

## AI in Hiring and Evaluating Workers: What Americans Think

*Many are generally wary and uncertain of AI being used in hiring and assessing workers*

**WASHINGTON, D.C. (April 20, 2023)** – A majority of U.S. adults think the use of artificial intelligence in workplaces will have a major impact on workers in general, but far fewer believe such AI systems will greatly affect them personally, according to a new Pew Research Center survey. Some 62% think the use of AI in the workplace will have a major impact on workers generally over the next 20 years, compared with just 28% who say AI will have a major impact on them personally. Roughly half believe there will be no impact on them or that the impact will be minor.

Asked about potentially beneficial or harmful effects of AI in workplaces in the next 20 years, a higher share say it will *hurt* more than help workers generally than say the inverse. About a third of Americans (32%) think the benefits and harms will be equally split for workers, while 22% are not sure about its potential effect.

At the personal level, 38% of Americans say they are not sure what the outcome of AI use in workplaces will be for them personally. Three-in-ten say the use of AI in these places will even out – the help and the hurt will be equal. Some 16% of adults think they themselves will be more helped than hurt, and 15% believe they themselves will be more hurt than helped.

The new report, based on a survey of 11,004 U.S. adults conducted Dec. 12-18, 2022, using the Center’s American Trends Panel, finds that Americans have a range of views about employers using artificial intelligence systems in key aspects of workplace operations. For instance, they oppose AI use in making final hiring decisions by a 71%-7% margin, and a majority also opposes AI analysis being used in making firing decisions. A smaller plurality (41%) also opposes the use of AI in reviewing job applications.

Relatedly, Americans are notably more likely to oppose than support employers using AI to track workers’ movements while they work, keep track of when office workers are at their desks, and record exactly what people are doing on their work computers. Still, there is an application that draws more public support than opposition: By a 43%-34% margin, people favor employers using AI to monitor workers’ driving behavior as they make trips for the company.

At a personal level, 66% of adults say they would *not* want to apply for a job with an employer that uses AI to help make hiring decisions, compared with 32% who say they would want to apply under those circumstances. Asked to describe in their own words the main reason why they would or would not want to apply for a job if AI is used to help with the hiring process, some cite their concern that AI systems would remove the “personal touch” from the hiring process. Others say they worry that computers could not pick up on job applicants’ personalities or discern whether job seekers would fit in well with co-workers. Another fear is that AI systems can introduce bias or other problems into hiring processes. People also cite potential positives, saying they believe AI systems would be more fair and objective, and might save time in the hiring process.

When asked if AI would fare better than humans at assessing applicants in four kinds of performance measurements, people have varied views. Roughly half (47%) say AI would be better than humans at treating all applicants similarly, while just 15% say it would do a worse job. By contrast, the public is more likely to believe AI would do worse than humans at seeing potential in job applicants who may not perfectly fit the description or at figuring out which applicants would work well with their co-workers. And public views on how AI would compare with humans in

identifying whether a candidate is well-qualified are decidedly more mixed; somewhat similar shares say AI would do better, worse or about the same as humans.

While some companies have utilized AI to help increase racial and ethnic diversity in their workforce, there are long-standing debates about whether AI reduces or amplifies bias in hiring. This survey finds the public taking the more optimistic view. Among those who say racial and ethnic bias in hiring is a problem, 53% think bias and unfair treatment based on an applicant's race and ethnicity will improve with increased use of AI by employers in the hiring process, while a much smaller share (13%) believes AI will make the issue worse. About one-third say this problem would stay the same.

While this sentiment is shared across different racial and ethnic groups, there is somewhat more skepticism among Black Americans than other groups: 20% of Black adults who say racial bias in hiring is a problem believe AI being more widely used by employers in the process would make the issue worse, compared with about one-in-ten Hispanic, Asian or White adults.

