

The Adaptation Challenge

Building the workforce for trusted AI adoption

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INTRODUCTION

As artificial intelligence becomes more capable, the economic question is increasingly whether workers and organisations can adapt quickly enough to use it effectively and securely.

Much of the public debate has focused on whether AI will replace jobs. Three years into widespread generative AI adoption, however, its effects remain difficult to isolate in headline employment figures. Hiring has weakened following the post-pandemic surge, while economic uncertainty and lower labour mobility continue to shape outcomes.

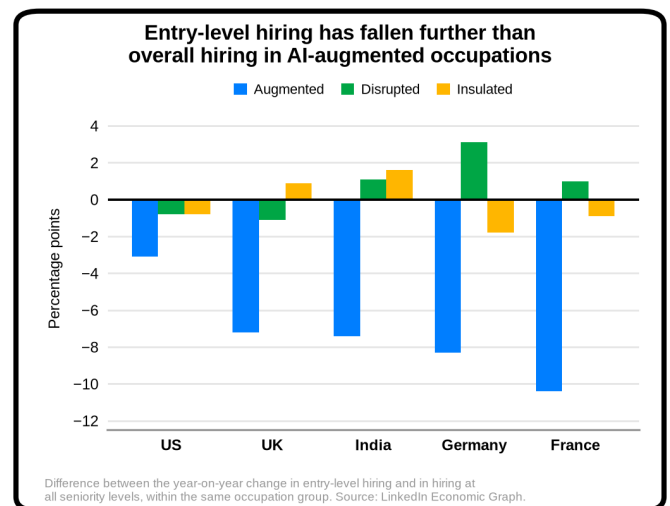
In this note, prepared for the LSE Global Forum for AI and the Social Sciences, we use LinkedIn Economic Graph data covering more than 1.3 billion members worldwide to examine a broader adaptation challenge. We consider where established pathways into work may be narrowing and where new opportunities are emerging; how sectors are building AI capability and organisations are starting to redesign work around increasingly capable systems; and whether the cybersecurity, governance and assurance capabilities needed for trusted adoption are developing alongside them.

ADAPTATION IS VISIBLE, BUT UNEVEN

Our recent research finds no sign that occupations most exposed to AI are shedding hiring faster than those least exposed. If anything, AI-augmented occupations, which combine AI-replicable and human-centric skills, have held up better overall than disrupted or insulated work.^{1, 2}

Consistent with recent joint work with the UK Government's AI & the Future of Work Unit, now the AI Economics Institute, the picture is more nuanced when entry-level hiring is considered.³

One place where a more consistent pattern does emerge is in entry-level hiring within AI-augmented occupations. In the markets we examine below, entry-level hiring in AI-augmented occupations fell further than augmented hiring overall, with a shortfall of between three and ten percentage points. No comparable cross-market pattern was visible in disrupted or insulated work.



One possibility is that employers are initially concentrating AI adoption among experienced workers, while becoming more selective about junior hiring in a weak labour market. The finding is not causal evidence that AI is displacing junior workers, but it raises a longer-term question about how people acquire experience if some of the tasks through which they previously developed it are changing.

NEW WORK AND NEW ORGANISATIONS

The pressure on some existing pathways is only one side of the adaptation story. New technology is also generating new forms of work, from building and integrating AI systems to operating the infrastructure

¹ Rosie Hood, LinkedIn Economic Graph Research Institute, [AI Labour Market Update \(August 2026\)](#).

² LinkedIn Economic Graph Research Institute, [Generative AI's Impact on the Workforce: A Technical Framework \(April 2024\)](#).

³ Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, [Entry-level hiring in the UK: a snapshot \(8 June 2026\)](#), published with LinkedIn and the AI & the Future of Work Unit.

