About IFOW

We research and develop practical ways to improve work and working lives. We do that by understanding how work is changing and how we can make the future better – in the face of technological change and economic turmoil.

Putting people first... To create a society where people are put first, we research the factors and trends that mould the future of work. We share our insights and catalyse change in areas where we can make the most impact, working at the intersection of academia, industry and policy. We want to make sure that technology works for people.

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Institute for the Future of Work (IFOW)

IFOW Team

Dr. Abby Gilbert:
Principal Researcher — Abby completed her PhD in 2015 exploring how ideologies of nature and technology shape state and market regulation of urban development. She has since completed varied research projects in think tanks and in practice.

Sam Atwell:
Head of Operations — Sam holds a Masters in Public Policy from Harvard University where he also taught economics. He is a trustee of a social mobility charity in York and has previously worked in global health and social policy roles.

Professor Jolene Skordis:
Senior Research Fellow — Professor Jolene Skordis is a health and development economist. She is Deputy Director of UCL’s Institute for Global Health and Director of UCL’s Centre for Global Health Economics.

Professor James Hayton:
Senior Research Fellow — Professor James Hayton is a researcher at Warwick Business School. He was previously Dean of the School of Management and Labor Relations, Rutgers University.

Dr Reuben Binns:
Senior Research Fellow — Dr Binns is an Associate Professor of Human Centred Computing, working between computer science, law, and philosophy, focusing on data protection, machine learning and the regulation of and by technology.

Professor Lilian Edwards:
Senior Research Fellow — Professor Lilian Edwards is a frequent speaker on issues of Internet law, intellectual property and artificial intelligence. She is the Professor of Law, Innovation and Society at Newcastle University.

Nyasha Weinberg:
Research Fellow — Nyasha was formerly a fast stream civil servant with experience of agile policy development. Nyasha graduated from Harvard as a Kennedy Scholar with a Masters in Public Policy in 2017.

Dr Jonathan M. Clarke:
Research Fellow — Jonathan is a clinician and academic in the Centre for Mathematics of Precision Healthcare at Imperial College London. His work applies network analysis to examine how health data may be used to address health inequality.

Josh Simons:
Research Fellow — Josh is a Harvard-Kennedy Scholar and a PhD candidate in Government at Harvard University. His research explores the politics and ethics of machine learning.

Josh de Lyon:
Research Fellow — Josh is a PhD candidate at Oxford University and a researcher at the Centre for Economic Performance, London School of Economics. His research looks at the impacts of globalisation and technology on the labour market.

Dr Lu Gram:
Research Fellow — Lu Gram has over 9 years of experience working in global health and development. Lu has published widely and consulted for the World Health Organization, Save the Children, and Harvard Kennedy School of Government.

Katherine Stapleton:
Research Fellow — Katherine is an Economics PhD student at Oxford University. Her research focuses on the impact of technologies on labour markets and global supply chains. Katherine previously worked in Economics Consulting with PwC.

Anna Thomas:
Co-Founder and Director — Anna was formerly a barrister specialising in employment law and appointed a Counsel to the Equality and Human Rights Commission. Anna was Head of Policy for the Future of Work Commission and is a Fellow of IPR and RSA.
IFOW Trustees

Anne-Marie Imafidon MBE:
Trustee — Anne-Marie Imafidon MBE is Head Stemette and co-founder of Stemettes – an award-winning social enterprise inspiring girls and young women into Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics roles.

Helen Mountfield:
Trustee — Helen Mountfield QC is a barrister and former head of Matrix Chambers, now Principal of Mansfield College, Oxford. Previously, Helen was Co-Chair of the Future of Work Commission with Tom Watson MP.

Dr Nadia Danhash:
Trustee — Dr Nadia Danhash is an investment manager and business developer who has led the Royal College of Art’s enterprise and entrepreneurship centre, InnovationRCA, for a decade.

Graeme Nuttall OBE:
Trustee — Graeme Nuttall OBE is a partner at Fieldfisher. He was the Government’s independent adviser on employee ownership and authored 'Sharing Success: The Nuttall Review of Employee Ownership'.

Naomi Climer CBE:
Co-Founder and Co-Chair — Naomi Climer is an engineer and leader who was the first female President of the Institution of Engineering and Technology and was formerly President of Sony Media Cloud Services.

Sir Christopher Pissarides:
Co-Founder and Co-Chair — Sir Christopher Pissarides is the Regius Professor of Economics at the London School of Economics. Chris was awarded the 2010 Nobel Prize in Economics for his work on labour market frictions and technology.

