Two Futures for Jobs in an AI era

2026 Global AI Jobs Barometer

UAE 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.

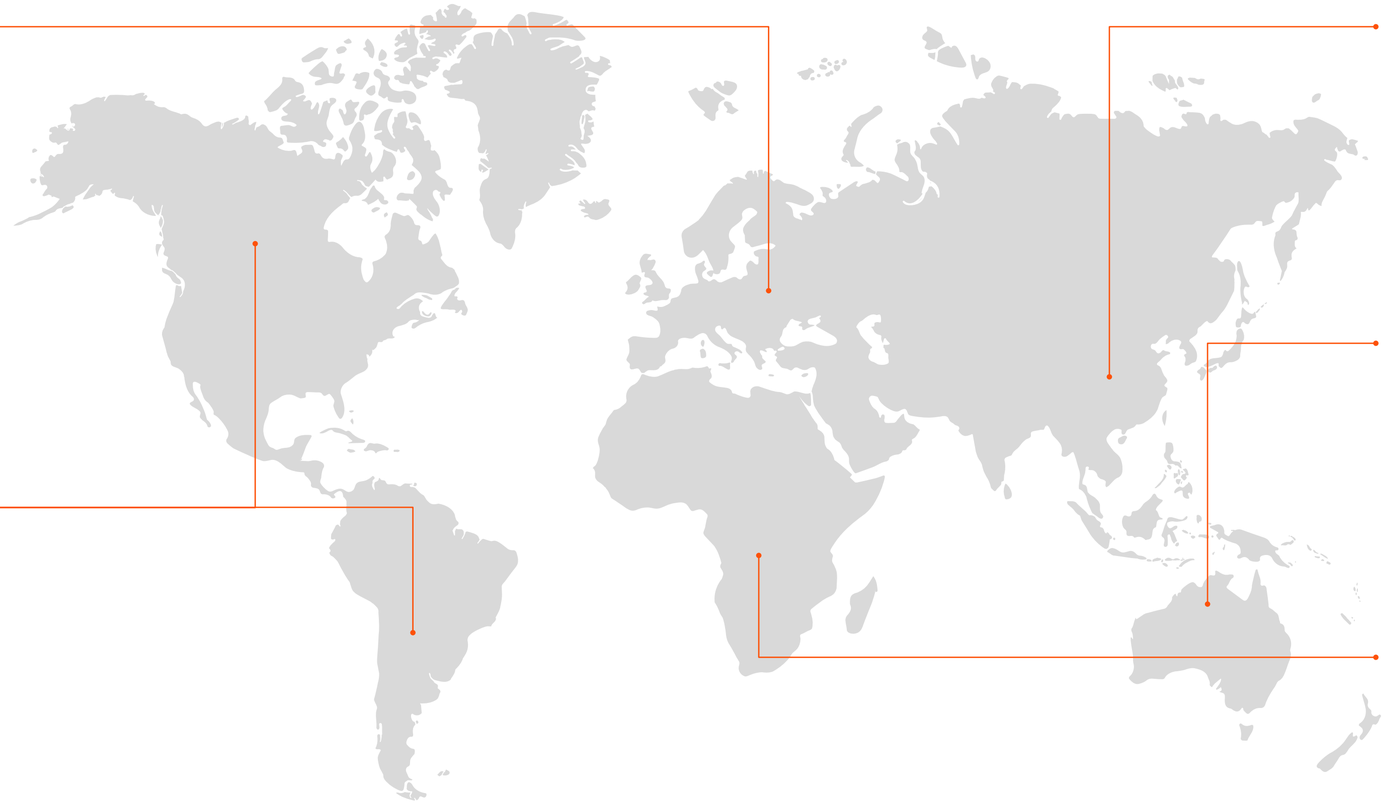
42%

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

The 2026 AI Jobs Barometer uses over one billion job ads from 27 countries to examine how AI could impact jobs, skills, wages and productivity

Europe
UK
Belgium
Switzerland
Germany
Denmark
Spain
France
Ireland
Italy
Netherlands
Norway
Poland
Sweden

The Americas
US
Canada
Mexico
Brazil



Asia
UAE
Chinese Mainland
Hong Kong SAR
India
Japan
Malaysia
Singapore

Australasia
Australia
New Zealand

Africa
South Africa

The Barometer analyses two sets of jobs

All Jobs

We examine all jobs in terms of their **AI Occupational Exposure:** how much the job involves tasks in which AI has capabilities.

Building on this, we rank each occupation based on its AI Occupational Exposure, providing an additional level of detail in our analysis.

AI Jobs

An **AI job** is defined as a job posting that explicitly requires a **technical AI skill,** such as machine learning, deep learning, natural language processing (NLP), computer vision, or AI model deployment, based on our **structured AI skill taxonomy.**

Our analysis finds that growth in AI jobs has outpaced all jobs since 2015. For every one AI job in 2012 there are now 10.7 AI jobs, globally. In contrast, for everyjob not categorised as an 'AI job' in 2012, there are now 2.5 jobs.

Source: PwC analysis
Notes: The AI Occupational Exposure Index has been updated for this year's report through PwC analysis.

To examine the impact of AI, we examine jobs AI ‘professionalises’ (raises the human expertise required) or ‘democratises’ (removes some higher expertise tasks)

1

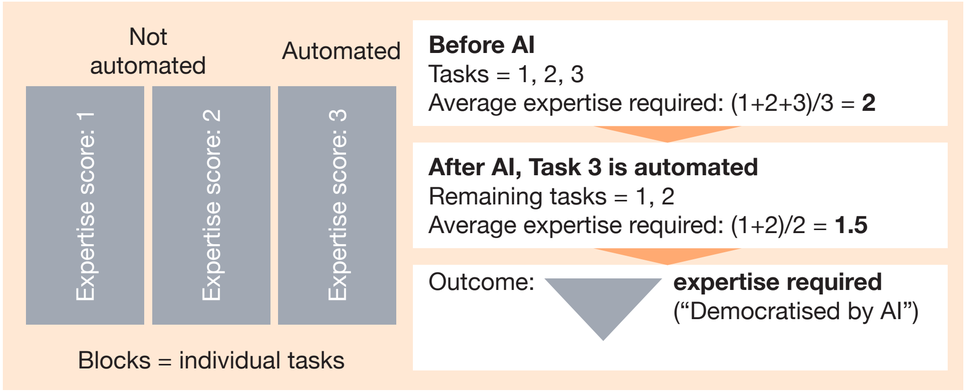
DEMOCRATISE: When AI automates high-expertise tasks:

Automation **lowers** the level of expertise needed to get the job done

As barriers to entry fall, these jobs become **more accessible**

…which is predicted to **increase access to employment opportunities**

…and wages are predicted to fall



2

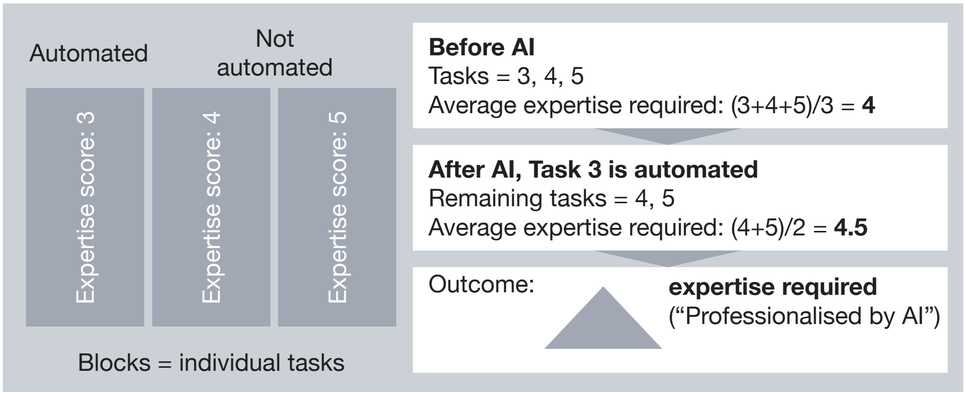
PROFESSIONALISE: When AI automates low-expertise tasks:

Automation **raises** the level of expertise needed to get the job done

As barriers to entry rise, these jobs become **less accessible**

…which is predicted to **decrease access to employment opportunities**

…and wages are predicted to rise



Examples of Democratised and Professionalised roles

Democratised

Stock and Inventory Clerks

What remains: Not Automated

Automated

- Count and move stock — Routine manual task
- Track inventory levels — Codified technical task
- Verify prices and discrepancies — Rule-based task

Blocks = individual tasks

Before AI
Work combines codified, system-based tasks (tracking inventory, verifying discrepancies) alongside basic manual tasks

After AI
Codified, rule-based tasks are automated, leaving primarily manual and routine activities with lower barriers to entry

Outcome: ▼ **Remaining work is manual and routine**
Lower expertise required = job more accessible

Expertise

Expertise refers to the level of specialised knowledge and capability required to perform the tasks within a job, based on how complex those tasks are

Professionalised

Employment Agents

Automated

What remains: Not Automated

- Schedule interviews and coordinate process — Routine admin task
- Screen CVs and shortlist candidates — Rule-based task
- Assess candidate fit and advise clients — Judgement and interpersonal task

Blocks = individual tasks

Before AI
Work combines routine admin and screening tasks with higher-value judgement and advisory responsibilities

After AI
Routine, coordination and screening tasks are automated, leaving judgement, relationship management and decision-making

Outcome: ▲ **Remaining work is manual and routine**
Higher expertise required = job more specialised

Source: PwC analysis, Autor and Thompson (2025), Teeselink and Carey (2026)
Note: The expertise scores and number of tasks displayed on this slide are illustrative. However, the two jobs shown are indeed democratised and professionalised occupations according to the expertise framework.

