

Dossier préparé par M Wattiaux

PART 1 – Workplace environment

DOCUMENT 1

Fortune 100 companies are back in the office — but 'work from home dark matter' is thriving under the radar

Jacob Zincola, *Business Insider*, January 19, 2026 (abridged)

Think of a big-name company, and there's a good chance it's rolled out a return-to-office mandate in the past couple of years. Amazon, AT&T, JPMorgan, Goldman Sachs, and Paramount Skydance have adopted a five-day-a-week office mandate, while Microsoft, Intel, and Starbucks have tightened their hybrid policies.

As of the second quarter of 2025, a majority of Fortune 100 employees were subject to a full-time office mandate — up from just 5% two years prior — according to Placer.ai, a location intelligence and foot traffic data firm. Over the same period, the average number of required in-office days a week at these companies rose from 2.6 to 3.9, according to real estate consulting firm JLL.

However, data reflecting how many US workers are actually in the office tells a different story, said Nick Bloom, an economics professor at Stanford University who studies remote work.

Bloom said actual work-from-home rates have remained fairly stable in recent years. He referred to it as "work-from-home dark matter" — a nod to the invisible material that makes up much of the universe. Like dark matter, remote work appears to be widespread, Bloom said, but may often be procured through special exceptions or flying under the radar.

"We keep hearing endless stories of companies pushing employees to return, but we just don't see much of this in the survey, swipe-card or cellphone tracking data," he said.

For companies, the apparent disconnect between rising return-to-office mandates and actual office attendance raises questions about whether employees and managers are complying with RTO policies. For workers, it suggests there may be more opportunities to work from home than they realize.

Bloom's research, published on the WFH Research website he co-founded, shows that the share of work-from-home days in the US has held fairly steady over the past two years — fluctuating between roughly 25% and 30%. Bureau of Labor Statistics data backs this up.

Bloom pointed to a few potential explanations for why work-from-home rates have remained resilient. One is that while fully remote arrangements have declined sharply since the height of the pandemic, hybrid setups — with employees splitting time between home and the office — have been adopted by many employers.

Additionally, Bloom hypothesized that some employees have secured exceptions that allow them to work from home more frequently than their company's official policy permits. He believes many of these arrangements are "off the record" — granted by individual managers without formal company approval.

Bloom said one reason some managers might allow these exceptions is that they're often evaluated based on their team's performance. If a manager is concerned that top employees will quit or become less productive under stricter in-office requirements, they may decide to offer more flexibility.

"Managers are allowing employees extra days at home because they are high performers or hard to replace in their jobs," he said, adding, "Managers ultimately care about their team performance."

One of these off-the-record exceptions was granted to a Wisconsin-based mother of three who works in a corporate role at a manufacturing company. When her employer announced a five-day-a-week in-office policy in 2023, she worried a two-hour round-trip commute would make it difficult to manage her childcare responsibilities. After an "off-the-record" conversation with her manager, she was told that as long as she came in a few days a week —

especially for key in-person meetings — they wouldn't give her any trouble.

"If I need to work from home for whatever reason, whether it's work or personal reasons, then that's OK," she said.

40 Not every work-from-home exception is off the record. After struggling to make it into the office following day care drop-off, Georg Loewen, a senior director of digital marketing at a public relations agency, said his manager formally exempted him — for the time being — from the company's three-day-a-week in-office policy.

"If drop-off ran long or parking didn't work out, I'd just work from home," said Loewen, who's in his 30s and lives in New Jersey.

45 Loewen said he sometimes worries about how his arrangement might be perceived by coworkers who don't have the same flexibility, but that he has consistently felt supported.

Bloom said he often hears about West Coast employees who are granted additional work-from-home flexibility because they have regular calls with colleagues in China or India that take place outside standard business hours. He also cited a case in which the head of a department at a Fortune 500 company was allowed to work remotely so his son, who had a health issue, could live near a specialist hospital.

50 The survival of remote work isn't just about individual exceptions. While large employers have made headlines with return-to-office mandates, many smaller businesses and startups have quietly continued to offer flexibility.

A report published last year by Flex Index, a platform that tracks flexible work policies, found that as of the third quarter of 2025, businesses with fewer than 500 employees were much more likely to offer flexible arrangements than Fortune 100 companies. And according to data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, about half of US private-sector workers are employed at companies with fewer than 500 employees.

55 Leslie Snipes is among the workers who have benefited from the flexibility of working at a small business. Snipes, a director of marketing at a Los Angeles-based creative agency with around 15 employees, said her 60- to 90-minute commute through LA traffic quickly took a toll during her first few months on the job. After speaking with her manager, she received formal approval to work almost exclusively remotely. She said she typically goes into the office once or twice a month to "show face" and connect with colleagues. [...]

