



Experts Warn Of A Tech Take-Over As Robots With Ai seize control

When enough unemployment is created by robots, Universal Basic Income will replace wages and offer a bone to the 'unemployables' This is were the risk of slavery most profoundly. □ TN Editor

Thousands of us unwrapped voice-activated electronic devices on Christmas Day.

Amazon's Alexa service, Apple's Home Pod and Google's Home speakers were among the best-sellers.

Recognising the human voice, the gadgets can play music, search the web, shop online, check the weather and even switch on the lights or control the central heating.

But while we are getting to grips with our new interactive electronics, a report last week sounded alarm bells over the implications of rapidly improving artificial intelligence.

The study, from the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) warns of thousands of jobs being lost to robots - with those on lowest wages likely to be hardest hit.

Around 44% of jobs accounting for about £290 million in wages risk being automated in the coming decades - mostly in low-paid sectors such as call centres, offices and factories.

Mathew Lawrence, a senior researcher at the IPPR, said: "Managed badly, the benefits of automation could be narrowly concentrated, benefiting those who own capital. Inequality would spiral."

Now the think tank is calling on governments to examine ways of spreading the benefits of automation throughout society.

IPPR research fellow Carys Roberts said: "To avoid inequality rising, the Government should look at ways to spread capital ownership and make sure everyone benefits from increased automation."

Unite, Britain's biggest union, said coping with advances in technology was nothing new for workers in the manufacturing sector in particular - but stressed the Government needs to invest in retraining people as automation increases.

They said: "We have seen in previous industrial revolutions, in the likes of the steel and other heavy industries, that whole communities can be left behind by new technology and this cannot happen again."

Scottish Engineering chief executive Bryan Buchan has a much more positive view of what robots will bring to the workplace.

He said: "The evidence is that automation doesn't cost jobs but it changes jobs. These things are quite advanced in terms of robotics and they don't need guards around them so humans can work alongside them.

"They are using 'cobots' on the Mini assembly lines now at Oxford. Fundamentally the 'cobot' does the horrible, repetitive jobs that humans don't like doing."

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