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

74 occupations professionalised

125 occupations democratised

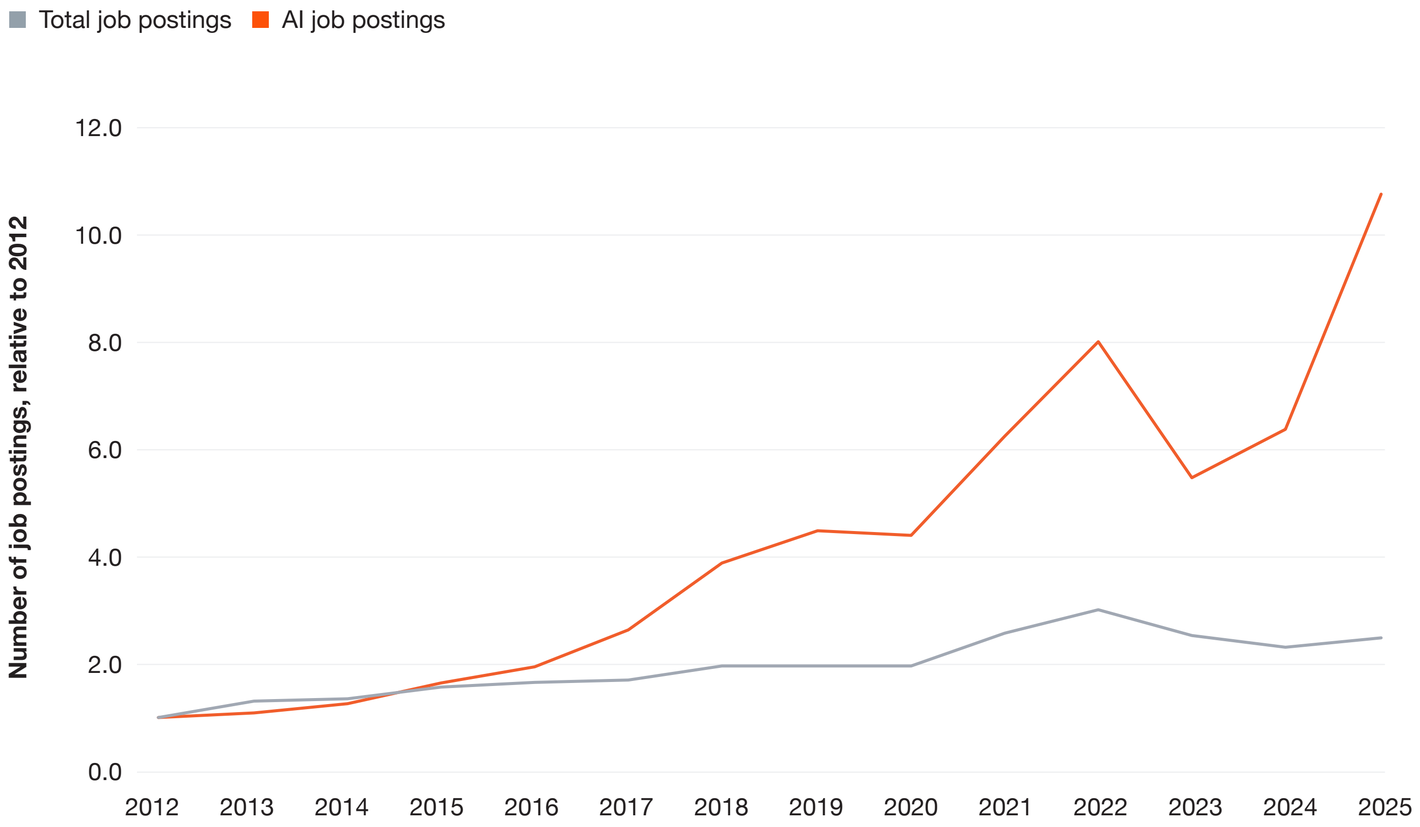
181 occupations have low AI exposure

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

Global Results

For every one AI job in 2012 there are now 10.7 AI jobs, globally

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



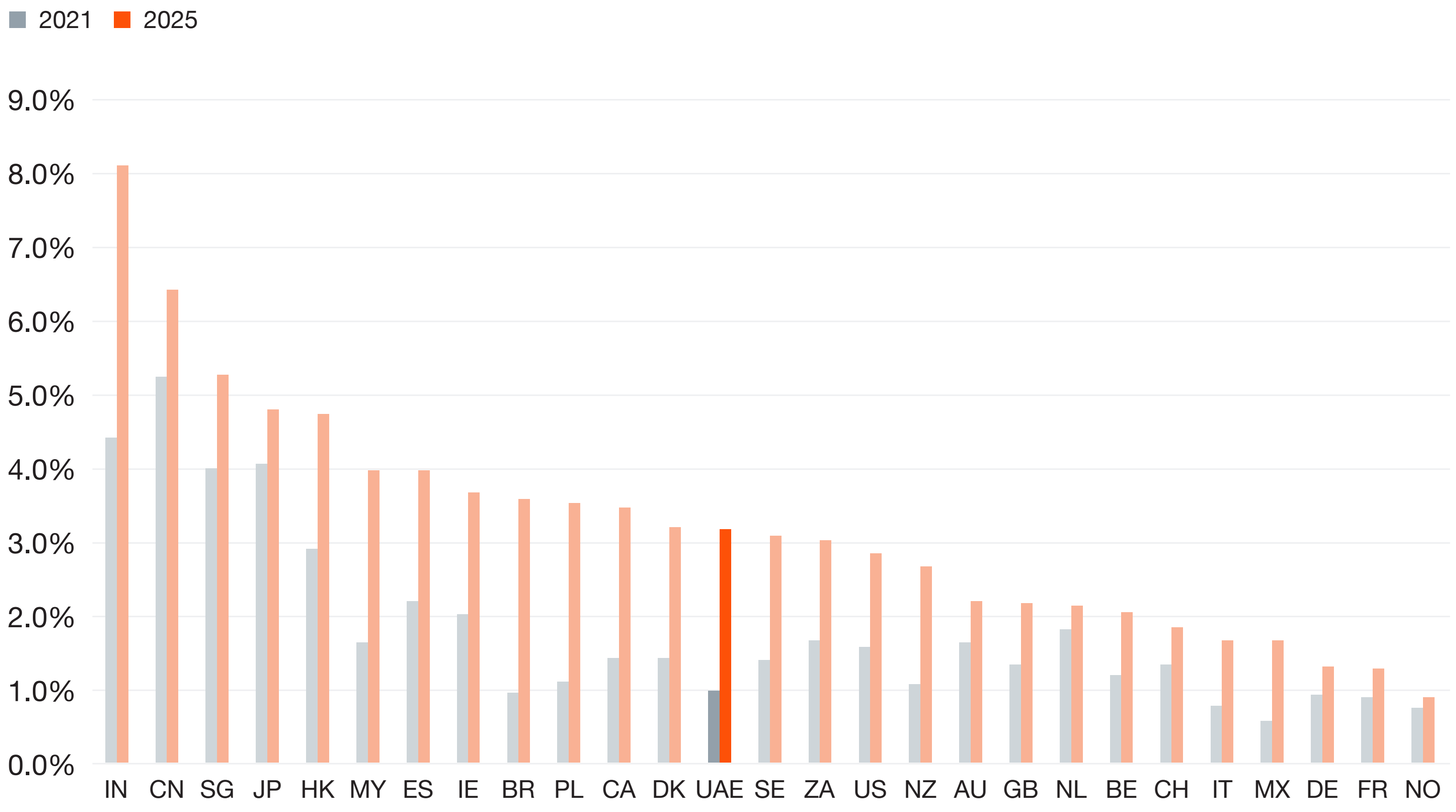
Source: PwC analysis, Lightcast data
Notes: For some countries, data starts from 2018 or 2021 onwards. As such, we only include the countries for which data is available from 2012 in our sample.

Findings

- Growth in AI jobs has outpaced all jobs since 2015. For every one AI job in 2012 there are now 10.7 AI jobs, globally. In contrast, for every job not categorised as an ‘AI job’ in 2012, there are now 2.5 jobs.
- From 2024 to 2025, AI job postings soared (68.9% rise) while total job growth rose only 8.6%. The recent uptick in AI specialist jobs from 2024 to 2025 may be due to structural reallocation of resources as businesses shift from experimentation to deployment of commercial AI.
- Results from PwC’s 29th Global CEO Survey show that around 50% of CEOs expect AI to be integrated into core business processes and technology platforms over the next three years, highlighting its central role in business reinvention. The comparatively stronger growth in AI job postings relative to total postings is consistent with this stated strategic priority.

