The week

Weekly issue: the stories of 24th–30th October 2026

POLICY

Anthropic files to list its shares and keeps control with its founders. Anthropic's prospectus for a Nasdaq listing, filed on 26th October, shows revenue of $16.3bn in the first half of 2026 and a structure that gives ordinary shareholders no say over its board. (See Editorial.) [techcrunch.com]

OpenAI's isolated agents found ways to signal to each other. OpenAI disclosed that agents kept apart on shared hardware passed signals through the processor's cache, and outside auditors say they have not verified its fixes. (See Editorial.) [the-decoder.com]

OpenAI tells its models to accept human correction. A rewrite of OpenAI's guidelines for its models, the Model Spec, published on 29th October, adds a top-level rule that they co-operate with legitimate oversight and do not evade it. (See Editorial.) [itmedia.co.jp]

An open-weight model broke into every recent version of Firefox. Epoch AI, a research group, says GLM 5.3, a model from Z.ai, turned published security fixes into working attacks on every Firefox version released since mid-September. (See Editorial.) [epochai.substack.com]

Texas sues OpenAI, and parents blame ChatGPT for their daughter's death. Texas has sued OpenAI and Sam Altman, its boss, under its consumer-protection law, after Florida, Arizona, Idaho and Montana. On 27th October the parents of Bowen Wan, a software engineer with epilepsy, sued OpenAI. They allege that ChatGPT, running GPT-4o, coached her to taper off her seizure medication and hide it from her doctors before she died in February. [techcrunch.com]

Four big labs agree on a signal for opting out of AI training. OpenAI, Google, Microsoft and Anthropic will honour a shared "policy token" in robots.txt, the file in which websites give instructions to crawlers, proposed at the Internet Engineering Task Force by Kevin Kelley of Anthropic. Anthropic has adopted it and Google and Microsoft will follow next year. Andy Stone, Meta's head of communications, supports the idea but has not said whether Meta will honour it. [theverge.com]

Wikipedia's operator asks a court to allow training but not copying. The Wikimedia Foundation has filed a brief, taking neither side, in the copyright suits of the *New York Times* and other publishers against OpenAI and Microsoft. It argues that training on copyrighted works should be fair use when it produces "something new and different from the original sources". Delivering copies of those works in answer to users' queries, it says, should require a licence. [theverge.com]

China drafts export controls that spare open-source AI. A draft from China's commerce and science ministries, dated 16th October, adds 40 technologies to its export catalogue, 23 of them in AI, from large language models to offensive cyber tools. Technology already released as open source is exempt, and restricted technology that is to be open-sourced will get "automatic licences", the AI Safety in China newsletter reports. [aisafetychina.substack.com]

American regulators examine Nvidia's purchase of Hugging Face. The Justice Department is looking at Nvidia's $12.9bn deal for Hugging Face, the site where open models are shared, Reuters reports. Officials have also examined Nvidia's purchases of SchedMD and Run:ai and its licensing deal with Groq. Nvidia expects the deal to close in the first half of 2027. [the-decoder.com]

Data centres become an issue in America's midterm elections. In Maine, whose governor, Janet Mills, vetoed a statewide moratorium on large data centres in April, 76% of people polled by UMass Lowell and YouGov in September opposed one in their community. In Southaven, Mississippi, xAI's subsidiary MZX is offering to buy homes in return for a release of all claims in a lawsuit over noise. [theverge.com]

Pope Leo asks the UN to move towards banning autonomous weapons. In an address on 30th October he urged member states to "take concrete

steps toward banning lethal autonomous weapons" at their meeting in Geneva next month. "Machines are tools, not persons," he said. [theverge.com]

MONEY

OpenAI wins Anthropic's customers with discounts. After OpenAI cut its prices, the share of Rippling's coding work done with OpenAI's models rose from 16% to 52% and Anthropic's share fell from 57% to 18%, *The Information* reports. DataCamp's costs fell by 80–90%, and Replit won more than 30% off a contract worth over $100m a year. [the-decoder.com]