DOCUMENT 2

Your Boss Wants You Back in the Office. This Surveillance Tech Could Be Waiting for You

Sophie Charara, *Wired*, 26 February 2025 (abridged)

Scan the online brochures of companies who sell workplace monitoring tech and you'd think the average American worker was a renegade poised to take their employer down at the next opportunity. "Nearly half of US employees admit to time theft!" "Biometric readers for enhanced accuracy!" "Offer staff benefits in a controlled way with Vending Machine Access!"

5 A new wave of return-to-office mandates has arrived since the New Year, including at JP Morgan Chase, leading advertising agency WPP, and Amazon—not to mention President Trump's late January directive to the heads of federal agencies to "terminate remote work arrangements and require employees to return to work in-person ... on a full-time basis." [...]

The question is, what exactly are we returning to?

10 Take any consumer tech buzzword of the 21st century and chances are it's already being widely used across the US to monitor time, attendance and, in some cases, the productivity of workers, in sectors such as manufacturing, retail, and fast food chains: RFID badges, GPS time clock apps, NFC apps, QR code clocking-in, Apple Watch badges, and palm, face, eye, voice, and finger scanners. Biometric scanners have long been sold to companies as a way to avoid hourly workers "buddy punching" for each other at the start and end of shifts—so-called "time theft." A return-to-office mandate and its enforcement opens the door for similar scenarios for salaried staff.

15 The latest, deluxe end point of these time and attendance tchotchkes and apps is something like Austin-headquartered HID's OmniKey platform. Designed for factories, hospitals, universities and offices, this is essentially

an all-encompassing RFID log-in and security system for employees, via smart cards, smartphone wallets, and wearables. These will not only monitor turnstile entrances, exits, and floor access by way of elevators but also parking, the use of meeting rooms, the cafeteria, printers, lockers, and yes, vending machine access.

These technologies, and more sophisticated worker location- and behavior-tracking systems, are expanding from blue-collar jobs to pink-collar industries and even white-collar office settings. Depending on the survey, approximately 70 to 80 percent of large US employers now use some form of employee monitoring, and the likes of PwC have explicitly told workers that managers will be tracking their location to enforce a three-day office week policy.

“Several of these earlier technologies, like RFID sensors and low-tech barcode scanners, have been used in manufacturing, in warehouses, or in other settings for some time,” says Wolfie Christl, a researcher of workplace surveillance for Cracked Labs, a nonprofit based in Vienna, Austria. “We’re moving toward the use of all kinds of sensor data, and this kind of technology is certainly now moving into the offices. However, I think for many of these, it’s questionable whether they really make sense there.” [...]

If warehouse-style tracking has the potential for management overkill in office settings, it makes even less sense in service and health care jobs, and American unions are now pushing for more access to data and quotas used in disciplinary action. Elizabeth Anderson, professor of public philosophy at the University of Michigan and the author of *Private Government: How Employers Rule Our Lives*, describes how black-box algorithm-driven management and monitoring affects not just the day-to-day of nursing staff but also their sense of work and value.

“Surveillance and this idea of time theft, it’s all connected to this idea of wasting time,” she explains. “Essentially all relational work is considered inefficient. In a memory care unit, for example, the system will say how long to give a patient breakfast, how many minutes to get them dressed, and so forth.

“Maybe an Alzheimer’s patient is frightened, so a nurse has to spend some time calming them down, or perhaps they have lost some ability overnight. That’s not one of the discrete physical tasks that can be measured. Most of the job is helping that person cope with declining faculties; it takes time for that, for people to read your emotions and respond appropriately. What you get is massive moral injury with this notion of efficiency.”

This kind of monitoring extends to service workers, including servers in restaurants and cleaning staff, according to a 2023 Cracked Labs’ report into retail and hospitality. Software developed by Oracle is used to, among other applications, rate and rank servers based on speed, sales, timekeeping around breaks, and how many tips they receive. Similar Oracle software that monitors mobile workers such as housekeepers and cleaners in hotels uses a timer for app-based micromanagement—for instance, “you have two minutes for this room, and there are four tasks.”

As Christl explains, this simply doesn’t work in practice. “People have to struggle to combine what they *really* do with this kind of rigid, digital system. And it’s not easy to standardize work like talking to patients and other kinds of affective work, like how friendly you are as a waiter. This is a major problem. These systems cannot represent the work that is being done accurately.”

But can knowledge work done in offices ever be effectively measured and assessed either? In an episode of his podcast in January, host Ezra Klein battled his own feelings about having many of his best creative ideas at a café down the street from where he lives rather than in *The New York Times*’ Manhattan offices. Anderson agrees that creativity often has to find its own path.

