Two futures for jobs in an AI era

2026 Global AI Jobs Barometer

Professional Services
Analysis

Key findings

AI is driving productivity, accelerating skills change and starting to create a redesign of entry level work

AI is strongly linked to significant productivity gains

Since 2022 when AI use soared, companies in the sectors most exposed to AI have tripled their lead in workforce productivity growth over the least AI-exposed companies.

Companies achieving the biggest productivity gains are boosting wages and headcount

Rather than replacing jobs at scale, leading organisations are using AI to amplify human performance and create value.

Harnessing AI is accelerating skills transformation

Skills required for the most AI exposed jobs are changing twice as fast as in least exposed roles - a 75% increase over last year's gap.

Redesigned entry level pathways

AI exposed junior roles are 7x more likely (than the least AI exposed junior roles) to demand traditionally senior skills like leadership and strategic thinking.

A two-track labour market

Jobs professionalised by AI – where AI does the basic work leaving more expert tasks for people (22% of advertised jobs) - are thriving while jobs democratised by AI – where AI takes on the complex work (52% of advertised jobs) - fall behind.

40%

Productivity growth is 40% higher at most vs least AI exposed companies.

52%

The most AI exposed companies see faster headcount growth than the least AI exposed (52% vs 36%) and higher wage growth (24% vs 17%).

2.5x

The most AI exposed jobs are adding tasks that rely on human-intensive skills like empathy, judgment and creativity 2.5x faster - than the least AI exposed roles.

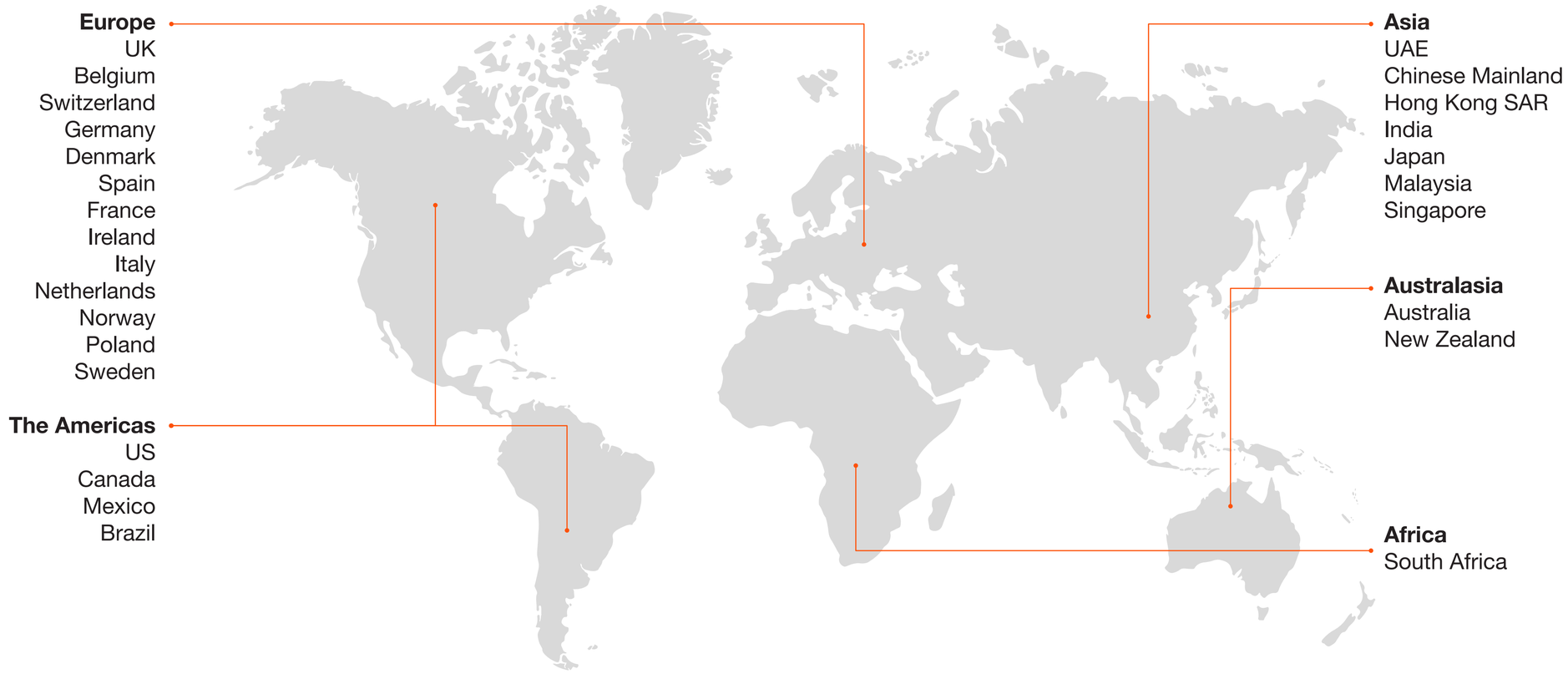
35%

AI-exposed 'seniorised' entry level roles are thriving with 35% growth since 2019 while other entry level roles decline in number.

