

World

Robotics

Service Robots

2026

incl. Mobile and Medical Robots



**Statistics, Market Analysis, List of Manufacturers and
Case Studies**

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World Robotics 2026 – Service Robots

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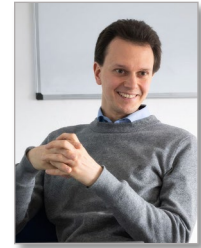
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Editorial

By: Alwin Heerklotz, CEO & Founder, Innok Robotics



Form Follows Function – The Pragmatism of Physical AI

We are living in one of the most fascinating eras in industrial history. The convergence of highly advanced mechatronics, rapid computing power and machine learning has ushered us into the age of 'Physical AI'. Robots are no longer confined to the monotonous, highly structured and isolated environments of traditional factory halls. They are venturing out into the real, unstructured world – a world characterised by mixed traffic, changing weather conditions and dynamic processes.

This year's IFR World Robotics Service Robots Report provides compelling evidence of this development. It shows that automation is no longer merely a tool for cost reduction, but rather the scalable and immediately effective response to the global, cross-sector skills shortage.

The fascination with humanoids and the reality of industry

When we look at the media-driven future of robotics today, humanoid robots dominate the headlines. And for good reason: the technological leaps in the field of bipedal locomotion and general-purpose artificial intelligence are breathtaking. Humanoid systems capture our imagination because they are modelled on us. They brilliantly demonstrate what is possible today at the very pinnacle of what is technologically feasible.

Yet, in our enthusiasm for these seemingly universal robots, we as an industry must not forget one of the most important lessons of engineering: form follows function.

Today's – and tomorrow's – industry and logistics sectors are not primarily looking for a technological sensation. They are seeking the most efficient, robust and cost-effective solution to specific, often tough real-world problems. Anyone who today needs to automate material flow in an established 'brownfield' plant, where heavy loads have to be transported across uneven tarmac, up ramps and through the rain from one hall to the next, does not need a robot that can balance or even dance. They need a machine built specifically for these extremes.



Figure 1: The realities of industry rarely stop at the hall door. Autonomous mobile robots (such as the INDUROS from Innok Robotics) seamlessly bridge the gap between indoor and outdoor logistics – even under real-world conditions in all weathers. Image credit: Innok Robotics.

The danger of false expectations

As an industry, we share a collective responsibility: we must learn to balance our enthusiasm for new technologies wisely and advise customers transparently. Humanoid robotics is not served by being forced into use cases for which it is simply not the most efficient choice, biomechanically or energetically speaking.

If an end customer is disappointed by an automation solution because a general-purpose system lacks the necessary endurance, payload capacity or weather resistance for continuous operation indoors or outdoors, trust in the entire robotics industry suffers. Many of these demanding tasks can now be handled much more efficiently, quickly and with a drastically shorter return on investment (ROI) by robust Autonomous Mobile Robots (AMRs), which are equipped, for example, with specialised CoBot arms and, ideally, are even suitable for outdoor use.

A wheeled system will always have an energy advantage when it comes to pure material transport over long distances. It can move enormous loads and, thanks to its wide base, offers the absolute stability that is essential for precise pick-and-place tasks.

Symbiosis rather than competition

This does not mean that humanoid robots have no place – quite the contrary. They will demonstrate their true strengths in environments designed entirely for humans (such as hospitals, care settings, households or other confined spaces). Many areas where service robots are already in use today also present good scenarios for this.

However, the future of industrial service robotics is not an 'either/or' scenario. It is a highly interconnected ecosystem. The report you are holding in your hands highlights this diversity. We will see fleets in which modern AMRs handle heavy-duty transport between buildings and hand over goods at the loading bay to specialised indoor systems or, in the more distant future, to humanoid robots for flexible precision work. All of this is controlled by intelligent, cross-platform software ecosystems.



Figure 2.: A wide variety of automation solutions, cleverly networked and interconnected. The focus is always on the processes, not on a specific type of robot. Image credit: Innok Robotics.

Conclusion: Creating value through pragmatism

We are at a turning point. The technology is mature, the legal framework is evolving, and social acceptance of service robots is growing rapidly.

Let us, as developers, integrators and customers, remain pragmatic. Let us always put the technology at the service of the real problem. If we choose the right form factor for the right use case, we can turn technological hype into genuine, sustainable value creation. This benefits manufacturers, the economy and, above all, the people whom we relieve of physically demanding, dangerous and monotonous work.

I hope you find the *World Robotics 2026 - Service Robots Report* an insightful and inspiring read.

Alwin Heerklotz