@donjpierce

Asked: 2024-09-24 12:15 UTC
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SOURCE QUESTION

How many years will it be before your job is automated by AI?

CREATOR STORY BRIEF

Younger workers saw the room as relaxed on AI job takeover while older peers sensed a near-term threat

In this sample, 25- to 34-year-olds tended to think others expected AI to automate their jobs later or not at all, even as 35- to 44-year-olds reading the same room perceived a consensus around very near-term automation—and both groups misjudged how many people actually leaned toward long-term or uncertain timelines.

LIKELY REALITY	COMMON EXPECTATION	CONFIDENCE BAND
More than 10 years	**Less than 5 years**	**low**

DISTRIBUTION

OPTION	OPINION	PREDICTION
Sample size: 21 responses (pilot).		
Less than 5 years	38%	**38%**
5–10 years	19%	33%
More than 10 years	**43%**	29%

FULL ARTICLE BODY

In a snapshot of how workers read each other on AI risk, people in their late twenties and early thirties walked away from the same conversation with a very different impression than those in their late thirties and early forties.

Asked to gauge when others in the room thought AI would automate their jobs, respondents aged 25 to 34 were more likely to say the group leaned toward long-term or uncertain timelines. To them, the social consensus felt relatively relaxed: job automation might come eventually, or it might not be predictable at all, but it did not seem imminent.

Respondents aged 35 to 44, looking at the same question, were more likely to read the room as expecting very near-term automation. In their view, the prevailing mood pointed toward AI taking over jobs in the short run, not at some distant or fuzzy horizon.

A smaller dissenting cluster cut against both age patterns, also perceiving the room as expecting long-term or uncertain automation. That pocket of respondents reinforced the sense that there was no single, shared understanding of what everyone else believed.

Beneath those perceptions, however, the actual distribution of views told a quieter story of misreading the crowd. When people were asked directly about their own jobs, far more respondents personally expected AI automation to be more than 10 years away—or were unsure—than others assumed would be the common view. Nearer-term timelines, especially very short ones, were overestimated as the norm.

The underlying answers themselves were polarized. Rather than clustering around a middle estimate, the group split toward the extremes: some said AI could automate their jobs in less than five years, while many more placed the risk beyond a decade or in the realm of uncertainty. Overall, the pattern tilted toward later or no automation, even as older workers in particular believed the room was bracing for a much faster takeover.

This pattern is real inside this sample, but it stops there. It shows how, even in a single room, age can shape not just what people think about AI and jobs, but what they think everyone else thinks—and how easily those social readings can be wrong.

MAIN STORY

Same question, different room: age groups split on how soon AI will take their jobs

Inside this sample, people the same question about AI and their jobs but did not share the same sense of what the room believed. Respondents ages 25–34 were more likely to feel that others expected job automation to be long-term or uncertain, while respondents ages 35–44 were more likely to feel the room expected very near-term automation, with a smaller dissenting cluster also sensing long-term or uncertain timelines. The pattern is a real split between visible groups here, not a universal rule about everyone in those age brackets.

People overestimate how many others expect AI to take their jobs soon

The room misjudged its own center of gravity on AI timelines. In reality, more people expected their jobs to be automated only in the long term or not at all than anyone guessed would be the common view, while faster timelines were mistakenly assumed to be the norm. The sharpest blind spot was around “More than 10 years,” which showed up more often in actual answers than in people’s expectations of what others would say.

STORY ANGLES

The room polarized between “very soon” and “more than 10 years” for AI job automation

Asked when AI would automate their own jobs, people in this sample did not settle on a middle-of-the-road timeline. Instead, answers clustered at the poles —“Less than 5 years” on one end and “More than 10 years” on the other—with the overall pattern leaning somewhat toward later or no automation rather than sooner automation. This is a tendency toward later timelines, not a claim that everyone chose the far endpoint or that a simple majority lined up behind it.

UNCERTAINTY BOUNDARY

A real split, but only inside this room

The divides in how different groups read the room on AI timelines are real within this sample, but they should not be treated as a universal rule about all people in those demographics or locations. The story can name these cluster-level patterns while keeping the boundary clear: they describe this group of respondents, not everyone everywhere.

