

To: Interested Parties
From: Data for Progress and Guardrails Action
Date: September 30, 2026
Re: Midwest Polling on AI & Regulation

Over the past several years, artificial intelligence has rapidly shifted from a nascent technology to a central part of the American economy and political landscape. As AI companies like OpenAI and Anthropic prepare for multi-trillion-dollar IPOs, the data centers that power their growth have become a local political flashpoint. Meanwhile, AI companies and their executives have formed super PACs planning to [spend](#) roughly \$200 million in this year's elections.

Ahead of the midterm elections, Data for Progress surveyed likely voters in [Iowa](#), [Michigan](#), and [Ohio](#) to understand how voters in competitive states view these developments. The results show a battleground electorate that is skeptical of the AI industry across party lines, wants guardrails against its harms, and treats AI money in politics as a red flag.

Key Findings:

- **AI money is more toxic than a vote to cut Medicaid.** About three-quarters of voters across Iowa, Michigan, and Ohio, would be less likely to vote for a candidate funded by AI super PACs, a higher net impact on vote likelihood than a candidate who voted to cut billions from Medicaid.
- **Voters are more concerned about AI industry election spending than about crypto, AIPAC, or Wall Street,** at levels matching pharmaceutical companies.
- **The issue moves voters across party lines.** More than 1 in 4 voters in Iowa, Michigan, and Ohio would consider voting for a candidate of the other party who took a strong stance against AI companies and data center developers.
- **Voters back ambitious economic responses.** A guaranteed jobs program, a dividend from AI profits, a tax on AI companies tied to unemployment, guaranteed health care for displaced workers, a UBI funded by a tax on AI companies, and a ban on developing superintelligence all draw majority support, including among Republicans.
 - Regarding the universal basic income proposal, these results differ from some public UBI polling, and UBI results vary substantially, depending on how the policy is described. Our question specified that the program would be funded by increased taxes on AI companies, while other surveys have emphasized different policy features or tradeoffs.

- **Voters take AI's risks seriously and don't see them as hype.** About two-thirds disagree that AI capabilities are overblown, and about 3 in 5 across all three states agree AI could eventually pose a risk to the survival of humanity.

AI Money Is a Political Liability

Voters are already paying attention to the AI industry's political spending: About two-thirds in every state have read, heard, or seen at least a little about AI companies or their executives spending money to influence this year's elections.

More than 80% of voters are concerned about that spending, on par with concern about health care and pharmaceutical companies and ahead of Wall Street, crypto companies, and AIPAC.

Voters in Key States Are Highly Concerned About AI and Big Tech Spending on Elections

How concerned are you, if at all, about the following groups spending money to influence this year's elections?

Survey respondents who selected: *Very concerned or Somewhat concerned*

	IA	MI	OH
AI companies and Big Tech CEOs	86%	84%	85%
Health care and pharmaceutical companies	84%	88%	88%
Cryptocurrency companies	80%	77%	74%
Wall Street executives	79%	79%	78%
American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC)	71%	73%	70%

September 4–14, 2026 survey of 3,157 likely voters in IA, MI, and OH

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About 4 in 5 are concerned about AI super PACs' planned \$200 million in spending (82% in Iowa, 81% in Michigan, and 83% in Ohio), and more than half are very concerned.

That concern carries real consequences for candidates. About three-quarters of voters in each state would be less likely to support a candidate who receives funding from super PACs backed by AI companies or their executives, including about 3 in 5 Republicans.

On net, that penalty is larger than the penalty for voting to cut billions from Medicaid in every state, and larger than for supporting key parts of Trump's agenda or a nationwide abortion ban.

Voters in Key States Are Less Likely to Vote for a Candidate Who Takes AI Super PAC Money

Below are actions that a potential candidate for office might take. For each, please say if the action would make you **more** or **less** likely to vote for that candidate.

Survey respondents who selected: *Somewhat less likely or Much less likely*

	IA	MI	OH
A candidate who receives funding for their campaign from Super PACs funded by AI companies or their executives	74%	73%	73%
A candidate who voted to cut billions in funding to Medicaid	71%	71%	73%
A candidate who supports a nationwide abortion ban, without exceptions for rape, incest, or the life of the mother	64%	66%	66%
A candidate who supports key parts of Trump's agenda, including helping Trump enrich himself off corrupt crypto schemes while in office	64%	66%	65%

