Two Futures for Jobs in an AI era

2026 Global AI Jobs Barometer

Australia 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.

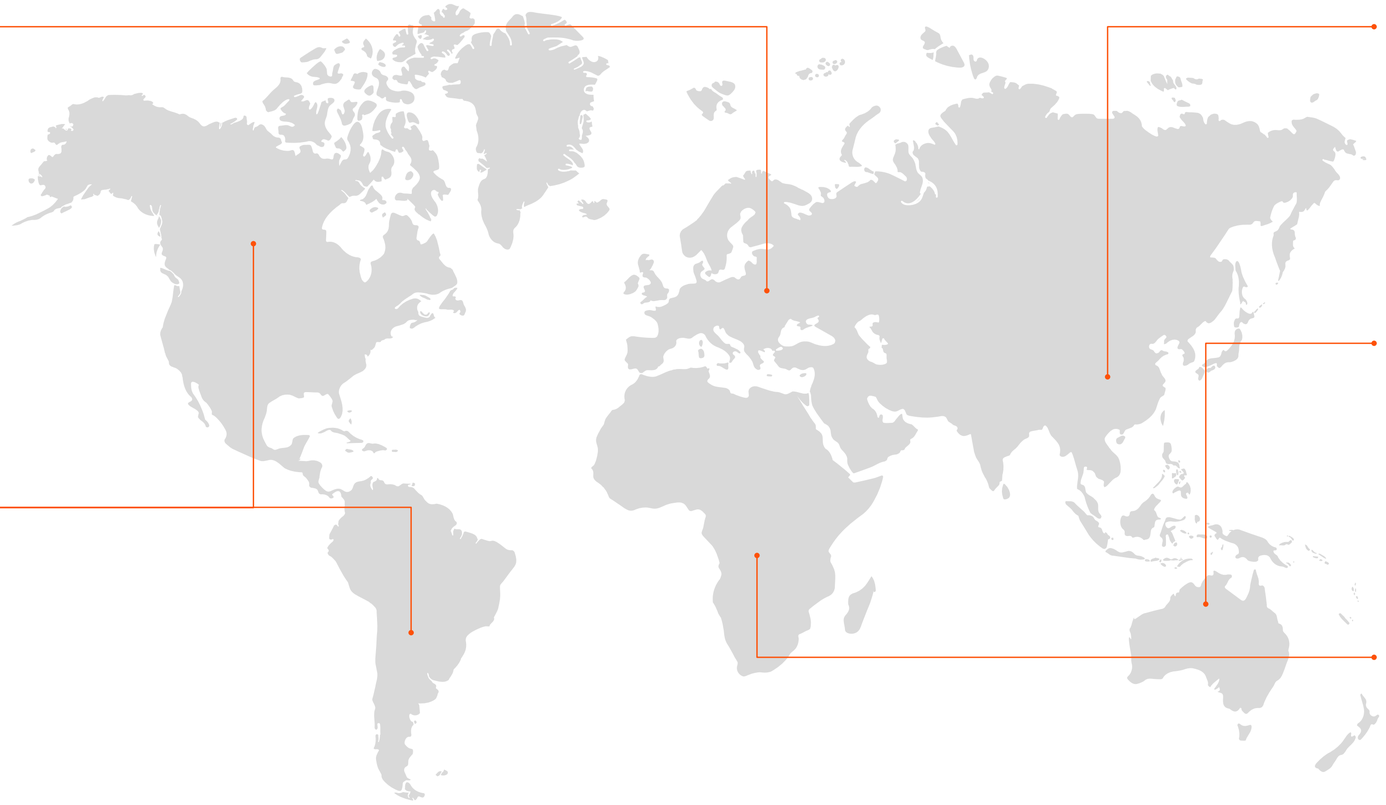
35%

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.

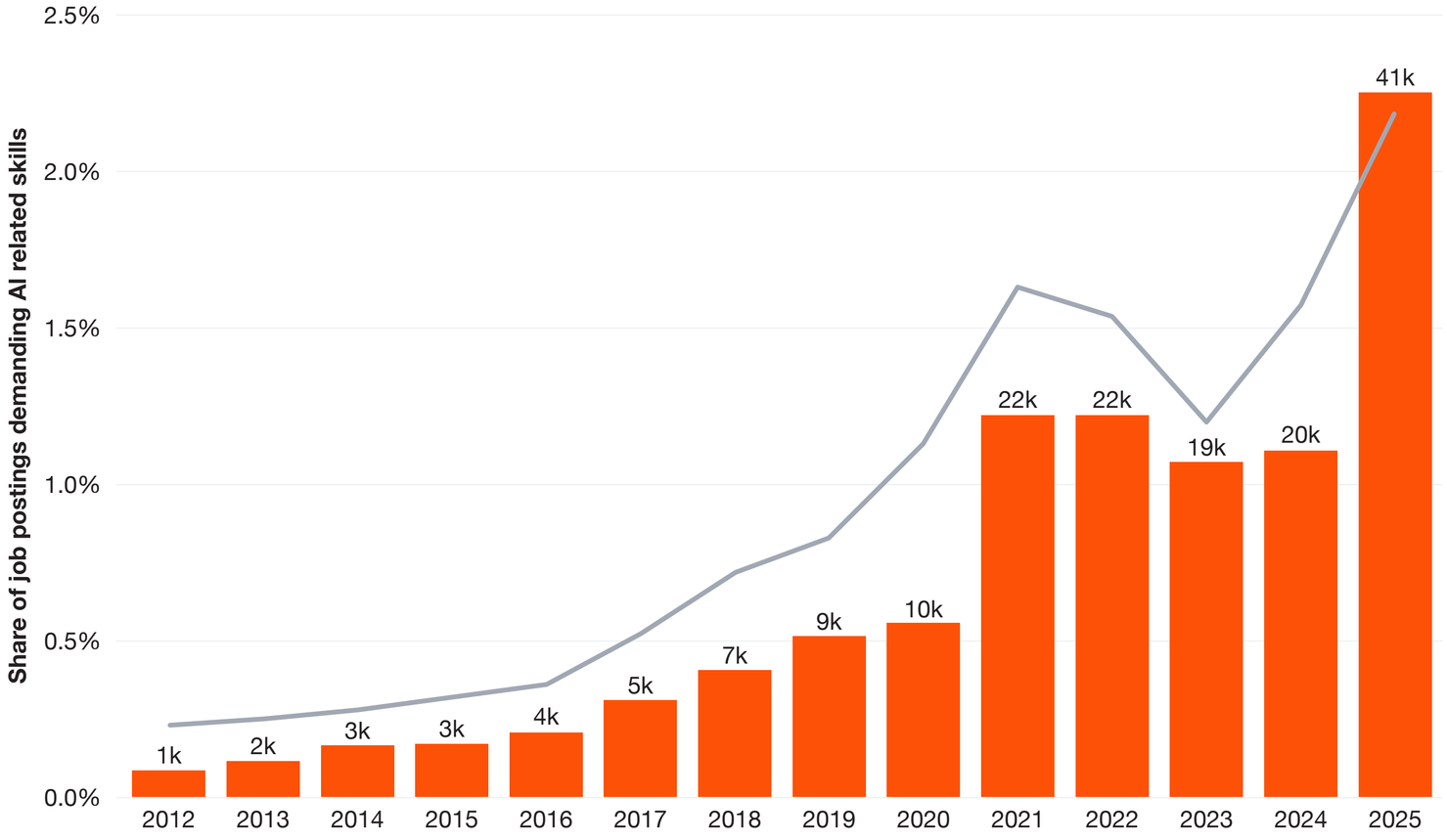
The 2026 AI Jobs Barometer examines over one billion job ads from 6 continents to reveal how AI is affecting jobs, skills, wages, and labour productivity



