Two Futures for Jobs in an AI era

2026 Global AI Jobs Barometer

Malaysia 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.

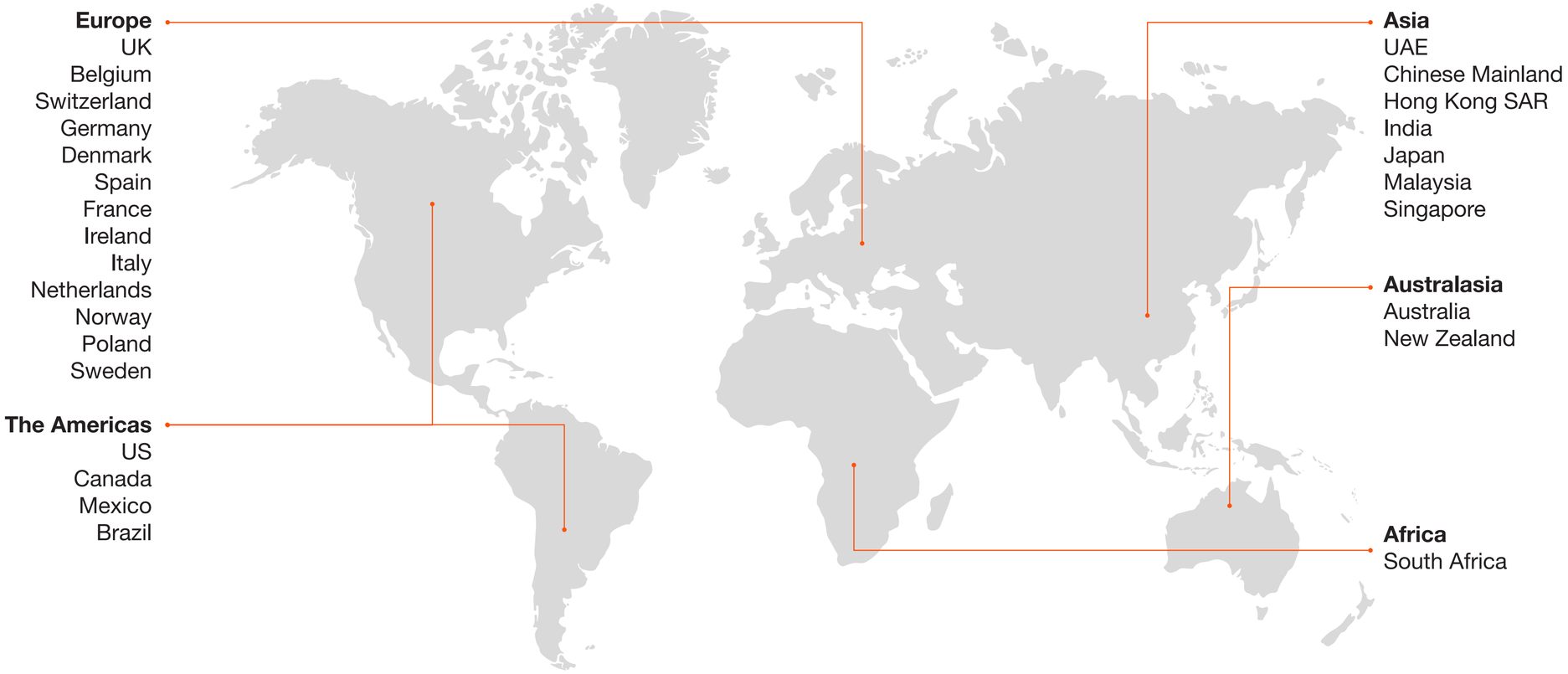
35%

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.

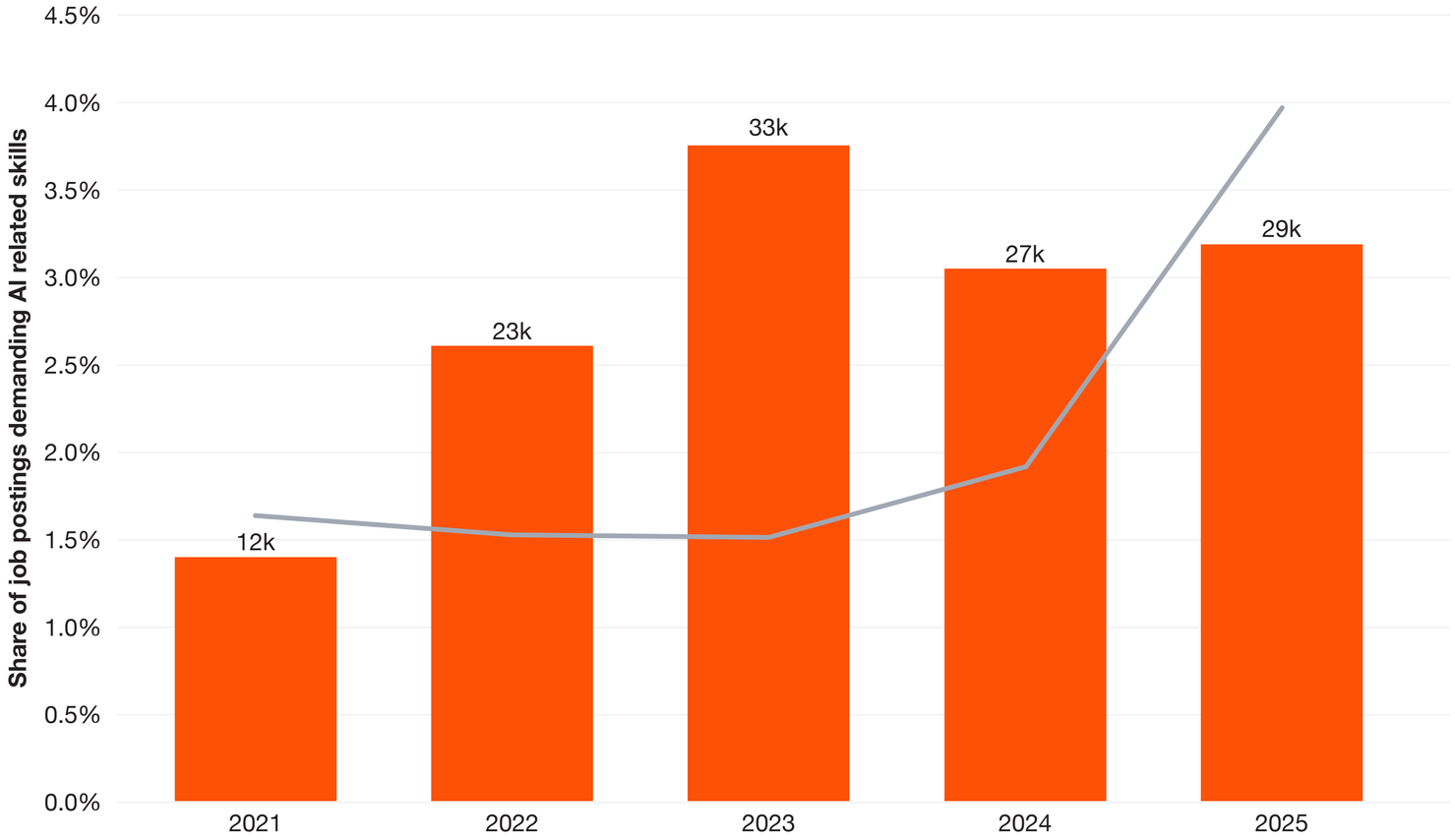
The 2026 AI Jobs Barometer examines over one billion job ads from 6 continents to reveal how AI is affecting jobs, skills, wages, and labour productivity



