

The Data Behind the **TECH DISRUPTION**

Artificial intelligence, robotics, automation—these technologies, related technologies, and technologies we haven't even heard of yet are affecting the future world of work. But what do most American workers think? Here's a look at the data behind the disruption.



By Cynthia Poole

Not a media day goes by without an ample dose of technology-focused news coverage—everything from smart phones to smarter robots—and how all of it is changing the way America works.

More recently, there has been increasing coverage of AI, robotics, and automation—especially as it relates to the U.S. workforce, production, and overall economy. Economists, scientists, technologists, and even so-called futurists continue to predict lost jobs as increasingly intelligent robots and other technologies replace the need for human workers.

To get a better look at the thoughts and sentiments among Americans on this topic, ASA reached out to them directly. The latest ASA Workforce Monitor® survey, conducted by Harris Poll among more than 2,000 U.S. adults, delved into several technology-related issues and

As Seen In

May · June · 2017

**STAFFING
SUCCESS**



American Staffing Association

© 2017 by the American Staffing Association



the findings reveal interesting perspectives for staffing companies. The results also provide valuable intelligence for forward-thinking professionals who want to take advantage of growth opportunities and steer clear of technology-related pitfalls.

Tech Not Top of Mind

While nearly nine out of 10 U.S. adults are aware of automation in the workplace, more than half admit to not thinking about the effects, according to the survey findings. However, 58% of the younger workers surveyed, adults age 18-34, are significantly more likely to consider robots and AI in the context of the workplace. And overall, employed individuals (53%) are more likely than unemployed individuals (43%) to do the same. >>>

Exclusive Industry Research & Data

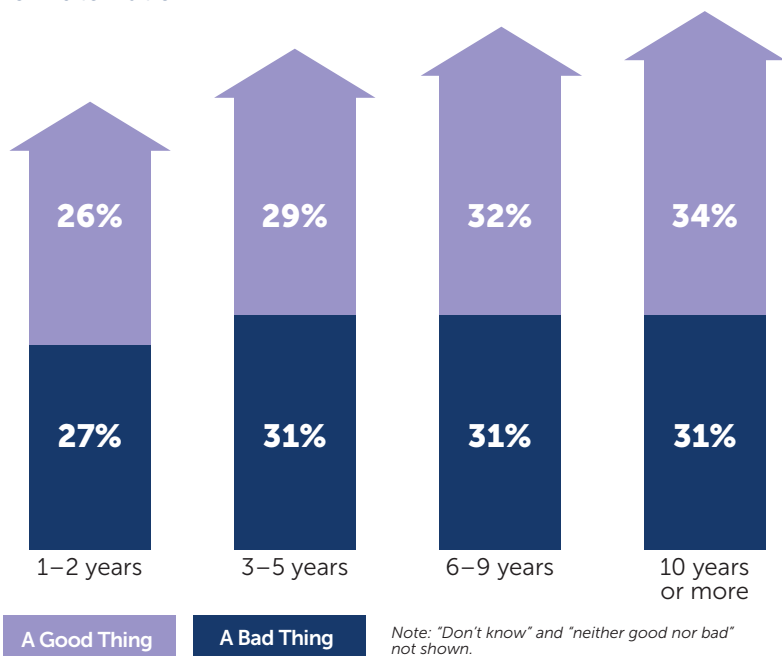


This issue's research-focused article complements the cover story on the topic of artificial intelligence, robotics, and related technologies—which some experts say are well on their way toward disrupting the staffing and recruiting industry. As the industry's research and data leader, the American Staffing Association reports on timely industry research in every issue of *Staffing Success*. Tell ASA what you think of this article on Twitter—follow @StaffingTweets and use the hashtag #ASAresearch.

