

Americans want Antimonopoly AI Regulations, Public AI Capacity

September 2023

Introduction

As part of a September 2023 survey, the Vanderbilt Policy Accelerator for Political Economy and Regulation (VPA) polled 1,006 U.S. adults ages 18 or older to identify attitudes toward artificial intelligence (AI) companies, the role of big tech in the AI industry, proposals to regulate big AI companies as public utilities, and proposals to break up the big AI companies.

Our polling reveals that Americans are deeply concerned about the dominance of AI technology by a handful of large corporations—namely, big tech companies Amazon, Google, Meta, and Microsoft. Moreover, we find overwhelming bipartisan support for government regulation of the AI industry. When Americans learn about the corporate concentration of the AI industry, they are concerned. They believe big tech is too powerful, the big AI companies should be split up, and the federal government should regulate big tech while developing its own independent AI capacity, rather than further entrenching the status quo. In sum, VPA polling reveals that:

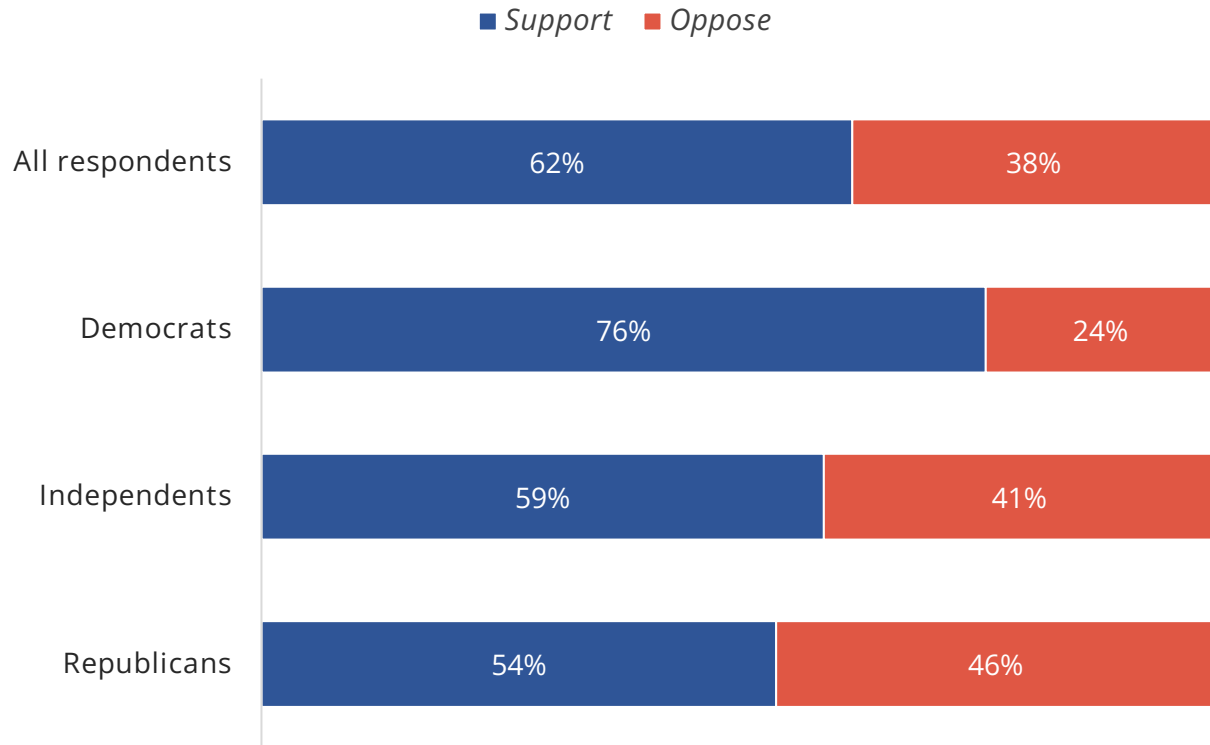
- Most Americans (62%) support having a federal agency regulate the use of AI.
- 3 in 4 Americans believe “Big tech companies should not have so much power and should be prevented from controlling all aspects of AI.”
- 76% of Americans agree that big tech companies should be regulated as public utilities, including 73% of Republicans, 80% of Democrats, and 75% of Independents.
- 68% of Americans—including two-thirds (67%) of Republicans—would support a proposal to break up the big AI companies, so that they do not control the entire sector.
- Americans also support creating publicly funded and publicly run tech resources for scientists and researchers to focus on AI (76%) and support a public option as an alternative and competitor to big tech companies (73%).