42%

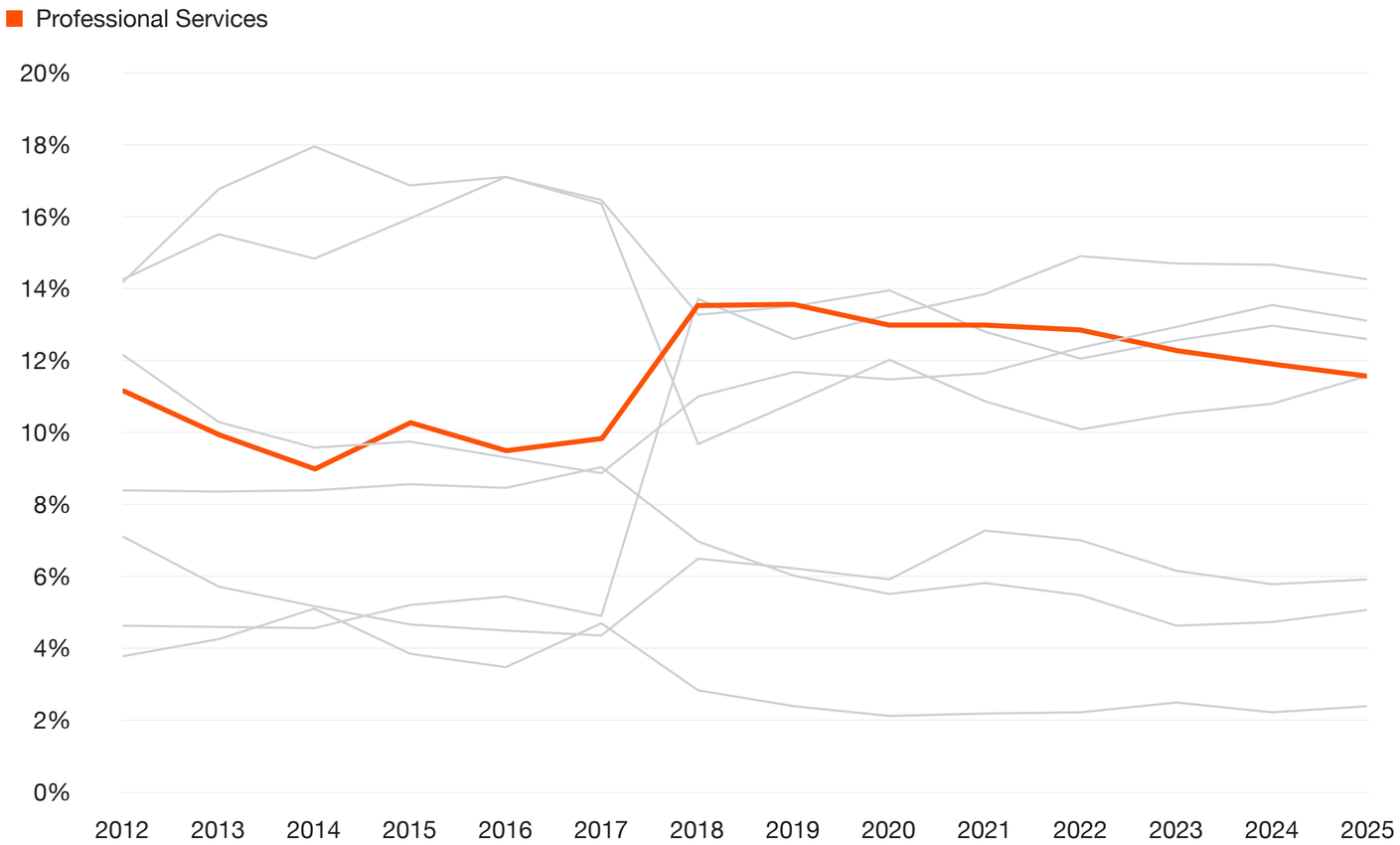
Professionalised jobs are growing twice as fast as Democratised jobs with 42% higher wage growth since 2021.

The 2026 AI Jobs Barometer examines over one billion job ads from 6 continents to reveal how AI is affecting jobs, skills, wages, and labour productivity



Professional Services represents a significant, but gradually declining share of labour demand

Share of total job postings in the Professional Services sector, globally (%, 2012 to 2025)



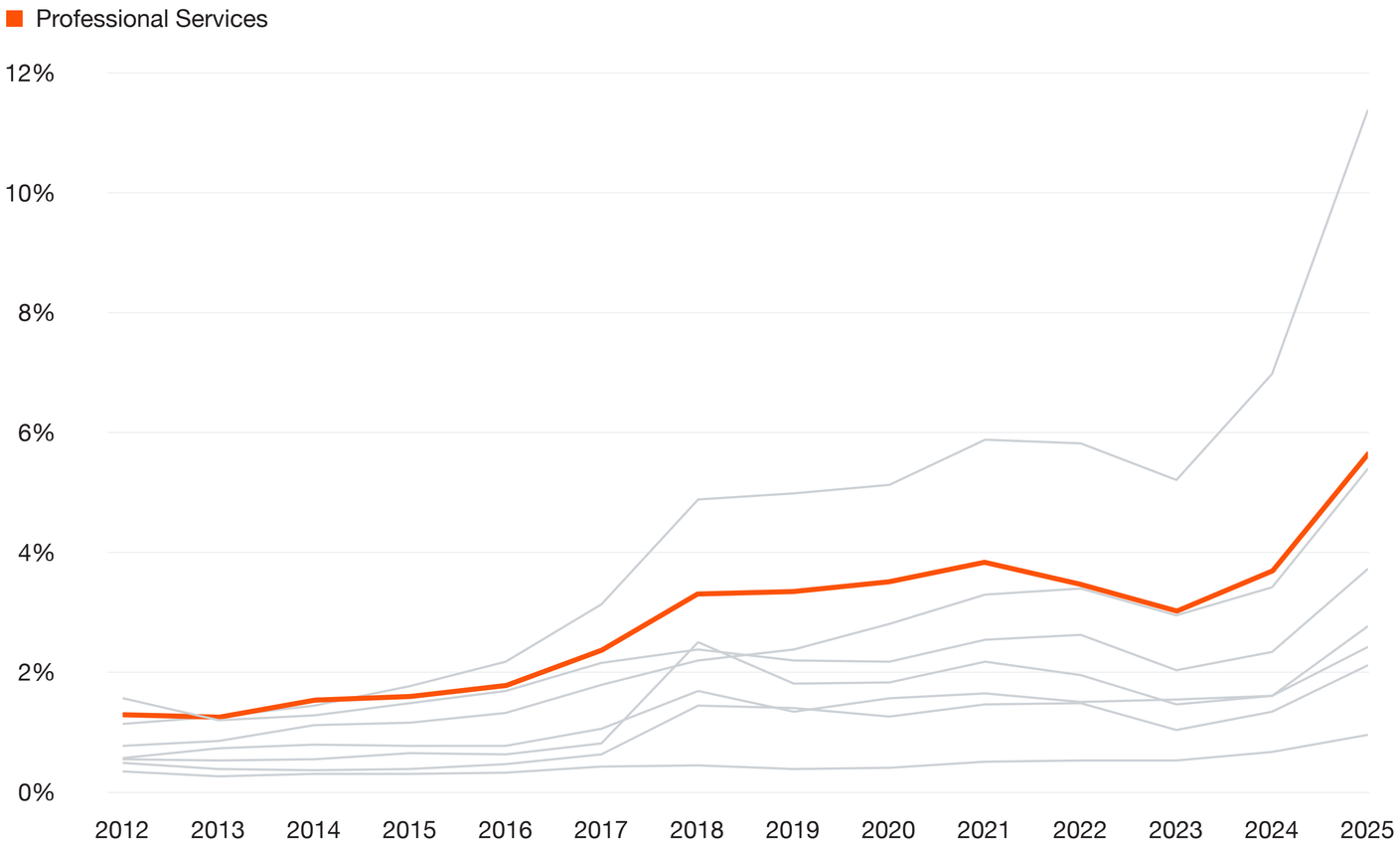
Source: PwC analysis, Lightcast data

Findings

- In 2025, the sector accounts for 11.6% of total job postings, placing it in the higher range among sectors analysed.
- While this trend has seen a gradual decline from 2019, it remains a major contributor to aggregate hiring demand.
- **Note**: Professional Services is defined as professional, scientific and technical activities, including legal, accounting, management consulting, architecture and engineering, R&D, advertising, market research and related specialist advisory activities. It does not include wider business support services.

