Parliamentary Affairs (2025) 00, 1–22
Advance Access Publication 23 October 2025
https://doi.org/10.1093/pa/gsaf050

Democracy by algorithm? Public attitudes towards AI in parliamentary decision-making in the UK and Japan

Steven David Pickering[1,2,*], **Martin Ejnar Hansen**[2], **and Yosuke Sunahara**[3]

[1]*Department of Political Science, University of Amsterdam, Postbus 15578, 1001 NB Amsterdam, Netherlands*
[2]*Department of Social and Political Sciences, Brunel University of London, Kingston Lane, Uxbridge, UB8 3PH, UK*
[3]*Kobe University, Graduate School of Law, 2-1 Rokkodai-cho, Nada-ku, Kobe 657-8501, Japan*

[*]*Correspondence: s.d.pickering@uva.nl*

Parliaments are beginning to experiment with artificial intelligence (AI), but public acceptance remains uncertain. We examine attitudes to AI in two parliamentary democracies: the UK ($n = 990$) and Japan ($n = 2117$). We look at two key issues: AI helping Members of Parliament (MPs) make better decisions and AI or robots making decisions instead of MPs. Using original surveys, we test the roles of demographics, institutional trust, ideology, and attitudes toward AI. In both countries, respondents are broadly cautious: support is higher for AI that assists representatives than for delegating decisions, with especially strong resistance to delegation in the UK. Trust in government (and general social trust in Japan) increases acceptance; women and older respondents are more sceptical. In the UK, right-leaning respondents are more supportive, whereas ideology is weak or negative in Japan. Perceptions of AI dominate: seeing AI as beneficial and feeling able to use it raises support, while fear lowers it. We find that legitimacy for parliamentary AI hinges not only on safeguards but on alignment with expectations of representation and accountability.

Keywords: artificial intelligence; public opinion; parliaments; democratic legitimacy; UK; Japan.

Received 3 July 2025; revised 23 August 2025; accepted 18 September 2025

1. Introduction

The rise of artificial intelligence (AI) presents profound challenges and opportunities for democratic governance, particularly in relation to how parliaments function and how political representatives make decisions. Beyond well-documented areas such as clinical decision-support, credit scoring, and defence analytics, comparatively little is known about how AI intersects with legislative work and representative decision-making (Horvath et al. 2023; Charles, Rana and Carter 2022; van Noordt and Misuraca 2022). In legislative contexts, AI has been proposed for tasks such as decision-making research, public engagement and assistance in policy decisions (Koryzis et al. 2021; Citino 2025). Despite these developments, there is still no cohesive framework for studying the impact of AI on parliaments, unlike the more established literature on the effects of the Internet in legislative settings (see Leston-Bandeira 2007).

Proponents argue that AI can help analyse large volumes of bills and amendments or simulate policy outcomes, potentially improving legislative efficiency (Fitsilis 2021; Wahl 2024; Connally 2025). Critics, however, warn that AI-driven decision-making may erode democratic accountability and diminish public trust (Gregg 2018; Nemitz 2018; Kreps and Kriner 2023). There are broader concerns that relying on automated systems could undermine fundamental democratic principles such as representation and transparency. If left unchecked, this reliance might also weaken social and political trust (Kreps and Kriner 2023). Legislators in several countries have already begun to debate these challenges, and some have proposed guidelines for the use of AI in parliaments (Fitsilis, von Lucke and De Vrieze 2025).

These concerns are especially pronounced in parliaments, where legitimacy is rooted not only in the actual results of policy, but in the visible procedures of representation, scrutiny, and participation. If citizens perceive that Members of Parliament (MPs) are ceding too much judgement to machines, or that automated tools are used without proper oversight, public trust may suffer. Given the importance of public legitimacy for parliaments and for political decision-making more broadly, it is important to understand how citizens view the use of AI within their representative institutions. In this piece, we therefore analyse public acceptance of AI in parliamentary systems: whether people see the use of AI as legitimate in legislative processes. This subject has become increasingly important, as AI technologies are already being implemented in many parliaments, even though the extent of their use by MPs is not yet systematically understood. The integration of AI may also affect how MPs perform their representative duties, potentially altering public expectations of what representation should entail (Bengtsson and Wass 2011).

There is still relatively little research on public attitudes toward the use of AI in political decision-making. While academic work on public opinion and AI

is expanding, it has so far focused more on applications in the private sector than on government or politics. Nonetheless, a growing body of literature is beginning to address these gaps (e.g. Starke and Lünich 2020; van Noordt and Misuraca 2022; Horvath et al. 2023). This study contributes to that emerging literature by asking which factors influence public opinion on the use of AI in political decision-making. We examine this by exploring how citizens evaluate two related but distinct applications: the use of AI to support parliamentarians in making better decisions, and the use of AI or robots to make decisions in place of politicians. Our analysis draws on original survey data from the UK and Japan. These countries offer a valuable comparison: both are advanced democracies and global technology leaders with ageing populations, but they differ in cultural attitudes toward automation and in their policy approaches to AI.

The Japanese Diet has been reluctant to adopt new technologies. While many countries introduced online deliberations during the pandemic, Japan stood out as the only G7 nation that did not permit such practices. This hesitation is partly linked to the high proportion of elderly legislators, but institutional conservatism also plays a role: until recently, even the use of tablets in the Diet chamber was prohibited. More recently, proposals to use generative AI in parliamentary responses have been discussed, but they have faced strong criticism not only from senior legislators but also from the mass media.

In the UK, engagement has been shaped by inquiry and oversight. The House of Lords Select Committee on Artificial Intelligence (2018) has examined ethical, legal, and governance implications, producing recommendations for a principles-based regulatory framework. Debates in Westminster tend to emphasize balancing innovation with public trust, without binding MPs to a single governance model.

While the Japanese Diet has been reluctant to embrace AI, this view is at odds with the vision of the Japanese Cabinet Office. For the Cabinet Office, AI is a core technology for realizing the country's *Society 5.0* vision: a framework aimed at achieving sustainable development through the integration of digital innovation into all aspects of society (Narvaez Rojas et al. 2021; Atay et al. 2025). Leading economic organizations have advocated for the creation of a centralized command centre within the government to coordinate the use of AI and other digital technologies in conjunction with diverse data sources, and to formulate a comprehensive national strategy. This environment led the Japanese government to enact the AI Promotion Act in 2025, which declares that the state will strategically advance AI development and use to enhance people's quality of life and support economic growth.

