

Increasing wealth inequality is one of the [many concerns](#) that AI might bring about. If things go well, future AI is expected to make humanity substantially richer in addition to [solving many of our most enduring challenges](#), but this could happen at the cost of heightened inequality.

Many historically disruptive inventions (e.g., the printing press, the telephone, the internet) have substantially improved the human condition, but on the way have led to small groups gaining a lot of power. If future AI is left unregulated, this dynamic might be perpetuated at an unprecedented scale.

The world's economy employs many knowledge workers, and much of that work is done through language. Human capital is traditionally the bottleneck on this work, but advanced language models offer a way to potentially remove that bottleneck. As a result, many of these knowledge work jobs may be [disrupted or replaced entirely](#) by language models or future AIs. Generative image models may impact artists and designers, customer service jobs may be lost to generative voice models, and future categories of AI models may threaten careers that seem safe today. A report from Goldman Sachs suggests that AI could replace the equivalent of [300 million full time jobs](#). Without well-designed programs to retrain workers and redistribute the productivity gains of AI, that increase in economic value might be captured by a small number of corporations or wealthy individuals.

Social programs like [universal basic income](#) might help mitigate some of the effects of technological unemployment, but they would probably not have much effect on the scale of wealth inequality. Even if the least advantaged members of a society have a reasonable standard of living, it has been [argued](#) that [large levels](#) of economic inequality are intrinsically bad, regardless of the level of material wealth of the poorest people. This inequality can be addressed by [the usual mechanisms](#), but an option more specific to AI would be companies attempting to build AGI committing to a [windfall clause](#) could probably make a larger dent in the inequality.

These are the types of problems that we will have to face if we ever build [post-scarcity economies](#) — but let's make sure we [don't all die](#) before we get there.

Further reading:

- Geoffrey Hinton shares his thoughts in an [interview](#)

Alternative phrasings

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- [Isn't the real concern technological unemployment?](#)

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