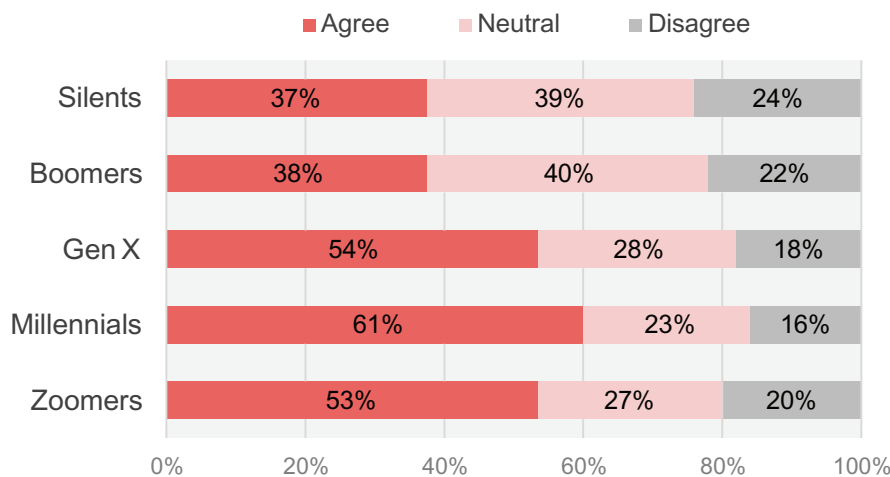


# COVID-19 June 2020 Update: The Acceleration of Automation

Across generations, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to affect many facets of life. In May and early June 2020, the MIT AgeLab conducted a follow-up to an earlier survey from March about the ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. This brief highlights generational attitudes regarding automation and robotics in the COVID-19 era.

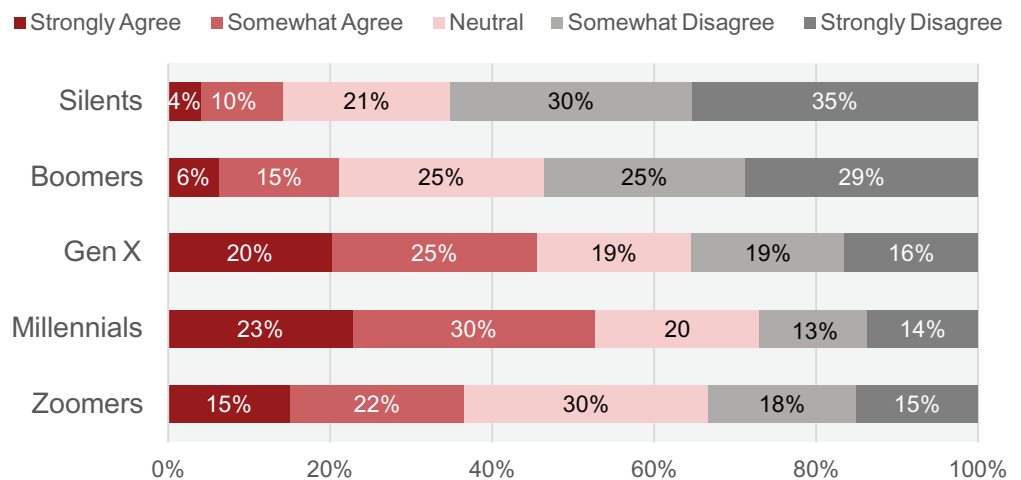
## Automation in the workplace to protect employee health: are companies doing the right thing?



Technologies adopted during the COVID-19 pandemic have enabled some companies to automate routine business processes. As the virus continues to spread, some employers are turning to automation to reduce workplace viral exposure as well as operating costs. Younger generations, especially Millennials, reported more openness to workplace automation than older generations, and were more likely to say that similar changes can protect employees and public health.

## Preferences regarding interaction with automated systems or robots in retail settings

Older people, particularly those from the Silent Generation and Baby Boomers, indicated a stronger preference for human-to-human interactions in retail settings, as compared to younger generational cohorts, who evinced more comfort with automated systems or robots. Millennials were the generation most likely to express a preference for automated systems in retail.