Australia Insights

AI hiring in Australia doubled between 2024 and 2025, following four years of limited growth

Total number and share of job postings requiring AI related skills, Australia, 2012-2025



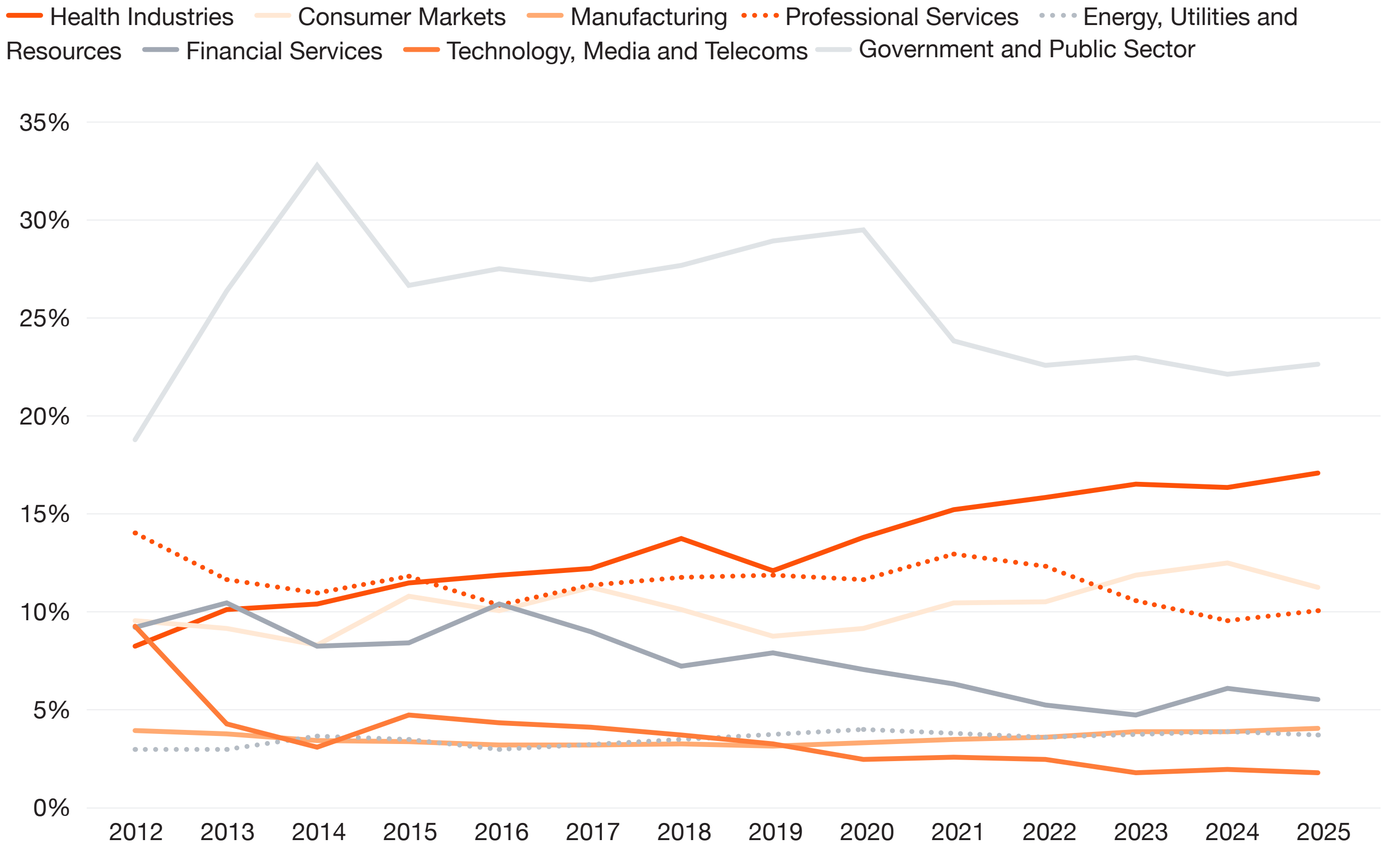
Source: PwC analysis, Lightcast data

Findings

- The number of job postings in Australia requiring AI skills increased by around 21k in 2025, reversing the moderate declines seen in 2023 and 2024.
- As a result, the share of job postings requiring AI skills reached 2.2% in 2025.

Government and Public Sector and Health account for the largest shares of hiring in Australia

