National Predictors of Attitudes Toward Artificial Intelligence:

A Cross-Cultural Analysis

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Abstract

This study explores national-level predictors of attitudes toward Artificial Intelligence (AI) in 31 countries using data from Stanford's 2024 AI Index Report. We began with 16 socioeconomic and cultural predictors (e.g., GDP per capita, gender inequality index, and global freedom index) and applied Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) screening to address multicollinearity, followed by stepwise regression to refine the models. After these procedures, five to six predictors were retained for each of three outcome measures: positive attitudes toward AI, nervousness about AI, and self-assessed AI knowledge. Results show that countries with higher levels of individualism, freedom, and GDP per capita express fewer positive perceptions of AI, suggesting a paradox where technological advancement may foster greater skepticism. At the same time, countries with greater internet penetration display higher AI nervousness. Interestingly, the analyses also reveal societies that are more individualistic report lower self-assessed AI knowledge. These findings show that cultural, societal, and political factors can jointly predict citizen attitudes toward AI. The results also suggest that policy interventions should be tailored to national cultures to address concerns about emerging technologies.

Keywords: Artificial intelligence attitudes, Cross-cultural analysis, AI perception, Individualism

Introduction

Artificial intelligence (AI) has been fundamentally altering everyday life in the recent few years. Its inception, however, dates to the mid-20th century in Dartmouth. McCarthy et al. (1955/2006) provided the foundational definition of AI as the "science and engineering of making intelligence machines." More recent conceptualizations frame AI in functional terms, and researchers have highlighted the potential for AI to profoundly transform consumer and organizational experiences (Furman & Seamans, 2019; Puntoni et al., 2020). The evolution of AI from an abstract concept into a powerful force in modern life suggests that its integration is continually increasing.

While these technological capabilities continue to expand, attitudes toward these systems may change across global contexts. Evidence suggests that AI adoption varies significantly between countries. For example, adoption rates among companies range from 26-33% in France or Spain, compared to higher rates of 50-59% in India, Singapore, and China (IBM, 2023). There are also differences in individual-level attitudes, with citizens of emerging countries expressing more trust and optimistic views of AI's impact. Gillespie et al. (2023) found that 61% of respondents from 17 countries showed wariness in trusting AI, with people in emerging countries having the highest levels of trust. Some reasons for distrust involve cybersecurity risks and other ethical concerns (Gillespie et al., 2023).

Interestingly, people of these countries were also more likely to express greater knowledge of AI than those in developed countries (Ipsos, 2022). Kelley et al. (2021) characterizes public attitudes toward AI in four themes: exciting, useful, worrying, and futuristic, showing significant differences between selected countries. Demographic factors, such as gender and age, have also been shown to modulate optimism toward AI (Grassini & Ree, 2023; Gillespie et al., 2023). These variations show how factors beyond exposure shape how populations interpret and respond to AI.

Cultural differences appear to be a significant factor in shaping these perceptions, with studies pointing to deeper historical, societal, or philosophical reasons. For example, greater optimism in China and ambivalence from other countries like Germany and the United States could be due to its individualistic culture (Brauner et al., 2024; Dang & Liu, 2021). Individualist cultures may be more likely to perceive AI as external and potentially threatening to individual autonomy, while collectivist cultures are more likely to incorporate AI as some kind of shared sense of identity (Barnes et al., 2024; Yam et al., 2023; Folk et al., 2025).

These differences in AI perception could also be shaped by each nation's priorities. Western societies often focus on the impact of AI on issues like privacy and bias, while non-Western societies emphasize its influence on economic growth, technological leadership, and governance (Frimpong, 2024; Neudert et al., 2020). Some countries in Africa and Latin America may also have fears of AI because of significant historical events, like being subject to colonial influence (Frimpong, 2024).

Beyond cultural values, psychological differences can also impact AI acceptance. Minton et al. (2022) found evidence for religiosity being a causal factor in positive evaluations of AI-driven brands. There is also evidence that a higher power (e.g., God) increased acceptance of AI-based recommendations, possibly because the contemplation primes openness to powerful, external decision-makers (Karataş & Cutright, 2023). Similarly, intergroup threat theory has been used to explain rejection of AI in domains like healthcare, where AI systems may be perceived as an invasive out-group (Zhou et al., 2022).

