The AI Collective Institute

# Can We Regulate Trust?

A global analysis on the correlation between national AI regulation and public trust

**September 2025**

# Contents



## About the Author


### Liel Zino

*Policy Director, AI Collective Institute*


Liel Zino is a tech policy professional with expertise in digital transformation, AI governance, and public innovation. She has led and contributed to policy initiatives at both national and international levels, with experience spanning government, civil society, and research. Previously, Liel was a Fritz Fellow, where she focused on comparative research on government digital transformation and emerging technology regulations. She also served as a Massive Data Institute Scholar and as a Policy Analyst at the Beeck Center for Social Impact and Innovation. Liel currently serves as the Policy Director at the AI Collective Institute, where she focuses on advancing responsible AI policy and bridging the gap between innovation and the public good. She holds a B.A in government, Diplomacy and Strategy from Reichman University and an M.P.P. in Public Policy from the McCourt School of Public Policy at Georgetown University.

## About the AI Collective Institute

**The AI Collective Institute** (AICI) is the policy and research arm of the AI Collective, the world's largest open community devoted to ensuring artificial intelligence serves the public good. The Collective connects more than 70,000 technologists, researchers, policymakers, and creatives through over 60 city-based chapters, championing AI that is open, responsible, and aligned with human values.

Founded in 2025, the Institute channels this global expertise into action. It convenes working groups, publishes studies, and issues governance proposals that bring builder and user perspectives into policymaking. By translating community insights into practical recommendations, the Institute strengthens public dialogue and advocates for inclusive and accountable AI policies.

# Executive Summary

Artificial intelligence (AI) is transforming societies at an unprecedented pace, but its integration into daily life is threatened by a growing deficit of public trust. **This report challenges the widely held belief that national AI regulation increases public trust in AI systems.**

Drawing on data from 47 countries, public sentiment surveys, and regulatory landscape analysis, the study empirically tests the belief that regulation increases trust. Surprisingly, the findings reveal **no significant correlation** between national AI regulation and higher levels of public trust. Instead, countries with higher rates of daily AI use show greater trust, suggesting that familiarity and direct interaction with AI play a more substantial role in cultivating confidence.

Despite this, the report underscores that regulation remains essential, not as a direct driver of trust, but as a safeguard to ensure ethical oversight, accountability, and risk management. Instead, it recommends that policymakers:

- **Diversify Efforts:** Invest in nationwide initiatives to deepen public understanding of AI systems, empower citizens, and encourage informed, meaningful engagements in tandem with advancing regulation, recognizing that regulation alone is not sufficient to foster trust.
- **Lead by Example in Public Sector AI Adoption:** Integrate AI responsibly into government services to demonstrate transparency, fairness, and societal benefit, using public-facing applications to signal trustworthiness.
- **Strengthen Public–Private Collaboration:** Build strategic partnerships between governments, academia, and industry to collaboratively develop solutions to address the trust deficit and align innovation with societal values.

Ultimately, this study concludes that building public trust in AI requires a multifaceted strategy, and regulation alone is insufficient. Policymakers must also prioritize education, exposure, and early interactions with the technology to ensure AI adoption aligns with societal values. **Without deliberate efforts to bridge the trust gap, governments risk losing public buy-in and limiting AI's transformative potential.**

# Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is reshaping our world more rapidly and profoundly than any force in history. In ways large and small, this transformative technology will continue to permeate nearly every aspect of our daily lives and over time, fundamentally reshape the way we work, live, and interact.

AI systems rely deeply on human interaction at every stage of development and use. This makes public trust a vital ingredient for its success and a prerequisite for the integration of AI into society, particularly in sensitive domains such as healthcare, education, finance, and law enforcement. For AI to be fully realized across sectors, people must feel confident enough to use it, engage with it, and allow it to become part of their routines. **Trust is what allows AI to move beyond the laboratory and into the fabric of society.**

Yet, recent AI enthusiasm comes during a period marked by turmoil and declining trust in public institutions. In this climate, the arrival of an immensely powerful but poorly understood technology has only intensified public concerns, where rather than being welcomed as a tool for progress, **AI is often met with suspicion, fear, confusion, and doomsday assumptions.**