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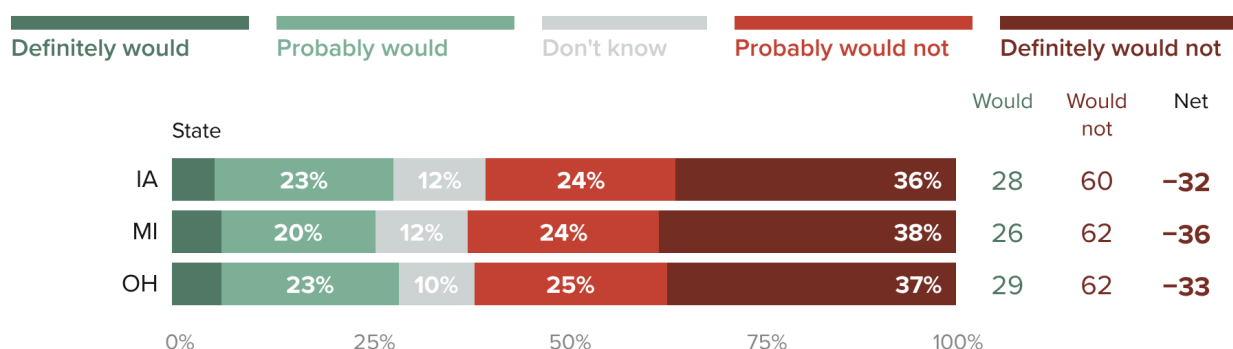
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Meanwhile, voters in each of the three states show openness to candidates who take concrete positions on AI infrastructure. At least 3 in 5 would be more likely to vote for a candidate who opposes building new data centers unless the local community votes to approve them (61% in Iowa, 60% in Michigan, and 62% in Ohio), while only about 1 in 8 would be less likely.

Notably, these findings also suggest that AI has the potential to disrupt traditional partisan divides. More than 1 in 4 voters would consider voting for a candidate from the other party who took a strong stance against AI companies and data center developers (28%, 26%, and 29%), a share that rises to 38% among voters under 45 in Ohio.

More than a Quarter of Voters in Key States Say They Would Cross Party Lines to Support a Candidate Who Takes a Strong Stance Against AI

Would you consider voting for a **Republican/Democrat** for Congress if they took a strong stance against AI companies and data center developers, while their opponent did not?



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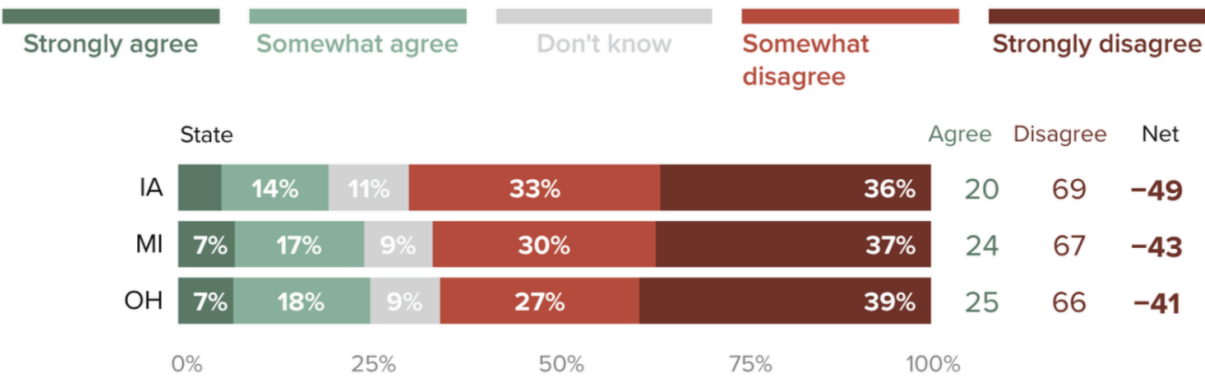
Voters See AI as High-Stakes, Not Hype

Voters in all three states — Iowa, Michigan, and Ohio — take AI seriously as a force that will reshape the country, and they are skeptical that the people building it have their interests in mind. These views hold across party lines, with majorities of Republicans in every state sharing each of the four views below.

Two-thirds reject the idea that AI is overblown. About two-thirds disagree that AI's capabilities are overblown and that it won't replace jobs or affect people's lives much (69% in Iowa, 67% in Michigan, and 66% in Ohio), including a majority of Republicans in each state (63%, 60%, and 57%).

Voters in Key States Do Not Think AI Capabilities Are Overblown

How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following?
— AI capabilities are overblown, and I doubt AI will replace jobs or affect people's lives that much