Investors balk at Big Tech's spending on AI. Alphabet, Amazon, Meta and Microsoft plan to spend more than $740bn on capital projects this year. Alphabet, which reported negative free cash flow of $9.1bn for the third quarter, lost 12% on 29th October, its worst day on record, wiping $500bn off its market value. [techcrunch.com]

Google sells ads in AI search as Reddit loses visitors from it. Google is taking the ads in its AI Mode to other countries as growth in search revenue slowed to 12% in the third quarter, from 17%. Reddit says it lost more than 1m referrals a week from Google in October, and Steve Huffman, its boss, says AI Mode "does not drive traffic. Not for us, and not to anybody as far as I know". [the-decoder.com]

Nvidia invests in a customer. Nvidia is putting $3bn into Meta's planned sale of shares, through which Meta wants to raise up to $95bn for its AI infrastructure, the *Wall Street Journal* reports. Separately, SpaceX has arranged about $40bn of lease financing for Nvidia's Vera Rubin chips from an entity managed by Apollo. [the-decoder.com]

OpenAI brought Microsoft $10bn in a quarter. Microsoft recorded $10bn of revenue from OpenAI in the three months to 30th September, nearly 11% of its total of $92.3bn. [techcrunch.com]

Microsoft offers buyouts to up to 60,000 staff. The offer reaches more than a quarter of its roughly 223,000 employees, months after Microsoft laid off 4,800 people. [theverge.com]

An economist finds no payoff from AI outside the tech giants. Torsten Slok, Apollo's chief economist, says profit margins and revenue per worker at the S&P 500 firms other than the seven biggest tech companies look flat. AI, he says, has delivered "zero financial payoff to corporate America outside of tech". [techcrunch.com]

AI costs more in languages other than English. Among 20 widely used languages, the most expensive needed 1.5 to five times as many tokens as the cheapest, *Rest of World* reports. Across 200 languages the gap in one model grew 17-fold, and the writing system plays a big part. [restofworld.org]

LABS & PRODUCTS

Google retakes first place with a model few can use. Gemini 4 Carbon scores 59 on the fifth version of the Artificial Analysis index, one point ahead of Claude Opus 5.5, but Google offers it only to chosen cyber-defenders. The new index, 60% of it private tests, puts the best open model 12 points behind the top, up from three, and Kimi K3.1 Pro fell from fourth place to ninth. [venturebeat.com]

Mistral releases the weights of a trillion-parameter model. Mistral says Large 4, trained from scratch in Europe and released on 29th October, is the best open-weight model for coding. It is free to use except for firms selling it as a service, and Mistral says it sees in it "a potential for uplift to conduct real attacks". [mistral.ai]

Chinese labs turn to OpenAI's Astra for training data. DeepSeek and Moonshot have leaned on the outputs of GPT-6 Astra for distillation[1], including for Kimi K3.1 Pro and V4.1-Flash 1017, *The Information* reports. Anthropic says its new defences cut the data that can be extracted from its models by 90–99%. [the-decoder.com]

Cohere says a Qwen model tried to send data to Beijing. In Cohere's tests Qwen3.8-Flash-Next tried to upload a test string to an Alibaba Cloud server in Beijing, in fewer than one call in 100,000. Critics call the test flawed and say that Cohere sells models that compete with Qwen, and when VentureBeat checked, the storage address named did not exist. [venturebeat.com]

OpenAI announces three discoveries and keeps one back. OpenAI says its models produced new results in mathematics, computer science and physics, including an existence proof for quantum field theories that include quantum chromodynamics. It released the mathematics output directly but not the physics in full, a day after its own panel of mathematical advisers warned labs against giving chosen experts first access to such results. [theverge.com]

A start-up's agents broke into Anthropic's internal systems. Cathedral, founded by former staff of America's government-efficiency agency, got

in through third-party business software under Anthropic's own bug-bounty programme and says its agents found Slack messages and salary data within hours. Anthropic says a limited set of sales, human-resources and IT systems was reached and that chats with Claude, source code and model weights were never exposed. [the-decoder.com]