As such, we find that the two countries have two distinct sociotechnical imaginaries (Jasanoff and Kim 2009): in Japan, we find a centralized, innovation-led narrative with strong symbolic endorsement, whereas in the UK, we find a more cautious, pluralistic debate anchored in ethical oversight. This context

provides the empirical backdrop for our comparative analysis of parliamentary AI acceptance. Our analysis investigates how demographic factors (age, gender, education), political attitudes (trust in institutions, ideology), and personal dispositions (risk tolerance, optimism, or fear about AI) shape support for AI in political contexts. In doing so, we examine how public opinion and technology readiness interact in different policy environments.

Drawing on our original surveys, we find that citizens in both countries are cautious about delegating political decisions to AI. In both the UK and Japan, younger and male respondents are generally more supportive, while older individuals and women are more sceptical. Trust in government institutions and a positive attitude toward technology are associated with greater acceptance, while fear of AI is associated with lower support. However, we also observe key differences between the UK and Japan. Most notably, there is a left–right ideological division between the two countries. In Japan, right-wing ideology is negatively associated with support. In the UK, by contrast, right-wing respondents are more supportive of AI use in political decision-making.

We relate these patterns to existing research on technology adoption and democratic responsiveness, and consider their implications for policymaking. The findings suggest that the legitimacy of AI in parliamentary contexts will depend heavily on public confidence. This, in turn, will require transparency, public education, and inclusive consultations that align technological innovation with citizens' values.

2. AI and parliaments

There are many ways in which AI has the potential to be beneficial to legislative bodies and democratic governance. Machine learning algorithms can process large volumes of documents, identify patterns in legislative activity, and streamline administrative tasks (Koryzis et al. 2021). Beyond speech recognition and automated transcription, AI tools have also been applied to semantic text analysis, law tracking, agenda setting, and the categorization of public feedback (Fitsilis 2021). Applied carefully, these applications could help to improve transparency, increasing administrative efficiency, and support more evidence-based decision-making, especially in complex policy environments where rapid information processing is essential (Tretter, 2025).

The adoption of AI in parliaments is often driven by the aim to modernize outdated workflows, manage the information overload faced by legislators, and enhance public access to legislative records (Fitsilis, von Lucke and De Vrieze 2025). Tools such as digital assistants and AI-enhanced search functions have been proposed to support MPs in drafting questions, analyzing bills, and anticipating constituent concerns. AI could in theory allow for more personalized

constituent services and enable more responsive interactions between citizens and representatives, for example through chatbot interfaces or participatory dashboards (Koryzis et al. 2021).

However, the introduction of AI into legislatures raises significant normative and institutional challenges. Algorithmic systems often lack explainability, and their decision-making processes can be opaque even to their developers. This opacity may conceal embedded biases, raising issues of fairness, discrimination, and epistemic integrity (König and Wenzelburger, 2020; Nemitz 2018). There is also a risk that reliance on AI could shift decision-shaping power toward technical elites, thereby diminishing the role of elected representatives and marginalizing the deliberative processes that underpin parliamentary democracy (Starke and Lünich, 2020; König 2023).

These tensions are becoming increasingly important as parliaments around the world begin to experiment with AI. In 2021, the Finnish Parliament attracted international attention by holding an experimental hearing that featured GPT-3, a language model simulating expert testimony. This symbolic event reflected both curiosity about AI's potential and unease about its place in democratic deliberation (Fitsilis 2021). The episode sparked debate not only over AI's technical capabilities, but also over its symbolic authority and institutional limits.

Approaches to AI integration vary significantly across national legislative contexts. In the UK, parliamentary bodies such as the House of Lords Select Committee on AI have undertaken inquiries into AI ethics and governance, producing recommendations for a context-sensitive model that balances innovation with democratic safeguards. Rather than adopting a comprehensive AI statute, the UK favours sector-specific oversight and principles-based guidance, emphasizing transparency, proportionality, and public engagement (Nemitz 2018).

Japan, by contrast, has taken a distinctive 'soft-law' approach. In 2025, the Diet passed the AI Promotion Act, a foundational, non-binding statute that frames AI as a driver of socio-economic resilience, prioritizing voluntary coordination between government, industry, academia, and citizens over binding regulation. The Act's architecture centres on transparency, multi-stakeholder collaboration, and administrative guidance rather than punitive enforcement (Government of Japan 2025).

This reflects a soft-governance philosophy, where ethical implementation and flexibility take precedence over rigid legalism (Ichikawa, 2025). The two models (the UK's principles-driven regulatory oversight and Japan's coordination-oriented voluntary framework) highlight the contrasting paths parliaments can take to balance innovation, democratic legitimacy, and adaptability. Legislatures are increasingly seen as key arenas for shaping such norms, with initiatives like ParlTech underscoring the importance of ethical integration, institutional flexibility, and civil society engagement (Koryzis et al. 2021).

Over recent years, researchers have started to draw attention to the democratic risks posed by AI in governance. Kroll et al. (2017) argue that incorporating mechanisms for transparency and redress into algorithmic systems is essential for maintaining institutional legitimacy. Similarly, König and Wenzelburger (2020) highlight how AI reshapes the informational ecosystem of representative democracies, with implications for responsiveness and accountability across input, throughput, and output dimensions. To ensure that AI reinforces rather than undermines democratic norms, effective oversight mechanisms are needed. These include algorithmic audits, explainability tools, and clear public disclosures.

Although empirical research on AI use in parliaments remains limited, it is expanding. In the United States, initiatives such as the 'AI Bill of Rights' highlight the importance of public participation and seek to formalize citizen involvement in the design of automated decision-making systems (Wilson, 2022). Such developments suggest that the legitimacy of AI in political institutions depends not only on its technical performance but also on its alignment with democratic values and public expectations. A clear distinction is emerging between AI used for technical and administrative tasks, and its more controversial use by elected representatives themselves.

