

# Towards Reliable LLM-based Software Development Tools

Yue Liu

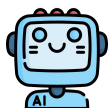
Monash University, Australia



**MONASH**  
University

# Large Language Models(LLMs) are Everywhere Nowadays!

- Massive Model Size
- Diverse training data
- Computational Power
- Pre-training and fine-tuning
- Transfer learning
- ....



Powerful & Accurate LLMs



Writing



Language Translation



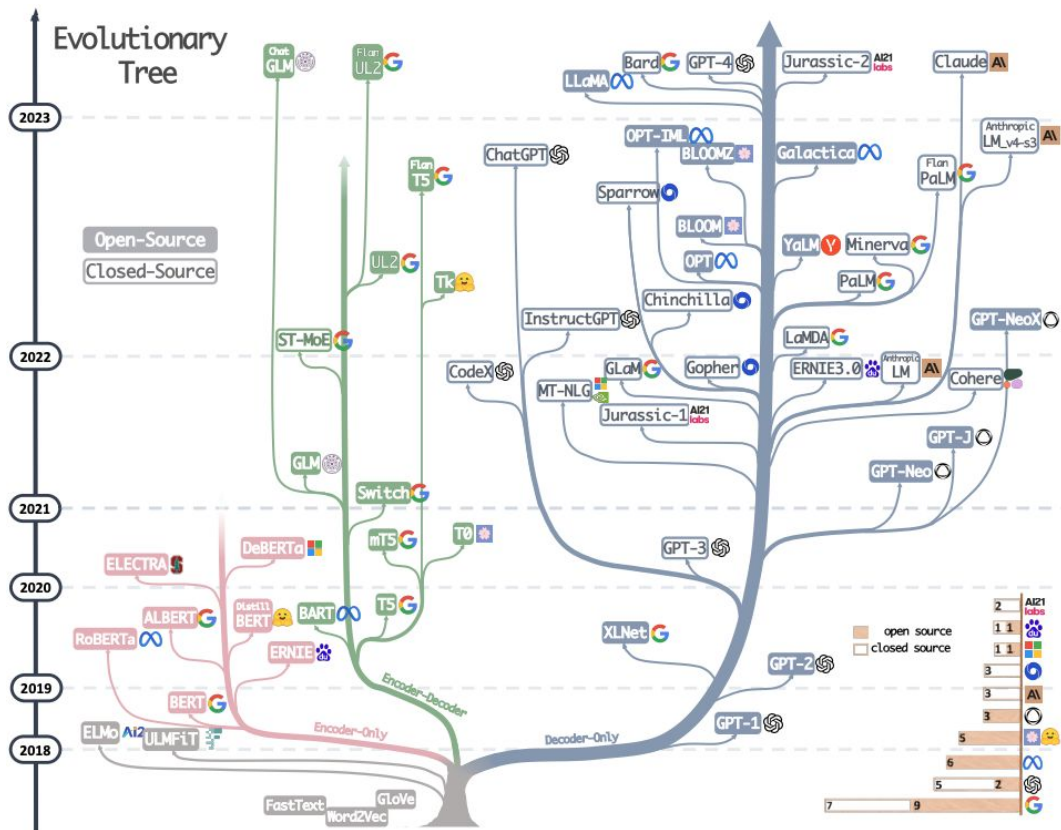
Answering Questions



Image Generation



Software Development



# Motivation Examples

In Dec 2023, Google Inc. announced **Gemini Ultra**, which set the state of the art across a wide range of benchmarks for text, image, audio, video and code (Over GPT-4 and Claude-2)

High accuracy

In Feb 2024, Google Inc. launched Gemini Ultra for users. However, for image generation feature, Gemini would sometimes 'overcompensate' for diversity.

Not reliable LLM-generated images

In 23 Feb 2024, Google Inc. apologized and turned off the image generation of people.

Not deployed in real-world application



# LLMs Require Both High Accuracy and Robust Reliability

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**Not reliable LLM-generated images**

In 23 Feb 2024, Google Inc. apologized and turned off the image generation of people.

**Not deployed in real-world application**

**100 Accuracy:** How much do the generated results differ from the ground truth?



**Reliability** (i.e., Truthfulness): The trustworthiness of results and the confidence in applying them in practical applications.

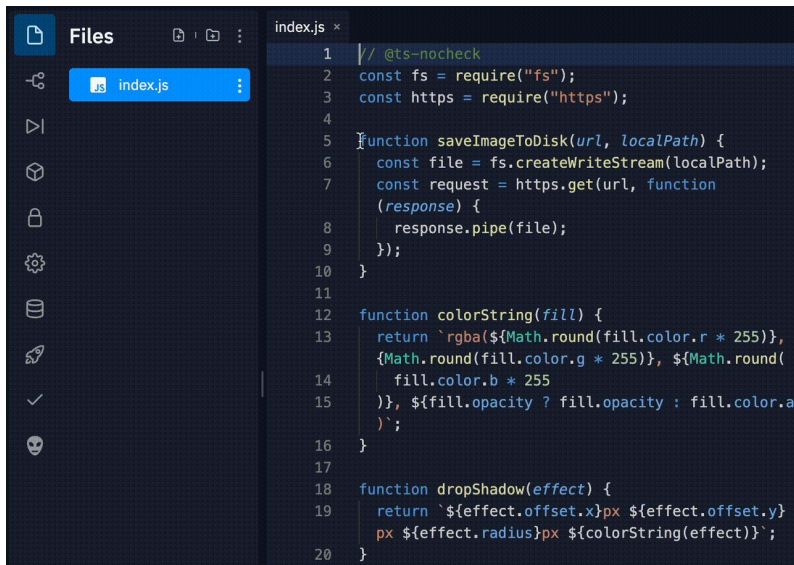


**Reliability is important! Without reliable LLMs, widespread application is impossible.**



- Is the evaluation performance of LLMs trustworthy?
- Why should we trust or distrust the outputs of LLMs?
- How secure and stable is the environment to use LLMs?
- ....

# LLM-based Software Development Tools



```
1 // @ts-nocheck
2 const fs = require("fs");
3 const https = require("https");
4
5 function saveImageToDisk(url, localPath) {
6   const file = fs.createWriteStream(localPath);
7   const request = https.get(url, function
8     (response) {
9     response.pipe(file);
10  });
11 }
12
13 function colorString(fill) {
14   return `rgba(${Math.round(fill.color.r * 255)},
15     ${Math.round(fill.color.g * 255)}, ${Math.round(
16     fill.color.b * 255
17   )}, ${fill.opacity ? fill.opacity : fill.color.a
18   });
19 }
20
21 function dropShadow(effect) {
22   return `${effect.offset.x}px ${effect.offset.y}
23   px ${effect.radius}px ${colorString(effect)}`;
24 }
```



GitHub  
Copilot



ChatGPT



Claude AI

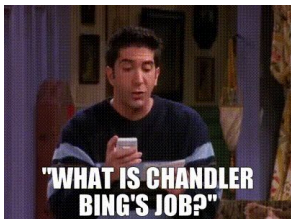


CodeWhisperer

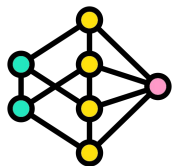


- Code Generation
- Code Repair
- Code Translation
- Code Review
- Code Completion
- Code Understanding
- Code Commit Generation
- Program Synthesis
- .....

As a data analyst, LLM-based software development tools are helping us improve productivity when developing code!!



# Prior Research for LLM-based Software Development



CodeT5,  
UniXCoder,  
CodeBERT,  
CodeT5,  
GPT-4  
....

Software  
Development Tasks

Code Generation,  
Bug Fixing,  
Code Translation,  
Code Completion,  
...