Malaysia Insights

Despite stable AI hiring levels in Malaysia, the share of AI postings increased markedly in 2025

Total number and share of job postings requiring AI related skills, Malaysia, 2021-2025



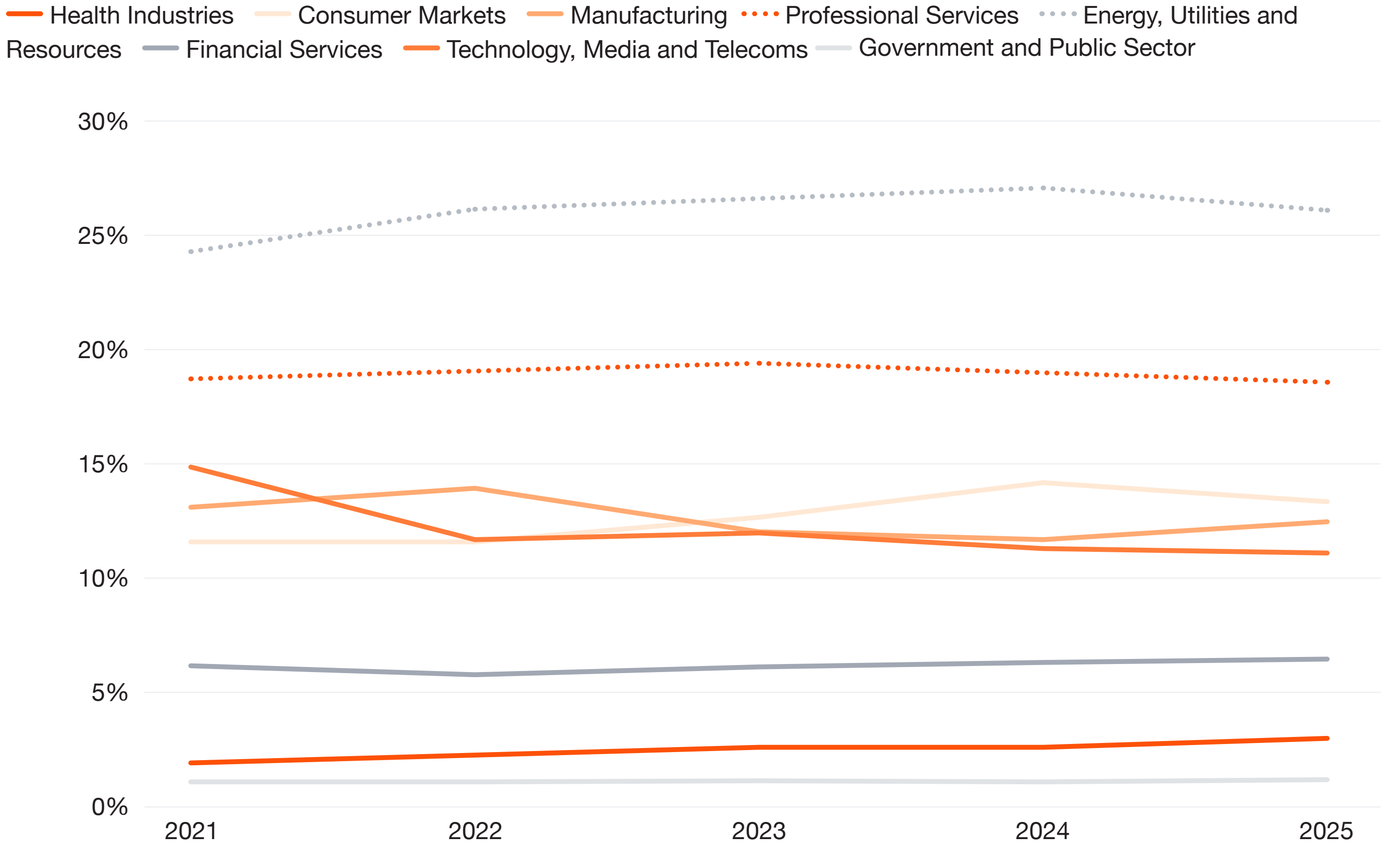
Source: PwC analysis, Lightcast data.
Notes: We classify a Lightcast job posting as an 'AI job' if it has at least one AI skill tagged to it.

Findings

- The number of job postings in Malaysia requiring AI skills increased by around 2k in 2025. The volume of job postings has remained relatively stable since 2022, peaking in 2023 at 33k.
- However, the share of AI job postings has continued rising, up from 1.9% in 2024 to 4% in 2025.

