

Being human in the age of AI

Imagining
THE
**Digital
Future**
CENTER

Lee Rainie
Human Edge Conference
Elon-RTI
9.17.25



ELON UNIVERSITY

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How Are We Changing in the Age of AI? What Does This Mean for Humanity?

Experts predict major shifts by 2035 in the ways people think, feel, act and relate to one another

Latest Research

Being human in 2035: How are we changing in the age of AI?

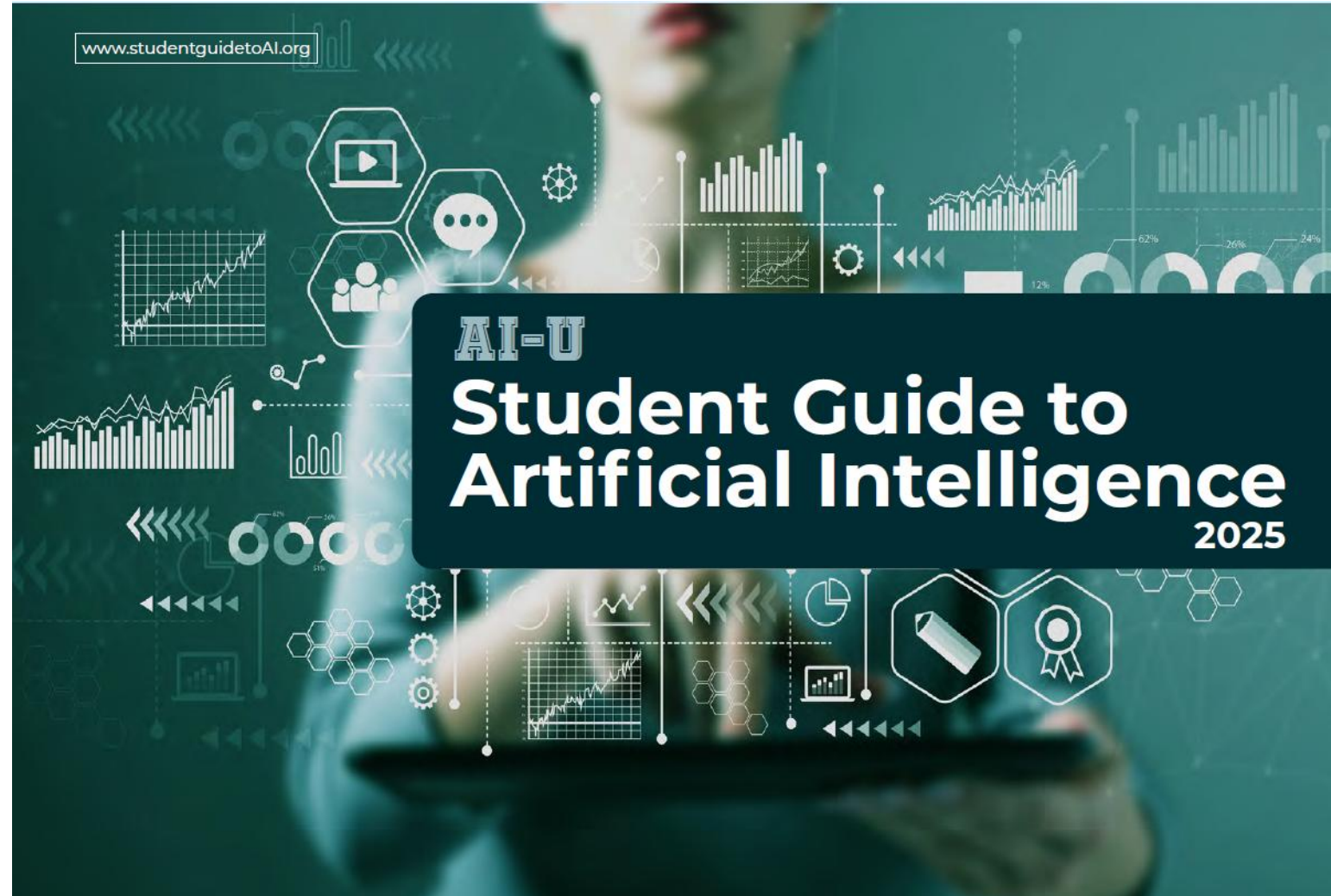
In our latest survey of tech experts, the majority says that – as humans and AI evolve over the next decade – the magnitude of change will be “deep and meaningful” or even “fundamental and revolutionary.”