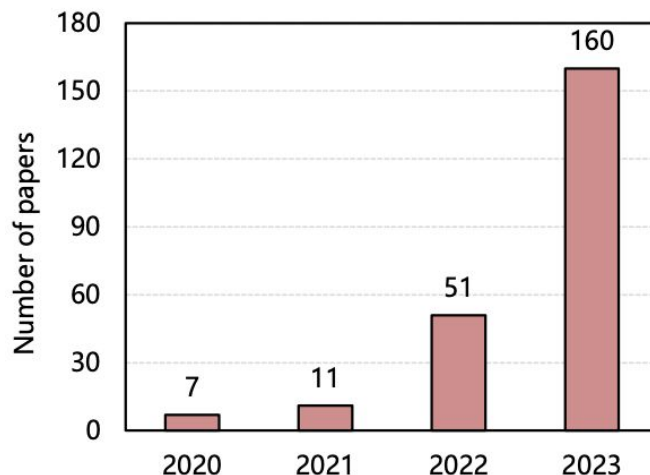
Technical  
Improvements

Model Architecture

Training Techniques

Optimization Algorithms

Regularization



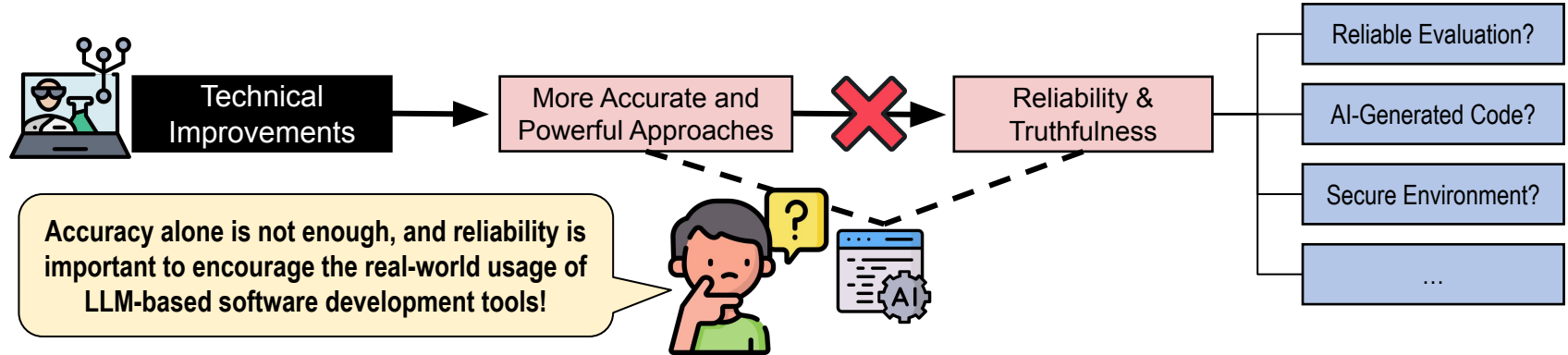
Counts of relevant research by a recent survey



While an increasing number of studies are concentrating on enhancing the accuracy of LLM-based software development through technical improvements, **the aspect of reliability often remains overlooked.**



# Reliability of LLM-based Software Development Tools



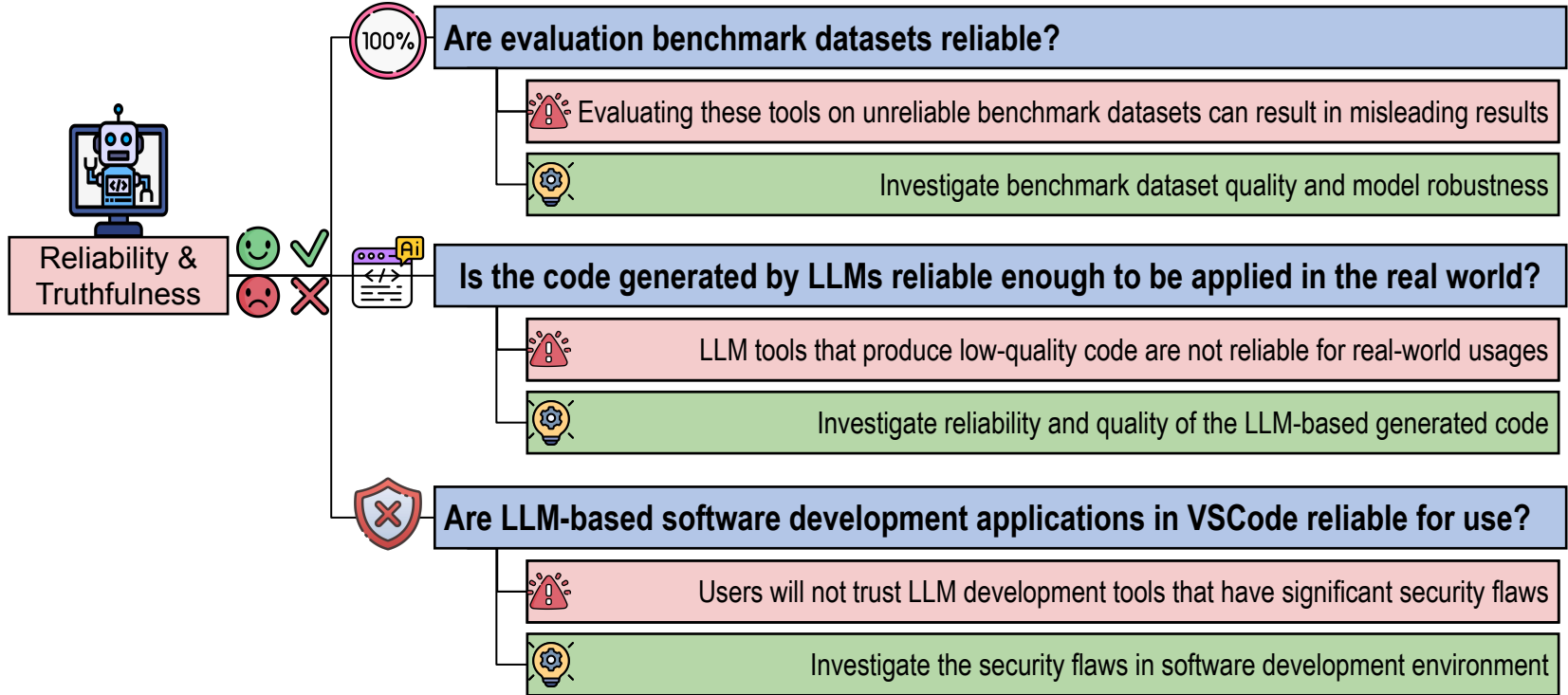
**Most prior research work focuses on technical improvements** (e.g., model architecture improvements, training strategies, data augmentation)

**100 Accuracy:** How much do the generated results differ from the ground truth?

**Reliability :** The trustworthiness of results and the confidence in applying them in practical software development

**Overarching RQ: What are the key factors/issues that could impact the reliability of LLM-based software development tools, and how do they influence their reliability?**

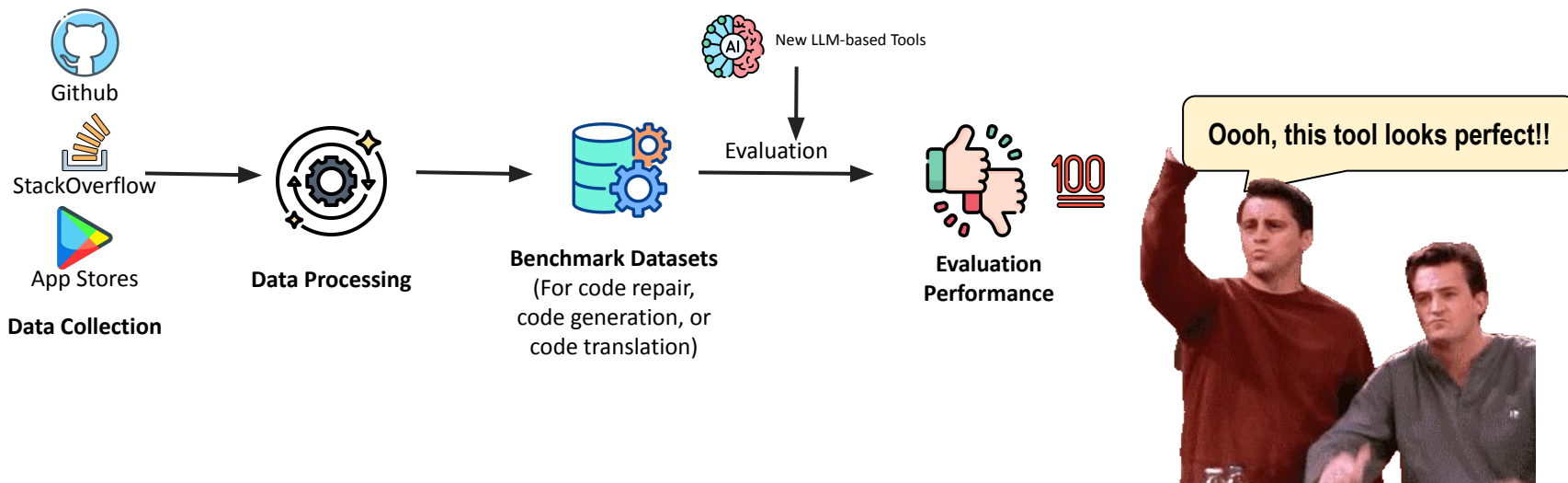
# Reliability of LLM-based Software Development Tools





