What's Trending:
AI IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT IT
PTI SURVEY RESULTS

INTRODUCTION

With so much conversation about Artificial Intelligence as the next "big thing" in local government IT, Public Technology Institute (PTI) wanted to gain a better understanding on how city and county IT executives view AI.

In August 2023 PTI surveyed local government IT executives on the current state of AI within their organization, potential impact and uses of AI, and issues regarding AI that IT executives find concerning. PTI surveyed PTI member IT executives and participants in the PTI / Rutgers University Certified Government CIO (CGCIO) program. One hundred-ninety executives from across the U.S. were contacted with a response rate of 27%.

Key Findings:

- 58% of responding IT executives believe AI will bring dramatic change to local government operations and service delivery over the next three years
- 38% of respondents stated that their IT department is currently involved in an AI project
- Ethics was ranked as the number one concern of AI by IT executives
- Cybersecurity management was ranked as the number one function that could benefit from AI
- 85% of IT executives stated that they believe they need training to better understand the implications of AI
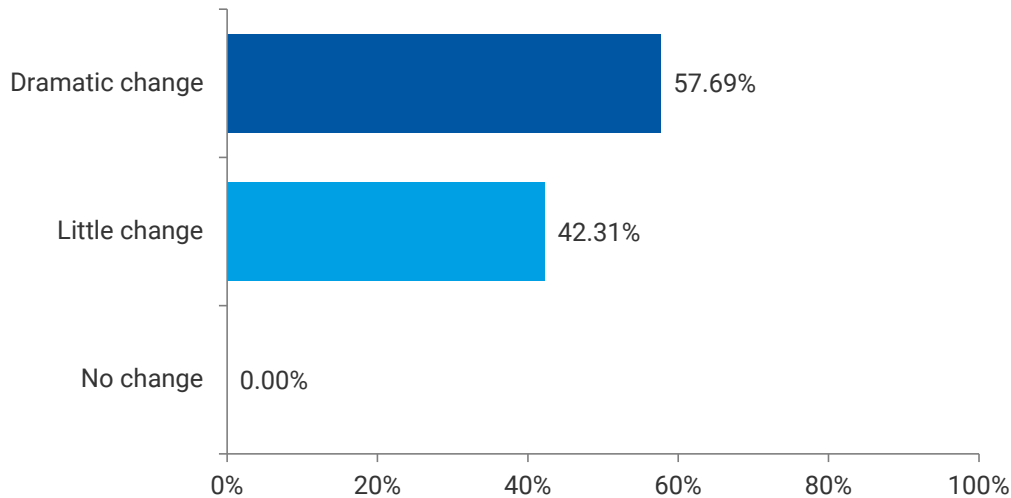
The State of AI

We began by asking IT executives whether their local government has an AI policy in place:

- 2% responded "Uncertain"
- 4% responded "Yes"
- 42% responded "No"
- 33% responded "We are working on one"
- 17% responded "We should be developing one"

It should be noted that there is a difference between policy and guidelines. For the purpose of this survey, PTI considers policy as a course of action adopted by a governing or leadership body versus guidelines, designed to steer, direct or provide recommendations for a process or course of action. PTI believes it is important to have both: AI guidelines for the exploration and development of AI-related projects or initiatives, under an overarching policy set by policy makers.
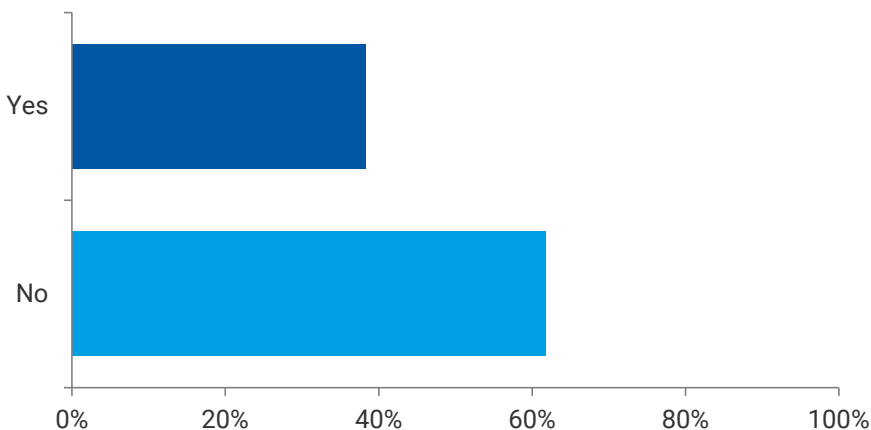
Next, we asked executives about the impact they believe AI will have on local government operations and service delivery over the next three years. Fifty-eight percent responded that AI will have dramatic change, while 42% responded AI will have little change.

