pwc

Two futures for jobs in an AI era

2026 Global AI Jobs Barometer

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AI is creating a two track labour market. That is a key finding from our analysis of over one billion online job advertisements across six continents.

Rather than simply replacing jobs, AI is reshaping them in fundamentally different ways. At one end of the spectrum, AI is **professionalising** work, automating away routine tasks and elevating the importance of human expertise, judgement and creativity. At the other end, it is **democratising** work, reducing the skill barriers for complex tasks and shifting roles toward less specialised activities. This divergence is creating two tracks in the labour market with markedly different outcomes. The 22% of jobs that are being professionalised are growing twice as fast as democratised jobs (52% of jobs) and seeing 42% higher wage growth since 2021.

The study reveals a potentially counter intuitive finding - greater AI exposure is linked to headcount growth, not decrease. Why? While AI can deliver significant value through productivity improvements, its greatest potential comes through redesigning how companies operate. Reinvention is the key to unlocking the maximum benefits from AI, and our data suggests the companies that are achieving the largest productivity gains are taking that route. Headcount growth at the most exposed organisations is double growth at the least exposed, with wages also growing significantly faster. Consistent with other PwC research, we find a 'superstar' effect - while the companies most exposed to AI are seeing productivity growth relative to a 2018 baseline of 34%, if you zoom in on the top 20% of companies in this group, that number rises to 163%.

As work changes rapidly, skill needs change rapidly too - with employers increasingly focused on attributes that are distinctively human. Skills required for the most AI exposed jobs are changing twice as fast as in the least exposed roles, while new tasks that rely on skills like empathy, judgement, and creativity are added 2.5x faster.

A two track labour market is emerging at every level. Analysis of US data finds that entry level jobs highly exposed to AI are evolving to require traditionally senior capabilities (such as motivational leadership, strategic decision making and team building) which now account for 52% of new skills required for these jobs. For entry level jobs least exposed to AI, the equivalent number is just 7%. Entry level jobs that have been 'seniorised' in this way continue to grow in number (up 35%), while globally the number of entry level jobs in roles highly exposed to AI has flatlined.

There is a clear lesson from this year's AI Jobs Barometer for both business leaders and workers: winning is not just about using technology, it is about human skills. The more AI is deployed, the more distinctly human expertise is valued. For organisations, the focus should be on redesigning work not just automating tasks, while for individuals it will be important to make sure they hone their leadership, judgement, creative and teamwork skills so they can do what AI cannot.

01 A two-track jobs market is emerging

A puzzle: why does AI automation appear to benefit some occupations?

Last year's AI Jobs Barometer uncovered a puzzle. Despite widespread concerns that AI automation may displace workers, we found that job numbers and wages are rising in jobs highly automatable by AI.

AI automation makes some roles more expert

We believe that what matters is how automation reshapes the role – specifically, whether AI automation grows or diminishes the need for human expertise (defined as specialised knowledge or capabilities).[1] In this year's Barometer, we test this idea.

1 *Expertise*, Autor & Thompson, 2025

Three types of jobs

All jobs globally fall into one of three categories

1. Low AI exposure jobs: Jobs that include few tasks in which AI has capabilities, so AI is likely to have limited impact on the role. Examples: Chefs, construction workers, mechanics.
2. Professionalised jobs: Jobs reshaped by AI to demand *more* expertise. Examples: Radiologists, employment recruiters, air traffic controllers.
3. Democratised jobs: Jobs reshaped by AI to demand less expertise. Examples: Software developers, loan officers, finance managers.

See Methodology appendix for more information.

First, let's look at how AI can increase the need for expertise. By taking on the relatively basic tasks in a job, AI leaves the more complex and expert tasks to people. For example, AI helps lawyers with basic tasks like document summarisation, leaving people tougher tasks like building a case in court. Or consider employment recruiters; AI can now automatically screen CVs, leaving recruiters more demanding tasks like negotiating contracts. We call jobs made more expert by AI 'Professionalised.'

On the other hand, AI can take away the relatively more expert tasks in a role, leaving the less demanding tasks for people. Consider inventory clerks. AI now performs complex tasks like managing inventory, leaving people less expert tasks like moving stock in warehouses. We call these jobs 'Democratised.'

AI is having two different impacts on jobs depending on whether it is automating more or less expert[2] tasks

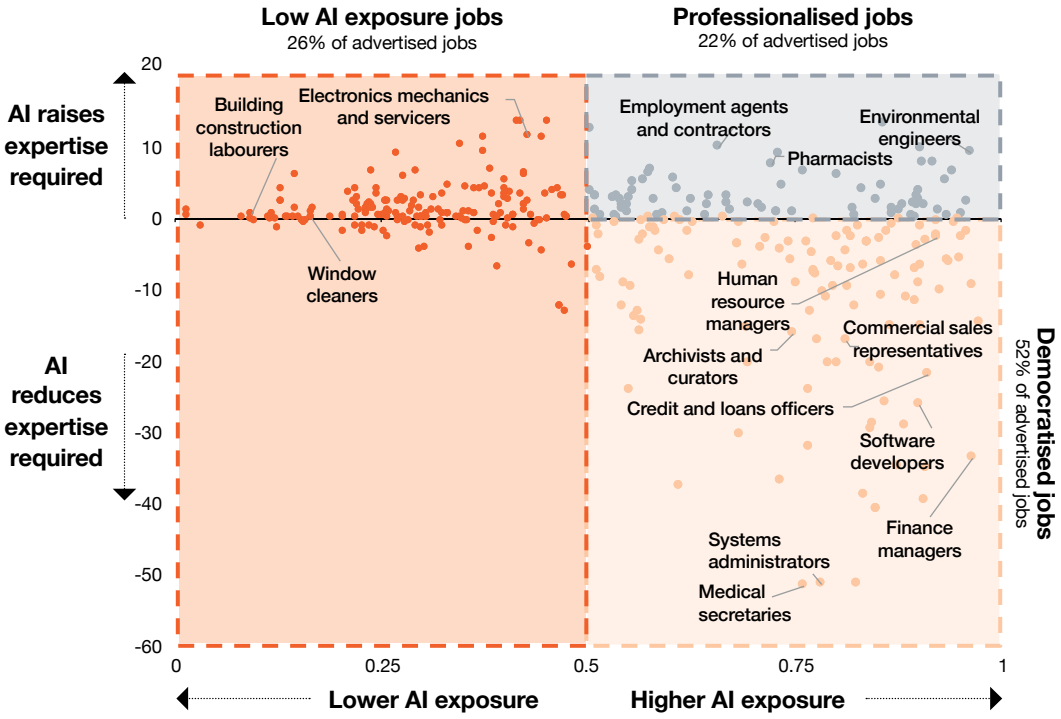
52% of jobs are being **DEMOCRATISED** (shifted toward less expert tasks)	22% of jobs are being **PROFESSIONALISED** (shifted toward less expert tasks)
Example: Inventory Clerk	**Example: Recruiter**
More expert tasks like manage inventory → **AI automated**	**More expert tasks like negotiate contracts** → **Remain**
Less expert tasks like move stock → **Remain**	**Less expert tasks like screen CVs** → **AI automated**

2 Expert = requiring specialised knowledge or capability

Our data shows that AI significantly reduces the human expertise needed for some Democratised jobs. For medical secretaries and IT systems administrators, for example, AI automates a large share of the expert tasks formerly performed by people. (Please see the Methodology appendix for a full explanation of how expertise change is calculated, drawing on the work of Teeselink and Carey (2026).

AI's impact on Professionalised and Democratised jobs will be widely felt. About half of advertised jobs globally are Democratised, while around a quarter are Professionalised and the remaining quarter have low exposure to AI.

AI's impact on expertise is especially strong for Democratised jobs



Of 380 ISCO-08 job categories, 74 are Professionalised, 125 are Democratised, and 181 have low exposure to AI. 40 SOC-2018 occupations are excluded from the analysis because of limited data quality from Teeselink et al. for ranking expertise.

The Professionalised vs Democratised framework moves us past a backward-looking view of AI's impact – cataloguing old tasks that have been automated - to a forward-looking view of how AI reshapes roles for the future. Our hope is that Professionalised vs Democratised offers a clearer lens for understanding the future of jobs in an AI era – and as we will see below, it may.

