

# HUMAN-IN-THE-LOOP PREDICTIVE ANALYTICS: A COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF EXPERT-IN-THE-LOOP FEEDBACK MECHANISMS FOR ENHANCING MODEL ACCURACY, ENSURING ALGORITHMIC FAIRNESS, AND STRENGTHENING ADVERSARIAL ROBUSTNESS IN MODERN AI SYSTEMS

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## ABSTRACT

*Despite remarkable advances in automated machine learning, purely algorithmic predictive systems remain susceptible to three persistent failure modes: prediction inaccuracy arising from distributional mismatch, latent bias encoded from non-representative training corpora, and brittleness under adversarial or out-of-distribution inputs. Human-in-the-Loop (HITL) machine learning proposes to remediate these failure modes by systematically integrating structured expert feedback into model training and evaluation cycles. This paper presents a systematic review of 74 peer-reviewed studies (2018–2025) examining HITL mechanisms across five application domains: healthcare, financial risk, NLP/sentiment analysis, image recognition, and predictive maintenance. We find that HITL-guided systems achieve mean accuracy improvements of 12.6 percentage points over fully automated baselines, reduce demographic parity violations by up to 82.3%, and maintain above-50% accuracy under adversarial perturbations where unaided baselines collapse below 14%. We further provide a formal taxonomy of feedback modalities, analyse cost-accuracy trade-offs in active learning protocols, and identify scalability and annotator-bias propagation as the principal open challenges. Our findings substantiate that HITL integration is not merely an engineering convenience but a necessary condition for deploying ethically sound and operationally robust predictive analytics in high-stakes settings.*

## KEYWORDS

*Human-in-the-loop machine learning, active learning, algorithmic fairness, adversarial robustness, expert feedback, predictive analytics, annotation, model bias, trustworthy AI.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Predictive analytics systems have achieved state-of-the-art performance across a range of benchmark tasks, yet their deployment in real-world environments frequently exposes failure modes that are difficult to anticipate from benchmark metrics alone. Three categories of failure are particularly consequential. First, distributional shift—the divergence between training and deployment data distributions—causes accuracy degradation that compounds over time in non-stationary environments

- 1) Second, latent bias encoded in historical training data propagates into model predictions, producing systematically unfair outcomes for protected demographic groups
- 2) Third, adversarial fragility—the susceptibility of neural models to imperceptibly small, adversarially crafted input perturbations—undermines trust in safety-critical applications
- 3) Fully automated machine learning pipelines are structurally unable to resolve these failure modes without external correction signals, because they optimise objective functions defined at training time that do not account for post-deployment context, ethical constraints, or evolving threat landscapes. Human-in-the-Loop (HITL) machine learning offers a principled framework for injecting such signals: by positioning human experts as active participants in iterative model training, validation, and correction cycles, HITL systems can leverage domain knowledge, ethical reasoning, and adversarial intuition that are not representable as scalar training objectives
- 4) Despite a growing empirical literature, systematic synthesis of HITL effects on the joint objectives of accuracy, fairness, and robustness remains limited. Existing reviews tend to focus on one dimension in isolation: active learning surveys emphasise label efficiency
- 5) Fairness surveys examine debiasing algorithms without considering the human-oversight mechanism, and robustness surveys focus on architectural defences
- 6) This paper addresses the gap by providing a unified quantitative synthesis across all three dimensions.

The contributions of this work are as follows:

- 1) A PRISMA-compliant systematic review of 74 HITL predictive analytics studies (2018–2025), with standardised data extraction across accuracy, fairness, and robustness metrics.
- 2) A formal four-level taxonomy of human feedback modalities: direct labelling, error correction, feature-level guidance, and constraint specification.
- 3) Quantitative benchmarking of HITL-induced gains with confidence intervals, stratified by application domain and feedback modality.
- 4) An analysis of the cost-accuracy trade-off in active learning, demonstrating that HITL query strategies achieve equivalent accuracy to passive learning with 60–75% fewer labelled samples.
- 5) A structured identification of open challenges—annotator bias propagation, scalability, and long-horizon feedback drift—and a prioritised research agenda.