What impact do you believe that AI will have on local government operations and service delivery over the next three years?

Category	Percentage
Dramatic change	57.69%
Little change	42.31%
No change	0.00%

Thirty-eight percent of respondents stated that their IT department is currently involved in an AI project, while 62% stated they are not.

Is your IT department currently involved in an AI project?

Yes	~38%
No	~62%

For those local governments that are working on an AI project, we invited participants to share what they are doing. Responses included:

- Scripting and website management
- Investigating tools for accessibility monitoring and remediation using AI
- The deployment and training of an AI chatbot to provide customer service functions
- Robotic Processing Automation policy crafting and security implementation
- Cybersecurity integration with vendors that utilize AI
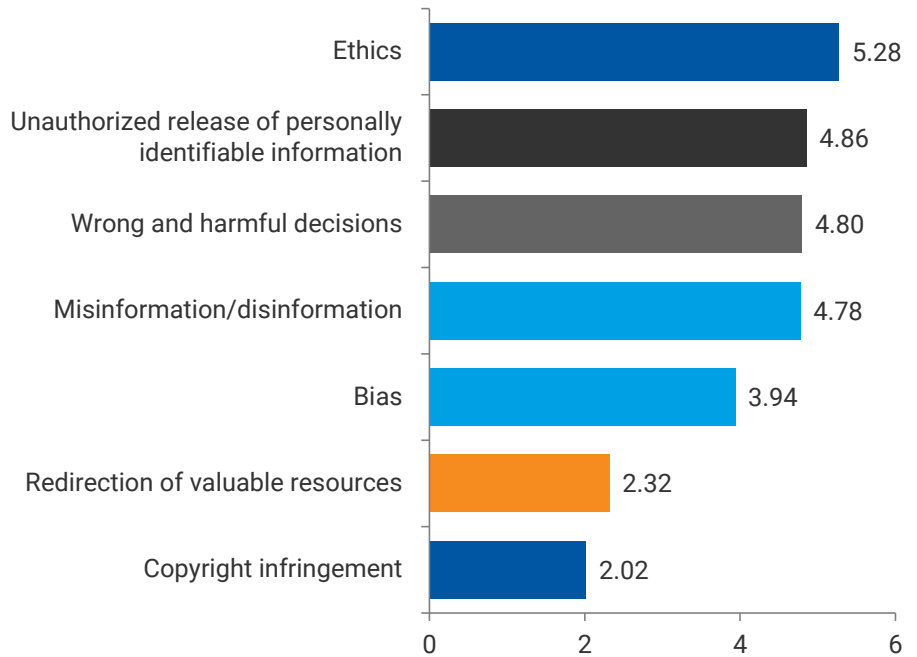- Use of AI for intrusion detection and prevention

Some respondents shared that they are experimenting internally, or working with local students on projects.

Concerns and Benefits of AI

We wanted to get a picture of the issues regarding AI that most concern local government IT executives. We provided survey participants with a list of seven issues and asked them to rank in order of most concerning to least concerning.