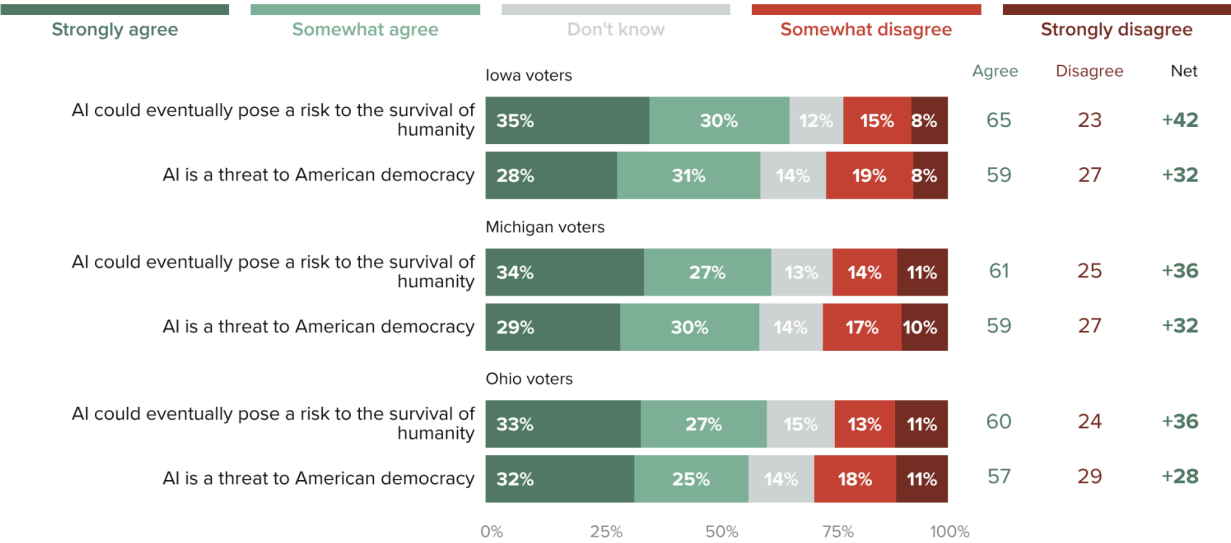
September 4–14, 2026 survey of 3,157 likely voters in IA, MI, and OH

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About 3 in 5 agree AI could eventually pose a risk to the survival of humanity (65%, 61%, and 60%), including a majority of Republicans (59%, 60%, and 54%). And a similar percentage in all three states believe AI is a threat to American democracy, though by slightly smaller margins.

Voters in Key States Believe AI Is a Threat to Democracy and to the Survival of Humanity

How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following?



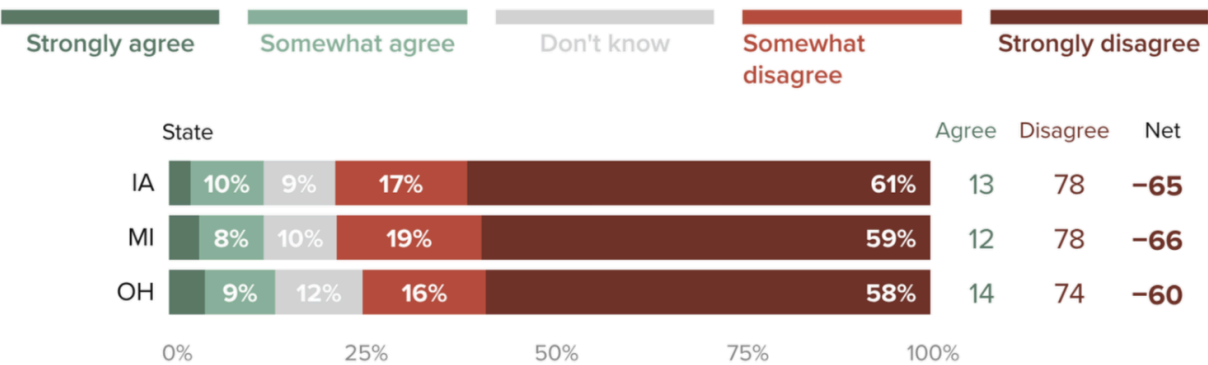
September 4–14, 2026 survey of 3,157 likely voters in IA, MI, and OH

More than 7 in 10 believe AI will lead to mass layoffs of American workers in certain industries (71%, 73%, and 72%), even though only about 2 in 5 employed voters worry about their own job.

About three-quarters disagree that the executives who run AI companies care about people like them (78%, 78%, and 74%), and about 3 in 5 strongly disagree.

Voters in Key States Strongly Disagree That AI Executives Care About Them

How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following?
— The executives who run AI companies care about people like me



