EXECUTIVE BRIEF · GEORGE M. J. ZAK · JUNE 2026

The Slowdown Brief — a six-page summary of Anthropic's call

Anthropic published something this week that should make every business leader pause. This brief is the condensed version. Six pages. Key numbers, the three futures, the EU AI Act intersection, and the ninety-day action list. Share with your CTO, your board, your compliance lead — or keep for yourself when you have ten quiet minutes.

Executive brief | AI governance | ~10 min read | v1 · 2026-06-06

SECTION · 01 · THE THESIS

01. What Anthropic said

For most of AI history, humans did the development work — coding, testing, designing experiments, debugging, writing infrastructure, training models, interpreting results. Anthropic is publicly arguing that this is changing.

Claude is now doing a growing share of that work inside Anthropic itself. The future possibility they name is an AI system that can **autonomously design, build, test, train, and improve its own successor**. That is recursive self-improvement. They are careful: *they say we are not there yet, and it is not inevitable, but it could arrive sooner than institutions expect.*

THE SINGLE SENTENCE TO TAKE AWAY

AI is no longer only being built by humans. AI is increasingly helping build the next AI. The loop is beginning to close. Institutions are not ready for what happens if it closes fully.

SECTION · 02 · THE NUMBERS

02. What they actually measured

Three numbers are doing most of the work in the Anthropic essay. Each comes with a caveat that the authors are honest about; together they describe a curve that's hard to ignore.

80%+

OF ANTHROPIC'S MERGED CODE

Of code merged into Anthropic's codebase in May 2026 was authored by Claude.

8×

ENGINEERING THROUGHPUT

Anthropic engineers shipping ~8× more code per quarter vs. 2021–2025 (lines-of-code overstates real productivity, but the trend is real).

4×

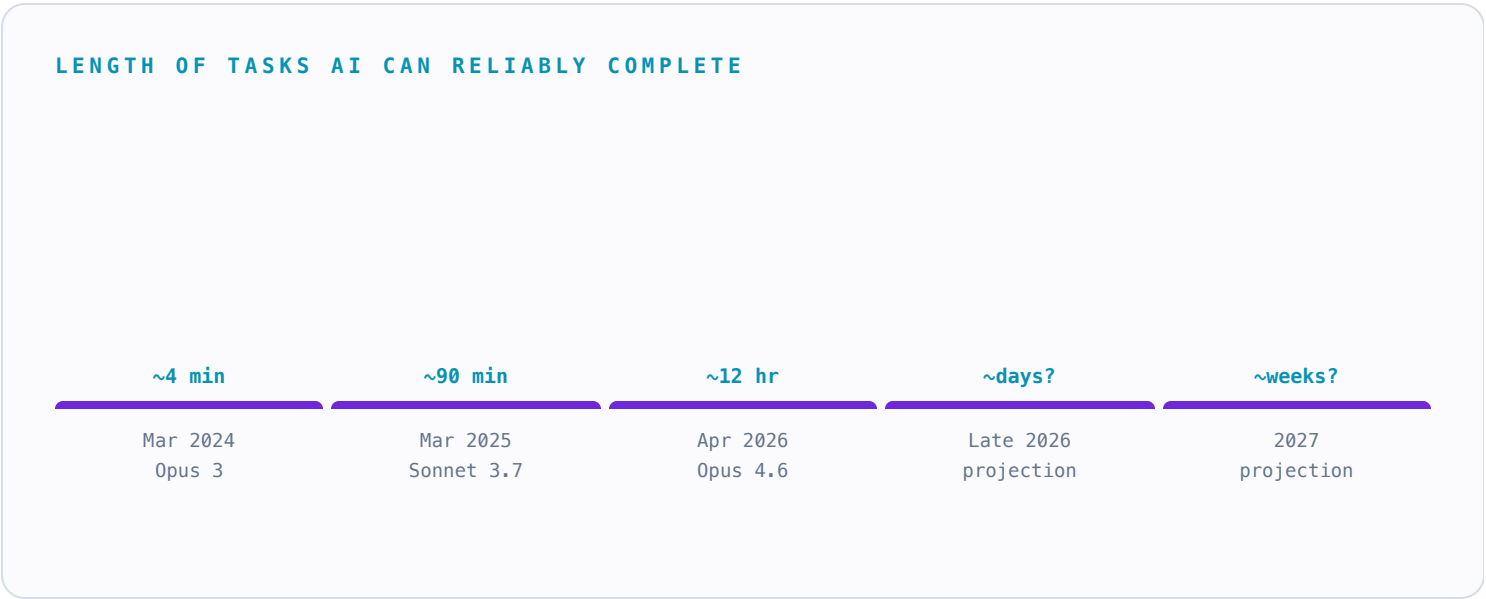
SELF-REPORTED RESEARCHER OUTPUT

Median self-estimated gain in a March 2026 internal poll of 130 researchers using Mythos Preview.

SECTION · 03 · THE CAPABILITY CURVE

03. The task-length doubling — a visual

The trend Anthropic finds most striking is that the length of tasks AI models can reliably complete has been **doubling roughly every four months**. The chart below is the simplest way to see it.