Half of Americans Don't Think About Automation in the Workplace



Americans Somewhat More Positive About the Future of Automation



A Majority Don't Think About Automation

In some cases, technology such as robots and AI already is at work, automatically performing tasks humans would normally do. A majority (54%) say this type of automation has had no effect on most American jobs. Of that majority, those 45 and older are most likely to agree that there has been no impact. A third of respondents (34%) say automation and related technology has had a positive effect on the workforce, with those ages 18-44 more likely to agree. Still, about a quarter of Americans (27%) know someone who has been affected by automation, and roughly half of those say that the effect was negative.

Opinions Split on Good vs. Bad Effects

Views differ on automation in the workplace, with roughly equal percentages of U.S. adults saying that robots and artificial intelligence will either be a good or a bad thing for the future world of work.

Indeed, about a third of Americans (34%) say automation (e.g., robots, AI) will be a positive development for the workforce in the next 10 years or more, compared with 31% who assert the opposite—an indication that the future of technology in the workplace may be viewed more positively.

While nine in 10 Americans feel that there are some tasks that robots and AI will never be able to take over from humans, eight in 10 share a belief that the increased use of automation will revolutionize the way we work—and that this transformation is inevitable.

A substantial majority of adults think that automation will fundamentally change the number (79%) and types of jobs (68%) available in the U.S. >>>

87% agree:

Due to automation, **additional training** will be needed to **get a job in the future.**



AI Technologies:

Revolutionary? Inevitable? Or Job Killer?

When asked about workplace technologies—including automation, artificial intelligence, and robotics—nine in 10 surveyed individuals said such technologies will never be able to replace human workers.

Agree

90% There are some tasks that technology will never be able to take over from humans

83% Increased use of technology will revolutionize the way we do work

82% The use of automation and related technologies in the workplace is inevitable

79% Increased use of technology will fundamentally change the number of jobs available in the U.S.

68% Increased use of technology will fundamentally change the types of jobs available in the U.S.

Of Note for Staffing:

Consideration for Focused Training

Among the findings, perhaps of particular interest to staffing companies: A strong majority of individuals surveyed agree with the following statements: gence, and robotics—nine in 10 surveyed individuals said such technologies will never be able to replace human workers.

87% Due to automation, additional training will be needed to get a job in the future

85% Automation will increase the demand for jobs in technical fields such as robotics, engineering, and process design

78% Automation affects traditional blue-collar jobs (e.g., factory workers, truck drivers) more than it does white-collar jobs (e.g., office professionals)

79% agree:

Increased use of technology will fundamentally change the **number of jobs available in the U.S.**



Methodology: How the Survey Was Conducted

The ASA Workforce Monitor survey series focuses on current U.S. workforce trends and issues. Harris Poll conducted the survey online within the U.S. on behalf of ASA, March 7–9, 2017, among 2,133 U.S. adults age 18 and older. Results were weighted on age, education, race/ethnicity, household income, and geographic region where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the U.S. population.

To learn more about the ASA Workforce Monitor and to download high-resolution infographics on survey results, visit americanstaffing.net/workforcemonitor.

The Humans Are Skeptical

There is a hint of skepticism surrounding the use of robots and AI in the workplace, with seven in 10 Americans saying that the increased use of automation will lead to higher unemployment. Although, nearly three in four (73%) disagree that their work can be easily replaced by robots or AI-related technology, and eight in ten (85%) agree that the human factor outweighs any benefits of automating jobs.

According to the survey findings, Americans are well aware of how technology could affect the workplace and jobs in the future. Therefore, forward-thinking staffing companies may choose to consider honing their recruiting strategies to get ahead of technological advances, as well as explore training opportunities that could help prepare candidates to be of greater value to clients that are using the technologies discussed here.

A recent ASA Workforce Monitor survey determined that job seekers are eager to receive training that will help them become employed. Go to americanstaffing.net/workforcemonitor for details. ■

Cynthia Poole is the director of research for ASA. Send feedback on this article to success@americanstaffing.net. Engage with ASA on social media—go to americanstaffing.net/social. To learn more about the ASA Workforce Monitor and to download infographics, visit americanstaffing.net/workforcemonitor.