Professionalised jobs are pulling ahead in numbers, complexity, and pay – while Democratised jobs fall behind

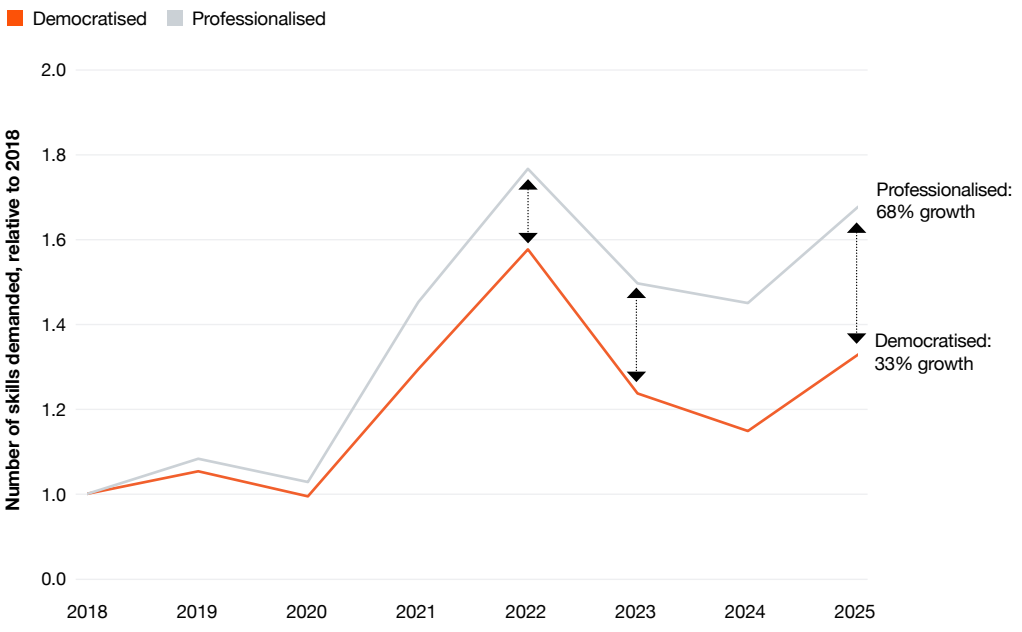
To understand the possible future trajectories of Professionalised and Democratised jobs, consider what happened when spreadsheets came into widespread use in the 1980s.

Spreadsheets could perform many of the more challenging parts of the roles of bookkeepers and accounting clerks, effectively Democratising these roles and sending numbers of these jobs into a gradual but steady decline. Financial analysts, on the other hand, now had a powerful new tool that enabled them to perform analysis with unprecedented complexity and fluidity, effectively Professionalising their jobs. Numbers of financial analysts began a steep ascent that has continued into the 2020s as new fields of financial analysis were pioneered – many with rising wages (US data).[3]

Our analysis shows that Professionalised jobs across the world are indeed becoming more complex, demanding new skills at twice the rate of Democratised jobs.

Professionalised roles are demanding additional skills at twice the rate of Democratised roles, and the gap has widened since 2022

Number of skills demanded relative to 2018, democratised vs professionalised occupations, global



Source: PwC analysis, Lightcast data, Teeselink and Carey (2026)
Notes: Due to data robustness, we only include the six countries for which Lightcast data is available from 2012 onwards.

3 US Current Population Survey – FT analysis, 'What the AI Jobpocalypse narrative misses,' 2025

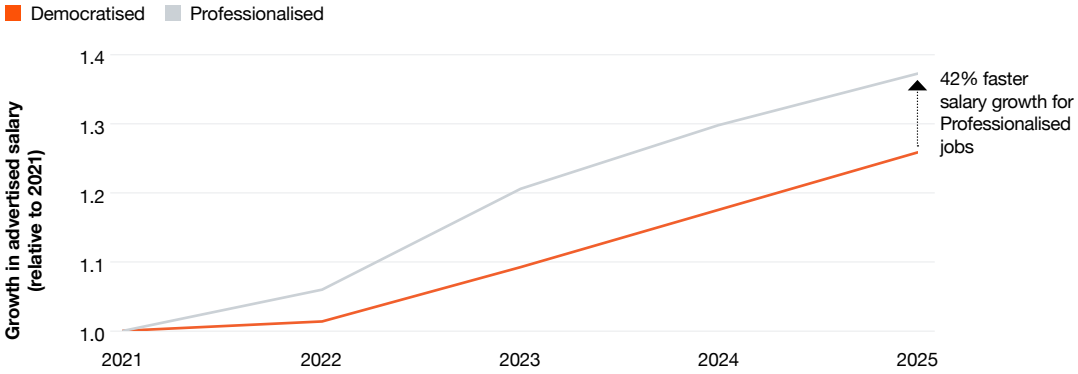
The rising demands on Professionalised workers are reflected in 42% faster salary growth vs Democratised jobs, and the gap has grown since 2022 when AI use soared.

42%

The rising demands on Professionalised workers are reflected in 42% faster salary growth vs Democratised jobs

Professionalised roles have seen 42% faster growth in average salaries relative to Democratised roles, with a growing gap from 2022

Growth in average advertised salary, democratised and professionalised jobs, relative to 2021, global



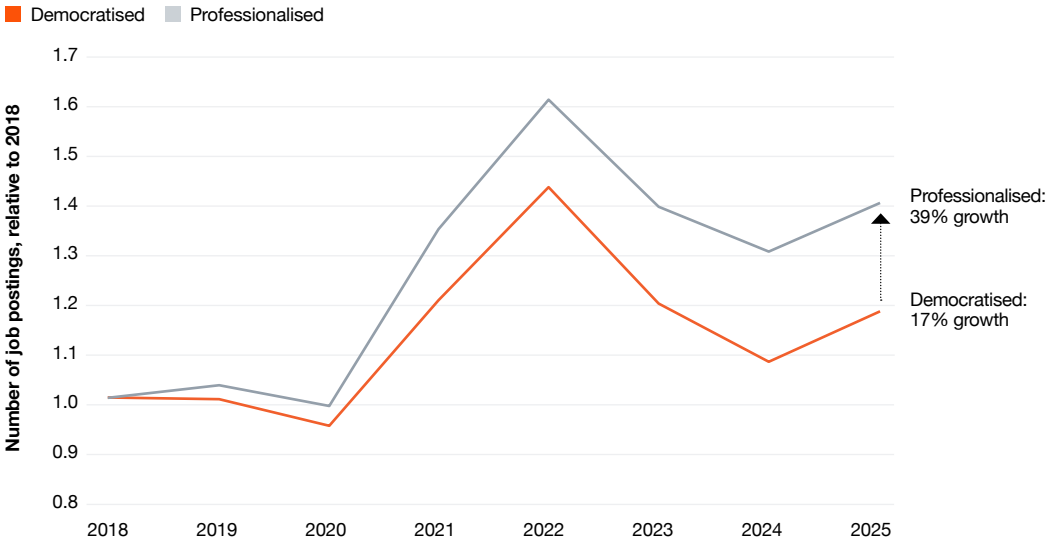
Teeselink's expertise data was provided to us at SOC-2018 level. SOC classification in Lightcast jobs data is not available outside of the US. Thus, in order to produce global figures and metrics for our expertise analysis using Lightcast data, we map Teeselink's expertise scores from SOC-2018 to ISCO-08 for this purpose only. Professionalised salaries have grown 37% since 2021 and Democratised by 26% - a 42% gap.

Source: PwC analysis, Lightcast data, Teeselink and Carey (2026)
Notes: Due to data robustness, we only include the six countries for which Lightcast data is available from 2012 onwards.

Turning to job numbers, we find – encouragingly – that both Democratised and Professionalised jobs are continuing to grow. However, Professionalised jobs are growing markedly more quickly than Democratised ones. This suggests a gradual rebalancing of the jobs market away from Democratised jobs.

Professionalised jobs are growing twice as quickly as Democratised jobs

Number of job postings relative to 2018, 2018 - 2025, democratised and professionalised jobs, global



Source: PwC analysis, Lightcast data, Teeselink and Carey (2026)
Notes: Due to data robustness, we only include the six countries for which Lightcast data is available from 2012 onwards.

Our data suggests that some jobs expected to be displaced or devalued by AI automation – such as air traffic controllers and marketing managers, both of which are Professionalised – may in fact see growing demand, wages, and skill requirements. It may be time for the debate on work and AI to move on from fear of AI automation to more nuanced questions about how AI reshapes the value workers can deliver.

Other forces shaping AI's impact on jobs

The broad global trend is for Professionalised jobs to have higher growth in job numbers and wages – while Democratised jobs see the opposite – but there will be exceptions.

Consider nursing aides, a Professionalised job. AI professionalises this role by taking on some more basic tasks like tracking vital signs and scheduling medication, enabling nursing aides to spend more time on more expert tasks like building relationships with patients or responding to unexpected situations with empathy and discretion.

We might expect nursing aides to follow the path of 1980's financial analysts newly equipped with spreadsheets – that is, to be even more in demand as technology helps them step up to perform more expert tasks. But AI's impact on nursing may be constrained by forces such as regulation, challenges in workflow integration, or a limited supply of job candidates willing to enter a demanding profession.