“Say there’s a webcam tracking your eyes to make sure you’re looking at the screen,” she says. “We know that daydreaming a little can actually help people come up with creative ideas. Just letting your mind wander is incredibly useful for productivity overall, but that requires some time looking around or out the window. The software connected to your camera is saying you’re off-duty—that you’re wasting time. Nobody’s mind can keep concentrated for the whole work day, but you don’t even want that from a productivity point of view.”

Even for roles where it might make more methodological sense to track discrete physical tasks, there can be negative consequences of nonstop monitoring. Anderson points to a scene in Erik Gandini’s 2023 documentary *After Work* that shows an Amazon delivery driver who is monitored, via camera, for their driving, delivery quotas, and even getting dinged for using Spotify in the van.

“It’s very tightly regulated and super, super intrusive, and it’s all based on distrust as the starting point,” she says.

65 “What these tech bros don’t understand is that if you install surveillance technology, which is all about distrusting the workers, there is a deep feature of human psychology that is reciprocity. If you don’t trust me, I’m not going to trust you. You think an employee who doesn’t trust the boss is going to be working with the same enthusiasm? I don’t think so.” [...]

DOCUMENT 3 • VIDEO • ABC (Australia), “The push for a four-day work week”, 29 July 2025.

↳ link: <https://youtu.be/asbUpFse20A> (7 minutes)

DOCUMENT 4 • VIDEO • The Wall Street Journal, “Why This Disney-Inspired HQ for 13k Employees Still Has Individual Offices”, June 16, 2025.

↳ link: <https://youtu.be/cw27tlKcO7Q> (9 minutes)

DOCUMENT 5 • VIDEO • CBS, “Remote work sparks a surge in “digital nomads””, March 14, 2023.

↳ link: <https://youtu.be/tx87ZiSnl0> (7 minutes)

PART 2 – Workers’ rights

DOCUMENT 6

How will the changes to workers' rights affect you?

Michael Race, BBC, 16 December 2025

A major shake-up of workers' rights is on its way, but the government has U-turned on some reforms and it is still unclear how other proposals will work in practice.

5 The government has said the measures in the Employment Rights Bill, expected to gain royal assent before Christmas, mark the "biggest upgrade to rights at work for a generation".

10 However, some business groups have expressed concern at the plans, while others have argued that the government has watered down or delayed certain elements to try to keep both employers and employees happy.

15 The government has argued it has altered its proposed legislation to prevent it being delayed from coming into force, with some changes set to take effect in April 2026 before more are applied in later years.

Unfair dismissal

20 The bill - applies to England, Scotland and Wales, but not Northern Ireland where employment law is devolved - originally declared workers would have the right to claim unfair dismissal against their employer from day one.

That was a big change from the existing two-year

25 qualifying period and faced strong opposition from many business groups.

Following consultations, the government announced the right will now take effect after six months instead, and will come into force at the start of 30 2027.

The U-turn is a breach of Labour's election manifesto commitment to offer all workers the right to claim unfair dismissal from their first day in a job.

35 The government said the changes to its bill made it a "workable package".

It added day one protection against discrimination remained and other new day-one rights to sick pay and paternity leave will still go ahead, coming into effect in April 2026.

40 The reforms originally outlined that workers would be subject to a nine-month probation period, during which employers could dismiss someone more easily and without the full process required, but such proposals might yet change following consultations.

45 As it dropped the commitment to day one protection from unfair dismissal, the government said it planned to abolish the current limits on compensation for financial loss in ordinary unfair

dismissal cases.

50 Currently, awards to former employees who successfully bring a claim are capped at either their annual salary or £118,223, whichever is lower.

Zero-hours contracts

55 Zero-hours contracts are also known as casual contracts. Workers are not guaranteed hours from employers, but they also do not have to work when asked.

Under the new legislation, company bosses will be required to offer a zero-hours worker a guaranteed-
60 hours contract based on the hours they clock up during a 12-week period.

Employees who prefer having a zero-hours contract will be able to remain on those terms if they want to - the change is that they will have the right for
65 guaranteed working hours if they want them.

Workers on zero-hours contracts will also be entitled to "reasonable" notice ahead of any changes being made to their shifts, as well as compensation if a shift is cancelled or ended early.

70 Flexible working

Flexible working is to become the "default" for all workers, with employers required to say yes to requests from staff from their first day starting in a job unless they can prove it is "unreasonable".

75 The government defines flexible working as a way of working "that suits an employee's needs", for example, having flexible start and finish times, or working from home.

80 Employees can already request flexible working from their first day in a job, but an employer can refuse an application if they have a good business reason for doing so.

It is unclear if there will be a big shift from current rules and there appear to be many reasons available
85 to employers to refuse flexible working in the new bill.