AI hiring intensity in the sector is the second highest after Technology, Media and Telecoms (TMT) and is accelerating rapidly

Share of AI jobs within the Professional Services sector, globally (%, 2012 to 2025)



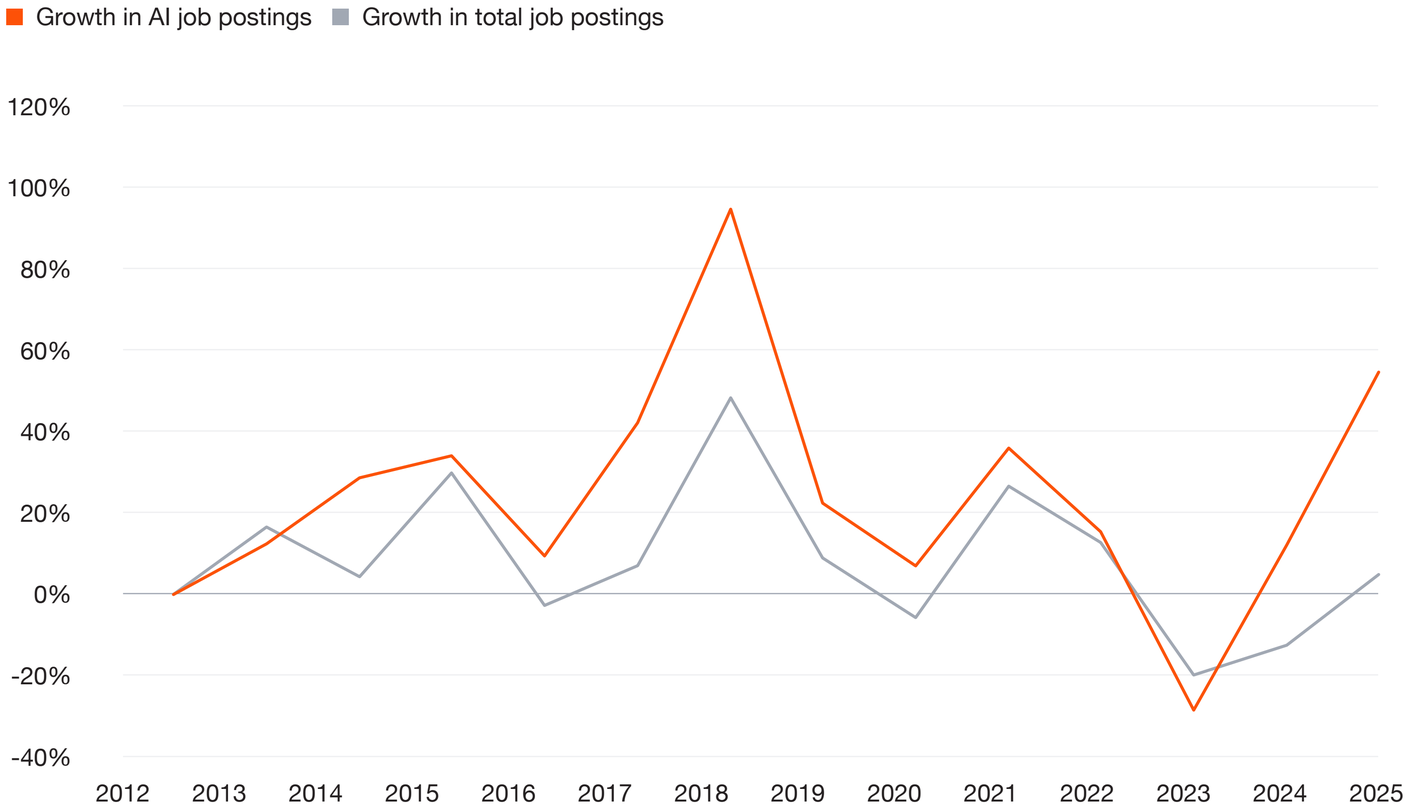
Source: PwC analysis, Lightcast data

Findings

- In 2025, AI roles account for 5.6% of total job postings, up sharply from 3.7% in 2024. This places Professional Services close to Financial Services in terms of AI hiring share, and the highest of sectors where digital services are not the core product offering.
- The relatively high and rising AI intensity suggests strong scope for AI augmentation across advisory, analytical and client-facing functions.
- The scale of the increase indicates that AI is becoming increasingly embedded in core service delivery models.

AI hiring in Professional Services is accelerating sharply, outpacing the sector's broader recovery

Growth in total job postings and AI job postings for the Professional Services sector, globally (%, 2012 to 2025)



