

AI AND THE FUTURE OF THE WORKPLACE

Canada's challenge is no longer AI adoption. It is AI competence.



A POINT OF VIEW ON
THE ENDURANCE ECONOMY



FRANCE CANADA
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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Preface:

What Is the Office in an AI-Enabled Economy?

Artificial intelligence is rapidly changing how and where work gets done. As this report highlights, the challenge facing organizations is no longer simply AI adoption. Increasingly, it is building the confidence, skills and culture needed to translate AI into meaningful value. For employers, this raises an important question:

If AI helps people work more independently, how do we make time together in the office more valuable?

AI is arriving at a moment when many employees are already navigating considerable uncertainty. Ipsos' [Endurance Economy](#) research has documented a growing desire for confidence, support, and stability amid ongoing economic and social change. In this environment, workplace transformation is not simply a technology challenge. It is a human one.

As AI takes on more routine and individual tasks, the purpose of the office evolves. It becomes less about providing a place to work and more about creating the conditions for people to do what they do best together. The benefits of being together in an office extend beyond mentoring new colleagues. They include collaboration, knowledge sharing, and the development of stronger relationships. Collectively, these experiences help build trust and a shared sense of purpose.

This report identifies trust, learning, and psychological safety as critical factors in determining whether organizations realize value from AI. These are not outcomes delivered by technology alone. They are shaped by leadership and by the office environments in which people interact every day.

We believe the workplace is a strategic asset. Its purpose is not merely to accommodate work, but to foster the connections and experiences that enable individuals and organizations to thrive. In an increasingly hybrid and AI-enabled world, organizations will need to be more intentional about why people come together and what they gain from doing so. AI may help people work independently while the office becomes the place where organizations build the trust, learning, and collaboration that turn technology into value.

The organizations that succeed in the years ahead will do more than deploy AI. They will combine technological capability with human capability. They will create environments that build confidence as deliberately as they pursue efficiency and they will bring people together to create value that technology alone cannot deliver.



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Introduction

This report was prepared for a special Ipsos/France Canada Chamber of Commerce Roundtable Discussion on the Future of the Workplace.

AI and the changing workplace are one of the many structural issues facing Canadians. The uncertainty and pressures associated with on-going change deepen the mindset that is the foundation of the Endurance Economy.

Artificial intelligence is becoming a permanent feature of the Canadian workplace. Awareness of generative AI is nearly universal, workplace usage is growing, and most Canadians believe AI adoption is inevitable. Yet beneath these encouraging adoption metrics lies a more consequential challenge: workforce capability. While employees are increasingly experimenting with AI and many report meaningful productivity gains, relatively few feel highly proficient, and most do not believe their organizations have adequately prepared them for an AI-enabled future.

Executive Summary

Artificial intelligence is becoming a permanent feature of the Canadian workplace. Awareness of generative AI is nearly universal, workplace usage is growing, and most Canadians believe AI adoption is inevitable. Yet beneath these encouraging adoption metrics lies a more consequential challenge: workforce capability. While employees are increasingly experimenting with AI and many report meaningful productivity gains, relatively few feel highly proficient, and most do not believe their organizations have adequately prepared them for an AI-enabled future.

Canadian organizations may be asking the wrong question about AI. The issue is no longer whether employees are aware of AI or using it. The emerging challenge is whether employees have the confidence, skills, governance, and organizational support necessary to translate adoption into measurable business value.

This distinction matters because Canada continues to struggle with lagging productivity growth while governments, investors, and business leaders increasingly view AI as a key lever for future economic competitiveness. Yet the assumption underpinning many AI strategies, that greater usage will naturally lead to greater value, is far from guaranteed.

This analysis suggests Canada may be facing less of an adoption gap than a competence gap. It should be noted that competence extends beyond technical proficiency. It includes the ability to critically evaluate AI outputs, understand the limitations and risks, and apply AI responsibly within organizational and ethical boundaries. Closing the adoption gap without addressing the competency gap risks limiting AI's impact on both organizational performance and national productivity.

Five Realities Shaping the Future of Work

- AI adoption has moved from exploration to everyday workplace use (at least among white collar professions).
- Employee confidence and capability lag awareness and adoption.
- Workers who use AI already report meaningful productivity benefits.
- Canadian attitudes toward AI remain more cautious than those of global peers.
- Organizational culture and workforce readiness are becoming critical determinants of AI success.

For leaders, the strategic question is shifting. The future will not be determined by who deploys the most AI tools, but by who develops the workforce capabilities, governance frameworks, and organizational culture needed to turn AI adoption into sustained advantage.

AI Adoption Has Moved from Exploration to Everyday Work

For years, discussions about AI focused on what might happen in the future. Increasingly, however, workplace AI is becoming a present-day reality.

Research from Statistics Canada suggests awareness of generative AI tools is now nearly universal among Canadian workers, with more than one-third report having used generative AI as part of their work during the previous year. Adoption varies considerably across industries, with workers in knowledge-intensive sectors far more likely to use AI than those in many service-sector occupations.



Most users, however, do not rely on AI for the majority of their work. Instead, they are incorporating it into selected tasks and workflows. AI has established a meaningful presence in Canadian workplaces, but its integration remains uneven and continues to evolve.

