

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Trusting AI Agents: What Makes People Feel Safe, Informed, and in Control?

You are being invited to take part in this research study. Before you decide if you would like to take part, it is important that you read this document so you understand why the study is being carried out and what it will involve.

Reading this document, discussing it with others, or asking any questions you might have will help you decide whether you would like to take part.

What is the Purpose of the Study?

This study explores how people understand and judge trust in agentic AI systems. These are AI systems that can plan, act, and carry out tasks on a person's behalf, sometimes with limited human oversight.

The study will examine how adult users, AI designers/product practitioners, and institutional actors think about trust, safety, control, accountability, and contestability in these systems. It will also compare views from the United Kingdom and Nigeria to understand how social, regulatory, and institutional contexts may shape trust in AI.

Why have I been invited?

You have been invited because you are either:

1. an adult user of AI tools,
2. an AI designer, product practitioner, UX researcher, or professional involved in AI system development, or
3. someone with relevant institutional, governance, policy, or accountability experience.

You must be aged 18 or over to take part.

Do I have to take part?

No. Taking part is voluntary. You may choose not to take part, or you may withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason and without any negative consequence.

What will happen if I take part?

You will be invited to take part in one semi-structured interview lasting approximately 45–60 minutes. The interview may take place online through Microsoft Teams or Zoom, or in person where appropriate.

You will first be asked a few background questions about your experience with AI systems. You will then be shown short written scenarios describing AI systems carrying out tasks on a user's behalf, such as managing communications, making recommendations, acting across apps, or supporting decisions.

You will be asked about your reactions, expectations, concerns, and reasoning in response to these scenarios. You do not need specialist technical knowledge to take part unless you are participating as an AI/product practitioner or institutional actor.

With your consent, the interview will be audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis.

What are the possible disadvantages of taking part?

The main inconvenience is the time required for the interview. Some questions may ask you to reflect on trust, risk, error, control, or professional practice. You do not have to answer any question you are uncomfortable with.

Practitioner and institutional participants will not be asked to disclose confidential organisational information.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

There may be no direct personal benefit. However, your contribution will help improve understanding of how agentic AI systems can be designed, governed, and communicated in ways that better support trust, user control, and accountability.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential and anonymous?

Yes, your name and contact details will be stored separately from your research data. Interview transcripts will be pseudonymised, and identifying details such as names, organisations, locations, or product names will be removed. Wherever direct quotations is used in publications or reports, but these will be anonymised.

How will my data be stored, and how long will it be stored for?

Research data will be stored securely using password-protected, university-approved systems with restricted access. Consent forms and contact details will be stored separately from interview data.

Audio recordings will be deleted after transcription and verification. Anonymised transcripts and research notes may be retained for research, publication, and audit purposes in line with Northumbria University policy.

What categories of personal data will be collected and processed in this study?

The study may collect:

- * your name and contact details for recruitment and consent;
- * basic contextual information such as job role, country of residence, and experience with AI;
- * audio recordings of interviews, with consent;
- * interview transcripts;
- * researcher notes.

No special category personal data will be intentionally collected. You will be advised not to disclose sensitive personal or confidential organisational information.

What is the legal basis for processing personal data?

Northumbria University will process personal data for research carried out in the public interest. The University will comply with the UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018. For Nigerian participants, data handling will also take account of the Nigeria Data Protection Act 2023 where relevant.

Who are the recipients or categories of recipients of personal data, if any?

Personal data will be accessed and processed by the Northumbria University research team and any approved research assistants working on the study. Where transcription support is used, audio recordings may be processed through a university-approved transcription platform or service for transcription purposes only.

Identifiable personal data, including names and contact details, will not be shared outside the UK/EU. No identifiable personal data will be shared with employers, professional bodies, funders, or external organisations.

If research support is provided in Nigeria, only anonymised or pseudonymised research data will be shared with authorised members of the research team where necessary. Identifiable data will be removed or minimised before any transfer, and all

data will be stored using secure, password-protected, university-approved systems with restricted access.

What will happen to the results of the study, and could personal data collected be used in future research?

The findings may be reported in academic publications, conference presentations, research reports, teaching materials, and future research outputs. Any quotations used will be anonymised, and participants will not be named or directly identified.

Anonymised research data may be used in future research on trustworthy AI, human-AI interaction, and agentic AI systems. Personally identifiable data will not be reused for a new purpose without appropriate ethical approval and safeguards. Participants may request a summary of the findings by contacting the researcher.

Who is organising and funding the study?

The study is organised by Northumbria University.

Funding source: Stemres Foundational Research Grant [ST04/2024/89911921]

Who has reviewed this study?

The research project, submission reference [insert project ID number], has been approved through Northumbria University's Ethics Online system. It has been reviewed to safeguard participants' interests and approval has been granted to conduct the study.

What are my rights as a participant in this study?

Taking part is voluntary. You may choose not to take part or may withdraw from the study without giving a reason and without negative consequence.

You have the ([individual's rights under GDPR](#)) in relation to their personal data, including the right to request access to a copy of their personal data ([Subject Access Request](#)) and, in certain circumstances, the right to request correction of inaccurate personal data. You also have the right to object to decisions being taken by automated means.

If participants are dissatisfied with how Northumbria University processes their personal data, they have the right to complain to the Information Commissioner's Office. For more information see [the ICO website](#).

Contacts for further information

Researcher email: o.dele-ajayi@northumbria.ac.uk

Name and contact details of the Records and Information Officer at Northumbria University, Duncan James (dp.officer@northumbria.ac.uk).

You can find out more about how we use your information at our [GDPR webpage](#), or by contacting a member of the research team.