

Data Annotations in the Era of LLMs

Rotem Dror





Do we need to annotate data in NLP nowadays?

Guiding Questions



Do we need humans to annotate data?



Can we trust LLMs as judges/annotators?



What about subjective annotations?



Why Annotations Still Matter?

LLMs are generalists

Even if you don't train the model, you need to evaluate it.

Fairness



The Changing Landscape of Annotations

- Manual Annotation Workflow
- Task Definition
- Guidelines Creation
- Human Annotation
- Review
- Aggregation
- × Costly
- **X** Time-consuming
- ★ Inconsistent (esp. subjective tasks)
- × Heavy quality control

- LLM-Augmented Workflow
- Task Definition
- Prompt Engineering
- LLM Annotation
- Review
- Optimal Human Adjudication
- ∀ Fast
- **△**□ Prompt Sensitivity
- **∆**□ Confidence ≠ Accuracy



Do We Still Need Human Annotations?

- Short answer: Yes.
- Slightly longer answer: Yes, but not as much as we did five years ago.
- Long answer:
 - We no longer need humans to annotate entire datasets just a representative sample
 - Human input is essential for supervising and validating automatic annotations 66
 - For this smaller subset, expertise and skilled annotators are preferred



LLM-as-A-Judge VS. LLM-as-An-Annotator

What is "LLM-as-an-annotator"?

 Using LLMs for annotation, evaluation, or labeling tasks that are traditionally performed by human annotators.

• LLM-as-a-judge is a special case: LLMs that evaluate outputs of other models (LLMs).

Why "LLM-as-a-judge"?

- It is cheaper, faster, requires less effort, and is less labor-intensive.
- Sometimes, LLMs are better than humans... when?







The Alternative Annotator Test:

How to Statistically Justify Replacing Human Annotators with LLMs

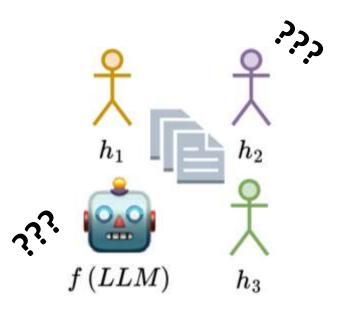
Nitay Calderon Roi Reichart Rotem Dror











Can We Trust LLM-as-a-Judge?

- LLMs directly shape the results, findings, and insights of scientific papers.
 - Not only in NLP, but also in medicine, psychology, social science...
- Many papers do not report any alignment measures between LLMs and humans.
- Those that do typically use traditional measures such as:
 - % agreements, F1 score, IAA kappas, correlations...
- There is no established standard or criterion for making a yes/no decision.
 - "Is an F1 score of 0.6 sufficient?"
- The decision **requires statistical rigor**, which is often lacking in how researchers apply traditional measures.



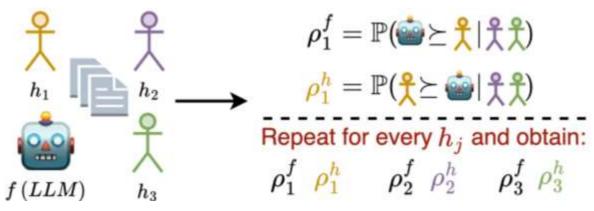
The Alternative Annotator Test

- Researchers should demonstrate that the LLM offers a comparable alternative to recruiting human annotators.
- In other words, when factoring in the cost-benefit and efficiency advantages of LLM annotations, they should be as good or better than human annotations.
- What is better?
 - In some cases, agrees more with the majority vote.
 - In other cases, reliable and consistent.



The alt-test: How it works

1. **Leave-one-out:** Exclude each annotator in turn, and estimate the probabilities that the LLM aligns better with the remaining annotators than the excluded one, and vice versa.



3. Apply an FDR procedure and identify the rejected hypotheses.

$$FDR(rac{p ext{-value }1}{p ext{-value }2}) \longrightarrow rac{\sqrt[q]{H_1}}{\sqrt[q]{H_2}} ext{ is not rejected}$$

2. Conduct hypothesis tests to compare the probabilities and obtain p-values.

$$\text{x3} \begin{cases} H_{null} : \rho_j^f \leq \rho_j^h - \varepsilon \\ H_{alt} : \rho_j^f > \rho_j^h - \varepsilon \end{cases} \xrightarrow{\substack{p\text{-value 1} \\ p\text{-value 2} \\ p\text{-value 3}}}$$

