Swinburne University of Technology

School of Science, Computing and Engineering Technologies

COS30019 - Intro to AI

Assignment 1: Research into AI Ethics & Responsible AI

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Semester 1, 2025

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1 Executive Overview

1.1 Overview

This research examines the question: **"What should we do if jobs are in short supply due to AI-driven automation?"** By investigating the ethical, economic, and social implications of the rapid adoption of AI, the study provides a comprehensive analysis of how modern automation is reshaping the society. Advancements in AI and automation promise significant increases in productivity and economic growth. However, they also raise concerns about mass job lay off, inequality, and ethical challenges surrounding fairness and human dignity. The research sets out: **(1)** to evaluate the ethical dilemmas posed by AI - especially the potential for bias, reduce humanity, and the erosion of society's identity,**(2)** to assess economic policy responses to potential job shortages, including options such as Universal Basic Income, re-skilling programs, and innovative labor market reforms. **(3)** to analyse stakeholder perspectives from governments, corporations, and workers to understand the impacts of automation.

1.2 Key Findings and Conclusion:

- **Ethical Implications:** AI-driven automation may have a negative impact workers with lower skill levels, potentially deepening economic inequality. Moreover, the risk of bias in areas like hiring and job evaluation could further belittle already vulnerable groups. Ethical considerations demand that AI systems are designed in a way that protects human rights.

- **Economic Impact:** Although historical trends suggest that technological change can eventually create new jobs, the sheer speed and scope of AI advancements could lead to a period of job scarcity. Policy proposals such as Universal Basic Income (UBI), enhanced retraining and up-skilling schemes, and adjustments to work structures (like reduced work weeks) are explored as potential solutions.

- **Stakeholder, Workers, Government Perspectives:** Governments are tasked with safeguarding public welfare through regulation and intervention, while corporations must balance efficiency gains with social responsibility. Workers and labor unions emphasise the need for inclusive policies that secure adequate social safety nets and ensure that the benefits of au-

tomation are shared.

- **Real-World Examples:** The research highlights case studies from industries such as manufacturing, transportation, and retail, where automation has already altered employment landscapes. These examples illustrate both the opportunities for increased productivity and the potential risks of displacement and reduced job quality.

To navigate the challenges posed by AI-driven automation, the study recommends:

- **Adaptive Regulation:** Establish flexible, forward-looking regulatory frameworks that enforce ethical AI deployment and safeguard against discrimination.
- **Invest in Education:** Scale up re-skilling and lifelong learning programs to prepare the workforce for emerging job opportunities in AI-augmented industries.
- **Strengthen Social Safety Nets:** Enhance unemployment support, explore pilot programs for Universal Basic Income, and consider innovative labor policies for the transition.
- **Foster Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration:** Create platforms for dialogue between government, industry, and labor groups to ensure that technological advancements are aligned with what the society needs.

2 Introduction

2.1 First words:

Artificial intelligence (AI) and automation technologies have transformed the nature of work in the 21st century. Machines and algorithms powered by AI are now capable of performing tasks that once required human labor – from manufacturing and logistics to customer service, data analysis, and even creative tasks. History has shown that technological revolutions (such as the Industrial Revolution) can disrupt labor markets, eliminating some occupations while creating new ones. However, the scale and speed of modern AI advancements have led to concerns that automation could be outpacing the creation of new jobs, leading to a scenario where jobs are in short supply for human workers Paolillo et al. (2022). Policymakers, business leaders, and communities are now working at

a problem: **What should we do if AI-driven automation leads to widespread job shortages?** This research study tries to answer that question by examining the ethical, economic, and social implications of AI-driven job automation.

The research question can be stated as follows: **"What should society do if AI and automation significantly reduce the availability of jobs for human workers?"** The objectives of the study are:

1. Assess the ethical concerns raised by AI replacing human labor (such as fairness and equity)
2. Evaluate potential economic policy responses to job shortages (including proposals like Universal Basic Income and re-training programs)
3. Analyze the broader social implications combined with multiple perspectives surrounding AI and employment.