As Justin Westcott of the Edelman Institute observed, *"Trust is the currency of the AI era."* A deficit of trust in AI is not merely a hurdle; it is a suffocating factor that risks pushing development ahead of public understanding and acceptance. **Only when people trust AI can it truly deliver on its promise to improve lives and contribute to progress across all parts of society.**

Today, public trust in the AI sector lags significantly behind trust in the technology sector overall. *Edeleman's 2024 Trust Barometer* found that while **76%** of respondents surveyed trust companies in the technology sector to "do what is right," only **50%** felt the same about AI sector companies. In recognition of this sentiment, many governments and international organizations have turned to national AI regulatory frameworks as an antidote for both the lack of safeguards and the erosion of public trust. The underlying belief is that clear regulation can ease fears, increase trust, and provide reassurance that AI systems are being developed and used responsibly.

This debate has recently gained traction in the United States, where a proposed 10-year moratorium on AI regulation made headlines before ultimately being rejected, underscoring the growing and urgent pressure on lawmakers to move forward on building a national AI policy. Still, the core assumption that regulation meaningfully increases public trust has yet to be empirically tested until now.

**This paper examines 47 countries around the world and analyzes whether the presence of a national AI regulatory framework correlates with higher levels of public trust in AI.** It evaluates both the regulatory landscape and public sentiment to assess whether regulation truly builds trust, aiming to provide insights that can help policymakers pursue effective solutions to this growing challenge.

# The Current State of Trust in AI

Siau (2018) describes a person's perceived trust in something as a meaningful factor in determining their behavior, interaction, and acceptance of it. When it comes to public trust in AI, he defined it as "people's willingness to accept AI and believe in its suggestions and decisions, share tasks, and contribute information and support to such technology" (Siau, 2018).

The history of public trust in AI is marked by a complex mix of curiosity, optimism, suspicion, and deep concern. While many acknowledge AI's potential to drive innovation and improve lives, widespread unease continues to grow around issues like bias, job displacement, and lack of transparency.

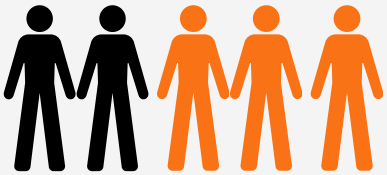
According to the ***2024 Edelman Trust Barometer***, **public trust in AI declined from 61% to 53% from 2019 to 2024** underscoring growing public awareness of AI and accompanying skepticism as people increasingly weigh the costs and risks AI can impose on their daily roles and routines.

**A similar decline can be seen in the *2025 KPMG global study of trust, attitude, and use of AI*, which found public trust declined from 52% to 46% from 2022 to 2025.** Furthermore, 61% were worried about AI's implications, whilst more thought of AI as trustworthy in fields like healthcare (52%) and less in human resources (43%).

Interestingly, the study also revealed that trust varies between emerging and developed economies, and people in emerging economies tend to trust AI more and have higher rates of acceptance and approval of AI in comparison to developed economies (KPMG, 2025).