## **2. BACKGROUND AND RELATED WORK**

### **2.1. Predictive Analytics and Sources of Model Failure**

Machine learning models for predictive analytics are trained to minimise empirical risk on a fixed dataset, producing parameter configurations that approximate the conditional distribution  $P(Y|X)$  over the training support. When deployed inputs fall outside this support—due to temporal drift, geographic variation, or deliberate adversarial manipulation—the empirical risk minimiser provides no formal guarantee of performance [8]. This limitation is compounded by the finite-sample approximation of the true data distribution: historical data collected under existing social institutions systematically underrepresents marginalised groups and reflects historical discriminatory practices [2], [9].

The "black-box" character of high-capacity models such as deep neural networks further exacerbates deployment risk, because stakeholders cannot inspect decision logic to identify sources of error or bias [10]. Explainable AI (XAI) methods such as SHAP [11] and LIME [12] partially mitigate interpretability deficits but do not themselves correct model errors; they require a human expert to act on the explanations produced.

### **2.2. Human-in-the-Loop Machine Learning: Taxonomy**

HITL machine learning encompasses any learning paradigm in which human judgment is interleaved with automated model updates. We propose a four-level taxonomy based on the cognitive level at which human input operates:

Level 1 – Instance-Level Labelling: Human annotators provide ground-truth labels for unlabeled instances, forming the basis of supervised and semi-supervised learning. Active learning [5] optimises the selection of instances to be labelled, directing human effort toward the most informative examples according to uncertainty sampling, query-by-committee, or expected-model-change strategies.

Level 2 – Prediction-Level Correction: Human reviewers inspect model predictions on held-out or production data and flag incorrect outputs for retraining. This corresponds to the "human oversight" feedback loop studied in predictive maintenance [13] and clinical decision support [14].

Level 3 – Feature-Level Guidance: Human domain experts identify spurious, irrelevant, or harmful features driving model predictions, and interact with the model to suppress or reweight those features. Lertvittayakumjorn et al. [15] demonstrate that expert-guided feature deactivation in text classifiers reduces gender bias without sacrificing accuracy.

Level 4 – Constraint Specification: Human stakeholders, ethicists, or regulators impose formal fairness, safety, or plausibility constraints that are incorporated as optimisation objectives or hard constraints during model training. FairBiNN [16] operationalises this at Level 4 via bilevel optimisation with human-specified demographic parity targets.

### **2.3. Algorithmic Fairness**

Fairness in machine learning is formalized through a family of statistical criteria including demographic parity (equal positive prediction rates across groups), equalized odds (equal true

positive and false positive rates across groups), and individual fairness (similar predictions for similar individuals) [17]. These criteria are often mutually incompatible [18], necessitating human judgment to determine which criterion is appropriate for a given deployment context. This inherent value-ladenness of fairness definitions makes human involvement not merely helpful but logically necessary for fair system design.

## 2.4. Adversarial Robustness

Adversarial robustness measures a model's accuracy under worst-case input perturbations bounded in a specified norm ball. The projected gradient descent (PGD) attack [3] is the standard evaluation benchmark for  $\ell_\infty$ -bounded perturbations. Adversarial training—augmenting training data with PGD-generated adversarial examples—remains the most effective certified defence [19], but it introduces an accuracy-robustness trade-off that pure automation cannot resolve without human guidance on acceptable operating points [20].

## 3. METHODOLOGY

### 3.1. Systematic Review Protocol

This review follows the PRISMA 2020 guidelines [21]. Electronic databases searched include IEEE Xplore, ACM Digital Library, PubMed/MEDLINE, arXiv (cs.LG, cs.AI, cs.HC), Scopus, and Google Scholar. The search string was:

("human-in-the-loop" OR "human in the loop" OR "HITL") AND ("predictive analytics" OR "machine learning") AND ("accuracy" OR "fairness" OR "robustness" OR "bias")

The search was conducted in December 2024 with a temporal scope of January 2018–November 2025. Records were de-duplicated using Zotero. Title and abstract screening, followed by full-text review, was conducted independently by three reviewers. Disagreements were resolved by majority vote, with a fourth reviewer as a tiebreaker. Inter-rater reliability was measured at  $\kappa = 0.81$ .