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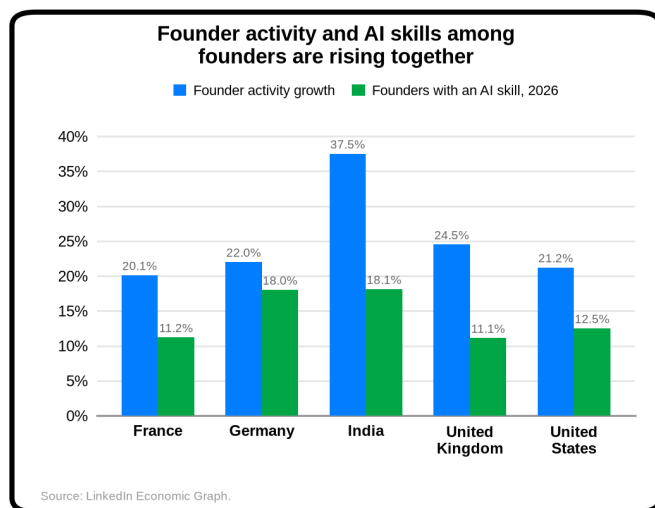
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that supports them. LinkedIn research has identified more than 2 million emerging technology-enabled roles globally, alongside more than 600,000 AI-enabled data-centre jobs created in the previous year. These opportunities extend well beyond the relatively small group building foundation models.

Entrepreneurship provides another adaptation signal. Founder activity increased across all five markets in our latest research, while AI skills are becoming increasingly common among founders. Globally, 13% of founders now list at least one AI skill, compared with 1.2% of members overall, making founders around 11 times more likely to do so. The corresponding gap was only sixfold in 2022.⁴



These indicators do not establish that AI caused the rise in founder activity, particularly in a weak hiring market. They nevertheless suggest that entrepreneurial activity and AI capability are developing alongside one another as the labour market adapts.

The picture is therefore not one of generalised displacement, but of uneven adaptation: new work and new organisations are emerging while some established routes into work may be narrowing. The next test is

whether organisations more broadly can redesign work around increasingly capable systems.

FROM EXPERIMENTATION TO ORGANISATIONAL REDESIGN

New firms can build around AI from the outset. Established organisations face a different challenge: integrating new capabilities into existing workflows, responsibilities and systems of control. Between them, small and medium-sized businesses provide an early indication of how adoption is moving from experimentation towards deployment.

Among SMBs, AI Agents was the fastest-growing AI engineering skill in Germany, India, the United Kingdom and the United States in 2025, while LLMOps led in France. The wider rankings also feature AI productivity, operational platforms, strategy and Responsible AI. This could signal that upskilling is broadening beyond general AI capability towards execution, deployment, integration and governance.⁵

Table 1. Fastest-growing AI engineering skills among small and medium-sized businesses, 2025

Market	Fastest-growing skills, ranked 1 to 5
France	1. LLMOps 2. Responsible AI 3. OpenAI API 4. LangChain 5. Artificial Intelligence
Germany	1. AI Agents 2. AI Productivity 3. OpenAI API 4. LLMOps 5. Responsible AI
India	1. AI Agents 2. AI Productivity 3. Azure AI Studio 4. Intelligent Agents 5. Automated Feature Engineering
UK	1. AI Agents 2. AI Productivity 3. AI Strategy 4. LLMOps 5. OpenAI API
US	1. AI Agents 2. AI Productivity 3. Azure AI Studio 4. AI Strategy 5. Amazon Bedrock

Source: LinkedIn Economic Graph, AI Labor Market Update (April 2026).

AI capability is also spreading across established sectors. Technology remains ahead in each of the five

⁴ Rosie Hood, LinkedIn Economic Graph Research Institute, [AI Labor Market Update \(August 2026\)](#).

⁵ Rosie Hood, LinkedIn Economic Graph Research Institute, [AI Labor Market Update \(April 2026\)](#).



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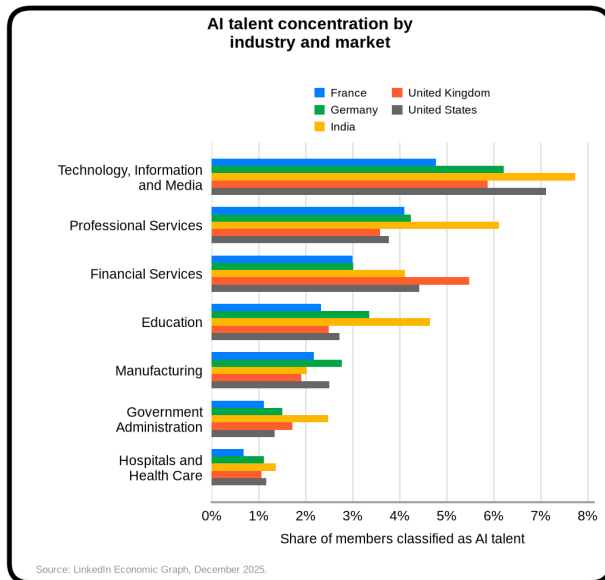
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markets examined, but significant concentrations are now visible in professional and financial services, education and manufacturing.