By addressing these areas, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and to propose informed recommendations for policymakers and stakeholders.

2.2 Methodology

To answer the research question, I tried to look for literature reviews different sources. Research was centered on peer-reviewed journal articles, authoritative policy papers, and reputable reports from organizations studying AI's impact on society. Foundational documents – such as government white papers on AI ethics and regulation, academic studies on automation and employment trends, and economic analyses. For example, the Australian Government's 2024 proposals on **"Safe and Responsible AI in Australia"** provided insight into regulatory perspectives, while scholarly works (e.g., **Frey & Osborne's seminal study** on job automation risk) offered data on potential employment impacts (Commonwealth of Australia Department of Industry, Science and Resources, 2024; Frey & Osborne, 2013).

Sources were selected through searches different sources, with the help of Consensus AI in the search and NotebookLM in analysing them, focusing on materials from roughly the past years to ensure relevance to today's rapidly evolving AI situation. Contrasting viewpoints were included

– for instance, optimistic vs. pessimistic forecasts of AI's effect on jobs – to provide a balanced analysis. By taking information from ethics research, economic data, and real-world case studies, I tried to build an overview picture of AI-driven automation and its implications. In the following sections, we will first review the key literature then proceed to an analysis of major themes (ethical issues, economic policies, stakeholder perspectives) with real-world examples, and finally present conclusions and recommendations according to the findings.

3 Findings

3.1 Literature Review and Methodology

3.1.1 Foundational Findings on AI, Automation, and Employment:

A growing body of literature has examined how AI and automation are reshaping the workforce. One influential early study by Frey and Osborne (2013) estimated that about **47% of total U.S. employment** is at risk of automation in the coming decades (Frey & Osborne, 2013). This work, which analyzed the computerisation potential of over 700 occupations, found that jobs on the lower wages side and educational requirements were especially vulnerable (Frey & Osborne, 2013).

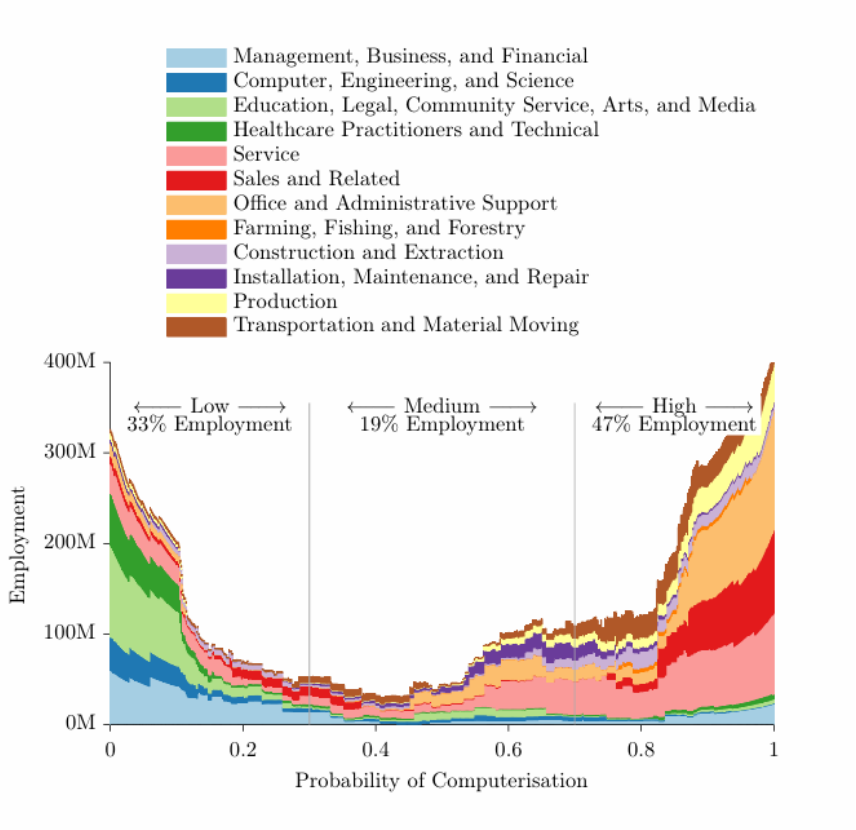

Figure 1: The distribution of BLS 2010 occupational employment over the probability of computerisation. Source:(Frey & Osborne, 2013)

