MORAR HPI

AI Meets Collaboration

A global survey reveals employee perceptions of advanced technologies and virtual assistants in the workplace.

Advanced technology is having a growing impact on our everyday lives. Adoption of advanced technologies and virtual assistants such as Amazon Echo and Google Home are becoming more mainstream in homes. Meanwhile organizations worldwide are increasingly looking at how to implement similar technologies to improve productivity, speed workflows, and increase collaboration among employees, business partners, and even customers.

To date, little is known about perceptions of technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) and virtual assistants in the workplace and how they will impact how we work in the future.

Cisco engaged Morar HPI, a research and strategy consultancy, to conduct a global study with enterprise workers and gain more in-depth insights of AI's impact in the workplace, identifying differences in global perspectives, generations, and functions within organizations.

This white paper focuses on four core themes that emerged from the global survey:

- Technology optimism
- Bots as co-workers
- Openness to AI
- Security

1 Technology optimism

Globally, most workers express optimism that advanced technology will lead to more jobs and help people free up time and be more productive.

Increasing workplace productivity with AI

Consumer adoption of virtual assistants is growing, with 85% of workers surveyed saying they have used virtual assistants in their personal life. However, just 75% have used them for work-related tasks, suggesting that there are opportunities to do more to embed this technology into work streams.

But why should enterprises care? The study points to four clear team benefits. Specifically, virtual assistants help to increase employee:

- Productivity
- Focus on high-value tasks
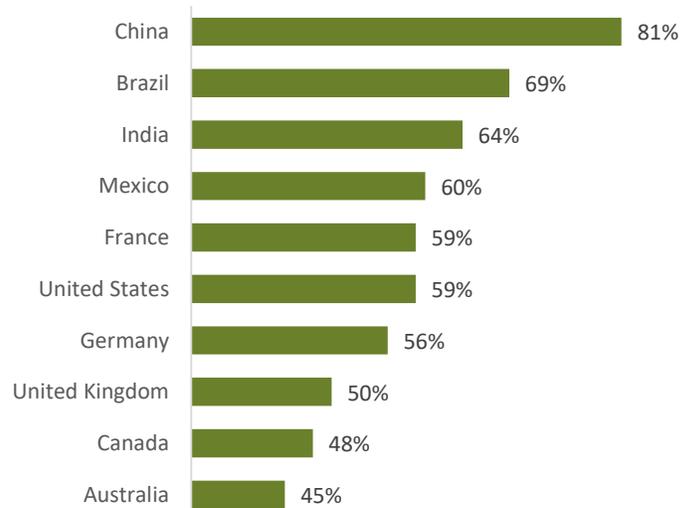- Creativity
- Job satisfaction

In particular, millennial workers are highly responsive to using AI in the workplace. In fact, 90% of workers under 30 say they have tried conversational AI systems like Siri or Alexa in their home lives; 64% say they could not live without them now; and more than 70% believe virtual assistants could lead to major improvements in their work lives.

That is not to say other generations lack interest in the technology. In fact, nearly 50% of all workers cite frustration that they cannot use this technology at work today.

Technology to benefit global job creation

Globally, six of ten workers express optimism that technology advances will lead to more job creation than reduction. Workers in China, Brazil, and India were most optimistic.

Increasing productivity ranked as the greatest team benefit.

Increase productivity — 57%

Increase focus — 51%

Increase creativity — 35%

Increase satisfaction — 33%

Respondents who agree that advanced technology will create more jobs than it eliminates, by country.

Country	Percentage
China	81%
Brazil	69%
India	64%
Mexico	60%
France	59%
United States	59%
Germany	56%
United Kingdom	50%
Canada	48%
Australia	45%

Using AI to solve meeting pain points

It is clear that meetings carry many pain points for global workforces: 94% of workers say they dread meetings. The top two complaints:

- Meetings that run longer than needed (49%)
- Finding a meeting time that works for everyone (39%)

Enterprises have an opportunity to address these pain points by implementing advanced technology. Doing so can help to improve productivity and overall satisfaction. With the majority of workers spending hours each day in meetings, the potential benefits of these technologies are significant.

The study asked workers to consider both individual work and meeting tasks, revealing that the vast majority of respondents believe that AI could provide improvements, in turn creating direct benefits on job satisfaction, productivity, and additional time to focus on higher-value tasks.

95%
of workers believe that artificial intelligence can improve tasks such as scheduling meetings, taking notes, or typing documents and emails.

2 Bots as co-workers?

Across the board, workers indicate they'd accept bots as part of their "teams." Even those who say they don't trust AI say they would gladly delegate their least favorite tasks to technology, such as scheduling meetings and taking notes.