Energy and Professional Services account for the largest shares of hiring in the Malaysian labour market

Share of all job postings by sector, Malaysia, 2021-2025



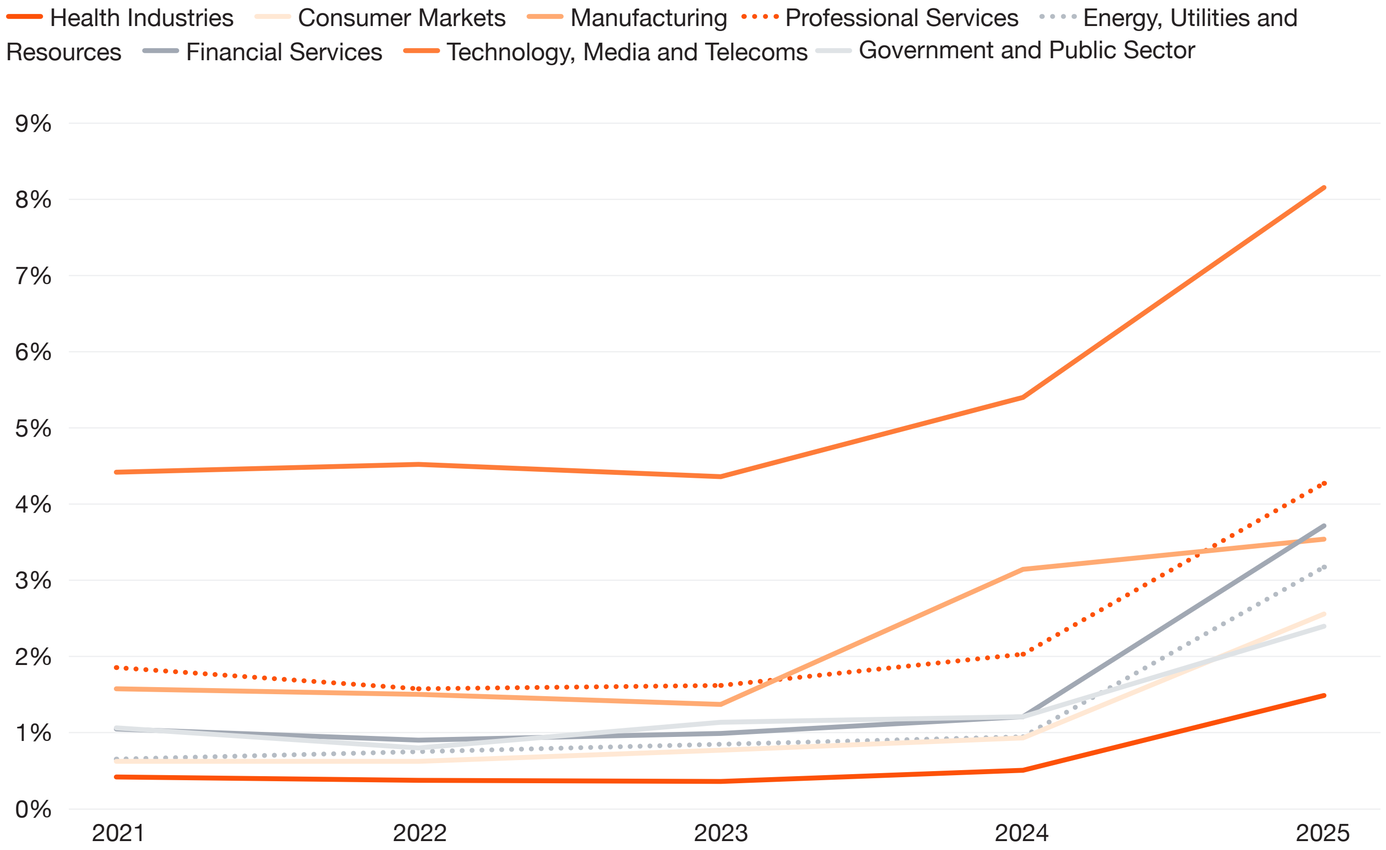
Source: PwC analysis, Lightcast data.

Findings

- Energy, Utilities and Resources and Professional Services stand out as the largest sources of labour demand, accounting for 25.3% and 17.7% of total Malaysian job postings respectively.
- Health and Government and Public Sector record the smallest shares, at 2.1% and 0.3% respectively.

AI hiring intensity is rising across all sectors in Malaysia and is led by TMT

Share of AI job postings within each sector, Malaysia, 2021-2025



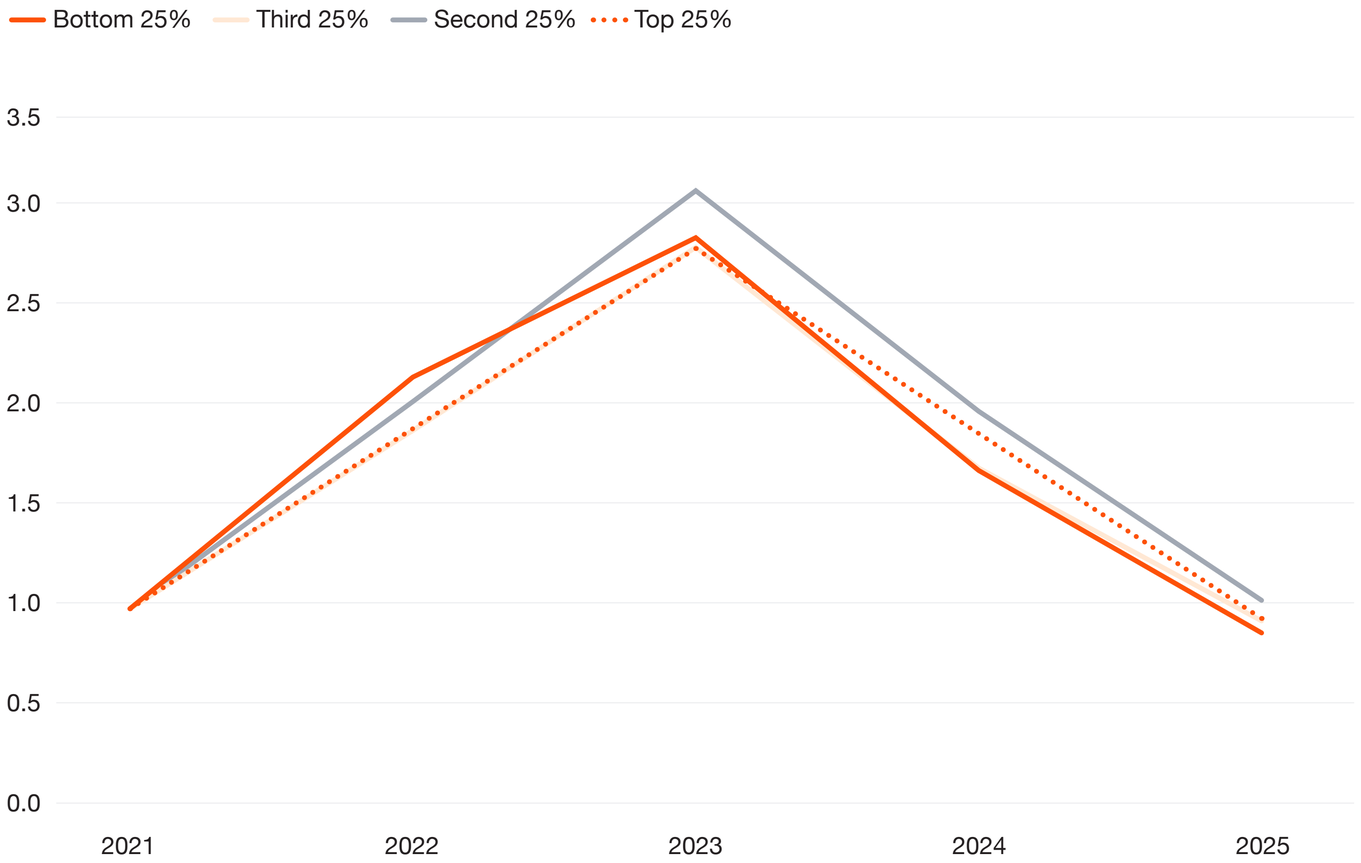
Source: PwC analysis, Lightcast data.