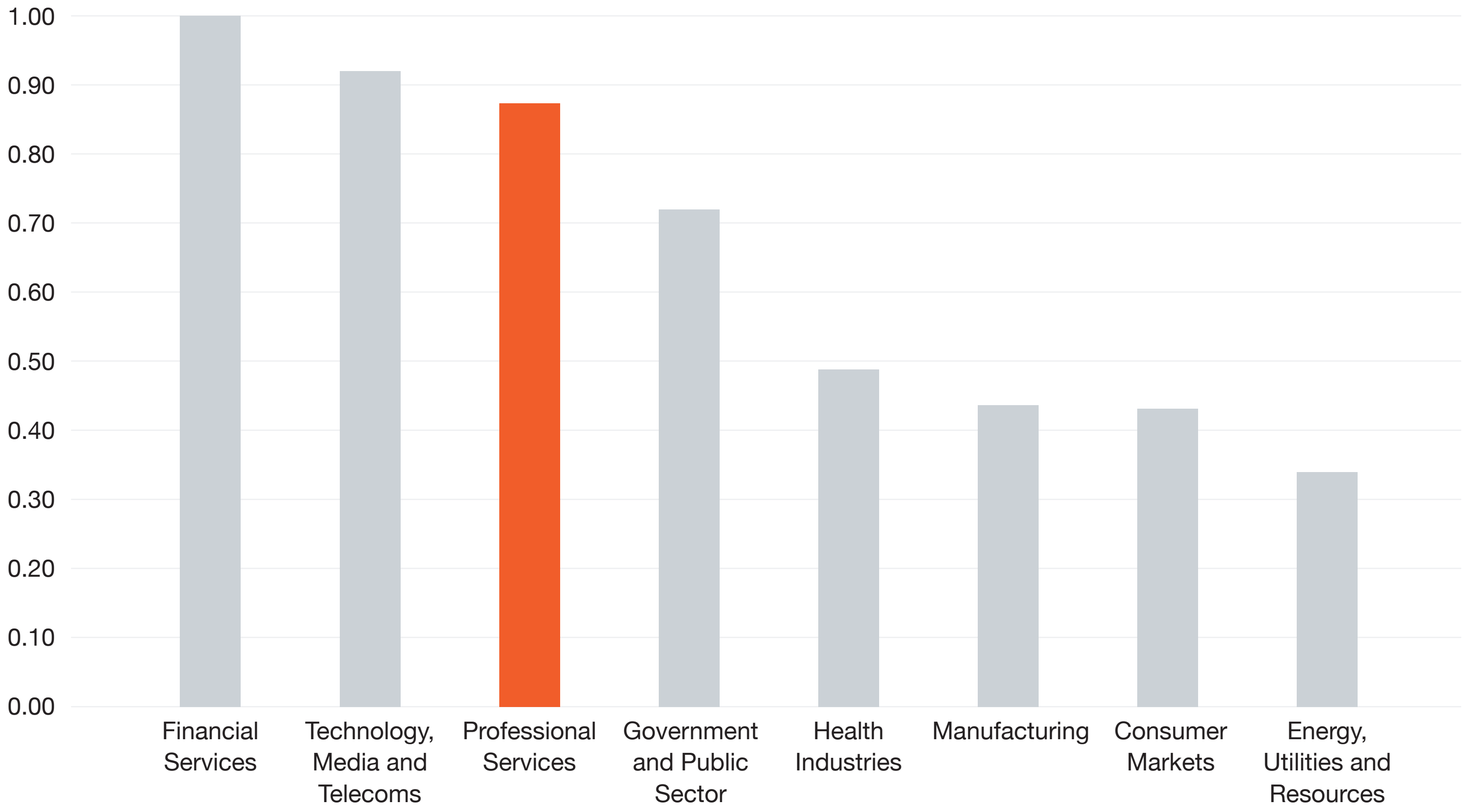
Source: PwC analysis, Lightcast data

Findings

- Total job postings declined by 12.3% in 2024 before recovering to 5% growth in 2025. Over the same period, AI roles grew by 12.2% in 2024 and surged by 54.7% in 2025.
- While overall hiring has returned to modest growth, AI expansion has accelerated far more rapidly.
- The scale of divergence suggests that AI momentum is not simply a by-product of cyclical recovery. Instead, firms appear to be prioritising AI capabilities as part of evolving service delivery models and productivity strategies.

This acceleration in AI hiring is underpinned by high AI exposure, with the sector ranking third across the key sectors

PwC AI industry exposure by sector (2026)



