

AI Divide: Canadians worry technology will widen inequality

Use is rising, though most remain deeply skeptical of long-term impacts

June 9, 2026 – Artificial intelligence is rapidly embedding itself into Canadian life, whether through active use of tools such as ChatGPT or Claude, or passive exposure to AI-generated information in search, apps, customer service platforms, and media. But while use grows, the same can not be said about comfort levels regarding the overall impact of this technology.

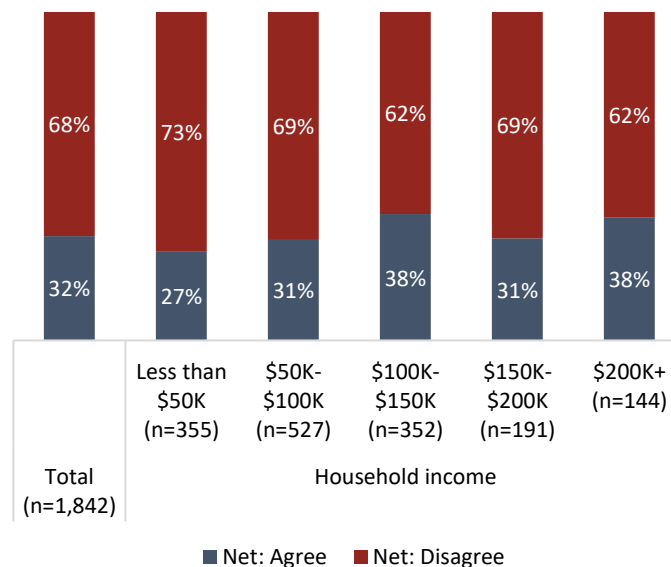
New data from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute finds Canadians are more likely to view AI with skepticism than enthusiasm. This unease persists even as Canadians report more frequent personal use of AI than they did late last year. The proportion saying they use the technology several times a day has risen from 10 to 16 per cent since November of last year.

Meanwhile, majorities say AI is more likely to create inequality (56%) than equality (7%) in society, and most (68%) reject the idea that everyone has the same opportunity to benefit from it.

To wit: higher-income and university-educated Canadians are much more likely to say they are actively using AI by prompting tools directly. Those with lower incomes and less formal education are more likely to describe their exposure as passive, through tools or information appearing in apps and programs without their asking, or to say that they aren't even sure if they're using AI.

As the technology becomes more embedded in workplaces, schools, services, and everyday information-seeking, this raises a key question: whether the technology will broaden access to opportunity, or further advantage those already best positioned to use it, as many Canadians appear to feel it will.

Agree vs Disagree "Everyone, regardless of where they live or who they are, has the same opportunity to benefit from AI"



METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from May 7 – 11, 2026, among a randomized sample of 1,842 Canadian adults. Respondents are drawn from the [Angus Reid Forum](#), a large-scale online panel developed to include Canadian residents in each of the 343 federal ridings in Canada and representative of the Canadian population by age, gender, family income, ethnic status and education. The sample was weighted to be representative of adults nationwide according to region, gender, age, household income, and education, based on the Canadian census. For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size would carry a margin of error of +/- 2 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding. The survey was self-commissioned and paid for by ARI. Detailed tables are found at the end of this release.

For more information on our polling methods, [click here](#).

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More Key Findings:

- Familiarity with AI does not necessarily ease concern. Majorities across all AI Assessment groups say they know at least a little about AI and where it is being used, suggesting skepticism is not driven simply by unfamiliarity.
- The top perceived upsides are the ability to learn or research things quickly (43%) and making information easier to access (37%).
- The leading worries are that people will rely less on critical thinking or problem-solving skills (41%) and that it will become difficult to know whether content is real or AI-generated (36%).

About ARI

*The **Angus Reid Institute (ARI)** was founded in October 2014 by pollster and sociologist, Dr. Angus Reid. ARI is a national, not-for-profit, non-partisan public opinion research foundation established to advance education by commissioning, conducting and disseminating to the public accessible and impartial statistical data, research and policy analysis on economics, political science, philanthropy, public administration, domestic and international affairs and other socio-economic issues of importance to Canada and its world.*

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Part One: Canadian hesitation toward AI persists, even as they use it more

Canadians are increasingly encountering artificial intelligence in daily life, as the technology moves quickly from a novelty to something embedded in search, work, education, customer service, media, and the apps people use every day. Its rapid spread has raised hopes about convenience, productivity, and new ways of solving problems, but also anxiety about trust, job disruption, inequality, and the ability of individuals or governments to keep pace. To better understand these attitudes, the Angus Reid Institute created an AI Assessment index, grouping respondents based on whether they see the technology as trustworthy and beneficial, or as risky, unequal, and potentially disruptive.

The AI Assessment Index was established by aggregating and dividing the scores from Canadians based on four questions.