Or consider child care services managers, a Democratised role. AI can assist with some of the more expert parts of this role from budget management to complying with government regulation. But far from stagnating, job postings for child care services managers have more than doubled since 2019 given the vast latent demand for child care - combined with Democratisation of the role which enables many more people to perform it.[4]

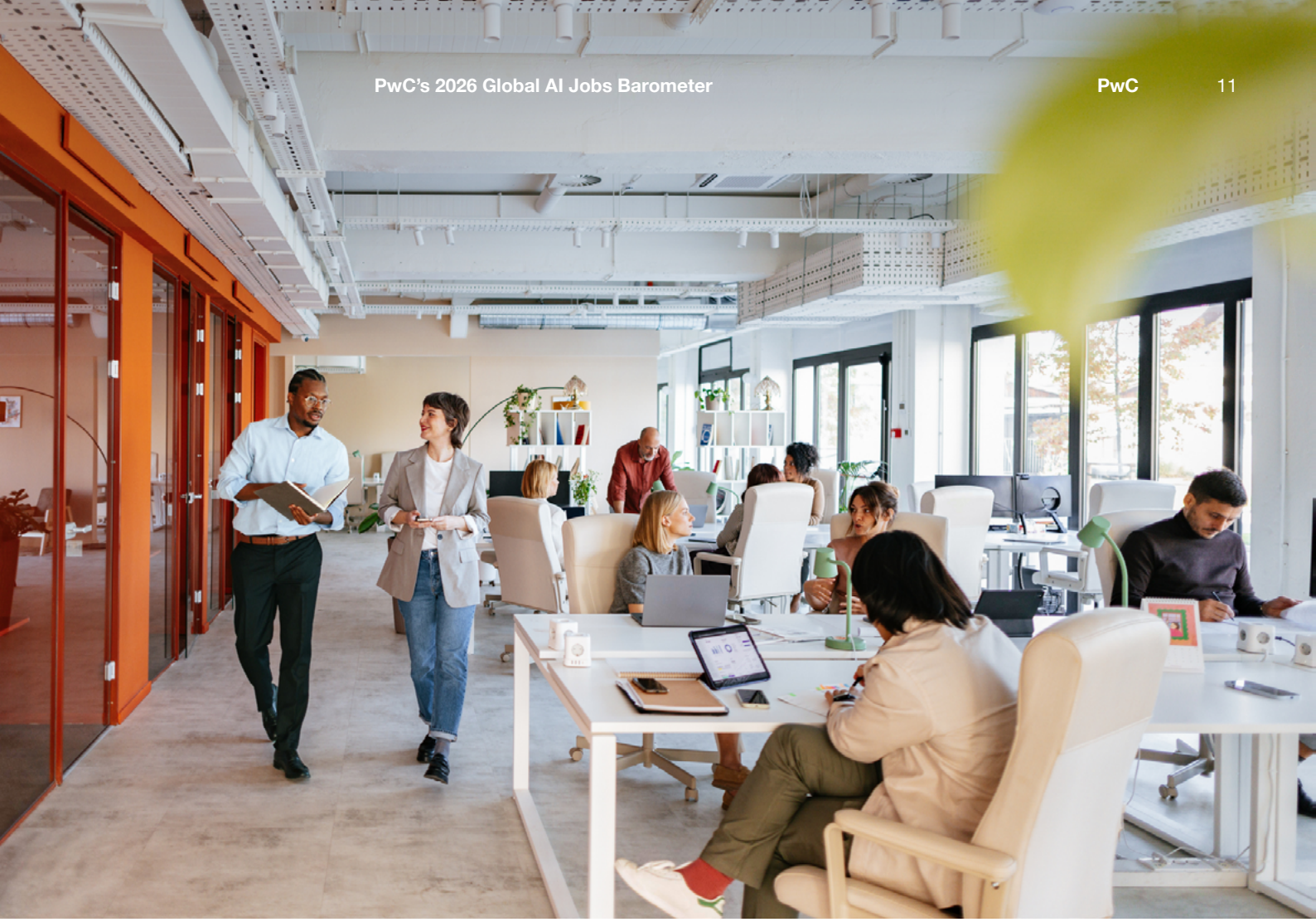
Four questions to help foresee the future of any job

Our analysis suggests four questions for business leaders and workers to consider as they seek to understand the future of a particular job role:

1. **Expertise:** How is AI changing the level of human expertise required?
2. **Supply and Demand:** How might demand for this job – and the supply of workers to fill it - change as AI reshapes the role?
3. **AI's limitations:** Where is human involvement needed to oversee or assist AI, for example to check the quality of AI's output or manage atypical cases?
3. **Environmental forces:** How do external forces (from business process bottlenecks to regulation) constrain or affect the use of AI?

Considering these four questions – starting with expertise change – can help to uncover how AI is redefining the partnership between people and technology in a given job, and what the future may hold for that role.

4 David Autor argues in Expertise (2026) that as technology reduces the expertise required for a job, the pool of qualified candidates expands which can in turn enable the occupation to grow (while wages may stagnate). Think of taxi drivers, for example; as satellite navigation reduced the need for specialised road knowledge, many more people can fill this job – leading numbers of taxi drivers to soar while wages stagnate. This is what appears to be happening with child care service managers; job listings have more than doubled since 2019 (growing 111%) while wages have grown only 8%.



02 A two-track jobs market is emerging at the entry level too

The well-known decline in AI-exposed entry level job numbers hides a deeper story

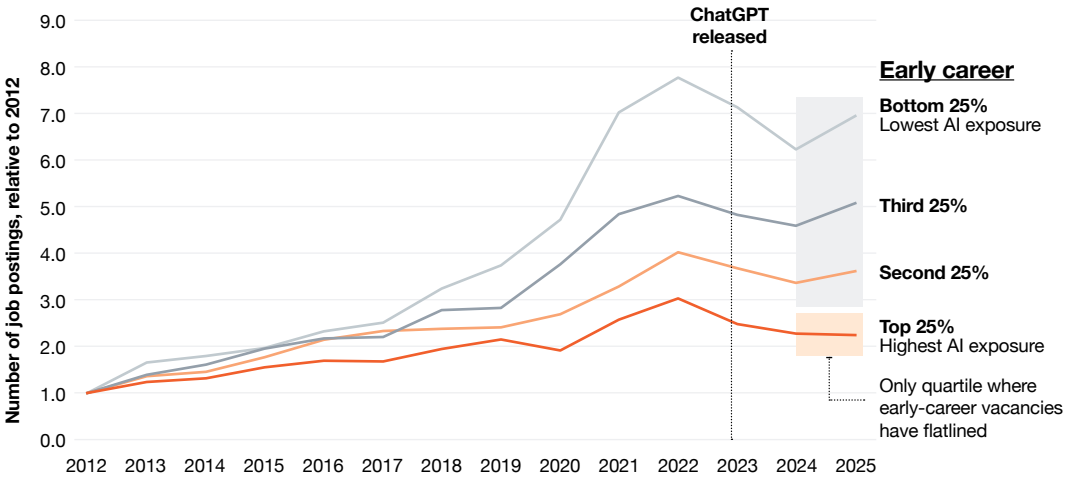
A recent Stanford University analysis found a 16% decline in entry level jobs in AI-exposed fields. Much deeper declines in entry level roles have been noted in some industries heavily exposed to AI such as finance and tech.[5]

The trend is likely to continue and perhaps intensify. PwC's latest Global CEO Survey finds that 49% of CEOs expect AI adoption to decrease junior hiring in the next three years (vs 12% for senior hiring).

5 Canaries in the Coal Mine? Six Facts about the recent Employment Effects of Artificial Intelligence, Brynjolfsson et al, 2025; The Crisis of Entry level Labor in the Age of AI, Jacob Jacquet, 2025

Across advanced economies, job postings are growing more slowly for entry level workers more exposed to AI

Number of entry-level job postings relative to 2012, by AI exposure quartile, global



Source: PwC analysis, Lightcast data
Notes: The "Years of Experience" variable from Lightcast is used as a proxy for early-career jobs. A posting is defined as an early-career job if its years of experience listed is between 0-2 years. Due to data availability, we only include the following countries in our analysis: Canada, Singapore, UK and US (1) Careful interpretation of this chart is necessary – this is not to say AI is causing these impacts. Other shocks / structural characteristics of occupations in the Top 25% may also contribute to the observed trend. (2) Results are mainly driven by US data which accounts for c.73% of total job postings in the sample of countries with data available from 2012.

49%

PwC's latest Global CEO Survey finds that 49% of CEOs expect AI adoption to decrease junior hiring in the next three years

Below, we offer one way to know which entry level jobs are most and least likely to decline in number - a vital piece of information for junior workers seeking to build successful careers (and for the companies that employ them).

The answer lies in how AI is reshaping the need for human expertise. Entry level jobs most exposed to AI (such as junior data analyst) are rapidly evolving to demand more skills traditionally required of senior workers.[6]

In fact, the most AI-exposed entry level jobs are now seven times more likely to require traditionally senior skills than the least AI-exposed ones. These senior skills demand EQ, judgment, and leadership ability at a level not historically required in many junior roles.

Did your first job require these skills?