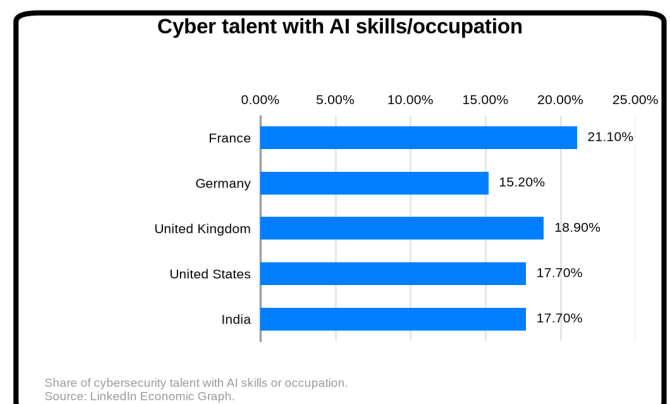
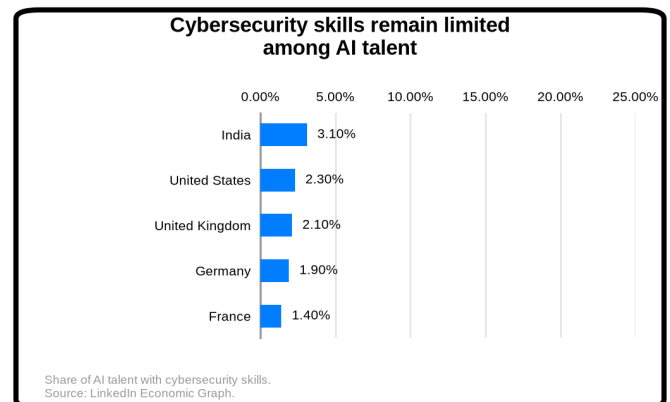


Financial services provides an instructive example. In the United Kingdom, 5.5% of finance professionals were classified as AI talent in December 2025, the highest concentration outside technology. Longer-term data show the share rising from 2.4% in 2016 to 5.8% in 2026. This does not demonstrate successful organisational redesign, but it shows that technical capability can accumulate within a highly regulated sector.

Agents make the next organisational questions more pressing. Firms must decide which tasks and decisions can be delegated, when a 'human in the loop' is needed and how automated actions can be audited or challenged. Doing so will require domain expertise, cybersecurity, governance, assurance and risk management alongside AI engineering. It may also require firms to rethink teams and entry-level roles so that people can continue to develop judgement as some routine tasks change.

THE WORKFORCE BEHIND TRUSTED ADOPTION

Recent debate has increasingly focused on the security implications of advanced AI systems, including their potential to support cyberattacks, accelerate vulnerability discovery or enable more sophisticated forms of automation. While assessments of these risks continue to evolve, they point to a broader reality: successful deployment depends not only on model capability, but on the workforce and institutional capacity required to govern use.



A first test is whether cybersecurity capability is developing within the AI workforce itself. Very few AI talent hold cybersecurity skills, while the reverse is far more common: cybersecurity professionals are considerably more likely to hold AI skills or experience. This is perhaps less surprising than it looks, given

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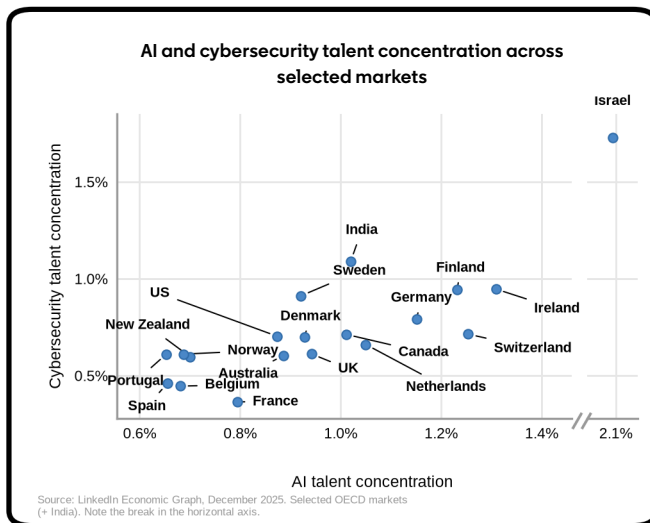
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cybersecurity professionals must continually update their skills as threats evolve. The more telling question is whether that familiarity is translating into people moving into roles that build and govern AI systems, where the evidence is thinner: assurance-related experience accounted for just 1.2% of moves into AI occupations in the UK, and under 0.4% in France and Germany.

