Project Outcomes for NSF 1927227:
Measuring and Mitigating Animosity toward Artificial Intelligence Systems and Science

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We measured American public opinion toward Artificial Intelligence over the course of several years.

For two years we ran weekly surveys of 100 Americans. We found the American public supported the development of Artificial Intelligence. Survey respondents could choose one of seven points between Strongly Oppose and Strongly Support. Over 82 weeks, we never observed the average dip below the midpoint.

Every few weeks we asked Americans "How much trust do you have in _____ to do the right thing?" The blank was randomly filled with Congress, the President, the average American, your best friend or artificial intelligence algorithms. As Figure 1 demonstrates, Americans trusted AI algorithms more than Congress or the President but less than the average American or their best friend. We maintained a website presenting these results and more titled *Jones-Skiena Public Opinion of Artificial Intelligence Dashboard*. You can find it at https://jasonjones.ninja/jones-skiena-public-opinion-of-ai/
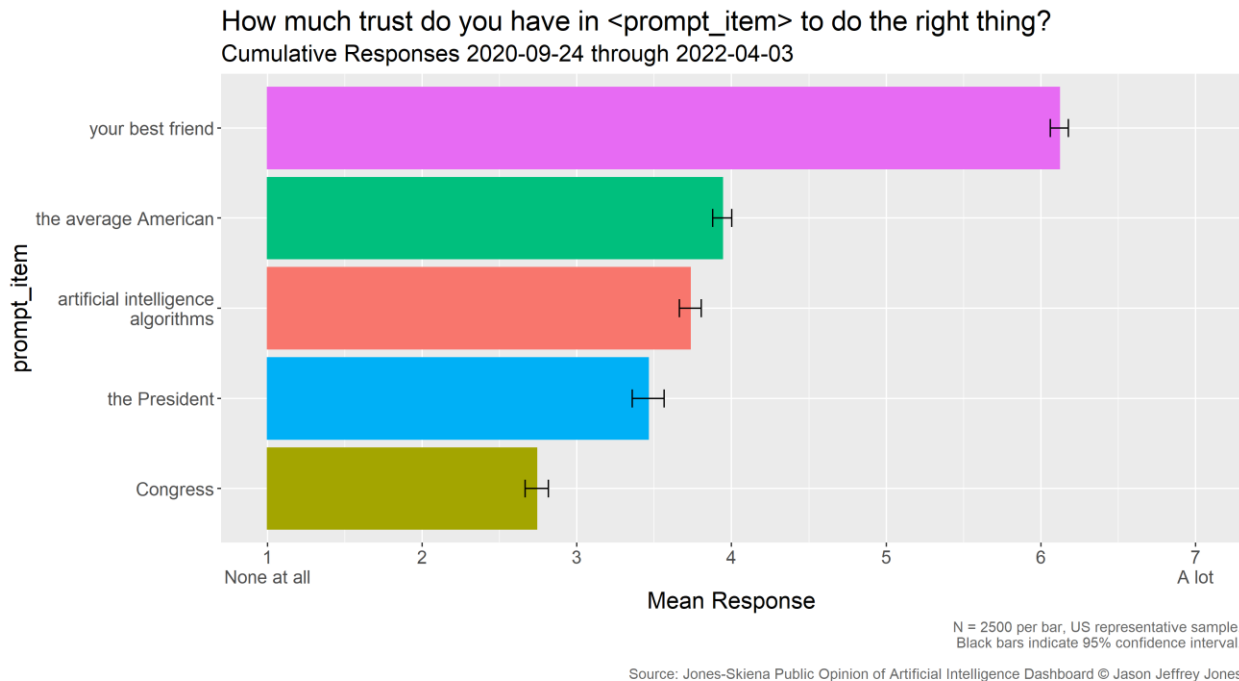

Figure 1. On average, the American public trusts "artificial intelligence algorithms" to do the right thing just a little less than they trust the average American. Americans trust artificial intelligence algorithms more than Congress or the President, but not as much as their best friend.