4. Calculate the LLM's winning rate and determine if it can replace humans.

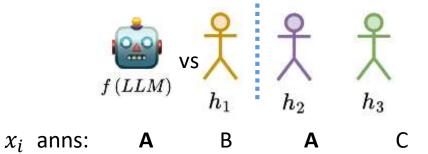
Winning Rate
$$\omega = \frac{\sqrt{\chi}}{3} = 0.67$$
 If $\omega \geq 0.5 \Rightarrow \frac{\mathrm{can}}{\mathrm{replace}}$

1. Leave-one-out and estimate the relative advantage probabilities

S(.) measures how well the annotation of the LLM or the excluded human aligns with those of the remaining annotators.

$$W_{i,j}^f = \begin{cases} 1, & \text{if } S(f,x_i,j) \ge S(h_j,x_i,j) \\ 0, & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

$$\rho_j^f = \hat{\mathbb{P}}(\operatorname{LLM} \succeq h_j) = \hat{\mathbb{E}}[W_{i,j}^f] = \frac{1}{|\mathbb{I}_j|} \sum_{i \in \mathbb{I}_j} W_{i,j}^f$$
The instances annotated by the j-th excluded human



$$ACC(f, x_i, 1) = 0.5$$

 $ACC(h_1, x_i, 1) = 0$
 $W_{i,1}^f = 1$

$$ho_1^f = \mathbb{P}(\stackrel{\longleftarrow}{\cong} \succeq \stackrel{\blacktriangleleft}{\gimel} | \stackrel{\blacktriangleleft}{\gimel} \stackrel{)}{\gimel})$$
 $ho_1^h = \mathbb{P}(\stackrel{\blacktriangleleft}{\gimel} \succeq \stackrel{\longleftarrow}{\cong} | \stackrel{\blacktriangleleft}{\gimel} \stackrel{)}{\gimel})$
Repeat for every h_j and obtain:
 $ho_1^f \hspace{0.1cm}
ho_1^h \hspace{0.1cm}
ho_2^f \hspace{0.1cm}
ho_2^h \hspace{0.1cm}
ho_2^h \hspace{0.1cm}
ho_3^h \hspace{0.1cm}
ho_3^h$

2. Conduct a hypothesis test: Does the LLM hold an advantage?

$$\begin{cases} H_{null}: \rho_j^f \leq \rho_j^h - \varepsilon \\ H_{alt}: \rho_j^f > \rho_j^h - \varepsilon \end{cases} \xrightarrow{\begin{array}{c} p\text{-value 1} \\ p\text{-value 2} \\ p\text{-value 3} \end{array} }$$

Cost-benefit hyperparameter: Penalty to the human because LLMs are faster and cheaper

As a rule of thumb, if annotators are:

- Trusted experts (expensive, less accessible) $\varepsilon = 0.2$
- Skilled (undergrads, trusted workers) $\varepsilon = 0.15$
- Crowd-workers (cheap) $\varepsilon = 0.1$

A paired t-test (== a t-test for the differences)

$$d_{i,j} = W_{i,j}^h - W_{i,j}^f$$

 $\bar{d}_j =
ho_j^h -
ho_j^f$

$$t_j = \frac{\bar{d}_j - \varepsilon}{s_j / \sqrt{n}}$$
 $s_j = \sqrt{\frac{\sum_{i=1}^n (d_{i,j} - \bar{d}_j)^2}{n-1}}$

3. Apply an FDR-controlling procedure

Simply counting the number of rejections is problematic:

- Accumulation of Type-I errors (false) rejections)
- Hypotheses are dependent (The score of h1 depends on h2, h3, ...)



Replicability Analysis for Natural Language Processing: Testing Significance with Multiple Datasets

Rotem Dror, Gili Baumer, Marina Bogomolov, Roi Reichart

$$FDR(rac{p ext{-value 1}}{p ext{-value 2}}) \longrightarrow rac{\sqrt{H_1}}{H_1} ext{ is rejected} \ \mathcal{F}H_2 ext{ is not rejected} \ \mathcal{F}H_3 ext{ is rejected}$$

Benjamini-Yekutieli (BY)

Algorithm 1 Benjamini-Yekutieli (BY) Procedure Require: p-values from m hypothesis tests, de-

es in ascending order:

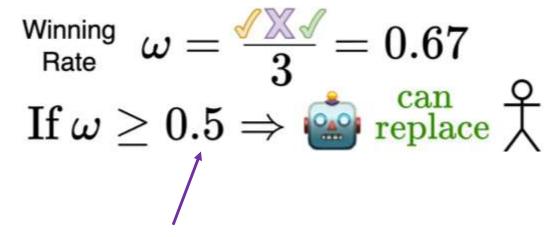
djusted threshold using:

$$= \frac{i}{m} \times \left(\frac{q}{\sum_{j=1}^{m} \frac{1}{j}} \right)$$

- Find the largest i such that p_(i) ≤ threshold(i)
- 6: Reject null hypotheses corresponding to $p_{(1)}, p_{(2)}, \ldots, p_{(i)}$
- 7: return List of rejected null hypotheses



4. Compute the winning rate



This is also a hyperparameter. We use 0.5 because we want to conclude that: it is more likely that the LLM holds an advantage over a random chosen annotator.



How to Compare LLM Judges?

The Average Advantage Probability:

Highly interpretable:

Represents the probability that the LLM is as good as or better (e.g., closer to the majority vote) than a randomly chosen human annotator.

Versatile:

Can be used for any annotation type: (discrete, continuous, free-text)
There is no need to switch between metrics.

Comparable:

On the same scale for every dataset.

$$ho = rac{1}{m} \sum_{j=1}^m
ho_j^f$$

The proportion

The average advantage probability

$$\rho_j^f = \hat{\mathbb{P}}(\mathsf{LLM} \succeq h_j) = \hat{\mathbb{E}}[W_{i,j}^f] = \frac{1}{|\mathbb{I}_j|} \sum_{i \in \mathbb{I}_i} W_{i,j}^f$$

Experiments – Datasets

10 diverse datasets.

• 2 vision-language.

Each instance is annotated by multiple annotators.

Discrete, continuous and free-text tasks.

Different number of Annotators/instances/categories

Annotator types: 4 crowd-workers, 3 skilled, 3 experts

annotators instances categories annotators per item											
				ion Tasks [CLASSIFICATION]							
Dataset	m	n	Cats	A.p.I	Agree	Fleiss's κ	Task Description				
WAX	8 C	246	16	5.61	0.33	0.26	Identify the type of relationship between two associated words.				
LGBTeen	4 E	880	5	2.91	0.69	0.53	Assess the emotional support provided by LLMs to queer youth.				
MT-Bench	3 E	120	3	2.05	0.66	0.49	Compare two conversations between a user and different LLMs.				
Framing	4 S	2552	3	3.00	0.79	0.57	Annotate climate articles with frame-related yes/no questions.				
CEBaB-A	10 C	1008	3	4.00	0.86	0.74	Determine the sentiment for four aspects of restaurant reviews.				
Continuous Annotation Tasks [REGRESSION]											
Dataset	Anns	Items	Scale	A.p.I	MAE	Pearson	Task Description				
SummEval	3 E	6400	1–5	3.00	0.51	0.74	Rate model-generated summaries on four aspects.				
10k Prompts	13 S	1698	1-5	2.26	0.84	0.41	Rate the quality of synthetic and human-written prompts.				
CEBaB-S	10 C	711	1-5	3.08	0.67	0.67	Identify the star rating (1-5) given in restaurant reviews.				
Lesion	6 S	500	1–6	5.96	0.44	0.77	Score five melanoma-related features based on lesion images.				
	Free-Text Annotation Tasks [GENERATION]										
Dataset	Anns	Items	- TT-0	A.p.I	Avg.	Similarity	Task Description				
KiloGram	50 C	993	-	7.27		0.28	Generate free-text descriptions of tangram images.				



Results:

