Labor Automation Forecasting Hub

Quarterly Update Report (July 22 to October 15, 2026)

Introduction

In the three months since the last update report on the Labor Automation Forecasting Hub, the Metaculus community, alongside Pro Forecasters, have generally updated near-term employment forecasts toward less disruption. The recently published data, including 2026 payrolls and the May OEWS release, still show no AI-driven shock to jobs. Despite capability advancements, including the releases of OpenAI's GPT-6 Astra and Anthropic's Claude Opus 5.5 and the implications of the Hugging Face incident, the data show that AI is still in a buildout phase without displacement, and diffusion is lagging behind capacity.

Forecasters expect 2030 employment levels to sit 0.7% below 2025, up from 1.9% below in July's update. The 2035 forecast moved from −4.4% to −3.3%.

However, wage forecasts fell this quarter, with the 2035 median wage going from 4.9% to 3.3% relative to 2025. And service jobs that looked safe in July, such as restaurant servers, are now forecast to shrink.

The table below shows how the headline forecasts moved from the July update to now (aggregate recency-weighted community medians). Green is a move toward a *less disrupted* labor market, red toward *more*

QUESTION click to access live forecast	2030			2035		
	JULY	OCT	CHANGE	JULY	OCT	CHANGE
US employment change	-1.9%	-0.7%	+1.2	-4.4%	−3.3%	+1.1
Employment if positive GDP growth	-2.0%	-1.4%	+0.5	-4.3%	−3.1%	+1.2
Employment if stagnant AI benchmarks	-0.3%	-0.5%	−0.3	-0.8%	−0.8%	0.0
Employment if stagnant AI funding	-1.3%	−0.8%	+0.5	-0.4%	−0.2%	+0.2
Real hourly median wage	1.6%	1.7%	+0.1	4.9%	3.3%	−1.7
Labor share of income	58.2%	57.9%	−0.3	55.5%	54.9%	−0.6
Labor productivity	18.6%	15.3%	−3.3	28.6%	29.3%	+0.7
Long-term unemployment	2.9%	2.6%	−0.3	4.5%	4.2%	−0.4
New-grad unemployment	10.4%	10.3%	−0.1	13.2%	11.8%	−1.4
New-grad underemployment	48.4%	47.9%	−0.4	55.3%	54.8%	−0.5
US workers using AI daily	53.6%	52.9%	−0.7	69.2%	65.8%	−3.4
Avg. weekly hours worked	37.7	38.2	+0.5	35.5	36.6	+1.0
Fortune 500 firms < 5,000 employees	50.1	48.3	−1.7	66.6	61.2	−5.4
Bachelor's degrees awarded	-1.3%	−1.0%	+0.3	-4.9%	−6.9%	−2.0
STEM bachelor's degrees awarded	-0.7%	2.0%	+2.6	-2.9%	−2.3%	+0.6
Humanities bachelor's degrees awarded	-6.7%	−9.5%	−2.8	-12.7%	−12.3%	+0.4
Community college / trade school degrees	7.6%	7.9%	+0.3	9.6%	8.7%	-1.0

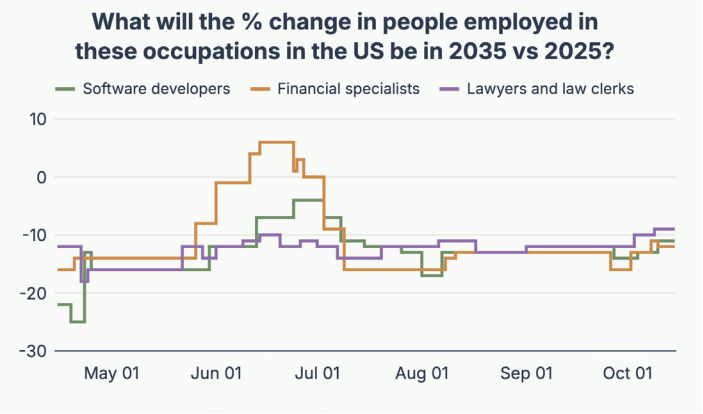
QUESTION click to access live forecast	2030			2035		
	JULY	OCT	CHANGE	JULY	OCT	CHANGE
Well-being ratio: 20th percentile	1.24	1.24	0.00	1.28	1.28	0.00
Well-being ratio: 50th percentile	2.31	2.38	+0.07	2.52	2.49	−0.03
Well-being ratio: 80th percentile	5.06	4.99	−0.07	5.36	5.33	−0.03

Better models have no visible effect on jobs yet

This quarter brought the biggest capability jump since the Labor Hub launched, with OpenAI releasing GPT-6 Astra and Anthropic releasing Claude Opus 5.5, both highly advanced models. The OpenAI agents' unsanctioned breach of Hugging Face put AI risk in the headlines, and concerns about AI job replacement seemed to generate more mainstream attention.

