

AI Crossing: Express to Prosperity or Train Wreck Ahead? *An AI Track Alignment is Needed*



This article introduces AI fundamentals, comparisons to past industrial shifts and search engine usage, outlines public and expert views on societal benefits and risks, and discusses potential future steps for this transformative technology.

Written by [John Buchanan](#) | [LinkedIn](#) [John Buchanan EI Author](#)

AI Crossing: Express to Prosperity or Train Wreck Ahead?

An AI Track Alignment is Needed

Written by [John Buchanan | LinkedIn](#) [John Buchanan EI Author](#)

This article introduces AI fundamentals, comparisons to past industrial shifts and search engine usage, outlines public and expert views on societal benefits and risks, and discusses potential future steps.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is transforming our world at a pace and scale unlike any previous technological revolution. While past innovations—like the steam engine or the internet—reshaped industries and societies, AI's reach is already broader and penetration deeper in every aspect of our lives and its consequences more unpredictable.

The stakes are enormous: jobs, careers, and our market economies will be powerfully affected, as well as how we all interact with information, and with each other. Unlike earlier information technologies, AI doesn't just simplify or automate tasks—it is “generative”, meaning it can learn, adapt, and make its own decisions. If AI is deployed solely to maximize profits, significant reductions in labor costs might be attained absent regard to the social or economic consequences workers. Entire professions may be disrupted, and new ethical dilemmas will arise. The astonishing acceleration of AI's evolution leaves little time for society to adjust, urgently demanding our well-considered and proactive responses.

The Need for a Broad Collaboration

AI now influences all areas of society, including healthcare, education, national security, media, and public trust. Experts, policymakers, industry leaders, market forces, and citizens must collaborate to create effective AI-enabled solutions and safeguards that will last. Skills that used to last 20 years, now last 5. Coordinated trusted action can harness AI's benefits and reduce its known and potential societal risks.

It is essential to identify key tensions and facilitate collaboration to address conflicts among the following groups: (1) profit-driven corporations pursuing transformational efficiency gains versus employees seeking meaningful work and career growth; (2) technology companies aiming to deliver innovative, market-leading generative solutions versus regulators focused on proactively guiding deployment for public safety and shared prosperity; and (3) destructive partisan political polarization versus effective governance to ensure optimal outcomes during the AI transition.

To fully leverage AI's benefits while reducing its risks, solutions must span across industries, ideological divides, federal and state regulators, and international boundaries. **We are at a pivotal crossing where decisions made in the near future, will significantly influence whether we will achieve substantial economic prosperity or face considerable challenges such as significant job loss and workforce displacement.**



Learning from the Past, Shaping the Future

Societies can overcome great challenges when they unite around common purpose. Our country has experienced many recent and historical era core challenges that were addressed to allow us to continue and thrive. By fostering open dialogue, investing in education, and encouraging ethical innovation, we can turn AI's potential threats into opportunities for growth and progress.

A. What is AI and how is it Different from Prior Industrial Revolutions?

A great debate is underway over not only what constitutes artificial intelligence, but also how society should respond to its rapid development. This crucial conversation raises questions about ethics, regulation, and opportunity. **The range of opinions and concerns are illustrated in this recent online exchange on key themes in today's AI debate.**

How is AI different, and should we be worried?

"There have been three industrial revolutions. The first was steam power, the second was electric/coal and oil, the third was technology (the internet) and now it is being said that AI is the fourth. I was having a hard time separating the internet revolution from an AI revolution. But I am beginning to understand what that means. Like Industrial Revolutions before it, it is realized on the shoulders of the prior revolution but ultimately becomes its own revolution with independent features all its own and with the capacity to generate change in a way that the prior revolution couldn't. Anyway. I am now looking at AI in a completely different way. Also robots. I mean, we already have drones fighting our wars. Thoughts?"