	Discrete Annotation Tasks (3) (4)														
	WAX ($\varepsilon = 0.1$) LGBTeen ($\varepsilon = 0.2$)						MT-Bench ($\varepsilon=0.2$) Framing ($\varepsilon=0.15$) CEBaB-A ($\varepsilon=0$							= 0.1)	
	Acc	$\underline{\mathbf{WR}\ \omega}$	AP ρ	Acc	$\underline{\mathbf{WR}\ \omega}$	AP ρ	Acc	$\underline{\mathbf{WR}\ \omega}$	$AP \rho$	Acc	$\underline{\mathbf{WR}\ \omega}$	AP ρ	Acc	$\mathrm{WR}~\omega$	AP ρ
Gemini-Flash	0.38	0.38	0.69	0.54	0.25	0.71	0.62	0.0	0.72	0.69	1.0	0.83	0.88	0.7	0.91
Gemini-Pro	0.39	0.5	0.74	0.47	0.0	0.67	0.62	0.0	0.76	0.79	1.0	0.91	0.91	0.9	0.94
GPT-40	0.38	0.5	0.73	0.63	0.75	0.77	0.68	0.0	0.77	0.80	1.0	0.92	0.90	0.9	0.93
GPT-4o-mini	0.24	0.0	0.59	0.59	0.75	0.76	0.60	0.0	0.74	0.74	1.0	0.87	0.86	0.5	0.90
Llama-3.1	0.24	0.0	0.57	0.54	0.0	0.72	0.54	0.0	0.69	0.66	0.5	0.80	0.87	0.6	0.89
Mistral-v3	0.17	0.0	0.50	0.58	0.25	0.75	0.52	0.0	0.68	0.66	0.25	0.80	0.78	0.1	0.81
Continuous and 6 al Annotation T 7															
	Summ	Eval ($arepsilon$:			rompts ($\varepsilon = 0.15$)	CEB	$\mathbf{aB-S}$ (ε =	= 0.1)	Lesi	on ($\varepsilon=0$).15)	KiloC	Gram ($arepsilon$	= 0.1)
	Pears	$\underline{\mathbf{WR}\ \omega}$	AP ρ	Pears	$\underline{\mathbf{WR}\ \omega}$	AP $ ho$	Pears	$\mathrm{WR}~\omega$	$AP \rho$	Pears	$\underline{\mathbf{WR}\ \omega}$	$AP \rho$	Sim	$\underline{\mathbf{WR}\ \omega}$	AP ρ
Gemini-Flash	0.51	0.0	0.46	0.44	0.31	0.67	0.75	0.6	0.82	0.70	0.17	0.71	0.79	0.66	0.61
Gemini-Pro	0.47	0.0	0.44	0.33	0.08	0.63	0.78	0.8	0.87	0.73	1.0	0.81	0.77	0.08	0.43
GPT-4o	0.54	0.0	0.48	0.47	0.69	0.76	0.80	0.9	0.90	0.67	0.0	0.62	0.78	0.2	0.53
GPT-4o-mini	0.50	0.0	0.54	0.46	0.92	0.80	0.79	0.9	0.89	0.72	0.67	0.73	0.78	0.16	0.49
Llama-3.1	0.36	0.0	0.58	0.23	0.15	0.67	0.78	0.6	0.85	_	_	_	_	_	_
Mistral-v3	0.12	0.0	0.62	0.28	0.15	0.67	0.76	0.5	0.83	_	_	_	_	_	_

- On eight datasets, at least one LLM passes the alt-test (green cells).
- Closed-source LLMs outperform (the examined 7B) open-source LLMs.



