



ORIGINAL RESEARCH

Canadians Are Reevaluating Their Educational and Career Plans in the Wake of AI

While they're optimistic about their economic futures, and the country's, AI and the renegotiation of CUSMA remain sources of anxiety.

A 10KC National Survey Report • Fieldwork: June 15–July 10, 2026 • Published August 2026

Introduction

Whether they're comfortably employed, between jobs, self-employed or in school, many Canadians are feeling like their professional prospects are at the mercy of major geopolitical, technological and economic forces.

From the disruptive impacts of artificial intelligence to the upcoming renegotiation of the Canada-U.S.-Mexico Free Trade Agreement (CUSMA), Canadians are watching carefully to see how global events impact their futures here at home.

Mentorship software provider Ten Thousand Coffees (10KC) recently polled more than 800 Canadian program participants on a range of topics impacting the country's — and their own — economic prospects and found many remain optimistic in the face of these looming challenges.

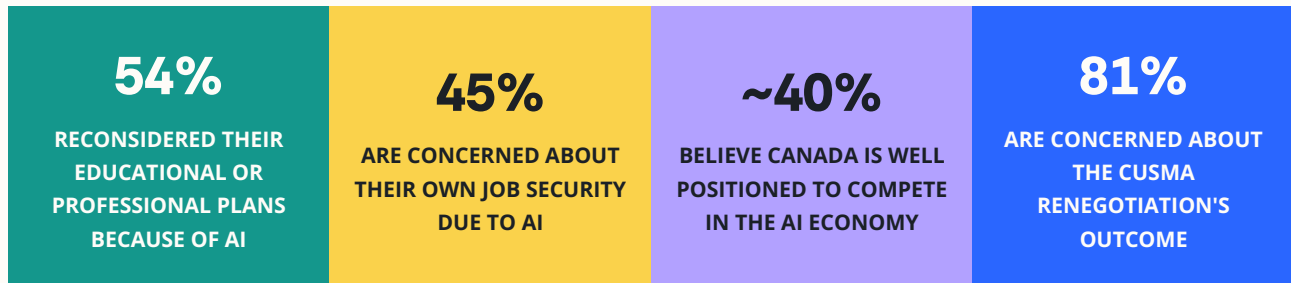
The data also suggests Canadians aren't sitting back and letting these global forces shape their futures. Instead, they're finding ways to proactively prepare for the changes ahead, whether through growing their networks, pursuing professional training or asking their favourite AI tool for career advice.

As a result, most say they're optimistic about the country's economic future, and Canada's ability to compete globally in the AI economy. A slight majority also expect their earnings to increase this year in the face of ongoing economic headwinds.

However, many express concern about looming challenges, such as how well they, their employers, and the country are positioned to compete in the AI economy, as well as the implications of the upcoming CUSMA renegotiation.

Many also believe in the value of mentorship and that a strong professional network can help them navigate a rapidly changing career landscape. The majority of 10KC participants report that the program better prepared them to engage in professional networking conversations and feel more confident when presenting themselves in a professional setting.

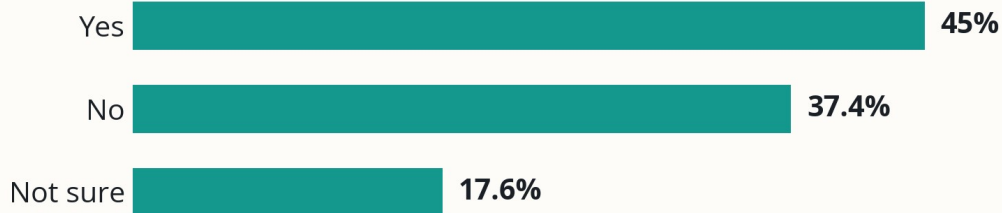
Key Takeaways



- Most respondents (54%) say advancements in artificial intelligence have caused them to reconsider their educational or professional plans, and nearly half (45%) said the technology has made them concerned about their own job security.
- Most respondents have taken proactive steps to reorient their careers in direct response to AI advancements, with a third pursuing additional professional training, 28% conducting independent research and 22% engaging in employer-led AI training. Less than a third have taken no career action due to AI advancements.
- Roughly 40% believe Canada is well positioned to compete globally in the AI economy and another 40% believe it is neutrally positioned, with just 20% pessimistic about Canada's future competitiveness.
- Among full-time employed respondents, 39% said their employer has adapted well to AI, and another 32% say their organization has made some adjustments, but not enough. Only 7.5% were concerned their employers are falling behind.
- Nearly half (44%) believe the Canadian economy will get stronger in the next three to five years, and another 23% believe it will remain the same. However, 81% expressed concern over the upcoming CUSMA renegotiation, including 28% who are "very concerned."
- After participating in a 10KC mentorship program, most respondents said they felt more or much more ready to have professional networking conversations, and half felt more confident in their ability to present themselves in professional settings.