The grounds against granting requests include: burden of additional costs; detrimental effect on ability to meet customer demand; inability to re-organise work among existing staff; inability to recruit additional
90 staff; detrimental impact on quality.

Sick pay

The waiting period and lower earnings limit to receive Statutory Sick Pay will be removed.

95 Around 1.3 million low-paid workers in the UK are to be entitled to 80% of their weekly salary as sick pay

from the first day of illness, under the government plans.

100 Currently, to qualify for sick pay, you must have been ill for more than three days in a row and earn an average of at least £123 per week.

Under the plans, employees will be entitled to Statutory Sick Pay from the first day they are ill and those earning under £123 per week will also be eligible for it.

105 You can get £116.75 per week Statutory Sick Pay if you're too ill to work and it is paid by your employer for up to 28 weeks. Some can get more if their company has a sick pay scheme.

Unpaid parental and bereavement leave

110 Parents are currently only allowed to take unpaid parental leave if they have been with a company for more than a year. The government plans to change this to become a right from "day one" in employment.

The same will apply for bereavement leave.

115 Anyone legally classed as an employee has the right to time off if a dependant dies.

A dependant could be their: husband; wife; civil partner or partner; child; parent; a person who lives in their household (not tenants, lodgers or employees); a
120 person who relies on them, such as an elderly neighbour.

Fire and rehire

125 If a business needs to cut costs, it may try to change its workers' terms and conditions, for instance by cutting pay or changing shift patterns.

If the workers don't agree, the employer could dismiss the affected workers and hire them back on worse terms and conditions.

130 The new bill bans such fire and rehire practices in most circumstances, but a company could still use it if it is at risk of becoming insolvent.

What isn't in the Employment Rights Bill?

135 Certain measures included in Labour's plan to "Make Work Pay", issued in the run-up to the general election, have not featured in the Employment Rights Bill.

For example, the "right to switch off" - stopping employers contacting staff out of hours on phones, emails and texts - has been kicked down the road.

140 The commitment to create a "single status of worker" is also not in the bill. This aimed to increase protection for people who are classed as self-employed, but largely work for one employer, but have fewer entitlements than other employees.

It is understood legal complexities mean this will 145 have to be revisited at a later date.

DOCUMENT 7

Australia's 'right to disconnect' laws are here. Does this mean no more work intrusions on personal time?

Tory Shepherd, *The Guardian*, 25 August 2024 (abridged)

From Monday, plenty of Australian workers will be looking forward to switching off.

That's when the new "right to disconnect" laws come in, meaning employers can't punish workers who
5 refuse to pick up the phone out of hours.

Except they still can, under certain conditions.

The Covid pandemic exacerbated the blurring of lines between work lives and private lives. Work already followed people home on their laptops, smartphones
10 and other devices. Working from home meant that work was in the home all the time.

In an attempt to restore boundaries and balance, the changes to the Fair Work Act have granted workers an "enforceable workplace right to refuse to monitor,
15 read or respond to contact, or attempted contact, from their employer outside of their working hours, unless such refusal is unreasonable".

"The right to disconnect will also enable an employee to refuse to monitor, read or respond to
20 work-related contact, or attempted contact, from a third party," the Australian Public Service Commission's guidance on the new rules says.

The Department of Employment and Workplace Relations says the right is "about making sure
25 employees know when they can switch off and what they have to do when they are not working (and not being paid)".

Why do we need it?

Less unpaid overtime should lead to less stress and burnout, Dr Gabrielle Golding from the University of
30 Adelaide's law school says.

"Employees will have a definitive end to their working day and no longer carry the burden of continuing to be contactable about work-related
35 matters in their private time, unless certain reasonable exceptions apply," she says.

"This result signals a momentous societal shift in the value placed on work and similarly on wellbeing and private time."
40

Employers will also benefit, she adds, through

productivity gains from more refreshed workers.

Unsurprisingly, the unions are mostly onboard, while business groups say it's unnecessary and could lead to job losses. The Coalition argued it would create
45 "confusion and uncertainty" and reduce the ability for workplaces to have flexible working arrangements.

Similar laws have been brought in within existing enterprise bargaining agreements, as well as in France and other European countries – the European
50 Commission is evaluating their effectiveness.

Does it include me?

Maybe. The laws come into play for all "national system employees" from 26 August this year, and for small businesses from the same date in 2025. That means it
55 applies to most employees, as it rolls out through existing awards.

To be clear, the new laws do not prohibit bosses from getting in touch, or employees from contacting each other. They give employees the right to ignore that
60 contact without disciplinary action.

So while your boss may flick you an email at 11pm when you finished work at 5pm, you don't have to read it.