Share of all job postings by sector, Australia, 2012-2025



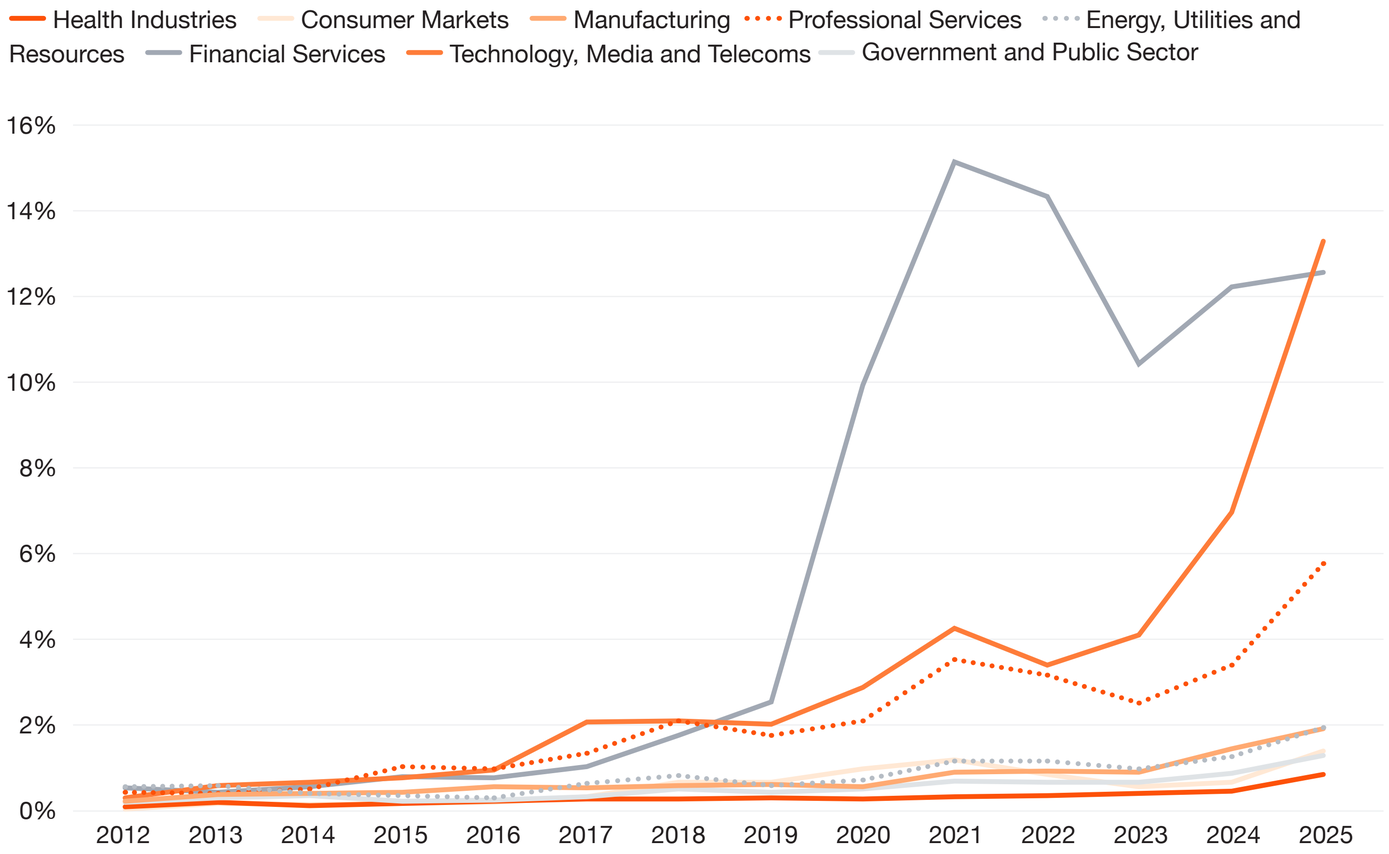
Source: PwC analysis, Lightcast data

Findings

- Government and Public Sector and Health Industries dominate labour demand in Australia, accounting for 22.7% and 17.1% of total job postings respectively.
- This highlights the strong role of public services in the country's employment landscape.
- Other sectors account for smaller shares of hiring but still represent important contributors to overall labour demand.

AI hiring intensity is rising across all sectors in Australia and is led by TMT and Financial Services

Share of AI job postings within each sector, Australia, 2012-2025



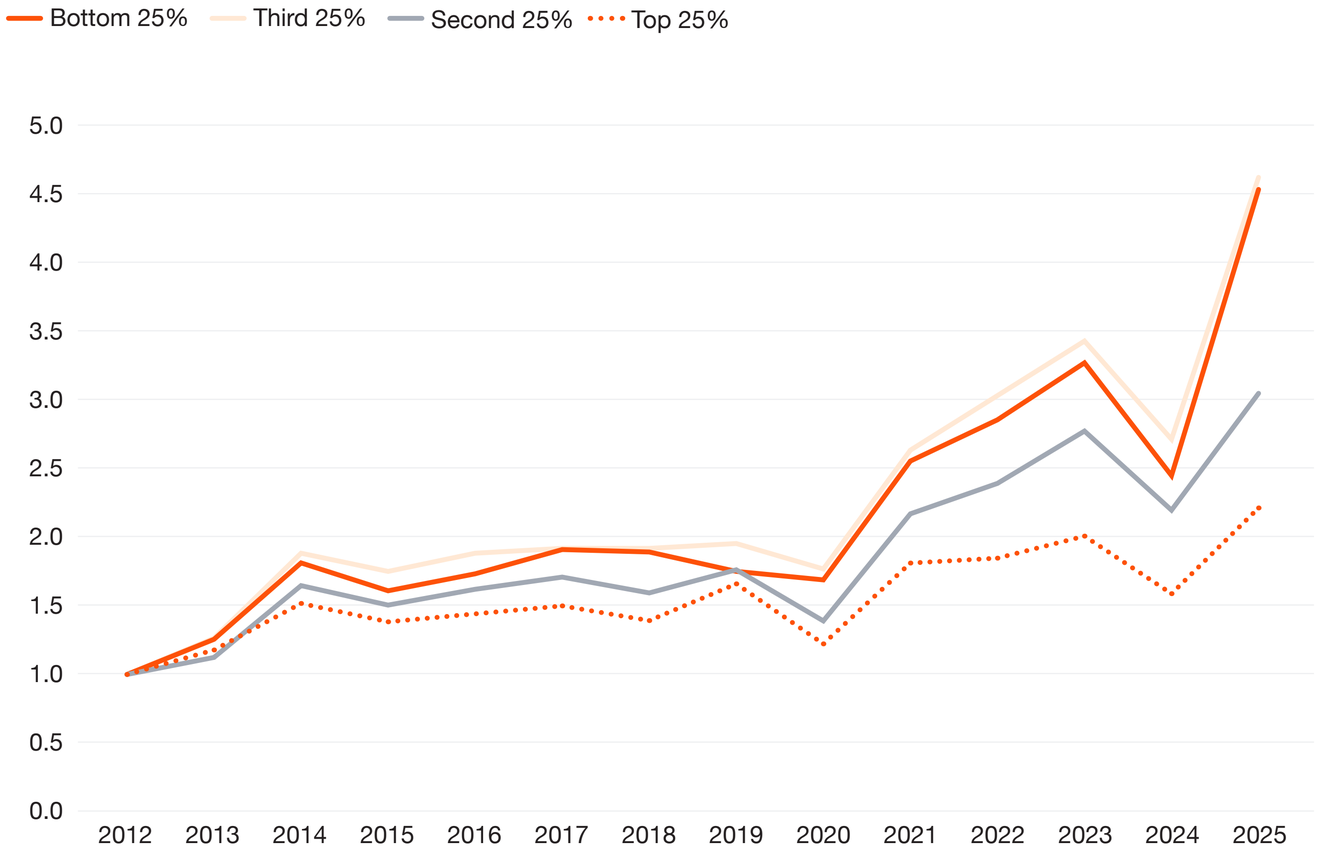
Source: PwC analysis, Lightcast data

Findings

- Technology, Media and Telecoms (TMT) records the highest share of AI job postings in Australia as of 2025, overtaking Financial Services which peaked in 2021 and saw moderate growth in 2025.
- All sectors saw an increase in AI job share in 2025, pointing to broad-based growth in AI hiring.
- This suggests AI adoption in Australia is expanding across the economy, rather than being concentrated in a small set of industries.