AI and the Endurance Economy

The rapid adoption of AI is unfolding against a backdrop of economic uncertainty and growing social bifurcation. Ipsos research has increasingly identified a divide between Canadians who feel confident in their ability to navigate economic challenges and those who feel they are continually enduring it. AI has the potential to become another fault line in that divide.

Workers who possess stronger digital skills and greater confidence, are better positioned to benefit from emerging technologies. Those with fewer opportunities to build those capabilities may find themselves struggling to keep pace. Left to diffuse organically throughout organizations, AI risks deepening existing capability gaps. Managed intentionally, however, AI could become a powerful tool for expanding opportunity, increasing workforce resilience, and improving productivity across a broader segment of the labour force.

For leaders, the challenge is not simply encouraging AI adoption. It is ensuring that adoption creates shared value rather than widening the gap between those who confidently embrace workplace transformation and those who feel increasingly left behind by it.

By the Numbers

93% OF CANADIAN WORKERS ARE AWARE OF GENERATIVE AI TOOLS.

36% HAVE USED GENERATIVE AI AT WORK IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS.

64% OF AI USERS EMPLOY AI FOR SOME TASKS, BUT NOT MOST TASKS.

— Source: Statistics Canada, *Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence Tools Among Canadian Workers, March 2026*

AI and the Canadian Workplace: Inevitable, But Not Yet Integrated

The growth of workplace AI is occurring against a backdrop of rising expectations about its future role. According to the 2026 TD AI Insights Report, most Canadians believe workplace AI adoption is inevitable. Yet many workers do not believe either they or their organizations are fully prepared for that future. More than half believe their workplace is lagging others in AI adoption, while fewer than four in ten report receiving adequate AI training.

The findings suggest that expectations for AI may be developing faster than organizational support structures. Workers recognize that AI will play a growing role in work, but many do not yet feel fully equipped for what that means in practice.

Executive Implication

Many organizations are focused on the technical aspects of AI readiness. However, employee perceptions may be just as important as organizational reality. If workers believe their organization is unprepared, engagement with AI initiatives may lag regardless of technology investments. Leaders should assess the role of their workplace in bringing people together to ensure they are building both capability and confidence.

By the Numbers

59% SAY AI MAKES THEM MORE PRODUCTIVE AT WORK.

58% SAY AI PROVIDES A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE IN THEIR ROLE.

— Source: Ipsos / TD Bank Group, 2026 TD AI Insights Report

Canada in a Global Context

The Canadian workplace experience looks different when viewed through a global lens. Results from the Ipsos AI Monitor 2026 show Canadians are less likely than the international average to report workplace benefits from AI and less likely to believe AI will significantly transform their jobs in the years ahead. While optimism alone does not create better outcomes, differences in confidence, expectations, and acceptance may influence the speed at which organizations transform and capture value.

The question for Canadian leaders is not whether employees are less enthusiastic than workers elsewhere. The more important question is whether lower confidence and lower expectations contribute to slower organizational transformation and weaker productivity outcomes over time.

Governments are investing heavily in AI as a means of boosting productivity and economic competitiveness. At the same time, media coverage around job displacement, workforce disruption, and broader societal risks will continue to shape how Canadians perceive AI in the workplace. How organizations navigate these narratives may become an important differentiator in the years ahead.

By the Numbers

46% OF CANADIANS SAY AI HAS SAVED THEM TIME AT WORK IN THE PAST YEAR COMPARED WITH 62% GLOBALLY.

42% OF CANADIANS BELIEVE AI WILL CHANGE THEIR JOB WITHIN FIVE YEARS, COMPARED WITH 61% GLOBALLY.

— Source: Ipsos AI Monitor 2026



Canadians are Becoming more Comfortable with AI

Workplace attitudes toward AI do not exist in isolation. They are shaped by broader public attitudes toward the technology. The Ipsos Canada Next syndicated study suggests that while concern about AI remains significant, some measures of anxiety have declined over time. Canadians are less likely today than they were in 2019 to believe AI will reduce human empathy or insist that people should always be able to override AI-generated decisions.

These findings do not suggest concerns have disappeared. Majorities continue to express reservations. They do suggest, however, that attitudes are evolving as AI becomes more familiar in everyday life.

Employee attitudes toward AI are unlikely to remain static. Organizations that regularly listen to and measure workforce sentiment will be better positioned to adapt their AI strategies as perceptions evolve.

By the Numbers

↓ Concern that AI may reduce empathy has fallen from **71%** (2019) to **59%** (2025).

↓ Agreement that humans should always be able to override AI decisions has declined from **88%** (2019) to **75%** (2025).

— Source: Ipsos Canada Next

AI and Canadian Workplace Values: Alignment and Tension

AI is being introduced into a workforce that already has strong views about what matters at work. Research from Ipsos Essentials syndicated study shows Canadians place high value on work-life balance, working smart, career stability, meaningful workplace relationships, and empathetic leadership.