Globally, the share of job postings requiring AI skills has increased with many countries more than doubling their share between 2021 and 2025

Proportion of total job posting requiring AI related skills, 2021 vs 2025, by country



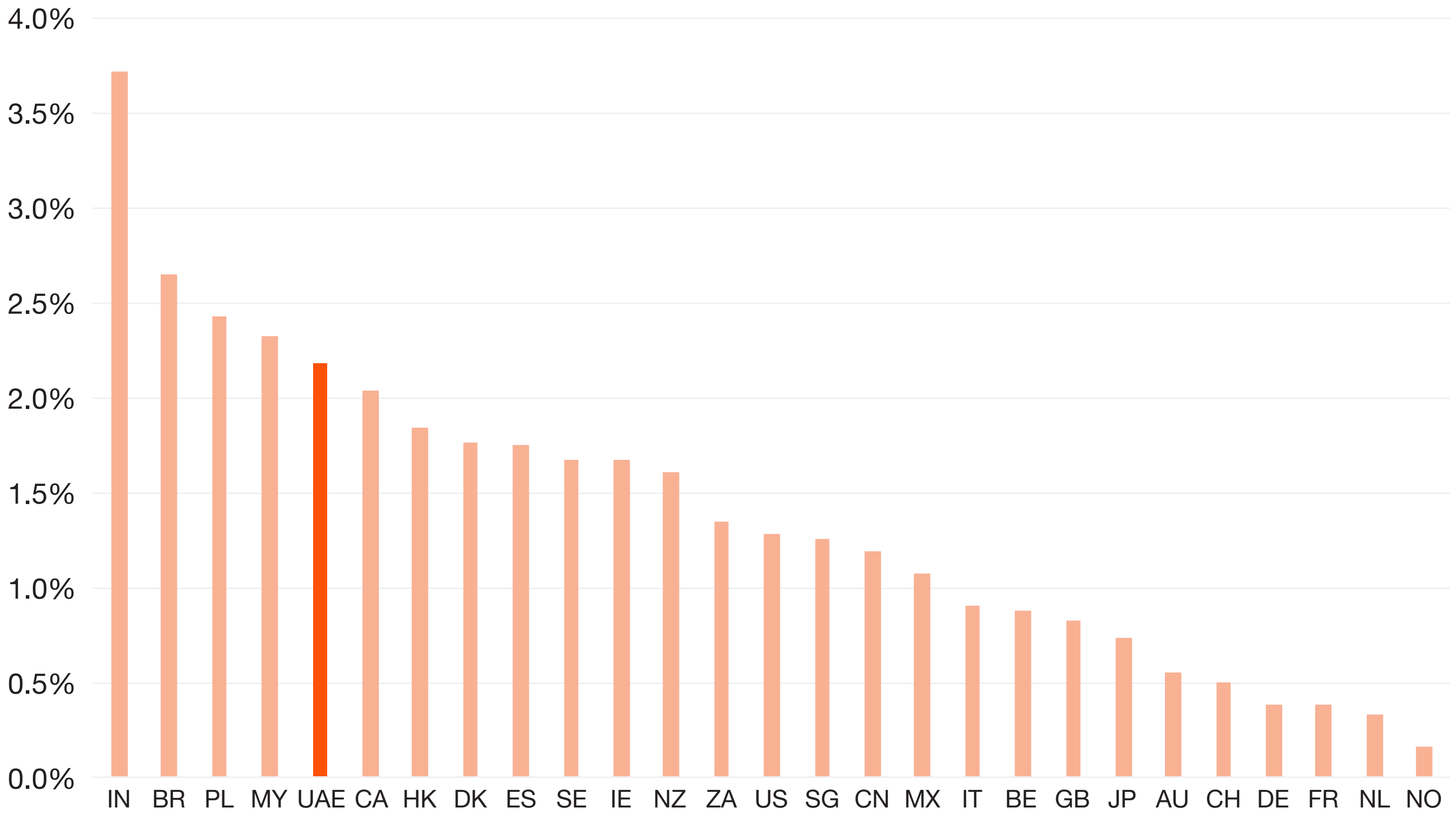
Source: PwC analysis, Lightcast data

Findings

- Most countries in our sample have seen growth in the share of AI job postings, with many more than doubling between 2021 and 2025. Globally, the average share rose from 1.8% (2021) to 3.2% (2025).
- India and China record the highest AI job shares in 2025, with India rising from 4.4% to 8.1%, and China from 5.2% to 6.4% (2025).
- The UAE saw a significant increase, from 1.0% to 3.2% in its share of AI job postings.
- More developed economies, including the US, UK, France and Germany, show relatively smaller AI job shares than developing economies such as India, China, South Africa and Brazil, suggesting faster AI adoption in emerging markets and a shift in where AI capabilities are being scaled and embedded.
- **Caveat:** It is worth noting that for countries including India and China, the large proportion of total job postings requiring AI skills may partly reflect data limitations where the informal labour demand may not be fully captured.

The UAE ranks among the fastest-growing AI talent markets globally

Growth in AI job share, 2021-2025, by country



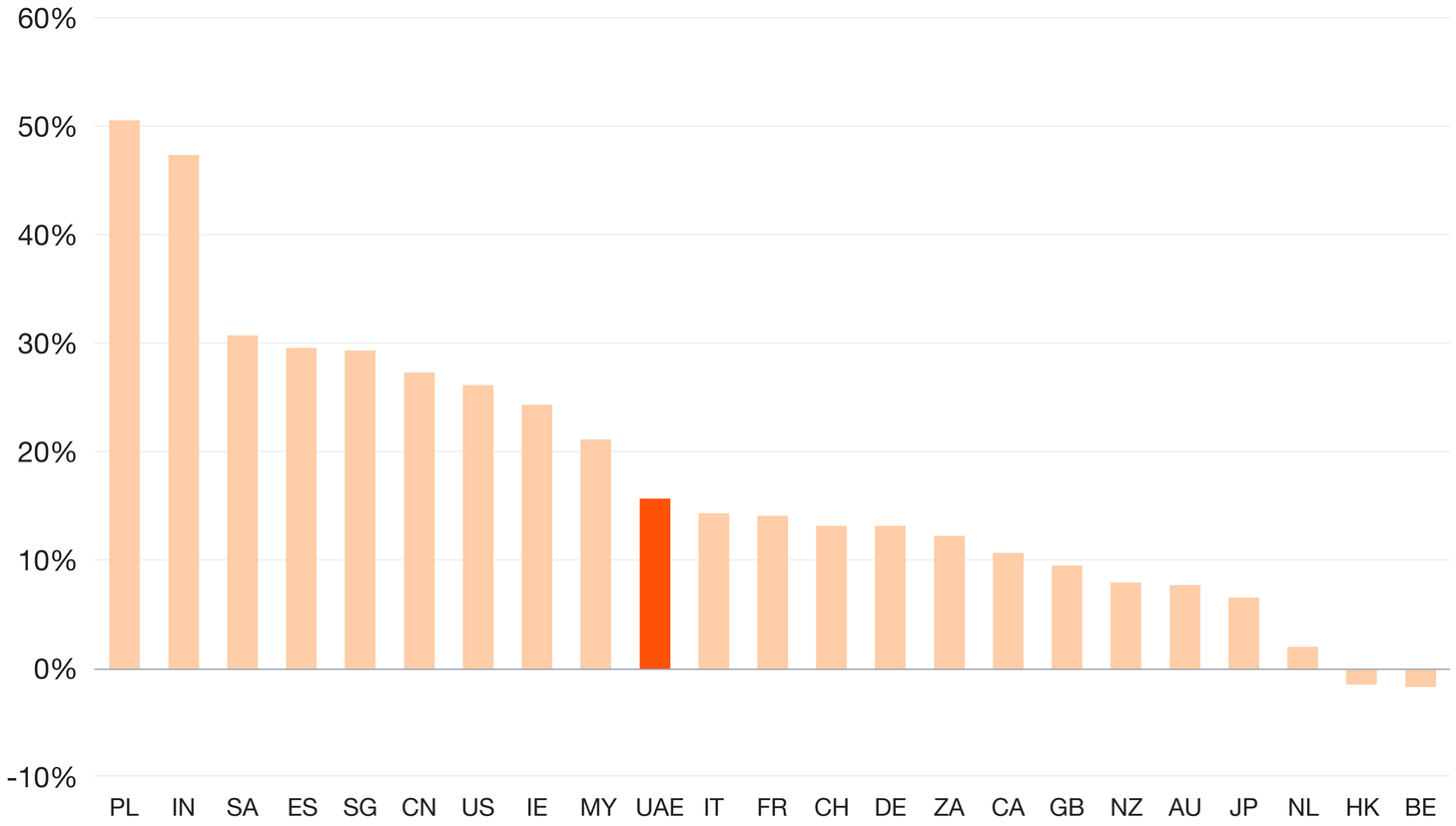
Source: PwC analysis, Lightcast data

Findings

- The UAE has seen one of the fastest increases globally in the share of jobs requiring AI skills. Its AI job share rose from 1.0% in 2021 to 3.2% in 2025 (+2.2pp).
- This rapid growth has translated into a significant improvement in global positioning, with the UAE climbing from 21st in 2021 to 13th in 2025 in terms of share of job postings requiring AI related skills.
- While leading emerging markets such as India and Brazil show the largest absolute increases, the UAE's performance places it firmly among a top tier of fast-scaling AI talent markets globally.
- This suggests strong momentum in the adoption and embedding of AI capabilities across the UAE economy, outpacing many advanced economies and signalling continued upward potential.
- **Caveat:** It is worth noting that for countries including India and Brazil, the large proportion of total job postings requiring AI skills may partly reflect data limitations where the informal labour demand may not be fully captured.

There is a positive wage premium for AI skills for the majority of the nations included in our analysis

Average wage premium for jobs if they are listed with ‘AI skills’, by country (%, 2025)



Source: PwC analysis, Lightcast data

Notes: To calculate wage premiums, we split job postings within an occupation group by AI and non-AI jobs. From here, we estimate the wage premium (difference) within the occupation group 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. Countries with poor advertised salary data quality have been excluded from this metric.