Findings

- Technology, Media and Telecoms (TMT) records the highest share of AI job postings in Malaysia, consistent with its role as the most digitally intensive sector.
- All sectors saw an increase in AI job share in 2025 compared to 2024, pointing to broad-based growth in AI hiring.

In Malaysia, job postings growth is similar across AI exposure groups, with all quartiles declining after a peak in 2023

Number of job postings relative to 2021 by AI exposure quartile, Malaysia, 2021-2025



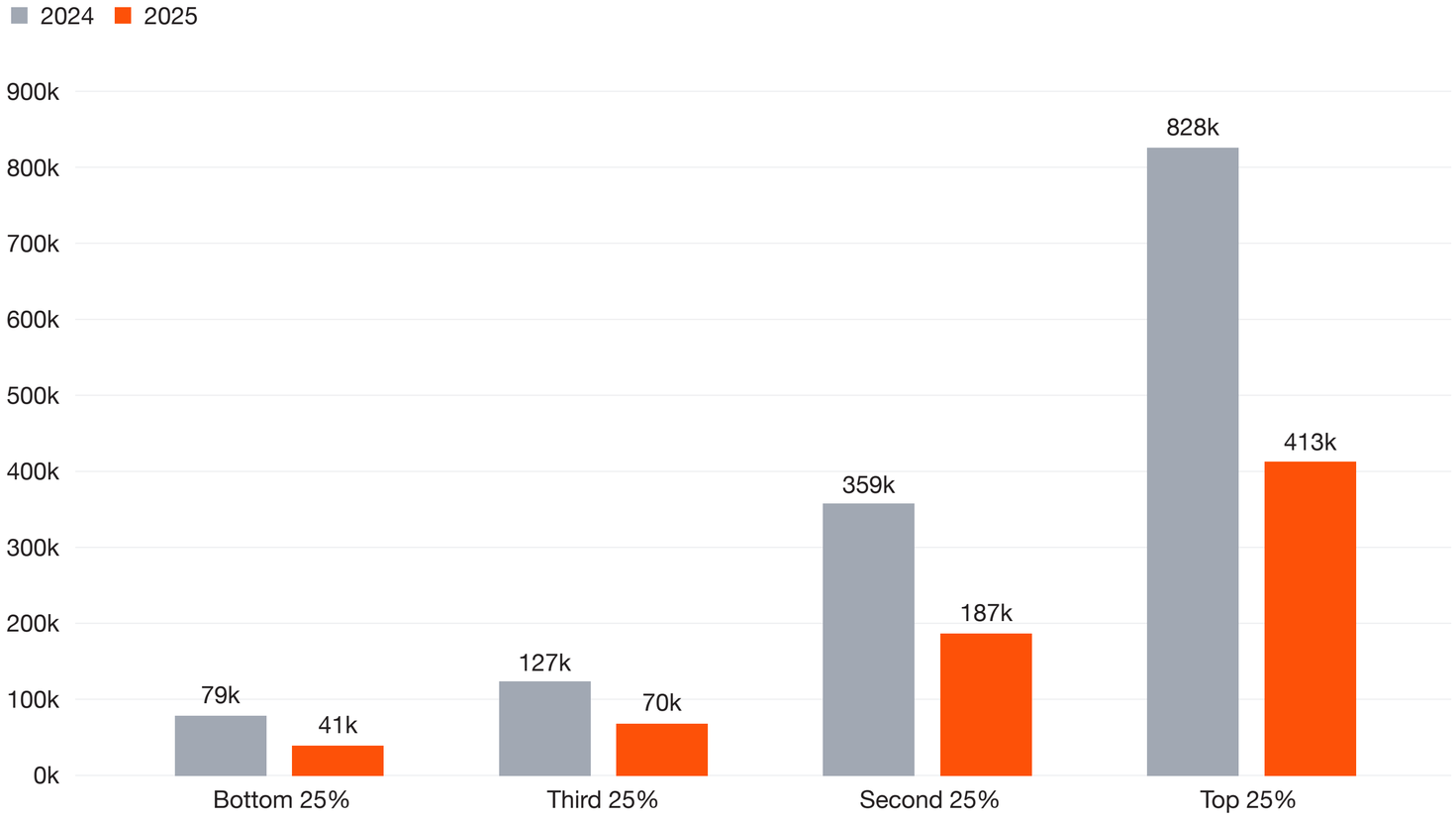
Source: PwC analysis, Lightcast data

Findings

- When grouped by AI exposure, all quartiles follow a similar trajectory, with no clear relationship between exposure and job postings growth.
- Job postings increased to a peak in 2023 before declining across all quartiles through 2024 and 2025. By 2025, the lowest exposure quartile is at around 0.87 postings for every posting in 2021, compared to 0.95 in the highest exposure quartile.
- This suggests that recent trends in job postings are driven more by broader macroeconomic factors than by differences in AI exposure.