How individuals frame the role of AI, like for augmentation or for replacement, also impacts their attitudes. Dégallier-Rochat et al. (2022) argue that framing AI as a complement to humans may reduce psychological threat and increase trust, especially in collectivist environments where integration of technology into the self is more culturally accepted. On

the individual level, personality traits and psychological needs are relevant as well. AI anxiety, agreeableness, and lower knowledge predicted negative attitudes, while greater computer literacy and openness predicted positive ones (Kaya et al., 2022). Bergdahl et al. (2023) found that fulfillment of basic psychological needs such as autonomy and relatedness predicted favorable AI attitudes across Europe.

AI acceptance varies further by the reasons for application. In sensitive domains like healthcare, patients are often reluctant to accept AI-based diagnostic tools (Zhou et al., 2022; Wiegel & Mettini, 2024). In the workplace, resistance to AI-led human resources systems is higher in Western societies than in technologically progressive Eastern counterparts (Mantello et al., 2023). Similar differences appear in the realm of AI weaponization, where cultural narratives in Japan and India differ markedly from those in France and the United States (Bode et al., 2024).

Despite these insights, the literature reveals several gaps. Many studies are either region-specific or narrowly focused on cultural dimensions like individualism and collectivism. Systematic cross-national comparisons that incorporate a wider array of national indicators are also limited in scope (Akter, 2024). For instance, although GDP per capita is often mentioned as a form of national development, few studies examine how it relates to other factors such as inequality (Gini Index), political freedom (Global Freedom Index), or technological access (Internet Penetration). Moreover, cultural dimensions such as indulgence versus restraint, uncertainty avoidance, and power distance are underexplored in this context (Barnes et al., 2024; Zahid & Mukhtar, 2024). Researchers have also pointed to significant Western bias in AI research and ethics frameworks, which may limit their global applicability (Peters & Carman, 2024).

To address these gaps, the present study examines how a range of national-level factors jointly predict societal attitudes toward AI. By integrating economic, cultural,

demographic, and technological dimensions into unified models, this research moves beyond single-factor explanations and toward a more holistic understanding of AI acceptance across nations. This study contributes to the growing field of AI perception research by identifying the conditions under which AI is welcomed or contested. It also offers practical implications for governments, technology firms, and international organizations seeking to foster culturally sensitive AI policies.

Method

Data

Public opinion data on attitudes toward AI were obtained from the 2024 Stanford AI Index Report (Maslej et al., 2024), which organized data originally collected by Ipsos (Ipsos, 2023). There were 31 countries surveyed, and three composite dependent variables were created: positive perceptions of AI, nervousness about AI, and self-reported knowledge of AI. Specific survey prompts and item compositions are provided in Table 1. A map of the countries involved is shown in Figure 1.

Independent variables were collected from various publicly available datasets. An initial set of 16 national-level predictors were selected based on previous literature and theoretical relevance. These predictors are detailed and categorized into socio-cultural, economic, and political variables in Table 2. Two variables, internet freedom and literacy rate, were excluded due to substantial missing data. A link to the data and code used for analyses can be found here: doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/P3SXN.

Transforming Variables and Missing Data

Predictor variables were assessed for skewness using the moments package in R (Komsta & Novomestky, 2022). Variables with substantial skewness, defined by an absolute skewness greater than one, were transformed prior to further analysis. Unemployment rate

and the Gini Index variables (skewness > 1) were log-transformed with log(x+1). There were no highly left-skewed variables (skewness < -1). Variables with moderate skewness were

