



**Markkula Center**  
for Applied Ethics  
*at Santa Clara University*

## **Student Opinion of AI and Topics Related to AI Ethics**

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Hackworth Fellowship Project

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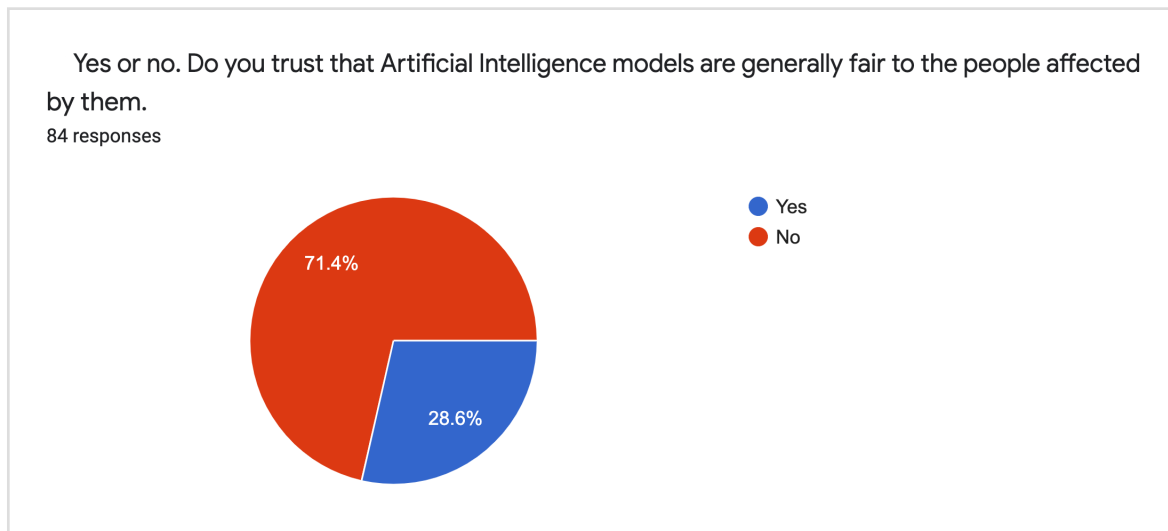
Santa Clara University

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Artificial Intelligence (AI) has changed - and is changing - almost every facet of how the world works. From automation of formerly mundane tasks, to predictive policing, to content promotion, to job applications, AI is omnipresent and making never before seen impacts. Over the course of the 2020-2021 academic year I gathered Santa Clara students' opinion on AI and potential ethical concerns. In a sixteen question survey I asked questions related to four topics: fairness and equity, social impact, moral status and intelligence, and use cases and settings. Several students also chose to share their greatest concerns with AI in an optional free response section.

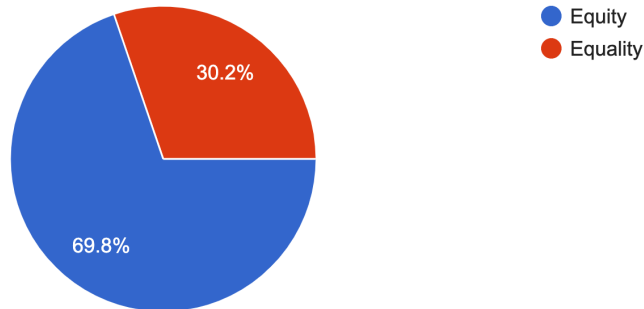
A total of 87 students completed the survey representing all three colleges and four years of undergraduate study. The data represented in this document are a selection of important questions and answers that are organized into four categories. Each category includes a visual representation of survey responses followed by a written analysis and explanation.

### **Fairness and Equality:**



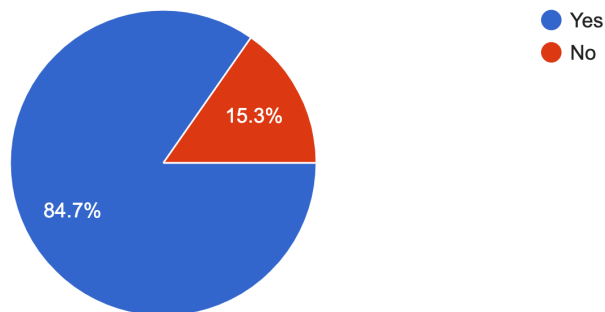
- 71.4% of respondents do not trust that Artificial Intelligence models are generally fair to the people affected by them.

