

# CONNECTED BY DATA

## Involving the public in AI policymaking

### Experience from the People's Panel on AI

February 2024


**Connected by Data** is the campaign for communities to have a powerful voice in the governance of data and AI. We work to put communities at the centre of data narratives, practices and policies.

We organised the **People's Panel on AI** to address the glaring absence of public voice in the UK AI Safety Summit, and to demonstrate the value and feasibility of embedding deliberative public participation in future AI policy making.


On 3rd November 2023, the People's Panel on AI made seven recommendations based on their deliberation of discussions at the AI Fringe and UK AI Safety Summit:

- 1 A global governing body for AI** to bring together citizens, impartial experts and governments from across the world, and ensure regulatory collaboration that includes the global south.
- 2 A system of governance for AI in the UK that places citizens at the heart of decision making** drawing on input from scientists, researchers, ethicists, civil society, academia and industry to inform and provide evidence for government and citizens to then work together on decisions.
- 3 Awareness raising about AI across society.** From the classroom to the home. From the workplace to the community. Highlighting risks such as addiction to social media, as well as the opportunities that AI offers.
- 4 A safe transition, with training, to support people into a world of work alongside AI, ensuring no-one is left behind.**
- 5 A continued national conversation on AI, including retaining the People's Panel to keep public voice live in a fast-changing AI landscape.** We citizens can do jury service and as such are already trusted to make life-impacting and significant decisions.
- 6 Focus on inclusive collaboration,** to set out a vision of life where AI is used to enhance and balance human needs.
- 7 Stakeholders acting with transparency at all times.** An example of this might include a 'black box flight recorder' approach to AI models: protecting intellectual property but shared when things go wrong.


# Summary

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-  **6** weeks from design to delivery


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  -  **12** members of the public recruited


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  -  **15+** hours of learning


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  -  **8+** hours of deliberation

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  -  **7** recommendations

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  -  **10** advisory group members
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The People's Panel on AI was a **deliberative review** of the UK AI Safety Summit and AI Fringe.

It brought together a representative mini-public of people from across England to spend four days learning about AI, engaging with AI experts and discussing their thoughts. Through a facilitated deliberation process, the Panel put forward recommendations for government, industry, academia and civil society.

“I think this is an extraordinarily valuable gift to all of us in the tech community and to the rest of the country, the entire country, and trying to figure out who we want to be and how we want to work with these technologies...”

*Stakeholder feedback at Panel presentation event*

This short paper outlines the process, finding and learning from the People's Panel on AI, and makes recommendations for the future use of public deliberation in AI governance.

## Key findings

- Deliberative reviews can bring new insight, perspectives and focus to AI governance debates
- Public engagement should be a key component of future AI Safety Summits and other AI governance policymaking
- With the right investment, deliberative mini-publics can be delivered in agile ways that support the fast-developing AI governance landscape

“You really got down to the most important points. Some of those points I think are very much part of the debate, but I think the crucial point that you've made time and again is the need to involve people in these discussions. AI is about technology and it's about people. We hear a lot about technology and we hear a lot from the technologists and the business leaders and the politicians and the academics, but we haven't heard enough from the people.”

*TechUK at Panel presentation event*

## Definitions

- **Mini-public** – a randomly selected group of the wider population, demographically matched or selected to reflect a diversity of experiences and perspectives.
- **Deliberation** – a process of gathering, examining and discussing a range of evidence as a group, designed to support informed judgements.
- **Deliberative review** – deliberation applied to provide summarisation, judgements or recommendations in relation to an event, proposal or decision



# Method

The People’s Panel on AI was created over the course of six weeks from initial concept to delivery, demonstrating the potential for public participation to keep pace with rapid AI developments.

## Recruitment

The People’s Panel on AI was made up of a randomly selected group of 11 people from across England with diverse backgrounds, experiences and perspectives.



**4,123**

### Invited

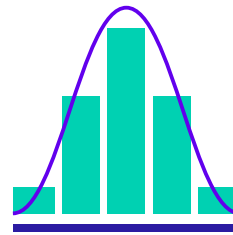
Invitations were sent through [Sortition Foundation’s opt-in list](#), reaching a broad sample of people across England.



**490**

### Expressed Interest

Those who expressed an interest in taking part completed a short question about prior experience of AI.



**12**

### Selected

A stratified lottery delivered diversity of age, gender, region, urban/rural location, local level of deprivation and prior experience of AI.