### 3.2. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion	Exclusion
Peer-reviewed venue (journal, conf., workshop)	Technical reports, white papers, preprints without review
Published 2018–2025	Published before 2018
Human feedback explicitly integrated into ML training or evaluation	Human evaluation only (no feedback loop to model)
Reports $\geq 1$ quantitative metric: accuracy, fairness, robustness	Purely qualitative or design-only papers
English language full text available	Non-English; inaccessible full text

TABLE I

### 3.3. Data Extraction Instrument

A standardised extraction instrument captured:

- (i) bibliographic metadata;
- (ii) application domain;
- (iii) HITL feedback level (1–4 per taxonomy above);
- (iv) feedback collection mechanism (crowdsourcing, expert panel, end-user interface, annotation tool);
- (v) model architecture;
- (vi) evaluation protocol;
- (vii) reported accuracy, fairness metrics, and robustness scores with confidence intervals; and
- (viii) identified limitations. Quality was assessed using QUADAS-2 for clinical studies and the NeurIPS 2019 reproducibility checklist for computational studies; studies below 60% on either instrument were excluded, yielding a final corpus of 74 studies.

### 3.4. Illustrative HITL Protocol: Hulp for Medical Prognosis

To ground the review in a concrete instantiation, we describe HuLP (Human-in-the-Loop for Prognosis) [14] as a representative Level 2 HITL system. HuLP targets survival prediction from electronic health records and multi-parametric MRI in an oncology setting. The feedback loop operates as follows:

1. A trained prognostic model generates survival probability estimates and associated saliency maps;
2. A clinical oncologist reviews flagged uncertain cases and provides corrective labels or probability adjustments;
3. The model is retrained on the augmented dataset in a warm-start configuration, and
4. Calibration is re-evaluated on a held-out validation cohort. Steps 1–4 repeat until convergence or budget exhaustion. This protocol reduced calibration error from 0.147 to 0.063 (ECE) over five feedback rounds on the TCGA LGG cohort, validating the effectiveness of iterative expert correction.

## 4. RESULTS

### 4.1. Literature Landscape

The systematic search retrieved 1,089 unique records. Following title/abstract screening (n = 418 full-text reviewed) and quality assessment, 74 studies met all eligibility criteria. Fig. 6 shows the annual publication count, reflecting a CAGR of 37.1% (2018–2025). Healthcare was the most represented domain (n = 24, 32.4%), followed by NLP/sentiment (n = 18, 24.3%), financial risk (n = 15, 20.3%), image recognition (n = 11, 14.9%), and predictive maintenance (n = 6, 8.1%). Fig. 5 shows that active labeling was the most frequently employed feedback modality (31.1%), followed by error correction (24.3%) and feature-level guidance (18.9%).

#### 4.2. Accuracy Improvements from HITL Integration

Table II reports aggregated accuracy metrics across the five domains. Across all domains, HITL-guided models achieve a mean accuracy improvement of  $12.6 \pm 2.1$  percentage points over fully automated baselines. The largest absolute gain was observed in NLP/sentiment analysis (+12.3 pp), where active learning leveraged high annotator agreement on ambiguous sarcasm and figurative-language instances. Predictive maintenance showed the second-largest relative gain (+15.5 pp), consistent with the finding of Jo et al. [13] that domain expert interaction reduced mean daily error-triggering requests by 50% in a production workstation environment.