Such figures sparked widespread debate about **"technological unemployment"** a term originally coined by John Maynard Keynes to describe job loss due to innovation. An **OECD study by Arntz, Gregory and Zierahn (2016)** argued that when accounting for the specific task composition of jobs (rather than entire occupations), only about **9% of jobs on average in OECD countries** are highly automatable (Arntz, 2016). This view suggests that many roles will be partially automated rather than completely eliminated, with humans still needed for most tasks. Indeed, while machines displace certain jobs, they often create new ones and/or augment existing roles. For instance, the ATMs in banking did not eliminate bank teller positions; instead, banks adjusted their operations and teller employment initially remained stable, though it began declining years later as online banking grew(American Enterprise Institute, n.d.). The literature reveals some perspectives: from warnings of mass unemployment to optimism that economies will adapt over time.

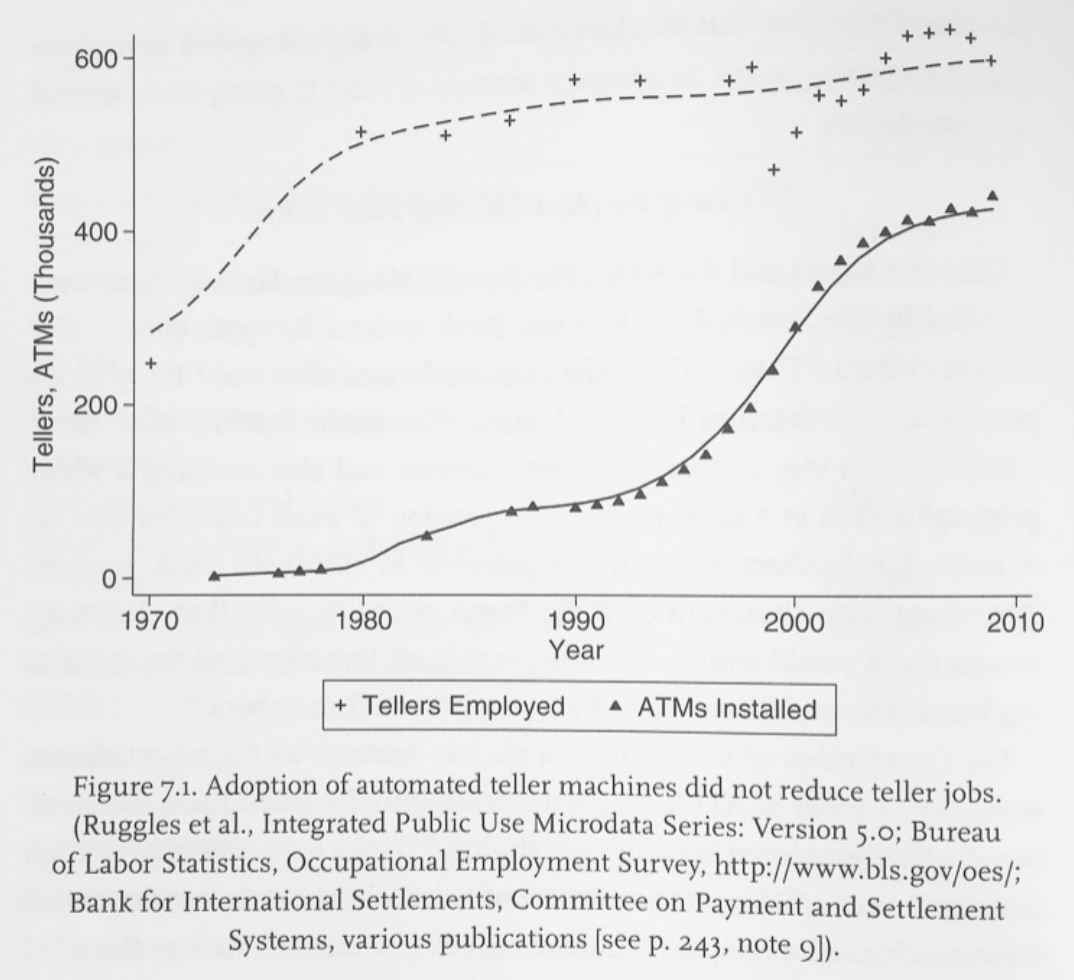

Figure 7.1. Adoption of automated teller machines did not reduce teller jobs. (Ruggles et al., Integrated Public Use Microdata Series: Version 5.0; Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment Survey, http://www.bls.gov/oes/; Bank for International Settlements, Committee on Payment and Settlement Systems, various publications [see p. 243, note 9]).

