AI Labor Market Update

Entry-Level Hiring Lags Where AI Amplifies

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KEY INSIGHTS

The Work & AI Dashboard on LinkedIn Pulse provides a real-time view of how AI is reshaping the global labor market across 1.4B+ members. In this edition, as the hiring slowdown moderates, a clearer AI pattern is emerging. Entry-level hiring is lagging most in roles where AI complements experienced workers. Gen Z is adding AI engineering skills and founder roles faster than older generations. And cybersecurity talent is using AI to step up as AI's first line of defense.

1. Hiring: Entry-level hiring lags most in AI-augmented roles

- **Hiring declines are easing, and entry-level workers are sharing in it in some markets:** Hiring declines eased in most markets in July-September compared to the previous quarter. Entry-level hiring kept pace with overall hiring in the US (-2.6% vs. -2.8% YoY) and the UK (-12.0% vs. -12.3%). In India, entry-level hiring fell 13.9%; 3.3 percentage points more than overall hiring.
- **There is an entry-level gap in AI-augmented roles:** Entry-level hiring in AI-augmented roles (where AI can perform some tasks, but not most) continues to lag overall hiring in those roles, with the gap widening in the US compared to the previous quarter. In the US, overall hiring in augmented roles is nearly flat (-1.1% YoY), while entry-level hiring is down 5.2%. Entry-level hiring in AI-disrupted roles (where AI can perform many tasks) and AI-insulated roles (where AI can perform few tasks) has largely kept pace with their respective overall hiring trends.

2. Fastest-growing roles: Founder growth accelerates as the US entry-level tech squeeze deepens

- **Founder and AI Engineer remain the standout growth roles**: Founder ranked among the fastest-growing roles in all five markets and picked up pace, reaching +72% YoY in France (up from last quarter's +55% YoY) and +55% in India (from +37%). AI Engineer grew +71% YoY overall and +65% at entry-level in the US.
- **Entry-level tech hiring may be consolidating into AI-specific titles**: With the rise of entry-level AI engineers, we also saw a drop in closely related tech roles. In the US, entry-level Full Stack Engineer (-26% YoY), Data Scientist (-26%) and ML Engineer (-28%) declined. In Germany, Software Engineer declines spread to all levels (-28%). In India, entry-level Frontend Developer fell 58%.

3. Generational trends: Gen Z is driving AI engineering talent and a new wave of AI-skilled founders

- **Gen Z is building AI engineering talent fastest**: Gen Z's share of members with AI engineering talent grew between 13.4%–28.6% YoY across all five markets, led by India (+28.6%). Gen Z now has a larger share than Millennials in India (3.5% vs. 2.3%) and the US (2.5% vs. 2.4%).
- **Gen Z is starting companies faster, and its founders are the most AI-skilled:** The share of US Gen Z members adding a founder position rose 67.8% YoY, well ahead of Millennials (+40.1%). Gen Z also led in India and the UK. In all five markets, Gen Z founders are the most AI-skilled generation of founders: one in five Gen Z founders is AI-skilled in the US (20.2%, up from 14.5% a year ago) and 25.6% in India.