With two students, we published a peer-reviewed, open-access research article titled *American Public Opinion on Artificial Intelligence in Healthcare*. As Figure 2 illustrates, we found that the American public strongly prefers human medical professionals make medical decisions, while at the same time believing they are more likely to make culturally biased decisions than AI.
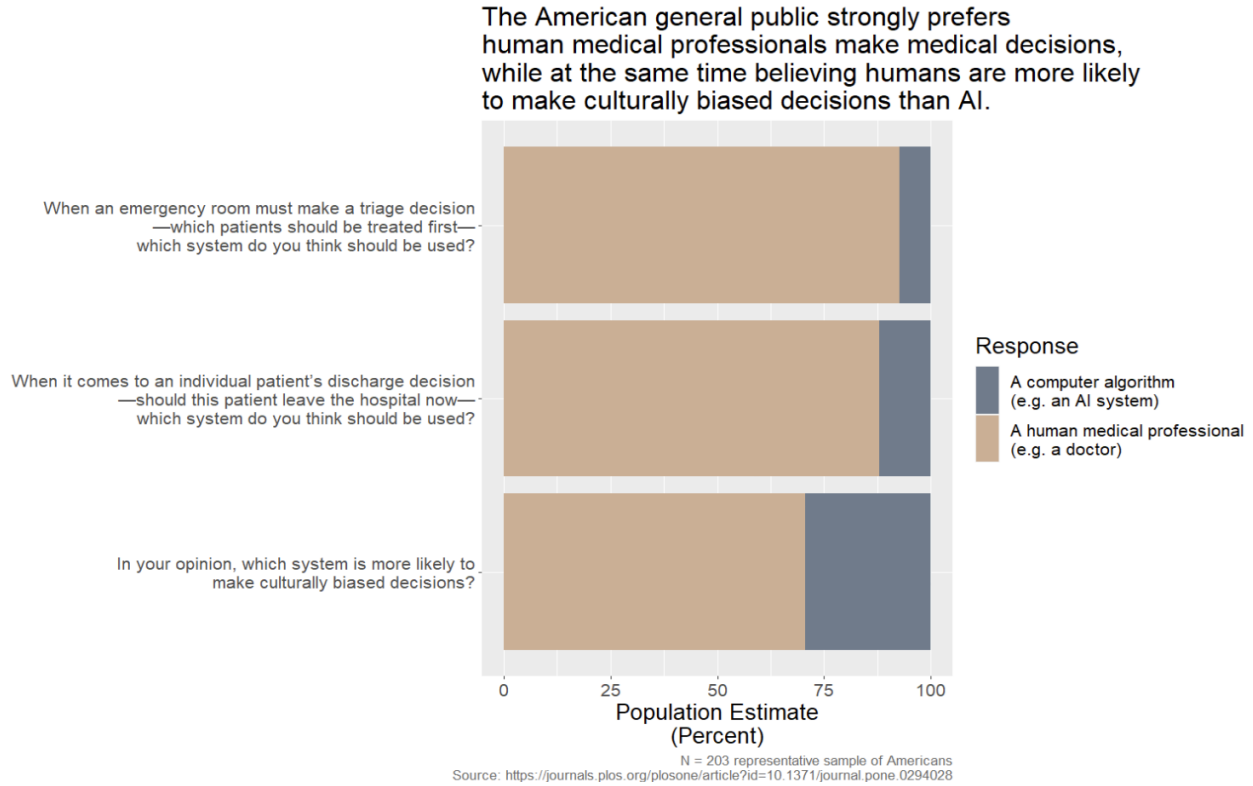

Figure 2. Americans prefer human medical professionals make medical decisions over a computer algorithm.

With another student, Dr. Jones published a peer-reviewed, open-access research article titled *The Effect of Artificial Intelligence on Social Trust in American Institutions*. Using survey experiments again, we discovered that Americans report less trust in companies, hospitals and police when they are said to "use artificial intelligence." See Figure 3.
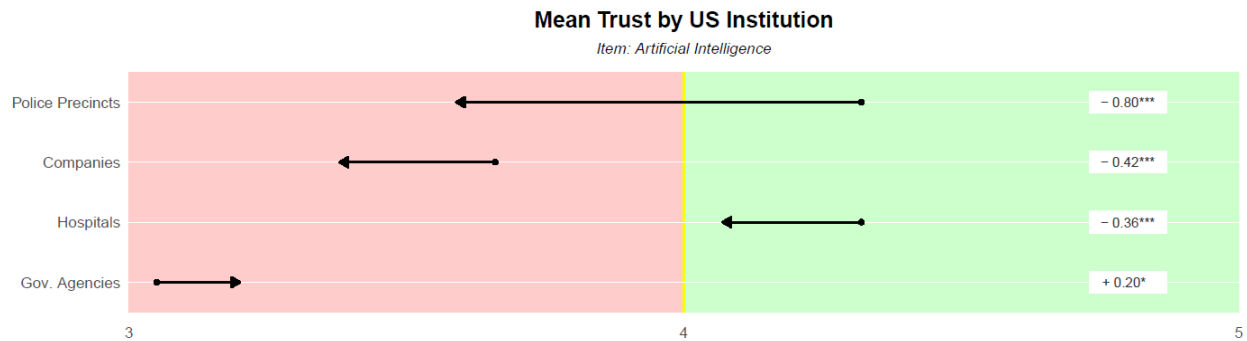