- 81% of Americans think the government should develop its own public cloud computing system for AI scientists and researchers, instead of paying big tech for that service.
- 77% of Americans support creating a dedicated team of government AI experts to improve public services and advise regulators.
- 62% of Americans want the government to have its own AI experts instead of relying on consultants and tech companies—even when confronted with a ‘big government’ counterargument.

Nearly all of these stances and policies are supported by majorities that cut across demographics, including partisan affiliation, race, gender, income, and education.

VPA’s polling was conducted by SSRS from September 8 to September 11, 2023, with a sample of 1,006 respondents. The margin of error is +/-3.5% at the 95% confidence interval. SSRS is a member of the American Association for Public Opinion Research’s Transparency Initiative.

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September 8-11, 2023 survey of 1,006 U.S. adults ages 18 or older

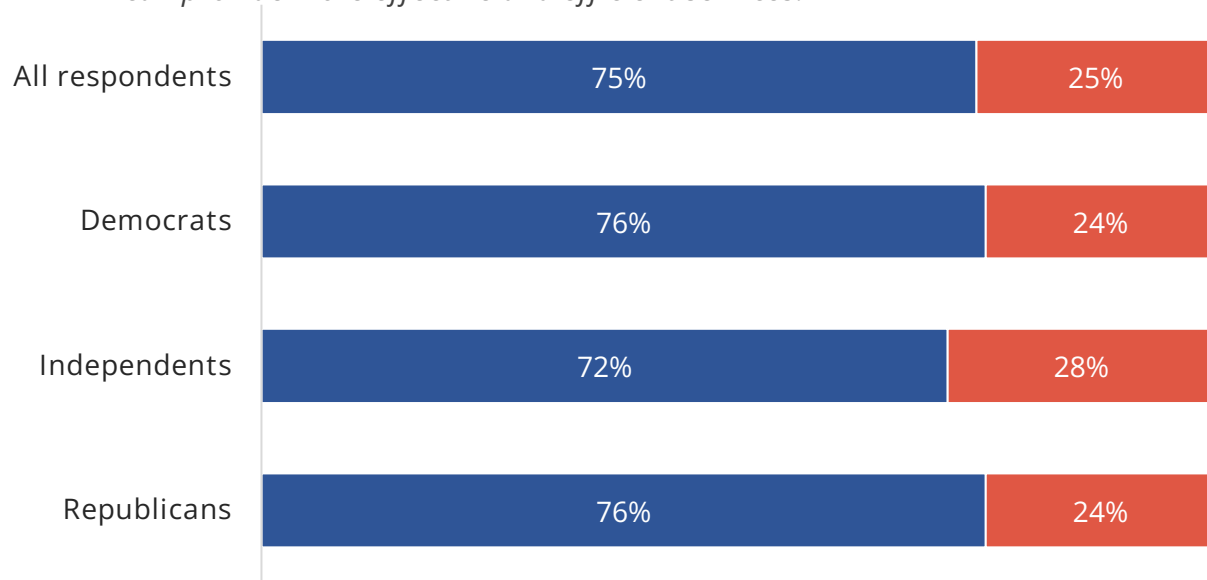
Base: Total Respondents

Table 001/VPA11

Respondents were asked the question: “Would you support or oppose having a federal agency regulate the use of artificial intelligence, also known as AI?”