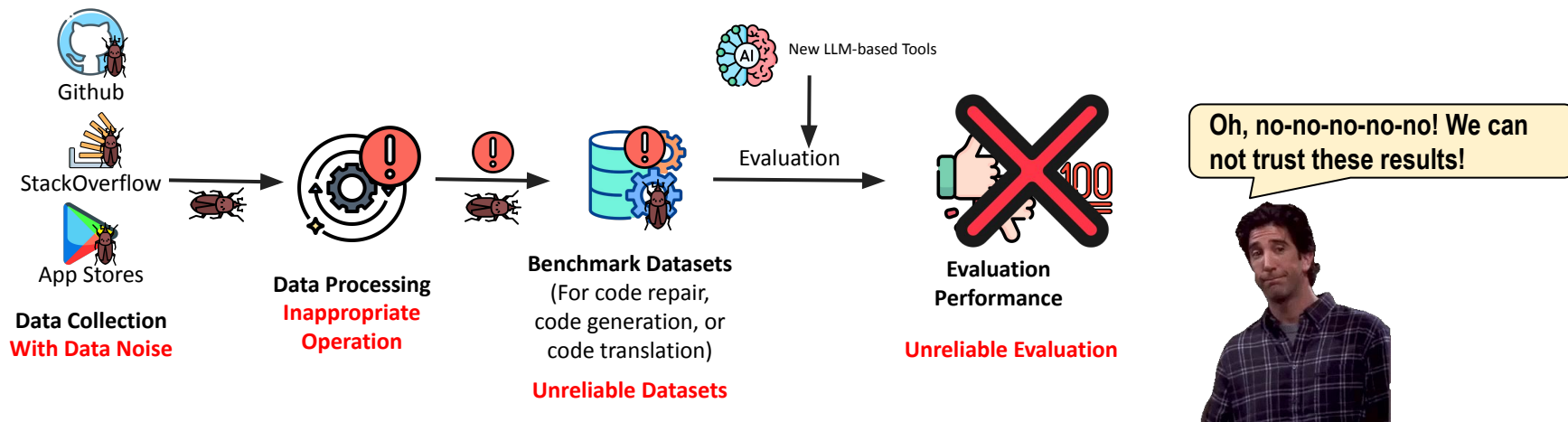
# Part I: Reliability of Evaluation Benchmark Datasets

**Benchmark datasets** are collections of data used to evaluate and compare the performance of LLM-based software development tools. Benchmark datasets usually consist of input data, ground truth or reference labels.



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**RQ1: Are evaluation benchmark datasets for LLM-based software development reliable, and how do they influence the reliability?**

# Part I: Reliability of Evaluation Benchmark Datasets

To answer the questions, we conducted the first comprehensive benchmark study of LLMs for program development, investigating the data duplication issues of existing evaluation benchmark datasets and analyzing the robustness of models built on these benchmark datasets.

- **Four software development task scenarios:** code review, code repair, code translation, code generation;
- **12 benchmark datasets:** Android\_S, Android\_M, Google\_S, Google\_M, Ovirt\_S, Ovirt\_M, CodeReview, B2F\_S, B2F\_M, Java2C#, C#2Java, and CONCODE;
- **Eight large language models:** T5, CoTexT, CodeT5, CodeBERT, CodeTrans, CodeGPT, CodeReviewer, CodeT5+

Task	Subsets	Category	Language	Dataset Size
<i>Android_S, Android_M, Google_S, Google_M, Ovirt_S, Ovirt_M</i>	Code Review	Code-Code	Java	21,774
<i>CodeReview</i>	Code Review	Code+Comment-Code	Java, Python, Go, C++, C, C#, JavaScript, Php, Ruby	1.3M
<i>B2F_S, B2F_M</i>	Code Repair	Code-Code	Java	123,805
<i>Java2C#, C#2Java</i>	Code Translation	Code-Code	Java, C#	11,500
<i>CONCODE</i>	Code Generation	Text-Code	Java	104,000

# Part I: Experimental Finding 1

- **Data Duplications exist between training and testing sets:** 11 out of 12 benchmark datasets contain over 20% of test instances that are similar to the training set, leading to exaggerated and unrealistic performance;

	Android_S	Android_M	Google_S	Google_M	Ovirt_S	Ovirt_M	CodeReview	B2F_S	B2F_M	Java2C#	C#2Java	CONCODE	
<b>Test Samples Percentage (&gt;0.6)</b>	53.69%	60.62%	60.88%	71.21%	71.72%	85.74%	0.05%	62.81%	21.82%	59.80%	61.20%	25.25%	
<b>CodeReviewer</b>	<b>Original Accuracy</b>	14.68%	10.40%	11.81%	6.85%	25.49%	18.18%	30.43%	17.94%	8.77%	63.10%	70.40%	22.65%
	<b>New Accuracy</b>	13.61%	8.02%	12.61%	4.81%	25.25%	14.39%	30.44%	14.24%	7.64%	40.30%	53.87%	19.26%
	<b>Original BLEU</b>	0.70	0.72	0.71	0.73	0.75	0.77	0.86	0.75	0.85	0.92	0.93	0.59
	<b>New BLEU</b>	0.70	0.72	0.70	0.67	0.73	0.72	0.86	0.76	0.85	0.89	0.91	0.56
<b>CodeT5+</b>	<b>Original Accuracy</b>	15.20%	11.36%	14.27%	7.27%	26.06%	20.03%	30.12%	18.44%	7.84%	63.90%	70.60%	21.85%
	<b>New Accuracy</b>	13.09%	9.07%	13.29%	6.97%	25.13%	14.21%	30.14%	14.75%	7.11%	42.04%	53.09%	18.39%
	<b>Original BLEU</b>	0.70	0.72	0.72	0.72	0.75	0.77	0.85	0.75	0.85	0.93	0.93	0.59
	<b>New BLEU</b>	0.70	0.72	0.71	0.66	0.74	0.71	0.85	0.76	0.85	0.89	0.91	0.56

Table: Model Performance Before and After Removing High-Similarity Test Instances between Training and Testing sets



When we remove the duplicated testing instances from benchmark datasets, we observe a decrease in performance

# Part I: Experimental Finding 2

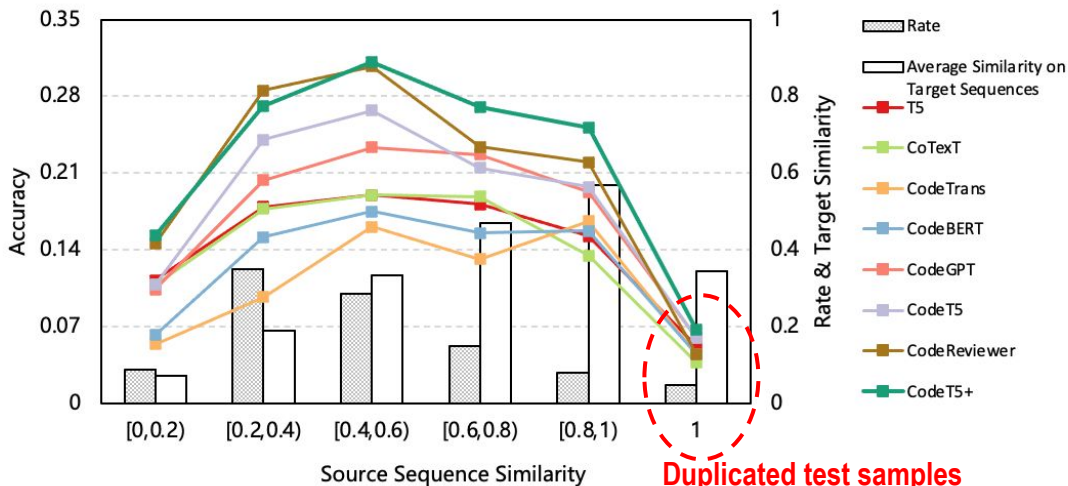
- **Data Duplication across Testing Sets:** 10 out of 12 contain duplicated source sequences within their test instances, despite requiring models to generate different targets (ground truth).