However, the top quartile of AI exposed occupations still accounts for the largest number of job postings in Malaysia

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



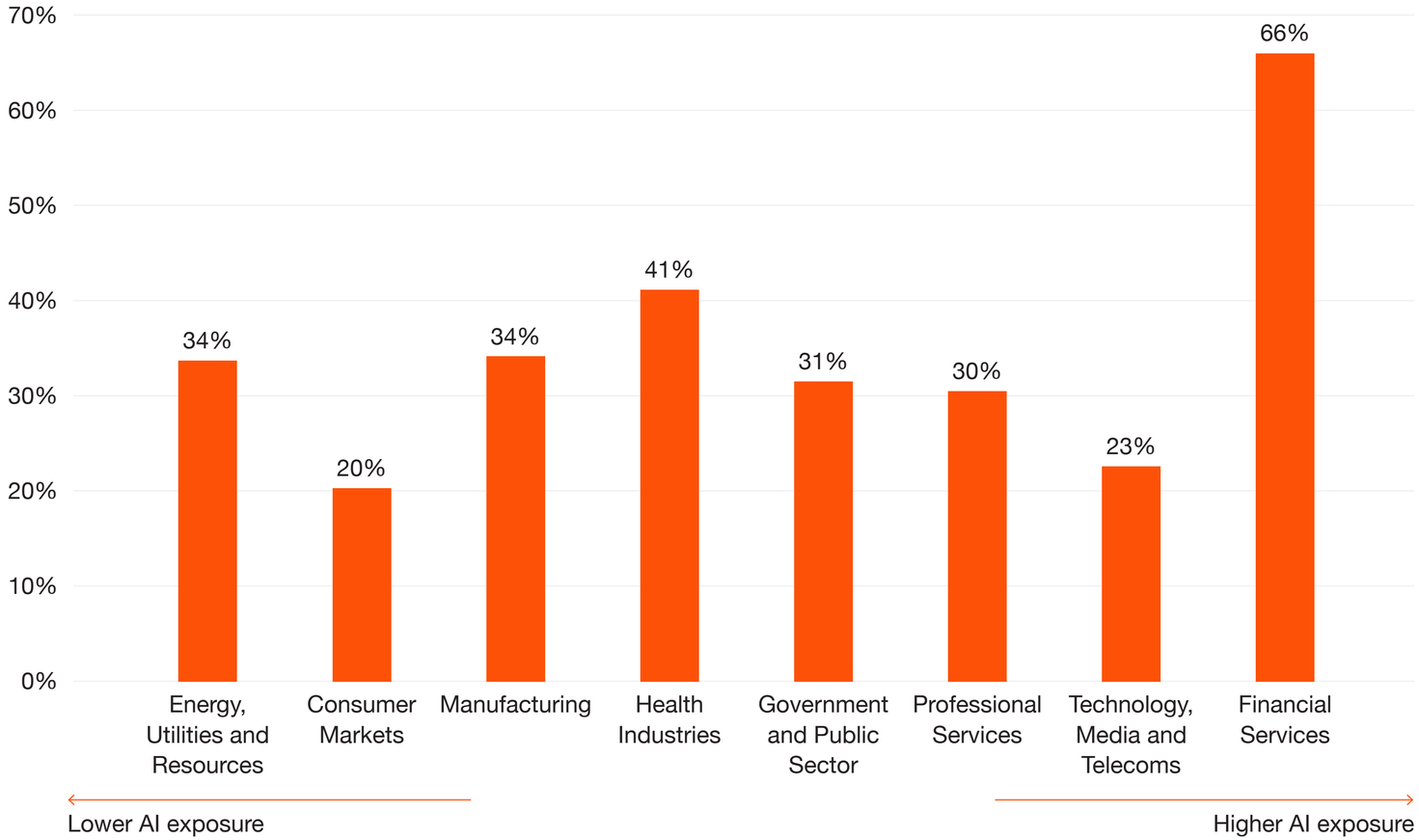
Source: PwC analysis, Lightcast data

Findings

- While job postings growth is broadly similar across AI exposure quartiles, the highest exposure quartile accounts for the largest share in absolute terms.
- In 2025, the most AI-exposed quartile recorded around 413,000 job postings.
- All quartiles saw a decline in job postings in 2025, with the largest drop in the highest exposure quartile, which fell by around half relative to the previous year.

AI wage premiums in Malaysia are high across sectors, with Financial Services recording the highest premium

Wage premium by sector, Malaysia, 2025



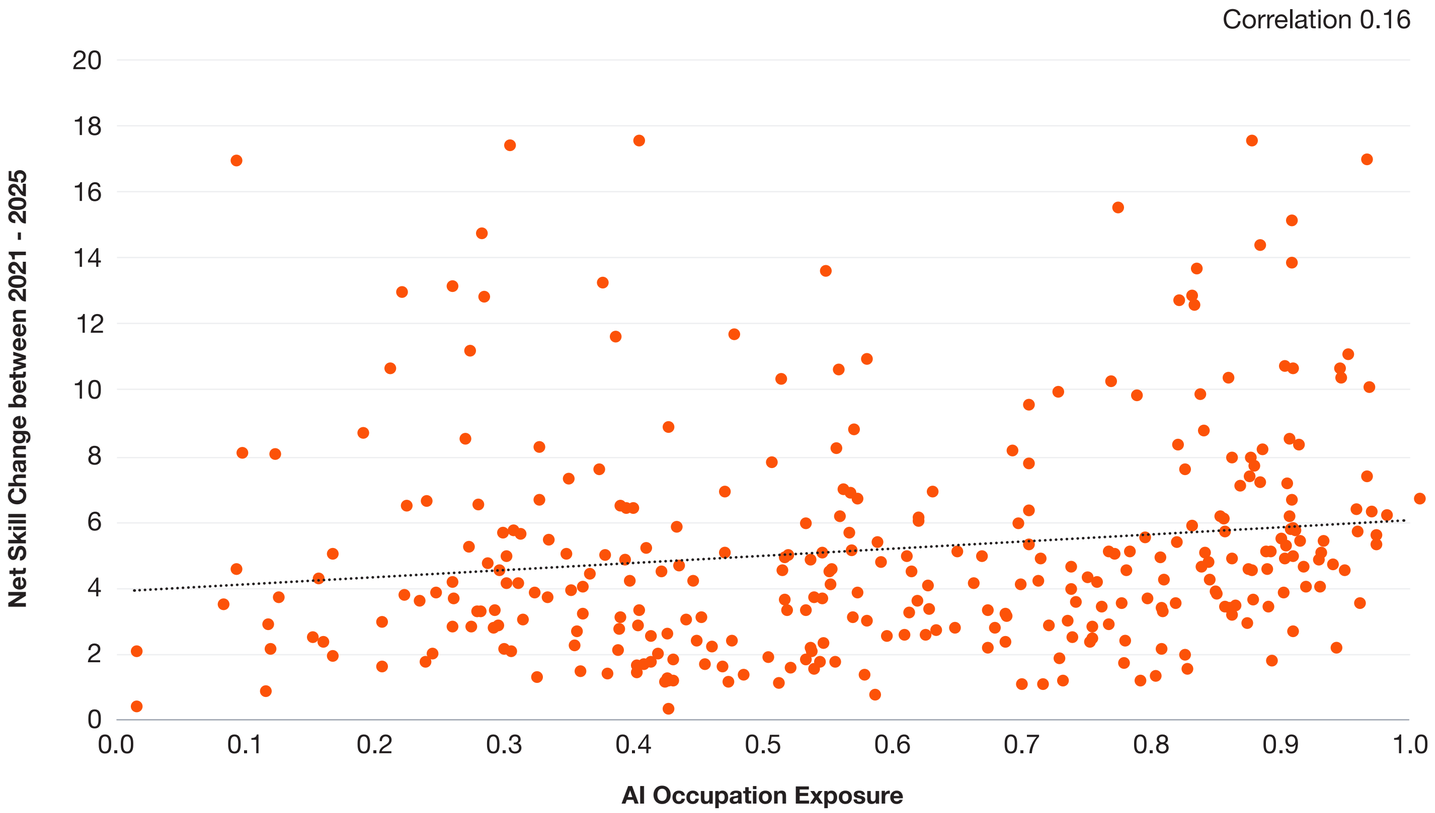
Source: PwC analysis, Lightcast data
Notes: (i) To calculate wage premiums, we split job postings within a sector by AI and non-AI jobs. From here we estimate the wage premium (difference) within the sector for wages in the AI group compared to the non-AI group. This analysis is not a growth rate but 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.