In Australia, job postings have increased across all AI exposure groups since 2012

Number of job postings relative to 2012 by AI exposure quartile, Australia, 2012-2025



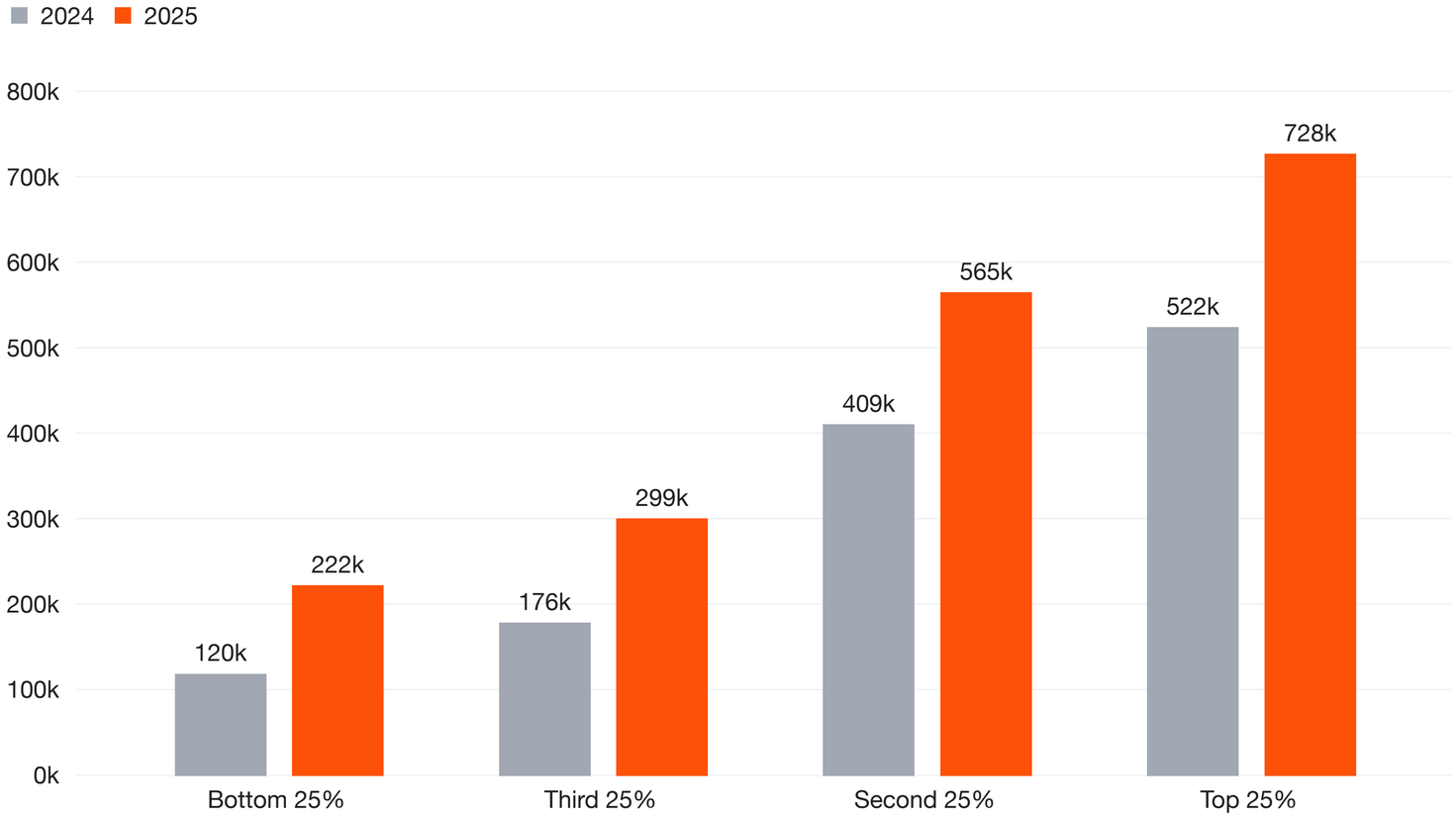
Source: PwC analysis, Lightcast data

Findings

- Job postings have increased across all AI exposure quartiles in Australia. By 2025, the lowest exposure quartile has around 4.5 postings for every posting in 2012, compared to 2.2 in the highest exposure quartile.
- All quartiles saw their largest increase in 2025, marking the strongest year of growth over the period.

The top quartile of AI exposed occupations accounts for the largest number of job postings

