



Multi-country Survey Finds Nearly 80% of Employers Aren't Worried About Unethical Use of AI. But Maybe They Should Be?

ANZ employers and employees contribute their opinions on AI ethics policies, potential misuse, liability and regulation

Companies around the world are expecting to apply artificial intelligence (AI) within their companies in the next few years but are lagging in discussions about the ethics surrounding it, new research from global technology leader Genesys® finds. More than half of the employers questioned in a multi-country opinion survey say their companies do not currently have a written policy on the ethical use of AI or bots, although 21% expressed a definite concern that their companies could use AI in an unethical manner.

The survey uncovered that nearly two-thirds (64%) of the employers surveyed globally expect to be using AI or advanced automation by 2022 to support efficiency, staffing, budgeting or performance. In Australia and New Zealand (ANZ), 44% companies surveyed say they already use it or are planning to implement it in the next 12 months.

In spite of the growing trend, an average of 54% of employers in all countries questioned say they are not troubled that AI could be used unethically by their companies as a whole, or by individual employees (52%). Employees appear more relaxed than their bosses, with only 17% expressing concern about their companies.

“As a company delivering numerous AI innovations, we understand this technology has great potential that also comes with tremendous responsibility,” said Merijn te Booij, Chief Marketing Officer, Genesys. “This research gives us important insight into how businesses and their employees are really thinking about the implications of AI – and where we as a technology community can help them steer an ethical path forward in its use.”

Millennials say “put it in writing”

Over a quarter of employers surveyed (28%) are apprehensive that their companies could face future liability for an unforeseen use of AI, yet only 23% say there is currently a written corporate policy on the ethical use of AI/bots. Meanwhile, an additional 40% of employers without a written AI ethics policy believe their companies should have one, a stance supported by 54% of employees.

Even more interesting is that more than half of employers (52%) believe companies should be required to maintain a minimum percentage of human employees versus AI-powered robots and machinery. Employees are more likely (57%) than employers (52%) to support a requirement by unions or other regulatory bodies.

The Genesys surveys underscore that Millennials (ages 18-38) are the age group most comfortable with technology, yet they also have the strongest opinions that guidelines are needed. Across the countries surveyed, the questions about AI ethics resonated more with Millennials than with Generation X (ages 39-54) or Baby Boomers (ages 55-73). Whether it's anxiety over AI, a desire for a corporate AI ethics policy, worry about liability related to AI misuse, or willingness to require a human employee-to-AI ratio — it's the youngest group of employers who consistently voice the most apprehension. ANZ millennials stood out, with a whopping 63% confirming they would like to see a minimum human to AI requirement in the workplace.

Australia and New Zealand in line with global trends – with some surprising differences

In general global employers and employees trust each other's ethics – and their companies – when it comes to AI. However, there are some surprising differences with the ANZ workforce when it comes to responsibility for training and use of AI, generational approaches, responsibility and liability.

In Australia and New Zealand, half of employers are not concerned that their employees will use AI in an unethical way, with Generation X being the least concerned (56%), however, 22% of ANZ employers are concerned their company will use AI unethically.

30% of ANZ employers believe they will face future liability for unforeseen use of AI in the workplace, which is 2% higher than the global average.

Employers in ANZ are divided when it comes to the responsibility of training employees with the skills to perform in an AI-enhanced workplace: 45% of ANZ employers believe the employee's direct manager is responsible, however, 26% of employers in ANZ believe employees are responsible for equipping themselves with the skills to be effective in an AI-enabled environment, and 21% believe that it is the responsibility of the Human Resources (HR) department.

With the rapid global deployment of advanced technology, and specifically the growth in the ANZ region, technology leaders such as Genesys need to work with employers, employees and customers, to achieve the optimal balance in this largely uncharted ethical and regulatory territory.

"Our research reveals both employers and employees welcome the increasingly important role AI-enabled technologies will play in the workplace and hold a surprisingly consistent view toward the ethical implications of this intelligent technology," te Booij said. "We advise companies to develop and document their policies on AI sooner rather than later – making employees a part of the process to quell any apprehension and promote an environment of trust and transparency." -Ends- Survey notes

Genesys (www.genesys.com), the global leader in omnichannel customer experience and contact center solutions, commissioned third-party research consultancy Vitreous World to conduct online surveys in six countries of 5,310 adult employers or employees, coming from a total pool of 28 industry categories.

There are limited interview opportunities with content experts available.

For more information and survey highlights please contact the Genesys media relations team at genesys@zadroagency.com.au or download it from the Genesys website

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