Examples of skills traditionally required in more senior roles that are now required in many AI-exposed entry level roles

- Motivational leadership
- Team building
- People management
- Stakeholder management
- Process management
- Mentorship
- Data-driven decision making

6 A skill is defined as traditionally senior if it had >50 mentions in experienced (non-entry-level), high AI exposure job postings in 2019 and ≤5 mentions in entry-level, high AI exposure postings in 2019

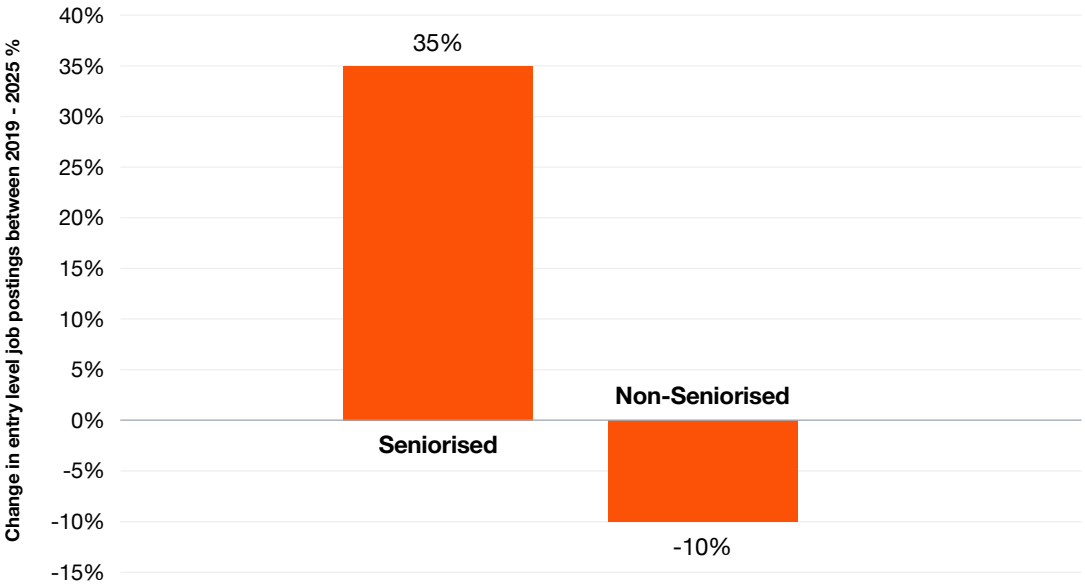
Zoom in on the most AI-exposed set of entry level jobs, and a striking divergence is apparent. Entry level roles that now require more than 10 new, traditionally senior skills are thriving with a growth rate of 35%, while other entry level roles decline in number.

35%

Entry level roles that now require more than 10 new, traditionally senior skills are thriving with a growth rate of 35%

But look deeper, and AI-exposed entry level roles have very different job growth outcomes depending on whether they are being upskilled to demand more traditionally senior abilities

Change in entry-level job postings between 2019 and 2025, seniorised vs non-seniorised roles, top AI exposure quartile, US



Source: PwC analysis, Lightcast data
Notes: (1) An entry-level job posting is classified as "seniorised" if it contains ≥10 mentions of a skill that is both new and traditionally senior. A skill is defined as new for a given occupation if it has >10 mentions in entry-level postings in 2025 but ≤5 mentions in entry-level postings for the same occupation in 2019. A skill is defined as traditionally senior if, within the same AI exposure quartile, it had >50 mentions in experienced (non-entry-level) job postings in 2019 and ≤5 mentions in entry-level postings in 2019.

In other words, not all AI-exposed entry level roles are shrinking. The AI-exposed entry level is in effect being Seniorised, with increasing opportunities for workers whose jobs are reshaped by AI to be even more complex and demanding.

Companies (and educators) must rethink how they train, mentor, and scaffold early career pathways to help junior workers build and demonstrate senior skills much earlier.

03 The AI skills earthquake is accelerating

AI is rapidly changing the skills workers need to succeed

Professionalised roles in particular are becoming more complex and demanding, but that does not mean workers in Democratised roles can stand still when it comes to skill development.

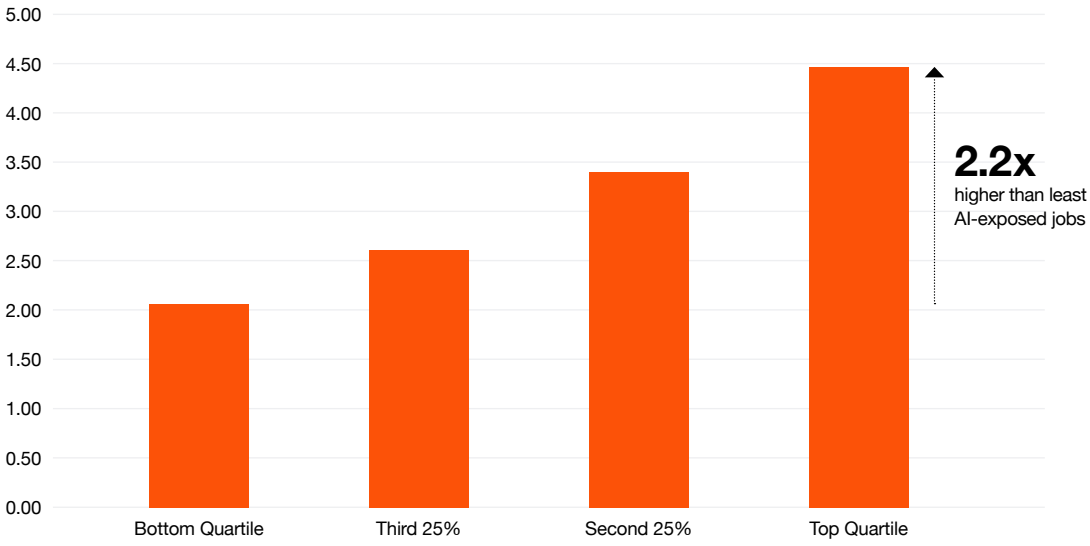
Skills needed for the most AI-exposed jobs (including both Democratised and Professionalised ones) are changing more than twice as fast as for the least AI-exposed jobs. What's more, the gap in the pace of skills evolution between the most and least AI exposed jobs is quickly growing. The most AI-exposed occupations are now evolving their skillsets at more than twice the rate of the least exposed roles – a 75% increase over last year's gap.

75%

The most AI-exposed occupations are now evolving their skillsets at more than twice the rate of the least exposed roles – a 75% increase over last year's gap.

Skills needed for the most AI-exposed jobs are changing more than twice as fast as for the least AI-exposed jobs

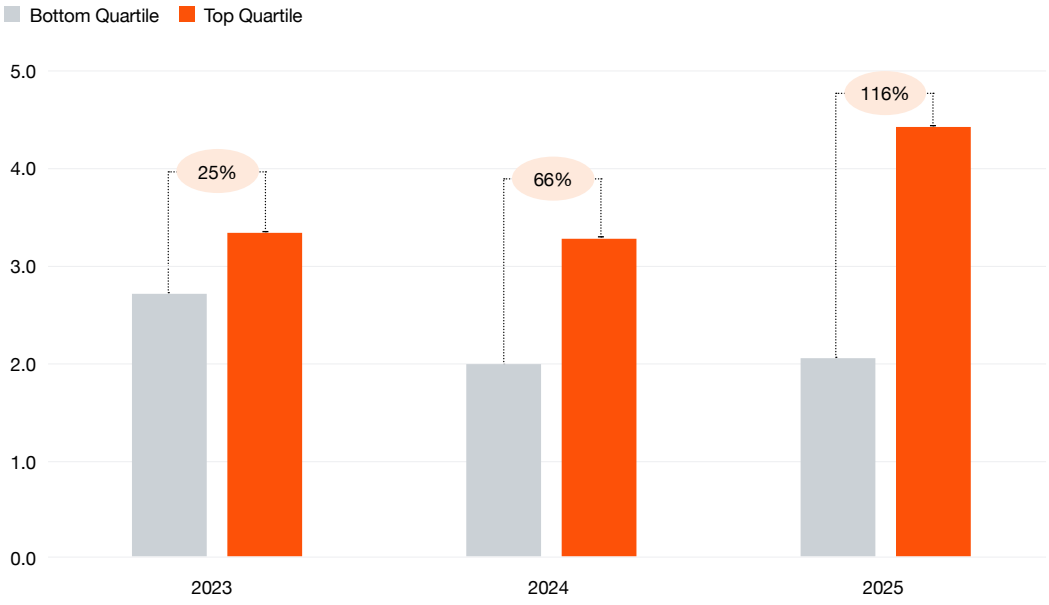
Net skill change by AI exposure for all jobs, 2019-2025, globally, by exposure quartile



Source: PwC analysis, PwC AI Occupational Exposure Index, Lightcast data
Notes: Net skill change is calculated as the aggregation of the percentage point difference between 2019 and 2025 of the share of a skill making up an occupation.

The gap is widening over time, with highly AI-exposed occupations seeing faster and faster skills transformation

Net skill change by AI exposure for all jobs from 2019 to 2023, 2024 and 2025, globally, for top and bottom quartile of AI exposure



Source: PwC analysis, PwC AI Occupational Exposure Index, Lightcast data
Notes: Net skill change is calculated as the aggregation of the percentage point difference between 2019 and 2025 of the share of a skill making up an occupation.

2.5X

We find that new tasks added to the most AI-exposed roles (both Professionalised and Democratised) are 2.5x more likely to rely on these human-intensive abilities.

