

Number of Canadians who don't trust food companies with AI is almost double that of Canadians who do

HALIFAX, NS. (May 30, 2023) – In recent years, the rapid advancement of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies has significantly transformed various industries, and the food industry is no exception. AI's emergence in the retail and service sectors has brought forth a plethora of opportunities and challenges. As AI algorithms become increasingly sophisticated, they offer food companies the ability to gain valuable insights into consumer behaviour, predict preferences, and even anticipate changes in dietary choices. This research report aims to delve into the perceptions of Canadian consumers regarding the utilization of predictive analytics and AI within the food industry, shedding light on their attitudes towards predicting behaviour, brand choices, and shifts in dietary preferences.

The objective of this research report is to gauge the opinions, concerns, and expectations of Canadian consumers regarding the use of predictive analytics and AI within the food industry. By understanding consumer perceptions, we can gain valuable insights into the ethical, privacy, and social implications associated with AI adoption.

Dr. Sylvain Charlebois, Director of the Agri-Food Analytics Lab at Dalhousie University reflected on the survey results. "Trust is the essential ingredient for a successful recipe in the food industry's AI revolution. However, the report reveals a concerning disparity as the number of Canadians who don't trust food companies with AI is nearly double those who do," said Charlebois. "Building trust through ethical practices and transparent use of AI will be vital to meet the evolving needs of consumers."

In collaboration with **Caddle**, a cross-national survey was conducted in May 2023, encompassing a substantial sample of 5,525 respondents. The first part of this survey was to gauge consumer awareness regarding the utilization of AI in various contexts, particularly within the food industry. Additionally, the survey aimed to explore consumer perspectives on the potential impact of AI on the job market, concerns related to privacy, and apprehensions surrounding the misuse of the food industry to harm populations.

Awareness and Concerns

When asked if they were aware of the use of AI, 37.9% of Canadians had never heard of AI being used in the food industry. A total of 29.0% said they are aware but don't understand how AI is being used in the industry. A total of 18.8% believe they have a good understanding of AI and are aware of how it is used in the industry.

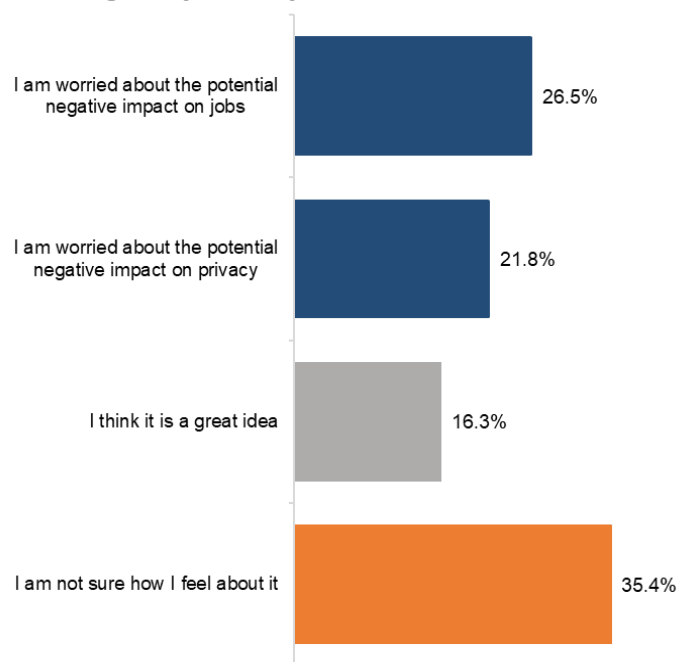
AGRI-FOOD ANALYTICS LAB/LABORATOIRE DE SCIENCES ANALYTIQUES EN AGROALIMENTAIRE

<https://www.dal.ca/sites/agri-food.html>

When asked if they are worried about the use of AI in either the grocery industry or food service, while 26.5% are worried about the potential negative impact on jobs, 21.8% are concerned about privacy. Only 16.3% believe it's a good idea. When asked if they are willing to shop at a grocery store knowing the company uses AI, while 30.2% are comfortable with the concept, 50.2% don't know how they feel about it.

When asked about the use of AI for personalized recommendations for groceries or restaurant menu items, 23.4% think it's a good idea. Other Canadians either think it is not necessary (31.6%), are not sure how they feel about it (28.5%), or are worried about privacy (16.5%).

How do you feel about the use of AI in the grocery industry or restaurant sector?



The survey also looked at whether Canadians think that AI could improve grocery shopping or restaurant experiences. A total of 47.7% believe AI can offer faster checkout times at the grocery store, and 28.5% believe AI can offer a more personalized experience. A total of 28.0% believe AI can provide better product or dish recommendations.