3 in 4 Americans think big tech companies have too much power over AI

- *Big tech companies should not have so much power and they should be prevented from controlling all aspects of AI.*
- *It is okay for big tech companies to dominate the AI industry because they can provide more effective and efficient services.*



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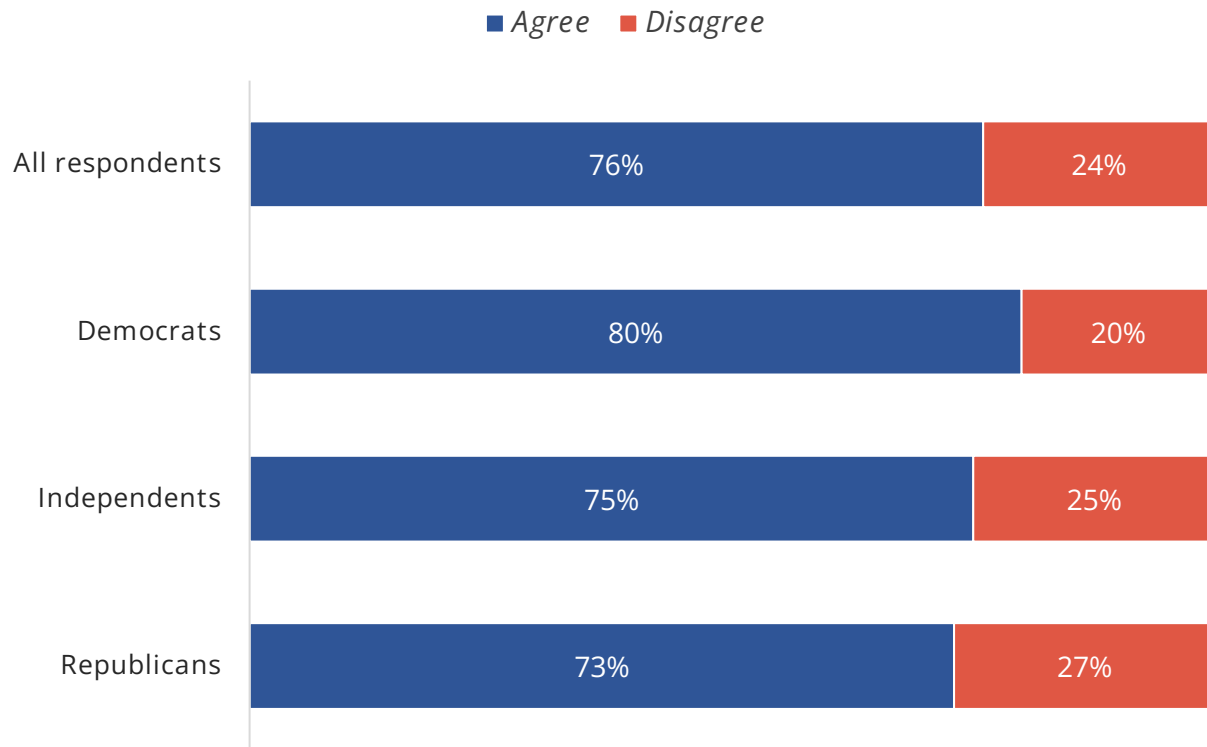
Base: Total Half Sample Respondents

Table 002/VPAI2

The survey provided respondents with the following context and then the two statements.

Four big tech companies—Amazon, Google, Facebook, and Microsoft—dominate artificial intelligence or AI. Which of the following comes closest to your view?

