

Social and Demographic Trends

1. The Graying

Worldwide, the population of people over age 65 is 3 times smaller than the population of those under age 5. By 2050, that statistic will reverse making the over age 65 population 3 times greater than the under age 5 population. Historically, world population distributions have taken the shape of a pyramid with the largest population being in the youngest age categories and narrowing as you go up in age, making the oldest age category the smallest. In the U.S., longer life expectancies and lower overall birth rates are morphing that pyramid into a rectangle. As a result, by 2060 there will be almost as many people over age 85 as there are under age five. Each day in 2019, roughly 10,000 Baby Boomers will turn 65 and begin collecting Social Security.

2. Close Quarters

Approximately 54% of people worldwide now live in cities, up from 30% in 1950. The United Nations and the International Organization for Migration both estimate that around 3 million people are moving to cities every week. This trend is more mature in the United States. Today, 82% of North Americans live in urban areas and are increasingly concentrated in mid-sized and large cities. In 2010, 41 urban areas in the United States housed more than 1 million people, up from 12 areas in 1950 and projected to grow to 53 by 2030. The increasing concentration of industry expertise and wealth into specific cities is also driving people towards fewer, larger cities in the United States and other developed economies.

3. New Neighbors

Over the last 50 years, immigration and declining birth rates among whites has had a significant impact on the racial makeup of the nation. More than 40 million immigrants have arrived since 1965; half of whom have been Hispanic, and 30 percent Asian. By 2050, about 37 percent of the U.S. population will have immigrated to this country—the largest share in its history. This shift will make the proportion of immigrants to native-born citizens in the U.S. similar to the ratio at the dawn of the 20th century. One immediate consequence of the uptick in immigration since the 1960s is seen in the racial makeup of the Millennial generation—those currently 20-35 years old—who are the most racially diverse generation in American history, at just 60 percent white.

4. Alone Again

Loneliness and emotional well-being are being recognized as serious public health concerns. In the last 50 years, rates of loneliness have doubled in the United States. Nearly half of Americans report that they are sometimes or always feeling alone or left out. One in four Americans rarely or never feel as though there are people who really understand them. Only around half of Americans have meaningful in-person social interactions, such as having an extended conversation with a friend or spending quality time with family, on a daily basis. Social media use alone is not a predictor of loneliness; respondents defined as very heavy users of social media have a loneliness score that is not markedly different from the score of those who never use social media.

5. The Rise of Women

Early this decade and for the first time in American history, women became the majority of the workforce for the first time in U.S. history. Most managers are now women too. And for every two men who get a college degree, three women will do the same. Women dominate today's colleges and professional schools—for every two men who will receive a B.A., three women will do the same. Of the 15 job categories projected to grow the most in the next decade in the U.S., all but two are occupied primarily by women.

Technological/Digital Trends

1. Digital Distraction

Our immersion in the digital world is now so total that a recent study says that we pick up our devices every 12 minutes: That is roughly 80 times during one day's waking hours. Two recent studies show that people enjoy social situations less when they keep their smartphones with them. There is also nascent research that suggests that our devices may be rewiring our brains. A famous Stanford University study published in 2009 concluded that multitasking is a myth and that in practice those who juggle online and offline tasks are what one of the authors called "suckers for irrelevancy.... Everything distracts them." Recent research from Pew Research Center found that 15 percent of adults believe it is seriously impairing their focus at work.

2. Seeing the Future

The science of predictive analytics is aimed at making predictions about future outcomes based on historical data and analytics techniques such as statistical modeling and machine learning, and it can generate future insights with a significant degree of precision. With the help of sophisticated predictive analytics tools and models, any organization can now use past and current data to reliably forecast trends and behaviors milliseconds, days, or years into the future.

3. Side by Side

Machine collaboration is the discipline where statistical approaches allow software algorithms to improve the reliability and effectiveness of particular tasks over time with experience. AI technology is moving from large central processing to local devices working on their own out on the edge and ultimately in concert with each other. Worker/machine collaboration is already being used in many organizations. For example, chatbots can answer questions about pay and benefits, freeing up the humans to deal with the issues that demand a personal touch. Machines can serve as an augment to our memories, learning how to help us store and retrieve information quickly. AI-powered virtual assistants can help boost productivity and give workers an edge, facilitating more rapid and efficient collaboration among workers.

4. My New Best Friend

Tech firm Gartner has predicted that in the next decade the average person will have more conversations with bots than with their spouse. While it's AI and machine learning that make it ever more possible to realistically model human conversation, millions of consumers are already deeply immersed in behaviors that make virtual companions the natural next step. Increasingly people are developing "relationships" with personal digital assistants that already extend beyond the merely functional prompting tech companies to hire software engineers with a psychology background to help Siri and Alexa have serious conversations.

5. Special Orders Don't Upset Us

Customers want to easily connect with, interact with, and get service from an organization. Three out of four customers say that valuing their time is the most important thing that an organization can do to provide them with good service. Organizations and service providers must offer customers ways to easily engage with them to foster an ongoing dialogue and relationship that strengthens loyalty and retention. They will look for personalized services that fit their specific situation, and organizations will need to support differentiated, memorable experiences for various customer segments.

Talent/Workforce Trends

1. Gig Workers and Side Hustles

Freelancers, independent contractors and flex workers who make up the gig economy now total nearly 60 million, and they are becoming an ever bigger slice of the American workforce. A recent survey reported that the freelance workforce is growing three times faster than the overall U.S. workforce and that the majority of people will be working independently by 2027. This change has major implications for how the American workforce will look in the years ahead, the role corporations will play in this new landscape, and the technologies that are helping to drive the marketplace shift. In addition, many full-time employees are embracing side hustle to make money each month, pursue their interests or, indulge their entrepreneurial spirit.

2. Mind the Gap

The phenomenon — an inability to find skilled people for open jobs — is frequently referred to as the "skills gap," --- the idea that available workers just don't have the skills employers are looking for today. According to recent Bureau of Labor Statistics data, 6.3 million jobs remain unfilled and even the best recruiters are struggling to fill those roles despite millions of people who "are willing and able to work" across industry, job and geographic lines. To many, there appears to be a dire disparity between the skills that the unemployed job seekers possess, and the skills and expertise that employers need.

3. A Raised Bar

New workforce entrants are more likely to choose their job based on factors other than pay, including:

- A positive workplace culture
- Opportunities for continuous learning
- Well-being programs and incentives
- Workplace flexibility in terms of hours and location

Research by Deloitte found a direct correlation between employers that offered flexible working practices and employee loyalty.

4. Yours, Mine, and Ours

Most work cannot be done sitting at a desk by yourself. The pace of change and the complexity of society are requiring organizations to respond more quickly in an ever shifting environment. The agility to work on multiple initiatives with people who have different work and interaction preferences is required for organizations and teams to successfully complete projects and initiatives and to engage and delight customers.

5. The Right Thing

A Glassdoor study found that 75% of U.S. millennials expect their employers to take a stand on sociopolitical issues. With the workplace becoming more complex with issues such as combating sexual harassment, promising pay equity, promoting sustainability and ensuring corporate ethics taking on more importance.