Total number of job postings by AI exposure quartile, Australia, 2024 and 2025



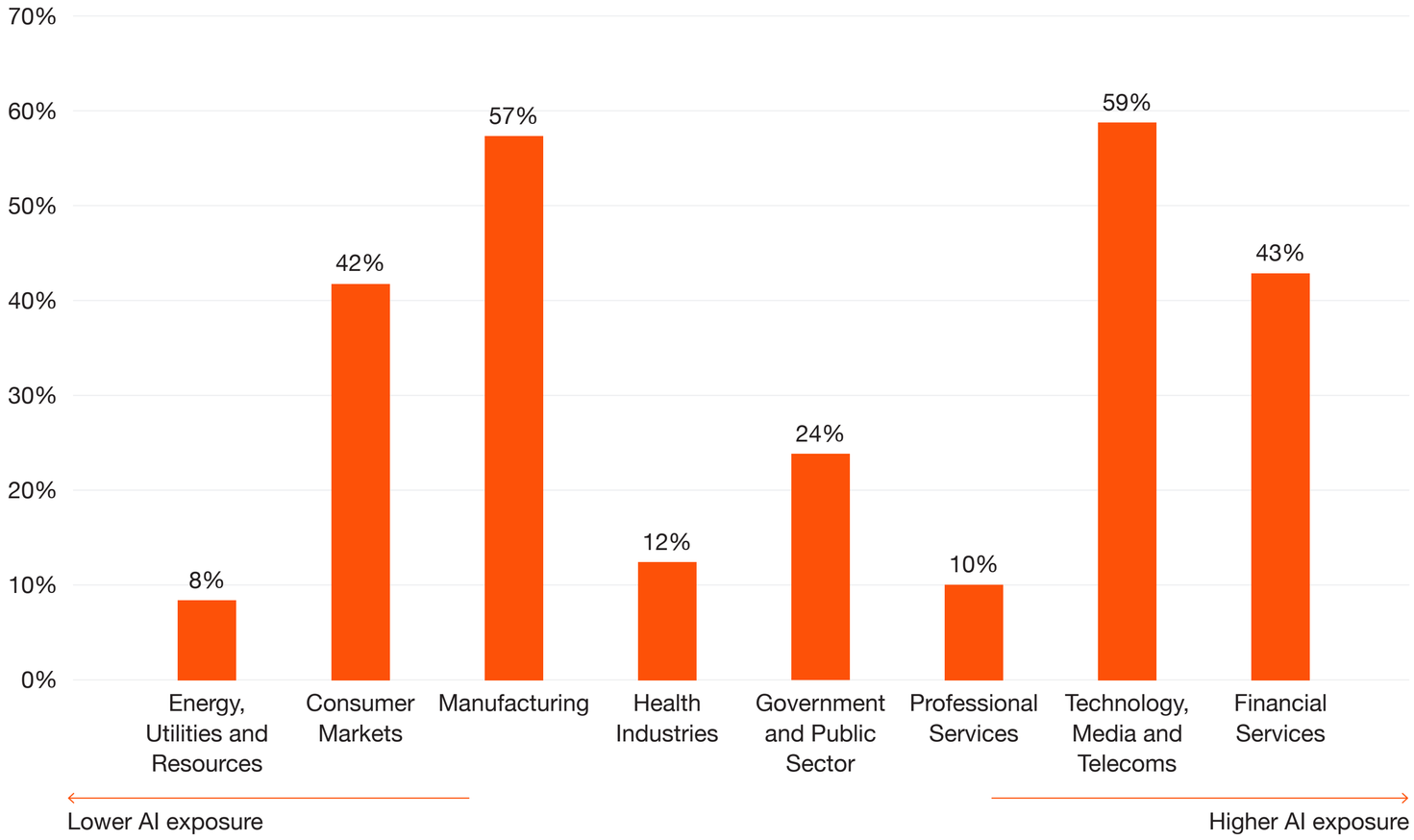
Source: PwC analysis, Lightcast data

Findings

- While job postings have grown faster in less AI-exposed occupations over the long term, highly exposed roles still account for the largest share in absolute terms.
- In 2025, the most AI-exposed quartile recorded around 729,000 job postings, substantially higher than lower exposure groups.
- All quartiles saw an increase in job postings between 2024 and 2025, indicating broad-based growth in demand.

AI wage premiums in Australia are strongest at both ends of the exposure spectrum

Wage premium by sector, Australia, 2025



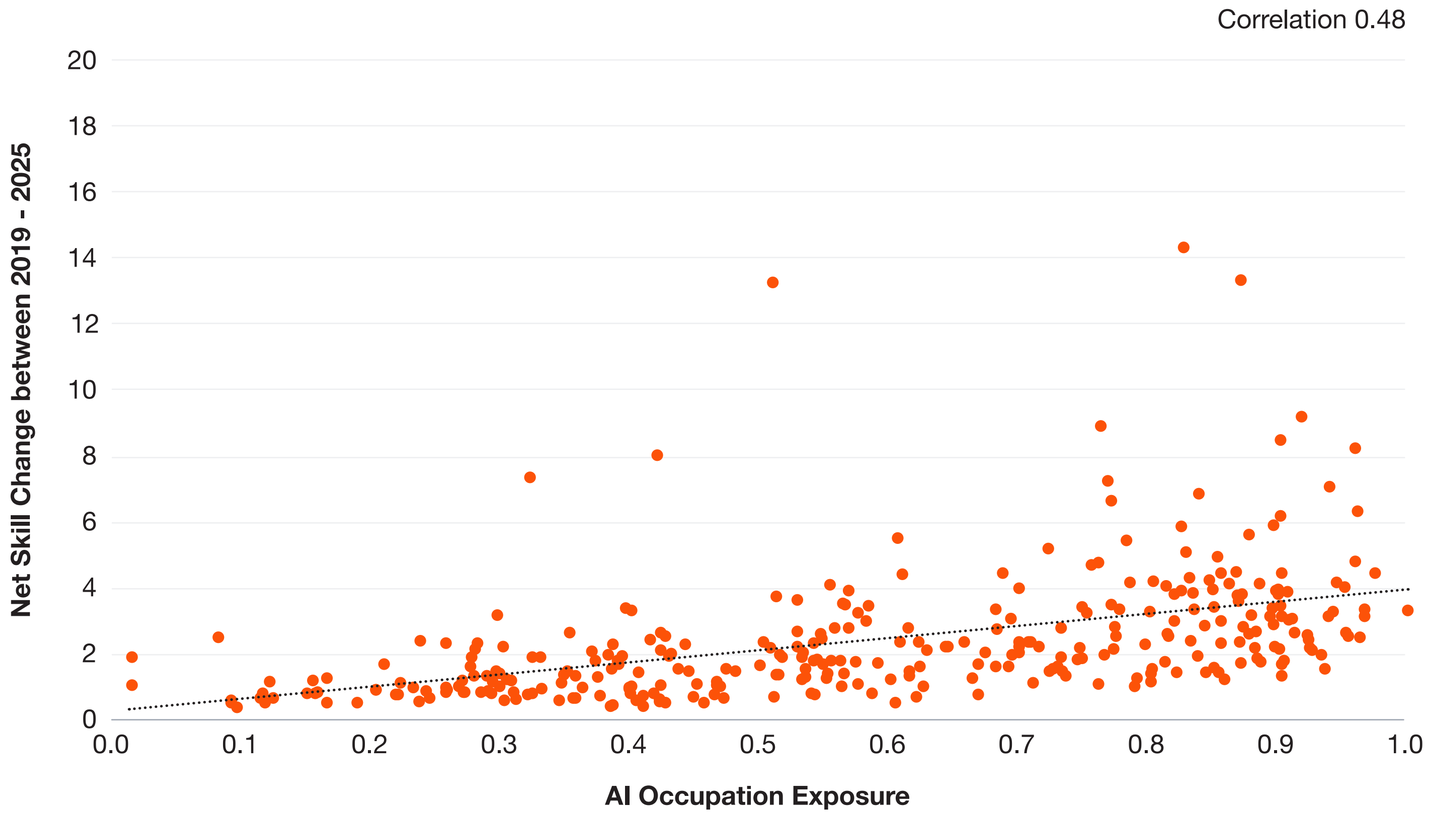
Source: PwC analysis, Lightcast data

Findings

- AI wage premiums in Australia follow a U-shaped pattern across sectors, with higher premiums observed in both lower and higher AI exposure industries.
- In lower exposure sectors, such as Manufacturing and Consumer Markets, premiums are elevated, reflecting specialised roles where AI skills are relatively scarce and command higher pay.
- In more AI-exposed sectors, premiums are driven by widespread adoption, where AI skills are more embedded across roles and remain highly valued.