Vision

People are put first

Mission

To make sure that technology works for people

Values

Collaboration: We believe that bringing people together with different perspectives and experiences enriches our understanding and ideas.

Innovation: Through this collaborative approach, we aim to create innovative, practical and inclusive solutions.

Interdisciplinarity: We use the best interdisciplinary research to shape policy and decision-making in government and business to build approaches that put people first.

Equality: Equality is at the heart of good work and social justice. It should be recognised as a guiding principle in technology design - and to shape a future of good work. We develop ways to understand and prevent the adverse effects of cutting-edge workplace technologies on equality and fairness. New data-driven technologies are capable of detecting and mitigating patterns of inequality with great precision. But automated systems can also embed past inequalities into future ways of working. This spiral of decline is hard to reverse because the pace of technological change outstrips our ability to respond, meaning that business and policymakers are playing catch up. This has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic as companies rush to respond to the challenges of hiring and management by increasing use of automated systems through lockdown and beyond. We work with partners to support the
development of new mechanisms and tools to ensure new technologies work to help people who are disadvantaged, not against them.
1. Work

*Investigate the use of data-driven technologies to determine access, terms and quality of work*

**Stakeholder(s)**

**Policymakers**
Our activities help policymakers and businesses create and preserve high quality work, bringing people and their communities together in their day-to-day lives.

**Businesses**

Changing work — We investigate the accelerating use of data-driven technologies to determine access, terms and quality of work. This programme focuses on the effects of technology on health and wellbeing for different people in different places. We develop pathways to good work open to everyone. As people’s working lives are transformed by sweeping technological change fuelled by the COVID-19 pandemic, we seek to understand how work is changing and will change in the future. Technology can free us from dull and dangerous tasks and create new opportunities to collaborate. But when implemented poorly, it is bad for health – and can make us feel like accessories to a computer...

We believe that a focus on future good work will help us meet new challenges, and build resilience for individuals, communities and the country.

1.1. Retail, Logistics & Transport

_Understand how technology is shaping experience of workers in the retail, logistics and transport sectors_

Gig Trends Escaping the Gig Economy — IFOW have interviewed workers in the Retail, Logistics and Transport sectors to understand how technology is shaping experience of work for those in these connected industries. We have found that practices of algorithmic management - which allocate and reward work and thought commonplace only in the ‘gig economy’ - are escaping into conventional work.

**Stakeholder(s):**

Retail Sector
Logistics Sector

Transport Sector

1.2. Covid-19 Recovery

_Identify new policy challenges and opportunities to support a robust recovery in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic_

Convening Expertise — Bringing together leading experts in the Future of Work Commission, we identify new policy challenges and opportunities to support a robust recovery in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.

**Stakeholder(s):**

Future of Work Commission
1.3. Service Sectors

Study how trends linked to the gig economy are spreading into traditional service sectors

Inclusive Policy Making — We use mixed methods to research how trends linked to the gig economy are spreading into traditional service sectors, and identify key challenges.

Stakeholder(s):
Service Sectors

1.4. Work & Health

Maps the relationships between conditions for good work and health at a local level

Good Work Monitor — Our Good Work Monitor maps the relationships between conditions for good work and health at a local level to guide the development of public health and industrial strategies.

1.5. Charter

Implement our Good Work Charter to meet new challenges

The Good Work Charter — We are implementing our Good Work Charter, underpinned by sound principles for good work, to meet new challenges... The Good Work Charter is an organising framework for policy-orientation and practice designed to encourage commitment and fresh-thinking from government and business about the fundamental components of good work and how to protect these components through the new industrial revolution. We hope it will encourage people and institutions to prioritise the creation of future good work, facilitate a broader dialogue about the social and economic conditions needed for future good work, and lead to practical solutions. National government may consider the Charter in developing industrial strategy across sectors including sectors such as retail and transport, which are poorly paid and undergoing significant disruption. Businesses may use the Charter as a checklist when designing or applying new technology, and responsible employers may adopt it as they introduce the technology.
2. Equality

Promote equality

We investigate the effects on people of data-driven technologies as the full range of employer functions are digitised. We are seeking to address intersectional inequalities from being projected into the future of work at an unprecedented scale.

2.1. Algorithmic Bias

Advise policy makers on algorithmic bias

Advising Policy Makers on Algorithmic Bias — Our work on bias with the Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation has ensured that the technology union Prospect and Equality and Human Rights Commission are consulted in the Government’s advisory Bias Review.