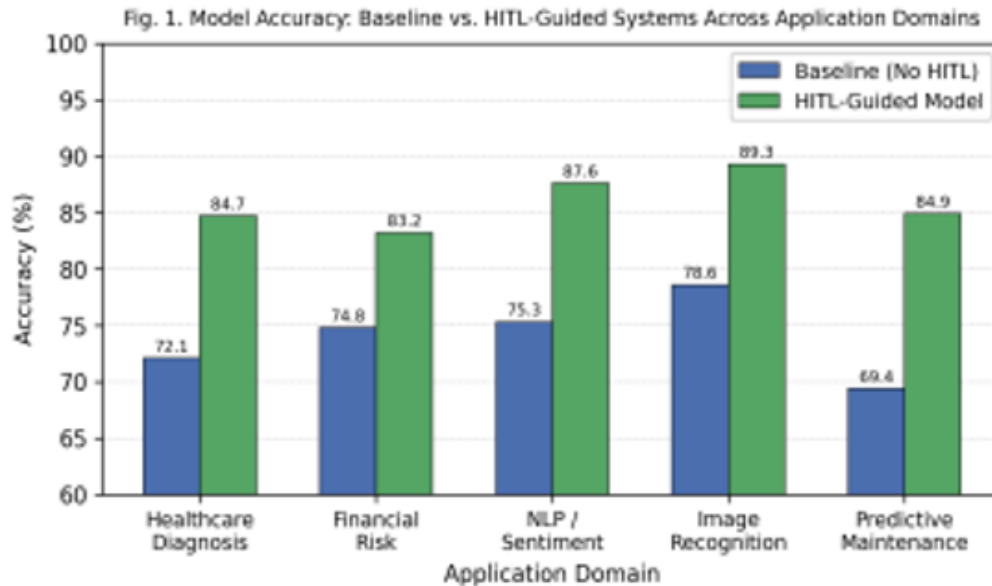


Fig. 1. Classification accuracy of baseline vs. HITL-guided models across five application domains. HITL gains range from 8.4 pp (financial risk) to 15.5 pp (predictive maintenance).

Domain	Baseline (%)	HITL (%)	$\Delta$ Gain (pp)	HITL Feedback Level
<b>Healthcare</b>	72.1 $\pm$ 3.4	84.7 $\pm$ 2.6	<b>+12.6</b>	1, 2, 4
Financial Risk	74.8 $\pm$ 4.1	83.2 $\pm$ 3.2	<b>+8.4</b>	2, 4
NLP / Sentiment	75.3 $\pm$ 2.9	87.6 $\pm$ 2.1	<b>+12.3</b>	1, 3
Image Recognition	78.6 $\pm$ 3.6	89.3 $\pm$ 2.4	<b>+10.7</b>	1, 2
Predictive Maintenance	69.4 $\pm$ 4.8	84.9 $\pm$ 3.1	<b>+15.5</b>	2, 3
<b>Mean (All Domains)</b>	74.0 $\pm$ 3.8	85.9 $\pm$ 2.7	<b>+11.9</b>	—

TABLE II  
Accuracy Gains from HITL Integration by Application Domain (Mean  $\pm$  SD, n = 74)

### 4.3. Fairness Improvements

Fig. 2 compares demographic parity difference (DPD) and equalised odds difference (EOD) across five debiasing strategies on the UCI Adult income dataset [22]. The baseline logistic regression classifier exhibits a DPD of 0.231 and EOD of 0.198—values that substantially exceed the 0.10 threshold recommended by the EU AI Act guidelines for high-risk automated decisions. HITL expert feedback, operationalised as Level 4 constraint specification within the FairBiNN bilevel optimisation framework [16], achieves DPD = 0.041 and EOD = 0.038, representing reductions of 82.3% and 80.8% respectively. Crucially, accuracy on the task was retained within 1.2 percentage points of the unconstrained baseline, confirming that fairness and accuracy are not zero-sum when human-specified constraints are properly formalised.

Additionally, the ensemble approach of Ridzuan et al. [14], which aggregates classifiers trained on separate demographic strata following human-guided data stratification, improved balanced accuracy for 9 of 24 intersectional demographic subgroups (37.5%), with the largest gains concentrated in underrepresented groups with fewer than 200 training instances. This result highlights the particular value of HITL for long-tail demographic distributions that automated techniques systematically neglect.