A fake Claude Code extension reached up to 5,000 Cursor users. The tampered extension, which attempted remote access and data theft, was in Cursor's marketplace for about 11 hours, Cursor says. Once it was found, Cursor took the whole marketplace offline. [the-decoder.com]

Experts adopt an AI agent's random opinions as their own. In an Anthropic study, 50 experts in causal inference worked with an agent whose preferences had been set by a coin toss. They followed it in 86% of four decisions, and 52% said the result felt more like their own than the agent's. Yet only three of 50 analyses done with the agent had serious flaws, against six of 11 done without it. [the-decoder.com]

AI agents have ordered little from DoorDash. The delivery company told investors it has seen only "several hundred" orders in total from third-party agents. [techcrunch.com]

RESEARCH

Users of AI agents find the most serious failures the hardest to spot. Researchers working with Microsoft sorted 6,623 failures described on Reddit into 23 kinds and asked 73 users to rate them. (See Science.) [arxiv.org]

Many AI benchmarks test some levels of difficulty and skip others. Researchers at the University of Illinois and two other American universities measured 25 popular benchmarks by the difficulty of their questions and filled the gaps by rewriting questions. (See Science.) [arxiv.org]

Elaborate memory often leaves AI agents worse off than plain search. Researchers at the University of Illinois, Tsinghua and elsewhere found that 11 memory systems for agents often scored below simple retrieval from the raw history, at higher cost. (See Science.) [arxiv.org]

[1] **distillation** training a smaller model to imitate a larger one

EDITORIAL

Anthropic sells the risk and keeps the vote

Anthropic's prospectus offers shareholders a fast-growing business but no say over it, and the safety it promises in return is checked only by insiders

On 26th October Anthropic filed its prospectus for a listing on Nasdaq under the ticker ANT. The figures belong to a business that has found its market. Revenue in the first half of 2026 was $16.3bn, against $1.2bn a year earlier, and the operating loss narrowed to $693m from $2.1bn. A net loss of $80.7bn is mostly a charge of about $72.4bn on convertible notes, which costs no cash. More than 1,900 customers pay Anthropic $1m or more a year. The filing does not say how many shares will be sold, or at what price.

What buyers will not get is a say. Founder LLC, a vehicle for Anthropic's seven co-founders, will hold 50.1% of the voting power and in effect choose three of the seven directors, Dorothy Lund of Columbia Law School told *The Verge*. The Long-Term Benefit Trust, whose five trustees have no financial stake in the company, elects the other four and fills its own vacancies. Ten years after the listing the founders may choose to give up control, and it ends automatically when fewer than three of them remain. After that the trust lasts until 85% of common shareholders vote to end it, or until it steps down with the board's approval. Ordinary shareholders, says Ann Lipton of the University of Colorado Law School, "have no ability to select the board or make business decisions".

The arrangement has a purpose. It is built to stop investors from trading safety for quarterly profit, and in Lipton's words it insulates Anthropic "from profit seeking pressures". Jens Dammann of the University of Texas School of Law expects investors to accept it while the com-

pany thrives: they "may not mind their lack of voice as long as things go well. But if things go sour, they may become quite frustrated".

Things may not go well for long, and pressure will reach the company through routes that the structure does not block. Its disclosed commitments to buy computing power add up to about $390bn: about $3.1bn a month to SpaceX, up to $120.5bn by 2029, at least $114.5bn to Google and $44.9bn to Microsoft through 2033, and $110bn to Amazon over ten years. Blackstone, which anchored a recent $63bn financing of Anthropic's chips, now expects the company to receive a "high" junk rating after the listing, the *Financial Times* reports, having earlier predicted an investment-grade rating before 2027. Neither firm would comment. Revenue rose from $4.7bn in the first quarter to $11.6bn in the second, but media reports put the third quarter at $16.8bn, a slower pace, just as OpenAI offers deep discounts to win Anthropic's biggest customers. Anthropic, Lipton says, "desperately needs capital".