**11**

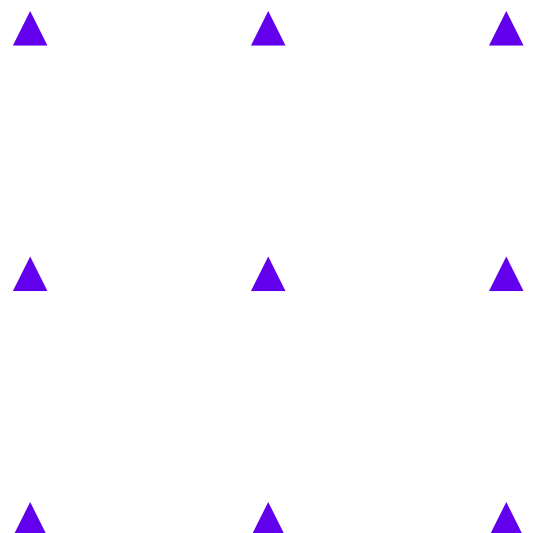
### Final Group

One participant had to drop out due to illness. The rest of the group engaged through onboarding phone-calls, pre-session webinar and in-person sessions.

We set a higher target for ethnic minority representation because past research highlights disproportionate AI impacts on ethnic minorities. Participants were paid a £600 honorarium for their participation, and had all travel, accommodation and meal expenses covered.

“I think we all had different outlooks. From different backgrounds in what we did – a retired engineer to someone working for [a government department] and me in a busy tea room. Quite a range of activities people came from.”

*Member of the People’s Panel on AI*



# Learning and deliberation

Unlike a stand-alone citizen jury where experts come and speak privately to a panel, **the learning phase of the People's Panel on AI was embedded in the AI Fringe:** a five day series of events with an event hub at the British Library. People's Panel members attended sessions, took part in public engagement workshops, engaged in hands-on learning, and questioned experts. In addition, Panellists watched webcasts and reviewed documents from the Bletchley Park AI Safety Summit.



## Tuesday

**Travel** to London

**Fringe panel**  
Why we need this conversation [on AI Safety]

**Deliberation** Early impressions of AI and clarification of key points

## Wednesday

**Hands on Learning** with Generative AI

**Fringe panel**  
Public voice and AI

**Engagement workshop** Hopes and Fears Lab

**Fringe panel**  
AI and climate

**Deliberation**

## Thursday

**Fringe panel** AI and the future of work

**Deliberation** including review of Safety Summit Webcast

**Invited experts**  
Discussing the roles for government, industry, civil society and academia for the future of AI

**Fringe panel** AI and the information ecosystem: safeguarding democratic institutions and processes

**Deliberation**

## Friday

**Deliberation**

**Public presentation** of findings







## Advisory group & observers

A project advisory group met weekly from 2nd October, providing guidance on participant selection criteria, framing questions and evaluation.

We invited advisory group members and other interested parties to observe deliberation sessions. We had observers from industry, government, academia and civil society at selected sessions.

## Communication and impacts

The week before the Panel, we presented information about the Panel at a stakeholder briefing. Each day, we produced a daily bulletin, sharing selected insights from the Panel discussions. Over 100 people subscribed. The final presentation event was attended by stakeholders from government, industry, academia and civil society.



“The level of transparency I think [was] quite unique, it was great to be able to follow along ‘in real time’ at a distance.”

*Stakeholder interview, Independent Evaluation*

# Outputs and Outcomes

In the week of the AI Safety Summit and Fringe we produced:

- **seven recommendations** presented to an audience of over 50 (in person and via webcast) on the last day of the AI Fringe
- **four daily bulletins** during the fringe sharing insights on building trust, public hopes and fears, future visions and centering the social good

In the following weeks, we provided:

- **a full report** prepared by Hopkins Van Mil, detailing panel deliberations on the values and principles that should underpin AI development; red-lines for AI use; and visions for future public involvement in AI decision making
- **an independent evaluation** which finds the process was credible and inclusive, and delivered high quality recommendations, helping “to convince stakeholders that the public can genuinely deliberate on and contribute to the debate on complex and technical issues including AI.”
- **a four minute video** sharing details of the process and recommendations, and making the case for future deliberation
- **A section for the AI Fringe report** sharing People’s Panel findings

Since the AI Fringe, members of the People’s Panel on AI have been involved in:

- **the TechUK Digital Ethics Summit** where two members of the Panel took part in the opening plenary
- **local AI conferences and events** including the [Truro AI in Education conference](#)
- **monthly meetings and WhatsApp discussions about the impact of AI**

Panellists reported increased self-confidence and a sense of agency. The Panel generated ripple effects, with participants becoming champions of informed engagement in their own communities, and seeking further opportunities to get involved in AI governance.



“[participating in the Panel] has boosted my confidence again. Sparked up a fire in my belly I thought had fizzled away... I feel like I’m not going to go home and forget about this...”