4. Sector deep dive: Cyber professionals are learning AI, and how to secure it

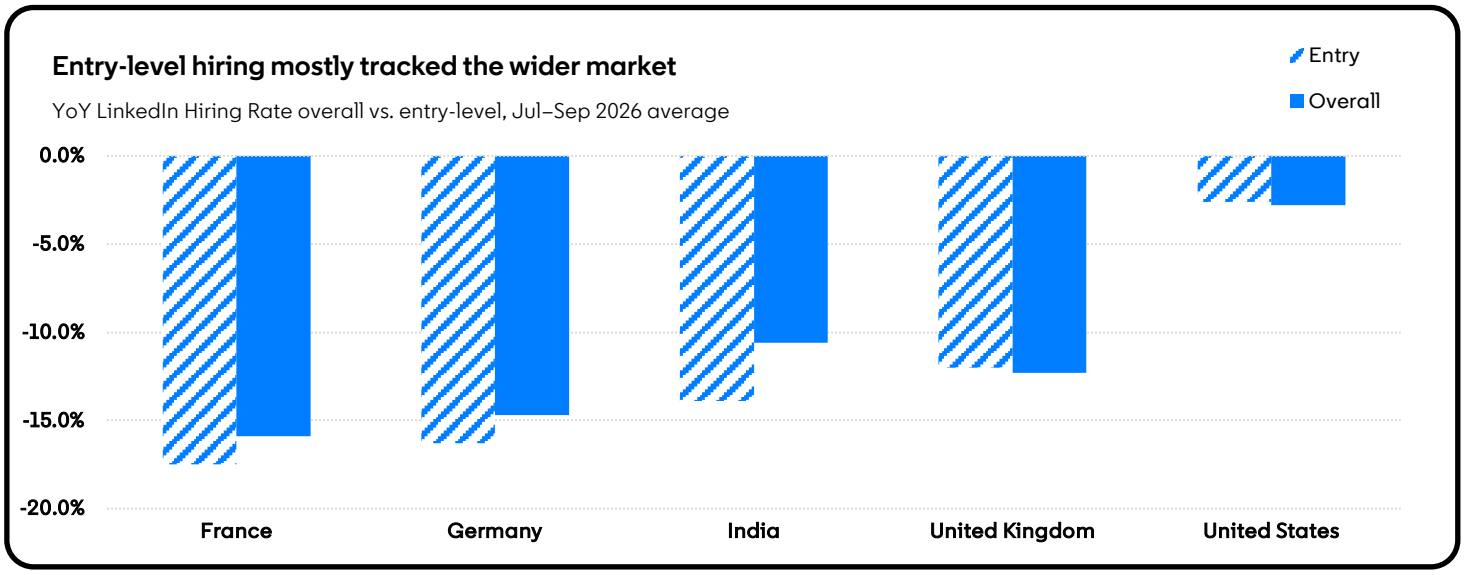
- **AI skills are becoming core to an established cyber workforce:** Globally, 4.3 million LinkedIn members are cyber talent, including 1.35 million in the US. The share of cyber talent that is AI-skilled rose 26–48% YoY across all five markets, and over one in ten is now AI-skilled in four of the five markets, reaching 12.9% in India.
- **Cyber talent is both adopting and governing AI**: Cyber teams are adopting AI for their own work while taking responsibility for securing it. Among US cyber talent, Anthropic Claude was a fastest-growing skill, alongside Multi-agent Systems. AI Governance and AI Security also ranked among the ten fastest-growing skills.