Over 75% of Americans support regulating big tech companies as public utilities



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Base: Total Respondents

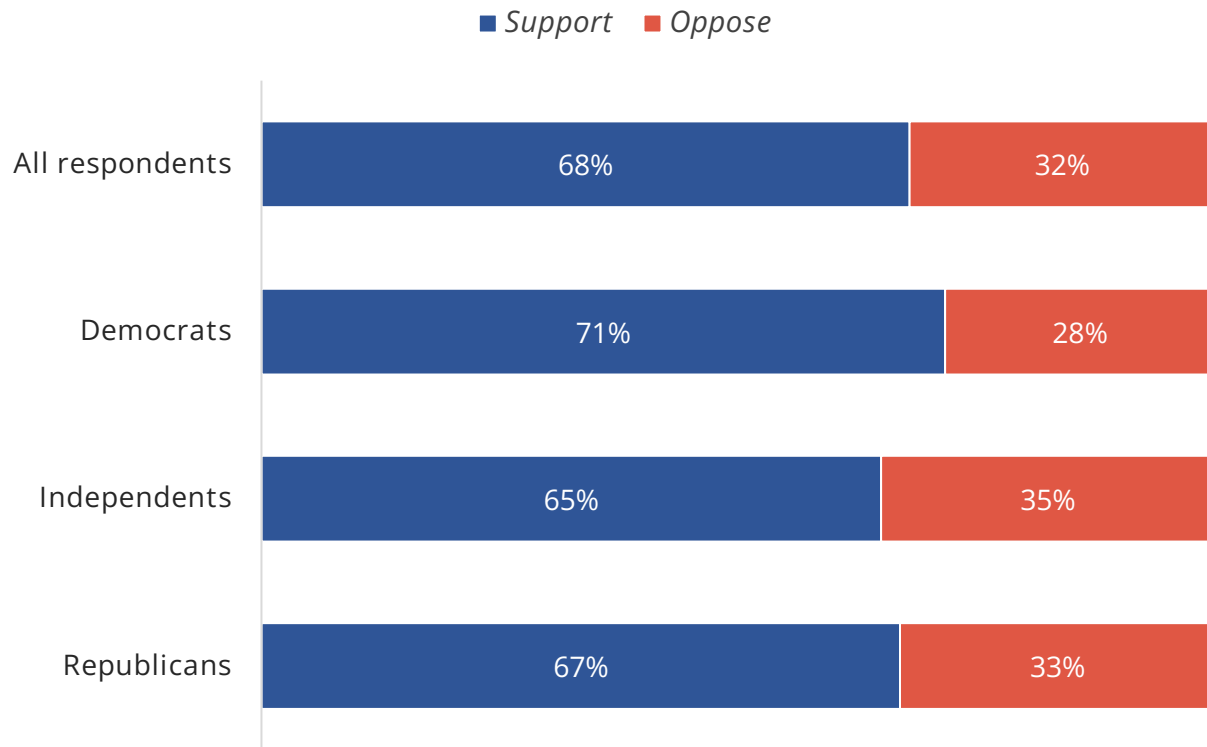
Table 004/VPA14

Respondents were asked the question: “Do you agree or disagree that big tech companies should be regulated as public utilities?”

The survey provided respondents with this context:

“Artificial intelligence depends on large amounts of processing power. Three companies—Amazon, Microsoft, and Google—have captured the market for processing power. Some people think these big tech companies should be regulated as public utilities. This means the big tech companies would have to provide equal access to small businesses and would have to charge transparent, uniform prices.”

Americans across the aisle would support a proposal to break up the big AI companies