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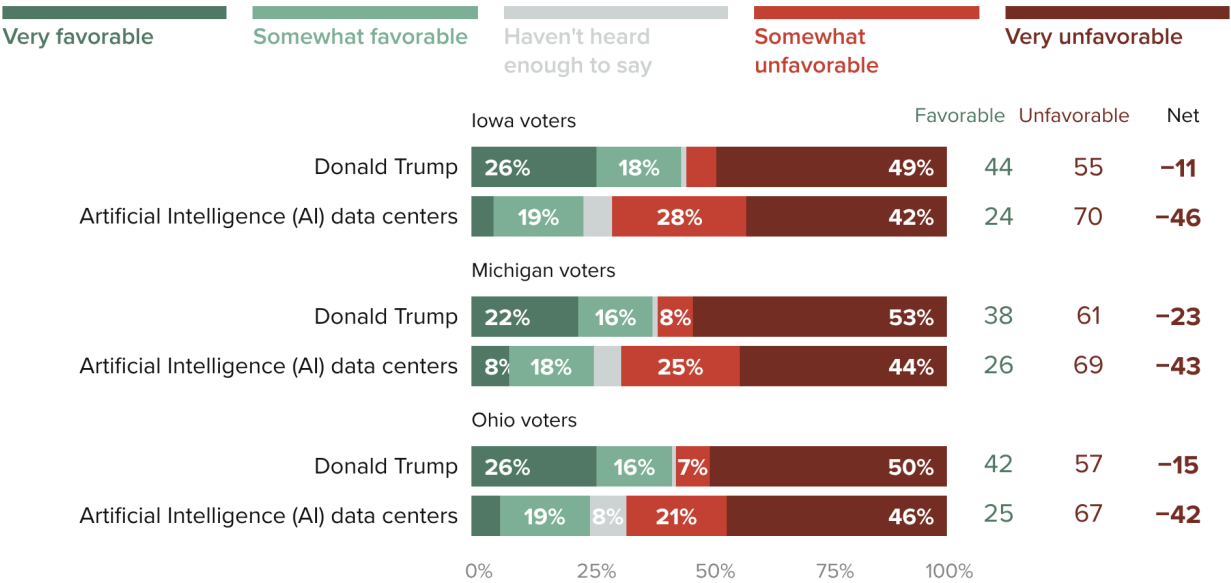
Voters Are Sour on the AI Industry, and Even More So on Data Centers.

A majority of voters in every state are unfavorable toward the AI industry (58% unfavorable in Iowa, 60% in Michigan, and 57% in Ohio) and toward AI companies (63%, 57%, 55%).

Data centers are viewed less favorably still. AI data centers are underwater by more than 40 points, and are viewed more unfavorably than President Donald Trump by at least 20 net points.

Voters in Key States Are More Unfavorable of AI Data Centers Than Trump

Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of the following people or institutions?



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A majority in each state are also unfavorable toward large technology companies, and more than 6 in 10 are unfavorable toward Flock Safety surveillance cameras.

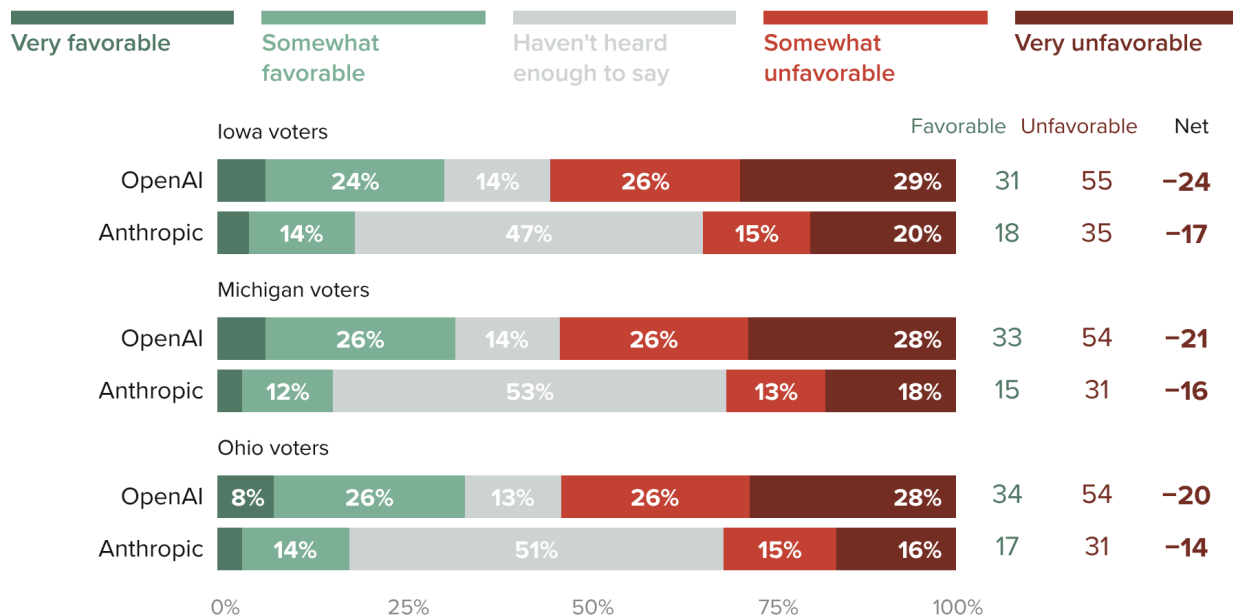
Most voters don't yet know the industry's leading figures, but those who do lean negative. About 3 in 5 haven't heard enough to rate Sam Altman (63% in Iowa, 63% in Michigan, and 64% in Ohio) or Peter Thiel (66%, 59%, and 59%), and more than 4 in 5 say the same of Marc Andreessen.