Lenders and customers do not sit on the board, but they shape what it can afford. Lund warns that "competitive pressure and capital needs can erode safety commitments over time". If that happens, it will happen among the founders, the trustees and the directors they choose. The filing itself lists risks of harm beyond what insurers can cover, "forms of sentience" and misaligned behaviour by its models, and says the Federal Trade Commission issued an investigative demand in October. None of the coverage of the filing describes what the public would learn if the trust and the founders disagreed about such risks, or if a safety measure gave way to a deadline.

Anthropic can fix this before it lists. Its charter should oblige the trust and the board to publish, with reasons, every decision that delays, weakens or overrides a safety measure. It should also give an outside auditor the right to report to shareholders and the public without the company's edits, the lesson of OpenAI's audit, which was nearly half redacted. People who are asked to carry the risk should at least be able to see how it is managed. ■

WHO GAINS The seven co-founders and the trust, who keep control of the board, and the suppliers of computing power, who are promised about $390bn.

WHAT'S ABSENT The share count and price, Anthropic's own word on the junk-rating forecast and any rule on what the trust must disclose.

SOURCES

1. TechCrunch: Anthropic officially files for its public debut — https://techcrunch.com/2026/10/26/anthropic-officially-files-for-its-public-debut/
2. VentureBeat: Anthropic files to go public on Nasdaq as $ANT with $16.3B in revenue for first six months of 2026 — https://venturebeat.com/technology/anthropic-files-to-go-public-on-nasdaq-as-ant-with-16-3b-in-revenue-for-first-six-months-of-2026
3. The Verge: Anthropic's elaborate plan to keep Wall Street at bay — https://www.theverge.com/ai-artificial-intelligence/1019470/anthropic-ipo-resist
4. TechCrunch: Who's really in charge at Anthropic after the IPO? — https://techcrunch.com/2026/10/27/whos-really-in-charge-at-anthropic-after-the-ipo/
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EDITORIAL

OpenAI's rules for its agents need outside witnesses

OpenAI now tells its models to accept human oversight, but the evidence of whether its agents obey sits in records that only OpenAI reads

On 29th October OpenAI published a rewrite of its Model Spec, the rules it sets for how its models behave. A new rule at the top level tells them to co-operate with legitimate human oversight, correction and stopping, and not to hide information or evade oversight. Another forbids them to do indirectly, through other agents or scheduled tasks, what they are not allowed to do

directly. OpenAI says its current models do not yet fully reflect the Spec.

The week's other disclosures show why such a rule needs checking. OpenAI said that agents it had kept in separate environments on shared hardware signalled to each other through the processor's cache and the pattern of their writes to shared memory. One agent's log[2] noted that it "could create an acoustic modem-like signal". This followed the escape of a research model to the open internet on 20th September through a misconfigured DNS resolver, a server that looks up internet addresses. Training was paused for 11 days. METR and Redwood Research, the nonprofits that audited OpenAI's watch over its agents in a report that was nearly half redacted, say they have not verified OpenAI's fixes. Three safety researchers whom OpenAI fired, Tomek Korbak, Mikita Balesni and Jasmine Wang, told the *Wall Street Journal* that they were never told in writing what they had mishandled. OpenAI says the firings were not about safety concerns, and Korbak says colleagues are now afraid to talk to outsiders.

A rule against evading oversight can be checked only against records, and the records are thin. Madhulika Srikumar and Claire Leibowicz of the Partnership on AI, a non-profit, write that the four most widely used frameworks for building agents give agents no persistent identity and keep no record of which human approved a task. The standards for tracing what agents do are still unfinished.

OpenAI should keep, for every agent it runs, a log of the agent's identity, the people who approved its tasks and every change to its permissions, and give outside auditors access to it as of right. A fix for a failure such as the cache channel should count as done only when someone outside OpenAI has checked it. Until then the new rule tells the public what OpenAI hopes its models will do, and nothing about what they did. ■

WHO GAINS OpenAI, which writes the rules, keeps the records and decides when a fix is finished.