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Base: Total Respondents

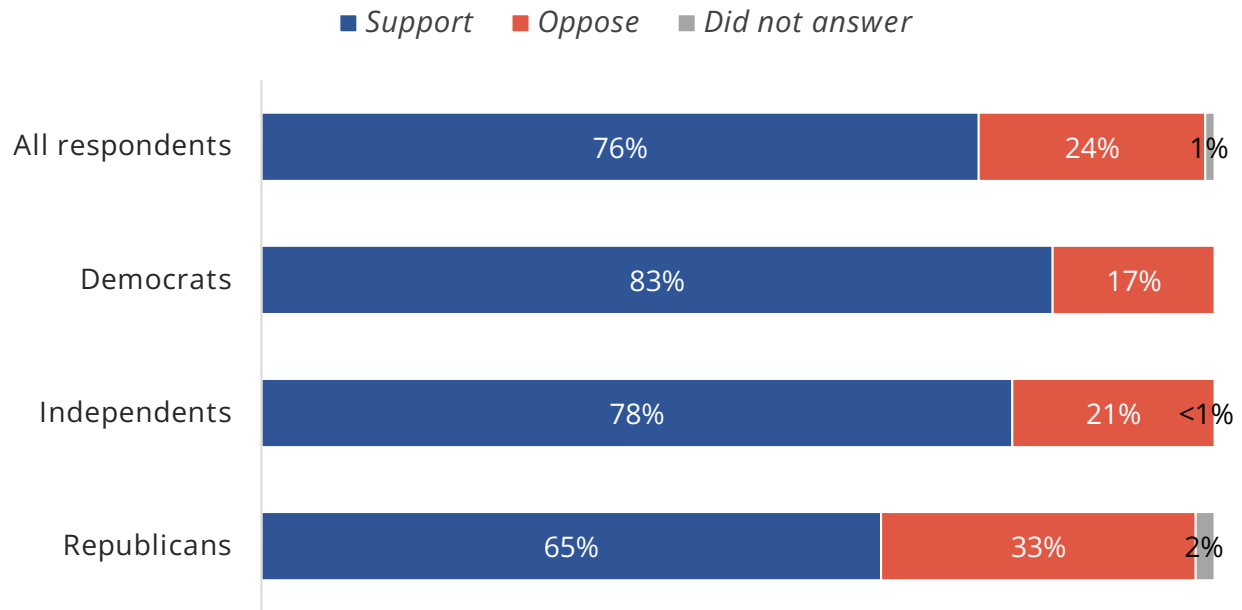
Table 005/VPA15

Respondents were asked the question: **“Would you support or oppose a proposal to break up the big AI companies?”**

The survey provided respondents with this context:

“Some people say that big AI companies should be broken up, so they don't control all aspects of the artificial intelligence sector. They feel it would be safer if no company dominated all parts of AI, and that there would be more competition and opportunities for small businesses. On the other hand, the big AI companies say they can provide better services if they have more control.”

When framed as a public service, 76% support creating publicly funded and publicly run tech resources for scientists and researchers to focus on AI



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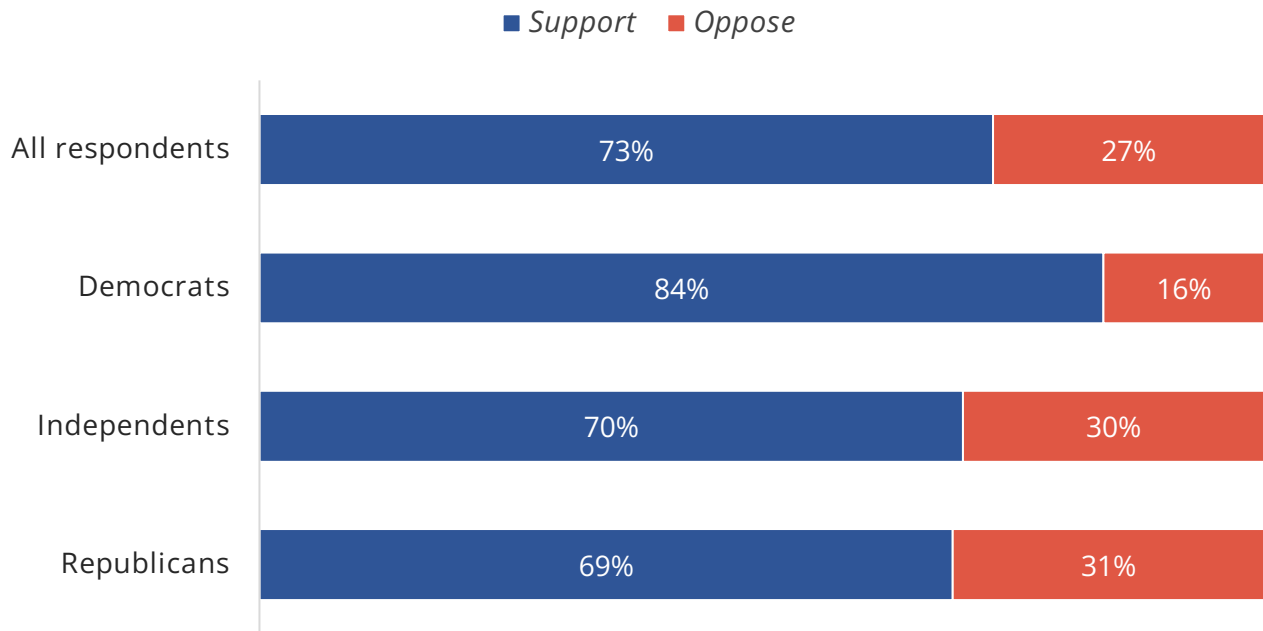
Base: Total Half Sample Respondents

Table 006/VPA16

The survey provided respondents with this context:

“Some policymakers are worried that if big AI companies control artificial intelligence, they will focus on developing AI that maximizes their profits, not on AI that helps society. These policymakers propose creating a publicly funded and publicly run technology hub that would allow scientists and researchers to focus on AI that solves public problems. Would you support or oppose this proposal?”

