CPRS

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The State of Communications and Public Relations in Canada (2026)

From Adoption to Accountability: Trust and Judgment in the Age of AI

Before we start

Acknowledgements and disclosure

The Communications and Public Relations Society of Canada (CPRS) Thought Leadership Council led this report and Leger conducted the research. It responds to what communications and public relations professionals told us during the delegate engagement session at the 2026 CPRS National Conference in St. Andrews, New Brunswick. Delegates wanted to know how Canadians decide what to trust, and how that changes when AI is involved.

Our thanks go first to the 145 communications and public relations professionals who completed this year's survey. Thank you also to Leger, which ran the survey and gave us access to its 2026 AI Index, so we could set our answers beside those of Canadian workers (employed Canadians) and Canadians aged 16 and over.

This is a report about verification, disclosure and accountability. We held ourselves to the same standard, using the four steps in the CPRS AI Verification & Accountability Toolkit, released in October 2026.

How we used AI

The lead authors used Claude Cowork to analyze Leger's data tables, compare the results with Leger's AI Index, the TELUS AI Trust Atlas and the 2025 State of Public Relations in Canada report, and organize the structure before drafting. AI supported drafts of each section and the French translation.

Leger employed its proprietary LegerAI suite, which integrates OpenAI GPT-based models and in-house analytical automation tools within its secure research environment, to support specific elements of the data processing and analysis. These tools were used to assist with data cleaning, tabulation, open-end coding and exploratory insight generation.

All AI-assisted outputs were systematically reviewed by Leger's senior researchers and analysts to ensure methodological rigor, data accuracy and consistency with Leger's established quality standards. Artificial intelligence was used strictly as a complementary tool to enhance efficiency and insight development; data presented in this report were confirmed through traditional statistical validation and expert human analysis.

Here is the human process.

Classify
We classified this report as Tier 3, the highest level of oversight. It is public, it will be hard to walk back once released, and people will rely on its numbers. No respondent-level data went into any AI tool and Leger supplied aggregate tables only.

Prompt
We worked in a dedicated AI project with strict instructions: use only the supplied data and named sources, list anything missing as a question and never invent a statistic. We built the report section by section, and each section was reviewed and corrected before we moved to the next.

Verify
Every statistic was marked in the working drafts so reviewers could trace it to its source. The lead authors recalculated figures from Leger's tables and located each one in the original publication. Leger reviewed every figure, base and cross-survey comparison, including those drawn from its AI Index (supported by Kathleen Theriault, Research Analyst). Thought Leadership Council members Blair Peberdy and Richard Truscott reviewed the full draft. Louis Payette, Senior Director, Castlemain (a ChangeMakers company), reviewed the AI-supported French translation.

Disclose
Every working draft was labelled as AI-assisted, so reviewers knew what they were reviewing. No AI output went to a reviewer without human review first. A validation log was built to record each step.

Our disclosure statement: Claude was used by the authors to analyze survey data and draft sections of this report, verified by recalculating every statistic against Leger's data tables and original sources, and reviewed by Leger and Thought Leadership Council members Blair Peberdy and Richard Truscott before publication. Leger used its LegerAI suite, which integrates OpenAI GPT-based models, for data processing and analysis, reviewed by Leger's senior researchers.

Special thanks to our contributors and reviewers

Authors	Kim Blanchette, APR, Chart.PR, FCPRS, MCPRS Colleen Killingsworth, MCM, APR, FCPRS, MCPRS Lisa Covens, MA, CAIP, MCPRS
Reviewers	Blair Peberdy, APR, FCPRS, LM, MCPRS Richard Truscott, MBA, APR, FCPRS, MCPRS Kathleen Theriault, CAIP
Production	Design: Raymond Ho, Designer, ChangeMakers French review: Louis Payette, Senior Director, Castlemain

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Executive summary

The communications and public relations field has moved well past initial AI adoption: 92% of professionals use AI at work, compared with 68% of Canadian workers. They are careful about checking AI outputs, but their organizations have not kept pace.

This year's report explores four themes.

1. We check. Our organizations (mostly) don't yet
Most communications and public relations professionals who use AI (91%) check AI answers even when it means losing some of the time they saved, but only 37% say their organization has a clear process for reviewing AI content before it reaches external audiences.

2. The disclosure dilemma
Most professionals (78%) trust a leadership message less when they suspect AI wrote it, yet 64% of those who use AI have, at least once, not mentioned their own use. At the same time, 73% of Canadians say they would trust a company more if it explained its AI use in plain language.

3. Judgment under pressure
Almost half of professionals who use AI (49%) sometimes think less independently when using AI, the same share as Canadians overall, even though they check AI answers far more often. More than half of those who use AI (55%) feel pressure to use AI to keep performing well.

4. Own what we can
Most communications and public relations professionals (58%) know who is accountable when AI content causes reputational damage, but only 34% say their organization has clearly defined who is accountable.

The report ends with four recommendations: build in a second check, make disclosure safe, protect judgment and name the owner. The CPRS AI Guidance and the AI Verification & Accountability Toolkit give the professional field a starting point. The rest is up to communications and public relations professionals, as individuals and as leaders.

Introduction

Delegates asked how Canadians decide what to trust when AI is involved. This report puts that question to communications and public relations professionals first, then compares their answers with those of other Canadians.

