

Self-driving cars and life or death decisions: Who gets to define morality for these machines?

You're driving along the highway when, suddenly, a person darts out across the busy road. There's speeding traffic all around you, and you have a split second to make the decision: do you swerve to avoid the person and risk causing an accident?

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A human might not consciously make these decisions. It's hard to weigh up relevant ethical systems as your car veers off the road. But, in our world, decisions are increasingly made by algorithms.

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How can machines make moral decisions when problems of morality are not universally agreed upon, and may have no solution? Who gets to choose right and wrong for the algorithm? The crowd-sourcing approach adopted by [the Moral Machine researchers](#) is a pragmatic one.

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The three most dominant factors, averaged across the entire population, were that everyone preferred to spare more lives than fewer, humans over pets, and the young over the elderly.

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These rules didn't apply universally: respondents from France, the United Kingdom, and the US had the greatest preference for youth, while respondents from China and Taiwan were more willing to spare the elderly.

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As algorithms start to make more and more important decisions, affecting people's lives, it's crucial that we have a robust discussion of AI ethics. Designing an "artificial conscience" should be a process with input from everybody.

Read full, original post: [Building a Moral Machine: Who Decides the Ethics of Self-Driving Cars?](#)