Figure 2: Adoption of automated teller machines did not reduce teller jobs. Source: (American Enterprise Institute, n.d.)

3.1.2 AI Ethics and Social Impact:

Scholars have debated about the ethical implications of AI in the workplace as issues of fairness, bias, and equality surface. AI systems used in employment (such as hiring algorithms or workplace monitoring tools) can discriminate or treat workers unfairly if not carefully managed (Commonwealth of Australia Department of Industry, Science and Resources, 2024). A well-known example is an AI-powered recruiting tool developed by Amazon that was found to be biased against female applicants, leading the company to scrap the project (Commonwealth of Australia Department of Industry, Science and Resources, 2024). Additionally, many experts voice concern that AI-driven automation could concentrate power and wealth in the hands of a few tech companies and owners of capital, worsening income inequality (Bird et al., 2020). If left unchecked, the benefits of AI (e.g.

higher productivity) might present itself mostly to corporations, while leaving workers struggle – a scenario raising questions of justice and the social contract. Another ethical problem is the potential loss of meaning and purpose that work provides in people's lives. Philosophers argue that beyond income, having gainful employment is tied to one's sense of contribution to society and self-worth; a future with fewer opportunities to work could challenge our society's notions of dignity and identity (Burton et al., 2017; Bird et al., 2020).