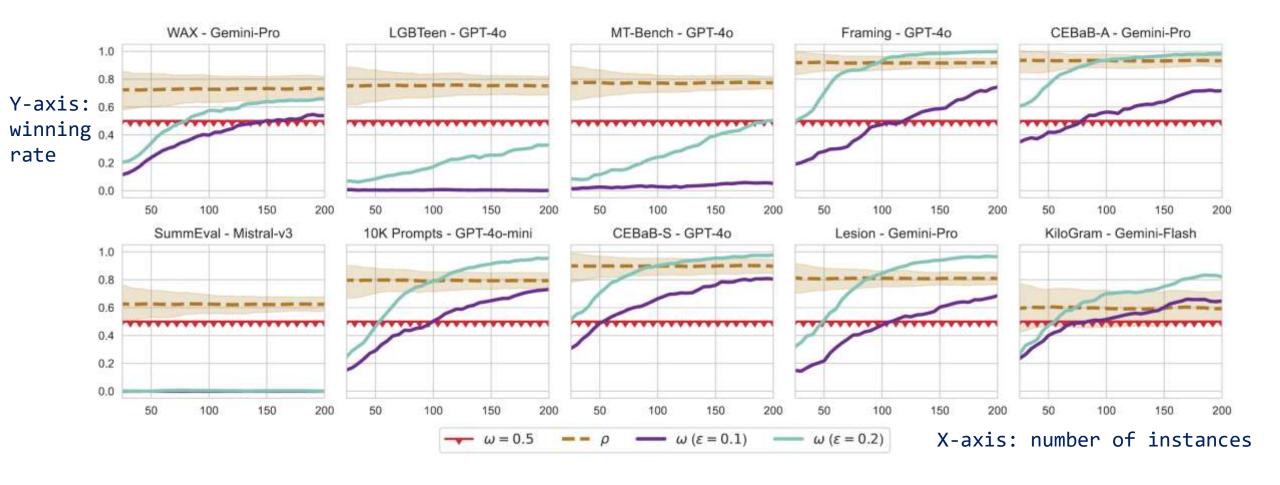
Results: Small subsets — ICL + CoT

	WAX ($\varepsilon = 0.1$)			LGBTeen ($\varepsilon = 0.2$)			MT-Bench ($\varepsilon = 0.2$)			SummEval ($\varepsilon = 0.2$)			10K Prompts ($\varepsilon = 0.15$)		
	Acc	WR ω	ΑΡ ρ	Acc	$WR \omega$	AP ρ	Acc	$WR \omega$	AP ρ	Pears	$WR \omega$	AP ρ	Pears	$WR \omega$	AP ρ
Gemini-Flash	0.37	0.08	0.66	0.55	0.02	0.74	0.63	0.0	0.72	0.47	0.0	0.48	0.36	0.09	0.66
+ 4-shots	0.41	0.19	0.70	0.66	0.61	0.83	0.61	0.0	0.73	0.60	0.41	0.76	0.40	0.58	0.76
+ CoT	0.38	0.09	0.69	0.47	0.0	0.70	0.63	0.01	0.76	0.47	0.0	0.46	0.37	0.01	0.61
Gemini-Pro	0.40	0.15	0.70	0.50	0.0	0.69	0.62	0.01	0.76	0.42	0.0	0.43	0.28	0.01	0.61
+ 4-shots	0.39	0.17	0.69	0.55	0.04	0.73	0.63	0.03	0.77	0.57	0.59	0.77	0.24	0.0	0.60
+ CoT	0.36	0.09	0.68	0.48	0.0	0.70	0.58	0.0	0.76	0.49	0.0	0.56	0.32	0.01	0.64
GPT-4o	0.37	0.17	0.69	0.65	0.55	0.82	0.69	0.16	0.78	0.52	0.0	0.49	0.41	0.27	0.73
+ 4-shots	0.39	0.15	0.69	0.55	0.03	0.75	0.66	0.13	0.78	0.58	0.28	0.74	0.38	0.16	0.72
+ CoT	0.37	0.11	0.70	0.65	0.43	0.81	0.65	0.4	0.79	0.58	0.03	0.67	0.37	0.43	0.74
GPT-40-mini	0.27	0.0	0.59	0.59	0.1	0.78	0.60	0.0	0.73	0.49	0.0	0.53	0.36	0.48	0.76
+ 4-shots	0.30	0.01	0.62	0.60	0.12	0.77	0.61	0.0	0.74	0.60	0.77	0.79	0.42	0.74	0.78
+ CoT	0.33	0.0	0.66	0.57	0.06	0.75	0.59	0.0	0.72	0.56	0.0	0.60	0.32	0.44	0.74
Ens. Geminis	0.42	0.21	0.71	0.56	0.11	0.77	0.66	0.03	0.76	0.48	0.0	0.55	0.33	0.06	0.67
Ens. GPTs	0.38	0.05	0.67	0.61	0.19	0.79	0.60	0.0	0.73	0.58	0.04	0.66	0.39	0.64	0.77
Ens. All	0.44	0.24	0.73	0.63	0.37	0.80	0.61	0.01	0.74	0.58	0.02	0.66	0.39	0.41	0.74

- Few-shot improves LLM-as-a-judge (LLMs now pass the alt-test for SummEval)
- Chain-of-Thoughts and Ensembles only sometimes.