The use of AI doesn't appear to get Canadians to want to pay more for food. A total of 69.4% don't see why they should pay more if AI is used. Only 13.3% would be willing to pay more, depending on the product. When asked about whether AI can help Canadians save, results were mixed.

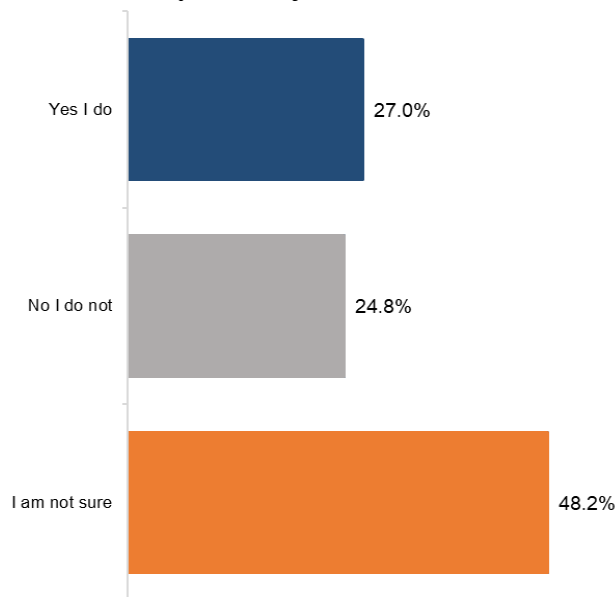
AGRI-FOOD ANALYTICS LAB/LABORATOIRE DE SCIENCES ANALYTIQUES EN AGROALIMENTAIRE

In response to the question, "Will the use of AI in the grocery industry or restaurant sector become more widespread in the future?" the survey revealed that 48.3% of Canadians hold the view that AI will indeed become more prevalent in these sectors. On the other hand, 36.8% expressed uncertainty about the future adoption of AI.

Ethics

In the survey, participants were asked about their level of trust in companies to use AI ethically within the grocery industry or restaurant sector. The results indicate that 40.3% of respondents expressed a lack of trust in food companies' ethical use of AI. Interestingly, this figure is nearly twice as high as the 21.9% of Canadians who share the same sentiment towards food companies' utilization of AI at present.

Do you think the growing use of AI in the food industry could increase risks of seeing our food supplies being used as a weapon, to potentially harm consumers?



One of the questions posed in the survey aimed to gauge respondents' opinions on the potential risks associated with the increasing utilization of AI in the food industry. Specifically, participants were asked whether they believed this growing trend could result in food supplies being exploited as weapons, thereby endangering consumers. Out of the respondents, 27.0% expressed concerns regarding this possibility, while a notable 48.2% admitted to having no clear perspective on the matter.

Janet Music from the Agri-Food Analytics Lab pointed out that AI has the capacity to fill gaps in the food industry we’ve seen growing since the advent of COVID-19. “Pressure will be on policy makers and companies to use AI to create more equitable labour practices and better service for consumers,” she stated.

<i>Provinces</i>	<i>Trust use of AI in food industry</i>	<i>Don't trust use of AI in food industry</i>
<i>Saskatchewan</i>	11.7% (10)	50.5% (1)
<i>Nova Scotia</i>	14.8% (9)	37.1% (5)
<i>Prince Edward Island</i>	15.6% (8)	24.0% (10)
<i>British Columbia</i>	15.9% (7)	46.3% (2)
<i>Alberta</i>	20.5% (6)	45.7% (3)
<i>Newfoundland and Labrador</i>	21.2% (5)	25.8% (9)
<i>New Brunswick</i>	21.5% (4)	37.0% (6)
<i>Manitoba</i>	22.0% (3)	36.5% (7)
<i>Ontario</i>	23.5% (2)	39.7% (4)
<i>Quebec</i>	25.6% (1)	36.4% (8)

Findings from the survey indicate that when provided with information on the ethical use of AI by a grocery store or restaurant, Canadians are divided regarding their willingness to patronize such establishments. Approximately 30.9% of respondents expressed a reluctance to utilize AI-based services, while 30.4% indicated a favourable inclination towards its usage.

End of report.

Download the preliminary results of the survey in English and French at <https://www.dal.ca/sites/agrifood.html>.

Contacts

Dr. Sylvain Charlebois, Director

Agri-Food Analytics Lab, Dalhousie University

sylvain.charlebois@dal.ca

Janet Music, Research Program Coordinator

Agri-Food Analytics Lab, Dalhousie University

janet.music@dal.ca

Methodology for survey: Caddle is one of the most credible active panels in the Canadian market. A representative survey of Canadians was conducted in May 2023. A total of 5,525 Canadians participated in this survey. Margin of Error: +/- 1.2%, 19 times out of 20. Any discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding.

Disclosure: Funding for the survey was provided by Caddle and Dalhousie University.