/edge
AMERICAN EDGE PROJECT

MEMORANDUM

TO: Interested Parties
FROM: American Edge Project (AEP)
RE: Voters Are Optimistic About the Potential of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Think Open-Source AI Could Help Protect Against Threats from China
DATE: May 2025

New Poll: Most Voters Want to Ensure There Is Room for Open-Source AI. Many Think It Could Help Protect the U.S.'s National Security, Values, and Competitive Edge Over China.

As innovations in AI continue to progress, a new poll finds that nationwide voters support open-source AI. Voters – especially those who make up Trump's base – are worried about the threats China and its AI technologies pose to the U.S. Most see open-source AI as a way to help protect the U.S.'s national security, prevent censorship and surveillance, and ensure the U.S. maintains its competitive edge over China.
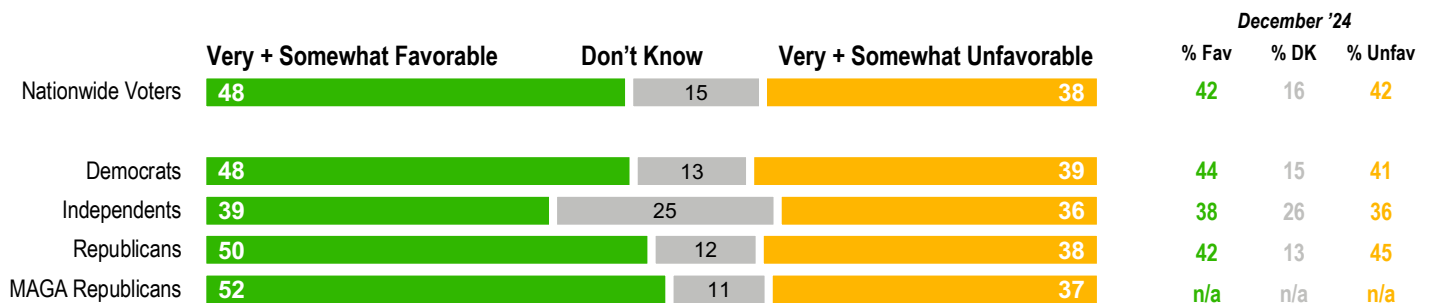
Doug Kelly, AEP CEO, said, **"People across the country and political aisle increasingly understand the pivotal role that artificial intelligence leadership will play in the race for global tech domination. As China strategically positions itself to overtake the U.S. in this race, we need a full-scale innovation strategy that ensures America leads on all its battlefronts, including open-source AI."**

This survey, conducted by Mercury Analytics, was fielded between April 10 and 15, 2025 among 2,000 nationwide registered voters. It is a continuation of similar research conducted late last year, in which Mercury Analytics surveyed 1,508 nationwide registered voters between December 2 and 9, 2024.

Key findings of this research include:

- **As voters become more familiar with AI, their perceptions of it improve.** Compared to data from Mercury Analytics' December 2024 survey, familiarity with AI is slightly growing along with positive perceptions of AI, especially among Republicans.
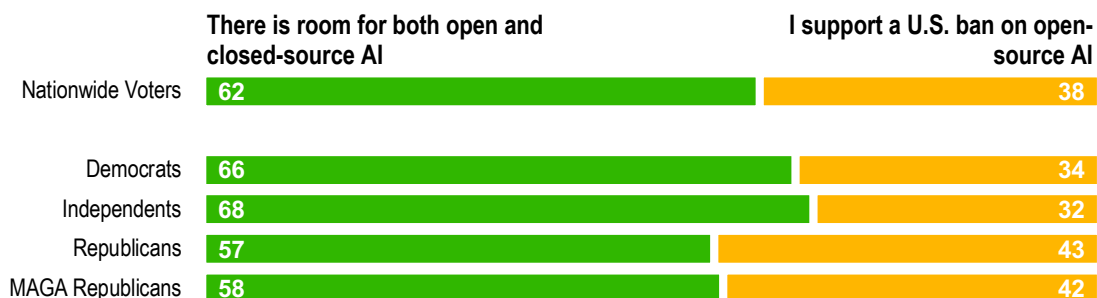
    Question: How favorable or unfavorable do you feel toward artificial intelligence (AI)?

	Very + Somewhat Favorable	Don't Know	Very + Somewhat Unfavorable	December '24 % Fav	% DK	% Unfav
Nationwide Voters	48	15	38	42	16	42
Democrats	48	13	39	44	15	41
Independents	39	25	36	38	26	36
Republicans	50	12	38	42	13	45
MAGA Republicans	52	11	37	n/a	n/a	n/a

    Note: MAGA Republicans are defined as Republican voters who consider themselves supporters of the MAGA movement.

- **Voters think the U.S. should make space for innovations in both open and closed-source AI.** When given the choice between a ban on open-source AI vs. making space for both open and closed-source AI, a majority of voters – including 68% of independents – support making room for both.