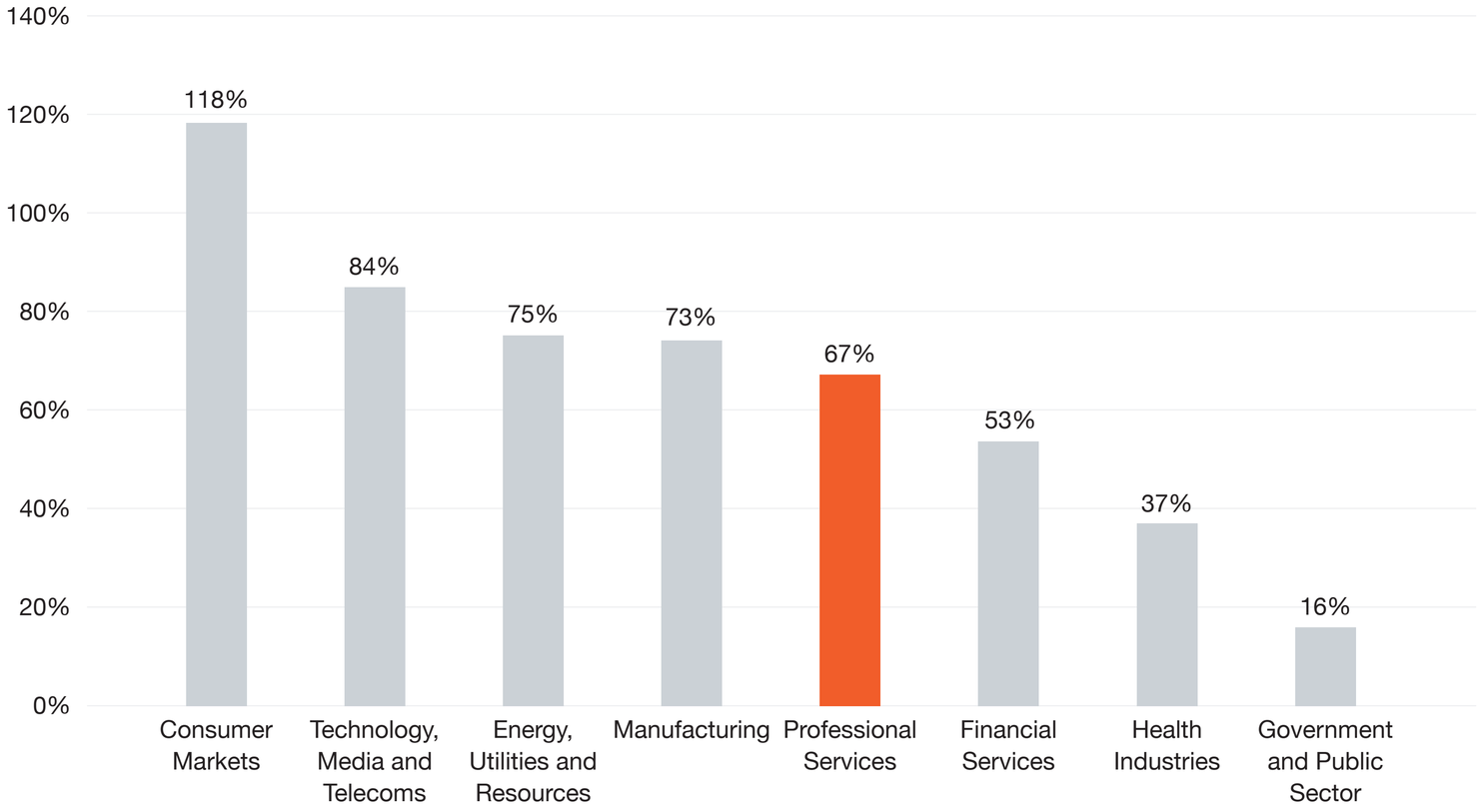
Source: PwC analysis, Lightcast data

Findings

- Professional Services ranks third on our AI Industry Exposure Index, behind only TMT and Financial Services.
- This may reflect an occupational mix of roles involving analytical, advisory and knowledge-based tasks that are well suited to AI augmentation.
- The sector's strong exposure aligns with the sharp acceleration in AI hiring observed in 2025. This suggests AI adoption is increasingly embedded in core service offerings rather than confined to peripheral experimentation.

AI enabled roles in Professional Services command a substantial wage premium, reflecting the strategic value of AI expertise

Average wage premium for AI related skills by sector, globally (%, 2025)



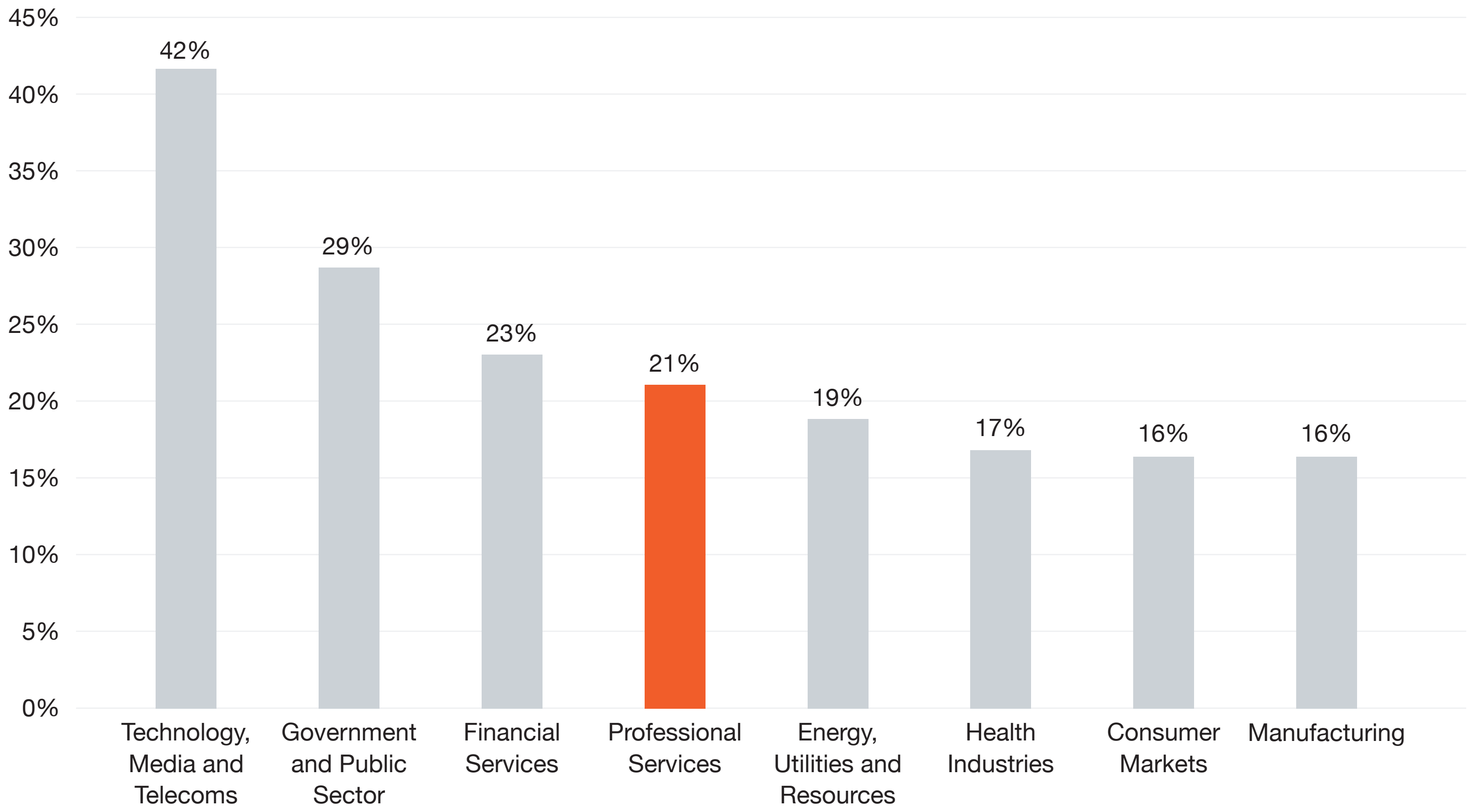
Source: PwC analysis, Lightcast data
Notes: (i) To calculate wage premiums, we split job postings within a sector by AI and non-AI jobs. From here we estimate the wage premium (difference) within the sector for wages in the AI group compared to the non-AI group. This analysis is not a growth rate but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

Findings

- In 2025, AI-enabled employees earn a wage premium of 67% relative to non-AI roles within the sector. While not the highest across sectors, this represents a significant uplift in compensation.
- The scale of the premium is consistent with the sector's high AI exposure and strong hiring acceleration.
- AI capabilities appear increasingly central to advisory, analytical and client-facing services, with compensation reflecting their growing commercial importance.