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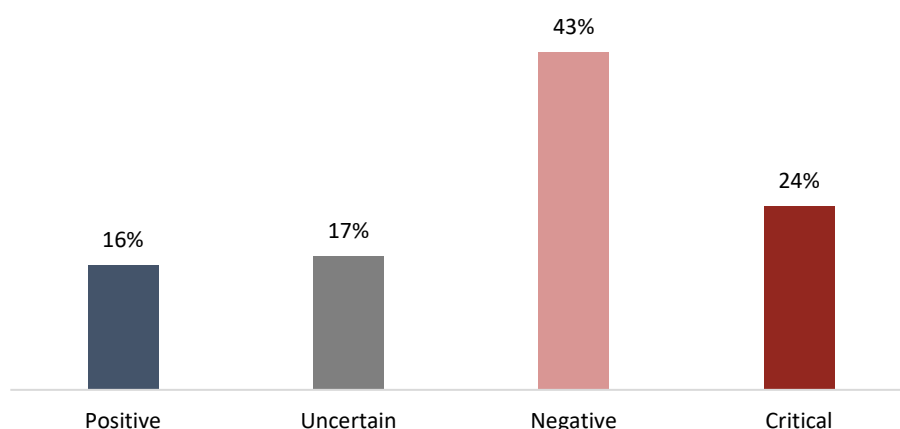
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- Agree vs Disagree “AI is a force for good in society”
- Agree vs Disagree “Everyone, regardless of where they live or who they are, has the same opportunity to benefit from AI”
- Agree vs Disagree “AI will create a prosperity gap between those comfortable and uncomfortable using it”
- How trustworthy do you consider the information you receive from AI platforms?

Overall, the largest number of Canadians are either negative about (43%) or outright critical of (24%) AI, when measured on the metrics noted. One-in-three are divided between seeing the technology positively (16%) or uncertainly (17%). This mirrors much of what was found in previous research from Angus Reid Institute, that found Canadians hesitant to embrace the technology, whether they use it or not:

Related: Artificial intelligence, real concerns

AI Assessment - based on trustworthiness and perceived impact of AI on 4 variables

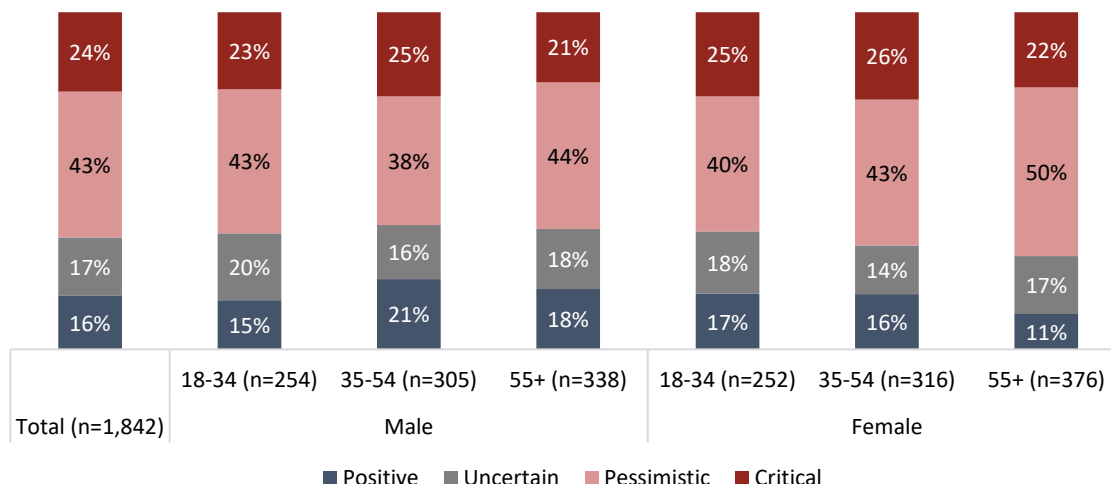


Age and gender are not overwhelming indicators of one's personal view of artificial intelligence. There are more positive views among men over the age of 35 compared to women of the same age, but most in all age and gender groupings lean toward pessimism and criticism of the technology:

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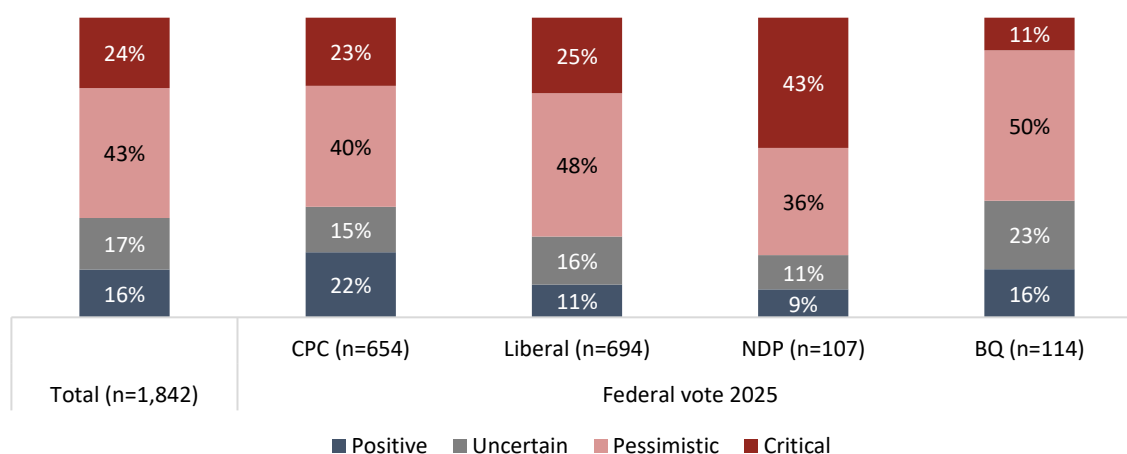
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AI Assessment by age and gender - based on trustworthiness and perceived impact of AI on 4 variables



These perspectives are scattered across income and education levels in a relatively consistent manner ([see detailed tables for more](#)). There are, however, more politically driven divisions evident, particularly between Conservatives, who tend to be more positive, and New Democrats, who are much more negative.