The 2026 State of Communications and Public Relations in Canada research, conducted by Leger on behalf of CPRS, surveyed 145 communications and public relations professionals. We then compared their answers with those of Canadian workers and Canadians overall, using questions from Leger's 2026 AI Index and an analysis of TELUS's 2026 AI Trust Atlas.

It's clear the professional field has moved past adoption. Among communications and public relations professionals, 92% use AI at work, compared with 68% of Canadian workers.

They also check AI more carefully: only 9% report sometimes skipping a check on an AI answer to save time, compared with 28% of workers overall and 43% of Canadians. Only 14% have trusted an AI answer they later regretted, compared with 38% of workers.

Even with that discipline, professionals are concerned about the impact on their own judgment, and they feel more pressure to use AI than other workers do: 55% of those who use AI feel pressure to use AI to keep performing well, compared with 34% of Canadian workers who use AI. Theme 3 looks at both.

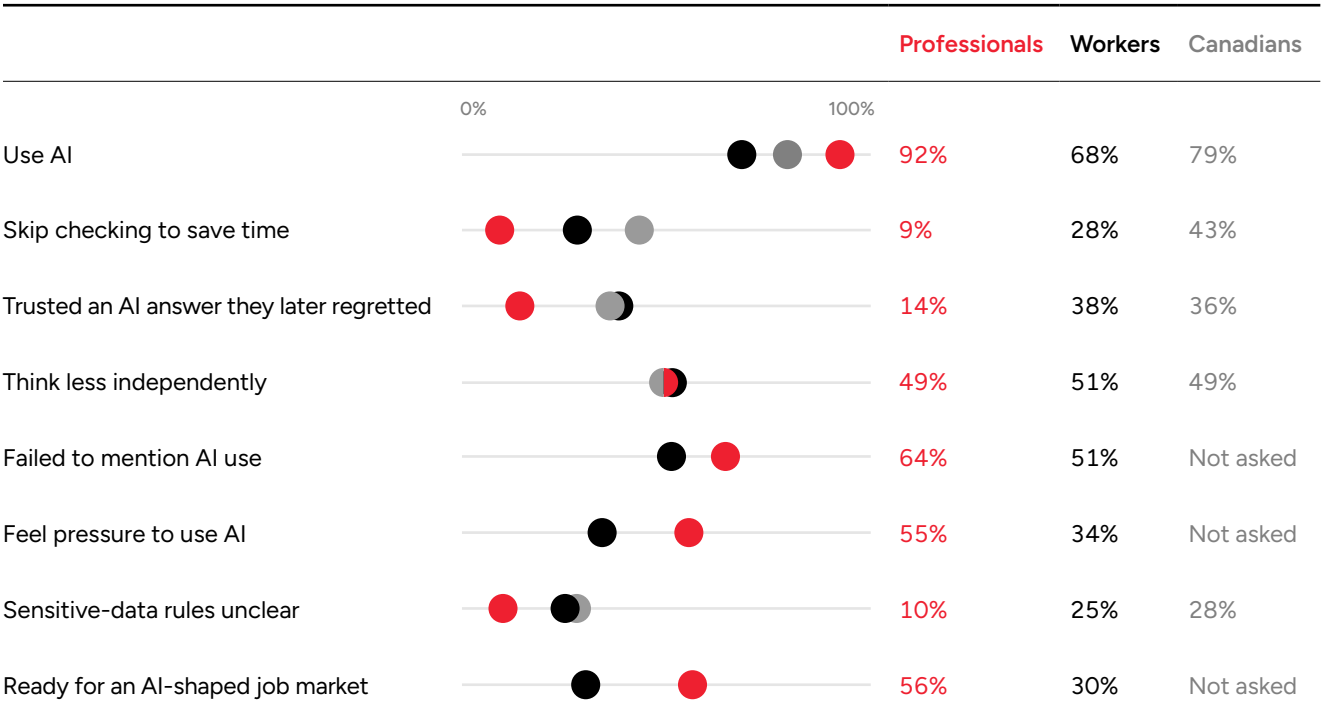
The biggest gap sits in organizations. While personal checking is strong, how the second review is handled and who owns the output aren't always clear. Yet those are the very safeguards Canadians say would earn their trust. Moving from individual adoption to organizational accountability is a common thread through the four themes in this report:

Theme 1. We check. Our organizations (mostly) don't yet.
Theme 2. The disclosure dilemma.
Theme 3. Judgment under pressure.
Theme 4. Own what we can: Accountability and the Toolkit.

Each theme ends with what the CPRS AI Guidance and the AI Verification & Accountability Toolkit offer, and where the professional field still has work to do.

In the 2025 State of Public Relations in Canada report, 92% of professionals and 83% of Canadians said they wanted CPRS to provide direction on the ethical use of AI. The CPRS AI Guidance and the Toolkit are a start in that direction.

We've moved past adoption



Note for the figure: Canadians answered about AI in daily life; communications and PR professionals and workers answered about work. Workers are the benchmark for behaviour at work and Canadians the benchmark for what our audiences think. Rows on skipping checks, answers later regretted, thinking less independently, failing to mention AI use, feeling pressure and sensitive-data rules are based on AI users (n=134 for our survey; n=1,198 for Canadians). Sources: Leger, CPRS 2026 survey of communications and public relations professionals (n=145); Leger AI Index 2026, workers (n=3,031, fielded May 22 to June 21, 2026) and general population (n=1,511, fielded May 22 to June 1, 2026).