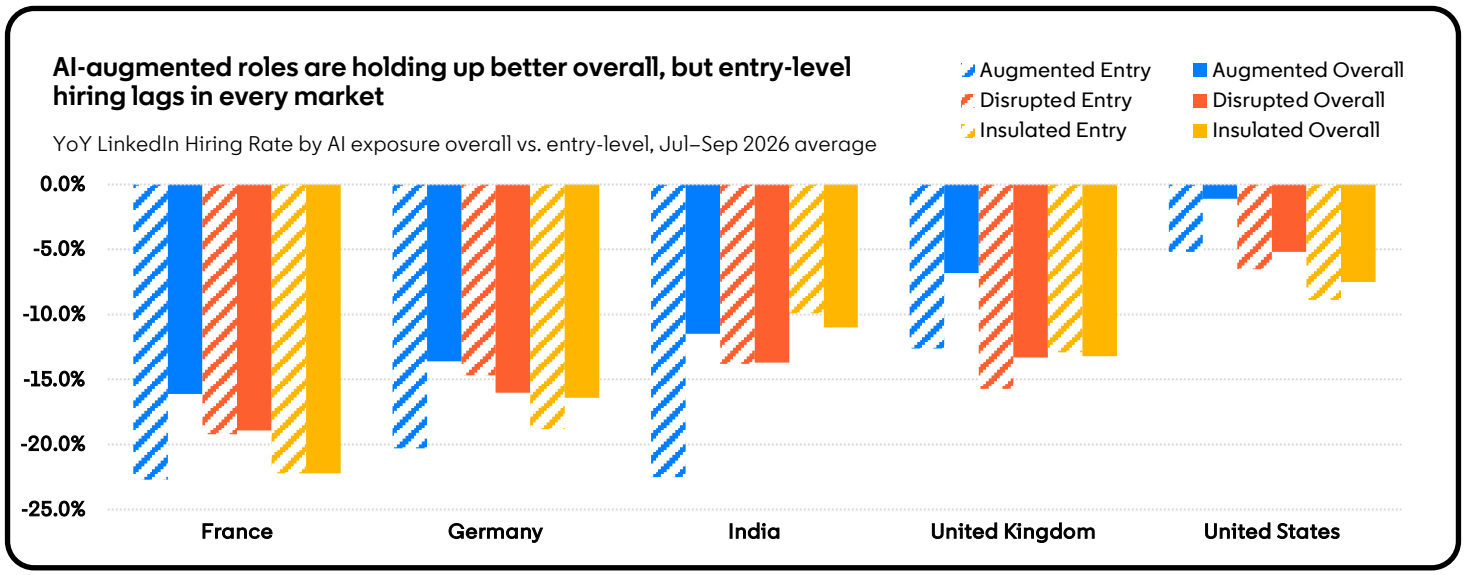
HIRING: ENTRY-LEVEL HIRING LAGS MOST IN AI-AUGMENTED ROLES

Hiring fell year-over-year in all five markets last quarter, but declines have eased in most since our last edition. In the US, hiring is recovering, and entry-level workers are sharing in it: entry-level hiring fell 2.6% YoY vs. 2.8% overall. In the UK entry-level hiring is now more robust than overall hiring (-12.0% vs. -12.3%). In India, entry-level hiring fell 13.9% YoY vs. 10.6% overall, widening the entry-level gap from 2.0 to 3.3 percentage points, the largest of the five markets. France (-17.5% vs. -15.9%) and Germany (-16.3% vs. -14.7%) saw only a slight widening, from 1.4 to 1.6 percentage points in both.

There is an entry-level gap in AI-augmented roles. Entry-level hiring for augmented roles ran 4–11 percentage points below augmented hiring overall, the largest gap of any exposure group in every market. As augmented hiring picks up overall (declines eased by 5.4 percentage points in the US, 4.9 in Germany, 3.3 in the UK and 2.6 in India), entry-level workers are not sharing equally in the US. In the US augmented hiring overall is nearly flat (-1.1% YoY, from -6.5%) but entry-level augmented hiring lags (-5.2%, from -9.6%), pointing to employers favoring experienced hires.

Entry-level hiring in AI-disrupted and AI-insulated roles stayed close to overall hiring. The largest entry-level gap is not in roles most exposed to AI. In AI-disrupted roles, entry-level hiring generally moved with overall hiring in France (-19.2% vs. -18.9%) and India (-13.8% vs. -13.7%), and ahead of it in Germany (-14.7% vs. -16.0%). Entry-level declines also eased in insulated roles, those least exposed to AI, in all five markets, including the UK (-12.9% YoY, from -18.2%) and the US (-8.9%, from -13.5%). That suggests economy-wide pressure on entry-level hiring is fading in most markets, and the remaining entry-level shortfall is increasingly concentrated in roles where AI complements experienced workers.





FASTEST-GROWING ROLES: FOUNDER GROWTH ACCELERATES AS THE US ENTRY-LEVEL TECH SQUEEZE DEEPENS

Founder and AI Engineer remain the standout growth roles, picking up pace from last quarter. Founder ranked among the fastest-growing roles in all five markets over July-September: France reached +72% YoY (up from +55% in the previous quarter), and India +55% (from +37%). AI Engineer grew year-over-year in the US (+71% overall, +65% entry-level) and in India (+62% and +39%).

The entry-level tech squeeze deepens in the US. US entry-level Full Stack Engineer (-26% YoY), Data Scientist (-26%) and ML Engineer (-28%) declined over July-September compared to the same period last year, while entry-level AI Engineer grew 65%, suggesting entry-level tech hiring may be consolidating into AI-specific titles. In Germany, Software Engineer declines spread from entry-level to all levels (-28% overall). India's declines deepened: Frontend Developer fell 58% at entry-level. In Europe, entry-level growth is scarce: no entry-level role grew year-over-year in France or Germany. The UK is the exception, where in-person roles such as Pharmacist (+11%) and Bar Staff (+6%) led modest entry-level gains.