There is still flexibility in the system. Factors that need to be taken into account when employees and employers are negotiating how it will work include the reason for contact, how the contact is made, the level of disruption of the employee's life, the extent of any compensation and the nature of the employee's role
65 and personal circumstances.

That reference to "compensation" means some people might get extra pay for remaining available out of hours, so higher income earners might be exempt.

"Even so, it would be worth those employees – particularly those in managerial roles – adhering to workplace practices that are in line with the right to disconnect. Doing so will enable them to lead by example and model behaviours that are in line with that of their colleagues earning below the threshold,"
75 Golding says.
80

What if my workplace doesn't agree?

Golding says that, initially, the right will “open the gateway to conversations about reasonable and unreasonable out of hours contact”. Those conversations are already happening, she says, and the legislation should empower employees to take control of their working hours.

“Reasonable and unreasonable” is the key phrase here. Is the contact reasonable or unreasonable? Is the employee’s refusal to engage reasonable or unreasonable?

If unreasonable contact occurs, the employee first has to raise a complaint directly with their employer.

Any disputes can go to the Fair Work Commission, which can order mediation, conciliation, or arbitration. If that doesn’t work, the commission can issue stop orders.

If an employer contravenes a stop order, various civil penalties apply.

And there are other avenues employees can take through work health and safety and fair work laws. [...]

DOCUMENT 8 • VIDEO • CNBC, “Why Starbucks, Apple And Google Are Unionizing Now For The First Time”, August 5, 2022.

↳ link: https://youtu.be/D_-9uACGJeo (13 minutes)

DOCUMENT 9 Video Game Actors End Contract Dispute Over A.I.

Reggie Ugwu, *The New York Times*, July 10, 2025

After striking for nearly 11 months, actors approved a new contract with major video game studios on Wednesday night that addressed concerns about the use of artificial intelligence to create digital replicas.

The agreement with SAG-AFTRA requires the companies behind some of the world’s most popular games, including Call of Duty, Mortal Kombat and Apex Legends, to obtain the written consent of performers to create visual or vocal replicas. Studios must also pay performers for the use of replicas at a rate comparable to in-person work.

“I feel incredibly relieved,” said Jennifer Hale, a voice actor known for her work on Mass Effect, Overwatch and other games. “I feel more confident that the work I do will not be abused or misused.”

The deal, which was approved by more than 95 percent of voters, echoes a framework established during the union’s strike against film and television studios two summers ago.

“Members can go to work and feel confident that the work they’re doing today isn’t going to harm their career tomorrow,” Duncan Crabtree-Ireland, the national executive director and chief negotiator of SAG-AFTRA, said in an interview.

Video games have long relied on human actors to perform dialogue or model the appearance of digital characters. Actors were worried that powerful generative A.I. software could be used to replicate or repurpose their work indefinitely without their involvement.

In May, Fortnite unveiled an A.I.-powered Darth Vader who responds to players in the booming voice of James Earl Jones; before the actor died last year, he had agreed to let A.I. learn from his vocal performances.

In addition to the A.I. guardrails, the union’s new contract includes annual pay raises for members through 2027, as well as new safety measures, such as a requirement that a medic be present for hazardous action performances.

The actors ended their strike last month after a tentative deal had been reached. A future strike would automatically suspend their consent for the use of digital replicas to generate new material.

The bargaining group for video game studios included Activision, Electronic Arts, Warner Bros. Games and six other companies. Audrey Cooling, a spokeswoman for the group, said in a statement that it was pleased the deal delivered “historic wage increases” and “industry-leading A.I. protections.”

“We look forward to building on our industry’s decades-long partnership with the union and continuing to create groundbreaking entertainment experiences for billions of players worldwide,” the statement added.

The actors went on strike last July after a lengthy effort to renegotiate a previous agreement that had expired in November 2022. The pay raises and safety measures had been agreed to by that point, leaving artificial intelligence as the sole dispute.

PART 3 – Automation

DoorDash's Dot delivery bots might be coming to a bike lane near you

Chris Valazco, *The Washington Post*, 30 September 2025

SAN FRANCISCO — What's red, has two eyes and can carry six large pizzas in its gaping maw?

No, it's not some nightmare version of a ghost from Pac-Man. It's Dot — DoorDash's first built-from-scratch autonomous delivery robot — and it may wind up hauling food and groceries in a suburban bike lane near you.

Dot doesn't look anything like a cooler on wheels, though — it's more of a supersized baby stroller with a pair of cartoonish LED "eyes." It's about 4½ feet tall, weighs 350 pounds and can carry deliveries of up to 30 pounds in a modular cargo space that opens and closes like a giant mouth. (In case you were wondering, yes, it chirps and croons the way droids from Star Wars tend to.) Dot's design isn't just vaguely friendly. It's also eye-catching, which suits its very specific mission.