Our increasingly human-like engagement with AI language models

A national survey finds LLM users have human-like encounters with these tools, and some users say the models have personality traits that are both pleasing and dismaying.

<https://imaginingthedigitalfuture.org/>

Elon Student Guide to AI - 2025



<https://studentguidetoai.org/>

Higher education's essential role in preparing humanity for the artificial intelligence revolution

- 1) People, not technology, must be at the center of our work
- 2) We should promote digital inclusion within and beyond our institutions
- 3) Digital and information literacy is an essential part of a core education
- 4) AI tools should enhance teaching and learning
- 5) Learning about technologies is an experiential, lifelong process
- 6) AI research and development must be done responsibly

https://www.elon.edu/u/imagining/event-coverage/global-igf/igf-2023/higher_ed_ai_statement/

The path to our new study

August 6, 2014

PewResearchCenter

NUMBERS, FACTS AND TRENDS SHAPING THE WORLD

FOR RELEASE AUGUST 6, 2014

Digital Life in 2025

AI, Robotics, and the Future of Jobs

Experts envision automation and intelligent digital agents permeating vast areas of our work and personal lives by 2025, but they are divided on whether these advances will displace more jobs than they create.

<https://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/9/2014/08/Future-of-AI-Robotics-and-Jobs.pdf>

“

The central question of 2025 will be: What are people for in a world that does not need their labor, and where only a minority are needed to guide the 'bot-based economy?



— STOWE BOYD, LEAD RESEARCHER
AT GIGAOM RESEARCH

”

NBER WORKING PAPER SERIES

HARD EVIDENCE ON SOFT SKILLS

James J. Heckman
Tim D. Kautz

Working Paper 18121
<http://www.nber.org/papers/w18121>

NATIONAL BUREAU OF ECONOMIC RESEARCH
1050 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02138
June 2012



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Nobel Prize Winner Calls for Harder Research on Soft Skills

National Soft Skills / Nobel Prize Winner Calls for Harder Research on Soft Skills

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Since then, we have reported on these other AI-related topics....



Since then, we have reported on

**Imagining the Internet Center
Pew Research Center**

Digital Life Trends 2035?

Experts Share Hopes, Fears

Healthcare, Science and Education Top Hopes;

AI + Surveillance Capitalism/Fascism = Top Worry

February 29, 2024



Theme 1: We will have to reimagine what it means to be human

Theme 2: Societies must restructure, reinvent or replace entrenched systems

Theme 3: Humanity could be greatly enfeebled by AI

Theme 4: Don't fear the tech; people are the problem and the solution

Theme 5: Key benefits will arise

<https://imaginingthedigitalfuture.org/reports-and-publications/the-impact-of-artificial-intelligence-by-2040/the-17th-future-of-digital-life-experts-canvassing/>

April 2, 2025



<https://imaginingthedigitalfuture.org/reports-and-publications/being-human-in-2035/>

1-Curiosity and capacity to learn

2-Creativity

3-Decision-making and problem-solving abilities

4-Capacity to think deeply

5-Metacognition, think about your own thinking

6-Social and emotional intelligence

7-Empathy, application of moral judgment

8-Self-identity, meaning, and purpose in life

9-Trust in shared values and cultural norms

10-Individual agency

11-Mental well-being

12-Confidence in their own abilities

Today: What the public thinks



<https://imaginingthedigitalfuture.org/reports-and-publications/public-views-on-being-human-in-2035/>

N=1,005 U.S. adults on SSRS Opinion Panel
Conducted July 17-20, 2025
Margin of error: +/- 3.5 percentage points

Half of U.S. adults said the magnitude of change in key human capacities in the next decade will be 'deep and meaningful' or 'revolutionary'

% of U.S. adults who said artificial intelligence and related technologies are likely to **change the essence of being human** in these directions by 2035