Findings

- AI wage premiums vary significantly across sectors, though all key sectors show positive premiums.
- Financial Services stands out with the highest premium at around 66%, indicating strong demand for AI skills in the sector.
- Beyond this, no clear relationship emerges between AI exposure and premiums. For example, Health records the second highest premium at 41% despite only moderate exposure.

In Malaysia, more AI-exposed occupations show a slight tendency towards faster rates of skills transformation

Net skill change from 2021 to 2025 for 4-digit ISCO code occupations by AI occupation exposure, Malaysia



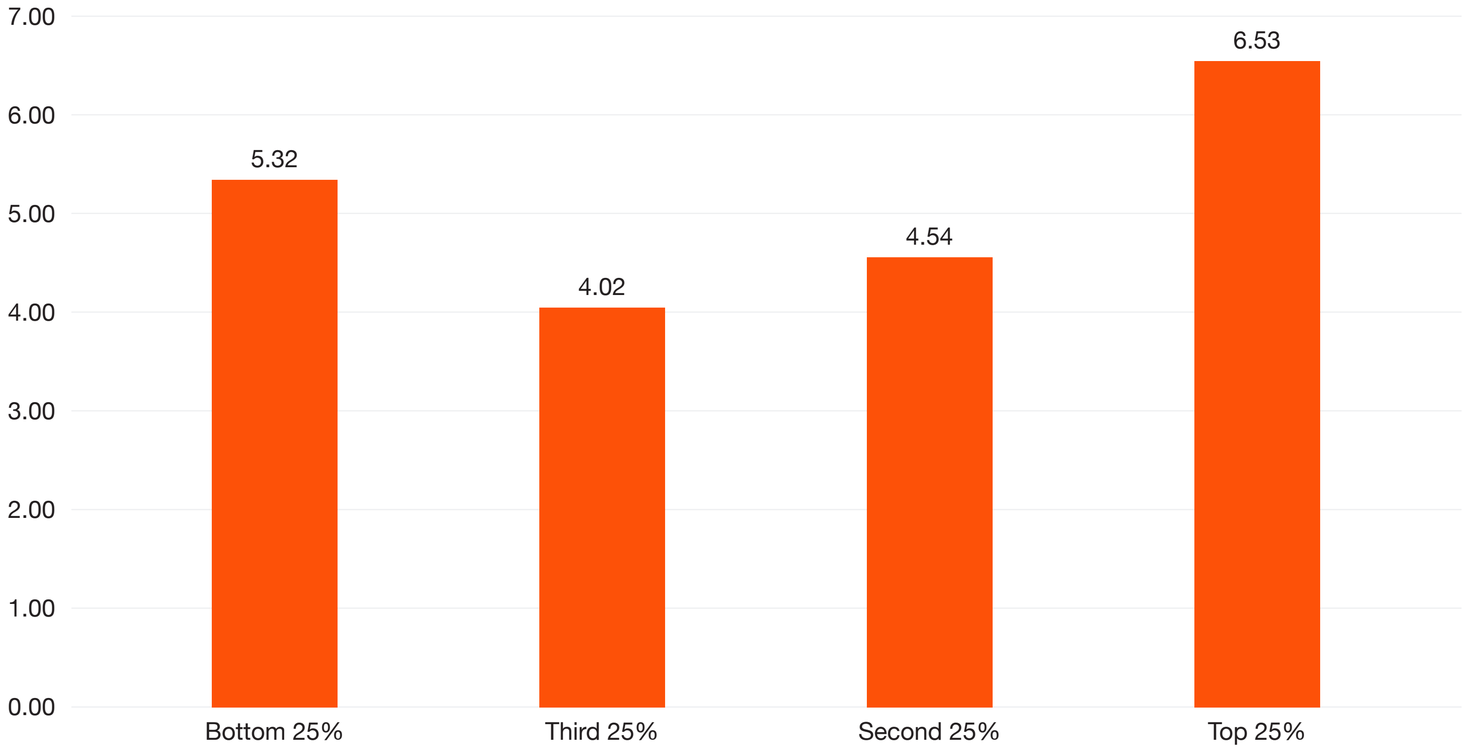
Source: PwC analysis, Lightcast data
Notes: Net skill change is calculated as the aggregation of the percentage point difference between 2021 and 2025 of the share of a skill making up an occupation.

Findings

- There is a positive correlation of 0.16 between AI exposure and net skills change between 2021 and 2025, indicating that more exposed occupations tend to see slightly greater shifts in skill requirements. However, the spread of datapoints is wide, suggesting that while a modest overall relationship exists, occupation-specific factors also play an important role.
- Overall, this suggests that AI-exposed roles in Malaysia are adapting slightly more rapidly, with evolving task demands reshaping the capabilities required.

