

At Davos, AI did not feel like a technology conversation

It felt like a labour conversation that nobody quite wanted to own.



Leaders, CEOs, economists, politicians raising the same questions.

Not whether AI will change work, but who absorbs the impact, and when.

The IMF's warning cut through the noise: **AI is hitting labour markets "like a tsunami"**. Around 60 percent of jobs in advanced economies exposed. Most organisations unprepared. Most governments behind the curve.

That language matters, a tsunami is never gradual, and the escape is to reskill your way out of it in real time.

And yet, listening to the debates, there was a strange disconnect.

Everyone agreed disruption is coming, but few agreed on what disruption really means.

Some voices were optimistic.

They were saying:

1. AI will create new jobs.
2. More meaningful jobs.
3. Higher productivity. Better outcomes.

The others were far more cautious warning use that we are entering territory we have never navigated before. **That once AI crosses certain thresholds, historical comparisons stop helping.**

What to me was not the disagreement, but as an assumption that this is still a future discussion.

Why? Because the data already shows something shifting.

Job postings in AI-exposed roles are falling sharply. Early-career workers are taking the hit first. **Hiring is slowing, not because work disappeared, but because fewer humans are being added to do it.**

That distinction matters because employment is not being replaced in a dramatic wave, but it is being quietly squeezed.

The Uncomfortable Signal

Data shows that **workers are not rushing to adapt. They are freezing.**

Surveys show rising AI usage alongside falling confidence. People are staying put. “Job hugging”. Less mobility. More anxiety. Not because they hate AI, but because they do not trust how it is being introduced or how decisions are being made about them.

At the same time, recruiters are doubling down on AI:

- Automated screening.
- Algorithmic shortlists.
- Faster exclusion.

So, on one side, AI decides who gets hired.

On the other, workers feel less able to influence the outcome.

That for me is not a skills gap, that is a trust gap. Is AI seen as “the enemy”?

What The Discussion Is Not Considering

Here is where I think the debate needs to be more honest.

AI does not need to replace entire jobs to replace people.

If it removes 30 to 40 percent of tasks, as some argue, it still reshapes headcount decisions. One person with AI support replaces two without. Teams shrink without announcing layoffs. Entry points disappear. Apprenticeships become almost unnecessary.

This is just the operational logic. I had that debate 20 years ago, when I entered university to study computer science and information management.

And it **explains why so many organisations report no financial return from AI yet.** Not because AI is the wrong investment, but because it is being **used defensively**:

- To **contain cost.**
- To **pause hiring.**
- To **delay expansion.**

That tension was everywhere at Davos.

- High investment.

- Low confidence.
- Rising anxiety.

AI becomes the justification, not the cause

And without deliberate choices, the outcome seems predictable:

- Less opportunity at the bottom.
- More pressure in the middle.
- Concentration of advantage at the top.

That is not inevitable, but it is the default path in a capitalist society.

If this is going to be a real transition, not a slow erosion of trust, we need a different conversation.

- About pacing.
- About accountability.
- About where humans must remain in the loop, not because they are better, but because societies need them to be there.

Davos showed the awareness is rising.

To me the real debate has not really started yet, and that, to me, is the real risk.

Sources:

1. [Davos WEF 2026: 7 Brutal AI Truths Leaders Must Face](#)
2. [Davos 2026: AI 'tsunami' will leave young workers & middle class at risk, warns IMF chief](#)
3. [BlackRock's Larry Fink and Nvidia's Jensen Huang discuss AI and labor market at Davos](#)
4. [At Davos, Business Leaders Seek a Human-Centered AI Future](#)
5. [AI at Davos 2026: From work impact to Europe's place. Here's what the tech leaders hope and fear](#)
6. [AI Layoffs and Job Market Anxiety Rise According To Experts At Davos](#)

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