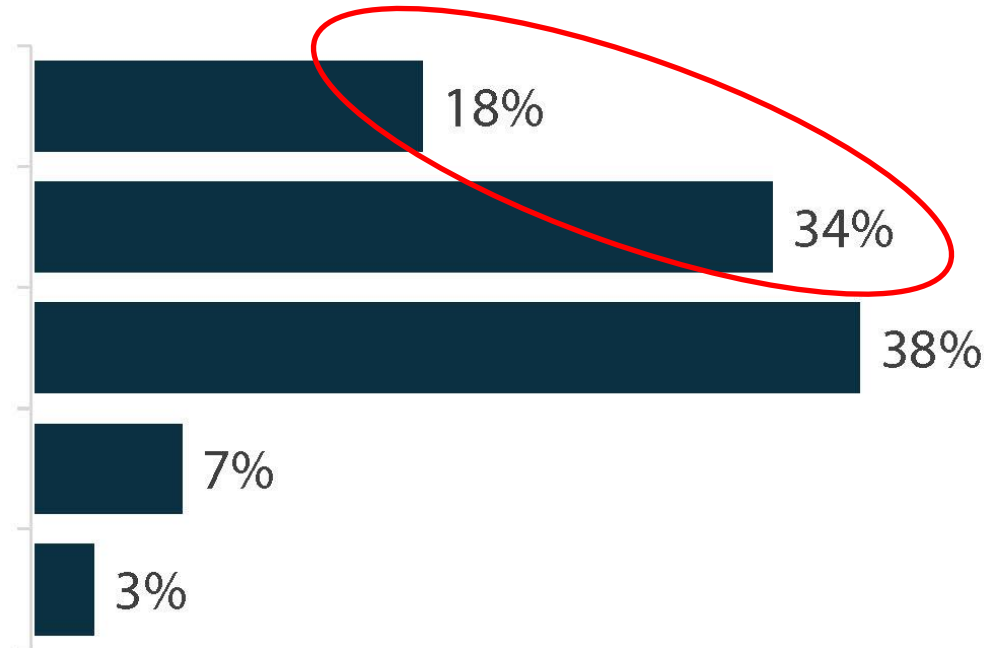
Dramatic: There will be a fundamental, revolutionary change

Considerable: There will be deep and meaningful change

Moderate and noticeable: There will be some clear, distinct change

Barely perceptible: There will be minor change

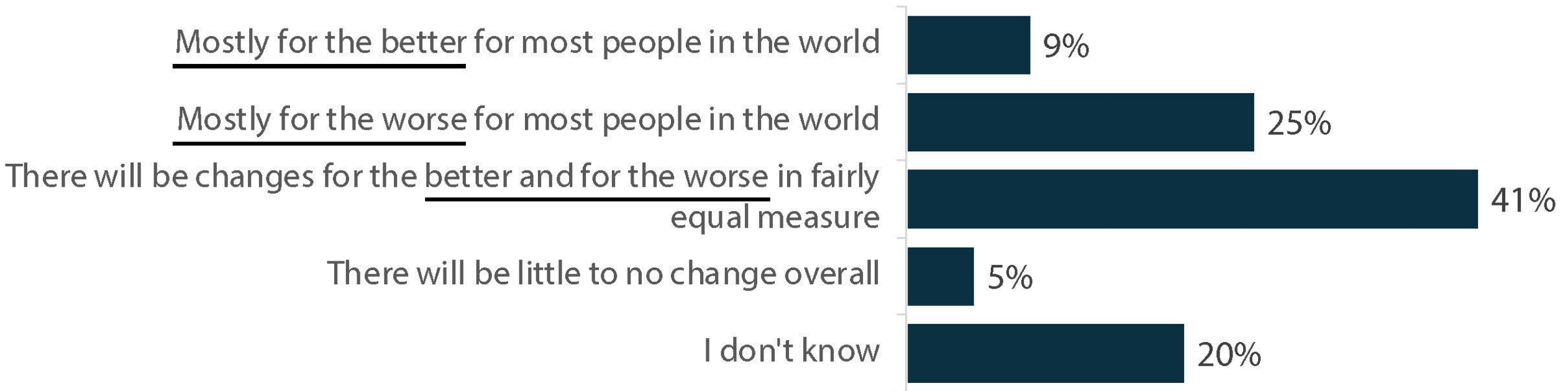
Inconsequential: There will be no noticeable change