Stakeholder(s):
- Policy Makers
- Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation
- Prospect and Equality and Human Rights Commission

2.2. Tools

Design tools to prevent workplace inequality

Artificial Intelligence in Hiring — Our cutting-edge research into AI in hiring found tools designed to prevent workplace inequality do not work... The use of artificial intelligence (AI) presents risks to equality, potentially embedding bias and discrimination. Auditing tools are often promised as a solution. However our new research, which examines tools for auditing AI used in recruitment, finds these tools are often inadequate in ensuring compliance with UK Equality Law, good governance and best practice. We argue in this report that a more comprehensive approach than technical auditing is needed to safeguard equality in the use of AI for hiring, which shapes access to work. Here, we present first steps which could be taken to achieve this. We also publish a prototype AI Equality Impact Assessment which we plan to develop and pilot.

2.3. Practice & Compliance

Promote better practice and demonstrate compliance with equality legislation

Equality Impact Assessments — Our prototype Equality Impact Assessment supports companies in their efforts to promote better practice and demonstrate compliance with equality legislation.
2.4. Impacts & Offsets

*Explore the adverse impacts of data-driven technologies and how to tackle them*

Equality Task Force — Our Equality Taskforce explores the adverse impacts of data-driven technologies and how to tackle them through the age of automation.

**Stakeholder(s):**

**IFOW Equality Task Force**

*The Institute for the Future of Work (IFOW) has established a Task Force to examine how the Equality and Data Protection Acts apply to some increasingly common uses of new technology and explore ways to advance equality in the work space other than individual rights. Reducing barriers to the opportunities of disadvantaged groups is not only the right thing to do for individuals. Discrimination in the labour market damages growth and innovation at a firm and national level [Bell et al 2019].*
3. Workers in Transition

Create positive change and reduce risk for workers in high-risk areas.

Stakeholder(s)
Workers in Transition

People are being forced out of old jobs as the demands of the rapidly changing world of work kick in. We explore worker transitions in high risk areas, working with people affected, government, business and unions to create positive change and reduce risk. Technological advancement can create 'winners' and 'losers'. For some, new technology provides new opportunities, but for others, it can be threatening to their way of life. We believe government, business and unions need work together to support those most at risk. In this programme, we listen to people’s stories of the changing world of work to understand the experience of introducing technology and automation. We make sure that worker voices are heard in our research, and in co-creating solutions. And we develop and promote new networks and ideas to support people facing disruption to move into sustainable and high-quality work.

3.1. Worker Platforms

Explore the impacts of 'worker-tech' on dignity, autonomy and other aspects of work quality

Connected Worker Platforms — Our project on connected key workers is exploring the impacts of 'worker-tech' on dignity, autonomy and other aspects of work quality. This research will inform our New Deal for Key Workers.

3.2. Collaboration

Create effective and people-centred responses to complex problems

Supporting Collaboration — We support organisations and individuals to work together to create effective and people-centred responses to complex problems through our Social Policy Innovation Accelerator (SPIA).

Stakeholder(s):
Social Policy Innovation Accelerator (SPIA)

3.2.1. Problems

Articulate problem statements

Stages 1 & 2 - Discover & Define — Participants share their diverse perspectives on the issue at hand and come to an agreement on the specific problem they want to solve, articulated in a problem statement.

3.2.2. Ideas

Identify promising ideas

Stages 3 & 4 - Design & Develop — Participants generate ideas to solve the problem they identify and begin to rank them according to their impact and feasibility. Through this process, they identify the most promising ideas.
3.2.3. Targets & Milestones

**Devise targets and milestones**

Stages 5 & 6 - Deliver and Distribute — Participants consider the best ways to implement their chosen solutions, identifying barriers and enablers, and devise a set of illustrative targets and milestones.

3.3. New Deal

**Develop a New Deal for Key Workers**

New Deal for Key Workers — IFOW are working to develop a New Deal for Key Workers, informed by a dialogue with public philosopher Professor Michael Sandel.

**Stakeholder(s):**
- Key Workers
- Michael Sandel

3.4. Social Partnership

**Establish forums for consultation and social partnership**

We are building the case to establish new forums for consultation and social partnership to make sure that diverse voices are heard.

3.5. COVID-19

**Provide evidence about people’s experience of transition during the COVID-19 pandemic**

Spotlight on Work through Covid-19 — Our Spotlight series provides vital evidence about people’s own lived experience of transition during the COVID-19 pandemic through the voices of working people.