The workforce: Staying ahead of artificial intelligence
Dispelling myths on how people see AI’s impact on the workforce
Workers ready to learn
But businesses slow to train

For many of us, assistants like Siri, Alexa, and Cortana, are no longer novelties, they’re tools that help us throughout the day. But when it comes to the workplace – where AI is transforming how we run processes, work with data, and interact with customers – workers and businesses may not be ready for the changes ahead.

Headlines herald the arrival of the AI apocalypse. The findings from our study of more than 5,000 people surveyed in the US, UK, and Australia, however, tell a different story: among workers (2,795), only 10% strongly agree that AI threatens their jobs.

This report is the second in a three-part series by Genpact. The research explores the state of AI adoption, readiness, and impact across three critical communities: the C-suite, workforce, and consumers. This installment examines how workers see the role of AI and the workforce.

Time to learn
While people may not fear imminent job losses or working alongside robots, they know they need new skills. They fear a lack of time or resource to build these capabilities to work effectively with AI. And these skills aren’t necessarily technical or typically taught at school.

Mind the training gap
The challenge is how to upskill. Our first study with C-suite and senior executives finds that only 38% of businesses currently offer retraining in light of digital disruption. This must change if organizations are to enhance existing jobs, create new ones, and make their plans for AI succeed.

Using our study’s findings, this report dispels common myths about AI and the workforce.
About this research

Genpact worked with research firm YouGov to survey 5,179 people (2,189 in the US, 1,749 in the UK, and 1,241 in Australia) and study how artificial intelligence impacts their personal and professional lives. Of the total survey population, 2,795 are workers, employed at least eight hours per week. YouGov conducted the fieldwork online between August 15-30, 2017.

Just over half of respondents (54%) are classified as workers, being employed at least part-time, while the remainder are students, retired, or currently unemployed. The survey represents a broad range of education and income groups.

Our research series provides a comprehensive view of AI adoption, readiness, and impact from the C-suite, the workforce, and consumers. Combined, these findings give businesses valuable insights on how to succeed with artificial intelligence. The first study, released in September 2017, explores the senior management perspective. We will release the consumer study later this year.
MYTH 1: Workers fear AI is taking their jobs
What, me worry?

Workers like their chances in the modern work environment – for now

- People are not concerned about AI’s impact on the workforce right now. Just slightly more than one-quarter of 2,795 workers agree that AI threatens their current jobs
- And only 10% strongly agree that it puts their vocations at risk
- But more than half of all respondents worry that AI threatens the career prospects for their children or later generations

AI threatens the jobs of my children and/or of later generations 58%

AI threatens my vocation 28%
In fact, they’re often happy to work with AI

Executives and workers agree AI is here to stay

- Workers—especially younger ones—are surprisingly open to working with AI-powered programs and machines: overall, nearly half say they would be at least comfortable working with robots at work
- This aligns with the executive opinion. In our first AI study of 300 senior executives, 45% say that employees will soon be comfortable working with robots—and fully 79% of executives who are leaders in AI say they will
- At a regional level, the majority of Australian workers say they’re open to robots in the workplace—more than in the UK or US

How comfortable would you be working with/among robots? (% of workers surveyed)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Very comfortable</th>
<th>Fairly comfortable</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>34%</td>
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<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>27%</td>
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<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>26%</td>
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Very comfortable | Fairly comfortable
MYTH 2: Workers need technical skills to work with AI
Workers want to prepare
But many companies are not equipping employees with the skills they need

Workers who say they worry about lacking the time and money to be retrained to work effectively with AI

- My employer is investing in technology
- My employer is not investing in technology

- While workers are concerned about ensuring they can work with AI effectively, those from companies that are investing in AI are less fearful

- Fewer than one in four (24%) workers from companies that are investing in technology to take advantage of AI say they’re worried about keeping up – indicating on-the-job training can substantially mitigate concerns about AI

- Yet our first study with senior executives shows that companies aren’t ready to address this need for reskilling:
  - Only one in four respondents (25%) strongly agrees that their company equips employees with the skills they need to take advantage of AI
  - And only 38% of executives say that their organizations currently provide reskilling options to address technology disruption
Critical thinking and creativity outstrip coding and math

Workers know what they need while employers lag in providing retraining

- Workers are getting exposure to cutting-edge technologies earlier and more often, so they’re coming to understand the skills they need to work in this new environment.
- Technical skills like coding, statistics, and applied math remain important—but ‘softer’ skills like adaptability, critical thinking, problem solving, and creativity are critical.