Source: Elon University Imagining the Digital Future Center survey July 17-20, 2025

Americans said advancing AI will have a mixed impact in the coming decade on the essence of being human

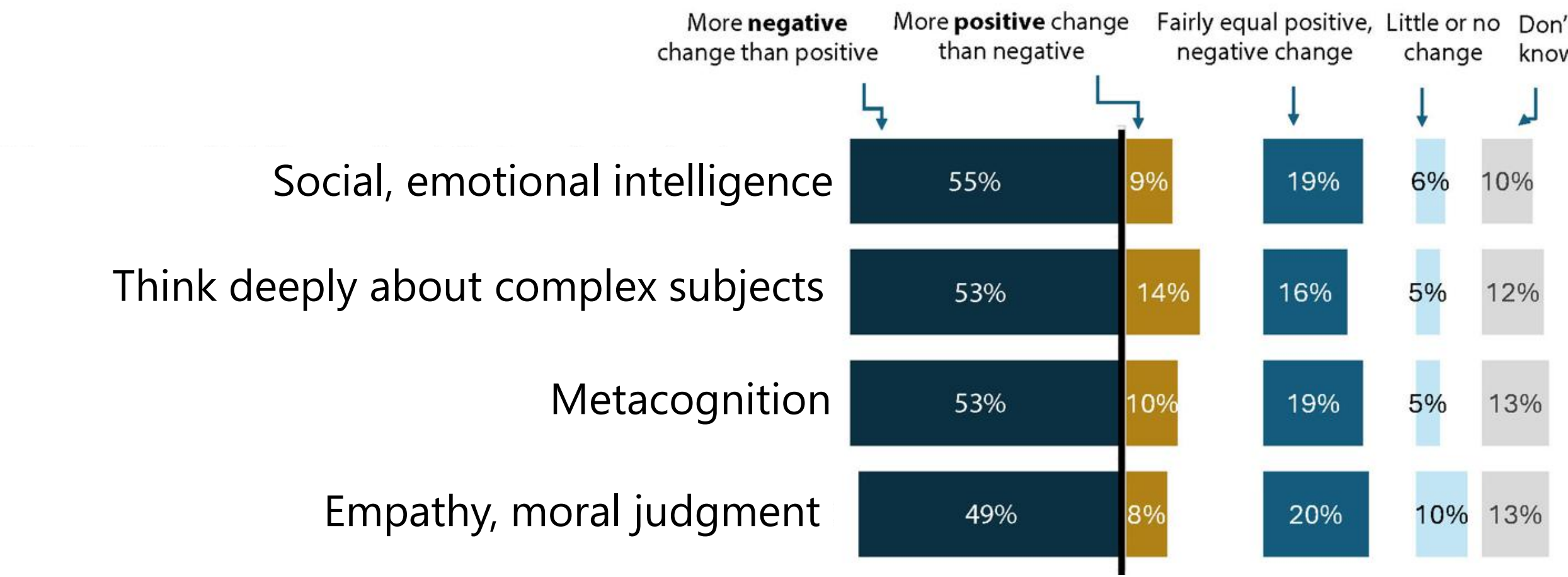
% of U.S. adults who said uses of artificial intelligence and related technologies are likely to **change the essence of being human** in these directions by 2035



Source: Elon University Imagining the Digital Future Center survey July 17-20, 2025