These robo-deliveries shouldn't cost any extra, either. Merchants and restaurants set their own prices for each item they sell, and DoorDash says delivery and service fees will be the same whether a human or a robot drops off your dim sum. (Tips you've prepaid will be refunded if a robot brings your supplies, naturally.)

This isn't the first time DoorDash has contemplated unusual ways of delivering orders — it's actively testing lightweight airborne deliveries in partnership with drone companies, and already leans on autonomous machines built by Coco Robotics to drop off dinners in cities such as Los Angeles and Chicago.

While other delivery robots are generally limited to slow speeds in cities and on college campuses, Dot was built for longer trips through busy suburbia, where it can haul orders down busy streets and bike lanes at speeds of up to 20 mph, in addition to gingerly rolling down driveways and sidewalks.

Stanley Tang, DoorDash co-founder and head of its robotics-heavy Labs division, called Dot's flexible approach to navigation a world's first, more akin to a Waymo vehicle than a traditional delivery bot.

"The core sensor, hardware, and software approach is similar to that of robotaxis, enabling the kind of reliable, door-to-door autonomous deliveries that customers expect and merchants rely on," he said.

For now, DoorDash's Dot can only be found roaming around in one place — the greater Phoenix area, where it has received regulatory approval — and the company declined to say where it planned to roll out its delivery robots next, though DoorDash CEO Tony Xu said at an event Monday that the company is in talks for regulatory approval in other cities. Tang hinted at the kinds of places where Dot could thrive.

"Think about the three-to-five-mile-dense suburbs in ... the Bay Area, like the East Bay, and Denver and Dallas," he said.

A more fleshed-out fleet of delivery robots might be a boon for local merchants, who will be able to get started with deliveries via Dot with no up-front costs. What remains to be seen, though, is how communities across the country will react to the growing presence of cheery red robots cruising down their streets.

After all, autonomous machines big and small have already proved to be easy targets for harassment, and in some cases, existing delivery robots have struggled to accurately react to emergency responders and bystanders alike.

DoorDash leaders also repeatedly highlighted the way Dot robots could use bike lanes to traverse suburban roads, but at a little under three feet wide, these machines could stymie cyclists trying to use those same limited patches of asphalt.

Another lingering question: How frequently will DoorDash assign orders to its fleet of delivery robots, rather than human drivers?

Because of Dot's limited operating scope right now, it's difficult to say. Tang, the DoorDash co-founder, said the company's vision is a "hybrid" of human and autonomous delivery workers, and claimed that its autonomous delivery tools can match each order to the best delivery method — robotic or otherwise — based on "speed, cost, location and experience."

It's possible that, over time, robots may come to take on more and more of these delivery jobs. "I could imagine that, in 10 years from now, there will be very few actual drivers working for Uber or Lyft or DoorDash because [they'll]

be automated,” said Michael Reich, professor of economics at the University of California at Berkeley.

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For now, though, Dot’s limitations — it’s not fast enough to drive on freeways and not nimble enough to tackle stairs or elevators — means the human touch isn’t going anywhere.

DOCUMENT 11 • VIDEO • CNBC, “Meet The New Amazon Robot That Can Feel What It Touches”, May 7, 2025.

↳ link: <https://youtu.be/2X4CU3jmw-g> (12 minutes)

DOCUMENT 12 • AUDIO • NPR, “When AI is your job interviewer”, November 3, 2025.

↳ link: <https://www.npr.org/2025/11/03/nx-s1-5593168/when-ai-is-your-job-interviewer> (9 minutes)

DOCUMENT 13 • VIDEO • NBC, “How ‘upskilling’ is changing the workforce and salaries”, April 11, 2024.

↳ link: <https://youtu.be/oEDuDDfWeGE> (4 minutes: from 0:00 to 3:27)

DOCUMENT 14

Here’s what will really affect jobs in the age of AI

Fabien Curto Millet and Diane Coyle, *The Washington Post*, 19 October 2025

Is artificial intelligence going to destroy jobs, as some recent research warns?

Some labor market disruption is a real possibility. But the true challenge for governments and businesses is ensuring that workers have the skills and adaptability needed to use the technology. Only then will AI drive productivity and raise living standards.

5

In one important way, we can take comfort from history. The arc of technological change through the decades is one of constant adaptation and growth. The labor market has experienced many transformations, including the dramatic change in the share of employment in agriculture in the United States (from 60 percent in 1850 to less than 5 percent by 1970) and the incorporation of women into the workforce in the second half of the 20th century. There have been multiple waves of automation since the dawn of the Industrial Revolution. Yet the share of Americans who are employed has risen.