When framed as a competitive measure, 73% of Americans support creating publicly funded and publicly run tech resources as an alternative and competitor to big tech companies



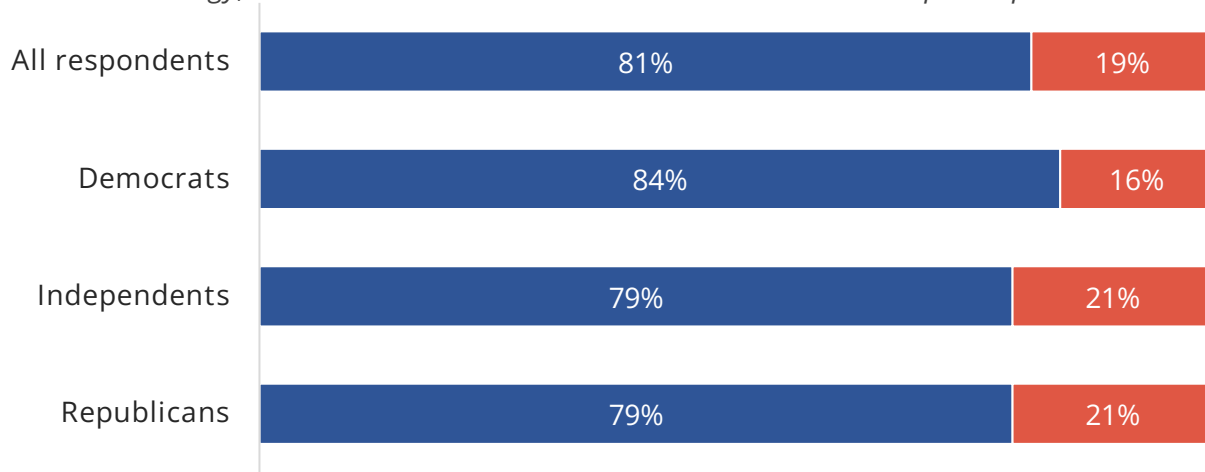
*September 8-11, 2023 survey of 1,006 U.S. adults ages 18 or older
Base: Total Half Sample Respondents
Table 007/NPA17*

The survey provided respondents with this context:

“Some policymakers are worried that if big AI companies control artificial intelligence, there will be limited competition and the big AI companies will abuse their power. These policymakers propose creating a publicly funded and publicly run technology hub that would compete with the big private AI companies, so people and businesses have another choice, if they want to use it. Would you support or oppose this proposal?”

81% think the federal government should develop its own public cloud computing system for AI scientists and researchers, instead of paying big tech for that service

- *The big tech companies are too powerful and shouldn't get more government money; instead, a public funded and publicly run AI technology hub should be created for scientists and researchers to use it to address public problems.*
- *The federal government should pay the big tech companies for access to AI technology, so scientists and researchers can use it to address public problems.*



