Guardrails Action

DATA FOR PROGRESS

Uncontainable: Focus Group Perspectives on AI from Iowa, Michigan, and Ohio

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AI, Data Centers and Regulation: Focus Group Findings from Iowa, Michigan and Ohio

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Executive Summary

Through four focus groups with registered voters in Iowa, Michigan, and Ohio, Data for Progress and Guardrails Action examined Midwestern voters' concerns around AI and tested possible regulations and messages about them. While some participants expressed general openness to the development of AI and their own personal use of the technology, most participants expressed overall concern about the pace at which it is being developed without proper regulation, and about how the technology is affecting society and children's education.

Participants' views on regulation were largely informed by distrust of elected officials and AI companies, whom they view as heavily influenced by AI lobbyists, and by concerns about AI companies creating superPACs to advance their agenda through the officials they fund. Participants showed support for policies and regulations that could protect their data, children, and workers, but expressed mixed views towards policies that provide an economic safety net from the harms of AI, which many saw as a buy-off that absolved AI companies of accountability. AI felt most tangible in data centers, with participants tying them to water, utility costs, noise, and farmland in their own communities, and wanted facts about what they do to the places that host them.

Introduction

AI and Data Centers in the Midwest

Iowa, Michigan, and Ohio all have operational and proposed data center projects, many of which have faced controversy. Some counties in these states have passed data center moratoriums, temporary pauses on construction such as a one-year pause, while others have debated moratoriums that later failed to pass. Much effort around AI legislation has focused on data centers and their potential impacts on issues like energy bills, strain on the power grid and local water systems, site-related impacts like noise generation or the loss of farmland, and limited job creation outside of the construction phase of a project.

Relatively less consideration has been given to broader regulation of artificial intelligence (AI), but there are notable examples of regulatory efforts in each of these states. Legislative efforts in Iowa, for example, have primarily focused on consumer protection, user privacy, and the legal status of AI-generated output, including proposed legislation to regulate conversational AI services' interactions with minors through mandatory disclaimers that users are interacting with AI, and placing restrictions on simulating emotional dependency. On the other hand, Michigan's approach has centered on establishing safety and transparency standards for AI developers, with a proposed bill (HB 4668) that would require large AI developers to publicly disclose internal safety protocols, conduct third-party audits, and protect whistleblowers, alongside bills that would prohibit health insurers from using AI tools to make claims decisions and regulate the availability of companion chatbots to minors. Lastly, Ohio's legislative efforts have prioritized public safety, accountability, and transparency in employment, including a bipartisan bill (HB 524) that would penalize developers whose AI models generate content encouraging self-harm or violence, and a bill (HB 828) that would prohibit employers from relying solely on AI for hiring, promotion, or disciplinary decisions.

Motivation for the Research

Data for Progress, in partnership with Guardrails Action, conducted four focus groups in September 2026 to assess concerns around AI and test possible regulations. Participants were recruited from Iowa, Michigan, and Ohio, and represented diverse backgrounds and perspectives on AI. The purpose of the groups was to hear from voters about their experiences with and views towards technologies like AI, and to learn what resonates with them and how to talk about these topics. Participants first shared their top-of-mind associations with AI and where they encounter it in daily life, before discussing specific areas of concern: jobs, workplace surveillance, personal privacy, children and education, data centers, and risks to democracy. Participants then watched three or four 30-second videos about AI regulation and reacted to each, and then closed the discussions by responding to a set of policies Congress could pass, naming who they would and would not trust to shape AI policy, and sharing the one thing they most want policymakers to understand about how they think about AI.

Key Findings

1. While some participants expressed general openness to the development of AI and their own personal use of the technology, most participants expressed overall concern about the pace at which it is being developed without proper regulation

Many participants use AI, and most immediately associate AI with products many of them use regularly at work or at home through social platforms or search engines such as ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, Siri, or Grok. Participants pointed out the benefits that AI brings to certain jobs or content creation on social media, acknowledging how the technology has made certain tasks easier and more efficient.