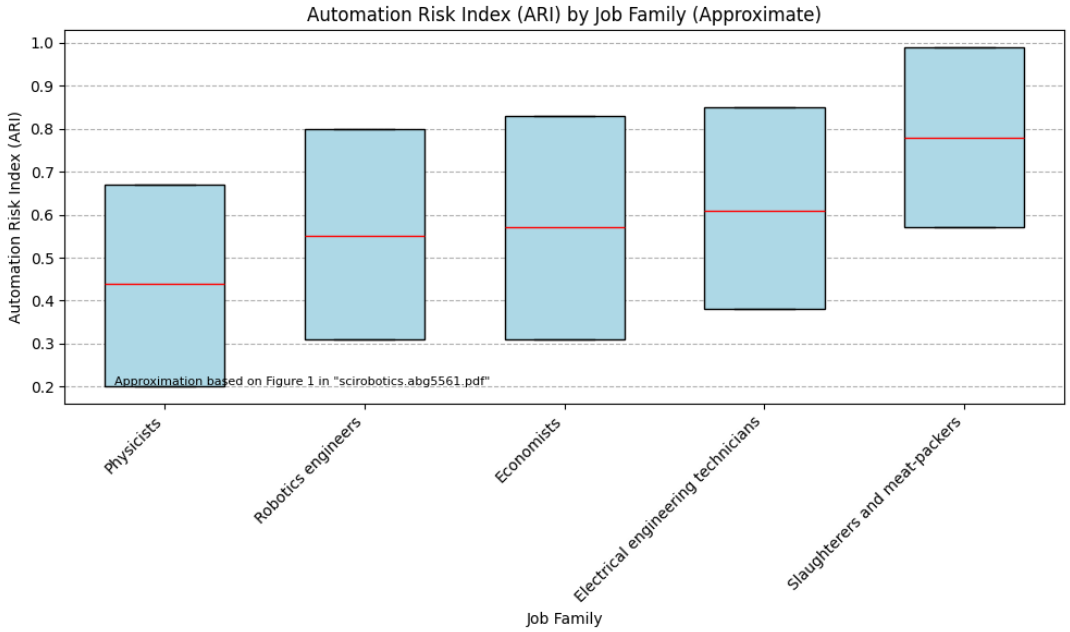

Figure 3: The ARI as a measure of automation risk, ranging from low to high created by me from: source: (Paolillo et al., 2022)

3.1.3 Policy Papers and Government and others Perspectives:

Governments around the world have begun studying the impacts of AI on employment and formulating responses. For instance, the Australian Government's 2024 "Safe and Resonsible AI" proposals paper argues that existing regulation are **"not fit for purpose"** to address AI's risks, and advocates for **mandatory guardrails** in *high-risk* AI application (Commonwealth of Australia Department of Industry, Science and Resources, 2024). Employment is identified as a high-risk domain and the paper suggest that AI systems that are used for decisions-making in recruitment, promotion or termination/layoff should be subject to fairness and transparency requirements (Commonwealth of Australia Department of Industry, Science and Resources, 2024). Similarly, in the USA - the White House released a **Blueprint for an AI Bill of Rights in 2022** which emphasises the right of

workers to be protected from abuse or discriminations from AI systems in hiring (Review, 2024). Additionally, US policy makers have also emphasises preparations in the workforce: **"investing in training and job transistion services so that those employees most disrupted by AI can transistion effectively"** (Review, 2024). This calls for discussions in many parts of the world about investing in education, re-skilling programs to help workers adapt to technological change. For example, Hy Nguyen - an AI PHD student from Deakin University has expressed his points in an article in Vietnam ***"We should prioritize human skills, integrate AI effectively, upskill through AI courses, and build a strong digital presence to stay competitive in the workforce."*** (translated from Vietnamese) (Dantri, 2025).

3.2 Analysis and Discussion

3.2.1 Ethical and Social Implications

If AI technologies lead to significant job losses, then who bears the consequences of this disruption? Studies consistently suggest that job automation affect lower-income and less-skilled workers are generally at higher risk of displacement since many of their tasks can be automated (Frey & Osborne, 2013; Bird et al., 2020). This raises ethical questions about **economic inequality**. Brynjolfsson and McAfee (2014) cautioned that **"there's never been a worse time to be a worker with only 'ordinary' skills... because computers, robots, and other digital technologies are acquiring these skills at an extraordinary rate."** Such inequality in workforce could potentially offend the principles of justice in our society (Bird et al., 2020).

Another is the ethical issue of **bias and discrimination**. As companies turn to AI for hiring, promoting and firing - there exist a risk that these systems and amplify existing biases (Commonwealth of Australia Department of Industry, Science and Resources, 2024). For example, an AI system trained on historical employment data might favor certain demographics for jobs and screen out others. The case of Amazon's AI recruiting tools is often cited as a cautionary tale (Commonwealth of Australia Department of Industry, Science and Resources, 2024). When jobs are scarce, **algorithmic bias** could be devastating - denying qualified individuals and concentrating unemployment among certain groups. Beyond that, **human dignity and social well-being** are also key ethical and social considerations. For many work is not merely a source of income but also something that gives them purpose and a sense of contribution to society. Social isolation, depression, and erosion

of self-worth could rise if large segments of the population feel "useless" or left out of the production activity.