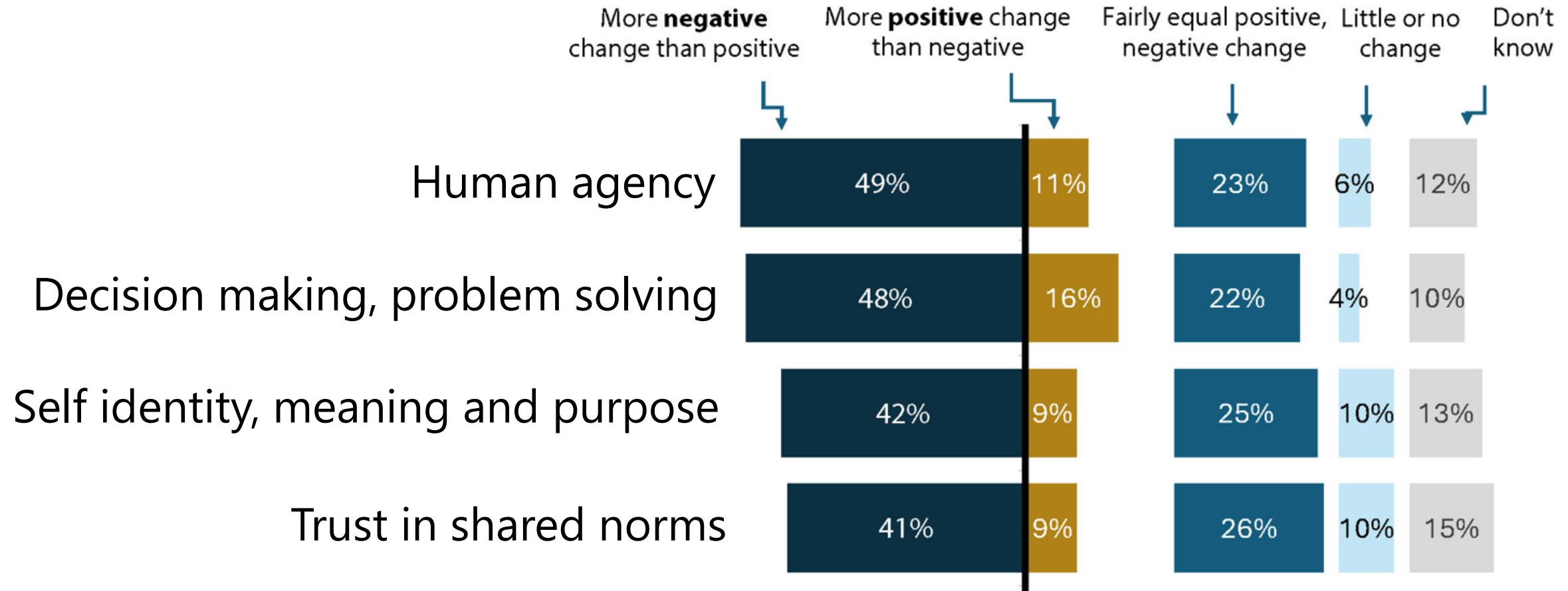
The public is much more negative than positive about AIs' impact on key human cognitive and social traits in the coming decade

% of U.S. adults who said the co-evolution of humans and AI is likely to affect these key aspects of humans' capacities and behaviors by 2035 in the following ways