The shape of that curve is what matters. Even if you trim the rightmost two bars by half, the trajectory is the same: *the units of work AI can complete unsupervised are getting larger, fast.*

SECTION · 04 · OPERATIONAL SHIFT

04. From assistant to worker — and the moving bottleneck

The operational shift Anthropic names is from **assistant** to **worker**. Claude can now take an underspecified engineering problem — a goal without a method — and produce a solution. Humans set the goal; AI figures out how.

The consequence is that the bottleneck moves. When AI writes code faster than humans can review, **review** becomes the bottleneck. When AI can propose more experiments than researchers can prioritize, **choosing-which-experiments-matter** becomes the bottleneck. This is Amdahl's law applied to organizations.

THE PRACTICAL CONSEQUENCE FOR YOUR ORG

Companies do not just need AI tools. They need **operating models for AI-accelerated work** — explicit decisions about where humans review, what they choose, where they escalate. If you don't design the new bottleneck on purpose, it designs itself, and usually badly.

SECTION · 05 · THE THREE FUTURES

05. What Anthropic imagines next — three scenarios

The most honest section of the essay sketches three possibilities and refuses to claim certainty about which arrives.

FUTURE A

The trend stalls

Capabilities follow an S-curve. Compute, energy, or some new barrier asserts itself. Even then — today's AI alone is enough to significantly change the economy.

FUTURE B

Compounding, humans direct

Small teams do the work of huge organizations. Wonderful for productivity. Dangerous for surveillance, manipulation, cyber misuse, scaled influence ops. Same engine, both halves.

FUTURE C

Recursive self-improvement

AI systems building their successors. Human roles compress toward oversight, validation, verification. Hardest to predict. Most alignment risk if misalignment compounds across successor systems.

Anthropic does not claim to know which future arrives. They argue the time to design institutions for B and C is *now*, while A is still possible.

SECTION · 06 · THE ASK

06. What they're asking the rest of us to do

Anthropic argues it would be good for the world to **have the option** to slow or temporarily pause frontier AI development — so safety research and societal structures can catch up. They acknowledge that a unilateral pause by one lab solves very little; a meaningful pause would require *multiple frontier labs across countries, shared conditions, and credible verification*. They compare it to arms control, with the explicit caveat that AI training is much harder to detect than missile silos.

Their final message is the one most worth amplifying: **people outside AI companies must be involved in this conversation.** Policymakers, researchers, civil society, non-frontier AI companies, ordinary practitioners building real systems. The conversation cannot stay inside the labs. The decisions are too large.

SECTION · 07 · EU AI ACT INTERSECTION

07. If you're operating in or to Europe

If your operations touch European users, the EU AI Act applies regardless of where you're registered. Most general-purpose AI provider obligations land in **August 2026**. Several Anthropic-essay themes map directly onto act provisions:

Article 12 (record-keeping) — high-risk AI systems must maintain logs. Anthropic's bottleneck-shift problem makes this both more urgent and more complex. **Article 14 (human oversight)** — required for high-risk systems, and exactly the question the recursive-self-improvement scenario most strains. **Article 15 (accuracy, robustness, cybersecurity)** — security posture is now a regulatory artifact. **GDPR overlay** — personal data passing through AI is still personal data; AI does not exempt anyone from data protection.

> **THE HONEST READ**
>
> The EU AI Act was designed for a slower-moving capability curve. The Anthropic essay is, in effect, a public statement that the curve they're seeing is fast enough to be in tension with the assumptions baked into the act. Compliance teams should expect amendments. Operations teams should not wait for them.

SECTION · 08 · THE ACTION LIST

08. Ninety days of practical work

Three concrete moves any technology leader should make in the next ninety days, regardless of whether you believe Anthropic's most ambitious projections.

01 **Map where AI sits in your operations today.** Where it touches sensitive data, where it makes decisions on behalf of humans, where a capability jump would break your current controls. You can't respond to a change you haven't mapped.

02 **Build the operating model, not just the tools.** Pick one team, one process. Redesign it around the assumption that AI execution is fast and human judgment is the constraint. What does that team review? What do they choose? Where do they escalate? Design the bottleneck on purpose.

03 **Make sure your governance can move at AI speed.** If your change-control board meets quarterly and your AI capability doubles every four months, you have a structural mismatch. Pre-traditional governance posture does not survive contact with growing systems.

SECTION · 09 · WHAT I'M DOING

09. How I'm using this in my own field work

For the work I do with clients, the Anthropic essay crystallizes a conversation that has been on every serious agenda for months. I'll be using it as the central reference in three places.

EU AI Act readiness reviews — where the "capability-change vs. governance-change" gap is the most under-rated risk. **Architectural reviews for AI-accelerated engineering teams** — where the bottleneck-shift problem is now visible in real time. **Executive sessions on what genuine AI governance looks like** — when the system you're governing is being co-built by AI itself.

None of this is doom. None of it is hype. It's the work of taking a curve seriously while there's still time to design for it.

If this brief helped, you can pay it forward.

Share with one other leader you trust. Forward to your CTO, your board, your compliance lead. The conversation only stays useful if it spreads beyond the labs.

If your team needs more direct help — EU AI Act readiness, architecture review, AI governance design, executive AI strategy — that's the field work I do. Let's talk.

— George M. J. Zak · jorgemjzak.com · 2026-06-06