In summary, the ethical and social implications of AI-driven job shortages revolve around fairness, prevention of bias and discrimination, safeguarding human dignity, and maintaining social cohesion. These concerns place an emphasis that technological decisions cannot be left solely to market forces or technical optimisation; they must be guided by ethical principles and a vision of the kind of society we want to live in. The next part of our analysis will explore what economic policies and strategies are being considered to address these challenges and ensure that AI's benefits are widely shared.

3.2.2 Economic Policy Responses to AI-Driven Job Shortages

What economic policy tools can we deploy to potentially ensure livelihood and social stability when AI-driven automation cause many people to struggle to find employment? Some propose **Universal Basic Income (UBI), re-skilling and education programs**, adjustments like reduced work week or even ideas like **"robot taxes"**.

Universal Basic Income (UBI): Where the government provides every citizen with regular cash payments sufficient to meet basic needs. The appeal comes from the fact that this will decouple income from employment. If robots and AI are doing much of the work, humans would still have money and freedom to pursure other activities (Cabrales, Hernández, & Sánchez, 2020). However, UBI is not without controversy, many economists prefer to keep people **engaged in the labor market** rather than compensating them for job loss (Review, 2024). Economist Diane Coyle dismisses it as **"a chimera advocated by Silicon Valley individualists who don't want to take responsibility for the social consequences of their innovations"** (Review, 2024). Her argument emphasised that UBI might be used by companies to displace workers without guilt ("The Government will pay them") and with concerns like the cost of providing basic income could be enormous and might require heavy taxations and reallocation of budgets. Thus, many advocate first for policies that keep people productively employed or quickly re-employed in other parts.

Re-skilling, Up-skilling and Education: This is a universally supported response to AI's impact. As automation eliminate certain jobs, new ones emerge (data science, AI maintenance, software development). The problem is to ensure workers can transition from declining occupations to growing ones. A 2022 White House report emphasised on **"investing in training and job**

transition services" for workers disrupted by AI (Review, 2024). For example, programs like WorkAdvance and Year Up in the United States, which prepare workers for careers in IT, healthcare and other sectors, have been found to boost earnings of participants by 14–38% in the years following training (Review, 2024). However, this also faces hurdles, one major issue is scale and speed - AI is advancing blazingly fast, and retraining millions of workers in new skills, including older workers and those in areas that are not easily accessible for new industries could be difficult. There is also a question of what to train people for, given the rapid advancement and uncertainty of AI jobs.

In summary, no single solution exists. UBI offers a safety net but has feasibility issues, while reskilling and education, though popular, demand substantial investment and industry collaboration. Ultimately, a mix of policies—governmental pushes for human-centric AI and pulls through training and incentives—is likely needed. As noted by experts, governments may need to both "push" and "pull" – push companies to adopt AI in a human-centric way.

3.2.3 Real-World Examples of AI Impact on Employment

Manufacturing and "Lights-Out" Factories: AI is further enhancing what robots can do (with better vision systems, autonomous decision-making on the assembly line, etc.). An example is Foxconn, a company known for assembling iPhones and other electronics, reportedly replacing 60,000 workers with robots (Quartz, 2016). The company claimed that while those assembly roles were eliminated, the automation allowed them to redirect human workers to higher-value tasks like quality control and equipment maintenance (Quartz, 2016). Whether this was simply a way to soften the news of layoffs is debated – certainly, many of those workers had to find new employment outside Foxconn.

Transportation – Autonomous Vehicles: Studies have estimated that a rapid adoption of autonomous vehicles could put millions of driving jobs at risk. One analysis forecast more than 300,000 driver jobs per year could be lost when self-driving technology matures to widespread use (Logistics, 2025). While no large-scale layoffs of truckers have happened yet due to AI, labor unions and driver groups are actively monitoring this space.