Equality is the prescription to treat all people equally, regardless of outcome. Equity, on the other hand, is the prescription to treat unique groups differently based on their needs to achieve the same outcome. Do you believe that Artificial Intelligence models should strive for equity or equality?  
86 responses



- 69.8% of respondents answered that they believe Artificial Intelligence models should strive for equity in their outcomes.

Yes or no. Do you believe that some amount of preferential treatment for certain groups is needed to ensure equity?  
85 responses

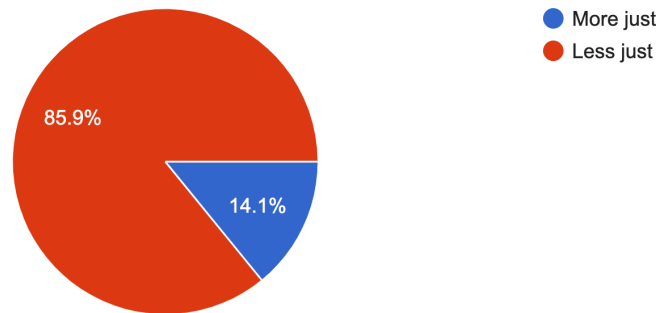


- 84.7% of respondents believe that some amount of preferential treatment for certain groups is needed to ensure equity.

## Social Impact:

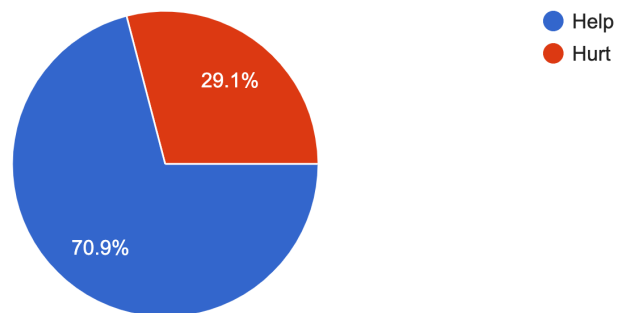
Do you believe that Artificial Intelligence and automated weaponry will make war more just or less just?

85 responses



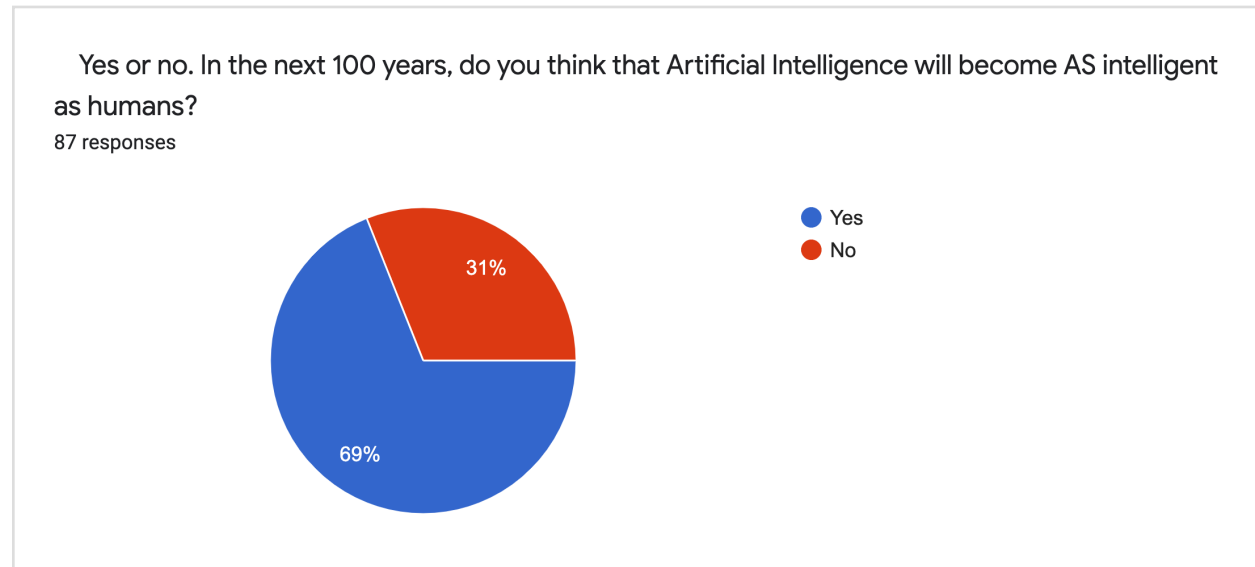
Over the next 20 years, do you think that Artificial Intelligence will generally help or hurt society?