2.1 Public acceptance of AI in parliamentary decision-making

We are chiefly interested in people's level of acceptance of AI in parliamentary decision-making. Our two dependent variables capture two subdimensions of this concept. 'AI supporting parliamentarians to take better decisions' operationalizes augmentation legitimacy (human-in-the-loop support that may increase informational capacity while preserving representative judgement). 'AI or robots taking decisions for politicians' operationalizes delegation legitimacy (ceding authoritative judgement to automated systems). We therefore analyse them separately. Their moderate correlation (0.5) is expected: citizens who are generally positive toward AI may endorse both, but the delegation item triggers additional normative concerns about substituting elected judgement, not merely assisting it. This distinction is central to parliaments because parliamentary legitimacy is rooted in visible procedures of representation and accountability, not only outcomes (cf. Leston-Bandeira 2007; Starke and Lünich 2020).

This conceptualization also clarifies why studying AI in parliamentary contexts is theoretically complementary with studies of AI in administration or public services. Administrative uses (such as document processing or service allocation) are often judged primarily on performance and fairness. By contrast, parliamentary uses additionally involve the morality of representatives, the acceptable bounds of expert/automated input into deliberation, and the preservation of a legible human chain of responsibility to constituents. Accordingly, we expect generic attitudes to AI towards matter, but to be conditioned by political trust, ideology, and views

about representative authority. Our hypotheses and cross-national design test these scope conditions in two otherwise similar parliamentary democracies with contrasting sociotechnical imaginaries.

3. Public opinion and political decision-making

Political decision-making in democratic systems rests on the expectation that elected representatives will respond to citizens' preferences. As Kreps and Kriner (2023) note, the legitimacy of democratic governance depends not only on outcomes, but also on the openness of institutions to public voice and deliberation. Traditionally, this relationship has been mediated through mechanisms such as public consultations, opinion polling, constituent correspondence, and media coverage. These practices signal citizen priorities and help constrain arbitrary or overly technocratic decision-making.

However, the increasing digitization of political communication, combined with the rise of AI as both a policy tool and communicative actor, complicates this feedback loop. AI systems are now used to generate, curate, and interpret political content, which increases the risk of signal distortion. Generative AI can produce fabricated or exaggerated constituent messages, overwhelming MPs' information channels and undermining confidence in the authenticity of public input (Kreps and Kriner 2023).

Despite these risks, the link between public opinion and policy outcomes remains strong. Research on technological governance shows that citizen preferences can play a decisive role in determining whether governments adopt, adapt, or abandon controversial innovations. For instance, public resistance to algorithmic tools in areas such as criminal sentencing, welfare allocation, or predictive policing has led to moratoria, external audits, or major regulatory changes (Nemitz 2018; König and Wenzelburger 2020). By contrast, when trust is high and AI systems are perceived as fair, innovations in the public sector are more likely to gain support and be sustained.

Recent empirical studies highlight the central role of trust, perceived fairness, and system design in shaping public acceptance of AI in governance. Horvath et al. (2023), using a conjoint experiment in the UK, show that citizens are more supportive of AI-based services when systems include procedural safeguards such as high accuracy, transparency, and accessible appeal mechanisms. In contrast, support declines significantly when private-sector actors are involved or when data-sharing practices are opaque. These findings suggest that institutional arrangements and what Friedman (1996) refers to as value-sensitive design, play a more decisive role in shaping acceptance than demographic traits alone.

Nevertheless, socio-demographic and psychological factors remain important. Yokoyama et al. (2022) find that older citizens and women tend to be more

risk-averse and ethically concerned about AI, viewing it as more likely to produce unintended or harmful consequences. Psychological dynamics also shape attitudes. For example, 'algorithm aversion' refers to the tendency to reject algorithmic decisions after observing even minor errors, despite overall high performance (Dietvorst et al. 2015). These patterns indicate that public judgements are shaped not only by rational assessments but also by emotions, social norms, and cognitive biases.

People's views on democracy also influence their openness to AI in politics. König (2023) finds that individuals who favour liberal-democratic or participatory models of governance are more sceptical of AI involvement in decision-making, especially at higher levels of authority. Conversely, support increases among those who adopt reductionist or output-oriented understandings of democracy: citizens who value efficiency and responsiveness over deliberation and inclusion. People who express populist views are associated with scepticism toward AI in politics, which may be an expression of discomfort with its perceived elitism and opacity. These findings underscore the importance of ensuring that the design and implementation of AI systems are compatible with prevailing democratic values.

From a normative perspective, the challenge is not only to maximize the technical performance of AI systems, but also to ensure that they align with democratic legitimacy. This includes input legitimacy, which relates to citizen voice and participation; throughput legitimacy, which concerns transparency, fairness, and procedural accountability; and output legitimacy, which reflects policy effectiveness and perceived benefit (Starke and Lünich 2020). Even systems that perform well can provoke backlash if they lack procedural clarity or fail to secure public consent.

Public opinion therefore acts as both a constraint and a potential enabler of AI in politics. Citizens' levels of political trust, their past experiences with technology and their broader attitudes toward governance all shape their willingness to accept AI integration. In high-trust environments, innovation is more likely to be welcomed. In low-trust contexts, or where people have had negative experiences with automation, we would expect to see more scepticism. When scepticism is rooted in perceptions of exclusion, injustice, or disempowerment, it may prompt legislators to delay or scale back reforms.

This evolving feedback loop highlights the need for more systematic research into how citizens understand, evaluate, and respond to AI in political decision-making. Without such insight, policymakers risk implementing tools that alienate the very people they are meant to serve. In short, when input authenticity and throughput safeguards are weak, even accurate systems can reduce perceived input and throughput legitimacy, depressing acceptance in parliamentary uses where representative accountability is of high importance (Starke and Lünich 2020).

Accordingly, we formulate seven hypotheses regarding support for AI-assisted political decision-making:

H1: Older citizens will be less supportive of AI in political decision-making than younger citizens.

H2: Women will be less supportive of AI in political decision-making than men.

H3: Higher educational attainment will be associated with greater support for AI in political decision-making.

H4: Higher levels of trust in political institutions and general social trust will be associated with greater support for AI in political decision-making.

H5: Individuals with more right-wing ideological orientations will be less supportive of AI in political decision-making.

H6: Individuals with a higher tolerance for risk will be more supportive of AI in political decision-making.

H7: Positive attitudes toward AI, such as optimism about its future or confidence in one's ability to use it, will increase support, whereas fear or distrust of AI will reduce support.

We test these hypotheses using our original survey data and interpret the findings in light of existing theories on technology adoption and democratic responsiveness.