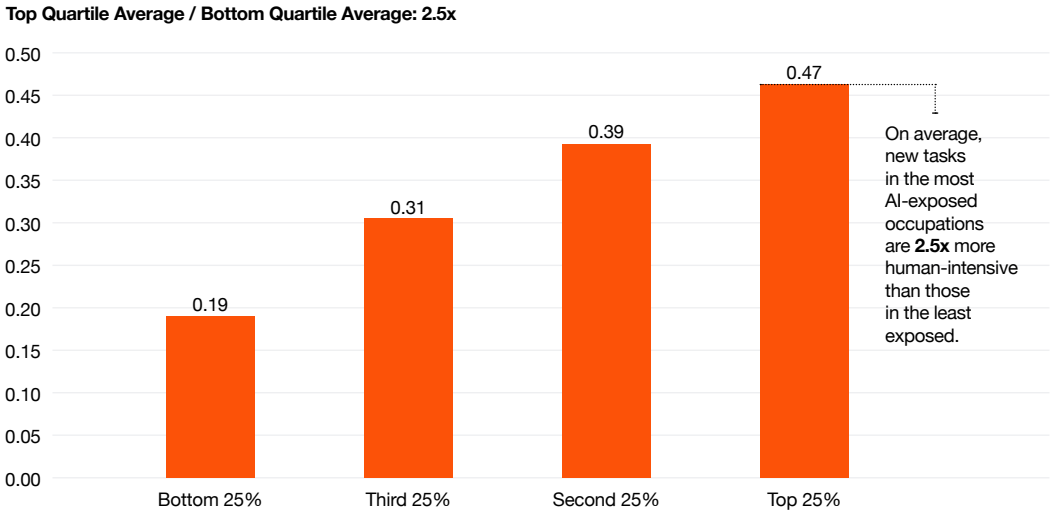
What capabilities are now more likely to be required for the most AI-exposed roles? To help answer this question, we draw on MIT's Loaiza and Rigobon (2026) EPOCH framework that sets out the 'human-intensive' abilities that are most resistant to AI automation and complementary to AI (complementary means necessary for people to deliver alongside AI systems).[7] The five sets of human-intensive abilities are:

- **Empathy & Emotional Intelligence:** Compassion, understanding, and building meaningful connections.
- **Presence, Networking & Connectedness:** Physical presence, networking, and navigating social contexts, crucial for building trust and collaborating.
- **Opinion, Judgment & Ethics:** Navigating open-ended, ambiguous, or ethical scenarios.
- **Creativity & Imagination:** Original thinking, improvisation, and generating novel ideas.
- **Hope, Vision & Leadership:** Grit, perseverance, initiative, and setting strategic direction.

We find that new tasks added to the most AI-exposed roles (both Professionalised and Democratised) are 2.5x more likely to rely on these human-intensive abilities.

New tasks added to AI-exposed roles since 2022 are 2.5x more likely to rely on 'human-intensive' capabilities such as empathy, creativity, and face to face presence

Average EPOCH score per occupation (new tasks only), by AI exposure quartile, 2022-2025

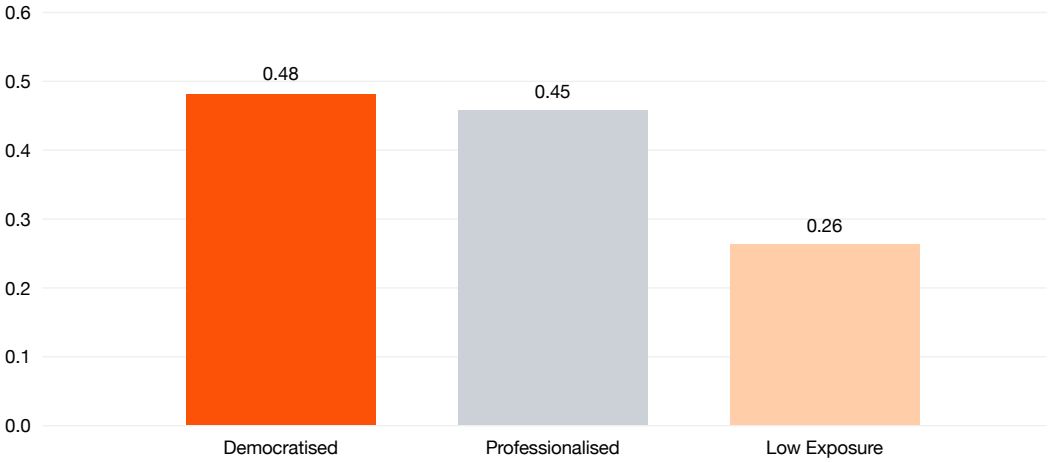


Source: PwC analysis, PwC AI Occupational Exposure Index, Loaiza and Rigobon (2025)
Notes: We draw upon the EPOCH framework, developed by Loaiza and Rigobon (2025) to assess the human intensity of newly emerging tasks. EPOCH scores measure the extent to which tasks rely on human capabilities (Empathy, Presence, Opinion, Creativity, and Hope). We calculate the average EPOCH score of the new tasks in each SOC-2018 occupation, and report averages by AI exposure quartile.

7 The EPOCH of AI: Human-Machine Complementarities at Work, Loaiza & Rigobon, MIT, 2025

Both Democratised and Professionalised roles increasingly require these human-intensive capabilities

Average occupation-level EPOCH score, by expertise classification, 2025

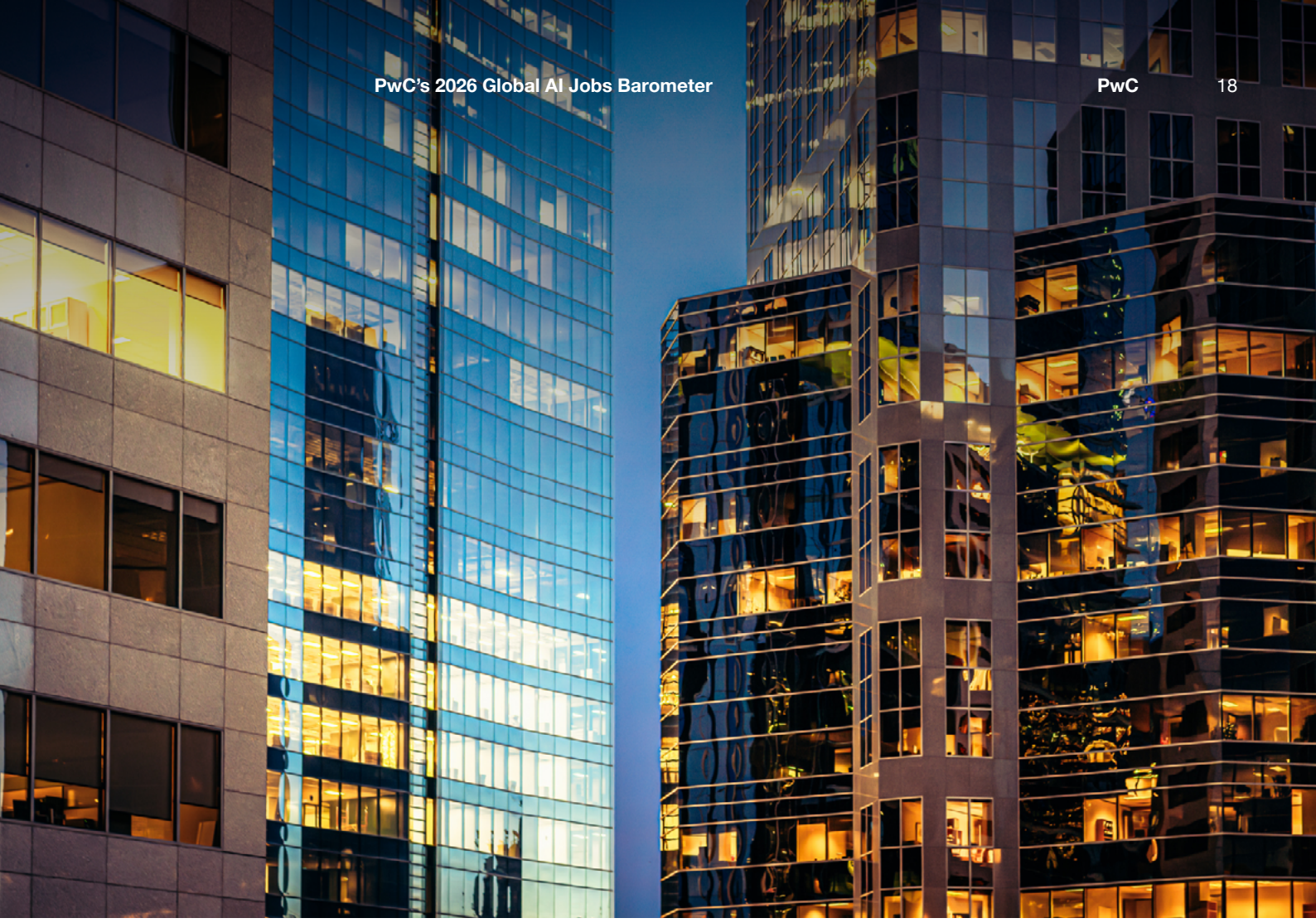


Source: PwC analysis, Teeselink and Carey (2028). Loaiza and Rigobon (2025)
Notes: We draw upon the EPOCH framework, developed by Loaiza and Rigobon (2025) to assess the human intensity of newly emerging tasks, EPOCH scores measure the extent to which occupations rely on human capabilities (Empathy, Presence, Opinion, Creativity and Hope). We calculae teh average 2025 EPOCH score of 'democratised' roles, 'professionalised' roles, and 'low exposure' roles (at SOC-2018).