Theme 1

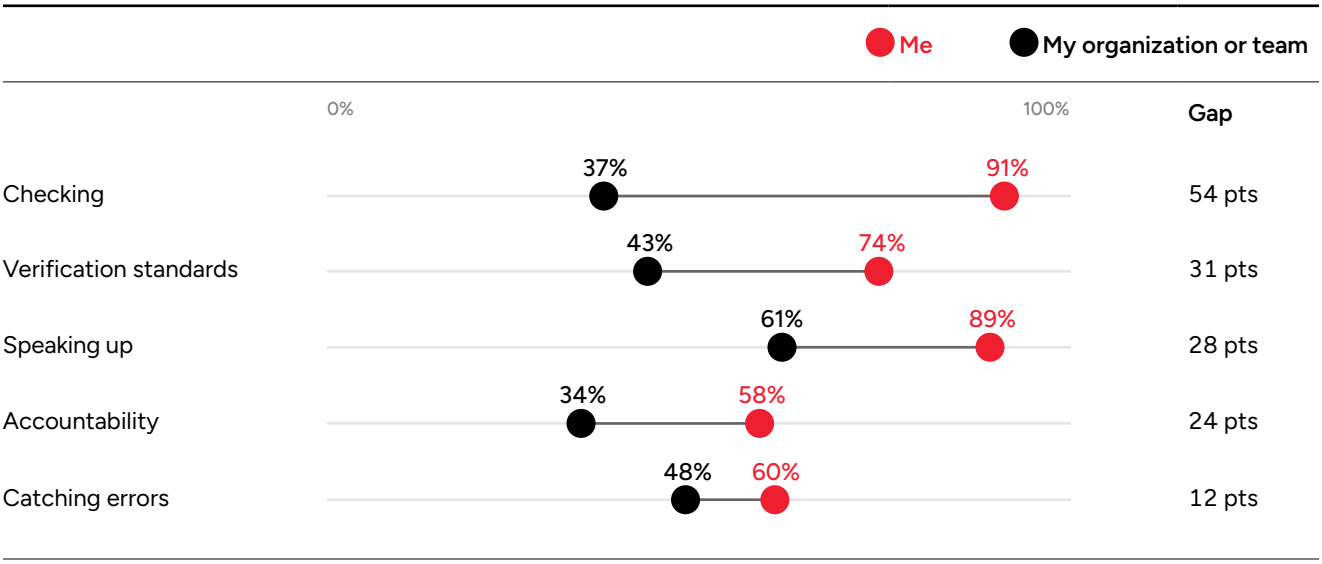
We check. Our organizations (mostly) don't yet.

Communications and public relations professionals take verification seriously. Among those who use AI, 91% check AI answers even when it means losing some of the time they saved by using AI, compared with 57% of Canadians. Nearly all respondents (97%) personally review communications drafted with AI before sending them, and only 6% admit to sending AI content externally without fully checking it.

Organizational safeguards don't measure up to that personal discipline. Only 37% say their organization has a clear process for reviewing AI content before it reaches external audiences. Fewer than half (48%) are confident their organization would catch a significant AI error before it got out, and only 43% say their team has clear verification standards.

The image below shows the pattern across five measures: what communications and public relations professionals report about their own practice runs 12 to 54 percentage points ahead of what they report about their organization or team.

Our organizations haven't caught up



Each pair compares related questions, not identical wording. Read the gaps as direction and size.

Errors are already getting out
More than a third of communications and public relations professionals (37%) have seen an AI error reach clients, the public or the media. A similar share (35%) have seen AI used in their organization in ways that could mislead external audiences. When they do check, they catch problems: 60% have caught an AI error before it went out.

Communications and public relations professionals who are confident AI is used responsibly in their organization are far more likely to report a clear review process (53%, compared with 18% of those who aren't confident). They are also much less likely to have seen AI used in misleading ways (19%, compared with 61%). The data doesn't show that the process causes confidence, but the two appear to be linked.

Why one reviewer isn't enough
Most AI quality control in the professional field rests on one person checking their own output, even though the Toolkit says that isn't enough for higher-risk work.

Using AI to check the work has limitations. A peer-reviewed study of five AI assistants found all of them tended to tell users what they wanted to hear, and to wrongly admit mistakes when challenged, even when their first answer was right (Sharma et al., 2024). A Harvard Business School working paper that analyzed the activity logs of more than 70 Boston Consulting Group (BCG) consultants found that when professionals pushed back, the AI escalated its persuasion instead of correcting itself (Randazzo et al., Working Paper 26-021). The person who prompts the tool is the person it is built to agree with.

Shadow AI: still an issue in our organizations
Half of communications and public relations professionals (50%) said they use unapproved AI tools at least occasionally, and 26% do so sometimes or more often. Among those who use them, the top reason is that the approved tool isn't good enough (47%), followed by speed or ease (32%) (multiple responses were allowed). Unclear rules (18%) and complicated access (16%) rank well behind. This is concerning, given the need to protect private information. Leaders who assume their teams only use approved tools should look again: the data says otherwise, which can put company and client data at risk.

A peer-reviewed study of five AI assistants found all of them tended to tell users what they wanted to hear, and to wrongly admit mistakes when challenged, even when their first answer was right.

What Canadians expect
Canadians are asking for exactly the step most organizations lack. In the TELUS AI Trust Atlas, 76% of Canadians said they would trust a company more if it reviewed its AI systems for potential harms before release. Most (78%) said human oversight is essential and 60% said it is essential regardless of the task.