As one participant put it: *"You know, I think it's hard to avoid anything with AI, at least the way that I would define AI. I mean, from the time I wake up in the morning and ask my Google assistant what the weather's going to be or what's on my schedule today, or to play certain music on a speaker, or as a photographer helping me edit photos to not replace what I do, but to shortcut what I do."* – Ohio man, college-educated, 45+ years old, Independent

Some participants did not feel like the development of AI was inherently bad, and saw the potential in AI as a tool that will benefit the future, improve productivity, and advance society. One group was notably more optimistic about AI and its benefits than the others, associating it with positive outcomes and viewing it as less of a threat when it comes to its impacts on democracy or the job market.

However, this openness came with mixed views on AI's overall societal impact in the long run. The efficiency that AI brings to jobs or content creation has its downsides, such as making users less capable of essential skills like writing, replacing creativity with AI, and potential job loss.

"...When it first became big, I would like use it a lot for like emails, like quick messages or assignments I needed. But then you kinda start realizing that you're not really learning, like your writing is not getting better. So I try to like avoid using it for like emails and stuff now just so that my writing doesn't deteriorate." – Michigan man, college-educated, under 45 years old, Democrat

For many participants, AI felt like a given, something with great power that will fundamentally reshape society, politics, and the economy, and which no one is really positioned to stop. At the same time, other participants expressed their unease about how fast this technology is developing and how powerful it is becoming without proper regulation. When shown a video calling for AI regulation, some felt it raised more questions about who is in charge of regulating, and how, and some felt that it may be too late, too big, or impossible to contain.

"My question is, how would you even begin to regulate it? Like, is there a kill switch or something. It's kind of too late, right? Like, you started this, and I don't think there is a way to do it. I think it's just a lie to make us feel better about it, but it's not actually possible." – Michigan woman, non-college-educated, under 45 years old, Republican

Views of AI as a powerful tool, mixed with cynicism about regulatory bodies created a tension and urgency around finding someone to regulate. One participant worried that the longer it takes to find someone to regulate AI, the smarter the technology gets.

2. Most participants expressed overall concern about how the technology is affecting society, the environment, and children's education.

Impacts on society

Participants pointed to the consequences this new technology will have on society, including how it is being used for workplace and general surveillance, job losses caused by automation, presenting false information as factual, and replacing human creativity with AI slop.

The most immediate pain point was customer service representatives who have been replaced by chatbots. Participants expressed annoyance at how unhelpful these can be, and how any frustration from a customer can eventually make its way back to a real person who has to answer their call after the AI fails to address their issue.

"I found that 90% of places you call today are answered by AI, and then you have to go through the AI program to get where you wanna go, and half the time it doesn't understand what you want, so you have to repeat it over and over again to get where I wanna go." – Michigan man, non-college-educated, 45+ years old, Republican

Participants also said one of the biggest problems that AI currently presents is its creation of slop and fake content. They are often unsure of what they can believe on social media, as well as in more professional settings like using AI for research.

"Some of the internet browsers that you use are internet sites like Facebook, I have no belief in half the stuff I see posted anymore because I have no idea if it's real or not." – Michigan man, non-college-educated, 45+ years old, Republican

Most participants see job loss as a problem, especially one growing larger in the future and in certain industries.

“I think a lot of white-collar jobs [will be lost]. Jobs that people go and get college degrees to perform, which what they're really providing is knowledge, and AI is somewhat of a form of knowledge, not always right, but that's where it's moving.” – Ohio man, college-educated, 45+ years old, Independent

Several participants were more resistant to these concerns, saying that AI could also create more jobs we haven't yet considered possible, or that AI is just another technology changing society the same way the printing press did, and we will just have to adapt. In one group, job displacement felt like a more far-off concern, if a concern at all, and some participants were adamant that it wouldn't happen.