Results: The number of instances

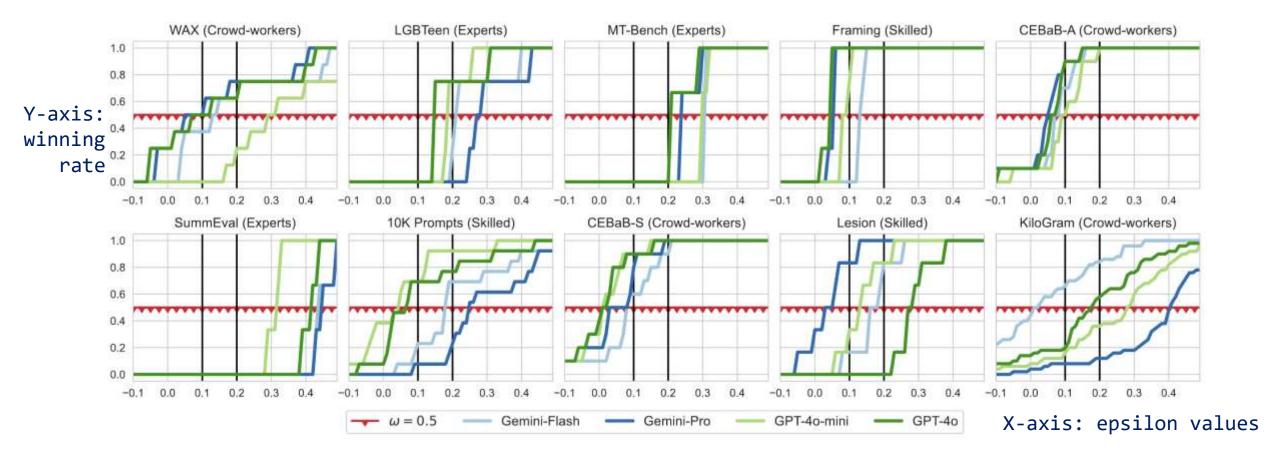






Results: How to select ε

$$egin{cases} H_{null}:
ho_j^f \leq
ho_j^h - arepsilon \ H_{alt}:
ho_j^f >
ho_j^h - arepsilon \end{cases}$$



- The **effective range** is between 0.05 and 0.3
- Our recommendations: experts 0.2, skilled 0.15, workers 0.1



Benchmarking against A Single Human Expert

- Expert annotations are limited and expensive often, only one expert is available, and they annotate a small portion of the data.
- Question: Should a non-expert continue to annotate the rest of the data or an LLM?
- Adjustment Compare how well the LLM aligns with the expert vs. how well non-experts align with the expert.
 - Calculate $S(f, x_i, exp)$ instead of $S(f, x_i, j)$.
 - Compare LLM's score against each non-expert's score, using the same aggregation methods for final comparison.



"Suddenly, Everyone's an Expert"

 Subjective annotation tasks often lack a single ground truth and may reflect diverse perspectives, especially from marginalized or underrepresented groups.

 When every human is an expert and disagreements are expected, how can we decide if an LLM is a good annotator?

Is this tweet funny? - No universal ground truth - Personal perspectives - Disagreements are expected and meaningful Is this sentence embarrassing?



Subjective Annotations with LLMs

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Subjective Tasks Require Evaluating Annotators Differently

- Instead of forcing consensus, we should
 - Model annotators as sources of personalized signals (Basile et al., 2021; Gordon et al., 2022; Mostafazadeh et al., 2022)
 - Consider score distributions instead of a single score (Dror et al., 2019; Uma et al., 2021)
- How can we judge a single annotator?
 - Self-consistency: Does the annotator make similar judgments across similar items?
 - Relative reliability: Does the annotator's bias (disagreement) with respect to the other annotators remain constant across all examples?



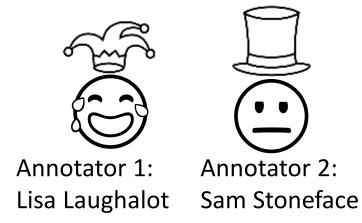
Measuring Reliability – What is a good disagreement?

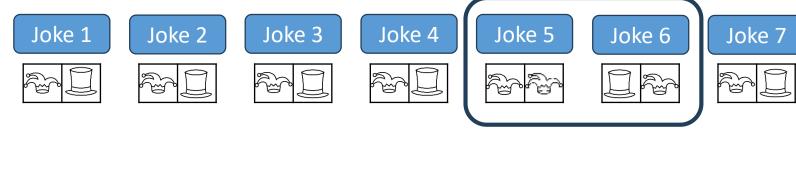
Meet our annotators:

to see if they are funny or not:

| loke 2 | loke 3 | loke 4 | loke 5 | loke 6 | lok

We gave them some jokes to annotate





Joke 5 Agreement – this joke must be hilarious!

Joke 6 Disagreement – the bad type of it

Disagreement is problematic if it defies an expected pattern



From Intuition to Methodology

- We developed a new metric that evaluates annotator consistency rather than raw agreement.
- It accounts for individual labeling tendencies and expected patterns of disagreement.

The full method will be detailed in an upcoming paper currently in preparation — stay tuned!



16 real-world datasets.

Each instance is annotated by multiple annotators.

Experiments - Datasets

Nominal and ordinal annotation tasks.

