

# 2018 Challenges Ahead

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**ATL**

## REGIONAL ISSUE

# Planning for Increasing Automation in the Workforce

## BACKGROUND

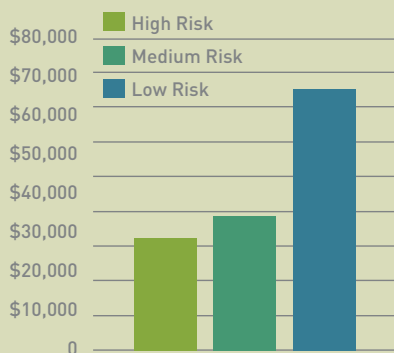
The Atlanta region is one of the fastest-growing in the nation, but the long-term economic success of a large segment of our population is at risk because of the rise of automation in the workplace.

Several of the metro area's biggest job categories, employing many thousands of residents – including retail clerks, logistics laborers, fast-food employees, office workers and accountants – could be replaced as more automation technologies come online. Evidence of this trend is visible today, from automated ticketing kiosks at airports to warehouses and production lines where robots perform the bulk of the labor.

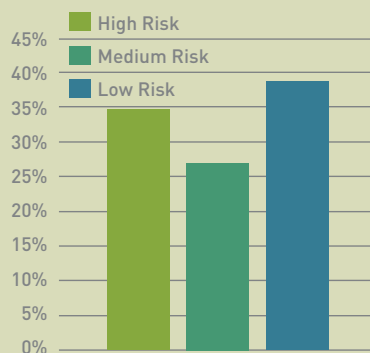
About 62% of metro Atlanta employment is at “high” or “medium” risk over the next 20 years, by one estimate. Automation is disproportionately affecting jobs held by younger, lower-paid, and less-educated workers, exacerbating the trend toward stagnant wages and rising income inequality.

Some professions aren't likely to be replaced any time soon, such as physical therapists, dentists, and other occupations that require a “human touch.” But even well-paid, highly trained workers in health care and other industries may not be exempt in the long run.

Researchers and high-tech companies are racing to develop artificial intelligence and other technologies to perform complex tasks such as voice and image recognition, medical diagnoses, vehicle navigation, robo-investment advice, and routine legal work.



Mean Wage by Risk of Automation



Share of Employment by Risk of Automation

## REGIONAL PLAYERS

10-County WorkSource Metro Atlanta  
Technology Association of Georgia  
Metro Atlanta Chamber  
ARC Workforce Solutions Group

## INSIGHTS & INNOVATION

Education and retraining may be the best ways to address automation job losses, many experts say.

Recent data from Burning Glass Technologies indicate that jobs requiring more education or more interaction with humans face the lowest risk from automation. A report from the World Economic Forum said workers “will need to develop new skills to take on very different kinds of jobs, possibly in different industries.”

But some say the fears of job losses are somewhat overblown, noting that previous technological advancements have ultimately created more jobs than they eliminated. A 2016 paper by James Bessen at Boston University noted that “greater productivity might reduce prices and thus increase product demand, offsetting the labor-saving effect.”



Atlanta Regional Commission