E-commerce and warehousing: Amazon's warehouses employ hundreds of thousands of workers, but also over 300,000 robots. Automated storage and retrieval systems ferry goods across the warehouse, while algorithms optimize packing routes. Amazon is also experimenting with Just

Figure 4: Foxconn factory automation. Source: (Quartz, 2016)

Walk Out technology in Amazon Go stores – AI and sensor fusion track what customers take off shelves and charge them automatically. The WEF's Future of Jobs Report 2023 indeed lists roles like cashiers, ticket clerks, and data entry clerks among the fastest declining due to automation (Forum, 2023).

Figure: Data from the World Economic Forum's Future of Jobs Report 2023 shows that jobs such as AI and Machine Learning Specialists, Data Analysts, and Robotics Engineers are among the top growing roles, while many clerical and administrative jobs (e.g. bank tellers, postal clerks, cashiers, data entry clerks) are the fastest declining (Forum, 2023). This highlights the trend that AI is driving demand for highly skilled tech workers even as it automates away routine office and service tasks.

Retail and Service Industries: AI automation is also visible in everyday consumer settings. In supermarkets and fast food restaurants today we usually find self-checkout kiosks or ordering tablets. These technologies reduce the need for cashiers and waiters. Large retail chains and restaurant say this is a response in part to labour shortages and rising wages.

In manufacturing and retail, automation often leads to job cuts, while creative and professional fields experience a subtler reshaping of roles with potential future risks. Workers may need to switch industries or upgrade their skills, and creative professionals are setting boundaries on AI use. This means that a mix of strategies like regulation, social safety nets, and targeted re-skilling

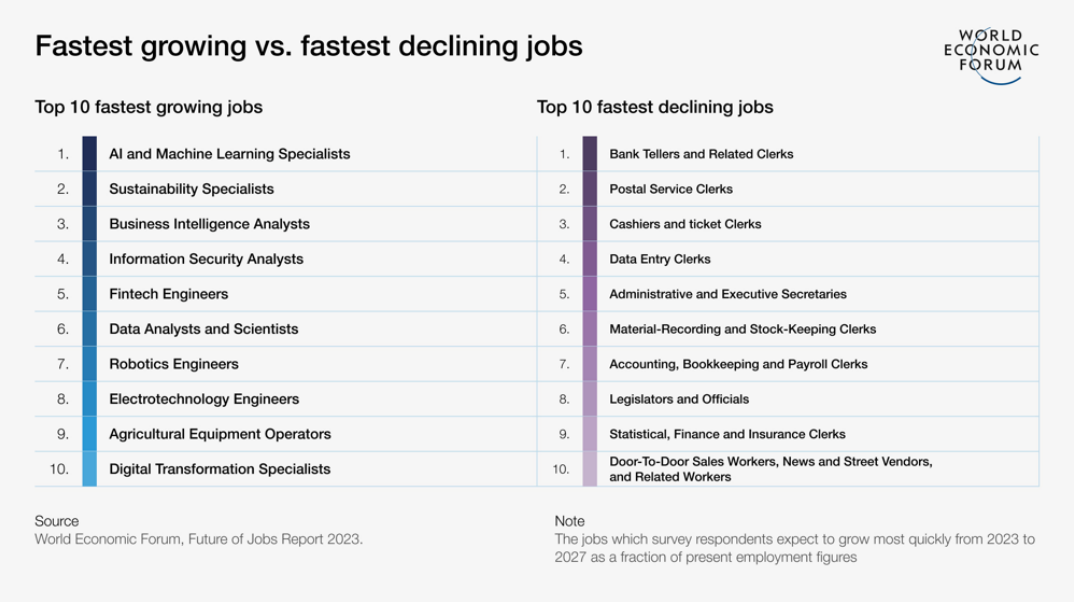

Figure 5: Fastest growing vs. fastest declining jobs (2023–2027). Source: (Forum, 2023)

is essential. Although automation can cause job losses, it may also create new roles, as seen when Amazon's automation led to growth in IT and delivery jobs. The transition period is challenging, but with proactive support, it can be effectively managed.