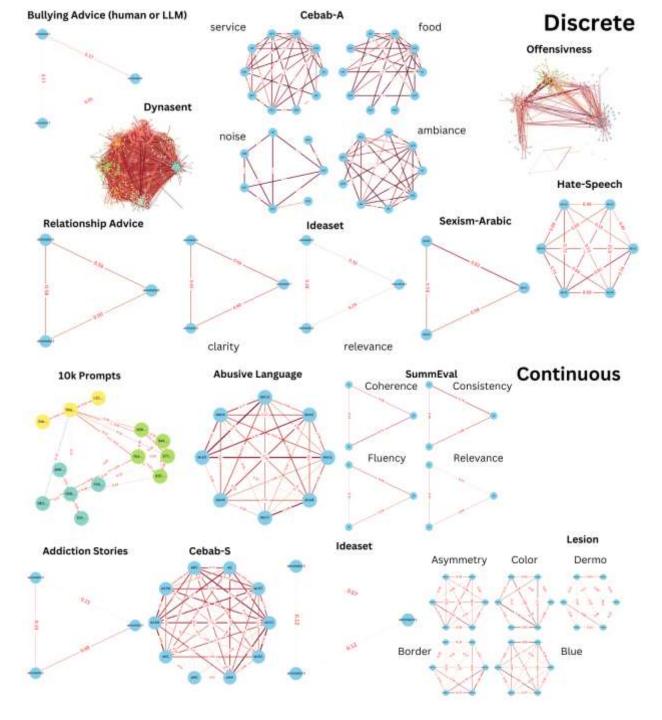
Different number of Annotators/instances/categories

Annotator types: crowd-workers, skilled, experts indicates LLM annotator

Nominal Annotation Tasks											
Dataset	Anns	Items	Cats	Asp.	IpA	ApI	Agree	Fleiss's κ	Task Description		
Relationship Advice	3 S	480	6	1	452.7	2.83	0.7	0.54	Identify relationship advice type		
Dynasent	1063 C	101,659	4	1	469.45	4.9	-	0.33	Determine the sentiment of a text		
Bullying Advice	3 S	255	2	1	253	2.97	-	0.14	Determine if a comment was written by a human or an LLM		
Ideaset-RC	3 S	300	2	2	300	3	0.82	0.3	Determine if an idea is clear and relevant		
©CEBaB-A	10 C	940	3	4	105	3.96	0.85	0.61	Determine the sentiment of restaurant reviews		
Sexism-Arabic	3 E	943	2	1	943	3	0.77	0.53	Determine if a tweet contains sexist content		
Hate-Speech	6 E	1120	2	1	1120	6	0.85	0.35	Determine if a tweet contains hate speech		
Offensiveness	312 C	10736	2	1	152.9	4.45	0.72	0.36	Determine if a tweet contains offensive dialogue		
Ordinal Annotation Tasks											
Dataset	Anns	Items	Scale	Asp.	IpA	ApI	MAE	Pearson	Task Description		
@SummEval	3 E	1600	1-5	4	1600	3.00	0.52	0.71	Rate model-generated summaries on four aspects		
20k Prompts	13 S	1698	1-5	1	296	2.26	0.91	0.31	Rate the quality of synthetic and human-written prompts		
©CEBaB-S	10 C	711	1-5	1	219	3.08	0.67	0.67	Identify the star rating given in restaurant reviews		
Lesion	6 S	100	1-6	5	99.3	5.96	0.44	0.5	Score melanoma-related features based on lesion images		
Addiction Stories	3 S	251	1-5	1	251	3	0.68	0.68	Rate how dangerous an addiction described in Reddit post		
Ideaset-C	3 S	300	1-7	1	300	3	1.51	0.28	Rate the creativity of an idea		
Abusive-Language	8 S	4050	-3 - 1	1	1521	3	0.3	0.79	Rate dialogue abusiveness between a user and an agent		
@Sarcasm	632 C	5225	1-6	1	35	4.2	1.36	0.4	Rate how sarcastic a response is given a context story		



Consistency among Human Annotators





LLM Personas

- We can judge if an LLM is a good annotator in subjective tasks by detecting problematic disagreements.
- But first, we want to teach the LLM how to imitate a persona. We experimented with 3 methods to create personas:
 - In context demonstrations of real annotations (few-shot)
 - A description of the persona (implicit)
 - Demographic features of the persona (explicit)



Example Prompts

You will receive a tweet discussing Black Lives Matter protests. Your task is to classify the tweet as either **"offensive"** or **"normal"** based solely on the language used—avoid letting personal opinions influence your judgment, and do not explain your choice.

