

Home to over 12,000 students, the Ted Rogers School of Management at Toronto Metropolitan University is Canada's leading diverse, entrepreneurial business school centered in an urban learning environment.

Each month, we survey students at the Ted Rogers School to deliver timely and relevant insights to Canadian organizations. Our goal is to help you better understand the early talent workforce, enabling you to refine your recruitment and retention strategies accordingly.

This issue of *Early Talent Insights* examines how students are preparing for the AI-driven workforce.

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Students Are Preparing for an AI-Driven Workforce

STUDENT POLL

As a business student preparing to enter the workforce, we know you foresee the use of AI in the workplace becoming increasingly important in the coming years. Indicate one of the following that best describes how you are preparing for this:



1,168

No. Responses*



12

No. Bachelor of Commerce Programs
(representing 5 Schools)

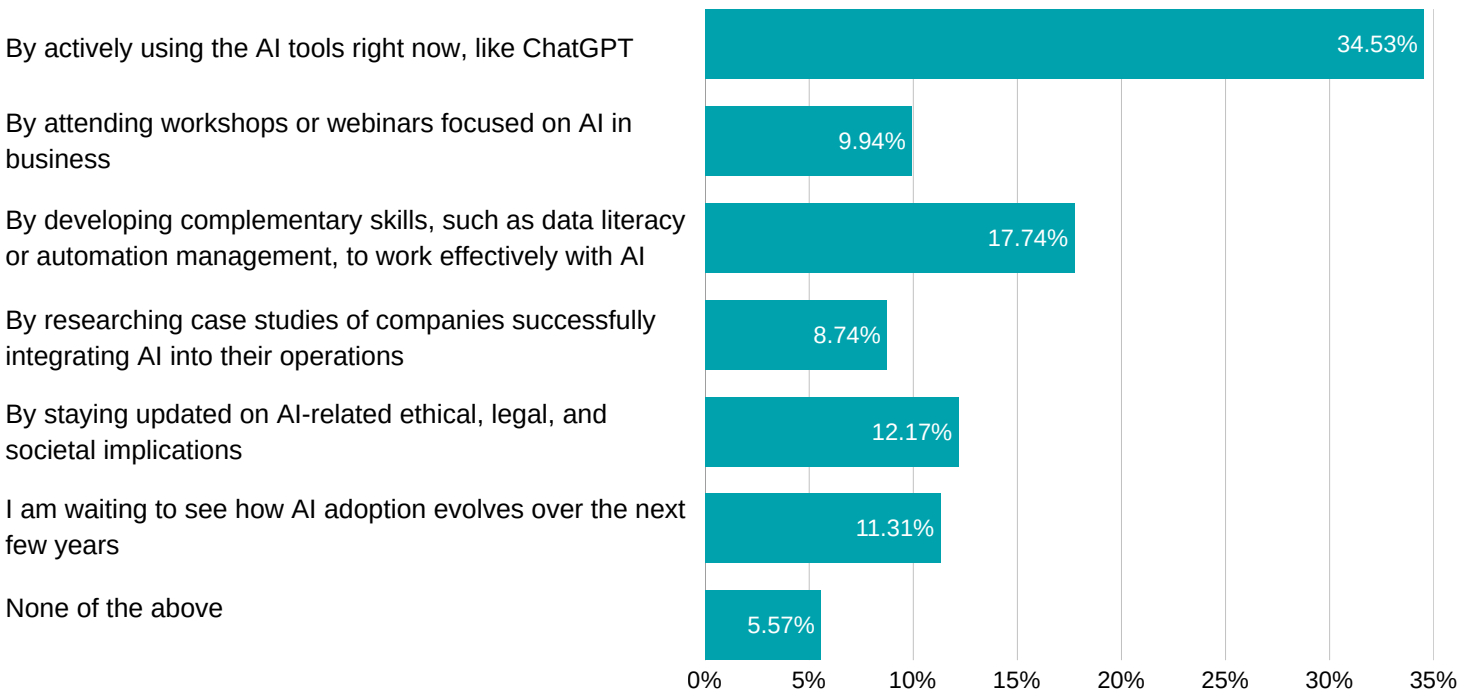


1-4

Years of Study

Summary of Student Responses

We analyzed 1,168 student responses regarding the way in which they are preparing to use AI in the workplace. The key findings are summarized below.



Student Responses by Year of Study

We then broke down the student responses by their year of study.

Student Responses by Year of Study

| Response | 1st | 2nd | 3rd | 4th |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| By actively using the AI tools right now, like ChatGPT | 28.10% | 34.47% | 37.10% | 41.18% |
| By attending workshops or webinars focused on AI in business | 12.09% | 8.56% | 10.48% | 8.82% |
| By developing complementary skills, such as data literacy or automation management, to work effectively with AI | 17.65% | 17.85% | 18.55% | 16.67% |
| By researching case studies of companies successfully integrating AI into their operations | 10.13% | 9.05% | 7.66% | 7.35% |
| By staying updated on AI-related ethical, legal, and societal implications | 14.38% | 14.43% | 8.87% | 8.33% |
| I am waiting to see how AI adoption evolves over the next few years | 10.46% | 11.74% | 10.89% | 12.25% |
| None of the above | 7.19% | 3.91% | 6.45% | 5.39% |
| Grand Total | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |

Findings

- Students across all years of study most commonly report actively using AI tools like ChatGPT and developing complementary AI-related skills as their primary methods of AI preparedness. There are no statistically significant differences across all other responses.
- Significantly fewer 1st year students report actively using AI tools, while 4th year students report slightly more students in this category, suggesting an increased AI usage as students progress through their studies.
- For all other AI preparedness behaviours, differences across years of study are not statistically significant, indicating relatively consistent engagement patterns from 1st year through 4th year.