Here, then, is another dimension on which AI reshapes the expertise workers need. Workers who hope to succeed in either Democratised or Professionalised roles are more likely to need skills such as building empathy, navigating social situations, and creating original ideas.

Some critics say these are skills that the use of technology including AI may erode, complicating the challenge for workers, educators, and business leaders as they seek to build a workforce fit for the future.[8]

8 Alone Together, Sherry Turkle, 2025; The Shallows, Nicolas Carr, 2025; The Anxious Generation, Jonathan Haidt, 2024



04 'Superstar' companies are capturing the greatest gains from AI

Some companies are achieving strong benefits from AI while others struggle

We have explored how AI is creating a two track jobs market for workers, with different trajectories for jobs Professionalised or Democratised by AI.

Similarly, we find an AI-driven divergence for companies with some capturing outsized benefits from AI while others struggle to make the most of the technology.

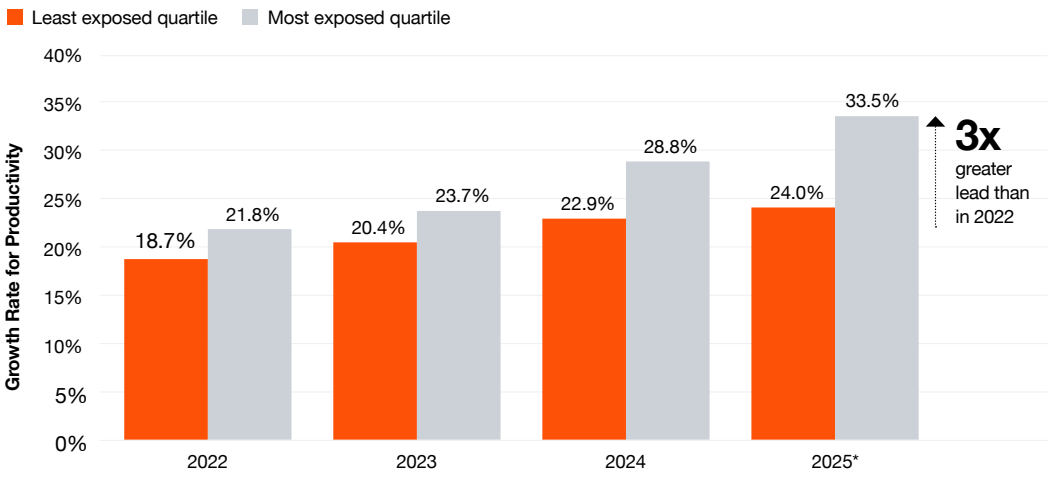
Since 2022 when AI use soared, the most AI-exposed companies have leapt ahead in topline productivity growth (measured in revenue per employee) – and their lead is growing.

33.5%

The most exposed companies as a whole have a 33.5% productivity growth rate.

Since 2022 when AI adoption soared, the most AI-exposed companies have seen faster productivity growth

Average firm growth rate in productivity by AI exposure quartile (measured using a 2018 baseline)

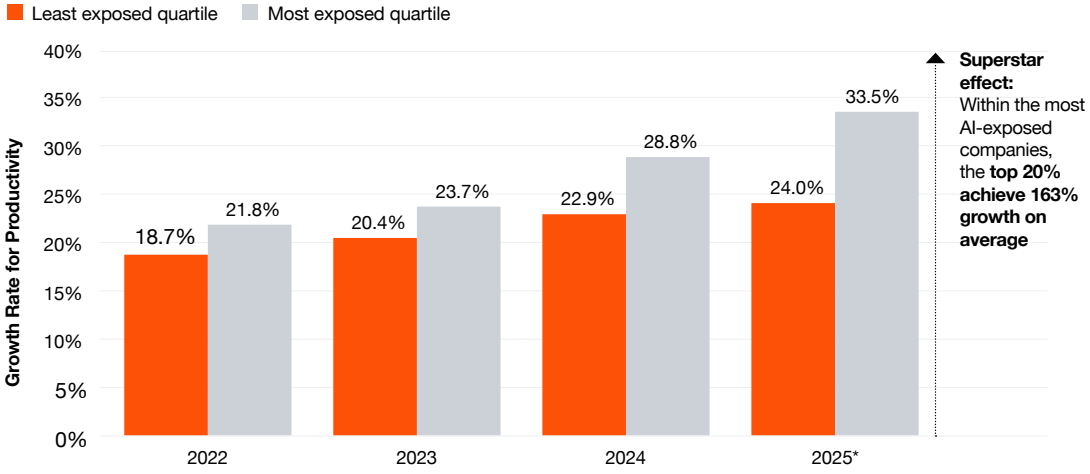


Source: PwC analysis, ORBIS data
Notes: *Productivity is measured by turnover per employee 2018-2024/25. 2025 is data used for companies where available, we substitute missing coverage with 2024 data. Company AI exposure is determined by the NAICS sector the company is tagged to in the ORBIS data (for example, the company may sit in a high exposure sector like architecture and insurance, or low exposure sector like mining or waste treatment).

Look closer, and a small set of 'superstars' within the most exposed companies are achieving far greater productivity gains. The most exposed companies as a whole have a 33.5% productivity growth rate, while the superstars – the most productive fifth of the most exposed companies – have a 163% productivity growth rate.

There is a pronounced 'superstar' effect. The top 20% of most-exposed companies achieve 5x higher topline productivity growth than the most exposed companies as a whole.

Average firm growth rate in productivity by AI exposure quartile (measured using a 2018 baseline)



Source: PwC analysis, ORBIS data
Notes: * Productivity is measured by turnover per employee 2018-2024/25. 2025 is data used for companies where available, we substitute missing coverage with 2024 data.

This finding fits with PwC's latest CEO Survey which found that only 8% of CEOs report that AI has generated more than a slight increase in revenue in the past year. It appears that many companies are still in the experimentation phase with AI, while a few superstar companies are figuring out how to turn AI into real returns.

What superstars do differently

8%

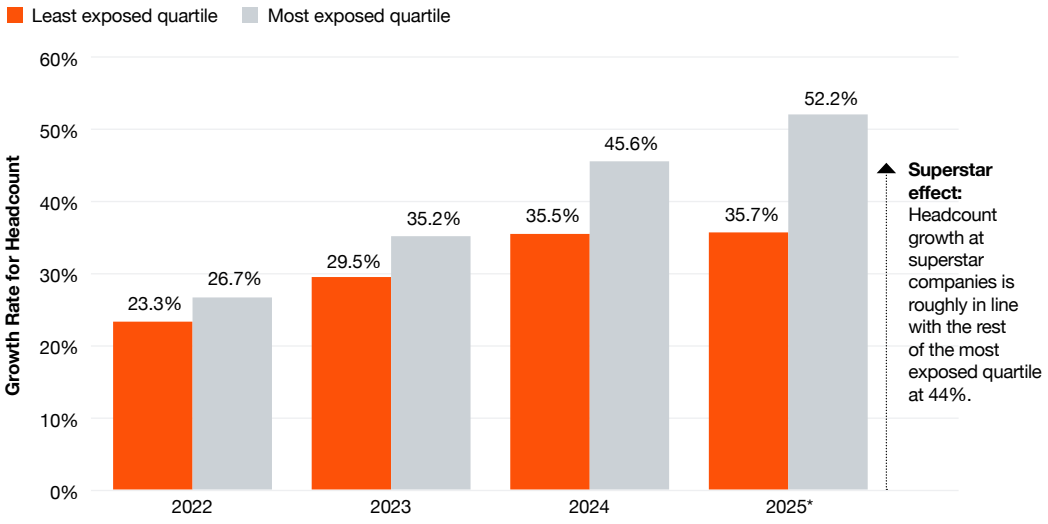
of CEOs report that AI has generated more than a slight increase in revenue in the past year.

What are the superstars getting right? For this question, we can turn to PwC's 2026 AI performance study. This study too found a superstar effect with 20% of companies claiming 74% of the gains from AI. The single strongest factor in capturing outsized gains is whether a company is using AI to pursue growth opportunities, especially opportunities created by collaborating or competing across sector lines.

This year's AI Jobs Barometer confirms that AI is being used for expansive growth. We find that headcount growth at the most AI-exposed companies is far outpacing that at the least AI-exposed companies – and the gap has grown every year since 2022. This implies that AI-exposed companies – and especially the superstars - are not using AI only to find efficiencies or reduce headcount. Instead, they appear to be using AI to fuel growth that is in turn spurring expansive hiring and wage increases. The headcount data, too, aligns with PwC's AI performance study which found that 32% of AI performance leaders expect headcount increases of 5% or more, while only 17% of AI underperformers expect headcount increases. Far from being a job killer, AI may actually be a job expander.

