

# AI ‘apocalypse’ could take away almost 8m jobs in UK, says report

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Almost 8 million UK jobs could be lost to artificial intelligence in a “jobs apocalypse”, according to a report warning that women, younger workers and those on lower wages are at most risk from automation. The Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) said that entry level, part-time and administrative jobs were most exposed to being replaced by AI under a “worst-case scenario” for the rollout of new technologies in the next three to five years. The thinktank warned that the UK was facing a “sliding doors” moment as growing numbers of companies adopt generative AI technologies – which can read and create text, data and software code – to automate everyday workplace tasks. The report said this first wave of AI adoption was already putting jobs at risk as growing numbers of companies introduce the technology. However, a second wave could lead to the automation of more jobs amid rapid advances in AI. Analysing 22,000 tasks in the economy covering every type of job, the IPPR said 11% of tasks currently done by workers were at risk. This could, though, increase to 59% of tasks in the second wave as technologies develop to handle increasingly complex processes. It said routine cognitive tasks – including database management, scheduling and stocktaking – were already at risk, with potential to displace entry level and part-time jobs in secretarial work, administration and customer services. However, the second wave of AI adoption could impact non-routine tasks involving the creation of databases, copywriting and graphic design, which would affect increasingly higher earning jobs. Women would be significantly more affected, as “they are more likely to work in the most exposed occupations, such as secretarial and administrative occupations”, the IPPR said. In the worst-case scenario for the second wave of AI, 7.9m jobs could be displaced, the report said, with any gains for the economy from productivity improvements cancelled out with zero growth in GDP within three to five years. In a best-case scenario for full augmentation of the workforce with generative AI, no jobs would be lost, while the size of the economy could be increased by 4%, or about £92bn a year. Sounding the alarm over the impact on workers, the left-of-centre thinktank said government action could prevent a “jobs apocalypse”, and help to harness the power of AI to boost economic growth and raise living standards. Carsten Jung, senior economist at IPPR, said: “Already existing generative AI could lead to big labour market disruption or it could hugely boost economic growth. Either way, it is set to be a gamechanger for millions of us. “But technology isn’t destiny and a jobs apocalypse is not inevitable – government, employers and unions have the opportunity to make crucial design decisions now that ensure we manage this new technology well. If they don’t act soon, it may be too late.”