Overall, AI preparedness behaviours appear largely similar across academic years, with the only notable difference being slightly lower AI tool usage among 1st year students and slightly higher usage among 4th year students.

Upper-year students may feel more academically and professionally prepared to integrate AI tools into their workflow, whereas 1st year students may still be adapting to university-level expectations and focusing on how AI fits into their academic development.

Student Responses by Academic Program

When student responses were broken down by Academic Program, several differences were highlighted.

Student Responses by Academic Program

| Response | Accounting & Finance | Business Management | Business Technology Management | Hospitality & Tourism Management | Retail Management |
|---|---------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|--------------------------|
| By actively using the AI tools right now, like ChatGPT | 30.81% | 33.16% | 38.28% | 35.71% | 52.94% |
| By attending workshops or webinars focused on AI in business | 9.48% | 11.73% | 7.72% | 7.14% | 0.00% |
| By developing complementary skills, such as data literacy or automation management, to work effectively with AI | 16.11% | 18.03% | 17.80% | 21.43% | 23.53% |
| By researching case studies of companies successfully integrating AI into their operations | 3.32% | 10.88% | 8.90% | 0.00% | 5.88% |
| By staying updated on AI-related ethical, legal, and societal implications | 13.74% | 11.56% | 12.17% | 14.29% | 11.76% |
| I am waiting to see how AI adoption evolves over the next few years | 15.64% | 10.54% | 10.09% | 14.29% | 5.88% |
| None of the above | 10.90% | 4.08% | 5.04% | 7.14% | 0.00% |
| Grand Total | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |

Findings

- Students across programs report actively using AI tools like ChatGPT and developing complementary AI-related skills as their top methods towards AI preparedness in the workforce. There are, however, no statistically significant program differences for these activities.
- Accounting & Finance students report significantly less engagement in researching AI case studies and are significantly more likely to select “None of the above,” indicating less inclination towards the use of AI in their prospective field.
- Accounting & Finance students also report slightly more in terms of waiting to see how AI adoption evolves, indicating a more cautious stance compared to other programs.
- Business Management students report more participation in AI-focused workshops/webinars and researching AI case studies than other programs, indicating relatively higher proactive engagement in structured AI learning.

A possible explanation is that students of more practical and analytical disciplines tend to be less inclined/more cautious towards the use of AI in their fields, whereas students whose prospective jobs rely on more technical/soft skills welcome the use of AI as a potential tool for aid through their employment.

Business Management students demonstrate more proactive, structured engagement with AI-related learning opportunities, whereas Accounting & Finance students show comparatively greater caution and lower participation in applied AI activities. However, because most preparation methods do not significantly differ across programs, AI readiness appears to be broadly distributed rather than concentrated within specific disciplines. This suggests that AI is becoming a cross-disciplinary competency.

Student Responses by Co-op Participation

Student Responses by Co-op Participation

| Response | Non-Co-op | Co-op |
|---|-------------|-------------|
| By actively using the AI tools right now, like ChatGPT | 29.38% | 43.53% |
| By attending workshops or webinars focused on AI in business | 11.05% | 8.00% |
| By developing complementary skills, such as data literacy or automation management, to work effectively with AI | 18.46% | 16.47% |
| By researching case studies of companies successfully integrating AI into their operations | 10.38% | 5.88% |
| By staying updated on AI-related ethical, legal, and societal implications | 12.80% | 11.06% |
| I am waiting to see how AI adoption evolves over the next few years | 11.32% | 11.29% |
| None of the above | 6.60% | 3.76% |
| Grand Total | 100% | 100% |

Findings

- Students in both Co-op and Non-Co-op programs most commonly report actively using AI tools like ChatGPT and developing complementary AI-related skills as their primary methods of AI preparedness. There are no statistically significant differences for all other responses.
- Co-op students report significantly more active use of AI tools, while Non-Co-op students report significantly fewer in this category, indicating stronger direct AI engagement among Co-op students.
- Non-Co-op students report significantly more engagement in researching AI case studies, while Co-op students report significantly fewer in this category.
- Overall, AI preparedness behaviours are largely similar between Co-op and Non-Co-op students, with notable differences primarily in active AI tool usage (higher among Co-op students) and case study research (higher among Non-Co-op students).

A possible explanation is that Co-op students may be more likely to actively use AI tools in practical settings through increased workplace exposure, whereas Non-Co-op students may engage more through academic or theoretical exploration, such as researching case studies.

Note: In this analysis, "significantly more" reflects patterns identified through chi-square statistical analysis, meaning these differences are unlikely to happen by chance.

Question to Consider



Have you defined your AI expectations for early-career hires? What programs do you have in place to help them build these skills?

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If you would like to discuss these findings in more detail or explore ways in which a Business student (Co-op and/or Internship) or new graduate can add value to your organization, please click the '*Connect With Us*' button below.



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