved for America's ability to compete globally in AI and technology, where 36 per cent call data centers a good thing and 26 per cent call them bad — the only dimension tested where the positive view outweighs the negative.

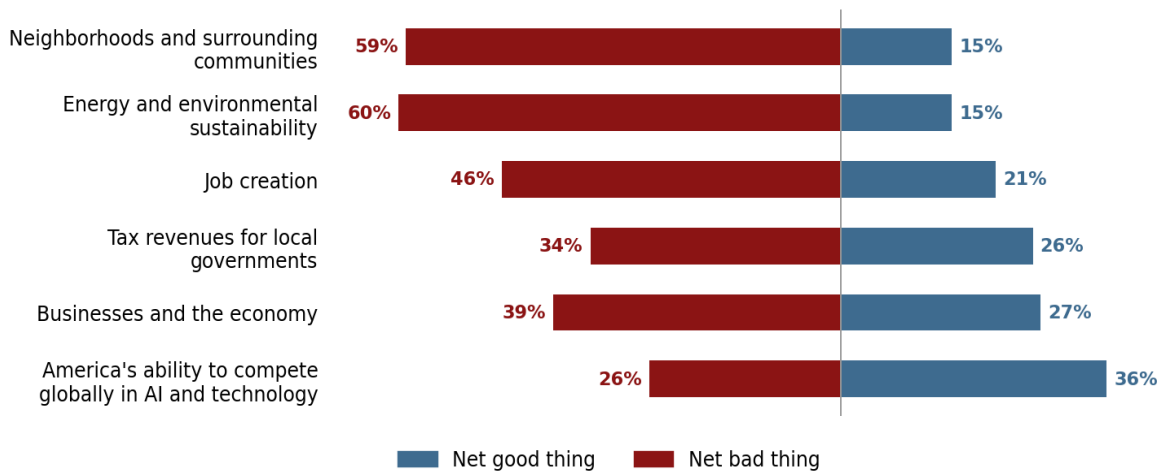
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Views are more closely divided on the economic case closer to home: 27 per cent say data centers are good for businesses and the economy versus 39 per cent who say bad, and a similar split holds for tax revenues for local governments (26% good, 34% bad). On job creation specifically, only 21 per cent see a net positive against 46 per cent who see a net negative — a sharp rebuke to one of the industry's central selling points to local communities.

The clearest negatives are environmental and local. 60 per cent say data centers are bad for energy and environmental sustainability, the costliest concern by far given the enormous water and power demands these facilities place on local grids and watersheds. A nearly identical share, 59 per cent, say data centers are bad for neighborhoods and surrounding communities — underscoring the central tension facing both government and industry as they try to sell AI infrastructure as a national priority while reassuring the communities asked to live next to it.

Overall, do you think large AI data centers and computing facilities are a good thing or bad thing for each of the following?



Methodology

Angus Reid USA conducted an online survey from June 12-19, 2026, among a representative randomized sample of 2,007 American adults who are members of Angus Reid Forum USA. For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size would carry a margin of error of +/- 2.0 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding. The survey was self-commissioned and paid for by Angus Reid USA. Detailed tables are found at the end of this release.

For detailed results by age, gender, region, education, and other demographics, [click here.](#)

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