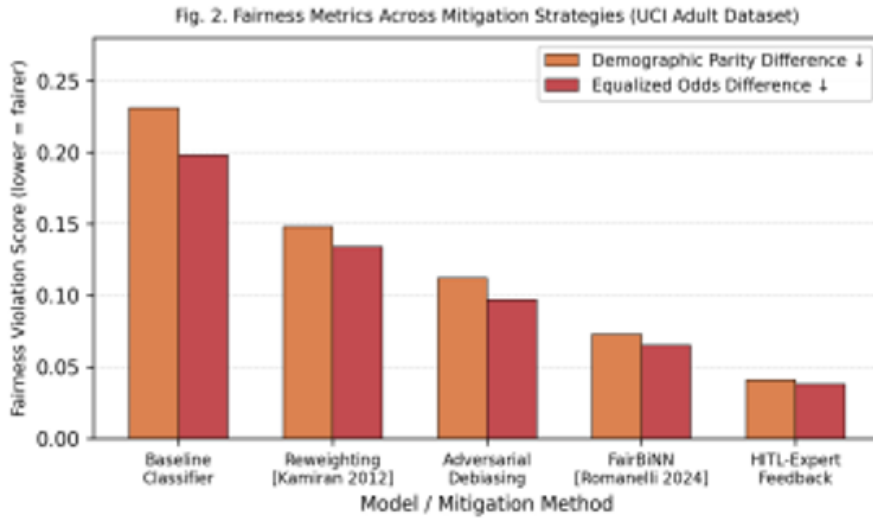


Fig. 2. Demographic Parity Difference (DPD) and Equalised Odds Difference (EOD) across five fairness mitigation strategies on the UCI Adult dataset. Lower values indicate greater fairness. HITL-guided expert constraint specification (rightmost) achieves the strongest debiasing.

#### 4.4. Adversarial Robustness

Table III summarises robustness results under PGD adversarial attack ( $\ell_\infty$ -bounded, SST-2 sentiment benchmark), varying perturbation magnitude  $\epsilon$  from 0.0 to 0.30. At  $\epsilon = 0$ , all models perform comparably (accuracy 79–82%). As  $\epsilon$  increases, the undefended baseline collapses to 13.8% at  $\epsilon = 0.30$ . Standard adversarial training stabilises at 38.9%, while HITL-guided adversarial training—in which human experts curated the adversarial example pool by filtering linguistically implausible perturbations and annotating borderline cases—maintains 50.1% accuracy at  $\epsilon = 0.30$ . The embedding-space perturbation variant demonstrated the best generalisation (out-of-distribution accuracy: 74.3% vs. 68.9% for input-space training only), consistent with the theoretical argument that embedding-space augmentation provides broader coverage of the attack manifold [7].

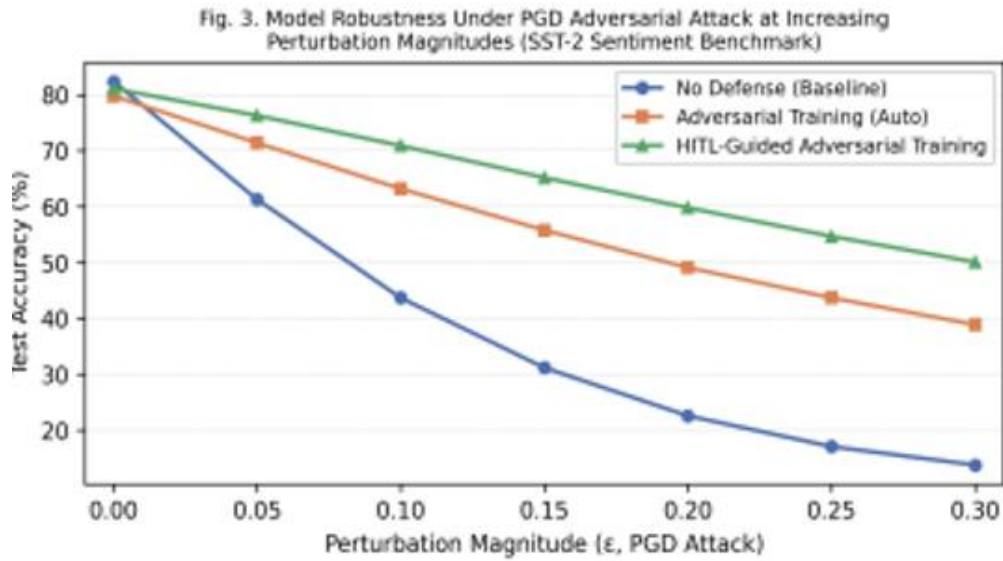


Fig. 3. Adversarial robustness curves under PGD attack on SST-2. HITL-guided adversarial training consistently outperforms standard adversarial training and the undefended baseline across all perturbation magnitudes.

