

The AI Balancing Act: Canadians divided on AI benefits, united against subsidies.

National survey released August, 2026
Field: July 28th to 30th, 2026
Submission 2026-3097

THE GLOBE AND MAIL*



Nanos was retained to conduct research regarding the views of Canadians on AI data centres, including benefits and concerns, their impact on the economy, and support for the government incentivizing their construction.

Nanos conducted an RDD dual frame (land- and cell-lines) hybrid telephone and online random survey of 1,104 Canadians, 18 years of age or older, from July 28th to 30th, 2026 as part of an omnibus survey. The sample included both land- and cell-lines across Canada. The results were statistically checked and weighted by age and gender using the latest Census information and the sample is geographically stratified to be representative of Canada.

Individuals randomly called using random digit dialing with a maximum of five call backs.

The margin of error for this survey is ± 3.0 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

This study was commissioned by the Globe and Mail and the research was conducted by Nanos Research.

Full data tables with weighted and unweighted number of interviews are [here](#). Tables within the report that have significant differences are highlighted in yellow.

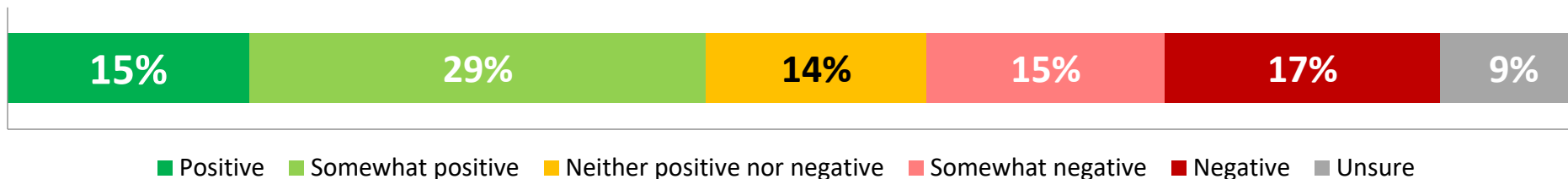
Note: Charts may not add up to 100 due to rounding

Key findings

- **Majority oppose the government incentivizing AI data centre construction** – Two thirds of Canadians at least somewhat oppose the government providing financial incentives to encourage the construction of AI data centres in Canada (38% oppose; 26% somewhat oppose), while just over one in four support (six per cent) or somewhat support this (22%).
- **Positive views outweigh negative views on economic impact, but no majority opinion** – Just over two in five Canadians think constructing AI data centres in Canada will have a positive (15%) or somewhat positive (29%) impact on the Canadian economy, while about one in three think the impact will be negative (15%) or somewhat negative (17%).
- **Canadians give slight edge to prioritizing both building AI data centres and protecting resources rather than only protecting resources** – Just under one in two think Canada should equally prioritize investing in AI data centres to strengthen Canada's economy and competitiveness and protecting energy, water and land resources from large industrial developments (46%), while two in five think the priority should be protecting energy, water and land resources (40%). Nine per cent think Canada should prioritize investing in AI data centres.

Impact of building AI data centres on Canadian economy

Q – Overall, do you believe building AI data centres in Canada will have a positive or negative impact on the Canadian economy?



*Weighted to the true population proportion.

*Charts may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Just over **2 in 5**
Canadians

believe building AI data centres in Canada will have a positive (15%) or somewhat positive (29%) rather than a negative (15%) or somewhat negative impact (17%) on the Canadian economy, although a similar proportion hold outright positive or outright negative views.

Impact of building AI data centres on Canadian economy – by demographics

Q – Overall, do you believe building AI data centres in Canada will have a positive or negative impact on the Canadian economy?

