

# Nearly half of voters fear AI will take their jobs

## *Public report concerns about impact of artificial intelligence on redundancies as effects already felt in some sectors*

by Oliver Wright, Policy Editor, The Times - 4<sup>th</sup> November 2023

Nearly half the public fear that their jobs are at risk from the rise of artificial intelligence, with some saying they are already witnessing the impact of the technology in their workplace.

Polling and focus group research for The Times found that just 13% of the public thought that AI would present opportunities for their career while 22% thought it was a threat.

The poll, conducted by YouGov, found that 44% of people were worried about the impact of AI on their jobs, with around a third saying they did not think it would make a difference to their career.

This was backed up by focus group research by Public First, an opinion research company, which showed that some people had already seen the impact of AI in their jobs.

Juliet, a freelance proofreader and copywriter from the south of England, said she was becoming very worried about what it meant for her future. “AI is increasingly being used [in my sector] and it has to be a concern, because it’s going to take my work,” she said. “I haven’t seen huge volumes of new work coming in.”

Nicola, a retired bookkeeper, added: “A friend of mine was working on a research project looking into AI and how to implement it into a company. And at the end of it, she has been made redundant, which I think sums it up really.”

Kelly, who works as a complaints manager in Walsall, said it was causing her “absolute hell at work”. She said: “We get these letters and they look like they’ve been written by a solicitor. You’ve got people who wouldn’t know all the protocols to do with complaints and they [would previously have had] a bit of a moan. Now they use the AI stuff it starts to bring in [reference] legislation. I read them and I think, ‘Oh my God’. Without being rude it is cleverer than the person writing it.”

The focus group research found that while there was a very high degree of public awareness about AI, a far fewer number of people were confident that they could explain exactly what it was to a friend. But many had already used, or seen the use of, public-facing AI such as ChatGPT.

Jon, a father of two, said he had used ChatGPT to write a speech for his son at school and described the experience as “pretty scary”. He said: “It was so accurate given the minimal input you put into it.”

In the wider context many were happy for AI to be used in such areas as making medical diagnoses if it could be proved to be as accurate.

Tony, from Walsall, said: “There’s probably more chance of seeing a robot than a doctor, to be honest, so I’d take a punt.”

The YouGov polling also found concerns about the impact of AI on fake news and misinformation, as well as terrorism. The poll found that 42% of people thought that AI was a threat to the integrity of the news they received, with just 11% thinking that the technology could actually limit the problem. It found that 27% thought it was equally a threat and an opportunity.

A quarter of people thought it could lead to an increased threat of terrorism while 16% thought that AI might actually be able to reduce the threat of an attack.

Martin, a mechanic, said he didn’t think AI could be policed. He said: “There’s too many countries, too many different laws, too many different governments. You imagine Russia or North Korea, they’re going to do what they want. America is going to do what they want.”