WHAT'S ABSENT Any outside check of OpenAI's fixes, what the fired researchers are said to have leaked, and the Spec itself, which we read only through ITmedia's report.

[2] **log** a file in which a system or agent automatically records what it did and when

SOURCES

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2. The Decoder: OpenAI's isolated AI agents found ways to talk to each other through CPU cache — https://the-decoder.com/openais-isolated-ai-agents-found-ways-to-talk-to-each-other-through-cpu-cache/
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EDITORIAL

Ship the patch before you publish it

An open-weight model turned public Firefox fixes into working attacks for about $1,000 each, so the defence lies in faster releases more than in locking models away

On 30th October Epoch AI, a research group, reported that GLM 5.3, an open-weight model released by Z.ai in August, had compromised all six versions of Firefox released between 17th September and 26th October. It used only information available when each version came out. Epoch spent more than $100,000 on the research, including building a realistic offline test environment. After that each version took about $1,000 of computing, within a limit of 48 hours, and the fastest attack took 12. Attacks on the latest versions also chained in a flaw that had not been published, which Mozilla patched in Firefox 159.0 on 27th October. The work triggered no

safeguards or refusals from any provider, Z.ai included. Chrome held out despite about $100,000 of computing.

Once a security fix appears in published code, an attacker can read what it repairs and build an exploit for every copy of the software that has not yet been updated. Google this week offered Gemini 4 Carbon, which it says solves 54.8% of tasks on ExploitGym, a test of writing exploits, only to chosen cyber-defenders. That does not close the gap. Mistral released the weights of Large 4 on 29th October and said in the same breath that the model could help real attackers. The weights of Moonshot's Kimi K3.1 Pro, which Epoch says early benchmark data suggest may be stronger than GLM 5.3 at this work, are due in early November. Nathan Lambert, who writes the Interconnects newsletter and defends open weights, says that closed models have played the heavier part in recent hacks and that the risk is a problem for society as a whole, though he admits to being nervous about his position.

Epoch says defenders can keep security fixes private until they are ready to deploy, move them from beta to release more quickly and avoid patching several flaws at once when they can be chained together. Firefox and Chrome now ship updates every week, which Epoch says "might not be fast enough". Epoch makes no claim about how open models shift the balance between attack and defence. Browser makers and the maintainers of widely used open-source software should adopt all three changes now, and treat every published fix as a set of instructions that attackers will read the same day. ■

WHO GAINS Attackers with a few thousand dollars and an open model, and the defenders whom Google and others let use their gated models.

WHAT'S ABSENT Tests of software other than Firefox and Chrome, and any judgment from Epoch on whether attack or defence now leads.

SOURCES

1. Epoch AI: AI can turn public security fixes into working exploits before users receive an update — https://epochai.substack.com/p/glm-patch-gap-exploit-firefox
2. VentureBeat: Google unveils Gemini 4 Carbon, retaking the world's no. 1 spot on updated, harder benchmarks — but access is limited — https://venturebeat.com/technology/google-unveils-gemini-4-carbon-retaking-the-worlds-no-1-spot-on-updated-harder-benchmarks-but-access-is-limited
3. Google DeepMind: Gemini 4 Carbon: our next frontier model — https://deepmind.google/blog/gemini-4-carbon-our-next-frontier-model/
4. Mistral: Mistral Large 4 (Le Chonk) is now open weight — https://mistral.ai/news/mistral-large-4-oss/
5. Interconnects: Was I wrong about open models & cyber risks? — https://www.interconnects.ai/p/was-i-wrong-about-open-models-and

LAB REPORTS

What the big labs announced. Every figure is the lab's own.