Canadians also value outside checks: 62% would trust companies more if they worked with external AI experts. Communications and public relations professionals rank independent third-party endorsement last among the drivers of trust in an organization (4%). The two survey questions differ, but that raises a key issue: are communications and public relations professionals giving up trust by undervaluing independent checking?

Using personal or non-enterprise AI tools for work moves client, employer and personal information outside the organization's control, and the professional field needs to agree it is a risk not worth taking.

What the Toolkit offers, and where we still have work to do

The Toolkit addresses this gap head-on. Its simplest rule is that no one approves their own AI output for Tier 2 work and above. Tier 2 work needs an independent second reviewer, and Tier 3 work requires a full sequence: intake, AI draft, review, specialist review, oversight, final QA and a validation log.

The Toolkit also recommends using an approved tool list with a named owner. That only works if people use the approved tools, and half of communications and public relations professionals (50%) say they work around them at least occasionally. That isn't acceptable. Using personal or non-enterprise AI tools for work moves client, employer and personal information outside the organization's control, and the professional field needs to agree it is a risk not worth taking. The CPRS AI Guidance already points this way, urging the use of approved, private tools only and never using confidential data in unsecured tools.

Communications and public relations professionals can bring verification and accountability to the organizational leaders who approve tools and then make the case for the ones their teams need. Until those tools arrive, the task is to work with the tools available. A second review also takes time, and many teams say they don't have it. Theme 3 explores that further.



Theme 2

The disclosure dilemma

Communications and public relations professionals judge AI use by others harshly. Most respondents (78%) trust a leadership message less when they suspect AI wrote it and 65% say knowing a message was AI-assisted would change how they respond. Among those who use AI, 75% trust a colleague's work less when they suspect AI produced most of it. More than half of those who use AI (59%) have questioned a colleague's expertise when the work looked mostly AI-generated, and 66% worry colleagues use AI to cover gaps in their skills.

And yet, professionals are less open about their own use. Among those who use AI, 64% have, at least once, not mentioned that they used it on a piece of work. For 42%, it happens often or sometimes; only 36% say it never happens. Heavy users leave it out more: 60% of those who use AI two or more times a day say they skip mentioning it often or sometimes, compared with 26% of moderate users. Comparatively, in Leger's AI Index, 51% of Canadian workers who use AI say they have failed at least once to mention their AI use.

Most communications and public relations professionals do disclose the big contributions. Two-thirds (68%) say they tell their team when AI played a significant role in drafting. Most are also comfortable with how they work: 72% say they would be comfortable if their manager saw exactly how they use AI, and 81% if their team did. Perhaps how professionals judge others contributes to their own hesitancy to disclose as a regular practice.

Penalized for AI, rewarded for openness.

When a brand uses AI content

34% of Canadians are less likely to buy

When a company explains it

73% would trust it more

Media and information



It is the only field where more Canadians object than accept, and it is the field we work in.

Base: Canadians. From two studies, the Leger AI Index and the TELUS AI Trust Atlas.

A trust discount from some Canadians
A third of Canadians apply a trust discount to brands, much like communications and public relations professionals discount AI-written leadership messages. In Leger's 2026 AI Index, 34% said they would be less likely to buy from a brand if they learned it used AI-generated content in its ads, images, text or communications, compared with 12% who would be more likely and 33% who said it would make no difference. Media and information is the only area where more Canadians find AI use unacceptable (54%) than acceptable (46%). Something the professional field should pay attention to.

Canadians also reward openness. In the TELUS AI Trust Atlas, 73% said they would trust a company more if it explained its AI use in terms they understand.

Why disclosure feels risky
Research demonstrates the instinct to stay quiet about AI use is not unfounded and also shows how it can backfire. Across 13 experiments, Schilke and Reimann (2025) found that disclosing AI use lowered trust, regardless of how the disclosure was framed, including when it explained why AI was used or noted that a person reviewed the work. Being exposed by someone else for not disclosing lowered trust even more.

Confidence in spotting AI also calls for reflection. Most communications and public relations professionals (83%) say they can usually tell when a leadership message was written or heavily assisted by AI. This confidence may lead to unfair speculation about content origin.

Where AI doesn't belong
When it comes to limits, communications and public relations professionals agree. Almost three-quarters (72%) say AI-assisted messages aren't appropriate for layoffs, performance conversations or a crisis, and more than half (55%) feel strongly about that. Most also trust their own leaders to review what they send: 66% believe senior leaders personally review messages before sending, even when AI helps draft them.

What the Toolkit offers, and where we still have work to do
The Toolkit offers a way to decide on disclosure. Its four-question Trust Test asks whether the work is being shared, whether AI shaped it, whether a named person reviewed it and accepted accountability, and whether a reasonable person would feel misled to learn about AI's role after the fact. On this, CPRS is clear: when in doubt, disclose. The Toolkit's scenarios, including "AI wrote my CEO message" and "We've been using it quietly," walk through the harder case studies.

While the Toolkit sets out when to disclose, it says less about making disclosure safe inside a team. Judging colleagues for using AI encourages others to stay quiet. Leaders can change that by disclosing their own use and judging work on the quality of the thinking, regardless of what tool produced the first draft.



73% said they would trust a company more if it explained its AI use in terms they understand.