86 responses

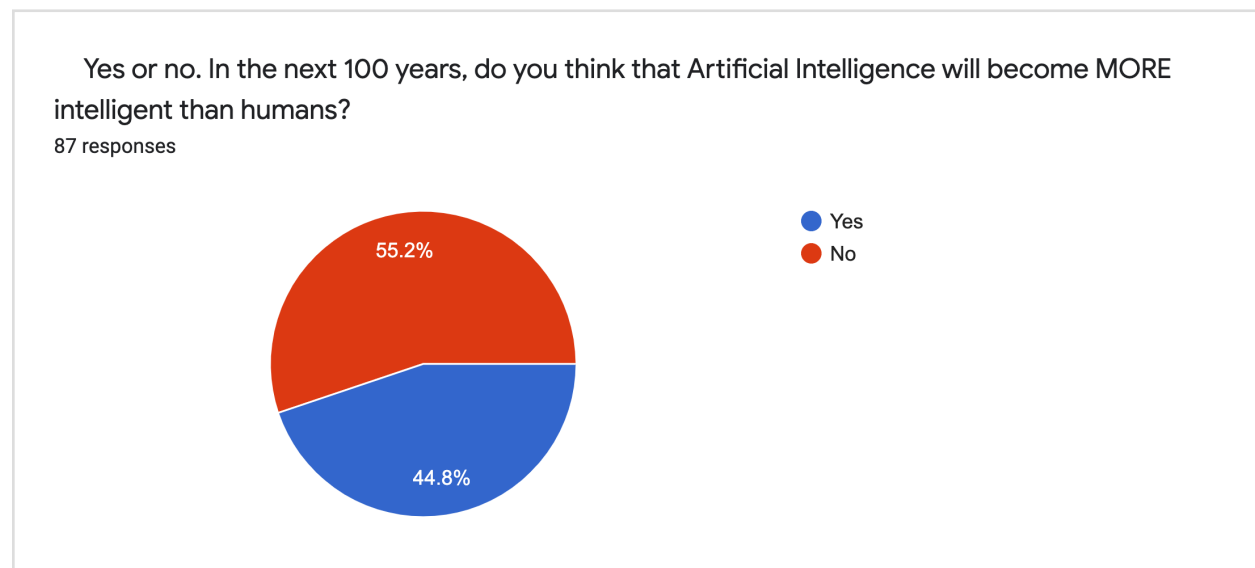


- 85.9% of respondents believed that AI will make war less just.
- 70.9% of respondents believe that AI will generally help rather than hurt society over the next 20 years.

## Moral Status and Human-Level Intelligence:



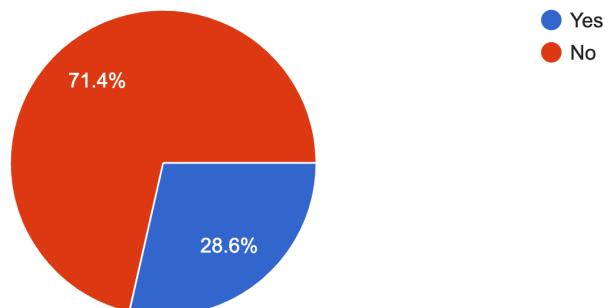
- 69% of respondents believed that in the next 100 years AI will become as intelligent as humans.



- 55.2% of respondents believe that AI will not become more intelligent than humans over the next 100 years.

Yes or no. If Artificial Intelligence develops human-level or greater intelligence, should it be granted a similar moral status to human persons?

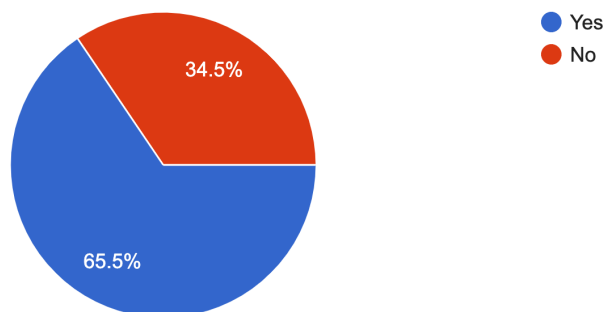
84 responses



- 71.4% of respondents said that if Artificial Intelligence were to develop human-level or greater intelligence, it should not be granted a similar moral status to humans.