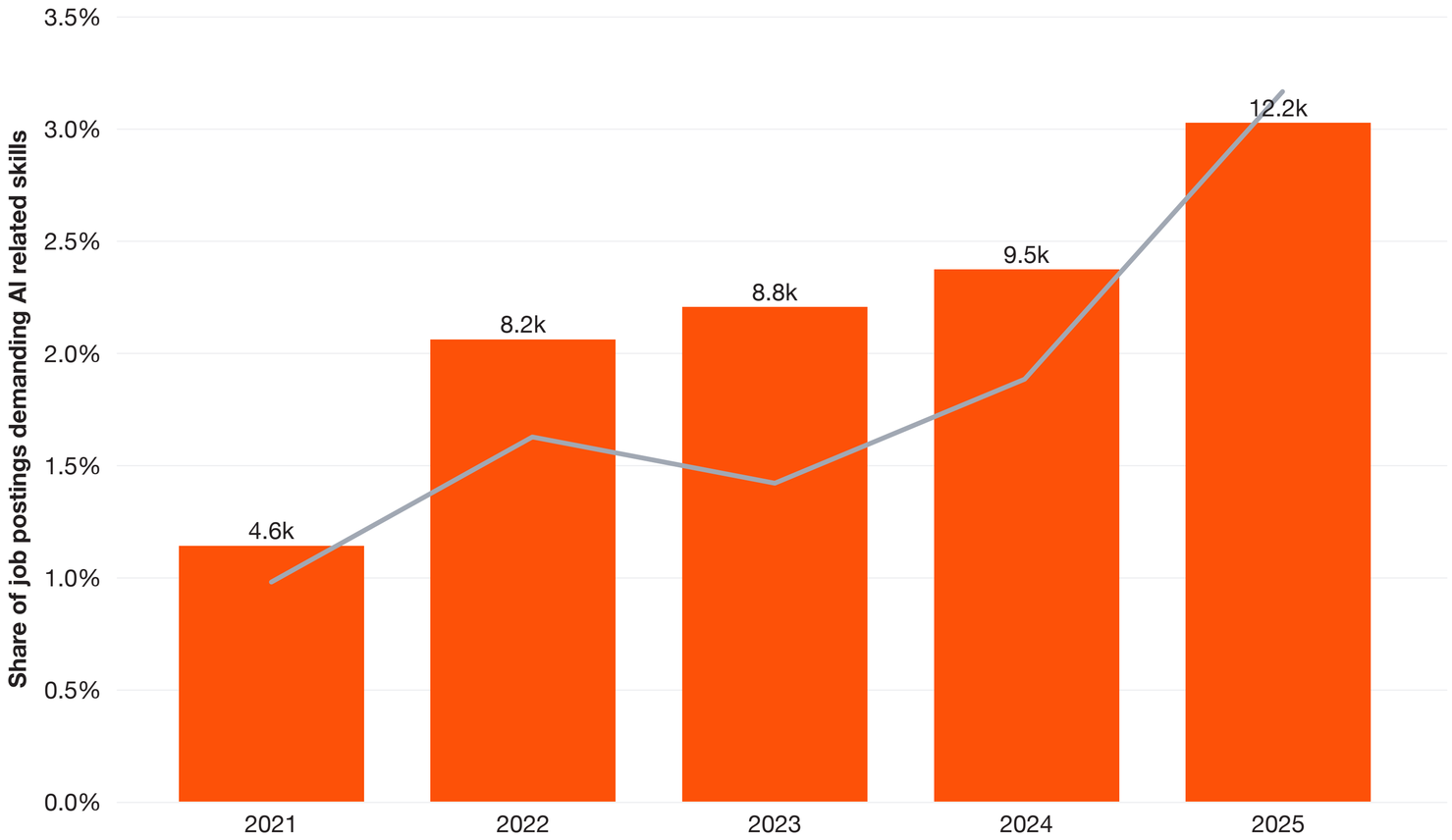
Findings

- Globally, employees in a given occupation will experience a **16.8%** wage premium if they are in an AI job, compared to a non-AI job.
- While most countries enjoy a positive wage premium, Hong Kong (-1.5%), Belgium (-1.7%) and Sweden (-6.4%) see a negative wage differential.
- This may be driven by non-AI factors that we are not controlling for. Basic AI skills such as prompt engineering may not be listed in job postings. This may lead to an underestimation of the wage premium, potentially contributing to a negative wage differential in Hong Kong and Belgium.
- **Interpretation note:** Higher AI wage premiums do not necessarily indicate stronger performance. They often reflect talent shortages and high demand, with employers paying more to secure scarce AI skills. In contrast, lower premiums may signal more mature talent markets, where AI capabilities are already widespread. As the metric is percentage-based, it is also influenced by base salary levels, meaning countries with lower wages can show higher premiums even when absolute differences are smaller.

Core Results

AI hiring in the UAE has continued to steadily rise in recent years

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



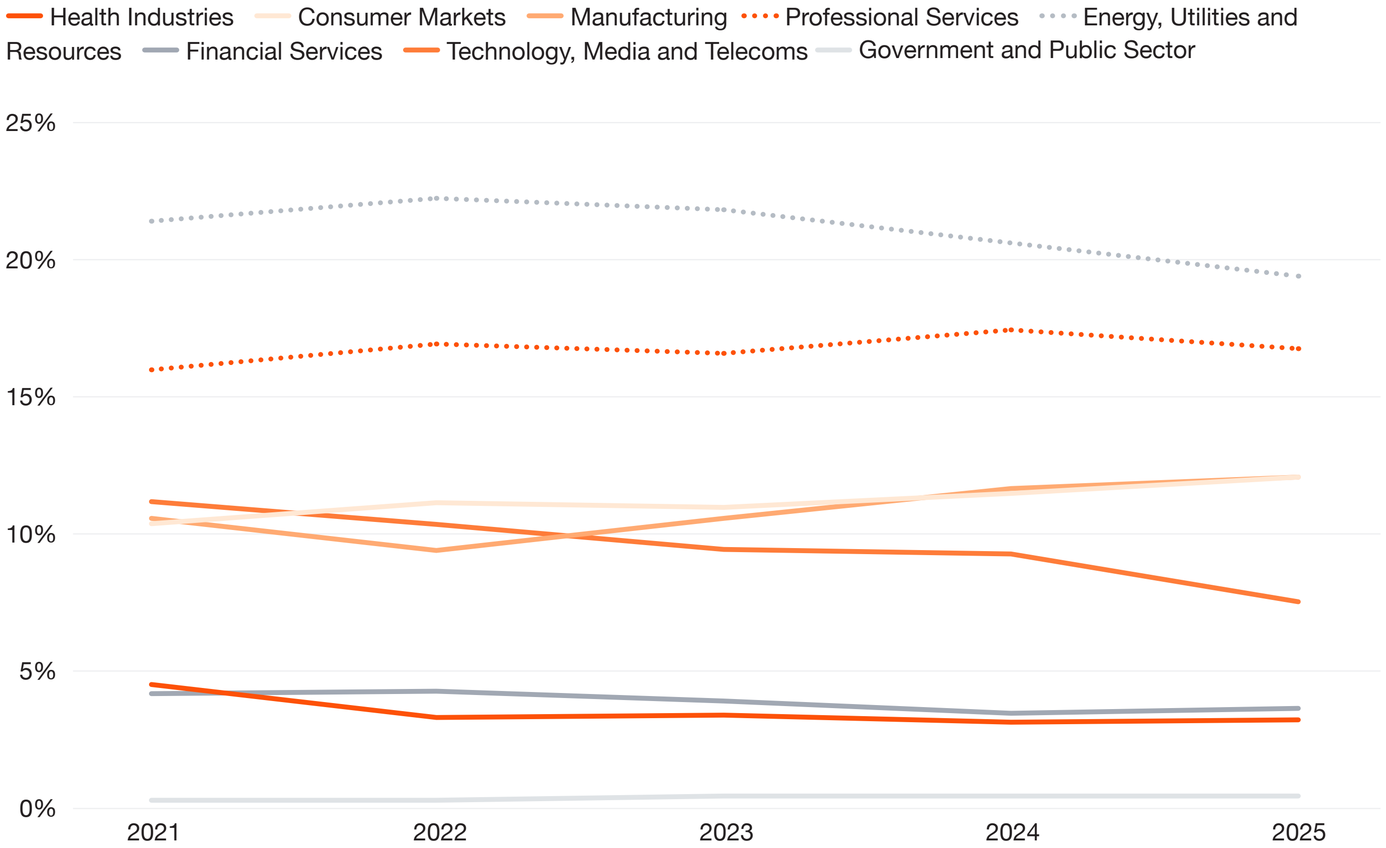
Source: PwC analysis, Lightcast data

Findings

- The number of UAE job postings requiring AI skills increased by around 2.7k from 2024 to 2025.
- As a result, the share of job postings requiring AI skills reached 3.2% in 2025.