“I don't really see any of that. I'm in rural Iowa to start with, so it’s not really a factor. Largely it's agriculture and manufacturing. To take jobs in manufacturing, you need physical robots at some level, and that's decades away, and it's really cost-efficient to do it for probably longer than that. Agriculture, I don't know. I guess that we might take some jobs, but it's not like a huge industry around here. I think that most jobs that AI theoretically would take are largely just repetitive tasks that aren't really jobs. They're kind of placeholders. You're just doing something because it does need to be done.” – Iowa man, non-college-educated, 45+ years old, Republican

Concerns about surveillance and privacy also came up through the discussions. Participants were more permissive of surveillance at work than in their personal lives. Several said employers already monitor productivity, and the issue is older than AI. Others drew a line between work and home:

“I think I would be far more concerned in my personal life because if it's in my workplace, I get it. I am there to do a job. Someone is paying me to do something. So I understand if you wanna monitor or check me on whether or not I'm complying with what you're paying me to do, but in my personal life, like no, I'm free.” – Iowa woman, non-college-educated, under 45 years old, Democrat

Concern about AI's accuracy also showed up as worry about scams, Flock safety cameras, and misidentifying criminals through AI facial recognition.

“I'm concerned about my older family members falling for the scams. They can use your likeness, your voice, and everything, and there's no real way to combat them and let them know that it's not actually you.” – Iowa woman, college-educated, under 45 years old, Independent

Impacts on the environment

AI felt most tangible to participants in data centers. Participants described data centers being built or proposed in their own communities and tied them to water, power, noise, and the loss of farmland. Some participants also said data centers are built near farmers and working people rather than in affluent areas.

Participants also strongly connected data centers to policymakers (especially local) who must approve this infrastructure, but they feel like politicians only pretend to work in their constituents' interests and break their promises once elected, as they are likely to financially benefit from building these data centers.

"The data centers is a big topic where I stay. I have relatives in Detroit. When we have power outages, it now goes for almost two weeks- five days to two weeks. You gotta think of the data centers taking up all the water. And then where did they put the water that they use? There are so many questions. I feel like there's nobody fighting for us, and the government and billionaires are saying we're gonna put it where the land is, and we don't care what the citizens say that stay around these areas." – Michigan woman, college-educated, 45+ years old, Democrat

Impacts on children

The impacts on education were a strong concern for participants, who view AI as contributing to brain rot and a lack of critical thinking, and altering children's learning abilities, such as research, and how they're using it in their personal lives.

"My daughter uses it for writing papers because they [teachers] have her use it to write papers. And I'm like, I think that it's the biggest form of brain rot. We become so reliant. I think everybody here is at least a generation before it [AI]. So we have some sort of like, grounding before my kids. It's kind of scary. It's like, I want them to know the advances 'cause it is their future, but I don't want them to not pursue excellence in their own brains because they're relying on AI to answer questions." – Ohio woman, non-college-educated, under 45 years old, Independent

However, most say they want children to still be able to use AI so that they understand how to use it well and discern what is true or appropriate from AI. This means creating certain limits at school as well as in the home, which would allow children to still have exposure to this technology and "keep up" with AI's development, while not relying on it fully.

"*...I agree with what you're saying, but I guess I would couch that in that if AI is undeniably part of their future and an important tool, they need to know how to use that tool effectively to be part of that future society, whatever that is. And that if they don't, they're gonna be at a disadvantage in some ways ... there's gotta be a balance that if you don't expose them and let*

them use these tools to the best of their ability, you're somewhat handicapping them against their peers." – Ohio man, college-educated, 45+ years old, Independent

Children's mental health was a related concern. Participants, parents and non-parents alike, have heard about children becoming too attached to chatbots and relying on them for relationships or advice, even when the chatbots might not be able to respond with empathy, and acknowledged that increased access leads to a larger likelihood of relying on it more. Most were concerned about AI's lack of ability to have real empathy for people the way humans can, so trust in AI addressing mental health is relatively low, though some participants did feel that AI is useful for increasing accessibility and resources for mental health treatment.

"I don't have kids myself, but it did resonate with me because I do feel like people can become attached to ChatGPT or Gemini with questions, and you have this AI tool or chatbot responding, and if they're responding with any type of empathy, even though it's not a human being, that can kind of manipulate a kid's feelings." – Ohio woman, college-educated, 45+ years old, Democrat

3. Participants expressed little confidence in the ability of both government regulators and AI companies to properly regulate this new technology.