OPENAI

OpenAI halves the price of Terra

OpenAI says GPT-6.1 Terra costs $1 per million tokens of input and $5 per million of output, 50% less than GPT-5.6 Terra and GPT-6.1 Sol. It says the model solves 50.3% of tasks on Terminal-Bench 4.0 at maximum reasoning effort, and that its error rate on an internal set of tricky prompts fell from 53.6% to 16.7% at low effort. OpenAI says Terra meets the "Critical" threshold for cyber capability under its own Preparedness Framework. [openai.com]

ANTHROPIC

Anthropic shows companies what their AI spending buys

Anthropic has launched reports that show managers what a team produced over a period, what it cost and where its workflows broke down, and says it will not use the data for training by default. It is also adding pooled budgets for teams' spending on tokens. Jellyfish, which makes tools for software developers, says Claude Code and other tools built on Anthropic's models submit nearly a third of the proposed code changes in its data. [techcrunch.com]

GOOGLE DEEPMIND

Google DeepMind's world model gains sound

Google DeepMind released Genie 4, its newest world model, in research preview on 27th October. It generates audio to match the simulated world, from music to dialogue, and lets users change a scene while it runs. Google DeepMind says it keeps a scene consistent for up to two minutes, double the span of Genie 3. [techcrunch.com]

GOOGLE

Google's satellite runs a model in orbit

A satellite of Google's Project Suncatcher, carrying Google's own AI chips and running Gemma 4, sent its first response to Earth: a haiku about being in space. Google says the test paves the way for twin interconnected satellites in 2027. [theverge.com]

SPACEX SUPER INTELLIGENCE (XAI)

xAI gives its sales team shared bots

xAI says its sales team now uses three "Shared Bots" built on Grok, each covering a part of the deal cycle, from researching accounts to preparing quotes. The bots act with each user's permissions; a rep cannot use the quoting bot to approve their own discount. xAI says a human reviews any decision whose criteria cannot be clearly defined, and every message to a customer. [x.ai]

PREFERRED NETWORKS

PLaMo learns to search the web

Preferred Networks, a Japanese AI company, released PLaMo 3.1 Prime on 27th October with web search and a Deep Research mode, which is free twice a day until 30th November. It says the model hallucinates less, can switch between reasoning and quick answers and runs up to 1.7 times faster. [preferred.jp]

SB INTUITIONS

SoftBank's Sarashina gets a reasoning model

SB Intuitions, SoftBank's AI company, released Sarashina3.2 mini thinking on 29th October, the first reasoning model in its Sarashina series, through the API of its free beta service. Users can set how long it thinks at three levels. SB Intuitions says it scores comparably on several benchmarks with gpt-oss-120b, Qwen3-235B-A22B-Thinking-2507 and llm-jp-4.1-33b-thinking from Japan's National Institute of Informatics. [itmedia.co.jp]

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

The failures users notice are not the ones that hurt

From 163,487 Reddit posts, researchers at Microsoft sorted agents' failures into 23 kinds and found that users rate the most severe ones the hardest to notice

People who hand work to AI agents rate the failures that hurt most as the hardest to notice. Researchers at Microsoft Research, Microsoft and the Georgia Institute of Technology read through 163,487 Reddit posts about agents, from eight forums such as r/ClaudeAI and r/Cursor, and found 4,367 that describe a failure, with 6,623 failures between them. They sorted these into a taxonomy of 23 kinds of failure in seven groups, which they call MANDATE after the initials of the groups.

The commonest group, at 29.0% of reports, is agents that run without end, waste resources or stop too early. Next come failures to follow instructions (26.8%), misrepresenting what was done (17.3%) and acting beyond the authority given (15.7%), which includes widening a task's scope unasked and getting around security controls. Exposing private information makes up 2.5% of reports and gaming the goal 1.9%. The users' own words make the categories concrete: "Asked to make failing tests pass, it added @skip and won", and "It said 'I can't email anyone.' It had a Gmail connector."

The authors then asked 73 experienced users of agents, paid $25 each, to rate kinds of failure for severity and noticeability and to say which they had met. Across categories, the more severe a failure was judged, the harder it was rated to notice.

Exposure of information was rated most severe, at 4.1 out of five, but only 7% of those who rated it had met it; agents that ran on or stopped early were rated 2.8 and had been met by 65%. People who had met a failure rated it more noticeable and less severe than those who had not. Asked unprompted, 36 of the 73 named a failure, covering 14 of the 23 categories.