	Canada 2026-07 (n=1104)	Atlantic (n=109)	Quebec (n=222)	Ontario (n=388)	Prairies (n=219)	British Columbia (n=166)	Men (n=587)	Women (n=517)	18 to 34 (n=151)	35 to 54 (n=393)	55 plus (n=560)
Positive	15.3%	5.1%	14.5%	16.2%	18.8%	14.9%	21.8%	9.2%	12.6%	14.1%	18.1%
Somewhat positive	28.9%	36.0%	37.5%	24.5%	24.6%	28.9%	30.7%	27.2%	29.9%	29.7%	27.7%
Neither positive nor negative	13.9%	17.8%	20.0%	12.0%	11.7%	10.0%	13.1%	14.7%	15.8%	12.1%	14.1%
Somewhat negative	15.1%	8.4%	12.7%	14.9%	17.7%	19.3%	12.7%	17.4%	13.1%	16.0%	15.6%
Negative	17.4%	17.3%	7.8%	21.6%	20.8%	17.6%	14.7%	20.1%	24.9%	17.6%	12.5%
Unsure	9.3%	15.5%	7.4%	10.7%	6.4%	9.2%	7.1%	11.4%	3.8%	10.4%	12.0%

Men are more likely than women to believe building AI data centres in Canada will have a positive impact on the national economy.

Top benefits of building AI data centres in Canada

Q – What do you think are the top benefits, if any, of building AI data centres in Canada? [OPEN]

Close to one in four Canadians think more jobs and local hiring are a top benefit of building AI data centres in Canada (22%; 37% of those who think building AI data centres will have a positive impact on the Canadian economy), followed by those who think it will have no benefits (13%; 54% of those who think building the centres will have a negative impact on the economy).

Top mentions	Impact on Canadian Economy						
	Total (n=1028)	Positive (n=176)	Somewhat positive (n=307)	Neutral (n=132)	Somewhat negative (n=144)	Negative (n=163)	Unsure (n=106)
More Jobs and Local Hiring	22.2%	37.1%	28.4%	19.1%	15.0%	6.7%	20.3%
No Perceived Benefits	13.4%	-	0.7%	6.3%	19.0%	54.4%	2.3%
Canadian Data Sovereignty	8.2%	9.8%	9.6%	13.8%	6.8%	2.6%	5.1%
Economic Growth and Distribution of Benefits	8.1%	11.8%	9.9%	3.3%	7.1%	8.2%	3.8%
Keeping Pace With Global Technology	7.7%	8.9%	11.8%	8.1%	2.8%	2.8%	8.2%
National Control Over Infrastructure	6.5%	6.4%	6.7%	10.2%	8.4%	2.8%	5.0%
Short-Term Construction Work	6.3%	4.2%	6.0%	3.4%	10.6%	9.3%	2.8%
Stronger AI and Tech Leadership	4.0%	5.5%	3.9%	5.3%	3.0%	1.7%	5.8%
Unsure or Need More Information	3.4%	-	-	5.1%	5.4%	1.1%	20.4%
Reduced Dependence on Other Countries	3.0%	1.7%	5.5%	2.8%	3.2%	0.4%	2.4%
Unsure	4.5%	0.5%	1.0%	13.5%	4.6%	0.8%	18.4%

Source: Nanos Research, RDD dual frame hybrid telephone and online random survey, July 28th to 30th, n=1028, accurate 3.1 percentage points plus or minus, 19 times out of 20.

Top concerns for building AI data centres in Canada

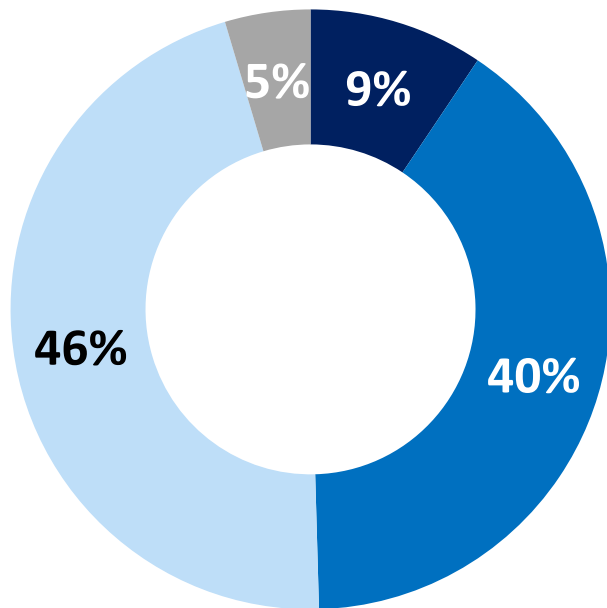
Q – What do you think are the top concerns, if any, of building AI data centres in Canada? [OPEN]

Canadians most often mentioned high electricity demand (26%), environmental harm (18%) and heavy water use (16%) as their top concerns related to building AI data centres in Canada.