Perhaps surprisingly, headcount growth at the most AI-exposed companies is outpacing that at the least AI-exposed companies

Average firm growth rate in headcount by AI exposure quartile (measured using a 2018 baseline)

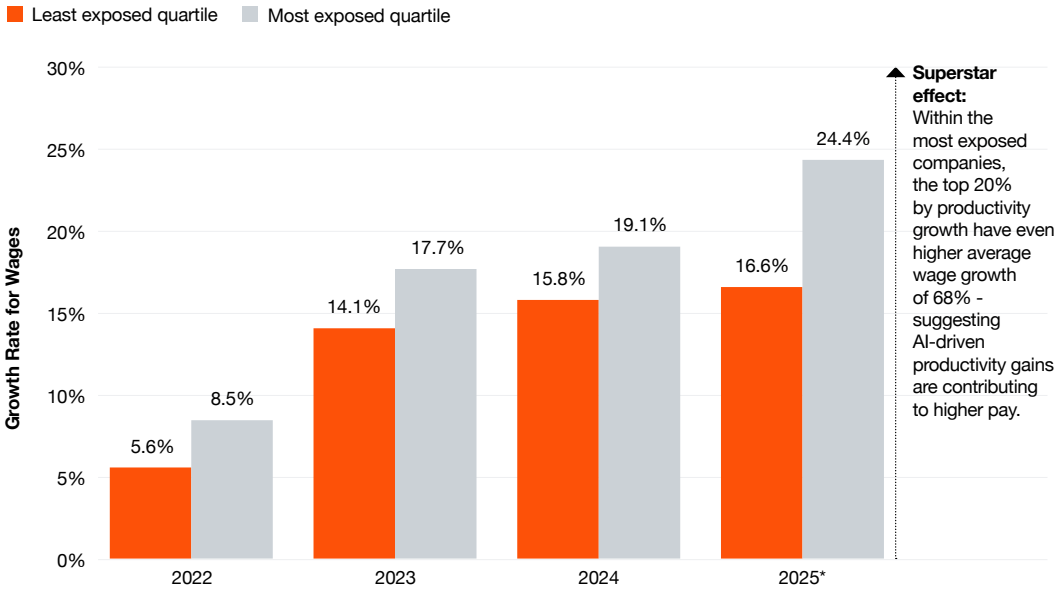


Source: PwC analysis, ORBIS data
Notes: * 2025 is data used for companies where available, we substitute missing coverage with 2024 data. ORBIS company data is not intended to represent economy-wide employment growth. The analysis is based on larger formal firms with available financial and headcount data in both 2018 and 2024/25, including an initial filter for companies with annual turnover of at least $50m USD; firms that exited the market during the period are excluded, creating a survivorship bias. In some countries, financial reporting requirements also vary, meaning firms with consistent reported data may be larger, more formalised or better-performing than the wider business population. The key interpretation is therefore the **relative difference** in headcount growth between more and less AI-exposed companies, rather than the absolute growth rate compared with the broader economy.

Wages too have risen much faster in the most AI-exposed companies than the least – and particularly so at the superstars.

Wage growth at the most AI-exposed companies has accelerated as productivity rises, suggesting gains are shared with workers

Average firm growth rate in wages by AI exposure quartile (measured using a 2018 baseline)



Source: PwC analysis, ORBIS data
Notes: *Wages are measured by total staffing cost per employee 2018-2024/25. 2025 is data used for companies where available, we substitute missing coverage with 2024 data.

The implication for companies is to claim the greatest gains from AI by using it to create new forms of value, not just make old ways of working more efficient. The implication for workers is to leverage growing opportunities in sectors – and companies – who are making the most of AI's power.

05 Wage premiums for AI skills continue to rise

Workers with AI skills command a 62% wage premium

The value companies gain from AI is apparent in the high wage premiums paid to workers with AI skills such as prompt engineering. This year, the wage premium has grown to 62%. (Wage premiums are calculated by measuring the difference between salaries offered for given roles that do require AI skills versus salaries offered for comparable roles that do not require AI skills. Please see Methodology appendix for a list of AI skills.)

62%

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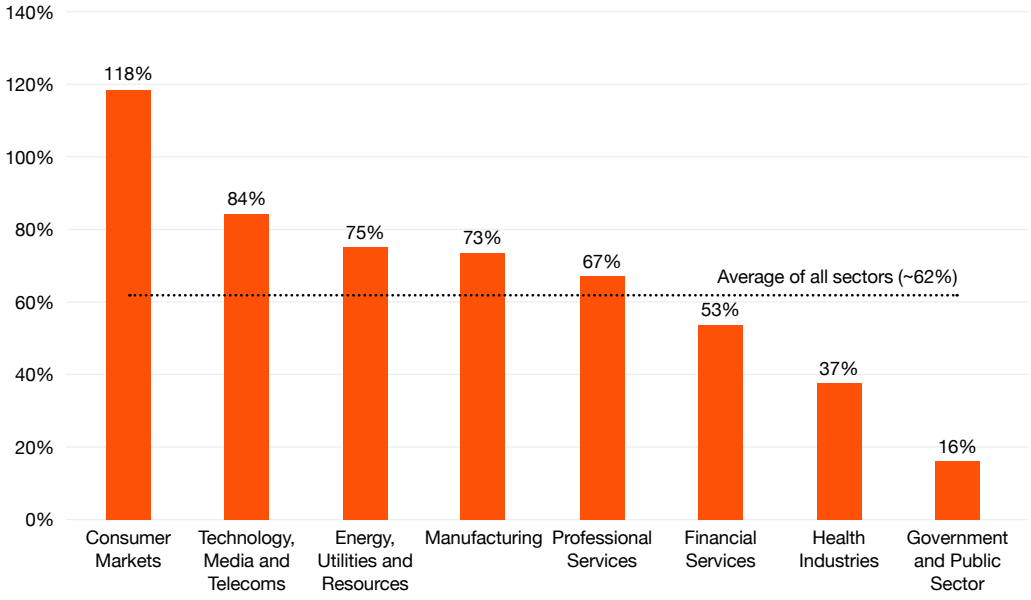
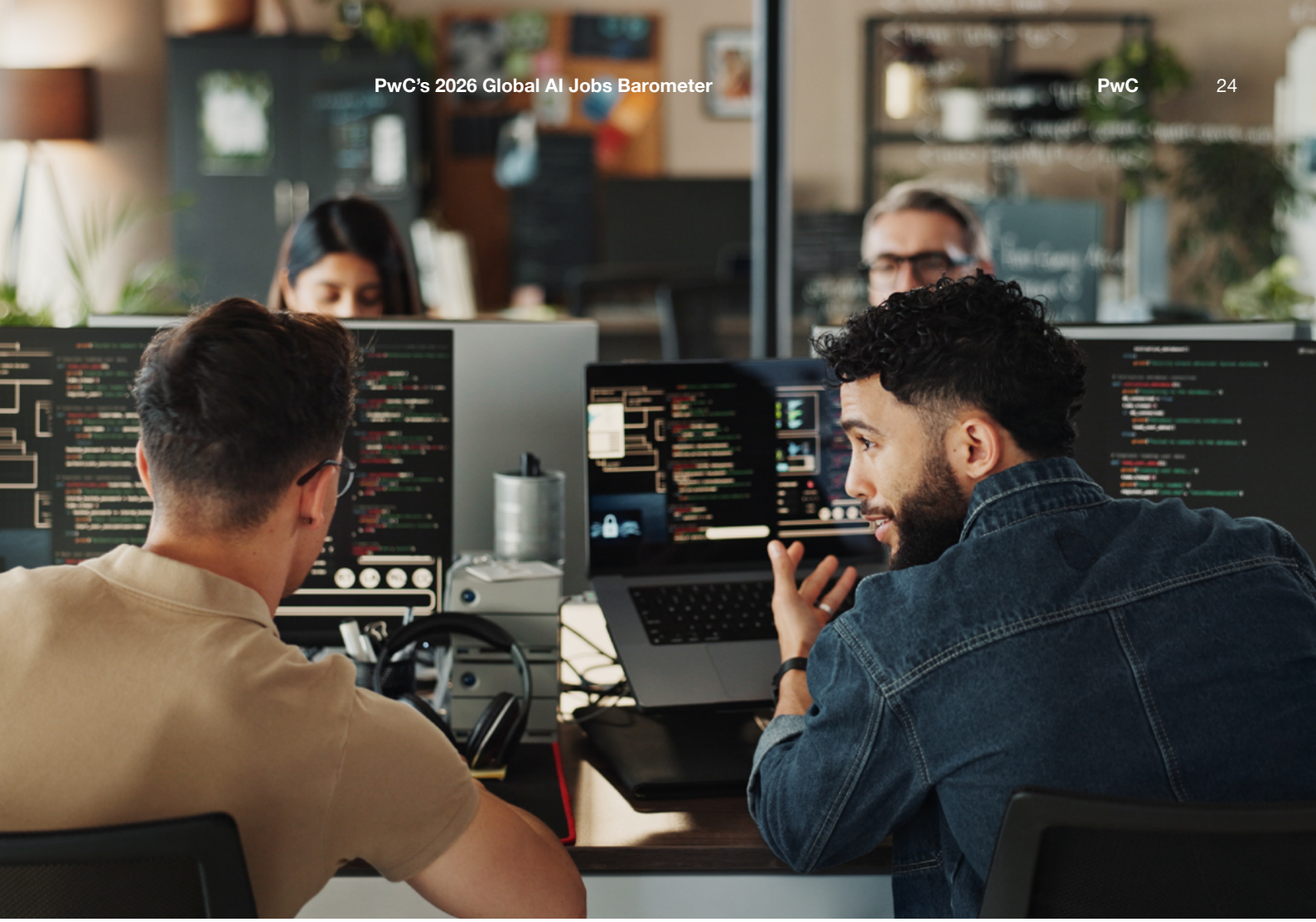
Wage premiums for workers with AI skills have risen to 62% (from 57% in last year's Barometer')

Wage premium by sector, (%, 2025)



Source: PwC analysis, Lightcast data
Notes: (i) To calculate wage premiums, we split job postings within a sector by AI and non-AI jobs. From here we estimate the wage premium (difference) within the sector for wages in the AI group compared to the non-AI group. This analysis is not a growth rate but rather a snapshot of a given year. Note that only the eight PwC aligned sectors are shown in the visual, however the average of 62% is calculated across all 16 sectors in our AI Jobs Barometer scope.