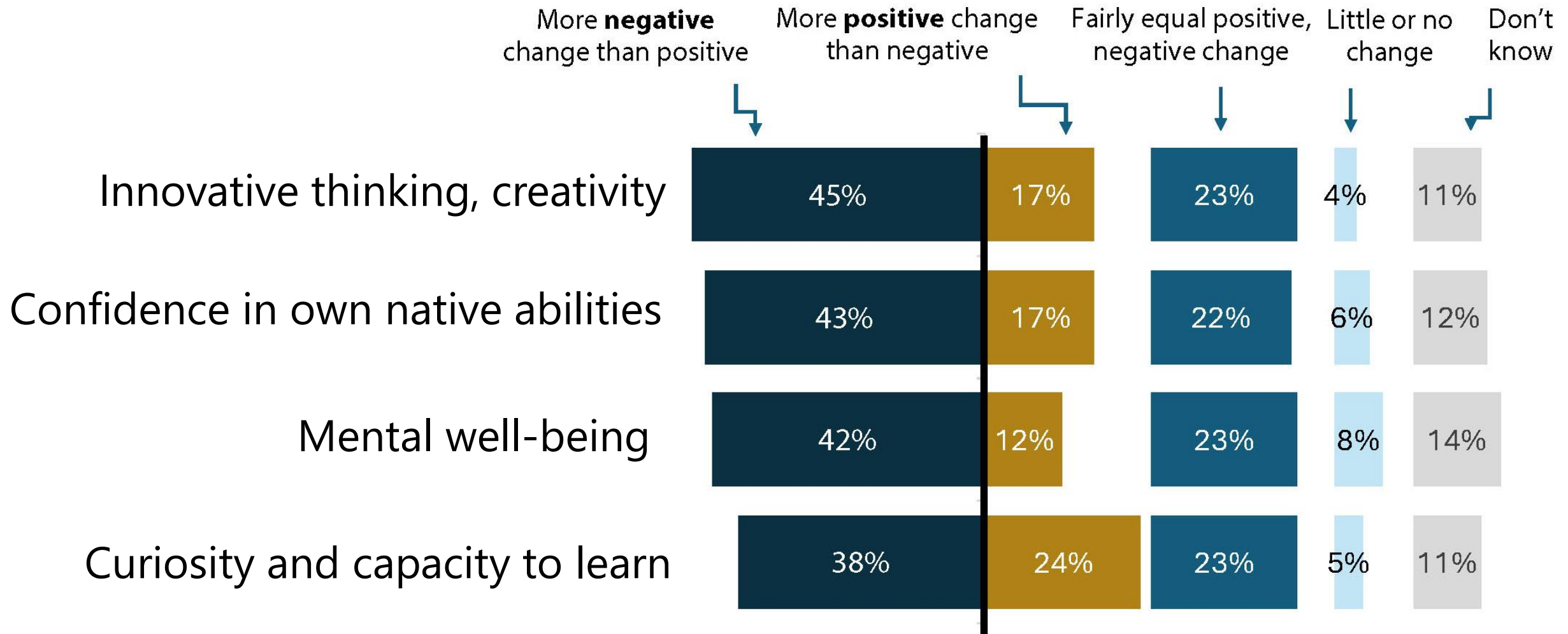
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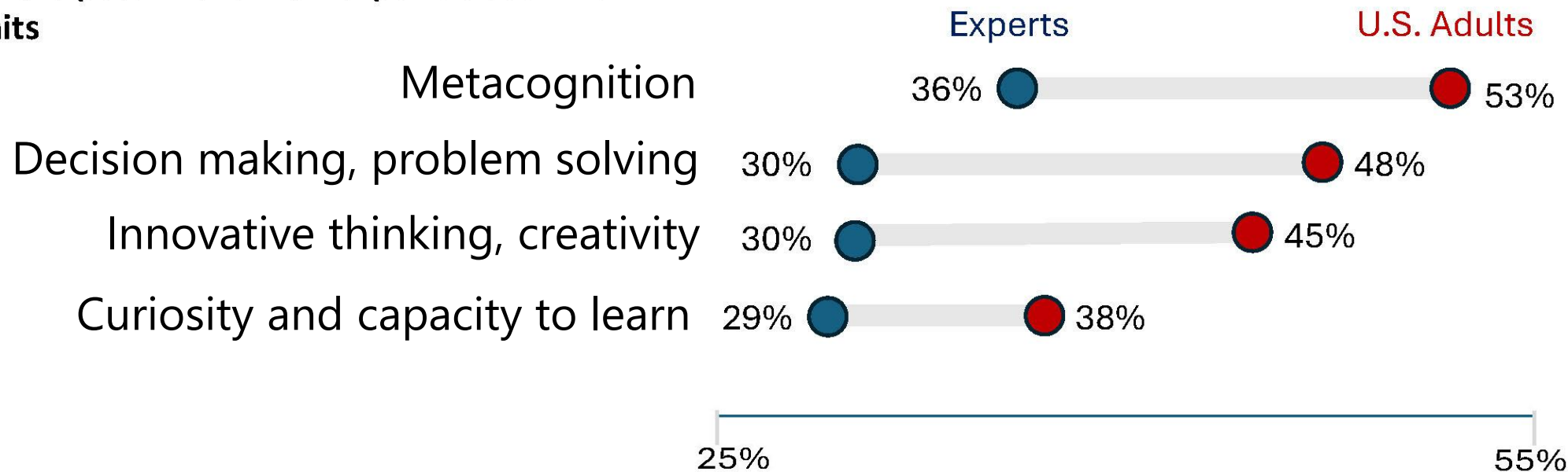
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How public opinion and experts' views compare as they assess the impact of AI on key human capacities and traits