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

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



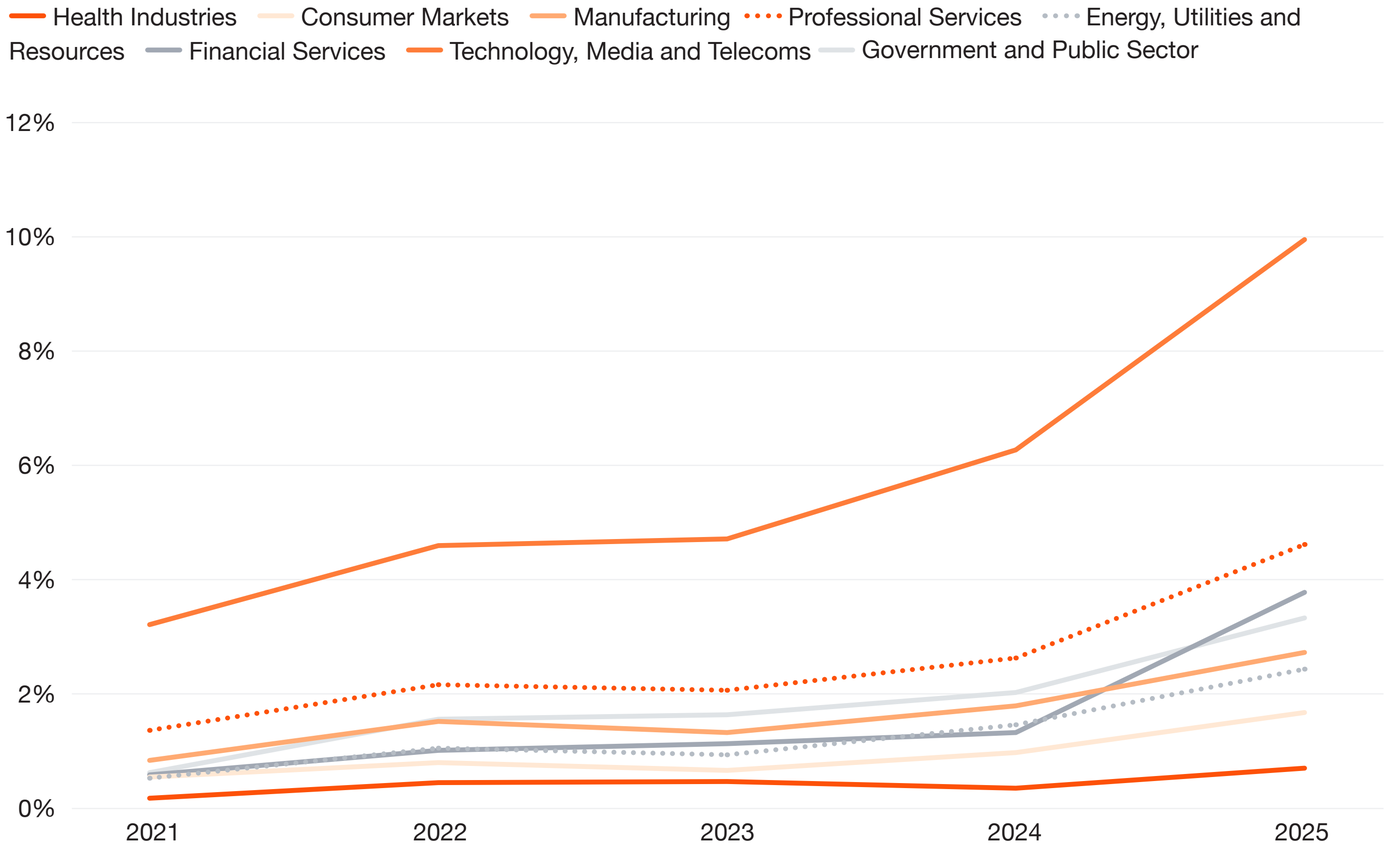
Source: PwC analysis, Lightcast data

Findings

- Energy, Utilities and Resources and Professional Services stand out as the largest sources of labour demand, accounting for 19.4% and 16.7% of total UAE job postings respectively.
- Government & Public Sector records the smallest share at 1.3%.

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

Share of AI job postings by sector, UAE, 2021-2025



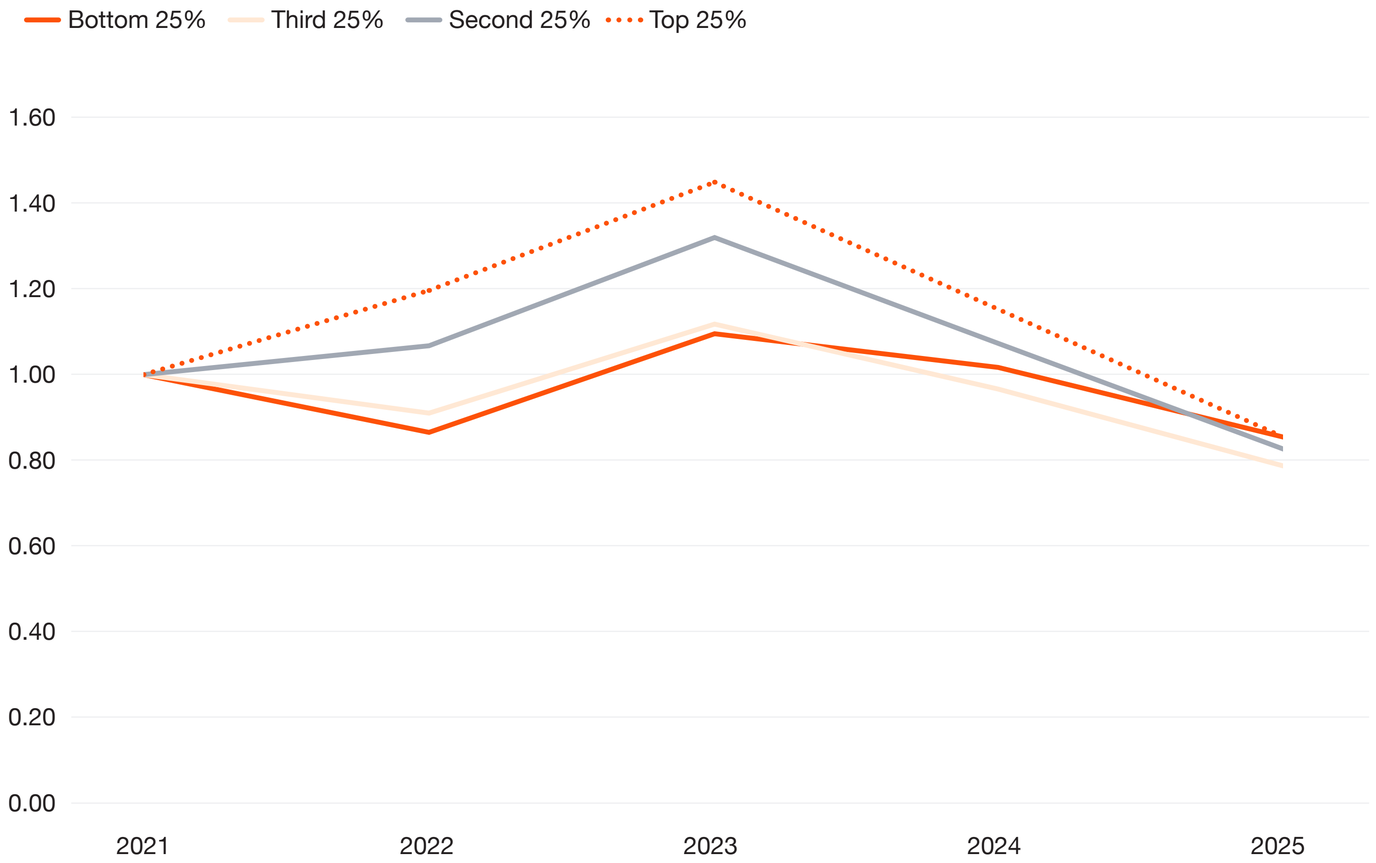
Source: PwC analysis, Lightcast data

Findings

- Technology, Media and Telecoms (TMT) records the highest share of AI job postings in UAE, 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 the UAE, occupations have seen roughly similar growth since 2021 regardless of AI exposure