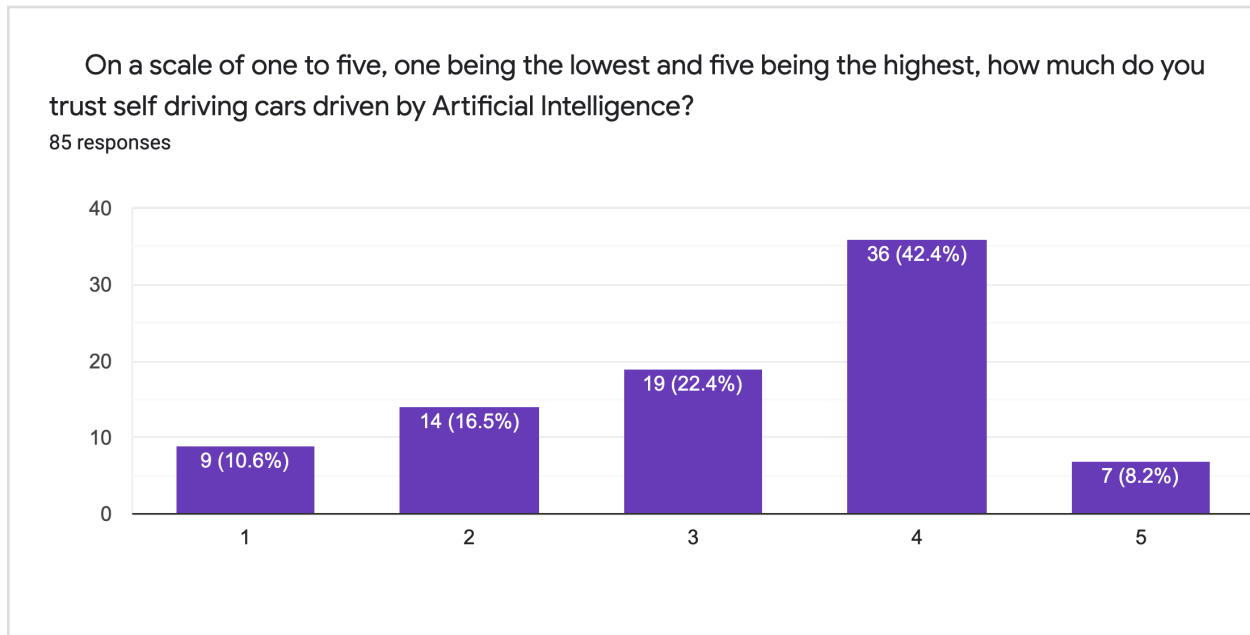
Yes or no. Do you think that an Artificial Intelligence model should be morally responsible for its outputs?

87 responses

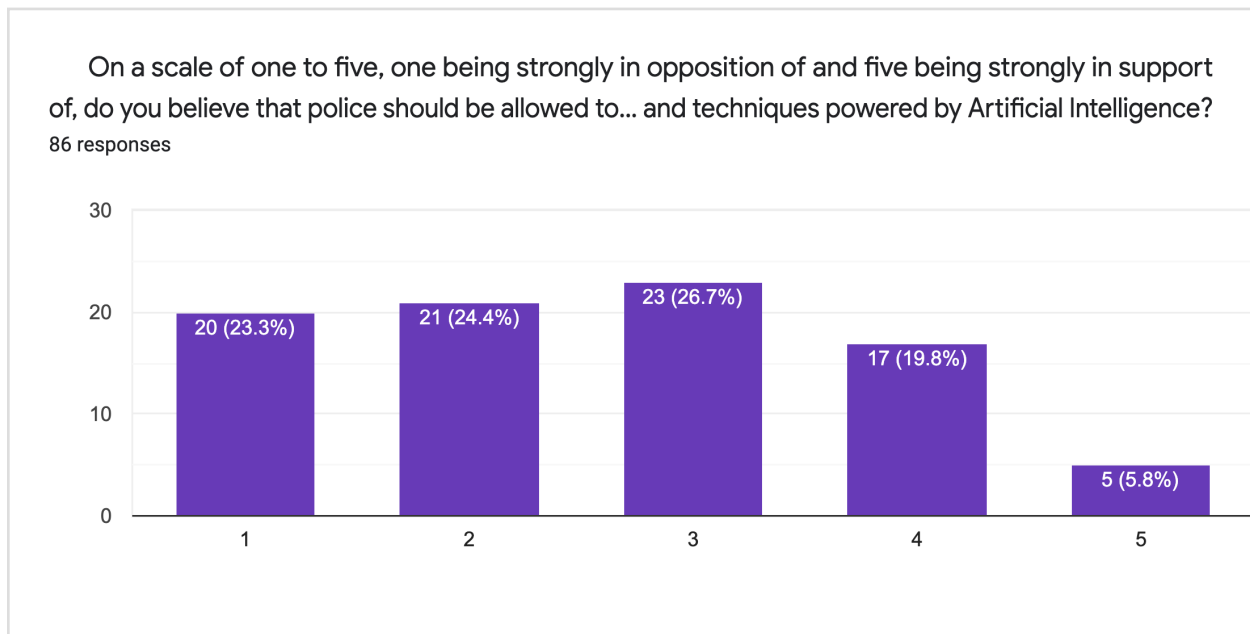


- 65.5% of respondents believe that an Artificial Intelligence model should be morally responsible for its outputs.