4. Data and methodology

We adopt a most-similar systems design (MSSD) (Przeworski and Teune 1970; Lijphart 1971; Landman 2008) by comparing the UK and Japan: two consolidated parliamentary democracies with high state capacity, advanced digital infrastructures, globally significant AI sectors, and ageing electorates. Holding these institutional and structural features broadly constant allows us to examine whether individual-level predictors of support for AI in parliamentary decision-making (age, gender, trust, ideology, and AI attitudes) travel across similar constitutional architectures. Where we expect our cases to differ is in their 'sociotechnical

imaginaries' (Jasanoff and Kim 2009): people in the two countries may have markedly different views on automation, regulatory style and governance philosophy toward AI, and public discourse about AI's role in politics. This combination of a similar institutional form, with contrasting cultural-regulatory environments, fits the classic MSSD logic for isolating the conditional role of context (George and Bennett, 2005; Hirschl 2005, 2014; Gerring 2007; Anckar 2008; Seawright and Gerring 2008). Our purpose is not to establish causal effects within individual countries, but to assess how technology-acceptance mechanisms generalize across parliamentary settings.

Data were collected via online surveys conducted in the UK and Japan in November 2024. In the UK, the survey was administered through the YouGov online panel; in Japan, it was fielded through the Rakuten Insight panel. The total sample included 1,322 respondents in the UK and 2,611 in Japan. However, not all respondents completed every item, which led to a lower number of valid cases for some parts of the analysis. After excluding incomplete responses, the final analytic samples consist of 990 respondents in the UK and 2,117 in Japan. Both samples are nationally representative with respect to gender, age, and political orientation.

We focus on two outcome variables. Respondents were first presented with the following prompt: 'Thinking about the advancement of artificial intelligence (AI) over the next few years, to what extent would you support or oppose the following uses of AI in politics?' They were then asked to rate two statements: 1 'AI supporting parliamentarians to take better decisions', and 2 'AI or robots taking decisions for politicians'. Responses were recorded on a five-point scale, where 1 indicates 'Do not support at all' and 5 indicates 'Support completely'. Respondents who did not answer or selected 'Don't know' were excluded from the analysis. These two items operationalize the augmentation versus delegation distinction in our concept of parliamentary AI acceptance; we therefore analyse them separately rather than collapsing them into a single scale.

Our survey also included a second set of items tapping general attitudes toward AI, such as whether respondents agreed that 'AI scares me' or that 'there are many beneficial applications of AI'. While these questions are not parliament-specific, they serve an important function: broader technology acceptance is a well-established antecedent of domain-specific acceptance (Davis 1989; Venkatesh and Davis 2000; Venkatesh et al. 2003). We therefore analyse both the parliamentary-specific items and the general AI attitude items in tandem, but keep them conceptually distinct in our interpretation. These items are similar to those used in König (2023), although we analyse the two outcome variables separately. While the two concepts are related, they are not identical. A Pearson's correlation coefficient of 0.5 suggests a moderate relationship, but also indicates that they may capture distinct dimensions of public opinion. Because both dependent variables are

Table 1. Descriptive statistics

Variable	Japan	UK
N	2,117	990
Support for AI helping parliamentarians (1–5, mean, SD)	2.48 (1.11)	2.12 (1.21)
Support for AI or robots taking decisions (1–5, mean, SD)	2.21 (1.11)	1.40 (0.86)
Age (mean, SD)	49.6 (16.3)	49.7 (16.5)
Age (min, max)	18–79	18–90
Women (%)	46.60%	51.40%
Men (%)	53.40%	48.60%
University degree (%)	53.00%	41.40%
Left–Right ideology (0–10, mean, SD)	5.07 (1.60)	4.83 (2.14)
Trust government (1–7, mean, SD)	3.36 (1.41)	2.85 (1.58)
General social trust (1–7, mean, SD)	3.13 (1.52)	3.52 (1.57)
Risk-taking tendency (0–10, mean, SD)	4.60 (1.98)	4.68 (2.15)
AI scares me (1–7, mean, SD)	4.43 (1.43)	4.87 (1.59)
AI is beneficial (1–7, mean, SD)	4.59 (1.23)	4.29 (1.61)
I know how AI can help me (1–7, mean, SD)	3.82 (1.33)	3.53 (1.74)

measured on a five-point scale, we use ordinary least squares regression to facilitate interpretation of the results.

Our analysis includes a range of independent variables. Among the socio-demographic factors, we include age (measured in years), sex (coded 1 for women and 0 for men), and a binary indicator for whether the respondent has completed a university degree. We also include two trust variables: one measuring trust in government and the other measuring general social trust. Both are recorded on a seven-point scale, with higher values indicating greater trust. Additional variables capture psychological and ideological predispositions. Risk tolerance is measured on a 0–10 scale, as is left–right self-placement on the ideological spectrum.

We present the descriptive statistics for our dependent and independent variables in Table 1 below. The data presented are based on respondents who successfully completed all questions used in our analysis.

Figure 1 presents the distributions of responses to our two dependent variables. In both countries, respondents are generally cautious about AI in parliamentary decision-making. In the UK, scepticism is particularly strong: almost half of respondents select 'do not support at all' when asked about AI assisting parliamentarians, and nearly four in five reject outright the idea of AI or robots taking decisions in place of MPs. The Japanese distributions are less stark, with opinions on AI assistance more evenly spread across the scale and some limited support visible. However, here too, delegation to AI or robots attracts predominantly negative responses. These patterns indicate that our regression analyses are explaining variation around a baseline of widespread caution rather than divided or enthusiastic publics.