AI roles on the rise while several entry-level tech roles retreat

Top 5 fastest-growing and top 5 fastest-declining occupations by year-over-year hiring, Jul–Sep 2026 average

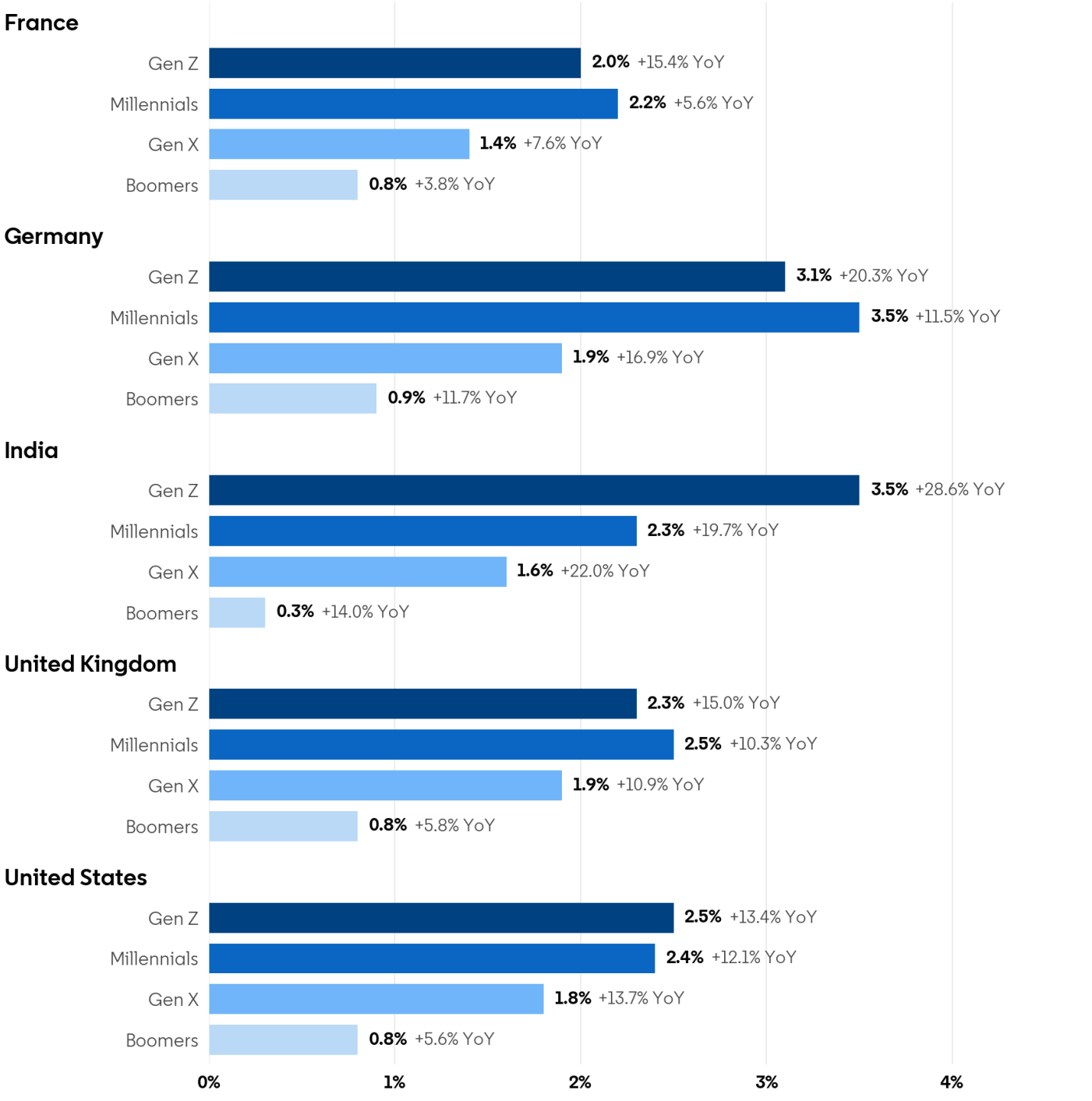
	Fastest growing					Fastest declining				
France										
Overall	Founder +72%	Co-Founder +16%	President +7%	Sales Specialist +3%	Psychologist -1%	Recruiter -30%	Education Instructor -31%	Marketing Assistant -31%	Direction Assistant -31%	Project Manager -35%
Entry	Psychologist -1%	Order Processor -3%	Front Desk Associate -5%	Animator -8%	Teacher -14%	HR Assistant -29%	Comms Assistant -29%	Marketing Assistant -31%	Direction Assistant -31%	Project Manager -38%
Germany										
Overall	Founder +62%	Co-Founder +40%	Owner +11%	Bus Dev Spec -3%	Postdoc Researcher -4%	Key Account Manager -27%	IT Specialist -28%	Marketing Manager -28%	Software Engineer -28%	HR Manager -32%
Entry	Postdoc Researcher -4%	Clerical Officer -10%	Law Clerk -10%	Sales Specialist -10%	Account Manager -12%	Project Engineer -21%	Sales Manager -23%	Project Manager -24%	Product Manager -25%	Software Engineer -30%
India										