## AI Use Cases & Setting:



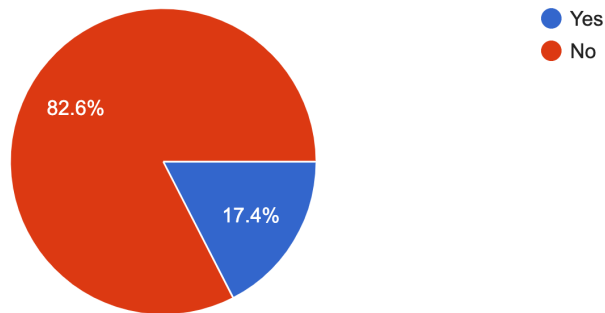
- 50.6% of respondents expressed a high level of trust in self-driving cars piloted using AI, 22.4% expressed a medium level of trust, and 27.1% expressed a low level of trust.



- 47.7% of respondents expressed opposition to police using tools and techniques powered by AI, 26.7% of respondents were neutral on the topic, and 25.6% expressed support.

Yes or no. Do you believe that tasks such as rating a teacher's quality and effectiveness should be automated with Artificial Intelligence?

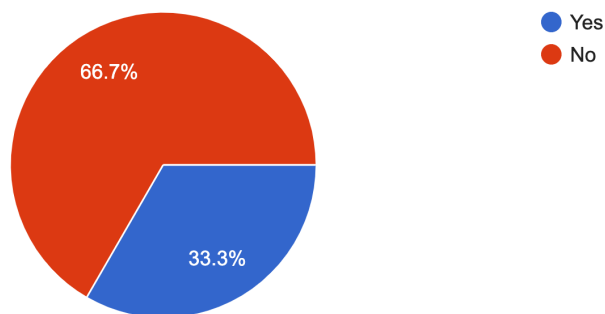
86 responses



- 82.6% of respondents believed that tasks such as rating a teacher's quality and effectiveness should be not automated with Artificial Intelligence.

Yes or no. Do you believe that tasks such as grading a student's exam or essay should be automated with Artificial Intelligence?

87 responses



- 66.7% of respondents believed that tasks such as grading a student's exam or essay should not be automated with Artificial Intelligence.



## **Analysis:**

One clear take away from these data is that students are aware of the pressing ethical concerns that AI poses. For example, students understand that some level of preferential treatment is needed to ensure an equitable outcome, and furthermore that equitable AI is a more preferable outcome than equality. Moreover, in the free response section of the survey where students were given a space to share their greatest concern in regard to AI, many expressed concerns about increased inequality, institutionalized bias, and institutionalized prejudice. Additionally in the free response section, students expressed concern that AI would lead to increased job loss and mass poverty. In addition to these important, albeit highly publicized, AI ethics concerns, students also expressed a more nuanced set of concerns.

One of these areas is human interaction. In the free response section students raised concerns about the loss of meaningful human interaction and a detachment from human values resulting from AI. These sentiments are supported by the data which show that students are concerned with AI being used in tasks commonly associated with human interaction and interpersonal skills. To highlight, a significant portion of students believe that AI should not be used to judge teachers effectiveness and quality, signaling that these are important tasks that should remain under human purview. Moreover, students expressed concern that many people do not understand how AI truly works, that people's expectations of AI are too high, and that people place too much trust in AI.

Focusing on questions of moral responsibility and status, students shared contrasting views. On one hand, students believed that if AI reached human level intelligence that it should *not* be granted a similar moral status as humans. On the other hand, students broadly believed

that AI models should be morally responsible for their outputs. (This contrast, however, may have resulted from poor wording of questions or a lack of understanding of the volitional capabilities of AI. e.g. I assume that students believe *someone* should be morally responsible but perhaps not that AI has the necessary traits needed for moral responsibility). Lastly, students seemed to be generally optimistic about AI's impact on society in the future and have a clear notion of where and how AI should and should not be used.