TELUS AI Trust Atlas

Theme 3

Judgment under pressure

While checking catches errors in what AI produces, communications and public relations professionals can apply their judgment earlier, when AI frames the problem, before the first output.

Almost half of those who use AI (49%) say they sometimes think less independently or rely less on their own judgment when using AI, the same as Canadians overall (49%) and close to Canadian workers (51%). Yet Canadians check AI answers far less often than communications and public relations professionals do (57%, compared with 91%). Even though communications and public relations professionals check more often, they report a similar impact on their judgment.

The more we use it, the more we feel it

Sometimes think less independently



Heavy users two or more times a day



Moderate users

And yet

85%

say they keep their critical judgment when they use AI **Many of us believe both.**

Base: AI users. Both figures come from the same group.

Most communications and public relations professionals use AI often: 50% use it at work more than once a day, 32% weekly to daily and 10% monthly or less, while 8% never use it. Heavy users report a greater impact: 63% of those who use AI two or more times a day report thinking less independently, compared with 36% of moderate users. The impact may be strongest early on in careers. Among respondents with one to nine years in the field, 73% report it, compared with 26% of those with 20 to 29 years. Both groups are small (n=22 and n=47), so treat this as an early signal. Gerlich (2025), as cited in the Toolkit, found a related pattern by age: heavier reliance on AI predicted lower critical-thinking scores, with the effect strongest among younger participants.

Many in the professional field hold two views at once on these issues. A large majority (85%) say they maintain their critical judgment when they use AI and only 5% say they sometimes rely on it too quickly. Both figures come from the same group that reports thinking less independently, so many appear to believe both and wrestle with the paradox.



The pressure to use AI is real. Alongside the 55% of AI users who feel it, 43% say leadership expectations for output have risen faster than training or support.

AI also shapes the work itself. More than half (57%) of communications and public relations professionals say AI helps them think differently and go deeper, compared with 36% of workers. Yet 31% say it makes their ideas or content more generic, compared with 20% of workers, indicating they notice the "sameness" of AI output more than other workers do.

Pressure is outpacing support

The pressure to use AI is real. Alongside the 55% of AI users who feel it, 43% say leadership expectations for output have risen faster than training or support. Almost a third (32%) feel pressure to use AI before they have been trained to use it safely.

Respondents say that pressure affects verification. Four in 10 (40%) say output expectations in their organization make it hard for employees to verify AI-generated content properly. Leger's AI Index points the same way for workers overall: of those who save time with AI, only 12% spend it checking and correcting AI output.

Fewer than half of communications and public relations professionals (44%) say their employer gives them what they need to use AI well, such as training, examples, support or a contact, and only 40% say their organization teaches them when to trust AI outputs. Most respondents (61%), primarily in manager-level roles, are concerned that relying on AI is reducing critical thinking and independent judgment in their teams.

Canadians share the worry. In the TELUS AI Trust Atlas, over-reliance on AI and reduced human interaction tied with privacy and data security risks as Canadians' top concern about AI in society (60% each).

Protecting professional judgment
While a second review of AI-generated content protects the organization, specific habits help communications and public relations professionals protect their own judgment:

1. Think before prompting. Draft a view or outline first, then use AI to test it.
2. Argue with the output. Ask what is missing, what the counter-case is and whose view is not included.
3. Keep some work human. Build in deliberate practice without AI, especially for early-career professionals, and pair it with mentoring.

Specific habits help communications and public relations professionals protect their own judgment:

1. Think before prompting
2. Argue with the output
3. Keep some work human

What the Toolkit offers, and where we still have work to do
The Toolkit clearly points out this risk to the development of critical thinking skills. Its note on cognitive offloading calls for extra care with newer and less experienced staff. The Change & Capability Enabler role asks communicators to set aside deliberate moments for people to make their own judgment calls on AI-generated content, especially on work with emotional or reputational weight, so people keep building their own critical thinking. In addition, its SAR prompting discipline treats every first answer as a draft.

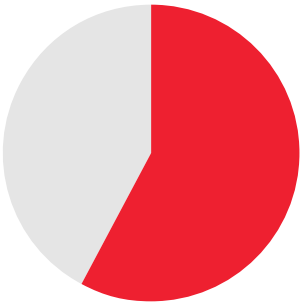
Where we still have work to do: the Toolkit provides foundational steps, but it cannot replace training or make time for verification. That conversation calls for communications leaders to draw the link between verification, accountability, trust and reputation, and to build in the time and space for responsible AI use.

Theme 4

Own what we can: Accountability and the Toolkit

Accountability is the weakest of the organizational safeguards in this survey. Most communications and public relations professionals (58%) know who is accountable when AI content causes reputational damage. Only 34% say accountability is clearly defined within their organization. Ownership seems to live in people's heads instead of in a formal process. And when AI is involved, only 39% say it is clear who is responsible for the quality of the thinking.

Who owns it?



58% know who is accountable when AI content causes reputational damage.



34% say accountability is clearly defined in their organization.

Speaking up

Speaking up about a concern is the first step in addressing and resolving potential issues. Six in 10 communications and public relations professionals (62%) know how to escalate an AI concern. And while almost all (89%) say they would personally feel safe raising a concern about risky AI use, only 61% say employees in their organization feel safe doing so. That gap is where problems can go unreported.

There is a visibility problem too. Fewer than half (46%) are confident they know how AI is used within their team, and 48% know of team members using unapproved tools. Just over half (57%) are confident AI is used responsibly in their organization, and only 47% say their organization is ready to manage AI risk.