In Australia, more AI-exposed occupations are experiencing faster rates of skills transformation

Net skill change from 2019 to 2025 for 4-digit ISCO code occupations by AI occupation exposure, Australia



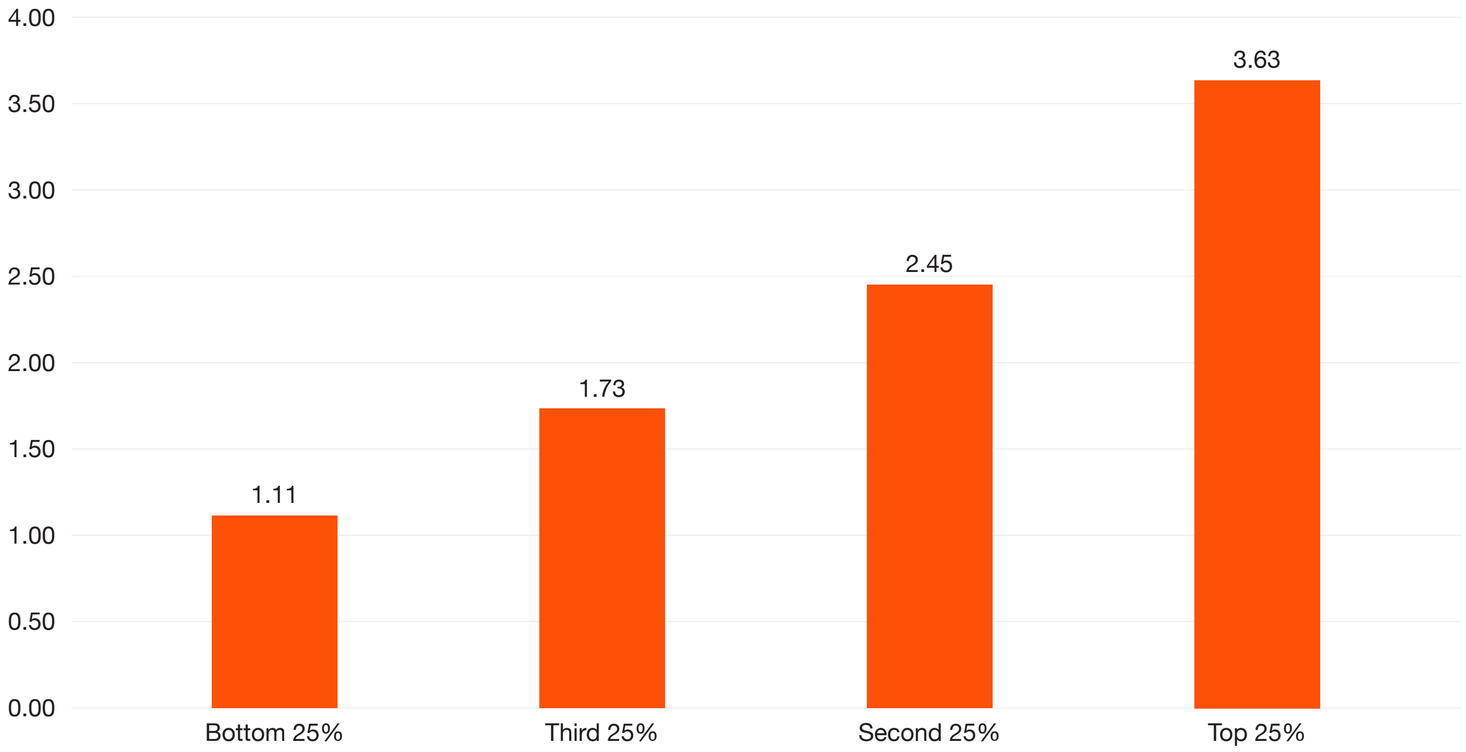
Source: PwC analysis, Lightcast data
Notes: These figures only include countries for which data is available from 2012.

Findings

- There is a positive correlation of 0.48 between AI exposure and net skills change between 2019 and 2025, indicating that more exposed occupations tend to see greater shifts in skill requirements.
- This suggests that AI-exposed roles are adapting more rapidly, with evolving task demands reshaping the capabilities required.

This is evident across exposure quartiles, where the most AI-exposed occupations show the largest skill shifts

Average net skill change from 2019 to 2025 for 4-digit ISCO code occupations by AI occupation exposure quartile, Australia