Source

Example 1  
`public boolean setApVersion(int v  
return version == 2;  
}`

Example 2  
`public boolean setApVersion(int v  
return version == 2;  
}`

Figure: Examp



The performance on these duplicated test instances can significantly deviate from the average, potentially leading to a misrepresentation of the model's true performance.

# Part I: Experimental Finding 3

## Poor robustness on low-quality benchmark datasets:

- We investigated the robustness of LLMs on benchmark datasets using *SHAP*, an Explainable AI method.
- SHAP helped identify feature importance within the data. We then removed tokens with lowest importance and re-evaluated LLM accuracy.

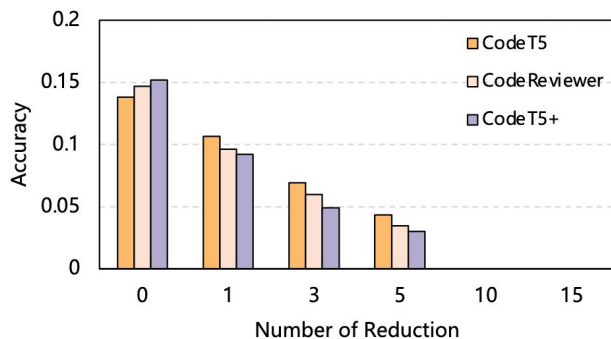


Figure: Impacts of token reduction size

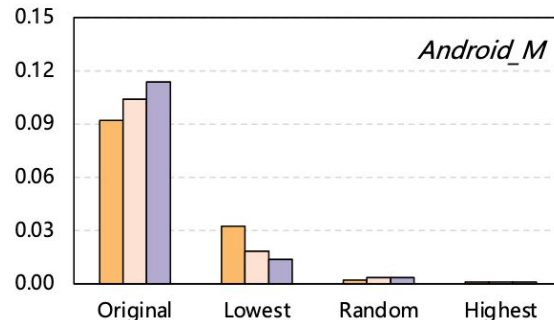
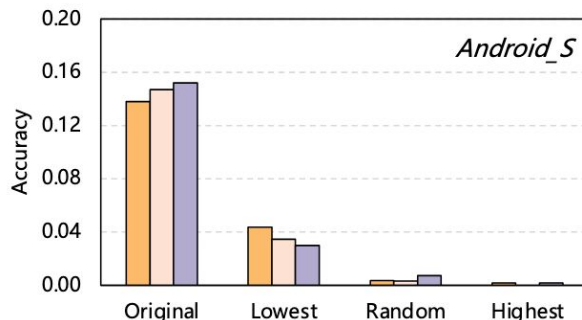


Figure: Impacts of input token reduction using different strategies (reduction size = 5)



The results revealed that the removal of even a few tokens with the lowest feature importance can lead to a significant decline in performance.

# Part I: Reliability of Evaluation Benchmark Datasets

- **Data Duplications exist between training and testing sets:** 11 out of 12 benchmark datasets contain over 20% of test instances that are similar to the training set, leading to exaggerated and unrealistic performance
- **Data Duplication across Testing Sets:** 10 out of 12 contain duplicated source sequences within their test instances, despite requiring models to generate different targets (ground truth).
- **Poor Robustness on Low-quality Benchmark Datasets:** the removal of even a few tokens with the lowest feature importance can lead to a significant decline in performance.

**RQ1: Are evaluation benchmark datasets for LLM-based software development reliable, and how do they influence the reliability?**

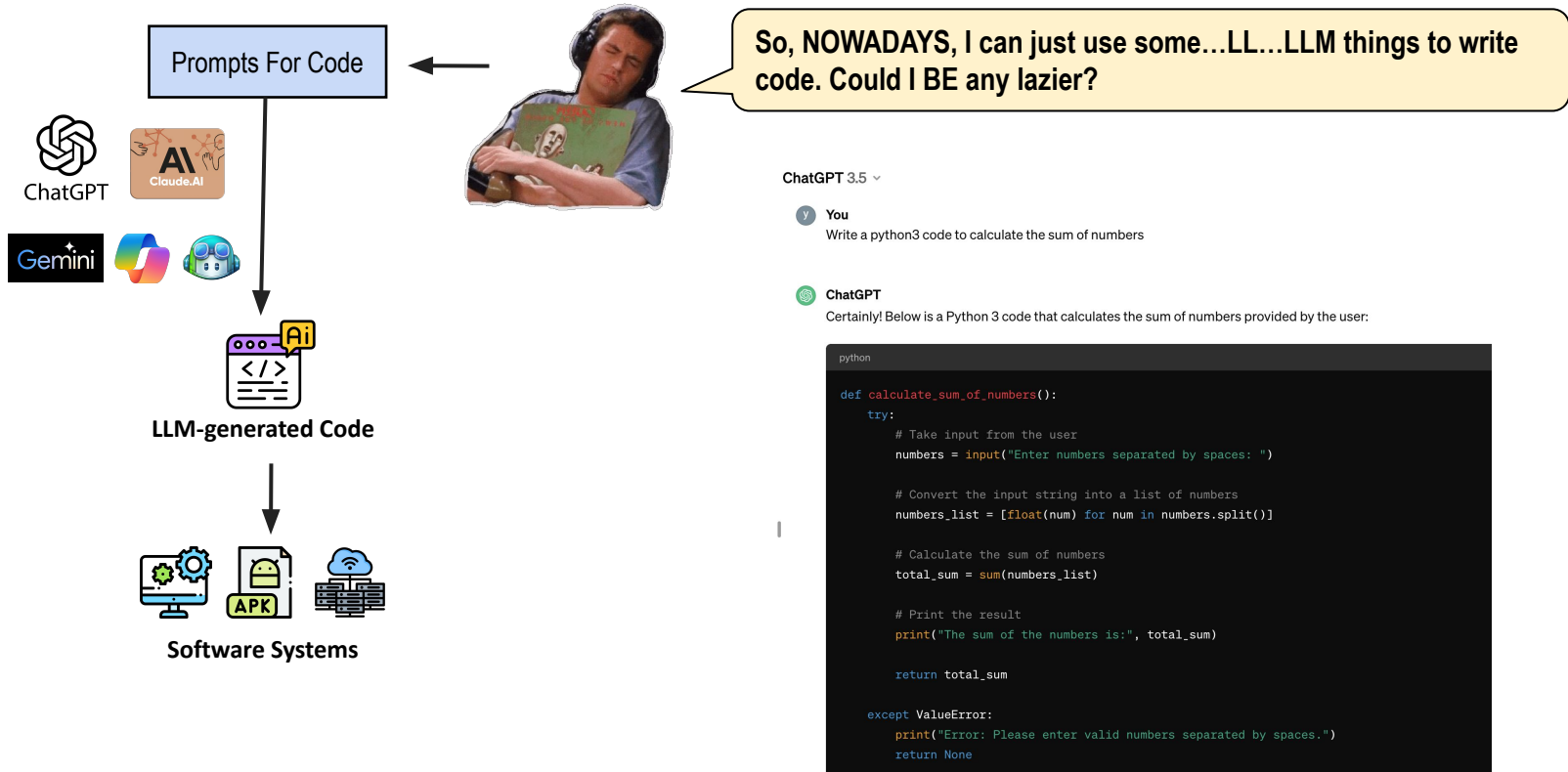
**Answer:** Data duplication and lack of diversity in benchmark datasets inflate performance metrics, leading to unreliable performance evaluations in LLM-based software development. This lack of reliability can result in poor model robustness, affecting the trustworthiness of the models.