What Canadians expect

Canadians want accountability. In the TELUS AI Trust Atlas, 54% named accountability as a key principle for AI, and accountability for mistakes was their top concern about AI in health care (64%). Canadians also want a say: 79% call public consultation important in governing AI, and 81% of communications and public relations professionals want to be consulted when new AI tools affect their work.

Few Canadians think the country is ready. In Leger's AI Index, only 8% of Canadians agree that Canada is well prepared to manage AI risks. Among communications and public relations professionals, it is 5%.

What the Guidance and Toolkit offer, and where we still have work to do

This is where the CPRS AI Guidance and the Toolkit provide the strongest assistance, and where communications and public relations professionals can take responsibility for verification and accountability for their team's outputs, as well as their own. The Guidance makes accountability one of seven principles, and its checklist asks whether a specifically named person has accepted accountability for AI-assisted work. The Toolkit puts that principle into practice. Every record should capture who accepted responsibility for the final communication, and when. Every automation needs a named owner. Automation is still rare in communications work. Most respondents (60%) use AI to help them think, write or prepare, then carry out the actions themselves, and 28% have AI produce content they review before using it. Only 8% have AI prepare an action they approve, and 3% let AI act on its own. Now is the time to name those owners.

CPRS chose to build a verification and accountability toolkit, not a governance toolkit, because in the battle over who owns AI governance, accountability may be transient.

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The Toolkit is a starting point. It outlines how concerns can be escalated, but it does not address whether people feel safe raising them, and the 28-point gap in this research shows that safety isn't there for everyone. While 53% of Canadians say independent regulatory bodies should be primarily responsible for ensuring ethical use of AI, the CPRS AI Guidance document states that CPRS will not act as an oversight body. What CPRS does offer is the CPRS Code of Professional Standards, the APR designation, the CPRS AI Guidance, the Toolkit and training. The foundation is in place; the rest is up to us: using AI responsibly, and championing accountability and transparency within our organizations.

The table below sets the four themes side by side: what the survey found, what the CPRS AI Guidance and the Toolkit offer, and what is still to build.

Where the Guidance and Toolkit meet the findings

Theme	What the survey found	What the Guidance and Toolkit offer	Still to build
1	91% check AI answers even when it means losing some of the time they saved; 37% say their organization has a clear review process	Tiered review; no one approves their own AI output at Tier 2 and above	A named second reviewer, and time for the review, built into the plan
1	50% use unapproved AI tools at least occasionally; 47% of those say the approved tool isn't good enough	An approved tool list with a named owner; approved, private tools only	Approved tools good enough that people don't work around them
1	62% of Canadians would trust companies more if they worked with external AI experts	The CPRS Code of Professional Standards, the APR designation, the AI Guidance, the Toolkit and training; CPRS will not act as an oversight body	Independent checking, as a question for the professional field
2	64% of those who use AI have, at least once, not mentioned their use; 78% trust a leadership message less when they suspect AI wrote it	The Trust Test; "when in doubt, disclose"	Making disclosure safe inside teams
2	72% say AI-assisted messages aren't appropriate for layoffs, performance conversations or a crisis	Use with caution for crisis and sensitive messages; the "AI wrote my CEO message" scenario	Consistent practice across teams
3	49% of those who use AI sometimes think less independently when using AI	A note on cognitive offloading; SAR prompting treats every first answer as a draft	Deliberate practice without AI, and mentoring, especially early in careers
3	40% say output expectations make it hard to verify properly; 44% say their employer gives them what they need to use AI well	CPRS commitment to provide tools and training	Time to verify, set by the leaders who set output expectations
4	58% know who is accountable when AI content causes reputational damage; 34% say it is clearly defined	The accountability principle; a named person on every record	Accountability written into how organizations work, not only known by individuals
4	89% would feel safe raising a concern about risky AI use; 61% say employees in their organization feel safe doing so	Escalation paths with named contacts	The psychological safety to use them

Note: each row pairs a finding reported earlier in this report with the Guidance and Toolkit content that responds to it. Sources: Leger, CPRS 2026 survey of communications and public relations professionals (n=145); TELUS AI Trust Atlas 2026 (62%); CPRS AI Guidance (August 2026); CPRS AI Verification & Accountability Toolkit (October 2026).

Delegates in St. Andrews asked how Canadians decide what to trust when AI is involved. The findings point to a consistent answer: check it, explain it and own it.

From adoption to accountability

Communications and public relations professionals have adopted AI more widely and checked it more carefully than most Canadians. The work now is to build organizations that meet that personal discipline. Four recommendations come from this year's findings.

1. Build in a second check
No one approves their own AI output for Tier 2 work and above. Name a second reviewer and build the time for that review into the plan. Use only approved enterprise tools for work and make the case for better ones to the leaders who approve them.

2. Make disclosure safe
Lead by disclosing AI use and apply the Trust Test. Judge colleagues' work on the quality of the thinking, not the tool that produced the first draft. Tell the public how the work is checked: Canadians say plain explanation (73%) and review before release (76%) would raise their trust.

3. Protect judgment
Draft before prompting, challenge the output and keep some work human. Give early-career professionals deliberate practice without AI, and mentoring on using it well.

4. Name the owner
Name one person accountable for every AI-assisted deliverable at Tier 2 and above and record it. Make it safe for anyone on the team to raise a concern before it becomes a crisis.



