



# OPINION: AI IS COMING FOR YOUR JOB? - JOHN STOSSEL

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The media warn, "Artificial intelligence will replace millions of jobs."

In San Francisco, Teamsters protest, demanding the government "protect" their jobs. In my new video, they chant, "Do not have these self-driving vehicles on San Francisco streets, taking jobs!"

They're complaining about the Waymo driverless taxis already in use in part of San Francisco (and Phoenix).

The union is right to worry. Robot cars don't get tired. They don't take lunch breaks. They don't drink or get distracted. Self-driving cars will replace many delivery-driver jobs, taxi jobs, Uber jobs and truck driver jobs.

Texas is building a special highway with a lane just for self-driving trucks.

The idea isn't just to save money by having machines do what people do now, but to get human drivers off the road entirely.

Safety advocates want that, because despite publicity over occasional robot-car crashes, we humans make many more mistakes. Robot-cars will save thousands of lives.

But when I said that in this column last month, some of you said government officials will soon use "safety" as an excuse to outlaw human driving.

"Regulators will try to ban traditional cars," writes orangecrate26. "You're not taking my Mustang, or my guns."

Government will have "total control of your movement," writes another. "No movement at all if you think the wrong way."

It's a threat I hadn't considered.

Because lots of you like driving, and politicians fear upsetting big voting groups, I assumed government wouldn't ban human driving altogether.

But I've been wrong about state intrusions before.

What I haven't been wrong about is the job loss.

Some people *will* lose jobs because of AI.

But history suggests that most will find better jobs.

More than 90% of America's workers once worked on farms. Better farm equipment replaced most of those jobs. Today, only about 1% of Americans work on farms.



Are the former farmers out of work? No, most found other jobs, better jobs -- jobs less demanding and dangerous than farming.

There were once half a million typists in America. Nearly all those jobs are gone.

So are thousands of phone and elevator operator jobs.

Bank tellers were replaced by ATM machines and online banking.

Video rental stores were killed by streaming services.

But after those people lost jobs, there was no surge in unemployment.

In fact, over the past 15 years, unemployment has dropped. Wages, adjusted for inflation, are up. No union predicted that.

It happened because, as machines took jobs that humans once did, people searched for different, better work. Most found it.

Thousands found better paying jobs in fields like education, hospitality and health care.

This creative destruction makes almost everyone better off. Although you won't convince the unions.

Stossel TV Executive Producer Maxim Lott asked the Teamster boss, "In the future, there'll be new jobs we can't even imagine. You buy that?"

"I don't," he replied, "because AI's scary, and it's here to stay."

It is scary and here to stay. Fortunately, many people Lott interviewed see the benefit of that.

One points out, "We got machines that pick things up. We no longer needed strong people to pick things up. We don't say, let's not develop the forklift!"

AI will create lots of disruptive job change, probably more drastic than anything in the past. But history suggests that this change is probably good news.

As former AI executive Alex Roy points out, "For every new technology, there has been someone who said, 'stop this.' But it can't be stopped!"

That's a good thing, he says. "Think about how many businesses don't exist yet that could and will, when Robo-taxis are ubiquitous."

My brain is too small to know what those jobs will be. But they will come.

Of course, it's possible that AI robots decide that we humans are in their way and just kill us. That does worry some AI researchers. Then all bets are off.

But short of that, the AI job change will mostly be a good thing.

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