**53%**

In **5 years,** public trust in AI dropped **8% from 61% to 53%**



**3 out of 5 people** in advanced economies are unwilling or unsure about trusting AI systems

**43%**

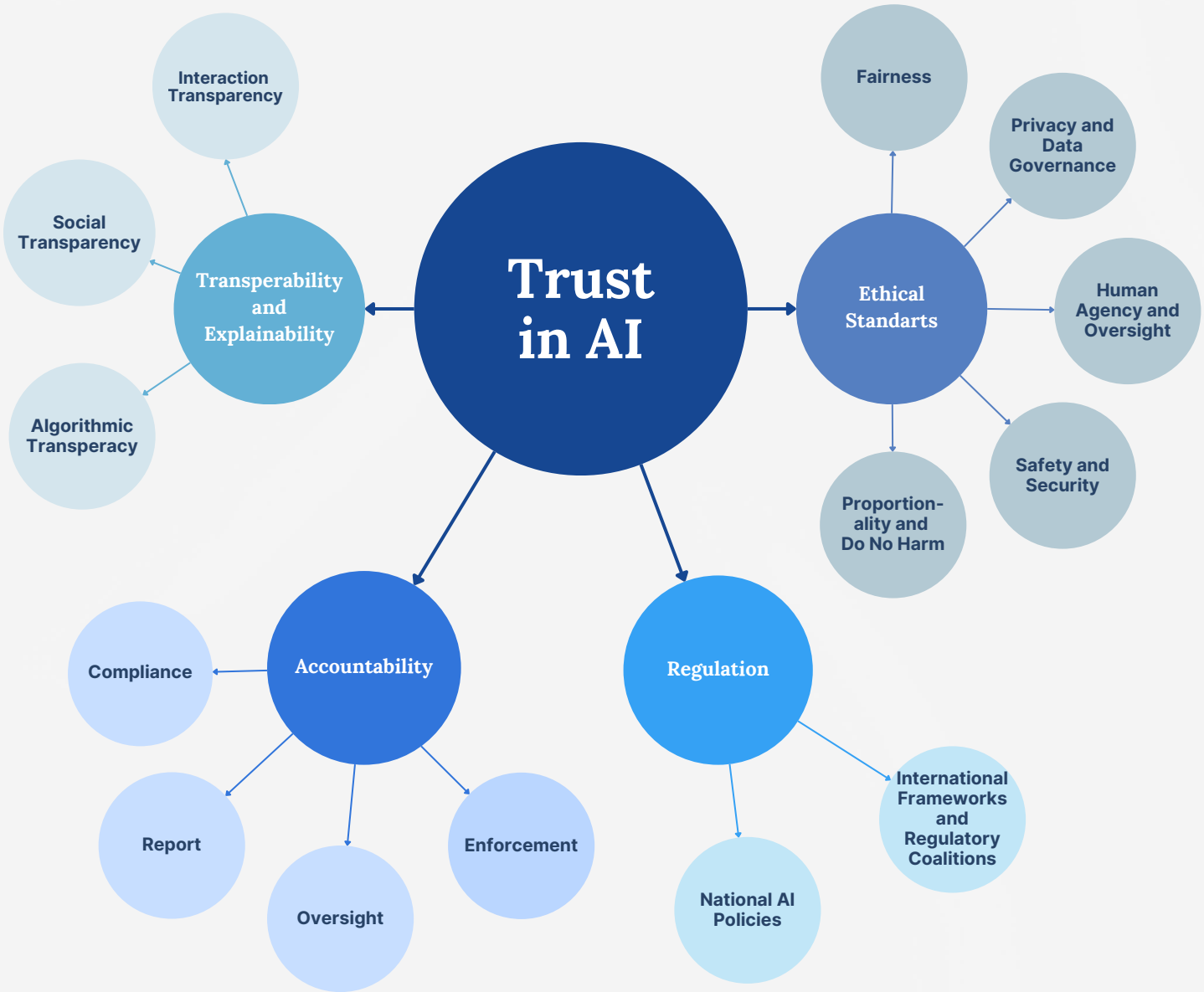
Willing to trust AI in the Human Resources field