AI Is Inspiring Students to Change Programs, Employers to Change Strategies, and Workers to Change Career Paths

Are you concerned about your own job security as a direct result of artificial intelligence?



Source: 10KC National Survey, 2026 (n=829)

Most respondents (54%) say advancements in artificial intelligence have caused them to reconsider their educational or professional plans, and nearly half (45%) said they are concerned about their own job security as a direct result of AI.

Furthermore, more than half of respondents that are currently enrolled in a post-secondary institution say they have changed their focus or academic program in response to AI advancements.

Younger respondents were more likely to say AI inspired a career or academic pivot, with 56% of those aged 18 to 29 saying the technology has caused them to reconsider their plans, compared with just 31% of those over 50.

Most respondents have taken proactive steps to reorient their careers in response to AI, with a third pursuing additional professional training, 28% conducting independent research and 22% engaging in employer-led AI training. Less than a third have taken no career action due to AI advancements.

Have you asked AI for career advice in the past 12 months?



Source: 10KC National Survey, 2026 (n=829)

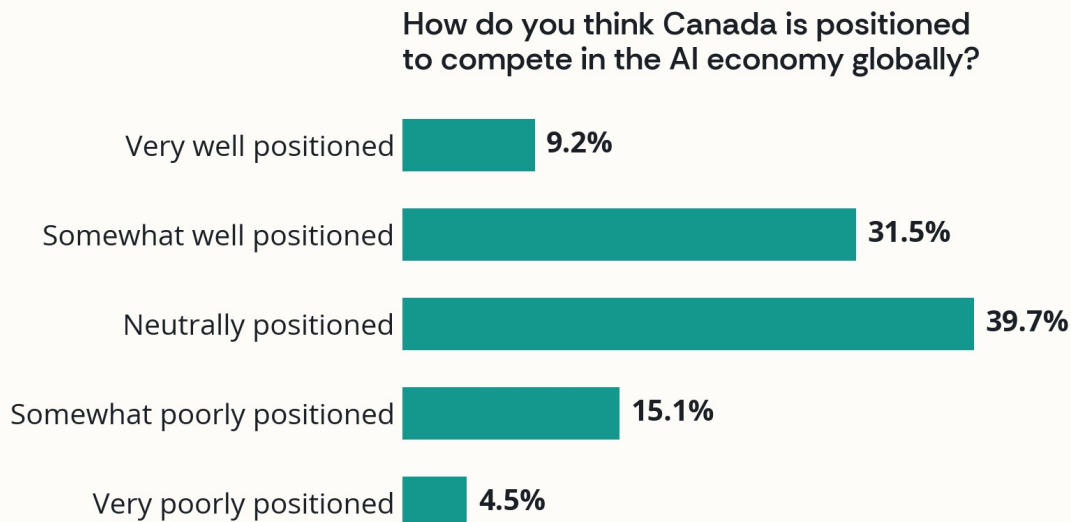
The majority (62%) have also asked AI for career advice in the last year. Early career professionals were much more likely to turn to AI for career advice, with about 71% of those aged 25-29 asking the technology for help, compared with less than half of those over 40.

Among full-time employed respondents, 39% said their employer has adapted well to AI, and another 32% say their organization has made some adjustments to business as usual, but not enough. Only 7.5% of employed respondents were concerned their employers are falling behind.

Canadians Are Mostly Optimistic About Their Economic Future

Despite expressing some trepidation over the impacts of AI on their own careers, respondents were generally optimistic about Canada's future prosperity, and their own.

Nearly 40% said Canada was somewhat or very well positioned to compete in the AI economy, another 40% said it is neutrally positioned, and less than 5% said the country was "very poorly positioned" to compete globally.



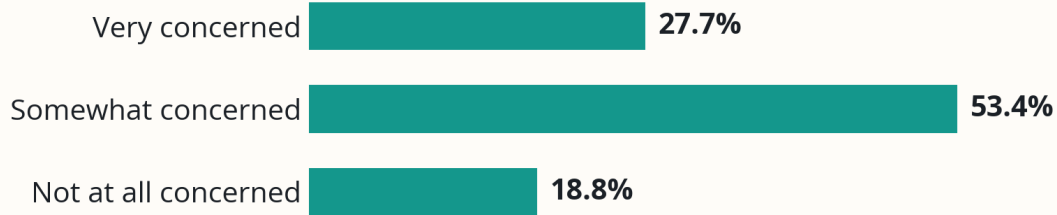
Source: 10KC National Survey, 2026 (n=829)

Nearly half (44%) also believe the Canadian economy will get stronger in the next three to five years, 23% believe it will remain the same, while 22% fear the economy is poised to get weaker in the years ahead.