Participants across all four groups showed distrust in elected officials to be truthful about the harms of AI, viewing them as heavily influenced by AI lobbyists. Elected officials were generally distrusted as AI regulators, and there was little confidence, and even some derision, at the idea that Congress was positioned to provide the regulation that AI needs. Participants had little trust in specific politicians on any level to regulate AI.

"To be honest with you, I can't put my trust in the people that's in office. I can't put my trust in anyone. That's just the truth. Because everyone lies and says, Hey, I have your best interest. And then when they get an office or when they do something, it's not in my best interest. It winds up hurting me or my family at the end. It's kind of hard to say who we can put in charge to make sure that everything is covered. Make sure that whoever does something wrong, that they get punished, like they are supposed to. So it's kind of hard, and it's kind of difficult to say who I would allow to be able to put those regulations in place." –Iowa man, non-college-educated, 45+ years old, Democrat

Participants were slightly more open to local politicians regulating this technology, who they see as closer to the areas affected. Even at the local level, however, participants still fear these politicians are accepting money from AI lobbyists.

"I would want to think that local politicians would do more. But, being that billionaires flood them with money always, I just don't have the trust in it anymore. Even with our local politicians." – Michigan woman, college-educated, 45+ years old, Democrat

Participants also doubted whether AI companies are telling the truth about how this technology will affect society in the future, and had mixed views on including AI executives in regulation. Some felt their perspectives were important because they are experts in the field, and raised the possibility that executives are more open to regulation and the safe growth of the industry than people assume.

Others felt AI executives will always work only in their own interests and cannot be trusted with any more power. Participants wanted some involvement from experts in the industry, but not those at an executive level; the experts would have to be willing to blow the whistle on the industry rather than profit from it, though few participants had heard about the recent whistleblowers.

"I would trust the people who have been whistleblowers from what I've seen, who have worked in the tech industry and left it because they saw how corrupt it was. I would actually go for them first because those are the ones who had the integrity to lead the companies...once they saw that it wasn't just...helping medicine, but people were using it to then violate privacy laws. So I would go for the people who have left and kind of are, like, the ones who are blacklisted within the industry." – Ohio woman, non-college-educated, under 45 years old, Independent

Asked who they would trust instead, participants described an independent group that would include everyday people, whistleblowers, parents and non-parents, and people with different backgrounds to represent the diverse views and experiences of society, with politicians excluded from the table. Others wanted to hear from experts in intersecting fields, such as professionals in water, electricity, or pollution management, but not those who work directly for an AI company. One participant named educators, and another the judiciary.

"I think we would need like some sort of board or panel of people from all different walks of life. All different backgrounds. I think we would need whistleblowers, we would need parents, we need people without kids. People from all different age brackets, people at different jobs. Even like, you know, kind of like a decent-sized sampling of all of these people who, like, do make up the melting pot of our society." – Iowa woman, non-college-educated, under 45 years old, Democrat

Participants reacted somewhat favorably to the proposal to establish an OSHA or FDA-like entity to regulate the AI industry, but had little idea who would be able to implement such a proposal and run that agency with the expertise and accountability needed.

"I'm not opposed to oversight. I just don't see how exactly that would be implemented." – Iowa man, non-college-educated, 45+ years old, Republican

When named political figures came up, just a few participants said they would trust specific national leaders, especially middle-of-the-road or compromise-oriented figures, or those who have demonstrated independent judgment. Participants pointed to Kamala Harris, J.D. Vance, Marco Rubio, and Bernie Sanders, as long as none of them have taken money from tech companies or AI lobbyists. In one group, no one trusted any of the figures named.

"I think I would too. I think Bernie shows a little bit of integrity. I haven't examined his full record, but I've seen that he has been independent on a lot of things, and I think he uses his own judgment. I think he may sway me a little bit, but you know, you never know with a politician." – Michigan man, non-college-educated, 45+ years old, Democrat

Participants were concerned but not surprised by AI companies creating political superPACs and spending millions of dollars on elections. Most had not heard about it before the discussion. Participants understand that the spending is to advance AI companies' agendas once candidates are elected with the PACs' money. Some said this concern is not unique to the AI or tech industries, as they are concerned generally about how much money goes into politics; others said the size of the AI industry is particularly concerning because of how much power it could have.