Demographic Profile

To simulate a realistic judgment, you will assume the following persona:

Gender: [Gender]

Ethnicity: [Ethnicity]

Age: [Age]

Political Alignment: [Political]

Profession: [Profession]

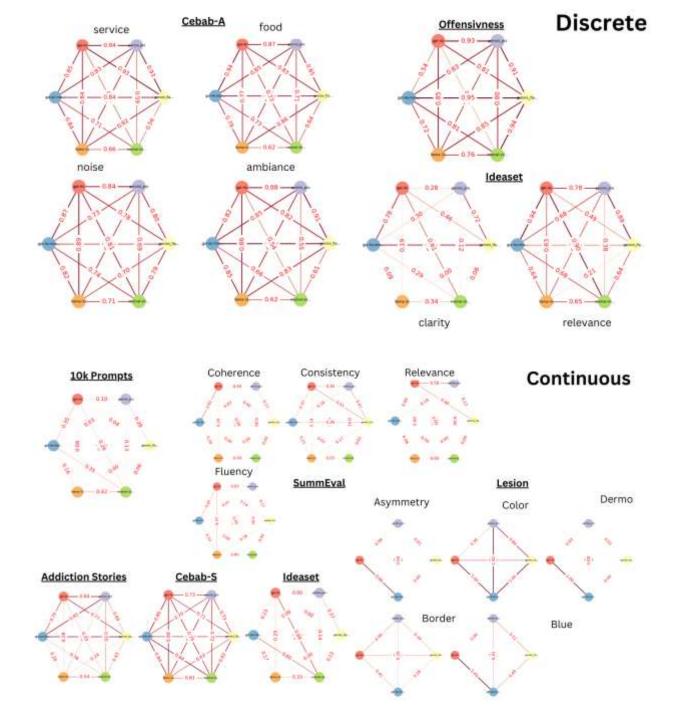
Religion: [Religion]

You will receive a tweet discussing Black Lives Matter protests. Your task is to classify the tweet as either **"offensive"** or **"normal"**, based solely on explicit language.

You assume the role of a social justice activist who believes that even coded language or implicit bias can be harmful. You are highly attuned to offensive language, even if it does not include direct slurs.

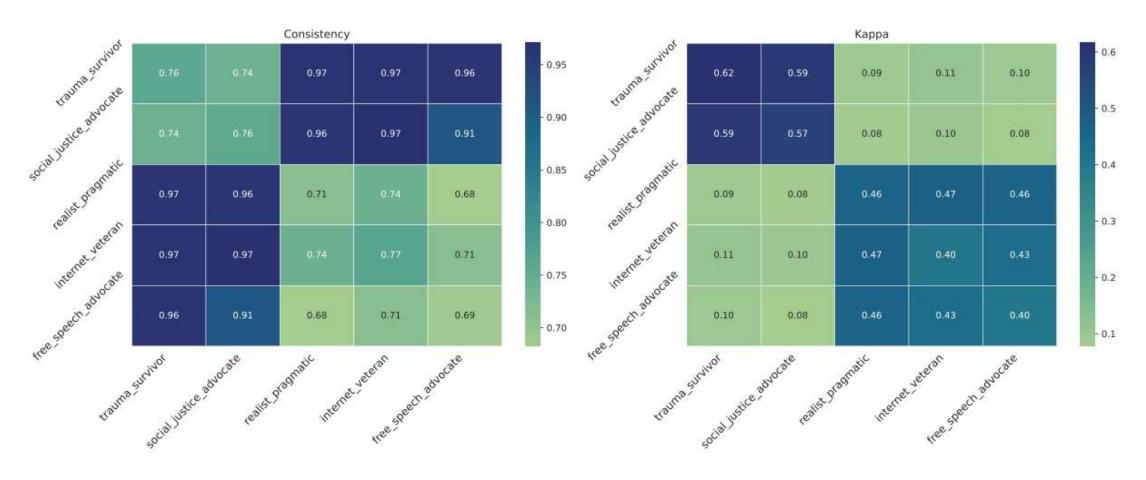


Consistency among LLM Annotators





Results on Offensiveness Dataset





Conclusions

- LLMs are changing the role of human annotation but not eliminating it.
- We still need humans, especially for supervision, subjective judgment, and high-quality calibration.
- Evaluating annotators (human or LLM) requires different strategies depending on the task:
 - Objective tasks: focus on agreement.
 - Subjective tasks: focus on consistency and expected behavior.
- Our proposed consistency metric offers a new way to judge annotators in subjective contexts.







- LLMs can augment or even replace human annotators if we evaluate them rigorously.
- Ongoing work focuses on refining these metrics and understanding when LLMs are trustworthy annotators.



Questions, thoughts, or jokes you want us to evaluate?