



The Associated Press-NORC
Center for Public Affairs Research

NEW SURVEY EXAMINES AMERICANS' PREFERENCES FOR AUTOMATION IN EVERYDAY LIFE

Forty-one percent expect automation to make the quality of day-to-day life better, 22 percent think it will make things worse, 34 percent anticipate no change.

CHICAGO, Oct. 29, 2017 — About half of Americans would rather interact with a salesclerk at a supermarket or convenience store than pay for their purchases using the automated checkouts that are becoming commonplace, according to a new survey from [The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research](#).

Certain modern technologies are becoming part of everyday life, and many Americans expect that developing automation will improve the quality of life, offer convenience, and improve efficiency. More than half of adults often use smartphones or bank online, and many use GPS, shop online, use social media, or stream video. Paying by cell phone, using voice-activated assistants, ride-sharing apps, and telecommuting are not quite as prevalent.

ATMs are ubiquitous, and only 31 percent would rather see a live teller for routine banking transactions. However, comfort with automated banking has not translated to other everyday transactions. Only about a quarter of Americans prefer to pay for purchases at supermarkets or convenience stores using the automated checkouts, while about half would rather interact with a salesclerk. Another quarter have no preference.

There are worries about possible negative effects from this emerging technology. Forty-two percent of Americans are concerned about job loss due to automation, including 19 percent who say it is likely someone in their household will lose a job to technology. Forty-five percent expect people to become more isolated as a result of technological developments.

“Automation is having a profound impact on many areas of American life, and Americans have mixed feelings about it,” said Trevor Tompson, director of The AP-NORC Center. “While 4 in 10 anticipate a better quality of life as a result of automation, a third of Americans do not expect it to lead to any improvement in their day-to-day existence, and more than 2 in 10 think automation will actually worsen their quality of life.”

Key themes and findings from this study are described below:

- Most Americans do not anticipate that automation will improve their daily lives. While 4 in 10 predict that automating ordinary activities and tasks will make their lives better, a third do not expect any improvement in their day-to-day existence, and more than 2 in 10 think automation will harm their quality of life.
- Young adults are more likely to see themselves as fast adopters of new technologies. Most Americans consider themselves neither quick nor slow to utilize technological developments, but 42 percent of people age 18 to 29 say they quickly adopt new technology, compared with 19 percent of older Americans.
- Certain modern technologies are becoming widespread, as more than half of adults often use smartphones or bank online, and many use GPS, shop online, use social media, or stream video. Paying by cell phone, using voice-activated assistants, ride-sharing apps, and telecommuting are not quite as prevalent.
- ATMs, first introduced in the 1970s, are now almost everywhere, and only 31 percent would rather see a live teller for routine banking transactions. However, the comfort with which Americans manage automated banking has not translated to other everyday transactions. Only about a quarter prefer to pay for purchases at supermarkets or convenience stores using the automated checkouts that are becoming commonplace in stores, while about half would rather deal with a salesclerk. Another quarter have no preference one way or the other.
- In addition to proficiency with ATMs, more than half the public regularly uses the internet or a mobile app to conduct their personal banking. At the same time, while e-commerce is growing, people still make most purchases in person, particularly groceries and drugstore items.
- Nearly half the public thinks shopping will become easier and more efficient in the coming years, but about the same number of Americans expect job loss among retail workers because of technological developments.
- Fifty-six percent say automation in factories has resulted in significant job loss. A majority of Americans also consider it likely that more jobs require advanced education or training because of automation.
- While many people see automation as improving factory safety and efficiency, there is also a belief that automation has caused a decline in factory wages. Most say automation has not resulted in the return of manufacturing jobs to the United States.
- Automation is viewed as a job killer by many. While 57 percent are fairly confident that no one in their household will be replaced at work by automation during the next 10 years, 42 percent are concerned about job loss due to new technological developments, including 19 percent who say it is extremely or very likely that someone in their household will lose a job to technology.



- Two-thirds of American workers say automation plays at least some role in their workplace. Forty percent of these workers with first-hand knowledge of the new technology see automation as beneficial to the American workforce, compared with only 24 percent of other workers.

About the Survey

This survey was conducted by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research and with funding from NORC at the University of Chicago. Data were collected using the AmeriSpeak Omnibus®, a monthly multi-client survey using NORC's probability-based panel designed to be representative of the U.S. household population. The survey was part of a larger study that included questions about other topics not included in this report. During the initial recruitment phase of the panel, randomly selected U.S. households were sampled with a known, non-zero probability of selection from the NORC National Sample Frame and then contacted by U.S. mail, email, telephone, and field interviewers (face-to-face).

Interviews for this survey were conducted between August 17 and 21, 2017, with adults age 18 and over representing the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Panel members were randomly drawn from AmeriSpeak, and 1,038 completed the survey—861 via the web and 177 via telephone. The final stage completion rate is 26.9 percent, the weighted household panel response rate is 33.5 percent, and the weighted household panel retention rate is 89.2 percent, for a cumulative response rate of 8.0 percent. The overall margin of sampling error is +/- 4.1 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level, including the design effect. The margin of sampling error may be higher for subgroups.

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The two organizations have established The AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research to conduct, analyze, and distribute social science research in the public interest on newsworthy topics, and to use the power of journalism to tell the stories that research reveals.

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