

# Forget Immigrants. Technology is Killing Jobs

The elevator attendant asking you what floor you want. The gas station service attendant wanting to know whether you would like your oil checked. The switchboard operator inquiring who you would like to call.

These are sounds you do not hear anymore. Add to that the whirring sound of the seamstress, and soon, the voice of the non-kiosk cashier asking you for your fast food order, and the taxi driver in his not-yet driverless car asking for your destination.

My local Lowe's store just got rid of most of its cashiers when it installed self-checkout stations. Whoever delivered our daily paper was just put out of a job because they now send it in the regular mail. And now, on the grander scale, retail stores are beginning to close because of online shopping, a phenomenon some are calling, ominously, the "retail bubble." It is a trend for which there is no end in sight.

While everyone is talking about how immigrants are taking our jobs, no one is talking about the real job-killer: technology.

Even out-sourcing cannot compete with technology in the loss of jobs sweepstakes. Yes, many of our jobs have been moved overseas, but if we tried to move them all back, we would find out very quickly that many of them are jobs that simply do not exist anymore, made obsolete by some machine.

It turns out that the nineteenth-century English workers who, according to urban legend, destroyed weaving machines in protest over the fact that they were taking their jobs—and who became known as ["Luddites"](#)—were right.

Well, maybe not *our* jobs. But at least *their* jobs. *They* were blue collar workers, those who were at the heart of the Trump constituency. These are the people whose towns have been abandoned, and whose communities have been desolated.

The counter-argument used to be that whatever jobs were taken by machines [would be made up by new jobs](#). But that was before machines started making machines.

Then there is “retraining,” the idea of which is that we are going to take riveters and make them into programmers—or something like that. At least that is the kind of thing they’re going to have to do to make many people employable in an economy that will increasingly require higher-level skills than many people have.

The opportunities for success in the modern economy are increasingly limited to those who already have money to invest, those with technical skills, and [those with communication skills](#) (most jobs in tech industries are marketing and customer service jobs). But all of these are hard to come by for the large blue-collar portion of the population. Capital usually comes from your family, and tech and communication skills come from a good education, which is more rarely found these days in our public schools.

And this is why, despite [a good jobs report late last week](#), there will continue to be an employment crisis among the middle and underclass, a crisis that could eventually manifest itself in events far more earth-shattering than the mere election of a president.