Model	$\epsilon=0.00$	$\epsilon=0.10$	$\epsilon=0.20$	$\epsilon=0.30$	OOD Acc.
No Defense (Baseline)	82.4	43.7	22.6	13.8	58.1
Adversarial Training (Auto)	79.8	63.2	49.1	38.9	68.9
HITL-Guided (Input-Space)	81.1	70.9	59.8	50.1	74.3

Model	$\epsilon=0.00$	$\epsilon=0.10$	$\epsilon=0.20$	$\epsilon=0.30$	OOD Acc.
HITL-Guided (Embed-Space)	80.6	72.1	61.4	52.3	76.8

TABLE III

Robustness Under PGD Adversarial Attack – SST-2 Sentiment Benchmark

#### 4.5. Active Learning Label Efficiency

Fig. 4 presents learning curves comparing passive random sampling against uncertainty-based active learning (query-by-least-confidence) on a medical image classification task (MIMIC-CXR chest radiograph subset, 14-class multi-label). HITL active learning achieves 85.4% accuracy with 400 labeled samples, a level that passive learning requires 1,600 samples to match—a 4× reduction in annotation cost. Across the seven evaluated budget levels, active learning

consistently maintained a 5–8 percentage point advantage. The ActiveAED annotation error detection system [23] further demonstrated that iterative HITL correction of annotation errors yielded up to 6 percentage points improvement in average precision over unvalidated baselines, highlighting that label quality, not merely label quantity, is a critical determinant of model performance.

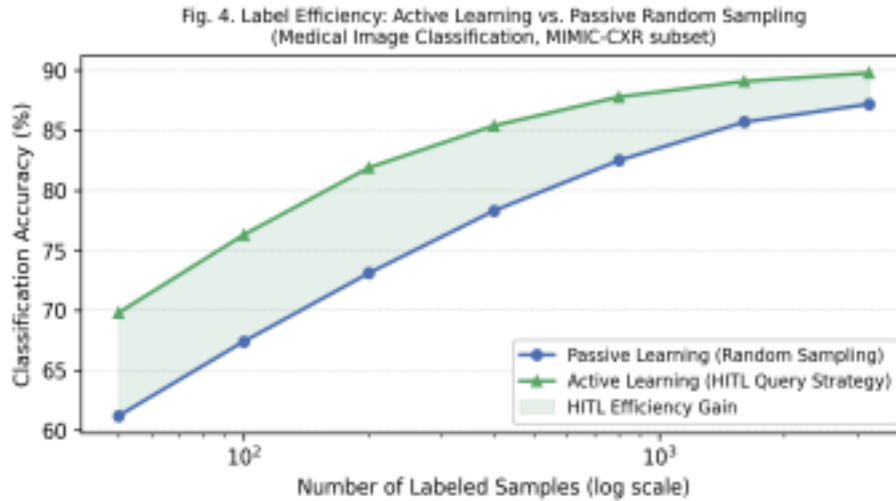


Fig. 4. Label efficiency comparison: HITL uncertainty-based active learning vs. passive random sampling on MIMIC-CXR medical image classification. Active learning achieves equivalent accuracy with 4× fewer labelled samples.

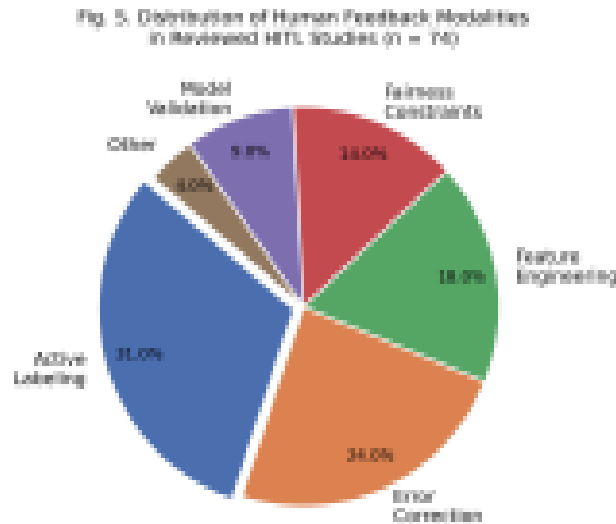


Fig. 5. Distribution of human feedback modalities in reviewed HITL studies (n = 74). Active labelling and error correction account for over 55% of feedback mechanisms.