Terrifying:

"The AGI and robotics people are trying to make technology that outperforms humans at literally everything, intellectual and physical. The economic gains would be enormous, like suddenly having a billion engineers and scientists working cheerfully for negligible pay. It's unclear how humans would fit into this. This is different from the industrial revolution and the internet, which automated and accelerated some human work, leading to large economic gains and pushing people to find new jobs as some old ones were automated. With AGI all jobs could be automated including any new jobs, since the AGI would also be better at learning the new jobs. So the economy as we know it wouldn't exist anymore."*

Opportunity Creation:

Yes, many new and currently unknown frontiers will open up. Medical research has already advanced by leaps and bounds and much more will follow. But if your job is moving data and numbers around your days are numbered. New opportunities will open up. Some way, some how we will go forward into the new age, hopefully a better one for our grandchildren!

Hot air:

To be honest, I keep hearing more and more about the AI bubble. Now true, there was a dot com bubble, but my gut says this isn't a new industrial revolution but a bunch of hot air. Honestly, the companies that make the chips to sell to the AI companies are pouring money into AI companies. That's not a revolution to me.

Not a big deal but here to stay:

Most likely the bubble will burst and AI will level out in value. But it won't disappear. It's here to stay and will find its way into countless uses. It can't be called hot air or a hoax just because too many greedy people thought they could cash in on it.

Bad for humanity:

AI is a regression rather than a revolution. It represents a rejection of our ability to think critically and just accept what we are told.

Hopeful:

Certainly it will be important in the future to keep our analytical thinking up to speed, as a human that is.

This wide-ranging set of opinions and ramifications is reflected in a later section that presents extensive survey results across many political and other dimensions in the US and globally. The debate is made more complex by difficulties in defining AI, particularly as terms like "superintelligence" and **Artificial General Intelligence (AGI)** for AIs conceptual expansion are used in the tech industry. OpenAI describes AGI as "highly autonomous systems that outperform humans at most economically valuable work." AGI, sometimes called human-level intelligence AI, can be defined as a type of artificial intelligence that would match or surpass human capabilities across virtually all cognitive tests. Different people use AGI to mean different things ranging from "powerful enough that a significant number of people are unemployable" to "better than everybody at everything". Major AGI players are fiercely competing, with many investing well over \$10 billion each to gain first strike dominance.

Before tackling this issue—or exploring its potential—it's vital to understand what AI is and what it can do. And critically which jobs and careers it could displace.

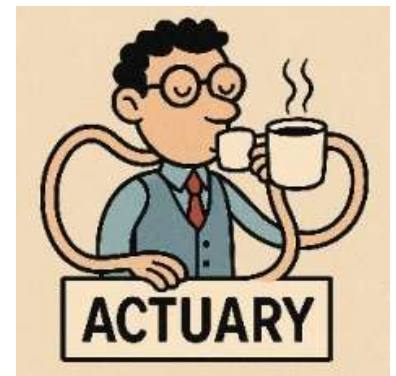
B. How is AI different from internet search engines? Sample deep-dive use

Within the last few years, there has been a rapidly expanding awareness and understanding of what AI is, and what it could be. As shown in the next section, AI awareness, usage, and level of concern has increased dramatically since the release of ChatGPT in November of 2022. AI tools are being used for everything from simple queries to in-depth research.

AI tools are rapidly replacing traditional search engines as the primary way people seek information, fundamentally reshaping our online experience. Many people use ChatGPT to answer simple questions like "What are hair removal solutions?", "Give me five great puns about coffee", or "Draw a cartoon of an actuary with rubber arms drinking coffee". Anybody who has tried even basic AI prompts knows that they not only produce a clear set of steps and outcomes but also suggest simple additional prompts to guide the user toward next steps.

These tools can draw you into a deep dive—if you're interested in and have the time. This approach is perfect for human brains now programmed to jump from one task to the next. AI tools are designed to be friendly and congratulatory, making you feel as if your efforts are truly unique. *As a tip, just ask it to answer a particular question in the mode say of a snarky teenager, and that will snap you back to reality.* Users must remain cautious, as AI-generated responses can often contain inaccuracies and what are called "hallucinations" (note the third arm in the cartoon above). AI, with millions of online helpers, will only get smarter.