AI Assessment by 2025 federal vote - based on trustworthiness and perceived impact of AI on 4 variables



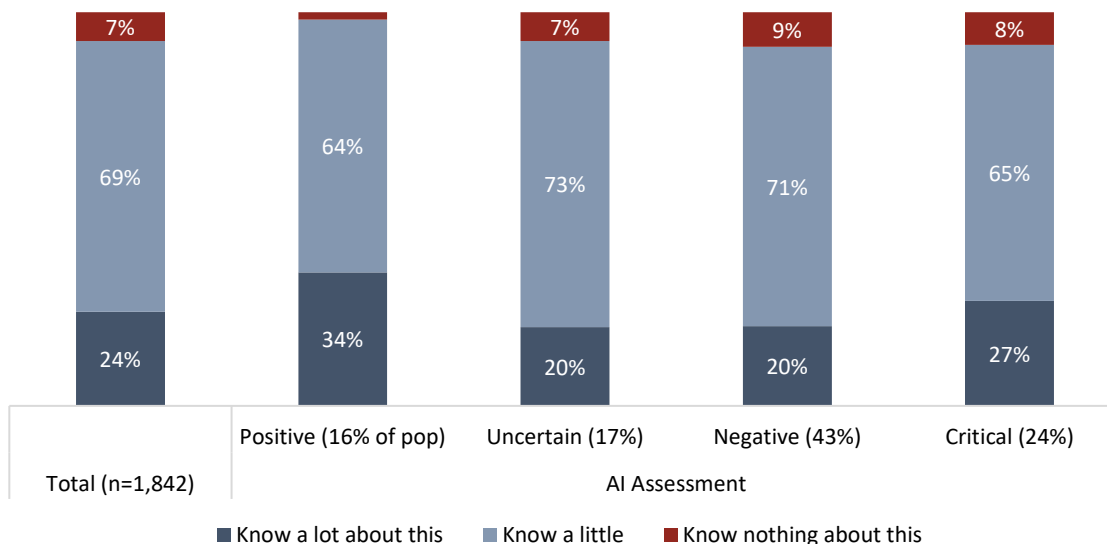
Knowledge about AI has little impact on how people feel about it

Notably, ignorance of the technology or comfort in knowing what it is being used for do not appear to be a major factor in one's view of it. Those who are positive about it are slightly more likely to say they know "a lot" about its application, but majorities in all groups say they know "a little":

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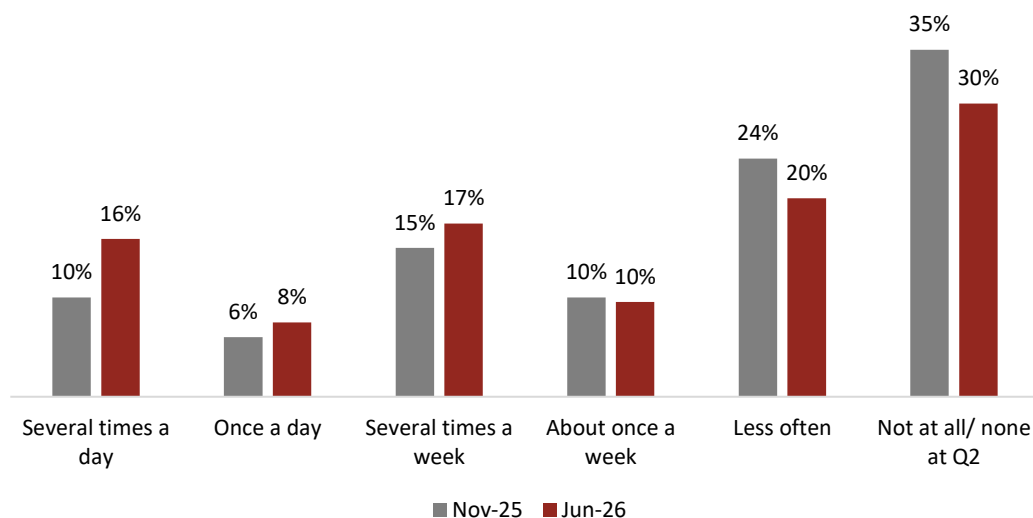
First, how much would you say you know about “artificial intelligence” and where it is currently being used:



Despite skepticism, use is increasing

While negativity and hesitation continue to largely define how AI is viewed in Canada, its use is growing. Compared to November of last year, the number of Canadians saying the use is several times a day, once a day, and several times a week, have all risen slightly.

Usage of AI over the past three months for personal purposes:



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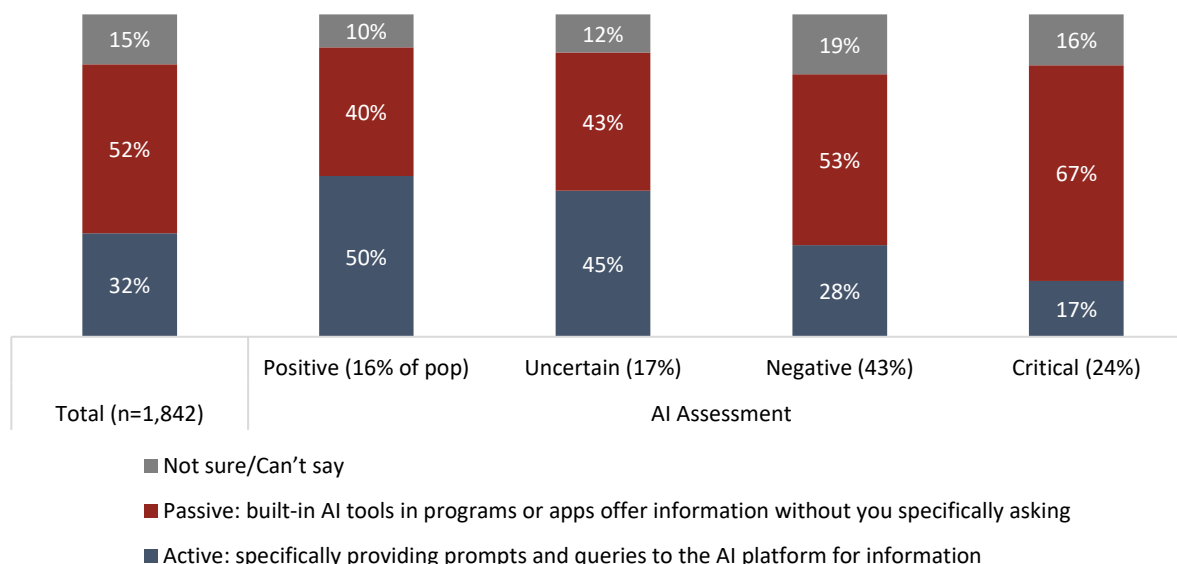
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Active versus passive use

Not all use, however, is equal. While some Canadians are deliberately engaging with AI tools by entering prompts or queries in programs like Chat GPT or Claude, more say their exposure is passive — encountering AI-generated information or built-in AI features in apps and programs without specifically asking for them.

This passive exposure is highest among those with a negative assessment of AI, two-thirds of whom (67%) say most of their AI exposure comes this way. By contrast, those with a positive view of AI are much more likely to describe their use as active, suggesting a link between hands-on experience and more favourable views, while more passive or unsolicited exposure may be contributing to unease.

Thinking about this, would you say most of your exposure to AI is:



Part Two: Benefits and concerns

As noted by the amount of passive use, AI is changing the world, whether many people like it or not. And while the overall view is thus far a largely negative one, there are clear benefits and risks according to Canadians.

Ease vs critical thinking

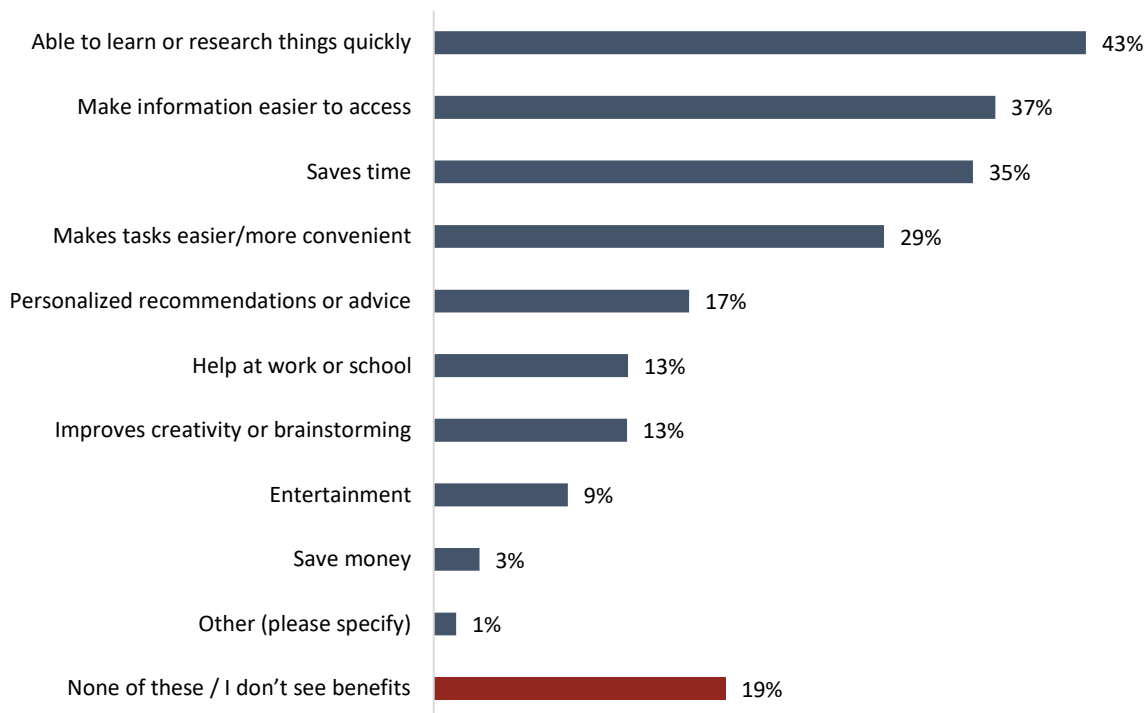
The benefits Canadians see in AI are largely practical. The leading perceived upside is speed: 43 per cent say AI can help people learn or research things quickly, while 37 per cent say it makes information easier to access. Another 35 per cent say it saves time, and 29 per cent point to convenience or making tasks easier. Fewer see AI as a tool for more specific personal or professional gains, such as personalized recommendations, help at work or school, or improved creativity. Notably, one-in-five say they do not see benefits at all, underscoring that enthusiasm for AI's possibilities remains far from universal.

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What would you say are the biggest potential benefits from using AI?