Other key findings include:

- **Americans see both benefits and downsides to employers using AI to evaluate and observe employees in the workplace; public views about potential negative consequences of AI use are striking.** Some 81% of adults say this use of AI would lead to workers feeling inappropriately watched, including about half who say this sentiment would definitely be present. Concerns about data security are also strong, with two-thirds saying information collected about workers' performance would definitely or probably be misused if employers use AI. By comparison, 49% say the use of AI in the workplace would lead to improvements in workplace security, while a somewhat similar share (46%) say the same for decreasing inappropriate workplace behavior.
- **Face recognition use by employers draws mixed reviews.** The survey explored public views about several possible uses of face recognition technology by employers to monitor workers. Seven-in-ten Americans oppose using it to analyze employees' facial expressions, compared with 9% who favor it. People are also more likely to oppose using face recognition to track how often workers take breaks (52%-25%). At the same time, a 45% plurality favors face recognition being used by employers to automatically track the attendance of their employees (35% oppose it).
- **Those with different household incomes have contrasting views at times about the use of AI in workplaces.** Americans with upper incomes (38%) are more likely than those with middle (29%) or lower (20%) incomes to *favor* AI being used to review job applications. But adults with middle and upper household incomes are more likely than those with lower incomes to *oppose* employers using AI systems to decide whom to promote or fire. Nine-in-ten upper-income adults say workers would probably or definitely feel inappropriately surveilled if AI were used to collect and analyze information about how workers are doing their jobs, compared with 84% of those in middle-income households and 70% of those in lower-income families.
- **Men are more likely than women to see specific benefits *and* downsides to AI's use in the workplace.** Larger shares of men than women feel that if employers used AI to analyze information about how workers are doing their jobs, workers would feel like they were being inappropriately watched (85% vs. 77%). And men are more likely than women to believe that information collected about workers would be misused (72% vs. 60%). At the same time, men are more likely than women to think workplace security would be improved and company profits would go up with AI monitoring systems in place. Beyond that, higher shares of men than women oppose certain uses of face recognition technology: analyzing workers' facial

expressions (74% vs. 68%); tracking how often workers take breaks (56% vs. 49%); and automatically tracking the attendance of employees (37% vs. 31%).

- **Different racial and ethnic groups sometimes see applications of AI in hiring and workplace situations in diverse ways.** White and Asian adults are more likely to see potential downsides for workers if AI were used to monitor them. They foresee workers feeling inappropriately watched or the information collected from this surveillance being misused. Smaller shares (albeit still majorities) of Hispanic adults and Black adults think these things would happen. There are also differences by race and ethnicity when it comes to uses of face recognition covered in the survey. For instance, Black (25%) and Asian adults (23%) are more likely than White or Hispanic adults (16% each) to say face recognition technology definitely would recognize some skin tones better than others in a workplace setting.
- **Opposition to various types of AI monitoring in the workplace varies across age groups.** Adults ages 18 to 29 are consistently more likely than those 65 and older to oppose each of the six types of AI surveillance at work explored in this survey. One of the striking gaps between these groups is on whether adults favor or oppose the use of AI to track what people are doing on their work computers: 64% of those ages 18 to 29 oppose it, compared with 38% of those 65 and older. Adults under 50 are more likely to see AI systems as an improvement over humans in the consistent treatment of job applicants (50% vs. 43%). In the other direction, adults under 50 are also more likely to say AI would be worse at seeing the potential of job candidates (48% vs. 39%) or figuring out if an applicant would fit well with co-workers (46% vs. 39%).
- **Awareness about AI's possible use in work-related activities is often tied to people's opinions.** Americans who say they have heard a lot about the use of AI in hiring, evaluating worker performance or face recognition in the workplace are more likely than others to think that AI will have a major impact on workers generally, on themselves personally and the U.S. economy. In addition, those who have heard a lot about some key uses of AI in workplaces are more open than those who have not heard anything to applying for a job where AI is used in the hiring process. And those more aware of AI use in workplaces are more likely to favor using these computer programs to review job applications.

These are among the findings from the new report, which is based on a survey of 11,004 U.S. adults conducted online Dec. 12-18, 2022. The margin of error for the full sample is plus or minus 1.4 percentage points.

**Read the full report:** [\[LINK\]](#)

**Methodology:** [\[LINK\]](#)

**Survey topline:** [\[LINK\]](#)

This report is part of an ongoing series exploring the increasing role of AI in shaping American life. For more, read:

- [60% of Americans Would Be Uncomfortable With Provider Replying on AI in Their Own Health Care](#)
- [Public Awareness of Artificial Intelligence in Everyday Activities](#)
- [AI and Human Enhancement: Americans' Openness is Tempered by a Range of Concerns](#)

For more information or to arrange an interview email Haley Nolan at [hnolan@pewresearch.org](mailto:hnolan@pewresearch.org).

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