Improve, not replace, humans

Improving productivity is a key opportunity, even among workers who already have a personal administrative assistant. Indeed of the 58% of workers surveyed (predominantly senior managers) who have an admin, 82% say they would be more productive if they also had a virtual assistant.

Workers expect AI

Sixty-two percent of workers surveyed expect that using voice commands with virtual assistants will fully replace typing on keyboards at some point. The speed at which this technology is becoming common in daily life supports the finding that one in three respondents expect it to happen in the next five years.

62%
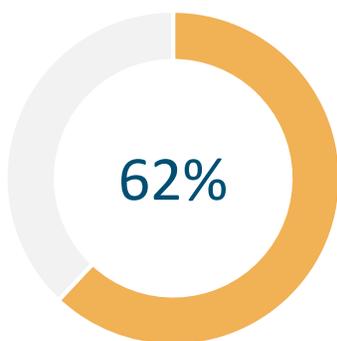
Many workers believe that using voice commands to speak to virtual assistants will eventually replace typing.

Also of interest are specific ways that virtual assistants could support meetings. The overwhelmingly positive response suggests that respondents are ready to adopt this technology in their daily work streams. In particular, respondents show interest in:

| Bots taking an active role in conference calls by removing background noise | 80% |

| Bots taking meeting notes | 77% |

| Using facial recognition to sign in to meetings | 71% |

People don't fear AI

Contrary to what mainstream media may infer, few office workers report that they find AI technology "creepy" or "disturbing." In fact, when provided with the following scenario, reactions are positive:

The next time you walk into an office, the computer recognizes you and knows that you have a call starting soon. It asks "would you like me to join you to your call now?" and then takes action based on your response.

Fewer than 10% say this is "creepy" and just 5% described it as "disturbing." The majority (86%) had only positive reactions, describing the scenario as "productive," "smart," or even "awesome." This indicates that workers are ready for this technology and are looking forward to the benefits of bots and AI.

3 Openness to AI

The study results show that certain personal characteristics likely influence perceptions of AI. Factors that influence how people feel about having machines as teammates include age, personality type, and even affinity for Captain Kirk.

Extroverts and introverts

We investigated the perceptions of different personality types to reveal advocacy and interest in advanced technologies such as AI and virtual assistants. The results reveal that people who are more extroverted, trusting, and open to trying new things are much more open to AI.

Respondents who agree that advanced technology will create more jobs than it eliminates.
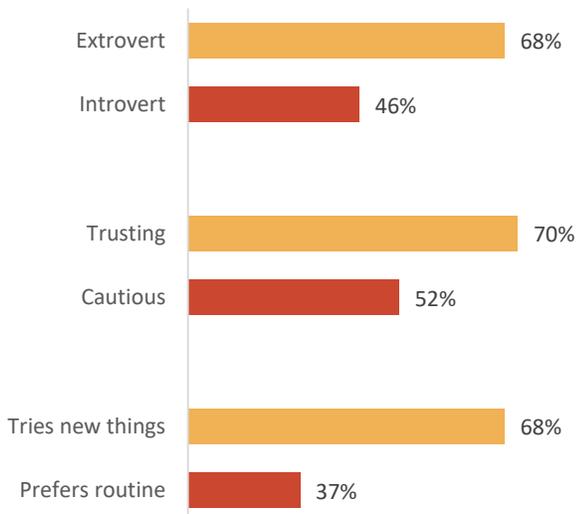
Overall, extroverts report higher current usage of virtual assistants than do introverts. Extroverts are slightly more enthusiastic about working alongside bots (55% vs. 47%). The gap is slightly wider for risk takers vs. those who consider themselves risk-avoiders (59% vs. 45%).

Personal characteristics likely influence how people feel about AI in the workplace.

Adoption varies by age

Only 10% of workers under 30 reports that they don't currently use virtual assistants such as Siri or Cortana in their personal lives. This jumps to nearly 20% of workers over 30. This difference suggests that the millennial workforce will likely adopt this technology earlier than their counterparts.

Personality types also affect these generational differences. Among respondents under 30, the study reveals that extroverts are much more likely to use virtual assistants on a daily basis (35%) than introverts (25%).

Techies and Trekkies

Attitudes toward technology and tech-related interests also influence openness to advanced technology in the workplace. For example, the desire for a virtual assistant was highest among those who reported having the most weekly screen time.

Among this group, 55% agree they would rather have a virtual assistant than other workplace perks such as a weekly free lunch. The same was true for those who intended to buy the Apple iPhone X as soon as it was available (67%).

Even popular culture plays a role. For example, 78% of respondents who describe themselves as *Star Trek* or *Star Wars* fans say they are "excited" about the possibility that AI could help them perform better at work. This compared to 68% of non-fans.

Respondents who feel positively toward meeting bots and virtual assistants.