Based on the average weighting of the data collected, ethics was ranked number one, followed by unauthorized use of personally identifiable information, wrong and harmful decision-making, misinformation/disinformation, and bias.
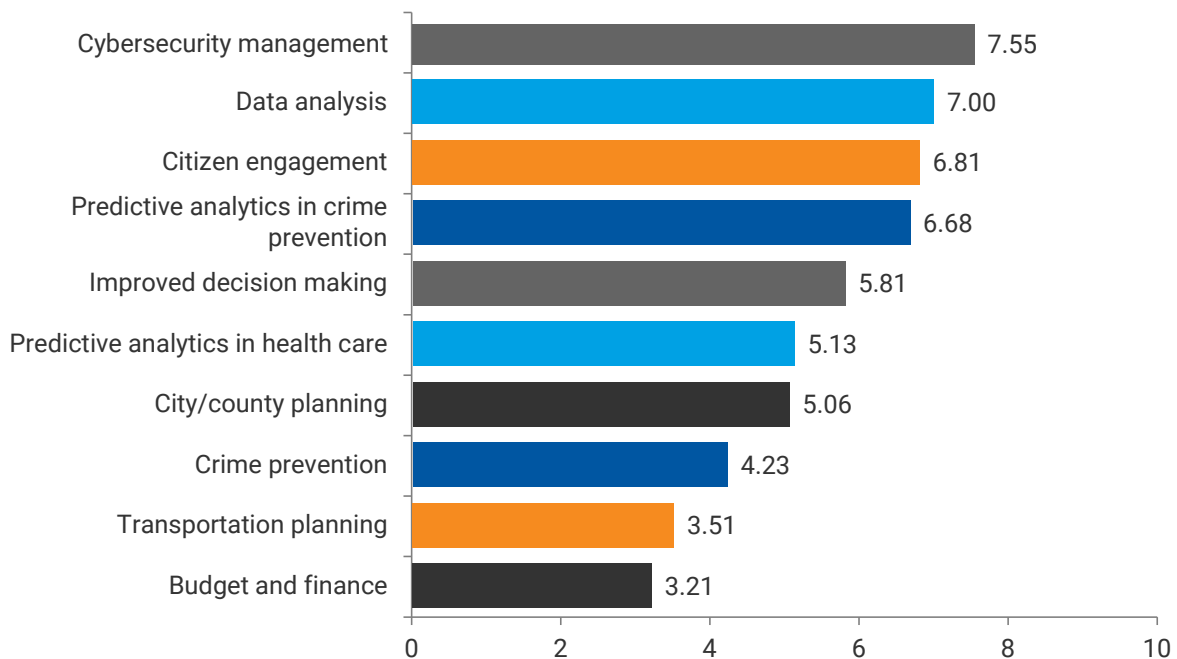
Which issues regarding AI concern you the most? (Table based on average weighting of data collected).

Issue	Value
Ethics	5.28
Unauthorized release of personally identifiable information	4.86
Wrong and harmful decisions	4.80
Misinformation/disinformation	4.78
Bias	3.94
Redirection of valuable resources	2.32
Copyright infringement	2.02

We wanted to get an idea of the functions that local governments provide that IT executives feel could benefit most from AI. We provided participants with a list of choices (ten) and asked that they rank each function from would benefit the most to which would benefit the least.

Based on the average weighting of the data collected, of the top five benefits that were selected, cybersecurity management ranked number one. Data analysis was second on the list, followed by citizen engagement, predictive analytics in crime prevention, and improved decision making.
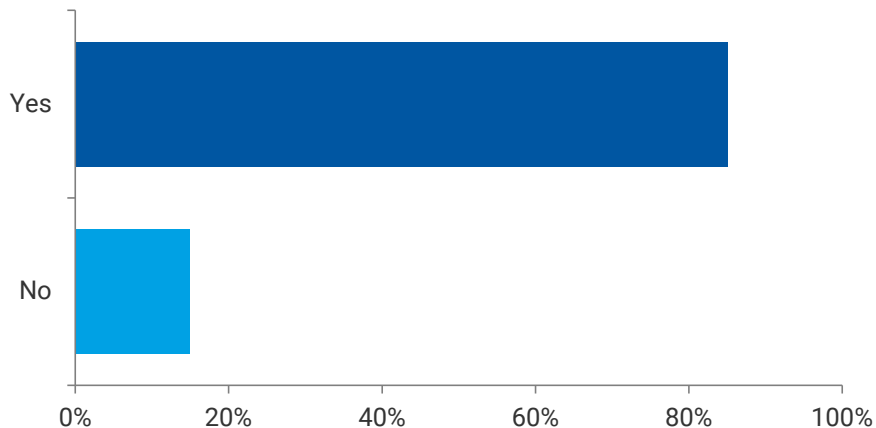
Which of the following functions of local government do you feel can benefit the most from AI? (Table based on average weighting of data collected).

Function	Value
Cybersecurity management	7.55
Data analysis	7.00
Citizen engagement	6.81
Predictive analytics in crime prevention	6.68
Improved decision making	5.81
Predictive analytics in health care	5.13
City/county planning	5.06
Crime prevention	4.23
Transportation planning	3.51
Budget and finance	3.21

Training

When it comes to training, we had three questions. First, we asked if the respondent believes that IT executives need training to better understand the implications of AI. An overwhelming 85% of respondents replied yes.