Table 1

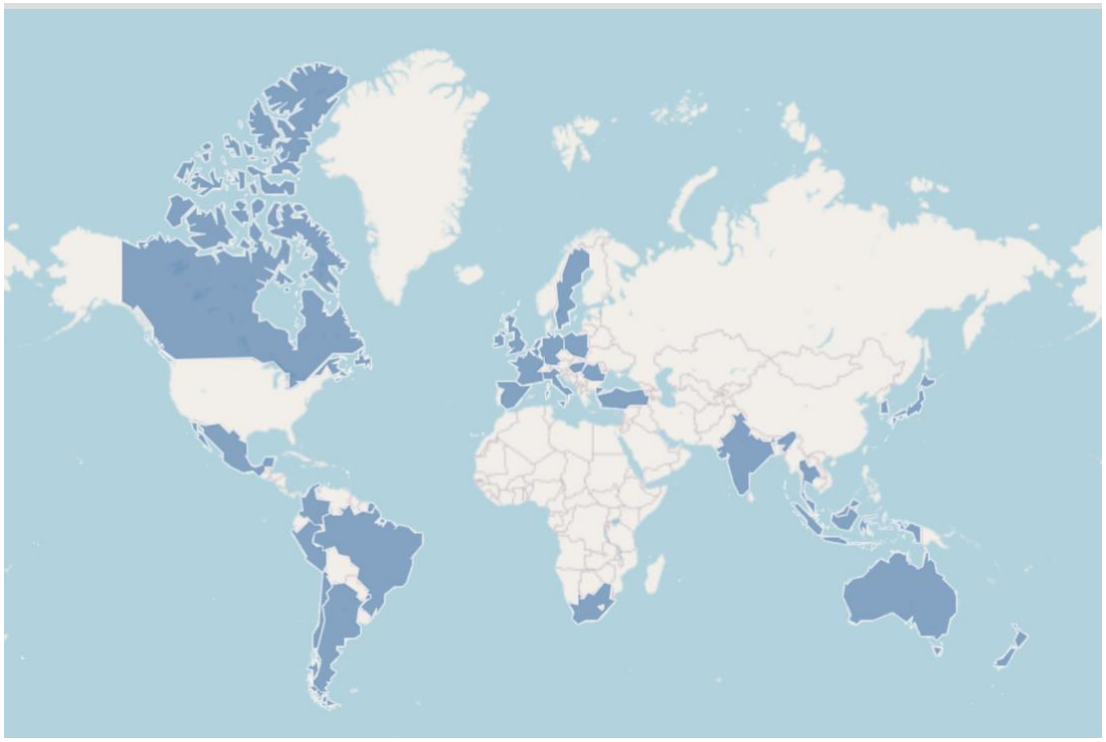
List of Prompts and Categories

Positive	Negative	Knowledge
"Products and services using artificial intelligence will profoundly change my daily life in the next 3-5 years" "I trust artificial intelligence to not discriminate or show bias towards any group of people" "Products and services using artificial intelligence have more benefits than drawbacks" "Products and services using artificial intelligence make me excited" "I trust companies that use artificial intelligence as much as I trust other companies" "I trust that companies that use artificial intelligence will protect my personal data" "Products and services using artificial intelligence have profoundly changed my daily life in the past 3-5 years" The Potential of AI to improve: • "The amount of time it takes me to get things done" • "My entertainment options" • "My health" • "My job" • "The economy in my country" • "The job market"	"Products and services using artificial intelligence make me nervous"	"I have a good understanding of what artificial intelligence is" "I know which types of products and services use artificial intelligence"

Note. Prompts and data are from Stanford's AI Index, 2024 (Maslej et al., 2024)

Figure 1

Countries Surveyed in the Dataset



Note. Shaded regions represent the countries represented in the dataset.

retained without transformation. These transformations aimed to satisfy assumptions of linear modeling in the predictors.

Missing data was addressed using predictive mean matching (PMM) multiple imputation with 10 imputed datasets. Only a small proportion of the data was missing, with at most two countries missing values on a variable out of 31 total countries. Variables with missing values included the Gini Index (two missing), internet penetration (one missing), uncertainty avoidance (one missing), and trust (two missing). Descriptive statistics can be found in Table 3.

Table 2

List of Predictor Variables in the Initial Analysis

Socio-cultural	Economic	Political/Demographic
Gender Inequality (UNDP, 2024)	AI Readiness (Oxford Insights, 2024)	Corruption Perceptions (Transparency International, 2024)
Internet Freedom (Freedom House, 2025)	GDP per Capita (World Bank Group, 2023)	Global Freedom (Freedom House, 2025)
Hofstede's Individualism (Hofstede Insights, 2015)	Human Development (UNDP, 2024)	Internet Penetration (World Bank Group, 2022)
Hofstede's Uncertainty Avoidance (Hofstede Insights, 2015)	Global Innovation (WIPO, 2023)	Literacy Rate (World Bank Group, 2024)
Hofstede's Indulgence vs. Restraint (Hofstede Insights, 2015)	Gini Index (World Bank Group, 2024)	Median Age (CIA, 2024)
Trust (WVS, 2022)	Unemployment Rate (CIA, 2023)	Urbanization (World Bank Group, 2023)