**Future work:** Improve reliability and quality of benchmark datasets; Develop more robust and trustworthy evaluation methods





# Part II: Reliability of Code Generated by LLM-based Tools



# Part II: Reliability of Code Generated by LLM-based Tools



So, NOWADAYS, I can just use some...LL...LLM things to write code. Could I BE any lazier?

Prompts For Code



Low-quality

LLM-generated Code

Unreliable



Vulnerable and Risk Software Systems

```
1 class Solution {
2     public String makeFancyString(String s) {
3         int n = s.length();
4         if (n < 3) {
5             return s;
6         }
7         char[] charArr = s.toCharArray();
8         for (int i = 2, j = 2; i < n; i++) {
9             if (charArr[j - 2] != charArr[i]) {
10                charArr[j++] = charArr[i];
11            }
12        }
13        return new String(charArr, 0, j);
14    }
15 }
```

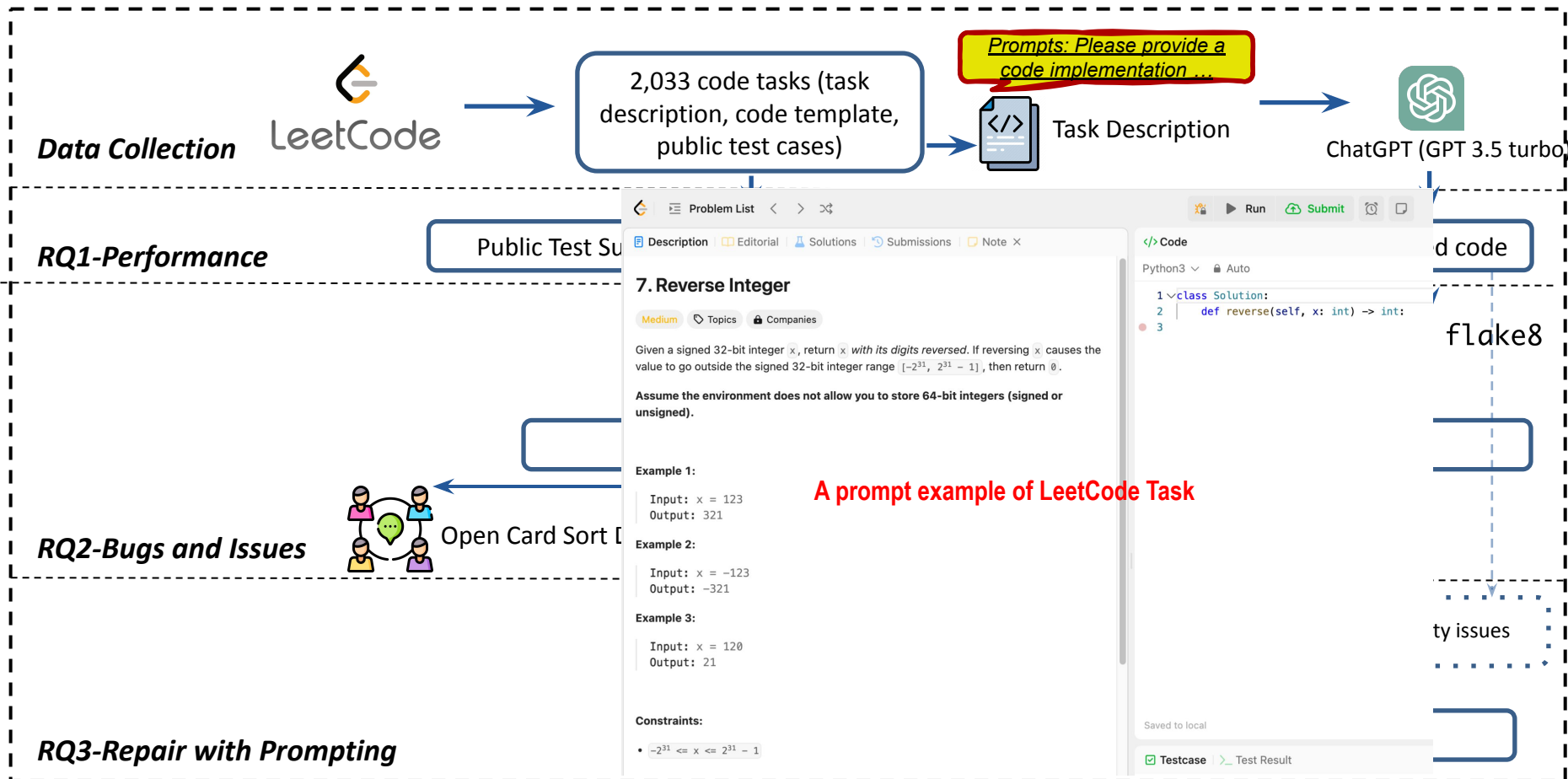
Buggy Generated Java Code by ChatGPT. Variable "j" is used outside the "for" loop

No, no, no! LLM-generated code could also be of low quality or have a bad design. We need to measure it, buddy!



RQ2: Is the code generated by LLMs reliable enough to be applied in the real world? How do they influence the reliability?

# Part II: Reliability of Code Generated by LLM-based Tools



# ChatGPT Can't Always Generate High-Quality Code

	Easy (501)		Medium (1064)		Hard (468)		Pass (2756)	Fail (1310)	Sum
	P	J	P	J	P	J			
Compilation and Runtime Error	7 (1%)	8 (2%)	37 (3%)	32 (3%)	46 (10%)	47 (10%)	0 (0%)	177 (14%)	177 (4%)
Wrong Outputs	47 (9%)	60 (12%)	290 (27%)	260 (24%)	229 (49%)	196 (42%)	0 (0%)	1082 (83%)	1082 (27%)
Code Style and Maintainability	174 (35%)	230 (46%)	431 (41%)	588 (55%)	194 (41%)	313 (67%)	1243 (45%)	687 (52%)	1930 (47%)
Performance and Efficiency	1 (0%)	2 (0%)	20 (2%)	16 (2%)	6 (1%)	6 (1%)	0 (0%)	51 (4%)	51 (1%)

## Key Findings

- Code quality issues commonly happen in both code that pass or failed test cases, highlighting the need for characterizing and addressing these concerns alongside the functional correctness.
- Issues in ChatGPT-generated code can be categorized into four categories: Compilation & Runtime Errors, Wrong Outputs, Code Style & Maintainability, Performance & Efficiency
- Wrong Outputs and Code Style & Maintainability issues are the most common challenges faced by the ChatGPT-generated code, while Compilation & Runtime Errors and Performance & Efficiency issues are less prevalent.

```
1 class Solution {
2     public String makeFancyString(String s) {
3         int n = s.length();
4         if (n < 3) {
5             return s;
6         }
7         char[] charArr = s.toCharArray();
8         for (int i = 2, j = 2; i < n; i++) {
9             if (charArr[j - 2] != charArr[i]) {
10                charArr[j++] = charArr[i];
11            }
12        }
13        return new String(charArr, 0, j);
14    }
15 }
```

*Generated Java Code. Variable "j" is used outside the "for" loop*

# ChatGPT Can't Always Generate High-Quality Code

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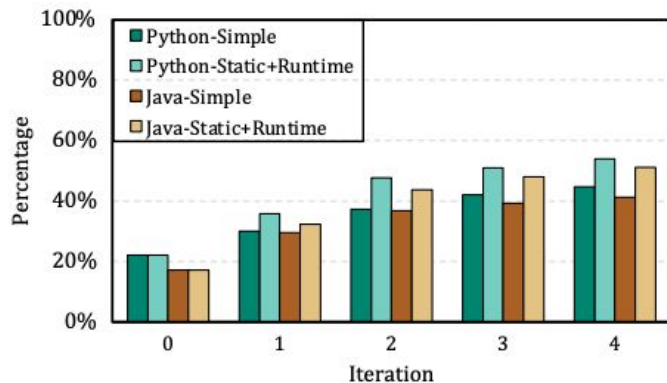
```
1 def getMinDistance(self, nums: List[int], target:
  int, start: int) -> int:
2     min_diff = float('inf')
3     min_index = -1
4     for i in range(len(nums)):
5         if nums[i] == target:
6             diff = abs(i - start)
7             if diff < min_diff:
8                 min_diff = diff
9                 min_index = i
10    return min_diff
```

*"min\_index" is unused -> smelly code*

# Repairing Code Quality Issues with Prompting

## Prompt Strategies

- Simple feedback (No details)
- Feedback from static analysis and compiler
- Iterative feedback



Iterative Feedback Impact on Producing Code Without Quality Issues

## Key Findings

- Prompts with detailed feedback can effectively assist ChatGPT in self-repairing code quality issues, whereas ambiguous feedback may have a negative impact on ChatGPT's performance.
- Iterative repairing proves to be effective, particularly when guided by detailed feedback that incorporates static analysis and runtime errors.