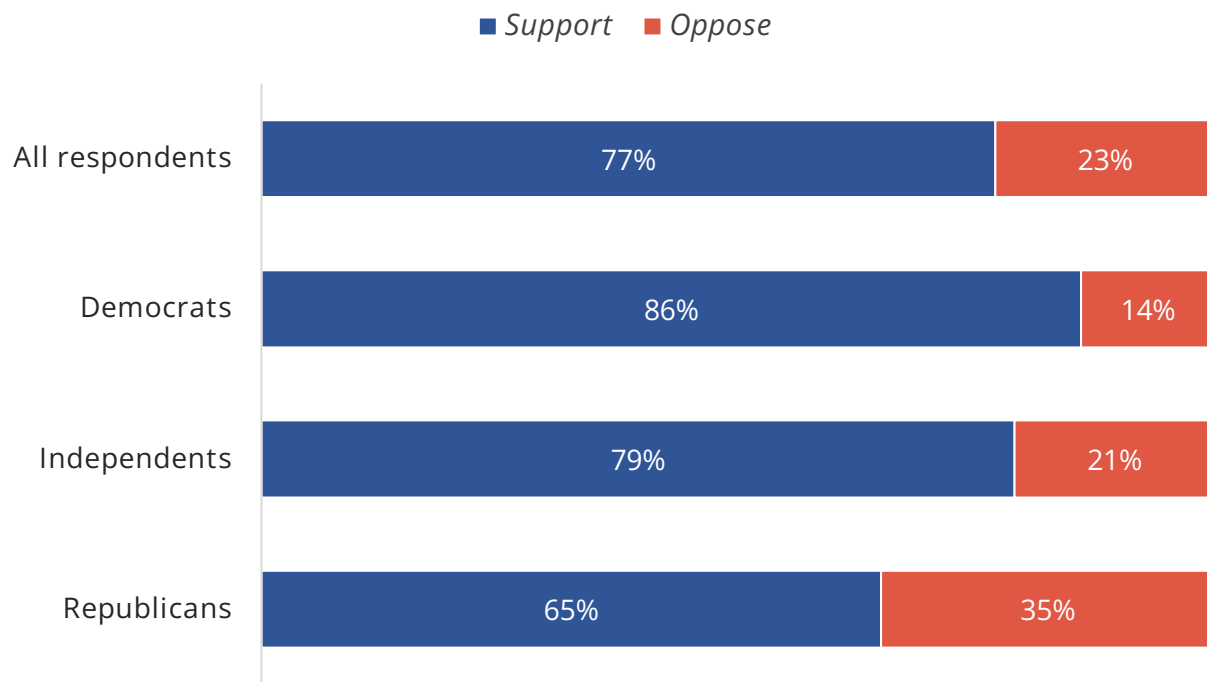
September 8-11, 2023 survey of 1,006 U.S. adults ages 18 or older

Base: Total Respondents

Table 008/VPA18

Respondents were provided two statements and then asked which stance came closer to their view.

77% of Americans support creating a dedicated team of government AI experts to improve public services and advise regulators



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Base: Total Respondents

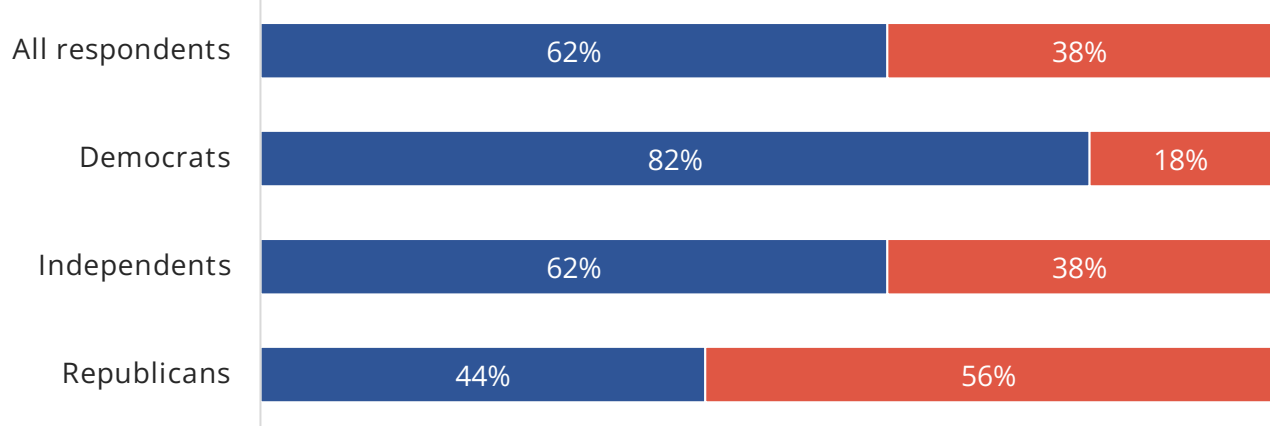
Table 009/VPA19

The survey provided respondents with this context:

“Some people think the federal government needs a dedicated team of technology experts who can help federal agencies use artificial intelligence to improve public services and advise them on how to apply existing laws to artificial intelligence. Would you support or oppose this proposal?”

