



Top-down Approach to Generative AI is Crucial as Canadian Employees Surpass Employers in Adoption

CDW Canada's report, [Uncharted Innovation: The Rise of Unofficial AI Tool Usage Among Canadian Office Workers](#), finds 47 percent of Canadian workers are using unregulated AI tools

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Today, [CDW Canada](#), a leading provider of technology solutions and services for Canadian organizations, released new research exploring how Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) is reshaping Canadian workplaces. [Uncharted Innovation: The Rise of Unofficial AI Tool Usage Among Canadian Office Workers](#) contains research conducted among members of the Angus Reid Forum, including 1,000 office workers across businesses of varying sizes and industries throughout Canada.

Employee driven adoption is outpacing organization policies

As artificial intelligence (AI) tools become even more accessible, employees are increasingly leveraging GenAI to enhance productivity and explore new workflows. However, much of this adoption occurs informally without approval or guidance from their organizations, as nearly half (47 percent) of Canadian employees admitted to using unregulated AI tools. Additionally, over a third (33 percent) of these unregulated users engage with AI tools weekly, signaling a strong demand for accessible organization-approved AI solutions.

"As AI becomes embedded in society and the workplace, employers must be prepared to provide the necessary framework to guide responsible use," said Brian Matthews, Head of Services, Digital Workspace at CDW Canada. "Organizations that don't prioritize formal AI adoption risk being left behind. Lack of AI adoption can also pose increased security risks, particularly if employees are using unregulated tools."

The survey found employees feel more confident using AI when their organization takes the lead. Many (61 percent) Canadian employees report feeling comfortable with workplace AI tools when they are officially implemented by their employer,

compared to only 43 percent in workplaces without approved AI tools. Additionally, 54 percent of employees without access to AI tools indicated an interest in using them if implemented first by their organization.

As demand and unregulated use continue to surge, organizations will need to adapt to remain competitive and retain Millennial and Gen Z talent, as over half (61 percent) of younger employees aged 18 to 34 are adopting AI tools, significantly above the national average of 45 percent. This presents an opportunity for employers to shape the use of AI within their organization, ensuring security while meeting the rising demand for innovative solutions.

Unregulated use high amongst mid-level and senior-level employees

As Canadian employees increasingly rely on GenAI tools for tasks involving sensitive data, many organizations are left vulnerable due to the absence of guidance and policies. The survey found that mid and senior-level employees are the biggest users of unapproved GenAI tools. Over a third of mid-level (38 percent) and senior-level (37 percent) employees report using these tools without workplace approval. Without secure platforms and clear guidelines, organizations face risks to data security and reputation that they may not be aware of.

“Embracing AI is not just a choice but a necessity to remain competitive, but without a structured approach to adoption the risks increase significantly,” said KJ Burke, Field CTO, Hybrid Infrastructure at CDW Canada. “Organizations can maintain integrity and security by establishing a framework to address data privacy, proper ethical use and regulatory compliance while empowering employees.”

GenAI governance increases pressure on IT teams

Organizations are constantly contending with everchanging technology and the unknowns as AI applications evolve. Internal IT teams are bearing the burden of AI adoption, often without the resources or expertise needed to manage its unique challenges.

The report found that while 36 percent of organizations are planning to implement AI tools, nearly three-quarters (73 percent) have yet to enlist third-party support.

“AI governance is complex and requires a specialized skill set and internal teams can quickly become stretched thin,” said Brian Matthews, Head of Services, Digital

Workspace at CDW Canada. “A trusted third party can provide tailored expertise on AI solutions to address specific challenges and job duties, allowing organizations to reap the full benefits of AI.”

To learn more about the opportunities and challenges Generative AI presents to organizations, download the report [here](#).

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About the Survey

These are the findings of an online survey conducted by CDW from September 23, 2024, to October 1, 2024, among a sample of 1000 office workers who are members of the Angus Reid Forum. The survey was conducted in English. For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size would carry a margin of error of +/- 3 percentage points, 95 times out of 100.

About CDW Canada

CDW Canada Corp. is a leading provider of technology services and solutions for business, government, education and healthcare. Established in 2003, CDW Canada is the country’s trusted advisor for cybersecurity, hybrid infrastructure and digital transformation. CDW Canada experts design, orchestrate and manage customized services and solutions, making technology work so people can do great things. Through its services-led approach, CDW Canada simplifies complex technology to empower customers to focus on their business and thrive in a rapidly evolving landscape. CDW Canada is a wholly owned subsidiary of CDW Corporation (Nasdaq: CDW), a Fortune 500 company. For more information, visit www.cdw.ca.

For further information, please contact:

Julie Clivio

VP, Growth & Operations, CDW Canada
647.288.5828 | julie.clivio@cdw.ca