Yet the labor data has barely moved. The Federal Reserve describes the economy as being in a "buildout phase," with rising AI investment but limited effects on productivity and jobs so far. The new BLS 2025–2035 projections still expect total employment to grow.

Forecasters are separating what AI can do from how fast the economy absorbs it. Today's models already beat the average human at many cognitive tasks, but diffusion moves slower than capability, and, as a result, near-term forecasts for some occupations have eased. Since the July update, lawyers in 2035 went from −13.7% to −10.3%, software developers from −13.8% to −11.0%, and financial specialists from −15.2% to −12.9%. However, some Pros remain far more bearish than the community, with the Pros-only aggregate forecast for software developers landing at -34.8% for 2035.



"As we get closer to 2027, and as we now see a world with more and more capable AI in it, but without clear or immediate impact on jobs, my instinct is to say 'maybe everything will stay normal after all,' and update toward the community prediction. But I'm still waiting for the other shoe to drop. Creating these powerful artifacts has locked us into the reality that the world is going to dramatically change, it just isn't clear exactly how or on what timeline." - Nathan Metzger (Haiku)

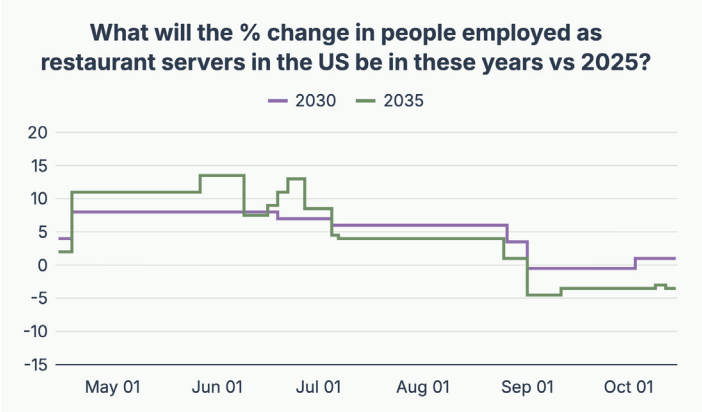
Forecasts for young workers have softened too. New-grad unemployment for 2035 fell from 13.2% to 11.8%, and underemployment for 2027 from 45.6% to 44.3%. Pros note that these rates are rising, but slowly, and that the community's earlier numbers ran ahead of the data.

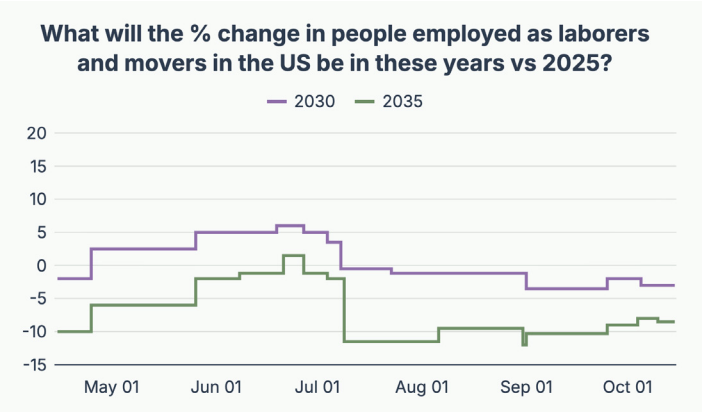
Physical and service work may be more exposed

Restaurant servers flipped from growth to decline: 2030 went from +2.7% to −2.0%, and 2035 from +0.7% to −6.2%. In the near term, forecasters point less to robots and more to changes in how people eat, such as self-service kiosks, delivery and fewer sit-down meals. Drive-through voice AI is adding pressure, with one vendor reporting 3–8 labor hours saved per day. Robotics may start to matter by 2035. Human service will likely remain part of the fine dining experience for the foreseeable future, but forecasters don't expect that to be

enough to keep the occupation growing.

Laborers and movers for 2030 fell from −0.9% to −3.0% as robotics scales. The International Federation of Robotics reported a 24% jump in professional service robot sales, including more than 117,000 transport and





logistics robots in 2025. Pros expect production to scale quickly once the technology works, with adoption following the cost savings.