Do you believe that you need training to better understand the implications of AI?

Whether training in the use of AI should be made available to their government's staff within the next two years was the focus of our next question. Fifty-one percent responded yes, that training should be mandatory. Forty-seven percent responded yes, but training should be optional. Two percent responded that training for their staff is not needed at this time.

When asked if PTI were to offer a course or educational programming on AI, would the IT executive of IT staff be interested in participating, 91% responded in the affirmative.

Next Steps for Local Officials

Elected Leaders and Policy Makers:

Engage! Whether it be with officials in other communities to understand what they are doing, or with your management and IT staff to better understand the implications of AI with the ultimate goal of setting policy direction for your community. Now is the time to start your policy development. And, as the interest in AI expands, be prepared to share with the community what your organization's goals are.

IT Executives:

Reach out to your customers and business partners - be in the forefront and lead the discussion around AI versus playing catch up and responding piecemeal. This includes providing training and information sharing.

Work with management and policy leaders on policy development for the organization and community, while at the same time develop guidelines that you can put in place for AI exploration and implementation.

IT Practitioners:

Be inquisitive. Research AI. Explore and consider training and educational opportunities.

What is PTI Doing on the Topic of AI?

Public Technology Institute – a division of Fusion Learning Partners – focuses on technology issues that impact local government. PTI programs focus on leadership development, membership, research, and consulting. Fusion Learning Partners is a non-profit organization.

PTI has added AI as a module for the PTI / Rutgers University CGCIO program, a national certification program that addresses the technology leadership and management challenges impacting the local government IT community.

Because of the interest, as cited in this survey, for educational and training on AI, PTI is developing a pilot program for local government executives and their staffs.

We will continue to provide insight for local officials to consider as they explore the potential of AI. This includes providing commentary and articles, monitoring local government policy development and interviewing public and private sector leaders and practitioners who are actively engaged on this topic.

PTI is committed to work with partner organizations to educate officials on the impact will have on government service delivery and why city and county management and elected leaders need to be more than made aware, but to be involved in secure and ethical AI policy and strategy development.

To find out more about PTI, and if you would like to share your ideas for future AI-related research, webinars and articles, please contact Dale Bowen, Deputy Director, _dbowen@fusionlp.org_. We welcome your input!

Resources

PTI Commentary

Making government AI-ready begins with an AI-ready workforce
americancityandcounty.com/2023/08/16/making-government-ai-ready-begins-with-an-ai-ready-workforce/

In machines do we trust?
americancityandcounty.com/2022/11/16/in-machines-do-we-trust/

Generative AI expands the race for search and meaning - Implications for society and government
americancityandcounty.com/2023/02/15/generative-ai-expands-the-race-for-search-and-meaning-implications-for-society-and-government/

How can local governments regulate generative AI—Just ask ChatGPT
americancityandcounty.com/2023/07/19/how-can-local-governments-regulate-generative-ai-just-ask-chatgpt/

Skarkbytes.net Podcasts

A Conversation with Alexa and ChatGPT – Communicating with AI
blubrry.com/1469918/94427628/season-3-episode-6-march-22-a-conversation-with-alexa-and-chatgpt-communicating-with-ai/

Data Governance the Foundation of AI - A Special Encore Edition
blubrry.com/1469918/104129663/season-3-episode-12-data-governance-the-foundation-of-ai-a-special-encore-edition/

City of Tempe Adopts Ethical AI Policy – The How and Why
blubrry.com/1469918/111886838/season-3-episode-14-city-of-tempe-adopts-ethical-ai-policy-the-how-and-why/

Articles and Policies

Exploring AI Applications in City Government: The Promise and the Risks
nlc.org/article/2023/08/31/exploring-ai-applications-in-city-government-the-promise-and-the-risks/

City of Boston, MA Interim Guidelines for Using Generative AI
boston.gov/sites/default/files/file/2023/05/Guidelines-for-Using-Generative-AI-2023.pdf

City of San Jose, CA Information Technology Department Generative AI Guideline
sanjoseca.gov/your-government/departments-offices/information-technology/itd-generative-ai-guideline

Twelve Steps Local Governments Can Take to Successfully Use AI
govtech.com/opinion/12-steps-local-governments-can-take-to-successfully-use-ai

Counties build AI framework to harness its potential, bolster protection
naco.org/articles/counties-build-ai-framework-harness-its-potential-bolster-protection