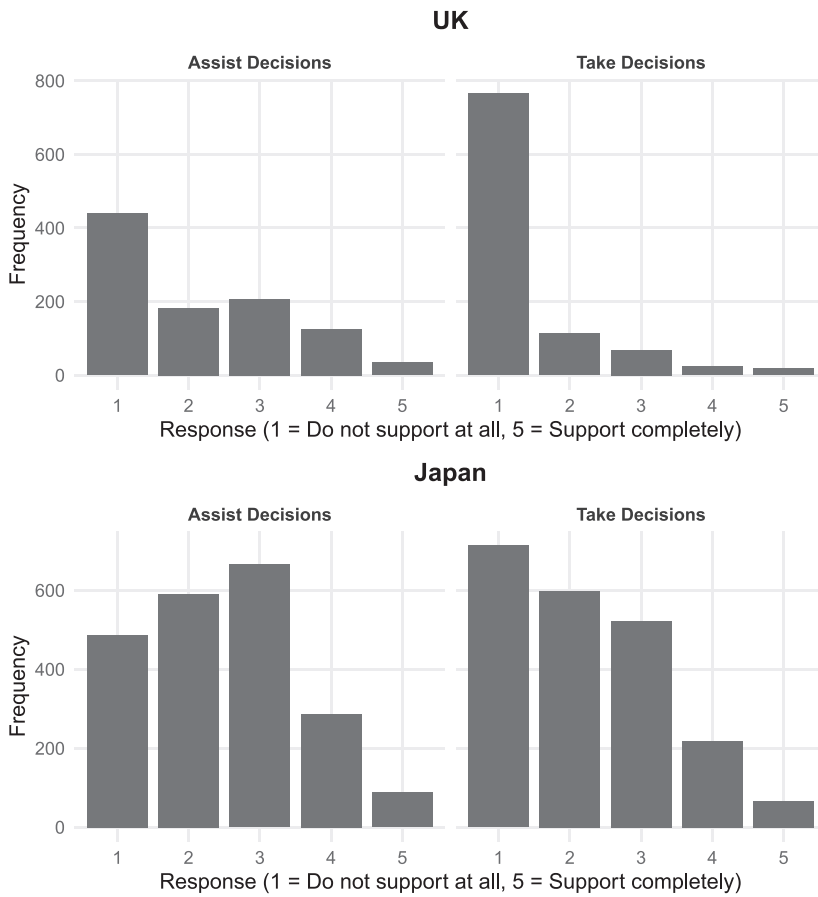

Figure 1. Support for AI supporting parliamentarians to take better decisions, and AI or robots taking decisions for politicians, UK and Japan.

4.1 Analysis

We present the results of the regression analyses examining how the predictors described above relate to support for AI in political decision-making in Table 2. Coefficients are unadjusted; standardized versions are presented in the Online Appendix. The same questions were asked in both countries, and we estimate four models for each country (Models 1 to 4 for the UK and Models 5 to 8 for Japan). In each case, the models use the same two dependent variables: support for AI assisting parliamentarians in making better decisions (represented in the Table as 'Assist decisions') and support for AI or robots taking decisions for politicians (in the Table as 'Take decisions'). The key findings are summarized below.

Table 2. Linear regressions

	Dependent variable:							
	UK				**Japan**			
	Assist decisions		**Take decisions**		**Assist decisions**		**Take decisions**	
	(1)	**(2)**	**(3)**	**(4)**	**(5)**	**(6)**	**(7)**	**(8)**
Age	−0.004*	0.001	−0.01***	−0.01***	−0.01***	−0.01***	−0.01***	−0.01***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
University	0.29***	0.13*	−0.09	−0.16***	0.02	−0.02	−0.08	−0.10**
	(0.08)	(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Women	−0.33***	−0.12*	−0.17***	−0.06	−0.22***	−0.18***	−0.22***	−0.17***
	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Trust government	0.10***	0.05**	0.02	−0.01	0.08***	0.06***	0.05***	0.03**
	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Trust people	0.05**	0.04	0.01	−0.0002	0.04**	0.03**	0.04**	0.03*
	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Risk taking	0.05***	0.03*	0.03**	0.02	0.07***	0.04***	0.05***	0.03**
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Left–right	0.05***	0.04**	0.04***	0.04***	−0.003	−0.01	−0.02	−0.02
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
AI scares me		−0.14***		−0.08***		−0.07***		−0.08***
		(0.02)		(0.02)		(0.02)		(0.02)
AI beneficial		0.23***		0.08***		0.18***		0.07***
		(0.02)		(0.02)		(0.02)		(0.02)
Know how AI can help me		0.05**		0.05***		0.14***		0.16***
		(0.02)		(0.02)		(0.02)		(0.02)
Constant	1.40***	0.96***	1.53***	1.44***	2.36***	1.46***	2.65***	2.12***
	(0.20)	(0.26)	(0.15)	(0.20)	(0.13)	(0.15)	(0.13)	(0.16)
Observations	990	990	990	990	2,117	2,117	2,117	2,117
R^2	0.10	0.27	0.05	0.13	0.06	0.15	0.07	0.12
Adjusted R^2	0.09	0.26	0.04	0.12	0.06	0.15	0.06	0.12

*$P < .1$, **$P < .05$, ***$P < .01$.

We begin by considering the linear regression results for the two dependent variables. The models reveal notable differences between them, which supports our decision to analyse them separately.

Our first hypothesis predicted a negative association between age and support for AI in political decision-making. This expectation is confirmed in Japan for both outcome variables. In the UK, however, age is only significantly associated with support for allowing AI or robots to take decisions for politicians. There is no significant relationship between age and support for MPs using AI to improve their decision-making.

Regarding gender, the expected negative association is clearly observed in Japan, where women are significantly more sceptical of AI than men. Similar patterns are present in the UK, although they are less pronounced. When

AI-specific variables are included in the models, the gender effect in the UK disappears for support for AI or robots making decisions, and becomes only marginally significant for support for MPs using AI. Educational attainment shows a consistent negative association with support for AI or robots making decisions in both countries. However, in the UK, there is a positive association between university education and support for MPs using AI to make better decisions. In Japan, no significant relationship is observed for this outcome.

The two trust variables yield different patterns across countries. In the UK, general social trust shows no significant association with either outcome, particularly once AI-specific variables are included. In Japan, by contrast, general social trust is positively associated with support for AI across all models. Trust in government behaves as expected. It has a consistent positive effect on both outcomes in Japan. In the UK, it is positively associated with support for MPs using AI to improve their decision-making, but shows no significant relationship with support for AI or robots making decisions in place of politicians.

Ideological self-placement also produces divergent results. In Japan, left–right orientation has no significant effect. In the UK, however, we observe the opposite of our expectation: right-leaning respondents are more supportive of both AI-assisted decision-making by MPs and full delegation of decisions to AI or robots. This is surprising given findings from Germany by König (2023), who reported broad populist scepticism toward AI in politics, but no clear effect of left–right placement.

Risk tolerance is positively associated with support for both dependent variables in Japan, and with support for MPs using AI in the UK. However, once the AI-specific variables are added to the models, the significance of this relationship weakens, and disappears entirely for the AI or robots variable in the UK.