Even so, each is underwater. Altman's net favorability is -21 in Iowa, -21 in Michigan, and -18 in Ohio, and Thiel's is -21, -24, and -25.

The best-known AI company, OpenAI, is viewed unfavorably by a majority of voters in all three states, and both OpenAI and Anthropic carry double-digit net unfavorability, even though about half of voters haven't heard enough to rate Anthropic.

Majorities of Voters in Key States Are Unfavorable of OpenAI, and Pluralities Are Unfavorable of Anthropic

Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of the following people or institutions?



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AI has not yet emerged as a top voting issue on its own. Inflation and the cost of living remain the top issue in all three states (23%, 22%, and 23%), while only about 1% choose AI and data centers.

But when asked directly, more than 4 in 5 say it is important for lawmakers to regulate AI (87%, 83%, and 86%) and AI data centers (86%, 87%, and 87%), including at least three-quarters of Republicans in every state.

Negativity Toward AI Doesn't Arise From Personal Experience or Fears About Their Own Job

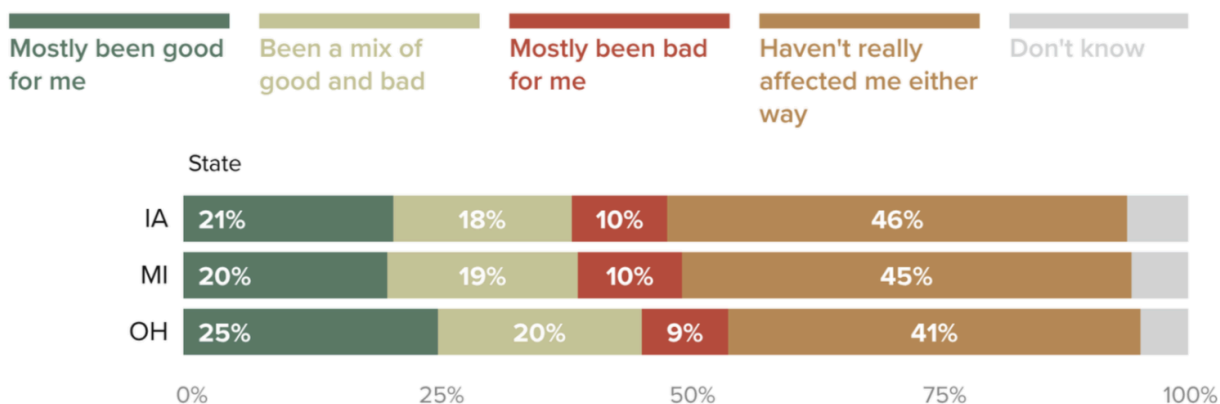
Most voters haven't felt AI's effects in their own lives. About half rarely or never use AI tools personally (49% in Iowa, 48% in Michigan, and 46% in Ohio), while about 1 in 5 use them daily.

Voters split roughly evenly between saying that they have mostly embraced AI tools (33%, 31%, and 34%), have mostly resisted them (30%, 30%, and 31%), and have not found areas to use them (34%, 34%, and 31%).

The most common answer on personal impact is that AI tools haven't really affected voters either way. Among those who say AI has affected them, at least twice as many say it has been mostly good for them as mostly bad.

Only About 1 in 3 Voters in Key States Say AI Tools Have Affected Their Life in a Mostly Positive or Negative Way

Overall, how would you say AI tools have affected your daily life?



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Negativity is also not driven by fears about voters' own jobs. Only about 2 in 5 employed voters are concerned their job may be reduced or eliminated by AI or automation in the next decade (39% in Iowa, 39% in Michigan, and 40% in Ohio), and just 11% to 15% are very concerned.

Instead, Voters' Concerns Are About Power: Who Profits, Who's Watching, and Who's in Charge

In each state, voters were asked whether AI will be good or bad in the long run for society, the U.S. economy, and U.S. workers. Voters in all three states most often say it will be a mix.