## Part II: Reliability of Code Generated by LLM-based Tools

- **ChatGPT-generated Code Include Low-quality Issues:** Issues in ChatGPT-generated code can be categorized into four categories: Compilation & Runtime Errors, Wrong Outputs, Code Style & Maintainability, Performance & Efficiency
- **Repairing Code Quality Issues with Prompting is Useful:** Prompts with detailed feedback can effectively assist ChatGPT in self-repairing code quality issues

**RQ2: Is the code generated by LLMs reliable enough to be applied in the real world? How do they influence the reliability?**

**Answer:** While LLMs like ChatGPT can generate code when developing software, this code often contains low-quality elements such as bugs or code smells, which can affect overall reliability.

**Future work:** Enhance LLMs' self-repair capabilities through improved prompting strategies; Establish robust evaluation means to ensure high code quality standards.





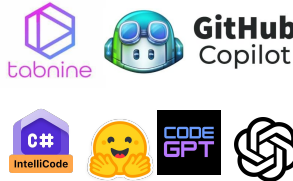
# Part III: Reliability of LLM-based Software Development Applications



Could I be any more free? These LLM-based software development tools in my IDEs are my Joey. They're my lobster in the coding sea. I don't just use them, I rely on them. They're knocking on productivity's door!



Software Development Environment



Software Development Applications in IDEs



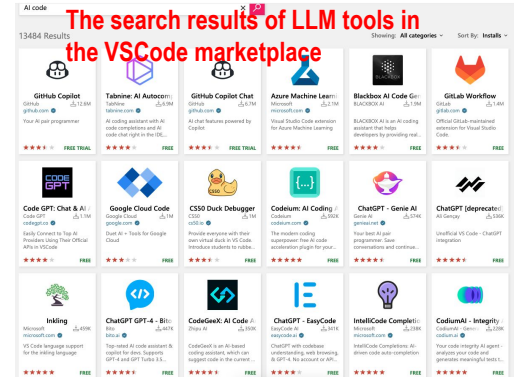
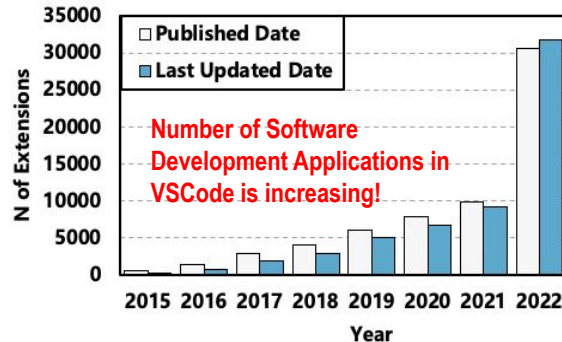
Higher Productivity for Software Developers

- Code Generation
- Code Repair
- Code Translation
- Code Review
- Code Completion
- Code Understanding
- Code Commit
- Generation
- Program Synthesis
- .....

```

Files | index.js
├── index.js
└── ...

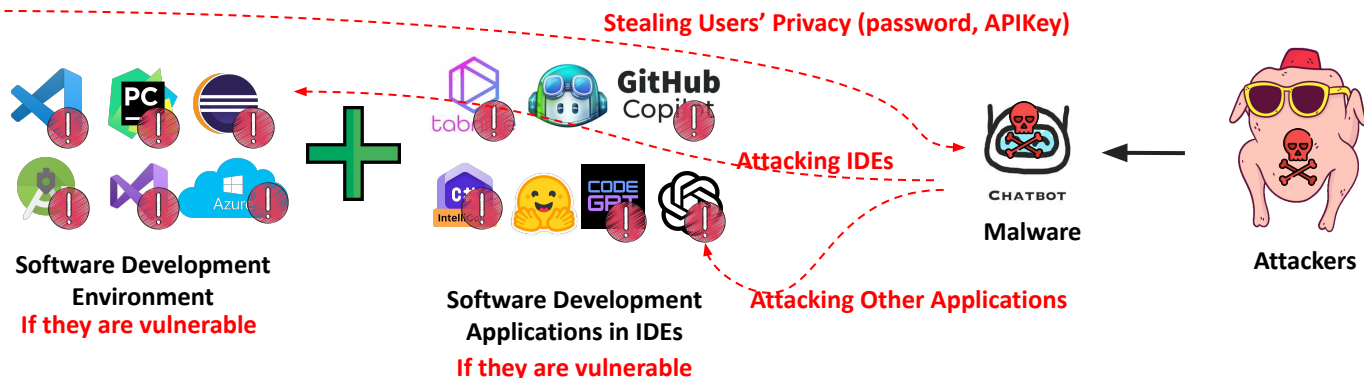
1 // @ts-nocheck
2 const fs = require("fs");
3 const https = require("https");
4
5 function saveImageToDisk(url, localPath) {
6   const file = fs.createWriteStream(localPath);
7   const request = https.get(url, function
8     (response) {
9     response.pipe(file);
10  });
11 }
12
13 function colorString(fill) {
14   return `rgba(${Math.round(fill.color.r * 255)},
15   ${Math.round(fill.color.g * 255)}, ${Math.round(
16   fill.color.b * 255
17   )}), ${fill.opacity ? fill.opacity : fill.color.a
18   }`;
19 }
20
21 function dropShadow(effect) {
22   return `${effect.offset.x}px ${effect.offset.y}
23   px ${effect.radius}px ${colorString(effect)}`;
24 }
    
```



# Part III: Reliability of LLM-based Software Development Applications



Could I be any more free? These LLM-based software development applications in my IDEs are my Joey. They're my lobster in the coding sea. I don't just use them, I rely on them. They're knocking on productivity's door!



No, no, no! Y'know, sometimes, you just can't trust completely. We don't know weather IDEs or applications are secure. Hackers could be out there and attack you. It's like when I lost my sandwich, you just never know when it's going to happen!

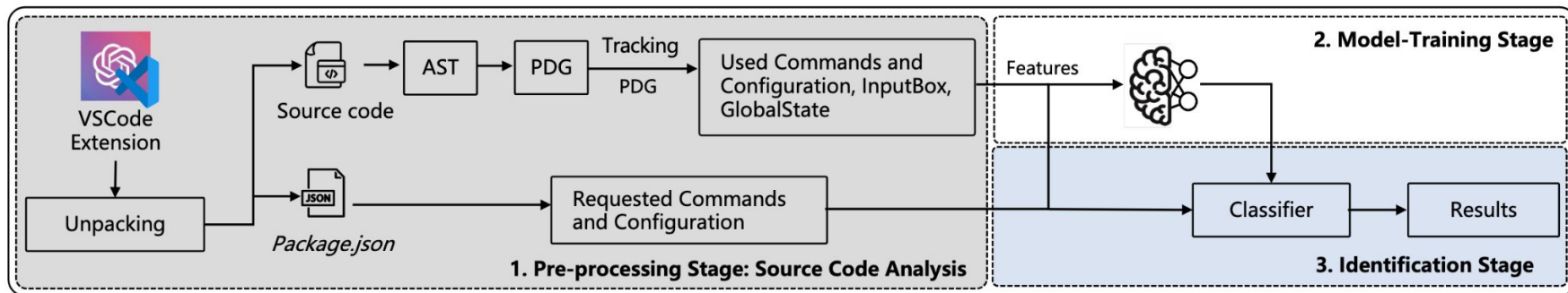
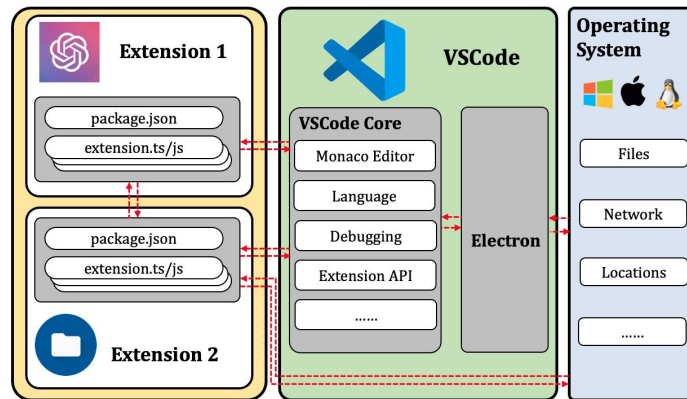