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



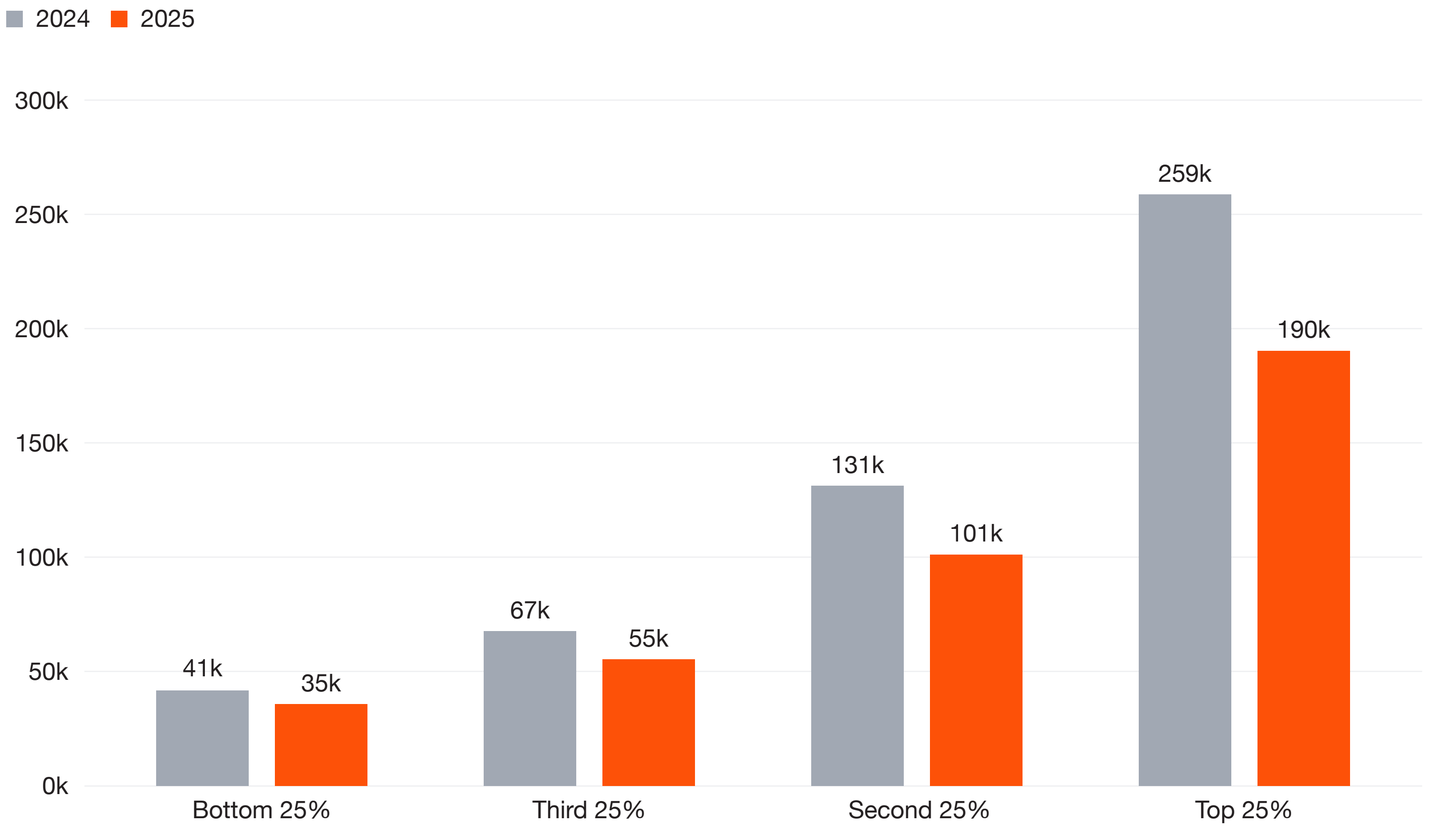
Source: PwC analysis, Lightcast data

Findings

- Unlike global trends, the UAE sees its high exposure occupations see faster growth in job postings compared to lower exposure occupations.
- There has, however, been a clear convergence across all quartiles of AI exposure. Since 2023, all quartiles have experienced a steady decline in total job postings. In 2025, both the bottom and top quartile of exposure have around 0.85 jobs for every job in 2021.

As such, the top quartile of AI-exposed occupations in the UAE still accounts for the largest number of job postings

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



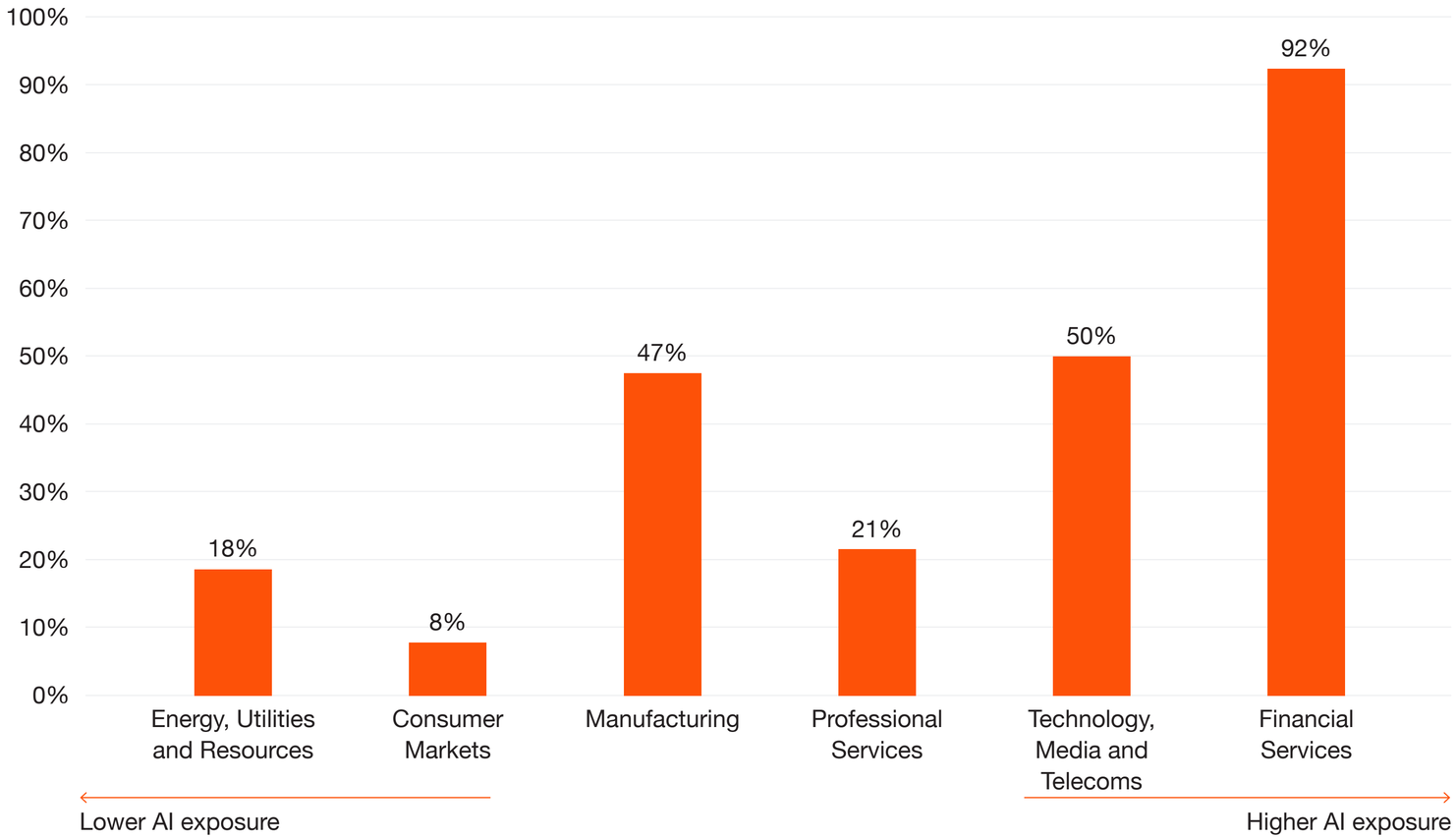
Source: PwC analysis, Lightcast data

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 190,000 job postings, much higher than lower exposure groups.
- All quartiles saw a decline in job postings, with the largest drop in the highest exposure quartile, which fell by around 69,000.

Wage premiums in the UAE are generally higher for sectors more exposed to AI, with Financial Services garnering the highest premium

AI wage premium by sector, UAE, 2025



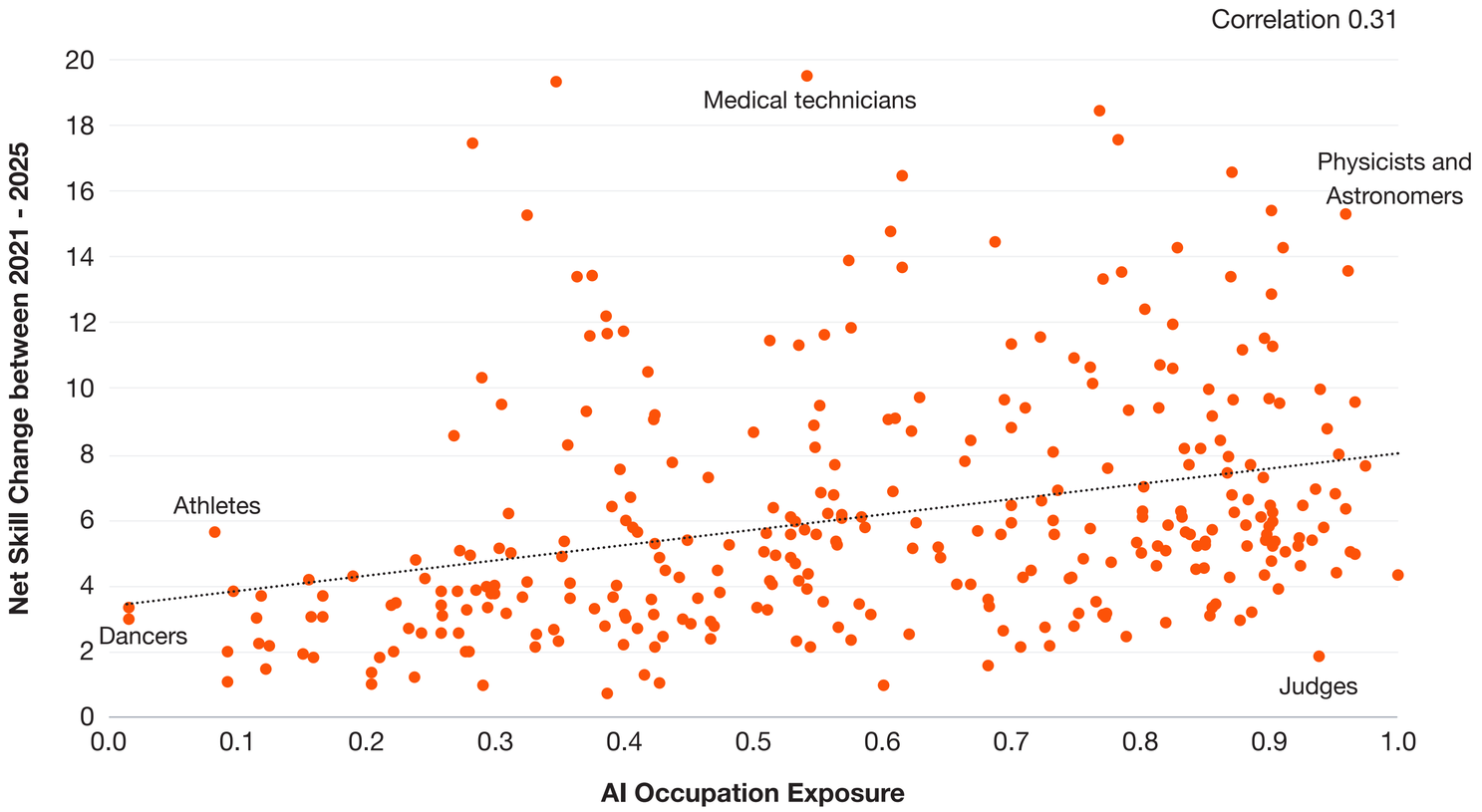
Source: PwC analysis, Lightcast data
Notes: For this metric, 'Government and Public Sector' and 'Health Industries' are excluded for the UAE due to poor data quality (low sample size of postings with valid salary information in 2025). To calculate wage premiums, we split job postings for a given sector by AI and non-AI jobs. From here we estimate the wage premium by calculating the difference in average salary for the AI postings for that given sector with average salary of the non-AI postings for the same sector. This analysis is not a growth rate but rather a snapshot of a given year.