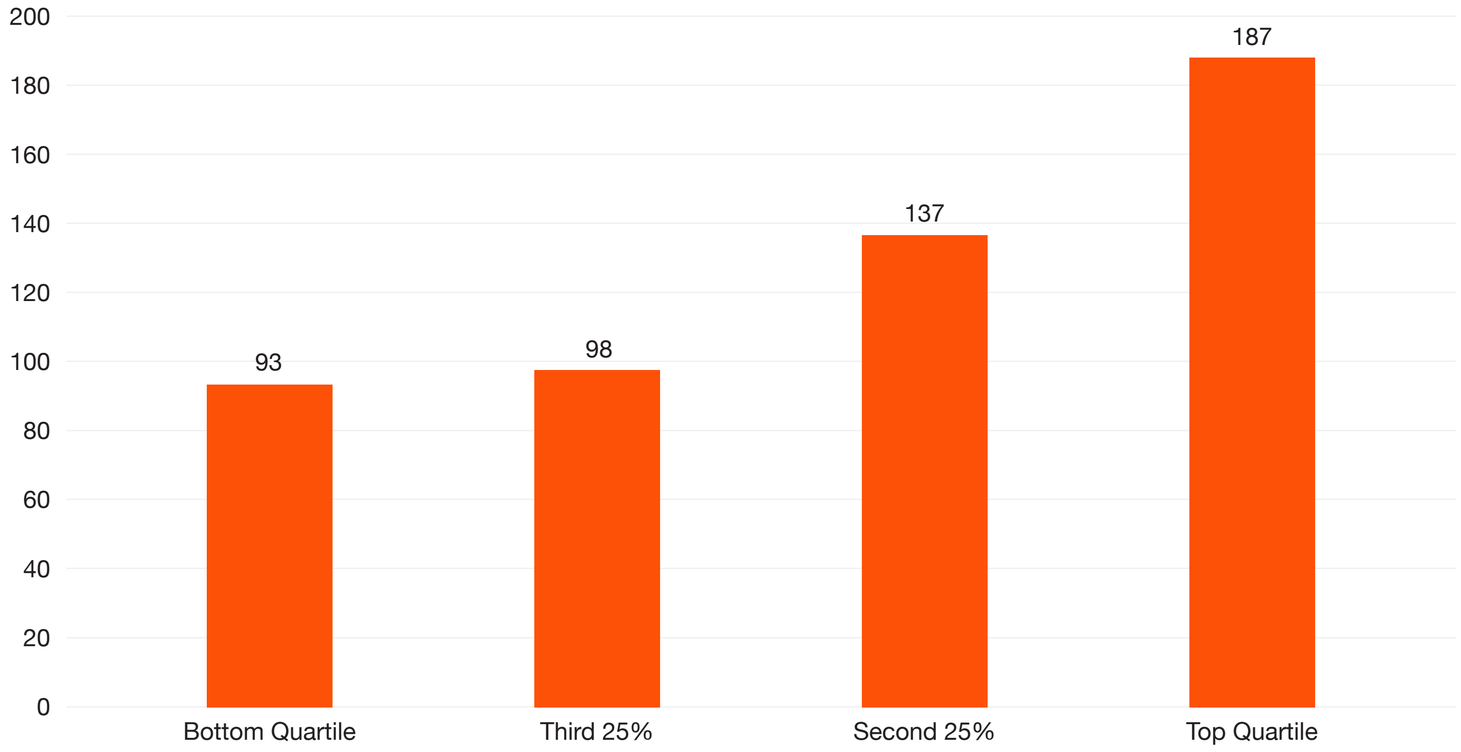
Source: PwC analysis, Lightcast data

Findings

- The same pattern observed earlier is reflected across exposure quartiles: occupations in the highest AI exposure group show the fastest skills transformation between 2019 and 2025.
- Lower exposure quartiles also follow a gradual upward progression, with each successive quartile seeing higher average net skill change, and the top quartile seeing a significant jump from the lower quartiles.
- This reinforces the earlier finding of a strong positive relationship between AI exposure and skills change in Australia, where more exposed occupations tend to evolve faster as task requirements shift.

In line with this, the most AI-exposed occupations see greater expansion in the average number of new skills per occupation

Average number of “new” skills per occupation, by AI exposure quartile, Australia, 2025 relative to 2019



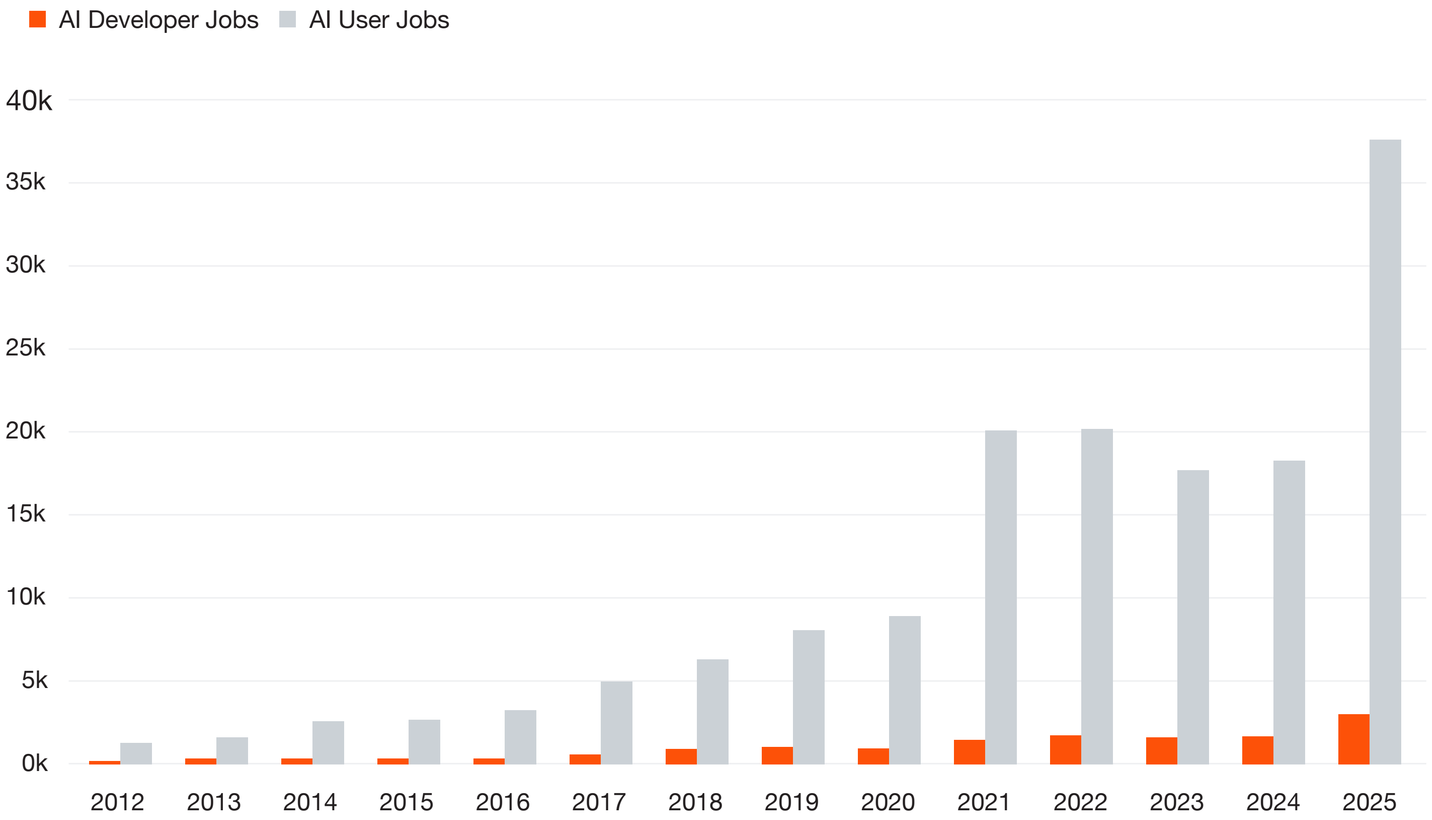
Source: PwC analysis, PwC AI Occupational Exposure Index, Lightcast data
Notes: We define a ‘new skill’ as any skill that has greater than 10 mentions in an occupation in 2025, but five or less mentions in that same occupation in 2019. Across all postings for an occupation in a given country, we count the number of ‘new skills’ required for that occupation.