Those who are least likely to see the benefits are most likely to be those who are not engaging with AI. The group who say they have no exposure to large language models, such as ChatGPT, Claude or Perplexity, are vastly more likely to see no benefit (33%) compared to those who use them monthly or more:

What would you say are the biggest potential benefits from using AI?						
	Total (n=1,842)	Conversations with AI programs				
		Once a day or more	Weekly	Monthly	Every few months	Not at all/ none
Able to learn or research things quickly	43%	50%	52%	48%	51%	36%
Make information easier to access	37%	39%	41%	36%	48%	33%
Saves time	35%	47%	40%	43%	47%	28%
Makes tasks easier/more convenient	29%	46%	34%	33%	36%	23%
Personalized recommendations or advice	17%	27%	26%	22%	12%	11%
Help at work or school	13%	23%	21%	16%	12%	7%
Improves creativity or brainstorming	13%	22%	21%	18%	9%	8%
Entertainment	9%	9%	10%	9%	5%	9%
Save money	3%	5%	4%	1%	3%	3%
None of these / I don't see benefits	19%	2%	3%	1%	7%	33%

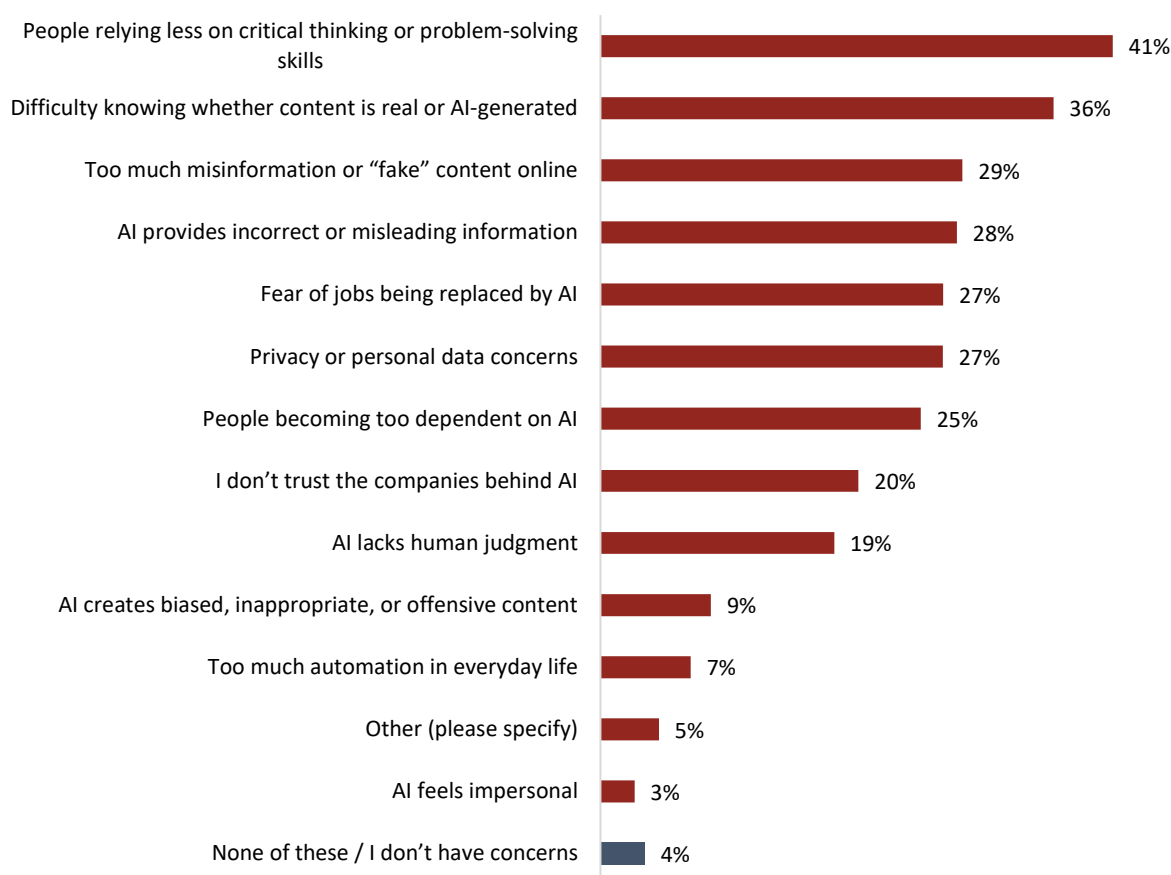
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On the concern side, Canadians are most worried about what AI may do to human judgment and trust in information. The top concern is people relying less on critical thinking or problem-solving skills, chosen by 41 per cent, followed by difficulty knowing whether content is real or AI-generated (36%) and the spread of misinformation or “fake” content online (29%). Similar numbers worry about AI providing incorrect information, job replacement, privacy, or people becoming too dependent on the technology. Taken together, the concerns suggest that Canadians’ unease is less about AI feeling strange or impersonal, and more about whether it will weaken people’s ability to think critically, assess truth, and remain in control of the tools they are using.

And on the other side of things, what concerns do you have?