*Panel Participant in evaluation interview*





# Lessons

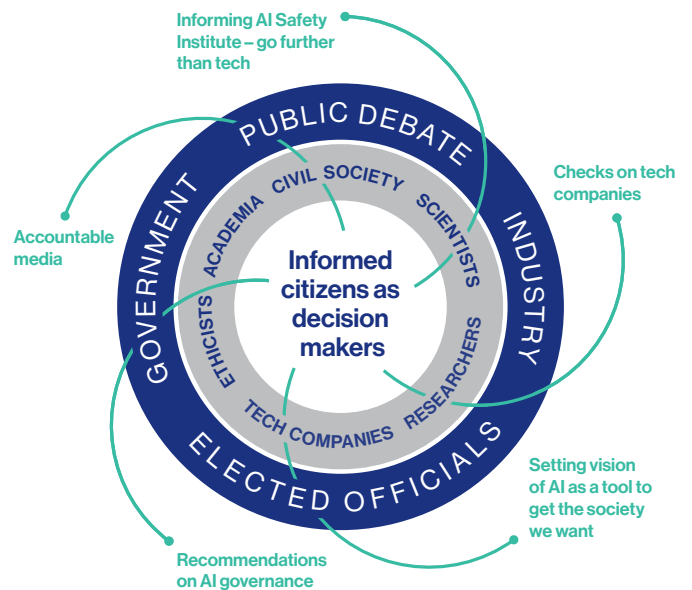
The People’s Panel on AI was an experiment in deliberation. While we followed common deliberation best practices, we also incorporated a number of innovative elements – both by necessity and by design.

**Using the AI Fringe as our primary expert input, and seeking to report our outcomes during the week of the AI Safety Summit, brought significant energy and dynamism to the process.** It was an exhausting schedule for both participants and facilitators, but had significant benefits.

- **The Panel was engaged with live issues**, following the same discussions that experts, decision shapers and makers were engaging with. We included some activities for the Panel to fill specific knowledge gaps; future panels should make time for induction and learning ahead of the deliberation.
- **The Panel was visible in the AI Fringe.** Having members of the public ‘in the room’ during discussions can help change the conversation. Panel members were able to enter into ad-hoc conversations with experts at the Fringe and Hopes & Fears Lab as informed interlocutors.
- **We had access to experts and observers** and used interest in the AI Safety Summit and Fringe to engage stakeholders. However, the timing of outputs (necessarily after the Summit), and the need to protect participants from intrusion early in the process, made it hard to secure media coverage.

In their final deliberation session, the People’s Panel on AI developed a vision for future public engagement around AI. They described a model of informed citizens as decision makers, supported by evidence from diverse expert stakeholders, in a process similar to jury service.

The Panel highlighted the trust placed in juries to make life-altering decisions based on the evidence shared with them. They envisage similar panels providing guidance, recommendations or judgements about AI to industry, government, new institutions, elected officials and public media.



Visual developed by the People’s Panel on AI to describe a vision of future public engagement in AI governance





# Recommendations

Public voice is crucial for shaping an AI future that is trustworthy, trusted and operating for public good. The People's Panel on AI demonstrates the utility of **deliberative reviews** to provide that voice.

Informed and in-depth public participation in the governance of AI is about more than user-centred design, one-off consultations, or stand-alone assemblies. The public should have a seat at the decision-making table. Governments, industry and other stakeholders should provide the access and resources needed for mini-publics to observe, interrogate and publicly review AI debates and decisions.

We call on all stakeholders involved in AI to **act on the recommendations and priorities of the People's Panel on AI**. We recommend using deliberative reviews to create space for public voice.

- If you are convening summits, conferences or AI governance discussions then **commission a parallel deliberative review** that invites representatives of affected communities to engage and input.
- If you are sponsoring AI events and activities then **allocate support and funding for public engagement** and work with independent facilitators to deliver robust processes.
- If you are making decisions about AI, from policy design to AI model releases, then **embed a deliberative review into your decision making**.

“[What] was very humbling is, if you bring 11 people from ordinary life into these discussions, and you get to sit and listen to them about the issues that matter to them, you realise how in the weeds we get; and actually listening to all of you talk about how is this going to impact on education security? How is this going to impact on my job? How is this going to affect my neighbourhood, or on those who are disabled? You realise that these are the very human things that people want to talk about. And this is how I feel we should be framing our wider discussions about artificial intelligence.”

*Mozilla Foundation, at Panel presentation event*





## Acknowledgements

### The People's Panel were

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### Report author

Tim Davies

### Organisation & delivery team

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### Independent evaluator

Anna Beckett

### Advisory group

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## Find out more

Connected by Data are developing resources to help organisations embed participatory, democratic and deliberative approaches to governing data and AI in their work. To find out more, get in touch via [www.connectedbydata.org](http://www.connectedbydata.org)



[connectedbydata.org/projects/2023-peoples-panel-on-ai](http://connectedbydata.org/projects/2023-peoples-panel-on-ai)

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