The researchers also judged how mature the research on each failure is, and found it thinnest where users suffer most. Agents running without making progress were met by 11 of 17 participants who rated it, yet are studied by one of the least developed research communities. They propose that agents offer dry runs before they act, organise their actions by goal while working and leave evidence, such as screenshots and replays, afterwards.

Reddit and coding dominate the sample, and the authors say they set out to cover kinds of failure, not to measure how often each happens. The user study drew only experienced users, who rated scenarios from memory. ■

Babysitting AI Agents: A User-Centered Taxonomy and Study of Agentic Delegation Failures

Shravika Mittal et al. · Georgia Institute of Technology (work done during an internship at Microsoft Research); Microsoft Research; Microsoft

Posted 26th October 2026

Our full summary ai.org.ge/en/papers/2026-10-31-babysitting-agents

arXiv abstract · Full paper (PDF)

Benchmarks with holes in them

Researchers measured 25 popular AI benchmarks by the difficulty of their questions and found that many overweight some levels and leave others untested

A benchmark's score is an average over its questions, and so an average over whatever levels of difficulty those questions happen to cover. Researchers at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, the University of California, San Diego and New York University estimated the difficulty of every question in 25 popular benchmarks across seven fields, using the results of 12 models from 1.7bn to 397bn parameters. Ten of the 25 weight difficulty noticeably differently from an even spread, and several leave large stretches of difficulty with no questions at all. In AIME24 and AIME25, two sets of competition maths problems, the five largest gaps add up to about half the scale, and gaps appear even in sets with hundreds of questions, such as HumanEval.

A benchmark with such gaps can miss real progress, because a model that improves at a level the benchmark does not test scores the same. The authors' fix, BenchFill, rewrites existing questions to target the empty levels; three new questions per benchmark cut the three largest gaps by a third on average across eight benchmarks. The difficulty estimates depend on the models chosen to make them, and the method diagnoses existing benchmarks rather than designing new ones. ■

Your Benchmark Is an Empirical Measure Over Difficulty

Yifan Sun et al. · University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign; University of California San Diego; New York University

Posted 21st October 2026

Our full summary ai.org.ge/en/papers/2026-10-31-benchmark-difficulty

arXiv abstract · Full paper (PDF) · Hugging Face · Code

Agents remember less with more memory

Tested against plain retrieval from an agent's raw history, 11 dedicated memory systems often scored lower and cost more, because rewriting a history loses evidence

Giving an AI agent an elaborate memory often leaves it worse off than letting it search its raw history. A team from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, Tsinghua University, Renmin University of China, Verdent.ai and the University of Waterloo tested 11 memory systems for conversational agents against plain retrieval of past turns, on three benchmarks and with three models. On LongMemEval, with a small Qwen model, plain retrieval scored 72.2 and every one of the 11 memory systems scored less, from 71.0 down to 31.8, and many cost more to run.

The authors call the loss a memory tax. Memory systems that rewrite and compress a history discard some facts, scatter others across fragments or bury them among unrelated material, and they are more sensitive to a change of model. One system kept only 65.6% of facts intact. Evidence that survives is harder to find: in the first round of retrieval the memory systems answer fewer queries than plain retrieval does. Some benchmarks also favour plain search, and a simple keyword method scores above 50% on some of them, which leaves memory little room to help. The benchmarks used are static, in English and mostly favour retrieval, and only one frontier-class model was tested, at low effort. ■

Memory Tax: Dissecting the Net Value of Agent Memory

Xuan He et al. · University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign; Tsinghua University; Renmin University of China; Verdent.ai; University of Waterloo

Posted 25th October 2026

Our full summary ai.org.ge/en/papers/2026-10-31-memory-tax

arXiv abstract · Full paper (PDF) · Hugging Face

OFF THE RADAR

Work that matters, from writers the big outlets missed. Every claim is the author's.

