

1. Generation Z is facing a 'career apocalypse'

Times are hard for young people looking for work. It is becoming more and more difficult for Generation Z (or Gen Zers) to find a job. A Gen Zer is someone born between the mid-to-late 1990s and early 2010s. Students who have just graduated from university cannot find employment. Aki Ito, chief correspondent for the "Business Insider" website, warned of a "career apocalypse". She said uncertainty in the world has "taught today's graduates to prepare for the worst". The British journalist and writer Peter Hitchens said one reason is that people are studying for "worthless degrees". He said young people would "be much better off" if they became plumbers or electricians.

There are over 4 million Gen Zers not in school or work in the USA. In the UK, there is a similar problem. There were 987,000 young people aged 16 to 24 not in education, employment, or training in December of last year. This has risen by over 100,000 in the past year. Many people cannot find jobs because of artificial intelligence (AI). An increasing number of jobs are now being done by AI. There are fears that teachers, accountants, lawyers, writers, and other jobs could completely disappear. However, some people say many graduates no longer want to do "entry-level" jobs. Instead, they want to enter a company at a management level and get well paid in their very first job.

2. Researchers find way to target sound to individuals

The way in which we listen to music and hear sounds has changed over the centuries. Today, we have state-of-the-art, noise-cancelling ear buds that provide the highest quality aural experience. In the near future, we will be able to listen to music in public without headphones. New technology is being tested that can aim beams of sound at individuals, without people next to them hearing. This means we could be having private conversations in public without others listening in. A team of researchers at Penn State University in the USA developed an innovation called "audio enclaves". The ultrasound waves used for these enclaves cannot be heard en route to the recipient. In addition, the waves can be bent to get around obstacles.

The researchers spoke to the website "The Conversation" about their work. Lead researcher Jiaxin Zhong said: "We essentially created a virtual headset. Someone within an audible enclave can hear something meant only for them, enabling sound and quiet zones." He elaborated on the potential uses of the technology. Museums could provide headphone-free audio guides to visitors. Passengers in a car could listen to music without distracting the driver. Those requiring confidentiality could set up enclaves to ensure their conversations are not overheard. Individuals could also receive personalized ads as they walk through a shopping mall. In addition, audio enclaves could be set up to eliminate noise pollution in busy workplaces.

3. Food packaging warnings should be on AI books

A leading poet and writer from Scotland has called for warnings to be put on books written by artificial intelligence (AI). Peter Mackay became Scotland's national poet in December last year. He is concerned about the damage AI could do to the publishing industry. He wants food packaging-style health warnings on all AI-generated books. He told the BBC: "I have got huge concerns about AI in terms of the creation of new literature and the creation of new books, partly because, as a writer, it could be disastrous for new people who are in the profession." He added: "It's very hard to make a living as a writer anyway, and [now] you are having to compete with [all the] knowledge of every book written."

Mr Mackay wants all new books to have a special mark that shows whether AI or a person wrote it. He said the symbol could be like those used on food packaging. He believes the public needs to know about the level of AI input in a book. One idea is that information could show if a book is "100 per cent AI-free or 100 per cent organically produced". Mr Mackay's call comes just before the USA and UK refused to sign an international agreement on AI to keep it "clean" and "ethical". US Vice President JD Vance said too much regulation of AI could "kill a transformative industry just as it's taking off". He said "pro-growth AI policies" were more important than safety.

4. Students using A.I. over humans to learn English

More and more students in Japan are using artificial intelligence (AI) to learn English and other languages. The language-learning app Duolingo conducted a survey on how students study languages. More than 4,700 Japanese students answered questions about their language-learning habits. The survey found that the number of people using ChatGPT and other AI tools increased by more than 80 per cent in 2024. AI was particularly popular with younger people. The researchers said more young people used AI than took face-to-face lessons. However, some people in their 20s were not totally happy with AI lessons. They said AI lacked natural responses and was a little boring.

Duolingo said: "We're in the midst of an AI revolution....Technology has long had an impact on language learning." It found that apps were the most popular method in Japan to learn languages. English was the most studied language, followed by Korean. People are studying Korean "to understand the language as spoken by...favourite artists and celebrities." Duolingo said around 58 per cent of people who took the survey used language-learning apps. This was followed by video streaming platforms like YouTube and Netflix (37%), textbooks (36%) and online lessons (16%). The number of people going to a language school is decreasing. Just 13.8 per cent of people went to classes with a teacher.

5. Travelling could slow down the ageing process

Travelling is good for us. There is a saying that travel broadens the mind. A new study says that going on trips could slow down the ageing process. The travel bug could be one hobby that is healthy. Researchers from Edith Cowan University in Australia said travelling could make us look and feel younger. They said having different experiences and meeting new people could make us more youthful as we get older. Fangli Hu, lead author of the research, said: "Tourism isn't just about leisure and recreation. It could also contribute to people's physical and mental health". Ms Hu added: "Ageing, as a process, is irreversible. While it can't be stopped, it can be slowed down."

The researchers looked at how travelling might affect how we age. They suggested that going on vacations, backpacking and sightseeing can lower stress. Going on trips can also boost our metabolism, which strengthens our immune system. Travel could also help repair body tissue. This helps to slow down the signs of ageing. Ms Hu said travelling often involves physical activities like hiking, climbing, and cycling. She said these "potentially" reduce tension and fatigue in the muscles and joints. She added: "Participating in these activities could enhance the body's immune function and self-defence capabilities." The researchers said travelling could be better than anti-ageing creams.