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Technology typically affects tasks, not entire jobs. A job is, essentially, a bundle of tasks, and eliminating an entire job requires the automation of a significant portion of its underlying duties. In fact, this rarely happens. The 1950 Census listed 271 occupations, but only one — elevator operator — has since disappeared as a result of automation. We think the lessons from history are likely to apply to AI.

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That seems to be the case so far. In 2016, it was predicted that AI would replace radiologists within five years. Yet demand for radiologists has surged, because their job is not just to study images but also to analyze medical records, advise doctors, talk to patients and interpret findings. Instead of going extinct, radiologists are thriving by incorporating AI into their workflow.

20

Technology routinely creates more jobs than it eliminates. The diffusion of computers in the United States since 1970 has led to a loss of 3.5 million jobs in such fields as typewriter manufacturing but has created more than 19 million jobs in areas ranging from computer manufacturing to e-commerce. And, according to one prominent study, the technology-driven creation of new occupations accounted for 85 percent of employment growth over a period of 78 years.

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Building the infrastructure for new technologies such as AI is itself a source of job creation. For example, management consulting firm McKinsey estimates that the United States will need 130,000 additional electricians in the coming years, largely because of the build-out of data centers and manufacturing facilities. This demand surge will also affect a range of other occupations, from welders to HVAC engineers. And we can only begin to imagine the other jobs that will flow from AI’s integration into our economy, from those focused on building autonomous vehicles to positions specializing in robotics or the future of gaming.

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However, technology’s impacts are distributed unevenly, so certain groups are likely to bear more of the transition costs. For example, when AT&T introduced automated switching in the 1920s, it was a major shock for telephone

operators. Though overall employment was not reduced, some operators saw their wages go down or exited the labor force.

This is where the key challenge lies now — and here the lessons of history are less encouraging. In many prior waves of technological disruption, such as the automation that took place across manufacturing in the 1980s and '90s, support for workers needing to change how they worked or to find other occupations was inadequate. Many who were laid off were unable to find new jobs, and their communities still bear the scars. Policymakers should be thinking now about how to manage the transition better this time.

The key is training workers to make the most of AI. Since most of our 2030 workforce is already employed, we should meet people where they are and provide opportunities to acquire new skills mid-career. There is economic evidence that appropriately designed reskilling support can be highly effective.

The private sector has a major role to play in this area. Employer-led retraining efforts — including apprenticeships and on-the-job training — have scored successes in the past, as they tend to involve training in transferrable skills most valued by employers and can reduce employment barriers for nontraditional workers in high-wage sectors. Workers' ability to demonstrate and document the acquisition of AI skills will also be important. Initiatives such as the Career Certificates offered by Google's training program, Grow With Google, aim to help them do this.

AI represents an extraordinary economic opportunity, and most signs point to labor markets continuing to thrive, especially in the face of the demographic reality that advanced economies are running out of workers rather than running out of work.

Ensuring that this promise of economic advancement is shared by all requires deliberate action, not wishful thinking or defeatism. The future is not a forecasting exercise — it's a design challenge.

DOCUMENT 15

AI Is Eliminating Jobs for Younger Workers

Will Knight, *Wired*, 27 August 2025

Economists at Stanford University have found the strongest evidence yet that artificial intelligence is starting to eliminate certain jobs. But the story isn't that simple: While younger workers are being replaced by AI in some industries, more experienced workers are seeing new opportunities emerge.

Erik Brynjolfsson, a professor at Stanford University, Ruyu Chen, a research scientist, and Bharat Chandar, a postgraduate student, examined data from ADP, the largest payroll provider in the US, from late 2022, when ChatGPT debuted, to mid-2025.

The researchers discovered several strong signals in the data—most notably that the adoption of generative AI coincided with a decrease in job opportunities for younger workers in sectors previously identified as particularly vulnerable to AI-powered automation (think customer service and software development). In these industries, they found a 16 percent decline in employment for workers aged 22 to 25.

The new study reveals a nuanced picture of AI's impact on labor. While advances in artificial intelligence have often been accompanied by dire predictions about jobs being eliminated—there hasn't been much data to back it up. Relative unemployment for young graduates, for instance, began dropping around 2009, well before the current AI wave. And areas that might seem vulnerable to AI, such as translation, have actually seen an increase in jobs in recent years.

"It's always hard to know [what's happening] if you're only looking at a particular company or hearing anecdotes," Brynjolfsson says. "So we wanted to look at it much more systematically."

By combing through payroll data, the Stanford team found that AI's impact has more to do with a worker's experience and expertise than the type of work they do. More experienced employees in industries where generative AI is being adopted were insulated from job displacement, with opportunities either remaining flat or slightly growing.