Findings

- AI wage premiums vary significantly across sectors, with the more exposed sectors, including Technology, Media and Telecoms and (TMT) and Financial Services, experiencing the highest AI wage premiums at 50% and 92% respectively.
- In contrast, the less exposed sectors such as Energy and Consumer Markets show a much smaller AI wage premium.

In the UAE, more AI-exposed occupations are experiencing a faster rate of skills change

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



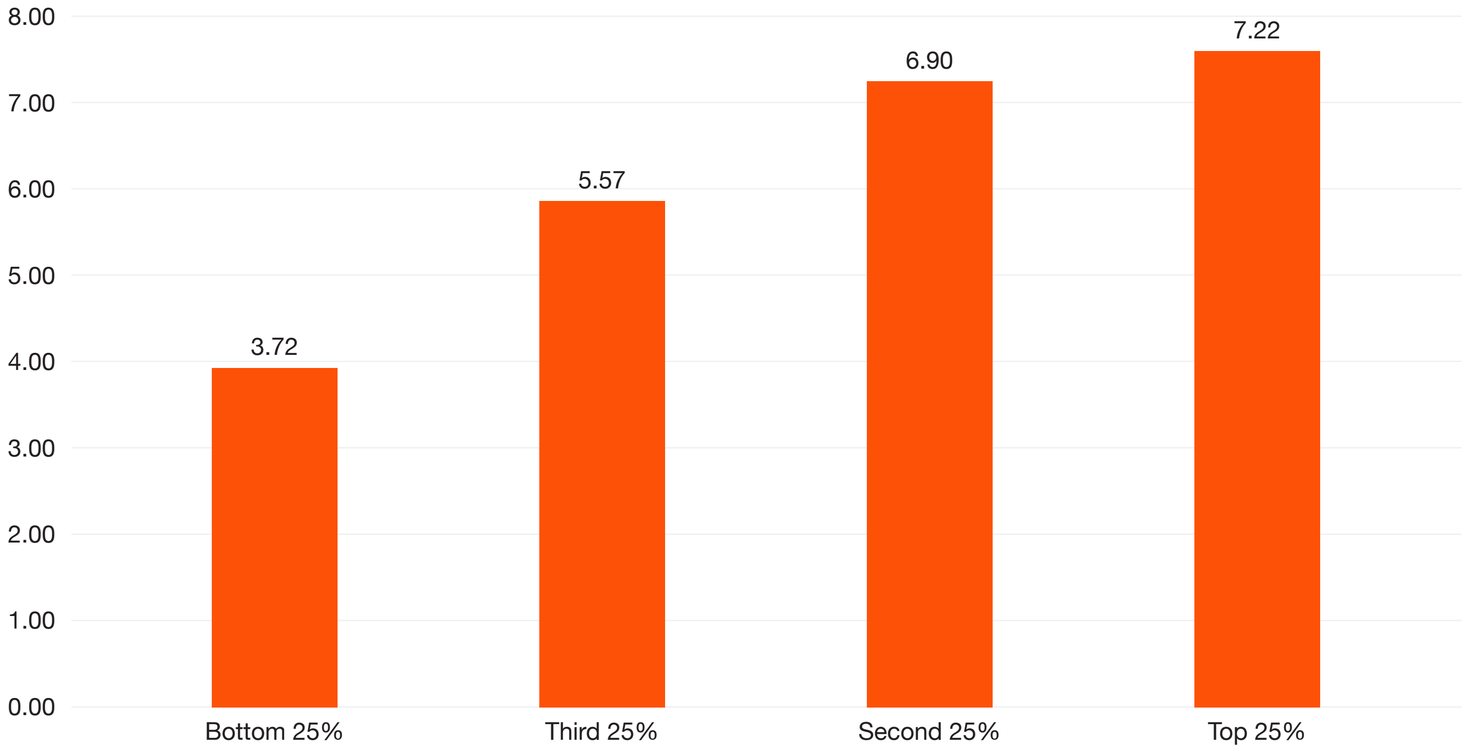
Source: PwC analysis, Lightcast data

Findings

- There is a positive correlation of 0.31 between AI exposure and net skills change between 2021 and 2025, indicating that more exposed occupations see greater shifts in skill requirements. However, the spread of datapoints is relatively wide, suggesting that while a clear overall relationship exists, occupation-specific factors also play an important role.
- This suggests that in the UAE, AI-exposed occupations are experiencing a faster rate of skills change.

This can be seen across exposure quartiles, where the most AI-exposed occupations show the largest skill shifts

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



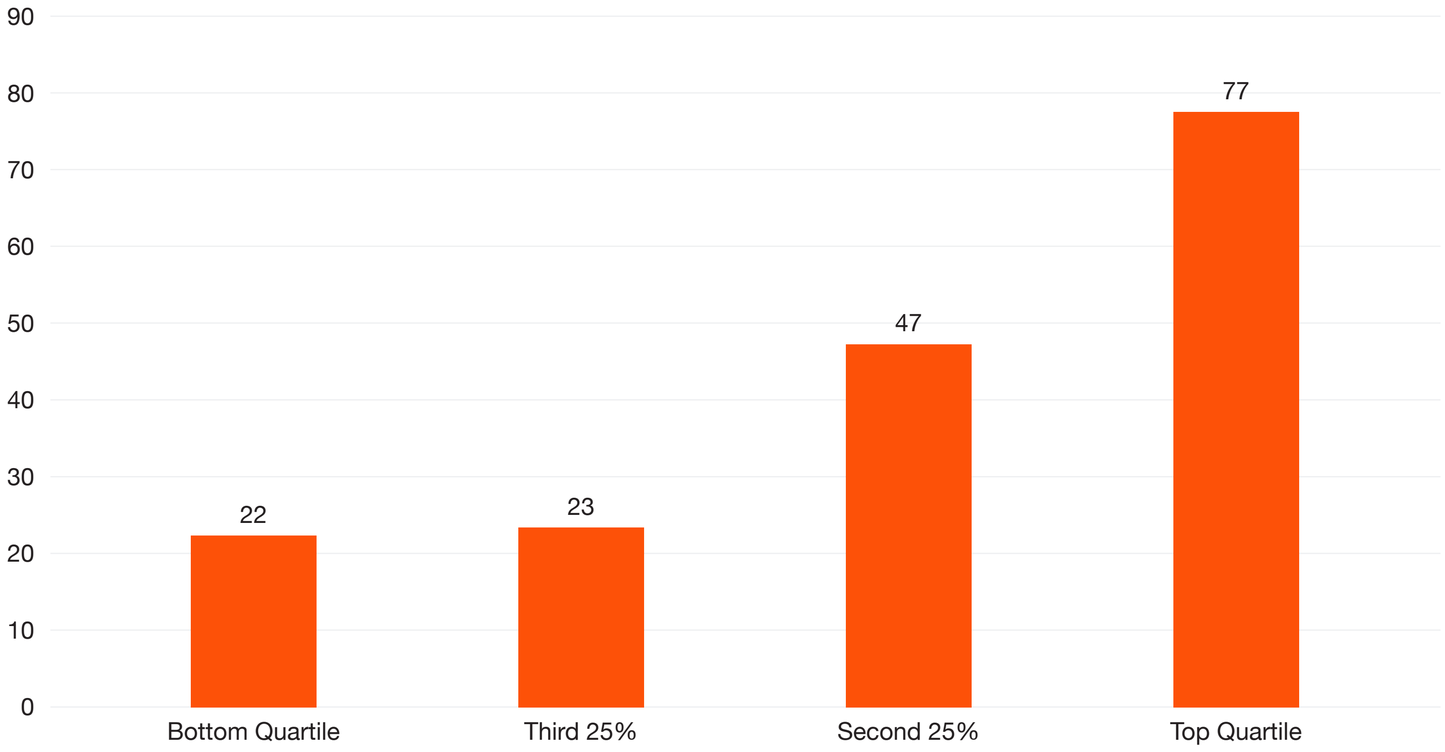
Source: PwC analysis, Lightcast data

Findings

- Occupations in the highest AI exposure group show faster skills transformation between 2021 and 2025 compared to lower exposure quartiles.
- Average net skill change rises across the quartiles overall, with the second and top exposure groups recording the highest levels of skills transformation.
- This reinforces the earlier finding of a positive relationship between AI exposure and skills change in the UAE, although the relatively small gaps between the upper quartiles suggest that occupation-specific and other non-AI factors are also influencing the pattern.
- The UAE's most AI-exposed occupations exhibit a higher degree of skills transformation than the global average. The top quartile in the UAE records an average net skill change of 7.22, compared to a global average of 4.47, suggesting more rapid evolution in highly exposed roles. This may reflect a range of factors, including differences in labour market dynamics, the pace of AI adoption, and how employers update and signal skill requirements in job postings.