All three AI-specific variables show significant associations with both dependent variables in both countries. Respondents who report being scared of AI are consistently less supportive of its use in political decision-making. In contrast, those who express confidence in their ability to use AI, or who believe AI will bring future benefits, are significantly more supportive, in line with our expectations.

Several cross-national differences stand out. Age and gender effects are present in both countries but are more pronounced in the Japanese models. Trust in institutions has a stronger influence in Japan than in the UK. Ideological orientation points in opposite directions across the two cases. These patterns suggest that cultural and political context shapes how individual traits and dispositions translate into policy preferences.

5. Discussion and perspectives

The analysis presents a complex picture of public opinion on the use of AI in parliamentary decision-making in both the UK and Japan. Several clear themes emerge.

Demographics are a key factor. Younger men are the most receptive to AI in politics in both countries, while older individuals and women are generally more sceptical. These patterns are consistent with prior research on public attitudes toward technology. Yokoyama et al. (2022), for example, found that older people and women tend to perceive AI as more ethically problematic and risky: a pattern our findings confirm in the political domain.

The role of education is more nuanced. In the UK, higher educational attainment is associated with greater support for augmentation legitimacy, i.e. for MPs using AI to improve decision-making, but with lower support for delegating decisions entirely to AI or robots. This suggests that more highly educated respondents may distinguish between abstract support for innovation and concrete concerns about delegating political authority to automated systems.

Trust in institutions also emerges as a powerful determinant of public support for AI in politics. Respondents who have confidence in their political system are significantly more likely to support the use of AI for parliamentary tasks. This finding aligns with broader theories of institutional trust and technology acceptance. When citizens believe that government officials and civil servants are competent and act in the public interest, they are less likely to fear the introduction of new technologies.

Horvath et al. (2023) emphasize that features such as transparency and accountability play a crucial role in building trust and increasing public acceptance. In practical terms, this suggests that policymakers seeking to promote AI in government should prioritize procedural safeguards. For example, a legislative AI system that includes appeal mechanisms and audit trails is likely to be seen as fairer and more legitimate.

The opposite also holds: when institutional trust is low, scepticism towards AI increases. This is particularly evident in Japan, where public trust in the regulation of emerging technologies has historically been weaker than in many Western democracies, making institutional trust especially influential in shaping attitudes.

This does not mean that personal attitudes can be overlooked. Indeed, our results suggest that individual perceptions of AI play a significant role in shaping public opinion. People who believe AI will bring positive societal change, and who feel confident in their ability to use it, are much more supportive. In contrast, those who explicitly fear AI are far less likely to support its use in political decision-making. This divide between 'AI optimism' and 'AI fear' is well documented (e.g. Guingrich and Graziano 2025), and these findings further suggest that there is also a divide between augmentation and delegation legitimacy.

Cultural differences also help explain this variation. Japanese respondents, in various studies, have long expressed acceptance of robotics and automation, reflecting a broader cultural optimism toward machines (e.g. Coco, Kangasniemi and Rantanen 2018). By contrast, public attitudes in the UK tend to reflect greater

anxiety about the potential harms of AI (Wang, Downey and Yang, 2023). Our findings are consistent with this contrast, and they also mirror Yokoyama et al. (2022), who show that fear of AI is especially common among certain demographic groups, including older individuals, women, and those with less subject-specific knowledge.

Given our focus on political decision-making, the cross-national differences in ideological self-placement are particularly striking. In the UK, individuals on the political right are more supportive of AI in governance, whereas in Japan, support is higher among those on the left. One interpretation is that conservative Britons may associate AI with economic growth and national competitiveness, while conservative Japanese, who often prioritize social harmony and incremental change, may view AI as potentially disruptive.

Although this interpretation is speculative, it underscores the point that ideology interacts with cultural context. These opposing patterns suggest that political discourse around AI in governance is likely to differ across countries, with partisan alignments and ideological framing shaped by national narratives and policy traditions.

The findings speak to a central concern in democratic theory: the relationship between public opinion and policymaking. If most citizens oppose AI in governance, elected officials might be expected to avoid its implementation. Yet our results suggest that even among those who express some support, enthusiasm is limited. The average respondent is ambivalent or cautious. If parliaments proceed with AI initiatives while public confidence remains low, the risk of political backlash increases.

Kreps and Kriner (2023) caution that a misalignment between citizens and governments on emerging technologies can undermine institutional accountability. The Brexit example further illustrates how neglecting public concerns, even when technocratic arguments seem compelling, can trigger significant political disruption. For any major shift toward AI-assisted legislation, it is important that policymakers take citizen sentiment seriously.

Our data suggest several practical steps that policymakers can take to build public support for AI in governance. First, measures that build trust are essential. Ensuring that AI systems used in parliament are transparent, explainable, and subject to oversight is likely to increase their perceived legitimacy. The concept of algorithmic accountability, including audit trails, impact assessments, and appeal mechanisms, is central to public confidence. Kroll et al. (2017) argue that such safeguards are necessary to ensure that AI systems used in public institutions remain accountable and trustworthy.

Public engagement should also be prioritized. Both the UK and Japan could benefit from structured consultations, citizen assemblies, or expert panels focused specifically on AI in governance. This is especially important when AI moves

beyond administrative tasks such as transcription or document search and begins to influence, assist, or even replace aspects of parliamentary decision-making. Early engagement can help set the boundaries of public consent and build legitimacy before trust is eroded.

Many respondents indicated that they do not feel knowledgeable about AI. A lack of understanding may lead to uncertainty or fear. Public information campaigns and transparent pilot programmes could help familiarize citizens with the benefits and limitations of AI tools. For example, initiatives that incorporate human oversight and clearly demonstrate how AI can support better decision-making may reduce public scepticism.

Such efforts may also help address the 'algorithm aversion' effect described by Dietvorst et al. (2015), who found that even highly accurate algorithms were often rejected after making a visible mistake. By presenting AI tools in government as aids rather than replacements, and by clearly communicating their accuracy and built-in safeguards, authorities can help reshape public perceptions and build confidence.

National context also shapes the appropriate emphasis for policy responses. In Japan, where citizens tend to be more comfortable with robotics and technological innovation, policymakers may have more latitude to launch pilot projects involving AI in governance. However, even in this relatively receptive environment, it remains important to address concerns about autonomy and control through strong privacy protections and clear oversight mechanisms.