The most AI-exposed quartile of occupations sees the largest skill shifts, although the pattern across quartiles is mixed

Average net skill change from 2021 to 2025 for 4-digit ISCO code occupations by AI occupation exposure quartile, Malaysia



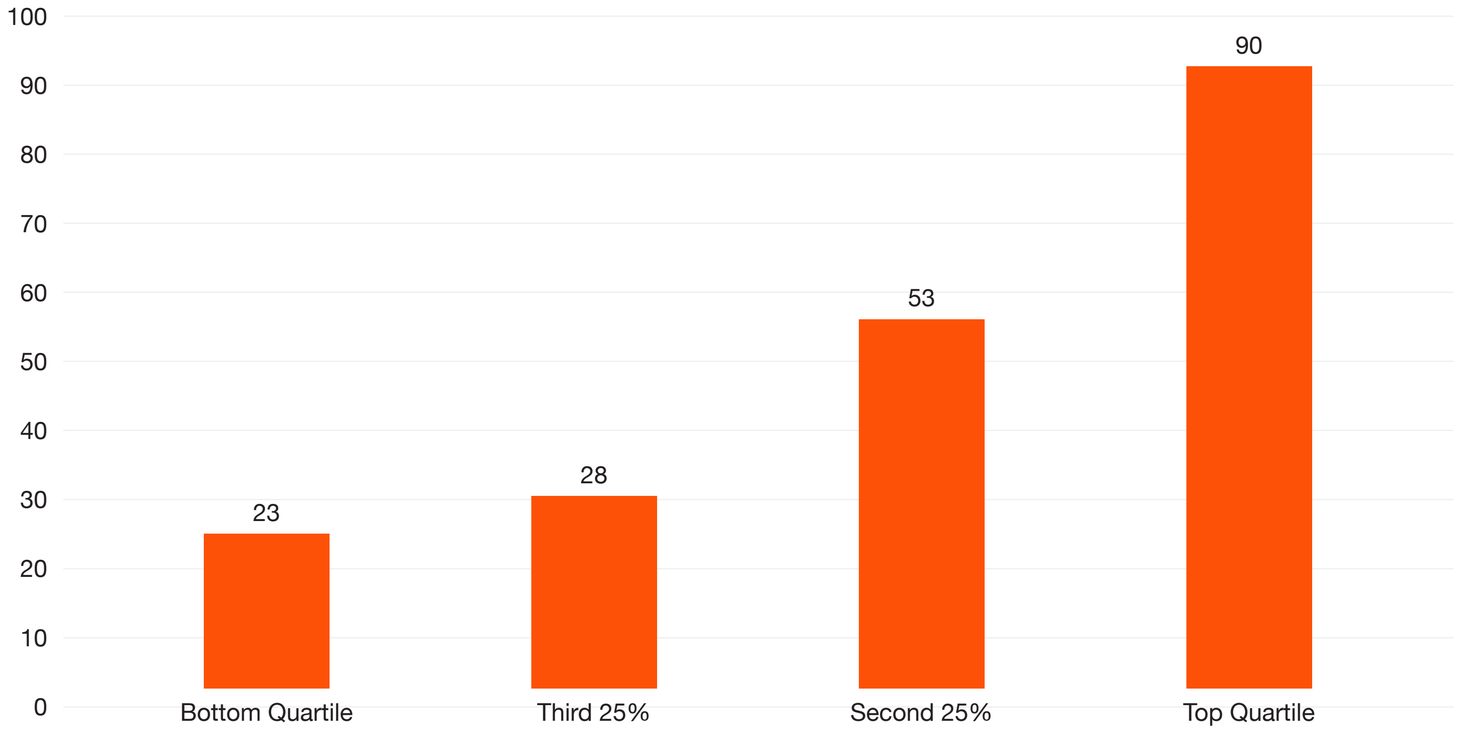
Source: PwC analysis, Lightcast data
Notes: : Net skill change is calculated as the aggregation of the percentage point difference between 2021 and 2025 of the share of a skill making up an occupation.

Findings

- Occupations in the highest AI exposure group show faster skills transformation between 2021 and 2025 compared to lower exposure quartiles.
- While the pattern is not fully linear across all quartiles, the highest exposure group records the greatest average net skill change, and the second quartile also stands above the third exposure group.
- This supports the earlier finding that more AI-exposed occupations in Malaysia tend to see slightly faster skills transformation, although the relatively high bottom quartile suggests occupation-specific and other non-AI factors are also influencing the pattern.

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, Malaysia, 2025 relative to 2021



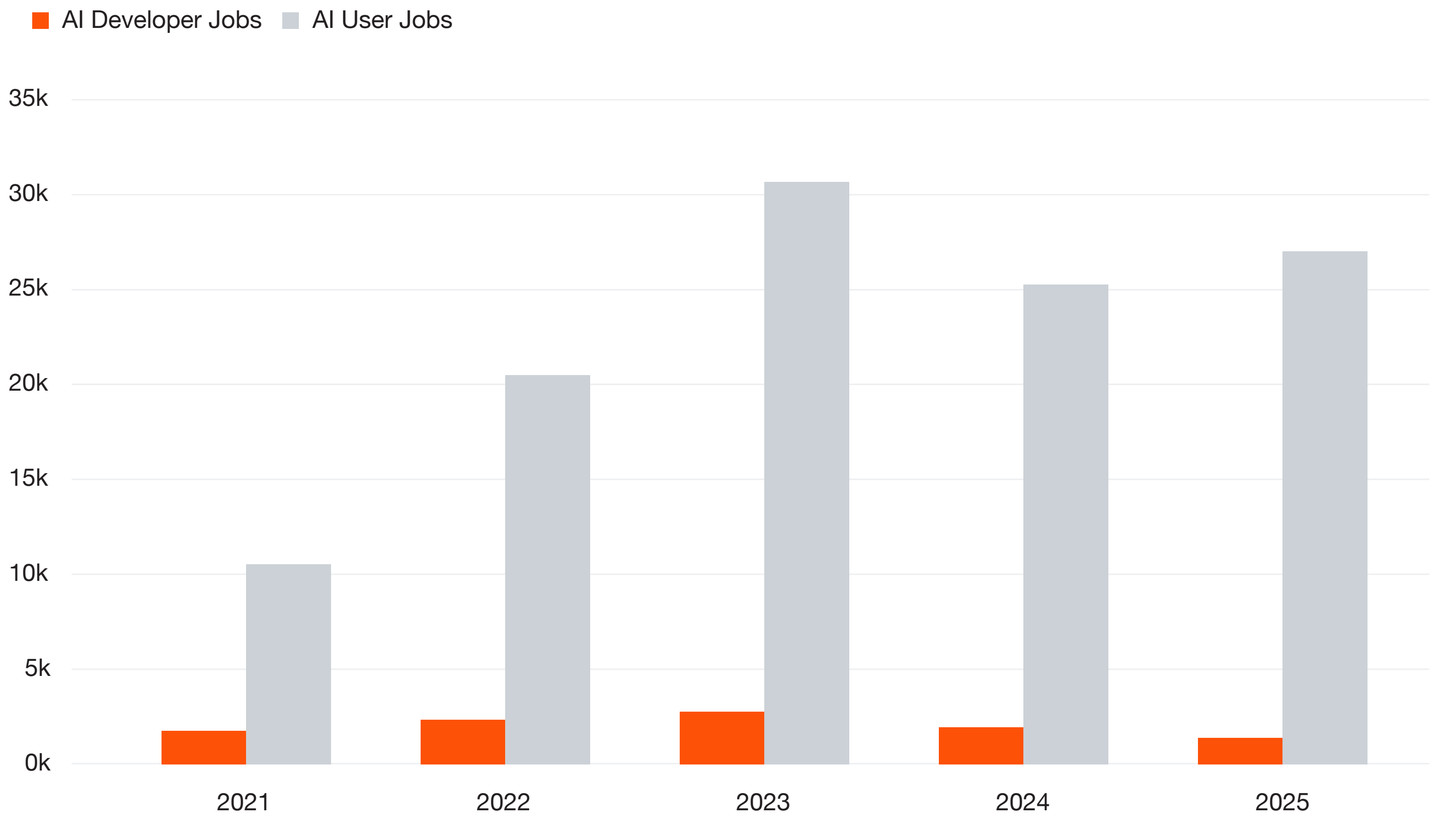
Source: PwC analysis, PwC AI Occupational Exposure Index, Lightcast data
Notes: We define a ‘new skill’ as any skill that has greater than 10 mentions in an occupation in 2025, but five or less mentions in that same occupation in 2021. Across all postings for an occupation in a given country, we count 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 90 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 Malaysia is dominated by user roles, with user roles returning to growth while developer roles fell to their lowest point