4 Conclusion and Recommendations

4.1 Summary of Findings:

The evidence indicates that while AI-driven automation holds enormous promise for economic growth and efficiency, it also poses significant ethical, economic, and social challenges. Workers in routine, low-skill jobs are at the greatest risk of displacement, and without intervention, the resulting inequality and social disruption could be severe. Ethical concerns include the risk of bias in AI decision-making, the erosion of human dignity, and the potential loss of purpose and community identity. Economically, while new job categories may emerge, the transition period could be marked by prolonged unemployment and reduced bargaining power for workers.

4.2 Recommendations:

Governments must establish dynamic regulatory frameworks that evolve alongside technological change: **(1)** Requiring rigorous impact assessments and certifications for AI systems in high-risk applications. **(2)** Enforcing transparency and auditability of AI decision - making processes. **(3)** Mandating ethical oversight - such as "ethical black boxes" - to ensure accountability when AI systems cause harm.

A cornerstone of the strategy is to equip workers with the skills necessary for new roles in an AI-enhanced economy. Recommendations include:**(1)** Expanding public and private funding for retraining and upskilling programs. **(2)** Integrating digital literacy and STEM education from early schooling through higher education. **(3)** Designing targeted retraining initiatives for workers in sectors most vulnerable to automation, with special emphasis on vulnerable and underrepresented groups.

To support those displaced by automation, governments should consider: **(1)** Piloting Universal Basic Income (UBI) programs or conditional cash transfers in regions experiencing high levels of job displacement. **(2)** Enhancing unemployment insurance and providing robust job-transition support, including counseling and career guidance services. **(3)** Implementing job guarantee programs in public sectors (e.g., infrastructure, healthcare, education) to ensure that all citizens have access to meaningful work.

Ensuring that the benefits of AI are realized without undue harm requires robust accountability:**(1)** Develop methods for regular algorithm auditing and independent oversight. **(2)** Create clear legal frameworks that assign responsibility for AI-induced harm to the appropriate human actors—whether developers, operators, or corporate leaders. **(3)** Foster transparency by requiring that companies disclose key data regarding AI performance, particularly in high-risk sectors such as finance, healthcare, and autonomous vehicles.

With proactive, well-coordinated policies that emphasize ethical design, worker support, and inclusive growth, the benefits of automation can be harnessed to drive innovation and create new opportunities. By ensuring that technological advancements are aligned with human values and that all stakeholders share in the prosperity, society can navigate this transition in a way that enhances both economic efficiency and social well-being.

In conclusion, the challenge of job scarcity in the era of AI is a problem humanity have to face. Adaptive regulation, substantial investments in education and social safety nets, responsible corporate practices, and open multi-stakeholder dialogue form the pillars of a strategy that can ensure a fair and equitable transition. The future of work will require collaboration and flexibility; with thoughtful policies and ethical innovation, the promise of AI can be realized for the benefit of all.

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A Acknowledgement

I gratefully acknowledge the support of tools and previous works in the preparation of this report. In particular:

- **ChatGPT** for providing valuable brainstorming ideas that set the foundation for this work - it also helped with the wording in the report (OpenAI, 2025).
- **Consensus** for its critical role in searching for and retrieving relevant scientific papers (Consensus, 2025).
- **NotebookLM** for summarising and analyzing the information collected throughout our research (Google, 2025).
- **HCMUS Unofficial Report Template** available on GitHub `https://github.com/khongsomeo/hcmus-unofficial-report-template`, which provided a solid framework for this document (khongsomeo, 2025).
- **My tutor, Hy Nguyen** for showing me how tools work and guide me to use the tools efficiently regarding academic integrity (Nguyen, 2025).
- **Swinburne University of Technology** for giving me an assignment to research and write a report.

Their collective contributions have been instrumental in shaping the outcomes presented in this report.