Boundary: This finding is real inside this sample, but it stops there. The story can name the pattern without pretending it is universal.

EVIDENCE NOTES

These notes are the receipts behind the story. They are evidence, not finished prose.

DISTRIBUTION EVIDENCE ONLY

Support clustered toward “Less than 5 years” and “More than 10 years” more than the middle options.

Claim: Responses on expected time until AI automates people’s own jobs were polarized toward the near-term and long-term poles, with a modest lean toward later or no automation overall.

Why it matters: That means the topline should be read as a contested field, not as a clean collective judgment.

BIAS

The TruTake answer 'More than 10 years' was underpredicted by 14%: it was chosen by 43% of responses, but the people expected it to appear in only 29%.

Claim: Respondents underpredicted how common the belief is that one’s own job will be automated by AI only in the long term or not at all, overreading support for sooner automation.

Why it matters: This is a journalistic blind-spot claim, not just a statistical one. It says people were not only choosing answers - they were misjudging what would feel socially common or visible.

DISTRIBUTION EVIDENCE ONLY

The overall distribution tilted more toward “later or no automation” than toward “sooner automation”.

Claim: Responses on expected time until AI automates people’s own jobs were polarized toward the near-term and long-term poles, with a modest lean toward later or no automation overall.

Why it matters: That means the topline should be read as a contested field, not as a clean collective judgment.

BIAS

The answer '5–10 years' was overpredicted: it was chosen by 19% of responses, but the people expected it to appear in around 33%.

Claim: Respondents underpredicted how common the belief is that one’s own job will be automated by AI only in the long term or not at all, overreading support for sooner automation.

Why it matters: This is a journalistic blind-spot claim, not just a statistical one. It says people were not only choosing answers - they were misjudging what would feel socially common or visible.

CITATION-BACKED INSIGHTS

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DISTRIBUTION SUPPORT 1.00

Responses on expected time until AI automates people’s own jobs were polarized toward the near-term and long-term poles, with a modest lean toward later or no automation overall.

That means the topline should be read as a contested field, not as a clean collective judgment.

People stayed polarized on AI automating their jobs, leaning slightly toward later automation.

BIAS_EXPECTATION SUPPORT 0.93

Respondents underpredicted how common the belief is that one’s own job will be automated by AI only in the long term or not at all, overreading support for sooner automation.

This is a journalistic blind-spot claim, not just a statistical one. It says people were not only choosing answers - they were misjudging what would feel socially common or visible.

People underestimate long-term expectations for AI job automation.

CREATOR HOOKS

25–34s see others expecting later automation; 35–44s see it very soon.

People stayed polarized on AI automating their jobs, leaning slightly toward later automation.

This pattern is real in this sample, but does not extend beyond it.

People underestimate long-term expectations for AI job automation.

Among people answering the same question about when AI will automate their jobs, respondents ages 25-34 were more likely than respondents ages 35-44 to read the room as leaning toward long-term or uncertain automation, whereas respondents ages 35-44 were more likely to read the room as leaning toward very near-term automation. A dissenting cluster also perceived the room as expecting long-term or uncertain automation.

CROWD PERSONAS

Confident Aligners (≈24%)

HIGHEST CALIBRATION (SAMPLE)

More than 10 years + Expected More than 10 years

About 24% of people chose “More than 10 years” and expected “More than 10 years” to be the most common answer. They matched the dominant view and correctly anticipated that others would feel the same way. This group reinforces the core consensus.

Confident Dissenters (≈19%)

LOWER CALIBRATION

Less than 5 years + Expected Less than 5 years

About 19% of people chose “Less than 5 years” and expected “Less than 5 years” to be the most common answer. They held a less common view and expected it to be more common than it was. This group may feel more common than it is in the broader audience.

Independent Readers (≈14%)

LOWER CALIBRATION

Less than 5 years + Expected 5–10 years

About 14% of people chose “Less than 5 years” and expected “5–10 years” to be the most common answer. They reflect a distinct subgroup whose expectations diverged from the overall pattern. This group is useful to address when discussing how “Less than 5 years” relates to the wider consensus.

Demographic splits are suppressed due to sample size.