Findings

- We find a clear positive relationship between AI exposure and the number of new skills required within occupations. Specifically, occupations in higher AI exposure quartiles exhibit a greater average number of newly emerging skills between 2019 and 2025.
- Importantly, this metric reflects the average number of new skills per occupation within each exposure quartile, rather than the total number of new skills observed.
- While the bottom and third quartiles show relatively modest differences, there is a more pronounced increase at higher exposure levels, with the top quartile averaging 187 new skills per occupation. This suggests that skill expansion accelerates as AI exposure increases.
- While some of this increase reflects higher posting volumes in more exposed occupations, this is consistent with underlying job growth and evolution, as expanding roles require a broader and more diverse set of skills.

AI job demand in Australia is dominated by user roles, with both user and developer roles returning to strong growth in 2025

Total number of AI user and AI developer job roles, Australia, 2012-2025



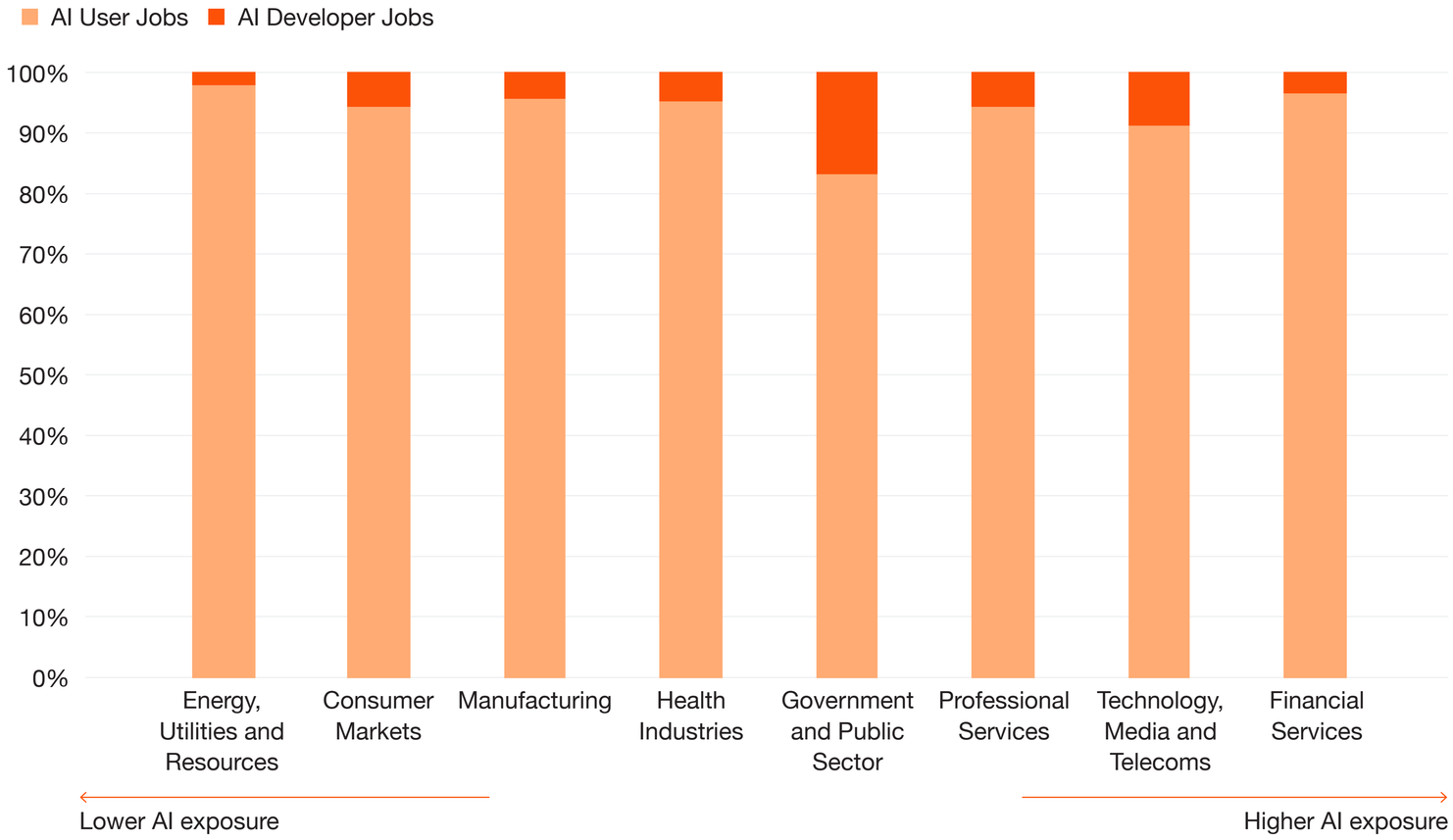
PwC analysis, Lightcast data
Notes: AI user and AI developer job roles are determined as jobs requiring Tier 0 or 1 skills (AI literacy and applied AI skills) for AI user jobs and Tier 2 skills (advanced AI skills) for AI developer jobs. AI developer jobs are tagged as such if there are any skills in the job postings data requiring Tier 2 skills for a specific job role.

Findings

- AI user roles account for the majority of AI-related jobs and continue to drive overall demand, increasing by around **19.3k** roles in 2025 after remaining below their 2022 peak in the previous two years.
- AI developer roles remain smaller in volume, but also increased in 2025, rising by around **1.3k** roles after softer demand following their 2022 peak.
- Overall, this points to renewed momentum across both categories in 2025, with AI user roles **more than doubling** and AI developer roles increasing by **81.2%,** indicating continued expansion in both AI adoption and development capabilities.

Across sectors, AI job postings in Australia remain concentrated in capabilities related to the use of AI rather than its development

Within sector shares of AI user and AI developer job roles of all AI related roles, Australia, 2025



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Findings

- AI user roles account for the largest share across most sectors, indicating a strong focus on deploying and integrating AI into existing workflows.
- **Government and Public Sector** shows the highest share of **AI developer** roles **(17.2%).**
- **Energy, Utilities and Resources** records the highest share of **AI user** roles **(97.5%),** reflecting broad-based adoption of AI across operational roles rather than in-house development.

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