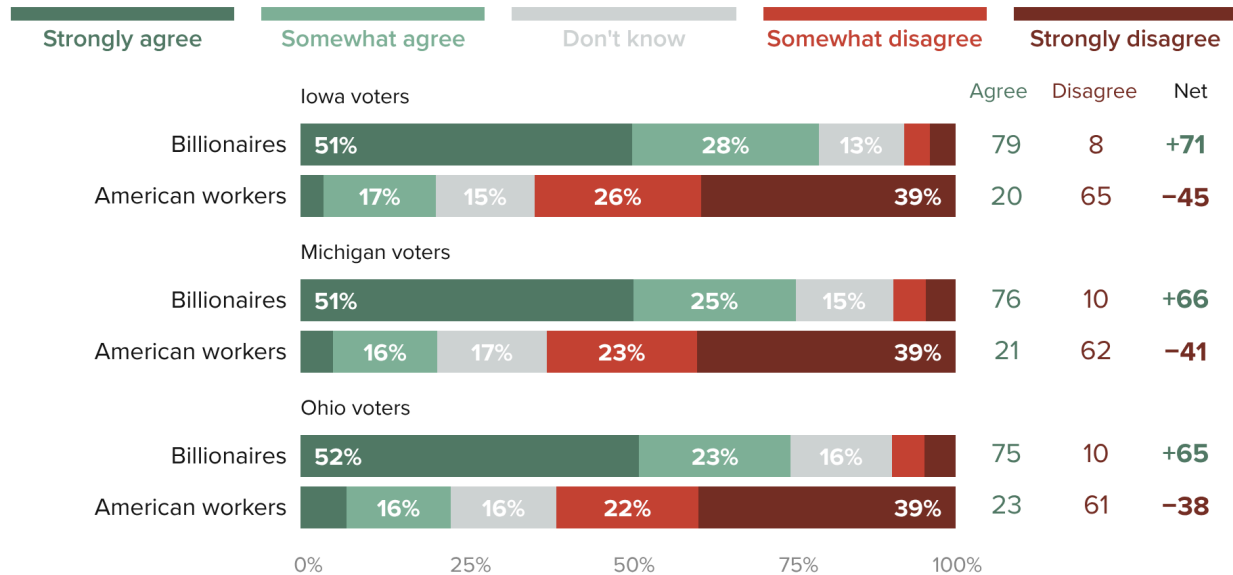
Fewer than 1 in 5 say AI will be mostly good for society (12% in Iowa, 12% in Michigan, and 15% in Ohio), the economy (16%, 15%, and 17%), or workers (12%, 12%, and 13%).

Voters mostly see the benefits flowing to the top. About three-quarters agree AI will increase the wealth of billionaires, while only about 1 in 5 say the same for American workers.

Voters in Key States Believe AI Will Increase the Wealth of Billionaires, But Not American Workers

How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following?

— AI will increase the wealth of...



September 4–14, 2026 survey of 3,157 likely voters in IA, MI, and OH

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Concern about surveillance and control is nearly universal. About 9 in 10 voters in every state are concerned about AI being used to track what they do online and in public, companies collecting their personal information to train AI or target them, AI chatbots interacting with children, companies using AI and personal data to charge some people higher prices, and AI-generated deepfakes. More than 4 in 5 are concerned about every other harm tested, including AI-powered mass surveillance like Flock Safety cameras.

Voters in Key States Are Highly Concerned About Various Applications of AI

How concerned are you, if at all, about each of the following?

Survey respondents who selected: *Very concerned or Somewhat concerned*

	IA	MI	OH
Not being able to tell what is real and what is AI-generated online	94%	91%	92%
AI-generated "deepfake" images, audio, or video of real people	94%	91%	91%
AI being used to track and monitor what you do online and in public	94%	91%	90%
AI chatbots or "companion" apps interacting with children or teenagers	93%	91%	93%
Companies using AI and your personal data to charge you a higher price than other people for the same product	92%	91%	92%
AI being used for massive surveillance, like with the use of Flock Safety cameras	91%	86%	85%
Companies collecting your personal information to train AI or to target you with ads and content	90%	88%	91%
People relying on AI for companionship or advice instead of other people	87%	84%	85%

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The same holds at work. Employed voters were asked how concerned they would be if their employer used AI for several purposes, and at least 7 in 10 are concerned about each one: tracking their keystrokes (70% in Iowa, 75% in Michigan, and 75% in Ohio), reading their messages (73%, 77%, and 74%), tracking their location (80%, 80%, and 79%), and scoring their productivity (76%, 77%, and 77%).

Concern is highest for AI deciding who gets hired, fired, or disciplined without a person reviewing it (83% in Iowa, 88% in Michigan, and 88% in Ohio).

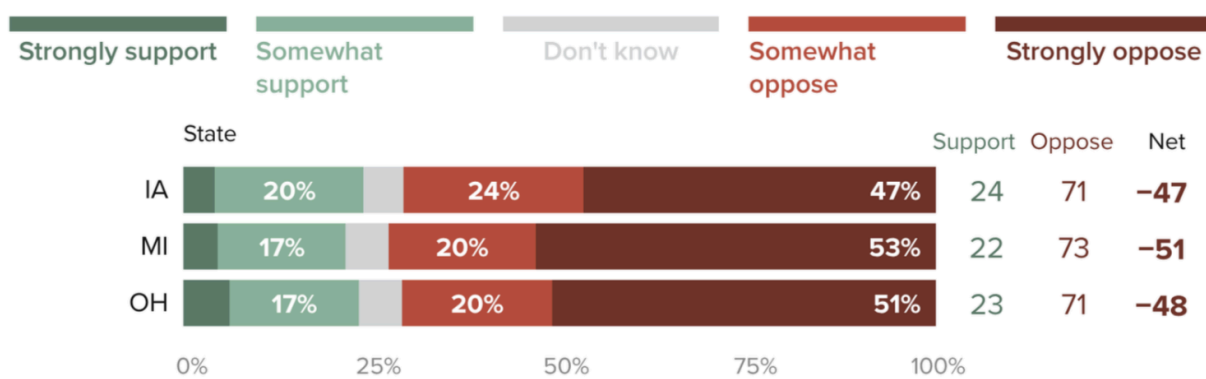
Data Centers Are Where Those Concerns Become Concrete