Higher exposure to AI than other sectors is reflected in a notable growth in productivity in Professional Services

Growth rate in productivity by sector, globally (%, 2018-2025)



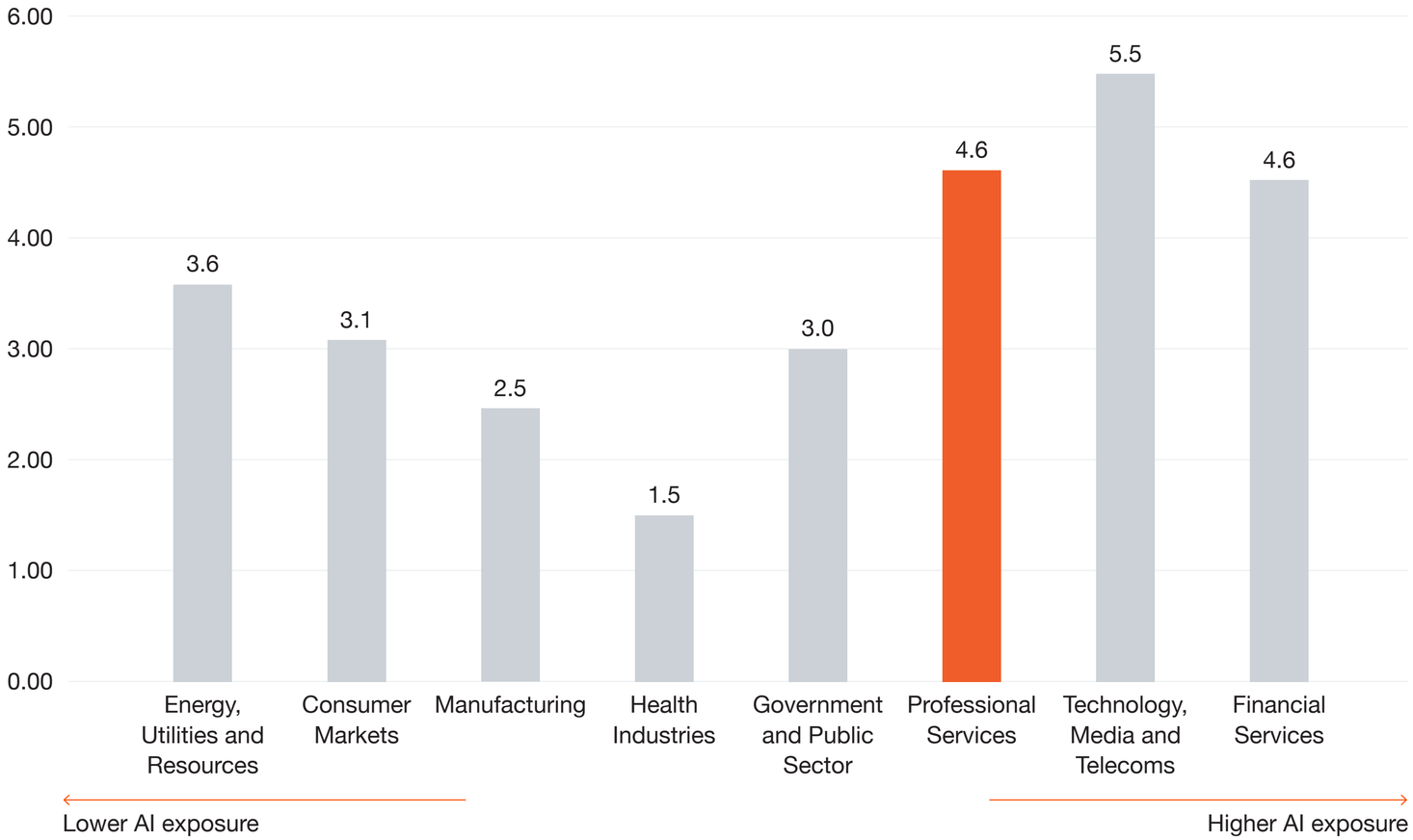
Source: PwC analysis, ORBIS data
Notes: Productivity is measured by turnover per employee using ORBIS data. We compute the growth rate in productivity between 2018 and 2024/25 at company level and aggregate up to sector level. Includes company data from all countries in the 2026 AIJB scope. 2025 data is used for companies where available, otherwise we default to 2024 data. Sectors are mapped from two-digit 2022 NAICS to the closest match(es) amongst the eight key PwC sectors. See productivity analysis appendix for all data cleaning filters applied.

Findings

- Professional Services records productivity growth of 21%, placing it in the mid-range across sectors.
- This is consistent with its high level of AI exposure, indicating steady efficiency gains from AI adoption.
- Overall, the sector shows solid but not standout improvements, reflecting a more gradual translation of AI integration into productivity gains.

Professional Services is experiencing one of the fastest rates of skills transformation, matching the most exposed sector – Financial Services