"I think it's a lot different because AI feels like it's not optional. And the other stuff is like, if you wanna get involved, you can, but you don't have to. And AI is more like it's here, and you have to deal with it." – Michigan woman, non-college-educated, under 45 years old, Republican

"... I think it's concerning. Like if you think about it, with smoking and tobacco, once they found out tobacco or smoking can cause cancer, all these tobacco companies were paying these politicians to still push cigarettes, right? It's kind of the same type of thing. I would still be concerned about that. So if you're pushing to stop regulation, that's concerning for me." – Ohio woman, college-educated, under 45 years old, Democrat

Some participants said they would like a way to easily research whether a politician has accepted money from an AI company or data center, because they are less willing to vote for someone who has taken such money. One participant suggested that politicians have to disclose who their funders are, the way NASCAR drivers wear their sponsors' logos.

4. Participants expressed mixed views towards policies and regulations that provide an economic safety net from the harms of AI, while expressing a desire for policymakers to focus their attention on protecting society from the harmful effects of this technology and providing a humanitarian approach in regulating these products.

Asked what Congress should do about AI if it could do one thing, participants' initial policy desires revolved around intentionality: making sure that Congress does its research, answers

questions like impacts on the environment, forces companies to write proposals before granting permission to build data centers, and makes sure that AI is not integrated into the military. Several participants brought up fear and apprehension about using AI for advancing the military, especially in a way that could be catastrophic for everyone. Others named age restrictions for children and legal liability for AI companies.

"I would say one of the things that would come to mind for me that Congress would wanna take a look at would just be legal liability. That if AI provides information that results in someone getting harmed or killed or some other bad thing, that they should be able to be sued in the same manner as if a person were to hurt or harm or do something negative to another person. And I think that with those deep pockets, that would force them to take greater responsibility if they could be held legally responsible for negative results." – Ohio man, college-educated, 45+ years old, Independent

"Maybe force companies into, like, writing proposals on why they need the AI and the data centers and, you know, is there really a benefit to people in the long run if you know, develop this type of AI? Or is this really not something that's gonna benefit people in the long run? I mean, actually look at things before just developing them, you know, and have restrictions on what they're allowed to develop AI for. I mean, I feel like that could keep it from getting out of hand possibly, if it has to go through some sort of process to get approved, maybe there is one, I don't know, but I feel like there should be; if there's not, to kind of prioritize what AI do we really need and what AI is maybe hurting people more than helping people." – Ohio woman, college-educated, 45+ years old, Republican

In one group, it wasn't clear that voters wanted any specific AI regulation. There weren't many solutions that people could organically come up with that they wanted Congress to pursue beyond getting out of the way or making use of AI for us.

In one group, participants responded positively to proposed regulations that would protect both children and consumers alike: banning companies from using AI and personal data to charge different people different prices for the same product, or to pay workers different wages for the same work; requiring companies to test AI systems used for hiring, lending, housing, or medical care for bias and errors, and report results to regulators; and banning AI "companion" chatbots for children and requiring chatbots to tell users they are not human. Participants liked these ideas but did not see any of them as full solutions. Protecting children from the harmful use of AI, such as generative AI being used to create child sexual abuse material, also came up on its own in two groups.

Reactions to a set of policies meant to help address economic loss and job loss that may come as a result of AI adoption were more negative. Participants were sensitive to the idea that policies could be a buy-off or would convey implicit consent for AI companies stealing their

data. While some participants were open to the idea of benefiting personally, such as receiving healthcare coverage or money for their data, they felt providing these benefits only in the context of AI felt unfair and absolved AI companies of any accountability.