The finding backs up what some software developers previously told me about AI's impact on their industry—namely that rote, repetitive work, like writing code to connect to an API, has become easier to automate. The Stanford study also indicates that AI is eliminating jobs but not lowering wages, at least so far.

The researchers considered potentially confounding factors including the Covid pandemic, the rise of remote work, and recent tech sector layoffs. They found that AI has an impact even when accounting for these factors.

Brynjolfsson says the study offers a lesson on how to maximize the benefits of AI across the economy. He has long suggested that the government could change the tax system so that it does not reward companies that replace labor with automation. He also suggests AI companies develop systems that prioritize human-machine collaboration.

Brynjolfsson and another Stanford scientist, Andrew Haupt, argued in a paper in June that AI companies should develop new “centaur” AI benchmarks that measure human-AI collaboration, to incentivize more focus on augmentation rather than automation. “I think there's still a lot of tasks where humans and machines can outperform [AI on its own],” Brynjolfsson says.

Some experts believe that more collaboration between humans and AI could be a feature of the future labor market. Matt Beane, an associate professor at UC Santa Barbara who studies AI-driven automation, says he expects the AI boom to create demand for augmentable work—as managing the output of AI becomes increasingly important. “We'll automate as much as we can,” Beane says. “But that doesn't mean there won't be a growing mountain of augmentable work left for humans.”

AI is advancing quickly though, and Brynjolfsson warns that the impact on younger workers could spread to those with more experience. “What we need to do is create a dashboard early-warning system to help us track this in real time,” he says. “This is a very consequential technology.”

PART 4 – The Gender Pay Gap

DOCUMENT 15 • VIDEO • NBC, “Inside the ever-present gender pay gap”, March 25, 2025.

↳ link: <https://youtu.be/UFJHZ2IebdU> (4 minutes)

DOCUMENT 16

UK mothers earn £302 a week less than fathers, analysis shows

Amelia Hill, *The Guardian*, 25 August 2025

Women with children earn £302 less every week than men with children: one-third less per week and almost 20% less per hour, according to analysis based on ONS data. This means that Mums' Equal Pay Day falls on 1 September this year, almost three months earlier than Equal Pay Day for all women. From this date, mothers are working for free for the rest of the year compared with fathers.

“The reason the gender pay gap worsens so significantly after having children is because starting a family has a disproportionately negative impact on women's earnings,” said Joeli Brearley, the founder of Growth Spurt, an online back-to-work scheme for parents.

The analysis has been acknowledged as accurate by the Office for National Statistics. But the picture is really much worse, said Brearley, because it does not account for the many parents who become economically inactive owing to their caring responsibilities.

“Yet we know that women are much more likely to have been forced to leave their jobs due to childcare costs, maternity discrimination and a lack of suitable flexible working,” she said.

Pregnancy and maternity discrimination remain widespread: every year, about 74,000 women are forced to leave

15 their jobs simply for getting pregnant or taking maternity leave, according to earlier analysis by Brearley. “The majority of mothers say they’ve faced some form of discrimination or disadvantage as a result of taking maternity leave, from missed promotions to being sidelined at work,” she said.

The cost and availability of childcare are still major barriers to women continuing work or taking up promotions, while the flexible and part-time roles many mothers need to balance work and care are too often low-paid and offer limited opportunities for progression.

20 Since women are more likely to request flexible working, Brearley said, they disproportionately bear the career penalty attached to these roles.

“And finally, our outdated parental leave system reinforces gendered expectations: mothers are encouraged, and often expected, to take extended time off, while fathers return to work quickly. This not only entrenches the idea that caregiving is ‘women’s work’, but also means men’s careers continue to progress while women’s stall,” she said.

25 Penny East, the chief executive of the Fawcett Society, which calculates the annual Equal Pay Day, welcomed the analysis.

“It’s significant that Mums’ Equal Pay Day falls so much earlier than Equal Pay Day,” she said. “Motherhood can create a financial cliff edge for many women. It’s also worth remembering that for many women the motherhood penalty and the gender pay gap conspire to create a pension pay gap, which pushes many women into pension poverty later in life,” she added.

30 “There is no good reason for any pay gap to exist and government and employers must do more to level the playing field for all women at every stage of our lives.”

Dr Mary-Ann Stephenson, the director of the Women’s Budget Group, said: “The research highlights how the earnings gap really opens up when women become mothers.

35 “We have a leave system which reinforces the gendered division of unpaid care, meaning that even couples who intend to share care more equally than their parents find that women are still the default parent.

“It’s really important that the government’s review of parental leave recognises how the current system is bad for everyone, and makes the reforms needed to allow parents to share both paid and unpaid work more fairly,” she said.