Net skill change by AI exposure for key sectors, 2019-2025, globally



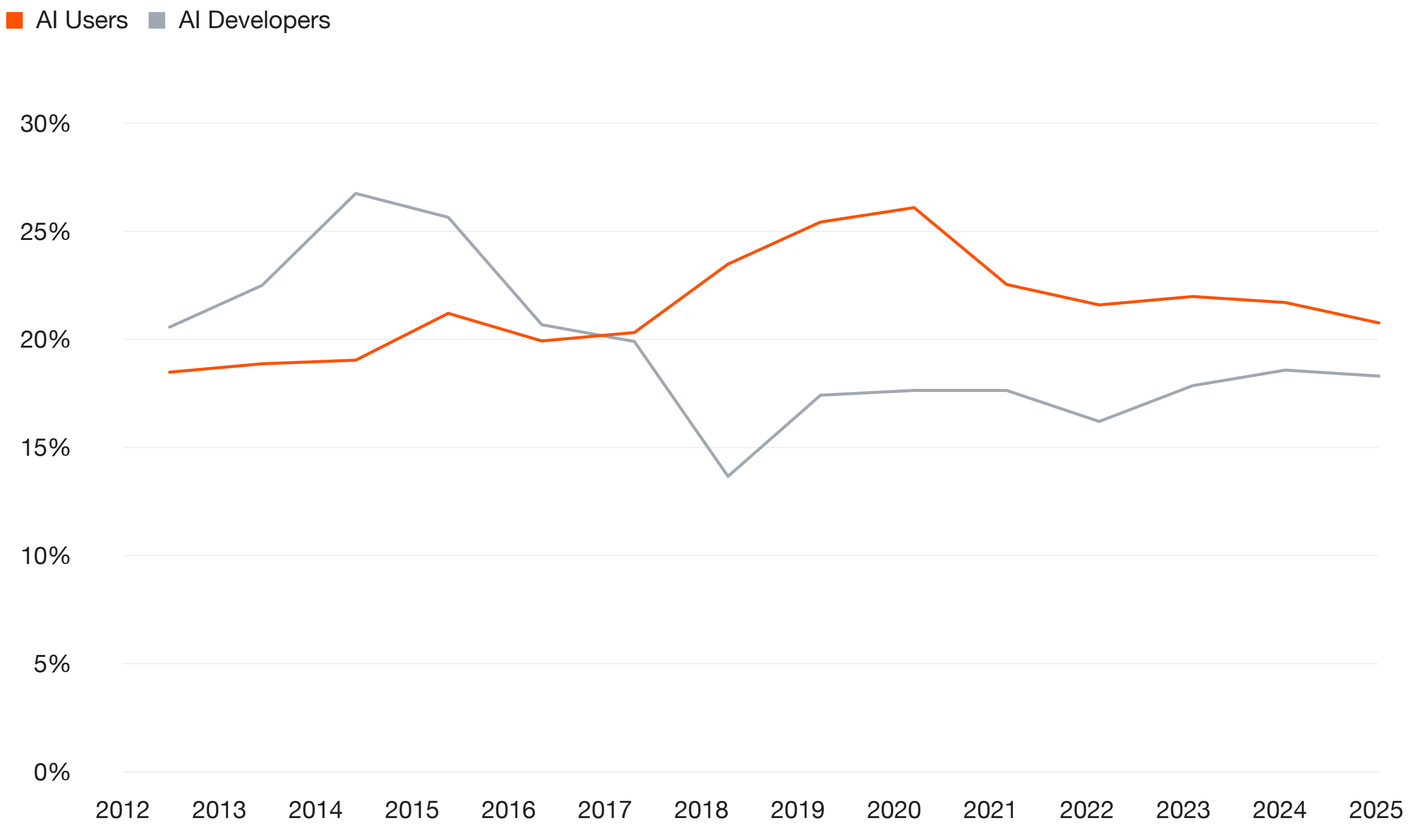
Source: PwC analysis, Lightcast data
Notes: Net skill change is calculated as the aggregation of the percentage point difference between 2019 and 2025 of the share of a skill making up an occupation.

Findings

- Between 2019 and 2025, the sector records a high level of net skills change, equal to Financial Services, the most AI-exposed industry.
- This places Professional Services among the most rapidly evolving sectors in terms of workforce capabilities.
- Given the knowledge-based nature of roles, AI-driven augmentation and automation are likely significant contributors to this skills reconfiguration.

The Professional Services sector accounts for a substantial share of global AI skill demand across all capability tiers

Share of global skill mentions for the Professional Services sector, by user category (%, 2012 - 2025)



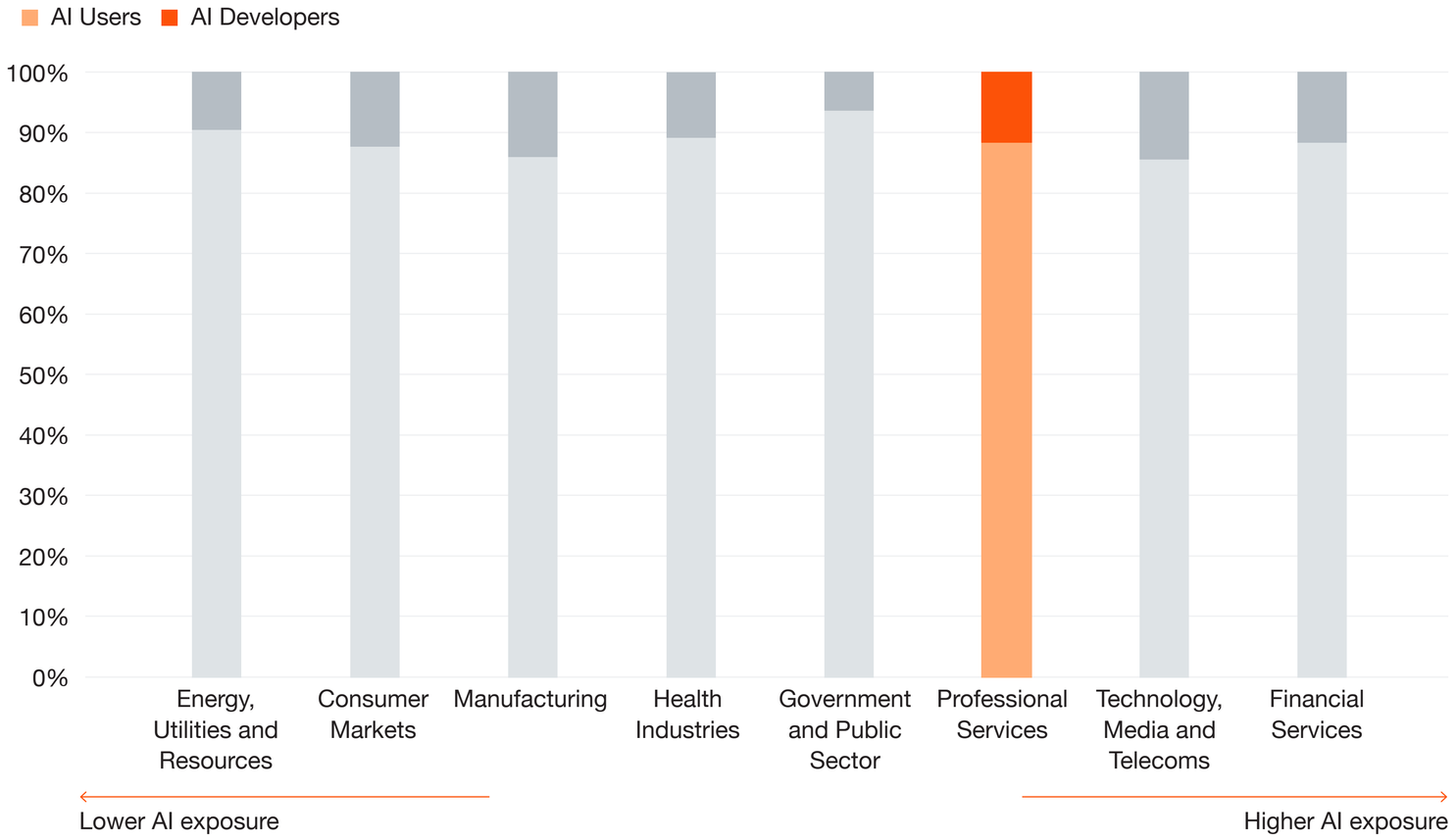
Source: PwC analysis, Lightcast data

Findings

- In 2025, the Professional Services sector accounts for 20.8% of global AI users (applied AI and basic literacy) skill mentions and 18.3% of AI developer capability mentions (advanced AI development).
- This suggests firms may be increasing focus on embedding AI into business processes and products at scale.
- Additionally, these shares have remained stable in recent years, indicating hiring demand is keeping pace with the supply of AI skills.