While our dependent variables focused squarely on parliamentary applications of AI, we also incorporated broader measures of general technology acceptance. This is because domain-specific attitudes toward AI in parliaments are partly conditioned by underlying orientations toward AI more generally (Davis 1989; Venkatesh and Davis 2000; Venkatesh et al. 2003). Distinguishing between the two allows us to show that support for augmentation and delegation in parliamentary contexts is not reducible to generic optimism about AI, even if the latter remains an important antecedent.

It is important to acknowledge several limitations of our study. First, the survey questions address AI in fairly general terms. It is possible that different results would emerge if we had used a more experimental design, such as vignettes or scenario-based prompts that offered greater context or specificity. As such, we do not make any causal claims based on our findings.

Second, much of the existing literature on AI in parliaments focuses on its use within parliamentary administration; for example, in document processing or record management. While this is a valuable and relevant area of inquiry, it limits the extent to which we can directly link our public opinion findings to specific institutional practices in political decision-making.

Finally, we know relatively little about how MPs themselves view AI or how they are currently using it, if at all. There is a lack of systematic data on MPs' attitudes,

levels of technological self-efficacy, or openness to AI integration in their work. This creates a disconnect between citizen attitudes and parliamentary practice, and presents an important avenue for future research.

Overall, our findings suggest that while there is cautious interest in the use of AI for political decision-making, significant public reservations remain. These reservations are shaped by demographic factors, levels of institutional trust, and broader attitudes toward technology. If left unaddressed, they could hinder or delegitimize efforts to introduce AI into legislative processes.

At the same time, our results point to opportunities for building support. Policymakers and advocates can appeal to segments of the public who are more optimistic about technology and more comfortable with risk. Equally important is the need to engage with the concerns of groups that tend to be more sceptical; particularly older individuals, women, and those who lack trust in political institutions.

6. Conclusion

This study has examined how citizens in the UK and Japan view the use of AI in political decision-making, drawing on original survey data and regression analysis. The findings indicate that public opinion is far from uniformly positive. Most citizens adopt a cautious stance, with support shaped by age, gender, trust in institutions, risk tolerance, and core attitudes toward AI.

In both countries, a consistent profile emerges: younger men who trust the political system and hold optimistic views of AI are the most supportive. In contrast, older individuals, women, and those who feel threatened by AI are more sceptical. Education plays a role primarily in the UK, and its effect depends on whether AI is being used to assist or to replace decision-making.

Importantly, national differences are also evident. In Japan, support is more strongly associated with age and trust in institutions. In the UK, ideological orientation and fear of AI are more predictive. Across both contexts, a key distinction emerges between public attitudes toward AI supporting MPs and AI replacing them. Citizens are generally more open to AI being used as a decision-supporting tool by elected officials than they are to AI or robots making political decisions independently. This suggests that public legitimacy exists for AI-assisted representation, but not for full delegation of democratic authority to machines.

These findings have important practical implications. They suggest that any effort to introduce AI tools into parliamentary or policy processes must be accompanied by steps to build and maintain public legitimacy. Policymakers and political leaders should take the concerns of sceptical groups seriously. In practical terms, this requires transparency, clear avenues for appeal, human oversight, and active citizen engagement in decisions about how AI is used.

Our analysis indicates that when such safeguards are in place, public support is likely to increase. This is consistent with broader research showing that systems designed to be accurate, transparent, and fair are more likely to gain public acceptance. By contrast, neglecting these concerns may provoke resistance and erode both democratic responsiveness and the potential benefits of AI in governance.

In summary, the integration of AI into political decision-making rests on a delicate balance. While there is a clear appetite for innovation, it is tempered by enduring democratic values. Parliaments in the UK, Japan and elsewhere would be wise to proceed with caution, using evidence on public opinion as a guide. These findings also warrant reflection in relation to the more philosophical and ethical dimensions of the issue, as highlighted by Tretter (2025).

By aligning AI adoption with citizen expectations, through consultation, education and responsible design, governments can navigate both the promise and the uncertainty that AI brings to democratic institutions. As Citino (2025) suggests, introducing AI into the parliamentary toolbox raises not only technical but also normative questions. Ultimately, the long-term success of AI in governance will depend not only on how well it performs, but on how well it preserves the trust and participation of the people it is meant to serve.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Han Dorussen, Naofumi Fujimura, Naoko Matsumura, Jason Reifler, Atsushi Tago, Dorothy Yen and Masahiro Zenkyo for their help in grant acquisition and survey development.

Conflict of interest statement: None declared.

Funding statement

This research was funded by the UKRI/ESRC (grant number ES/W011913/1) and the JSPS (grant number JPJSJRP 20211704).

Ethics approval statement

The Ethical Review Committee of Brunel University London approved this research, reference number 35290-LR-Jan/2022–37,313-1.

Replication data

Full replication data and code are available from the Harvard Dataverse, at: https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/D7OETJ

References

Anckar, C. (2008) 'On the Applicability of the most Similar Systems Design and the most Different Systems Design in Comparative Research', *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 11: 389–401.

Atay, S. et al. (2025) 'Society 5.0 and Human-Centered Technology: Redefining Talent Management in the Digital age', *Sustainable Futures*, 9: 100733.

Bengtsson, Å., and Wass, H. (2011) 'The Representative Roles of MPs: A Citizen Perspective', *Scandinavian Political Studies*, 34: 143–67.

Charles, V., Rana, N. P., and Carter, L. (2022) 'Artificial Intelligence for Data-Driven Decision-Making and Governance in Public Affairs', *Government Information Quarterly*, 39: 101742.

Citino, Y. M. (2025) 'Leveraging Automated Technologies for law-Making in Italy: Generative AI and Constitutional Challenges', *Parliamentary Affairs*, 78: 625–47.

Coco, K., Kangasniemi, M., and Rantanen, T. (2018) 'Care personnel's Attitudes and Fears toward Care Robots in Elderly Care: A Comparison of Data from the Care Personnel in Finland and Japan', *Journal of Nursing Scholarship*, 50: 634–44.

Connally, C. (2025) 'Protecting Parliamentary Procedure: Bridging the Gap in Institutional Memory with Artificial Intelligence', *Australasian Parliamentary Review*, 40: 134–52.

Davis, F. D. (1989) 'Perceived Usefulness, Perceived Ease of Use, and User Acceptance of Information Technology', *MIS Quarterly*, 13: 319–40.