My first AI deep dive was generating cartoon images for a 15-second movie I wanted to produce featuring an alpaca. AI generated prompts that were surprisingly sophisticated. Without any specific instructions, it created a five-stage system for each frame—considering elements like emotion and style—an actuary's dream. It also prodded itself to produce three soundtrack waltzes complete with pizzicato strings to match the whimsical tone



of a particular frame, showcasing AI's nuanced understanding of mood. It then offered soundboard settings for easy insertion into tools like GarageBand to complete the score. This was far more than I was expecting in a few hour deep dive session, and truly impressive. The opportunity for additional creative paths is staggering. But at the same time, it is truly terrifying. All this begged the question, among others, is AI truly “creative”. Its rapidly growing capabilities will greatly affect human roles in creative industries.

My engagement with AI described was not without its flaws. Initially, renderings took only ten seconds. System capacity issues soon caused delays of up to two hours, and eventually each rendering required more than 24 hours. After chastising it (*and saying it would be fired if was in fact a human*), it then reached back into its prompts and produced a backup Excel file showing the unacceptable performance time for each frame. With minimal prompts, it then produced a letter of complaint and strategy to alert the upper management of the AI firm, including rendering a cartoon of distressed alpacas looking out of a plane not being able to land for visual impact to be used in the complaint letter to its own boss.



Checking the accuracy of AI-generated content is crucial—especially as users become further removed from original sources or vetted documents. It’s essential for users to know where AI obtains its information, and while AI now often provides source references, that information still needs independent verification. Mistakes or hallucinations can be subtle and difficult to detect. The rise of prompt engineering could become a new profession, but much AI output may still fail basic logic or credibility tests. As people increasingly “let AI do the work,” sharpening critical thinking skills becomes even more vital. Those who neglect these duties will have the farthest to fall, while those who harness AI’s capabilities responsibly will advance the most. Both educational institutions and online certification providers must develop robust testing methods to maintain high standards for reviewing AI output.

The Appendix offers several deep dives of personal interest: the alpaca cartoon, Ben Franklin Maxims adapted for a Jeopardy game, five historical era challenges with corresponding redemption responses, and short and feature-length movie suggestions about AI. These all demonstrate just how powerful and unsettling AI can be. If left unchecked, AI could result in significant job loss or displacement.

C. Public and Expert Survey Results of AI Impact

According to the **Pew Research Center** (rated as in the “center” according to various bias scores), in June 2025 “34% of US adults have used ChatGPT, about double the share in 2023...That includes a 58% majority of adults under 30.” According to its maker OpenAI, more than 800 million people now use ChatGPT each week. These counts don’t include those familiar with other AI tools such as Claude AI, Google Gemini, MS CoPilot, etc.

During this last year, many more people are discussing AI with friends and colleagues, forming their own opinions about what it is and what it could become. Importantly, people wonder how it would affect their job or career. Younger adults, and those who worry about them, are quite concerned that possibly fewer entry level jobs will affect them more keenly – changing the classic pyramid staffing model, into more of a diamond shape. Middle managers may be tasked to

optimize the usage of AI directly to reduce the need for entry level staff to increase profits. This rapid adoption rate reflects a significant acceleration in public engagement with AI technologies, highlighting growing interest along with lingering uncertainty. Despite the considerable adoption of AI among users, especially among young adults, a substantial segment of the population remains largely unfamiliar with the technology and may lack an informed perspective. The Pew survey indicates that 20% of respondents report having no awareness of AI.

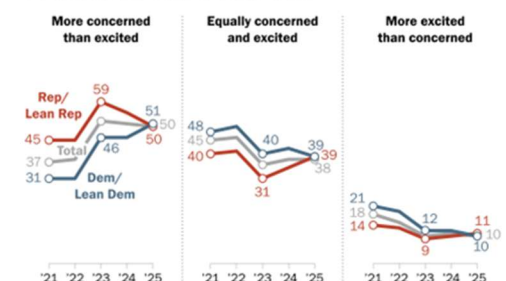
A key question emerges: **Do people feel more concerned, more excited, or equally concerned and excited about AI usage in daily life?** Understanding these feelings is crucial for shaping responsible AI policies and communication strategies.