Question: Which of the following statements do you agree with most?

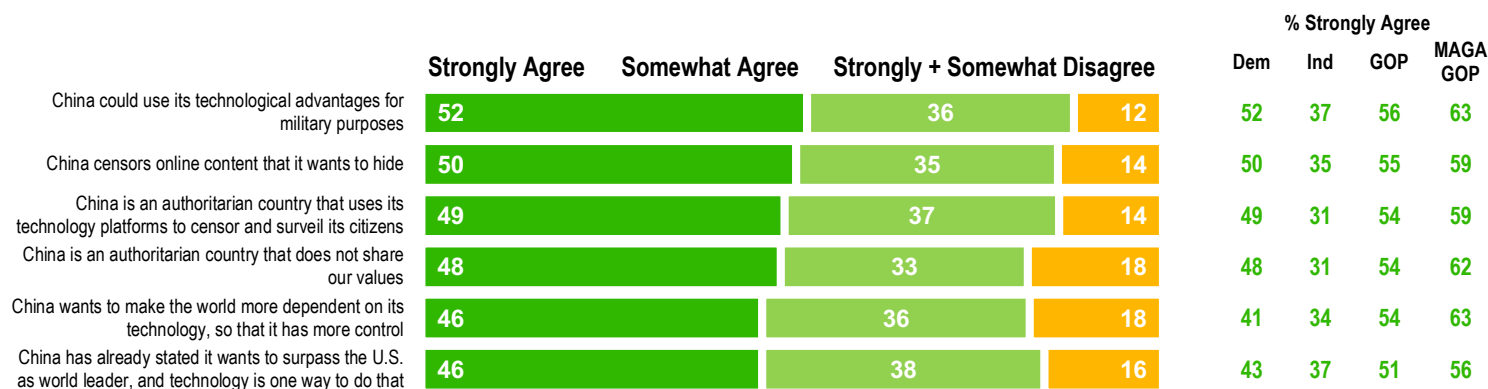|	There is room for both open and closed-source AI	I support a U.S. ban on open-source AI
Nationwide Voters	62	38
Democrats	66	34
Independents	68	32
Republicans	57	43
MAGA Republicans	58	42

- **Voters on both sides of the aisle are worried about China's AI, fearing it could use its technology to censor information and for military and economic dominance.** The vast majority of nationwide voters – especially voters who make up Trump's base – are worried about the potential China has to become a global leader in AI. Specifically, they worry that if China does become a global leader in AI, it could have dangerous repercussions for the U.S.'s national security, enable censorship and surveillance, and give China a competitive economic advantage.

Question: How worried are you about China becoming a global leader in AI?

	Very + Somewhat Worried	Not That + Not Worried at All
Nationwide Voters	67	33
Democrats	66	34
Independents	57	43
Republicans	69	31
MAGA Republicans	73	27

Question: Here is a list of reasons some people say they are worried about China becoming a global leader in AI. How much do you agree or disagree with each statement?

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly + Somewhat Disagree	% Strongly Agree Dem	Ind	GOP	MAGA GOP
China could use its technological advantages for military purposes	52	36	12	52	37	56	63
China censors online content that it wants to hide	50	35	14	50	35	55	59
China is an authoritarian country that uses its technology platforms to censor and surveil its citizens	49	37	14	49	31	54	59
China is an authoritarian country that does not share our values	48	33	18	48	31	54	62
China wants to make the world more dependent on its technology, so that it has more control	46	36	18	41	34	54	63
China has already stated it wants to surpass the U.S. as world leader, and technology is one way to do that	46	38	16	43	37	51	56

- **Voters see open-source AI as a way to protect the U.S.'s national security, free speech, and competitive edge over China.** Nationwide, more than two-thirds of voters agree that open-source AI supports the U.S.'s national security and military, aligns with core values (e.g., free speech and an open internet), and helps ensure the U.S. is able to compete with China on a level playing field.

Question: Please indicate how compelling each is as a reason to support open-source AI systems.

	Very + Somewhat Compelling	Not That + Not Compelling at All	% Compelling Dem	Ind	GOP	MAGA GOP
Open-source AI allows the U.S. to compete with China on a level playing field	70	30	71	63	72	76
Open-source AI aligns with U.S. values of free speech and an open internet	70	30	72	60	70	74
Open-source AI will improve America's economic growth if American-designed systems are adopted globally	69	31	71	58	70	74
Open-source AI helps the U.S. military keep Americans safe by improving cyber defenses and strengthening intelligence	69	31	69	59	71	74
Open-source AI will improve America's national security if American-designed systems are adopted globally	66	34	68	56	67	71

The bottom line: Voters across the political spectrum are worried about China becoming the global leader in AI and the ramifications that would have on the U.S.'s economic standing, values, and national security. Innovations in open-source AI can help protect the U.S. from China's threats, strengthen the U.S.'s military, encourage values like free speech, and give the U.S. a competitive edge.