AI supporters say information received is “trustworthy enough”

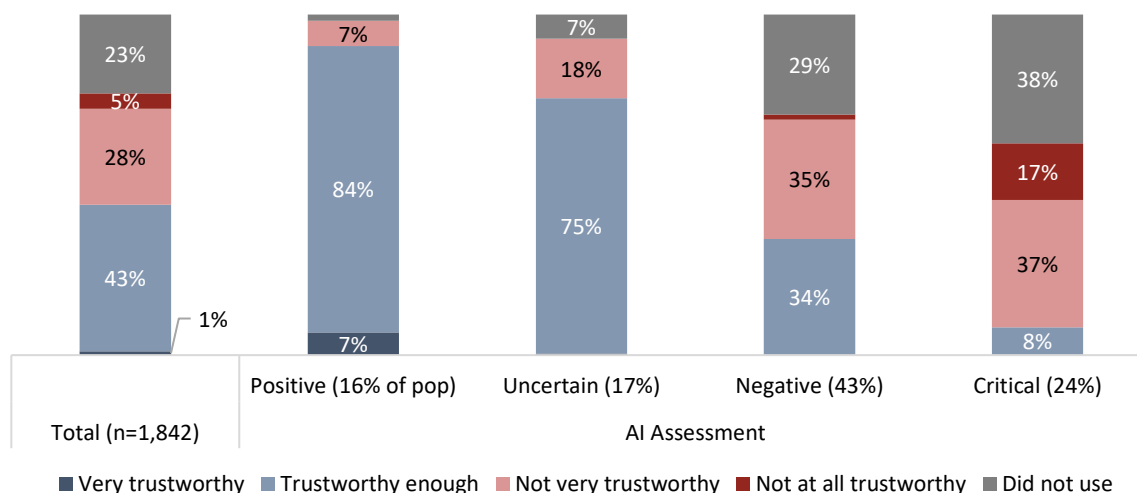
Trustworthiness of information continues to be a source of contention as AI adoption rises. The problem is not theoretical. In recent years, AI tools have [invented legal cases](#), [misstated company policies](#), produced [unreliable search summaries](#), and even generated [false claims about real people](#) — examples that have made “hallucination” one of the central public trust challenges facing the technology.

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Almost no one feels AI is “very” trustworthy at this time in its evolution (1%), while more say it is “trustworthy enough” (43%):

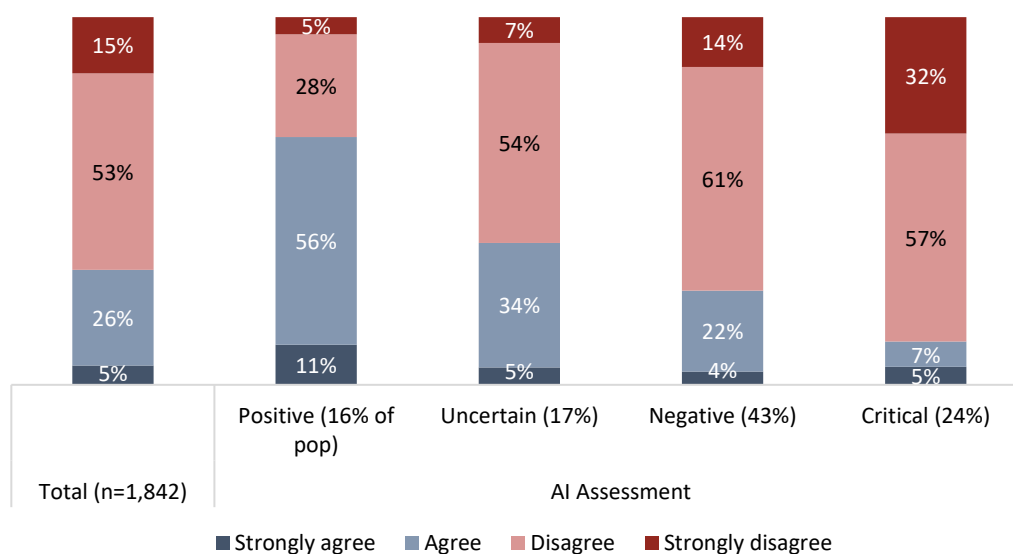
How trustworthy do you consider the information you receive from AI platforms?



But misinformation remains a concern

That aforementioned misinformation risk is real to most. Asked if AI-generated misinformation will be solved eventually, two-thirds disagree (68%), suggesting the technology has a long way to go to garner true public trust:

Agree vs Disagree: "AI-generated misinformation is a problem that will eventually be solved"



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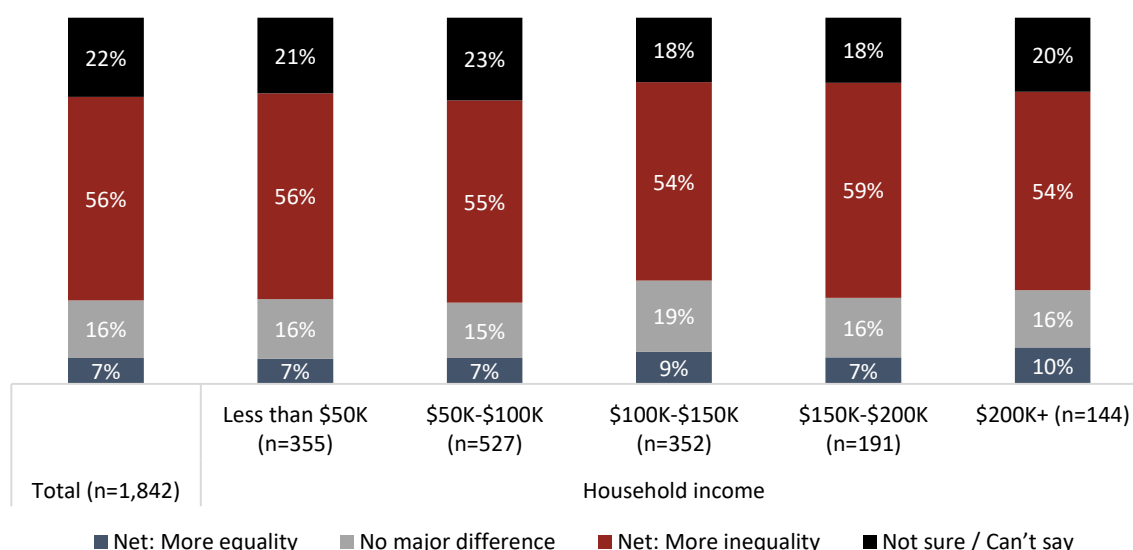
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The income and inequality undercurrent