If AI still feels abstract in most voters' own lives, data centers are where it is becoming tangible. Nearly half of voters in Iowa (47%) and Ohio (47%), and more than a third in Michigan (37%), say an AI data center is operating, being built, or proposed in or near their community.

About 7 in 10 oppose new large AI data centers being built in their community, and about half strongly oppose it. A majority of Republicans in every state are opposed as well.

Voters in Key States Oppose New Large AI Data Centers Being Built in Their Communities

Would you support or oppose new large AI data centers being built in your community?



September 4–14, 2026 survey of 3,157 likely voters in IA, MI, and OH

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The opposition is about AI specifically. In every state, about 3 in 5 voters say they are more concerned about AI data centers being built than non-AI data centers, while only about 1 in 5 aren't concerned about either.

About 3 in 5 say the government should pause construction of new AI data centers until rules are in place to protect electricity prices, water, and communities (58% in Iowa, 63% in Michigan, and 60% in Ohio), compared with about a third who say they should be allowed to be built with requirements (36%, 32%, and 35%).

Voters Want Lawmakers to Act, With Bipartisan Support for Guardrails

Voters were asked how important it is for Congress to address five issues that could arise from the growth of the AI industry. Eight in ten or more say each is important in every state: protecting children's safety (95% in Iowa, 95% in Michigan, and 96% in Ohio), severe job losses (93%, 94%, and 95%), protecting the environment and public health (91%, 92%, and 92%), mass surveillance

(85%, 86%, and 84%), and the construction of massive data centers in communities (80%, 80%, and 81%).

Data center regulation: Voters don't just want Congress to act in the abstract; they back specific policies to hold data centers accountable. More than 7 in 10 voters in Iowa, Michigan, and Ohio support every data center policy tested short of a nationwide ban.

Importantly, a ban is more divisive than a moratorium. While more than 7 in 10 support a moratorium on new AI data centers until new rules are passed, only about half support banning all new data centers nationwide (47% in Iowa, 51% in Michigan, and 48% in Ohio), with about 2 in 5 opposed.

Voters in Key States Support Various Policies to Regulate Data Centers

Below are some policies that Congress could pass regarding data centers.

For each, please say whether you would support or oppose this policy.

Survey respondents who selected: *Strongly support or Somewhat support*

	IA	MI	OH
Requiring data center companies to transparently publish information about their water and energy usage	90%	90%	90%
Requiring AI data centers to pay the full cost of the new power plants and transmission lines they need	89%	89%	91%
Requiring data centers to reduce their energy use during power grid emergencies so that homes and businesses are not at risk of losing electricity	87%	86%	88%
Repealing or limiting tax incentives so that data centers don't strip funding away from local services like public schools	87%	85%	85%
Ending federal tax breaks for new AI data centers and charging the largest operators a new tax on their revenue, with the money going to communities and workers affected by data centers and AI job losses	78%	78%	81%
Requiring data centers to use renewable energy to power their facilities instead of fossil fuel energy	77%	74%	78%
Enacting a moratorium on new AI data centers nationwide until Congress passes rules protecting electricity prices, water supplies, workers, and public safety	74%	78%	73%
Enacting a moratorium on new AI data centers nationwide until Congress passes laws that regulate the AI industry	72%	71%	76%
Banning all new data centers from being built nationwide	47%	51%	48%

September 4–14, 2026 survey of 3,157 likely voters in IA, MI, and OH



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AI policies: Voters also back policies that directly address their concerns about AI. We tested ten, spanning child safety, consumer and worker protections, corporate accountability, and how the benefits of AI are shared. Nearly all are supported by more than two-thirds of voters in Iowa, Michigan, and Ohio.

Voters in Key States Support Various Policies to Regulate AI

Below are some policies that Congress could adopt regarding AI.

For each, please say whether you would support or oppose this policy.