Figure 3. Trust in police, companies and hospitals decreases from baseline when they are said to use artificial intelligence. The opposite occurs for trust in government agencies – a slight increase from a low baseline.

Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) refers to a computer system that could learn to complete any intellectual task that a human being could. Dr. Jones and Dr. Skiena wondered if Americans are ready for AGI computer equals. We asked Americans how much they agreed with the following three statements - once in 2021 and again in 2023:

- I personally believe it will be possible to build an AGI.
- If scientists determine AGI can be built, it should be built.
- An AGI should have the same rights as a human being

In Figure 4, you can see how Americans responded and how their opinions changed. From 2021 to 2023, Americans increasingly agreed AGI was *possible* to build. But they agreed more weakly that AGI *should* be built. Finally, Americans mostly disagreed that an AGI should have the *same rights* as a human being - disagreeing more strongly in 2023 than in 2021.
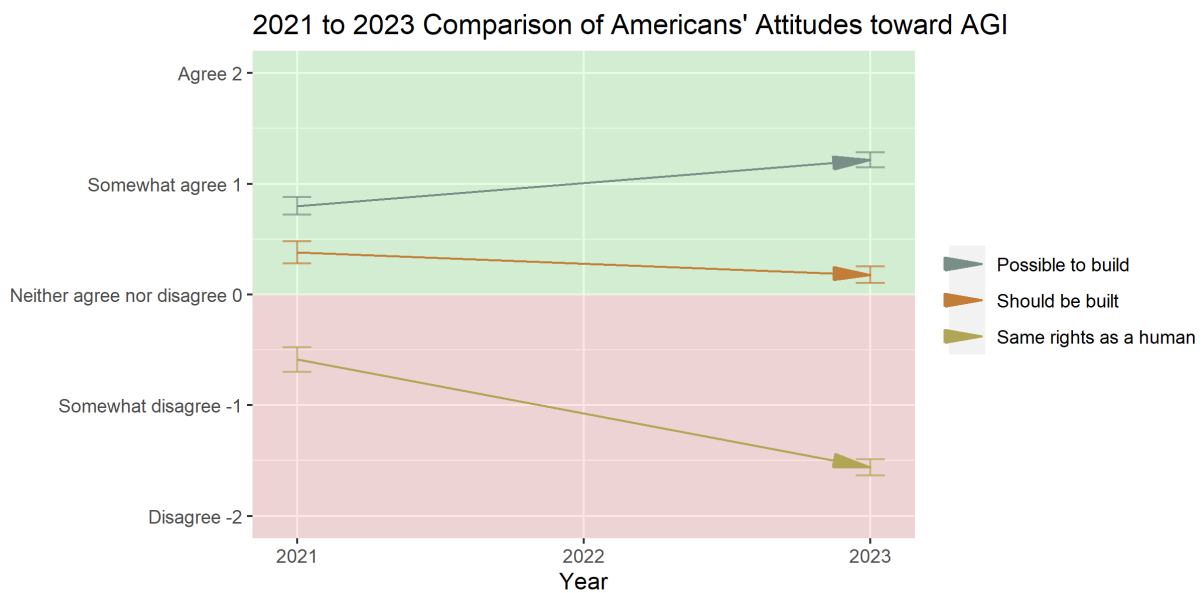
2021 to 2023 Comparison of Americans' Attitudes toward AGI

Figure 4. Americans updated their beliefs about Artificial General Intelligence from 2021 to 2023.

Overall, we found that American public opinion is at a tipping point. Most Americans have only weak feelings - neither very positive nor very negative - toward Artificial Intelligence. However, with the large amount of public attention the field currently draws, we expect that to change in the near future.