What skills will people need to succeed professionally? (% of all respondents)

- The ability to adapt to change: 50%
- Critical thinking and problem solving skills: 44%
- The ability to think creatively: 42%
- The ability to communicate and collaborate: 40%
- Technical skills (e.g., coding, statistics, applied math): 39%
- Not applicable - I don’t think humans will need any skills in particular: 13%
MYTH 3: The future workforce needs more advanced education to use AI effectively
Nine in ten people believe that younger generations will need to develop new skills to compete in a workplace shaped by AI.

Giving young people training in human-machine interaction and more relevant early education offers the best chance at developing those skills.

But advanced university education – far from being the single most important skill-building resource – doesn’t even crack the top three.

This suggests that the best way to shape the future workforce is to focus on fundamental literacies and get more AI-focused training, not advanced degrees.

### What are the best ways for younger generations to develop AI-ready skills?

- **Have more specialized job training on human-machine interactions**: 45%
- **Complete more relevant primary/secondary education in subjects that will prepare them for the future workforce**: 43%
- **Have more apprenticeships/internships**: 36%
- **Complete more relevant advanced education (e.g. undergraduate degrees, masters, PhDs etc.)**: 33%
- **Not applicable - younger/future generations do not need to develop any particular skills**: 10%
MYTH 4: Few workers see the benefits of AI
Workers acknowledge AI advantages – if they can see them
Younger generations tune into the benefits of AI

- Reducing staff costs and saving time are the two biggest benefits, according to worker respondents
- Younger workers are more likely to recognize these benefits than their older colleagues – and are more likely to feel that the advent of AI benefits them personally
- This is especially true for those benefits that workers can see themselves, like saving time and reducing errors, and not so much for employer-directed benefits like increased revenues and reduced staff costs

What are the main benefits of AI in the workplace? (% of workers surveyed)
The takeaways
Employee training will make or break the future of AI for many organizations

Artificial intelligence brings a seismic shift in the future of work – making some roles obsolete, enhancing others, while creating new jobs and even spawning new professions.

Many workers expect to be comfortable working alongside AI within the next three years, but they worry that their employers aren’t going to retrain them to make the most of the technology. And with few senior executives – according to the first study in our series on AI – acknowledging that their companies offer reskilling today, a skills gap is growing.

Making human-machine collaboration work

Employers can put these concerns to rest – and optimize their existing workforce and AI initiatives – by investing in employee training for the most effective AI-related skills.

The big question is how to effectively encourage and adopt human-machine collaboration. If workers are to contribute fully to the rise of artificial intelligence, organizations must foster a top-down culture that embraces AI, learning, and training at all levels. And do so quickly.

Next: AI in your lifestyle

Read the first report in the series – Is your business AI-ready? – and look out for further findings from consumers on the role AI plays in their personal lives.
We are Genpact

We’re a global professional services firm that makes transformation real.

We drive digital-led innovation and digitally-enabled intelligent operations for our clients. Guided by the experience that comes from running thousands of processes for Fortune 500 companies.

We think with design. Dream in digital. Solve problems with data. Obsess over operations and sweat the small stuff. All 78,000 of us.

From New York to New Delhi (and 20 countries in between), we have the end-to-end expertise to connect every dot. Reimagine every process. And renew your ways of working. Because we know that rethinking each step from start to finish will change your business for the better.

Wherever you want your business to go, we’ll focus on getting you there. So you can focus on your big picture, big returns or next big thing. Whatever it is, we’ll be there with you—putting data and digital to work to create bold, lasting results.

Because transformation happens here.

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