**61%**

Worried about AI implications

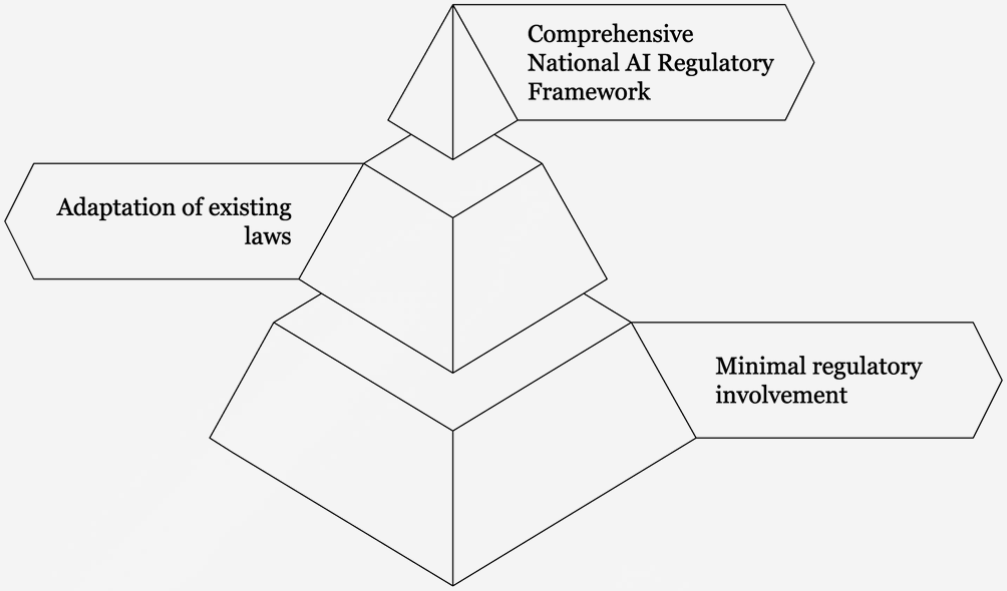
# The AI Trust Framework

Many elements influence public trust in AI. **This conceptual framework defines 14 critical factors for fostering public trust in AI across 4 main categories: regulation, accountability, transparency, and ethical standards.**



# AI Regulatory Landscape

Over the last few years, there has been a significant push to create regulatory frameworks to govern the development and deployment of AI across various sectors. International organizations and governments in each country have responded with a variety of initiatives, including national AI strategies, regional and international regulatory proposals such as the EU's AI Act, and the formation of ethics boards and widespread audit protocols for AI systems.




## Comprehensive National AI Regulatory Framework

The most proactive governments create dedicated, **AI-specific legislation or regulatory frameworks** that address the unique risks, ethical questions, and societal impacts AI poses. These frameworks typically encompass a wide range of considerations, including transparency, explainability, accountability, human oversight, data governance, and protections against bias and discrimination. Examples include the **European Union's AI Act, and China.**

## Adaptation of Existing Laws

Instead of creating entirely new regulatory structures, governments at this level **apply and modify pre-existing legal frameworks** to address the specific challenges posed by AI. This approach seeks to fill regulatory gaps by leveraging well-established legal principles to ensure that AI systems are subject to the same standards as other technologies and services. **The United States** follows this approach on the national level, alongside other countries including **Saudi Arabia, Israel, and India**.

## Minimal Regulatory Involvement

At this level, governments take a **largely hands-off approach**, focusing on **enabling innovation and growth** in AI technologies with **sparse direct regulation**. These governments emphasize voluntary guidelines, industry self-regulation, and public-private collaboration rather than binding legal instruments. **Singapore** is a representative example of this approach.

# AI Regulation = Trust?

These growing regulatory actions reflect a broad consensus among policymakers and industry leaders that, without clear safeguards, AI has the potential to cause harm, erode public trust, and ultimately slow innovation.

The thinking is straightforward: regulation mitigates risk and provides the guardrails needed to build confidence in AI, which in turn allows the technology to reach its full potential and contribute meaningfully to society. In this view, the reason we have lower trust rates in AI stems from a lack of a cohesive regulatory framework. Therefore, countries that adopt national AI regulations should, in theory, see a corresponding rise in public trust.


Despite these efforts, it's an open question as to whether top-down regulatory approaches are sufficient to foster public trust. This uncertainty points to the need for an empirical examination to test whether regulation truly delivers the trust it aims to build.

**So, is it a lack of regulation and oversight that prevents us from increasing public trust in AI?**

# National AI Regulation & Trust

To test the widely held assumption in policy circles that national AI regulations lead to higher levels of public trust in the technology, we developed a comprehensive cross-national database to examine the relationship between public trust in AI and the existence of national AI regulatory frameworks across 47 countries.

This database integrates public sentiment data from the KPMG 2025 Global Trust in AI Survey with information we collected on the presence and scope of national AI regulations across those 47 countries. **Among the 47 countries analyzed, 57% have implemented a national AI regulatory policy, while 43% have not.**

# Methodology & Findings

We examined each country's state of AI regulation, assigning a score of 1 to countries with a national AI regulation framework in place and a score of 0 to those without a current national AI regulation framework. We then performed an ordinary least squares (OLS) regression analysis with the dependent variable of public trust in AI (measured on a 7-point scale) taken from the *KPMG 2025 report*, and two independent variables: the presence of a national AI regulatory framework (binary: 1 = AI regulation framework in place) and the national rate of daily AI use (percentage) also taken from the KPMG report.

