Article: Voters can be rapidly swayed by AI chatbots
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AI SUMMARY:

Research from Cornell University reveals that AI chatbots can significantly influence voter opinions and intentions, with shifts of 10 percentage points or more observed across various political contexts. The studies highlight the persuasive power of factual claims, though accuracy can diminish as persuasive tactics increase.

KEY POINTS:

Influence of AI Chatbots on Voters

- AI chatbots can shift voter opinions about political candidates and policies substantially, with changes noted by up to 10 percentage points or more.
- Researchers discovered that chatbots primarily use factual claims to persuade voters, though unverified claims may also be presented.

Cornell University Studies Overview

- Conducted by professors David Rand and Gordon Pennycook, the studies used controlled conversations between voters and chatbots, testing in the U.S., Canada, and Poland.
- The U.S. study included over 2,300 participants shortly before the 2024 presidential election. Chatbots advocating for Kamala Harris or Donald Trump influenced participants' views significantly.

Results from Different Countries

- When advocating for Harris, chatbots shifted Donald Trump supporters' views by 3.9 points towards her policies, while Trump's chatbot shifted Harris supporters by 1.51 points.
- In Canada and Poland, chatbot influence exceeded 10 percentage points among opposition voters, showcasing stronger effects than traditional political ads.

Effectiveness of Argumentation Styles

- Chatbots utilized polite tones and evidence-based arguments rather than insults or emotional appeals, proving more persuasive.
- Blocking chatbots from using factual claims drastically reduced their persuasive power, demonstrating that specific factual claims are crucial for influence.

AI Model Performance and Challenges

- Students across the UK participated in trials with nearly 77,000 individuals discussing over 700 issues. Larger AI models were found to be more persuasive due to content-rich arguments.
- A formulation optimized for persuasion achieved a striking 25 percentage point shift in opposition voters' attitudes, albeit at the cost of accuracy of the claims presented.

Ethical Considerations and Safeguards

- Safety measures were in place during studies, ensuring participants knew they were interacting with AI, which helped mitigate biases.
- Researchers acknowledged the limitation that only engaging individuals can be influenced; however, AI's role in political discourse is escalating, raising potential ethical concerns about misinformation.