Note. Trust represents the share of people agreeing with the statement "most people can be trusted," based on data from the World Values Survey. The Gini Index and Literacy Rate reflects the most recent available year for each country.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics for All Variables Pre-Imputation

Variable	Missing	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Outcome Variables:					
Positive Score	0 (0%)	0.48	0.11	0.34	0.70
Knowledge Score	0 (0%)	0.59	0.10	0.41	0.80
Nervousness Score	0 (0%)	0.52	0.09	0.23	0.69
Predictor Variables:					
AI Readiness	0 (0%)	69.16	9.18	52.91	87.03
Corruption Perceptions	0 (0%)	56.45	18.27	26.00	84.00
GDP per Capita (USD)	0 (0%)	34,789	26,987	2,481	103,888
Gender Inequality	0 (0%)	0.18	0.14	0.02	0.44
Gini Index	2 (6.5%)	36.83	8.59	25.70	63.00
Global Freedom	0 (0%)	78.74	19.26	33.00	99.00
Human Development	0 (0%)	0.87	0.09	0.64	0.95
Individualism	0 (0%)	52.26	26.13	13.00	91.00
Indulgence v. Restraint	0 (0%)	53.90	18.78	20.00	97.00
Innovation Index	0 (0%)	45.01	12.02	27.70	64.22
Internet Penetration	1 (3.2%)	88.00	8.18	66.49	97.40
Median Age	0 (0%)	39.17	5.92	29.80	49.90
Trust	2 (6.5%)	28.24	16.76	4.00	63.00
Uncertainty Avoidance	1 (3.2%)	65.73	23.77	8.00	94.00
Unemployment Rate	0 (0%)	5.91	4.82	0.91	28.00
Urbanization	0 (0%)	77.93	14.36	36.36	100.00

Note. All scores and indices are on their original scales. Missing values were later handled using multiple imputation. See Table 2 for the sources of these variables.

Multicollinearity and Standardization

To prevent multicollinearity, Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) diagnostics were conducted. Predictors with VIF values exceeding 10 were removed one by one. Human Development Index (VIF = 32), Corruption Perceptions Index (VIF = 16.8), Gender Inequality Index (VIF = 14.88), and Global Innovation Index (VIF = 13.6) were the four variables with VIFs over 10. After all these removals, the remaining predictors had VIF values below the threshold of 10.

All variables were standardized using pooled means and standard deviations calculated across all 10 imputed datasets. The same pooled mean and standard deviations for each variable were applied across imputed datasets for consistency.

Variable Selection

Given the limited number of countries in the sample (n=31), approximately five predictors were retained for each regression to balance model complexity and prevent overfitting. To select predictors, stepwise regression based on Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) was conducted independently using the stepAIC function with the MASS package in R (Ripley et al., 2025).

For the positive AI perceptions outcome, six predictors were consistently selected across all 10 datasets. For the AI knowledge outcome, two predictors appeared in all datasets, while three predictors were in five datasets. The nervousness of AI outcome had three predictors in all 10 datasets, with two more in at least eight datasets. These variables were used for the final regression on all imputed datasets with pooled coefficients to conclude the analysis.

Results

Three multiple regression analyses were conducted, predicting positive AI opinion, nervousness about AI, and knowledge of AI. Standardized coefficients (β), standard errors, and significance levels are reported in Table 4.

Table 4

Multiple Regression Results: Predicting AI Public Opinion

Predictor	Positive Score (SE)	Nervous Score (SE)	Knowledge Score (SE)
AI Readiness Index	-0.18 (0.10)	—	—
GDP per Capita	-0.23** (0.11)	—	-0.30 (0.15)
Gini Index	0.08 (0.11)	—	—
Global Freedom Index	-0.39*** (0.08)	—	-0.26 (0.14)
Individualism Index	-0.35*** (0.09)	0.16 (0.14)	-0.43*** (0.14)
Indulgence v. Restraint	—	0.49*** (0.16)	—
Internet Penetration	—	0.38** (0.17)	—
Uncertainty Avoidance	-0.22*** (0.08)	-0.34** (0.14)	-0.16 (0.12)
Urbanization	—	-0.53*** (0.17)	-0.13 (0.11)