Our data reveal that the presence of national AI regulation does not correlate with significantly higher levels of public trust in AI (Coefficient =-0.067, $p = 0.386$), with the model explaining 76.2% of the variance in public trust ($R^2 = 0.762$). This challenges the widespread assumption that formal regulatory frameworks are sufficient for building public trust in AI. **While national regulation remains essential for protecting rights, ensuring accountability, and managing risks, regulation alone is not sufficient to foster trust.**

By contrast, our data show a positive and statistically significant relationship between AI usage rates and trust levels (coefficient = 0.0272, $p < 0.001$). In countries where AI is more commonly integrated into daily life, public trust in the technology tends to be higher, although by a small magnitude, suggesting that other components might be more dominant in shaping public trust.

This finding suggests that **familiarity and direct experience with AI systems may foster trust more effectively than top-down regulatory frameworks alone**.

**Having a national AI regulation doesn't appear to increase trust, but regular AI usage does.**

# Policy Recommendations

To improve public trust in AI, policymakers should:

## 1. Invest in AI Literacy and Public Awareness Campaigns

A deeper emphasis on AI literacy and public awareness is essential to increase AI usage across society and, in turn, strengthen public trust. Governments should invest in nationwide AI literacy programs that enhance public understanding of how AI systems function, where they are applied, and what rights and protections citizens have when interacting with these technologies. Furthermore, AI literacy should be embedded in school curricula to ensure that both current and future generations are prepared to engage with AI responsibly and confidently.

## 2. Implement AI in Public Sector Services as a Trust Signal

Governments should lead by example by adopting AI responsibly in public sector services to demonstrate that AI can be used transparently, fairly, and effectively for the public good. By integrating AI into public-facing systems under clear ethical guidelines, governments can provide living proof of AI's trustworthiness. This approach not only delivers practical benefits to citizens but also helps build public confidence in AI by showing that it can be deployed in ways that align with societal values and serve collective interests.

## 3. Foster Stronger Public–Private Partnerships (PPPs)

Governments should establish formal collaborative mechanisms that bring together the public sector, academia, and private industry to advance responsible AI development and deployment. By creating joint initiatives to address the trust deficit, they can assume shared ownership of the issue and build viable solutions.

## 4. Advance National AI Regulation Efforts

Policymakers should still continue advancing national AI regulation to ensure ethical oversight, public safety, and accountability, even if such regulation doesn't directly increase public trust. A strong legal framework provides the safeguards needed for AI to develop responsibly and might help create some of the conditions under which trust can be earned through transparent and accountable use.

# Conclusion

Artificial intelligence (AI) has stormed into society, ushering in massive technological shifts poised to redefine modern society. Its rapid development and deployment across sectors are reshaping economic systems, social interactions, and how individuals engage with the world around them. **As AI continues to evolve, it is rapidly shifting from an innovative tool to an influential force on the structures and values of contemporary life.**

Yet alongside this rapid growth, public trust in AI continues to decline, posing a significant challenge to the technology's ability to achieve its full potential. This decline is not merely a temporary setback, but a serious concern. Public trust is essential for AI's responsible development, deployment, and meaningful integration into society.

The main factors contributing to public trust in AI fall into four categories: regulation, accountability, transparency, and ethical standards. In recent. years, governments and international bodies have made substantial efforts to create regulatory and legal frameworks governing AI's development and use. Despite these initiatives, it's an open debate as to whether top-down regulatory approaches are sufficient to improve public trust.

The findings from our analysis covering 47 countries suggest that the presence of national AI regulation does not correlate with significantly higher levels of public trust in AI.

Instead, trust appears to be shaped more by direct experience and meaningful daily interactions.

Countries with higher daily use of AI tools have shown a significant positive correlation with higher public trust rates, proving that familiarity and daily use matter more than regulation.