Top mentions	Impact on Canadian Economy						
	Total (n=1061)	Positive (n=171)	Somewhat positive (n=307)	Neutral (n=138)	Somewhat negative (n=159)	Negative (n=175)	Unsure (n=111)
High Electricity Demand	26.2%	27.1%	28.5%	32.5%	28.5%	17.5%	21.5%
Environmental Harm	18.2%	14.4%	20.0%	7.5%	20.9%	25.5%	15.9%
Heavy Water Use	15.8%	13.7%	13.9%	16.3%	18.7%	19.2%	13.4%
Privacy and Data Security Risks	4.7%	1.2%	7.6%	8.1%	3.2%	3.3%	1.6%
Weak Governance and Oversight	3.9%	3.9%	4.4%	2.7%	0.8%	7.1%	3.0%
Land and Siting Impacts	3.1%	2.0%	3.2%	4.5%	0.9%	3.2%	5.5%
Higher Utility Prices	3.0%	2.5%	2.0%	4.9%	3.7%	3.1%	2.7%
Job Loss From AI	2.8%	-	2.2%	0.7%	5.2%	6.4%	2.0%
Security and Safety Threats From AI	2.5%	-	3.1%	1.3%	2.0%	3.9%	5.0%
Noise and Nearby Nuisance	1.6%	1.5%	1.0%	2.6%	2.5%	1.2%	1.2%
Foreign Corporate Control	1.6%	2.6%	1.9%	0.9%	2.1%	0.7%	0.8%
Limited Local Economic Benefit	1.1%	-	-	0.4%	2.9%	2.5%	1.6%
None/no concerns	2.7%	9.0%	2.7%	0.6%	1.9%	0.5%	0.8%
Other	4.9%	14.3%	3.4%	4.4%	2.3%	1.8%	5.3%
Unsure	4.4%	1.7%	3.6%	8.7%	0.7%	1.3%	16.8%

Source: Nanos Research, RDD dual frame hybrid telephone and online random survey, July 28th to 30th, n=1061, accurate 3.0 percentage points plus or minus, 19 times out of 20.

Views on prioritizing AI data centre investment vs protecting resources from developments



- Investing in AI data centres to strengthen Canada's economy and competitiveness
- Protecting energy, water and land resources from large industrial developments
- Both should be equal priorities
- Unsure

*Weighted to the true population proportion.

*Charts may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Q – If Canada had to choose, which should be a higher priority?

Close to **1 in 2** Canadians

think Canada should equally prioritize investing in AI data centres to strengthen Canada's economy and competitiveness and protecting energy, water and land resources from large industrial developments (46%), while two in five think the priority should be protecting energy, water and land resources (40%). Fewer than one in ten think Canada should prioritize investing in AI data centres (nine per cent).

Views on prioritizing AI data centre investment vs protecting resources from developments – by demographics

Q – If Canada had to choose, which should be a higher priority? [ROTATE]

	Canada 2026-07 (n=1104)	Atlantic (n=109)	Quebec (n=222)	Ontario (n=388)	Prairies (n=219)	British Columbia (n=166)	Men (n=587)	Women (n=517)	18 to 34 (n=151)	35 to 54 (n=393)	55 plus (n=560)
Protecting energy, water and land resources from large industrial developments	40.1%	39.2%	37.6%	41.1%	43.6%	37.8%	35.3%	44.7%	40.8%	43.4%	37.2%
Investing in AI data centres to strengthen Canada's economy and competitiveness	9.4%	5.6%	10.3%	7.7%	11.9%	11.1%	15.3%	3.7%	11.9%	7.5%	9.3%
Both should be equal priorities	45.8%	50.4%	46.0%	47.0%	39.7%	48.0%	44.5%	47.1%	43.4%	43.6%	49.1%
Unsure	4.6%	4.8%	6.1%	4.2%	4.8%	3.2%	4.9%	4.4%	3.9%	5.5%	4.5%

Though a minority view, men are more likely than women to believe investing in AI data centres to strengthen the national economy and competitiveness should be a higher priority than protecting energy, water and land resources from large industrial developments.

Views on governments financially incentivizing construction of AI data centres in Canada

Q – Do you support or oppose governments providing financial incentives to encourage the construction of AI data centres in Canada?



*Weighted to the true population proportion.

