



## PART 3

Read the text below and answer questions 27–40.

### THE FUTURE OF WORK IN AN AGE OF AUTOMATION

A

Automation is often portrayed as a single wave that “replaces jobs,” but its labour-market effects are usually more granular and uneven. Most technologies substitute for specific tasks, complement other activities, and then trigger organisational redesign as firms reconfigure workflows. As a result, the same tool can reduce employment in one occupation while increasing demand in another, depending on how quickly processes are reorganised and how rapidly workers can adjust skills. The central question is therefore not whether machines arrive, but how adoption interacts with training, management choices, and the pace of change in local labour markets.

B

Historical experience suggests that technology can create as well as destroy employment, even when displacement is severe in the short run. Mechanisation dramatically reduced agricultural labour, and automation later altered manufacturing headcounts, yet new sectors expanded and absorbed workers over time. However, the benefits were not automatic, and transition costs were often painful. Workers leaving routine roles did not always move smoothly into emerging occupations, and places dependent on a single industry could experience long spells of frictional unemployment and declining local demand. This history is frequently used to argue that the most important issue is not the long-run arithmetic of “jobs lost versus jobs gained,” but the social and geographic unevenness of adjustment.

C

A key analytical concept is task composition. Most jobs are bundles of activities, ranging from routine and predictable work to judgement-intensive, social, or physically adaptable tasks that are harder to codify. Automation tends to target routine tasks first, especially where data are structured and outcomes can be measured. When routine elements are removed, what remains may become more complex and may require reskilling, because workers are left with exceptions, interpretation, and coordination rather than repetition. This is one reason economists discuss labor market polarization: demand can rise at the high end for cognitive non-routine tasks and at the low end for in-person services, while middle-skill routine roles face pressure.

D

New work arrangements are emerging alongside automation, particularly through



platforms and remote collaboration tools. Digital labour markets can match freelancers to short projects, widening access to opportunities for some people and allowing firms to source skills across regions. Yet flexibility can come with weaker security: work may be intermittent, benefits may be non-portable, and workers may bear more risk. In addition, algorithmic management can monitor performance through ratings, GPS traces, and time-stamped activity logs, shifting control from human supervisors to software dashboards. These arrangements can blur the boundary between work and rest, especially when tasks arrive continuously and workers feel compelled to remain “available” to protect their visibility in ranking systems.

## E

Recent advances in machine learning extend automation beyond physical labour into cognitive domains, including drafting text, classifying images, and detecting patterns in medical scans. These systems can be valuable, but they are often brittle in novel conditions, particularly when inputs differ from training data or when rare edge cases occur. Models can also amplify algorithmic bias embedded in historical datasets, producing uneven error rates across groups and raising questions of accountability. For many organisations, the first challenge is not simply deploying models but maintaining human-in-the-loop oversight, documenting limitations, and deciding who is responsible when automated recommendations contribute to harm.

## F

Productivity gains from automation do not automatically translate into shared prosperity. When technology raises output per worker, the distribution of that gain depends on institutions such as unions, labour regulation, corporate governance, and tax systems. If automation mainly increases profits for owners while wages stagnate, inequality can rise even when average productivity improves. Some analysts therefore emphasise bargaining power as a key variable in determining who gains, arguing that the labour market is shaped by rules and negotiation, not just engineering. The same productivity shock can look like broad wage growth in one setting and rising concentration in another, especially if displaced workers face weak re-employment prospects.

## G

Policy responses typically focus on skills and safety nets, but governments do not converge on a single model. Many programmes subsidise training, expand apprenticeships, or fund lifelong learning accounts to help workers move into new roles before displacement becomes crisis. Other proposals include portable benefits, strengthened unemployment support, or wage insurance that cushions earnings losses when workers shift into lower-paid jobs. Debates also include broader ideas, such as



universal basic income, though views differ on feasibility and incentives. Across these approaches, a recurring argument is that support should be proactive and targeted, reducing the length and severity of transition rather than waiting for unemployment to become entrenched.

H

Firm strategy and market demand can change the net employment effect of automation. Some companies use automation primarily to cut labour costs; others use it to raise quality, expand output, or enter new markets. When demand grows, automation can coincide with hiring because new tasks appear in maintenance, compliance, data preparation, customer support, and supervision. The future of work is therefore not predetermined by machines: it will be shaped by adoption choices, the speed of skills adjustment, and the institutional capacity to manage transition fairly. Automation can raise productivity and create new roles, but without credible safeguards for security and distribution, it can also deepen inequality and insecurity.

### **Questions 27–31**

Choose the correct heading for each paragraph.

#### **List of Headings**

- i How the mix of tasks within jobs shapes what automation replaces
- ii Historical patterns of job loss, job creation, and painful transitions
- iii Why advanced models raise reliability and bias concerns
- iv New work arrangements that increase flexibility but reduce security
- v How firms' strategies and market demand can change net employment effects
- vi Institutions and bargaining power in determining who gains
- vii The role of education in delaying workforce entry

**27 Paragraph B**

**28 Paragraph C**

**29 Paragraph D**

**30 Paragraph E**

**31 Paragraph F**

### **Questions 32–35**



Choose **TRUE** if the statement agrees with the information given in the text, choose **FALSE** if the statement contradicts the information, or choose **NOT GIVEN** if there is no information on this.

**32** The passage suggests that automation's effects depend partly on how firms reorganise processes and how quickly workers can adjust skills.

**33** The passage suggests that platform work always improves job security by providing stable long-term contracts.

**34** The passage states that machine-learning systems are generally reliable under novel conditions once deployed.

**35** The passage claims that wage insurance has already become the most expensive automation policy in most countries.

### Questions 36–40

Complete the summary below. Choose **NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS** from the text for each answer.

### Why outcomes differ across places

Automation often removes routine tasks, so remaining work may become more

**36** ..... Advanced models can fail under **37** ..... and may amplify bias from training data. Whether productivity gains raise living standards or increase **38** ..... depends partly on institutions and bargaining power. Platform and remote work can blur the boundary between work and **39** ..... Many policy proposals aim to support worker **40** ..... before displacement turns into crisis.

### Answer Key

27. ii

28. i

29. iv

30. iii

31. vi

32. TRUE

33. FALSE

34. FALSE



35. NOT GIVEN

36. complex

37. novel conditions

38. inequality

39. rest

40. transition