# Geographic Scale in AI Governance Executive Summary

RESEARCH STRENGTHS, GAPS, AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

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Artificial intelligence (AI) is revolutionizing society, work and government. Governments worldwide are proposing models of AI governance to achieve the right balance of regulation and innovation to ensure a thriving economy. The report offers a timely and urgent literature review of AI governance and its implications for geographic scale, synthesizing knowledge on research strengths and research gaps across global, national, and subnational jurisdictions. Scale in AI governance is studied in multiple disciplines and practices, including computer science, which is closely tied to market ideals of "scaling up" such as increased computational power and efficiency. In law, scale is conceptualized as jurisdictions rooted in legal frameworks. The discipline of geography is helpful because it rejects the strict delineation of space as solely jurisdictional, captures flows and influence among jurisdictions, and better aligns with the transjurisdictional nature of AI. A political economy lens supports the close examination of governments' roles as opposed to more dominant discourses that emphasize private sector actors.

## Objectives

The report provides a critical review and analysis of research strengths and gaps in AI governance at scale. It pierces the dominant discourse that AI governance only is practiced nationally and supra-nationally. Rather, the report engages with the subnational, interrogating local challenges of AI and its governance. The report conceptualizes scale as a series of transjurisdictional complexities and interdependencies involving AI governance, including the cross-border challenges posed to legal and regulatory frameworks and, more simply, the art of governing this opaque new digital technology. Thus, it is more than a legal matter. It involves managing relationships among various actors who function at different scales so that governments can ensure accountability, transparency, and effective implementation.

## Findings

1. **Current Research Focuses on National and Supranational AI Governance:** *Research strengths in jurisdictions*: Research at the national and supranational levels; National and supranational concentration of power in AI and its governance; Subnational research and scalar analysis; *Research gaps in jurisdictions*: Jurisdictional flows: data centres; The digital sovereignty paradox; and Neglect of Indigenous sovereignty.
2. **Public Participation in AI Governance Emphasizes Global and National Initiatives:** *Research strengths in public participation*: Global (public) participation methods; National public participation methods; Subnational public participation methods; *Research gaps in public participation*: Issues in global participation methods; Issues in national participation methods; and Less research on participation at the subnational level.
3. **Accountability in AI governance Differs Across Scales**: *Research strengths in accountability*: Hard law: enacted and drafted AI regulation; and soft law: AIAs, standards, and public registers; *Research gaps in accountability*: Gaps in hard law; and Gaps in soft law.

Addressing research strengths and gaps clarifies requirements to meaningfully include concerns and ideas of the general public on AI, bolstering public trust as well as encouraging conversations about AI adoption and use. Standardization is useful for AI governance, at the same time paradoxically this universality across scales cannot obviate the need for bottom-up governance to address nuances, cultural contexts and the messiness of the democratic process.

1. **Digital sovereignty trends in AI governance must balance national security and economic development goals:** (1) Governments at all scales should invest in an organizational infrastructure that enables AI governance, especially for subnational governments; (2) Canadian digital sovereignty should reconsider bilateral agreements and partnerships with foreign states and international partners as part of domestic security concerns; and (3) Canadian digital sovereignty must recognize and work in parallel with Indigenous sovereignty.
2. **Meaningful public participation in AI governance is crucial for building trust across scale**: (1) Governments must centre the public's local experiences of AI; (2) Governments should slow down AI adoption; (3) Governments should improve civic engagement efforts by investing in resources to conduct public participation; and (4) Governments should support dissent in AI governance and public participation to increase public trust in AI.
3. **Accountability in AI seeks to ensure effective AI governance for the public interest:** (1) Governments should improve workers' rights and labour laws impacted by AI; (2) Governments should encourage mutual learning across governments at all scales; (3) Governments must encourage the creation of robust AI governance frameworks at all scales; and (4) Governments must invest in public interest technology.

## Methodology

We conduct an integrative literature review on AI governance, with special attention to the level of jurisdiction involved, civic participation and accountability. This method is well-suited to examine emerging and multi-disciplinary fields such as AI governance, and can be fruitful in evidence-based practice concerning rapid innovations. Selection criteria included academic and grey literature on global, national, and subnational AI governance. Structured research strategies, such as specific keywords, aided data collection of academic literature. Unstructured search strategies covered the multiple disciplines and moving parts of this quickly changing field, including web search of grey literature. The literature was aggregated in an annotated bibliography. Content analysis of governmental policy documents and industry reports was conducted as it offers a flexible method to identify meanings, intentions, consequences and context across multidisciplinary, emerging fields.

Read the full report: aifortherestofus.ca/scaleAIgovernanceKSGreport

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