

Americans Wary of AI Job Displacement

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Americans are expressing deep concern over artificial intelligence’s potential to permanently disrupt the workforce, according to a recent Reuters/Ipsos poll.

The six-day survey, which concluded on Monday, found that 71% of respondents fear AI could “put too many people out of work permanently.” While the current U.S. unemployment rate remains relatively low at 4.2% as of July, the public is increasingly cautious about how AI could reshape industries, jobs, and daily life.

AI's rise into mainstream discussion began in late 2022 with the launch of OpenAI's ChatGPT, which quickly became the fastest-growing application ever recorded. Major tech companies, including Meta Platforms, Alphabet, and Microsoft, have since introduced their own AI products, fueling broader adoption and public debate.

The Reuters/Ipsos poll also highlighted widespread concern about AI's societal impact. Approximately 77% of respondents said they worry the technology could be used to generate political unrest, reflecting anxieties over AI's ability to create realistic but fabricated videos and images. High-profile examples include former President Donald Trump posting a social media video depicting former President Barack Obama being arrested, an event that never occurred.

Concerns extend to military applications as well. Forty-eight percent of respondents said AI should never be used to identify military strike targets, compared with 24% who approved such usage and 28% who were uncertain.

Despite public caution, investment in AI technology continues to grow. Companies like Foxconn and SoftBank are planning data center equipment factories in Ohio, while national security policies are evolving as the United States and China compete for AI leadership.

Environmental impact is another area of concern. The survey found that 61% of Americans worry about the electricity required to power AI technology. In response, Google recently announced agreements with two U.S. electric utilities to reduce AI data center power usage during peak demand periods.

The poll also revealed apprehension about AI's effects on social and personal life. Two-thirds of respondents expressed worry that AI companions could replace human interaction. Other criticisms include AI-generated false medical advice, tools enabling inappropriate conversations with children, and technology that may support discriminatory rhetoric.

Opinions were mixed on AI's role in education. Thirty-six percent believed it could enhance learning, while 40% disagreed, and the remainder were uncertain.

The Reuters/Ipsos survey collected online responses from 4,446 U.S. adults nationwide and carries a margin of error of approximately two percentage points.

The poll underscores Americans' complex views on AI, balancing optimism about innovation with caution regarding social, economic, and ethical consequences.