Overall	IT Analyst +121%	AI Engineer +62%	ML Specialist +59%	Founder +55%	Data Specialist +42%	Interface Specialist -51%	Student Rep -52%	Technical Specialist -53%	UI Designer -54%	Frontend Developer -56%
Entry	IT Analyst +129%	AI Engineer +39%	Data Specialist +38%	Operations Associate +17%	Service Engineer +16%	Legal Associate -37%	Medical Coder -43%	Content Writer -52%	Interface Specialist -53%	Frontend Developer -58%
United Kingdom										
Overall	Founder +62%	Co-Founder +14%	Sales Dev Rep +10%	Engineering Specialist +7%	Head of Operations +6%	Graphic Designer -28%	Account Assistant -29%	Salesperson -30%	Board Member -32%	Data Analyst -32%
Entry	Pharmacist +11%	Sales Dev Rep +8%	Event Specialist +7%	Bar Staff +6%	Bartender +6%	Account Assistant -29%	Data Analyst -30%	Graphic Designer -30%	Salesperson -31%	Finance Specialist -32%
United States										
Overall	Principal +190%	AI Engineer +71%	Founder +63%	Test Engineer +38%	Clinical Research Assoc +37%	Real Estate Agent -29%	Pastor -30%	Audit -30%	UX Designer -35%	Medical Coder -43%
Entry	AI Engineer +65%	Mechanical Engineer +38%	Growth Specialist +38%	Test Engineer +36%	Field Svc Engineer +34%	Full Stack Engineer -26%	Mental Health Therapist -26%	Data Scientist -26%	ML Engineer -28%	Real Estate Agent -30%