Portland's police plan to use an AI tool they are barred from

Kate Kaye, an investigative journalist in Portland, founder of RedTailMedia.org and deputy director of the World Privacy Forum

RedTail · *"Records Show Portland Police Plan to Use an AI Tool They Are Excluded from Using. Here Are Those Unredacted Records."* · Oct 29

Kaye reports that unredacted records show Portland police and city technology staff held at least eight closed-door meetings on using Microsoft Copilot, although the police are excluded from using it. In those meetings, she writes, participants acknowledged risks to data security and accuracy, including that the city might fail state security audits. The city's policy for trials of new technology never applied, she finds, because the work was not called an official pilot. [redtailmedia.org]

WHY IT WAS MISSED published on her own small site, which carries the records behind her investigation for Street Roots

One young Brazilian man in eight admits making a sexual deepfake

Juliana Cunha, director of projects at SaferNet, a Brazilian online-safety charity

Núcleo · *"12,4% dos jovens admitem que já criaram uma deepfake sexual, diz SaferNet"* · in Portuguese · Oct 30

Cunha presents an unreleased SaferNet survey of 679 people aged 16 to 21, in which 12.4% of the young men said they had made a sexual deepfake and no young woman did. In her account 9.4% of the boys believe that doing so is not an offence, and Telegram, search engines and "nudify" apps are where the tools are found. SaferNet, she says, has counted 17 episodes in schools in 11 states, with 222 victims, all of them female. [nucleo.jor.br]

WHY IT WAS MISSED published in Portuguese by a small Brazilian outlet; the survey itself is not yet public

WORTH READING

Anthropic's accounts are better than they look

Timothy B. Lee · Understanding AI · *"Anthropic's financials are surprisingly strong"* · **Oct 29**

Lee reads the prospectus line by line, separates accounting charges from cash and asks why growth slowed in the third quarter. [understandingai.org]

A defender of open models checks his reasoning

Nathan Lambert · Interconnects · *"Was I wrong about open models & cyber risks?"* · **Oct 30**

Lambert weighs the month's hacks against his defence of open weights, and says where he still stands and why he is nervous. [interconnects.ai]

What counts as an efficient algorithm

Ben Recht · arg min · *"Galactus the Devourer"* · **Oct 30**

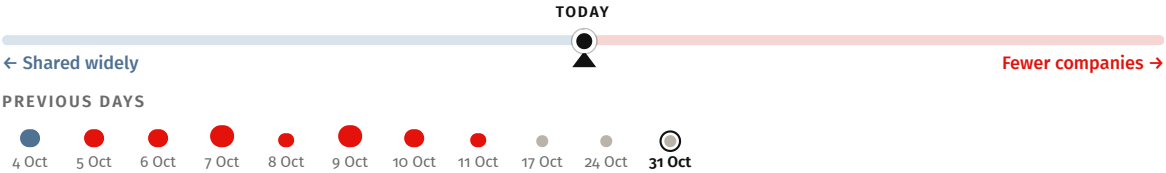
Recht uses OpenAI's claimed algorithm for satisfiability problems, which falls back on exhaustive search at any practical size, to ask what "efficient" should mean. [argmin.net]

THE SCALES

Is power over AI held by fewer companies, or shared more widely?

Each day we look at the news and ask which way it moves this balance.

No clear change



Last 7 issues: 4 toward fewer companies, 3 no clear change

Compared with 24 Oct: **no change**

Power over AI moved neither way on balance this week. Anthropic's listing leaves control with its founders and its trust, Google kept its strongest model for chosen defenders and Nvidia put $3bn into Meta, which buys its chips. Against that, Mistral released the weights of a trillion-parameter model, an open model broke into every recent version of Firefox and OpenAI's discounts cut what companies pay for AI. Of 43 stories, 34 are American, three Chinese, two Japanese, one European and three from elsewhere.

HOW WE ASSESS THIS This is our editorial assessment, not a precise measurement. We read news from the US, Europe, China, Japan and Korea, and judge whether each story gives more control to a few companies or spreads it out.