Within Professional Services, AI hiring is centred on applying AI across client and delivery work, supported by a meaningful developer base

Shares of AI User and AI Developer job postings of all AI related roles, Professional Services, 2025, globally (%)



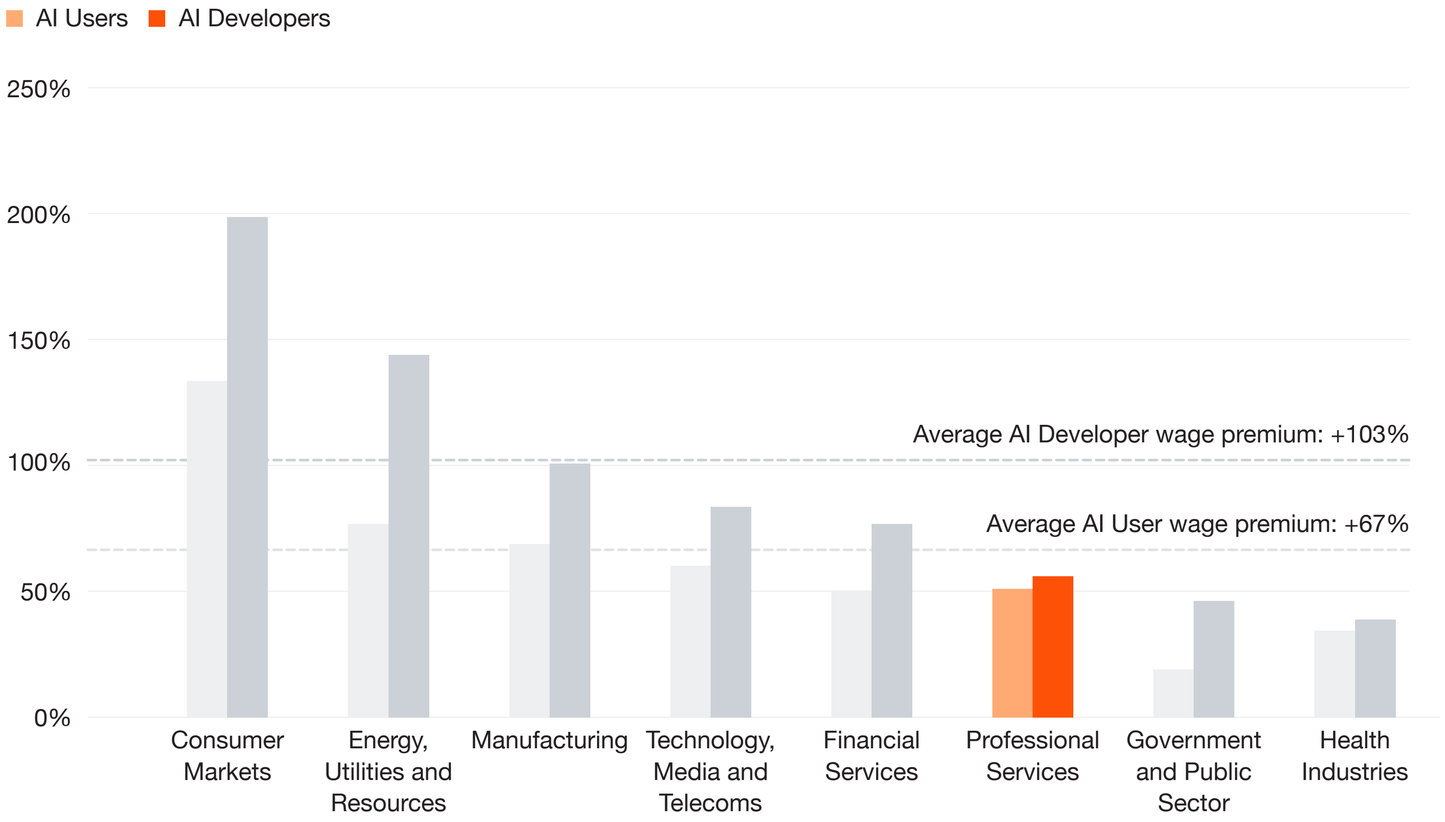
Source: PwC analysis, Lightcast data
Notes: We only include the countries for which data is available from 2012 in our sample.

Findings

- In 2025, AI user roles account for 89% of AI related job postings in Professional Services, compared with 11% for AI developer roles. This shows that most demand is focused on applying AI within day to day delivery and business functions rather than on specialist build roles alone.
- That mix fits a sector where much of the value comes from embedding AI into knowledge intensive work, including research, analysis, content generation, workflow support and client service delivery, rather than from building stand alone AI products. The continued developer share points to the need for technical talent to tailor tools, integrate them into delivery platforms and support more specialised sector and firm level use cases.

Despite representing a smaller share of hiring, developer roles in Professional Services command only a modestly stronger wage premium

AI User and AI Developer wage premiums, Professional Services, globally, 2025 (%)



Source: PwC analysis, Lightcast data
Notes: We only include the countries for which data is available from 2012 in our sample. 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.

Findings

- In 2025, AI user roles in Professional Services carry a wage premium of +51%, while AI developer roles carry a premium of +57% relative to non AI roles in the sector. This indicates that while most AI hiring is concentrated in user roles, the market places still place a slightly higher premium on advanced technical AI capability.
- Both premiums sit below the overall cross sector averages, indicating that AI skills are clearly valued in Professional Services, but with a more moderate pay uplift than in sectors where AI talent appears to be scarcer or concentrated in more highly rewarded roles. The relatively narrow gap between user and developer premiums also suggests that the market is rewarding applied AI capability and technical AI capability more evenly than in most other sectors.

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