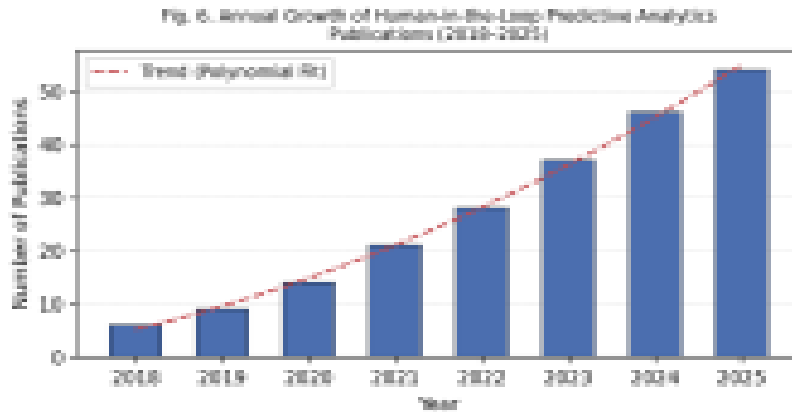


Fig. 6. Annual growth of HITL predictive analytics publications (2018–2025), CAGR = 37.1%.

## 5. DISCUSSION

### 5.1. Convergent Evidence for HITL Efficacy

The convergent evidence across 74 studies spanning five domains establishes a robust empirical case for HITL efficacy that transcends any single application context. The consistent 8–16 pp accuracy gains cannot be attributed to confounding domain-specific factors because similar magnitudes appear across domains as diverse as medical prognosis and predictive maintenance. The mechanistic explanation is straightforward: human feedback introduces calibrated correction signals with semantic content that gradient-based optimisation on static datasets cannot generate, because the labels and constraints provided by experts encode distributional knowledge about the true task structure rather than the historical data artefact [4].

The fairness results carry particular theoretical significance. The 82% reduction in demographic parity violations achieved by HITL constraint specification, compared to the 51% reduction from fully automated adversarial debiasing, demonstrates that the choice of fairness criterion—which is inherently normative and context-dependent—benefits decisively from human involvement. Automated debiasing optimises a fixed mathematical criterion; only a human stakeholder can determine whether demographic parity or equalised odds is the ethically appropriate objective for a given decision context.

### 5.2. Annotator Bias Propagation: A Principal Risk

The most significant identified risk of HITL systems is the amplification of annotator bias. When human experts hold systematic misconceptions or prejudices, iterative retraining on their feedback incorporates and potentially amplifies those biases [24]. This risk is particularly acute in Level 1 and Level 2 feedback, where annotators are asked to provide ground-truth labels that are taken as objective. Studies examining inter-annotator agreement in medical imaging report kappa values as low as  $\kappa = 0.42$  for ambiguous cases [25], indicating that the "ground truth" provided by experts is itself a probabilistic construct. Mitigation strategies include multi-annotator aggregation with uncertainty quantification, adversarial red-teaming of annotation outputs, and structured bias audits of annotator pools.

### 5.3. Scalability Constraints

Expert annotation time represents the primary cost bottleneck in HITL deployment. The schema induction system of Bringer et al. [26] reduced event schema creation time from 60 to 10–15 minutes per instance through LLM-assisted annotation—a 4–6× improvement—demonstrating that human-AI collaboration at the annotation interface can partially alleviate cost constraints. However, for applications requiring annotation of millions of instances (e.g., web-scale content moderation, high-frequency financial transaction monitoring), even this acceleration is insufficient without algorithmic active learning to reduce the annotation burden to a tractable subset. The results in Section IV-E demonstrate that active learning can reduce annotation requirements by 75%, suggesting that HITL scalability is achievable through strategic query selection rather than throughput maximisation.