Older Canadians are more optimistic about the country's economic future, with more than half of those over 40 believing Canada's economy will strengthen in the next three to five years, compared with just 42% of those under 30.

When it comes to their own finances, 29% of respondents expect their household earnings to grow by at least 5% this year, and another 23% expecting at least some earnings growth. Only 22% believe their incomes will stay the same this year and another 14% expect their household earnings to decline in 2026.

How concerned are you about the outcome of the upcoming Canada-U.S.-Mexico free trade negotiations?



Source: 10KC National Survey, 2026 (n=829)

Despite the general sense of optimism among respondents, many expressed concerns over the upcoming CUSMA renegotiation, with more than half (53%) saying they are somewhat concerned and 28% saying they are very concerned about its outcome. Overall, just 19% said they were “not at all” concerned about the trade deal.

Those employed in HR and recruitment (93%), retail, wholesale and e-commerce (92%), consulting and professional services (89%) and environment and sustainability (89%) saw the highest proportion of respondents at least somewhat concerned over the upcoming trade deal. Meanwhile, just 53% of those employed in life sciences and R&D, and 63% of those in the data science, analytics and AI industry expressed concern over CUSMA.

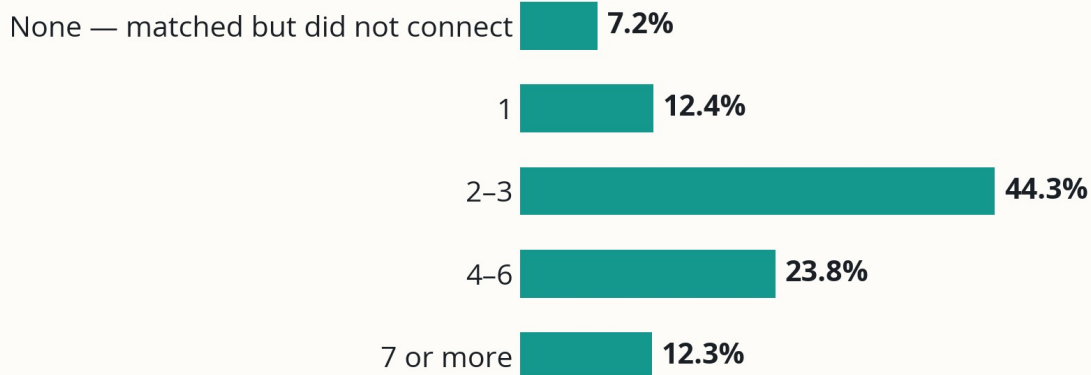
Overall, Canadians most trust the federal government to regulate AI, with a third of respondents picking them over provincial governments, technology companies, NGOs and the free market to determine AI’s future. Another 29% admitted they weren’t sure whom that responsibility should fall to.

Mentorship Makes a Difference

In a rapidly changing world, Canadians are looking for answers, and not all of them can be found by prompting an AI chatbot.

Instead, 10KC mentorship program participants report feeling more confident in themselves and their ability to navigate their careers after meeting with a mentor through the platform.

Approximately how many total 1:1 conversations did you have through the platform?



Source: 10KC National Survey, 2026 (n=829)

Roughly three quarters of program participants had at least two 1:1 conversations with a mentor they connected with through the platform, and 59% ranked the quality of those conversations a four or five out of five. Nearly half (46%) are still in touch with some of those they met through a 10KC mentorship program.

Since participating in the program, 28% have finished their degree, diploma or certification, and 29% secured their first full-time job. Another 26% report expanding their professional network in a meaningful way and 16.5% have received a promotion or raise, while 18.5% made a meaningful career pivot after meeting with a mentor.

Roughly 40% of program participants agree or strongly agree that their participation was a meaningful factor in their career progression, and an equal proportion agree or strongly agree that they felt better prepared for their career because of it.

After participating in a 10KC mentorship program, most respondents said they felt more or much more ready to have professional networking conversations (52%). Half also felt more confident in their ability to present themselves in professional settings and in their ability to communicate with, guide and inspire others.

Nearly half also agreed or strongly agreed that they have a better understanding of their career path and industry, more clarity about their own career goals and directions, and a better sense of how to navigate the Canadian job market since joining the program.

Methodology

10KC surveyed 829 of its current and former program participants based in Canada between June 15 and July 10, 2026. All respondents were 18 years or older.

About 10KC

Ten Thousand Coffees (10KC) mentorship software redefines workplace mentoring, making it easy to connect employees at all levels to share knowledge and grow together. Early talent, high potentials, and managers alike can make meaningful progress at every step of their career journey, improving key talent outcomes like retention, engagement, mobility, and development. With smart-matching technology, expert guidance, flexible formats, and reporting, 10KC delivers a truly engaging mentoring experience.