"Also it feels like a buyout. Like if I just pay you, then you'll be quiet about all the concerns you have." – Michigan woman, non-college-educated, under 45 years old, Republican

"Payoff also kind of creates this form of consent in a way where, yeah, it's okay that you haven't taken my data and continue to do it, even if I don't agree to all parts of it, which legally could end up in a really gray area. If they take something of yours that you legally could take action against, they've already, you know, compensated you for it, even though it's, again, $200." – Iowa woman, college-educated, under 45 years old, Independent

Many participants felt that social policies like a guaranteed jobs program or guaranteed healthcare for workers who lose their jobs to AI would be unfair, requiring them to pay for people who can't solve their own problems. Some also felt it would be unfair for these policies to only apply to the AI sector, such as free healthcare: why stop there? At least one participant said this as a criticism, while another said it as more of a desire. Others questioned how anyone would prove a job was lost to AI, or they saw job loss as the nature of technology.

"I think that's the nature of technology. I mean, people who drove horse-led carriages weren't given free healthcare when automobiles came around, and operators weren't given healthcare. When the systems are smart enough, they no longer needed operators. It seems to be...how do you even define if someone lost your job?" – Ohio man, college-educated, 45+ years old, Independent

"...I have a hard time believing that that can happen because it's just the nature of technology. I mean, the printing press put the scribe out of business, and the telegraph put the pony express out of business and, you know, technology moves forward, and it's really hard to say, your company can't use a forklift because we need 10 men to do the job of one machine." – Ohio man, college-educated, 45+ years old, Democrat

The economic policy that did best was creating tax breaks for companies that hire human employees and tax penalties for those that replace workers with AI or automation. Some felt this put the onus on companies rather than other policies that felt like they were "buying off" the public.

5. Participants across all four groups expressed that they want lawmakers in Congress to make the best decision for humanity when it comes to regulating AI.

At the close of each group, participants were asked to say, in one sentence, the most important thing they want policymakers to understand about how they think about AI. Several participants

across each of the focus groups said that lawmakers' attention should be focused on protecting future generations of children who will undoubtedly be ingrained with this technology.

Final thoughts centered around remembering we are all human and attempting to make the best decisions for all of us, especially future generations: centering constituents' needs, doing their own research, and ensuring data privacy. Participants also said that lawmakers need to protect their data and not allow AI companies to use it for their own benefit, and encouraged transparency around the use of their data.

Closing statements were a mix of pro-AI and pro-regulation sentiments. Some participants encouraged Congress to think holistically and remember the humanity aspect of how technology impacts society; others said AI is the future and we don't have to sacrifice jobs along the way. Most acknowledged that AI can be used for both bad and good, and encouraged its development to be used for the latter, especially through some sort of regulation.

"AI is a developing tool that has vast potential for both good and bad. And we need to work to understand exactly the best way to utilize it." – Iowa man, college-educated, under 45 years old, Independent

"They shouldn't forget that these are real people with real jobs that have real problems that they could potentially help mitigate with their policies. They forget that there's actually real people out here dealing with real things." – Ohio woman, non-college-educated, 45+ years old, Democrat

Video Testing

To test messaging, Guardrails Action provided seven 30-second videos about AI. Each group watched three or four, and each video was shown to two groups.

- **Jobs:** Workers who are concerned about job loss, especially their own roles training AI to take over their jobs
- **Parents:** Current and future parents who are concerned about the unknown impacts of AI on future generations
- **Young:** Young adults who are concerned about the unknown impacts on their futures
- **Kids:** Children swinging and describing their outdoor playing, and how a future data center will wreck that
- **Questions:** Adults asking questions they have about AI
- **Data Centers:** Rural adults describing the negative impacts of data centers on their communities
- **AI Solutions:** Highlights the frequent requests from adults for more AI regulations

The Parents, Kids, and Young videos resonated in both groups that saw them. The Parents video worked because it resonated with concerns around children's mental health and AI's lack of qualifications, particularly its ability to have real emotions, and was convincing for parents and non-parents alike. The Young video accurately conveyed the fear people in the video had of AI's impacts; the emotional appeal, rather than strictly economic, helped humanize the problem. The Kids video provided a strong emotional appeal to parents and non-parents alike, with multiple participants describing it as tugging at their heartstrings, and it resonated because of its local ties, with participants noting their own experiences with data centers built in their communities.