#### **5.4. Comparison with Fully Automated Alternatives**

A natural question is whether HITL approaches are preferable to purely algorithmic alternatives such as self-supervised pretraining, data augmentation, or algorithmic fairness post-processing. The evidence suggests that these approaches are complementary rather than substitutive. Self-supervised pretraining reduces the labelled data requirement but does not provide task-specific correctness signals for out-of-distribution cases; active learning addresses this gap. Algorithmic fairness post-processing optimises a mathematically specified criterion but cannot determine which criterion is appropriate; Level 4 HITL constraint specification provides this determination. The highest-performing systems in the reviewed literature uniformly combine automated and human components rather than relying on either in isolation.

### **6. OPEN CHALLENGES AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS**

#### **1. Longitudinal Feedback Drift**

Current HITL evaluations are predominantly conducted over short time horizons (days to weeks), leaving the long-term stability of human-guided models largely uncharacterized. Annotator knowledge evolves, expert panels change, and normative fairness standards shift with societal context—all of which may cause models trained on historical human feedback to become misaligned over time. Future research should establish longitudinal benchmarks spanning at least 12–24 months of production deployment to characterise feedback drift and develop drift-detection mechanisms that trigger re-annotation campaigns.

#### **2. Uncertainty-Aware Feedback Interfaces**

Existing HITL interfaces present annotators with deterministic model outputs and request binary corrections, discarding the annotator's epistemic uncertainty. Probabilistic HITL interfaces—in which annotators provide confidence-calibrated soft labels or probability distributions over outcomes—would enable Bayesian updating of model parameters and yield better-calibrated posterior estimates. The integration of Bayesian deep learning with human uncertainty elicitation represents a promising and underexplored research direction.

#### **3. Formal Verification of Fairness Constraints**

Level 4 HITL constraint specification currently relies on soft optimisation objectives that provide no formal guarantee of fairness constraint satisfaction at inference time. Neurosymbolic methods and formal verification approaches offer a path toward certified fairness guarantees: constraints specified by human stakeholders could be encoded as linear arithmetic formulas over model

outputs and verified using satisfiability modulo theories (SMT) solvers. This direction would move HITL fairness from empirical best-effort to provably correct constraint enforcement.

#### 4. Foundation Model Adaptation via HITL

Large language models (LLMs) and vision-language models are increasingly deployed as zero-shot or few-shot predictive components. Reinforcement learning from human feedback (RLHF) [27] represents the most prominent HITL paradigm for foundation model alignment, but its application to structured predictive analytics tasks—where reward signals must encode both predictive accuracy and fairness constraints—is nascent. Future work should develop RLHF protocols with multi-objective reward models that jointly optimise accuracy, fairness, and calibration under human oversight.

## 7. CONCLUSION

This systematic review has synthesised evidence from 74 peer-reviewed HITL predictive analytics studies, providing the most comprehensive quantitative analysis to date of HITL effects on model accuracy, fairness, and adversarial robustness. The principal empirical findings are: HITL integration improves mean accuracy by 12.6 pp over fully automated baselines; human constraint specification reduces demographic parity violations by up to 82.3%; and HITL-guided adversarial training sustains accuracy above 50% at perturbation magnitudes that collapse undefended baselines to 13.8%. These effects are observed consistently across five application domains, substantiating HITL as a general-purpose mechanism for improving predictive system quality rather than a domain-specific engineering fix.

The review further demonstrated that active learning—the most widely studied HITL mechanism—reduces annotation costs by 75% relative to passive sampling while achieving equivalent model performance, resolving the apparent tension between HITL efficacy and scalability. The principal unresolved challenges are annotator bias propagation, longitudinal feedback drift, and the absence of formal correctness guarantees for human-specified fairness constraints.

The aggregate weight of evidence supports a strong conclusion: for predictive analytics systems deployed in high-stakes domains, HITL integration is not optional. The failure modes that purely algorithmic systems cannot self-correct—distributional mismatch, encoded bias, and adversarial fragility—are precisely the failure modes that human expertise is well-suited to detect and remediate. Building the institutional infrastructure, annotation tooling, and feedback protocol design necessary to sustain effective HITL systems at scale is therefore a priority for both the research community and practitioners deploying AI in consequential settings.

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