*Charts may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

2 in 3 Canadians

oppose to one extent or another, governments providing financial incentives to encourage the construction of AI data centres in Canada, while just over one in four support (six per cent) or somewhat support this (22%).

Views on governments financially incentivizing construction of AI data centres in Canada – by demographics

Q – Do you support or oppose governments providing financial incentives to encourage the construction of AI data centres in Canada?

	Canada 2026-07 (n=1104)	Atlantic (n=109)	Quebec (n=222)	Ontario (n=388)	Prairies (n=219)	British Columbia (n=166)	Men (n=587)	Women (n=517)	18 to 34 (n=151)	35 to 54 (n=393)	55 plus (n=560)
Support	5.6%	2.9%	5.5%	6.8%	5.9%	3.4%	7.6%	3.7%	4.8%	5.6%	6.1%
Somewhat support	22.4%	31.1%	22.3%	22.6%	16.8%	25.3%	26.8%	18.3%	22.4%	20.6%	23.9%
Somewhat oppose	26.3%	24.6%	30.8%	25.2%	22.6%	26.9%	26.2%	26.3%	24.1%	26.6%	27.3%
Oppose	38.0%	30.2%	30.5%	38.0%	49.9%	39.5%	34.3%	41.6%	43.1%	39.4%	33.6%
Unsure	7.7%	11.3%	11.0%	7.4%	4.8%	4.9%	5.1%	10.2%	5.5%	7.8%	9.0%

Prairie residents are more likely than Canadians on average to outright oppose governments providing financial incentives to encourage constructing AI data centres.

Element	Description	Element	Description
Research sponsor	The Globe and Mail	Weighting of Data	The results were weighted by age and gender using the latest Census information (2021) and the sample is geographically stratified to ensure a distribution across all regions of Canada. See tables for full weighting disclosure
Population and Final Sample Size	1,104 Randomly selected individuals.	Screening	Screening ensured potential respondents did not work in the market research industry, in the advertising industry, in the media or a political party prior to administering the survey to ensure the integrity of the data.
Source of Sample	Nanos Insights Lab	Excluded Demographics	Individuals younger than 18 years old; individuals without land or cell lines, and individuals without internet access could not participate.
Type of Sample	Probability	Stratification	By age and gender using the latest Census information (2021) and the sample is geographically stratified to be representative of Canada. Smaller areas such as Atlantic Canada were marginally oversampled to allow for a minimum regional sample.
Margin of Error	±3.0 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.	Estimated Response Rate	13 percent, consistent with industry norms.
Mode of Survey	RDD dual frame (land- and cell-lines) hybrid telephone and online omnibus survey	Question Order	Question order in the preceding report reflects the order in which they appeared in the original questionnaire.
Sampling Method Base	The sample included both land- and cell-lines RDD (Random Digit Dialed) across Canada.	Question Content	Topics on the omnibus ahead of the survey content included: views on political issues, views on economic issues, views on Canada-US relations including alcohol and trade, views on CUSMA negotiations, and views on potential Conservative Party leaders.
Demographics (Captured)	Atlantic Canada, Quebec, Ontario, Prairies, British Columbia; Men and Women; 18 years and older. Six digit postal code was used to validate geography.	Question Wording	The questions in the preceding report are written exactly as they were asked to individuals.
Fieldwork/Validation	Individuals were recruited using live interviews with live supervision to validate work, the research questions were administered online	Research/Data Collection Supplier	Nanos Research
Number of Calls	Maximum of five call backs to those recruited.	Contact	Contact Nanos Research for more information or with any concerns or questions. http://www.nanos.co Telephone:(613) 234-4666 ext. 237 Email: info@nanosresearch.com .
Time of Calls	Individuals recruited were called between 12-5:30 pm and 6:30-9:30pm local time for the respondent.	Tabulations	<u>By region, age and gender.</u>
Field Dates	July 28 th to 30 th , 2026.		
Language of Survey	The survey was conducted in both English and French.		
Standards	Nanos Research is a member of the Canadian Research Insights Council (CRIC) and confirms that this research fully complies with all CRIC Standards including the CRIC Public Opinion Research Standards and Disclosure Requirements. https://canadianresearchinsightscouncil.ca/standards/		



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Any questions?



Nanos Research

(613) 234-4666, ext. 237

ea@nanosresearch.com

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