



# Learning for the jobs of the future

*I am*  
**THE  
FUTURE  
OF WORK**  
A PEOPLE POWERED INITIATIVE

# I am THE FUTURE OF WORK

## A PEOPLE POWERED INITIATIVE

The future of work is now. Globalisation, digitalisation and other mega-trends have sparked changes that are radically affecting our working lives. Through the *I am the Future of Work* campaign, the OECD wants to help governments and stakeholders build a more inclusive world of work. In doing so, we support progress towards SDGs 4 and 8, relating to access to quality

education, lifelong learning opportunities and good quality jobs for all. We provide expert advice to policy makers, seek to amplify diverse perspectives and ideas in the public debate, and create spaces for cross-sector conversations and collaboration.

Together, we can build a better world of work.

"Shaping a future of work that is more inclusive and rewarding calls for a Transition Agenda for a future that works for all - a whole-of-government approach that targets interventions on those who need it most."

Stefano Scarpetta, OECD Director for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs



"I would say to future generations to study hard. Keep going, don't give up."

Hatem, 50, weaver, France

## Jobs and how we do them are changing

As technological advances continue, some skills are becoming obsolete while demand for others is rising. Such shifts are creating new jobs, but automation is also removing the need for human input from some lower-skilled roles.

This means that some people are at risk of being left behind, particularly low-skilled workers, who perform routine tasks that can be automated. Nearly 14% of jobs in OECD countries fall into this category, with another 32% at high risk of being at least partially automated – so nearly 1 in 2 people is likely to be affected in some way.

At the same time, we are using new technologies to do our jobs more efficiently, finding work through online platforms, and collaborating in new ways with colleagues across countries. We may be working more flexibly to better balance our work and family lives, or moving into a different career later in life.

Ensuring that people can successfully weather these changes and benefit fully from the promise of new technologies means helping people acquire the right skills for new jobs and ways of working – and helping children and young people build the skills they need for the future.



"Eight years ago, robot suits were introduced in my industry and I had to learn how to work with them."

Haruhiko, 42, physical therapist, Japan

"The truth is, machines are really good at doing rote, repetitive work. They're not good at creativity, they're not good at thinking outside the box, and they're not good at connecting with people. For now, and for the next few decades, I think, interpersonal and creative tasks are exactly the ones that human will be the most needed for."

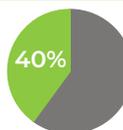
Eric Brynjolfsson, Director of the MIT Initiative on the Digital Economy

[Find out more in this OECD podcast episode](#)

Between 2005 and 2016,

**40% of jobs created**

were in digitally intensive sectors



Yet

**6 out of 10 workers**

in OECD countries lack basic computer skills



## What skills are **needed for jobs today?**

As the demand for digital skills increases, so too is the demand for soft skills such as communication, teamwork, problem solving and self-management, which are uniquely human and harder to automate. There will also be other skills needs, not yet identified, for jobs we haven't even begun to imagine.

Today,

**35% of workers**



feel they lack the skills needed to do their current tasks and want more training

**40% of employers** in G20 countries



report difficulties in finding the right people to fill jobs



“A lot of my job is just soft skills and people skills – every job requires these skills!”

*Caroline, 37, architect, United States*

“We should talk a lot less about “education” and a lot more about people taking ownership over what, how, where and when they learn. It’s not about filling you up once, for a lifetime, but more about giving students the social skills and the capacity to continue learning throughout their lives.”

*Andreas Schleicher, OECD Director for Education and Skills*

[Find out more in this OECD podcast episode](#)

## Schools have a **vital role to play**

Learning systems must help students to gain the right skills, both soft and hard ones, and set them on a path of lifelong learning. [Nearly 9 out of 10 students](#) surveyed in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) said that they felt school had taught them things that might be useful in a job and 3 out of 4 said that school had helped prepare them for adult life. Nevertheless, PISA data also shows that, on average, 1 in 5 students in OECD countries lacks basic proficiency in science, reading and mathematics. Yet [nearly 25% of students](#) expect to go straight from high school to a job. Learning systems must catch up, ensuring that everyone leaves school with strong skills so that they can make a smooth transition into work and adulthood.

OECD data shows that [access to digital technology](#) in schools is high, although [about a quarter](#) of heads of school say that their schools lack adequate digital technology for teaching. What’s more, it appears that while students use personal devices regularly at school, primarily for social reasons, the student use of computers, laptops or tablets in schools is [not widespread](#) and has even fallen in many countries. Teachers also report they lack the skills to fully exploit the digital resources available to them or access to training to build their skills.



“It’s hard to keep up with the pace of digitalisation because I lack the equipment needed to teach it. AI, simulation – these are things that require expensive equipment. And fibre optic internet hasn’t reached my university yet.”

*Gabriela, 33, professor of mechanical engineering, Mexico*



in the OECD have received training in the use of ICT for teaching

Further developing their digital skills is one of teachers’ top 3 concerns



## Continuous learning will help people keep up

To keep pace, we will have to change not only what we learn at primary school, but what and how we learn afterwards. In the OECD today, more students than ever have a higher degree: 45% in 2018, compared to 35% in 2008. Those with a degree are still more likely to have a job than those without. Yet many employers say they can't find workers with the skills they need. So is higher education preparing students adequately for the labour market? Is higher education crowding out other pathways to skills offered by vocational and professional programmes? More needs to be done to ensure good matching between skills acquisition and labour market needs—and as these needs evolve, we must be prepared to continue learning throughout our lives.



Sectors in high demand may struggle to find the skills they need



Only **14% of graduates** earned a degree in engineering, manufacturing and construction



Only **4% of graduates** earned a degree in information and communication technologies



“I'm always looking to learn new things in order to better understand what the job market is looking for. Constantly learning!”

*Daniela, 23, accountant, Mexico*

## Are we ready?

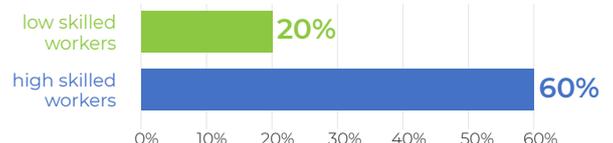
Continuing education and training may meet the needs of both workers and employers, but are those who need it most getting the training? What do countries, employers and unions need to do to help people keep learning and acquire the skills they'll need for good quality jobs in tomorrow's world of work?



Only **2 out of 5 adults** take part in education and training in any given year overall



% of workers participating in training (OECD)



## What's working? What needs to be done?

Some countries are well on their way, building programmes to prepare people for the future of work. France, for example, grants people the right to paid training leave, which is portable and transferable between employers. Finland bases its public procurement of training courses for the unemployed on estimated regional labour market needs. Spain is piloting an initiative for SMEs in developing apprenticeship programmes and matching available vocational qualifications with firms' skill needs. In Canada and the Czech Republic, Sector Skills Councils play a key co-ordination role, while independent bodies such as national skills advisory groups help improve coordination in Denmark, Finland and Germany.

But there is still much to be done to ensure that skills needs are identified and met, and that no one is left behind:

- School systems must equip students to learn throughout their lives and strengthen the resources and training available to teachers
- Substantial investment is needed to retrain people at risk of being displaced by automation
- Training should be targeted at those most in need to address inequalities



## Where to look next

→ **OECD resources**

[oecd.org/education/2030-project](https://oecd.org/education/2030-project)

[oecd.org/employment/outlook/](https://oecd.org/employment/outlook/)  
[oecd.org/skills](https://oecd.org/skills)

→ **Campaign website**

[oe.cd/fow](https://oe.cd/fow)