06 Hiring of AI specialists is rising sharply, indicating growing AI investment

Companies are accelerating their investment in AI systems and the people who build, run, and optimise them. Across the world, hiring of AI specialists (workers with advanced AI skills like machine learning) grew eight times faster in 2025 than hiring in all jobs.

AI specialist hiring is growing in every territory in our study. Some emerging economies are recording faster growth than many mature economies, indicating rapid expansion of AI capabilities and talent demand.

AI specialist hiring is rising in every sector too, led by Tech Media and Telecoms where 11.4% of job listings in 2025 were for AI specialists.

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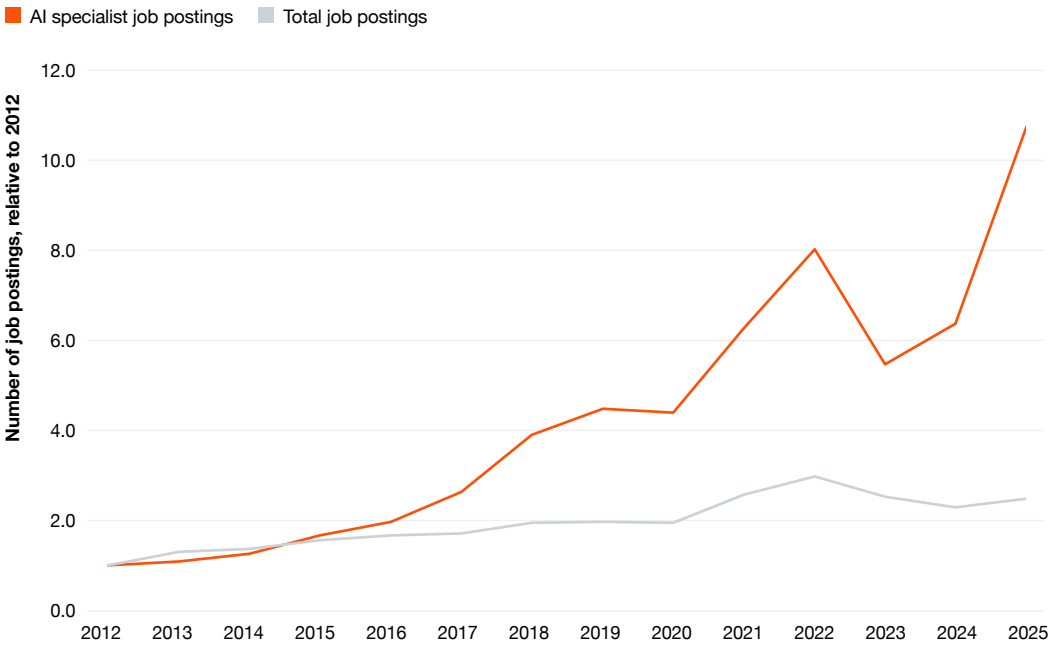
AI specialist job numbers shot upward in the last year, growing eight times faster than jobs as a whole - indicating companies are prioritising AI investment

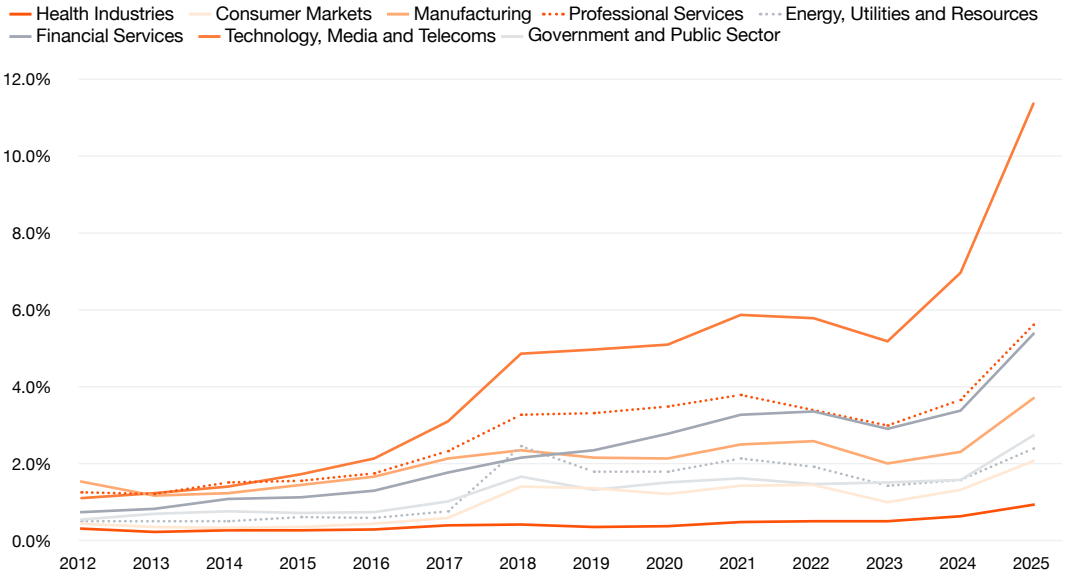
Relative growth in AI and all job postings, 2012 to 2025, globally



Source: PwC analysis, Lightcast data
Notes: For some countries, data starts from 2018 or 2021 onwards. As such, we only include the countries for which data is available from 2012 in our sample. AI job postings are defined as those requiring at least one AI-related skill.

AI specialist hiring is rising in all sectors

Share of AI jobs by sector, globally (%, 2012 to 2025)



Source: PwC analysis, Lightcast data.

Conclusion: Next Steps

Our analysis of over a billion job listings worldwide does not support worries about an AI-driven jobs apocalypse[9] – but it does reveal a deep reshaping of the jobs market and the skills required to succeed.

Next steps for business leaders

1 **Use AI to pursue growth over efficiency alone.** Companies gaining the greatest value from AI are not using it only to cut costs or shave headcount. Instead, they are using it to unlock new revenue, enter new markets, and create new forms of value. Leaders should frame their AI agenda around growth opportunities, especially by partnering across industry lines. However, simply pointing AI at these opportunities isn't going to capture them. Our AI performance study shows that having the right AI foundations - for example, a targeted strategy to scale the most valuable AI initiatives and modernised data and technology platforms to support them - greatly increases the ability to capitalise on AI's promise.

2 **Shape workforce strategy using a Professionalised / Democratised lens** to guide talent investment and skills development while anticipating attrition pressures. Professionalised roles may require deeper investment in advanced AI fluency, human-intensive skills, specialist talent, and retention strategies as demand and wage pressure rises. Democratised roles may require proactive work redesign, mobility pathways, and refreshed career propositions as AI changes the expertise required.

3 **Invest in agentic AI, the ultimate complement to human expertise.** With a team of AI agents at their command, workers can use their uniquely human expertise to deliver value at much greater scale – enabling their organisations to think, adapt, and execute faster than competitors. Indeed, PwC's AI performance study found that those companies getting the most value from their AI investments are twice as likely to deploy agents as those seeing lower ROI.

4 **Reinvent early career pathways.** Map junior roles that increasingly demand senior-level capabilities. Redesign onboarding, mentorship, and training programmes to accelerate development of advanced skills like leadership, stakeholder management, and strategic decision-making.

5 **Invest in human-intensive skills alongside AI skills.** Empathy, judgment, creativity, and leadership become more competitively valuable as AI absorbs routine and technical tasks. Building a workforce with these capabilities is as strategically important as developing workers' AI proficiency.

9 Prepare for an AI jobs apocalypse, Economist, May 2026

Next steps for workers

1. **Consider moving toward roles made more expert by AI.** Our analysis suggests opportunity is migrating from Democratised roles toward Professionalised and low AI exposure roles (with exceptions).

2. **Seek out pioneering companies and industries.** Look for companies that are using AI to create new markets or services, or who are partnering across traditional industry lines to invent the new businesses of the future.

3. **Learn to command AI as a tool and partner.** Our work suggests that the following saying is true: you won't lose your job to AI but rather to someone who knows how to use AI.

4. **Build human-intensive skills.** Hone the skills whose value is rising in an AI era such as creativity, people skills, leadership, judgment, and the ability to navigate complexity and ambiguity.

5. **If you are early in your career, develop senior skills fast.** The good news is that many junior workers will be spared years of drudgery on basic, repetitive tasks. The tough news is that those same workers need to quickly step up to demonstrate skills like leadership and strategic thinking.

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