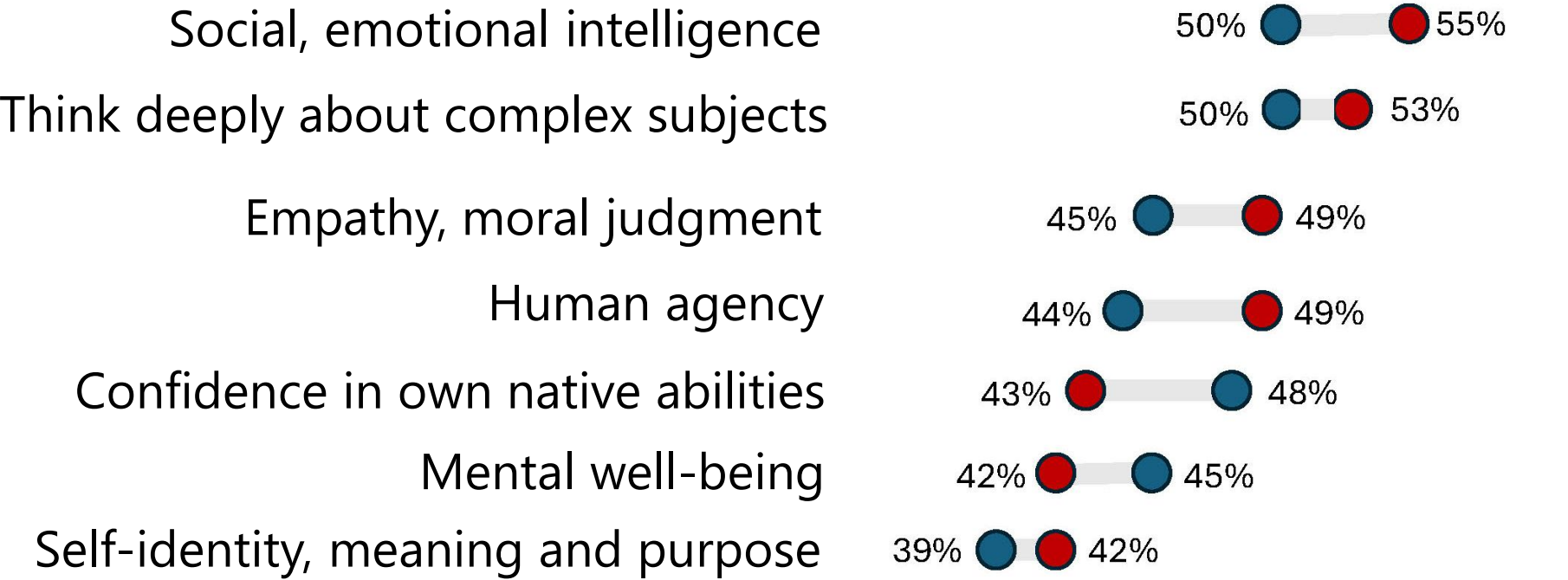
% of U.S. adults and experts who said that the integration of AI with human activities will be **more negative than positive** by the year 2035

Where the public is more pessimistic than experts about AIs' impact on human traits

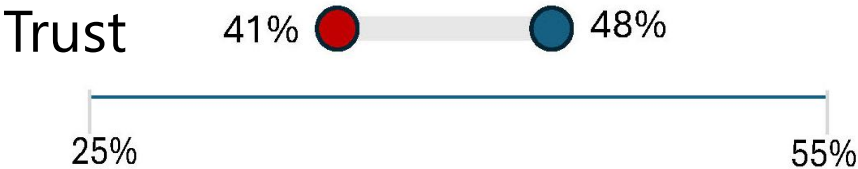


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Where the public and experts see AIs' impact somewhat similarly