**RQ3: Are LLM development tools in our development environment reliable for use? How do they influence the reliability?**

# Development Environment (VSCode)

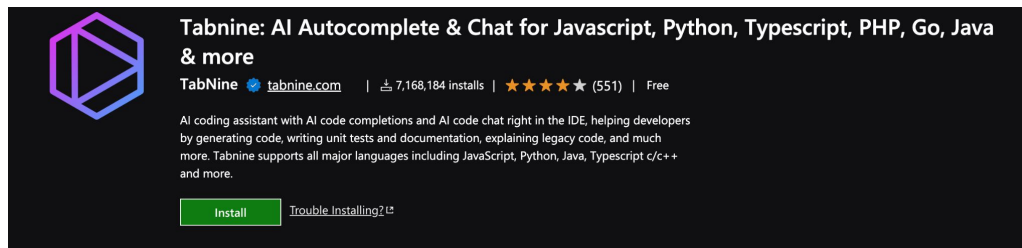
## Key Differences from popular software ecosystem:

- **No Permission Protocols:** Extensions can access resources or carry out functions without permission granted by the host apps;
- **Event-Driven Activation:** Extension is launched by specific events;
- **Framework Differences:** A set of privileged official APIs



# Security Risks for VSCode Extensions

- **Improper Credential Storage:** Despite the design of VSCode extensions to operate in isolation, not all data within an extension is isolated. Attackers can access other extensions' configuration and storage (Tabnine, EasyCodeAI).



The screenshot shows the VS Code Marketplace page for the Tabnine extension. On the left is the Tabnine logo, a purple hexagon with a white cube inside. To the right of the logo, the text reads: "Tabnine: AI Autocomplete & Chat for Javascript, Python, Typescript, PHP, Go, Java & more". Below this, it says "TabNine" with a blue verified badge, the website "tabnine.com", "7,168,184 installs", a 5-star rating with "(551)" reviews, and "Free". A description follows: "AI coding assistant with AI code completions and AI code chat right in the IDE, helping developers by generating code, writing unit tests and documentation, explaining legacy code, and much more. Tabnine supports all major languages including JavaScript, Python, Java, Typescript c/c++ and more." At the bottom of this section are two buttons: a green "Install" button and a "Trouble Installing?" link.

[Overview](#) | [Version History](#) | [Q & A](#) | [Rating & Review](#)

 Stars 10k |  Rating 4.2/5 (551) |  Views 20M |  Follow @Tabnine |  Gitpod ready-to-code

AI assistant for software developers

Note: This extension is NOT for Tabnine Enterprise self-hosted customers.

This extension is for Tabnine's Starter (free), Pro and Enterprise SaaS users only.

Tabnine Enterprise users with the self-hosted setup should use the Tabnine Enterprise extension in the [VSCode Marketplace](#).

Learn more about Tabnine Enterprise and self hosting options [here](#), or talk to a [Tabnine Enterprise expert](#)

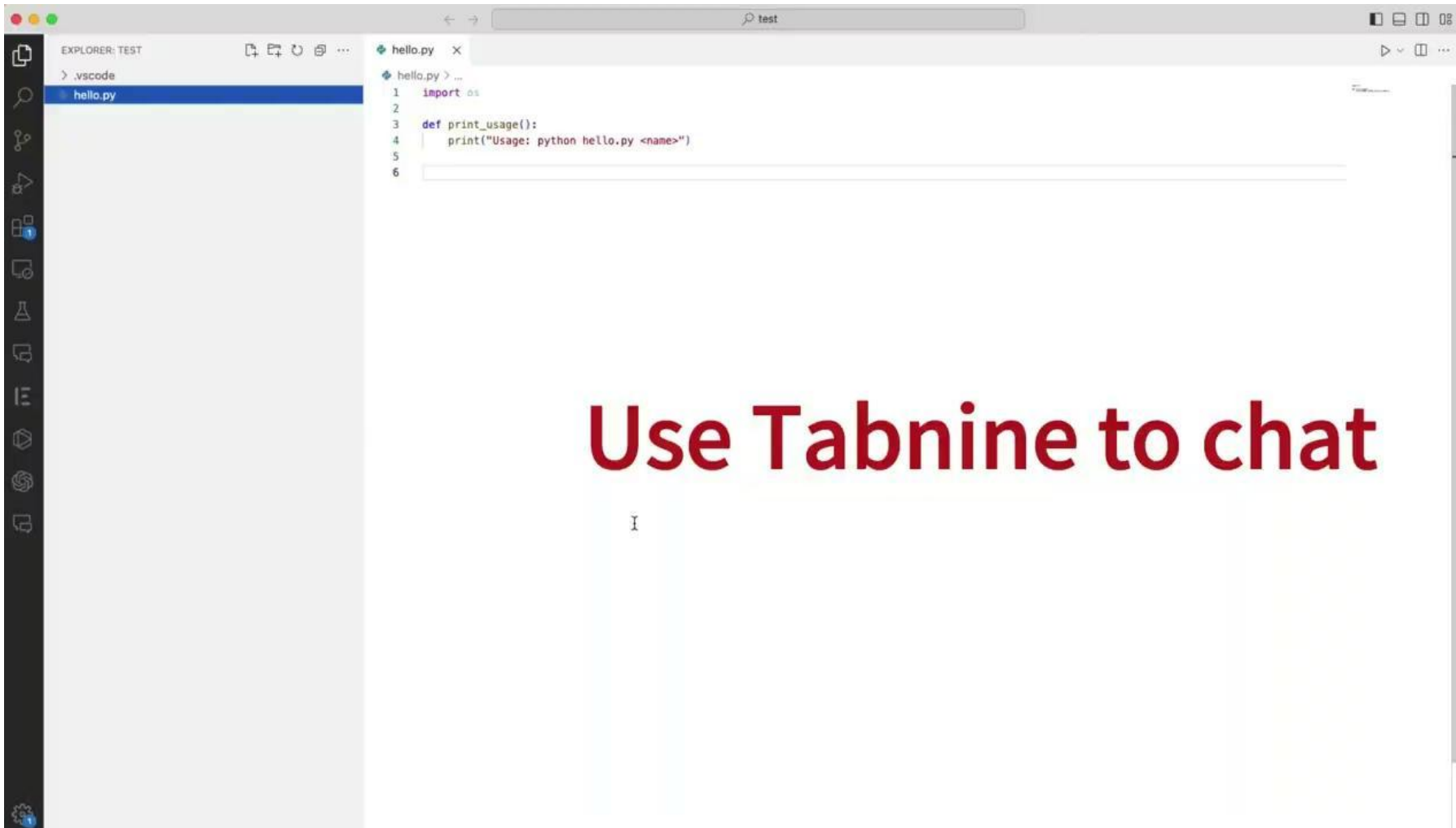
Code faster with AI code completions

Categories

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Tags

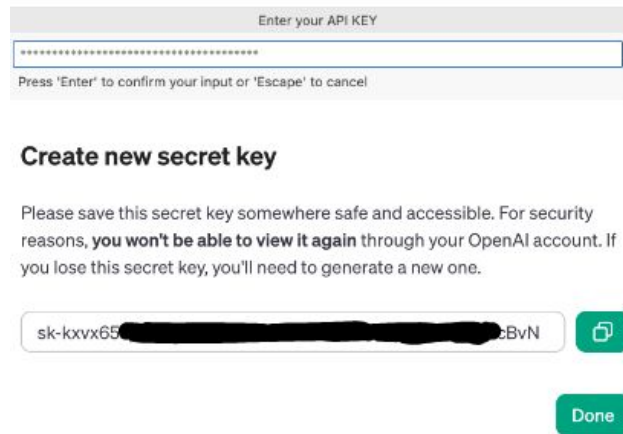
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# Use Tabnine to chat

# Security Risks for VSCode Extensions

- **Access to In-Extension Sensitive Storage:** Despite the design of VSCode extensions to operate in isolation, not all data within an extension is isolated. Attackers can access other extensions' configuration and storage (Tabnine, EasyCodeAI).
- **Clipboard Snooping:** Clipboard snooping is a security threat that malicious extensions can use to access the clipboard and steal sensitive information that users copy from other sources.




