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2026 Global AI Jobs Barometer

Two futures for jobs in an AI era

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Reimagining work with AI: Reinvention matters more than adoption

Malaysia is entering a pivotal phase in its AI journey—one defined less by job creation or displacement, and more by a fundamental redesign of work. PwC's 2026 Global AI Jobs Barometer, based on an analysis of over one billion job advertisements across six continents, finds that AI is reshaping roles, skills, and wages. While macroeconomic forces continue to shape employment trends, AI is steadily reshaping job roles, skill requirements, and value creation across sectors.

AI is creating a two-track labour market: 'professionalised' roles requiring deep human expertise are growing twice as fast as 'democratised' ones globally—with 42% higher wage growth—while democratised roles become increasingly accessible to non-experts.

AI adoption remains nascent
The share of job postings requiring AI skills is still limited at 4.0% in 2025—despite doubling from 1.9% in 2024. Although less than one in five Malaysian CEOs report large-scale AI deployment in core functions, this has yet to translate into significant AI-related hiring, indicating a gap between ambition and workforce readiness.

AI is driving new skill demands
AI's impact is fundamentally a skills story. As AI integrates into work, the value of tasks is being redefined—elevating the importance of distinctly human capabilities such as judgement, creativity, and leadership, while automating routine and repetitive activities.

Malaysia's AI moment: Reconfiguring work
The real opportunity lies not in adopting AI tools, but in rethinking how work gets done. Organisations that will lead are those that embed AI across functions—redesigning workflows, accelerating workforce upskilling, and integrating human capabilities with machine intelligence.

As global demand for AI talent accelerates, Malaysia must act swiftly. Delayed adoption risks widening skill gaps and weakening competitiveness. Ultimately, the advantage will come not just from technology, but from effectively integrating and managing it—across people, processes, and AI.

Key findings

7.4%

increase in total number of job postings requiring AI-related skills

Urgency for Malaysia to keep pace as global AI talent demand accelerates

Global AI specialist job postings grew by 69% in 2025, outpacing Malaysia's AI job postings, which have remained largely flat between 23,000 and 33,000 since 2022. This gap underscores the urgent need for Malaysia to accelerate AI workforce readiness and talent development. Without prompt action, Malaysia risks missing out on critical economic and innovation opportunities.

4%

share of job postings requiring AI-related skills

Malaysia's sectoral AI adoption mirrors global trends

AI hiring in Malaysia broadly mirrors global trends, led by technology, media, and telecom (~8%), followed by professional and financial services (~4%), albeit trailing global benchmarks by 2–4 percentage points.

AI adoption remains concentrated in digital and knowledge-based sectors. Unlocking broader value will require expanding opportunities across industries. This includes scaling use cases in operational, frontline, and physical domains across manufacturing, government, energy, consumer, and healthcare sectors, ultimately benefitting more Malaysians.

20% - 66%

range of AI wage premiums across sectors

AI wage premiums vary significantly across sectors

In Malaysia, financial services leads with the highest premium at 66%, reflecting strong demand for AI skills. This is followed by health industries (41%), energy, utilities, and resources (34%), and manufacturing (34%).

These premiums highlight the growing economic value of AI skills from stronger employability and higher-quality jobs to improved earning potential. For organisations, investing in AI talent strengthens competitiveness, enabling higher-value work and sustained productivity gains.

90

Average number of new skills per occupation (2025 vs. 2021) in the top AI exposure quartile

Jobs with high AI exposure see more new skills emerge

Occupations with higher AI exposure see a significantly greater number of newly emerging skills. In Malaysia, the top quartile averages 90 new skills* per occupation, compared to just 23 for the bottom quartile.

As AI exposure increases, work processes and ways of working are being redesigned, beyond just automating tasks. This is driving rapid shifts in skill requirements and the need for new capabilities such as prompt engineering and machine learning, alongside human skills such as empathy, judgement, and creativity. In turn, AI-enabled skills are increasing job value by driving productivity and better outcomes.

Note:
*A "new skill" is any skill that has greater than 10 mentions in an occupation in 2025 but five or less mentions in that same occupation in 2021.

Next steps for business leaders to reshape jobs and skills for success

1

Shape workforce strategy

Understand how AI redefines human expertise and workflows, guiding targeted talent investment and redesigning work processes to maximise AI integration.

2

Complement human expertise

Invest in AI that enhances uniquely human capabilities, enabling greater value creation alongside technology.

3

Reinvent career pathways

Revamp onboarding, mentorship, and training programmes to accelerate the development of advanced skills like strategic decision-making and stakeholder management.

4

Invest in human-intensive skills

Focus on empathy, judgment, creativity, and leadership, which are increasingly critical as AI automates routine and technical tasks.

“AI will not create advantage on its own. Its edge will come from how leaders redesign work and career pathways, integrating AI with human judgement, creativity, and leadership—human-intensive skills that technology can't replace. This is Malaysia's moment to turn AI ambition into workforce strategy across priority sectors, creating high-value jobs, stronger productivity, and more inclusive transformation by 2030.”

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