GENERATIONAL TRENDS: GEN Z IS BUILDING AI ENGINEERING TALENT FASTEST

Gen Z's AI talent is growing fastest in most markets. Gen Z's share of members with AI engineering talent (those working in AI roles or with the technical skills to build or apply AI) grew between 13.4%–28.6% YoY across all five markets, led by India (+28.6% YoY), Germany (+20.3%) and France (+15.4%). That outpaces every other generation in most markets, with the US the only exception. Gen Z has a larger share than Millennials in India (3.5% vs. 2.3%) and the US (2.5% vs. 2.4%), and is closing the gap in France, Germany and the UK, pointing to younger workers becoming a key source of AI talent.

Gen Z's share of AI engineering talent Is growing fastest, surpassing Millennials in the US and India

Share of members with AI engineering talent by generation, annotated with YoY change. September 2026



GENERATIONAL TRENDS: GEN Z IS DRIVING A NEW WAVE OF AI-SKILLED FOUNDERS

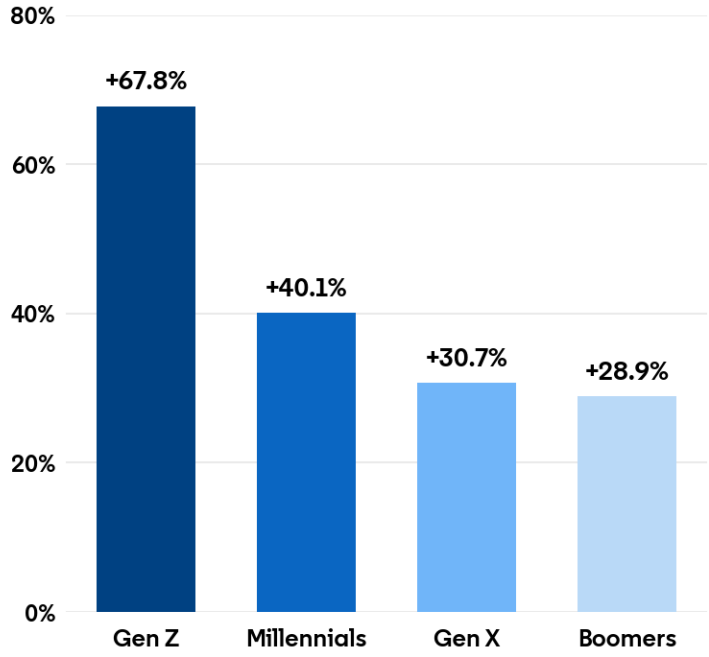
Gen Z is starting companies faster than other generations. In the US, the share of Gen Z members adding a founder position to their LinkedIn profile rose 67.8% YoY, well ahead of Millennials (+40.1%), Gen X (+30.7%) and Boomers (+28.9%). Gen Z also led in India (+76.3%), France (+65.2%) and the UK (+59.3%). Germany is the exception, where Gen X grew faster (+64.7% vs. +56.3% for Gen Z).

Gen Z founders are the most AI-skilled generation of founders in all five markets. In the US, one in five (20.2%) is AI-skilled, compared with 12.8% of Millennials, 11.9% of Gen X and 7.8% of Boomers. That share is even higher in India (25.6%) and Germany (22.1%), followed by the UK (16.8%) and France (13.2%). Over the past year, the AI-skilled share of Gen Z founders grew faster than that of older generations: the US share rose from 14.5% in September 2025 to 20.2% in September 2026, and India's from 17.7% to 25.6%.

Gen Z's fastest-growing skills mix AI engineering with commercial know-how. Model Context Protocol (MCP), the open standard that connects AI agents to external tools and data, is the fastest-growing skill among Gen Z members in both the US and India. In the US it is followed by Object-oriented Languages, Business Data Management, and Digital Marketing Channels. India's list adds AI coding tools (Cursor AI, Anthropic Claude) alongside Salesmanship and Start-ups Management. In Germany, AI skills lead: n8n, Prompt Engineering, AI Agents and Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG).

