Q6:

WHY THE RECENT INTEREST IN AI SAFETY

Stephen Hawking, Elon Musk, Steve Wozniak, Bill Gates, and many other big names in science and technology have recently expressed concern [in the media](http://www.forbes.com/sites/ericmack/2015/07/27/hawking-musk-wozniak-freaked-about-artificial-intelligence-getting-a-trigger-finger/) and via open letters about the [risks posed by AI](https://futureoflife.org/ai-open-letter/), joined by many leading AI researchers. Why is the subject suddenly in the headlines?

The idea that the quest for strong AI would ultimately succeed was long thought of as science fiction, centuries or more away. However, thanks to recent breakthroughs, many AI milestones, which experts viewed as decades away merely five years ago, have now been reached, making many experts take seriously the possibility of superintelligence in our lifetime. While some experts still guess that human-level AI is centuries away, most AI researches at the [2015 Puerto Rico Conference](https://futureoflife.org/2015/10/12/ai-safety-conference-in-puerto-rico/) guessed that it would happen before 2060. Since it may take decades to complete the required safety research, it is prudent to start it now.

Because AI has the potential to become more intelligent than any human, we have no surefire way of predicting how it will behave. We can’t use past technological developments as much of a basis because we’ve never created anything that has the ability to, wittingly or unwittingly, outsmart us. The best example of what we could face may be our own evolution. People now control the planet, not because we’re the strongest, fastest or biggest, but because we’re the smartest. If we’re no longer the smartest, are we assured to remain in control?

FLI’s position is that our civilization will flourish as long as we win the race between the growing power of technology and the wisdom with which we manage it. In the case of AI technology, FLI’s position is that the best way to win that race is not to impede the former, but to accelerate the latter, by supporting AI safety research.