Note. ***$p < .01$, **$p < .05$, *$p < .1$

The regression model predicting positive opinions on AI was statistically significant, $F(5,25) = 98.76$; $p < .001$; $R^2 = .92$. Four of the six predictors were significant, with the results suggesting that developed countries are more skeptical about AI benefits. More individualistic societies expressed fewer positive attitudes toward AI ($\beta = -0.35$, SE = 0.09, $p < .01$). GDP per capita was also negatively associated ($\beta = -0.23$, SE = 0.11, $p = .05$). Overall, the results show that countries with greater freedom, wealth, and higher risk aversion (i.e., uncertainty avoidance) tend to have less positive opinions about AI.

The model predicting nervousness about AI was also statistically significant, $F(5,25) = 9.92$; $p < .001$; $R^2 = .61$. Indulgent countries showed higher nervousness about AI ($\beta = 0.49$, SE = 0.16, $p < .01$). Greater internet penetration also predicted higher nervousness about AI ($\beta = 0.38$, SE = 0.16, $p = .03$). Overall, the results indicate that societies exposed to the internet experience more AI-related anxiety, whereas more urbanized populations and those with higher uncertainty avoidance are less concerned.

The model predicting knowledge about AI was statistically significant, $F(5,25) = 61.36$; $p < .001$; $R^2 = .77$. Higher individualism was associated with less knowledge about AI ($\beta = -0.43$, $p < .01$). Although GDP per capita and global freedom showed negative coefficients, they did not reach significance. These findings show that countries with high individualism may paradoxically report lower awareness about AI.

Discussion

This study aimed to identify national-level predictors of public attitudes toward AI across 31 countries. We find that cross-cultural differences in optimism, anxiety, and self-perceived knowledge of AI are predicted by cultural values, political freedoms, and exposure to digital technology.

First, we replicate prior findings and show that individualistic and economically developed countries express less positive views of AI. These results align with earlier work that suggest personal autonomy may conflict with the perceived role of AI (Dang & Liu, 2021; Yam et al., 2023), and developed societies focus more on AI's risks than benefits (Frimpong, 2024).

Second, we contribute to the literature about exposure to AI. Higher levels of internet penetration are associated with increased nervousness about AI, even after controlling for some economic and cultural factors. Highly technological societies might be more frequently exposed to concerning AI narratives, which may potentially amplify anxiety. Deeper digital exposure may play an important role in shaping public opinions of nervousness.

Third, perceived AI knowledge was negatively associated with individualism, suggesting that individualistic societies are less confident in AI. This may reflect a greater limit of one's knowledge and indirectly a greater uncertainty about this new complex technology.

Limitations in this study include a small country sample with cross-sectional data and the possibility of unmeasured confounders. Due to model limitations, we were only able to incorporate a few covariates through methods like stepwise regression. Other variables that have data collected were not able to be included in the model to examine its correlations with the outcomes. Future studies could use panel data or experimental interventions to clarify causal mechanisms, both at the country and individual level of AI perception.

Conclusion

This cross-national analysis demonstrates how attitudes toward AI are not shaped by any single economic or cultural factor, but by a combination of national characteristics at work. Countries scoring higher on individualism, wealth, freedom, and uncertainty avoidance

were less enthusiastic about the benefits of AI. Individualistic countries are also more cautious of their self-assessed knowledge, yet no less anxious than more collectivistic cultures. At the same time, greater exposure to the internet was associated with greater nervousness about AI. Practically, these findings call for AI governance that acknowledges societal values. Policymakers in highly individualistic societies may require emphasis on personal autonomy to counteract skepticism. In digitally literate societies, anxiety-reducing methods could help deal with fears around these innovative technologies.

Future research should incorporate a greater number of countries to decrease omitted variable biases due to model constraints. The stepwise approach, while suitable for sample size limitations, excludes potentially relevant predictors. Researchers could test the robustness of these findings by alternative variable-selection techniques. Through integrating societal, economic, and psychological values, we move closer to explaining why societies differ in their hopes and fears about AI, and how policies can be created in light of these local concerns.

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