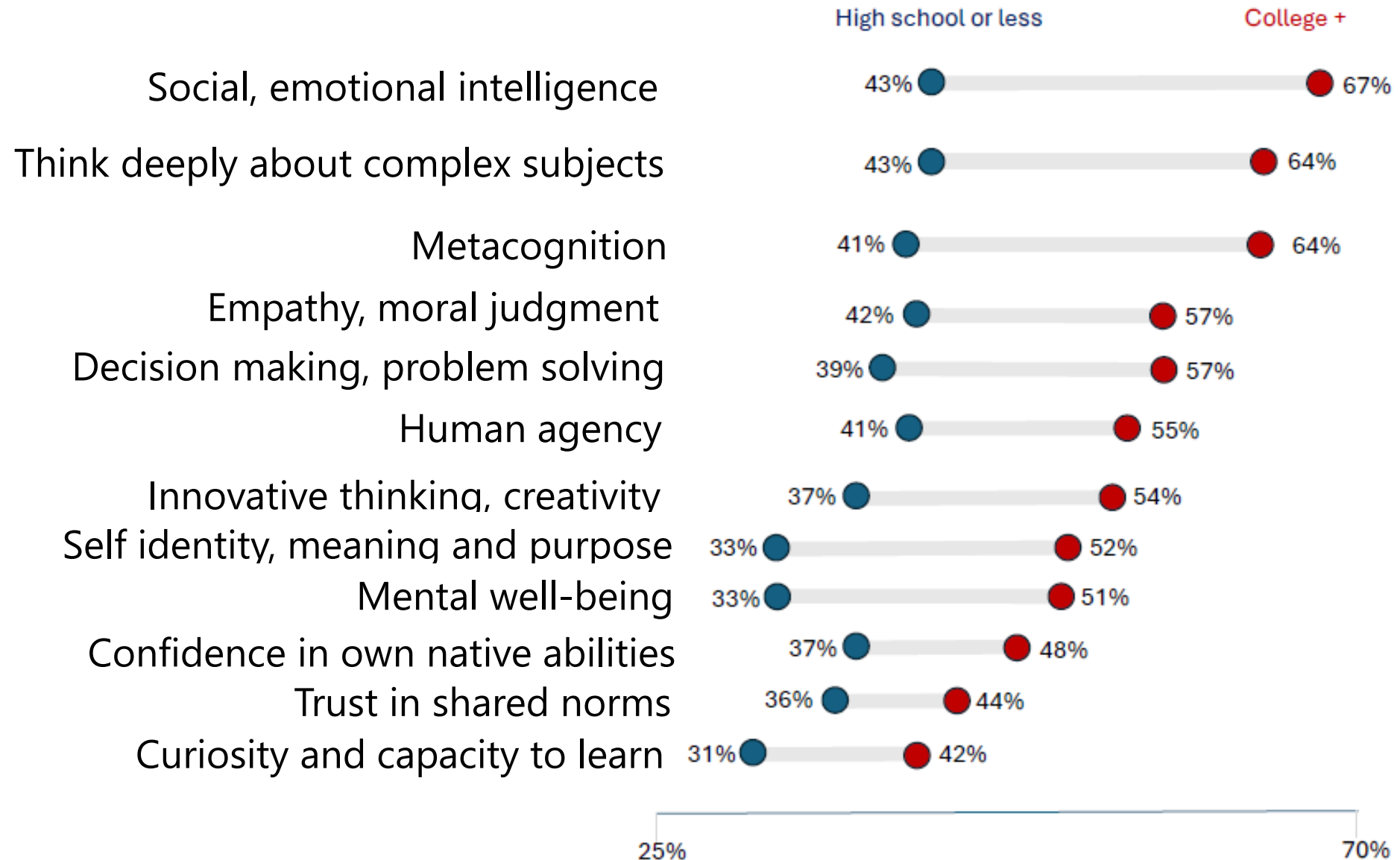


Where experts are more pessimistic than the public about AIs' impact on human traits



Those with higher levels of education are more worried about the effects of AI on human capacities

% in each group who said the impact of AI on these human traits by 2035 will be **more negative than positive**



Grand themes of this work

- This is a pivotal moment that will affect the way things evolve
- New intelligences will become omnipresent soon – and they will be seductive
- The nature of human experience will be transformed we interact with synthetic systems that create meaning and understanding
- Boundaries will be shattered: intelligence itself ... reality and fiction ... human and synthetic creations ... skilled practitioners and augmented humans ... what we think we know and what everyone else knows
- New socio-economic disparities are inevitable

Thank you!