The question of who benefits from AI is emerging as one of the central debates around the technology. On one hand, AI tools may lower barriers for people who need help writing, learning, translating, coding, or navigating complex systems. On the other, early adoption may be easier for those with higher levels of education, more digital comfort, and jobs where experimenting with AI is encouraged or rewarded.

Research in the U.S. has already found that early interest in generative AI followed familiar digital-divide patterns, with higher uptake in more urban, educated, and economically advantaged places. Canadians appear alive to this risk: across income groups, a majority say AI is more likely to create inequality than equality in society.

Do you think AI will lead to more equality or more inequality in society?



Does everyone have the same opportunity to gain?

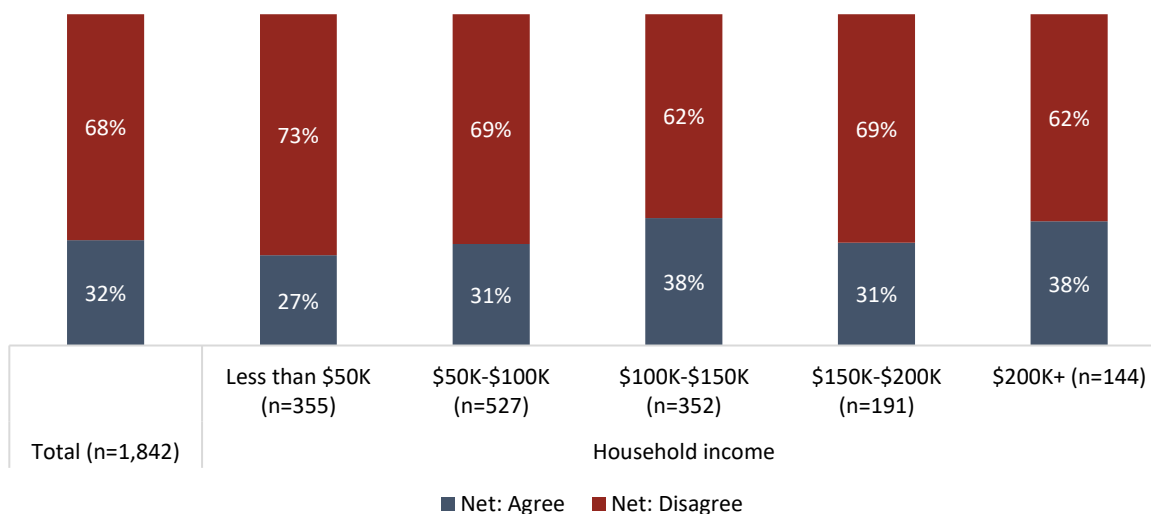
That concern carries through when Canadians are asked whether everyone has the same opportunity to benefit from AI. Majorities across income groups disagree, suggesting the issue is not simply whether the technology is useful, but whether access to its advantages will be evenly distributed.

Statistics Canada has found business use of AI doubled from 2024 to 2025, but adoption remains uneven, and other analysis points to gaps in skills, infrastructure, and organizational capacity as key factors shaping who can make use of the technology.

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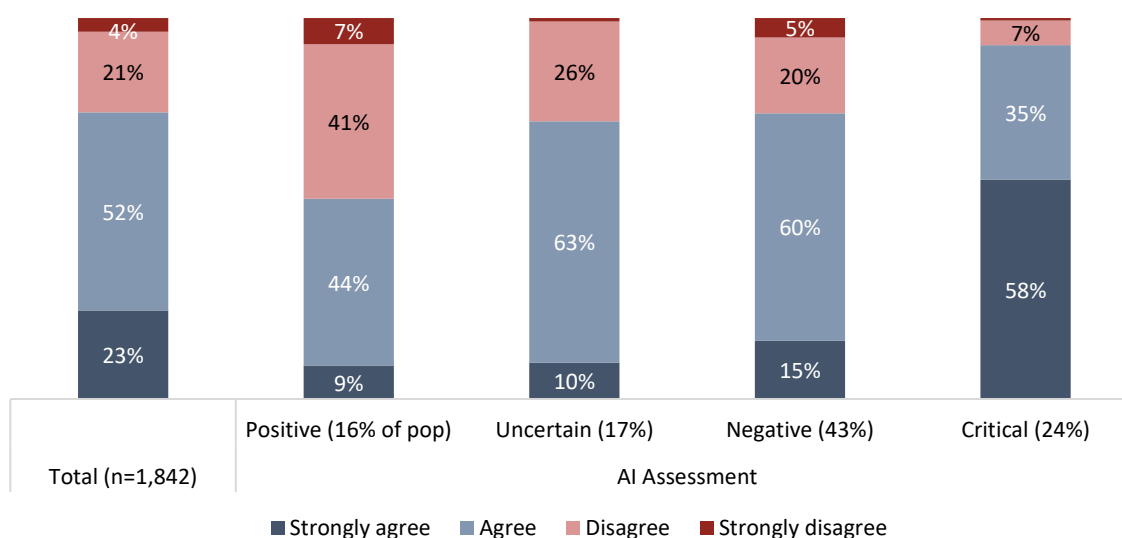
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Agree vs Disagree "Everyone, regardless of where they live or who they are, has the same opportunity to benefit from AI"



This divide is even more apparent when Canadians are grouped by their overall assessment of AI. Those most positive about the technology are much less likely to believe it will create a prosperity gap between those comfortable and uncomfortable using it – though half still do. Those most critical, by contrast, overwhelmingly agree, and a majority do so strongly.