Dietvorst, J. P., Simmons, J. P., and Massey, C. (2015) 'Algorithm Aversion: People Erroneously Avoid Algorithms after Seeing them Err', *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, 144: 114–26.

Fitsilis, F. (2021) 'Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Parliaments: Preliminary Analysis of the Eduskunta Experiment', *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, 27: 621–33.

Fitsilis, F., von Lucke, J., and De Vrieze, F. (2025) 'Inception, Development and Evolution of Guidelines for AI in Parliaments', *The Theory and Practice of Legislation*, 1–24.

Friedman, B. (1996) 'Value-Sensitive Design', *Interactions*, 3: 16–23.

George, A. L., and Bennett, A. (2005) *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Gerring, J. (2007) *Case study Research: Principles and Practices*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Government of Japan (2025) *Jinkō chinō kanren gijutsu no kenkyū kaihatsu oyobi katsuyō no suishin ni kansuru hōritsu [Act on the Promotion of Research, Development, and Utilization of Technologies Related to Artificial Intelligence; Reiwa 7 Act No. 53] e-Gov 法令検索*. https://laws.e-gov.go.jp/law/507AC0000000053.

Gregg, B. (2018) 'The Coming Political: Challenges of Artificial Intelligence', *Digital Culture & Society*, 4: 157–80.

Guingrich, R. E., and Graziano, M. S. (2025) 'P (Doom) Versus AI Optimism: Attitudes toward Artificial Intelligence and the Factors that Shape them', *Journal of Technology in Behavioral Science*, 1–19.

Hirschl, R. (2005) 'The Question of Case Selection in Comparative Constitutional Law', *American Journal of Comparative Law*, 53: 125–56.

Hirschl, R. (2014) *Comparative Matters: The Renaissance of Comparative Constitutional Law*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Horvath, L. et al. (2023) 'Citizens' Acceptance of Artificial Intelligence in Public Services: Evidence from a Conjoint Experiment about Processing Permit Applications', *Government Information Quarterly*, 40: 101876.

House of Lords Select Committee on Artificial Intelligence (2018) *AI in the UK: Ready, Willing and Able? (Report of Session 2017–19, HL Paper 100)*House of Lords.

Ichikawa, T. (2025) 'Norms in New Technological Domains: Japan's AI Governance Strategy', in *Center for Strategic and International Studies* https://www.csis.org/analysis/norms-new-technological-domains-japans-ai-governance-strategy.

Jasanoff, S., and Kim, S. H. (2009) 'Containing the Atom: Sociotechnical Imaginaries and Nuclear Power in the United States and South Korea', *Minerva*, 47: 119–46.

König, P. D. (2023) 'Citizen Conceptions of Democracy and Support for Artificial Intelligence in Government and Politics', *European Journal of Political Research*, 62: 1280–300.

König, P. D., and Wenzelburger, G. (2020) 'Opportunity for Renewal or Disruptive Force? How Artificial Intelligence Alters Democratic Politics', *Government Information Quarterly*, 37: 101489.

Koryzis, D. et al. (2021) 'Parltech: Transformation Framework for the Digital Parliament', *Big Data and Cognitive Computing*, 5: 15.

Kreps, S., and Kriner, D. (2023) 'How AI Threatens Democracy', *Journal of Democracy*, 34: 122–31.

Kroll, J. A. et al. (2017) 'Accountable Algorithms', *University of Pennsylvania Law Review*, 165: 633–705.

Landman, T. (2008) *Issues and Methods in Comparative Politics: An introduction*, 3rd edn, London: Routledge.

Leston-Bandeira, C. (2007) 'The Impact of the Internet on Parliaments: A Legislative Studies Framework', *Parliamentary Affairs*, 60: 655–74.

Lijphart, A. (1971) 'Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method', *American Political Science Review*, 65: 682–93.

Narvaez Rojas, C. et al. (2021) 'Society 5.0: A Japanese Concept for a Superintelligent Society', *Sustainability*, 13: 6567.

Nemitz, P. (2018) 'Constitutional Democracy and Technology in the Age of Artificial Intelligence', *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society A: Mathematical, Physical and Engineering Sciences*, 376: 20180089.

Przeworski, A., and Teune, H. (1970) *The Logic of Comparative Social Inquiry*, New York: Wiley-Interscience.

Seawright, J., and Gerring, J. (2008) 'Case Selection Techniques in Case Study Research: A Menu of Qualitative and Quantitative Options', *Political Research Quarterly*, 61: 294–308.

Starke, C., and Lünich, M. (2020) 'Artificial Intelligence for Political Decision-Making in the European Union: Effects on Citizens' Perceptions of Input, Throughput, and Output Legitimacy', *Data & Policy*, 2: e16.

Tretter, M. (2025) 'Opportunities and Challenges of AI-Systems in Political Decision-Making Contexts', *Frontiers in Political Science*, 7: 1504520.

Van Noordt, C., and Misuraca, G. (2022) 'Artificial Intelligence for the Public Sector: Results of Landscaping the Use of AI in Government across the European Union', *Government Information Quarterly*, 39: 101714.

Venkatesh, V., and Davis, F. D. (2000) 'A Theoretical Extension of the Technology Acceptance Model: Four Longitudinal Field Studies', *Management Science*, 46: 186–204.

Venkatesh, V. et al. (2003) 'User Acceptance of Information Technology: Toward a Unified View', *MIS Quarterly*, 27: 425–78.

Wahl, T. (2024) 'The Rise of Data and AI in Parliamentary Proceedings – The Norwegian Parliament', *Stortinget. International Journal of Parliamentary Studies*, 4: 79–87.

Wang, W., Downey, J., and Yang, F. (2023) 'AI Anxiety? Comparing the Sociotechnical Imaginaries of Artificial Intelligence in UK', in *Chinese and Indian Newspapers*. p. 20594364231196547. Global Media and China.

Wilson, C. (2022) 'Public Engagement and AI: A Values Analysis of National Strategies', *Government Information Quarterly*, 39: 101652.

Yokoyama, H. et al. (2022) 'Octagon Measurement: Public Attitudes toward AI Ethics', *International Journal of Human-Computer Interaction*, 38: 1589–606.

Parliamentary Affairs (2025) 00, 1–22
https://doi.org/10.1093/pa/gsaf050
Original Article