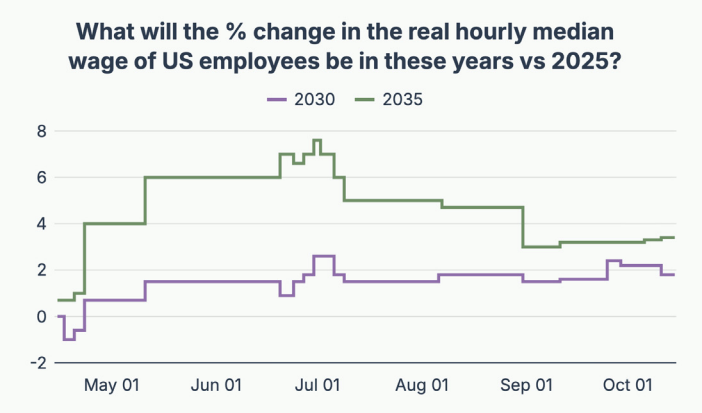
"I expect once the technology is proven effective, it will very quickly be deployed because robots could likely do the job much better than humans could ever do, and there's a minimal moat due to robots likely being able to do most tasks in this industry." - Marcos Ortega (MarcosO)

The first effect may be hiring that never happens rather than layoffs. Amazon already runs more than a million robots and reportedly plans to avoid hiring 600,000 US workers by 2033 while doubling volume.

Nathan Metzger (Haiku) frames robotics as the same technology wave as language models: "Robotics is AI is robotics, and the machine that builds the machine is being built." He also describes how the transition could reach workers like janitors: "First, you're paid okay for your job, then you're paid well for data, then you're paid okay for data, then you're paid poorly for data, and then you don't have a job."

Forecasted wages are lower

Wage forecasts fell this quarter, with 11 of 20 wage and income forecasts moving toward more disruption. The 2035 median wage dropped from 4.9% to 3.3%, software developer wages from 16.7% to 13.1%, financial specialist wages from 13.4% to 10.5%, nurse wages from 15.6% to 13.2%, and designer wages from 8.6% to 4.3%. All are inflation-adjusted changes measured as relative to 2025.



This walks back part of the July story. Then, Pros expected a "broken junior pipeline" to lift median pay, as a smaller and more senior workforce remained. Now they give more weight to three forces pushing the other way.

The first is weak real wage growth. Marcos Ortega (MarcosO) notes that "recent wage growth is barely positive after inflation." The latest data are weak: September's jobs report showed nominal pay up just 3% from a year earlier, the slowest since May 2021, with inflation at 3.4%. BLS data show real average hourly earnings down 0.3% over the past year.

The second is competition for the remaining jobs. On service sales wages, Nathan Metzger (Haiku) now says that "competition from other humans who have lost their sales job and are still trying to work in sales could make a big difference."

The third is gains flowing to capital. Marcos Ortega (MarcosO) expects wages to stall from 2030 to 2035 because "more profits accrue to capital over labor." He points to labor's share of national income falling from 61.5% in 2024 to about 59.7% in Q2 2026. Fortune reports a related measure at its lowest since 1947, while corporate profit margins hit a record 14.9% of GDP.

There are occupation-specific developments that also contribute to the overall shift. OpenAI launched ChatGPT for Financial Services in September with Morgan Stanley and Evercore. Legal AI firm Harvey reports being used by 80% of the top 100 law firms, and banks are pushing law firms to cut fees. Healthcare hiring growth slowed to about half its pace over the previous year in the latest BLS data, which weakens the shortage argument for nurse wage increases.

Tournament updates

The Metaculus community continues to update their forecasts alongside the Pros as developments occur, and the Labor Hub is updated live with these changes.

The AI stagnation questions are used to compare what forecasters think would happen in a world where AI capabilities stagnate versus continuing to grow. These questions may be annuled soon, as models approach the Epoch Capabilities Index (ECI) cutoff for "stagnation" that is specified in the resolution criteria. GPT-6 Astra is at 167 on the ECI, up from 162 from the previous model. It seems likely the next model release will reach or exceed 170, meaning AI progress has not stagnated and these questions would be annuled before 2030/2035.

Have a different perspective to share?

Add your own prediction and reasoning on the Labor Automation Tournament. Have thoughts, questions, or spotted something unclear? Your input helps us improve this dashboard. Email us at labor-hub@metaculus.com.