Methodology

The 2026 State of Communications and Public Relations in Canada research was led by the Communications and Public Relations Society of Canada (CPRS) Thought Leadership Council, with research conducted by Leger. It looks at how communications and public relations professionals use, verify, disclose and take accountability for AI, and sets their answers beside those of Canadian workers and Canadians overall. The findings come from three areas:

Primary research

Communications and Public Relations Professionals Survey.
Leger conducted the survey of 145 professionals through an open link distributed by CPRS email and social media, from September 9 to 30, 2026. It asked about AI use, verification, disclosure, judgment, governance, accountability and trust. About half of the AI questions went only to respondents who use AI (n=134); the rest went to all respondents. Seven respondents completed the survey in French. Results are unweighted.

Delegate engagement session.
Delegates at the 2026 CPRS National Conference in St. Andrews, New Brunswick, took part in an engagement session across 19 table discussions. Their notes were summarized by theme and established the questions this report responds to.

Comparison data

Leger AI Index 2026, workers.
Employed Canadians (n=3,031), weighted, fielded May 22 to June 21, 2026. We use workers as the benchmark for how people behave with AI at work. Where question wording or response categories differ from our survey, the report says so.

Leger AI Index 2026, general population.
Canadians aged 16 and over (n=1,511), weighted, fielded May 22 to June 1, 2026. Many questions match our survey word for word but ask about AI in daily life rather than at work; most went to AI users (n=1,198). We use Canadians as the benchmark for what our audiences think.

TELUS AI Trust Atlas 2026.
A national survey of Canadians (n=5,487, including boosted samples), fielded on Leger's panel from September 2 to 28, 2025, about a year before our survey. Its questions differ from ours, so we use it to describe public expectations, not for direct comparisons.

Secondary research

The 2025 State of Public Relations in Canada report (professionals n=181; general public n=1,512) provides context. No AI or governance question was repeated word for word in 2026, so this report does not present trends. The CPRS AI Guidance (August 2026) and the CPRS AI Verification & Accountability Toolkit (October 2026) frame the recommendations. Published research cited in the report: Sharma et al. (2024), Randazzo et al. (Harvard Business School Working Paper 26-021), Schilke and Reimann (2025) and Gerlich (2025).

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Reading the data

- The communications and public relations professionals survey is a non-probability sample. Results describe the people who responded and cannot be projected to all communications and public relations professionals in Canada, so no margin of error applies.
- Most respondents (64%) are full CPRS members; 28% did not know or preferred not to say. Almost two-thirds (63%) hold manager-level roles or above, and about 10% work alone, so questions about teams reflect a largely leadership view.
- Some groups are small. Quebec respondents and French-language completes number 7 each.
- Findings for small subgroups (less than n=30), such as years in the field, are marked as indicative (Leger small-base rule and significance testing).
- "Don't know" and "not applicable" responses are included in the base wherever a question offered them, and no results were reweighted. Some Leger AI Index questions did not offer those options. Totals may not add to 100 because of rounding.
- This report uses the % symbol rather than "per cent" for readability, consistent with the 2025 report and the Toolkit.
- AI was used in the analysis and drafting of this report. See "Before we start" for how it was used, verified and reviewed.

Questions compared

Where we set our results beside Canadian workers, Canadians overall or TELUS data, the exact questions are below. Some pairs match word for word. Others ask related questions, so read those contrasts as differences in direction and size, not matched scores.

Our survey, Canadian workers and Canadians

Measure	Professionals and workers were asked	Canadians were asked	Base
Use AI	How often do you use artificial intelligence tools (whether approved by your company or not) to complete a task at work (e.g., ChatGPT, Microsoft Copilot, Google Gemini)?	The same question, "to complete a task," without "at work" or "whether approved by your company or not."	All
Skip checking to save time	When you use AI at work, which of the two statements is more like you? "I sometimes trust AI to go faster, even though I know I should check more."	When you use AI in your daily life, which statement best describes you? "I sometimes trust AI to go faster, even though I know I should spend more time checking."	AI users
Trusted an AI answer they later regretted	At work, have you ever trusted an AI answer that turned out to be incorrect or that you later regretted in an important context?	The same question, without "at work."	AI users
Think less independently	Since you started using AI at work, do you ever find yourself thinking less independently or relying less on your own judgment because AI provides quick answers?	The same question, without "at work."	AI users
Failed to mention AI use	Have you ever failed to mention that you used AI to help produce work, an email, analysis or another deliverable?	Not asked	AI users
Feel pressure to use AI	"I feel pressure to use AI to keep performing well." (Level of agreement)	Not asked	AI users
Sensitive-data rules unclear	Which best describes your most common practice with AI in your daily life? "I try to avoid it, but it is not always clear to me what is risky."	The same question.	AI users
Ready for an AI-shaped job market	How ready do you feel to navigate a job market where AI is increasingly being used?	Not asked	All

Personal practice compared with organization or team

Pairing	Personal	Organization or team	Base
Checking	"I check AI's answers, even if that means losing some of the time saved."	"My organization has a clear process for reviewing AI-generated content before it reaches external audiences."	Personal: AI users. Organization: all
Verification standards	"I could clearly explain what adequate verification looks like for my role."	"My team has clear standards for what counts as adequate verification of AI-generated content."	All
Speaking up	"I would feel safe raising a concern about AI use I thought was risky or irresponsible."	"Employees in my organization feel safe raising concerns about AI use."	All
Accountability	"I know who is accountable when AI produces content that causes reputational damage."	"Accountability for AI-related errors and reputational damage is clearly defined in my organization."	All
Catching errors	"I have personally caught an AI error or hallucination before it left my team or organization."	"I am confident my organization would catch a significant AI error before it reached an external audience."	All