A broader view of talent distribution provides additional context. The figure below shows AI and cybersecurity talent concentrations across selected OECD markets, together with India. The distribution is uneven, with some markets exhibiting substantially higher concentrations of both capabilities than others. While the figure is not intended to establish any particular relationship between AI and cybersecurity talent, it can highlight the importance of tracking how the capabilities needed for trusted adoption are developing across different labour markets over time.



As increasingly capable systems move from experimentation towards deployment, organisations will require a wider range of skills than AI engineering alone. Cybersecurity, governance, assurance and risk-management capabilities are likely to become increasingly important complements to technical expertise, particularly in sectors where trust,

accountability and resilience are essential. The challenge is therefore not simply building AI capability, but ensuring that the workforce and institutional capacity needed to deploy it responsibly develops alongside it.

Transitions from assurance-related roles into AI occupations remain small. Trusted adoption depends on organisations combining technical capability with cybersecurity, governance, assurance and risk management, at a pace the pipeline has yet to match.

FROM CAPABILITY TO TRUSTED ADOPTION

The immediate labour market challenge may be adaptation as much as automation. AI is creating new work and spreading into established sectors, but the skills, pathways and organisational capabilities needed to translate technological progress into broad economic gains are developing unevenly.

Policymakers should strengthen technical education, apprenticeships and entry-level pathways into AI-augmented work, including roles that support the secure and responsible deployment of AI. Firms must treat adoption as an organisational redesign challenge, rethinking how people acquire experience and judgement while combining AI expertise with cybersecurity, governance, assurance and domain knowledge.

Better workforce data will be essential to identify where capabilities are emerging, where gaps remain and how the opportunities created by AI can be shared more widely. Trusted adoption will depend not only on what AI systems can do, but on whether workers and organisations are equipped to deploy them responsibly.

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METHODOLOGY

LinkedIn Hiring Rate (LHR). A measure of hires divided by LinkedIn membership in the country, based on members' profile updates using the start date of a new job. This analysis compares the hiring rate in a given month with the same month in the previous year.

AI talent. A member is considered AI talent if they have added at least two AI engineering skills to their profile and/or have ever held an AI occupation.⁶

AI talent concentration. Counts of AI talent divided by counts of LinkedIn members in the relevant market, industry or sector.

Cybersecurity talent concentration. Counts of members classified as cybersecurity talent divided by counts of LinkedIn members in that market, calculated on the same basis as AI talent concentration.

AI-exposure occupations. Augmented occupations require a mixture of skills that are AI-replicable and human-centric; disrupted occupations use skills largely replicable by AI; insulated occupations use few AI-replicable skills.

Seniority. Entry-level refers to hires into positions classified as entry-level in LinkedIn's seniority taxonomy. Overall refers to hires at all seniority levels within the same group.

LINKEDIN DATA FOR IMPACT

Indicators in this note draw on LinkedIn's [Economic Graph](#) — a real-time, granular representation of the global economy built from the activity of more than 1.3 billion members — using only anonymised, aggregated data meeting strict quality thresholds.

While the Economic Graph is expansive and growing, it is not yet representative of the full global workforce; we

encourage readers to treat it as a complement to, rather than a replacement for, official labour market statistics. LinkedIn works with government and multilateral partners to test and validate this data, including the [World Bank](#), the [European Central Bank](#) and Germany's [Destatis](#). Indicator methodologies are available [here](#).

⁶ Rosie Hood, Akash Kaura and Mar Carpanelli, [AI Data Partnerships: LinkedIn Methodology](#), LinkedIn Economic Graph Research Institute (March 2026).