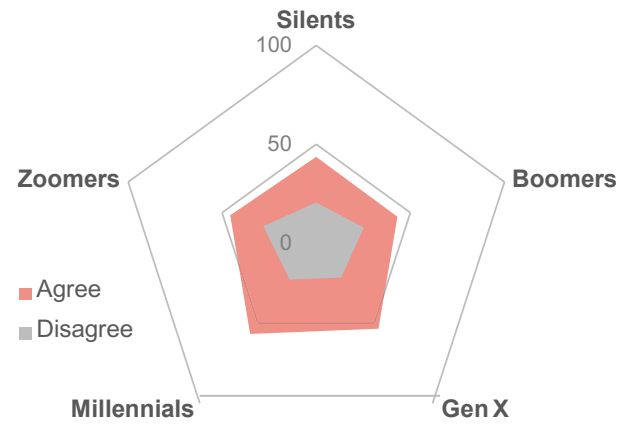
### The impact, and importance, of income

Across the above questions, respondents with higher annual household incomes expressed greater preference for automation than those with lower incomes. Specifically, those with higher incomes agreed more strongly with the statement that replacing humans with automated systems or robots is good. Additionally, those with higher incomes were more likely to state that they would prefer to interact with automated systems or robots in grocery stores or retail settings.

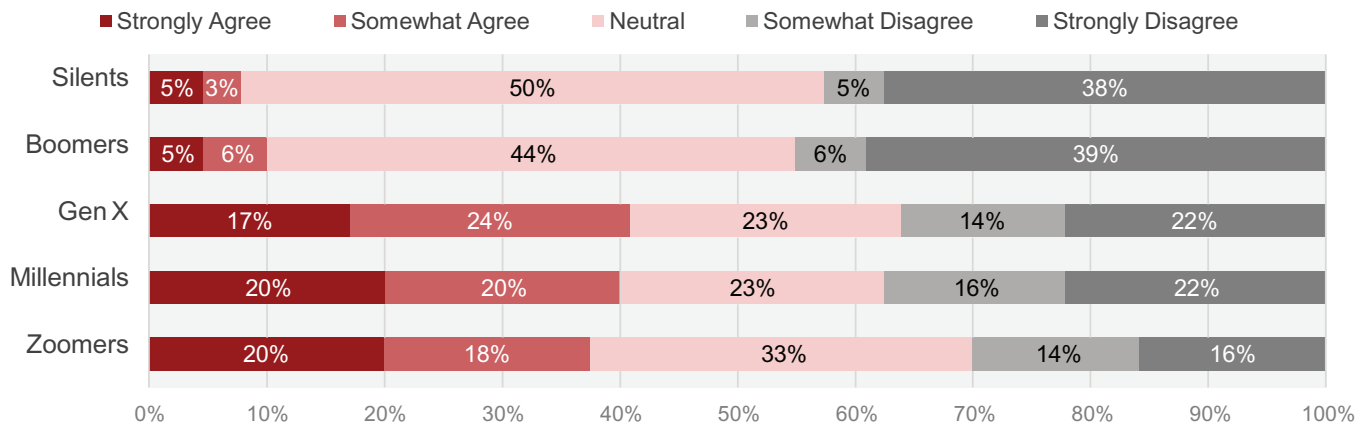
## Will companies need to re-hire fewer workers due to COVID-19-related automation?

Just under half of the people surveyed agreed with the statement that companies will need to rehire fewer workers after the COVID-19 crisis passes.

Compared to all other generations, Gen X-ers and Millennials were the most likely to believe that companies will be able to fill jobs through automation. The distribution of opinions of Zoomers, however, closely matched that of Baby Boomers and the Silent generation.



## Fear of job loss as a result of automation among employed people



### The impact, and importance, of income

Respondents with annual household incomes over \$150,000 were significantly more concerned that their job might be eliminated with rising automation associated with COVID-19, as compared to individuals with lower income levels.

These results represent a snapshot of perceptions in the time window in which data were collected: May 8-June 8, 2020. Sample collected from Qualtrics Panels. Number of cases for analysis ranges from 1250 to 1387. Ages in 2020: Silents, 75-92; Baby Boomers, 56-74; Gen X, 40-55; Millennials, 24-39; and Zoomers, 18-23. Less than 6% of the March sample (March 17-19, 2020) was re-interviewed in the second survey; the balance represents a new cross-sectional sample. The MIT AgeLab continues to monitor how different generations' attitudes and perceptions shift over time.

What is known about COVID-19 changes daily. For more information about preventing the spread of COVID-19 and keeping yourself and your family safe, visit the Centers for Disease Control at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).