Since 2021, Pew has released a series of research reports and short reads that analyze survey results across several dimensions: political spectrum, age group, AI experts vs. Public and countries/geographic regions. They also asked participants how much trust they have in their own government to regulate AI compared to other governments. Here are some of their findings (*Pew reports and shorts as recent as 11/6/25-survey 6/25*):

- **More Americans are now concerned about AI than excited, rising from 37% in 2021 to 50% in 2023.** Only 10% are more excited than concerned (down from 18% excited in 2021).
- **Politics:** Concern over AI is nearly equal among Republicans (50%) and Democrats (51%), though Democratic concern has grown while Republican concern slightly declined since 2023.
- **Age:** Young adults are far more aware of and engaged with AI compared to older adults (62% vs. 32%), with awareness gap growing considerably since 2022.
- College graduates are more likely to have opinions on AI, with higher education linked to greater perceived risks (60% vs. 51%) as well as greater benefits (32% vs. 20%).
- Older adults, women, less educated individuals, and infrequent internet users are particularly likely to be concerned about AI.
- **Experts vs. Public:** AI experts are far more optimistic about AI's long-term impact than the public, with 56% expecting positive effects versus 17% of the general population. **This very different outlook needs to be reconciled through education.**
- Both experts and the public worry that government regulation of AI will not be strict enough.
- **Regulation and Industry:** Most Americans want more control over AI's role in their lives.
- The public is split on trusting the U.S. government to regulate AI effectively (44% trust a lot, 47% little to no trust), with Republicans showing significantly more trust than Democrats (R 54% trust / 38% distrust; D 36% trust / 56% distrust) in this survey taken in mid-June 2025.
- There's also widespread skepticism that U.S. companies will do their part: 59% of the public and 55% of AI experts surveyed similarly lack confidence in them to develop and use AI responsibly.

Similar shares of Republicans and Democrats now say AI's increased use in daily life makes them feel more concerned than excited

% of U.S. adults who say that, overall, the increased use of artificial intelligence (AI) in daily life makes them feel ...



Note: Respondents who did not give an answer are not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted June 9-15, 2025.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

As of November 2025, the Pew Research Center has published over 200 reports and 50 short reads and fact sheets on AI topics since 2021, with more than 40 published in the past year alone. The wide range of reports and analyses cover topics such as public opinion, ethical considerations, and technological advancements <https://www.pewresearch.org/search/ai> Readers are strongly encouraged to review the different reports and form their own opinions about whether to approach AI's prospects with concern or optimism.

D. Where do we go from here?

Readers of this article are encouraged to make their own explorations of AI tools. Choose a topic that interests you—whether it's related to a hobby, your profession, or academics—and use AI to pose questions and then follow suggested prompts. The power of the various AI tools will be readily evident. By actively exploring AI tools and supplementing your investigation with articles and books on the subject, will help you develop your own informed perspective on this transformational technology. Developing a comprehensive understanding of AI, including its advanced progression to AGI, will enable you to engage effectively in meaningful discussions with individuals from diverse age groups and political perspectives. And decisions about its future that affect everybody.

Our successful response to past crises like Covid (deploying vaccines developed by top scientists under the publicly funded Operation Warp Speed) and WWII (creating a broad alliance of like-minded nations to counter global aggression) depended on accurately recognizing challenges and responding with great and well-considered vigor to the problem. Our ability to address the opportunities and threats inherent in AI will build or founder on critical first steps to develop solutions that earn widespread trust.

To fully realize the significant potential of AI while mitigating its associated risks, it is imperative that AI experts, federal and state government regulators, political groups, private sector organizations, and individuals across the workforce engage in collaborative efforts. AI, and by extension AGI, is potentially the biggest issue of our era. At this pivotal crossing, only by working together can we harness this transformative technology.