Survey respondents who selected: *Strongly support* or *Somewhat support*

	IA	MI	OH
Making it a crime for AI companies to let chatbots sexually solicit kids or encourage self-harm	92%	91%	92%
Banning AI "companion" chatbots for children and requiring chatbots to tell users they are not human	90%	88%	88%
Holding AI companies financially accountable for any damage their technology may have caused and using those proceeds for potential victims	88%	86%	88%
Banning companies from using AI and personal data to charge some people a different price than other people for the same product, or to pay workers different wages for the same work	87%	84%	84%
Banning companies from using AI to decide who gets a job, a loan, an apartment, or medical care due to bias and errors	83%	80%	85%
Banning AI companies from allowing their products to be used for nefarious reasons and enforcing a "kill-switch" method on their technology, which would automatically stop their products from functioning	82%	83%	83%
Requiring AI companies to devote a significant portion of their research to help the process of medical breakthroughs, like curing cancer	81%	79%	83%
Placing a tax on large AI companies based on the AI services they sell, with the tax rate rising automatically when unemployment goes up	74%	72%	75%
Requiring companies to test the AI systems they use to decide who gets a job, a loan, an apartment, or medical care for bias and errors, and report the results to federal regulators	66%	67%	69%
Requiring the federal government to own stakes in AI companies to ensure American people have a say in the development of their products	48%	49%	56%

September 4–14, 2026 survey of 3,157 likely voters in IA, MI, and OH

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Most of these policies are highly popular across party lines. In Iowa, for example, 9 of these 10 policies are supported by a majority of Democrats, Independents, and Republicans.

Iowa Voters Across Party Lines Support Various Policies to Regulate AI

Below are some policies that Congress could adopt regarding AI.

For each, please say whether you would support or oppose this policy.

Survey respondents who selected: *Strongly support or Somewhat support*

	Democrat	Independent / Third party	Republican
Making it a crime for AI companies to let chatbots sexually solicit kids or encourage self-harm	92%	93%	90%
Banning AI "companion" chatbots for children and requiring chatbots to tell users they are not human	90%	91%	87%
Holding AI companies financially accountable for any damage their technology may have caused and using those proceeds for potential victims	89%	89%	86%
Banning companies from using AI to decide who gets a job, a loan, an apartment, or medical care due to bias and errors	88%	85%	79%
Banning companies from using AI and personal data to charge some people a different price than other people for the same product, or to pay workers different wages for the same work	87%	90%	84%
Requiring AI companies to devote a significant portion of their research to help the process of medical breakthroughs, like curing cancer	86%	80%	78%
Placing a tax on large AI companies based on the AI services they sell, with the tax rate rising automatically when unemployment goes up	84%	73%	66%
Banning AI companies from allowing their products to be used for nefarious reasons and enforcing a "kill-switch" method on their technology, which would automatically stop their products from functioning	82%	85%	80%
Requiring companies to test the AI systems they use to decide who gets a job, a loan, an apartment, or medical care for bias and errors, and report the results to federal regulators	74%	69%	56%
Requiring the federal government to own stakes in AI companies to ensure American people have a say in the development of their products	50%	45%	49%

September 4–14, 2026 survey of 1,120 likely voters in IA

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by 8/8/2026

Economic responses: Voters also support ambitious policies to protect workers from AI-driven job loss and share the wealth AI creates, though with somewhat less intensity than the most popular guardrails.

Voters in Key States Support Various Policies to Mitigate Job Loss Due to AI

Below are some policies that Congress could adopt to help mitigate the potential job losses through the growth of AI.

For each, please say whether you support or oppose this policy.

Survey respondents who selected: *Strongly support or Somewhat support*

	IA	MI	OH
Creating a guaranteed jobs program for American workers who were laid off or terminated due to AI or automation	79%	75%	80%
Creating a system that would guarantee health care for all American workers who lost their jobs due to AI or automation	73%	71%	76%
Creating a tax law that would incentivize companies to hire human employees while financially penalizing those who replace their workers with AI or automation	72%	73%	76%
Banning the development of artificial "super" intelligence that could replace massive amounts of jobs	70%	71%	73%
Creating a dividend where Americans are able to receive a portion of profits from AI companies that use commercial data	70%	68%	74%
Creating a universal program, also known as UBI, which would provide a monthly stimulus check to every American, which will be funded through raising taxes on AI companies	61%	62%	66%

September 4–14, 2026 survey of 3,157 likely voters in IA, MI, and OH

Conclusion

Across three key battleground states, voters want to see the AI industry regulated. Even among voters who have not personally felt the effects of AI, there is concern about who holds power and who benefits — and voters back specific, enforceable guardrails across party lines. With AI super

PACs preparing to spend \$200 million, candidates have more to lose from taking the industry's money than from standing up to it.

Methodology

From September 4 to 14, 2026, Data for Progress conducted a survey of 1,120 likely voters in Iowa. From September 4 to 11, 2026, Data for Progress conducted surveys of 1,005 likely voters in Michigan and 1,032 likely voters in Ohio. All three surveys used SMS and web panel respondents and were weighted to be representative of likely voters by age, gender, education, race, geography, and recalled presidential vote. The margin of error for each state is ± 3 percentage points; results for subgroups are subject to larger margins of error. Party reflects self-identified affiliation, not registration.