Country	%
Mexico	97%
China	96%
India	93%
France	90%
Germany	89%
Brazil	88%
United Kingdom	83%
Australia	83%
Canada	83%
United States	81%

78%
of workers who identified as *Star Trek* or *Star Wars* fans are "excited" that AI could help their work performance.
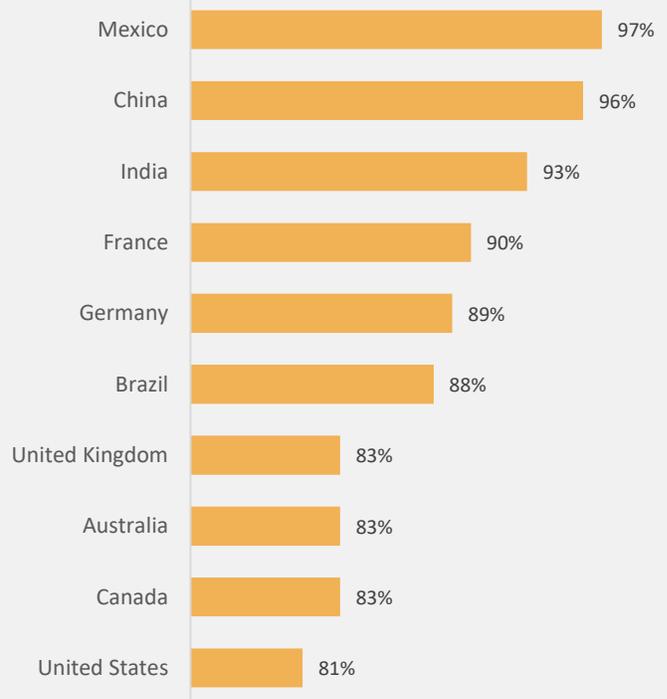
Regional perspectives

Overall there is high advocacy for virtual assistant technology and meeting bots in the workplace. Some regions are particularly positive. Fewer than 5% of respondents in Mexico and China report negative feelings toward the technologies, while the vast majority agree that they are "excited" or "can't wait" to incorporate the technology into their work life.

While overall still positive, workers in the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada were least excited about this technology with around 20% not interested or indifferent.

4 Security

Despite the excitement around the possibilities, enterprises will need to overcome concerns and challenges to support widespread acceptance. We have already revealed that advocacy is driven by age and personality types, which could pose challenges for teams made up of diverse generations, personalities, and nationalities.

Regardless of their comfort level with the concept of AI at work, 65% of workers identify security as a key concern and 64% mention privacy. In an age of online fraud, hacking, and data breaches, people are wary of embedding this type of technology into their work lives.

For the respondents who are not interested in using virtual assistants at work, 42% identify security and privacy as the top two reasons.
The challenge is for companies to overcome these barriers to entry, in particular ensuring users are aware of the privacy and security measures taken to protect their data.

65%
of global workers cite security as a concern when using technology such as virtual assistants.

Conclusions

Advanced technology is already embedded in our daily lives, but it's still in relative infancy when it comes to workplace adoption. However, consumer adoption of technology and AI tools such as virtual assistants drive more interest. As adoption increases and innovation continues, they have potential to make us more efficient, productive, and creative, changing our roles and approach to work.

Organizations that want to excel need to build upon current technologies in new ways. This study reveals the positive impact that technologies such as virtual assistants can provide. Improving productivity and job satisfaction are two possible outcomes that enterprises may not have expected. The benefits build a strong case for investment – creating jobs while making current jobs better.

Emerging solutions

Cisco is one of the vendors at the forefront of advancing collaboration experiences with machine learning and AI capabilities in its Cisco Spark Platform. In a recent article, Cisco Senior Vice President Rowan Trollope[1] articulated a vision on how meetings would be advanced with AI over the next ten years to drive even greater enterprise value:

- **Stage 1: Command and control** voice response helps with meeting setup.
- **Stage 2: Natural-language understanding** AI bots have some knowledge of context and can assist with meeting management such as sending information to attendees.
- **Stage 3: Semantic understanding with domain expertise**. After a meeting, AI can help summarize the key topics.
- **Stage 4: Intelligent team member** AI can "read the room" to understand participant needs and group dynamics, and synthesize data to help the team.
- **Stage 5: Team and strategic intelligent** AI is aware of an organization's goals and worker's skills, and can make personnel suggestions.

Its clear that no only are employees ready for AI in the workplace, but there are a growing number of vendors who introducing enterprise class solutions for businesses to take the next step to capturing greater value in their businesses.

Next steps

Evaluate opportunities to enhance your work environment with AI enhanced meetings.

Explore collaboration platforms such as Cisco Spark which integrate AI and digital assistants into collaboration tools built for the enterprise.

[1.] "The 5 Levels of Meeting AI," by Rowan Trollope, Cisco

Thank you for reading

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