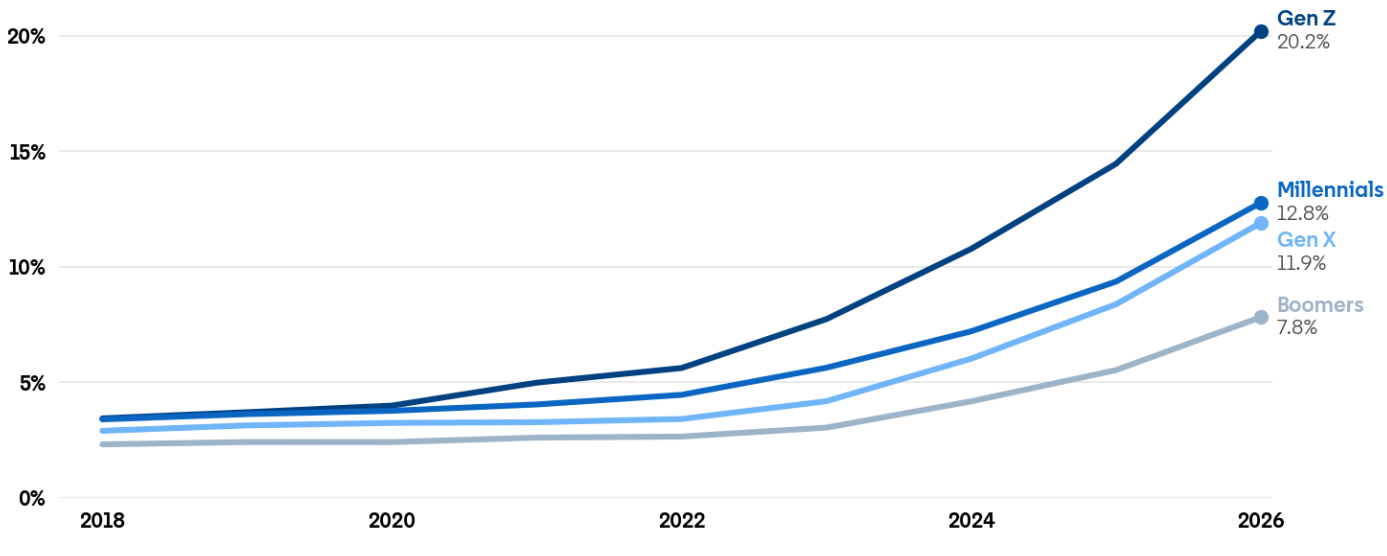
US Gen Z founders outpace every other generation

YoY change in the share of US members adding a founder position to their profile, by generation. Jul–Sep 2026 average



One in five Gen Z founders in the US is AI-skilled

Share of US founders that are AI-skilled by generation. September 2026, comparing September data



SECTOR DEEP DIVE: CYBER PROFESSIONALS ARE LEARNING AI, AND HOW TO SECURE IT

Cybersecurity professionals are adopting AI tools quickly. They are also adding the skills needed to secure and govern AI across their organizations. As of September 2026, 4.3 million LinkedIn members worldwide were part of the cybersecurity workforce. The US has by far the largest pool (1.35 million), followed by India (~580k), the UK (~225k), France (~150k) and Germany (~105k).

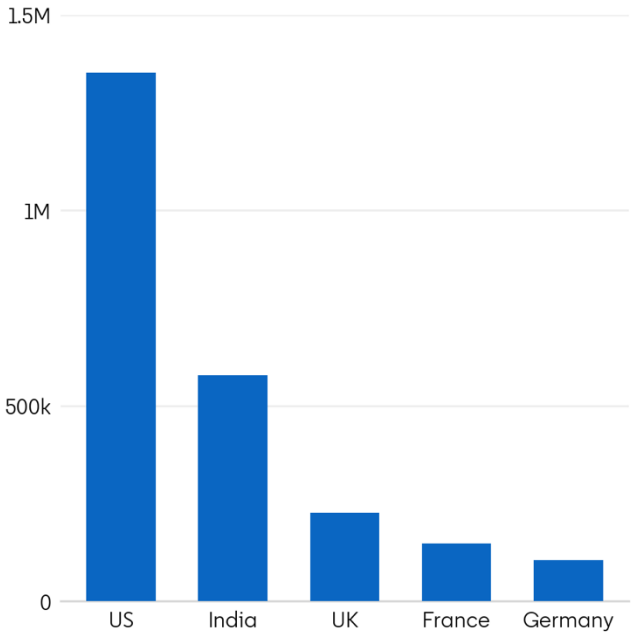
AI is a crucial part of the cyber skill set. Across all five markets, the share of cyber talent that is AI-skilled rose 26–48% year-over-year. Around one in ten cyber professionals on LinkedIn are now AI-skilled: 8.8% in France, 10.6% in the US, 11.0% in the UK, 12.2% in Germany and 12.9% in India. Germany has the smallest talent pool of the five but the second-highest AI-skilled share.

Cyber professionals are both AI users and AI guardians. Among US cyber talent, Anthropic Claude was the fastest-growing skill, up more than tenfold, followed by other AI tooling skills like Multi-agent Systems (+447%). At the same time, AI Governance (+512%), AI Security (+476%) and Compliance Operations (+591%) entered the top ten. Cyber teams are adopting AI for their own work while taking responsibility for securing and governing it for the businesses they protect.