When confronted with a "big government" counterargument, 62% of Americans still prefer public capacity to contracting out.

- *The federal government needs its own AI experts, so it does not have to rely on big tech companies who charge high fees and will serve their own financial interests.*
- *The federal government should use private contractors for AI because the government is already too big.*



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Base: Total Respondents

Table 010/NPA110

The survey provided respondents with the following context and then the two statements:

Some people oppose the creation of a dedicated team of technology experts within government who can help federal agencies with artificial intelligence because they think government is already too big and bloated, and that agencies should use private contractors if they need help. Others say that private contractors are big tech companies and big consulting firms that charge high fees and will serve their own financial interests, not the public interest. They think the federal government needs its own experts, so it is not depending on big tech experts. Which is closer to your view?

Survey Questions

TABLE 001/VPA11—*Would you support or oppose having a federal agency regulate the use of artificial intelligence, also known as AI?*

- Support
- Oppose

TABLE 002/VPA12—*Four big tech companies—Amazon, Google, Facebook, and Microsoft—dominate artificial intelligence or AI.*

Which of the following comes closest to your view?

- Big tech companies should not have so much power and they should be prevented from controlling all aspects of AI
- It is okay for big tech companies to dominate the AI industry because they can provide more effective and efficient services

TABLE 004/VPA14—*Artificial intelligence depends on large amounts of processing power. Three companies—Amazon, Microsoft, and Google—have captured the market for processing power. Some people think these big tech companies should be regulated as public utilities. This means the big tech companies would have to provide equal access to small businesses and would have to charge transparent, uniform prices.*

Do you agree or disagree that big tech companies should be regulated as public utilities?

- Agree
- Disagree

TABLE 005/VPA15—*Some people say that big AI companies should be broken up, so they don't control all aspects of the artificial intelligence sector. They feel it would be safer if no company dominated all parts of AI, and that there would be more competition and opportunities for small businesses. On the other hand, the big AI companies say they can provide better services if they have more control.*

Would you support or oppose a proposal to break up the big AI companies?

- Support
- Oppose

TABLE 006/VPAI6—*Some policymakers are worried that if big AI companies control artificial intelligence, they will focus on developing AI that maximizes their profits, not on AI that helps society. These policymakers propose creating a publicly funded and publicly run technology hub that would allow scientists and researchers to focus on AI that solves public problems.*

Would you support or oppose this proposal?

- Support
- Oppose

TABLE 007/VPAI7—*Some policymakers are worried that if big AI companies control artificial intelligence, there will be limited competition and the big AI companies will abuse their power. These policymakers propose creating a publicly funded and publicly run technology hub that would compete with the big private AI companies, so people and businesses have another choice, if they want to use it.*

Would you support or oppose this proposal?

- Support
- Oppose

TABLE 008/VPAI8—*Which of the following comes closest to your view?*

- The federal government should pay the big tech companies for access to AI technology, so scientists and researchers can use it to address public problems.
- The big tech companies are too powerful and shouldn't get more government money; instead, a publicly funded and publicly run AI technology hub should be created for scientists and researchers to use it to address public problems.

TABLE 009/VPAI9—*Some people think the federal government needs a dedicated team of technology experts who can help federal agencies use artificial intelligence to improve public services and advise them on how to apply existing laws to artificial intelligence.*

Would you support or oppose this proposal?

- Support
- Oppose

TABLE 010/VPAl10—*Some people oppose the creation of a dedicated team of technology experts within government who can help federal agencies with artificial intelligence because they think government is already too big and bloated, and that agencies should use private contractors if they need help. Others say that private contractors are big tech companies and big consulting firms that charge high fees and will serve their own financial interests, not the public interest. They think the federal government needs its own experts, so it is not depending on big tech experts.*

Which is closer to your view?

- The federal government should use private contractors for AI because the government is already too big.
- The federal government needs its own AI experts, so it does not have to rely on big tech companies who charge high fees and will serve their own financial interests.