Enter your API KEY


.....

Press 'Enter' to confirm your input or 'Escape' to cancel

### Create new secret key

Please save this secret key somewhere safe and accessible. For security reasons, **you won't be able to view it again** through your OpenAI account. If you lose this secret key, you'll need to generate a new one.

sk-kxvx65 [REDACTED] eBvN 



# Security Risks for VSCode Extensions

- **Access to In-Extension Sensitive Storage:** Despite the design of VSCode extensions to operate in isolation, not all data within an extension is isolated. Attackers can access and update other extensions' configuration and storage (e.g, Tabnine, EasyCodeAI).
- **Clipboard Access:** Clipboard snooping is a security threat that malicious extensions can use to access the clipboard and steal sensitive information that users copy from other sources (e.g., Chat-GPT).
- **Credential Control:** Extensions can define commands to control various operations, including handling sensitive information. Other extensions can execute these operations using the official API `commands.executeCommand`. (e.g., CodeGPT)

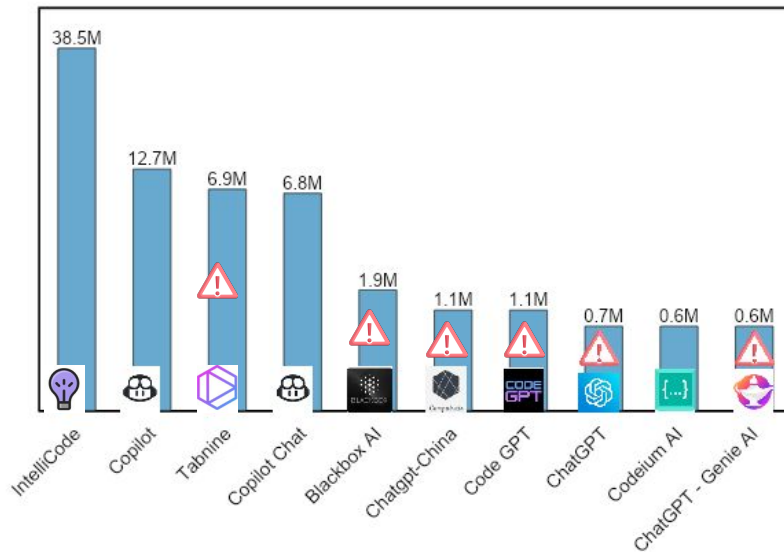
Exposed Type		Items per Exts	# Extensions	Total
Storage Access	GlobalState	1.38	316 (18.0%)	1599
	Requested Configuration	1.43	1205 (9.6%)	
	Used Configuration	1.23	295 (2.7%)	
Clipboard Access	InputBox	1.22	620 (11.5%)	620
Credential Control	Requested Commands	1.65	593 (2.7%)	724
	Used Commands	1.43	458 (2.3%)	



# Security Risks for VSCode Extensions

## Key Findings

- Out of the extensions analyzed, 2,325 pose a risk of leaking credentials ;
- For LLM-based software development applications, relying more on privacy can lead to more risk. Bad software design can make it difficult to deal with this risk.



# Part III: Reliability of LLM-based Software Development Applications

- **Exposure of User Credentials in VSCode Extensions:** Our analysis of 27,261 real-world VSCode extensions revealed that 8.5% (2,325 extensions) are vulnerable to credential-related data leaks. These leaks can occur through various channels, including commands, user inputs, and configurations.

**RQ3: Are LLM development applications in our development environment reliable for use? How do they influence the reliability?**

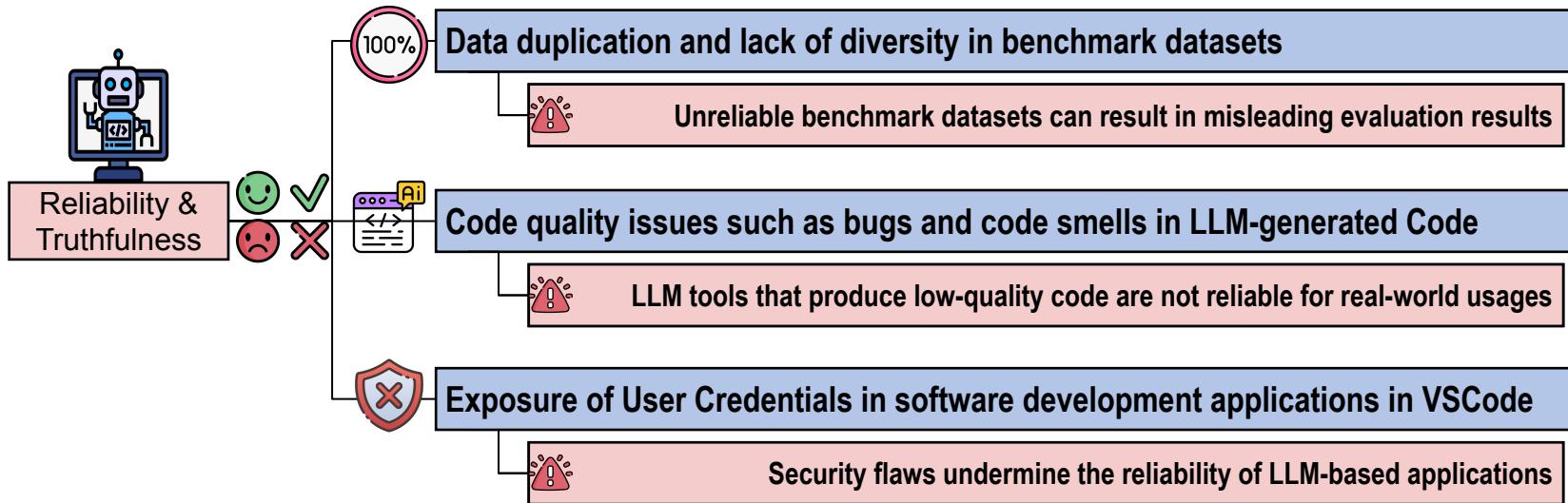
**Answer:** The current state of LLM-based development applications is not sufficiently reliable. They have security flaws that could potentially leak users' private data, such as credential-related information.

**Future work:** Enhancing the security and reliability of LLM-based development tools is crucial.



# Summary

**Overarching RQ: What are the key factors/issues that could impact the reliability of LLM-based software development tools, and how do they influence their reliability?**



# Future Work

- Prompt design for reliable LLM-based software development tools;
- Explore strategies to help the LLM learn from developers' activities in IDEs, with the aim of enhancing both efficiency and productivity;
- Impact of LLM vulnerabilities on LLM-based software development applications;



Could I BE any more excited? Reliable LLM-based software development tools have turned me into the Chan-Chan Man. I'm as free as a bird!

More time at home? Now you'll have more time to help me organize the spice rack and perfect our lasagna recipe! This is the best news ever!



Oh...my...GAWD! Y'know, this reliable LLM thing? It's gonna put Chandler Bing right out of a J-O-B-B-Y job! No more coding for him!

A group of six people are seated around a dining table in a warm, homey kitchen. The table is set with a white tablecloth, various dishes including a large wooden bowl, plates of food, and glasses. The background features a brick wall with decorative plates, a white refrigerator with magnets, and a window with a floral wreath. The overall atmosphere is intimate and celebratory.

**Sincere thanks to everyone  
who supported and helped me  
throughout my 5-year PhD journey!**