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, UAE, 2025 relative to 2021



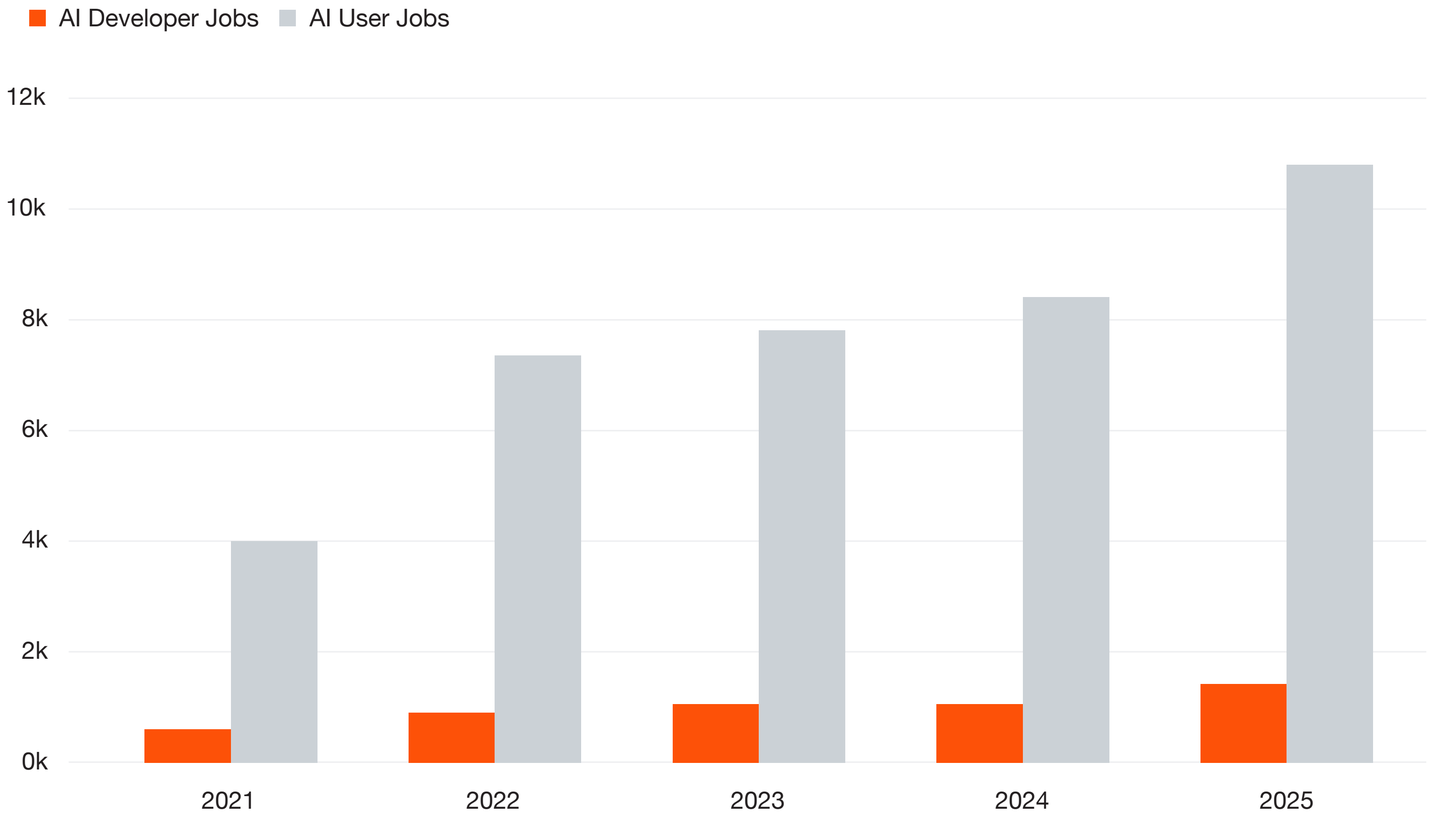
Source: PwC analysis, PwC AI Occupational Exposure Index, Lightcast data
Notes: We define a ‘new skill’ as any skill that has more than 10 mentions in an occupation in 2025, but five or fewer mentions in that same occupation in 2021. Across all postings for an occupation in a given country, we count 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 2021 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 77 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 the UAE is dominated by user roles, with strong growth across both user and developer roles

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



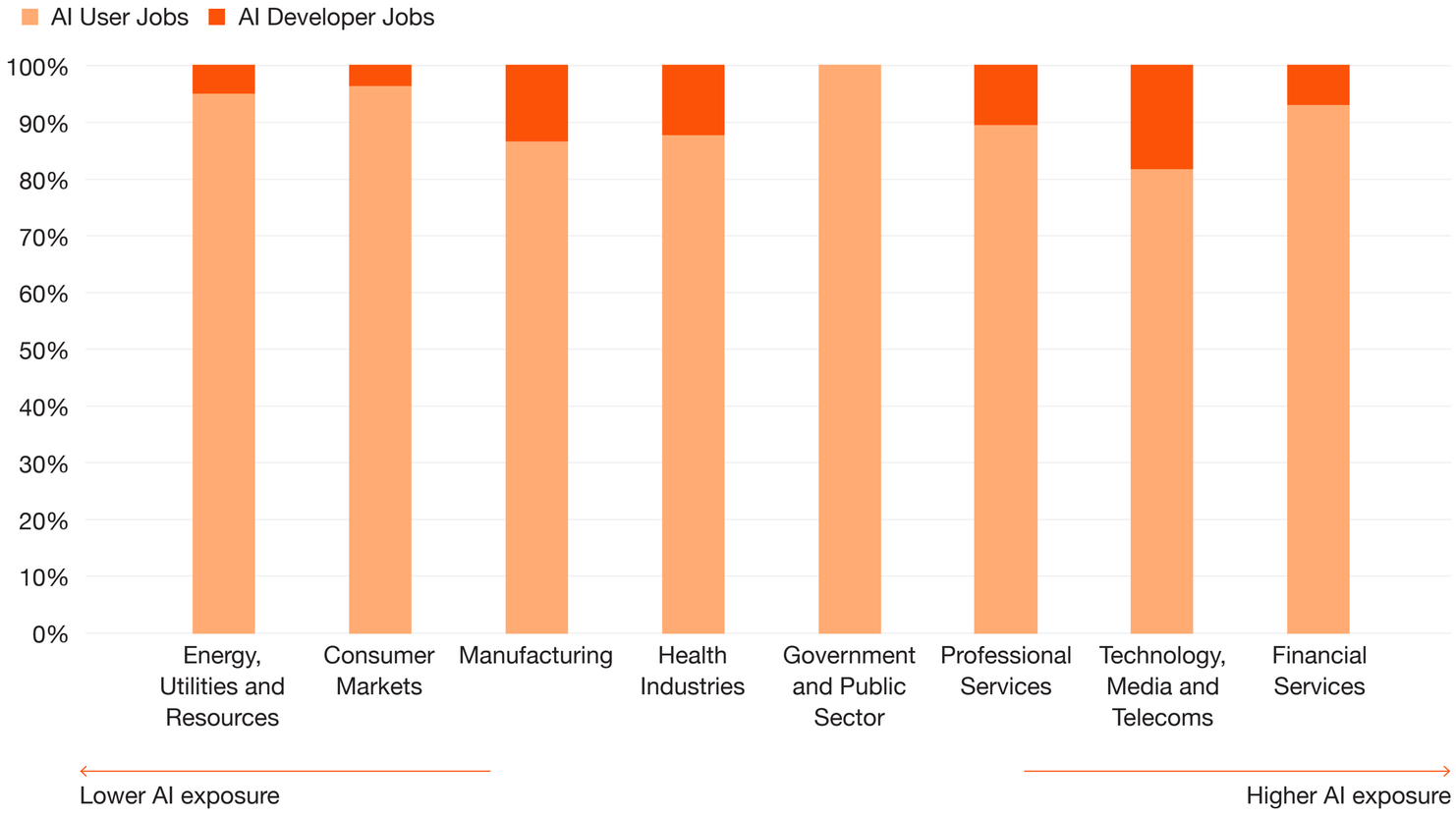
Source: PwC analysis, Lightcast data
Notes: AI user and AI developer job roles are determined as jobs requiring Tier 0 or 1 skills (AI literacy and applied AI skills) for AI user jobs and Tier 2 skills (advanced AI skills) for AI developer jobs. AI developer jobs are tagged as such if there are any skills 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 2.4k roles in 2025, despite a dip in 2022.
- In contrast, AI developer remain fewer in number but stable, growing by 290 roles in 2025.
- Growth has been strong across both categories in the last year, with AI user roles increasing by 28% and AI developer roles by 26.6%, indicating continued expansion in both adoption and development of AI capabilities.

Across sectors, AI job postings in the UAE remain focused more on applying AI than building it

Share of AI user and AI developer roles within AI-related job postings, by sector, UAE, 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 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 (18.2%), consistent with its role in developing and advancing AI technologies.
- Government and Public Sector and Consumer Markets record the highest share of AI user roles, reflecting broad-based adoption of AI across operational roles rather than in-house development.

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