Fastest-growing skills of US Cybersecurity talent		
1	**Anthropic Claude**	+1,081%
2	Platform Engineering	+748%
3	Enterprise Support	+698%
4	Compliance Operations	+591%
5	Executive Advisory	+519%
6	**AI Governance**	+512%
7	Microsoft Certified Desktop Support Technician	+481%
8	**AI Security**	+476%
9	Reducing Operating Costs	+470%
10	**Multi-agent Systems**	+448%

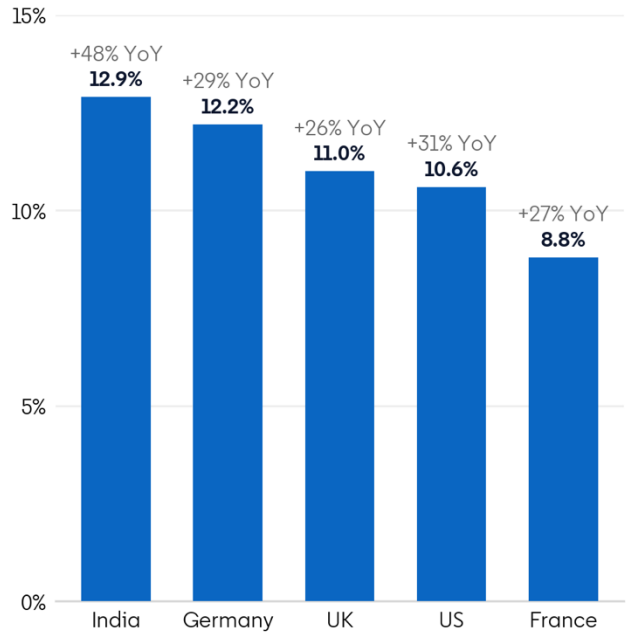
The US has the largest cybersecurity talent pool

Number of LinkedIn members who are cybersecurity talent, September 2026



AI skills are spreading fast through cyber

Share of cybersecurity talent who are AI-skilled, annotated with YoY change. Jul–Sep average



APPENDIX

Methodology

The LinkedIn Hiring Rate (LHR) is a measure of hires divided by LinkedIn membership in the country. This analysis looks at the changes in hiring rate between this month and the same month in the previous year. This is based on members' profile updates using the start date of a new job.

AI Engineering Talent. A LinkedIn member is considered AI engineering talent if they currently work, or have worked, in an AI occupation (e.g., Machine Learning Engineer, AI Engineer), or if they list at least two AI engineering skills on their profile (e.g., Machine Learning, Large Language Models).

AI Engineering Talent Concentration. The counts of AI engineering talent are used to calculate talent concentration metrics, e.g., to calculate the country-level AI engineering talent concentration, we use the counts of AI engineering talent in a country divided by the counts of LinkedIn members in that respective country.

Cybersecurity Talent. A LinkedIn member is considered cybersecurity talent if they currently work, or have worked, in a dedicated cybersecurity occupation (e.g., Security Engineer, Security Analyst), or in a cybersecurity-adjacent occupation (e.g., Network Engineer, IT Auditor) while listing at least two cybersecurity skills on their profile.

AI-skilled. A LinkedIn member is considered AI-skilled if they currently work, or have worked, in an AI occupation, and/or list at least one AI engineering or AI literacy skill on their profile.

AI-Exposure Occupations. Augmented occupations require a mixture of skills that are AI replicable and human-centric, disrupted occupations utilize skills largely replicable by AI, and insulated occupations use few AI replicable skills.

Further reading

AI Labor Market Update (August 2026)

AI Labor Market Update (April 2026)

AI Labor Market Update (Jan 2026)

AI Data Partnerships - LinkedIn Methodology (2026)

AI Skills Are Near Parity for Workers with Disabilities. Jobs and Leadership Are Not.

The Triple Penalty. Mapping the Gender Gap in the AI Economy

The AI Talent Divide. Strong Demand and Pay, Uneven Returns