Artificial Inequality: AI is exacerbating career and gender divides, research from The Adaptavist Group reveals

Digital Etiquette survey uncovers how enterprises and men are being given access to AI opportunities such as tools and training, while others are left behind.

TORONTO, CANADA, July 16, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Adaptavist Group, a collection of diverse technology companies making businesses work better, today launches its annual Digital Etiquette report Unlocking the AI Gates, which uncovers how workplace implementation of AI is deepening inequalities on a global scale.

Based on a survey of 1,000 Canadian knowledge workers, the study reveals that 43% now use AI tools daily, reporting usage of 11 times or more per week. AI usage is paying dividends for frequent users, with more than a third (35%) reporting time savings of more than 11 hours a week, opening the door to the possibility of a four-day working week for some.

However, clear divides are emerging between large enterprises and small businesses. While just over half 51% of Canadian knowledge workers at large enterprises (5,000+ employees) use AI tools frequently, only 27% of those at small businesses (under 50 employees) do the same. Training also remains uneven: 29% of small business workers report receiving no AI training at all, compared to just 14% at large companies.

ChatGPT by OpenAI tops the list of AI tools used (73% of knowledge workers), followed by Microsoft Copilot (53%), Gemini by Google (37%), DeepSeek (16%), and CapCut (15%). ChatGPT's freemium model makes it popular among both small businesses (76% usage) and large enterprises (67%); however, Microsoft Copilot is used far more frequently in large enterprises (64% vs 41%). This may be explained by the 79% of large enterprise knowledge workers who say they're using the AI tools provided by their organisation for professional use, vs just 43% of those at small businesses who say the same.

Knowledge workers across the board generally feel supported to use AI by their organisations (44% at small businesses, 53% at large enterprises), however, interestingly, some still hide their use of AI at work due to fear of repercussions (14% at small businesses, 17% at large enterprises).

Training is delivering better outcomes for those who get it

The findings also show how training translates into greater efficiency: 39% of those with 20 hours or more of training annually are saving at least 11 hours a week by using AI, equivalent to 1.4 working days for the average full-time employee. Of this figure, 17% said they are saving more than 30 hours, close to the equivalent of four full working days! Comparing this with those who had received no training at all, 55% saved just three hours or less per week.

Digital Etiquette 2025 reveals a clear link between AI training and enablement with better outcomes, indicating that AI training is becoming a key differentiating factor for career mobility and success in the workplace. This highlights the need to support workers at all levels of the organisation. Employees who received more than 20 hours of AI training annually were nearly three times as likely to view it as indispensable (23%) compared to those with no training (8%).

Those with more training not only saw more value but felt more comfortable proving it. Three-quarters (84%) of those with over 20 hours of training felt comfortable proving the ROI of their AI tools, compared to 48% of those with 3-5 hours of training. There is also a direct correlation between training and job satisfaction. Some 86% of those with more than 20 hours of training reported that AI had increased their job satisfaction, compared to 51% of those who had received an hour or less of training.

Additionally, the figures suggest that company culture may be hindering AI skills and outcomes, as a significant 30% of workers stated they wanted more training but were hesitant to ask for it.

Reinforcing the gender gap

The study also uncovered that women are given less access to training than their male counterparts, despite the clear correlation between training and AI value: 34% of women reported receiving more than five hours of training in the last 12 months, compared to 51% of men. What's more, amongst administrative staff, 35% of women received structured external training compared with 50% of men.

At a time when AI is increasingly being used to automate administrative tasks, fueling job cuts, this poses an urgent question about whether women will be more exposed to redundancy risk than men.

However, this gender divide closes for those with more professional experience. Asked whether they believed they had been given 'sufficient guidance on how to use AI at work', there is no discernible difference in the response between men (78%) and women (76%) at C-level. This is an improvement on the global average, where men at C-level are more likely to report receiving sufficient guidance on AI usage at work (87%) than women (77%). In fact, when it comes to

training, C-level women in Canada are more likely (67%) to have received structured training sessions on AI from external providers than male C-level executives (57%).

Jon Mort, CTO of The Adaptavist Group, commented: "Our research makes it clear that AI has the potential to unlock huge value for both workers and their organisations, but right now, that opportunity isn't equally shared. Workers at large enterprises are far more likely to receive structured training and support, while those at small businesses are often left to figure it out on their own. We're also seeing worrying gaps when it comes to gender, with women getting less training and guidance on how to use AI tools effectively, despite the clear link between training and better outcomes. If we want AI to help close gaps rather than widen them, organisations of every size must take action to ensure equal access to tools, training, and support. Otherwise, we risk entrenching the very divides that technology should help to bridge."

Susi O'Neill, AI Consultant and Founder of EVA, comments: "Popular AI tools are built in the vision of Silicon Valley and best serve its demographics, leaving others behind. This critical research exposes how higher earners with more AI training extract more value, and explicitly shows the gender disparity in similar roles, with women facing reduced access and opportunities. As AI adoption accelerates, this creates a divide between AI 'haves' and 'have-nots' which will deepen inequality at work.

"This isn't just about fairness, it's about organisational survival. Companies that prioritise inclusive AI principles will outperform those that don't. The choice is simple: give everyone AI access for exponential growth, or concentrate opportunity among the few and limit your potential."

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About The Adaptavist Group

The Adaptavist Group is a collection of diverse companies with one common goal: to make business work better. We combine the best talent, technology, and processes to make it easier for our customers to excel – today and tomorrow.
We are experts at delivering innovative software, tailored solutions, and quality services across some of the world's most trusted technology ecosystems, including Atlassian, AWS, monday.com, GitLab, and many more.

The Adaptavist Group exists to support clients' day-to-day workflows, business transformation, and high-growth strategies. We offer a comprehensive but always evolving range of services across key practices: DevOps, work management, ITSM, AI, agile, and cloud. Our depth of knowledge across these practices unites us in our mission to help businesses embrace continuous transformation and make it their competitive advantage.

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