Total number of AI user and AI developer job roles, Malaysia, 2021-2025



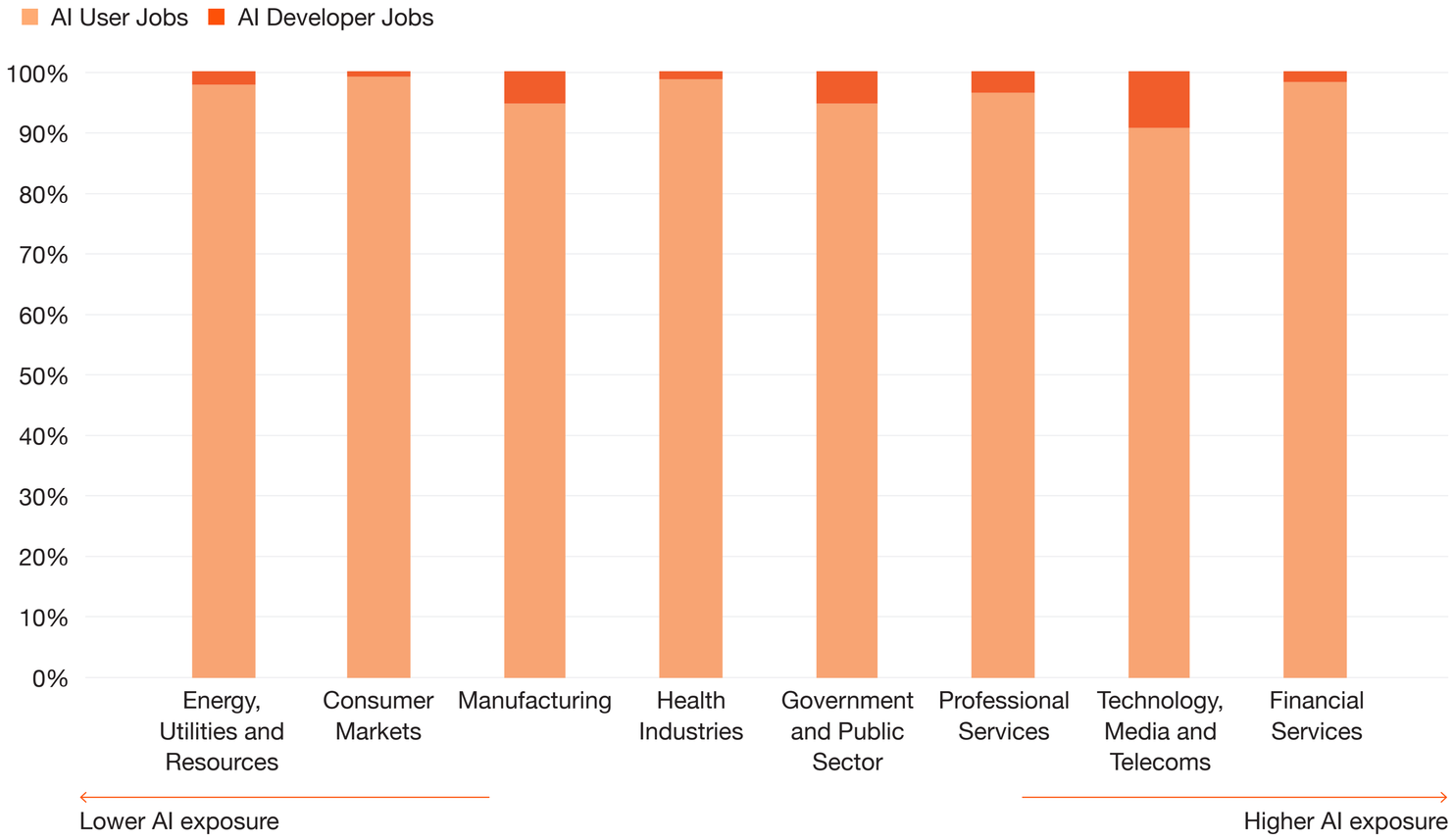
Source: PwC analysis, Lightcast data
Notes: AI user and AI developer job roles are determined as jobs requiring Tier 0 or 1 skills (AI literacy and applied AI skills) for AI user jobs and Tier 2 skills (advanced AI skills) for AI developer jobs. AI developer jobs are tagged as such if there are any skills 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 **1.8k** roles in 2025. However, user demand remains below its 2023 peak.
- In contrast, AI developer roles remain lower and contracted by **467** roles in 2025, falling to their lowest level in the period.
- Overall, this points to mixed momentum in the last year, with AI user roles increasing by **6.9%** while AI developer roles contracted by **23.6%,** indicating continued demand for AI adoption but weakening demand for developer roles.

Across sectors, AI job postings in Malaysia 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, Malaysia 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.
- **Technology, Media and Telecoms (TMT).** shows the highest share of **AI developer** roles **(9.3%),** consistent with its role in developing and advancing AI technologies.
- **Consumer Markets** records the highest share of **AI user** roles **(99.1%),** reflecting broad-based adoption of AI across operational roles rather than in-house development.

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