"I think what stood out to me was how well-rounded it was. So it wasn't just focused on the economic impact, but the human connection. I know there are teens that are having relationships with AI bots. And I think it's making people more introverted and having less actual human connection. So I thought it really touched on a lot of different aspects and resonated." – Michigan woman, college-educated, under 45 years old, Democrat

Participants had mixed reactions to the AI Solutions video in both groups that saw it. Participants were mostly cynical about the ability to regulate AI or the vagueness around what those regulations would be, and some felt it raised more questions about who is in charge of regulating, and how, and that it may be too late, too big, or impossible to contain. The repetition of the word "regulation" made one participant feel the video was against regulations, and another worried the title card saying "regulate AI" would rub certain people the wrong way. Another felt that an emotional appeal may be more impactful for persuading viewers of the need for regulations.

Reactions to the Jobs and Data Centers videos split by group. Jobs was most participants' favorite in one group because it humanized the issue, putting faces and job titles to the problem, while participants in another did not understand how AI would impact certain jobs or fields, and did not necessarily believe AI would replace a job like insurance. One participant felt the Data Centers video was an accurate representation of small towns' susceptibility to believing in economic benefits that do not actually come; others found the messaging too vague and repetitive, and said it would be stronger with concrete evidence or statistics, or a before-and-after framing showing the impacts on communities and how they have changed. Across several videos, participants said they wanted more information, concrete evidence, or statistics.

"It was just so vague and non-specific that there was nothing for me to grasp onto. Like there weren't any statistics or facts. So I'm perfectly happy to believe them, but to me, there needs to be concrete evidence. And there probably is, but they just didn't show any of it." – Ohio man, college-educated, 45+ years old, Democrat

Conclusion

Across four focus groups in Iowa, Michigan, and Ohio, participants expressed some openness to AI and their own use of it, but most were concerned about the pace of its development, its effects on children and society, and the influence of AI companies over the officials who would regulate it. They supported regulations that protect children, consumers, and workers, were skeptical of policies that pay people for AI's harms, and wanted policymakers to remember the people, and the future generations, on the other side of these decisions.

Appendix

Methodology

Data for Progress worked with qualified recruiters in Ohio, Michigan, and Iowa to recruit registered voters for four virtual focus groups. These groups lasted 90 minutes each and were conducted via Qualboard, a video conferencing platform. Trained qualitative experts moderated the conversations, and other DFP staffer(s) at each group assisted with note-taking and technology. Participants were compensated $150 for their time and contributions to the discussion.

Twelve participants were recruited for each group, with the aim of seating at least eight participants per group. No focus group had fewer than 9 participants during the discussion. Participants across all four focus groups were segmented by gender, partisanship, and geography to ensure a diverse and representative sample.

The findings of these focus groups are qualitative and should not be interpreted as statistically representative or extrapolated to wider registered voters. These findings illuminate patterns of thought among registered voters residing in Ohio, Michigan, and Iowa, providing nuanced insights into attitudes and concerns towards artificial intelligence (AI).

Participant Demographics

Number of participants	38	**Count**	**Percentage** ***Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding or respondents selecting more than one option.**
Number of focus groups	4		
Gender	Female	17	45
	Male	21	55
Age	18-29	4	11
	30-39	9	24
	40-49	9	24
	50-59	7	18

	60-69	5	13
	70+	4	11
Race/Ethnicity	White	30	79
	Black or African American	11	29
	Hispanic or Latino/a	2	5
	Asian or Asian American or Native American/Indian	2	5
Income	Less than $25,000	1	3
	$25,000-$50,000	5	13
	$50,001-$75,000	9	24
	$75,001-$100,000	9	24
	$100,001-$150,000	7	18
	More than $150,000	7	18
Employment Status	Employed, full time	23	61
	Employed, part time	4	11
	Unemployed	3	8
	Retired	5	13
	Parent/caregiver	4	11
Partisanship	Democrat	13	34
	Independent / Third party	12	32
	Republican	13	34
Education	College	18	47
	Non-College	20	53
Urbanicity	Urban	8	21
	Suburban	23	61
	Rural	7	18