Agree vs Disagree "AI will create a prosperity gap between those comfortable and uncomfortable using it"



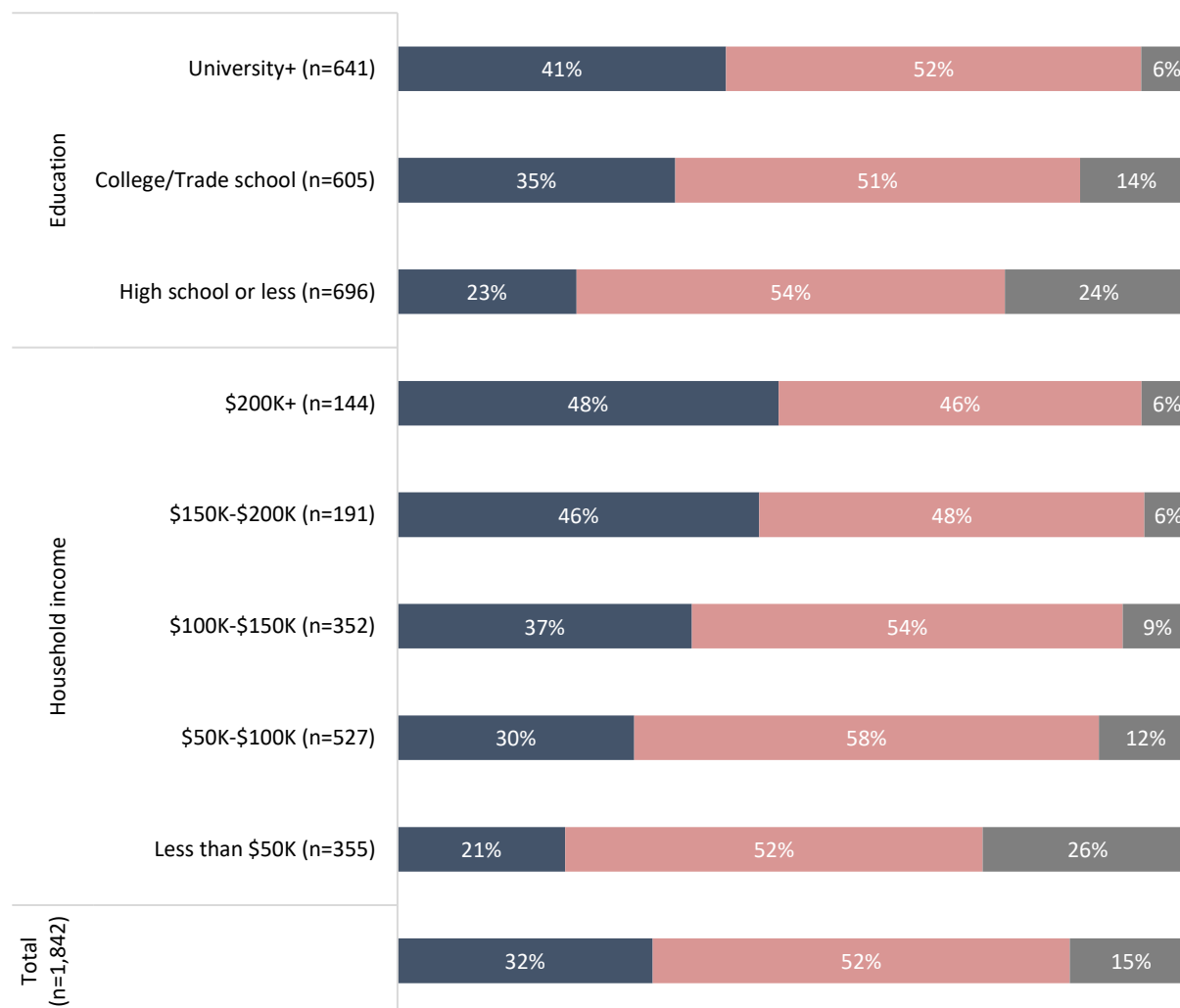
Some of the demographic trends noted in AI-uptake research are visible in these new data. Those with more education and higher household incomes are significantly more likely to say their AI exposure is

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active, meaning they are directly prompting tools and using them for information. University-educated Canadians are much more likely to report active use than those with a high school education or less, while active use rises sharply with income, peaking among households earning \$150,000 or more. That suggests the Canadians already better positioned in the economy may also be the ones most able to experiment with, adapt to, and benefit from AI as it becomes more embedded in work and daily life.

Thinking about this, would you say most of your exposure to AI is:



- Active: specifically providing prompts and queries to the AI platform for information
- Passive: built-in AI tools in programs or apps offer information without you specifically asking
- Not sure/Can't say

For detailed results by age, gender, region, education, and other demographics, [click here](#).

For detailed results by AI Assessment Index, [click here](#).

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