Although the data suggest that national AI regulation alone does not statistically increase public trust, well-designed regulatory frameworks remain critical for creating the conditions that ensure AI is governed with accountability, fairness, and alignment with democratic values. Regulation sets the necessary guardrails to manage risks and prevent misuse or potential harms. Therefore, governments should be proactive and build the regulatory foundations needed to support AI integration and adoption.

By the same token, this research proves regulation alone is insufficient to build trust. Policymakers must also create multifaceted strategies with clear mandates and incentives to promote AI literacy and encourage opportunities for positive, habitual interactions with AI systems, through a combination of educational initiatives, awareness campaigns, and public-facing government services.

Ultimately, increasing public trust needs to be a central priority for governments and policymakers. Trust will not emerge on its own. It must be deliberately cultivated through education, exposure, and inclusion.

***Governments that fail to act decisively today risk being sidelined in the AI-driven world of tomorrow.***

# Endnotes


Afroogh, S., Akbari, A., Malone, E., Kargar, M., & Alambeigi, H. (2024, November 18). Trust in AI: Progress, challenges, and Future Directions. Nature News. https://www.nature.com/articles/s41599-024-04044-8

The age of Intelligence: Empowering human-AI collaboration for a trusted future. KPMG. (2025a). https://assets.kpmg.com/content/dam/kpmgsites/xx/pdf/2025/05/trust-attitudes-and-use-of-ai-executive-summary.pdf

AI regulation in Argentina. Policy Framework & Compliance. (n.d.). https://digital.nemko.com/regulations/ai-regulation-argentina

AI regulation. Ministry Of Economic Affairs And Employment of Finland. (n.d.). https://tem.fi/en/ai-regulation

AI regulations around the world. Diligent. (2024).https://www.diligent.com/resources/guides/ai-regulations-around-the-world

AI Tracker France. Herbert Smith Freehills Kramer. (n.d.). https://www.hsfkramer.com/insights/reports/ai-tracker/france

Artificial Intelligence in government. Digital.Gov.AU. (n.d.). https://www.digital.gov.au/policy/ai/policy

Artificial Intelligence. the Federal Ministry of Research, Technology and Space (BMFTR). (2025, June 10). https://www.bmbf.de/EN/Research/EmergingTechnologies/ArtificialIntelligence/artificialintelligence_node.html

Bailey, M. (2024, February 20). How can we trust AI if we don't know how it works. Scientific American. https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/how-can-we-trust-ai-if-we-dont-know-how-it-works/

Brazil's federal government launches the Brazilian Artificial Intelligence Plan 2024-2028. IDS. (n.d.). https://ids.org.br/en/news-post/brazils-federal-government-launches-the-brazilian-artificial-intelligence-plan-2024-2028/#:~:text=Share-,Brazil's%20federal%20government%20launches%20the%20Brazilian%20Artificial%20Intelligence%20Plan%202024,and%20the%20%E2%80%9CStructuring%20Actions%E2%80%9D.

Chakravorti, B. (2024, May 3). Ai's Trust Problem. Harvard Business Review. https://hbr.org/2024/05/ais-trust-problem

Edelman Trust Institute. (2025a). 2025 Edelman Trust Barometer Global Report. https://www.edelman.com/sites/g/files/aatuss191/files/202501/2025%20Edelman%20Trust%20Barometer%20Global%20Report_01.23.25.pdf

# Endnotes


Edelman Trust Institute. (2025b). 2025 Edelman Trust Barometer Global Report- Trust and the Crisis of Grievance. https://www.edelman.com/sites/g/files/aatuss191/files/2025-01/2025%20Edelman%20Trust%20Barometer%20Global%20Report_01.23.25.pdf

Edelman, M. (2024). Technology's tipping point: Why now is the time to earn trust in AI. World Economic Forum. https://www.weforum.org/stories/2024/03/technology-tipping-point-earn-trust-ai/

Egypt National Artificial Intelligence Strategy. The Egyptian National Council for Artificial Inteligence. (2025). https://ai.gov.eg/SynchedFiles/en/Resources/AIstrategy%20English%2016-1-2025-1.pdf

Fried, I. (2024, March). Exclusive: Public trust in AI is sinking across the Board. Axios. https://www.axios.com/2024/03/05/ai-trust-problem-edelman