In some respects, these priorities align naturally with AI's potential. Technologies that reduce repetitive tasks and improve efficiency support preferences for working smarter and protecting personal time. At the same time, priorities such as stability, human connection, and empathy may shape how employees react to conversations about workplace change. These priorities also point to a re-evaluation of the role of offices with an eye to ensuring that workplaces deliver on the values required to ensure greater return from AI investments.

The connection between AI and workplace values may ultimately determine employee acceptance. Productivity gains alone are unlikely to overcome concerns around stability, trust, human connection, or career security. Organizations that position AI as a tool that

helps employees work smarter, reduce routine work, and strengthen performance may find greater acceptance than those that frame AI primarily as a cost-reduction initiative.

Age may also shape how employees experience workplace AI. Research from Ipsos and TD Bank Group found that familiarity with AI varies significantly across generations, with 83% of Gen Z and 71% of Millennials reporting familiarity with AI compared with 61% of Gen X and 38% of Boomers. Younger workers are also more likely to report productivity gains from AI, suggesting they may be integrating these tools into their daily work more readily than older cohorts.

The findings also suggest that familiarity should not be confused with competence. While younger Canadians are more likely to view themselves as AI-savvy, older generations often perform as well as or better on objective measures of AI knowledge. For employers, this points to an important reality: different generations may be facing different readiness challenges. Younger employees may bring greater digital fluency, while more experienced workers contribute business judgment, institutional knowledge, and workplace context that remain critical for translating AI adoption into meaningful organizational value.

Executive Implication

Introducing AI is not solely a technology strategy. It is also a workforce experience strategy and a workplace strategy. Leaders who successfully align AI initiatives with employee values and the in-office experience may find it easier to build trust, accelerate adoption, and realize value from their investments.

My work should add meaning and purpose to my life	51%	49%	Work is a means to earn a good life
A good work-life balance is non-negotiable for me	75%	25%	I prefer a demanding job that offers me high pay and fast growth
Meaningful human connections at work are important for my work satisfaction	48%	52%	I value efficiency, speed of response, and professionalism at work
I believe that there is no shortcut to hard work	33%	67%	I believe in being pragmatic and working smart
What I do at work helps define who I am	42%	58%	My work is just how I earn a living
Loyalty and stability in my career is important to me	68%	32%	I see value in switching jobs frequently for new experiences and growth opportunities
I admire leaders who value performance and help the company succeed	39%	61%	I admire leaders who have soft skills and show empathy toward employees

- Source: Ipsos Attitudes Towards Work Research; Ipsos Essentials



Conclusion

AI is entering a new phase in Canada. Awareness is widespread, workplace use is growing, and many employees already report tangible benefits. Canada's most significant challenge may no longer be adoption. It may be capability. While workers are increasingly exposed to AI, many continue to report limited training, modest confidence, and uncertainty about how AI will affect their future work.

The first phase of workplace AI was defined by experimentation. Employees explored new tools, organizations launched pilot programs, and leaders sought to understand emerging opportunities.

The next phase will be defined by execution. Organizations will increasingly be judged not on whether they have access to AI, but on whether they can transform that access into measurable improvements in productivity, innovation, customer experience, and workforce performance.

The organizations that succeed may not be those that deploy the greatest number of AI tools. Instead, they are likely to be those that build the confidence, skills, governance, leadership capability, and culture required to turn AI adoption into sustained competitive advantage.

Looking Toward the Future

As AI becomes more embedded in daily work, organizations will increasingly need to address the cultural conditions that enable employees to use these tools effectively. Workers who feel pressure to appear knowledgeable may be less likely to ask questions, admit mistakes, or openly experiment with new approaches. Conversely, organizations that create psychological safety for learning and exploration may be better positioned to build lasting AI capability.

Trust will also become increasingly important. Employees are more likely to embrace workplace transformation when leadership actions align with leadership messaging, when expectations are communicated clearly, and when organizations demonstrate a consistent commitment to workforce development rather than simply technology deployment.

Strategic clarity and visible investment in employee capability may become important differentiators between organizations that adopt AI and those that successfully create value from it.

The challenge may be particularly important across generations. Employees who built their careers before the emergence of AI and those entering the workforce with AI already integrated into their education and daily lives are often navigating different learning curves. The organizations that succeed may be those that build readiness for both groups while maintaining the human connection and shared sense of purpose that underpin effective workplace cultures. Increasingly, competitive advantage may depend not only on access to AI, but on the organizational culture that surrounds it.



Boardroom Questions

- What business outcomes do we ultimately want AI to enable within our organization?
- How much AI adoption is occurring today through employee experimentation that remains invisible to leadership?
- What constitutes AI readiness in our organization: technology investment, governance, leadership capability, workforce capability, or some combination of all four?
- Where is AI creating measurable value today, and how effectively are we scaling those successes?
- Are we closing our AI competency gap?
- What actions are we taking today to ensure AI advances our strategic objectives rather than simply changing how work gets done?
- Do employees feel psychologically safe experimenting with AI, sharing lessons learned, and challenging established ways of working?
- What are we doing in our places of work to build confidence while we pursue efficiency?

For more insights on the Endurance Economy, visit the Ipsos Canada Endurance Economy Hub or reach out to discuss what this means for your brand:



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