6. Nissan develops paint to keep cars cooler

Japanese car maker Nissan has developed a new type of paint that keeps cars cooler. The paint lowers the temperature inside cars that are parked in sunlight. The paint can keep a car 12°C cooler than cars with regular paint. The new paint will also reduce the need for air conditioning. This means there is less pressure on a car's battery. The paint was developed in partnership with a Chinese company called Radi-Cool, a specialist in heat-cooling products. Nissan said: "The project is part of [our] pursuit of...innovations that empower journeys, and help create a cleaner, more sustainable society." The paint is currently only available in white. Nissan hopes to make other colours in the future.

The leader of the "cool paint" project is Dr Susumu Miura. He is a manager at the Nissan Research Center near Tokyo. His team started developing the paint in 2021. Their current paint is about six times thicker than standard automotive paint. This will make cars a little more expensive. Dr Miura spoke about his work. He said: "My dream is to create cooler cars without consuming energy." He added: "This is especially important in the electric vehicle era, where the load from running air-conditioning in summer can have a sizeable impact on the [condition of the battery]." He hopes vehicles like ambulances that spend most of the day out driving will have the paint.

7. Scientists fear people will fall in love with AI voices

OpenAI, the company that owns ChatGPT, is worried that people may become emotionally dependent on artificial intelligence voices. The company released a new "advanced voice mode" to users last week. The chatbot comes equipped with an array of lifelike voices that are almost indistinguishable from human voices. They can have an authentic conversation in real time, laugh at the right time, interject with "umms," "aahs" and "hmms," and they can adjust to being interrupted. An OpenAI report states that the newly-released, human-sounding voices may lead people to rely on AI for companionship, and even for romance and love. It cautioned: "Users might form social relationships with the AI, reducing their need for human interaction."

The OpenAI report warns that future chatbots could fundamentally change societies. They will reshape how we interact with family, friends and colleagues. They may even usurp communication among humans. The report points to benefits of the new tool. These include bringing comfort and friendship to lonely people, and giving confidence to those who lack self-confidence. The report says people may gain enough confidence to start dating in the real world. On the flip side, chatbots could cause people to be ruder, more impatient and more selfish. Wired.com writes that the new chatbot includes "the potential...to amplify societal biases, spread disinformation, and aid in the development of chemical or biological weapons".

8. Spanish residents take to streets against mass tourism

Thousands of people in Spain are protesting against mass tourism. In Barcelona, residents have sprayed tourists in restaurants with water guns. On the island of Mallorca, 10,000 people took to the streets holding banners that read: "Enough is enough!" and "Mallorca is not for sale." People in Mallorca are angry that their rents are increasing. It is becoming almost impossible for locals to buy a house because of tourism. Property prices are sky-high because companies are buying them to rent to tourists. A spokesperson for Airbnb said: "The people who work in the tourism industry can't afford the rent in their own city." She added: "We believe that basing the economy...on...tourism is unsustainable and has to change."

Residents in tourist areas have many complaints. They say tourism has a negative effect on their lives. Many can no longer find somewhere to live. Some have to move out of their homes because landlords are increasing rents. Daily life is also becoming a problem. Buses and trains are full of tourists with backpacks and suitcases. Towns are having problems keeping their streets clean. This is because of increasing litter. Local people also complain that they cannot eat at their favourite restaurants because of tourists. Spain is not the only country where tourism is becoming a problem. Japan, Austria and Mexico have acted to find a balance between helping local people and sustainable tourism.

9. Cold weather exercise burns more calories

Everybody knows that exercise is essential to keep us healthy. It lowers the risk of heart disease, and helps us to maintain a healthy weight. It also reduces stress and makes us happier. Doctors say that exercising in cold weather is even better for us. Going for a jog or even a swim when it's chilly or freezing outside has extra benefits for our physical and mental health. The reason for this is that the cold gives our heart a more energetic workout. Dr Angela Pepdjonovic, from the Hospital for Special Surgery in New York, explained why. She said: "Your heart has to work a little bit harder to pump blood around your body...in the cold. This can help to boost your endurance over time."

Dr Pepdjonovic said cold-weather workouts can help the body burn calories at a faster rate. She said: "As your body is required to work harder to maintain its core temperature, you actually increase your calorie burn by exercising in the cold." Physical activity in cold temperatures can boost our metabolism, which helps us lose weight. In the cold, our metabolism slows down, so we can preserve fat and keep warm. Another benefit is that being in natural light helps to reduce our stress. This is especially so for people who suffer from Seasonal Affective Disorder (S.A.D.). This is a type of depression caused by the shorter, darker days of winter. It is more common in people who live far from the equator.

10. South Koreans to become a year or two younger

A new law in South Korea means South Koreans will be a year or two younger. The law was passed last Thursday. Before it was passed, there were three different ways that people could tell their age. South Koreans could have three ages. One was an "international age". This is the same as how most people in the world calculate their age. A baby is zero at birth and becomes one year old a year after it is born. The second was a "Korean age". Under this system, babies are considered a year old on the day they are born, and then a year is added every January the 1st. The third method was a "calendar age". This makes babies zero years old at birth, and a year is added to their age every January the 1st.

The new law simplifies age in South Korea. Lawmakers hope it will end confusion about how old people are. From June 2023, all official documents must use the standard international age. It will be used for the legal ages for drinking, getting married, smoking, and military service. It should help to end legal and social problems caused by the old system. However, many people will continue to use the Korean age in informal situations. A Korean Twitter user was relieved there is a new law to make things simpler. She tweeted: "I'll become two years younger. I'm so happy. I turned two years old two weeks after I was born, as I was born in December. Finally, I'm about to get my real age back."

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