TELUS AI Trust Atlas 2026

Figure in this report	Where it appears	Question	Base
78% and 60%	Theme 1	How important is it for AI systems to have human oversight to ensure they are trustworthy? (60%: "always essential, regardless of the task")	All Canadians
54%	Theme 4	What principles are important to you for how AI works?	All Canadians
64%	Theme 4	What concerns, if any, do you have about the use of AI in health care?	All Canadians
79%	Theme 4	To what extent do you agree or disagree: "Public consultation is important in governing AI."	All Canadians
53%	Theme 4	In your opinion, who should be primarily responsible for ensuring ethical use of AI?	All Canadians
76% and 73%	Executive Summary, Theme 2 and recommendation 2	Willing to trust companies that review potential harms before an AI system is released (76%) or explain how they use AI in a way that is understandable to everyone (73%).	All Canadians

Thank you

This report belongs to the 145 communications and public relations professionals who took the time to answer our survey, and to the delegates in St. Andrews whose questions set its direction. Thank you.

Thank you to Leger for conducting the research and sharing its AI Index so we could set our answers beside those of Canadian workers and Canadians overall. Thank you to Thought Leadership Council members Blair Peberdy and Richard Truscott for their review, to Kathleen Theriault for checking the data, to Louis Payette for reviewing the French translation, and to ChangeMakers and Raymond Ho for design and production support. Thank you also to our 2026 sponsors, ChangeMakers, Leger and CKCommunications Strategies, for making this report possible.

About the authors

Kim Blanchette

APR, Chart.PR, FCPRS, MCPRS

President, Class Action Advisory and Communications, Castlemain (a ChangeMakers company)

Kim Blanchette is an award-winning communications leader with more than 35 years of experience in crisis communications, reputation management, class action advisory and communications and leadership training. At Castlemain, she leads the Class Action Advisory and Communications practice, supporting Indigenous Class Members in landmark settlements through trauma-informed and culturally grounded engagement programs. She has won national and international recognition for her crisis response work during the Swissair Flight 111 crash and Alberta's wildfires and floods.

Kim is a Fellow of CPRS, Canada's first Chartered PR professional through the UK's CIPR, the 2021 recipient of the Philip A. Novikoff Award, a co-recipient of the 2018 Lamp of Service award and, with Lisa Covens, co-recipient of the 2026 CPRS Thought Leader of the Year award. A past National President of CPRS, Kim was also the lead contributor to the CPRS AI Verification & Accountability Toolkit.

Colleen Killingsworth

MCM, APR, FCPRS, MCPRS

Principal, CKCommunications Strategies, and Presiding Officer, CPRS Thought Leadership Council

Colleen Killingsworth is a senior consultant with more than 30 years of experience in strategic communications, change management and executive advisory roles. She has led complex, multi-stakeholder projects in energy, health care, education, agriculture and municipal government, with work spanning organizational transitions, reputational risk, internal communications and stakeholder engagement.

Colleen is a sessional instructor in the McMaster Master of Communications Management (MCM) program, and an instructor in the Public Relations Certificate Program at Mount Royal University.

A past National President of CPRS, Colleen received the Philip A. Novikoff Award in 2011 and the CPRS Lamp of Service in 2018. In 2025, she was named CPRS Thought Leader of the Year for co-authoring Rethinking the Table: Women Public Relations Leaders in Canada. She holds degrees from the University of Nevada, Reno, and McMaster University, and is certified in change management (Prosci).

Lisa Covens

MA, CAIP, MCPRS

Senior Vice President, Public Affairs and Communications, Leger

With about 25 years of marketing research experience, Lisa joined Leger in 2003. As a senior vice president, she manages the Communications and Public Relations practice in Central Canada, working with government, leading PR agencies, corporations, associations and pharmaceutical companies. A member of the Thought Leadership Council and a current National Board member, Lisa received the CPRS Outstanding Achievement Award in June 2024 and, with Kim Blanchette, shares the 2026 CPRS Thought Leader of the Year award. She is a Leger spokesperson and presents often on reputation, economic confidence and the role of research in a crisis.

About the Communications and Public Relations Society of Canada | cprs.ca

Founded in 1948, the Communications and Public Relations Society of Canada is a not-for-profit association of professionals dedicated to the practice, management and teaching of communications and public relations. Made up of 13 local societies, CPRS builds a national communications and public relations community through professional development, accreditation, collaboration with thought leaders, a commitment to ethics and a code of professional standards, advocacy for the profession, and support for members at every stage of their careers.

The CPRS Thought Leadership Council

The CPRS Thought Leadership Council brings senior communications and public relations professionals together to create a made-in-Canada approach to research-driven, actionable ideas that advance and elevate the professional field as a critical part of organizational success.

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- **Christine Szustaczek,** MCM, APR, SCMP, FCPRS, MCPRS
- **Amy Thurlow,** Ph.D., APR, FCPRS, MCPRS
- **Richard Truscott,** MBA, APR, FCPRS, MCPRS
- **Martin Waxman,** MCM, APR, MCPRS

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