Giovine, C., & Roberts, R. (2024, November 26). Building AI Trust: The key role of explainability. McKinsey & Company. https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/quantumblack/our-insights/building-ai-trust-the-key-role-of-explainability

Global AI law policy tracker. IAPP. (n.d.). https://iapp.org/media/pdf/resource_center/global_ai_law_policy_tracker.pdf

Klimentov, M. (2023). AI regulation around the world, from China to Brazil - The Washington Post. Washongton Post. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2023/09/03/ai-regulation-law-china-israel-eu/

Marr, B. (2024a, August 27). As ai expands, Public Trust seems to be falling. Forbes. https://www.forbes.com/sites/bernardmarr/2024/03/19/is-the-public-losing-trust-in-ai/

Marr, B. (2024b, August 27). As ai expands, Public Trust seems to be falling. Forbes. https://www.forbes.com/sites/bernardmarr/2024/03/19/is-the-public-losing-trust-in-ai/

McClain, C., Kennedy , B., Gottfried , J., Anderson , M., & Pasquini, G. (2025, April 3). How the U.S. public and AI experts view Artificial Intelligence. Pew Research Center. https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2025/04/03/how-the-us-public-and-ai-experts-view-artificial-intelligence/

Novelli, C., Taddeo, M., & Floridi, L. (2023, February 7). Accountability in artificial intelligence: What it is and how it works - AI & society. SpringerLink. https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s00146-023-01635-y

OECD. (n.d.). National AI Policies & Strategies. OECD's live repository of AI strategies & policies - OECD.AI. https://oecd.ai/en/dashboards/overview

# Endnotes


Ognyanova, K., & Singh, V. (2025). National AI Opinion Monitor: Ai Trust and Knowledge in America. National Ai Opinion Monitor. https://naiom.net/public-reports/NAIOM%20Report%2002%20AI%20Trust%20Knowledge.pdf

Public Trust in AI: Implications for Policy and Regulation. ipsos. (n.d.). https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/news/documents/2024-09/Ipsos%20Public%20Trust%20in%20AI.pdf

Rabb, N., Zomer, A., & Chen, N. (Lula). (2024). Can trustworthy AI improve governance and trust? AI trends, Biases, & Gaps. MIT GOV/LAB. https://mitgovlab.org/news/can-trustworthy-ai-improve-governance-and-trust-ai-trends-biases-and-gaps/

Secretariat, T. B. of C. (2025, June 3). Government of Canada. Canada.ca. https://www.canada.ca/en/government/system/digital-government/digital-government-innovations/responsible-use-ai/guide-use-generative-ai.html

Trust, attitudes and use of Artificial Intelligence. KPMG. (2025). https://assets.kpmg.com/content/dam/kpmgsites/xx/pdf/2025/05/trust-attitudes-and-use-of-ai-global-report.pdf.coredownload.inline.pdf

Wren, H. (2024, January 18). What is ai transparency? A comprehensive guide. Zendesk. https://www.zendesk.com/blog/ai-transparency/#

Werner, J. (2024, November 7). Costa Rica unveils national AI strategy to lead ethical and responsible AI adoption in Latin America. BABL AI. https://babl.ai/costa-rica-unveils-national-ai-strategy-to-lead-ethical-and-responsible-ai-adoption-in-latin-america/

YouGov survey: Artificial Intelligence . YouGov. (2025). https://d3nkl3psvxxpe9.cloudfront.net/documents/Artificial_Intelligence_poll_results_By2HZGP.pdf


## Citations

Zino, L (2025). *Can We Regulate Trust? A Global Analysis of the Correlation Between National AI Regulation and Public Trust*. The AI Collective Institute.

## Acknowledgments

Design and graphics: Noah Frank, Venkatesh Lakshmi Narayanan.

Editorial Support: Noah Frank, Elizabeth Farrell, Catherine McMillan, and Stanley Chiang.

## Contact Us

The AI Collective Institute
Institute@aicollective.com

Liel Zino
liel@aicollective.com

***For media inquiries please contact Elizabeth Farrell: elizabeth@aicollective.com.***