

Automation, productivity, and skills: investing in human capital for a technology-driven future

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Today's discussion

Productivity growth is sorely needed

The potential from automation and AI is huge

But the barriers to productive adoption are also substantive

Productivity growth is sorely needed as demographics reduce contribution from employment growth Real GDP growth contribution of employment and productivity growth, 1972 – 2022

Global GDP growth, CAGR, %



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Generative AI has the potential for enormous productivity gains for individual tasks – but economy-wide impacts are uncertain



Task level example

70% productivity improvement for generating new code



Occupation level example



improvement in call center agents' overall productivity



Economy level example

<1%

of occupations have more than 60% of their workload currently automatable by Al

Generative AI has boosted the automatability of occupations that are likely to increase in size due to multiple other demand drivers



Increase in automation adoption driven by generative AI, %-points

 Incorporates multiple drivers affecting demand, including rising incomes, aging populations, infrastructure investment, net-zero transitions, marketization of unpaid work, creation of new occupations, technology investment, automation and AI, increased remote working and virtual meetings, and e-commerce and other virtual transitions.
Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics; Current Population Survey, US Census Bureau; McKinsey Global Institute analysis

Contents

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Broader adoption of digital technology, automation and AI is not yet wide-spread or necessarily speeding up

Adoption of big data and AI, US and EU, 2022

% of businesses



Adoption of AI technologies, UK, September 2023 % of businesses



Micro < 10 employees, small 10-49 employees, medium 50-249 employees, large 250+ employees.
Extent of overlap between currently using and planning to adopt not known.
Source: EIB Investment Survey; ONS; McKinsey analysis

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Investments in human capital and software are complementary

Productivity growth as a function of investment

Deepnet model based on EU countries, 1995-2015

Investment in training % of GDP



High productivity growth

Low productivity growth

- 1 Simply investing a lot in training is not directly associated with higher productivity growth
- 2 Investing in software without training is also not associated with high productivity growth
- (3) Investing in software and a moderate amount in training is associated with high productivity growth

To move into higher-wage occupations, workers will need to be trained more on social and emotional skills and technological skills

Time spent using various types of skills by wage quintile in the United states,¹ 2030, %

Midpoint automation scenario, with generative AI acceleration



Note: Figures may not sum to 100%, due to rounding.

1. Based on skills needed across 850 occupations and 2,100 activities, classifying each work activity according to the primary skill used among a set of 25 skills, and further grouping skills into the 5 categories shown. Source: O*NET; US Bureau of Labor statistics; Current Population Survey, US Census Bureau; McKinsey Global Institute analysis McKin

Reskilling will need to take place across the entire working population, as skills needs evolve over the coming decades



Source: The Skills Imperative 2035: Occupational Outlook – Long run employment prospects for the UK, NFER, October 2022; The Skills Imperative 2035: Essential Skills for tomorrow's workforce, NFER, October 2022; UK Skills Mismatch in 2030, Industrial Strategy Council, October 2019; McKinsey analysis

Investing in human capital alongside productivityenhancing technology diffusion will also advance prosperity beyond GDP

